

Marinos Koutsomichalis - Malfunctions track #5

Sounds of failure or malfunctioning, static, feedback noises and various otherwise 'unwanted' sounds have been intuitively layered and juxtaposed together to form Malfunctions - released by agxivatein label in 2009 - out of which you can listen to track 5. In most cases the artist interferes himself with found circuitries and machinery to acquire on purpose all sorts of malfunctioning - trying this way to expose all larking uncertainty and ambiguity. Using found electronic devices, coils, custom electromagnetic and ultrasonic transducers along with various hardware hacks and feedback techniques, the artist here meditates on all those sounds-that-were-not-meant-to-be.

Alison Maletz - Cheek to Cheek (a Family Portrait)

I had each of my six family members (and myself) sing Irving Berlin's song "Cheek To Cheek", from the 1935 film "Top Hat". I recorded each of us separately singing the song to completion at our own paces. Then I overlapped the seven tracks to that we are all singing it together, as a family unit, made up of individuals. It perfectly demonstrates the push and pull affect I am trying to create within my art, of the subjects being so happy together that they are in heavenly bliss, while at the same time there is something unberably uncomfortable, out of sync, and wrong.

Yota Morimoto - Recitative

Computer generated sound file, I imagined a brief recitative piece of a strangely un-religious tone, having a hope that even in this transient musical moment, failure, or usually opposing matters would be put together.

Lukas Pearce - Epic Fail

A piece about how we often only notice things when they go wrong. Perhaps the broken gear is doing its best to be noticed and appreciated? This piece started when the Alesis 8 channel audio mixer I was using to demonstrate different types of microphones during an introduction to audio production workshop I was teaching began acting in a very peculiar way. I was able to send it's self generated noise to its built-in effects, so as to modify the semi-rhythmic pulses that were being generated by 3 of the channels, and then I recorded the output. I then loaded the sounds into Ableton Live and modified them using MAX/MSP software, but focused on making a random yet consistent and defined effect on the 16 channels, echoing the way that the mixer was behaving. In doing so, I was pushing my computer to it's processing limit, and thus generating artifacts again not unlike what the mixer had been generating. The computer narration is a paraphrasing of the kind of troubleshooting one does when trying to solve audio gear problems, and it seemed fitting that the computer was speaking about this process, creating as self-reflexive voice , not unlike the reflexivity of "success through failure."

Zoe Solomon - REVerse RAPture

1. Reverse Rapture: This is a song from my (Fresh Flesh's) album, Get Born!. The beat is playing in reverse but the lyrics come in forwards. This is the basic framework of the project. 2. Reverse Rapture Reversed: Also from Get Born!, (which was recorded using a four track recorder), is the same track but played in reverse, so that the beat comes in forward but all the lyrics are backwards. Listening to this recording has allowed me to start learning the lyrics phonetically backwards. 3. Reverse Rapture Backwards: This is a spoken word fragment from Reverse Rapture Reversed. Soon I will perform this live and over a beat, the "failure" is evident in the next track. 4. Reverse Rapture Backwards Reversed: This spoken word fragment is reversed on the four track machine. Ideally the sound of the phonetically backwards spoken words should come back sounding like forwards English when reversed. This current track is getting closer, but not quite there yet. I need to get a better grasp on speaking in reverse before I can record and perform it live and over the beat. I can only check my progress by recording and then reversing the words. Once I hear the reversed recording I can hear how close or far from the proper pronunciation I am.

Pudy Tong - How to Fix a Bad Marriage

The disembodied voice of Stephen Harper orates an article entitled "How to Fix a Bad Marriage" from eHow.com. This soundtrack flawlessly mimics the Prime Minister's voice and the teachings the text expounds are extremely insightful. Open dialogue is the first step to fixing any problem, however mono-directional, generalized or artificial that dialogue may be.

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Success Through Failure

Sometimes you can't get something right
without doing it completely wrong

Broadcasting for Reels: Audio Art for Radio

8 - 9:30 p.m. Friday, November 5, 2010

CKDU 88.1FM

Hosted and curated by Lucas Damberg

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As curator for this year's Broadcasting For Reels, I chose the theme "Success Through Failure," because I'm interested in the way that a change in perspective can transform a mistake or a failure into something new, interesting, and successful. What I find most exciting about failure is the way it can reveal things that would not normally be apparent. A sound artist working in a studio may never think about the machines that are processing his or her piece, the studio's construction, or the environment around the studio. When things are working properly, all of these factors will be invisible even though they are all crucial parts of the finished piece. I get excited when these elements, which are usually behind the scenes, get to step out of the background and make themselves known. When something goes wrong it will often make us upset. We have an expectation of the way our tools should work, especially tools that we work with on a daily basis, such as our computers, our vehicles, our bodies, or minds. We form relationships with these things, but in many cases our relationships are one-sided. We expect them to serve us, and not cause problems. When problems do arise the relationship suddenly changes. Instead of just taking, we have to give back, and that's not easy. It requires us to have a better understanding of our tools – and perhaps even to have compassion and empathy.

Can one have compassion for a computer? For a sound mixer? For a bad idea? For something broken? When things are going right most people would rarely consider the idea. But to try and fix a problem you must first understand the problem. Why is the mixer making that noise? Why does this idea in my head not match up with the real world? The only way to solve these problems is to get to know them better. How is the mixer built? Why is it built that way? Who built it, and why did they make the decisions that they made? Delving into these problems can lead to a deeper, fuller understanding of how we all work, how we communicate, and how we understand each other. When listening to the pieces I picked for this year's broadcast I found that they addressed three main aspects of "Success Through Failure." First, there's serendipity: the beautiful mistake. This was most evident in pieces like Anne-F Jacques' recording of a circuit getting blown, Lukas Pearse's efforts to diagnose a malfunctioning sound mixer, Andi Chapple's unexpected encounter with an airplane, Yota Morimoto's re-working of a corrupted audio file, and Lisa Folkerson's attempt to salvage footage from a flooded video camera. Next, I saw a category of artists who wanted to explore the idea of failure itself. These included Victoria Fenner's piece on anxiety, Marinos Koutscomichalis's efforts to record the sounds of consumer technology malfunctioning, Daniel Blinkhorn's Glass Ear project - which started off as something quite different, and Emma Hendrix's recording of a sound studio being dismantled.

Finally, I saw a group of artists who were intentionally generating failure. In this group is Pudy Tong getting Prime Minister Stephen Harper to read instructions on how to fix a bad marriage, Allison Maletz's palimpsest recording of Irving Berlin's "Cheek to Cheek," Graham Dunning's improvised performance involving broken instruments, Zoe Solomon's interpretation of generational decay, and a Spanish artist named Blank, who took the PDF file of our call for submissions, loaded it into an audio program, and played it back. I think Blank's piece is a great example of subverting technology through a change in perspective. The idea that a sound program could be used to interpret a graphic image is so surprising that it opens your mind to a whole new world of possibilities. Instead of just seeing a sound program as a tool to play back audio, the tool can be seen in a more general sense. As an interpreter of data, regardless of origin, the sound program becomes more powerful, more useful, and more open to experimentation. This is the importance of failure – its ability to open new doors, and take you places that success never would. If you are able to change your expectations and alter your perspective, failure can be as rewarding an outcome as success.

— **Lucas Dambergs, Curator**

Daniel Blinkhorn - Glass Ear

We spend much of our lives with nothing but a wall between ourselves and the manifold sonic activities created by others. Inspired by the ever subtle art of eavesdropping via a glass placed upon a wall, this work situates the listener as though holding a glass to a wall and listening. To create the piece, I firstly composed a soundscape drawing from my archive of subsound recordings for this project and then, using a contact microphone attached to the inside of a glass, I recorded the sound of the composition being played from speakers in a room next door... the final composition presented here quickly shifts the listeners perception between the recording captured through the glass and the actual original composition itself. This piece would not have been created if my previous, unsuccessful attempts had been successful, yet in an entirely different manner. As such I know if I had not given up on the work I would have simply settled for a vastly different, inferior approximation of the effect in order to complete the work.

Andi Chapple - Call and Response

Call and Response is a duet for whirly tube and jet aircraft, recorded in St. Andrew's Church, Sedbergh in June 2010. Sedbergh is a small town in Cumbria, north-west England; I was recording sound samples for the installation 'A Month of Sundays' which I presented as part of this year's Sedbergh Music Festival. Sedbergh is on the fast-jet training flight-path for the RAF and the rest is as you will hear.

Blanca Rego Constela - Right Works of Wrong Minutes

In Right Works of Wrong Minutes, the original archive was a screen capture of the Call for Submission published in the Center for Art Tapes web page. The sound is not edited or modified in any sense, I just changed the resolution of the image from 72 to 300dpi (for length reasons) and then I opened the image in an audio editor. The resulting sound track is just noise because in fact is not sound, strictly speaking—we are listening to an image of a text, but we are not able to see it or read it, it contains a message that we are not able to decode.

Graham Dunning - ccidant

The piece is an edit of a live composition performed at Sonic Arts Forum in Huddersfield, UK, in May 2010. Sound sources used are turntables, modified records, field recordings pressed to dubplates, a cymbal amplified through the stylus, self oscillation through feedback, a metal plate with marbles and cheap, modified audio effects units. The performance was improvised and carried forward by chance occurrences and technical mishaps.

Victoria Fenner - Out of the Dark

Having a panic attack may be interpreted by some (especially the person having the panic attack) as a failure to cope. This piece takes the listener into the middle of a person's mind while having a panic attack ... and then coming out the other side into a relaxed, focused state of equilibrium. As with the case of many people who have struggled to cope with panic and anxiety, the presence of the anxiety can lead a person to explore new ways of dealing with the world. Therefore, a more successful life can emerge out of panic and fear. The piece uses sounds gathered at a carnival midway, a yoga class in the Appalachian Mountains and the rough Thanksgiving Day Atlantic Ocean waves on the Outer Bank in North Carolina. The compositional style as described by composer Victoria Fenner, is an associative documentary style ... storytelling, but without narration or traditional linear radio documentary format.

Lisa Folkerson - Do Damn Drain Do

This piece comes from a massive failure. This audio piece was recorded on NSCAD University's underwater camera. Even though I was extremely careful with the equipment, water seeped in and the camera never turned on again. I was able to save the audio from the recording and was surprised at how well it stood on its own and how effective it was at exploring what I had been interested in doing with the video footage. The search for human connection and an attempt to look at space and its boundaries as the boundaries of communication are themes I'm trying to explore. Using underwater space as a metaphor, I am interested in examining the larger spaces that human beings occupy and which separate people from each other. For these reasons, I am especially eager to have this piece presented on the radio - a medium that connects people in both obvious and abstract ways. People can be in the same room or separated by entire cities sharing the same listening experience. Despite physical boundaries, people can still be connected by simultaneously tuning in to the radio.

Emma Hendrix - Failure of Deconstruction

Originally recorded during the destruction of my sound studio in April of 2009, and the result of being forced to rip the entire sound-proofed room out of what was previously an unfinished basement. The excerpt you're hearing is a stereo mix of all 4 microphones and has been time-compressed to about 5% of the original length. It is a fairly accurate example of the cycles of discussion and destruction. Failure #1: Building a studio in a shared rental home on my own dime and having to rip it out a year later. Failure #2: Expecting to have a ready-made quadrophonic sound installation by attaching wireless mics to the 4 of us as we tore apart the basement. It took us four hours to break it all down. The results were less than intriguing. Failure #3: This all happened on my birthday. Failure #4: I incorrectly entered the submission address on the eve of the deadline. Success! Work accepted.

Anne-François Jacques - Stator Laminations Humming

This piece emerged from my experimentation with motor control circuits in the last year. When I connected a motor into AC for the first time, I recorded its vibrations on a miked surface - until I detected a burning smell just before the motor stopped running. Though as yet unable to fix the circuit, I kept the recording that bears the traces of a certain magical electricity danger.