

Christian Groothuizen

Resonant Objects: Communicating Vessels

(Plywood Felt, Bioplastic, 2020)

This installation is in response to a passage in Juhani Pallasmaa's book *The Eyes of the Skin*. Pallasmaa develops the idea of sound's inherent ability to conjure within the mind an entire city through a snapshot of aural experience: 'Anyone who has half-woken up to the sound of a train or an ambulance in a nocturnal city, and through his/her sleep experienced the space of the city with its countless inhabitants scattered within its structures, knows the power of sound over the imagination; the nocturnal sound is a reminder of human solitude and mortality, and it makes one conscious of the entire slumbering city'. (Pallasmaa, 2005)

In his *Ten Books of Architecture*, Vitruvius (80 BCE to 15 BCE) describes how bronze 'acoustic urns' were placed amongst theatre audiences to enhance the vocal performance of actors on stage. There are no known extant examples of this Greco/Roman technology. With the rediscovery of Vitruvius' writings in the middle ages, many stone chapels, throughout France and England, were constructed with stoneware urns placed within the walls to obtain a similar effect. Modern scientific analysis shows that the effect is negligible. A recent theory suggests that the vessels were employed as portals to communicate with angels.

These objects are 3D printed from data sourced from a series of field recordings made by the artist. The field

recordings were made at night in cities that the artist has lived in during his lifetime, South Auckland and London. They are three dimensional sonic snapshots of nocturnal spaces of slumber. The recordings explore sound's complex relationship with architecture and the built environment. The work describes both the exploration through making of real objects and an enquiry into 'Sound Objects' as phenomenological events, drawing from Pierre Schaeffer's view that the Sound Object, 'is a kind of phenomenological quest for the essence of sound'. (Schaeffer, 2012) These investigations form the basis of an investigation into architectural space, sound and memory.