

Review: Static Gestures

By Rashana Youtzy / January 29, 2019 / Arts and Culture

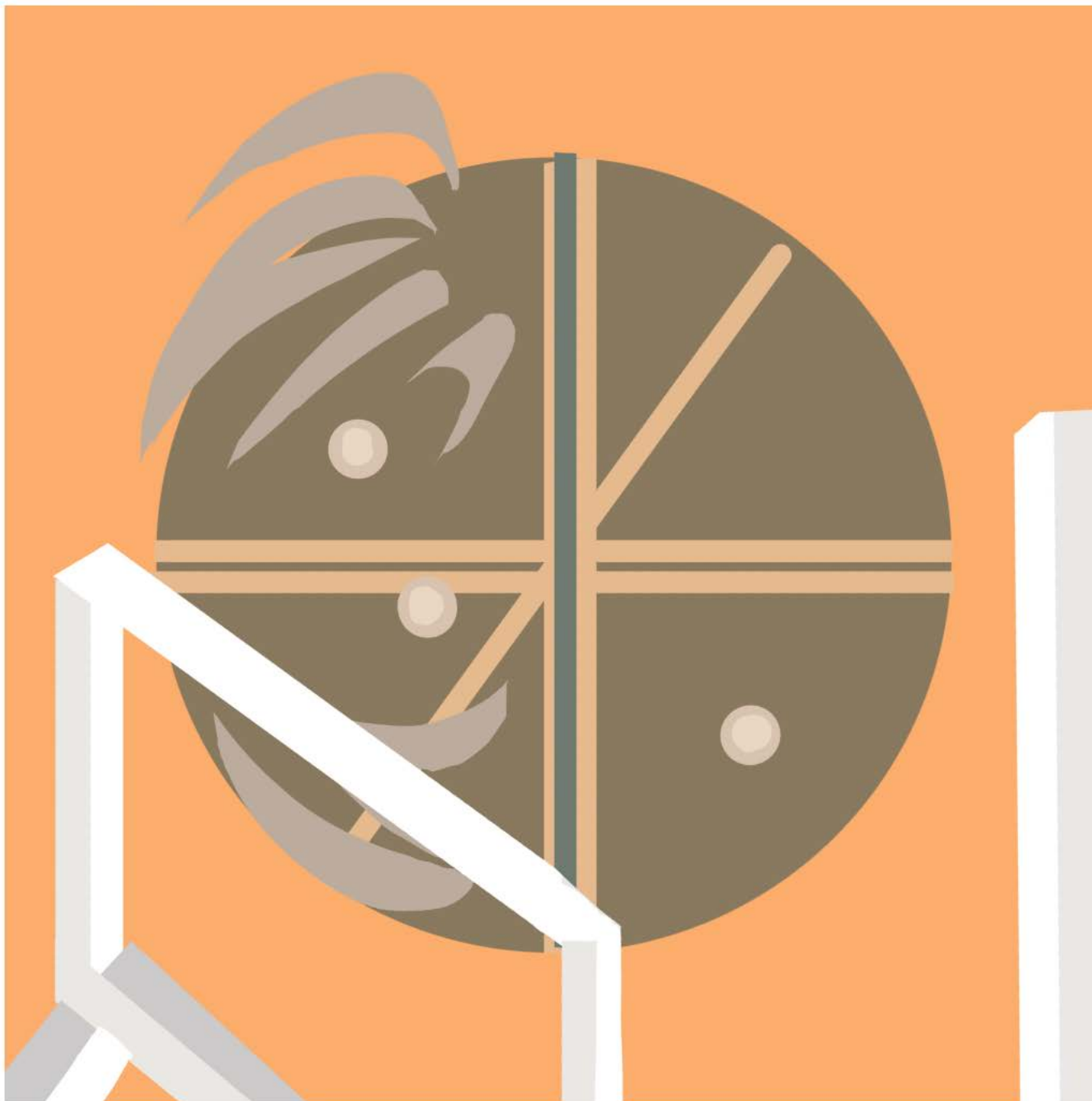


Illustration by Mia Carnevale

An exercise in actively listening to art

One of the lesser-ventured spheres of the art world is the realm of sound art: it reconfigures sensation from typically ocular-centric domains to one that engages visitors more intimately. Electric Perfume offered an evening of sound performances on January 5 featuring Marla Hlady and Christof Migone, Sarah Tracy and Jason Gillingham, Wesley Peñalosa, Rob Cruickshank, and Raul Altosaar. This event, *Static Gestures*, was the third in the series “Making Sounds With Stuff.”

The difference between sound art and optical art is that there is no visual narrative to lead or invite a visitor into the work. Sound art decontextualizes otherwise ordinary objects and reconfigures them within an unknown setting. The whirring milk frother is no longer used to whip and instead rattles in a jar as its own performance. Performances such as Hlady's and Migone's make the sounds we fail to perceive now salient. They are akin to the phenomenon of inattentional blindness in that we are no longer deaf to the sounds in our auditory peripheries. Though sound art alone is stimulating and entertaining, artists such as Hlady and Migone offer a tangible experience through a display of art in practice—making sounds (with stuff) in front of an audience.

Hlady's sound pieces animate common objects into a new form, employing wind-up toys to play out a theatrical performance while a steel chain coils itself on a turntable. Hlady practices this tactic of showcasing objects in unexpected ways in kinetic sculptural works. (The artist works in a breadth of media including sculpture, video, and site works, among others.) Alongside Hlady is Migone, a sound artist and writer who investigates language, voice, and performance in addition to several other pursuits. Migone offered an immersive display of his craft as patrons witnessed the careful flick of a switchboard, using the sound of the action as part of the performance rather than operating sound from the tool. One of the more confrontational sounds he produced was his self-submergence in a bag of packing Styrofoam, equipped with a microphone as he crunched and chewed his way through a cacophonous segment. The performance by the two artists lasted for about half an hour, and they used a variety of objects in their presentation, leaving visitors hypnotized by their calculated movements but also enthralled by their playful attitude in creating. There were several other artists featured that evening, and so I recommend seeing their work in future instalments of the series “Making Sounds With Stuff.”

Electric Perfume

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More information for upcoming events and workshops at <http://www.electricperfume.com>

On Marla Hlady: <http://www.marlahlady.com>

On Christof Migone: <http://christofmigone.com>