

AND SAY
THE ANIMAL
RESPONDED?

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FACT
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INTRODUCTION

And Say the Animal Responded? is the title of an essay from 1997 by philosopher Jacques Derrida. In it, he questions whether humans can be set apart from - or above - the rest of the animal kingdom because of their unique intelligence. He disagrees with the argument that human language is special, that it enables us to 'respond' to others while animals merely 'react' through instinct. Ultimately, he points out, we cannot truly know how an animal thinks or what its communications mean.

But what if the animal did respond? How would we know? Are we listening? Studies show that animals feel emotions and have distinct personalities and ways of communicating, yet we rarely consider what the destruction of their habitats, and species extinction means beyond how it affects us.

As we cut down forests, expand farming, overfish, pollute the seas, and warm the planet, billions of animals are being lost. When we talk about the decline of bees, it is out of concern for food scarcity, the extinction of tigers or elephants is tragic for future generations who may never see them, and the bleaching of a coral reef is a devastating loss of beauty. Shouldn't our focus shift to consider non-human animals and their right to exist?

And Say the Animal Responded? brings together the work of six international artists. These pieces present face-to-face encounters with the sounds and behaviours of animals from around the planet. The exhibition creates a space for the animal's 'voice' and immerses visitors in animals' sonic lives: from an ocean choir of whales and dolphins recorded by hydrophone, to the quiet interactions between wolves captured by drone camera, to a living colony of leafcutter ants 'scratching' music in the gallery.

REPRESENTING THE ANIMAL'S VOICE

In this exhibition, we set out to represent the animal's voice and the animal's perspective. Of course, this was impossible. As humans, we filter everything through our own senses, experiences and understandings. When we represent animals in films, art, or even through the gifs which we use to communicate every day, we tend either to consider animals only in relation to humans and what they mean to us, or else we give them humanlike qualities so that we can empathise with them. We should care about animals not just because they are like us or are of value to us, but also because they are not like us. There are other ways of being in the world, and these are beautiful and deserve to be respected, protected from cruelty, and allowed to flourish.

To capture and present the animal (whether as specimen, image or sound) humans have used the technologies of their time, and these are always disturbing for the animal to some degree. Paintings and taxidermy often distorted the animal's nature and appearance in their presentation. Zoos changed the animal's behaviour. Today, we use a range of innovative techniques to detect and record animals, and assume that these present a truer representation. All the works in this exhibition present the animal through the use of technology. Yet, each does so with the knowledge that this changes the behaviour of the animal observed, and in doing so asks us to question what it is to observe other animals.

ARTISTS

ARIEL GUZIK

AMALIA PICA & RAFAEL ORTEGA

ALEXANDRA DAISY GINSBERG

DEMELZA KOIJ

KUAI SHEN

GALLERY 1 GROUND FLOOR

AMALIA PICA &
RAFAEL ORTEGA
*Catalogue of great ape
gestures (in alphabetical
order) (2018)*

AMALIA PICA &
RAFAEL ORTEGA
Pan troglodytes ellioti and cousins (2016)

ARIEL GUZIK
Psychic voices (sound composition) (2020)
The Nereida Capsule (2007)
Holoturian (2019)
Offering (2017)
Untitled (2010 - 2020)

KUAI SHEN
Ohm1gas: biomimetic stridulation environment (2012)
Nømadas (2019)

DEMELZA KOOIJ
Wolves from Above (2018)

Don't miss *Is it grunting, barking or panting?* (2017) by Amalia Pica, an audio piece that can be heard on both the ground and first floors of FACT.

GALLERY 2 FIRST FLOOR

ALEXANDRA DAISY
GINSBERG
Machine Auguries (2019)

ALEXANDRA DAISY
GINSBERG
The Substitute (2019)

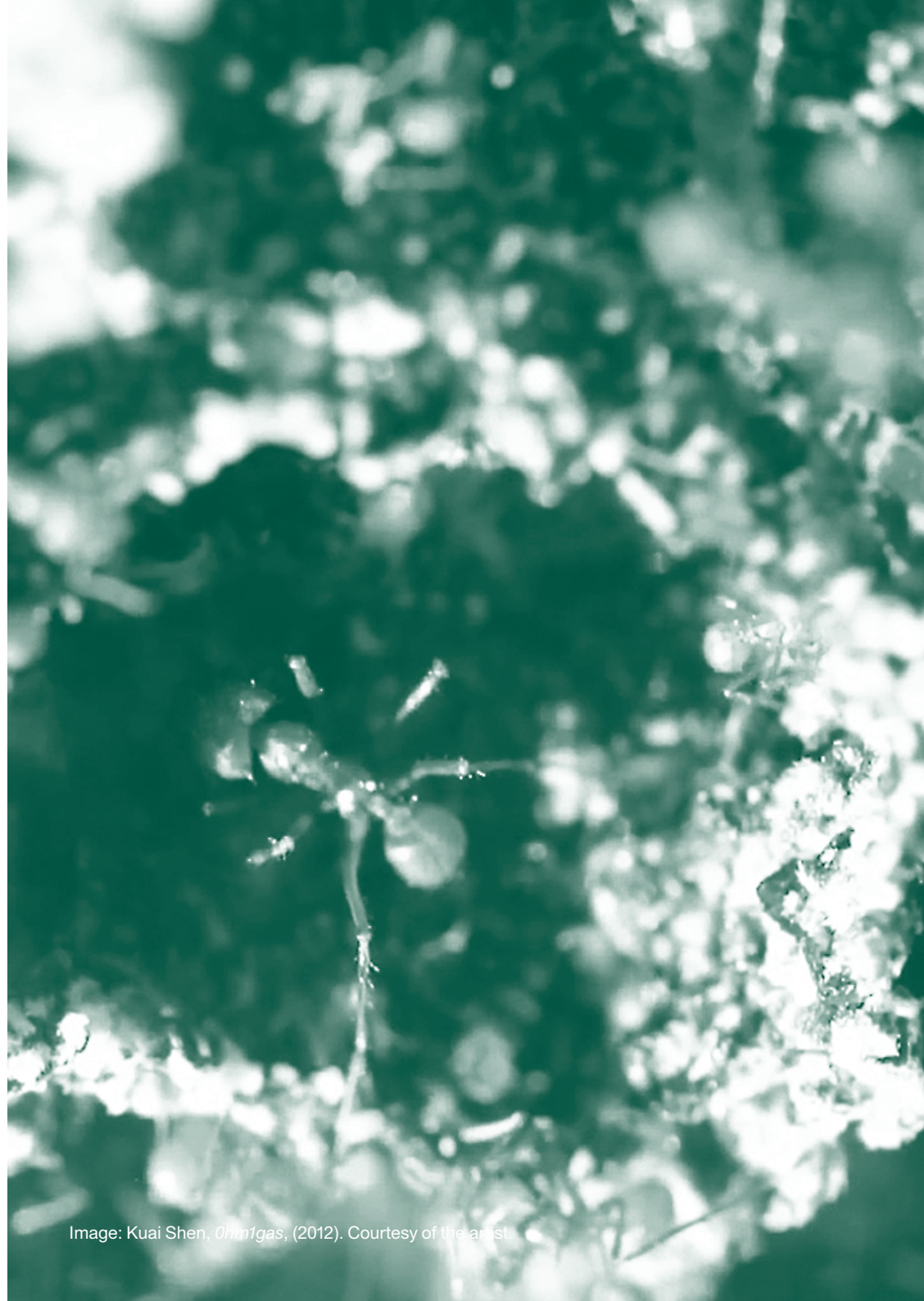


Image: Kuai Shen, *Ohm1gas*, (2012). Courtesy of the artist.



Image: Amalia Pica & Rafael Ortega, *Pan troglodytes ellioti and cousins* (2016). Image by Oscar Monsalve. Courtesy of the artist & NC-Arte, Bogotá.

AMALIA PICA (Argentina) is a London-based artist who explores metaphor, communication and civic participation through sculpture, installation, photography, projections, live performances and drawings, each utilised to expose the nuances in communication. Pica is the winner of the 2020 Zurich Art Prize.

RAFAEL ORTEGA (Mexico) is a London-based cinematographer whose art practice gravitates around moving image collaborative projects with both artists and museums. Through this process he has been part of more than 75 projects. Some collaborations include works with Francis Alÿs, Abraham Cruzvillegas, João Penalva, Amalia Pica, Pablo Vargas Lugo, Melanie Smith, Javier Tellez and the Amparo Museum, Mexico.

All works courtesy of the artists and Herald St.

AMALIA PICA & RAFAEL ORTEGA

Pan troglodytes ellioti and cousins (2016)

Single-channel video loop, (1 min 1), video camera with infrared trigger and monitor

North-eastern Nigeria holds one of the last remaining wildernesses of jungle in West Africa. In Gashaka Gumti National Park, scientists coordinated by primatologist Volker Sommer monitor the movements of animals via camera-traps.

These surveys record members of the largest surviving population of the rarest type of chimpanzee (*Pan troglodytes ellioti*). The jungle cameras sometimes malfunction, returning images as grainy as those from CCTV's. In the installation of this wildlife clip, chimpanzees drift in and out of the camera's eye. However, they are not the only ones being observed.

Is it grunting, barking or panting? (2017)

Humans imitating primate calls, audio 5.1 audio installation (50 min)

Humans are often defined as the only animal capable of language, yet researchers have recorded a very complex range of animal vocalisations. Some say that these simply reflect the animal's emotions, such as fear or aggression. Other scholars maintain that animal vocalisations may act as symbols and refer to external things. In any case, animals tend to develop local dialects and pass them on from generation to generation. In this audio piece, scientists and field assistants in a Nigerian research camp impersonate calls of monkeys and apes.



Image: Amalia Pica and Rafael Ortega, *Catalogue of great ape gestures (in alphabetical order)* (2018).
Performer: Michael Smith. Photo: Louis Lim.

AMALIA PICA & RAFAEL ORTEGA

Catalogue of great ape gestures (in alphabetical order) (2018)

Single-channel video (13 min 22). Dance choreographed with and performed by Michael Smith.

At the University of St. Andrews in Scotland, researchers studying apes compiled a 'Great Ape Dictionary'. The gestures used by wild gorillas, orangutans, chimpanzees and bonobos reveal surprising similarities across the different species. The researchers catalogued dozens of common gestures, from "arms wave", "beckon", "clap" and "dangle" to "stroke" and "tandem walk". The dance choreography follows the ape repertoire in alphabetical order.

A new performance of these gestures will be shown at FACT during the exhibition, performed by Nicolette Whitley, co-produced by FACT and MDI.

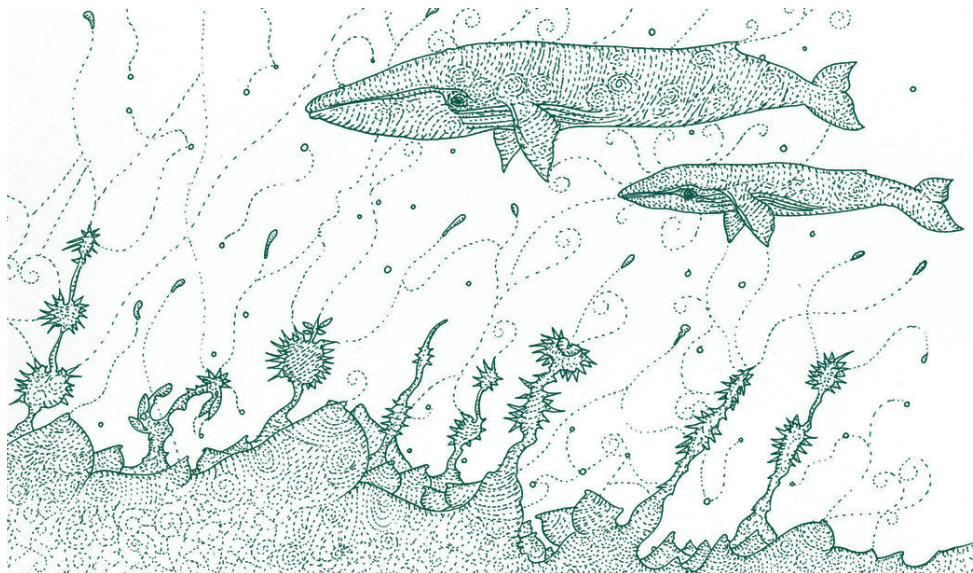


Image: Ariel Guzik, *Ballenas Azules*. Courtesy of the artist.

ARIEL GUZIK (Mexico) is a multidisciplinary artist who designs and engineers mechanisms and instruments which engage with and tap into the languages of nature, specifically cetaceans (whales and dolphins). His projects explore the phenomenon of natural resonance and its use in the natural world. Guzik's work is shown around the world. He represented Mexico at the 55th Venice Biennale in 2013 and at the Edinburgh International Art Festival in 2015.

Sound recordings produced by Alejandro Colinas, Emilio Gálvez y Fuentes and Ariel Guzik. With special thanks to Catalina Juárez, Leobardo Ramírez, Gabriela Galván and Adriaan Schalkwijk, also members of the Nature Expression and Resonance Research Laboratory. Courtesy of the artist.

ARIEL GUZIK

Psychic voices (sound composition) (2020)

Underwater recording of voices of gray whales during sleep (Magdalena Bay, Baja California Sur 2002), and voices of various cetaceans (BCS and Costa Rica. 2004-2019) (duration variable)

The Nereida Capsule (2007)

Quartz crystal, electronics, wood, metal (200 x 200 x 200cm)

Holoturian (2019)

HD video (2 min 14)

Offering (2017)

Gray whale tympanic fossil, wooden altar (133 x 30 x 30cm)

Untitled (2010 - 2020)

Piezographic prints and cetacean calligraphy (dimensions variable)

Mexican musician and artist Ariel Guzik's work sets out to preserve mysteries, rather than try to explain them. He is interested in how we perceive nature through our senses, fascination and fantasy. Here, he presents a new installation, incorporating sound, drawings and sculptural works from his long-term research project to communicate musically with whales and dolphins in the wild. This installation muses on their sonic world and language, and suggests an undersea planet almost separate to the one we know, populated by very different intelligences and cultures.

Guzik designed his submersible musical instrument *Nereida*, to connect with ocean mammals (or 'cetaceans'). In the deep sea, its subtle sound vibrations invite a chorus of responsive sounds from whales and dolphins; in the gallery, the instrument's music and the recordings of this cetacean choir reverberate through the space. Alongside, Guzik premieres a new film, charting the expedition of his latest instrument *Holoturian* into the depths of the Pacific Ocean.



Image: Kuai Shen, *Oh!m1gas*, (2012). Image by Kristof Vrancken. Installation view at Manifesta. Courtesy of the artist.

KUAI SHEN (Ecuador) is fascinated by ecosocial insect behaviour and works with ants to create audiovisual installations and performances, exploring the concept of invertebrate aesthetics. His transdisciplinary research amplifies the relationships between species using dynamic techno-ecologies.

All works courtesy of the artist.

KUAI SHEN

Oh!m1gas: biomimetic stridulation environment* (2012)

Invertebrate multi-species community (farming leaf-cutter ants *Atta cephalotes*, fungal symbiont *Leucocoprinus*, fungal parasite *Escovopsis*, diverse antibiotic-producing bacteria), acrylic glass habitat, two turntables with ATmega 8-bit microcontrollers driving 2-stepper motors, two vinyls with field and studio recordings of ant stridulations, three wireless surveillance cameras, three CCTV monitors, 2-channel sound amplification, two piezoelectric amplifiers, computer vision tracking algorithms in Max/Jitter.

Nømadas (2019)

Single-channel video with stereo sound (6 min 46)

Ecuadorian artist and ant lover Kuai Shen presents a living artwork: a reactive sound installation within which a community of leafcutter ants become DJs, controlling the movement of two turntables. The ants communicate using chemical messages (called pheromones), body language (touching or stroking each other) and acoustic vibrations called 'stridulations', which they produce by shaking their abdomens up and down so that two body parts rub against each other. This generates miniscule sounds that can be heard when amplified. The ants' movement in the nest is tracked by computer and this data is used to rotate the turntables, making the vinyl records rub against the needles. This creates scratching compositions in response to the ants' social behaviours: farming fungus, tending the young, building the nest, moving material, and composting waste.

Exploring the relationship between human technology and the social structures of ants, the work draws analogies between 'scratching' as a form of human musical expression and the ants' stridulation sounds.

Kuai Shen's film work, *Nømadas*, visualises the migrations of Amazonian army ants as choreographic performances.

*biomimetic = the imitation of systems used in nature

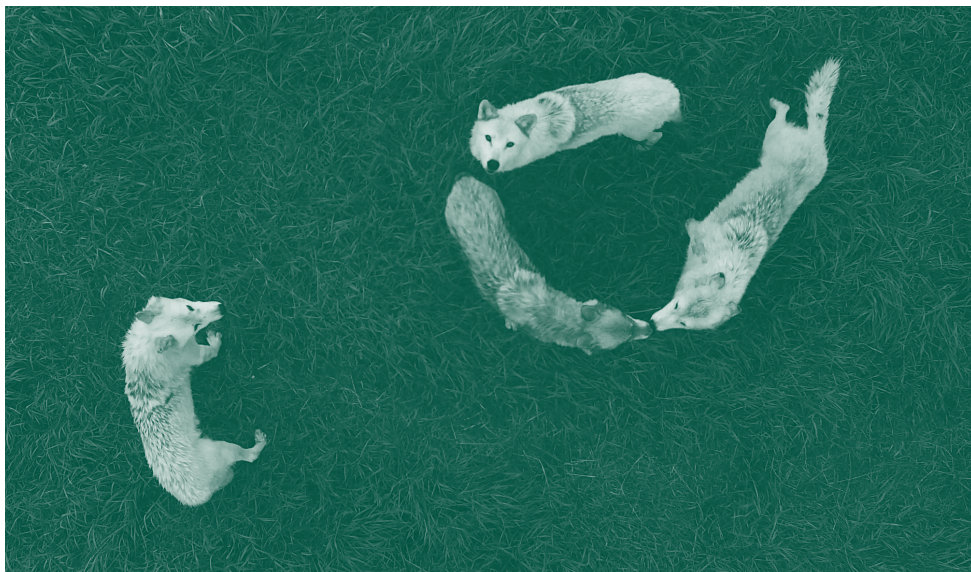


Image: Demelza Kooij, *Wolves from Above* (2018). Courtesy of the artist.

DEMELZA KOIJ (Netherlands/UK) is a Liverpool based artist/filmmaker and university lecturer. Her work is presented worldwide at museums, film festivals, art exhibitions, and conferences. Her art and research interests relate to depicting other worlds: un(der)explored territories nearby and far away; the human and non-human, blurring boundaries, sci-fi, Other animals, ecologies of the sea, land, sky and exchanges in-between.

Courtesy of the artist.

DEMELZA KOIJ

Wolves from Above (2018)

Single-channel video with sound (5 min 40)

Demelza Kooij's film installation *Wolves from Above* captures the quiet interactions of a wolf pack, filmed through a single drone shot. These elusive animals inhabit a tranquil wilderness where the sounds of growling, sniffing and licking feel oddly nearby, heightening the intimacies of communication through human-to-wolf spectatorship.

Though they are being filmed, the wolves continue their almost silent communication, but their occasional glances to the sky illustrate their awareness of the drone humming above them, indicating how our use of technologies to observe and document animals - however gentle - still have an effect on animal behaviour.



Image: Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg, *The Substitute* (2019). Courtesy of the artist.

ALEXANDRA DAISY GINSBERG (UK) is an artist whose work focuses on the relationships between nature and technology. Daisy's diverse portfolio of artworks, writing, and curatorial projects explores subjects which include artificial intelligence, exobiology, synthetic biology, conservation, biodiversity and evolution, as she investigates the human impulse to 'better' the world.

Dr. Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg (Johanna Just, Ness Lafoy, Ioana Man, Ana Maria Nicolaescu). The Mill (Art Director: Adam Parry; Executive Producer: Jarrad Vladich; Senior Producer: Kelly Woodward; Animation Supervisor: Paul Tempelman; Animators: Kieran Jordan, Maxime Cronier, Kevin O'Sullivan, and James Hickey; Unreal Developers: Roberto Costas, Mark Dooney, Haydn Roff, and Ed Thomas; Model and Rig: Andreas Graiche and Daniel Weiss). Sound: Chris Timpson, Aurelia Soundworks. Special thanks to Andrea Banino/DeepMind and Dr. Richard Policht.

Commissioned by the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum and Cube design museum, 2019. Courtesy of the artist.

ALEXANDRA DAISY GINSBERG

The Substitute (2019)

Synced video installation (6 min 18)

The Substitute explores a paradox: our preoccupation with creating new life forms, while neglecting existing ones.

On 20 March 2018, headlines announced the death of Sudan, the last male northern white rhinoceros. We briefly mourned a subspecies lost to the human desire for the imagined life-enhancing properties of its horn, comforted that it might be brought back using biotechnology.

Ginsberg's life-size projection presents a digital resurrection of the rhino roaming in a virtual world, his movement around the space determined by an artificial intelligence (AI) experiment by technology and research company, DeepMind. The rhino becomes more 'real' as it discovers the limits of its environment. The rhino's form and sound toggle from pixelation to lifelike, glitching in and out of existence. Experimental data is played on a second screen, showing the path and development of the AI's internal navigational system.



Image: Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg, *Machine Auguries* (2019). Image by Luke Walker. Installation view at Somerset House. Courtesy of the artist.

Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg (Dr. Alexandra Daisy Ginsberg, Johanna Just, Ness Lafoy, Ana Maria Nicolaescu). Machine Learning: Dr Przemek Witaszczyk (Faculty), Sound design: Chris Timpson (Aurelia Soundworks), Lighting design: Lucy Carter, Associate to Lucy Carter: Sean Gleason, Production: Angharad Cooper, AV: KSO. With thanks to Chris Watson, Geoff Sample, The British Library, Sara Keen, Xeno-canto, Professor Ben Sheldon, Maria Diaz and Dr John Mansir of Faculty and Karishma Rafferty.

Commissioned by Somerset House and A/D/O by MINI. With additional support from Faculty and the Adonyeva Foundation. Courtesy of the artist.

ALEXANDRA DAISY GINSBERG

Machine Auguries (2019)

Multi-channel sound installation (10 min)

Light and sound pollution from our 24-hour urban lifestyle affects birds, which are singing earlier, louder, for longer, or at a higher pitch to defend their territory and find mates. Not all birds can adapt: populations are diminishing, and so too the dawn chorus.

In this sound installation, a natural dawn chorus is infiltrated by artificial birdsong. As the room illuminates and the bird calls trained by machine learning get louder, with a call and response set up between natural and artificial birds, we question how the city might sound with changing or disappearing bird populations.

The composition follows the arc of a dawn chorus, compressed into 10 minutes from the natural 90 minutes. The listener experiences the sound of a fictional urban parkland, entering in the dim silvery light of pre-dawn. We start with a lone 'natural' redstart, his solo a warbling call. In response, from across the room, we hear an artificial redstart sing back, sampled from an early epoch (an epoch is a complete cycle of training during the machine learning process). A 'natural' robin joins the chorus, with a call and response set up between natural and artificial birds, the chorus rises with other species entering, reaching a crescendo 5 minutes in. As the decline starts and the room illuminates to a warm yellow, we realise that the artificial birds, which have gained sophistication in their song, are dominating. The chorus ends with a lone call from an artificial great tit.

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