

“Liz Magic Laser Talks to the Hand,” *art21*, November 20, 2012, page 1 of 1.

New York Close Up

A New Documentary Series on Art and Life in the City

Can you tell what politicians mean by what they say or how they move? In this film, artist [Liz Magic Laser](#) develops [The Digital Face](#) (2012)—a new performance staged at [Derek Eller Gallery](#) in Chelsea and at [MoMA PS1](#) in Long Island City—that examines hand gestures in contemporary presidential State of the Union addresses. Struck by the virtuosity of Barack Obama’s movement in his 2012 address, Laser examined past speeches to discover that George H. W. Bush was the first president to use gestures in the televised era. The artist choreographs the presidents’ wordless movements with two [Merce Cunningham](#)-trained dancers—[Cori Kresge](#) as Obama, and [Alan Good](#) as Bush—into a performative dialogue that reveals how gestures have been embraced and codified by politicians and their handlers over the past two decades. Throughout the rehearsal process, Laser employs stop-action photography to isolate and tweak individual gestures; she later amplifies the sound of the camera shutter’s incessant clicking for the performance’s soundtrack. Tracing the origin of many of these oratorical techniques to the 19th century theoretician [François Delsarte](#), Laser is concerned with how contemporary political figures are adopting theatrical tools to persuade the public, masking the content of their speeches with movements designed to induce empathy through well-rehearsed and often subliminal cues. “We are living in strange days,” says Laser, “where performance itself has become the dominant instrument of power.”

[Liz Magic Laser](#) (b. 1981, New York City, NY, USA) lives and works in Brooklyn, New York.

CREDITS | *New York Close Up* Created & Produced by: Wesley Miller & Nick Ravich. Editor: Brad Kimbrough. Cinematography: Don Edler, Amanda Long, Wesley Miller, Rafael Moreno Salazar & Ava Wiland. Sound: Amanda Long & Wesley Miller. Associate Producer: Ian Forster. Production Assistant: Amanda Long. Design & Graphics: Open. Artwork: Liz Magic Laser. Music: Tristan Shepherd. Additional Video: George Bush Presidential Library & Museum, The Ronald Reagan Presidential Library, & The White House. Thanks: Derek Eller, Alan Good, Cori Kresge, Ken Laser, Isaac Lyles, MoMA PS1, Jocelyn Miller, Wendy Osserman, Jenny Schlenzka. An Art21 Workshop Production. © Art21, Inc. 2012. All rights reserved.

Released: 11.20.12