

PETER BURKE | MISHAP: HAIFA | 2019

Date: Sunday 29 December 2019, 6-7pm

Location: German Colony, Haifa

About the project

Mishap is a series of impromptu actions performed in public spaces in various cities around the world. The work is based on a simple slapstick gesture—a performer spills the contents of a briefcase into pedestrian traffic. In recent iterations of the project in Shanghai, Tokyo, Delhi and Bloemfontein, it is unlikely that audiences recognised the intervention as a performance, even though cameras were in the distance. When passersby engaged and helped the performer pick up the briefcase contents, it appeared to reveal concern, kindness and empathy. When passersby did not assist it begged the question of whether it was the briefcase and its associations with power, the fear of corruption, apathy, or the way pedestrians are conditioned to engage or disengage in public space that prevented people from helping.

Practicalities

Location:

- German Colony, Haifa (sites selected in consultation with curator)
- Pedestrian areas, walkways, plazas etc where people are walking, congregating, crossing paths
- Spaces with good street lighting
- Windy spaces

Description of performance:

- A performer wearing everyday clothes and carrying a briefcase walks through pedestrian areas
- At certain intervals, the performer's briefcase bursts open and its contents spill onto the ground. The briefcase contains papers and personal items such as wallet, a comb, etc.
- The interaction, or lack of interaction, is part of the work. In some instances, passersby ignore the incident, leave the performer to pick up the items, or interact in some other way.
- Each briefcase drop and pick up lasts approximately 60-90 seconds
- When the performer has packed up his briefcase, he moves to another location and repeats the action
- There may be approximately 20 briefcase drops in an hour

Camera documentation:

- Ideally 2/3 video camera operators follow the performer, but are not too close to the performer, nor distract the audience
- They need to be versatile and respond to the moment
- The camera operators could be at different angles - above the action (e.g. on a balcony, stairs etc) and on street level
- Capture the overall narrative – performer walking, dropping case, picking it up, walking again.
- Capture the details of action - papers falling to the ground
- Capture interactions with audience, or audience not interacting
- Make use of existing lighting conditions (dark?)
- Close-up and distant shots
- Good lens for distant shots

Go Pro:

- This could be attached to the inside of briefcase **or** carried by a third camera operator

Additional idea for Haifa:

- Would it be possible for an assistant and a camera operator to visit the locations where the performer been and ask several members of the public a series of questions? I could design the questions as a public survey with a clipboard. This could be a task for a student. The responses could be shared at the presentation on Monday.
- *Did you see the guy that dropped his briefcase?*
- *Did you notice anyone help him pick up the papers?*
- *Why did/didn't anyone help?*
- *Did you know that this is a performance?*
- *The artist is doing this as part of a project to see how people interact on the street. What do you think it says about the way we interact in city spaces?*