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Dynamic Relationships between the Sonic Artist, the Sonic Artwork and its Audience: an Investigation through Theoretically Informed Creative Practice.

Samantha Horseman

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Abstract

The following portfolio of sonic artworks and accompanying commentary comprises creative and theoretical research undertaken between 2008 and 2012. Alongside a portfolio and commentary of sonic artworks, it will also feature an exposition of the theoretical concepts that have propelled and informed their creation. At the centre of the research is the development of an integrated theoretical and creative practice in sonic art.

I will discuss the context that has led me, as a creative practitioner, to question the nature of the dynamic relationships that potentially operate between both sonic and physical media and the perceptive occupant that inhabits the artwork. The concept of a tri-polar dynamic forms the theoretical crux of this project. It outlines the potential for the perceptive occupant to play a completing role within the portfolio of sonic artworks: a kinetic activation of dormant syncretic potential held within the artistic materials. Influenced by the philosophical models of Nattiez, Kramer, Merleau-Ponty, Delueze and Guattari, the works also explore satellite topics of temporality, the internal monologue and phenomenology. The commentary outlines the creative processes involved in the development of the artworks focussing in particular on how they embody and activate aspects of the tri-polar dynamic. The overarching aim of the research is the development of an integrated approach of both a theoretical and creative exploration of a self-referential theme: the dynamic relationships between myself as the sonic artist, the creative media with which I work and the perceptive occupant.

Chapter 1: Introduction

In current literature, the term 'sonic art' has been referred to as 'elusive' (Licht 2009, p.3) and as a 'hybrid art form with many exits and entrances' (Brandt 2006, p.354). Citations such as these portray a genre surrounded by grey definitions and taxonomical debate, yet it is within this field that I have found vast resource and inspiration. For me, many of its most engaging instances embrace this rich plurality and an almost infinite scope of interdisciplinary artistic possibilities. It is an art form that requires both the artist and its audience to temper a simultaneous presentation of multiple artistic media and it is this crux that propels my own interest in the genre. This introduction will contextualise the origins of my research questions explored via this creative portfolio and commentary. Having introduced and contextualised the key lines of conceptual inquiry, I will then discuss my intentions for tackling them via a portfolio of integrated creative and theoretical practice.

1.1 Current Creative Practices and Research Questions

1.1.1 Background and Evolution of my Creative Practice

As an undergraduate student, I studied acoustic composition with James Saunders and Christopher Fox at the University of Huddersfield. I then continued this study with Jonathon Eato during my postgraduate study at York University, during which time I also began to explore acousmatic composition. Throughout this period, I also pursued musicological interests in experimental music, sonic art and the issues raised by pluralism in music and the visual arts. Personally, I have always found the process of composition a search to represent or communicate a conceptual idea via a musical format. Rarely would I take the approach of choosing an aspect of musical language, such as timbre or rhythm, to explore and develop in a work. More often, my compositions would convey a particular character, persona or atmosphere explored through the syntax of the musical language. In fact, during performances of my works I would quite often find myself preoccupied with gauging how my work was being received by the audience and whether they were able to comprehend and

understand the nuances and subtleties that I had come to know so well through their development. As Jon Appleton observes, 'The composer has always been confronted with the task of considering the differences between what he hears and what his audience perceives' (Appleton 1969, p.107). These issues of intention and reception are commonly reported as concerns of the music composer. Although it would be impossible to say that conceptual communication is the driving force for all composers, this circumstance has been noted and discussed in current literature. For example, Joanna Demers writes in her book, *Listening Through The Noise: The Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music* (2010), of the *intent* to communicate specific concepts in the music of both Trevor Wishart and Pierre Schaeffer. Although each composer does so from the perspective of different aesthetic intentions: Schaeffer calls for communication via reduced listening to music with internally referent relationships, whereas Wishart's practice relies more on external references to source-bonded virtual imagery (Demers, 2010). Writing of the ability to identify specific attributes within the building blocks of music in reference to Wishart, Demers states, 'These attributes are effective organizational devices for guiding an audience's responses… For Wishart, once those attributes have been detected and studied, the composer must utilize them if a musical work is to have any communicative success' (Demers 2010, p.30). I find Demers' choice of words, 'communicative success' significant in this context. How is the communicative success of a creative work measured? The phrase implies that the composer had an *intended* message, concept or effect that they wished to embody within the creative work - and the work is only successful if the listener receives a congruent message upon its mediation. In this instance, it could be argued that the experience of the audience seems to be the uppermost concern of the composer. The initiation of the Intention/Reception Project (2006) by Rob Weale and Leigh Landy is further evidence of this trend of thought. Weale reports that the project was, '…designed to generate knowledge that contributes to supporting access in terms of our better understanding of how E/A art music succeeds in terms of communicating content and experience with its listeners' (Weale 2006, p.190). As discussed above, I do not imply that all composers are concerned with the reception of their compositional intentions;

however, the issues tackled by Joanna Demers, Rob Weale and Leigh Landy were certainly an important consideration for me as a composer. At this time, the preoccupation with the communicative success of my intended message led me to explore creative works that used media and performance directions beyond the traditional acoustic formats. It seemed to me that the interior relationships expressed within the syntax of the musical material were capable of a more explicit (and therefore successful) communication if they were contextualized and in dialogue with other signifying forces in the composition. This could include the kinetic movement of performers or visual references present in the landscape of the ensemble. For example, *Momentum* (2004) was based on the notion that an instrument has a kinetic energy that drives and connects with a performer's own. The work was propelled by the organic development of an additive modal motif. The aleatoric introduction allowed the performer to combine elements of the motif presented at various locations in the performance space to set up a sense of integration between the performer, the musical material and their presence in the space. I also directed rhythmically impatient foot tapping as a form of interaction between the performer, page turns and fragmentation of the motif. Also composed during that period was, *Clockwork (*2005) for wind quartet. This work aimed to capture the kinesis of machinery via its contrapuntal melodic relationships and a gradual chromatic evolution of oscillating tonal centers. More whimsically, the mechanical relationships of the quartet were visually supported by their seating arrangement in a deconstructed car surrounded by automotive mechanical components that doubled as percussive aids. In retrospect, it is the conceptual ideas that inspired my compositions that pushed me to explore them in a broader range of media. Fuelled by this expanding compositional practice and a longstanding musicological interest in sonic art, I quickly developed towards working within the realm of sonic art installation. Previous works have included *X829 CDF* (2006) and *Tempus Liminal* (2008). *X829 CDF* explored the potential for a space to inhabit both a personal and iconic identity both in site and sound – in this case my own Ford Fiesta. Similarly, *Tempus Liminal* was also a work that explored different characteristics and identities inhabited within a specific site. Throughout this trajectory, the

development of my own creative practice as a composer and sonic artist had been informed and driven by a consideration of the audience's reception of my ideas. I applied the same questions I had as a composer (regarding how conceptual ideas can be communicated to the audience) to the domain of sonic art with its expanded disciplinary repertoire and media resources. Through this, I came to enjoy sonic art's potential to facilitate a layering of semantic relationships between its media and its audience, afforded by its ability to juxtapose different languages, syntax and schemas of semiotics and significations through its different media.

1.1.2 Background and Evolution of Research Questions

Whilst my preoccupation with communicative success had driven my creative practice towards the genre of sonic art installation through - what felt for me - an organic evolution, it also ignited theoretical lines of inquiry. Concurrent to my creative practice and fuelled by an interest in the presence of disciplinary pluralism in our contemporary musical climate, I continued to research and study sonic art and experimental music from a musicological perspective as both an undergraduate and postgraduate. This resulted in the authoring of texts that tackled topics such as post-structural musicology, disciplinary pluralism in music, analysis of sonic art works and phenomenology. As a result of this, a consideration of the broader issues concerning sonic art were a natural accompaniment to my creative practice. However, as my own practice expanded to encompass disciplinary and phenomenological pluralism, so too did the difficulties in considering how a work might be interpreted by the audience and its ultimate communicative success. A work that utilises more than one artistic discipline naturally incurs a complex interplay of media, phenomenological experience, temporality and space. I was fascinated by how simultaneous plateaus of media coexisted, layered and interacted much like unstable tectonic plates. Herein lay the primary source of impetus for me as an artist but it was also a source of blurred boundaries and uncertainty regarding my theoretical inquiries.

I began to view this notion of disciplinary pluralism as a common denominator from which I could begin a new consideration of the media I had found myself working with. My focus had now been steered from questions relating to the communicative success of a work (such as how this was achieved and why it felt important to me as a composer?) to questions relating to the very plurality in sonic art. I was now considering the potential relationships and possibilities afforded between these multiple media and for me, these seemed to reside at the very crux of the genre. Questions of such a weighted nature cannot be answered simply or concretely; even on a case-by-case basis they are inherently complex. However, in order to advance my own practice, it felt essential to consider whether there might be broader categorisations operating within the vocabulary of different media I was working with. Furthermore, what are the discrepancies and comparisons to be made between media that can be considered phenomenally different; temporal or non-temporal; fixed or fluid?

1.1.3 Sonic and Physical Media: A Definition of Terms

It seemed to me that I approached my own work as if it had two (albeit broad) categories of media according to their phenomenological status: the sonic (aural) and the physical (concrete) media of a sonic artwork. Firstly, the work I was producing had by its very nature, a sonic presence experienced as auditory sensory phenomena. For example, the electroacoustic compositions installed as part of my car-based installation, *X829 CDF* or the sampled vocal texts of *dis:ORDER* (included in the creative portfolio). For the remainder of this text, I will refer to material of this description as *sonic media* referring to that which is *heard*.

My use of the term *physical media* requires a more careful exposition as it refers to a physicality in the artworks that can result from that which is heard, seen or haptically experienced. When considering possible phenomenological distinctions within the media of my interdisciplinary artworks, my initial instinct was to employ the term visual media: this makes reference to that which is *seen* in sonic art such as sculptural objects, video or light projections. However, I found that a sense of physicality could also be created with the use of non-visual sources in this context.

The articulation of space via the diffusion of electroacoustic music or the consequential experience of the space itself can also result in an *implied* physicality: one that is imagined as a virtual, *visualised* trace in the space of the artwork or even the internal space of an audience member's cognitive map. Furthermore, I saw the possibility to create haptic sensations within an artwork that can also invoke a sense of physicality. This can occur, for example, through physical contact with an artwork, the physical grounding of oneself within the space of an artwork or even the potential for sonic material to be physically detected through vibration. From herein, my use of the term *physical media* references both the real physicality of media that is visually perceived, an implied virtual physicality resulting from more ephemeral sources such as sound and space *and* the physical relationships that are potentially activated and understood through haptic perceptions within an artwork. As an artist, I make the distinction between sonic (aural) and physical (concrete media) on a phenomenological basis. Physical media engenders the sensations of physicality occurring in the instances outlined above and I view this as worthy of distinction from the sensation of aurality invoked by sonic media.

1.1.4 The Tri-Polar Dynamic: An Introduction

As an artist, viewing my works as comprising both sonic and physical components highlighted the intricate complexities involved in its perception and grounded the questions stemming from this juxtaposition. Sonic and physical phenomena differ not only in the nature of their materiality, but also in their dependence on two different physiological sense systems. As a result, both phenomena use different semiotic coding, which ultimately influences the way they are mediated and contribute to the understanding of an artwork. W. J. T. Mitchell states in his essay, 'There are no Visual Media', that, 'We also need to be mindful that media are not *only* extensions of the sense, calibrations of sensory ratios, they are also symbolic or semiotic operators, complexes of sign-functions' (Mitchell in Kelly [ed.] 2011, p.77). Both sonic and physical stimuli host a different variety of the potential sign-functions and semiotic operations that Mitchell is referring to. Firstly,

sound can be organised to have an internal syntax that is culturally symbolic, such as that of the traditional syntax of a tonal musical language. Likewise, this may encompass the use of electroacoustic sounds, which can also have internal relationships and narratives between more abstract characteristics such as its dynamic morphology, texture and timbre. Sound can also comprise anecdotal samples that make reference to a source-bonded object, allowing the sound to conjure an image of its source in the conscious being of the perceptive occupant or imply any related cultural associations (Denis Smalley 1994).[1] Physical media can also include visually anecdotal references through the use of found objects, photographs or video and other related media. Physical media may also take on more abstract forms that do not have a specifically cultural identity. Although they may still have interior characteristics with culturally conditioned associations, for example, the use of red light in a sonic art installation may have connotations of danger or warning. As can be seen from this discussion, even when considered singularly, sonic and physical media encompass a wide variation in their potential for semantic explicitness. In fact, the very labelling of creative media as 'artwork' can result in the semantic reconsideration of even anecdotal samples of sound or the use of found objects. One of the most famous examples of this is Marcel Duchamp's pioneering conceptual artwork, *Fountain* (1917) that relabelled a male urinal as a 'readymade' sculptural object. As such, sonic art can be seen as widely accepted as exhibiting vast variance in the artistic media it utilises (electroacoustic composition, anecdotal sonic samples, video, sculpture etc.) and a consequentially rich array of issues regarding temporality, narrative and semiotic codes. One of the ramifications for my own research was that the specific signification of the sonic and physical media is dependent on the particular individual in question at the time of its viewing. Yet the notion of the *individual* had evolved from the terminal recipient of my work to hold a far more weighted importance – one as a completing signifying force within the sonic artwork itself. As a composer, I had dictated the structure and temporal order in which the audience

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[1] Source Bonding is discussed by Denis Smalley as the natural inclination to ally sounds to the source of their production (Denis Smalley 1994).

would hear my work, steering the perceived narrative and relationships between its culturally determined interior syntax. But unlike the linear unfurling of a sonic stream that is possible in music, it is not always possible to control or dictate the order in which the plural media in my sonic artworks are apprehended. Nor is it possible to have a similar level of control regarding the semiotic coding in sonic art when the potential interplay between two phenomenally disparate media is seemingly infinite. The possibility and preoccupation with communicative success had now become inappropriate on account of the inherent variability between different members of an artwork's audience. Instead I was beginning to view the individual as important a signifying force as the sonic and physical media in my artworks. As such, during my research I moved to the position of wanting to create sonic artworks that explore the potential for *a tri-polar dynamic* to operate within them between the sonic, the physical and the individual.

1.1.5 The Perceptive Occupant

Having identified that the relationships between an individual and the artistic media within my work will form an integral part of the framework that contextualises my research questions, it is now appropriate to outline what I see as important characteristics attached to this notion. The term 'individual' in relation to the understanding of an artwork is complex. Electroacoustic music, particularly of the 'cinema for the ears' type propagated by many composers based in Montreal in the 1990s (Normandeau, Gobeil, Daoust, Dhomont et al.) acknowledges that each individual has a personal history and background that affects their interpretation of everyday sounds used within electroacoustic compositions. Whilst I acknowledge this as a strongly influential factor on the relationships between the dynamic of the tri-poles in sonic art, my own work focuses on understanding the individual as situated within and as part of the artwork itself as a *perceptive occupant*. I see this notion as existing in line with Maurice Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological concept of the body subject. Merleau-Ponty argues that instead of a distinction between a physical bodily vehicle that contains a conscious being, we exist instead as a third kind of 'body subject'

(Merleau-Ponty 2012). Merleau-Ponty scholar, Monika Langer writes of this instance, stating: 'Bodily being is not a purely factual physicality, and subjectivity is not a purely translucent consciousness. We are not an uneasy alliance of matter and mind, but a third kind of being' (Langer 1989, p.55). Furthermore, this *being* is inextricably integrated with the environment it inhabits. And so, my view of a perceiving occupant in this instance is an irreducible amalgamation of sensory faculties (i.e. auditory, visual, haptic…) and the consciousness through which they operate. As a term, the 'perceptive occupant' infers an audience member's existence as a *perceptive* being and contextualises this existence within the physical *occupation* of a sonic artwork. My own creative work has come to focus on the relationships between the three signifying forces in a sonic artwork: the sonic, physical and the perceptive occupant. It is in this context that the research questions and themes of my creative projects submitted alongside this commentary are framed.

1.1.6 Research Questions and Theoretical Concerns of the Creative Portfolio

The overarching theoretical concern of this research project was to explore the potential dynamic relationships at flux within sonic art as a tri-polar concept. As an artist, through the design of both the sonic and physical aspects of a work, I aimed to question whether it is possible to create an environment that sparks an active inhabitation of the art space. And in this instance, is it possible to view the perceiving occupant as a completing component of a sonic artwork as they become an integral activator of meaningful relationships between the sonic and physical media?

If my work is to be viewed as a platform to forge dynamic relationships between the sonic media, physical media and the perceiving occupant, naturally it is the identity of the latter (and not necessarily the design of the artwork) that may have the most impact on the mediatory outcomes of the artwork experience. I wished to explore the concept that a narrative is led by the act of perceiving that occurs during the mediation of an artwork as part of the tri-polar dynamic. From this broad research, I also explored further questions regarding more specific issues through the creative portfolio. These include: How might perceiving occupants posit themselves within the sonic art

space and what influence does this have on the narrative of the artwork experience? What is the identity of an artwork once it is inevitably mediated by more than one perceiving occupant, thus becoming a social object? On what level can the sonic artworks be considered immersive and is it possible for a work to become immersive on both physical and virtual levels? If this is true, how weighted is the corporeal boundary of the perceiving occupant that may separate these levels?

1.1.7 Exploration of Research Questions via an Integrated Creative Practice

It is important to iterate here that I do not anticipate that this research will produce concrete and specific answers that pertain to all instances of sonic art. Rather I wish to explore how they can be embodied within my own portfolio of creative works. When considering various methodologies with which to resolve the research questions outlined above, I found myself presented with one final question – what might occur if I were to make these hypothetical concepts and questions the very conceptual foundations and focus of the creative works themselves? Previously, I had two separate lines of inquiry regarding sonic art: that of my own creative practice and also a theoretical line of inquiry that had led me to my current research topic. Uniting these two strands resulted in an integrated research methodology that allowed me to explore the potential for sonic art to embody these concepts, forging platforms in which different tri-polar dynamics may occur and play out. In doing so I employed the experience of my own relationships with sonic and physical media as a creative practitioner to supplement and propel the development of conceptual ideas regarding the existence of the tri-polar dynamic in my own work. As such, I propose a creative portfolio that exists symbiotically with the hypothetical concepts it aims to embody, each exploring different facets of possibility regarding a tri-polar dynamic. Furthermore, what will also emerge throughout this commentary is my development of a creative methodology resulting from an integrated theoretical and creative practice that considers how these sonic and physical medias translate, relate and embody.

Chapter 2: The Presence and Use of the Tri-Polar Dynamic in current Sonic Art Practices and Literature

This chapter aims to outline creative works that have been influential to either my own creative practice or methodology. This will be followed by a brief introduction to the theorists that have enriched my conceptual frameworks. I will make particular reference to the ways in which plural artistic media may result in a conceptually rich art experience. In outlining the ways in which an audience potentially interacts with artistic media, it is possible to demonstrate how sonic artworks might embody issues relevant to the idea of a tri-polar dynamic. In discussing how the work of others reflects or embodies the research questions outlined, I hope to further contextualise my own creative portfolio and its embodied concepts. Due to the genre's heterogeneous lineage, this text will not only discuss sonic art installation but also other works belonging to neighbouring genres such as installation art and electroacoustic music. Further to this, because of the wide variances in format, context and aesthetic positioning that most sonic artists are likely to explore and develop throughout their artistic practise, it may be logical to address these works according to the different contexts of exhibitory housing and aesthetic characteristics, rather than an artist-by-artist account. These contexts may include site-specific works, electroacoustic concerts and installations housed in art gallery spaces. It is not suggested that the contexts and categorizations made in this chapter are comprehensive or fixed - in fact there are so many instances of sonic artworks that span multiple contexts and categories that to attempt such categorization would be an almost impossible task. Rather, the aim is to facilitate a consideration of what is interesting and unique to each artwork *because* of their particular instance, context or aesthetic in relation to my own research and practice.

2.1 Instances of a Tri-Polar Dynamic in Current Creative Practices and Literature

2.1.1 Sonic Art as a Conceptual Art Form

The view that sonic art is a form of conceptual artwork is an overarching theme of the research project. Much like my compositional approach before it, I intended to approach sonic art as having

a sense of *gesamtkunstwerk* at its essence – aiming for aesthetic gain in both the intrinsic and extrinsic values of sonic and physical media itself and seeing value in the potential for the artworks to bear semantic and conceptual significance greater than the sum of their contributory parts. It is on this basis that I view my artworks as capable of expressing conceptual circumstances pertaining to the tri-polar dynamic within the creative portfolio as a means of research. As such, this project could be seen as a continuation of Seth Kim-Cohen's contention that sonic art is primarily a conceptual art form. His text *'In the Blink of an Ear: Towards a Non-Cochlea Sonic Art'* (2009) consolidated my own views on this stance. Within the text, Kim-Cohen argues towards an aesthetics of sonic art that considers its broader conceptual signification beyond that which focuses purely on the phenomena of sound itself. He summarizes this viewpoint stating that, 'A conceptual sonic art would necessarily engage both the non-cochlea and the cochlea, and the constituting trace of each in the other' (Kim-Cohen 2009, p.xxi). Kim-Cohen continues to critique a tendency to discuss sonic artwork purely on the intrinsic content of its sound. Throughout, he uses Derrida's deconstruction of Husserl's phenomenology to contextualise a discussion of conceptual and extra-musical significance through a range of examples of the use of sound in the last century from sonic art and popular recording. It is this stance that directly reflects my aim to create works that require a perceptive mediation beyond a purely phenomenological experience. As such, the discussion of aesthetics and sonic artworks that follows is not only in reference to the skilful organisation of sonic and physical media but also referring to the semantic relationships and dynamics operating within the sonic artwork as a conceptual art form.

Creatively, Seth Kim Cohen's idea of a conceptual sonic art holds two particular facets of interest for me. As an audience member, I am interested in engaging with its potential for encompassing a multi-faceted semantic layering of artistic materials. As an artist, I am fascinated by the deepening of conceptual links between artistic ideas and the artwork that can result from process-driven artistic practices. One such artwork by Robert Morris that appeals on both accounts is his seminal minimalist work, *Box with the Sound of its own Making* (1961). In this homage to

Duchamp's ready-mades, Morris recorded himself narrating the process of making a small wooden box, housing the sonic results inside the box itself. Although its material output is decidedly minimal, the work is semantically dense (especially placed in the cultural zeitgeist of 1960s America) presenting an implicit theatricality in its experience. In terms of its perception, the audience is invited to ponder the relationships between the art object and the processes that led to its existence. This is achieved through experiencing the work in time, juxtaposing the audio material heard via its linear temporal narrative and an instantaneous understanding of the concrete presence of the box itself. A rich conceptual insight is gained only through an active participation that considers the work beyond its materiality. Without this process of engaging in a tri-polar dynamic, the conceptual complexity of the work would be lost - the work being rendered a purely abstract artwork should it be viewed in a reductionist manner. Brandon Labelle also writes of conceptual art of this nature stating that, 'It is theorized as perceptual process in which the image (concept) is experienced as an immediate presence – an art that presents to the viewer/listener an experience to be completed through the very act of perception' (Labelle 2006, p.68). In a similar way, my creative portfolio is self-referential with a reflexive functionality: a body of sonic art exploring and exemplifying the relationships and satellite themes capable of operating *within* the genre of sonic art itself.

I also feel an affinity with conceptual art because of its capability to embody and present the artistic process as a research outcome. Although British installation artist Cornelia Parker does not work predominantly with sound as an artistic material, her work is capable of displaying such a delicately balanced duality as both the documentation of artistic process *and* a work of art. As such, I feel it would be beneficial to discuss her practice briefly. In her works, *Thirty Silver Pieces* (1988-89) and *Cold, Dark Matter: An Exploded View* (2001) a striking visual presence also acts as a documentation of the deconstruction of her materials during the artistic process. Although Parker's work does not occupy the genre of sonic art, I feel that the balance she maintains between a documentary presentation of the work's evolution and a visually intricate end result is reflected in

my own practice (such as the use of suspended magnetic tape in *Suspended Imprints*). It is in works such as these that such heavy conceptual layering provides great scope for the perceptive occupant to delve deeper into the semantic content of a work. Here, a sense of active participation with the artwork is established, as a revelatory narrative is undertaken regarding the perceptive occupant's *relationship with* and *understanding of* the work itself. For me, Parker's works evoke a sense of history and a direct link to the processes and past activities of the artist herself. Her audience is not only left in the presence of an artwork but from it can gleam a sense of her process, thinking and identity. It is this sense of history and potential trace left by the artist that I feel is an integral implication of artworks that facilitate a tri-polar dynamic – a standpoint evident throughout the theoretical concepts embedded within my own portfolio.

Again, considering sonic art as allied with conceptual artwork (Kim-Cohen 2009) and therefore as a perceptual vehicle for an artist's concepts and ideas, I began to question the creative value in written texts as an explicit expression of these concepts before they are explored perceptually using sonic and physical mediums. This view was fostered through the development of a practice in which theoretical research is an integral part of the artistic process. On this topic, Elise Noyez quotes Buchloh in her recent paper entitled, 'Measuring Up – Measuring Pieces and the Redefinition of Scale in Conceptual Art' given at the AHRA Scale Conference in Kent 2012. She discusses conceptual art stating, '…artists even aimed for an art in which the idea that initially led to the production of an artwork would simply replace it, altogether substituting "the object of spatial and perceptual experience by linguistic definition alone (the work as analytic proposition)" (Buchloh in Noyez 2012, p.119). Although this statement is admittedly extreme to some degree, it does pose an interesting suggestion for the creative consideration of text that is known to have spurned artwork, as is the case here.

2.1.2 Site-Specificity

Site-specific sonic artworks are created and installed in a specific location using aspects of the site itself as a contributing physical component of the work. As such, site-specific works are often non-transferrable in location. The installation of foreign sonic material in an existing physical space is of particular artistic potency to my practice as it catalyses a re-evaluation of the relationships between the art space, sonic matter and the perceptive occupant. I will now discuss several site-specific works of particular interest to me as they exemplify how the presence of sonic material may affect the semantic context of a physical environment or vice versa, whether resulting in new meanings or revealing hidden facets layered within an existing landscape.

Bill Fontana's *Sound Island* (1994) comprised of three instalments located over different levels of the *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris. At its ground level, speakers hidden on the façade of the monument broadcast a live audio stream from the Atlantic Ocean on the Normandy coast. The waxing and the waning of the tidal sounds invite the viewer to apply this oceanic imagery to the stop/start flow of the traffic that circles the monument. Fontana refers to the monument as 'an urban architectural island not because it is surrounded by water, but by a sea of cars' (Fontana accessed online 12/06/10). The work utilises the audience member's natural tendency to semanticize both visual and aural sensory stimuli in the context of one another, despite such glaring locational displacement. The success of this work is partly due to the anecdotal potency of the ocean sounds employed by Fontana, although this is not a uniform condition for successful site-specific sonic installations. The sound material is undoubtedly that of a waxing and waning tidal shoreline and as such this highlights the comparable stop-start motion of the traffic flow. It is this component of *Sound Island* that clearly demonstrates the potential for site-specific works to create a change in the semantic contexts of location and sound. For example, despite the displacement of the ocean sounds in Bill Fontana's *Sound Island* (1994), they are perceived as belonging to the urban traffic landscape surrounding the *Arc de Triomphe* and together, they engender an artistic entity. Furthermore, I am intrigued with this work's ability to highlight how the disparate elements of an

artwork can find congruency in the virtual perception of affective relationships between them and with the perceptive occupants themselves. One change or development in the sound, for instance, may be correlated to a change or development in the physical environment of a work, or perhaps a perceptive occupant may look for pathways of interaction between themselves and the artwork.

I was further inspired by the potential for an artwork to inspire the perceptive occupant to observe meaningful relationships by the sonic art installation, *Chorus* (2009) presented by the art collective, United Visual Artists and commissioned by Opera North. It was a site-specific work housed in the Howard Assembly Rooms in the Grand Theatre, Leeds. The work featured a series of large suspended pendulums, each with its own light and loudspeaker, swinging with constant rhythmical variations in its movement. With it, the speakers emitted isolated sonic events of sampled instrumental and vocal material, layered *en masse* to create a constantly evolving soundscape. With each loud speaker inhabiting its own pendulum and an on-going variation in swing pattern and soundscape, it becomes difficult to resist seeking correlations between sonic and kinetic patterns. These encompass cause and effect relationships between pendulum movement and sonic events, identifying triggers in changes of rhythmical pattern and the consideration of external semiotic references induced in the employment of sampled operatic and orchestral sounds. My own work, *Swarm* explores relationships in the tri-polar dynamic through kinetic movement, echoing the causal relationships between media in *Chorus* and employing extrinsic semiotic threads through the subtle use of anecdotal sound worlds as discussed in Fontana's *Sound Island*.

In contrast to the anecdotal sound material of *Sound Island* is the use of sound in Max Neuhaus' *Times Square* which ran from 1977-1992 in New York before being permanently re-installed in 2002. The work features a block of harmonically dense sonic resonances emanating from a grate in New York City's Times Square and in doing so explores complex aesthetic concepts using the simple *presence* of installed sound. The sound material's resonant quality, seemingly emanating from an anonymous source is responsible for its potential to remain camouflaged by the complex and unpredictable sound-world of New York City. What results is a space that remains

completely unremarkable to unaware passers-by but also operates as a defined and personal space to those public members who recognise the unexplained sonic presence. Neuhaus' subtle treatment of site and sound result in a work as potentially non-existent as it is existent, dependant entirely upon the individual and their own encounter with the space. Personally, the work importantly exemplifies the conceptually powerful effect that sonic art is capable of demonstrating with the least anecdotal of materials. In the case of *Times Square,* even though the artwork is unannounced - and almost unframed – it remains capable of powerful conceptual implications to those perceptive occupants who happen to consider it. Throughout my portfolio, I explore varying levels of semantic explicitness in my artistic media. This particular thread of my creative journey culminated in works such as *Negative Static* and *Swarm*. These works aimed to facilitate the perceptive occupant to forge their own semantic links between themselves and the artistic media in contrast to these links being suggested by overt references and relationships within a work's physical settings and media.

I see the examples of site-specific sonic artwork outlined above as harnessing the potential for sound to act as a manipulatory force on the context of their physical setting, whether using anecdotal, ambient, abstract or symbiotic sound material. And these are distinctions that make themselves clear to me as a perceptive occupant of sonic art when considering my own reactions to the use of sound. Denis Smalley speaks of sound's ability to achieve such semantic layering with the concept of 'intrinsic and extrinsic threads' and 'source bonding' as introduced in his theoretical writing on electroacoustic composition (Smalley 1997).[2] He goes on to state,

> In this type of electroacoustic music, meaning is closely allied to recognizing their sources, identifying with them, knowing which context they have been drawn from and reinterpreting their meaning in a new musical context. Such music is therefore *transcontextual* or *intertextual*.
> (Smalley 1997, p.110)

For instance, the physical setting for Fontana's *Sound Island* was not tampered with or changed for the purposes of the work but in framing the site with installed sound, perceived intrinsic and

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[2] Smalley defines source bonding as, 'the *natural* tendency to relate sounds to supposed sources and causes, and to relate sounds to each other because they appear to have shared or associated origins.' (Smalley 1997, p.110)

extrinsic threads incurred semantic changes to the physical site on a virtual level, executed within the audience's imagination. When sonic material is combined with the already meaning-laden backdrop of a specific physical space, the network of semantic possibilities becomes complex, unpredictable and infinite. As a sonic artist, it is the potential to create virtual imagery and semantic layering beyond that of the raw materials held within the palette of artistic resources that is most exciting.

2.1.3 Non Site-Specificity

Sonic art that does not use a pre-existing location (i.e. site-specific artwork) is often housed in interchangeable art galleries or specialized exhibition spaces. For example, Paul Rooney's *Thin Air* (2009) has transformed various lecture theatres and rooms into art spaces upon the public's participation in this pseudo-lecture/sonic artwork. In this instance, unlike site-specific works, suitable physical contexts of the work are interchangeable and are therefore potentially more flexible. The physical environment in non site-specific sonic artwork can range from a complexly altered visual environment as seen in works such as *Tell Me! ...a secret…* (2007) by Hans Tutschku to the more minimalist settings of configured loud speakers utilising sound's immersive properties alone to encapsulate the viewer physically in an sonic environment such as *Sunboxes* (2009) by Craig Colorusso. Sonic artworks of this description are capable of creating a sense of immersion that, for me, is intrinsically linked with the idea of a tri-polar dynamic. Whilst site-specific works can also have a strong sense of immersion, this is often a physical immersion in a literal sense referenced and created by a specific site. However, when a sense of immersion is achieved through non site-specific works, it highlights the potential for a *virtual* immersion that can almost be considered voluntary. Sonic artist, Bernhard Leitner often employs the loudspeaker as an unapologetically visual feature in his work and utilises sound for its sculptural ability to define space on a virtual level. His series of works, *Serpentinata* (2004-2006) all feature a large, fluidly entangled sculpture of PVC tubing on which forty loudspeakers are mounted, each pointing in

different directions and emitting a variety of sonic material. The result is a tangible sculptural object, the ephemeral sonic projections of which reach far beyond the structure itself – an invitation to explore and inhabit an environment blurring the line between both real and virtual sculptural projections.

I would like to discuss Janet Cardiff's *The Forty-Part Motet* (2001). The piece is a re-working of Thomas Tallis' *Spem in Alium* (1573) using forty loudspeakers to emit each of the forty voices of the ensemble individually. The work has been housed in multiple exhibition environments including the Rideau Chapel, National Gallery of Canada and the Howard Assembly Rooms at Opera North in Leeds, UK. Of particular interest to me is the series of different housings that *The Forty-Part Motet* has been exhibited in. This has prompted me to consider the idea of foreground and background spaces within the work and the consequential effect this can have on the perceptive experience of a work. It is interesting to note that every different exhibitory location of the work colours the atmosphere and ambience differently; from the stark, minimal settings of its gallery housing to the ornate and intimate feel of the work housed in chapels and churches, which seems to draw an extra emphasis to the music's rich heritage. In a cathedral setting, perhaps Tallis' *Spem in Allium* (1570) has an increased sacred ambience as opposed a presentation in a gallery space which may highlight other facets of the work such as its immersive quality or the contrapuntal interweaving of vocal lines. Yet, regardless of setting, the conceptual thread of the work remains intact. Cardiff herself states,

> 'I placed the speakers around the room in an oval so that the listener would be able to really feel the sculptural construction of the piece by Tallis. You can hear the sound move from one choir to another, jumping back and forth, echoing each other and then experience the overwhelming feeling as the sound waves hit you when all of the singers are singing.' (Cardiff accessed online 21/6/10).

For the perceptive occupant, I see the immersive experience of a sonic artwork's sensory phenomena as facilitating access to the conceptual knowledge residing in the interstitial spaces between its dynamic forces that would otherwise elude direct access via purely literary means. As

such, I am excited to embark on a research project in which there is a dialogue and co-dependence between concepts expressed both literary and non-literary (creative) formats.

2.1.4 Contemporary Literature

Regarding existing literature on the subject, this discussion is not intended to provide an exhaustive list or review of current literature available on the genre of sonic art and it is with pleasure that we see the sonic arts bibliography and presence in the current arts climate continue to grow. There are now ample texts in existence that discuss, exemplify and critique the different use of both sonic and physical media as aesthetic materials in sonic art. This allows me to work from the tacit knowledge that sonic art is an inherently pluralistic practice with grey taxonomical boundaries. Both Tony Gibb's *The Fundamentals of Sonic Art and Sound Design* (2007) and Alan Licht's *Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories* (2009) acknowledge the ambiguity of sonic art as a genre and address the plurality responsible for its wide breadth of existence in today's interdisciplinary arts culture. Gibb's book is an excellent introductory text covering the wide range of media arts that employ sound as an artistic medium through extensive artist case studies and contributions. Licht's text also identifies the historical context from which sonic art developed and uses extensive discussion of individual practitioners to exemplify the use of sonic and physical media in sonic art. For me, the writing of Brandon LaBelle has played an important part in my own research and thinking. In his text *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (2006), he also embarks on an extensive study of the history of the genre only this time it is used as a tool to focus on the use of sonic material and its relationships with physicality and location from a phenomenological stance. In contrast to some emerging critical theories of sonic art that focus primarily on sound as a medium, the significance for me was the focus on both sonic and physical aspects and the relationships that can occur between them. In turn, providing a several different platforms from which to consider my own contentions regarding the tri-polar dynamic.

Salome Voeglin's text, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Toward a Philosophy of Sound Art* (2010) introduces a proposed philosophy of sonic art focussing on the experiential phenomena of

sound as an aesthetic material. Referencing philosophical thinkers of the last century including Heidegger, Merleau-Ponty and Adorno, Voeglin conducts a philosophical consideration of the act of listening in sonic art and the conceptual narrative experienced by the individual as a result. This topic clearly resonates with my own, although it is my wish to expand on these ideas further through creative embodiments of the potential circumstances that enable a tri-polar dynamic. However, it is its methodology and stance as an experimental text that has the most relevance to my own practice. My decision is to tackle the proposed research topic in hand via a theoretical and creative investigation and therefore it is not conducive to aspire to new knowledge that can be epistemologically justified. Salome Voeglin exemplifies this outlook in her book *Listening to Noise and Silence: Toward a Philosophy of Sound Art* (2009). She introduces the text as an experiment and 'extends the invitation to read it as such'. She further writes, '… I borrow the term from Adorno to suggest that its formal enquiry produces experimentations rather than ideology and truth' (Voeglin 2010, p.xiii). She speaks throughout of a fluid narrative experience that is *of the moment* both in the experience of a sonic media and later, in relation to the experience of considering her text. In line with this outlook, it could be argued as inevitable that research concerning the dynamic relationships operating within sonic art must concede both the plurality of the genre and the individuality of both the perceptive occupant and the sonic artist. This, in turn, prevents the possibility of a universally applicable thesis. In response to this, I propose a hermeneutically focussed study in which a constellation of platforms from which to consider the dynamic relationships of sonic art are suggested and explored.

Whilst the sonic artists discussed vary widely in their use of media, exhibitory housing and aesthetics, I see them as united in their desire to trigger unique dynamic relationships between the sonic artist, their artistic media and the perceptive occupant. This may involve the application of semantic content and relationships between abstract and non-abstract artistic materials and settings as demonstrated in Neuhaus' *Times Square* or a more direct role in shaping the artwork experience as seen in Kubisch's *Electrical Walks*. It is my aim to explore the dynamic relationships between

the sonic artist, their creative media and the perceptive occupant not only from an external experiential viewpoint but also from the first hand experience of a creative practitioner of sonic art. I see this approach as unique in allowing me to employ the experience of my own relationships with sonic and physical media as a creative practitioner to supplement and propel more theoretically based research and vice versa. As such, the output will be a symbiotically theoretical and creative thesis to be explored and related in a similarly hermeneutically experimental experience. It is hoped that a stimulating avenue of investigation can be forged in navigating the paradox between a hermeneutically focussed study that embraces the numerous potential relationships of the perceptive occupant with sonic art and my own singular interpretations of this study that will result in a creative output. What will emerge concurrently is the development of an integrated theoretical and creative practice, through the investigation of the self-referential topic of the dynamic relationships between the sonic artist, their creative media and the perceptive occupant in sonic art.

2.2 Metacriticism

2.2.1 Influential Theorists

I also intend to contextualise and inform this research with broader knowledge garnered from the writings of literary critics and philosophers. This metacritical methodology of research has been inspired by my consideration of sonic artwork as having much in common with conceptual art as suggested by Seth Kim-Cohen (Kim-Cohen 2009). Sol Lewitt states in his seminal writings on conceptual artwork that, 'the idea becomes a machine that makes the art' and if we are to consider this as the crux of the sonic artworks, it may then be viewed as both relational and communicative forces created by an artist and mediated by the perceptive occupant (LeWitt in Alberro and Stimson 1999, p.12). It is on these grounds, considering sonic art as a vehicle for the *communication* of concepts, that the metacritical approach of literary critics and philosophers has relevance to my theoretical inquiry. Metacriticism is the broad branch of inquiry that encourages the consideration of meaning and author-text-reader relationships in literature. It encompasses many branches of

philosophy including hermeneutics, phenomenology, structuralism and post-structuralism in considering the socio-historical contexts of both the reader and author, relationships between them and how meaning is interpreted and contained within a text. In this context it is logical to see the obvious comparison between the trichotomy of the author, text and reader and the trichotomy of the sonic artist, sonic artwork and perceptive occupant. What must be accounted for however, are the differences between a text and the sonic artwork as the subject of our study. Whilst the former has the ability to communicate with an explicit written language, the latter uses both sonic and physical media often lacking in a formalised, meaningful syntax either within themselves as singular disciplines and/or in the context of each other.

It has always been part of my research methodology to supplement the development of conceptual notions and frameworks with relevant philosophical figures and theorists. This technique has also been demonstrated by other authors such as Seth Kim-Cohen's use of Derrida, Salome Voeglin's references to Heidegger and Brandon LaBelle's use of Merleau-Ponty. Particular branches of metacritisicm that I will be researching include phenomenology, post-structuralism and semiotics - more specifically; the works of Merleau-Ponty, Jonathon Kramer, Jean-Jacque Nattiez, Giles Delueze and Felix Guattari. All of these figures have either tackled issues pertaining to the tri-polar dynamic concept either in an abstract philosophical manner or in direct relation to music and sound. When exploring ideas of how a perceptive occupant might encounter and decode sonic and physical media, issues of phenomenology and semiotics become most relevant. I was interested in employing Merleau-Ponty's view of perception in relation to the corporeal body in light of the tri-polar dynamic in which I see a sensorial distinction between the sonic and the physical. Using it to contextualise the view that a perceptive occupant has the potential to be both physically and mentally immersed within a work on both a concrete physical level and a virtual level via the experiential narrative. Jean-Jacque Nattiez has written substantially on the topic of semiotics and music. Of most significance to me is his use of Charles Sanders Peirce's semiotic theory to highlight the hermeneutical nature of perception in music. Nattiez is also of metacritical relevance

on account of his tri-partite theory of semiotic analysis in music examining the relationships between the music, composer and the listener. As a post-structuralist, Delueze naturally appeals to me on account of the engaged, reflexive thinking experience he creates for his readers. I view Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the rhizome as a model for the perceptive experience of multiplicities, again, most significant for grounding ideas hermeneutically. Finally (and perhaps most directly related) are Jonathon Kramer's writings on temporality in music. In considering the experience of a perceptive individual within a tri-polar dynamic, I intend for concepts of temporality to be a satellite topic to the research thread.

Chapter 3: Conceptual *Potentialities* concerning the Tri-Polar Dynamic and the Creative Portfolio

3.1 Syncretism in the Creative Portfolio

Having established that the works in the creative portfolio explore how the perceptive occupant might be positioned within sonic and physical media, the concept of *syncretism* might provide us with a useful platform from which to discuss this further. Syncretism is referred to by Gene Youngblood as 'the combination of many different forms to one whole form' and viewed in such simplistic terms, its relevancy is most apparent (Youngblood accessed online 1/10/10). In his article, 'Syncretic Reality: Art, Process and Potentiality', Roy Ascott expands on the concept, describing the possibility for a coherent whole to emerge from apparently disparate artistic materials. He writes that, 'syncretism is about breaking boundaries while maintaining cohesion… In the syncretic context, extreme differences are upheld but aligned as such that likeness is found amongst unlike things' (Ascott accessed online 21/04/10). In the context of the creative portfolio, the 'unlike things' referred to by Ascott most notably apply to differences in the perceptive experience of the phenomenological properties of both sonic and physical media in the creative portfolio. This may manifest as differences in the external characteristics of the artistic media itself: for example, the differing morphological shapes, pitches and timbres in the sonic elements of the *dis:ORDER* series versus the differing shapes, formats and scaling in its physical elements. However, it is not my suggestion here that the perception of these works are reducible to a purely phenomenological experience. As previously mentioned, I am discussing the portfolio in line with Seth Kim-Cohen's proposal of a conceptual sonic art that has both textual and inter-textual significance. It is *through* the perceptive processes that traverse beyond a purely cochlear and retina based mediation of the artworks that the consequent 'likeness' of which Ascott speaks, transpires. The initial tempering of disparate characteristics within a sonic artwork occurs upon the acceptance of all its elements as summating one artistic whole.

All the works in the portfolio aim to explore this concept in some format, alongside highlighting further satellite topics. For instance, the media in *Negative Static* could be considered abstract upon initial consideration: featuring seemingly unconnected components including a sonic soundscape that maintains a sense of narrative stasis, minimal layering of black viewing frames and the wider space in which it is housed. It is only with time and active consideration that these features begin to summate an artistic whole through the experience of the work. Through this, the potential for the perceptive occupant to view 'snapshots' of outside space is realised and their own micro-framed moments may correlate with the sonic references to camera shutters. Further more, perhaps the use of simple delay and panning processes could bring attention to the need for a constant refocusing between the four different viewing panels as illustrated on the accompanying DVD media. In the situating of the perceptive occupant within a specific locale between the viewing panels and stereo speakers, the work aims to result in facilitating a playful relationship between interior and exterior spaces, highlighting how a virtual reality may come to exist as a result of a syncretic art experience.

Here, the perceptive occupant may find themselves operating in a virtual reality, positioned between plural artistic media that exhibit a syncretic state of difference and semantic ambiguity, as discussed above. Because of its potential immersive nature, the perceptive occupant mediates the sonic artworks as a body subject that unites all sensory faculties and conscious thought. As such, we experience it as we would our everyday existence. And so, just as we create a cohesive reality that makes sense to us in our everyday existence, we are encouraged to forge meaningful relationships between the disparate sonic and physical media in the sonic artworks. Henceforth, the initially disparate media within the artworks are conceptually tempered, resulting in the acceptance of all their elements as contributing to an artistic whole.

Therefore, in the absence of a perceiving occupant, I see the creative portfolio as possessing a great deal of *potential* conceptual energy. It is through the occurrence of a tri-polar dynamic that their potential conceptual energy is kinetically released, as disparate elements are perceived as operating as an artistic whole. This potential 'likeness' that transpires is not, however, resultant of

magically dissipating boundaries of difference between plural 'unlike' elements (Ascott, *op cit*). Rather, via the experience of combined sonic and physical phenomena as a virtual reality, the perceptive occupant is incited to perceive a *conceptual* sonic artwork, operating beyond the pure materiality of its elements as a cohesive, artistic whole. From here the sonic artworks can now be seen as redefined and embodied within the consciousness of the perceptive occupant and contextualized by a wider tacit knowledge that is culturally and individually specific. And so, Ascott's 'likeness' comes to fruition *virtually* as a metaphysical concept existing in the interstitial space between the perceptive occupant and the artworks. On these grounds, the perceptive occupant can be seen as a *completing* component of an artwork and along with its sonic and physical components, forms the tri-polar dynamic that unifies the sonic artwork.

To summarize, we are now in the position to acknowledge that the perceptive occupant may experiences the artworks via the combined sensory faculties of their corporeal body in a virtual reality and it is this condition that triggers a tempering of the syncretic differences between the artwork's media. Because of this, it could be argued that the semantic explicitness absent in an artwork itself is re-instated in the presence of the perceptive occupant, who now also has a certain amount of semantic weighting.

3.2 Issues of Temporality in the Creative Portfolio

3.2.1 Introduction

The existence of multiple temporalities operating within music and the visual arts has been a popular topic for discussion in contemporary theory. As a genre utilizing both sonic and physical practices, it is therefore logical to assume that sonic art can also be seen as potentially juxtaposing the temporal facets of its media, whether it is the static existence of an art object or the presence of media that progresses over time such as video or sound. What is of particular interest, however, is that the sonic, physical and perceptive occupant must all co-exist along the same linear timeline in order for a dynamic dialogue between them to occur. According to Ted Perry, this is a consequence

of the intermedia art format. He states that, 'one of the most important aspects of intermedia is its presentational form… quality of happening in the moment' (Ted Perry in Higgins (ed.) 2001, p.145). What is more, Robert Morris allies this unfurling quality of sonic art to the enhanced spatial presence of combined sonic and physical media, because space is inextricably embedded in its existence over time. For Morris, '…images, the past tense of reality, begin to give way to duration, the present tense of immediate spatial experience' (Morris 1994, pp.175-6). The complexities of discussing temporality in sonic art become evident when considering the various asynchronous temporalities at play in the sonic and physical media and the perceptive occupant simultaneously. As such, sonic art can perhaps be allied to *the event* as outlined by Sanford Kwinter as he proceeds to state, 'Events belong to a class known as "emergent phenomena" – the product and expression of sudden communicative coherences or 'prehensions' (Whitehead) of converging qualities inexplicably interweaving and unfolding *together*, even though they may originate at vastly different temporal and phenomenal scales' (Kwinter 2002, p.22). The constant consideration to be maintained amongst this complexity, however, can be found in the temporal experience of the perceptive occupant. When immersed in a work of sonic art, the perceptive occupant exists in space and time alongside sonic and physical phenomena. It is within this framework that a revelatory narrative occurs as they complete a tri-polar dynamic in the sonic artworks.

The creative portfolio is influenced in this context by the notion that the revelatory narrative (in which the perceptive occupant becomes a completing part of an artwork through the tri-polar dynamic) could occur on account of an evolution of temporal consciousness. As such, many of the works were designed to foster a positive correlation between the temporal inhabitation of a work and the potential semantic involvement in its embedded conceptual content. In hindsight of the design processes and final outcomes of the creative portfolio, I began to find much resonance between how I see the perceiving occupant developing a relationship with a work and J.T Fraser's *Umwelt* model of temporality as discussed by J. Kramer in his seminal text, *The Time of Music: New Meanings, New Temporalities, New Listening Strategies* (Kramer, 1988). J.T Fraser's

hierarchical model of time outlines levels of temporal consciousness or *Umwelts* in which he describes temporality in the evolution of nature and the human consciousness. This conceptual framework is often posited against the arts, however it is especially relevant to our discussion here on account of its correlation to conscious thought.

3.2.2 Potential Temporal Concerns of a Perceptive Occupant within the Creative Portfolio

Fraser's lowest *Umwelt*, Atemporality is not applicable to our discussion because the artworks already exist as an organized system (having been created and given form) as opposed to Kramer's description of Atemporality's 'chaos and emptiness' (Kramer 1988, p.395). Instead, I propose to commence with a discussion of the second *Umwelt*, Prototemporality in which, 'form is understood cumulatively, as the totality of constituent events' (Kramer 1988, p.395). I find a correlation between this notion and the very instance of transformation that occurs upon first beholding one of the sonic artworks: the moment when it transforms into artistic unity from its previous state of syncretic difference. It is phenomenally instantaneous and though its multiple phenomenological forces exist simultaneously, affective temporal and semantic relationships have not yet come to pass. Much like the perception of the physical intricacy of *dis:ORDER* or *Suspended Imprints* before the sonic media has had chance to unfurl or the inner details of its physical structure have been engaged with. The work as a whole has been apprehended but perhaps not yet experienced.

As the perceptive occupant's experience goes beyond this split-second occurrence and the artwork's phenomena begin to inform a deeper level of understanding, the *Umwelt* of Eotemporality transpires. Here, Kramer describes an existence in which, 'cause and effect exist but cannot be distinguished; there is temporal succession, but temporal direction is not significant'. He continues to compare this to a 'multiply-directed time' in music in which, 'the order of events is important, but several different successions, moving in different directions, are presented as it were at once, in the same composition' (Kramer 1988, p.395). This notion can clearly be extended to apply to the sonic artworks on account of the capability of both their sonic and physical elements to exist and

display multiple temporalities mediated in the linear coexistence of the perceptive occupant. Subsequently, Biotemporality may be seen to occur as we cognitively 'lock on' to the work. The resultant dialogue between sonic and physical phenomena and the perceptive occupant may initially consider the intrinsic characteristics of artistic media and the comprehension of meaningful syntax within and between them. Consequently, a sense of temporal progression, order and affective relationships begin to exist within the context of the work's own parameters. Kramer writes, 'the present is recognized as different from the past and future… consciousness exists but there is no long-range prediction or hierarchically organized memory' (Kramer 1988, p.396). In reference again to *dis:ORDER*, the perceptive occupant may now be aware of the self-referential organisation of its prose or similarly, i.e. the significance of the Möbius strip in relationship to *Suspended Imprint's* themes of spatial inhabitation and the internal monologue.

The fifth *Umwelt* of Nootemporality is one of self-awareness in which, 'the encoding and remembering of information is a basic process'. Here, the artwork is fully engaged with and a dialogue is formed between itself and the perceptive occupant: their background as an individual, thought processes and 'unique personal history' (Kramer 1988, p.396). It is within this dialogue that the disparate components of the sonic, physical and perceptive occupant begin to function as an artistic whole, conceptually greater than the sum of its parts and reminiscent of the *Gesamtkunstwerk*. The works are mediated through both intrinsic and extrinsic perspectives. An artwork is experienced that is *both* cochlear and non-cochlear, retinal and non-retinal, forging its place in the history of the individual's own story. And so, it is within this temporal framework that I see the potential for the transformative process of a revelatory narrative to occur within my work - one that kinetically 'becomes' in the presence of a third signifying power: the perceiving occupant — who, in achieving a virtual state of likeness, completes the syncretic artistic whole. As Ascott writes:

> 'It is the action of observing that creates meaning – but also provides a parallel to the inherent fuzziness of mind and content, the semantic potentiality of the truly open-ended, inconclusive, emergent quality of interactive art. This gives rise to the notion of a fuzzy, open-ended syncretism, whose parts are coming into being, in unforeseeable, unclassifiable

variety, transforming, diminishing, re-appearing, within a non-linear structural containment. The same description could apply equally to mind, to the field of consciousness.'
(Ascott, *op cit*)

It is not my proposal that a perceptive occupant would experience the boundaries between *Umwelts* as distinct. In line with the very nature of evolution itself, the evolution of the perceptive occupant's revelatory narrative (as modelled against Fraser's *Umwelts*) occurs along a linear continuum. Furthermore, it should be noted that these *Umwelts* would not necessarily occur in stages of equal length: for example, Eotemporality is likely to only occur fleetingly before temporal consciousness evolves. Fraser outlines temporal *Umwelts* as existing in a nested structure, with each level possessing all the properties of the lower *Umwelts* that precede it. Despite lower level *Umwelts* potentially occupying a brief split-second existence that may even exist subconsciously, the *Umwelts* can be argued as occurring in a linear chronology, with Nootemporality incurring a cumulative temporal complexity. For example, the perception of intrinsic relationships between artistic media during a Biotemporal state cannot escape the external influences conditioned in the perceptive occupant, such as the learned syntax of language used in *dis:ORDER* and *Suspended Imprints*. However, this is not the same as the exterior semantic references that position the work within the wider context of a perceptive occupant's personal history during Nootemporality. Yet, without the process of a Biotemporal experience, the wider extrinsic contextualization of the artwork would not be possible and the Nootemporal would not come to pass.

I would now like to extend the consideration of the condition of the perceptive occupant having reached a Nootemporal state of consciousness in the mediation of a sonic artwork because it is here that I see the perceptive occupant as fully activating the syncretic semantic potential of the creative portfolio.

3.2.3 The Implication of Hermeneutics in the Nootemporal Experience of the Creative Portfolio

As discussed above, I see the proposed evolution of temporal consciousness in the perceptive occupant as one that could potentially take place through time itself upon consideration of the creative portfolio. That is, as time passes so too does the perceptive occupant's progression to increasingly higher temporal *Umwelts*. Therefore, it is almost paradoxical to note that in order for this temporal evolution to reach the higher *Umwelts* of Biotemporality and Nootemporality, the artworks must be further and further contextualised in the personal history or *past* of the perceptive occupant. It is via acquired personal memories, cultural conditioning and even anatomical characteristics influencing the reception of sonic and physical phenomena that a Nootemporal understanding of the works can occur. This implication of a personal history in the conscious mediation of sonic artwork is acknowledged by Brandon LaBelle, who states, 'perception is that which propels us toward the real, toward space, objects, matter, the future, while memory is that which impels us toward consciousness, the past, and duration' (LaBelle 2006, p.164). It is the collision of past and present in the Nootemporal state that is particularly intriguing, especially if we consider this within the concept of Merleau-Ponty's body subject immersed in the virtual reality of the an artwork. Here, the perceptive occupant's past exists metaphysically within their consciousness and is intertwined within a physical body that unifies all sensory faculties. Furthermore, this body subject is then inherently implicated in the environment of the artwork. This is a concept I explore further during *Suspended Imprints*, which aims to focus on the collective and individual inhabitation and navigation through space as a body subject that is both physical and conscious matter. Perhaps it is in this light that my focus on a hermeneutically driven art form becomes apparent: often semantically re-contextualised in the presence of a perceptive occupant and their personal history and culturally conditioned responses to phenomena. With this, their experience of the creative portfolio becomes one of specificity, unique to the time, individual and place of its occurrence. It is on this basis that I describe *Suspended Imprints* as site specific *and*

temporally specific on account of its use of source recordings specific to a particular time frame. If the same perceptive occupant encountered *Suspended Imprints* at an earlier or later date, the outcome of the tri-polar dynamic would be shaped by fewer or more of their memories and past experiences respectively. And naturally, different perceptive occupants will each have a unique history that will yield differing interpretations. As Seth Kim-Cohen writes on the concept of the situation: 'The situation is a product of time, context, expectation (protention), and memory (retention)' (Kim-Cohen 2009, p.46).

I wish to reference Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of the body subject's experience *through time* in order to expand on the previous discussion of past and present embodied in the perceptive occupant during a Nootemporal state of dialogue. Merleau-Ponty introduces us to the concept of a 'habitual body' as the facet of our 'being' that embodies the 'habits' of our past, which then determine our expectation of our current experiences. It is our habitual body that is embodied and informed by our experience of the now, in the 'present body' (Merleau-Ponty, 2012). During the mediation of an artwork, the present body encounters an environment of juxtaposing stimuli that exist in a state of difference, which could be said to create a virtual reality beyond the horizons of our everyday expectations. This collides with the expectations of our habitual body and as the relationship between the habitual and present body is intensified, the tri-polar dynamic is activated (in which the syncretic likeness of the artwork is formed). For instance, the physical and sonic environment of *Swarm* is not one that will have previously been encountered or experienced. Nor does it bear similarity to any typical everyday situation. It deliberately features artificial, graphic and sonic environments that the habitual body immediately deems as syncretically different. As the 'present body' tempers this environment and the sonic and physical media are contextualized in the presence of each other, the work summates a new virtual reality with its own schema and syntax. It is now possible to consider further the conscious processes in the tri-polar dynamic that result in the semantic redefinition of the sonic artworks and how this may exist in an *interstitial* space.

3.3 An Interstitial Occupation of Syncretic Likeness in the Creative Portfolio

As outlined previously, it is my view that the intensification between the habitual and present bodies embodied within the body subject of the perceptive occupant can be considered a trigger point of a tri-polar dynamic. It is here that the differences between artistic media are detected, causing the perceptive occupant to cement these semantic gaps on a metaphysical level. As meaningful relationships are created between the sonic, physical and perceiving occupant, an artwork may emerge as a cohesive artistic whole: it *becomes* to exist virtually in the metaphysical consciousness of the perceptive occupant. I would like to suggest that the syncretic 'likeness' of the sonic artworks do not exist without the presence of the third, completing component: the perceptive occupant. And it is in their presence that the interpretation of a work is contextualised by the past and present experiences of the body subject. It is on these grounds that we may argue that these sonic artworks then adopt a new identity, redefined in the eyes of the perceptive occupant. Furthermore, I would like to suggest that the redefined identity of the sonic artworks exist in a parallel space to the same sonic artwork in a state of syncretic difference. It operates within an *interstitial* space, no longer grounded by the physical presence of its artistic media but existing between the dynamic of sonic, physical and the perceptive occupant's body subject.

Through exploring both the physical and metaphysical existence of the perceptive occupant during a tri-polar dynamic, we can further understand how the sonic artworks may become situated between them, thus existing *interstitially*. To exemplify this notion further, it may be interesting to cross-reference the aforementioned ideas of Merleau-Ponty's body subject with the philosophy of Giles Delueze. Within the vast expanse of ideas covered in *Difference and Repetition* (1995), Delueze discusses the concept of identity and the relationships between the mind, body and reality by contrasting ideas of pure difference and complex repetition (Delueze 1995, back cover). I would like to adopt his three levels of synthesis in the mind, used to outline a progressive state of difference within the mind's comprehension of reality. For me, Delueze's model has clear resonances with the *Umwelt* model of temporal evolution outlined earlier. However, it also allows

me to extrapolate a more detailed perspective on the relationship between an integrated corporeal body and its consciousness. For Delueze, the primary synthesis of the mind sees it functioning at a basic level of existence, governed by the sensory information of our reality and concerned primarily with maintaining our existence on an animalistic level. It is this level that I see as most embedded within the physical body and its sensory faculties. For the perceptive occupant, immersion one of the artworks is activated in a primary state of mind. The second synthesis of the mind occurs as it expands its horizons beyond the present tense of its physical existence in the sonic artwork. In doing so, memories of the past are accessed, existing in a virtual consciousness as the mind splits from its first synthesis present in the physical body. We find the two running parallel to each other, existing concurrently. Philosophy scholar Reidar Due writes of Delueze's position on this split stating, 'the present moment is itself as if split, composed internally and virtually of two temporal dimensions, on the one hand, a present tense – *this is now* – and, on the other, *a movement of passing away*' (Due 2007, p.47). For Deleuze, the third synthesis of the mind is one of pure abstraction and the condition for philosophical thought. The mind operates as what Delueze terms a 'body without organs' in which thought and concepts are no longer dependent on what the body receives perceptually from its environment. Due discusses this matter in his book, *Deleuze* (2007, pp.47-50). It is important for our current discussion to recognise that it is here that the mind can engage in the creative act, forming concepts beyond those already existent in reality. Therefore, when the sonic artworks exist in a state of syncretic difference, they encourage a third synthesis of the mind – they become semantically complete, imbued with meaning beyond that of their physical and sonic stimulus. Deleuze uses the third synthesis of the mind to explore the possibility that purely abstract thought is possible and can be transcendent of our physical body. However, it is not my intention to support this argument either way. I am interested in it as a model of evolution towards a state of mental creativity during the production of syncretic likeness in my own works.

It is my contention that the state of third synthesis is one that sees the creation of new conceptual relationships between the disparate media in the artworks, grounded within the memory

of the second synthesis and the physical perception of the first synthesis. On these grounds, in which the three levels of synthesis have a nested configuration, the pure abstraction of which Delueze speaks may not be obtainable (in the mediation of sonic art at least). Alternatively, I would like to posit the idea of the third synthesis of the mind as one inhabiting, and prompted by, the physical existence of our integrated corporeal senses (in line with Merleau-Ponty's body subject) *and* the physical existence of the artistic media itself. I acknowledge the need for the evolutionary state of conscious transcendence in a tri-polar dynamic; yet wish to position it within the integrated conscious and physical being of the body subject. It is between these levels of synthesis and the sonic and physical media that the dialogue occurs as a constant loop of recontextualisation.

The potential interaction of the perceptive occupant with *dis:ORDER* exemplifies the discussion above in a simple way. The work features a continuous line of conceptual prose, syntactically split up across various panels and mounted on a three dimensional framework. The framework also emits recordings of the prose, processed in such a way to obscure clear audibility. The work is configured in such a manner to invite the perceptive occupant to decipher the syntactical disruption in order to experience the prose in its linear form (although this is not a prerequisite for mediating the work). In order to read all of the panels the perceptive occupant is physically required to navigate around the structure itself. They may also hear sonic fragments as distinguishable sections of prose or marry panels of text to the suggested morphological shapes in the sonic landscape should the two stimuli coincide. Having been experienced by the perceptive occupant, the memories of the sonic and physical media in the work begin to piece together, formulating a more linear reading (whether correct to the original or not). It is impossible to comprehend the entire linear prose from one physical position and so this encourages the work to be held in the consciousness of the perceptive occupant as a memory. This is also dependant on the perceptive occupant having the cultural conditioning of being a speaker of the English language. And so, despite having produced linear prose at a more metaphysical level, the work may still propagate a sense of physical immersion, especially in the instance of a sonic fragment coinciding

with one's reading of the panels. Thus, as a cohesive whole, the artwork exists interstitially between these aforementioned existences.

Issues regarding semiotics and the tri-polar dynamic are complicated because of the hermeneutical impact of temporal evolution in the perceptive occupant, as previously highlighted in our discussion of *Umwelts* and Deleuzian states of synthesis of the mind. During the mediation of the creative works each perceptive occupant has the potential to interpret and form syncretic likenesses in an endlessly unique array of possibilities, all of which are born because the sonic and physical media have the *potential* to act as meaningful signifiers, which are then activated by the perceptive occupant who, in reaching Nootemporal consciousness, can be considered a signifying force them self. It is from this point that we can continue to discuss the sonic artworks as containing nodal points of semiotic collision within this tri-polar dynamic with further reference to Jean-Jacques Nattiez and Charles Sanders Peirce.

3.4 Semiotic Instability of the Tri-Polar Dynamic in Creative Portfolio

When attempting to discuss aspects of semiology and perception within the portfolio of sonic artworks it is most important to acknowledge that unstable relationships within the tri-polar dynamic are unavoidable. Jean-Jacques Nattiez acknowledges the difficulty for stable relationships to exist between the signifying and signified in music in his 1987 text, *Music and Discourse: Toward a Semiology of Music*. In this text, Nattiez references the work of Charles Sanders Peirce when discussing the unstable nature of - what has been discussed here as - the perceptive occupant's personal Nootemporal history when considering semiotics. Peirce's triangular model of semiotics in language (Figure 3.1) maintains that, 'A *sign* is anything which is related to a second thing, its *object* in respect to quality, in such a way as to bring a third thing, its *interpretant*, into relation to the same object, and that in such a way as to bring a fourth into relation to that same object in the same form, ad infinitum' (Nattiez 1987, p.6).
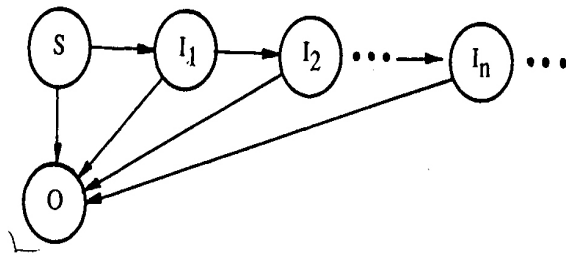
Figure 3.1: Peirce's model of semiotic interpretants (Nattiez 1987, p.6).

In Nattiez's discussion of Peirce, he observes that the virtual nature of the signifying object exists only, 'within and through the infinite multiplicity of interpretants, by means of which the person *using* the sign seeks to *allude to* the object' (Nattiez 1987, p.7). Clearly, this notion resonates with the previous discussion stating that it is the third signifying power in the sonic artworks: the perceptive occupant, who creates the syncretic, artistic 'whole' in a virtual, metaphysical sense. In reference to the Nootemporal state of the perceptive occupant, Nattiez makes an essential observation stating that 'the individual places the object in relation to areas of his lived experience – that is, in relation to a collection of other objects that belong to his or her experiences of the world' (Nattiez 1987, p.9). Peirce's diagram shows his model of semiotics consisting of a sign having an infinite number of possible interpretants, combining to form a signified virtual object. The model presented above in Figure 3.1 needs to be adapted if we are to consider that the sonic artworks have two signifying forces, the sonic and the physical, that differ phenomenally. The diagram below (Figure 3.2) is an adaptation of Peirce's triangular semiotic model and takes both the sonic and physical media of a sonic artwork into account. Here the sonic and physical signifiers coexist and together contribute to an understanding of an artwork. In the absence of the perceptive occupant, I would like to suggest that this model occupies a state of unrealized conceptual potential energy, with the sonic and physical signs existing but the potential interpretants and object existing having yet to be actualized by the perceptive occupant.
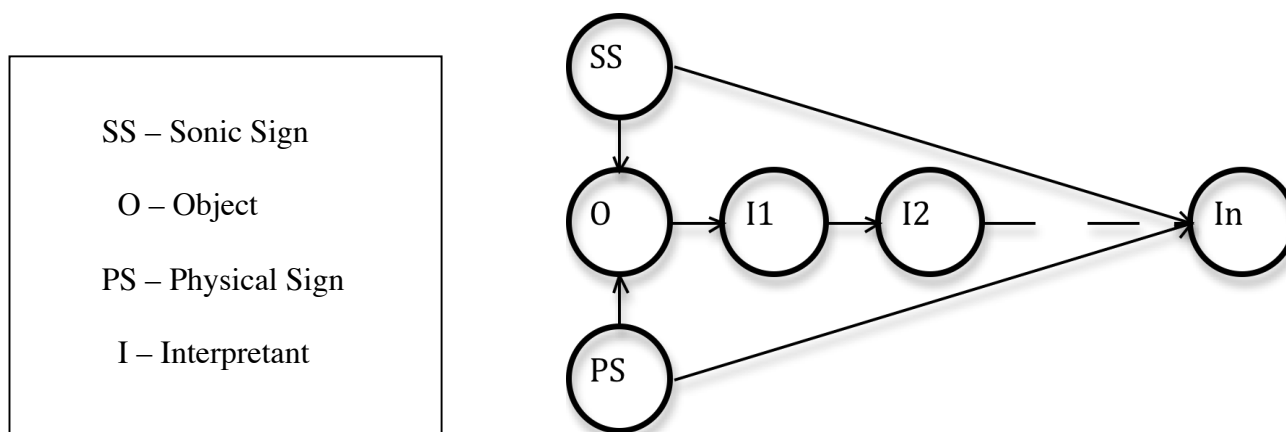
Figure 3.2: An adapted of Peirce's model encompassing both the sonic and physical signs of a sonic artwork.

Whilst Peirce's model and its subsequent adaption have clear relevance to our discussion, they do not directly acknowledge the perceptive occupant as a signifying force. In Peirce's diagram (Figure 3.1) it would seem that the presence of the perceptive occupant is merely assumed to be true, indicated by the reference to possible interpretations of the sign, perceived by the perceptive occupant as the object. My adaptation in Figure 3.2, rather *embraces* the absence of the perceptive occupant, suggesting instead that the interpretants exist here merely as potentialities. I would now like to develop this model to incorporate the sonic, physical *and* perceptive occupant as signifying forces operating in the sonic artworks in order to highlight the dynamic relationships operating between them. However, in the absence of a feasible hierarchy or stability between the signifying elements of a sonic artwork, how can one consider its tri-polar dynamic and therefore gain insight into its perceived mediation?

3.5 A Rhizomatic Schema of Tri-Polar Dynamics in Creative Portfolio

I propose that the concept of the rhizome is of great use in this particular context, as discussed in Giles Deleuze and Felix Guattari's text, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capatalism and Schizophrenia* (1987). Instead of seeking to define a fixed topology of tri-polar relationships, the idea of using a rhizomatic model allows for a fluid relationship to exist between the tri-polar signifiers of the sonic artworks. In the book's first chapter, Deleuze and Guattari take inspiration from the rhizomatic

structures that occur naturally in the root systems of plants. They continue to present the rhizome as a conceptual model, describing it as an assemblage, or networked multiplicity of continuously perpetuating lines of semantic enquiry, unhindered in its ability to potentially connect across genre, classifications and languages making any form of concrete organization wholly impossible. Deleuze and Guattari state that within the rhizome, 'semiotic chains of every nature are connected to very diverse methods of coding (biological, political, economics, etc.) that bring into play not only different regimes of signs but also states of things of differing status' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.7). Simon O'Sullivan further explains that the rhizome is without centre, can be accessed from any point and is, 'composed not of points but of the lines between points' (O'Sullivan 2006, p.27). For me, this is an apt description of the way in which semantic chains may perpetuate rhizomatically, occurring when the perceptive occupant engages in a dialogue with the sonic and physical media of the artworks. The rhizome also accounts for the inherent variability of syntax, language and phenomena in the use of both sonic and physical artistic media, whilst also acknowledging that a perceptive occupant's subjectivity will result in a fluid relationship with an artwork. The rhizome's applicability to the syncretic artistic process is evident in the following quotation by Ascott:

> It is the action of observing that creates meaning – but also provides a parallel to the inherent fuzziness of mind and content, the semantic potentiality of the truly open-ended, inconclusive, emergent quality of interactive art. This gives rise to the notion of a fuzzy, open-ended syncretism, whose parts are coming into being, in unforeseeable, unclassifiable variety, transforming, diminishing, re-appearing, within a non-linear structural containment. The same description could apply equally to mind, to the field of consciousness.
> (Ascott, *op cit*).

In order to explore the idea that the tri-polar dynamic operates in a rhizomatic manner, I have used Peirce's diagram (Figure 3.1) as a starting point from which to develop a model that encompasses the sonic, physical and perceptive occupant as having a tri-polar dynamic in which nodal points of affect between all three take place. Figure 3.3 maintains the neutral level of Figure 3.2. The addition of the perceptive occupant extends the model into a three dimensional form which represents an artwork as it exists virtually, redefined in a state of activated kinetic conceptual energy.

The perceptive occupant, physical and sonic signs all exist on the same level in a state of prototemporal difference as represented by the red lines. The three dimensional extension above it illustrates the process of temporal evolution in the tri-polar dynamic, as represented by the black lines. Here, the perceptive occupant tempers the syncretic differences existing on the base levels and completes the artwork, producing a signifying artistic whole, or *object* in a virtual existence.
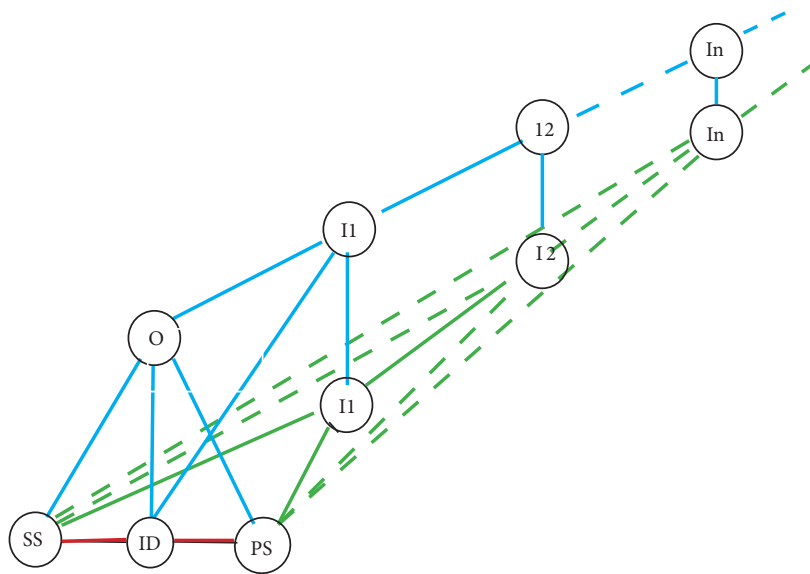
Figure 3.3: A diagram of the rhizomatic schema between sonic (SS), physical (PS) and the perceiving occupant (ID) in the creative portfolio, resulting in the art object (O) and its infinite interpretants (Ix).

On the base level of the diagram, illustrated in green, is a *potential* infinite trajectory of interpretants that remain in a state of unrealised conceptual potential, before a tri-polar dynamic has occurred. The interpretants on the upper, blue level of the diagram represents the lines of semantic flight that occur with the Nootemporal, tri-polar dynamic unique to the perceptive occupant. The diagram could be said to exemplify the potential for one of the sonic artworks to *become*, as its potential conceptual energy is *actualized* into a kinetic state. All areas other than the red base line exist on a virtual, metaphysical level. It should be noted that there is no connecting line between the perceptive occupant and the interpretants occupying the base level of diagram. This is because the lowest layer of the figure represents the potential interpretants that remain in a state of *unrealized*

conceptual potential, before the tri-polar dynamic has occurred (as in Figure 3.2). The perceptive occupant is instead connected to the interpretants on the upper level of the diagram that have been *realized* as a result of the perceptive occupant's engagement in the tri-polar dynamic.

Furthermore, the potential for the perceptive occupant to engage in an ongoing narrative of revelation within the tri-polar dynamic fits neatly with the infinite lines of semantic flight described as part of the rhizome. As such, we are given the impression that there is a transformative element within the dynamic as the three signifying forces collide: 'The diagrammatic or abstract machine does not function to represent, even something real, but rather constructs a real that is yet to come, a new type of reality' (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.142).

The proposed dynamic of this tri-polar model in the sonic artworks is just that – existing in a state of *dynamic* flux, constantly evolving and temporally non-static. Yet, the linear connectivity in Figure 3.3 is suggestive of singular, fixed lines of flight. A conceptual crux of the rhizomatic argument is that it represents multiple lines of semantic flight, capable of journeying in any direction, with multiple points of entry and exit. Therefore, it is important to recognise that these diagrams are intended to illustrate just *one* of these possible semantic chains. It is here that I suggest to the reader that the interpretant levels in Figure 3.3 are virtually expanded in consideration of what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as the first principle of the rhizome: that any point on the rhizome can be connected to anything other, and must be, with no point plotted or order fixed (Deleuze and Guattari 1987). The diagram should also be considered as a snapshot of what would be a dynamic process in flux, as discussed in John Mullarkey's chapter, 'Thinking in Diagrams' in his book, *Post-Continental Philosophy. An Outline.* (2006).

Having developed a deepened understanding of the creative processes involved in the creation of sonic art during my development of the creative portfolio I would now like to position myself as the sonic artist within the tri-polar dynamic. If we are to see the tri-polar dynamic as the potential *future* of a sonic artwork in the absence of the perceptive occupant, I would like to begin this process by now considering this creative process as the potential *past* of a sonic artwork.

3.6 Dynamic Relationships between Myself as the Sonic Artist, the Creative Portfolio and the Perceptive Occupant.

3.6.1 Tri-Partition in the context of the Creative Portfolio

As the sonic artist, I am not only responsible for the creation of an artwork and therefore, the artwork's own *history*, but I have engaged in an artistic process that is also unavoidably shaped by my own personal history and background. It is here that it may be useful to reference Nattiez and in particular, his tripartition model of semiotic analysis (Nattiez 1987). Not only does this serve as a useful framework with which to further discuss temporality, it also offers a useful parallel model from which to consider semiotics and sonic artwork.

Nattiez's tripartition model of semiotic analysis originally dealt with the semiosis of music, identifying three distinct levels: the *poietic*, the *neutral* and the *esthesic* (Nattiez 1987). The poietic level deals with all aspects of the production of a piece of music - from the creative processes to transcribing the work - all in the context of the composer's personal and cultural history. In terms of *Umwelts*, it could be suggested that a sonic artist occupies a Nootemporal state during the creative processes of artwork production. In this instance, they are influenced by their own particular history and a creative crux, which propels the creative journey from which a sonic artwork emerges. The neutral level concerns itself with the immanent configurations of the trace — the end result of the poietic process, e.g. the score and/or sound-object. In terms of the creative portfolio, the sonic and physical components of a work co-exist in a state of syncretic difference, simultaneously occupying a state of encoded poietic history and potential semantic kinesis. The esthesic level deals with the reception and consumption of artistic forms. In terms of music this can include issues of perception, cognition, interpretation, and reception history. It is interesting to note that esthesis occurs - similarly to poiesis - within a Nootemporal *Umwelt*, only this time a perceptive occupant occupies it. It is my contention that the process of esthesic strategy in the sonic artworks should be seen not only as deriving subjective meaning from the sonic and physical phenomena but also as a process in which the perceptive occupant becomes a kinetic activator of the dormant syncretic potential of

artistic media existing otherwise in a state of syncretic difference (as discussed previously). Furthermore, the consequent placing of a perceptive occupant on Nattiez's tripartition model is then called into question. On one level, a perceptive occupant is most certainly an esthesic strategist, but in assimilating similarities (or 'likenesses' as Ascott would argue) between disparate artistic stimuli within the interstitial spaces of a work itself, it could be argued that the perceptive occupant may also occupy a space on the neutral level, as a completing part of the artwork (Ascott *op cit*).

This, in turn, would necessitate a re-evaluation of Nattiez's terminology regarding the 'neutral level' in that the process of mediation, as discussed above, means that the unique personal history of the perceptive occupant is unavoidable. If the perceptive occupant is to be argued as having a place in both the esthesic and neutral levels of artistic semiosis, then the inherent Nootemporal state of the perceptive occupant renders a *neutral* existence of the artworks impossible. In addition to this argument, if the poietic strategies used in their creation are in part driven by my a shared cultural history, then it could be argued that the artwork's media is no longer a disparate *trace* but rather one that holds tangible remnants of their own cultural conditioning. Despite these concerns, I find it an exciting notion to consider Nattiez's idea of the neutral level as a gateway between an artwork's past and potential future temporal existences.

3.6.2 Rhizomatic Schema of the Tri-Polar Dynamic and the Creative Process

As the sonic artist, I am not only responsible for the creation of an artwork and therefore, the artwork's own *history*, but I have engaged in an artistic process that is also unavoidably shaped by my own personal history and background. Having acknowledged this poietic process and its potential positioning against issues of temporality, it is logical next to posit these processes on the previous rhizomatic model of the tri-polar dynamic.

There is currently one more facet of this model that could be explored diagrammatically: the poietic processes in which I created the portfolio of works. Figure 3.4 takes into account the previous discussion concerning the past of the sonic artworks, in which I have developed physical

and sonic expressions of conceptual ideas resulting in what Nattiez refers to as the artistic trace. It extends the base level of Figure 3.3 to include a new lower level of possible semantic chains: interpretants that led to the culmination and choice of artistic media as it exists in the artworks. In other words, it includes the creative processes that comprise an artwork's *past* in a process of poiesis. Like the upper level (its mirror image), the lines of flight in blue exist here in the Nootemporal state of the creative artist (in this case, myself), with a creative practice influenced by my own personal history and individuality.
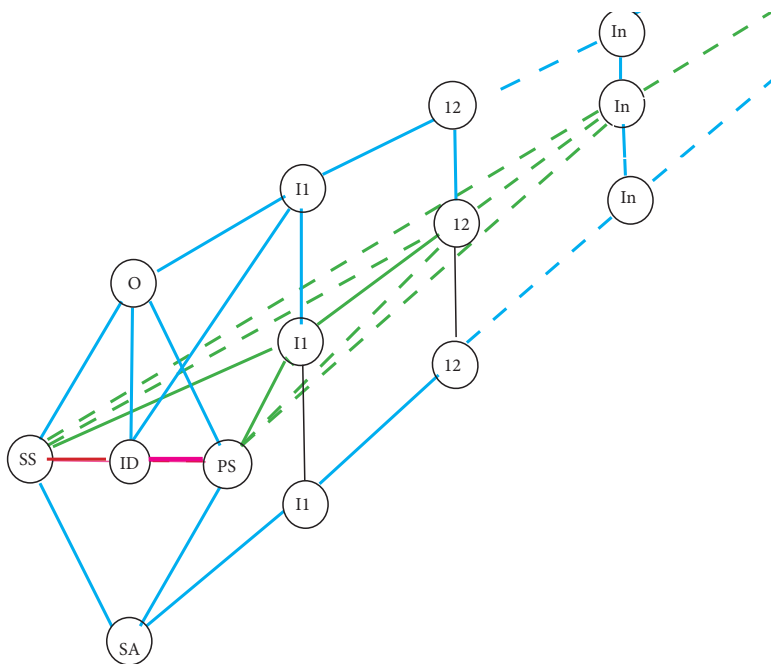
Figure 3.4: A Rhizomatic Schema of the Tri-Polar Dynamic and the Creative Process

This rhizomatic model of the dynamic relationships operating between myself as the sonic artist, an artwork and its perceptive occupant has three states of existence: the poietic level existing in the artwork's *past*, the potential level of infinite interpretants yet to be realized (in the absence of the perceiving occupant) and the actual lines of semantic flights occurring within the tri-polar dynamic.

3.6.3 The Sonic Artwork as Site of Semiotic Collision

The themes dealt with throughout this text have much conceptual resonance with Roland Barthes' 'The Death of The Author' (1977). One of the central themes of this text is his indication that trying to mediate a work and understand it in terms of the intent of the author is a limiting approach. In this discussion of my own creative practice, I similarly conclude that as an artist, I have aborted an overt concern with the reception of the work in terms of 'successful communication'. In fact, if these were simultaneous concerns of both an artist and perceptive occupant, it is almost as if the work itself would be obsolete. Instead, perhaps the artwork is merely a site of arrival for me as the artist and subsequent departure for the audience. Based on these notions, it could be argued that the artworks act as a gateway between two individuals engaged in a poietic tri-polar dynamic and esthesic tri-polar dynamic respectively. It is my contention that perhaps in this context, the sonic artworks in the creative portfolio can be seen as a plateau that acts as a site of collision between the two.

It could then be argued that both lower and upper levels are part of the same semantic rhizome in which I, the artist, have an exit point at the neutral level and the perceptive occupant has an entry point. During the poietic process I have traversed part of a semantic rhizome through the development of the artwork, culminating in the artistic trace. However, this does not necessarily mean that the rhizome ends there, as Deleuze and Guattari may also argue. It may be conducive to liken a sonic artwork to a 'freezeframe' of the kinetic *becoming* in the creative process. It is here that perceptive occupant enters the sonic artwork and uses it as a point of departure or affect. Here the rhizome is continued in the consciousness of the perceiving occupant, only now deterritorializing it from my own original rhizomatic pathway. Furthermore, in the immersive nature of the artworks and their multiple phenomenal media, it is likely that perceptive occupant may choose their own particular entry point to the work, forging perceptive footholds from which to began their rhizomatic flight path. It is within the virtual reality of these artworks that we can see *nodal points* of collision and departure as representing the aforementioned spark of affect.

3.7 Summary

Deleuze and Guattari's account of traversing the virtual plane is a most fitting and succinct summary:

> This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous point on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensity segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight.
> (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.161).

If this can be seen as a process undertaken by *both* myself as the artist and audience, then it is a sonic artwork itself that operates as a plane of nodal collision between the two. It is important to acknowledge that the proposed model of a tri-polar dynamic has been developed alongside – and as part of – a wider creative practice. It provides a theoretical framework of creative investigation as opposed to a schema that is universally applicable among the interdisciplinary arts. This framework functions as a site of reflexivity - it not only inhabits the cruxes of the theoretical investigation that propels creativity in the portfolio, but the insights gained during these creative processes provide a contributory source to it. In considering the creative portfolio as embodying a potential tri-polar dynamic between the perceptive occupant, sonic and physical media we can begin to understand the significance of hermeneutics: the same artwork becomes capable of multiple identities dependant on the particular individual completing the syncretic whole. This multiplicity seems to be a most relevant topic to many of today's intermedia art forms. Propelled by an 'age of confront' (Burroughs in Youngblood accessed online 1/10/10), which refers to the idea that information concerning all cultures and subjects is readily available across geographical and temporal boundaries, our arts culture is evolving — almost cybernetically and self-perpetuating — into an expanding network of interconnected art forms and with it, an exciting rhizomatic network of taxonomical possibilities seems to be the replacement of clear-cut genres for the future of intermedia arts.

Chapter 4: Exegesis of Creative Works

4.1 *Dis:ORDER* – A Creative Exploration of Syntax and Narrative

Comprising of a mixed media sculptural object and accompanying sound-world, *dis:ORDER* was housed in the atrium of the Creative Arts Building at the University of Huddersfield during April 2009. The artwork is informed by research conducted into the perceptive processes of the sonic art audience. There are several conceptual themes represented in the work that combine to provide a cohesive commentary on the sonic artwork experience. These include: the use of perceptive footholds as a means of navigating a linear pathway through the complex, multifaceted nature of the sonic art installation; the dialect occurring between artwork and audience in which semantic meaning is derived from artistic disciplines devoid of formalised syntax and languages. This text documents the conceptual thinking and research that underpins the creative processes involved in the work's development and realisation. Media footage and documentation of the development of the work is included on the accompanying DVD.
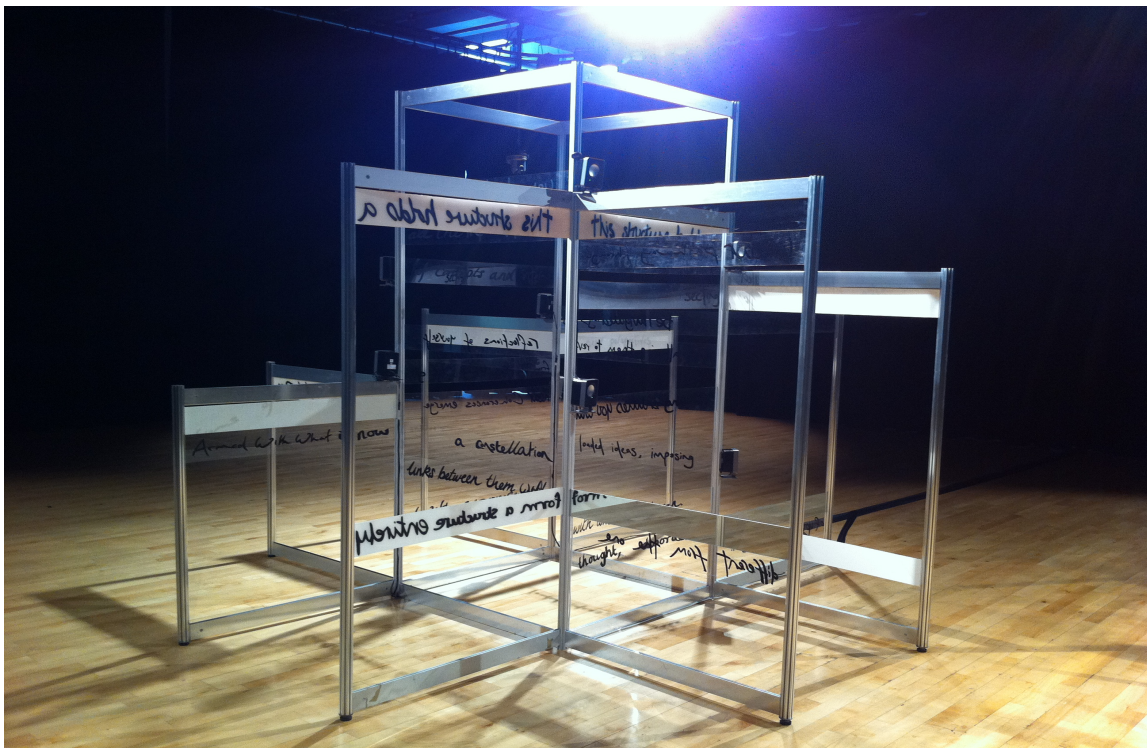
Figure 4.1: *dis:ORDER* at the SightSoundSpacePlay Conference, DeMontfort University, 06/2010.

4.1.1 *Dis:ORDER*: Conceptual Themes

4.1.1.1 An exploration of the Tri-Polar Dynamic, Narrative and Syntax

Chapter 2 discussed the potential for a tri-polar dynamic to operate between sonic, physical and perceptive occupant in the mediation of the sonic artworks. *Dis:ORDER* aims to further explore these themes in a creative format. Comprising a complex structure of fragmented text and accompanying sonic environment, the work exists in a state of syncretic difference in the absence of a perceptive occupant. As such, the initial beholding of the work may yield little explicit meaning. However, the potential exists for a linear text to emerge through an investigatory dialogue between sonic and physical media and the internal monologue. As such, *dis:ORDER* is transformed through the process of mediation; redefined in the eyes of the perceptive occupant as a work with an increased semantic explicitness. Based on these ideas, *dis:ORDER* exemplifies the potential for sonic art to possess *potential* semantic energy. In particular, *dis:ORDER* deals with the idea of narrative within the tri-polar dynamic because it highlights a linear pathway of discovery through the complex mesh of its artistic media. The syncretic evolution experienced by the perceptive occupant through the lived experience of the tri-polar dynamic can therefore be referred to as a *revelatory narrative*. *Dis:ORDER* was created with the view to provide perceptive footholds as a means of navigating this revelatory narrative. For example, the use of intelligible sound files within the sonic environment and instances of obvious linkage between text panels could encourage a more linear reading of the text itself. The opportunity also exists for rare instances of synchronicity to occur between the perceptive occupant and the sonic and physical media of the artwork. Such instances occur when a segment of text is both audibly and visually perceived.

Chapters 1 and 2 also discussed the open-ended semiotics that potentially operate within a sonic artwork on account of the breadth of variety in its artistic media. I am interested in the idea that the ability to communicate through creative works with a semantic explicitness is correlated with the existence of syntax and internal structure in artistic media. Furthermore, I am also interested in considering how the experience of the perceptive occupant might be affected by the

presence of a formalised syntax in artistic media (or lack thereof). As Trevor Wishart observes, 'there is no divorce between the syntax of musical language and the syntax of musical experience' (Wishart 1996, p.17). In comparison to the media of sonic artwork, music belonging to a Western tonal idiom can be considered as a communicative language capable of syntactical organisation. Jean-Jacques Nattiez speaks of the units of musical language as being responsible for its ability to contain meaningful relationships. He writes, 'those semiological properties of music as form or symbolic scalic units, melodic pitch, rhythms, chords, motifs, phrases – are either discrete or "discretizable"' (Nattiez 2004, p.8). The composer of such music most often has a culturally conditioned knowledge of the meaningful relationships invoked by the syntax of its 'discrete units'. In turn, this knowledge may prove a valuable resource in achieving the outcomes and intended effects of a composition. However, it could be argued that the open-ended semiotics operating in the work may result a semantic explicitness that is equally open-ended. In any eventuality, I would like to suggest that the signifying potential of sonic art in this case is not simply dissipated through the use of non-syntactical artistic media. It is perhaps more useful to view it as having been displaced, only to be reclaimed and activated by the perceptive occupant during the revelatory narrative of the tri-polar dynamic.

4.1.1.2 An Exploration of Language as an Artistic Resource

Language is a prime example of syntactically organised media capable of explicit communication. *Dis:ORDER* aims to explore the concept of syntax creatively and as such, language and text form the main artistic resource for the work. Trevor Wishart writes, on the subject of what he refers to as our 'scribe-dominated culture' that it has led to the 'reification of ideas and undervaluing of immediate non-verbal experiences' and continues to observe that, 'only people "mean" and words merely contribute towards signifying people's meanings' (Wishart 1996, p.13). Based on these notions, language provides an interesting opportunity to *deconstruct* the semantic explicitness made capable by its syntax.

Furthermore, the use of text is also relevant because of the parallels outlined in Chapter 1 between literary criticism and the aesthetics of sonic art. Here, the work of Wolfgang Iser is of particularly note. His work is illustrative of the notion that the signifying potential of the artworks is not lost in the absence of syntactical media but transferred in lieu to the perceptive occupant. Iser studied phenomenology as pertaining to literature and suggested that 'the critic should not explain a text *as an object* but its *effect on the reader*' as described by Guenn and Labor who continue to state, 'a text does not tell readers everything; there are "gaps" or "blanks", which he [Iser] refers to as the indeterminacy of the text. Readers must fill these in and thereby assemble the meaning(s), thus becoming co-authors in a sense' (Guenn and Labor 1998, p.337).

The use of text in the physical structure of the work is paralleled by recorded readings of the text in the soundscape of the work. For me, both handwriting and spoken voice are suggestive of the internal monologue embodied by each perceptive occupant. Furthermore, each perceptive occupant (by default) invokes a sense of personal background and cultural conditioning influential on their mediatory experience. As Brandon LaBelle writes,

> It would seem that the sound space interplay demands a shift in definition or attention when heard in relation to speech, for what we hear in the voice that speaks within a given space is not so much an acoustical body but an individual as he or she is pressed upon, responds to, and affected by situations, and inside of which speaking takes shape. The term "context" is thus useful to outline or open up the purely acoustical to forms of "social architecture", derived from the relational dynamics at play within any given space or environment. Context presses in, as social pressure, as architectural presence, and as psychic intensity, modulating and partially sculpting, through its contours of interaction, the movements of the voice.
> (LaBelle 2006, p.124)

Therefore, *dis:ORDER* explores the idea that even in the absence of syntactical media, the revelatory narrative of the perceptive occupant follows a linear thread and as such, has syntax of its own. In the tri-polar dynamic between sonic, physical and perceptive occupant, a redefined artwork may come to fruition through syncretic likeness revealed in a linear pathway of artwork experience.

4.1.2 A Contextual Review of Language and Syntax as Creative Media

In light of the importance of text and syntax as themes in *dis:ORDER*, it became important to conduct extensive research regarding typography in other art forms. Typography is a useful creative tool for imbuing text with meaning or signification beyond that of its literary content. As media theorist Marshall McLuhan famously highlighted, 'many people would be disposed to say that it was not the machine, but what one did with the machine that was its meaning or message' (McLuhan in Triggs 2003, p.21). Semantic typography in which the aim is to 'arrange the structure of the text visually and bring forth the meaning' (Bonsiepe in Triggs 2003, p.55) was most influential therefore in the design of *dis:ORDER*. In considering these issues, *dis:ORDER* highlights the potential for text to function at multiple semantic levels within an artwork. During my research, I identified several works that use typography and text to interesting effect. Elena Knox's *PalinPoem for Pete's Sake* (2006) makes use of a palindromic organisation of words installed onto the staircase of an art gallery. The text makes sense both upwards and downwards on the staircase. This not only highlights the location and perspective of the perceptive occupant but also brings into question the culturally conditioned habit of reading text from top to bottom. There is also creative use of typography in the work of Nick Keys and in particular, *New Babylon Sydney* (2006) in which he employs a playful treatment of text using cartographic influences to evoke issues of structure and configuration. Finally, Michael Farrell's *The Winter Sky* (2006) prompted me to consider the role of structure and typography regarding issues of hierarchy and ownership in textual meaning. The work features small lines of typed text, housed within the framework of a larger handwritten text. This integration of two styles and their housing within one another highlighted the ability of this format to indicate hierarchy and causality between the two texts. Notably, the ability for text to have both a literal and graphical signification is also highlighted by the *calligrammes* of Guillaume Apollinaire, as seen in his *Animated Landscapes* (1913).

The content of the text in *dis:ORDER* is both conceptual and instructive. As such, it became significant to consider other creative works that have used text to this effect. Dada typography often

used text or poetry as a score for performance, with the typographical design often holding instructional signification. For example, Kurt Schwitter's *Ursonate* (1922-1933) uses a variety of sizes and types in the text score itself, which in turn is suggestive of the pronunciation of the phonetics in the performance of this sound poem. I am particularly interested in the variance in interpretation of works such as this, thus highlighting the relevance of hermeneutics in its mediation. Also of interest is the work of Paul Van Ostaijen. His work *Bezette Stad* (1920) features what he terms, 'rhythmic typography' (Ostaijen in Bartram 2005, p.102) because the visual design correlates to a suggested rhythm for its utterance. For me, both these works are an intriguing intersection of typography, sonic utterance and performance via the process of mediation. The emergence of Fluxus saw further development of text-based event scores in the work of George Brecht, Yoko Ono and La Monte Young. Brandon LaBelle discusses the semantic layering capable in this format stating that, 'the event score articulates, implies and performs the very thing written, yet only in the moment of it being read, as a textural act. This operates on what Dick Higgins calls: the postcognitive"' (LaBelle 2006, p.64).

4.1.3 *Dis:ORDER*: Creative Processes

4.1.3.1 Physical Design of *Dis:ORDER*

The sculptural structure of *dis:ORDER* comprises perspex and mirrored panels organized in a repetitive pattern on an aluminium framework alongside eight small speakers. The panels themselves display segments of a linear, handwritten text, organised with a methodically disrupted syntax. The speakers emit an intimate sound-world via a Max/MSP patch that systematically distributes a bank of sound files between the eight channels. The sounds themselves are sourced from recordings of the text, designed using digital processes inspired by structural and syntactical characteristics of the sculptural object. The aim was to create an intimate and engaging work, where text and sound highlight points of cohesion (unique to each perceptive occupant's experience of the

work) in a structurally complex mass. As such, there is a natural invitation for the text to be deciphered by the audience, should they so wish.

Structurally, the framework was designed so that from one perspective it appears as a complex web of paneling and from another, a simple, linear design. This can be seen in Figures 4.2 and 4.3. Conceptually, I wanted to present the ability of the text to appear unintelligible from one viewpoint but semantically coherent as the perceptive occupant discovers a linear pathway through it. The text is deliberately conceptual, self-referential and instructional. It reads:

> *Although you cannot immediately see all the information that this structure holds, a linear pathway through it will reveal a collection of concepts and intersecting notions. All these separate segments of idea must be navigated by seeing reflections of yourself and allowing them to reveal new perspectives. It is only then that from the resulting web of floating entities, you will hear coherences emerge and clarity untangled. Once armed with what is now a constellation of loaded ideas, imposing links between them will form a structure entirely different from the one with which you began. With experience and thought disorder is tempered by a code of your own design.*

Figure 4.2: *dis:ORDER*, Research Festival, University of Huddersfield, 05/2009.

The text is written in five different handwriting styles. Aesthetically, handwriting counteracts the highly structured nature of framework design. From a conceptual perspective, handwriting is a

personalised medium and therefore suggestive of an internal monologue outlining an individual narrative of mediation. Furthermore, the use of different handwriting styles highlights the different perspectives that each perceptive occupant will bring because of their unique background. This visual context is paralleled by the use of five different samples of spoken text in the sonic environment.

The syntax of the linear text has been disrupted in a methodical manner. This allows for the opportunity for the text to be deciphered (should the audience so wish), producing a semantic clarity by tracing a linear narrative through the complex organisation of the work. The linear text begins on the highest panel, and continues on to two panels directly below it. The second panel is situated further behind panels 1 and 3, requiring a shift in visual focus: an example of the way in which concepts of perspective are explored in the work. Panel 4 is positioned perpendicularly to panel 3 allowing for the text between the two to read linearly. Panel 5 is situated below panel 4 and its text is written in mirror image. Therefore, the mirrored panel opposite must be used to read it, suggestive of the personal viewpoint required for engagement in a tri-polar dynamic in sonic art. Finally, panel 6 is situated below the mirrored panel. This pattern is then repeated over 36 panels in a downwards spiral on the framework. An example of a linear reading of the text can be seen on the media footage of *dis:ORDER* on the accompanying DVD.

Typographical design was implemented to enhance the semantic function of certain words or phrases throughout the artwork. For instance, the phrase, 'new perspectives' was specifically positioned on a mirrored panel to highlight the structural signification in use here. This can be seen in Figure 4.3. Also, certain words were designed as an acknowledgment of the influence of the aforementioned *calligrammes* of Guillaume Apollinaire**.** For example, the word 'inter-secting' is split between two panels, essentially intersecting the word itself. Likewise, the word 'constellation' is made up of a constellation of four different handwriting styles, again highlighting its meaning. This is seen in Figure 4.4.

Figure 4.3: 'new perspectives' made legible using the mirrored panel.
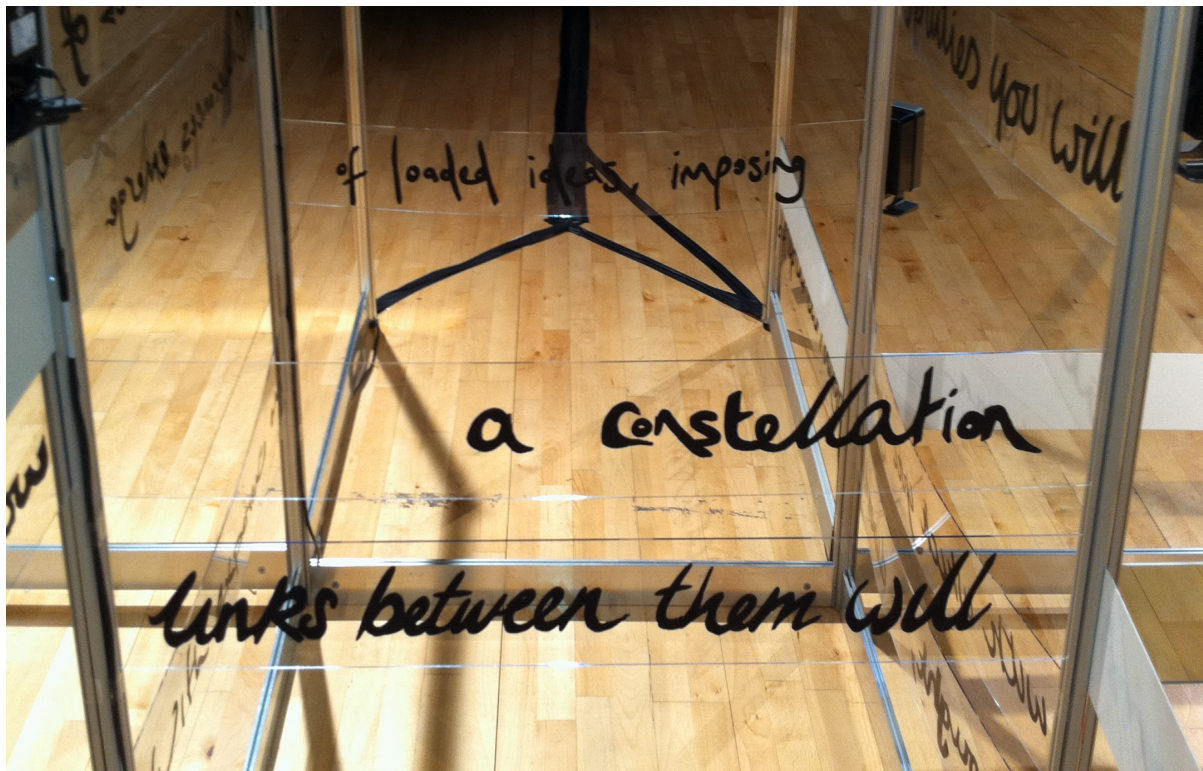
Figure 4.4: 'a constellation' constructed from 3 different hand-writing samples.

4.1.3.2 Sonic Design of *Dis:ORDER*

The sonic environment is derived from five source recordings of the *dis:ORDER* text, corresponding to the five samples of handwriting on the perspex panels. The processes used to design the sonic environment are directly influenced by the structural features of the work as outlined below. Steinberg's Nuendo software was used to create four categories of soundfile: 'Audible', 'Focussing', 'Reflective' and 'Convolved'. These are as follows:

- 'Audible samples' – these soundfiles have been processed using various VST techniques yet remain audibly intelligible. This corresponds with the sections of legible text immediately evident in the structure.

- 'Focussing samples' – these soundfiles have been processed using varying degrees of delay and layering in order to suggest that the sound itself is coming in and out of audible focus. This corresponds to the perceptive occupant having to adjust visual focus in order to read the panels displaced by depth and height (the first three panels of the structure).

- 'Reflective samples' – these soundfiles have been processed with a VST instrument, interjecting the text with a test tone at varying speeds and panned across the stereo field thus creating a bouncing effect. This corresponds to the perceptive occupant needing to use the mirrored panels in order to see the backwards text in the structure.

- 'Convolved samples' – these soundfiles have been convolved with each other using the Sony Soundforge software package. The effect of this, although varied, often gave a rich timbral sound, aesthetically conducive to the ambience of the work alongside evoking the layered aspects of the panels and the complex nature of the structure as a whole.

These soundfiles emanate at random from the four pairs of stereo speakers, attached at various points to the structure. The soundfiles play back at a low volume in order to encourage intimate engagement with the work and are suggestive of the internal monologues of other perceptive occupant mediating the work. The sound environment loops in 20-minute cycles. This was achieved by using Cycling74's software Max/MSP. The work is intended to provide a different listening and

viewing experience with each visit and so utilises a continuous sound world with an organic and subtle evolution of texture and density. Overall, an evolving soundscape constructed from recordings of the text presented on the sculpture itself provides points of semantic and physical coherence between the sound, structure and perceptive occupants.

4.1.4 Summary and Future Research.

Dis:ORDER was originally designed to explore issues of syntax and narrative in the tri-polar dynamic between sound, physical and the perceptive occupant. Not only has the creative processes involved in exploring these issues supplemented my theoretical research regarding the dynamic relationships within the creative portfolio, but has also inspired further research into the satellite topic of the internal monologue explored within *Suspended Imprints*.

4.2 *Suspended Imprints*: A Creative Exploration of Sound, Space and the Inner Monologue

Suspended Imprints is a mixed-media sonic art installation that was premiered in January 2010 during the GEMdays Festival of Sonic Explorations at the University of Huddersfield. It is both temporally and site specific, documenting the thoughts of people traversing a popular thoroughfare during a specific period of time. *Suspended Imprints* is influenced by the notion that our interior monologue provides a mediatory narrative in the perception of these sonic artworks, exploring the blurred boundaries between internal and external personal spaces and seeking to reconsider the complex relationship between the spaces we occupy and our own personal dialogue with them. This text documents the conceptual thinking and research that underpins the creative processes involved in the work's fruition. It explores the links between theoretical research into the interior monologue and the topological figure, the Möbius strip with the creative processes and final artistic form of the work. Media footage and documentation of the development of the work is included on the accompanying DVD.

Figure 4.5: *Suspended Imprints*, GemDays Festival, University of Huddersfield, 01/2010

4.2.1 *Suspended Imprints***: Conceptual Themes**

4.2.1.1 The Interior Monologue

Suspended Imprints is the result of an ongoing artistic exploration into the notion of a personal, interior monologue: the private, communicative vehicle operating in the mediation between ourselves and the spaces we occupy (whether artistic or otherwise). In terms of phenomenology, it is possible that one's interior monologue could be considered as the kinetic and expressive vehicle by which Edmund Husserl's concept of the 'objectivating act' is carried (Husserl in Macann 1993, p.7). According to Husserl this refers to the instance in which a perceptive occupant directs their consciousness towards an object, real or imaginary in order to perceive it, thus occupying a state of intentionality. Christopher Macann discusses this concept in his text, *Four Phenomenological Philosophers: Husserl, Heidegger, Sartre, Merleau-Ponty* in which he suggests that for Husserl, 'the objectivating act is the primary bearer of matter' (Macann 1993, p.7). Furthermore, when placed in this context, the idea of the objectivating act (as implemented by the interior monologue) is of great significance to my creative research. It resonates with the concepts introduced in Chapter 2, specifically the idea that, within the process of artistic mediation, a perceptive occupant makes kinetic the signifying potential of the artworks via engagement in the tri-polar dynamic between the sonic, physical and perceptive occupant. Whilst Husserl primarily discusses the idea of an objectivating act in reference to the physically deliberate act of articulated utterance or written text, his ideas are still applicable to the more ephemeral existence of the interior monologue in the particular instance of artwork mediation.

Regarding my creative research, the notion of the interior monologue has further significance in terms of providing an outlet for the traversal between what may be considered as the physical bodily confines which it inhabits internally to the exterior art object. It is interesting to consider Martin Heidegger's development of Husserl's definition of the act of objectivating, not as reducing experience via *withdrawal* from our natural existence but as one accommodating

consciousness as *part* of the existential world. His notion that our 'bodilyness' extends beyond our 'bodily limits' (Heidegger 1962, p.62) would support the suggestion that it is not only our physical presence that articulates the art spaces we inhabit, but there exists a second, projected presence via an interaction between our interior and exterior environments. As Robert Morris highlights in his writings on space and the artwork, 'Mental space has no location within the body. Yet without it there is no consciousness' (Morris 1994, p.176). It is the complexities of the notion of the internal monologue and its position regarding the corporeal body and its projection into our external environments that *Suspended Imprints* aims to explore in a creative format by embodying documentation

Creatively, *Suspended Imprints* is interested in exploring the notion that our interior monologue acts is a communicative vehicle, not only implemented in the tri-polar dynamic between sonic, physical and the perceptive occupant but as one capable of both a prospective and retrospective physical trace. Furthermore, it is the complexities of the notion of the internal monologue and its position regarding the corporeal body and its projection into our external environments that *Suspended Imprints* aims to explore in a creative format.

4.2.1.2 The Möbius Strip

During the developmental stages of the work, I found a strong connection with the aforementioned concepts and the topological figure, the Möbius strip. The figure has been defined by Nathaniel Stern as,

> ... a topological figure that can be produced by twisting a strip of paper and looping and attaching its ends. It is thus a one-sided surface with only one boundary component, which is available in three dimensions. This means that it lives in both 2-D and 3-D space at the same time; it is greater than the sum of its parts.
> (Stern 2007, p.24)

On initial encounter with the structure, there is an obvious edge or spatial boundary separating the interior and exterior spaces between what appears to be two separate surfaces – much like the boundary provided by our own physical body which allows for an immediate distinction between

our personal, internal space and the exterior world in which we position ourselves. However, upon closer consideration one ascertains that the boundary of the Möbius strip - whilst clearly existing - no longer provides a clear distinction between these spaces. The same continuous surface exists in both interior and exterior states, accompanied by a considerable grey area as to when it can be considered one or the other. These topological properties of the Möbius strip have long been popular as a conceptual representation of the body and its relationship with the exterior world, having been exemplified by philosophers such as Lacan, Lyotard and Grosz among others. Further resonances with the previous discussion of the interior monologue, is the notion that the properties of the Möbius strip are revealed as the result of a linear narrative of investigation. To those unfamiliar with it, what instantaneously appears as two surfaces is revealed as a singular, continuous surface after tracing the trajectory of the material. This is similar to the connections that occur between our own personal consciousness and the external spaces that we inhabit - connections that exist interstitially through the lived experience of a temporally linear narrative as expressed by the interior monologue

4.2.2 *Suspended Imprints*: Contextual Research

Suspended Imprints aimed to create an encompassing presence for the perceptive occupant in both its physical size and the resonant nature of its sonic soundscape. This was to encourage the perceptive occupant to consider him or herself as belonging to the artwork environment by engaging both physically and via the interior monologue. The inclusion of the documentation stages in the final work, which involved recording the thoughts of people as they traverse a public space, may also encourage the consideration of a collective ownership of an existing space - suggesting that it has the potential to retain pathways or traces of the interior monologues belonging to others gone before them. In his book, *Installation Art* (2003) Mark Rosenthal speaks extensively on the interaction of the perceiving occupant within the expanded space of the installation:

> There is a kind of natural quality about the viewer's experience of the rapprochement, for he or she physically cohabits with the art, living in the present and a real time and place, not in an historical, analytical, or imaginative realm. The perceptual perambulation is paramount. Along with the eye, the body is involved; physical and sensory recognitions add to our understanding of the space. One's experience of the place is joined with the aforementioned sense of oneself… It is the ultimate in figurative art, with the human being present not by depiction or implication but by actual presence, and necessary for the completion of work. (Rosenthal 2003, p.77)

A creative work of particular interest, dealing directly with notions of the interior monologue, is Paul Rooney's 2009 work, *Thin Air*: a performative sonic artwork taking the form of a pre-recorded, fictitious academic lecture. Its subject matter focuses on the work of 'Alan Smithson', a sonic researcher who documents EVP recordings and correlates them to the real inhabitants and events of a former art studio. An extract from the lecture reads,

> Smithson is not only saying that human thought waves expand beyond the human body into space. He is also claiming that buildings, or the H Building at least, can contain some kind of sonically audible data bank of these thought waves, formed from a conflation of fragments of the more charged human memories that have been sparked within the rooms. He at one point names this as "site anamnesis".
> (Smithson 2009)

On one level, the work is about the subject matter itself: the work of Alan Smithson, the fictional notion of site anamnesis and the consideration of its existence. On another, it is concerned with ideas of authority, formality, acceptance and truth. Interestingly, its fantastical nature was not widely publicized before its premiere during the Sonic Art EXPO 2009 in Leeds, leaving the audience unsure of the validity of the extreme content to which they had been subject. Perhaps most important however, is the question that arises when one takes into consideration both these facets: on discovering the fictitious nature of the work, does the subject matter decrease in impact? As *Suspended Imprints* is a sonic artwork dealing with such intangible concepts, this work was important to me regarding both the actual subject matter and ideas of credibility and truth.

4.2.3 *Suspended Imprints*: Creative Processes

4.2.3.1 Primary Documentation

As mentioned above, *Suspended Imprints* is concerned with the notion that our interior monologue establishes a complex relationship with the spaces we occupy, articulating both spatial pathways and a narrative of encounter with our environment. As such, the installation itself is resultant of a documentary process in which the immediate thoughts of people traversing a popular thoroughfare in the Creative Arts Building at the University of Huddersfield were recorded on tape. Between the 11th and 16th January 2010, a temporary recording booth comprising a microphone and a multi-track tape recorder was housed in this space. People were invited to record their thoughts at that particular moment in time when they entered the booth. There are several reasons behind my use of magnetic tape as a recording medium. Primarily, I was attracted to the ability of analogue recording to allow the transferral of a temporally ephemeral source material (in this case, utterance of the inner monologue at that specific time) into a physical material. As a material itself, magnetic tape is delicate, pliable, thread-like and translucent. These physical characteristics resonate clearly with the conceptual characteristics operating in the work. Upon completion of this documentary period, the sonic material was converted into a digital format for further processing, whilst the tape itself was used in the physical installation.

4.2.3.2 Installation Processes

The installation structure was housed by a 4.5m³ scaffold from which a large number of Möbius strips were suspended at varying lengths using the magnetic tape from the documentary stage of the work as illustrated in Figure 3.5. The strips themselves were constructed from pages of pre-owned topical books, such as architectural and geographical texts. Blueprints of the building itself, transcribed excerpts of the documented thoughts and original conceptual text were also layered onto the strips. Following the use of self-referent text in *dis:ORDER*, I wished to explore this format

once more. However, on this occasion embedded it within the work on a more subtle level. The conceptual text reads as follows:

> *In turning your consciousness inwards, traces of thought become suspended in a mesh of those left before you. You journey through a* Möbius *pathway and what at first glance has traversable boundary, becomes a melded continuity. This space is shared but confined within its concrete limits, boundless imprints inter-lock and evolve.*

As a result, each Möbius strip is unique, containing multiple layers of meaning and multiple ways with which they can be engaged and interpreted. Therefore, whilst the information held on each Möbius strip has a previous meaning and history, it still takes on new meaning through the mediation of a perceptive occupant. The work is presented as a large sonic and physical cloud-mass created from a multiplicity of small finite units, each containing its own unique display of topography and text, as such providing layers of temporality, phenomenology and meaning to be explored. As such, the structure of the artwork can be seen to parallel the idea that the identity of a geographical space is infused with the individual tracings of interior monologues that belong to the potentially countless number of people that have traversed it.

The physical components of *Suspended Imprints* are paralleled by the sounds generated from the documentary stage of the work, creating a cohesive artistic environment aiming to reach beyond the physical confines of the structure itself. The entire installation space was filled with low, resonant sonic material, evolving in timbre and harmonic density at an *almost* undetectable rate. The source material was processed using simple techniques such as low pass filtering, compression and modulation to achieve this.

4.2.3.3 Sonic Processes

Metallic-like morphologies simultaneously move kinetically within the structure itself, articulating pathways through the space aiming to highlight its visual intricacy. I wanted to create the impression of ephemeral trajectories of sound that appear to exist within - and perhaps become part of - the dense, low resonance encompassing the perceptive occupant. The high, metallic timbres

were achieved by processes of spectral filtering and simple looping in order to allow the dynamic morphologies of the spoken utterance to *only just* articulate the timbral flux of the material. A Max/MSP patcher was then designed to select these sound files randomly and panned them around the four speakers suspended in the structure, at differing speeds and asynchronously. This allowed for the possibility of both temporal and spatial overlapping. The aim was to achieve a balance between the sonic and physical elements of the installation, creating an atmospheric sonic parallel of the concepts operating in the physical structure rather than distract the perceptive occupant from a personal dialogue with the work due to an explicitly transformative narrative in the sound-world.

Figure 4.6: close up still of Möbius strips.

4.2.4 *Suspended Imprints*: Summary and Future Research

4.2.4.1 Modifications during the Installation Process: A Case Study

I would now like to discuss modifications that were made to *Suspended Imprints* due to logistical complications during the actual installation process itself. As a result, these modifications brought

implications for the work's physical design and the relationships between its sonic materials, physical materials and the perceptive occupant that encounters them. In considering these changes, important questions regarding the genre of sonic art as a whole were highlighted and provided new lines of creative inquiry in my research, both theoretically and practically.

Originally, the work was designed to be suspended 1.5m above head height. This would have created a blanketing cloud-mass of Möbius strips occupying the upper strata of the installation space, creating the impression of a cascading freefall suspended in motion with only some of the strips hanging low enough to be read. It was during the installation process itself that the scaffold caused issues with health and safety forcing a loss of 1.5m in structural height. As a result, the Möbius strips could no longer be suspended above the audience as previously described. A new design of the work was resultantly forced as a rounded cloud-mass of the Möbius strips suspended at eye level. Before discussing the implications these developments may have incurred on the perception of the work, it must be stated that they are based on purely anecdotal evidence. They are accounts of my own experience and those reported by others. The notion that the meaning and experience of the creative portfolio is specific to each perceptive occupant is central to my research and so for me, conclusive, quantitative evidence of this is an impossibility. However, on this particular occasion it should be noted that reported accounts of experiences from visitors of the exhibition were wholly congruous.

4.2.4.2 Implications of the Redesigned Artwork

Visually, the most significant change to *Suspended Imprints* was the exchange of an installed environment *inhabited* by the perceptive occupant with an art object contained in the space and *beheld* by the perceptive occupant. There is no doubt that this had implications on the aesthetic appearance of the work but more importantly, it meant that the suspended mass of Möbius strips became a focal point with which to engage. Had the original design of the work come to fruition, it may be argued that the dialogue between artwork and perceptive occupant would have been more

focused on the relationship of self and space, how and why the perceptive occupant physically investigates the installation and the interior, mental navigation of sonic and physical environments. As it was, the structure provided a strong visual feature directing, via its very presence, the likely pathway of space to be taken around it and also allowing for an increased engagement with the text on the Möbius strips. In both outcomes, mediation of the work can be seen as the completing act of the artwork but it could be argued that with the changes made, there perhaps occurred a shift in the potential signifying weight of the physical structure.

Consequently, it may be argued that the physical properties of the installation now occupy a focal point in the work, in turn affecting the relationships between perceived physical and sonic elements. Experientially, sight is an instant phenomenon. Whilst it may occasionally take time to fully understand, mediate and decipher what we see, a linear temporal experience is not a pre-requisite of its sensory perception, unlike the process of perceiving sound. As a result, it was reported that the sound occupied a subordinate role compared to such an imposing object – more as an accompaniment than an equal presence. Some visitors reported the sensation that the resonant sonic material was emanating from the structure itself. The functionality of the sound now seemed to be perceived as heightening the presence of the cloud-like mass rather than defining and encompassing an environment in which to be inhabited and aesthetically considered. With the signifying balance between physical, sonic and perceptive occupant now appearing to be skewed in favour of the visual structure, I found myself questioning the ontological properties of the work. Did my work change from what was personally intended as a sonic art installation piece to a work of art that included sound within its media? If so, what are the differences between the two and are those differences important? It is interesting to note that many visitors reported that they expected the structure to be interactive. Although it cannot be said whether this was due to an expectation for further stimulus from such a strong visual presence or because many sonic art installations are interactive in general. It is also of note that some visitors viewed the work lying underneath the

structure, exploring the originally intended viewing perspective, with no previous knowledge of this information

4.2.4.3 Future Research as a Result of the Installation Process

Whilst the questions highlighted by my experience of installing *Suspended Imprints* have no definitive answer, they sparked new lines of inquiry in my creative and theoretical research. In the creation and execution of *Suspended Imprints*, my attention was drawn to the physical scale of the work and the important role it seemed to play in its perception, both in relation to the perceptive occupant and the perceived scale between the sonic and physical presences in the work. As a result, the role of scale and self is further explored in the *dis:ORDER* series, each taking the same artistic concepts and material yet manipulating their format in terms of scale and proportion.

Suspended Imprints was also influenced by the concept that the identity of a geographical space is infused with the individual tracings of the interior monologues belonging to the potentially countless number of people that have traversed it. As such, the creative work, *Swarm* uses issues of shared ownership and space as a starting point for its development.

4.3 The *Dis:ORDER* series: A Creative Exploration of Scale and Perception

The *dis:ORDER* series comprises three sonic artworks, all of which are developed from the same artistic media and conceptual origin. As a series, they explore themes of scale, immersion and perception through a playful employment of deconstruction and different presentational formats. The *dis:ORDER* series embodies the notion of creative practice as research and allows for a comparative analysis of each work regarding issues of scale and perception. Media footage and documentation of the development of the work is included on the accompanying DVD.
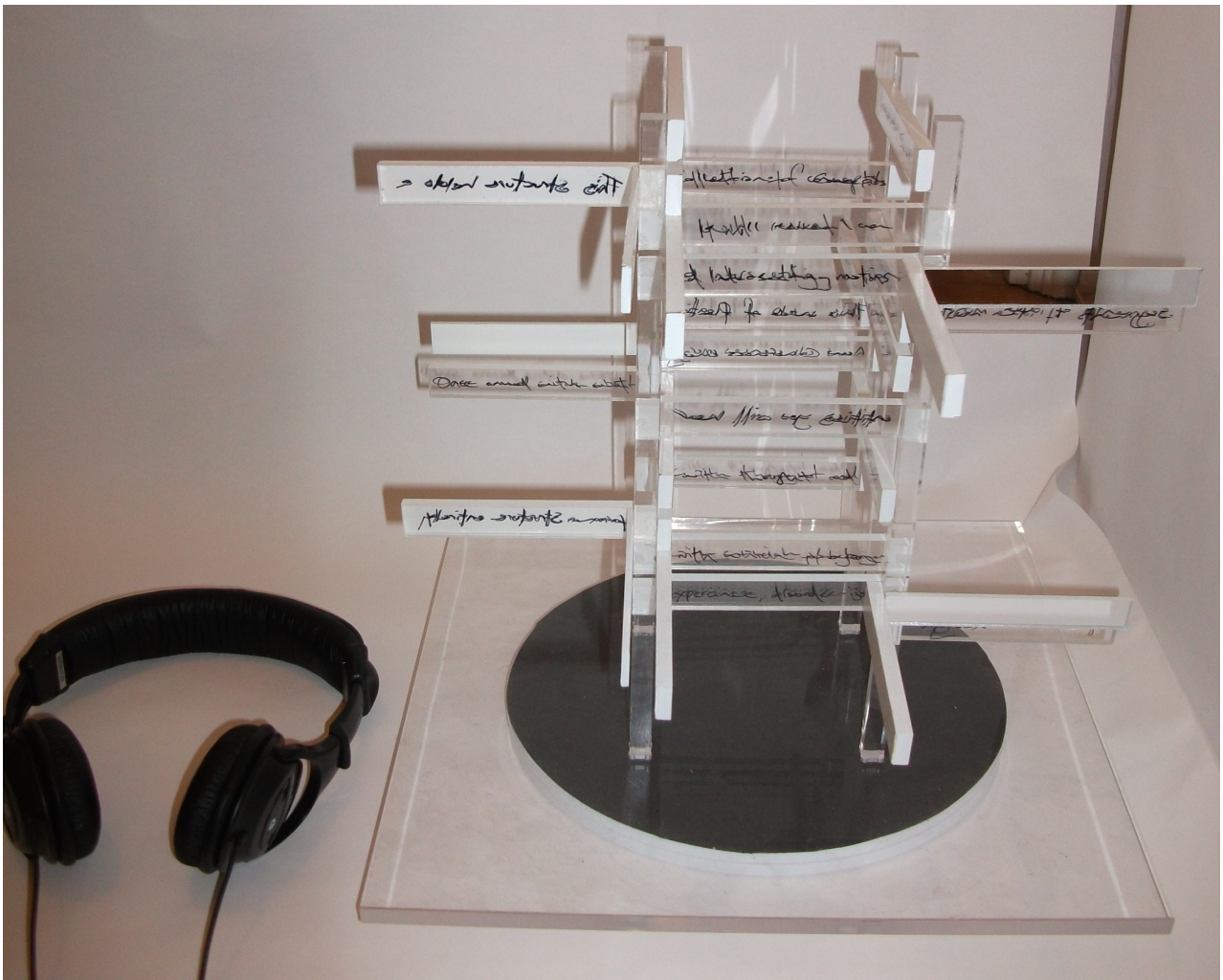
Figure 4.7: *dis:ORDER2*

Figure 4.8: *dis:ORDER3*, Weekend of Speakers, University of Huddersfield. 11/2011

4.3.1 The *Dis:ORDER* Series: Conceptual Themes

4.3.1.1. Scale and Perception

The structural design of *Suspended Imprints* was modified during the installation process. The result was a finite art object existing *within* the exhibition space as opposed to the space that would have been created by suspending the Möbius strips above head height. This process inspired me to create a series of works that explored different presentational formats in order to research issues of scale and perception further. I wanted to question how the perceptive occupant might positions them self within artwork in relation to its scale and what implications this may have on the immersive aspect of the works? Furthermore, in light of the installation process of *Suspended Imprints,* I was prompted to question where the boundary lay between an art object existing in foreground focus and an artistic space comprising an encompassing sonic and physical environment?

It is logical to suggest that for a work to *impose* itself as immersive it may completely encompass the perceptive occupant from all angles, either sonically, physically or both. It is here that the relationship between scale and immersion comes to the fore. As Elizabeth Noyez writes, 'scale, then, revolves around a physical and phenomenological confrontation between a spectator and a work of art within a certain space' (Noyez 2012, p.120). As such, the immersive nature of the artwork is judged *by* the perceptive occupant, and in terms of their own positioning within the work. In mediating the sonic and physical media against which they are posited, the perceptive occupant becomes aware of their own physical existence and navigation of the art space. Robert Morris outlines this circumstance as responsible for the perceived comprehension of scale and immersion. He writes, 'The human body enters into the total continuum of sizes and establishes itself as a constant on that scale' (Morris 1994, p.11). Based on this idea, through the *dis:ORDER* series I wanted to explore the relationship between the body (as the constant against which scale and encompassment in artistic media is judged) and the immersive qualities of sonic artwork.

4.3.2 The *Dis:Order* Series: Contextual Research

An important starting point for the research that informs this series is the artwork of Robert Morris. Often, his works deal with the relationships between an audience, space and the art object. His work, *Passageway* (1961) featured a man-made, fifty-foot corridor that gradually decreased in width, exhibited in Yoko Ono's studio in New York. Here, Morris created a space that moved from being a physically immersive one to a physically oppressive one. I see this as highlighting the intangible border between inhabiting a space (perhaps unwittingly) and the undeniable immersion in a space that encroaches upon our corporeal body. The positioning of the perceptive occupant in relation to the artwork is also explored in Morris' 1960 work, *Column*. The work begins with a large column stood vertically. The column spontaneously falls from its standing position to a horizontal one, activating theatricality in the work. In the kinetic movement of the artwork, the perceiving occupant moves from a position being overshadowed by the structure to one which now

overshadows the column as it lays horizontal. In doing so, *Column* intensifies the, perhaps, static position of the perceptive occupant and their relation to the work. As such, Morris' creative exploration of scale and physical positioning of the artwork in space enables multiple conceptual interpretations of the artistic media without changing its form.

4.3.3 *Dis:ORDER* Series: Creative Processes

4.3.3.1 *Dis:ORDER2:* Creative Processes

The original work, *dis:ORDER* is discussed in detail during chapter 3.1. It consisted of perspex panels displaying a fragmented text, arranged as a large sculptural object. The object housed eight small speakers emitting a sonic environment of processed recorded samples of the text itself. The installation invited the perceptive occupant to embark on an exploration through sound and physical media to construct a linear text revealing the conceptual basis of the work.

Dis:ORDER2 was premiered at the SightSoundSpacePlay Conference at De Montfort University in June 2010. It features a hand-held sculptural object modelled directly on that of *dis:ORDER*. The object is mounted on a rotating base that allows the perceptive occupant to view it in its entirety from all angles. It is constructed entirely from perspex and mirrored panels and features a stereo mix of the *dis:ORDER* sonic environment played through personal headphones. This is illustrated in Figures 4.8 and 4.9. The work was designed with the intention of creating a more intimate and internalized art experience. One distinguishing feature between *dis:ORDER* and *dis:ORDER2* is seen in the use of handwriting and text. *Dis:ORDER2* only uses two samples of handwriting but layers them both on the same panel. This was done with the intention of requiring the perceptive occupant to focus more intensely in order to read the panel, in turn increasing the intimacy with the object itself (see Figure 4.10).
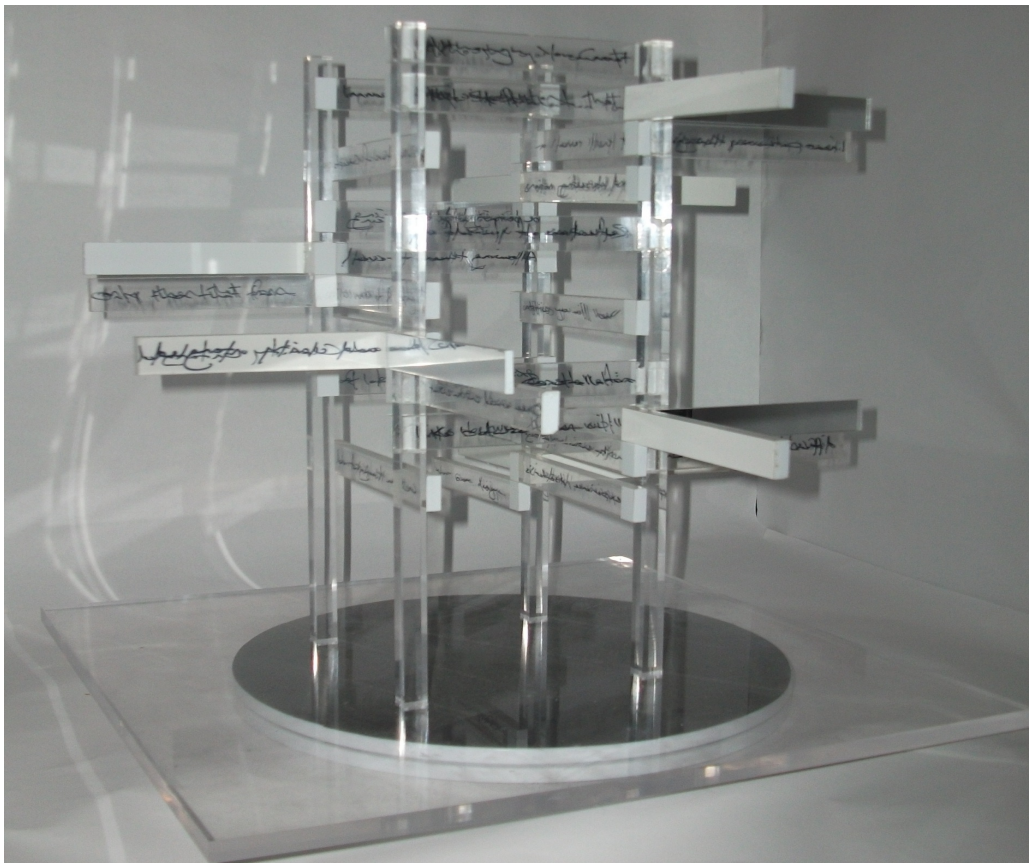
Figure 4.9: *dis:ORDER2*

Figure 4.10: panels displaying double layers of text in *dis:ORDER2*.

4.3.3.2 *Dis:ORDER3*: Creative Processes

Dis:ORDER3 was exhibited in the Atrium of the Creative Arts Building during the Weekend of Speakers (WofS) 2011 at the University of Huddersfield. *Dis:ORDER3* sees the creative materials of *dis:ORDER* and *dis:ORDER2* deconstructed, creating an immersive sonic environment with stations of unstructured and fragmented text. The sonic environment was created using sixteen speakers emitting the sonic environment of *dis:ORDER*. Speakers are positioned on both ground and first floor levels in order to create an all-encompassing sonic environment. The unstructured, fragmented text exists as handheld strips situated at two stations within the space. This can be seen in Figures 4.8 and 4.11. As with all works in the series, the invitation exists to create a linear text from its fragmented offerings. However, in the absence of the methodical pattern of disruption, the perceptive occupant has a decreased number of perceptive footholds. In turn, they have an increased personal influence on the outcomes of their interaction. This is resonant with the previous idea that there is a transferral of semiotic weighting to the perceptive occupant in the absence of syntactical media, as discussed in the text accompanying *dis:ORDER* in chapter 4.1.

All three works in the series are united by their use of the same sonic environment and conceptual text. As such, we can discuss how their different presentational formats illuminate the relationship between scale and the perceptive occupant as activated through the corporeal body. The following text also draws on anecdotal reports from the exhibitions of all three works.

4.3.4 Scale and Perception in the *Dis:ORDER Series*

4.3.4.1 Scale and Perception in *Dis:ORDER*

Dis:ORDER is housed within a larger exhibitory environment although as an object, it is far bigger in mass than the perceptive occupant. As a sculptural object it has defined borders and because of the work's containment in a larger space, the perceptive occupant can traverse these borders in order to view the work from all angles. Despite this, the work was designed to encourage a voluntary self-immersion within its sonic and physical media. For example, the sculptural object

was designed in such a way that the perceptive occupant can step in and out its confines. As such, the sonic environment is purposefully emitted at a low volume in order to draw the perceptive occupant into the space of the sculpture. As a result, the work has a playful sense of boundary. The perceptive occupant can immerse themselves physically within the confines of the structure and also engage in a voluntary immersion through the consciousness' intimate engagement in a tri-polar dynamic.

Figure 4.11: *dis:ORDER3* Aerial View

4.3.4.2 Scale and Perception in *Dis:ORDER2*

Robert Morris has written extensively on the relationships between the perceptive occupant and their positioning within artwork spaces. He acknowledges that in the interaction between the two, a viewer's internal sense of their own body is mobilised (Potts in Diamund and Costello (eds.) 2007, p.135). For me, the concept of the perceptive occupant is a corporeal integration of senses and consciousness. In *dis:ORDER*, the work is experienced via a physical exploration of the work – the work must be traversed physically in order for a linear text to be constructed in the virtual space of the consciousness. I wanted to contrast this with *dis:ORDER2*, which aims to provoke a virtual mobilisation of the internal consciousness, thus highlighting its role in the voluntary immersion of the work. The work is miniaturised, in essence contracting the distance between perceptive occupant, sonic and physical media. As such, the physical body of the perceptive occupant is, in no uncertain terms, a larger being than the artwork. It is almost as if the artwork itself must reside within the personal space of the perceptive occupant, who is capable of seeing the full structure from one static position. Furthermore, the sonic environment does not require a physical proximity to be heard. The use of headphones is suggestive of the internal consciousness being the source from which the sounds emerge. Because of this format, *dis:ORDER2* has minimised the physical navigation of the artwork, instead requiring a physically intimate mediation. For Robert Morris, the miniaturisation of works presents an unusual condition in which, 'the whole is removed from our own space and time' (Morris 1994, p.195) In the case of *dis:ORDER2*, it is this facet that is responsible for the mobilisation of the consciousness in the perceiving occupant. That is, the linear pathway of discovery that happens through *both* a mobilised corporeal body and its consciousness in *dis:ORDER*, is achievable by *just* a conscious force in *dis:ORDER2*. This is much like the previous discussion of Heidegger's notion that the consciousness can project beyond its physical bodily confines, discussed in Chapter 4.2 accompanying *Suspended Imprints*.

Dis:ORDER2 is, for me, an important example of the possibility for a sonic artwork to incur an immersion of the consciousness. This viewpoint was also concurred by audience members who

reported a greater feeling of immersion compared with that of *dis:ORDER*, despite the latter providing the possibility for a physical immersion within the structure's confines. It was also anecdotally reported to the author that the sonic environment experienced via headphones contributed to this feeling of intimacy and immersion.

4.3.3.3 Scale and Perception in *Dis:ORDER3*

Just as *dis:ORDER2* spatially contracted the sense of distance between sonic, physical and perceptive occupant, *dis:ORDER3* aimed to expand spatial proximity within the tri-polar dynamic. Following the reports that suggested the sonic environment in *dis:ORDER2* created a sense of intimacy, the sonic environment in *dis:ORDER3* was designed so that it infiltrated the entire installation space. In a literal sense, it is not feasible to claim that the sound is removed from the physical media of the work. However, a *sense* of distance can be said to exist because of the wide dispersal of the speakers as sonic sources and the juxtaposition of an expansive art space containing localised points of interaction. As a result, it is possible that the perceptive occupant may feel directly posited *between* the expanse of the sonic environment and the localised stations of fragmented text. Furthermore, despite this sense of distance, the perceptive occupant may then experience an increased sense of syncretic tempering *between* the two phenomena in the perception of a cohesive artistic whole.

In terms of the possible effects on the immersive qualities of *dis:ORDER3*, for me, the work highlights a balance between an immersion of the corporeal body and the conscious of the perceptive occupant. In navigating a physical pathway through the sonic environment of the work, the physical positioning of the perceptive occupant is highlighted. This is contrasted, however, by the more intimate engagement with the fragmented text, especially in the absence of a structured presentation.

4.3.5 Conclusion and Further Research

Irrespective of format, all works in the *dis:ORDER* series require a conscious retention of their artistic media in order to construct a linear text from the text and sonic fragments featured in the works. As such, the works exist in an interstitial space within the tri-polar dynamic. What the *dis:ORDER* series does highlight, however, are the different circumstances in which immersion can occur on account of scale and the perceptive occupant's positioning within the artwork. For example, the more physically immersive existence within *dis:ORDER3* compared with the more conscious-driven exploration of *dis:ORDER2*. In turn, this self-awareness or conscious foregrounding of the perceptive occupant sparks the tri-polar dynamic. It is these issues of boundary and framing within the concept of foreground and background installation spaces that I wished to explore creatively in *Negative Static*. Furthermore, a continued exploration of the physical articulation of space in an immersive sonic artwork environment is also continued in *Swarm*.

4.4 Swarm - A Creative Exploration of Sociotemporality

Swarm is a reactive sonic installation, featuring a six channel sonic environment housed in a space enveloped in linear light projections. The work itself explores ideas of sociotemporality and the physical articulation of space within an immersive sonic art environment. Documentation of the work is taken from a creative development session conducted in Phipps Concert Hall at the University of Huddersfield, May 2012. A technical specification and final design details are included on the accompanying media DVD.
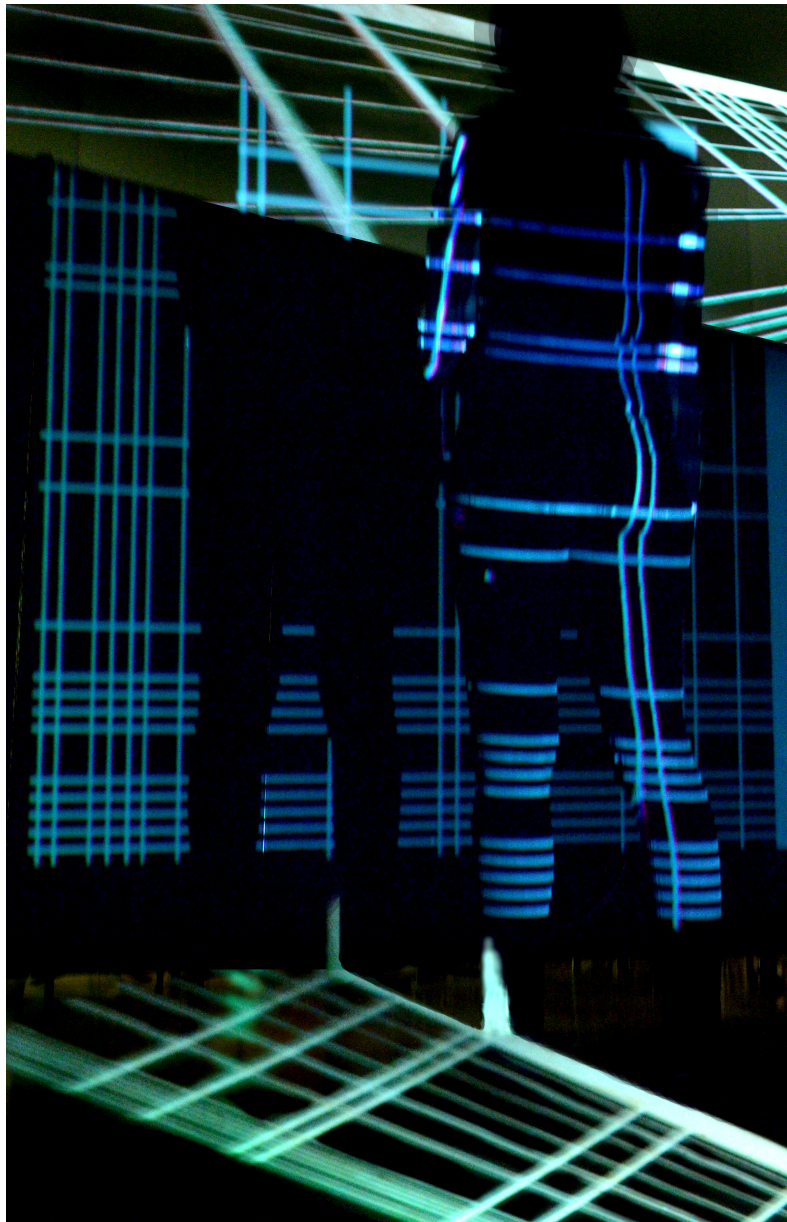
Figure 4.12: *Swarm* in development, University of Huddersfield, 05/2012.

4.4.1 *Swarm*: Conceptual Themes

4.4.1.1 Physical Articulation of Space in the Tri-Polar Dynamic

Previous creative works in the portfolio, including *dis:ORDER2* and *Suspended Imprints*, have focussed on the dynamic relationship between the *consciousness* of the perceptive occupant and the spaces of sonic artwork. However, Chapter 3 discusses the concept of the perceptive occupant as a cohesive synthesis of physical sensory faculties and consciousness. As such, *Swarm* is concerned with the corporeal body as a physical inhabitation of the consciousness and its consequential occupation and exploration of space. Similarly, *dis:ORDER* also encouraged a physical movement of the perceptive occupant in space, inviting then to traverse its sculptural boundaries. The physical installation invokes the potential for the work to be voluntarily immersive through inviting the perceptive occupant to step into the sculptural space itself. *Swarm*, on the other hand, aims to explore physically *imposed* immersion on the perceptive occupant through an encompassing sonic and physical environment.

It was my intention to create an artwork that encourages the perceptive occupant to articulate space physically, in reaction with - and to facilitate mediation of – the sonic environment. As a result, a self-awareness of the occupation of the perceptive occupant in the space over a linear timeframe activates and accompanies a tri-polar dynamic. Salome Voeglin recognises her own subjectivity as a driving force in this circumstance. She writes, 'it is my intersubjective motility that produces the site as socio-political dynamic, and places me as an aesthetico-political subject within this dynamic. Listening, conceptual and actual, makes me appreciate my own inhabiting on the gradient of power that moves times and space' (Voeglin 2010, p.165). As a result, *Swarm* (in this context) aims to reignite the awareness of the perceptive occupant's own positioning and physical articulation of space as a result of their occupation and mediation of the sonic space in time. This idea has much in common with Brandon LaBelle's idea of a mode of listening, 'that builds architectures out of interaction' (LaBelle 2006, p.248). It was these concepts that inspired me to

pursue a work in which the physical trajectory of each perceptive occupant was somehow integral its existence, either in a reactionary or interactive format.

4.4.1.2 The Identity of Sonic Art in the Experiential Past of the Perceptive Occupant.

In Chapter 3, I discuss the creative works concerning the dynamic relationships between the perceiving occupant and the sonic and physical media of a work *during* their mediation. The lines of enquiry for this work were prompted by a new consideration: what of the relationship with the sonic artworks *after* their mediation? I would like to propose the possibility that the perceiving occupant has access to two versions of a sonic artwork as a memory in their experiential past. The first instance may be a remembrance of the revelatory narrative and engagement of the tri-polar dynamic occurring over time during the mediation of a work. This is a self-referent memory of their own experience as a perceptive occupant occupying the foreground of their focus within their sonic art experience. The second identity of a sonic artwork may emerge as the end result of this narrative: a finite conceptual image of the work as a whole; encompassing the artwork's media and its conceptual networking as an instantaneous understanding. This can be exemplified with the case of the *dis:ORDER* series. One may remember the linear pathway of navigation in its presence, yet it would be impossible to experience the same revelation on a second viewing of the work. This is because a *second* identity of the work irrevocably exists, in which the linear text uncovered by the perceptive occupant is already determined and accompanied by its conceptual implications. That is not to say that future tri-polar dynamics and revelatory narratives are not possible upon second viewings of the sonic artworks (and beyond), rather they will build upon previous experiences of the work. This discussion highlights another interesting consideration regarding temporality and the creative portfolio, namely that a memory of the tri-polar dynamic exists as a memory of an experience, occurring over a linear timeframe. However, the second instance of a sonic artwork remembered in the experiential past of the perceptive occupant allows the temporal linearity of the tri-polar revelatory narrative to be condensed and represented out of this timeframe. It is now

possible that what is experienced as a linear process is now existent as an instantaneous conceptual image. Xenakis, in his study of memory, time and temporality, acknowledged the possibility for creative works, (in this instance, music) to exist *outside* of time. LaBelle expands on Xenakis' viewpoint, writing 'This representation [of the creative work], when encoded in our memories... becomes accessible to us as a whole; a whole which we can navigate, jump back and forth in, and sustain at random access. The whole becomes not a succession, but something non-temporal...' (LaBelle 2006, pp.281-282). It could be argued that the identity of the sonic artworks (specific to the hermeneutical subjections of the perceptive occupant) in this instance exists within this conceptual whole, held in the virtual space of the consciousness.

4.4.1.3 Sociotemporality in the Creative Portfolio

The discussion above takes into account the experience of one perceptive occupant. However, what of the identity of the sonic artworks having been mediated by the public *en masse*? In this instance, our previous discussion of J.T. Fraser's *Umwelts* may now be completed, as a Sociotemporality in the creative portfolio is accounted for. Chapter 3 discussed J.T. Fraser's *Umwelt* levels of temporal evolution in the context of a *potential* evolution of the perceptive occupant's revelatory narrative during a tri-polar dynamic. When considering a singular perceptive occupant within the tri-polar dynamic, it was not appropriate to discuss the final *Umwelt* of Sociotemporality. However, Sociotemporality, 'as the temporality of cultures and civilizations' (Kramer 1988, p.396) becomes relevant when considering that numerous perceptive occupants may experience the sonic artworks: an artwork existing in the experiential past (as discussed above) of the perceptive occupants that make up the public or society. A work may come to exist on a Sociotemporal *Umwelt* as it begins to have significance beyond that which is relevant to us as individuals - also occupying a meaningful place within culture and gaining a socially accepted identity. This may result as a culmination of public exhibitions, a political viewpoint proposed in the work, Internet presence, public critique and reviews. As such, it was my aim to create a work that existed as a result of the experience of its

perceptive occupant *en masse*. *Swarm* creates a sense of shared ownership because the experience of the *present* perceptive occupant within its space is governed by the culmination of the *previous* perceptive occupant's experiences. Furthermore, I am interested in the potential for such a work to exacerbate the tensions between the freedom of movement present in the subjectivity of the perceptive occupant and an artwork that has a socially incurred identity and final form.

4.4.2 *Swarm*: Contextual Review

The conceptual themes explored creatively through *Swarm* led to a wide array of works and artists being researched in preparation for its development. I would like to outline two key practitioners of significant influence that deal with issues regarding the physical occupation of space and also the concept of creative use of accumulated data.

The work of Gianni Colombo, founder of kinetic art group Gruppo T, is of particular importance to the research that culminated in *Swarm*. His body of work deals with the concept of an active participation in artwork through the physical exploration and occupation of dynamic space. By creating kinetic installations, Colombo directs the focus towards the subjectivity of the perceptive occupant and their own relationship with space. He writes, 'my works emancipate the viewer from his state of perception, making him aware of what concerns him' (Colombo in Scotini accessed online 12/02/11). His work, *Elastic Space* (1967) consists of a three-dimensional, networked environment of elastic threads illuminated by black light. The elastic threads are kinetically activated by motors, invoking a playful sense of scale as the space expands and collapses with the movement of the elastic. I am especially interested in the potential for this artwork to prompt the perceptive occupant to re-evaluate their position within the space of the work. As Marco Scotini summarises, ' [the work is…] a construction of movements of passages in time which, through movement, the inseparable relationship between corporeality and the perceived world was re-proposed' (Scotini accessed online 12/02/2011). *Elastic Space* also bears a slight similarity to the visual presentation of *Swarm*. The geometric grid-like structure created by the elastic is an

interesting juxtaposition of a structured linearity and a kinetic fluidity in their movement. For me, however, *Swarm*'s geometrically inspired visual design is used in reference to cartography and the graphing of data.

4.4.3 *Swarm*: Creative Processes

Swarm is a reactive sonic art installation, developed and prototyped in Phipps Concert Hall at the University of Huddersfield, 2012. The work evolves over the time of its exhibition, shaped by the physical occupation of its perceptive occupant. Conceptually, it is influenced by research regarding themes of Sociotemporality and the physical articulation of a perceptive occupant inhabiting a sonic environment, as discussed previously. Documentation of the development session is included on the accompanying DVD alongside a technical specification required for its implementation.

4.4.3.1 *Swarm*: The Sonic Environment

Swarm comprises a six-channel sonic environment housed within a darkened installation space upon which a linear grid design of white light is projected. The work aims to create an immersive space that encourages a spatial exploration of the sonic environment. Any physical movement throughout the space is then detected by sensors that, in turn, dictate the projections of light throughout the space.

The sonic environment itself is composed from two categories of sources. The first are naturally occurring sounds created by living entities *en masse*. These include swarms of bees, ant's nests and the ambience noise of busy, public places. Samples of single bees were also used in order to highlight the dichotomy of the perceptive occupant and a social mass. These samples were used in their original format and also processed using techniques such as spectral filtering, granular delay and convolution to create interesting variances in texture and timbre. I will refer to these as Category 1 Sounds. The second category of sounds reference conceptual themes of tracking and data. They include the use of sine tones and sonar pulses. I also saw an aesthetic congruence with

these sounds and the visually graphic nature of the projected environment. I will refer to these as Category 2 sounds.

The sonic arrangement begins with sound files from Category 1, emitted between spatially distant channels. The density and layering of the sound files is gradually increased as the work evolves. The aim was to prompt an exploration of the space by panning similar sound files between the six channels. The work employs a select vocabulary of sound files in order to aid their recognition, thus encouraging hubs of characteristic sonic activity to be detected and physically explored. As the work progresses, the presence of the Category 2 sound files begins to infiltrate the soundworld. Sine waves pan between distanced channels, evoking a sense of dynamic movement and sonar pulses conceptually reference the physical tracking of perceiving occupants. Sine waves that are close in frequency create beating patterns that fleetingly materialise into the foreground of the sonic environment to give the impression of emergent locales within the sonic space. The presence of Category 2 material is reduced in order to restore the sparse textures of Category 1 sound files featured in the opening, allowing for a cyclic repetition of the work.

4.4.3.2 *Swarm*: The Physical Environment

The darkened installation space of *Swarm* features white light projections on every surface of the environment. At the beginning of the exhibition period, the work uses a linear, grid-like configuration of white light. As the exhibition continues, the work evolves as the light design changes according to the physical movements of the perceptive occupants in the space. Microsoft Kinects were used as infrared sensors to detect the movement of perceptive occupant within the space as they explore the sonic environment. The Microsoft SDK for the Kinect device was imported into a C+ programming environment to enable the skeleton tracking capability of the hardware. The software then detected the distance of the pelvis point in the perceptive occupant's skeleton from the Kinect sensor along X, Y and Z coordinates over timeframes of 90-seconds. Data collected over this timeframe was then put into an array and analysed to identify the most densely

populated area of the installation space. The software then moved either a line from the X or Y coordinates of the grid on the graphical output to correspond to the areas of population during that time frame. As a result the areas in the space with a heavier occupation of perceptive occupants are represented by a heavier linear presence in the graphical output. The resultant grid-like configuration of white light creates a sense of cartography, suggestive of a mapping. Several projectors emit the graphical output of the software and are used to fill the space with an overlapping meshwork of grids. Furthermore, perceptive occupants occupying the space naturally become a projection surface alongside the walls of the installation space. Examples of this can be seen in Figure 4.12. What results is a cohesive environment that evolves over the exhibitory period, shaped by the interaction of the perceptive occupants in the sonic space. It was not my wish for perceptive occupants to be overly aware of their effect on the light projections and to prevent this, changes to the environment happen subtly and infrequently. This was orchestrated to prevent the work becoming a directly interactive experiment with perceptive occupants moving in the space solely to gauge the reaction of the light projections. The overall effect is a work that is shaped by the cumulative contribution of its perceiving occupants in their physical articulation of its sonic environment.

4.4.4 Summary and Future Research

Swarm aimed to creatively explore a Sociotemporal existence in the sonic artworks by cumulatively evolving as a growing number of perceptive occupants navigate its sonic space. In doing so, it also activates the physical navigation of space with direct results on the media of the work. It is from here that *Negative Static* continues to explore the corporeal boundary of the perceptive occupant as a border between the artwork environment and their internal conscious being.
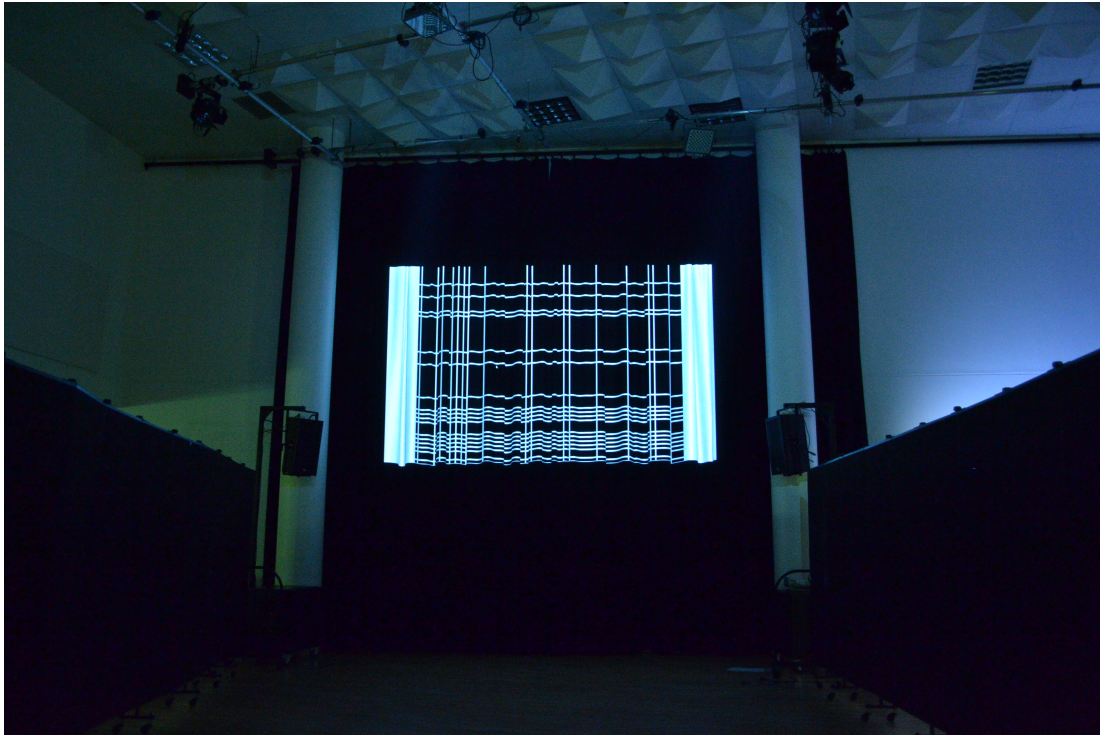
Figure 4.13: *Swarm* Development Session, Phipps Hall, University of Huddersfield, 05/2012
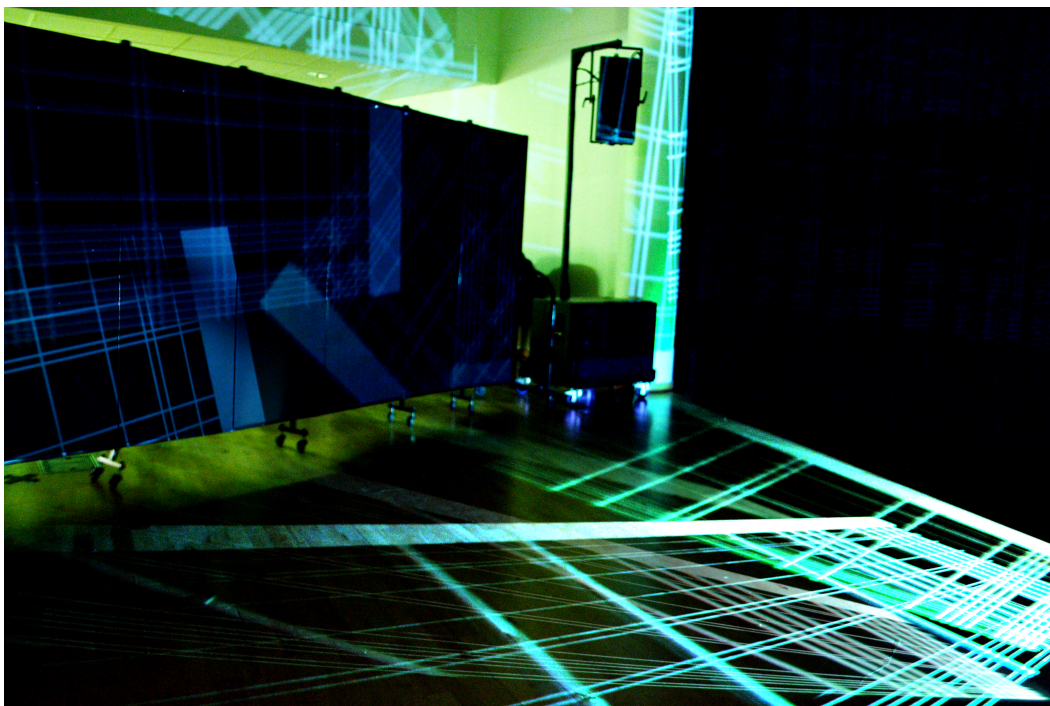
Figure 4.14: *Swarm* Development Session, Phipps Hall, University of Huddersfield, 05/2012.

4.5 N*egative Static* - A Creative Exploration of Corporeal Boundary and the Sonic Art Space

Negative Static explores the idea that the corporeal body acts as a boundary between the external art environment and our internal consciousness. It also aims to foster a position of syncretic difference between its artistic media as an exploration of the tri-polar dynamic. This text documents the conceptual thinking and research that underpins the creative processes involved in the work's development and realisation. Media footage and documentation of the development of the work is included on the accompanying DVD.

Figure 4.15: *Negative Static*, Greenhead Park, Huddersfield, 06/2012.

4.5.1 *Negative Static*: Conceptual Themes

4.5.1.1 Issues of Boundary and Perception

Previous theoretical and creative research has, among other themes, explored both the *physical and conscious being* of the perceptive occupant and their dynamic relationship with the sonic artworks. As Bill Viola observes, 'We usually think of the camera as an 'eye' and the microphone as an 'ear'

but all senses exist simultaneously in our bodies, interwoven into one system that includes sensory data, neural processing, memory, imagination and all the mental events of the moment' (Viola in Kelly [ed.] 2011, p.193). As such, it is the corporeal boundary that can be seen as a vital concept in the distinction between our own sense of self and the environment we inhabit. It was my wish to explore this notion further in a creative format through *Negative Static*.

The previous works in the creative portfolio highlight and creatively explore the interaction and immersion of the perceptive occupant in the sonic and physical space of artworks, in both voluntary and imposed contexts. It may be possible to reinterpret these themes as having investigated the dichotomy of *internal* and *external* spaces in the artworks and the ephemeral boundaries that separate them. It is from this position that the research culminating in *Negative Static* commenced. Independently, the spaces of self and artwork exist as two self-contained entities. Yet, within the context of sonic art, the potential exists for an engaged dialogue between them. This results in a cohesive artwork that resides in an *interstitial space* and therefore has the potential to transgress the aforementioned corporeal boundary. In this process, it is almost as if the corporeal boundary is rendered translucent. Brandon LaBelle acknowledges, 'sound converses with the spatial confines of mental reverberation' (LaBelle 2006, p.xi). I wanted to focus on the idea of a boundary between the 'spatial confines of [our] mental reverberation' and the wider environment of the artwork. In *Negative Static*, I suggest that the sensory faculties of our physical body could be seen as acting as a gateway between external environmental phenomena and our inner consciousness - or, in other words, the gateways between the *internal* and *external* spaces of a tri-polar dynamic. Retinal photography is the basis for the physical component of *Negative Static*. The retinas act as a canvas onto which images of our external environment are projected. I wanted to present their image *in negative*, external to their bodily confines and situated as a boundary between the perceptive occupant and their wider environment.

Chapter 3 discussed the potential syncretic differences between sonic and physical media and their tempering by the perceptive occupant in the tri-polar dynamic. In order to highlight the

aforementioned concept of internal and external spaces within the creative portfolio, I aimed to create a locus of difference: not only between the sonic and physical media of the work but also between the perceptive occupant themselves and the environment around them. This latter difference is achieved by using the sonic and physical media of the work to create a sense of external boundary between the perceptive occupant and the wider environment in which the artwork is placed. Georg Klein notes the ability of public spaces to highlight the interiority of the perceptive occupant. He writes:

> Acoustic art in public spaces basically involves installing a space in another existing space, both physically and sensorially, and metaphysically and mentally – an interior space in an exterior space, so to speak. The original quality of sound art lies in the *oscillation of interior and exterior space*. Thus public spaces intensified by sound art cause transitional spaces to come into being, in a political and a psychoanalytic sense.
> (Klein 2009, p.101).

The sonic and physical media of *Negative Static* are therefore designed to integrate space in which the work is presented as integral to the artwork itself, with the intention that it can be presented within any public space and achieve a similar conceptual effect.

With the integration of public spaces within the artwork, another dichotomy becomes apparent: that of *static* and *dynamic* movement. Public spaces, by their very nature, have the potential to encompass dynamic movement and presence. I wanted to enhance the dynamism experienced by the perceptive occupant via the relative immobilisation and sense of boundary created by the physical and sonic media of the work. The mediation of public spaces may also incidentally include members of the public that happen to be traversing or located within it at that time. This not only highlights our individuality, but also, our simultaneous contribution to a society or culture as a whole - in reference to the issues of sociotemporality first explored in *Swarm*. *Negative Static* creates an interesting simultaneity in which the perceptive occupant is at once part of the environment in which the work is placed but also a separate entity resulting from the suggestion of boundary and an imposed staticness. Once more, perhaps the boundary between the two is rendered almost translucent. As Hatton interestingly observes, 'Isolation is a state of nature;

Solitude is the work of culture. Isolation is an imposition, solitude a choice' (Hatton in Chambers 1994, p.49).

Negative Static is a work that aims to activate several dichotomies: internal and external, static and dynamic, individual and society, perceptive occupant and artwork. Ultimately, all of these dichotomies could be said to result in the reinforcement of the perceiving occupant's own self-awareness regarding their subjectivity and dialogue within the tri-polar dynamic. The contribution of these dichotomies to an increased focus on one's own position within the work is acknowledged by Morris, who writes, 'The self's representation to itself, a more complex operation involving the extensive use of language as well as imagery, maintains as well an opposition between the static and the dynamic' (Morris 1994, p.177). Also, the aforementioned heightened state of syncretic difference between the perceptive occupant and the artwork's media in *Negative Static* further emphasises their subjective variation in the work's mediation. It is at this juncture that it may be apt to discuss Merleau-Ponty's interpretation of hermeneutics and ideas of truth in his concept of *Fundierung* briefly. Merleau-Ponty argues for the validity and strength of a perceptive occupant's interpretation. Langer introduces the concept in her writings on Merleau-Ponty, stating that 'truth' can be seen as 'a perspectival, temporal being and like the latter, they are essentially dynamic and open-ended… it is therefore ultimately impossible to distinguish between "truths of fact" and "truths of reason"; their relationship is one of "*Fundierung*"' (Langer 1989, p.120). *Fundierung* is especially relevant in this light because this indistinguishable state is most resonant with the sonic artwork that exists interstitially between the *factual* existence of the media and the *reasoned* syncretic likeness imbued by the perceptive occupant.[3]

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[3] Merleau-Ponty's concept of *Fundierung* is an adaptation of what is originally a Husserlian term. He introduces it as, 'the founding term – time, the un-reflected, fact, language, perception – is primary in the sense that the founded is given as a determination or an explicit form of the founding, which prevents the founded from ever absorbing the founding; and yet the founding is not primary in the empiricist sense and the founded is not simply derived from it, because it is though the founded that the founding is manifested' (Merleau-Ponty 2012, p.xix).

4.5.2 Contextual Review

The work of Max Neuhaus has been significant during the development of *Negative Static*. Of particular note is Neuhaus' creative use of existing environments and landscapes in his work. This often highlights the importance of perceptive occupant within these spaces, evident in works such as *Times Square* (1977-1992, 2002-Present) or *Drive In Music* (1967). *Times Square* came from a lineage of unlabelled works, in which Neuhaus aspired to let a sonic presence be the defining trigger for the aesthetic consideration of the site, rather than the announcement of an artwork or its title. There is a clear resonance with my previous discussions and Neuhaus' desire to activate a sense of place within an existing public environment through the public's interaction and relationship with it.

4.5.3 *Negative Static*: Creative Process

Negative Static was documented in Greenhead Park, Huddersfield in June 2012. It features a pair of stereo speakers positioned in close proximity to the perceptive occupant. This positions the perceptive occupant directly behind a series of four frames displayed at head height. Each black frame is a negative tracing of the blood vessels of the retina, documented during retinal photography. The work is designed to occupy any public space and in doing so, implies that space as being integral to the artwork. A number of dichotomies are established through the mediation of *Negative Static*, all of which aim to work cohesively in highlighting the hermeneutical positioning of the perceptive occupant.

4.5.3.1 *Negative Static*: Sonic Environment

In the sound environment I created for *Negative Static*, I wanted to match the imposed immersivity of the public environment. However, given that the public environment is also an interchangeable facet of the work, an encompassing sonic environment would have been unfeasible. Alternatively, as exemplified by *dis:ORDER2*, a sense of internal immersion invoked by the use of personal

headphones inspired the configuration of the speakers in the work. I aimed to deconstruct the implied aesthetic of personal headphones, maintaining a sense of sonic intimacy but externalising its source. The result of this endeavour led to a pair of stereo speakers, emitting an intimate sonic sound-world, being positioned in such a way that the perceptive occupant must literally place themselves within their space. This also positions the perceptive occupant so that the public environment must be viewed through the retinal framework (to be outlined in the forthcoming section). This parallels the representation of the retina, as a component of our visual sense, existing external to its bodily confines. Again, suggesting the notion of our sensory faculties as acting as a spatial gateway between the boundaries of artistic phenomenal media and self.

The sonic environment of *Negative Static* uses samples of camera shutters as its source. These were chosen for their conceptual relevance to the blink of an eye, a parallel to the beginning of Bill Viola's text. This also suggests concepts of framing and photographic snapshots, much like the framing of a public space by the retinal frames.

The samples undergo minimal transformations using processes such as time stretching, delay, spectral filtering and convolution techniques in order to maintain a cohesive sound-world. The sound-world comprises a series of isolated groupings of sonic events. This was done with a view to echo the short events of movement viewable through the tiny framings of the external environment created by the layers of retinal framing. This establishes the opportunity for the perceptive occupant to forge points of correspondence between the visual dynamics and the rhythmic and gestural morphologies of the each sonic event. The use of a series of individual sonic events was also designed to provide aural highlights among a background of ambient noise that may occur naturally from the site of installation.

4.5.3.2 *Negative Static*: Physical Design

The structure of *Negative Static* involved a series of four black frames measuring 2 x 1m. The frames feature a negative impression of the blood vessels of my own retinas taken using retinal

photography. The pattern of the blood vessels of both retinas were then traced and laser cut into MDF and painted black. Two frameworks of each retina are mounted at intervals of 50cm along a standing frame, as seen in figure 4.17. The blood vessels of the retina, outlined in black, articulate the visual backdrop of the public environment. Rather than enable our vision of the external world, in this instance, the 'black' retina detracts from it. However, in doing so, they also create multiple frames of the incidental environment in which kinetic movement and activities occur. This is illustrated in video footage on the accompanying DVD. This framing is suggestive also of the concept of an artistic frame contextualising its contents as aesthetically worthy.

Figure 4.16: *Negative Static*: four retinal frames.

Figure 4.17: *Negative Static*: Greenhead Park, Huddersfield, 06/2012.

4.5.4 Summary and Future Research

Negative Static activates multiple dichotomies between the artwork and its relationship with the perceptive occupant. In doing so, the work reinforces the self-awareness of the perceptive occupant and situates them in the foreground of their own focus.

During the creation of the portfolio I have also aimed to develop a creative practice that acts as research culminating from both theoretical and creative avenues of exploration. As the final work in the portfolio, *Negative Static* concludes what I see as a journey of extended research and artistic exploration into the theoretical implications of the tri-polar dynamic between sonic, physical and perceptive occupant. In considering this process retrospectively, it became possible to view it in relation to the processes of the sonic artist. Simon O'Sullivan successfully summarises many of the themes and aims explored within this creative portfolio, in his statement:

We separate ourselves as subjects from the object world. Indeed, this alienated state is the very precondition of self-consciousness. Art, at least as it is figured within representation, is complicit in this dynamic. Art mirrors back an apparently reassuring image of our own subjectivity (an outer form and an inner content). As such, a transformation in how we think about art will necessarily alter the topology of how we think ourselves and *vice versa'*. (O'Sullivan 2006, p.16).

Chapter 5: Conclusion

This overarching thread of this research project is the development of an integrated practice in which I concurrently develop of conceptual and theoretical frameworks and concrete artistic media. These two elements symbiotically inform one another. As a result, the portfolio of sonic artworks embodies concept in a concrete format, providing a potentiality for its activation. I feel the development of this creative practice has prompted me to view my creative process from a new perspective. Through this I have gained insight into how I view my own identity as a sonic artist and my relationship with artistic media and the perceptive occupant. To summarise this process, I now wish to expand on the development of my practice over the creation of the portfolio of works and how I feel it has become more sophisticated. Having outlined this and in keeping with the self-referent conceptual framework of the thesis as a whole, I will then posit the creative practice that has resulted from this research period through a philosophical lense, in line with Deleuze and Guattari. Finally, I will then expound my intentions for further development and areas of exploration in the future.

5.1 Trajectory of Creative Processes Resultant of an Integrated Artistic Practice

The development of the theoretical frameworks has, for me, acted as a prompt to refine questions and conceptual potentialities coupled with a creative work that would provide a context, a framework in which to posit information and ideas. I view this as a journey from verbal to non-verbal communication as summarised by Robert K. Logan in his article, 'The Emergence of Artistic Expression and Sensory Perception' (2007). He refers to non-verbal communication as using 'secondary perception' which 'allows the potential artists to combine their perceptual capabilities with their ability to create symbols and to think symbolically, which are the necessary ingredients for artistic expression' (Logan accessed online 21/03/12). This inability to imagine or predict the outcome of the art experience or to outline its conceptual embodiment in a linear or verbal fashion was manifest in the development methods of the works. In the development of a creative work,

maquettes were produced as a direct way to experiment with the physical format of the work. I would evaluate these models whilst listening to compositional sketches for the accompanying sound-world – a means of evaluating the final form of the work. Often these maquettes would undergo radical developments in design, allowing creative free reign without the constraints of logistics or practicalities. An annotated documentation of this process can be found in the appendixes of the thesis. Again, Sol LeWitt observes this tendency in the development of conceptual art stating, 'the planning and decisions are made before hand and the execution is a perfunctory affair' (LeWitt 1967, p.12). It is through this process that the conceptual frameworks and sonic artworks became cyclical in their feedback.

All the conceptual models were based on the central idea of a tri-polar dynamic in sonic art in which the perceptive occupant (operating as a cohesive symbiosis of physical sensory faculties and conscious thought) becomes a completing component of the artwork itself with the sonic and physical media in the work. Through a revelatory narrative, the dormant syncretic potential of the disparate artistic media is activated and the conceptual potential imbued by the sonic artist is kinetically released. These notions were developed concurrently in both creative and theoretical formats. The *dis:ORDER* series and *Suspended Imprints* both explored the use of semantically explicit artistic media, especially through the employment of text. As the research progressed and idea of a syncretic difference in sonic art developed, the creative works began to embrace the use of more abstract media, as can be seen in *Negative Static* and *Swarm*. However, conceptually all the works in creative portfolio activate, embrace and explore ideas of issues of virtuality, immersion and temporality in sonic art as mediated by the perceptive occupant.

The sonic artworks in Chapter 4 appear in chronological order. This not only exemplified the evolution of my theoretical exploration, but also is conducive to demonstrating a journey that departs from openly referential forms of media and moves towards increasing states of syncretic difference within the creative work. I see my tendency towards the use of text in earlier works such as the *dis:ORDER* series and *Suspended Imprints* as symptomatic of my compositional background.

Not only is it a direct representation of the language of the inner monologue but it may also be a relic of working with syntactical creative languages. As my theoretical research became more concerned with a tri-polar dynamic in which a rhizomatic dialogue between the perceptive occupant and the artwork produces an *interstitial* meaning and identity in sonic art, my creative output began to shift accordingly in its aims. I found myself embracing conceptual facets that may be encompassed within the artwork yet may prove difficult to articulate in a written format. In place of the need for semantic explicitness and communicating a specific conceptual idea, I began to formulate artworks with a heightened sense of syncretic difference (in line with the theoretical development of this notion). More and more the works became concerned with fostering a position in which the perceptive occupant must cement the semantic gaps between the artistic media, in turn facilitating a meaningful dialogue between the sonic, physical and perceptive occupant. This drive can also be seen in my treatment of the loudspeaker within my sonic artworks. Many sonic artworks feature the loudspeaker as the main physical presence in the work: either for visual aesthetics, its cultural signification or as a method of drawing attention to the sonic material of which it is a source. These contexts are evident within the works of Berhard Leitner, Brandon LaBelle and Janet Cardiff. Conversely, I see the role of the loudspeaker in my work as incidental and preferably completely discrete wherever possible - its existence in the work is solely as a method of emitting sound. As can be seen from the appendixes of development notes for each of the works, the discrete placing of loudspeakers was a consideration in the physical design of the works. For the perceptive occupant, I intended the sonic phenomena to exist simply alongside the physical phenomena - rather than the physical phenomena of the loudspeakers indicating a sonic presence. For me, this aided a greater state of syncretic difference within the artwork and as a result, an increased semantic weighting of the perceptive occupant results in an increased self-referential focus during the tri-polar dynamic (or *vice versa*). Much in line with Kim-Cohen's statement that, ' …the wordless aspects of art allow contact with prelinguistic experience' (Kim-Cohen 2009, p.115). Practically, this aesthetic manifested itself in a general 'stripping back' of media content. The use of text and

structural representations of concept was exchanged for more ephemeral media such as light and the visual simplicity of *Negative Static*'s retinal frames.

My treatment of sonic medias has also followed a similar trajectory to my physical media in that the pressures I may have once felt as a composer - to focus on the development and narrative of sound – have waned. In lieu of this, I become more and more focussed on creating a sonic environment in which the perceptive occupant can inhabit. As such, I see the aural phenomena in my artwork most aptly described as *sound-worlds*. I see the lack of my own imposed sonic narrative as allowing for the focus to be on the perceptive occupant's own narrative within the tri-polar dynamic and there chosen pathway of engagement within the sonic space. Furthermore, as the physical media in the creative portfolio became increasingly minimal, I felt this brought a more balanced semantic weighting with my use of sonic media. It should be noted that some of the works did feature a sound-world with an evolution in terms of density and occurrence of sound file playback, such as *Suspended Imprints*. This was employed to discourage disengagement with the sonic component of the work. This resultant aesthetic is well illustrated in the design and spatialisation of sonic media in *Swarm*. The cyclic progression of the duration and occurrence of both Category 1 and 2 sound files (as defined in Chapter 4) aims to maintain enough flux to hold aural interest. Yet it does not aim to undergo an exploration or development of the interior characteristics of the sonic media; instead, they exist as isolated sonic events emitted by the six loudspeakers throughout the art space. This allows the perceptive occupant to focus extrinsically rather than intrinsically on potential semantic links with themselves and the physical media of the work, in particular a narrative of their own physical trace of spatial and sonic exploration.

In summary, my creative drives have remained that of the embodiment or exploration of conceptual ideas and networks in an artistic format, whether as a composer or sonic artist. However, I am no longer concerned with the intent of a 'successful communication' with the sonic art audience but more so with a process benefitting my own research aims and insight. This has resulted in a move towards embracing a lack of explicit signification within sonic art, fostering

heightened syncretic difference between artistic media. As Seth Kim-Cohen writes of the creative processes within conceptual art forms: 'Artistic process and innovation are not driven by the need for a more adequate correlation of signifier to signified, but by the effort to more fully come to terms with the impossibility of representation' (Kim-Cohen 2009, p.220). When considering my own practice and how it has developed as a result of an integrated practice, issues of translation become a focal point: that is translation from theoretical concept to experiential potentiality through concrete media. It is now as if I see my creative work as concepts expressed via a post-structural lexicon of artistic forms. The potential for activating kinetic relationships is embodied in almost intangible conceptual complexities. In chapter 3, I outlined how I see my own creative process as a rhizomatic journey. I feel that the recognition and insight into the creative process afforded by the development of an integrated practice is responsible for the continual refinement of my work as a sonic artist. It seems a natural pathway for me now to examine how I see my own processes of translation from theoretical concept to artistic media in more depth through a philosophical lens in line with the thesis as a whole. I see this as an awareness of the pre-phenomenal within the creative process, then culminating in potentialities of affect.

5.2 A View of my Creative Process embedded within the Conceptual Framework of the Thesis

For me, the sonic artwork does not just exist nor is it predetermined - it *becomes* and is an essentially kinetic process. In my work, this process has always taken a conceptual idea as its starting point. At this time, I consider myself as dealing with the pre-phenomenal – an ignition point for the creative process in which concept *becomes* both physical and sonic artistic media. With the prospective aligning of this process within a tri-polar dynamic, I am compelled to ask: can this process of becoming also be considered a process of syncretic temporizing? But instead of artistic media being present from the outset, it emerges as the end-result of a conceptual start point – much like a process of open-ended syncretic assimilation.

It is upon deeper consideration of this process that I refer back to Deleuze and Guattari's idea of the rhizome as a model of conscious processing. Starting from the conceptual, the artist embarks on a journey of rhizomatic connections and explorations. Perhaps we can view the artist's consciousness as travelling *rhizomatically* through what Deleuze refers to as *the virtual*. The virtual in this context can be seen as the palette of artistic possibility from which anything can be assembled or forged. As Sanford Kwinter expands on in his discussion of the concept, 'Virtuality is a free concept – uncontrolled by limitations (Kwinter 2002, pp.10-11). It is within this idea that the virtual realm is free of limitation and can therein encompass anything a rhizomatic flight of conscious may deem possible. Could it be argued that it is these characteristics of the artistic process that accounts for the open-ended nature of conceptual art and more specifically in this case, the sonic artworks? Darren Ambrose succinctly summarises these writings describing a Deleuzian art as an, '… emergent autopoietic line of divergent becoming' (Ambrose in Vickery and Costello 2007, p.119). Ultimately, this rhizomatic flight ends in the creation of something *actual*, an existing artwork resultant of this navigation of the field of *virtual* potentialities. For Deleuze, this journey is a process of differentiation, in which the consciousness of the artist pursues the virtual, identifying potential by travelling backwards from the actual (Ambrose *Op Cit*). In his book, *Art Encounters: Deleuze and Guattari* (2006), Simon O'Sullivan discusses the relationship between art and the philosophical texts of Deleuze and Guattari. His writing supports my viewpoint stating that, 'The virtual or actualization of the virtual, is then the creative act – precisely the production, or actualization of difference and thus diversity from a pre-existing field of potentialities' (O'Sullivan 2006, p.118). In light of this discussion, can we consider the sonic artwork a manifestation or mapping of the rhizomatic lines of flight taken during the creative process in their physical or phenomenal format?

It is here that I feel it necessary to make the distinction between virtuality in this context and our previous discussion of sonic art as having a sense of 'virtual reality'. Sonic art, having emerged from a traversal of the virtual is unrestricted by empirical logic. The result is a unique

situation, typically un-encountered by the perceptive occupant and operating externally to the horizons of our everyday existence. It is here, that the two uses of the term, 'virtual' may coincide. Considered as a 'virtual reality', sonic art is just that – a reality constructed from the open-ended palette of the virtual as discussed above. Deleuze writes on the 'newness' that is possible within the virtual realm on account of its limitless nature: 'The virtual on the other hand, does not have to be realized, but rather actualized; and the rules of actualization are not those of resemblance and limitation, but those of difference or divergence and of creation' (Deleuze 1988, pp.96-97). To refer this back to the discussion in Chapters 3 and 4, the sense of virtual reality and 'newness' that results in sonic artwork is the ignition for a tri-polar dynamic, through which its syncretic differences are tempered. For Deleuze, this is termed as *affect* – a spark point of rhizomatic flight in the perceptive occupant. O'Sullivan summarises this standpoint, 'Art is that genuinely creative act that actualises the virtual, the virtual here being understood as the realm of affect' and continues to state, 'The perception of small differences without pretext is the perception of affect' (O'Sullivan 2006, p.66). It is here that I can contextualise the previous discussion of my development as a sonic artist, evolving from preoccupations with the communication of conceptual ideas to a focus on syncretic differences and conceptual embodiment. Deleuze and Guattari's account of traversing the virtual plane is a most fitting and succinct summary:

> This is how it should be done: Lodge yourself on a stratum, experiment with the opportunities it offers, find an advantageous point on it, find potential movements of deterritorialization, possible lines of flight, experience them, produce flow conjunctions here and there, try out continuums of intensity segment by segment, have a small plot of new land at all times. It is through a meticulous relation with the strata that one succeeds in freeing lines of flight.
> (Deleuze and Guattari 1987, p.161).

As such, it could be said that my creative practice is currently concerned with the realm of affect – creating a divergence from reality to result in a creative work that sparks conscious movement in the perceptive occupant. It is from this point that I am now looking to my future creative endeavours as multi-disciplinary plateaus of potential *affect*.

5.3 Creative Aims for the Future

Through the formation of the conceptual frameworks and their creative exploration in the portfolio, I feel an inwards focus on my own practice has afforded me an extended insight into my own processes and relationships with the signifying forces in the tri-polar dynamic. As a result, it is my intention to continue to approach sonic art as a site of nodal semiotic collision – almost as a freeze-frame of my own rhizomatic conceptual journey from the pre-phenomenal to concrete. As such, I foresee that issues of the tri-polar dynamic will long be central to my practice, with an interest in creating syncretic differences to be tempered by a perceiving occupant within the tri-polar dynamic. However, it is now my intention to explore satellite conceptual notions further, such as the relationship between the perceiving occupant, public space and personal space. Following the conceptual thread started through *Suspended Imprints* I wish to explore the idea that our personal and public spaces are self-defined and negotiated with our structural surroundings. On a concrete level, I am interested in exploring the creative options provided by Arduino technology. Resonant with my focus on issues of translation (as outlined above), I feel there are interesting possibilities to be explored considering the translation of data provided by sensory input methods into creative artistic outputs. It is not my wish at this moment in time to explore interactive artworks that have overt reactive elements as for me, this detracts from the potential for semantic tempering between sonic and physical media to occur on a virtual level. However, I am interested in continuing the idea that a creative work might evolve, influenced by a continued presence of the perceptive occupant in the sonic and physical spaces of the work (as first explored in *Swarm*). In summary, I am now looking forward to embracing the inwards reflection and creative processes that are prompted by an integrated practice in which I explore translations of pre-phenomenal concept into concrete artistic media.

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