

**Lilt, Twang, Tremor**

**Sarah Rose, Susannah Stark, Hanna Tuulikki**

**18 November 2017 - 14 January 2018**

**CCA:** Centre for  
Contemporary Arts

For this exhibition, CCA has invited three Scottish artists whose work examines the politics and production of voice. Looking at how the voice takes shape in different places and environments, the exhibition explores the contexts in which voices are made audible. Examining the mouth, the mouthless voice, the embodied and disembodied voice, the voice as a tool, and as an instrument – the artists question the manner in which vocals affect the environment around us.

In each of the artists' work, the performance and consumption of voice in the spaces around us is key. Across the practices, the voice is explored as it is shaped by both rural and urban environments, as is the way the female voice might be perceived or delivered. The spaces imagined by the artists include the Greek agora, a Hebridean island, a city close, a luxury apartment, the fluxing city of Glasgow, an urban demolition, and an empty hotel. In each of these places we can witness how voice is used to create new truths, embellish a story, or misrepresent something or someone entirely. Birds and bird sounds are prominent across the works, as is an exploration of how gender operates within voice, song and storytelling. With the urge to speak comes protest – in the various 'spaces of appearance' represented in the gallery, we also might see how some voices are not granted political agency.

**Sarah Rose's** practice results from an interest in how the voice constructs prejudices and bias, investigating the vocal transmission of information, such as rumour, translation and inflection. Responding to the limitations of printed text, she explores how the unwritten voice might reject a gendering of narrative. Her sculptural installations examine how objects hold sound and tell stories in space, and how information is shaped through its oral communication. Through an in-depth research into specific materials, climates and histories, her work in this show aims to locate the political within sound, volume and material.

For this show, Rose has produced a new series of works responding to the absorption of voice in materials, voiceless protest, and vocal rumour. In the Rumour series, Rose describes an image to another person without showing it to them. That person then creates their own representation of the image by responding to this verbal description only. Two images were chosen, the first a reproduction of a cartoon called Bird of Prey, featuring an image of a feathered woman swooping down on a fleeing bird. Published in 1892 in response to the impending implementation of 'The Plumage Bill' – a law created to deter the slaughter of birds for millinery feathers – Virginia Woolf would later write an essay with the same title, describing the hypocrisy and sexism inherent within the debate. Women were chastised and ridiculed for their role in this industry, and men were supposedly morally not implicated. Rose includes this image as a representation of the way voices are silenced or misrepresented and, as an exercise in understanding how her own voice shapes new images. The artist Scott Rogers responded with three new works, a strange and gendered assemblage of a hunting cap and an egret feather; three doctored James Audubon prints and a found RSPB pin (the RSPB was founded as a legacy of the Plumage Bill).

The second image, described to curator Mason Leaver-Yap and artist Alexis Mitchell, is a photograph of Jane Jacob's 1961 West Village tape action demolition protest. Leaver-Yap and Mitchell's response was for Rose to exhibit a thirty-minute film called Glasgow 1980, commissioned in 1971 to imagine a future Glasgow, and a Verso report called The Right to the City, in which several contemporary essays discuss how the city has evolved, and who for, in the last fifty years. In the film we can map a change in relationship towards public space. In the report, one pertinent text by Nina Power, The Only Good Public is a Moving Public, discusses two publics, the first which is "mute but constantly chattering" and the second which is "alive but constantly silenced."

Bedding is a new work, also based on a rumour. A 411-bedroom structure built on Spain's Cobe de Gata nature reserve, the hotel is illegal owing to its proximity to the ocean. It was never inhabited but is rumoured to be fully furnished, bed linen and all. Rose's Bedding, made from seaweed fibre, responds the ecological and environmental disruption posed by the building, the ensuing Greenpeace protest and the many varying myths and stories that circulated during its failed inhabitation.

**Susannah Stark** focuses on the power and placement of the voice, questioning how language is used in a technology-driven, digital and capitalist culture. She has an interest in the mouth as modulator which shapes and organises culture, both as a bodily organ and a machine. With many works questioning how

voice functions within the context of urban space, she investigates the translation of voice into material and cultural experience. Collaborating with Reggae musician Donald Hayden she merges the economic, cultural, spiritual and personal into a rotating narration of the contradictions of contemporary living, using digital media, sound, and song. For Lilt, Twang, Tremor, Stark and Hayden have produced a new surround sound work Searchlights – part public service announcement and part protest which includes a variety of dissonant rhythmical sounds, drumming and lyrics, forming a confused and contradictory public space.

Agora of Cynics is based on a Greek architectural agora, a classical space of political assembly and a public platform for speech. Often the agora was also the marketplace of the city. The three elements of the installation together explore who can speak and be seen in the polis, and which emotions or ways of speaking may be granted. Stark takes influence from the Ancient Greek Cynics who were one of the few classical philosophical schools to operate outside of the institution and to be open to including women as equals, provided they relinquished material possessions and lived out in the street. Only property-owning men could speak in the agora, and the cynics responded by rejecting popular standards of etiquette. The agora columns are adorned with an array of strange, cartoon-like facial expressions. These expressions make reference to the cynics, and in particular a text by Peter Sloterdijk called 'In Search of Lost Cheekiness' where he examines the counter tradition of the Cynics, and how polite decorum was replaced by mischievousness, display of emotion and cheekiness. Stark's faces play with the acceptability of expression in public life, where we often have to remain calm and appear in control, despite how we might really feel.

Stark's work is more widely focused on notions of property ownership, material wealth and public space. Unnatural Wealth is a new moving image work, incorporating found cityscapes, images from luxury flats and a floating digital denture that mouths Stark's deconstructed lyrics.

**Hanna Tuulikki** presents three works in dialogue with one another for the first time. In her installations we can see how the voice holds history, topography, feeling and place. In the space of Lilt, Twang Tremor, Tuulikki's work practice as a composer, artist and performer is key – her practice result from meticulous research in to vocal sound and the production of the bodily, singing voice. Her work considers the voice as a meeting point between self and the world, investigating the ways in which the body communicates beyond and before words, telling stories through imitation, vocalisation and gesture. Often exploring music and movement traditions across cultures, she is particularly interested in how bodily relationships and folk histories relate within specific environments. With a strong connection to landscape and ritual, her works explore an ecology of the world through textured tapestries of performances, audio visual installations and visual score drawings. In CCA2, cloud-cuckoo-island is a vocal composition centring upon the folk story of 'Mad Sweeney', an Irish king who wanders the landscape lost and deranged. Tuulikki's moss-bearded Sweeney sings a wordless protest against the culture that sent him into battle that instigated his madness. Rejecting this culture, he retreats to the wilderness. The improvisation responds to a call of a real cuckoo and the echo from the cliff, mimicking the cuckoo's perpetual call until the effort exhausts her.

Away With The Birds is a vocal composition, a series of drawings and a visual score, exploring the history and sounds in Gaelic song, and its relation to the ecology of the western isles of Scotland. Across five movements, each one a different habitat, she weaves together fragments of Gaelic songs that imitate birdsong and bird calls. Performed by a female ensemble on the Isle of Canna in 2014, a carefully conceived space holds the work for viewing and immersive listening. In CCA1 a twin channel installation examines a very different context. The incidental birdsong we hear in the background 'sound' more urban, and the place is a close in Edinburgh's old city centre. SING SIGN: a close duet is performed between Tuulikki and her collaborator Daniel Padden. The singers perform a hocket, a melody divided between two parts wherein the notes gently coincide in tandem with one another. Tuulikki reaches for the lowest notes of her vocal register, whilst Padden sings at his highest, each undermining normative gendered vocal characters to find a common tonal space between them.

A fourth work, Women of the Hill, will be performed in CCA's Theatre space on 12 January 2018.

#### Events:

**Who Speaks? Who Listens? Nina Power & Laura Oldfield Ford**, Mon 11 Dec, Free but ticketed / All ages

**Hanna Tuulikki, Women of the Hill performance**, Fri 12 Jan, 7pm, Free but ticketed / All ages

**Sarah Rose, The Weather, Sat 13 Jan**, 11.30am, Free but ticketed / All ages

**Susannah Stark and Donald Hayden performance**, Sun 14 Jan, 6pm, Free but ticketed