

Open Sound 2010:
play.back.work
Surrey Art Gallery

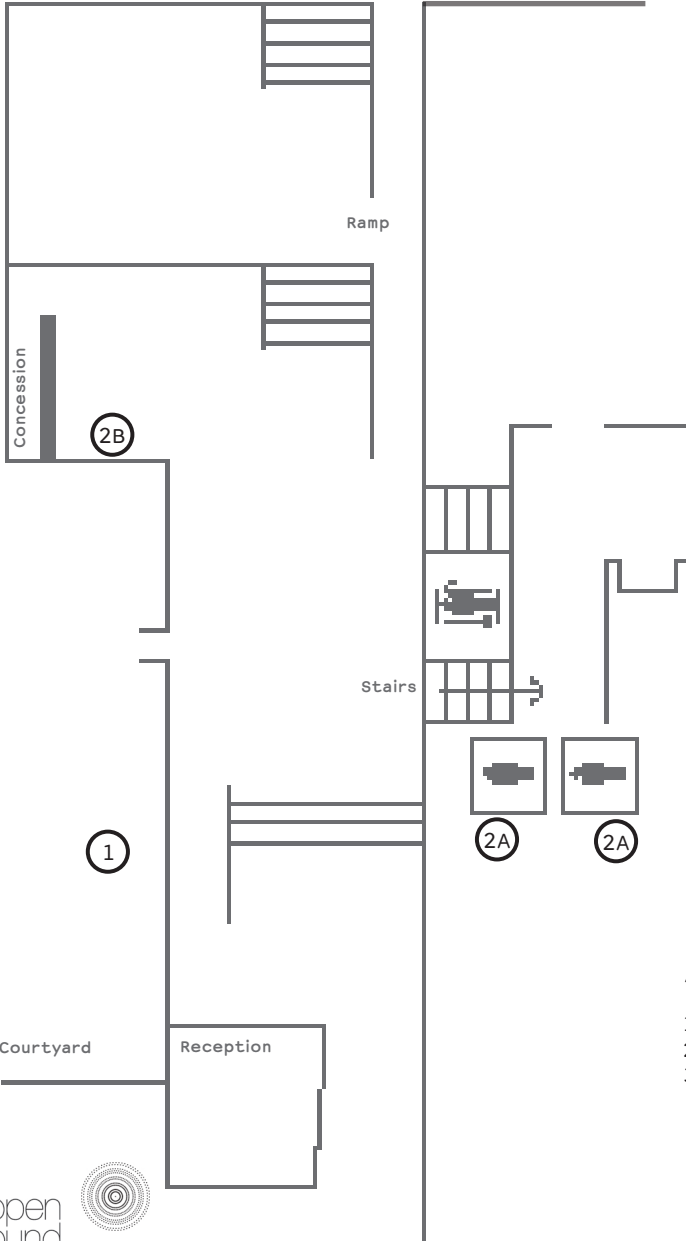


/ Featuring works by
Brady Cranfield
Leonard Paul
Anju Singh

/ Curated by
Jordan Strom

/ April 3 – December 19, 2010

Map



/ Artwork locations

- 1 Brady Cranfield
- 2 Leonard J. Paul
- 3 Anju Singh

Introduction Sound Art

play.back.work is part of the Surrey Art Gallery's Open Sound series. Open Sound is an exhibition program developed in 2008 by the Surrey Art Gallery to support the production and presentation of audio art forms as part of contemporary art practice. Open Sound seeks to feature the leading edge of audio art, and has included site specific installation, radio experiments, ecological practices, and other investigations into the limits of sound today.



13750 88 Avenue, Surrey, BC V3W 3L1
Information: 604-501-5566
www.arts.surrey.ca
www.surreytechlab.ca
artgallery@surrey.ca



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada



BRITISH
COLUMBIA
ARTS COUNCIL



Open Sound was made possible with the ongoing support of the City of Surrey, the Canada Council for the Arts and the BC Arts Council.

Printed on 100% post-consumer waste recycled paper.

ESSAY

play.back.work

The notion of play is at the centre of music. When music is performed we refer to songs being played; We press play when we want to activate pre-recorded sound. At the same time, work and music are also closely intertwined through such things as traditional work songs, or the industrial music of the 20th century. The exhibition play.back.work presents a series of three sound art installations by British Columbia based sound artists that examine the parallels between work, play and sound in contemporary culture.

By revealing a raw unfinished character, the sound art installations in this exhibition foreground the work involved in their own creation. At the same time, this informal quality reveal their playful approach to very different subject matter. In Brady Cranfield's Work Hard, Play Hard the recording session in the Surrey Art Centre's theatre space becomes a construction site choir. Leonard J.Paul's Core Dump V3.0a&b reveals the normally hidden work of computer coding and relates this to other forms of underrepresented labour that goes into making the city. Anju Singh's Work is Worship uses a quintessential piece of industrial machinery to play back workplace sounds normally considered as separate. Each of these artworks considers the sound of labour as it coincides with play, recreational culture and or the "play back" of the recording device. All three projects examine the aesthetisation of work and how culture informs work through sound.

Jordan Strom,
Curator of Exhibitions and Collections



Brady Cranfield Work Hard, Play Hard

/ About the artwork

Expanding on the peculiar phrasing used where art objects are commonly referred to as artworks, sound artist Brady Cranfield's art practice has regularly returned to address the relationship between work and art. In the installation *Work Hard, Play Hard* Cranfield has quite literally used the sounds of his own labour put into the construction of an artwork as the final art piece itself.

The recorded hammering sounds of the plinths' construction—built as they were in the acoustically resonant space of the Surrey Art Centre's Main Stage—are played back from a trio of portable audio devices. Like most "boomboxes" these audio playback devices are designed for recreational purposes, however this particular model has been also designed for construction work sites. The shape and colour of each device has been made to look like a blend of boombox and toolbox.

Staying true to one of the standard building materials of North American architecture, the artist has chosen to use exactly one sheet of plywood for each plinth. *Work Hard, Play Hard* is influenced by American artist Robert Morris's classic minimalist sculpture *Box* with the sound of its own making (1961), a work that resembled a museum style plinth that emitted the sawing and hammering sounds of its own construction.

Unlike Morris's work *Work Hard, Play Hard's* arrangement of the wooden structures, which use the full height of a standard sheet of plywood, resemble both a three-member choir and a set of high rise towers. Played on repeat the recordings create an ever-changing arrangement of hammering sounds that will, in theory, never play the same composition twice. Placed in the Centre's outdoor courtyard, the installation is raw and unfinished in character, much like a building worksite. The chance percussive rhythms recall the sounds of Surrey's recent domestic building boom, while mingling with the tranquil sounds from the nearby water fountain.



/ About the artist

Brady Cranfield is an artist, musician and teacher based in Vancouver. He has presented work at the Or Gallery, the Western Front, The Contemporary Art Gallery, The Charles H. Scott Gallery and Artspeak in Vancouver. He is the founder and co-organizer, in collaboration with Kathy Slade, of The Music Appreciation Society, an ongoing public art project. He is also a member of the bands *Womankind* and *Leviathans*.



Leonard J. Paul Game Boy Advance: Core Dump

/ About the artwork

In his sound artwork Core Dump V3.0 the video game designer and sound artist Leonard J. Paul uses computer coding to push the system of the Gameboy console beyond its limit. Paul uses the console's pre-existing programming along with his own coding to reveal the internal processes that video games run on. Core Dump V3.0 remix a set of images and sounds related to subject matter rarely presented in the video game world—in the case of V3.0a, small-scale urban gardening and urban farming flash on the screen (ie. pictures of fresh produce and seed packages) in conjunction with a voiceover soundtrack celebrating the era of agribusiness. In V3.0b, cycling culture (ie. pictures of bike rallies and vintage cycles) are presented in tandem with a mid twentieth century soundtrack about bike safety. In Core Dump V3.0 Paul presents both the work involved in the playing of video games and the work required to produce the food or participate in non-carbon based commuting.

In Core Dump the video game protagonists—V3.0a's "Wario" character and V3.0b's "Princess Peach", both of Nintendo's Mario series of videogames—are launched into a world of sound and pictures representing work the mostly hidden labour of the city. As the "game" proceeds the "memory dumping" processes—processes that video gamers are normally unaware of—generate a set of images and sounds that eat themselves—gradually becoming more and more distorted as the imagery and sounds proceed. The image and sound combinations of Core Dump may take many years to repeat.

Portable videogame consoles have long been a means of taking sound and images with us into remote locations. By placing these artworks in the Surrey Art Gallery public washrooms and nearby to the Art Centre's garbage bins, the artist is drawing a connection between the internal waste production of the video game with that of various types of human waste production.ⁱ



/ About the artist

Leonard J. Paul has an Honours degree in Computer Science from Simon Fraser University with an Extended Minor in Music concentrating in Electroacoustics. He has fifteen years of experience in composing, sound design and coding for video game companies such as Electronic Arts, Radical Entertainment, Rockstar Vancouver and Black Box Games. Paul has taught classes in game audio at the Vancouver Film School, the Art's Institute of Vancouver and the Emily Carr University of Art and Design.

ⁱ The Core Dump V3.0a soundtrack takes the place of the ambient "easy listening" music we associate with the public washrooms of large institutions.



Anju Singh Work is Worship(2010)

/ About the artwork

Anju Singh's sound art installation *Work is Worship* presents the sound of work as a combination of machine noise and human song. Located in the Art Centre's previously dormant coat check kiosk, *Work is Worship* presents a 1950s model sewing machine, in which the needle and thread has been replaced by an audio-tape loop. Noise drones produced from the modified sewing machine and recordings of religious drone music are played together to create one stereo piece of sound.

As a practicing experimental musician Singh became interested in a form of Western minimalist music which has come to be known as "drone music". Drone music, is a musical style which emphasizes the use of sustained or repeated sounds or notes using only slight harmonic variation. There are many types of ethnic drone music—such as Japanese gagaku or Scottish pibroch piping. Music historians have drawn special emphasis between contemporary Western avant-garde drone music and Hindustani classical traditions.

While these larger world sound traditions are important to Singh, her interest in drone music comes from the Punjabi religious chants that she heard as a child raised in a religious home by parents who worked in garment workshops.

For Singh, the "concept of work being viewed as a form of worship was a core tenet in the culture in which I was raised which further trained me as a listener to perceive factory noise as a part of life and religion, and not as unwanted sounds." The noise of the machines," according to Singh "were analogous to the sounds heard in the temple."

By locating the work in the quiet and semi-private locale of the Art Centre's old coat check kiosk the artist points to the largely invisible and silent cultures of sacred labour and song that goes into the manufacture of some of our most common everyday objects.

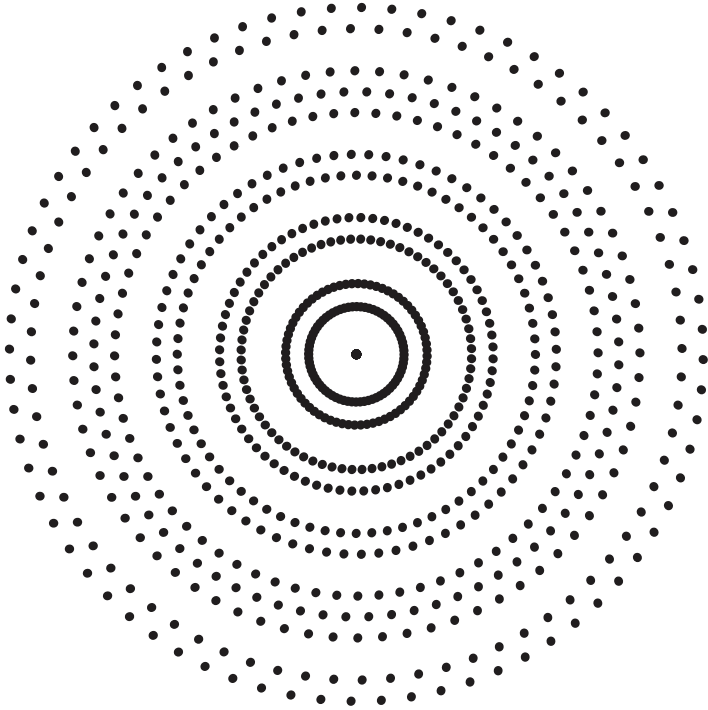


/ About the artist

Anju Singh is Vancouver-based artist who is interested in noise, sound art, and experimental music. She has been performing in various projects in the city including AHNA and Bleeder as well as doing solo noise performances. Violin, drums, cello, bass guitar, pedals, found objects—turned noise-machines, and cannibalized instruments are some of the tools with which she regularly performs. Singh is actively involved with Fake Jazz Wednesdays, a weekly open form experimental night in Vancouver. In the spring of 2010, she co-curated the Fake Jazz Festival at the Western Front.



Sound Thinking Fall 2010



/ A Symposium
on sound and art

/ Curated by
Brady Cranfield



13750 88 Avenue, Surrey, BC V3W 3L1
Information: 604-501-5566
www.arts.surrey.ca
www.surreytechlab.ca
artgallery@surrey.ca



Canada Council
for the Arts

Conseil des Arts
du Canada



BRITISH
COLUMBIA
ARTS COUNCIL



Sound thinking 2010 is part of Open Sound,
Surrey Art Gallery's ongoing series of sound art exhibitions