

# ARTFORUM

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### DISPLAY

**Mansteinstrasse 16  
August 5–August 28**

Communication begets miscommunication when codifications of language are flexible. Mounted as part of the Project Space Festival, this exhibition brings together two artist duos to investigate semantics beyond speech. Christine Sun Kim and Thomas Mader, along with Carrie McLwain and Johanna Ackva, utilize film, performance, dance, and sound to expand understanding and undermine spoken classifications.

Projected onto a suspended screen, Kim and Mader’s video *Classified Digits* (all works cited, 2016) shows the artists playing the game “helping hands,” in which one’s hands are hidden behind one’s back and replaced by those of a partner. At one point, Kim, who is deaf, uses facial expressions such as wide eyes and pursed lips to respond to Mader’s two erect index fingers, which is the American Sign Language sign for individual people. Various scenarios play out, such as an elevator run-in. The humor of these situations trumps speech, creating the impression of a minimalist Punch-and-Judy show.

McLwain and Ackva staged *Women and Watery Men* on the show’s opening night, and its recording is now projected in the gallery. While sharing a bath, they exchange intimate dialogue about shame, with the conversation meandering from peeing in pools to gender issues. After the artists emerge from the water and wrap themselves in robes, a guitar and microphone are promptly recruited so that McLwain can translate Ackva’s choreographed movements into sound. Ending with a collective dance-off, the process of bodily expression is privileged over verbal communication, comprising so much more than mere words.



**Christine Sun Kim and Thomas Mader,**  
*Classified Digits*, 2016, HD video, color, sound, 5  
minutes 28 seconds.

— Louisa Elderton