

University of the Arts London Professorial Platform 2017

Prelude Loss

Whose memories are we silencing?

Whose voices are we not listening to?

What histories are we in danger of re-writing?



My mother is losing her memory.

Slowly but surely I am witnessing her loss of language, almost imperceptible on a daily basis, but significant when heard over weeks or months. She often can't remember what just happened or indeed what should be about to happen. As her memory disintegrates small gaps become huge omissions as her history, and therefore mine, gets rewritten with each iteration.

ENEMIES OF FREEDOM

PROTECT

AXIS OF EVIL

WAY OF LIFE

HOSTILE FORCES

THREAT

SECURITY OF OUR NATION

THEM

ULTIMATELY DESTROY

FOREIGN

NECESSARY EVIL

SACRIFICE

PROTECT THE INNOCENT

LIBERTY

CONTEST FOR FREEDOM

TYRANNY

FIGHT FOR PEACE

DESTROY

FOR QUEEN AND COUNTRY

TRUTH

ISSUE OF SURVIVAL

MENACE

STAND FAST

ATTACK

ALL THAT WE HOLD DEAR

DEGRADE

PROTECT OUR INTERESTS

STABILITY

NEW DARK AGE

JUST

Soundings and Re-Soundings: a theme and variations

It is difficult to find time to reflect when you are in the middle of a busy academic and artistic life, but as my thoughts have meandered through possible titles and the pathways that I could take through my work, I have been surprised at how consistently my seemingly disconnected concerns, activities and sound works have continued to revolve around the subject of memory. Of course, this is not unusual in academic or artistic practice, especially in sound arts practice, but in my work this does not, in general, take the form of a nostalgic look at the past or a lament for lost sounds, but rather a consideration of how memory is formed and re-formed. Much of my work is concerned with how histories get lost or omitted from the grand narratives of the past that inform our present realities. I am interested in what happens when pieces of history are silenced or when certain voices get muted and equally interested in recovering and un-muting those voices, the lives lived and the experiences that they can speak for. These experiences may be individual or collective, they may relate to place, family, labour or aspects of social, cultural and political life. So my theme is the soundings and the re-soundings of memory and how some of my works offer a series of variations on this theme.

Hidden Lives²

The House of Memory
A sound installation by Cathy Lane
Part of the Stoke Newington Festival

Clissold Park, Stoke Newington, London N16. Installation situated outside Clissold House.

Sunday June 10 (Street Festival Weekend)
Saturday June 16 (Children's Festival Weekend)
Sunday June 17 (Children's Festival Weekend)
From 12 noon to 7pm

Thanks to Hackney Museum. Hackney Archives, the pupils and staff of Colvestone School, Stoke Newington Festival, Clissold Park. Financially supported by the London Institute.



Fragments Variation 1

"Memory is continually created, a story told and retold, using jigsaw pieces of experience. It's utterly unreliable in some ways, because who can say whether the feeling or emotion that seems to belong to the recollection belongs to it rather than being from the general store of likely emotions we have learned? Memory is not false in the sense that it is willfully bad, but it is excitingly corrupt in its inclination to make a proper story of the past."

Jenny Diski Skating to Antarctica (2005)





... continually created ...

In *Hidden Voices* (2006) a dance work and film made in collaboration with choreographer Rosemary Butcher, dancer Elena Giannotti, stark in a red costume, moves on the spot as if negotiating her way through the unrelenting airstream of fragmented memories rushing towards her. She run/swims through them, always looking forward, never looking back, until at one crucial moment in the work she looks behind her as if to see if any of those memories have caught up with her. It is as if she is escaping her memories, trying to get beyond them, but with her lack of forward motion she is in fact surrounded, encompassed and even overwhelmed by them as they sonically fragment and reform all around her.



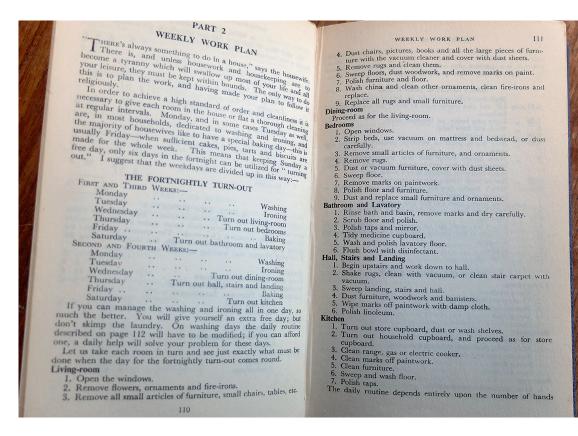
...a story told and retold....

How does memory get lost? Does it fall down through the cracks as stories are told and retold, each time missing out what is not considered important according to those who have the power to tell the stories?

Whose stories can be told and who can tell them? What is memory when there is no one left to tell the story, when it has been effectively silenced or just ignored?

...It's utterly unreliable ...

When memory gets lost, some voices are silenced. What we cannot hear is potentially more significant than what we do hear. We need to listen carefully for the silences and be aware of what we ourselves are not listening to. We need to be watchful of the mechanisms that allow some things to be heard.



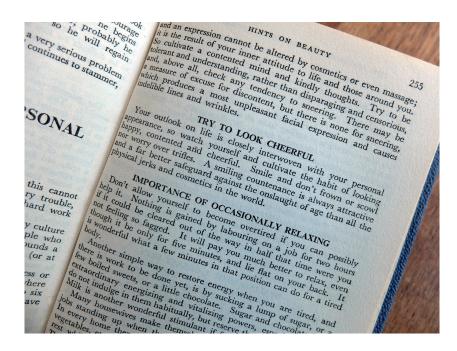
Un-mutings Variation 2

"They screech like fishwives, laugh like drains, shriek like hyenas, nag like sirens, cackle like hens." Sally Feldman New Statesman (2008)

Hidden Lives (1999) explores ideas of the house as a repository of memories, and of women as the curators of hidden histories. The themes of the domestic, family and the lives and histories of women which I first investigated in Hidden Lives have surfaced repeatedly in my work as have some of the compositional strategies used in the piece, such as composing with the voices of friends and family; the sounding of written text and the use of recorded spoken word as primary material.

For the making of *Hidden Lives* I recorded a number of female friends and family reading text passages from *The Book of Hints and Wrinkles* a household manual from the 1930s. The book describes the repetitive cycle of regular tasks concerned with all aspects of household management and childcare shared by women across centuries, societies and cultures.

The daily routine timetable ensures that no women could ever spend much time outside the house or away from this backbreaking schedule. Women are viewed as part of the household furnishing, to be polished and scrubbed in order to look clean, welcoming and attractive.



The voices of these women and girls reading sections of the book out loud can't help but capture their indignation as they imagine the lives of their grandmothers and silently compare them to their own. These performative re-soundings of the muted voices of their ancestors aim to both acknowledge and comment on the past.

Voices Variation 3

"My mum used to make lentil bake
My mum makes crepes
My mum cooks all the time
She cooked and cooked and loves it
My mother used to make a lot of bread
Mum makes rice pudding
Mum made the loveliest beetroot soup
My mum and my dad
My mum and my dad together
He used to cook on Sundays
He made curry on Tuesday
He used to cook things in camp ovens
He always cooked breakfast
He made porridge"
Cathy Lane ...the pickle jar is her home... (2009)





What foods most remind you of your childhood?

Individual domestic memories and recollections of family life form the basis for ... the pickle jar is her home... (2009) which weaves together field recordings and interviews from the UK and India. Over the course of the work we hear recordings of food being prepared and cooked; of the places where food is grown and sold; of people and companies selling food and food products and of the different voices of people talking about the food that reminds them of home and of their childhood as well as the foods that they like to cook and how to prepare them.

When you were a child who did most of the cooking in your house?

The piece explores peoples' emotional investment in food as a carrier of memory and of ideas of "home" focusing on the preparation and consumption of home food as central to family life. While the details of who cooks and what is cooked reflect individual histories, together the voices build up a collective cultural and social history of gendered domestic relationships.



"Apple crumble

Barbequed chicken

Celery baked in the oven

Dosa

Fish in deep pan with soy sauce

Indian tea

Mushroom and leek on pasta with parmesan cheese

Palak paneer

Pancakes

Ridge gourd

Risotto

Scrambled eggs

Spaghetti bolognaise

Spanish omelette

Spinach roti

Sweet potato soup

Tuna pasta"

Cathy Lane ... the pickle jar is her home... (2009)

"In the days of Queen Elizabeth 1, the English stevedores who unloaded the spice ships were forbidden from wearing clothes with cuffs, and also had their pockets sewn up, to discourage pilfering of peppercorns." Christine McFadden *Pepper* (2008)

These personal stories operate within the larger political, economic and cultural histories of food and spices within colonialism, particularly the complex relationship between Britain and the Indian subcontinent.

Family Variation 4

"Over and over again we get told stories by our parents and grandparents, and sometimes, if these stories are tested seriously and checked, that is all they turn out to be – stories, unsubstantiated and often downright contradicted by the actual evidence on records. But sometimes beneath the stories lurks the history of more than an ordinary person. Sometimes their story is the story of thousands." Margaret Forster *Hidden Lives* (1995)







Family life and memories are re-visited in *The Ties that Bind* (2013) through family stories of flight and refuge and the evolution of a family business against a backdrop of war in Europe. The work, made in collaboration with Tessa Brown, is as much about the unacknowledged and acknowledged convergences and similarities in the ways that family history is recounted and stories are told right down to the phrases used and the emphases given.

The Ties that Bind is based on oral history interviews conducted with family members from three generations of the White (formerly Wadjgras) family whose small family business, trading in wholesale underwear, primarily to African market stall holders, existed in the East End of London until the early 1990s.

The individual accounts are of the evolution of the business through wartime London and pre-war Berlin to its roots in the Jewish garment industry in Poland. Often recounting stories second or third hand, they reveal aspects of the process of cultural assimilation and how family memory can be preserved, narrativised and transmitted through stories and photographs or can so easily be lost.

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Michał Malkowski

Sekretarz rach.

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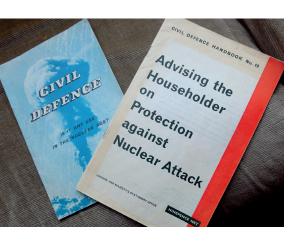
Dala Dale

Words Variation 5

"Having an enemy is important not only to define our identity but also to provide us with an obstacle against which to measure our system of values and in seeking to overcome it to demonstrate our own worth. So when there is no enemy we have to invent one...."

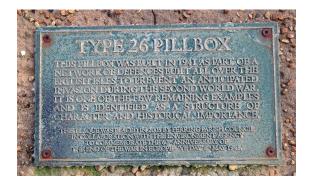
Umberto Eco *Inventing the Enemy* (2008)

While *The Ties that Bind* reveals how narratives are handed down from generation to generation through stories which often share language and turns of phrase, *Preparations for an Imaginary Conflict* examines how narratives are constructed over and over again by those in power, drawing very directly on the stories of the past and, specifically, how the fiction of the enemy is created through sound and language.





The starting points for *Preparations for an Imaginary Conflict* are two small pamphlets *Advising the Householder on Protection against Nuclear Attack* published by Her Majesty's Stationery Office in 1963 and *Civil Defence: Is it any use in the Nuclear Age* – this one did not have a publication date but it did include an application form to join the Civil Defence Corps. It was a shock to read the grim and graphic advice and duties detailed in these publications.



What kind of words, written or otherwise can make rational people believe something about a place or a people?

Preparations for an Imaginary Conflict focuses on two periods in the twentieth century in the UK when the public was led to expect an attack or invasion. The first, in 1940, when a German invasion was expected and the second, in the 1960s, when it was widely believed that there might be a nuclear attack. Using a variety of recorded spoken word, it examines how a possible invasion or attack has been imagined, planned and prepared for and how the government has, with various degrees of success, tried to unite people behind the idea of the enemy.

The work uses archival sound recordings from a wide variety of sources, from the BBC Archive to the Imperial War Museum sound archives. These include individuals talking about the specifics of anti-invasion preparations in small villages in the South of England in 1940, to political speechifying from British PMs Blair, Cameron, May, Churchill and Thatcher. Over the decades these speeches have repeatedly used the same phrases.

The recordings include official government advice about how to prepare for and behave in the event of an attack and recorded post-attack broadcasts which fortunately, were never used. Field recordings, primarily from the South Coast sites of potential WW2 invasion and sounded text, including advice from Ministry of Information leaflets, German surveys of the UK and sections from fiction which imagines that an attack has taken place, are also used as material.

Archives Variation 6

"Working in parallel with archeology it keeps uncovering layers of distortions and it is directed to the future rather than to the past: how has our present been constituted in ways that seem natural and undisputable to us, but are only the effects of certain historical, social, cultural, political and economic configurations. By revealing this contingency we become freer to imagine other ways of being." Maria Tamboukou *Archive Pleasures or Whose Time Is It?* (2011)

Maria Tamboukou's foregrounding of the researcher as an activator of the archive recasts it from a closed sealed entity to a springboard for new ideas and possibilities, with the aim of moving "us to a future in which the present can no longer recognize itself." Elizabeth Grosz *The Nick of Time: Politics, Evolution, and the Untimely* (2004)

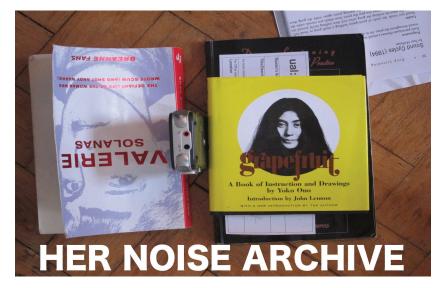


Over the last two decades I have used material from many different archives, small, large, national, local, analogue, digital, official, unofficial, organized, disorganized.... I am particularly interested in how the sound recordings of personal memories that are often conducted by museums, libraries and public archives and community groups can be used compositionally in a work of sound art. Often an underused resource, these collections are a reminder of past ways, language and ways of talking, narrativizing and storytelling. Accents, turns of phrase and paralinquistic utterances are as informative as the

stories themselves and over the years become indicative of time and place. Above all they are about people, often talking about quotidian things – the stuff of life.

Oral history or 'history from below' focuses on the experiences and perspectives of ordinary people in contrast to traditional political history and its focus on the actions of 'great men'. This 'below' can also be applied to the voices of those who are never 'heard' in the grand narratives of the past or the present and to those who operate outside the dominant social norms. Archives can provide alternative discourses and compensate for the edits and omissions from the specific narratives of power that we inherit.

The Her Noise Archive, which celebrates recent and contemporary feminist work related to sound art and experimental music offers the researcher an opportunity to queer the records and open the neat canonical narratives of the development of sound art and experimental music to its messy side alleys and alternative routes. It also serves to offer inspiration to new generations of artists and to collect materials for academic and artistic scrutiny that might otherwise be overlooked, and thus influence or fracture the dominant narratives that are operating in our artistic and academic worlds.





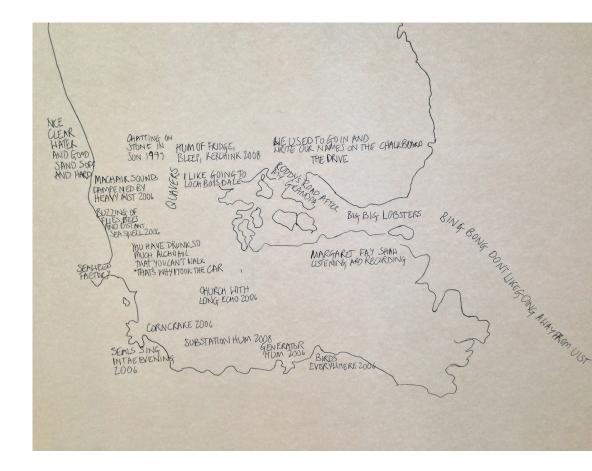
Land Variation 7

What is landscape but a map of activity past and present?

Places hold and anchor memories as much as archives. Over the last decade the Outer Hebrides off the west coast of Scotland have been the focus of much of my work. Through interviews, field recordings and existing oral history materials I have been investigating aspects of people's relationship to place, trying to move beyond the visual and to listen out for the sonic traces of past lives and past events. These listenings, often conducted in collaboration with local residents, have involved landscape, language, song, stories, music, weather, labour, religion and culture.

Do past lives and past events leave sonic traces and how can we hear them in the present?

A recent project focused on the 'resonances' of place names and how they 'fix' memories and historical events onto a landscape. It also investigated intergenerational relationships to place names through the medium of sound, primarily oral history recordings old and new. Underpinning this research were questions about whose history could be commemorated on the landscape with the aim of anecdotally renaming some of these places according to other histories and other memories, both shared and individual.



"language is used not only to navigate but also to charm the land. Words act as compass; place-speech serves literally to en-chant the land: to sing it back into being, and to sing one's being back into it." Robert MacFarlane Landmarks (2015)

I found that for the crofting communities of Benbecula, North and South Uist the land holds individualised yet shared memories of place and function. Place names, particularly those in Gaelic, act as a mnemonic for a dynamic memory re-creation. It is as if a mesh of past, present, ideas of kinship, place, features of the landscape and the shared and personal experiences of each speaker and listener covers and overlays the lived landscape.

Silences Variation 9

The starting point for this ongoing project was a photograph of The Ayahs Home in the Hackney Archives. The home, which operated from 1900-1947, was a mixture of boarding house, employment agency and Christian mission specifically for female domestic workers employed as nannies by British families travelling to and from India.



The ayahs in the Ayahs' Home in Hackney, London. (British Library)

The staged photograph shows an early twentieth century drawing room populated by around fifteen women all of whom are engaged in reading or sewing. The room looks quiet. As it turns out this is a very quiet chunk of history for while there are many British people who can still tell the story of their Indian upbringing under the auspices of their ayah it seems almost impossible to find an ayah or her descendants to tell their story. Most archival records reveal women with no name, apart from that of their employer; no place of birth apart from that of their very large country – women who leave little trace, except muted in this and the few other photographs that exist of the Ayahs Home.



"She must not let herself be worried nor imposed upon by the ayah, who, whenever she wants to run and have a smoke, will tell her that the child is hungry." Flora Annie Steel and Grace Gardiner The Complete Indian Housekeeper and Cook (1888)

How can the muted be voiced?

How can the unheard be listened to?

Coda

I have attempted to trace a path though a small section of my work focusing on memory and the themes and variation that have emerged from that. The list of works and publications that follow give a more complete picture of my body of work.

More information can be found at:

https://cathylane.co.uk/

http://www.crisap.org/people/cathy-lane/

Soundworks

White Noise 2016 (with Holly Ingleton)

Sandy Jaffas 2015

Preparations for an Imaginary Conflict 2015

Sweet Airs 2014

BEAM 2014

Am I Here? 2014

Why 0h Why? 2014

The Ties that Bind 2013 (with Tessa Brown)

Sea Shanty 2013

Gaoth 2013

Where Once were Whales 2013

Taming the Tentacles 2012 (for Polly Bagnall)

MAOS2 2011 (with Tessa Brown)

MAOS1 2011 (with Tessa Brown)

Tweed 2010

Lapped Translated lines 2010 (Rosemary Butcher Dance Company)

Destructive Navigations 2010 (Rosemary Butcher Dance Company)

...the pickle jar is her home...2009

Episodes of Flight 2008 (Rosemary Butcher Dance Company)

On the Machair 2008

Victor Vasarely Vega-200 2008

Aftermath 2006 (with Cathy Greenhalgh and Rosemary Butcher)

Hidden Voices 2006 (Rosemary Butcher Dance Company)

Hatworks 2004

The Memory Machine 2003

White 2003 (Rosemary Butcher Dance Company)

Still-Slow-Divided 20001 (Rosemary Butcher Dance Company)

Hidden Lives 2:The House of Memory 2001

Undercurrent 2001 (with Cathy Greenhalgh and Rosemary Butcher)

Scan 1999 (Rosemary Butcher Dance Company)

Hidden Lives 1999

Bath 1998

Invisible Crowds 1996

Nesting Stones 1996

Fallout 1994

The Defeat 1993

Sparks in the Dark 1991 (for Emergency Exit Arts, London)

A'awaf 1989

Just Desserts 1989 (for Leeds Animation Workshop)

The Wandering 1988 (for Carousel Arts Brighton)

Winters End 1988 (for Emergency Exit Arts, London)

Old Wives Tale 1987 (for Invisible Women shadow puppets, London)

The Elements 1986 (for Carousel Arts Brighton)

Fooled Again 1986 (for Rachel Posonby)

Building 1985 (for WITCH women's film group, Liverpool)



Publications

2016 'Mapping the Outer Hebrides in sound: towards a sonic methodology' *Island Studies Journal*. 11:2

2016 'Why Not our Voices' Women and Music; A Journal of Gender and Culture, Vol 20

2016 'Why am I a sound artist? Am I a sound artist? Some thoughts on the relationship between music and sound art' *Colloquium: Sound Art-Music* eds. Gardner, T. and Voegelin, S. Zero Books

2016 'Sound::Gender::Feminism::Activism: Research and the Challenge to the Orthodoxies of Sound Arts' Contemporary Music Review 35:1

2015 'Chalke Way' Uniformagazine No 3 Spring-Summer 2015

2015 'Separated but Connected' *The Travelling Archive in East London* at Rich Mix, London June 2015

2014 'It Started with a Dress: Amy Cunningham's 'Smart Appliances' Sounding Food and Music, a project by Contemporary Connections

2013 On Listening co-edited book (with Angus Carlyle) (Axminster, Uniformbooks)

2013 In The Field: The Art of Field Recording co-edited book (with Angus Carlyle) (Axminster, Uniformbooks)

2011 'Listening for the Past: A composer's ear-lead approach to exploring island culture past and present in the Outer Hebrides' *Shima Journal of Island cultures*, Spring 2011

2010 Playing with Words CD and online audio compilation, Gruenrekorder, Germany

2010 'In Conversation: Rosemary Butcher and Cathy Lane' What I Think About When I Think About Dancing ed. Lisa Havilah, Campbelltown Arts Centre, NSW, Australia

2009 'History Re-mixed' *Ars Viva catalogue 09/10* Kulturkreis der deutschen Wirtschaft, BDI e.V.

2009 'Performing the Cinesonic-Gazetteer, Explorer Yarns and Sagas' in *Practice-as-Research – in Performance and Screen* (with Cathy Greenhalgh). Palgrave-Macmillan

2008 Playing with Words: the spoken word in artistic practice (RGAP/Axminster, Uniformbooks)

2008 'Acts of Translation' and interviews with Laurie Anderson, Pamela Z, Trevor Wishart, Paul Lansky in *Playing with Words: the spoken words in artistic practice*

2007 'Studio Report Sound Arts and Design at London College of Communication' ICMC (International Computer Music Conference) proceedings

2007 'Sound History and Memory' Autumn Leaves Sound and the Environment in Artistic Practice ed. Angus Carlyle (Double Entendre, Paris 2007)

2006 'Voices from the Past: Compositional Approaches to using recorded speech' Organised Sound 11:1

2005 'The Memory Machine: sound and memory at the British Museum' *Organised Sound* 10:2 (with Nye Parry)

2005 'The Memory Machine' ICHIM 03 (International Conference on Hypermedia and Interactivity in Museums) (with Nye Parry)







Exhibitions

Solo Shows:

2015

'Preparations for an Imaginary Conflict' Ohrenhoch Gallery, Berlin

'The Hebrides Suite: Mapping the Islands in Sound' Museum & Tasglann nan Eilean, Isle of Benbecula, Outer Hebrides, Scotland

2014

'Sweet Airs' Ohrenhoch Gallery, Berlin

Group Shows:

2017

'Connecting Columns', Srishti Outpost@Mill Hall, Mattancherry, Kochi-Muziris Biennale, Kochi, India

2016

'What's the good of Mercator's North Poles and Equators?', Martin Art Gallery, Muhlenberg College, Allentown, PA 18104

2015

'The Hebrides Suite', Listening Room, FON Festival, Barrow in Furness, Lancashire

'The Hebrides Suite', Dreams of Machines, Victor & Hester at Transmission, Glasgow

"Tweed" stereo installation work in *Sound Matters: Exploring Craft through Sound*, National Centre for Craft and Design, Sleaford, Lincolnshire

"Tweed" stereo installation work in *Sound Matters: Exploring Craft through Sound a Crafts* Wolverhampton Art Gallery, Wolverhampton

'BEAM', interactive multichannel sound installation in *Dialogic Assemblages*, Artry Gallery, Kochi, India a Kochi-Muziris Biennale collateral event

"Preparations for an Imaginary Conflict" multichannel installation work in *Staging Disorder*, London College of Communication, Elephant and Castle, London

"Preparations for an Imaginary Conflict" (radio version) stereo mix broadcast on Radiophrenia temporary art radio station Broadcasting live from Glasgow Centre for Contemporary Arts

Foundsoundscape online sound show www.foundsoundscape.com

2014

'BEAM', interactive multichannel sound installation in Srishti Interim, UB City, Bangalore, India

"Tweed" stereo installation work in *Sound Matters: Exploring Craft through Sound*, Smiths Row, Bury St Edmunds

'A Sonic View', Sounding the View, Tate Britain

2013

"The Ties that Bind" multi channel installation work (with Tessa Brown) how is it towards the east? Calvert 22 Gallery, Shoreditch

"Where Once Were Whales" multi channel installation work, *Sound Portal* at Chelsea College with BeOpen Foundation

"Tweed" stereo installation work in *Sound Matters: Exploring Craft through Sound*, Iona Gallery, Kingussie; St Fergus Gallery, Wick; Inverness Gallery, Scotland; Stanley Picker Gallery, Kingston upon Thames; Smiths Row, Bury St Edmunds

2012

"Dead Fingers Talk 2012 – The Mayan Caper" Galleri Box, Göteborg, Sweden

2011

"Sounds from the Weave" in A Complex Weave: Women and Identity in Contemporary Art, Robeson Gallery, Penn State University, USA

'Close Encounters' *Bird Brain* Emerson Galerie, Berlin German; SoundFjord Gallery, London and Screenspace, Melbourne, Australia

2010

"Dead Fingers Talk: The Tape Experiments of William S. Burroughs", IMT Gallery, London, "Sound Walk Editions" online gallery

2009

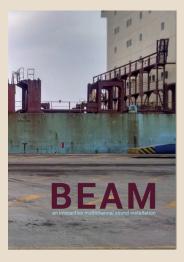
"What I Think about when I think about dancing", Campbelltown Arts Centre, Campbelltown, NSW, Australia

"Sounds from the Weave" part of A Complex Weave: Women and Identity in Contemporary Art, Stedman Art Gallery, Rutgers University, NJ, USA

"Material Texts", Kashi Art Gallery, Kochi, India







Thanks

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All images by Cathy Lane except;
Page 8 not known
Page 9 Rocco Redondo
Page 17, 18, 19 White family archive
Page 26 courtesy of British Library
Page 27 Moorli Dhur. B. Hopkins

Cathy Lane is a composer, sound artist and academic. Her work uses spoken word, field recordings and archive material to explore aspects of our listening relationship with each other and the multiverse. She is currently focused on how sound relates to the past, our histories, environment and our collective and individual memories from a feminist perspective. Books include *Playing with Words: The Spoken Word in Artistic Practice* (RGAP, 2008) and with Angus Carlyle *In the Field* (Uniformbooks, 2013), and *On Listening* (2013). Cathy is Professor of Sound Arts and University of the Arts London and co-director of CRiSAP (Creative Research in Sound Arts Practice), University of the Arts London.

www.cathylane.co.uk



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