



# GALLERY GUIDE

**SUMMER 2016**

**MUSEUMOFPORTABLESOUND.COM**



GALLERY  
GUIDE

SUMMER 2016

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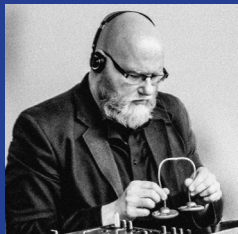
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# MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR

What does it feel like to stop and listen – to press the pause button on life, and give over your attention to something that requires quiet, focused attention? Sound is everywhere, but rarely do we allow ourselves the luxury to experience it as anything other than background to the visual cacophany of everyday life: of mobiles feeding us a constant stream of news, messages, and tasks; of televisions and cinema screens; of GPS systems telling us where to go. In the 21st century, listening can be a luxury – one that we wholeheartedly celebrate and encourage here at The Museum of Portable Sound!

We've been bringing the culture of sound to the world, one listener at a time, since November of 2015, and we hope to keep doing so for a long time to come. We'd love to include as many voices as we can in our Museum – we want to hear from you! Please feel free to connect with us on social media (links at the back of this guide), send us a message from the form on our website, or even become a member of the Museum.

I hope you will enjoy your time wandering through our galleries and listening to our sound objects, using this Gallery Guide to help find your way. I'm also pleased to be able to present a new temporary exhibition by artist Jessica Akerman – you can learn more about it on page 19. Happy listening!



## **JOHN KANNENBERG**

Director and Chief Curator  
Museum of Portable Sound

# NATURAL HISTORY

## THE SOUNDS OF ANIMALS

People who live in cities might tend to have a limited experience of listening to the sounds of animals, yet we have shared the natural soundscape with other creatures as long as humans have walked the Earth. Listening to birdsong is quite probably one of the world's oldest pastimes. Poets, musicians, and philosophers have all extolled the virtues of listening to the music generated by our feathered friends. Along with the culture of bird watching, bird *listening* is an activity that can, depending on the type of song, bring a sensation of calm or even agitation to listeners. The purr of a pet cat might make you feel relaxed after a difficult day. Conversely, the bark of a neighbour's pet dog might keep you awake at night. *All night.*

Some animals, like dolphins, make sounds to communicate underwater, while bats make sound to *echolocate*: using sound as a form of radar to help them navigate in the dark. Animals also make sounds for many of the same reasons humans do: to attract potential mates, to express emotions, to warn each other of potential danger.

Do you have a favourite animal sound?

# NATURAL HISTORY: THE SOUNDS OF ANIMALS

## OBJECT INFORMATION

**Actual Bird Record made by A Captive Nightingale (No. II), The property of Herr Carl Reich, of Bremen, Berlin (His Master's Voice, Cat. No. B 390, released in 1910)**

*Digital transfer of vinyl LP recording, 3.33*

The first commercially released recording of birdsong in world history, this digitised track was donated to The Museum of Portable Sound in 2015 by the British Library Sound Archive.



*Original record label of Actual Bird Record made by A Captive Nightingale, 1910, courtesy British Library Sound Archive.*

# NATURAL HISTORY: THE SOUNDS OF ANIMALS

## OBJECT INFORMATION CONTINUED

### **Birds, Crickets, Cows, and Cow Bells at Dusk: Alandroal, Évora, Portugal, 30 April 2016**

*Digital field recording, 1.30, recorded by John Kannenberg*

An impromptu recording made on the balcony of a farm house resort, with the microphone placed on the floor of the porch behind a wall to avoid excessive wind. The cows were far off in the distance, but the overall quiet at the time allowed their mooing to carry onto the porch.



*View of cows recorded at dusk on 30 April 2016 in Alandroal, Évora, Portugal.  
Photograph by John Kannenberg.*

# TECHNOLOGY RECORDING FORMATS

When recordings of sound became portable, our listening experience changed completely: suddenly we were able to create our own personal soundscapes, handcrafted and sequenced to our own liking, with all of recorded sound now able to be experienced anywhere. As audio tape was replaced by the Compact Disc, recordings became more portable than ever, and we could begin to carry around small libraries of sound.

The quest for ever smaller, more portable formats sometimes misfired: the MiniDisc, introduced in 1992 by Sony, was much smaller than the Compact Disc and was easily re-recordable, but never caught on with a mainstream audience. As we began using MP3s – purely digital files, unencumbered by a physical form – they also became easily accessible for free via peer-to-peer file sharing networks such as Napster in the early 21st Century. Our relationship with recorded sound, and how we collected it, changed forever.

Do you collect digital sound files? Do you collect any physical recordings like LP records, cassettes, or CDs? Do you feel nostalgic for your old MP3s?

# TECHNOLOGY: RECORDING FORMATS

## OBJECT INFORMATION

### **THE FIRST CD: Track 1 - Claudio Arrau - Chopin: Waltz #1 In E Flat, Op. 18, 'Grande Valse Brillante,' 1980**

*Digital transfer of Compact Disc recording, 6.12*

The first commercially released Compact Disc, released by Philips Classics in 1980.



*The copy of Claudio Arrau's Chopin Waltzes held in the collections of The Museum of Portable Sound. This Compact Disc is available for inspection upon request. (Museum archives photograph by John Kannenberg)*

### **THE FIRST MP3:**

#### **Suzanne Vega - 'Tom's Diner (a capella),' 1987**

*Digital transfer of Compact Disc recording, 2.09*

When German digital recording engineer Karlheinz Brandenburg of the Fraunhofer Institute was helping to fine-tune the compression algorithm of the MP3, the story goes that he used the a capella version of Suzanne Vega's song 'Tom's Diner' to help him hear what parts of the soundwaves of a recording were acceptable to strip away from the human voice in order for it to still sound 'natural.' The Fraunhofer Institute went on to declare Vega 'The Mother of the MP3,' bringing her to their offices for a major press event at which she politely suggested that MP3s didn't sound as good as CDs.



# TECHNOLOGY

## PORTABLE

## AUDIO

## DEVICES

With the advent of the MP3, early portable digital audio players like the MPMan, the Diamond Rio, and a trio of Jukeboxes (HanGo, Creative Nomad, and Archos) struggled to gain widespread acceptance. Apple's iPod changed that in 2001. Digital sound players are now the norm, with the iPhone still leading Apple's rivals (like Microsoft's Zune).

Do you think Apple will continue to dominate the market, or will rivals like Samsung and Google develop something even better soon?

If you could design your own portable sound listening device, what would it look like?  
What else would it be able to do?

# TECHNOLOGY: PORTABLE AUDIO DEVICES

## OBJECT INFORMATION

These recordings, made by Museum Director John Kannenberg, are of the magnetic fields generated by several historic portable electronic devices created for the purpose of listening to or making audio recordings. The sounds you will hear are the sounds of the magnetic fields generated by the devices themselves while the devices are in use; they are always there, but are unable to be heard by the human ear without the aid of special microphones.

### **iPhone 4S magnetic field (portable digital audio player & recorder), 2015**

*Digital recording with induction coil microphone, 1.00*

This recording contains a sample of the Tom's Diner MP3, which was played by the iPhone 4S from the Museum's galleries.

### **iPod Classic magnetic field (portable digital audio player), 2015**

*Digital recording with induction coil microphone, 1.57*

Switch on, menu scrolling, track selection, playing a track.

### **Olympus LS-10 magnetic field (portable digital audio recorder), 2015**

*Digital recording with induction coil microphone, 0.35*

Switch on, menu selection, making a recording.

# TECHNOLOGY

## AUDIO

## INTERFACES

Interface design, or ‘User Experience Design (UXD),’ tends to be thought of as a visual discipline. Yet countless audible interfaces surround us every day. Sound brings another level of communication to an interface, a visceral, almost haptic sensation of touch, an experience based on the sensation of sound brushing against our eardrums; sounds designed to help us complete a task or find our way around an unknown space can trigger instinctive, almost primal responses within us.

How do you feel when you hear the ‘ding’ of an elevator bell, the ‘beep’ of a microwave oven, the startup sound of your laptop computer?

What if you could change these sounds to radically different ones? What would you want them to sound like?

Have you turned off the ‘camera shutter’ sound effect on your mobile phone?

# **TECHNOLOGY: AUDIO INTERFACES**

## **OBJECT INFORMATION**

### **Public Telephone in Telephone Booth, Zagreb, 2015**

*Digital recording, 0.26, made by John Kannenberg*

### **Street Crossing Signal for Visually Impaired, Zagreb, 2015**

*Digital recording, 1.00, made by John Kannenberg*

### **Street Crossing Signal for Visually Impaired, Aarhus, 2016**

*Digital recording, 2.04, made by John Kannenberg*

# SOUNDSCAPES MUSEUMS

Many of us tend to think of museums as silent. Maybe that outdated idea is comforting to some people, maybe it is annoying or threatening to others. But is it accurate?

Museums themselves seem to have moved past the idea that they should only be soundless temples of thought. Many museums now feature late night events with loud music, dancing, or performances. Still, most of the 'noise' that museums encourage happens outside of 'regular business hours' – there still seems to be an attempt to regulate what is 'normal' sound for a museum. But as museums gradually come to grips with the notion that sound is an integral part of the museum experience, they will no doubt explore many different ways of sounding.

How should a museum sound? Do you ever wonder why you're most always asked to look at things in museums rather than listen to them?

What would it be like if the sounds in museums told stories the way the other objects inside them do?

# **SOUNDSCAPES: MUSEUMS**

## **OBJECT INFORMATION**

### **Silence in the Acropolis Museum, Athens, 2010**

*Digital field recording, 1.01, made by John Kannenberg*

### **Slide projectors in the Ana Mendieta exhibition, Hayward Gallery, London, 2014**

*Digital field recording, 1.01, made by John Kannenberg*

### **Musical Bracket Clock, 1784, in Ashmolean Museum, Oxford, 2015**

*Digital field recording, 1.17, made by John Kannenberg*

### **Las Vegas Pinball Hall of Fame and Players Museum, 2011**

*Digital field recording, 1.00, made by John Kannenberg*

### **Attic crawlspace Reverb Chamber, Motown Museum, Detroit, 2012**

*Digital field recording, 1.08, made by John Kannenberg*

### **Rainstorm on skylights inside the Museum of Broken Relationships, Zagreb, 2015**

*Digital field recording, 1.00, made by John Kannenberg*

### **Climate Control Device, Science Museum, Oxford, 2014**

*Digital field recording, 1.00, made by John Kannenberg*

### **Sherlock Holmes Museum interior, London, 2014**

*Digital field recording, 1.00, made by John Kannenberg*

# SOUNDSCAPES EXHIBITIONS OF SOUND

Some museums have not only begun to accept the idea that sound should be part of the museum experience, they have actually begun displaying sound like a visual object. This is happening quite frequently within art galleries, as more and more artists have begun to make work with sound rather than paint, or marble, or clay.

Why do you think an artist would want to make art out of sound?

What is different about *listening* to art rather than *looking* at it?

Do you think a sound can be an object?

# **SOUNDSCAPES: EXHIBITIONS OF SOUND OBJECT INFORMATION**

**First Floor gallery, *Art or Sound* exhibition,  
Fondazione Prada, Venice, 2014**

*Digital field recording, 2.31, made by John Kannenberg*

**Two views (above and below) the Gravity Xylophone,  
*The World of Charles and Ray Eames* exhibition,  
Barbican Art Gallery, London, 2015**

*Digital field recording, 1.14, made by John Kannenberg*

**Ground Floor exhibition space, *Sound Art: Sound as a  
Medium of Art* exhibition, ZKM, Karlsruhe, 2012**

*Digital field recording, 1.16, made by John Kannenberg*



# SOUNDSCAPES ARCHIVES

Traditionally, when recorded sound has been collected by an institution, it has usually been collected by libraries and archives rather than museums. In America, the Library of Congress is responsible for archiving the sonic heritage of their country. In the United Kingdom, the British Library Sound Archive has been at the forefront of preserving British audio history. Recently, a new European initiative, Europeana Sounds, announced a bold new mission: to bring together sound archivists from across Europe to collectively decide on a 'universal' method for preserving European sonic heritage.

Why do you think museums tend not to collect sounds? Doesn't something like an antique cuckoo clock collected by the Victoria and Albert Museum include a sound? Could it be that museums already have collected vast amounts of sounds but haven't figured out what to do with them yet?

If you were the head curator of a museum, what sounds would you collect?

# **SOUNDSCAPES: ARCHIVES**

## **OBJECT INFORMATION**

**Internet Archive Backup Server (exhaust fan), Bibliotheca Alexandrina, Alexandria, Egypt, 2010**

*Digital field recording, 1.00, made by John Kannenberg*

**Melodic CD-R Printer, British Library Sound Archive, London, 2014**

*Digital field recording, 0.34, made by John Kannenberg*

**Turning the pages of the 'Description de l'Égypte,'  
Kelsey Museum of Archaeology Archives Facility,  
Ann Arbor, 2012**

*Digital field recording, 2.07, made by John Kannenberg*

EXPOSITION SPACE

# HEAVE AND FLOW

**JESSICA AKERMAN**  
RECORDS SOUNDSCAPES  
OF LABOUR AND PLAY

GUEST CURATED BY  
**DR. IRENE NOY**  
THE COURTAULD INSTITUTE OF ART

# JESSICA AKERMAN

## HEAVE AND FLOW

Exposition Space is the Museum of Portable Sound's temporary exhibit gallery. Our second exhibition features three soundscapes of labour and play recorded by London artist Jessica Akerman. These pieces were recorded as part of a series of interrelated projects commissioned for various venues between 2010 – 2014. Guest curated by Dr. Irene Noy of the Courtauld Institute of Art, Jessica's work will be featured in the Exposition Space during the Summer 2016 season.

## OBJECT NOTES BY JESSICA AKERMAN

### 1. Songs of Salt, 2010

*Digital recording, 2.37, recording by Jessica Akerman*

*Songs of Salt* was an installation made in collaboration with Chris Rainbow, Juliet Sugg and Ellie Curtis. Visitors were invited into a beach hut in Whitstable, where they lay, alone on a makeshift bed. The hut was almost entirely dark apart from a lo-fi lantern which swung gently above, projecting an outline of a figure, which the light multiplied to create a trio moving around the walls. Beneath the pillow (and only audible if lying down) played the soundtrack of a solitary singer (local folk singer, Mark Morris) singing a popular shanty. As the track progresses other singers emerge in the soundscape, before returning to the solo. This piece was a reflection on communal labour, in particular the contrast between being on a working vessel and on shore using the sea shanty, a form which developed to enable sailors to synchronise activity and work together.

*Songs of Salt* was produced for the 2010 Whitstable Biennale Satellite Programme, before being reproduced for the 2011 Festival of Britain at the Royal Festival Hall and featuring in *A day at the beach* in Whitechapel, Whitechapel Gallery, London.

# JESSICA AKERMAN

## HEAVE AND FLOW

### OBJECT NOTES CONTINUED

#### **2. Darlington Playground Songs, 2013**

*Digital recording, 1.38, recording by Jessica Akerman*

*Darlington Playground Songs* was commissioned by Metal for its 2013 educational project, *On the Line*, which explored the history of the Thames Estuary. Working with composer Dicky Moore and 60 Year 2 children from Leigh-on-Sea, they collectively wrote and choreographed the movements for four new playground songs, all based on the military and industrial history of the Thames (the SS Richard Montgomery shipwreck which still contains World War Two explosives, the broken Mulberry Harbour and Maunsell Forts). They were interested to see whether it would be possible to synthetically produce playground songs, like *Oranges and Lemons* or *London Bridge is Falling Down*, to see if it could become a part of the local oral collective memory. (It didn't!)

#### **3. Waulking Songs with Frankie Armstrong, 2014**

*Digital recording, 3.00, recording by Jessica Akerman*

The Waulking Songs project was a collaboration with folk singer Frankie Armstrong. Frankie has forty years experience of leading workshops simulating the sounds and movements of women's work songs from around the globe, mimicking the vocables and gestures of waulking, threshing and milking songs from a variety of folk traditions. Produced in Cardiff for *Made in Roath*, 2014, Jessica Akerman was interested in particular in capturing the gestures of women's work songs. To this end, a group of women (and two guest men) sat around a long table, and pounded huge balls of playdough in the rhythm of the waulking song. These songs accompanied pre-industrial Hebridean women as they waulked the tweed, collectively pounding it as they moved it around the table. As a direct progression of the male shanty project (*Songs of Salt*), Jessica researched equivalent female songs, which were developed specifically to help perform certain physical tasks.

# ABOUT JESSICA AKERMAN

Jessica Akerman grew up in Bradford and now lives in Hackney, London. Her practice focuses on drawing, as a process of recording, exploring materials and making gestures. It includes installation, sound and sculpture. Materials vary from veneer, playdough and 'cuir bouilli' to graphite powder, song and mud.

She has a fascination with work, and the way local history records it. Much of her practice explores the tools, processes, and social, environmental and industrial experience of working lives. She has a particular interest in women's working lives, from the physicality of toil, to the collective and networked ways in which women (as well as men) often work and balance responsibilities. She has explored this through film, movement, audio and narrative drawing in recent years.

An adjacent preoccupation is the imprint that military and industrial structures leave on rural and urban environments, particularly the social and economic structures they impose. A theme she has returned to over ten years is the boom in property development, in particular the linguistic and material form of urban development. She is currently documenting a timber yard in Hackney, drawing it before it closes to be redeveloped into apartments, to capture a distinct feature of the local environment which is at a point of increasingly rapid transition. Also produced in the months before a site was redeveloped for housing, *Live Work Space* (2014) was part of Dig Collective's *Hole Story*, in which she turned an 8 metre cubed hole, into a temporary live work space. Occupying the small space made a direct comment on the role of artists in the gentrification process and the ways in which corporations co-opt lives and environments, repackaging them as aspirational lifestyle choices.

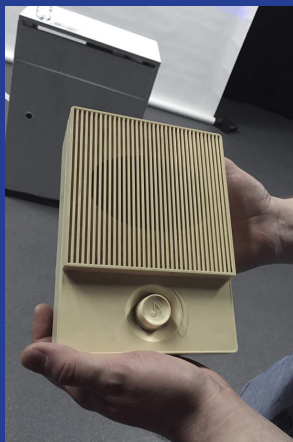
**jessicaakerman.com**

# RECENT ACQUISITIONS



Filmmaker Karel Doing presents Museum Director John Kannenberg with the vintage 1988 Ukrainian radio donated by Doing's wife, noted King's College scientist Kate Yonova-Doing. The handover took place on 16 December 2015. Photos for the Museum archives by Lara Torres.

The Museum of Portable Sound doesn't just collect sounds, it collects objects that make sounds as well! Our most recent acquisition was donated to the Museum's archives on 17 December 2015: a 1988 Ukrainian radio.



Kate Yonova-Doing, the donor of this wonderful new piece to our collections, had this to say upon offering this fantastic item to the Director:

'I wanted to tell you that my 85 year old grandma is donating her radio (made 1988 in Ukraine, still working) to the Museum of Portable Sound. It was her best friend for the last 27 years and is one of my favourite objects at home. With its help my musical culture was formed from classical music to alternative and modern composed etc...[S]he saved it from going to the trash, and I [brought] it to London, [where] she hopes it will find a happy new home in your museum.'

We are pleased and honoured to be able to accept this donation to the Museum's collections! If you have an object you would like to donate, or would like to view the physical objects in the Museum's archives, contact our Director. Alternatively, you can arrange an appointment using the Contact Form on our website.





## MUSEUM OF PORTABLE SOUND

### GALLERY GUIDE SUMMER 2016

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