

Dr Alan Dunn  
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**The sound of an art school**  
*An alternative listening narrative of Leeds*

*PART 1 Journey Through The Mirror Pool*

*drip*

*PART 2 Cage, Fluxus, Chris Watson, Bill Drummond, Louis Le Prince, Aire*

# SUPERSENSES

UNLOCK THE POWER OF YOUR SENSES





2017 *Journey Through the Mirror Pool*, National Science & Media Museum, Bradford



“The award-winning Mirror Pool is the largest urban water feature in the UK, animated by over 100 fountains, the largest of which, “the Bradford Blast” rises to 30 metres.”



Bradford, 60 miles from Scarborough, 50 miles from Blackpool



# UNHEARD BRADFORD



*Industrial Beach, Bulgaria*



*Bradford by the Sea, Morecambe*

## **CONCEPT : Industrial Beach, Machines of Leisure**

Focusing on the Mirror Pool as a leisure destination for Bradford where families go together to play and socialise, the installation will reference the town's history of working class families going to Morecambe on holiday or 'Bradford by the Sea'. Presenting a future dystopian industrial beach where after the town's decline of industry; the machines have gone underground and now work to produce leisure for the people via the Mirror Pool. Audiences will be invited to journey 'below the mirror pool' (though the looking glass!), sitting in a circle of deck chairs, the audience will undertake a collective listening experience as they descend underneath Bradford, to hear (and see) the hidden sounds below their city.



2017 *Journey Through the Mirror Pool*, National Science & Media Museum, Bradford



CAUTION!

Electrical equipment  
may be present  
in this area.

Warning  
A live circuit may  
be present here.



FRAGILE  
HANDLE WITH CARE



Three levels of *the unheard*: behind locked doors, beyond listening range and overlooked due to familiarity







2017 *Journey Through the Mirror Pool*, National Science & Media Museum, Bradford





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2017 *Journey Through the Mirror Pool*, National Science & Media Museum, Bradford



NOISE



# NOISE ORCHESTRA



## SOUND DESIGN & PRODUCTION

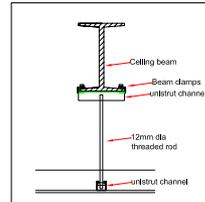


Over 170 individual pieces of audio were recorded on the days with Chris Watson, following a playback day at Leeds Beckett University where we discussed the recordings made, we took these back to the studio to begin the process of listening to the content, grouping and starting to sketch out a sonic narrative for the piece. These were our initial groupings of audio

- Dawn chorus (birds, Bradford town centre)
- Ambient mirror pool recordings, including people/voices (above surface)
- Town clock chimes
- Submergence under water (hydrophone recordings -going under water)
- Descent underground (ambient – darker room lighting)
- Drones (machines/textures)
- Rhythmic sounds (mechanical sounds)
- Electromagnetic buzzing (power station)

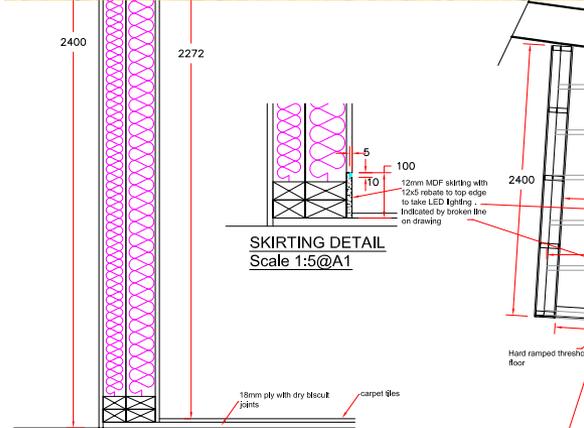


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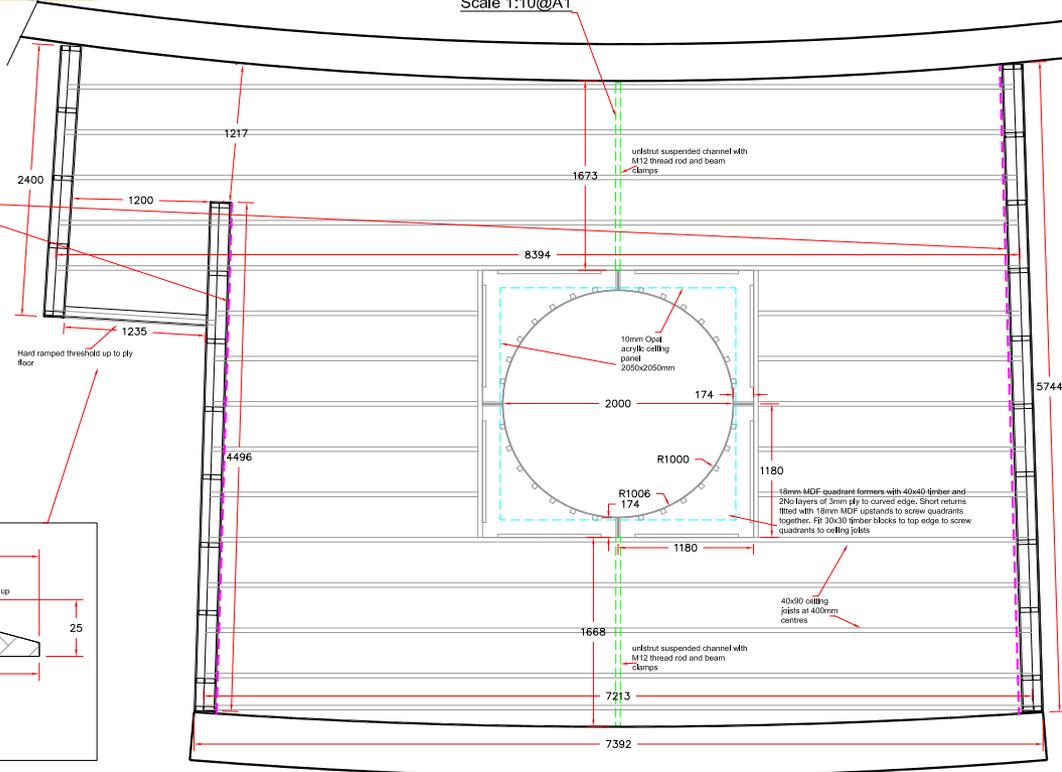


SECTION THRU UNISTRUT CEILING SUSPENSION  
Scale 1:10@A1

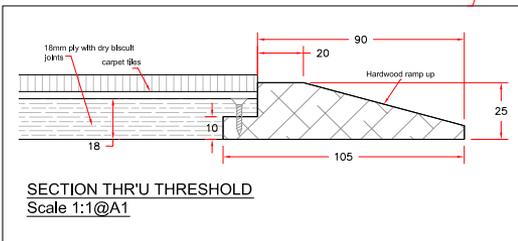
SPECIFICATION	
<b>MATERIALS</b>	
18mm plywood	
3mm plywood	
40x40 timber	
9.5mm plasterboard	
12mm sound block plasterboard	
18mm 12mmx25 MDF	
70x40 timber, 90x40 timber,	
10mm solid acrylic,	
105x25mm hardwood for threshold	
<b>FINISHES</b>	
B/C	
<b>HARDWARE</b>	
Unistrut channel M12 threaded rod toggles and beam clamps LED lighting strip	
<b>GENERAL NOTES</b>	
<b>QUANTITY</b>	
1 No required.	



SECTION THRU PARTITION & CEILING  
Scale 1:10@A1



PLAN OF PARTITIONS WITH CEILING PLAN  
Scale 1:20@A1



Rev	Date	Drawing Revisions	Drawn
A	07.06.17	Revised sizes	JM

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Client: BRADFORD SCIENCE AND MEDIA MUSEUM

Project: BRADFORD SCIENCE AND MEDIA MUSEUM

Project Code: 4393

Title: PARTITION WALL & CEILING DETAILS

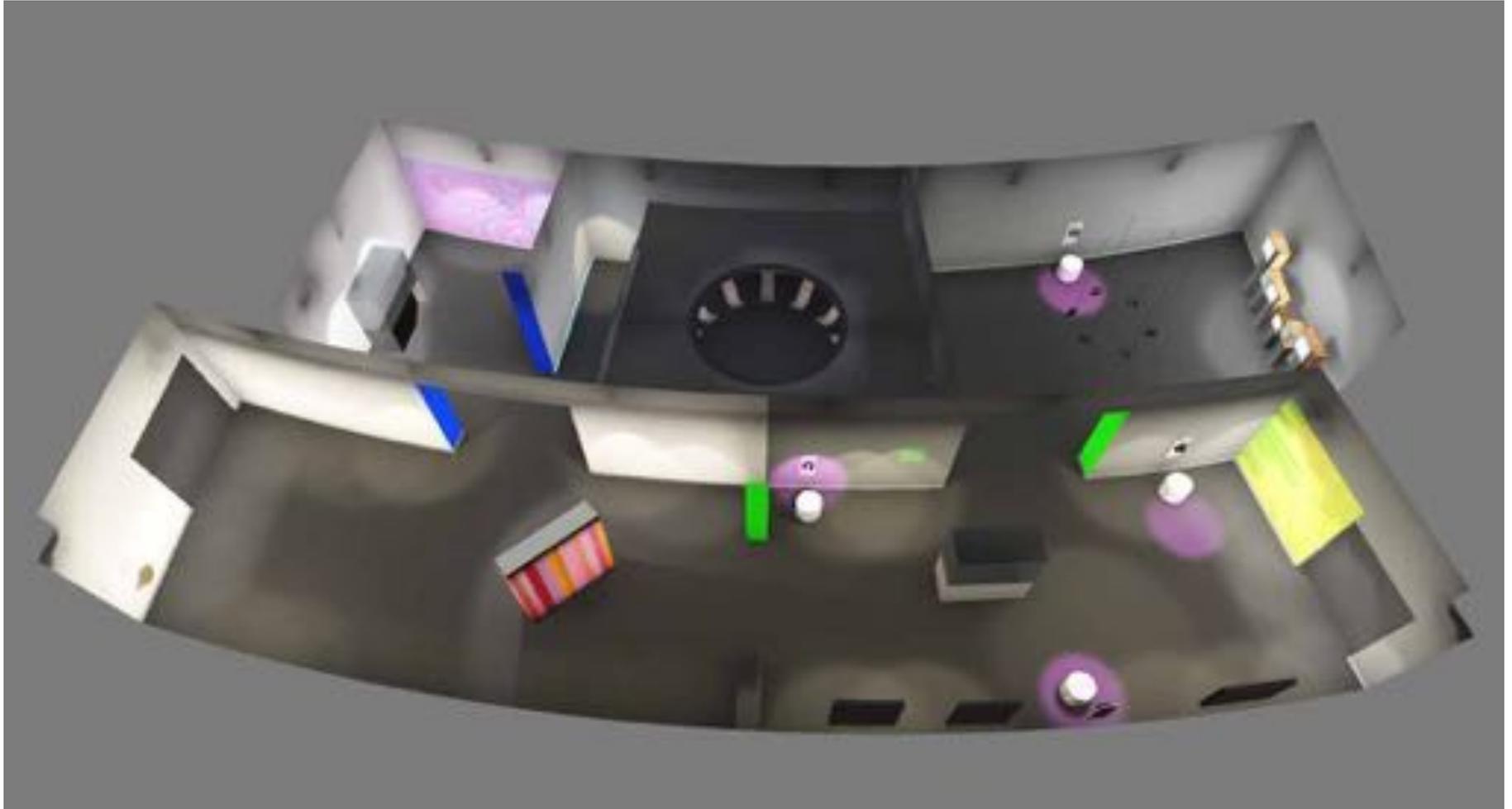
Scale: 1:20 1:10 1:1 @ A1 Drawn: JM

Date: 06.06.17 Checked:

Drawing No: 4393-02 Rev: A



2017 *Journey Through the Mirror Pool*, National Science & Media Museum, Bradford



2017 *Journey Through the Mirror Pool*, National Science & Media Museum, Bradford



*Bradford Industrial Museum*







2017 *Journey Through the Mirror Pool*, National Science & Media Museum, Bradford









Soft Launch  
2017 *Journey Through the Mirror Pool*, National Science & Media Museum, Bradford



Shared "immersion"  
2017 *Journey Through the Mirror Pool*, National Science & Media Museum, Bradford



See More







Journey Through the Mirror Pool is a nine minute long sound experience.  
Please be aware that this space is quite dark and contains some flickering lights.

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**Please be aware that this space is quite dark and contains some flickering lights.**

# JOURNEY THROUGH THE MIRROR POOL

Get ready to journey beneath Bradford, to a hidden world of secret sounds.

Journey Through the Mirror Pool is a sound experience that takes you from the bell tower in Bradford City Hall, to the surface of the Mirror Pool fountain and below, into its mechanical underbelly.

It reveals how exciting it can be to stop for a few minutes and really pay attention to the different sounds that surround you. You might just discover something you have never noticed before.

Created by Noise Orchestra and Alan Dunn in collaboration with Chris Watson



**JONATHAN NOBLE**  
City Park Manager

So there is one pool over there, one pool here and one pool at this end here.







**This**  
*was*  
**just**  
**handed**  
*to*  
**you**  
*by*  
**Robin**  
**Page**

**now**

**fear**  
*it*  
**up**  
**throw**  
*it*  
**away**  
**and**  
*forget*  
*it*



1969 George Brecht and Robin Page performances in Leeds



1959 George Brecht and 1962 Dick Higgins performing Brecht's *Drip Music*

## DRIP MUSIC (DRIP EVENT)

For single or multiple performance.

A source of dripping water and an empty vessel are arranged so that the water falls into the vessel.

Second version:       Dripping.

G. Brecht  
(1959-62)



2008 Alan Dunn & Jeff Young *Music for the Williamson Tunnels: a collection of the sound of dripping water; Water as rhythm, performance and basic building block of life, featuring George Brecht, Deep Listening Band, John Cage, Scanner, Hugh Le Caine, Jem Finer, Asmus Tietchens, Kaffe Matthews and Leeds students*

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## Global Ear

A survey of sounds from around the planet

From the Fluxus-inspired anti-art movements of the 1960s to present-day below-radar strategies,

## Leeds

is maintaining its reputation for quiet yet stubborn resistance. By Bruce Davies



Jonny Fryer aka These Mountains live at Leeds City Trinity Church

Scratch beneath the surface of the official history of Leeds – Henry Moore and Barbara Hepworth, Sisters Of Mercy, Kaiser Chiefs – and you start to uncover a more radical and political history. This art, the Psycho-Music Discoveries Of Alan Smitthan, by audio-visual artist Paul Rooney, is an artwork commissioned by Leeds Metropolitan University. Part lecture, part audio-visual installation, it concerns the chaotic anti-art spirit emerging from Leeds Polytechnic during the early 1970s in the wake of input from Fluxus members George Brecht, Robin Page and Robert Fillius. Smitthan was a 2D design student who became obsessed with capturing Electronic Voice Phenomena in the recently vacated 18 Block at Leeds 18c.

At one of several presentations of this artwork/lecture, I bump into artist and lecturer Alan Dunn, whose current project seems to share similar non-material concerns as those working at Leeds Polytechnic in the 70s. Dunn has curated a series of CDs that he refers to as a continuous self-portrait, in the process of putting these albums together he has created documents that combine contributions by Leeds students and lecturers alongside the work of established musicians/artists. Dunn has also established a yearly masterclass at Leeds Metropolitan University, with sound recordist Chris Watson: Yorkshire's past extending a helping hand to the county's potential future.

In a very different vein, my first encounter with Improv musician Jonny Fryer, aka Onward The Indian/These Mountains, came three years ago on a warm, late summer Sunday evening. He was perched on an unpolished bench, and surrounded by the paraphernalia of performance – guitar, laptop, Loop Station and keyboard – while old Super 8 films projected onto the walls created a wobbly feeling of nostalgia. The music had the familiar motifs of solo Improv gradual build towards orchestral climax before the inevitable falling away. This all took place in The Bunker, a student basement in the Hyde Park (L5) area of Leeds. Operating only at weekends, The Bunker housed photographic exhibitions, one art and

installations alongside music and performance art. As the performance drew to its close, the warmth of the evening sun and the hiss of bottles being opened creased us outside for a drink.

Revealing in a similar temporal zone to The Bunker is Leeds's Black Dogs Collective. Formed in 2003, their practice involves "exhibitions, publications, events, interventions, workshops, social engagement and curatorial activity", and most recently the production of an audio atlas. The individual practices of the Black Dogs are wide ranging, so the production of an album seems quite natural for a collective known as much for Situations/1-night events as for its exhibitions. "Objects are difficult because of their potential slippage into commodities, but that's not to say they can't be deployed responsibly," says Andy Abbott of Black Dogs and Leeds experimental rock outfit That Fucking Tank, for whom the DIY ethic is writ large in their modus operandi. The DIY ethic of Black Dogs is evident, too, in That Fucking Tank's attempt to explore alternative avenues to the mainstream in terms of production and performance.

Entering the city from the south you experience the Light Weville Street project, a sound and light installation by Hans Peter Kuhn designed, in part, to smarten up the approach to the city. In recent years Leeds has seen other high profile commissions such as Bill Popey's *Primal Soundings* installation at Leeds Art Gallery and the rather lavish opening of Opera North's Howard Assembly Rooms, a much-needed, dedicated music venue. While these projects are worthy, they appear to be weighed down by their civic duty, and are vulnerable to cuts in the current economic climate. In contrast, one cannot underestimate the importance of self-funded events such as The Man Who Saved The World, a dining film/gig event featuring Home Of The Brave, a MontyCano-inspired jazz Improv outfit featuring Joost Hendriks (drums), Seth Bennett (bass), Richard Ormerod (sax) and Jonny Flockton (guitar). The project finds the group placed at the centre of a vast, vacated TK Maxx store, surrounded by a ten-screen reconstruction of

a film dubbed The Turkish Star Wars, chopped up and re-presented by Eoin Shea and Derek Horton. The original material itself is a bizarre mash-up of men with tinted sweats running around a desert interior with stolen frames from Star Wars, the perfect backdrop for the Singshells Western surmise of Home Of The Brave.

Three years after Jonny Fryer's Bunker performance, the venue is no more than a memory and I find myself outside a cafe in the city centre discussing his latest project with him. Gone is the Onward The Indian member, along with the Loop Station, replaced now by human collaborators. The intervening years have seen an interesting trajectory: 11 self-released albums, an expanded instrumental palette to include kalimba, berimbau and snail box, and a trail of performances ranging from the Rendezvous Festival, Portugal, to the art-orientated North By Northwest at Tate Liverpool. Lately he has been working on a collaborative sound art piece for an exhibition at that vacated branch of TK Maxx as well as a music performance for a gallery space. It's a twist on the usual gallery performance idea. Fryer will present a film documenting the making of a particular album accompanied by the finished recording, the idea being that an album is not conceived as a fait accompli but is in fact the final stage of a process you rarely see.

There is a certain amount of suspicion between the various camps in Leeds surrounding motivation – musicians are wary of art venues wanting to promote music, artists are wary of empty shop unit based projects wanting to promote art, and the establishment is wary of anyone tagged artist or musician. But for all the intransigent looking, there is a positive outcome that one may not expect, and that is longevity. Lydia Lunch once described New York as a "beautiful tattered dog". Leeds cannot look back on its past through such rose-tinted glasses, but the spirit of Fluxus permits to this day in a city whose underground is simultaneously them and driven by division and discussion. Was it revolution? ☐

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Chris Watson sound art lecture, Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April, 5-7pm, AG02









Leeds meeting of River Aire and the Leeds & Liverpool Canal



Yesterday I spent 17 hours standing on a manhole cover at the bottom of Mathew Street in Liverpool. From 7am through to midnight (piss breaks excluded). The reason that I gave for standing on this manhole cover was to spend the time contemplating what it would be like to wake up the following morning and all music had disappeared.

For me, I now see the manhole cover to very much symbolise the gateway between the known, out-there physical world and the unknown, internal, imagined world.

Bill Drummond (Liverpool-Leeds)



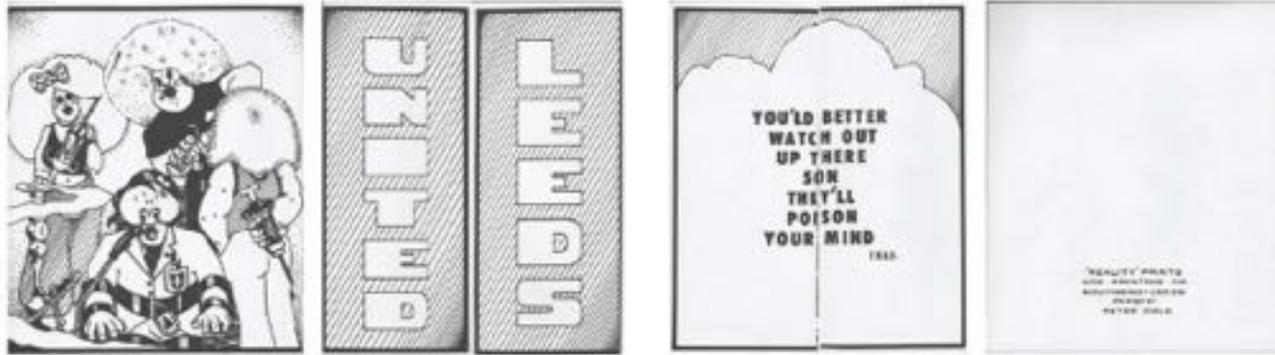




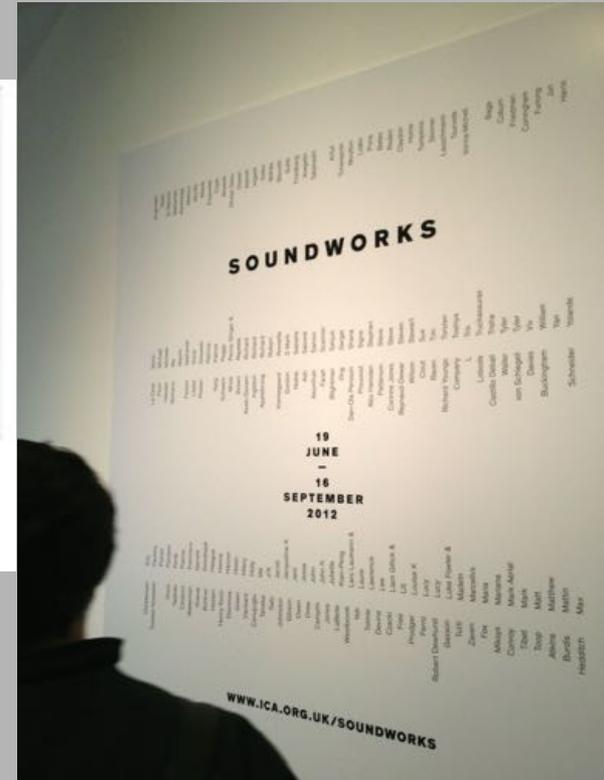
2012 BBC *Bang goes the theory*



“Students at Leeds” ICA exhibition, 1972. In the foreground, George Banks looks at Clare Charnley’s hand shaking machine. An open-handed Simon English can be seen in the background with Jeff Nuttall approaching, pint in hand.



A flyer by Peter Cole for “Students at Leeds: An exhibition by students of the Fine Art Department of Leeds Polytechnic” at the Institute of Contemporary Art in May 1972.



1972 *Students at Leeds*, ICA, London  
 2012 *SOUNDWORKS*, with Bruce Nauman, ICA, London



John Cage performing *Water Walk* in January 1960 on the popular TV show *I've Got A Secret*.



Louis Le Prince - *Traffic Crossing Leeds Bridge* (1888), filmed from British Waterways Building, "probably the world's first successful moving pictures"



## ENDNOTES

Broadcasting Place (broadcast, receive) - River Aire – Leeds Aire University – *the sound of the word is derogatory in other tongues* – sick building syndrome – Maplins toolkit – AHRC bid for Museums working with sound – sonic lineage in a city – Fluxus omitted from Leeds' European Capital of Culture bid in 2023, "23" being Bill Drummond's KLF number – ICA 1888-1972-2012, the longer narrative of Leeds listening

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**The sound of an art school**