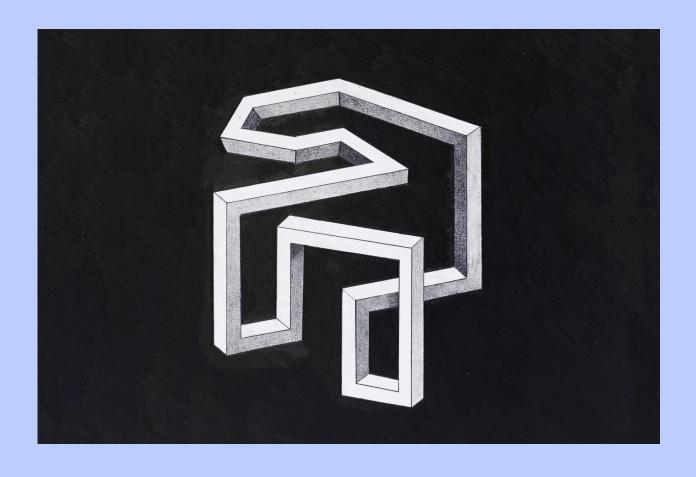


ADSR Zine 011



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THE NEW VIRTUOSITY: A MANIFESTO FOR CONTEMPORARY SONIC PRACTICE

Cat Hope and Louise Devenish

FACT: Creativity is a team pursuit.

The New Virtuosity is built by communities of artists and rejects the single author model.

The New Virtuosity rejects invisibility.

The New Virtuosity is energy, not exclusivity.

The New Virtuosity transfers methods across groups, instruments, workstations, places, peoples.

The New Virtuosity is generous.

FACT: Sound creation has unlimited forms.

The New Virtuosity values transgression.

The New Virtuosity engages diverse understandings of musical athleticism.

The New Virtuosity is rigorous.

The New Virtuosity disregards the electronic/acoustic binary.

The New Virtuosity is vulnerable.

FACT: Extended technique is just technique.

The New Virtuosity is an infinitely evolving network of ideas and articulations.

The New Virtuosity defines instrumentality through performance.

The New Virtuosity champions conceptualism.

The New Virtuosity celebrates sounds between and beyond scales, style and tone.

The New Virtuosity is discovery in process.

FACT: Listening is an active and situated practice.

The New Virtuosity thrives on curiosity and transferral of ideas across mediums.

The New Virtuosity links listening and responding in sound.

The New Virtuosity finds compositional materials in individual performers and their experiences.

The New Virtuosity defies pragmatism.

The New Virtuosity is cyclic and responsive.

FACT: Notation is not over.

The New Virtuosity is not static.

The New Virtuosity engages notation that serves sound, not analysis.

The New Virtuosity is sensation over transcription.

The New Virtuosity rejects institutional measures as the only measures of legitimacy.

The New Virtuosity is practice led.

THE NEW VIRTUOSITY IS NOW, THE FUTURE.

The Fabric of an Expanded Trumpet Practice

Callum G'Froerer



Hannah Robson Rays [2016] weaving and lacemaking in stainless steel © Hannah Robson

Starting practice with my instrument for the day is like the first sight of myself in the mirror – a moment of uncanny recognition delivering me from any lingering traces of the dream world. I sense my musical mind wrestling with the transition to the tool that expresses it, and the faint memory of a sworn duty to the instrument and the vocation. The daily rekindling of the relationship between body and instrument is a wildly unpredictable process, even after decades rehearsing this routine. The conversation between the two parties ranges from awkward, humbling, passive-aggressive, satisfying, mystifying, empowering, to emotionally upheaving.

Like any musician, I accept that a degree of struggle is unavoidable in the process of harmonising the instrument with my body. As a trumpet player, this happens as I press metal against my lips then wait for the natural inflammatory response to create some cushioning. I can then safely lean further and further into the process, slowly connecting body tissue to sound. The instrument begins to feel less heavy, cold, and hard. My lungs become more flexible, blood flow picks up, my senses sharpen, and the interface between body and instrument materialises into a familiar symbiosis.

My practice as a trumpet player and composer is a site for research, comprising interconnected mental and physical processes. Musical and theoretical concepts are investigated, renewed, or rejected, promoting a continually updated and idiosyncratic approach to music making and collaboration. Creative reflection and visualisation allows for musical ideas to grow unencumbered by physical or practical limits, and as these limits are pushed in service of artistic ideas, new instrumental techniques become integrated. I have enjoyed a journey through a constellation of

musical interests and settings, gaining fluency across various genres, exploring new instruments in the trumpet family, learning and using various forms of electronic mediation, and exploring new concert presentation formats. Over time, a conceptual framework has emerged in order to contextualise and reconcile these loosely interlocking processes and elements.

Practice as Fabric

My artistic practice is made up of invisible threads of memory, muscle, sound, space, instrument, concepts of artistry, history, politics, and the senses, which are constantly and reflexively influencing and interacting with each other. These threads weave and emerge as a *fabric* of musical and artistic practice, multifaceted and textured. Each moment with and away from my instrument is an interaction with that fabric – tugging, adding, reinforcing, removing, knotting, replacing, stretching, tightening, loosening, restructuring. My practice is the most current expression or state of that fabric.

This analogy helps me consider the current configuration of embodied knowledge, the breadth and depth of my investigations and research into my practice, and the concept of an interconnectedness and contingency between multiple elements within that practice. The weaving of the fabric and its evolution arises from conscious and unconscious processes. Breakthroughs are never predictable nor are they always immediately apparent. Residue from rejected ideas can rematerialise unexpectedly, providing insight into seemingly unsolvable problems; concepts that felt fully formed at one time present themselves for updating or suddenly lose their salience.

By considering my practice as multiple interconnected threads, I am afforded a distanced and topographic view, where no one thread or element exists completely independently. Inspecting the intersections along one thread of my practice reveals a series of events or processes that have influenced its course or nurtured its strength. The fabric reflects back what is present in my practice without judgement, and allows me to regard my practice dispassionately. I can adopt this attitude when experimenting or letting my imagination follow its course untethered – I can unravel ideas from the fabric or weave them in without negative consequences. I can actively rearrange them or let them find their way back in some form.

This gradual weaving and reweaving allows me to investigate threads that feel inauthentic or which are shaped by choices not in line with my values. I also examine which forces pull the fabric in one direction or another – who else has had a hand in its weaving? Rather than following a rigid or predefined pattern, the fabric of my practice is an organic and dynamic expression of practical, theoretical, and imagined concepts. What can be understood can be interacted with or altered, and fabric as a concept allows me to understand my practice from a new angle, thus encouraging new ways to act upon that understanding.

Performance as Fabric

The analogy of a woven fabric is a useful cognitive strategy for considering one's instrumental or artistic practice. This can be extended to the interconnected elements (musical and extramusical) of performances of composed and improvised musical works.

When considering a musical work or performance on an aesthetic level, one can overlook the vast ecology of elements and contingencies which interact to form an elaborately woven fabric. The amount of elements involved is scalable, yet performances with the barest of elements still contain noteworthy interconnections.

Sonic Elements

- musical material
- instrumental techniques
- incidental noise
- sound design

Audio-Visual Hardware Elements

- live electronic processing systems
- pre-recorded tape playback
- projection/video elements
- lighting design
- speaker technology

Temporal Elements

- duration
- memory
- form/proportion
- physical endurance
- rhythm/synchronicity/delay

Spatial/Visual Elements

- spatial design
- acoustics of a concert space
- physical spatialisation of performers/speakers/audiences
- movement/choreography
- props/objects/instruments

Experiential Elements

- audience agency/role
- emotional/sensory engagement
- expectation/occasion/politics associated with the social ritual of a performance

This is by no means an exhaustive list of possible elements. Furthermore, some elements are not bound to one category (e.g. musical material can be considered both a sonic element and a temporal element) and two or more intertwined elements may emerge as a new element. This potentiality in itself illustrates fabric-like interconnectedness and multiplicity.

Musical works and performances unfold and develop reflexively through iterative processes of action and evaluation, creating ever more complex networks of interconnection. We may consider performance and thus fabric as a dynamic ecological system, not driven by rigid preconceived aesthetic design, but embracing chance occurrences and transformation both in real time and after its production. The shift to conceptualising discrete performances in these ways facilitates the emergence of novel approaches to altering or updating elements therein. Additionally, the configuration of an imagined fabric, conceived prior to the act of performance or composition, can serve as a framework or prompt for its unfolding.

Two musical frameworks I composed for myself to perform in 2017, and have adapted for subsequent performances, provide rich examples for considering a musical work or performance through the concept of fabric. These works were part of my 2017-2018 international touring recital, *The Sculpted Trumpet*, with programs drawn from a pool of works including collaborations with composers as well as my own compositions. Programs were tailored to specific venues or events.

In the following detailed descriptions of the mechanics of the works, the interconnectedness, contingency, and weaving together of certain elements is expressed explicitly. However, readers are encouraged to reflect on other implicit interactions of threads I have not highlighted. It is my hope the reader can generate their own personal imagining of the fabric of the works.

Charcoal VI [2017]

for amplified double-bell trumpet, 4-channel speaker spatialisation [link to work]

Charcoal VI is a work for solo amplified double-bell trumpet (with no mouthpiece) and four speakers surrounding the audience. Four small microphones are secured onto the instrument in locations where air rushes past (inside both bells and outside the open 1st and 2nd valve slides [image]). Each microphone's signal is sent to each of the four speakers, with the pressing of the valves (1st, 2nd, and the bell-switching valve) controlling which microphone/speaker is activated – from one at a time to all four simultaneously, and any combination thereof. These air sounds amplify the natural resonance of the trumpet's tubes and they are modulated by delicate articulation techniques (tongue, teeth, lips, breath, throat, diaphragm), normally used for influencing the envelope of a regular trumpet tone. The lack of a mouthpiece (blowing straight into the instrument) allows for heightened presence of various articulations, sibilants, and the harmonic shaping of air sounds.

Close amplification of the air/articulation sounds and the speakers' positioning expands and transforms the trumpet into a tangible and dynamic sound mass dancing throughout the performance space, situating the audience *within* the trumpet. In order to manually send sound to different speakers, I have learnt a valving system unrelated to regular trumpet playing. Subsequently, I am able to move sound in different directions (anti/clockwise, diagonally, figure eight) at different speeds, as well as to different combinations of speakers. This manual control of the sound's location interacts with the audience's perception of patterns of movement and direction.

Contingencies are evident between threads of audio-visual hardware, alterations to the instrument, new instrumental techniques, and musical material. Regular trumpet tone and valving techniques unravel into a radically different modality of playing the instrument, deeply altering the musical material explored. The tangible movement of the sound through the concert space tugs at the audience's sensory engagement – their eyes are on a static performer and they are immersed in sound that has a physical presence, perhaps leading them to attempt to understand how the valving affects the sound's movement.



© Marcel Weise

When the work is performed in venues with controllable acoustics, I am able to experiment with feedback for a segment of the work. By opening and closing specific valves, as well as my mouth, and slowly changing the angle of the amplified trumpet, its length and sensitivity to re-amplification changes, as well as its distance from the multiple speakers, allowing for chords of feedback to emerge. Feedback is a precarious element to work with and requires vigilance/responsiveness as a performer, as it triggers the audience's natural response to normally unwanted noise. This technique unravels an acoustic phenomena into further new instrumental techniques, while acutely engaging the senses of the listeners.

Many of the articulations and vowel shapes are derived from a text I composed for this work, fragments of which are recited into the trumpet at different points. This allows me to braid speech, language comprehension, and instrumental techniques; the way certain spoken sounds are amplified through the trumpet is a source of exploration in this work.

the only thing standing between us | was our own experience inside this, reason reflects | refracts outside ourselves how much really stands between us | when we are surrounded by light

Themes in the text itself intertwine with and influence the musical material: the situation of the characters in this imagined space echoes the sound mass surrounding the listeners and performer; references to reflection and refraction are expressed through the mirroring and dividing of the sound using one to four speakers.

By stripping the trumpet back to tubes and valves and avoiding the natural resonances produced by conventional techniques, the instrument becomes analogous to a MIDI controller but for amplified acoustic sound. Furthermore, the speakers are as much a part of the entire meta-instrument as the trumpet itself. My perception of my 'instrument' is physically stretched further than what I hold in my hands, and the regular sonic feedback loop (i.e. hearing my acoustic trumpet sound reflected in a space) now features a weave of acoustic and electronic elements.

Charcoal X [2017]

for double-bell trumpet, spotlights, bowls of water, CD, candle [link to work]

Like *Charcoal VI*, this work evolved from the idea of the double-bell trumpet, as a physical object as much as an instrument, being a medium for a sonic or visual investigation, with the intention of creating a kind of meta-instrument. The three movements of *Charcoal X* engage the instrument physically with visual or light elements, progressing through different visual scenes. To heighten the interplay between threads of sound, vision, and technique, a timed tape of pre-recorded sounds mimics and extends the live instrumental techniques of the work.

The first movement involves fastening a blank CD (reflective layer facing out) to the end of one bell of the trumpet, positioned in front of a small spotlight on the ground, which I kneel next to. This results in the colour spectrum reflecting and refracting onto the walls and ceiling, which stretches and contracts depending on the CD's angle against the spotlight. The physical limitations of this

setup determine the trumpet techniques I use – in this kneeling position it is difficult to play the trumpet normally, so I blow air into the underside of the three valves, functioning like a small pan flute, with a delicate and raspy tone and pitch variation coming from small valve movements.



© Rob Loughlin

The second movement centres on two large glass bowls filled with water, with different coloured spotlights shining through each onto the walls and ceiling. While kneeling with my back to the audience, one trumpet bell is submerged in the water, with the other bell pointing back over my shoulder. The bubbling water (air travelling out one bell goes straight into the water) creates a compelling sound as well as turbulence in the water, which gives motion to the refracted colours; the normal sound (second trumpet bell over my shoulder) counteracts the bubbling with improvised lyrical statements. This conversation between the two bells is accompanied by tape playback of a close microphoned electrolyte tablet fizzing away in water, culminating in a multifaceted audio-visual environment.

In the first two movements, musical material and instrumental technique are unravelled, rewoven together, and wrapped in the thread of the mechanics of the intended visual effects, and the objects used to create them. The sensory engagement of the audience is a weave of the sight of: the visual effects; my actions as a performer (a departure from traditional concert stage presence); and the objects I use to create the visual effects. These elements are intertwined into the braided aural environment of acoustic and tape playback sounds.



© Rob Loughlin

The third movement is a reduction in physical scale and energy as the work nears its end (*Charcoal X* is designed to be the final piece in a recital program). A small tealight candle holder is attached to the top of the trumpet's bell, and I improvise a lyrical, emotionally distant, and gradually descending solo, without accompanying tape playback. In this movement, a sparser fabric emerges, consisting of only acoustic sound and a reduced visual focus in near darkness. The musical material intertwines with the atmosphere of this moment. *Charcoal X* concludes when I blow out the candle, requiring me to finally detach my lips from the trumpet - a poetic finish to a work that weaves an intricate fabric between instrument and instrumentalist. The concert space is woven into all three movements, with the visual effects as well as the acoustic and pre-recorded sounds highlighting its dimensions and intrinsic features.



© Rob Loughlin

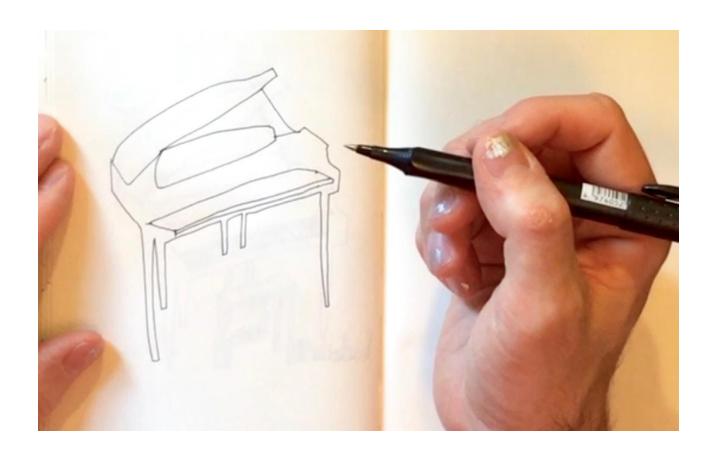
These two works, with their many coinciding elements, serve as two illustrations of artistic performance and practice conceived as a woven fabric of interconnecting threads. This cognitive strategy allows me to shift my creative point of view from an aesthetic focus to a more ecological one, seeing the many elements involved in a performance laid out in a complex plane with all their interactions and contingent relationships. This zooming out, or finding 'higher ground', helps me observe my evolving practice in a way that feels sustainable. I'm able to recognise and evaluate the configuration of my artistic values without feeling consumed by the complexities of my practice, or worn down by the emotional labour of navigating new and challenging ideas. This ability to self-evaluate in a way that is non-judgemental keeps my practice flexible, responsive, and honest.

Naarm (Melbourne) 12.10.20

With thanks to Cat Hope, Chris Cottrell, Georgia Ioakimidis-MacDougall, Joe O'Connor, Piers Morgan, and Hannah Robson.

callumgfroerer.com

Julian Day Music For Twenty Keyboards



1980

My father's bandmate's house is full of musical objects. In his darkened studio sits a Rhodes. It is black with a leathery grain. I am simultaneously intrigued and unsettled by a piano with on/off button and dials.

1983

The same bandmate writes a paean to suburban music-making called *Radio Is Always Next To The Ironing Board*. His accompanying piano is jaunty and honky-tonk; out of step with the resigned inertia of the lyrics.

1984

One night on Countdown I notice someone called Julian Lennon. He sings while standing at a keyboard - a real one-man band. I ask mum if she's heard of him because surely he's related to John but she hasn't.

I start writing songs, so my father loans me a little white Casio. Its tiny keyboard only elicits one note at a time. It can however play several rhythms including the classic doo-doo-CHIH-CHIH doo-doo-CHIH-CHIH.

One morning on TV I catch a film clip by Tears For Fears and I develop a crush on their bass guitarist. His mullet is quite refined, a new wave squall with a rat's tail. His futuristic instrument has no tuning pegs. The lead singer is called Roland and I start to notice his san-serif name on various synthesizers.

1985

A parade of half-remembered keyboards in stadium hair metal bands. To me those 80s musicians now look and sound a lot like those from the 70s - metal, glam, prog and punk, all rolled into one.

1987

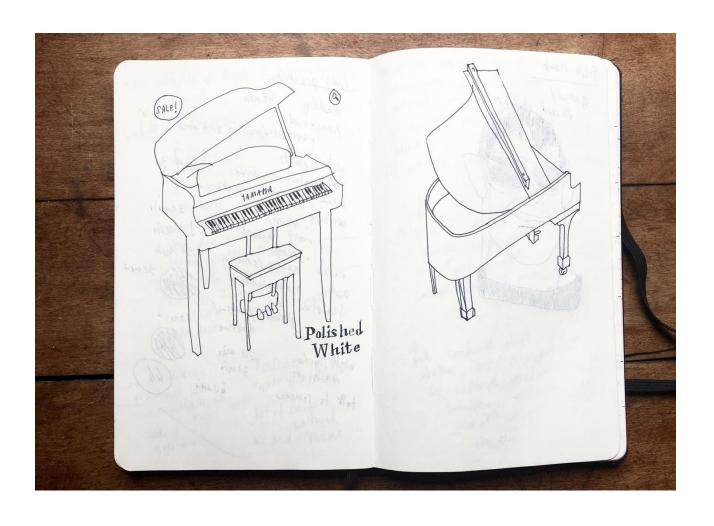
Roland burrows into the cultural fabric. My high school doesn't have a piano but has a Roland synth. I form a band with a friend but we never make it past the Public Enemy scratching noise or the fart sounds.

1988

We don't have a piano so on Saturdays I catch the tram to the behemoth music store in the city. I sit at the Steinways to test out my pieces and write them in my notebook. When the occasional customer arrives I am shooed away to the uprights. One day my Mum collects me and is surprised the staff know my name.

I offer to hire us a piano. I can earn the requisite \$8 a week by busking with my flute. Mum says no.

Mum finds a male friend to teach me piano. Mum's boyfriend, however, won't let me learn from a "faggot".





One of mum's female friends has a piano in her flat. She gives me the key so I let myself in after school to practice. She works until six so I have a long time to myself. I develop elaborate erotic fantasies about her.

Mum and I visit a different friend who lives in a skinny terrace. Her new husband is on the run after publishing an expose on Scientology. While the adults talk I sit at their piano composing a G minor fantasy.

I discover that the big Anglican cathedral in the city has a pipe organ. I convince mum to take us. It takes a long time for the organ to make itself known so in the meantime we sit through a sermon about exorcism.

1989

My father's last roommate owns a fancy new Roland. This is useful to my father because I can entertain myself for hours while he does important things like talk to his girlfriends or drink sherry in his bedroom.

1990

We move to the tropics where my new school had a piano. Late one Sunday afternoon a girl takes me to the music room and teaches me *Right Here Waiting*. Before I know it her tongue is down my throat.

My new stepfather finally buys a piano. Because our house has tiles it sounds tinny and the humidity keeps it out of tune. Eventually it is agreed that I can go live in the shed and take the piano with me.

1993

I move to the city to study composition and piano at music school. One night I stay back to practice for my lesson. It gets too late to walk home so I sleep under the Yamaha. At 3am I'm woken up by the cleaners.

1997

I date an opera singer. We find a practice room which for once has no piano. We fuck quickly on the floor.

2000

I finish school and realize I've wasted my life. Whilst I studied Sciarrino, countless golden-faced teens have become lauded. I must write songs, fast, so that someone will love me before I lose my looks. I spend a year playing keyboards in music shops trying to finish some songs. My uncle says to learn guitar instead.

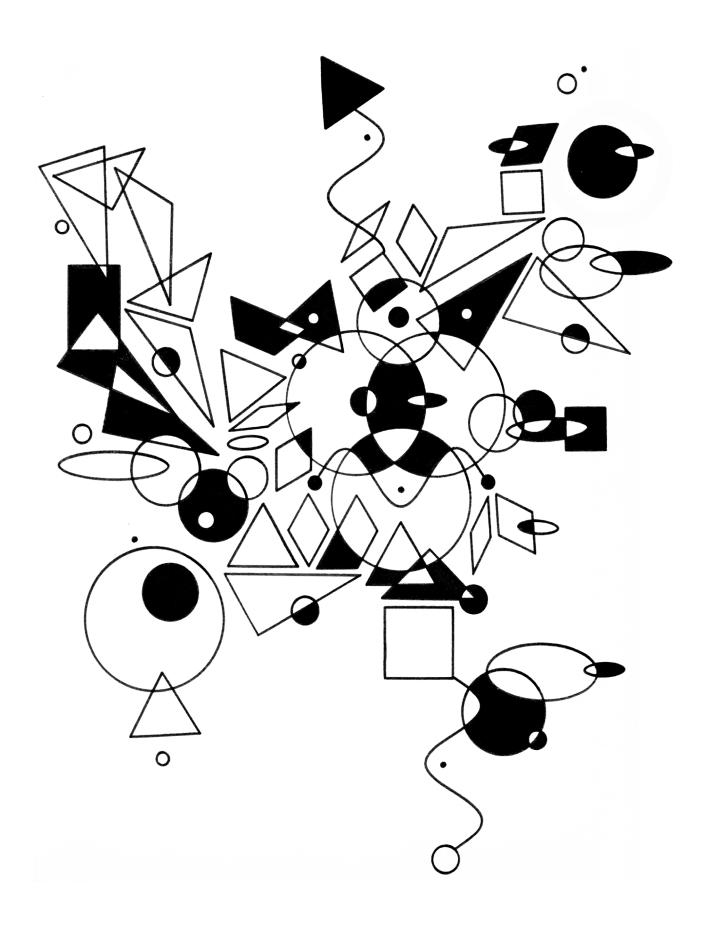
2005

I turn thirty. Mum realizes that my younger siblings have failed to touch our piano so she agrees to give it to me for my birthday. A few years later I ask my sister what happened to it. Mum sold it to buy a fence.

ADSR Zine 011.2.1 DECAY-SUSTAIN

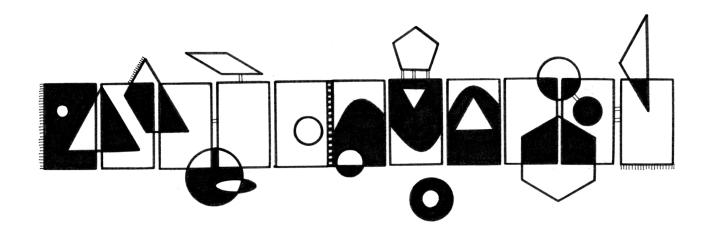


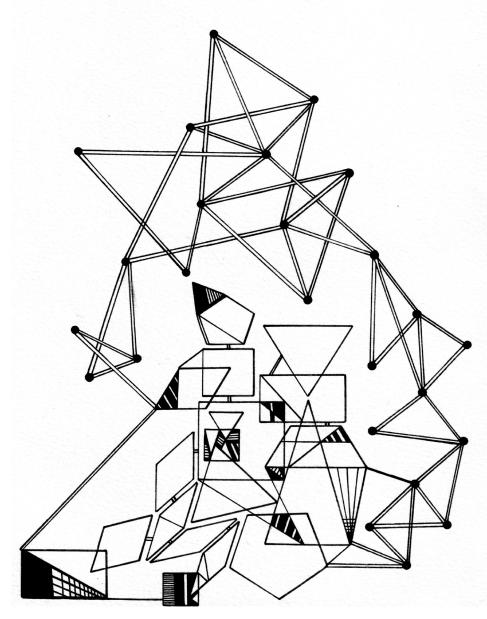




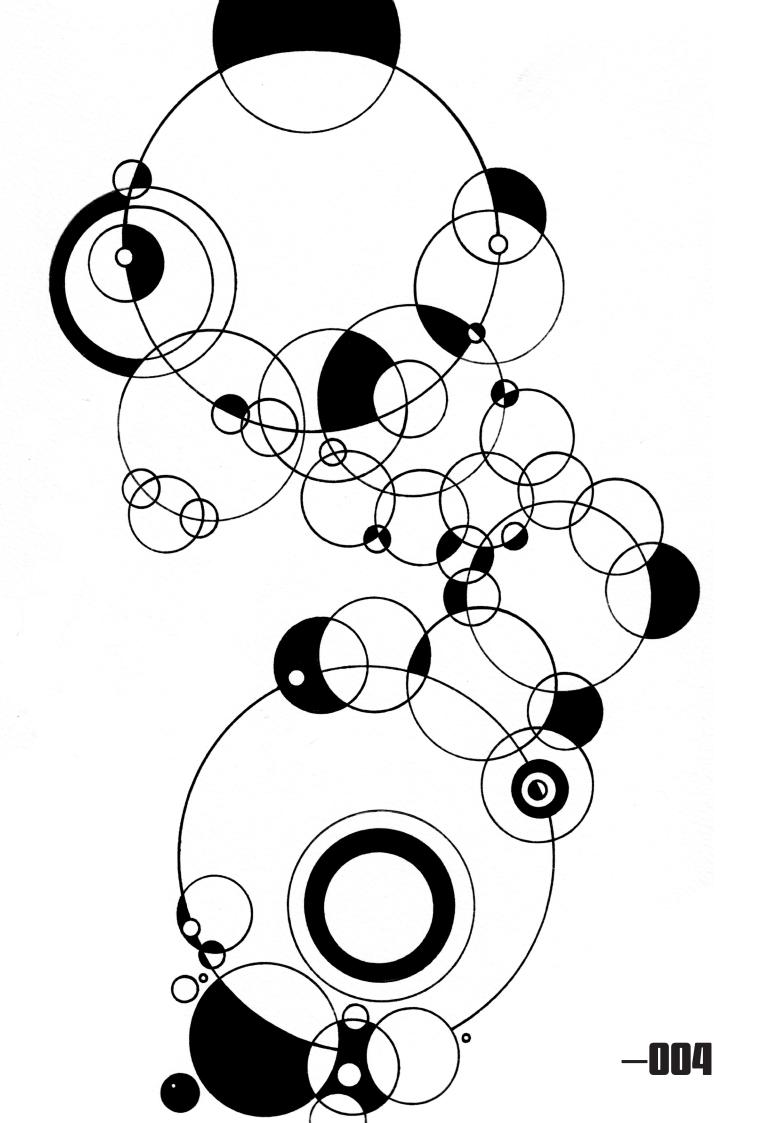
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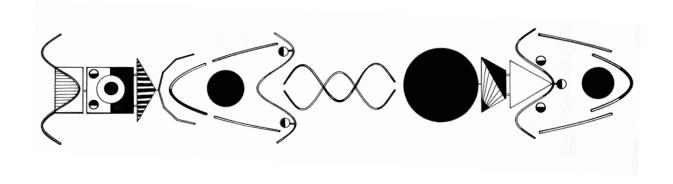


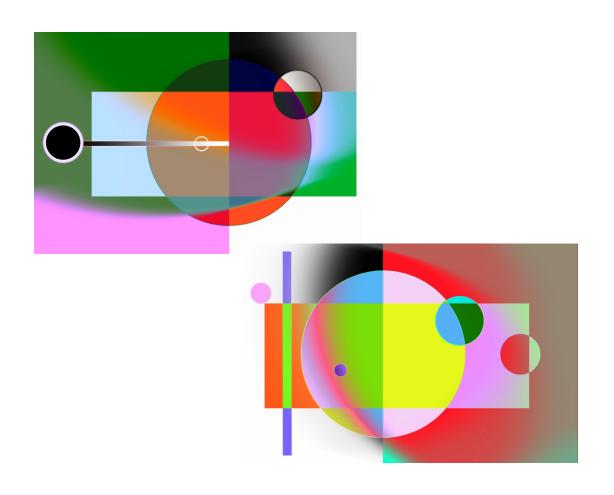


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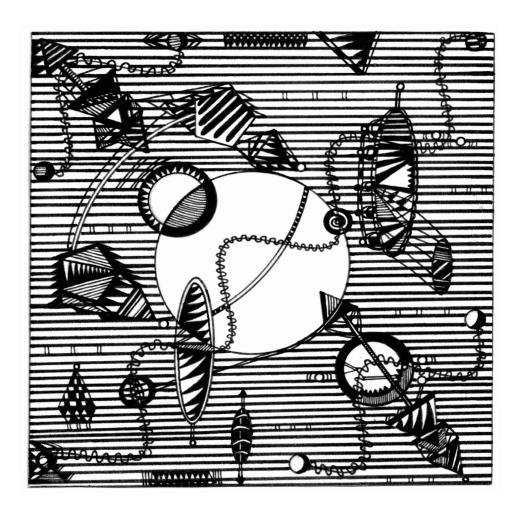




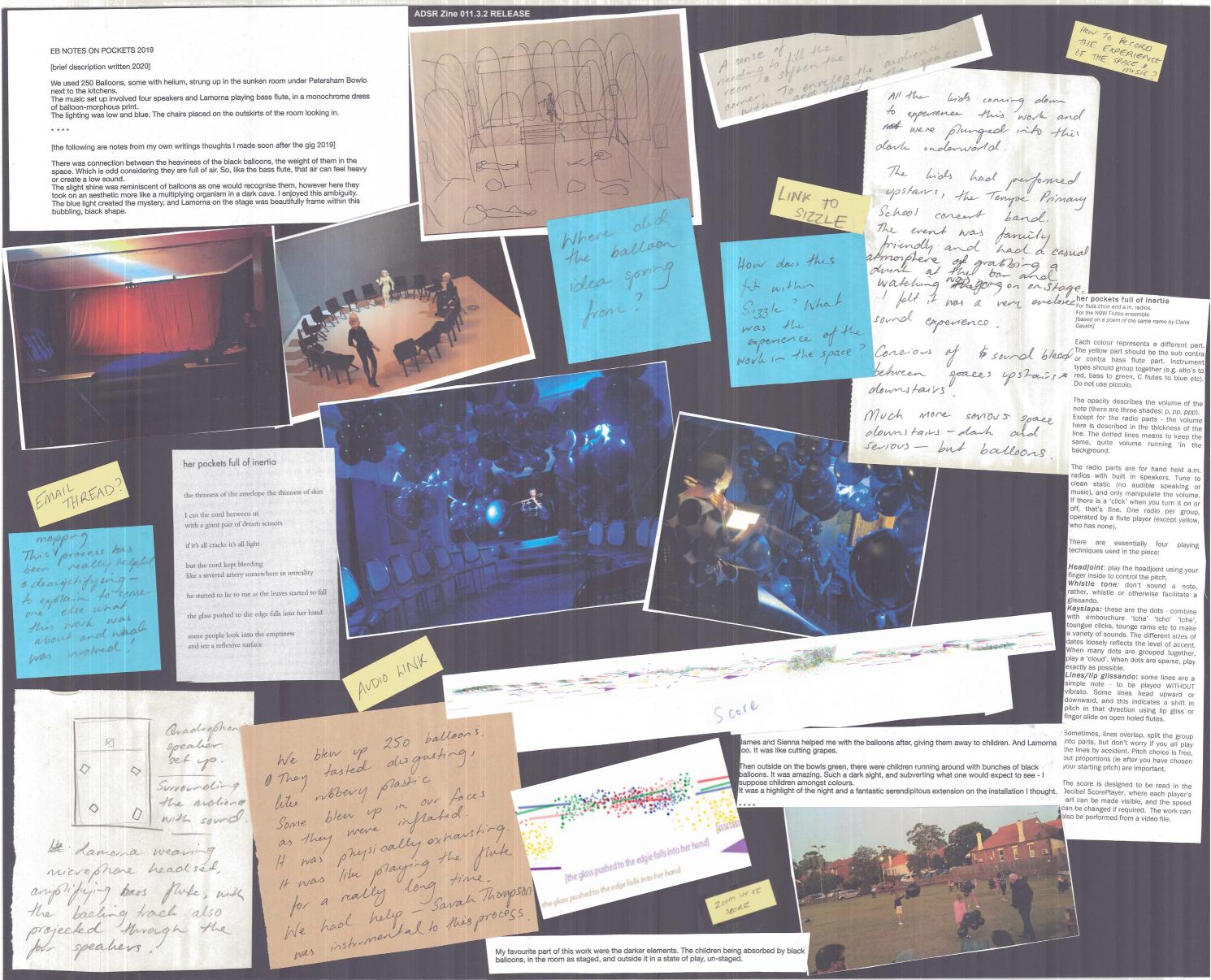




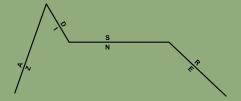




composition + balance [of emotional space]







ADSR Zine

[attack, decay, sustain, release]

ADSR Zine is an online platform established in November 2018 by Elia Bosshard, James Hazel and Sonya Holowell. It is a bi-monthly publication that features writing from contributors who are, or who work with contemporary practising artists. We value the process of reflection, translation, interpretation, critical response and active engagement with Australian art and performance.

We believe that the artist is not only an expert in their field, but offers an important voice beyond the scope of their primary discipline. Artists are welcomed to move beyond this scope to embrace naivety, presenting the sweep, the details, or a combination of both.

As a magazine with a strong interdisciplinary focus, the online format allows for the delivery of written, sonic and visual resources to present, support and facilitate discourse between practising artists.

WHAT WE DO

ADSR Zine offers a 3-part conceptual scaffold that is designed to evoke experimental and non-formalist approaches to responsive writing and media within a contemporary arts and performance context.

OUR POINT OF DEPARTURE

ADSR Zine is a platform for discourse that encourages experimental approaches to discussing visual, performative and sound art. Functioning from an 'art begets art' premise, we offer contributors significant creative license.

We are influenced by the wave of 70's and 80's experimental music and art publications (<u>NMA</u>, Sounds Australia) which were platforms for creative and innovative solutions to writing and conceptualising experimental work.

TEAM

Editors = James Hazel, Sonya Holowell, Elia Bosshard Website = Elia Bosshard Cover Art = Nadia Odlum



