

MUSEUM SHOWS

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Currents 2014 — Re-Collect: Jane Tingley with Michal Seta

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Canadian artist Jane Tingley is interested in “looking at the not-so-perfect nature of technology and trying to find poetry in it.”

The appearance of her work in *Currents 2014* suggests something beyond the technological. *Re-Collect* is a series of suspended, glowing

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Re-Collect: Jane Tingley with Michal Seta



objects connected with cabling. The light-sound piece, which resembles a jellyfish and a tree, is designed to recall the synaptic connections within the brain.

Tingley, an assistant professor of hybrid media in the department of fine arts at the University of Waterloo, Ontario, made the prototype form of the hanging objects out of clay, referring to medical drawings of synapses. “I gave the form to a cabinetmaker, and it was spun on a lathe. It’s a beautiful form. Then it was cut in half and carved out in the center. I took the two halves, and I made molds and clear-cast them in resin.

“*Re-Collect* has five nodes, and each one has five arms, and in the

center is a circle. So there are five objects hanging with speakers, and in the center is a microphone I made myself. All have fiber optics embedded in them, and there are also LEDs, so there are two qualities of lighting.”

What she calls a “sonic and luminescent mass” is actually a responsive installation that incorporates recordings. “It’s constantly attentive to its environment. As people interact in space at various times, the piece is recording them — not in a surveillance way but in a remembering way — and those recordings get folded into a memory.”

The recordings are from the lifespan of the installation, which previously exhibited in Montreal, Quebec; Kitchener-Waterloo, Ontario; and New York City. When people move through the installation, the recordings are

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triggered — apparently randomly, although there is a programmed pattern. “Its character will change as it interacts with individuals in Santa Fe; that will shape future experiences in other places. It’s kind of like a human: as you meet people, you change over time.”

Re-Collect has several states. When “at rest,” it’s in what Tingley calls a dream state, which is characterized by mild sound events and ambient light fluctuations reminiscent of a lightning storm. “When you enter the space, you start to activate it and it gets agitated and there’s a lovely light display that happens. Once it gets used to you, it goes into the listening state, and that’s when it folds you into its own memory. It then cycles between the agitation and listening states.”

For this piece, she invited composer and digital artist Michal Seta to improvise “a specific sound quality,” she said. “I worked with Michal at the matralab at Concordia [University], so I was familiar with his work.

“We’re using a physics engine [software], and that creates a three-dimensional space where we’ve placed the installation. In a computer we’ve defined the space, and it knows where the speakers and sensors are. So the sounds are spatialized — which means they’re spinning throughout the space — and as people walk through, their bodies will trigger the sensors, and the sensors will push the sounds around.”

Can the visitor create a cacophony or something very peaceful by doing certain things? “Well, if the visitor spends a lot of time repeating himself or whistling or doing something very particular, it’s likely that a recording will be triggered while he’s there, but this is more of a longevity type of idea. When we get to Santa Fe, we will add a few things. I want a playback that follows a recording, so maybe something happens and there’s an instant playback. We’re going to try to incorporate something so that people will hear themselves.”

The artists will fine-tune *Re-Collect* for the space. This includes coming up with a way to “wake up” the installation. At previous venues, they were able to do that with a sensor in the doorway through which people entered the

artwork space, but at El Museo Cultural de Santa Fe, the piece is in the center of a room.

Regarding the commonly understood divide between the organic and the technological, Tingley is inclined to be a little loose. “I don’t believe the technological needs to be rigid. In fact, if you take off the hard shell of technology, what’s revealed is actually something very complicated and similar to our human systems — our veins and nerves. My interest is not making a machine that sort of pushes forward, stomping forward. It’s more like making something that’s more fragile, so I sort of draw attention to that organic quality of the technological.

“I’m really interested in drawing out the sensitivity of technology, looking at technological systems as flawed. Things that are perfect are not so interesting. People aren’t perfect. It’s maybe in our flaws that people have poetry, I suppose.”

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