

Light Moves Like Sound Waves: Lynne Sachs and Stephen Vitiello

Program 2

Sound Cues From Wings:

Drift and Bough – Every Fold Matters

Saturday, November 4, 2017 at 7:00 pm — Center for New Music
Filmmaker Lynne Sachs and sound artist Stephen Vitiello in person

Light Moves Like Sound Waves is a two-part screening series documenting the five-year collaborative relationship between filmmaker Lynne Sachs and sound artist Stephen Vitiello. “In collaborating on the soundtracks for my films, Stephen somehow recognizes the interior sounds of objects and releases them for us to hear. Together his music and his sound designs push audiences toward a new way of experiencing cinema.” (Lynne Sachs) This two-part series is presented at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts (November 3) and the Center for New Music (November 4). Lynne Sachs and Stephen Vitiello in person at both screenings. Program centers on performance works by Vitiello including a recent Montalvo Arts Center commission, *Taking Sound Cues From Wings* and *From The Fish House*, a section of *Captiva*, collaborative LP created with Taylor Deupree and other works as well as two films by Lynne Sachs featuring soundtracks by Vitiello.

In recorded works, installations and live performances, sound artist Stephen Vitiello creates sonic works which explore space, ambiance and locative sound, presenting rich and minimal ephemerality suggestive of atmosphere, weather and luminance. Frequently collaborating closely with visual artists (including Nam June Paik, Tony Oursler and Dara Birnbaum), Vitiello has worked with Sachs for five years.

“According to my hard drive, I began creating soundtracks for Lynne Sachs in 2012. It feels like it could easily be longer, just in terms of the comfort of speaking about the role sound can take in Lynne’s works and finding a collaborative balance that gives me a great deal of freedom but also the interest to listen to valued feedback along the way. Film-to-film, I’ve truly enjoyed our working partnership.” (*Stephen Vitiello*).

Drift and Bough (2014) by Lynne Sachs; Super 8mm on Digital, B&W, sound, 6 minutes, print from exhibition file from the maker

Sachs spends a winter morning in Central Park shooting film in the snow. Holding her Super 8mm camera, she takes note of graphic explosions of dark and light and an occasional skyscraper. The stark black lines of the trees against the whiteness create the sensation of a painter’s chiaroscuro. Woven into this cinematic landscape, we hear sound artist Stephen Vitiello’s delicate yet soaring musical track which seems to wind its way across the frozen ground, up the tree trunks to the sky.

Every Fold Matters (2014-2018); excerpt from live performance and film co-directed by Lynne Sachs & Lizzie Olesker, 7 minutes

Based on a long-term collaboration between Sachs, Olesker and Vitiello, *Every Fold Matters* looks at the charged, intimate space of a crossroads of a Brooklyn community—the neighborhood laundromat. Based on interviews with New York City laundry workers, the project combines narrative and documentary elements as it explores personal stories of immigration, identity, money, stains and dirt. “The legacy of domestic work, the issues surrounding power, and the exchange of money for services are all potent themes which rise to the surface and bubble over in dramatic, thrilling escalations of the everyday.” (Ginny Mohler, *The Brooklyn Rail*)

***Taking Sound Cues From Wings* (2017) by Stephen Vitiello**

Taking Cues from Sound Wings is a sonic response to the script and musical score for the 1925 play *Wings* by Joseph S. Thompson, which Vitiello discovered in the collection of Montalvo Art Center's Phelan Library. Vitiello describes being drawn to "an art deco-inspired drawing on the cover depicting beautiful winged creatures flying over mischievous spiders, and script notes describing such actions as, 'the curiously syncopated theme of the earth bugs.'"

Created in collaboration with French horn player Dan Callaway, cellist Nora Krahl, flautist Jane Rigler, violinist Sara Soltau, and Foley artist Shelley Roden, the resulting [original] piece is a theatrically vibrant sound installation not intended to illustrate the play but envisioned as an imagined companion piece filled with the fabricated flutter of wings, the padding steps through a spider's web and a propulsive musical track. *Taking Sound Cues from Wings* animates a space that—aside from scheduled concerts and theatrical events—is often empty, and conjures such disparate associations as historical plays that could have once been performed here, live broadcasts of radio dramas in the 1920s, and movie soundscapes. (Montalvo Arts Center. www.montalvoarts.org/sculpture/taking_sound_cues_from_wings/)

***Captiva* (2014) by Taylor Deupree & Stephen Vitiello**

"The best way to know people is to work with them, and that's a very serious form of intimacy.

— Robert Rauschenberg, 1977

Stephen Vitiello and Taylor Deupree's *Captiva* consists of four pieces created while in residence at the Robert Rauschenberg Foundation's new Rauschenberg Residency Program at his estate and studio compound in Captiva, Florida. The first record, ***From the Fish House***, captures a series of duets, recorded in a small guest house, perched above the bay of the inland waters of Captiva Island. Microphones were mounted inside and outside the room, allowing the environmental sounds of osprey, pelicans and water to naturally enter the mix. The primary instrumentation here is modular synthesizer, samples, electric guitar and found objects for percussion. If there's a missing sound that could never be captured, it's the sound of porpoises circling the Fish House, quietly breathing... a moment too fleeting to ever make it to tape, although attempted on many occasions.

While the first record was recorded during sunny afternoons, the tracks on the second record, "From The Main Studio" and "Last Piano (for RR)" were recorded during late night sessions in a vast reverberant work space, which the artist Robert Rauschenberg used as a multi-purpose production studio. In the far corner of the room, near giant doors opened to the quiet evening darkness, a baby grand piano sat, waiting to be played. Tracks on these pieces include the piano played with EBows and prepared with forks and local beach shells as well as synthesizers and guitar. Many of the sounds were amplified and re-recorded in the room. The presence of Rauschenberg's history and maybe welcoming ghost were always felt... if possibly not heard.

Captiva is presented as a beautifully realized double-10" album graced with a pair of Polaroid photographs from the artists taken of the Fish House and its surrounding waters. The audio work and their photography was shown at the Rauschenberg gallery space in Chelsea in New York City in 2013. This is the duo's first full-length collaborative recording following a series of performances, a song recorded with Ryuichi Sakamoto and a multi-channel sound piece for the touring exhibition, *With Hidden Noise*, organized by Independent Curators International. (www.12k.com/releases/captiva/)