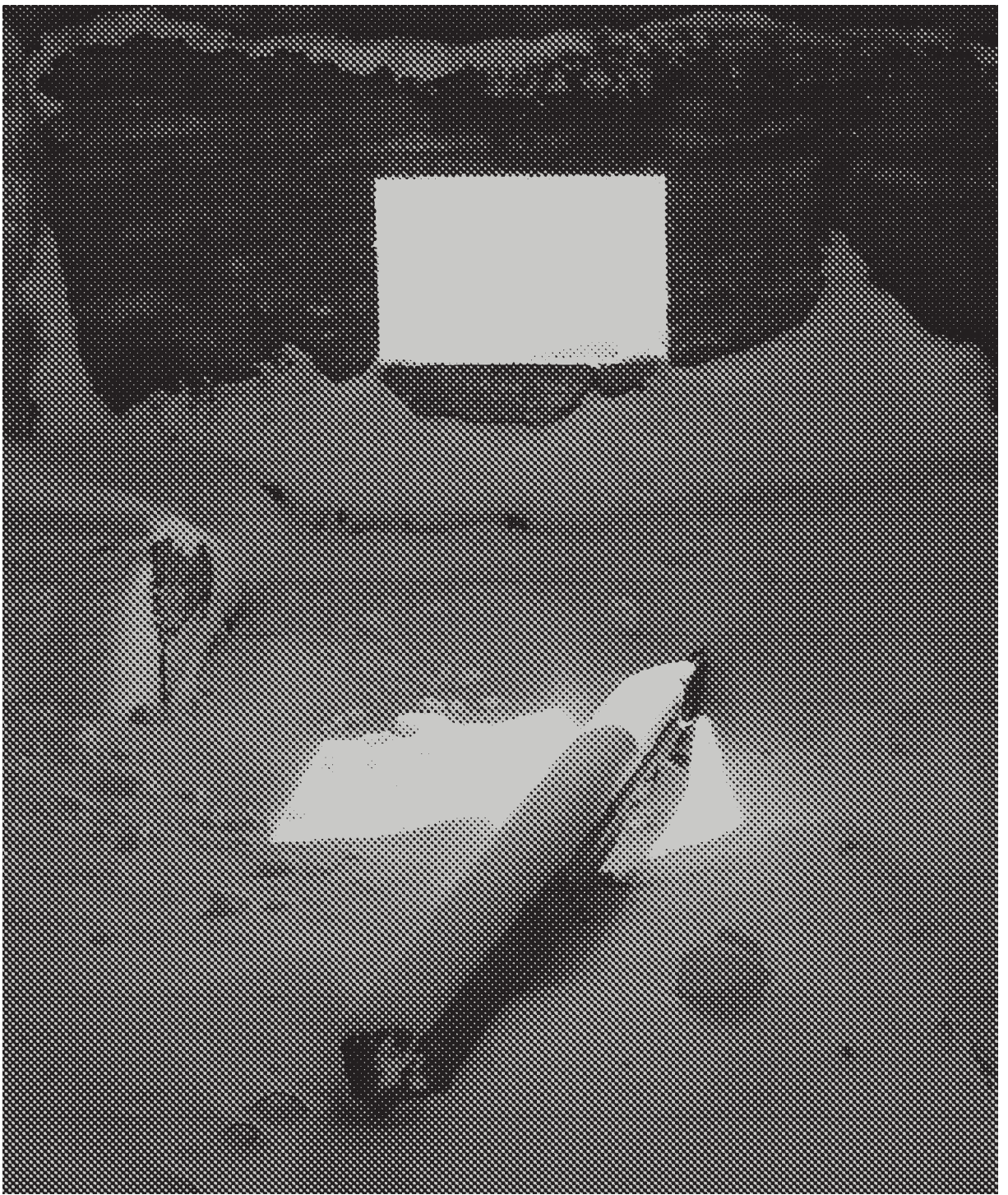


**SUPER FIELD  
RMIT DESIGN HUB**

**08.12.17—17.02.18**



# INTRODUCTION: REFLECTIONS ON REMOTENESS

Through sound and vision SUPER FIELD transports us to places that we may never physically visit due to their remoteness. The Australian Alps, the Kimberley, the Arctic, Antarctica and the many international wilderness sites represented in SUPER FIELD are places that demand time, resources and, often, established relationships to gain access. Through their creative responses, the nineteen artists and researchers in this exhibition offer us the opportunity to transcend time and space to explore and connect with these hard-to-reach places.

For SUPER FIELD, we have commissioned architects Mauro Baracco and Louise Wright (Baracco+Wright Architects) to work collaboratively with the RMIT Design Hub team and the SUPER FIELD curators Philip Samartzis and Madelynne Cornish, to spatialise the concept of remoteness. The brief was to create an exhibition environment that was challenging rather than beautiful, immersive but not loud, and that pursued moments of both tension and release.

In response, Design Hub's Project Rooms are composed as two distinct zones – one space focused on sound and the other on image. Here, Baracco+Wright introduce an extreme spatial compression – an idea that literally pushes the ceiling, walls and floor of Design Hub down, up and out, as if compelled by an inner force and which, in turn, makes manifest the extreme conditions experienced in the remote environments explored in the exhibition.

The cathedral-like volume of Project Room 1 is disrupted via a monumental swathe of netted scrim that cradles a network of speakers and cables hanging from above. Strung up like a room-length hammock, the white fabric drapes to compress the space to head height, demanding that visitors navigate its surface and intimately engage with its presence and the immersive sound field that surrounds them. The floor below rises up to greet the scrim, creating a near-meeting point of two bulbous arcs that pulse with the recorded frequencies of a desert, mechanical infrastructure or a glacier.

In contrast, the arcade-length space of the adjoining Project Room 2 receives a lighter touch. A single moment of compression –

the gentle belly-like swelling of one white wall – focuses the visitor as they move through the dark, visually rich companion to the aural expression of remoteness in the bright white space next door.

SUPER FIELD builds upon our intent at Design Hub to curate a progressive program of exhibitions and programs that explore, visualise and perform the making of design research and the value of collaborative, interdisciplinary creative practice to our collective community.

Transcending Design Hub's urban site, at the north end of Melbourne's 'cultural spine', SUPER FIELD brings together an extraordinary collection of fieldwork and projects by internationally renowned artists who have dedicated their practices to researching remote communities and landscapes. Through exposure to these extreme and often spectacular locations, SUPER FIELD commands our attention and our senses so that we might better understand the social, political and environmental challenges and complexities of remoteness.

Kate Rhodes and Fleur Watson  
Curators  
RMIT Design Hub

# INTO THE WILDS

SUPER FIELD has been conceived by the Bogong Centre for Sound Culture in collaboration with RMIT Design Hub to highlight the work of Australian and international artists engaging with remote regions and their communities. It features emerging and pre-eminent sound and visual artists who have undertaken extensive fieldwork in a diverse range of wilderness settings located in faraway, often inaccessible, parts of the world. As musicologist Dr Carolyn Philpott observes, 'by bringing together artists working across the globe, SUPER FIELD demonstrates a range of complex social, economic and environmental issues affecting isolated communities and regions including climate change, war, tourism, poverty and industrialisation'.

Through transnational discourse SUPER FIELD articulates ways in which ideas of place emerge, converge and re-form through a diverse set of responses to how we inhabit, engage and experience remote environments, their communities and their conditions. By provoking new ways of hearing and of seeing these spaces, such artworks can encourage a deeper sense of appreciation and advocacy for the places captured within them, and perhaps prompt us to hear and see other places – both foreign and familiar – anew as well.

SUPER FIELD is divided into four thematic components presented sequentially over a three-month period. Accompanying the exhibition are four commissioned essays exploring ideas of remoteness, immersion, community, and the nature and practice of fieldwork. Exhibition themes and regions include:

- I. HIGH COUNTRY: The Australian Alps
- II. A SURRENDER TO NATURE: The Kimberley
- III. GLACIAL ERRATIC: Antarctica and the Arctic
- IV. UNHEARD SPACES: International wilderness areas

SUPER FIELD is presented within a distributed multi-channel sound and video projection system spread throughout Project Rooms 1 and 2.

Project Room 1 comprises a field of loudspeakers dispersed throughout the space to create an immersive sonic experience. The arrangement is designed so that there is no central listening point. Rather, audiences are encouraged to wander through the field of loudspeakers to discern discrete sound events.

Project Room 2 comprises an array of projected images articulated by screens staggered along the space. Audiences are encouraged to wander the corridor to experience a dispersed set of images that together articulate an experience of isolation and dystopia. The overall effect is poetic and meditative, focusing on the details and nuances of materiality and space. SUPER FIELD builds on the Bogong Centre for Sound Culture's commitment to engaging with remote regions and their communities through an exciting and ambitious exhibition of socially and environmentally focused artworks.

Madelynn Cornish and Philip Samartzis  
Curators  
Bogong Centre for Sound Culture

# FULL PROGRAM AND WORK DESCRIPTIONS

PROGRAM I  
HIGH COUNTRY:  
THE AUSTRALIAN ALPS  
8-22 DECEMBER 2017

## PROJECT ROOM 1

Benoit Bories  
GATEWAY, 2017  
Surround sound composition  
30:00

GATEWAY is a sound work that invites listeners to feel the ecological and social changes affecting the Kiewa Valley and High Country in Victoria. It is created by little stories that describe the relationship between people and their environment. Connections with land are changing. New lifestyles are developing. The purpose of the work is to make these changes audible and link new behaviours with past knowledge.

Many thanks to all those in the Alpine community who shared their stories and knowledge. GATEWAY is supported by the Institut Français, the Municipality of Toulouse and the Alliance Française in Australia.

Jay-Dea Lopez  
DEAD HORSE GAP GLITCH, 2017  
Stereo sound composition  
5:00

“Midwinter at Dead Horse Gap in Australia’s Snowy Mountain region. The sun had set and the temperature was dropping quickly. A steel bridge crossed an icy stream. I attached contact microphones to its handrails. Malfunction. Static and electrical whines played through my headphones. There would be no contact microphone recordings that evening. I switched to a coil pick-up and quickly tested the equipment on my phone and the recorder itself. The electromagnetic pulses emanating from these objects were captured perfectly. I abandoned the recordings until recently. Removed from their immediate surroundings, the compositional potential of the sounds within the glitch came to the forefront.”

Jay-Dea Lopez



Combining the recordings of malfunctioning contact microphones with those of the coil pick-up, DEAD HORSE GAP GLITCH develops the creative aspect of failure; it celebrates the possibilities of the glitch.

Philip Samartzis  
FLOW, 2017  
5.1-channel sound composition  
35:00

FLOW focuses on the range of infrastructure used to exploit the gravitational force of falling or flowing water, including turbines, pumps, substations, dams and aqueducts, and the manner in which they inhabit the natural environment.

FLOW was originally commissioned by Frequency OZ as part of the Transmuted Signal series aired on Kunstradio ORF Austria.

Michael Vorfeld  
LIGHT BULB MUSIC, 2017  
5.1-channel sound composition  
30:00

LIGHT BULB MUSIC is based on a series of live improvisations using light bulbs, relays, dimmers, flashes and switches to generate a range of electrical and mechanical sound of varying intensity. The piece was recorded at Bogong Village in response to the Bogong Power Station located within and underneath the village.

## PROJECT ROOM 2

Matthew Berka  
DISTANT WAYS, 2017  
Single-channel standard-definition video, stereo sound  
12:00

DISTANT WAYS is an array of found footage from the Bogong Centre for Sound Culture's video and film archive. The film replays scenes of Bogong's recent but seemingly distant past. Outside of the frame there is a world unrecorded and excluded from view, an archive reassembled for a future age.

Madelynn Cornish  
OVERFLOW, 2017  
High-definition single-channel video, stereo sound  
12:30

OVERFLOW is an audiovisual installation exploring time and movement through the flow of water within the hydroelectric scheme. Within the artwork, stillness is used to articulate the



passage of time while the subtle movement of insects, shadow and light are used as indicators of change.

Matthew Quomi and Madelynne Cornish  
KOSCIUSKO CHALET CHAIRLIFT, 2017  
Seven-channel video, stereo sound  
3:30

This video installation explores, through photographs, the memory of the Kosciusko Chalet Chairlift. This ski lift traversed the Ramshead Range in the Snowy Mountains of New South Wales. The concept for the enterprise was to provide all-weather transportation from the Alpine Way to the snowbound village of Charlotte Pass. The 5.5 kilometre route was divided up into six sections by seven stations, with the mid-station housing the Ramshead Restaurant.

Built during the first half of 1963, the shortcomings in design were quickly exposed by the extreme weather, which put the chairlift out of service. The last passenger disembarked during the summer of 1965/66. Dismantling the chairlift, which has involved helicopters, prisoners and the army, is an ongoing process, with nature continuing the slow process of removing what was once believed to be the world's longest chairlift.

PROGRAM II  
A SURRENDER TO NATURE:  
THE KIMBERLEY  
16–20 JANUARY 2018

## PROJECT ROOMS 1 AND 2

Philip Samartzis  
FLOOD, 2017  
Eight-channel sound composition  
45:00

Madelynne Cornish  
FLOOD, 2017  
High-definition nine-channel video, stereo sound  
6:00

On Sunday 13 March 2011, after 130 millimetres of rain, Turkey Creek rose in the space of a few short hours to inundate Warmun, a remote Indigenous community located in the Kimberley region of Western Australia. The art centre was significantly damaged, and seventy homes destroyed, along with a large percentage of infrastructure, vehicles and household goods. FLOOD comprises sound and video recordings made in and around Turkey Creek in the aftermath of the devastating event. During this time, a major rebuilding project was

underway while the displaced community lived in temporary accommodation on the site.

FLOOD is the outcome of the Tura New Music Remote Residency program, which was sponsored by Healthway to promote the 'Respect Yourself, Respect Your Culture' message. Many thanks to Tura New Music and the Indigenous community of Warmun for making the residency possible.

PROGRAM III  
GLACIAL ERRATIC:  
ANTARCTICA AND THE ARCTIC  
23 JANUARY–3 FEBRUARY 2018

PROJECT ROOM 1

Natasha Barrett  
WESTERN NORWAY MICROCLIMATES REMIX, 2017  
Twenty-five-channel sound composition  
30:00

WESTERN NORWAY MICROCLIMATES REMIX is a special remix for SUPER FIELD of four studies from a field trip undertaken in Western Norway during April 2007. Each study, which is called a 'microclimate', attempts to capture in sound and space, the artist's experience of four unique locations. In this remix, the four microclimates run consecutively, and are remixed for the large SUPER FIELD loudspeaker array. The remix includes the following studies:

GLACIAL LOOP: from the Briksdalsbreen glacier, using hydrophones to capture the glacier heard through melted water.

WET FACE: composed from the sounds of animals, water and vegetative materials in the Sandane area.

WATER FALL: two hydrophones are thrown off a bridge into the white rapids of Holvikfossen, Gloppen.

REMOTE GALE: an excursion to the lighthouse at Utvær—driving wind and rain, inspiration from above and below the water.

Lawrence English  
VIENTO (Antarctica), 2012  
5.1-channel sound composition  
16:22

The wind haunts. It evades easy capture. It shifts and twists, largely invisible and inaudible until it comes in contact with objects. VIENTO is a work concerned with the sympathetic relation of the wind and those objects and things that fall within its path. Recorded during three separate blizzards in Antarctica during the summer of

2010, this piece is concerned with tracing the impact of the wind's energy made apparent by that which it comes into contact with.

Douglas Quin  
ROUND ISLAND, 2017  
2.1-channel sound composition  
30:00

ROUND ISLAND is a soundscape composition from Round Island, Bristol Bay, Alaska, USA. Round Island is part of the Walrus Islands State Game Sanctuary and protects one of the largest haul-out sites in North America. More than 14,000 walrus have been counted leaving the water in a single day. In addition to walrus and Steller sea lions, the island's rocky cliffs and beaches are populated by thousands of breeding pelagic birds including kittiwakes, murre, parakeet auklets, cormorants and guillemots. ROUND ISLAND features surface and underwater recordings, including the characteristic teeth clacking, gnashing and gong-like sounds of walrus displays, and the static din of snapping shrimp.

Philip Samartzis  
DAVIS STATION, 2014  
Eight-channel sound composition  
21:00

Situated on the edge of the Vestfold Hills on the Ingrid Christensen Coast of Princess Elizabeth Land is Davis Station, which is the most southerly and the most temperate of all the Australian bases on the Antarctic continent. Katabatic (or down-slope flowing) wind and extreme variations in temperature often create a volatile set of conditions to underscore the vulnerability of this remote settlement. Inside the braced, steel-framed and insulated-panel buildings, a silence pervades that imposes a profound sense of isolation from the immediate environment. Outside, the environment's volatility is expressed through a variety of resonances emitted by miscellaneous surfaces and materials undergoing tremendous stress.

DAVIS STATION was supported by the Australian Antarctic Division, the Australia Council for the Arts and INA-GRM.

Jana Winderen  
SPRING BLOOM IN THE MARGINAL ICE ZONE, 2017  
Four-channel sound composition  
20:00

SPRING BLOOM IN THE MARGINAL ICE ZONE was originally commissioned for Dark Ecology at the Sonic Acts Festival in Amsterdam. The listener experiences the bloom of plankton; the shifting and crackling sea ice in the Barents Sea around Spitsbergen, towards the North Pole; and the underwater sounds made by bearded seals, migrating species such as humpbacks

and orcas, and the sounds made by hunting seithe and spawning cod. These phenomena all depend on the spring bloom. The phytoplankton present in the sea produce half of the oxygen on the planet. During spring, this zone is the most important CO<sub>2</sub> sink in our biosphere. The marginal ice zone is the dynamic border between the open sea and the sea ice, which, ecologically, is extremely vulnerable. In **SPRING BLOOM IN THE MARGINAL ICE ZONE** the sounds of the living creatures become a voice in the current political debate concerning the official definition of the location of the ice edge.

## PROJECT ROOM 2

Anne Colomes  
**ANTARCTIQUE, 2008**  
Standard-definition single-channel video, silent  
16:04

**ANTARCTIQUE** is derived from found footage of a 16mm film discovered in the French part of Antarctica while the artist was staying there on a residency program. The original film was shot in Dumont d'Urville during the 1960s or 70s. The uncertain date of this documentation intensifies all kinds of thoughts about meaning, context and archival forms. Memories of this place, the human community and its activities are evoked through these unreleased images. This isolated place and its rather hostile environment lead to many questions. Time seems stretched out, elastic, sprinkled with clues. This imagery describes the artist's experience of this unusual place.

Madelynne Cornish and Philip Samartzis  
**ISOLATION, 2017**  
High-definition seven-channel video, stereo sound  
15:00

**ISOLATION** is a study of the remote Antarctic research station Davis, located in the Vestfold Hills in eastern Antarctica. Images of the station are set against sound recordings of the medium-frequency spaced array radar system used to measure upper atmospheric turbulence.

ISOLATION is supported by the Australian Antarctic Division and the Australia Council for the Arts.

Polly Stanton  
**THREE ROOMS, 2014**  
High-definition single-channel video, stereo sound  
9:25

**THREE ROOMS** is an audiovisual work that explores the interior remains of a farmhouse in the isolated region of Iceland's Westfjords. The work contemplates the contingent moments of

sound and light inherent in each room, presenting a hauntological space of shifting ephemera and provisional temporalities.

THREE ROOMS was supported by the Australia Council for the Arts.

PROGRAM IV  
UNHEARD SPACES:  
INTERNATIONAL WILDERNESS AREAS  
6-17 FEBRUARY 2018

PROJECT ROOM 1

Yannick Dauby  
TAIPINGSHAN, 2017  
Stereo sound composition  
43:25

Taipingshan is located in the northeast of Taiwan, in the region of Yilan. Called by the indigenous Atayal people 'Mien Nao', which means green and thick forest, it was renamed during the period of Japanese colonisation. Its precious trees were logged, especially Taiwan cypress, and used locally or exported to Japan. After World War Two, the government of Taiwan (the Kuomintang) maintained pressure on the forests of the country. Most of the oldest trees were cut down and indigenous people were denied the right to hunt in their traditional territories. Taipingshan is now under protection; its remaining fauna and flora are dense and diverse. The sound recordings presented here have been realised between altitudes of 900 and 2300 meters around Cuifeng Lake and on the different trails in the region.

Thanks to the Soundscape Association of Taiwan and to the rangers of the Taipingshan Forest Recreation Area.

Hughes Germain  
FASO\_NORD, 2015  
Four-channel sound composition  
39:51

FASO\_NORD talks of those zones of land which are between the desert and a place to live. Many people live in these uncertain areas, in very small villages, and one is never really alone, even in the immensity of the stony desert, where no one really lives.

Hughes Germain went to the desert after many years of recording the seaside, hoping to find other colours, other sensations but the Sahel is a 'shore' for the desert. Curiously, listening to this almost-desert-land there is acoustically little difference from that of the seaside.

Germain always tries to stay as close, and true as possible, to the places he records. While objectively impossible, perhaps,

the intention is important – there are a lot of things he will not do, but loops and octave pitches helped him to render the emotions he felt in the round heavy heat of Sahel.

All quadraphonic recordings were made in the deep Sahel, Africa, at the crossroads of the invisible border of Burkina, Niger and Mali.

Martin Kay  
RESONANT REFLECTIONS, 2017  
5.1-channel sound composition  
17:00

RESONANT REFLECTIONS is comprised of an array of environmental sound recordings captured from Ulleungdo, a remote volcanic island situated 125 kilometres from the mainland of South Korea in the East Sea (Sea of Japan). Through the consideration of a variety of obscure and discrete acoustic conditions of both Ulleungdo's built and natural environments, this work seeks to explore the means in which the built environment guides and accommodates the presence of a spectator experiencing the natural landscape. It may also serve to influence the ways in which this rugged and remote location can be mediated, abstracted and represented through an experimental field recording practice.

Slavek Kwi (Artificial Memory Trace)  
OWMAN (OVERWHELMAN), 2017  
4.1-channel sound composition  
22:00

To travel to Xixuau Xiparina reserve, located in the state of Amazonas in Brazil, takes about thirty-six hours by double-decker boat from Manaus, upstream on the Rio Negro to Rio Jauaperi. The rainforest is annually flooded – the water level rises and descends about eleven metres – however, the surrounding forests still seem to be partly underwater all the time. Slavek Kwi travelled in between the trees in a canoe. The flooded rainforest is beautiful and it has a spacious and resonant quality. The intensity and density of sounds are at times overwhelming, especially at night. OWMAN (OVERWHELMAN) is an attempt to transfer this sensation into a different form through layering and manipulating original recordings.

Based on recordings from the remote Xixuau Xiparina Reserve in the Brazilian Amazon, collected in summer 2007 and winter 2008–2009.

Douglas Quin  
ADIRONDACK DAWN, 2017  
5.1-channel sound composition  
20:00

ADIRONDACK DAWN is a soundscape composition from the Adirondack Mountains, New York, USA. The Saint Regis area of the Northern Adirondacks in upstate New York is one of the

major thoroughfares on the Atlantic Flyway bird migration route. This dawn chorus recording was made in June 2017 after the main body of migratory birds had come through and both seasonal and year-round residents had settled in. The recording was made lakeside in a marshy area, using a Soundfield ambisonic microphone, imaged into a 5.1-channel surround soundscape. The recording is notable for its transition from night to first light and the presence of green frogs and bullfrogs.

Douglas Quin  
PANTANAL, 2017  
2.1-channel sound composition  
30:00

PANTANAL is a soundscape composition from the Pantanal, Mato Grosso do Sul, Brazil. The Pantanal is a seasonally flooded swamp that encompasses an area three times the size of Tasmania and which sprawls across Brazil, Paraguay and Bolivia. It has been designated a UNESCO World Heritage Centre and boasts an extraordinarily diverse range of fauna and flora, including more than 1000 bird species and nearly 500 species of reptile. This soundscape compresses the transition from dusk to dawn and includes a dense concentration of fishing yacare caiman, whose barking and splashing punctuate the dawn chorus of birds and insects.

Philip Samartzis  
OPEN FIELD, 2017  
5.1-channel sound composition  
42:00

OPEN FIELD investigates a broad range of social, economic and environmental issues affecting the remote mountain and rural communities of San Marco dei Cavoti in Campania, and the Abruzzo region of Italy. The region surrounding San Marco Dei Cavoti comprises a dense array of wind turbine technology, while Abruzzo was the site of a series of earthquakes and an avalanche in late 2016 and early 2017. This work was produced in collaboration with several communities to measure the impact these geophysical events and technological incursions have had in each region.

OPEN FIELD is supported by Liminaria, Pollinaria and the School of Art, RMIT University.

Chris Watson  
KEVÄTAIKA: A TIME SLICE FROM THE TAIGA, 2017  
Four-channel sound composition  
32:00

KEVÄTAIKA: A TIME SLICE FROM THE TAIGA reflects the seasonal transition between the ice melting on Lake Suvasvesi and the evolving spring chorus from the surrounding woodlands and across the lake.



## PROJECT ROOM 2

David Burrows  
MONTAGNE RUSSE, 2017  
Standard definition video  
Anamorphic nine-channel video, stereo sound  
12:00

An absurd journey to the gateway of the Kolyma Highway. Magadan is an island continent. Its residents call the rest of Russia 'the mainland'. From here the 'Road of Bones', Stalin's passage into the Kolyma, was carved.

The late Belgian film director and artist Chantal Akerman wanted to film the snow falling over old Gulag sites. David Burrows was to be her assistant. Two days before departure she decided not to go and Burrows found himself in Magadan without a purpose.

An exercise in absurdity. Sisyphus is the archetypal absurd hero, condemned to push a rock up a mountain only to have it roll down every time he reaches the top, an eternity of futile labour.

The French phrase 'montagne russe' literally translates to 'Russian mountain', however its meaning is 'rollercoaster'.

Many thanks to Le Fresnoy National Studio of Contemporary Arts, Chantal Akerman and Isabelle Bohnke.

Madelynne Cornish  
DENSITIES, 2017  
High-definition nine-channel video, stereo sound  
12:00

DENSITIES marks the beginning of a long-term project that examines the cultivated forest across different seasons and multiple years. It uses moving image, sound and anthropological research to explore logging from a social and environmental perspective. The project is a comparative analysis of two regions – Mänttä (Finland) and Alpine Shire (Australia) – where logging was established at a similar time and still continues.

DENSITIES guides visitors through a series of forests located in the Mänttä environs. All but one are commodified landscapes used for forestry. However beautiful these manufactured environments appear they lack the biodiversity of an intact forest landscape. The intent of the installation is to highlight the complex, and often contradictory, aspects of environmentally responsible forest management.

DENSITIES was supported by the Australia Council for the Arts, and the Serlachius Museums and Mänttä Art Festival residency program.

# PUBLIC PROGRAMS

SUPER FIELD journeys to a diverse range of remote locations over four distinct programs. Join us to learn about the politics and planning, making and editing, residing and visiting that have gone into the production of these sound and video works made in remote locations. Throughout the program we'll speak with the curators and artists, the exhibition designers as well as the Design Hub team involved in creating SUPER FIELD. These are hands-on programs where we'll be making, recording and listening.

All events are free. Book at [rmitdesignhub.eventbrite.com](http://rmitdesignhub.eventbrite.com)

## SUPER FIELD PREVIEW

Wednesday 29 November 2017

12–2PM

MPavilion

Queen Victoria Gardens

Join us at MPavilion for a special MMusic event featuring a selection of soundscape works from SUPER FIELD.

## POSTCARD FROM THE AUSTRALIAN ALPS

Wednesday 13 December 2017

12.30–1.30pm

RMIT Design Hub

Project Rooms 1 and 2

In this program, visiting French artist Benoit Bories will present a live performance of GATEWAY. Listeners will experience some of the ecological and social changes of the Kiewa Valley in Victoria's alpine region. By mixing local voices, field recordings and electroacoustic composition in order to build links between the past and present, this sound piece questions our relationship with the environment in light of ecological tourism. After the performance we will discuss how artists and researchers undertake fieldwork and some of the sound recording techniques used to capture different environmental events. The program will draw on the work of the Bogong Centre for Sound Culture to demonstrate different methods of engagement within remote wilderness environments and their communities.

## POSTCARD FROM THE KIMBERLEY

Wednesday 17 January 2018

12.30–1.30pm

RMIT Design Hub

Project Rooms 1 and 2

During a residency in the Kimberley region of Western Australian, Madelynne Cornish and Philip Samartzis experienced the devastating effects of the Turkey Creek flood on the remote Indigenous community of Warmun. In response, both artists worked closely with the local communities to make field recordings. In this conversation with Design Hub curators Kate Rhodes and Fleur Watson, we discuss the techniques Madelynne and Philip developed to document their experience and the possibility of capturing the sound of place.

## POSTCARD FROM ANTARCTICA AND THE ARCTIC, OR HOW TO LISTEN TO SOUND ART

Wednesday 24 January 2018

12.30–1.30pm

RMIT Design Hub

Project Rooms 1 and 2

This workshop is an introduction to listening to sound art. Associate Professor Philip Samartzis has taught at RMIT for twenty years and in this program he will provide participants with some simple techniques for approaching the task of how to listen to audio works. Sound art, unlike the visual arts, remains a less than common encounter on the exhibition landscape and, arguably as a result, we are largely under-equipped in how to 'tune in' to its qualities. To guide us in this task, Philip will examine the ecoacoustic and geophysical characteristics of Antarctic and subantarctic environments using sound recordings he made in East Antarctica and Macquarie Island.

## POSTCARD FROM THE EXHIBITION: CONSTRUCTING SUPER FIELD

Wednesday 31 January 2018

12.30–1.30pm

RMIT Design Hub

Project Rooms 1 and 2

This program looks at the fundamentals of exhibition making with the designers of the SUPER FIELD exhibition environment – architects Mauro Baracco and Louise Wright (Baracco+Wright Architects) – along with the Design Hub curatorial team. We look at how we create a brief, how the exhibition design is developed and evolves, how sound and video works are installed, and how we communicate with audiences through spatialising an exhibition concept with the concerns of the artists and curators involved.

OPEN FIELD SYMPOSIUM  
Wednesday 7 February 2018  
1–4pm, 4–5pm drinks and exhibition viewing  
RMIT Design Hub  
Lecture Theatre, Level 3

The Open Field Symposium will examine some of the key ideas informing SUPER FIELD by looking at ways in which artists undertake fieldwork in remote locations. It will draw on a range of projects to discuss the reasons why artists choose to work in remote locations, and how fieldwork impacts on the work that they produce as a result. The symposium will also be a platform to discuss the concept behind the SUPER FIELD exhibition and the use of multi-channel sound and vision to create immersive encounters with place.

Speakers: Ben Byrne on undertaking fieldwork in the Victorian Alps, Philip Samartzis on the practice of sound recording in extreme environments, Madelynne Cornish on documenting the ecoacoustic characteristics of Finland's forests, Polly Stanton on expanded listening in remote environments, David Burrows on the absurdity of human endeavour when measured against overwhelming nature and history and Martin Kay on considering the remote landscape of Ulleungdo Island through its built environment.

Presented in association with Liquid Architecture and the Bogong Centre for Sound Culture. Chaired by Michael Graeve, sound and visual artist working between noise and painting. Michael is the vice-president of Liquid Architecture.

POSTCARD FROM FINLAND,  
OR THE HIGHS AND LOWS OF FLYING A DRONE  
Wednesday 14 February 2018  
12.30–1.30pm  
RMIT Design Hub  
Project Rooms 1 and 2

In the midst of undertaking fieldwork in Mänttä, Finland, Madelynne Cornish made a decision to purchase a drone. Having no experience she decided to equip herself with this complex mechanism consisting of sensors, electronics, software, camera and joysticks. In this workshop she will talk about the accompanying pitfalls and dilemmas of learning to fly a drone in heavily forested areas.

DENSITIES was supported by the Australia Council for the Arts and the Serlachius Museums and Mänttä Art Festival residency program. Presented as part of RMIT Research and Innovation's conference and event series 'Engaging for Impact: Academia and Industry Co-Creating our Future'.

# ESSAYS



LISTENING FROM A DISTANCE:  
EXPERIENCING ANTARCTICA IN  
SOUND ART

Dr Carolyn Philpott

Sounds affect how we feel about places in ways that are immediate and profound. Whether we are outdoors exploring the natural world, or indoors watching a film or television program set in a distant locale, sounds draw our attention to the uniqueness of places and help us to understand the world around us. Although most of us tend to prioritise the visual over the acoustic in our day-to-day lives, music and sound art composed in connection with places can trigger powerful emotional responses. This, in turn, can make us feel a deeper sense of connection to, and concern for, specific places. As the renowned philosopher of place Jeff Malpas has observed:

... the sounds that ... fill the space around us are so often taken for granted, and even overlooked, treated as mere 'background noise'. To redirect attention to such 'background' is already to unsettle our ordinary experience, to re-present it in a new and unfamiliar way, and so to provoke new ways of hearing and of seeing. Yet while our acoustic environment is often taken for granted, the acoustic nevertheless also has a power to intrude, and sometimes disrupt ... The taking of sound as a primary focus of investigation thus provides a way of shifting our usual experience of things, and [does] so with respect to a phenomenon that can itself have an extraordinary and powerful affect. In this fashion, sound can be seen as offering an alternative route for the exploration of our world and our relation to it, providing new ways to experience the places and spaces in which we find ourselves.<sup>1</sup>

Of course, here Malpas is referring primarily to places and spaces in which we are used to being physically present; however, sound can also help to shape our knowledge of remote places that most people are unlikely to ever experience in person, such as Antarctica. As sound artist Jay Needham and photographer Gary Kolb have noted in relation to Antarctica in particular, soundscape recordings can help to 'form the public conception of "unknowable" spaces that are beyond the reach and view of the average person'.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, researchers working in the field of soundscape

1. Jeff Malpas, 'Breathing Space: Leigh Hobba and the uncertainty of presence', in *Leigh Hobba: The space of presence*, ed. Jeff Malpas and Jonathan Holmes (Hobart: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 2007): 9–11.
2. Gary Kolb and Jay Needham, 'Antarctic Dreams', *Exposure* 47, no. 2 (2014): 7



ecology have recognised that actively listening to soundscapes can 'inspire the appreciation, management and conservation of the organisms and resources that create them'.<sup>3</sup> This is particularly important in relation to places that are under threat due to environmental change, such as the frozen continent. In fact, Antarctica is a particularly significant remote site due to its centrality to climate change issues – both as a source of information (through ice cores) and of potential sea level rise (due to melting ice sheets) – and the fact the continent is more often imagined by humans than actually physically experienced. Although increasing numbers of people are visiting the far south through tourist cruises, their 'ice time' is generally quite limited. Similarly, scientists who travel to and live on bases in Antarctica typically only stay there for months at a time. With no indigenous population or even permanent resident population, Antarctica represents perhaps the most remote wilderness on earth. It is also arguably the most extreme, holding records for being the coldest, windiest and driest continent on the planet, with the highest average elevation.<sup>4</sup> Due to these factors, Antarctica presents one of the most problematic environments on Earth for recording sound, as it does for carrying out various other human activities. The weather is frequently inconsistent and often extreme. Animal life can be sparse and unpredictable. For these reasons and others, the far south offers unique challenges for even the most experienced sound artists and composers to navigate – physically, technologically and creatively.

Despite the considerable difficulties inherent in undertaking creative field work in Antarctica, increasing numbers of composers and sound artists have been visiting the continent in the past two decades to gain inspiration and source material for their compositions. Many of these individuals have travelled there as part of arts fellowship programs operated by various nations with scientific stations in Antarctica, such as those administered by the Australian Antarctic Division, the United States' National Science Foundation, and – until recent years – the Argentine Dirección Nacional del Antártico and the British Antarctic Survey. Others have made their own way down to the ice, typically on tourist vessels. These artists have employed myriad approaches and techniques to capture their Antarctic experiences in sound and then (re)present them to listeners. Some have focused primarily on recording biological and 'geophysical'<sup>5</sup> ambient sounds from the environment for their compositions,

3. Bryan C. Pijanowski, Almo Farina, Stuart H. Gage, Sarah L. Dumyahn, and Bernie L. Krause, 'What is Soundscape Ecology? An introduction and overview of an emerging new science', *Landscape Ecology* 26, no. 9 (2011): 1227.
4. See Peter Convey, 'Editorial: Antarctic Research: Significance to the global community', *International e-Journal of Science, Medicine and Education* 8, no. 3 (2014): 1; Prabir G. Dastidar and Olle Persson, 'Mapping the Global Structure of Antarctic Research Vis-à-vis Antarctic Treaty System', *Current Science* 89, no. 9 (2005): 1552; Erin Wayman, 'Frozen Continent May Not Be Immune to Global Warming', *Science News*, 27 July 2013, accessed 12 September 2017, <https://www.sciencenews.org/article/taking-antarctic-temperature>.
5. Pijanowski et al., 'What is Soundscape Ecology?': 1213.



such as vocalisations of penguins and seals, and sounds produced by wind, blizzards and ice cracking and calving. For example, United States-based composer Douglas Quin captured the extraordinary sounds of Weddell seals underwater, as well as sounds of emperor and Adélie penguins and seals on land, in his pioneering soundscape CD *ANTARCTICA* (1998); British sound recordist Chris Watson recorded natural sounds above and below the surfaces of Antarctica for David Attenborough's documentary *FROZEN PLANET* (2011); and Australia-based composer Lawrence English presented his untreated recordings of blizzards at two Argentine bases in Antarctica – Marambio and Esperanza – in his soundscape piece *VIENTO/ANTARCTICA* (2015). Similarly, San Francisco-based composer and performer Cheryl Leonard has created a suite of compositions, titled *ANTARCTICA: MUSIC FROM THE ICE* (2009–2014), based on her Antarctic soundscape recordings of biological and geophysical sound sources; however, she has also incorporated into these pieces sounds from natural objects (penguin bones, rocks and shells) that she collected in the far south and crafted into instruments.<sup>6</sup> Other artists, including Andrea Polli, Craig Vear and Philip Samartzis, have acknowledged the presence of humans in Antarctica by incorporating anthropogenic and mechanical sounds (in addition to biological and geophysical sounds) into compositions stemming from their respective visits to the ice. Samartzis, in particular, has aimed to observe and document the 'effects of extreme climate and weather events upon various environments, communities and infrastructure'<sup>7</sup> in several projects resulting from his two Australian Antarctic Arts Fellowships, such as his radio work *ANTARCTICA, AN ABSENT PRESENCE* and the compositions that accompany his 2016 book of the same name.<sup>8</sup>

Significantly, Antarctic-related sonic art works (and soundscape-based works in general) can reach large and diverse audiences. These works are not only showcased in live performances, but also are regularly heard in films and television programs, in exhibits at art galleries, museums and zoos, and through sound recordings on CD, LP or online that can be listened to in the comfort of one's own home, or anywhere for that matter. In addition to providing aesthetically pleasing listening experiences, these works can play a pivotal role in shaping public knowledge of places that are beyond the reach, view and earshot of most people. This is particularly important when those places are simultaneously susceptible to drastic change as a result

6. Douglas Quin, *Antarctica*, CD (Miramar: Wild Sanctuary, 1998); Carolyn Philpott, 'Promoting Environmental Awareness Through Context-Based Composition: Cheryl E. Leonard's *Antarctica: Music from the ice* (2009–2014)', *Organised Sound* 23, no. 1 (2018), forthcoming.
7. Philip Samartzis quoted in Carolyn Philpott, 'Sonic Explorations of the Southernmost Continent: Four composers' responses to Antarctica and climate change in the twenty-first century', *Organised Sound* 21, no. 1 (2016): 90.
8. Philip Samartzis, *Antarctica, An Absent Presence* (Melbourne: Thames & Hudson, 2016). See also Carolyn Philpott and Philip Samartzis, 'At the End of Night: Explorations of Antarctica and space in the sound art of Philip Samartzis', *The Polar Journal* 7, no. 2 (2017): 1–15.

of anthropogenic influences. By enabling broad audiences to engage with remote places, context-based compositions can inspire listeners to establish a visceral connection to those locales from a distance – without the need to travel or to cause further environmental impacts – perhaps promoting environmental awareness and advocacy in the process. In some cases, soundscape recordings may provide the only evidence of the existence of certain species and places that have been affected irrevocably as a result of environmental change. Douglas Quin, for example, has recorded sounds in an ice cave in Antarctica that now no longer exists.<sup>9</sup> As scholars in the field of soundscape ecology have observed: ‘Sound is a fundamental property of nature and because it can be drastically affected by a variety of human activities [it is likely that] ... recordings made today will become tomorrow’s “acoustic fossils”, possibly preserving the only evidence we have of ecosystems that may vanish in the future because of a lack of desire or ability to protect them.’<sup>10</sup> Soundscape recordings, therefore – and particularly those encapsulating the sounds of remote places – can hold significance as sonic records or artefacts, in addition to providing rich listening experiences that allow us to engage, in deep and meaningful ways, with parts of our world both within our immediate vicinity and beyond.

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9. Philpott, ‘Sonic Explorations’: 86–87.

10. Bryan C. Pijanowski et al., ‘Soundscape Ecology: The science of sound in the landscape’, *BioScience* 61.3 (2011): 203, 213.

## LISTENING IN BOGONG

Ben Byrne

Driving to Bogong from Melbourne there is a moment when you crest a hill near the turn-off for Glenrowan, when on your right you are presented with a view across the King Valley to the Alpine region beyond. You can catch glimpses of it before this but it's the first time you can really see it. Mount Buffalo towers over you from a distance in the same way that the Grampians do as you approach across the farming country of western Victoria, and Wilson's Promontory does when seen from South Gippsland. The experience is one of great magnitude, of something of such immense scale that time itself seems to move slower in its presence.

Mount Bogong is the tallest mountain in Victoria and it stands watch over the Kiewa Valley, which you cross before starting your ascent to Bogong Village. But the village is not actually on the mountain. Instead, it is on the road to Falls Creek. The village is perched next to this road, huddled over the Kiewa River below and nestled into the hillside. You can't even see the mountain from the village. Mostly all you can see is the forest of manna gums around you, which reaches up and over the ridges that the sun slowly rises over and slips behind each day. You are in the alps.

I recently visited the HOKUSAI<sup>1</sup> exhibition at the National Gallery of Victoria, which centred around THE GREAT WAVE OFF KANAGAWA, the famous print from the artist's THIRTY-SIX VIEWS OF MOUNT FUJI series. The series, which numbers forty-six prints including ten produced after the original thirty-six, captures scenes of daily life around Japan with Mount Fuji as a backdrop. In almost all of the prints the mountain is produced in its iconic form, as a gently but forcefully curved peak, often capped with snow. It stands as a sentinel, looking out over each image.

One print, however, sits apart – CLIMBING ON FUJI. It depicts a party of men climbing the mountain, with more huddled in a cave above. Fuji as we know it is nowhere to be seen in the print. Instead it is underfoot and all around the climbing party, the ground of the image. We don't have the distance to see it as a whole. We're not given the chance to stand back in awe; in just the same way that at Bogong you can't gaze out at the alps precisely because you are in them.

When you get there, Bogong feels remote, not because of the distance to the city – the drive is actually quite easy – but because of the closeness of where you are. The way this place imposes itself on you. Time moves slower. The mountains are no longer just something to look out at but something to inhabit, negotiating their uncompromising topography and extreme weather conditions.

1. HOKUSAI, National Gallery of Victoria, 27 July - 22 October 2017

While you can't gaze out at the alps from Bogong, you can always hear them. Underscoring the quiet of the town itself is a constant noise. Almost everywhere in Bogong you can hear the rush of water from the Kiewa River. The river cradles the village, filling Lake Guy below before spilling over Junction Dam and onwards downstream. The noise filters up through the trees, carried on a slight breeze, and brings with it the sounds of local wildlife. It's a familiar and calming sound, but insistent.

There is another sound too, hidden under the noise of the river. A sound that, like its source, is buried, dug into the hill below. A sound that you feel at first rather than hear. The sound of the hydroelectric Bogong Power Station harnessing that rush. The hum of electricity – power.

French economic and social theorist Jacques Attali argues that listening to noise allows us to discern that 'its appropriation and control is a reflection of power'. At Bogong, his statement is made not only obvious but literal, as the power of the water racing from the high country, sped by gravity's force down those great magnitudes seen from a distance, is harnessed for human purposes and stalled into the regular cycle of alternating current.

It is late at night that the hum is most obvious. The power station is fed with water via piping direct from the McKay Creek Power Station upriver and once it's been through the turbines, its energy used to produce electricity, the water is piped on. Understanding this process changes things a bit when we think about Attali's claim – his point still holds but the way it applies at Bogong is complicated.

The hum of electricity that can be felt late at night and heard through microphones in the village reflects human efforts to appropriate and control the power of the river, part of the vast energy of Australia's high country that we witness viewing the magnitude of its mountains from a distance. However, the noise of the river as it flows on through the hydroelectric scheme demonstrates how little of the world's power we humans manage to grasp. At Bogong, despite the hulking turbines buried beneath, the noise of our power, while intense, is dwarfed in magnitude by that of the river, as it continues its rush into the valley below.

Listening in Bogong teaches us that experiences of remoteness are tied to distance in complex ways. Distance from major centres and the services and comforts that they bring, but also a lack of distance. An inability to distance ourselves from the world, as we so often do in cities. Exposure to the power of the world, as experienced through its various geographies, ecologies and meteorologies, including our efforts to navigate and appropriate that power. Experiences of the world not as a landscape onto which we look but as environments of astonishing magnitude that envelop us in the same way the sound of the river does in the village.

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OPEN FIELDS: ON REMOTE FIELDWORK  
AND BEING IN PLACE  
Dr Kristen Sharp

'... field functions today in two ways, designating a constructed open area and a sort of theatre of operations ...'<sup>1</sup>

Undertaking fieldwork positions artists in a multidimensional and active encounter with place. This meeting unfolds through a series of 'operations', or sets of relations, which involves constant negotiation with the meaning of place: materially, socially and symbolically. One way to understand these relations of negotiation is to identify the artist as a mediator, translating their experience of place and re-presenting it through artistic outcomes. This approach assumes that the resulting artworks are some kind of 'slice' of place, or a poetic representation. But there are other ways to understand the negotiations and relations of place – between artist, between place and artwork – and between audience, artwork and place.

When artists undertake fieldwork, they are engaging in a series of symbolic, social and material positioning that locates them IN a site. To this encounter with place they bring previous experiences, ideas, expectations and imaginings, practices and equipment. Place is thus translated and reimagined through presence. We can understand this as an open area traversed by cultural and environmental discourses, and material and social dimensions. These can be seen as open-ended processual relations, a collaboration between person, place and artwork.

## IMAGINING PLACE

British social scientist and geographer Doreen Massey argues for understanding place as an event.<sup>2</sup> The meaning of place is formed through multiple processes and practices (material, social and symbolic) that are always in formation, rather than being fixed in time as a bounded or essentialised object of study that can be dissected and known. '[Space] is a product of relations-between, relations that are necessarily embedded material practices which have to be carried out, it is always in the process of being made. It is never finished; never closed.'<sup>3</sup> This does not deny the specificity of place, but acknowledges that place is formed in relation to a range of forces rather than something that can be understood as

1. John Stilgoe *What Is Landscape?* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2015), 195. Stilgoe continues: 'As early as 1340 "field" denoted too an area of operation or observation, often of active study, in ways perhaps derived from military practice.': p197.
2. Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London: Sage, 2005).
3. *Ibid.*: 9.

a singular entity, as a 'thing'. Places, like artworks, are active and defy closed interpretations or representations. They are a 'coexisting heterogeneity'.<sup>4</sup>

If the meaning of place is fluid, then likewise artworks produced out of situated fieldwork should be understood as a further element in this ecology. Undertaking fieldwork shapes an understanding of place as a lived space. Artists themselves are not just representing and presenting a perception of place through their artworks, rather they are also part of the forming and processes of this environment, as a processual action.<sup>5</sup>

The imagination can, according to anthropologist Tim Ingold, be understood as a way of living creatively in place. That is, that the imagination is PART OF the perception of place, rather than just a means to generate a symbolic presentation, such as an artwork: 'To imagine ... is not so much to conjure up images of a reality "out there", whether virtual or actual, true or false, as to participate from within, through perception and action in the very becoming of things.'<sup>6</sup> Place in this sense is not a preexisting object, or a 'ready-made' thing, awaiting artistic translation; rather, it is something that is actively formed through the imagination.

## FIELDWORK AS MATERIAL

Fieldwork is a concrete and material activity. This is not to deny the aesthetic, cultural dimensions of fieldwork, but rather to also acknowledge the deep and significant impacts of the practical and physical encounters in the field that also awaken artists' perception of place. This includes environmental factors such as weather, transport and access, as well as services such as electricity and the internet. Artists may be hauling heavy and bulky equipment, such as microphones and recording units, or cameras and tripods, while also dealing with the direct physical elements of heat, cold, rain, wind, wildlife and insects. The physical awkwardness of lugging about sound or camera recording equipment in remote terrain, or concerns about the security of equipment (either social or environmental) can play a significant role in determining the sites that are selected for fieldwork. Broader infrastructural issues beyond geography, including the politics of accessing sites, the private and public control of land, and other socio-economic factors, also shape the practice of fieldwork.

These are a few examples of the types of decisions that determine an artist's way of being in place, which is itself informed by previous experiences and practices in the field. These physical and cultural contours can define the experience and imaginative encounter for artists in very practical terms. They are also the actions that become the lived space of fieldwork.

4. Ibid.

5. Larissa Hjorth et al., *Screen Ecologies: Art, media and the environment in the Asia-Pacific region* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2016).

6. Monica Janowski and Tim Ingold, *Imagining Landscapes: Past, Present and Future* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012): 3.







## THE PLACE OF POST-PRODUCTION

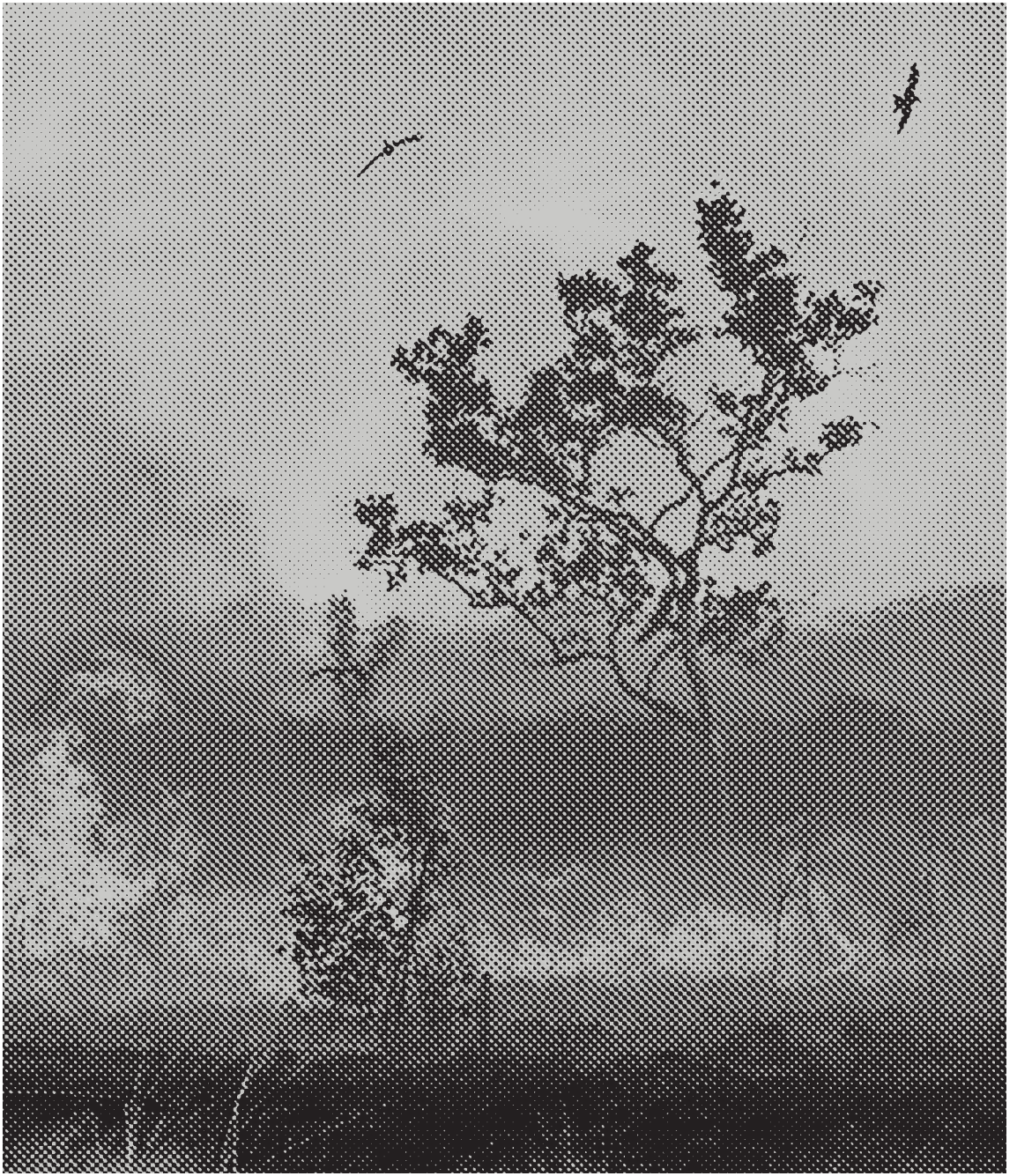
Fieldwork is not just about time spent in-situ in a location; it is also about the process of post-production, which may occur at a completely different location, such as back home or in a studio. This constructing phase is part of the process of making and of imagining place. For example, listening to recordings in a completely different locale, filtering them through software programs and trying to reconfigure a composition is always framed by the 'here and now' presence of place. This adds to the 'coexisting heterogeneity' of place, where it becomes an open area not only shaped by the original fieldwork site but also through the 'site' of post-production. It is this extension of fieldwork conducted in one place, which interpenetrates another place, that is so critical to understanding the multiple layers of meaning audiences encounter with artworks generated through fieldwork.

For audiences, the experience of distance may be at a double remove, in that they encounter a representation of place in an entirely different context – the gallery. The presentness of place in which an artwork is encountered seeps in – did I hear that in this room or in the recordings? We are always listening and seeing out of place and in place simultaneously. The place being presented and encountered by the audience through artworks is therefore fluid and changeable. It is simultaneously one of distance and closeness – a place which is under constant and active formation.

## TRACING THE OPEN FIELD

If place, and artworks created through fieldwork, cannot be understood as slices of time or fixed representations, then perhaps a different way to consider them is as open fields of encounter. A place in which to revisit, challenge, reinforce, or reinvent a sense of remoteness, a sense of place. Like the artists, the audience brings to this experience the already known and the already encountered, whether geographically, culturally or imaginatively. Yet there is also an encounter with the unfamiliar, and the unexpected. We listen and see through our own sense of place within the gallery – our sense of spatiality, climate, light, location, scale, emotion and memory. We encounter the whole space – not just the screens, the wall-works and speakers but also the edges of the gallery. We hear the sounds of the artworks, but also the air conditioning, the other people in the gallery, and the traffic and worksites outside. These elements, both deliberately presented and spontaneous, construct an area comprising multiple elements moving together – an open field. They draw attention to the perception of place as processual, as dynamic and relational. They also reveal the artwork as a material object not indexical of something else, but rather a presence in itself in its physical and conceptual form. A presence that is located in place. The artwork, as the fieldwork, is thus encountered as a living theatre of operations.

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LIMINARIA: EXPERIMENTING WITH SONIC  
TRANSLATION WITHIN RURAL SPACE IN  
SOUTHERN ITALY  
Leandro Pisano

In recent years, the practices and discourses of art have increasingly tended to consider both rural areas and the concept of declining communities as a relevant part of the theoretical reflections and experiences developed by artists and curators.<sup>1</sup>

On the one hand, the modification of the concept of territory in the post-global age, linked to changes in the perception of space and time triggered by the impact of new communication technologies,<sup>2</sup> reveals the emergence of spaces and geographies on the margins of narratives of modernity. This process defines a mobile ground where art continuously experiences itself as a set of tools, languages and methods able to cross in a critical way the territories and the complex scenarios of our contemporary age, revealing hidden or removed layers.

On the other hand, the attention of artists to the plurality of ideas produced by the processes, social joints and related political and historical contexts, oriented in a specific sense to the issues of a community or other social groups defined by common interests or agencies, produces new possible areas of intersection and investigation.

In the shuffling of the geographies of post-globality, invisible places emerge beyond the flat surface of maps as reconfigured spaces of models, practices and relational elements within rural communities, analysed through the language of art.

In this sense, rural territory becomes a cultural space where it's possible to imagine and to practise a different political economy. Art comes here not as an external force, but rather as a process that fosters a new assembly of elements, practices and possibilities that are already in circulation. It is an innovation introduced by the implementation of processes that open up spaces for interaction between artists and communities based on temporary shared interests, or simply built on chance encounters determined by dwelling transiently within the same place at the same time. It is an encounter that produces the unexpected, which reveals the art in its ability to go beyond the constraints imposed by disciplinary boundaries and syntax, and which redraws the rural area as a critical space in which to query the semantic fields of terms such as 'community' or 'identity' in order to find new ways of translation. Here, the concept of 'rural'

1. Margo Handwerker and Richard Saxton, eds., *A Decade of Country Hits: Art on the rural frontier* (Heijningen: Jap Sam Books, 2014); Leandro Pisano, 'Comunita "sperimentale": lo spazio aumentato dell'arte nelle esperienze di Latronico e di Interferenze', in Bianco-Valente and Pasquale Campanella, eds., *A Cielo Aperto. Pratiche di collaborazione nell'arte contemporanea a Latronico* (Milan: Postmedia Books, 2016), 46–51.
2. Franco Farinelli, *La crisi della ragione cartografica* (Milan: Einaudi Books, 2014).

is framed not so much in a geographical sense as a 'place', but rather as a political and cultural 'position'.<sup>3</sup>

In this perspective art and, in a specific sense, sound art, are critical tools that allow us to rethink the space–time streams in which the territory is inscribed. Art allows us to come out of the fixity of museums and galleries in order to reread the complexity of the elements through which to escape the commonplaces of an inherited rurality and also to rediscuss the sense of belonging to that territory.

At the same time, sound brings out many of the conditions of contemporary rurality – through the practice of listening we can get a sense of the complexity and dynamics from which the territory reveals itself in different ways and perspectives. Listening closely allows us to 'feel' its topologies – the tones, harmonies and dissonances that vibrate at the same time in which these processes take place.

Rural places rediscover, through sound art narratives, traces and paths that exceed the vision of a territory fixed in its marginality, by striving for the recovery of an active force that diverts the gaze beyond any instrumental or rational view.<sup>4</sup>

In the folds of these spaces, we can hear the echo of a pulsating cultural fabric, one that resonates with forgotten, neglected or erased stories. Other narratives, filled with new meanings or concepts like 'tradition' that, removed from the role of cultural simulacrum, become instead a dynamic part of the flow of translation, transformation and transit that returns like an underground river of the unconscious, latent but indelible.

As a fieldwork-based research platform aimed at developing sustainable cultural, social and economic networks in the Fortore area, a rural micro-region in the province of Benevento, Southern Italy, Liminaria<sup>5</sup> is one of the possible results of these aesthetic processes mediated by sound, expressed in terms of a project that reflects and transmits not only aspects of collective and individual memories of a rural region, but also new experiences and habits.

The Liminaria project unfolds through the planning and execution of 'actions' in the surrounding territory, all carried out in joint collaboration with local communities. In this way, it seeks to test out new models of intervention in rural areas, thus

3. '[The rural] inherits a certain quality of tension keeping intact the immensity of its "otherness" and its "sameness" – it is a position not a place.' Jennifer Davy, 'Rural Economy: How much for that donkey or is that a cow?', *Art Lies*, vol. 65 (2010): 21.
4. The postcolonial analysis of sound is currently finding its foothold in the sonic studies debate. Among the most relevant references, it's important to mention at least: Anja Kangieser, 'Geopolitics and the Anthropocene: Five propositions for sound', *GeoHumanities*, vol. 1, no. 1 (2015): 1–6; Julia Catherine Obert, 'The Cultural Capital of Sound: Québecité's acoustic hybridity', *Postcolonial Text*, vol. 2, no. 4 (2006): 1–14; and Ana María Ochoa Gautier, *Aurality: Listening and Knowledge in Nineteenth-Century Colombia* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).
5. Liminaria ([www.liminaria.org](http://www.liminaria.org)) is one of the projects developed by Interferenze New Arts Festival ([www.interferenze.org](http://www.interferenze.org)) and which takes place in different rural regions of South Italy – Irpinia, Sannio and Puglia (Barsento-Trulli area) – since 2003. All these projects draw on art, technocultures and the rural. From the original form of the art and new technologies Interferenze Festival a series of hybrid format (residences, laboratories, workshops, research field projects) initiatives have been developed through the years, resulting in a research platform dealing with the concept of the (neo-) rural and based on different multidisciplinary approaches inspired by new media studies as well as cultural and postcolonial studies.



reconfiguring rural territories as dynamic places while revaluing local resources.

Founded in 2014, Liminaria has undertaken different kinds of actions so far within the framework of the project: cultural events and performances (including a sound-art residency programme for international artists), midterm coworking projects with local schools, activities of network optimisation, new-media related initiatives, hybrid and experimental research protocols.

The Liminaria residency program is an essential part of the project. The international sound artists who join the program share the project's mission of shunning merely descriptive approaches to the territory and its local communities, activating instead a critical, two-way exchange in which local communities are called upon to tell their stories and the stories of their territory together with the artists, thus co-threading a narrative that creatively changes year after year. Indeed, since the very first edition of Liminaria, the residency program has focused on the very evident characteristics of the Fortore region to narrate them in an active sense. These characteristics include complex dynamics between rural territory and urban space, the issues of 'generation' and 'time' within local communities (depopulation, movement, and cultural heritage), the peculiar geophysical characteristics of the place (remoteness, wind, energy and infrastructure, or the lack thereof).

However, over the years the approaches within the residencies have changed significantly. The territory has very soon ceased to be a mere space for the artists to describe as if they were detached observers or detached listeners; on the contrary, the territory has claimed its right to be experienced in all its complexity as a milieu made of different, co-existing elements.

In terms of sonic thought and sonic research, this has entailed the elaboration and production of projects that have increasingly addressed composition over documentation and 'innerscapes' over static notions of the soundscape, thus revealing the acousmatic, the fleeting and the eerie within the milieu, in the consideration of absent as well as present elements, human as well as non-human forces.

Since 2014, nineteen artists have been invited to take part in the Liminaria micro-residencies program. The residency format is intriguing in itself, as it requires a shift in thought and art-making. In the specific case of sound-based and rural-based residencies, this is an approach inspired by the possibility to translate sound art outside the white walls of museums and galleries, urging artists to experience different geographies and territories. It's a bi-directional movement, from an urban environment to a 'remote' or peripheral one and vice versa, that can be generated as a result of an artistic process enhanced by the dialectic of movement and difference.

In this sense, the residency format fosters a slower creative process, pushing artists to question their social 'self-representation' to relocate in a context far beyond the one in which their daily practice normally feeds and finally allowing renegotiation of the terms of artistic production and of knowledge through the enhancement of new relationships and a multicultural debate.

Operating in such an environment encourages the artists to adapt, to redesign and to question languages, materials and their approaches to the territory itself. They consider an all-encompassing experience of involvement, while entering into a relationship with a mixture of different ways of living, conceiving, narrating and performing the world. Their meeting with the local context is not only instrumental, but in some way organic, built during a period spent researching, communicating and immersing themselves in the local area.

The collaborative<sup>6</sup> interaction between the artist and the local community is based on a range of methodological elements that should be problematised, to prevent implemented aesthetic practices leading not only to the easy conversion of materials and experiences of local everyday life – in what American art critic and historian Hal Foster<sup>7</sup> calls a ‘cultural proxy’<sup>8</sup> built on the centralisation of the anthropological gaze – but also to an ethnographic drift in which the authority of the artist’s voice affirms itself in an undisputed and recognised way.

In this performative process, the artist and the community meet in the in-between space in which is put in place a decisive negotiation of the concept of re-subjectivisation, within the complex field of forces in which it is defined as the act of meeting itself. The dialogue that the artist builds with the object/subject of experience requires a clear, re-subjectivised positioning, in the narrative of the ‘other’.

Even sound practices can trigger a series of re-subjectivisation dynamics in the narration/action process with regards to the context in which they act, in particular when the same context within which a sound work is produced is emphasised, avoiding a purely acoustic or a ‘sound-in-itself’ approach. The sound dimension, which acts as a powerful metaphor for the experience of place by the artists, has a critical role in the intervention model implemented by a project such as *Limnaria* and acts to foreground the context within which the specific sound work is produced.

The activated aesthetic dialogue between sound artists and the local community exceeds the burden of ‘objectivity’ reflected by the concrete documentation of reality conveyed by some sound archiving practices, instead establishing a more thoroughgoing exchange between subject and context. It is a process that opens the territory itself to the possibility for the local community to reaffirm its central role and re-occupy its soundscape with a force that questions and shatters the

6. The problematisation of the ‘collaborative’ interaction between artist and local community emerges here as an inescapable node: on the one hand, the collaboration between the artist and the local community is a powerful tool to reoccupy lost cultural spaces and to give voice to counter-stories and memory; on the other hand, it is clear the risk of an ‘ethnographic’ authoritarianism expressed through the artist’s gaze. Cf. Miwon Kwon, *One Place After Another: Site-specific art and locational identity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2002).
7. Hal Foster, ‘The Artist as Ethnographer’, in *The Return of the Real: The avant-garde at the end of the century*, MIT Press, Cambridge, MA, 171–204.
8. *Ibid.*



supposed unity of the present, challenging the modernist paradigm of rural territory perceived as a simulacrum of the past.

In terms of a complex system that conveys ideas and bodies, by connecting different spaces and times, contemporary languages and traditions, the rural territory thus overcomes the limits of the map and its representation. Reconfigured, in a Foucauldian sense<sup>9</sup> as a heterotopic device, it suggests different ways to experience history and culture, to instantiate time and space in peripheral places of modernity.

From this perspective other narratives arise, to the extent that the sounds produced by the artists with the local community bring out – through a temporary translation process – fragments of a past that opens to the dynamic and unpredictable trajectories of the present, fueling a process in which, starting with the revision of the current, it's possible to reimagine (and re-occupy) the rural territory as a different landscape.<sup>10</sup>

Leandro Pisano (IT) is a curator, writer and new-media producer for projects and events focused on new media, sound and technological arts. He is the founder and director of Interferenze New Arts Festival, an event taking place in Southern Italy since 2003. Pisano holds a PhD in cultural and postcolonial studies from University of Naples 'L'Orientale'.

9. Michel Foucault, M 1984, 'Dits et écrits 1984, Des espaces autres (conférence au Cercle d'études architecturales, 14 mars 1967), *Architecture, Mouvement, Continuite*, vol 5 (1984): 46–49.
10. Leandro Pisano, *Nuove geografie del suono. Spazi e territori nell'epoca postdigitale* (Milan: Meltemi, 2017).

# ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES

**NATASHA BARRETT (UK)** composes acousmatic music, electroacoustic music for live soloists and ensembles, and sound-art installations. She has also created music for theatre and dance, large-scale outdoor media productions, background sound environments for exhibitions and incidental music for games and jingles. Many creations have involved collaborations with musicians and visual artists, as well as architects and scientists.  
→ [natashabarrett.org](http://natashabarrett.org)

**BENOIT BORIES (FR)** is a composer working with music, research and creative uses of sound. His work encompasses acousmatic and electroacoustic concert composition, sound installations, theatre music, large-scale outdoor media productions, sound-architectural works and interactive art. Bories is interested in listeners hearing and feeling music and art through sound and temporal structure, rather than them needing to understand the complexity of his techniques.  
→ [faidosonore.net](http://faidosonore.net)

Based in London, **MATTHEW BERKA (AU)** is an Australian artist and curator who works with film, video and sound. Through audiovisual assemblage he creates speculative films that explore associations between place and the unknown.  
→ [matthewberka.net](http://matthewberka.net)

**DAVID BURROWS (AU)** is a visual artist concerned with exploring spatial perception, the physiological means by which we sense volume, and psychological readings of place. Trained in France at Le Fresnoy Studio for Contemporary Arts (2007), Burrows has exhibited throughout Europe and Australia. He was the 2011 Australian Antarctic Fellow.  
→ [davidburrows.info](http://davidburrows.info)

**ANNE COLOMES (FR)** is an artist working with drawing, video and text. Her art practice very often leads to things that lie hidden beneath the image. She is interested in inner natures, unfathomable spaces and

unattached landscapes. At the moment she is inspired by geology and poetry. Colomes is currently living and working in Bordeaux, France where she teaches contemporary drawing at the School of Fine Arts.  
→ [annecolomes.fr](http://annecolomes.fr)

**MADELYNNE CORNISH (AU)** is an audiovisual artist who documents the effects of climate and weather on natural and built environments, and the social and environmental conditions affecting remote communities.  
→ [bogongsound.com.au/artists/madelynne-cornish](http://bogongsound.com.au/artists/madelynne-cornish)

**YANNICK DAUBY (FR)** has been based in Taiwan since 2007. His practice explores the soundscapes of the island through field recording, audio documentaries and community projects.  
→ [kalerne.net/main](http://kalerne.net/main)

**LAWRENCE ENGLISH (AU)** is a composer, artist and curator based in Australia. Working across an array of aesthetic investigations, English's work explores the politics of perception and prompts questions of field, perception and memory. English utilises a variety of approaches, including visceral live performance and installation, to create works that ask participants to consider their relationship to place and embodiment.  
→ [lawrenceenglish.com](http://lawrenceenglish.com)

**HUGHES GERMAIN (FR)**, is a sound artist and composer interested in expressing sonic experiences through immersion, materiality and movement. His practice establishes spaces that he uses to measure, explore and penetrate environmental conditions and social exchanges.  
→ [hgermain.net](http://hgermain.net)

**MARTIN KAY (AU)** is a sound artist and designer who primarily utilises unmixed and unedited environmental sound recordings to create audio montages and compositions that explore the intersection of architecture, psychoacoustics, social dynamics and place. Through employing a technologically limited

(recording-focused) work methodology, Kay is driven to find inventive recording techniques that re-contextualise his surroundings.

→ [mountainblack.net](http://mountainblack.net)

SLAVEK KWI (IE) focuses on electroacoustic sound-paintings. His complex audio-situations are mainly created from site-specific recordings such as tropical rainforests, resulting in subjective reports for radio broadcast and 'cinema for the ear', and inspire fresh and idiosyncratic compositional approaches pertinent to the places, situations and events he engages with.

→ [artificialmemorytrace.com](http://artificialmemorytrace.com)

JAY-DEA LOPEZ (AU) explores the relationship between sound and our social and environmental heritage. Lopez hails from the Northern Rivers region of New South Wales and his aural journeys document the disappearing acoustic ecologies of the area. Made using sound and field recordings, his works reflect the social and environmental anxieties of the early 21st century.

→ [soundlikenoise.org/tag/jay-dea-lopez](http://soundlikenoise.org/tag/jay-dea-lopez)

DOUGLAS QUIN (US) is a sound designer, naturalist, public radio commentator and music composer. He is renowned for his groundbreaking work in Antarctica where he travelled to explore and document its varied, alien sonic environments – from seals communicating beneath sheets of ice to the shifting and cracking noise of the ice itself.

→ [dqmedia.com](http://dqmedia.com)

MATTHEW QUOMI'S (AU) practice of architecture explores his personal connection to Australia's postwar development. His work has evolved to include oral history and the collating of archival documentation, followed by rigorous analysis and documentation in the field. This research will conclude with the publication of three books, with the third telling the story of the Kosciuszko Chalet Chairlift.

→ [instagram.com/matthewquomi](http://instagram.com/matthewquomi)

PHILIP SAMARTZIS (AU) makes work that interrogates the effects of isolation and extreme weather events within remote settings to measure the impact the environment has on vulnerable communities. Samartzis was the 2009 and 2015 Australian Antarctic Division Arts Fellow.

→ [bogongsound.com.au/artists/philip-samartzis](http://bogongsound.com.au/artists/philip-samartzis)

POLLY STANTON (AU) is a moving image artist, sound practitioner and researcher. Her work investigates the experience of looking and listening within contested environments, speculative landscapes and more-than-human worlds.

→ [pollystanton.com](http://pollystanton.com)

MICHAEL VORFELD (DE) is a visual artist and musician based in Berlin who creates installations and performances with light, sound, photography and film. He plays percussion and self-designed string instruments and realises electroacoustic sound pieces. He is active in the field of experimental and improvised music and sound art, and is often involved in site-specific art projects.

→ [vorfeld.org](http://vorfeld.org)

CHRIS WATSON (UK) specialises in recording wildlife and natural phenomena. He records the sounds of animals, habitats and atmospheres from around the world. As a freelance composer and sound recordist, Watson specialises in creating spatial sound installations that feature a strong sense and spirit of place. He has contributed to a number of David Attenborough documentaries in the LIFE and FROZEN PLANET series and has released albums of his field recordings.

→ [chriswatson.net](http://chriswatson.net)

JANA WINDEREN (NO) researches hidden depths using the latest technology and her work reveals the complexity and strangeness of the unseen world beneath. The audio topography of the oceans and the depth of ice crevasses are brought to the surface. She is concerned with finding and revealing sounds from hidden sources, both those inaudible to the human senses as well as sounds from places and creatures difficult to access.

→ [janawinderen.com](http://janawinderen.com)

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

SUPER FIELD has been conceived by the Bogong Centre for Sound Culture in collaboration with RMIT Design Hub.

Curators: Madelynne Cornish and Philip Samartzis  
Exhibition design: Baracco+Wright Architects  
Graphic design: Public Office

RMIT Design Hub team

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Technical Assistants: Gavin Bell, Robert Jordan, Simon Maisch, Jessica Wood

Supported by the Institut Français, the Municipality of Toulouse and the Alliance Française in Australia.

### THE BOGONG CENTRE FOR SOUND CULTURE

The Bogong Centre for Sound Culture (B-CSC) is an independent regional arts initiative supporting projects focusing on sustainable energy production, effects of climate change in wilderness areas, ethnographic studies of remote communities, chronicling vanishing industrial procedures, and systems used to represent natural and built environments. Additionally, the B-CSC facilitates a broad cultural program comprising festivals, exhibitions, publications, master classes and artist talks focusing on site-specific art practices. The B-CSC is situated at Bogong Alpine Village, located 350 kilometres from Melbourne in northeast Victoria in Alpine National Park.

### BARACCO+WRIGHT ARCHITECTS

Mauro Baracco and Louise Wright (Baracco + Wright Architects) work over a diverse range of locations from conglomerate inner urban areas to sensitive rural and coastal environments. They explore how to make architecture that is generous, opportunistic and connected to a local physical environment as well as the non-physical, mixed conditions of each context. They approach projects by thinking through a whole-of-world view where a building may not necessarily be the solution, placing value on the very occupation of land. Their built environments often take on simple geometries and restrained material palettes that prioritise the spatial condition and rely on their relationship with landscape. They integrate academic and practice-based research, applied over a range of disciplines that effect the built environment to find meaningful ways that architectural design can contribute.

### PUBLIC OFFICE

Led by Paul Mylecharane, Public Office is a collaborative research, design and development practice that focuses on the intersection of online and offline publishing for arts, culture, commons and pedagogical practices.