

Wendy Richmond: Navigating the Personal Bubble, May 25, 2012–November 4, 2012

This multi-part video installation by Wendy Richmond explores how portable digital technology creates mobile zones of privacy—the artist calls them “personal bubbles”—that change the social experience of being in public. Richmond’s consideration of public privacy started in 2004, when she was commuting extensively between the east and west coasts and spending a lot of time in airports. Richmond recalls, “Waiting in security lines, waiting for boarding, waiting in food courts...most of the people around me were alone and waiting, too. We were in a very public place and also in our personal zones. Reading, working on laptops, talking on cell phones, playing video games, watching DVDs, staring into space—we were all engaged in our own internal worlds, temporarily oblivious to what was going on around us. This phenomenon occurs all the time in public spaces: the denser and more urban the place, the more intense the personal bubble.”

In developing this exhibition, Richmond worked with RISD students during the January 2012 Wintersession term to experiment with possible forms and ideas related to the “personal bubble.” One class assignment asked students to make one-minute videos of themselves working in a public place, such as a café. Watching the results, Richmond remarked, “I was surprised to find subtle but distinct gestures common to all of them: a furrowed brow; a coffee cup lifted and held for a moment, as though supporting an unfinished thought; occasional eye contact with café-mates.” These videos were the starting point for *Alone in Public*, a three-channel video installation created for the RISD Museum’s New Media Gallery.

“Each gesture reflects the mind’s eye communicating with the virtual space of the screen...countless sighs, twitches, frowns, and inward gazes—these repetitive movements create an unconscious choreography.”

Building on *Alone in Public* and inspired by Richmond’s background in dance, the vinyl text piece *Gestures* presents a choreographic taxonomy of physical behaviors specific to the “personal bubble,” providing a template for what the artist calls “mutual awareness through physical movements.”

CHECKLIST OF THE EXHIBITION

Wendy Richmond, video artist

American, b.1953

Alone in Public, 2012

Three-channel black-and-white video installation, sound, 14 min. 57 sec.

Gift of the artist and Carroll and Sons, Boston, in honor of Judith Tannenbaum 2013.15.1



RISD MUSEUM

Wendy Richmond

American, b.1953

Gestures, 2012

Vinyl text on wall

Gift of the artist and Carroll and Sons, Boston, in honor of Judith
Tannenbaum 2013.15.2

