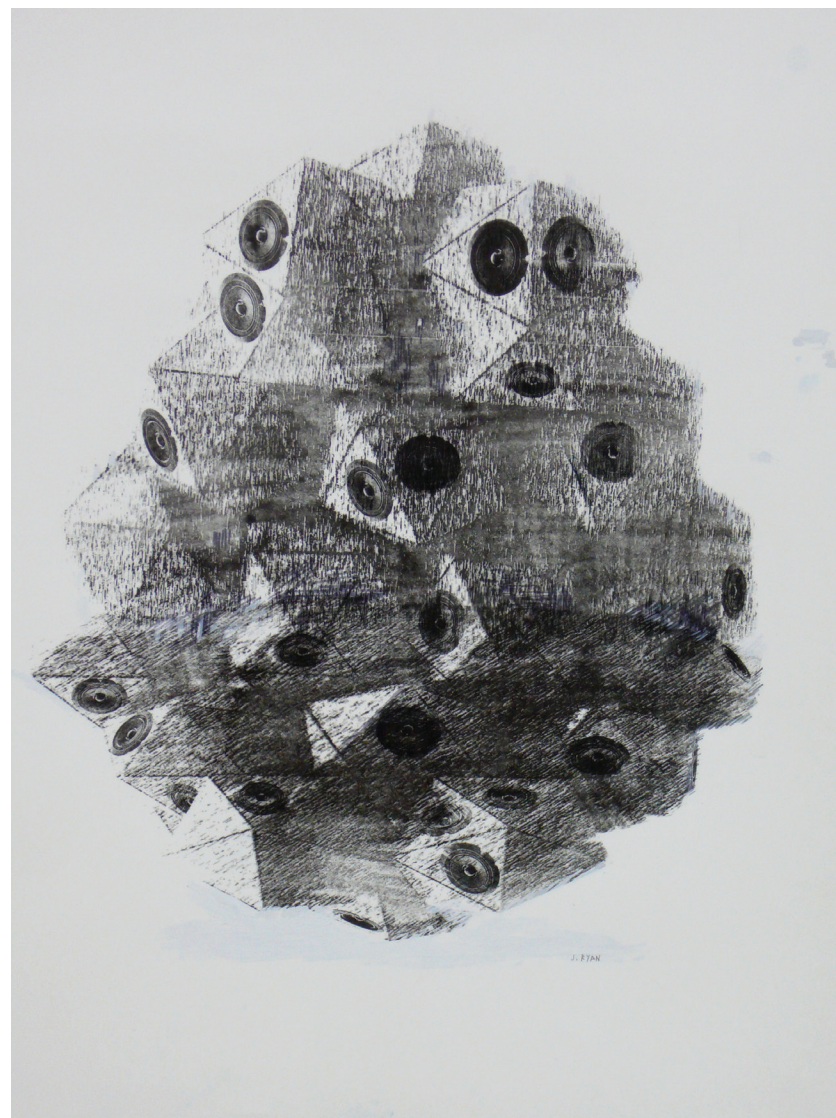


JACK SNELL-RYAN





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



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

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Schumann Resonance Conduction Unit, 2015–2020

Plywood, electronics, helmet conch, woolly mammoth tooth, yellow wire nut, yellow ear plug, Sanyo recorder, welded steel tube, felt, transducers, custom electronics, audio
48 x 42 x 30 in

Photo: Mario Gallucci

A PRIMER FOR CONDUCTIVE THINKING

by Daniel Canty

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 message, what each offers—on 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-evident. Signals blink and course between them. Together, they combine into an array of resonant forms, pulsing with presence. A device of elusive purpose, its components as clear as logical operators: resistors, capacitors and transistors in an electrical circuit, blinking itself into being. Though 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 soon 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 portrait of Winfried Otto Schumann, leaning against the wall. In 1952, he predicted—through mathematical projections—the existence of extremely-low frequency sound waves rotoring around the planet. Transient electromagnetic events—every second, some fifty bolts of lightning streak across the planetary skies—travel in the conductive zone between the Earth's geological shell and the ionosphere. At the appropriate wavelength, they crash against themselves and boom in a flat B-2, far out of range of the lowest radio bandwidth. Their trajectories, sketched on paper, surround the planet with gyres. A hollow. A spark. An echo. This is the incidental tune of our world. Its frequency, at 7.83 Hz, roughly corresponds to the lower threshold of the human brain's alpha waves, which marks the limit between wakefulness and trance states. This nesting of scales is typical of a Jack Snell-Ryan proposition, where every object emits its own sound signature, and shimmers to take its place into a greater whole. We are not dealing with a simile, but with commonly overlooked facts of life. Airs we've all heard before, but cannot quite recall. The Earth's and the brain's hemispheres, seemingly incommensurable objects, conjoin along a wave of thought.

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, but 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 objects. Every drawing presents a vibrating isolate 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 calls 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 of a sound in mind. Speaker-studded meteorites, glinting with diodes, sit on the gallery floor, while their likeness hovers in a drawing. The suggestion of sound reaches across dimensional boundaries—out of Flatland, and into the inaudible spectrum. Within the isometric grid, boxlike structures, haunted by half-erased seven-segment digits, glide into presence, like signals from the prehistory of the digital age. They are the first naive operators to bridge the gap between the world of natural numbers and the intricacies of code. In the inaudible reaches of the electromagnetic spectrum, waves flow into waves, attain amplification. Such is the earth's pulse, the muted rumor at the back of our own hearts. Scales intermingle. Hemispheres conjoin. Every object is a cipher, a monad. Yet each plays a part in an elusive whole. All this odd machinery—whether or not it can factually be considered as such—gathers into an assembly of speakers. See this conch, lending its ear to the hollow of a conch? Do these objects really resist language? They carry me into



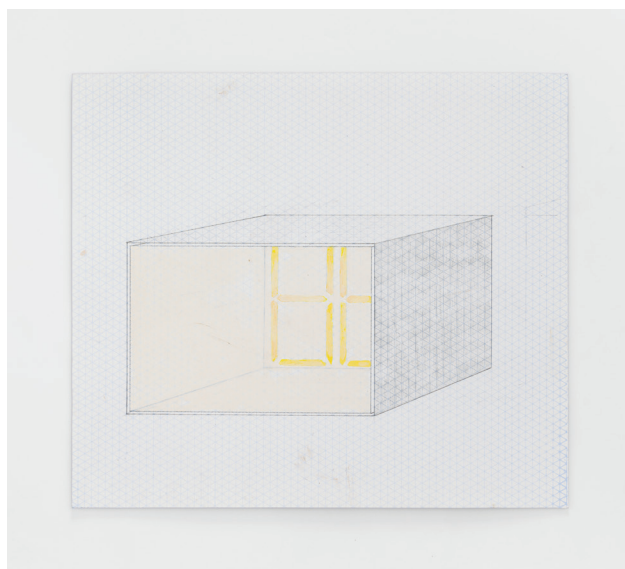
Schumann Resonance Conduction Unit (detail), 2015–2020
Plywood, egg carton, steel tube, felt, transducers, custom electronics, audio
60 x 42 x 30 in

its flotsam and jetsam, and displace timeless philosophical quandaries. If a wave crashes into a wave, and there is no one to hear it, does it make a sound? Of course it does. But not only for us. When I say this, don't you hear the sound of waves? For everything you hear, there is a blind side. Things cannot be reduced to one another. The mysteries of the inner ear are whole. They are bounded by echoes. Consciousness is made of waves that know themselves. The scale on which the music of mind plays out bridges the gap between the animate and the inanimate. There is no clear answer to the rebus of thought, but there are ways to listen in.

Daniel Canty is a writer and artist living in Montréal, Québec.



*Untitled (An Armature For Holding
Two Things That are Listening)*, 2020
Manual and mechanical drawing
media on paper
16 x 14 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci



Untitled (Judd Cube), 2020
Manual and mechanical drawing
media on paper
14 x 16 in
Photo: Mario Gallucci

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 Portland2012 and Portland2016 Biennials, presented by Disjecta Contemporary Art Center; PDX 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.



VISUAL ARTS PROGRAM

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