

Hello! Thanks for stopping by. Have a seat. Can I get you anything?

I hope you enjoyed my work. Feel free to let me know what you thought, leave a note, or do whatever else in the space below!

- Benji

Benji -

I was thrilled to discover your work here - your exploration of sound and vision and touch, which all comes with a unique analytic take. I really encourage you to check out Christine Sun Kim who also makes kinetic sound experiments with speakers . .as a deaf sound artist, she has a really particular take on the interaction of touch and sound and vision. Here's a quick minidocumentary as an intro to her work:

<https://www.nowness.com/story/todd-selby-x-christine-sun-kim>

Your explorations of play and sound remind of me of some fluxus works that use games to create a process, and also a seminal early minimalist work by Steve Reich, Pendulum Music - perhaps you already know

it: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fU6qDeJPT-w&t=268s>

One question: Have you thought about how or if you want to scale up these works so that they can move from closeup short videos into larger works that could be for performance stage or installation space? There are a lot of ways to do this. Here are some other folks doing highly analytic and physical sound, and ways they found to build their practice into the gallery:

Check out Tristan Perich's Microtonal Wall:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MJSgaEaZytg>

Or Ryoji Ikeda: <https://www.alminerech.com/artists/3863-ryoji-ikeda>

Or Carsten Nicolai "Physicist of Sound":

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCBIKXFrNA>

I also enjoyed the variable resistance "Hand Games" - - it would be interesting to see where these experiments and short pieces go! Once you have variable resistance, you then have the opening to create more expressive instruments, like the Ondes Martinot, but made from the human body? Hmmm . . !

Jess Rowland

Benji,

The soundtracks of your videos are particularly arresting. That low-level hum sounds at first like it could even be coming from the computer where I am looking at the work from. The videos seem to me to get stronger as I proceed from left to right on your page. Maybe that is not completely true, but i do think that the accumulation of videos makes each stronger. The low hum reads (sounds?) to me like the low-level menace of the machines we surround ourselves with and that broker most of our transactions with the world.

Well.

More directly, perhaps, the second video (In Lights Fade In) has a similar quality with all of the rest, but this one makes me especially curious. I imagine this is because what I see on screen is ambiguous and remains so for most of the length of the video. By the time it reads IN, I am already immersed in that restricted world of a few LED lights.

There is something illicit in the Speaker Game videos. Perhaps just the hum, again, but also the paraphernalia used including the tweezers and the tin foil. These 'Games' make me think of the film director Michael Haneke's Funny Games which is nothing if not menacing. Your work is strong and it surely hits other registers, but this sense of underlying terror is what struck me most immediately. I hope this is useful.

David Reinfurt

I very much enjoyed the sounds you have created in your videos. Perhaps this is already something you have been experimenting with, but you may be interested in exploring binaural recordings. I mention this because I had a very different experience of the sounds from a speaker played directly into the room, vs via headphones, where the sound component was seemingly bifurcated and richer. I am curious as to whether you consider these recordings of live performances you might enact in a gallery setting, and how you might spatially set up the relationship between the action, the audience, and the speakers.

Conceptually, there is an interesting element in which you create intentionally digital instruments while continuing to play with the rawness and simplicity of your own body. I would be curious to see these works expanded.

Ani Liu

Benji,

I really enjoyed reviewing your work. With many of the videos, I felt as though I was right there with you in your garage, watching you wrap wires around your hand or use dental tools to maneuver the aluminum foil. All in all, it was a great virtual experience, and I thank you for hosting me. Bravo!

Kavya Chaturvedi

=====

Hi Benji,

The works you've displayed immediately capture by interest because they are so procedural and experimental. I remember during your studio visit you said that you were a chemistry major and you were kind of experimenting around to see what works, at which point I thought perhaps you could use the same scientific mindset used in the lab to lead you to some interesting destinations in your artwork. It seems like you've found something you want to pursue and have gotten pretty productive with it.

I love the technical elements in your work – the circuitry, the 3-tiered circuit machine thing you built, the use of conductivity (I think that's what produces sound?). Maybe it's because I'm a COS major, but the low drone and spontaneous bursts of different frequencies reminds me of the beep-boop meme that's being thrown around a lot nowadays to refer to people who work with computers. To me, I get the image of standing in a massive dark long hallway in one of those server centers with all the machines humming around me and speaking the beep-boop language in response to some change of state or novel input. It's fascinating because it's very intriguing, like decoding a message. I also find your speaker games fascinating in a similar sense. You extract and expose a secondary frequency from the default frequency played by the speaker, kind of decoding an encrypted message. I recently read about Edward Elgar's [Enigma Variations](#), in which the composer hid an unexplained theme, "the Enigma", in the piece, and no one knows for sure what the theme is to this day. To me, your speaker games seem to uncover one hidden theme from the speaker, but that kinda makes me wonder what else you can uncover from it.

I think your work can turn into a totally different beast when displayed in a gallery, especially since most galleries echo pretty wildly. It's one thing to hear the low frequencies coming out of a computer screen, but another totally different thing to hear it echoing all around you, possibly with special lighting effects. There's a lot of potential for immersion, so perhaps try to experiment with that once we head back to campus (or maybe you have the capacity to try things like that from where you are).

If you're interested in taking a further dive into computer-produced sounds, there's a Stanford-based computer music artist and programmer named Ge Wang whose work might be interesting to you. He did his PhD at Princeton, and when he was on campus, he created an audio programming language called ChuckK that's used in COS/MUS 314 (which isn't offered this fall unfortunately), among other places. [Here's](#) one of his talks, and you can watch from 5:30 - 9:10 for the ChuckK demo. Also, I'm not sure if you've checked out the Princeton Laptop Orchestra (PLOrk) yet – they put together some very interesting performances using computer-generated sound and lighting effects. You can probably find some of their old performances on YouTube if you didn't get a chance to see them perform on campus yet.

Keep fiddling around with various gadgets and don't stop experimenting! Can't wait to see what you come up with for next year.

– Kevin

=====

Hello!

I appreciate the very hands-on experimental work you're doing here. I noticed how the very method you recorded your videos and laid them out on the site is so scientific. The low hum and speaker acting as a control for all these different audio subjects, and how you have your tweezers constantly involved in the process. And seeing your hand unplug the speakers, just the way you presented the work itself reminds me of your studio and how you build something to test some object but in a controlled manner. I found it funny how you said in the description to watch in no particular order, but with your videos on the site being very orderly with the lights in and out, and the games being numbered and separated by materials.

In terms of the content, the videos all seem part of some ominous laboratory. The low hum, the red lights, the playing with the hand. I saw a lot of these as fights for control, whether it be using tweezers to keep the pins back on the speaker or having them loop around your hand. I like the lighting changes in your first video and am curious if you can play with shadows in your other game videos. That could add another layer to this whole eerie control in your videos by hiding/revealing certain parts using light. This is partly achieved in your fade in/out videos in which the moving red dots in the dark make me wonder what is actually causing the lights - similar to monsters in the dark.

Anyway, you have very interesting processes that develop to become a part of your work and I loved seeing all these experiments!

~Victor

Hey Benji!

Thanks for sharing your work, it was really cool to see your experimentation with light and sound. I especially liked the speaker games, which related sound and movement in a way I hadn't seen before. Maybe even a new form of quarantine entertainment?
Hope you continue to experiment and share your findings!

All the Best,

Emily R.

Hi Benji!

What a cool "show" you put together! I really enjoyed seeing you manipulate wires around your hand in the Hand Game videos-- it reminded me of the childhood game Operation. The sounds and images were all quite mesmerizing. I can't wait to see more garage experimentation in your future work!

- Arielle

James Welling

Fantastic projects. A long throw from Albumen prints....but I see a connection

.

Look at/listen at Max Neuhaus

<https://www.diaart.org/visit/visit-our-locations-sites/max-neuhaus-times-square>

Remko Scha

<https://www.superiorviaduct.com/products/remko-scha-machine-guitars-lp>

David Roy...MFA in sculpture at Yale, sound works and rockets...plus motorcycles

<https://soundcloud.com/roy-david-1>

And Glenn Branca

<https://www.npr.org/sections/therecord/2018/05/15/611268914/composer-and-leading-avant-garde-guitarist-glenn-branca-has-died-at-69>

The guitar solo in the obit

Dear Benji,

The knowledge of human nature that you display in this series shatters the limits of artistic expression. Your understanding of posthuman philosophy is represented in the transformation from machine to humanity. Starting from THE MACHINE, the lights fade in and human interaction emerges with the SPEAKER GAMES. Numbered with tallies, these games are still dominated by the machine. The HAND GAMES appear next, numbered with arabic numerals in a clear representation of increased human influence. The lights fade out, and we are left with two images: the Bill of Materials suggests the coexistence of man and machine, and the open hands show the gradual acceptance of this coexistence; SPIN THE SYMMETRY represents the final desire for raw human control, as the spinning motion of progress cannot continue without a human push. I really enjoyed your fascinating and stunning work Benji!

- Jonny

Benji,

Of the videos, the ones I am most attracted to are "IN LIGHTS FADE IN" and "OUT LIGHTS FADE OUT" as well as the spin symmetry one. This may be because they are mostly visual and each seems to have a plot with beginning, middle and end clearly articulated. That said, the game videos produce wonderful sounds and a richness of associations using a very small amount of means. I feel the oppression of an operating room, a kind of laboratory from the future or from the past feeling in them. I find myself intently watching the disembodied hands, the simple tools -- tweezers, wires, a speaker, etc -- which, dull as they are in their repetitiveness and slowness, create a strange beauty. The sounds seem mundane and menacing, and strangely enough I feel I want to watch them again, hear those sounds again. They take me somewhere foreign, claustrophobic, airless, futuristic, strange, maybe to Dr. Frankenstein's laboratory, but definitely somewhere a bit sinister, a bit cold. They each feel like letters in a word - with some like the hand game films being repeating letters. I really like talking about some of your photos as well this term, and found only a handful on your linked website. I encourage you to continue. I appreciate the stillness of your photos, the emptiness, the structure - all of which we talked about. Look at Jean Cocteau's "Orphée" this summer, you might like it. It has been a real pleasure to work with you this semester. Have a good summer.

Daniel

Benji!

Wow what a delightful meditation this has been. I really enjoyed your work and have many questions about the machine, how it works and how it was constructed.

I really feel the sense of game/boredom. I have found myself finding pleasure in the tiniest of forms of pattern and noise. I found myself yesterday fascinated by the sprinkle of water drops left after my shower and watched them for a few minutes. Your pieces remind me of that. I enjoy watching the tinfoil dance and shake. It reminds me of the trees outside my window I have been watching dance. The tinfoil also reminds me of me. In ways I am RESTLESS. I can barely type. My mind is going faster than my childish typing skills can manage. I am paralyzed by my limited range of motion that sometimes i dont move at all. my hands know they could type whatever and form sentences that say who knows what! They could be lies. And similarly the tinfoil seems to be hiding something. Or something is being hidden from us lthe viewer). I see the tinfoil dance and shake and hear the pieces buzz and clamour but i don't fully understand the system. How does it work, where does this noise come from? why doesn't the tinfoil fly off the shaking speaker?

I also really enjoyed Hand experiment II. I feel like I was eavesdropping on a conversation between the tweezer and your hand. As it touched you, the sounds it emitted seemed to have the affect of the tweezers frustration as they struggled to lace the cord between your fingers.

I also realize I sound crazy. But I really feel like these works were a guided meditation and that as I listened and watched, I listened for metaphors and watched for memories.

-Raya
