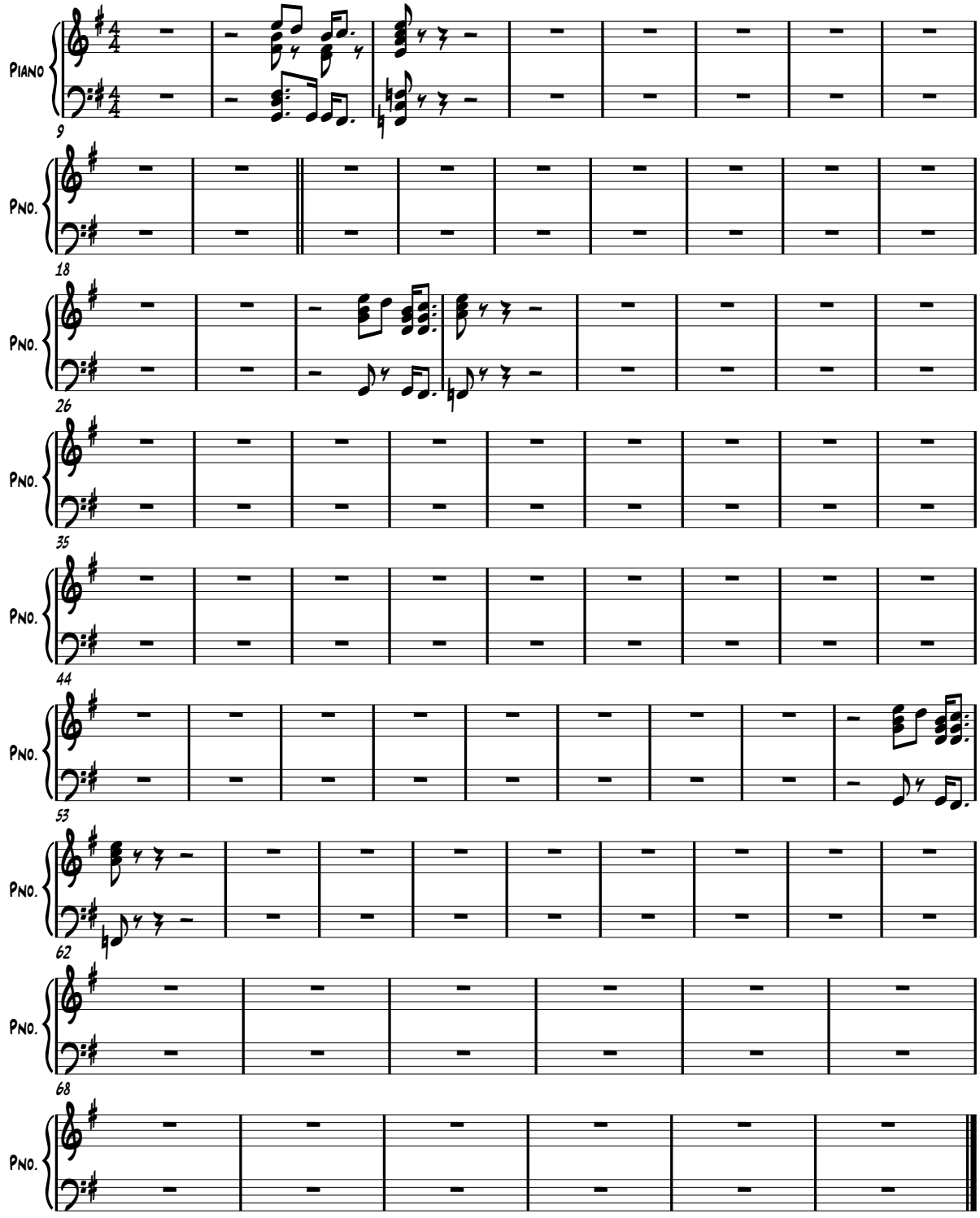
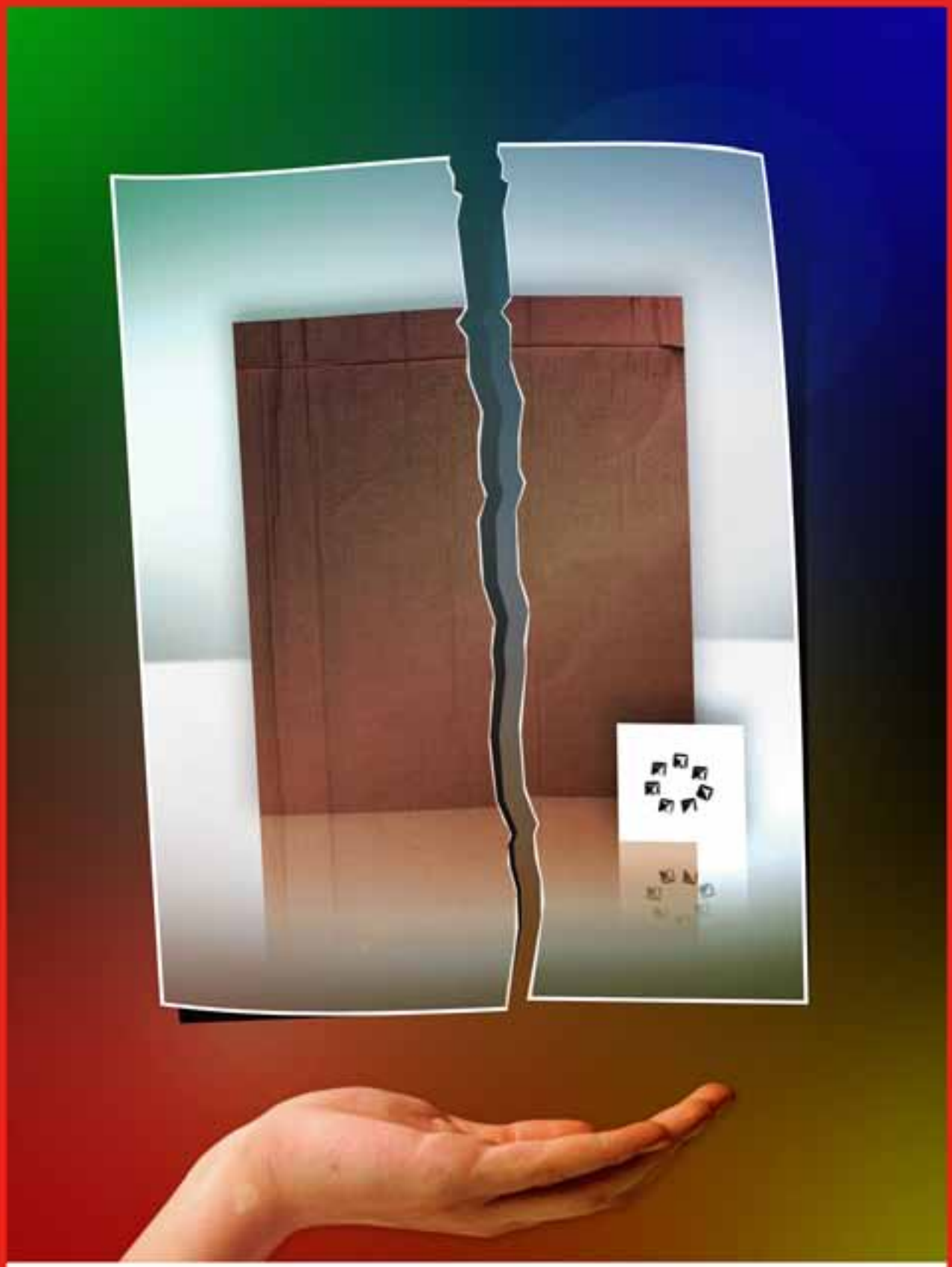
SOUND SPILL

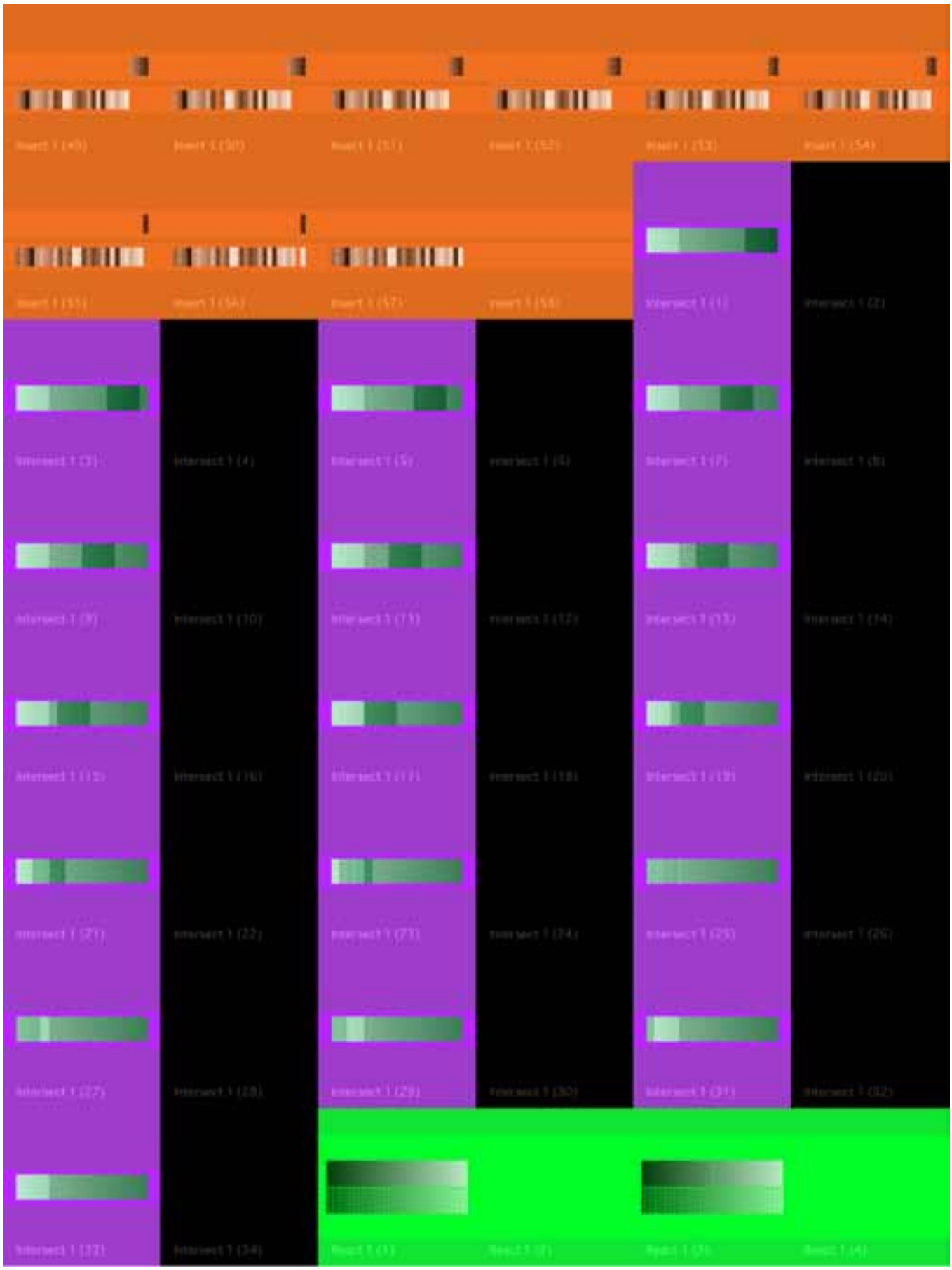
Cory Arcangel
André Avelãs
John Baldessari
Trisha Baga
Michael Bell-Smith
Ben Cain
Peter Coffin
David Raymond Conroy
Melissa Dubbin & Aaron S. Davidson
Peter Fischli & David Weiss
Lesley Flanigan
James Hoff
Stephen Sharp & Roc Jiménez de Cisneros
Lucky Dragons
Oliver Payne
Amalia Pica
Seth Price
Hannah Sawtell
Lorenzo Senni
Ben Vida
Raphaël Zarka

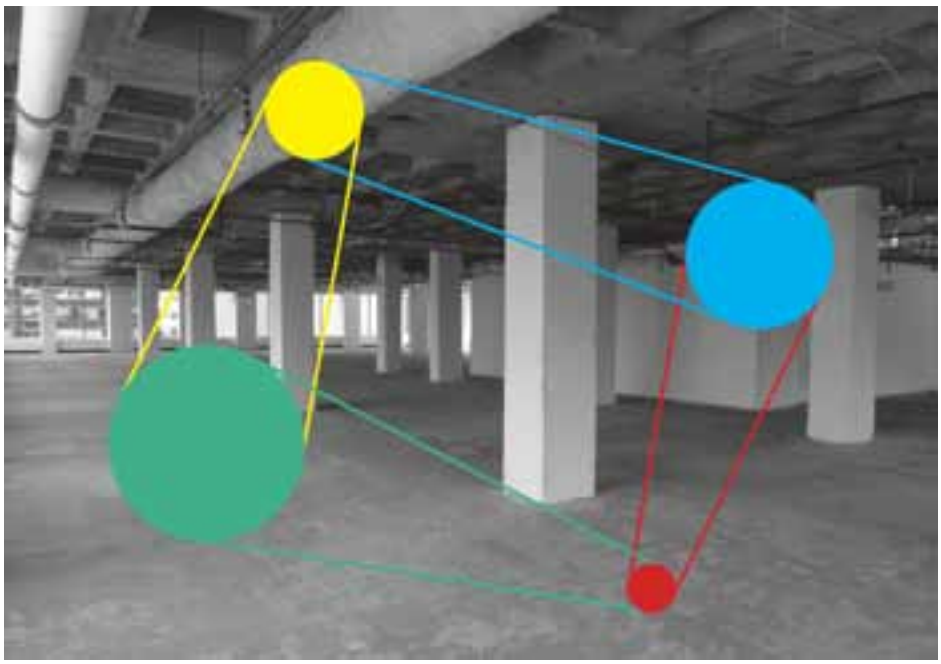
Sound Spill
Curated by Thom O'Nions & Richard Sides
Zabludowicz Collection New York
8–26 May 2013

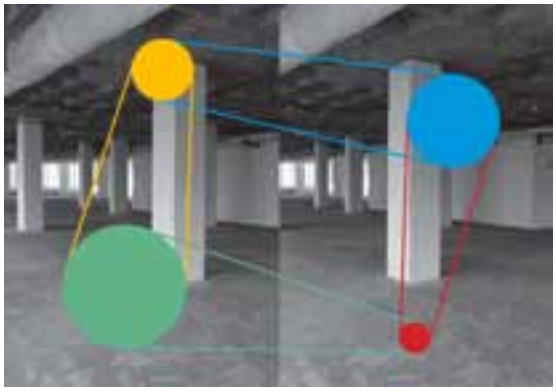
Bennie and the Jets

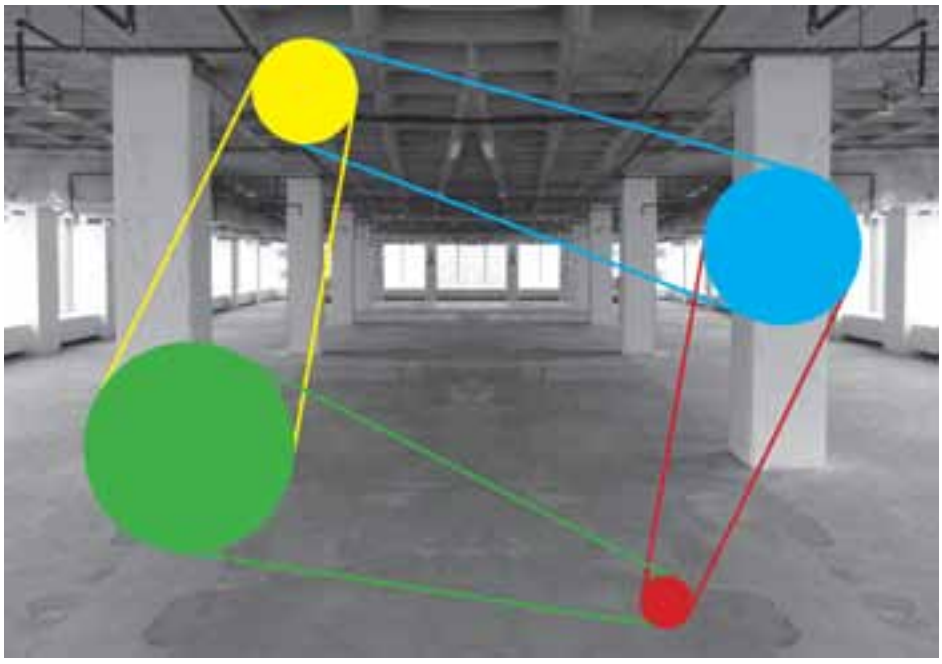












Δ
This is the sound of a room without anything.

Δ
This is the sound of that anything becoming a cool thing.

Δ
This is the sound of that cool thing becoming a warm thing.

Δ
This is the sound of that warm thing gaining speed.

Δ
This is the sound of that speed gathering history.

Δ
This is the sound of that history being transformed into an item.

Δ
This is the sound of that item being duplicated.

Δ
This is the sound of that duplicate being used.

Δ
This is the sound of that using being performed by a machine.

Δ
This is the sound of that machine producing a material.

Δ
This is the sound of that material becoming liquid.

Δ
This is the sound of that liquid becoming an object.

Δ
This is the sound of that object becoming a service.

Δ
This is the sound of that service being outsourced.

Δ
This is the sound of that outsourcing being cast in concrete.

Δ
This is the sound of that cast concrete being thrown from the 33rd floor.

Δ
This is the sound of that floor being streamlined.

Δ
This is the sound of that streamlining being pictured.

Δ
This is the sound of that picture turning to clay.

Δ
This is the sound of that clay being coloured.

Δ
This is the sound of that colour communicating.

Δ
This is the sound of that communication being internalised.

Δ
This is the sound of that internalising being transformed into sound.

Δ
And this is the sound of that sound.

Δ
This is the sound of that sound being internalised.

Δ
This is the sound of that internalising being communicated.

Δ
This is the sound of that communication being coloured.

Δ
This is the sound of that colour becoming clay.

Δ
This is the sound of that clay becoming a picture.

Δ
This is the sound of that picture being streamlined.

Δ
This is the sound of that streamlining producing the 33rd floor.

Δ
This is the sound of that floor being cast from concrete.

Δ
This is the sound of that casting being outsourced.

Δ
This is the sound of that outsourcing being serviced.

Δ
This is the sound of that service becoming an object.

Δ
This is the sound of that object becoming a liquid.

Δ
This is the sound of that liquid becoming a material.

Δ
This is the sound of that material being produced by a machine.

Δ
This is the sound of that machine being used.

Δ
This is the sound of that using being duplicated.

Δ
This is the sound of that duplication becoming an item.

Δ
This is the sound of that item becoming history.

Δ
This is the sound of that history transforming into a warm thing.

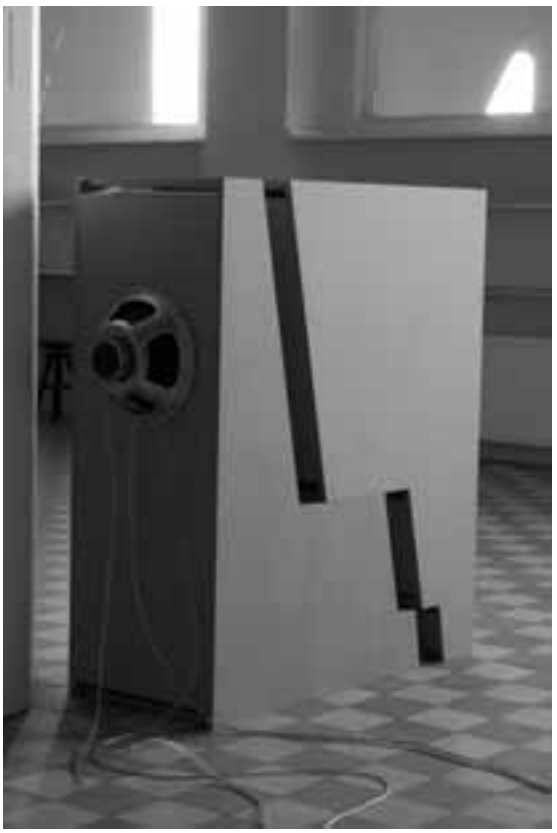
Δ
This is the sound of that warm thing loosing speed.

Δ
This is the sound of loosing speed becoming a cool thing.

Δ
This is the sound of that cool thing becoming any thing.

Δ
This is the sound of that any thing becoming the sound of a room.

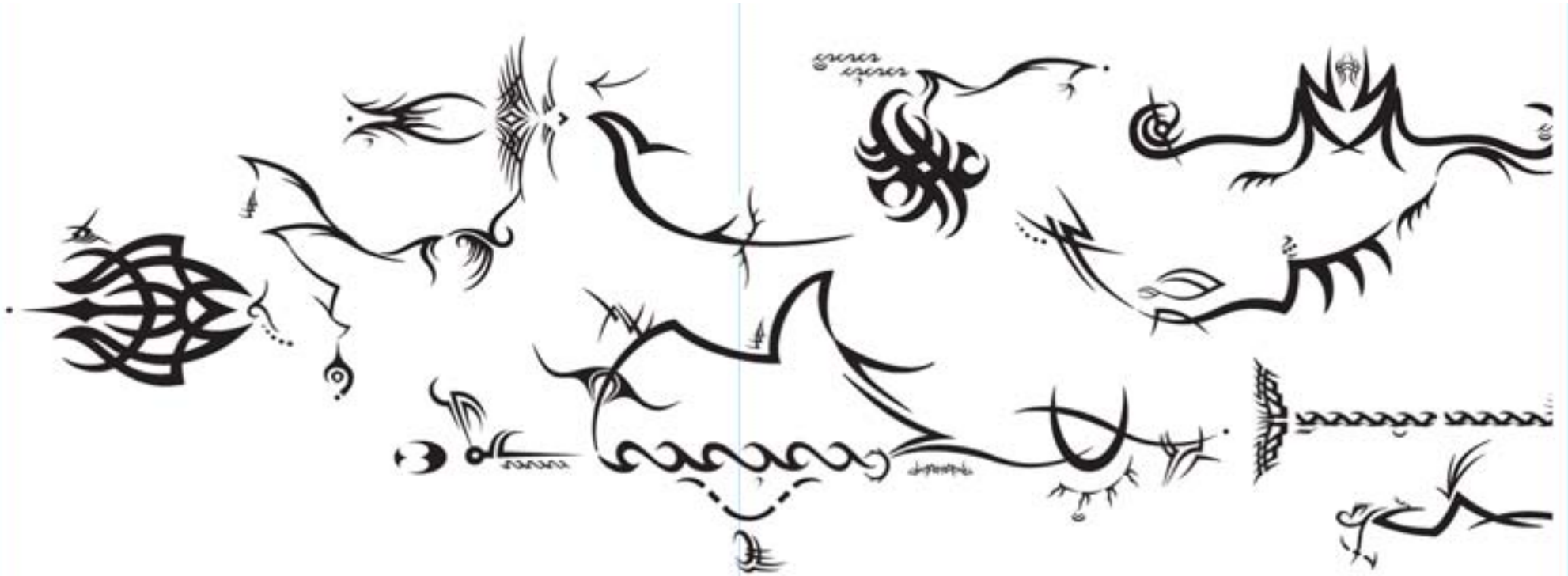
Δ
And this is the sound of that room.



DumbDrum Machine

dumbdrum01.aif, with no character, narrow, and a little wicked; dumbdrum02.aif, pessimistic, unintelligible, with very subtle attack; dumbdrum03.aif, veiled and archaic, vague, muddy and short; dumbdrum04.aif, narrow, blanketed and distended; dumbdrum05.aif, blurry or foggy, poor and puffy, textureless; dumbdrum06.aif, low intensity, dark, short and unclear; dumbdrum07.aif, fadeout tapping sound, distant, not too spread; dumbdrum08.aif, with no accentuation, short and boring.

http://www.rubengrilo.net/works/dumbdrums.html/



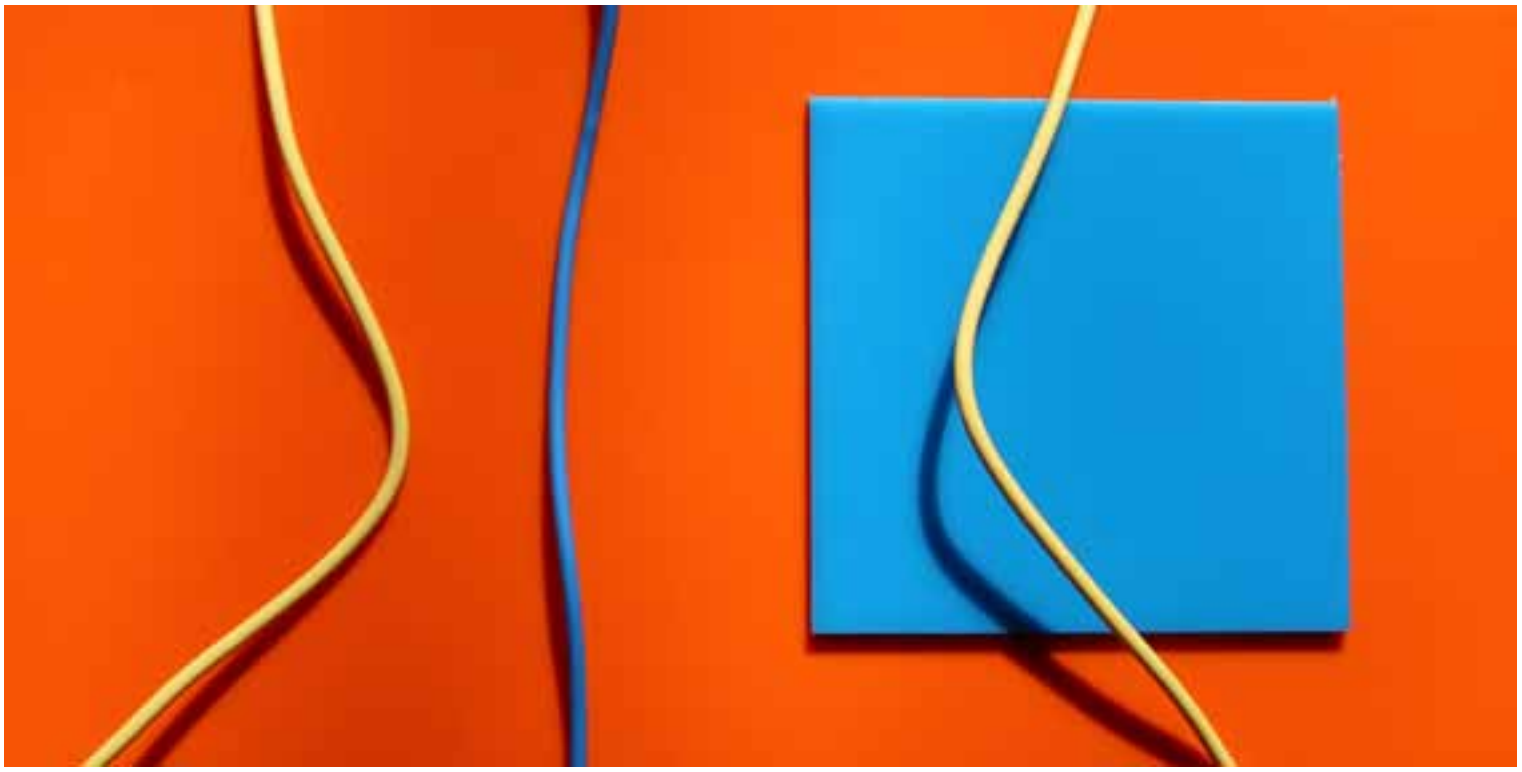
FOR THE ATTENTION OF THE HEIRS OF GYÖRGY LIGETI

PLEASE ACCEPT THIS AS OUR FORMAL APOLOGY FOR ABUSING 'CONTINUUM' ONE MORE TIME. IT WAS NOT OUR INTENTION TO CAUSE ANY INCONVENIENCE AND WE HOPE THAT OUR NEW SIX CHANNEL VERSION FOR COMPUTER CONTROLLED DRUM MACHINE IS TO YOUR LIKING. IT WILL BE PART OF THE 'SOUND SPILL' SHOW AT 1500 BROADWAY, NEW YORK CITY, MAY 8-18, 2013.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO CONTINUE THIS CONVERSATION, PLEASE FEEL FREE TO CONTACT US.

SINCERELY,

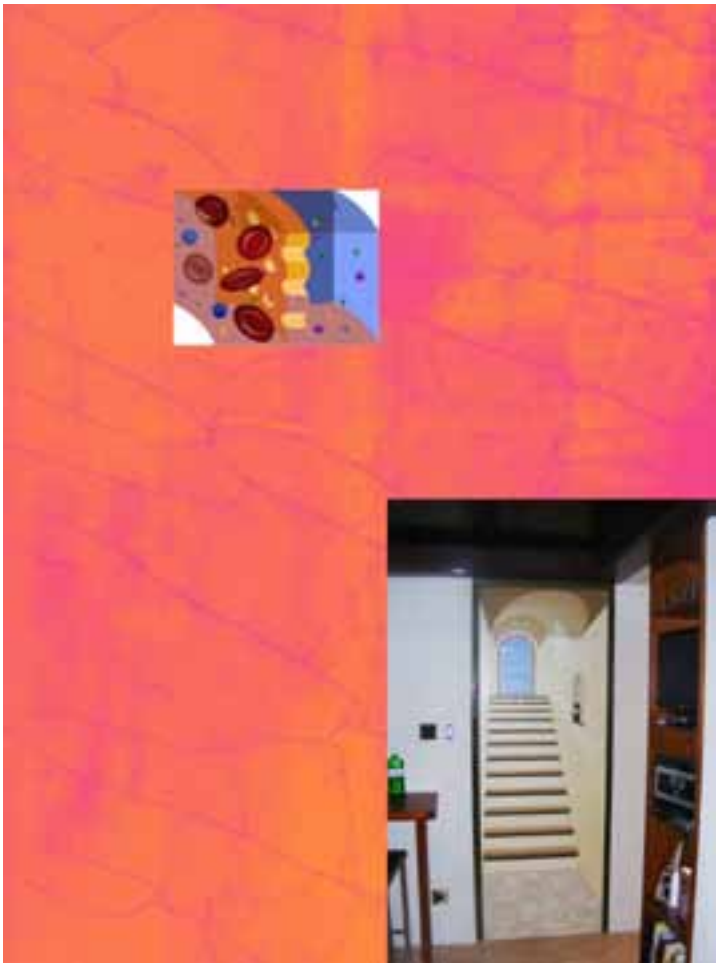
STEPHEN SHARP AND ROS JIMÉNEZ DE CISNEROS, MEMAFUNANA.ORG



A Correspondence
Thom O'Nions & Richard Sides

It's about two in the morning and I've been lying in bed for half an hour or so, unable to sleep. In a corner of the room there is a large fan maintaining a low electrical drone, interrupted intermittently and arrhythmically by a rapid burring sound, caused I think by a loose screw holding together the cage that surrounds the blades. In the kitchen, maybe 5 metres down the hallway from the bedroom, there is an ageing fridge which sustains its own electrical drone, this one punctuated by a steady escalating whine as it struggles to maintain its interior temperature. At points the burr and the whine overlap, creating a sort of harmony, the metallic staccato sound of the fan counterpointing the fluctuating fridge. This incidental composition keeps me awake for an hour, as I become increasingly aware of its subtleties, the susurrant palm trees outside the window filling out the rest of the spectrum, binding it together almost.

So much of our perception of sound is based upon a distinction between the inside and the outside. An interesting delineation, both physically and psychologically. It's been suggested that the stethoscope represents a huge historical shift in our understanding of the interior. What happens for the first time with the stethoscope is the transposition of one acoustic space, the resonant chest cavity of the patient, upon another, the space between the doctor's ears. Sound breaks down the threshold between bodies.



Daniel Heller-Roazen talks about this idea of the ‘the apex of babble’, he writes:

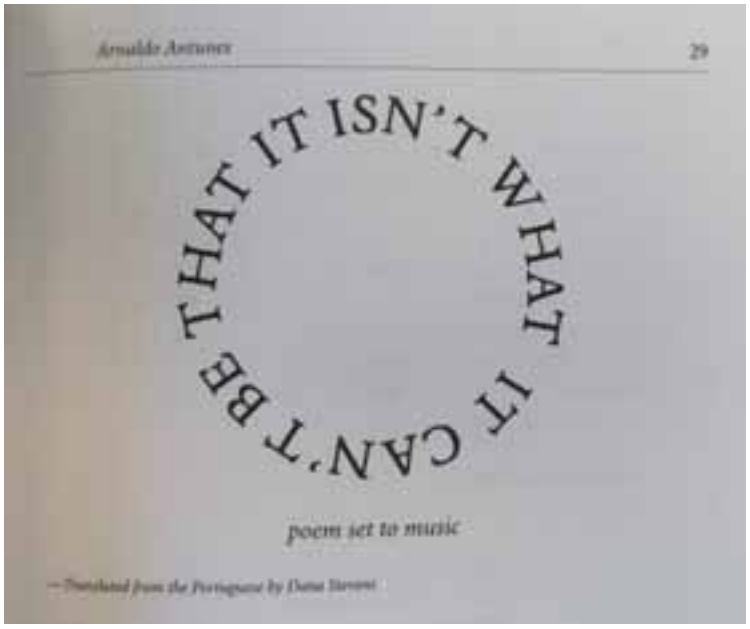
‘A babbling child can accumulate articulations which are never found within a single language or even a group of languages: consonants with the most varied points of articulation, palatalized and rounded consonants, sibilants, affricates, clicks, complex vowels, diphthongs, and so forth.’

At this pre-linguistic stage in their development children possess the capacity to form ‘all of the sounds of all of the languages of the world’. For Heller-Roazen the process of learning language is a process of forgetting, of the ‘atrophy of phonic abilities’. In order to correctly learn a mother tongue the child must forget all of the sounds that do not exist in his native language. Language must cross this threshold from glossolalia to the meaningful constructions of words. Words as spoken are an echo of ‘the indistinct and immemorial babble that, in being lost, allowed all languages to be.’ There is a threshold of forgetting that marks off words from the boundless territory of babble. Thresholds here are stutterings, locationless limits that border every word, surround them on all sides.

On an ontological level it's possible to question what a sound might initially be to a child; when a baby is forming its initial thoughts, language and memory. Their neurological process is transformed by a system of external frequencies and unsubstantial data patterns. In ecological terms a system is always defined by negative and positive spaces of interaction; our image of the world is defined not simply by experience, but also by our reaction to it. A similar problem arises when reading an ecological habitat, because you cannot determine behavioural autonomy. What's interesting here is that it is impossible to acquire quantitative data from the 'eco-acoustic' environment, it is subject to too much change. It doesn't repeat in a way that can generate data. Essentially, it is hard to be deterministic about ideas of sound's potential, or even music's transmission.

If we are born into Dasein, we feel, taste and hear Dasein and through perceiving presence we learn how to communicate. A semantic relationship with the world is soon developed and along the way a personal musicality, a language for experiencing sound with and for understanding one's own relationship to music and noise. Alongside many other variables the progression of culture in a contemporary context can be seen as looking into the future through the past, in counterpoint with moving into the future through exponential information, as with 'Moore's law'. So it is the clash of sounds; of inevitable new experiences, where we can't know or understand the possibilities, that gives music its potentially infinite entrance points and innumerable configurations – music being one of the few disciplines to bear such abstract significance to 'being'.

Like art, music proposes a complex set of physical relationships – humans do not have a 'default' setting when listening, or even hearing (supposing listening to be an active perception and hearing passive). The mood, context and state of mind make the cognitive perception of sound unpredictable. Sound has an omni-directional presence; it exists within an interactive field where all the elements absorb and produce their own sets of resonances.



This is not to say that a decisive conclusion, or a thorough understanding of sound isn't possible – Ernst Florens Friedrich Chladni was already making profound advances in the theory of acoustics in 1787. He discovered that a layer of quartz dust upon a sheet of glass would, when vibrated by a violin bow, form distinct and regular patterns or 'Klangfiguren' (tone figures). They corresponded to specific tones, effectively demonstrating the existence of visual traces of pitches.

Within music the composers 'mapping' of an emotional landscape is transcendent of its material form. This is relevant in the context of Oliver Sachs's writings about a psychology of music. He talks about how intrinsic the relationship between sound (a material) and our perception of this (the phenomenology of cognition) is:

'We humans are a musical species no less than a linguistic one. This takes many different forms. All of us (with very few exceptions) can perceive music, perceive tones, timbre, pitch intervals, melodic contours, harmony, and (perhaps most elementally) rhythm. We integrate all of these and 'construct' music in our minds using many different parts of the brain. And to this largely unconscious structural appreciation of music is added an often intense and profound emotional reaction to music. 'The inexpressible depth of music,' Schopenhauer wrote, 'so easy to understand and yet so inexplicable, is due to the fact that it reproduces all the emotions of our innermost being, but entirely without reality and remote from its pain... Music expresses only the quintessence of life and of its events, never these themselves.'

What Sachs is trying to explore is not only the phenomena that are produced by acoustic events – in the more attuned sense of 'music' (whether the boundaries of this exist is a fundamental question – isn't all sound potentially musical?) asking what is happening when the auditory systems perceive music, but how is it that we have certain emotional relationships to particular resonant frequencies? To illustrate the absurdity of this 'unintelligible' pattern Sachs makes further reference to Arthur C. Clarke's novel *Childhood's End* in which highly cerebral alien beings come down to the Earth's surface to attend a concert:

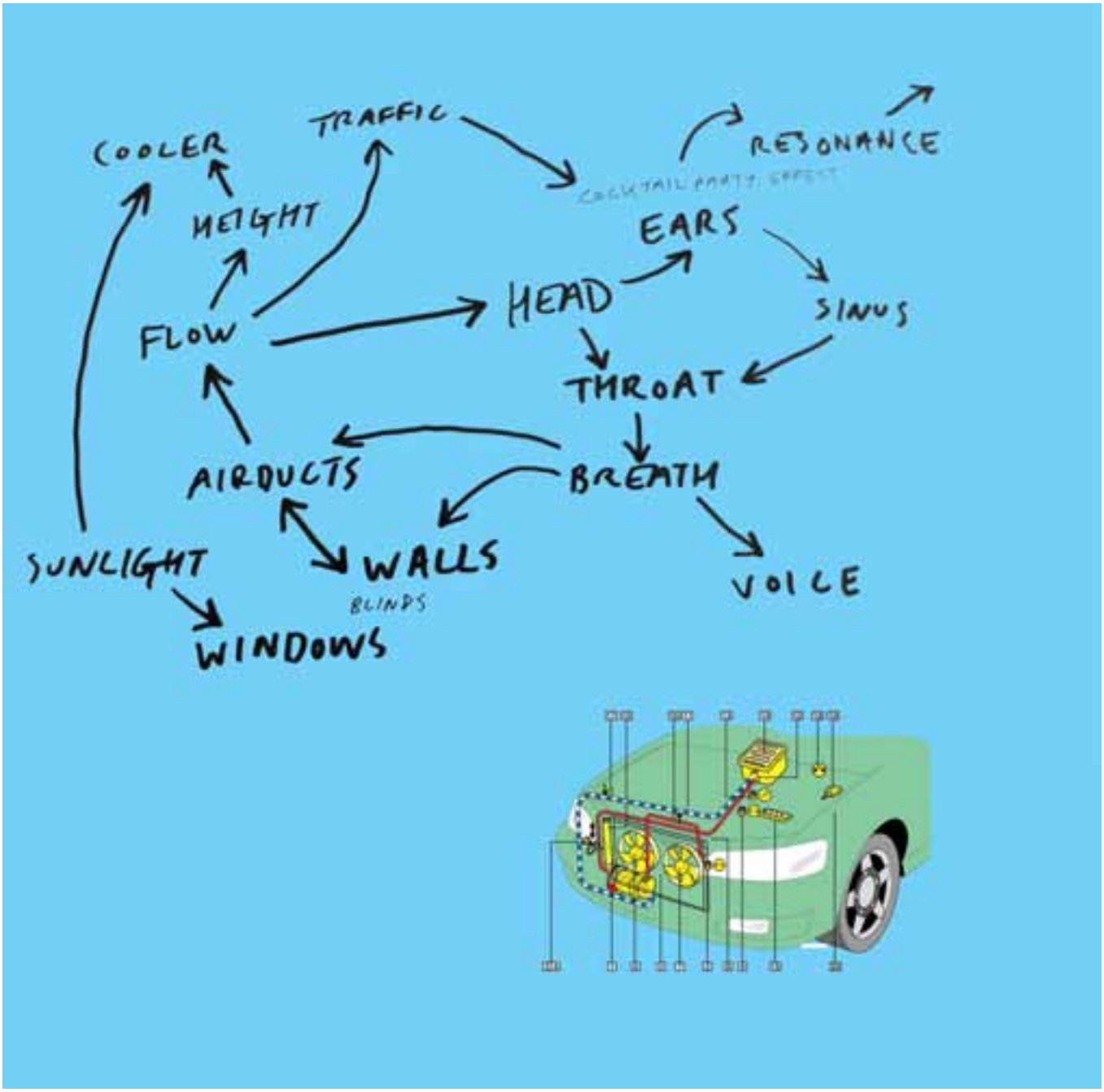
'at which they listen politely, and at the end, congratulate the composer on his 'great ingenuity' – while still finding the entire business unintelligible. They cannot think what goes on in human beings when they make or listen to music, because nothing goes on with them. They themselves, as a species, lack music.'

What Clarke's aliens are addressing here is that the human's ontological relationship to music is one of provocation and abstraction.

Vladimir Nabokov famously hated music, he described feeling ‘flayed’ when he heard an orchestra playing. I like this description of listening, your insides are exposed, the threshold removed. In some senses I am envious of that depth of feeling in response to a piece of music, but I guess to him it was not music, it was something else. Che Guevara also suffered from this, it’s called amusia, apparently he was a terrible dancer.

Fundamentally there is a language of music, a language that talks to the nervous system through the perceptual system, the pineal gland et al. Though it is still essentially the mood generated by concrete sounds heard through time, pitch and tone that gives music its unique set of experiences – its vernaculars and discourses. Like the act of looking in a mirror, a reaction to music is both physical and psychological.

The sound of air conditioning is ubiquitous in New York City. It provides a constant soundtrack to a succession of spaces throughout the day. I have always thought of air conditioning as somehow bodily, as an articulation of a building's animateness. It is interesting to imagine how the city sounded before Modernity, before the skyscrapers. The air must have moved around Manhattan differently, in the buildings and down the avenues.



We rarely pay attention to the incredibly complex process of exclusion that our brain performs in selecting and prioritising sound.

Image Credits

Cory Arcangel / pg.4
The Boys Are Back, 2006

Michael Bell-Smith / pg.6
Magic Hands Poster #2, 2012

Theo Burt / pg.8
Slides from *'Processes for Control'*, 2009

Ben Cain / pg.10–15
2013

Melissa Dubbin & Aaron S. Davidson / pg.16
Volumes for Sound. Ben Cain, David Raymond Conroy, Melissa Dubbin & Aaron S. Davidson, Lesley Flanigan, James Hoff, Stephen Sharp & Roc Jiménez de Cisneros, Lucky Dragons, Lorenzo Senni, Ben Vida, 8–26 May 2013, New York, 2013

Melissa Dubbin, Aaron S. Davidson, Shawn Onsgard (Three Planes of Silver) / pg.18
12 ft high, 16 ft wide, 34 ft long, 2013

Ruben Grilo / pg.20
2013

Lorenzo Senni / pg.22–25
AAT (Advanced Abstract Trance) Score, 2013

Stephen Sharp & Roc Jimenez de Cisneros / pg.26
Apology, 2013

Ben Vida / pg.28
Performed Color Test, 2013

Insert:
James Hoff
Anna Kournikova, 2013

This publication has been produced in an edition of 250 to coincide with Sound Spill at Zabludowicz Collection New York, 8-26 May.

Sound Spill is an ongoing project by Haroon Mirza, Thom O'Nions and Richard Sides. It takes the idea of sound spilling between artworks in exhibitions as its organising principle. The Zabludowicz Collection invited the collaborators to produce a version of the project in New York, in the temporarily empty spaces at 1500 Broadway. In this instance O'Nions and Sides have spent an intensive research period in New York City supported by a curatorial grant from the Zabludowicz Collection, allowing them to develop a dialogue with artists, writers and curators based in the city. The resulting exhibition is selected from works in the Zabludowicz Collection in addition to a number of pre-existing works and a series of new commissions.

This publication brings together contributions from a variety of artists, invited to respond to the ideas that circulate within the project.

Zabludowicz Collection would like to personally thank the artists and the curators, our excellent assistants here in New York and our supporters and friends including: Itrat Sayeed, Ivy Greenberg, Ashley Huiberts, Tanya Hooper and Maira Leon at Tamares, Todd MacWhorter, and the whole CBRE Team; Benjamin Newton, Kiki Lindskog, John Schneider, Rambo Ostroff and Aaron Ray-Crichton for the eleventh hour installation trouble-shooting and Shai Baitel, Eugene Lemay, Yigal Ozeri, Anthony Ponzio, Selena Ricks and Heiko Stoiber from premier arts outlet Mana Contemporary who provided installation, technological and logistical support for the exhibition.

A free PDF Download of this book is available from http://www.zabludowiczcollection.com/new-york/exhibitions/sound-spill

MANA CONTEMPORARY

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Tamares Real Estate

I DESIGN LIGHT.

Sound Spill

Curated and Edited by Thom O'Nions and Richard Sides with Elizabeth Neilson
Designed by Mark Holt and Malcolm Southward

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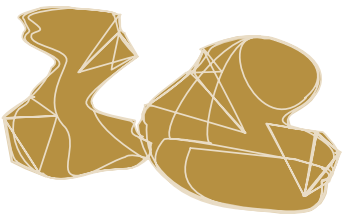

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