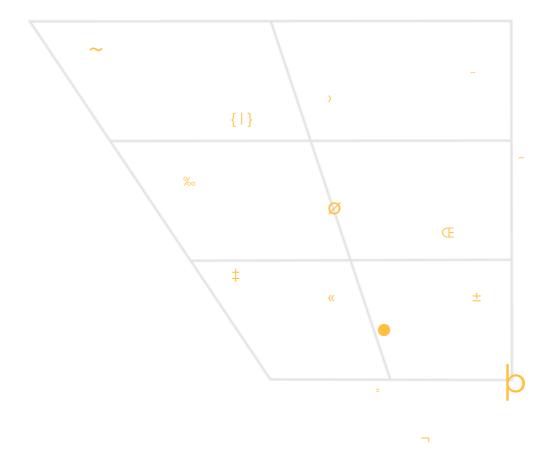
# listening together-apart

collaborations in matters of the sound-image







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#### **Abstract**

Listening together-apart is a practice-research project exploring collaborative approaches to the conceptual and actual composition of sound with moving images. Through a portfolio of compositions spanning film, installation, publication, performance, music and sonic arts this thesis explores the notion of the sound-image; an agential entanglement of sound, image, artist, audience, and the matters to which each sound-image speaks. Theories of non-hierarchical, non-binary relation in cultural studies, sound and filmmaking are explored through collaborative projects realised with artists and community groups, using the indeterminacy of *Open Works* as a site for creative investigation into these matters. This written commentary outlines the theoretical framework for this study and documents the practical and conceptual approaches to each work included in the portfolio.

### Acknowledgements

A research project into collaborative processes unsurprisingly owes a debt of thanks to a considerable cast of people.

I would like to thank Ross Birrell, Christoph Cox, Alexandra Ross and Nick Fells for their time and attention in supporting the development of this thesis as it has grown, and of course to Louise Harris, who has guided my research and practice throughout with care and consideration, who taught me to trust my ears and follow where they lead.

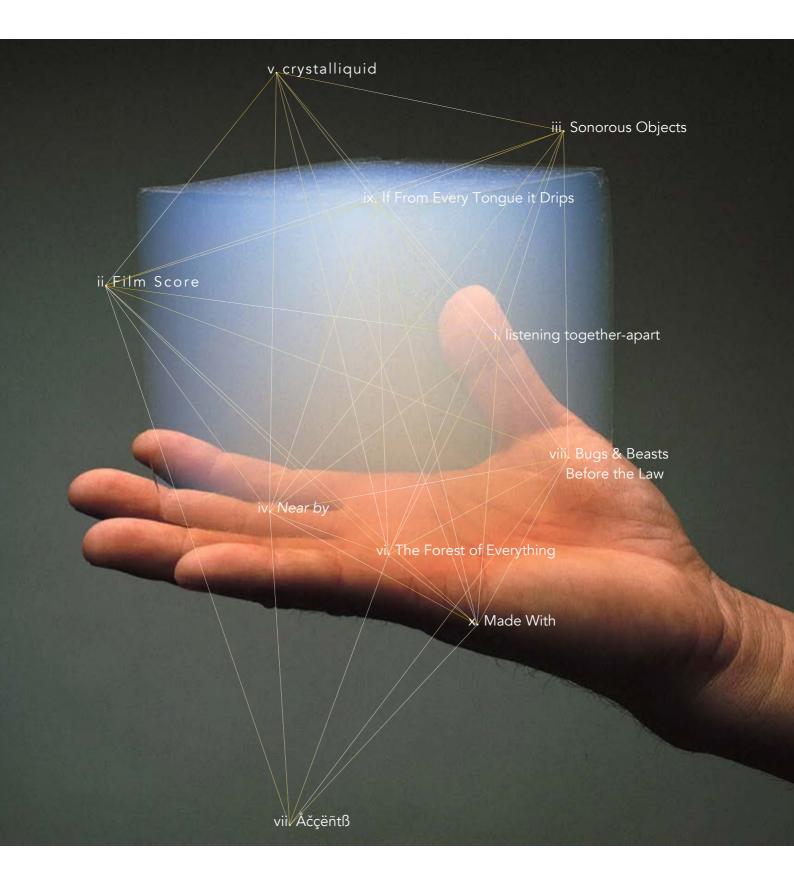
I am grateful to the vibrant community of artists in Glasgow and beyond, from whom I am continually learning. Especially for the critical ears, creative imaginations, and considered conversation of Sharlene Bamboat, Alexis Mitchell, Alexander Storey Gordon, Martin Cathcart Froden, Lauren Gault, Mark Bleakley, Sarah Rose and Wendy Kirkup.

A number of organisations have supported my practice, particularly LUX Scotland and the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities, alongside Rhubaba, Collective, the Glasgow Short Film Festival, Glasgow Life, and Sound Thought to whom I owe a great deal of thanks.

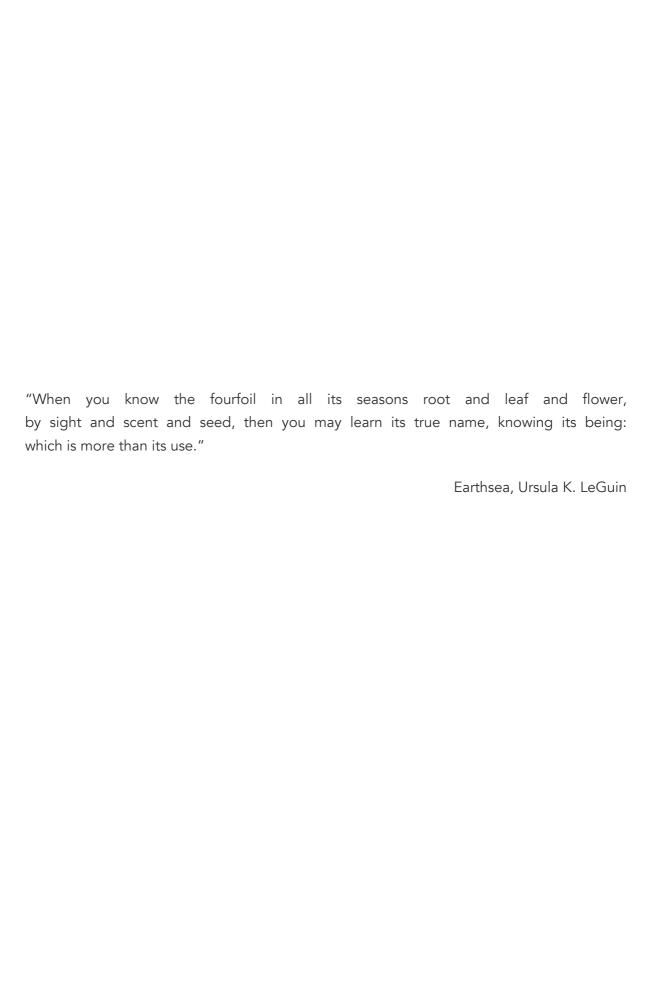
Thanks also, of course, to the communities, choirs and schools who have so eagerly contributed to creating the works throughout this thesis for their imagination and energy, from whom I learned so much.

Finally, I would like to thank my family and friends for their everlasting support, counsel and enthusiasm and love. None more so than Ainslie, for all the conversations, care and the confidence you've always had in me, and for teaching me more about listening than anyone.

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#### Introduction

Listening together-apart is a practice of collaboratively composing sound with others. This thesis is a creative inquiry into the development of this practice; a way of listening to relational entanglement in the composition of sound-images.

A sound-image is an entanglement of sound and image, which is really an entanglement of sound, image, artist, audience, and the matters to which each sound-image speaks. It is a messy knot to unpick, in part because it is always changing. It is always in flux. It is always different. The works in this portfolio do not try to unpick this knot, because it cannot be disentangled. Rather, they explore ways of listening to the sound-image from different perspectives, tuning into these differences as sites of relation rather than opposition, celebrating these differences and the creativity to be found between them. Because we are immersed in sound-images; we are apart from them and simultaneously a part of them. We see light and see in light, we hear sound and hear in sound (Ingold 2007), "we are part of the world in its differential becoming" (Barad 2007, 185). As we travel through the world these waves of light and sound wash around and through us, diffracting as we move, and are moved by, sound-images. Much of this research project is about listening to the patterns made by these diffractions and considering our role in shaping them.

The sound-image is a slippery subject to speak about. It is a matter of listening and looking, the doing of these actions together and apart simultaneously. That we don't have a colloquial verb<sup>2</sup> for this everyday activity is telling.<sup>3</sup> Whether I am taking in a film in the cinema, sat on my sofa in front of the TV, at an exhibition in a gallery, or indeed involved in any other audiovisual condition in which I am engaged in the act of being an audience, what I am really doing is listening-watching. In listening, I am "listening and responding" (Oliveros 2005, xxiii), in watching, I am an active spectator (Trinh 1999), between these I am an agent in an agential

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> I use the term sound-image throughout this body of work to speak to something similar to, but different from, the audiovisual. In the sound-image there is no presupposed modal hierarchy. It does not exist separately from the agents who create it. The term builds on Holly Rogers' definition of the sound-image, whereby sound and image "retains a coexistent sense of its origin, of its new placement and of the resultant "poetic ambiguity" that lies between these two spaces" (Rogers 2017, 183).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Michel Chion proposes the term audio-vision, "the type of perception proper to the experience of film and television" (Chion 2009, 469).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> Alongside the psycholinguistic research of Asifa Majid, and Laura Speed, Lera Boroditsky points to "a solid body of empirical evidence showing how languages shape thinking", that "one's mother tongue does indeed mould the way one thinks about many aspects of the world, including space and time" (Boroditsky 2011, 63). Perhaps one of the reasons we tend to prioritise the visual over the sonorous (Schafer 2013, 31), especially in audiovisual media, is that we lack the ordinary language to address the matters as being epistemologically equivalent.

flux of sight, sound, knowing and being, as each is performed through the other, becoming something that is more than the sum of its parts: the sound-image.

In her work, feminist theorist and quantum physicist Karen Barad employs the hyphen to denote non-binary relations between concepts often positioned as opposites, such as her notion of the *together-apart* (Barad 2014); a way of articulating differentiated relation, to which we will return. In the *sound-image*, sound and image are framed as being *together-apart*, simultaneously entirely separate, and entirely enmeshed. Drawing on Barad, throughout this thesis I have also hyphenated different terms to indicate this kind of complex relational simultaneity.

These hyphens support an awful lot of weight for such delicate lines. If we were able to magnify them, we might see that they're not straight lines at all, but knots of contours and topographies, densely and sparsely entwined threads of all manner of thicknesses, materials, viscosities, conductive properties, and tensions. These threads would be thrumming like a great string orchestra; a massive, motive, mass of music which, like all music, would sound very different depending upon the positions from which we are listening. Much of this research project is about listening to the music in these hyphens.

#### Difference

Sound-images are collaborative. They are made with others. Meaning is materialised, formed and performed, contingently, directly and indirectly, in dialogue with other people, and with other matters. This open exchange occurs through and within the sound-image; between artist and audience, between artist and the matters a sound-image speaks to, between those matters and an audience. It also occurs at the site this research project focuses on; between an image maker and a sound maker.

The practice of listening together-apart has developed through my role as a composer most often working with others to create *sound-music*<sup>4</sup> for artist film, for installations and in community contexts. These sound-image works are often held in cinemas and galleries; contexts in which, for better or worse, there is habitually as much discussion around the concept of a work as there is around its aesthetics or the processes of its construction. This

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> I work in different ways in different projects, sometimes as a composer, sometimes as a sound designer, sometimes as a mix engineer, though most often as something between all three. These are all ultimately practices of crafting and arranging sounds in relation to other sounds, to images and to people. I use the same ear in different ways in every project. I hear it all as music. Though it might be better understood as *sound-music*.

collaborative, conceptual creativity relies heavily on a mutual understanding of the words used between image maker and sound maker. Sound and image however, like words in a sentence, communicate meaning through their difference. Sounds, images, and words mean different things to different people. "Different meanings may be given to the same word, the same sentence, when it is read by a member of the dominant and by a member of a dominated group of a culture. Since marginalized people are always socialized to understanding things from more than their own point of view, to see both sides of the matter, and to say at least two things at the same time, they can never really afford to speak in the singular" (Trinh 1999, 39). Much of this research project is about considering the multiplicity of a matter, of speaking and listening in the plural, of listening to others.

#### Composing Diffractively

Barad describes diffraction as "patterns of difference that make a difference" (Barad 2007, 72). Diffraction is a material occurrence which "comes into being when a multitude of waves encounter an obstacle upon their path, and/or when these waves themselves overlap" (Geerts and Van der Tuin 2021, 173). As such, they can be observed as both a sonic and optical phenomenon. Barad builds on Donna Haraway's conception of diffractive thought, which "attends to the relational nature of difference" (Haraway 1992), observing that "a diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of differences appear" (Barad 2007, 72). As Geerts and Van der Tuin attest, "in contemporary feminist theory, diffraction is often employed figuratively, to denote a more critical and difference-attentive mode of consciousness and thought" (Geerts and Van der Tuin 2021, 173).

Barad also draws on filmmaker, composer, and post-colonial theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha's diffraction, whereby theory, texts and thought are not set against each other hierarchically. Instead, "diffractively engaging with texts and intellectual traditions means that they are dialogically read 'through one another' (Barad 2007, 30) to engender creative, and unexpected outcomes" (Geerts and Van der Tuin 2021, 175, emphasis my own). Much of this research project is about creating conditions for such creative and unexpected outcomes.

I find great pleasure in hearing music in places where one might not otherwise expect to hear it, of being open and receptive to the sonorous in the serendipitous. "It is a plunging into the world of a composition without a score, without grammar, but with the strength of the radical contingency of a collaborative production of music that imagines a collaborative production of the world" (Voegelin 2019, 173). Listening to difference, teasing out "new

resonances without harmonic reference or name" (ibid.) by tuning our ears to the intervals between matters as sites of relation rather than opposition, is a powerful way of feeling connected to people and the world around us. Through this kind of listening attention comes a greater awareness<sup>5</sup> of others, whereby one can feel sustained and supported – together – whilst feeling agentially solid and distinct – apart. Held and holding; together-apart.

As a composer who collaborates with different artists on different kinds of projects in different contexts, diffractive thought offers me a way of locating myself in others work, whilst listening across them to read each through the other. Through these projects I frequently encounter novel, non-standardised ways of working, exploring diffuse, disparate, complex, and sensitive subjects of which I do not have direct experience, but to which I have an ethical and artistic responsibility to communicate carefully, creatively, and meaningfully. I am continually learning from the people and materials I listen to and make with. Thinking through their difference as a condition of connection offers an instrument through which to discover the common as well as the creatively contradictory. Each project I work within resounds with echoes of those that came before, unsettling "forms of singularity: hearing myself, as another, and another: an echo within a commons of echoes" (LaBelle 2016, 5). Much of this research project is about hearing oneself as another.

Practice-research

I have undertaken this doctoral study through practice-research.

This practice-research project is around 3 parts written to 7 parts practical. This does not however, indicate an equivalent ratio of "research" to "practice". The mix of theoretical discourse and practical application grew through the development of the works; each came to change the other, with theoretical matters suggested as often from those I collaborate with as from the books and artworks referenced throughout this thesis. The resultant mix is the practice-research. It cannot be disentangled into its constituent components. Nor can one explain the other. Like describing the wetness of water, the best way to know it is to reach into the waves and feel it for yourself. Practice-research is *onto-epistemological* (Barad 2007); the knowing is the being.

I try to compose in ways which allow an audience to hear something of the processes of the composition, to make works which show something of how they came to be. In doing so I draw upon the practices of artist filmmakers and sound artists whose works render audible

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>5</sup> This follows Pauline Oliveros' practice of Deep Listening, which is explored in vii. Åčçëñtß.

and visible the artifice of their construction, works which materialise the spectre of the artist-composer's authorship as it meets that of the audience through the sound-images they create. John Smith's *Girl Chewing Gum* (Smith 1976), Beatrice Gibson's *The Tiger's Mind* (Gibson 2012), Kathryn Elkin's *Dame 2* (Elkin 2016), Rehana Zaman's *Some Women Other Women and all the Bittermen* (Zaman 2014), Guy Sherwin's *Optical Sound Films* (Sherwin 1971-2007) and Hildegard Westerkamp's *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (Westerkamp 1996) are examples of this kind of reflexive making and are works I have publicly discussed throughout this research process.<sup>7</sup>

Documentation of such practice-research projects though, can be a difficult task. A task made all the harder if one seeks to wrestle the "ephemerality of performance" (Nelson 2006, 107) into the concrete of "another mode of cognition such as words" (ibid., 106), if seeking to use "word, image or sound just as an instrument of thought" (Trinh 1999, 218). Instead, I have sought to speak to the praxis of this research project, the "theory imbricated within practice" (Nelson 2006, 115), by creating "conditions for knowledge to occur... in the relational encounters" (ibid.) between "both the product and related documentation" (ibid.). This "mutual illumination of one element by another" (ibid.) is done with the aim of speaking nearby, rather than always seeking to speak about, "a speaking that reflects on itself and can come very close to a subject without, however, seizing it or claiming it" (Trinh 1999, 218). One such gesture towards this, has been a deliberate reticence to use individual images documenting process and exhibition. Rather, throughout the thesis I have composed assemblages of images that blur the documentation of a work's development, of the work itself, and of its performance/exhibition together. These collages are a way of visually illustrating the complex entanglements of how the works came to be amongst what they came to be. Because speaking nearby is "a speaking in brief, whose closures are only moments of transition opening up to other possible moments of transition... forms of indirectness well understood by anyone in tune with poetic language" (Trinh 1999, 218). Much of this research project is about listening for poetry between the seen and heard, because "only in poetic language can one deal with meaning in a revolutionary way" (ibid., 216).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Though artist and composer are traditionally framed as "one who creates images; another who works with sounds" (Rogers 2013, 9), Holly Rogers proposes the term *artist-composer* "to reimagine each title as a fluid, expressive, and increasingly interchangeable designation", a way of making "intended to suggest not simply a combination of interests, but rather a continuous creative experience that arises in the present tense" (ibid.).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Through hosting screening programmes and reading groups. See Appendix A.

The sound-image is a move away from framing our encounters with audiovisual phenomena as being individualist or discrete, towards being an open, ongoing process of collaborative participation. Through the works I create, I try to amplify these conditions in both the strategies I employ in devising the works and where possible, in their exhibition.

These works however, most often come to be shown in either the black box of the cinema or the white cube of the gallery<sup>8</sup>, two sites which, in different ways, architecturally condition individualist encounters with audiovisuality. "The cinema attempts to lull us into forgetting our physical presence in the theatre, while the art gallery constantly alerts us to the fact that we are looking at art and that we are present." (Kelly 2017, 3) In the soft, dark plush of the cinema, we are immersed in highly produced surround sound, bathed the glare from the silver screen, our awareness of those around us is intentionally muted. By contrast, in the amongst the cold, crisp white walls of the gallery, "the audience attends exhibitions in a hushed manner, speaking quietly, if they must at all... an isolated experience where the individual, even when accompanied by another person, experiences an individual artwork in isolation" (ibid., 19). The cinema and the gallery are sites where the unruliness of the everyday is swept away, where sociability is sealed out. They are sites where perspective is measured, controlled, curated.

Sound, however, transgresses such attempts at containment, at being bound by borders. Sound oozes through walls and pours around corners. It washes over adjoining artworks and audiences alike, becoming part of all that it meets, permeating and connecting. Always moving and always changing, sound carries the outside in and the inside out. In my practice-research, I seek to work with these sonorous qualities to render audible the vast multiplicity of perspectives through which the sound-image can be interpreted, to the ways it can influence and be influenced. Some of the works in this portfolio, more directly than others, are concerned with bringing in to focus these intra-personal relational dynamics of audience-sound-image-artist through which meaning is contingently materialised. crystalliquid and Åčçëñtß in particular are participatory audiovisual works, realised by their audiences through their active participation in their performance, as I will go on to argue, all sound-images are to some extent.

The sound-image is not bound to screens. It is not a category of audiovisuality, of parallel or entwined modalities, tied to the "media-technical conditions for realizing a medium"

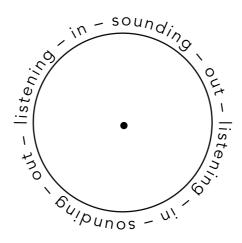
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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Often the same work will be shown in both contexts.

(Spielmann 2008, 1). This research project is not concerned with questions of modality, of *inter* or *intra* medial boundaries, of defining what is inside and outside, or "properly intermedial" (Hegarty 2015, 107). I do not propose to define what the sound-image "consists of, how it works and what are its borders" (ibid., 2), because it is not an object observed from a distance, to be considered as separate from its spectator, who is also, in part, its creator. It is not a *thing* but a *doing*, a process *and* an outcome, in which we participate by listening with an ear tuned to collaboration in difference amongst the confluence of sight, sound, artist, and audience.

Despite the conditions of their exhibition, the sound-images in this thesis are not bound by the black box of the cinema or the white cube of the gallery, nor by the screens in which they are shown. They are made, and made anew, amongst the vibrant, indeterminate grey of the everyday.

listening - in - sounding - out



There are two different compositional approaches explored through this thesis; *listening in* and *sounding out*.

In practical terms, *listening in* relates to projects where my attention is focused on a matter in close collaboration with an individual in the creation of sound-images. Most often, this is with artists with whom I create soundtracks for moving image works, installations, and

exhibitions. These are projects where broadly my role is to sonorously interpret matters proposed by another.

Sounding out on the other hand, relates to projects where my awareness of a matter is expanded across a distribution of collaborators in the creation of sound-images. This is most often realised by composing works with communities, collectives and choirs. These are projects where broadly my role is to propose matters for others to sonorously interpret.

These compositional approaches are not distinct. Each is a way of investigating the other, and throughout this thesis, often the same instruments are used to listen in each direction. The hyphens between *listening in* and *sounding out* in the previous image hold both these dynamics in relation to one another. They are drawn around composer Pauline Oliveros' drawing of a dot in the centre of a circle, her illustration of the ideal balance between attention and awareness in her practice of *Deep Listening* (Oliveros 2005).

"Attention is narrow, pointed and selective. Awareness is broad, diffuse and inclusive. Both have a tunable (sic.) range: attention can be honed to a finer and finer point. Awareness can be expanded until it seems all-inclusive. Attention can intensify awareness. Awareness can support attention. There is attention to awareness; there is awareness to attention" (Oliveros 2015, 139).

Listening in and sounding out are ways of tuning to the other through the other.

Listening in to a matter is focusing one's attention on ways an individual might sonify a subject. It is asking "what is being spoken to?". It is the conceptual composition of sound-images.

Sounding out a matter is broadening one's awareness of ways others might sonify a subject.

It is asking "how is it being spoken to?"

It is the practical composition of sound-images.

Listening in and sounding out are different ways of hearing multiple perspectives on a matter. Listening to these different perspectives informs the conceptual and practical decisions I make when composing sound-images. Each chapter in this portfolio outlines the practical ways I have sought to do this. Much of this research project is about learning to practice listening in through sounding out, sounding out through listening in; to practice listening together-apart.

Both *listening in* and *sounding out* can be understood through Zeynep Bulut's notion of "co-sounding" (Bulut 2016); the former with an ear bent towards a "non-cochlear" (Kim-

Cohen 2013) co-sounding, and the latter towards a physical, embodied realisation of it. For Bulut, "co-sounding does not just happen. It is a constant negotiation. It requires electricity, a certain atmosphere, and a certain agency. It demands embracing the risk – the joy – of falling into another, of forgetting yourself. It implies resonance, an act of both tuning in and tuning with an environment. That joy or resonance is not always harmonious. There are also dissonances, clashes, and conflicts. When we 'co-sound', our bodies meet but do not perfectly merge or become one. Co-sounding intensifies the thing between us. It can be considered an act of re-assembling a world while being displaced, both in physical and political terms" (Bulut 2016, 30). The question of where one hears dissonance and consonance in the sound-image, and as such the structures through which we "(re-)assemble" the world, is one which will be addressed in the coming pages through a consideration of Trinh's interval (Trinh 1999); a "(no)state of intense altered consciousness" where "one finds oneself being of both – of here and there, knowingly knowing not" (ibid., xiv).

Through the works in this portfolio, I have sought to compose sound-images that creatively question the temperaments (or tuning systems) we have come to apply to the intervals between sound and image. It is through the works themselves, rather than the writing around them, that these questions are most fluently expressed. These sound-images seek to articulate a state whereby the agencies of sound maker, image maker, the matters around which their work speaks, and the audiences to which it is in dialogue with, are held together-apart. Listening with an ear tuned towards difference in this entanglement is a way of paying attention to the ways we listen to each other and to the non-human, and in doing so raising our awareness of the choices we make in materialising the world we live in. "Because listening is always listening and responding" (Oliveros 2005, xxiii).

The following pages hold a portfolio of ten texts: a chronological account<sup>9</sup> of the trajectory of this practice-research project. Each practical work is introduced through a text speaking to the artistic aims of the work and the processes of its composition.

- i. **listening together-apart** is an essay which sets out a theoretical framework for the practice introduced in the previous pages and developed through the works in this portfolio.
- ii. Film Score is a moving image graphic score, a film that indicates the performance of its own soundtrack. The work was made with the Rhubaba Gallery choir and is an experiment in collectively sounding out material notions of shape, colour, and texture.
- iii. Sonorous Objects is a workshop model for artist-composers developed through a collaborative research process with artists exploring translations of materiality through sound, movement, sculpture, text and moving image.
- iv. Near by is a publication that traces compositional conversations between collaborating artists and I across four different works. The book is constructed from an exchange of letters that were exploded and recomposed into a series of overlapping text scores.
- v. **crystalliquid** is an interactive installation made with and for young children. It is a work exploring playfully and collaboratively imagining the sound of *liquid crystals*, a material mediating many of our sound-image encounters.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Though often these projects were being created at the same time, over different time scales. The essay *listening* together-apart was composed throughout the course of this research.

- vi. The Forest of Everything is a sound-image work composed in collaboration with a group of children from a Glaswegian after-school club, inspired by John Paynter's research into the use of open works in classroom music making.
- vii. AcçentB is a sound-image work that employs subtitles as verbal notation to suggest the performance of its own soundtrack. Made with community choirs across Glasgow, the project explores accents as a musical material in our everyday voices that resonates with the complex flux between individual and collective identity echoed in the sound-image.
- viii. Bugs & Beasts Before the Law is an experimental essay film that explores the medieval practice of putting animals on trial and questioning the resonances of this legal, political, and social history in our contemporary relations to each other, and to the non-human world.
- ix. If From Every Tongue it Drips is a film composed between Montreal, Batticaloa and the Isle of Skye, using the framework of quantum physics to explore the ways that personal relationships and political movements at once transcend and challenge time, space, identity and location.
- x. Made With holds information on the people, projects and practices through which this research project has been realised.

Appendix A is a catalogue of creative projects undertaken alongside those in the portfolio. Though these works are not examined directly in the thesis, to omit these projects, and the artists with whom I collaborated with in making them, would be to erase their contribution to the knowledge created through this research.

Appendix B contains short biographies of the key collaborators involved in the works in the portfolio.

Appendix C is a document called *Listening Games*; a series of creative prompts for collaborative making devised throughout the course of this thesis.

## i. listening together-apart



An earlier iteration of this essay was published under the title Åčçëñtß: Notes on a Distributed Composition in the journal Airea: Arts and Interdisciplinary Research.

Carey, Richy. 2020. Åčçëñtß. *Airea: Arts and Interdisciplinary Research*, no. 2 (October), 36-48. <a href="https://doi.org/10.2218/airea.5043">https://doi.org/10.2218/airea.5043</a>

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The sound-image is the material that I make art with. It is a sticky matter, to make with and to think about. Mercurial and absorbent, it imbibes what we bring to it and leaves traces of itself upon us, getting everywhere, spilling out from the screen into all corners of culture, ringing in our ears and our eyes. The works I make from this material look, sound, and feel different to different people. In the shapes I shape it into, I try to hold space for this indeterminacy, this contingent creativity. The research project *listening together-apart* grew from a desire to better understand this thing, this stuff which feels so tangible yet so ephemeral, this material through which I express something of myself, and something of others.

The following chapter sets out some of threads I have followed in exploring this material. These threads are wrapped around and through the subsequent projects in this portfolio. In some cases, they are woven into other people's works, and in others they are shaped into patterns of my own design. They are always though, entwined with other people and their own creative interests, as we realise these sound-images together.

The sound-image is inherently collaborative: a matter performed through sound, text and image, its makers, the objects of their investigation, the instruments of its mediation and the audience who meet it. From this perspective, to reduce this collaborative, dynamic multiplicity into a dichotomy of sound and image, as much audiovisual discourse has historically done (Audissino 2017), is to rupture the object of our investigation, a fissure that is antithetical to the vibrantly complex lived experience of the sound-image. It is a "unity to which violence is done when theoretically separated" (Winters, 2012, p. 51). In the field of film music studies, Emilio Audissino points to moves away from a "separatist conception" where "music and visuals are thought of as two distinct entities, with the visual medium being the dominant" (Audissino 2017, 45) towards writers such as Kathryn Kalinak, Nicholas Cook, Ben Winters and Michel Chion, who propose "non-separatist" (ibid., 46) approaches to conceptualising the sound-image. "To fight the separatist conception, film is to be thought as a system, built of equally important, interconnected, and reciprocally influenced elements analysed in terms of the overall form they construct" (ibid., 59). Audissino's non-separatist understanding of the sound-image is one I subscribe to, in every way other than considering it to be a system, with all the connotations of regulation and regularity, control and coercion the term implies.

Thinking of the inseparable difference between sound and image in the sound-image still allows for, if not relies upon, individuated critical readings of ways both sound and image might behave; culturally, politically and epistemologically, as different ontological realms.

But, it also allows for locating them within a relational "field" (Eco 1989); (Barad 2007) or "meshwork" (Ingold 2007); (Morton 2013) which relies upon difference in the performance of its whole. As Trinh T. Minh-ha writes, "Two does not necessarily imply separateness, for it is never really equated with duality, and One does not necessarily exclude multiplicity, for it never expresses itself in one single form, or in uniformity" (Trinh 1996, 15).

In different ways, sound-images are composed "within a community of creative personae" (Winters 2016, 52). These communities of "equally important, interconnected, and reciprocally influenced" (Audissino 2017, 59) actors translate, and interpret ideas from one form into another, across and between disciplinary boundaries: collaboratively materialising meaning. For "matter and meaning are not separate elements. They are inextricably fused together, and no event, no matter how energetic, can tear them asunder... matter and meaning cannot be dissociated." (Barad 2007, 3).

#### Agential Realism

Karen Barad's practice of Agential Realism is "an effort to foster constructive engagements across (and a reworking of) disciplinary boundaries" (ibid., 25), to examine "how conceptions of materiality, social-practice, nature, and discourse must change to accommodate their mutual involvement" (ibid.). For Barad, what is, how we know what is, and the choices we make in coming to know what is, are entangled. "Agential Realism is an epistemological, ontological and ethical framework that makes explicit the integral nature of these concerns" (ibid., 32), it is an "ethico-onto-epistem-ological" study, "an intertwining of ethics, knowing and being" (ibid., 185). This entanglement is readily heard in the sound-image; an artifice of sound and light which nonetheless is real enough to move us to tears, mobilise us to political action and locate us by loved ones half a world away. In the sound-image, the decisions a lighting designer makes can come to change how the costume design is seen, which in turn can effect how the music is heard, shaping the subtleties of an actor's delivery, and on, and on, in an ebb and flow of continuous interaction. Actors, on screen and off, work together and apart through the creative choices they make. Some are overt collaborators, devising creative approaches together before enacting them, others "modest collaborators" (Voegelin 2019), working together without necessarily knowing they are. In this performance, Barad uses the term intra-action, as opposed to interaction, to emphasise the inseparability of these actors; "the neologism 'intra-action' signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. That is, in contrast to the usual 'interaction', which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction" (Barad 2007, 33). "Agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements"

(ibid.) For Barad, we are constantly configuring, and re-configuring the very matter of the world as we intra-act with it; a collaborative performance amongst everything that is, has been and will be. For Salomé Voegelin, Agential Realism is "seeking caresses, entanglement, creativity and agency, to reach a non-hierarchical, non-dualistic world that accounts for the variability of the human and the non-human, and that comes to breach the dualistic nature of knowledge by performing its differences" (Voegelin 2019, 160). This *non-hierarchical*, *non-dualistic* performance sings with the sound-images I hear around me and guides those I seek to create, through the works I have worked on, and with the people I have made them with. How we hear the sound-image, as dualism or difference, is correlate to the instruments we use to listen to it.

A principal concern for Barad is an attention to the *apparatuses* we employ in the process of knowing; that the tools we use to know the world have material effects on the knowledges they allow for, and perhaps more importantly, those which they do not. They are "arrangements that give meaning to certain concepts to the exclusion of others" (Barad 2007, 147). Barad takes Nils Bohr's two-slit diffraction experiments as a figurative example; that the apparatus to test if light behaves as a particle confirms that it behaves as a particle, and that the apparatus to test if light behaves as a wave confirms that it behaves as a wave. She explores this as a way of considering how we relate to the word, that the different tools we use to know phenomena; language, looking, and listening for example, each allow and disallow certain knowledges to be performed through our *intra-action* with them.

Thinking through Agential Realism has led me to pay particular attention to the instruments we use to construct the sound-images we create. Attention to the different kinds of knowledge that the camera lens, the microphone, the screen and the speakers, and the languages we employ in speaking between these matters might allow, raises greater awareness of that which they do not. Through the sound-image, or what Chion has termed the *audio-logo-visual* (Chion 2009, 468), we intra-act with these apparatuses simultaneously, interpreting, *diffracting*, what we come to know through one lens with what we come to know through the other, and the other, and the other... We read meaning through the patterns of difference made by these intra-actions. When I compose with sound-images, I try to resist tautologies between the seen and the heard. When there is so much to say of the multiplicity of a matter, I try to let the sound speak to that which the image is not.

As we have discussed, diffraction patterns "come into being when a multitude of waves encounter an obstacle upon their path, and/or when these waves themselves overlap" (Geerts and Van der Tuin 2021, 173). Thinking of reflection and diffraction as optical phenomenon highlights their conceptual differences; "whilst mirrors produce images... of objects placed at a distance from the mirror, diffraction gratings are instruments that produce patterns that mark differences in the relative characters" (Barad 2007, 81). Though Agential Realism attests to an ongoing performance of becoming, of newness, it does not disregard

that which came before. "Diffraction is not a set pattern, but rather an iterative (re)configuring of patterns of differentiating-entangling. As such, there is no moving beyond, no leaving the 'old' behind. There is no absolute boundary between here-now and there-then." (Barad 2014, 168). As it is with the ways we understand sound-images, all that we bring to it, and all that others have made it, all the choices made in its conception, are a part of it what it is. "Matter is a sedimented intra-acting, an open field. Sedimenting does not entail closure. (Mountain ranges in their liveliness attest to this fact.)" (ibid.)

But the sound-image is not an agential smudge; there is as much clear distinction, discrepancy, divergence, and apartness in difference as there in its togetherness. There is a revolving cast of actors in every sound-image to which we can pay attention. For Barad, "agency is a matter of intra-acting; it is an enactment, not something that someone or something has. Agency is doing/being in its intra-activity." (Barad, 2007, p. 235) Marking difference in agential realist terms is to cut together-apart, it is not an absolute separation, but a relative one. "This differs from a Cartesian cut in that it does not attempt to 'disentangle' the phenomena" (Stark 2016). It does not entirely separate out you from I, or from the world around us, but it does hold us as agentially distinct. These distinctions are made through agential cuts, which "enact that which is inside and outside of phenomena in a single movement" producing "the very boundaries through which something is made 'inside' and 'outside', 'this' and 'that', of the phenomena. Detecting cuts is making them. And making cuts is performing phenomena by 'diffracting different types of agencies" (Sauzet 2018).

The effervescence of this ongoing intra-action, transient and in flux rather than static and inert, might be easier to conceptualise through what Cristoph Cox terms *sonic thought* – learning *with* sound as material – "sound as flux, event, and effect" (Cox 2015, 125). For Cox, "sound lends credence to a very different sort of ontology and materialism, a conception of being and matter that can account for objecthood better than an ontology of objects can account for sounds." (ibid., 124). Listening allows us to access this mutability in a way that the solidity of sight does not. Through sound, we are immersed in transience, we understand the performative becoming of the world implicitly through our ears. Similarly, Voegelin points to Agential Realism as enabling "a sonic visibility of indivisible vibrations, connections, patterns and differences that are not either resonant or dissonant but produce the experience of reality in the between-of-things" (Voegelin 2019, 163). And that "in turn, listening makes diffraction thinkable as a material experience" (ibid.)

Listening together-apart is a way of tuning to the vibrancy of intra-action between sound and image, between oneself and one's collaborators. To do so requires consideration of the instruments we use in this listening, what knowledges they allow and disallow. "Such an exploration demands thoughtfulness about the language used to talk about this sonic world hidden in the depth of a visible actuality... we cannot afford a rigidity about what words mean

etymologically but need to focus on what they come to mean contingently" (Voegelin 2014, 12).

## Open Works

In my own practice, the site where this contingent materialising of meaning is felt most readily is in the discussions between myself and the artists I collaborate with. When I work with artists, a significant part of the labour involved is in learning about the matters they are speaking to through their work. Gaining an understanding of the complexity of these matters, the different perspectives through which it can be considered, is vital to forming the rationales behind the compositional decisions I go on to make. This has led me to pay close attention to the language we use in collaboratively composing sound-images. Because words and language, or discourse, "is not what is said; it is that which constrains and enables what can be said" (Barad 2007, 146).

In his *Philosophical Investigations* (Wittgenstein 1953), philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein considers the *language-games* played between actors as they continually move through the ways each comes to understand the other. "In the practice of the use of language one party calls out the words, the other acts on them... I shall also call the whole, consisting of language and the actions into which it is woven, a 'language-game'" (ibid., 4). As with our attention to the *doing* of our intra-action in the sound-image "the term '*language-game*' is meant to bring into prominence the fact that the speaking of language is part of an activity, or of a life-form" (ibid., 10). Wittgenstein pays close attention to the multiple ways words and meaning come to gravitate around each other; that there are "countless different kinds of use of what we call 'symbols', 'words', 'sentences'. And this multiplicity is not something fixed, given once for all; but new types of language, new language-games, as we may say, come into existence, and others become obsolete and get forgotten" (ibid.). The intra-active emergence of language-games, and the sedimenting of meaning that comes to pearl and dissolve around them, can be understood as "an ongoing performance of the world in its differential dance of intelligibility and unintelligibility" (Barad 2007, 149).

Making room for this dance, for one's partner, for the time needed to learn the steps and choreograph new ones, is vital to listening together-apart. Doing so is a way of building the trust necessary to allow sound and image to each lead the other at different times through the sound-image, and to learning to score these movements. For both Barad and Wittgenstein, this dance is performed in a "field" of possibility, which is "not static or singular but rather is a dynamic and contingent multiplicity" (Barad 2007, 146); a motive movement

of meaning where "the first judgement is *not* the end of the matter, for it is the field of force of a word that is decisive" (Wittgenstein 1953, 186).

Open works offer a way of making with this irreducible fluxing field, of composing with interpretive possibility, rather than trying to stifle it.

In his essay *The Open Work*, Umberto Eco explores the "field of possibilities" in the open work; "a complex interplay of motive forces is envisaged, a configuration of possible events, a complete dynamism of structure" (Eco 1989, 14). With this possibility comes a "discarding of the static, syllogistic view of order, and a corresponding devolution of intellectual authority to personal decision, choice, and social context" (ibid.)

# EXERCISE Determine the limits of an object or event. Determine the limits more precisely. Repeat, until further precision is impossible.

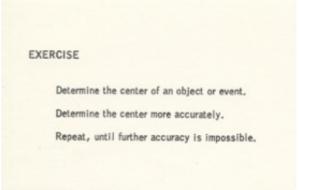


Fig. 1. Exercise (Brecht 1963) and Exercise (Brecht 1963).

George Brecht's Exercise (Brecht 1963) and Exercise (Brecht 1963); from his collection of event scores, Water Yam (Brecht 1963), are two examples of this kind of open work. We can hear something of Wittgenstein's language-games and his search for the boundaries of a word, in all its irreducible scale, in these six succinct lines.

Water Yam was amongst the earliest works published by Fluxus; a loose collective of interdisciplinary artists, composers, poets and more, whose "production ranges from minimal performances, called Events, to full-scale operas, and from graphics and boxed multiples called Fluxkits to paintings on canvas" (Higgins 2002). Privileging process over product, shared creative questions across the group included indeterminacy, interaction between artist and audience, and the "non-hierarchical density of experience" (ibid.). Though I do not frame my work through Fluxus, these are all concerns which I have come to consider carefully in the sound-images I compose, and which I try to make manifest in the works themselves.

In my own practice I often use forms of open work, namely iterations of verbal scores and graphic scores, in different ways in the composition of sound-images.

Verbal notation is "an approach to scoring that uses the written word, as opposed to symbols, to convey information to whoever chooses to interpret it" (Lely and Saunders 2012, ixx). The

written word is far more accessible medium than that of Western musical stave notation. Almost all the people I create sound-images with are not formally trained musicians, they are filmmakers, artists, a mix of people from different community groups, broadly people who do not sight-read music. They are more fluent in communicating through the written word than stave notation, as am I. Verbal notation can express "temporal relationships between elements of composition in a flexible way...; it can express ideas with great precision; it can express generalities it can suggest many different types of relationships between author and reader; it can express ideas and concepts, as well as providing prescriptions for action" (ibid.). In composing verbal scores for sound-images some of the labour, authorship and the creative decision making is shared. What is made through these scores is something that conceptually and concretely belongs to neither I nor the other, but to both.

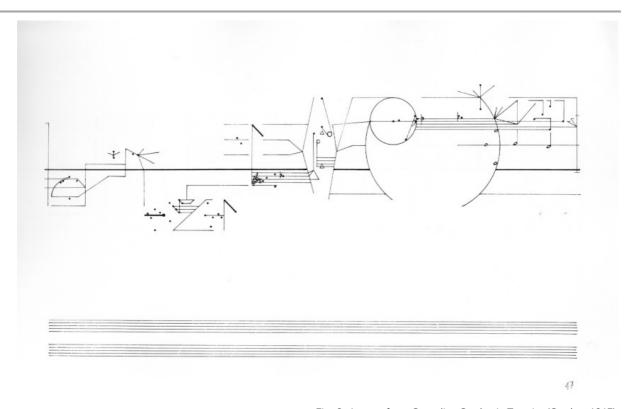


Fig. 2. A page from Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise* (Cardew 1967).

I use graphic scores to similar ends. As can be seen in the example from Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise* (Cardew 1967), graphic scores are pictographic, rather than logographic, communications for the creation of music. They can be read as rejections of "a hierarchical division of labour that requires performers to subject themselves to the will of the composer..., instead fostering active collaboration between parties" (Cox 2013, 188). Using verbal scores and graphic scores invites a plurality of voices into the composition of the sound-image, or perhaps, allows us to hear the voices that were always already there. What they most certainly do, is "render audible and readable the multiplicity of the interpretive process itself" (Trinh 1999, xi).

In commercial filmmaking contexts one of the tools commonly employed to circumvent such sites of (mis)interpretation is the *temp-track*. This is the practice of using pre-existing music set to an image by filmmakers to explain to a composer the kind of sound they would like composed for the image. I have found such didactic forms of collaboration to be problematic in terms of the relational frameworks they can instigate; that they can lead to a perpetuation of sound-image tropes that reinforce hierarchical, visio-centric and auteurist hegemonies. <sup>10</sup> In my own work, I seek to embrace the poetic indeterminacy of language, and the potential for new thinking this engenders, rather than trying to circumvent this situation as the temp-track does.

Composing sound-images through open works is "an approach where things are allowed to come forth, to grow wildly as 'controlled accidents' and to proceed in an unpredictable manner" (Trinh 1999, 34). In listening to the open work, "one is compelled to look into the many facets of things... unable to point safely at them as if they were only outside of oneself". (ibid.)

I make open works to listen for difference. When *listening in* to a close collaborator, it lets me hear something of how they understand a word, image, gesture or sound differently from I. When *sounding out* a matter with a group, I listen for how all their differing responses intraact, not with an ear tuned to the fidelity of their individual responses, but to the sound of the collective and to the patterns of difference created between their voices. In the open work we hear something of what is in-between the binary positions of the I and the O, the I and the Other, to what Trinh T. Minh-ha describes as the *Interval*.

#### Interval

Through the interval, "a direct relation is possible: a relation of infinity assumed in works that accept the risks of spacing and take in the field of free resonances" (Trinh 1999, xii). Filmmaker, writer, composer, and theorist Trinh T. Minh-ha's works often explore the politics and practice of representation. She is acutely aware of the agential cuts enacted by the apparatus we use to understand the world; "to keep the relation of language to vision open, one would have to take the difference between them as the very line of departure for speech and writing, rather than as an unfortunate obstacle to overcome" (Trinh 1999, xi).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Ben Winters critiques the "long shadow" cast by Western Musicology's traditional veneration of the figure of the "genius" composer and it's relative in Film Studies; "a mode of thinking that privileged the creative efforts of individuals, most commonly a film's director" (Winters 2016, 52).

The notion of the interval is a key concept to which Trinh often returns through her work; "intervals allow a rupture with mere reflections and present a perception of space as breaks. They constitute interruptions and irruptions in a uniform series of surface; they designate a temporal hiatus, an intermission, a distance, a pause, a lapse, or gap between different states" (ibid. xii). The interval performs relational difference, it is an explicitly non-binary position, the interval always exists in the between. The intervallic difference to which Trinh speaks is "not opposed to sameness, nor synonymous with separateness... there are differences as well as similarities within the concept of difference" (Trinh 1988).

Thinking of the sound-image as a site of intervallic difference might allow us to move beyond totalising, "top-down, Grand Theory" <sup>11</sup> (Audissino 2017) approaches to the analysis and interpretation of sound-images whilst still recognising that these positions illuminate the specific instantiations they speak to with an alacrity and insight.

As a composer of sound-images, as someone who has come to understand the world most keenly through sound, I find it useful to think of the relationship between the seen and the heard in the material as a complex chord of sound and sight. "Music is largely consumed by the complex task of generating, arranging, altering, arresting, modulating, inflecting, distorting, adjusting, tempering, perfecting, purifying, setting and standardizing intervals... Musicianship, some would assert, is basically a matter of intervallic mastery" (Trinh 1999, xiii). Making music with sound-images is no different.

In Western music "intervals are classified as consonant and dissonant and made to hate each other" (Trinh 1999, xiii), and the legacy and dualism of these terms, consonance and dissonance, resound in the sound-image. The dissonance, counterpoint and anempathy between the seen and the heard which Michel Chion discusses (Chion 2009) appear based on the notion that within the audiovisual chord of sight and sound, the image is always to be heard as the tonic, the tonal centre, to which the sound's harmony is relative.

"Why? I asked HIM who knows the rules of precedence. Who can evaluate with certainty what ranks above and what ranks below in the art of ordering film sound" (Trinh 1991, 201). To move beyond the "problem... of control and standardization of images and sounds" (ibid., 32) we should demand an *emancipation of dissonance* in the ways we listen to, and compose within, the intervals of the sound-image. There are theoretical moves away from this kind of intervallic tempering. Holly Rogers' propositions of *sonic elongation* and *sonic aporia* (Rogers 2021) being examples of this. Rogers explores *rupturing* (ibid.) the threads by with which sound and image have become hierarchically bound, an echo of Trinh's intervals which "allow

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Audissino points to the problem of the "Grand Theory" in film music analysis, "around which the approaches are shaped and to which the practical applications always strive to conform" whereby a "top-down" approach is taken, in which "theory comes first and then a film is selected that conforms to the specific theory" (Audissino 2017, 51).

a rupture with mere reflections" (Trinh 1988). "Sonic elongation gradually unstitches film along its audiovisual seam until the text gapes open, aporetic moments begin with rupture and toy with its implications for sensory fragmentation" (Rogers 2021, 433). As with Trinh's *Interval*, Roger's *Rupture* "complicates the idea of a single mode of listening" (ibid., 433) and exposes "the materiality of the phantasmic body" (ibid., 444) that is the sound-image. Opening the interval between the seen and the heard both draws "attention to the images" whilst emphasising "sound as sound", (ibid., 444) creating conditions whereby an audience is "required to hold together multiple spaces and possibilities in their mind at once" (ibid., 446). These non-hierarchical ruptures are the kinds of conditions I seek to create when composing sound-images through open works; to collectively call attention to "our processes of engagement, consumption, and multimodal meaning-making" in the sound-images we create, raising our awareness "of the process of interpretation" (ibid., 446) inherent in the material.

Trinh's methodology of *speaking nearby* as a form of indirect language offers us an apparatus for thinking and relating, of positioning ourselves, within the site of the interval. It gives a rationale for certain kinds of *rupture*. *Speaking nearby* is "a speaking that does not objectify, does not point to an object and as if it is distant from the speaking subject or absent from the speaking place. A speaking that reflects on itself and can come very close to a subject without, however, seizing it or claiming it" (Trinh 1999, 218).

Composing sound-images, listening together-apart, with the intention of *speaking nearby*, of seeking polyvocality through making space for plurality, is a way of carefully and meaningfully exploring matters with collaborators. When *listening in* to a collaborator, open works are a tool for building a language, or playing language-games, that allows for a careful translation of ideas between the seen and the heard. Where one can choose to speak directly, or obliquely. When collectively *sounding out* a matter, they allow the listener to hear the multiplicity of this material, for meaning to gravitate around it but never enclose it.

As Trinh goes on to say, speaking nearby is a form of "indirectness well understood by anyone in tune with poetic language. Every element in film refers to the world around it, while having at the same time a life of its own. And this life is precisely what is lacking when one uses word, image or sound just as an instrument of thought" (Trinh 1999, 218).

## Listening

"Listening as an innovative and generative practice, as a strategy of engagement that we employ deliberately to explore a different landscape other than the one framed by vision, and it is cultural vision that I refer to here, grants us access to another view on the world and on the subjects living in that world." (Voegelin 2014, 12)

Listening is a practice that takes practise. Or rather, it is practices. How we listen and what we hear are correlate. When I began studying music as an undergraduate student, I had never really listened to orchestral music, nor could I really read music notation. In class we practised listening to orchestral works and determining what different instruments were doing at different times. To my ear, this was an almost impossible task. I knew the sounds of the individual instruments well enough to name their sources by ear. Though when played together, making the music they were made for, I could not distinguish those same individual sounds from the whole. I could not see the trees for the wood. Over time I learned to differentiate one sound from another, to draw a dotted line around a sound amongst the sound, to point to it and name it. Sounds that were opaque became distinct through learning to listen for them with certain attentions.

The continuum of sound is always there for us to hear, "there is no earlid" (Kim-Cohen 2013, xx), it is an inseparable fluidity in which we are immersed and cannot disentangle ourselves. When I learned to recognise sounds of individual instruments from amongst the whole, the rest of the orchestra did not evaporate, their music was not muted. It continued to perform in its entirety, playing and sounding just as it did before. I learned to listen in both directions, listening in to the individual whilst sounding out the whole. I came to hear distinction in the orchestra not by separating out sounds completely, because that is not possible, but by learning to listen for the relational difference within it, holding the whole together and apart simultaneously, a way of listening together-apart.

Listening practices are forms of Baradian apparatus, they allow different forms of sonic understanding to emerge through the conscious act of aural attention, and in turn close off other kinds. "As a psychological act, listening is decisive; it expands outward and draws inward by attentively incorporating surrounding environments and their audibility into the folds of consciousness" (LaBelle 2012, 158). We hold agency in how we choose to listen and in what we choose to listen for. Listening is like a kind of magic. Simply through the ways we focus our attention, we can tune our listening to hear things distinctly which we were previously unaware existed, materialising the world around us.

Michel Chion proposes three modes of listening useful to critical analysis of the audiovisual: causal, semantic, and reduced. Causal listening "consists of listening to a sound in order to determine its cause (or source)" (Chion 1994, 25). Even at this level of sonorous discretion, Chion points to the intra-agential nature of sound, that "a sound often has not just one source but two, three, even more" (ibid., 27). Semantic Listening is "that which refers to a code or a language to interpret a message" (ibid., 28). Chion points to the matter-meaning bind; "one can listen to a single sound sequence employing both the causal and semantic modes at once. We hear at once what someone says and how they say it." (ibid.). We listen for meaning in sound beyond the linguistic continuously, certain sounds remind us of certain situations, people, places. Sound can transport you elsewhere by the nature of its semantic correlations. The third type of listening is that of reduced listening; "the listening mode that focuses on the traits of the sound itself, independent of its cause and of its meaning." (ibid., 29). It is difficult to speak about sound in and of itself, and Chion notes that in doing so, "the language we employ as a matter of habit suddenly reveals all its ambiguity" (ibid.), that as "perception is not a purely individual phenomenon, since it partakes of a particular kind of objectivity; that of shared perceptions... it is in this objectivity-born-of-intersubjectivity that reduced listening, as Schaeffer defined it, should be situated." (ibid.). The act of articulating the sound object, the material correlate to reduced listening, is an intrinsically collaborative matter.

When listening to the sound-image, we are often moving through these three states of auditory attention simultaneously. These listening modes are powerful tools for the formal analysis of the sound-image on screen, and the practice of *reduced listening* is especially invaluable in the studio. However, these modes are geared towards listening to an *outcome* of my practice; that which exists on the screen, rather than the *process* of composing sound-images; which is listening to others.

Pauline Oliveros' practice of *Deep Listening* develops "attention strategies" that are "ways of listening and responding in consideration of oneself, others and the environment" (Oliveros 2005, 29). It is a practice that has been integral to the development of *listening together-apart*. This relationship is explored more fully in the chapter *vii*. Åčçëñtß.

Oliveros describes *Deep Listening* as coming from "noticing my listening or listening to my listening and discerning the effects on my bodymind continuum, from listening to others, to art and to life" (ibid., xxiv). Through verbal scores, Oliveros composes situations whereby one can guide one's own, or a group's ear towards a heightened state of attention and awareness of themselves, their relationships to those around them, and to the non-human world to which they are sonorously connected. Her scores are strategies for a diffractive listening "intended to facilitate creativity in art and life" which "means the formation of new patterns, exceeding the limitations and boundaries of old patterns, or using old patterns in new ways" (ibid., xxv). As with Trinh's *interval*, her *Deep Listening* explores "complexity and boundaries, or edges beyond ordinary or habitual understandings" (ibid., xxv), and the indeterminate interpretive

multiplicity of this space; that "there is no sound pressure variation that will always lead to one and only one perception", and "no perception that always comes from one and only one pressure variation" (ibid., xxiii). The non-hierarchical, non-dualistic intention of the interval is performed through participating in her *Sonic Meditations* (Oliveros 1971), written as "explorations which include everyone who wants to participate" (ibid., 2) they are "attempts to erase the subject/object or performer/audience relationship" (ibid.).

As a prolific composer of verbal scores, Oliveros' understood the weight of words in materialising the world around us, that "the visual is favoured over the aural in our culture. Thus, we have fewer words in our vocabulary to express aurality" (Oliveros 2011, 162). She proposes that to affect a cultural shift away from the visual towards the sonorous, a change in our everyday language is required, a simple but intentional effort to speak with words more readily associated with acoustic phenomena. Such a shift is vital if we are to open our ears to the sonorous possibilities of the sound-image.

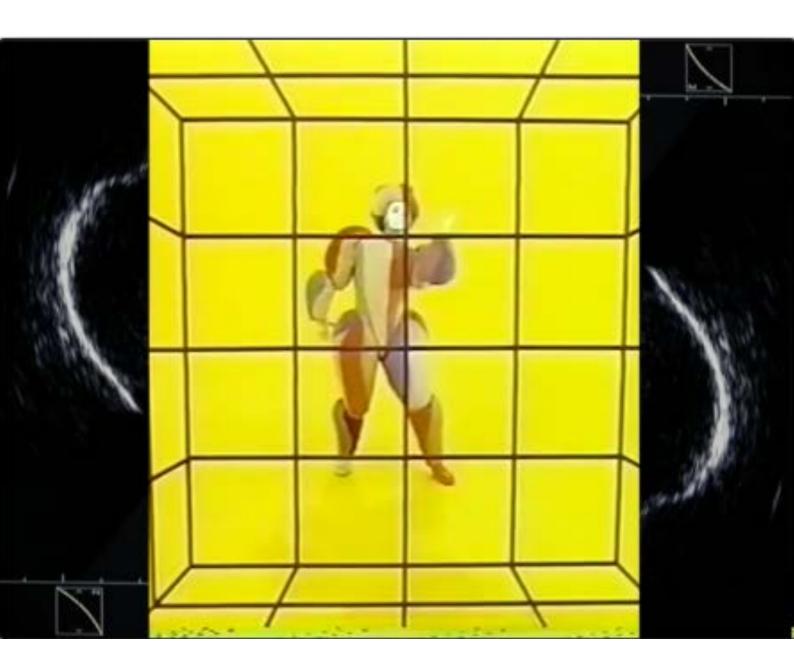
## listening together-apart

Listening, relative to looking, is a slow attention. Listening to the sound-image is difficult, in part because of the relationship between these two tempos. In the sound-image, we listen with our eyes open, our attention plural, materialising meaning from a complex flow of difference. The different rhythms in the intervals between sight and sound, between differing agencies, and the diffraction patters created by their intra-action, can be navigated with an ear tuned towards a non-hierarchical, non-dualistic relation. This listening attention draws awareness to "our contingent involvement, our responsibility in the perception and production of a possible actual world" (Voegelin 2014, 76), one which listens for "an ethics of doing as an ethics of doing together, of entanglement and participation in difference" (Voegelin 2019, 173).

Listening together-apart is a way of listening for collaboration in the sound-images we create. Collaborations which are always being enacted through the entanglement of sound, image, artist, audience, and the matters to which each sound-image speaks.

Like learning to listen for the individual instruments in the orchestra, we can listen to these collaborators as being simultaneously agentially apart and entirely together; listening for the music that is always already there in matters of the sound-image.

## ii. Film Score



Dir. Richy Carey, 2016.

SD video, Stereo I Live choral performance. 6 min.

Sound Thought, CCA, Glasgow. Mar 30 – Apr 1, 2016.

Film Score was composed in 2015/16 following an invitation to work with the Rhubaba choir, a collective of amateur singers who meet at Rhubaba Gallery in Edinburgh. The choir "acts as a commissioning platform for new works, intended to provide invited artists, musicians and writers with the resource of collective voices as a material" (Rhubaba, 2020). Composed through a series of workshops and rehearsals with the choir, Film Score is a form of moving image graphic score, or a film suggesting its own soundtrack, a film score. The project culminated in a live performance at Sound Thought 2016, an annual postgraduate conference held at the Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow.

The impetus for the work came following a week-long summer school called *Rhyme or Reason* held at Collective, Edinburgh, programmed by Mason Leaver-Yap from LUX Scotland. The school was a five-day "intensive study programme" exploring "the role of notation, improvisation and score across the visual arts and other disciplines" (Collective 2015) with tutors including Giles Bailey, Beatrice Gibson, Laura Guy and Will Holder.



The school provoked many of the questions which I have come to ask, and the compositional strategies I have sought to answer them, through the development of this thesis.

What are the consequences of our provisional and private forms of language? How can these intimate instructions translate into forms of broadcast and communication?

As a form of writing or sketching that is closely linked to musical scores and ideas of indeterminacy, notation thrives on personalisation and permutation. *Rhyme or Reason* will explore why and how practitioners are using notation and score when developing work today – thinking through the relationship between structure and improvisation, and the complex politics of working with or representing others.

Introduction to Rhyme or Reason, (LUX Scotland 2015).

Rhyme or Reason<sup>12</sup> had a profound effect on my formative practice-research. Questions of translation, indeterminacy and "the complex politics of working with or representing others" (ibid) can be heard resonating throughout the works in this portfolio. Thinking through these complex politics is an ever-present question in my practice. As a composer of sound-images my role involves creating in ways which hold space for the intentions of the image maker, for the potential creative readings of sound and image by the audience, and for my own aesthetic and conceptual agency, all balanced with a careful attention to how I sonorously represent matters explored through a work.

Verbal notation and graphic scores were discussed often throughout sessions at the school. Though graphic scores in the form of static images have been relatively common in experimental music since the 1950's onwards (Cage 1969), moving image graphic scores are comparatively less so.<sup>13</sup>

Around the time of attending the school, my practice-research had been focused on the field of visual music; a form of abstract filmmaking whereby shapes, colours and textures move across a screen as visualisations of musical gestures and structures. Famous examples of this early sound-image practice include Walther Ruttmann's *Lichtspeil* series (Ruttmann 1921-25), Oskar Fischinger's *An Optical Poem* (Fischinger 1937), Norman McLaren's *Spook Sport* (McLaren 1939) and Mary Ellen Bute's *Synchromy No.2* (Ellen Bute 1935). I was struck by the aesthetic and conceptual similarities between visual music and graphic notation, each an articulation of music as image, of sound made material. This can be seen in the graphic scores of Cornelius Cardew's *Treatise* (Cardew, Treatise 1967) or György Ligeti's *Artikulation* (Ligeti 1958), and the moving image work of Paul Sharits in *Declaritive Mode* (Sharits 1976-77), which seems to silently straddle the two. Where visual music and graphic notation differ, is that visual music is most often<sup>14</sup> heard in tight concomitance with the music it is moving with,

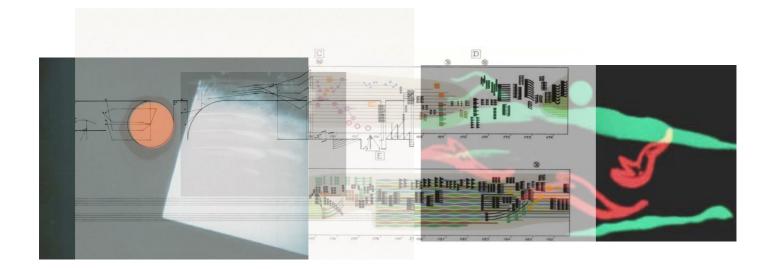
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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> And subsequently *LUX Scotland* as an organisation.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Australian composer Cat Hope being possibly the most well-known contemporary artist creating moving image graphic scores, which she terms *animated scores* (Hope 2021).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Though not in the case of purely visual moving image representations of music, those with no audible concomitant such as Hans Richter's *Rhythmus 21* (Richter 1921), whose "black-and-white geometric shapes move across the screen, receding and pulsing to an unheard beat" (Rogers 2013, 24).

whereas the graphic score is a static visual representation of an as-yet unrealised sound, it's concomitance is conceptual.



I had recently composed a rescoring of Walther Ruttmann's *Lichtspiel Opus I* (1921) (Carey 2014), whereby in many ways I had treated Ruttmann's images as a form of motive graphic score. The soundtrack I had created was a sonorous interpretation of the material qualities of the image; the interactions of shape and colour, their movements and rhythms, were a score to which I slowly improvised. The compositional autonomy I enjoyed in making the work, however, was at odds with other sound-image projects I was involved in. In making soundtracks for filmmakers, I was composing towards a shared conceptual and aesthetic outcome, rather than my own singular interpretation. These works, to some extent, required imagining how someone else was hearing the images I was looking at.

Driven by an intention to de-centre my own subjectivity in this regard, I proposed to the *Rhubaba choir* that we might work together to create a moving image graphic score, whereby I could listen to others interpreting these matters. Doing so with a choir was a way to listen to different sound-image correlations come to form contingently around visual gestures, listening with an ear tuned to the interval between the choir members individual, and collective sounds. I understood these workshops as way of listening to dynamics of Wittgenstein's *language games*; asking the choir "what does 'pointing to the shape', 'pointing to the colour' consist in?... Without doubt you will do something *different* when you act upon these two invitations. But do you always do the *same* thing when you direct your attention to the colour?" (Wittgenstein 1953, 14e). *Film Score* would be a way of exploring "the sort of thing that happens while one directs one's attention to this or that" (ibid.).

I proposed a series of workshops through which we would *sound out* graphic scores and works of visual music. I would then compose a sound-image work that would sit somewhere between the two for the choir to perform.

The initial workshop had two key aims; the first being simply for me to meet the choir, to speak about my hopes for the project and to listen to the choir members' own experiences of graphic scores and open works more broadly. The need to build in this social time, a slow space focused on getting to know each other, has only grown more apparent through the subsequent projects in this portfolio. The need for this social time extends to the site of exchange between image-maker and sound-maker in other contexts. Meeting each other as colleagues and collaborators, making time for contextualising our relationships to each other and the project.<sup>15</sup>

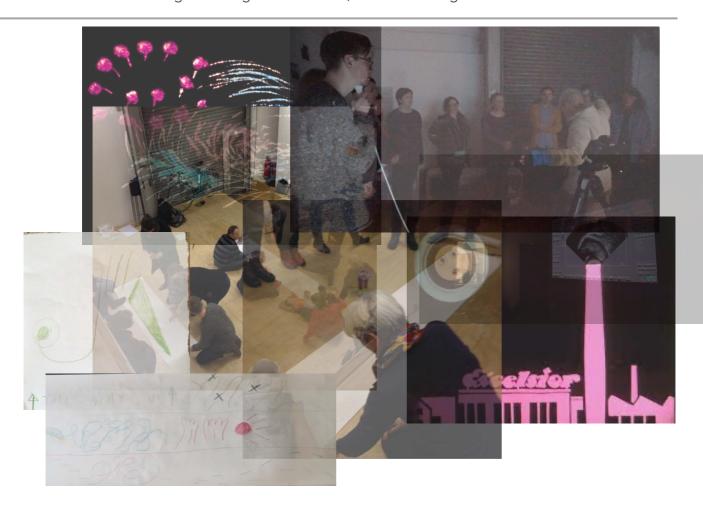
We did so by playing some collective graphic scoring games. One of which was for each participant to draw the sound of a word as it fell from their tongue, thinking of the shape of the sound, it's colour and texture. They would then write the word on the back of the page, then pass it on to another to perform their score and the group would try to guess the word from the resultant sound. Another game was to break into two groups and collectively draw graphic scores which told a fairy tale, discussing the rationales behind the gestures and how they related to the stories. The two groups then swapped scores and performed the scores, before trying to guess what the story might have been, discussing their reasonings behind their sonorous translations.

In the second workshop we experimented with reading works from the oeuvre of visual music as motive graphic scores. The relatively slow visual rhythm of these scores and distinct simple colours and shapes, allowed the group time to establish relations between the gestures they were following and their sonorous responses. However, the choir did note a considerable difference in the difficulty of reading moving images compared to static ones. This raised a question around the agency of the moving image being felt through the rhythm of its edit; that whilst the static image was read and sung at a tempo dictated by the performers, in the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> For example, two of the choir members spoke of their experience as synaesthetes. These were extremely interesting conversations; however, it seems important to emphasise that my practice is not orientated towards an entirely synaesthetic conception of sound and image. The notion of the *sound-image* proposed in *listening together-apart* is one in which the sound and image embrace their modal differences, rather than a *Gesamtkunstwerk* type experience. Christoph Cox's chapter "Against Synaesthesia" in his book *Sonic Flux* points towards *sound-image* constructions in this vein, "It comes in part from the suspicion that any convergence of the senses is likely to retain the hierarchy that subordinates all other modalities to the visual. It is equally born of the desire not to eliminate the unique differences between the senses and the rich aesthetic tensions these differences generate" (Cox, 2018).

moving image, the tempo was dictated by the score. I suggested that we therefore begin to think of the image as being the conductor, as well as being the score.



For the third workshop, I invited phonetician and researcher Dr. Fabienne Westerberg from the Glasgow University Phonetics Laboratory to the rehearsal. I was keen for the choir to explore the potential for new sounds in their voices, to learn different techniques for vocalising. Dr. Westerberg brought a portable ultrasound machine, which allowed the group to see their vocal tracts projected on to the wall. Seeing the inside of our bodies moving in real time as we sang with the scores, seeing shapes of our singing bodies dancing with the shapes on the screen, provoked interesting discussions around the habitual relationships between the muscles of our mouths and the sounds we make in our everyday. Dr. Westerberg creatively and congenially guided us around the International Phonetic Alphabet, through a myriad of different vowels and consonant sounds to explore the vast sonic palettes on our palates. Attending to the subtle movements of our vocal tracts expanded our awareness of the kinds of sounds we were able to set in motion with gestures of the scores.

Before returning to the choir, I began composing sketches of what *Film Score* would become, sampling images from Bavaria Atelier GmbH's film adaptation (Hasting, Schömbs and Verden 1970) of Oskar Schlemmer's *Das Triadische Ballett* (Schlemmer 1922). The *Triadic* 

Ballet "comprises three aesthetic dimensions (costumes, music, and dance). There are three dancers, eighteen costumes, and twelve dances. The work contains three major sections, each further subdivided into a series of short dances. Each section is characterized by a dominant color and mood: the first series is lemon yellow and 'jovial-burlesque,' the second is pink and 'ceremonial-solemn,' the third is black and 'mystic-fantastic.'" (Patteson 2016, 44)

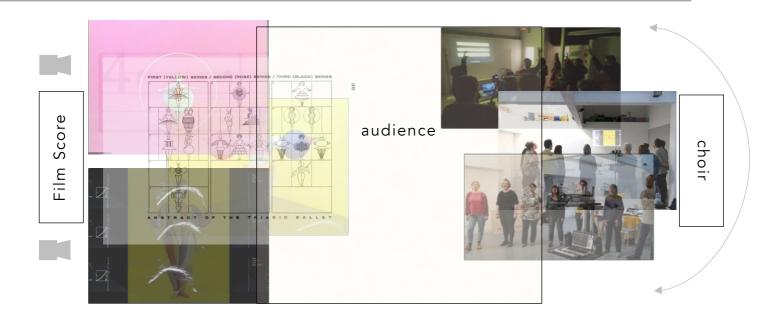
For Schlemmer, "color and form reveal their elementary values within the constructive manipulation of architectonic space.\(^{16}\) Here they constitute both object and receptacle, that which is to be filled and fulfilled by Man, the living organism" (Schlemmer 1961, 22). Writing at the advent of Ruttmann's absolute film in the early 1920's, he described the ideal of his work as a form of absolute visual stage; "form and color in motion, in the first instance in their primary aspect as separate and individual mobile, colored or uncolored, linear, flat, or plastic forms, but furthermore as fluctuating, mobile space and as transformable architectonic structures. Such kaleidoscopic play, at once infinitely variable and strictly organized, would constitute - theoretically - the absolute visual stage (Schaubuhne)" (ibid.).

Reading these movements of colour and form of *Das Triadische Ballett* as a motive graphic score was a way of listening to the fulfilment of these object-receptacle images by the choir, by the living organism. Framing the dancers as gestures in a graphic score was also a way of visually drawing attention to human agency in recognising these colours and forms as music. It is a way of drawing attention to the human inside the frame to raise awareness of those outside it; in the choir, in the audience, in the sound-image.

Film Score is also organised in three short movements; [i], [ä] and [u]. These are three of the most distinctly divergent vowel sounds, the furthest reaches of close-open and front-back between tongue and palate in the formation of vowels. The first movement focuses on more on simple shape and colour, the second on material, metallic qualities, and the third an invitation to move slowly through elongated diphthongs. The moving lines in the third movement correspond to the different formats of [i], [ä] and [u] made visible when read through a spectrogram. These images were overlaid with recordings of the choir's vocal tracts, collected from our workshop with Dr. Westerberg as a way of folding something of the score's construction back into its form.

Through repetitions of these sketches, the choir's sonorous readings of the images began to coalesce towards repeatable, if not predictable, patterns; a slow building of a private language shared between the choir.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Architectonics being the study of different kinds of structure.



I brought working versions of the score to two more rehearsals before its performance, taking notes on what the choir found difficult to follow collectively and individually, and adapting the score in response. We experimented with a sparse soundtrack to help with the performers confidence in interpreting the work. Composing this soundtrack provided a tonal and rhythmic foundation which the choir could use as a platform to ground their vocalising, and allowed me to understand *Film Score* as being both a form of visual music, and a form of open work. As indicated in the image above, in its performance at *Sound Thought 2016*, the choir was arranged across the rear of the performance space directly behind the audience, with both audience and choir facing the screen on the stage at the front. Having the choir "read their score during the performance" was a way to "mediate between them and the audience" (Burrows 2010, 143), a gesture towards the audience as *active spectators* shaping relations between sounds and images, and the performers doing the same.

I am extremely grateful to the Rhubaba choir for the creative energy, critical attention, and patient support they showed me through the devising and performance of *Film Score*. Their careful consideration of the aims of the work, and the way we collaboratively composed it, afforded me space to experiment, to make mistakes, and to learn.

The performance at the CCA Glasgow left me with a number of observations to consider going forward. The first being that although the devising sessions with the choir were exceptionally fruitful, and became a space for vibrant discussions, that I did not allow enough time for the choir to rehearse together with the final version of the score. As with any piece of music, rehearsal is vital for the performers confidence in their ability to realise the work the way they would hope to. There was also too much visual information in the score itself, too many forms moving too quickly to be improvised from comfortably. The work would also

have been better understood by the audience, and possibly more easily realised by the choir, were I to have included simple, concise instructions as to its performance on the screen at the beginning of the score.

There were however elements of the work I would take forward into future works. The orientation of the choir to the score served to perform something of the complex, intraagential flux between sound, image, artist, and audience in the sound-image, and transgressed the assumed authority of the image. Listening to the choir divergently, yet collectively sounding out the material qualities conveyed by images also offered a way of hearing something of the multiplicity of perspectives within the sound-image.

Collaboratively composing a motive graphic score was a way of *listening in* to how others sound out materialites through moving images. Film Score was the beginning of a journey towards tuning my listening to the agential intervals of the sound-image, by sounding out these matters with others.

Film Score (2016) SD video, Stereo. 6 min.

The moving-image graphic score to which the Rhubaba choir performed their live reading, can be viewed using the following link <a href="https://rb.gy/ozfaqy">https://rb.gy/ozfaqy</a> or through the QR code;



Film Score (2016)

## iii. Sonorous Objects



Tone, Timbre, Texture: Material Approaches to Sound with Moving Image Public workshop.

Artist Moving Image Festival, Tramway, Glasgow. Nov 28, 2018. The Hope Scott Trust | Artist Moving Image Festival 2018 | SGSAH Student Development Fund

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Sonorous Objects was a project that took place periodically across 2017 and 2018 between the CCA Glasgow, Tramway Glasgow and The Glasgow Project Rooms.

The title is borrowed from Pierre Schaeffer's *Objet Sonores* (Shaeffer 1966) which is the notion of the sound object arrived at through *reduced listening*; "stripping the perception of sound of everything that is not 'it itself', in order to hear only the sound, in its materiality, its substance, its perceivable dimensions" (Chion 2009, 39). For Schaeffer, and his former student Chion, the sonorous object is a correlate of reduced listening "they define each other mutually and respectively as perceptual activity and object of perception" (ibid.).

I most often practice reduced listening when composing or mixing soundtracks in the studio; considering how and where sounds meet, how they contrast and complement each other as parts within a whole. I understand it as a form of conceptual-perceptual aural sculpture. If my listening attention had hands, it would be feeling for the weight, texture, grain, shape, colour, opacity, and vitality of a sound, chipping away the semiotic sediment pearled around what I hear to uncover something of a sound apart from it social, cultural, personal connotations<sup>17</sup>. A sound, though, is held amongst the irreducible flow of sound, it cannot be disentangled. What I am feeling between my listening fingers is the effervescence of those material qualities above in continuous flux (Cox 2018). Through reduced listening I am listening to, and as such shaping, a morphing, moving, borderless body.<sup>18</sup>

In Sonorous Objects, I worked with sculptor Lauren Gault<sup>19</sup> and artist-choreographer Mark Bleakley<sup>20</sup> to collaboratively explore the different correlate matters that might be performed by attending to materials through sound, sculpture, text, moving bodies and moving images.

The project did not result in a definitive work-as-outcome. Nonetheless, it did profoundly inform the theoretical direction of this thesis and the practical approaches to thinking across disciplines devised through the workshops.<sup>21</sup> Sonorous Objects culminated in a public workshop titled Tone, Timbre, Texture: Material Approaches to Sound with Moving Image.

The project aimed to move on from the figurative materialites of colour and shape explored in *Film Score*, to considering tangible, everyday materials. Through *Sonorous Objects*, Mark, Lauren and I read and discussed questions around how the *slices* of what we can

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup>It is important to remember however, that "reduced listening is not a censoring activity. It does not imply repressing or denying our figurative or emotional associations. It merely requires placing the latter temporarily to the side of our activity of observing and naming" (Chion 2009, 487).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Though digital recording techniques allow a composer to hear 'the same' sound over and over, this could also be said of watching a film on repeat. No matter how many times you watch it, you will always see something new.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> See appendix B

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> See appendix B

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Both Lauren and Mark are collaborators on the publication *Near by*, with Mark also collaborating on *crystalliquid*.

comprehend of matters which we cannot entirely grasp proposed in Timothy Morton's viscous Hyperobjects (Morton 2013), resonated with Baradian apparatus, and the forms of knowledge allowed/disallowed by them. We considered these in relation to the intra-agential fluidity between media and materiality, the *in-betweenness* of these as *mediumlmaterial* (Herzogenrath 2015), explored by Bernd Herzegonrath; extending the "understanding of 'medium' in such a way as to include the concept of materiality that also includes 'non-human' transmitters" (ibid., 2).

We initially met for two days in the CCA Glasgow cinema space, each bringing a material we hoped to collaboratively explore. In my case, a box of 'singing sand'<sup>22</sup> I had collected on a research trip to the Isle of Eigg in the summer of 2017. Lauren brought some freshly shorn sheep's wool from her family's farm, and Mark a medical thermoplastic used in cast moulding he was exploring through his choreographic practice.

Initially, as with *Film Score*, I asked that we try to keep our explorations to our immediate phenomenological encounters with the materials we were investigating, deliberately omitting the conditions of the materials production, their broader societal applications, and cultural connotations. I hoped that in doing so might help us attune to something of the *wooliness* of the wool, the *sandiness* of the sand and the *plasticity* of the plastic. However fruitful this attention to the immediate encounter was as an initial framing device, the socio-political and cultural conditions through which we perform with materials could not be ignored. Rather, this condition of inquiry became an obstacle to discussion, and we quickly removed this restriction.

We began by *listening in* to the materials using different kinds of microphones and filming them using different kinds of lenses, considering the different material qualities these instruments of observation amplified and muted in relation to our unmediated encounters.

Lauren then led us through a series of writing exercises aimed at articulating, or naming<sup>23</sup>, our perceptions of the materials, feeling them between our fingers, feeling the wool's oiliness, how it pushed back when compressed, describing tangents of these encounters. We discussed the differences between the knowledges that filming and listening to these materials allowed for, and those communicated through our haptic experiences of them. We

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> Singing sands are very particular kind of sand found at certain locations along the west coast of Europe and Africa, and in a few other locations around the globe, which due to its regularity of grain size emits sound as these grains are rub together (Fischer 2012). Whereas the enormous singing sand dunes of Morocco can be heard resonating in rich, low tones, the significantly smaller *singing sands* beach in Cleadale, Eigg make little more than squeaks as one walks along them.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> The power of naming to bring a thing into being is a performative act explored most eloquently, I think, through Ursula K. LeGuin's *Earthsea* series (LeGuin 2012). Learning the 'true name' of a thing is the root of magic in the world of those books. It may be the same for our own.

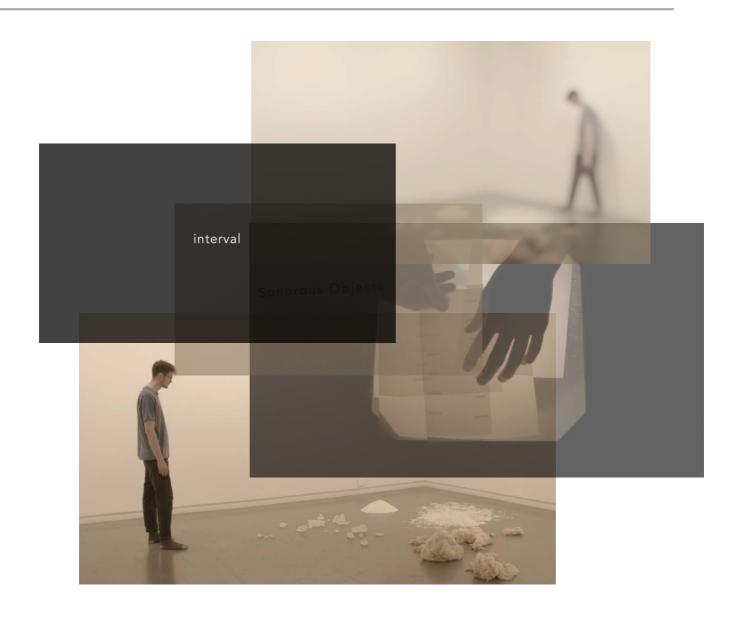
discussed how trying to articulate these experiences through text offered new understandings of these qualia, that in trying to find the 'right' word to articulate our experience, we came across other, semiotically related words which nonetheless spoke to something else of these encounters, different from the immediate feelings between our fingers, different from what we heard or saw in our recordings of them.



Mark then guided us through a series of movement exercises; moving as wool in coils of tension and release, gaps and oils and small grits of extraneous matters caught in the threads. We slid and grated like sand, holding and releasing, dissolving and compressing, heating and cooling, forming and deforming towards thermoplastic materials. I had never used my body to think about sound before, and Mark's movement exercises provoked entirely new ways of considering the sonorous qualities of these materials.

Having my listening attention guided through non-acoustic lenses opened my ears to new possibilities in the ways I might approach sounding those materials out. Composing sound-images involves creating a sound of the matters within a frame. This can refer to tangible matters, i.e., asking "what does that city sound like?", or "what does this room sound like?". Though just as often the matter at hand is an intangible one; "what do the relationships in this image sound like?". The workshops gave me tools to creatively explore the interval between how I encounter a matter and how I might speak nearby it through sound.

Following these initial workshops, Lauren, Mark and I continued to exchange texts, questions, thoughts and provocations around our collaborative investigations.<sup>24</sup> During this time, I was invited by curators Naomi Pearce and Mark Briggs to contribute to Down a Material Mouth, the 2018 iteration of LUX Scotland's Artist Moving Image Festival (AMIF 2018) held at Tramway, Glasgow. I proposed a public workshop led by Lauren, Mark and I around the processes we were exploring through Sonorous Objects. At roughly the same time I was offered use of the Glasgow Project Rooms for two weeks, a week either side of the weekend of AMIF, and chose to use the time and space to further our investigations. I was awarded funding<sup>25</sup> to be able to invite three other artists working between moving image and sound, whose practices I greatly admire: Anneke Kampman, Duncan Marquiss and Rebecca Wilcox.



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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Which grew into the letters exchanged in *Near by*.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Through the Scottish Graduate School of Arts and Humanities' (SGSAH) Student Development Fund.



During the first week of our residency at the Glasgow Project Rooms, Lauren, Mark and I continued to build upon the process that we had begun through or workshops at the CCA. We used the time to slowly experiment with cameras, microphones, movement, projection, sculpture and text. We made objects, created choreographies, and spoke at length about our practices, all the while slowly sketching out a workshop plan for AMIF which might guide others through the kind of visceral learning we were exploring together.

Before setting out what we did through the workshop however, I think it important to speak to what I learned from the following week, working with Marquiss, Kampman and Wilcox.

Throughout the first week of the Project Rooms residency, Lauren, Mark and I had been filming our investigations, from which I edited a short film that was structured along the lines of the workshop. In the week following the AMIF workshop, I aimed to spend the time working with Marquiss, Kampman and Wilcox on creating a scratch soundtrack for this film, which we would perform live at a public event on the final day of the residency. There were several reasons why we didn't achieve this, from which I learned a great deal about creating conditions for collaborative creativity. Marquiss, Kampman and Wilcox are exceptional artists and thinkers in their respective fields, each creating sound-images from different perspectives through their practices. However, rather than using the time we had together to learn about how they think and make with sound-images, I had instead arranged our time to follow the processes of the workshop quite rigidly. I had done so in the hope that it might give us a

structure to create a score from in the three days we had together. Instead, however, doing so seemed to close off avenues for collaborative exploration. I was asking them to be creative only on my terms, rather than creating a context that facilitated their creative agency. Instead of allowing time for listening to each other's methods, for sharing the theories and practices that structure our ways of creating and conceptualising sound-images, I instead had created a rigid context centred around my own work, rather than a flexible one which supported collaboration.

The spectre of the live performance also weighed heavily on our time together. Though my intention had been to focus on process rather than outcome, the pressure of a public facing performance had the opposite effect. Eventually we decided to cancel the public sharing, which gave us time to speak more openly about what had been of interest through the process for each of us. I am exceptionally grateful to Marquiss, Kampman and Wilcox for the time they spent with me, and the criticality, compassion and creativity they invested in my work. They are artists who I continue to learn from and be inspired by.

I have since tried to ensure that in any collaborative work I am involved in, be they community focused or more intimate exchanges with individual artists, there is time for sharing references, for raising questions and most importantly, simply speaking with each other.



10:30am - 12:30

Richy Carey, Tone, Timbre, Texture: Material approaches to sound with moving-image

workshop

Tramway studio

A two-hour workshop looking at practical ways notions of materiality can be translated between moving-image and soundtrack. Drawing on Karen Barad's concept of Agential Realism, and using collective movement, writing and sounding exercises, we will work towards creating part of a soundtrack with a moving-image work that explores these processes.

The workshop will be led by composer Richy Carey and artists Mark Bleakley and Lauren Gault.

\*Places for this workshop are limited and can only be booked with a festival or day pass for AMIF 2018. See ticket information for further details.

Tone, Timbre, Texture: Material Approaches to Sound with Moving Image took place over two hours with a group of sixteen artist filmmakers. I broke the session down into eight parts that resonated with the sequential process which we had been devising.

- 1. Introduction A Thread to Pull.
- 2. Feeling the Material.
- 3. Sounding the Image.
- 4. The not-quite-in-my-vocabulary.
- 5. Neither Eye, nor Ear, nor Tongue.
- 6. Matter and Form.
- 7. Conclusion A knot to tease.

A Thread to Pull was the introduction, where we all introduced ourselves, and spoke about some of the themes of the session. We discussed elements of Barad's Agential Realism framing the sound-image as an intra-action between sound and the moving image. We spoke

of differences between tone, timbre and texture in music theory and how these might relate to how the participants might approach reading an image and thinking about interrelated sound.

In Feeling the Material, we watched filmed images of the materials gathered at the Project Room on a screen – discussing, listening in to, the differences between material qualia portrayed by the image, and those of the material/object present in the room, make notes on these differences. For example, that the colour of the sand in the image was much more muted than the colour of the sand that was present before us, or how the macro images drew our attention to the individuality of each grain.

Sounding the Image was a series of simple vocal exercises that served to both warm-up the group, and to record our initial impressions of what the image might sound like. We would refer back to at these recordings at the end of the workshop. For example, asking the participants to sound out the sand with their voices, to find a grainy, rasping or shushing sound, and recording this collective response. This served two purposes; to enable the group to listen back to the collective sound, and discuss where they heard texture and where they heard timbre in the collection of voices. The exercise also served to highlight how limited, or reserved, their initial ideas of what sound of the sand could be.

We then went on to the *not-quite-in-my-vocabulary*. Led by Lauren, we divided the participants into three groups, each with a different material in front of them that they could pick up and play with. We asked them to each write down eight to ten words on a sheet of tracing paper that articulated something of the materiality of the matter in front of them. They discussed these words amongst their groups, sliding leaves of paper over and under, before deciding on three to five words which the group felt held the most interesting resonances with the materials in front of them. We then gave each group a list of pre-prepared prefixes and suffixes and asked each to create a new compound word. These new hyphenated words drew together the divergent material qualities, holding the differences in relation to one another, holding something of the other within the hyphens. The prefixes were a way to direct a reader's attention to notions of scale, position or relation. For example<sup>26</sup>;

In *Neither Eye, nor Ear, nor Tongue*, Mark then guided us through movement exercises whereby we sought to embody something of these new compound words. Beginning with Steve Paxton's *The Small Dance / Stand* (Paxton 1977), Mark guided our movements towards

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>26</sup> This exercise forms the basis of coordinates, an exercise I will speak to in *Bugs & Beasts Before the Law*.

a concentrated awareness of the weight of liquid in our bodies. We then discussed with the groups the differences again between reading or speaking material qualities and embodying them, and the illuminations each cast upon the other.

In Matter and Form, we brought each group together to repeat the vocal exercises from the beginning of the class, creating a collective sound for each material based on their new compound words, with their movements still fresh in their minds and muscles. Each group was significantly more confident in voicing their sounds, and indeed in the range of new sounds they vocalised in doing so. We recorded these collective responses, playing these alongside the moving images of the materials, allowing the participants time to reflect on how they arrived at this as a sound of that. Before finally coming together in A knot to tease, all share our thoughts on the processes.

Sonorous Objects made a number of things apparent which profoundly challenged ways I had been working up to this point. The most evident perhaps, being a heightened appreciation of the agency of non-human materials<sup>27</sup>; that the other sets its own terms of encounter, and thus that my experience of these others are always *intra-agential*. I am acted upon as I act upon the other, and what becomes is a performed through both; that the same is true in the sound-image. In a Baradian sense each continually forms and reforms the other through their fluxing, intra-active becoming.

However, whilst the project drew my attention to this entangled, agential *togetherness*, it also drew my attention to the seperability of this relation. That what we come know is correlate to how we come to know it. With regards to my compositional practice, this has led me to listen more attentively for that which an image is not speaking to of a matter, and to create sound which seeks to amplify these muted perspectives.

Learning to listen through different modes of attention brought into focus what Barad describes as "onto-epistem-ology – the study of practices of knowing in being" (Barad 2007, 185), that "practices of knowing and being are not isolable; they are mutually implicated" (ibid.) For Barad, and others such as Tim Ingold, there is no Cartesian separation between knowing and being, "we are part of the world in its differential becoming" (ibid.) and as such are not "outside observers of the world... rather we are part of the world in its ongoing intraactivity" (ibid., 184). However, as I learned during the second week of my residency at *Project Rooms*, as the apparatuses we construct to know the world shape its mattering, that "what is

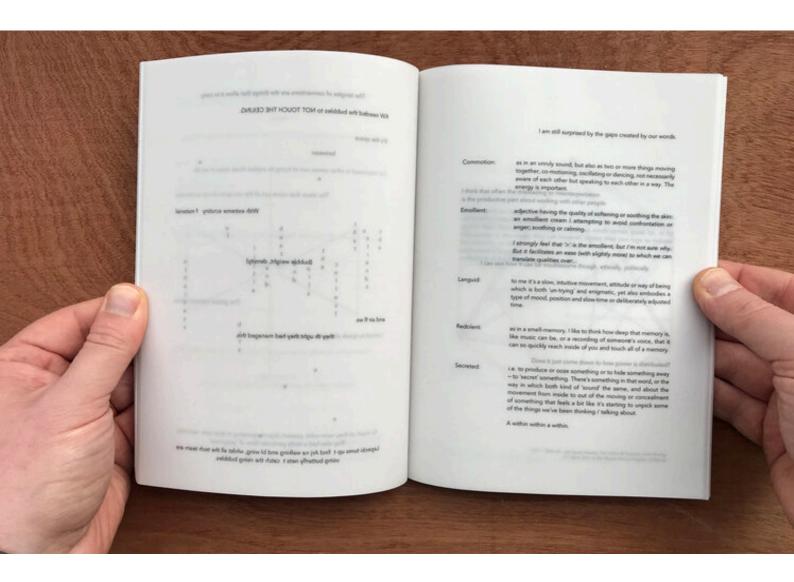
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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>27</sup> Which in some ways we encountered in the devising of *Film Score*, when the choir moved to reading moving images, rather than static images, as scores.

needed is something like an *ethico-onto-epistem-ology* – an appreciation of the entwining of ethics, knowing and being – since each intra-action matters" (ibid.).

I learned a great deal from both Mark and Lauren through our investigations, and they are artists with whom I have continued to work and learn from since. They opened my ears to completely new ways of considering the sonic world we inhabit. Though I do not always literally create sculptural objects, or move my body, in response to the moving images I work with, I very often do so mentally, feeling the matters in my body, holding their weight in my hand, listening through my other senses.

Sonorous Objects led me to think more carefully about how the different strands of my practice-research come to shape each other, to question what divisions I had, perhaps arbitrarily or in response to institutional expectations, created between them and why. For example, at this time I was also working two days a week in a school, facilitating music classes for participants who were either deaf, blind or degrees of both. Through this work I was learning new ways of speaking about sound and sight, learning about the subjectivities of seeing and hearing, learning new ways of listening, ways of facilitating other's sonic creativity, and learning to question where I placed value in these collaborative exchanges - the process or the outcome? This was very similar to, though also very different from, the work I was exploring through my academic research. What I learned in each context informed how I worked in the other. Acknowledging this, I think, is at the root of diffractive thought.



Richy Carey. 2018.

Publication, Recycled and Tracing Paper.

Made with Sharlene Bamboat, Mark Bleakley, Martin Cathcart Froden, Lauren Gault, Alexander Storey Gordon, Alexis Mitchell, Ainslie Roddick, Sarah Rose.

Near by is a publication tracing lines between sound, text and image across four works:

Memo to Spring with Sarah Rose. NOW, The Scottish National Galleries of Modern Art, Edinburgh, Oct '17 – Feb '18.

Special Works School with Bambitchell (Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Mitchell).

Gallery TPW, Toronto, Jan – Feb '18 + Berlinale, Berlin, Feb '18.

Wondering Soul with Alexander Storey Gordon. Radiophrenia, Centre for Contemporary Arts, Glasgow, Nov '17.

Sonorous Objects with Mark Bleakley and Lauren Gault. Artist Moving Image Festival, Tramway, Glasgow, Oct '18.

The publication was composed from a series of letters between the author and the artists, written during and following their collaborations. The letters spoke to the authors' processes of thinking and making collaboratively, the subjects of their works, and the translation of sound, image, object, and text through one another. These letters were then exploded and recomposed into a series of overlapping text scores as a way of diffracting fragments of these conversations around four knots: sound, word, image, and pattern. Author and long-time collaborator Martin Cathcart Froden then edited these fragments into four monologues: a distillation of this polyphony into a monophony, a letter in reply.

*Near by* was printed on recycled paper and tracing paper, with each copy made by hand at Publication Studio Glasgow, May 2018.

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Near by opens with a letter.<sup>28</sup> I began composing this letter as I cycled home from my first meeting with artist Sarah Rose, thinking through the conversation we had just had over a cup of coffee at the CCA, Glasgow. We met to discuss an exhibition Sarah had upcoming, *Memo to Spring*, and the prospect of making a sound work which would accompany the sculptures she was creating for the show. Though we had never met properly before, as the conversation unfolded, we slowly *sounded out* sites where our practices and research intersected, in questions around ecologies of materiality, authorship, and language. Sarah told me of her previous works, her attention to sound in practice, and some of the conceptual touchstones guiding her thinking towards the forthcoming exhibition. We spoke of my own work, of reading I was doing that resonated with her practice and eventually, how we might move forward together towards composing collaboratively. It was the beginning of a long process of attunement<sup>29</sup>; of listening, responding, learning, and imagining together.

During our conversation Sarah told me of a curatorial project space she co-steered called *tenletters*<sup>30</sup>, and I think it likely that this conversational aside was the prompt for me to write a letter to her. A letter seemed a way of noting down some of what we had spoken of, whilst prompting a continuation of the conversation. Unlike emails or text messaging, writing a letter felt considered as well as colloquial, that it ought to be read and returned to, kept and shared.

Alongside making *Memo to Spring*, I was also working with other artists on other projects. Though each of these projects explored different matters, through different mediums, over differing timescales and contexts, there was also a significant degree of conceptual consideration in common between them. Often a creative question from one project might be answered, overtly or obliquely, through dialogue with another. My own making, thinking, and learning was distributed across these works as well as being collected within each. Through *Near by* I sought to acknowledge this vibrant field of influence and temporal asynchrony. I asked my collaborators to enter an exchange of letters, to have a "conversation reflecting on our making" (Carey 2018) and was explicit about the possibility of these being made public, and eventually, into a publication.

Beatrice Gibson and Will Holder's book *The Tiger's Mind* (Gibson and Holder 2012) provided a framework for making public the kinds of collaborative, creative exchange that *Near by* investigates. Inspired by "experimental music practices of the 60's and 70's" (ibid., 3)

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>28</sup> The letters referred to throughout *Near by* were not written on paper and sent via the postal service. They were instead exchanged via a google docs. However, their tone and intention were always to be that of a letter, to give "time for retrospection and to go back and look at particular moments shared between people and what they may or may not mean" (Storey Gordon, 2018).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>29</sup> Which I am thankful to say continues to this day.

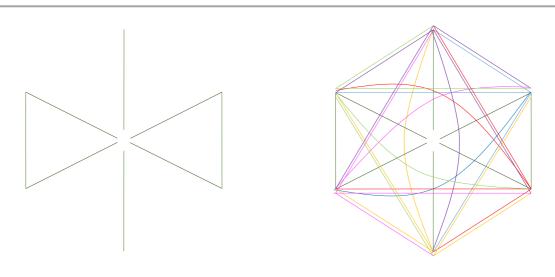
<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>30</sup> tenletters is a "space... focused by the representation, expression and circulation of language in its many forms" to "give(s) time and attention to writing, reading, and publishing practices outside of the gallery setting." (tenletters 2021).

Gibson's work often illuminates "ideas around collective authorship" and "poetics of activation" (ibid.) intrinsic to filmmaking by devising works through graphic and verbal notation. Both the publication, and her 2012 film of the same name (Gibson 2012), were created collaboratively with editor Will Holder, composers John Tilbury and Alex Waterman, and artists Jesse Ash and Céline Condorelli. Their project began as a "close reading" (ibid., 4) of Cornelius Cardew's original verbal score, *The Tiger's Mind* (Cardew, The Tiger's Mind 1967). Gibson and Holder's publication opens out conversations between the artists as they considered the conceptual structure of the project, the questions and rationales behind their interpretations of Cardew's score, and references which these artists brought to the project to frame the work. While the publication speaks to the expanse of conversation surrounding the film's creation, the film itself performs this collective interpretation and distribution of authorship, in part by foregrounding different elements of the work as characters/performers.



Near by draws on the compositional transparency of *The Tiger's Mind*, as well as other publications which obliquely open up artists' processes of sound-image composition such as 8 Metaphors (because the moving-image is not a book) (Fowler, et al. 2011) and Optical Sound Films: 1971-2007 (Sherwin 2007). Near by is an exploration of dialogue and of discourse, which is "not what is said", but "that which constrains and enables what can be said" (Barad 2007, 146). Though there might be an "inherent and inescapable contradiction" (Fowler, et al. 2011, 7) in using text to speak to the sound-image, as the editor of 8 Metaphors Mason Leaver-Yap states, in writing collectively about collaborative endeavour there is "an emphasis on the contingency of making and of making meaning: the need for verification, translation, reinscription by others." (ibid.)

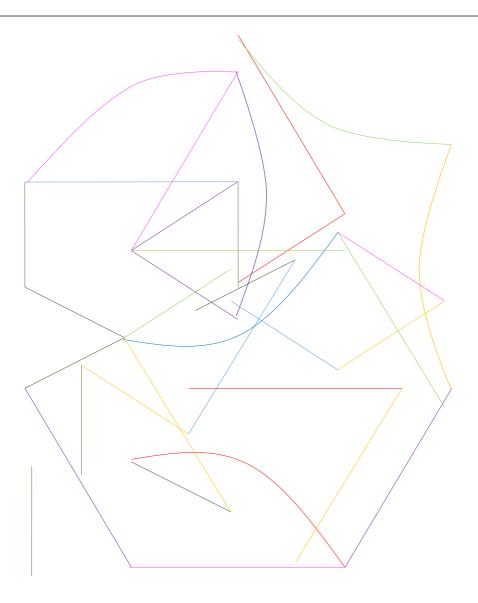
It was in this spirit, that I also wrote to Alexander Storey Gordon, with whom I had been collaborating on a live-to-air radio work titled *Wondering Soul*, to artist duo Bambitchell with whom I had been composing a sound-image work titled *Special Works School*, and to Mark Bleakley and Lauren Gault, with whom I had been devising *Sonorous Objects*. I became the locus of an interchange between two individuals, a duo who would confer with each other before replying in unison, and two independent artists working collaboratively; a shape which could be mapped quite simply as in the left-hand image below.



The aim of *Near by* though, was to listen across these exchanges, to make readable the ways in which I could hear Alexander's writing on spectres resounding in Sarah's sculptural objects, or to listen for the resonances of Mark's movement games in my approaches to sounding the degradation of senses in Bambitchells soundtrack. The shape of these entanglements of influence is anything but simple and might instead look more akin to the image on the right above. As with the sound-image, as it is in the hyphens in this thesis, its shape is never one thing, it is an unruly, nebulous motive flux. "It goes backwards, forwards and up the wall!! It is very responsive and requires a lot of listening" (Rose 2018).

Looking through the letters for lines which spoke nearby questions of sound, word, image, and pattern, was a way to diffract our voices through these matters. I composed a series of text scores from these conversational fragments using tracing paper. The paper allowed me to compose through the pages as well as across them, as I had with my collaborators in our works and in our letters, with the material performing something of the opacity of those intraactions, and the distributed, opaque authorship of the work. The text scores might be what Lely and Saunders describe as "no mood" (Lely and Saunders 2012, 42) verbal scores. The scores "do not centre around verbs" (ibid.), they don't instruct a reader to do anything directly. Rather, the scores aim "to achieve a kind of strategic indeterminacy" whereby "it is up to the reader to determine what meaning to privilege" (ibid.). The scores are performed

simply through the reader's reading; around, through and across the pages. They are both an invitation into the conversations in the letters, and a gesture towards an audience's complicity in making sound-images meaningful. Like the image below, what is presented in the scores is one way of arranging fragments of these relations between collaborators, though as with any open work, is not intended to be read as the only way.



I approached author, editor and long-time collaborator Martin Cathcart Froden<sup>31</sup> to discuss the text scores, with a view to bringing this diffusion of voices back into the focus of a single monologue again; to write a new letter from these letters. Martin took the fragments I had chosen and edited them into four new correspondences, diffracting these conversations

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>31</sup> We first worked together on a project called *All at Sea* (Carey, Cathcart Froden and Walker 2012); part album, part publication, the project explored a process of collaboratively creating a record through visual art, creative writing and music simultaneously.

around four matters of my practice-research which he named: THE MAKING, THE PRIVATE, THE PUBLIC, and THE UNKNOWING & THE IN-BETWEEN. Martin recomposed lines from the Near by letters, indicating his own voice between brackets. As my own practice-research involves realising and communicating the sonic imagination of others, hearing one's own voice and ideas translated so carefully and insightfully was a poignant reminder of the intimacy and trust inherent in this site of interpretation, as well as the remarkable clarity with which one who spends a long time listening can articulate another's thoughts.

I went on to hand-make eighty copies of *Near by* at Publication Studio Glasgow<sup>32</sup>, a DIY printing and binding studio hosted at the CCA that is free for anyone to use. Feeling the grain of the paper between my fingers, lining up the scores for each copy, the slow, repetitive, and careful attention needed to make so many, and the delicate guillotining of each, was redolent of being in my own studio, and my own processes of sound-image composition. It was reminiscent of listening to timbres of sounds and gestures of image as you mix them together, listening for how their materialites meet, of the often laborious but necessary careful management of files, and of the fine trimming and placement of regions to arrange the most *affective* concomitances of sound and image. Making the publications was a pleasure, a small but important acknowledgement to make, as it is "something which is often denied by artists in the contemporary" (Storey Gordon 2018).

Writing 'letters' between collaborators has since become an integral part of my practice. I find them to be a way of tracing the evolution of a creative conversation and site to spark new avenues of thought. They can be exchanged over long distances and easily accommodate slower tempos of making, they can be read and returned to at leisure. Letters invite both the writer and the reader to, "for a time, put ourselves in each other's voices" (Carey 2018), and when thoughtfully composed, are a reminder of the careful consideration we must pay to the ways in which we translate these voices.

A physical copy of the publication *Near by* is submitted alongside this thesis.

The following pages provide accounts of the works which are discussed through *Near by; Memo to Spring* (2017), *Special Works School* (2018), and *Wondering Soul* (2017), with the exclusion of *Sonorous Objects* (2018), which was explored in the previous chapter. These short descriptions are intended to offer context to the conversations which unfold through the pages of *Near by*.

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>32</sup> Publication Studio Glasgow "is part of an international network of eleven studios spanning four continents" under the umbrella Publication Studio. (Glasgow 2021) "The studio is a laboratory for publication in its fullest sense – not just the production of books, but the production of a public" (ibid.).



With Sarah Rose. 2017.
3 channel sound installation, 12 mins.

NOW, Scottish National Galleries of Modern Art, Edinburgh. Oct 28, 2017 – Feb 18, 2018.

"Sarah Rose's overall practice engages with processes of translation, abstraction, mutation, and transformation to think through the lifecycles of material resources and information. Sculptures and sound works trace different states, contingent interactions and ways of communicating" (Talbot Rice 2021).

After our first meeting, which I spoke of at the beginning of this chapter, Sarah and I met once a week for a couple of months to discuss her work and to spend time playing with sound in my studio. Sarah would suggest a material or action to record, I would do so, we would listen, I might suggest new ideas or materials we could try, Sarah might do the same. Directed by Sarah, it was a slow, sociable, organic process of listening and responding.

We composed a sound piece that played over 3 separate channels in the exhibition, with the dialogue moving between each speaker in slow, tidal waves. This sound work was an accompaniment to the main sculpture in the room, a cast polyurethane foam, the kind used as acoustic dampening, which Sarah had created. Between the sound in the space and the materials in the room, the works spoke to tidal movement, what is held and let go of through materials, humans and the non-human, the porous ways these are enmeshed.



The sound was relatively simple, though the conversation rich. Sarah's voice sings through the works I have gone on to make since. As her sculptures speak to, the resonances of a matter can be felt in materials where its waves have washed against it; "it speaks to us of its invisible capacity, and the indivisible volume that we excite and produce by being with it, intra-acting its expanse" (Voegelin 2019). Though we've not had an opportunity to work together since, we do occasionally meet to discuss art, sound, ecology, listening, materiality,

and life. These conversations are an artistic labour that is just as vital to my listening practice as time spent in the studio or in works made material. *Near by* is a way of amplifying this kind of unquantifiable influence, from Sarah and from the other artists I've collaborated with, which can be heard through the sound-images in this portfolio and beyond.<sup>33</sup>

Memo to Spring (2017)

3 channel sound installation. 12 mins.

The sound work *Memo to Spring* was mixed across three channels and played back on loop through speakers hung from the gallery ceiling. A stereo mixdown of the piece can be listened to using the following link <a href="https://rb.gy/yxkq11">https://rb.gy/yxkq11</a> or through the QR code;



Memo to Spring (2017)

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>33</sup> See Appendix A.



Dir. Bambitchell. 2018. HD Video, Stereo. 27 min.

BFI London Film Festival, Experimenta. Oct 10 – 21, 2018. Videomedeja, Serbia. Aug 31 – Sept 2, 2018. Union Docs, Brooklyn, NY. May 4, 2018. Berlinale, Forum Expanded, Berlin. Feb 15 – 25, 2018. Gallery TPW, Toronto. Jan 13 – Feb 24, 2018.

Special Works School was "the codename used by the British War Office between 1917-1919 for a group of artists tasked with the job of 'camoufleur' - painters, textile artists, scenographers, designers, sculptors and scenic painters who were employed by the military to work specifically on developing camouflage technology." (Bambitchell 2021)

Bambitchell, the moniker for the research-based practice of artists Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Kyle Mitchel, invited me to collaborate with them on a new work commissioned by Gallery TPW, Toronto, which spoke to contemporary questions of *surveillance*. At the time, Sharlene Bamboat was based in Pittsburgh and Alexis Mitchell in Berlin, with the work being developed almost entirely over the internet.

The duo had created a script for a film which framed "surveillance as an aesthetic practice" (ibid.) and considered "the psychic, embodied and material dimensions of surveillance - both from the position of the surveillor and the surveilled". (ibid.) The arc of their script follows the disintegration of sense (touch, taste, smell, sight and hearing) from the perspective of three colours: sand, cyan and purple. The duo approached me in part due to my previous work with Ruttmann's Lichtspeil: Opus I and proposed creating the soundtrack before filming any moving images for the work. The privileging of sound in relation to the moving image, and the task of sonifying the non-listening senses at the same time as notions of colour, was an exciting prospect in relation to my previous research. Following Gibson's work in The Tiger's Mind, I framed the script as a form of score, as "a way of making people move" (Gibson and Holder 2012, 3).

There are several sonorous gestures toward the embodiment of colour, and the movement of these bodies, throughout the work.

Purple narrates from the omniscient position of the *Voice of God* (Wolfe 1997); a narrator who speaks from "a position of absolute mastery and knowledge outside the spatial and temporal boundaries of the social world the film depicts" (ibid.). In colour theory, *the line of purples* is "the locus on the edge of the chromaticity diagram formed between extreme spectral red and violet" (Wikipedia 2021). Colours along the line of purples are difficult to determine as their wavelengths are a fully saturated mixture somewhere between the extreme ends of red and violet, beyond which the human eye cannot discern. To sonify this sense of the extra-human, or edge of human sensory perception, played under Purple's dialogue is a an infrasonic sine tone oscillating at 19Hz. This frequency is also known as the *ghost frequency*, and has been claimed to be close enough to the resonant frequency of the human eyeball to cause migraines, eye watering and in some cases, spectres of images to appear (Tandy and Lawrence 1998).<sup>34</sup> Though most cinema equipment would be unable to reproduce this frequency, it's inclusion is a conceptual conceit, a way of pointing to the liminal

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 $<sup>^{34}</sup>$  This sound is also used throughout *Wondering Soul* to similar ends.

edges of our abilities to see and hear; to the extrasensory site where the voice of Purple is speaking from.

Cyan however, speaks in the second person, and its dialogue is double tracked and delivered in wheezy, breathy tones as a suggestion of *cyanosis*; a symptom of disease indicative of a lack of oxygen in the blood, which turns the skin a bluish hue.

Sand's voice is processed through a low resolution bitcrusher to achieve a digital disintegration of the sound and bring out a sense of grain in its timbre. I recorded the dialogue in broken phrases, and at some sections as separate syllables, before editing these back together into sensible sentences as a way of speaking to the multitude of the material which the colour is named after.

The trio of voices which interject in harmonies are *the chorus*, in the style of Greek plays. They sing as a substitute for the indivisible entirety of all other colours in the spectrum.

For its exhibition in Toronto, a series of chapbooks were published as tangents through which meet the themes of the work. One of these chapbooks was a transcription of a dialogue back and forth between the curator of the show, Bambitchell and I, resonating with the letters in *Near by*. A 3.1 mix of the soundtrack was created for its exhibition at Berlinale 2018, with the film screened on three screens in a circular room, with each colours voice distributed around separate speakers.

Special Works School (2018) HD Video, Stereo. 27 min.

The film has been shown as in both gallery and cinema contexts, in both stereo and 3.1 channel surround sound. A stereo version of the film can be viewed using the following link <a href="https://rb.gy/o8apad">https://rb.gy/o8apad</a> or through the QR code;



Special Works School (2018)



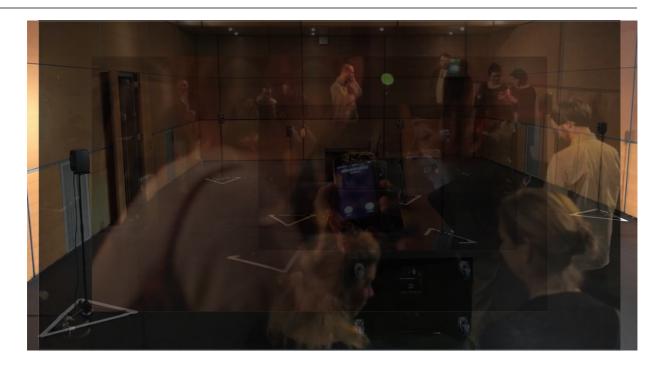
With Alexander Storey Gordon, 2017. 8 channel sound installation | Stereo live radio broadcast. 38min.

Radiophrenia, CCA Glasgow, Glasgow. Nov 10, 2017.

Wondering Soul was commissioned by Radiophrenia, an artist run FM radio station broadcasting in Glasgow and online (Radiophrenia 2021), for their Live-to-Air sessions. A collaboration with artist and curator Alexander Storey Gordon, it is the story of a data mining algorithm that falls in love with a woman and comes to take on a quasi-physical form, embodying her keenest conscious and subconscious desires, a narrative loosely based on a short ghost story by Vijay Dan Detha titled *Duvidha* or *The Dilemma* (Detha 1997).

Alexander and I began by speaking about connections between sounds and spectres, reading chapters of Mark Fisher's Weird and the Eerie (Fisher 2016) through Operation Wandering Soul, a psychological warfare operation by the United States military. During the Vietnam war, manipulated recordings of voices, sounds and music were broadcast over large speakers through the jungle as a way of distressing Vietnamese soldiers as to the state of their unburied comrades (Friedman 2021). The technologies of modernist composition were employed in sonifying the eerie, a "failure of presence" (Fisher 2016, 63). The eerie force with which we feel the presence of algorithms structuring of our contemporary, human interactions, is the central spectre in Wondering Soul.

In Wondering Soul, Alexander created a narrative in which an ambiguously voiced narrator recounts a story of the embodied emergence of an algorithm called E.M.Path. The narrator does so in dialogue with a therapist, whose line of questioning is reminiscent of those of ELIZA, an early machine learning program designed to mine and analyse ordinary language via exchange with human users.



The narrator is voiced by three different actors, whose dialogues weave in and out of each other surrounded by a soundscape which was created almost entirely from sounds collected from Freesound.org. Freesound is a "collaborative database of audio snippets, samples,

recordings, and all sorts of bleeps, ... released under Creative Commons licenses that allow their reuse" (Freesound.org 2021), and is a site to which I have both contributed<sup>35</sup> and collected sounds in different works. I set a boundary of only using sounds found through exact phrase searches of the site using words from the script. This was a way of listening for the kinds of sounds a simple ordinary language algorithm might also collect were they to create sounds from the script.

For the live element of the performance, we created an 8-channel installation to be played in a dimly lit theatre space at the CCA, Glasgow. In the centre of the room the dialogue stem played from two speakers. Beyond this were two rings of speakers; one pointing out from the centre and one pointing in from the edge. Throughout the work sounds transitioned from one ring as an indication of proximity to the narrators and the audience, inside to outside, outside to inside. Simultaneously, a stereo sum was broadcast over the radio.

Before the performance<sup>36</sup>, the audience were invited to write down their mobile phone numbers. At a specific point at the end of the work, we used a program called text-em-all to simultaneously call all these phone numbers, those in the room as well as those listening over the radio.

Wondering Soul is a work about intimacy and humanity, and the hazy spectre of closeness which technologies perform both the absence and presence of. Those who answered their phones were met with the voice of Anaïs Nin speaking on these matters from nearly fifty years ago.37

"While neurosis flows, all life becomes a symbolic play, and this is the story I'm trying to tell. We have reached a hastier and more superficial rhythm, now that we believe we are in touch with a greater amount of people, more people, more countries. This is the illusion which might cheat us of being in touch deeply with the one breathing next to us. The dangerous time when mechanical voices, radio, telephones, take the place of human intimacies, and the concept of being in touch with millions, brings a greater poverty in intimacy and human vision" (Nin 1972).

The letters which Alexander and I exchanged, were a step towards undoing these rhythms, to acknowledge the vitality and presence of speaking with others, of listening slowly, carefully, and closely.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>35</sup> For example, in Wild Tracks Radio. See Appendix A.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>36</sup> This invitation was also extended to listeners on the radio who could text in their phone numbers.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>37</sup> This has been overlaid at the appropriate point in the submitted stereo version.

Wondering Soul (2017)

8 channel sound installation. 38 mins.

The stereo sum of the 8 channel installation, broadcast live by Radiophrenia, can be listened to using the following link <a href="https://rb.gy/1gwud7">https://rb.gy/1gwud7</a> or through the QR code;



Wondering Soul (2017)

## v. crystalliquid



Richy Carey. 2018.

HD Video, Stereo I Interactive installation. 8 min.

Children's Exhibition, Tramway, Glasgow. Jul 7 – Aug 26, 2018.



In 2018 I was invited by Tramway, Glasgow, to make a new work for children between the ages of 0-12, which would be exhibited as part of a group show called *Children's Exhibition* (Tramway 2018). The project was shown under the title the TWIST (is that you're just like me) but subsequently renamed *crystalliquid*.

In the sound-image, sound can communicate material qualities that the image alone cannot. Imagine seeing on a screen knuckles knocking on a tree trunk. The image tells you that a trunk is being knocked, but nothing of the hollowness, dampness or possibly artifice of the tree, nor that of the person whose knuckles are doing the knocking. Chion's causal listening, affords the auditor this kind of "supplementary information" (Chion 1994, 25) about the object or phenomenon held in the image. It is a listening attention which asks "what is making the noise, where is it located, or how it's behaving or moving" (Chion 2009, 471). In my role as a composer of sound-images, I am often tasked with creating the sound of a matter which has no literal audible sound. Instead, to express material qualities associated with it; haptic qualities such as lightness, density, sharpness or grain and notions of scale relative to the audience through sound. Causal listening is a speculative act, "with respect to the cause that it encourages us to guess at" (ibid.). Sounding out an image can be a way of reaching through the frame to speculatively listen inside a matter, as well as to what surrounds it.

Hilda Hellström's Malleability (Hellström 2013) is a sound-image work in which different melting plastics are observed through macro photography, together with a soundtrack which seemingly plays with the scale of this observation. Deep drones and broken breaths are delayed and distorted, which at once translate the image into a vast fluctuating topography observed from a great distance, as well as an intimate account of our proximity to this ubiquitous material and the consequences of its production. Whereas Hellström's work employs sound to activate physical materials, Mikhail Karikis works with communities to compose sound-images that speak to incorporeal, but viscerally measurable matters of social, political and ecological relation, exploring "the voice as a sculptural material and a sociopolitical agent" (Whitechapel Gallery 2021). Though I first encountered Karikis' work in the months following crystalliquid's exhibition, his project No Ordinary Protest (Karikis 2018) is a model of the kind of collaborative practice-research which this research project explores; whereby at its most affective "communal listening and noise-making become tools that can 'move mountains' and transform our world" (Karikis 2021). In No Ordinary Protest, "through workshops, experimental pedagogical methods, reading, debating and play, they created a film together" (ibid.) in which the children collaboratively create a sound that "resonates with the collective howl of creatures affected by the pollution of the planet" (ibid).

For *Children's Exhibition* I proposed a project whereby I would pay close attention to a material in the vein of Hellström and, like Karikis, work with a group of children to collectively speculate as to how this material might sound. In *crystalliquid*, I worked with a group of children from a local primary school to ask, "what might liquid crystals sound like?"

We see liquid crystals all the time, though perhaps we are looking right through them. Liquid Crystals are the LC in the LCD screens of our TVs, computers, phones and watches; a material mediating many common sound-image intra-actions.

Liquid crystals are a non-classical state of matter; they are neither entirely solid nor entirely liquid, they flow like a liquid and behave like solid crystal. The molecules in the kinds of liquid crystal found in LCD screens 'twist' from a randomly distributed order to all being aligned in the same order when heat is applied to them. It is this twisting that allows light to shine through. Each pixel on an LCD screen is really made from three subpixels, one green, one blue and one red. The amount of voltage applied to the liquid crystal in each subpixel changes the amount of light allowed through, which is how the blend of these three colours is created in every pixel on your screen. Like the sound-image, liquid crystals are neither one thing, nor the other, but both at the same time. The *twist* inherent in the liquid crystal, and to its ability to mediate the sound-image, is a means to articulate this kind of relational difference.

I worked with Tramway's public engagement producer to approach Glendale Primary School to ask if one of their classes would be interested in creating an artwork together for exhibition in their local gallery. Alongside my PhD research, I have continued to work as a community musician, making art in schools, prisons, and community contexts for various social arts organisations. I am also a qualified playworker, having worked in after-school settings for many years. My experience in both these fields meant I was grateful to work under the oversight of a producer who was responsible for ensuring the project met all requisite GDPR regulations and adhered to standards of best practice in working with young people. The school were happy to be involved and arranged for me to work with their Primary 2 class.<sup>38</sup>

The first session with the group was intentionally short, a way for me to introduce myself and the project gently. I brought along examples of liquids and some larger crystals which we passed around, discussing the differences between these contrasting materials, and making a list of adjectives for each. I asked the class if they would like me to come back to do two longer workshops with them, where we would play at being between liquid and crystal. Before leaving, I gave each student a small crystal growing kit, from which they grew their own crystals in the time between then and our first workshop. This was a way for the children to see how slowly, and in what kinds of shapes, crystalline structures grow, and to give them time to think about the project with their teacher.

I approached Mark Bleakley, collaborator on *Sonorous Objects* and *Near by*, and artist-filmmaker Margaret Salmon, to do two workshops at the school with me. Margaret was to film both, whilst I would record sounds and facilitate the classes. The first workshop, led by

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>38</sup> Children between the ages of 6 and 7.

Mark, focused on playing movement games, using our bodies to move between being crystalline and liquid. In the second workshop we played sound games, like 'telephone' (where a word is passed, and most often miscommunicated, along a chain of children) whereby we twisted crystalline and liquid words through other, before collectively sounding out the resultant "word". For our last game, we played with trying to blow bubbles<sup>39</sup> whilst making sounds at the same time, resulting in a marvellously messy commotion which would go on to become part of the exhibition.



Through researching liquid crystals, I encountered the microscopic photography of Prof. Vance Williams of Simon Fraser University, Vancouver; a chemist specialising in liquid

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>39</sup> Cleaning detergents being another common liquid crystal substance.

crystal research. I asked Prof. Williams for permission to use these images in the resultant work to which he generously agreed, even going so far as to create a short video for the children showing them his laboratory and explaining how he created his images.<sup>40</sup>

The workshops with the Primary 2 class were geared towards playfully twisting ideas of liquidity and crystal through sound, movement, and touch. They were an age-appropriate expansion of the workshop sessions in *Sonorous Objects*. As with *Sonorous Objects*, the aim was to expand upon the children's initial sonorous/semiotic responses, towards new and unexpected sounds. Working with children was a joy in this regard. Their ideas were far more imaginative than my own, and I learned much from their boundless creativity about the myriad ways liquid crystal might feel, move and of course, sound.

For the exhibition, I wanted to create a setting whereby the audience would be invited to act in similar ways to the Glendale P2 class, to contribute to the performance of a liquid crystal sound-image. I proposed creating an installation whereby three plinths – one with a touch sensor, one with a movement sensor, and one with a microphone – would connect to a screen playing Prof. Williams' liquid crystal images. As the children activated each sensor, fragments of a soundtrack would begin to play in the space. Once each sensor had been activated, the complete sound-image would be revealed, and bubbles emanate from a bubble machine mounted above the playspace.

I commissioned artist and computer programmer Jen Sykes<sup>41</sup>, whose "work spans creative computer programming, sculpture and electronic hardware designs often connecting the physical analogue and digital worlds" (GSA 2021) to design the interface between the sensors and screen. Though I have used Max MSP to similar ends previously, the skills required for such a complex project are far beyond my own. I designed three crystal-shaped plinths, behind which were mounted screens playing looped images of the Glendale P2's playing with sound, movement and touch. These were intended to indicate the kinds of actions the audience might make at each plinth. A liquid crystal film was laid over the touch sensor, turning from black to multi-coloured as the children put their hands upon it.

The central sound-image work is composed from sounds and images recorded during the workshops, and my own more 'musical' interpretations of the liquid crystal adjectives the Glendale P2 class created. The soundtrack was composed in five layers; a layer of intermittent sounds which played in the room continuously, three layers of sounds created by the children which became audible as each plinth was triggered, and a final 'music' track which played

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>40</sup> I was grateful to read that the project was also of benefit to Prof. William's own research, being "a unique opportunity to extend outreach activities from the virtual realm of social media to the real world" (Williams 2019). <sup>41</sup> I had recently collaborated with Jen on *on the waves of the air, there is dancing out there*, a project for artist Carrie Skinner commissioned by Glasgow International 2018. See Appendix A.

once all three plinths had been activated. At this moment, the images on the main screen twisted from Prof. Williams' to those of the children's workshops, whilst bubbles blew down from above, filling the room with liquid crystals.



The screens behind each sensor were intended as a form of non-verbal instruction scores, ways of communicating how to play the game with children who may not be able to read yet. However, on reflection, simple instructions as to how to play the installation would have been useful for parents, clarifying both the practical and conceptual aims of the work. Though in observing children playing with the installation, once they worked out how to activate one sensor, they very quickly deciphered how to engage the others, seemingly enjoying the challenge of solving the puzzle as much as revelling in the sound-image-bubbles they

created. It was a reminder that in sound-image composition, diving the rules of the language games we play can be pleasurable as well as practical.

In *crystalliquid*, speculatively sounding out the material at hand became a way of listening in to our relationships with each other, of learning from liquid crystals as we collaboratively imagined how they might sound. In the workshops, supported by the class teacher, we discussed that although categorical differences are real, such as those that separate liquids and solids, that states of matter can also be both conditions at the same time, as with liquid crystals: that thinking between categories is a simple *twist*. The *twist* became an apparatus for navigating intervals, and thinking through other intra-categorical and plural situations, such as emotions, identity, and sound-images.

crystalliquid (2018) HD Video, Stereo. 8 min.

The work was installed across 4 screens in Tramway's Gallery 4. Three screens played silent looping images of gestures related to the different sensors; sound, movement, and touch (as shown in the left image below). The fourth screen, flanked by a stereo pair of speakers, played the main moving-image work, which transitioned between microscopic images of liquid crystals and a composition of images collected through the school workshops.



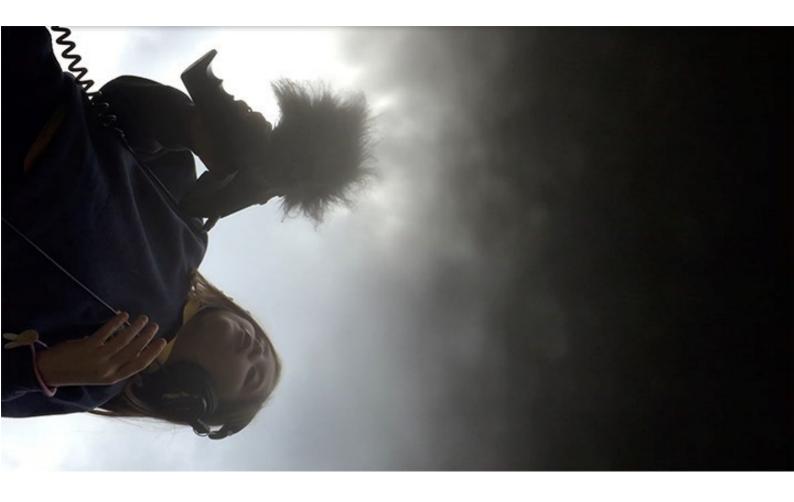


A version of the main moving-image work, which includes transitions between the liquid crystal and workshop images, and its corresponding soundtrack, can be viewed using the following link <a href="https://rb.gy/ojg5aj">https://rb.gy/ojg5aj</a> or through the QR code;



crystalliquid (2018)

## vi. The Forest of Everything



Dir. Richy Carey & Wendy Kirkup. 2019. HD video, Stereo. 5min.

Commissioned by LUX Scotland | Margaret Tait 100.

The Forest of Everything is a collaborative work made with children from Hyndland After School Club, exploring sound-image composition through children's play.

In 2019 artist filmmaker Wendy Kirkup<sup>42</sup> and I were commissioned by LUX Scotland to make a work that would "celebrate the life, legacy, attitude or approach of Scotland's filmmaking pioneer Margaret Tait" (Margaret Tait 100 2021). Tait was an Orcadian poet and experimental filmmaker, whose work transgressed intermedial boundaries and the cultural and social norms of her time and locale. Wendy and I spent time exploring Tait's archive and were particularly drawn to her work *Aerial* (Tait 1974). Tait described it as "really a very simple film if you allow yourself to respond to it instead of trying to follow it intellectually. There is no narrative and no argument, it seems more like a musical theme conjured out of the whole rather than presented as point to be taken" (Tait 2021). Tait "frequently likened her approach to filmmaking with musical composition" (Neely 2017), saying "I think that film structure is more like musical structure than anything else" (Tait 2021). In *Aerial*, I heard resonances with my own approach to composing sound-images, and the same was true for Wendy, who had previously created two films portraying, and structured by, musical compositions: *Touches Bloquées* (Kirkup 2016) based on the György Ligeti composition of the same name, and *film from a score* (Kirkup 2017) based on Luciano Berio's *Sequenza III for female voice*.

Wendy and I had met at a reading group<sup>43</sup>, where she introduced me to the work of composer and music educationist John Paynter. In the 1970's Paynter "developed a new philosophy for music in schools... that placed creativity at its core" (Salaman 2010), bringing the experimental musical strategies of the likes of John Cage, Morton Feldman and Karlheinz Stockhausen from the galley and concert hall into the classroom. He wrote two books of non-prescriptive strategies for creative music making, which he described as "suggestions for lines of work" (Paynter and Aston 1970, 7). His embrace of indeterminacy in facilitating the creative agency of others greatly influenced many of the works in this portfolio, as did his writing on the necessity of learning through practice-research.

"The materials of any art form impose their own limitations. There are things which clay cannot do; equally we must face the limitations which an instrument or method of sound organisation presents. We must learn how to discover what the materials can do. This cannot be learned from a textbook. It is knowledge which can only be gained by practical experience. There is much more value in ten minutes spent doodling at a keyboard than in ten weeks reproducing rigid and unimaginative exercises" (Paynter and Aston 1970, 5).

The Forest of Everything is a sound-image work created with children that departs from Paynter's classroom exercises in the spirit of Tait's Aerial; a way of exploring light and sound guided by people who instinctively create through play, "to discover what the materials can do" (ibid.).

I approached Hyndland After School Club (HASC), proposing a series of workshops that would take place during the after-school sessions, exploring instrument making, songwriting,

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>42</sup> See Appendix B.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>43</sup> listening.watching.speaking for LUX Scotland. See Appendix A.

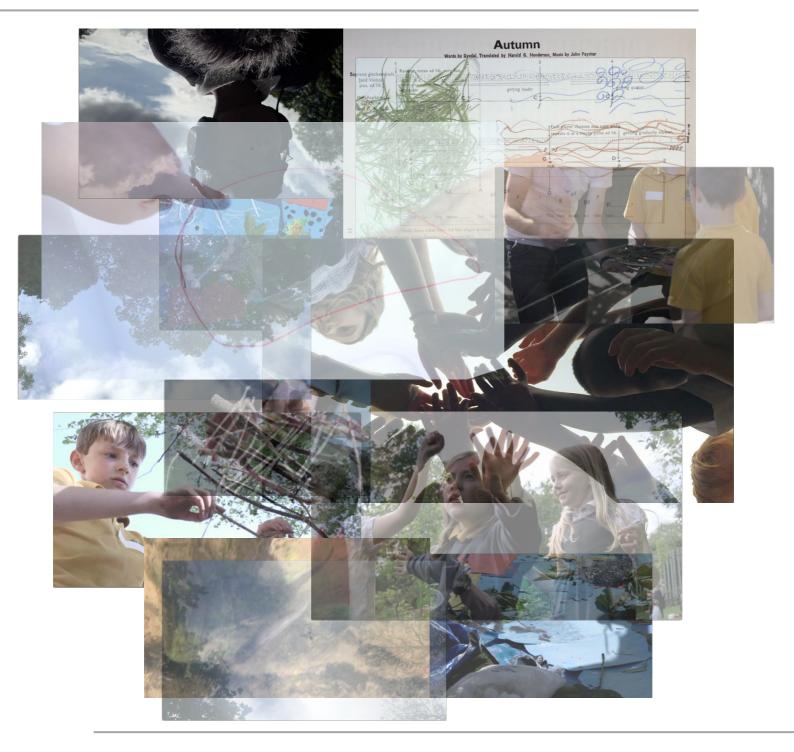
graphic scores, movement exercises, and field recording. I had worked at HASC for several years, and it was a joy to be able to return and create music with some of the children whom I had known since they first started Primary school. HASC were generous enough to take responsibility for the GDPR adherence of the work, creating the permission forms and liaising with parents as the to the boundaries of the project.

We started from a rudimentary graphic score, that spoke to playing the game *pooh sticks* (where sticks are tossed over one side of a bridge, and 'race' under the bridge carried by the water) in an environment reminiscent of materials explored in *Aerial*; wind, light, earth, water and flora.

In our first workshop we performed a version of Paynter's Autumn (Paynter 1972) before going outside to create guiro style instruments from sticks and string, imagining these as bridges between different parts of the playground and making music from them. In our second workshop, we collectively wrote a song using techniques I had learned from Prof Nigel Osborne<sup>44</sup>, including passages of "free duration" (ibid.), whereby the children chose how long they wanted to sing each line, as in Paynter's Autumn. The children created the lyrics from the song as a response to the question "what are you doing when you are playing?" Some of these lyrics can be heard sung throughout the work. In our third workshop we created a graphic score from craft supplies, paint, and materials we found around the playground. As we created the score, which had roots in slow sticks, the children explained their creative decisions, the reasons behind the textures they had chosen and their placement of them, all the while describing the kind of environment the score represented.

In our fourth workshop we played movement exercises choreographed by the children's score, with some of the children having cameras taped to their arms or torsos. Similarly, throughout each workshop I would give a field recorder to the children to record the activities from their perspectives. After each workshop, the children would take the field recorder off to find sounds from around the playground that caught their ears. These recordings were remarkable. Though cluttered with scuffs, pops, bumps and distortions – the kinds of sounds regarded as erroneous in professional sound recording contexts – these were exceptional recordings of railings ringing, grasses crunching, fragments of conversation, gentle introspection, disagreements, laughter; the sounds of sound being played with. "HIM... who can evaluate with certainty what ranks above what ranks below in the art of ordering film sound" (Trinh 1985, 201) may well dismiss these recordings as flawed, even unusable. Though we can simply twist our listening to hear them instead as the sounds of an instrument being played with, a world of sonorous possibility emerging in the ear of the recording artist. Valuable doodling.

 $<sup>^{\</sup>rm 44}$  Through making Motherwell: The Opera. See Appendix A.



Whilst we were playing with the children, Wendy was also filming and I recording sounds. Between sessions we'd return to our studios to sketch assemblages of the material collected, exchanging them between each other, finding moments that caught our ears and eyes, and creating concomitances in sound-images that illustrated each other in interesting ways. We would bring these sketches back into the workshops to let the children see-hear how the work was developing and give feedback on the work or how they were being portrayed.

Wendy organised a final shoot with another group of children racing handmade boats down a river, playing the game in *slow sticks*. To my ear, this became a manifestation of the

children's score; bridges became boats, painted waves were splashed in, gently moving fingers grew into softly swaying leaves.

The soundtrack was composed from field recordings collected through a distribution of ears<sup>45</sup>, towards what Brandon LaBelle calls "a dirty theory of listening as the basis for an expanded ear... an ear made sensitive to what it previously could not or would not allow itself to hear. A listening in wait: for others who may surprise us with their noises as well as their melodies" (LaBelle 2016, 7). Composing from this plurality of perspectives is a way of listening to a matter from different positions, positions which I could not inhabit otherwise. It is somewhere between the open work, relinquishing control of the ultimate sonorous object created, and my own compositional subjectivity, a single perspective on the sound of a matter. Composing in this way is not entirely egalitarian. I ultimately decide what sounds do and do not enter the work, and their relative positions in the composition. It is intended though, as way of listening to others, of composing sound-images that speak from a multiplicity of perspectives, "to appreciate the movements of sound as a type of possibility, for participation, for collectivity, and more, for multiplicity and imagination" (ibid., 4).

The Forest of Everything<sup>46</sup> is a difficult work to describe. As with Aerial, and as it is with play, it may be best understood if you "allow yourself to respond to it instead of trying to follow it intellectually" (Tait 2021).

The Forest of Everything (2019) HD video, Stereo. 5min.

The film can be viewed using the following link <a href="https://rb.gy/xmzeaa">https://rb.gy/xmzeaa</a> or through the QR code;



The Forest of Everything (2019)

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>45</sup> This compositional approach was cultivated further in *wild tracks radio*, *If From Every Tongue it Drips*, and *We know a better word than* happy. See appendix A.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>46</sup> This was the name the children gave to their score.



Dir. Richy Carey, 2019. HD video, Stereo I Live Performance. 33 mins.

Glasgow Short Film Festival 2019 | Glasgow Royal Concert Halls. Mar 16, 2019 Glasgow Life UNESCO City of Music artist-in-residence 2018.

In 2008 Glasgow became a UNESCO City of Music; a member of a network of 47 cities across the globe which identified music as a vital part of their cultural ecology (Cities of Music Network 2021). Ten years later, in 2018, I became the city's first UNESCO City of Music artist-in-residence, commissioned with responding to the question "What does a music city sound like?"

Glasgow, like many cities, has a rich culture of people making, performing and participating in all kinds of music, a vibrant patina of different genres and styles, in a myriad of differing contexts. Every musician, producer, band, choir and orchestra sound different. Its recognition as a City of Music however, pointed to a distinction between the collective sound of this city, and that of other cities; that between this collective *sound-in-difference* there must also be sound-in-common; something like an accent.

It was with this in mind that I proposed Åčçëñtß; a composition exploring accents as the everyday music in our voices; sounds which perform the differentiated relation of sound-incommon through sound-in-difference, sounds which sing the hyphen between our communal and individual identities. I proposed a work for community choirs that could be performed by "anyone who wishes to participate regardless, or in spite, of musical training" (Oliveros 1971, 2).

Åčçëñtß was developed over the course of a year. I began by speaking with different community groups about their socio-political experiences of accents, through workshops exploring verbal notation. Following this research period, I began composing the piece in earnest, creating a sound-image work in four movements which uses verbal notation in the form of subtitles to suggest<sup>47</sup> its performance to its audience. Åčçëñtß was premiered as part of the Glasgow Short Film Festival 2019, at the Glasgow Royal Concert Halls, performed by an audience of around 350 people.

As with the other works in this portfolio, I began the project by talking to my collaborators, listening to the different ways other Glaswegians<sup>48</sup> speak about their accents. In making a work around a matter as subjective, personal, and socially and politically charged as accents, it seemed vital to begin by simply speaking to others about how they experience these sounds in their lives.<sup>49</sup> I approached several community arts organisations and proposed a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>47</sup> I 'suggest' in a similar way to Annea Lockwood's preference for the term 'entice'. "The challenge lies in finding a balance between suggesting a focus and leaving the experience open, but possibly diffuse and generic. I think of it as 'enticing' rather than 'instructing'" (Lockwood 2012, 250).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>48</sup> My definition of Glaswegian is anyone who lives, or has lived, in the greater Glasgow area, no matter length of time or heritage.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>49</sup> Years previously, in a skills training workshop with a community arts organisation, my mentor described the kind of collaborative dynamics central to the work we were doing, which in this case was songwriting with prisoners in criminal justice contexts. He stressed that though in this specific context I was considered the expert in the craft of songwriting, that my collaborator was the expert in what the song was about, that my role was to learn from

series creative workshops exploring accents (through music and sound art). These workshops were also to be a site for me to practically learn about the composition and performance of instruction scores by making them with others.

With *Deaf Youth Theatre* we discussed the different accents between Glaswegian signing and Edinburgh signing, watching Esther Ferrer's *I'm going to tell you about my life* (Ferrer 2018), and creating a visual choir of voices by sketching a moving image work from transparent layers of signed stories told at the same time. With *Time for Art*, a group of retiree artists, we discussed, performed, and composed our own instruction scores, alongside works such as Alison Knowles' *Shoes of Your Choice* (Knowles 1963) and George Brecht's *Exercise* and *Exercise* (Brecht 1963). However, most often<sup>50</sup>, I found myself turning to Pauline Oliveros' *Sonic Meditations* (Oliveros 1971), as a way of creating a sense of collective endeavour at the beginning of our sessions and articulating an embodied understanding of the possibility of verbal notation.



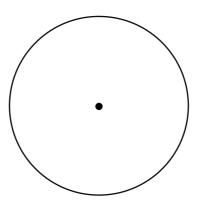
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them. There is a parallel here in the dynamics between sound maker and image maker in my role as a composer of sound-images.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>50</sup> As in the workshops with KIN, "a close-knit arts collective of 14-25 year olds who have all lived through having a parent or sibling in prison" (Vox Liminis 2021); with the Lodging House mission choir, a choir of people experiencing homelessness (Lodging House Mission 2021); The Joyous Choir, "an international women's community choir" (Maryhill Integration Network 2021).

In Western music, an *accent* is also a form of musical emphasis, "the bringing forward into consciousness of a particular *moment* in the rhythmic order" (Scrutton 1997, 29). Raising consciousness of sound, and listening in the moment, is at the centre of Oliveros' practice of Deep Listening, a practice "intended to heighten and expand consciousness of sound in as many dimensions of awareness and attentional dynamics as humanly possible (Oliveros 2005, xxiii). For Oliveros;

"The proper relationship of attention and awareness can be symbolised by a circle with a dot in the middle. The dot represents attention and the circle awareness. In these respective positions, each is centred in relation to the other. Awareness can expand, without losing centre or its balanced relationship with attention, and simultaneously become more inclusive. Attention can be focused as fine as possible in any direction (.sic), and can probe all aspects of awareness without losing its balanced relationship to awareness" (Oliveros 2015, 140).



The correlate dynamic of attention-awareness in Oliveros' work echoes the irreducibility of words that Wittgenstein speaks of, whilst demonstrating the scale of Trinh's interval. When explaining this kind of listening attention in workshops, I have described it as akin to a magic eye trick for the ear, of zooming one's listening in and out at the same time.

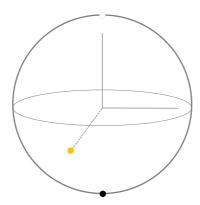
Regular practice of Deep Listening exercises influences my approach to the composition of sound-images. In works such as *Bugs & Beasts Before the Law*, and *If From Every Tongue it Drips*, I have tried to create sound-images which both focus an audience's attention towards what is literally being addressed in the image whilst also heightening their awareness of how this concomitance might resonate in contexts outside of the frame. In Oliveros' circle, we can think of this as the dot being the image and sound being the circle. Like the *accent* in music, I have come to think of this kind of performative gesture is an *accent* in the sound-image; an articulation in both directions which brings forward into consciousness a *particular moment*. In the next chapter, I will point to examples of this, and discuss practical strategies for listening for the multiple matters an image maker is speaking to through a work.

I have spoken elsewhere<sup>51</sup> of the potential for Deep Listening to become an overwhelming experience, that such focused listening can create a vertiginous awareness of the sheer scale

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>51</sup> In What can we learn about love from Lichen? (Lewis 2021). See Appendix A.

of sound relative to the bodies we inhabit. I have never experienced this sonic vertigo when practicing these meditations in groups however, where one's *listening in* and *sounding out* is held by a "common bond with others through a shared experience" (Oliveros 2015).

Were we to twist Oliveros' attention-awareness circle in another dimension, we could understand this as something like the image below, which is a visual description of a qubit, the basic unit of quantum information. In the qubit image, the white and black dot represent the digital binaries of O and I respectively. Or, relative to Oliveros' diagram, the idealised end points of complete attention to complete awareness as they infinitely move away from each other. The gold dot is the qubit, an indeterminate state between binaries that is simultaneously both. This image illustrates the entanglement of sound and image in the sound-image, and the kind of intra-active attention-awareness which informs listening together-apart.



In a reflection on *Teach Yourself to Fly* (Oliveros 1971) Oliveros speaks to the relational entanglement of Deep Listening; "The key principle in this meditation is *observation of the breathing cycle...* by trying to observe the breath cycle without disturbing it, one begins to tune to an activity which is both conscious and unconscious... is it possible to observe the breath cycle without disturbing it?... perhaps participation in *Teach Yourself to Fly* is to experience Heisenberg's principle of uncertainty" (Oliveros 2015, 150).

Though I am not a certified *Deep Listening* facilitator<sup>52</sup>, I held a free two-hour workshop of Sonic Meditations at the bandstand in Kelvingrove Park, Glasgow as part of the Åčçëñtß research. The point of the workshop was not to 'teach' Deep Listening, rather to collectively participate in a selection of *Sonic Meditations* with a "willing commitment to the given conditions" (Oliveros 1971) of each. The intention was to create an environment similar to my first participation in one of Oliveros' meditations, which took place at the very start of my research journey during the *Rhyme or Reason* summer school. At the bandstand, we participated in several of the meditations, discussing how each made us feel, what they made us think of, and the cumulative understanding of them that grew through the course of the

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>52</sup> There are courses available to become a certified Deep Listening facilitator through the Centre for Deep Listening (Listening 2021).

workshop. Of the meditations we tried, there were four which would go on to be key to the development of Åčçëñtß; -I-, -XVI-, -X-, and -XII-.

Throughout all the research workshops, alongside playfully thinking through different forms of verbal notation, I would also have direct discussions with participants about accents. This would often lead to conversations about some of the positive and negative experiences they had encountered through an attention to their accents, leading to the recounting of times they had been made to feel excluded due to the ways they sound, as well as times when the familiarity of an accent was of comfort.

It was through these workshops I came to learn something of the mutability of accents as a material, of these sounds as simultaneously a performance of the individual and collective. I came to understand accents as;

- Sounds that hold something of our histories, the voices we have encountered that resonate in how we sound in the present.
- Sounds which can communicate something of an aspiration, how we would *like* to be heard.
- Sounds can consciously and subconsciously change depending on the contexts in which we are speaking.
- Sounds through which one can be othered and excluded, as well as identified with and welcomed. Sounds, in short, which echo something of the social and political conditions in which we reside.

In composing Åčçëñtß, I aimed to create a work which could hold the plurality of these conditions and which, like accents themselves, would sound different contingent on those who were singing it in each performance.

Oliveros described her practice as coming from "listening to my listening and discerning the effects on my bodymind continuum, from listening to others, to art and to life" (Oliveros 2005, xxiv). In a similar sense, I wanted to create a work which performed *listening-watching* to one's *listening-watching*. Åčçëntß tries to amplify the kind of collaborative, intra-agential dynamics of the sound-image; those between sound, image, composer and audience.

I composed Åčçëñtß in four movements, as four short sound-image works: I, II, III, and IV. Each movement employs an adaptation of one of Oliveros' Sonic Meditations as subtitles, altered to varying degrees to speak to the different aims of each piece. The images are interpretations of the four icons of Glasgow's founding myth;

Here is the bird that never flew Here is the tree that never grew Here is the bell that never rang Here is the fish that never swam The myth is based on the 'miracles' performed by Glasgow's patron saint, St. Mungo.<sup>53</sup> As with *Film Score*, the works were devised to be performed live by the audience facing towards the screen.

I is filmed in one continuous take from the perspective of a bird looking down upon the river Clyde and Glasgow Green, the largest and oldest *common* in the city. Taking inspiration from *Teach Yourself to Fly*, the verbal notation guides an audience through the kinds of attention-awareness required to perform the works' listening and responding to the image, the text and each other.

Listen to your breath, the ebb and the flow.

Listen as the air drifts through you, past your lips, your tongue, your throat, your lungs.

Let it sing with you.

inhaling / exhaling

continue to breathe to your own rhythm your own meter, your own unique pace

let your mouth open wide and your breath become loud feel the air stretch your frame cold on your teeth dry in your throat

look for a rhythm in the image, its own pace bend yours towards its

when you feel ready, let your breath become a tone it can be any pitch, any volume

let the pitch change if you want it to play with your range, feel for difference, feel for comfort

lastly
let your rhythm, and the tone that you sing bend to meet others around you

find a balance between you, the image and the sound

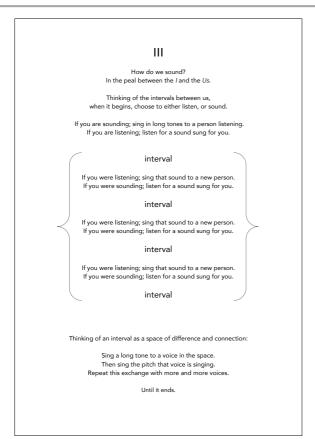
inhaling / exhaling

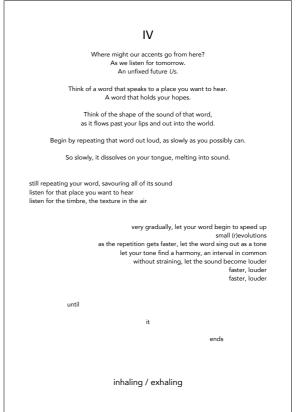
Ш How has your accent grown?
Through the long, slow flow of the seasons. Twisting, stretching, finding shape and form. Could you recall your first sounds? How have your vowels changed since? Those subtle movements of shape in your mouth, the arch of your tongue the purse of your lips, the stretch in your cheeks the reach of your jaw Singing in tones as long as a breath, at any comfortable pitch or volume, follow the path of those sounds back from here to there trace those sounds back through your voice. listening, feeling, for the shape of each sound through the voices you've known and the patte those small movements that moved you nd the patterns they left till you find the seeds of those sounds Hold them quietly and close under your tongue From those knots grew your voice, your exceptional sound. Let these sounds grow again, twisting through shapes familiar and foreign, resting, at times, in places that resonate in you. slowly, in small gestures, let your sounds reach out from the centre, along your own branch or root before coming to rest in a meaningful place, getting quieter, and quieter, until it ends

II is made from images of a 250-year-old tree I used to climb as a child, filmed every few weeks over the course of the year, and edited in different rhythms to gently conduct changes in rhythm. The verbal notation tangentially speaks to Oliveros' -XVI- and it guides the audience to listening in to their individual accents, to sounding out the soil from which grew their unique sound.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>53</sup> St. Mungo is said to have brought a Robin back to life in his early years, to have brought a fire back to a flame using a bushel of hazel, and to have found the lost ring of a princess inside a salmon plucked from the river Clyde. He also famously had a bell which he rang to announce his sermons (Glasgow 2021) I remain sceptical as to how miraculous the story of the third line of the poem is, though I appreciate the rhyme.

III is composed from time lapse footage filmed from the from Glasgow University's bell tower, looking North, East, South and West. The text is based on Oliveros' -X- and speaks to the sound-in-common through sound-in-difference within the room at the time of its performance. A form of cloudy call and response, this movement speaks to the development of an accent formed by those participating in its performance. I made recordings of the Glasgow University bell sounding as a moments of interval, with bells in Scotland often being rung to mark times of change in life; births, marriages and deaths.





*IV* is composed as an assemblage of abstract shapes, and colours. Composed from the perspective of the fish<sup>54</sup>, the images were created by filming upwards out of a moving car as I travelled under the Clyde Tunnel. Based on Oliveros' -XII- One Word, the score speaks to an unknown future accent, to change and the agency of the audience in affecting that change.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>54</sup> This is perhaps a good example of learning from the people I collaborate with. In a conversation with someone I met at a choir workshop, I happened to mention that I was still thinking of how to create images from the perspective of a fish. He told me that fish have poor eyesight, and look upwards through the murk of a river for changes in the light for prey. This, combined with a wish to use abstract images for a work speaking to an unknown future, is why I filmed *IV* this way.

Where I introduces the form of the work, II, III, IV sequentially builds upon the I, the We, and the Us, and the intra-agential flow between these positions through accents, through the sound-image, and through our ongoing collaborative construction of the world.

The work is introduced however by four simple, concise instructions which are there to structure the rest of the piece.

There is no wrong way to sound.

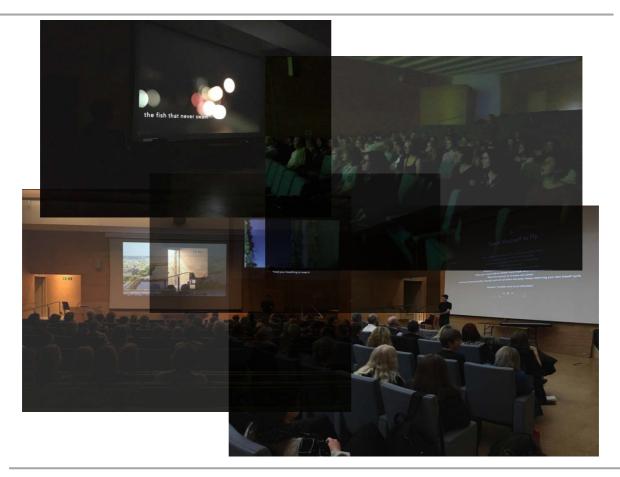
Listen to the voices around you.

The texts are only lines, follow them, bend them, or forget them.

Let the image be the conductor.

These instructions not only guide the performance of Åčçëñtß, but are also intended as indicators of how I have come to practice sound-image composition.

In devising Åčçëñtß, I approached a number of Glasgow's community choirs<sup>55</sup> to workshop earlier versions of the scores to listen for how these scores sounded in practice. In these sessions we would perform a movement, then openly discuss how the choir understood each work, what they found challenging, what they felt inspiring.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>55</sup> I am especially grateful to the GSA choir and the Glad Café choir for their support in this regard.

These workshops were equally energising and challenging, though completely vital to the development of the project. Standing in front of one hundred people and hearing candidly their views on the shortcomings of the composition and at times the project overall could be difficult, though there were also of course also positive remarks from the choirs. It was through these open discussions that suggestions were made as to the clarity of the texts, the accessibility of the font, and to the timings of phrases within the movements. These devising workshops were where the collaborative labour was most readily felt, and most deeply appreciated. Following each session, I would return to the studio and rework the scores, thinking through their creative and practical suggestions, and returning a few weeks later to see if I had addressed their concerns whilst still holding true to my own creative vision for the work.

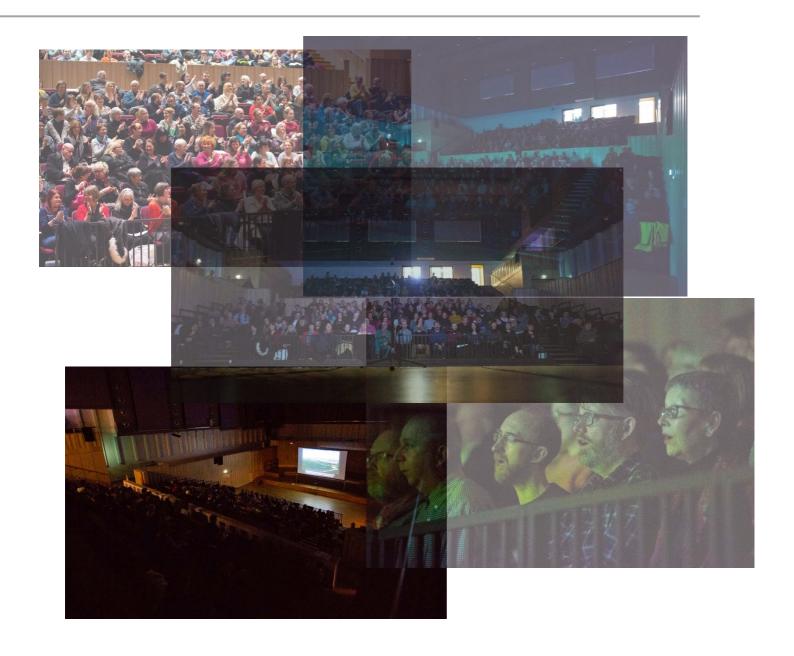
I then took the final scores to a number of other community choir rehearsals across the city, at the invitation of their choir leaders. In these sessions, I would usually join in as part of their regular rehearsal for the first half of the evening, before using the second half of their rehearsal to introduce the project, to try performance of I, and then inviting them to join the premiere.

As part of the Glasgow Short Film Festival 2019 I also programmed a screening of artist film at the Glasgow CCA to put the project in context. Åčçëñtß: influences took place the night before the main performance. We screened Mikhail Karikis' Sounds from Beneath (Karikis 2012), John Smith's Blight (Smith 1996), Beatrice Gibson's Solo for a Rich Man (Gibson 2015), Peter Rose' Pressures of the Text (Rose 1983) and Kathryn Elkin's Dame 2 (Elkin 2016). The programme spoke to themes of place, voice and identity, collective performance, indeterminacy and instruction scores, as well as dynamics between sound, image and text.

On the day of the performance, I hosted one final workshop/rehearsal just prior to the premiere. This was the first time that all members of the different choirs had met together, joined by other members of the public who were interested in performing the piece. The event was free, and I ensured there were also travel funds made available for low-income choir members to attend. Alongside paper versions of the scores which were handed out to every performer, I also created a spoken word version of the instructions which played in synchrony with the film. This version could be listened to through Bluetooth headphones ensuring those with visual impairments, or for whom written English is a barrier, were still welcome to take part. I asked those attending the workshop to distribute themselves in pockets around the rest of the audience when it came time for the performance. This ensured that voices would be heard singing in all corners of the audience, and was a gesture to encourage those who were attending the performance only to join their voices in the sound.

On the 16<sup>th</sup> March 2019, over three hundred and fifty members of Glasgow's community choirs, as well as Glaswegians who were interested in the project, came together to realise Åčçëñtß at the Glasgow Royal Concert Halls.

Though I had heard versions of the scores many times, with many of the same collaborating participants, I was not prepared for how present the feeling of connection, of being part of a larger identity, that the performance generated. There was a palpable emotion in the air that I had felt only moments of through the workshops and rehearsals. The recording linked to at the end of this chapter is a welcome and useful outcome, but is not the locus of the work, which of course is the ever-present challenge of documenting live praxis in practice-research. Åčçëntß existed in the room, between the voices, between the sound-image.



I informally invited the audience to reflect on the work by anonymously writing down any observations they wished to share on pieces of tracing paper as they were leaving the auditorium. The following are transcripts of these remarks.



Åčçëñtß is not an easy work to perform, though it is relatively straightforward in its design. The demand on the participants' attention-awareness is weighty; interpreting the words, attending to the image, and listening to those around you simultaneously is a difficult task. It may be the strongest example of *sounding out* as a means to *listening in* in the thesis.

Though all the audiences' reflections were welcome and generous, one in particular stood out for the way it spoke to what I had, and have been, trying to articulate through Åčçëñtß, and more broadly through the notion of *listening together-apart*:

"I felt part of something intense, huge and personal."

Åčçëñtß audience member, Anon.

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Åčçëñtß (2019)

HD video, Stereo I Live Performance. 33 mins.

A stereo recording of the performance of ÅčçëñtB, synchronised with the moving-image score, can be viewed using the following link <a href="https://rb.gy/pezrdb">https://rb.gy/pezrdb</a> or through the QR code;

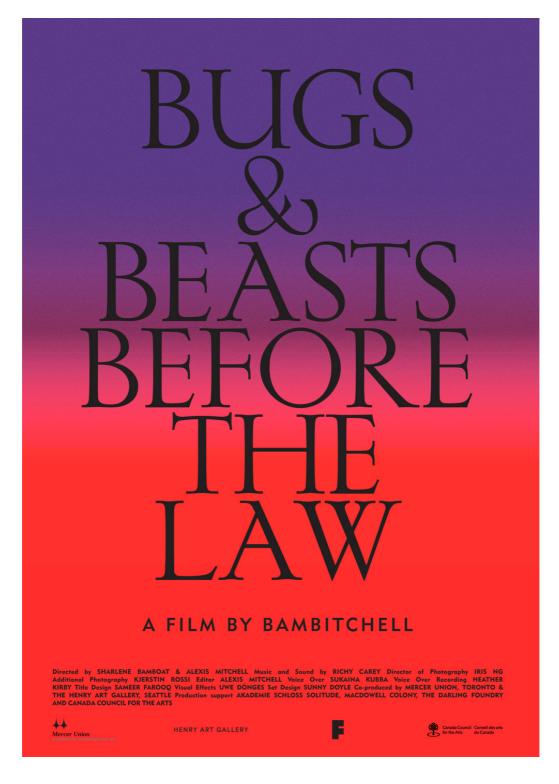


Åčçëñtß (2019)

A short film commissioned by Glasgow Life to give context to the project for a wider audience can be viewed using the following link <a href="https://rb.gy/tpmaqb">https://rb.gy/tpmaqb</a> or through the QR code;



Åčçëñtß an introduction (2019)



Dir. Bambitchell, 2019.

HD video, 33 min. 5.1 Surround Sound.

Mercer Union, Toronto I Henry Art Gallery, Seattle.

Bugs & Beasts Before the Law is a sound-image work made with artist-duo Bambitchell, "an experimental film that explores the medieval practice of putting animals on trial" (Bambitchell 2021). These trials took place across in Europe and its colonies from the 9<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Most of the stories referenced throughout the film come from E. P. Evans' 1906 *Criminal Prosecution and the Capital Punishment of Animals* (Evans 1906), a document of the long and, from a modern perspective, absurd history of putting the nonhuman on trial in secular and ecclesiastical courts. The film has been described as being "about oppressive governmental and legal structures" and "human abuses of power, including colonialism, homophobia, sexism, and religious intolerance" (Hogeveen 2019). Bugs & Beasts Before the Law is a work about the artifice of inequitable power structures, and the folly of being complicit in their continuation.

Following our work together in *Special Works School*, Bambitchell approached me to compose the soundtrack for a film which they had slowly been developing over a number of years. Through their research of *Criminal Prosecution and the Capital Punishment of Animals*, Bambitchell had collected footage from different locations across Europe named in the book as being sites of notorious animal prosecutions. As with *Special Works School*, they had a rough version of a script to work from, but in this case wanted to collaborate on the sound and visual edit simultaneously, to allow each to inform the other. This kind of exchange is a slow and careful process, but one which creates conditions for considered and responsive gestures in the sound-image, where sound and image can speak to different aspects of the same subject.

The soundtrack was composed in part using exercises developed through previous works in this portfolio. Rather than using these open work exercises to *sound out* a matter across a distribution of ears and voices, we played them as a way of *listening in* to the concepts and contexts to which the work spoke.

The film was made between May and August 2019, with Sharlene then living in Montreal, Alexis in Berlin, and I in Glasgow. Having worked together closely, though remotely, on *Special Works School* and in the making of *Near by*, we all met together<sup>56</sup> for the first time in Berlin at an exhibition of *Special Works School* at *Berlinale '18*. Over the course of these projects, we had grown as collaborators and colleagues, developing a shared creative language which grew stronger, and more nuanced, throughout the making of *Bugs and Beasts Before the Law*. The development of this mutual language might be what Lauren Redhead describes as that of a *shared aesthetic* (Redhead 2018); the "interaction between creative individuals (that) is often not a matter of conscious choice but a gradual process of the creation of shared understanding" (ibid., 36).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>56</sup> Alex and Sharlene have been working in person together under the moniker *Bambitchell* since 2009.

We discussed how the accounts detailed in the book, as well as paralleling contemporaneous inequities in British and North American justice systems, also spoke to what Marianne Shaneen has since described as "a premodern worldview that contemporaries might do well to consider: one of humans existing on a continuum of life and agency with nonhumans" (Shaneen 2020, 79). Shaneen draws on John Berger to note that far from being a risible condition of relation, legal recognition of the agency of the non-human points to a time before animals became "merely raw material, processed like manufactured commodities, part of the same process... by which men have been reduced to isolated productive and consuming units" (Berger 2009, 13). The aim of the project was not to point to the animal trails from a position of moral superiority, rather to question the matter from a multiplicity of perspectives, to position these histories as contemporary, to question "the common superstition of the age" (Bambitchell 2019). Multiplicity was to become a key word guiding the composition of *Bugs and Beasts Before the Law*.

Much of our initial discussion centred on the voice of the narrator. The script, until the last paragraph, is an objective recounting of events. The narrators voice however, implicitly subjectifies the positions from which the tale is told. "The voice has an intimate connection with meaning, it is a sound which appears to be endowed in itself with the will to "say something", with an inner intentionality" (Dolar 2006). The aim was to find a voice that resisted speaking from an implicit position of authority, that held an ambiguity in its accent and delivery, at least in relation to the kinds of narrator's voice commonly heard in documentary film. It was with this in mind that we approached artist and colleague Sukaina Kubba<sup>57</sup> to narrate the work, who's voice is described in the Closed Captions version of the film as an "untraceable accent." <sup>58</sup>

The film is structured in five chapters, between which are interludes indicating the title of chapter to come. We worked on these chapters individually, though not sequentially. Before composing any sounds, I asked Bambitchell to play some open work exercises as compositional prompts. These exercises were based on those developed through the previous works in this portfolio. I have since drawn these into a document called *listening games* (Carey 2021)<sup>59</sup>; a short collection of questions, prompts, scoring exercises and

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>57</sup> Kubba is a Bagdad born artist who has lived and worked in both Montreal and Glasgow (Kubba 2021).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>58</sup> The Closed Captions version of the film was created by *Collective Text*, a "a Glasgow-based worker collective who share skills and expertise to deliver intersectional access projects, specialising in creative Captioning and Audio Description for art and experimental film. Collective Text facilitate dialogue and exchange between organisations, artists, and audiences, providing in-depth conceptual development and consultation in close collaboration with D/deaf & Hard of Hearing, Blind & Visually Impaired and Disabled artists and audiences." (LUX 2021). *Collective Text* have captioned numerous projects I have been involved in with creativity and care. The process of collaboratively articulating one's soundtrack through non-sonorous language is an incredibly thought-provoking experience, one which they guide expertly.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>59</sup> See Appendix C.

collaborative tools which I sometimes share with others when we begin working on a new project.<sup>60</sup>

The first of these games, Coordinates, grew from the not-quite-in-my-vocabulary activity from Sonorous Objects. The game is explained in the image below.

## iv. Coordinates

I find it difficult to articulate in linear sentences the motive, fluxing, living changeableness of sound-images. Sentences make words feel fixed in place, and I can never seem to get them in the right order. Coordinates is a short game about playing with the vitality of words, seeing them as vibrant, effervescent with possibility.

Begin by writing out 10 words that hold something of what you are speaking to in the project – some may be direct, some may be outliers that feel important, but might not have made sense in a "pitch" or a sentence. We can elaborate on why you've chosen these words.

Draw these words out on a page in a way that makes sense to your eye. Some words might be close together, others might be out on their own. You could draw lines between these words. Think of these lines like hyphens; something of the other is held in a hyphen, they are very complex little lines. You might choose to add something else to your score, it could be a text, a quote, or an image.

Then, choose three words from this score as a way of triangulating the meaning of the work/scene/moment, but holding it within its context.

You could write this new hyphenated word out. You could change the words a little to make more sense;

commotion-within-otherness

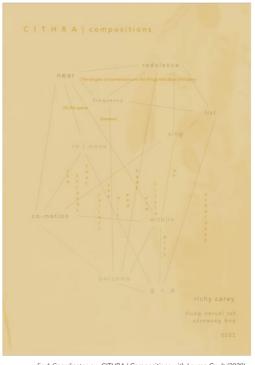


fig.1 Coordinates ex. CITHRA | Compositions with Lauren Gault (2020)

The game is a way of positioning the words a collaborator chooses within a constellation of other words, a way of learning about how the gravities of each weigh upon the other, and quickly creating a context in which each word speaks. It is a tool to prompt discussion, and to develop new, hyphenated words, from which to think creatively from. Playing this *language* game is a way of establishing "fundamentally different meanings" that "may be given to the same word, the same sentence, when it is read by a member of the dominant and by a

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>60</sup> Such as in No Archive Can Restore You (2019) for Onyeka Igwe, Ashley (2020) for Jamie Crewe, Salmon I A Red Herring (2020) for Cooking Sections, CITHRA (2020) for Lauren Gault and What can we learn about love from lichen? (2021) for Isabel Lewis. See Appendix A.

member of a dominated group of a culture." (Trinh 1999, 39). Coordinates is a game for both listening in and sounding out matters.

Bambitchell and I played early versions of *Coordinates* for each chapter of the film, which I then extrapolated along with my own words to create a lexicon for different scenes within the chapter. Since working on Film Score, I have formed a habit of sketching graphic scores when devising, composing, or mixing sound-images. These graphic scores are not necessarily made for others to perform.<sup>61</sup> Rather, they are a way for me to visualise the sonic shape of a work and imagine where its materialites meet those of the images. I plotted out a *sounding board* for each chapter which combined our lexicons with a graphic score, alongside plans for how I would realise these sounds and timecode for each scene. The exercise is explained in the images below.

## v. Sounding Board

Much like a storyboard, it can be useful for us to compose a sounding board, a chronological outline of where, how and why the sonic gestures might relate to the image and/or narrative, to plot the arc of the work and compose its form. As you can see from below, they can be very sketchy. You can make them however you like, in whichever way suits your project. They can be quite nice artefacts.

We can use customary ways of communicating these dynamics, through timecodes, screengrabs, and text. Or we can combine these with graphic scores to visualise the interactions between sonic elements like dialogue, music, foley, sound design. I find this a really useful tool. It also lets us visualise sonic-material concepts like weight, force, texture, distance, density, or width, and how these sounds might interact.

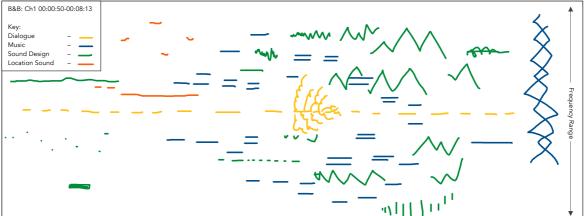


fig.2 Graphic Score ex. Bugs & Beasts Before the Law (2019) dir. Bambitchell

<sup>61</sup> However, I have suggested them as tools for collaborating artists to indicate how they envisage the shape of a soundtrack, which they go on to make in their own aesthetic, as in Onyeka Igwe's *Mapping Sonic Shadows* (Igwe

soundtrack, which they go on to make in their own aesthetic, as in Onyeka Igwe's *Mapping Sonic Shadows* (Igwe 2021).

The above graphic score indicates four separate "voices" in a particular scene (Dialogue, Music, Designed Sound and Location Recordings) composed through time and frequency range, though it doesn't have to be as specific as this. I often make little graphic scores before composing or even mixing, it lets me imagine the dynamics I want to create and is a useful memory aid for when I get caught up in making.

The aim of this process is not to communicate through singular channels of specificity, but rather through multiple, uncertain gestures, *inviting* translation, and the interpretive possibilities this encourages.

The sounding board example below illustrates how might combine the coordinates game with a graphic score, and more traditional storyboarding methods like screengrabs and timecode to create a sounding board.

00:00:50 - 00:03:04	00:03:04 - 00:05:00	00:05:00 - 00:06:17	00:06:17 - 00:07:13	00:07:13 - 00:08:12	00:08:12 - 00:08:29
		SOIT	A CONTRACTOR OF THE PARTY OF TH		Book I or
subtle	ingrained	institutional	constructed	raw	wrong
offscreen	everyday	architectural	collapsing	present	frozen
constructed	old	monumental	grinding	material	warning
inside / outside	religious	separated	fractious	nearly diegetic	sorbet
dry	amateur	apparent	multiple	immediate	preparation
intimate	thin	force	separated	cracking	other
hollow	transient	drawn	grain	collapsing	abrupt
lack	local	grain	choral	separated	funny
authority	unseen	cracks	loose		casual
purpose	warm	mortar			pretentious
creaking floorboards,	Location sound, of that	cement mixer, drills squeals,	cement mixer, drills squeals,	cement mixer, drills squeals,	no sound design
fields, wind, grass blowing,	space, nothing added,	construction sites,	construction sites,	construction sites,	
insects buzzing,	flap of bird wing on lens flare	hammering, sawing,	hammering, sawing,	hammering, sawing,	
odd sense of diegesis -	hearing cars but not seeing	crunching, thumping	crunching, thumping	crunching, thumping	
disconnected	them on street shot				
creaking to rear of 5.1	everything to front of 5.1	Introduce slowly	Building up to even with	Overpowers music	
field/outside to front of 5.1			music		
		Begin in front speakers		Spread around 5.1 –	
			Spread around 5.1	beginning to fold to front	

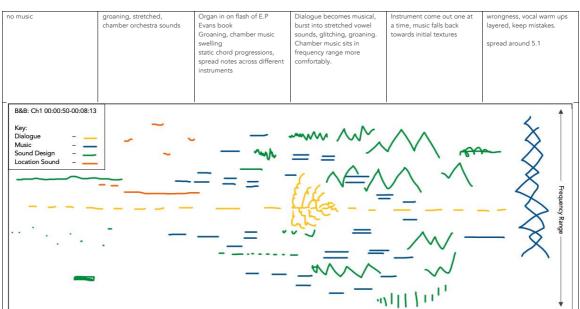


fig.3 Sounding Board ex. Bugs & Beasts Before the Law (2019) dir. Bambitchell

The above is an example from a scene previous project, Bugs & Beasts Before the Law (2019) dir. Bambitchell, we might use this as a departure point to create our own sounding boards that are more specific to your creative processes.

The sounding board above indicated the planning for the first chapter of the film, Book I No. V, The Hour of the Pig. The sounding board indicates some of the words drawn from our Coordinates exercise, with short notes on the kinds of sounds I would use to realise these intentions broken into timecoded sections. These related to the graphic score, notating how I imagined arranging the dialogue, sound design and music in relation to each other.

This first chapter opens with a slow panning shot across an empty set. The scene begins and ends by allowing the audience to see behind the set, to see how it has been constructed. Artifice is a central theme in the film and its soundtrack. Throughout, I overtly and covertly used sounds usually omitted from recordings; location recordists "slating" takes<sup>62</sup>, the warmup exercises of the musicians I recorded, choosing to make apparent the "walla" of the walla<sup>63</sup> in the courtroom; all sounds which illustrate the artifice of the soundtrack. Similarly, I used pitch correction and pitch shifting to the more extreme limits of the effects, to make apparent glitches in their processing as they struggled to "correct" the sounds of voices, woodwinds and brass; a way of sonifying the systems of control to which the work speaks.

Bambitchell and I also created a Spotify playlist<sup>64</sup> of music which we heard as resonating with how we imagined the script. Unlike the use of temp-track music, there was no expectation that I would compose music which directly referenced any of these songs, though there were works which we discussed the aesthetics of in relation to the themes of the project. Ravel's *Boléro* being one, a work which Roger Scrutton uses to illustrate rhythmic grouping in music; "however unambiguous the metrical organization of a piece of music, there will be subsidiary groupings, stresses and boundaries which we impose upon it, and which we can alter and emphasize at will" (Scrutton 1997, 29). Perhaps the most apparent example of the boundaries we impose upon the other in the film is that of *Deodand*, "a principle of English law to hold animate and inanimate objects responsible should they be involved in the accidental death of an adult human person" (Keenan 2020). The principle of Deodand is explained in the film's third chapter, *Inanimates in Exile Book III – No. XVII*.

The music for this chapter was written to time roughly with the long take of the camera moving through a forest, pausing occasionally to observe inanimate objects. The red dot was animated to move in time with the music, an example of the creative flexibility which creating soundtrack and visual edit simultaneously allows. It has been described as "appearing a dual symbol for magic and modern surveillance... it is hard not to associate... with Western civilization's obsession with tracking and pathologizing difference as dissidence" (Hogeveen

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>62</sup> Where you might hear the recording location and take number called.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>63</sup> Walla is the North American term for the indistinct chatter of people in the sound of a scene. In British drama this is more usually termed "Rhubarb", where groups of actors would murmur the words walla or rhubarb to render the impression of a busy space.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>64</sup> This playlist can be listened to through the following link; https://open.spotify.com/playlist/3oAgad6phlh9o90RR4PwGx?si=7bca72fc1d2149fe (accessed 9/11/2021)

2019). I composed the soundtrack with the help of a small choir, whose voices held noticeably different grains and accents, an ensemble of musicians and a soprano opera singer. With the choir, I began the recording session with Oliveros' *Teach Yourself to Fly* (Oliveros 1971), with those breathing sounds being heard at 00:25:13. I didn't ask the choir to sing any specific notes, rather recorded them speaking different vowel sounds in long tones, which I then processed with pitch manipulation effects mentioned previously to compose the choral sounds in the film.

The soundtrack was composed in 5.1 surround sound, which when installed in exhibition settings, envelops an audience who sit on pew-like benches. Rather than the rear speakers being arranged at 110° from centre, as they most often are in cinemas, they are hung at ~150° from centre, directly behind the audience. Sounds in the rear speakers are used to implicate the audience as listening from different positions relative to the image throughout the film. For example, as the camera pans across the constructed set from 00:00:50 -00:02:09, floorboards creak behind the audience, to indicate the presence of the camera operator, positioning them as listening from inside the set. From 00:10:12 – 00:11:00, sounds of gentle eating can be heard in the rear speakers, as a way of implicating the audience as being sat amongst the termites spoken to in the account, being judged as the insects were judged. At 00:27:49, at the high pitched, tinnitus type sound-of-shock, slightly different frequencies are played from four of the speakers, so that a different rhythm of interference pattern is heard from each position in the seating arrangement. In this case, the sound can be listened to from multiple positions; as a literal sound of an electrical current, as the sound of a silent cry from Topsy the elephant, and as the sense-numbing shock of the crowd's (and as such the wider audience's) complicity in this kind of torture. This sonic dissociation is exaggerated by removing the narrator's voice but continuing the dialogue in the subtitles. In a work that has such a busy soundtrack, the only moment of silence in the film comes directly following this; a moment of reflection to allow the listener to consider their position in relation to the stories told throughout the course of the film.

Throughout the work, the sound seeks to speak beyond the frame, whilst being securely tethered by clear moments of concomitance. The soundtrack is a deliberately bombastic, pompous and absurd provocation of what is, for the most part, a series of slowly panning images of civic spaces. Playing the *listening games* above was a way for me to *listen in* to the complexities of the matters that *Bugs & Beasts Before the Law* speaks to with the directors, in an indirect way. The words we drew from playing *Coordinates* afforded me a broad pallet of perspectives to consider the images from which I very likely would not have considered on my own, images which for the most part are speaking to multiple matters in oblique ways. The *listening games* were time spent playfully discussing possibilities for the film, learning about why the directors were making the work and who they hoped it would

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>65</sup> The scene with the roasting pig being a clear exception.

speak to. It was time spent creating a *shared aesthetic*, time focused on developing the conceptual rationale for not only the sound, but the sound-image.

Bugs & Beasts Before the Law is a work by Bambitchell. I do not claim to have done anything other than helped make the soundtrack for which I was initially commissioned to compose. At some point during the process, Bambitchell asked if I would be happy for the film66 to be spoken of as a collaboration (Bamboat 2021), and to have a dedicated title card during the opening credits. Authorship in the sound-image is a complex knot to try and untangle. "Unless one works with someone on equal ground, but whose areas of strength are radically different from one's own (even when situated in the same field), one cannot really talk about collaboration. Collaboration happens not when something common is shared between the collaborators, but when something that belongs to neither of them comes to pass between them" (Trinh 1999, 244). Bambitchell's considered attention to collaborative labour, both conceptual and practical, create conditions for flattening the often uneven ground of filmmaking. Throughout the project I felt supported, encouraged even, to stretch the intervals between sound and image, to rupture the seams (Rogers 2021) of accepted audiovisuality and create complex sound-image relationships that speak to complex social and political relationships. Bugs & Beasts Before the Law does not belong to me, but I recognise my practice within it, and feel recognised in what has passed between us in its creation.



<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>66</sup> Not the broader research project.

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Bugs & Beasts Before the Law was first exhibited at Mercer Union, Toronto in September 2019. I was able to attend the install to finalise the sound in the space and take part in a public discussion about the work. It has since been exhibited at Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, and screened at numerous film festivals internationally. The Seattle exhibition was the subject of an academic colloquium at Washington University<sup>67</sup>, and the work published as a book<sup>68</sup>. Bugs & Beasts Before the Law led to Bambitchell being jointly awarded the Sobey Art Prize in 2020 (National Gallery of Canada 2021).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>67</sup> A multi-month colloquium considering "the entangled issues of justice, personhood, and kinship" which "imagined and explored possibilities for survival and liberation for those whose protections are limited or whose personhood is compromised, oppressed, or threatened within socio-legal systems." (Henry Art Gallery 2020) <sup>68</sup> Bugs & Beasts Before the Law: Appendix A-L is a book by Bambitchell which holds documents from their

Bugs & Beasts Before the Law (2019) HD video, 33 min. 5.1 Surround Sound.

Bugs & Beasts Before the Law has been shown in both gallery and cinema contexts. Two versions of the film, the original 5.1 surround mix, and a stereo mixdown, are linked to below.

The stereo version of the film can be viewed through the following link <a href="https://rb.gy/hpnnfk">https://rb.gy/hpnnfk</a> or by QR code;



Bugs & Beasts Before the Law (2019)

The 5.1 version of *Bugs & Beasts Before the Law* can be viewed through the following link; <a href="https://rb.gy/5gg3kh">https://rb.gy/5gg3kh</a> or by QR code;



Bugs & Beasts Before the Law (2019)

ix. If From Every Tongue it Drips



Dir. Sharlene Bamboat, 2021. HD video, Stereo. 67 min.

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If From Every Tongue it Drips is a film by Sharlene Bamboat, one half of artist duo Bambitchell, with whom I collaborated with in Bugs and Beasts Before the Law, Special Works School and Near by.

The film "follows the lives of a couple living in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, one of whom writes Rekhti, a form of 19th century, Urdu, queer poetry; the other, her lover, the camera operator. As their personal lives unfold on camera, the lines between rehearsal and reality, location and distance, self and other dissipate and reinforce one another" (Bamboat 2021). If From Every Tongue it Drips explores "the interconnected impacts of British colonialism and Indian nationalism on contemporary poetry, dance and music in South Asia" (Desai 2021) through the lens of Baradian quantum physics, through "a call and response exchange of sound, text and image" (ibid).

The film was made between Montreal, Canada, Batticaloa, Sri Lanka, and the Isle of Skye, Scotland.

In Autumn 2020 Sharlene approached me to create the soundtrack for a new film, or what was initially framed as a series of films. Sharlene proposed that we split the sound budget into two, one half being towards the conceptual devising of the soundtrack, which started before the first shot was filmed, and would continue through the creation of the film, informing the images throughout. We did this via an exchange of letters every two weeks; discussing issues around the work, sharing and reading texts, watching and listening to footage, devising strategies for creating a deeply entangled sound-image which could speak from a polyphony of perspectives. The second half of the budget was spent on the practical realisation of the soundtrack. Having worked together closely in previous projects, Sharlene suggested this represented a more honest reflection of the labour I undertake when composing with others, that *listening in* and *sounding out* are correlate and should be recognised as such.

The film was created during the COVID pandemic, at a time where almost everything, including filmmaking, had to be done remotely. It was a time where time itself felt undone, where the rhythms that structure our lives blurred and beat against each other, where personal relations became hypermediated. The film can be read within that context, however in reality the making of it was an escape from the slow cacophony of this time. It is a film which would always have required collaborating from a distance, but which embraced the constraints of the time as a way of escaping them, by listening through the ears of someone else, somewhere else.

Concurrently to making *If From Every Tongue it Drips*, I was working on another remotely composed project, *Wild Tracks Radio*. In *Wild Tracks Radio* I was collaborating with a group of young artists based in Edinburgh to create a series of sci-fi radio plays, whose stories grew from sounds they collected using their mobile phones from around their homes. We composed these sounds and stories through a long, careful, and ultimately sincerely meaningful exchange. In *Wild Tracks Radio* I would set a creative task, my collaborators would respond, I would start to compose from their responses, setting a new task based on their recordings; round and round, over and under, through and between we would weave our collective story. This way of making, of listening with a *dirty ear*, of hearing oneself as "always already an echo, an echo within a commons of echoes" (LaBelle 2016, 5) creates an "assembly of a multiplicity that will forever unsettle any single view".

If From Every Tongue it Drips was created with a similar, dirty ear.

The following pages are an account of the letters between Sharlene and I. In reflecting on the film, I of course wished to return to our letters; to re-read our writing. In amongst our discussions of the work, there was also much that was tangential, personal, and private. I have re-written these letters as a reply to Sharlene, hyphenating these other parts of our conversations out. Not as a form of redaction, because that's not what these hyphens are. Instead, they hold all the other complex connections that are vital to making together, perhaps those that are most meaningful for us as collaborators working together, but which can be left apart for now, as echoes "within a commons of echoes" (ibid.).

The letters end with a transcript of *Notes* (Carey 2021), instruction scores for listening together-apart from which much of the sound-music in *If From Every Tongue it Drips* is composed.

Rather than concluding this thesis with a chapter which finalises its findings, I instead propose the film itself as the logical end point for this body of work. If From Every Tongue it Drips, and the letters through which it was composed, are a more definite, and more poetic articulation of the practice of listening together-apart than I am able to surmise through writing. Like Speaking Nearby, learning to listen together-apart is a process rather than an outcome, an ongoing collaboration; "it's an attitude in life, a way of positioning oneself in relation to the world" (Trinh 1999, 218).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>69</sup> See Appendix A.

Sept 10, 2020

Richy, I wrote this email to

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but I never sent it.

-

I thought maybe it was a nice continuation point for us... (since we started this conversation when we first met) ... to think about multiplicity, polyvocal-ness, subjectivity and form, or rather formlessness.

Hey

\_

I've been thinking about your talk a lot - and while it felt like a slice of something very small it just resonated a lot with the things I've been thinking about.

(Or things I always think about!)

You mentioned multiplicity a few times, and it's a word/concept/framing that I have been somewhat obsessing over for a while. When I say obsess, I mean, how to formalize it, how to vocalize it, visualize it.

\_

This rings through to a lot of my work, and I think maybe with this new work I am slowlyyyyyy making and unmaking. Unmaking because every time I make a cut of this video, I undermine my singular 'voice'.

For me, and maybe for you too, this is wrapped up in diaspora. And perhaps for lack of a better term it's a way to negotiate the perpetual grey zone of inbetweeness.

What you said about a single truth connected to power and dominance also really resonates, and I think there is something queer about this thought. The always and forever questioning & aestheticizing and playing with.

I wonder how you provide context to your work for an audience that might not be familiar with the history of

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# you are dealing with?

How do you dance between saying too little, and saying too much? I know this is the ultimate question of artists film, and is something that I navigate with most of my work, especially ones having to do directly with Pakistan and its pop culture and politics, b/c the audience watching the work is never familiar with that. So then, who am I speaking to?

How not to centre colonial narratives in my own work, when within the diaspora I am constantly toeing that line.

I appreciate your talk and your work. Clearly it sparked something in my brain.

-

'Formlessness' is perhaps why I keep undoing myself, and this video, which has, as I mentioned 11 versions - as of Sept 6th.

Remember how I told you I finally read parts of Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's 'the Undercommons'? There's a moment when Fred talks about the song *What's Going On?* by Marvin Gaye (Gaye 1971). He talks about this minute moment at the beginning of the song - the first 8 seconds to be exact, where there is banter and people chatting.

"What emerges is a form, out of something that we call informality.

The informal is not the absence of form. It's the thing that gives form. The informal is not formlessness. And what those folks engage in at the beginning of "What's Going on?" is study. Now, when Marvin Gaye starts singing, there's study too. It's not study that emerges out of the absence of study. It's an extension of study."

(Moten and Harney 2013, 129)

This reminds me of you.

It shows what is happening outside of the recording studio, outside of the song: America at the time of the song, and with Black (American) music at the time of recording.

You always talk about pointing to the production of the thing we are making.

Breaking the construction.

To let an audience know the thing is just *one* construction, just *one* way of looking at things amongst a myriad of ways of looking and listening and being and thinking.

"It's almost like everybody has to comb that moment into their recording practices, just to remind themselves, and to let you know, that this is where it is that music comes from. It didn't come from nowhere. If it came from nowhere, if it came from nothing, it is basically trying to let you know that you need a new theory of nothing, and a new theory of nowhere." (ibid.)

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Sept 16<sup>th</sup>.

This helps me think.

This is the kind of place where I feel most comfortable exchanging ideas. Just talking, but with the ability for me to pause, deletedeletedelete, reword/reframe a thought. It's so weird you picking out the informal in Moten and Harney. I was writing something at the start of the week about this voice - the letter voice - being somewhere between the formal and informal.

-

you should

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send a message

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with something of what you wrote before.

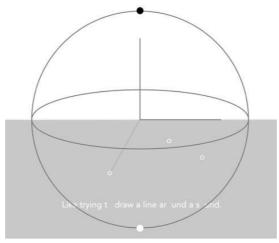
\_

The vulnerability of speaking about something that you're still immersed in and trying to find anchors in. But I think just speaking to people helps you find those anchors, maybe?

When you're talking about the perpetual inbetweeness, that grey, that irreducible complexity - I think that's the most exciting place to be, and the most daunting. I know you were talking about it specifically in terms of a diasporic sense, which isn't something I can speak to. I think holding opposing narratives concurrently is something that art making, or what I've read Trinh calling a *poetic language* (Trinh 1999) does in a way that the kind of state-sanctioned, single truth language cannot even begin to grasp. Maybe there's something here in the complexity of the work speaking to lots of people.

It's also a lot more like what I think life is actually like.

I know I hold contradictory beliefs; I live contradictions all day.



Sg. 4) A some for Coordinates (2020).

I can't really articulate it, but this image helps me think of it. It's a qubit, the quantum bit. In binary form you have black/white, on/off, I/O. But in the qubit you have all the possibility between the binary. I know you'll know this much, much better than I. But what *is*, is always something of both the I and the O, the black and the white. It's not formless if it's not at one end or the other of the binary - it's just a more complex, indefinable definite.

There's not nowhere in between, it's where we always are.

\_

I'm speaking as if I know what I'm talking about. I don't. But when it comes to thinking of narrative, maybe thinking with multiplicity is like what Trinh says about thinking from difference; "it's a way of positioning oneself in the world." (Trinh 1999)

-

I think the point of the poetic is that it's supposed to be interpreted differently by its audience. For me, this is what thinking from difference allows - allowing space for others to find their own form in a work.

-

There's definitely a need for anchors, or knots for an audience to hold on to and know that they're thinking towards an interpretation the artist is shaping for them. But there's an inherent "informality" to the form like you say.

Also, if we're thinking from multiplicity - does the audience need to always understand the references? If they do, it feels uniform.

-

That's one of the joys I get in watching work - seeing things I've never seen before; learning about other ways of being, seeing, hearing and thinking.

It's like a magpie picking up something shiny - I think an arrangement of beautiful things that make sense to you will always have sparkles of interest to an audience no matter what perspective they are looking at it from.

Maybe, if there's something in artist film that is different to other types of filmmaking, it's an expectation of an active/critical spectator. There is an attention that is primed for reading, for meaning making. Because its time based, you have control over how the clues are presented, you can shape the argument, frame the story, etc. But they're definitely studying it, in a more active way than other settings condition us to be with film.

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I guess part of presenting multiplicity could be just showing / speaking to the contradictions and just letting them be, thinking creatively about the differences between them, what kinds of questions those differences ask?

\_\_\_\_\_

Sept 22, 2020

I love this idea of both the I and the O. There's not nowhere in between, it's where we always are. I definitely understand this, in many different ways intellectually, emotionally and also physically: to be in both bod(ies) and all bodies and beings simultaneously.

#gendertrouble!

I'm going to chew on this for a minute.

"Thinking from Multiplicity, does the audience need to always understand the references?"

This is a good point. I wonder what it is in me that wants my audience to understand where I am coming from?

What I am coming from? From which between I exist?

I think maybe I know the answer to that one.

I try to draw things - maybe not lines, but other shapes, around and through images.

Do you ever feel like you are on the edges of understanding?
I perpetually feel like this. It's a series of 'almosts' without ever having an a-ha moment. This is most definitely the case when learning a new language. Which, we both are currently doing: you Gaelic, and me French. I perpetually feel that I understand, and don't simultaneously. And because I understand around the thing that is being said, and never the actual thing, I somehow convince myself that I don't need to know everything; that sitting on that edge is a good place to be.

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I want to tell you that I started the filmmaking process with those two friends in Sri Lanka. It's been fascinating so far, trying to articulate myself with words, instead of filming the image I see with my eyes. And then somehow embodying the eye of the camera operator, S. She filmed her lover vertically, and then all landscape horizontally. I wonder what she was thinking when doing this? If this was a conscious choice, or maybe it just happened that she forgot to turn the phone towards a horizontal image.

\_\_\_\_\_

No date

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I'm sitting downstairs writing to you looking out the window, the leaves are turning, the air is crisping, and the light is thinning - the constant changing of the world feels very tangible, with all the good and the bad that comes with that.

I've been looking forward to sitting down and reading your letter since I got it. Even though it's digital and *here*, I'm trying to think of it as permanent and between my fingers.

I knew you'd understand it in so many more ways than I, the qubit, being both the I and the O.

-

Thinking of bits and qubits, it's the *both* that feels so human, or not just human, *living*. Like that fluxing between is something like the energy of living, and I'd only ever understood the digital as being not living, a bit being either/or, I/O.

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It feels like this sense of THE DIGITAL that really structures our political and social boundaries now is always spoken of as either I or O, but thinking of THE DIGITAL through the qubit is much more powerful, life-like. Real.

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I think what you're saying about being in both bodies and all bodies and beings simultaneously is a much more eloquent way of speaking to this. Could you talk more around this?

-

Makes sense to want the audience to understand where you're coming from, or like you say between where you're coming from. Necessary even. When you're talking about shapes are these in the image? Like the composition of the frame? It makes me think of when we were talking about that book between The City and The City (Miéville 2009), like that border building they have to move through, it makes me think of these moments of similar shapes in an image as being something like this border building - like focusing on a shape in one image and then moving to a similar shape in the sound - a threshold.

I get that about drawing shapes around things. I like doing that with words. Like a way of triangulating an idea, but in a way that gives space for that translation to happen. Exactly like you're saying with learning a new language. Sitting on the edge though - I find comfort there too, it amplifies the slipperyness of words and ideas - you've phrased it so much better than I. When you're talking about drawing shapes, how do you do this? Practically as well as through thought?

I think that phrase you've used is interesting, "never fully grasping". Do we want to fully grasp? There's a kind of crushing in that thought, a sense of mastery or something. I find an excitement in trying to touch/hold/find meaning, in all aspects of life - learning languages or making sounds or going for a walk and seeing a new bug. Maybe bug collecting is a good analogy - to collect the butterfly folk would kill it, pin it to a page and study it. Grasping it. But there's all this other knowledge that is there if we don't grasp the bug, but just let it sit on our hands for as long as it wants to be there, learning from what it wants to give.

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Sometimes just writing down thoughts as they come is important.

It does lead on to the thinking about the film with your Sri Lankan friends. I love that she's filmed both these things in these two ways. Feels like part of collaborating, eh? Resisting the urge to say, "no you're doing it wrong", to just asking why they're doing it the way they are, and then proposing something creative from this. It makes me think how lovely it would be to just have one gesture in the film where the film might turn from vertical to horizontal. A movement that brings the land towards her lover, or her lover towards the land, that doesn't separate them. Like a kind of cadence. Were these a couple of the shots that you were going to show me but got deleted?

Tell me more about what you want to think around in this series of works. Do you want to kind of embody S's eye? How are you having this conversation with her? It makes me think of the shapes from earlier, how are you both drawing them together?

\_\_\_\_\_

Oct 7th, 2020

I'm in Toronto.

-

Writing you this letter.

The tree outside my window has been blowing around so hard because of the wind. I wonder if this is the remnants of yet another tropical storm somewhere far away.

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You ask a good question about embodying S's eye. I suppose I do want to embody it in some way. Maybe, to work with it. She sees things, and sends them to me and then I re-see them. Perhaps it's also a different way to look at my friend P - who is the 'actor & the poet'. She used to live in Toronto for years, which is where we met, and since 2019 moved to Sri Lanka. I'm looking at her through a different lens.

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This is my narrative anyway.

I think a lot about stories; how we tell them and to whom we tell them. Thomas King, a First Nations writer who lives here in Canada writes a lot about stories. Stories about stories: "For better and worse, the truth about stories is that's all we are." (King 2008)

Nice and simple, no?

Do you ever think about how you continue to assist other people tell their stories? Do you ever want to write (visualize/sonify) your own stories? Or do you think yours is wrapped up in other peoples? In the same way we have been talking about a simultaneous and interconnected existence.

Back to my point about S - The way the conversations are happening is that I gave her a primer on what kinds of daily things I wanted filmed. She sends me short videos of random household things. Of landscape and surroundings. And also of P, her lover. I asked her to script one scene and they both enacted it, and actually it worked out really well. She has a slow drawl and way of speaking which I like, because it feels as if she is asking me (unintentionally) to slow down for a second and listen to her words. She doesn't have many words for me, but when she does it's as if the camera is speaking.

The more I work on this video, the more I wonder how I am going to wrap myself in there because it is 'about' me. Whatever that means.

P addresses me on camera. For example, in one shot she says,

"Let's capture this plant for Shar". I chose to leave that in.

I like those moments of calling. As if she's pointing outside the frame to let me know there is no suspension of reality here.

Could we give ourselves some 'homework' for our next writing? I came across this piece of writing on time and sound and thought it might be nice to read/write about together (Sterne and Mills 2020).

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Oct 15th, 2020

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The light here is really special, it's never the same, the light and the shadows across the land are always moving, and comes in from a really flat angle. There is definitely a magic/magics here.

Thin. Between what we can sense and what we might not have the apparatus/senses to feel/understand.

I'm bringing this thinness up as it feels like one way of me thinking about some of what you've been speaking about.

In the sith stories here, there is the mundane day-to-day world we can sense, and then the sith world, which is on the other side of the thinness, but which is also utterly mundane, but at the same time completely, unknowably, magically different.

Maybe it's the betweenness that's the magic.

On S and P. Do you think it's an embodiment, or is it more like being led by S's eye? In the way you've set it up between each other there are these lines of empathy going on mediated by the camera/mic. I've held a phone camera so often now that I can feel the act, or feel part of it.

I like what you're saying about keeping in the mentions of you, the direct pointing to you as an absent spectator in a way.

I like things that show their making. I know what you mean about it being as if the camera is speaking. How do you think of the frame? I'm always interested in the sound outside the frame really, like in the Baradian sense of thinking what an apparatus/tool for knowing allows and disallows - frames make that clear. I like hearing things you can't see. Chion calls it the *acousmatic* (Chion 2009). Is this a space for us to think about all this otherness in your thinking that you might want to point towards but never fully articulate/reveal? Or where you make it more distinctly about you, as it were? Pulling in sounds that have a similar *shape* but are not of what we see in the frame? These could be subtle, but could also be overt at times.

I've been working my way through that text you shared.

"To demand that physiology and culture conform to a single temporality is to demand that social time and social life be organized according to a single perspective" (Sterne and Mills 2020). I started whizzing through it but felt like I was doing the opposite of what it's talking about. I'm happy for us to do it separately, but maybe it might be a good thing for us next Thursday to meet for a couple of hours and just read/listen through this together, slowly and "in person".

I liked what you're saying about Thomas King and us just being stories. I completely agree. I think that we're our own stories and other people's stories, a kind of knotted twist that can't be undone. Like the ways tree roots grow around each other. They stand alone above the ground but are so intertwined below. I recently found out that some trees can share nutrients through their roots. So even when the *tree* is cut down, and all that is left is the stump, the other trees around it keep it alive by sharing their resources.

I think about my own stories in that way. I think I just enjoy hearing about other people's stories and contributing to them.

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That's a bit grand.

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I think also, what we choose to listen to is a reflection of our own stories in lots of ways. We maybe bend towards the stories that nourish us.

What about you? How do you think about this as a filmmaker? As a person?

-

Can I see more of what you've been filming/cutting with P?

Maybe we could also be thinking about what's between what we are seeing and hearing in it? What's in the image, what's in the sound, what is shared and what is different?

I'm really interested to hear how you're thinking of yourself in this work. I know that's a big question, and maybe not something that's easily put into words. Especially when you say it more clearly through film.

There's so much more to ask and write.

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Oct 19-21, 2020

The thing between what we can sense and what we do not have the understanding for is definitely something I think perhaps we both have spoken about – edges of understanding. I love thinking about the in-between as magic! Certain landscapes, places, cultures lend to more magical thinking. I often think about how myth and superstition allow for a way of thinking that moves us past what we can see with our eyes. This is why I love the writing of Leanne Betasamosake Simpson (Betasamosake Simpson 2021). She's a Michi Saagiig Nishnaabeg writer, scholar, musician and educator here. She tells such fantastic stories and reflections wrapping in myth, critical race theory and poetry. I wish I could select a passage for you, but I can't decide on which one!

-

I, similar to you, like to facilitate other people's stories. I definitely have my own to tell, which I centre as well in my practice, but there are so many other ways I feel I can connect and contribute to other peoples' - not just in art practice, but in life as well. Maybe in film terms that's the distinction between those in front of the camera and those behind it? Or in the periphery of it, as it seems in this film.

I'm going to refer back to our language learning since it seems to be playing a huge role in how we perceive ourselves and our environments. My French teacher recently asked me if in Urdu/Hindi

'the past' looks at the back or the front? Does it literally signify behind us, or do we need to look behind us to understand what is to come? I'm still chewing on this, but it is an interesting thought. In Urdu/Hindi the word for yesterday and tomorrow are the same:

What does this say about the people who speak those languages?

Do they perceive time in different ways? What happens when you speak many languages? How do you then think about time?

This leads me back to our many conversations about time and its infinite simultaneity!

I know that during *Special Works School* we investigated how different languages create colour perceptions for people who are native to those languages, I never thought so much about time within that context. But here we are.

You ask a good question about me being led by S's eye.

Could she be one eye and me be the other? Do we always need two

eyes if both look at the same thing in similar ways?

I've been reading Ali Smith's 'Summer'. She wrote this book in the Summer of 2020 and it is about 'the now'. For a long time, I have been preoccupied with making a film about 'the now' while the now is happening. Often, most of my work has some distance from the time it's being made. As you know, I often make work about a somewhat distant past, and the reasoning behind it always was to have a better perspective on things. But what does that mean?

Can we not have perspective during a moment in which that moment is happening?

It's just a different perspective and that will always change depending on when the thing is being made, whether it's 2 years later, or 500 years later.

Maybe this is also an exercise in undoing the linearity of time, because if everything is always happening simultaneously then how can there be a past or a future?

It's a bit of a mindfuck no?

I look forward to hearing your voice tomorrow, and to reading collectively together, even if it might not serve our immediate purpose. We meander together, separately.

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Oct 30th 2020.

Do you get a lot of magic/in-betweenness from her work?

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Valuing that role - that way of thinking/being/working you're speaking to - is what I think I'm trying to draw attention to (though does that mean I'm doing the opposite?) when I think about sound and image, about collaborating.

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It is about noticing that collaborating/facilitating is the default, the thing we're always doing - and in forever putting the SINGLE\_AUTHOR on a pedestal it reiterates a lot of the problems in the world. I went to a talk by my friend Scott Rogers about his new film (Rogers 2020). I really liked it. I think you might too. It's all iPhone footage and just a slow voice over. He's talking about Mutualism as opposed to Darwinism. Cooperation and collaboration being the way that life works.

Made me think of you.

I didn't know that about Urdu and Hindi, is it just context that lets the listener know when - tomorrow/yesterday - is being referred to? That paper I sent you (Boroditsky 2011) talks about psycholinguistic research into language and time/space perception. What did you end up tasting when you were chewing on your French teacher's question? Do you think that if you can speak fluently/think in two or more different languages (cultures), that you can hold the

contradictions of those ways of thinking about time quite comfortably? I imagine so - as soon as we start interrogating time in English it soon becomes frictionless - undefinable - very quickly.

Might it be that if we are thinking in terms of linguistic structures and their impact on perceptions of time, alongside maybe the structure of the poetry you're thinking through, that we might fold these into a kind of score, or structure, for the sound?

I was thinking that perhaps we could ask P and S to think of creating a kind of field recording poem - or something like an assemblage of words that might make them up? Maybe we could talk about this in more detail, as it's possibly something you're not thinking towards too much anymore.

-

It made me want to ask P and S, or you through them, to think of rhyming as a sound that reminds you of another sound.

That we might be asking them about listening to a place, space, or something of their relationship as a sound. Thinking of making a field recording as a line of a poem - and thinking of another place that "rhymes" with the line/recording before.

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I wanted to come back to how we started, to ask you about "multiplicity, polyvocal-ness, subjectivity and form, or rather formlessness". How are you thinking about these questions having spent time with their filmic responses?

It seems like we have a lot of strategies to think around this between what we're seeing and hearing in the work. In terms of hearing other spaces/places over an image of a different space, in terms of playing back sounds from different spaces at different speeds, in terms of recording sounds at the same time but in different places - maybe this is a small experiment we could try - you recording something to them and them recording something to you at the same time. It makes me excited to be thinking of time in a kind of non-referential/sequential way - to be thinking of it together.

Are there recordings of the song that you shared with me ages ago, the really famous one that is used as a protest song, that we want to fold in here?

Or does that feel like it's part of a different film at the moment?

\_\_\_\_\_

Nov 2 - 4th, 2020

There is a section in the film where I want you to create sounds based on Barad's notion of the *here-there*:

"Matter, most definitely behaves like a particle, well except when it behaves like a wave.

Waves are extended disturbances that can overlap and move through one another.

Particles are localized entities that occupy a single position in space, one moment at a time.

Light can't simply just be a wave and a particle, extended AND localized,

substance AND disturbance, a thing AND a doing.

Right?

Diffraction is a matter of patterning attuned to differences.

Waves make diffraction patterns precisely because multiple waves can be in the same place at the same time.

And a given wave can be in multiple places at the same time.

Particles do neither.

Because particles, by definition are localized entities, they can be here or there, but not in two places at once.

According to quantum physics this is because a given particle can be in a state of superposition. To be in a state of superposition, to be in between two positions for example is not to be here or there.

Or even here and there.

Rather it is to be indeterminately here-there" (Barad 2018).

What does the here-there sound like?

Because she is speaking about it in terms of waves and particles that "overlap and move through one another", perhaps there is a way for us to overlap and move through sound together?

I would like to give P & S directions - more S, since she is the character behind the camera, and more interested in the formal aspects of things, to try the sonic rhyming you suggest.

I would also love to do an experiment with S - of her recording something the same time I record something and then send those two simultaneous recordings to you.

Do you have instructions for us?

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Oct 30, 2020

All this chat about languages and translation is going somewhere.
In this film, the underlying, maybe less 'under' and more 'over' theme is translation. Most evidently seen in the translation between Urdu and English, however, now there is a Tamil element as well, which will need to be translated into English.

How to hold multiple translations in one space?

The moment that nailed the translation coffin for me was speaking to P about filming

's memorial on Wednesday (tomorrow) morning:

P said she is going to do simultaneous translation

(not sure from which language to which),
and I thought this would be an interesting thing to film.

This person, translating live, the words reflecting the life of her

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I read this essay recently by the ever-prolific Arundhati Roy on translation, where she talks about being accused of writing in a language (English) that is not her own. Then going through what a 'mother-tongue' is in a place like India which has over 700 languages (!!), and how nationally mandated single language notions feed into Nationalism - in this case, Hindu Fascism.

She also speaks about Urdu and its inceptions, which I find lovely.

This film is really all about translation, in all of its manifestations and conceptualization. I wanted to share the closing lines from Roy's article with you because I think it sums up my entire project – not just the video,

but all the different components I want to facilitate and create:

So, how shall we answer Pablo Neruda's question that is the title of this lecture?

In what language does rain fall Over tormented cities?

I'd say, without hesitation, in the Language of Translation. (Roy 2020, 46)

You ask: "I wanted to come back to how we started, to ask you about 'multiplicity, polyvocal-ness, subjectivity and form, or rather formlessness'. How are you thinking about these questions having spent time with their filmic responses?"

Am I thinking about it differently than I did before? I'm not sure.

I am bound to the idea of our eyes and ears creating something together.

P

S

Richy

Shar

M (the editor)

The found footage voices & characters in the film:

Fareeda Khanum (singing on instagram live during the early days of Covid 2020)

Iqbal Bano
(singing a song on stage that was banned

by the Pakistani government,1980s)

Chandralekha

(choreographer extraordinaire, speaking about her (and women's) bodies resisting and reacting, early 1990s).

I think it's worth continuing to explore your questions about multiplicity, polyvocal-ness, subjectivity and form/lessness.

How are you thinking about these questions now that you have seen more and talked more?

\_\_\_\_\_

Nov 4th

\_

As I write to you now, I am attending

-

's online memorial which P is live translating on zoom.

It's bizarre and moving, and also extremely distancing.

I will send you some sections of the video. It's really fascinating how translation is functioning here, and how a pretty fucked up platform like zoom facilitates its ease, with voice, text, close captions etc.

It's also strange to see S in the background every now and then filming P, as per our discussion.

It's a bit surreal and I'm not sure how to think about that just yet.

The process of herethere,

watching the same thing from across an ocean and time.

-----

12th Nov 2020.

-

You're completely right. Things live in our bodies - or maybe it's not only us that live in our bodies, but everything else - and we live in other bodies.

\_

I'm glad you were able to be there for

\_

's memorial, vicariously and immediately. I guess you must've spoken about it together, but I can only imagine it must've been simultaneously distancing and joining, like you said. Do you think it's something that is part of the film just by merit of the fact you did it, or are you thinking the images might become a part of it?

\_

It might speak to time in a different way. How people are with us when they aren't - in lots of ways, like you say.

-

I think this is so close to, or is a better way of articulating, what I think about when we're composing with images and sounds. The sound doesn't need to "match" the image, just rhyme with it, like poetry. Trinh talks about thinking of sound and images in that way, tuning into the poetry of language when speaking about film. Not describing it.

\_

Like when P is in the kitchen at around 10 mins and is like, "stop being rigid with the structure - it's structured in its non-structure - if that makes sense". (As an aside, I love the sound of; opening the coffee pot and closing it and opening it and closing it).

I think the rhyming of sounds and images, sounds and sounds, not always literally, semiotically or something around that structure is a good hook to hang things on.

Like translation.

-

I was thinking how good it'd be to have lots of people reading that text, maybe in different languages and translations that I could like assemble into a kind of choral work. In a more constructed/composed way, but with something like this Esther Ferrer work, I'm Going to Tell You About My Life (Ferrer 2018), but in a way that lets you hear more of what's being said.

\_

I don't have questions or tasks yet. But I'm holding it in my mind. I need to spend a wee bit of time sitting and thinking about what these questions to you, S and P would be.

-

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Nov 23, 2020

\_

On my walk, I was listening to a mix of the news (about rubber production and vaccines!) and Billie Holiday and Hole. I noticed that all the Billie Holiday tracks really showcased the materiality of what it was recorded on. I don't know how to write it in words, but the closest is: ksssssccchhhhh ksssssccchhhhhhh of the records they were recorded on. And I started thinking about the most recent

exercise I made S do in recording sound. You can hear the materiality of the cell phone on her body as she walks through the streets of Batticaloa. And I was thinking about what that means about cell phones as extensions of self. As eyes and ears of our lives. Especially our quarantine lives where they play a much larger role than even before.

-

I don't think this film could have been made any other way than on a phone. To allow for the ease through which S & P move through their city, through their house, and through, and with each other. It would take much longer to get used to a bigger camera set up to get at all the things I want to get at - an intimacy that lingers in between the image being recorded and the camera itself.

-

The way she recorded the sound is vertical and I love the footage. I think maybe it brings all the vertical footage that I use in the film together.

There are so many things going on with the sound. I closed my eyes and just listened, this is what I hear:

- $\,\sim\,\,$  a musicality to the machines that surround her. It's got a bit of an early Soviet 'man is machine' vibe. But I'm into it!
  - P or S, I'm not sure which, humming or singing and you can hear parts of that
    - ~ S's body movements on the recording itself.

-

The parts where they talk back to me, I quite like because it's an attempt to show 'me' within the space of the images and sounds. Being located there but also so far away. I'm curious to see what you did with the three of our voices reading Barad.

I like the idea of rhyming sounds and images together.

-----

# No date

-

I really like the walk sound-footage too. It's excellent. Reminded me of how you spoke of you and P going on long walks together, the sound of footsteps throughout, a steady, comfortable pace. There's a really great Pauline Oliveros text, called *Some Sound Observations* (Oliveros 2015) where she just writes through what she is listening to, almost in real time. Like what you did in your last letter. I find it a useful thing to do too, as a way of listening to a recording, just writing what I hear as I hear it, noting what I notice. There's a lot in there I think you'd like, it's short and beautiful. With the clip you sent, I listened to it first before watching it. I heard it very differently the second time.

There's a mechanical rhythm of footsteps, which oscillates with the banging/metallic noise. The weird bubbling compression that phones relentlessly crush their sounds through. The scraping on the microphone diaphragm. The wind noise. I like how it quietens down, we hear the kind of high-pitched braking of the bus, the hiss of the air compression. The birds, the bikes and always their feet. The sound of vehicles passing from left to right. Some chatter, some wind, some calls, some stillness. And always their steps; moving and being moved.

\_

There's a writing game I use sometimes that we've played before. A way of writing around a sound.

It feels like there are a lot of threes throughout this film.

P, S and You.

You, M and I.

Here, there and everything in between.

This, that and the other.

I wonder if I could ask you to think of three spaces you'd like to convey the sound of? These don't need to be geographical or physical spaces. Then you, S and P could propose three feelings, or textures, or sounds you'd suggest for each of these spaces. They might not all be in English, in fact it would make a lot of sense if there were certain words or notions that are difficult to translate. And in a short discussion between you, decide on three of those words, which between you, sing the loudest for each of the three spaces you hope to convey. This gives an open instruction for the person doing field recordings. Which might be happening in Batticaloa, or might also be happening in Montreal? If it was me doing the field recordings, it would give me three specific notions of the kinds of sounds to record, whilst also setting these in a kind of context amongst the other six words in each space.

\_

It'd be a good space to prompt thinking about the kinds of sound collecting that  ${\sf P}$  and  ${\sf S}$  could be doing too.

If anything, it might just end up helping me think about closeness, distance, and textures when it comes to soundtracking.

If you want to try this, let me know and I can draw it in an easier way than I can write it.

We could try just recording one of your phone calls with P and S?

-

-----

3rd Dec 2020.

-

I think that what you wrote, and what Pauline Oliveros wrote in that text, is a much better way of describing the sounds of a place, space and time to a sound recordist in another place; to reimagine something of the sound of elsewhere.

It doesn't need to be all abstract and such, like I wrote before. Simple and honest.

Perhaps, we, as in you P and S, and maybe also me if you wanted, might just find a time to write down what we are hearing in a place that is important to the work. Perhaps we just find a place to listen from and mark down what we hear together.

There may well be some beautiful serendipities - there usually is.

Something li	ke
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listening together-apart

Dear Sharlene, Ponni, Sarala and Muhammed.

It's great to be writing to you, I've heard so much about you all, and feel like I maybe know something of you from watching the cuts of the film as it's been growing. My name's Richy, I'm helping out Sharlene with the soundtrack for the film.

We were talking the other day about ways of listening together, in part to record some sounds directly that might fold into the film's soundtrack, in part to explain to someone like me what kinds of sounds might make sense to try find that might speak around the film, but I think, most importantly to listen together whilst being physically so far apart. A collective listening.

So much of this film has been about making across distance and the enfolding of time and space. We were hoping that we could each set aside some time, at the same time, where we might listen out for each other from different places that we are in the world.

On the next page there are three instruction scores, that follow/borrow from composer Pauline Oliveros' *Sonic Meditations*, and practice of *Deep Listening*. For Oliveros "*Deep* coupled with *Listening*... is learning to expand the perception of sounds to include the whole space/time continuum of sound – encountering the vastness and complexities as much as possible."

They're pretty simple, but also, for me at least, can be quite difficult. I don't know how often you take a chunk of time out of your day to sit and listen to the world, but it can be hard to tune out the everyday demands on our attention and to begin the attunement to the place we are, the sounds of the non-human and the human and the in-between. Oliveros said that Deep Listening is "intended to facilitate creativity in art and life" which "means the formation of new patterns, exceeding the limitations and boundaries of old patterns, or using old patterns in new ways". I hope that in listening together-apart we might hear something of these patterns we are a part of.

There are three meditations.

I would give yourself at least 30 minutes to do all three.

You might do all three in 10 minutes, you might take much longer than 30 minutes.

Don't look at the clock, let your attention be guided by what is around you.

Don't worry if you misremember what the instructions were – they're only words – bend them, follow them, forget them.

You might want to do one or two of them again in the future.

Like anything, it gets easier the more you practice it.

#### listening together-apart

#### Notes

Find a time to be together-apart, in a meaningful place. Have a pen or pencil and paper to hand. If you can, close your eyes. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth, in long slow breaths.

When you are ready, begin to listen for notes in the air around you.

Make notes on what you notice. Write down what you hear. If you don't know the source of the sound, describe its texture or tone. Follow one sound as it moves into the next. If it moves away from you, let it go and listen for a new sound. Listen for the sounds inside other sounds. Listen for the sounds around other sounds. Listen to where they meet.

When you feel like you have heard something of the space, read back through what you have written. You might choose to read it aloud, you might choose to record yourself.

# Variation I

Set your phone to 'voice record'. Close your eyes. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Open your ears to the space you are in.

When you are ready, open your eyes and take a walk. Describe what you hear to your phone as you move. Try to describe what you are hearing, not what you are seeing. Notice the differences between the two.

You might walk to somewhere new; you might return to where you began. When you arrive, pause for a time. Close your eyes, breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Stop recording.

Variation II - (An adaptation of Environmental Dialogue (1971) by Pauline Oliveros.)

Find a meaningful place to be. Close your eyes. Breathe in through your nose and out through your mouth. Begin to open your ears to the space.

As you notice the sounds around you, gradually begin to reinforce the pitch of the sound source, either vocally or mentally. If you lose touch with the source, wait quietly for another. If the pitch of the sound source is out of your range, then reinforce it mentally. Reinforcing means supporting or sustaining.

Listen out for each other.

When you feel as though you have attuned to something of the space, stop recording.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 2020, the day of the winter solstice, Sharlene, Ponni, Sarala, Muhammed and I met in different locations, at the same time<sup>70</sup>, to practice the instruction scores *Notes, Notes Var. I and Notes Var. II.* Most of the non-synchronous sound-music in *If From Every Tongue it Drips* is composed from recordings made during this time spent listening together-apart.

Following this listening session, Sharlene and I continued to write to each other. The conversation gently moving from the conceptual to the practical, gravitating from pages to video calls, exchanging edits rather than letters, moving through all the concrete machinations involved in realising films. I composed with the sounds collected though *Notes*, amongst others found from the different sites of the film, to create a soundtrack where a listener could hear something of *there* amongst the *here* of the images. The sounds are layered and diffuse, opaque and definite; waves of sounds lapping against waves of images, making "diffraction patterns precisely because multiple waves can be in the same place at the same time" (Barad 2018). Composing sound and image, conceptually and practically, from the first letter to the last, was a "matter of patterning attuned to differences", of *sounding out* to *listen in*, of *listening in* to *sound out*; of listening together-apart to create a sound-image that is indeterminately here-there.

If From Every Tongue it Drips (2021) HD video, Stereo. 67 min.

The film If From Every Tongue it Drips, with audio captions by Collective Text, can be viewed through the following link <a href="https://rb.gy/w3mgda">https://rb.gy/w3mgda</a> or by QR code;



If From Every Tongue it Drips (2021)

-

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>70</sup> 08:00 EST in Montreal, Canada; 13:00 BST in the Isle of Skye, Scotland; 18:30 IST in Batticaloa, Sri Lanka.

Sound-images are Made With others.

Through the course of this research project, I came to crediting all the contributors in the sound-image works I directed under the single title *Made With*. This was intended as a move away from the demarcated delineation of roles commonly found in credits, to speak to the interplay of influence and authorship in the works. Though this gesture spoke to the collaborative nature of the works, it had the undesirable effect of muting the collaborators' distinct contributions. *If From Every Tongue it Drips* finds a balance between the two, crediting the work as being *Made With* the key collaborators, followed by their individual contributions.

This chapter is written in the same spirit. Listening together-apart was Made With;

Appendix A is a chronological account of collaborative projects undertaken alongside those in the portfolio. For the most part<sup>71</sup>, these are projects in which I contributed as part of another artist's work. Each project has been a site for creative discussion with artists and communities around the collaborative composition of sound-images. Beyond the boundaries of the portfolio, these works are where I have learned to practice-research *listening togetherapart*.

Appendix B holds short biographies of the artists and collectives with whom I collaborated on the composition of the works in the portfolio. I am grateful for their critical ears, creative imaginations, and considered conversation.

Appendix C is a copy of Listening Games; a series of creative prompts for collaborative making devised throughout the course of this thesis.

Works Cited is a list of the works cited throughout this thesis.

<sup>71</sup> With the exception of those highlighted in gold where I was the lead artist.

# Appendix A

Laughter Track, for Rhubaba Choir
Pig Rock Bothy, Scottish National Gallery of Modern Art, Edinburgh.
Sound recording and mix for sound installation.

The Health Benefits of Eating Silica, for Lauren Gault + Zoë Claire Miller Tramway, Glasgow International 2016, Glasgow. Sound design for installation.

There's Something Happening Somewhere, for Carrie Skinner Tron Theatre, Glasgow. Composition for live theatre.

INCONGRUOUS DIVA, for Will Holder and Cara Tolmie British Art Show, Southampton. Sound recording and mix for vinyl record I sound installation.

Cinepoems, for Rachel McCrum

Sound recording and mix for sound-image poetry series.

Article on processes published in All These New Relations.

Forms of Action for Asunción Molinos Gordo CCA, Glasgow. Sound recording and mix for interactive sound installation.

Music to my Eyes for Alexander Storey Gordon SWG3, Glasgow International 2016. Publication. Speculative essay on Don Levy's sound-image practice.

2017

Motherwell: The Opera, for Prof. Nigel Osborne Tapestry Project. Community music and filmmaking project.

## Kids Parliament

Shock of Victory, CCA Glasgow.

Creative activities around democratic organisation for children.

Memo to Spring for Sarah Rose NOW, Scottish National Galleries of Modern Art, Edinburgh. Sound design and mix for installation.

Wondering Soul with Alexander Storey Gordon Radiophrenia, CCA Glasgow, Glasgow. Sound design and mix for installation I live broadcast

2018

# sounding in / sounding out

LUX Scotland.

Workshops for artist filmmakers on creative sound design.

Part-Time for Margaret Salmon Tramway, Glasgow. Sound mix for installation.

Special Works School for Bambitchell Gallery TPW, Toronto. Composition and mix for film

April for Sarah Forrest LUX Scotland | Margaret Tait award commission 2018. Sound mix for film.

On the waves of the air, there is dancing out there for Carrie Skinner Telfer Gallery, Glasgow International 2018.

Composition for live performance.

## Words for Timbre

Romanti-Crash, Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh. Creative workshops at art/music festival.

### Now and Next: Sound for Moving Image

LUX Scotland | BBC Scotland.

Workshops on creative sound-design for artist filmmakers.

Between a Whisper and a Cry for Alberta Whittle LUX Scotland | Margaret Tait award commission 2019. Sound design and mix for film.

No Archive Can Restore You for Onyeka Igwe KW, Berlin I Mercer Union, Toronto. Sound design and mix for film.

Child of Magohalmi and the Echoes of Creation for Zadie Xa Tramway, Glasgow. Sound mix for installation.

Ways of Seeing for Kathryn Elkin. Projections, Tyneside. Sound recording and mix for film.

The Narrator for Sarah Forrest Hospitalfield, Arbroath. Sound mix for film.

Home for Margaret Salmon Housework films | Random Acts, Channel 4. Location recording.

## listening.watching.speaking

LUX Scotland.

Reading group around perspectives of sound-image composition in artist film.

Translanguaging

University of Glasgow | British Council

Creative language/sound games for teachers and EASL support teachers.

Ashley for Jamie Crewe

LUX Scotland | Margaret Tait award commission 2020.

Sound design and mix for film.

Salmon I A Red Herring for Cooking Sections

Tate, London.

Sound design and mix for installation.

CITHRA for Lauren Gault

Gasworks, London.

Sound design and mix for installation.

#### CITHRA | Compositions

Gasworks, London.

Series of compositions for one-day sound installation.

#### Pause

Images Festival, Toronto.

Sound-Image work for intertitles between films at festival.

Trailers for Isabel Lewis

Art Night, London.

Field recording for online exhibition.

A So Called Archive for Onyeka Igwe

KW, Berlin I Mercer Union, Toronto.

Sound recording, design and mix for film.

RESET for Alberta Whittle

Frieze, London | Forma, London.

Sound design and mix for film.

Deep Space Call & Response for Victoria Evans

Design Informatics, Edinburgh.

Sound mix for film.

Cosmic Domestic for Victoria Evans

LUX Scotland | BBC Arts Scotland.

Sound mix for film.

Méduse for Lauren Gault

Common Guild, Glasgow.

Sound design and mix for audio work.

#### Wild Tracks Radio

Collective, Edinburgh | Radiophrenia, Glasgow.

First two episodes of community made sci-fi radio docu-dramas.

2021

#### Wild Tracks Radio | The Listening Crystal

LUX Scotland | BBC Arts Scotland | BBC 6 Radio.

Third episode of community made sci-fi radio docu-drama.

Traces of Escapees for Cooking Sections

SALT Beyoğlu, Istanbul.

Sound design and mix for installation.

What can we learn about love from lichen? for Isabel Lewis

Art Night, London | ATLAS Arts, Isle of Skye.

Series of instruction scores and guided listening walks.

We know a better word than happy for Helen McCrorie

LUX Scotland | BBC Arts Scotland.

Sound design and mix for film.

Tell me how do I feel? for Annie Crabtree

Glasgow International 2021.

Sound mix for film.

#### Åčçëñtß in RESET

Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh.

Exhibition of Åčçëñtß scores as part of group show exploring Alberta Whittle's RESET.

## Cithra

Tetley, Leeds.

Reworking of CITHRA I Compositions for exhibition.

GROOM for Leyla Josephine BFI Network. Sound design and mix for film.

Traces of Escapees for Cooking Sections Turner Prize, Tate | Herbert, Coventry. Sound design and mix for installation.

## Appendix B



Fig. 3. Installation image. Bugs & Beasts Before the Law. Henry, Seattle. 2021.

BAMBITCHELL is the artistic collaboration between Sharlene Bamboat and Alexis Kyle Mitchell. Since 2009, their research-based practice has taken form through moving image, installation and performance to re-imagine nationalist histories – playfully recycling official state documents and institutional archives.

Their works have been exhibited at festivals and galleries such as Mercer Union (Toronto), International Film Festival Rotterdam, Berlin International Film Festival, Galerie Dazibao (Montreal), and the BFI London Film Festival (UK). Their practice has been the subject of writing in ArtForum, The Brooklyn Rail, Canadian Art, and the Routledge published book "Contemporary Citizenship, Art, and Visual Culture". The duo held fellowships at Akademie Schloss Solitude in Stuttgart, Germany (2016-2017), The MacDowell Colony in New Hampshire, USA (2018) and The Darling Foundry in Montreal, Canada (2019). Bambitchell were long list recipients of the 2020 Sobey Art Award, through the National Gallery of Canada. They currently have a solo exhibition at the Henry Art Gallery (Seattle).

## http://www.bambitchell.com



Fig. 4. Film still. If From Every Tongue it Drips. 2021.

Sharlene Bamboat is an artist and filmmaker. Her works have exhibited internationally, including: the Sharjah Film Platform (U.A.E.), the Berlin Film Festival: Forum Expanded (Germany), Aga Khan Museum (Canada), BFI's London Film Festival (UK), Malmo Queer Film Festival (Sweden) and Vasakh Film Festival (Pakistan). Sharlene frequently works in collaboration, most notably with artist Alexis Mitchell under the name Bambitchell. The duo have had solo exhibitions at Gallery TPW (Toronto), Articule (Montreal), AKA Gallery (Saskatoon), Mercer Union (Toronto), andthe Henry Art Gallery (Seattle). They were long list recipients of the National Gallery of Canada's Sobey Art Prize in 2020.

Sharlene contributes regularly to the arts-sector in Canada, as programmer, artistic director, jury member for festivals, board member for not-for-profits arts organizations, and has been a member of various film/video collectives.

Sharlene is based in Tio'tia:ke/Montréal, in Kanien'kehá:ka territory.

https://sharlenebamboat.com



Fig. 5. Performance image. A Nude Descends into a Lump. Collective, Edinburgh. 2016.

Mark Bleakley is an artist and choreographer who presents work in both dance and visual arts contexts. Formally trained in visual art, his practice is rooted in social dance through Bboying (Breakdancing) and House dance, whose practice incorporates contemporary choreographic and improvisational practices. He develops compositions combining video, the body and text to explore choreographic relations between gesture, context and their affects. His current work explores how We handle things; people, objects and how objects handle Us through: environments, architecture, and social structures, asking "can the gallery and the choreographic field provide a space to present and re-examine these relations that our bodies are in constant dialogue with?"

https://markbleakley.co.uk

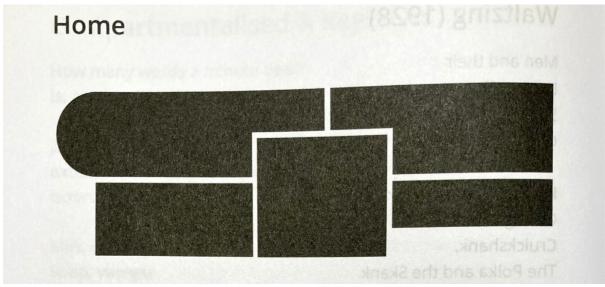


Fig. 6. Image from Light and Other Observations. Borland Ceilidh Publishing. 2018.

Martin Cathcart Frödén is a Lecturer in Creative Writing at Malmö University, Sweden. His debut novel *Devil take the Hindmost* won the Dundee International Book Prize. He has been Poet in Residence for The National Trust for Scotland and his short fiction has won awards including BBC Radio 4's Opening Lines.

https://www.lumawords.co.uk



Fig. 7. Installation image. CITHRA. Gasworks, London. 2020.

Lauren Gault is a Glasgow-based artist born in Belfast. She graduated from Duncan of Jordanstone College of Art and Design in Dundee in 2008. Recent solo exhibitions include:Cithra, The Tetley,Leeds (2021) C I T H R A, Gasworks, London (2020); The Workbench, Milan; Grand Union, Birmingham (2019); CCA Derry~Londonderry (2018); Prairie Underground, Seattle (2017); Rinomina, Paris (2016); Jupiter Artland, Edinburgh; CCA Glasgow (2015). Lauren will hold a solo exhibition curated by Katherine Murphy at Temple Bar Gallery + Studios, Dublin in 2022, selected through an Open Call for Curators.

https://www.laurengault.co.uk



Fig. 8. Film still. Screenshot. 2019.

Image: Alexander Storey Gordon, Screenshot 2019, 2019, film still

Alexander Storey Gordon lives and works in Glasgow. He makes drawings, films, texts, and events, that look at the way film and literature, mediate perceptions and conceptions, of ourselves, our environment, and others, in the construction of meaning. He graduated with a degree in Printmaking from Gray's School of Art in 2010 and is the producer of The Artists Moving Image Festival, Tramway/ LUX Scotland, from 2015 – present.

Recent solo exhibitions include, Interludes, Plymouth Art Centre and Mount Florida Screenings, Plymouth Art Weekender (2018); On The Waves of The Air, There Is Dancing Out There, with Carrie Skinner, Glasgow International (2018); A Wondering Soul, with Richy Carey, Radiophrenia, CCA, Glasgow (2018); A Apopheny!, CCA Intermedia, Glasgow, (2017); Aparição, Phosphorus, Sao Paulo (2015).



Fig. 9. Film still. Film From Two Études. 2019.

Wendy Kirkup is a Glasgow based artist working primarily with moving image. Her recent portrait works draw attention to the subjective gestures of musical performance and listening. Experiments in new music with its emphasis on innovative approaches to notation, indeterminacy and the aleatory have been used as a starting point and structuring device for these films.

Her past work has been shown within the UK and internationally including Tate Britain, Centro Andaluz de Arte Contemporáneo , Sevilla, ZKM, Germany, Beton7, Athens and more recently, with *The Forest of Everything* at Pier Art Center, Orkney, Inverness Film Festival and Viborg Kunsthal, Denmark.



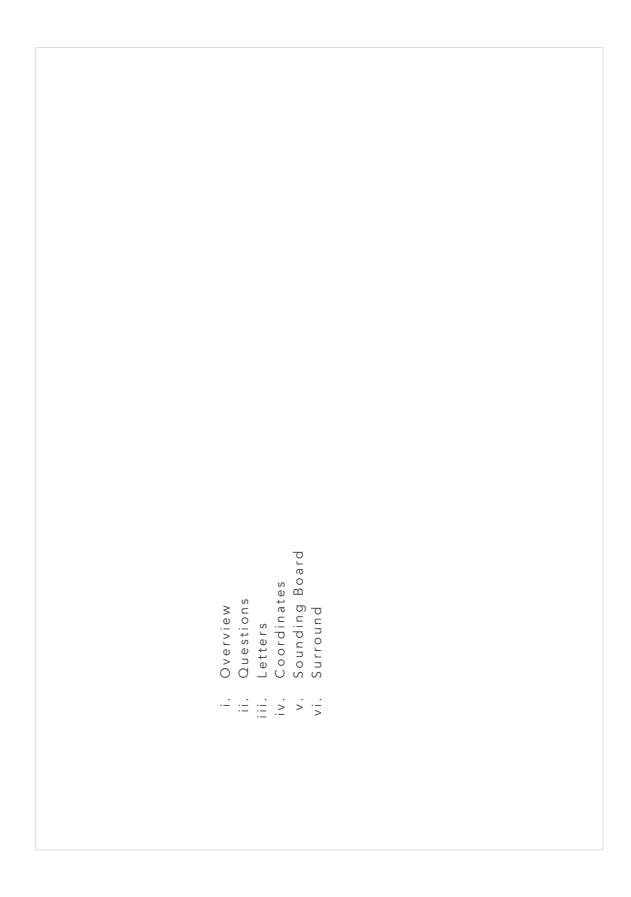
Fig. 10. Installation image. Open Source (crocodile). Talbot Rice, Edinburgh. (2021).

Sarah Rose is an artist based in Glasgow. Her practice engages with processes of translation, abstraction, mutation, and transformation to think through the lifecycles of material resources and information. Sculptures and sound works trace different states, contingent interactions and ways of communicating.

Sarah's work has been shown at the Scottish Museum of Modern Art, Centre for Contemporary Art Glasgow, Hospitalfield, Darling Foundry,SWG3 Gallery, Baltic 39, Elizabeth Foundation Project Space. Sarah was artist-in-residence at Little Sparta: the garden of Ian Hamilton Finlay, Hospitalfield, Edinburgh Sculpture Workshop and the Banff Centre. Sarah is involved in tenletters, a space in Glasgow that is focused by the representation, expression and circulation of language in its many forms. Sarah moved to Scotland in 2010 from Aotearoa, New Zealand to undertake a masters at Glasgow School of Art.

## Appendix C

# listening games Richy Carey, 2021



## . Overview

The following pages are some listening games we can play as ways of speaking around what y/our project might be/come. It seems prescriptive, though it's really not intended to be. We don't have to do any of them, or we can do all of them, whichever suits your way of working best. They are only lines; we can bend them, follow them, or forget them. There is no right way of doing them.

- i. Holds some of the questions I tend to ask myself as I'm making sounds.
- These don't need answers yet, we'll find them as we make together and make new ones as we go.
- If you're doing location recording, they might help you think about the sounds you want to record.
- ii. Is an invitation for us to write to each other as we make together.
- I find letters much more useful ways of tracing a conversation than emails.
- We can write in the same spirit as a letter over a google doc.
- They can be a way of thinking slowly; a place we can return to, seeing different perspectives as the work grows.
- iii. Is a game for making a score called Coordinates.
- Speaking about sound is notoriously difficult.
- Words on their own are specific and very vague, part of their magic is their liveness, their refusal to be fixed.
  - This exercise helps us to think around your project, whilst leaving space for new ideas.
- It helps us be specific but not rigid.
- iv. Helps us think of the shape of the work, a variation on storyboarding.
- Here we can begin to plot the dynamics of the work, how the sounds and images might move with each other and why.
- I find it easier to work with both words and graphic scores here, to think in terms of texture, tone, harmony, rhythm, timbre.
- We might return to this and make new versions for specific scenes or passages as well as for the work as a whole.
  - It might help us find rhythms and variations in the work and think about what they might say.
- They can be as sketchy or detailed as you like.

v. Is simply a reminder for us to share films, music, sounds, books, texts, images that we're thinking of in relation to the work.

## i. Questions

The following, in no particular order, are some of the questions I tend to ask myself when I'm listening with images. Some might be useful for your project, some might not. There will be others. I'd prefer to hear your questions.

# From who's perspectives are we listening?

Sound can hold many perspectives at the same time. We can make a collective or individual in the image? A person from before or after that moment? The land? The wind? The camera?

Between sound and image we can listen from more than one perspective at the same time, or at least gesture towards that. How and where might these perspectives change?

why?

## Where is our attention?

Sound can sort of remix our awareness of what is in an image, we can amplify small gestures and soften loud images.

How might this change through time?

Why?

# What is the image not saying?

What is happening outside the frame that we might want to know?

How might those sounds relate to the immediate, the previous and future in the work?

How attached to the image do we want to be at certain points?

When might we want the sound to say the same as the image and when do we want it to speak to something else?

When might we w

## Where are the differences?

In the actual space of the image, where is the rhythm, crescendo, texture, reverberation, thickness and thinness, busyness and emptiness? Thinking sculpturally, with sound as a physical material, what is the form, shape and dynamic of the sounds and how do they change? Are these differences echoed through sound? N.B. there is a sonic meditation by Pauline Oliveros which often helps me attune to an environment before recording. This of course is not always pragmatic in recording situations, but if there is time it's a useful guide for our ears to find what we might attend to,

--

**Environmental Dialogue** 

Each person finds a place to be, either near to or distant from the others, either indoors or out-of-doors. Begin the meditation by observing your own breathing. As you become aware of sounds from the environment, gradually begin to reinforce the pitch of the sound source. Reinforce either vocally, mentally or with an instrument. If you lose touch with the source, wait quietly for another. Reinforce means to strengthen or sustain. If the pitch of the sound source is out of your range, then reinforce it mentally.

Pauline Oliveros (1971)

What instrument is mediating the sound?

The ear is an instrument, it allows for the performance of certain knoweldges and is deaf to others – how can we make the unheard sonorous and why might we choose to do so?

Different microphones and techniques of recording will colour your listening in different ways. If you have time repeat Environmental Dialogue through your recording apparatus. How is it different and how might we amplify or equalise these differences?

Where is the silence?

Will there be silence, or silence? With no sound at all being played back from the speakers the audience will hear the space they are in, becoming acutely aware of the separation between themselves and the space of the image – might this be desirable?

What might be the room tone in each image?

Does it come from the site of the image, or might it come from somewhere else?

Whv?

How will it be heard?

Cinemas, galleries, televisions and mobile screens have vastly different sonic potentials and attentions, as do mono, stereo, surround and headphone speakers convey different languages of communication.

What space and format will it be shown in, and why employ one sound array instead of another?

## iii. letters

In previous projects, I've found it useful to create a google.doc where we can write backwards and forwards to each other, rather than doing so over emails.

Writing these 'letters' to each other is usually a lot slower than writing emails – in a good way. I find them to be a place to think carefully.

It's also a way of collecting all our discussions in one place, a place we can refer back to as we go. These letters can hold links to edits, can point to works that inform the project, hold images, anything really.

Writing letters is more like having a real conversation.

In previous projects, these letters have occasionally been turned into publications or ways of framing the work we make.

I'm always happy to try other ways of doing something similar to the above more in line with how you usually work.

# iv. Coordinates

I find it difficult to articulate in linear sentences the motive, fluxing, living changeableness of sound-images. Sentences make words feel fixed in place, and I can never seem to get them in the right order. Coordinates is a short game about playing with the vitality of words, seeing them as vibrant, effervescent with possibility.

Begin by writing out 10 words that hold something of what you are speaking to in the project – some may be direct, some may be outliers that feel important, but might not have made sense in a "pitch" or a sentence. We can elaborate on why you've chosen these words.

Draw these words out on a page in a way that makes sense to your eye. Some words might be close together, others might be out on their own. You could draw lines between these words. Think of these lines like hyphens; something of the other is held in a hyphen, they are very complex little lines. You might choose to add something else to your score, it could be a text, a quote, or an image.

Then, choose three words from this score as a way of triangulating the meaning of the work/scene/moment, but holding it within its context.

You could write this new hyphenated word out. You could change the words a little to make more sense; commotion-within-otherness

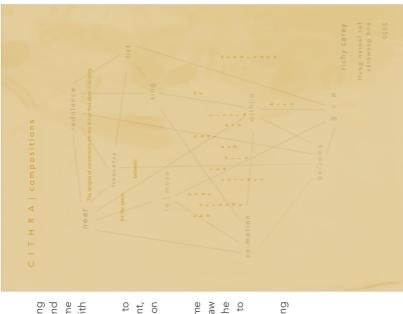


fig.1 Coordinates ex. CITHRA | Compositions with Lauren Gault (2020)

# v. Sounding Board

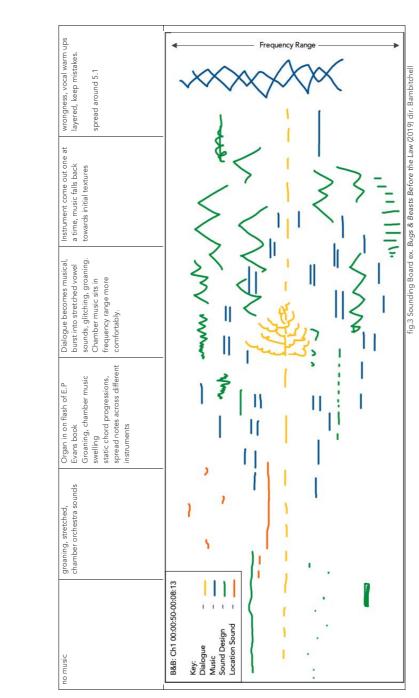
Much like a storyboard, it can be useful for us to compose a sounding board, a chronological outline of where, how and why the sonic gestures might relate to the image and/or narrative, to plot the arc of the work and compose its form. As you can see from below, they can be very sketchy. You can make them however you like, in whichever way suits your project. They can be quite nice artefacts.

graphic scores to visualise the interactions between sonic elements like dialogue, music, foley, sound design. I find this a really useful tool. It We can use customary ways of communicating these dynamics, through timecodes, screengrabs, and text. Or we can combine these with also lets us visualise sonic-material concepts like weight, force, texture, distance, density, or width, and how these sounds might interact.



The above graphic score indicates four separate "voices" in a particular scene (Dialogue, Music, Designed Sound and Location Recordings) composed through time and frequency range, though it doesn't have to be as specific as this. I often make little graphic scores before composing or even mixing, it lets me imagine the dynamics I want to create and is a useful memory aid for when I get caught up in making. The aim of this process is not to communicate through singular channels of specificity, but rather through multiple, uncertain gestures, inviting translation, and the interpretive possibilities this encourages. The sounding board example below illustrates how might combine the coordinates game with a graphic score, and more traditional storyboarding methods like screengrabs and timecode to create a sounding board.

00:08:12 - 00:08:29	Book Inc.	wrong	frozen	warning	sorbet	preparation	other	abrupt	funny	casual	pretentious	no sound design								
00:07:13 - 00:08:12		raw	present	material	nearly diegetic	immediate	cracking	collapsing	separated			cement mixer, drills squeals,	construction sites,	hammering, sawing,	crunching, thumping		Overpowers music		Spread around 5.1 –	beginning to fold to front
00:06:17 - 00:07:13		constructed	collapsing	grinding	fractious	multiple	separated	grain	choral	loose		cement mixer, drills squeals,	construction sites,	hammering, sawing,	crunching, thumping		Building up to even with	music		Spread around 5.1
00:05:00 - 00:06:17		institutional	architectural	monumental	separated	apparent	force	drawn	grain	cracks	mortar	cement mixer, drills squeals,			crunching, thumping		Introduce slowly		Begin in front speakers	
00:03:04 - 00:05:00		ingrained	everyday	old	religious	amateur	thin	transient	local	unseen	warm	Location sound, of that	space, nothing added,	flap of bird wing on lens flare	hearing cars but not seeing	them on street shot	everything to front of 5.1			
00:00:50 - 00:03:04		subtle	offscreen	constructed	inside / outside	dry	intimate	hollow	lack	authority	purpose	creaking floorboards,	fields, wind, grass blowing,	insects buzzing,	odd sense of diegesis -	disconnected	creaking to rear of 5.1	field/outside to front of 5.1		



The above is an example from a scene previous project, Bugs & Beasts Before the Law (2019) dir. Bambitchell, we might use this as a departure point to create our own sounding boards that are more specific to your creative processes.

## Much like the in the coordinates exercise, the works that surround our specific interests are as important as those that directly inform the project Here, or in a separate document, we might share films, music, sounds, books, texts, images that we're thinking of in relation to the work, not with a view to emulating them, but to better understand the touchstones we each use to navigate the themes and questions the project speaks fig.4 Graphic Score from Near By (2018). This space is as illuminating as coordinates and sounding board exercises in collaboratively composing sound-images together. in orientating our understanding. vi. Surround ţ

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