

LUX Salon:

Like slow breathing, it seemed to emanate from inside the walls

curated by Erik Martinson

Tuesday 3rd May 2016, 7pm

This programme derives its title from Nigel Kneale's short story *Minuke* (1949). The narrator, a realtor, recounts the unfortunate tale that leads his clients to flee their home, a near seaside bungalow lovingly called Minuke, or 'My Nook.' The resident family receives escalating non-verbal hints to vacate, seemingly from the house itself: plumbing outbursts, rearranged furniture, food 'suddenly and revoltingly decomposed.' They confide to the realtor, and though doubtful he begins to speculate mysterious causes after his own encounters. He recalls the bungalow's foundations are 'enormous flat stones' with concrete used to fill the gaps; they could be Norse, 'or even very much older.' Before the family's unnatural eviction, a climatic scene unfolds in the kitchen. A conversation between the realtor and the father of the family reveals the persistent and unnerving sound the realtor thought to be the inhale/exhale of the sea is a false presumption; the humble bungalow is too far from the shore. The source is closer: walls breathing, deep, to their foundation.

Kneale revisits ancient foundations and their unknowable capacities in the 1972 BBC teleplay *The Stone Tape*. As a research team moves into a country estate to set up their lab, with the goal of developing a new recording medium, rumors circulate of a haunting in the cellar. Their computer programmer has an encounter in this harrowing room, which pre-dates the rest of the estate. Emerging from the stone of the wall, along unused steps leading nowhere, is a woman in a Victorian maid's uniform; she brings her arms up to cover her face and screams. This woman is an image, a translucent flicker. The rest of the team soon experience the apparition in repeat appearances as they try to ascertain how it is stored in stone, seeing a possibility for the new recording medium they seek. Their director claims: 'It's the room...there is no ghost...the room holds an image and when people go in there they pick it up. ...It must work like a recording. Fixed in the floor and the walls, right in the substance of them. A trace of what happened in there. And we pick it up. We act as detectors—decoders—amplifiers. ...It'd have to be in the stone.' Further testing of this hypothesis leads to traumatic consequences; the layers of recorded sediment can be erased, or more aptly, re-recorded.

Situated at the intersection between human and non-human perception, recording technologies provide a durational though flawed frame for experiential events, mundane or otherwise. On rare occasions there are traces of an irrational sort hiding within the recording, emergences that move beyond perceptual limitations into the data stream, traces that point nowhere and everywhere at once. A recording can be a glimpse of the conceptually out of reach, an unnerving fracture, a witness.

Considering the recording in all its (im)material forms, with all its potential (both latent and actualized), this programme seeks to engage with emergent absence and presence, the nebulous qualities of the sonic, (un)contained narratives, and that which can be termed 'unhappened'.

Featuring work by: Leslie Peters & Dara Gellman, Tan Pin Pin, Jenny Perlin, Graeme Arnfield, Karen Cunningham, Emily Wardill, Steve Reinke, and Mark Aerial Waller.

This programme is part of an ongoing research/exhibition project called *Stone Tapes* begun in 2013. Research areas include: considerations of speculative fiction, Stone Tape Theory and approaches to Forensic Architecture, The Rhythmic Event, Imaginary Media, Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP), and Numbers Stations, among other threads.

Programme:

Pearl, Leslie Peters & Dara Gellman, 2002, 3:30, Canada
The Impossibility of Knowing, Tan Pin Pin, 2010, 11:37, Singapore
Inaudible, Jenny Perlin, 2006, 1:44, USA
Sitting in Darkness, Graeme Arnfield, 2015, 15:30, UK
Mystics After Modernism, Karen Cunningham, 2012, 6:05, UK
The Diamond (Descartes' Daughter), Emily Wardill, 2008, 15:00, UK
Squeezing Sorrow from an Ashtray, Steve Reinke, 1992, 5:45, Canada
The Sons of Temperance, Mark Aerial Waller, 2000, 7:15, UK

Total runtime: 66:45

Programme notes:

***Pearl*, Leslie Peters & Dara Gellman, 2002, 3:30, Canada**

Pearl transforms a single moment of found footage from an investigative "documentary" program, bringing into question the sanctity and safety of the home, and revealing the narratives of absence. (vtape.org)

***The Impossibility of Knowing*, Tan Pin Pin, 2010, 11:37, Singapore**

"*The Impossibility of Knowing* came into being because I was wondering if the video camera can capture the aura of a space that has experienced trauma. I made a list of places I knew about where accidents had happened and we filmed them. But my camera did not "capture" anything. It could be due to the limitations of physics, but the canal remained a canal, the house, a house. Maybe the aura we sought doesn't exist or we just did not have the requisite gift to see the aura. Maybe you can see better than us." – Tan Pin Pin

With the barest of details gleaned from contemporaneous news clippings, Tan Pin Pin reconstructs the incidents via a dry voice over. The film is narrated by Lim Kay Tong who is the presenter for local crime re-construction series *Crime Watch*. (tanpinpin.com)

***Inaudible*, Jenny Perlin, 2006/12, 1:44, USA**

Inaudible is an animated film that makes visible all the words that the FBI could not hear or imagined were being spoken in the film *Transcript*. Most of the discussion, inaudible, is dutifully transcribed, as the word "inaudible" comes up again and again on screen. In *Transcript*, the text comes from an October 1953 transcript of a dinner party that took place four months after the Rosenbergs' execution. On October 30, informant NY-964-S eavesdropped on two couples having a dinner party at an apartment in the West Village, New York. Both of these couples had been friends of the Rosenbergs, and were being called to testify in front of the House Un-American Activities Committee about their roles in the "Commie spy ring." NY-964-S cannot hear many details of the conversation and fills in words he cannot understand. Most of the text is inaudible, but one gathers that the guests at the dinner party know they are being spied on. *Inaudible* and *Transcript* are part of the series *Perlin Papers*. The Perlin Papers is an archive located at Columbia University Law School that contains 250,000 documents related to the case of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg, who were tried and executed in 1953 for alleged espionage for the Soviet Union. For two decades after the execution, the FBI spied on hundreds of people tangentially connected to the case. The archive is named for Penny's relative, Marshall Perlin, a lawyer who forced the U.S. government to release the papers in the early 1970s, in one of the first successful uses of the Freedom of Information Act in the U.S. (<http://www.nilrep.net/>)

***Sitting in Darkness*, Graeme Arnfield, 2015, 15:30, UK**

Out of the darkness a sound emerges. It echoes and drones. Terrified people take to the streets in search for its source. They get their cameras out and document the sky, searching for an author. We watch on, sitting in darkness, our muscles contract and our pupils dilate. 'I hope the camera picks this up.' *Sitting in Darkness* explores the circulation, spectatorship and undeclared politics of contemporary images. (<http://graemearnfield.tumblr.com/>)

***Mystics After Modernism*, Karen Cunningham, 2012, 6:05, UK**

'If the modern signifies a passing, from one era to another, and the enforcement of the present, then beyond the popularity of new-ageism at the time of its construction, what does it mean to have built a stone circle in Glasgow city centre in the late 1970s, less than 400 metres away from recently constructed tower blocks?' (karencunningham.org)

***The Diamond (Descartes' Daughter)*, Emily Wardill, 2008, 15:00, UK**

Taking the mythical story of the death of Descartes' daughter as a starting point to search for her again without the anchor of 'rational' thought, *The Diamond (Descartes' Daughter)* is a disembodied wandering through of scenes from a film where a diamond is protected by lasers; images of a girl playing on a Nintendo Wii in a homemade version of the costume that Etienne Jules Marey would dress his subjects in when conducting chronophotography; through logic experiments; 'Ready Maids' and words shattered like a crystal refracting light - the dispassionate reeling off of the text breaking up: sentence fragments are repeated, amended, the voice skipping as though trying to jump a programming error. (lux.org.uk)

***Squeezing Sorrow from an Ashtray*, Steve Reinke, 1992, 5:45, Canada**

'We've been working on ashtrays for a couple of months now. Basically, we put an ashtray in the chamber and subject it to a series of pulses of a specific frequency. Sensors placed around the chamber pick up the resulting sound waves.' Part of *The Hundred Videos*. (<http://myrectumisnotagrave.com/>)

***The Sons of Temperance*, Mark Aerial Waller, 2000, 7:15, UK**

The Sons of Temperance is introduced by a man talking about collections of ancient ceramics. In their creation, potters would turn pieces of clay on a wheel. As they were turned, the potter's fingernails or tools created grooves in side the pot, which would resonate with the voices or sounds of what was happening in the vicinity. Today, these ceramic pieces can be played back like vinyl recordings. The collection's value no longer resides in the visual, but in the secret beauty of the audio. (lux.org.uk)

Erik Martinson is an independent curator based in London. He worked in Toronto at Vtape, a not-for-profit artists' video distributor, from 2005-2014 and was a member of the Pleasure Dome curatorial collective from 2006-2014. He has curated screenings/exhibitions for Art Star 3: Video Art Biennale at SAW Gallery, Ottawa (2007); Vtape's Curatorial Incubator (2009); the Rendezvous with Madness Film Festival, Toronto (2010, 2011); The Images Festival, Toronto (2012); A Space Gallery, Toronto (2012); Art Gallery of Mississauga (2013); Institute of Contemporary Arts, London (2015); Red Barn Project Space at University of California Santa Barbara (2015), and Chalton Gallery, London (2016). Recently he was on the selection jury for Videonale.15 at Kunstmuseum Bonn (2015). While living in London he is working toward an MFA in Curating at Goldsmiths College and is Assistant Curator for the Nuclear Culture Project at Arts Catalyst. He will attend a curatorial research residency at Rupert, Vilnius, during the autumn of 2016.