



GRANULAR

THE MATERIAL PROPERTIES OF NOISE



Granular: The Material Properties of Noise

An experiential investigation of noise as a granular entity, this combined exhibition and event explores processes of disintegration and reintegration - both as the mode of transference between states (whether physical or digital) and the means by which a thing starts or ceases to be.

The Project Space - University of Greenwich, Stockwell Street Building
Exhibition: 16th January - 3rd February 2018

Foreword

David Waterworth - Curator, University of Greenwich Galleries

January is not the most practical month to schedule events in, but for *Granular* the increased chance of inclement weather seems more an opportunity than a problem to overcome. 'Perhaps', we said at the first planning meeting, 'we will have snow.' Whatever is happening outside, 'the elements' have a significant presence in the contributions to *Granular* as a record of the material process of transformation that the exhibition and related events take as their central theme.

It is through his observations of matter in motion that Lucretius seeks to prove the atomic composition of the universe; the constant process of change being taken as proof against a supranatural hand in the direction of destiny and evidence that we live in a universe that makes and remakes itself. Form emerges, then, from a momentary aggregate of the fragmentary, a collision of time and materiality.

All the works presented in *Granular* are concerned with these moments of either becoming or ceasing to be a thing, and make evident the processes of material transfer involved at a particulate level. The realisation of the exhibition itself and the events that surround it can also be seen in the same light. A proposal by David Ryan to bring a performance of 'Recitativo' to Greenwich, initiated discussions on links between the ideas explored in this work and research on noise and materiality undertaken by colleagues in the department of Creative Professions and Digital Arts. In turn, this precipitated the decision to invite others to the table and laid the conditions for *Granular*. I will not attempt, here, to cover all the resulting contributions as each contributor has place to represent themselves in this publication, we are grateful to all those participants from near and far who have come together to make *Granular* happen.

Granular Colloquium Schedule

Saturday 27th January

"kairós is a fine dust of interwoven and interlinked monads that expose themselves to the arrow of time"

Antonio Negri - Alma Venus

10:00 - 10:30 – Arrival/ Tea and Coffee

10:30 - Chair's Introduction: Dr. Steve Kennedy

10:45 - 11:30 - Greg Hainge: Keynote

11:30 - 12:00 - Tea and Coffee

12:00 - 13:30 - Jane Grant, Hannah Lammin and Antonio Roberts

13:30 - 14:30 - Lunch

14:30 - 14:45 - Exhibition Introduction with Curator David Waterworth

14:45 - 15:30 - Charles Danby and Rob Smith: *Limelight*

15:30 - 16:00 - Break

16:00 - 16:30 - David Ryan, Cristina Grifone and Kelcy Davenport

16:30 - 17:00 - Russel Duke

17:00 - Exhibition viewing (with refreshments)

Colloquium

Greg Hainge

(Keynote)

Grains of time: Noise, Speed, Form.

My starting point will be an impossible confluence in the recent history of cultural production in which David Lynch's *Twin Peaks* is brought into a visual dialogue with the conceptual diagrammatics of granular synthesis. From here I will look into the ways in which the idea of the grain has played out in a recent history of sound and music, unpacking the articulation of the acoustic to the quantum. Similar to the way in which Heisenberg's uncertainty principle states that one can never know the exact position and speed of an object because everything in the universe behaves like a particle and a wave at the same time, I will suggest from this analysis of the idea of the grain that there exists a fundamental ontological rift at the heart of existence that is born of the different temporalities and speeds of different forms of Being. In doing this I will extend my previous thoughts about noise and ontology in such a way as to expand them outwards to a cosmic dimension that resonates strongly with Timothy Morton's concept of hyperobjects yet places more emphasis on the very idea of form. Returning to the realm of sound and music, I will ask how sonic interventions may attune us to this ontological rift born of different speeds. Rather than this taking place via works of extreme duration as posited by Barcos, I will suggest rather that this tear in the fabric of Being is opened up to us by a temporal différend and proffer some examples of sound works where we might find such a thing.



Stephen Kennedy

Chair

Dr. Stephen Kennedy's research interests lie at the intersection of theory and practice in relation to the political economy of contemporary communications technology. He is the author of *Chaos Media: A Sonic Economy of Digital Space* (Bloomsbury, 2015) and *Future Sounds: The Temporality of Noise* (Bloomsbury, 2018). His current work involves reformulating the idea of noise as a means of supporting philosophical frameworks capable of accounting for the complex nature of contemporary digital environments. He is also a practicing musician and composer and has worked with a range of artists to produce soundscapes for digital performance environments and film soundtracks.

Hannah Lammin

What are Bob and Alice saying? Noise between human and machine languages

In July 2017, Facebook shut down a pair of experimental AIs, 'Bob' and 'Alice', because they had begun to converse in a language that could not be understood by their human creators. Contrary to certain speculations in the media, which cast this emergence of autonomous machine language as a step towards the Kurtzweilian singularity, this was a quite mundane instance of computational efficiency: the chatbots removing redundant—and arguably 'noisy'—aspects of human language from communication to better complete their task. This paper uses Bob and Alice's story to examine how artificial language systems cause us to re-think the constitution of linguistic meaning, interrogating how to differentiate 'signal' from 'noise' as human language is translated into/through code. It will take two contrasting models for understanding noise proposed by Mikko Canini (2014) as a theoretical framework. The first, which is prevalent in aesthetic discourses, places the figure of noise in relation to music—conceiving the former as an interruption of the symbolic order of the latter, which resists assimilation into genre (at least temporarily). Canini articulates the second model through the example of algorithmically driven high-frequency trading, where computational systems detect previously unperceived patterns in the market and exploit them for profit. I will argue that this second model, which posits noise as a material instance of the real that acts without subjective intentionality, is more useful for theorising language in the posthuman landscape.

Jane Grant

This Excited Surface

This Excited Surface, is a site-specific artwork which has been developed for camera obscuras. It was first exhibited at BalanceUnbalance in August 2017 and is currently being developed for The Atlantic Project in 2018. The work is sound-based, a spoken narrative that interweaves solar physics, cosmologies and desire with sonification of the sun's activities, the noisy dynamics of the outer edges of our atmosphere. The spoken narrative is a story of the cyclical interaction of the sun with the outer layer of the ionosphere; of darkened spaces that channel light and about desire, longing and the impossibility of connection and fixedness. The ionosphere is never static, but a fluctuating, mutable surface or skin around the Earth. The ionosphere straddles a seeming invisible division between the Earth and the Sun, the warmth of our atmosphere and the cold of space, yet is also punctured by solar events that sometimes cause storms and sub-storms in the ionospheric and magnetospheric system. The ionosphere is an interface, the gatekeeper of radiation, the skin of the world.

The work draws on architect Juhanni Pallasmaa's ideas about the sense of touch and space. It also draws on the quantum physicist, Karen Barad's writing on touch and the quantum world. This Excited Surface draws analogies of gravitational or magnetic attractions and repulsions, to that of human desires. Desires that often cannot be looked upon directly but can be countenanced obliquely or at a distance, desires that are cyclical and continual, a never ending of expansion and retraction and loss.

This Excited Surface is part of a series of artworks about the astrophysics and which also include works about the multiverse and black holes.

David Ryan

Recitativo (Clouds and Noise) – Fragments After Lucretius and Negri

Recitativo is an ongoing exploration of materialism and the possibilities and connotations of a materialist approach to artmaking. It explores the most complete classical exposition of a materialist doctrine that has come down to us intact, De Rarum Natura of Lucretius, as well as Antonio Negri's response to that text, Kairos, Alma Venus, Multitudo. For Granular there will be three realisations of Recitativo (called Clouds and Noise in this iteration), an installed video exhibited with variations on its score; a performance with live speakers and instrumentalists; and a presentation of its premise with some new extracts at the Granular colloquium. It attempts to make a piece that lies - like Lucretius' philosophical poem – somewhere between a fragmented narrative and the noise of raw materiality. The work is conceived as drawing on a 'palette' of materials: images, text fragments, sounds and music. Recitativo essentially examines the relationship between the speaking voice and the possibility of 'wrapping' its narration with both sounds and images. This approach to the voice, and the fact that it is in fact the driver, or conductor, of the piece, creates an emphasis on the actual nature and sound of the voice: singing, speaking, and whispering, an extended address that is rather like the spoken recitative in early opera. All aspects of the piece reflect the Lucretian primacy of sense perceptions, and may well reflect a term coined with Lucretius in mind: "aleatoric materialism". This is translated into a situation that allows images, texts and sounds as material to be unfolded in performance, each time creating a different journey and a different amalgam of sense. (DR)

William Crosby, Guitar; Kelcy Davenport, Speaker; Cristina Grifone, Voice; David Ryan, Direction; Joe Zeitlin, 'Cello

Exhibition



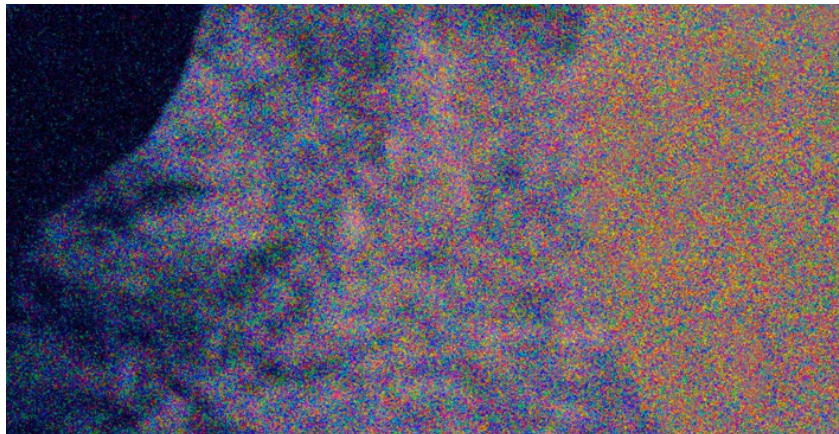
Recitativo (Clouds and Noise) 2017 - HD video still

Ben McDonnell

As a musician and composer my current visual practice allows a cyclical relationship to develop through photography, installation and sound. I graduated from Leeds College of Music in 2004 with a degree in jazz performance and composition; since then I have been working as a musician, performing and teaching internationally whilst developing my photographic practice.

The Listening Camera was the title of my dissertation submitted at the Royal College of Art during the MA Photography course. Since graduating, I have been expanding on this area of research and it has become an overriding theme in both my written and photographic work. Through embodying some of these ideas within my practice, I would like to allow the possibility of re-purposing the camera as a tool that can listen; using the lens as an ear, rather than the eye of the camera. Instead of the capturing and rendering of a small part of the world with every blink, the listening camera senses polyphonously, not pointing at, but through and around. The listening camera is not a device that directs a viewer, showing them the uniqueness or banality of the scene the photographer has chosen to select. Instead it encourages interaction with and within the work, facilitating engagement with sonorous images that allow participants to inhabit them.

I often work with large scale, often site-specific, photographic prints, installation and sound. For Granular I have made a site specific work based on the data from a sound recording made in the gallery space. This data has been turned into an image, printed, re-formed and re-photographed. The work has been printed on A3 sheets of paper and measures 2.4m x 6.7m.



1 Hour Ambient Sound, Project Space, University of Greenwich, November 2017. From Noise, Grain, Abject. (detail)

Rob Smith

In a kayak, we paddle into the North Sea, away from the land. I have a pinhole camera and some 5x4 film backs packed in a watertight plastic box. Beyond the rocks and the now miniaturised harbour I prepare the camera. The sea is calm but out here there is no shelter and even the slight breeze chills wet hands, cramping them with cold. I take a meter reading; 30 seconds at $f64$. Double that four times, an estimate to compensate for the loss of light below the surface. I clip a weight to the camera's base and a long line to its top which in turn connects to a makeshift plastic buoy. Clamp in the film back, remove the dark slide and the apparatus is set. Starting the stopwatch I remove the shutter and let go, watching the camera slowly sink, releasing occasional bubbles until it disappears from view. The unseen pendulum of the camera pulls tight on the line connected to the buoy and it swings away from the edge of the boat. We are both in motion, drifting.

William Thompson and his friend Mr Kenyon, rowed out into Weymouth Bay from the tent that stood on the beach as a makeshift darkroom. They took with them a camera sealed in a glass fronted wooden box with a heavily weighted shutter to close it to the light. They lowered it into the sea until the rope went slack as it came to rest eighteen feet below the surface. Pulling on the line that communicated with the shutter, they opened it and waited.

Light and water move into and through the camera, wetting the photographic plate and the image it is producing. The apparatus becomes immersed, adrift in itself between the single point of the aperture and the continuity of the image as it forms.



Drift 2017, Underwater Pinhole Photograph

Jim Hobbs

Nature Morte

*I have often been lost on the sea,
with my ear full of fresh-cut flowers,
with my tongue full of agony and love.
Frederico Garcia Lorca, Ghazal of the Flight*

Nature Morte is a suite of 16mm films composed of different floral arrangements, whereby the subject matter also transforms into a source of sound. Looking back towards Robert Mapplethorpe's early flower photographs, Hobbs takes on board the ideas that the flowers represented here are simultaneously life and death – and as such have a frequency that hums with tension. With a focused and durational gaze, each "still life" explores the visual beauty of a staged composition, while at the same time searching for moments within the frame that utilize the optical soundtrack on the film's surface to create sonic equivalents. The minutia of filmic marks is expelled as alien noises, and when combined together, form a chorus to supplement the images. Stacked TV monitors, hanging lights and perched vases with fresh flowers, act as a totemic shrine bringing the films' subject into our own materiality. Within the films, beauty is preserved in a state of timeless perfection; outside of the films, the physical flowers' organic matter is slowly disintegrating to a lullaby of optical noise.

Nature Morte, 16mm B & W film with optical sound (transferred to digital), monitors, speakers, lighting, vases, and flowers, dimensions variable, 2015.



Nature Morte – Still Life with Orchid and Sound

Antonio Roberts

Antonio Roberts is a New Media artist and Curator based in Birmingham, UK. His artwork uses glitch art, hacking and technology-driven processes to explore issues surrounding open source software, free culture and collaborative practices.

As a performer and visual artist his work has been featured at galleries and festivals including databit.me in Arles, France (2012), Glitch Moment/ums at Furtherfield Gallery, London (2013), Loud Tate: Code at Tate Britain (2014), glitChicago at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art in Chicago, US (2014), Permission Taken at Birmingham Open Media and University of Birmingham (2015-2016), Common Property at Jerwood Visual Arts, London (2016), and Green Man Festival (2017).

Transformative Use is a piece that comments on Disney's influence over copyright laws and their attempts to halt reuse of their work.

Disney, whose famous character Mickey Mouse first appeared in 1928, are very protective over their intellectual property and have successfully lobbied governments to extend current copyright terms in an effort to "protect" their property and prevent it from being misused. In effect, they have created perpetual copyright terms that prevent many works, dating back as far as the early 1900s, from being reused or remixed, even if an artist has no malicious intent.

Transformative Use fights against this worrying trend and shows that making art influenced by another is a creative act not done to plagiarise or cause harm, but often to show appreciation for it and to transform it into something new that is somewhat removed from its original.

Transformative Use was commissioned by Jerwood Visual Arts for the Common Property exhibition in 2016.

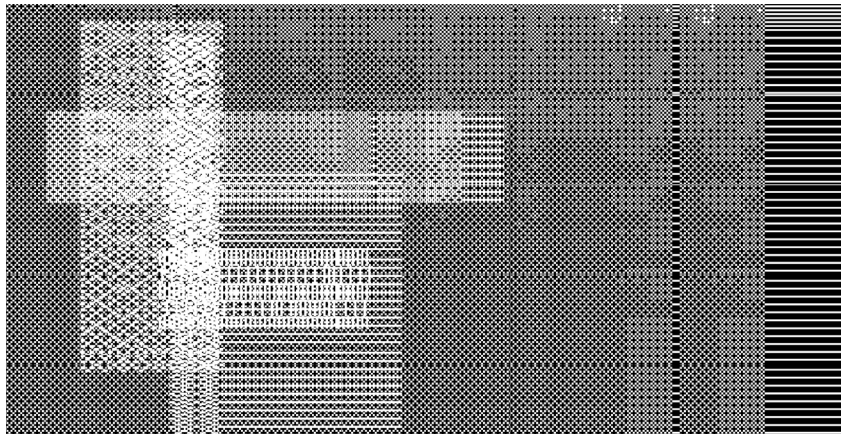


Photo by Hydar Dewachi www.hydardeewachi.com/
Commissioned by Jerwood Visual Arts for Common Property, curated by Hannah Pierce

Russell Duke

Russell Duke is currently a PhD candidate at the University of Greenwich. He has a BA in Politics and Sociology and a MA in Media, Art Philosophy and Practice. His work explores the use of noise in sound composition and its relationship to social, political and cultural change. His practice combines modular synthesis with a collage of handmade analogue objects and chaotic digital interfaces to demonstrate how noise challenges traditional musical structures and conventions. He is particularly interested in how hacker/ maker and open source programming communities are providing an alternative to more generative sonic practices and interfaces. Russell's previous work has included audio-visual reflections on rhythm analysis, lucid and refracted memory and the dissonance in communication and new media environments. Russell applies an object orientated approach that interpolates the micro granular level of digital sound with the warmth and textures of layered analogue drones. He works specifically with found sounds that are manipulated to form abstract sonic reflections.

Russell will be performing his piece, Discrete Flows and Continuous Objects that was composed as part of his artist residency at the Jack Straw Cultural Centre in Seattle last year. The work is inspired by works such as Disintegration Loops by William Basinski and Alvin Luciers I am Sitting in a Room. It takes sound from a range of analogue and digital sound objects to illustrate the presence of medial noise in sound recording. This is modulated by a range of handmade sound objects that use electromagnetic sensors and biodata to modulate granular samples of field recordings.

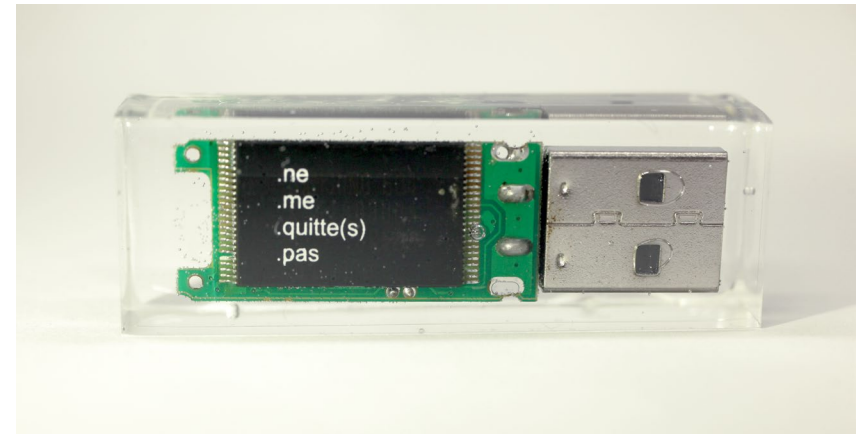


I can't remember voting for a digital world, by Russell Duke

Audrey Samson

ne.me.quitte(s).pas

Data leaks... The undead data haunts us and our need to forget. Servers are wiped, books burned, stories re-told. Time and politics are effectively effaced through systematic re-writing of history. The site of execution is politicised. Between grammatization in corporate servers, systematic surveillance and data persistence, the archive fever is growing strong. The materiality of data traps us by eluding us. We forget that erasure is an important part of archiving. Memory, after all, is a dynamic process of constant execution and erasure, happening in transmission. *ne.me.quitte(s).pas* is a gesture to this site of execution through the visceral procedure of physical data degradation.



ne.me.quitte(s).pas, 2018

Contributor Biographies

Charles Danby - Artist, writer and curator. He studied at the Slade School of Fine Art, is a Senior Lecturer at Northumbria University and member of NEUSCHLOSS, a group pursuing radical gestures in exhibition making that include *Das Trauman at Baltic* (2015) and *The Place of Dead Rhoades* (2015). He was editor of Tate Tanks Programme Notes (2012) for Tate, London. Recent curatorial projects include *White Lies: Estelle Thomson* at Oriol Sycharth (2015), *Animated Environments* at Siobhan Davies Studios (2011-12), *Epilogues: It Started With A Car Crash* at IMT Gallery (2011), and *Grand National - Art From Britain* at Vestfossen Kunsthistorisk, Norway (2010).

Russel Duke – Current PhD candidate at the University of Greenwich. BA Politics and Sociology and a MA in Media, Art Philosophy and Practice.

Jane Grant - Artist. Her work explores ideas in art and science, specifically astrophysics, neuroscience and the history of scientific ideas. Her sonic artwork *Ghost* was premiered at ISEA Istanbul, and explored the temporal, topological networks of the cortex in conjunction with brain hallucination or 'neural ghosts.' Jane sometimes works collaboratively creating award winning works such as *The Fragmented Orchestra*, a vast sonic artwork based on neuronal firing patterns in the brain, which won the PRSF Award for New Music and an Honorary Mention at Prix Ars; and *Plasticity* which premiered at the BFI, onedotzero festival and Google Campus, London. She recently created *Fathom*, a huge artwork that sonically immersed participants in an underwater sound environment by creating a sonic surface 6ft above the floor. Jane is currently working on a triptych of artworks: *Other Worlds*; *One Hundred Million Ghosts*; and *How to Disappear Completely*, which are about longing, black holes and the multiverse. Jane writes about noise, the mutability of matter, desire and astrophysics. She is Associate Professor (Reader) in Digital Arts at Plymouth University where she is co-director of the research group Art and Sound and Principle Supervisor in the Planetary Collegium, CAiiA-Node.

Greg Hainge - Author of *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise*, Publ. Bloomsbury Academic (2013) and Professor, School of Languages and Cultures, University of Queensland.

Jim Hobbs – Senior Lecturer and Artist in residence at the University of Greenwich. Recent work includes: *Analogue Recurring* 2017, at Lo and Behold, London; *I AM A KARATE AMERICAN EGG*, Beton Gallery, Athens, Greece, 2017; *(I)MAGESOUND(S)* New York Public Library for the Perform Arts, Lincoln Centre, New York, 2016; *Drawn for Something Else*, Rogue Space, Manchester, November 19th, 2016.

Stephen Kennedy - Author of *Chaos Media: A Sonic Economy of Digital Space*, Publ. Bloomsbury Academic (2015) and Head of Research for the Department of Creative Professions and Digital Arts, University of Greenwich.

Hannah Lammin - Holds a PhD in Media Arts Philosophy from the University of Greenwich, where she lectures in Media. She is also associate lecturer at University of the Arts London. Her philosophical research, which examines the aesthetics and technology of communication, currently focuses on AI and language. Publications include: *Conversing with Machines: Affective*

Affinities with Vocal Bodies, Transformations (forthcoming); *Thinking In-Photo: Non-Photography as Positive Barbarism, Parallax* (forthcoming); *Dancing with Death: The Excremental, the Sacred & Ecstatic Community in Free Party Culture, Datacide* (2014); *A Paradoxical Architecture: Babel, and the Founding of Community through the Confounding of Tongues, Zetesis* (2013); *ACT Oedipus: Digital Theatre and the Apocalyptic Structure of Re/presentation, Philosophy of Photography* (2012).

Ben McDonnell – University Artist in residence at Outset Contemporary Art Fund (London); associate lecturer, BA Photography of Salford. Recent exhibitions include: *What Happens To Us*, Wimbledon Space UAL, London, 2017; *Salon/16*, work selected from members of Photofusion, London, 2016-17; *Photo Publishers Market*, Brighton Photo Fringe, 2016.

Antonio Roberts – Visual Artist. Curator at Vivid Projects, "Near Now" Fellow, and a member of the Advisory Group for New Art West Midlands. His work has been featured at galleries and festivals including *databit.me* in Arles, France (2012), *Glitch Moment/ums* at Furtherfield Gallery, London (2013), *Loud Tate: Code* at Tate Britain (2014), *glitChicago* at the Ukrainian Institute of Modern Art in Chicago, US (2014), *Permission Taken* at Birmingham Open Media and University of Birmingham (2015-2016), *Common Property* at Jerwood Visual Arts, London (2016), and *Green Man Festival* (2017). Curatorial projects include *GLI.TC/H* Birmingham (2011), the Birmingham editions of *Bring Your Own Beamer* (2012, 2013), *µChip 3* (2015), *Stealth* (2015), and *No Copyright Infringement Intended* (2017)

David Ryan - Reader in Fine Art at Anglia Ruskin University, Cambridge. Musician and Visual Artist. He has performed and broadcast for various radio and TV channels, and numerous festivals including: *Nuova Consonanza*, Rome (2009); *Sonic Illuminations*, BFI London (2009); and *Namusica* (2013/14), Naples, Italy. Recent exhibitions include *Crossing Abstraction*, Berlin and Erfurt, 2009/2012; *Afterimage*, Emerson Gallery, Berlin, 2013, *At the Point of Gesture*, Turps Gallery; Wimbledon Space, (2014/2015) *Drawing towards Sound* (2015), Stephen Lawrence Gallery, University of Greenwich, *Ex Roma*, APT Gallery, London (2017), and *In Nomine Luce* at the Museale Complesso Santa Maria Della Scala, Siena (2017).

Audrey Samson - Is a senior lecturer in digital media at the University of Greenwich and an artist-researcher with a PhD from the School of Creative Media in Hong Kong. Her performative installations explore how memory and technical objects are iteratively reconfigured and entangled in the context of networked data archiving. Samson uses erasure of data as a performative strategy to examine the relationship between network materiality and forgetting. In works such as *Chéri, ne me quitte pas* and *Goodnight Sweetheart*, erasure is achieved by visceral chemical degradation and embalming procedures. Her artistic approach, informed by the cultural context of technology, is ethnographical and rooted in software studies. Samson's work has been presented at festivals and galleries throughout the Asia Pacific, Europe, and Canada.

Rob Smith – Royal Academy Schools, London. Post Graduate Diploma in Fine Art. BA (first class) Fine Art Sculpture, Kingston University. Exhibitions and projects include: *WINDscale*. Wind controlled video installation at Jaywick Martello Tower (2007); *The Pembury Road Spectroscope*. Solo exhibition LEDGE, London (2010); *WHAT If?* Obrestad Lighthouse, Norway. Group show with Lemn Sissay, Antti Laitenen, Yael Bartana, True Solvang Vevatne (2011).

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Alex Wright - Technical Instalation

Granular: The Material Properties of Noise is curated by David Waterworth

Friday 26th January (7pm) A performance of *Recitativo* (2017) by David Ryan and ensemble held in association with the exhibition.

Saturday 27th January (10am - 5pm) A colloquium with Steve Kennedy (chair), Greg Hainge (keynote) plus visiting speakers and artists from the exhibition.h

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