

Expect the Unexpected

By Greig Burgoyne



Project Details

Name of Researcher:	Greig Burgoyne
Name of Output:	Expect the Unexpected
UCARO link:	https://research.uca.ac.uk/5290/
Output Type:	M – Exhibition; group exhibition with performance and ongoing screening
Year and mode of dissemination:	Live performance: <i>Expect the Unexpected</i> , The Lowry, Salford, UK, June 27 2019 Exhibition: <i>Expect the Unexpected</i> , The Lowry, Salford, UK, June 27 - September 29 2019
Key Words:	Chance, performance, installation, film, live performance, play, contingency, thresholds

Synopsis

Expect the Unexpected is a research output by Greig Burgoyne. Burgoyne was invited to present a series of works that contributed to the *Expect the Unexpected* exhibition at the Lowry gallery in Salford. The exhibition explored the themes of chance and risk in both historical and contemporary art practices; other artists featured were Yoko Ono, Sarah Sze, Keith Tyson, John Cage, Gillian Wearing and Merel Theloesen.

Burgoyne's artworks for this exhibition consisted of a series of live, then subsequently projected or screened, drawing performances within the gallery. 'Sticky walk' and 'Post-it note dance' explored the role of chance within contemporary art.

'Sticky walk' saw Burgoyne move around the space whilst walking on sticky-side-up high-contact duct tape. The sporadic and untamed movements and gestures alongside the residual traces of the tape testify to a desire to revisit

the role and scope of spatial drawing and the gestures that support it. In 'Post-it note dance' Burgoyne covered himself in an entire packet of post-it notes, then sought to remove them without using his hands. He shook, jumped, kicked and lashed out in frantic spontaneous gestures to shed the post-it notes. Unlike 'Sticky walk', which was re-presented as a large scale two channel video projection, 'Post-it note dance' was subsequently displayed as a small-scale performance video presented on a flat screen. Post-it notes shed during the performance remained on the floor adjacent to the screening. Through these works Burgoyne proposes new dialogues in our rapport with the automatic actions that constitute a drawing in space.

This portfolio of supporting information includes evidence of the research aims, context and processes which led to new insights. It also includes images of the performance of 'Sticky walk' and 'Post-it note dance' and is accompanied by videos of both works.



Performance of 'Sticky walk', The Lowry, Manchester, 2019



*Performance of 'Sticky walk', The
Lowry, Manchester, 2019*



Tape left behind after the performance of 'Sticky walk', The Lowry, Manchester, 2019

Context

Expect the Unexpected: a chance exhibition took as its starting point John Cage's performance piece 4' 33", and the artists included all incorporated an element of chance into their work. 'Sticky walk' and 'Post-it note dance', built on Burgoyne's previous work such as 'Bad drawing' (2016), in which he worked with live performance or film and video installation, in order to extend upon and engage with frame, lack, and temporal roles within embodied drawing.

'Sticky walk' and 'Post-it note dance' are informed by the discourses of Jacques Derrida and Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Burgoyne references the point made by Derrida in *Speech and Phenomenon* (1973) that language is either an indicator or an expression. Similarly, in *The Visible and Invisible* (1964) Merleau-Ponty considers where we see ourselves in the world versus where we are in the world, for a world all around is not simply in front of us.

Burgoyne extends upon these considerations of language and space by seeking to identify where and in what ways live drawing performances within public space can challenge and

relinquish the confines of imposed behaviour and actions. The works offer up new thresholds indicative of emancipation from these strict limits.

The research suggests that we have a world both within and outside ourselves, and in this enfolding and folding of space Burgoyne seeks to revitalise thinking and action. As a result, the works contest often assumed spatial positions that propose we are simply in a space as opposed to space being something indicative of what we are. Space is always occupied, although we may need to revise and contest how, where and to what end.

REFERENCES

- Burgoyne, G. (2016) *The Prison Drawing Project*. [Exhibition] Scarborough Jail, Yorkshire, 13 - 14 February 2016.
- Derrida, J. (1973) *Speech and Phenomena: And Other Essays on Husserl's Theory of Signs*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.
- Merleau-Ponty, M. (1964) *The Visible and the Invisible*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Research Questions and Aims

Research questions:

What is the drawn space, where are its limits?

In what ways does risk extend or compound that enquiry?

Research aims:

To test and extend new conceptual frameworks for drawing and spatial dialogues that both expand and renegotiate the drawn space

To consider the self-organising of public spaces and interrogate static and closed spaces as paradoxically private, versus inclusive and open space that is fluid

Research Methods and Processes

The works were made both prior to and in the gallery spaces themselves as live performance. Through both film and live mediation of the site, various responses were achieved. A live performance was made on the opening night; in this the tension of where the space of the work existed and the public space of the gallery as a viewing space were brought into conflict and debate for both artists and audience alike.

These works were conceptually informed by Derrida's writings in *Speech and Phenomena*, in particular the section on meaning and representation. Burgoyne's research built on Derrida to contest the notion of language as something which is produced. Instead, Burgoyne explored how this may be attained as pure expression, which is only possible if we do not communicate (produce language).

The work sought to extend the notion of performative drawing as beginning with lack. This means only the body and ubiquitous, commonplace materials, specifically post-it notes, paper or tape, were used, as a means to extend alternative space/body dialogues in accumulative acts of duration that were directed by self-imposed rules. Setting rules both relinquishes control from the performer and in turn permits a

new space for automatic and spontaneous gestures to emerge. In doing so the work generates spatial dialogues that both embody and disembody the role or function of the site; the logic we bring to conceptually loaded sites is debated and tested.

The research process also extends Merleau-Ponty's observation in his book *The Visible and the Invisible* that 'solidity is not found in the heaven of ideas, nor in the foundation of meaning... neither above or below appearances but at its joints'. On a practical level this revelation of the joints of here and elsewhere, between pre-determined knowledge we bring to a site and the experience that collides with that knowledge when we are in that space, is indicative of the subconscious undercurrent of body and space, directed by the material in and of itself.

These themes and processes were highlighted in the feedback of the public, staff and gallery teams, both actual and online. The work was very popular with a diverse audience for its simplicity, playfulness and absurdity, as well as the ways in which it extends the concept of drawing as a means to cover and shed, to reveal and conceal.



*Performance of 'Sticky walk', The
Lowry, Manchester, 2019*



Tape left behind after the performance of 'Sticky walk', The Lowry, Manchester, 2019

Research Contribution and Recognition

Research insights and contribution:

Through the meeting of artist, viewer and space, and subsequently through interactions with the remnants of this meeting, the work invited its audience to retrace and remake the work in a virtual sense. In this way they could encounter the new, if challenging, conditions of space through their movement and interaction with the strewn material remains in the galleries.

Further dissemination details:

The Lowry, Salford commissioned the works as part of the exhibition *Expect the Unexpected* which ran from June 27th to September 29th 2019. The exhibition also featured various talks and workshops throughout its run. The exhibition received over 4000 visitors (approximately) during its run.

A video introducing the exhibition is available at:
<https://youtu.be/E1rGmQWf5yw>

Influence of the research:

Burgoyne's work has been analysed in the 2020 book *Performance Drawing: New Practices Since 1945*, co-authored by Maryclare Foá, Jane Grisewood, Birgitta Hosea and Carali McCall (Bloomsbury).

Research Contribution and Recognition

Follow-on activities:

Following this exhibition, Burgoyne has been invited to make a solo show (2021, subject to re-scheduling) in which he will create a series of major public participatory performances, new film works and installations. The commissioned works will be in dialogue with the Lowry collection, its ideas and the contexts of labour, work and action that related to the work of L.S. Lowry.

Burgoyne has been invited by the European performance art network PAErsche, based in Cologne, to present further works at Bochum Kunsthallen.

In 2021 Burgoyne has been commissioned to make a work for the Civitella Ranieri Foundation based in New York for the foundations' cultural centre in Perugia Italy.

In addition, his work has been commissioned for the project RAID at Galleria Bruno Lissi Rome, curated by Camilla Boemia (2021, may be subject to change).



Performance of 'Post-it note dance'



*Performance of 'Post-it note dance',
The Lowry, Manchester, 2019*

Post-it notes left from the performance beneath a recording of 'Post-it note dance', The Lowry, Manchester, 2019





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FRONT COVER
Performance of 'Sticky walk', The
Lowry, Manchester, 2019

BACK COVER
Expect the Unexpected exhibition,
The Lowry, Manchester, 2019

| EXPECT THE | UNEXPECTED |

Mark Bloomfield
Greig Burgoyne
Joel Goodman
Paul Kenny
Yoko Ono
Eugenie Scrase
Sarah Sze
Merel Theloesen
Keith Tyson
Gillian Wearing

A century ago the Dada movement first started exploring the role of chance in art and poetry, celebrating it as a new stimulus to artistic creation. In 1952 the American experimental composer John Cage also used chance as the creative impetus behind his 'silent' piece 4'33".

This exhibition brings together contemporary artists who continue to embrace or engineer chance and spontaneity in their work, through film, performance, photography, painting and sculpture.

