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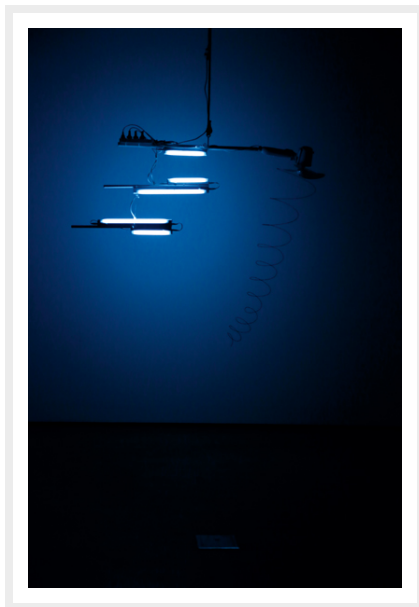
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TarraWarra Biennale 2012: Sonic Spheres

28 August 2012 | Melissa Pesa



Sonic aesthetics and visual appreciation – visual artwork engaging with sound, music and voice – is what can be found at the TarraWarra Museum of Art's (TWMA) third iteration of its biennial, 'Sonic Spheres'. There are musical scores and assemblages built from musical instruments as well as drawings, paintings and video. Curator and TWMA Director, Victoria Lynn explains the exhibition, which consists of work by 20 artists and collaborations, presents a diverse range of work. While some artists explore "an avant-garde tradition of experimental sound" there are others who investigate the cultural expression of music; "for many of the artists sound or song is a means of communication", Lynn explains.

Christian Thompson is an Amsterdam-based Australian contemporary artist whose work ranges from photography, to videos, to performance. Thompson's art is expressive of a continuing relationship to his indigenous people, country and culture. In *Decent Extremist*, Thompson – in collaboration with Carlos Vaquero – uses the words 'Nguwal' (meaning 'bees') and 'Muna' (its singular, 'bee') to create a soundscape resembling that of a bee swarm migrating from one place to another. The

words are rendered separately in high and low frequencies and played simultaneously, which creates a discordant hum resembling that of the bees – and also the chat of the words themselves.

Many of Thompson's sound-based works are concerned with the innate lyricism of his traditional, nearly extinct, Bidjara language. In redistributing his language into the public world, Thompson educates us on the cultural and political importance of smaller, overlooked, communities. Members of a bee colony are highly social and could not survive without constant intercommunication. *Decent Extremist* creates intimacy and a ritual nature of communication through a constant connection between the sonic surrounding, the socio-cultural milieu, and the individual listener. The audience is conscious of the work through both its aesthetic and audible qualities.

In 'Sonic Spheres', works connect you to a community, to a social and physical environment, to the artwork itself, thereby making the distance and border between you and the other less absolute. Immersed in sounds, you are no longer the autonomous and independent subject. Sounds thus construct, destruct, and deconstruct the viewer's subjectivity. Sonic studies suggest that it is possible to conceptualize new ways of knowing a culture and of gaining a deepened understanding of how people relate to each other through the sense of hearing. Culture cannot be captured or understood through visual means alone.

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Lynn believes "in taking your audiences with you" and 'Sonic Spheres' contains possibilities for ushering people into an experience that alternates between the lively and playful to a more serious exploration of interplay between art and sound. But those works also need to have other layers of meaning and interest buried within them that can be explored by a viewer and keep them engaged.

Each of the artists and collaborations – Robyn Backen, Lauren Brincat, Eugene Carchesio, The Donkey's Tail, Marco Fusinato, Nathan Gray, David Haines & Joyce Hinterding (collaboration), Ross Manning, Dylan Martorell, Victor

Meertens, Angelica Mesiti, Yukultji Napangati, James Newitt, Tom Nicholson with Andrew Byrne (collaboration), John Nixon, Sandra Selig, Christian Thompson, Ray James Tjangala and Johnny Yungut Tjupurrula – present work

that allows the viewer's appreciation to extend well beyond the confines of the visual as it shows the aesthetic potential of sound. When visiting the exhibition make sure to listen with an aesthetic ear.

TarraWarra Museum of Art

Until December 9, 2012

Victoria

Ross Manning, *Light Sequence and Spiral*, 2012,
oscillating fan, CFL lights, dowel, timber, rope, power board, 230 x 30 x 200cm.

Photograph by Alex Cuffe

Lauren Brincat, *Snare the Sea*, 2012,
documentation of an action, single-channel HD digital video, 16:9, colour, sound, 3m29s.

Image by Nick Hudson

Courtesy the artists; Milani Gallery, Brisbane; and Anna Schwartz Gallery

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