

FLORIAN

HECKER

AT

CHISENHALE

12 February – 28 March 2010

PRESS COVERAGE

Date	Publication	Reference
13 February 2010	Artforum.com	http://artforum.com/words/id=24855
18 February 2010	Postproduced.com	http://postproduced.blogspot.com/2010/02/florian-hecker-chisenhale-gallery.html
10 March 2010	Frieze	Frances Morgan, 'Florian Hecker', http://www.frieze.com/shows/review/florian_hecker/
March 2010	Art Review	Reviews UK: p114
March 2010	Time Out London	p43
April 2010	The Wire	p80

PRESS REACTION

As the Chisenhale Gallery amply demonstrates, gallery spaces can sound great: resonant. Vibrant. Roomy [...] any remaining questions about why Hecker's vision of electronic composition is better suited to gallery spaces were conclusively answered.

The Wire, April 2010

Chisenhale Gallery
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Florian Hecker's solo exhibition seems designed not to disorientate with sonic extremes – although it occasionally does – but to invite more considered questions about the spatial qualities of sound.

frieze, May 2010

We are dealing with a truly open mind, capable of turning every acoustic stimulus into a poetic creation.

Kaleidoscope, April 2010

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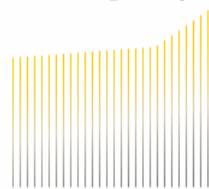
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Florian Hecker

02.09.10



Florian Hecker, *2 x 3 Kanal*, 2009, three-channel electroacoustic sound, loudspeaker system, 19 minutes 10 seconds, dimensions variable. Installation view, BAWAG Contemporary, Vienna.

Florian Hecker is an artist who has recently performed with Aphex Twin and collaborated with Cerith Wyn Evans. Hecker's latest exhibition, commissioned by two nonprofit spaces—Birmingham's Ikon Gallery and the Chisenhale Gallery in London—opens at the latter on February 12.

THE SOUND PIECES in this show will entail distinct requirements for their installation. But what is constant is the dialogue between the micro, meso, and macro sonic levels. Housed in a renovated veneer factory from the 1930s, the Chisenhale Gallery plainly shows its industrial past. Five large T-bars cross the ceiling and divide the otherwise open space. This architectural structure appeared to me an intuitive fivefold division of the gallery, and superimposing a conventional exhibition design felt somehow out of place. It became clear that a temporal layout of the four works would be my approach, and this sequence, from one piece to another, mirrors the internal spatial logic of each piece.

The first up in the show, *Magnitude Estimation*, features spoken-word sections that had to be recorded in an anechoic chamber. John Cage often mentioned the anechoic chamber as an important influence on his interest in silence, which led to his composition *4' 33"*. Due to its highly absorbing acoustic properties, such a space offers a magic, intense experience of sonic dislocation. All the day-to-day environmental noises that we take for granted as the cues for our spatial orientation seem to disappear, and a whole other auditory world arises. (You can hear the sounds of your nervous system, blood circulation, and bodily fluids, for instance.) It was exactly this perceived otherness and its very effect on the performers' vocal inflection and accentuation that interested me.

Magnitude Estimation will be followed by *2 x 3 Channel*. This work consists of two separate three-channel pieces that rotate simultaneously around three speakers. One rotates clockwise, the other counterclockwise. Depending on the viewers' auditory focus, one part is heard in the foreground, the other in the background. In the second section of this work, the conflict of the directional auditory perception of both pieces is complicated and intensified anew. A seemingly constant ascending sonic structure alternates with a sequence of tones in the style of Diana Deutsch's *Tritone Paradox*. Here, an additional dimension can be heard besides the circular movements in the work. *Auditory Scene*, the final piece in this temporal order, presents a sequence of five short tones that may be arranged depending on the viewers' position in the gallery.

This multitude of perspectives and the perceptual organization the show creates—which change according to the very position of visitors and the direction of their attention—emphasize the impossibility of a unified description or consensus as to what has been heard, from where, at what time, and by whom. In each of the pieces, one can witness a certain decoupling of the perceived sound and its visible source.

— As told to Lauren O'Neill-Butler

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Florian Hecker, Chisenhale Gallery, London

Posted on 18.2.10 Labels: Aphex Twin, Carsten Holler, Cerith Wyn Evans, Chisenhale Gallery, Contemporary art, Florian Hecker, London, Review, Sound Art



Florian Hecker
Chisenhale Gallery
64 Chisenhale Road, London, E3 5QZ
11.02.10 – 28.03.10
Preview Thursday 11 February 2010 6.30 – 8.30pm
Wednesday to Sunday 1 – 6pm
Thursday 4th March until 9pm

Musician and sound artist **Florian Hecker** presents a new installation at one of London's best established and most consistently interesting contemporary art spaces, East London's Chisenhale Gallery. The public gallery undertakes 5 shows each year, each an ambitious newly commissioned solo project by an emerging international artist.

Hecker's installation at Chisenhale comprises of 4 separate works, displayed in a sequence which guides the viewer (listener?) around a sparsely empty gallery space, ornamented with slick, black, ceiling-mounted speakers. The collection of works utilise immaculately produced electronic noises to lead us aurally and physically through a shifting landscape of auditory experiences; At turns disorienting, intriguing and captivating, the largely multi-channel works give us an awareness of the physical contingencies involved in the process of listening, and invite us to explore modes of interacting with what we hear.

The most visually striking work is an untitled new piece featuring a single speaker pointing concentrated bursts of sound at a ceramic-tiled section of the gallery wall. Beautifully lit, the speaker casts a symmetrical shadow across the minimal white-on-white of the tiles on the wall, while the sound oscillates and reflects back to the on-looking viewer.

The pieces are durational works that, through a variety of approaches – sounds generated through the audience's movements, exercises in three-channel panning that alternate between clockwise and anti-clockwise rotations and works spread between speakers placed a gallery's width apart – form a continuation of the artist's exploration of sound in relation to the body and space.

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Florian Hecker, Chisenhale Gallery, London

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Oliver Laric, Versions, Seventeen Gallery, London

Hecker's list of collaborators includes [Carsten Holler](#), [Cerith Wyn Evans](#) and [Apex Twin](#). This exhibition of 4 new sound installations is definitely not to be missed.

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Florian Hecker

CHISENHALE GALLERY, LONDON, UK



Florian Hecker, installation view at Chisenhale Gallery (2010). Photographs: Andy Keate

The white-walled gallery with cracked concrete floors is cold, harshly reverberant and empty apart from a number of speakers, emitting high-pitched electronic tones, suspended from the ceiling at angles that call to mind surveillance cameras. Yet there is something very accessible about Florian Hecker's solo exhibition (co-commissioned by Chisenhale and IKON Gallery, Birmingham), which seems designed not to disorientate with sonic extremes – although it occasionally does – but to invite more considered questions about the spatial qualities of sound.

Pentaphonic Dark Energy (2008), Sadie Coles HQ, London

This is perhaps surprising given the nature of much of Hecker's output as a recording or performing electronic musician: releases such as last year's *Acid In The Style Of David Tudor* can feel

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Published on 10/03/10
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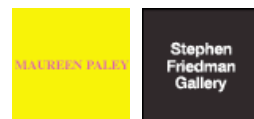
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exhilaratingly chaotic, their highly processed, alien textures, some of the most visceral to occur in purely digital music. However, that's not to say that his work is diluted in this setting, in which the listener is guided through four discrete explorations of different states of auditory perception. In the context of a gallery installation – here even more than in his last UK exhibition, at Sadie Coles HQ in late 2008 – it feels more as if his ideas are given room to unfold and breathe; that, with the extra dimension that the gallery allows, chaos reveals its order.



That said, in each work Hecker deliberately disrupts or distorts the usual order of our listening experiences, constructing a series of events in which fixed points and final decisions about what is heard slip out of reach. This is at its most immediate in *Auditory Scene* (2010), in which five loudspeakers placed at varying heights play a sequence of fast-paced tones, each starting at different points. At first the blurred, skittering sounds are baffling; further listening patterns them into impossible shapes that become almost compulsively elusive. In *Untitled* (2010), placed opposite, the loudspeaker shoots a single tone onto a ceramic-tiled section of the wall, creating a forcefield of oscillating sound. If the first of these is introspective, inviting a personal, physical response, and the second more concerned with the properties of the space and the physics of surfaces, *Magnitude Estimation* (2010) bridges the gap between the two, with synchronized voices projected across the gallery giving readings of numerical values of volume.



2 x 3 Kanal (2009) is exhibition's centrepiece, both literally – three outward-facing speakers are suspended from the middle of the ceiling – and in the success with which it brings together the concerns that are raised by the other works. The 19-minute work feels unlike an experiment or the exposition of a single idea: it is very much a composition. The synthesis of the means of transmission – the two three-channel pieces are played between the three speakers, rotating in different directions – and audio content feels perfectly realized, and visitors appear to fully inhabit the work, forming circles around the speakers, or moving to their own interior logic towards and away from the sound. *2 x 3 Kanal* has moments that recall the transformative, psychedelic elements of Hecker's live shows: at one point, towards the middle of the work, the conflicting textures of a high-end hiss and a pulsing throb battle it out for background and foreground status so effectively that I experienced an aural illusion similar to viewing a three-dimensional image; in the latter part of the piece, notions of high and low pitch are thrown into confusion as ascending tones ricochet off the echoing walls. But I imagine that Hecker's mastery of such phenomena is not particularly motivated by the desire to excite thrill-seeking noise fans; instead, we are being asked not only to put ourselves in the service of sound and space, but also to consider our own part in the process – how we, in a sense, create what we hear.

Frances Morgan

Responses

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REVIEWS: UK

Florian Hecker

Chisenhale Gallery, London
12 February – 28 March

Artist and musician Florian Hecker's solo show at Chisenhale, his first in a UK public institution, is by turns an auditory pleasure and an assault. Commissioned by Chisenhale and Birmingham's Ikon Gallery, Hecker's new installation of soundworks continues his investigations into the physicality of sound. Totalling just under half an hour and played in sequence around the space, the compositions feature some spoken words, the odd tune, tones, frequencies, pulses and white noise – the sound perhaps best suited to this clinical gallery space. I visited twice: the first time I wanted to flee, the second time I was lulled into staying put. These reactions provide a key to understanding Hecker's work, predicated on the idea of auditory reception being defined by variables as simple as one's position in a space.

The show comprises four works. *Magnitude Estimation* (2010) consists of two loudspeakers positioned at opposite ends of the cavernous gallery space, each simultaneously transmitting the same voice as it announces the loudness values of various sounds. The voice – flat and impersonal, yet like most automated readers recognisably female – reads statements such as “81 dBA sound pressure level”, but the information is skewed by harsh, screechy noises that crackle from the speakers. The doubling of the sound and the positioning of the speakers posits the sonic space between as a defined physical space where sounds meet and clash. This idea of sound in space and as space is one of the exhibition's ongoing refrains. *Auditory Scene (5 Fold)* (2010), for example, features five speakers suspended from the ceiling in a wavelike formation. A frenetic sequence of tones is emitted, ranging from high to low, which is echoed in the formal organisation of the speakers. The viewer can almost see these sounds rising and falling, faster or slower, depending on where she is standing in the gallery.

The triumph of the show is *2 x 3 Channel* (2009). Two three-channel pieces are played simultaneously, one clockwise, the other anticlockwise, around three speakers located in the middle of the ceiling. The viewer/listener's position in the gallery defines which strain takes auditory precedence. At just under 20 minutes, the work is most like a composition, encompassing related movements and similar rhythms and sounds repeated throughout. At certain points, something approximating a fairground tune is heard, before spiralling off into a digression of buzzing sounds and singing crystal. At moments when the composition reaches a fever-pitch of layered zipping noises, the sound feels densely physical, and the body's response to it purely visceral. It becomes a total environment, and moving around the space yields no respite. Attempting to transcribe the sound in language, I found myself unable to think outside of the sound itself, and resorted instead to visual notations, graph lines and scribbles that seemed most closely to describe it.

Background noise it ain't, but the pockets of space created by sound are strangely inviting, and the sense that one's insides are being hollowed out to better receive it is pleasantly intuitive. It's the *thing-ness* of noise that Hecker is immersed in; by the time the work is over, you imagine you are seeing the particles in space throbbing. *Laura Allsop*



Florian Hecker, 2010 (Installation view, Chisenhale Gallery, London). Photo: Andy Keate. Courtesy Sadie Coles HQ, London, and Galerie Noll, Berlin

Kaye Donachie

★★★★★

Maureen Paley

Bethnal Green to Hackney

Kaye Donachie's paintings have always contained ambiguities, her depictions of Edenic and utopian scenes often incorporating intimations of dread or exploitation. However, in her current works portraying women from the 1920s and '30s, it's the very forms themselves that seem indeterminate. The figures are blurred or multiplied, bodies and faces continually bisected by lurching shadows, diffused with eerie light, or refracted through prisms of coppery colours so that they seem to be on the verge of dissolving away altogether into the background.

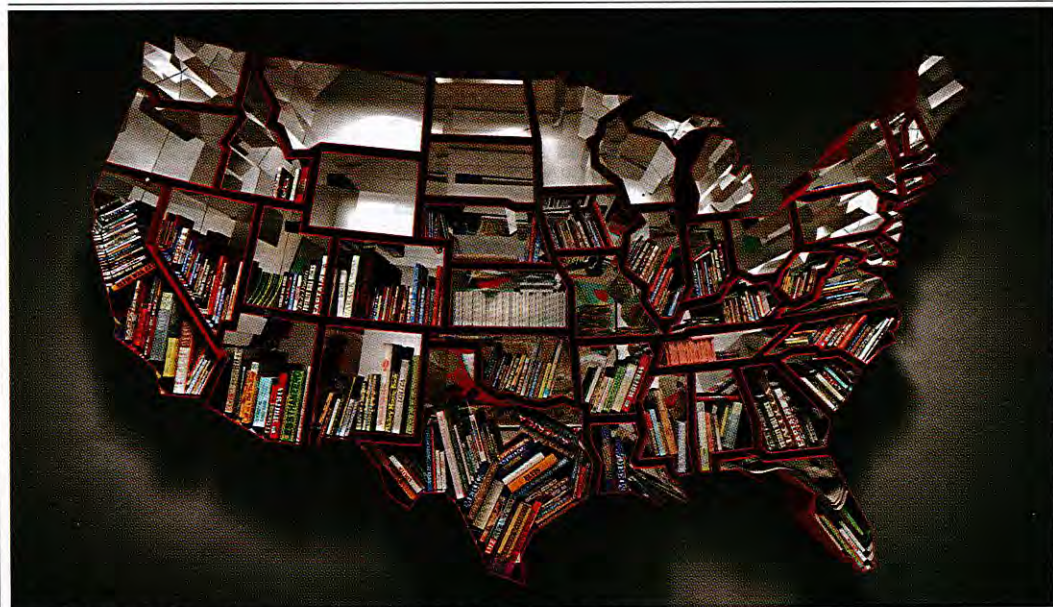
The women reflect Donachie's continuing interest in idealist movements – they're all feminists and futurists, a mixture of persons real and imagined. The mood, however, is far from hopeful; instead, these six small works seem melancholy, brittle. Taken together, they read like still versions of some strange German expressionist film, whose complicated montage effects have somehow been held in stasis, as if slowed by the translation to paint. Donachie's staring heroines seem unnaturally fixed in place, their potential movements at once obscured and occluded.

Such cinematic associations are appropriate. In the upstairs gallery, the artist has compiled a programme of excerpts from various leftfield, experimental films dating from the '30s to the '70s. Although each clip is stylistically distinct, two main thematic areas emerge: the play and manipulation of light and pattern, and issues surrounding the representation of women, as images and objects to be gazed upon. This may sound rather theoretical or dryly academic, but in fact the films are often quirkily amusing and even touching, the show as a whole never heavy-handed – quite the opposite, in fact: the overall sense is of something fugitive and vaporous, a vision of femininity that's mutable and inchoate. *Gabriel Coxhead*



'I do believe that most of me, floats under water', oil on canvas, 2010

Ron Arad: Restless



United States of Ephemera 'Oh, the Farmer and the Cowman Should Be Friends', 2009

★★★★★

Barbican Centre Major spaces

Busy, busy, that's Ron Arad. As illustrated by this coruscating retrospective, he has been perpetually on the go for 30 years, creating everything from spoons to shopping centres. The restlessness extends to the work itself. Attached to motors, furniture fidgets – bookshelves slide on tracks, or, in the case of 'This Mortal Coil', judder like they're enjoying a private joke. A corresponding jitteriness is instilled in the viewer. You can send a text message to the 'Lolita' chandelier and have it displayed in twinkling lights and, in the rumpus area that closes the show, play ping-pong on a polished steel table curved at each

end like the wings of a jet – to slow the game down, apparently – or fold yourself into an array of Arad's (less ritzy, it has to be said) furniture.

It's a dazzling, endlessly distracting experience but in the end, the ideas and references are what make Arad's work truly restless. Visual quips and punning titles aside, from the Duchampian 'Rover Chair' with which he made his name, he has ceaselessly pushed the potential of objects, so much so that his abiding obsession with the humble chair becomes something of a running gag. There are moments, particularly with his many mirror-finish, 'Terminator 2'-meets-Henry Moore confections, when it looks as though Arad would rather have been a Lisson sculptor, entirely free to

exercise his imagination, than a designer with mundane practicalities to consider.

Perhaps a part of him still yearns for that freedom, even though we're far less snuffy about the hierarchies of art and design these days, and his own reputation – and prices – are comparable with the big boys of contemporary art. Yet the enduring impression is of a man happy with his lot and endlessly energised by his work's potential. In short films that act in lieu of gallery texts, Arad's openness and humour shine while the art versus design arguments recede. He has also made excellent use of the Barbican's rather awkward spaces, which makes him less of a designer and more of a miracle worker. *Martin Coomer*

Florian Hecker

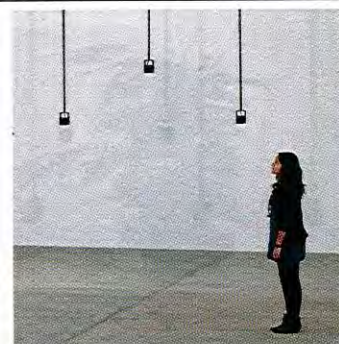
★★★★★

Chisenhale Bethnal Green to Hackney

Even now that we are used to seeing artists struggle valiantly within the formidable Turbine Hall of Tate Modern, the interior of this ex-veneer factory can still shrink or strand an artist's work. Florian Hecker savours this challenge, however. Not only do his sound installations grow to the size of their container, they also describe and are inscribed by it. Like a carwash, the symbiosis of sound and space creates a scenario that invites the visitor to pass through or languish within it.

Five electro-acoustic works, each delivered by its own severe, pragmatic constellation of black speakers, take turns to generate an audio encounter. Four pieces segue and shift between abstract elements, at times rising in tone

to imply progression towards denouement or bouncing back and forth in perpetuity. The fifth is a self-referential experiment in spoken word, amplification and interference. Hecker operates in both art and music worlds, and does not submit to the idea that the manipulation of an audience is tyrannical. 'Auditory Scene (5 fold)', for example – a series of five speakers at zigzagging heights emitting sounds that create an illusion of a single panning rhythmic track – impels the listener to move left to right, to check for parity or balance or succession. '2 x 3 Kanal' appears to rotate about the gallery, listeners generally standing still to experience the full carousel effect. Psychoacoustics might be brought into play to discuss the finer theories of subjective perception – audio as object and the reciprocity between listener and



Hecker's sonic installation

flux of audio event. Perhaps more beguiling, though, is how this brittle formalism occasionally cracks and the associations of cinema and dance invariably seep in. *Sally O'Reilly*



Florian Hecker installation at Chisenhale Gallery

Florian Hecker

Chisenhale Gallery, London, UK

Suspended from the ceiling on black steel poles in a cavernous gallery space painted brilliant white are speakers – five of them bounce an ecosystem of shadows against the back wall, three are clustered around the centre of the ceiling and, hung on opposite walls across the space, two more speakers face each other like duelling pistols. Bracing myself against an Arctic East London afternoon, I enter the gallery in time to hear sound drain away from the speakers. There's absolute silence and then I sneeze. Deafeningly. The one person already in the room shudders like I've detonated a grenade. She glares in my direction, but I'm entranced at how the acoustic carries my sneeze, ricocheting its shockwaves off the walls, filtering out the upper partials from my nasal intrusion.

Having inadvertently tested the acoustics housing this latest show by German electronic music composer Florian Hecker, I'm reminded why composers like Cage, Feldman and Glass were driven to perform in art galleries during their formative, scene-setting years. Why put music that aims to upset classical archetypes in those very halls conceived as monuments to classical assumptions of superiority? As the Chisenhale Gallery amply demonstrates, gallery spaces can sound great: resonant, vibrant, roomy.

Here, Hecker unveiled four new works – *Magnitude Estimation* (2010), *2 × 3 Kanal* (*2 × 3 Channel*, 2009), *Untitled* (2010), *Auditory Scene* (*5 fold*) (2010) – running in a sequence that lasts around 40 minutes, which the curator must reboot after each play to, as he told me, protect an overstretched Mac Mini from wear and tear.

Hecker's pieces are bona fide sculptures. They have a different narrative from music derived from music, and he's dealt with the issue of placing sound, in what is ostensibly a visual space, very cannily. The last

thing these works are about to advocate is storytelling and passive listening. Each piece requires an intensely active engagement with the processes Hecker triggers. They need to be walked around and viewed/heard from multiple perspectives; listeners must place their brains between the concepts and the emerging sounds. Hecker's fusion between form and content is expressed most sharply in *Magnitude Estimation*, the piece involving two speakers hanging from opposite walls. On the left: an alto-range female voice reads out the decibel levels of given sounds. Bouncing back along the other wall is the corresponding decibel reading realised as fragmenting, viscous white noise. Move around the space and the counterpoint between voice and noise walks with you. And there's an enjoyable conceptual oxymoron too – since no functional link between the loudness of the reading and the noise actually exists, it wouldn't matter if the two sides didn't match up anyway.

Auditory Scene (*fold 5*), in which your perspective on a zigzagging line shifts depending on where you stand, and *Untitled*, which uses ceramic tiles to deflect and bend tones, propose comparable sonic monkey puzzles. *2 × 3 Kanal* (*2 × 3 Channel*), however, trips logic up most profoundly. Deploying different speakers to simultaneously twist clockwise and anticlockwise, Hecker trashes perceptions of background and foreground, while snow-blinding your ears to how high a seemingly endless rising scale can possibly reach. Having walked around the piece, I leant against a wall and my ears were unexpectedly caught in the crossfire of competing, irregular overtones. I felt like the music had followed me round the room: any remaining questions about why Hecker's vision of electronic composition is better suited to gallery spaces were conclusively answered.

Philip Clark