

ROBIN SEWELL

The artist and lecturer Robin Sewell is working on a project based at the Portland Sculpture and Quarry Trusts Headquarters in Easton, Portland and in his own studio in the East End of London. The Mineral Industry Sustainable Technology Programme and the University College for the Creative Arts are sponsoring this project. An exhibition is scheduled at the Drill Hall Gallery; Easton through September 2006 entitled KYMA.

For some years now he has been making paintings and 'dry powdered drawings' that employ and investigate the properties of vibrations applied to a volatile dust compound on panel surfaces. This project develops that research via collaboration with a British scientist and new connections with artists and scientists in America that are also involved in the intriguing research into the phenomena of Cymatics (pertaining to waves). This work centres on the vibration signature of many pieces of Portland stone and the image produced by the CymaScope (a sensitive instrument that forms fluid and dry powdered drawings from sound).

One of the major outcomes of this project will be an exhibition at the Drill Hall in Portland through September 2006. The show will be the first for the Portland Sculpture and Quarry Trust, heralding the Drill Hall Gallery as a new exhibition venue. It will specialise in contemporary fine art work with particular emphasis on links with scientists from many fields of research related to stone, quarrying, geology, ecology and all aspects of Portland's rich environment and history. The current proposal is to have five elements within the exhibition.

- 1) Eight wall panels 152cm x 251cm each – dry compound on white base to become 'drawings' or they could be made with higher relief and be over primed and become paintings- acrylic. These works will be related to sound maps of ringing Portland stone and the form of the quarry site itself will bring its influence to bear on these works.
- 2) A video work – working title '*The Nomadic Particle*'. This is a new medium (first film) to examine, demonstrate and poetically visualise the nature of particles, from their random displacement towards form and structure via the forces of vibration (sound).
- 3) Photographic stills from the CymaScope of sound waves from the ringing stones and other sources. The blue opening page to this web-site is of these images.

BACKGROUND NEWS TO THE PROJECT

May 2006

John Reid is a scientist and leading authority on Cymatics and is currently developing a production model of his CymaScope®. He is venturing into educational and commercial applications within science and art, mainly in the United States. John has provided data enabling me to make a version of his CymaScope. Related devices have had a variety of names over the last 100 years e.g. the Tonoscope (named by Hans Jenny) is normally spoken into to affect the particle surface, however, the CymaScope has an electronic speaker to deliver its signal to the membrane. Through the six months prior to meeting with John I made several to my own specifications but the latest version is a highly sensitive instrument, able to generate subtle images from sounds from a wide tonal range in both powders and fluids or both simultaneously.

The acoustic nature of Portland stone underpins this project and the forms it will produce via the CymaScope. Within each stone slab there is huge range of sound vibration profiles, setting forth an array of currents and counter currents. Some have a bell like tone with a long decline and others have an internal oscillating tone, an echo. Each stone carries its own sound signature, emitting high and low tones whilst others with fault lines within them give forth a dull 'thuk' when struck.

I have been visiting Portland and taking structural references from the landscape and specifically its quarries. This research along with the cymatics work via the struck stone and the CymaScope will form the basis of information that will affect the panel works. Eight large primed panels have been under construction for some time now and are at the final stage of surface preparation before the dry compound can be employed to make the 'drawings'. At this point I am unsure how many will remain as 'drawings' and how many will become 'paintings'.

The digital video, 'The Nomadic Particle' is currently in production. There are still elements to be found and I am waiting for the completion of the CymaScope so I can film the powder and fluid configurations made from the sound of ringing stones. What is most surprising about this poetic story of particles is that it was to begin with random displacement of individually active 'dust', however it seems that randomness has a very allusive character, as particles almost too readily succumb to an ordering force, whether in air, water, or onto solid matter. The precise structural logic and beauty of matter as it flows through another material is evident throughout this film. Within the exhibition, the film 'The Nomadic Particle' will be projected onto a large 'wing' of Portland stone. This will ground the experience of the fluid subject matter onto a heavy, solid block so that it can psychologically hold our response to our own physical presence, helping in the struggle to anchor the amorphous ungrounded nature of the film and the dislocation of the sound, to this one and a half ton object.

Here is a note to indicate some reference points for the digital film

The Nomadic Particle.

Portland stone was formed in the Bahamas and via tectonic action found its way to its current latitude. The planet is spinning and hurtling around the sun and the entire galaxy is on the move. The universe is expanding away from the epicentre of the big bang.

Where has every atom in your body been since they came out of that impossible compression to be shot across the space? We can surmise that between them they have been just about everywhere on the planet and formed part of billions of its life forms when they were not being a component within a cloud, the sea or rock.

The micro, macro universe is on the move, vibrating and making sound, nothing is still or quiet. Even the cells in your body are emitting sounds and sing along with the latent background sound radiation from the big bang.

Cymatic forces deliver structure from randomness and give us images from sound. The random displacement of dust finds order and pattern by the controlling force of vibration. This periodicity brings inanimate matter into so many formations that show a striking resemblance to genetic constructions. Evidence of its affect and influence seems to be within every part of every living entity. Without realising it, you probably know it too, like the back of your hand.

The film touches upon the randomness of existence from microscopic events so improbable as to defy calculation, to the energy of being alive, a vibrant being, yet destined within a geological blink to return to the ebb and flow of dust.
