

INSIDE STONE

a ritual working for spatial and temporal locations
D.FYANS 2013

Concept:

A shard of quartz, wedged into a Cairn, 109m above sea level in Cairisiadar, Lewis, A psychic resonator tuned to a universal frequency. From the same point in time and space, millions of years ago, an explosion happening in slow motion. Geological time runs across frames per millennia.

An exploration and excavation of the spaces between; between the physical and the ephemeral, of time now, past and yet to come and real and imagined landscapes, between symbol and meaning.

The installation as a spell, built as ritual practice, combining occult geometry, numerology, focussed will and the realisation and rationalisation of shamanic vision - obscurely seen in the half light between wakefulness and dreaming, psychic fugues, secrets of the universe, whispered softly in the darkness untangling.

The magickal construct invokes and insinuates imagined space in which considerations of cosmic scale, the aeon's breath and geological time may be observed and explored-explosions happening in slow motion over millennia, the sound of glaciers singing and time's subtle hand on landscape. A constant and cyclical flow of energy, in perpetual flux.

An installation based graphical score and resultant sculptural audio work. Constructed in laser cut acrylic, suspended around 4 walls of a square space. A seating area is in the middle, a light source revolves to highlight the corresponding parts of the score. The audio will 'move' around the space as the piece unfolds via 4 speakers (two stereo pairs) and a quadraphonic mix.

The piece may be considered an expansion, exploration or divining of trump IX of the Thoth Tarot, The Hermit. In many ways, the structure of the space mirrors the visual composition of the card and the process and execution of the work may be read parallel to the suggested meaning. In many ways, I have embodied the card, solitary work, in my darkened space (a cave perhaps?), questing and toiling for the light, the space revealing problems and solutions as the journey unfolds, 'practical plans, derived accordingly'. Accordingly, this card revealed itself to me at quite a late stage in the proceedings, in looking at the developed space, plans and considering the concept, meaning and process undertaken, I recalled the card and on closer inspection it perfectly relayed the myriad facets involved.

Trump IX: The Hermit

'Wander alone; bearing the Light and Thy Staff. And be the Light so bright that noone seeth thee. Be not moved by aught without or within: Keep Silence in all ways.'

Suggested meaning: Illumination from within, secret impulse from within; practical plans derived accordingly. Retirement from participation in current events.



A SHORT ARTIST'S STATEMENT

I believe the role of the artist is one of shamanic intervention. By descending into oneiric and ethereal realms and, through research, practice, action and enactment, drawing out the details of some enquiry and bringing this arcane knowledge back into the physical world and presenting this revelation to present to the community.

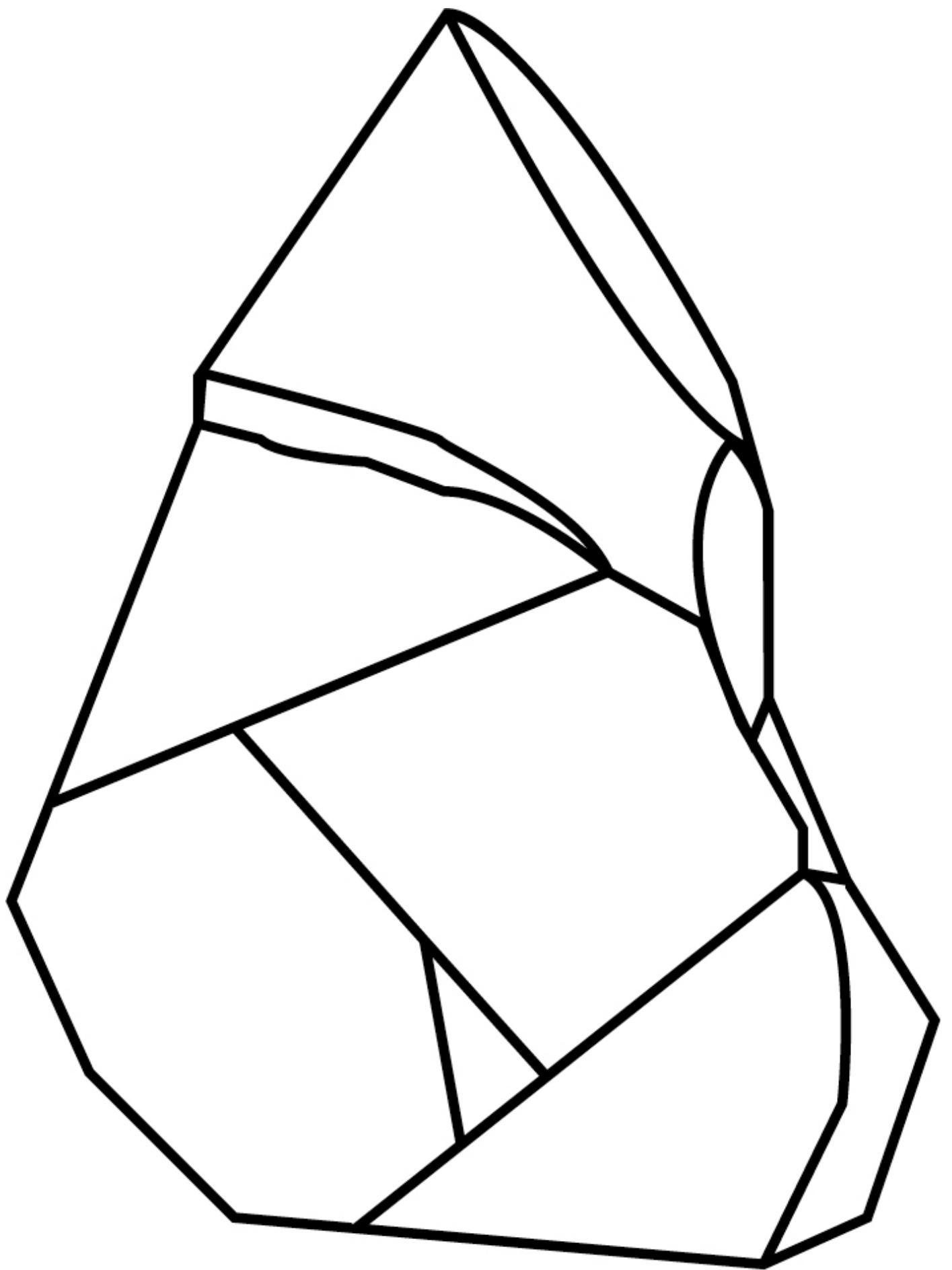
Inhabiting the spaces between, the artist has the unique ability to cast light (and shade) into the everyday, imbuing physical space or material with the potential for some psychic enlightenment - joy, sadness, profundity, a new (or renewed) experience, a new perspective on the human condition, divined from the deepest realms of internal space. This operation results in and experience that would not be accessible without the ability of the artist to create, refine, destroy or renew physical matter in previously unconsidered configurations.

The artist is a compound of experience, an aggregate of everything seen, read, heard, thought, dreamed, experienced combined with knowledge, skills, talent and ability to shape materials and media stochastically and heuristically into a desired outcome.

With this in mind, within my own practice, which I consider to be multidisciplinary, I embrace the unknown. Some glimmer of thought, a piece partially seen in the state between wakefulness and sleep, the result of a mental distraction, some daydream or the way light catches a certain object, leads down a path of enquiry - a quest to reach the essence or tone suggested in my mind.

Often I find that the works themselves inform the medium, modes of production and presentation and it is my task to resolve and refine these aspects, to negotiate some intervention that bridges the spaces between the conceptual and the physical, be it through sculptural sound, physical objects or images and imagery created or in any apposite combination of platforms that may form a cohesive whole.

In presenting work to the public, I strive to leave room for interpretation and experience. While I have my own motivations and conceptual underpinnings, I feel that to enforce my meaning of a work on the viewer closes the potential for their own understanding. It is not my job to tell someone what they should experience, only to set up the potential for them to have their own relationship with the work they have shared space with.



An Ode To Cairisiadar

On the wind blasted moraine
Across the skin of sleeping giants we creep
Two startled grouse
A conversation in sine tones with an oystercatcher

The wind ripples the surface of the loch
A fizzing between the elements
A three walled structure built into the side of a cliff
The network of cairns

Seams of rock, fingers jutting
Land seldom traversed, lying in state
The ancient stones vibrate in time
Secrets whispered only to birds and heather

You cannot capture this with lens nor brush
Electromagnetic movements too vast and slow to sense
This is majesty dreaming
The same now as then, then as now, always different

INTRODUCTION or THE PROBLEM WITH DIVINING ART

Often, I inhabit a piece before it exists, before it has even been thought about. In darkened dreams and psychic fugues, I walk through it, around it, feel its edges, glimpse some facet or another from an improbable point in time and space.

The 'problem' with such divination lies, as do most of the problems of our Aeon, in the corporeal realm. Oneiric/etheric mechanics are not necessarily subject to the physics, to dimensions and gravity, materiality and resources. My role is to negotiate these 'visions', to make sense of what I have seen. How it is constructed, connected and defined in terms outside of the cosmic space, the embryonic universe of possibility from where it was transmitted.

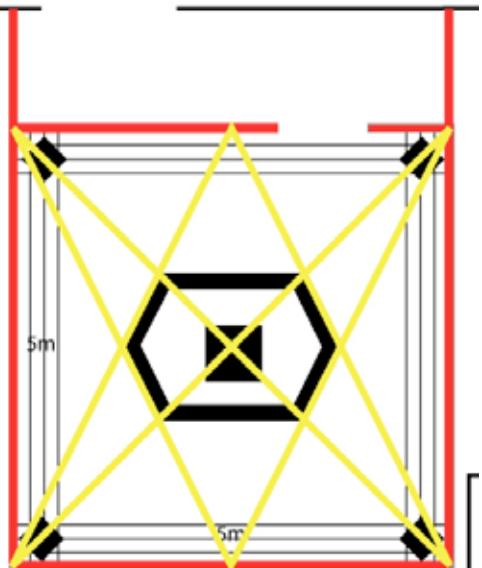
The shapes and colours may endure but we are left with the proposition of dragging 'the idea of a thing', a homeopathic distillation, half dreamt, tasted, smelt, glimpsed through a veil into the collation, mutation and conjuration of energy into the slightly flat, practical realms of measurement and logic, the constraints of the 4 dimensions we currently have the limited mental hardware to inhabit.

It harks back to that old and strange question of where does art come from? This piece is an attempt to physically manifest something that existed in my head as a fully formed concept. The culmination and condensing of research and conceptual process subconsciously constructed? A shamanic vision? The arcane designs of some Power outside of rational thoughtspace? The results of a freak electrochemical reaction in my brain as a result of something I had eaten? I don't truly know, I just know that I have mentally inhabited and walked through this space in my mind and that it had to be made manifest and presented to the outside world to offer a new experience or perspective on life.

EMBRACING THE 'OTHER' or CONSTRUCTION AS A MAGICKAL ACT

Throughout the realisation of this piece, in order to imbue it with the necessary energies, the various practical activities that have taken place - taping, painting, measuring, building, placing of wires, laser cutting, hanging, composition and arrangement, etc. have been treated as ritual elements, constituent parts feeding towards a complex magickal device, a spell to focus and direct energy towards those who are open to the experience of the work.

'You have come of your own free will to the appointed place.'
(the Wickerman, Dir. Robin Hardy, Writer. Anthony Shaffer, 1973)



The magician must invest energy in the making of a magickal construct, suffer for his art, so to speak. The space, although it is obscured is based around the unicursal hexagram, a Thelemic device represents a continuous flow of energy, a line unbroken, the endless knot. It represents the transfiguration of energy. Nothing can be created or destroyed in this Universe, matter simply changes states through design or chance. The grid of wires from which the score hangs acts as a magickal barrier, a fence constructed to contain the energies within the space, a ritual boundary, to be dispelled only on the dissolution of the piece.

By building space and objects, the physical act converts thought into corporeal form, the synthesis of art, the act of conjuring. Energies must be focussed, toil and sweat make us feel this cosmic transaction, a ritual exchange, physical and mental exertion leading to the manifestation of something 'other', from elsewhere, another realm. Blood, sweat and tears an offering, time a sacrifice.

THE SPACE

The space has been designed as a square allowing each wall to be apportioned an equal amount of time and space. Having measured out the space, and tested out various possibilities using a scale diagram, A3 and A4 sheets (the size of the source sheets of acrylic) I decided that 4 minutes per 5m wall was a suitable duration for the piece.

As the space needed a ceiling in order to enclose it and make it dark, a 600mm^2 pillar was built in the centre of the space to support it. This caused a serious complication to the lighting system that needed to be worked around (see section titled 'Reverse Engineering A Lighthouse').

Due to the construction, both the wall and ceiling joints in most of the boards were leaking a lot of light into the space so the entire space needed taped and filled several times in order to minimise this incursion and create a truly darkened space.

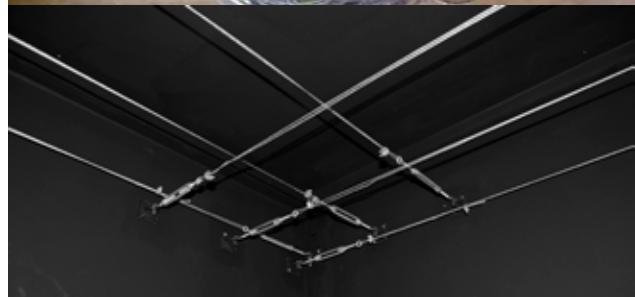
HOOKS, WIRES, CABLES

The issue of how to suspend the score in space was another example of a requirement, implied by the space. The square design of the room allowed for tension cables with adjustable hooks to be run in parallel sets, three separate cables for each wall would allow for the layering and arrangement of the score.

ENTRANCE/EXIT

The entrance to the space, as with the pillar support for the ceiling, is an example of a compromise of practical over the ideal. Ingress into a controlled environment is always a matter of difficulty, the decision was made to create a dog leg, a vestibule or 'air lock' to separate the outside world from the hermeticism of the piece.

Once the space had been painted black, I decided that in order to provide some low level ambient lighting, I would paint the entrance space white to reflect light from the outside and to delineate between inside and outside. As the audiowork and score are continuous, I have needed to 'break' the boundary a little and hang some of the elements opposite the doorway. Although these satellite elements exist outside the marked boundaries of the internal space, they are visible from within and this space containing the continuation of the score has been painted black to show the connection between inside and out.



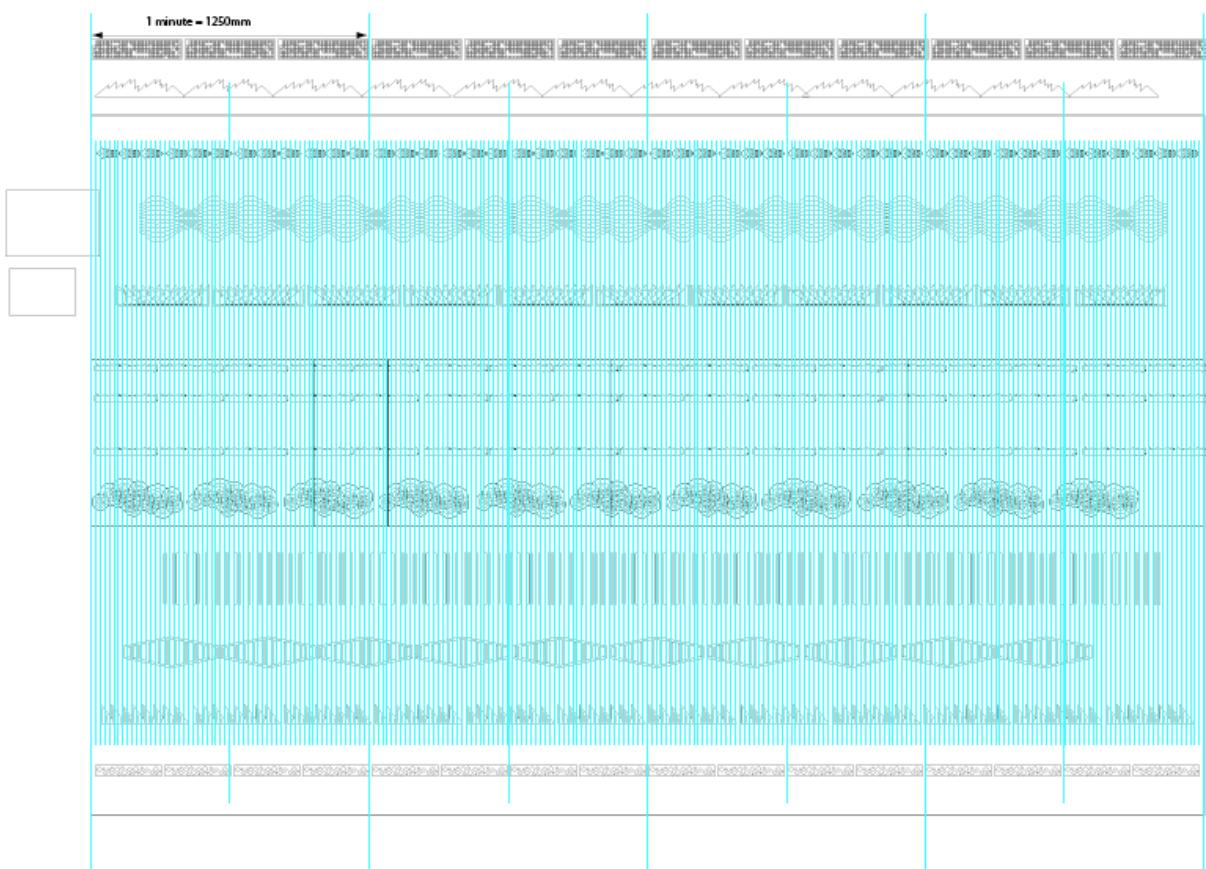
COMPOSITION

The audio element itself should be considered a sculptural work, invoking the textural and metaphysical concepts underpinning the piece - the nature of time and space, the power of art (audio in particular) to transport the viewer/listener from the here and now, to some 'other' place.

Constructed using modular synthesis, the audio has been built with reference to a strong connection felt while recently spending time in the Isle of Lewis. The landscape, in particular the geological structures and wide open spaces lend themselves to illustrating movement taking place over very long periods of time. The high levels of quartz, traditionally a medium employed in magick for its resonant properties and amplification of energies, helped me visualise the interconnected nature of the world we live in and the subtle changes taking place from an initial point of volcanic forming to the seemingly latent state that landscape now occupies (although if we could see it millennia from now, it will be radically altered). The continuous, circular looping of the piece, long modulations and transitions over time structurally allude to this concept.

THE SCORE

I have long been interested in graphical scores and the way that the performer or listener may form relationships between physical marks and sonic counterparts. Inside Stone is an escalation and expansion of ideas addressed in previous works The Breath Between Marks (2010), The Machine Was Already Singing (2012) and Mandala (2013). As with these previous works, the score deals with visual interpretive data, not strictly rigid directions for the performance or recreation of a piece but rather the tone, mood and texture of the elements, durations and their arrangement.



Physically, the score comprises of multiple 2mm, laser cut, clear acrylic components, suspended by fishing line from tension cables and hooks. Three cables on each wall allow for the spacing, layering and transitioning of these elements.

The use of clear acrylic, in my mind, perfectly mirrors the ephemeral qualities of sound. Notes hang in the air, have both a physical and emotive presence, and while lacking a solid visual aesthetic and corporeal form, still fill space and cause an emotional response in the listener.

Around 400 separate pieces have been cut and arranged throughout the space. These have been designed in Illustrator with planning, development and arrangement all taking place within scale models of the 5m wall spaces and the A3/A4 sheets from which the elements are cut.

The arrangement was achieved by arranging the composition, taking a screengrab and positioning it in a document containing 4x5m walls alongside the score components and laying these out correspondingly



The score exists in 5 dimensions, we can see not only the point in time the composition is currently at, but see time spanning both forwards and backwards, anticipation and recall co-exist alongside the 'present' point of focus.

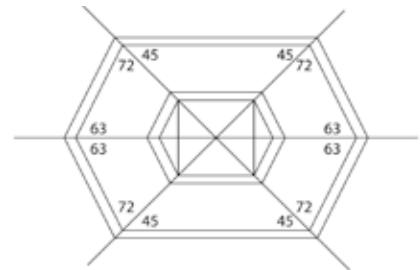
Around 20 hours have been logged in laser cutting over 42 sheets of A3 and around 40 sheets of A4 acrylic.

The physical hanging of the score has been thought through leading to the most logical and practicable use of the axis, time running left to right for each wall, and different heights and layers denoting relative pitches and relationships within the spectrum of frequency.



SEATING

Due to the duration of the piece, I decided that I would implement a seating area which viewers may use to take the time to experience the slow movements of the work if they wished.



Keeping in mind the notion of the installation as a magickal device, I decided to incorporate an other arcane practice into the physical fabric of the piece. As such, an irregular hexagon measured using occult centres was designed. Similar to the division of a space or composition using the golden ratio, drawing a unicursal hexagram to divide the space, the points of intersection divine the centre of power, the most effective point for the transferal of energies, an eye opening upon the universe, the centre of the storm, focussed will.



SPATIAL MIXING IN 4 CHANNELS

As a device to direct the attention of the viewer, the composition has been mixed quadrophonically via two sets of stereo channels. By utilising panning and volume automation in a final mixdown to two stereo mixes - played back from two separate sources, the piece moves through the physical space, starting/ending (as it is a loop) in one corner, and over the course of 16 minutes (4 minutes per wall) physically passes in a circular clockwise motion over the duration corresponding with the laser cut score.

Creating a perfect loop across 2 systems proved tricky due to buffering time in the repeat function of CD players and so Minidisc with its shorter buffering was eventually used to achieve the desired continuous playback.



REVERSE ENGINEERING A LIGHTHOUSE

The intention was always to have light as a visual aid to help direct the viewer to locate the audio, to highlight the 'current' physical location of section of the piece that is currently taking place and the movement within the work.

The possibility of using projectors to this purpose was an initial plan but due to the pillar supporting the ceiling made this improbable as the throw would either be impeded by the pillar or require an unmanageable amount of projectors and synced playback devices. A revolving light was another consideration but the problem of tangled cables was unsolvable given the distance of travel.

The final solution took some tricky engineering and my first foray into the use the Arduino system of IC controlled systems. It was impossible to run a standard motor down to a speed of 1/16th of a revolution per minute (one full cycle of the light is 16 minutes across 4 walls) and so using a stepper motor presented itself as the logical solution.

A stepper motor, rather than being a single, continuous coil to which voltage is applied causing an electromagnetic movement, consists of a series of multiple coils which can, via IC control, be controlled accurately to move at very small fractions in a controlled manner. Arduino is small microprocessing circuit board which can be connected to various physical inputs and outputs (switches, lights, motors, etc.) and programmed using a variant of the Processing language to provide customised interactions.

Fixed to the central column, is a shelf with runners and a plastic hoop which is being driven directly by the stepper motor, which has become the most problematic element of the installation. In theory the mechanism works, in reality it has been very temperamental and required stripping down and re-engineering several times.

An LED rope light was initially used as it could wrap around the column and provide an even light source, the plan was to mask this light so that a slit appeared on the wall, however, the light produced was not strong enough and the decision was reached to use a 3 LED battery operated torch and a supply of AAA batteries, stress testing the light, I found that it would provide a steady light for over 10 - 12 hours per set of batteries. The lightsource has been fitted to the construct via a bracket and a series of magnets provide the required pitch that the light sits at to illuminate the score.

As with any engineering project, this has been fraught with variables, technical issues and re-engineering and refinement. Different combinations of running and tracking guides have been tried, altered and retried and finally, a different type of drive wheel attached to the motor (with minor modifications to the wheel and the Arduino programming resulted in the most stable and reliable system.



IN CONCLUSION, A BANISHING

And so, the work comes to its conclusion, a tying together of ongoing areas of consideration and investigation, stochastic and heuristic processes intertwined. It has been a long journey from the original vision of the piece to its resolution. Distance in time and space have been traversed, solutions and problems arising in equal measure. The route from shamanic vision, to a desolate windswept hilltop in Lewis, the activation of the quartz transmitter, the subsequent negotiations between conceptual intent, artistic practice and practical physical construction have been heavy with physical and mental exertions.

As with any grand ritual working and in dealing with unknown elements, the process comes close to destroying the magician who puts everything into his work, the hermit, entombed in solitude in his cave, carelessly treading the line between enlightenment and madness. Desolation, rapture, the testing of will and challenging of both physical and mental capabilities have all taken place. The working has not been an easy one, but then I firmly believe that no good ever came of anything easily achieved.

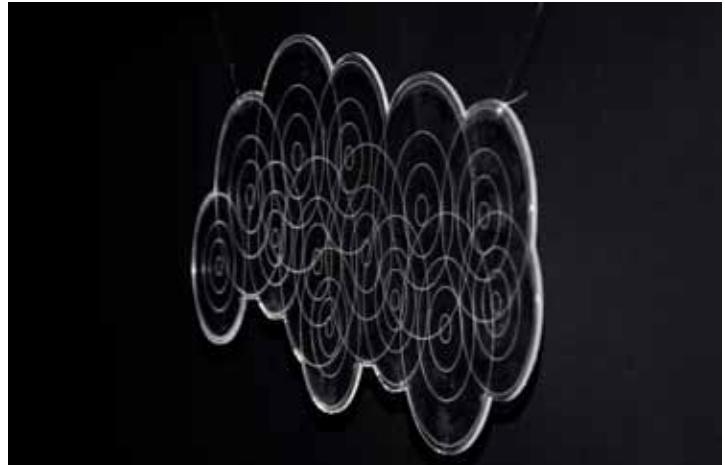
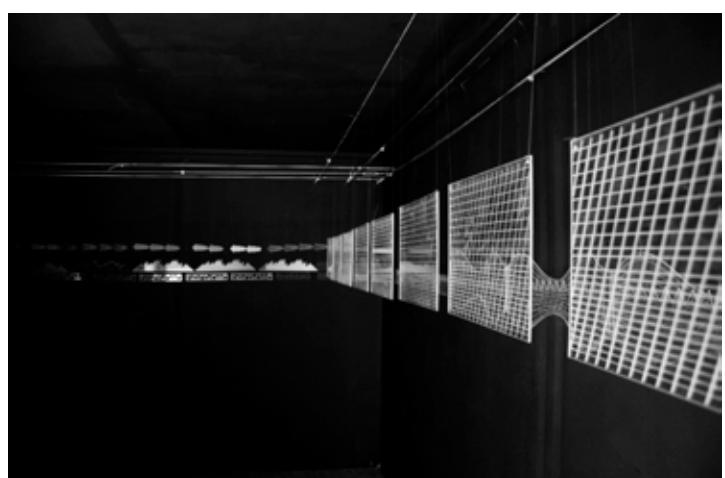
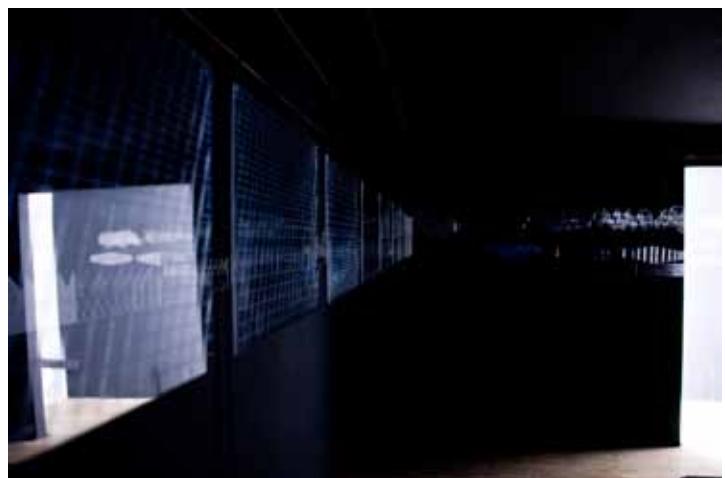
The piece now exists, the spell has been cast, in the traditional shamanic journey, I have received knowledge from another place and have returned to share that with the community. The knowledge now sits, waiting to be experienced and interpreted by the public, they may take from it what they will. I have my own reading, they may have theirs. By crossing over the magickal boundary into the space, they are entering into a contract of experiential possibility, submitting their energies and time into the ritual.

The magickal device has become activated and will remain so until it is banished (uninstalled) although the experience and knowledge will live on in my memory and anyone else who wishes to hold it.

As above, so below.

Aum

D.Fyans, August 2013



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