



## **Becoming the Olympics: The Sound Proof series of exhibitions (2008-2012)**

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### **Abstract**

The Sound Proof series of exhibitions (SP 2008-2012) emerged from an organic process to make artistic contributions in response to the Stratford site of the London 2012 Olympics. Planning for the series began in 2007—at the same time that the official Cultural Olympiad was starting up—and so the archive of yearly exhibitions reflects both changes to site and the evolving mood as the event neared.

The series has heritage concerns at its core—both the tangible cultural landscape and the intangible dimension of memory. Through its thematic funnel linking art practice, curation and legacy, SP created a unique container to address the cultural legacy concerns attached to Olympics sites while placing the focus firmly on the site of London 2012—providing an artistic record from its unique vantage point of independent artist-led activity.

The exhibition programme evolved over time, generating 28 new artworks by 21 artists in 5 exhibitions, 4 exhibition multiples and 1 publication. Exhibition themes were sound as cartography, sound as artefact, sound as text, sound as legacy, and sound as voice.

In its yearly iterations SP is like a memory track of how the Stratford site was building up towards 2012, reflecting a complex layering of moods and views through the filter of artistic responses. The works are part of the public record and contribute to the Olympics' legacy of artistic representations—expressing a wider spectrum of voices in the artistic record of London 2012.

**Key words:** sound, art, curation, memory, heritage, legacy

### **1. Distinguishing features of historical memory: An organic process**

We punctuate our memories of events by recording them in some form that marks them down for remembrance. With landmark events such as London 2012, the official narrative was threaded through a combination of cultural programmes including invited artists and curators, open calls, and initiatives at the local level guided by the organisers of the Cultural Olympiad. There was a complex, multilayered approach to London 2012's Cultural Olympiad and by coincidence it started at the same time that we held our first Sound Proof exhibition in 2008.

From the start, we wanted to keep the Sound Proof exhibition series as an independent initiative. Later, when I decided to continue Sound Proof on my own as a five-year series to represent the five Olympic rings, it was my goal that we could respond to the Olympic preparations organically. The sequence of yearly exhibitions would not be pre-planned into a programme of activities that fit an overall vision. Instead, it would commemorate the ever-shifting landscape of the Stratford site, perhaps in a search to represent what Paul Claval refers to as the "spatial patterning of social life and the symbolic imprint of social groups in the landscape".<sup>[1]</sup> Sound Proof was an attempt to pin down in concrete, tangible terms the intangible memory of a site in transition.

The impetus for me was as well to maintain critical distance so as to achieve the even-handed perspective that I sought with this series. This approach echoed Nick Couldry's work on voice—creating "a sort of liminal space, alongside power but somehow normatively separate from it"[2] where the artists involved were encouraged to experiment and express their views freely. As Couldry states in an interview with Rafico Ruiz (published in the journal *Seachange*, 2012): "And I decided therefore to talk about voice as a value, which is the idea that not only do we have the potential for voice...we need to be in the middle of ways of organising things which value voice, which take voice into account." [3] Placing art as the main expression of that voice, Sound Proof fomented the idea of art as a social actor, expressing through its cycle of exhibitions John Dewey's understanding of communication as a medium for the sharing of meanings and his belief in the contribution of communication to democracy.

What became a series of yearly exhibitions of commissioned artworks with a focus on sound began in 2007 with a walk of the Stratford site of the 2012 Olympics. It was a tour of the site led by a member of the Ramblers Association who had recently moved out of the area to make way for the construction yet to come. He took us on paths, alongside the waterways, pointing out industrial and residential sites soon to be recommissioned for future works. It was like being in a space suspended in time; in a state of becoming. Not quite what it appeared to be, not yet the place envisioned.

Before each yearly exhibition, I would go on a walk of the site—in this way attempting to soak in the zeitgeist in the air that year, looking for visual signs of meaningful change in the landscape and observing the way the site integrated in its environs and how people interacted with it. Luckily for me, the Greenway—central artery cutting through the heart of the construction in Stratford—remained open to the public from the moment construction started, although for the first few years of construction, hardly anyone knew it and that made for site visits that were eerily quiet.

## **2. Distinguishing features of historical memory: Sound as cartography**

Whoever maps the space gives that landscape and location its territorial characteristics: what is in, what is out, what is named, what goes unnamed or unmarked. It is a way to define the space via contour and specification.

When Colm Lally invited me to co-curate a sound art exhibition with him at E:vent Gallery in 2007, I had recently completed a walk of the designated Olympic area between Hackney Wick and Stratford in London. At the time of my walk I had wondered what would become of the space and whether any of its current landmark features would be retained. The memory of that experience stayed with me and helped shape the theme of sound as cartography for the first Sound Proof exhibition. Our aim was to capture sonic readings of the space at that time to retain a record of something that would disappear and re-shape into new forms when construction commenced.

We invited six commissions and asked the artists to create one-hour long sound pieces and visual maps based on artist's walks, with works by Brown Sierra, Angus Carlyle, Jem Finer, Sara Heitlinger and Franc Purg, Miller and McAfee Press (Andrew Miller and Duncan McAfee), and Vessna Perunovich in collaboration with Boja Vasic. This approach had as its model the rich history of artist walks by artists such as Janet Cardiff, Richard Long, Sophie Calle and Hamish Fulton.

At the time we were aware that official programmes were starting up and that our contribution would be considered within the bigger picture of the Cultural Olympiad, artistic programmes in London cultural centres, and other independent contributions from initiatives like ours. We made a decision to go ahead with an independent offering that would encourage different perspectives from the artists on the Olympic project and retain the focus on the artistic output. And so it is that Sound Proof crystallised as an idea and as a show. I retained that approach as I continued to develop Sound Proof as an exhibition series on my own.

The sequence of walks—organised and pre-planned for a curated exhibition—spoke implicitly about inside and outside space, inner and outer, both spatially and also in terms of the socio-political positioning of the project. This was the first exhibition, and as of yet, there were no others planned to follow it. So—in a way—out of all the exhibitions in the series, Sound Proof 1 was the most in-the-moment, the most authentic of the five. With nothing preceding it and nothing following, Sound Proof 1 expressed the sense of urgency at that time to memorialise a landscape that would be altered beyond recognition within a period of years. The six artists (and artist pairs) involved in the exhibition all seemed to recognise that we were part of a capturing of a moment in time, before the site inexorably pushed on to its Olympic destiny. In a way that period of a few months between January and April 2008—the time when the Sound Proof 1 commissioned artists were recording at the site—reminds me

of Lisa Saltzman's description of Pliny's tale about the Corinthian Maiden who drew an outline of her lover before he went off to war as "that mythic moment when imminent loss drives the impulse to record and remember"[4]. Saltzman's interest in the tale is "in its potentially paradigmatic status, the model it provides for isolating and interpreting the various visual techniques and technologies through which the work of memory is performed in contemporary artistic practice"[5] and "as a ritual of remembrance".[6] For Sound Proof, the techniques were sonic more than visual and so the discussion we extended was not just art's role in remembrance but also the loss of oral traditions as a means of commemorating and preserving our links to the past.

Oral traditions conveyed historical events and cultural narratives via direct imitation and observation and placed vernacular culture on the same (or greater) level of importance as official records.[7] This meant that history was passed down through direct contact, making the local interpretation of a space more important than the official one. With the development of the written word, distribution of culture, knowledge and history transferred from the local to the official having huge temporal and spatial consequences. Linking local narratives to those of distant places meant that perceived geographical and historical bonds could be cemented, making it possible to build great systems of power and political organisation. This led to the rise of nationhood as a concept encapsulating the social, historical and political characteristics of collective identities formerly differentiated through local affiliation.[8]

Sound Proof used sonic strategies to give a vernacular reading of the Stratford site at the same time that the official cultural programme was establishing its historic record. As a series of commissions the exhibition mobilised vernacular aesthetic inheritances to, as Saltzman says, make memory 'matter'. And so, the oral elements of the works give the past a place in the present.[9] Our approach stood alongside other initiatives to conserve elements of the cultural landscape being transformed. Two years after the first Sound Proof exhibition, Hackney Museum initiated an oral history archive of local residents and businesses, preserving their perceptions of the changes taking place during the build up to London 2012. The project was called Mapping the Change and invited initiatives like Sound Proof to be part of the archive of works. In this way Mapping the Change amassed a comprehensive local record of cultural activity that is preserved for public use at the museum and forms part of the official record. This type of approach mirrors work in the field of landscape studies, where place meaning is enacted through both vernacular and official channels, considering local populations and visitors as much as the functional category ascribed to the site officially.[10]

As Claval states with great urgency: "The contemporary crisis of identities is responsible for the renewed interest in landscapes by geographers, and indeed for the spatial turn generally across the social sciences." He reinforces a belief in the importance of place in identity formation stressing "the complex relations which exist between social groups and spatial forms".[11] Niamh Moore more specifically zeroes in on the role of the city in identity formation, noting that cities that rely on change to survive will confer a more fluid and dynamic place identity upon its inhabitants.[12] London being a prime example of this, the Stratford site's designation as Olympic made it particularly vulnerable to 'forgetting'—the idea that a new identity could be imprinted on it—and so it is that a surge of localised projects emerged during the key period of 2007-2008 as a means of offsetting what was going to be the 'imminent loss' that Saltzman speaks of in relation to Pliny's Corinthian Maiden. The brownfield land between Hackney Wick and Stratford fit Moore's description of a landscape that is 'particularly unique, legible and imageable within a particular city' [13], making it a prime site of contestation during the huge surge of economic and physical restructuring in the area after London was announced as Olympic Host City post 2005.

Anthony Giddens also cautions against seeing cities simply as 'blank canvases' to be filled with new narratives and emphasises the intimate links to the past that remain and should be conserved as part of their spatial identity. Going further still, he stresses that spatial cultural memory is preserved by the inhabitants and visitors most closely and strongly associated with it. By extension, he also highlights that the loss of those specific members to the local landscape signifies a cultural loss as well, unless something is done to preserve their memories and their contributions to space creation. Giddens sums it up by stating: "In a world characterised as runaway and constantly in flux, memory is critical in the formation of both personal and place identity but it is also crucial in shaping discourses on preservation, development, and how heritage is defined and represented." [14]

Giddens conceptualises globalisation as, not only pulling upwards (from national economies), but also—and importantly—pushing downwards, having direct influence on local decision-making. As national governments increasingly lose autonomy in the face of international competition and demands, they put increasing pressure on their landmark cities to provide a sense of national pride and a sense of



**Fig. 1: Stratford site, London. 2008.**

heritage. Thus the current fierce competition for Olympic status and the heritage rewards it promises. For nations caught in the middle of what Giddens describes as problems both too large and too small for nations to solve, Olympic status can help reinforce national pride—something precious and difficult to summon in the face of a highly interconnected and interdependent global economy.[15]

Economic restructuring has impacted on urban planning on a global scale, leading to an entrepreneurial approach towards heritage that often leaves those for whom the memory of a place remains the strongest feeling the most out of place.[16] This creates direct conflict between the idea of heritage as a shared public resource and the construct of heritage to reinvigorate urban areas.[17] It puts in danger the ability of the cityscape to operate as 'psychic anchor' for its inhabitants and visitors, and it undermines the ability of its spatial framework to provide a sense of history from which to embrace the shifts and changes of time.[18]

Certainly there was a 'psychic anchoring' taking place through the sound commission recordings for Sound Proof 1—something historic in a vernacular way as artists explored and documented the space before traces of its existing essence would be dug out into piles of dirt. Jem Finer's performance at the Stratford site in the depths of winter provided for me that 'mythic moment' that Saltzman references. He invited me to come along for his performance at the site in early February 2008 and the first thing that struck me was the massive blue wall that had been erected since my last visit in 2007. It surrounded the entire area, with the distinctive blue paint used to mark out even bridges and access points, announcing the site's state of becoming Olympic. I had not known about it and was totally unprepared for it. It was truly an incredible sight. Within a period of a few months, the landscape had been transformed from overgrown weeds and decrepit buildings alongside working factories and living accommodations (designated as brownfield land) to a cordoned off area surrounded by fencing and wire mesh, all painted in a memorable blue. Just as Yves had his International Klein Blue, so London 2012 had its blue to designate the area as Olympic. It was to that panorama that Finer introduced a troupe of musicians to trumpet down the wall. They played along paths leading to the wall, marched alongside it, and reached the midpoint of the Greenway—the public pathway that acted as central artery to the epicentre of the construction. Workers at the site waved and cheered as the musicians performed their finale facing the wall.

Pliny's Corinthian Maiden tracing the contours of her lover's shadow became for the artists in Sound Proof 1, the tracing of the contours of the perimeter of the Stratford site. We had asked for permission to do recordings inside the site, but were instead granted a bus tour of the site with no stops, no access to the outside, and no recordings allowed during the journey. Having had the experience of travelling inside the site, but then only being able to document its perimeter—now cordoned off by an imposing blue wall—the artists were of course positioned on the outside looking in; or drawing the contour of the shadowy world that the construction site became after the wall was erected.

### **3. Distinguishing features of historical memory: Sound as artefact**

"History studies the past through old documents, and in the case of landscape, is essentially a documentary study of maps and documents related to landscape. Archaeology studies the past more directly, through material remains in the present." [19]

For Sound Proof 2, the theme was sound as archaeology, with an emphasis on the artefact—reflecting the key question for me in 2009: what could constitute material fact for a site in a state of becoming? I commissioned four artists—Isha Bøhling, Daniel Jackson, Sheena Macrae, and John Wynne—to create object-based installations with sound for the exhibition. Brian Reed and I produced a vinyl record multiple in an edition of 300 for Sound Proof 2—the record being a sound artefact from previous decades as few would have turntables to actually hear the sound recordings on the multiple.

In a departure from the first exhibition, my main curatorial direction for this exhibition was to allow sound works to co-exist in one space with all works playing simultaneously (no headphone works)—allowing the sound elements to breathe and interplay with each other. Like the previous year, I invited artists to explore around and through the Olympic site to gather materials and inspiration for their commissions. I expected a range of responses and these would form part of the Sound Proof record—like a yearly litmus test reading.

In a site still in development, what would constitute artefact?

For John Wynne and Daniel Jackson, the artefact in 2009 was extracted, not from the physical site, but from public consciousness. John Wynne investigated meaning in the visual form of the Olympic logo and through that uncovered an alternate reading to that supported in the popular media. Subversions of the Olympic symbol manifested in graffiti, stickers, banners and blogs. Legislation enacted to bottle up voices of protest. Battles waged for right of use and ownership of lands. As Wynne stated, "the starting point for this piece is visual rather than sonic", and through that approach he created a sound work that built a sense of expectation and anticipation, much like the projection of the five rings onto collective consciousness. For Daniel Jackson's conceptual sound work, the physical site existed in terms of its statistical data and numerical reference points. The bone structure—invisible but holding the whole project together—was the physical site in Stratford. The visual manifestation was a play on the word represented through the five rings—olympics.

For Isha Bøhling and Sheena Macrae the archaeology was personal. In 'Prize', Isha Bøhling excavated a family history to evoke both the historic and individual sense of loss that accompanies an Olympic competition. Sheena Macrae had a personal history sited at the centre of the future Olympics complex, as she lived in the Pudding Mill Lane area for some years. Working with composer Paul Robinson, Macrae examined her personal sonic signposts—like ruins from a former time—by compressing and intertwining sequences from Robinson's compositions to convey a folding over, multiplying and layering of time and change in her own personal narrative. As she stated at the time, "soon my studio will be floating somewhere above seat 64 in the stadium".

There was a real, physical site in existence in 2009 in Stratford, London—one populated by bulldozers, cranes, metal, trucks, and a lot of dirt. It was a transitory space, waiting to be filled and completed by an event yet to take place. The search for material fact at that point took place in our minds—through our understanding of what came before the site was designated Olympic and in our ability to foresee what was yet to come.

### **4. Distinguishing features of historical memory: Sound as text**

Returning to the site in early 2010, there were developments on the way—cranes dotting the skyline, stadium structure dominating the epicentre of the site, signage designating the space Olympic, and a cafe, exhibition space and viewing area to make the works in progress accessible to the public. With the site's identity emerging, it seemed an appropriate time to open up the conversation and involve other sites around England also involved in Olympic competition.

Sound Proof 3 became a dialogue between two sites of the future Olympics: Weymouth and Portland in Dorset—where the sailing was to take place—and Stratford, London. I co-curated the exhibition with Julie Penfold (LabCulture, Dorset) and we selected two artists based in London and two based in Dorset to create responses from their own site-specific perspective: Claire Burke and Joe Stevens from Dorset and Sheena Calvert and Denna Jones from London.

The theme for Sound Proof 3 was sound as text: the vernacular (phonetic) represented in its textual form (written). We linked the artists and sites via the means of conversation, starting the project in



**Fig. 2:** *Overtime* installation. Barbara Held, Yapci Ramos et al. Sound Proof 4. Canterbury Court, London. 2011.

September 2010 as part of the B-side Multimedia Arts Festival in Dorset. One of the key texts that emerged from Sound Proof 3 was Sheena Calvert's visual deconstruction of Iain Sinclair's conceptualisation of the term 'edgeland'. Through formal compositions on the two-dimensional plane, Calvert explored the liminal spaces of paper "which elude exact definition, yet which are constantly being [in]formed"[20]—the edges and folds of paper as key conveyors of information. For Claire Burke, the focus was on written text's ability to align itself more closely with its phonetic, vernacular form: "Open breath open view open sea. Open ears open eyes open future. The ground: open. Open past open heart open masts open art. Open window open web open world." [21]

### **5. Distinguishing features of historical memory: sound as legacy**

One year before London 2012, Sound Proof amplified its reach and extended the dialogue to Barcelona, site of the Olympics in 1992. I wanted to explore the potential links between the two cities, as—with a 20 year difference—there was an interesting reflection on Olympic and artistic legacy that could take place.

In preparation for the Sound Proof 4 exhibition, I did a residency at the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art (MACBA) at their Study Center in early 2011 and accessed documentation, exploring both the historical references to the 1992 Cultural Olympiad and the urban legacy the Games imprinted on the city. My work also involved exploring the sites of the 1992 Olympics with a special focus on the Poblenou area, earmarked as a key area of regeneration for Barcelona 1992. What of Poblenou now and its Olympic legacy?

The 1992 Games once again reconnected Barcelona to the sea as the old industrial area of Poble Nou—flanked on the seafront by railroad tracks and populated by factories no longer in use—was renovated as part of the plan to site the Olympic Village there. As Lluís Millet explains in *Barcelona: La ciutat i el 92*, the renovation had as one of its main objectives to transform the area of Poblenou from its obsolete industrial use to one more urban and residential, with the aim being to recover the entire line of the sea from Barceloneta to the Bèsos river as an integral part of the city.[22] In fact, the handling of Poble Nou and of the Stratford site are quite similar in terms of the problematic they

presented and the aspirations attached to both sites. Both areas were considered marginalised from the city in some form, with considerable areas of brownfield designation, limited transport links and low residential use. Both landscapes had industrial function imprinted on them, much of it no longer in use. Both had a low profile in terms of image, which meant they could be reshaped and reformed as new areas post Olympics.

After consulting the written texts providing historical references of Poblenou, I embarked on a series of site visits, including a walk from the north centre of the city to its northeast edge, cutting through the heart of neighbourhood. From what I had read from a distance, Poblenou was an artistic hub poised to transform into a centre of technology. My walks did evidence areas of transformation and development and areas that still needed work—at least from the residents' perspective.

On the recommendation of Pilar Ortega of the Miró Foundation in Palma de Mallorca, I began by accessing documentation of Glòria Moure's commissions for the 1992 Olympics. The commissions are a fixture of the city to this day, with Rebecca Horn's installation at the beach in Barceloneta a key landmark of that area, although few people would recognise it as an emblem of Barcelona's Olympic legacy. This became a very interesting point for me in relation to the approach I wanted to develop for Sound Proof 4—to expand on Moure's idea that the commissions did not have to make specific reference to the Olympics.

In his discussion on the framing of heritage Paul Claval distinguishes between vernacular and official forms of establishing cultural allegiance through ties to the past. The vernacular form meant that a sense of continuity between past, present and future was established from local environments and transmitted by its inhabitants, conferring the power of heritage transmission to local populations rather than relying on official interpretations. Any historical reference beyond the lifespan of living inhabitants could be relegated to the area of myth, so that a person's sense of identity and their sense of place "was directly experienced as a living reality".<sup>[23]</sup> With the arrival of the written word, cultural elements could be transferred to younger generations beyond the memory of living inhabitants and could be linked to other geographical locations beyond the experienced landscape. This allowed for the expansion and transmission of knowledge and experience across time and space, but it also made it possible to harness a sense of heritage and belonging into more centralised power structures.

This distinction between vernacular and official heritage transmission is directly relevant to an understanding of the Sound Proof series of exhibitions in relation to the official Cultural Olympiad. It is not a question of better or worse, but of adding texture and understanding to cultural activities happening in relation to London 2012. What Sound Proof sought to establish was a platform for independent voices from the artistic community—organised in a more ad hoc framework to allow for reaction in time and in space to events happening within the city in preparation for the Olympics. It was not a case of us vs. them, but an opportunity to showcase the importance of the vernacular in bringing into focus what might be lost in the official.

The core activator for me in the construction of both Sound Proof 3 and Sound Proof 4 was the mechanism of the conversation. In the case of Sound Proof 3 the conversation between artists happened through the Twitter mechanism. In Sound Proof 4 the conversation happened at the exhibition space, with all four installations co-existing in one large warehouse space—ambient sounds intermingling freely. Expanding on the approach of Sound Proof 3, I invited two commissions from Barcelona and two from London to create a conversation between works by the artists from the two cities. Exhibited in Canterbury Court in November 2011—site of Sound Proof 2 in 2009—the installations of Sound Proof 4 formed a type of environmental sculpture, projecting the voices and thinking of the participating artists and allowing the works to speak to each other in the context of the exhibition.

Leigh Clarke's commission for Sound Proof 4 entitled *Squash*—a celebration of his passion for art and his frustration with sport—expressed a view that might not be so easy to posit through official channels, yet expressed what many in the population felt. John Fawcett exhibited *Radiance*—a filmic document of the creation of a huge energy network throughout London. Roc Jiménez de Cisneros' *Continuum, expanded* was an unstated commentary on the use of cultural activity to support official versions of legacy and heritage—the lack of statement being central to the work. Barbara Held's collaborative *Overtime* was a real time transmission of a memory held from the Olympics in Barcelona 20 years earlier—allowing for new interpretations and various iterations through five different expressions of one score. This was the most truly vernacular of all the works presented during Sound Proof 4, as one of the responses to the score was created during a live transmission on Resonance FM days after the exhibition opened. The links celebrated in *Overtime* were not between individual and

nation, as is often the case in Olympic events, but between individuals who had a shared history and set of interests—people who knew each other personally and celebrated together a moment in time.

Perhaps it is the case that the experienced has lost its currency. Through digitised global interactions with others, we have come to rely less and less on what we know and experience in our immediate environs. As Giddens puts it, "When the image of Nelson Mandela is more familiar to us than the face of our next door neighbour, something has changed in the nature of our everyday experience." [24] It comes back to an art of observation and to being in the moment and experiencing it as a time and a space. This is becoming increasingly difficult to do as our every experience has the potential to be networked, indexed and distributed as it is being felt and experienced, with the emphasis being more on passing it on and less on the experience itself.

This need to index and punctuate through historical links is what Giddens emphasises when he writes "It is a myth to think of traditions as impervious to change. Traditions evolve over time, but also can be quite suddenly altered or transformed. If I can put it this way, they are invented and reinvented." [25] For him the transition from tradition to heritage marks a disconnect between the experienced event and its shell rituals, leading towards a celebration of ceremony. This is quite effective in the transmission of power structures to a society's population, but it is the shared experience of the tradition that links individuals to their sense of time and place, and this—Giddens asserts—is most fruitfully accomplished via democratic structures and processes that require direct participation from individuals in the population in order to activate the mechanisms of power.

## **6. Distinguishing features of historical memory: Sound as voice**

In her study of urban heritage, Moore expresses the critical role that memory plays in both personal and place identity and how this plays out in the repositioning of areas marked for regeneration —'landscapes that are particularly unique, legible and imageable'. This was certainly the case when the Stratford site was announced as main site of London 2012. By the time the first Sound Proof exhibition was in the planning stages, there were projects taking place to debate the actual costs and benefits to the communities affected by the transformation of the area. Many of these debates focused on displacement of well-established communities for the sake of monetary gain by outside forces. And so it was fitting that for the fifth and final Sound Proof exhibition (which took place during London 2012) we invited the We Sell Boxes We Buy Gold collective to present their archive of interviews, photographs and sound works produced five years earlier, at the time that our own exhibition series coincidentally started.

We Sell Boxes We Buy Gold—a project initiated by Lucia Farinati, Richard Crow, Alberto Duman, Jude Rosen, and Louise Garrett—had examined the social, physical and psychological implications of the Olympic project in the areas within and surrounding the designated area through a series of artist walks that also represent "that mythic moment" that Saltzman references in relation to Pliny's Corinthian Maiden. The archive of interviews, recordings, and photographs produced in 2008 was exhibited for the first time at Carter Presents Gallery in 2012 as part of Sound Proof 5, bringing the Sound Proof project full circle from beginning to end.

A force once seen mainly for the good, regeneration has now shown its many faces and has demonstrated the complex effects it has on the vibrancy of the communities undergoing the changes. I touch on regeneration in this paper quite lightly as it was not the main concern of the exhibition series. But for those artists involved in Sound Proof not buoyed by the Olympic spirit, regeneration concerns were central to their critique, in particular Jem Finer (SP1), John Wynne (SP2), Sheena Calvert (SP3), Leigh Clarke (SP4), and We Sell Boxes We Buy Gold (SP5). It comes back to the point made by Moore about heritage as cultural resource or as financial asset. [26] It is in the spirit of heritage as cultural resource that Sound Proof engaged in a more ad hoc and organic manner with a site and an event punctuated by official quotation marks, allowing more vernacular forms and expressions to represent the event as cultural artefact.

Sound Proof 5 also showcased the work of Jonathan Munro who looked beyond the immediate area of the host city and featured responses to the international event by children living in the city of Hull—a location in the north of England not touched by Olympic gold dust but seriously affected by the economic turmoil of recent years. Their hopes for the future on the eve of London 2012—in spite of the complicated backdrop of their immediate communities—lined up quite well with their nation's wider ambitions for the Olympic project.

In the work of Marcus Leadley, the idea of within and without was expressed through a focus on sound art. His breaking apart of inside/outside acoustic aspects of diverse environments fractured the





**Fig. 3:** *Outside In* installation. Marcus Leadley. Sound Proof 5. Carter Presents Gallery, London. 2012.

everyday experience into its constituent parts. The result was a disorienting interplay between what is seen and what is heard to arrive at a clearer understanding of sound's pervasive relationship to a complex network of personal experiences and associations that colours our experience of place.

Through the experienced installation, Leadley achieved an integration between vernacular and official form intermingling sound with visual and sensed environment. In this work he spoke about inside and outside space, much as the Sound Proof 1 artists had done five years back. Whereas for the artists in Sound Proof 1 there was a sense of imminent loss, Leadley's installation is full of open interpretation and possibility—a porous liminal space that allows for the crossing of unspoken boundaries in time and space—at that key juncture in time when London 2012 was taking place. The past and the future were not the focus for once, just the present.

## **7. Conclusion**

In his exploration of an evolving conception of heritage, Claval finds "new values and meanings are now being ascribed to particular landscapes, many of which previously were not considered of particular significance."<sup>[27]</sup> This is one of the elements linked to the regeneration efforts of Olympic cities and London responded to this in a knowing multi-layered, multi-faceted approach, by building opportunities for vernacular responses within the aegis of the official programme and through the many initiatives by cultural centres in the city. Sound Proof, in its yearly iterations, became a memory track of how the Stratford site was building up towards 2012, reflecting a complex layering of moods and views through the filter of artistic responses. This ad hoc, organic approach allowed for multiple voices to contribute to the cultural legacy of London 2012, celebrating the values and meanings of the location through vernacular forms and channels.

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