

Sean Dower

PLUNK, BOUM, KRASH, ZZTZ

Curated by Jo Melvin



28 September – 23 November
PV. Friday 27 September, 6-8pm

In this exhibition Sean Dower presents new, recent and older work installed in response to the spaces of Laure Genillard's Gallery. Dower's exploratory practice is grounded in a sculptural investigation of our three dimensional experience of the world, where sound, light, film, performance, language and duration are as much a part of the vocabulary as objects or artefacts. The intangible or invisible also play a role and reminds us that the word 'volume' not only relates to mass and space but to sound and changes in air pressure. Dower's work often draws attention to the interconnections between sound and sculpture. Traditional materials such as iron, quartz, copper and stone have electromagnetic properties and it is perhaps surprising to realise that these materials also mediate and mould the everyday sounds we hear.

In the upstairs gallery space minimalist looking sculptures complement each other with their unexpected use of sound. "Vibrating rod" suspended from the ceiling exists beyond audibility in the realm of the haptic and complements the mysterious sounds emanating from "Piezoelectric Panel", a grid of 100 ultrasonic disks, set in a concrete panel. In piezoelectric cells a thin slice of quartz attached to a brass disk vibrates when electric current is applied and the brass disk flexes to produce sound. Likewise, a physical force applied to the quartz produces a corresponding electric current. High up on another wall, a laser pointer shines a thin beam of green light across the room, which becomes visible as it strikes a small mirror mounted on a speaker, which in turn redirects the beam around a corner. The varying sound pressure of the speaker causes the mirror to vibrate and project an oscillating pattern of light onto a monochrome photograph of a Neolithic standing stone. The stone is primarily made of quartz, a detail that could easily be overlooked.

In dialogue with these works, a six-panel text work “Noises” (“Bruits”) presents a sequence of onomatopoeic French words that reference technology and suggest a violent but cartoon-style narrative. The ensemble suggests liminal modes of communication and the electromagnetic noises of military or other-worldly technology. In the downstairs space actual sound is conspicuously absent, however these works suggest the residual or projected traces of sound. The “Monumental Guns” series pairs photographs of publicly sited cannons and other artillery with their hypothetical targets. These juxtapositions are factual – and they seem to draw on the ‘what if’ musings that a passer-by might conjure whilst imagining the trajectory of a shell and the resulting damage. The work indicates a deadpan sense of humour combined with horror (and implicit history). The guns series revisits ideas Dower explored in earlier works. “Exploding Teacup Photogram” (1988) is a four panel photogram work where a standard cafeteria ceramic cup was placed directly onto photo paper and exposed to light on its three axes, before being blown up with an explosive charge in the fourth image, illuminating and burning the paper. “Between Terror and Relief” (1988-89) consists of a painted text work made in relief on paper and an accompanying photo of two adjacent billboards spotted after the painting was made. This work explores the nuance of emotional expression in language and touches on the extraordinary nature of coincidence.

A characteristic playfulness of Dower’s approach is the way he pays direct and indirect homage to other artists’ work and he treats the exchange as one might when holding a conversation, with its potential for interpretation, transformation and misunderstanding.

Sean Dower (Born 1965, UK) was active as a performer in the UK industrial music scene in the early 1980s before going on to work internationally with the radical performance art group Bow Gamelan Ensemble. He studied Sculpture at Camberwell School of Art London (1988-1991) and attended the Rijksakademie van Beeldenden Kunsten in Amsterdam (1993-1995).

Dower's artworks explore the expanded idiom of sculpture and incorporate other media such as film, photography, performance and sound. His work often engages the viewer in a direct physical experience and the diversity of his outcomes is a result of his experimental methodology and open agenda.

Much of Dower's recent sculptural work addresses the spatial, physical and material aspects of sound and draws upon his historical involvement in live performance. He has exhibited his work in a broad range of contexts since the early 1990's and continues to make live performances. His work was included in the book ‘Sculpture – vertical horizontal closed open’ by Penelope Curtis in 2017 (Yale University Press) and a monograph of his work with an essay by Dr Jo Melvin was published in 2018 by Dom Omladine Belgrade and the Franklin Foundation. Sean Dower was awarded a Henry Moore Institute Fellowship in 2019.

Selected exhibitions and performances include: *Find Your World in Ours*. Ikon Gallery and Supersonic Festival, Birmingham, UK. 2018; *A Conversation along the highway of Brotherhood and Unity*. Dom Omladine Belgrade, Serbia. 2017; *On Air / Off Air*. Beaconsfield Gallery Vauxhall, London, UK. 2015; *The Voyeur*. De La Warr Pavilion, Bexhill, UK. 2012; *Musik für Barbaren und Klassiker*. Netwerk Centre, Aalst, Belgium. 2010; *The British Art Show*. IKON EAST, Birmingham UK. 2007; *Break it Down - A Performance*. Timothy Taylor Gallery, London, UK. 2006; *Single Shot*. Tate Britain / touring, UK. 2006; *Audiopathology*. W139 Gallery, Amsterdam, NL. 2001; *New Video Art from Great Britain*. MOMA New York, USA. 1998; *UK Maximum Diversity*. Krinzinger Gallery, Vienna, Austria. 1998; *No Room in Hell*. Matt's Gallery, London, UK. 1997; *Against*. Anthony d'Offay Gallery, London, UK. 1997.

Jo Melvin is a curator and writer, Reader in Fine Art, Chelsea College of Arts, UAL, London and director of the Barry Flanagan Estate. Current exhibition projects *Barry Flanagan retrospective* Ikon Gallery, 2019. Recent exhibitions include *Language Games*, Franca with Cannara, PG, Italy, and *MACHISMO Machismo*, Villa Lontana, Roma with Vittoria Bonifati. *The Hare as Metaphor: Barry Flanagan* Paul Kasmin Gallery, New York 2018, *Sculptureless Sculpture and Archaeology of the mind; the metadata of Villa Lontana* Rome, 2018 with Vittoria Bonifati. Publications in 2019 are Gene Beery, FriArts, Switzerland and David Nash, National Gallery of Wales. Guest critic with The Brooklyn Rail, New York, *Fifteen people present their favourite book* and *Forgotten Moments; Future Exhibitions*. In 2018 she was guest curator with the Mahler & LeWitt Studios, Spoleto, Italy, where she devised residencies, symposium and publication-as-exhibition project in collaboration with Viaindustriae, Foligno, Radio Arte Mobile, Rome.