

## Cara-Ann Simpson

### Noise Cancellation: disrupting audio perception

November 21 – December 12, 2009

#### Enclosure

Working with engineer, Eva Cheng, Cara-Ann Simpson has developed the sound installation *Noise Cancellation: disrupting audio perception*. This work is part of an ongoing investigation into the science of noise and signal cancellation, and audience interaction. Simpson is particularly interested in how people perceive and understand sound within space. Her current research involves modes of listening and how changes in environmental sounds can affect an individual.

*Noise Cancellation: disrupting audio perception* draws upon ideas from the Futurist movement, where everyday sounds were elevated above their level and considered as essential as sound from a musical instrument. Joining this concept with Erik Satie's notion of 'furniture music' from the 1920s<sup>1</sup>, Simpson seeks to create an atmosphere that is produced by environmental sounds but also disrupted by those who make the sounds (audience). Philosophically, the installation is a cultural investigation into differences and similarities between listening and hearing. The formal separation of hearing and listening has previously been posited by Roland Barthes in the text, *Listening*, from *The Responsibility of Forms*.<sup>1</sup> Barthes suggests that hearing is physiological – more to do with the body in space and awareness of surroundings. Alternatively, listening is a psychological act, it requires the individual to concentrate and be decisive about what sounds to analyse, and what to ignore. Within, *Noise Cancellation: disrupting audio perception* Simpson seeks to question this distinction between hearing and listening. Can we ask an individual to pay as much attention to atmospheric and environmental sound as to a symphony? Or can we ask that individual to also become aware of the sounds they are contributing to the installation, whether willing or not the individual has become an active participant.

By recording, manipulating and playing back sounds that re-enter the environment Simpson is investigating how audio disruption and manipulation will change cognition of a specific space.

The notion can be related to taking a photograph of a view through a window, and then putting that photograph over the window. We understand them to be the same on one level (view and photograph of view), but we also distinguish them as different entities. The photograph is an abstracted flattened version of the view, just as the sound being emitted from the speakers is an abstracted and distorted version of that which is being recorded

<sup>1</sup> K Goldsmith, 'Bring Da Noise: A Brief Survey of Sound Art', in *NewMusicBox*, 2004, viewed on 20 March 2008 <<http://www.newmusicbox.org/article.nmbx?id=2413>>.

<sup>1</sup> B LaBelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*, The Continuum International Publishing Group Inc, New York, London, 2006

Cara-Ann Simpson is a multidisciplinary artist with a focus on the tension between visibility and auralness. In 2007, Simpson graduated from the University of Southern Queensland with a Bachelor of Visual Arts with Distinction, and in 2008, she completed her Bachelor of Visual Arts First Class Honours (USQ). Simpson was the recipient of the Hobday and Hingston Bursary from the Queensland Art Gallery in 2007, the Asia-Pacific Golden Key International Honours Society Visual & Performing Arts Sculpture Award (2008) and was awarded the University of Southern Queensland Faculty of Art – Visual Arts medal (2007). Simpson has recently been included in numerous emerging artist awards including the Wilson HTM National Art Prize 2009, Agendo 2009 and the Port Jackson Press Graduate Printmaking Award 2009.

Simpson has had a number of solo shows, sound releases and been involved in numerous performances and group shows within Australia, New Zealand and the United Arab Emirates. In 2008 she installed a work at the Australasian Computer Music Conference (sound:space), Sydney Conservatorium of Music, and curated and performed a sound art collaboration, *Audio Aware*, with Lawrence English (Brisbane) at the Brisbane Powerhouse as part of the University of Southern Queensland's tradeshow. She moved to Melbourne in early 2009.