

LUCRECCIA QUINTANILLA

> A RIPPLE AND AN ECHO



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ART

How we value sound is complex. In our dense urban environment, sound is often man made and forms a constant distant low hum. The sounds of the natural world are often obscured – bird song, the movement of wind or the crash of waves are lost as they are overpowered by the noise of the cities we inhabit.

Lucreccia Quintanilla makes artwork that asks us to step a little closer and consider what it is we hear; what we overlook and what we take for granted.

INTRODUCTION

Her sculptural works are modelled on the natural world and it is within these structures that she embeds soundscapes of Melbourne – from the sounds of introduced animal species to the various multicultural voices that inform our culture.

In the end, Quintanilla explores who does in fact get heard.

MELINDA MARTIN

Director

June 2019

Lucreccia Quintanilla's artworks provide a sense of timelessness where meaning remains unfixed and relies on the memories and imagination of the viewer. The work is inimitably poetic and it is imbued with myth and historical intrigue.

Quintanilla's practice is guided by a sense of open enquiry, underpinned by her consideration of "*What it's like to exist in the post-colonial landscape, as a settler and as part of the diaspora*"¹. Her engagement with the question of "*how to make work about a place when there is always another place that exists in the imagination*"² is also of primary importance.

LUCRECCIA QUINTANILLIA

> A RIPPLE AND AN ECHO

The potency of sound to signify and strengthen cultural practices and identities is highlighted throughout Quintanilla's work, as an artist and also as a DJ. With a strong connection to dub music, Quintanilla explores the ability of sound and music to transcend time and space. She has written, "*Echo, delay and reverb through their invocation and manipulation of time act as conduits for the teasing out of meaning and metaphor within the diaspora. To me sound is able to articulate this condition better than the image by activating a multiplicity of layers, a play with time as well as an ability to create a collective mythology. This aspect of sound is what has drawn me to work with it as subject matter and as a medium.*"³

The sculptures that Quintanilla has created for *A Ripple and an Echo* have been inspired by Pre-Columbian archaeological vessels, in particular the conch flute (or sea-shell trumpet). This instrument, made from clay, replicates the shape of a conch shell, which is a natural amplifier, with added holes that alter the pitch of the notes played. The conch shell is an effective resonator that filters the frequencies of surrounding sounds, in effect sampling certain sounds from our environment and echoing them back to us. The fact that we often hear the ocean when we put this shell to our ear is a form of pareidolia, arising

¹ Conversation between Lucreccia Quintanilla and Juliette Hanson, June 2019

² Conversation between Lucreccia Quintanilla and Juliette Hanson, June 2019

³ Quintanilla, L. Masters Thesis, Monash University, 2015



IMAGE > Lucreccia Quintanilla, *A Ripple and an Echo* [detail], 2019, sound composition, clay and gouache, broken i-phone. Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.



IMAGE > Lucrecia Quintanilla, *A Ripple and an Echo* [installation view], 2019.
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

from the shell's oceanic origin. To quote Michel Serres, "*We never hear what we call background noise so well as we do at the seaside. That placid or vehement uproar seems established there for all eternity.*"⁴

The conch shell is a highly evocative sonic form. The American composer and sound artist Alvin Lucier was fascinated by conch shells describing them as "*small rooms that had resonant characteristics*"⁵. They were the inspiration behind his work *Chambers* of 1968, which used conch shells as resonators for other sounds, as part of his broader exploration of acoustic phenomena. The internal structure of a conch shell, which looks like a spiral shape when bisected, is the same as the internal structure of a speaker, both of which also bare a resemblance to the human ear.

For *A Ripple and an Echo*, Quintanilla has created sculptures, which she describes as speakers, to amplify recorded tracks played on broken mobile phones placed within each of the vessels. Quintanilla has also produced a composition that includes recordings of the natural sounds found in St Kilda including birds and of course the ocean. The composition is played on the four mobile phones, whose parts are timed and layered as they might be if performed by a musical ensemble. The form of each vessel has been specifically calibrated to amplify the sound emanating from within, which essentially relies on the production of echoes.

In many different cultures, there are myths involving supernatural echoes. In times past, without the scientific knowledge about sound waves, any echoes would have been understood as being generated from within the surfaces from which they came, such as cave or canyon walls. The places that echoed were therefore venerated because they were seen to be full of spirits. In prehistoric caves and canyons across the world, the earliest known artworks have been found most predominantly in places where echoes are most resonant or amplified.⁶

The sounds heard in *A Ripple and an Echo* have been brought into the gallery where they are given a focus not afforded to them in the maelstrom of sound that exists in St Kilda's busy outdoor precincts: the streets, the esplanade, the beach. We experience these sounds differently in the gallery context because

⁴ Serres, M. Genesis, 1982, *from Sound*, ed. Kelly, C. The MIT Press, p.93

⁵ Lucier, A. *Music 109: Notes on Experimental Music*, Wesleyan University Press, 2012, p.87

⁶ Examples include caves in France at Arcy-sur-Cure in Burgundy and Niaux in the Pyrenees, in the USA at Horseshoe Canyon in Utah and Hieroglyph Canyon in Arizona. See Hendy, D. *Noise A Human History of Sound and Listening*, Profile Books Ltd. 2013, pp.3-10

their meaning becomes abstracted and intensified. The bird calls and the movement of salt water can take us into a different time, maybe to a past time when these sounds would have been more dominant, or maybe to a different place altogether.

The layering of metaphor with rich imagery is a key characteristic of Quintanilla's practice. These layers include personal memories that have contributed to her passion for sound. Quintanilla's grandfather was a musician. As he grew older he required a walking stick. A prominent childhood memory involves her grandfather playing his walking stick like a flute, having converted it into an instrument. Quintanilla was ever in awe of his creativity, patience and resourcefulness. This memory is encapsulated in the work *Walking Stick* [2019]. The walking-stick-flute is presented in a manner reminiscent of an archaeological object, discovered, exhumed and segmented.

These works must be approached with a spirit of exploration and openness. Quintanilla has written that sound operates "*as a carrier of past and future and as an amplifier of collective mythologies and complexities*"⁷. The vessels, combined with the sounds emanating from within them, hold stories that "*sit outside of anthropology*"⁸ to create new meanings in the present.

JULIETTE HANSON
Curator
june 2019



⁷ Quintanilla, L. Masters Thesis, Monash University, 2015

⁸ Conversation between Lucrecia Quintanilla and Juliette Hanson, June 2019

IMAGE > Lucrecia Quintanilla, *Walking Stick* [installation view], 2019, clay and gouache.
Image courtesy of the artist. Photograph: Theresa Harrison Photography.

Lucrecia Quintanilla is an artist, writer and researcher at Monash University as a PhD candidate. Quintanilla has received grants from Arts Victoria, the Australia Indonesia institute the National Gallery Women's Encouragement Award and the Australian Postgraduate Award. Most recently she has been awarded the 2016 NAVA Sainsbury Sculpture grant to travel to The Banff Centre for Creativity in Banff, Canada. She has presented her work in Auckland, Chicago, New York, Berlin, Yogyakarta, Canada, Sydney and Melbourne where she is based. Quintanilla has worked as an arts worker at Arts Project Australia, has

LUCRECCIA QUINTANILLA

lectured at Auckland University of Technology, Monash University as well as project managing the multilingual international publication *Mapping South*. She writes both solo and collaboratively and most recently her work has been published in *Un/Projects* and *Sounding Out!*

lucrecia-quintanilla.squarespace.com/



IMAGE > Lucrecia Quintanilla, 2018. Image courtesy of the artist.

LUCRECCIA QUINTANILLA

A Ripple and an Echo [dome], 2019
sound composition, broken i-phone, clay and gouache, 24 x 34.5 x 35cm
\$800

LIST OF WORKS

A Ripple and an Echo [vessel], 2019
sound composition, broken i-phone, clay and gouache, 24 x 21 x 24cm
\$800

A Ripple and an Echo [upright conch], 2019
sound composition, broken i-phone, clay and gouache, 48 x 26 x 32cm
\$800

A Ripple and an Echo [conch], 2019
sound composition, broken i-phone, clay and gouache, 21.5 x 22 x 43cm
\$800

Walking Stick, 2019
clay and gouache, 4.5 x 98 x 15.5cm
NFS

EVENTS

MEET THE CURATOR
> UNDERSCORING SOUND
26.07.19 > FREE

Join Linden for a special curator-led tour of exhibitions Cat Hope > *Sub Decorative Sequences*, Lucreccia Quintanilla > *A Ripple and an Echo* and Mona Ruijs > *Sympathetic Resonance* with Linden Curator **Juliette Hanson**.

IN CONVERSATION > CAT HOPE, LUCRECCIA
QUINTANILLA & MONA RUIJS > 16.08.19 > \$11

Artists **Cat Hope**, **Lucreccia Quintanilla** and **Mona Ruijs** are coming together to talk about the experimental world of sound art.

CRAFTERNOON FOR ADULTS
> GENERATIVE PATTERNS WITH SOUND & CODE
17.08.19 > \$44

Code your own sound visualisation.
Suitable for any skill level and with no prerequisites, participants learn coding fundamentals from scratch in Processing, a programming language made for visual artists.

CRAFTERNOON FOR KIDS
> SOUND COLLAGE
18.08.19 > \$15

We know you don't hear it often but – the louder the better! Join sound artists **Dale Gorfinkel** and **Bryan Phillips** for a special sound workshop. Using recycled materials, organic or kitchen objects to create sound sculptures, kids will bang, clash and make a collective music composition. Kids will be able to record their sounds and use digital manipulation to create experimental sound collages.

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