

Drum Listens to Heart: Part III

Curated by Anthony Huberman

Organized by Diego Villalobos

CCA Wattis Institute for Contemporary Art

Part III: January 17 - March 4, 2023

→ Exhibition Overview

Drum Listens to Heart: Part III

is the final part of a three-part exhibition, and this part presents installation, video, interactive, and sculptural works. The series brings together an international roster of artists exploring rhythm, pulse, music, cultural history, healing, power, freedom, and control.

→ About *Drum Listens to Heart*

This exhibition, along with the accompanying performances and programming, weaves together various forms of **percussion**—physical and socio-political, literal and metaphorical. Together, the works juxtapose instances of physical impact and vibration with forms of command, emancipation, and community-building.

Drum Listens to Heart is centered around an action foundational to human existence: to strike an object against another. The simple act of beating is not only a tool for fabrication and mark-making, but also for oppression and control—to strike or to beat down. In opposition, *the beat* has also been used as a means to break free, to express independence, and to establish language in the face of oppression. Without needing words or images, the percussive can threaten forms of authority and voice a powerful demand for freedom.

→ For Reference

Source: [merriam-webster.com/dictionary/](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/)

“Percussion”: per·cus·sion | \ pər-ˈkə-shən

1: the act of percussing: such as

a: the striking of a percussion cap so as to set off the charge in a firearm

b: the beating or striking of a musical instrument

c: the act or technique of tapping the surface of a body part to learn the condition of the parts beneath by the resultant sound

2: the striking of sound on the ear

3: percussion instruments that form a section of a band or orchestra

“Polyrhythmic”: poly·rhythm | \ ˈpā-lē-ri-thəm \

1: the simultaneous combination of contrasting rhythms in music

→ About the Artists

David Hammons (b. 1943, Springfield, USA)

Hammons' 1995 installation is made by bouncing a charcoal and dirt covered basketball onto a gallery wall. Hammons collected the dirt from Harlem, a historically Black neighborhood in New York City. Hammons wields the basketball as a paintbrush-like tool. This mark-making sparks thinking about the role of Black athletes in the sport of basketball.

Basketball Installation, 1995

Steel basketball hoop, tree trunk, ceramic jug, basketball, dirt on wall



Hammons' video, *Gong*, shows the artist observing a construction site on a New York City street, clamoring with the sound of power tools. He joins the construction workers, and begins to play a gong next to them. His intervention is meant to transform the scene: he invites the viewer to consider the workers as musicians and to reframe what we first consider noise as urban music.

Gong, n.d.

Single-channel video, color, sound. 5:15 minutes

NIC Kay (b. 1989, Bronx, USA)

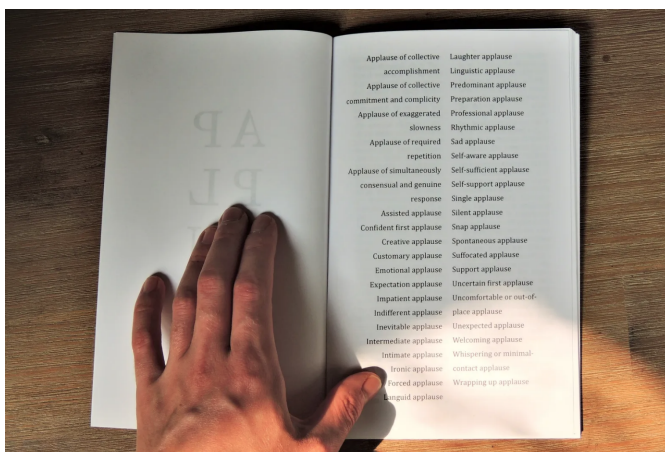
Name the playlist, Deep down inside, deep deep inside, or Table thumping with Uncle Djembe, 2022
Video, iPhone, school desk, sound.

Installed on a phone and on the wall, with a school desk protruding from it are two videos by interdisciplinary artist, performer, and choreographer NIC Kay. Interested in Black cultures and communities online, Kay documents and collages scenes from everyday life, tailoring their videos to the formats of TikTok and Instagram. One silent video shows a close up of an older person's hand, slowly tapping on a table; another combines footage of younger people tapping on school desks, creating a beat. The audio is played through abstracted vibrations behind the wall. A QR code invites visitors to experience (on their phones) the different sounds and music the artist has been collecting. NIC Kay will also be taking over Wattis social media for a week in February as part of their work in this show.



Consuelo Tupper Hernández (b. 1992, Chile)

Applause Dictionary, 2020-2022
Printed book, 8 x 5 in.



Applause Dictionary is a printed book that is installed at the Wattis in the form of 17 printed pages, each with 100 copies for visitors to take. Tupper Hernández considers the social and cultural contexts for applause, which we perform for others and encounters throughout our lives. In her two column list, we can see the many kinds of applause, as well as its different forms and functions. The CCA MFA graduate explores the range of this communal act depending on social context: confident, uncomfortable, professional, sad, self-sufficient, and even silent.

Raven Chacon (b. 1977, Fort Defiance

American Ledger No. 1, 2022

Performance score on flag, dimensions variable.



This composition is presented in two different formats in the exhibition. It takes the form of a flag and has flown above the entrance to the Wattis throughout all three parts of *Drum Listens to Heart*. In *Part III*, this composition is also printed on an army blanket and placed on the Wattis gallery floor.

The composition presents a *score*: or an arrangement for making a piece of music.

Meant to be performed, this score is based on the story of the founding of the United

States, including moments of violence, building, erasure, destruction, and rebirth.

Chacon's score suggests that stories, like music, do not have to always be told in the same way. *American Ledger No. 1* is meant to be performed using coins, ax and wood, a police whistle, and a match.

Angel, bist du es? II, 2010

c-print, 24.4 x 33.9 in.



David Zink Yi (b. 1973, Lima, Peru)

In David Zink Yi's trio of photographs from 2010 *Angel, bist du es?*, each captures two pairs of feet: one standing firmly on the ground, while the other is suspended in the air. While the image anticipates the eventual thud of the suspended feet landing on the ground, it also makes us question if they, instead of falling, are levitating, jumping, or ascending. The varying heights of the pairs of feet across the three images form a visually fluctuating rhythm and beat. With much of Zink Yi's work informed by music, his photographs visualize the percussive. The Berlin-based artist gives the work a German title, which translates to Is that you, Angel in English?

Guadalupe Maravilla (b. 1976, San Salvador, El Salvador)

Disease Thrower #16, 2021

Gong, steel, wood, cotton, glue mixture, plastic, loofah, and objects collected from a ritual of retracing the artist's original migration route.

98 x 96 x 52

Guadalupe Maravilla's *Disease Thrower* series symbolizes healing through spirituality and non-Western medicine. The large gongs in the sculptures refer to the healing practice of sound baths, where sonic vibrations align with bodily vibrations in deep meditation. These sculptural "healing machines," as the artist calls them, are arrangements of found objects, including toy snakes, plastic anatomical models, baskets, and conch shells, all things the artist encountered on his journey as a young migrant from Central America to the United States.

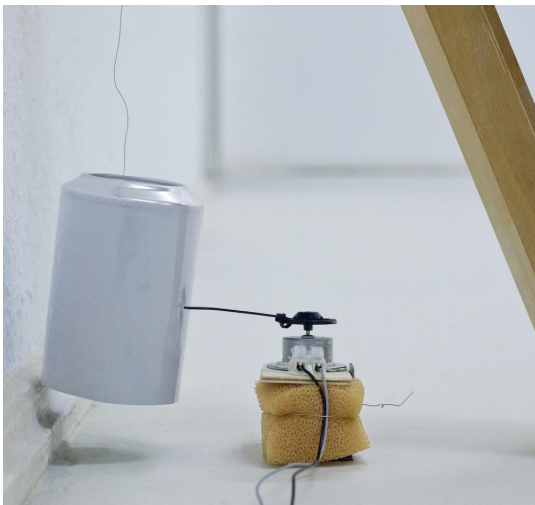


On the walls is a painting of *tripa chuca*, a popular children's drawing game in El Salvador that the artist played on his migration journey. As the artist describes the game, participants draw lines connecting pairs of numbers to form an abstract pattern. In the artwork, collaborators who share a similar story of migration form an index of cultural exchange. A game of two players, the artist collaborates with a DACA recipient to paint this on site for the exhibition.

Rie Nakajima (b. 1976, Yokohama, Japan)

Kaeru Oto (Sound, returning), 2023

Motor, timer, wire, objects



Rie Nakajima combines locally sourced everyday materials with motors to install kinetic sculptures on site. A small motorized stick taps a can, making it hit a wall over and over; another hand-made device forces a small cardboard box to turn in circles, causing the tiny ball inside to roll from corner to corner in a series of small thuds; another device repeatedly strikes a sheet of plastic, making it bounce and vibrate. Spread throughout a gallery, Nakajima's playful kinetic sculptures form a *polyrhythmic* of sounds and bring everyday objects to life.

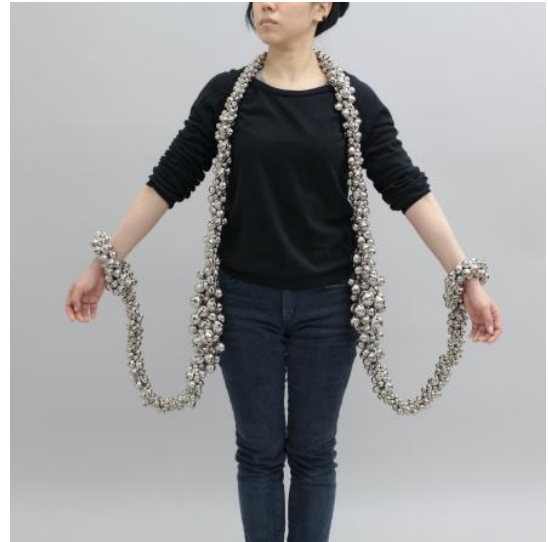
Haegue Yang (b. 1971, Seoul, South Korea)

Scarf with Mitten Ends-Brass Plated #1, 2013/2018

Brass plated bells, metal rings, elastic cord

13 x 224 x 13 cm

Haegue Yang's interactive Sonicwear sculptures are partially inspired by Korean shamanism, where female shamans rattle and dance with bells to summon spirits and ancestors. Yang is also inspired by European Bauhaus artists of the early twentieth century: their creative projects brought together the principles of architecture, fashion, art, and choreography. Yang invites gallery attendees to wear her Sonicwear pieces as scarves and bracelets. With them, the visitor creates performance and sound with the jangle of brass and nickel-plated bells on their bodies.

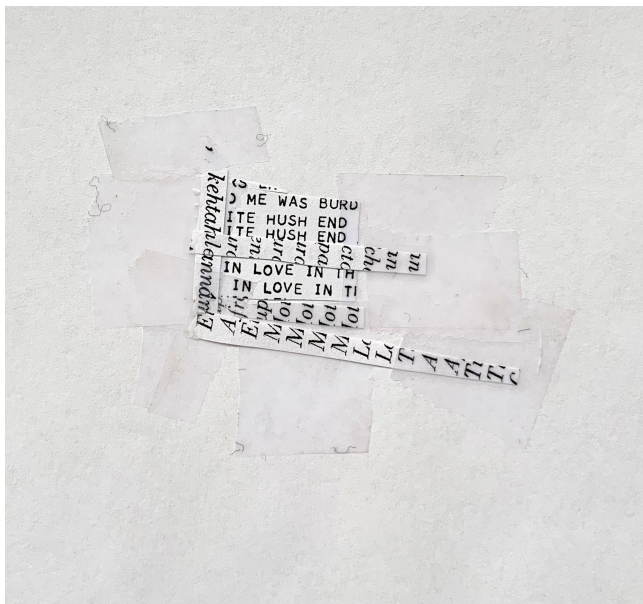


On the walls are digitally printed wallpaper Yang commissioned for the exhibition. The content references Peruvian shamanistic ritual, climate change, and the environment.

Susan Howe (b.1937, Boston) & **David Grubbs** (b.1967, Louisville)

Concordance page 82, 2022 (detail of collage)

Represented in the exhibition by letterpress prints, 6 x ½ x 8 ¾ in. each.



Susan Howe finds rhythm in found language and inserts a break within the beat of language. Pages from her poetry collection *Concordance* consist of collages made with found words. She collects this language from sources including poetry and literature, nature field guides and legal documents. When read aloud, this language starts, stops, sputters, and erupts again, in percussive rhythms. Single pages of poetry are turned into one-minute recordings she made with the musician David Grubbs.

These are played every fifteen minutes throughout the duration of all three chapters of the exhibition.

→ Recommended Questions for Discussion

Before your visit...

1. What does percussion mean to you? What comes to mind when you first hear this word?
2. What are forms of percussion that you interact with everyday?
3. Can you think of any examples of percussion that are:
 - Physical
 - Social
 - Political
 - Literal
 - Metaphorical?

During your visit...

1. How do you experience the artworks included in the exhibition as expressing the percussive?
2. Which works challenge your conception of percussion?
3. Part III of this exhibition includes works in a variety of formats and mediums. How do they relate to each other? How do the different works of art in the show respond, correlate, harmonize, or re-percuss with one another?

After your visit...

5. How has your perception of percussion changed?
6. Which of the artworks motivated you to think about the percussive as a social or political concept?
7. After considering the artworks included in the exhibition, can you think of an example of anything in another artwork or in everyday life that is a metaphorical example of the percussive?

→ **Related Programming**

Live music performances (curated by Diego Villalobos):

January 21, 8pm: Ikue Mori, William Winant, Valentina Magaletti, and NOMON (at The Lab)

February 25, 8pm: Raven Chacon and Music Research Strategies (at The Lab)

Lectures, screenings, and other events:

January 26, 6pm: Josiah Luis Alderete curates a night of poetry readings, exploring the poetics of percussion and how language can expand a beat.

February 4: 11am: A Healing Sound Bath by Guadalupe Maravilla

March 4, 6pm: A Performance by NIC Kay

→ A Syllabus for Drum Listens to Heart

***Indicates it is available at the CCA Library

Listening to Percussion

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The Percussive as a Drum

Agawu, Kofi. [*The African Imagination in Music*](#). New York: Oxford University Press, 2016.

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Cahill, Zachary. [*Theaster Gates: Every Square Needs a Circle*](#). Chicago: Richard Gray Gallery, 2020.

Hurston, Zora N. 2009. [*Tell My Horse: Voodoo and Life in Haiti and Jamaica*](#). Edited by Henry L. Gates. New York: HarperCollins, 2009.

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Thompson, Robert F. [*Flash of the Spirit: African and Afro-American Art and Philosophy*](#). New York: Vintage Books, 1984.

Percussion is Political

Agudio, Elena, Anna Jäger, Saskia Köbschall, and Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung, eds. [*I Will Draw a Map of What You Never See: Endeavors in Rhythmanalysis*](#). Berlin: SAVVY Contemporary and Archive Books, 2019.

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