

On Site

Exhibitions, installations, etc

Din

195 Mare Street, London, UK
This summer the US based Johns Hopkins Perception & Mind Lab published a landmark study essentially concluding that we hear silence, or as *Scientific American* reported, "our brain actively perceives silence in the same way it hears sound". This assertion is firmly in my mind on entering Din, an exhibition of "sound related works" that are silent, presented by The Thames Submarine at 195 Mare Street – a modest Georgian mansion in the heart of Hackney undergoing renovation into a community space. The project is wholly site specific, playing in and with the house in this porous threshold between the artworks and the life of the building.

Beginning in the basement, a giant iron range suggests the titular din this domestic engine room must have once produced; opposite, the anonymous work *Tin Pan Alley* places a row of tin foil spheres, scrunched-up ends of a packed lunch, along stove-like crockery shelves in a delicate crescendo.

Further sculptures share in this ludic immediacy: Dion Kitson's *Conch*, an ageing rugby ball, achingly evokes its namesake. Lynn Loo's *Reframe* repeats in liminal spaces, each one half of a picture frame. Matt Harding uses only in situ materials, dancing slivers of tinder and tiny woodcuts. Ecka Mordecai offers visitors her three perfumes, each a portal to a precise listening experience. And literally rearticulating the curatorial contention, Sebastiane Hegarty presents an existing text work in a new variation for cassettes and empty house: I am not

imagining the sounds of these words, you are.

Meanwhile, O YAMA O spill over a whole salon, including kinetic sculptures redolent of their live performance – one makes a few tiny taps that pierce the gentle hum of visitors in our heightened state of listening. There are moving images too: Mute Frequencies show two soundtracked silent films on video monitor; peering into another cubbyhole you can see Livia Garcia's graphic video score.

The grand ballroom furthers this focus on scores, maps, blueprints inaugurated by Kenichi Iwasa's *Composition that I am planning to do in 2031*, a hand-drawn monochrome score on a giant roll stretched across the floor. Maria Chavez's arresting paintings of mountainous ranges conceptually meld into the phonographic grooves the artist is most associated with and shown here in smaller print form plead to be experienced at full scale.

Echoing concerns for landscape, Cathy Lane's outsize map of the Hebrides with its handwritten labels requires steps to read higher parts. Turning to the body, Esmeralda Valencia Lindström simply shares the written exercises she received to train her voice after a silencing laryngitis, while Rebecca Glover's rhizomal ceramic ears are at once tactile and disturbing.

Three final works are in exquisite conversation. Foley artist Sue Harding arranges her shoe collection of at least 50 pairs in a corner array, props vital to her oeuvre as much or more than their quotidian use. Angharad Davies's *Rydal Mount* documents the belongings of her late grandmother in 50 photographs by type: here a handful of prints on a wall grid, others in a tray for use in performance. Lastly, Carole Finer's typewriter is offered posthumously to be played with. While the exhibition of scores and similar ephemera can often feel frustratingly mute, here the proposition of a shared silence imbues these works with a liveliness in their joyful communing – perhaps loudest of all is the vivid community this exhibition maps.

Irene Revell

Johanna Billing

Each Moment Presents What Happens
Whitechapel Gallery, London, UK

Form is a curious thing. It has a habit of overflowing its banks and seeping into its surrounds. Near the beginning of Johanna Billing's new film *Each Moment Presents What Happens*, we find ourselves in a black box room with a camera going round and round on a circular track. A small group of students in the middle perform a series of Merce Cunningham-like dance moves. To one side, another student repeats a four-note motif on a heavily prepared piano, its soundboard stuffed with paintbrushes, forceps, model cars, even an animal skull resting on the strings. A young girl hangs off a ladder reciting lines from John Cage's "Lecture On Something": "This

is a talk about something and naturally also a talk about nothing. About how something and nothing are not opposed to each other but need each other to keep on going".

Then the camera cuts and we're in a school canteen with a cook rhythmically chopping onions. We see groups of children walking across the playground in criss-crossing lines. Dozens of identical plastic chairs are stacked in neat rows. And somehow all these seemingly banal movements take on the same dance-like qualities as those few choreographed steps we saw at the start. They feel composed. They take on a certain form.

Billing's film is a tribute to a performance that happened 70 years ago. Only a few people saw it and it left next to no documentation. But if today we are able to perceive such poetry in the mundane, it's in part because of that event at a liberal arts college in North Carolina.

By mid-century, Black Mountain had become something of a haven for avant garde talent. Josef Albers taught there, having fled his post at the Bauhaus when the Nazis took power in 1933. So, too, were his soon to be famous students: Robert Rauschenberg, Cy Twombly and Ray Johnson. The music faculty included Cage and David Tudor. Cunningham formed his first dance company there while in residence in 1953. Directing the summer institute was the architect and engineer turned futurist visionary, Buckminster Fuller.

On 16 August 1952, Cage entered the college dining room and announced an untitled event would take place later that afternoon. Lasting around 45 minutes, it featured readings from Black Mountain poets Charles Olson and MC Richards; Cunningham danced, Tudor played the piano, Rauschenberg displayed his *White Paintings* and played records. Everything happened at once. There were no rehearsals. It was a union of different artforms – not integrated and synthesized as in the Wagnerian Gesamtkunstwerk, but simply juxtaposed. Arriving almost seven years before Allan Kaprow coined the term while a student of Cage's experimental music class at the New School, the event is today often regarded as the first happening. Like Kaprow's later *18 Happenings In 6 Parts*, it blurred the line between audience and performer, between art and life.

Billing's film restages Cage's event with students at Bristol Grammar School. In the dining hall, they repeat Cage's announcement, prepare piano, dance, play instruments, read poetry. But we also see something of daily life at the school. Like previous Billing works (such as 2015's *Pulheim Jam Session*, which juxtaposed Keith Jarrett's *Köln Concert* with a line of gridlocked traffic), *Each Moment Presents What Happens* demystifies legendary events from music history by situating them in the everyday real, in the process raising their humdrum normality to the level of the sublime.

Robert Barry

Sue Harding's shoe collection at Din



Matt Harding