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**COMMENTARY ON SONIC ARTS PRACTICE**

**BY**

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**Submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of  
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Figure 1. Image A from GPS data for *Worm*.

**PORTFOLIO:**

[claireeleanorhealy.com/mysub](http://claireeleanorhealy.com/mysub)

## INTRODUCTION: PART I

I see art as a means to think through difficult ideas and curiosities and their representation does not necessarily reveal this, nor does it need to. Art does not always have to mean something. There is a statement by surrealist artist Giorgio de Chirico that I found fascinating throughout the development of my portfolio. In the artist's short texts, de Chirico depicts the world as 'an immense museum of strangeness,' to reveal the 'mystery in insignificant things.'<sup>1</sup> He believes that 'Art is the fatal net which catches these strange moments,' and further, he says these moments are not dreams but rather a living reality.<sup>2</sup> My portfolio is a collection of these strange moments and this thesis a reflection upon the process and experience of attempting to collect what is but a living reality. My project involves using art to navigate difficulty, to map out process and progress, narration and the uncanny. The time of this portfolio is a strange reality and my process is its mapping and re-mapping. What you see and hear are the traces of a journey through wormholes trying to find my way home, only to find the unhomey.

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1 Giorgio de Chirico, in Marcel Jean (ed.), *The Autobiography of Surrealism* (New York, 1980), 6.

2 Giorgio de Chirico, 'On Metaphysical Art' (1919), in Herschel B. Chipp (ed.), *Theories of Modern Art* (Berkeley, 1969), 448.

## INTRODUCTION: PART II

My portfolio comprises two projects: *Chicken* and *Worm*. For examination purposes, these projects are represented as an online portfolio at [claireeleanorhealy.com/mysub](http://claireeleanorhealy.com/mysub). On this site, *Chicken* is quite directly a documentation of an event-work, whereas *Worm* attempts to have a separate existence online; it is a documentation of events that invites the viewer-listener to reenact some of those events.

*Chicken* is a work that was installed at the Old Hairdressers on 27th May 2012 as part of an event I organised called ANACOLUTHON (see Figure 2 and 3). For this work I programmed the data received from an Arduino micro controller and four distance sensors using Pure Data to produce a large-scale theremin effect. The sound field is visually represented by a black sheet that is suspended above the audience/participants. It is interactive in that when someone reaches up to touch the material they move closer to the sensors and thus change the sound frequencies of the field. In addition to this, during the event a recording is played made specifically for the installation, and I wear a suction cup microphone on my chest which picks up my beating heart and other bodily sounds.

*Worm* is a work that focuses on process. It took shape as a film and sound work that traces a journey but does not allow access to specific locations. It is made up of field recordings that are chopped and rearranged, and photographic images of travel. There are four films in total, each with their own 'soundtrack.' These films are found on the portfolio website amongst static black and white images of Google Maps exported from the Global Positioning System device I had with me which mapped this journey (See

Figure 1 and 4). *Worm* plays on the notion of truthful documentation by presenting the viewer-listener with a confusing diary of events; the act of documenting a journey is at once a personal reflection and a estranged fiction.

### INTRODUCTION: PART III

*Chicken* is an attempt to force the physicality of the installation space upon the viewer-listener; to make it immanent and to bring closer that which hangs above our heads. Indeed, the namesake of this work is Chicken Licken - the young chick who claims 'the sky is falling down!' This children's tale is about the fear of a collapsing space above our heads - the sky threatens to suffocate though it is made of air. Chicken Licken provokes mass hysteria among the other animals, afflicting others with his illness. The remoteness of the sky keeps it safe, faint, and distantly relevant. Just as our beating heart affirms our living existence, the sounds in the air confirm our place on earth, locating that existence in place; beneath sky. The hanging sheet functions to force the audience/participants to look up and reevaluate the space of the sky. The audience/participants are forced in this way through curiosity in the source of the sounds. The imposing sheet becomes the focus of the installation space and when someone reaches towards it, that person notices an effect in the sound emitted. It is massive, tech-heavy, and yet delicate and temperamental. Its function is dependent upon an audience and a space as it requires participants to complete the sounds and the full installation experience.

The noisy black sheet which tempts the intrusion of the sky is accompanied by another wave of sound created from field recordings of church bells and other sounds of the out-of-touch realm of the sky. Indeed this work was approached mindful of Martin Dixon's essay 'Dwelling and the Sacralisation of the Air: A note on acousmatic music.'<sup>3</sup> In this Dixon makes reference to Alain Corbain's book, *Les cloches de la terre*, in which he

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3 Martin Dixon, 'Dwelling and the Sacralisation of the Air: A note on acousmatic music,' *Organised Sound* 16(2), Cambridge University Press, 2011, 115-119.

tells of the importance of the parish bell in nineteenth-century France. Corbain says it 'anchored localism, imparting depth to the desire for rootedness and offering the peace of near, well-defined horizons.'<sup>4</sup> I will later discuss Dixon's reading which references Martin Heidegger's notion of dwelling, but first I will talk about the context of bells and gongs for this project. I have always had an interest in these sonic qualities specifically, I think, due to my time spent as a member of a Gamelan orchestra. The room where we practiced was in a church that sat at one of highest points of the city, so that the ringing could be heard all around. It was common to find walkers tilting their heads upwards trying to locate a source of this usual noise (usual for Cork at least). To make the recordings for *Chicken*, I was humbly entertained by the Guild of Bellringers at St Mary's Cathedral in Glasgow - a curious ensemble who are very proud of their ten bell peal. While bemused locals wondered what all the fuss was about ('A wedding, perhaps?'), I had the chance to climb up the tower to the Guild's practice session to understand the famous peal and take some recordings. Of course, I also got to put faces and personalities to these mysterious ringers and their song. In a way, I find such experiences of common but unknown sounds such as bells and gongs in any city feels like being a part of a secret club.

In the process of making *Worm* I began to think more deeply about objecthood and the performance of a 'self' and a kind of meshing of time and space. To explain, while in 'performance mode,' I began to rethink the place of the audience and my awareness of measured 'stage' times. It was this thought process that changed the end result of the work. Initially, *Worm* was conceived to be a traveling installation with each iteration taking the form of a dialogue. I was to stage a conversation of sorts based on my

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<sup>4</sup> Alain Corbain, *Village Bells: Sounds and Meaning in the French Countryside*, trans. Martin Thom (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), 97.

surroundings, and play back recorded material from previous conversations and attempt a response. I planned to map out a journey by land and sea starting in Glasgow and stopping in London, Paris, Treignac, Rotterdam, Dublin and Cork.<sup>5</sup> However, when it came to staging the first installation of *Worm*, a number of problems arose. One issue was my unintended audience - in train stations, parks, urban streets, and under heavy surveillance at boarder controls. My announcement as artist to 'begin' and 'end' seemed at odds with the fluidity of travel and of objects more generally. Using walkie-talkies and other recording devices dispersed in my desired location, my dialogue with myself and my environment seemed false. Justifying my presence on a 'stage' interfered with any meaningful engagement with sonic material. Demarcating my presence as an artist seemed to overwhelm my capacity to listen and respond. While these conversations were initially expected to be challenging in that the ambient sounds would interact with the recordings, causing difficulty in understanding the spoken words of my interlocutors, I had not anticipated my experience of insincerity and stuttered, measured time. As I continued my journey I reformulated the project into something much more fluent and continuous as it was mapped and documented and re-recorded and re-shaped.

The project is now made up of layers of inquiry rather than snapshots of a passing reality; the listener hears bits of conversation, some questions, and some answers. There is no stage, but a living artwork. I did not time my 'performances' but rather recorded everything. I edited this material later when home in Glasgow. During travel and after in edit, fictions seemed to emerge from fractions of truth. It was a liberating experience to not 'plan' an installation, but to let it take its own shape. Together with the visual

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<sup>5</sup> In Treignac is an artist-run gallery and residency space called Treignac Projet. There I was to take part in PATIO. In its second year, PATIO is a process of developing and maintaining networks between geographically dispersed actors through short-term, discursive meetings and active projects. There I had the chance to develop my portfolio, my thesis, and install another installation called Oral History Museum - a work conceived by architect Kelwin Palmer. Many thanks to Sam Basu, Elizabeth Murray, Kelwin Palmer, Tim Coles, and Siobhan Tessa Milne.

material, it creates a heavy collage of moments during travel and art-making. Choosing the medium of film plays on this refusal to stop time, as the images and sounds provocatively wormhole and never reveal their now-past time or location. I aimed for a fluid experience of time and space, and inspired by the philosophies of Henry Bergson and others, I came to understand a notion of continuous time and coexistent time. Ideas of duration informed what has become , in its online presence, a shortcut through conventional time a space. The interaction with the materials in *Worm*, creates a kind of movement through time and space, rather than a reference to it. Or even, *Worm* function as an object that times in that it holds the properties of time. Indeed, my initial attempt with *Worm* to map out a journey gave way to a more fuzzy, uncanny notion of reality. Very quickly it became obvious to me the insincerity of my initial approach to 'stage' installations. In a way I felt it would take away from the would-be art object. Framed in this way, any result of this staging seemed to be mere appearance of what was, rather than a more fruitful attempt at what the materials could be. The object was already past. This trying to indicate an action led to any art production being frozen in its already becoming state. This realisation helped me to re-evaluate what this project could be.

In fact, both of these works are the result of many edits, revisions, and reformulations. It is this process of working that interests me; its imaginings but also, essentially, its failures. *Chicken*, for example, was first planned to be installed as part of Sound Thought 2012, for which I worked as an active committee member and production manager. However, upon installing the work, in order to adjust the angle of the wires I attached play-doh to the sensors to weigh them down. The water content of the play-doh caused them to short circuit. With this experience of failure I had the opportunity to refine the structure of the work to make it both more robust and elegant.

However, while the two work share the quality of multiple lives, they also differ in many ways. *Worm*, for example, involves but does not pressure. It is intentionally everywhere and nowhere. Contrasted to *Chicken*, it is lightweight and mobile. The persistent ritualistic announcement in *Chicken* - 'this is happening now, pay attention to my art' - is abandoned in *Worm* for more fluid narratives and dislocated subjectivities. Whereas *Chicken* points to the unknown and uncanny realm of the the sky and makes it present and physical, *Worm* attempts to map out time and space as derived from objects; the sounds and events are not located on a map as nodes to be reached and traversed, but are dissolved, intangible assemblages of a road trip. Whereas *Chicken* occupies the air and then falls to intervene a more earthly realm, *Worm* has a more complex orientation to the earth by problematising its possible categorisation by way of invoking multiplicity and wormholing. In *Worm* the mapping of the earth involves the activation of the journey so that the destination no longer becomes a marker, or node or orientation point. I will now begin to delve deeper into the process of this portfolio, and start with a discussion on failure.



Figure 2. Image A from *Chicken* installation.

### **CHICKEN & WORM: FAILURE**

When a work fails it disturbs and shocks: how could this happen? where does the problem lie? why is this happening to me? The object in question comes strikingly into view, the creator-object becoming obsessed with its 'thingness,' its unresponsiveness, its refusal to cooperate. When something breaks its objecthood stares you right in the face. You are frustratingly responsible for this object yet you seem to have no control over it. If it fails, you fail. The artist-creator is defunked. The object reveals itself to you and yet no solution appears.

This failure is one result of the artist's proposition of material. It is an act of articulation which tumbles and mumbles in its delivery. The intention in *Chicken* was to overwhelm in delivery - an act achieved through an articulation of excess and multiplicity. While the first staging of *Chicken* could not uphold this relatively complicated delivery of material comprising of multiple sound sources and high volumes, the second staging as documented in the portfolio keeps it together, but only just. Difficulty and inarticulation are themes that run throughout my portfolio. This reflects an interest of mine in facing the impossibility of direct or transparent communication.

The *Chicken* event is framed as art but its signification is somewhat unclear as the montaged elements fight with each other; bells sound against the black sky and one movement of the hand effects the architecture of the space. The artist is present but all she seems to communicate is her internal sounds, rather than any outward display of communication. This paradoxical articulation of the medium in order to allow the process of disarticulation to be made visible could be called a liquefaction of language.

It is like a map without a key. A journey without a destination. The *Chicken* installation is itself a material assemblage of tries and starts to dissolve language and to re-evaluate the narrativity implicit in artistic creation. Formally it suffocates and confuses: the interactive sheet hanging claustrophobically close to the audience/participants, and the montaged quality of the sonic elements clash against each other disallowing any straightforward signification. In *Worm* we see elements of a map but their specificity is unclear. The voice present in the audio drifts in and out of perceptibility and shifts subjectivities, telling the story of multiple selves.

This is an act of the author under erasure. One artist, Marcel Broodthaers, explicitly staged this confusion of signs. Broodthaers, for example, prefers not to perform the various tasks usually incumbent upon the artist- exploring instead the efficacy of a self-imposed muteness and failure. In his 1969 film *La Pluie (Projet pour un texte)* he stages such an event. In this film he is seated outside at a desk and begins to write. As he does so, rain starts to fall onto his page flooding his newly penned inky letters. He persists despite the downpour and the dissolution of his words. As Ed Krêma describes it: 'The regression of the legible sign to watery stain or disarticulated flow, far from opening onto a liberated expressive plenitude, instead stages an enigmatic withdrawal and tautology.'<sup>6</sup> The trace of a line and the mapping of thoughts are erased and their significance - their usefulness - dissolves. It is a subtracting of sense. This approach influenced both *Chicken* and *Worm* in that it points to the potential for an eviscerated, desiccated language of pure exchange to be examined and made ambiguous in its dissolution. In its place flows something like Lacan's inarticulate 'kernel of non-sense.'<sup>7</sup>

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6 Ed Krêma, 'Liquid Language,' originally published in Edwin Carels (ed.), *Graphology–Drawing from Automatism to Automation*. Drawing Room, London, ARA.MER, Ghent and M HKA, Antwerp, 2012, 50-58.

7 See Jacques Lacan, *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psycho-analysis*, trans. Alan Sheridan, (London: Vintage, 1998), 250ff.

This insistence in not making sense, confusingly enough, is another theme of my work. This thesis tries to explain this process of making art that struggles to articulate. In the moment of articulation I often felt anxiety. I think this anxiety could be best described as the effect of the uncanny.

### ***CHICKEN & WORM: THE UNCANNY***

The uncanny involves a concern with events in which repressed material returns in ways that disrupt unitary identity, aesthetic norms, and social order. That which made the work fail - my mistakes, my inexperience - resurfaced just at the moment when I was to establish my artistic identity. This moment of disruption is carried through into *Worm's* refusal to locate and delineate, and its disorienting conception of time.

André Breton said the following of his fellow practitioners of surrealism:

'Everything tends to make us believe that there exists a certain point of the mind at which life and death, the real and the imagined, past and future, the communicable, and the incommunicable, high and low, cease to be perceived as contradictions. Now, search as one may one will never find any other motivating force in the activities of the Surrealists than the hope of finding and fixing this point.'<sup>8</sup> The practitioners of surrealism work to find this point yet at the same time they do not want to be pierced by it, for these binaries only come together in the experience of the uncanny, and its stake is no less than death.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> André Breton, 'Second manifesto du Surréalisme,' *La Révolution surréaliste* 12 (December 15, 1929); trans. Richard Seaver and Helen R. Lane in *Manifestoes of Surrealism* (Ann Arbor, 1972), 123-4.

<sup>9</sup> Hal Foster, *Compulsive Beauty* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), xix.

This uncanny death of the artist is approached when the author is under erasure - when the author faces the impossibility of direct communication, of any true knowledge of reality and the ability to express it in its fullest form. In his essay 'Liquid Words,' Yve-Alain Bois writes, 'Whoever says "articulation" always says, in the first instance, "divisibility into minimal units": the articulus is the particle. Language is a hierarchical combination of bits... Liquid, on the contrary(...), is indivisible (...). Thus, properly speaking there cannot be liquid words (...)except in the brief moment at which they have just been penned and the ink is not yet dry.'<sup>10</sup>

The ink not yet being dry is also a useful way to think about artistic processes. The second iteration of *Chicken* took place at ANACOLUTHON - an experimental night I curated of postgraduate students in the School of Culture and Creative Arts. The name ANACOLUTHON came from an interest in artistic process. Most works presented were works-in-progress, one of many iterations, and on-going inquiries. The word 'anacoluthon' means an inconsistency or an incoherence in logic; a failure to follow on. As a rhetorical device it can be understood as a change of syntax within a sentence, gesturing towards how we think to ourselves. Stream of consciousness writing, for example, includes twists of imagination, or caesurae in our personal lyrics, often resulting in a confusion of meaning. Philosopher Tim Morton speaks of anxiety as 'the intrusion of a non-human into the narrative frame.'<sup>11</sup> This invasion of an other defies the completion of the thought - left to be in suspended in flux. With a destructuring of the

10 Rosalind Krauss and Yve-Alain Bois, *Formless, A User's Guide*, (New York: Zone, 1997), 124. These two liquefactions of language involve both a subtraction of one kind of 'sense' – that of communicable meaning – and the adoption of opposed positions in relation to another – sense as in 'sensation'. See Michael Newman, 'The Marks, Traces, and Gestures of Drawing,' in Catherine de Zegher (ed.), *The Stage of Drawing: Gesture and Act, Tate and The Drawing Center* (London and New York: 2003), 100. Referring to both Cy Twombly and Broodthaers, Newman ends a recent essay by asserting that 'the work of art happens as non-sense.' Michael Newman, 'Absolute Nonsense' in Sabine Folie (ed.), *Un Coup de Dés, Writing Turned Image. An Alphabet of Pensive Language* (Vienna: Generali Foundation, 2008), 223.

11 Tim Morton, 'They Are Here' published on *Ecology Without Nature*  
<http://ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05/they-are-here-my-nonhuman-turn-talk.html>

sentence, another presence is felt - a rush to change - an uncanny disturbance as the sign encroaches the referent - leaving the object ambiguous. In terms of *Chicken*, this can also be thought of as the reorientation of the viewer-listener to look up, to consider our situation, to consider what lies above our heads. The dropped sheet and curious interactivity of the hanging material draw a response from the audience/participants to reach upwards and listen for effect. Also the bells which accompany this event evoke these sounds of the sky. At this point I would like to mention how Dixon usefully relates the function of bells to impart localism to Heidegger's notion of dwelling, that is, the way in which we live and keep our place on earth ours and safe. Heidegger states that 'Mortals dwell in that they receive the sky as sky. They leave to the sun and the moon their journey, to the stars their courses, to the seasons their blessing and their inclemency; they do not turn night into day nor day into a harassed unrest.'<sup>12</sup>

Heidegger invokes the notion of the Fourfold to approach an understanding of human existence which 'consists of the coming together of four distinct realms of Being: the Earth, the Sky, the Divinities, and Mortals.'<sup>13</sup> Sound, it is argued, plays an important role in our dwelling on earth and our necessary dealings with the space above our heads. The ringing of church bells was and still is believed to be a means to create a space for humanity and to ward off unknown dangers of the sky. Demons would be 'horrified'<sup>14</sup> and angels would respond; 'it occupies the skies and calls out to, or repels, divinities.'<sup>15</sup>

This intervention of the sky, as witnessed in *Chicken*, implies an intervention of its inhabitants - the divinities. This act of looking up plays on the human trait of asking for inspiration, or begging for forgiveness - our waiting for the divine to guide what is out-

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12 Martin Heidegger, *Poetry Language, Thought*, trans. Albert Hofstadter (New York: Harper Collins, 2001), 148.

13 Dixon, op. cit., 116.

14 Corbain, op cit., 101.

15 Dixon, op. cit., 118.

of-hand - to create a split - a break from the imagined eventuality. When we look up, we pause, humbled in respect of the sacred, but also in fear of its unknown workings. We feel vulnerable in the realisation of the sky's indifference to our well-being. The dawning of something bigger than us is embodied in the material approach of *Chicken*. It is a material invocation of what Morton calls the hyperobject - an object that is 'massively distributed in time and space relative to human scales.'<sup>16</sup> He says that they are 'so huge and so long lasting compared with humans that they obviously seem both vivid and highly unreal for exactly the same reasons.'<sup>17</sup> *Chicken*, then, functions in this way to evoke the uncanniness of being, to make myth or horror of daily life. Sound, as Dixon says, can 'enchant the air...briefly make the sky sacred.'<sup>18</sup> And particularly acousmatic music, according to Dixon, 'belongs to the air more radically than other musical genres.'<sup>19</sup> Its spatialisation, its resonance, and its verticality, make it seamlessly straddle both what is near and the realm beyond and out of grasp. He says: 'a sound without source or body, a sound that thickens the air and fashions impossible resonance spaces, and even, through sheer volume and impact encroaches on planes of fear in us, will inevitably cause the air to be sacralised.'<sup>20</sup> This effect of acousmatic music is close to how Morton describes the work in the time of ecological awareness: 'an art that does the art of the time of hyperobjects is an art that explores the uncanniness of beings, the uniqueness of beings, the irony of the interrelationships between beings, and the ironic secondariness of the intermeshing between beings.'<sup>21</sup>

The one to sense this uncanny fear of the untouchable is driven to an unsteady state of

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16 Tim Morton, 'The Time of Hyperobjects: Hegel, Ecology, Aesthetics,' <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jrvA3nv0Py4>

17 Tim Morton, Dawn of the Hyperobjects,' <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NS8b87jqnw>

18 Dixon, op. cit., 116.

19 Ibid., 119.

20 Ibid.

21 Morton, 'Dawn of the Hyperobjects.'

dwelling. The one who predicts danger is a prophet or a scaremonger. The remoteness and indifference of the sky upsets the hysteric and the ill. For although 'we see in the sky the sovereign realm of chance,'<sup>22</sup> we also 'see a realm of terror, terrorist death that strikes at random, strikes without consideration of innocence or guilt, strikes anyone who just happens to be there.'<sup>23</sup>

During the *Chicken* event I have a silicon suction cup microphone attached to my chest which sounds the beating of my heart (listen for the low thud throughout the recording). I hold my breath for periods of time to quicken the heartbeat. The beating heart can be seen to affirm bodily presence, however, in the project concerned this phenomenon is not audible to provide a source of the sounds created, but rather to monitor the artist's reaction to and interaction with the other participants, and her fear of this horrifying collapse of the sky. Any change in rhythm or tempo comes from outside in what surrounds. For as Lingis states: 'Not only do emotions discharge their forces on the outside environments; they have their source in it.'<sup>24</sup> Unpredictable, nonteleological movements of interactive installation spaces highlight this exchange of emotions in continual adjustment to the environment. As Lingis continues: 'The speeds, slowness, and turns of our movements come from movements we meet about us.'<sup>25</sup> The body meets others and experiences the world as convulsed, just like the hysteric, thrust into 'a forest of symbols.'<sup>26</sup>

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22 Alphonso Lingis, *Dangerous Emotions* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998), 114.

23 Ibid.

24 Lingis, op. cit., 18.

25 Ibid., 29.

26 André Breton, *L'Amour fou* (Paris, 1937), trans. by Mary Ann Caws as *Mad Love* (Lincoln, 1987), 15.



Figure 3. Image B from *Chicken* installation.

Of course, the heart and bodily sounds have long been associated with the affirmation of the non-existence of silence - remember, if you have forgotten, John Cage's experience in an anechoic chamber at Harvard University in 1951.<sup>27</sup> This story tells of the omnipresence of music. We have a situation in which any sound we produce does not come from the individual as such, but from outside and beyond. Lingis has said: 'Humans do not begin to sing, and do not sing, in dead silence. Our voices begin to purr, hum, and crescendo in the concerto and cacophony of nature and machines.'<sup>28</sup>

This grand statement also illustrates the dependence we have on situation and those we interact with- our relationality. In this way, our profusion of language and opinion is symptomatic of our sociality and the confined temporality/duration of any state of isolation, eventually demanding expression or narration to others. The process of autobiography can lead one to illness in hypochondria for example, but its opposite - a silent passivity - is unsustainable. As our heart beats it is felt and moved by others. Its rhythm propels us forward while it gestures backward; simultaneously projective and recursive. Rhythm redeems present potentiality from the chronology of past and future. As Giorgio Agamben has said: 'Rhythm grants men both the ecstatic dwelling in a more original dimension and the fall into the flight of measurable time.'<sup>29</sup> With the repetition of rhythm we have the becomingness of being freed of any intrinsic ontological unity and yet it firmly situates us as 'here'.

The very act of performance in *Chicken* and *Worm* provokes ideas of presentness, autobiography, and narrative statement. To engage in dialogue, conversation, call and

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27 Michael Nyman, *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond (Music in the Twentieth Century)* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 25-6.

28 Lingis, op. cit., 34.

29 Giorgio Agamben, *The Man without Content* (Stanford, Californian: Stanford University Press, 1994), 100.

response, writing, is for the 'I' to take shape. The self forms in the act of narration. A response of any means is the mark of the self's need to both escape the weight of being and render the self as thinking autonomous subject. Indeed, autobiography is readily inscribed into the artist's production. With live performance this connection tends to be made even more readily, as in music performance there is a tendency towards reading a personal identification with the sounds the performer creates. There is an insistent autobiography at play and it is this personalising of the music which reappears as a common criticism of improvisatory practices particularly. The firmly ingrained notion of music as self-expression can be disagreeable for many. Gavin Bryars in conversation with Derek Bailey, for example, describes this situation in improvisation thus: 'It's like standing a painter next to his picture so that every time you see the painting you see the painter as well and you can't see it without him. And because of that the music, in improvisation, doesn't stand alone. It's corporeal.'<sup>30</sup> In this example, the music is non-autonomous, instead carried by and implicit in the body. It is as though in improvisation the artist makes a sacrifice to take the load of the sounds upon and within his presented being. These ideas of autobiography are explored the bodily presence of the artist in *Chicken* and her internal dialogue of nerves presented by her audible racing heart. In *Worm* the artist's subjectivity is undermined by the multiple narrative voices and her dislocated bodily self. But isn't any sort of meaningful engagement with another person a type of sacrifice? Lingis states that 'Each time we enter into conversation we expose ourselves to being altered or emptied out, emptied of our convictions, our expectations, our memories.'<sup>31</sup> To converse, to communicate with another, we give up a part of ourselves; it is self-destructive and dangerous.

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30 Gavin Bryars quoted in Derek Bailey, 'Free Improvisation,' from *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* (New York: Da Capo, 1992), excerpt reproduced in *Audio Culture: Reading in Modern Music*, ed. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Continuum, 2006), 255-65: 263.

31 Lingis, op. cit., 100.

## **CHICKEN & WORM: SELFHOOD**

But what would it mean to be 'self-destructive'? Throughout the development of my portfolio I was concerned with problematising subjectivity and selfhood with questions of agency, responsibility and decision in 'creative' action that tease art objects and their makers. The resulting destruction and anxiety in this approach has a long history, and could even be posited as the origin of tragedy. The tragic figure, from Oedipus to Tony Soprano, knows all too well pain in anagnorisis. Self-questioning of our own consistency plays a part in every iteration, every artistic 'look at this' and 'hear me now,' every narrative projection. In the act of performance the stage become so clear and one's place in it is deeply complicated. One finds oneself within Plato's allegory of the cave contemplating the theatre of shadows. One interpretation of this parable is to understand that outside the cave there is some true reality, some ultimate real. But another is to understand that outside is just another, different theatre of shadows. As Slavoj Žižek explains in his *Parallax View* 'the properly Lacanian twist to the story would have been that for us, within the cave, the Real outside can appear only as a *shadow of a shadow*, as a gap between different modes or domains of shadows.'<sup>32</sup>

However there is a more drastic interpretation, that proposed by Thomas Metzinger in his book *Being No One*: that there is no one in the cave.<sup>33</sup> As Žižek explains it: 'The cave, rather, projects *itself* (its entire machinery) onto the screen: the theatre of shadows works as the self-representation (self-model) of the cave. In other words, the observing subject itself is also a shadow, the result of the mechanism of representation: the "self" stands for the way a human organism experiences itself, appear to itself, and there is no

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<sup>32</sup> Slavoj Žižek, *Parallax View* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006), 162.

<sup>33</sup> Thomas Metzinger, *Being No One: The Self-Model Theory of Subjectivity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2003).

one behind the veil of self-appearance, no substantial reality:<sup>34</sup> What place has art when the self is just a process? What of the audience? In Metzinger's formulation the phenomenal self-model is transparent as we only ever see the content and never see consciousness itself.<sup>35</sup> If we are part of some dream-like reality where all the world's a stage everyone becomes a puppet unaware of the medium of the world, as conscious experience itself is an invisible interface. The audience shares the dream-like reality of the stage artist - as the performer performs, they too remain quiet and graciously clap when directed.

However, for my purposes in particular, this theory is reductive, as according to this theory the stage becomes all important and the whole involving process of social context is essentially reliant on being framed and heard to exist. I encountered these issues in the initial staging of *Worm*. What I mean by this is if one relies on the spectator to complete the art object, what we have is a humanist conception of art that prioritises the thinking subject (over the object itself). This is rather like the approach associated with Nicolas Bourriaud's term Relational Aesthetics. Bourriaud defines this as: 'a set of artistic practices which take as their theoretical and practical point of departure the whole of human relations and their social context, rather than an independent and private space.'<sup>36</sup> In this conception the artist becomes the facilitator rather than maker, and the art is 'a state of encounter.'<sup>37</sup> The social space constructed with relational aesthetics in mind does not prioritise objects to be apprehended. Liam Gillick suggests

34 Žižek, op. cit., 162.

35 'The illusion is irresistible. Behind every face there is a self. We see the signal of consciousness in a gleaming eye and imagine some ethereal space beneath the vault of the skull, lit by shifting patterns of feeling and thought, with charged intention. An *essence*. But what do we find in the space behind the face, when we look? The brute fact is there is nothing but material substance: flesh and blood and bone and brain... You look down into an open hand, watching the brain pulsate, watching the surgeon tug and probe, and you understand with absolute conviction that there is nothing more to it. There's no one there.'

Paul Broks, *Into the Silent Land: Travels in Neuropsychology* (London: Atlantic Books, 2003), 17.

36 Nicholas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics* (Paris: Les presses du réel, 1998).

37 *Ibid.*, 18.

even that: 'My work is like the light in the fridge—it only works when there are people there to open the fridge door. Without people, it's not art—it's something else—stuff in a room.'<sup>38</sup>

This formulation of the work as though its affects were intended solely for us through the production of discursive curatorial elements holds the subject at its centre which generates a humanist set of beliefs. In this way, the relation between objects and subjects is as though the object - the artwork is *for* the subject. To put this in context, if I had continued with my original idea for *Worm* to stage installations in public places, I would have been forcing an audience to encounter the work and somehow imply that it was being expressed 'for them.'

I came to question this expectancy placed on the art object and choose not to rely on the human compulsion to categorise and delineate. Indeed, humans are thought to be representational creatures, possessing a Platonic 'eros for form,'<sup>39</sup> but what remains is the paradox that it is possible to feel a touch, a closeness towards an object, to feel its affect, and to know that the object can never fully be understood by concept alone. This is what we say of the withdrawn nature of objects. To say that an artwork can be non-

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38 Liam Gillick quoted in Liam Gillick, *Renovation Filter: Recent Past and Near Future* (Bristol: Arnolfini, 2000), 16. See also Lars Bang Larsen speaking at a recent conference in the iCI 'If there is a common denominator between the things I will be talking about tonight [...] it is the issue of translation, whether its problems of cultural translation [...] the act of inscribing one's subjectivity on an artwork, the act of interpreting an artwork from the situation you find yourself in, or how artists operate between different formal vocabularies and different fields of knowledge.' (The Curator's Perspective iCI 2009).

39 Humans are 'representational creatures with representational habits of thought. We inhabit an internal and an external world. We separate ourselves as subjects of the object world. Indeed, this alienated state is the very precondition of self-consciousness...Art mirrors back an apparently reassuring image of our own subjectivity (an outer form and an inner content). As such, a transformation in how we think about at will necessarily alter the topology of how we think about ourselves and *visa versa*. It is in this sense that the crisis of representation is also a crisis in typical subjectivity...Representation is the condition of our subjectivity and as such has to be "gone through" as it were.' Simon O' Sullivan, *Art Encounters Deleuze and Guattari - Thought Beyond Representation* (New York: Palgrave, 2006), 9-37. See also Mihaela C. Fistioc, *The Beautiful Shape of the Good: Platonic and Pythagorean Themes in Kant's Critique of the Power of Judgment* (New York: Routledge, 2002), 104.

conceptual - extra-philosophical - is to understand that it can produce determinations that are beyond the human. This involves a radical reformulation of the place of the audience. This informed my reformulation of *Worm* in that the pressure on the audience - those beings who would surround and invade my impromptu stage - would become implicit in the work without their consent and with no real need for their eyes and ears at that time for the completion of the work. Their presence was in a way superfluous because the work was not for or about them.

### ***CHICKEN & WORM: TIME & SPACE***

As I developed my portfolio I became less interested in staged installations that somehow delineate a specific time of performance. I was instead drawn to fluid notions of time and space, inspired by philosopher Henri Bergson and others. Effectually I felt this initial staging of *Worm* broke with the present reality, in that it seemed to draw a boundary around 'now' and any such measurement of time and space seemed false. In Bergson's formulation, reliance on representation of time in spatial terms is contrasted to pure duration which he proposes as 'succession without distinction.'<sup>40</sup> In other words, for him, duration is a form of temporal continuity that is concerned with qualitative differentiation, without quantitative measure. He sees the measurement of time as separating present and former states. As Morton explains: 'since at the quantum scale *to measure* means "to hit with a photon or an electron beam" (or whatever), measurement, perception (*aisthesis*), and doing become the same. What I "see" are deflections, tracks in a diffusion cloud chamber or interference patterns. Far from underwriting a world of pure illusion where the mind is king, quantum theory is one of

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<sup>40</sup> Henri Bergson, *Time and Free Will: An Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1989), trans. F. L. Pogson (London: 1910), 98-100.

the very first truly rigorous realisms, thinking its objects as irreducibly resistant to full comprehension, by anything.<sup>41</sup>

If during *Worm* I was to delineate the present and merely document its occurrence without further investigation, I imagined this would result in the representation of the past as merely past and no more. If, for example, to measure is to record the reflection - the trail - of an object, it is not attending to the object itself, but to an illusion of its presence. Further, to reconceptualise these theories in terms of time and duration, one could say that the appearance of an object is its past. If, for example, we remember Zeno's paradox, we know that measured time is working by hindsight. That which we can encounter of an object is 'the past, the afterglow.'<sup>42</sup> Thus we could say that the appearance of an object is its past and its essence is futurely; the quantitative elements of an object are that which have been. As Morton proposes: 'facts are the shadow of things, their each thrown into the past. facts are nothing on the face of things. facts are on the side of illusion because there are real things that they don't touch. under the frisson of unmeaning, there are entities - facts are nothing on the face of them.'<sup>43</sup>

These ideas surrounding facts as past gained further importance for me when thinking about 'mapping.' I will detail this process later in relation to mapping as a trace.

To return to Bergson, he radically argued for the severance of time from its representation in spatial terms; a divorce from what he thought to be the nonessential conceptual dependence on space. Time, according to Bergson in his *Essay on the Immediate Data of Consciousness* (1889), when conceived as existent within spatial form is 'some spurious concept, due to the trespassing of the idea of space upon the

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41 Morton, 'Objects as Temporary Autonomous Zones,' *continent* 1.3 (2011), 149-155: 150.

42 Morton, *They Are Here*.

43 *Ibid*.

field of pure consciousness.’ This instance is what he deems to be ‘nothing but the ghost of space haunting the reflective consciousness.’<sup>44</sup> In this way, we allow more possibilities of experience when we divorce time from space and acknowledge and exist within a multiplicity of conscious states that succeed themselves without division. This theory of time allows for a blurring of past, present and future in that looking back does not situate the subject in a past state but instead does not situate the subject specifically; the ego ‘refrains from separating its present state from former states.’ Bergson calls for the resistance to what he calls ‘the cinematographical mechanism of thought;’ a mechanism which allows a concept such as nostalgia to exist.<sup>45</sup> By the cinematographic - the division of times - Bergson means that commonly, ‘Instead of attaching ourselves to the inner becomings of things, we place ourselves outside them in order to recompose their becoming artificially. We take snapshots, as it were, of the passing reality...’<sup>46</sup> These ideas informed my choice of medium in *Worm*, in that I wanted to test the filmic material and push it into a kind of warped reality. I experimented with the notion that this practice of the episodic division of time is false in that reality exists as fluid and constant and so to measure it is to immobilize it. Any categorization of time is at odds with Bergson’s notion of continuous, coexistent time. Brian Massumi elaborates on Bergson’s theory on Zeno’s paradoxes of movement saying: ‘We stop it [the arrow] in thought when we construe its movement to be divisible into position. Bergson’s idea is that space itself is retrospective construct of this kind. When we think of space as “extensive,” as being measurable, divisible, and composed of points plotting possible

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44 See Bergson, *Time and Free Will*.

45 Bergson, *Creative Evolution*, trans. Arthur Mitchell (London: MacMillan, 1912), 330.

This also has meaning for the strange occurrence that is Nostalgia. Etymologically, nostalgia itself comes from *nostos* meaning return home, and *algia* meaning longing. However, we can understand nostalgia to mean a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed, and also feeling sick of home, or rather feeling oppressed to some degree by the conventional confines of time and space.

In other words, nostalgia can manifest itself as a result of a pervasive teleology of progress. An alternative to this end- directed, progressive conception of time and space, is that proposed by the Bergson.

46 *Ibid.*, 322.

positions that objects may occupy, we are stopping the world in thought. We are thinking away its dynamic unity, the continuity of its movements. We are looking at only one dimension of reality.<sup>47</sup> In this way, when one thinks, one does so in a backwards way, in that to use the intellect is to stop time itself in motion. Bergson was interested in the idea of the contemporaneousness of the past and the present,<sup>48</sup> and it is with this formation that the resistance of episodic, ‘cinematographical’ mechanisms of thought remove the issue of before and after (and also depth theory in general).

However, in terms of this reading of how objects travel *through* space, the object effectively occupies the space. This is at odds with how I imagine the *Worm* project as existing multiple spaces and time - not existing within spaces and time. The sounds wormhole; they create their own trajectory, their own map. Morton usefully rethinks this notion by suggesting that motion is the state of reality itself. I found this re-evaluation of the present useful in the development of *Worm*. As he puts it: 'Either everything is just an illusion and nothing really moves at all (Parmenides). Or objects are here and not-here “at the same time.”<sup>49</sup> This latter possibility provides the basic setup for all the motion we could wish for. Objects are not “in” time and space. Rather, they “time” (a verb) and “space.” They produce time and space. It would be better to think these verbs as intransitive rather than transitive, in the manner of *dance* or *revolt*. They emanate from objects, yet they are not the object.<sup>50</sup> He continues to explain how how problematic it is to presume that the human can know or to be able to distinguish

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47 Brian Massumi, *Parables for the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2002), 6.

48 ‘Your perception, however instantaneous, consists then in an incalculable multitude of remembered elements; in truth every perception is already memory. Practically we perceive only the past, the pure present being the invisible progress of the past gnawing into the future.’ Bergson, *Matter and Memory*, trans. Nancy Margaret Paul and W. Scott Palmer (New York: Zone Books, 1991), 149.

49 Morton, *They Are Here*.

50 Morton, 'Objects as Temporary Autonomous Zones,' op. cit., 152. See Graham Priest, *In Contradiction* (Oxford University Press, 2006), 172-181.

between the object itself and that which the object emits: 'How can we know the dancer from the dance?'<sup>51</sup>

Thus we can propose that time and space emanate from objects, and that the appearance of objects is their echo, their trace. The documentation of *Worm* is mindful of this notion in that it involves film (a medium long associated with truthfulness) but does not suggest specificity. It comprises a blurry reality that is not necessarily intended for human comprehension and critique. And yet it does as, in this case, it is presented for examination. To deal with this contradiction, I have presented this material and given it a new existence online specifically for this cause. Essentially, however, I felt the work that I have done in experiencing this journey is all I can ask for. I understand the simple documentation of time and space as an echo, or shrinking effect of that object. As Morton states: 'appearance is the trace of death, namely, the form of a thing, which just is the past. Form is the past. The withdrawn essence of the thing, on the other hand, can't be located in measurable, ontologically given space.'<sup>52</sup> The withdrawn essence of an object is not for human to know, to see, to hear - to presume this option would be humanist and anthropocentric. While we can now understand objects' status to be levelled with a kind of flattish ontology, human perception can no longer be set upon a pedestal.

Here we have a phenomenon similar to what Walter Benjamin called aura - in that this strange webbing of time and space produced from the *Worm* object involves the perception of a 'forgotten human dimension.'<sup>53</sup> This uncanny return of a familiar time

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51 William Butler Yeats, "Among School Children," *Collected Poems*, ed. Richard J. Finneran (New York: Scribner, 1996).

52 Morton, *They Are Here*, op. cit.

53 Walter Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography" (1931), trans. Phil Patton, in Alan Trachtenberg, ed., *Classic Essays on Photography* (New Haven, 1980). See also Miriam Hansen, 'Benjamin, Cinema and Experience: The Blue Flower in the Land of Technology,' *New German Critique* 40

made strange is temporal in that the form - the a distorted trace of presence, this appearance of an object past - is the appearance of something distant but arrestingly close to hand.<sup>54</sup> In *Worm* the sounds, images and films are intentionally ambiguous about their location and context. They provide snippets of narrative, at once the listener/viewer in pulled up close to some object-event that must be past but seems up close, only to be washed away to elsewhere. Montaged fragments hint at places and things but never reveal all. While making the work, I started thinking about time that does not sit, surround, lie in wait - time that has no one directionality - it is bisexual time. These art objects conjure that which is emitted by things - that which is unclear and uncanny. As John Donne says: each object is 'a little world made cunningly.'<sup>55</sup>

### ***CHICKEN & WORM: OBJECTS***

Graham Harman, for example, would say that the object is never fully exhausted by the connections it makes with other objects, as it withdraws from relations. To understand this philosophy it is important to grasp Harman's formulation of objects as unified and autonomous, as that which have a life apart from their 'relations, accidents, qualities, and moments.'<sup>56</sup> Harman sees that the problem with philosophy up until now is that it hasn't properly accounted for objects as such - that it has forgotten that 'An object is grazed only lightly by another, not drained to the dregs.'<sup>57</sup> Again, the presupposition that objects are there for human contemplation is undermined for the dramatic realisation that reality is not for humans - in other words, the abandonment of an idea that

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(Winter 1987), 179-224.

54 Benjamin, "A Short History of Photography" op. cit., 209.

55 John Donne, Holy Sonnets 15, in *The Major Works: Including Songs and Sonnets and Sermons*, ed. John Carey (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009).

56 Graham Harman, *Intentional Objects for Non-Humans*, (2008).

57 Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics* (Melbourne: re.press, 2009), 112.

presupposes things exist in the world for our cognition of them.<sup>58</sup> And what a terrifying and unsettling realisation it is that everything always has more parts than a whole to it. With the rejection of overmining and undermining there is no background anymore and no foreground.<sup>59</sup> While cognitively liberating, the realisation that we can not come to objects as they actually are is uncanny. The time of the present becomes an arbitrary boundary - a meaningless distinction of human perception and delineation. We are existing on the inside of something, but we don't fully understand what the something is; that 'creepy reality' which Morton deems the dawn of the hyperobject. Our present time of noticing these larger entities - global warming, evolution, and nuclear radiation for example - we find ourselves immersed in a strange reality and our place in the universe de-centred. In *Chicken* this dawning of something big and relatively unknown is realised in the lowering of the sky so that it makes its presence known. It invokes the creepy realisation that there is a vastness above us and our relation to it is made unstable and unhomely through its intervention into the place where we dwell.

Art that does art in the time of hyperobjects is 'art that strives to evoke hyperobjectivity in its very form'<sup>60</sup> - it 'explores the uncanniness of beings, the uniqueness of beings, the irony of the interrelationships between beings, and the ironic secondariness of the intermeshing between beings.'<sup>61</sup> This kind of art does not have to be some sort of conscious decision on the part of the artist - as human artists did not cause hyperobjects to appear for the very reason that the non-human has been here all along. The object,

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58 Tim Morton states: 'There are places in the universe that thinking can't touch, I just don't accept that when I think this untouchability I am touching it, this would be the Hegelian response to Kantianism, but unlike Kant and his correlationist legacy, I see this not as a reason to confine thinking to a little island of human meaningfulness but rather to embark on a speculative journey amidst an irreducible plenum of discreet, unique, sparkling objects, be they snow crystals, Arsenal or a single photon.' Morton, *The Time of Hyperobjects* op. cit.

59 Morton, *The Shape of the I: OOO, Ecology, Marx*, <http://ecologywithoutnature.blogspot.co.uk/2012/04/shape-of-i-ooo-ecology-marx-mp3s.html>

60 Morton, *Dawn of the Hyperobjects*, op. cit.

61 Ibid.

and the hyperobject, is always already there. As Morton explains: 'Before we look at it, global warming is not a function of our measuring devices, yet because it's distributed across the biosphere and beyond, it's very hard to see it as a unique entity and yet there it is - raining on us, burning down on us, quaking the earth, spawning gigantic hurricanes - so in some deeply rigorous sense, hyperobjects and objects in general infested human art forever. All that has happened is that humans have dropped something: a concept. A concept that their art is by them, for them, about them...the human mist evaporates leaving behind what is real.'<sup>62</sup>

The misty reality created by spraying spouting objects - the 'mesh' of time and space - tempts the modernist brain to organise and to structure. But the shocking reality is that 'the more maps we make, the more real things tear through them. Non-human entities emerge through our mapping, then they destroy them.'<sup>63</sup> In the making of *Worm* I meditated on this realisation that to map is to create arbitrary boundaries that have a limited lifespan. Boundary lines are forever redrawn and mountains move and crumble. To map is a political act and its function varied. I used a GPS device throughout my journey to track my movements with the initial intention of being able to show the location of installations. In the end, the tracks created by the device are represented in *Worm* as possible paths, and possible actions. The device occasionally lost contact with satellites so when I upload the tracker to Google Earth I find gaps and glitches where I seem to have disappeared. At other times I seem to go off-road through fields, and at other times it looks as if I skipped the ferry and instead teleported myself across the Irish Sea. The lines of my map are not to be trusted - they include wormholes.

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62 Ibid.

63 Ibid.

Where this brings us now, in this discussion of process and art objects, is that it has become apparent that we need to rethink our relation to objects. Heidegger's ideas on tool use are often quoted in this regard and are particularly relevant to my previous discussion on the experience of failure, and the anxiety of brokenness. What is pertinent to this discussion is Heidegger's formulation of *vorhanden* (present-at-hand) and *zuhanden* (ready-to-hand).<sup>64</sup> Take a hammer: when a tool such as this is used to hit a nail, it disappears, or withdraws (*Entzug*), as we are preoccupied with the nail it is hitting. If however the hammer slips, we might notice it: all of a sudden it becomes *vorhanden* (present-at-hand) rather than *zuhanden* (ready-to-hand). But what of the hammer itself? Is its use as a tool the entirety of the hammer? No. Harman would say that Heidegger's formulation represents a small anthropocentric slice of reality, and never uncovers the true nature of the hammer itself. As Tim Morton states: 'Harman discovered a gigantic coral reef of withdrawn entities beneath the Heideggerian submarine of Da-sein, which itself is operating at an ontological depth way below the choppy surface of philosophy, beset by the winds of epistemology, and infested with the sharks of materialism, idealism, empiricism and most of the other isms that have defined what is and what isn't for the last several hundred years.'<sup>65</sup>

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64 Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, tr.ans. Joan Stambaugh (Albany, N.Y: State University of New York Press, 1996), 62–71. See also Graham Harman, *Tool-Being: Heidegger and the Metaphysics of Objects* (Peru, IL: Open Court, 2002).

65 Morton, *Autonomous op. cit.*, 149.

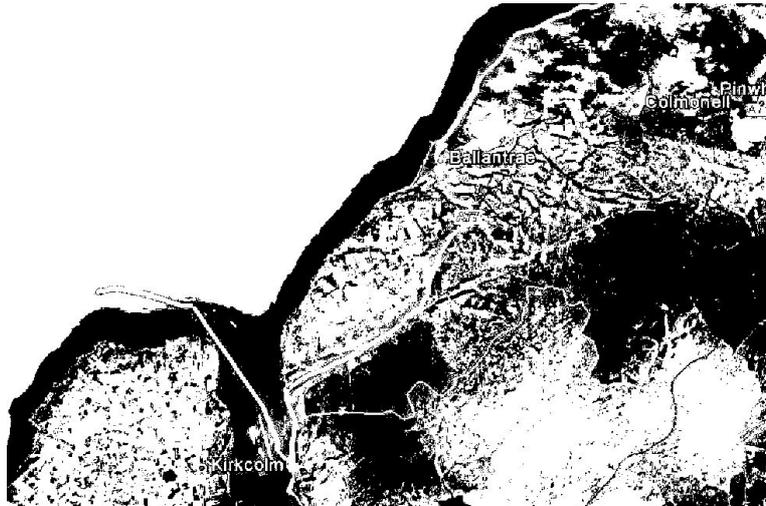
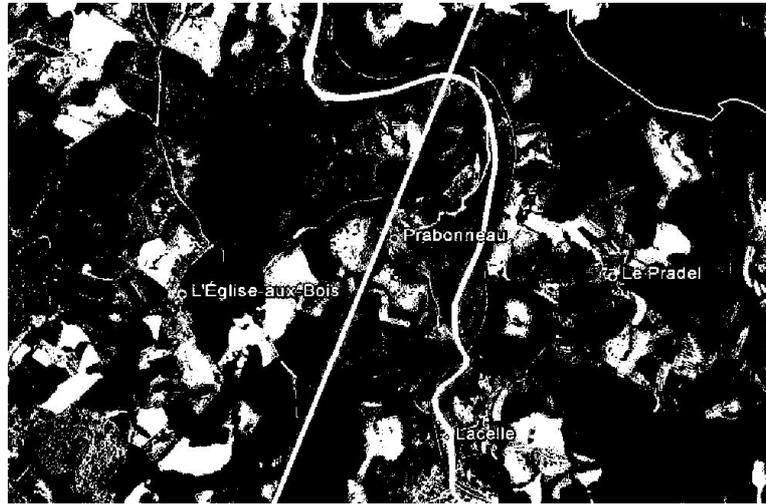
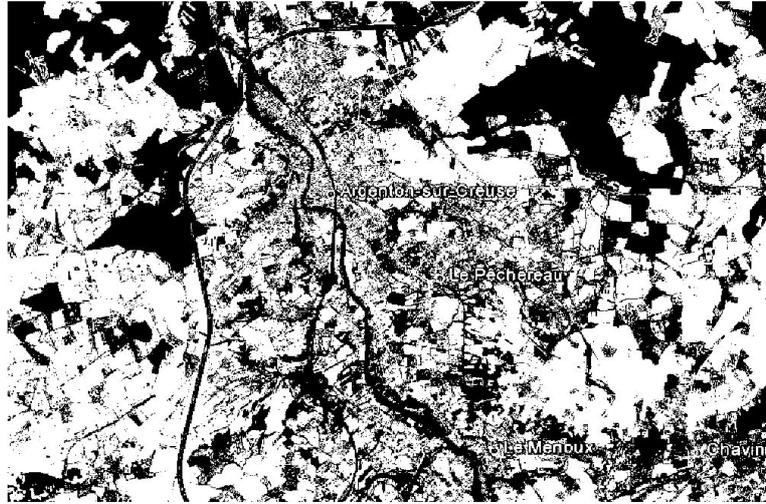


Figure 4. Images B, C & D from GPS data for *Worm*.

Object-Oriented Ontology (OOO) provides a radical re-figuring of the art object. OOO claims that an object withdraws from access. As Morton states: 'This means that its very own parts can't access it. Since an object's parts can't fully express the object, the object is not reducible to its parts. OOO is anti-reductionist. But OOO is also anti-holist. An object can't be reduced to its "whole" either, "reduced upwards" as it were. The whole is not greater than the sum of its parts. So we have a strange irreductionist situation in which an object is reducible neither to its parts nor to its whole.'<sup>66</sup> This anti-reductionist stance means that an object cannot be *undermined*. The withdrawn essence of an object cannot be accessed through any attempt of undermining an object wither through thought or some other means. As Morton explains, by essence is meant something different from *essentialism*: as essentialism 'depends upon some aspect of an object that OOO holds to be a mere appearance of that object, an appearance-for some object. This reduction to appearance holds even if that object for which the appearance occurs is the object itself!<sup>67</sup>

OOO is also different to what Harman calls *overmining* - the claiming of priority or hierarchy of some objects over others; in other words, that some are more real than others. The overminer insists that an object's existence consists in its relations with other objects; its relation to a more real entity. Or put another way, the overminer insists the realness of an object consists in its qualitative apprehension; its measurement.<sup>68</sup> The uncomfortable staging of an event in the early days of *Worm* became subsumed in the retracing of something , its measurement, its documentation and its past. This organising, conceptualising impulse is a near-redundant remapping of objects because the real breaches, awesomely immune to our measuring devices. For *Worm*, I was

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66 Ibid., 150.

67 Ibid.

68 Graham Harman, *The Quadruple Object* (London: Zero Books, 2011), 10-12.

interested in the possibility of an ongoing process of mapping; a process where I could rub out and redraw lines as I went.

### ***CHICKEN & WORM: MAPPING***

I have already spoken about the process of mapping in relation to tracing a journey, and providing a document of the past. However, I would now like to expand on my context for the use of this phrase. I understand the process of mapping as being at once a creative, utilitarian, and political act. Further to this, mapping is also personal and tactile in its indexical nature. For example, in the tracing of a map or the marking out of an idea, there are gaps between the marks where there exists a realm of bodily deliberation. This is shown in the residue - the footprints, scars, and echos. This reminds me of what in 1952, French philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty, had to say of the wavering and wandering of Matisse's hand as it was revealed in a section of slow-motion film footage. He wrote of the necessity of attending to 'the threads of silence that speech is mixed together with.'<sup>69</sup> Here, Merleau-Ponty draws our attention to the drawing process, and specifically of what happens in the temporal gaps between strokes - the breath marks between statements. Silences make up the process of sounds, and give time to invite new ideas. My process during *Worm* of recording sounds was staggered and reflected upon between bursts of documentation - and the material listened to repeatedly to find its place within the work. Artist William Kentridge describes his method of drawing and walking back and forth from the page as allowing for what he calls 'fortuna' - a contingent and transformative agency that guides him from one sequence to the next, enabling the development of visual ideas that were not (and perhaps could not

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<sup>69</sup> Maurice Merleau-Ponty: 'Indirect Languages and the Voices of Silence', in Galen Johnson (ed.), *The Merleau-Ponty Aesthetics Reader* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1993), 83-4.

have been) planned in advance; it is 'something other than cold statistical chance, and something too outside the range of rational control'.<sup>70</sup>

This processing of the work and letting the mind wander is what made up the most meaningful time for me as an artist. In this way the journey becomes everything and the destination disappears. Quantitative acts of filming and recording were mixed and reformed as the roadtrip became open to the indeterminate. As artist Henri Michaux describes his method: 'I wanted to draw the consciousness of existing and the flow of time. As one takes one's pulse. Or again, more modestly, that which appears when, in the evening, the film that has been exposed to the day's images, but shorter and muted, is rerun. Cinematic drawing.'<sup>71</sup> Just as they are concretions of time, each film that makes up *Worm* spreads out time in their own way. However, the presentation of these films, and also the sonic materials that make up *Chicken*, are resistant to position and fixity in their modeling of an uncanny reality.<sup>72</sup>

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70 William Kentridge, "'Fortuna:" Neither Program nor Chance in the Making of Images.' in Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Dan Cameron and J.M. Coetzee, *William Kentridge* (London 1999), 118–19.

71 Henri Michaux, 'To Draw the Flow of Time' (1957), in *Untitled Passages by Henri Michaux*, Catherine de Zegher (ed.), trans. Richard Sieburth (New York: The Drawing Center, 2000), 7.

72 In the first issue of the surrealist journal *La Révolution surréaliste*, Max Morise wrote that 'stream of thought cannot be viewed statically' and that 'secondary attention necessarily distorts an image' - in other words, that the strangeness of an event or object is compromised by pictorial ratiocination. According to him, 'The images are surrealist, but not their expression.' Max Morise, 'Les Yeux enchantés,' in *La Révolution surréaliste* 1 (December 1, 1924), 27.

## CONCLUSION

This commentary follows a map of what processes I have utilised and experienced to create my portfolio. I have tried to establish an honest account of my practice and provide my reflection on attempting to structure creative output such as this. This project has involved understanding what it is to make objects, and consciousness of a critical relation to that experience. This has brought me to confrontations with failure, the uncanny, structures of time and space, and questions of self and objecthood. I hold it to be true that art can function as a means to think through difficult ideas and this body of writing further argues for the relevance of a reflective sonic practice. I have tried to remind the reader that we exist on the inside of something very big, and that this is very unsettling. I also hold it to be true that if one figures the world as 'an immense museum of strangeness,' art will follow graciously and abundantly. This work is a small trace of that.

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