

The Museum of Lost Sounds

Paul Fletcher & Jacques Soddell

Allan's Walk Artist Run Space

29 May – 21 June, 2008
Thurs/Fri 11-3, Sat 10-1

We live in a noisy environment. We take sounds around us for granted, until we have a need to look for a particular sound and realise it is missing or lost to our world. This happened to us in our first collaboration – on a film and sound composition for the Gas Connection, when we couldn't find the sounds of a Gasworks, which were closed by the 21st century. R Murray Schafer's classic text on acoustic ecology, *The Soundscape*, explores this idea of lost sounds. In it he suggests that there is a cultural and historical symbolic meaning for many sounds, but this changes over time; some sounds become ignored or even completely lost, for instance the crowing rooster was replaced by an electronic alarm or radio sound, the sound of the breeze blowing through the window becomes the tamed drone of an air conditioner. Sound also has a cultural dimension and becomes part of our language, which, like other languages, is constantly evolving and mutating, eg in the development of the abstract poetry of Dadaists Kurt Schwitters and Hugo Ball or Luigi Russolo's magnificent *intonarumori* (noise machines) which, as part of Marinetti's Futurist movement, played a revolutionary role in the incorporation of noise and environmental sound into modern music, but are now lost. Various types of hearing loss also contribute to the individual experience of lost sounds.

The Museum of Lost Sounds explores this notion of lost or missing sounds, through a museum-like presentation of an assortment of objects relating to lost sounds – both real and imagined. Inspired by artists who have used boxes or suitcases to present their work eg Marcel Duchamp's *Box in a Valise*, Peter Greenaway's *Tulse Luper Suitcases*, Joseph Cornell's boxes and Moniek Darge's music boxes, we present a series of standalone works, many in briefcases.

Paul Fletcher

Paul Fletcher is a video/animation & sound artist, interested in experimental relationships between narrative, sound and animated motion, I work part-time as a Lecturer in the Animation Department of the VCA School of Film & Television and work collaboratively with multi-discipline central Victorian art collective *Punctum* and *Undue Noise*, and continue individual film and live performance projects, including the invention of custom built audiovisual instruments. More info at <http://digitalcompost.net/>

All sounds quickly become lost; every sound, the instant it is struck or uttered is lost; it literally vanishes in to thin air. Some sounds cease being struck or uttered and disappear with changes in the environment natural and human made. Many fascinating sounds disappear from our audio

view, due to never even having been listened to in the first place. Some sounds can recall other places, times and relationships. My small collage based constructions relate to the loss or endangered species of technological, cultural, and natural environment sounds. I approach this loss, with a mix of respect and longing, as well as a warmth and joyful absurdity.

Jacques Soddell

Jacques Soddell is a Bendigo-based sound artist (live performance and installation). He mainly works with field recordings which he often manipulates beyond recognition and layers them to create electroacoustic soundscapes. He sometimes works in 4 channels, and has recently started improvising multilayered images to his soundscapes. He also creates works for live arts group *Punctum* and choreographer Megan Beckwith. He curates experimental music series *Undue Noise* and runs sound art label *Cajid Media*. More info at <http://cajid.com/jacques>

There are so many possible interpretations of "lost" sounds. Many of these are due to changes in technology or social conditions and expansion of cities into rural areas. We no longer hear glass milk bottles being delivered to the doorstep by a milkman. The dial telephone has disappeared. The sound of dot matrix printers no longer annoys us at work. The sound of a sprinkler system pouring huge amounts of water onto a lawn is no more. In this installation I have attempted a few, selecting themes that are personal, political, artistic or technological.

The Pieces



1. Paul Fletcher "Electronarumori < The thunderbox"> An homage to the *intonarumori* of the Italian futurists - this is a noise making box that also relates to the loss of hearing quality- attributable to modern noisy environments. Hold down the little red button for as long as you can stand listening to this *Electronarumori*.



2. Paul Fletcher "The Discowave Receiver"

All the people have fled the scene, the flairs, safari and jump suits are now relegated to their irregular often insipid retro revivals. But thanks to sophisticated technology, a-la The Discowave Receiver, faint vibrations of color and light from 1970's discotheques can be tuned into. The Discowave Receiver is a simulation of a disco in a microwave, and is an absurd recontextualisation and juxtaposition of technologies (microwave oven, record turntable) and cultural icons (mirror balls and light shows). The Discowave Receiver is an homage to bogus science fiction and to the sound of lost music, fashions, style and precariously attached mirror balls. (video approx 3 min) light show, mirror ball and light switchable from front panel)



3. Jacques Soddell "Analog Memories"

Analog sound recording and reproduction technology has changed over the years, moving from Edison wax cylinders to 78 rpm shellac recordings to stereo vinyl discs, wire recording, reel to reel tape, 8-track cassettes, compact cassettes. More recently these have been replaced by digital technology (compact discs (cd's), mp3 players, dvd's). This is a tribute to the early pioneers. The sound file is a combination of excerpts from 2 recordings. The first is the eery, scratchy first Edison wax cylinder recording of music, an excerpt of Handel's *Isreal in Egypt* sung by a chorus of 4000 voices recorded with a phonograph over 100 yards away in 1888. The second is by a recently discovered pioneer of sound technology Édouard-Léon Scott de Martinville, a Parisian typesetter, who found a way of recording sound onto paper covered in carbon (a phonoautogram), but saw no need to replay the sound. His analog tracing on paper of a singer's recording of *Claire de Lune* in 1860 was digitally restored earlier this year by audio scientists in Berklee. Scott died believing that credit for his breakthroughs had been improperly bestowed on Edison. (audio 2min)



4. Jacques Soddell "The Lost Picture Show"
An audience watches a video & sound collage of found and original footage, sometimes manipulated, of sounds lost mainly through technological change. (video 5:43 min).



5. Paul Fletcher "The lost sound of hand forged steel, hand tools and gasworks."
A briefcase assemblage of various iron and steel with a film screen inbuilt showing silhouette and stop motion animation of these same elements plus excerpts of an earlier collaboration between Jacques and Paul - sounds and animated images of the Bendigo Gasworks. (video approx 3 min)



6 Jacques Soddell "Silenced"
Earlier this year the death of Marie Smith Jones, the last speaker of the Eyak language in Alaska, was reported. Her children did not speak the language – they were punished at school if they tried. Listening to a recording of her voice inspired me to investigate lost languages. In Australia more than 200 indigenous languages have been lost or are near extinction. In this piece, each of these is represented by a piece of wood, and is also named. The sound composition is entirely made up of manipulations of Mary Smith's voice, speaking English and Eyak. "Now I know that I am the last one for a purpose ... to bring my people back to their own again." (audio 4 min)



7. Paul Fletcher "Expired"
An ode to the disappearing sound of clockwork motors, specifically the distinctive sound of clockwork parking meters. I remember this sound from my childhood visits to the big city (Melbourne) and always thought of this sound as depicting the mechanical eating up of small metal coins.



8. Paul Fletcher "The Sound and Color Organ of Finkel Von Tinkenstein"
A fictional recreation of the lost sound of live organ performances to silent films, a miniature set inside a briefcase. Finkel Von Tinkenstein was a largely unrecognised virtuoso of this now lost art form. Each Von Tinkenstein performance was a unique event complete with lighting effects produced from the custom Von Tinkenstein color organ. (video approx 3 min)



9. Paul Fletcher "Sound Fossils"
Traces of sound lie trapped in these rocks still vibrating ever so faintly.



10. Jacques Soddell "So Quiet"
When we lose a loved one, we lose the sound of their voice. This piece is dedicated to my mother who died of

complications from a stroke. The image was taken the day before the stroke. The voice, commenting on a lost sound, was recorded 2 years earlier. "How come it's so quiet out here next door?" (audio 2 min)



11. Jacques Soddell "Listen"
John Cage's silent piece, 4'33", was originally played on a piano. It caused a storm, but has been extremely influential. It can be viewed as Cage's hearing aid for people who can hear, but don't listen (a lost sound). The music box is programmed to play silently as it's turned. Thanks to Ken Gilmore of *Hearing Aid Specialists*, Bendigo for the hearing aids. (audio "silent")

Opening, Artist talk and Performance

The artists will discuss their work at the gallery on Friday June 6 at 7:10 pm followed by an official opening, The Museum will close on Saturday June 21 at 7:30pm with a live multimedia performance by the artists in an empty gallery, based on material collected for the Museum.