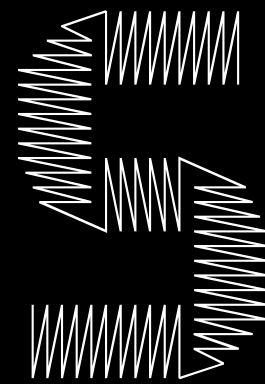
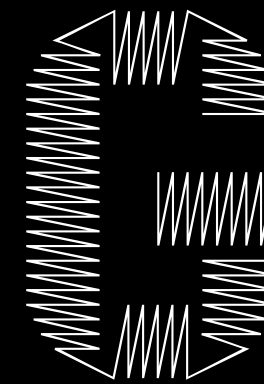
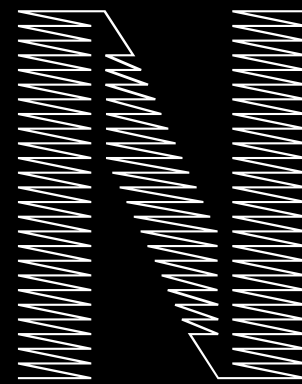
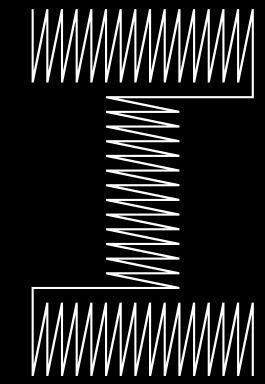
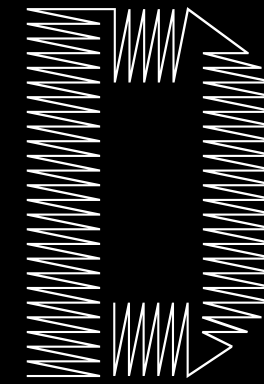
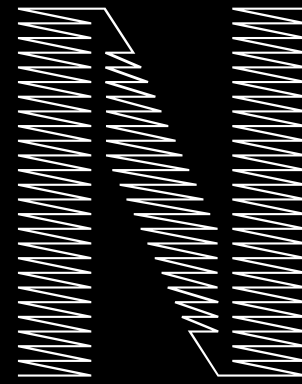
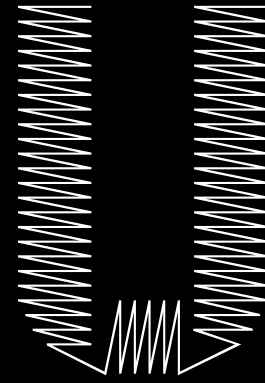
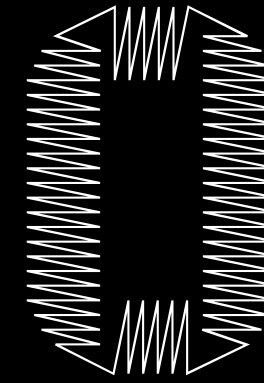
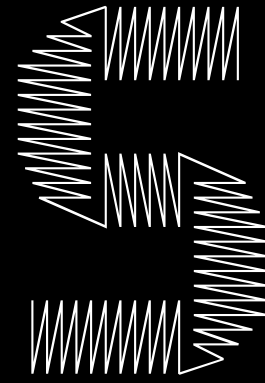


A Contemporary Score

MoMA



A Contemporary Score

Barbara London
With an essay by Anne Hilde Neset

The Museum of Modern Art,
New York

Published in conjunction with the exhibition *Soundings*, at The Museum of Modern Art, New York, August 10–November 3, 2013. Organized by Barbara London, Associate Curator, with Leora Morinis, Curatorial Assistant, Department of Media and Performance Art.

The exhibition is made possible by MoMA's Wallis Annenberg Fund for Innovation in Contemporary Art through the Annenberg Foundation.

Additional funding is provided by the Office for Contemporary Art Norway (OCA).

Produced by the Department of Publications, The Museum of Modern Art, New York

Edited by Sarah McFadden
Designed by Project Projects
Production by Marc Sapir
Printed and bound by OGI/1010, China

This book is typeset in Karbon and ZigZag. The paper is 157 gsm Neo Matt.

Published by The Museum of Modern Art, 11 West 53 Street, New York, New York 10019
www.moma.org

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Library of Congress Control Number: 2013937082
ISBN: 978-0-87070-888-6

Distributed in the United States and Canada by ARTBOOK | D.A.P., New York
155 Sixth Avenue, 2nd floor, New York, New York 10013
www.artbook.com

Distributed outside the United States and Canada by Thames & Hudson Ltd
181A High Holborn, London WC1V 7QX
www.thamesandhudson.com

Printed in China

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SOUNDINGS

From the 1960s to the Present Barbara London

Soundings: A Contemporary Score features recent work by sixteen young artists who work with sound. They come from the United States, Uruguay, Norway, Denmark, England, Scotland, Germany, Australia, Japan, and Taiwan and have a broad understanding of art, architecture, performance, telecommunications, philosophy, and music. As they move comfortably between mediums, listening and hearing remain central to their practices. Their environments, drawings, and assemblages have a palpable sonic presence—even the ones that must be seen to be heard.

Sound as an art medium emerged during the 1960s from the foundations that had been laid for it over the preceding fifty years.¹ In the spirit of counterculture and revolution, artists were experimenting with time-based art that was intangible and difficult to commodify and collect. Their seat-of-the-pants approach to process and materials was well suited to the artist-run, rough-and-ready exhibition spaces sprouting up in cities the world over. Unconstrained by the financial expectations of commercial galleries, these nonprofit establishments allowed artists to experiment and benefit from their successes and failures. In these venues, which were frequented mostly by the artists' peers, viewers became participants and assumed active relationships with the new kinds

of art—site-specific and/or performance-based—then forming.

The distinctions between visual artists and composer-musician-performers blurred as young artists started to thrive in the fertile middle ground between disciplines. La Monte Young, founder in the early 1960s of the Theatre of Eternal Music, was accompanied by Marian Zazeela, Angus MacLise, John Cale, and Tony Conrad in creating legendary environmental installations featuring electronic drone sounds in a loft in downtown Manhattan. Up-and-coming artists such as Rainer Fetting, Martin Kippenberger, Salomé, and Luciano Castelli in Berlin, Throbbing Gristle in London, and Barbara Ess in New York picked up electric guitars and made music with the same three analogue chords that were being strummed by their counterparts in punk rock bands. James Nares, Eric Mitchell, and others on Manhattan's Lower East Side created sound events and collaborated on soundtracks for one another's experimental films. Many artists, following the lead of John Cage and David Tudor, took to fashioning homemade electronic circuits, often for live events.² Others, such as Joan Jonas, Terry Fox, Charlemagne Palestine, Luigi Ontani, and Gilbert & George, used sound as a central component of their performance work.

Not only in New York, but also in cities such as Stockholm, London, Milan, Kobe, and

Melbourne, art centers known as "alternative spaces" were emerging and supporting the evolving sonic arts.³ These organizations, some of them short-lived, welcomed artists visiting from abroad and gave them opportunities to try out new forms. Critics were welcomed as well, to discuss the connections between art, music, and sound.

Alternative spaces jumped in where museums feared to tread. A prime example is the Kitchen, which, since opening in Manhattan's SoHo in the early 1970s (it has since moved to Chelsea), has presented visual art, dance, and experimental music, often in combination. Back then, the term "experimental" was much used and applied to diverse forms of artistic experimentation, from Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète* in 1950s France⁴ to works by sound-oriented intermedia artists of the 1960s, including VALIE EXPORT in Vienna, Carolee Schneemann in New York, and Nalini Malani in Bombay.

Significant early milestones signaled sound art's coming of age. René Block, as director of the DAAD in the 1970s, championed sound as an art form by granting residencies in Berlin to a dozen or so practitioners.⁵ Block's colossal 1980 exhibition *Für Augen und Ohren. Von der Spieluhr zum akustischen Environment. Objekte. Installationen. Performances* (For eyes and ears: from the music box to the acoustic environment. Objects,

performances) at the Akademie der Künste in Berlin traced the art form from its glimmerings in automatic instruments of the sixteenth century to Dada and Futurism of the early twentieth century, and also made connections to the Fluxus circle.⁶ By that time, Germano Celant's 1973 exhibition *The Record as Artwork. 1959–73* had identified the LP as a vital, collectable art form.⁷ Change was afoot. Whereas twenty-one sound exhibitions were held in museums worldwide in the 1970s, in the 1980s there were sixty-two.⁸



Laurie Anderson. *O Superman*. 1983. Music video, 8 min. 23 sec. The Museum of Modern Art. Gift of Warner Bros. Records

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Artists' engagement with technology opened new possibilities for sound art and expanded its audience. Christina Kubisch mastered techniques of magnetic induction to realize her sound and light installations,⁹ and Bill Viola, Joan Jonas, and Brian Eno finely tuned their respective video

installations by using state-of-the-art loudspeakers that enabled them to place as much emphasis on sound as on image. Laurie Anderson employed vocoders, pillow speakers, harmonizers, and homespun special effects to shift between personas in live performances and in her 1983 music video *O Superman*. Around the same time, turntablist Christian Marclay was working at the intersection of the aural and the visual, sampling and appropriating in the manner of a DJ. In alternative spaces he soloed with patchwork records made of fragments he glued together and played loudly on his phonoguitar. He strutted and pumped up the volume, paying homage to Jimi Hendrix in his 1985 performance *Ghost (I Don't Live Today)*. Twenty years later, desktop video allowed him to compose with sound and visual material simultaneously, and to produce the precise edits and sound transitions that characterize his remarkable recent works *Video Quartet* (2002) and *The Clock* (2010).

Small alternative spaces still thrive largely in the low-rent peripheries of cities, where they continue the cycle of showcasing emerging sonic practices and generating discussion about them.¹⁰ At this topsy-turvy moment of brisk technological change, innovation manifests itself in myriad ways. Young artists with an interest in sound are as likely to study computer programming and music composition as painting, sculpture, and media art. Well versed in technology and in command of their digital productions, they are, like most members of their generation, comfortable watching feature films on smart phone screens and generating their own personalized sound tracks. However, they are much more than mere consumers of images and sounds. They consider the choosing of what they look

at and listen to, and may upload for their friends, as part of the process of deciphering the threads connecting them to a world that is growing more accessible every day. Artists' ever-expanding tool kits now include digital matter that is proliferating "in the cloud."

Today, museums are fully adept at incorporating video and media installations, and by extension, sound art, into their contemporary programming. Many have specialized audio/visual crews on staff to install and maintain collection and exhibition equipment. This expansion of the range of art shown by museums occurred in the early 1990s, when projectors and personal computers became more affordable and user-friendly. As commercial art galleries embraced media art and developed marketing strategies for it, museums hired media conservators to safeguard and preserve it for the future.¹¹ This practical step, along with the burgeoning of interdisciplinary art practices, contributed to what is now a widespread acceptance of time-based media installation as a collectable art form. As media and performance have become the default modes for many artists, sound has moved up through the ranks to be recognized and exhibited as an art form in its own right.

The work brought together in this exhibition reflects the strength of a dynamic and diversified area of contemporary practice. Some of the pieces convey sound visually. They spark in the mind's ear what is sometimes referred to as non-cochlear sound, a seemingly paradoxical term that recalls Marcel Duchamp's notion of non-retinal art.¹² In an exemplary evocation of seen sound, Marco Fusinato has produced five abstract drawings based on an orchestral score. On each



Christian Marclay. *The Clock*. 2010. Single-channel video, 24 hours

page, a straight line connects every individual note to a central spot, creating a focal point of immense weight and intensity. If Fusinato's piece were ever performed, the orchestra would produce the most explosive five notes ever heard.

A more traditional rendering of a score is heard in a work by Susan Philipz. Her installation draws upon a symphony that was composed in a concentration camp in Nazi Germany in 1943. Whereas the original score was written for twenty-four instruments, in the performance orchestrated by Philipz, there are just two, a cello and a viola, playing their intermittent parts in a work now haunted by silences.

Field recording, a branch of sound art also known as acoustic photography and phonography,¹³ is used to capture a sense of space and place, and in doing so, it often reveals that silences are anything but empty. Jacob Kirkegaard's single-channel audio-visual projection depicts, in four sequential segments, four deserted rooms at the abandoned site of Chernobyl, in Ukraine. The sonic atmosphere of each room, punctuated by barely audible sound events—a drip, a creak—was recorded, then played back and re-recorded repeatedly on location. With the addition of

each sonic layer, the recording gained in mass and volume, as if to broadcast the terrifying message of nuclear disaster.

The works of several artists in *Soundings* are based on sound-producing devices that have been altered. Camille Norment removed the interior mechanism from an old-fashioned standing microphone and replaced it with a pulsating light that eerily invokes the shades and voices of celebrated performers of the past. Richard Garey converts a worn-out record player into a stage for another antique—a shiny glass marble. Together, the obsolescent device and vintage child's toy perform a touching drama that gives rise to sounds rarely if ever fully attended to.

Soundings is the realization of a longstanding commitment to bring sound works by artists into the Museum. It began in 1979 with *Sound Art*,



Jacob Kirkegaard. *AION*. 2006. Photograph, Lambda print on dibond, 11 7/8 × 15 3/4" (30 × 40 cm)

an exhibition of works by three artists that was held in a tiny video gallery.¹⁴ Due to the small size of the space, the works were shown one at a time, in rotation, for a couple of weeks each. The impetus for the exhibition came from the artists, who, with their countercultural convictions, were committed to working in a medium that went against the grain. Sonic work then had a candor, a do-it-yourself sense of experimentation. It broke new ground, pushing the capabilities of institutions willing to exhibit it and the sensory thresholds and understanding of audiences who were curious to experience it.

Within contemporary art, the energy of the counterculture has dissipated, and sound is no longer marginalized as a medium. Nevertheless, artists are more than ever drawn to it, perhaps because it is still so full of potential, and not yet quite defined. Today the art of sound questions how and what we hear, and what we make of it.

Luke Fowler and Toshiya Tsunoda
Ridges on the Horizontal Plane. 2011. Sound installation with 16-mm film, slides, piano wire, and projection screen. Collection the artists and Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne

Artists with strong individual practices, Luke Fowler and Toshiya Tsunoda both studied visual art and are involved in music production and performance. Fowler is best known for his film portraits of social radicals such as Cornelius Cardew, the avant-garde composer and political activist, and the Scottish psychiatrist R. D. Laing. The mood and form of each of his films reflect the character of the subject. Tsunoda, a widely respected

composer of experimental music, is also acclaimed for his field recordings.

As a duo, Fowler and Tsunoda explore the relationship between seeing and hearing. They first collaborated on *Composition for Flutter Screen*, a film-sound installation commissioned by the 2008 Yokohama Triennial.¹⁵ In this work, images of natural elements including water and fire are seen on a projection screen, across which a taught vibrating wire pulsates. An electric fan aimed at the loose cloth screen causes it to move, bringing it into contact with the resounding wires and distorting the projected images.

Ridges on the Horizontal Plane expands upon the earlier work by adding an element of doubling. Still and moving images are projected onto either side of a cloth projection screen, which is agitated by air currents produced by two oscillating fans. Two amplified piano wires stretch horizontally across either side of the cloth, bisecting the images. The tones made by the vibrating wires change in response to the shifting airflows and intermittent contact with the billowing screen. The moving images, shot in 16-mm film, depict signs of natural and man-made movement. The still images, projected from large-format color slides and in smaller scale, show semitransparent windows and reflective surfaces.

Ridges has roots in structuralist film and in the legacies of expanded cinema. Its unsynchronized audio and visual elements and their seemingly random connections link to the strategies of chance first explored by John Cage and others. The artists see the horizontal division of the screen by the wire as a horizon line framing the landscape of images.

Marco Fusinato
Mass Black Implosion (Shaar, Iannis Xenakis). 2012. Five-part drawing. Collection the artist and Anna Schwartz Gallery, Melbourne

Marco Fusinato explores the rhetoric of radicalism as practiced in the arts and in politics. In art school, he was more interested in ideas than in process and was drawn to the work of the Futurists, Marcel Duchamp, John Cage and artists associated with Fluxus, artists who “crossed over,” as he puts it, between disciplines. He became interested in the searching work of avant-garde composers and pondered the connections between contemporary music and Conceptual art.

Fusinato played guitar as a noise instrument in underground clubs, employing a panoply of electronics in his guitar work to achieve masses of sound comparable to the forceful clusters in the works of Iannis Xenakis. He immersed himself in Xenakis’s writings and recordings and bought one of the composer’s early scores. This document would become the starting point of Fusinato’s *Mass Black Implosion* series, which over the last ten years has come to include works by many other twentieth-century composers.



Marco Fusinato. 2012. Performance at Funhouse, 30th São Paulo Bienal, Brazil. 2012

The exhibited work, *Mass Black Implosion (Shaar, Iannis Xenakis)*, consists of a drawing in five parts based on Xenakis’s *Shaar*, a piece from 1983. Working on reproductions of five pages from the score, Fusinato selected a central point on each sheet to which he drew a straight line from every note on the page. His project proposes a new piece of music in which all the notes are to be played at once. The resulting images strike the eye as violent blasts, great compressions that thunder in the mind’s ear as the music implodes into noise.

Richard Garett
Before Me. 2012. Turntable, microphone, pair of speakers, clear glass marble. Collection the artist and Julian Navarro Projects, New York

Sound is the driving force in Richard Garett’s installations, moving images, and performances. Garett served as a teaching assistant to the painter Larry Poons and later was a student of the artist and composer Maryanne Amacher (see text by Anne Hilde Neset, p. 18) at Bard College. He was captivated by Amacher’s undocumented installations and performances, which were intended to be experienced exclusively at first-hand. From Larry Poons, Garett learned that highly unorthodox ideas could be central to an artist’s work.

Garett’s abstract digital works, which he calls sonic constructions, combine algorithmic and analogue systems and are usually presented as projections or on computer screens. Garett also creates live audiovisual performances, which are closely related to these works, while sitting at a laptop.

Garett’s *Before Me* is a sonic construction with tangible form. The work consists of an



Richard Garett. *Light Motion and Radio Disturbances*. 2011. Performance at SFMOMA, San Francisco, California, 2011

old LP record player with an upside-down platter revolving at 33 ½ rpm. A clear glass marble placed at the upturned edge of the platter’s smooth metallic surface advances slightly before rolling back to its starting point. This action is repeated again and again, ad infinitum. The scraping sound of glass against metal—the sound of the marble’s sisyphian ordeal—is picked up by a microphone and amplified by a speaker standing on the floor. Unlike the maddening stutter of a scratched LP, the sight and sound of the marble’s endless to and fro elicit sympathy and wishes for its speedy deliverance.

Florian Hecker
Affordance. 2013. 3-channel electroacoustic sound. Collection the artist

Florian Hecker studied computational linguistics and psycholinguistics at Ludwig Maximilian University, Munich, before receiving a degree in fine arts at the Akademie der Bildenden Künste in Vienna. He is the creator of electroacoustic performances and sound installations and publishes writings on his own and others’ work.

In his installation *Chimerization*, which premiered at Documenta 13 in 2012,

three sound streams could be perceived individually and also together as a unit, in the manner of the chimera of Greek mythology, a monster composed of three distinct animal parts. Based on a libretto by the philosopher Reza Negarestani, the sound streams of *Chimerization* were spoken in English, Farsi, and German by readers whose voices could be heard to merge and separate.

Threefold sound challenges and complicates what Hecker calls our “bifurcated” listening. In *Affordance*, he explores this three-stream idea further. Sounds coming from three speakers are molded to the space of the installation as one would mold a malleable, visible material.

Christine Sun Kim
All Day. 2012. Marker, pastel, and charcoal on paper, 38 ½ × 50”
Pianoiss . . . issmo (Worse Finish). 2012. Pastel and pencil on paper, 38 ½ × 50”
Feedback Aftermath. 2012. Marker and charcoal on paper, 38 ½ × 50”
All Night. 2012. Pastel, pencil, and charcoal on paper, 38 ½ × 50”. Collection the artist

Born deaf, Christine Sun Kim explores the materiality

of sound in spirited work that connects sound to drawing, painting, and performance. She created “seismic calligraphy” drawings in 2008 by resting paint-dipped brushes on canvases that were placed horizontally on a pulsating subwoofer. The brushes’ movement generated non-cochlear sound paintings. Sun Kim has also worked with piano wires, transducers, helium balloons, and a microphone. At nineteen she was introduced to Walter Ruttmann’s *Wochenende*, an imageless film of sound from 1930, and the experimental sound compositions of composer/theorist Pierre Schaeffer (see text by Anne Hilde Neset, p. 17). Both bodies of work expanded his horizons and lay the foundations for his artistic practice.

After receiving an M.F.A. from the Academy of Media Arts in Cologne in 2006, he began experimenting with sophisticated recording tools. Today he uses accelerometers, hydrophones, and home-built electromagnetic receivers to capture wondrous dimensions of the world around him. He has recorded the singing sands of the Oman desert, sounds that emanate from the inner ear, and unspoken but audible communications that take place in social interactions.

AION is a sound and video portrait of four spaces inside the exclusion area surrounding the Chernobyl nuclear power plant site, which was evacuated immediately after disaster struck there in 1986. Kirkegaard placed recording equipment in four forsaken spaces—a moldy swimming pool, a rubble-strewn concert hall, a grimy gymnasium, and a quaint church.

He captured the “voices” of these enclosures by setting up a microphone, recording deck and loudspeaker in each location. Then he hit the record button and went away. Returning, he stopped the recording, played it back, and recorded the playback in the same location. The process was repeated several times, so that the eerie quiet of the spaces thickened and was amplified until it became a deep, intensely resonating roar.¹⁶ Kirkegaard matched the visual depictions to his acoustical method, creating multiple layers of

Jacob Kirkegaard
AION. 2006. Single-channel sound and video installation. Collection the artist

Kirkegaard has been recording the sounds around him since the age of six, when he was given a reel-to-reel tape recorder

images of each space. The title comes from ancient Greek $\alpha\omega\upsilon\upsilon$, which means time without end, and to most is beyond belief.

Haroon Mirza

Sick. 2011.

LEDs, amplifier, speakers, video, monitor, strobe, electronic circuits, and gold nugget
Collection Dillon Cohen, New York

Haroon Mirza received an M.A. in fine art from Chelsea College of Art and Design and an M.A. in design and critical practice from Goldsmiths College, both in London. His works are assemblages of electronic gadgets, faders, and controllers that he has tinkered with and used to alter appropriated videotapes, outdated TVs, and old furniture. The glue in his work is sound.

Sick is shiny and black, and it pulsates. It was first seen in 2011 at the 54th Venice Biennale, where Mirza received the Silver Lion Award for most promising young artist. The installation brings together disparate elements. A 9.5-gram lump of pure gold—equivalent in weight to a £1 coin—bounces on top of a small speaker emitting pulsating sounds that resemble those of an electronic drum. On the floor, small blue LEDs flash in unison. Also floor-bound, and half hidden under what looks like an improvised enclosure, a liquid crystal display screen extracted from a television flashes in conjunction with bursts of video images of an angry demonstration outside an upmarket department store in central London. The protesters were condemning tax avoidance by wealthy corporations at a time when the government was cutting back social services. The crowd's vehemence matches Mirza's synchronization of pulsating sound and light.

The word "sick" in the title has in recent years acquired

a slang usage that inverts the word's usual meaning to its opposite: "sick" is "cool." Except that it isn't cool to say what you really mean, and so the inverted meaning doubles back on itself, and "sick" reverts to its conventional meaning. Originally conceived as a sound-track to David Goldblatt's photographic portraits of South Africans who had been absolved of heinous crimes after confessing them to their country's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, *Sick* stands on its own as an indictment of rapacious commercial interests and their government allies, and it targets everyone within earshot.

Carsten Nicolai

Wellenwanne Ifo. 2012.

Aluminum tray, wood, CD player, CD amplifier, speakers, mirror, screen, water
Collection the artist and Galerie EIGEN + ART, Berlin

Carsten Nicolai is a visual artist, musician, architect, and the author, most famously, of *Grid Index*, a seminal work on the mathematics of grids and visual patterns. As a member of the bands Signal (with Frank Bretschneider and Olaf Bender) and Cyclo (with Ryoji Ikeda), he goes by the name of Alva Noto.

For many years Nicolai's visual practice has been shaped by the principles of cymatics, a branch of science concerned with modal phenomena. In 2000 he investigated the relationship between order and disorder in *Milch* (Milk) by pulsing barely audible sound waves into a small pool of milk, thus generating undulating patterns on the milk's surface. The patterns changed according to the frequency of the acoustic signals and were captured in a series of photographs. The images are exacting and reveal the elegance of complex systems.

In *Wellenwanne Ifo*, low-frequency sound waves transmitted onto the surface of a pool of water create waves of concentric circles that generate interference patterns. The patterns change depending on the sound frequencies that produce them. Reflected by a mirror onto a large display screen, they serve as a scientific visualization of the properties of sound and as a subject of meditation on the principles of order and chaos.

Camille Norment

Triplight. 2008.

Microphone cage, stand, light, electronics
Collection the artist

Camille Norment studied comparative literature and art history at the University of Michigan before receiving an M.F.A. and then an M.A. from the Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University and participating as a fellow in the Whitney Independent Study Program (ISP). She plays glass harmonica in an ensemble that includes the Norwegian *hardingfele* (Hardanger fiddle) and electric guitar. Her sonic installations create poetic spaces in which visitors are both performers and witnesses.

A standing microphone resembling one that Billie Holiday or Elvis Presley might have used conjures long-ago performers pouring themselves into their songs. Yet the 1955 Shure microphone Camille Norment adapted for her sculpture *Triplight* stands alone and silent. Its original internal mechanism has been removed, replaced by an erratically flickering light. Illuminated from within, the microphone's grill casts a large, specter-like silhouette over an adjacent wall. The ghostly form resembles a rib cage, and the pulsing light, a heartbeat.

Norment's work often brings to mind the uncanny. Cultural memories are condensed into physical, spatial, and temporal experiences that have the hallucinatory qualities of psychological atmospheres. In *Triplight*, singer and sound are ghosts, but both are present. The listener is the medium that draws out substance from that which is not there.

Tristan Perich

Microtonal Wall. 2011.

1,500 1-bit speakers and microprocessors, aluminum
Collection the artist and Bitforms Gallery, New York

Tristan Perich studied math, computer science, and music composition as an undergraduate at Columbia University and received an M.A. from the Interactive Telecommunications Program at New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. In 2004 he released *1-Bit Music*, an electronic circuit carefully arranged in a CD case with a headphone jack on its spine. Using rudimentary hand-programmed electronics, he made the forty-minute music composition as a means of investigating the foundations of digital sound.

Math, physics and computer code are the main building blocks and aesthetic inspiration for Perich's music and his installation work. *Microtonal Wall* is equal parts analytical, in its deconstruction of electronic music, and sensorial, in the physical experience it offers. The work consists of 1,500 tiny speakers, each with a 1-bit processor emitting a different microtonal frequency. The speakers are arranged in a grid, with low-pitched sounds on the left graduating to high-pitched on the right, and are mounted on a twenty-five-foot-long panel. What one hears depends upon where one stands

in relation to the piece, which spans four octaves. Up close, distinct tones from individual speakers can be detected; at a short distance from the center, the sounds blend into a uniform mass; and as listeners proceed from one end of the piece to the other, they progress through different tonal fields, each eliciting its own range of psychic and emotional responses.

In the tradition of Minimalism, which in the 1970s pared down form to the bare yet not-so-simple basics, Perich arranged the humblest of digital building blocks to create a contemporary composition of depth and complexity.

Susan Philipsz

Study for Strings. 2012.

8-channel sound installation
Collection the artist and Tanya Bonakdar, New York

After studying sculpture in art school, Susan Philipsz became the only artist to have won Britain's Turner Prize (in 2010) for a work composed of sound alone. She is known for creating evocative sound interventions using recordings of her own a capella singing of traditional folk songs—lullabies and love songs about

sailors gone to sea. Transmitted through public address systems in places such as supermarkets, the undersides of city bridges, and on weekends in deserted financial districts, the songs and their delivery have a jarring and moving intimacy as they address memory and desire.

Study for Strings, which was commissioned by Documenta 13, is based on a twenty-four string orchestral work by Pavel Haas, a student of Czech composer Leoš Janáček. Haas wrote the composition in 1943 while interned at the Theresienstadt concentration camp, and the completed work was performed there, once, by incarcerated musicians. (A film of the performance was used as Nazi propaganda.) Soon after, the composer and many of the musicians were sent to Auschwitz-Birkenau and killed. The conductor, Karel Ancerl, survived and reassembled the orchestral parts after the war.

Philipsz evokes the pathos of the original performance of *Study for Strings* as well as the horror that followed. The entire score is performed by just two musicians, who play only their parts in the orchestral work. It is as if they are engaged in a serious conversation that unfolds slowly, full of pauses,



Sergei Tcherepnin. *Pied Piper, Part 1*. 2012.

Mixed media sound installation. Installation view at Audio Visual Arts, New York, 2012



Stephen Vitiello. *Women's Chorus (Image One)*. 2003.

Field photograph. Watoriki Village, Amazon, Brazil

each waiting politely for the other to complete a thought. The silences resound with absent music and conjure memories of the dead.

Sergei Tcherepnin

Motor-Matter Bench. 2013.

Wood bench with amplifier and transducers
Collection the artist and Murray Guy, New York

Sergei Tcherepnin is a member of the fourth generation of musicians and composers descended from Nikolai Tcherepnin (1873–1945), who studied with Rimsky-Korsakov and conducted Diaghilev's Ballets Russes. The young Tcherepnin trained as a composer and wrote instrumental music into his early twenties, when he started delving into electronic music, acoustics, the physiology of the ear, and the ways in which sound can affect the brain. In his studies at Bard College with Maryanne Amacher and the sound engineer Bob Bielecki, he became interested in psychoacoustics and the physicality of sound.

Tcherepnin's performances, compositions, and spatial arrangements, made with the simplest of materials, turn sound into material. His temporary architectural interventions,

in which the sonic and the haptic intertwine, have a droll touch.

Motor-Matter Bench features a vintage New York subway platform bench situated in a busy area of the Museum. Using an analogue synthesizer and onsite recordings, Tcherepnin composed a synthetic version of melodies and rhythms embedded within the space itself. Recharge pulses from transducers mounted on the underside of the bench send the composition, via bone conduction, through the bodies of people seated there. The sound coming from within them is audible to people standing nearby.

Stephen Vitiello

A Bell for Every Minute. 2010.

5-channel sound installation with aluminum sound map
Collection the artist

Stephen Vitiello creates sound installations, performs live with electronic instruments, and has composed soundtracks for video artists such as Tony Oursler, Eder Santos, and Jem Cohen. He travels to remote places rich in unusual sounds and on location uses professional as well as homemade recording devices to capture sound that he subsequently integrates into his work.



Hong-Kai Wang. *Music While We Work*. 2011.
Multichannel sound and 2-channel video installation

In 2003, he lived among the Yanomami in Brazil and learned how Yanomami shamans use birdsongs and the sounds of insects to predict future events. The shamans' method, called "heã," of interpreting the voice and language of the forest underlay Vitiello's installation at the Cartier Foundation, *Yanomami: Spirit of the Forest*, in 2003.

When Vitiello became Associate Professor of Kinetic Imaging at Virginia Commonwealth University in 2004, he learned about an old-growth forest where some of the largest cypress and tupelo trees in Virginia still stand. Entering the area by canoe, he paddled along the Nottoway River, where he captured the calls of owls in the forest.

During a six-month residency in 1999, Vitiello occupied a studio on the ninety-first floor of the World Trade Center, where he recorded the creaking noises the building made as it swayed in the wind. Placing contact microphones on the permanently closed windows, he captured sounds of the world outside—the buzz of airplanes, helicopters, and boats in the harbor, and on Sunday mornings, church bells. The resulting

work, *Inside Out*, emphasizes how much information about our environment comes through the sounds we hear.

A Bell for Every Minute, commissioned by Creative Time, Friends of the High Line, and the New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, is broadcast through speakers installed in the Museum's outdoor Sculpture Garden. Every minute, the sound of a different bell is heard, and on the hour all the bells chime together. Recorded in New York City, the sounds include diner bells, the New York Stock Exchange bell, the United Nation's Peace Bell, bike bells, bells on cat collars, and alarm bells. An accompanying map locates each bell's position within the city. Each bell tone within Vitiello's composition has a clarity that cuts through the blur of urban sound that penetrates the walls of the Museum's garden.

Hong-Kai Wang
Music While We Work. 2011.
Multichannel sound and
2-channel video installation
Collection the artist

Hong-Kai Wang pursued art
and politics at the National

Taiwan University before receiving an M.A. in Media Studies at the New School in New York. She works with sound as a means of investigating social relationships, seeking ways to explore the construction of social space in everyday life.

Wang made *Music While We Work* for the Taiwan Pavilion at the 54th Venice Biennale. She chose as a collaborator the political activist and composer Chen Bo-Wei, a founding member of Black Hand Nakasi Workers' Band, which since 1996 has been facilitating the active involvement of social minorities in cultural productions and political activism.

Wang assembled a group of retired workers from a sugar refinery in the small industrial town of her childhood, where her own family's life had revolved around the same factory. After attending workshops in listening and recording led by Bo-Wei, the retirees and their spouses—there were nine participants in all, many of them friends—returned to the factory to document the sounds of the environment they knew so well. Wang asked them to "paint a world composed by your listening," and together



Jana Winderen. Untitled performance at SuperDeluxe, Tokyo. 2008

they created a soundscape of a very particular place, with its own particular language. The editing, like the recording, of the sound was a collective effort by the workers, assisted by the artist. The sound is paired with video in a work that is a tribute to its makers' intelligence, sensitivity, and human warmth and a record of a certain way of life, and of acquired skills, that are fast disappearing.

Jana Winderen
Ultrafield. 2013.
16-channel ambisonic sound
installation. Surround sound
audio software and installation
consultancy by Tony Myatt,
Professor of Sound, University
of Surrey
Collection the artist

Jana Winderen studied mathematics, chemistry, and fish ecology in Oslo and went on to graduate in Fine Arts from Goldsmiths, University of London. Describing her work as "blind" field recording, she begins her compositional process in remote locations, where she chooses which sound, creature, or idea to follow, and

thus lays the foundations for a project.

Winderen uses sensitive microphones to collect sounds that are unfamiliar and sometimes inaudible to the human ear. Using hydrophones, she captures sounds from deep beneath the ocean's surface, then mixes the recordings into layered compositions that she uses in live performances and installations, on CD, cassette and vinyl records, and for film and radio. The results are uncanny sonic evocations of places as difficult for most of us to imagine as a crevasse in an underwater glacier. Revealing the complexity and strangeness of the natural world is central to her practice. Who knew that cod and shrimp use sound to communicate and select a mate, or that ants at work make a tremendous racket?

Recently, Winderen has been recording the sounds of bats in flight. In *Ultrafield*, listeners hear even more than the artist did as she was circled by bats flying among a stand of trees. Imperceptible to her at the time, the bats' ultrasonic echolocation calls have been rendered audible by slowing the recording to one-tenth of its normal speed. These clicking sounds have been combined in *Ultrafield* with the chirping stridulations of underwater insects and sounds made by fish to protect their habitats or to find a mate. The result is a composition echoing the activity of a fragile ecosystem revealed through sound.

1 See Anne Hilde Neset's essay on p. 16.
2 Cage's use of electronics began with his *Cartridge Music* (1960), *Music for Amplified Toy Pianos* (1960), *0'00"* (the 1962 companion piece to *4'33"*), and *Electronic Music for Piano* (1964). Tudor's performance installation *Rainforest I* was composed in 1968 for the choreographer Merce Cunningham. The fourth version of the piece, created in 1973, featured an electronic circuit that drove sounds

through discarded oil drums and box springs and had a cast of performers that included the artists John Driscoll, Phil Edelstein, and Bill Viola, who went on to form the still-active collaborative Composers Inside Electronics.

- 3 Experimental Intermedia and The Kitchen, in New York City; Fylkingen intermedia society (founded 1933), in Stockholm; Sonic Arts Network, now Sound and Music, in London; E/Static Gallery in Milan; XEBEC in Kobe; and Clifton Hill Community Music Center in Melbourne.
- 4 Carlos Palombini, "Machine Songs V: Pierre Schaeffer: From Research into Noises to Experimental Music," *Computer Music Journal*, MIT Press, Vol. 17, No. 3 (Autumn, 1993), pp. 14–19.
- 5 Since 1963, the DAAD (German Academic Exchange Service) has granted one-year residencies in Berlin to approximately one thousand artists. During René Block's directorship, recipients included sound artists Terry Fox, Arnold Dreyblat, Paul diMarinis, Gordon Monahan, Pauline Oliveros, John Driscoll, Marianne Amacher, David Moss, Shelley Hirsch, Alvin Lucier, and Alvin Curran.
- 6 *Für Augen und Ohren* established the notion of Klangkunst, which gradually developed as a field with its own theoretical discourse, largely in Germany. Klangkunst was the focus of *Sonambiente: Festival für Hören und Sehen*, an exhibition with film screenings and performances, held at the Akademie der Künste, Berlin, in 1996 and 2006.
- 7 The exhibition took place at the Royal College of Art, London.
- 8 Seth Cluett, "Loud Speaker: Towards a Component Theory of Media Sound," Ph.D. diss., Princeton University. (Ann Arbor: ProQuest/UMI, 2013), pp. 122–128.
- 9 A major figure among the first generation of sound artists, Kubisch (born 1948) trained as a composer before turning towards installation. Her experiments with acoustic space and the dimension of time are especially well known in Europe.
- 10 Singuhr sound gallery, Berlin, founded 1996 by Carsten Seiffarth; Five Beekman, New York, founded 1996 by Michael Schumacher and Liz Radke, was renamed Diapason in 2001; KHOJ, New Delhi, founded 1997; AVA, New York, founded 2008 by Justin Luke; Issue Project Room, Brooklyn, founded 2003 by Suzanne Fiol; Lydgalleriet (Soundgallery), Bergen, founded 2005, and Sound Fjord, London, founded 2010.
- 11 Often fully realized only when installed, time-based media works are complex constructions that pose new challenges for their custodians. The installation of these works requires new skills and new networks

of collaboration within museums. Current international standards for the handling, installation, and care of time-based media works can be found at http://www.moma.org/explore/collection/conservation/media_art

- 12 Seth Kim-Cohen, *In the Blink of an Ear: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art* (New York: Continuum International Publishing Group, Inc., 2009).
- 13 The term "phonography" was synonymous with "stenography" long before it was associated with sound recording in the 1990s. <http://www.phonography.org>
- 14 The exhibition included the work of Connie Beckley, Julia Heyward, and Maggie Payne. It was preceded by "Projects: Laurie Anderson, Handphone Table" in 1978 and was followed by Terry Fox's show *Room Temperature* in 1980.
- 15 They worked together again on part three of *A Grammar For Listening*, 2009, a film in which Fowler experimented with the relationship between looking and listening.
- 16 Kirkegaard was inspired by Alvin Lucier's work *I am Sitting in a Room* (1969), in which Lucier recorded himself narrating a text that began "I am sitting in a room, different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice..." He played that recording in the room and rerecorded it, repeating the process until his words were unrecognizable, overwhelmed by the ambient tones and harmonies within the room.

Plates

In the short texts that follow, the artists in *Soundings* discuss their work. Each was sent this set of prompts, which they were free to interpret, reroute, or discard as they saw fit.

What led you to make work with or about sound?

What is your (or your work's) relationship to the politics or ethics of listening?

Describe your relationship to your material or medium.

How would you describe your relationship to the material and sonic realities of contemporary culture?

What is your relationship to silence and/or to the inaudible?

How would you describe the relationship between sound and social space?

LUKE FOWLER & TOSHIYA TSUNODA

Luke Fowler

As far back as I can remember, I have been interested in music. My neighbor's father was in a band and encouraged us to play with whatever was at hand. In the early 1990s, my friends and I were excited about hip hop, dub, Dance and Electronic music, as well as heavy metal. We relied upon the WEM Copycat—a tape echo unit—to give depth to cheap Yamaha keyboards. It stripped back the need for complex, virtuosic playing. Then came PCs, Cakewalk, and all things midi. My first synthesizer had a dull user interface and a lifeless sound. In this time of primitive sequencers you'd spend hours staring at a piano roll, fixing minute velocity changes. Those early midi days made sampling possible, but sociability was compromised, both with each other and our instruments. It was a sterile and clinical means of producing.

In art school, I did a project called *The Social Engineer* (1999),

an installation that used dialogue as material. My mother is a sociologist, and her use of cassette recorders in interviews had an effect on my art. I have continued to use the interview as a tool in my research, though I'm acutely aware of its problematics as a mode of documentary representation. You can see this in my film *The Way Out* (2003), which is a portrait of DIY musician Xentos Jones. The film dances around the issue of respecting or destroying Jones's constructed identities. I can often tell when a film defers to its subject's desired depiction and when its form is unfettered by personal relations. In the second mode, the portrait is drawn with residue or evidence rather than testimony—objects, signs, and interpretations. My films have used both models.

In the 2000s, I became interested in using contact microphones to record the vibration of very small, otherwise inaudible sounds. In my

improvised tape loop duo *Lied Music* (2004), I worked with the instrument-maker Sarah Kenchington to create a group of bowed metal instruments to use in the studio and on tour. These instruments were inspired by Hugh Davies and Walter Ruttman's steel cello. They had a beautiful glacial palette but were compromised by their fragility. I began to phase out the use of tape loops and samplers in favor of using field recordings and found objects as both source and focus of my sound work. In dialogue with collaborators such as Toshiya Tsunoda, Jean-Luc Guionnet, and Richard Youngs, I have come to the conclusion that the impetus behind a work is a more significant and formative factor for me than considerations like expression, skill, texture, or other such musical values.

I found a quotation from the musician Taku Sugimoto which chimes with my thinking on matters of sound and listening:

I think that, though there are several kinds of music, we adopt the same way of listening to them all; Led Zeppelin, AMM, Bach, and Romanian folk music are all different. But I think the reason we appreciate the difference is that we listen to them in the same way. One of the aims of experimental music is to break this convention. It must be done (again and again) to dislocate this rigid way we adopt when listening to music. To make new sound is not experimental unless it opens a new way of listening.¹

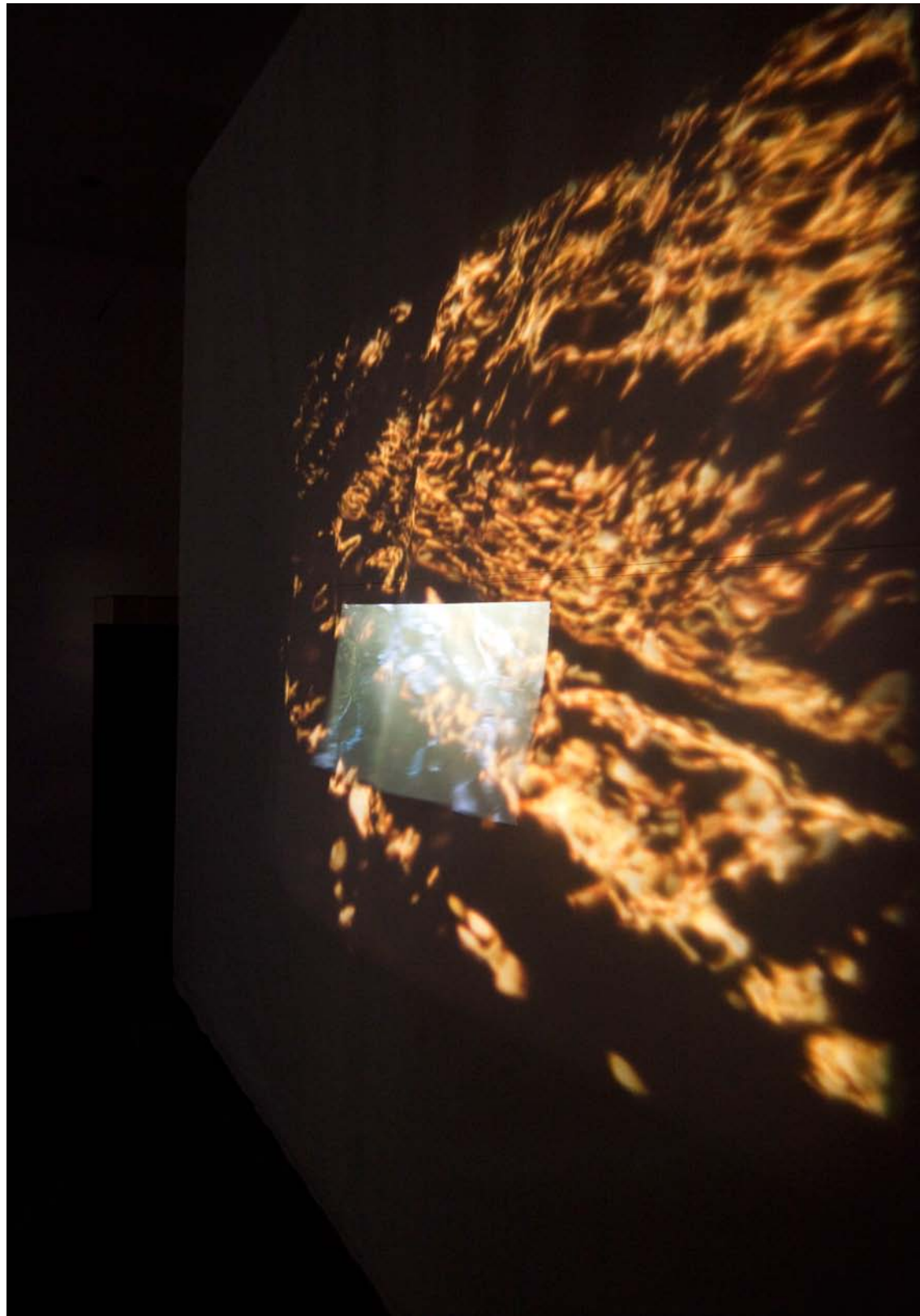
¹ Taku Sugimoto. *Musical Composition Series 2*. 2010. Two compact discs. Kid Ailack Enterprise, Japan.

Born 1978, Scotland
Born 1964, Japan

Lives and works in Glasgow
Lives and works in Yokohama



Luke Fowler and Toshiya Tsunoda. *Ridges on the Horizontal Plane*. 2011. 16-mm film, slides, piano wire, projection screen. Installation view at Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, 2011. Collection the artist and Galerie Gisela Capitain



Luke Fowler and Toshiya Tsunoda. *Ridges on the Horizontal Plane*, 2011. 16-mm film, slides, piano wire, projection screen. Installation view at Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, 2011. Collection the artist and Galerie Gisela Capitain

Toshiya Tsunoda
 A perceived environment does not necessarily relate to what is vibrated sonically. In field recording, the “environment” is often determined prior to the act of recording. I find this reality disturbing; preconceptions are difficult to overcome. For instance, in so-called soundscape field recordings, the sound of the river is usually a prescribed sound; it is as we expect it to be. In this type of work, sounds are often used as tools to create a musical whole. It is not my intention to create music. Rather, for me, field recording is like landscape painting. I see recording as a subjective thing, inseparable from the person making it. Much like landscape painting, where the artist sees a scene from a first-person point of view, documentation is not just

a hollow version of reality, but it is in itself a complete, autonomous entity that exists within its own space and time, and with its own role and implications in the world.

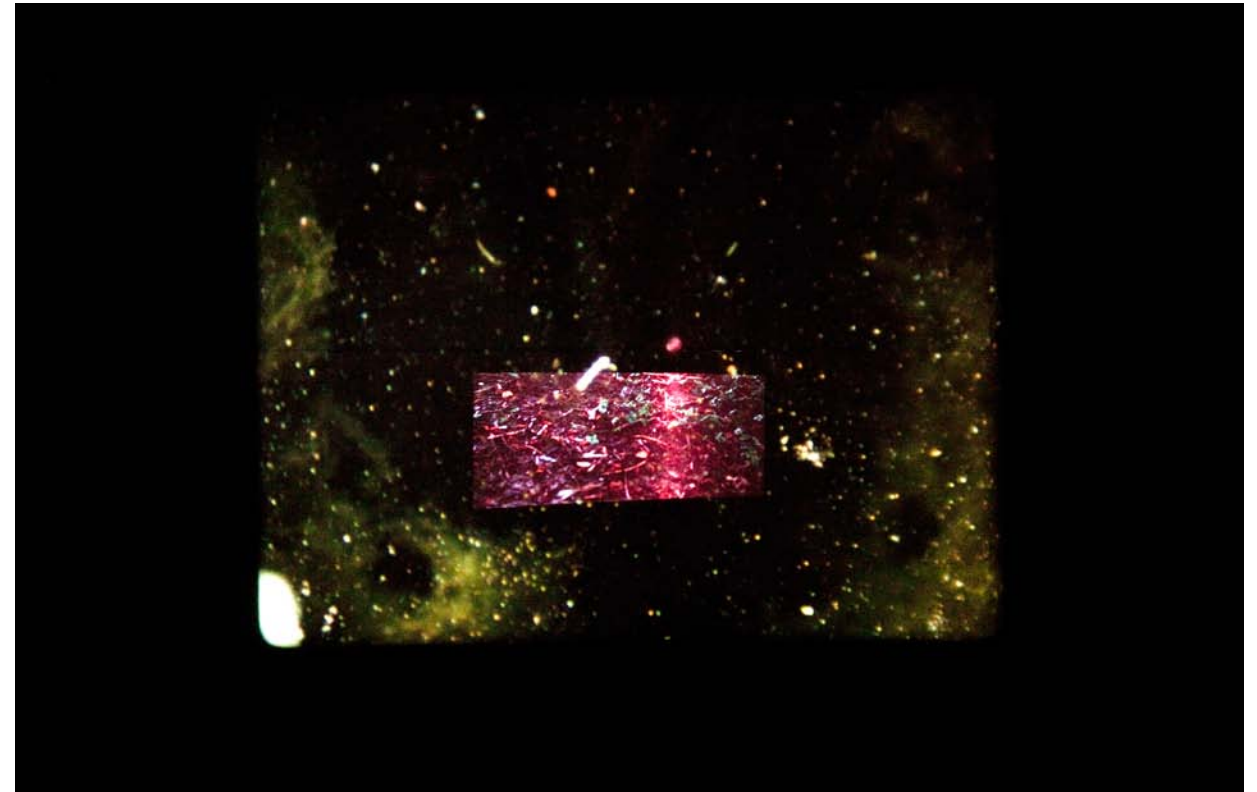
For instance, although footsteps are just grooves, physical impressions in the ground, we acknowledge them as independent matter, distinct from the ground in both concept and form. This is because we have the ability to recognize images and traces left by many factors colliding in a given space. To take a more auditory example: the sound of applause does not belong to either the left or the right hand; our concept of applause relies on an actual occurrence or interaction, a material and social object composed of hands, time, space, and, in this case, intention. Thus, I prefer to describe

my recordings as a trace of a particular collision, rather than a secondary documentation of reality.

Sound is largely influenced by the shape or conditions of the space in which it vibrates. Like the strange echo one hears by listening close to the opening of a glass bottle. I often use extremely small air microphones, as well as contact microphones, to record vibrations within tight spaces or inside objects. Vibrations that travel through solids behave in unique ways, but they are not altogether different from vibrations that travel through the air. A vibration can travel to the walls of a building that is a few hundred meters away from the source. Such behavior can make us aware of occurrences taking place in spaces otherwise unknown or unavailable to

us. In one instance, I recorded the vibration of a wire fence that divides the road from the sidewalk inside a small tunnel. After a car has driven by, its sonic presence lingers in the fence. Many factors lead to the existence and specificity of this vibration: the length and material of the fence, the velocity of the car, the size and structure of the tunnel, the temperature and humidity (i.e., season and weather). Furthermore, the people who dug the tunnel and the architects who designed it also play roles in creating this real-time phenomenon of vibration. All of this remains inaudible unless we place our ears, or recording devices, directly on the fence. I’m interested in making phenomena and landscapes like this one heard.

Translation by Yasuko Elisson



Luke Fowler and Toshiya Tsunoda. *Ridges on the Horizontal Plane*, 2011. 16-mm film, slides, piano wire, projection screen. Installation view at Galerie Gisela Capitain, Cologne, 2011. Collection the artist and Galerie Gisela Capitain

MARCO FUSINATO



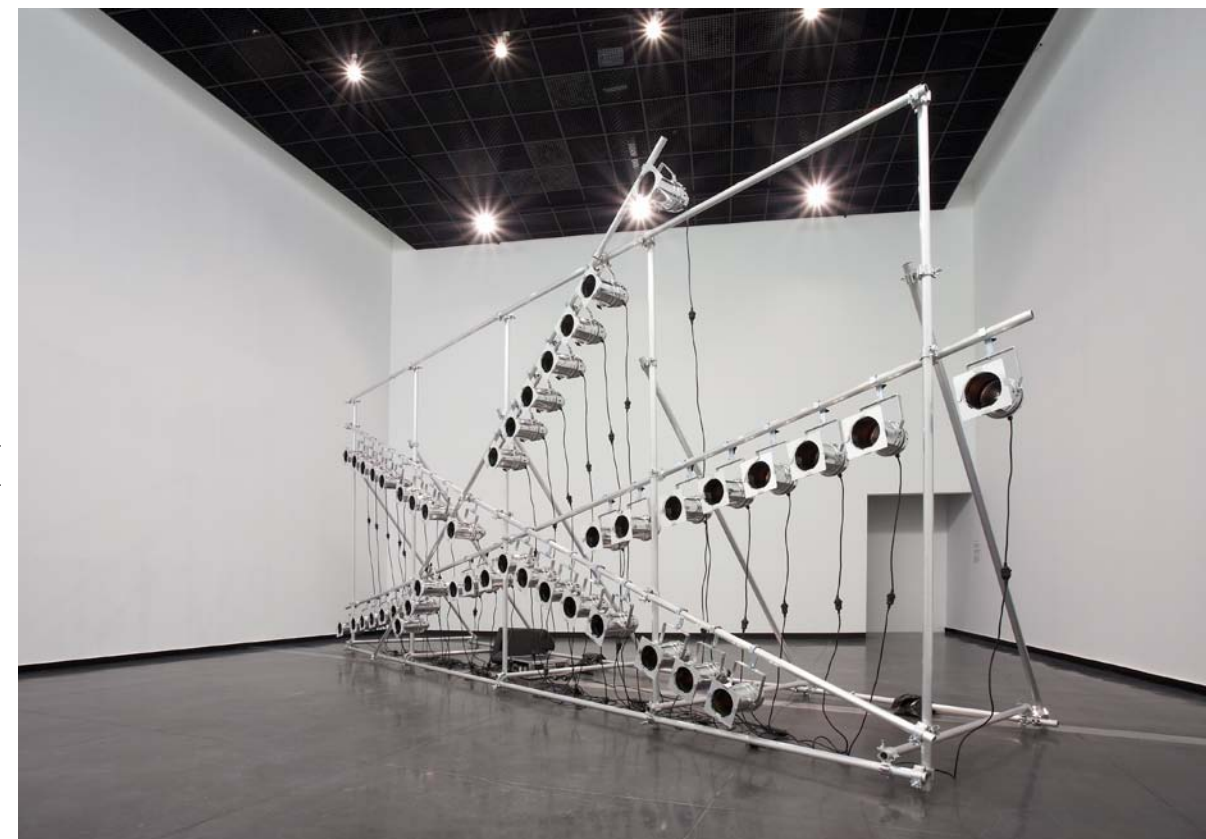
Marco Fusinato. *Double Infruitive 2*. 2009.
White UV halftone ink on black aluminium. 98 1/4 x 24 1/2 (250 x 625 cm).
Private collection, Hobart

I've had a long-term interest in noise as music. On one hand, I'm drawn to its purity, and on the other, its ability to contaminate. In various ways, noise permeates many of my projects. In gallery contexts, some of my works relate to noise metaphorically, and others more literally. In terms of the former category,

in the series *Noise & Capitalism* (2010), for instance, I enlarged a collection of twenty-first century insurrectionary leftist pamphlets and then superimposed certain pages on top of others. The result is an illegible morass of text and image. An ideological mess. And in the series *Double Infruitives* (2009),

I've taken print-media images of riots—of those decisive moments when a rioter brandishes a rock against a backdrop of fire—and enlarged them to heroic, history-painting scale using the latest commercial print technologies. Even though the images have been appropriated from a vast array of geographical

and historical moments, the series appears remarkably unified. In these works, one of the things I'm interested in is the way noise functions symbolically, or gesturally in this particular case. *Double Infruitives* presents actions of rage, violence, and chaos as tableaux of silence and distilled energy.



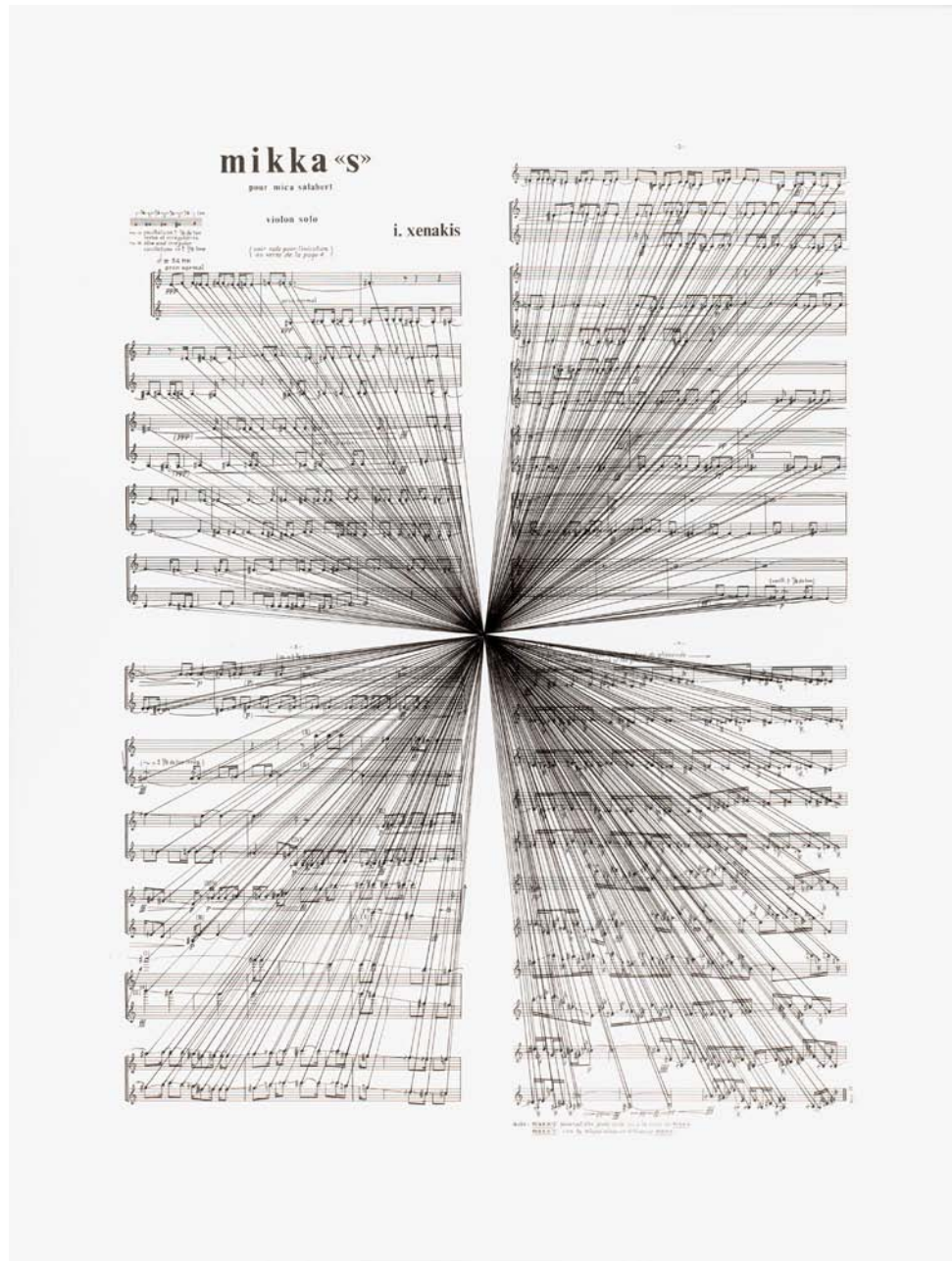
Marco Fusinato. *Aetheric Plexus*. 2009.
13,200 watts of white light, 105db white noise, alloy tubing, Par can 56 lights, double couplers, Lanbox LCM DMX controller, dimmer rack, DMX mp3 player, speaker, sensor, extension leads, shot bags.
Installation view at the Australian Centre of Contemporary Art, Melbourne, 2009

A third in the more metaphorical category, *THERE IS NO AUTHORITY* (2012) re-presents this message of self-determination, "THERE IS NO AUTHORITY BUT YOURSELF," on a huge wool rug fabricated by one of the world's finest rug makers. It is a scaled-up reproduction of a hand-painted black and

white backdrop that Crass (an anarcho-punk band) hung behind their stage. The rug reaches wall-to-wall across a third of the gallery space. The woven slogan faces the back wall, and viewers are thus forced to walk across the work, and then re-orient themselves spatially—by turning 180

degrees—to view the whole plane and discern what the rug spells out. No longer behind the stage, *THERE IS NO AUTHORITY* becomes focal point and foreground. The rug is not the entire work. Additionally, there is a monitor mounted on the wall, also facing the back of the gallery. It is connected to

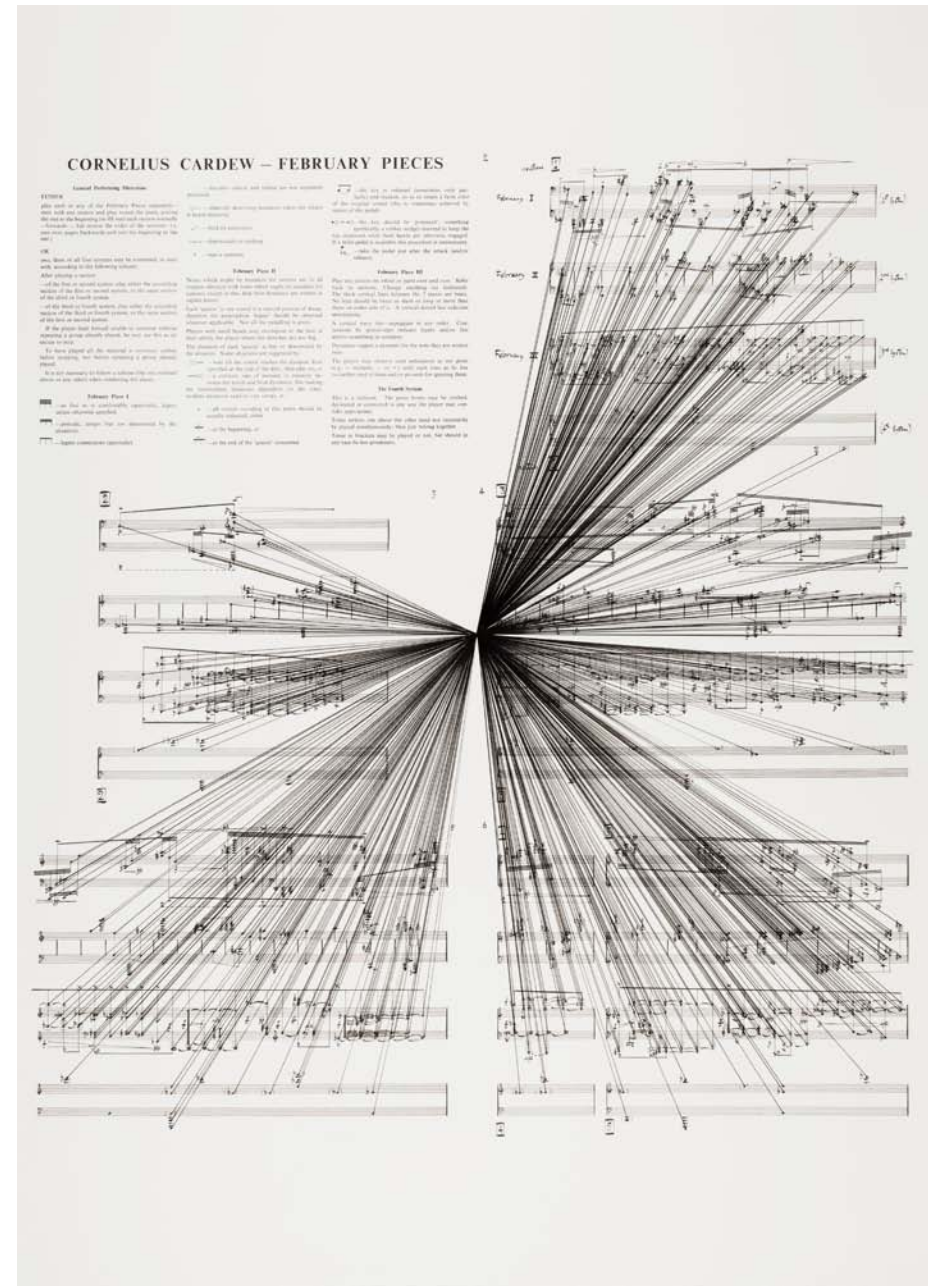
a camera in the rafters above, which is recording the surface of the rug. The camera sends this feed to the monitor with a short delay, increasing the likelihood that the viewers see their own image. In this way, the audience becomes a part of the work; they become implicit in the text.



Marco Fusinato, *Mass Black Implosion (Mikka S, Iannis Xenakis)*, 2012.
Ink on archival facsimile of score, 36 1/8 x 27 1/2" (93 x 70 cm) framed

Then there are some works for galleries that have audible noise content, at extreme volume. For example, *Aetheric Plexus* (2009) takes the equipment associated with contemporary spectacle (stage rigging, lighting and speakers—usually there to highlight the performer) and turns it

directly on the audience, in an assault of 13,000-plus watts of white light and 105 decibels of white noise. This is an unequivocal, overwhelming action. It assaults the audience—simultaneously crushing them into the corner of the gallery space and making them the spectacular object.



Marco Fusinato, *Mass Black Implosion (February Pieces, Cornelius Cardew)*, 2012.
Ink on archival facsimile of score, Part 1 of two parts, 26 1/8 x 23" (68 x 58.5 cm)

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