

## **Appendix 2:**

### **Concept Description Expression Of Interest – City of Melbourne**

#### **What is the proposed project?**

The project, Revoicing the Striated Soundscape, is a proposal for the creation of a sonic space in which air-conditioners speak, chant and sing to passers-by. The project conceptualises the city soundscape as the *voice of the city*. The ubiquitous air-conditioners in Melbourne's laneways create a homogenised voice. Residents and visitors to laneways are subjected to a one-way listening experience: an unchanging monologue of turgid drones. In this project voices will emerge from the drones creating a sense of dialogue between the *voice of the city* and the inhabitants of the city. The term, striated soundscape, is sourced from Deleuze and Guattari, who used striations as a visual metaphor to describe sedentary urban space; spectral visualisations of air-conditioning sounds show parallel lines existing in the soundscape, thus the term striated soundscape. By re-composing these striations a new voice can begin to emerge. The project is site-specific, to be placed in Rainbow Alley, an excellent location with its large number of air-conditioners creating a strong sonic presence. The project is equally applicable to three other sites I have identified. This project is in an experimental stage. A category 1 submission is an opportunity to trial the idea of revoiced air-conditioners using pre-composed materials. Future projects will use real-time interactive processing and multi-speaker arrays to achieve a more sophisticated sonic experience.

#### **How will the project be realised?**

This realisation will be a stereo version, using:

- Bose 151 3-way stereo speakers
- SA-2 amplifier
- IBM T40 Laptop
- Soundcard

For security reasons, the equipment will be concealed inside two air-conditioning casings. The units will be placed either side of identified clusters of air-conditioners and ventilation outlets (see attached photographs), which will provide a stereo effect in the space. This is a suspended work, in keeping with artworks located between buildings. A company has been sourced that can provide air-conditioning casings, and the fixtures required to position the units at the required height. The casings will be foam insulated for temperature control, and prevention of vibration and resonance of the casings by the speakers. The two air-conditioners will be inconspicuous in so far as they will blend in with existing air-conditioners in the space. When residents and visitors walk through the space the existence of sound equipment will not be visible.

Four locations have been selected that contain a large number of air-conditioners and/or ventilation outlets, which create a strong sonic presence. They are:

Laneway 1 – Rainbow Alley

Laneway 2 – Hardware Lane

Laneway 3 – Union Lane

Laneway 4 – Degraeves Street

Laneways are the ideal location for this artwork as laneways are the default position for unwanted air-conditioning and ventilation noise. Furthermore, the laneways are semi-enclosed spaces, which intensify the sound due to resulting eigentones (resonant standing waves) and prolonged reverberation times. Volume levels of

designed sounds will be within  $\pm 3\text{dB}$  of the laneways' existing sound levels, though on average they will play at an equivalent sound level.

Sound samples are created in Metasynth, an image-to-sound platform in which the spectral characteristics of sound can be deconstructed and manipulated in various ways. Of particular interest is the harmonic content of air-conditioners. The key concept for the sound design of this project is the reimagining of air-conditioning harmonics as formants. Speech formants can be applied as a filter to recorded air-conditioning sounds, which convolves its harmonic structure with the spectral characteristics of the human voice creating the illusion of singing, talking and chanting air-conditioners. Voices provided in the audio excerpt are my own, however for the artwork a variety of voices will be used – female, male, old and young.

There is some creative license with the notion of an air-conditioner's voice. Some sounds will be discernable as human voices emerging from the air-conditioners. Other voices are modulated sounds and rhythmic sounds that emerge from the harmonic structure of the air-conditioners. The introduced sounds will not play permanently; there are also segments of silence. The intention is to create diversity in the artwork so people have a different experience each time they enter the site. This avoids the issue of listening fatigue caused by some sound-art works. (Please refer to audio disk for sound samples).

### **How does the project address the assessment criteria?**

This artwork has conceptual integrity in its capacity to transform people's perceptions of the acoustic environment of laneways. The laneways are dominated by a single sound source – air-conditioners/ventilation outlets. This artwork turns this everyday listening experience into an aural delight, where a presence of communication and sonic diversity emerge.

The public space of Melbourne is enhanced by this work, as the everyday soundscape of a laneway is transformed into a soundscape of play and dialogue. The discovery of a speaking air-conditioner could provoke people's curiosity and invoke the desire to further explore Melbourne for other such phenomena, delights and follies. This artwork will enhance Melbourne's identity as a city of discovery; to wander though a laneway and discover a speaking air-conditioner would be a memorable experience.

The artwork enhances cultural awareness of Melbourne due to the conversational content of the air-conditioners voice; in this project air-conditioners are considered inhabitants of the site, and will comment on the everyday activities of the site. Commentary will be based on the artist's own immersion in the space over a number of weeks noting the rhythms and activities of everyday life. The preferred site, Rainbow Alley, is rich in conversational potential due to the peculiarities contained in its façades and the potential stories contained within its unusual architectural features (see attached photographs).

The budget demonstrates that the project can be implemented within the \$5000 limit. Appropriate materials have been sourced and the work will be able to be installed within the given budget. The only logistical/safety issue will be ensuring the fixtures are able to hold the combined weight of the materials; however, the fixtures are designed for air-conditioners that exceed the weight of the proposed materials.

Excluding electrical failure of components there should be no need for maintenance. Assuming that fixtures are adjoined correctly there is no danger to public safety. Security and safety concerns are resolved by sealing air-conditioning casings, therefore, preventing access to the inside of the units.

The artwork will require a constant supply of power, which is the only potential environmental consideration. The use of solar panels has been considered but unfortunately exceeds the Commission 1 budget. Confirmation is still required regarding access to mains power on site, but an indicative amount for electricity costs has been included in the budget.

### **Who is the target audience?**

The target audience is the residents and city workers within proximity of the artwork, as well as those who visit the site. The artwork will engender more diverse listening experiences than unchanging broadband noise. Diversity of sound material is considered when designing sounds, catering not just for visitors to the site but also the needs of those who inhabit the site.