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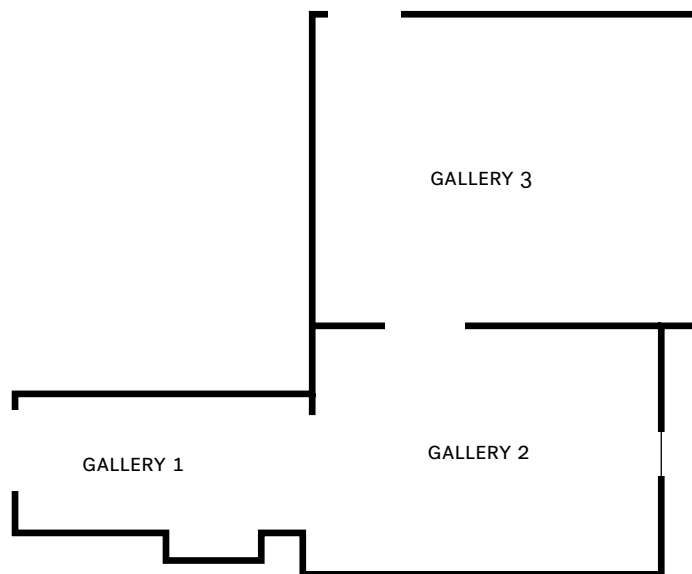
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Featuring recent artworks by Danilo Correale (b. 1982), Alison O'Daniel (b. 1979), and Alexander Provan (b. 1983), **Moving at the Tempo of a Broken Song** explores listening not as a physiological process, but as an act of engaging with the world. The artists address listening as a site where interactions and translations take place, shifting the focus on sound from an entity that we hear to a force that **shapes** our hearing. Sound is thus understood as the object that informs listening, and as a means of configuring our social behavior.

The artists present three parallel but distinct sound investigations, which range from critical to poetic. Correale's **Bird Song. Active Noise Cancelling** (2019) is a newly commissioned installation on the ability of music to both atomize and unite us; O'Daniel's two videos, excerpts from her feature-length film **The Tuba Thieves** (2018), address the potentiality and poetics of miscommunication; and Provan's audio work **Measuring Device with Organs (Instrumental and A Cappella)** (2019) is a portrait of the so-called "expert listener" and a listening test that reflects his particular tastes and biases. Instead of arranging images **with** sound, these works foreground the experience of sound, which they use to desynchronize and fragment multiple narratives.

Moving at the Tempo of a Broken Song invites visitors to exercise their sonic sensibility and to acknowledge that listening is not a given but something to be questioned and explored.



GALLERY 1

Alison O'Daniel
*The Tuba Thieves: Scene 61 -
 The Kaleidoscopic Window*, 2018
 HD video with sound,
 black and white
 5:48 min
 Courtesy the artist

GALLERY 2

Danilo Correale
*Bird Song. Active Noise
 Cancelling*, 2019
 Two-channel HD video
 with sound, color
 16:22 min
 Courtesy the artist

GALLERY 3

Alison O'Daniel
*The Tuba Thieves: Hand Shapes
 and Scene Numbers*, 2018
 HD video, no sound, color
 5:33 min
 Courtesy the artist and
 Shulamit Nazarian Gallery

Alexander Provan
*Measuring Device with
 Organs (Instrumental and
 A Cappella)*, 2019
 Installation with variable media,
 two-channel audio, 35 min each,
 on two different sets of Grado
 Prestige Series headphones,
 new artworks by the artist and
 objects from his collection.
 Courtesy the artist

The exhibition starts with a video projection by O’Daniel titled **The Tuba Thieves: Scene 61 – The Kaleidoscopic Window** (2018). The video presents artist Christine Sun Kim signing the story of Nyke – the protagonist of the feature-length film **The Tuba Thieves** – going skinny dipping with her boyfriend Nature Boy. The projection is large and installed at eye level, allowing the visitor to have a one-to-one encounter with Kim. The video exposes the audience to three different narrative versions (American Sign Language, voice-over and subtitles) generated by the same screenplay, each of which has its own syntax, order and tempo. Those who know ASL can comprehend the signs, those who hear can listen to the voice, and both can read the captions. The three “voices” disorient the viewer and suggest that sound can be experienced as a tool for communication but also as an obstacle to understanding.

O’Daniel, who is hard-of-hearing, explores sound in relation to the limits of bodily communication. By focusing on harmonious and dissonant aspects of the acts of speaking and listening, she investigates the poetics of mis-hearing and misunderstanding, and what the loss of information can produce. How do we react when we do not get to know everything that is being communicated? Can this be productive rather than limiting? The artist is interested in making visible “perceptual shifts” of the aural spectrum and in making the audience receptive through the presentation of coincidences and information encountered by chance. This allows her to evoke a sound universe halfway between deafness and hearing, and to transform sound from a source of frustration into a model for building new forms of storytelling.

For Correale, like O’Daniel, sound can be a social barrier but also an element of social control. In the last two decades, the highly personalized use of music streaming services and noise-cancelling headphones has eroded the communication between people and shifted the use of music from a community bonding tool to an instrument for isolation. Although online music is experienced socially and as a way for listeners to temporarily disconnect from the acceleration of everyday life, listeners are also

monitored and monetized by service providers. This means that listening not only is shaped by our sociopolitical and technical environments but acts as a tool through which control is exerted and our auditory sphere is managed.

Starting from these premises, Correale presents **Bird Song. Active Noise Cancelling** (2019), a newly commissioned audio and video installation in collaboration with musicians from Bard College Conservatory of Music. In the gallery, twin monitors feature two videos in dialogue. While the first shows video documentation of the musicians in action, the second features a scrolling text including fragments of ideas and questions which underline the project. The gallery space is suffused with a green glow and filled with a continuum of sound. The latter is an improvised musical progression that simulates a transition from five social stages – identity, subjectivity, collectivity, dialectic, multitude – identified by the artist to metaphorically express how new portable devices transform listeners into a silent and anonymous mass. During the first and second stages the listener hears a disconnected group of pitches. Each musician tries to deeply focus on a sound that, to them, represents the most meaningful sound that they can conjure without listening to the music being played by the others. In the third and fourth stages, musicians start to be aware of the soundscape around them and eventually begin to respond to each other. In the last section, they play in sync to unify the musical segments. In this stage, which simulates the passage from individuals to an ensemble, they transform the gallery into a space where sonic isolation is experienced collectively. **Bird Song. Active Noise Cancelling** engages sound not only as an invisible tool for silencing people but as a site where constant translation, action and self-transformation take place.

Exhibited in the third gallery are O’Daniel’s video **The Tuba Thieves: Hand Shapes and Scene Numbers** (2018) and Provan’s audio essay **Measuring Device with Organs (Instrumental and A Cappella)** (2019). Both investigate, from different perspectives, how we produce sound through bodies and technologies, and how our experiences are conditioned by social and technical mediations.

O’Daniel’s video has no sound and displays only a close-up of a pair of hands as they sign numbers and letters which correspond to scene numbers in **The Tuba Thieves**. The work is made from two videos, one in color and one in black-and-white, that are layered on top of one another, slightly out of sync. Various shapes are painted on the palms and fingers of the speaker, which emphasizes the visuality of signing and makes the gestures abstract, as if they were playing a musical score. The numbers are signed in and out of order, and the signing is similar to the movements of a mouth in the expression of speech as well as silence and breathing, but the video is often cut right before anything is said / signed. By inviting viewers to listen with their eyes, not just with the ears, this work implies that sound can be experienced through multiple senses. On the other hand, the presentation of “speaking hands” questions how we produce sound and suggests that even physicality generates sonic feedback.

In the same gallery, Provan presents **Measuring Device with Organs (Instrumental and A Cappella)**, an installation that hinges on a thirty five minute audio work adapted from an LP produced by the artist in 2018. The audio work narrates the experience of an “expert listener” undergoing a test meant to determine what sound should sound like. The work reflects Provan’s research into how standardization agencies rely on a particular demographic: a white, male, middle-aged audiophile. Presented as objective, the expert listener is actually a highly specific and idiosyncratic type that has come to arbitrate how and what people around the world hear.

For the installation, Provan divided the work into two tracks with two tonally distinct mixes (an instrumental and an a cappella version), which loop simultaneously on two different sets of Grado Prestige Series headphones. The audio primarily consists of sounds that are used in such tests by engineering and standardization organizations, which the artist procured and manipulated. Using the second-person singular, the narrative intimately involves the listener, who is prompted to wonder if she, as the expert listener, can recognize the faults and degree of fidelity in each sound. The visitor is prompted to move

between the two mixes to evaluate the relationship between her subjective experience and the objective qualities of the sounds. The test asks the listener to consider distortion, smearing, and other effects of inadequate components, compression, or mismatched speakers and receivers, which might be particularly salient in vocals or instrumentals, high or low frequencies, pop / classical or non-Western tonalities. The listener is led to question how the sensorium is incorporated into and conditioned by audio reproduction systems.

On the shelves and walls, Provan displays visual references that contribute to the characterization of the expert listener. These objects and ephemera are coming from the collection of the artist and include new artworks by Provan that employ imagery from advertisements for stereo components and other audiophile ephemera (e.g., a small framed portrait of Steve Hoffman, the legendary studio engineer); records, sheet music, and mementos that are mentioned in the work; and traditional ceramics and artifacts from around the world, which speak to the expert listener’s consumption of culture and enthusiasm for “fidelity.”

Measuring Device with Organs questions who listens for whom, to what end, and under what circumstances, and investigates how processes of audio standardization and a specific class of engineers assign values and technical parameters that define how we listen. If for O’Daniel sound is untrustworthy but also a gateway for creativity, and for Correale music can be used to improve our moods but also to distract us from the political context at hand, for Provan audio reproduction technologies condition not only how we listen to music but how we form memories. Together, the three artists investigate sound as a site of negotiation between artificial and existential factors and advocate for awareness within the auditory sphere. For these reasons, the works appear less antagonistic and more like a mutual attempt to make visible a process that concerns everyone.

— Eugenia Delfini

My warmest thanks to the artists, Danilo Correale, Alison O'Daniel, and Alexander Provan. A special thanks to my inspiring classmates, the faculty and staff at CCS Bard, whose openness to my research profoundly enriched the project.

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Moving at the Tempo of a Broken Song
Danilo Correale, Alison O'Daniel,
Alexander Provan

April 7 – May 26, 2019
Hessel Museum of Art
Center For Curatorial Studies
Bard College, NY

Museum Hours
Thursday – Sunday, 11 – 5pm
Free Admission

Moving at the Tempo of a Broken Song
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Brochure designed by Bo-Won Keum.