Autumn Almanac
The Voice and the Lens

Exhibition

Why 'The Voice and The Lens'?

The voice and the camera are the fundamental tools we use to understand and to make contemporary culture. The voice is perhaps *the* technology of the human, but it's also informed by and reflects other, less organic technologies. We talk about the voice in terms of its 'colour' (*coloratura*: to colour) and its focus; the techniques and rhetorics that we apply to light are mimicked by the movement of the mouth's own aperture.

This relationship between the voice and the camera is a filter through which we explore a number of linked ideas: sound and image; original and copy; liveness and mediation; presence and absence. And it ultimately stages the relationship between different ways of experiencing and constructing our self-identity. The combination of voice and image gives a sense of presence and immediacy – "it is I who speak" – yet in the same gesture makes both seem absent and distant – "is *that* what I sound like?!"

We invited vocalists and artist film-makers to negotiate a process of collaboration, resulting in works for screen and for performance, begging the question of which might be considered the original and which the copy. In notated music, the score is regarded as the 'work' and any performance of it is merely an 'interpretation'. In the visual art world the final object or event is given principal value and the processes involved in making it are given a secondary status. We aim to upset these hierarchies.

From 19th Century experiments with moving images, to early films, video, MTV, digital film, IMAX and mobile phones, the voice has played a central role in our relationship to technology. *The Voice and the Lens* explores how these technologies have shaped the voice, *and* how the voice has shaped these technologies.

We hope that you enjoy the programme, and encourage you to contribute to the many debates that orbit *The Voice and the Lens*. Tweet with the hash-tag #thevoiceandthelens and post videos to our Vimeo channel: www.vimeo.com/channels/thevoiceandthelens.

Sam Belinfante & Ed McKeon (Third Ear)

New Commissions
First Floor Galleries, 9-11 November, 11am-6pm, free entry

At the heart of *The Voice and the Lens* is a series of new works by established and emerging artists who all share a strong interest in both sound and the voice. Each of these artists was paired with creative vocalists in order to explore together the voice as both subject and medium.

Sam Belinfante – *New Work*, with Elaine Mitchener (2012)
16mm transferred to HD video
Belinfante and Mitchener's collaboration grew out of a shared interest in 'exercise' as both a device to practise and test techniques and a repetitive activity that requires great physical effort. As an artist new to analogue film, Belinfante explores the limits and idiosyncrasies of his camera in a series of choreographed moves paced by each wind of the machine. Paralleling these movements, Mitchener engages in an intensive workout routine that has dramatic effects on her own (vocal) instruments.

Amy Cunningham – *Oracle* (2012)
HD video
For *The Voice and the Lens*, artist Amy Cunningham presents a video in which the lens and the voice act like machines with an ability to travel back and forth through time. Successions of objects are rotated in front of the camera, such as a sextant and a metronome. Presented in this way, their primary function is obscured allowing for alternative narratives to be constructed. Different images flash by, appearing through the translucent membranes and upon the reflective surfaces that they possess. The disembodied singing voices that can be heard become the tools with which to make comments from afar, to mark time and to measure distance.

Bruce McLean – *Drumstick*, with Adam de la Cour (2012)
HD video
Drumstick attempts to deal with problems of communication, visually and aurally. It references Bunraku Theatre, ventriloquism the concepts of throwing your voice, a News Night setting, words put into other peoples' mouths, Chinese whispers, synchronisation and the work being (of course) completely out of sync.

Jayne Parker – *Bird*, with Loré Lixenberg (2012)
16mm film transferred to HD video
This film builds on a concept and original performance piece by Lixenberg, and Parker's earlier film of Katharina Wolpe performing Messiaen's bird-inspired piano music. Filmed at Steinway Hall, London, Lixenberg's birdsong is reflected in the bird-wing shape of piano lids and the instrument's golden-strung interior. The addition of reflection and the dark casket-like casing of the instrument sets the scene for Lixenberg's interest in the bird as a carrier of the soul at death, inspired by the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*.

Imogen Stidworthy – *New Work*, with Loré Lixenberg, Nicholas Clapton & Oscar Richardson (2012)
HD Video
Imogen Stidworthy has been working with a treble, a female soprano and a counter tenor; these are the three vocal types used to simulate the castrato voice through the seamless technical procedure of digital merging pioneered by the experimental sound laboratory IRCAM, in Paris, for the film 'Farinelli'. The castrato voice exists for

contemporary ears as an imagined sound, constituted through the descriptions of earlier generations and our interpretations of the work of the composers who wrote for the castrati. The idealised, artificial sound of the 'masked voice' is produced by a combination of training and a physiology which no longer exist. The lost voice is the starting point for an investigation into confusion and divergence between voices and bodies.

Mute Images
Second Floor Galleries, 9-11 November, 11am-6pm, free entry

Sam Belinfante, *Aperture* (2011)
C-Type prints
Aperture is a series of seven photographs that record the artist performing an ascending scale. As the scale goes up, he moves from a hum to an 'Ah' sound, changing his mouth shape to enable the higher notes. Paralleling this movement the camera's own aperture is widened on each step of the scale; the image gradually emerges just as the sound did in the initial performance.

Kathryn Faulkner, *My Voice, Chanting* (2009)
Photograph made via CymaScope by John Stuart Reid.
A CymaScope is a device that generates an image in response to sound vibrations passing through it. *My Voice, Chanting* is a photograph taken by John Stuart Reid of the artist's voice caused by vibrating fluid on the membrane of the machine.

Mikhail Karikis, *Sculpting Voice* (2010)
This recent series of photographs by artist and performer Mikhail Karikis captures the extreme transformation of the face in the process of shaping the voice for individual sounds.

Yiannis Katsiris, *Musarc Portraits* (2012)
The experimental nature of the choir *Musarc*, as well as the diversity of its members, inspired the photographer Yiannis Katsiris to explore different approaches to document their rehearsals. The listener can be tricked and perceive the choir as one body, as a whole. Similarily these images operated as both a group and as single images which offer mesmerising moments of both loud expression and silent concentration.

Sam Taylor-Wood, *Mute* (2001)
Mute presents a video of a young man singing a passage from an opera with the sound removed, denying immediate gratification. Yet it is through our inability to hear the imagined beauty of the voice that seems to pass through and animate the singer – precisely, through its failure to reach us – that the film's extraordinary pathos is discharged.

BIAD & Birmingham Conservatoire collaborations
Tower Room, 9-11 November, 11am-6pm, free entry

Please note that the tower room is only accessible via a number of steps.

Luke Atkinson & Luke Deane – *luke and luke like to look and listen* (2012)
Luke likes to look,
luke likes to listen,
Luke looks at luke listening,
luke listens to Luke looking.

Amritpal Sembhi & Ashley Turnell (Ex Cathedra) – *New Work* (2012)
This short documentary draws out the characteristics of becoming a professional singer today. By following the efforts and measures undertaken by Turnell, we will understand if and how the experiences of one singer can effectively change the dynamics of a choir.

Tower Room, 9-11 November, 5pm-6pm, free entry

Ravi Deepres & Andy Ingamells – *New Work* (2012); additional soundscape by **Scanner**
Karlheinz Stockhausen's *Originale*, his experimental step into the world of Sixties Happenings, was a controversial performance art piece that was forcibly cancelled during its initial run in Cologne in 1961, and protested at its American premiere in 1964. In his score Stockhausen describes how he wanted "people, activities, events from daily life" to be "compressed into one space, into one time". In this collaboration, Ravi and Andy have tried to look beyond the controversy to spotlight the only 'vocal' part of the piece: that of the busker.

Biographies

Sam Belinfante has presented shows in Stoltzestrasse 11 (Frankfurt); REMAP (Athens); BALTIC; Milton Keynes Gallery; Wysing Arts Centre, ICA and Tate Britain. His curatorial projects have included: *Notations* and *The Voice and Nothing More* (Slade, London – with Neil Luck); *LOOPs* (Chelsea Space, London); and *The Scuttler*,(ICA – with boyleANDshaw). www.sambelinfante.com

Adam de la Cour has performed internationally as a vocalist, electric guitarist and clown, premiering works by Michael Finnissy, Chris Newman and Bruce McLean among others. He performs metal, free improv, experimental, and contemporary music, and performs with Ensemble + -, Zipperface, ARCO, Letter Piece Company, The Bishop of X***, Mowgli, and is a founding member of squib-box. www.adamdelacour.com

Amy Cunningham has exhibited her performance, installation and screen-based work at OTO, Slade, and Serpentine (London); Kulturens Hus Luleå (Sweden); ZINGERpresents (Netherlands); Towner (Eastbourne); Musée des Beaux-Arts de Nîmes (France); Brighton and Soundwaves Festival (Brighton); and SC Gallery (Croatia). She co-founded the Voice Laboratory in 2009, and works with the collective SpRoUt. http://arts.brighton.ac.uk/staff/amy-cunningham

Loré Lixenberg has worked with Theatre de Complicite, comedians (Richard Thomas, Stewart Lee), and experimental artists (Stelarc, Bruce McLean, David Toop), as well as performing works by leading composers – from Aperghis to Gerald Barry, Earle Brown to Birtwistle – at festivals worldwide. She is director-residence for the physical music theatre group SCENATET (Copenhagen). www.lorelixenberg.com

Ed McKeon (**Third Ear**) is a live music producer, occasional broadcaster, and Visiting Tutor at Birmingham Conservatoire. www.thirdear.co.uk

Bruce McLean is a Scottish performance artist and painter. Reacting against academicism, he abandoned conventional studio production for impermanent sculptures using materials such as water, along with satirical performances directed against the art world. He has had numerous solo exhibitions including Tate (London), Modern Art Gallery (Vienna) and Museum of Modern Art (Oxford). In 1985 he won the John Moores Painting Prize.

A classically trained vocalist fusing gospel, jazz and extended vocal techniques, **Elaine Mitchener** has worked with leading musicians, composers and artists from Henry Grimes and Christian Marclay, to Heiner Goebbels, Evan Parker, David Toop, and Attila Csihar. Stage productions include *Century Songs*, *Star-Shaped Biscuit* and *I Burn For You*, and *Of Leonardo da Vinci*.
http://elainemitchener.posterous.com/

Jayne Parker is an artist and filmmaker whose work has been widely shown in major art institutions, on TV and in film and music festivals. In 2003 she received the 1871 Fellowship, researching the relationship between music and film. In 2008 she completed *Trilogy: Kettle's Yard*, premiered at London Film Festival, and in 2011 presented a retrospective of her films at BFI Southbank.
www.lux.org.uk/collection/artists/jayne-parker

Imogen Stidworthy makes videos, sound works and installations that examine aspects of spoken language such as the sound of the voice, losing, gaining and regaining language, and acts or processes of translation. She has shown widely in major exhibitions including Documenta 12. Recent solo exhibitions have included: Matts Gallery (London); Kunstpavillon (Innsbruck); Arnolfini (Bristol); and Galerie Akinci (Amsterdam).

Luke Atkinson graduated from BIAD in 2012 with a First Class degree in photography and moving image. www.orangeandwhite.co.uk

Luke Deane is a composer and a pupil of Howard Skempton. He has performed on stages, in art galleries, car parks, over a network and even on a departing train. http://lukedeane.bandcamp.com/

Ravi Deepres has shown work worldwide at major festivals and venues from The Olympic Gala opening ceremony to Star Space (Shanghai), Royal Opera to Paris Opera, Magnum Photos and Ikon Touring, on Channel 4, BBC1, as solo artist or in collaboration (e.g. with choreographers, Chicks on Speed etc.) http://ravideepres.com/

Composer **Andy Ingamells**' work focuses upon theatrical aspects of music, with recent performances at venues and festivals from Amsterdam to Canterbury, and The New Art Gallery (Walsall).
http://andyingamells.com/

Mikhail Karikis' work includes video installation, performance art, photography, drawing and music, showing at Venice Biennale to Royal Opera House. Since Bjork's release of his music by in 2005, his recordings include *Orphica*, and *Morphica* – nominated for a Qwartz Electronic Music Award.
www.mikhailkarikis.com

Photographer **Yiannis Katsiris** is commissioned by magazines, private companies and not-for-profit organizations, design groups, production houses and theatre companies in the UK and abroad.
www.yianniskatsaris.com

Amritpal Sembhi studied at Birmingham Institute of Art & Design. She makes films, works in TV and won a Student Award (Blue Hippo Media). www.amritpalsembhi.com

Ashley Turnell is a freelance singer, specialising in choral and consort work with Ex Cathedra, Ensemble Plus Ultra, Tallis Scholars, BBC Daily Service Singers and many others.

Thank You

It would not have been possible to put this ambitious programme together without the good will and active support of all the artists and their gallery representatives (and to English National Opera, Sky Arts and the artists' representatives for the short aria films by Werner Herzog, Dougal Wilson and Sam Taylor-Wood). For the making of the new works, we are particularly grateful for support from no.w.here, the London

Symphony Orchestra, St Matthew's Church Bethnal Green, Steinways and Oxford Brookes University. Our thanks also to Flatpack Festival for their advice and support.

A feature of the programme has been our partnerships with organisations and companies in Birmingham, notably BIAD, the Conservatoire, Giant Screen, Ex Cathedra and Birmingham Opera Company.

We would particularly like to thank our principal partners and supporters, namely Sound and Music, the PRS for Music Foundation and the Institute for Musical Research.

Ikon Gallery
1 Oozells Square, Brindleyplace, Birmingham B1 2HS
Open Tuesday-Sunday, 11am-6pm, free entry
0121 248 0708 / www.ikon-gallery.co.uk
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