



ATTACHMENT DRAWING: INTERFACE
Ali Bramwell

‘Attachment Drawing: Interfaces’ creates tangible connections between individuals and objects through a strategic use of sound, engaging its audience with the unseen. Ali Bramwell’s performative installation is most accurately described as an activated sound sculpture, encapsulating theories and methods central to her practice. In culmination, the sculptures create a field of interaction whereby the objects and the bodies that walk among them develop a mutual exchange with one another.

Structurally, the installation is comprised of conductive sculptures attached to Theremin sensors; the pitch and volume of resulting sounds affected by both existing architecture and passing variables. By materialising a magnetic field of conductive materials (both human and nonhuman), a social dynamic completes the installation creating a transient, experimental and responsive space; sensitive to the physical composition and dynamics of those located within the environment.

Concerned with not only the performative potential of sculpture, but also the incorporation of site-specific elements into an installation, in the past decade Bramwell has immersed herself in a range of landscapes and cultures around the globe. Japan, China, The Netherlands, Sweden, Slovenia, Bosnia, and South Korea are far from her current home at None Gallery in Dunedin, where she works to expand on its decade long history of incorporating notions of experimental sound in art making. In 2011, Bramwell worked with Ljudmila – Ljubljana in Slovenia, an open access digital media research lab dedicated to the creative use of new technologies through artist projects. This led to an introduction to the Ljubljana based Theremidi Orchestra, who specialise in DIY Theremin performance, experimental antennae and physical interface design. Bringing her research back to None, Bramwell presented *Magnetic field Data* (2013) with Charlotte Parallel at Lines of Flight in association with the 2013 Dunedin Fringe Festival.

Though these many localities and cultures have created opportunities to explore site specificity within her practice, they also serve as research into her ongoing examination of the Bogan artist. Although all societies breed a margin—whereby the social quarantine of the working and middle class are referred to as a ‘sub-culture’—the unique slang term ‘bogan’ has persistently remained at the heart of New Zealand and Australian class culture. Drawing on the pejorative sense of the term, Bramwell offers a tangible link between

bogan philosophy and the acculturation of technology with limited resource:

Technology, more normally acculturated in the regional cultural wastelands of New Zealand has developed envy over the note of a hemi straight six in cold burnout, from a mint Valiant Charger most can not afford and will never actually drive.

Using symbolic materials gleaned from society's post-industrial landscape such as barbed wire and steel tubing, Bramwell forges new relationships within a wider socio-historic context. These objects are coarse, sharp and heavy. They stand in the way of doorways and corridors, interrupting gentle or contemplative wandering in the gallery, leading the viewer into a potentially uncomfortable mode of interaction in the space. Electronic contents from the classic 'DIY kit' are worked and reworked to expose a frustration Bramwell recognises as Žižek's 'ignorance of chicken'. DIY kits are simple and affordable, yet the ideology they represent is patronising, leading to a fetishised belief that 'doing it yourself' is virtuous.

Individually, 'Attachment Drawing: Interfaces' brings to life mechanical and industrial objects, manifesting their own dynamics in the form of sculpture and sound. Though the gallery spaces themselves are inundated with this kind of presence, it is the area between the works that are as important as the pieces themselves. The unseen; the margin. Feeding off and enlivening surrounding architecture, the viewer is drawn to populate these areas, a variable which in turn creates an unpredictable tension in the work. In this way, bodies act as a catalyst, toying with the usual interactions people have with artworks, where using the field of sound to reflect, amplify and ultimately distort this interaction.

This process is ultimately experimental, as the relationship formed between the fixed (the conductive objects and architectural framework) and the unfixed (anticipating that bodies move at random) creates a constantly unfolding and amplified social dynamic. In this way, 'Attachment Drawing: Interfaces' departs from Bramwell's previous more organised activated sculptures, giving an unprecedented amount of control to the technological component of the work. During her Slovenian-based residency at the Center of Contemporary Arts Celje in 2011, the installation/performance *Repeat as*

Required balanced the notion of control to generate an element of residual chaos, as a weighty collection of full wine bottles were hoisted on rope by audience members, heaving them so they would smash onto the adjacent concrete tunnel wall. Led by Bramwell, the audience energetically repeated this process until all 46 bottles were completely smashed, scattered residually across the floor and walls of the space.

The pulley system central to *Repeat as Required* presents a unique function key to Bramwell's practice, as it not only materialises the industrial, working-class aesthetic, but also functions in a performative sense to bridge body and object. In a way, the pulley also represents the division between what French sociologist Bruno Latour propose as the 'Dingpolitik, whereby things and objects have a political epistemology just as humans do. As the nonhuman pulley engages with locale through action, a humanised site-specific sculpture is activated. As Bramwell pulls and leads her audience pulling, the strength required to force the bottles to break on the wall forms part of a wider catalytic tactic to push the participants and work into a political field of thought, but the same can be said for the objects generating mutual exchange.

The concept of the 'attachment drawing' is something Bramwell has continued to explore in the past three years of her practice. Retaining the pulley system, Bramwell's residency at the Quartair Contemporary Arts Initiative at The Hague in 2011 produced *Attachment drawing: dynamic release circuit breaker activated by gravity*. Connecting a string of fixed fluorescent tubes emanating light, Bramwell hoisted the work from the floor to the ceiling before letting it fall, smashing backward against the gallery wall and onto the floor. The temporality of the work echoed that of *Repeat as Required* (2011), as well as the nature of sound created from the site-specific 'nonhuman' objects as she released them crashing onto the gallery surface.

In both works, the tension of the assemblage is key to its residual life within the exhibition. Borrowing from contemporary philosopher Manuel De Landa's 'machinic phylum', Bramwell's 'attachment drawings' consider the two elements—human and nonhuman—as the sum of one part, that of the work itself. Thus a new social dynamic—the element of sound—in 'Attachment drawing: Interface' requires a relinquishing of control and welcoming of possible failure. Through a potential process of self-organising, the work blurs the human and nonhuman. Considering De Landa, this experimental

blur reaches a critical point where each component would begin to co-operate forming a higher entity.

Through physically transmitting the mechanic phylum into social metaphor, the exhibition as a whole seeks to interrogate the nature and mechanics of interaction. Does this suggest that perhaps there is more to our interaction with our environment than what we may assume? Latour's 'Dingpolitik' resonates. Realising a soundscape that both reflects and influences its temporal inhabitants and their relationships to one another is crucial to the experimental nature of the work. As the mechanical mimics nature within the space, the human and nonhuman become further intertwined, twisting conjointly in a manufactured environment. Whether or not these idealistically separate components begin to exchange, self-organise, co-operate and blur, is left to the poetic unpredictability of social interaction.

Zach Williams and Chloe Geoghegan

Further Reading

Slavoj Žižek, "Notes towards a politics of Bartleby: The ignorance of chicken" (2006).

Bruno Latour and Peter Weibel, *Making Things Public: Atmospheres of Democracy* (2005).

Manuel De Landa, *War in the Age of Intelligent Machines* (1991).

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Wednesday 4 – Saturday 28 June 2014
Blue Oyster Art Project Space

Ali Bramwell (b. 1969) gained a Masters in Fine Art from the Dunedin School of Art in 2001. Based in Dunedin, New Zealand, she has exhibited in Japan, China, The Netherlands, Sweden, Slovenia, Bosnia, South Korea and New Zealand, with permanent sculptural works in Germany and Georgia. In 2011 Bramwell was awarded artist in residence at Slovenia's Centre for Contemporary Art Celje.

Centrefold: *Attachment Drawing* (2012) Tokyo Art Islands, Japan.

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www.blueoyster.org.nz

Tuesday - Friday 11am - 5pm
Saturdays 12-3pm

