**SOUNDLAB**

Nicola Rae and co-Laborators *www.nicolarae.co.uk*

Working with others is an important aspect of my current process of making art. The sonic installations that I develop do have collaborative aspects, yet they are often not inherently collaborative enough to warrant this description. However they do bring together the skills of many different people, as well as the contingent improvisations of transitory visitors. For a short space of time we become *co-Laborators*, allowing the unexpected to happen...

SOUNDLAB at CUBE4x4x4, Mannheim, 2012 *(opposite)* was devised to be interactive as well as site-specific, through referencing the prior use of the building as a cigar factory. Lateral online searches led to my exploration of the aesthetics of cigar box guitars and their acoustic resonant properties. A deconstructed instrument was assembled with double bass strings stretched across an assortment of cigar boxes, which were then amplified by Jez Riley-French’s specialised contact microphones. An awareness of Cornelius Cardew’s Scratch Orchestra and his ideas concerning democratic sound production, have been of interest to me since 2009. This informed SOUNDLAB and led to developing the possibilities of making sonic installations that encouraged an equality of participation. Various objects, including chopsticks, barbecue sticks and feathers, are seen being interacted with to create sounds. Participants often responded to each other’s improvisations, as they tapped, plucked or drummed the amplified strings or sound boxes. *Overtone Analyzer* visualised these sounds as a continually transforming interactive score, projected onto the walls of CUBE4x4x4.

My initial experiments with sound began in 2005, when documenting the frequencies of audible and inaudible sounds, recorded at particular moments of time. Yet my ongoing interest in working with interactive sound was not enacted until 2010, through discovering *Overtone Analyzer,* which made possible full-screen projections of live visualized sound. My first sonic installation, *Lab Frequencies Live (2010),* was intended to be a reflexive environment of microphones and live sound visualisations; responding to noises heard within the building and visitors’ voices. Two days before the opening, sound artist-musician Angelo Madonna began collaborating on this installation. Through improvising with a self-made theramin, he activated the visualised frequencies to sonic extremes during an opening performance, while his partner, Silvia Battista, engaged in overtone singing which activated *Overtone Analyzer*’s specific dynamics. During the exhibition, visitors started to experiment vocally with the installation, interacting with live sound as visual effect. This led to reciprocal vocal/visual play, and continued into uninhibited singing and noise production. At this moment, the open process of allowing the unexpected to happen became my preferred way of working.

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*Photographs from SOUNDLAB, CUBE4x4x4, Mannheim, Germany, 2012 ©Paul Malone*