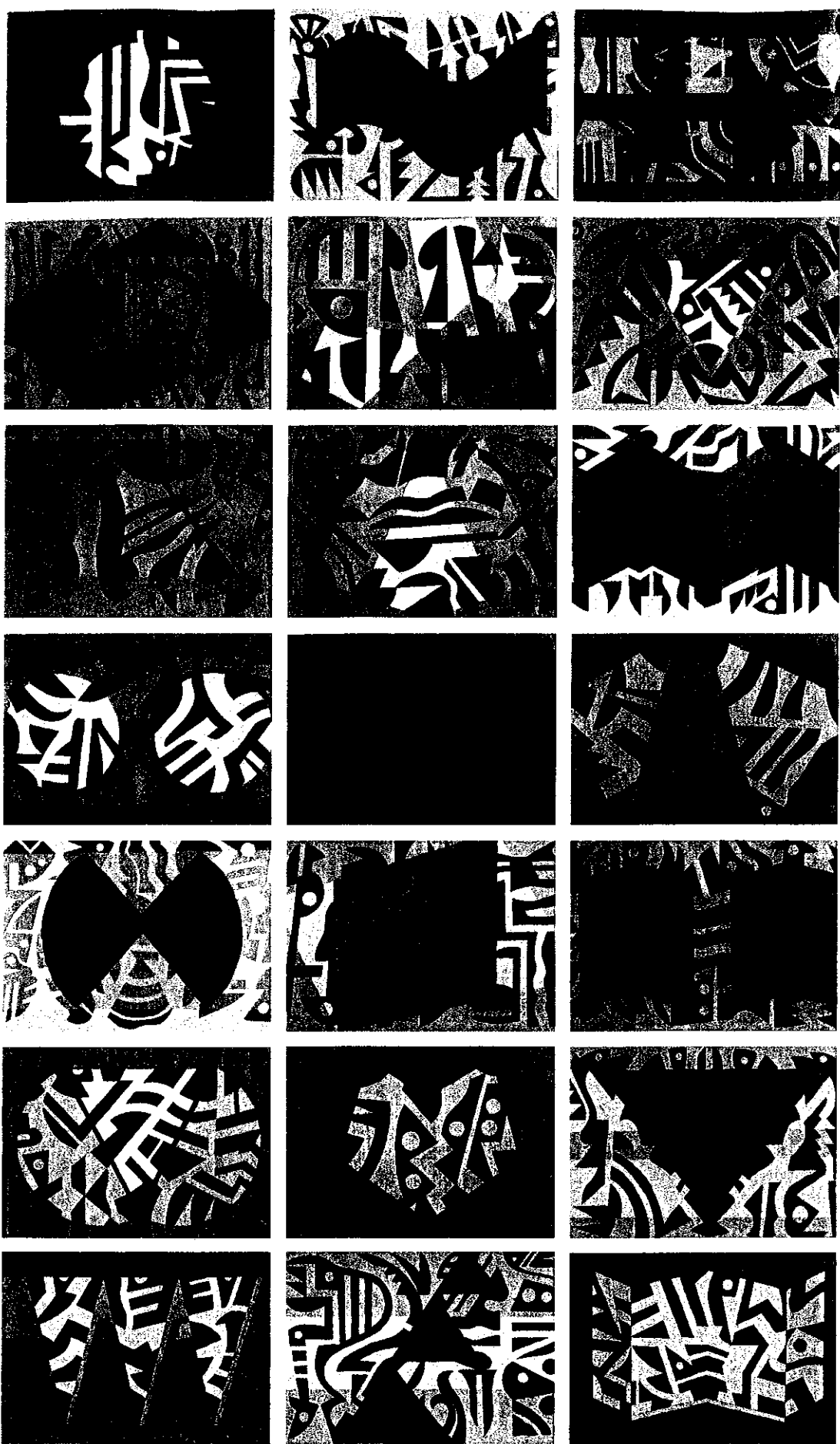


# METCALFE/LEWIS IKONS



**Burke Taylor**, Vice President, Culture & Celebrations / *Vice-président, Culture et célébrations*  
**Robert Kerr**, Program Director, Cultural Olympiad / *Directeur des programmes, Olympiade culturelle*  
**Marlene Madison**, Head of Visual Arts / *Chef du service des arts visuels*  
**Kristin Fung**, Production Assistant / *Adjointe à la production*  
**Katharine Carol**, Program Manager / *Gestionnaire de programme*  
**Anne McDougall**, Production Manager / *Directrice de production*  
**Derek Mack**, Technical Director / *Directeur technique*  
**Andi Mortenson**, Graphic Design, Epic Design / *Graphiste, Epic Design*

**George Lewis** / *George Lewis* / *George Lewis*  
**IKONS** / *IKONS* / *IKONS*

A companion to the interactive sculpture *IKONS* by Eric Metcalfe and George Lewis /  
 La musique à l'œuvre dans la sculpture interactive *IKONS* par Eric Metcalfe et George E. Lewis

Opening: 2010, January 27, 2010, 560 Seymour, Vancouver, Canada /  
 Première: 2010, le 27 janvier 2010, 560 rue Seymour, Vancouver, Canada

Performed by Turning Point Ensemble / *Jouer par Turning Point Ensemble*;  
 Jeremy Beckwith and Owen Underhill, co-Artistic Directors / *Directeurs artistiques*

Orchestra: Clarinet / *les flûtes*; Ingrid Chang, bassoons / *les bassons*;  
 Robert Brouillette, horn / *les cors*; Mary Sokol Brown, violin / *violin*;  
 Robert Berkman, trombone; Vern Griffiths, percussion / *percussions*;  
 David Brown, cello / *violoncelle*; David Brown, contrabass / *contrebasse*

Commissioned by Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad /  
 Mandaté par Olympiade culturelle 2010 à Vancouver

Special thanks to / *Sincères remerciements à*:  
 Western Front Society, Kristin Fung, and the / *et le*  
 Albert H. Case Chair in American Music, Columbia University, New York

Software realization / *programmation informatique*  
 Rick Ross, technical consultant / *conseiller technique*

Special thanks to Rick Ross, a longtime friend and collaborator on various  
 projects throughout the years, most recently in the application of *IKONS* /  
 Sincères remerciements à Rick Ross un ami et collaborateur de longue date,  
 récemment avec *IKONS*.

Thank you to the following people who worked on the *IKONS* project / *Merci aux*  
 personnes suivantes, my assistants / *mes assistants* Verena Kaminiarz, Arabella  
 Campbell, Mark Nakamura, Isabel Lange and / *et* Katie Lucy Lyte.

Thanks to / *Merci aussi à*: Wayne Arsenault, Judy Radul, Eli Bornowsky, Rachelle  
 Sawadsky, Karen Henry, Colin Griffiths, Daniel Phillips, and to / *et à* David MacWilliam  
 and / *et* Landon Mackenzie of / *de* Emily Carr University of Art + Design, and / *et* Allyson  
 Clay of / *de* Simon Fraser University for their support with volunteers / *pour leur support*  
 avec les volontaires Katie Chow, Corne Neyrinck, Kirk Gower, Erik Brinkman and / *et*  
 Suzanne Fulbrook.

Special thanks to / *Sincères remerciements à*:  
 Robert Kerr, Program Director and Marlene Madison, Head of Visual Arts,  
 Vancouver 2010 Cultural Olympiad for their support with this project. /  
 Robert Kerr, Directeur des programmes et à / *Marlene Madison*, Chef du  
 service des arts visuels, Olympiade culturelle 2010 à Vancouver pour  
 leur soutien à ce projet.

**Eric Metcalfe**

Suite Études, six suites of  
 eight études, 2008 / 2009  
 (select / *une sélection d'études*)  
 gouache, still paper /  
 gouache, still papier  
 30 cm x 20 cm /  
 30 cm x 20 cm

Collection of the artist /  
 Collection de l'artiste

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

**Eric Metcalfe**

Suite Études: six suites of eight  
 études, 2008 / 2009 (select  
 / *une sélection d'études*)  
 Collection of the artist /  
 Collection de l'artiste

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010

Medite composition board,  
 graphite, acrylic paint, 1x4  
 stemlock, ultrasound sensors,  
 embedded speakers, sampled  
 acoustic sounds, control interfaces,  
 interactive software /

Panneau de carton médite,  
 graphite, peinture acrylique,  
 capteurs d'ultrasons émis  
 par la poutre, cîquê (1 x 4),  
 hauts parleurs intégrés, sons  
 acoustiques échantillonnés,  
 interfaces à commande,  
 logiciel interactif

Collection of the artists /  
 Collection des artistes

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Chris Cameron

**Eric Metcalfe**

Triple Treat  
 from / *de* Suite Études: six suites  
 of eight études, 2008 / 2009  
 Private collection. Courtesy of  
 the artist / *Collection privée.*  
 Avec la permission de l'artiste

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Damon Holzborn,  
 Eric Metcalfe, Rick Ross

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 George E. Lewis

George E. Lewis, Eric Metcalfe

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Verena Kaminiarz

George E. Lewis, Santa Fe,  
 USA / *Etats-Unis*

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 George E. Lewis

**Rick Ross, Eric Metcalfe,  
 George E. Lewis**

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Damon Holzborn

Eric Metcalfe, study for *IKONS*  
 (maquette) / *étude pour IKONS*  
 (maquette)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe during the  
 production of *IKONS* /  
 Eric Metcalfe pendant  
 la réalisation de *IKONS*.

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Chris Cameron

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010 (details / *détails*)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Chris Cameron

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010 (details / *détails*)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010 (details / *détails*)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe

Suite Études: six suites of  
 eight études, 2008 / 2009  
 (installation view /  
 vue d'installation)

Collection of the artist /  
 Collection de l'artiste

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Chris Cameron

**Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis**

IKONS, 2010

Collection of the artists /  
 Collection des artistes

Photo / *Photographie* (installation  
 view / *vue d'installation*):  
 Chris Cameron

Eric Metcalfe / study for *IKONS*  
 (maquette) / *étude pour IKONS*  
 (maquette)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe: study for *IKONS*  
 (maquette) / *étude pour IKONS*  
 (maquette)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe: study for *IKONS*  
 (maquette) / *étude pour IKONS*  
 (maquette)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010 (details / *détails*)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010 (details / *détails*)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010 (details / *détails*)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe / George E. Lewis  
 IKONS, 2010

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

George E. Lewis

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 George E. Lewis

Rick Ross

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 George E. Lewis

Eric Metcalfe: Study for *IKONS* /  
 Étude pour *IKONS*.

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe: study for *IKONS*  
 (maquette) / *étude pour IKONS*  
 (maquette)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe: study for *IKONS*  
 (maquette) / *étude pour IKONS*  
 (maquette)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe: study for *IKONS*  
 (maquette) / *étude pour IKONS*  
 (maquette)

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Rick Ross

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Eric Metcalfe

Production image /  
 Image de production

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Production image /  
 Image de production

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Eric Metcalfe

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 George E. Lewis

Production image /  
 Image de production

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Verena Kaminiarz

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Eric Metcalfe

Arabella Campbell

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Verena Kaminiarz,  
 Isabel Lange

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Eric Metcalfe

Mark Nakamura

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 George E. Lewis

Isabel Lange

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Eric Metcalfe

Isabel Lange, Mark Nakamura,  
 Verena Kaminiarz

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Eric Metcalfe

Mark Nakamura, Eric Metcalfe,  
 Rick Ross, Arabella Campbell,  
 Verena Kaminiarz

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

Gallery 560 before exhibition  
 installation / *galerie 560 avant*  
 installation de l'exposition

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 George E. Lewis

IKONS installation /  
 l'installation de *IKONS*.

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Eric Metcalfe

IKONS installation /  
 l'installation de *IKONS*.

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

IKONS installation /  
 l'installation de *IKONS*.

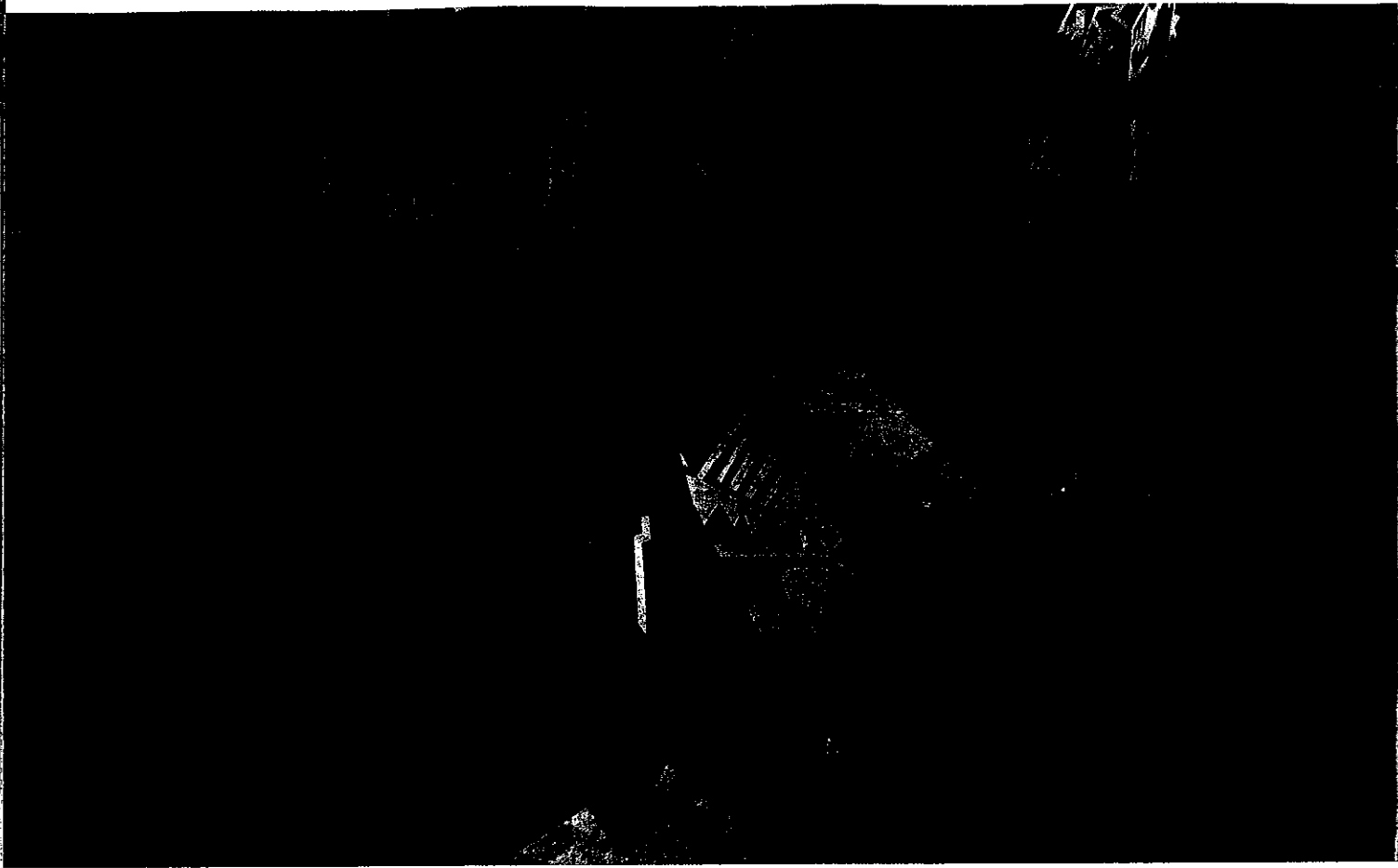
Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

IKONS installation /  
 l'installation de *IKONS*.

Photo / *Photographie*:  
 Marlene Madison

# GEORGE LEWIS

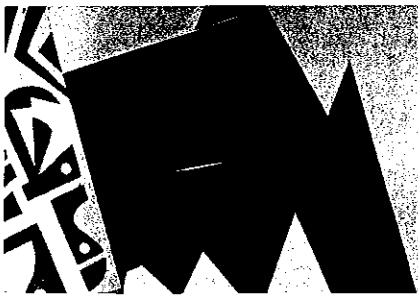
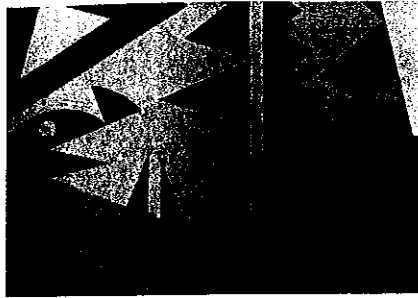
HOW RESPONSIVE: ON GEORGE LEWIS



If the world were quiet, it wouldn't be our world. The sound the twig makes when stepped on is a signal that your presence affects. There are forests and there are jungles. You see? That means nothing is simple. The second thing is regret. After the snap of the twig, the first note, the first word, the instantiation of presence — then, inhalation, sorry, start again. If backwards existed. Which it doesn't. Exactly. Within the possibility of action exists error. But. No! No redaction.<sup>1</sup> And. And this music engages not the subtractive, but the additive principle. The next note, and the next note, can shift the tonal center, but won't erase the line, the pattern, by which — continuously arriving. Regret arises at the moment of passing from potential to actual. Music is a machine for transforming regret at its root. The sun is shining.

<sup>1</sup> Guantanamo-era legalese for liminally existing information that has been desensitized or sanitized.

# AND IKONS



The sound for the installation IKONS, originated with a Lewis composition for Vancouver's Turning Point Chamber Ensemble, which was performed at the opening at 560 Seymour Street. A repository of digitally recorded sonic behaviours, derived from the composition itself, reappear as source material for the installation. The listener enters into a sonorous and unpredictable space. The fundamental differences between things and sounds are on display. The visitors (neither viewer nor listener, the visitor has always just arrived) naturally place themselves in relation to the upright, motionless, though rhythmically patterned, sculptures by Eric Metcalfe. In this way visitors also place themselves in relation to the sensors embedded within the sculptures. However, this positioning of oneself as a player on the chessboard of the installation is far more complex, if not an impossibility, in relation to Lewis' sound composition. Sculptures stand. They refer to you, as another standing, upright, being, ordered by a headfirst hierarchy. It's not at all sure that sounds, which move laterally and reflectively, address the same being. A sound source may have a distance, but the sound itself is always close, always penetrating, always in your head. The ability of visitors to pose themselves as causal agents by decoding their relation to the interactive system is of less interest to Lewis than activating the visitor's propensity for surprise — which could also be called his/her potential for listening — listening through the orchestra, to the music and back to the gathered. This reverberation asks that we ask, "Who are gathered here?" The answer will be continually differing and need to incorporate the human, sculptural and machinic elements in the space.

The interactivity or responsiveness of IKONS is, by Lewis's standards, not terribly complex; it is more about variation, unpredictability and the recombinant than the involved causality of works such as Voyager (1992). But as Lewis points out, through this sound you enter into proximity with other visitors: "In IKONS, sound provides the mycelium for sociality. The experiences of visitors in different parts of the space can be linked by sound, since the piece only makes sound in response to the computer's detection of proximity, which is posited as a kind of attention. In IKONS, you don't have to see people to know that they are there, and you can experience the sonic aspect of one part while experiencing the visual aspect of a different part."<sup>2</sup> Although these possibilities of human-to-human-through-computer interaction were not on Hannah Arendt's mind when she was writing *The Human Condition* in 1958, human plurality and togetherness were of great concern to her. She pursues a line of thought from Greek antiquity concerning the meaning of action: "This revelatory quality of speech and action comes to the fore where people are with others and neither for nor against them — that is, in sheer human togetherness. Although nobody knows whom he reveals when he discloses himself in deed or word, he must be willing to risk the disclosure..."<sup>3</sup> Lewis's work incorporates creative machines into the production of "togetherness." He writes:

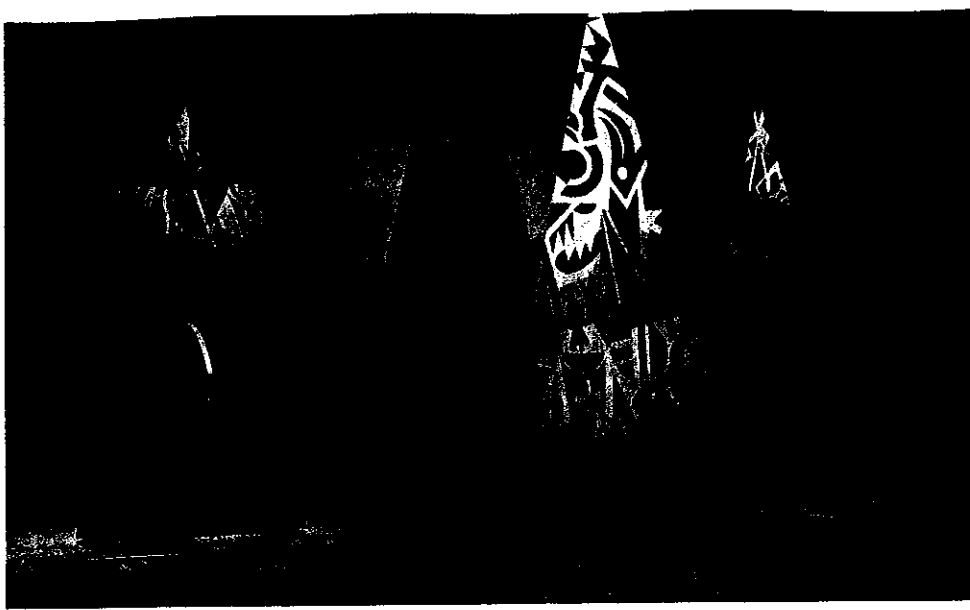
*... The creative music machine... in much contemporary practice embeds not a face-to-face animating metaphor but a dramaturgy founded, first, upon empathy in the relation between bodies and second, upon the creation of a community of differences and commonalities between one ear and another. Embedded in this altered conception of space is a theory of listening, hearing and interpretation that lies at the root of any design strategy for creative machines, because we can understand the experience of listening to music as very close to the experience of the improvisor. Listening itself, an improvisative act engaged in by everyone, announces a practice of active engagement with the world, where we sift interpret, store and forget, in parallel with action and fundamentally articulated with it.*

*New ethnographies of free improvisation will pose important questions about how order, agency and subjectivity are achieved, maintained and contested and how new models of 'the expert' might be produced that do not depend for proof of concept upon the simulation of received models of music making.<sup>4</sup>*

<sup>2</sup> In a letter to the author from George Lewis.

<sup>3</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition: A Study of the Central Dilemmas Facing Modern Man*, (New York, Doubleday, 1959), p. 150.

<sup>4</sup> George E. Lewis, "Mobilitas Animi: Improvising Technologies, Intending Chance" *Parallax*, Vol. 13, No. 4, 2007, p. 113.



"Composer, programmer, musician, artist George Lewis is a forethinker-player diverting and reallocating relations between improvisation, composition, computers, composers, players and participants."

The disclosure of my shifting presence as I walk through the IKONS installation is a concert that is an acting in concert of people gathered together. This interactive concert rephrases the viewer's question *What do I correspond to?* to the visitor's question *What do I correspond with?* I correspond with, by means of sound, the sound of music, and the music of sound. This powerful ability which music has to connect disparate elements requires that it continuously negotiate the risk of "uniting" — as in the military march and conventional film soundtracks — rather than producing questions about relations and correspondences. Composition and improvisation by creative machines have the potential to redistribute choice and disassemble received models of music against these conservative uses of musical power.

Composer, programmer, musician, artist George Lewis is a forethinker-player diverting and reallocating relations between improvisation, composition, computers, composers, players and participants. Lewis tests limits, continually keeping difference as well as strategic identities in play. Unreflective genuflections to — laudable yet limited — Europa-derived thought are challenged in word and deed by Lewis. His writings about music and improvisation, in works such as the recent *A Power Stronger Than Itself*, *The AACM and American Experimental Music*, are themselves sounds born from broader listening. The political nature of subjectivity, the life which brings its force to improvisation, is at issue for both Arendt and Lewis. Lewis quotes Charlie Parker as saying "Music is your own experience, your thoughts, your wisdom. If you don't live it, it won't come out of your horn."<sup>5</sup> Arendt's exclusive association of politics with action and speech is complicated by Lewis's music. Lewis explores the possibility that sound is action and music and computation destabilize speech as the determining carrier of meaning, adding music as the resonator of differing histories and politics.

Video projection is currently the preferred mode of visual accompaniment for musicians. The apparent immateriality of projection seems to sidestep the differences and incongruities between the perceptual apparatus which sound and vision call upon. This exhibition however, combining painting-sculpture and sound, stages these differences outright. Contemporary philosopher Jean-Luc Nancy has written a book called *Listening*, and though he warns against opposing the senses and insists on their interrelation, he proposes an affinity between the visual and evidence or meaning, he contrasts this to sound's evocation of a substratum of meaning, its support or resonance.

There is, at least potentially, more isomorphism between the visual and the conceptual, even if only by virtue of the fact that the morphe, the "form" implied in the idea of "isomorphism," is immediately thought or grasped on the visual plane. The sonorous, on the other hand, outweighs form. It does not dissolve it, but rather enlarges it: it gives it an amplitude, a density and a vibration or an undulation whose outline never does anything but approach. The visual persists until its disappearance; the sonorous appears and fades away into its permanence.

Nancy also finds in sound a dispensation toward participation: "The visual is tendentially mimetic, and the sonorous tendentially methexic (that is, having to do with participation, sharing, or contagion), which does not mean that these tendencies do not intersect..."<sup>6</sup> It seems that Nancy's ideas concerning the relation of sound and participation make common cause with those of Lewis, who can trace 35 years of musical participation and sharing.

<sup>5</sup> George E. Lewis, "Too Many Notes: Computers, Complexity and Culture in 'Voyager'", *Leonardo Music Journal*, Vol. 10, 2000, p. 37.  
<sup>6</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, trans Charlotte Mandell, *Listening* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 10.

One struggle in articulating the effects of causal relations in computational systems allowing for player/visitor input is to avoid what Lewis calls "pretensions to omniscience" by the visitor as well as weak insistences on the human-centeredness of every system. In discussing the early history of interactive computer music (and along the way, both critiquing its pan-European frame and establishing its anteriority to later new media practices) Lewis writes:

*[T]his new kind of live computer music blurred the boundaries between human and machine music-making and called into question received notions of human identity... the "structure" of the pieces was difficult to separate from the enabling technologies. Interactivity, contingency, and partial perspective promoted sharp questioning of the notion of hierarchical control of musical process.<sup>7</sup>*

Similarly, Nancy's philosophy recasts the subject, not as a visual entity or object, but as a listening agent, a place of reverberation and echo. He calls this the "resonant subject."<sup>7</sup> Through his emphasis on sound and listening, Nancy, like Lewis, is able to de-emphasize creation and "manifestation" — the production of something from nothing. Instead he associates listening and the resonant with "evocation."

*Music (or even sound in general) is not exactly a phenomenon; that is to say it does not stem from a logic of manifestation. It stems from a different logic, which would have to be called vocation, but in this precise sense: while manifestation brings presence to light, evocation summons (convokes, invokes) presence to itself. It does not establish it any more than it supposes it already established.<sup>8</sup>*

We resonate with something and something is something else. Some. Other. Thing. Something that started before us, that already exists. We join. We enter. We channel. This experience of entering in the middle but still playing a role seems to be what Lewis' sonorous interactive systems provide.

Twentieth-century music has explored the limits of the instrument, and consequently of instrumentality — the turning of something to our own ends. By continuously extending the animation of the instrument as object, composers and musicians ask us to listen to an ongoing story of the malleability of the world. The musician blows into the apparently lifeless thing and makes it unmute, crafts from it intelligible music. Through this ongoing encounter with the horn (or the string, or the drum) the world is infinitely less hostile. The image of the charmer is apt. However, the seduction is not only of the snake, but the charmer risks charming himself, incorporating into his being the refrain: I can tame! This illusion of control and self-control is precisely what Nancy finds listening to be the antidote for, and what Lewis uses creative machines and live algorithms to temper. Lewis animates Metcalfe's already totemic, chevy-with-fins-masquerading-identity-painting-sculpture-patterned-monads, but the between what and who of the encounter is purposefully shifting.

My destruction of this twig (in the forest in the first-paragraph jungle) was not intentional. But it brought attention to me. The hungry lion is very interested in me — but not for "myself." Ah, the world's indifference is hard to accept. You enter as an instrument among instruments, if an instrument is a composer. If an instrument is a composer and a composer is one such as yourself. You can't put it down. Your foot, just behind, your attention. Move forward. Stop. Find calm. Find interest. Move strings. Closer. Move Horn. Farther. Move. Woodwind. These leaves rustle. Which what who is wind? Now? Now? From over there. Attention and intention. Attention. I attended the concert. I heard you. There.

— JUDY RADUL

JUDY RADUL is a visual artist whose practice involves the consideration of the forms and conditions of video, language and performance. Radul currently and lives and works in Vancouver, B.C. She is represented by Catriona Jeffries Gallery, Vancouver, and teaches at Simon Fraser University, School for the Contemporary Arts.

<sup>7</sup> Nancy discusses a subject which is not conceived visually, one whose body is a "reverberation chamber" and whom he describes as a "resonant subject." This subject is not a "me" not given, or uncomplicatedly present to myself. "[L]istening is passing over to the register of presence to self, it being understood that the "self" is precisely nothing available... to which one can be "present," but precisely the resonance of a return [renvoi]. For this reason, listening — the opening stretched toward the register of the sonorous, then to its musical amplification and composition — can and must appear to us not as a metaphor for access to self, but as the reality of this access, a reality consequently indissociably "mine" and "other," "singular" and "plural" as much as it is "material" and "spiritual" and "signifying" and "a-signifying... presence in the sense of a present that is not a being (at least not in the intransitive, stable, consistent sense of the word), but rather a coming and a passing and extending and a penetrating." Jean-Luc Nancy, *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, *ibid.*, p. 20.