JACK SNELL-RYAN
Untitled (Cone Drawing), 2010
Manual and mechanical drawing media on paper
29½ x 22 in

Untitled (Color Sound Cone), 2015
Manual and mechanical drawing media on paper
29½ x 22 in

Conch Loop/Isometric Speaker Pairing, 2010–2020
Helmet conch, pink conch, welded steel, sheet metal fabrication, felt, audio electronics
22 x 42 x 19 in

Cast Concrete/Sanyo, 2017–2019
Cast concrete, found Sanyo tape recorder
10 x 9 x 3 in

Schumann Resonance Conduction Unit, 2015–2020
Plywood, electronics, helmet conch, woody marram (triff, yellow wire nut, yellow ear plug, Sanyo recorder, welded steel flake, felt, transducers, custom electronics, radio
48 x 42 x 30 in

Photo: Mario Gallucci
The objects that Jack Snell-Ryan offers to our inquiries resist the temptations of language. They beckon with that beguiling quality of a rebus. In that mind game, drawings stand in for phonemes. One sounds out the names of things until they start making sense as words again. Jack Snell-Ryan, as it is, prefers to stop mid-sentence, and leave his images humming at the threshold of meaning just a step short of grammar and syntax. He brings things into audible range and beckons us to listen in. The objects point to some deeper signification. But instead of the clarity of a meaning, what each offers—in its own or as part of a system—is a structure for thinking in, or, better yet, thinking through. The elements of the enigma are self-revelant. Signals blink and course between them. Together, they combine into an array of resonant forms, pulsing with presence. A device of elusive purposes, its components so clear as to logical operations: resistors, capacitors and transistors in an electrical circuit, blinding itself into being. Thought I am always tempted by the charms of the alphabet, I know better than to downplay the evidence at hand. What these objects offer is a primer for conductive thinking. But even such metaphors seem too restrictive. It’s not a sentence I should be looking for at all, but a means to leave the game of language behind, and enter a field of sound, in tune to the hum of things.

**Schumann frequency**

That is a portal of Wifred Otto Schumann, leaning against the wall. In 1952, he predicted—through mathematical projections—the existence of extremely-low frequency sound waves rotating around the planet. Transient electromagnetic events—every second, some fifty bolts of extremely-low frequency sound waves rotoring around the planet, inaudible reaches across dimensional boundaries—out of Flatland, and into the inaudible reaches of the electromagnetic spectrum, waves flow into waves, attain amplification. Such is the structure for thinking in, or, better yet, thinking through. The elements of the enigma are self-revelant. Signals blink and course between them. Together, they combine into an array of resonant forms, pulsing with presence. A device of elusive purposes, its components so clear as to logical operations: resistors, capacitors and transistors in an electrical circuit, blinding itself into being. Thought I am always tempted by the charms of the alphabet, I know better than to downplay the evidence at hand. What these objects offer is a primer for conductive thinking. But even such metaphors seem too restrictive. It’s not a sentence I should be looking for at all, but a means to leave the game of language behind, and enter a field of sound, in tune to the hum of things.

**Isometric grid**

How does one draw like a sculptor; hold a thing in mind in order to mould it, fashion it? Jack Snell-Ryan, borrowing from the engineer’s toolkit, sets self-contained objects afloat in an isometric grid. In this notional, cubic space, every line meets at an angle of one hundred and twenty degrees. Perspective is vanquished. Depth is forever acknowledged. Scale, universally maintained. Those familiar with his sculptures will recognize their vocabulary, some of their component parts, in the drawings. But these are not mere blueprints. The objects they embody come from a geometric universe, and belong to the same class of phenomena as the sculptures: they exhibit their own solidity, their own materiality. These are cognitive sketches. There is an almost analytical oddness, a natural awkwardness, to the isometric grid. Every drawing presents a vibrating isolates of thought. Each seems to say: whichever way you might look at me, you will meet an ungraspable wholeness. This is due to the method as well as the manner of the drawings. The combination of grid and stroke has imbued each with a specific volume and tone. Once these words enter the equation, I cannot silence their connotations. The grid acts like the lines in a score. Every object appears part of an inscrutable notation system, and to be sounded out. So, how does one hold a thought? Like one holds a tune. What this sculptor does is to draw things out into the audible range.

**Resonance chamber**

Drawing is a box to put sculpture in. Sculpture a way to sound things out. Once electricity is brought into the equation, the objects inch that much closer to life, and to us. Currents carry echoes. Transducers vibrate. Lights glow and blink. The objects arrange into circuits. A transmission builds up. To be relayed through the black box of consciousness, where thought sparks and brainwaves flow electric. The work abounds with strange loops. They mingle with our cognitive patterns. See this conch, lending its ear to the hollow of a conch? It is the perfect image for an isometric grid. Loudspeakers, diode, resistor, give it a fullness of sound. Speaker-studded meteorites, glinting with diodes, sit on the gallery floor, while their likeness hovers in a drawing. The suggestion of sound is forever acknowledged. Scale, universally maintained. Those familiar with his sculptures will recognize their vocabulary, some of their component parts, in the drawings. But these are not mere blueprints. The objects they embody come from a geometric universe, and belong to the same class of phenomena as the sculptures: they exhibit their own solidity, their own materiality. These are cognitive sketches. There is an almost analytical oddness, a natural awkwardness, to the isometric grid. Every drawing presents a vibrating isolates of thought. Each seems to say: whichever way you might look at me, you will meet an ungraspable wholeness. This is due to the method as well as the manner of the drawings. The combination of grid and stroke has imbued each with a specific volume and tone. Once these words enter the equation, I cannot silence their connotations. The grid acts like the lines in a score. Every object appears part of an inscrutable notation system, and to be sounded out. So, how does one hold a thought? Like one holds a tune. What this sculptor does is to draw things out into the audible range.

**A PRIMER FOR CONDUCTIVE THINKING**

by Daniel Canty

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JACK SNELL-RYAN
b. 1967. Lives and works in Eugene, Oregon
2015 Hallie Ford Fellow

Jack Snell-Ryan is an interdisciplinary artist, independent curator, and long-time member of Ditch Projects, now serving on the Board of Directors. His practice explores trance and contemporary culture through the conduits of sonic theory and sculpture. Snell-Ryan’s work has been exhibited in the Portland2012 and Portland2016 Biennials, presented by Disjecta Contemporary Art Center; FDX CONTEMPORARY ART and The Art Gym at Marylhurst University in Portland, Oregon; the American University Museum, Hirshorn Museum, and The Phillips Collection in Washington, DC; Consolidated Works, Seattle, Washington; MICA, Baltimore, Maryland; Maison Laurentine, Aubepierre-sur-Aube, France; The Palace of Fine Arts-Ministry of Culture, Cairo, Egypt; Dublin Electronics Arts Festival, Dublin, Ireland; Ausstellungsraum Klingental, Basel, Switzerland; and The Banff Centre, Banff, Canada. His research has been supported by the Oregon Arts Commission, Djerassi Resident Artist Program, The Precipice Grant in partnership with Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts, The Calligram Foundation, and the Banff Centre for Arts and Creativity. Ryan received a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Georgia, Athens, Georgia.
Hallie Brown was born in 1905, outside of Tulsa, in Indian Territory that would become the state of Oklahoma. She supported herself as she earned a bachelor’s degree at East Central University and taught in Oklahoma before her parents moved their family to rural Oregon. In 1935 Hallie married Kenneth W. Ford and together they established Roseburg Lumber Company in the midst of the Great Depression.

Hallie Ford was drawn to art all her life, specifically the accessibility of artmaking. She took classes with the painter Carl Hall at Willamette University in Salem, and painting became a central part of her life. Her philanthropy established and supported key Oregon visual art museums and universities.

After Hallie’s death in 2007, The Ford Family Foundation’s Board of Directors honored our co-founder by establishing a Visual Arts Program. The first element of this program was the Hallie Ford Fellowships in the Visual Arts, awarded since 2010. Through these unrestricted fellowships, we seek to make significant awards to visual artists who have worked to establish their voice and craft.

Another of our goals is to help support the ecology that builds connections and capacity in the visual arts community of our state. As the Fellows become the focus of exhibitions throughout the world, they bring more attention and support to their Oregon peers. We are certain that Hallie Ford would be pleased to see how both individual artists and the visual arts community in Oregon have flourished since the establishment of this program in her honor.

We could not be more excited each year to bring new Hallie Ford Fellows into this family, and to share their work with you.

Anne C. Kubisch
President, The Ford Family Foundation

The Hallie Ford Fellowships are the flagship element of The Ford Family Foundation Visual Arts Program. The Foundation commits to an ongoing relationship with our Fellows through exhibition support, convenings, and professional development opportunities. In addition, the Visual Arts Program offers grants to visual artists for unanticipated career opportunities; supports artists-in-residence programs in Oregon and nationally; brings curators and arts writers from outside the region to Oregon for studio visits and community dialogue; commissions arts writing and publication; supports exhibitions, catalogues and other forms of documentation for Oregon artists; and awards grants to enhance exhibition spaces.

The Foundation is pleased to partner with the Oregon Arts Commission, University of Oregon, Pacific Northwest College of Art (PNCA), Portland State University, Reed College, Portland Institute for Contemporary Art (PICA), Creative Capital, Native Arts and Cultures Foundation, United States Artists, and the artists and visual arts organizations of our state.

The Ford Family Foundation was established in 1957 by Kenneth W. and Hallie E. Ford. Its mission is “successful citizens and vital rural communities” in Oregon and Siskiyou County, California. The Foundation is located in Roseburg, Oregon, with a Scholarship office in Eugene. For more information about the Foundation and its Visual Arts Program, visit www.tfff.org.