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SONIC ARCADE, MAD'S MAJOR FALL EXHIBITION, EXPLORES SOUND AS A MATERIAL AND ITS UNIQUE POWER TO SHAPE EXPERIENCE AND ENVIRONMENT

Immersive and interactive installations, solo projects, and commissions by **Foo/Skou, MSHR, Noordeman and Wright, Studio PSK, Julianne Swartz, and Naama Tsabar** alongside nested exhibitions curated by **Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe and Radius**, with commissions by **Deborah Stratman and Anna Friz**

Sonic Arcade: Shaping Space with Sound
September 14, 2017–February 25, 2018

Press Preview on September 13 at 4:30 pm



NEW YORK, NY (September 12, 2017) – From September 14, 2017, to February 25, 2018, MAD presents *Sonic Arcade: Shaping Space with Sound*, a multi-component exhibition featuring interactive installations, immersive environments, and performing objects that explore how the ephemeral and abstract nature of sound is made material.

Bringing together over twenty artists, *Sonic Arcade* explores sound as substance, framing it as an interdependent material that is physically crafted and transmitted through electronic circuits



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and signals, radio waves, and resonant bodies that create encounters that are not only heard, but felt.

“*Sonic Arcade* assembles artists, designers, and performers who utilize sound as a material, activating its potential to shape space and environment, while drawing out the ability of the auditory to provide a fresh perspective on how surroundings, and the body, are perceived and engaged,” said Shannon R. Stratton, MAD’s William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator.

Sonic Arcade activates three gallery floors of the Museum, and also expands into the stairwell and Turnstyle Underground Market at the 59th Street–Columbus Circle subway station below the Museum, resulting in an expansive auditory experience that affects how space is navigated and perceived.

Sonic Arcade: Shaping Space with Sound is curated by Shannon R. Stratton, MAD’s William and Mildred Lasdon Chief Curator, with the support of Curatorial Assistant and Project Manager Angelik Vizcarrondo-Laboy. *Audiowear*, the collaborative solo project by Arjen Noordeman and Christie Wright, is curated for the Tiffany & Co. Foundation Jewelry Gallery by Assistant Curator Barbara Paris Gifford. *At Play*, the activation of *Studio PSK: Polyphonic Playground*, is curated by Manager of Public and Community Engagement Programs Danny Orendorff.

Featured artists and projects include:

Julianne Swartz, *Sine Body*

MAD commissioned artist Julianne Swartz to craft a new series of sculptural installations for *Sonic Arcade*, entitled *Sine Body*. Using acoustically reflective materials, Swartz builds anthropomorphic glass and ceramic vessels; then, utilizing an electronic feedback process to read the air mass in the vessels, she locates a pure sine tone, a smooth repetitive oscillation produced by a single continuous wave, which resonates in each body. That tone is at a frequency determined by the unique shape, size, and opening of each vessel, to which Swartz adds no additional overtones. The resulting piece is a chorus of pure sound.

Studio PSK, *Polyphonic Playground*

Polyphonic Playground is an interactive sound installation designed by Studio PSK, a creative design studio based in Peckham, South East London. The structure combines the archetypal elements of the child’s playground—a slide, swings, and a climbing frame—with conductive materials and custom electronics to create a large-scale, body-activated MIDI controller.

Performance | At Play: Performing Artist-in-Residence Series
Featuring **Stephanie M. Acosta, NIC Kay, and Steven Reker**

As an installation and instrument, Studio PSK’s *Polyphonic Playground* inspires countless possibilities for the production of new and experimental performance-based works. MAD invited New York City–based artists Stephanie M. Acosta, NIC Kay, and Steven Reker to be in residence with *Polyphonic Playground* for the duration of its



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exhibition at MAD, August 22, 2017, to February 11, 2018. During regular Museum hours the public is invited to observe, participate, and ask questions as these artists develop new interdisciplinary performance pieces on the playground, to be performed publicly at the conclusion of the residency period in early 2018.

Play Time, hosted on select Thursday evenings (6 to 9 pm) and Saturday mornings (10 am to 1 pm), allows the public to interact with *Polyphonic Playground* under supervision. Additional programs and performances will be announced here: <http://madmuseum.org/series/play-performing-artist-residence-series>.

Foo/Skou, *Format 3*:

Collaborative duo Louise Foo and Martha Skou work with smartphone technology, physical computing, graphics, and sculpture to explore the possibilities of composing, making, and experiencing sound in the digital age. Foo/Skou have produced *Format 3*, a sound experience through the passageway of MAD's Stairwell B, linking the 6th, 5th, and 4th floors through a series of plateaus, where visitors are invited to explore the concept of the graphic score with the help of an iPhone app and touch-reactive sculptures.

The sculptures and graphics distributed across these spaces make up the *Format 3* alphabet, a system of eighty-one sounding symbols developed using the three basic shapes of square, circle, and triangle. Using the *Format 3* app, which functions like an optical synthesizer, visitors can trigger sound, samples, and synthesis connected to each symbol.

Naama Tsabar, *Propagation (Opus 3)*

For *Propagation (Opus 3)*, Naama Tsabar will turn the Museum into an enormous instrument, evoking an electric guitar through the use of strings, bridges, and sound holes within its architecture. Embedding speakers backward along the top of the gallery wall so that they play back into the interior façade, Tsabar unifies the instrument's body with its projected voice, channeling its sound through the structure and into the cavity of the building, transforming the Museum into a resonating body. Within the context of a cultural institution, the wall-instrument provides an opportunity for audience members to physically activate a space that is normally off-limits to their bodies.

MSHR, *Knotted Gate Presence Weave*

The music and art collective MSHR creates sculptures, interactive sound and technology installations, and performances that explore how experience can be altered and augmented through digital and analogue manipulation. Their work combines hand-built synthesizers, digitally designed modular sculpture, and digital prints along with lights and mirrors to construct spaces that immerse their audience within a sensory system.

With *Knotted Gate Presence Weave*, MSHR has constructed their largest environment to date: a cybernetic musical composition that uses circuitry, visitor presence, and sculptural arrangement as its score. Visitors become an integral part of the system when they navigate the



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environment, demarcated by a series of archways, thus triggering a change in the feedback system of sound and light. These archways are literal and metaphorical “gates.” In electronics, a logic gate is an elementary building block of a digital circuit that regulates the flow of electricity through the input of binary values. The result is a complex audio-visual environment of distinct and unrepeatable sequences, in which emergent formations of sound and light unfold over time.

Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe, *Subject to Gesture*

Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe is interested in sound art and performance as gestural, and as an artist he incorporates his own voice into a collaborative performance with analogue synthesizers and sound sculptures. For him, voltage is an unpredictable, malleable, and living material whose manipulation is capable of carving the air with sound. He describes his process as intuitive, seeking out sounding objects that allow him to cultivate, rather than learn, technique. As a performer he responds to circumstances rather than staging a production, treating performance as a process of creating space within a space, with sound.

Subject to Gesture consists of two sections. The first includes artworks and ephemera that resonate with Lowe’s own practice and approach to working in sound, with a special focus on the visual music created by video synthesizers, devices that electronically create a video signal. The second offers an interactive space for audience members to experiment with a selection of hand-built analogue synthesizers, including two newly commissioned pieces by Emily Counts and Make Noise. These synthesizers are an example of a field where makers play multiple roles: they are all at once engineers, musicians, designers, and craftspeople, producing beautiful objects whose aesthetics lie both in their physical construction and their engineering.

Arjen Noordeman and Christie Wright, *Audiowear*

A porcelain musical jewelry collection that showcases the acoustic quality of clay by replicating idiophone and aerophone instruments, *Audiowear* features *Xylophone Bangles*, a *Guiro Cuff*, a *Diamond Rattle Bracelet*, a *Trumpet Bracelet*, a *5 Whistle Necklace*, and a *Panflute Collar*, made by designer and ceramist Christie Wright and designer Arjen Noordeman at the European Ceramic Work Center, in Den Bosch, the Netherlands, in 2010, to create a vocabulary of sounds to be used in musical production.

The creation of *Audiowear* led to collaborations with musicians, DJs, and hip-hop artists, who made original tracks by digitally remixing the ceramic sounds with added vocals. Fueled by a Kickstarter campaign, the artists recorded a vinyl record, produced and starred in music videos, and performed live in New York, Michigan, Korea, Great Britain, and the Netherlands.

Radius, *Beacon*

Radius is an experimental radio broadcast platform founded in 2010 by sound artist, radio producer, and curator Jeff Kolar. Focused on experimental and electronic music and drone, noise, and live improvisational broadcasts, Radius presents artists who use radio as a tool or medium for transmission. For artists working in radio, the method of transmission and reception bears as much significance as the message. In this sense, the airwaves—or the frequencies



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used for broadcasting—become a core material in a radio artist's practice, equivalent to the tools the artist uses to make sound itself.

Since its founding, Radius has broadcast eighty episodes featuring 197 artists from over twenty countries. Throughout the run of the exhibition, these episodes and more will be transmitted directly from the gallery in real time throughout the range of the Museum property. Visitors can listen to a different piece of radio art daily within the gallery, or tune into the program on personal transistor radios available for checkout at the admissions desk.

As part of *Radius: Beacon*, two projects have been commissioned:

Anna Friz, *Echophone*

Responding to the idea that radio measures and allows for relationships over distance and time, *Echophone* is a speculative radio-based installation. It reveals itself to visitors as they explore the Museum, searching for and tuning into messages being broadcast from beacons placed throughout its interior. Radios with headphones can be checked out from the admissions desk to experience this piece.

Deborah Stratman, *Hearsay* and *Siege*

Deborah Stratman created *Hearsay* and *Siege* as site-responsive artworks located in Turnstyle Underground Market at the 59th Street–Columbus Circle subway station. Inspired by the visual and sonic chaos of this teeming public site, home to one of the busiest MTA stations in the city, Stratman created two pieces that work together to hack the perceived surface of an environment.

Hearsay collects sound from two live mics placed along the corridor, processing this material live via a series of algorithms to produce various effects. These processed sounds are then rebroadcast via overhead speakers back into the environment, creating a subtle disruption in how the space is perceived. *Siege* is a video of optical illusions, similar to those circulated as aids to hypnosis, meditation, and hallucination. Here, the illusions are deployed in response to the visual surplus of the corridor and the customary use of the video screens for advertising.

Siege and *Hearsay* can be seen and heard the first seven minutes of every hour, excluding 8–10 am and 5–7 pm, on the weekdays in Turnstyle Underground Market's two-block-long underground passageway that stretches below 8th Avenue between 57th and 59th Streets.

EXHIBITION CREDITS

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ABOUT THE MUSEUM OF ARTS AND DESIGN

The Museum of Arts and Design (MAD) champions contemporary makers across creative fields and presents the work of artists, designers, and artisans who apply the highest level of ingenuity and skill. Since the Museum's founding in 1956 by philanthropist and visionary Aileen Osborn Webb, MAD has celebrated all facets of making and the creative processes by which materials are transformed, from traditional techniques to cutting-edge technologies. Today, the Museum's curatorial program builds upon a rich history of exhibitions that emphasize a cross-disciplinary approach to art and design, and reveals the workmanship behind the objects and environments that shape our everyday lives. MAD provides an international platform for practitioners who are influencing the direction of cultural production and driving twenty-first-century innovation, and fosters a participatory setting for visitors to have direct encounters with skilled making and compelling works of art and design.

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PRESS CONTACTS

Museum of Arts and Design
Claire Laporte / Hally Wolhandler
212.299.7737
press@madmuseum.org

Third Eye
Katie Wisniewski / Will Hoffman
Katie@hellothirdeye.com / Will@hellothirdeye.com



museum of arts and design

BIOGRAPHIES

Emily Counts was born in Seattle, Washington, where she currently lives and works. Utilizing natural materials that carry a rich history of craftsmanship—ceramics, bronze, wood, fiber, and glass—her practice explores contemporary themes of connectivity in biology, technology, and sexuality. She has exhibited at the Torrance Art Museum, Garboushian Gallery, Mark Moore Gallery, and Durden & Ray in California; at Nationale, Carl & Sloan Contemporary, and Disjecta in Portland, Oregon; and at Eitoeiko and Gallery Lara in Tokyo. Counts has been an artist-in-residence creating work for associated solo exhibitions at RAID Projects and Plane Space. She has received grants from the Oregon Arts Commission, the Regional Arts and Culture Council, and the Ford Family Foundation.

Louise Foo and Martha Skou are Danish-born artists based in New York City. Their careers span the worlds of music, visual art, and design. In their collaborative practice, they share the urge to explore and better understand the physics and systems of sound. Working with installations, visual design, and experimental software, they communicate the magic they find in their research through the creation of experiences. Foo/Skou have participated together in residencies at Pioneer Works and the New York Art Residency and Studios (NARS) Foundation. Foo/Skou have shown their work at venues including Reverse Space, Creative Tech Week Expo, and Telfair Museums' PULSE Art + Technology Festival.

Anna Friz is a sound and media artist who specializes in multichannel radio transmission systems for installation, performance, and broadcast. Since 1998, she has created and presented new audio art and radiophonic works in more than twenty-five countries. Her radio works, in which radio is often the source, subject, and medium, have been commissioned for national public radio in Canada, Australia, Austria, Germany, Finland, and Spain, and heard around the world on independent and clandestine frequencies. She also composes atmospheric sound works and sonic installations for theater, dance, film, and solo performance that reflect upon public media culture, political landscapes and infrastructure, and time perception. Friz is currently Assistant Professor of Sound in the Film and Digital Media Department of the University of California, Santa Cruz.

Robert Aiki Aubrey Lowe is a New York–based artist and composer who works with voice in the realm of spontaneous music. Most recently, he has focused on creating patch pieces with a modular synthesizer and tonal vocal work. He has exhibited widely at art venues including Performa 11, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and Fondation Louis Vuitton, Paris. Lowe has worked with Ben Russell, Jóhann Jóhannsson, Tarek Atoui, Philippe Parreno, Ariel Kalma, Lucky Dragons, Alexandra Wolkowicz, Biba Bell, ADULT., Ben Rivers, Rose Lazar, Rose Kallal, and many others.

Make Noise was founded in 2008 by Tony Rolando, a self-taught electronic musical instrument designer. What started as a re-visioning of jettisoned music technology has grown into a crew of folks working together in Asheville, North Carolina, to design and build strange yet thoughtful modular synthesizers. Make Noise sees these instruments as a collaboration with musicians who create once-in-a-lifetime performances that push boundaries and play the notes between the notes to discover the unfound sounds. The instruments are intended to be an experience,



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one that requires us to change our trajectories and thereby impacts the way we understand and imagine sound.

MSHR is the art collective of Birch Cooper and Brenna Murphy. Their work meshes digital sculpture, analogue circuitry, and ceremonial performance. The duo builds and explores cybernetic systems using synthesizers of their own design. For exhibitions, they install macro-arrangements of these sculptural instruments to create immersive light-sound-scapes. In their performances, they engage the systems through a series of unique interfaces. They also work with 3D modeling programs to design virtual forms that are output as images and sculptures with the use of digital fabrication. MSHR's sculptural, musical, and electronic works inform each other deeply, creating the meta-form that is the duo's collaborative practice. MSHR emerged from the five-person art collective Oregon Painting Society in Portland, Oregon, in 2011. They have been artists-in-residence at Sonoscopia, Eyebeam, Pioneer Works, and Signal Culture.

Arjen Noordeman is based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. He has worked as a designer for the interactive design company the Chopping Block in New York City, as well as for broadcast companies including RTL in the Netherlands and Bravo in New York. He has also served as Director of Design at the Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art and as Art Director at Nickelodeon in New York City. The recipient of Promax Entertainment Creative, Eyes & Ears, and Art Directors Club Awards, Noordeman is currently Creative Director of Brand Design for Comedy Central, Spike, and Paramount Network in Amsterdam.

Radius is an experimental radio broadcast platform established in 2010 that produces, exhibits, and distributes work by radio and transmission artists from around the world. Radius provides artists with live and experimental formats in radio programming and features a new episode monthly, with statements by artists who use radio as a primary element in their work. The goal is to support work that engages the tonal and public spaces of the electromagnetic spectrum. The founder and Artistic Director of Radius, Jeff Kolar (b. Chicago, US), is an independent sound artist, radio producer, and curator. His solo and collaborative projects, installations, and public performances often investigate the mundane sonic nuances of everyday electronic devices.

Deborah Stratman is a Chicago-based artist and filmmaker interested in landscapes and systems. Much of her work points to the relationships between physical environments and human struggles for power and control that play out on the land. Recent projects have addressed freedom, expansionism, surveillance, sonic warfare, public speech, ghosts, sinkholes, levitation, propagation, Orthoptera, raptors, comets, and faith. She has exhibited internationally at venues including the Museum of Modern Art, Centre Pompidou, Hammer Museum, Mercer Union, Witte de With, the Whitney Biennial, and festivals including Sundance, Viennale, CPH:DOX, Oberhausen Short Film Festival, Ann Arbor Film Festival, Full Frame, and the International Film Festival Rotterdam. Stratman is the recipient of Fulbright, Guggenheim, and United States Artists fellowships; a Creative Capital grant; and an Alpert Award. She teaches at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Studio PSK is an award-winning design and creative studio based in London, UK. Using design and technology, Studio PSK creates unique experiences that bring audiences and organizations closer together. Characterized by a cross-disciplinary approach, the studio works with brands, companies, and galleries to tell stories through interactive objects, digital environments,



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installations, and graphics. Studio PSK has produced work that has been exhibited internationally in the Design Museum; MU artspace, Eindhoven; Tate Modern; National Institute of Design, India; Victoria and Albert Museum; Design Miami; and Macau Tower. *Polyphonic Playground* was originally commissioned by Fashion Space Gallery, London.

Julianne Swartz lives and works in Stone Ridge, New York. Her work has been exhibited at venues including Tate Liverpool, Whitney Museum of American Art, the New Museum, the Jewish Museum, MoMA PS1, Indianapolis Museum of Art, the Israel Museum, Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art, and the Art Gallery of Western Australia. She was a recipient of the Anonymous Was a Woman fellowship in 2015.

Naama Tsabar was born in Israel and currently lives and works in New York City. She creates sensually driven installations, performances, and sculptures that evoke questions of power and bravado found in musical and social environments. The works investigate the underlying themes of intimacy, performativity, sexuality, and excess with a minimalist aesthetic. She zooms in on the objects and materials that hold a distinct functional purpose within these bigger, all-encompassing experiences, inserting them into a new order. Tsabar has had solo exhibitions and performances presented at the Guggenheim, High Line Art, Palais de Tokyo, Tel Aviv Museum of Art, Herzliya Museum for Contemporary Art, MARTE Contemporary, Frieze New York, Páramo Gallery, Dvir Gallery, Spinello Projects, and Pianissimo Gallery.

Christie Wright is based in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. She has created work for various publications, including *Martha Stewart Living*, *View on Colour*, and *Bloom* magazine. She has served as a stylist for the trend forecasting company Studio Edelkoort, Paris, as a designer creating products for the lifestyle brand West Elm in Brooklyn, and as a teacher in the Product Design Department of Parsons School of Design. The recipient of various honors, including a Fulbright grant and a Louis Comfort Tiffany Grant for the Arts, Wright is currently Associate Creative Director for Marcel Wanders' studio in Amsterdam.

At Play Performing Artists-in-Residence

Stephanie Acosta is a multidisciplinary artist who places the materiality of the ephemeral at the center of her practice, questioning meaning-making and manufactured limitations. Acosta will work with an ensemble of dancers, musicians, and writers to develop a new exploratory performance inspired by the American landscape, the cinematic thriller, and the site and sounds of *Polyphonic Playground*.

NIC Kay is an interdisciplinary artist who creates performances and performative spaces. Incorporating digital video and projections into the space of the playground, NIC plans to produce a new work inspired by children's television shows and the sociological concept of "parallel play."

Steven Reker is a Brooklyn-based composer and performer. Transforming *Polyphonic Playground* into a personalized instrument with the addition of audio samples and effects pedals, Reker simultaneously composes and choreographs as he constructs a new suite of off-kilter pop songs.