

“Sensing Time”  
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Electronic Integrated Arts MFA 2016 Thesis  
School of Art and Design - NYSCC at Alfred University  
Thesis Exhibit: April 9, 2016

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## Introduction

In Las Vegas, Nevada, where I'm from, there are three different coexisting strata of time: casinos or casino environments, the regular 24-hour clock calendar day society, and the desert. The casino environment consists of any place with gambling facilities. This includes any place with a gambling license from the major touristic casinos like the MGM to your neighborhood grocery stores or even, on your way out of the city, the airport.

The casino environment furnishes the experience of timelessness, which is activated through an infinitely looping hand action. Pushing buttons or pulling levers (slot machine), holding, flicking or arranging cards (table games), and rolling or throwing dice (roulette table) are some examples of this looping hand action. The action holds the gambler in place until they run out of money, win, or something from 24-hour calendar day society pulls them away. Both the casino environment and the 24-hour calendar day society weave in and out of each other like soap bubbles in the wind. These two bubbles of time exist inside a larger bubble – the desert, which visibly surrounds the city a full 360 degrees. It is not only visible everywhere, but it is also felt through the tremendous heat and dry air that it breathes. On some of the hottest days everything seems to pause, even the air. Time in the desert is experienced on a massive scale, as if the land, which exudes a sense of finality, an end of calendar-time and eternity of both, had swallowed time.

When one enters a casino, one enters a place that is purposefully designed to eliminate the sense of time or, better yet, to trap one in a sense of timelessness. There are no windows or clocks. All the games (slot machines, tables, sports book, bingo, etc.) call out to grab the passerby's attention through elaborate flashing lights and sounds, like a moth to a flame. When the player engages they enter a fantasy state. It's a raw place of uncertainty where the odds of winning are indiscriminate.

There is barely any movement among the gamblers. Movement from one spot to another is a risk, an additional gamble. The sampling tourist can be easily spotted from the serious players. The samplers tend to wander and talk and look around. In other words, they tend to engage with the surrounding environment. The serious gamblers stay focused on the game. They understand that moving around could change the outcome of winning. It's a chance change that alters the loop of action. Stopping or moving disrupts the cycle of play. You see, nobody, not the player or house knows when a winning hand, spin, or pick will land – it is completely unpredictable.<sup>1</sup> The gambler relies on the equal opportunity of uncertainty. The longer they stay in the game the more likely, perceivably, their chance of winning grows. The question is: what do they win beyond money? For some gamblers winning money might have economical significance that could alleviate money concerns. For others, who have money to spare and play with, the win is different. Either way, in both circumstances, the win is about power, either gaining power or playing with one's power. Regardless of the significance of the win, there is no hierarchy in the casino environment. Everybody is invited to gamble. All one needs is money. In a sense, money represents the gambler's 24-hour

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<sup>1</sup> There are mechanisms in place like counting cards designed to cheat the games.

calendar day reality. Hence, the gambler is gambling with their reality. They are asserting individual power over whatever structure keeps their society's bubble intact. Two people with different socio-economic and cultural backgrounds in the 24-hour calendar day bubble may never cross paths, see eye-to-eye, or experience the same opportunities in their society, but in a casino environment they will stand next to each other as comrades of chance. When the roulette ball lands on a number, fate is in control and the world outside has nothing to do with where it lands.

As a first generation Mexican-American raised within the casino culture, my identity has never set roots in any one place. The cultural markers of my Mexican heritage (language, rituals, cuisine, spirituality, traditions, aesthetics) were weakened by the necessity to assimilate to the American culture. My identity comes from an assemblage of different cultures and transitioning spaces. I identify most with the chance outcomes of an uncertain world. Perhaps this is why I find myself wanting to unhinge the roots of reality; breaking them up into parts, what I call "root-snippets," — freeing them from their aggrieved position to the grounds, which we call truths.

I am a gambler. As an artist, I create spaces that gamble with realities through the use of technology via my root-snippet assemblages. I excavate landscapes, materials, language, personalities, actions, and sounds to find these root-snippets. Then I use technology and performance to capture, bend, fold, twist, and loop them.

As a result, the assemblages are ‘modular narratives’<sup>2</sup> of entangled internal and external realities held together by seepages of different experiences of time created through the editing process. I find relationships between the varying root-snippets and choreograph them into a conversation with each other. This unassociated conversation between varying landscapes, spaces, people, and actions create the seepages of time between the individual internal world of our desires and the shared external material world.

My creative process is driven by new possibilities of experiencing the world differently. Through technology, media art, and the documentary process, I can fully extend my curiosity of perception by creating somatic experiences through immersive installations or presentations of the generated content. All of my work starts with a

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<sup>2</sup> Campora, Matthew, “Modular Narratives in Contemporary Cinema by Allan Cameron,” Sense of Cinema online film Journal, July 2010.

Film analyst and author Allan Cameron uses the term modular narrative to describe the complex narrative forms that have been explored in contemporary cinema. They represent an analytical perception of time that is concerned with a new set of temporal anxieties created by the digital era. According to Campora’s book review “[Allan] Cameron’s taxonomy of cinematic modular narratives is made of up of four categories: anachronic, forking-path, episodic and split-screen narratives. Anachronic narratives feature flashbacks and/or flash-forwards and are the most common type of modular narrative in contemporary cinema. ... Fork-path narratives represent the multiple possible futures of their central characters and notable examples are *Groundhog Day* (Harold Ramis, 1993) and *Run Lola, Run*. ... Episodic narratives are defined by Cameron as “structures that critically weaken or disable the causal connections of classical narrative” (p. 13). Episodic narratives are divided into two separate categories: the abstract series and the narrative anthology. Abstract episodic structures use non-narrative systems which dictate or overlay the organization of elements in a production; examples considered by Cameron include Peter Greeway’s *Drowning by Numbers* (1988) and *A Zed and Two Noughts* (1985). Anthologies, by contrast, are multi-stranded narratives “which are apparently disconnected but share the same diegetic space” (p. 13). Krzysztof Kieslowski’s *Decalogue* (1989-1990) and *Three Colours* trilogy (1993-1994) as well as Jim Jarmusch’s *Mystery Train* (1989) are all considered by Cameron, as are Robert Altman’s *Nashville* (1975) and *Short Cuts* (1993).

Cameron’s fourth category, the split-screen narrative, articulates modularity spatially by dividing the screen into “two or more frames, juxtaposing concurrent or anterior events within the same visual field” (p. 15). The conspicuous example here is Mike Figgis’ *Timecode* (2000), which follows a number of characters simultaneously by splitting the screen into four quadrants, allowing for the exploration of memory and simultaneity.

perceptual question that does seek an answer, but desires to be experienced. In the end, the work is the question being experienced.

#### My Performers:

The performers I work with represent the idea of the individual. I am drawn to them because of particular idiosyncrasies – a characteristic of theirs that I find to be not only unique, but completely genuine; a root-snippet of their identity. I do not seek actors and I even have trouble calling them performers. To me, they are Enas, Olga, Joel, Christin, Brent, Susanne, and etcetera. Therefore, when I ask them to be in my work they are performing themselves, perhaps on a larger scale. Sometimes I am the performer, but I am the performer as camera – I am camera.

#### Natural Landscapes and Created Spaces:

Sometimes I create a setting and other times, I scout out a natural landscape to complete the scenario I have in mind. These places are also performers, just like the slot machine or the dealer and their Blackjack table. I liken my consideration for landscapes and settings to Werner Herzog's perspective of landscapes:

“A true landscape is not just a representation of a desert or a forest. It shows an inner state of mind, literally inner landscapes, and it is the human soul that is visible through the landscapes presented in films...”<sup>3</sup>

With both, the settings and landscapes, I want to preserve their geopsychological<sup>4</sup> power. I seek to bring out the “inner landscape” through the interactions with the performer and/or camera.

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<sup>3</sup> Ames, Eric, *Ferocious Reality: Documentary According to Werner Herzog*. University of Minnesota Press, 2012, p. 51.

## Influences on my aesthetics

### Early Influences:

The root-snippet assemblages began in still imagery, heavily influenced by the work of artists like Jeff Wall, Minor White, and Nan Goldin<sup>5</sup> who capture the familiar in an unfamiliar state, creating a paradoxical experience of the imagery. Their work teeters on the documentary. It distorts reality, but communicates a critical view of the materials and events captured within the frame.

Through a process of creating sequential diptychs and triptychs, the concept of time entered my photographic work early on. I would shoot consecutive frames of the same scene where movement was taking place trying to capture a certain form or action in the moment. When looking over the contact sheets, I discovered something meaningful in the gaps between frames. It was in the ambiguity of elapsed time that the experience of the ephemeral and temporality of being was most powerful and convincing. The sequencing of images added an element of temporal dislocation — an unreality or something occurring outside of our perception of time.

Following this discovery, I started exploring the moving image, recording an action then slowing it down or speeding it up to create a rhythm in the movement of the footage. Doing so implicated me in the consideration of sound as well because the recorded sound associated with the footage was also being composed and arranged

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<sup>4</sup> Eric Ames describes this geopsychological characteristic best in the following statement from his book *Ferocious Reality: Documentary According to Werner Herzog*: “Herzog’s landscapes claim to visualize the inner world of the emotions, the psyche, and the soul—vast areas of human experience that are not directly observable...”.(p. 50)

<sup>5</sup> Additional photographers of influence: Thomas Demand, Uta Barth, Diane Arbus, Francesca Woodman, Brassai, William Eggleston, Julia Margaret Cameron, Meatyard, Wolfgang Tillmans, Joel Peter Witkin, Philip Lorca Dicorcia, Larry Sultan, and Joel Sternfeld

through the editing process. This discovery ignited my interest in playing with the notion of discontinuity in temporal structures to create moments of cognitive dissonance.

Sound:

Working with sound, for me, is about balancing the relationship between the materiality of the image and temporality of sound. At times, I use sound as what Michel Chion calls “added value”<sup>6</sup> – creating greater psychologically felt moments within the imagery. Nevertheless, I consider the sound and image as different experiences as well. At times, I detach the sound from the footage and give it a different space creating a shift in content where the two forms interact, but also exert themselves separately.

Creating Immersive Experiences:

When it comes to creating immersive experiences some of my biggest influences are artists like James Turrell, Paul McCarthy, and Max Neuhaus,<sup>7</sup> who in their presentation of work make installations geared towards a somatic experience. Although my work primarily deals with the moving image, I look at all my pieces as performance. The space in which the work is presented is not neutral, but has significant influence on how the work is perceived and received. My works are made to shape the spaces they inhabit. I consider all spaces as opportunities to thoroughly implicate the viewer’s body into the art experience. The spaces go as far as influencing my editing. I want the work to activate the space and vice versa.

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<sup>6</sup> Chion, Michel, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. New York: Columbia UP, 1994.

<sup>7</sup> Additional immersive art influences: Robert Irwin, Shirin Neshat, Kimsooja, and Olafur Eliasson Ryan Trecartin, Jordan Wolfson, Marina Abramovic, the Vienna Actionist, Zhang Huan, Tehching Hsieh, Vito Acconci, and Ana Mendieta.

Media work is flexible in its adaptability to space and so the same work can be experienced many different ways depending on its installation and location. This is the extended nature of media work; it is site-oriented by nature.

Cinema:

Cinema has been a huge part of my life and an important influence on my aesthetic choices. I look to the films of Andrey Tarkovsky and Alejandro Jodorowsky specifically because of their limited use of dialogue, the use of landscapes by Tarkovsky, and the way in which Jodorowsky works with actors and performers. Also, both confuse the boundaries of fiction and documentary and do so while using the full seductive capabilities of cinematography. Eija-Liisa Ahtila, who also works in this way, takes it one step further by pushing the cinematic experience into multi-channel installations. The first time I saw her work, it was a revelatory moment for me that erased any preexisting notions of how cinema should be experienced.

Filmmakers like Michael Haneke and Chantal Akerman<sup>8</sup> inspire my filming strategies. They explore the viewer's space within and outside the frame. They do not ignore the fact that a body holds the camera in the space where the action or inaction is being recorded. They treat the camera as another body performing in the film and allow it to interact with its performers and surroundings. They also allow for the growth of a scene by using real time, when real time is crucial to the experience of a moment and place. In these real time scenes, the camera is fixed in a location for an extended period allowing the viewer to completely absorb what they are seeing. The experience

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<sup>8</sup> Additional filmmakers of influence: Werner Herzog, Les Blanks, Maya Deren, Ingmar Bergman, Bruce Baillie, Andrea Arnold, Harmony Korine, Catherine Breille, Darren Aronofsky, Aki Kaurismaki, Lars Von Triers, Rainer Werner Fassbinder, Roy Andersson, Pedro Paolo Pasolini, John Waters, Steve McQueen, Alfred Hitchcock, Charlie Chaplin

of time, in the way that it exists in this location, becomes part of the shot. For them, it is not about capturing the world as is, but presenting it as is through the camera. The camera is an extension of our sight, but it can never replicate the eyes. It is its own thing and should be used accordingly for what it has to offer (size, weight, portability, image quality, etc.). Ultimately, my filming and editing process is motivated by this idea.

## WORKS

### Speaking Lion



6-channel video projection, 28:12 minutes, 2016

*Speaking Lion* is an episodic modular narrative video made up of six-channels. It begins with a family of six ordering dim sum seen across six screens. The second youngest child, about four years of age, is told to go sit down. As he makes his way to his seat he travels left to right through the screens, finally crossing the sixth screen to end up in the first screen. The screens are all connected through the content including the first and last – it is a 360 degree view from the center of the table out. The family finishes ordering and begins to eat when the father asks “What do you got for me?” The family proceeds to place small pink slips on the center turntable and spin them around to him. The scenes spin across all the screens and the dinner scene fades into a Coney Island beach scene at sunrise. Their continued dinner conversation serves as the soundtrack. The scenes continue to change from one location to another, some with people in action, some of just landscapes and cityscapes. During the conversation, the

father asks the family questions about what seems to be irrelevant to what is being seen, but as the family continues to talk parts of what are being said connect back or sync with the footage being shown.

The different scenes are of a man in a striped room talking and walking while eating baguettes, a woman walking up a snow covered hill on a quest to make snow angels, a young woman with a blond piñata and a man in a wheelchair in the desert with ATV riders riding around them, a couple rehearsing a folk dance, an artist drawing in a white room on green paper which circumvents the entirety of the room's walls, tourists at Niagara Falls, three women playing in a wooded backyard, and a construction sight with large CAT construction vehicles. Throughout the changing scenes the use of the 360 degree filming strategy starts to become clear.

The purpose of filming in 360 degrees was originally to answer the question: "Does the world disappear behind us?" It is a philosophical question, but also a question of perceptual ability. What I discovered after some test shoots was perplexing. Of course, one can use a mirror to see what is behind us, but this was a case, which asked for a simultaneous view of everything around these spaces and then presented directly in front of the viewer. What this unveiled was an inability of the mind to comprehend so much space and/or information at once. In other words, the 360 degree view can be logically mapped out and understood, but rationally it is hard to wrap one's head around. What is meant to be behind us or at our sides is now in front and the xyz space becomes confused. The compression of space creates a cognitive dissonance. As the performers move or the cameras navigate through these spaces, the viewer's expectation of direction is thwarted.

The different scenes are bubbles of reality floating around each other sharing a common diegetic space. The dim sum dinner ends with the youngest son saying “We’re going to be here for a long long time” followed by the father on the phone saying “I think we did this all wrong, Yasmina.” It then fades to black and a quote by Ludwig Wittgenstein (from which the title of this piece came) pops up: “If a lion could speak, we would not understand it.”, referencing our limited ways of perceiving the world.

In the next segment a disembodied voice is heard, “The letter D for d-o-g.” It is followed by a series of blurred and abstracted imagery. At times, forms can be distinguished, but mostly it’s a sequence of changing objects blurred into obscurity passing through the screens with the feel of a stop-motion animation. The corresponding sound is light, soft, and made up of undulating ambient tones accompanied by burst of what seem to be children’s toy sounds. This segment ends and is followed by the statement “We’re looking for the best truth teller.”

The modular narratives of people in action reappear, but now the viewer enters the scene as a voyeur watching them perform and this time the viewer is also given access to what is being heard and said in the space. Half way through this section, when the wooded backyard appears, the timing of the imagery and sound across the six screens become overlapped and unsynced. The performers and sound are echoed through the multiple screens. The performers appear in threes and fours and fade back out while the sound repeats over and over. The skewed timing and imagery of this scene starts a change in the overall progression of the video. The sense of time is now dislocated.

The following scene is of the artist making drawings. In the first encounter with the artist, the green paper barely had any marks, but at this point it is almost completely filled – again tampering with the viewer’s sense of time. As the artist continues to draw, the green paper disappears and becomes a window onto the other scenes while the soundtrack changes to an untuned violin being played with veracity by a non-professional musician. The artist continues to draw on the window, drawing directly onto the locations themselves. There are moments of synchronicity between the drawer, the other scenes being viewed in the window, and the violin.

The artist then fades away during a scene at Niagara Falls and we are left hanging off the side of the scenic overlook, with a vertical perspective that includes the sky above and the tourist on the ground below. This segment fades out and up pops another statement: “Through the camera, I exist.” This comment was made during filming by one of the performers, Enas Hassan – the snow angel maker, in regards to why she enjoys being filmed. The comment brings up notions of our digital identity and questions about what presence is in the digital age. Perhaps to capture our image through the camera serves as a digital mirror that includes time and allows us to see how we exist in the world outside ourselves.

Following this statement is a view of a sunset on Santa Monica pier in hyper speed on only three screens falling into synchronicity with the violin music. The three screens are a reference to a normal way of seeing (front and periphery), but the footage is not in real time. The hyper speed manipulation allows a thirty minute sunset to be witnessed in two minutes. Here again the viewer is given an extended ability of visual perception through technology.

The video ends with the scene in the desert of the man in a wheelchair and the young lady waiting by a van on the opposite end of the screens. The man is seen moving across the landscape as the violin playing changes from an intense plucking into a forlorn sounding languid playing. The scene is shown in real time and the viewer watches as the man works his way towards the van, but due to the compression of space it is discovered half way there that he is actually moving away and at that moment the young lady gets in the van and drives away from him. They both disappear into the horizon. The scene fades to black and a last statement pops up: “Snow angels aren’t real, yet they exist.” The video ends, the violin music intensifies in volume and playing and continues for about two minutes leaving the viewer with the projectors and empty screens until the musician seems to lose steam and ends with a few last plucking of the strings. There is a moment of rest while the credits are shown then it starts all over again. The viewer is thrown right back in into the looping video.

### Fountainhead Loop



3-channel video, 3:35 minutes, 2015

*Fountainhead Loop* is a 3-channel site-oriented piece that was meant to fill the entire Immersive Gallery space. The three videos are composed of three different scenes. On the left, is a sunflower facing forward existing in a neutral space, standing at

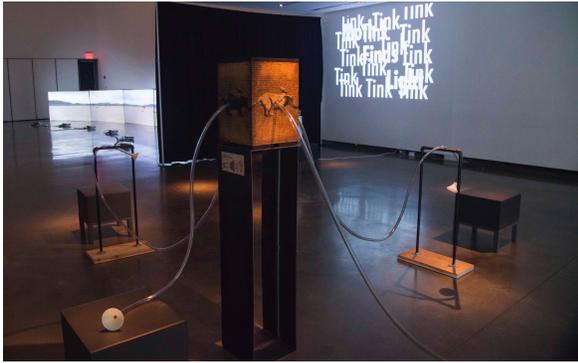
about 7 feet; it does not change throughout the duration of the piece. On the opposite side, a harvested sunflower field in decay fills the entire wall. On the front wall connecting those two videos, clips zoom in at consistent intervals from the center of the wall towards the edge until they fill the entire wall and then disappear. The footage is of a woman's interaction with a sunflower. The scene is cropped in tight and the sunflower remains in the absolute foreground almost filling the entire frame while the most of what is seen of the performer is from her waist up. Throughout their interaction the viewer's perspective changes from a third party observer to the sunflower's point of view. The soundtrack is made up of two looping components: one (coming from a set of speakers in the back of the room) is of two sustained tones: an organ sound and a low frequency electronic square wave similar to a slow heavy bass sound, both slightly wavering in volume, the second (coming from the front two speakers) is a voice speaking in gibberish.

The interchanging perspective of the center video ties the three videos together. The woman's approach seems to be of innocent curiosity, starting with no understanding of what a sunflower might be. As uncertainty of the object fades and fear is overcome, innocent curiosity escalates and turns into a more aggressive interaction. First, there is staring, followed by touching, playing, then pulling, tasting, biting, and finally breaking. In the last few clips the woman now wearing a white see-through nylon over her head, uses the flower petals as embellishments for her face by placing them on top of her head and inside the nylon pressed against her face. In the end, only the stem of the sunflower is left with the decorated woman standing behind it. She seems to enter a trance state in the second to the last scene, slowly looking from one side to the

other. The last frame of that clip becomes the last scene of the video. The viewer is left with the image of the woman's decorated head coming off the top of the stem. It breaks the rhythm in which the clips were zooming in and out of the frame and breaks the pattern of time being experienced through the work. The frozen image remains resonating in the room positing the viewer as witness to a transcendent moment.

This piece investigates the subject object relationship. On one side, we see the object in a neutral timeless space. On the opposite side, we see it in a cultivated state within a space of agricultural time. The middle seems to be both timeless and immediate. The videos zooming in and out and the woman coming in and out of the frame take away any certainty as to the duration of the interaction, whether it occurs over the course of an hour or a day or a week or whether she is representative of a relationship across a millennia between humans and objects. At the end, when the center image remains frozen a transgression occurs. The subject/object relationship boundary dissolves when it appears that they have become one. The work brings up the notion of the other and its evolving significance over time. It explores the fountainhead moments of cognizance amidst the relationship between human and object.

## From The Belly of the Beast



Philosopher Slavoj Zizek talks about a place within us – what he calls the void<sup>9</sup> – which is activated universally through certain stimuli to trigger particular emotional states. Ludwig Beethoven’s Ode to Joy is one of these forces that has been historically used by opposing political powers, rebellious regimes, and even in the Olympics to evoke the sense of brotherhood and solidarity. It is peculiar that a song has carried so much weight throughout history, that this particular song as a device, can move groups of people into alignment with a cause or ideology.

With *From the Belly of the Beast*, I wanted to explore this “void” contained within. Could it be that this void is the Achilles heel of individuality? How effective is this invisible power to emotionally manipulate humankind into acts of violence or resistance or tolerance? *From the Belly of the Beast* uses this notion of an invisible power in a sardonic way. The apparatus itself, which I call the the Shaman, is a medium sized birch wood box laser cut with the image of a raven sitting on the head of a panther who is eating the tail of the panther of the same image on the adjacent side (it’s a panther Ouroboros). It contains the sound, which can only be heard clearly from the end of the extending clear plastic tubes. The tubes extend out from each panther’s belly and have

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<sup>9</sup> Zizek, Slavoj, *The Pervert’s Guide to Ideology*, 2012.

a 3D printed funnel attached to the end of them. They reach out about ten feet to rest on a stand until the next listener arrives. On the pedestal where the box sits, there are signs that tell the passerby to “Have A Dose.” The signs prompt the listener to put the funnel to their ear and take in the sound. When they do, they are treated to a dose of ‘Ode to Joy.’ The song plays a continuous loop of a forty second snippet of the third stanza of Beethoven’s 9th Symphony – what is commonly known as ‘Ode to Joy.’

This piece is meant to be located in public spaces<sup>10</sup> where a passerby who is feeling out of alignment with a group or humanity in general can restore their state of hope and solidarity in an effort to continue being supportive of established societal systems. The Shaman provides “added value” to the scenery of real-life. The work brings into question the wavering emotional state of humans and the invisible “beasts” that may be manipulating us and stealing our individuality.

### Dream Baby Dream



3-channel video, 10:35 minutes, 2015

*Dream Baby Dream* shows three people in action in different locations. The modular narrative structure, specifically an episodic anthological narrative, obscures any

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<sup>10</sup> *From the Belly of the Beast* was originally shown in the Scholes Library staircase. The box sat on the 2nd floor landing while the tubes extended up and down to the other floors.

specific purpose to their actions. The viewer enters the space as a “fly on the wall.” The three videos start with a woman smoking a cigarette in a small room with the sound of someone speaking Russian in the background, an empty room with the sound of sweeping in the background, and an empty section of a running track with a runner infrequently passing by and the sound of hip hop music playing in that space. The sounds that are heard do not directly match what is being seen, but do seem to belong to the space. This goes on for about a minute then the camera’s perspective changes and we now enter the spaces with the sound matching the footage and in sync with the action. Then the actions turn uncanny. It is revealed that the woman speaking in Russian who was originally seen smoking a cigarette is either talking to a cat or to herself out loud. The empty room now shows a woman sweeping in a spiral toward the center of the room and the track shows a runner coming around over and over again too frequently for him to realistically make a normal turn around the track, but possibly just running around the room

For the first third of *Dream Baby Dream*, the videos are seen and heard simultaneously. In the second third, the sound cuts out from two of the videos shifting the focus to one video at a time (the action in the other videos continues). As the performers continue in their endeavors, the sound becomes convoluted and distorted. It becomes unsynced and repetitive entering a chaotic state until it finally, in the last section of the videos, seems to completely break away from any synchronicity with the footage. In doing so, it falls into its own harmonious loop. When this happens the performer’s actions take an even more unfamiliar turn. The woman sweeping in the empty room has put on a protective full body suit and starts working on a puzzle. The

woman speaking Russian changes jackets and leaves the room, as she does the camera pans left and the viewer is placed in front of a window looking out onto a yard. Later on, she is seen collecting dried leaves. The man running on the track leaves the track for the snow covered streets still dressed the same, in only his running shorts. Eventually he starts running barefoot. The woman putting the puzzle together seems to be confused as to what to do altogether. Then the camera cuts to a first person point of view. A merger of the performer and viewer occurs and the viewer is given a few seconds into a virtual reality where they navigate the performer's space.

*Dream Baby Dream* is a structuralist work. The film 'Critical Mass' by Hollis Frampton and the movies of Andrei Tarkovsky were an influence for this work. As I was editing this piece I was also thinking of Chion's notion of 'added value,' and how sound tends to be used as a supporting actor to the image. I thought "What would the reverse of this be like?" I set out to free the sound from its secondary role to the image, but I thought if this happened then perhaps, the events taking place would unhinge from reality and become absurd in the process. Through the edit, I discovered the ties within the action, footage, and sound. As I pushed towards my end goal of making this added value transition, the performer's actions stop making sense as well. What occurred was that they eventually lost themselves to us as if the medium itself was freed from the content that made it come alive.

## Warm Bodies



Single channel video diptych, 15:05 minutes, 2016

The need to be desired and to engage in physical contact with others knows no age. Upon approaching seventy years old, painter Susanne Forestieri's hunger to become more attractive and pursue a romantic relationship was reawakened. *Warm Bodies* is a docu-fiction split-screen modular narrative, which explores the lifelong predicament of our constant negotiation between the temporality and desires of the body. In this video, Susanne Forestieri's body literally becomes "the desert of the real."<sup>11</sup> As she tells us stories of her online dating adventures, the drying mud covering it transforms her body.

*Warm Bodies* is a single channel video diptych that was shot at the home of one of Susanne's friends located in Tecopa, California, which lies on the Nevada border in the Mojave Desert. The two channels juxtapose two different temporal states of the same action. The first video channel has a documentary feel taking the viewer through the entire process of preparing for a mud ceremony. The second is highly stylized with

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<sup>11</sup> Baudrillard, Jean, *The Precession of Simulacra*, Semiotext(e), 1983.

a softened vignette framing, and shows Susanne already in the midst of the ritual. In the first channel we get to know Susanne through a conversation with her friend Carlo about her struggles to find a partner and the steps she's taken like undergoing plastic surgery in an effort to become more desirable. In the meantime, the second channel shows her outside taking in the strong desert sun while covered in mud, talking, and flapping a horsefly tail baton, all in real time. Eventually, the first channel catches up to the second; in the process, showing the preparation for the ceremony and finally Susanne entering the ceremonial set (a backyard with an unfinished man-made pond). When the two channels align in content, the soundtrack changes to a piano song with only three phrases that build up in intensity until the end of the video. Both channels show her in the ceremonial stage, but the first keeps its documentary feel while the second one stays in a dream state.

Throughout the video, the viewer is given access to the internal timeless feel of the fantasy (right channel) and the external realistic feel of the documentary (left channel). This video works with the structure of cinema within what is documentary and what is fiction by juxtaposing fantasy next to reality. Perhaps it doesn't matter because what we're left with is an entry into a struggle with temporality as witnessed through Susanne's drying body merging with the surrounding desert and detritus filled property. How does one deal with the external aging changes of the body while the desires within stay very much alive and youthful?

Warm Bodies Piano Score:

G = g chord, C = c chord

4321 = notes F, G, A, and B two octaves above the middle C

Begins:

LG RC

LG RC

LG RC

Slow	Medium	Fast
4321	4321	4321
4321	4321	4321
4321	4321	4321
4321	4321	4321
4321	4321	4321
4321	4321	4321

Fast and even tempo

4321	111	111	111
4321	111	111	111
4321	111	111	111
4321	111	111	111
4321	111	111	111
4321	111	111	111

Fast and hard

11111111111111111111111111111111 4321 11111111111111111111111111111111  
11  
11

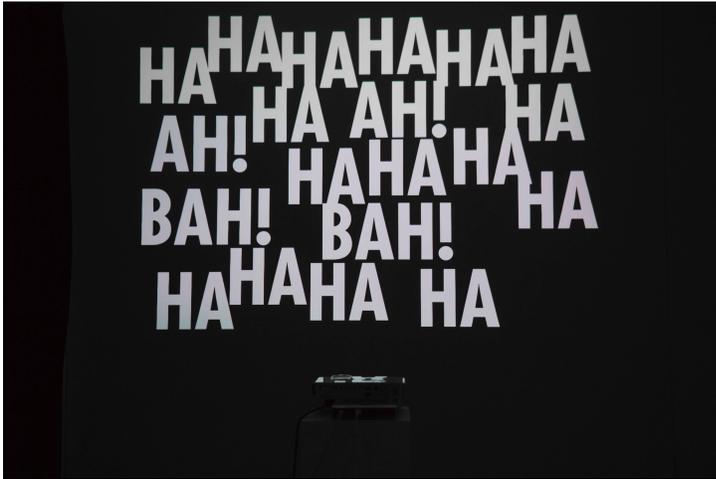
Slow

LG RC

LG RC

LG

## Butoh Speak - Tone Poems



In the movie *Mirror* by Andrei Tarkovsky there is a line spoken by one of the characters: “Words can’t really express a person’s emotions. They are too inert.” In my tone poems piece, which I call *Butoh Speak*, I wanted to use words in a way that would evoke imagery and sound, words that would activate both the right and left sides of the brain, words that could be described as onomatopoeic. I was curious about what might happen in our mind when using words that signify an action and the sound of that action simultaneously. My question was: “Do we hear sounds in our head or is it just the memory of a sound and is that a memory of an image or a sound?” Another question I worked from was “how do I make sound without physically making a sound?”

The Dadaist used the idea of a formless speech; language that does not speak to the point, but circumvents it – language that speaks to no point and follows no conventions not even that of language itself. These tone poems are not precisely following the Dadaist manifesto, but they do take shape through the use of circumvention and misappropriated structures of language. Part of their formula is from an attempt to describe a situation through our memory of sound and language using

words that point to something in combination with words that talk about something instead of using words for their meaning.

For example, in the poem HAHAHA the HA describes laughter, but does not describe the kind of laughter directly. The “Ha” takes an emotive form through the way it is written. At first, there is only three HA’s, the reader gets a sense that perhaps this laugh is cynical or the cause of the laugh is not that funny. Then the text of the laughter gets more intense through the “Ah-ha ha ha ha” and the “Ba-ha ha ha ha.” In the end, the laughter really takes flight, filling the screen with Ha Has changing the memories being activated to interpret the writing and possible changing intonation of what is being read.

I wanted these tone poems to be performed by the viewer in their mind. This was a way to make sound without making sound. I wanted the viewer to find the sound and its significance in written words through their own laugh, as in the case of the HA HA HA poem, or through their own memories and not through a standard definition of a word. I wanted the viewer to become the personalized ‘speaker box’ for the sounds, to become the voice and the gadget by which the medium takes its material form and to experience the elimination of continuity in spoken language.

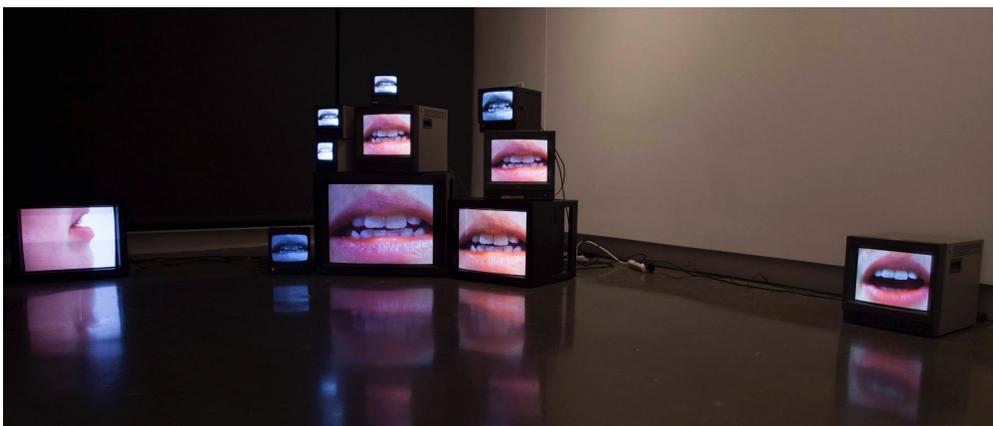
1,000 Yes Pileup, 2016



Photo courtesy of Aodi Liang



Install shot after performance with video documentation of the performance playing on monitor



Video sculpture of Yeses seen spoken



Performance of spoken Yeses are heard prior to entering the performance area.

**SPECS:**

Title: "A 1,000 Yes Pile-up"

Number of Performers: 6

Duration: Approx. 2 hours

Type of Performers: Dancer

Costume: metallic black full body spandex suit

Action: durational writing of the word "yes" with white oil pastels interrupted by spontaneous segments of movement

Reality consists of people saying yes, and even a no is a yes to something else.

My question for this performance work was "What does it look and feel like when yeses are removed from a historical timeline and compressed into a single consecutive action?"

*1,000 Yes Pile-up* has three parts; a sound component, a video sculpture, and a writing and dance performance (all durational). I had been working on a series of performance prints where I'd write the word "yes" 1000 times (one on top of the other) using oil pastels on archers 88 printmaking paper. Through this process, the yeses accumulate and become three dimensional; the print is then an artifact of this writing performance. In addition to the prints, I performed the yeses by vocalizing them. It takes 16 minutes and 40 seconds to say 1,000 yeses if a yes is said once every second.

The live performance component integrates writing with dance. In this iteration, the yeses are written directly on a wall. They represent the pulling out of the yes from the “yes” structure (yes structures are the built outcomes of group alignment or a consensus towards action). The movement represents the internal chaos of emotional information, which I call the pre-yes. To clarify, the pre-yes movement is the emotive state of action before it materializes in the world; it is everything before the creating of something based on meaning and purpose. I choreographed the movement based on the dance philosophies of Butoh<sup>12</sup>, specifically the philosophy of one of its founders, Kazuo Ohno. In the video *Piercing of the Mask*, Ohno explains his philosophy of dance as follows:

“Before employing techniques, the question of mind, spirit or life must be considered. When choreographing for example, if you consider techniques and apply them to dance, somehow in the process the most crucial part disappears. If the technique comes first in dancing, well, why should we bother dancing? We don’t depend on techniques to live. Rather I myself have experienced that the more techniques are employed, the more they push aside what is crucial. I don’t need techniques to lead my life after death. I try to ignore techniques and structures and focus on the spiritual.”

The movement of this piece was not centered around the spiritual (as Ohno seeks from his performances), but on an unaffected internal state of feeling.

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<sup>12</sup> Butoh is a Japanese modern dance. It arose after WWII through collaborations by Hijikata Tatsumi and Kazuo Ohno (its founders). It is described as the “Dance of Darkness” due to its often use of grotesque imagery and hyper-controlled motion. Butoh rejects notion of Western styles of dance like ballet or modern.

By way of the performances, I am actively trying to visualize agreement and understand groupthink by reflecting on my past yeses. History is built upon a consensus and although each person is an individual (as could be seen through the performer's different body types, movements, and writing) what we leave behind for future generations are structures of "yes" based on group alignment not individuality. In an act of transgression towards individuality, the dancer's bodies are fetishized and stripped of their identity through the costuming. Then they perform structured action through the choreography while maintaining a sense of control over their decisions.

Reflecting on my own yeses, I came to the conclusion that the outcome of saying yes is based on hope, hope of there being something better on the other side of that word. The yes has an underlying feeling of acting in the name of progress and fearlessness, but ultimately, there is no certainty in the action. The yes exists in a timeless gamble for a better experience of the future, whether immediate or prolonged. It is hard to say no and therefore, stay still; the gamble is too tempting.

1,000 Yes Pile-up Rehearsal Score for Performance:

Youtube Playlist:

([www.youtube.com/watch?v=paHf7Dfaky4&list=PL0t0Z5XeHxO7CatNQpGlgxknblpJVX77b](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=paHf7Dfaky4&list=PL0t0Z5XeHxO7CatNQpGlgxknblpJVX77b))

Butoh Video about Kazuo Ohno

Butoh: bringing the inside out (pure sensation, emotion, life – expressed with our flesh in all the ways it naturally reacts)

\*\*A state of being. You are in action, not reaction, no consciousness, no self-consciousness, just feeling your existence.

15 minute Warm Up: The Necks "Sex"

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZaTyHFo3kns>

2 minute meditation breathing

2 minute Kalabati Breath

5 minutes preliminary yoga stretches: rolling neck, shoulders, waist, legs windshield wipers, add arms

6 Sun Salutations, 4 knee down, 2 knee up

4 body rolls

4 body twist

Dance Warm up with Yasmina (song - Major Lazer, Get Free)

Themes: Out of these 10 pick around 5 cycle through during the performance

3 minutes each

1: Amazement, Astonishment, Power of controlling time (song -Belong, Remove the Inside)

Analogy: Time evaporates allowing you to watch the full cycle of a flower bloom from the seed sprouting to its petals falling.

Movement: Stare in disbelief, look at someone's shoes, face, hand, the floor and hold your gaze while slowly your jaw drops and your whole body starts to curves over with the weight of amazement.

2: Pleasure, ecstasy (song - Debussy, Clair de Lune)

Analogy: You enter a space with nothing in it, but the air which fills it except this air feels like kitten fur all over your body.

Movement: Touch yourself with every part of you possible, head to shoulder, wrist to ankle, stomach to thighs; as if every part of your body's surface is a new and orgasmic experience to touch.

3: \*\*Agony and relief (song -Theater of Eternal Music, The Fire is a Mirror)

Analogy: Puking wine, ugh.

Movement: Contract harshly and release slowly not wanting to evoke another contraction, then repeat. It's a pause in motion with an easing out, like a heartbeat in a monitor.

4: Surprise, Adrenaline (song - Z's, Trans Pecos)

Analogy: Carpet shocking the fuck out you.

Movement: A slight jump in the body then a look at the cause. Jump, look, pause, repeat

5: Shame, Embarrassment (song - Portishead - Only You)

Analogy: Feeling the delicious warmth of the sun on your skin while walking, then tripping and feeling the internal warmth of blood rush to your face in embarrassment.

Movement: Slowed flowing movement like ice cream melting on the warm cement than an erratic gesture.

6: Disgust, Fear, Anxiety (song - My Disco, King Sound)

Analogy: You suddenly find yourself in a bath of maggots.

Movement: Shake the skin off your body in an attempt to loosen it from your muscles. It can be a whole body movement or done in parts.

7: Betrayal, Heartbreak in complete disbelief (song - Suicide, Frankie Teardrop)

Analogy: Your best friend (of all your life) lies about you in order to get a job you were both going for.

Movement: Like watching a plane fall out of the sky; your frozen and suddenly gravity pulls you down as if the whole weight of the world lands on your shoulders and you slowly lose your strength.

8: Love – Bliss (song - Katrina and The Waves, Walking on Sunshine)

Movement: Dance like a child for the pure joy of movement, feeling your body in the air with uncoordinated movements.

9: Injustice, Hopelessness, Power and Powerlessness (song -Gesaffelstein, Pursuit)

Analogy: You know for a fact you failed a class because the professor is sexist.

Movement: You can get rid of all the injustice in the world by hitting it out of the air with your body.

10: Feeling kindness, Warmheartedness (song - Maurice Ravel, Bolero)

Analogy: You slip on some ice, the papers you were carrying are scattered everywhere and one stranger across the street runs to help you up and picks up all your papers.

Movement: The world hugs you and you hug back the air; grabbing air/kindness to hug it back.

### Whispers, 2014



Harder Hall lobby installation view



Detail shot of print

*Whispers* is a piece comprised of five prints hanging in front of five speakers.

The 16 x 20 inch prints are printed on Kitakata paper, a very thin and light greenly tinted

paper. The speakers are set on approximately four-foot tall pedestals and the prints hang from the ceiling at about an inch in front of them. The sound that plays out of the speakers is comprised of a youthful inquisitorial voice, a whispering accusatorial voice, and a sustained low frequency wave. The low frequency wave slowly rises in amplification and as it does, the prints react by shaking and flapping creating a sound teetering on a buzz. The youthful voice asks the viewers to look in different directions then follows up with the question “Do you see me know?,” as if playing a game of hide and seek. The accusatory voice, subtle and low, follows with the word “interloper” as if answering the question with an indictment.

The imagery of the fly appears in four of the five prints. It is a symbol for the insignificant, a representation of all things meaningless. Philosopher Steven Conner describes the symbology of a fly as follows:

“For flies have traditionally been thought of as the opposite of thought, as unmeaning. The meaning of flies is their meaninglessness, their meanness, insignificance, their negligible not-mattering. Flies are a maddening, but trivial distraction – maddening, of course, just because they are trivial.”<sup>13</sup>

At the time I was thinking about immigration<sup>14</sup> and the way people are deemed meaningless through a legal status while in fact are highly significant to the functionality of the system which ironically marks them as such. For this piece, I was focused on giving a presence to the trivial — the fly — by anthropomorphizing the prints through

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<sup>13</sup> Conner, Steven, *Making Flies Mean Something*, lecture given at the ‘Beckett and Animality’ conference, University of Reading, September 29, 2009.

<sup>14</sup> Not only is the issue of immigration of great concern to me as a first generation American who has undocumented family members living in the states, but also during this time, the migrant crisis in Europe was starting to happen.

the disembodied voices and reverberating of the paper; reversing the perceived power roles of human and fly.

Conner goes on to say:

“There is, in fact, a long tradition of identification between humans and flies. If flies are in one sense the opposite or negative of human being, literally living in and off our deaths, they are also for that very reason our familiars and fellow-travellers, their wide dispersal across the world shadowing that of their human hosts and partners.”

This statement gives significance to the fly by stating that the fly is of us. That the fly is a symbol of our rejected qualities; a metaphorical bin for the unwanted self.

In the fifth print instead of the imagery of the fly I printed the following poem:

TAP TAP TAP  
TAP TAP TAP  
TAP TAP TAP

On the window  
Goes the fly  
In search of  
the blue sky

TAP TAP TAP  
TAP TAP TAP  
TAP TAP TAP

Again, through the poem, I anthropomorphize the fly by attaching the human characteristic of hope to it.

Like *From the Belly of the Beast*, this piece is meant for display in a public area. It was originally displayed in a main thoroughfare lobby. Both pieces are conceived as artifacts of a paradoxical dystopian utopian failure.

## The Helen Keller Experience



[soundcloud.com/helenkellerexperience](https://soundcloud.com/helenkellerexperience)

*The Helen Keller Experience (HKE)* is a curatorial sound project that is a permanently accessible online. It consists of six original artist compositions inspired by a personal domestic space. The participating artists were asked to create a sound piece that is sonically, emotionally, or conceptually reflective of a familiar domestic space. My question for this piece was: “Can someone else’s score of a space change the way a listener perceives an equivalent space of their own?” In other words, if I take for example, Olivia Huffman and Freddie Wyss’ *Bedwomb* piece, based on their bedroom, and listen to it in my bedroom, will that change the way I experience my room? Will, after listening to the track, I see my bed or view from my window differently? Will their unique perspective of their space change my perspective of my room?

*HKE* is an empirical experiment that posits experience of space as a simultaneously unique and standardized account. It is about the transference of

significance through the recontextualization of a setting via sound: a sonic exploration into how we place and interpret meaning from the objects and spaces that surround us as both creator and user.

This project is meant to animate the mundane space, the everyday utilitarian spaces that witness our lives. As the sound composition is played in the listener's space, new meanings might be established through an audio-visual exchange of localized experiences.

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## Sensing Time-Technology List

### WORKS

#### 1. Speaking Lion, 2016

Description: 6-channel video projection with stereo sound, 2016.

Hardware for Installation	Software & Hardware Used to Create
6 short throw projectors	Panasonic HC-X920
6 mac minis	Adobe Premiere
6 HDMI cables 6' long or longer	Adobe Audition
2 JBLs & subwoofer	Yamaha Keyboard
network hub	Violin

#### 2. Fountainhead Loop, 2015

Description: 3-channel video projections with stereo sound

Hardware for Installation	Software & Hardware Used to Create
3 short throw projectors	Canon XF105
3 mac minis	Max Jitter Parent/Child sync patch
3 HDMI cables 2-20' and 1 -15'	Adobe Premiere
4 Tannoy speakers	Adobe Audition
4 speaker cords 1-5', 2-25', 1-20'	Adobe After Effects
8 banana clips	
2 RCA cables with adapters	
2 T-amps	

#### 3. Dream Baby Dream, 2015

Description: 3-channel video projections with stereo sound

Hardware for Installation	Software & Hardware Used to Create
3 short throw projectors	Canon 5D Mark II
3 mac minis	Panasonic HC-X920
3 HDMI cables 2-20' and 1 -15'	Gopro 3
2 Tannoy speakers	Max Jitter Parent/Child sync patch
2 speaker cords 1-5', 2-25', 1-20'	Adobe Premiere
4 banana clips	Adobe Audition
1 RCA cables with adapters	
1 T-amps	

#### 4. Warm Bodies, 2016

Description: single channel video diptych with stereo sound

Hardware for Installation	Software & Hardware Used to Create
variable	Panasonic HC-X920
	Adobe Audition
	Adobe Premiere
	Tascam DR-100 mk II
	Piano

#### 5. 1,000 Yes Pileup, 2016

Description: Performance, video sculpture, and sound piece

Hardware for Installation	Software & Hardware Used to Create
<b>Video</b>	
13 CRTs: varying sizes 3x3" to 27"	Panasonic HC-X920
3 media players	Adobe Audition
11 BNC connectors	Adobe Premiere
3 RCA cables with bnc adaptors	
<b>Sound</b>	
1 set of Audioengine2 speakers	Adobe Audition
media player	
<b>Durational Dance Performance</b>	
6 performers	
6 latex metallic black full body suits	
18 white oil pastels	
6 hooks	
1 crt museum monitor	
1 media player	

#### 6. Butoh Speak (Tone Poems), 2015

Description: video, no sound

Hardware for Installation	Software & Hardware Used to Create
1 short throw projectors	Adobe After Effects
1 mac mini 1 HDMI cord	

### 7. From the Belly of The Beast, 2015

Description: Site-oriented sound sculpture

Hardware for Installation	Software & Hardware Used to Create
Ipod	Birch wood panels
BEM bluetooth speakers trio	Epilog Legend 36EXT Laser cutter
	Plastic round clear tubing
	Black acrylic paint
	4 - 3D printed funnels
	Illustrator
	Audition
	Solidworks

### 8. ATAMBFY, 2015 (*As The Air Moves Back From You*) documentation work

Description: documentary video and book

Hardware for Installation	Software & Hardware Used to Create
Book n/a	Panasonic HC-X920
Video variable	Adobe Audition
	Adobe Premiere
	Canon 5D Mark II
	Tascam DR-100 mk II
	Adobe Indesign
	Book Binding Machine

### NOT IN THESIS SHOW

#### Whispers, 2014

Description: Surround sound and print sculpture

Location: originally installed in Harder Hall Lobby

Hardware for Installation	Software & Hardware Used to Create
5 Monitor Audio Speakers	Hand Lithograph Press
5 speaker wires 5' to 25' long	Kitakata paper
10 banana clips	Doepfer
DVD player	Adobe Audition
Sherwood Amp	Toast Titanium
RCA cord	Epilog Legend 36EXT Laser cutter
25 velcro removable wall adhesives	Woodcut
gold string	Gold leaf
5 black pedestals	
5 lithograph prints	

**The Helen Keller Experience, 2014**

Description: online curatorial project

Hardware for Installation	Software & Hardware Used to Create
Artist participants	Soundcloud.com
	Doepfer
	Adobe Audition
	bells