

# The Festival Exhibition

## Camille Norment

### *Gyre*

25. 5. – 13. 8. 2023

Bergen Kunsthall is proud to present the Festival Exhibition 2023 by Camille Norment. Norment is known as a visual artist, composer and performer, her works include recordings, sculpture, drawing, performance, and scores for vocal and orchestral ensembles. Poetic and often deceptively delicate, her work asks fundamental question about the ways in which we inhabit and frame the world and ourselves in relation to each other and our wider environments. Through sound, the works allow us to perceive and reveal resonances through time and space, across histories, bodies, and entangled experiences. For the first time in the history of the Festival Exhibition, this exhibition focuses on an artistic work where sound is central, highlighting the importance of sensing with the whole body, and the legacy of interdisciplinary practice in this respect.

The exhibition draws all four main galleries of Bergen Kunsthall together in an expansive sonic experience that visitors are invited to explore at their own pace. Many of the works have been produced specifically for the exhibition and make use of the active acoustics of the galleries of Bergen Kunsthall. Each of the galleries contains works that activate the space through different forms of sound production. A large work in brass, presented in the largest gallery, is the centre of a complex feedback installation in which open microphones listen to the environment, which is then heard as a ghosted sonic memory. Across the galleries, the composition contains polyphonic drum-like rhythms, together with sounds of resonating voices presented in a participatory installation, and the chattering of teeth vibrating through metal. Though some of the works are spectacular and large in scale, they occupy the space as discrete objects that function like instruments or devices.

The title of the exhibition, "Gyre" – the same word in English and Norwegian –, describes a spiral motion or vortex that simultaneously moves outwards and upwards, and functions as an abstract idea that Norment explores in various ways in the works on view. The exhibition uses cycles, loops and oscillations as sound cycles that repeat or include the surrounding sound within the work, in the form of feedback loops and generative composition, but also as physical forms, such as rings or dots. In contrast to a circle, a spiral is not ending in itself, but potentially expanding or imploding. The exhibition also plays with associations, involving materials from rust to brass, and forms – such as bells and rail tracks – that are charged with potential meaning.

Their reading depends on the experience and perspective of the viewer, to open productive moments that create agency for the viewer to move through and connect with the works.

Norment's work builds on a method that can be called "cultural psychoacoustics", an investigation of contextualised sociocultural phenomena through sound and music. The works address underlying systems that frame our perception – histories, habits, beliefs, identities – and how these intersect with larger frameworks, such as cultures of social interaction, cycles of production and consumption, relationships with environments and non-human bodies, belief systems, empirical sciences and intuited metaphysics. Norment specifically employs ideas of sonic and social dissonance, such as the phenomenon of feedback that has a crucial role in her work and in the exhibition at Bergen Kunsthall. As a sound that is generated through an acoustic loop, it is commonly seen as a problem and often censored in sound production. From another perspective, it's a sound that is generated in a specific situation and space, a collaboration between a source and an environment. As a principle, feedback points to fundamental mechanisms of evolution and the friction of progress and destruction. Norment is interested in sonic feedback both as the alarm of destructive cycles and the opportunity for enlightened collaborative progress. The exhibition uses the sonic and its opportunities to create a concrete experience of such entangled sensations and environments, and the spaces of agency it opens to listeners reflecting individually as well as collectively.

"Vibration is said to be the origin of life, as such sound is a fundament of all life and being." (Camille Norment)

A space on the second floor provides a research situation with records and publications that create a context for the works in the exhibition and will host a series of events throughout the exhibition period.

A new publication will be released at the end of the exhibition, with texts by Nina Sun Eidsheim, Kathryn Yusoff and Camille Norment.

On Friday 26 May at 19:30, Camille Norment will play a concert with her ensemble as part of Festspillene at Håkonshallen.

## About the artist

Norment has master's degrees in both visual arts and interactive telecommunications from New York University, and she attended the Whitney Independent Study Program in 1994-95.

Based in Norway since 2004, she represented Norway in the 56th Venice Art Biennale in 2015 with the large-scale three-part project *Rapture*. Her work has recently been shown in exhibitions at Punta della Dogana, Venice (2023) and the Dia Art Foundation in New York (2022-23), the David Logan Center for the Arts, University of Chicago (2019), the Oslo Kunstforening (2017), and Temple Bar Gallery and Studios, Dublin (2017). She has participated in biennales of Kochi-Muziris (2016), Montreal (2016), Lyon (2017), and Thailand (2018). She has produced several commissions for public spaces, amongst others for Henie Onstad Kunstsenter and the Norwegian Holocaust Center, both in Oslo.

Norment's approach to composition includes improvisation methods from jazz and folk music, as well as generative systems used in artificial intelligence and electronic music. She has worked specifically with vocal ensembles and more recently with orchestration, which will result in a performance organised as part of the exhibition in Bergen. Norment is also known as part of the Camille Norment Trio, where she performs together with Vegar Vårdal and Håvard Skaset. The group uses electric guitar, glass armonica and Hardanger fiddle, amongst others. All these instruments have at various points in history been considered so powerful that they have been banned. In this way, the performances can be understood as rituals that connect different sensibilities separated in time. She has recently performed at institutions including The Armory, New York (with Craig Taborn, 2022, 2016); Munchmuseet, Oslo (with Vokalensemblen Oslo 14, 2021); Renaissance Society, University of Chicago (with Hamid Drake, 2019); and Walker Art Center, Minneapolis (with Craig Taborn, 2019), and twice with Ryuichi Sakamoto (Sapporo Arts Festival 2017, The Stone, New York, 2018).

## Gallery I – ∞

A large brass sculpture occupies the centre of the largest gallery of the exhibition. The work evokes associations to a bell or a horn, with a second brass form resembling a clapper (the tongue of a bell) or a mute (a device used to dampen and change the timbre of an instrument) seemingly pouring down from the ceiling. Open microphones are hung from each corner of the room, aiming sharply at the sculpture. The work collects and amplifies ambient sound through a feedback loop between the microphones and a speaker system incorporated in the sculpture. The work includes the intermittent sound of static from 1960s and 1970s radio broadcasts (including community reporting and documentation of social and environmental struggles) Played as ghostly fragments, the sound becomes audible through the feedback when being closer to the work. First shown as part of Camille Norment's solo presentation "Plexus" at the Dia Art Foundation in New York in 2022, the audience visiting the gallery, talking, walking and watching, act as both composers and receivers, impacting the soundscape and thus the work itself. A bell or a bell horn is commonly used either to mark time, as an alarming device for a warning, or as a

device to celebrate a significant event – a summoning, communication, an open signal for future events. For Norment, the bell drone, sine wave, and feedback—tones used throughout the space—resonate with ideas of experienced time, historicity, power, resistance, and agency. In the gallery of Bergen Kunsthall, the distinctive ceiling is reflected in the brass and creates an image of a warped grid. The rigid framework that bends in relation to an environment is often associated with aspirations for a flexible and multiple society. It is also reminiscent of illustrations used to depict a wormhole in outer space, adding a layer of deep time and "negative feedback" caused by black holes. In spite of being a vortex, it has been found that some energy does escape the black hole's obliterating pull. While any feedback loop contains the seeds of its own destruction, like a social media echo-chamber, it also offers an opportunity to extend collaboration with greater environmental contexts whose input is necessary for evolutionary growth.

## Gallery II – What Stirs Between?

*Take a slow deep breath through your nose that reaches down into your pelvis. Turn your gaze inwards. Find a deep tone that resonates your throat, your chest, your diaphragm... Rather than thinking through tone or melody, allow your body to find its own harmony and dissonance with itself and its surroundings. Share this resonance with yourself and so with others.*

Inspired by the pause and its potential to make way for new input, to nurture and promote growth, three fractal-like architectonic forms —benches— provide the entry point to the exhibition. The polyphonic sound of resonating voices is audible as an ambient chorus when entering the room, and the audiences are invited to sit or lay on the structures and feel the tactile vibration of these bodies – the body's drone. As a generative composition, the sound work creates itself from a set of elements that are predefined. Using "call and response" as a technique, one voice responds to another, lifting every voice as the possible lead. The title of the work, which can be read as an "instruction", furthermore offers a welcoming environment for any visitors who would join the voices by finding and sharing resonance from their own vocalising body.

## Gallery III – The Coil and Effervescent Gravities

At the centre of the floor in Gallery III lies parts of a rusted metal from building tubes and railway tracks that form a fragmented coil. Through the metal parts we hear chattering teeth that form polyphonic rhythms, agitating the metals, sometimes in sudden bursts, and churn in rotation. Tracks are historically associated with the signs and symbols of progress, civilisation and conquest. In this sense the coil represents the seemingly inescapable loop of modernism. The chattering teeth may recall stories of oppression and resistance, anxiety. They may also evoke an incantation: a spoken or written formula of words that is believed to have magical or mystical power. The form of the coil and the way in which the metal parts are arranged also implies associations to the Ouroboros: an ancient symbol that depicts a serpent or dragon eating its own tail, forming a circle or a ring. It is often associated with the concept of infinity, wholeness, and cyclicity. Some see it as a representation of the cycle of life, death, and rebirth, but it can also be viewed as a symbol of self-

reflexivity, eternal recurrence, and paradoxically the closed loop that destroys itself by remaining invariable. Similar to the paradox in the efficiency and sustainability of self-generating life, the feedback loop of the work *Coil* bears the seeds of its own destruction.

On the walls of Gallery III are three drawings made with iron, rainwater, pencil, blood, and ink. The formations in the drawings are made with, and refer to forces of sonic vibration, magnetism and gravity, by exposing the materials to these forces and allowing them to move and re-form in collaboration with the artist hand. The drawings in a way "record" and transform the generative impact of their making. In their installation, this movement is continued through a hanging position that suggest the swirling energy of accelerating rotation. Titled *Effervescent gravities* the works on paper and acetate create associations to something light that escapes the gravitational pulls, like fragments of captured energies, sonic vibrations, magnetism and imagination. The used materials also point to suggestive intersections with the earth where the metal has been sourced, energy, the weather, our physical body and its life forces.

Sound needs a body to exist, whether it is a human body of a particle or the wave of light. Sound is always a collaboration.

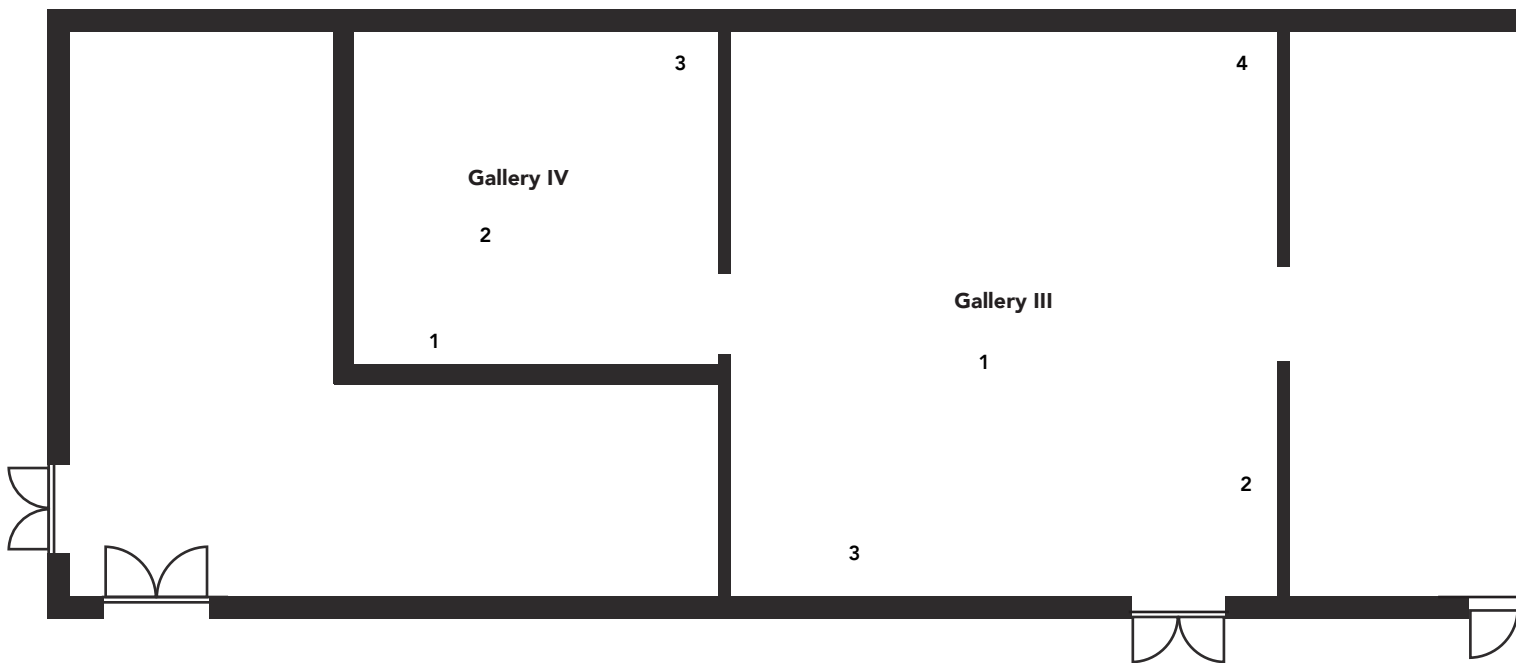
#### **Gallery IV – To Sate Triangulation**

Three works are on display in Gallery IV. The piece *Everything but Noting* consists of a singing bowl (a type of musical instrument traditionally used in Buddhist meditation practices) that extends from a six-legged drum stand. The bowl contains a pair of baoding balls, also known as Chinese meditation balls. Historically made of iron, they are usually rotated in the hand to improve coordination and mental focus. Baoding balls are created as sonic pairs, representing yin and yang through a difference in tone, and therefore in balance as a unit. In this work, two programmed magnets alternate turning on and off, causing each ball move around in disarray in its attempts and search to settle.

On the wall in between the two other works in the space is a single dot of ink entitled *The First Conscious Moment*. In science, the point or dot is often used as a mathematical abstraction to represent a location or a particle with zero dimensions, such as an electron or photon. While the point or dot is a frequently mathematical tool, it is a theoretical construct that cannot physically exist. The concept of a point particle is a fundamental part of many scientific theories, such as quantum mechanics, where particles are often treated as having no size or volume. However, in reality, all particles have some finite size, and they interact with their environment in complex ways that cannot be fully captured by a simple dot or point. One of the challenges of modern physics is reconciling the mathematical abstractions of point particles and other idealised models with the messy and complex reality of the physical world. The title of this work refers to the paradox that many spiritual practices aim to achieve true consciousness while existing as, and being determined by the material world.

In a corner of Gallery IV a large metal sphere—a gazing ball—reflects its surrounding environment and its visitors, activated mechanically as a drum that seems to sound

from across a great distance. The title *Frisson* refers to the term used to describe a sudden, intense sensation of shivers or chills that can run through a person's body, a powerful emotional response to excitement or fear. Here, the frissons is shifted in time and experienced as a quieted, hovering anticipation of something to come. The rhythms themselves were inspired by micro fragments from the publicized recordings of cosmic microwave background radiation (CMB) and scientist John Cramer's model for the sound of the Big Bang, the theorized origin of the universe.



#### Gallery I

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- 1 *Untitled (Bellhorn)*, 2022  
Brass, sine waves, autonomous feedback system, archival radio static recordings  
Dimensions variable

Courtesy of Dia Art Foundation, New York

#### Gallery II

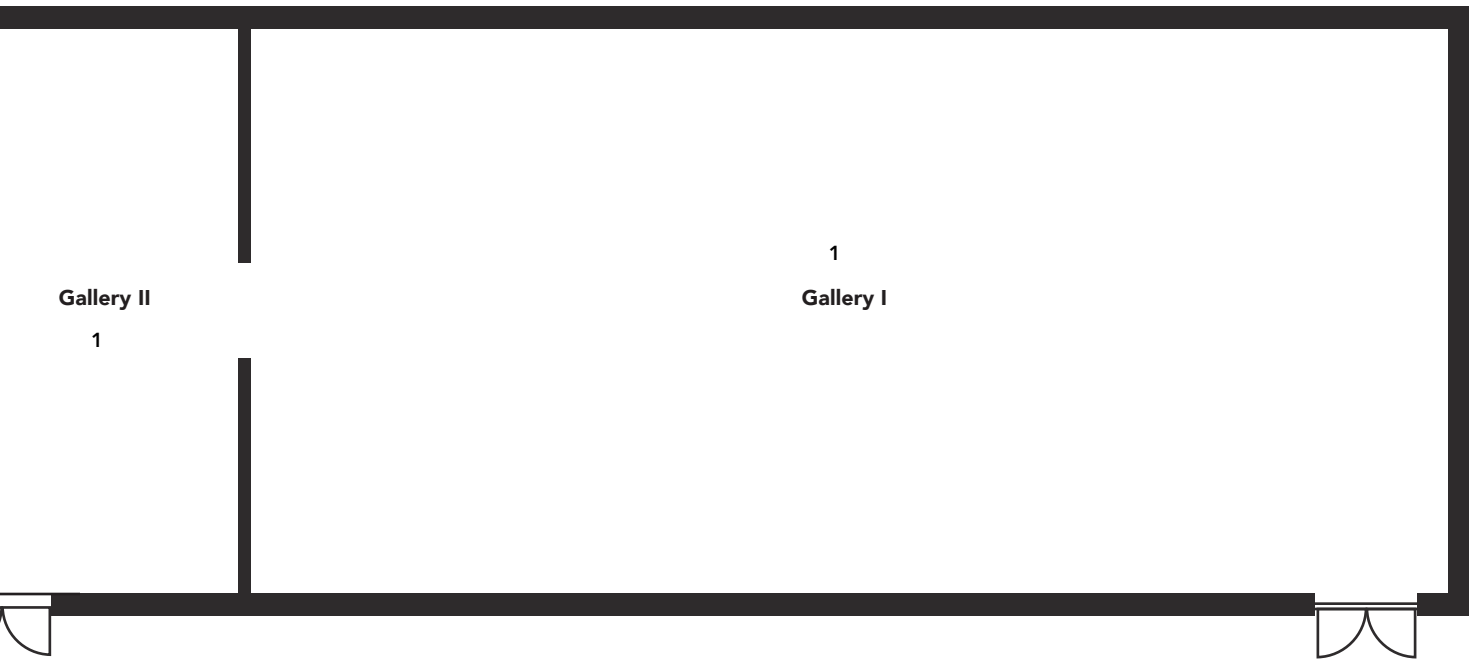
##### What Stirs Between?

- 1 *Take a slow deep breath through your nose that reaches down into your pelvis. Turn your gaze inwards. Find a deep tone that resonates your throat, your chest, your diaphragm... Rather than thinking through tone or melody, allow your body to find its own harmony and dissonance with itself and its surroundings. Share this resonance with yourself, and so with others*, 2023  
Generative composition for voice, tactile transducers, wooden structures  
Dimensions variable

#### Gallery III

##### The Coil and Effervescent Gravities

- 1 *Coil*, 2023  
Oxidized iron and steel, audio exciters, sound recordings of teeth grinding and clattering  
Dimensions variable
- 2 *Effervescent gravities 3*, 2023  
Iron, rainwater, pencil, blood, ink on hot press cotton rag paper, oxidized steel brackets  
187 x 114 cm
- 3 *Effervescent gravities 1*, 2023  
Iron, rainwater, pencil, blood, ink on acetate  
240 x 120 cm
- 4 *Effervescent gravities 2*, 2023  
Iron, rainwater, pencil, blood, ink on hot press cotton rag paper, oxidized steel brackets  
114 x 240 cm



**Gallery II**

1

1

**Gallery I**

**Gallery IV**

**To Sate Triangulation**

- 1 *Everything but Noting*, 2023  
Brass singing bowl, boading balls, six percussion stand legs and rod, headphone pads, electromagnets and circuit  
85 x 85 x 83 cm
- 2 *The First Conscious Moment*, 2023  
Point of ink  
Nondimensional
- 3 *Frisson*, 2023  
Stainless steel sphere, bass audio exciter  
100 cm (diameter)

**Upstairs**

Constellation room

## Camille Norment's Sonic Experience

Camille Norment's "Plexus", a live, site-responsive acoustic installation at Dia Chelsea, invites us to move ourselves, echolocatively, through two spaces of distinct vibrational sensibilities. A sounding brass form, viscous and svelte, plays anchor in the first, as if a hearing trumpet from the deep future worn by the room itself. Its effect is that of a conditioning chamber, tuning us to our own motion-generated sonic feedback, alongside the static, somehow lush, fragments of archival radio scrubbed of voice. In dramaturgical leap in the second room, a strewn scaffold of wooden beams, whose hidden excitors play conduit to tone, makes available different kinds of vibrotactile listening practices, including to elasticated voices via bone conduction. To attend to these spaces means to observe how Norment's forms, at once productive of sound and receptive to it, double as gathering technologies of bodies in varying states of prehension.

**Emma McCormick-Goodhart:** I'm interested in how you inhabit project sites from the outset, what your methods are, and the extent to which you feel that a space begins to speak to and through you, for instance in preparation for your current show, "Plexus", at Dia Chelsea.

**Camille Norment:** It's all too easy to develop methods that end up preventing you from seeing or hearing what's actually there. When I first enter into a space, it is literally to listen and feel it – to experience my body in that specific locale, and to allow responses to emerge. Usually a conversation is started from the combination of architectural structure and its acoustics within the hearing threshold. Sometimes it is initiated as "hearing", "seeing" or otherwise "encountering" fragments of sounds, objects or experiences that I may actually create and place in the space. Allowing myself to be guided by architectural space, as a collaborator, is very important to me. It's a method of allowing for a certain kind of opening up, of trying to keep a certain sensibility in relation to new encounters, so that I'm always listening for something new. This is one reason why I'm so interested in utilizing feedback as an instrument in live performance as well: you have to be on top of your sonic senses all the time, because you cannot exactly predict the fluctuations in the content or intensity of the feedback as a voice from moment to moment. These are incredible, important moments of sensibility.

**EM-G:** You've spoken of sound as a living system. Can we think about "Plexus", and what it sets in motion, in metabolic terms?

**CN:** Yes, absolutely. Metabolism, in its most basic sense, is a cycle of input processing, and the production of various outputs including "energies" and "wastes". "Plexus" complicates the assumptions of energy as opposed to waste through the experience of sonic energies, like noise and static, within the installation. It was important for me to resolve a satisfying generative composition for "Plexus", to build upon and allow the "system" living in or through this composition to be alive and to be unpredictable – and to force me to challenge my own relationship to control. These are things that keep me active and alive within the system of my own making.

**EM-G:** What happens in the passage, the dramaturgy, between the first and second spaces? Both are sonic climates of different kinds, where hearing unfolds across a gradient of aural and haptic intensities.

**CN:** There are many intertwined dramaturgies that are revealed from various conceptual and experiential nodes. For example, in the second room, you are met with voice, whereas voice is what was removed from the radio material used in the first room. I think it is important to enter the first space initially: to have to listen closely, to wonder, to move around the space physically, and perhaps realize that your movement affects sound. It becomes a kind of self-choreography of sonic experience. Moving into the second space, the opposite is almost true. I think having that inverse experience in the second space, in which you become fixed in some way, where sound comes to move through you and causes you to linger more, compliments those two dynamics. Both spaces offer a negotiation of movement, of continuity in space and time.

**EM-G:** In *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear* [2009], Steve Goodman theorizes that the potentials of sonic culture reside in the physiologically and culturally inaudible, which he terms "unsound", or that which is "not yet audible". What are your thoughts on vibrational zones above and below our narrow perceptual thresholds?

**CN:** My approach to acoustics necessitates the inclusion of frequencies outside of the human hearing range. So sonic experience extends beyond the ears to include the body, and beyond the human body to include all molecules in a sonic pathway, which is multidirectional in space and, for me, in time. When we apply this kind of listening to our engagement with each other and our worlds, we begin to move through society and culture in different ways, and to perceive different time-space-experience relationships. I am interested in the kinds of constellations that are created when we expand our listening in this way. It's not just sound, vibration or frequencies themselves, it's also physical space and the body that it's involved with; the relationship between perceiving actual lived experience and being open to understanding the experience of bodies outside of our own.

*This interview was initially published in frieze magazine, May 2022, in connection with Camille Norment's exhibition "Plexus" at Dia Chelsea in 2022.*



## Events

### Opening

Thu 25 May 13:00 Free  
The exhibition is opened by  
director Axel Wieder in the  
presence of Her Majesty  
Queen Sonja

### Plattform

Sat 27 May 14:00 Free  
Artist Talk  
(also streamed online)

Closing Weekend Talks:  
Nina Sun Eidsheim and  
Gary Tomlinson  
Sat 12 Aug 14:00 Free  
Talks

### Guided tours and family workshops

Every Sunday 14:00  
Every Sunday 13:00  
For families/children

### Concert

Fri 26 May 19:30 390,-/200,-  
This event is organised by  
Bergen International Festival  
Venue: Håkonshallen

### Staff

Axel Wieder  
Director

Jonette Vindenes  
Head of Administration

Nora-Swantje Almes  
Curator Live Programme

Stacy Brafield  
Communication

Sofia Marie Hamnes  
Producer

Thea Haug  
Members and Bookshop

Ragna Haugstad  
Bookshop – on leave

Essia Hidoussi  
Producer for Diversity and Inclusion

Mai Lahn-Johannessen  
Program Manager

Silja Leifsdottir  
Curator of Exhibitions

Ifrah Hassan Osman  
Live Programme Aspirant  
Hilde Marie Pedersen  
Head of Education

Emilio Sanhueza  
Head of Communication

Jonas Skarmark  
Technical Producer

Henrik Skauge  
AV-technician

Eric Alvin Wangel  
Head of Production

### Reception and Tours

Thea Hundsnes  
Vilja Marjatta Kjersheim  
Fredrik Langevåg  
Øystein Larssen  
Mari Norddahl  
Elise B. R. Petersen  
Martin Midtbø Rokkones

### Events and distribution

Åsa Bjørndal  
Lars Jonsson  
Lene Anette Kolltveit  
Ingvild Nordfonn  
Aksel Persen  
Marthe Serck-Hanssen  
Tale Elida Giancotti Søylen  
Eirinn O. Voldsund

### Technicians

Dan Brown  
Tim Ekberg  
Sturla Heggdalsvik  
Sarah Jost  
Fergus Tibbs

### Cleaners

Andrine Graue-Einarsen  
Marie Lahn-Johannessen

### Thank you

Randy Gibson, Max programming  
Thom Johansen, Circuit engineering  
and programming (*Everything and  
Nothing*)  
Agnar Gundersen, Production  
development and installation  
Henning Labrå and Kampen  
Mekaniske, metalwork  
UPA, casting and fabrication  
ITO Produksjon AS, Tyrstrand, tube  
production  
Mantena AS Alnabru, railway-parts  
Dia Art Foundation  
Jonas Bø Cassel, 3d modeling,  
prototyping  
Simen Stenberg, Studio assistance

Tor Ove Hamborg, Geir Kirkaune /  
Kuve

Thank you to my family for their dedi-  
cated support