

vv\_  
oo\_  
ic\_  
eer

**voice**  
**over (4-6)**

--vvooiceer

he\_  
ct\_  
**hectorm**  
**acinnes**  
ma\_  
cs\_

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0.

**intro**

4.

5.

6.

**litany  
strategy  
cacophony**

0. intro

(i)

**110926\_042.WAV**

Here is a file recorded in the course of your work: perhaps it's an interview, perhaps it's a recording of a workshop, perhaps it's a field recording made while teaching someone the basic skills of field recording.

You open it in Pro Tools or Reaper or Logic, and press play.

The very first thing you hear is your own voice.

Almost immediately the back of your neck tightens up. Your grip on a coffee cup, or on the arms of a chair, tightens slightly and you lower your head. Your eyes de-focus, and the feeling is that you are withdrawing behind them, backing away from the sensory space and taking the form of an anxious and disempowered homunculus. Uh oh. Oh no.

You ought really to be used to this by now,

to have become inured to the bodily affect of your own voice.

You must have recorded it, and listened back to it, hundreds if not thousands of times.

In fact, you hear it all day.

And yet, despite its familiarity and fundamentality, it appears before you - again - as a thing of violence. It remains far more un-nerving than any photograph, or any sample of your own handwriting, or the simple act of touching one of your hands with the other.

Those phenomena seem to yourself to be yourself.

Who is in that image? You are.  
Whose touch do you feel? Your own.  
Who wrote these words? You did.

But whose voice is that you hear? Somehow not yours, but your doppelgänger's. An imposter, who stole that time from you - the time in which you now hear yourself speaking - and occupied it in order to make you seem foolish, or bullish, or overconfident, or pretentious, or desperate, or overbearing, or weak. All of these things.

Why do you suffer from imposter syndrome?

Listen again, then delete.

>\_

This recording of your own voice holds the answer: because you are an imposter even to yourself.

(ii)

This booklet emerged from a practice-led enquiry into the role that voice plays in socially engaged arts work. Not simply how to deal with the uncanniness and nausea of *voice confrontation*, but how to subsume that into a wider reckoning with the power that comes with being the speaker, the biases we all have in favour of certain modes of articulation, the way we use our voices to manage and allocate the attention of others...

The project reflected on the schism between the way we hear our own voices, largely through bone conduction and as a function of our own thought processes, and how others hear them, through airborne vibrations and as a discernible flow of information or opinion.

It then explored that schism by working with the voice (my voice) across different media and different practices - print, letterpress, ventriloquism (metaphorical and literal) and audio technologies among other things.

(iii)

Some of these explorations led *nowhere* – or at least they initially seemed to.

Inspired by a passage from Olga Tokarczuk's *The Empusium* that describes a rutting stag, I attempted to merge my own articulations, using the audio programming capabilities of MaxMSP, with the frequencies and timbres available in field recordings of stags.

The results were, perhaps of course, an unsatisfactory mess.

Like all bad ideas, though, this one was bad for a reason. And that reason is always helpful.

Thinking of the sonic mess I had made as a failure of stags and I to speak for one another, I attended an exhibition and panel discussion curated under the theme of “ventriloquism”. I had become, in recent years, used to thinking about “ventriloquising” as a precarious, even pejorative, metaphor.

I imagine anyone who identifies as a socially engaged or participatory artist wants to elevate and to platform the voices of their participants; wants the communities they work with to be listened to. But to ventriloquise them most commonly means to try and speak for them, or to use their voices to project our own agendas.

So this exhibition, whose curatorial principle used ventriloquism in fact to *advocate proudly for speaking up when others can't*, gave me pause.

Perhaps a lot of artists (or, at least, galleries) believe passionately that their own personal practices are a righteous and unproblematic tool for speaking the concerns of underheard communities and individuals.

Perhaps my own circumspection about metaphorical ventriloquism is a corollary of my problems with voice confrontation.

Perhaps I should learn to own, and be more comfortable with, the tonality of my work, so I can put it to good use less hesitantly.

(iv)

Some of these explorations led *somewhere* - or at least initially seemed to.

I have gathered here three ideas that I found actually helped me think about the resonances of my own voice (literal and metaphorical), in so far as my practice, my work, my job, bring me into constant confrontation with them.

What unites them is that they focus on the ways that various taxonomies, signifiers, habits and expectations over-determine and over-codify spoken language - and how those over-determinations and over-codifications create tension and friction around the act of speaking.

Which is to say that they are a little toolkit to help me loosen up a bit about the existence of my own voice.

Perhaps they might be useful to you, in this way or in other ways.

*The project, I realised as it wound down, sat within a much longer series of investigations in and around sound, speech and text that I had been informally indexing under the title "Voice Over". The sections of this booklet are therefore numbered **VO 4-6**.*

4.

litany

to be read aloud

voice over  
voice over  
voice over  
voice over  
voice over  
talk over  
talk about  
talk talk about  
talk  
happy talk

sweet talk  
small talk  
big talk  
all talk  
sales talk  
cross talk  
speed talk  
artist's talk

baby talk  
fighting talk  
pillow talk  
talk talk  
tick talk  
careless talk  
jive talk  
crazy talk  
talk the talk

talk down  
talk dirty  
talk pretty  
talk shop  
talk through the side  
talk shop through the side of your shop  
of your mouth  
talk through the side  
of your mouth

big mouth  
wide mouth  
loud mouth  
potty mouth  
mealy mouth  
open mouth  
closed mouth  
river mouth

motor mouth  
down in mouth  
down in grangemouth  
down in weymouth  
down in lynmouth  
down in dartmouth  
down in yarmouth

full mouth  
cave mouth  
mouth to mouth  
foot in mouth  
tongue in cheek  
foot in cheek  
tongue in hand

hold your tongue  
forked tongue  
sliced tongue  
salted tongue  
speak in tongues  
speak in Tongue

speak with  
speak for  
spoken for  
speak for  
speak to  
speak about  
speak to  
speak for

*speak nearby*  
*speak over*  
*speak under*  
*speak out*  
*speak for yourself*  
*speak up*  
*techspeak*  
*newspeak*  
*don't speak*

*speak on behalf*  
*speakeasy*  
*speak clearly*  
*speak freely*  
*speak softly*  
*speak ill*  
*speak ill*  
*speak ill*  
*speak at all*

*speak in confidence*

*speak in code*

*speak to this*

*speak to that*

*speak over*

*speak over*

*speak over*

*speak at*

*Speak in  
your own voice  
your true voice  
the voice of reason  
the voice of prophecy  
the voice of experience  
the voice of dissent  
the voice of god  
the voice of the people*

*the inner voice  
indoor voice  
little voice  
soft voice  
cross voice  
acousmatic voice  
automatic voice*

*throw your voice  
train your voice  
lose your voice  
strain your voice  
ai voice*

*voice concerns  
voice opinions  
voice recognitions  
voice operations  
voices from the wild  
voices from the stage  
voices from childhood  
voices from the grave  
voices from the ground*

*voices over*  
*voices over*  
*voices over*  
*voice over*  
*voice over*

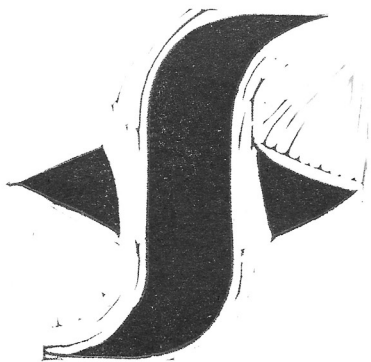
**voice**

**over**

5.

**strategy**

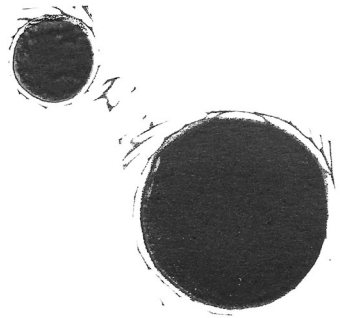
to be chosen from and added to



What your voice sounds like to you,  
belongs to you.

What your voice sounds like to other  
people, belongs to them.

Remember each person.



There is rarely any risk  
of saying too little.

Your voice has many different shapes.

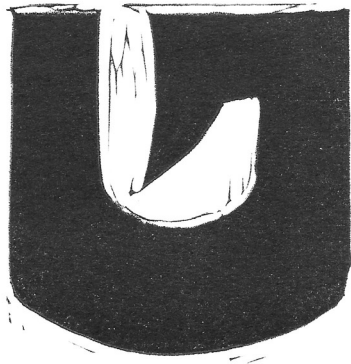
Other people's voices are always interesting. You are one of them.



Sound out the room before anyone else arrives: walk around it, enunciating high and low frequencies and exploring its different resonances.

Sit in silence in the centre of the room  
before anyone else arrives. Get used to  
its silence, befriend it, make an  
agreement with it.

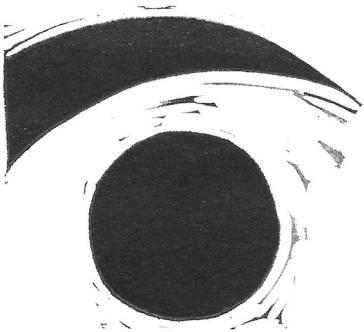
Write down a good reason why might you  
re-voice someone else's words in your  
own words?



Recite the alphabet.

Recite the alphabet, finding an  
alternative pronunciation  
for each letter.

Concentrate on finding the lowest  
speaking volume that can hold  
attention.



There is the way your voice sounds  
to yourself.

There is the way your voice sounds  
to others.

There is the way a recording of your  
voice sounds to yourself, which is a  
third and wholly different thing.

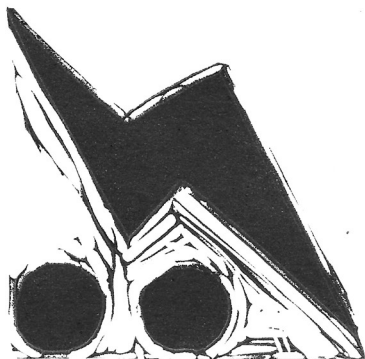
Each word and sentence you speak  
is held in place - held up - by the  
words and sentences either side of it.

Before you enter a room, say something  
that will hold up - that will hold in  
place - the first things you will need to  
say within it.

After you leave, say something that will  
hold the last thing you said - change  
it a little if you need to; soften in;  
sharpen it; absorb it.

“Show don’t tell” is not about the  
visual set against the sonic.

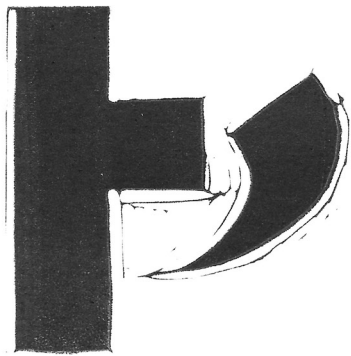
You can sustain this distinction  
within speech alone.



Every spoken thing was a lost  
opportunity to say something else.

An amplifier is simply a specific arrangement of other components.

Everything is an amplifier.

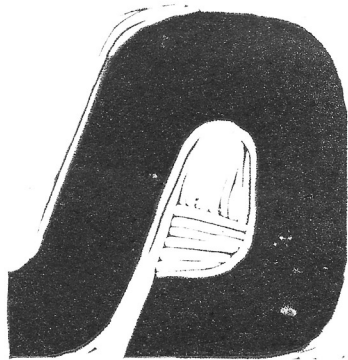


Speech is a type of distortion.

Speak only to meet the needs  
of the people in the room.

This includes yourself.

When you are waiting for others  
to speak, wait longer.



Give each person in the room a different short text (around 200 words) and ask them to all read it out loud simultaneously. Participate in this yourself as well. While reading aloud, listen to all the voices jumbled together. Invite a participant to conduct volume and pitch with hand gestures. When everyone is finished, reflect briefly on the empty space within which you are about to speak, before speaking.

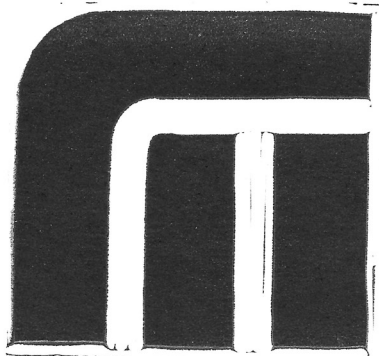
NB. Consider everyone's reading ability before trying this strategy.

The audible is a commons.

Instead of just recording your voice,  
film yourself.

Or find some way of recording  
the movements your body made.  
Or write down what you wore.  
Or doodle while you speak.

Or maybe this: before you begin a  
workshop or a session, leave a field  
recorder running at home, or wherever  
you might be otherwise. Record the sound  
of your absence from there instead, and  
when you come home, listen to that.



Not everything is a test.

Hoot, bellow, chirp, honk, hiss, roar,  
grunt.

Everything is a test.

6.

**cacophony**

to be studied



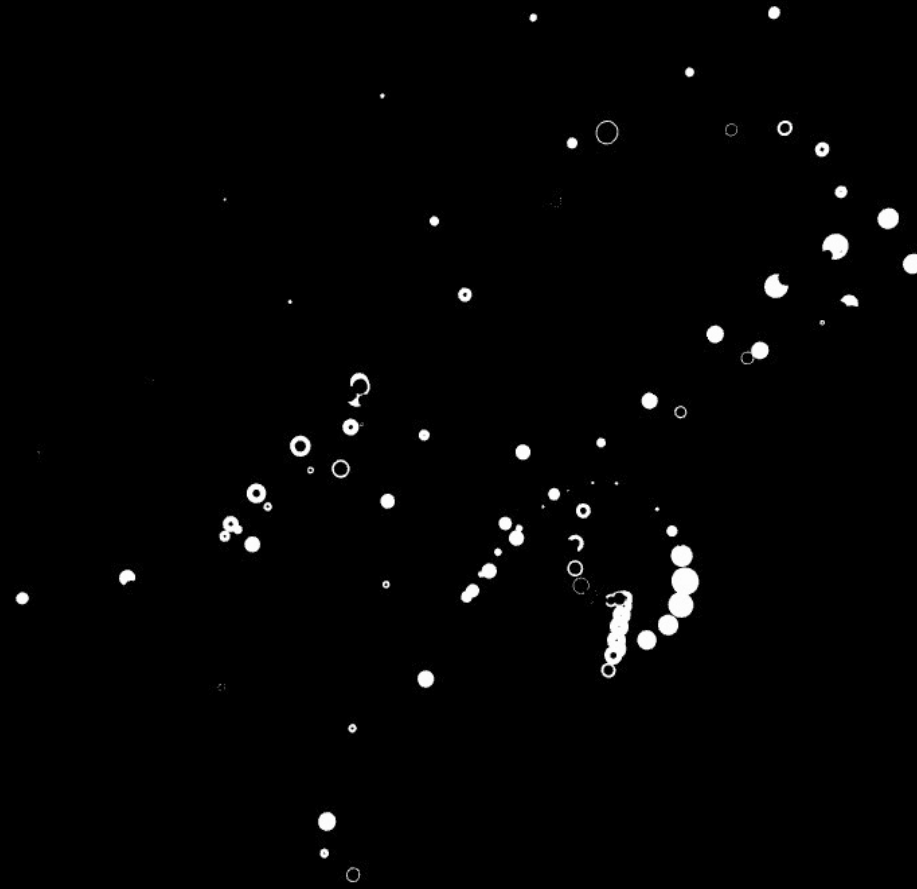


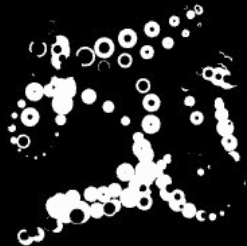


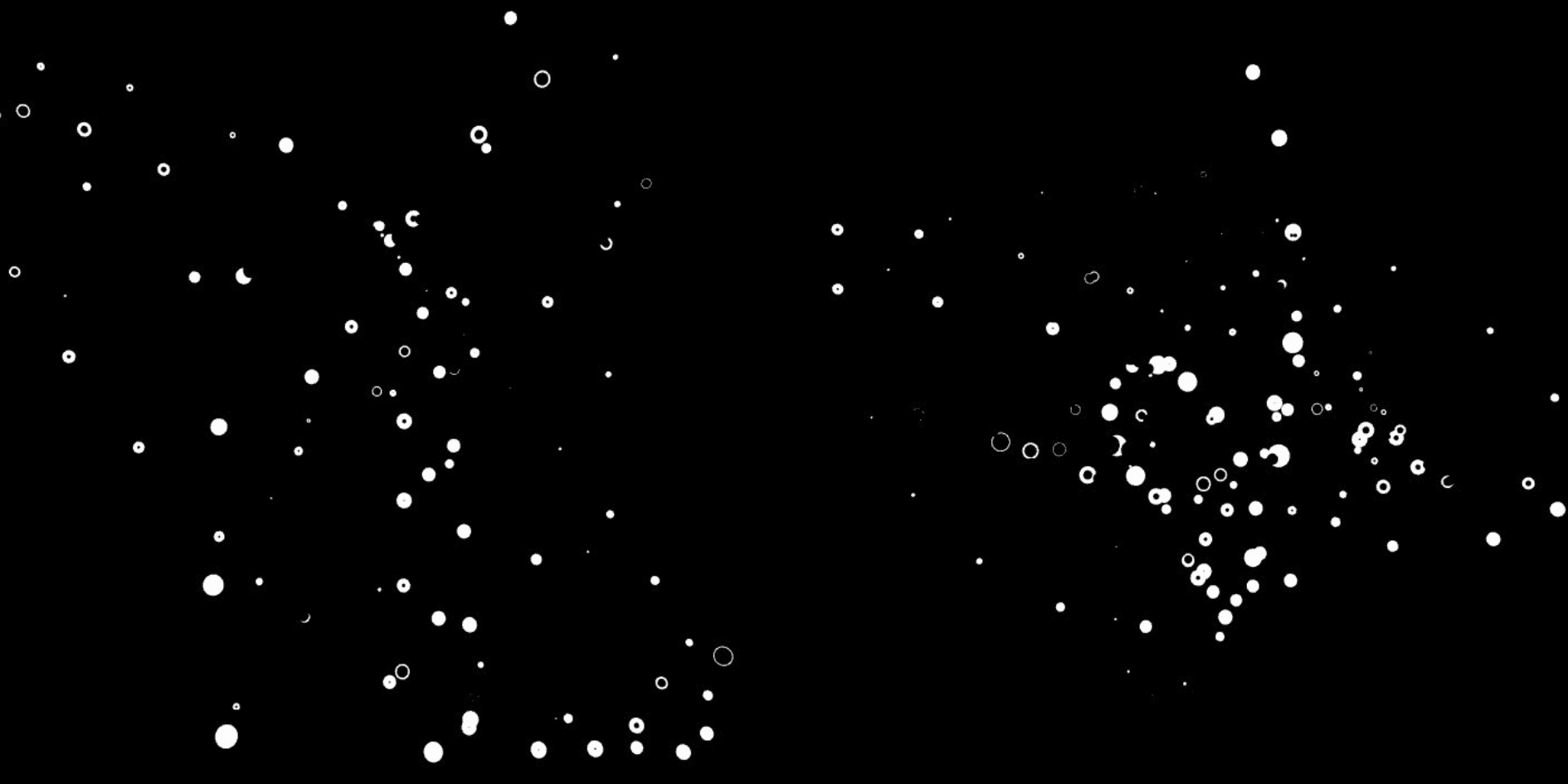














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