



PIA LINDMAN
CAMBRIDGE, MA

In *Embodiments*, her solo exhibition at the MIT Museum's Compton Gallery [April 18—June 30, 2006], the Finnish-born, New York-based artist Pia Lindman stakes out an archive for gestural investigation. The exhibition includes drawings, videos, and a new performance based on her interactions with robots at MIT's Computer Science and Artificial Intelligence Laboratory, which her current fellowship at MIT's Center of Advanced Visual Studies has afforded her. *Embodiments* explores the lexicon of everyday gestures—the movements and poses through which emotions are expressed and human subjectivity embodied.

Each of the three series on view—*The New York Times Project*, started in 2003 and ongoing, *Corpcomm*, 2004, and *The MIT Project*, 2005—began with the capture and isolation of a single gesture and ended with its live performance by Lindman herself. *The New York Times Project*, which explores gestures of mourning, relies on images of people displaying grief, which the artist culled from that newspaper's pages over the course of a year. Provoked by the events of 9/11, Lindman expanded her investigation to include manifestations of grief from around the globe. Once the collection was amassed, Lindman acted out each gesture in front of a video camera, transforming a posture originally disseminated by one mass medium into one secured and diffused by another. She then created a still of each gesture, and traced it as a drawing. She continues to use this drawing as a template for her live performances, during which she recreates and inhabits each pose.

The progression from newspaper to performance relies on a time-intensive process of transcription and mediation, one that gradually intensifies each gesture so that it is stripped of any excess and distilled to its purest, most condensed form. While the video and the drawings may seem like mere documents of the process, secondary to the climax of the live performance, the work gains its meaning precisely at the intersection between reproduction and authenticity. Lindman's exposition of the

layers of mediation and her conclusion with a theatrical performance reveal that the language of gesture is a mixed modality. It exists somewhere in the liminal space where mass media's inherently technological reproduction converges with real human emotion. The result of this union, Lindman suggests, is theatrical affect, a lexicon of socially constructed poses that signify mourning.

For *Corpcomm*, the abbreviation of Corporate Communities, Lindman infiltrated a corporation for a month in order to master the language of industry. She elaborated upon her usual process of mediation by inviting employees to her office to share their quotidian office gestures. Through their instruction, she developed an entire dictionary of poses that represent the bureaucratic experience. This study reveals the overwhelming regimentation of the corporate body and its comprehensive discipline. The worker must adopt a readymade discourse in order to function in the modern culture of industry. Indeed, he or she becomes an instrumentalized body—a body that expresses capitalism's irrational spirit through readymade (e)motions.

Lindman's most recent work, the embodiment of a robot named Domo, complicates this project by transcribing the gestures of a machine in human form. On the night of the opening, Lindman performed *Domo and its Double*, imitating Domo's gestures from a scroll of drawings while simultaneously projecting a video of Domo's mechanical movements behind her. In moments of uncanny intermingling, Lindman and the robot moved in perfect synchronicity, miming each other's gestures as if the robot were human and Lindman a machine. In this juxtaposition, the artist suggests that we can only relate to machines by investing them with a degree of humanity—by translating their gestures into an idiom of human emotion—while simultaneously merging with them and becoming mechanical subjects.

—Nuit Banai

ABOVE: Pia Lindman, *The MIT Project*, 2005, the artist performing Domo [courtesy of Luxe Gallery, New York; photo: Johanna Torkkola]