

ARTS CATALYST

Press Release

RADIO ARTS CATALYST

Arts Catalyst launches six new artist broadcasts via its platform for sonic inquiries into art and research.



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Conceived in Spring 2020 – at a time when it had started to become clear that the physical distance between people and places was going to grow – Radio Arts Catalyst was initiated as a means of exploring radio as a site of encounter; and as an ecology of overlapping spaces for collective listening, mapping and transmitting.

Historically, in times of crisis in which bodies have become separated – by oppressive regimes, the reinforcement and policing of borders, conflicts and displacement, for example – radio transmitters, occupied airwaves and neighbourhood pirate/DIY broadcasts have provided alternative spaces for conversation, creative expression and ways of organising.

Over the past year, Radio Arts Catalyst has existed as a virtual space where artists and practitioners from various backgrounds have been encouraged to come together to test out new modes of creation – individually and collectively – through sound and broadcasting. During this time, two of the project’s core elements have been developed: an artist residency programme, and The School of Broadcasting. The six resulting broadcasts launched today represent the culmination of a collective process, developed within these two distinct contexts.

Following an open call for artists based in the UK, **Yussef Agbo-Ola, Breakwater (Youngsook Choi and Taey lohe)** and **Cường Phạm, Ashley Holmes and Kaajal Modi** were selected to develop experimental, sound-based work, and to test out new aural approaches and sonic modes of artistic inquiry. As part of the residency, they received mentoring support from independent curator **Annie Jael Kwan**, as well as Arts Catalyst’s curatorial staff and podcast producer **Kitty Turner**. The four artist broadcasts that have emerged from the process explore hyperlocality, ecology, mental health, conviviality and migration.

The School of Broadcasting has been cultivated as an informal self-education programme and audio-centric space for exploring the possibilities of broadcasting as a collective practice. Over six months, under the guidance of two mentoring artists – **Evan Ifekoya** and **RESOLVE Collective** – two cohorts of participants embarked on a collective process of researching, organising and creating on the airwaves.

Radio Arts Catalyst Artist Residents

Yussef Agbo-Ola

Lavender and Lava



Image Courtesy Olaniyi Studio

Yussef Agbo-Ola's multidisciplinary artistic practice is concerned with interpreting natural energy systems, through interactive experiments that explore the connections between an array of sensory environments, from the biological and anthropological, to the perceptual and microscopic. His aim is to use diverse multidisciplinary research methods and design components, to reinterpret local knowledge and its environmental importance cross-culturally. He is the founder and creative director at Olaniyi Studio, an innovative design studio based in London that thrives on multidisciplinary relationships to actualise ideas around themes of environmentalism.

During this residency, Yussef has been creating acoustic architectural experiments that reflect upon the role of ethnomusicology, biological sonic feedback, and conceptual poetry around themes of environmentalism. He has developed a sound work that questions how different epistemologies from a range of diverse cultures relate, perceive, and become connected to or a part of their local ecological systems.

“Lavender and Lava is an organic orchestral artefact of both human and non-human environmental frequencies. Its conceptual apparatus originates from the repetitive yet ambiguous sonic atmosphere we hear in dynamic natural environments. The sonic dance of jungles, the voice of desert winds, the symphonic cracks of volcanoes are all embedded in this architectural composition to create an experimental sonic landscape that questions our relationship with the world around us”.

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO YUSSEF'S WORK](#)

Breakwater (Youngsook Choi and Taey lohe) and Cường Phạm Becoming Forest



Image: Breakwater: Becoming Forest (poster), 2020, courtesy the artists

Becoming Forest is a collaborative endeavour between the artist duo Breakwater (Youngsook Choi and Taeyohe) and the radio producer, curator, activist Cường Phạm. Breakwater make installations combining performance, film, sound, photography and text to explore postcolonial and intersectional identities.

The project considers mental wellbeing as a collective responsibility, focusing on the detrimental impact of Covid-19 and the spike of anti-Asian racism upon the mental health of Southeast and East Asian diasporas, refugees and precarious migrants in the UK. Drawing upon Frantz Fanon's seminal observation on the relationship between colonial oppression/violence and mental illness, this project conceptualises collective healing as performing justice.

In the first of four radio episodes that aim to provide and hold a space of solidarity and communal comfort, the artists invite listeners to join them for a guided sonic meditation, featuring birdsong, weather and a nostalgic Southeast and East Asian soundtrack as well as an interview with Michael Nagac, a mental health support officer at Kanlungan Filipino Consortium.

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO BREAKWATER AND CƯỜNG PHẠM'S WORK](#)

Ashley Holmes

Reworks / PDA

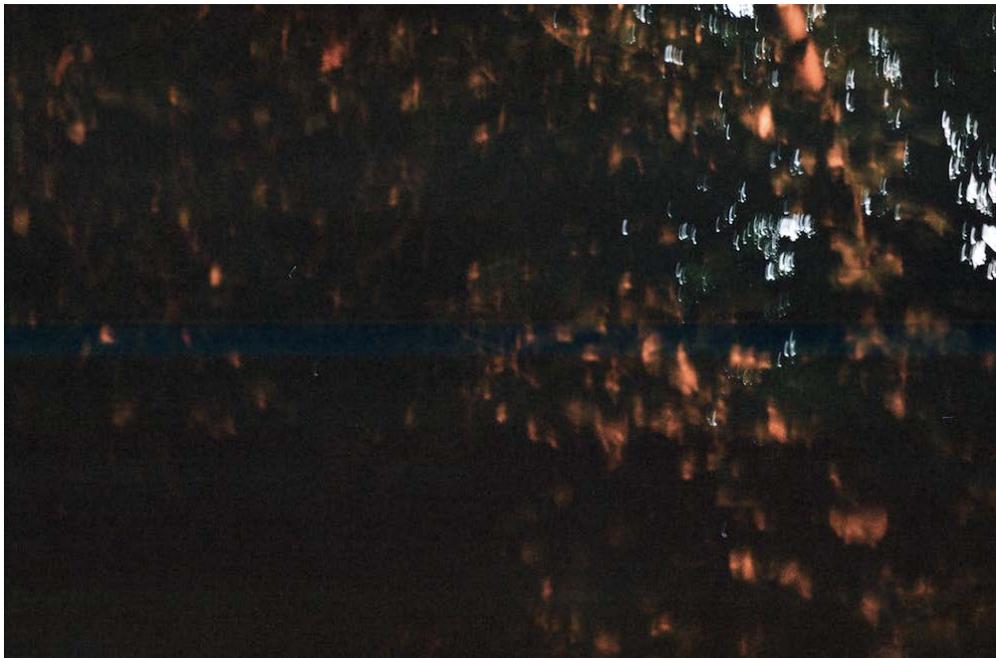


Image courtesy the Ashley Holmes

Ashley Holmes is a multi-disciplinary artist and DJ working across sound, moving image, radio broadcasts and performance. His work explores histories of resistance and anti-colonial resilience embedded in Black musical and sound-based practices to examine concepts of property, access and citizenship.

During the Radio Arts Catalyst residency, he began a process of developing a body of sound-based works and research which consider the ways perspectives around migration, class and racial identities are embodied, gathered and disseminated in music and cultural traditions. The final work comprises a series of compositions made from field recordings and samples.

“I’m interested in the ways we collect, memorialise and embody different stories and histories in contemporary society. My research during the residency has been based around oral cultures, pirating, bootlegging and the ways technologies and digital tools have been integrated into musical traditions across the African diaspora to document hyperlocality and a connection to the natural world”.

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO ASHLEY’S WORK](#)

Kaajal Modi

Kitchen Cultures



Image courtesy Kaajal Modi

Kaajal Modi is an artist and multidisciplinary designer with a background in community food activism, participatory design for social contexts and graphics & illustration.

During the Arts Catalyst Radio residency, Kaajal has been working with research outcomes and materials from a previous food-art-science research residency, in order to develop a multi-layered sound installation/experience that is intended to be listened to in your own kitchen while you cook. The work is an attempt to capture the experience of collaborative cooking, and being surrounded by women+ in the kitchen sharing stories, experiences, poems, recipes and joy. The voices you will hear are collaborators Eklass, Pepa, Rinkal, Sibutseng, Soha, Victoria, and chef collaborator Fatima. The piece incorporates poetry and storytelling with the sounds of

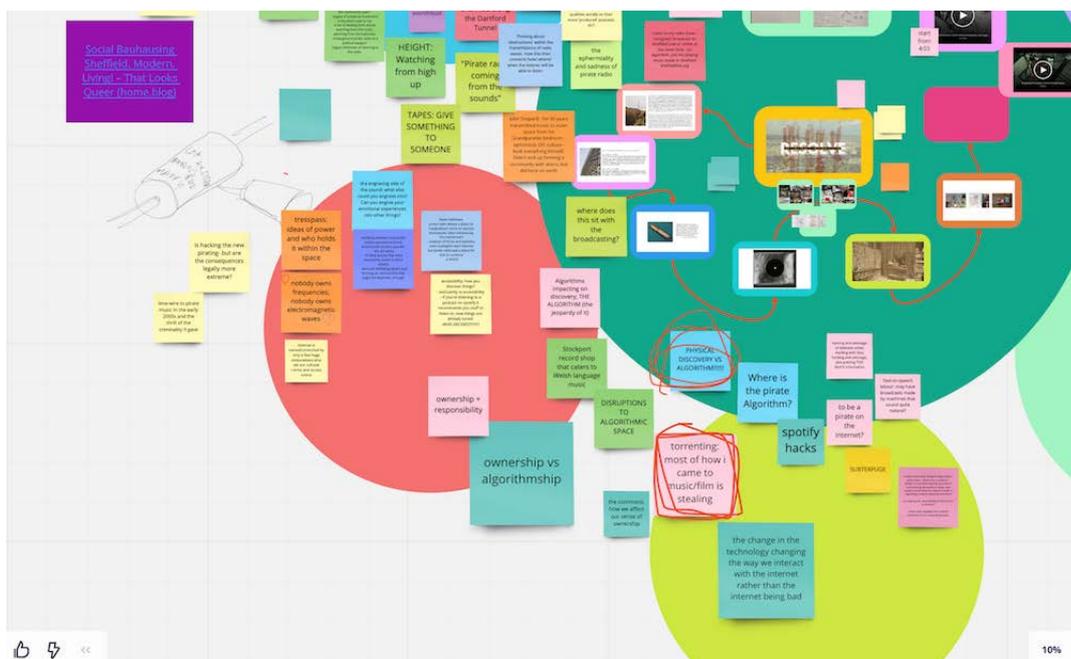
cooking and fermenting, creating an inter-cultural dialogue between the people and other beings who are collaborating in our preserved foods, to notice and connect us more fully to our food web.

“I’ve grown up surrounded by women and femme people in my community whose knowledge and agency was so overlooked, but they knew so much, and did so much. They knew about care, about food, about magic and about science and about the world in microcosm. What’s cooking if not kitchen science? It’s also kitchen magic, or it seemed that way to me as a child, and as I grow older that’s just becoming more self-evident.”

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO KAAJAL’S WORK](#)

The School of Broadcasting

\\ INTERFERENCE, INTERRUPTION
Mentored by RESOLVE



Documentation image courtesy RESOLVE

Resolve Collective’s workshop sessions explored the remote co-design of DIY instruments for ‘urban listening’ and ‘urban transmission’ and a collective mapping of different communities in Sheffield by locating and collating their sonic sense of place. Project influences spanned London’s 90’s Pirate Radio culture, Caribbean diasporic oral traditions and the gabinetes fonográficos of fin-de-siècle Spain, among others.

Through a process of co-learning, the group of around 30 participants from across the UK addressed the questions: what happens when we own the means of production when it comes to sound? How can we build, exchange and circulate such means today?

Resolve sent participants kits for building their own DIY phonographs in the post, in the attempt to collectively capture the materiality of sound and reclaim ownership over its means of production. A mixtape of sounds produced by the participants and assembled by producer Kitty Turner documents the process with all its failures, diversions, joyful manifestations and frustrations.

PARTICIPANTS

Summer Akhtar, Michael Ajjola, Steven Allen, Anja Borowicz-Richardson, Peter Brooks, Rosie Burslem, Mel Davies, Tuna El-salihie, Fe, Oliver Getley, Holly Graham, Clara Hancock, Jenny Handley, Quincy Haynes, Catherine Herbert, Alex Hoggett, Philip Lee, Toby Kilby-Pollard, Mengfei Liu, Olivia Lopez, Katie Matthews, Samra Mayanja, Tyler Mellins, Alisa Oleva, Andy Owen Cook, Lorenzo Prati, Pablo Rubio Alonso, Nastassja Simensky, Ella Skinner, Sian Williams, Charlotte West

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THE SCHOOL OF BROADCASTING: MIXTAPE 1](#)

Frequency, Embodiment and Melanin-o-phonic Space Mentored by Evan Ifekoya



Ritual Without Belief, installation view, Gasworks London, 2018

Drawing on frequency, rhythm and sound healing, artist Evan Ifekoya's workshop sessions aimed to bring the focus back to the body, addressing the questions: How does sound help us develop a greater awareness of our interior self? And what might this heightened awareness do for the collective?

Through practices of listening, reading and vocalising together, the group investigated the healing properties and possibilities of sound.

The emerging mixtape resonates with the knowledges and practices shared during the sessions, bringing together participants' contributions in a collectively realised sonic landscape.

PARTICIPANTS

(in order of appearance in the piece)

Freya Shaw, Ratiba Ayadi, Yen Chun Lin, Antonia Luxem, Rosie Stephens, Rhona Eve Clews, Marina Georgiou

[CLICK HERE TO LISTEN TO THE SCHOOL OF BROADCASTING: MIXTAPE 2](#)

ends.

For further information, images or interviews, please contact poppy.cockburn@artscatalyst.org.

SUPPORT

This initiative was made possible through funding from Arts Council England with Art Fund and Sheffield Church Burgesses Trust.

Arts Catalyst produces artist projects, research and public programmes at the intersections of art, health, ecology and economics. It programmes exhibitions, events, residencies, performances and publications, often working in collaboration with national and international partner organisations from the fields of art, science and academia. Public programming is intrinsic to the organisation's work, creating space for conversation, debate and fresh thinking. Since 1994, Arts Catalyst has commissioned more than 170 artists' projects, including major new works by the Otolith Group, Agnes Meyer Brandis, Tomás Saraceno, Aleksandra Mir, Larry Achiampong and David Blandy, and Susan Schuppli.

Evan Ifekoya is an artist and energy worker who through sound, text, video and performance places demands on existing systems and institutions of power, to re-centre and prioritise the experience and voice of those previously marginalised. Through archival and sonic investigations, they speculate on blackness in abundance; the body of the ocean a watery embodied presence in the work. They established the collectively run and QTIBPOC (queer, trans*, intersex, black and people of colour) led Black Obsidian Sound System (B.O.S.S.) in 2018. In 2019, they won the Kleinwort Hambros Emerging Artists Prize and in 2017 the Arts Foundation award for Live Art sponsored by Yoma Sasberg Estate. They have presented exhibitions and performances across Europe and Internationally, most recently: Liverpool Biennial (2021); Gus Fischer New Zealand (2020); De Appel Netherlands (2019); Gasworks London (2018).

Annie Jael Kwan is an independent curator, researcher and writer based in London. Since 2005 she has worked on numerous projects with major arts and cultural institutions in the UK and internationally. She founded the curatorial initiative, Something Human, in 2012, to focus on her interests in the critical ideas surrounding movement across borders. Exploring questions regarding futurity and alternative identities,

she initiated and co-leads the Asia-Art-Activism research network that is currently in residence at Raven Row, with a desire to interrogate the paradigm of “Asia” while experimenting with the formalities/informalities of working collectively. She holds an MA in History of Art and/or Archaeology from SOAS, teaches at Central St Martins and Sotheby's Institute of Art, and contributes to Art Asia Pacific.

RESOLVE is an interdisciplinary design collective that combines architecture, engineering, technology and art to address social challenges. They have delivered numerous projects, workshops, publications, and talks in the UK and across Europe, all of which look toward realising just and equitable visions of change in our built environment. Much of RESOLVE's work aims to provide platforms for the production of new knowledge and ideas. An integral part of this way of working means designing with and for young people and under-represented groups in society. Here, 'design' encompasses both physical and systemic intervention, exploring ways of using a project's site as a resource and working with different communities as stakeholders in the short and long-term management of projects. In this way, design carries more than aesthetic value; it is also a mechanism for political and socio-economic change.

Main image: graphic design by An Endless Supply.



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