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# Meeting the Garden Halfway: Ethnographic Encounters with a Sound Installation Microculture

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**Abstract.** This article follows the installation of a sound art project titled *Pleasure Garden* in a historic garden in Sydney, Australia. Discussing various activities, from laying cables to mixing the installation, I argue that an ethnographic perspective can deepen our sense of what is meant when sound art is described as a "practice." The article discusses the distinctive microculture that emerged around the installation process and traces issues of creative agency, epistemology, and ontology at stake as diverse actors—the creative team, the technological infrastructure, the garden, and its inhabitants—were brought into relationship.

## Ethnography and the Practice of Sound Art

> Sound art as a practice harnesses, describes, analyzes, performs, and interrogates the condition of sound and the processes by which it operates.
> —Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise*, xi

The idea of sound art as a "practice" is powerful and pervasive yet partial. Amid ongoing debates about definitions of sound art, its interdisciplinary and inter–art form status, and its uneasy relationship with work- or genre-based categorizations (Licht 2009), the idea of "practice" works to keep sound art's history and future open-ended, its incarnations ontologically fluid, and the activities of its "practitioners" plural and processual.[1] Yet an emphasis on theorizing and sometimes extolling the critical, political, and philosophical significance of sound art practice (e.g., Licht 2007; Kim-Cohen 2009; Voegelin 2010; Kouvaras 2013; LaBelle 2015) has often eclipsed consideration of other, more localized, tangible, and mundane activities involved in making sound art. Existing literature focusses surprisingly rarely on the processes by which practitioners design or mix sound

art and more rarely still on tasks such as laying cables, installing cooling fans, or positioning speakers.[2] Where it does, these activities are often only addressed in passing in terms of the technical features of finished works or treated as a mere preamble to the wider "artistic practice" of sound art. This neglect is even more stark in the literature on sound installations, "sound works that privilege concepts and experiences of space and place" (Ouzounian 2008:33, emphasis removed). Given the prevalence of "site-specific" and "interactive" as qualifiers of "sound installation" and keen interest in sound art's spatiality, it is surprising that scholars have rarely asked *how* installations are installed into or adapted for specific sites and made interactive *in practice*.[3] The reasons for this partial analysis are not my main concern here, but no doubt the relative lack of ethnographic studies of sound art is a major factor.[4] Perhaps more than any other method, ethnography offers opportunities to catch practices in the act of world-making. By exploring the process of designing, installing, and mixing one site-specific, interactive installation, this article suggests directions for the social and cultural study of sound art, a topic largely neglected within ethnomusicology to date (despite ongoing engagement with the sometimes overlapping area of Western art music; see Nooshin 2011).

Conceived and cocomposed by Genevieve Lacey, *Pleasure Garden* is an outdoor installation inspired by the music of Dutch composer, improviser, and performer Jacob van Eyck (ca. 1590–1657). Genevieve, a prominent Australian recorder player, collaborated on the project with Norwegian producer and musician Jan Bang (as cocomposer), Australian sound engineer Jim Atkins (sound design), Australian audiovisual artist Robin Fox (system design), and several others (see www.pleasuregarden.com.au).[5] Elsewhere, I trace the longer story of *Pleasure Garden*, discussing its creative origins and proliferation into multiple "iterations," including several installations, an album, and live performances (Browning 2020). This article focuses on one moment in that creative process: the installation of *Pleasure Garden* into one particular site. Variously described as a "listening garden," an "interactive instrument," and a "kinetic sound sculpture," *Pleasure Garden* was installed as part of the 2016 Sydney Festival in the historic (mid-nineteenth-century) pleasure garden of Vaucluse House, a colonial-era estate managed by Sydney Living Museums and located in the wealthy, harborside suburb of Vaucluse in eastern Sydney. Drawing on time spent with the team during the installation process (4–7 January 2016), as well as during preparations in Melbourne in late 2015, I trace how *Pleasure Garden* was installed and mixed for the Vaucluse site in practice. A third article (Browning, forthcoming) draws on subsequent ethnography with audiences and others in order to analyze the reception of the Vaucluse installation. Together, the three articles follow different phases of *Pleasure Garden*, aiming to present distinct yet complementary perspectives on the cultures surrounding this artistic project.

This article adapts the title of Karen Barad's (2007) book *Meeting the Universe Halfway* (itself borrowed from the poem "Cascade Experiment," by Alice Fulton [2004]) to describe the process of installing *Pleasure Garden* in Vaucluse. By "meeting the garden halfway," the creative team staged an encounter that involved both responding to and reshaping the installation-in-the-garden, negotiating its constraints and contributions through emergent practices. Questions of agency are central here, and Barad's notion of "intra-action" or "the mutual constitution of entangled agencies" offers a useful starting point for tracing how *Pleasure Garden* was made: "In contrast to the usual 'interaction,' which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action" (2007:33).

For Barad, intra-actions entail the emergence not only of distinct agencies but also of materials, space, time, meanings, subjectivities, and more; indeed, "the world is intra-activity in its differential mattering" (2007:141). Barad's far-reaching, deeply relational theory is challenging to think with, but it resonates with my ethnographic experience of *Pleasure Garden*. Drawing Barad's ideas into this narrower setting, I argue that installation practices, far from being mundane activities subservient to larger artistic agendas, are in fact richly complex intra-actions that decisively shape the world of the installation. Although ethnographic attention to sound installation practices has been limited, there is a considerable history of engagement in both ethnomusicology and the anthropology of art with other, broadly comparable practices of artistic production, including those of theater (Fabian 1990), studio production (Meintjes 2003), and opera (Atkinson 2006). Here I develop several long-standing emphases in this ethnographic literature—on process, practice, and the significance of the mundane dimensions of cultural production (see especially Atkinson 2006)—by connecting them with other concerns—materiality, more-than-human agency, ontology—pursued by Barad, Donna Haraway (1991, 2003) and others.

I argue below that it is through installation practices that a diverse range of contributors come to matter (or not), ontological differences are entrenched and undone, spaces are given shape, and attentive relationships are cultivated between people and world.[6] Amid these processes of more-than-human intra-action, various human social interactions take place. Through this, collaborators coproduce not only the installation but also social bonds, a group identity, and forms of cultural knowledge. In this article, I develop two concepts, "emergent epistemologies" and the "installation microculture," in order to better recognize and theorize installation practices as forms of sense-making, culture-making, and world-making.

*Pleasure Garden* offers a productive case study through which to explore these issues in part because of what I describe elsewhere as the project's

"quasi-autonomist" stance: its creators conceived it as emergent and open, not guided by a strong artistic agenda or political message (although see Browning [forthcoming] for a discussion of the many, occasionally politicized interpretations that nonetheless gathered around the project). Moreover, as I describe below, much of the installation process was quasi-improvisational, with the creative team inventing or adapting listening and mixing practices that were responsive to the site. For these reasons, *Pleasure Garden* provides an opportunity to seek social and cultural significance in the *act* of installation as much as in its conceptualization. In his classic text, *Power and Performance*, Johannes Fabian argues that performance is "not merely enactment of a pre-existing script; it is making, fashioning, creating" (1990:13). Similarly, my aim throughout this article is to focus on installation practices as forms of world-making that are in dialogue with, yet irreducible to, preexisting cultural categories. Rather than reading notions such as "natural" or "technological" onto *Pleasure Garden*, I consider how such categories were, in practice, both repeatedly reinscribed *and* undermined through an oscillatory dynamic characteristic of (what we might gloss as) Western late modernity (after Ochoa Gautier 2006).

## Entangled Agencies: "Whipbird"

Once open, *Pleasure Garden* ran from 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. for twenty days, looping a roughly fifty-five-minute cycle of fourteen tracks. Ten of these were cocomposed by Genevieve and Jan (and in one case Jim), often drawing on Van Eyck's compositions for inspiration or actual musical material. The tracks are populated by diverse recorder sounds, performed by Genevieve on several different instruments and utilizing various extended techniques, as well as field recordings predominantly of birds, bells, and carillons. Interspersed among these new compositions are four "interactive" tracks: recordings of Genevieve's performances of pieces from Van Eyck's *Der Fluyten Lust-hof* (The flute's garden of delights), during which audience members' movements would trigger a variety of sounds, including recordings of bells, cicadas, and frogs. Tracing the story of one of these fourteen tracks helps to orient my exploration of *Pleasure Garden*.

The central refrain of track seven, "Whipbird," comes from a field recording of eastern whipbirds (*Psophodes olivaceus*) made by Jim and Genevieve in Bermagui, New South Wales, in 2015. Later, while composing *Pleasure Garden* at Jan's studio in Kristiansand, Norway, Jan was especially taken with this recording and asked Genevieve to try to make sounds in a similar frequency range on her recorders, sparking a creative process that led to the final track (Genevieve Lacey, interview with the author, 18 December 2015, Melbourne). Collaboration seems to have been built into "Whipbird" from the beginning: whipbird calls are often produced antiphonally, with a male bird making a whip-like glissando

before the female contributes a "chew chew" response. Their calls are skillful, coordinated acts, performed "so precisely that the resulting song appears to emanate from a single individual" (Rogers 2005:158; also Watson 1969). From there, the creative process added further contributors and collaborators—Jim and his microphones, Genevieve and her musical instruments, Jan as producer-composer—all of which enabled and constrained both process and outcome.

Arguments such as this—highlighting the distributed or relational character of agency and creativity—have become relatively familiar in music studies (Born 2005; Stanyek and Piekut 2010; Clarke, Doffman, and Lim 2013; Piekut 2013; Clarke and Doffman 2017). One aim of this article is to work through certain ramifications of this argument that have been less thoroughly explored. Among these, "Whipbird" usefully demonstrates the "strange ontologies" (Born 2015:14; after Wakefield and Smith 2011) that come with distributed agency, since it belongs to the family of what Haraway calls "creatures simultaneously animal and machine, who populate worlds ambiguously natural and crafted" (1991:149). The mimesis built into the creative process meant that it was not always clear which of the high-frequency sounds in "Whipbird" were made by birds and which by Genevieve and her recorders. And in Vaucluse, mixing the track at a realistic volume level meant that it was not apparent whether the birdcalls were real or recorded (especially since whipbirds are typically heard but not seen). These semiotic ambiguities, combined with the agential complexity in its creation, mean that "Whipbird" hovers at the "three crucial boundary breakdowns" that Haraway identifies as characteristic of the cyborg: between human and animal, organism and machine, and physical and nonphysical (151–54). As we will see, these border-crossings were writ large in the installation of *Pleasure Garden* as it emerged at the ambiguous fault line between real and imagined gardens and came to be populated by "medianatures" (Bronfman 2017:23; after Haraway 2003 and Parikka 2012) made through the combined work of people, animals, and technologies, often in ways that made it hard to know the difference between them.[7]

## Insulation, Camouflage, and Calibration: Preparing the System

Among the key infrastructural elements of *Pleasure Garden* were two kinds of loudspeaker, which the team called "buckets" and "bird boxes" (see figure 1). Buckets—upturned black plant pots with a transducer attached to the inside—were the result of Jim's experiments to find a suitable speaker for *Pleasure Garden*: inexpensive, durable, and naturalistic, they could project sound in a hemisphere and diffuse it evenly throughout the garden. Also, as Jim noted, a bucket "produces the perfect frequencies for the recorder as it happens, because recorders don't have very many harmonics and [they're] certainly not very pronounced"

**Figure 1. Bucket speaker, bird box speaker, and bird box video camera. Photographs by the author.**

(interview with the author, 2 June 2016, Melbourne). Bird boxes likewise provided a naturalistic and durable container, but they housed more powerful, higher-quality loudspeakers, compensating for the relative inefficiency of the buckets. The bird boxes formed the outer ring of the *Pleasure Garden* diffusion system, while buckets made up the two inner rings. Bird boxes also housed the video cameras used in the interactive system (figure 1).

One day in November 2015, I arrived at Jim's house to see a new phase in the creation of *Pleasure Garden*. Cables snaked across the floor as Robin worked between two computers, testing the cameras. Bird boxes stood stacked in the back garden. Tools lay around. After several days mixing the *Pleasure Garden* album and as summer brightened, it felt good to move outdoors. The new task was to prepare and test several elements of the installation to ensure that it was sufficiently robust to run continuously for twenty days in Vaucluse. Much of Robin's work that day involved setting up the system in order to check that the software for the interactivity was working. The reliability of the system pivoted on a plan to switch between "production mode" and "performance mode" in the garden. In production mode, they could mix the installation's "music tracks," primarily using the digital audio workstation Reaper to adjust EQ, volume, spatialization, and other parameters. Once it was finalized, they could record the mix to a "garden computer" in the form of sixteen "bucket tracks" (the sounds played through each individual bucket or bird box speaker, as distinct from "music tracks," which might be spatialized across multiple speakers). In performance mode—used when the installation was running and audiences present—the garden computer would simply play the sixteen bucket tracks on a loop through QLab (a cue-based multimedia playback software) while also processing the interactive elements of the system (see below). This switch from "production" to "performance" mode meant that much of the intensive computer processing associated with mixing and spatialization could be prepared in advance and then fixed for playback rather than performed in real time. It represented a way of managing the risks associated with large data flows,

especially processor overload and overheating—material effects of seemingly immaterial computer processes that shape technological systems small and large (see Starosielski 2014; also Steingo 2018 on failures and music technology).

When we returned to Jim's house in December, the system had been running in his back garden, silently and without any problem, for several weeks. If running in performance mode safeguarded the internal stability of the computer system, Jim had also done much to insulate the computer from the external world of the garden. The hub of the installation—laptop, mixer, iPad, and more—was housed in "the box," a large, gray container intended to protect the machinery from theft, water, rats, insects, and so on. Again, heat was a major concern, since the installation would be running during Sydney's hot and humid summer. Even with processing kept to a minimum, there was a risk the computer could overheat, so Jim installed a small fan on the box. To deter insects, he covered the fan opening and the windows of the bird box speakers with a fine mesh and gave the bird box cameras transparent plastic windows. Traffic between internal and external worlds was regulated: hot air moved out, fresh air moved in, electrical signals came and went, but the system's border was closed to potentially disruptive creatures that might find these warm, dry boxes appealing. Such practices are what Nicole Starosielski calls "strategies of insulation," which "produce an internal break in an ecology, allowing one system to extend into and through another without being affected by it" (2015:19).

Once the installation was set up in Vaucluse, the box was locked and chained to a tree; a chemical repellent was added to discourage insects or rats. Because the garden is a site of archaeological significance, the installation cables had to be buried carefully and at a regulation maximum depth by the Vaucluse gardening team. This also prevented rats from chewing through the cables and audience members from tripping over them; multiple parties were imagined and brought into relation through such practicalities. Burying cables was also one of several tasks motivated by aesthetics; in keeping with the naturalistic look of the buckets and bird boxes, another task was to use palm fronds to hide the cables attaching speakers to trees (see figure 2). Like practices of insulation, this camouflaging worked to constitute the technological system and garden as "separate and autonomous" domains, a form of what Ana María Ochoa Gautier calls "purification" (2006:809–10). Together, these practices attempted a complex accommodation: cables, computers, speakers, and cameras were at once woven into and protected from the Vaucluse garden, then subsequently hidden as if to render the space "natural" once more. Ochoa Gautier argues that this "cyclic relation between hybridity and purity" is a characteristic feature of modernity (2006:810), and similarly oscillatory or ambivalent relations emerged elsewhere in *Pleasure Garden*.

Work on calibrating the interactive system represented a partial inversion of these measures to protect and conceal. The interactivity used a multiperson

**Figure 2. Before and after camouflaging the bird box speaker cables. Photograph by the author.**

tracking system (based on a design Robin developed for an earlier project) to detect movement in zones around particular buckets and cause sounds to be played in those parts of the spatialized system. Transient pixels in any one of four quadrants of four cameras were registered in a Max patch, which sent preassigned midi notes to QLab, causing "interactive" audio tracks (running concurrently with the Van Eyck recordings) to fade up and then fade out after a set period. Repositioning the cameras inside the bird boxes effectively changed the aperture and thus the contrast of the video image, and, combined with camera placement, this brought different features of the garden into or out of shot. In this way, and by adjusting the programming, the team tried to calibrate the system so that it would not register, for example, bees or moving foliage but would pick up people as they walked around the garden. Of course, strict differentiation was never guaranteed in the dynamic garden environment, as large birds visited or rain battered foliage into new positions, but a logic of (il)legibility nonetheless patterned the installation. While the technological system was hidden from *Pleasure Garden* audiences, the installation had to "see" those audiences, yet remain blind to other garden inhabitants. Barad's notion of "apparatus" is useful here: "Apparatuses are not mere observing instruments but boundary-drawing practices—specific material (re)configurings of the world" (2007:206, emphasis removed). Calibrated to recognize certain types of movement in certain locations, the interactive system did not simply detect presence but drew (albeit fuzzy) boundaries between the garden's human and nonhuman inhabitants.

These strategies of insulation, camouflage, and calibration were important in determining "what matter[ed] . . . and what . . . [was] excluded from mattering" (Barad 2007:184) in the world of the installation. But to understand their significance we must situate them within a more complex story, in which they contrast both with the prior entangled agencies of tracks such as "Whipbird" and with the recrossing of boundaries during the mixing stage.

## Mixing (in) the Garden: Emergent Epistemologies

Mixing in Vaucluse followed a loose rhythm. We began in the mixing tent, sited just outside the installation area (see figure 3), where Jim would start the "Lambley mix" of a track playing. These were the mixes prepared for a trial run of *Pleasure Garden* at Lambley Garden in rural Victoria (see Browning 2020 and below). Then some or all of us—Genevieve, Jan, Jim, Robin, and I—would leave the tent and cross a footbridge over a small creek to the pleasure garden (see figure 4). Each of us would trace a slightly different route through the central paths, listening to the sound filling the air. Then we would take one of two exits out of the pleasure garden and onto the surrounding lawn: one route led to a fountain and to the house and estate beyond the installation; another led onto a sloping lawn with a tall pine tree in the middle (see figure 5). Somewhere along these journeys we would talk, exchanging a few words about a volume level, noting a slight distortion in a bucket, or pausing for a longer conversation. Then we returned to the mixing tent via different routes. Back in the tent, Jim would stop the music and, taking suggestions from Genevieve and Jan, work on any changes as we sat on camping chairs, chatting, listening, and watching his computer monitor. This done, he would start something else playing, and we would walk out again into the garden to listen.

This cyclic process characterized much of the three days we spent mixing *Pleasure Garden*: dispersing, listening, discussing, returning, reworking. Mixing a track often began with adjusting the overall volume—calibrating the level of the music to the "level" of the garden—before changing numerous internal details, often making several passes at the more complex tracks. Later, attention turned to the "interactive tracks" and finally, on the last day, to the overall "flow"
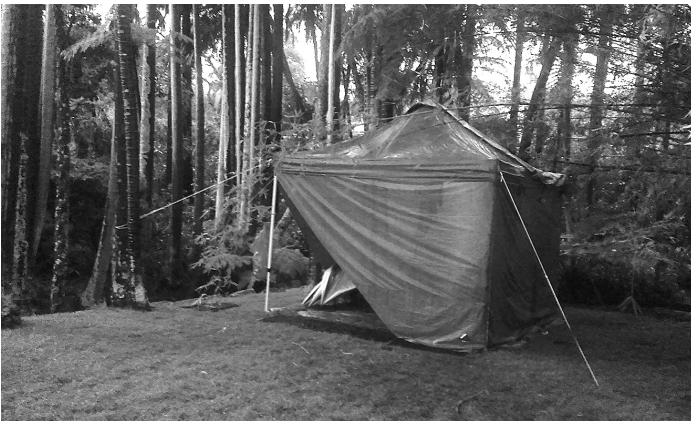


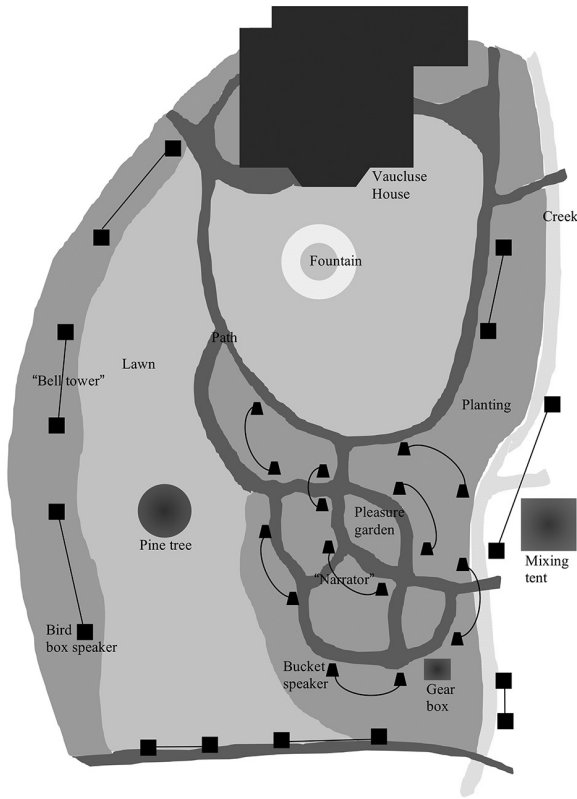Figure 3. The mixing tent. Photograph by the author.

**Figure 4. Plan of Vaucluse garden showing speaker pairs, mixing tent, and other features. After Figure 6 and from the author's own notes.**



**Figure 5. Lawn (*left*), pleasure garden (*right*), and Vaucluse House (*rear*). Photograph by the author.**

of relative levels and silences between tracks. As Genevieve reflected, "We learnt a lot from walking. . . . You just need to hear it multiple times from multiple different vantage points, and that will tell you what works" (Skype interview with the author, 15 April 2016). Mixing involved a strange combination of the magical and the mundane: the garden was heavy with rain, yet also startlingly alive with music, floating free of any clear source; cold, damp hours of walking and listening were leavened with moments of creative discovery.

Anna Tsing's argument is particularly apt here: "The point of ethnography is to learn how to think about a situation together with one's informants" (2015:ix). Walking, listening, and talking with them, I learned a great deal not only about how the team mixed *Pleasure Garden* but also about how they *learned to* attend to Vaucluse and mix the installation with this particular garden in mind.[8] Together, they developed what I call an "emergent epistemology" of the installation-in-the-garden: they learned how to know and become responsive to a rich interrelation of material, spatial, affective, and sonic features. A large part of this was what Steven Feld calls "acoustemology" or "sound as a way of knowing" (2015:12). But the team's epistemology of *Pleasure Garden* was importantly multisensory, attendant to the textures, contours, and sights of the installation-in-the-garden, including dynamic properties associated with the movements of wind, water, sounds, birds, and foliage. Nonetheless, Feld valuably characterizes the spirit of this attentiveness: "The kind of knowing that acoustemology tracks in and through sound and sounding is always experiential, contextual, fallible, changeable, contingent, emergent, opportune, subjective, constructed, selective" (14).

In describing the epistemology as emergent, I do not mean that the team created everything from scratch or that the installation process was unplanned but that they improvised forms of attention and new ways of working by adapting familiar practices to this new context. Most obviously, they drew on experiences and expertise from their professional careers, personal lives, and time spent mixing the installation in Lambley. Jan, for example, brought a preexisting sense of music as spatial or emplaced, explaining, "I always think quite visually when it comes to music: I have a sense of a place or something" (interview with the author, 6 January 2016, Sydney). Like me, he also found the Vaucluse garden and its birdlife quite different from the European landscapes we had grown up with, while that environment was much more familiar to the rest of the team. Such experiences preconditioned each team member's work in the garden. But with the exception of Robin, who works primarily as an audiovisual artist, the members of the *Pleasure Garden* team are not sound artists (and, significantly, Robin's contribution was largely technical; he was less involved than others in the mixing process), and so the process of designing and mixing the installation was a new experience for Genevieve, Jim, and Jan. Although the infrastructure and system design were carefully prepared in advance, the ritual of processional

listening was not planned beforehand, and the mixing, as Genevieve explained, "was done on instinct and . . . in conversation" as a collective response to the relationship between site and installation (Skype interview with the author, 15 April 2016).

### Relational Spaces: *Pleasure Garden*, Vaucluse, and Lambley

One dimension of this emergent epistemology was the practical negotiation between the spatial features of the Vaucluse garden and the spatial organization built into the design and infrastructure of *Pleasure Garden*. Jim's hand-annotated map documents this accommodation between system and site by recording the final locations of and distances between speakers (figure 6). Three concentric rings of speakers—a long-standing feature of the system design—had to be placed where the garden afforded suitable locations, so the outer ring of bird box speakers was installed in tall trees and along a perimeter fence (figure 7), while the two inner rings of buckets were placed in flower beds. This accommodation
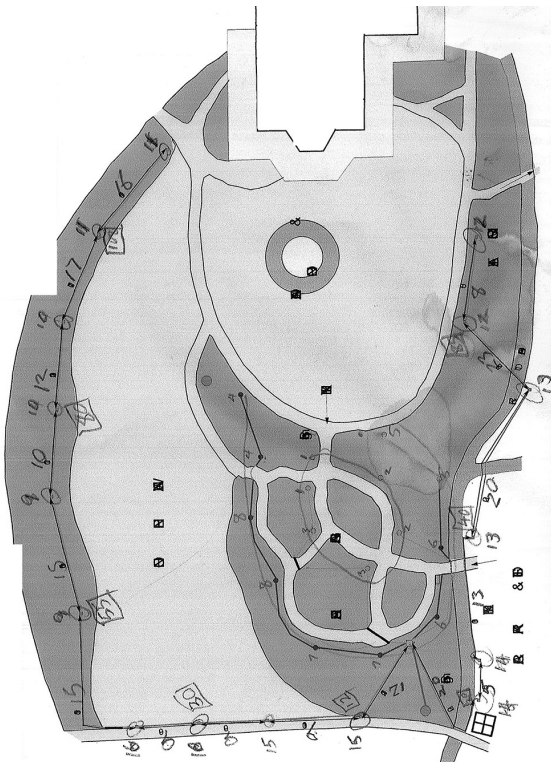


**Figure 6. Map of Vaucluse garden (excerpt), prepared by Mick Jessop, with hand annotations for *Pleasure Garden* by Jim Atkins. Reproduced with the permission of Mick Jessop and Jim Atkins.**

**Figure 7. Bird box speakers along the perimeter fence. Photograph by the author.**

turned the outer ring into a horseshoe shape (because of the lack of a suitable boundary on the house side) and distanced it farther from the inner rings on one side (see figures 4 and 6), making some parts feel, as Genevieve put it, "remote" and giving opportunities to "play with that space and what's mysterious and what's not" (Skype interview with the author, 15 April 2016).

Such negotiations "produced and performed" the space of the installation (see Barad 2007:393); others shaped how the team worked within it. Because there was only one area of flat ground suitable for pitching the mixing tent, this location—just outside the outer ring of speakers—became a hub of activity and the start and end point for our listening walks (see figure 4). The paths of the pleasure garden directed our walking, its high, enclosing foliage drawing attention to the close at hand; on the lawn, the sound was more expansive, the view was more open, and you could wander freely. The sounds of garden and installation pulled our attention in different directions with varied intensities: upward and away to the voices of birds or the strongly directional bird box speakers high in the trees; downward and around to the diffuse buzz of insects and bucket speakers on the ground. Together, these constraints and affordances shaped the mixing experience, helping to produce the distinctive spatiality of the finished installation.

Along the way, the team built on and reworked an informal set of mixing practices developed previously in Lambley. There, Genevieve explained, they learned collectively about "transforming something [i.e., a musical texture] from having a smaller to a much larger number of dimensions" by adjusting the

relative levels and positions of sounds (interview with the author, 18 December 2015, Melbourne). Where ideas did not carry over, the differences between the two gardens also became instructive. As Genevieve recalled it, Lambley was flat, open, and remote, making it quiet except for, at the time of the trial run, many "wrens, little tiny things with little tiny clear voices," while Vaucluse was undulating and "theatrical," with vivid colors and large trees, and dominated by the "big-bodied" sound of currawongs. So where in Lambley "it felt like what we did there needed to be incredibly delicate," in Vaucluse, "the combination of the shapes and the colors of the landscape and the feel of that place and then just the sound of the currawongs, it's like, 'Oh, we need to think of this as a much more . . . full-throated piece than it was the first time.' Because the first time it was like, 'Is it there [or] is it not?,' whereas this time it . . . needed to really embrace the landscape" (Genevieve Lacey, Skype interview with the author, 15 April 2016).

No doubt, observing the mixing process in Lambley would have added depth to my ethnographic perspective, but it was also instructive to notice Lambley as a kind of shadow presence haunting the Vaucluse installation. Often, when Jim first played the "Lambley mix" of a track in Vaucluse, the team chose to raise the overall level by a few decibels. Turning up the installation responded to this perception that Vaucluse was more "dramatic" than Lambley. Thus, mixing was not simply a question of inserting an abstract installation into a neutral space; instead, the mix emerged from the manifold relationship between the real Vaucluse garden, the design of the installation, and the prior relationship between garden and installation in Lambley.

As I argue elsewhere, issues of indigeneity and coloniality are important in understanding the wider *Pleasure Garden* project (see Browning 2020, forthcoming), and they meant that another sense of place also shadowed the mixing process. Sounds drawn from or references to Australian Aboriginal culture were conspicuous by their absence from the installation, given the colonial era location. Yet this is not a straightforward omission, as Genevieve explained:

> One of the layers of the project that I wanted to explore but didn't because it was too big . . . [was] the whole other matrix of an indigenous . . . connection to land. . . . It would have needed to become a really different project if I'd gone down that track and it may yet. . . . But I think I ended up deciding that Van Eyck doesn't need to be part of that conversation. . . . It's one of those big questions that's always floating [around], so . . . it was a conscious decision to take that particular train of thought out of this thing, but yet it's there. (Interview with the author, 18 December 2015, Melbourne)

As Genevieve's comments make clear, contemporary Australian artistic projects that somehow engage with "country," "place," or "land" are always about indigeneity. Here indigeneity is figured as a multiply absent presence (Law 2002):

at once "too big," deferred ("it may yet"), intentionally removed, but nonetheless unavoidable ("yet it's there"). In other projects (such as *Namatjira*; see https://genevievelacey.com/projects/namatjira/), Genevieve has indeed collaborated with Aboriginal artists, and talking with her, it is clear that the absence of this "layer" from *Pleasure Garden* was intended to be culturally sensitive, a way of avoiding superficial representations or appropriation: "I feel like we're still at an interesting enough point in our conversation with our indigenous people that . . . I couldn't just use those sounds unless it were literally in conversation with someone whose sounds they were and that was their contribution. So . . . I still feel careful about borrowing those things" (Skype interview with the author, 15 April 2016). Inevitably, such care over borrowing risks a kind of representational silencing, naturalizing the absence of Aboriginal sounds, stories, and land from *Pleasure Garden* as they are so often absent from wider Australian cultural and social life. Yet music's "hyper-connotative, hyper-affective propensities" (Born 2011:384) allowed such absent presences to reassert themselves: as I discuss elsewhere, the installation did (in varied and sometimes fraught ways) prompt listeners to think about an "indigenous . . . connection to land" and even hear certain sounds as Australian Aboriginal (see Browning, forthcoming). This chimes with Genevieve's hope, discussed below, that "this piece has got enough space in it for the listener and for the place, and so those things emerge . . . in the place, but also in the ears of the listener" (Skype interview with the author, 15 April 2016). Thus, multiple senses of place oscillated in and out of awareness in the process of installation, flickering between real and imagined or absent and present (Haraway 1991:153; Law 2002), shaped by the colonial history of Vaucluse and the creative backstory of the *Pleasure Garden* project.

## "Leaving Space" for the Garden / The Garden Kicks Back

Mixing brought a strong appreciation of the garden not only as a site but also as a sonic contributor to the installation. As noted above, Jim chose the bucket speakers in part because of their compatibility with the sound of the recorder, with its relative lack of harmonics. By the time the team had installed *Pleasure Garden* in Vaucluse, such frequency-related thinking was ingrained and expanded: during a talk at the launch of *Pleasure Garden*, Jan explained that he had also come to appreciate the way that the bucket sound "leaves space for the garden," since high frequencies missing from the buckets were instead provided by the sounds of birds, insects, wind, and moving foliage. During the same talk, Genevieve also described "leaving space in the piece so that in the best possible way the garden can intrude." The idea of crafting relatively sparse textures from simple materials was present from early in the creative process, but the rationale shifted subtly: what was initially an attempt to let audience members experience

the full, multisensory world of the garden increasingly became about recognizing the contributions of the garden itself. Reflecting on mixing in Lambley, Genevieve explained that "the ambient environmental sounds became the glue. . . . They were a way of holding [together] all these things that could have felt fragmented" (interview with the author, 18 December 2015, Melbourne). In Vaucluse, however, the currawongs that dominated the garden became more than "glue"—Jan described them as "soloists." Illustrating his comments with an impression of a currawong call, he explained that because the currawongs sang less frequently than the wrens in Lambley,

> when they appear it's much more powerful, . . . because that's also something to do with economy. So let's say in one of the pieces that I really enjoy, . . . "Bee Halo," . . . [for a record] I would probably have a soloist on top of it, . . . like a trumpet or something. . . . But it's not happening [in the garden], and in a way this is a possibility also for something to interact. . . . [At] one point, I was standing under the tree on the top [of the lawn] . . . and it was like one bird going [imitates call], . . . which was so beautiful. So you don't really have to do much in these . . . type of textures. . . . It's just something that grabs your attention, and if it doesn't happen, that's fine also. (Interview with the author, 10 January 2016, Sydney)

So although the garden's nonhuman inhabitants were carefully separated from the installation through insulation of the system and calibration of the interactivity, they were nonetheless welcomed as contributors to its soundworld. Barad argues that epistemologies are collective endeavors, since "practices of knowing cannot fully be claimed as human practices, not simply because we use nonhuman elements in our practices but because knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part" (2007:185). So ways of knowing *Pleasure Garden* emerged relationally: Vaucluse's currawongs contributed "intelligible" presences and vocalizations that, for all their apparent singularity (so unlike "Whipbird"), became caught in a wider history of coproduction: the creative team found these sounds meaningful and so mixed the installation to make them audible; the decision to site the installation in Vaucluse was informed by an awareness of its inhabitants; and the currawongs themselves were there because of a longer, tangled history of garden cultivation and opportunistic bird migration (see Browning, forthcoming).

The garden's contributions were not, however, always predictable or welcome, and efforts to include or exclude particular inhabitants, whether sonically or materially, were only partially effective. For example, the noise of the rain, which fell heavily throughout the installation process, raised doubts, as Genevieve explained:

> I was fretting that . . . it was shrouding what we were hearing, because it was another layer to try to listen through. So it was a long way from any kind of pristine listening environment, and I began to worry, particularly towards the end, [with]

the combination of tiredness and nerves, just that we were balancing in a way that would prove wrong if it stopped. But thankfully it wasn't actually [wrong]. . . . I was thinking, "Oh maybe we have made it too loud" and "Maybe we've had to accentuate certain frequencies because the rain is masking them." (Skype interview with the author, 15 April 2016)

On top of this, the water that collected on the bucket speakers made them quieter and increased the risk of distortion. Especially heavy rain sometimes stopped work altogether, and we just waited in the tent. Unless the rain paused or fell lightly, listening meant walking out with an umbrella or wearing a waterproof, usually with hood up. Umbrella, tent, and waterproof were another form of insulation, this time between human listeners and the weather; being fully open to the sounds of *Pleasure Garden* meant taking off this protection and so also being open to the rain and cold. By contrast, the launch of *Pleasure Garden* brought very hot days, and despite their preparations, Jim reported that the high-specification "garden" laptop was still running close to the limit in "performance mode": Max MSP was using about half of its processing power, and QLab another third (interview with the author, 2 June 2016, Melbourne). The laptop did crash twice in twenty days but was quickly reset by one of the Sydney Festival staff. During the rain we saw worms gathering in large numbers around the seal at the top of the box; currawongs came and went unpredictably; after the installation was taken down, Jim found ants in the bird boxes. In these ways, the garden "kicked back" (Barad 2007:215), recrossing previously established boundaries and so affecting the installation.

### Strange Ontologies: "Granite"

As should be clear already, the boundaries between "knowing" and "making" are fluid here (see Barad 2007:185); mixing *Pleasure Garden* involved simultaneously apprehending and reshaping the sonic-spatial features of the installation-in-the-garden. Our sense of this process is enriched by following the work on the track "Granite" over several days. One of the newly composed pieces in *Pleasure Garden*, "Granite" opens with breathy, percussive sounds (just about recognizable as flutter tonguing on the recorder) flickering around the installation space. Soon this mobile texture is thrown into relief by a bass recorder melody. The team refer to this bass recorder part as the "storyteller" or "narrator." During work in his studio in Kristiansand, Jan came to especially enjoy the sound of this instrument, and so, as Genevieve put it, "that became a really human creature that kept popping up" in many tracks (interview with the author, 18 December 2015, Melbourne). One early decision while mixing in Vaucluse was to clarify the position of this "narrator" by consistently placing it in a single pair of buckets in the inner ring of speakers (see figure 4). As "Granite" continues, the texture

becomes more complex as the melody and flutter tonguing are joined, first, by the fast tapping of stones and then by percussive, low-pitched key hits on a contrabass recorder. This texture falls back to make room for two field recordings from Utrecht: three widely spaced bell sounds and then a recording of a carillon. The track ends as slowly pulsating electronic "chords" emerge from the carillon recording and then fade out, accompanied by birdsong.

Sometimes on our listening walks Jan would enthusiastically explain to me why he wanted to mix in a certain way. He understood that I was there to learn about the installation process, but his explanations also conveyed his pleasure in the work, almost as if he was unable to contain his fascination with the sonic possibilities afforded by the installation. Once, listening to the opening of "Granite," Jan mentioned that the flutter-tonguing sounds were working well, as they sounded "threatening." Then he paused to explain a subtler point: having one still voice within a mobile texture helps to emphasize the moving elements, so here the stationary "narrator" melody represented a kind of "vertical" element within a field of "horizontal" movement produced by the flutter-tonguing and stone sounds. This prompted him to suggest that the volume of the "narrator" should be raised to make it stand out from the surrounding texture. As he reflected later, "It's like . . . in a dance piece, you have all the dancers going like this [moving], and then suddenly something just stops and looks straight at you. . . . You can feel it in your whole body that . . . something here is the focus." Where the Lambley mix of "Granite" divided the texture of contrabass key hits between opposite sides of the installation space, in Vaucluse Jan wanted to change the mix. After trying with the texture in the entire outer ring of speakers, they decided to place it solely on one side, in the line of the trees on the upper lawn:

> With that specific piece there is something that happens that is . . . kind of like a chord. . . . Once they [the key hits] become . . . harmonic, it's important that . . . you get that kind of [harmonic] feel into it. If that is too divided, you won't be able to get it. So if it's just . . . one note coming from there and one note coming from there, . . . it would just be noisy, so it wouldn't . . . create that emotional thing, because . . . in order to make it work you have to place it in [such] a way that you understand the connections between the events. (Jan Bang, interview with the author, 10 January 2016, Sydney)

Jan spent a considerable length of time listening to this texture on headphones and working with Jim to bring out its internal rhythms. Like the "threatening" mobile sounds at the opening of "Granite," it represented for Jan the "darker side" of the *Pleasure Garden* soundworld. As he joked, the listener hears those mobile sounds and thinks: "'Hey, look out! There's something happening here, something is about to happen.' . . . So it represents some kind of a danger, at least to me. . . . You think to yourself, 'Is this . . . a small animal? Is it a snake, or is it a rat? Will it bite me? Is there a cure for it?'" (interview with the author, 10

January 2016, Sydney). Similar characterizations appear elsewhere in *Pleasure Garden*: a spreadsheet from Lambley made to record the spatialization of different sounds includes annotations such as "rat" and "mole pop up." One late change to "Granite" involved remixing the electronic "chord" texture at the end of the track. In the Lambley mix, this was spatialized as a static sound, dispersed evenly throughout the garden. Spurred on by the increasing refinement of the track, Jan suggested that Jim place the low-pitched component of the texture in the outer ring of speakers, giving it a clear spatial separation, and adjust the three higher elements so that they moved slowly in between. Achieving this involved lots of tweaking of levels of individual music tracks, reducing their diffusion, and increasing the speed of movement so that the mobility was clearly audible. The result was magical, provoking delighted comments—for Jan, it was "like a breath"; for Genevieve, it felt "like standing inside a big bell"—as complex, wavering harmonics drifted around us.

This work on "Granite" gives a snapshot of the ways in which the team reshaped the sound of the installation for Vaucluse. Sometimes this involved creating specific local points or defined areas within the spatial field of the installation, typically by increasing volume and reducing diffusion or by increasing the spatial separation between thematically connected sounds in order to differentiate them. Converse strategies involved making sounds mobile or dispersing them in a static field throughout the entire garden. Sometimes the two combined in a kind of contrastive juxtaposition of moving and static elements (e.g., the "narrator" and flutter tonguing or, less explicitly, the high and low components of the closing electronic chords). My aim here is not, however, to propose a taxonomy of spatial strategies (e.g., Smalley 1997, 2007) but rather to credit the informal principles of mixing that developed in practice.

In *Pleasure Garden*, these principles were grounded on the assumption, which Georgina Born (2015:17) argues is central to much sound art, that sonic experience is perspectival, relational, and multiple. Collaborative walking-and-listening—moving, separately and together, with varied expertise and agendas—allowed the team to occupy multiple spatial and subjective positions that (partially) anticipated those of *Pleasure Garden*'s audiences. These also helped produce "strange ontologies" (Born 2015:14; after Wakefield and Smith 2011), which superimposed heterogeneous senses of space onto the real installation site, sometimes in paradoxical ways (Clarke 2015). Take, for example, the three bell sounds heard late in "Granite," which the team decided to place in a pair of bird boxes in trees on the upper lawn (see figure 4). When making this decision, they briefly mentioned making a "bell tower," deploying a metaphor that rationalizes the high, remote location through a kind of acoustic realism. Yet clearly there is no bell tower in the Vaucluse garden: it was a virtual artifact of the creative process, one that folded a distinctive acoustemology of Utrecht

(with its famous Dom Tower, housing a set of medieval bells and formerly the workplace of Van Eyck) into that of the Vaucluse garden.[9] *Pleasure Garden* is full of such virtual spaces (Born 2015:16; Clarke 2015), some relatively realist or tied to a real "elsewhere," others more fictional or abstract. For example, Genevieve's feeling of "standing inside a big bell" during the closing electronic chords briefly invoked a nonrealist virtual space related to but distinct from the "bell tower." Such families of metaphors and associations—bells, breathing, voices, and more—propagated during the installation process, and many entailed sound being "metaphorized into the conceptual framework of geometric volume and shape relations" (Porcello 2004:742). The provenance or character of these virtual spaces were more significant to creative insiders than they were for later audiences, whose reactions were, of course, multifarious. Rather than trying to construct an internally consistent sonic-spatial world that would direct listeners' experiences, what mattered was being inventive with the rich mixture of sonic and spatial resources at hand and developing enough shared language to navigate the creative process.[10]

## Installation Microcultures

My discussion so far raises important questions about the motivations, ideas, and experiences of *Pleasure Garden*'s creators and audiences. Such questions inform my argument here, and I discuss them elsewhere (Browning, forthcoming), but I also want to avoid reducing the installation process to the playing out of a preexisting symbolic agenda or a merely transitional phase between creation (i.e., composition) and reception. Instead, I want to suggest that this process might usefully be explored through the notion of an "installation microculture": the relatively localized, ephemeral cultural formation that emerges around the installation of a piece of sound art.[11] As I have shown, an installation microculture develops its own epistemologies, creative practices, social interactions, discourses, and material culture ("buckets" and "bird boxes" are among the material-discursive objects central to *Pleasure Garden*). These emerge for the short duration of the installation process and then disappear, perhaps reemerging in new forms for subsequent versions. They are not fully determined in advance of the encounter between practitioners, spaces, and sounds; and they do not, in turn, fully determine the later experiences of audiences. At the same time, these microcultures are not neatly bounded: they have their own prehistories (extending at least into the system design and other prior stages of the creative process) and feed into subsequent acts of reception. Although this characterization is broadly applicable to many kinds of creative process, it is perhaps especially useful for sound art, because it often necessitates the development of new computer programming, the use of nonstandard infrastructural materials,

the improvisation of new listening and mixing practices, and so on. Compared to preparing many musical genres for concert performance, where conventions are relatively fixed, the installation of a piece of sound art represents a more contingent and idiosyncratic process. Indeed, future research might ask whether the cultivation of distinctive microcultures is a *generic* feature of sound installation art.

My involvement in *Pleasure Garden* drew my attention to another characteristic of such microcultures: their effects on participants. Within a day or two, the mixing process brought an uncanny (sometimes amusing or slightly maddening) side effect: team members commented that they were hearing the installation when it was not playing, even outside the installation space. At the end of each day, as I returned to my accommodations nearby, cicadas seemed to turn on and off as I walked past, as if they were part of the interactive system; melodies from the installation hovered on the edge of hearing. The feeling only gradually faded after I left Vaucluse. These auditory hallucinations were partly a result of the weather, which encouraged a concentrated, prospective listening as our ears continually searched for sounds over the noise of the rain. While it is tempting to look for psychoacoustic explanations, it seems more productive to think of this experience as something akin to a ritual outcome of the installation microculture. Indeed, the broader atmosphere surrounding the installation made the artistic team not just agents of a creative process but also recipients of its effects: like the garden and the installation, they were subtly reconfigured by the process. As Genevieve commented, "It felt like everything was heightened in those days, . . . the urgency of the deadline but also . . . something about that weather, what that did to us, and the whole process, it just . . . amplified all sorts of things" (Skype interview with the author, 15 April 2016). This liminal quality—heightened, caught between creation and reception—alongside the repetitive, communal nature of the processional listening made the installation process in some ways highly ritualistic. And the disorientation and ambiguity (both characteristic features of liminal experiences; see Turner 1995) associated with hallucinating the installation—were sounds natural or technological, imagined or real?—brought further crossings of the boundaries associated with Haraway's cyborg (1991:151–54). Yet, despite its liminality, the installation was a strange kind of ritual, barely part of a tradition, in that its practices and atmosphere were largely unprecedented except for partial resemblances with Lambley.

These microcultural effects on the *Pleasure Garden* team were, at least for Genevieve, part of a wider sense of the entanglement of creative agency, landscape, and art. When I asked if she considers *Pleasure Garden* a distinctively Australian project, Genevieve explained:

> I feel like I'm Australian in a sort of deep, wired way because of the way that I'm attuned to this landscape and the light and the space and the heat and the sounds,

and it's like my senses have actually been configured around this environment. And I think if you're an artistic person who's working always out of [a] combination of senses and imagination and intellect, . . . what those things have been molded around . . . has got to have a fairly large part to play [in what you create]. (Interview with the author, 18 December 2015, Melbourne)

This cyborgian metaphor ("deep, wired way") for the relationship between subjectivity and environment also surfaces in Genevieve's comments on the relationship between subjectivity and art: "I do have a really passionate belief in beauty . . . and . . . those really old-fashioned ideas of it being transformative and the fact that if you're in the presence of something exquisite and you pay attention to it, it does actually rewire you" (interview with the author, 18 December 2015, Melbourne). Just as the technological system underlying *Pleasure Garden* was a more or less hidden element of the installation, so the idea of "wiring" is hidden inside Genevieve's attitude toward human-nature-art relationships. The idea of reconfiguring sensibilities also applied to *Pleasure Garden*'s audiences: Genevieve hoped the installation would afford listeners a similar "sense of delight and wonder and some kind of stillness" (interview with the author, 18 December 2015, Melbourne). And, importantly, *Pleasure Garden*'s interactivity gave audiences, as Genevieve put it, "permission" and "agency" to experience the installation in diverse and personal ways. In this, the installation's interactivity functioned as something closer to Barad's notion of "intra-activity": audience and interactive system were not entirely separate entities; instead, the system gave its listeners "agency" to affect and be affected by the installation even as those same listeners allowed the interactive system to operate. Neither could be removed without changing the other, neither wholly preceded their encounter. Perhaps more than any other phase in the creation of *Pleasure Garden*, the installation process, with its liminal position just before the launch, staged the entangled coconstitution of creators, system, and audience (see also Browning, forthcoming).

## Meeting the Garden Halfway: A Tangle of Practices, Ontologies, Actors

The term "microculture" has a special resonance for *Pleasure Garden* because its biological (rather than anthropological) overtones suggest creativity and ferment: the cultivation of microorganisms in a small-scale experiment through the meeting of human, organic, and technical elements. Following the design, installation, and mixing of *Pleasure Garden* reveals a rich mixture of practices involved in forging and forestalling relations between such elements. *Pleasure Garden* both protected and camouflaged its technological components—by, for example, keeping the laptop cool and hiding cameras inside naturalistic bird boxes. It both enlisted and excluded nonhuman animals, plants, and other

elemental presences: birds, cicadas, and the sounds of wind and foliage were welcomed as sonic contributors; the rain was tolerated and accommodated; ants and rats were kept out, although the latter were also valued as a shadowy imagined presence in the sonic undergrowth. *Pleasure Garden* made all these garden inhabitants more or less illegible to the interactive system while ensuring that the system was able to "see" and respond to people—who, in turn, both responded to and enabled the functioning of the interactivity.

What should we make of this tangle of practices? Camouflaging, for example, could be understood as aestheticizing, nostalgic, or antitechnological. But the hyperreal soundworld of the Vaucluse installation was unambiguously reliant on complex technology, making the camouflage something more like a magic trick—a sleight of hand that was pleasurable without really fooling anyone.[12] If camouflage seems to value nature above technology, this sense is undermined by practices of insulation that protected technologies from nature. And if these practices of insulation seem sanitizing, excluding rats from materially affecting the system, why reinstall these creatures as an imagined feature of the installation's soundworld (via what Jan described as "rat"-like sounds in "Granite," as discussed above)? If we read these practices as done only by humans and simply as symptomatic of wider, preexisting ontologies or philosophies, we encounter many possible interpretations and contradictions both for single practices and when multiple practices are juxtaposed. Attempts to draw out single threads of intentionality or symbolism are quickly frustrated, since any of a range of ontological categories—nature, technology, human, nonhuman—can be seen as separate, connected, antagonistic, integrated, and differentially or equally valued. But this is to read analytical distinctions back onto *Pleasure Garden*, where, in fact, the installation process was not intended to be symbolic of some wider presumed order. Instead, we might see the installation process in terms of what Benjamin Piekut calls an "improvisational ontology, born of risk, [which] refuses the pre-compositional step of dividing the world into the categories of nature and culture" (2013:158). The ambivalent status of Aboriginal land within *Pleasure Garden* is instructive here: its absence was motivated by care (concern over appropriation), yet it remained a fraught and complex issue (a conspicuous absence).[13] Indeed, the installation process was characterized throughout by oscillations between presence and absence (Law 2002), inclusion and exclusion (Barad 2007), hybridity and purity (Ochoa Gautier 2006), autonomy and interrelation (Steingo 2018). If this suggests anything about *Pleasure Garden*'s wider cultural setting, it is not the ongoing surety of ontological categories in Western late modernity but rather their paradoxical, uneven status as both powerfully operative and intensively reworked.

Following the installation of *Pleasure Garden* moves us, then, toward a sense of epistemology, ontology, and ethics as immanent in practices. Activities from the mundane to the magical determined what mattered in the

installation-in-the-garden—"mattered" in the sense of what was known, what existed, and what was valued (Barad 2007). "Relations of exteriority, connectivity, and exclusion . . . [were] reconfigured" (Barad 2007:141), so that diverse entities were materialized and made differentially agential, populating and shaping the installation space with cables, soil, cameras, trees, speakers, rain, computers, sounds, heat, rats, currawongs, people, "whipbirds," a "bell tower," a "narrator," and more. As Gavin Steingo argues, we need to "understand the ways that people intervene in the world . . . as having real ontological weight" (2018:569). But more than this, we might see such interventions not as the exclusive prerogative of humans but as a collective endeavor, part of the world's moment-to-moment engagement with itself. One implication of this is to decenter the creative team and disperse creativity across all the diversity that made up *Pleasure Garden* (Browning 2017). Knowledge practices were not exclusive to people; instead, deciding what "counted" was a responsibility shared, unevenly, with the interactive system and the intelligible interventions of nonhumans. Their collective practices were variously caring, controlling, creative, attentive, responsive, self-asserting, and mutually reshaping; they made space, "kicked back," sought alliances and autonomy. In this, they point to a wider project for music studies: to recognize the heterogeneous actors, epistemologies, and ontologies at stake in musical practices and to credit forms of world-making that unsettle familiar analytical categories (even, or perhaps especially, when they are close to home). *Pleasure Garden* was not simply installed; it made itself from the inside out. Its human creators played a crucial yet far from self-sufficient part in this process, but in meeting the garden halfway they joined in the cocreation of this world-within-a-world, refreshing our appreciation of what it means to make sound art in "practice."

## Acknowledgments

## Notes

1. Its institutionalization in CRiSAP, an academic center for "Creative Research into Sound Arts Practice" (http://www.crisap.org/), is indicative of the wider phenomenon.

2. There are of course exceptions, such as the literature on multichannel diffusion in sound art and electroacoustic music. Even here, however, discussion focuses on generalized techniques

and technologies or case studies of finished works or particular diffusion systems. The treatment of installation practices in processual terms remains rare. See, for example, the 2010 special issue of *Organised Sound* on multichannel diffusion (Harrison and Wilson 2010).

3. As Ouzounian notes, the literature on sound art "remains focused on composition, recording, transmission, and performance practices . . . with installation practices receiving less attention by historians and critics" (2015:73). Even Ouzounian's pioneering historical work on "spatial practices" in sound installations still engages relatively little with the kinds of practice I explore here, however.

4. Some studies are informed by scholars' experiences as listeners or grow from composers' reflections on their own works, such that a strain of loosely autoethnographic inquiry runs through much writing on sound art (e.g., Hawkins and Straughan 2014; Hogg 2013; Ouzounian 2006). Sound art projects informed by ethnography (e.g., Wynne 2011) and theorizations of various sonic arts as ethnographic (Drever 2002; Gallagher 2015; Rennie 2014) represent other points of connection. But with a few exceptions (Stirling 2016; Tan 2017; Valiquet forthcoming), there is very little substantive ethnographic work on sound art and sometimes allied fields such as electroacoustic music (see also Novak 2010; Plourde 2008; Valiquet 2018).

5. My use of first names to refer to members of the creative team is intended as a reminder of my relatively long-term ethnographic relationship with them (despite the focus here on a period of a few days) and as a device to lend immediacy to descriptions of the installation practices that are central to my analysis.

6. Far from a straightforward valorization of "practice" (for critiques or extensions of the "practice turn" in music studies, see Born 2010; Steingo 2018), my approach continues the ongoing engagement with actor-network theory, ontology, and new materialism in ethnomusicology (Bates 2012; Risk 2013; Roda 2014, 2015; Steingo 2018), and music studies at large (Born 2005, 2015; Haworth 2015; Piekut 2013, 2014). Although I draw primarily on Barad (2007), related ideas about "mattering" animate Latour's (2004) and Stengers's (2010, 2011) work on "cosmopolitics" and Mol's (1999) discussion of "ontological politics."

7. My argument in this paragraph, as well as the wider spirit of the article and much of the literature cited here, is powerfully indebted to Donna Haraway's influential *Cyborg Manifesto* (1991). Bronfman helpfully summarizes Haraway's complex essay, describing how it "interrogates the relationships between organisms and machines, with attention to the politics, the pleasure and the responsibilities involved in fusing them, . . . [as well as] creating a feminist perspective that also decentred humans and incorporated animals and machines in a politics of liberation from entrenched dualisms and gendered hierarchies" (2017:22). The term "medianatures" (Parikka 2012) is likewise derived from Haraway's work, specifically her concept of "naturecultures" (2003), and, especially in Bronfman's work (2017), valuably narrows the cyborg concept in order to inform our understanding of the fusing of organisms and machines in audio recordings. Here, I borrow the term "strange ontologies" from Georgina Born's (2015:14–17; after Wakefield and Smith 2011) discussion of spatiality in electroacoustic music and sound art in order to highlight further ramifications of Haraway's cyborg concept for our understanding of sound recordings and installations. I see the ontologies of recordings (such as "Whipbird") as "strange" when they complicate our often "entrenched" conceptualization of sounds in binary terms (e.g., as either "musical" or "natural") or our understanding of individual humans as the loci of creative agency. Relatedly, as I discuss later in relation to the spatiality of the installation, ontologies are made strange when sound reproduction technologies are used to superimpose sonic features of apparently incommensurate locations or scales and so disturb the normative sense of a place as singular and internally coherent.

8. For other dimensions of my role as participant observer in *Pleasure Garden*, see Browning (2020, and forthcoming).

9. The term "acoustemology" proves its worth here in keeping our attention firmly on practices—noticing and choosing to record specific sounds—rather than positing an Utrecht "sound-

scape," which would imply an objective landscape of sounds existing independently of such listening (see Feld 2015:15).

10. Discussing language use among sound engineers, Porcello notes that "all aspects of language . . . are resources that individuals can use in a number of ways. . . . But like all of language, there are politics behind access, and further politics behind language use" (2004:753). Although discourse analysis was not central to my research, I would tentatively suggest that the relative reliance of the *Pleasure Garden* team on metaphor and association was, in part, a response to their differing levels of expertise in sound recording and diffusion. Unlike more technical terminology, metaphorical language provided a shared, broadly intelligible vocabulary for discussing the sound of the installation.

11. Slobin's notion of "micromusics" (1992, 2000) and Becker's classic analysis of "art worlds" in terms of "patterns of collective activity" ([1982] 2008:1) are key reference points here. Narrowing their formulations somewhat, I use "microculture" to signal a formation that is highly delimited in space, time, and sociality: local, ephemeral, and involving few people.

12. For a related discussion of the ambivalent "politics of infrastructural visibility," see Parks (2009). Parks raises the question of whether the conspicuous camouflage of mobile phone "antenna trees" might, ironically, encourage better public knowledge of media infrastructures.

13. See Watson (2011, 2014) on "subalternist cosmopolitics."

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