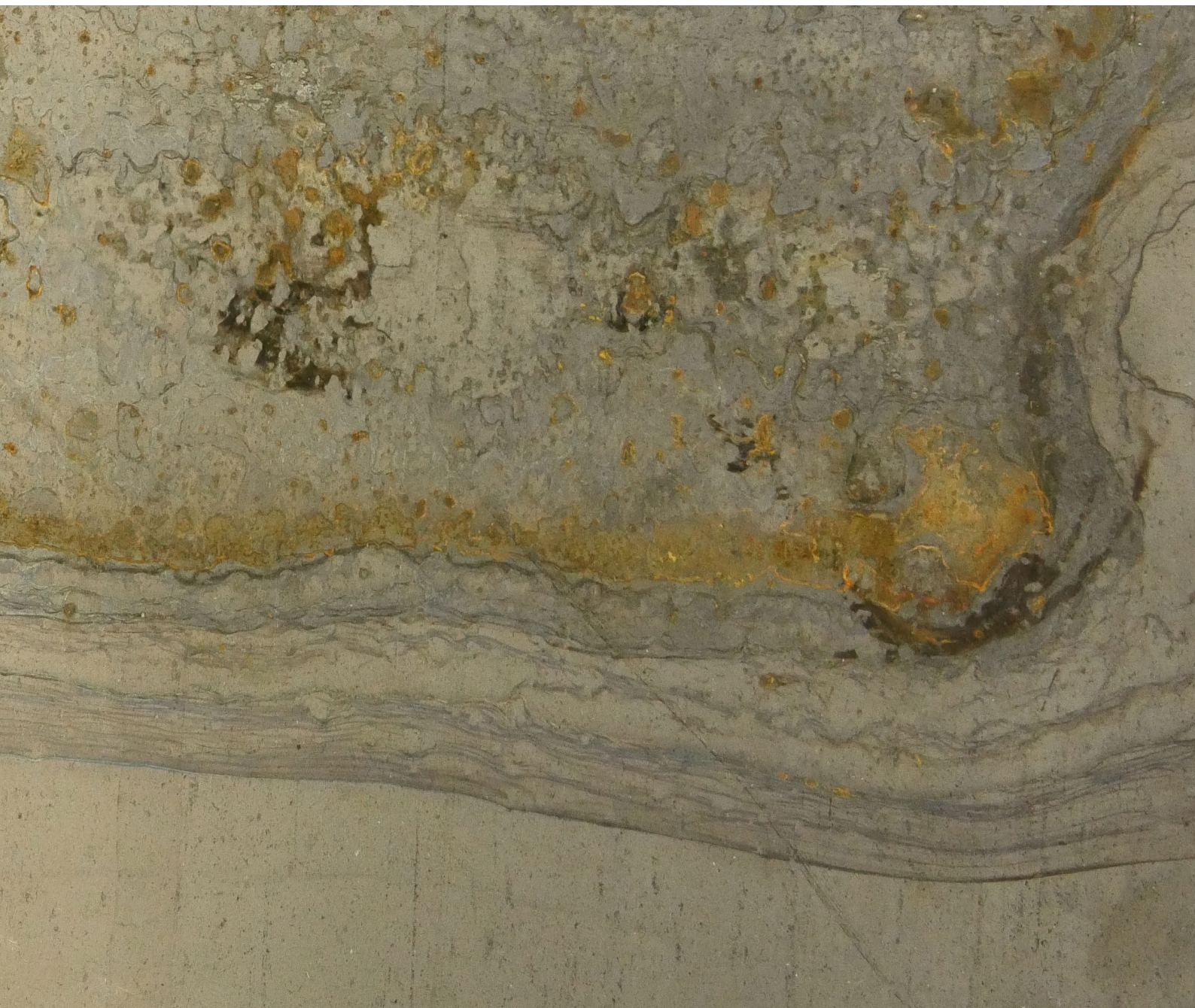




PORTFOLIO

SELECTED WORKS

Rees Archibald



BIO // ARTIST STATEMENT

My background lies in instrumental performance. I studied saxophone and completed a Bachelor of Music degree in Sydney, Australia, working with C20th century new music repertoire. During my undergraduate studies I became fascinated with the artistic traditions of Asia and particularly Japan. I felt a deep connection with a world view in which human creativity becomes transcendent through chance encounters with the fragile ephemerality of the natural world. The sound of a koto together with the singing of an insect, or dance accompanied by the sudden sighing of wind in the trees.

I worked at the Tokyo National University of Fine Arts and Music as a Japanese Ministry of Education research scholar between 1998-2000 focusing on traditional arts. I studied the *shakuhachi* (a traditional Zen bamboo flute) and investigated connections between traditional performance practices, aesthetics, and specific psychological states, as in meditation. For example, the Japanese have an aesthetic of *ma* 間, which could be translated as interval, timing, poise, or perhaps 'the space between actions'. *Ma* is not conceptual and cannot be planned or rationally decided during an activity. Achieving *ma* in a manner appropriate to each situation is in fact a somatic process deeply rooted in the physicality of the body and breath, and essentially involves moving 'beyond thought'.

This work in Japan forms the core of my aesthetic: I use the physicality of the body; I work with process; I want materials to 'explore themselves'. As with Brian Eno and Stan Brakhage, I think of my work as being like gardening - a bottom-up style of making and of generating complexity, rather than any top-down illusion of total control over intricate forms and outcomes. Making is dynamic, lived. Most importantly, making is a process; a process of problem setting/ solving using materials - not a demonstration of thinking done previously or elsewhere. Materials have a life of their own which the artist joins with in a process of feeling out, of exploration, of stumbling around and bumping into things, of hopefully placing themselves on 'a path of surprises'.

I recently completed a PhD in music composition at the University of Sheffield in the UK. My project used sonic artworks to investigate anthropologist Tim Ingold's notion of textility. Ingold uses this term to address what he sees as the distorted way we currently understand the process of making. All too often, he argues, our view of making is hylomorphic: we read objects backwards and understand making as the imposition of predetermined ideas on materials which are inert and practically lifeless.

In contrast, Ingold presents textility as a situation in which making becomes 'an intervention in fields of force and flow'. Artists join with the lines and contours latent in materials to "find the grain of the world's becoming (Ingold, 2010)", arriving at outcomes which are a collaboration between human agency and materiality. Paul Klee perfectly expresses this when he says, "drawing is taking a line for a walk."

I am active as a pedagogue, and worked as an academic for many years in areas such as music technology, media arts, and music performance. I run workshops in performance and composition, listening, programming and electronics.

My work has been performed and shown in venues such as The Kitchen in New York City, ZKM/HfG in Germany, the Sydney Opera House, Red Gate Gallery, Beijing, and the Emit/Time Festival in Bern, Switzerland.



Photographer : Artūras Bulota/Kaunas Pilnas

Sounds of place

Audio soundscape installation for 8-10 loudspeakers
Australia. 2022.



Sounds of place is an immersive soundscape installation for 8-10 loudspeakers about Helensburgh historic cemetery south of Sydney, Australia.

A site specific audio artwork commissioned by Wollongong City Council, the project considers the cemetery as a site of intersecting stories: of people who are buried there, their relatives, the history of the town and how it developed, all of which are underpinned and shaped by the environment - plants, animals, weather and fire.

Ten Audiomoths wildlife sound recorders were used to create wide area field recordings at the cemetery and combined with spoken word interviews which resulted in a multi-channel audio installation.

People can move and explore inside the cemetery 'sound field' which has been translated down to room size. Birds, frogs, cars, planes, the wind in the trees... and from the loudspeakers emerge voices talking about memories and human connections.

when Huygens met a ballerina

Five metronomes, video projection, laptop running Max/MSP/Jitter software. .
Rees Archibald (sound and image), Greta Bernotaite (dance)..



when Huygens met a ballerina is a performance work for five metronomes, laptop running Max/MSP/Jitter, video projection and five channel audio.

The work was commissioned as part of a series of events taking place at the Kunstsammlung Nord-Rhein Westfalen K21 in Dusseldorf during October 2019 focused on the notion of 'sonification', defined as the use of non-verbal audio to convey data or information.

I chose to work with metronomes, a classic mechanical device used in music training to sonify time periods; dividing these into musical tempi.

Metronomes are in fact pendulums, and a key part of this work traces its roots back to the Enlightenment and to the Dutch scientist Christiaan Huygens, who is credited as being the first theoretical physicist, and the inventor of the pendulum clock.

Huygens noticed that pendulum clocks, if placed on the same wall, would eventually synchronise their movements. When oscillating systems have a way to share energy, they are said to be 'coupled', and have an ability to synchronise motion..

This 'coupling' and 'uncoupling' became a central structural aspect of my work: the first section of this piece uses uncoupled systems in which the metronomes fragment or shatter both sound and image. The second section allows the metronomes to couple, and drive the audio-visual material in synchronisation.

21296 sliding

6400mm X 1500mm X 1mm steel plate, 6200mm X 1500mm X 1mm steel plate, contact microphones, audio transducers, laptop running Max/MSP/Jitter. 2018.



21296 sliding is a sculptural audio installation using large steel plates, contact microphones, audio transducers and laptop running pitch shifting software.

A microphone and audio transducer are directly connected using the material of the work itself; a connection which, at high levels of amplification, results in the creation of an acoustic feedback loop. As the transducer plays back this sound, the work transforms into a series of large scale sonic objects, sounding in direct relation to their inherent physical resonant properties.

The laptop is used to control the overall volume of the work, and alters the frequency of the sound using pitch shifting.

As a result of this shift in pitch feedback tones are moved away from a single most dominant sound, and begin shifting and flowing, finding new frequencies to which the steel is more or less sympathetic. At times remaining fairly muted; at times ringing like a bell.

overflowing room tones

Orange microcrush, Yamaha MSR250, microphone, laptop running Max/MSP/Jitter. 2018.



Overflowing Room Tones is a work that can function as both a sound performance or installation. The piece is for multiple loudspeakers, a single microphone, and a room.

Multiple acoustic feedback loops are set up in the room between a microphone and speaker outputs. The way each loop activates the properties of the room differs due to the size of the speaker and its relationship with the microphone and overall space.

Each speaker plays all of the sound captured by the microphone and so plays back every feedback loop. While every sound produced 'rings' the room as it is a resonant frequency of the room, only particular sounds resonate powerfully for each speaker/microphone pair. Energy levels move from one feedback stream over into others as they gather momentum and volume before dropping off again.

the sound was already inside

01. 2000mm X 1000mm X 0.6mm steel plate with flowers, transducer and contact microphone. 2016.

02. 2000mm X 300mm X 3mm steel plate, transducer and contact microphone. 2016



In Indonesian Gamelan, metal percussion instruments are considered home to spirit entities.

In this series of sound installation works, high levels of amplification and a direct connection between a microphone and audio transducer is used to create acoustic feedback through physical materials of various sculptural objects. As the sound passes around this loop, an object begins to vibrate and move, making sound according to its own physical characteristics, responding to its unique inner life.

A core idea in these works is that the materials 'explore themselves.' The

sounds heard are not produced externally; you are listening to a feedback loop explore the harmonic potential of the objects as the sound moves between different states of energy.



voices under the earth

1600mm X 450mm X 2mm steel plate, audio transducer, small audio amplifier, audio player, LED lighting. 2017.



"...and I cried. By reason of my affliction I cried unto you and you heard me; out of the belly of Hell I cried, and you heard my voice. For I was cast into the deep, in the midst of the seas; floods compassed about me: and billows and waves passed over me."

We journey deep into the dark places, the places that lurk and lie in wait beneath the surface of our minds. We seek a deeper understanding of our humanity; our understanding will not be a direct understanding.

We stand at the edge of an abyss and from this bottomless pit a beast rises up to meet us. A fight to the death. Suddenly we hear the song of the earth.

Voices under the earth was developed for the Šilainiai [Fortas] Project 2017 which took place in Kaunas, Lithuania. Underground sections of an old fortification were used as part of this event. The journey an audience takes down into the dark is used as a metaphor for an inward journey and encounter with the unconscious mind. Mythic texts were selected and read through a steel plate which acted as a resonant sound object for the voice and various other sounds over a 20 minute looping composition.

stone garden 03

Steel wire, contact microphones, audio speakers, small audio amplifier, river stones,. 2017.



In this work, an audio speaker and microphone are directly connected using a long piece of wire. A large river stone is hung at the end of this wire from the roof or high point in a space with the weight of the stone pulling the wire tight.

A speaker is connected by threading the wire through its metal frame and a contact microphone is clipped to the wire at varying distances from the speaker. When the volume of the system is raised, the direct physical contact between speaker and microphone creates acoustic feedback. The action of the speaker on the wire (as it vibrates to produce sound) adds to the complexity of the system by turning the wire into a vibrating string that modulates the overall sound.

requiem for owl

Steel wire, contact microphones, car audio amplifier, audio speakers. 2015.



Requiem for owl is an open installation work which took place over one week in a warehouse in Leeds, UK in 2016. The work was named after a dead Barn Owl which was found inside the building as the work was taking place.

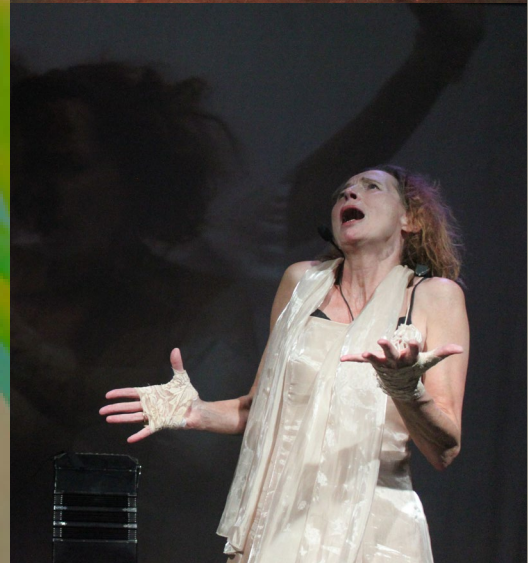
The piece acted as a kind of durational performance-installation in which various ideas were developed and explored using long lengths of wire to connect contact microphones and acoustic loudspeakers. The wire forms a physical path for the transmission of acoustic feedback and as the speaker starts to move the wire becomes a long, vibrating string.

A somatic, physically based approach was taken as part of this work. The space was prepared each day by sweeping the floor. Each iteration of the work was a process of feeling and sensing rather than strategising in advance. The work became a process unfolding over time focused on ideas of making-as-thinking and finding ways to open oneself up to unseen ideas. To discover newness right in front of us but just out of sight.



mitslalom

Caroline Wilkins (composition/performance), Oded Ben-Tal (sound), Rees Archibald (visuals). 2013.



The title is a play on the affinity, in Hebrew, between the word for sound (Tsil) and shadow (Tsel). If the word existed in the language it might mean 'sonorities of shadows'. The piece emerges out of Zaum: beyond mind – an ongoing collaboration between composer/performers Caroline Wilkins and Oded Ben-Tal. Zaum is a sound theatre piece particularly interested in the notions of embodied musical performance as it relates to the digital nature of much of the sonic material and the changing relationship between the different types of presence. A chance encounter with Rees Archibald in 2013 led us to try and extend our collaboration using live video.



A documentary saga of the OuLiPo

A video by Rees Archibald, Andrew Infanti and Matthew Shlomowitz.. 21 minutes. 2007.



A playful exploration of this post-war French literary movement, OuLiPo is an acronym that translates as “workshop of potential literature” most famously explored by Georges Perec and Raymond Queneau. The tenet of the OuLiPo is to create literature with constraints (not using the letter E an infamous example, or replacing nouns in texts with other from the dictionary).

six aspects of the body in image and sound

Music Matthew Shlomowitz, video Rees Archibald. 19 minutes. 2004.



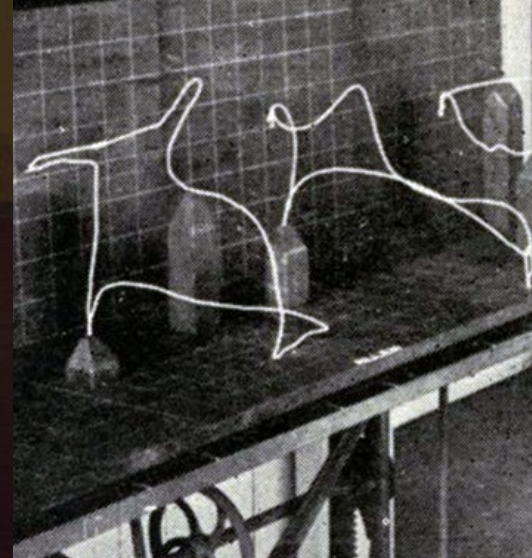
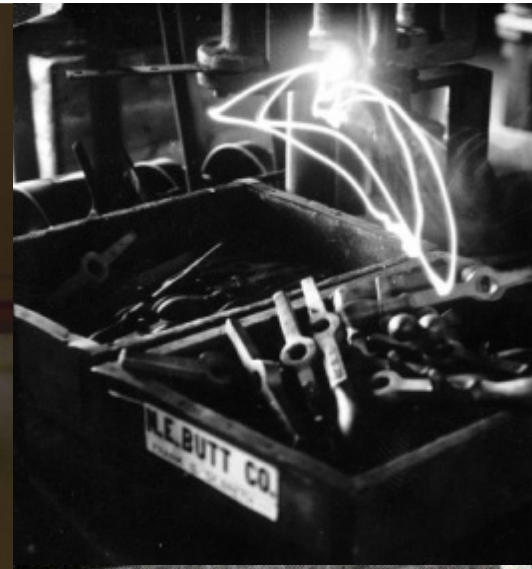
Six Aspects is an audio-visual work for instrumental ensemble and video. The six sections of this work are each based on a compositional process in which repeating units (audio and visual) are layered over one another. Each looping unit has its own speed and duration and, in combination with each other, creates an overlapping kaleidoscope or tapestry.

Each of the six sections takes a specific visual representation of the body as its subject, beginning at the hand and moving inwards to the torso. The continual permutation and repetition of the subject that the compositional process generates allows for the material to be explored, abstracted and re-interpreted. The audio and visual components do not seek material unison or temporal synchronicity. They share structural

principles but they move independently as interacting forces.

a fabrication

Rees Archibald and Jo Ray.
Video installation. 2016.



A collaboration with artist Jo Ray exploring emulation and improvisation in making.

What it is to follow a template, to plan, or to resist planning one's actions? How do we begin an action when we are unsure what is required, continue when uncertain, or conclude if we do not know what is expected?

The work required one of us to make a paper model, and to record the sound of this process. Having no prior knowledge of the original form (but a shared material and kit-list) the other would then listen to the recording and attempt to 'read' the sounds and transcribe them into a new model. A game of 'whispers' which could lead to many iterations. We consider the work a preliminary sketch

for future development.

The work began with a conversation about Frank and Lillian Gilbreth's time and motion studies of the early 20th Century. The Gilbreths' aim was to identify a prescribed method of working to attain a predictable outcome time and again. Our concern was to draw out the peculiar qualities of the making process when one is uncertain of an outcome.

The work also begins to address the performance of making, and what it is to 'practice'.