

Title: Sonic Crucible Entanglements

JORDAN LACEY, RMIT University

TOBY GIFFORD, University of the Sunshine Coast

MICK HARDING, Independent artist

1. PROGRAM NOTES

Sonic Crucible Entanglements is an ongoing 'new materialist' (Bennet 2010) investigation of singing bowls that critiques new age narratives (Barnett 2010; Brown 2020) by exploring the 'spiritual' potential of inter-cultural material-led collaborations. This live singing bowl performance, also featuring vocal and visual projections, will immerse audiences in an atmospheric cultural encounter combining performance, visuals, sound art and instruments. Taungurung Kulin artist Mick Harding will present a contextual introduction that explores the experimental approach of the collaboration. The artists acknowledge the Ngunnawal and Ngambri peoples, the traditional custodians of the Canberra region. Our intention of bringing smoke to this performance is not as a welcome to country or as an acknowledgement, but rather to introduce the element of smoke into the performance alongside light, sound, air and voice as part of our exploration of the vibrancy of materiality. Through a song of generosity, knowledge and sharing sung and performed by Mick Harding we embrace Indigenous Research Methods through a combination of traditional and new technologies of sound (Wilson 2008).



Fig. 1. Taungurung Kulin artist Mick Harding alongside the sonic crucible.

2. PROJECT DESCRIPTION

Taungurung Kulin artist Mick Harding joins Jordan Lacey and Toby Gifford to reveal entanglements across cultural and artistic practice. Harding is a member of the Taungurung people in Victoria, who draws upon his Aboriginal heritage in his

artwork and performances. Lacey and Gifford are musicians, technologists and researchers with international reputations in sound-based research and performance. Their sonic crucible performance-installation-sculpture is an automatically rotating silica-quartz singing bowl driven by a bespoke computer system designed by the artistic team. The bowl is lit from underneath giving it an orb like quality. A hydrophone is suspended inside the bowl, which is filled with various measurements of water throughout the performance. The resonant standing waves inside the water transfer through the hydrophone where they are processed by the computer system before transmission through an array of adjoining speakers. This allows for the mixing of the effected sounds and natural resonant properties of the bowl. A camera focused on the interface of air and water in the bowl connects to a second laptop with TouchDesigner installed. A number of Harding's original digital prints are mixed with a live image of the singing bowl's standing wave. This emphasizes the comparative dynamism of Harding's vibrant artworks and the bowl's acoustic properties. Wearing a possum-skin cloak,, Harding uses voice, dance and clapsticks while immersed in the live projections. During the performance Harding will use a traditional *Tarnak* placed in between projector and screen to create smoke from Eucalyptus leaves, the white-grey smoke of which is similar in colour to the projected images of the singing bowl. Harding's voice and clapsticks are accompanied by a contrabass clarinet, which in combination with the bowl resonance creates a spatial array of rich harmonic tones. The visual-sound-aroma combination creates an atmosphere designed to fully immerse the audience.

3. PERFORMANCE NOTES

As a performance-installation the performance can be ongoing. For instance, we could repeat each 10-15min performance multiple times over a 2-3 hour time span. Our proposal is for an outdoor space where the fire could be built, and then the performance conducted every half hour (approximately). The video link shows an example of the sequence of the performance and the ways in which the different mediums will be combined to create an immersive atmosphere. Equipment includes the sonic crucible sculpture measuring at 1.5x0.5x0.5m, two laptops (one each for bowl rotation and Touchdesigner), 3 speakers, a data projector, a video camera, and large screen. One of the performers plays a contrabass clarinet and another clap sticks. The area needs to be a darkened space, and if inside it should be a minimum 3x3 surface area that fits the equipment; a larger space would be preferred to support movement of performers. 4 power outlets required. Area for Tarnak should be outdoors, or indoor area able to temporarily shut down fire alarms. All equipment provided by artists.

4. MEDIA LINK(S)

- Sonic Crucible Entanglements w Introduction by Mick Harding:
<https://jordan-lacey.com/project/more-than-sound?index=sonic-crucible-entanglements>
[Note: this is a first iteration experiment to provide a sense of the structure of the performance.]

REFERENCES

- [1] J. Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2010.
- [2] R. Barnett, 'Understated Legacies: Uses of Oral History and Tibetan Studies', *Inner Asia*, 12(1): 63-9, 2010.
- [3] C.G. Brown, 'Tibetan Singing Bowls', *American Religion*, 1(2):52-73, 2020.
- [4] S. Wilson, *Research Is Ceremony: Indigenous Research Methods*, Canada: Fernwood Publishing, 2008.