

WRITING ABOUT *SIX SOUND WORKS*

by

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is the written component of the multipart installation work, *Six Sound Works*. Like the work it accompanies and elaborates, not supplants, this thesis explores a number of interrelated themes, establishing a criss-crossing constellation of overlapping associations—more an accumulation of running questions than a compendium of finished answers. Themes explored include the use of art in terms of research-based expository analysis in the definition and investigation of a problematic; the critical, exploratory and methodological possibilities of Hal Foster’s notion of the archive; the “mysteries” of sound and hearing and Jacques Lacan’s notion of the real; the aesthetics, conceptual preoccupations and multiplex consequences of Minimalism in art production and music; and ghosts, audible or otherwise.

Keywords: Sound, Minimalism, The Archive, Jacques Lacan, The Real

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INTRODUCTION

An Archival Process

Six Sound Works, presented at the Or Gallery in the summer of 2005, was first formulated after a hypothetical essay, to be titled *Dan Flavin: Sound Artist*. This essay was to examine Flavin's illuminated fluorescent light works in terms of their potential or, rather, inherent but unaddressed sound-making capacities. Fluorescent lights often buzz, hum and tinkle, sounds produced by causes such as improperly grounded, overtaxed or irregular electrical power supplies, general bulb deterioration and even everyday functioning. Present everywhere in contemporary built environments, the audibility of these commonplace sounds varies from faint to distinct, defined as much by the technology involved as the architectural context in which the fluorescents are found: high on a ceiling, placed in a corner, crossing a wall, traversing a room, low by the floor, outdoors, and so on. As sound-based works, Flavin's fluorescent lights, particularly his more architecturally sensitive installations, such as 1992's *untitled (to Tracy, to celebrate the love of a lifetime)* installed in the Guggenheim, would be understated.¹ The lights' sounds would be easy to overpower and miss, requiring purposeful listening, even stillness and quiet. Presented with such particular conditions, listeners would have to seek out the lights' noises—hesitant, heads cocked, searching, ears first. Consequently, as sound-makers instead of light sources, Flavin's installations would necessitate a reoriented audience/work/space dynamic. Eschewing the visual, this new dynamic would be increasingly furtive because of the subdued sound levels, and the more diffuse spatial character. The exact origin of the sounds would be much more elusive than with light, which, in comparison, more explicitly signals its source of emanation. An intriguing topic, I nevertheless did not pursue *Dan Flavin: Sound Artist* in essay form, exploring its premise via art production instead.

This thesis elaborates my investigatory arc, which, beginning with an interest in sound as the basis for installation artwork, expanded laterally to Flavin and the larger American Minimalist milieu at the historical junction of modernist, avant-garde and conceptual art practices.² Pursuing this subject matter, the work process involved for me in writing and producing art is comparable: I see them both as ongoing, wide-ranging, investigative, and sometimes speculative research, that draws from multiple resources, including texts of all kinds as well as hands-on material production. Purposefully open-ended, the reason for this inclusive process—as I consider it—is to generate and sustain a problematic, not to make determined conclusions. Obviously, however, this does not mean my process is therefore liable to spurious relativism, in which all things and ideas are accepted and evaluated as equal; rather, it is a critical and self-critical process, developing immanently, expanding in breadth and depth as it continues. Nor is this to limit my process to the conformity of dull reason, something linear, hierarchical and straightforwardly progressive—scientism with a different name. Instead, making use of intuition, spontaneity and creative work, my research often only becomes comprehensible retroactively. Even then my results are susceptible to recapitulation and renewal, postponing the closed supposition of truth. Not meant to be grandiloquent, despite this expansive explanation, my process demonstrates an extemporaneous working-philosophy: one that combines offhand theories of knowledge and existence into an interdisciplinary heuristic, grounded in everyday practice. To abridge this philosophy into a handy maxim: I will do what I need to do as I am doing it, or do something else if need be, to get done what I am trying to get done.

Identifying the conceptual references submerged in the summary above, my work process is articulated through Theodor Adorno's methodological metaphor of the constellation, Guy Debord's Situationist strategy of the *dérive*, Jacques Lacan's notion of

the *objet petit a* (the so-called object-cause of desire) and Hal Foster's analysis of the archive. Adorno, Debord, Lacan, and Foster all usefully propose different spatialized notions of investigatory knowledge. Guiding his critical enterprise, Adorno's metaphor, borrowed from Walter Benjamin, treats theories, examples and other research materials as objects of study gathered into interim arrangements, like stars in constellations, remaining open to reorganization as required.³ A form of spontaneous/objective exploration, Debord's psychogeographical strategy defamiliarizes routine, enlivening new-found attentiveness that resists conformity to the merely given, promoting wandering as a critical practice.⁴ Lacan's notion suggests how knowledge is fundamentally recursive, circulating forever around a foundational opening it cannot close, instead supplying a provisional intersubjective stopgap, which in turn becomes a focus of interest, albeit unstable, supplementary and provocative.⁵ Finally, Foster describes the notion of the archive as an active impulse: a creative approach for art making, a "will to connect" in a "gesture of alternative knowledge or counter memory," citing the work of Thomas Hirschhorn, Tacita Dean and Sam Durant as exemplars.⁶ Something indeterminate, an archive is for Foster as much an excavatory practice as it is a constructive result, stimulating viewers' interpretive engagement.

A linchpin in my thinking, Foster's contention brings the others' proposals together more explicitly into the domain of art production and analysis, specifically with respect to *Six Sound Works*. This merging of theory coalesced after viewing photographs of now-canonical Minimalist gallery shows, such as the Jewish Museum's Primary Structures exhibition in 1966 and various exhibitions of Morris' sculptures.⁷ *Six Sound Works* was motivated as significantly by this documentation as by the art depicted. The Minimalist works in these images function to transform imputed subjectivism, described by Rosalind Krauss as "the privacy of psychological space," into phenomenological

externality.⁸ This change redefines the artworks and gallery space together into one complex experiential and conceptual “situation,” as Michael Fried puts it, which affects artists and viewers alike (although Robert Morris and Donald Judd both reject this kind of assessment, preferring their own justifications).⁹ Interpreted in this way, and with Foster in mind, the photographs illustrate archives both *of* and *for* experience and thought. Furthermore, expanding the scope of the archive, the photographs themselves are valuable archival material, much more than secondary documentation. Armed with this compound understanding, I reconsidered my research paradigm as something also realizable spatially.

This became my methodology for *Six Sound Works*: an art-based research study presented by means of sound and built materials installed in space. Not an academic exercise, Foster’s metaphor instigated the literal and conceptual archival space necessary to deploy my research materials, including art-historical references, my own practice, and the now more strategically contextualized ideas of Adorno, Debord and Lacan. As Jacques Derrida reminds, an archive historically designates a real space, a space to hold the archive.¹⁰ This archival space is for me the space *of* and *for* my problematic.

And yet this strategy also results in a degree of fuzzy circularity: if an archive is both a process and a goal, then this thesis is itself another item in the growing collection constituted by *Six Sound Works*, not its explicatory justification. This realization expresses how I regard this text—a text which transforms *Six Sound Works* as I write it. But in being more emphatically discursive than the works in my installation are able to be alone, this text is usefully descriptive, enabling a self-reflexive investigation that can be tactfully blatant. Hence, latent themes can come to the surface, old presuppositions can be reinvigorated or dispensed with and new questions developed. Yet what is most important is that this thesis and the collected works it re-presents are not finished or

closed texts, even if the actual items in *Six Sound Works* have since been dismantled.

Instead, the archive, defining my research imperative, extends into hypothetical and historical space, continuing to establish my practice as it matures, informing future production.

But for all this complex clarification, I think my approach is quite ordinary. This last admission is not a dismissal or an equivocation; it is just the way I work. To rephrase Judd's well-known description of his work and work-philosophy, the archive develops as it develops as long as it inspires and sustains my interest.¹¹ Turning to the archive, then, the following presents a comprehensive introduction to the individual works collected in *Six Sound Works*, detailing them materially, conceptually and in terms of an art-historical context. Since these descriptions refer back to each other, they are progressively concise. Before I introduce the works, however, a first section elaborates my specific thinking about sound, drawing out a Lacanian model of hearing and listening that echoes throughout my archive. A short final section recapitulates the main themes of this discussion to conclude this text, if not the archive.

HEARING THE MYSTERIOUS REAL OF SOUND

The Ghost in Our Heads

Sound is phantomal, a force that is felt involuntarily; it is a transfer of energy that is simultaneously context specific and subjective; it avails itself to mechanical measurement but eludes our direct grasp, hard to hold in memory. According to Barry Truax, a basic definition of sound is that it is an audible vibration in any medium, in particular air.¹² This vibration activates our ears, transforming changing air-pressure waves into the perception of sound through a process of transduction. The movement of air facilitates a biomechanical and neurological conversion of physical energy perceived as sound.

Although scientifically plain, this definition is also mystifying in that it is tautological: it states that what is audible is sound and sound is what is audible—an elliptical claim that reads like a Steinian technique to critically de-familiarize language, suggesting that the truth of words might reside in the movement of air as breath, not in their lexicality. This observation about air movement holds for sound in general: it too is simply moving air. Yet what about audition—the experience of sound? On this score the tautology of sound offers a truth-claim that seems to encircle itself without need for external reference; it is process oriented, bracketing the questions of cause and effect. Sound seems to be everything in the middle of this orbit, a mediating phenomenon merging the physicality of existence with the vagaries of sensation, otherwise irreconcilable. Audition thus becomes a spooky epiphenomenon or by-product that occurs in our heads like a spectral visitation. All encompassing yet intangible, the experience of sound is an everyday haunting in the brain through which the world comes into audition, yet by virtue of which the world is also discovered to be ultimately remote. But even here the material world has great influence: the sound we hear is characterized by the place in which it occurs; it is coloured by the echoes, reverberations and mild distortions specific to each instance of audition.

In his essay "Listening," Roland Barthes observes that hearing and listening are interrelated but different.¹³ The former is more a reflexive action while the latter implies conscious assessment. Our ears are literally always open to hearing, even when asleep, whereas listening requires attentive selection and effort. As our conscious awareness of sound is concentrated with listening, we involuntarily privilege select ranges of frequencies within our hearing, directing our listening attention. These delimited ranges float within our total possible frequency responsiveness, which for humans is roughly between 20 to 20,000 Hz. This total range is effectively not used at all times, even if it is always ready to respond, as if on reserve. Instead, we specifically listen within the limits proscribed by our varying attention, which changes the focus of our hearing. For example, when having a typical conversation we tend to privilege the frequency range of human voices, roughly between 120 and 270 Hz, depending on factors such as the age and sex of the speakers. The same process is also true for loudness: the perception of loudness (the intensity of air pressure waves measured in decibels) is also delimited by shifts in hearing sensitivity. The same typical conversation, as above, is usually at 60 dB, while amplified music, in contrast, tends to be at 120 dB (in the case of decibels, a change in value is logarithmic not arithmetical). Although tied to attentive listening, and thus conscious awareness, these changes in sensitivity are both mental and physical, particularly with respect to loudness. When persistently extreme, sound can permanently damage hearing, overpowering the delicate structure of the inner ear.

Yet Barthes is not interested in physiological damage as much as the context of psychoanalysis, which explores potential psychological damage. A specialized form of listening is required for this therapeutic context. As Barthes recounts, this form ironically aspires towards hearing over listening as previously described. This goal attempts to avoid the negative influence of possible analytical misdirection caused by the interpretive

presumptions of the analyst. Barthes quotes Freud's advice to aspirant psychoanalysts in this regard:

We must make no effort to concentrate the attention on anything in particular, but to maintain in regard to all that one hears the same measure of calm quiet attentiveness—of 'evenly hovering' attention as I once before described it. In this way a strain which could not be kept up for several hours daily and a danger inseparable from deliberate attentiveness are avoided. For as soon as attention is deliberately concentrated in a certain degree, one begins to select from the material before one; one point will be fixed in the mind with particular clearness and some other consequently disregarded, and in this selection one's expectations or one's inclinations will be followed. This is just what must not be done; if one's expectations are followed in this selection there is the danger of never finding anything but what is already known, and if one follows one's inclinations, anything which is to be perceived will most certainly be falsified. It must not be forgotten that the meaning of the things one hears, at all events for the most part, is only recognizable later on. It will be seen, therefore, that the principle of evenly distributed attention is necessary corollary to the demand on the patient to communicate everything that occurs to him without criticism or selection. If the physician behaves otherwise, he is throwing aside most of the advantage to be gained by the patient's obedience to the 'fundamental rule of psychoanalysis'. For the physician the rule may be expressed thus: All conscious exertion is to be withheld from the capacity for attention, and one's 'unconscious memory' is to be given full play; or to express it in terms of technique pure and simple: one has simply to listen and not to trouble to keep in mind anything in particular.¹⁴

The special impassive or hovering style of therapeutic listening Freud describes—which is meant to foster unmitigated communication between analyst and analysand directly at the level of the unconscious—seems mischaracterized: does it define listening or hearing or somehow both at once?

Lacan provides a challenging perspective from which to examine Freud's enigmatic rule.¹⁵ Lacan's formulation is based on the complex interrelationship between three primary structures or so-called orders of human psychology, the imaginary, the symbolic and the real. The imaginary relates to Lacan's theory of the mirror stage in which an

infant identifies with its own image as an indicator of its coherent selfhood. This pre-linguistic identification is based on a fundamental alienation and misrecognition. It is not self-identification but identification by way of the image of the self as a fantastical and illusory ideal ego. Yet this splitting remains an integral part of subjectivity, perpetuated and elaborated by means of language. The acquisition of language instantiates the symbolic order, fostering the configuration of the unconscious. The symbolic is the realm of symbolisation, an expression of intersubjective social reality, preceding the formation of the subject. Once established, the symbolic is fuelled by desire with respect to the sense of lack inculcated in the subject as it emerges. This desire is paradoxical because it is based on a foundational lack, one essential for the establishment of the subject, as the mirror stage attests. Paralleling this lack, the real is that which eludes symbolization; it is both a resistant residue as well as a remainder that persists against the influence of the symbolic and the imaginary. As with the logic of the basic Saussurian linguistic sign, in which words come to stand in for and thus replace things, the real effectively disappears as it becomes organized in terms of language.

Lacan's focus is largely on language and the gaze, particularly with respect to the formation of the subject, on the whole leaving sound aside. Yet he provocatively comments, "it is well known that the ears are not made to hear with."¹⁶ Lacan makes this oblique comment in an allusion to human consort with the Gods of the past, adding: "those who have been listening to me for some time know that I use, quite intentionally, the formula—*The gods belong to the field of the real.*"¹⁷ This comment, although not specifically elaborated, and with respect to Lacan's atheism, seems to address the unconscious, which is somehow both in us and beyond us, caught in the oscillations of lack and desire. Referring to what he cryptically calls the "*dark God*," Lacan describes a dynamic whereby the subject desires the desire of another.¹⁸ This dynamic takes place in

terms of the mirrored image of the unified self, stronger with respect to the projected desire of the mother, and most dramatically and all pervasively in terms of the symbolic as an expression of the big Other, which is language itself. Under the authority of the big Other, if the unconscious is structured like a language, language is also the principle means by which the unconscious is expressed, albeit in coded, sometimes distressed ways. Does this mean that language is the *dark God* that belongs to *the field of the real*? Amidst this confluence, the locus of the real is ill defined by Lacan: is it our unconscious or is it the phenomenal world that lies beneath and at the margins of language? Language becomes little more than the symbolization of the real, leaving both the unconscious and the world untouched as foundational absences around which desire circles: it is as if they are negative values with a positive consistency, black holes with an impossible mass bending space and time.

Sound and hearing only intensify this already complex Lacanian problematic. If the Gods speak, their words fall on ears that are not made to hear with, as Lacan quips. Instead their voices are somehow always-already in our heads. But what if the Gods do not use language, avoiding the intervention of the symbolic altogether? Without words, can we hear the *sounds* of the Gods—perhaps a primordial intonation akin to the soundscape heard by babies in the womb? Does such prenatal non-linguistic sound escape the magnetism of meaning; is it liquid audition not yet split from the real? Recreating this question in secular terms, thus renaming the Gods if not bringing them closer to us, does the unconscious make sounds other than linguistically, or is it mute without language? This divulges another cut in the Lacanian schemata: language is what is heard without our ears, with sound as such left in a peculiar suspension. Thus, if the unconscious is more a phenomena of language than the unadulterated real itself, what is the audible expression of the real alone? Is it a miraculous all-sound without definition? For example,

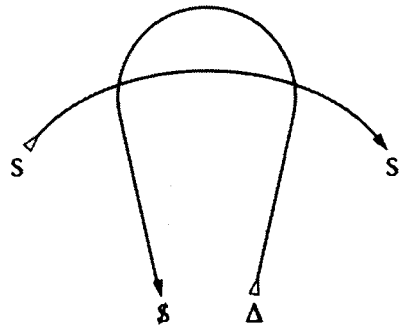
is the real the Big Bang, the supposed foundational transfer of energy still audible as a trace pulsation at the outer reaches of the electromagnetic spectrum? Is this cosmological sound as pure energy echoing in airless space the dark God of the real? Could this be the sound John Cage famously heard in 1951 instead of silence in the anechoic chamber at Harvard University: the thin whistle and throbbing dirge-like rumble of the real itself imprinted in his basic physiology, an echo of the Big Bang materialised in his body? Are our deaf ears attuned to the sound of the real *qua* the real or can we only recognize the symbolization of the real via meaningful sound?

Examining the use of sound in film, Michel Chion explicates the paradox of the possible inaudibility of the real *vis-à-vis* sound, arguing that the “ear in fact listens in brief slices, and what it perceives and remembers *already* consists in short syntheses of two or three seconds of the sound as it evolves.”¹⁹ Chion describes the “ear-brain” system as assiduously “gathering” and delivering a “gestalt” representation of “precise and specific data” but attenuated by a natural delay.²⁰ Put another way, the process of hearing takes “brain time,” as Dan Graham describes it.²¹ This inherent time lag presents an enigma, identified by Chion: “This results in a paradox: we don’t hear sounds, in the sense of recognizing them, until shortly after we have perceived them.”²² Chion recommends a simple experiment to demonstrate this paradox: “Clap your hands sharply and listen to the resulting sound. Hearing—namely the synthesized apprehension of a small fragment of the auditory event, consigned to memory—will *follow* the event very closely, it will not be totally simultaneous with it.”²³ Chion’s experiment suggests that although our ears may accept the real of sound we do not recognize this pure audition as meaningful sound except by virtue of the time lag of apprehension. In other words, we fail to hear the real in terms of the real because of the mediation of the symbolic, which is both the motor and medium for interpretation. The real *vis-à-vis* sound seems held in suspension; it is out there

in the world and in our heads, but, mysteriously, it is also in neither.

In his investigation of desire, Lacan employs a graph that presents a hold-up analogous to Chion's.²⁴ This graph details a point of mediation, which Lacan calls the *point de capiton* or anchoring point (this graph, the simplest Lacan uses to examine this topic area, looks suspiciously like an image that might illustrate the old putdown, "in one ear and out the other," which may well in the end be the truth of the real *vis-à-vis* sound).

Figure 1: *Graph of Desire*



Source: Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, 291
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The large S on both sides of the curved lateral vector in this graph, the latter S with a tick, signals the passage of the signifier with respect to a signifying chain. Unlike the basic organization of the Saussurian linguistic sign, which gives equal weight to the mutual independence of the signifier (the sound-image) and the signified (the concept), the signifier is the most important element of the sign for Lacan and is the basis for the structure of language. According to him, signifiers refer to other signifiers in a chain without correlation to any signified. Indeed, signifiers refer to nothing since they are ultimately unable to signify the subject, which is founded on lack. The other looping vector stands for the "vector of the subject's intentionality."²⁵ The movement of this vector is backwards, cutting the first vector retrospectively. Lacan compares this movement to

the completion of a sentence as it finalizes its meaning: “a sentence closes its signification only with its last term, each term being anticipated in the construction constituted by the other terms and, inversely, sealing their meaning by its retroactive effect.”²⁶ The large S crossed with a bar in this horseshoe shaped vector stands for the subject with respect to post-signification, albeit incomplete, and the triangular figure indicates a kind of unknown, perhaps a base manifestation of the subject before signification (although this figure is unclear, not unlike the real).

Lacan’s graph can be used as an illustration of Chion’s observation in two complementary ways. Read one way, the graph displays how the subject comes to obtain a kind of contingent consistency by virtue of interaction with the real of sound. In a sense, the subject who hears is a consequence of the real of sound, analogous to the way the subject is constituted by means of language in Lacan’s system. By this reading the horseshoe shaped vector of the subject’s intentionality hooks the passage of sound through time, indicated by the lateral vector S to S’. The interval of this hooking introduces the infinitesimal delay that Chion identifies as a facet of the so-called ear-brain system, requisite for apprehension. This duration is an unavoidable condition of the recognition of sound by means of the symbolic, through which the real of sound retrospectively becomes a sound that is known. Read the other way, the real of sound could take the place of the triangular figure in the horseshoe vector, looping through the subject’s capability for hearing, as per the ear-brain system, resulting in the recognition of sound by virtue of the symbolic, this time indicated by the barred S. This transaction also imparts a transformation on the part of the subject, marked by the change from S to S’. In this reading, the barred S indicates the sound that is known in contrast to the triangular form that indicates the pure energy of sound before audition in the ear-brain system, as if simply the brute vibration of air. Leaving an algebraic symbol to stand in for the

real doesn't actually reveal the real as such, however, only further highlighting the same conundrum in graphical form. The real *vis-à-vis* sound is not here; the mystery persists.

Although these re-readings of Lacan's graph do not fully reveal the real *vis-à-vis* sound, they do usefully demonstrate the manifest spatiotemporal character of sound with respect to the subject who hears, as per Chion's description. Sound is fundamentally spatiotemporal, marked by its place of audition and realised only through duration. Three quick examples not only show the spatiotemporal nature of sound but also the enduring mystery of the real. One, reverberation is a complex collection of short echoes that audibly accumulate as sound moves through a space over time; two, an event seen from a distance that causes a sound heard only later, such as fireworks, which audibly demonstrates the speed of sound waves as they move through air; and three, counting the seconds between a flash of lightning and its corresponding rumble of thunder, as a test of one's proximity to a storm. In all three examples the materiality of sound is emphasised because of the factor of time. Yet the mystery of the real *vis-à-vis* sound reasserts itself with respect to hearing. What accounts for this uncanny transduction? Although unshakable, this mystery is not debilitating. Rather, the notion of mystery suggests a moment of bodily engagement: hearing is an intervention into the spatiotemporal real of sound. As Gabriel Marcel puts it, "a mystery is something in which I am myself involved, and it can therefore only be thought of as a sphere where the distinction between what is in me and what is before me loses its meaning and initial validity."²⁷ Marcel understands mystery as enabling a kind of *running-room*, as Foster describes it: a capacity for critical opportunity.²⁸ According to Marcel, this critical sphere is obtained by being drawn into the mystery not by avoiding it, just as the subject who hears is implicated in the real *vis-à-vis* sound.

Several sound-related artworks exemplify the notion of the ever-captivating

mystery of sound: Marcel Duchamp's 1916 readymade *With Hidden Noise*; Robert Morris' 1961 sculpture *Box with the sound of its own making*; Bruce Nauman's 1968 work *Concrete Tape Recorder Piece*; and Mike Kelley's 1994 mixed media assemblage *Silver Ball*.²⁹ Sound in these works is variously obscured. Rattling inside a ball of twine clamped between two square brass plates, the sound source in Duchamp's readymade, added surreptitiously by Walter Arensberg, is literally unknown—"I will never know whether it is a diamond or a coin," Duchamp notably claimed.³⁰ In contrast, Morris' wooden box's apparent literalness adds to its enigma. Uncanny, the sound of its own construction by Morris plays continuously inside the box, as if the supra-sensual soundtrack of the real itself. Going further, Nauman's piece presents audition as impossibility: the tape recorder contained in the concrete block functions, if plugged in, but senselessly replays its secretive (but chilling) tape-loop of a woman screaming as imperceptible vibration. Most ominously, Kelley's assemblage materializes the mystery of sound itself in the form of a suspended globular ball of polyurethane foam and tinfoil, which, encompassing flashing lights and several sets of speakers from several nearby portable stereos, emanates an abstract soundscape. Thing-like, this work is an obscene alien projection, like something from another dimension or metaphysical plane, paradoxically presenting the mysteriousness of the mystery of sound in all its inarticulable un-presence.

Worth mentioning in this context too, Christian Marclay's ongoing interest in visual representations of sound, such as 1988's *Chorus II* or, more hauntingly, 1998's *Empty Cases (In Memoriam Tom Cora)*, compliments the previous set of works.³¹ However, I think Marclay offers a different take on the mystery of sound, one directed more within the purview of Lacan's categories of the symbolic and imaginary than with respect to the real. For Marclay, the real of sound seems given, a ground permitting its subsequent, often punning figuration—we do not need to hear it to know it and thus to

get it. In contrast, the other works comment on the mystery of sound by foreclosing its capacity to be fully known, even if sound as such is in fact audible.

The intractable irony of the mystery of sound immanently generates the problematic of the real *vis-à-vis* sound, engendering the implicatedness of the subject of sound with respect to this mystery. Decentred, the subject of sound in this complexly recursive equation traverses an often-mystifying shuffle of sensible perception, discursive knowledge and the durability of the material world. Hence, the spatiotemporal materiality of sound as vibration is suspended and remade as intelligible in the spatiotemporal materiality of brain time, but recoded via language. Rendered in the non-space of subjective consciousness, so long as reflexive hearing segues compulsively into attentive listening, the mystery cannot be dispelled. Instead, the ear-brain gap Chion describes endures as a kind of lost, particularly human duration. Yet this mystery is a motive influence, not a hindrance: as with the Lacanian real, the mystery of sound is an imputed absence that is necessary in order to retain the negative presence of absence it paradoxically provides. This ambiguous shell game between the material world and conscious awareness precisely enables the jumbled and beleaguered undertaking that is subjectivity. As Lacan argues, the formation of the subject depends upon this kind of paradoxical interplay. It is when sound seems most material that it draws out this mystery, and it is when consciousness feels most embodied that subjectivity seems most elusive. Does this dynamic therefore suggest that the body *hears* whereas consciousness *listens*? Perhaps Cage, following Freud's recommendation, ought not to have tried to listen while in the anechoic chamber. Or, rather, perhaps Cage indeed *heard* silence amongst the sounds he *listened* to, but was unable to acknowledge the former for the latter.

The pursuit of this irresolvable mystery as a critical opportunity informed my decision to use built objects in *Six Sound Works*. My first impulse was to use sound as a property alone, exploring it

in terms of sculpture and installation art without visual accompaniment, such as my previous work *Haunted: The Dominion Building*, presented at the Western Front in the fall of 2004. Yet I also did not want to produce a sound-based composition, which might have slipped too easily into the context of music, a common default language for sound-based work. A set of sound-related sculptural works, each one providing a different but related sound-making and listening opportunity, seemed to be the best response. The aptness of this choice became even clearer during a conversation with the artists Judy Radul and Tim Lee after the work was completed and installed at the Or Gallery. They suggested that my work, with its use of naked plywood and simple forms, seemed akin to props or stand-ins, alluding to something *else*. With their observation in mind, Freud's recommended therapeutic listening method took on renewed importance, revealing a different strategy for my *Six Sound Works*: perhaps the best way to encourage listening as hearing was in fact to provide some form of alternative engagement. This diversionary strategy resonates with Slavoj Žižek's notion of "looking awry," which describes a kind of indirect, even accidental viewing—seeing by virtue of not specifically looking.³² According to Žižek's Lacanian account, if the more generic process of seeing (hearing) is fixed in a specific instance of looking (listening), then the truth of the real is made invisible (inaudible). What is viewed by looking, instead, is a particular expression of social reality, an articulated matrix of symbolic and imaginary relations. And yet it is exactly by means of such specific acts of looking that the real can be seen, but only peripherally, furtively, mirage-like, aside from—or rather, awry from—the real target of invested looking. If focussed on, in other words, the real, in and of itself, cannot be seen. In the register of sound, this strategy of "listening awry," to borrow Jim Drobnick's terminological reinvention of Žižek's idea, is decisive for *Six Sound Works*.³³

SIX SOUND WORKS DESCRIBED

Six Sound Works is a multipart installation comprised of six sculptural works made primarily of unfinished, un-sanded plywood, although two works are painted with red or white enamel paint, preserving while accentuating the plywood's grain beneath a coloured gloss. The works each employ different sound-making technologies, including various microphones, headphones, a digital effect processor, a mixer, a radio, personal CD players and powered and non-powered speakers, although one work suggests sound without an actual sound-making capacity: its sound-making quality is associative, referential, contextual. The following descriptions, which itemize all of the materials used in each work, are organized under the titles given provisionally to the works during their conception and construction (but withheld from the show in order to help present the collection as a set and not as individualized pieces). These descriptions also present the various themes and art historical and theoretical citations that each work engages, which accumulate into a collection of interrelated, multivalent cross-references, connecting each work with the others. (Please refer to the appendix for images of the individual works.)

Dan Flavin: Sound Artist

First to be conceived, this work is comprised of a 32-inch (81.3 cm) square table made of a plywood top with a base and legs, also cut 32 inches (81.3 cm) high, made from raw two-by-fours. Set on the tabletop are a 5 × 10 × 6 in. (12.7 × 25.4 × 15.3 cm) rectangular plywood box with one open side, painted with white gloss enamel paint, and six 7 × 4.5 × 4.5 in. (17.8 × 11.4 × 11.4 cm) rectangular black metallic speakers, stacked in a pyramid form with rows of three, two and one. The white box and the speakers are placed at opposite sides of the table, facing away from each other, flush with their respective sides' edges. Speaker wire, cut just long enough to rest on the tabletop in a

kind of tangled overlay, runs from the back of each speaker to a partially dismantled radio inside the white box. The ends of the wires are bundled together and connected to the radio, accessed through the box's open side, in place of the speaker it once housed. The radio is tuned arbitrarily to one far side of the AM frequency band, playing crackly radio static continually through the pyramid of speakers, but adjusted to a low volume. The black power cord from the radio runs from the open side of the white box to a 2.5-inch (6.4 cm) hole cut in the centre of the tabletop, trailing down to a power source. The table is placed parallel to the gallery wall, but 2 inches (5.1 cm) away, with the speakers' side facing the wall, which partially dampens and diffuses the already hushed sound of static from the radio.

The table in this work is modelled after the table in my studio, at which I sat doing much of the preparatory labour and research for *Six Sound Works*. However, its height was made taller at the recommendation of Paulus Scholten, the carpenter who helped measure and cut the wood for this project, conforming to a standardized table and counter height of 32 inches (81.3 cm). This measurement is specially indicated on most tape measures. Conforming to this norm reemphasizes the connotations offered by the standardized materials used. Plywood and two-by-fours are commonplace building resources; they are basic if broad half-products meant for other multipurpose jobs. The liminal utilitarian capacity of these materials can be provocatively understood in terms of what Martin Heidegger calls revealing: an opening up or “disclosing” of the world as a kind of “bringing-forth,” “unconcealment” and “*poiesis*,” to use his terminology.³⁴ *Poiesis* is a Greek word that means, roughly, the activity of making something. Heidegger argues that this creative and generative revealing is the essence of technology, which has a significant impact on the articulation of—and thus the nature of—existence, *qua* history, based on concrete human activity. Yet Heidegger might also suspect the specifically

modern materials used in *Six Sound Works*. These materials arguably exemplify the negative quality of reductive means-ends modern rationalization that Heidegger disparages. My response is to acknowledge the modern flexibility of my chosen materials as well as their perhaps dubiously rationalized character as both equally immanent to my problematic.

Plywood is a common material for many so-called Minimalist artists. This is especially true for Robert Morris, whose grey painted sculptures, shown at New York's Green Gallery in 1965, are obvious citations for *Six Sound Works*. Moreover, plywood signifies thematically for me the underplayed use of simple and often readymade material common to Minimalist works generally. It acts as a kind of shorthand or icon, to refer to Flavin's pre-all-fluorescent works, throughout *Six Sound Works*: something simultaneously representative, instructive, and evocative. This readymade materialism, to give it a name, refers in this case to the table as a common object, but it also positions the table as something more complex. A table is a utilitarian thing, useable for a number of purposes; from display to work, its ready availability bespeaks its ubiquity. As with the Minimalist rejection of plinths, meant as a critique of the rarefied position of traditional sculpture, my use of the table locates this work on the floor, recognizing its everyday quality. Yet the table, the items organized on its top, and the table's final placement in the gallery *is* the work. The gallery setting in particular challenges the plain status of the table, changed from common object to object of art. But this transformation is reversible—the table still *remains* a table. As a familiar art-world gesture, however, the criticality of this auto-vacillation is attenuated. Admittedly, my table is not alone. Such self-reflexivity is a common critique of the institution of the gallery, the status of art objects and, indeed, of the art-world generally—a trajectory that runs, for example, from Duchamp, to Michael Asher, to Marcel Broodthaers, to the gambit of Relational Aesthetics. Long since avant-garde, this well-played strategy's critical consequence is

more historical than contemporary. It is exactly in this mixed form that it has entered my research-oriented work: my table is a quotation of an everyday object, a commodity, and an art-world gesture.

The table is also the first of three key references, if perhaps least self-evident: it is an allusion to Karl Marx's explication of the simple commodity form in volume one of *Capital*. In one of his most vivid metaphors, Marx describes how a wooden table appears to take on a life of its own, surrendering its material basis, use value and ultimate source of real value in terms of human labour power for the sake of exchange as a commodity in the marketplace. In this imagistic account of commodity fetishism, the table seems to come alive, transcending "sensuousness," now endowed with a "wooden brain," its social and political-economic truth concealed by means of the capitalist logic of the commodity form.³⁵ As a result, the table is reborn thing-like, autonomous. Ironically, this transformation, which so impressed and confounded Marx, is recreated by means of the basic social categorization of art, which can elevate objects, even humble tables, to newfound levels of significance and cultural power, thus even autonomy. Duchamp's readymades plainly serve as an example of this transformation. Historicized, this power is not unambiguous. As Theodor Adorno explains in *Aesthetic Theory*, the autonomy of art "was a function of the bourgeois consciousness of freedom," a conscious awareness also required in justifying the modern conception of the worker, now able to freely sell his or her labour power as itself a commodity.³⁶ Hence, autonomy blurs into alienation. Ironically, Adorno argues that art is unable to exclude or reject its "fetishistic element," a denial of which would mean enmeshment in the "false consciousness" of reified capitalist society.³⁷ Instead, art obtains a kind of critical objectivity by insisting on its recalcitrant fetishism, which becomes the substance of its radical difference from society. Art for Adorno is thus simultaneously both society's critical other and

an immanent signal of its historical degradation.

Contrasting Adorno's critique of politically committed art (contrary to the monadic autonomous art he endorsed instead), the next reference helps to more directly account for the unofficial title of the work described here: *Dan Flavin: Sound Artist*. In a way radicalizing the instrumental rationalization Heidegger decries, Vladimir Tatlin, the Russian artist and a founding figure of Constructivism, conceived of modernization, particularly its technological and industrial advances, in terms of proletarian values and goals. Tatlin's architectural *Monument to the Third International*,³⁸ for example, which was modelled in large scale in 1919-1920 but never actually constructed, was to be made of iron, steel and glass—pliable building materials exemplary of the promise of the modern age (perhaps with Walter Benjamin's analysis of steel and glass covered Parisian shopping arcades exposing the complimentary modern consumerist alternative to Tatlin's politicized ambition).³⁹ Like his *Monument*, Tatlin's mixed-media relief constructions, some mounted in corners, such as his *Corner Relief* from 1915,⁴⁰ are meant to be objective explorations of abstract form. These show his interest in similar constructions by Pablo Picasso, who he encountered in Paris in 1913, but are divested of Picasso-style subjectivism.⁴¹ But even if concerned more with larger theoretical concepts than imputed subjectivized meaning, Tatlin's work maintains a kind of real-world facility: committed to the practicable potentiality of the materials it employs, it was meant to be socially useful, helping to promote progressive modernization, which, in this case, meant serving the emerging Russian state. As Tatlin describes this historically grounded responsibility, "the appearance of new cultural-living institutions in which the working masses will live, think, and bring their talents to light will demand from artists not only an external decorativeness, but will demand first of all objects in accordance with the dialectics of the new way of life."⁴²

It seems possible that Flavin, who had a Catholic upbringing, albeit unhappy, might have responded more to Tatlin's background as a painter of religious icons than to his latter political affiliations (which is not to intuit Flavin's own political disposition).⁴³ The parallels, at least, are intriguing. For example, as with 1963's *pink out of the corner (to Jasper Johns)*,⁴⁴ Flavin continued Tatlin's use of the corner of a gallery as a display site, which is a common location for religious icons in Orthodox Christian Russian homes, the so-called *krasny ugol* or beautiful corner.⁴⁵ Also, in 1962-1963 Flavin produced a numbered set of *icons*, a group of differently coloured wall-mounted boxy constructions, adorned with various kinds of coloured lights, most given dedications and subtitles in brackets, such as the ruddy-pinkish *icon V (Coran's Broadway Flesh)* from 1962.⁴⁶ Secularized but still somehow reverent, Flavin's *icons* are enigmatic meditations; they are literally illuminated symbols that both provoke and defer exegesis—a suspension of meaning I appreciate in art (also redoubling my interest in Lacanian theory). Arguably, Flavin's use of titles (and subtitles), done amidst the more-typical profusion of untitled or only descriptively titled works by his peers, seems to continue this auto-hermeneutical-like habit, despite Judd's thoroughly un-metaphysical encouragement. Indeed, with a posthumous installation in Santa Maria Annunciata in Chiesa Rossa, a 1930s-built Catholic church in Milan, Italy, in 1997, more could probably be said of the significance of light itself for Flavin—the residual metaphysics of a lapsed Catholic, despite his protestations, or further ironic play?⁴⁷ It is more likely that Flavin's awareness of Constructivist-style formalistic explorations and use of new modern mediums, priorities his fluorescent works explicitly share, accounts for his interest in Tatlin. Nonetheless, it is a fact that Flavin executed a series of wall-mounted tower-like fluorescent works dedicated to Tatlin, beginning in 1964 with *monument I (to Vladimir Tatlin)*.⁴⁸ Monument to monument to monument, this last work is the third reference in

Dan Flavin: Sound Artist, from which it directly takes its pyramidal configuration of speakers and its proximity to the gallery wall (although not in the corner).

The off-tuned AM-band radio static used in this work emulates—seemingly mimetically, something proscribed by both rote Constructivist and Minimalist practice—the effluence of Flavin’s fluorescent tubes, but transposed. This jump from light to sound is grounded materially, analogous not allegorical; both are material frequencies of vibration manifested as appreciable pulses of energy transference via the senses of sight and sound. This transference has an impressively sympathetic reciprocity, if not a little uncanny in its complementariness: our sense preceptors somehow *match* the frequency spectrum of the world. More than perceptual, these energy pulses also engage with and partially adopt the physical qualities of the space of their propagation, expressing the tangible characteristics of their context as they travel within it. Physical differences become apparent here. To the degree light occupies a room, near-instantaneously forming cones, beams, angles and shadows, sound spills gradually into it. Sound bounces around walls and corners, becoming complex with echoes and reverberation. This tangible spatiotemporal difference reveals a significantly slower rate of vibration and propagation: sound travels at approximately 1225 km/h in air at sea level, depending on temperature, whereas light travels at 1,079,252,848.8 km/h. It is the corporeality of sound and radio waves that I am interested in more than the specific media of radio, which is used as a utility. To rewrite Marshall McLuhan’s dictum: the medium of the media is the message, which the static signifies.⁴⁹ Although substantive, we need radios to hear radio waves. Like spirits in need of a medium, they are inaudible for us without assistance, mysterious—the Lacanian real beyond direct human perception.

In C Towers

This work is made up of three identical 6 ft. × 8 in. × 8 in. (182.9 × 20.3 × 20.3 cm) column-like, open-backed plywood boxes. Not freestanding, the boxes are spaced eight inches apart with their open sides leaning against the gallery wall. Identical personal CD players and sets of self-powered speakers are mounted on a two-by-four shelf inside each box, approximately in the middle. The CD players and powered speakers are plugged into white extension cords glued into the boxes that all trail out at floor level to a small power-bar connected to a power supply. Set to function on repeat-play, the CD players each play, at a low volume, an audio CDR comprised of differently randomized track sequences of three sets of two lengths of sine-wave tones, with durations of four and eight seconds. The audio CDRs themselves are randomized because the CD players used are unable to provide simultaneous shuffle and repeat playback functionality—a satisfactory technical compromise. The sets of three tones on each audio CDR constitute the notes in a C Major chord, which are C, E and G. Hence, the audible content of this work is a somewhat lulling kaleidoscopic C Major chord ambience, the sound bouncing off the wall into the gallery.

My choice of C Major refers overtly to Terry Riley's 1964 Minimalist composition *In C*,⁵⁰ whereas the process of mechanized randomization refers to Brian Eno's 1978 Minimalist-inspired recording *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*.⁵¹ I wanted to have a controlled suggestion of Minimalism in music, expanding the field of references for *Six Sound Works* without dominating it. I chose *In C* not only because it is a veritable classic, but also because it is paradigmatic of Minimalist musical values. Challenging western compositional conventions at the time, *In C* explores the experiential and timbral qualities of musical sound as sound, a concern shared by many Minimalist composers. As Diedrich Diederichsen explains, musical Minimalism "sought to go behind music—

which we experience as time, given shape and organized syntactically and sequentially—to discover and investigate sound.”⁵² Also, *In C* is a personal favourite. A compelling mixture of repetition and evolution, Riley’s work is a self-organizing modular composition in which a number of performers are asked to execute a set of fifty-three small musical figures. Each player must play all of the figures and play them consecutively, but they are free to play the individual figures as many repetitions as they like, altering the overall pace and feel of their progression through the entire set. Not completely freely organized, however, the performers are instructed not to move too far ahead of the group as a whole. Instead, expressing a kind of sixties American counterculture sensibility, the players must maintain an awareness of shared responsibility and group interaction, working collectively to produce a complex musical endeavour or “trip,” as Paul Williams describes it in his liner notes to the 1966 CBS recording of *In C*.⁵³ A steadily drummed pulse is maintained on the top two C keys of a piano, which gives the composition both formal continuity and its name.

Another favourite, Eno’s *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* is detached to the degree that *In C* is engaged, if no less basically humanistic in its orientation. Inspired by the *musique d’ameublement* or furniture music of Erik Satie, but also enamoured with Minimalist aesthetics, *Music for Airports* is the inaugural recording in a series of so-called ambient works by Eno. In his liner notes to *Music for Airports*, Eno explicatively provides a definition for his spatialized understanding of ambience: “an atmosphere, or a surrounding influence: a tint.”⁵⁴ In direct contrast to the dulling, palliative and regulatory qualities of commercialized easy listening music, such as the supposedly workplace-friendly environmental music manufactured by Muzak Inc., Eno proposes that his ambient music is designed to invoke “calm and a space to think.”⁵⁵ And yet, echoing Freud’s paradoxical listening advice, Eno ideally wants his music to be as readily

ignored as listened to: “Ambient Music must be able to accommodate many levels of listening attention without enforcing one in particular; it must be as ignorable as it is interesting.”⁵⁶ (Eno’s easy inversion here of Judd’s well-known artistic zero-degree, “the interesting,” is noteworthy.)⁵⁷ In contrast to the progressive character of *In C*, which, despite its free-form activity, has a definite start and finish, *Music for Airports* offers four melancholically beautiful tracks of ever-evolving musical stasis. To create this paradoxical effect, Eno uses a mixture of prepared tape loops of different lengths. Each specially treated loop is of a different but tonally related melodic idea played on piano, synthesizer, and real and synthetic voice. The loops are set in motion and left to interact by chance, their arrangement slowly evolving without truly changing, fading from direct conscious awareness, left suspended ghost-like in listeners’ heads.

The raw plywood boxes in *In C Towers* refer overtly to Morris’s Minimalist sculptures, recalling his so-called “plywood show” at the Green Gallery in 1964, as well as his *Untitled (Column)* and *Box For Standing*, both from 1961.⁵⁸ But they also enact a two-part critique. First, in a basic deconstructive gesture, the boxes are not painted a neutral colour, like matt grey, a practice Morris prioritizes in his multipart “Notes on Sculpture” essays.⁵⁹ And second, they are not freestanding, instead leaning against the wall. Admittedly, there is no special animus by Morris for non-freestanding work, as his triangular *Untitled (Corner Piece)* from 1964 demonstrates⁶⁰ (but he was critical of the relief format for being too optical, like painting).⁶¹ Rather, in this instance Morris is the conduit for a critique aimed at the generalized formalistic vigour of Minimalism. (However, I do regard Morris to be sensible in this respect, often preferring a human scale, for example, making him an ideal, already halfway-critical target; also, he eventually articulates his own immanent critique of Minimalism in his essay “Anti Form,” which calls for pliable materials and freer organizational methods, priorities evident in his latter

work, such as 1970's *Untitled (Pink Felt)*.⁶² This critique is enacted through my quotation of Eva Hesse's 1968 work *Accretion*, which is comprised of fifty not-quite-identical 4 ft. × 10 in. × 2.5 in. (122 × 25.4 × 6.4 cm) hollow fibreglass tubes, leaning in a line against a wall at uneven intervals.⁶³ Because of its scale, relaxed posture and coarse materials, I see this work as a needed comment on of the implicit masculinity of much Minimalist production. This disposition manifests in the profusion of large-sized, hard-angled forms, which assert a stereotypical kind of self-assured, spatially aware maleness. Hesse's work offers an idiosyncratic but somehow constitutionally feminine rejoinder to this masculinist tendency. Specifically, *Accretion*'s rejection of strict formal precision is a smart reply to the mannishly obdurate exactitude characteristic of many Minimalist works. Such a precise approach is evident in John McCracken's plank-works, such as 1967's *Right Down*, despite the fact that they too lean against walls.⁶⁴ In an attempt to dispel a gender bias, I also include Judy Chicago's Minimalist-informed and wall leaning *Rainbow Pickett* from 1966 in this critique.⁶⁵

Due to historical and cultural contingency, not gendered preordination, Minimalism is a predominantly masculine idiom. Undoubtedly, its avatars and main critics have been men (as am I, obviously). And I do not want to uncharitably dismiss or doubt this contribution to Minimalism in particular and art history in general. However, I do want to cut down somewhat its distinctly virile aspect, if not completely deny its potential genderedness, which is not valueless. Certainly, the often-peevish, intellectualized manful jousting between Morris, Judd, and the critic Michael Fried (with the patriarch Clement Greenberg in the background) is prodigious, providing useful material for *Six Sound Works*. In particular, three key themes are worth extrapolating from their fruitful exchanges: Judd's concept of the Specific Object, Morris' phenomenological understanding of sculpture and Fried's notion of theatricality.

In his quasi-polemical yet no-nonsense essay “Specific Objects,” Judd affirms a three-dimensional multi-medium art production that emphasises its material characteristics over other more interpretive values: inner content, possible subjective meaning, allusion, and so on.⁶⁶ For Judd, these empirically tangible characteristics define artworks in terms of interesting wholes, their form and content coinciding with a kind of overt literalness: as Frank Stella complementarily puts it regarding his work, “what you see is what you see.”⁶⁷ Specifically, Judd makes this case in contrast to what he considered to be the delimited characteristics of painting and sculpture. He argues that these matured forms have realized their respective limits, such as with respect to the representation of illusionistic space. Interestingly, Clement Greenberg, who espoused flatness as a key aspiration for good modernist painting, shared this last complaint, but he also critiqued Minimalist art for reasons such as its interest in three-dimensions.⁶⁸ For Greenberg, this increased real-world spatiality blurred the difference between art and non-art objects, echoing the readymades of Duchamp (and signalling the dubiousness of kitsch, a Greenbergian term of derision).⁶⁹ In contrast, Judd endorsed—albeit via negation—work that is “neither painting nor sculpture,” exemplified by his own three-dimensional coloured objects.⁷⁰

Responding to Judd’s austere proclamations, Morris describes his own work in his “Notes on Sculpture” essays as sculptural, hence not Juddsian objects, and spatial.⁷¹ He also knocks Judd’s work as insufficiently “specific” by Judd’s own evaluation. In Morris’ estimation, Judd’s work’s often brightly coloured and glossily sensual surfaces actually direct attention away from the definite shape of the objects beneath (an opinion also shared by Rosalind Krauss and Robert Smithson, but not meant as criticism).⁷² The importance of the idea of shape for Morris, which he often describes as Gestalt, draws out his appreciation of the phenomenological philosophy of Maurice Merleau-Ponty.

Merleau-Ponty argues that human existence is embodied within the world, not abstracted or remote as if directed from the vantage of the supposedly sovereign *cogito*. Instead, the world and the *cogito* meet reciprocally in the flesh of perception, an intertwining Merleau-Ponty describes as chiasmic. As he explains, “it is that the thickness of the flesh between the seer and the thing is constitutive for the thing of its visibility as for the seer of his corporeity; it is not an obstacle between them, it is their means of communication.”⁷³ Informed by this philosophy, Morris regards his sculpture as definite shapes immersed in a spatialized world of perception. As James Meyer clarifies this approach, Merleau-Ponty’s perspective “offered Morris a language for theorizing a co-extensive spectatorship, a perception that encompassed, that made inextricable, the body and what it perceives.”⁷⁴ Furthermore, Morris considers this reductive, shape-defined spatialization to be the formal responsibility of sculpture, specifically distinguishing it from other media, principally painting, but also from Judd’s comparatively “relational” objects.⁷⁵

The palpable friction between Morris and Judd is only exacerbated by the participation of Fried, particularly as a consequence of his critical essay “Art and Objecthood.” Influenced by Greenberg, Fried’s critique argues against Minimalism writ large in favour of the continuing tradition of modernist art, principally also including painting. The danger Fried perceives with “literalist” work, as he calls it, is that it acutely threatens the very condition of art itself by effacing the difference between art and non-art objects. In fact, his term “objecthood” explicitly designates “the condition of non-art.”⁷⁶ As Fried describes his concern, “the literalist espousal of objecthood amounts to nothing other than a plea for a new genre of theatre, and theatre is now the negation of art.”⁷⁷ This notion of “theatricality” inverts Morris’ phenomenological view: whereas Morris thinks the spatial context of his sculptures, which include viewers’ actual bodies, is implicated in their reception, Fried sees such inclusion, or “staging,” as detrimental,

granting literalist works a subjectivized “presence.” Countering its stated intent, in other words, Fried argues “a latent or hidden naturalism, indeed anthropomorphism, lies at the core of literalist theory and practice.”⁷⁸ In short, it seems for Fried that literalist theatricality in art is simply too comprehensive. As Fried cunningly concludes his essay: “In these last sentences, however, I want to call attention to the utter pervasiveness—the virtual universality—of the sensibility or mode of being that I have characterized as corrupted or perverted by theatre. We are all literalists most of all our lives. Presentness is grace.”⁷⁹

But if not for his repudiative intention, I think Fried usefully articulates a fair distillation of the tenets of Judd and Morris’ practices. Thus, I agree with Fried to the extent that I refuse his criticisms as criticisms. In particular, *Six Sound Works* embraces his otherwise pejorative understanding of theatricality. My work aspires to the sense of presence Fried maligns, which resembles the curious effect of the Lacanian real. Extending this line of thinking, Fried’s notion also serves as the basis for my punning reinvention of Judd’s idea of Specific Objects into a psychoanalytic framework, becoming instead the idea of “specific *partial objects*.”

Very basically, a partial object is a Freudian notion, articulated in particular by Melanie Kline, which describes the supposition of a part of a person for the whole, such as with an infant and his or her mother’s breast.⁸⁰ This simplified yet enveloping misidentification is said to form the basis for all early interaction. As such, seemingly the source of all things necessary for life, the breast is the centre of the infant’s universe, to the extent that this universe is meaningful. With maturity, of course, other objects become the focus of desire, a tendency that becomes increasingly abstract and complicated with age, not to mention potentially problematical, at worst resulting in psychological pathology. In Lacan’s demanding understanding, the idea of partial objects is reformulated

in terms of his conception of the *objet petit a*, the object-cause of desire. According to Lacan, the *objet petit a* temporarily occupies the fantastical, irresolvable gap of the real, around which desire incessantly turns, forever unfulfilled. Yet this process is paradoxically necessary in order to sustain the besieged fiction of the self, symbolized through language. Furthermore, language itself is the big Other whose divisive logic the *objet petit* reproduces. In Lacan's formulation any object could potentially be granted this powerful yet elusive function. This complex dynamic is active in *Six Sound Works*, which is both prop-like and bestowed with a kind of haunted presence, accentuated because of its use of sound and listening. And yet the full implications of this provocative idea are still being worked out, which is a consequence of my ongoing research strategy. Nevertheless, the idea is an important first extension of *Six Sound Works* as a project; it will form the basis for subsequent work (but now already haunting the works described here).

Room-tone Conversation

This work employs an identical table to the one used in *Dan Flavin: Sound Artist*. A 16 in. × 1 ft. × 1 ft. (40.6 × 30.5 × 30.5 cm) rectangular plywood box with no bottom, painted with bright red enamel paint, is placed squarely in the centre of the table. One-inch (2.5 cm) diameter holes are cut into each side of the red box in the middle, approximately three-quarters of the way from the top. A two-inch (5.1 cm) diameter hole is also cut into the centre of the top of the box, but filled by a dome-shaped black metal microphone grill. Housed inside the box are a small microphone preamplifier and a small headphone amplifier with four outputs. The preamplifier is connected to a condenser microphone also hung inside the box, its receiving end positioned in the microphone grill, but protected by a small, circular piece of thin black foam rubber. The microphone

preamplifier feeds its signal to the headphone amplifier, which feeds four sets of simple black headphones. The headphones are connected, from the outside in, to the amplifier by way of the four one-inch (2.5 cm) holes cut into each side of the red box. The headphones rest on the table in front of their corresponding holes. Four 21 in. × 1 ft. × 1 ft. (53 × 30.5 × 30.5 cm) rectangular plywood boxes are set at each side of the table, serving as seats. A black power cord runs from the red box through the 2.5-inch (6.4 cm) hole at the centre of the table out the bottom to a power source. This work is set up in the corner of the gallery, leaving enough space on all sides for easy mobility. The signal the microphone receives is whatever sound takes place in and around the gallery.

The colour of the box on the table is derived from Donald Judd's use of bright red in many of his earliest untitled objects, continuing throughout his career. Against Judd's preferences, however, the red enamel paint in this case is applied directly to the plywood, which is also not sanded. The result keeps and even draws attention to the knotted grain of the wood, giving it considerable personality—an effect Judd would undoubtedly judge disagreeable. Also, the plywood is not obscured; its identity is patently obvious. This is something I maintain with the wood in general throughout *Six Sound Works*, as I explain in my description of *Dan Flavin: Sound Artist*. Rough-hewed, my box more properly resembles Judd's earliest transitional objects, such as *Untitled* from 1962, than his later more pristine, machine-made objects.⁸¹ In this respect my box is a critique of Judd's particularistic, oftentimes officious work and theoretical values, consequently of Minimalism in general. And since my box draws from Judd's own early work, its critique is immanent: it is as if the Judd of the past returns to haunt the Judd of the future. Like my box, Judd's older freestanding work is comprised of painted red planks of unfinished wood, which form two short walls of equal height, but different widths. The walls are joined lengthwise at one end, forming an irregularly angled corner.

An angled black metal pipe joins the walls at the centre of each, bridging this corner. To my eye this work resides somewhere between an assemblage-like sculpture or combine and an assisted readymade. Thus, it is easy to see why this object fails according to Judd's specialized criteria. Like my box, it does everything wrong if judged by the Judd of "Specific Objects." And yet this work still at least presents an overall impression of completion. It is a single object unlike my box, which offers little sense of wholeness. Instead, my box is clearly one part of a multipart work; also, it is functional: it serves to do something other than just exist as an "interesting" object, which, alternatively, Judd privileges.⁸²

Functionally speaking, then, *Room-tone Conversation* is a four-person "listening station." But more abstractly, this work serves to instantiate the process of mediation itself, which it demonstrates technically: the audio in the headphones is a live feed of the ambient sound occurring in the gallery, including the sounds produced by any listeners using the station. In the language of critical theory, mediation means roughly the "process by which things come to be what they are through their relations to other things."⁸³ At first glance, this basic definition echoes Morris' phenomenological appreciation of his sculptures' reception, which involves a similar, if more spatialized reciprocity. More compellingly, however, mediation also refers to the peculiar influence of the Lacanian real on the formation of subjectivity by means of language, although in Lacan's thinking language is not only a mediator, it is also constitutive. Specifically in terms of sound and hearing, mediation also offers a good description of the mysterious time lag of brain time in the ear-brain system Chion identifies. Put together, Chion's infinitesimal ear-brain duration and Lacan's explication of his "graph of desire," which illustrates the formation of subjectivity, combine into one definition of mediation: reemploying the topology of Lacan's graph, subjectivity designates a spatiotemporal location—some brain time—for the constitutive articulation of language and the real. Consequently, subjectivity signifies

an empty space: a pure potentiality that otherwise has no substance. And yet subjectivity is an actively negative presence, preparing the very location necessary for the articulation of language and the real by which it is itself subsequently founded. Like the reverberation of a sound not originally heard, subjectivity exists—and consists—in this spectral space.

Etymologically, mediation also contains the word “media,” of which this work is an exemplar. Listening to an ambient soundscape through a microphone and headphones tangibly demonstrates the difference between human hearing and listening and mechanical sound reproduction. A microphone, which receives all sound waves within its pick-up pattern and capacity, is indiscriminate in comparison to human listening, which is actively selective. Thus, the audio heard through the headphones in this work acutely reveals a much noisier world of buzzing lights, ventilation systems, ceaseless traffic, and other commonplace sounds, than is apparent without electrical assistance. Unlike our ears, microphones do not (and strictly speaking cannot) ignore or listen past or around such contemporarily ubiquitous incidental noises. As a kind of media, then, *Room-tone Conversation* is self-reflexive, drawing attention to its own technologically enabled sound-reproducing capabilities. With its expressed desire to hear what is not recognized when listening intentionally, Freud’s therapeutic listening strategy, which seeks an inactive impartiality, seems similarly machine-like—a microphone and headphone set directed at the analysand. At the other end of this set is the unconscious of the analysand as a *deus ex machina*, transmitting its truth via the coded dialect of machinery. Picking up this theme, the presence of four sets of headphones at the table around a central microphone underlines while critiquing the notion of dialogue, suggesting that language too is a complicated media. If the table in this work is meant for conversation, it is mediated by virtue of its sound reproducing technologies. This functionality suggests that media technology is itself a kind of ideology, literally *mediating* all expression done through it.

Hence, perhaps the media is indeed the message—but what does this claim really announce? Maybe only that the unconscious, which is structured like a language, operates, moreover, as a mediator.

Ghost Box Audio and Floorboard Ambience

These were originally conceived to be two individual works, but became a matched set during development. Both are wall-mounted 2 × 2 × 1 ft. (61 × 61 × 30.5 cm) plywood boxes, hung from the inside by two-by-four mounting brackets at the standardized height of 64-inches (163 cm). The boxes are placed approximately five feet from each other, *Floorboard Ambience* arbitrarily on the left, *Ghost Box Audio* on the right. Each box has a 2 ft. × 2 ft. × 1 in. (61 × 61 × 2.5 cm) coloured mesh-fabric covered wood-framed front panel, like a canvas. The panel for *Ghost Box Audio* is white, black for *Floorboard Ambience*, echoing the colour division of *Dan Flavin: Sound Artist*. *Ghost Box Audio* box has a two-inch (5.1 cm) hole cut into the middle of its right side, roughly three-quarters from the top. A small silver metal coat hook is screwed into the box beneath the hole. A two-inch (5.1 cm) hole is also cut into the centre of the bottom of the box, the exit for a white extension cord, plugged into a power source. A large diaphragm condenser microphone with a windsock is suspended inside the box, centred and facing outward, plugged into a small microphone preamplifier. The output from the preamplifier is plugged into a small mixer with a built-in digital effect processor, which is adjusted to a preset “large hall” reverberation setting. Strung through the hole on the right side of the box, a set of headphones is plugged into the headphone jack of the mixer and hung on the hook beneath the hole. The headphones’ cable is just long enough to let a person wearing them stand comfortably in front of the box, therefore the microphone. The volume from the mixer to the headphones is set low but is easily

discernible, the signal a live feed from the gallery picked up by the microphone, bathed in reverberation.

The box for *Floorboard Ambience* has the same hole cut into its bottom as its pair, also used as an exit for a white extension cord. A set of powered speakers, mounted on a one-foot piece of two-by-four, is centred inside the box. A 2 × 4 ft. (61 × 122 cm) rectangular section of plywood is placed on the floor, roughly six-inches (15 cm) lengthwise parallel to the wall, centred beneath the box. A small number of one-inch (2.5 cm) flat metal washers are placed under the plywood to lift it a little off the floor, providing slight give. A piezo disk-style contact microphone is attached to the face of the plywood, centred at the edge to the wall, thus making the plywood sensitive to sound. The just-slack output cord from the microphone feeds into the hole on the bottom of the box, plugging into a small microphone preamplifier whose output feeds the speakers. Set at a low volume, the audio from the speakers is the sound produced by touching the plywood on the floor, such as by walking or standing on it.

From Kazimir Malevich to Robert Rauschenberg to Robert Ryman, these boxes refer broadly to monochrome painting (especially black or white) as a historical tendency, both in terms of proto-Minimalist and properly Minimalist works. But this allusion is admittedly more aesthetic and formal than it is specific. It bypasses the individual ideas and objectives of the different painters, however important, influential and interesting, for the sake of a survey. As with my controlled references to Minimalism in music in *In C Towers*, I want to expand the field of references for *Six Sound Works* without dominating it, which I think a more detailed examination of painting might easily bring about. Painting is beyond the immediate purview of this work; it is a subject matter for further research instead. However, it is important to note that monochrome painting helps contextualize Judd, Morris, Fried, and Greenberg's more-or-less mutual evaluation

of the general trajectory of 20th Century painting towards a concern with issues like flatness, shape, and literalness, and so forth.⁸⁴ Crossing painting and sculpture in sympathy with this historical tendency, Flavin's box-like *icons* are, however, once again a reference for my boxes, but exchanging sound for light. Also, I found out after this work was done and installed that *Ghost Box Audio* shares part of its name with a 1962-1963 mirrored relief by Larry Bell, called *Ghost Box*.⁸⁵ Presenting several flat squares on top of a schematic image of a three-dimensional cube, this illusionistic work, constructed out of painted canvas and different kinds of glass, confounds viewers' straightforward sense of depth and shape. This is a formula Bell explores in subsequent works, such as the checkerboard-covered cube *Bette and the Giant Jewfish* from 1963.⁸⁶ Taking this premise further, Bell's *Untitled* work from 1968 is an architecturally expansive collection of large grey and clear glass walls that comprise a set of rectilinear compartments, spatializing the formal logic of his cubes.⁸⁷

The discovery of Bell's work is providential because of the similarities it shares with my ambition for *Ghost Box Audio*; Bell helps make my intentions clearer. His see-through distortions of visual perception resemble *Ghost Box Audio*'s use of artificial reverberation. In both cases the phenomenal world is retained but transformed, which accentuates the particular characteristics of the senses that are engaged. As with vision in Bell's glass boxes, listening to the world recreated as a miasma of reverberation by means of *Ghost Box Audio*'s hidden technology draws attention to the activity of listening itself. It is as if the reverb presents the world under the influence of the Lacanian symbolic, remaking the perception of reality—the more sounds we make the more emphatically it responds with reverberation. And yet, contra Freud's advice, listening is thus made more sensitive and reflexive, better able to identify the real soundscape lurking, like a faint trace or residue, within the reality presented via the reverb. Enacting a sly

Žižekian listening awry, although the audible world is therefore re-presented awash in accumulated echoes, it becomes somehow *more* real as a result, not *less*. Each and every reverberant sound is so unmistakably contrived and exaggerated that its originating source is concretized in our “mind’s ear” in response. Against expectations, the reverberation paradoxically imparts a critical acuity: not merely an obscuring and aestheticizing influence, the sound it envelops is accentuated, not annulled. The result is the real world of sound heard from the location of ghosts. And indeed the white front panel of this work designates its supra-natural affinity. Accordingly, the human-scale of *Ghost Box Audio* encourages a contemplative kind of solo interaction.

Reverberant, the sense of space *Ghost Box Audio* presents is thoroughly artificial. It exists nowhere but in the ears of the listener. This contrasts with the spatially grounded soundscape active in *Floorboard Ambience*. In this work, what one hears from the speaker box is the sound one makes on the plywood floorboard by walking in place or tapping one’s feet, and so on. This understated, self-reflexive literalness recalls Morris’ works *Box For Standing* and *Box with the sound of its own making*.⁸⁸ Like Lacanian puns of the real, Morris’ works refer frankly to their own constitution and function; they are obvious, even somehow inevitable. With its own simple means and straightforward consequences, this implication holds for *Floorboard Ambience* as well: inarguably basic, it simply presents the evident—an empirical demonstration kiosk at an imaginary science fair. And yet the seemingly evident is not often a simple thing. The sound produced from the floorboard is displaced, becoming uncanny, as with ventriloquism.⁸⁹ Definite actions by bodies in motion become faint sounds just perceptible above their originating source. Consequently, our senses turn out to be untrustworthy. Sounded simultaneously, the original sound sources and their reproduction are mixed up, caught in a self-referential loop. Abstracted, the sovereignty of the body that supposedly *makes*

the sound is therefore threatened; it seems to become more and more like a ventriloquist dummy than truly autonomous flesh and blood. Do the sounds make the body move or does the body make the sounds? This flash of doubt resembles the brief duration required by the brain time of audition, suspended in eerie contradistinction from the materially sensible world. Similarly, maybe Merleau-Ponty's flesh also holds off the intertwining it purports to facilitate. Evaluated in terms of the problematic of the Lacanian real, this mystery remains precisely indubitable.

5:1 Ratio

This work is comprised of a three-foot (91.4 cm) long piece of two-by-four with a three-quarter-inch (1.9 cm) plywood border, hung 64-inches (163 cm) high on the wall. Five $7 \times 4 \times 2.5$ in. ($18 \times 10.2 \times 6.4$ cm) small speaker-like plywood boxes are spaced on the floor, approximately 16-inches (40.6 cm) from the wall and divided evenly amongst four feet (122 cm) of space, in front of the two-by-four wall-mount. Speaker wire, cut long enough to just rest on the ground between, joins the front of the wall-mount to the backs of the individual boxes, attached by matching two-inch (5.1 cm) flat rectangular metal silver brackets. Unlike the rest of the works in *Six Sound Works*, this work does not have an actual sound-making capacity. Instead, its sound-making capacity is metaphorical, contextual, and allusive.

The title of this work refers to the number and organization of speakers in a typical home-theatre surround-sound system, a fully domesticated brand of quasi-Minimalist objects. Comprised of six speakers in total, surround-sound systems require four satellite speakers to be placed approximately in the corners of a room, a larger speaker positioned centrally on top of the television, and a subwoofer somewhere in the close vicinity, preferably near a wall (because of their low frequency, bass sound waves

can spread easily throughout a space, advantageously using walls to bounce off of). Modern surround-sound mixes, the new norm in sound design, reorganize the stereo field across this array of speakers, heightening the sense of acoustic verisimilitude. Soundtracks are now immersive—even at home. Amped up, surround-sound aspires to be real with respect to both filmic space and the space of reproduction. But in true Hollywood fashion, the sound it offers instead is super-real, exaggeratedly spatial more than actual space. No comparison, then, the real world of sound seems subsequently low-fidelity, un-dynamic, less present, and anti-climactic.

In a Cagian reversal that harkens back to his composition *4'33"*, this otherwise silent work is only functionally able to offer an utterly un-Hollywood real sound: namely, the living sound in the gallery.⁹⁰ By this means, all of *Six Sound Works* is made present in *5:1 Ratio*. Gathered like this, *5:1 Ratio* consequently presents the opportunity for another, this time even more emphatic Eva Hesse inspired critique, as with *In C Towers*. In its basic compositional form, *5:1 Ratio* directly replicates Hesse's 1967 sculpture *Addendum*, which is comprised of seventeen dome-like *papier mâché* forms placed unevenly across a narrow beam of wood, hung horizontally on the wall.⁹¹ Protruding from the centre of each form is a length of cord cut long enough to just coil a few times on the ground in front of the work. The entire sculpture is grey in colour and a bit rough and hand-made looking.

Like Dan Graham and Robert Smithson, Hesse signifies to me one of the most interesting, challenging and inimitable ways out of Minimalism's too often doctrinaire formalism. Indeed, I think she is arguably already at the outset further away from Minimalism than Graham and Smithson at a comparable point (although both of these artists quickly develop their own idiosyncratic practices). This individuation is true even in terms of her ostensibly Minimalist-informed work, which is stamped indubitably as

her derivation. From *Ascension II* to *Washer Table* to *Schema* and *Sequel*,⁹² all from 1967, her motives seem hers alone, but introverted more than autobiographical.⁹³ In comparison to her demonstrably Minimalist peers, then, Hesse's Minimalism appears to emanate from some personal location, her own artistic economy and symbol set. But Hesse's background and education also portends her erudition; her work is not just intuitive, unintentional. Still, no matter the source, even her most formalistic ideas appear to allude to an internal self-justification, not some external, more discursive rule, as with Judd and Morris. As Lucy R. Lippard reminds, complicating the situation, Hesse equates her life with her art, personalizing—even personifying—her practice: “My life and art have not been separated. They have always been together.”⁹⁴ True to this complex, self-referential disposition, the forms Hesse makes are indeterminate, cryptic, odd-shaped, ungainly—they are like fetishistic half-symbols that refer elusively to the body, or Freudian drives incarnated, but directed at “nothing.”⁹⁵ However, I do not unproblematically equate her work's apparent inwardness and privacy with her femaleness; this is not a natural or gendered inevitability, instead something wholly unique to her life, marked by history and culture.⁹⁶ Yet nor do I completely discount this possibility—who knows the full impact of the constitution of gender? What I am sure of is that her work maintains a provocative and powerful sense of the uncanny that I find both admirable and irresistible, such as displayed dramatically in her web-like hanging *Untitled (Rope Piece)* from 1970.⁹⁷ Her works seem to radiate like inaudible sound waves back through the history of Minimalism, vibrating even the sturdiest form with ease.

60 Cycle Smithson Pile

The last to be conceived, this work includes the sawdust swept from the workshop floor accumulated in the fabrication of all of the works as a key component. The

sawdust is placed in a neatly shaped pile in one corner of a 3 × 3 ft. (91.4 × 91.4 cm) square mirror laid on the floor. A 16 × 8 × 8 in. (40.6 × 20.3 × 20.3 cm) rectangular plywood box is placed diagonally in the opposite corner. The box, which has no bottom, has two one-inch (1.5 cm) holes cut into it, one roughly one-quarter from the top on its front side facing the sawdust, the other roughly three-quarters from the top on its back-side. Inside the box are a personal CD player and a set of powered speakers. One of the speakers has been replaced with a loose, slightly larger and more powerful speaker. This larger speaker is buried in the sawdust pile, its cable running out of the pile and through the hole on the front of the box to the powered speaker set. The cable is just taut, not touching the mirror. The CD player repeat-plays an audio CDR of a thirty-second 60 Hz sine wave tone transposed to a much higher pitch, which is more adequate for playback through the small speakers used. This sound fades evenly in and out over its short duration. A black power cord runs from the hole in the rear of the box to a power source, powering the CD player and speakers. Because this work is placed in the centre of the gallery, this power cord runs in a large arc on the floor from the work to the power source.

60 Hz is the base frequency that courses throughout the electrical grid in North America, producing a low consistent hum audible most noticeably near power stations. This grid extends fastidiously into all modern built environments wired for electricity—in other words, everywhere. Also mobile, we even carry the grid with us in portable electronics. According to R. Murray Schafer, the all-pervasiveness of the frequency from this grid functions as a near-unconscious acoustic reference or ground, subtly impacting human behaviour. Schafer describes this eerie phenomenon:

It is, however, only in the electric age that international tonal centres have been achieved; in countries operating on an alternating current of 60 cycles, it is this sound which now provides the resonate frequency, for it

will be heard (together with its harmonics) in the operation of all electrical devices from lights and amplifiers to generators. Where C is tuned to 256 cycles, this resonate frequency is B natural. In ear training exercises I have discovered that students find B natural much the easiest pitch to retain and to recall spontaneously. Also during meditation exercises, after the whole body has been relaxed and students are asked to sing the tone of “prime unity”—the tone which seems to arise naturally from the centre of their being—B natural is more frequent than any other. I have also experimented with this in Europe where the resonate electrical frequency of 50 cycles is approximately G sharp. At Stuttgart Music High School I led a group of student in a series of relaxation exercises and then asked them to hum the tone of “prime unity.” They centred on G sharp.⁹⁸

In a remarkably unintended and habitual way, the people Schafer reports about have automatically executed Freud’s ideal strategy of listening as hearing. It is as if some Ur-unconsciousness was at once communicating unmediatedly with everybody’s unconsciousness—exactly as Freud proposed. Ominously, this circumstance recalls Lacan’s so-called “dark God,” not psychotherapy.

It is easy to ascribe this frequency-effect to be another expression of the elusive real. But it is the process at work that is exemplary of the real more than the 60 Hz sound alone. And yet if contextualized and politicized, the sound is illustrative of an ideologically attenuated variation of the Lacanian real, hooking into the fictive space of our unconscious brain time. From a Marxist political-economic take, Žižek argues that the real of the historical present is “the inexorable ‘abstract’ spectral logic of Capital which determines what goes on in social reality.”⁹⁹ Unnervingly, the power grid based frequency effect Schafer identifies is completely and thoroughly coextensive with technologically facilitated contemporary global capitalism. It seems that where there is capitalism, there is the grid. This association surely literalizes (at last!) the now familiar description of capitalism’s constant revolutionizing of the mode and relations of production as “shocks” to the system....

If taken seriously, the correspondence between the prevalence of the power grid and the charged circuits of contemporary global capitalism provides a vivid demonstration of Fredric Jameson's Marxist-informed notion of cognitive mapping. According to Jameson, cognitive mapping is an attempt to critically symbolize the real of global capitalism, which he describes in terms of a totality.¹⁰⁰ By totality Jameson means an all-inclusive structuring structure, a "mode of production."¹⁰¹ For him, the totality of capitalism, like the Lacanian real, is not straightforwardly representable, instead discernible only in coded and aesthetized forms—perhaps even as an unconsciously internalized 60 Hz hum. Indeed, approximating the power grid Schafer exposes, Jameson comments that "communicational and informational technologies" are allegorical signs of contemporary capitalism's "whole unimaginable decentred global network."¹⁰² Engaging the problematic marked out by Schafer, Žižek, and Jameson, it is in Jameson's critical-allegorical spirit that I keep the power cords used in *Six Sound Works* exposed. Exemplary of the grid, these cords are part of the work. Furthermore, their presence accentuates the obscure ubiquity of the pitched-up 60 Hz tone in *60 Cycle Smithson Pile*, which seems to emanate from everywhere and yet nowhere—as if from the "centre of our being."

Beyond this tone, *60 Cycle Smithson Pile* abounds in references to Robert Smithson, as this temporary title makes deliberately clear. These allusions are theoretical and formal, synthesizing many of Smithson's well-known gestures. Specifically, Smithson informs the pile of sawdust, the mirror and the trailing power chord that runs curvilinear from the work. The sawdust refers directly to Smithson's various piles of earth, rocks, chalk, salt, and so on, both inside and outside of galleries. This sawdust—literally the material and historical remainder from the fabrication of all the works in *Six Sound Works*—is akin to Smithson's so-called nonsite installations, which display geological samples from the often-remote true locations of his work, such as *A Nonsite*

(*Franklin, New Jersey*) from 1968.¹⁰³ As Jennifer L. Roberts explains, Smithson's materialist historicism tends towards rubble, crystals and entropy.¹⁰⁴ Also, as the artist Kevin Schmidt pointed out in conversation after the work was done, my sawdust pile alludes to Smithson's 1966 text-based work *A Heap of Language*.¹⁰⁵ This association retrospectively resonates with my stated methodology—truly a heap of language. It also encapsulates my use of allusion in general, which similarly comes in heaps. For its part, the mirror refers to Smithson's various uses of mirrors throughout his work, from 1966's *Mirrored Ziggurat*, to 1969's *Chalk Mirror Displacement* and *Eight Part Piece (Cayuga Salt Mine Project)*, to the various works in the *Yucatan Mirror Displacement* series, also from 1969.¹⁰⁶ Smithson's use of mirrors affects a suspension of the supposedly linear progression of history, offering an enduring materialized historical presence instead.¹⁰⁷ (It is worth noting here that my use of mirrors also echoes Morris, who uses mirrors to produce a similar kind of suspension to Smithson, but more in terms of space and perception.) Arcing from a power source to the sound technology used in *60 Cycle Smithson Pile*, the power chord in this work is a figurative reference to *Spiral Jetty*, Smithson's most famous work, from 1970, which intimates a similar materialist critique of linear history as his use of mirrors.¹⁰⁸

Smithson himself, as an artist and historical figure, is a reference in this work as well. First, he functions figuratively, like Hesse, as a critique of Minimalism; Smithson's work quickly expresses a distinctive and critical vocabulary different from the common Minimalist discourse. Second, I use him as a means to conceptually and materially relocate my work in terms of contemporary art in Vancouver. Historically, Smithson executed two works in Vancouver in 1970, *Glass Strata with Mulch and Soil* and *Glue Pour*, as well as prepared for *Island of Broken Glass*, which was unrealized in this form.¹⁰⁹ Further, it is the echoing of Smithson's images of inverted trees, such as 1969's

First Upside Down Tree, taken in Alfred, New York, in Rodney Graham's large format inverted tree photographs that finally warrants this association in *Six Sound Works*.¹¹⁰

Describing a similar effect to Chion's ear-brain gap, Graham discusses his images:

You don't have to delve very deeply into modern physics to realize that the scientific view holds that the world is really not as it appears. Before the brain rights it, the eye sees a tree upside down in the same way it appears on the glass back of the large format field camera I use. I chose the tree as an emblematic image because it is often used in diagrams in popular scientific books and because it was used in Saussure's book on linguistics to show the arbitrary relation between the so-called signifier and the signified. I was also using a kind of readymade strategy based on the disputable assumption that a photograph is not art but an upside down photo is.¹¹¹

Not coincidentally, Lacan also uses this tree image for much the same reason.¹¹² Hence, it is with inverted trees in mind that my Lacan-imbued plywood circuitously but insistently returns to Vancouver. Indeed, British Columbia abounds in *spectacular* trees. Both its so-called supernatural scenery and its lumber production are key ingredients in the provincial economy. This unstable equation is expressed well by Roy Arden's 1991 photograph *Tree Stump, Nanaimo B.C.* on the latter side and Kevin Schmidt's 2004 photographic projection *Fog* on the former.¹¹³ Where Arden's image presents a commentary on BC's natural resource-based political-economy, Schmidt's invokes the enduring sublimity of the province's landscape. Rather than supply a false solution, *Six Sound Works* leaves this question open. With Smithson, Graham, Arden and Schmidt on the horizon, my use of plywood not only acts as a mediating cipher that emphasizes the melancholic dialectic between these apparent opposites, it also cites while critiquing the aesthetics of nature as a well-used trope in contemporary Vancouver art.¹¹⁴

CONCLUSION

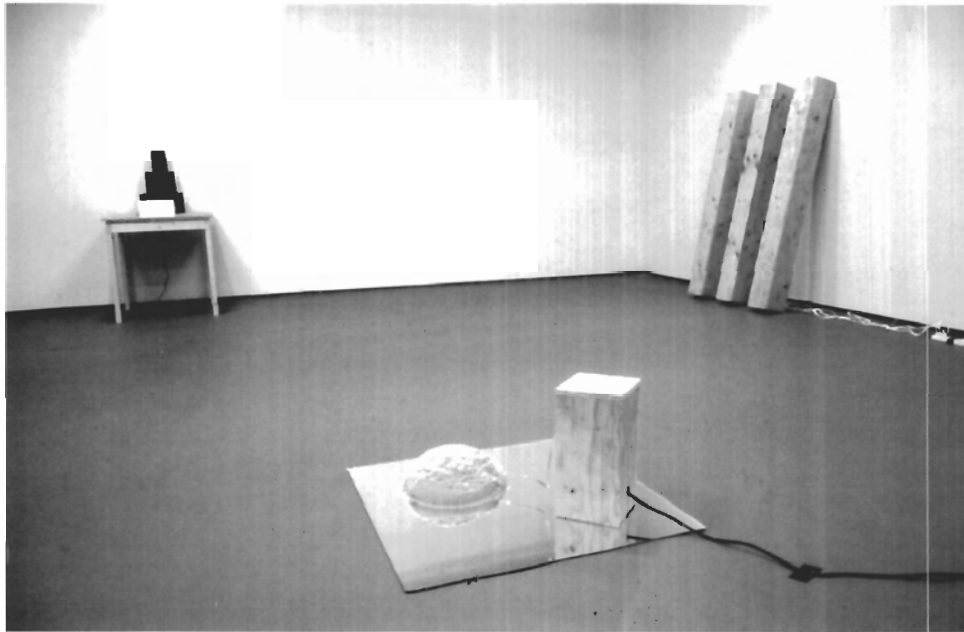
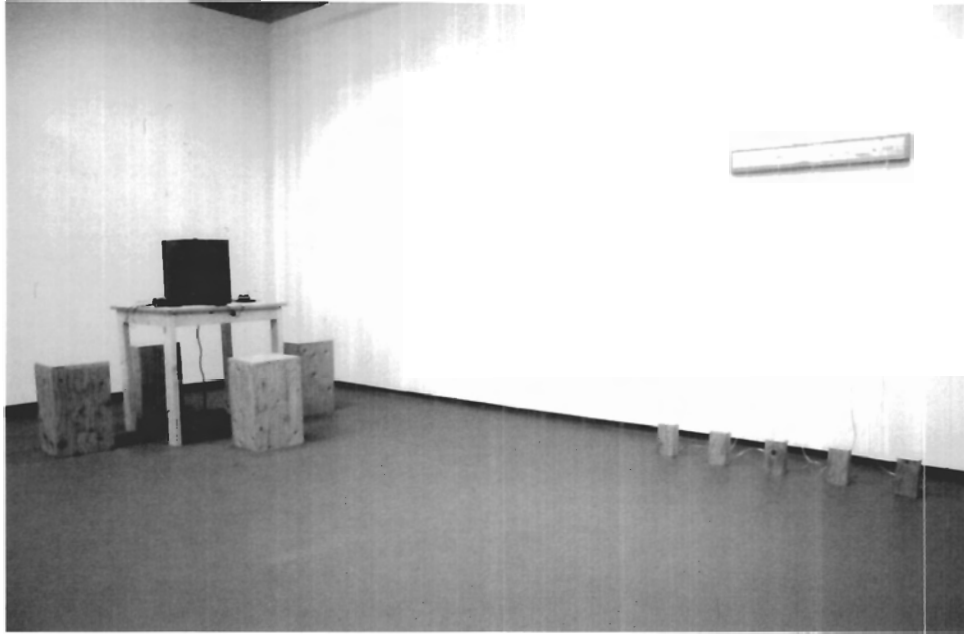
Ghostbusting the Archive—or Not

There are many ghosts haunting the woods, assuming the form of both actual traces in the landscape and insubstantial yet enduring ideas. Perhaps the most insistent spook is a well-known unresolved suspicion: if a tree falls in the woods does it make a sound? Unsophisticated, maybe even laughable, this philosophical cliché is nonetheless the epitome of the mystery that surrounds the real of sound and the subject who can only listen but never hear. In the end this mystery is the emanation *Six Sound Works* tries most to seek out, as if by séance, but not exorcise from its archive. Indeed this mystery is akin to intellectual curiosity; if it were gone the archive would become a lifeless collection of stuff. Instead, itself instantiated as archival space, curiosity fosters intrigue, conjuring the selfsame mystery, which, redoubled, returns to expand the space of the archive—capacious enough now for a tree to fall with uncanny noisy quiet. Self-reflexive, unending, this dialectical interaction is the imperative of the archive: a mystery that makes a mystery that makes a mystery, and so on. It is a strange comfort found in a lack of knowing, but it is a comfort. For when confronted by enduring inscrutability, a knowledge deficit is legitimated if it leads to questioning, then critique—this is the aspiration of genuine research. Hence, more than anything *Six Sound Works* is a demonstration of a particular way of doing things, both epistemologically and methodologically. Each smaller work in the larger installation is a set of questions underway. What seem like definite aesthetic, material, conceptual and historical choices segue into all-new allusions to examine. As an exercise that therefore promises no conclusion, the ongoing work involved in the process is the goal itself. Indeed, what better outcome is there than the initiative to continue working? After all, an archive is the space it defines, forever developing new rooms, corridors, basements, and attics.

What happens when following mystery as such? Unanticipated choices. Even after I was done the work for this project it was still surprising to me that I resorted to built objects to help me study sound. This was contrary to my first intention; I wanted to do exactly the opposite, almost defensively—it was to be sound and sound alone. But as I developed *Six Sound Works* and engaged with Minimalism, it was increasingly clear to me that such objects would be beneficial and thought provoking, even if, contra sound, they might initially seem to be the *raison d'être* of the work, both for prospective listeners/viewers and me. In any event, once I invested in the direction I took it led to much valuable research: from Flavin, Morris, Judd and their peers and intellectual adversaries, to Hesse and Smithson as creative directions out of Minimalism's conclusions. Although tendentious, this path of study even ultimately led me back to the context of contemporary art in Vancouver. A thoroughgoing process, my existent thinking about sound was also redeveloped; I could not take it for granted, either. Centrally, the objects somehow revitalized my recognition of the difference between listening and hearing, which ennobled my interest in Lacan's thinking. Overall, then, *Six Sound Works* affected a self-propelling, autodidactic dynamic, which continues. Starting with *Dan Flavin: Sound Artist*, the works lead from one to the other, eventually looping back in a self-referential and self-critical circuit. Soon, the collection of works was no longer different works but together one work, which Foster's thinking helped me theoretically and methodologically re-identify as an archive. And the archive grows. As I articulated at the beginning of this text, there is nothing conclusive about this conclusion; it is a formality. This thesis is another step in the process. Yet a collection of good questions is a legitimate aspiration for a work such as *Six Sound Works*.

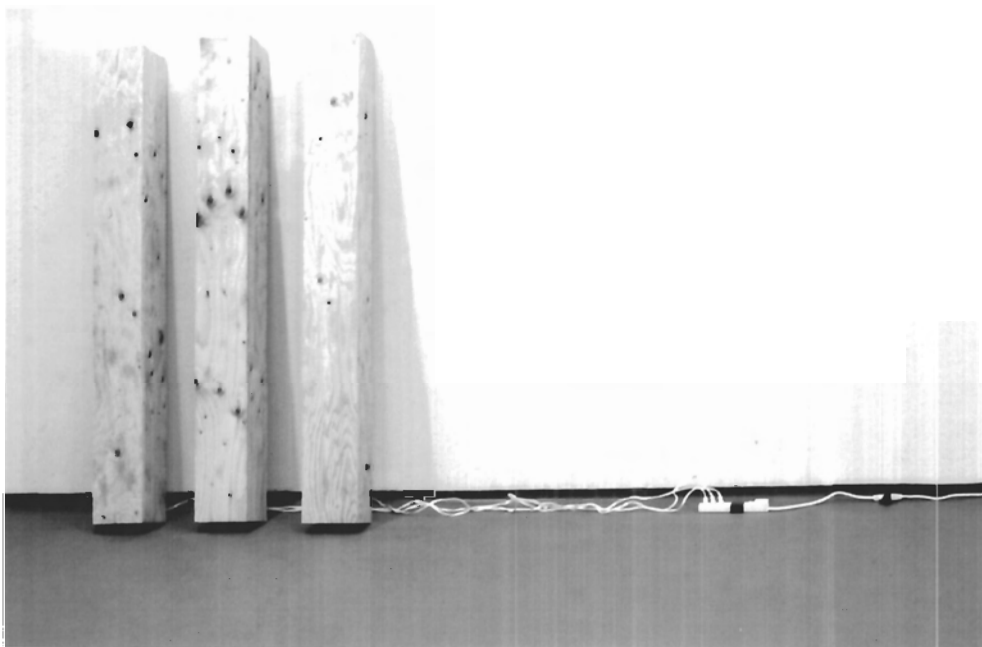
APPENDIX I

Installation views of *Six Sound Works* at the Or Gallery, 2005
(All images courtesy of the artist.)





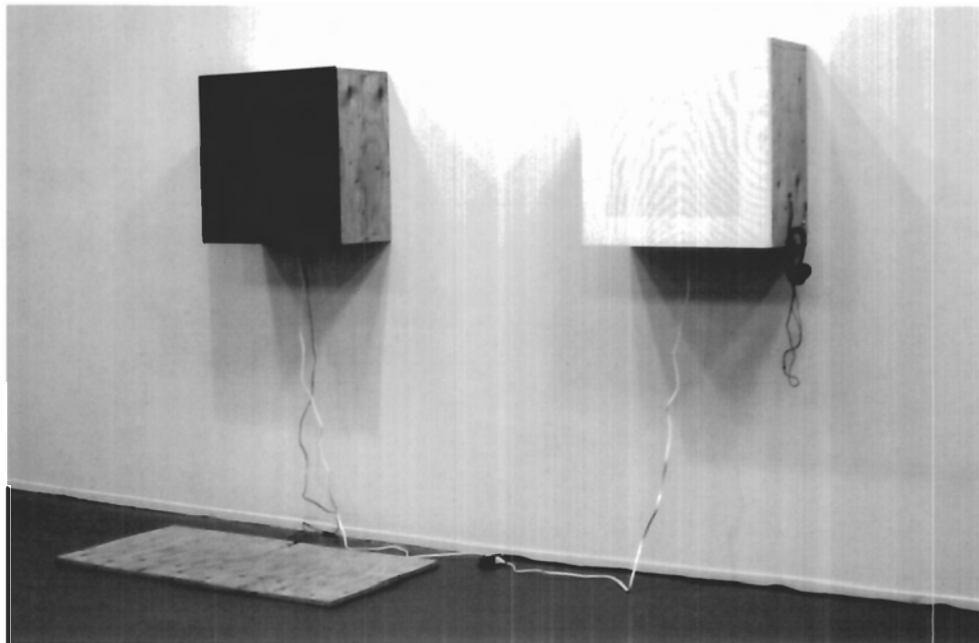
Dan Flavin: Sound Artist



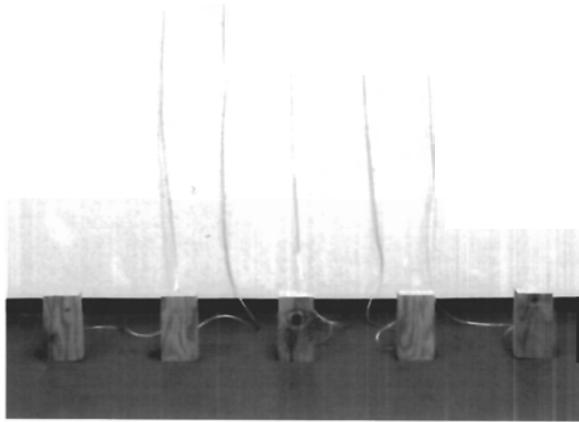
In C Towers



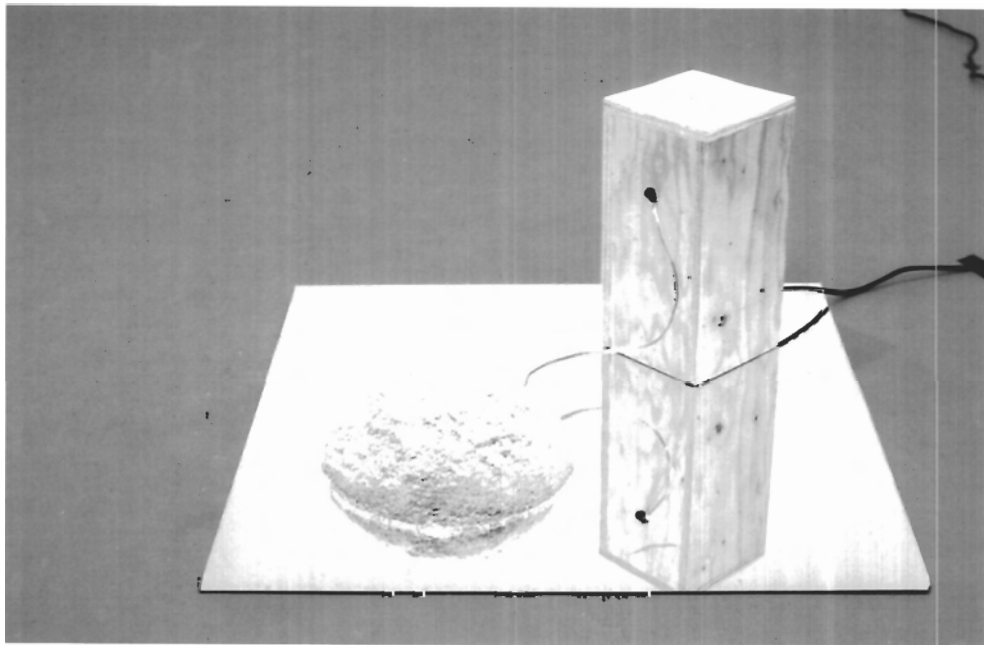
Room-tone Conversation



*Ghost Box Audio
and Floorboard Ambience*



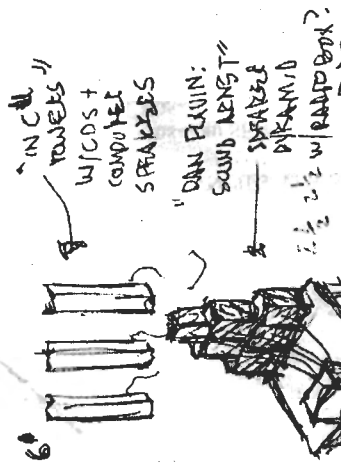
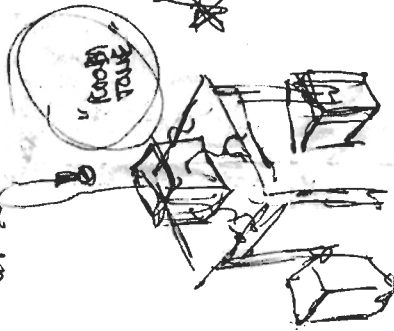
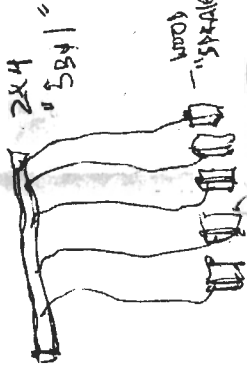
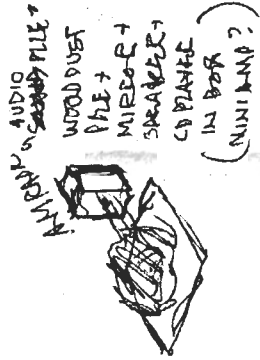
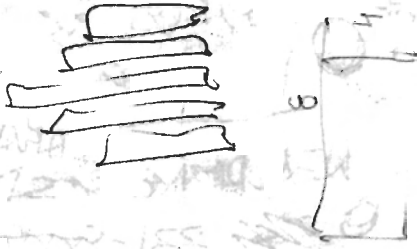
5:1 Ratio



60 Cycle Smithson Pile

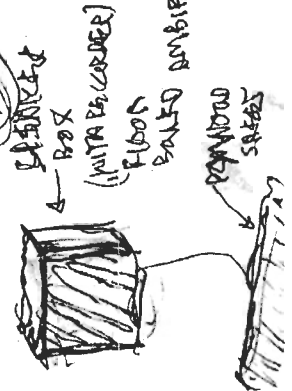
7) SOUND UNITS

SCM



RED
WAVE
HIGHEST BOX
LISTENING
STATION
MK + RECORDERS
MEMORPHONIS
(W/ DUBBY?)

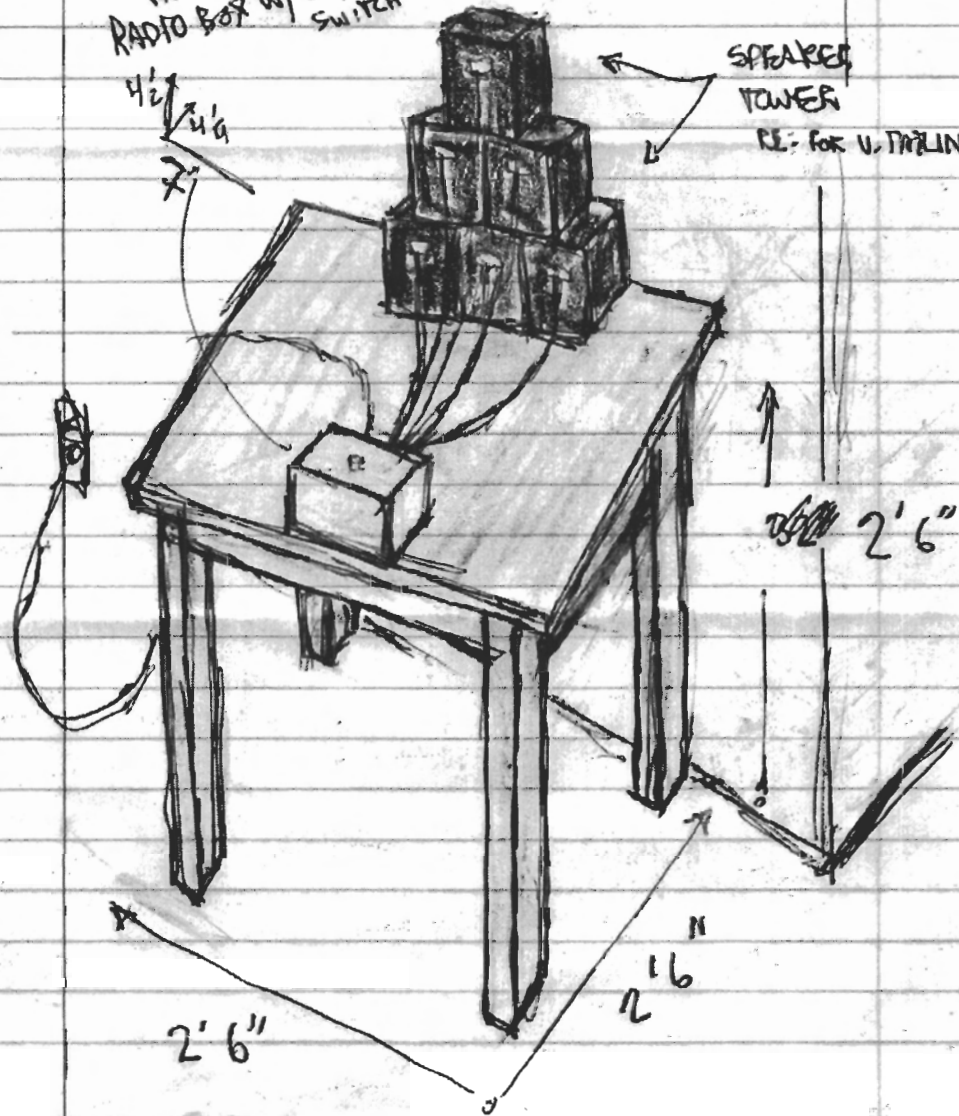
WAVE



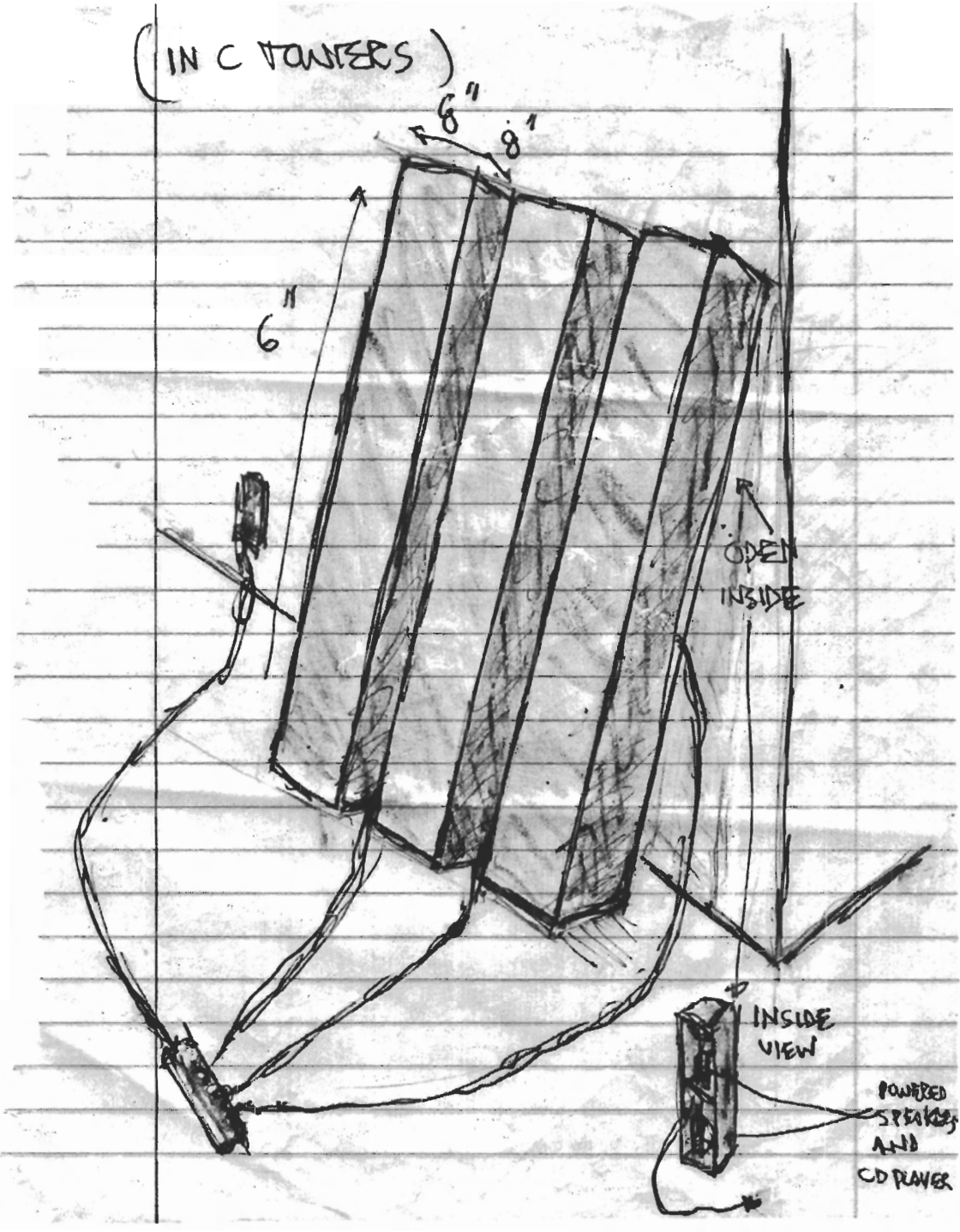
(DAN RAVIN: SOUND ARTIST)

PAINTED WHITE
RADIO BOX W/ ON/OFF
SWITCH

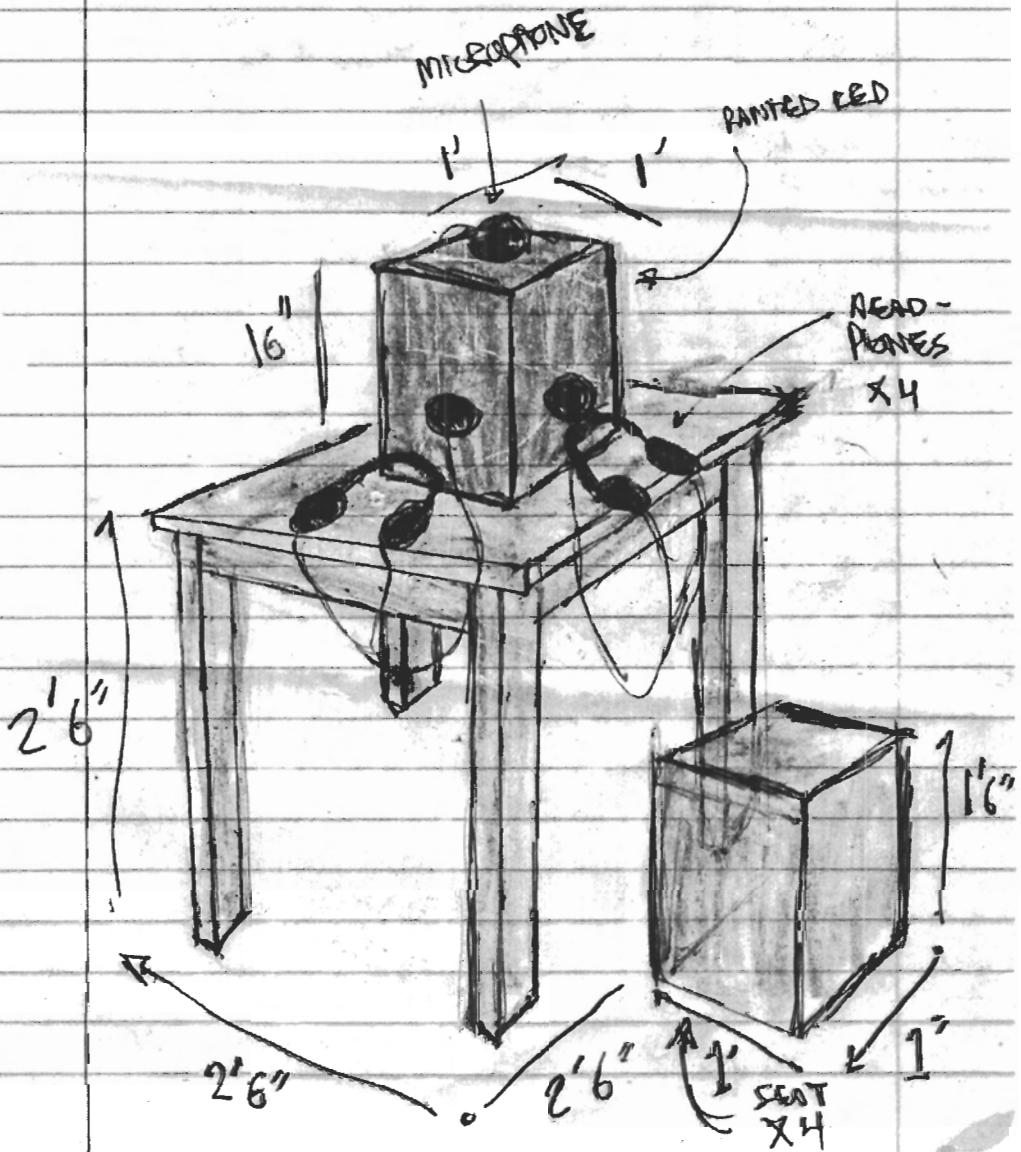
SPEAKER
TOWER
RE: FOR U. TRILIN



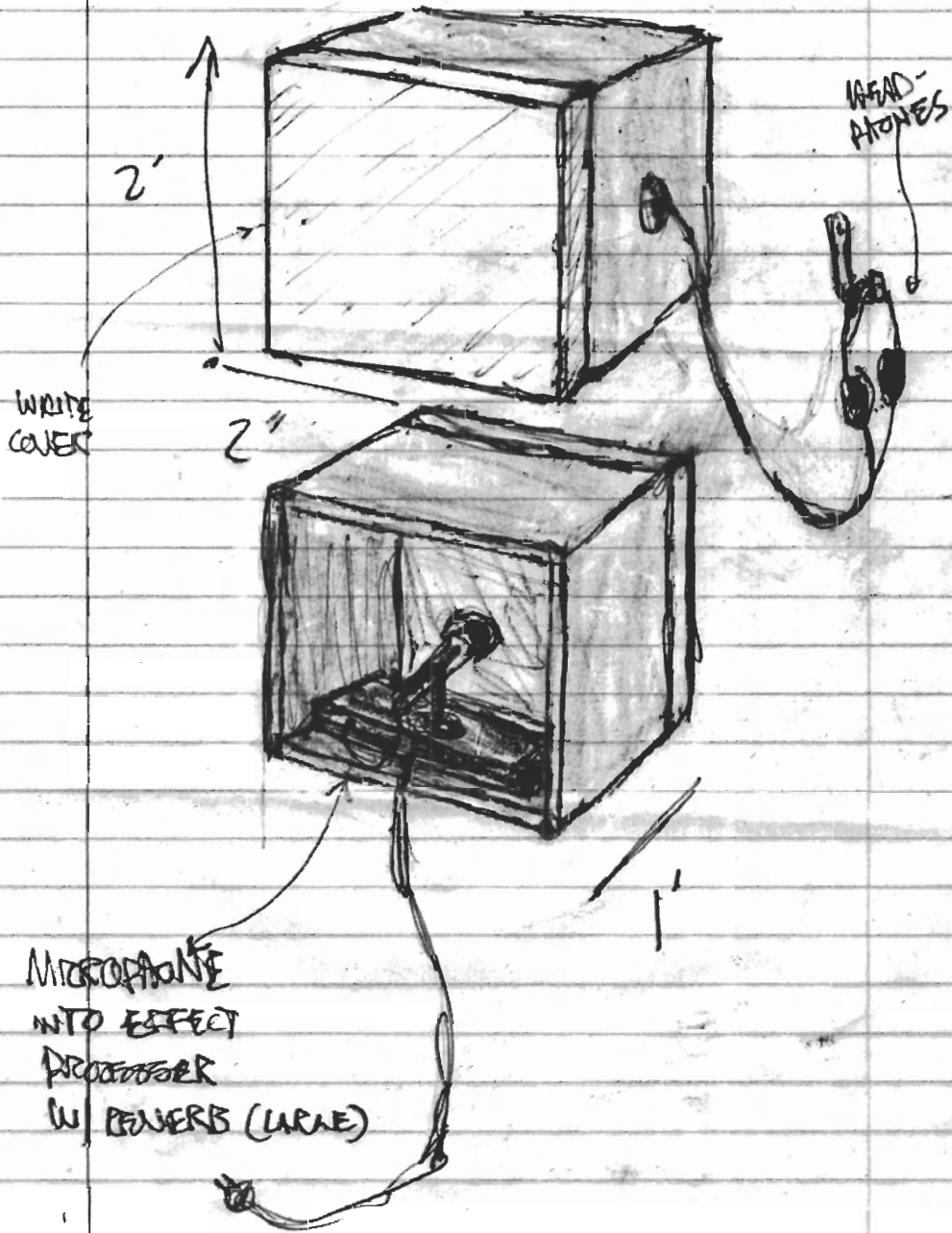
(IN C TOWERS)



(ROOM TONE - CONVERSATION SECTION)



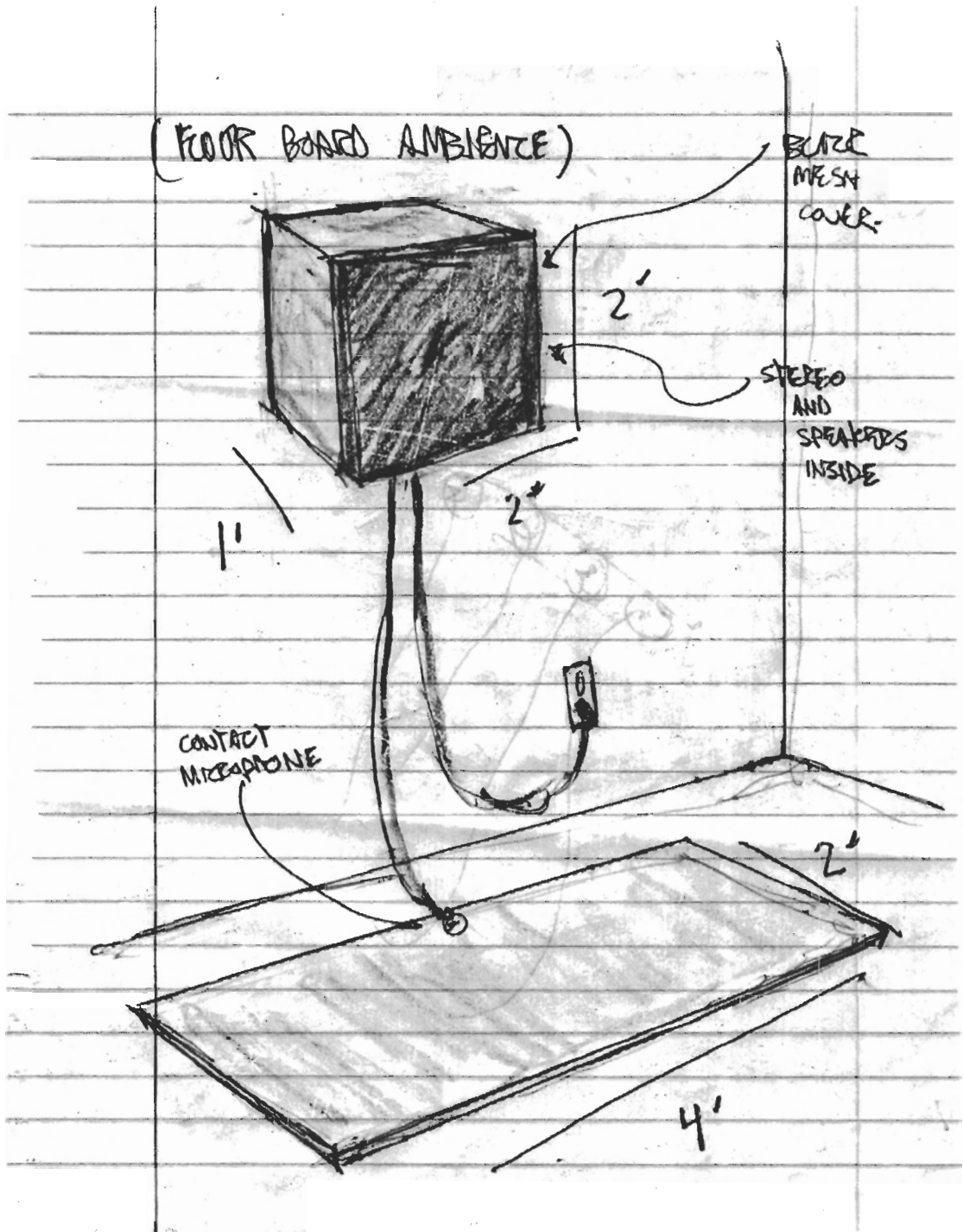
(HOST BOX ^{AUDIO} ~~STERILIZATION STATION~~)



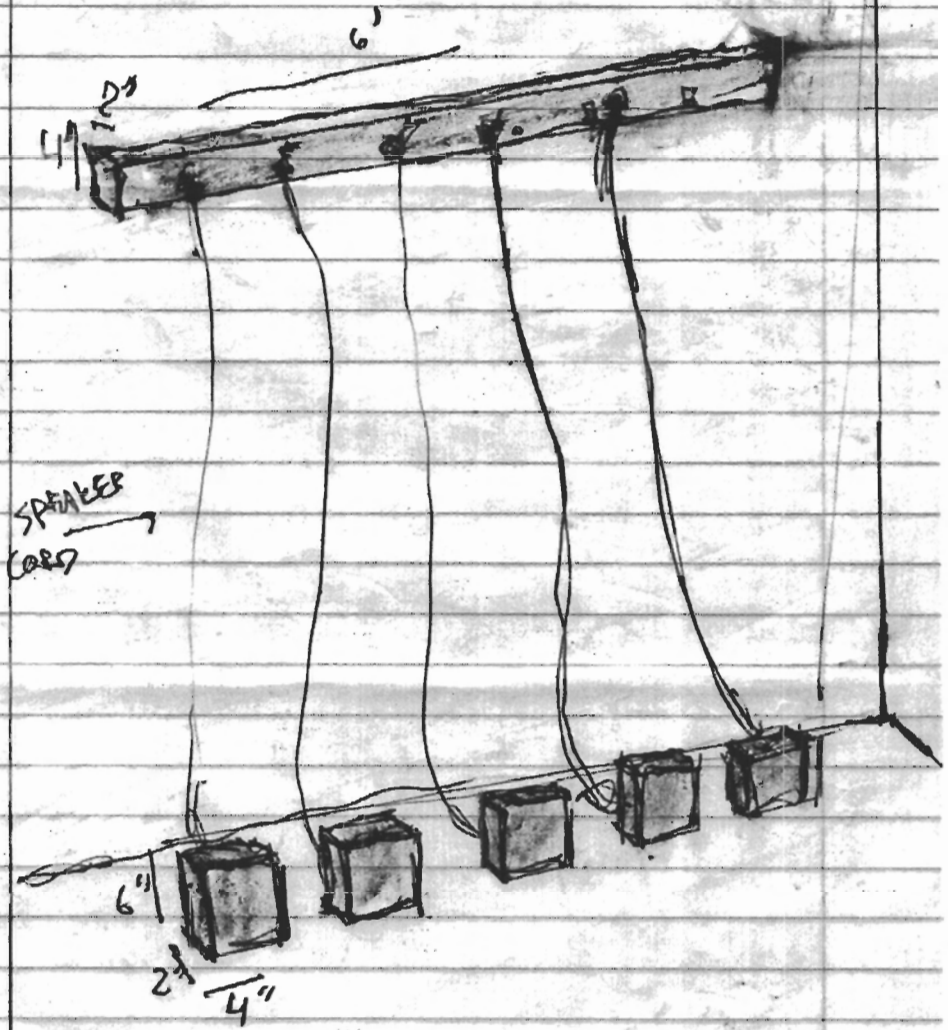
WRITE COVER

HEAD- PHONES

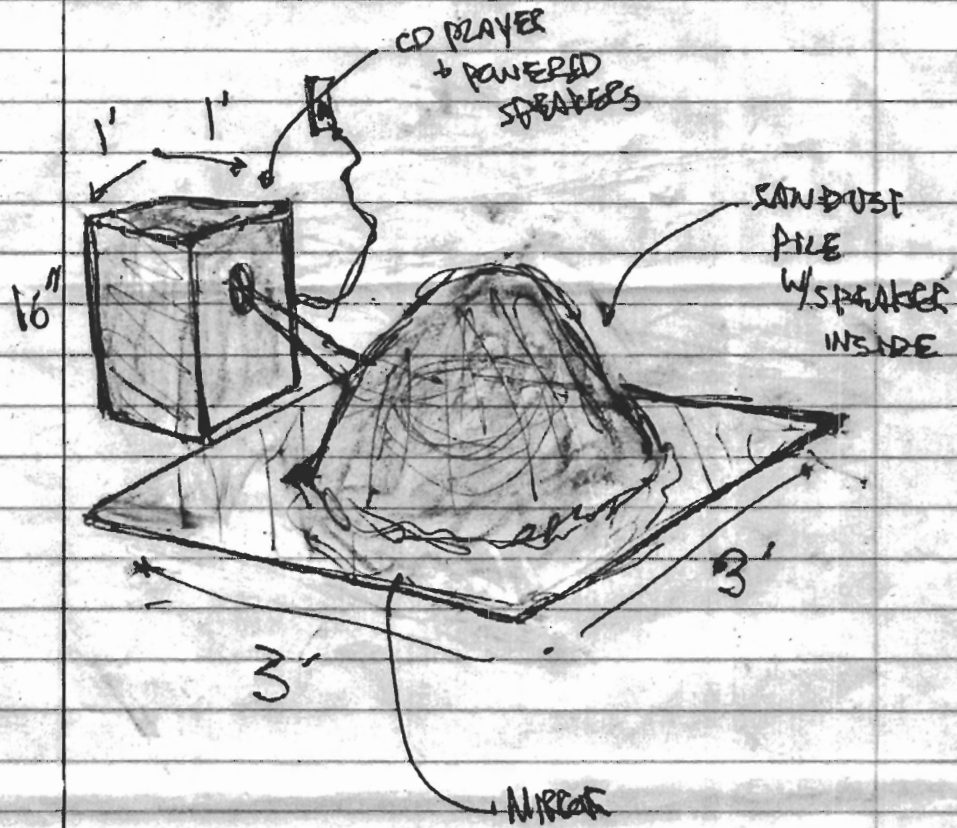
MICROPHONE
INTO EFFECT
PROCESSOR
W/ REVERB (LARGE)

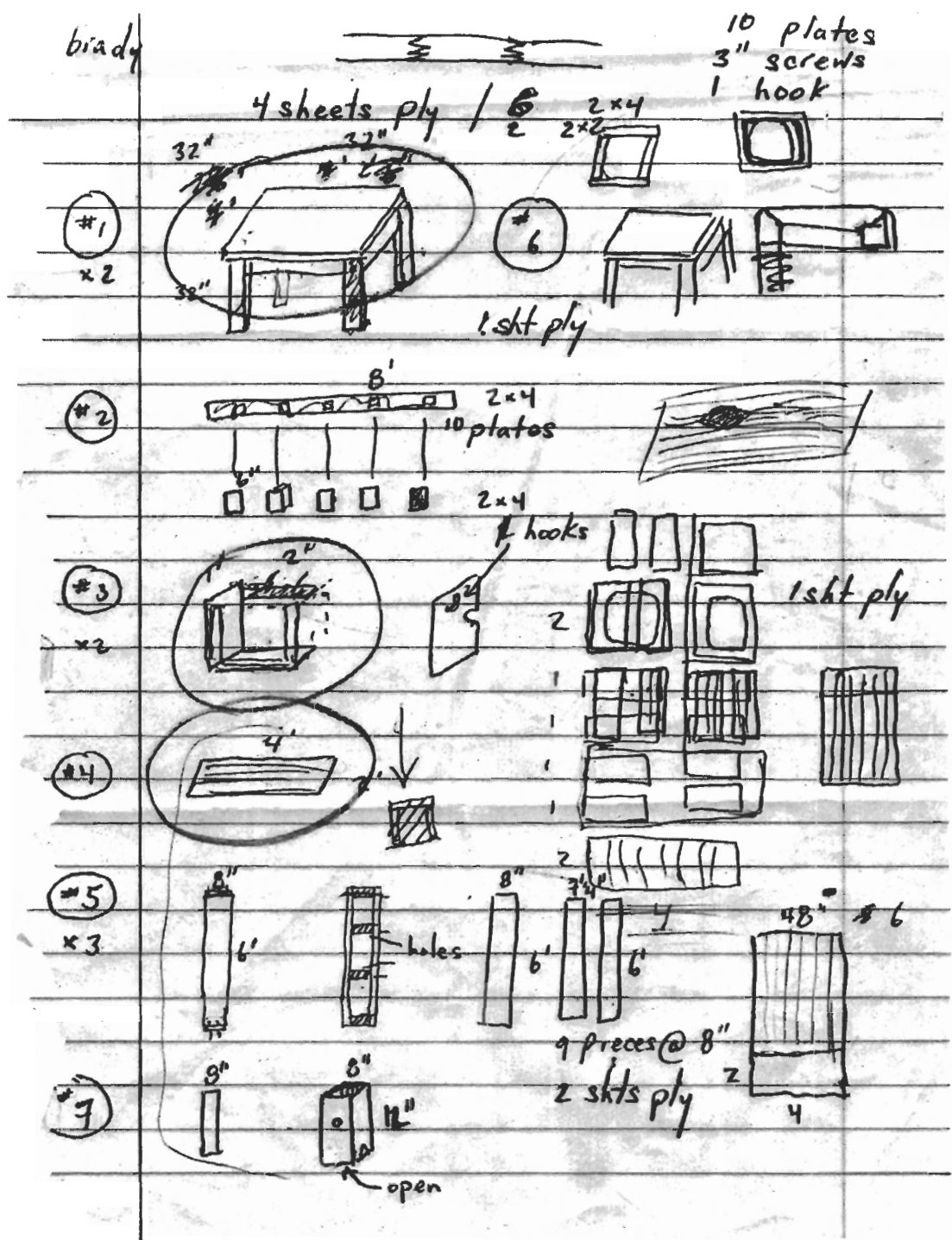


5 TO 1 RATIO
(~~25 TO 1~~)



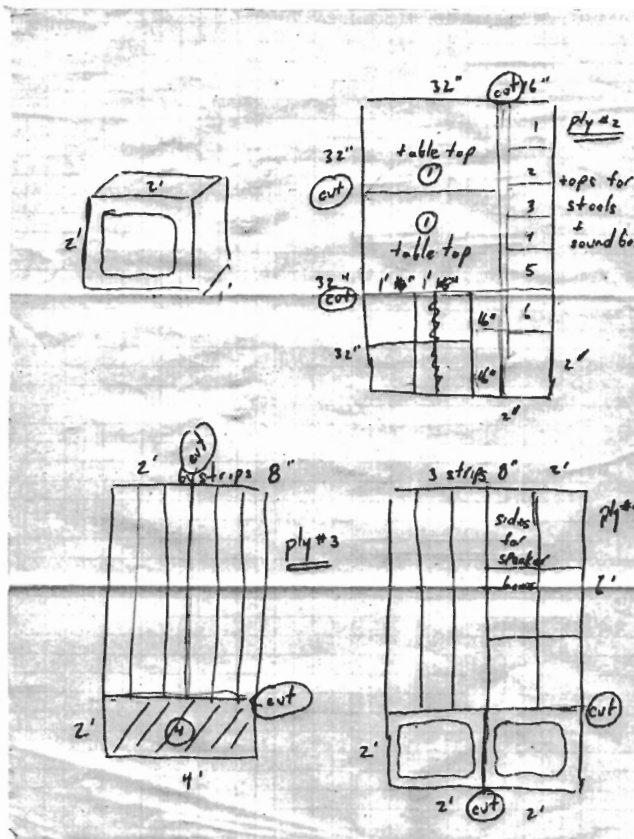
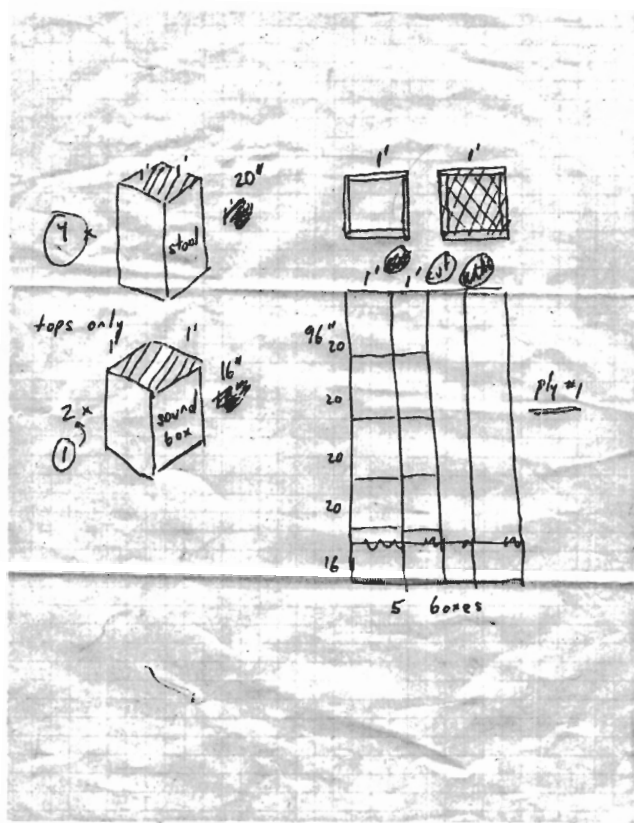
60 CYCLE SMITHSON PILE (SMITHSON AUDIO PROCESS)





Blueprint drawing by Paulus Scholten
 (Used with permission. All images courtesy of the artist.)

Blueprint drawings by
 Paulus Scholten
 (Used with permission.
 All images courtesy of the artist.)



ENDNOTES

¹ Dan Flavin, *untitled (to Tracy, to celebrate the love of a lifetime)*, 1992, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum collection.

² For an examination of this transition, see Claire Bishop, *Installation Art: A Critical History* (New York: Routledge, 2005) chap. 2.

³ See Theodor Adorno, "The Actuality of Philosophy," *The Adorno Reader*, ed. Brian O'Connor (Oxford: Blackwell, 2000) 23-39. For an examination of Adorno's indebtedness to Walter Benjamin regarding this concept, see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Origin of Negative Dialectics: Theodor W. Adorno, Walter Benjamin and the Frankfurt Institute* (New York: The Free Press, 1977) 90-95.

⁴ See Guy Debord, "Theory of the Dérive," *ubu.com*, 5 November 2005
<http://www.ubu.com/papers/debord_derive.html>.

⁵ For overviews of this concept, which Lacan developed in his thinking over time, see Sean Homer, *Jacques Lacan* (London: Routledge, 2005) 87-88; Dylan Evans, *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis* (New York: Brunner-Routledge, 2003) 124-126; and Slavoj Žižek, *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1991), especially chap. 1. See Jacques Lacan, *Écrits*, trans. Bruce Fink (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2004) chap. 9, for Lacan's complex description of how the *objet petit a* arises.

⁶ Hal Foster, "An Archival Impulse," *October*, 110 (2004): 3-22. For an interesting contextualizing take on this concept, see Hal Foster, "Archives of Modern Art," *October*, 99 (2002): 81-95.

⁷ These well-known images are routine in texts concerning Minimalism in overview, from David Batchelor, *Movements in Modern Art: Minimalism*, (London: Tate Gallery Publishing Ltd., 1997), to James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics in the Sixties* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

⁸ Rosalind Krauss, *Passages in Modern Sculpture* (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1981) 270.

⁹ Michael Fried, *Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998) 153.

¹⁰ For an expansive meditation on the archive, beginning with its literalization in space to a more conceptual understanding, see Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. Eric Prenowitz (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1998).

¹¹ His assertion is blunt in comparison: "A work needs only to be interesting." See Donald Judd, "Specific Objects," *Minimalism*, ed. James Meyer (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005) 210.

¹² Barry Truax, *Handbook for Acoustic Ecology* (Vancouver: A. R. C. Publications, 1978) 114-115. For a good introduction to the experience of listening, see Barry Truax, *Acoustic Communication* (Norwood: Ablex Publishing Corporation, 1984) chap. 2.

¹³ Roland Barthes, "Listening," in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, "Recommendations for Physicians on the Psychoanalytic Method of Treatment," *Collected Papers*, vol. 2 (London: Hogarth Press, 1946) 323-333, quoted in Barthes 252-253.

¹⁵ For good introductions to Lacan's thought, see Homer, *Jacques Lacan; Žižek, Looking Awry*; Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, *Jacques Lacan and the Philosophy of Psychoanalysis* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1987); Joël Dor, *Introduction to the Reading of Lacan* (Northvale: Jason Aronson Inc., 1997). Also, in many ways Žižek's entire *oeuvre* is an explication of Lacanian theory.

¹⁶ Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1998). 45.

¹⁷ Lacan, *Four* 45.

¹⁸ Lacan, *Four* 275.

¹⁹ Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994) 12.

²⁰ Chion 12-13.

²¹ Dan Graham, interview with Eric de Bruyn, "Sound is Material," *Gray Room*, 17 (2004): 108-117. Graham makes use of this term in reference to Minimalism in music, particularly Steve Reich's work.

²² Chion 13.

²³ Chion 13.

²⁴ For his use and explication of this graph and its complexification, Lacan, *Écrits* chap. 9.

²⁵ Evans 75.

²⁶ Lacan, *Écrits* 292.

²⁷ Brian Treanor, "Gabriel (-Honoré) Marcel," *The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, ed. Edward N. Zalta, 12 December 2004 <<http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/marcel/#6>>.

²⁸ For the implications of this notion, see Hal Foster, *Design and Crime: And Other Diatribes* (London: Verso, 2003) 13-26.

²⁹ Marcel Duchamp, *With Hidden Noise*, 1916, Philadelphia Museum of Art; Robert Morris, *Box with the sound of its own making*, 1961, Seattle Art Museum collection; Bruce Nauman, *Concrete Tape Recorder Piece*, 1968, Friedrich Christian Flick collection; Mike Kelley, *Silver Ball*, 1994, Museum of Contemporary Art.

³⁰ Marcel Duchamp, quoted in Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, vol. 2. (London: Thames and Hudson, 1997) 644, quoted in Jon Wood, "Marcel Duchamp, 'With Hidden Noise,' 1916," *With Hidden Noise: Sculpture, Video and Ventriloquism*, ed. Penelope Curtis, an exhibition catalogue (Leeds: The Henry Moore Institute, 2004) 28.

³¹ Christian Marclay, *Chorus II*, 1988, Robert J. Shiffler Foundation collection; *Empty Cases (in Memoriam Tom Cora)*, 1998, Musica Kremsmünster Schloß Kremsegg collection.

³² Žižek, *Looking* chap. 1.

³³ In a sense reversing the polarity of Žižek's formulation, Drobnick takes "awry" to mean with critical interest. For an elaboration of this change, see Jim Drobnick, "Listening Awry," in *Aural Cultures*, ed. Jim Drobnick (Toronto: YYZ Books; Banff: WPG Editions, 2004) 9-15.

³⁴ Martin Heidegger, "The Question Concerning Technology," in *The Question Concerning Technology and Other Essays*, trans. William Lovitt, (New York: Harper & Row, 1977) 3-35.

³⁵ Karl Marx, *Capital*, vol. 1, trans. Ben Fowkes, (London: Penguin Books, 1990) 163.

³⁶ Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, trans. Robert Hullot-Kentor, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997) 225.

³⁷ Adorno, *Aesthetic* 227-228.

³⁸ Vladimir Tatlin, *Monument to the Third International*, 1919-1920, whereabouts unknown.

³⁹ For a detailed examination of Benjamin's analysis, see Susan Buck-Morss, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project*, (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1995).

⁴⁰ Vladimir Tatlin, *Corner Relief*, 1915, whereabouts unknown.

⁴¹ For an introduction to Tatlin's life and artistic interests, including his brief connection with Picasso, see Margit Rowell, "Vladimir Tatlin: Form/Faktura," *October*, 7 (1978): 83-108.

⁴² Vladimir Tatlin, *V. E. Tatlin*, Katalog vystavki proizvedenii, Moscow, 1977, quoted in Rowell 85.

⁴³ For a brief autobiography that touches on his Catholic past, see Dan Flavin, "...in daylight or cool white," *Minimalism*, ed. James Meyer (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005) 204-206.

⁴⁴ Dan Flavin, *pink out of the corner (to Jasper Johns)*, 1963, Hauser & Wirth collection.

⁴⁵ For an introduction to icons, including their relevance for Russian Orthodox Christianity, see "Icon," *wikipedia.org*, 5 November 2005 <<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Icon>>.

⁴⁶ Dan Flavin, *icon V (Coran's Broadway Flesh)*, 1962, collection unknown.

⁴⁷ Dan Flavin, *untitled*, 1997, collection unknown.

⁴⁸ Dan Flavin, *monument I (to Vladimir Tatlin)*, 1964, collection unknown.

⁴⁹ His original dictum is: "the medium is the message." See Marshall McLuhan, *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*, (New York: New American Library, 1964).

⁵⁰ Terry Riley, *In C*, CBS, 1968.

⁵¹ Brian Eno, *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, EG Records, 1978.

⁵² Diedrich Diederichsen, "The Primary: Political and Anti-Political Continuities Between Minimal Music and Minimal Art," in *A Minimal Future? Art as Object 1958-1968*, ed. Ann Goldstein, an exhibition catalogue (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 2004) 123. For further descriptive contextualization, see Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond* (New York: Schirmer Books, 1974) chap. 7.

⁵³ Paul Williams, liner notes, *In C*, CBS, 1968.

⁵⁴ Brian Eno, liner notes, *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, EG Records, 1978.

⁵⁵ Eno.

⁵⁶ Eno.

⁵⁷ See Judd.

⁵⁸ Robert Morris, *Untitled (Column)*, 1961, collection unknown; Robert Morris, *Box for Standing*, 1961, collection unknown.

⁵⁹ Robert Morris "Notes on Sculpture: Part I," *Minimalism*, ed. James Meyer (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005) 217.

⁶⁰ Robert Morris, *Untitled (Corner Piece)*, 1964, Panza collection.

⁶¹ For his views on the relief as a format, see Robert Morris, "Notes on Sculpture: Part I," *Minimalism*, ed. James Meyer (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005) 217-218.

⁶² Robert Morris, "Anti-Form," *Minimalism*, ed. James Meyer (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005) 243-244; Robert Morris, *Untitled (Pink Felt)*, 1970, Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum collection.

⁶³ Eva Hesse, *Accretion*, 1968, collection unknown.

⁶⁴ John McCracken, *Right Down*, 1967, San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

⁶⁵ Judy Chicago, *Rainbow Pickett*, 1966, collection of the artist. For a rumination on her creative and political trajectory, see Judy Chicago, "Through the Flower: My Struggle as a Woman Artist," *Minimalism*, ed. James Meyer (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005) 264-265.

⁶⁶ Judd 207-210.

⁶⁷ Frank Stella, interview with Bruce Glaser, "New Nihilism or New Art?," *Minimalism*, ed. James Meyer (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005) 199. For an overview of the turn from the "modernist concept of 'truth to material'" made by Minimalist artists in general, including Judd, see Frances Colpitt, *Minimal Art: The Critical Perspective* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1990) chap. 1.

⁶⁸ For his argument concerning flatness and modernist painting, see Clement Greenberg, "Modernist Painting," *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) 773-779.

⁶⁹ For his critique of Minimalist art, see Clement Greenberg, "Recentness of Sculpture," *Minimalism*, ed. James Meyer (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005) 233-234. For his explication of kitsch, see Clement Greenberg, "Avant-Garde and Kitsch," *Art in Theory 1900-2000: An Anthology of Changing Ideas*, eds. Charles Harrison and Paul Wood, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2003) 539-549.

⁷⁰ This statement opened his essay *Specific Objects*. See Judd.

⁷¹ Robert Morris, "Notes" 217-218; Robert Morris "Notes on Sculpture: Part II," *Minimalism*, ed. James Meyer (London: Phaidon Press Limited, 2005) 218-220.

⁷² For Krauss and Smithson's opinions on this subject, see James Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics* 138.

⁷³ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *The Visible and the Invisible*, trans. Alphonso Lingis (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1968) 135.

⁷⁴ Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics* 161.

⁷⁵ For a detailed account of the tensions between Morris and Judd, see Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics* 45-61 and 153-166.

⁷⁶ Fried 152.

⁷⁷ Fried 153.

⁷⁸ Fried 157.

⁷⁹ Fried 168.

⁸⁰ For a good summary of this concept, see Evans 134-135.

⁸¹ Donald Judd, *Untitled*, 1962, Estate of Donald Judd collection.

⁸² See footnote 11 above.

⁸³ Peter Osborne, "Mediation," *A Dictionary of Cultural and Critical Theory*, eds. Michael Payne, Meenakshi Ponnuswami and Jennifer Payne (Oxford: Blackwell, 1997).

⁸⁴ For an overview of the differences and similarities amongst these figures, see Meyer, *Minimalism: Art and Polemics*, especially chap. 7.

⁸⁵ Larry Bell, *Ghost Box*, 1962-1963, collection of the artist.

⁸⁶ Larry Bell, *Bette and the Giant Jewfish*, 1963, collection of D & C Garland.

- ⁸⁷ Larry Bell, *Untitled*, 1968, collection unknown.
- ⁸⁸ Robert Morris, *Box for Standing*, 1961, collection unknown; *Box with the sound of its own making*, 1961, Seattle Art Museum collection.
- ⁸⁹ For an examination of ventriloquism and art, specifically sculpture, see Jon Wood, "With Hidden Noise: Sculpture, Video and Ventriloquism," *With Hidden Noise: Sculpture, Video and Ventriloquism*, ed. Penelope Curtis, an exhibition catalogue (Leeds: The Henry Moore Institute, 2004) 15-26.
- ⁹⁰ John Cage, *4'33"*, 1952.
- ⁹¹ Eva Hesse, *Addendum*, 1967, Tate collection.
- ⁹² Eva Hesse, *Ascension II*, 1967, collection unknown; *Washer Table*, 1962, LeWitt collection; *Schema*, 1962, Philadelphia Museum of Art collection; *Sequel*, 1962, collection unknown.
- ⁹³ And yet maybe the reverse is true: according to Anne M. Wagner, Hesse's extensive personal diaries are often included, for both good and bad, in the consideration of her work. See Anne M. Wagner, "Another Hesse," *October*, 69 (1994): 49-84.
- ⁹⁴ Lucy R. Lippard, *Eva Hesse* (New York: New York University Press, 1976) 5.
- ⁹⁵ Hesse expresses this somewhat nihilistic urge in one of her diaries. For a full quotation, see Eva Hesse, quoted in Thomas Crow, *The Rise of the Sixties: American and European Art in the Era of Dissent* (New York: Harry A. Abrams, Inc., 1996) 168.
- ⁹⁶ I agree with Wagner that it is too simple, reductive and deterministic to "explain" Hesse because of her sex—particularly including the quality of mystery I see in her work. Stereotypes do not readily foster understanding. And yet I think that the constitution of gender has an impact in general, albeit discursive, even impersonal. See Anne M. Wagner, "Another Hesse," *October*, 69 (1994): 49-84.
- ⁹⁷ Eva Hesse, *Untitled (Rope Piece)*, 1970, Whitney Museum of American Art collection.
- ⁹⁸ R. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1977) 99.
- ⁹⁹ Slavoj Žižek, *The Fragile Absolute* (London: Verso, 2000) 15.
- ¹⁰⁰ See Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1995) 51-54.
- ¹⁰¹ See Jameson, *Postmodernism* 399-418.
- ¹⁰² Fredric Jameson, *The Geopolitical Aesthetic: Cinema and Space in the World System* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1995) 13.
- ¹⁰³ Robert Smithson, *A Nonsite (Franklin, New Jersey)*, 1968, Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago) collection.

¹⁰⁴ Jennifer L. Roberts, *Mirror Travels: Smithson and History* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004).

¹⁰⁵ Robert Smithson, *A Heap of Language*, 1966, Museum Overholland Niewersluis collection.

¹⁰⁶ Robert Smithson, *Mirrored Ziggurat*, 1966, Metropolitan Museum of Art collection; *Chalk Mirror Displacement*, 1969, Art Institute of Chicago collection; *Eight Part Piece (Cayuga Salt Mine Project)*, 1969, Statens Museum for Kunst collection; *Yucatan Mirror Displacement*, 1969, Solomon R. Guggenheim collection.

¹⁰⁷ For an expansive discussion of Smithson's use of mirrors with respect to time and crystallography, see Roberts chap. 2.

¹⁰⁸ Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, 1970, DIA Centre from the Arts (New York) collection.

¹⁰⁹ For an account of these activities, see the Vancouver Art Gallery's exhibition catalogue *Robert Smithson in Vancouver: A Fragment of a Greater Fragmentation*, ed. Grant Arnold (Vancouver: Vancouver Art Gallery, 2004). Robert Smithson, *Glass Strata with Mulch and Soil*, 1970, Estate of Robert Smithson collection; *Glue Pour*, 1970, Estate of Robert Smithson collection; *Island of Broken Glass*, 1970, not realized.

¹¹⁰ Robert Smithson, *First Upside Down Tree*, 1969, Estate of Robert Smithson collection.

¹¹¹ Rodney Graham, interview with Anthony Spira, *Interview with the Artist*, Whitechapel.org, 15 November 2005 <http://www.whitechapel.org/content.php?page_id=461>.

¹¹² Lacan, *Écrits* 142.

¹¹³ Roy Arden, *Tree Stump, Nanaimo B.C.*, 1991, Canadian Museum of Contemporary Photography collection; Kevin Schmidt, *Fog*, 2004, collection unknown.

¹¹⁴ An unmentioned yet implicit figure in this ensemble of references for *Six Sound Works* is Sam Durant. However, he is only indirectly and propinquously an influence—more in spirit and attitude than manifest concerns. Nevertheless, the formal commonalities are noteworthy: the use of the mirror, the sawdust *qua* tree, sound in general in installation art and Smithson as an art icon are all aspects shared by his 2003 work *Upside Down: Pastoral Scene*.

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