

In The Emptiness Between Them

A work in twelve acts

Ella Finer works with the performance of sound and considers the voice as an aesthetic, poetic and political instrument. In her work she often challenges our visual expectations of sound as art, engaging speaking bodies that are at times present, at times hidden or altogether removed and recorded. She has made work for theatre spaces, exploring the possibilities of magic, visibility and darkness that they offer, but has also worked with words written on pages and uttered over radio. Here she has investigated the gallery space. Her work at Galerie8, the result of a twelve week residency, is made up of twelve compositions placed in twelve compartments. Twelve boxes filled with sound for twelve spaces filled with sound. And all the emptiness between.

[And so each week I went in to the gallery and took up a new space in the building, dedicating the day to that space, experimenting with the way the acoustics of the particular architecture in which I was located affected my voice. On each day I would record everything I had been making, which I configured into a composition for that distinct space.^{i]}

I.

BRICK: An echo cannot occur without a distance between surfaces for the sounds to bounce from. But the resonance is not on the walls. It is in the emptiness between them. It fills the emptiness with its complex patterning.ⁱⁱ

ECHO: *I have only imagined the inside.*

II.

ECHO: *Looking upwards through five floors to a glass ceiling and listening to the call of a train passing outside.*

ITINERANT BODY: A reedy series of small explosions. Drawing out.

BRICK: Place is not a secure ontological notion rooted in ideas of the authentic but something unfixated, contested and multiple; it is open and porous.ⁱⁱⁱ

ITINERANT BODY: Somebody lives here.

ECHO: *In twelve boxes.*

III.

BRICK: Instead then, of thinking of places as areas with boundaries around, they can be imagined as articulated moments in networks of social relations and understandings, but where a large proportion of those relations, experiences and understandings are constructed on a far larger scale than what we happen to define for that moment as the place itself.^{iv}

I.B.: In that moment I was there.

BRICK: So the history of a place is accumulated, made up of layers and layers of different sets of linkages to both the local and to the wider world. Place becomes a constellation of processes.^v

ECHO: *I melt into the floor above. And the floor above that.*

IV.

I.B.: They are singing in the lavatory.

BRICK: Since each of us was several there was already quite a crowd.^{vi}

V.

I.B.: Going up. Third floor. Fourth.

ECHO: *My body is standing in the lift.*

I.B.: Up. Fifth. Higher. Roof.

BRICK: The image of the constellation both describes and unfixes the notions of place and history.

I.B.: I can see the train from here.

VI.

BRICK: In other words, you and I are only meeting places for messages from the past.^{vii}

I.B.: I can hear you talking.

BRICK: We must learn to speak to each other so that we can embrace from afar.^{viii}

VII.

I.B.: In one of the boxes, climbing the stairs –

ECHO: *I am coming closer now.*

I.B.: – the echoes are distorted so that all I can hear are voices but not what they are saying.

VIII.

ALL: Is this where we meet?

IX.

I.B.: And now she is holding notes, holding notes.

ECHO: *Rushing through partitions and doors, under floorboards and over tiles, into light fittings and out of sockets, locks and cracks.*

I.B.: Only the cleaners are allowed in there.

X.

I.B.: The space is multiple, enormous, unfixed and surrounded by bricks.

ECHO: *The walls are holding history.*

BRICK: Place is irretrievably, here and now. It won't be the same 'here' when it is no longer 'now'.^{ix}

ECHO: *My ears are holding sounds.*

XI.

I.B.: Somebody works there.

BRICK: Each 'now' is the now of a particular recognizability. In it, truth is charged to the bursting point with time.^x

ECHO: *My feet have vanished.*

XII.

I.B.: People will eat here and fill this room with laughter.

BRICK: The 'now-time' offers revolutionary possibilities. It is in the present that time stands still, and it is only in the present that change can be brought about.^{xi}

ECHO: *I am coming closer now.*

I.B.: This place is everywhere I have been.

ⁱ Email from Ella Finer to me, Sent 09.07.2012, 20:02

ⁱⁱ Massumi, Brian, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2002), p.14

ⁱⁱⁱ Massey, Doreen, *Space, Place and Gender* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994) p.5

^{iv} Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p.154

^v Massey, *Space, Place and Gender*, p.156; and Massey, Doreen, *For Space* (London: SAGE Publications, 2005) p.141

^{vi} Deleuze, Gilles and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987) p.3

^{vii} Calvino, Italo, *The Complete Cosmicomics*, trans. M. McLaughlin, T. Parks and W. Weaver (London: Penguin Classics, 2009), p.233

^{viii} Irigaray, Luce 'When Our Lips Speak Together', in *This Sex Which Is Not One*, trans. C. Porter. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1985) p.215

^{ix} Massey, *For Space*, p.139

^x Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, trans Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) p.463

^{xi} Buck-Morss, Susan, *The Dialectics of Seeing: Walter Benjamin and the Arcades Project* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991) p.242