

GERTRUDE CONTEMPORARY

MEDIA RELEASE



VOCAL FOLDS

MANON DE BOER (NL), MARCUS COATES (UK), VALIE EXPORT (AUT)
CURATED BY JACQUELINE DOUGHTY

EXHIBITION DATES: 22 JUNE – 20 JULY 2013
OPENING: FRIDAY 21 JUNE 2013, 6–8PM

Gertrude Contemporary is pleased to present *Vocal Folds*. This exhibition of video installations by three influential international artists explores the physical and spatial qualities of the voice, moving beyond language and melody into the material and embodied. The voice articulates language and the transmission of abstractions, emotions and ideas, but it is also a physical product of the lungs, vocal chords, tongue and lips. In *Vocal Folds* the voice is both embodied and disembodied, sculptural material and conceptual conduit.

A listening library accompanying the exhibition presents an eclectic mix of recordings from the fields of experimental music and improvisational performance. Situating the exhibition within a wider context of expanded vocal and sound poetry practice, these recordings by iconic figures such as Meredith Monk (USA) and Henri Chopin (France) will be presented alongside more recent practitioners such as Jaap Blonk (Netherlands), Fatima Miranda (Spain) and the Sydney-based sound poet Amanda Stewart.

Live events in the gallery by Melbourne performers will include appearances by Jenny Barnes, Carolyn Connors, Dirk de Bruyn, Alice Hui-Sheng Chang, Tarquin Manek, Christopher LG Hill and Alex Vivian. These performers push the voice beyond its role as a vehicle for speech and melody, breaking language down into its smallest components, or doing away with it altogether to take the voice into a realm of growls, hisses, clicks, gurgles and wheezes that situate the voice firmly within the body and assert its origins in the breath.

Breath and voice are often characterized as immaterial and lacking in substance, but in the work of Dutch artist Manon de Boer they are revealed as strongly bodily. Her video work *one, two, many*, recently exhibited at DOCUMENTA 13, is made up of three performances which explore the existential space of the voice and its relationship to the body and the listener. In one segment the flautist Michael Schmid performs a solo

composition of circular breathing that builds in intensity, uninterrupted for nine minutes, and in which his strain embodies the physicality of breath.

The major, multi-screen video installation *Dawn Chorus* by British artist Marcus Coates sees 14 people interrupt their quiet moments with spontaneous birdcall. Coates, who explores contemporary shamanism and our connection to the natural world, filmed performers mimicking the slowed down field recordings of bird calls, translating the sounds of a language incomprehensible to us into abstract song. The footage was then sped-up so that the human-bird sounds recall the original avian dawn chorus. The performers' quickened movements - impossibly fast breath, facial twitches - return the voice to the physical body.

VALIE EXPORT, the iconic and provocative Austrian artist, takes us right to the origin of the voice in her video *I turn over the pictures of my voice in my head*, with footage from a performance in which the artist inserted a laryngoscope into her throat and filmed the contractions of her vocal cords as she reads a text. In this monologue she proposes that the voice is neither body or language, but a sign.

Performance and screening dates:

Thursday 27 June, 6:30 for 7-8pm: Performances by Jenny Barnes, Alice Hui-Sheng Chang, Carolyn Connors

Thursday 11 July, 6:30 for 7-8pm: Performances by Christopher LG Hill & Alex Vivian, Shane Van Den Akker & Nik Kennedy, Tarquin Manek

Thursday 18 July, 6:30 for 7-8pm: OtherFilm – Gertrude Contemporary film screening and performance: Dirk de Bruyn, Arf Arf (Frank Lovece, Michael Buckley, Marisa Stirpe)

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Image credit: Marcus Coates, *Dawn Chorus* (video still), 2007

Courtesy of Kate McGarry Gallery, London