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THE HEADPHONES SHOW

Vito Acconci · Andre Avelas · Betsey Biggs · Viv Corringham
Barbara Ess · Christina Kubisch · Abinadi Meza
Tristan Perich · Seth Price

Curator: Alan Licht

November 13 – January 9, 2009

Headphones have become ubiquitous within the urban landscape-- the Walkman, Discman, and iPods have made headphones a presence in the culture of commuters. It is the closest one can come to experiencing sound in the same way as reading silently to oneself. They provide an alternative, handpicked, and disjunctive soundtrack to one's surroundings. They also block out the sounds of the immediate environment, while keeping the music inaudible to others, preventing listeners and their cohabitants from being disturbed. In this way headphones have come to symbolize isolation as an increasingly common attribute of life in the digital world.

The Headphones Show curated by **Alan Licht** brings together recent art works that require headphones to be experienced, acknowledging the rise of sound as an element in visual art, as well as a medium in itself. The works in the show explore shared versus private experience, using headphones to signify the daily reconciliations of interior and exterior worlds in everyday life.

Alan Licht is an American guitarist and composer, whose work combines elements of pop, noise, free jazz and minimalism. Licht is also widely respected for his critical writing on music and sound art, which has been published in magazines such as *The Wire* and *Modern Painters*. His first book *An Emotional Memoir of Martha Quinn* was published by Drag City in 2002, and in 2007 Rizzoli published his highly acclaimed book, *Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories*.

THE HEADPHONES SHOW

November 13 - January 9, 2009

Opening Reception

Thursday, November 13, 2008

6-8 PM

Gallery Hours:

Tuesdays-Saturdays: 9 AM – 9 PM

Sundays: 10 AM – 6 PM

Featured Artists:

Vito Acconci

A poet in the mid-1960s, Vito Acconci concentrated on language to be looked *at* rather than *through*. By the end of the decade, his work had become performance, film & video; instead of the page as a ground, he used himself as a ground: he exemplified the common language of the time – 'finding one's self' – by using his body as both subject & object. Acconci's early performances -- *Claim* (1971), e.g., and *Seedbed* (1972) -- were controversial, transgressing assumed boundaries between public and private space, and between audience and performer.

Acconci's video tapes took advantage of the medium's self-reflexivity and connectivity. Consistently exploring the dynamics of intimacy, trust, and power, the focus of Acconci's projects gradually moved from his physical body (*Conversions*, 1971) toward the psychology of interpersonal transactions (*Pryings*, 1971), and, later, to the cultural and political implications of the performative space of the self (*The Red Tapes*, 1976). By the mid-70's his sound-installations treated museums and galleries as community meeting places, which slipped into design & architecture; in 1988 he formed Acconci Studio, a collaborative collision (not a blend) that mixes poetry and mathematics, biology and narrative, as they attempt to make spaces fluid, malleable and changeable.

Andre Avelas

Since graduating from the Rietveld Academy in 2005 Avelas has made numerous performances, sculptures, installations and recordings which share a fascination for the way in which audio is produced and how it creates meaning in relation to space and the conditions under which it is heard. For example, he has previously used industrial machinery to create sound, or built sculptures in which the physical process by which noise is produced is more apparent than any actual content of the sound itself. Central to the artist's practice is a focus on sound not as a carrier of content but as a malleable material which shifts and changes in relation to the methods and machines through which it is reproduced.

Betsey Biggs

Betsey Biggs is an artist and composer working with sound, video, interactivity, installation and performance. Her work aims to engage the audience, to expose the beautiful in the mundane, and to explore the tension between spontaneity and form. Biggs studied creative writing and music at Colorado College, performing with Stephen Scott's Bowed Piano Ensemble and various rock bands. After several years working in film and video she returned to Mills College to study music and sound with Pauline Oliveros and Fred Frith. She is currently completing her Ph.D. at Princeton University, where she is researching the uses and meanings of sonic participation in new media art.

Viv Corringham

Viv Corringham is a British vocalist and sound artist, currently based in Minnesota, USA, who has worked internationally since the early 1980s. Her work includes music performances, audio installations and soundwalks. She is interested in exploring people's special relationship with familiar places and how that links to an interior landscape of personal history, memory and association. She has been artist-in-residence at Sirius Art Centre and Art Trail (Ireland), Art Colony (Minnesota) and Cal State University (California). She received a McKnight Composer Fellowship in 2006.

Tristan Perich

Perich is inspired by the aesthetics of math and physics, and works with simple forms and complex systems. The challenge of elegance provokes his compositions for solo instruments, small ensemble and orchestra. As a visual artist, he works primarily with machines to create pen-on-paper drawings that explore the limits of traditional drawing through randomness and order. In 2004 he began work on *1-Bit Music*, combining his music with primitive, hand-programmed electronics that investigate the foundations of digital sound. The Village Voice, BOMB Magazine, BPM Magazine, Res Magazine, Wired News, Cool Hunting and Spin Magazine covered the release, which has also been featured on television. Surface Magazine called the boxes "profound throwbacks to the traditional album, a response to the intangibility of iTunes and mp3s in the form hand-held artwork."

Seth Price

Born 1973 in East Jerusalem, Israel, Seth Price underlines the production strategies, dissemination modes, and valuation patterns that art most typically occupies or assumes. His appropriative work, which often comprises what he terms the "redistribution" of pirated materials

such as music and published texts and the circulation of archival footage and data culled from the internet, disrupts the operations of commodity culture and the information systems on which its ingratiating fluidity depends. The music compilations that make up the series *Title Variable* (2001–), reference episodes in recent music history, including video-game soundtracks and hip-hop. Released in various formats, Price's mixes have been delivered online and through bookstores and museums, accompanied by the artist's essays on each music form.

Barbara Ess

Barbara Ess is renowned for her accomplished use of the pinhole camera and her effort to "photograph what cannot be photographed." Ess's is a conscious quest to explore what she calls "ambiguous perceptual boundaries: between people, between the self and the not self, between in here and out there." In her view, "reality... includes a perceiver, who has memories, thoughts, desires, emotions—[which] a normal camera tends to omit." The strange and affecting images she coaxes from this primitive camera manage to evoke the sublime and the impossible, the textures of desire and loss. Over the past two decades Barbara Ess has participated in numerous exhibitions, including a large retrospective of her work at the Queens Museum in 1993. She also works with video and installation.

Christina Kubisch

Christina Kubisch belongs to the first generation of sound artists. Trained as a composer, she has artistically developed such techniques as magnetic induction to realize her installations. Since 1986 she has added light as an artistic element to her work with sound. Christina Kubisch's work displays an artistic development which is often described as the "synthesis of arts" - the discovery of acoustic space and the dimension of time in the visual arts on the one hand, and a redefinition of relationships between material and form on the other.

Abinadi Meza

Abinadi Meza, born 1976, is formally trained in architecture, art and creative writing. His work is largely focused on sound, experimental materials and installation/performance practices. He has exhibited internationally and is featured in numerous public and private art collections. Meza has lectured and taught at universities and art schools, and has received numerous awards in support of his work. Abinadi Meza Studio is an interdisciplinary studio founded in 2004, producing cinema, public art installations, multimedia design, radio broadcasts, books and gallery projects.

About the Abrons Arts Center

The Abrons Art Center of Henry Street Settlement is located on Manhattan's Lower East Side. At once global and local in its artistic reach, the Center serves as a prime venue for New York's avant-garde, offering new, bold and experimental interdisciplinary work in dance, music and theater. www.henrystreet.org/arts .

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