

## Gestures and Spaces for Brand-New Meanings

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There are various ways, conscious or not, of entering a space and generating meanings, associations, and, by extension, new memories. Some may step into a space and allow themselves to be captivated by a word, a fleeting impression—an event belonging to the enigmatic domain of affect. Others may engage with space by scrutinizing its angles, planes, quadrants, and light. The distinction between these modes of perception, which we continuously experience, is subtle and often unspoken. Yet, these dynamics are always susceptible to representation through narrative or speculative means.

Nothing, however, prevents different ways of experiencing movement through space from merging, giving rise to exceptional occurrences: structural perceptions shifting into the realm of sensation or, conversely, sensory impressions assuming a geometric register, shaped by movement and rhythmic cadence. Ilê Sartuzi's exhibition *Trick*, installed at MAC USP, explores these observational and spatial possibilities, simultaneously revealing the structure (and infrastructure) of the exhibition space and activating the body's properties through meticulously choreographed movement.

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During the production of *Trick*, Sartuzi's approach was particularly remarkable. It involved meticulous research into the museum's structure and agreements with different institutional bodies, including curators, the security team, and the fire department, all of whom engaged in negotiations regarding the architectural scope. On one hand, there was a strong commitment to spatial considerations, evident in the study of the floor plan—an element that is integrated into *Trick* as both documentation or, if we want, an independent artwork. Equally noteworthy is the fact that many of these works—*Turn Me Off*, *Signal*, *False Alarm: Symphony for Museums*, *Vigilant*, and *beep*—emerged from a speculative process, originating as text. This aspect is particularly intriguing, as it reveals that before making visual and aesthetic decisions, Sartuzi engaged in a primarily technical approach, gathering vocabulary, perspectives, and conceptual frameworks related to his subject. Before finally arriving at the image—which potentially embodies novelty or, ideally, the possibility of transformation—

Sartuzi's process often draws upon a variety of linguistic models, including literature, architecture, theater, and choreography.

The two-channel video *Sleight of Hand*, recorded at the British Museum in London and now exhibited in *Trick*, confirms Sartuzi's interest in the study of space. However, this time, the exhibition space is strategically approached as the stage for an operation that lies between theft and magic, exploring what these two activities have in common. (*Sleight of hand* refers to the illusionistic manipulation of an object, making it disappear before the eyes of the other.) To execute this carefully premeditated move, the presence of another person is necessary, because without them, neither the magic nor the theft would be completed and would simply remain as mere practice. For the *sleight of hand* to be successfully performed, the magician or thief must navigate a complex system of signs, involving rhythmic, spatial, visual, and psychological elements. Because the outcome depends not only on the performer's actions but also on external factors, the thief or magician remains acutely attuned to external agents beyond their own gestures or movements. This is why even the most perfected preparation for the act involves a significant margin of error. When successful, it is not the act itself but the consequences—the gesture, the pass—that is revealed by both theft and magic.

The operations proposed by the tricks require a reconfiguration of gestures and the creation of rhythmic dynamics between the bodies, aiming to inscribe themselves within the supposedly natural order of the situation in which they are about to intervene. Flowing within the rhythm, even if only to participate synchronically, implies an intervention in reality, with the intention of camouflaging oneself within it, simulating spontaneity. From the operation of concrete and real elements, a transformation can happen, opening up new possibilities for perception. In *Sleight of Hand*, the magical action, or theft, performed by the artist leads to a shift in meaning, paving the way for a language that can be utopian and effusive, while also offering a critical perspective on the reality it engages with.

Another recurring element in Sartuzi's poetics emerges in *Sleight of Hand*: the study of bodies. While in previous works these bodies are represented in mechanized or artificially altered forms, often through dismantled mannequins, in *Sleight of Hand*, the characters are real and experience intense apprehension in response to the situation they face. Because they are anonymous—their faces never revealed to us—and silent (the video is accompanied only by a soundtrack that accentuates the rhythm and ambiguity of the outcome), our attention, as viewers, is directed toward the improvised choreography that was intuitively necessary for the success of the project.

And speaking of choreography and spatial configurations, we are invited to experience the exhibition not merely as spectators, but as agents capable of activating its structures, making the environment "speak" and respond to our paths and movements. However, one work in *Trick* challenges us—partly due to its pictorial nature, which

contrasts with the exhibition's technological explorations: *The Vanishing Coin*, a replica created by an anonymous art forger whom Sartuzi entrusted with the task of precisely replicating a painting of his own, introduces yet another anonymous body into the exhibition. The concealed identity of the depicted figure shifts the focus to the coin and the gesture that holds it. This painting emerges as an enigma, evoking a *mise en abyme* effect within an exhibition shaped by reproductions, forgeries, replicas—or, if we prefer, tricks—where meticulous layers of self-reference unfold like Russian dolls, encompassing choreographic, conceptual, and, in a broader sense, critical reflections on the institutional context and the circulation of art itself.