The Image Speaks
An exhibition of photography of PhD research by Andy Brown

Extended Essays —
Featuring

01. Alejandro Albornoz
02. Natasha Andronikou
03. Valentina Caruso
04. Charlie Crerar
05. Zelda Hannay
06. Armin Khaméh
07. Chris Leffler
08. Katrina Mayson
09. Laura Ştefănescu
10. Serenella Sessini
These images are spectrograms which show three women speaking in French, Spanish and English. They are saying the same text: ‘The Artificial Light’, the title of a project of 1919 by the Chilean avant-garde poet Vicente Huidobro, who usually wrote in Spanish and French. These images demonstrate how many high, mid and low frequencies are contained in each sentence and prove the complexity of human voice sonority which exists in parallel to the meaning complexities of language.

I am an Electroacoustic music composer. This is an artistic form that allows the use of all kind of sounds, organized in time and space by means of electronic equipment. In the early years this was essentially using analogue recording techniques like magnetic tapes. Nowadays the recording of sounds, their transformation and organisation in a piece of music is almost entirely created with computers.

My doctoral project is an artistic one, which combines a theoretical exploration of aesthetic sources and the creation of an original portfolio of compositions.

Within the world of Electroacoustic music, exist several aesthetic and technical approaches, including two very interesting to me: acousmatic and algorithmic composition paths.

Acousmatic is an ancient Greek concept related to listening to sounds without a visual reference. In Electroacoustic music, this implies the organisation of sounds in a computer as a painter fixes an image on a canvas. When the sonic piece is finished, it is performed from the computer through an array of loudspeakers without visual accompaniment.

On the other hand, algorithmic is an ancient Arab word related to a set of instructions for completing a task. Although is closely linked to computers (actually algorithm, programs and software are synonyms), not only is maths used to get a result, but we can also understand an algorithm as a understand a cooking recipe... In electroacoustic music, algorithms are used not only to control and transform sounds but also to organise a complete composition automatically, almost without human intervention.

Through human voice and poetry in electroacoustic composition, my investigation will search the relationship between acousmatic and algorithmic approaches, looking for the feasibility of merging intuitive hand-made procedures of acousmatic tradition with automatic and non-human control of algorithmic tools.

In practical terms, my doctoral activity seeks to engage and collaborate with other areas of human knowledge within the academic community in the University of Sheffield, the Humanities in general and Science, especially computing.

As an artistic project, my work tries to understand the expressive possibilities of moving between the meanings of language, pure abstract vocal sounds and the vast world of sound transformation of digital techniques.
The ‘idealism’ of the Athenian male-citizen body was formulated though the opposition to constructed ‘others’. These ‘others’ - foreigners, slaves, non-citizens and women - were thought not to possess the ‘idealised’ values of the Athenian city. This highly paternalistic society saw in females an existential threat. The Athenian female body was made less dangerous via social controls in the form of prescribed behaviours, dress practices and tamed by legitimate marriages. These controls were explained in terms of their perceived inability to manage their own sexuality. However, foreign, politically and socially disenfranchised women could not be brought under control and be tamed by marriage. My research focuses on the changing dress choices used to depict these female ‘othered’ groups. Their dress acts as a tool to understand the place of the female ‘other’ body in citizen-male imagination and its role in the formulation of ethnic, gender and social identities.

These photographs highlight some of the choices in dress types used by classical Attic artists to depict the non-ideal female body. The Persian style leggings, bow and arrow on the mythological warrior woman, the Amazon, associate her with a historical foreign threat. The tattoos on the Thracian female serve as ethnic markers and symbols of her permanent status as a slave. The animal skin on the mythological Maenad, the female follower of Dionysus, associates her with wild animals and places her outside the confines of the civilised city. The foreign headdress on both the maenad and the prostitute associates them to a dangerous foreign sexuality.

These foreign types of dress symbolise an ideological and geographical remoteness from the ‘self’. They are contrasted to the ‘idealised’ view of a layered, veiled and segregated within the household. Attic wife. The abandonment of ‘ideal’ domesticity in all females is implied through their dress. Their aggressive sexuality and untamed nature is highlighted. Their behaviours are explained as a result of the failure of their foreign forms of social organisation to control them. However, their depiction in Greek style garments, rather than strictly opposing these non-ideal females to Athenian women, I believe, ideologically associated the two. The combination of both dress styles served as a warning of the threat posed by all untamed women -Athenian or foreign, insiders or outsiders. They allude to social and political anxieties, like the immigration influx, that increased the numbers of foreign women in the city. Similarly, they refer to those gender anxieties experienced by the citizen-male body. If social control was not exercised on the female body, the ‘ideal’ female could easily slip into the category of the nonideal and endanger the prevalence of the patriarchy.

When looking at classical attic material one needs to be aware of its intended audience. It needs to be analysed from the viewpoint of the male-gaze situated within an exclusionary community. Different dress types and stages of undress that reveal the female body, I assumed that they ought to be received very differently today. This project allowed me to see that the female body still retains within it a sexuality that can be read as negative or positive, aggressive or passive, nude or naked depending on the dress types used to supplement it. I am only left to ponder on how these images speak to a modern and more diverse audience.

Department of Archaeology

Natasha Andronikou
Valentina Caruso
School of Languages and Cultures (Hispanic Studies)
This project deals with the study of Latin American novels whose principal context is the mining industry. The Latin American novels linked to this subject matter characterise a considerable subsection of Latin American literature, reflecting the fact that ore-mining is crucial to many economies in the region. My thesis specifically looks at Peruvian and Bolivian narrative productions: two Peruvian novels, ¿Quién mató a Palomino Molero? (1986) by Mario Vargas Llosa and Todas las Sangres (1964) by José María Arguedas; and one Bolivian novel Canchamina (1956) co-written by Víctor Hugo Villegas and Mario Guzmán Aspiazu.

In the three novels, the authors either confirm or challenge the conventional expectations related to industry and nature. Industrial space is conventionally associated with a male dominated environment where job proficiency and strict male gendered hierarchies determine the marginality of women. Moreover, the mine setting represents a foreign space that, closely tied to Conquest, Colonization and Postcolonial Imperialism, has played a significant role in the evolution of Latin American identities. Conversely, nature is traditionally represented as an untainted feminised landscape that is seen antagonistic to man and society. Additionally, it is related to the perception of the Latin American deprived of history and not organised by societies and economies.

The aim of this analysis is to explore how extractive industry spaces in these novels epitomize cultural spaces in which social, political anxieties and authorial uncertainties surface. In particular, these representations of landscapes and natural resources contribute to the way in which the authors interrogate controversial issues that underpin the development of Latin American identity. By challenging the binaries female/male, nature/industry, the authors refers back to the contentious theme of cross-breeding which is based on the inextricable interrelation between two Others, the Western and the Indigenous. Similarly, through the description of space, they express their concerns about a future national concept based on the complex compatibility between technological development and Latin American traditions.

A close reading of these texts also intends to illustrate the problematic interplay between the authors and mineworkers; or in other words, between the writers and their object of representation. The main point of this analysis is to problematize the gap between writers who speak for subaltern classes’ claims and subaltern classes who cannot independently represent their needs.
What does it mean to be an excellent knower, as opposed to a condemnable one? When are we praiseworthy or blameworthy for our intellectual merits or faults? My research asks questions like these by exploring the nature of intellectual virtues and vices. These are the character traits, like open mindedness, diligence, and intellectual courage on the one hand, conformity, laziness, and pride on the other, that determine the kind of intellectual character one has. In particular, I'm interested in what the relationship is between motivation and outcome in virtue and vice. Can someone be virtuous accidentally? And can people be vicious despite acting with the best intentions?

How to depict some of these themes in photographic form was a challenge. Eventually, we decided to focus on the role of context, how certain acts or objects might represent both intellectual virtue and intellectual vice depending on the story you tell about them. Unquestionably following your neighbour’s recommendation of a good hairdresser might be an appropriate thing to do; doing the same for their suggestion of who you should vote for in a forthcoming election might seem more problematic.

It was with this idea in mind that Andy suggested looking in the Alfred Denny Museum in the Department of Animal and Plant Sciences, a fascinating collection of objects from natural and scientific history. With the kind help of Duncan Jackson and Professor Tim Birkhead we came across this egg, one of hundreds like it in the museum. These eggs were gathered in vast quantities by amateur ‘oologists’, who claimed scientific motivations but who often simply kept the eggs in their own personal collections. This practice was outlawed in the mid 20th Century after threatening the populations of several rare bird species, but many collections were transferred to museums and universities where they now serve educational and legitimate scientific purposes. Famously, the harmful effects of DDT in pesticides were exposed by comparing the thickness of eggshells collected before its widespread use with those that had been exposed to the chemical.

This image invokes both the dubious practices of the egg collectors and the more reputable practices of the scientists using the same eggs in modern day research. It thus serves as a representation of some of the ambiguity in our everyday judgements of intellectual virtue and vice.
Zelda Hannay
School of English
Not only does the image speak, it is in conversation with you, and with the text you are currently reading. The subject of the conversation, and of my PhD in theatre, is the practice-lead theory of dramatic composition known as dramaturgy. The term has two senses. A work’s dramaturgy is its composition or its structure, the dialogue between curated theatrical elements: bodies, texts, sounds, objects. It also refers to the dialogue between the work and the processes of reflection, documentation and editing which accompany it. My research involves imagining certain traditional aspects of dramaturgy as three main areas of practical and theoretical exploration, namely conversation, materiality and time. A fascination with restoration and repair which began in my father’s restoration workshop when I was a small child has in the last four years developed into three pieces of theatre and the basis of my doctoral investigation. Dramaturgy is an art of remaking.

I am currently developing a performance piece for a single audience member about scarring as a form of visible repair in which I invite the audience member to draw their scars on to my body. Embodied experience and intimacy are important parts of my research process, hence the decision to use a photo of my own body in the creation of the image. The photo of my scar has been treated as if with Kintsugi, the ancient Japanese art of ‘golden repair’, in which gold, silver or platinum dust is mixed with lacquer and used to mend damaged pottery. All my practical work is concerned with the re-composition of existing material—text, objects and ideas taken from the material and immaterial world—into forms which play with ideas of incompleteness. My last piece, entitled Make/Do/Mend, for example, presented a patchwork of verbatim stories about the brokenness and repair of everyday things like dolls, dresses and fingers, and at the same time interrogated storytelling itself as a form of dramaturgy capable of continual breaking and remaking.

Not ‘what can we make that is new?’ but ‘how can we make do with what we have?’ is a familiar historical predicament with a peculiar contemporary resonance, from concerns over environmental sustainability to an artistic legacy which tells us ‘everything has already been done’. That theatre making and scholarship is always, to some degree, an act of reconstruction, need not lead us to nihilism or hopelessness, however. When an object is repaired it is not returned to its original state: this would be impossible. Rather, it progresses to a new one in which maker and re-maker enter into a dialogue across a material past, present and future. Rather than attempting to obscure the fissures and fault lines of the broken object, Kintsugi celebrates them, and, in doing so, affords imperfection and incompleteness a paradoxically elevated status. The visibly repaired object, or image in this case, is a metaphor for dramaturgy as I understand it; a material manifestation of the dialogue between completeness and incompleteness, between past, present and future, and between the material and immaterial occurring in all dramaturgical work.

Toleration is defined generally as the agent’s act of non-interference with the disapproved-of practice, and believed to be a virtuous practice necessary for peace and stability in a culturally diverse society. Yet, some philosophers and social critics have expressed their concerns as to whether toleration is genuinely a ‘virtuous practice,’ or is simply an act of power in disguise of magnanimity which ‘offers a robe of modest superiority in exchange for yielding.’ Critics argue that in tolerating one opts for enduring what one would otherwise suppress. By manifesting an act of indulgence, one licenses the performance of an action that she would otherwise not endure. Toleration presupposes and reserves not only the power of interference for the tolerator, but the discretion to define the threshold of interference, that is, to determine one-sidedly, what should be accepted and what should be rejected. Practices of toleration therefore are believed to create two different positions of the tolerator and the tolerated, where the former assumes the higher rank in the hierarchy of power. Toleration appears to be a patronising, condescending and charitable gesture that does not respect the tolerated as equal but subordinate her to the discretion of the tolerator.

The peculiar involvement of toleration with power is one of the problems that I take upon myself to settle in my PhD project. Whether in the circumstances of toleration the power asymmetry between parties is morally problematic depends to a large extent on the agent’s negative judgements which establish reasons for interference with tolerated’s doings. The latter demonstrates that in addition to the agent’s negative judgements there must be a specific moral delimitation of such judgements for the objection-condition to be obtained. In other words, the objection cannot be so generally construed to include all sorts of negative judgements. A critical determination of what can stand as a justified objection that morally allows the exercise of power must be formulated. Accordingly, I argue that toleration can be said to be compatible with equality only when the agent has proved to have a right to interference with the disapproved-of. In order to illuminate my point and highlight the significance of a right to interference for an egalitarian account of toleration, I partly appeal to smoking example.

The temporal and special conditions in which smoking occurs determine whether or not the agent’s negative judgement against this practice establishes or is accompanied with a right to interference. Without the latter smoking cannot be rendered the object of toleration. The exhibited image in this series highlights the change of attitude towards smoking in cinemas and theatre halls, in fact, in any indoors venue. Where smoking is assumed to be simply the exercise of an individual’s right, it is hard to see how one, despite having a negative judgement against smoking, can be said to ‘tolerate’ smoking. On such occasion, the agent’s negative judgement does not establish or is not accompanied with a right to interference: hence the impossibility of toleration.
We spend much of our lives on the move. Yet we rarely pay attention to the everyday places that we pass by. We certainly don’t think of them in terms of ‘memory’, a word we associate with war memorials and blue plaques. Yet it is my contention that, as pasts that continue to shape our present lives, memories form the fabric of our cities, regardless of whether or not we notice.

My photographs focus on Castle Square in Sheffield city centre. It is a place that most of us have encountered as a tram stop, yet it is also fundamentally defined by memory. For nearly thirty years, the square was home to the Hole in the Road, a roundabout and semi-covered shopping centre. The site’s futuristic roof made it a famous landmark and, whilst it was filled in 1994, it has never been forgotten. It is fondly remembered by locals, and has been immortalised in paintings and song lyrics.

The memory of the Hole in the Road shapes more than how people think about Castle Square, however. Beneath the ground the hole remains, and its material traces have never been fully erased. The square’s shape remains that of the former roundabout, and traffic must still drive around it as they used to. If you look closely, the outline of its distinctive roof is even traced in brickwork. Thus the Hole in the Road is remembered in the form and use of the square itself. It unconsciously structures what we see and how we move.

It is not merely what is physically present that defines Castle Square today. For many, the memory of the Hole in the Road is tied to that of Hyde Park flats, an estate that formed part of Sheffield’s “streets in the sky”. When it was partially demolished in 1991, legend has it that the rubble produced was used to fill in the famous hole. All historical fact points to this not being the case, but, for the memory contained in Castle Square, that is not what matters. That people believe it to be true means that the two memories are intertwined, bringing together two icons of 1960s Sheffield within a single site.

The number of memories contained within Castle Square only grows with exploration. The area was heavily bombed during the Blitz, creating the open space upon which the square was built. Going further back, the tram stop refers to Sheffield Castle, which was first built after the Norman Conquest. Once called the Shambles, the site’s original name thus seems surprisingly apt; Castle Square is a tangle of memories that becomes ever more complex the harder we look.

What is revealed is that there is more to the sites of our cities than what is immediately apparent. They are rich in memories, and sites such as Castle Square are a constantly changing network of times and places woven into bricks and concrete. We merely need not hurry by so quickly to begin to perceive them.
Elizabeth Bishop: Poem Object II

‘Joseph Cornell: inside your boxes
my words became visible for a moment’.

Elizabeth Bishop’s (1911–1979) poetry is marked by the sense of ‘I have seen it’. Her poetry is one of observation, rather than one of confession. Bishop uses the detail of what she sees to layer memory, emotion and thought in her poetry, creating a sense of depth and multi-dimensionality in her work.

My thesis explores how Bishop’s poems take on the characteristics of an art object; her ‘poem–objects’ allow the reader to experience the written word much as a visitor to a gallery would admire a painting or sculpture. What I want to achieve in this exhibit is a sense of the three dimensional nature of Bishop’s poetry. Exhibited here are photographs of my own version of a Joseph Cornell shadow box, a box that should be held and explored as a curious child would hold and explore a book. Featured inside the box is Bishop’s last poem, ‘Sonnet’. I’ve pinned the words to the paper at different levels, recalling Robert Lowell’s description of her writing process, where he asks ‘Do/you still hang your words in the air, ten years/unfinished […]’?

Ostensibly a vision of a bubble in a spirit level, ‘Sonnet’ can – and is -given many different readings. When I cut up the words of ‘Sonnet’, I kept them in the right order but made my own choices as to how to divide them; it is legitimate to choose other divisions. Consider also the punctuation in your reading of the poem. This action of cutting and dividing is a physical manifestation of what readers often call the ‘space between the words’ in which they can find their own personal response to, or in, the poem. Spatiality is a concept we understand through our sensory perception of our multi dimensional world. It is very much harder to represent in text and on paper.

Just as an object exists in the space in which it is viewed, the background to ‘Sonnet’ is composed by some of the themes I explore in my thesis. There are samples of her handwritten drafts of the poem and examples of the editing process her poem underwent at The New Yorker. Bishop ‘framed’ her work on the page with great care; here ‘Sonnet’ is printed in Baskerville, a typeface Bishop claimed for her poetry early on, and copies of Bishop’s original book jackets cover the exterior of the box. Personal relationships and poetic influence are symbolised by the photographs of Bishop’s Brazilian lover Lota de Macedo Soares, and the poets, Robert Lowell and Marianne Moore. Bishop was a prolific letter writer; she wrote letters as conversation, spinning webs of images and ideas that she later refined in her poetry, so her letters are here as well. Maps and travel feature, heralding the influence of geography on her poetry, and her sense of place is recalled by the photographs of her various homes in Nova Scotia, Key West and Brazil.

The title of this photograph recalls the work of Andre Breton and his ‘poem object’, and also refers to Bishop’s ambiguous choice of prefix, ‘III’, for Geography III. The words about Joseph Cornell are taken from her translation of Octavio Paz’s poem ‘Objects & Apparitions’, published within Geography III. The photograph of this shadow box is both an attempt to allow the image to speak but also to demonstrate how the words of a poem can move off the page into a multi-dimensional world.
Laura Ștefănescu
Department of Music
The Virgin in the Garden:  
From Earthly to Divine Love

A woman sitting in the middle of a garden enclosed by a wall of roses, close to a fountain and surrounded by a variety of birds and by music-making figures. This might well be the description of a secular scene depicting a lady of the medieval romance tradition, who, like in the Roman de la Rose, awaits patiently for her lover to find her in a secluded garden. However, at a closer look, the woman appears to be holding a baby in her lap and both their heads are surrounded by halos, while the music-making characters show their colourful wings. The lady reveals her identity as being that of the Virgin Mary with Christ in her arms, in the company of angels.

Several such Virgins appear in Italian Renaissance paintings (1420–1540), embodying in their persona both the worldly beloved and the celestial bride, a heavenly mistress whose knights are the Christian devotees. My research focuses on such paintings in which you can also find musical references. I would like to argue that the iconography of the Virgin in the Garden represents an evocation of secular love, through visual and musical triggers, in order to elevate the soul of the believer towards the higher realm of divine love and devotion.

This iconography seems to be part of a wider syncretic phenomenon, in which divine love mirrors the profane. Some medieval theologians speak about love using erotic metaphors. They address the Virgin as a man would address their loved one. In religious music, the melody of love songs is used as a basis for sacred songs and in polyphonic pieces even the verses are kept in one of the voices. The use of the garden as a setting and of activities that echo sensorial experiences, such as music-making, picking flowers and creating garlands or tasting fruits reference an iconographical, literary and poetical tradition in which lovers and the realm of love are placed in a garden, engaging in the same actions that evoke the five senses.

The intention behind the photographs was to create a double representation of love, in its sacred and profane form, which would showcase the dichotomy between the two, but at the same time their syncretic relationship, through the fact that they would represent the same form of art and they would use the same symbols. Andy came up with the idea of using tattoos as a contemporary expression of this phenomenon. Although the form of art displayed is very different in style and technique from the iconography of the Virgin in the Garden, the message behind it is the same.

The heart parallels the garden as a symbol of the realm of love, an identical sign used to represent two apparently different expressions of this feeling: the love for a divine figure and the love for a human one.

Laura Ștefănescu  
Department of Music
During the Renaissance in Italy it was believed that both images and music had an extraordinary power to influence their intended audience by affecting their behaviour.

The use of images and paintings was strongly recommended in relation to the idea that visual sources were able to influence their viewers, especially illiterates and young members of the household, who were considered to be as malleable as wax. This notion in particular is emphasised by the Florentine friar Giovanni Dominici, who, in his treatise on the management of the family, advises letting children mirror themselves in images of the Christ child. The idea was that, in this way, they would imitate Christ’s behaviour, for example when he is seen nursing or playing with Saint John child. In this context the sense of sight could be seen as a tool, to be used, tweaked and twisted for someone’s benefit.

Similarly, music was also thought to be an extremely powerful device that could impact the personality and the behaviour of listeners. Several Renaissance sources, such as treatises on education and more specialist texts on music, encouraged music education by virtue of its effect on the students. For instance, the music theorist Johannes Tinctoris gives examples of twenty different positive effects that music was thought to have, including its religious benefits, mood improvement, talismanic and medical properties, and to encourage moral attitudes in the listeners. Because of these effects the study of music was advocated by contemporary writers.

My research focuses on the potential role that musical depictions in religious paintings intended for domestic settings could have, as they combine the powers of both music and images. Images and music played an even greater role when used within a religious context, forming visual or auditory examples for people to emulate.

I am particularly interested in investigating to what extent these depictions - principally of musical angels - were used to influence the personality and behaviour of children, so that they would be tempted to follow these examples and develop an interest in music. Supporting this is the well-established affinity between children and angels, made clear by the fact that children were incited towards the impersonation of musical angels in religious plays, but also because music performed by children is often described as “angelic” in contemporary sources.

My goal is to put the musical depictions in context, and find evidence of the message that I believe they communicated to children of the household.

Like most exhibitions, The Image Speaks wouldn’t have happened without a colossal effort from many different people and organisations. Photographer Andy Brown and the 10 PhD students involved have worked tirelessly to understand each other’s perspectives and produce work that has both artistic and intellectual integrity.

The aim of the project, to give PhD students in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities a chance to work with an external partner on a public engagement project which both showcases their research to a wider audience and provokes reflection on their own work, can be seen both in the exhibition photographs, their labels and in the essays that accompany each piece of work. Every student has engaged with the process of working with Andy on many different levels and it is testament to the collaboration that the exhibition produced stands alone as an art show and has also provoked deeper reactions and thoughts about research and public engagement.

The Image Speaks wouldn’t have been possible without support from a number of people and organisations not directly involved in the project and we would like to thank the following:

Anthoula Kyriakidi
Yasmin Beladaci
National Coal Mining Museum, Wakefield
Tim Birkhead
Lantern Theatre, Sheffield
Picture Sheffield

We are grateful for the support of Arts Enterprise in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and funding provided by the Higher Education Innovation Fund, without which this exhibition would not have been possible.

Lastly, from a Faculty point of view, it is a privilege for us to work with students who are sure of the value of their research but are also willing to be challenged, confronted and provoked by those within and outside the academy. The resulting exhibition, I hope you’ll agree, has been worth their risk.

Amy Ryall, Sheffield, February 2016
The Image Speaks

An exhibition of photography of PhD research by Andy Brown

Supported by Arts Enterprise
Designed by: thecafeteria.co.uk
Andy Brown: envioustime.co.uk