

# Shorthand

## Katarzyna Krakowiak

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On 11 October 2012, K. enters the storefront at 334 Broome Street. Quietly scanning the room, she draws out her effects: annotated plans, a computer, small electronic box, multiple microphones, and diverse measuring devices. Her equipment is efficiently deployed, dispatched to the recesses of the space — the concealed closet that no one sees. Here, from the still middle of the space, while the powerful exhaust system blows, the upstairs neighbors trudge, and the cargo trucks outside rumble, she records the volume of silence.

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The experience of sound is a multipart process of translation: the compression of air engenders a waveform that resonates in the ear to be interpreted by the brain and become an audible impression. In the case of language, this process undergoes yet another step, as a particular pattern of noises resolves itself into phonemes and discrete units of meaning. The multiple levels of abstraction and potential for ambiguity within this cycle of interpretation are paramount to artist Katarzyna Krakowiak's nuanced approach to sound, architecture, and sculpture.

In her work *Shorthand* (2012), Krakowiak focuses on the limits of sound and its quietly disruptive potential. An acute connoisseur of raw noise, Krakowiak recognizes that what passes for silence — a non-condition, or perceived absence — is in fact rich with stimuli specific to a given context. The exhibition space of P!, a former exhaust systems contracting office, resonates with a cadence entirely its own, fueled by an overly-vigorous fan system that blows at intervals. The pulse of the street outside is equally particular: the space is located on a cobblestone block of Broome Street that serves as a significant thoroughfare for trucks and other vehicles passing between the Manhattan Bridge and the Lincoln Tunnel. The deep reverberations of big rigs grumble through the space like intermittent parlor-room quarrels. This aural landscape — invisible, ephemeral, yet palpable — forms the sonic footprint of P! and an indelible undercurrent to any possible inhabitation.

The artist's first move was to archive the fullness of this silence. Visiting P! during off-hours, Krakowiak created a multi-hour audio recording of the exhibition space from inside a hidden closet. This non-space becomes a secret station for observation. Through amplification, the audio document was then enhanced and made legible for human transcription. The resulting onomatopoeic text presents the successive appearance and frequencies of multiple aural phenomena, with the whirr of white noise as a constant whisper. Operating as if a script for reading, or a score for

performance, this particular silence is transcribed and transmuted from being merely descriptive into a text with the potential for repetition and future expression.

For her installation at P!, Krakowiak allows these ideas of silence, translation, and extension to rupture the closed system of the architectural space. Incising an orifice along the corner of the entrance foyer, she connects the space's entryway with the hidden closet where her recordings were first generated.. A second fissure punctures the ceiling of the closet and runs an exhaust duct with speaker equipment to a new ventilation grill, added directly above the exterior front door. Through this conduit the very sound of the space, as apprehended within the closet, is channeled outdoors for people to experience.

This system of cuts, additions, and amplifications completes a complex audio loop of estrangement. Audio impressions from within the concealed closet broadcast to street-side visitors as they approach the entrance to P!, the shuffle of their steps adding to the sound, filtering back through the speaker system and into their ears. There is no position for passive listening within this impossible situation of perception, reflection, and translation. The cycle is further complicated by Krakowiak's own real-time performance within the installation: for several days during the show, the artist will confine herself within the closet and strike, shake, and manipulate materials to create new noises that will mingle with the actual sounds of the exhibition space and project to its immediate exterior surroundings.

*Possibility 02: Growth*, the ongoing exhibition of which this project is the second installation, focuses on the myth of unchecked expansion, the gentrification of space, and the impossibility of an outside. Documenting, amplifying, and performing the silence of the raw space of P! — while simultaneously infiltrating the street with this investigation — through her multi-layered approach, Krakowiak expands the possibilities of how an entity or community might inhabit space. Invited to fill the exhibition with her work, she instead chooses to transform the space's apparent aural absence into a perceivable presence that implicates the viewer's bodies in the creation of noise. Space, turned back upon itself, becomes a feedback loop of conflicting sound and settlement.

— Prem Krishnamurthy, exhibition curator

Katarzyna Krakowiak (b. 1980) explores sculpture and architecture with the use of various media, notably sound. Her solo exhibition for the Polish Pavilion at the 13th International Architecture Exhibition—La Biennale di Venezia, *Making the walls quake as if they were dilating with the secret knowledge of great powers* (Venice, 2012), received a Special Mention. Other significant exhibitions include *Who Owns the Air?*, Galeria Foksal (Warsaw, 2011), and *Game and Theory*, South London Gallery (London, 2009).

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