

the object, the instrument, the book, the score:
compositional tools and the sonic imagination

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Abstract

The object, the instrument, the book, the score: compositional tools and the sonic imagination is a project that culminated in an exhibition of systematic grid-based drawings, organic watercolour monoprints/monotype prints, handmade book-objects, and recorded sound. The process of creating this collection of work investigated connections between viewing and listening practices, asking how visual representations of sound can influence the *sonic imagination*. Disorientation is a central concern throughout this project, as influenced by Sara Ahmed's *Orientations: Toward a Queer Phenomenology*, seeking a recontextualization of sonic experiences mediated by visual media as a way of engaging with different ways of being in a body in time and space. Chance-imagery, described by George Brecht as both improvisatory chance that engages the subconscious and mechanical process-based chance, has been central in this work because engaging with chance in visual media can be a way of opening up the imagination to better perceive the complexity of the world of sound. The artwork invites "playback" within the mind via audiation of sound images, created by blending the aesthetics of sound recording visualizations with the music staff symbol from Western classical music notation. This juxtaposed treatment is also used in working with sound directly, in combining "noisy" sounds with "musical" ones as part of an album of sound/music recorded as part of the project. The representation of time in fixed images is a consideration when creating music notations, and this project presents both the book form and the use of stitching traditions as multivocal methods of embedding temporality. Throughout this body of work, the idea of the score as an invitation rather than instruction is central to its function.

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Glossary

Audiation: Edward Gordon created this term to describe mental listening, “when we hear and comprehend music for which the sound is no longer or may never have been present” (“Audiation”). Audiation can be predictive and can occur while actively listening, such as when anticipating what will happen in a piece of music. Audiation includes all aspects of sound quality, including pitch, timbre, dynamic (loudness) and rhythm.

Compositional tools: In the context of this project, this term refers to the tools used in creative music composition, whether they are in the form of a combinatorial book-object, or more widely used music composition systems such as the matrix, used in twelve tone serial composition as developed by Arnold Schoenberg.

Graphic notation: In a contemporary context, graphic notation is an umbrella term for notation styles that adopt symbols or images from outside of the system of Western standard music notation. This is often for practical reasons, such as the representation of an electronic part that would not otherwise be notatable but still requires some visual representation to help line up the rest of the parts during a performance. More broadly, all notation styles that do not use exclusively numerals or written text instructions can be considered graphic notation in contrast to the symbols used for written language. “The act of writing a succession of notational syllables is graphic because it traces a path across the writing surface. That path is the analogue of the passage of music through time” (Bent et al. “Notation”). Graphic notations can appear alongside standard music notation, as well as separately in the form of graphic scores.

Graphic score: Graphic scores are music scores that forgo the typical formatting of standard music notation and instead present alternative imagery to represent a work of music or other activities. There are myriad approaches to the creation and interpretation of graphic scores, with varying degrees of prescription implied within the notation (Charlton and Whitney “Score (i)”).

Noise: This term is used across many disciplines, whether it is referring to sonic noise, data interference, or other generally disruptive phenomena. In the context of music, the classification of a sound as “noise” typically applies a value judgment, deeming it unmusical; unmeaningful. Noise is not an inherent quality of a sound (Hegarty “Noise”), though the term can also be used to describe broadband frequency spectrums (large ranges of audible frequencies sounding equally at once) such as white, pink or brown noise.

Sonic imagination: To me the term *sonic imagination* describes the process of imagining sound and music, though it appears in other sources such as *The Sound Studies Reader* (2012) in which Jonathan Sterne defines it: “[the term] sonic imagination (...) occupies an ambiguous position between sound culture and a space of contemplation outside it” (5).

Sound-object: Coined by Pierre Schaeffer in *Traité des objets musicaux* (1966), a sound-object is any sonic phenomena perceived as a distinct entity separate from its sound source; focusing on the quality of sound itself rather than interpreting sounds as the product of a sound source (34).

Sounding object: As used in this project, this term refers to objects or situations from which sound arises, but that are not sound themselves. Most objects have the potential to be sounding.

In the context of this project, even sounds experienced in the imagination through audiation can be considered to be generated by sounding objects if the experience of mental listening is directly connected to the artwork being viewed. The artwork would be the sounding object in this case. This term relates to the broad relationships we have with sound, and does not require sound sources to be actively sounding to be considered sounding objects.

Soundscape: Similar to a landscape, this term was coined by R. Murray Schafer to describe the entirety of a sonic environment, as experienced by a listener (Hill “Soundscape”).

Text score: Text scores are performance scores, broadly, that use text to convey ideas or instructions to be acted out, even if just in the imagination. Text scores can have varying degrees of detail in their descriptions, as well as the amount of prescription they convey (Griffiths “Aleatory”).

Introduction

Project Outline

The work presented in this thesis document explores the visualization of sound through different forms of music notation, drawings, handmade book-objects and other compositional tools. What began as a general interest in incorporating book binding into my ongoing music composition practice has resulted in focusing on the significance of the book form in experiencing notated music and thinking about our broader relationships with sound.

These broader relationships take on a variety of forms, all of which inform my work. Direct experiences of sound include: the sounds that surround us, the sounds we seek out, the sounds we avoid, those we notice, and those that go unnoticed. Connections to sound can also include relationships that are silent, or not sounding: objects, events, and contexts that produce sound but are not sounds themselves. For example, musical instruments, loud social gatherings, or infrastructure decisions that impact noise pollution levels all create sound, but exist outside of their sounding. Our interpretations and understandings of these different sound objects and sounding objects are other relationships as well. In my practice, to make art out of sound or art about sound requires an activation of these relationships, both in the world and within the imagination.

As a classical musician who received training as both a composer and performer (classical guitarist), listening was always directed towards certain qualities and away from others, such as good tone vs bad tone. The general awareness that music is made of sound was

even obscured because of this, further separated by the ready-to-play canon of music compositions with appropriate and inappropriate interpretation methods built into them. Composing music in an academic setting was mediated by one's ability to use music notation effectively. Pouring the imagination into a container on the page, the score quickly becomes the music itself, even though it actually functions as a set of instructions for a performer to interpret. The concept of music notation as a form of drawing was introduced to me through the work of John Cage, and this idea adds another dimension to working within this mode of sonic art.

If the score itself is a drawing, then what is the live sound produced by a performer? Where is the "artwork" located? This question points to hierarchies between performers, composers, and listeners in music creation. Though the exact location is vague, there is usually an understanding that the artwork is the composition, and though the performers may change, there is some inherent identity tied to the sequence of pitches and rhythms that make up the piece of music. There are many examples now of works that subvert these relationships, exploring different forms of music notations, such as those found in Cage's *Notations* or Theresa Sauer's *Notations 21*. Both of these collections present manuscripts that exhibit new developments in music notation, from the 20th and 21st centuries respectively.

Some forms of music notation and composition result in pieces that are not consistently repeated between performances. An example of this is Raven Chacon's *For Zitkála-Šá*, a collection of graphic scores each dedicated to an Indigenous artist. These pieces personalize the visual language of music notation, centering the performer in the process of music creation. Notated music is multivocal in nature because of these systems of creation and usage, and this

inherent quality is exaggerated further in my work by playing with the physical structure of the score itself.

Experimental book-objects, illustrated with drawings that explore alternative methods of notating sound, operate as combinatorial tools that engage with key parts of the classical music tradition: the published score, and the standardized music notation contained within it. The reproducibility of standard scores is lost, while the focus on materials and the handling experience are emphasized. I created two distinct types of books for the exhibition: “blank books” (see page 59; Fig. 14-15. and page 66; Fig. 16.) which make use of blank music staff paper, and compound books (see page 50-51; Fig. 11-13.) which extend the usual book structure to include multiple bindings that open in different directions. These disorienting objects aid in the exploration of new paths in music creation and offer alternative listening and reading opportunities. Functioning as music scores, compositional tools, and exhibitable art objects all at once further complicates the already complex question of which iteration of a piece — what’s on the paper, what’s in the air, the interpretation etc... — is the work of art itself when discussing notated music composition in the Western classical performance tradition.

The visual artworks created throughout this project were made with inherited art materials, the use of which I view as “performing.” Charcoal, fabric, colour pencils, newsprint... They all have backgrounds based in the desires and hobbies of the women in my family who had these items with the intention of using them for their own creative projects. Now as their inheritor, I am drawn to follow through their stories and continue using them. That is the reason I have gravitated towards certain mediums.

My artmaking is informed by the work of John Cage, Dada and Fluxus art practices through their use of chance and unfixity. Sound studies, particularly the work of Pauline Oliveros, and Angus Carlyle and Cathy Lane's book *In the Field: The Art of Field Recording* guide my listening and recording practices. Agnes Martin and Vija Celmins are the primary inspirations for the presence of drawn iteration in my work, as well as the range of possibilities found within serial grid forms and graphite. Christine Sun Kim's *Secession* (2023), a publication of "blank" music staff paper by multiple artists produced as a call for drawings, relates the use of staff lines to the ways sign language interpreters add their own voices and characteristics to what is being communicated. Along with Chacon's *For Zitk'ala-Šá*, these documents inform my own use of music staff lines as symbols and offer a contemporary context for my project. Sara Ahmed's "Queer Phenomenology" provides a theoretical framework to ground the idea of both listening and viewing as oriented actions. My work is interested in engaging the *sonic imagination*, informed by Jonathan Sterne's use of the term that speaks broadly to our sociocultural engagement with sound. My practice is also informed by my background and training as a classical musician and fifth generation Japanese Canadian with French Canadian ancestry.

Exhibition

The title of my exhibit, *the object, the instrument, the book, the score: compositional tools and the sonic imagination*, is descriptive of the multivocal nature of the work being presented. My creative background is based in contemporary music composition and classical guitar performance, and prior to this MFA program, my practice focused mainly on the use of field recordings in atmospheric soundscape compositions. The presence of sound is maintained

in my current work, and is directly featured in the exhibit via listening examples and an album, *time moves as slowly as it can* (see page 43), linked with a QR code. This direct listening component relates to the drawings, prints, and book-objects being exhibited, asking viewer/listeners to reflect on the relationship between mediums.

The inclusion of recorded sound in the exhibit is not only a practical consideration to aid in connecting the drawings and book-objects to sonic thinking. It is understood that a photo of something is not that thing itself, but the separation is often much murkier with sound recordings since the original sound objects are already disembodied, and their reproduction is much like a resurrection. This is an important consideration, especially since much of my sound work deals with field recordings, and engagement with the tension and ambiguity created by recorded sound is a direct way of working within the *sonic imagination*.

Large paired drawings, my five-part diptych series consisting of colour pencil and graphite grids, cover one wall of the gallery (see page 27-37). Upon first seeing them, they appear to follow a tradition of grid-based abstract minimalism, though they are generated from melodies. They are systematic drawings which use matrices from twelve tone serial music composition to generate visual patterns. These drawings are both generative tools for music and visual composition, and the result of the use of these tools. This is an example of both the interdisciplinary fusion of composition practices with image and object making, as well as the way the work uses memory to investigate my background and previous education experiences. Separate from the other work being presented, the diptychs are documents of sound influencing visual media, or artwork about sound/music, rather than the book-objects and prints that seek to

inform the *sonic imagination* through visual media. Though that is the case, they are both examples of compositional tools.

The centre of the gallery features handmade books that explore the book form as an active part of music creation and sound perception, welcoming visitors to flip through the pages. The construction techniques used range from hand stitched textiles, used as soft covers, to paper-based books that incorporate newsprint and kraft paper with uneven, overlapping pages. Some of the books explore the effect of combining music notation staff paper with blank drawing paper in the *blank book* series. These pieces feature the music staff as a compositional tool in its own right, which gives clarity to its uses in other artworks. The ability music staves have to signal sound and music even amidst blank pages points toward their potential in influencing compositional decision making. This is based on their use as a symbol to recontextualize otherwise non-musical/non-sonic imagery.

An example of this is the watercolour monoprint series displayed on the wall opposite the diptychs (see page 44; Fig. 9.). This series, featuring organic, fluid textures in a range of bright yet delicate colours incorporates music staves inconsistently, using them as a visual tool to balance the chance-images where necessary. Not all of the prints have them, yet their presence is carried over, pointing to something sounding in their otherwise silent gestures. Small monotype prints (see page 49; Fig. 10.) are also featured on the same wall, as well as in two of the *blank books*. Similarly, the noisy textures produced contrast with the inclusion of the music staff, in these cases, carved into the print block with the appearance of wobbly, hand-drawn lines.

Process

The primary method used to create this project has been the translation of music and art creation approaches across mediums. What I mean by this is very literal — there are a range of techniques that I use in music creation that span from totally gestural improvisation on the guitar, focused on the physicality and repetition of certain gestures, to structured composition systems that generate their own internal logic and rules to follow. Examples of these different approaches can be heard on *time moves as slowly as it can*. These are not distinct categories, and there is overlap in the techniques used. When I began to explore visual media more seriously, this same dual method is what guided my work. The process has evolved to the point where my art-making activities now influence my sound practices. This is what forms the foundation of my creative work, developed out of the deeply ingrained way that I have spent my life as a musician caught between the often separate worlds of composition, performance, and improvisation.

From this foundation, these basic techniques for working across mediums were applied within the scope of this project to the exploration of compositional tools as a meeting point for seemingly unrelated disciplines, such as book binding and listening. Researching and developing different styles of graphic notation and creating book prototypes that explore different materials and methods of construction have been the main focus. This is related not only to music notation being a form of drawing, but also to personal documentation and the use of play and chance in art/music making. Images produced with chance techniques, such as monoprinting with watercolour paints, tend to be very noisy looking, and there is a connection between the unpredictable and complex natural processes that produce both chance-imagery and the way

sound is present in the world around us. It is important to emphasize the shift from music as the sole focal point connecting my work to the broader world of sound.

What appear to be boundaries between “noise” and “music” is of particular interest to me, and is interrogated throughout this project. An example of this is the pairing of chance-imagery or other noisy textures with music staff lines. Similarly, my work with field recordings pairs environmental sound with more conventional (“musical”) elements. As a classical guitarist, these themes are also explored, pushing the sound-making capacity of the instrument with extended techniques (playing an instrument in non-traditional ways) into the realm of soundscape composition, contrasted by melodic passages. This range of creative sound work also makes use of disorientation, like the book-objects, to create new sonic spaces that call for expanded listening practices.

The combination of using inherited art materials with certain music composition techniques that are strongly linked to the academic study of classical music, such as twelve tone serial composition, allows me to connect my personal life and cultural heritage with my music composition practice. Without these specific items, the work would not have been possible. I view my usage of these materials as a way of performing them; of reflecting upon my relationships with the people I received them from, some of whom are deceased, and what their original intended purposes were. Though seemingly unrelated to the focus of this project, this autoethnography-inspired approach, drawing with inherited materials as a form of processing family connections and memories, contributes to the multivocal nature of my artworks and adds another dimension of imagining.

This thinking is influenced by Emily Thiessen's use of drawing as a viewing practice in *The Duck Pond*, an autoethnographic comic that relates the process of trying to find the village where her grandfather was born in Xiamen, Southern China. The accompanying text explores the use of comics and drawing in anthropological research. Where Thiessen used her daily drawings as a noticing method, enabling her to pay closer attention to her surroundings, my drawings made with inherited art materials have been part of a reflecting process. By working through memory by drawing, even in an abstract style, using these items themselves gives their histories a continuation, and makes them visible in a different form on the page. By engaging these personal yet ordinary tools, I am able to connect to my relatives in unique ways, reflecting upon our relationships. I like to think performing unusual actions can unlock memories or ideas that otherwise would not have surfaced, and this practice has been very effective in that way.

Julie Choi's reflections on personal documents in the "Prelude" of *Creating a Multivocal Self: Autoethnography as Method* informs this use of materials as well. In this section, she shares different personal items such as an old diary entry, business cards and university ID cards, reflecting upon how her name has been presented at different times, and in different languages throughout her life. In my own work, personal family artifacts exist in the form of passed-down items such as fabric and paper, along with other previously mentioned art materials. By activating these objects, by transforming them into artworks, I have been able to bring these intergenerational connections into my creative work, creating truly personal pieces that encompass my full self rather than just the part of me that is a musician.

The book-objects created through this fusion of material-based reflection and thinking through my background are purposefully disorienting objects. By activating the book form with multiple bindings, the compound books require conscious decision making when handled. In some of the works, unevenly sized pages that overlap, such as in *double book* (see page 50-51; Fig. 11-13.), further emphasize the atypical form. In the *blank books* (see page 59; Fig. 14-15. and page 66; Fig. 16.), the presence of staff lines in unusual contexts, such as within a textile-covered binding, create alternative viewing opportunities to engage with this widely used symbol; to see it as an active symbol itself rather than something that lives in the background of more conspicuous markings. Ahmed's writing about queer moments, instances of objects "slipping" or appearing "slantwise" as ways of "allowing the oblique to open another angle on the world" (566) informs the way the work orients the viewer, and in turn, how the viewer orients the work.

The interpretation of these objects is purposefully open, whether they are viewed exclusively as art objects, performed off of directly, or used to generate musical ideas. This openness is an invitation rather than a prescription. What has excited me the most about previous music scores that combine music composition with alternative book forms has been the unexpected approaches people have taken to interacting with the work. The book-objects created for this project have made it so that the unfixity central to my approach is embedded directly within the construction of the artwork. The desire to make music creation more accessible is a major factor in creating these pieces, removing the often intimidating system of standard Western music notation in favour of more abstract imagery.

Drawing can become a listening practice as well as a remembering practice. My performance of visual art also has a direct sonic component — in my gestural drawings, I am often improvising with the sound of the repeated gestures on the page, leading to linked decision making about both the visual and sonic composition of those moments. The “Burnish” tracks on *time moves as slowly as it can* (see page 43) is another example of this cross-disciplinary influence, where the title of the pieces references my work with colour pencils in the diptych series. The action of stippling or creating rhythmic, repetitive marks on the page, featured throughout *double book*, informed my guitar performance during the recording of those pieces. My process in general is a cyclical one, where certain projects in turn influence other work, presenting an enmeshed way of working with both visual art and sound.

To Become Embodied Within Sound

Hearing is a perceptual experience. It can only occur in time and space, though the constant use of recordings that displace these conditions creates the illusion of separation between moments and their environments. This project is primarily concerned with listening practices, as influenced by visual media, so it is important to distinguish between listening and hearing. Pauline Oliveros clearly explains “the difference between hearing and listening” in her Ted Talk of the same name:

The ear hears, the brain listens, the body senses vibrations. Listening is a lifetime practice that depends on accumulated experiences with sound. Listening can be focused to detail, or open to the entire field of sound. Listening is a mysterious process that is not the same for everyone. Humans have developed consensual agreements on the interpretation delivered to the brain by the ears. Languages are such agreements. To hear and to listen have a symbiotic relationship with a questionable common usage. We know more about hearing than listening. Scientists can measure what happens in the ear. Measuring listening is another matter as it involves subjectivity. We confuse hearing with listening. For example, music schools program ear training classes, but the ear can't be trained.

What really happens is a cultivation of musical mind. (00:02:45-00:04:11)

Listening mixes perception with memory, the interpretation of which is subject to time delays — “from milliseconds to many years later, or never” (Oliveros 00:04:55-00:05:00). As Oliveros states, listening is a learned practice, one that is oriented toward certain unconscious perspectives.

Though sound surrounds us completely and even passes through our bodies, there is not the same rigid directional orientation that exists with vision. We are oriented within sound: what is heard or felt through vibration is first interpreted by locating the sounds relative to ourselves. In *Orientations: Towards a Queer Phenomenology*, Ahmed writes: “(...) phenomenology makes orientation central in the very argument that consciousness is always directed toward objects and hence is always worldly, situated, and embodied (544).” This position resonates with Oliveros’s thinking, in which we are already positioned within sound physically (hearing), but that it is our situation more generally, the opinions and perspectives that grow out of our positionalities, that shape our interpretations of sonic experiences (listening).

Ahmed describes these contexts as the “background” of an object (549), in this case, a sound object. This term also describes the temporal backdrop that accounts for “the conditions of emergence or [the] arrival of something as the thing that it appears to be in the present” (549). Echoes can distort this situatedness, delivering the same physical experience of sound, though the location of origin is obscured. In this sense, a sound recording is a kind of echo as well; a repetition of an event dislocated from its original sound source. Christine Sun Kim’s *Echo Trap* series, which uses line-based drawings to mimic the ASL sign for “echo,” explores this relationship in the context of translation and interpretation. In the essay “Long Echo: Reverberations in the Work of Christine Sun Kim” published as part of Kim’s work *Secession*, Liou writes:

An echo is more than just a soundwave bouncing against a surface, however; the force of its redirection creates a delayed reflection of its source. “In my very Deaf life, everything is repeated or an echo,” explains the artist. She describes her life as “full of echoes, like

[my interpreter] Beth is repeating what I'm saying, she's echoing me, when I ask somebody to write what they've just tried to say, to me, that's an echo." For Kim, communication exists in the form of an echo — one that bounces off an interpreter, careening to be captioned and transcribed, and traveling, eventually, to the eyes and ears of her intended audience. The same process could be applied to describe the circuitous pathway between languages, from American Sign Language (ASL) to English to Korean to German, or even from thought to language itself, whether written or spoken or signed.

(121)

These pathways that Liou describes, of transcriptions and translations, expand the initial concept of the sonic echo into a symbol that illustrates a variety of important relationships, much like the music staves that make up the focal point of Kim's publication. As Kim demonstrates with the *Echo Trap* series, echoes can reverberate onto the page in the form of drawings. This continuation of sound, and of communication more broadly, into visual media allows for reflection upon the ways that sonic experiences as communication pathways, and the contexts they arise from, impact and shape our lives.

What is unnoticed within our listening? This is one of the major questions that arises from working with sound. I have always perceived the practice of listening as discussed in New/experimental music/sound art spaces as one that expands beyond simply the awareness of sound perception to a careful attention to the people and greater world around us. The lenses through which we interpret sensory information and contextualize it, "the objects that we direct our attention toward[,] reveal the direction we have taken in life" (Ahmed 546). In the case of listening, what is heard (or not heard) becomes understood through comparison to past

experiences, reinforced by standard interpretations, such as classifications of noise vs music. By creating artworks that contrast legible musical ideas with broader thinking about sound outside of music, I aim to work with the tension created by preexisting sound narratives confronted by new ways of listening. An example of this is the juxtaposition of the music staff symbol with organic gesture-based imagery, often within unusually bound books. Using the imagination as the site of this re-contextualizing allows for processing time that does not exist in live sound, and even moves the act of listening beyond the bounds of hearing.

Since sound is ephemeral, constantly slipping away in time, I find it to be a very dynamic field to find disorientation within. Ahmed states that orientations are created by repetition (553), and in this sense, when we engage with sound in conscious ways, we not only further our embodiment within those moments, but create potential sites of perceptual change. With live sound, there is no time to pause and form an interpretation — it occurs within time, and must be processed either directly, with our default listening perspectives (orientations), or through memory afterwards. By engaging the topic of sound with visual media, the opportunity to slow down and think about what mode of perception is being used is made possible. Recordings exist as an intermediate site between these two extremes because of their playback option. This allows for the repetition needed to create an orientation; to assign a mode of listening. This is why it was important for me to include a recorded audio component in the exhibition rather than a live performance.

Since repetition leads to orientation, perhaps reorientation can be directed by desire. This thesis project takes place within the context of reorienting myself both as a musician moving into

the world of visual art, and as a Trans person in the first few years of gender affirming care. The desire is to have greater fluidity with orientation; to be oriented more broadly, within a listening practice as well as more generally. I am currently reorienting myself within a creative discipline as well as within my own body. The book-objects, as disorientingly structured documents, also create space for orientation-forming repetition: pages can be flipped back and forth and returned to as the mode of viewing is developed. What is important is the embrace of disorientation, away from immediate understanding or legibility, to welcome new approaches to viewing, reading, listening, and embodying.

Book Piece

Preceding the use of the book form in this project, *Book Piece* (2021) was the starting point for my current work with the book structure as a formal component of the music score. The creation of this piece was driven by frustrations with seemingly rigid boundaries concerning who can and cannot compose music, an activity that is often regarded as highly selective. I wanted to make a piece that would add some fun and accessibility to the process of music creation, pushing the boundaries of performance and composition.

Book Piece is a text score that calls for performers to create their own parts, instructing the illustration and creation of book-scores. The number of musicians results in the number of movements, and performers exchange and perform each other's scores throughout the piece. The layout of the pages, created by making the book, dictates the phrase structure of each movement. I am interested in non-prescriptive graphic notations, and this was an experimental way of seeing what musicians would do when given the opportunity to create something visual to interpret themselves.

Book Piece

Camille Kiku Belair

This is an instruction score for any number of performers, to be performed for any duration. All performers create their own graphic score:

Think about a personal visual language. Use your intuition to decorate a single piece of paper. Use whatever media suits you in the moment: drawing, painting, collage, digital

printable media, found objects that can be secured to a page, embroidery, paper making...
Then fold and cut the paper into an 8 page booklet (instructions follow).

Each performer interprets their own score. All scores are performed at the same time. The pages are phrases. They can last as long as each performer feels in the moment. In between phrases (pages), pause until it feels right to start the next phrase (page). The middle pages can be interpreted as longer phrases. Once each performer finishes their book, the first movement is over. Exchange scores (books) every movement. Continue rotating books (scores) until everyone has performed each one once. The piece is now over.

What is often an invisible part of the experience of composing or interpreting music (the score as a book) can move from being passive to active in contributing meaningful ideas to the process, and since creating *Book Piece*, this consideration has been ongoing in my work.

Diptych Series

The diptych series, the most prominent part of the final exhibition, is composed of colourful, grid-based serial works that combine my interest in music composition systems with the impact the work of Vija Celmins has had on my approach to iterative art making. In 2019 the retrospective exhibit of her work *To Fix the Image in Memory* made such an impression on me that I went to see it five times. The incredibly accurate graphite replication of the images captivated me with both the degree of technical skill and the simultaneously abstract textural effect achieved. This fascination is enhanced by her juxtapositions of contrasting yet similar textured environments such as fields of stars with the small rocks of a desert landscape. Her iterations of the same patch of ocean rendered over and over with different grades of pencil, displayed side by side in a long row, directly inspired my use of graded graphite in the diptychs.

When I made the shift from classical music to visual art, I began to reflect upon what education I had received and what education I had missed — it is through that reflection that I began composing a series of guitar miniatures in various styles, reviewing the composition techniques that had been covered at music school. This is what led me back to twelve tone serial composition, coinciding with the beginning of my work with graphite pencils, attempting to learn a basic cross hatching technique to develop some skill controlling value in the medium. Coincidentally, my pencils came as a set of twelve, corresponding to the number of pitches and size of grid used for both my twelve tone matrix and graphite practice gradients. In early 2023, I produced an experimental drawing (see page 30; Fig. 1.), inspired by Vija Celmins's use of juxtaposition, and the effect struck a chord. Using the same matrix, I increased the scale of the

work and created *Dptych I* (see page 32; Fig. 3.), using iteration to explore a wider range of combinations relating graphite values (with the addition of colour pencil at this stage) to numerical pitches within the grid, generating patterns with this method for the first time.

Encountering Agnes Martin's work around the same time as this series began strengthened my own use of grids, and her ideas about expressing subtle emotions of happiness through this particular abstract form strongly resonated with me. Particularly with *Dptych II* (see page 34; Fig. 5.) and *IV* (see page 37; Fig. 8.), the solitary square grid, rather than the smaller more numerous ones in *Dptych I* and *III* (see page 36; Fig. 7.), has been what I have settled on as the main appearance of this series moving forward. In *Night Sea*, writing about the Martin painting of the same name, Suzanne Hudson describes that the image "slips in and out of focus," and that "from a stationary vantage point this undulation prevails, yet the conditional nature of such reversibility reveals itself most fully when the viewer moves" (13). The painting is a deep blue shade with a gold leaf grid embedded in it, and similarly in the diptychs, the metallic details make the work dynamic, appearing differently from different angles and distances. The pairing of a graphite rendering of each matrix with a colour pencil panel graduated to include metallic colour pencil from the second one on. The effect of certain squares within the grid, rather than Martin's delicate linework, shining out to capture more attention than before matches the reflective nature of the more densely layered graphite. The reflectivity does not correspond from sheet to sheet in the diptychs, despite using the same matrix (outside of the silver and gold in *Dptych II* that are shared on both sides) resulting in further iteration of the generated pattern.

Using the twelve tone composition technique, numbers (zero to eleven) are assigned to the twelve chromatic pitches used in traditional Western classical music, and a “row” is composed that orders them as desired by the composer without repeating or omitting any notes. The row is then used to generate a “matrix,” a twelve by twelve grid, that lists all of the transpositions and inversions of the original row which assists with the process of composing in the twelve tone style. Once the number-filled matrix is complete, I assign colours and shades of graphite to each number and proceed to colour in one square at a time until the pattern generated directly by the melody is revealed. I choose the colour schemes by selecting twelve hues from the collection of coloured pencils I inherited from my French Canadian grandmother, assigning numbers arbitrarily. The original row doesn’t need to be a strict sequence of all twelve pitches to generate a usable matrix. Three of the four diptychs use more typically composed melodies, even one Japanese minyo (folk song), to produce their patterns. Each diptych is accompanied by a brief recording of the melodies that generated the patterns for context.

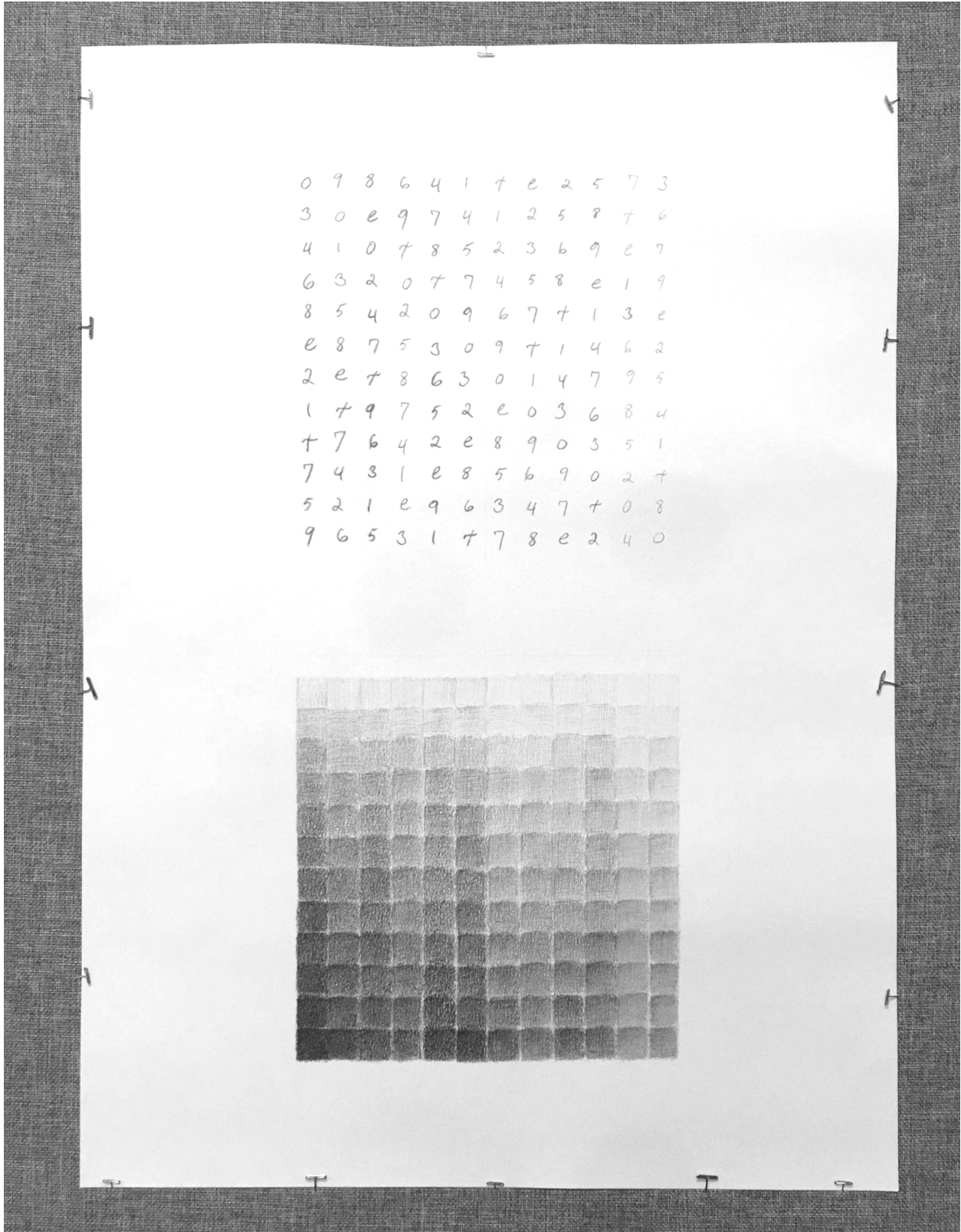


Fig. 1. Graphite gradient/matrix prototype drawing (2023). Graphite on paper.

0	9	8	6	4	1	t	e	2	5	7	3
3	0	e	9	7	4	1	2	5	8	t	6
4	1	0	t	8	5	2	3	6	9	e	7
6	3	2	0	t	7	4	5	8	e	1	9
8	5	4	2	0	9	6	7	t	1	3	e
e	8	7	5	3	0	9	t	1	4	6	2
2	e	t	8	6	3	0	1	4	7	9	5
1	t	9	7	5	2	e	0	3	6	8	4
t	7	6	4	2	e	8	9	0	3	5	1
7	4	3	1	e	8	5	6	9	0	2	t
5	2	1	e	9	6	3	4	7	t	0	8
9	6	5	3	1	t	7	8	e	2	4	0

Fig. 2. Matrix for *Diptych I* (2023).

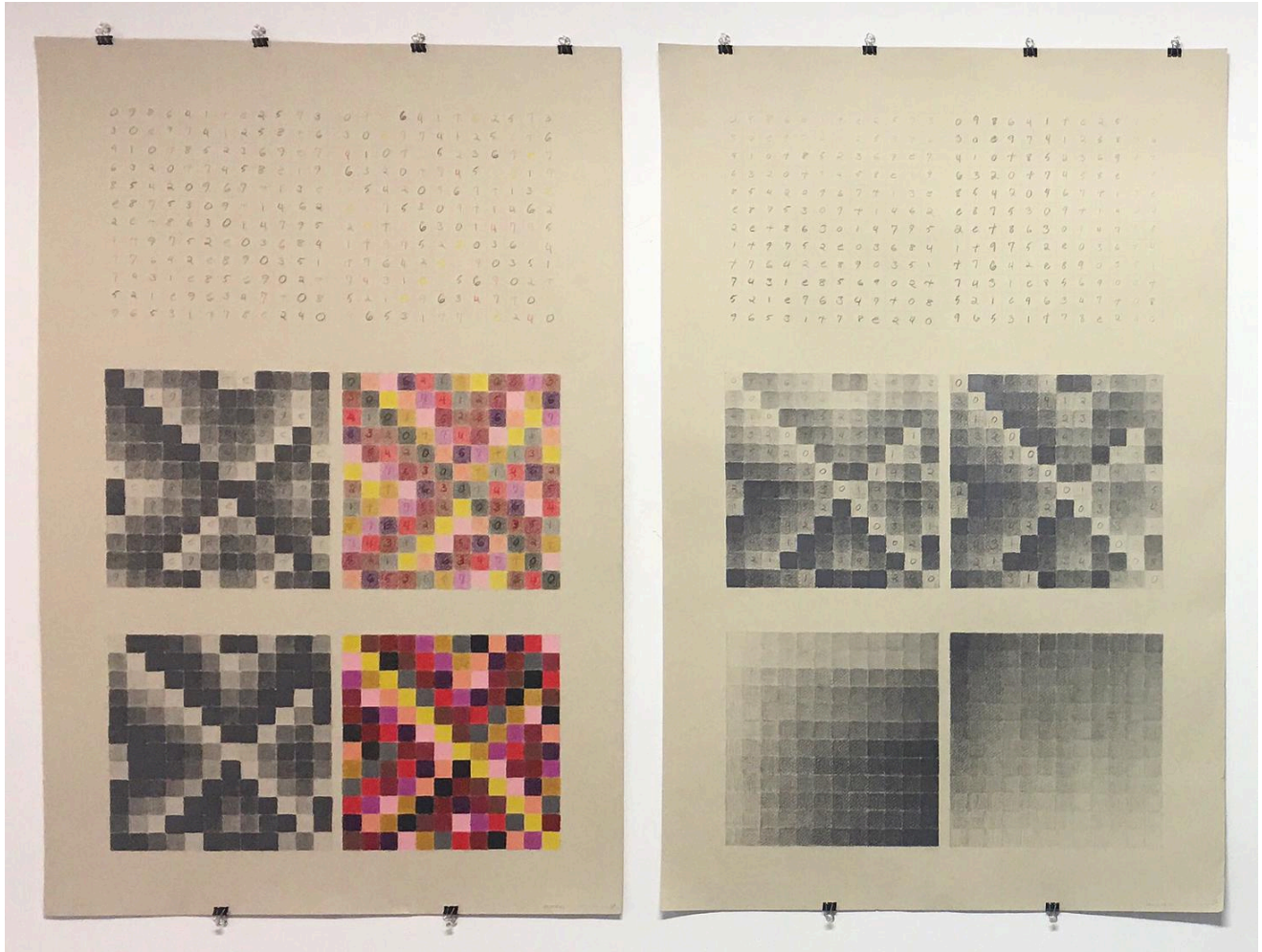


Fig. 3. *Diptych I* (2023). Graphite and colour pencil on paper.

0	2	3	9	t	0	9	5	3	0	2	3	9	t	0	2	0	9	0	t	6	9	3	6	t	0	6	5	2
t	0	1	7	8	t	7	3	1	t	0	1	7	8	t	0	t	7	t	8	4	7	1	4	8	t	4	3	0
9	e	0	6	7	9	6	2	0	9	e	0	6	7	9	e	9	6	9	7	3	6	0	3	7	9	3	2	e
3	5	6	0	1	3	0	8	6	3	5	6	0	1	3	5	3	0	3	1	9	0	6	9	1	3	9	8	5
2	4	5	e	0	2	e	7	5	2	4	5	e	0	2	4	2	e	2	0	8	e	5	8	0	2	8	7	4
0	2	3	9	t	0	9	5	3	0	2	3	9	t	0	2	0	9	0	t	6	9	3	6	t	0	6	5	2
3	5	6	0	1	3	0	8	6	3	5	6	0	1	3	5	3	0	3	1	9	0	6	9	1	3	9	8	5
7	9	t	4	5	7	4	0	t	7	9	t	4	5	7	9	7	4	7	5	1	4	t	1	5	7	1	0	9
9	e	0	6	7	9	6	2	0	9	e	0	6	7	9	e	9	6	9	7	3	6	0	3	7	9	3	2	e
0	2	3	9	t	0	9	5	3	0	2	3	9	t	0	2	0	9	0	t	6	9	3	6	t	0	6	5	2
t	0	1	7	8	t	7	3	1	t	0	1	7	8	t	0	t	7	t	8	4	7	1	4	8	t	4	3	0
9	e	0	6	7	9	6	2	0	9	e	0	6	7	9	e	9	6	9	7	3	6	0	3	7	9	3	2	e
3	5	6	0	1	3	0	8	6	3	5	6	0	1	3	5	3	0	3	1	9	0	6	9	1	3	9	8	5
2	4	5	e	0	2	e	7	5	2	4	5	e	0	2	4	2	e	2	0	8	e	5	8	0	2	8	7	4
0	2	3	9	t	0	9	5	3	0	2	3	9	t	0	2	0	9	0	t	6	9	3	6	t	0	6	5	2
t	0	1	7	8	t	7	3	1	t	0	1	7	8	t	0	t	7	t	8	4	7	1	4	8	t	4	3	0
0	2	3	9	t	0	9	5	3	0	2	3	9	t	0	2	0	9	0	t	6	9	3	6	t	0	6	5	2
3	5	6	0	1	3	0	8	6	3	5	6	0	1	3	5	3	0	3	1	9	0	6	9	1	3	9	8	5
0	2	3	9	t	0	9	5	3	0	2	3	9	t	0	2	0	9	0	t	6	9	3	6	t	0	6	5	2
2	4	5	e	0	2	e	7	5	2	4	5	e	0	2	4	2	e	2	0	8	e	5	8	0	2	8	7	4
6	8	9	3	4	6	3	e	9	6	8	9	3	4	6	8	6	3	6	4	0	3	9	0	4	6	0	e	8
3	5	6	0	1	3	0	8	6	3	5	6	0	1	3	5	3	0	3	1	9	0	6	9	1	3	9	8	5
9	e	0	6	7	9	6	2	0	9	e	0	6	7	9	e	9	6	9	7	3	6	0	3	7	9	3	2	e
6	8	9	3	4	6	3	e	9	6	8	9	3	4	6	8	6	3	6	4	0	3	9	0	4	6	0	e	8
2	4	5	e	0	2	e	7	5	2	4	5	e	0	2	4	2	e	2	0	8	e	5	8	0	2	8	7	4
0	2	3	9	t	0	9	5	3	0	2	3	9	t	0	2	0	9	0	t	6	9	3	6	t	0	6	5	2
6	8	9	3	4	6	3	e	9	6	8	9	3	4	6	8	6	3	6	4	0	3	9	0	4	6	0	e	8
7	9	t	4	5	7	4	0	t	7	9	t	4	5	7	9	7	4	7	5	1	4	t	1	5	7	1	0	9
t	0	1	7	8	t	7	3	1	t	0	1	7	8	t	0	t	7	t	8	4	7	1	4	8	t	4	3	0

Fig. 4. Matrix for *Diptych II* (2023).

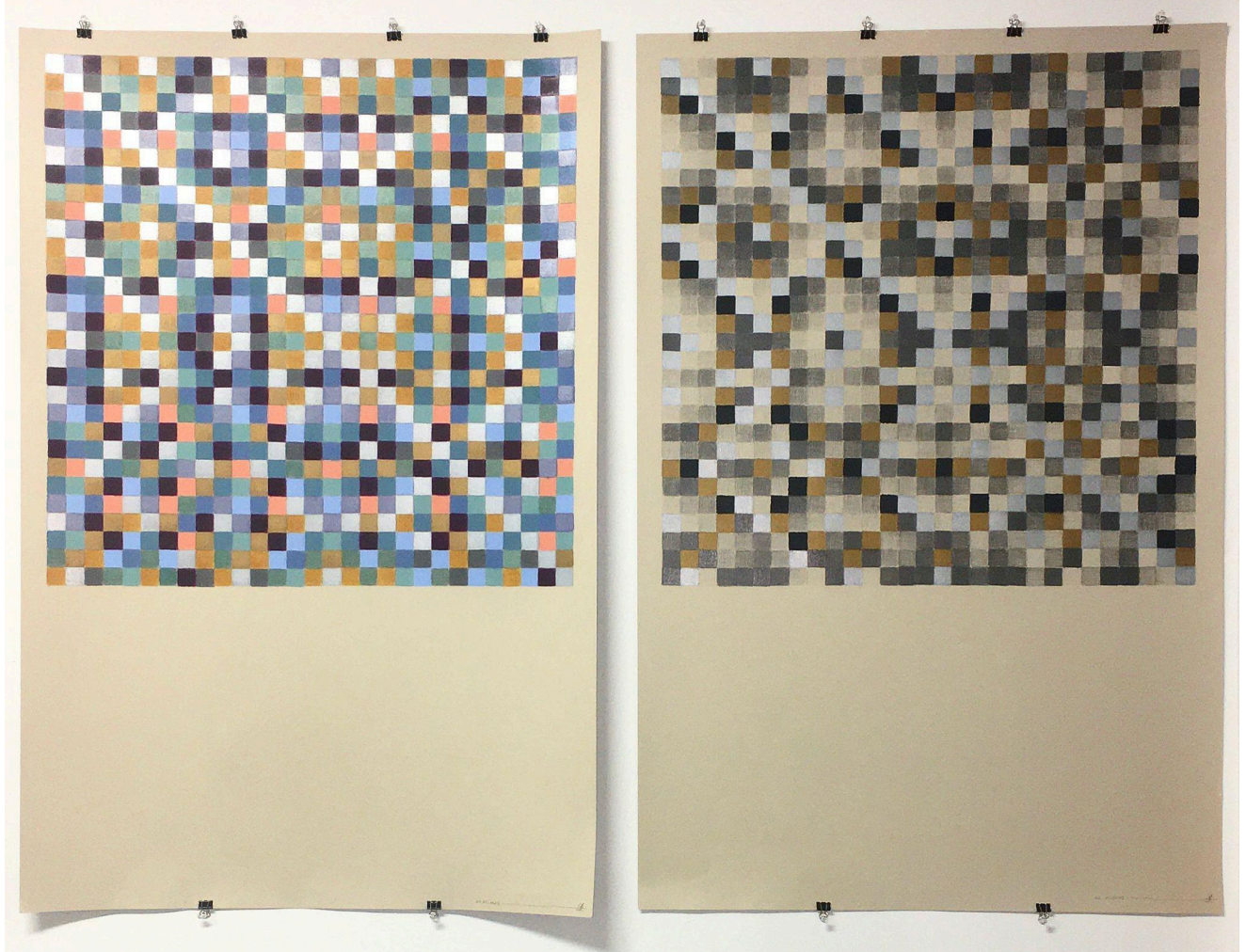


Fig. 5. *Diptych II* (2023). Graphite and colour pencil on paper.

0	5	t	e	3	t	6	t	5
7	0	5	6	t	5	1	5	0
2	7	0	1	5	0	8	0	7
1	6	e	0	4	e	7	e	6
9	2	7	8	0	7	3	7	2
2	7	0	1	5	0	8	0	7
6	e	4	5	9	4	0	4	e
2	7	0	1	5	0	8	0	7
7	0	5	6	t	5	1	5	0

Fig. 6. Matrix for *Diptych III* (2023).



Fig. 7. *Diptych III* (2023). Graphite and colour pencil on paper.

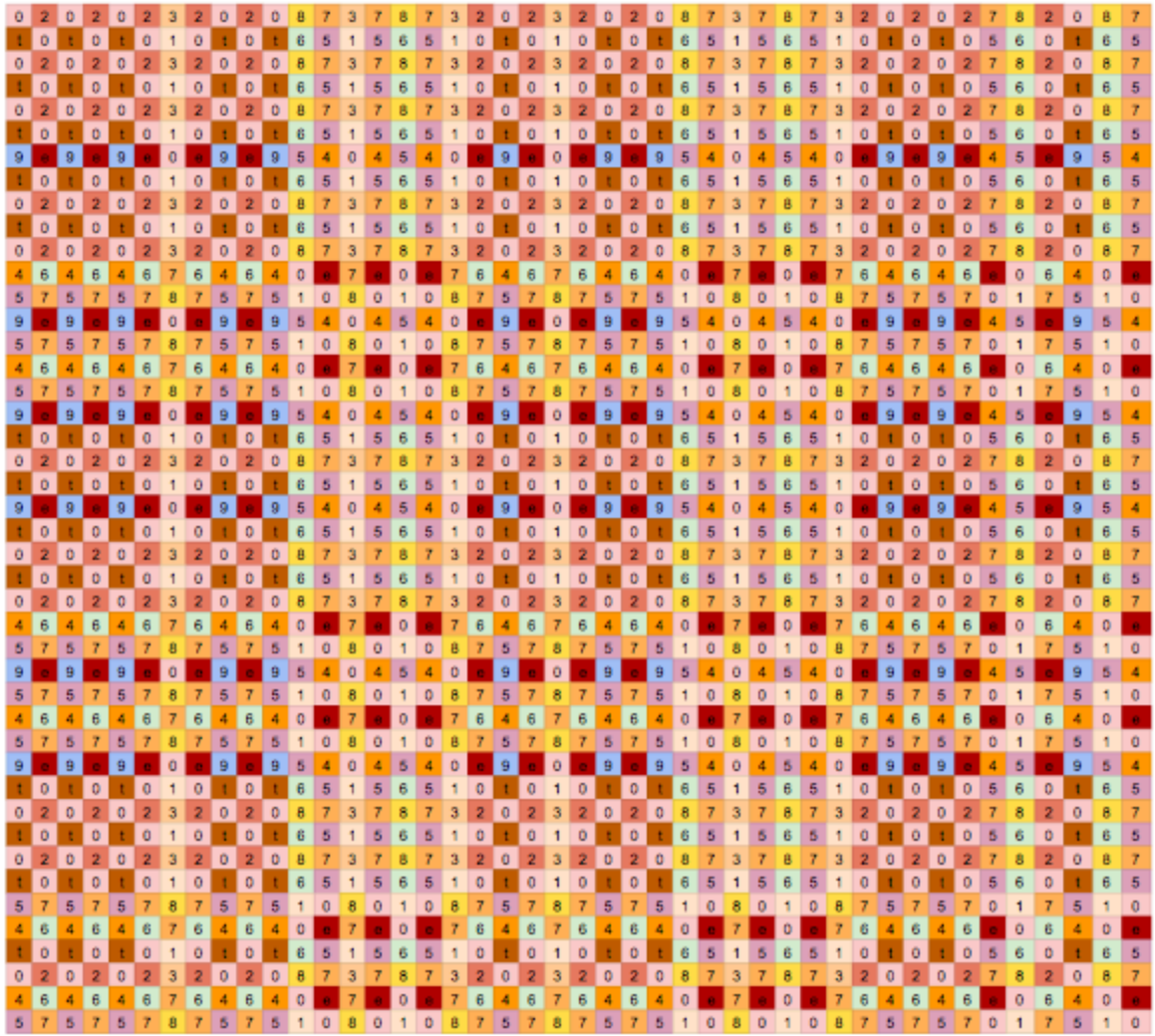


Fig. 8. Matrix for *Diptych IV* (2023)

The Sonic Imagination

Though to me the term *sonic imagination* describes audiation and the process of imagining soundscapes and music, it appears in other sources, such as *The Sound Studies Reader* (2012), in which Jonathan Sterne defines it: “sonic imagination is a deliberately synaesthetic neologism – it is about sound but occupies an ambiguous position between sound culture and a space of contemplation outside it” (5). Sound studies encompasses not just the study of sound practices, but also the institutions and discourses that deal with them; “it redescribes what sound does in the human world, and what humans do in the sonic world (Sterne 2).” Applied to my work, this expansive look at the greater world of sound, operating alongside direct sonic experiences, positions the compositional tools created and used in this project as part of a sonic imaginary: they ask questions about what is already contained within the mind about sound and music and invite a reevaluation; a reorientation. A cross-media approach is being explored, investigating how visual cues and dynamic objects (books) can influence sound awareness and lead to critical thought about sound and sonic systems.

In the context of music, the categorization of sound is a major concern. Toru Takemitsu’s work has had a particularly strong influence on my composition practice since I have performed his guitar music for a number of years. He writes about John Cage and his impact on the contemporary music world in *Confronting Silence*, stating that “without cultivating sound, no real originality will grow. Rules for music proliferate, but the question of sound remains obscure” (78). This statement is about exploring further possibilities for the range of sounds traditional musical instruments might produce (such as extended techniques). The emergence of

listening as a practice separate from music making is connected to this way of thinking about sound more broadly. As Takemitsu states, “listening to his sounds is what John Cage’s music really is. That is what any music is” (79). In that case, it is how listening is oriented that defines what music is from context to context.

Within the classical music world, the question of how notation is used is ever-present due to the practicality of communicating musical ideas to performers. With the realization that most music does not use notation at all, the usefulness of it in representing more experimental/less notation-suited music also becomes a serious question. Another aspect of this consideration is that the score is a work of visual art itself, as a connected yet separate discipline. Though the score itself is not one and the same as the music performed from it, there is no reason exploring the visual aesthetics of notation cannot be its own mode of creative expression. About John Cage again, Takemitsu reflects about a visit they made while in Japan together:

It was when we visited Dr. Hisamatsu in Kansai that Cage said to this distinguished Zen scholar, “I have been concerned with the problem of notating music, but now I have doubts about putting my music down on paper.” Dr. Hisamatsu replied, “Aren’t you thinking that eyes and ears are different? We can hear with our eyes and look with our ears.” Then he added that he thought the combination of both was more natural. Aren’t we even forgetting how to see with our eyes? (86)

To me, this remark speaks less to notation in the traditional sense, but to the potential we have of creating imaginative meaning out of a diverse range of sensory experiences. If it is our listening orientation that creates music, and listening can exist in a realm separate from hearing in the

imagination alone via audiation, then what appears on the page can become music, even if it is impossible to realize with real sound.

If we think about notation broadly as a system of recording sonic ideas, the topic of sound recording emerges as a comparison. What is a sound recording in this case? The definition is not actually clear. Patrick Feaster's book *Pictures of Sound* explores this question as part of a larger project aimed at making audible what were once purely visual methods of recording sound, such as early oscillograms which graph sound amplitude (loudness) over time (32). Typically, sound recordings are understood as audio recorded from live sound with a microphone, meant for reproduction in the form of different media such as CDs, or digital files; something that can be played back. However, in contemporary sound practices, much of the synthetic sound we use never existed in the real world, and was never physically recorded, though we still classify these documents as sound recordings. In other instances, many recordings of live sound are made without the intention or destiny of ever being heard, even though it is possible to play them back. This presents a complex range of possibilities for what can be described by the idea of recorded sound:

In contemporary practice, then, a *sound recording* or *recorded sound* isn't necessarily for playback, and it isn't necessarily made by documenting pre-existing sound waves [referring to electronic music]. The only necessary condition is that it should *represent* sound in a certain very specific way — namely, by expressing it in terms of amplitude or frequency as a function of time. (Feaster 5)

As Feaster stipulates, the necessity of temporality grounding sound is a fundamental part of a recording, whatever form it takes. That being said, he pushes the “when” of a recording’s location in time, and what form of notation it occurs in, further than the studio:

Pictures of sound, as the book is titled, can therefore be extended into an even broader interpretation, “moving in a direction that’s entirely different from the usual line of speculation into ways in which primeval sound vibrations might have been inscribed by chance onto the surface of ancient clay pots, into the brushstrokes of old paintings, or into prehistoric lava flows. (5-6)

The implications this has for the creative interpretation of images opens up what might be considered necessary criteria for the legibility of sound notation into a world of possibility.

As stated before, recordings do not need to be intended for playback to be legitimate records of sound. The potential for listening that can be evoked in the imagination alone through images is an important venue for understanding our relationships to sound and the aural sensory experience, as individuals as well as in broader cultural contexts. At times, the simple fact that music is made of sound can become obscured, as Takemitsu reflected:

From Cage I learned life — or I should say, how to live and the fact that music is not removed from life. This simple, clear fact has been forgotten. Art and life have become separated, and specialists are concerned with the skeletons of methodology. Aesthetics led us to music without any relationship to live sound, mere symbols on paper. (Takemitsu 289-290)

This is not to say that certain notation methods are in themselves an issue. Rather, the question is about what music results from them. Though most music does not use notation, notated music

still impacts the ways we conceptualize, privilege, and understand certain sound practices and not others.

Differing from recordings, notations are instructive drawings, and can have more open ways of representing time. By invoking the aesthetic qualities of modern spectrograms [sound visualization tools that show sound frequency (pitch) over time] or other visualizations of sound recordings in combination with symbols and tools from music notation, my work with the book-objects and monoprints/monotype prints invite imaginative “playback” through the imagination, alongside pairings with tracks off of *time moves as slowly as it can*.

time moves as slowly as it can

Created by layering improvised guitar pieces with a continuous hour long field recording made while out on a walk, *time moves as slowly as it can* continues to explore the creation of compound sound spaces. Since I have been working with field recordings, the idea of recording everyday sounds as a way of archiving experiences has appealed to me, and I find myself recording all the time without any intention of using these records for anything in particular. I have experimented with layering continuous field recordings, sometimes of the same space, to form new sound environments in the past, and as this process has progressed, I began to add casual recordings of myself playing guitar to the mix. The result, much like the addition of music staves to a textured monoprnt, gives affect to the “non-musical” field recording, and allows the sonic world captured and/or constructed to in turn influence the effect of the music.

Track List

1. *Burnish I*
2. *Expanded Time*
3. *Burnish II*
4. *Infinite Landscape*
5. *time moves*
6. *Burnish III*
7. *as slowly as it can*
8. *Burnish IV*
9. *So, So Distorted*
10. *Burnish V*



Fig. 9. Watercolour monoprint series (2023). Watercolour paint and pen on paper.

This series was made during a single printing session, using watercolour paint on a sheet of plastic film. Staff lines were added to some of the images afterwards with black pen. This marked another stage of using staff lines as a visual cue. Within a series, the presence of the lines in some of the pieces carries the idea of sound through them all.

Chance Processes in the Visual Representation of Sound

Throughout my gestural drawings and mono(type) printing processes, I have found the noisy, unpredictable textures that emerge visualize my perception of sound very well. The exploration of these techniques was inspired by George Maciunas's *Hydrokinetic-Osmotic Painting* series and George Brecht's *Chance Paintings*, which I encountered in Meridith Malone's *Chance aesthetics* (116, 135). The printmaking work of John Cage, featured in *Everyday is a good day*, has also become a major reference point for my work with print making and combinatoriality. These series use different chance-based methods to produce images. Maciunas's work involved applying ink to moistened paper, allowing it to disperse organically. Brecht used a bedsheet, bunched up after being treated with "blotted ink and marble and left to dry" (134). Cage's printmaking was often produced with the use of the I-Ching to dictate the visual composition of the images. The combination of organic/gestural and systematic chance appears throughout my work, and represents two approaches which I alternate between and blend.

This variation of chance operations is explored throughout George Brecht's writing in *Chance-imagery*, linking the production of what he describes as "chance-images" to natural processes, connecting art making to broader environmental phenomena. This connection is what appeals to me about this method of art making, and why I find it corresponds both aesthetically and formally to the world of sound. Series of unpredictable, subtle chain reactions, such as the way multiple sonic textures overlap in daily life, or the interaction of pigments suspended in

water as they are pressed against a page to form a print, fascinate me. It is not the interpretation of these events, but rather the possible range of interpretations that captures my imagination.

Brecht states that “there is no absolute chance or random event, for chance and randomness are aspects of the way in which we structure our universe” (5). A connection between nature and chance processes is highlighted here, though Brecht does not focus on more abstract aleatoric systems. My work with generative techniques used to create organic textures and patterns is informed by this link. Brecht describes two types of chance process:

In connection with art, and the affective image, we shall indicate two aspects of chance, one where the origin of images is unknown because it lies in deeper-than-conscious levels of the mind, and the second where images derive from mechanical processes not under the artist’s control. Both of these processes have in common a lack of conscious design. (5)

These two approaches to artmaking contrast: engaging with the subconscious, which could be viewed as a type of improvisation, compared with using mechanical processes, such as monoprinting with watercolours. In my work I refer to the differences as organic chance vs systematic chance. Organic chance being the root of my gesture drawing is an important consideration since it is tied directly to my music improvisation practice, compared to systematic chance processes such as monoprinting with runny paint.

I find that the connection to sound in the monoprints/monotype prints, besides the presence of hand drawn music staff lines, is found in the subtle textures which remind me of the sounds I often capture in my field recording practice. I am not concerned with sound quality, and

most of my recordings have been made with just my phone while walking along certain paths in the city, or during quiet moments at home. The effect of this is a noisy, blurry kind of sound that is at once muffled and quiet, but also unnaturally present in its heard proximity to the listener. There is disorientation in this work too, in the layering I often do of different recordings, creating a compound sound space. In *time moves as slowly as it can*, layered field recordings are replaced with a continuous hour-long recording of a walk through the city paired with improvised guitar pieces. This juxtaposition of “noisy” sound with “musical” sound echoes the diptychs in their use of contrasting colour pencil and graphite panels, as well as in other pieces in the exhibit. There is an element of chance, or at least the unpredictable, that is unavoidable in any kind of sound recording. This shared process, of engaging with chance in both art and sound works, is another link between the series.

There are clear connections between careful listening practices and chance-based processes, in which appreciation is turned towards natural operations that are mostly outside of our control:

Paintings get to be what they are physically through an interaction of method and material, and they have their effect in an interaction between painting and observer. As far as the observer is concerned, Pollock has demonstrated that the ability of humans to appreciate complex chance-images is almost unlimited. Here I would like to introduce the general term “chance-imagery” to apply to our formation of images resulting from chance, wherever these occur in nature. (The word “imagery” is intentionally ambiguous enough, I think, to apply either to the physical act of creating an image out of real materials, or to the formation of an image in the mind, say by abstraction from a more

complex system.) One reason for doing this is to place the painter's, musician's, poet's, dancer's chance images in the same conceptual category as natural chance-images (the configuration of meadow grasses, the arrangement of stones on a brook bottom), and to get away from the idea that an artist makes something "special" and beyond the world of ordinary things. (Brecht 11-12)

Brecht's emphasis on the possibility that imagery can consist of "the formation of an image in the mind" is connected to the idea of a *sonic imagination*. He specifically states that the musician's chance-images belong to "the same conceptual category" as those found in nature, and this raises the question of what a sound-image could be. Something formed purely in the imagination perhaps, or something born out of the imaginative sonification of visible images or ideas.

In more obviously visual works, chance processes, such as monoprinting with watercolours, or rolling a kneadable eraser over charcoal-covered paper to generate patterns, have been significant parts of my creative process. These actions, paired with the creation of the book-objects, signal aleatory as a central consideration when connecting the visual with the sonic. The reason it has taken on such a significance is that I believe engaging with chance in visual media can be a way of opening up the imagination to better perceive the complexity of the world of sound around us.



Fig. 10. Monotype series, ongoing (2023); watercolour, gouache and ink on paper.

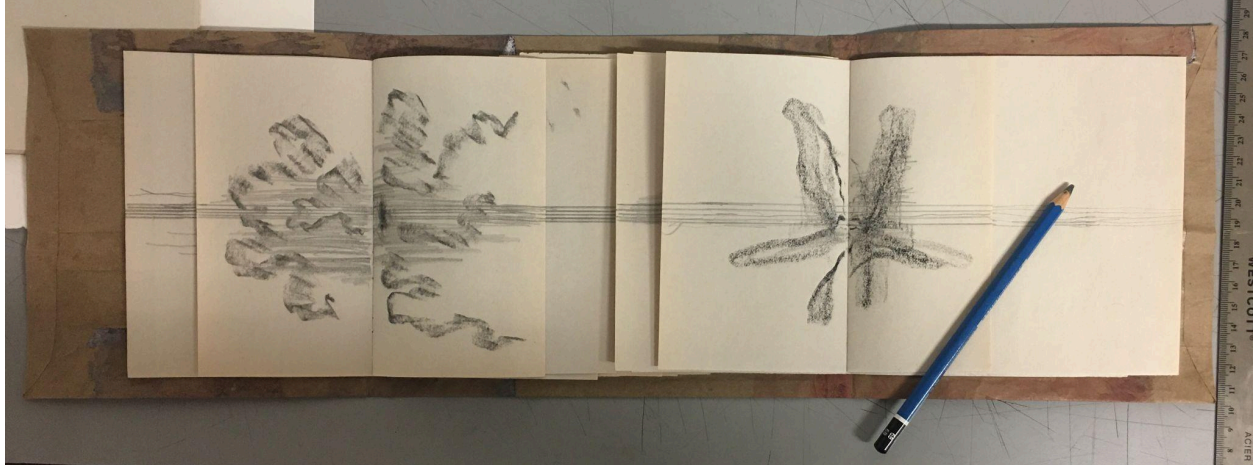


Fig. 11. *Double book* (2023). Charcoal and graphite on newsprint interior, kraft paper with ink monoprint cover, synthetic fibre binding.



Fig. 12. *Double book* (2023). Charcoal and graphite on newsprint interior, kraft paper with ink monoprint cover, synthetic fibre binding.

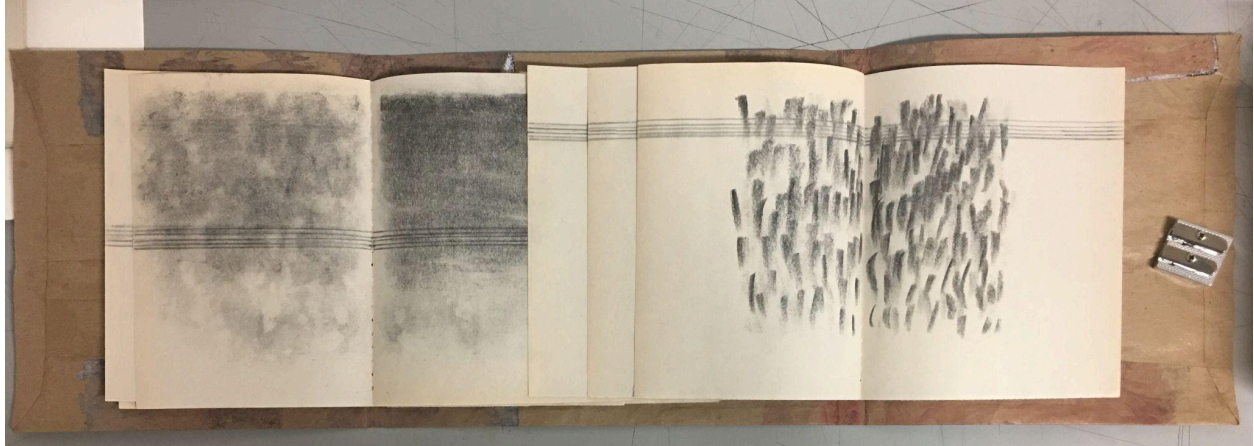


Fig. 13. *Double book* (2023). Charcoal and graphite on newsprint interior, kraft paper with ink monoprint cover, synthetic fibre binding.

Double book explores one method of creating an unfixed score, presented as a double-spined compound book with overlapping pages. The potential books have to influence the form of music/sound is of great interest to me, and this object can be used as a live performance score, a compositional tool, or simply an exhibitable work. Featuring staff lines that run across the pages at various heights and charcoal illustrations, this combinatorial graphic score is ever-shifting as new smudges and imprints form through use.

Representing Temporality in the Fixed Image

Any score, outside of video scores or other media, is a fixed image. The *sonic imagination* is something that can be developed with images, but it occurs within time via audiation; like recordings, imaginative experiences are unique from physical sound or any final performance of specific works. Still images can become temporal in this way, through imagined interpretation, even before being read and performed in the external world.

Outside of the standards of traditional Western music notation, how temporality is represented on the page is a major question. Does the score read left to right, describing sound events occurring over time? Does the sound-image instead show a diagram of sound locations? This asks whether temporality is a central subject of a piece, or if it is merely a necessary medium through which sounds exist. Within my practice, these are all important decisions that have to be made when assembling scores.

My compositional preoccupation prior to beginning my studio art practice was focused on exploring stasis in music. This push towards sparse musical content led to the question of what notation styles would be most appropriate, resulting in the move away from exclusively traditional Western music notation to graphic scores and text scores. The idea of moving from representations of steady “clock time” to more open “musical time” is reflected in the notations themselves. The book-object can be a solution to the issue of representing time in non-traditional music notations, the activation of which can give form, sequence, and duration to a piece of sound art/music. *Book Piece* is an example of this.

In this current project, there are multiple approaches to representing time in the fixed image. The small monoprint series that features music staff lines, in my personal interpretation, illustrates full soundscapes. Though the music staff implies different approaches in other work, such as *double book*, in these contexts the textures are so subtle and mostly without obvious gestures that they represent the same kind of static minimalism I aimed for in my more traditional compositions. The duration of the music/sound is not specified, and could either represent a snapshot of a single moment that immediately changes, perhaps following the next print in the series, or a continuous sonic texture.

In *double book*, due to the more obviously notational nature of the gesture drawings, the presence of the staff signals a more standard left-to-right reading, though that treatment is not the only possibility. Because of the segments that are created by the page structure, this book-object groups visual gestures together, making it a collection of visualized sound events rather than a snapshot/continuum of an sonic texture. Another possible reading would be to interpret the relationships between separate gestures on the page as a layout for their locations, if performed by musicians, or for use in electronic sound design. It is a more easily interpretable mode of sound visualization because of these practical reading options, compared with the more abstract language of the monoprints.

Some of the book-objects make use of hand-stitched textile covers, such as the *reinforced burlap book*, which has a reinforced burlap cover, features around 100 hours of stitching. It is also the first book to explore the option of textiles as possible cover materials. The idea emerged at this stage of the project that time could be represented independently from the subject of music

and/or sound within the work, and that could add clarity to the significance it has in the sonic world. If the concept of temporality being embedded into a work of visual art can be presented, then the idea that sound might also be present is less obscure. These hand-stitched textile book covers reflect this type of time-archiving in their repetitive stitching. Time becomes embedded within the object in both a visual and tactical way, and the repetition of the stitches mirrors the rhythms of sound.

I first encountered the idea of stitching as a method of recording time in Judy Martin's work, showcased in the book *Slow Stitch* (Wellesley-Smith 96-97). The piece *Not To Know But To Go On* (2013) explores temporality through the form of a rag-rug, which also incorporates her Finnish cultural heritage. For three years she carried out the daily practice of adding one skein of embroidery floss along with found fabric to the textile, noting "inner time goes backwards and forwards. Time is recycled (96)." The title is taken from Agnes Martin's writing, and it is possible this was also my first introduction to her work as well. The incorporation of heritage stitchwork in a seemingly unrelated project also resonates with me. This inspiration has shaped my stitching practice in the creation of my own temporal textiles, to be used as book covers. Wellesley-Smith writes about the Martin's time-recycling project as follows:

This 'private and controlled endeavour,' as Judy describes it, speaks to me as a visible record of time, making it tangible. It is a dense, material representation of thought and making. There is great craftsmanship visible in the repetition exhibited in the work. As I look at the densely stitched loops and coils of this work, so great in length after three years of daily stitching, I wish I could touch it and properly engage with the physicality of the object. Judy says, 'I'm interested in producing something very simple and quiet

and marked repeatedly with the human hand. Not because it is a metaphor for anything, but just because it's an object that says, unequivocally, I was here; I spent time with this; feel my touch.' (97)

Wellesley-Smith describes the desire to touch and interact with the expansive rag-rug, the result of years of work made visible. This tactile nature of repetitive stitchwork is one of the reasons I have gravitated towards making textile book-covers. The viewer/listener is invited to handle them and engage with the work put into them; to feel them and let their unusual material combination influence the experience of the contents of the book.

As Martin connected to Finnish heritage through stitching, the book-objects that include hand-stitched covers connect me to my Japanese Canadian identity. This is through learning about the sashiko tradition, a stitching practice that originated in Japan as a reinforcing and mending method, featuring intricate geometric traditional patterns (Futatsuya, "Sashiko as Cultural Sustainability"). Making textiles last longer and appreciating the fabric are core parts of the practice, originally developed out of necessity. The Japanese concept of *mottainai*, a value that emphasizes the importance of not wasting things, is embedded in the history of sashiko, as it was originally "practiced in harsh conditions with limited resources" (Futatsuya, "'boro' for a Japanese Who Practice Sashiko for Life" 2:28-2:36).

While stitching inherited fabric scraps together for *time-spending book* (see page 57), I spent a lot of time with my Japanese Canadian great-grandmother who took a keen interest in the work. She was not familiar with sashiko, outside of recognizing some of the common motifs, but all throughout her home there are echoes of the *mottainai* sentiment, from the zabuton seat

cushions on her chairs, also made from repurposed material, to her use of the phrase in day-to-day life. While doing the work, I reflected upon the way it felt to perform the stitching. I have taken this approach before while learning bunka shishu (a Japanese punch-needle embroidery style that uses unique thread to achieve a painting-like effect), which many of my relatives, including my great-grandmother, have done for decades. The reason for this tactile reflection is to try and connect with shared experiences through craft.

In a similar line of thinking, Atsushi Futatsuya, a sashiko artisan, explains that “(...) we try to imagine as much as we can to understand how the stitchers would have felt in stitching. I want you to imagine that as well. Imagination is how we can really appreciate the culture, I believe” (“‘boro’ for a Japanese Who Practice Sashiko for Life” 1:47-2:12). This sentiment resonates with my broader interest in sound as a part of culture, and the ways it can be worked with within the imagination. To engage with sashiko now as a fifth generation Japanese Canadian is to try and reconnect through the imagination to a family history that existed prior to coming to Canada. This is another way that temporality, intergenerationally and historically, is embodied by this series.

time-spending book (for my grandmothers and my aunts) I & II

These objects are compound books, meaning that there are multiple small books bound inside that can be flipped through independently when viewing the object. The materials used are very personal, and embed time in an intergenerational sense alongside the stitched time: the brown exterior fabric is a hand-me-down from my great-grandmother, and the patterned fabric interiors were inherited from my great-great aunt, her younger sister. I grew up very close to both of them, and they were strongly connected throughout their lives, so this was a way of symbolically representing those connections. Hand stitched meticulously for hours, the material echoes time spent in a number of ways; many of those hours were spent together.

The interior of these book-objects is handmade paper, created from recycled personal records, artworks that didn't work out from other pieces in this project, and inherited paper. Continuing with the intergenerational theme, some of the source material was paper from my French Canadian grandmother, who was an art instructor, and the person responsible for my early-childhood exposure to visual arts and textile crafts. I recently inherited many of her old supplies, including used watercolour paper with unfinished sketches. Combined with other personal paper items, such as my own recycled artworks, the collection of resulting pages further activates the potential of these artifacts to be read in a variety of ways. Though not directly related to music or sound, this work demonstrates the extra-textual meaning enabled through the book format.

I created the covers for these books in the company of my great-grandmother, and the process has been almost like a performance as we share those moments together. She is 103

years old at time of writing, and is a first generation Japanese Canadian who left Japan at two years old (my great-grandfather was second generation, which is why I am considered fifth generation). Though I didn't inherit sashiko directly from my family, I became inspired by the practice when I encountered it as part of one of my grandmother's crafts (my great-grandmother's oldest child) when she made a sashiko embroidered pillowcase from a kit. Though I use only the most simple pattern, consisting of offset parallel straight lines, the distinct motifs created by straight stitching caught my attention and led to a fascination with the practice.

reinforced burlap book



Fig. 14. *Reinforced burlap book* (2023). Cotton and jute cover, hand stitched, bound with synthetic fiber; gouache and printmaking ink on paper interior.



Fig. 15. *Reinforced burlap book* (2023). Cotton and jute cover, hand stitched, bound with synthetic fiber; gouache and printmaking ink on paper interior.

This book-object was constructed by reinforcing a sheet of burlap with cotton embroidery floss, inspired by another type of sashiko: kogin sashiko. Though the technique I used is different, the idea of thickening and reinforcing a coarsely woven fabric through manually stitching around the woven threads is what led me to this approach. Originally this method was used to better prepare fabric to be made into clothing for cold winters as this style is primarily found in the Aomori prefecture in Northern Japan (Futatsuya, “Kogin Sashiko: Another Ramification of Sashiko”). Unique diamond-shaped motifs are typically used, whereas my reinforced burlap ended up with a checked pattern since I wove over and under each original jute cord instead of in a more complex sequence, as is used in kogin sashiko. This sewing process was also mostly performed in the company of my great-grandmother.

The interior of the book-object features published pocket-size music notation paper alternating with monotype prints from a small wobbly staff line lino block. The paper used, both kraft and manila, echo the colours found in the cover. I used printmaking ink and gouache with a brush to create organic, noisy textures during the printing process, and the colours graduate from one print to the next. The binding style combines the simple single-sheet zine technique used in *Book Piece* to create the signatures that were then sewn directly to the cover. The result is a dynamic object that can be displayed in a variety of ways, such as with the cover draped over a plinth or folded to create a platform for the book.

Staff Lines as Symbols

The five-line music staff from standard Western music notation emerged as a focal point in my early abstract notations. These aimed to explore extracting symbols from music notation for use in purely visual works. My process of exploring compositional tools more generally has led me to continue the use of the staff symbol, itself a musical tool, as a way of signalling the idea of sound. The staff lines function as an imposed mediator - the vast majority of music does not use notation, so it is important to note the artifice of this signalling. The staff lines in my work are meant to point to sound in a way that can invite anyone to reflect upon sonic experiences without needing in-depth musical knowledge. This contradiction led me to gravitate toward their use, and is consistent with the disorienting effects built into my other work. As something that is not a necessary part of all music, though useful in certain contexts, it seems natural to me to explore notations and emphasize their nature as drawings.

Chacon's piece "For Heidi Senungetuk " from *For Zitkála-Šá* features five blank music staves, each drawn with a Nolograph staff line pen gifted to him by the featured artist, each with different contours (62). Some are in waves or slanted, and the instruction for the piece is to trace the staff lines with tracing paper, then with a second sheet of tracing paper, compose a melody on the first staff. The pages are switched, so that the tracing paper with the music staves is on top of the sheet with the single line of noteheads. Then, these noteheads are traced onto each staff, displacing their location from line to line. The filled out staves are then performed line by line for a total duration of five minutes (63).

In discussing the pen with Chacon, Senungetuk connected the music staff symbol with tavlugun, “ancestral Inupiaq women’s chin tattoos, which often consist of vertical lines marked from the bottom of the bottom lip to the bottom of the chin” (65). Chacon encouraged her to try drawing the markings on with the staff line pen “and, shortly,” she wrote, “I experienced two major parts of my life at once: ancestral Inupiaq facial markings (however temporary) and the Western musical notation symbols that have dominated a large part of my life activity since childhood” (65). Senungetuk reflects upon her experience as a violinist in orchestras, stating that the score is typically a representation of “someone else’s ideas” (65), whereas Chacon’s dedicatory score gives her “a greater sense of agency” (65) in creating and interpreting the music, especially in ways that connect to her ancestors.

The inspiration for Chacon’s project, Zitkála-Šá (b. 1876), was a Yankton Dakota composer, violinist, poet, writer, political activist, translator, music teacher, and “importantly, a trusted leader to many tribal communities still fighting the encroachment of the United States” (7). After learning about her work, Chacon writes that he “was compelled to compose a musical dedication to her exceptional life, to an artist who demonstrated direct action in all the involuntary spaces where we, as Native people, find ourselves” (7). Upon reflecting on the historical and present circumstances, barriers and “efforts in the continued fight against injustices” (7), the collection of graphic scores follows a dedicatory approach, highlighting thirteen contemporary Indigenous colleagues in the New Music field with extensive practices “including education, activism, research, and leadership in their respective communities” (7).

After connecting with each artist to discuss “how they, as Indigenous artists, are navigating the twenty-first century” (8), individual single-page works were composed as portraits that describe them and their practices. The choice of requiring the score to fit on a single sheet of letter-sized paper was to reflect Zitkála-Šá’s work both within and outside of music, since most of her work across disciplines was written on such paper. Chacon states that the scores present “opportunities to perform” (8), rather than prescriptive instructions to follow: “they can be an invitation to retrace the steps of their subjects, as many of them incorporate a feedback loop of learning within their design” (8). This unfixity resonates with my own work, in which the idea of the score as an invitation rather than instruction is central to its function.

Chacon, in analyzing Zitkála-Šá’s *The Sun Dance Opera*, describes how classical notation systems are limited in relaying “the complex keys and modes of the sung Native voice, nor the fluidity of time inherent in Indigenous musics” (8). He elaborates on his choice of graphic notation throughout the project:

The diatonic staff reduces all tribal music to an Indianist sound, easier digestible to white ears. A graphic score can resist the history of Western notation, and with that can eliminate normalizations and assumptions of time that influence how we see the universe and whoever created us. (...) On these pages, there is a filtering, a decoding, a mediating of speed, and a regenerating of what was lost. By following these lines, paths of agency are acknowledged and celebrated. (8)

Once again, temporality must be addressed when visually describing sound, and the Western notation method is limited in its capacity for broader senses of timing and rhythm. The music staff alone still points to a left-right linear reading, implying a progression of time, but without

other music notation symbols such as bar lines, does not restrict rhythm and flow. Especially when used in pieces like the monoprnt/monotype series, its dislocation — disorientation — from the usual context it is found in allows for new ways of understanding and viewing the symbol. In this case, it can become simply five parallel lines again rather than the ground upon which pitches and rhythms walk.

Kim's work *Secession* (2023) also engages with the symbol of the music staff. This piece called for artists to respond to the following text score:

Score

Find one or two sheets of paper. Using a pen, marker, paint brush, or anything that marks, draw or visually interpret your own version of blank musical staves. Make them empty and ready for anyone to fill in with their own notes. (6)

The resulting collection of blank staff paper was presented as a bilingual English/German publication. Prefacing the volume, the intent for the project is described as follows:

I started drawing staff lines in 2012. I wanted them to be seemingly empty so that anyone can add their own notes to these arranged lines. This is an homage to two types of people: the sign language interpreters I work with and the people — parents, partners, friends and even strangers — who have spoken on my behalf. These lines represent the parameters of their voices and how, in return, they affect my voice and work. For example, if I work with a shy person, the personality of their voice would make my voice sound shy too.

When you put notes within any of the “empty” staff lines in this book, your notes will be influenced by these lines. The act of combining staff lines drawn by one person and musical notation drawn by another person is all about negotiating, combining, respecting,

trusting and compromising. (5)

Like in the *Echo Trap* series, this use of the music staff symbol to embody relationships based around translation reflects a listening practice based outside of the physical act of hearing. The emphasis on interpersonal connection and creative impact elevates what is often an invisible background upon which other more vocal symbols are applied. Because of this, when I was introduced to *Secession*, it strengthened the connection I was developing with the use of blank staff lines. Their ability to contain such a range of meanings, from relationships with sound itself to their visual appearance on the page has given them a prominence throughout my entire practice.

Kim's work also resonated with me because of the emphasis on community co-creation, something that I have explored in my own work, such as in *Book Piece*. Where Kim uses the staff lines in a metaphorical way to reflect interpersonal relationships mediated by ASL, the wobbly staff lines I draw are meant to function more literally. The symbol transforms and reinterprets the context onto which it is placed, making it fit into an environment rather than act as the environment itself. It is a way of moving the image into the *sonic imagination*.

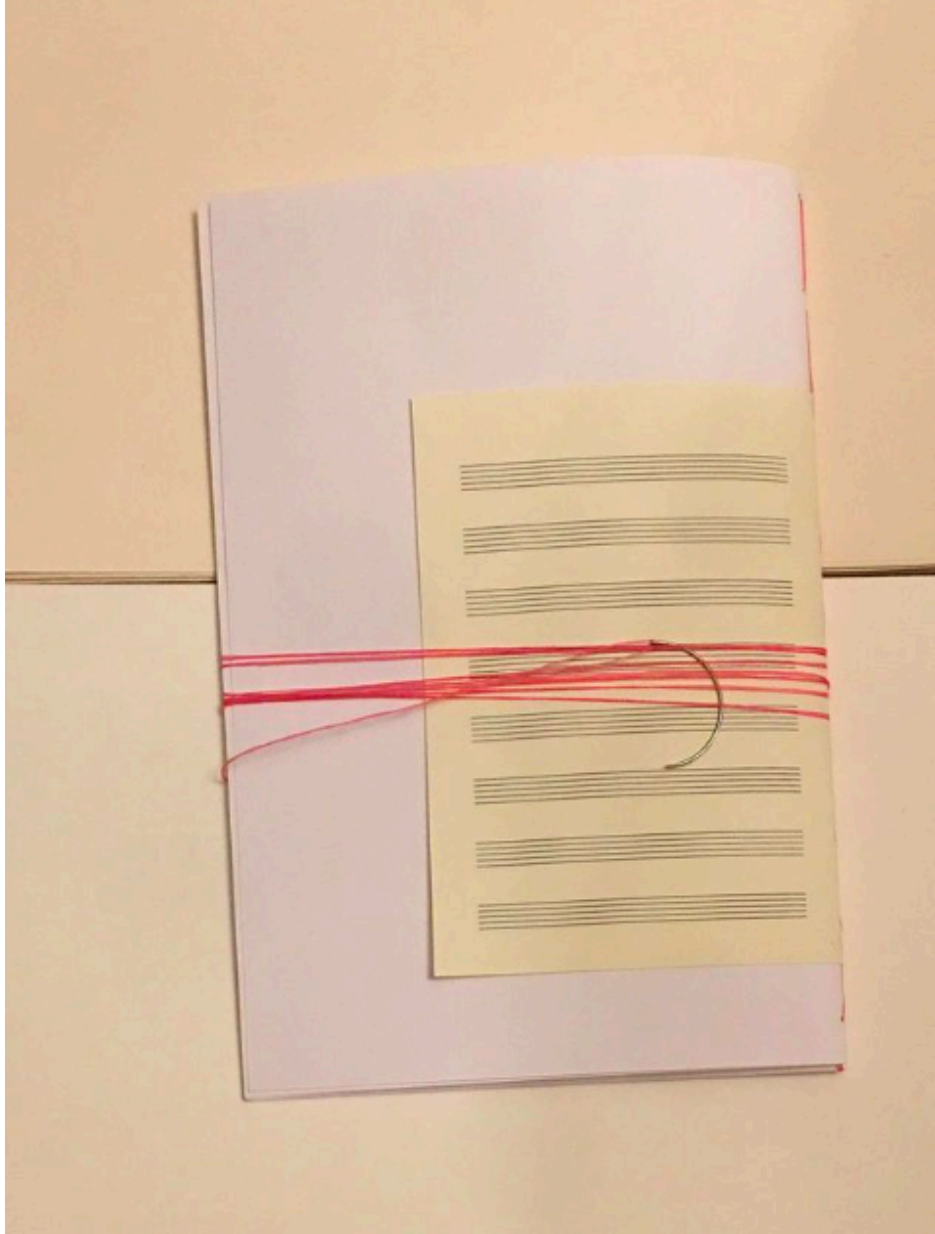


Fig. 16. *Blank Book* (2023). In-progress shot of the binding process; combining pocket-size published music staff paper (G. Henle Verlag Urtext Jotter) with larger blank sheets of drawing paper.

Conclusion

In *Every day is a good day*, Cage reflected upon key differences between viewing and listening, identifying the way that paying attention to sound can ground us in time and space:

The nature of listening is the experience of hearing something and then realizing that you're hearing something else. This is part and parcel of hearing. When you look at a painting, you don't have the impression that the painting is disappearing. But as you listen to sounds, you have the impression that they're gone, and that others have taken their place. And you're brought right by paying attention to events in time. All you need to see is [that] you're brought into direct contact with ephemerality [1983]. (66)

Here Cage identifies perceptual changes achieved through careful listening. It is this potential for reorienting, grounded in time and place, that has captured my imagination when approaching sound and music. Listening has the ability, both in real time and within the imagination, to shift our perception of environments, contexts, and bodies. This is approached throughout my work with disorienting objects and the recontextualization of music notation symbols and tools. Media is transformed from one discipline to another, relationships are drawn between disparate subject areas, and chance operations connect these actions with the natural processes that underscore everything.

This project has allowed me to explore the significance of the book form in music creation and sound appreciation in a variety of iterations. These works will continue on as a part of my creative practice, used as compositional tools, exhibitable artworks, and performable scores. By following my curiosity about the pattern-generating capabilities of matrices, I have

developed a unique approach to grid-based abstract artworks that I will continue to work with as well. The album featured as part of the exhibit allowed me to continue developing my recording, mixing and improvisation skills, alongside the ongoing maturation of my approach to working with recorded sound. The exhibition combines these elements with the intention of using visual media to centre the world of sound.

Oliveros states that the ear cannot be trained, but a musical mind can be cultivated through careful listening practice (“the difference between hearing and listening”); to develop a listening practice, what is presented here is the use of interdisciplinarity to provide different extra-musical avenues along which to arrive at a personal listening orientation. The orientations of our listening practices are fluid based on the desires we intentionally develop them with:

The question is less what is a queer orientation than how we are oriented toward queer moments when objects slip. A queer phenomenology might involve an orientation toward what slips, which allows what slips to pass, in the unknowable length of its duration. In other words, a queer phenomenology would function as a disorientation device; it would not overcome the disalignment of the horizontal and vertical axis, allowing the oblique to open another angle on the world. If queer is also an orientation toward queer, a way to approach what is retreating, then what is queer might slide between sexual orientation and other kinds of orientation. Queer would become a matter of how one approaches the object that slips away, a way to inhabit the world at the point at which things fleet.

(Ahmed 566)

As also stated by Cage, Ahmed’s specification of approaching what is retreating, in this case, what is connected to sound and sonic experiences as mediated by time, emphasizes what makes

this project so personally significant for me. It is the combination of all facets of my practice and personal life as distilled by creative work that is, though abstract, oriented towards finding new ways of experiencing and being in the world.

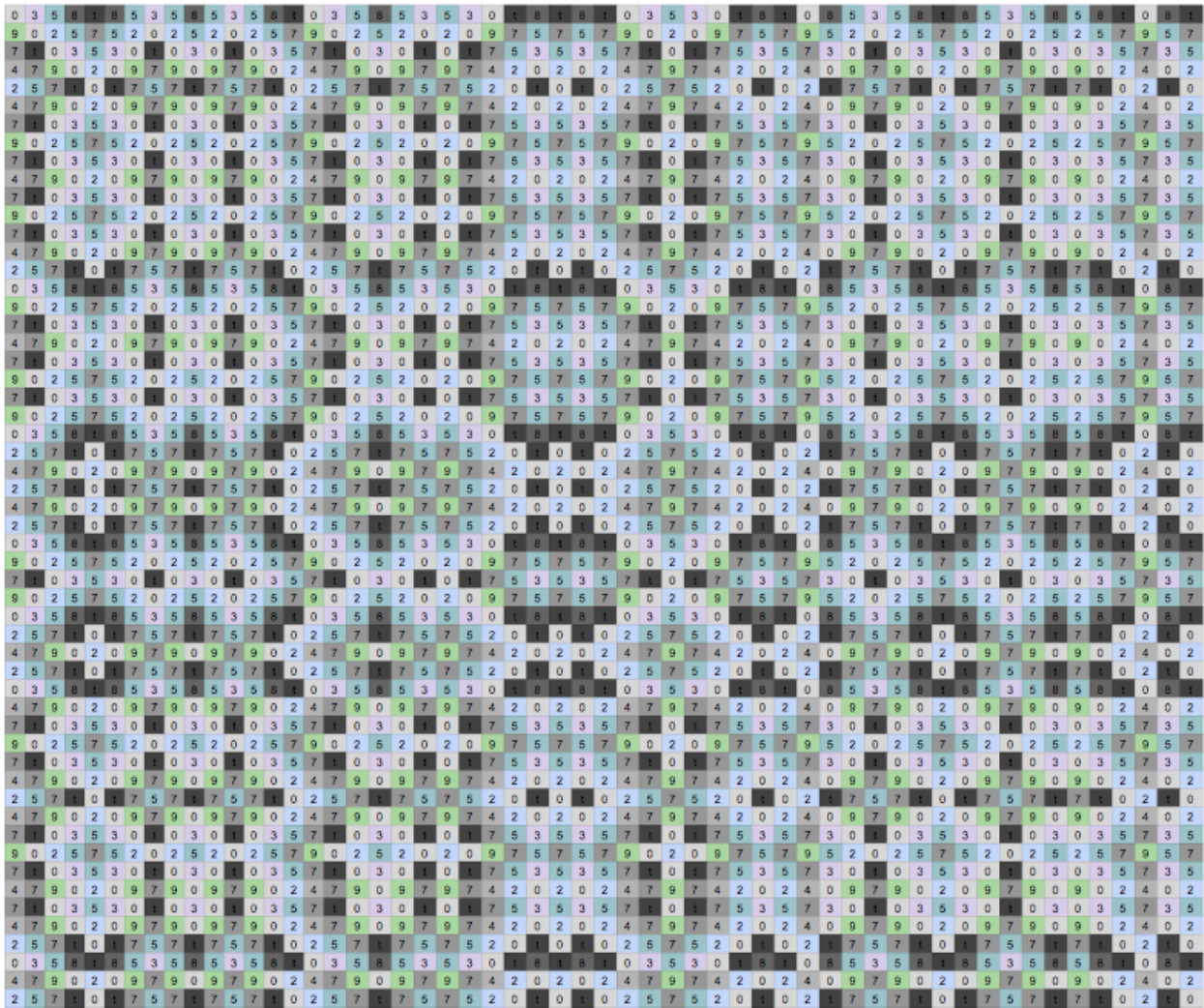


Fig. 17. Matrix for *Diptych V* (2023). Based on the traditional Japanese *Tanko Bushi* melody.

Drawing to be completed at a later date.

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