WRITING ABOUT HEARING VIDEO:
An experiment in archival research, exhibiting video art, and curatorial writing
By Lewis Kaye

with comments by Lisa Steele
and responses by Lewis Kaye
February, 2019
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V tape

V tape presents

Hearing Video

CURATED BY LEWIS KAYE

Works by Sarah Abbott, Kevin Lee Burton, Calla Durose-Moya, Vera Frenkel, Gordon Monahan, and Andrew James Paterson

March 5 - 24, 2018

Hearing Video is an experiment in archival research, exhibiting video art (the sign for the exhibition component appears above), and curatorial writing. What you're reading is the last of those three experiments. But as with any process-oriented work, that doesn't necessarily mean it's the final phase of the project. Should there be more to come in the future, and hopefully there will be, no doubt this essay will be adjusted to reflect that. Until then, I hope you enjoy it as it is.

Introduction: On the Idea of Writing as Conversing About Hearing as Seeing

Writing can sometimes be a challenge. It can feel very solitary, sort of like talking at someone who might not really be there. This isn't to deny its importance, as I certainly enjoy reading and therefore have no choice but to respect such textual assembly as a vital means of communicating and sharing ideas. Rather, this is a personal feeling borne of experience with, and a relationship to, a particularly abstracted, distanced, and theoretically supersaturated style of writing, that of "scholarly" writing. As a recovering academic, I've tried to move as far away from this approach as I can, with the result that when writing I feel an urge to be as excessively first-person as possible. This helps me get past the neutralized, third person perspective academia drills into scholars and art critics alike: we must make our writing "objective" so that its analytical component won't feel like personal opinion. But experience matters, perspective matters, and yes… *informed* opinion matters. And I believe this can and should be presented in a way that is both philosophically aware, analytically rigorous, open ended, and inclusive. In other words, I really want my writing to feel more dialogic, rather than monologic, in nature…

And this is why I prefer conversation to writing.

While writing might be thought of as a form of asynchronous conversation, I much prefer the active, synchronous, face to face, sonorous kind… having people in a room together, each enjoying the other's company, and speaking with each other from a place of mutual interest and respect. The energy and positivity of such encounters is physically audible to us: emotion and feeling can actually be heard. It is this love of **CONVERSATION** – its respectful and engaged practice, yes, but also its delightful sonority – that has deeply informed the project *Hearing Video* at almost every level. As this project developed through the stages of conceptualization, execution, and reflection, the idea of conversation became an ever more crucial conceptual lynchpin for *Hearing Video*.

The name of this project is *HEARING Video*, and the choice of this word was very intentional. If we were to engage the sonic component of video art in a manner similar to reading a more accurate word might be *listening*, and *LISTENING To Video* would have a markedly different conceptual and aesthetic sensibility than the one this project sought to explore. Indeed, this idea of *listening to video* would seem to inform dominant presentation modes – such as programmed screenings where individual works are presented in sequential order or exhibitions where the sound of each video is technologically isolated from the others through the use of headphones or hyper-directional speaker systems – which call upon us to *watch* (and perhaps to read?), rather than *see*, video art. And while I have no problem at all with these

presentation formats, I have always been curious as to how we might develop alternative, more dialogic curatorial strategies that treat video as an *audiovisual* art and bring the sound of multiple works into an encounter with each other. This is but one of the conversations this project sought to embody. I hope this essay is another.

What follows is the re-presentation of writing I did just after the conclusion of the exhibition (Part I, March & April and November & December, 2018), and during the project's conceptual and planning phases (Part II, May 2017 to March 2018). Part I is a reflection essay, summing up the ideas and thoughts that resonated and reverberated* throughout the process of organizing the exhibition and the exhibition itself. It's much more of a coherent work of writing than Part II, and perhaps can be read in a more traditional way. Part II, on the other hand, is the journal I kept during the planning and organization phases of the project. It's very much a diary of thoughts and actions, written in the moment knowing that this part of the process would produce a number of "aha!"-type experiences. Attending to such moments of realization and fascination is one of the great joys in life for me, inspiring me both intellectually and

creatively. These moments occurred throughout the life of *Hearing Video*, and even now, almost a year after the exhibition has closed, I still find myself having such moments when I reflect back on this or that feature of the project. The diary will be rearranged along the four broad dynamics of conversation I feel took place with the project, though the entries themselves will be minimally edited: *A Conversation Between Myself and The Organization; A Conversation Between Myself as Curator and the Artists; A Conversation Between The Artists and Their Works, and; A Conversation Between Myself and The Community/ Public*. These are by no means the only dynamics of conversation we might consider, but for now they seem to me to cover most of what transpired. Again, this project was only ever meant as a starting point for conversation, and there are already ways in which it has facilitated conversation beyond the works presented and the organization that has so generously provided me the resources to re-present them.

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* The use of the words *resonated* and *reverberated* here is consciously drawn from Gaston Bachelard's *The Poetics of Space*, (1969, M. Jolas [trans.], Boston: Beacon Press): "In the resonance we hear the poem, in the reverberations we speak it, it is our own." (p.xviii).

PART I — Reflections on Our Conversations

On the Idea of Research/Curation

And what is it that I'm writing? Apparently I need to deliver a "curatorial essay" as part of the fulfillment of my duties as Vtape's researcher/ curator-in-residence. So I guess this is what this is. But since I don't really know what a "curatorial essay" is, having never written one, this probably won't resemble one. And apparently curatorial essays are generally written *before* an exhibition takes place, providing the conceptual framework for the ideas the curator seeks to manifest in their exhibition. However, this is definitely not the case here because while I certainly had a number of questions that informed the exhibition project, it was impossible for me to write effectively about them because the exhibition itself formed the crucial test bed through which these questions would be explored. In a very real sense, then, the exhibition wasn't so much an embodiment of a pre-formed set of curatorial ideas as it was an experiment. Perhaps it was a meaningful example of research-creation as described and practiced by artist/researchers like Kim Sawchuk, Owen Chapman and Mélanie Hogan[2]? Perhaps it could be a variant of this practice we might identify as *research-curation?*

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* see O. Chapman & K. Sawchuk (2012) "Research-Creation: Intervention, analysis and 'family resemblances'". *Canadian Journal of Communication*, vol. 37, pp.5-26, and Hogan, M. (2012) *Crashing the Archive: A Research-Creation Intervention into the SAW Video Mediatheque*. PhD thesis, Concordia University.

A cursory online search of the term reveals that this term does exist. However, many of the

examples of "research curation" appear to be a rather straightforward application of the phrase "research curation" as the curation OF research. This, to me, is not terribly interesting and suggests a process that seems not far removed from making a bibliography. This is most definitely not what *Hearing Video* was all about. This exhibition was about curation **AS** research.

So what does this mean, **research-curation** or **curation AS research**? For this specific project, I can say that the goal was to establish a set of initial conditions of presentation and then see how these would develop over time. The exhibition itself, for example, was never conceived of as a finished project but rather one whose configuration would shift over time. Indeed, attending to how and why such shifts would occur was part of the observational approach I would take throughout the exhibition. So… some questions:

• How did the exhibition change over time?
• What were some changes I anticipated that did not happen?
• What were some initial conditions of presentation I did not anticipate?
• How did audience responses influence the transformations?

Let's see if we can address these as the writing continues…

On the Idea of a Living Archive

One of the formative goals of this project was to develop a working relationship with Vtape's archive. When I first spoke with Lisa Steele, Vtape's Artistic Director, about my ideas for the project (and I'm sure I'm repeating something I've already written, but given the passage of time it's probably not a bad idea to rewrite this), what sparked her interest was Vtape's goal of developing new strategies of engagement for their archive. (Lisa Steele: I would like to introduce a note here from me saying: The materials that we have at Vtape are only, in part, an archive. The actual titles (in the form of physical videotapes, DVDs and most recently digital files) are the holdings of the organization, materials that we hold in trust for the artists we represent. These holdings are governed by a contract between the artist and Vtape, allowing us to represent the work to potential users and audiences who may want to view it, purchase it or rent it. The archival part of Vtape is just recently available for public use: this is the accumulation of historical records – mostly in print form – relating to our activities as an artist run centre, a distributor and an exhibitor of artists' materials, since 1983 until the present.)

This, of course, begs the question of what precisely *IS* their archive (and by extension, the more general question of what is an archive). My approach going in to the project was to consider the archive in an expansive a way as possible. (Lewis Kaye: Lisa's distinction between "holdings" and "archive" is well taken. Perhaps we might say, then, that the archive in question here *encompasses* the holdings, as well as the texts, historical records, technologies, etc.? And yet… this might *still* not be expansive enough.) A phrase I use to encapsulate this idea is **the archive as a network and community**. This concept was developed specifically to help us think about media arts archives. The original formulation came about in the wake of my participation in the *Writing Audio Art* research residency at OBORO in Montreal in 2012 (see Lewis Kaye, "Reanimating Audio Art: The Archive as Network and Community", *esse arts + opinions* No 78, Spring/Summer 2013). This notion foregrounds both the technical *and* human apparatuses that are required to give life to archived media works.

The media archive is not – it cannot be – simply a repository of things, for the "things" that reside in it require an extensive technical apparatus to be made accessible to human experience. This apparatus itself necessarily encompasses the human knowledge and activity required for its maintenance and activation.

To me, this understanding of an archive is practically self-evident. But there are some fascinating implications that extend from it:

- What are the experiential implications of the technical choices made for the presentation of archived media artwork?
- How do contingent human factors influence both the selection and presentation of archived media artwork?
- How, as a curator, can I foreground these questions through the choices I will necessarily have to make?

On the Media Archive as a Technical Apparatus

"The mediality of the archive is based on the concreteness of its technical materiality—the apparatus of data storage (paper, film, computers) that for the most part remain constitutively concealed as concrete carriers of the signal of their cultural decoding: the archival carrier detached from the viewer's gaze (Groys). At the same time, it is an irreducible element both in play and at work in the archive as lieu de mémoire: the control signs belong not to the content of the archive but rather to an administration that is radically grounded in the present and so constitute an archive in Foucault's terms—as dispositif, which Groys succinctly terms *submedial carrier-space* (emph. added)."

- Wolfgang Ernst, "The Archive as 'Submedial Space'", pp.11-12
in *Stirrings in the Archives: Order from Disorder*,
A. Siegel, trans., Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield (2015)

The presentation of archived video artwork necessarily requires a number of technical decisions to be made. Working backwards, we can start with the consideration of the technologies that were used to present the work in the exhibition itself. Roughly speaking, there were five technical elements we needed to consider:

1. the visual presentation technology
2. the audio presentation technology
3. the connective technology
4. the installation support technology
5. the architectural/infrastructural technology of the gallery space itself

The *visual presentation technology* consisted of the screens and media players. The screens consisted of two 15" and one 13" flat panel LCD monitors owned by Vtape and three Sony CRT monitors we rented from Trinity Square Video. That we would rent monitors from TSV is itself emblematic of the way Vtape's archive extends outwards in a way that engages other like-minded and proximate organizations. Vtape and TSV, both located at 401Richmond, have a long history of working together. They have overlapping memberships, complimentary mandates, similar operational philosophies, and intertwined organizational histories. It only seems fitting that an organization (TSV) that has helped artists produce video work for many years, and with much of that work ending up in Vtape's

holdings, would also contribute to the very presentation of that work. This, I would suggest, is emblematic of the idea of an archive as both network and community.

These objects were the most "age appropriate" technologies used in the exhibition, meaning that the projection technologies most closely matched the original conditions of presentation available when each archived video artwork was initially produced. Two of the CRT monitors were used for Vera Frenkel's and Gordon Monahan's works and the LCD monitors were used for the more recently created pieces by Sarah Abbott, Kevin Lee Burton and Andrew Paterson.

The choice of media players, however, could not conform to this notion of "age appropriate" technology. The two older works, Gordon's and Vera's, were produced in the era of videotape, and videotape is spectacularly ill suited for ongoing exhibition presentation. On one hand, the constant playback and rewinding of the tape would physical degrade the archived copy and would thus necessitate using a duplicated – and this slightly degraded – copy for exhibition purposes. More significantly, however, would be the fact that this constant playback and rewinding would put substantial mechanical wear and tear on the videotape machine used for playback. This might not have been too significant an issue back in the 1980s or 1990s, as such machines were still being manufactured, replacement parts were still relatively available,

and the technical knowledge to get such machines repaired was still current. But this still WOULD HAVE been an issue. Today, this issue is far more acute as the availability of the technology is far reduced. The machines themselves, and their constituent parts, are much harder to come by. This is especially true for the professional videotape machines, such as the ¾" U-matic tape players. I recall suggesting to Kim Tomczack, Vtape's Restoration and Collections Management Director, early on that it would be really cool to use these machines in the exhibition, and his response was to shake his head and chuckle. "No way," he said. "These machines, and these tapes, are irreplaceable." To use them, in other words, is to degrade them.

As such, the decision was made by myself and Kim to use DVD copies of each. This decision had several implications for the ultimate look and sound of the exhibition. First, a DVD image just *looks* different than analog video. Second, the machines themselves sound very different when operating, and this operational sound necessarily becomes part of the exhibition itself. Thirdly, the auto-repeat function on a DVD operates much faster than that of an analog tape machine, and thus the silences between the end and the start of the individual videos become much shorter. This in turn contributes to a vastly different overall soundscape than if we were to use analog tape machines. ***Technical exigency thus deeply informed the aesthetic experience of the exhibition.***

Starting up the installation every day required a set of instructions that responded to the way in which each DVD copy was authored. Two of the videos, Gordon's and Sarah's, made use of DVD copies that were authored specifically for this exhibition. Both were being played back on professional Pioneer DVD players that did not have readily available autorepeat functionality, and thus both discs had to have repeat instructions authored into the DVDs themselves.

In fact, it took several attempts to author a DVD for Sarah that worked correctly! Ironically, the consumer-grade DVD players used for Andrew, Vera and Kevin Lee's discs were easily set to autorepeat and thus we were able to use the DVD copies already on hand in the Vtape holdings. *This begs the question of what actually happened to the discs of Gordon and Sarah's work after the exhibition closed. Were they catalogued and added to Vtape's physical holdings? Were they destroyed? Are they just sitting in a pile somewhere, unlabeled and unknown?*

The *audio presentation technology* used for the exhibition was also sourced (for the most part) from the Vtape archive. Again, though, I use the term "archive" here in the loose sense of *network and community*. In essence, only two of the speaker systems used came from the equipment stores of Vtape. The rest were either borrowed or purchased specifically for the exhibition:

- Andy – active monitors on the shelves at Vtape
- Sarah – active monitors taken off Lisa's desk in the tech room
- Gordon – active monitors brought from Lisa and Kim's home studio
- Vera – small Realistic amp and passive speakers brought from/used in Lisa and Kim's home
- Kevin Lee – speakers purchased sourced and purchased by me from Moog Audio and added to Vtape's equipment stores
- Calla – used the Yamaha PA system owned by Vtape and an old Hi8 camcorder she provided herself

The aesthetic implications of the technical decisions made about how to use the available audio technology – here meaning how these decisions contributed to the overall sound of the exhibition – were quite significant.

The baseline volume of the exhibition was set by Gordon Monahan's piece. For his video I chose the KRK Rocket monitors brought by Lisa and Kim from their home studio. These powered monitors generally require a preamp, which we did not have, as they have only limited volume controls. The audio outputs from the DVD player were connected directly to the monitors and then the volume level on these monitors was set to the lowest possible setting. Even at this setting the audio from Gordon's video was rather loud, although not overwhelmingly so.

I guess the important question here is *why* I chose these monitors for this work. I'm finding the answer, though, to be slightly more challenging to articulate than the decision was to make. My idea for how to use Gordon's sound was to place the two monitors in the back corners of the room in order for the sound to serve as a sort of ambient bed for the exhibition. Therefore, I figured these monitors, given they were the highest quality to be used in the exhibition, would work best in this role. In the end, it's a decision I was very happy with.

Perhaps the next fascinating aesthetic implication deriving from a choice made about which monitors to use with which video was with Vera's work. The amplifier and speaker combo used lent to Vera's audio a very rich low end, something that worked exceptionally well with Vera's voice and which contrasted well with the rapid digital editing used to process the voices in Kevin Lee's video into the linguistic soundscape that grounds his work. Kevin Lee's work, in turn, used the new speakers purchased at Moog Audio (essentially a decent, yet relatively inexpensive, pair of desktop computer speakers). At one point early in the exhibition, I actually swapped the speakers used for these two works but felt that the initial configuration sounded much better.

Perhaps the most striking aesthetic implication arising from the use of the available sound technologies related to Calla's work. But this shall wait (until pp.13-14)…

The *connective technology* consisted of the myriad audio, video and AC power cabling needed to make the exhibition operate. Often this technology is hidden from view, taped down or hidden behind walls or in conduits and cable channels. Yet this technology is an absolutely necessary part of any media archive, and thus leaving it visible is an important statement regarding the absolute necessity of this technology. Its visibility demonstrates the actual physical connections required to make media art possible.

The *installation support technology* will be considered soon.

On the Choice of the Individual Works Themselves

While the combination of the works, and the way they integrated so well with each other, surpassed my expectations, the foundation of the exhibition is of course the individual works themselves.

From left to right, with my original listening notes copied from my project journal

On table

Kevin Lee Burton, "Nikamowin (Song)" (2007, BetacamSP)
May 29, 2017 - This video first grabbed my attention visually, in that I noticed it in the stacks almost immediately due to the numerous copies and formats it is stored in. In fact, it is a photograph of Vtape's holdings of this video that is the image being used on the Vtape website to promote this research project.

My listening notes: "Lovely use of language and manipulated Cree. This would work very well with Vera's piece"

It is perhaps the most serendipitous event so far that this video would be so ideal for this project. I truly hope Kevin wants it to be here.

(for a sense of the "serendipitous event" that led me to view this video first, please see the first journal entry, and photo, under Part II.)

Vera Frenkel, "This Is Your Messiah Speaking" (1990, QuickTime Movie file)
May 29, 2017 - My listening notes: "Lovely audio. There are words, sounds, altered words. The video also has text and ASL interpretation".

I must admit I entered this project with the idea that I would use one of Vera's works. Being quite familiar with her work, having provided sound, audio and technical consultation for several of her recent projects, I have a deep respect for her approach to the relationship between sound and image. Yet had I not known her, I still would want "This Is Your Messiah Speaking" in this project. The audio straddles the line between something to listen to and something to hear, and the ASL component of the video raised for me for the first time the question of accessibility.

Andrew James Paterson, "The Enigma of S.A.P." (2008, BetacamSP)
June 19, 2017 – This video was selected on Andy's recommendation. This is another of Andy's formalist colour-field videos with a scripted dialog of various voices mixed with some crowd sounds. The dialog is discussing the ideas behind what an exhibition is and how it gets to be what it is. This would make an interesting counterpoint to Vera's work were it to be installed at the other end of the gallery. This might well be a fascinating video to have at the threshold of the entrance.

Gordon Monahan, "Speaker Swinging" (1987, HiFi VHS), presentation DVD copy with remastered audio (2017)
May 29, 2017 – While I was familiar with this work as a sound performance/installation, I was unaware that there was a dedicated performance video made so long ago. This is a beautiful video with compelling foregrounded sonic features. Conceptually, the video works perfectly with this project. It's also rather serendipitous that the very first video I preview would be so perfect.

This one is a keeper (pending Gordon's consent, of course).

Sarah Abbott. "Looking Back To See"
July 10, 2017 – My interest in this piece comes from the description as well, which suggests that this work might provide a similar experience to Leslie Peters and Dara Gellman's video. (LS: Do you discuss this video later? LK: Yes, on pg. 36… Their videos were on my tentative list to preview, but alas not every one could be accommodated.) We shall see…

This is a very interesting audiovisual work. The sound is an interesting stereo ambient mix of traffic sounds, bells, carriage thumps, documentary recordings, and voices, with a brief narration near the beginning. The narration is kept rather low in the mix, which makes gives it a very interesting character. The second narration addresses the possible value of such documentary recordings for communicating culture.

The video portion is itself very ambient and could be a very interesting component.

*** VERY POSSIBLE ***

An important note: It was at Chris Gehman's suggestion that I check out Sarah's work. An inspired suggestion it was, too. (Chris is the Vtape Finance Manager.)

On cart
Calla Durose-Moya, "Scene of the Screen" (2016–2018)
July 10, 2017 – I just had a very productive chat with Calla, one of the students working for Vtape this summer.

Continued July 17
Calla has an artwork that might work very well with what I'm trying to do here. Hers is a Nam June Paik-inspired installation piece that transforms the visual input from a video camera into sound delivered through a TV monitor.

Its interest to me stems from the way it works as a sort of metacommentary on the relationship between sound and image in the Vtape archives. If positioned carefully, the video input for Calla's piece will literally be the video output of the works being used in the exhibition. As well, there is a fascinating question of how this piece helps generate a sort of intergenerational dialogue. Given the fact the exhibition component of *Hearing Video* draws from the Vtape holdings/archive, and my specific interest in formats and format translation & remediation, there is a tendency to favour older works and hence older,

established artists. But if the dialogue I hope to generate is to be truly inclusive, the voices of young and emerging artists need to be part of it. The overarching metacommentary Calla's piece might generate might be a fascinating way to do this…

On the Visual and Aural Arrangement of the Works, i.e. The Installation Support Technology

Arguably, the single most crucial factor in the visual presentation of the work was dependent on a completely contingent factor: *finding the table to place the monitors on.*

The original presentation plan had the different monitors placed on various plinths that might be available from Vtape, The Commons in general, or other artist-run organizations in 401Richmond. Having worked in the building many years ago, I know the many organizations that inhabit the building have a strong culture of sharing resources, so I knew that scaring up plinths or other display furniture that weren't being used wouldn't have been a problem. One of the first stops we made was Gallery 44, who graciously offered several plinths for use. The staffer who showed these to me then suggested a long table they had in storage might also be useful. The table, which she called "Suzy Lake's Table", had apparently been specially built for an exhibition of Suzy's work.

(But was this really "Suzy Lake's Table"? According to Suzy's CV, her last solo exhibition at Gallery 44 was in 2004. So I called up Gallery 44 to ask about this, and spoke to Fraser McCallum, their Head of Membership and Facilities. Here are his email replies to my query:

"Hi Lewis,

I'm just sending a quick note along that I haven't forgotten about your question! It's been passed along through G44's history, first from current staff to two past executive directors. We think so far that it was used to show Suzy Lake's Specimen Box pieces (the broader project title is Fascia) in a show called Thick-Skinned in 2000. I'm hoping to look through some installation photos from our exhibition archive early next week to confirm.
I'll get back to you next week!

Best,
Fraser"

and, the second email:

"Hi Lewis,

Nice to meet you on Saturday!
I had a look through the exhibition archive today —
I wasn't able to find any installation views of the exhibition, unfortunately. I do have the exhibition

booklet, which you're welcome to look at, though it of course doesn't have installation views either. These may exist somewhere else in the archive, but nothing I've found so far jumps out at me.
Sorry I don't have a definitive answer, but I hope this helps!

Best,
Fraser"

Alas, there seems to be no definitive answer about the table. But the process of looking into this reveals another fascinating example about how archives are always embedded within living, active communities. It also revealed to me how fun it can be bringing another interested member of the community down this sort of rabbit hole with me!)

While the attention I'm giving to this table might seem a tad obsessive, its discovery and use completely transformed the visual presence of the exhibition. It allowed for the screens of the five works drawn from the Vtape holdings to be presented together, positioned within a unified field of vision that echoed the strategy of sonic presentation. Placing the five screens side by side on the table meant that no single video could be watched on its own, just as none of them could be individually listened to. **In essence, this completely contingent element helped unify the exhibition conceptually and visually, and became an indispensable part of whatever it is that *Hearing Video* became.** This, to me, is as endlessly fascinating

as it is conceptually relevant. It helps extend the idea of the ***living archive*** to include the mutually supportive networks and relationships amongst organizations that help ground the artist-run ecosystem in general, and at 401 Richmond specifically.

Contingency factored into the sonic character of the exhibition in several ways as well. First, the arrangement of the speakers followed a nominal plan that I had imagined during the installation period:

- the KRK monitors were used for Gordon's piece and placed in the back corner of the room
- the small powered monitors for Kevin Lee's piece were placed along the left wall, with the right channel towards the rear of the room
- the monitors for Sarah's piece were placed along the right wall, with the left channel towards the back of the room
- the speakers for Vera and Andrew's pieces were placed under the table
- Calla's piece, and the PA monitors it used were set up along the right wall as well

When first activated, the overall soundscape of all the pieces heard together far exceeded my expectations. To put not so fine a point on it, I was thrilled with the outcome. What surprised me, though, is how attached I became to the layout that contributed to this. This led me to alter the original plan for the exhibition, which involved the continuous rearrangement of the speakers and sound sources. In fact, with the exception of one

afternoon where I switched out Kevin Lee and Vera's audio, which I soon changed back, the audio setup stayed consistent throughout the exhibition.

Lastly, and perhaps most crucially, were the contingencies associated with the installation of Calla's work. What attracted me to Calla's work was the way it transformed the visuality of a space into sound using older video technologies like a Hi8 camcorder and CRT television. Aside from this being a lovely metaphor for the exhibition as a whole, there was the added idea of having an emerging artist's work reflecting on that of the established artists' archived work being used in the exhibition. For me, this was an elegant and wholly symmetrical rationale for inclusion.

Yet the work that was eventually exhibited was in fact substantially different from that installation as initially designed. This was due to several contingent technological factors, but more importantly Calla's flexibility in terms of reimagining the work in the face of these. The first contingent technical factor was the CRT monitor we rented from TSV for the exhibition. Calla's piece as originally designed used a guitar pickup, placed on the side of an old TV, to turn the fluctuating magnetic field of the CRT's projection tube into audio. It's in this way the installation turns the visual presence of a space – in the case of *Hearing Video* this meant both the videos themselves and the

visitors' visual interactions with the videos – into sound. Yet when we tried this with the Sony CRT monitors the pickup failed to register any changes in the magnetic field of the TV tube, likely because the Sony is a properly shielded professional monitor and not a cheap consumer TV set. As such, we were forced to rethink the entire installation.

We then hit upon the idea of using the Hi8 camcorder's microphone to feed the collective sound of the space back into itself, essentially creating a feedback loop which we would have to control very carefully. This was made a lot easier by the second important technical contingency: the fact Vtape's PA system had a built-in feedback inhibition circuit. This system effectively acted as a limiter that always kept the feedback under control.

Taken together, Calla's piece was transformed from a work that used the visuality of a space to create sound to a piece that used the aurality of the space to create sound. This aurality included both the sounds of the videos themselves, the sounds of the visitors, *and* the way in which the visitors' movements throughout the gallery modulated the sound of the videos themselves. **Calla's piece thus became, in a very real sense, a work that united all the elements of the project – the archived videos, the technological apparatus of presentation, the visitors to the exhibition, and the gallery space itself – into a shared and collective sound aurality:** *in other words, the sound of a living archive.*

PART II — An Interconnected Set of Conversations

A Conversation Between Myself and The Organization

– Working with people, technology, and all the relationships that bind them.
– Working with *The Archive*

MONDAY, MAY 8, 2017

Where to begin?

This is no doubt the first question for this project, and a very reasonable question at that given the experimental and exploratory nature of this archival research project.

However, perhaps the proper question isn't WHERE to begin, but rather HOW to begin?

The idea of "delving into the archive" isn't as straightforward as one might assume. Part of the problem, perhaps, is that the very idea of "the archive" is itself coloured by the unspoken assumptions of what an archive is: a repository of documents or things that are assumed to have some sort of historical value, and where the documents or things have value in and of themselves because the information that is encoded upon their material substrate is ***directly accessible*** to those who encounter it. This could mean the artefact itself that tells the tale or more likely the text it contains that does the talking. But this idea, as I am fond of telling my students about Wikipedia or other such repositories, is a good enough place to start but actually a lousy place to finish. That *material substrate* itself, and how it fundamentally mediates our encounter with the information inscribed onto it. This is what Wolfgang Ernst calls the submedia space, and it is the researcher's role to "open source" this (an idea he attributes To Boris Groys) and offer what he calls "a new art of the archive":

A digital archiving of media art that aims to do the media justice and engender a new "art of the archive" will lay bare the algorithms—the arché— of the archive. Boris Groys calls this level the submedia space behind the archive's surface, because as media carriers the media apparatuses are as good as inaccessible to the viewer—open source. The concept of media art is particularly meaningful when, technologically and aesthetically, it makes the most of its various media qualities, hence of its archival opportunities. The background here is the common origin of media theory and media-conscious art theory.

– Wolfgang Ernst, p.89 in *Digital Memory and the Archive*, J. Parikka ed., Minneapolis: Univ. of Minnesota Press (2013)

The General Idea (so to speak… a random heading that suggests a possible connection… does this mean their work should be included? Maybe? We shall see…)

The archive we are concerned with here is a media art archive: the Vtape holdings. And while the most obvious part of their archive consists of their video *holdings*, this project isn't simply concerned with the content of the video but of the technological and human networks that are required to animate these holdings. In this way this archival research project, and the research methodology the project hopes to play with, is concerned not simply with the holdings but with the organization itself, and how the organization is both a hub of technology as well as community.

A random catalog search…

As part of my orientation for the project, Lisa Steele gave me a quick tour of Vtape's Critical Writing Index. To do this, I selected a random keyword to search on: AUDIO. This produced a large number of hits. Needing to select one for demonstration purposes, somehow we stumbled upon the entry for Kevin Lee Burton's 2007 video "Nikamowin (Song)". How we got to that point I honestly cannot recall, but I do know it was the phrase "linguistic soundscape" (found in the description) that attracted me to this entry. When I looked for the video on the shelves, both Lisa and I were amazed by how many different formats it was found in.

The sheer variety of formats is itself an important "discovery". (It's not a *discovery* per se, but rather an aspect of the work's archival status that was revealed to me.) A key question the project will inevitably engage with concerns the format of the archival copy, and thus comes the question "which of these copies would be the one that is

exhibited?" This question ties in with another random observation made today…

A random technical observation…

My initial impulse regarding the upcoming exhibition was to make the media technology used to animate the archived work a visible part of the show. There is something quite cool about having ¾" U-Matic video machines visible to the public! But after a brief inspection of the equipment Vtape has available, it rapidly dawned on me that using this sort of machine for an exhibition presents some very specific challenges. The idea that all playback machines could be put on auto-repeat so that the soundscape would

be ever-present is certainly attractive at a conceptual level, but is completely unrealistic from a technical perspective. For one thing, it would put a lot of stress on the ¾" videotape. Even more important is the fact such constant use would put substantial wear and tear on the videotape machines themselves, machines that are in fact rather rare today.

While this represents a substantial challenge to my original vision for the exhibition, it opens many possibilities for configuration that I had not initially considered. For instance, the configurability of the exhibition – which was never intended to be an unbounded process but rather one that is moderated and supervised – can be designed to include specific workshops or events where the equipment (and its associated audiovisual content) becomes a temporary part of the exhibition soundscape.

THURSDAY, MAY 11, 2017
What is an archive?

"Archivists, look out: not everything that is called an archive is actually an archive."

- Wolfgang Ernst,"'A New Archivist': Foucault", pg. 7 in
Stirrings in the Archives: Order from Disorder, A. Siegel, trans., Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield (2015)

- archive as discourse
- archive as repository
- archive as "that which can be said"
  (Foucault, Groys)

"The mediality of the archive is based on the concreteness of its technical materiality—the apparatus of data storage (paper, film, computers) that for the most part remain constitutively concealed as concrete carriers of the signal of their cultural decoding: the archival carrier detached from the viewer's gaze (Groys). At the same time, it is an irreducible element both in play and at work in the archive as lieu de mémoire: the control signs belong not to the content of the archive but rather to an administration that is radically grounded in the present and so constitute an archive in Foucault's terms—as dispositif, which Groys succinctly terms *submedial carrier-space* (emph. added)."

- Wolfgang Ernst,"The Archive as 'Submedial Space'", pp. 11-12 in
Stirrings in the Archives: Order from Disorder, A. Siegel, trans., Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield (2015)

Part of the goal of this project is to make visible (and audible) the "submedial space" of the Vtape archive. This includes both the "technical materiality" of Vtape's holdings and its administration. This latter element brings the entire organizational structure and history into the fold, and forms the basis of the idea of "archive as community" that this project seeks to explore.

MONDAY, MAY 29, 2017
Notes written between May 29 and June 12

As I searched the shelves for videos I'd selected

from the online index, several videos "jumped out" at me from the shelves. It was the physical condition of two videos by E.J. Northey in particular that caught my attention. Both were in old U-Matic cases with yellowed, typewritten labels I found attractive and had titles ("Marconi: Amplified" and "Dr. Robert on Telecommunications") I thought might be relevant. But it was a set of larger labels that really made my eyes go wide:

"ONLY COPY" and "DO NOT DISTRIBUTE CRITICAL CONDITION" How could I resist these? I showed them both to Kim, and he decided to digitize them on the spot.

While this might seem like a rather mundane interaction, this could perhaps be considered a micro-intervention in the regeneration of the Vtape archive. The digitization of their archive is a slow process that proceeds according to a variable and contingent logic. The idea of an on-demand digitization process makes the archive itself responsive to community inquiry and demand, and it is precisely this sort of human activity that grounds the idea I've been playing with of the archive as network and community. Alas, neither video is suitable for the exhibition project at hand. Both are talking head-style documentaries and this format doesn't really work with what's being planned. Ah well… but at least two old videos in "CRITICAL CONDITION" have been rescued from potential oblivion!

[The following four "SIDEBARS" were observations made during my first sessions previewing works for potential inclusion in the exhibition]

SIDEBAR
Two interns for SAVAC are working in the shared archival research space as I preview these videos. What becomes interesting is the relationship between video sound and their own sound (mostly talking). When I begin previewing the videos, they seem to quiet themselves (although while I type these notes a couple of weeks later, they don't seem so affected). It's an interesting observation when considering the dynamic of a shared research space. Perhaps the ability of video to silence an audience goes beyond the actual audience itself? Perhaps it culturally encompasses the entire space of presentation regardless of the attentiveness of the people framed by that space?

SIDEBAR re: accessibility
In another moment of serendipity today (June 12), the question of accessibility came up again during a brief conversation with Deirdre Logue, Vtape Director of Development. Upon reflection, this MUST be a primary feature of this exhibition. As an archival research project, making the Vtape archives *accessible* is one of my primary goals. Having an expansive and inclusive model of accessibility must be one of the core values in play. To this end, Deirdre suggested I check out her current exhibition at Tangled Art + Disability which uses tactile audio systems to make the work accessible to those with hearing impairment. As well, Deirdre suggested I preview the work of Alex Bulmer, a visually impaired artist whose video work explores her experience with retinitis pigmentosa.

SIDEBAR re: digital formatting
The preview file [of Vera Frenkel's "This Is Your Messiah Speaking"] was a rather large QuickTime video file. And while this version may well be technically ideal for the exhibition, the file format for me raises some very important questions regarding archival robustness and longevity. The QuickTime media file container is a proprietary format of Apple's. As such, cross platform accessibility in an era of emerging open standard media formats means that QuickTime may well become obsolete sooner rather than later.

Ideally, there is a copy on high resolution videotape available to make another digital copy of. Without this, the eventual conversion of the QuickTime file into another digital file format risks substantial degradation.

SIDEBAR: traces
Oddly enough, one of my favourite things so far has been leaving my finger prints on the top of the dusty videotape cases. It's not so much the actual leaving them that I enjoy, but rather adding them to the fingerprints already there.

MONDAY, JUNE 12, 2017 con't
Today was a day dedicated to writing and some more consultations. I didn't realize how much time would be needed to write up my impressions of my first video previewing session. Nevertheless, the writing got done. I was planning on using the second part of the afternoon to preview more videos but ended up having a long chat with Vtape's long-time Distribution Director, Wanda vanderStoop. Given my emphasis on the idea of an archive as community, exploring the holdings through the knowledge and experience of the staff is an essential form of research. While Wanda was familiar with the general outlines of my project, our conversation gave me the opportunity to provide her with a more detailed sketch of the project. I was very curious to hear any suggestions she might have, and she immediately provided two: she suggested I look through the work of Nelson Henricks and gave

me the names of two videos by Jude Norris, "Red Buffalo Skydive" and "'A Horse Called Memory'". She believed that the sound components of either of these videos might work. Both are now added to the list…

I'm very happy that such suggestions seem to be flowing from the staff. Aside from the fact I'm rather a newbie when it comes to video art curation, as I said I believe the institutional memory embodied in an organization's staff is itself a crucial element of an archive's infrastructure.

MONDAY, JUNE 19, 2017
I began the day with a quick discussion with Lisa about whether it's feasible to work with CONTACT for this exhibition. Given some reflection, we both thought it might be too much of a forced fit. Having to develop the visual components of the exhibition might distract from the central curatorial and research aims of the project, just as the actual presence of such a developed visual component might distract from the centrality of the aural experience.

MONDAY, JUNE 26, 2017
My thinking about the project has also been expanding beyond the idea of gallery-centered project. The archival research process, its documentation, the story being told here, the way it's being told… it would make for a very good book. This could also be a very important legacy component for the project, and is something that should be explored.

Part of what's motivating this book idea is seeing the catalogue essay and images from Nelson Henricks's recent *Document XXL* exhibition at Artexte in Montreal. Henricks' excavation of the archives of Artexte appear to be working with a similar set of ideas as the ones that motivate this project. His writing is inspirational in both substance and tone, and made me think that drawing on his writing would be a great way to involve him in this project in some way.

The connection to Nelson was made by Deirdre Logue, who suggested I check out both his video work and this exhibition. It's indeed been a fortuitous connection. But of course, I believe this sort of interpersonal connection is a fundamental component of archival research. Searching is never a task done completely alone… The conversations around the searching must be foregrounded, and doing so helps emphasize the idea of an archive as both a network and a community.

MONDAY, JULY 17, 2017
NEXT PHASES (*redux*)
List developed July 10, 2017
List elaborated upon July 17, 2017

1) Finalize video lineup
Five videos have already been chosen, and another four await a decision. I'm actually somewhat surprised how easily these all came to me, especially given my lack of familiarity with the Vtape holdings and my general inexperience with video curation. A nagging fear this gives rise to is "what am I missing?" Of course, this

*might just be an inevitable feeling resulting
for any research project. I do seem to remember
feeling this way about my dissertation research:
there's always another book or article to read,
isn't there? I take it as a philosophical maxim
that here is no complete or final "truth", and
therefore what is most important is a sensitivity
to issues of process. With this in mind, I shall
jump to point (3) from last week…*

3) Set up schedule for beta testing exhibition
(see **Next Phases**, p.28)
- equipment needs
*Establishing "equipment needs" is, in retrospect,
not what is needed here. More important is to
take an inventory of available equipment. **Using
Vtape equipment for this exhibition is key
conceptual feature of this project**. The very idea
of "the archive" this project is playing with
encompasses the technical infrastructure of the
organization as a whole, for without this the
media content is wholly inaccessible.*

***Therefore, a key priority at this point is to
make a detailed inventory of equipment that might
be used in the exhibition.***

- gallery availability
*Once an inventory of potential exhibition
equipment is made, it's not that big a step to
trying out ideas for presentation. This makes me
recall the idea of the "beta testing exhibition"*

*Kathleen Pirrie-Adams and I developed when we both
worked at Inter/Access in the early 2000s (Which
reminds me… I need to email her!... DONE). However,
the first tests will be far more exploratory than this.*

2) Develop workshop ideas
- Weekend coordinated "jam session" for artists where
tech is featured
THIS must be fully fleshed out in the upcoming weeks…

WEDNESDAY, JULY 19, 2017
So I'm here today at Vtape, on a Wednesday, because
I'm booked to do a tour of the gallery for Bonnie
Rubenstein. Hopefully this might result in some
kind of partnership between Vtape and CONTACT, but
regardless it's just a good thing to let her see
the new gallery space and give her a sense of the
possibility.

But while I'm waiting in the archive space and doing
some work of my own, Calla is doing some of her work.
This consists of screening older videotapes and filling
out a Cassette Condition Assessment form. She asks
if this will bother me, and of course I reply "No."
It's a shared space, after all, and I am comfortable
working with other people around me. Interestingly
enough, one of the videos she is assessing sounds as
if it might be appropriate for the project:

*Wendy Geller, "Stories for the Garden: Metamorphoses"
(1990) 340.08*

I'm deeply appreciative of these sorts of random
   encounters. It's accidents such as these that
I've found to be the most rewarding elements of
   the archival research process, and they impress
      upon me the idea of that the contingent human
element is a fundamental component of the archive
itself: archives are indeed community processes.

                              MONDAY, JULY 31, 2017
Today we begin the process of taking an inventory
         of the equipment available for use in the
      exhibition component of the project. The first
      step in this was a meeting with Kim, as he is
   the central repository of knowledge with respect
      to what equipment Vtape has. It was also good
   to reconnect with Kim and give him an update of
   where things stand on the project. Of course, as
      in almost every ~~meeting~~ discussion I have with
               someone, more videos are suggested…

               Raw notes from discussion with KT
                              Different Setups
- KT: equipment traditionally was a "sculptural"
   element of most video art in the '70s and '80s

   Ian Murray – "Keeping ON Top Of The Top Song"

   Su Rynard – "As Soon As Weather Will Permit"

Of the many interesting ideas to come out the
discussion with Kim, the most intriguing is the idea
of *Different Setups*. Allow me to expand…

It's possible to break down the systems for
audiovisual reproduction into three parts: (1) medium/
playback, (2) visual projection system, and (3) audio
reproduction system. It would be very useful to
consider each of these three elements as *modular*, in
that there could be alternate systems available for
each. By treating each part as modular, it's possible
to build into the exhibition the idea that alternate
systems could be swapped out for each other, and thus
the aesthetic and affective implications of specific
technologies could be directly compared.

This ultimately results in a flexible technical
exhibition model that can be customized in different
ways for different events:

Ongoing exhibition tech set-up
- uses low impact Medium/Playback Systems
        - digital media players
        - DVD or Blu-Ray players
        - VHS players
- uses larger or fixed mounted Visual Projection
Systems
        - ceiling mounted projectors
        - wall mounted monitors
- uses built-in gallery Audio Reproduction System

Workshop tech set-up (class visits, public access, etc.)
- uses "original" playback equipment
    - U-matic decks, BetacamSP, etc.
- allows for A/B swapping out of archival vs. general presentation systems so visitors can reflect on the aesthetic differences associated with the different systems
- uses mobile presentation setups where possible
    - mobile carts, unmounted projectors, etc.

MONDAY, AUGUST 21, 2017

I was planning on starting some equipment/ presentation tests in the gallery today, but alas Kim is under the weather and is taking the day off. That's not a problem at all, as I'm rather tired and could use the day to finish up some teaching-related activities.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 20, 2018

(LS: Do you want to refer to this gap of time? Your teaching? Our teaching? LK: Sure… The long gap in time between this and the last entry was due primarily to fact I had a heavy university teaching load in the Fall 2017 semester. I'm a sessional/adjunct lecturer at several universities around Toronto, and like any freelancer, work can be a sort of "feast or famine" proposition. Fortunately for me, this term saw me working a lot. Unfortunately, it meant this project took a backseat for a few months…)

Technical meeting with Kim and Lisa
Available tech
    - Yamaha PA system
    - 2 Sony 12" CRT monitors
    - 19" Panasonic CRT
    - 2 Samsung 16x9 LCD
    - 6 15" 4x3 flatscreens
    - 3 20" 4x3 flatscreens
    - Up to 3 short throw projectors
    - Kim and Lisa have 1 pair KRK self powered monitors at home
    - Vtape office has two pairs of stereo, self-powered monitors in the tech room
    - Two pairs of self-powered monitors

TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2018
PAUSE for meeting with Lisa
- 2 x 25" , 1 x 20" cube monitors from Deirdre Logue
- TSV has 3 x Sony PVM 21" monitors
- several 9" monitors
- 4 x Samsung 19" flatscreen 4x3 monitors
- 14 x Bosch surveillance monitors
- 2 sets of 2x powered monitors

- confirm instructor invitations

- confirm curator & researcher event invitation list

Conversation Between Myself as Curator and the Artists
– Conversation and an ethics of curation

MONDAY, MAY 15, 2018

Some thoughts regarding the exhibition component

I'm still wavering a bit on the application of the word "exhibition" to what we're doing here, just as I'm wavering on assuming the title of "curator". There are certainly conditions being established that make this an exhibition: several works will be selected and exhibited according to a pre-established curatorial vision. However, the concept of exhibition presupposes a presentation of works understood as being complete and discrete. A related idea associated to the presentation of audiovisual work would be "programming" a "screening"; the idea a series of audiovisual works, again selected according to some sort of curatorial or programming vision, are shown one after the other. The exhibition planned as part of this project will not follow these models.

A large part of my interest in working with sound, and an idea that has animated much of my own work over the last 15 years or so, is the immersive and spatial quality of sound. Sound doesn't stay within the frame, so to speak, despite all sorts of technical dodges to try and keep it there. Headphones, directional speakers, and parabolic speakers are but a few examples of how artists, curators, exhibition designers, and others seek to contain and control sound.

But the goal for this project is precisely the opposite. Rather than try to keep the sound of each video contained, the idea is to have them all present at once… *to have them all inhabit a common space together*. A phrase I am using to describe this process is "to bring them into conversation with each other." There will, of course, be a great deal of genuine conversation – between myself and the artists, and hopefully between the artists themselves – needed to make this happen in a way that makes sure the artworks are respected. But for this very moment in this ongoing narrative, I'm curious about what this means for the idea of curation.

There are several ideas I've been toying with to describe my role in the development of the exhibition component of this project.

- Curator – this is the default, something demonstrated by the title of "Curator in Residence" Vtape has bestowed upon me for this project. Project Coordinator
- Editor – sort of connotes a text-focused idea that might have some resonance here: edited volumes and exhibitions have a great deal in common.
- Mediator – I like this idea because it suggests the role of institutionally authorized individuals present in the "submedial space" Groys and Ernst write about.
- Remixer – perhaps the most sonically relevant title.

I'm not suggesting that any one of these is the "correct" description, but rather together they more accurately describe what I'll be doing. And then again, I've never really liked titles…

Exhibition Structure

Seven works drawn from the Vtape holdings
Seven is an arbitrary number based on anticipated budgetary support for artist fees… because the ARTISTS MUST GET PAID. The works themselves will be selected according to criteria that includes:
• The sonic aesthetic of the individual piece
• How well the sonic aesthetic of the piece works with that of the other pieces
• How open the artist(s) is/are to having their work presented in such a non-traditional way
• How willing the artist(s) is/are to be part of the wider conversation the project seeks to generate

The equipment and cabling is to be visible
Part of the purpose of this exhibition is to make visible the technical apparatus of the media art archive. Having the equipment visible is an important conceptual feature of this goal.

Configuring the exhibition as modular, flexible and changeable
Bringing the archived works into conversation with each other is not meant to suggest the conversation will be static, fixed or inflexible.

Indeed, the idea of "conversation" or dialog is meant to suggest an ongoing, open-ended, and fluid process. The exhibition hopes to embody this idea by having its physical structure easily changeable and modified. This is not, however, to suggest a completely open process where anybody can make any changes to any aspect of the exhibition. On the contrary, the idea is that this exhibition consists of a *mediated* discussion, and by extension public intervention into the physical layout of the exhibition is also to be guided and mediated.

The equipment, where possible, is to be drawn from Vtape's equipment stores
Exploring the *idea* of Vtape's archive means going beyond the video holdings themselves. As has been made clear already, it is the "technical materiality" of the archive that we are also concerned with. Therefore, the equipment Vtape holds is a fundamental component of their archive.

Including excerpts from Vtape's Critical Writing Archive
I'm very curious to see what is contained in this component of the archive. There could be several principles guiding selection of critical writing to include:
• Writing that focuses on the audio component of video production
• Writing that comments upon the works that are being included
• Writing that addresses critical questions regarding the archiving of audiovisual work
• Writing that addresses curatorial questions relevant to the project

There are several ways such writing might be presented:
- In a reading nook
- Have slightly larger copies posted on the walls

An open question regarding the presentation of work based on the notion of "remixing"

The idea of blending the sound of multiple works raises some fascinating possibilities for the presentation of the selected works. Part of the basic premise of this project is that the sonic components (actually ALL components… but this is beyond the scope of my writing at this time… perhaps another time then!) of archived media are fundamentally conditioned by the technologies of reproduction used to animate them: different speakers, for instance, can radically transform what is heard and experienced. This technical fact, however, opens up a much wider space for intervention beyond simply the choice of technology. For if the choice of audio makes a passive intervention towards what is heard, then cannot we extend that to include more active interventions, such as EQing or adding effects? Such possibility for active intervention is not, however, a license for the curator/researcher/coordinator to make arbitrary decisions on what to do. Rather, such possibilities should be one of many starting points for conversation and dialog between the artist and the curator/researcher/coordinator.

On the fundamental instability of mediated audio
to be filled out in greater detail at a later date

**

To be scheduled for the first week of July
- beer and pizza conversation session with artists regarding the project
- let's open up this conversation sooner rather than later!
- means having a preselection of 8 or 9 works to be considered
    - or at least 3 or 4 people I'm pretty sure will be part of the project
    - Monday, July 3 as a tentative date

MONDAY, JUNE 19, 2017
I've also emailed Vera, Gordon and Kevin Lee to begin the process of discussing the project with artists who I hope to involve.

MONDAY, JULY 10, 2017
I just had a very productive chat with Calla, one of the students working for Vtape this summer.

Continued July 17
Calla has an artwork that might work very well with what I'm trying to do here. Hers is a Paik-inspired installation piece that transforms the visual input from a video camera into sound delivered through a TV monitor.

Its interest to me stems from the way it works as a sort of metacommentary on the relationship between sound and image in the Vtape archives. If positioned carefully, the video input for Calla's piece will literally be the video output of the works being used

in the exhibition. As well, there is a fascinating question of how this piece helps generate a sort of intergenerational dialogue. Given the fact the exhibition component of Hearing Video draws from the Vtape holdings/archive, and my specific interest in formats and format translation & remediation, there is a tendency to favour older works and hence older, established artists. But the dialogue I hope to generate to be truly inclusive, the voices of young and emerging artists need to be part of it. The overarching metacommentary Calla's piece might generate might be a fascinating way to do this…

NEXT PHASES

1) Finalize video lineup
2) Develop workshop ideas
 – Weekend coordinated "jam session" for artists where tech is featured
3) Set up schedule for beta testing exhibition
 – equipment needs
 – gallery availability

MONDAY, JULY 17, 2017

Today, I think, will be mostly a writing and reflection day. It's about time for this, I think, as the last couple of weeks have been more about delving into the holdings, and previewing and selecting videos. At this point, the video lineup is almost set. The initial five videos from Vera, Gordon, Kevin Lee, Andrew and David (Askevold… a video that was left out of the final lineup for the exhibition) form a very solid foundation. I'm happy these seemed to

find their way so easily to me, and I'm delighted by the varieties of ways in which they did.

I'm also delighted by the support and encouragement I'm getting from the artists. To this point, I've corresponded with Gordon and Kevin Lee by email and conversed directly with Andrew and Vera. These latter conversations have been very stimulating. Vera was initially unclear about the goals of the project (completely understandable given the brevity of the website description), but once I explained the underlying premises of the project she was very excited and offered up several ideas that will indeed find application in the exhibition component. Chief among these suggestions was to feel as free as possible when thinking about how to organize the projection elements. Andrew was similarly encouraging and open to the sort of re-articulations of his work that I am proposing.

What's most gratifying is precisely this sort of support and encouragement. Part of the conversation I hope to establish with the artists is about the myriad possibilities of presentation that might flow from the prioritization of their work's audio components. Having the artists not only embrace this idea but encourage me to be as creative as possible with it makes me feel as if I'm definitely on the right path here.

A Conversation Between
The Artists and Their Works
– Conversation as a strategy of archival reanimation, or how do we select works that will speak with each other in a way that is both conceptually and sonorously satisfying?

MONDAY, MAY 29, 2017
Notes written between May 29 and June 12

First dive into the collection…
Today was the first dive into the collection, and the first attempt to gather (shepherd?) videos to be used for the exhibition/installation. The process itself was rather simple. I began by browsing the Artist Index on the Vtape website to see what jumped out. By the end of the day, what jumped out most was this: narrowing down the list of videos to be used will be VERY difficult… there is SO MUCH GOOD WORK HERE.

What initially jumped out at first were artist names. Some were of people I know and whose work I'm already familiar with while others were names I was familiar with but didn't know and whose work I was curious about. I looked through each artist's list of titles and chose specific videos to look at based on titles and descriptions that might suggest a focus or concern with some aspect of sound.

I found interesting the fact that each listing would mention year of production, length, colour or black and white, and language of spoken elements but absent was any mention of audio features such as stereo, mono or multichannel.

The videos I did select for preview were:

Gordon Monahan	267.02	"Speaker Swinging"
	267.00	"Long Aeolian Piano"
Andrew J. Paterson	127.18	"A Typical Morning…"
	127.13	"Rectangular World"
The Hummer Sisters	125.03	"Power Play"
Vera Frenkel	122.11	"This Is Your Messiah Speaking"
Kevin Lee Burton	772.01	"Nikamowin (Song)"
Steve Loft	743.00	"2510037901"

There were others I wrote down, but I was only able to preview these.

Gordon Monahan, "Speaker Swinging" (1987, HiFi VHS)
While I was familiar with this work as an sound performance/installation, I was unaware that there was a dedicated performance video made so long ago. This is a beautiful video with compelling foregrounded sonic features. Conceptually, the video works perfectly with this project. It's also rather serendipitous that the very first video I preview would be so perfect.

This one is a keeper (pending Gordon's consent, of course).

Gordon Monahan, "Long Aeolian Piano" (1986, U-Matic mono)
This is a documentation video of the work's installation in Calgary. While the sound is interesting, it is perhaps a little too drone-y. The editing is also a bit rough, but I'm not sure this is an issue. In any case, I believe *Speaker Swinging* is for more appropriate for this project.

What did strike me in my previewing was that it was hard to gauge the appropriateness of the audio as my initial viewing/listening was done on a test monitor with a very small speaker. This is, or course, not an insignificant observation yet one that even given my attentiveness to this very question is an observation that caught me by surprise.

The sensitivity of recorded audio to the technological and spatial conditions of its reproduction is an issue that ~~goes beyond~~ extends deeper than the actual public presentation of an audiovisual work. The moments of previewing and selection are implicated here as well. Choosing an audiovisual work for inclusion in this exhibition is being done on the basis of a previewing protocol that may well be fundamentally misrepresenting the audio. This brings the very question of HOW these videos are chosen into question.

Hummer Sisters, "Power Play" (1984, U-Matic)
As a Toronto native, I remember as a teen hearing about – and being fascinated with – the Hummer Sisters and their unconventional campaign for the mayoralty of Toronto back in the 1980s. I thought I would use this opportunity to look at some of their work. While I enjoyed the "faux news" presentation of *Power Play*, the audio was far too narrative and thus I believe inappropriate for this project.

Ronald and Donald Kinney, "The Silence That Silences" (1990, U-Matic)
A compelling documentary produced for Paper Tiger Television, this video on a photo exhibition documenting the early years of the AIDS epidemic is also too narrative to be a good fit for this project.

SIDEBAR

This appears to be an early developing theme: non-narrative audio (or at least what I'm calling "non-narrative audio"), which could be understood as audio that is more meant to be *heard* than *listened* to, seems to be more appropriate. However, just as I begin writing this (June 12, 1:05PM) Lisa shows me a catalog from a 1977-78 exhibition at the Contemporary Arts Museum in Houston, TX entitled "American Narrative/Story Art: 1967-1977". (The ostensible reason Lisa showed me the catalog is because it contains a flexidisc of artist-produced audio!) The video component of this exhibition contains work from Lisa, John Baldessari, Martha Rosler, Vito Acconci, and Yvonne Rainer amongst others. What is immediately fascinating to me is that none of these videos fit into this idea of "narrative work" I'm using here. So a question…

How might an attentiveness or focus on the sound of video art refigure the very idea of narrativity in audiovisual work?

Steve Loft, "2510037901" (2000, DVD)
This disc was previewed on the Vtape research station iMac, and the first time I inserted it the disc was rejected as unreadable. Thankfully, the second time I inserted it the computer recognized it. It's a sonically fascinating video, blending the sound of Indigenous singing and dancing with that of a tattoo gun as it marks the artist with his Native Registration number. This act creates some deep personal resonance with me for me, as my great grandparents and numerous great aunts and uncles were lost in the Holocaust. While the video was indeed evocative, it was very short (at roughly 2 minutes) and thus perhaps not well suited for this project.

I'm thinking that 6 minutes or so would be the minimum length in order to produce a meaningful installation experience.

Vera Frenkel, "This Is Your Messiah Speaking" (1990, QuickTime Movie file)
My listening notes: "Lovely audio. There are words, sounds, altered words. The video also has text and ASL interpretation".

I must admit I entered this project with the idea that I would use one of Vera's works. Being quite familiar with her work, having provided sound, audio and technical consultation for several of her recent projects, I have a deep respect for her approach to the relationship between sound and image. Yet had I not known her, I still would want "This Is Your Messiah Speaking" in this project. The audio straddles the line between something to listen to and something to hear, and the ASL component of the video raised for me for the first time the question of accessibility.

Andrew J. Paterson, "A Typical Morning For Green and Blue" (2009, BetacamSP)

This is the first video I've previewed that has colour bars and test tones at the header of the tape. I realize that I'd be very happy to have these as part of the presentation.

The video has some lovely, basic ambient tones and stereo processing. I appreciate the formalist image construction of the video as well, but many periods of silence. Perhaps too many… so on to another video by AJP.

Andrew J. Paterson, "Rectangular World" (2006, BetacamSP)

Another formalist video, the audio starts with a thunderstorm and then a mock telephone conversation with full stereo separation of the voices. Again, an interesting work but perhaps not enough diversity in the audio.

After speaking with Andrew, he suggests his 2008 video "The Enigma of S.A.P." This I will most certainly check out…

Kevin Lee Burton, "Nikamowin (Song)" (2007, BetacamSP)

This video first grabbed my attention visually, in that I noticed it in the stacks almost immediately

due to the numerous copies and formats it is stored in. In fact, it is a photograph of Vtape's holdings of this video that is the image being used on the Vtape website to promote this research project.

My listening notes: "Lovely use of language and manipulated Cree. This would work very well with Vera's piece"

It is perhaps the most serendipitous event so far that this video would be so ideal for this project. I truly hope Kevin wants it to be here.

MONDAY, JUNE 19, 2017
Today's rifling through the archive took the form of a browse through a single row of the stacks. Many things struck me as I conducted this search. First, I noticed that while I felt the need to grab a ladder to investigate the upper shelves, I almost completely ignored the bottom two shelves. I really felt as if I needed to force myself to kneel and check these out. Second, I grabbed mostly BetacamSP copies. I knew that Kim had stepped out of the office for a while, so I actually didn't feel comfortable selecting any older tapes to preview. Their delicacy and fragility demands a different form of previewing, one that consults directly with the technical team at Vtape lest we risk damaging the videos in any way.

Videos Selected for Preview

Andrew James Paterson, "The Enigma of S.A.P."
(2008, BetacamSP)
127.16

This video was selected on Andy's recommendation. This is another of Andy's formalist colour-field videos with a scripted dialog of various voices mixed with some crowd sounds. The dialog is discussing the ideas behind what an exhibition is and how it gets to be what it is. This would make an interesting counterpoint to Vera's work were it to be installed at the other end of the gallery. This might well be a fascinating video to have at the threshold of the entrance.

Helen Spitzer, "Aural Fixation" (2001, BetacamSP)
149.00

Pulled from the stacks because of its compelling title, this is interesting video with a soundtrack that is a Negativland-style mashup of popular music, various sound fragments and some voiceover narrative. (**LS: I looked this up but I think you might need a footnote to explain.** LK: Negativland are a San Francisco-based audio collective that engages in a kind of media tricksterism and sonic satire. They actually coined the phrase "culture jamming", a practice popularized by the magazine *Adbusters* that appropriates materials from contemporary consumer culture in order to critique society's generally passive approach to media and other forms of consumption. In this, they simply carry on practices first developed by the Dadaists and later the Situationists.) It's perhaps too busy for what I'm planning, and may not work well with audio tracks from other videos.

Nelson Henricks and Jackie Gallant, "Untitled (Score)"
(2007, BetacamSP)
422.18

The video is a series of small images changing rapidly, but the audio is a song. Songs won't work as they require too much focus.

Mona Hatoum, "So Much I Want To Say",
(1983, BetacamSP)
177.03

Another video pulled from the stacks because of a compelling title (as well as the artist's reputation), the video consists of a series of slow scan images accompanied by a looped recording of the artist (presumably) saying "So much I want to say". While on its own this is a rather compelling audio work, its repetitive quality – particularly when looped over a long period of time – would quickly become overwhelming.

Tom Sherman, USB Flash Drive, 2012 Video Works
366.61-70

This USB has a number of interesting videos of Sherman's recent work, but I fear that there's too much narration

to work for what I'm doing. Perhaps a deeper dive into his past…

David Askevold, Films of David Askevold 1969-1971 269.15

This compilation video, apparently assembled by the artist and which contains the films "Knife Throw", "Catapult", "Rubberband", and "Fork Pairs", is absolutely lovely and wholly appropriate. That Askevold's work foregrounds the sonic qualities of the objects he is working with is without question. But what first grabs me is the sound of static. The sound of the media itself, and how this has itself been transformed over time through duplication and format transfers, is very present. Yet this sound drops out during "Catapult", which has no sound component of its own. "Rubberband" and "Fork Pairs", both essentially microphone performances that have been filmed, are amazing as well. Together they make a very nice collection and would have a very appropriate presence in the project.

KEEPER

MONDAY, JUNE 26, 2017
As the review of works and selection process proceeds, I'm facing what I always knew would happen: there's far too much good stuff, and some very good work will have to be left out.

While I'm happy with selections I've already made, I realize that at the moment they are skewing towards mostly men. My intention from the outset is to make sure the selection of works is both inclusive and representative, and thus gender considerations must be part of the search process going forward. This, to be sure, is easily done. All it takes is to make gender an explicit search parameter.

The following videos were found by searching the online index using the term "sound". My next phase of work will be to preview them. (I will come back and fill these in with notes once I do…)

*** Videos previewed on JULY 10, 2017*

Su Rynard
199
My choice to look at the work of Su Rynard seems a bit of a no brainer. She is an artist of considerable repute, and several people have suggested I check out her work. So I will.

Rather than preselect one of Rynard's videos, I chose to browse the shelves with her holdings and let one of the titles "jump out at me". It's the classic "find something you didn't know you were looking for" strategy that I often use in libraries. In fact, it's one of the things I love most about being physically present in the library.

*The video that "jumped out at me" is **"Within Dialogue (Silence)", 199.03, 1987, U-Matic**. The case is VERY dusty.*

This is a very lovely video, with a quiet soundtrack that I will need to experience under better conditions. As a U-matic video, I had to listen to the audio through the TV monitor speaker as the U-matic machine does not have a dedicated headphone jack. The soundtrack is in stereo and I was forced to preview it in mono. As well, the space in The Commons is quite loud as bustling today, which interfered somewhat in my experience of the work. I have a feeling the sound was an important component of the work, as the sound recording and mixing was done by Michael Wojewoda, who produced a lot of Toronto indie music back in the '80s and '90s.

On a very personal note, I noticed inside the video case a "Vtape Condition Assessment Completion" record, dated Oct. 21, 2010 and with the initials GS. These belong to Ginger Scott, the person whom I'm currently involved with. There is something very romantic about this sort of hyper-personal material connection, and I wonder if it was her hands that last touched the videotape before mine.

*** INTERESTED***

*****Eva Teppe, "Sound of Silverware"
1067.04*****
This is apparently a documentation video of an installation that might be described as what Duchamp would have called a *sculpture sonore*.

My first attempt to preview this video ran into a classic technical hitch: DVD video format/region restrictions. The only copy in the Vtape holdings is PAL-formatted DVD, and the player that's been added to the preview station only plays NTSC formatted video. Luckily, the research iMac was able to play it.

*The video itself was quite unlike what I was expecting. It is not at all a documentation video of a sculpture sonore-type installation, but rather a video designed for installation. The video itself was rather dark, and this visual was matched by a somewhat dark ambient-type soundtrack. **While sonically interesting, the soundtrack got me thinking about the emotional tenor I'm hoping to achieve with the exhibition**. Dark and foreboding audio certainly has its place, but I'm hoping to achieve an affective stance that's more welcoming and engaging. This is not to say I want a soundscape that is saccharine sweet, but I do want to create an environment that is conducive to calm and thoughtful reflection on both the works and the idea of the archive as well.*

Gunilla Josephson (and Eve Egoyan), "Venus Hedda"
645.07

What attracted me to this work is the fact it exists
in the Vtape database as both a video *and* a sound
installation. This is the first time I've encountered
a work of this type and it's made me very curious.

Well now my curiosity has taken a turn… What most
intrigued me from the description of this video
was the fact it is both a video AND an audio
installation. However, all that resides in the Vtape
holdings is the 60 minute video component of the
installation. The accompanying audio component does
not seem to be part of the holdings. This I must
investigate…

Sarah Vermette, "On The Brink Of Sound"
1015.00

This piece is described as being "based on the
filmmaker's personal experience of discovering
sound via a Hybrid Cochlear Implant. Her sense of
sound expands, along with her sense of self as she
develops a new perception of the world." There are
so many reasons why this work might fit. For one, the
description makes me tremendously curious about the
sound component. Secondly, the artist's experience
here can be read as an interesting metaphor for the
way this this project is using sound as an entry
point into archival research. Lastly, and most
importantly, the perspective on sound and hearing
would be immensely valuable to include in the
conversation this project hopes to generate.

Another technical glitch… It seems I've pulled an
HD CAM copy from the shelves when I thought I was
grabbing a BetacamSP copy. Oh well…

I found a QuickTime .MOV file on a USB drive which
worked OK.

As much as I want this video to work for this
exhibition, I'm not sure it does. It straddles the
line between non-narrative and narrative audio in a
very interesting way, but in the end I think it might
be too narrative for this project. But having said
that, perhaps having one work that is more narrative
might be good. Hmmm… let's think about this for a
while.

*** POSSIBLE ***

Leslie Peters & Dara Gellman, "Impossible Landscapes"
537.38
I've seen some of Leslie's works before and have
always been impressed with the ambient quality of the
sound work. Perhaps this would be a good addition to
the soundscape being constructed here?

As much as I like Leslie's work, this video too
has a sound component which is somewhat dark and
foreboding. Again, not a bad thing in itself, but it's
not in keeping with the emotional tenor I'm hoping to
produce.

Sarah Abbott, "Looking Back To See"
333.01

My interest in this piece comes from the description as well, which suggests that this work might provide a similar experience to Leslie Peters an Dara Gellman's video. We shall see…

This is a very interesting audiovisual work. The sound is an interesting stereo ambient mix of traffic sounds, bells, carriage thumps, documentary recordings, and voices, with a brief narration near the beginning. The narration is kept rather low in the mix, which makes gives it a very interesting character. The second narration addresses the possible value of such documentary recordings for communicating culture.

The video portion is itself very ambient and could be a very interesting component.

*** VERY POSSIBLE ***

Sarah Abbott, "Rug"
333

I'm viewing this at the suggestion of Chris Gehman, who when seeing that I had taken the previous video off the shelf mentioned that I really should look at this one.

While I love the sound of thunderstorms and cats meowing, which pretty much sums up the first five

minutes of audio from this video, sadly I think more may be needed….

Karma Clarke Davis, "Auslander"
614.10
I worked with Karma on one of her installations many years ago, and came away impressed by her interest and attentiveness to sound. Perhaps one of her videos might work here?

The video starts off with panicked breathing. Immediately, I think "No. I can't have this." But then it settles into a mixed soundscape with ambient audio from traffic and TV mixed in with some processed Wagner. The music is processed enough to make it not the total focus, but it assumed greater prominence as the video progresses. Do I want to make the sound from that anti-Semitic proto-Aryan front at centre? There is also a very present narration in German. It is a very strong piece, but dare I say it may perhaps be too strong for this project. **I'm coming to realize that a crucial point of selection is how the individual videos chosen for this exhibition will balance each other.**

But if presented quietly, might this actually work? I can see it complementing Vera's work if it is.

Much of the audio recording also sounds as if it was binaural. This might make for a very interesting presentation. Upon reflection, I KNOW there were

binaural recordings used in this video as I WAS THE ONE WHO DID THEM! Yes indeed… I had forgotten that not only did I help Karma with an installation I also assisted with some audio production work, and it was this video the work was done for. Go figure… This is actually quite fascinating to me. That I had forgotten this work yet become reacquainted with it through a completely different project 15 years after the fact…

I might have to do some testing to see if this will work*…*

Susan Britton, "Countdown"
229.18

There's a part of me that's attracted to older works in the holdings. Perhaps it's because it satisfies a desire to use this project to excavate a past that while perhaps not forgotten might nonetheless have been pushed aside by the ever accumulating pile of new works. This compilation of works from the early 1980s is described as having a "sci-fi theme", which immediately makes me curious about the sonic components of the videos. Sci-fi, after all, is a genre of audiovisual work with a number of very potent aural signifiers.

The videos in this compilation are quite fascinating. For one, it sounds very much like

"video": the sounds of the second work in the compilation was very obviously recorded onto the audio track of the VTR. This is fascinating to me. As well, the videos are intercut with a crude drum machine track that reminds me a lot of David Askevold's "Rubber Band" piece. The drum machine is musical, but not actually too musical so as to demand attention. The fifth video might also work with Vera's piece.

The most "musical" of the videos is the fourth one, "D Train". It also blends subway sounds in a very interesting, and very '80s, way.

I also really enjoy the streetscape sounds from the last video, "1984". The sound component of this video also sounds very much like video. However, there's a handwritten post-it note on the U-matic case that instructs this video not be included. What this is referring to, I do not know.

There's also a line in the video about some crackpot US president. This is so prescient…

*** DEFINITELY INTERESTED ***

Two videos Deirdre suggests I check out:

Anna Peak, "Lokhalle"

Freya Hattenberger, "Sirene"

SELECTED VIDEOS

As of June 12, 2017
Gordon Monahan, "Speaker Swinging": TENTATIVE YES
Kevin Lee Burton, "Nikamowin (Song)": TENTATIVE YES

Added June 19, 2017
David Askevold, "Films of David Askevold
1969-1971": YES
Andrew James Paterson, "The Enigma of S.A.P.": YES

Added July 10, 2017
Vera Frenkel, "This Is Your Messiah Speaking": YES

Added July 17, 2017
Susan Britton, "Countdown"
Sarah Abbott, "Looking Back To See"
Su Rynard, "Within Dialogue (Silence)"
Karma Clarke-Davis, "Auslander"

As of DECEMBER 20, 2017
EXHIBITING WORKS
Gordon Monahan, "Speaker Swinging": TENTATIVE YES
Vera Frenkel, "This Is Your Messiah Speaking"
Kevin Lee Burton, "Nikamowin (Song)": TENTATIVE YES
Andrew James Paterson, "The Enigma of S.A.P."
Sarah Abbott "Looking Back To See"
SCREENING DURING PRESENTATIONS
Susan Britton "Countdown"
Su Rynard, "Within Dialogue (Silence)"

DROPPED
David Askevold, "Films of David Askevold 1969-1971"

TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2018

Sound artists to consider for Saturday the 24th (LS: what is this referring to? Might need to explain. LK: Alright! For the final Saturday of the exhibition, we came up with the idea of inviting musicians and sound artists to interact and respond to the exhibition: in essence, to add their sound to the existing conversation created by the exhibited works. The artists invited were Mani Mazinani and Invisible Out [Xuan Ye + Jason Doell]. Mani brought a big old analog synthesizer and amplifier that he had set up on wheels and proceeded to improvise analog electronic sounds as he moved about the gallery space. Xuan and Jason brought a number of small electronic sound devices and different speakers, placing them around the entire space and moving them around when inspiration struck them. The underlying idea here was to extend the idea of *conversation* to include sound artists in the community, and have their voices added to the *conversation* mobilized through the exhibition.)

Ginger Brooks Takahashi
Pauline Beaudry and Renata Lorenz
Alaska B
Rita McKeaough (Sleepy Panda)
Elenor King
Abstract Random
Casey Messina
Erin Bear Witness
Alya Pathbani
Suggestion from Ginger Scott/Luis Hernandez - Xuan Ye

A Conversation Between
Myself and The Community/Public
– The curator as facilitator of a/the
relationship between the organization, its
archive, the community, and the public.

MONDAY, MAY 15, 2017

For now I will simply refer to what we are
working on here as "the project". I'm not yet
comfortable reducing it to any single term such
as exhibition or research.

The Project will consist of several interlocking
elements. Several of these are necessary elements,
while others can be considered potential:

- Archival research and investigation
- Publication (e.g. book/CD project)
- An exhibition of 7 works from the Vtape holdings
  selected according to their sonic elements and
  how these elements will contribute to an overall
  soundscape
- A series of guided workshops that will intervene
  and reshape the configuration of the exhibition
  while it is in process
    - For students
        - UTSC new media and studio students
        - UofT MVS and MMS programs
        - OCADU graduate programs
        - Ryerson new media
        - York ComCult, Film Studies
    - For established artists & curators
    - For emerging artists & curators
    - For members of the community
- A moderated panel presentation featuring artists and
  technical people
- A day-long symposium on sound, video and the
  technical apparatus of the archive (perhaps to be
  organized with a SSHRC grant, with the help of the
  JHI, etc.)
- A number of public events where older format videos
  (open reel, ¾" U-Matic, etc.) are brought in for
  temporary presentation and "added" to the overall
  soundscape

WEDNESDAY, DECEMBER 20, 2017
IMMEDIATE TO Do's as of Dec. 20
– prepare small description for Vtape invitations to
students/artists etc.

Hello,

Vtape and its 2017-18 researcher/curator-in-residence
would like to invite you and your class to a workshop
exploring our archival research project "Hearing
Video". This project explores several interlocking
questions that would be of interest to students
studying such subjects as time-based media, curatorial
studies, archival studies, and sound or visual
studies. What is a media art archive? What role does
technology play in how we experience archived media
artwork? How can arts organizations use their archives
in innovative ways that engage diverse communities of

practice? These are but some of the questions
we hope to explore with you and your students.

For some general information about the project,
please visit: http://www.vtape.org/event/vtapes-2017-
researchercurator-in-residence-is-lewis-kaye

We look forward to working with you!

TO DO:
- get Erin Webster's email address to Lisa
- I'll contact Su Rynard, Susan Britton and Sarah Abbott
- get in touch with Mike Zryd re SCMS public even on
March 17

NEAR TERM To Dos for Dec. 27
- prepare project description for curatorial,
academic invitations

POTENTIAL PARTICIPANTS
Curatorial/Academic Roundtable
Jim and Jennifer
Daniella Sanader
Luis Jacob
Kathleen Pirrie Adams
Gaelle Morel
Wanda Nanibush
Christof Migone
Mitch Akiyama
David Cecchetto
Kevin Dowler

Sarah Sharma
Ger Zielinski
Wende Bartley
Marla Hlady
TL Cowan

+ grad students

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2018
Strategies for roundtable sessions
- start as a guided tour
- present animating questions
- how do you curate sound?
- questioning my role

TO DO
- technical mapping meeting with Kim – schedule for
next couple of weeks
- write up one-sheet for project
- work on essay
- idea of a closing party/ day of musical
interventions
    - contact Mitch, Jess Forest, Rachelle, Mani,
    (ask Deirdre re FAG connections)

emails
- Sarah Abbott
- Mike Zryd re: SCMS idea
- Susan Britton
- Su Rynard

TUESDAY, JANUARY 30, 2018
To dos for today

- fix dates on website
- add Sarah Abbott and Calla Durose-Moya to list of artists on website

- confirm evening event for curators and academics
    - list of invitees
    - invitation text
    - schedule of activities
- confirm student workshops
    - Mondays are for my two classes
    - Monday for Jim Drobnick? Time?
    - Marla – confirm time
    - Erin Webster – confirm time
    - Oliver Hussain
    - Mitch Akiyama
    - KPA – Ryerson New Media
    - John Greyson - York

- confirm tech availability re: cube monitors from Deirdre
- confirm deadlines for writing

Sound, art, and an ethics of conversation

I'm sitting in the Commons listening to Gordon Monahan's "Cymbalism", which is part of the Vibrafusion Lab exhibition currently on. Last week, this interactive sound piece was turned off due to its relative loudness. Indeed, the sheer volume of the work overpowered the space and interfered with any other activities in and around the area. It's not surprising… Sound has a tendency to do that.

The solution was very simple: contact the artist and have him send a new Max/MSP runtime patch with a lower output volume. With the volume reduced by about 25%, the piece becomes a lovely sonic complement to the space.

(LS: DESCRIBE WHAT THIS IS [BELOW] LK: Below is the draft letter of introduction sent to group of scholars, curators and artists, inviting them to an evening roundtable discussing the issues around media art archiving and exhibiting we hoped to raise with *Hearing Video*.)

Hello,

Vtape and its 2017-18 researcher/curator-in-residence, Lewis Kaye, would like to invite you to an evening event exploring and discussing our archival research project and exhibition "Hearing Video". This project explores several interlocking questions that might be of interest to your own creative, curatorial or research practice. What might a curatorial/ research focus on sound suggest about new strategies for exhibiting audiovisual media art? What is the ontological status of a media art archive? What role do technologies of storage and presentation play in the aesthetic experience of reanimated archival media art work? How can arts organizations use their archives in innovative ways that engage diverse communities of practice?

These are but some of the questions we hope to discuss throughout the evening. Our hope is to bring fifteen to twenty curators and researchers together for a stimulating evening of art, sound, and conversation. We'd be thrilled if you could be part of it.

For some general information about the project, please visit: http://www.vtape.org/event/hearing-video

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 6, 2018
Educators confirmed or responded as of today

Erin Webster, Friday
Jim Drobnick, Tuesday
Philippe, responded with NO
Judith Doyle, grad seminar on affect theory

Conversation evening
Kevin Dowler
TL Cowan and partner
Daniella Sanader

TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2018
Confirmed for conversation evening

Kevin Dowler
TL Cowan and Jasmine Rault
Will Kwan
Judith Doyle
Emily Fitzpatrick

TUESDAY, MARCH 6, 2018
Confirmed for conversation evening for March 20

Kevin Dowler
TL Cowan and Jasmine Rault
Will Kwan
Judith Doyle
Emily Fitzpatrick
Mitchel Akiyama
Alyssa Firth-Englund
Sherry Phillips

Resend invitations
Luis Jacob
Ann MacDonald

New Invitations
Peggy Gale (invited in person at opening, follow up with email)
Jane Wilkinson (invited in person at opening, follow up with email)
David Liss (personal invite extended, formal should be sent too)
Midi Onodera midionodera@gmail.com
Jim Drobnick & Jennifer Fisher (Jim was invited to bring his class for a workshop)
Vicky Moufwad-Paul (at A-Space)

OTHER ISSUES
- artist fees
- booking conference room for class workshop times
- documentation?
    - I will do audio documentation
    - video? Photo?

SATURDAY, MARCH 10, 2018

I am sitting in the Commons, right outside the entrance to the Bachir/Yerex Presentation Space, the gallery space we're working in. The exhibition component of *Hearing Video* has been running for a week now, and all seems to be going well. The doors to the presentation space are closed, mostly containing the sound of the exhibition to the room. But what leaks out is already quite familiar to me. My familiarity with the piece (and of course I should be familiar by now!) means I can hear each of the works independently, as well as the collective voice they've achieved together. What makes this particular listening position so interesting is how the sound of the exhibition blends seamlessly with the sound of the building and the city outside. For some reason, traffic sounds rather frenetic today… lots of horns blaring (a huge burst while I wrote that!), which blended well with the sirens in Kevin Lee's piece.

So far, I have to say that I'm exceptionally happy about how things have turned out. The response to the project has been immensely gratifying.

Above all, the participating artists who've experienced the exhibition have been overwhelmingly positive. This, to me, is without a doubt the most important thing.

THURSDAY, MARCH 15, 2018

Almost two weeks in to the exhibition and just found out about a noise complaint. While in truth I am somewhat disappointed, I think it's actually because I've come to feel quite attached to the piece as it currently sounds. The prospect of changing it is not something I'm looking forward to. But that's actually a very interesting feeling to confront. I think part of my overall hesitance (and yes, at this point I think it's simply honest to label it as hesitance) to change things around is because I really like the way things sound at the moment. Lowering the overall audio level would certainly transform this in ways that I cannot predict.

Technically speaking, the challenge is setting levels that are determined by the sound that can be turned down the least. These are the KRK Rocket monitors that are connected to Gordon's video. These monitors do not have completely independent level controls, and as such can only be "turned down" so much. To achieve a good overall balance, the audio levels of all the other videos must be tuned to Gordon's piece. While it achieves a really nice effect in the gallery it is apparently vibrating the ceiling of the office below, an inevitable outcome given the physical construction of 401 Richmond and something I myself experienced many times when I worked here all those years ago. Will we be able to solve it? We shall see….

Whatever does happen, one thing is for sure:
the piece will change.

It's also interesting that I'm beginning to refer to this exhibition as a "piece". It's important to note that I'm not the one who first identified it as such, nor was it only one person, but I must say I do kinda like it. For one thing, it's personally gratifying to have people consider it an "artwork" that stands on its own. Perhaps this is because of the sound focus? Does combining the works in such a way to produce a unified experience lend to the exhibition a coherence that can be read as an individual work?

WEDNESDAY, MARCH 28, 2018

Key themes to write about
- on the idea of a living archive
- on the idea of an archive as a network and community
- on the media archive as a technical apparatus
- on the individual works themselves
- on an ethics of conversation, and an ethics of curation
    - phrase discovered in a chat with Mani
    - the pieces together as a "family" (Vera)
- between creation and curation
    - theme articulated well in Judith Doyle's class visit
    - on "dismembering" the exhibition (Rebekka D from Erin's class)

- on contingency
    - noticing Kevin Lee's video as a strolled through the shelves
    - Chris's suggestion of Sarah Abbott
    - Calla interning at Vtape the same time I was working there
    - Susy Lake's table
- on the value of experimentation
- curation as methodological elaboration
- the adding of sound as a "gesture"
    - word used by Jason Doell of Invisible Out
- discussion as an exercise in continual elaboration and articulation

It's Wednesday, March 28 and we took down the exhibition yesterday: we "dismembered" it, as Rebekka Degtyareva (a student in Erin Webster's UTSC seminar on curatorial studies) put it. It's an interesting phrase to describe a process that's usually referred to as "de-installing" or "taking down" an exhibition. Rebekka used the phrase, as she told me, because it suggests a work (or an exhibition, in this case) has a "soul" and thus taking it down has connotations of killing it. While I'm not sure the analogy can, or should, be stretched that far, the underlying idea is thought provoking. For one, I'd be lying if I said I didn't feel anything when taking it down (yes… I will stick to that phrase myself). It was definitely a bittersweet feeling, the sense of tired satisfaction and accomplishment mixed with a sense of loss of something I'd spent a great deal of energy caring for and nurturing.

Exhibitions, for me, have often been this way going back to my time as Access Coordinator at Inter/Access in the very early 2000s: spending time with an exhibition that changes over time gives a sense of that exhibition as a living, breathing entity. The particular design of *Hearing Video*, with its focus on sound, use of multiple looping videos all with different lengths, and the incorporation (is this the right word? Would "inclusion" be better?) of Calla Durose-Moya's live audiovisual feedback installation, makes this idea of a living, breathing exhibition readily apparent – and rather meaningful – to me.

But the issue with "dismembering" as a concept, its limitation in this context, is that while indeed evocative it suggests a finality that is not really warranted. This finality locates the "life" of the project in its particular manifestation as an exhibition at the Bachir/Yerex Presentation Space on the days between March 4 and March 27, 2018 (the exhibition technically closed to the public on March 24, but wasn't fully dismantled [there's another appropriate word!] until the 27th). This isn't actually the case because the exhibition is only part of the bigger *project* at hand. I've actually been referring to the end of the exhibition as the end of *Phase 2* of *Hearing Video*, with *Phase 1* being the research residency phase (which ended in August, 2017) and *Phase 3* being who the heck knows…

Actually, this writing that I'm doing at this very moment is as good a point as any to declare the start of *Phase 3*… ∎

Writing about Hearing Video – by Lewis Kaye

END