

Sound Full

Sound in Contemporary Australian and New Zealand Art



Vicky Browne
The Sound of Plants and Music, 2012,
mixed media.
Image courtesy of the artist and Galerie pompom.



Sound Full: Sound in Contemporary Australian and New Zealand Art is a Dunedin Public Art Gallery Touring Exhibition.

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Sound Full: Sound in Contemporary Australian and New Zealand Art

About the exhibition

Sound Full is an exhibition that asks us to LISTEN to art. It brings together 16 artists working in Australia and New Zealand who use sound as a component of their practice. The exhibition presents a diverse mix of artworks, including immersive installations in which sound can be both heard and felt, photographs of sound made visible and paintings full of imagined noise.

Through a range of sonic experiences the exhibition explores the role of sound in contemporary art. We are encouraged to pay attention to the world around us, to become active listeners to the background noises in our everyday lives, the incidental as well as the musical. Some of these artworks connect with the physicality of sound, reminding us that sound is something both heard and felt; we hear with our whole bodies not just with our ears. *Sound Full* invites us to consider the way that sound behaves in a physical space.

Not all artworks have an audible component. In some, sound is imagined, remembered or implied. Intriguing links are made between what we hear and see, asking us to consider sound as not being separate or divorced from vision. From low-fi to hi-fi, real to imagined, and live to recorded; the exhibition presents the idea that all art engages us in a multimodal sense, that art is already 'sound full'.

Artists: Vicky Browne, Philip Dadson, Robin Fox, Marco Fusinato, Michael Graeve, Brent Grayburn, David Haines and Joyce Hinterding, Eugene Hansen, Jenny Gillam and Dr Kron, Michael Morley, Kusum Normoyle, Thembi Soddell, Torben Tilly and Robin Watkins.

Selected works



Robin Fox uses a music creation application and an oscillator scope to map sound forming patterns, shapes and noises. Fox creates a space where we are able to see sound and hear images.

Robin Fox, *Volta*, 2005, video and audio, *Proof of Concept #16* 2010 and *Proof of Concept #12* 2010, photographs. Image courtesy of the artist.



David Haines and Joyce Hinterding often engage with sound and the senses in their practice. *Monocline: Black Boxes* (2011 – 12) brings gaming engines into the art gallery on a large scale, using a motion capture device that allows the user to navigate a virtual environment by moving

their body. Once inside this game we are not given any goals to achieve or enemies to eradicate. Instead we are free to explore this fantastical space, popping in and out of portals and through sound fields.

David Haines and Joyce Hinterding, *Monocline: Black Boxes*, 2011-12, real-time 3D environment utilising the Unreal Engine. Image courtesy of the artists and BREENSPACE, Sydney.



Vicky Brown playfully employs handcrafted technologies in her installation *The Sound of Plants and Music* (2012). Fragile microphones and speakers, crafted out of sticks sit amongst plants. The audience is invited to speak to the plants, helping them to sustain

a happy life. A cardboard construction hangs nearby in which we hear the wonderful sound of plant conversations.

Further research

Many contemporary artists working with sound have cited experimental musician John Cage as being influential to their practice. To watch and listen to John Cage talk about sound go to <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pcHnL7aS64Y>

Read *Sound* edited by Caleb Kelly, published by Whitechapel Gallery and the MIT Press, 2011.

Pre/post-visit activities

Sound Walk

Visual Arts – UC, PK
Music/Sound Arts – UC, PK, DI, CI
English – Language Features
Technology – Technological Knowledge

The artworks in *Sound Full* encourage us to listen to often overlooked sonic environments.

- Take a sound walk and listen to the unnoticed world of everyday noises. Make several stops, sit for 10 minutes and pay attention to everything you hear close by and far away.
- Document the journey on a sound map. Describe the sounds, their volume and duration, either in words or using shapes, colours or patterns.
- Make some field recordings of found noises and use them to create a piece of music about a place visited on the walk. Go to *Music for Forgotten Places*, a public art project by Oliver Blank for inspiration. <http://www.musicforgottenplaces.com/>
- Make a list of sound words generated on your walk. Write a poem or short story about your walk using onomatopoeia.
- Take a sound walk focusing on the natural environment. Āta whakarongo to the sounds and rhythms that come from Papatūānuku and Ranginui. Notice the sounds made by the wind when it whistles through ngā rākau; noisy cicada songs; pebbles being thrown up the beach by Tangaroa, and the songs of tūī, kokako and weka. These sounds inspired the creation of Taonga Pūoro (traditional Māori musical instruments). Find out more about Taonga Pūoro on Tales from Te Papa <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kXUb1YzQRvU> and in the book *Taonga Pūoro – Singing Treasures* by Brian Flintoff, published by Craig Potton Publishing, 2003.

Found object instruments

Music/Sound Arts – PK, DI, CI
Visual Arts – UC, PK, CI
Technology – Technological Practice, Technological Knowledge

Find out more about experimental artist and musician Philip Dadson at <http://www.sonicsfromscratch.co.nz/>, and how he makes and plays his own instruments, often from unexpected materials.

- Collect a variety of objects and test their sound-making potential. Explore some different ways to create noises (beating, shaking, scraping, blowing etc). Experiment with both natural and manmade materials and note the range of sounds and volumes produced. Consider the emotional qualities evoked by different materials such as metal or wood.
- Combine materials to create a found object instrument, then combine instruments to create a found object orchestra. Use them to compose and perform a piece of music for an audience.
- For more inspiration, find out how an entire town was turned into a giant music laboratory using recycled materials <http://inhabitat.com/swoons-dithyrambalina-is-a-new-orleans-shanty-town-that-doubles-as-giant-music-box/>

Sound visualisation / cymatics

Science – Physical world
Technology – Technological Practice, Technological Knowledge
Visual Arts – PK, DI, CI
Music/Sound Arts – PK, DI

Robin Fox's work *Volta* (2005) maps sound to form patterns and shapes. Find out more about cymatics, the study of making sound visible.

- Watch and discuss a Ted talk on cymatics by Evan Grant http://www.ted.com/talks/evan_grant_cymatics.html
- Look and listen to *Sonic Water*, a cymatic installation <http://vimeo.com/68768890>
- Build a cymatics rig using this step by step guide from <http://www.cymatics.org/>
Use it to make and record beautiful cymatic images or devise and perform sound visualisation experiments.

Synaesthesia

English – Listening, Reading and Viewing. Speaking, Writing and Presenting.

Find out more about synaesthesia, a rare condition in which the senses get mixed up.

- Read and discuss the picture book *Here Comes Frankie* by Tim Hopgood, a story where sounds become colours, shapes and smells (years 1-3).
- Watch and discuss Neil Harbisson's Ted talk *I listen to colour* http://www.ted.com/talks/neil_harbisson_i_listen_to_color.html