

MATERIAL – SOUND – FORM

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ABSTRACT

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My installations begin with the curiosity of how we experience sound through material and form. Through intellectual play in the studio, experimentation with materials, and the deconstruction of objects, I find a deeper appreciation for their qualities. This observational process of materiality is self-aware and can be related to concepts of deep listening, as defined by Pauline Oliveros. These qualities are categorized as physical and associative, the first dealing with the characteristics found in physics, and the second with the historical and cultural associations bound up with our perception of those materials/objects. Looking at authors like Caleb Kelly, Eva Díaz, and Will Schrimshaw, I will define materiality as it relates to my practice. Ultimately, the goal of my installations, *Vitrified Sound* and *Go-Between*, are to reframe the viewer as a user and imply functionality in my work. The resulting form is an accessible object that requires users to re-orient their perspective or themselves physically.

This thesis will also consider the work of artists' Benjamin Patterson, Christian Marclay, and Zimoun in relation to my installations *Vitrified Sound* and *Go-Between*. Through material and process-based research, I will contextualize my work within the broader traditions of materiality and its relationship with sound. Overview and detail photography, coupled with in-depth descriptions and comparisons of *Vitrified Sound* and *Go-Between*, will be used to link studio and material research to users' playful experiences of these installations. *Vitrified Sound* and *Go-Between* have benefited from the two modes of study, setting contextualized precedents and practical approaches to creating a more efficient and concrete embodied experience for the audience.

PREFACE

The studio-based practice research examined in this thesis took place over the course of my three years of graduate study, but the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic in the final months of my MFA caused significant obstacles in the fabrication, installation, and transcription of my work. Though this is no excuse for any shortcomings of my research and craft, context is always essential for understanding how or why something is the way it is. That said, the challenges presented during this time have allowed for a new perspective on the creation and exhibition of my work, causing me to question my practice and how it can adapt to other modes of presentation.

At the completion of this thesis, only one of my two planned installations was completed to its intended end, while the other remained mostly incomplete. Still, all of the material-based research related to these works was finished prior to the writing of this paper and is addressed in these pages. The conceptual components, though mostly unrealized, still lend themselves to the present conversation concerning materiality, sound, and form.

To provide a more conversational tone for the discussion of my work, this thesis also includes, in an appendix, excerpts from an interview conducted with Colby Caldwell, Co-Founder and Program Director of REVOLVE in Asheville, NC. The interview served as a starting point for my writing process. The transcript of the full interview is available to read and listen to at www.raybaccari.com.

INTRODUCTION: LINES OF INQUIRY

[A]rtwork was the impulse but it was the response that was significant and the catalyst.
(Schrimshaw ix)

Why do I enjoy live music? How can I amplify a heartbeat? What does dirt sound like? That's a cool noise. How can this object be used again? These are some of the first questions and statements that started several lines of inquiry—some requiring contemplation, some requiring experimentation in the studio, and some requiring other forms of research—that led to the installations I will be discussing. Each line of inquiry is significant but is only relevant when brought together by a physical form. Will Schrimshaw speaks to the different motivations for creating art and his writing. He acknowledges the potential for deeper emotive or immersive intent in his work while aligning his focus on what aspects let it get there. As such, my response to materiality and the functional associations of them makes my installations successful. I intend to show how materiality, sound/deep listening, process, and artistic influences work together to create a successfully engaged installation. Each aspect lends itself to the final presentation and determines how I see materials, respond to their qualities, anticipate audience interaction, and expand upon the precedent established by others in my field.

The research for this thesis draws from my studio practice and my own experiences and experiments as an artist working with sound, materials, and form. The issues, ideas, and discussion that follow are concerned with my material-based practice and how that process has helped me identify formal relationships between sound and material. It is important to acknowledge the other conceptual content of my installations *Go-Between* and *Vitrified Sound*; however, the focus of this thesis is on the physical and associative qualities of materials. The impulse to make work that produces empathetic responses or acts as a sonic portrait is superseded by materiality's significance in being the catalyst for that experience to occur.

AT A GLANCE

Vitrified Sound contains 24 porcelain slip-cast discs, cast from vinyl records. The content of these discs includes eight different sound collages, comprised of various field recordings made in Western North Carolina. These porcelain LPs rest on the wall, held by plywood plates with pegs, open and facing outward to the viewer. Accompanying the LPs is a plywood console built to reference an iconic piece of midcentury modern furniture. This console stands upright on its side, placed in the middle of a found area rug. Three found turntables and headphones sit within various stations on the console for the viewer to listen to the porcelain LPs.

Go-Between's main feature is an oversized black plywood horn measuring 5' in diameter at the opening. A series of cushions reside inside the mouth of the horn, providing a space for audience members to enter and sit. A plywood stool with a mic'd stethoscope, which connects to the horn through an amplification system, sits a foot away. This is provided for the audience to use and amplify their heartbeat through the system and the wooden horn. Soundproof panels accompany the horn, covering two adjacent walls in a grid pattern. The panels on the wall are left bare, showing the Rockwool insulation and are framed by the same plywood as the horn's construction. *Go-Between* sits atop a layered patchwork of wall-to-wall area rugs. The panels and rugs serve to help reduce sound issues in the space and create a comfortable environment.

MATERIALITY

In my work, materiality is defined as both the physical and associative properties of the materials or objects that I use – a perspective much like Josef Albers' philosophy on the material constitution of form. Eva Díaz explains how Albers categorizes this as *matière* and *material* in her article, "The Ethics of Perception." The former is concerned with appearances, such as texture and structure. The latter considers the capacities of materials, such as their compression or elasticity. (263) One is a study of the visual qualities of materials, while the other is a study of matter itself. My work oscillates between these two halves of materiality. I take what I learn from the material itself and respond by distilling and combining that knowledge

in various ways. These two categories reinforce one another, resonating toward a complete comprehension of the resulting form. As such, the user gains an accessible understanding of how to engage with my installations.

In his article, “Materials of Sound,” Australian writer and curator Caleb Kelly defines a material-based practice as “one in which the materials stand for themselves.” (Material-Based Art Practice) He is referring to the qualities that are inherent in everyday material, from dirt to birch plywood. Each act only as they can in physics and contain characteristics specific only to that material. How hard are they? Are they conductive? Can they bend? These considerations are answered through simple, but intentional, observation of the materials in question. Those qualities inform what to expect in terms of structure and behavior. Kelly’s definition best covers how I organize and categorize the materials based on various hierarchies, like functionality and visual effect, and how I construct sculptural forms like a large wooden amplification horn, or porcelain LPs and record cabinets.

However, the physical qualities of materials are often bound up with an associated use or the objects they make up and their functions. “Matter pertains to the sensorial events of a contingent encounter that ultimately boil down to an auto-affective sensation of the self.” (Schrimshaw 120) It is how we discern use or determine value, the correctness of setting, and frame our interaction with the physical world. These associations are often based on our collective understanding, or a type of pre-knowledge, of objects derived from the shared experience of our senses.

SOUND & LISTENING

Why sound? In my studio practice, I recognize sound as both a material and a material quality. Sound can expand our perceptions of the space around us, and as such, provide a more immersive experience for the audience. Historically, sound has taken on two forms in visual art: Musique Concrète’s *sound object*—defined as: sound in itself, disambiguated from any material or source origins, being exclusively sonic or acousmatic experience—and, what

John Cage refers to as, *material object*—defined as: a material or source origin that highlights the physical object that produces a sonic experience. (LeBelle 32) These are considered to be mutually exclusive terms. However, I think, when working with sound, one can fluctuate between them and apply their relevant qualities to an installation. There is an absurdity of materiality and sound that audibly and visually amplifies the experiences of the audience. Their encounter with the physicality of the object does not detract from the audible and intimate experience of the sounds coming from the object.

Sounds trigger memory and thereby activate similar associative qualities as other, more concrete, materials that I use. It is a way to measure attentiveness and is best appreciated through the practice of listening. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines listening in 3 ways: “to pay attention to sound, to hear something with thoughtful attention: give consideration, to be alert to catch an expected sound.” All of these require active participation from those in the space.

Using sound in installations like *Vitrified Sound* and *Go-Between* comes with the same principles of materiality that I apply to the wood or porcelain materials in the work. Sound as a quality and material in itself, stands apart from the other materials I use. It is a method of engaging the audience in a direct or unfiltered way. It prompts the viewer to question if they can listen to the porcelain discs in *Vitrified Sound* or project their heartbeat through a stethoscope in *Go-Between*. Sound invites the audience to become active, pay attention, and engage with the space in some way. Sound then takes on associative qualities of an enjoyable activity that requires one to be intentional with their time and listen to the work.

Taking it one step further, Pauline Oliveros presents the concept of “Deep Listening” in her book, *Deep Listening: A Composers Sound Practice*, as a way to move listening from an automatic response to one that is self-aware. “Listening to your listening.” (Introduction) It comes with the same awareness and attention required to unpack the material qualities I use in my installations. Sound becomes a catalyst for engagement and intimacy in works like *Vitrified Sound* and *Go-Between*. It frames the whole engagement as the primary guide of what one

should “do” in the space that these installations inhabit. This is especially evident in *Vitrified Sound*, where the sound collages are crafted using a collection of field recordings. I took time and paid special attention to my surroundings over the past three years, building a collection of noises that tell the story of my time in Western North Carolina. I first heard about deep listening in my interview with Colby Caldwell, who made the connection to my work. (See Appendix C)

WORK: HOW IT APPLIES

VITRIFIED SOUND

When creating *Vitrified Sound*, I considered these physical and associative material qualities. The 24 slip-cast discs reference the historical and formal power of an LP. The physical properties deal with porcelain’s ability to be cast and hold physical information, as well as its sonic qualities when played on a turntable. The “iconic” image of the LP carries with it a pre-knowledge of the object’s function, accessing the viewers’ associative understanding of how to engage with it. The choice of porcelain even elevates the precious associations with these LPs. Accompanying the porcelain discs are turntables and a plywood console that looks to iconic midcentury modern furniture. The materials themselves are durable, stable, and have an association with furniture making, providing a structure to display a portion of the installation. The associative qualities of the record console as a form, which in a sense acts as an altar for one to engage with LPs, again guides the viewer’s interaction with this installation. All aspects are considered, based on these parameters. Each signifier suggests a functionality in the work, which relies on the shorthand of pre-knowledge, that invites the audience’s activation.



Figure 1. Porcelain Records (Detail), 2019



Figure 2. Porcelain Records (Detail-2), 2019

GO-BETWEEN

The construction of *Go-Between* follows the same principals of materiality. The horn is constructed of Baltic birch plywood due to its structural, acoustic, and aesthetic properties. The consistent layered wood creates a visually pleasing line at the edge of the material. This physical quality informed the choice to expose that edge and outline the large opening of the horn, drawing attention inside to the seat cushions. The plywood's physical qualities also include its ability to resonate and amplify sound, or in this case, an individual's heartbeat. The cushions suggest a position to witness the engagement from a place of comfort. Formally, this construction looks to a gramophone and its ability to acoustically amplify sound, as well as the interactive associations with that function. That line of reasoning applies to the soundproofing that accompanies the horn. Exposing the panels on the wall shows the physical qualities of their manufacturing and assembly. Again, consistent edge lines of the plywood act as a frame for the Rockwool insulation, highlighting the waffle texture and gray/green coloring. The qualities of sound dampening are also found in the area rugs while channeling domestic associations. All relate to a home recording studio or DIY music space. Combining these qualities implies a functional and accessibly familiar space that guides the user's engagement with the horn.



Figure 3. Go-Between (Humans Excited About Being Human Exhibition View), 2020

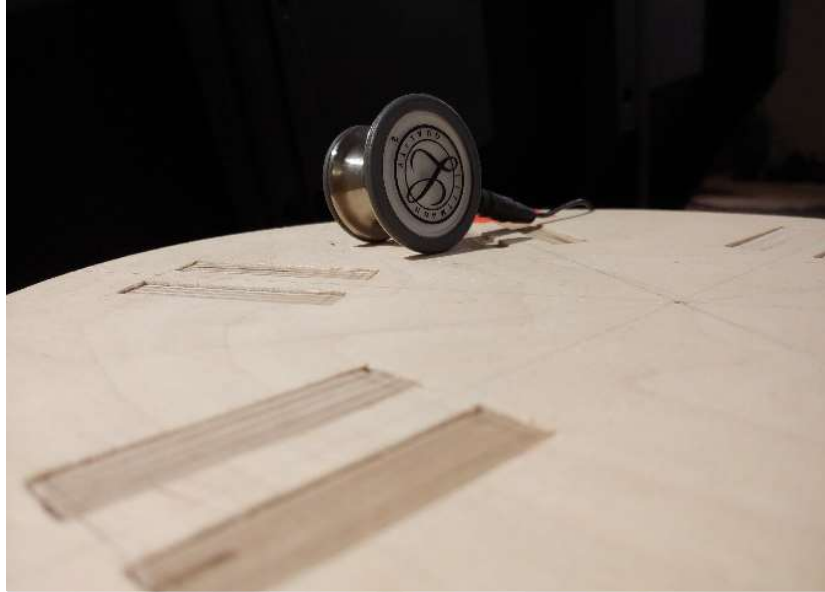


Figure 4. *Go-Between* (Detail), 2020

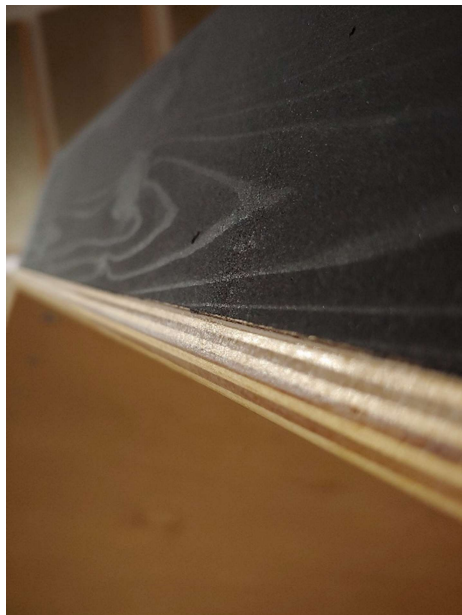


Figure 5. *Go-Between* (Detail-2), 2020

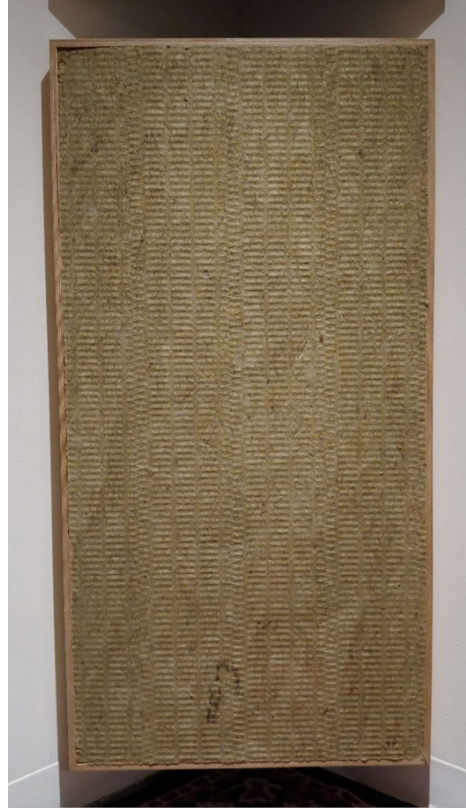


Figure 6. *Go-Between* (Detail-3), 2020

PROCESS: MAKING A USER

[W]hat creative and subversive potentials arise if we do not push analog medium further into transparency, but instead welcome and even intensify these imperfections and interferences. (Scherer 278)

My installations may begin with the previously mentioned lines of inquiry, but the sensibilities of Sebastian Scherer guide my process of discovering the interactions of sound with material and form. By dissecting the individual components and materials of everyday objects, I can connect the seemingly ethereal sound object to the physical material object. By consistently questioning a work's experiential delivery, I intuitively reach a deeper understanding of a

material's language and limitations. An example of this is *Go-Between's* plywood horn and its ability to resonate sound, hold structure, and refer to a sonic function.

Despite any conceptual intent, my goal is always to share the playful discoveries that often inform the resulting installation. In its broadest sense, the driving force behind my work is to reconnect the eyes and ears of the audience with the physical and material nature of sound. I achieve this through the use and transformation of everyday objects by using the visual shorthand that comes with their formal and material associations. This process has two dimensions. First, it includes those discoveries within the studio—the histories bound up with the objects and materials I use. Second, it recontextualizes the familiar or “iconic,” which allows the audience to visually comprehend an installation more easily—much like how a gramophone horn, record console, or LPs in an art context suggest a direct engagement.

Through the process of play, I often perform the role of an inventor and problem solver who utilizes materiality in the context of the visual arts. Play is an important consideration because my installations seek the interaction or performance of the audience as well as the objects themselves. That interaction comes from thinking of the viewers as users of my work. The ensuing relationship is one of resonance. Brandon LaBelle recognizes the notion of resonance as a quality that fits both sonic and visual art in his book *Background Noise*. According to LaBelle, “Resonance is about fragments coming together to form greater wholes.” (125) I see resonance in my installations as the place where like knows like, where the user and object come together to form a functional relationship. The forms and devices in my installations are used to create static systems that require the user to activate and shape the content. By creating a set of rules defined by visual cues, a potential outcome is implied; however, the result is not always what is expected. In the case of *Go-Between*, the intent is for a heartbeat to play through the stethoscope, but the user can subvert that by playing whatever they like. The unpredictability of the user in this system gives space for indeterminate connections to form

within the environment. It is here the resonant relationship exists, as the user discovers a playful functionality in the work, which may disarm them. Something is recognized as becoming whole and seen between the user and the object, or the user and someone else. Colby Caldwell and I spoke about the importance of reframing the viewer as a user in my installations as a way to subvert expectations. (See Appendix A).

INFLUENCES: LAYING THE FOUNDATION

[D]eath alone is silent and [...] life is full of noise – work noise, human noise, animal noise. [...] Nothing essential happens in the absence of noise. (Attali 90)

When investigating the relationships between sound, material, and form, I encountered a long tradition of sound artists that pushed boundaries, laying the foundations for my own body of work. Swiss-American artist Christian Marclay, American Fluxus artist Benjamin Patterson and Swiss artist Zimoun all inspired ways to subvert our collective understanding of everyday materials and sounds. Witnessing their treatment of materials provided a precedent that gave me access to a shorthand for guiding interaction. Patterson's *Paper Piece* (1960), Marclay's *Recycled Records* (1980), and Zimoun's *186 prepared dc motors, cotton balls, cardboard boxes* (2010), are all excellent examples of work that push materials and objects to their limits. I even see my interest in the physical and associative properties of the materials connecting with the tradition of Minimalist sculpture. Each artist applies a sense of deep listening to their environments, materials, and objects as they inform the audience's level of participation. They do so by stratifying material qualities otherwise deemed imperfect or unimportant and rely on object ontology as a common language to frame the experience of their works.

Patterson provides a list of instructions on how to interact with different types of paper. Members of the audience are asked to come on stage and interact with piles of paper according to the instructions. These instructions are based on the physical limitations of paper in itself and turn something discarded and mundane into an instrument. Examining Patterson helped me identify ways of experimenting with systems of play and interaction. *Vitrified Sound* asks users to interact with porcelain LPs based on a defined set of understood rules. *Go-Between* asks the audience to take on the role of performer, like *Paper Piece*, with the engagement defined by the equipment in the space.

Marclay's *Recycled Records* reconsiders the ubiquity and disposability of an LP in ways that make evident sound as a physical material. The records are collected, broken, and collaged together, highlighting the pops and clicks created by their reconstruction. His work has taught me to consider a wholistic way of making an immersive listening experience. Marclay's use of charged objects with implied function, such as LPs and instruments, has also impacted how I view objects as material. This has framed how I use the formal qualities of a record console in *Vitrified Sound* or the gramophone in *Go-Between*.

Zimoun assembles a tower of cardboard boxes, activated by a simple series of dc motors and cotton balls. His treatment of a nonprecious material elevates the familiar and mundane objects with absurdity and scale. It is this approach to material that evokes a quality of deep listening, and how thoughtful one can be with otherwise utilitarian material. This process takes time and attention, similar to the process of collecting field recordings for *Vitrified Sound*. Likewise, *Go-Between*'s activation via heartbeat becomes significant through a sonic absurdity of scale. Making something internal, external, and louder through the amp system makes it take on a thoughtful presence. I touched on this and other regional and home life influences in my interview with Colby Caldwell. (See Appendix B)

CONCLUSION: MATERIALS CREATING RESONANCE

By allowing myself to play in the studio, and exploring how materials and objects work, I find a deeper appreciation for their qualities. From that, I gain a sense of craftsmanship and inventiveness that allows these things to come into my life. My senses connect me with the materials, grounded in their physical presence. Those physical qualities assure me that these objects are real. The associated qualities, the history they are bound up with, let me know they have the potential to be important. Those moments are what I enjoy about making work and are the discoveries I aim to share. Materiality plays a crucial role in the success of audiences engaging with *Go-Between* and *Vitrified Sound*, through associative material qualities and their ability to create a common language—based on pre-knowledge—that every audience member can access. My treatment of materials seeks to utilize this shorthand. It is a mechanism that can transcend different ways of communication. Sound is explicitly one quality that I think best accomplishes this. Using sound helps to imply functionality, which then suggests interaction on some level. Through the processes of the engagement, the users create a resonant connection with the space, object, or other users. I came to this conclusion through my studio practice, which includes play, experimentation, and the practice of deep listening. However, my study of artists, who use sound, laid the foundation for me to do this with confidence, and successfully engage the audience. Although I stated at the beginning of this paper that the empathetic response or sonic portraiture of my installations was not the focus, the ability to achieve those more emotive conceptual aspects is only done so through materiality.

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APPENDIX A

Colby Caldwell And since you've been here, you've continued along the path of the idea of sound, but then the idea of generating a lot of your work from found objects or using what would sometimes been seen as construction materials and finding ways to change that, transform that into things in your studio practice that would have some sort of charged element. You ground these everyday materials with elements of the personal.

Just as you subvert the original "use" of these found materials, you subverted the expectations of what people might see at your GMU BFA painting thesis show at that point.

Baccari Right.

Caldwell You're continuing to use this idea, this concept to subvert, even in the commissions that people are contacting you to do which I think is really wonderful, but now as you are preparing work for your MFA thesis at WCU, you're creating work that might be in some ways difficult to define or difficult to find a place in the more general sense. You also are working in that liminal space between disciplines.

So, do you see yourself primarily working in sound installation? Do you see yourself primarily as a sculptor or do you actually see yourself primarily as a performer?

Baccari I think that it's equal parts of all three. Because the object, the physical object is really important to what I do, so that's ... and of course sound as an element as well, depending on an immersive experience, so sculpture for sure, but sometimes that expands onto a more full-on installation to create a more expanded experience for the audience member and then I still think it's performative in a way. Less on myself and more on that interaction between the object and the audience member, the user. Either they are performing, or the object itself is performing in the space.

Caldwell Okay, so you use the term "user" which in some sense is a fairly interesting way to engage your audience or think about your viewers - to think about them more as users and that starts to bump up against that idea of the audience as consumers in a sense, right, that they are having some sort of engagement that's ... I'm imagining that's not passive, and if we had to think about something that seems to be vital for you in that experience is how to transform the viewer from passive to active.

Baccari Yes.

Caldwell And the way to maybe do that is really in the way that you're describing, in the sense of continuing to use and put forth this idea that you really see folks as being "users" of your work, not necessarily just viewers of your work - and moves you away from being the performer in the traditional sense, into creating a situation, creating an element where the user becomes the performer.

...

Caldwell So okay, that word "iconic" has come up, and that's something I think is a pretty rich word. In several instances, you talk about how using iconic forms and how that can ... as you've just indicated that that in some ways is a signal to the viewer that they can engage in this form, in the ways that they're familiar with.

Baccari Right.

Caldwell Although the form itself may not be as familiar as it once was.

Baccari Correct.

Caldwell So how do you think forms become iconic? How would you ... and how do you actually describe the term: "Iconic?"

Baccari So for me, it's using ... honestly, something I would consider every day, that we're very familiar with. Guitars are pretty ubiquitous as an example. At least everybody thinks they can try and play one. And then those associations with these objects, mostly visually speaking, so that first visual image that pops in your head when I say guitar or stereo or vinyl record, or drums or something like that. Everybody has ... I feel everybody has this visual that pops into their head of what those individual components are that make up that object, then pulling from those, as a visual inspiration is why I consider them iconic and then how I try and utilize them, is zero in on those aspects.

Caldwell And as we touched on the iconic bits, described the tuning keys, the strings, fretboard to a certain extent, the hollow body with the hole.

And those things create a common communal language that you can tap into.

Baccari Right.

Caldwell Finding ways to then reconfigure those things to your own means, your own uses, yet keep the engagement that those forms take on to get your audience to become users is pretty vital.

Baccari Absolutely.

Caldwell So I know we've talked about this, this idea that you ... I wouldn't describe you as a hoarder. I've been in your studio and I've spent some time. It's what I would call an organized chaos.

But ... and I use the term organized primarily over chaos. It's clearly very thorough in the way that you organize, put things, and things of that nature. You're not just picking things up and throwing them in the studio ... In a corner and figuring out what will happen later, but you're a

collector and it wouldn't put it past you to be driving down the road, pulling over and picking something up off the side of the road ... If it grabs your attention.

Baccari Done it before.

Caldwell Yes. So, once that happens, once you take this object, I think you've mentioned to me sometimes, you use Craigslist as a photo ground. And even going to friend's houses, they're not immune to the possibility of you asking, "Are you using that?"

Baccari Yeah.

Caldwell This idea of taking these objects that have a history, they have their own chargedness to what they were intentionally made for, you're taking them from one place that is in some ways been neglected, you're then picking them up, and you're taking them to what ... and especially someone like yourself whose studio is in a sense a laboratory, it becomes very intentional.

Baccari Yep.

Caldwell When an object comes into your studio, does it become integrated in your work right away, and or sometimes, does it sit in there for three years?

Baccari Both. It depends on the object. It depends on how available those things are, so if I have a specific need for tuning keys for guitars and I hop on Craigslist and then I find five for under 20 bucks each, I'll go buy five. I probably don't need them all, so some will sit and live, but it's usually fueled by ... or at least initially by a very specific requirement of material from these things.

Caldwell That would be the Craigslist situation.

Baccari That would be a Craigslist situation or going to a thrift store. I'm usually there for a purpose, and I'm there for these objects which I consider material, to be either broken down into its individual parts and harvested and re-utilized some of the way, or sometimes it's just a really,

really interesting object that is so charged with its histories or my associations with it, or it's just so exotic, that it just lives in the studio with me and we occupy space together, and I just visually wrestle with it and pull inspiration from it, as opposed to physical materials, so things like vinyl records sit around. They become pretty non-precious objects in a way, unless you really like what's actually on it, or listening horns are fascinating to me as a natural way to amplify something, especially because we're all so familiar with the electrical and digital side of things nowadays. They have that nostalgia associated with them, of course, but ...

Caldwell And that's a good example of how the iconic element of that is something that you can play with, for lack of a better term.

Baccari Right, so yeah, and nostalgia's going to be inescapable with a lot of the things that I have utilized just because I have so much past and history associated with them, so yeah, they ...

Caldwell Just for a moment, that's really interesting to me, because in your previous life, you were working as a videogame designer, so you're really working in the virtual world, to generate things that don't have a history. And now, you are actually trading in objects that are obviously in the tangible world, but are dripping with history/nostalgia...

Baccari Right.

Caldwell Was there a particular moment where you were making that shift or do you still see yourself working in both those places?

Baccari I definitely see the importance of working in both places and I won't shy away from it, but I think the turn from one to another is just an evolution of growing up in general and is gaining confidence and awareness or knowledge about things and I grew up with video games and that's what I knew, so that's where I wanted to be.

And then just in feeling like it's okay to actually explore these other things and learn how other things work, or how things worked in the past really led me down that line of inquiry of why don't we use this anymore? What was wrong with it?

Caldwell So this is a technology issue, in a way.

Baccari Yeah.

Caldwell In a sense, what you're saying is that you don't really differentiate between the technology of the computer to the technology of a record player. They're both technology. They both at one point were the cutting edge of technology.

So, the idea of creating a hierarchy within that technology is something that you've been able to just neutralize. It's just about technology and how does it work, why does it work, what purpose does it serve now and what purpose it served in the past. That's rich for you to mine.

Baccari How can it ... There's nothing wrong with revisiting and seeing how it can be useful again. It doesn't always have to be new and innovative, with heavy quotation marks and I think ... especially in a lot of my reading for my thesis, there is a general disassociation as artists, but also with people, from the objects that they utilize every day, specifically the stereo. Nobody questions how or why the stereo works. They absolutely take for granted that it does and if it doesn't, it's broken, and they need a new one.

So there's a lot of little bits of it, of the DIY, the fixing culture, just questioning why we always need something new. As part of that turn, or at least looking back to older technology, but yeah, it's pretty much a level playing field for me.

Caldwell Well, I had two things just to follow up with that and they're not questions, but as a photographer, when I'm out in the world, it's a visual experience and I'm always in some ways ... Even though I don't necessarily currently work in a traditional way as a photographer in the

sense I don't carry a camera around, I am visually photographing in my mind's eye all the time, in the sense of thinking about whether this is a fertile area for me to possibly come back and work in at some point.

It sounds like to me, in a sense, that's kind of how you are operating as a sculptor in the world. You're moving through the world and you're looking at things as potential material and you're not necessarily limiting it to ... and this gets back to your video game current way of thinking, way of working. You're not limiting it to its original use.

You're not saying "Oh, that's a ... That's a piano so it should sit upright and it's going to be over against the wall and I'll figure out a way to build something around it." You actually think of it as "Oh, that's the shelf with all these different components in it that could be taken apart and reconfigured in different ways." It's just a holding box for a whole bunch of cool stuff.

Baccari Yeah, really cool, small intricate things.

Caldwell And so, in a sense, that's how you're traveling through the world.

There's an artist that I think that works in Asheville that came out as a visiting artist to Western. I'm not sure if you got to work with her, Molly Sawyer.

Baccari Yeah, she came into my studio briefly, yeah.

Caldwell And she did a small show out there as well, and I don't know if you've seen her work outside of that particular context but she also ... and I've been with her in numerous occasions where I'm trying to have a conversation or we're just walking the dogs together and I lose her for like minutes, maybe even 15 minutes at a time because she's been side tracked by something that she sees that could be potential material and it's usually a matter of collecting it. And then moving it and then storing it, but then in her practice, sometimes it can sit there for literally years before it then reveals what it's use is going to be for her.

And I see somewhat of a slight way in which that you guys look at material, while your end results are dramatically pretty different, but you both are able to neutralize its original content, its original use and see through that in a transformative way.

It's a way I think that allows your users, in your case, and viewers in Molly's case, as a way to create that kind of transformative moment for them visually. They are not ... You're taking them places they weren't expecting to go with these iconic forms and shapes that have been done and that's ... That seems like it'd be a real part of your practice at the end, which is you're wanting the viewer, and in your case the user, to have this "What ... I'm familiar with this, but it's become something I'm not that familiar with so let me see ..."

Baccari Right. I'm looking for that accessibility with the familiar for them to get into the sculpture or the installation and then follow along with a similar trend of little discoveries that I go through, within the space or the making of these things or the tearing apart of the grand standing piano and really getting familiar with not only how or why and how it works and then they, hopefully as they interact with my work, have this expectation that gets transformed in a way and have those similar moments of discovery of "Oh, it's got a stethoscope. Stethoscope's normally go on your chest, right? What happens if I put it on my chest and I turn on this switch? Oh, I can hear my heartbeat being projected in this space. I've never experienced that before and now I'm familiar with that aspect, what else can I do with this thing?" I've hopefully given them the first steps towards them playing with the objects.

APPENDIX B

Caldwell Baccari Well, since undergrad, I've been aware of and have looked into Christian Marclay. [...] I really enjoyed ... and I got more into it when I got into grad school, but the fact

that he was simultaneously turntabling while hip-hop was being developed, but totally parallel to it ...

And then his interest in the physicality of the medium that is an LP and what we described earlier about that personal listening experience of your putting a small metal needle on this flat disc of plastic that has these grooves in it and just that hyper awareness of what you're actually doing with these objects as opposed to that supposed perfect listening experience, the highest of fidelity to make it as close to real as possible and then his approach to the forms of instruments and stuff in a sculptural, artistic way. He's been a big, big initial influence for me.

Coming here, to WCU, the area has a lot of the tradition of Black Mountain College, so ...

Caldwell Right. What about that tradition, because of course, that gets tossed around a lot, right?

Baccari True, so looking at ... briefly, haven't gone too in depth, but you can't ignore John Cage and his influences in the area, but mostly that interdisciplinary process and the approach of play ...

Caldwell But that comes up a lot in your statement, actually. You use the word play, I picked up, three times in your statement. So some folks would interpret that as not serious, let's say, so when you use the word play in the way that you just did and then in the way that you do in your statement, what do you mean by that?

When I talk about it, obviously it has the context of childlike, frivolous play and actually being the father of a two-and-a-half-year-old you realize it actually really isn't as frivolous as people think it is. It's very formative in who you are as a person.

it's that fearlessness of, he doesn't know that there's a wrong way to do something. And for me, that's what play is about, is just really exploring and pushing those boundaries of what's possible. You can call it experimentation if you want.

Caldwell And would you say that without repercussions, without judgment? That's the key part of that aspect.

Baccari And I approach it, I would say, in a more intellectually sophisticated way. It's learning how things work. It's wondering what sound that thing makes, and it comes from a very almost child-like state, but my approach and follow-through comes from an obviously much broader knowledge base to work from, as compared to my son, but John Cage's approach and his also ... The reason why I mention him as lead-in to Fluxus Art Movement.

So from Black Mountain College, the Fluxus better represents my interests and interdisciplinary work and play and just radical experimentation and from within that school thought, Benjamin Patterson is an artist that I discovered, in researching that and he's the first African American artist in that group and he was a founding member and it's fun to me because his only interest was he wanted to make, as he put it, "New, new, new, new, new, new, new music".

And it's totally incomprehensible noise, really, at the end of the day, but that willingness to "Let's saw a piano in half and that sound that it makes while this is happening is a song". Or specifically, his paper piece, I am pulling inspiration from, so his paper piece is a composition of five people who interact with different pieces of paper and they have a list of rules of how they can interact with it and they're all tearing and crumpling and pulling taught and flapping, and rubbing together and popping paper bags in tandem for six minutes and it is a musical composition, technically.

Caldwell Right. Right and there's just some overlap of Cage as well.

Baccari Right, exactly.

Caldwell A series of actions.

Baccari Yeah, and systems. I find that I always end up creating a system anyway, but I come to that through play and then a more contemporary artist that I discovered in all my research is another ... I think he's Swiss also, Zimoun.

Caldwell Zimoun?

Baccari Yeah. Only ever has one name in all my research, but he does a lot of hyper material based sound installations, a lot of cardboard boxes with DC motors and cotton balls on them, and just a 25 foot tall stack of these motors spinning and rubbing up against the cardboard boxes and that cacophony of just these things doing things, being the objects that they are and that sound that they project into space. I think it is really fascinating and somebody who I've started to look to in terms of how I think about these individual components of instruments and then also how this material itself acts and sounds and it doesn't always have to be from a well-crafted instrument. It could be a cheap, cardboard box and it could still make something really profound and interesting.

Those are probably the short list of specifically artists and then I'm all over YouTube watching makers and DIY people just fearlessly being "I don't know how to do this but I'm going to try it anyway and this is what I figured out."

Caldwell Right, and again, you are looking at a community on YouTube whose intentions are one thing, but your intentions at looking at them are another thing, and from that, you're able to derive this sense of play, that I think releases that kind of heaviness of intentionality and of meaning.

When you're in a program like you're in right now, everyone is dissecting every single thing you're doing ...

APPENDIX C

Caldwell Well, I think what really resonated for me was ... I think the natural sounds like you're talking about from the natural world, that to me was an easier access for me, but when you talk to me about the one recording, the one LP that will be in your show that is a collection of the sounds of your peers keys as they walk down the hallway ... To me, that's what [Pauline Oliveros would talk with her idea of deep listening](#) where you are focusing on these everyday sounds in a way that then heightens them to a point of ... They become very personal. They become highly connected to very specific things ...

And there's the usual things like at 7:30 every Tuesday morning, the trash truck comes through. You can count on it. It's going to come through every time. It's going to make the same sounds, but the idea of this kind of everyday-ness of something that happens, in that building, hundreds, maybe thousands of times where all sorts of people are walking into the building and keys are jingling because they're on a carabiner or they're in a pocket or they're actually playing with them as they're walking, for you to be able to start discerning which keys are who through the idea of deep listening and then the idea of creating a sonic collage, a sonic poem ... excuse me ... out of that is taking your work to that ... To me, it's like you've really distilled things down to the essence of what you're really wanting to wrestle with in that aspect of your work.

You're not interested in creating facsimiles of [Cheap Trick at Budokan](#) on porcelain.

Baccari Right.

Caldwell It seems what you're actually interested in is how listening to everyday sounds, and the repetitive moments that occur there - can become a kind of ritual. That there are sonic pleasures to be experienced in captured and distilled everyday sounds if you just pay attention.

Baccari Yeah, if you just take that moment and listen to what's happening around you.

Caldwell It could be the best techno tune you've heard.

Baccari Right. Absolutely. You have no idea and for me, there are those sounds that just absolutely baffle and fascinate me, like how did that happen? There are the sounds that I know I'll miss, possibly, just because I won't be in a situation where I will experience that. For example, like the train that passes through town here, where I live, I don't hear that anymore. I never thought I'd miss it, especially waking me up at 4:00 in the morning.

Caldwell But now you've got the rooster.

Baccari Right, now I've got the rooster to replace it and then there are those fun subconscious sounds that I didn't realize I was making an association with, but I was able to tell when my good friends were coming to my studio based on the sound of the keys walking through the hall. And then of course, that has a little bit of a level of excitement, like "Oh, my friend's coming to visit me" kind of thing and when you become self-aware of that, it's a really kind of fun feeling to have and then being able to apply that awareness to the world around you is really, really nice I think.

Caldwell So in a way, this focusing on daily sounds - this deep listening - suggests or conjures a memory or a person or place - it generates a virtual portrait of sorts - would that be an accurate way to get at what you're interested in with these sound collages?

Baccari Yeah.

Caldwell Once you recognize that's the sound of Mo's (a peer MFA student) keys coming down the hallway - and then the sound of Morgan's keys coming down the hallway, and that sound is conveyed by listening to their respective gait thus your recognition of them is grounded in your ability to hear sounds that pertain to them respectively by both their gait and the amount of keys they carry, the idea of putting together a sound poem around that in some ways, is a really beautiful portrait of your friendships.

Baccari Yeah. Absolutely. It's a little bit of a love letter to my friends in a way, for sure, but my keys are also on there, and it's sort of my own self portrait in a way, too because that's a constant sound when I'm school, that I have with me always and it just becomes my theme music, if you think about it in a way, because it's just always there in the background and it's just an indication of my presence and my rhythm and my labor, right?

Caldwell Right.

Baccari Everything that makes me real and physical.