

SOUND

Radio Activity

On 19 September 2015 a new work by Grace Schwindt, entitled *Little Birds and a Demon – A Live Transmission*, was streamed to six venues in northern England and Scotland from an isolated lighthouse on the Shetland Islands. In one incarnation the performance was broadcast to The Mount in Fleetwood, a pavilion built on an extensive rabbit warren from which the streets of the town radiate. The audience there could look out to panoramic views of the north-west coastline, taking in the quiet beaches from which ferries no longer depart. This chosen site deepened the experience of the work, which draws parallels between the harshness of the natural coastal environment and the degradation visited upon it by the processes of capitalism.

Swindt's *Little Birds and a Demon* was one of several exhibitions and events that took place throughout the winter of 2015 using broadcast and performance to form temporary sites of participation and investigating the possibilities of sound to be both transitory and archivable. The daily footfall for artist-led spaces and smaller galleries is limited by a number of intersecting factors, including their capacity to both reach and be reached by potential audiences. However, through working within a structure of events or broadcasts rather than static temporary exhibitions, the work discussed here created different possibilities for engagement, either consciously and thoughtfully limiting participation or constructing the potential to reach unexpected audiences with the use of FM signals and online archives.

Taking place throughout the month of October at & Model Gallery in Leeds, **Project Radio**, developed by curator Marion Harrison and artist Sophie Mallet, experimented with the potential of artists' radio. & Model is an unfunded space curated by Derek Horton which sits parallel to Leeds Art Gallery and Library, where the British Art Show 6 had opened that month (Reviews AM391). The gallery looks out onto the street through a large shop window, and for the duration of the exhibition passers-by could glance in to see a functioning mixing desk situated in a neat plywood casing. There was also a similarly neat and basic bar and reading room installed in the back room of the gallery, which had been the site for 'Broadcast Bartender', a series organised by Toby Lloyd and Andrew Wilson, artists in residence at East Street Arts' 'Artist House 45'. Lloyd and Wilson are interested in the potential of the public house to transform a spectator into a participant through the

purchase of a drink, a conceit that they were able to enact and explore through Project Radio.

For organisers Harrison and Mallet it was important that there be a trigger accompanying the broadcasts which could serve as an invitation to the potential listener to participate. This could have been by viewing the mixing desk through the gallery window or, for those not local to the gallery, by accessing the Project Radio website which paired each archived broadcast with a written description or set of instructions and an image. Some broadcasts took the form of workshops and so could be accompanied by a piece of documentation, whereas others could tap into existing work by artists based abroad, such as *The Waterline Prophecy* by Luiza Crosman. For the gallery, Project Radio constituted a way to exist in parallel with the British Art Show but without staging a competing group exhibition. Instead, live and pre-recorded broadcasts took place every afternoon throughout October, with the gallery open for the public to intervene.

Harrison explained that the choice to broadcast via a website was in part a pragmatic response to the saturation of the FM airwaves in Leeds, whereas for **Radio Anti**, which delivered one of its intermittent broadcasts in Sheffield on 4 December, the use of an FM signal is integral to the production of site and community. Ross Jardine and Matthew de Kersaint Giraudeau, both based in London, have previously produced Radio Anti broadcasts in domestic settings local to them. However, their Sheffield broadcast, entitled *The Map is the Territory*, had been devised specifically for Bloc Projects. For this one-off event the audience was invited to encircle a nomadic tabletop mixing desk alongside the invited speakers and guest artists. In their introduction, Jardine and de Kersaint Giraudeau explained the impetus behind the theme and title of the event, speaking of mapping through broadcast, with the temporary site's boundaries generated by the limitations of their FM signal, which only reached one mile from Bloc Projects and was impeded by geographical and architectural features. Simultaneously broadcasting online, there was also the potential for a much larger audience than that reached by the FM signal or present at the event.

During *The Map is the Territory*, each of the speakers, some live and some pre-recorded, discussed extremes of place-making. An abbreviated improvisational Live Action Role Playing (LARP) activity demonstrated the potential power of an audience's collective imagination to conjure a new place into being. The presentations that followed dealt with the histories of existing housing projects, as with Jonathan Hoskins's project around De

Beauvoir Town in East London (Profile AM390), as well as temporary sites that loom large in the public imagination, such as Camp Bastion. Places derived plainly from imagination and shared fiction, such as hobbyists' micro-nations, were discussed by artist Collette Rayner, the playfulness of which was mirrored ominously in *Extrastatecraft*, Keller Easterling's pre-recorded talk on the formation of glittering economic cities within otherwise underdeveloped infrastructure.

Although delivered through speech and performance, the broadcasts from Radio Anti and Project Radio could be seen as constituting publications, by which research texts, interviews and artists' projects are disseminated. This concept of the event as publication, with spoken editorials and performed features, was consciously enacted in **Dancehall 11**, a short exhibition held at Castlefield Gallery, Manchester in November 2015. Produced by artists Hannah Ellul and Ben Knight, *Psykick Dancehall* is a journal of which the exhibition 'Dancehall 11' constitutes the latest instalment. Featuring live interventions that were resistant to documentation, and with interventions from *Hello* art magazine in collaboration with Louise Hobson, the performed and interactive elements of 'Dancehall 11' served to form the temporary space of the journal. Like the broadcasts discussed above, this exhibition engaged in place-making through speech, sound and performance, but in this case the project was confined to the gallery.

Unlike 'Dancehall 11', the Project Radio and Radio Anti broadcasts are available to listen to online, along with the Project Radio archive including Schwindt's *Little Birds and a Demon*, which had been streamed to & Model Gallery as well as Fleetwood. It had always been the intention of Project Radio's organisers that the archived broadcasts would be available for at least a year after the exhibition, further expanding the potential community of listeners. For galleries and project spaces like & Model, Bloc Projects and Castlefield Gallery, it is feasible to anticipate that for temporary exhibitions, and to a greater extent events, more viewers will find out about and experience the work shown through documentation after the fact than were present in person. This issue is dealt with deliberately in the work discussed here through the use of broadcast technologies to reach geographically and temporally distant audiences, or by emphasising the limitations of publishing within specific spaces through transient media and the exclusive structure of the event. ■

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