

# Transference

ANDY PAIKO AND ETHAN ROSE

*Transference* is a collaborative installation that explores the aural potential of glass – specifically of the vessel. Glass artist Andy Paiko and sound artist/composer Ethan Rose share a mutual interest in re-contextualizing antiquated objects and technologies. In looking for a way to combine their individual interests, Paiko and Rose uncovered the buried histories of the glass harp and glass armonica. Such musical instruments employ a series of glass bowls or goblets of varying sizes; by rubbing a wet finger on a rim of glass, a performer uses friction to create musical tones. The installation, *Transference*, employs the strangely ethereal sounds of the “singing wine glass” with the aural and physical sensations of seemingly random spinning bowls. In this contemporary interpretation of the glass armonica, the artists remove the performer, relying on electronic composition to trigger movement, vibration and sound in bowls mounted on walls and atop pedestals. This alternative version of a nearly forgotten instrument calls attention to history while simultaneously reminding viewers of the unexpected potential of the deceptively simple glass bowl.

Trained in glassblowing, Andy Paiko builds decorative yet functional objects through the additive process of cold-fusing multiple blown-glass pieces. His work explores the craft-based tradition of tool and instrument building. For Paiko, tensions in his work reside in the dissonance between a functional object constructed out of an impractical, breakable and precious material: glass. Through his past work – a spinning wheel, scale, and seismograph, for example – Paiko challenges the symbolic and metaphorical meaning of form and function.

Ethan Rose, a sound artist, is known for combining modern electronics with nearly forgotten instruments like music boxes, pipe organs and player pianos. Drawn to automated musical instruments, Rose’s compositions rely on hands-on interaction between the object and the artist. Rose uses the structure of such older instrumental technologies to explore a balance between order and accident. Blurring familiar and nostalgic tones with nearly random yet melodious electronic compositions, Rose’s projects call attention to the physical experience of sound.

Paiko and Rose’s shared interests led them to explore the buried histories of the glass harp and glass armonica. Dating back to the Renaissance, the instrument was immensely popular in various forms from the late 18th to early 19th centuries. Numerous notable historical figures played the glass armonica, including Marie Antoinette, and the notorious Franz Mesmer, who used the instrument in sessions that led to the term “mesmerizing” to describe its hypnotic effects. Composers from Mozart to Bach to Beethoven wrote work for the glass armonica. Although Tchaikovsky originally specified a glass armonica for *The Nutcracker* (1892), before the piece premiered he changed it to the celesta, a keyboard bell-like instrument. Believed to cause nerve damage – even madness – in both the performers and the audience, the glass armonica lost favor and fell into relative obscurity (one theory proposes that the lead in the crystal bowls or goblets could have poisoned performers).

Through collaboration during all stages, from concept development and design to fabrication and installation, Paiko and Rose use the glass itself as a third contributor and the primary performer in the project. Rather than create and tune vessels to a pre-determined range of tones, the artists instead focused on sounds emitted by the variously sized vessels, letting the material determine tonal qualities for the overall composition. Here, the bowls no longer

function as containers of something tangible or solid; this group of transparent glass vessels is, instead, a vehicle for the dissemination of sound. The back and forth between the visual and aural elements of the installation – from the glimmer of a moving glass vessel, the motion of a shadow, and the way glass throws sound making it difficult to identify a source – results in a synesthetic experience in which the ear and the eye are equally engaged.

Commissioned by the Museum of Contemporary Craft in partnership with Pacific Northwest College of Art, *Transference* offered two emerging regional artists the opportunity to create a large scale museum installation. The exhibition centralizes craft as a conceptual vehicle by which contemporary artists can explore history and challenge ideas about functionality. *Transference* serves as a juncture through which a sound artist, Ethan Rose, returns to instrument making, and a glass artist, Andy Paiko, explores a new facet of his chosen medium.

### NAMITA GUPTA WIGGERS

*Curator, Museum of Contemporary Craft in partnership with Pacific Northwest College of Art*

*Transference* is on view November 19, 2009 – January 9, 2010.

### ANDY PAIKO

Portland artist Andy Paiko is known for ambitious, technical works which explore the metaphorical and symbolic tension of form versus function. His work has been featured in such national print publications as *ELLE*, *House and Garden* and *Glass Art Quarterly*, and on-line blogs Boing Boing and design sponge. He was selected as one of twenty emerging Searchlight Artists for 2008 by the American Craft Council. Paiko holds a BS in Studio Art from California Polytechnic State University and currently resides in Portland, Oregon.

### ETHAN ROSE

Experimental sound artist and composer Ethan Rose specializes in found sounds and the re-contextualization of music technologies from the past. His work was included in the film *Paranoid Park* (2007), directed by Gus Van Sant, and has been reviewed by national publications including *The New York Times*, *Pitchfork* and *XLR8R*. He has performed as part of Portland Institute for Contemporary Art's Time-Based Art Festival and the SXSW Music Festival, among many other venues throughout the nation. Rose holds a BA in Music Composition from Lewis & Clark College and currently resides in Portland, Oregon.

The artists would like to thank the following individuals and companies for their technical assistance and support in developing this installation:

Belle Chesler · Crouzet Motors · Dymax Corporation · Firehouse Glass · Travis Gintz · Green Street Details · Jointway International · Dave Madden · Merkled · Synchronotive

## PRELIMINARY MUSINGS:

*Musician and artist Rebecca Gates will be writing an expanded essay on the exhibition. Because language to adequately describe sound installations is as elusive as verbiage to adequately define craft, we agreed it was best to wait to publish her full essay after she had a chance to experience the installation in the Museum. The following musings are her initial thoughts after meeting with Andy Paiko and Ethan Rose several times during the fabrication of Transference.*

– Namita Gupta Wiggers

### **Gates' expanded essay will be available after December 4, 2009.**

Andy Paiko and Ethan Rose's choice of the word "transference" as the title of their exhibition is not only appropriate to the issues they are exploring through their collaboration, but also points to a key problem in critical writing about sound and craft.

Language, a complex and rich resource, leaves one at a distinct disadvantage when attempting to discuss the ineffable experience of listening. "How do we hear?" and "What are we hearing?" are elementary questions subject to continual review. As Richard Ranft, head of the British Library Sound Archive, points out, "Sound is relatively simple physics, small fluctuations in air pressure over time. Yet the way humans interpret sound is overwhelmingly complex and significant."

The vocabulary for examining sound is frequently borrowed from visual sources. In technical terms, this makes sense; sound is, after all, waves. Sound is a measurable phenomenon that can be visually represented, diagrammed via an oscilloscope. Technical language used to describe sound, with its focus on hertz, impedance, and various scientific terms, is surely valid, but does not allow a discussion of impact of content. In an attempt to express the experience of listening, one turns to any number of words borrowed from painting, film and visual practice; tone "color," mixing, illumination, fades, edits, soundscape, expansion, compression, lightness, "topography of the audible," "disclosing the invisible."

When presented with sound in a museum or gallery setting (a presentational space typically dedicated to the visual arts), one often defaults to a description of how a project is installed. It is easier to discuss the architecture of a room and speaker placement, or to consider the origin of a recorded sound. One of the many interesting points of *Transference* is the fact that the objects making the sound are also amplifying it. This leads to a discussion of material and form (rather than spatial position and originary source). The tones are being generated in real time and by the materials in the room, which further complicates and confounds verbal description. Is it sound art? Is it music? The pattern of notes generated in the moment, guided, yet not pre-determined by the artists creates an intentionally random, complementary sonic experience – without a doubt a composition.

Re-contextualizing lapsed technologies and examining the function of the vessel form, Paiko and Rose challenge assumptions of their media of choice and what the expectations are from their materials. In this exhibition, a transparent material, glass, produces a tone and in doing so references a craft based tradition of instrument building. The investigation of sound when

placed in a craft context, where, whether in a traditional or modern sense, material has been the organizing principle, offers a new opportunity to explore and expand how to experience and respond to both disciplines.

REBECCA GATES

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Rebecca Gates is a musician and artist based in Oregon and Rhode Island who has released four albums, three of them as leader of The Spinanes, and appeared on recordings by numerous artists including The Decemberists and Willie Nelson. She co-curated *The Marfa Sessions*, a group exhibition of commissioned sound installations in Marfa, TX and is the editor of *Sonoset* audiomagazine, a sound-only periodical that will debut in 2010.

Gates has been featured as an artist at Lehmann Maupin Gallery (New York, NY), Vedanta/Kavi Gupta Gallery (Chicago, IL), Fontanelle (Portland, OR), The Sun Valley Center for the Arts (Sun Valley, ID/Los Angeles, CA) and in *The Art of Touring* (Yeti Publishing, 2009) and *Visionary Architecture* (coordinated by Mass MOCA and to be issued next year). Her photography will be exhibited in Barcelona February 2010.

## PROGRAMS

### **Craft Conversation: Transference**

Saturday, November 21, 1 pm

The Lab at Museum of Contemporary Craft

FREE WITH MUSEUM ADMISSION

Join exhibiting artists Andy Paiko and Ethan Rose, contributing essayist Rebecca Gates and Museum of Contemporary Craft Curator Namita Wiggers for a discussion of the installation on view, and of the complexities of writing about both craft and sound-based art projects.

### **Curator Walkthrough**

Tuesday, December 8, noon

Tour convenes at front desk

FREE WITH MUSEUM ADMISSION

Museum of Contemporary Craft Curator Namita Wiggers guides participants through *Transference*, *Elusive Matter* and *The Academy is Full of Craft*, providing behind-the-scenes insight into these exhibitions.

**Please visit the museum website at [www.MuseumofContemporaryCraft.org](http://www.MuseumofContemporaryCraft.org) to download podcasts, videos and more.**

To learn more about the history of the glass armonica and to see it played:

<http://www.glassarmonica.com>

[http://blog.makezine.com/archive/2009/10/thomas\\_bloch\\_plays\\_the\\_glass\\_armoni.html](http://blog.makezine.com/archive/2009/10/thomas_bloch_plays_the_glass_armoni.html)

<http://sln.fi.edu/franklin/musician/musician.html>

<http://www.uh.edu/engines/epi710.htm>

[http://www.pbs.org/benfranklin/13\\_inquiring\\_glass.html](http://www.pbs.org/benfranklin/13_inquiring_glass.html)

Glass Armonica version of Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*:

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/video/eQemvyyJ--g-dance-of-sugar-plum-fairy.aspx>

Glass Harp version of Tchaikovsky's *The Nutcracker*:

<http://www.encyclopedia.com/video/EgoaehDEBrU-glass-harpdance-of-sugar-plum.aspx>

**CD recordings and limited edition glass works and are available for purchase in The Gallery.**

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