

Statement

“No one who has not tried it can realize how extremely interesting all activity becomes when viewed and treated as a definite, measurable combination of motions and decisions.”

– Frank B. Gilbreth & Lillian Moller Gilbreth, PH.D, Motion Study for the Handicapped, 1920.

Tics and jerks are the most prominent symptoms of the two movement disorders I live with. These motions are unintentional and purposeless, causing me to gesture wildly and stumble over my own feet. Despite a lack of specific standards of acceptable movement, my inability to walk in a straight line or stand in one place without losing balance is immediately recognizable as abnormal and unacceptable to those around me. These movements mark me as other—as someone who cannot conform to intangible yet oppressive standards of movement which govern our actions in public space.

I am inspired by the motion studies done by Frank and Lillian Gilbreth, whose original intention of streamlining processes in the factory and the home, have led me to examine my own involuntary movements through a meticulous process of recording, projecting, and manually tracing lines of motion. My works visualize a difference in how I physically navigate public life that is felt by myself and others but has, until now, evaded a precise record. This work seeks to visualize those so-called abnormal movements, to celebrate each wobble and examine the paths carved out in their wake. Bold, precise brushstrokes inscribe practiced motions onto the canvas—their geometric stylization distancing these gestures from their bodily origins. These thick lines, presented in nonspecific gridded spaces and stripped of extraneous personal identifiers, ask the viewers to consider not just my motion but theirs as well. While my motions feature most prominently in the work, I am far from its only concern. The same standards, the same grid, which provides a framework for how I think about my motion also extends beyond those like me to the rest of the population. We as people are not measured against the average, or even the best of us. We are all measured against and forced to defend an impossible perfect ideal representing how the human body should be, instead of being asked to reckon with and accommodate its actual current abilities. Without providing a specific way forward, these abstractions redirect viewers to look closely as they feel the dotted rhythm and move in response to the work, understanding that the problematic influence of the grid extends beyond my life and the edge of the canvas.