

# *Missing Time*

Serena Korda

Promotional material for Serena Korda: *Missing Time* at  
BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, 2018

**BALTIC**

**SERENA  
KORDA**

*Missing Time*  
9 February – 28 May 2018

**Serena Korda Performance:**  
*Missing Time*  
Fri 9 Mar 18.30 £10

**In Conversation:**  
**Serena Korda**  
10 Feb, 10 Mar, 7 Apr, 14 Apr  
11.00 and 14.00 £5

**Book online or in-store**  
[www.baltic.art/tickets](http://www.baltic.art/tickets)

Commission price available. Online booking fee applies.  
Serena Korda collecting sound recordings inside a 'sound room' along the North East coastline. Photo: Chris Eggen-Saunders

Arts Council England Gateshead Council

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## STATEMENT

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*Missing Time* is a body of research produced between 2016 and 2018, during Korda's two-year Newcastle University / BALTIC Fellowship in Ceramic Sculpture, funded by the Lipman Trust for Ceramic Sculpture. The research explored a space at the intersection of ceramics, sound art, socially engaged practice and performance art. Korda became fascinated by the sound of stars in the dark skies of Northumberland, which are only audible with specific radio devices, and the pre-radar acoustic sound mirrors still found along the North East coastline, devices for detecting the sound of enemy planes during the First World War.

Investigating ways of making the invisible visible, and sound as a mode of interpersonal and interplanetary communication, Korda collaborated with a radio astronomer to create improvised radio telescopes which could pick up stellar sound waves and frequencies derived from the planets. Drawing on histories of astronomy and the ancient philosophical concept of the 'music of the spheres', and experimenting with the Japanese *nerikomi* ceramic technique, she created a series of large ceramic

dish-shaped sound mirrors, which acted as sound resonators within the gallery. Korda worked with a local acapella group *Mouthful* to develop a set of live performances which experimented with the harmonics of each ceramic portal.

*Missing Time* was disseminated through an exhibition combining ceramic work, original sound recordings and performance at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (February – May 2018), and a series of public events (also held at BALTIC) with various experts and practitioners, with whom Korda worked during the Fellowship. Korda later expanded on the work with an immersive sound performance for the High Line, New York (June 2018), featuring *Mouthful*, responding to the mythology of the High Line as a 'thin place' and a portal to other worlds, drawing on field recordings from the park.



Trailer for Serena Korda: *Missing Time* at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (February – June 2018), showing the field recording process, rehearsals and recording with Mouthful

Serena Korda *Missing Time*

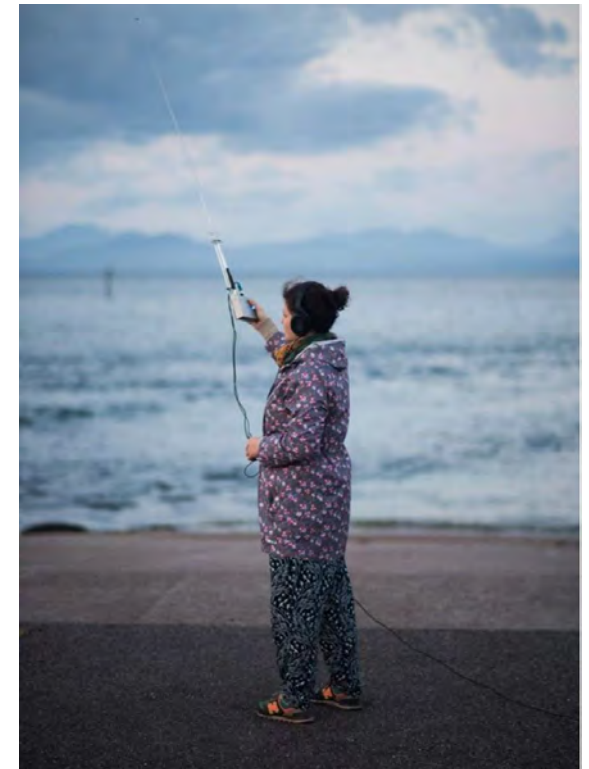
## ABOUT THE PROJECT

*Missing Time* drew on the practices of sonic meditation and deep listening developed by the North American composer and electronic musician Pauline Oliveros in the 1970s and 1980s, with Korda bringing ceramics and sound practices together. Engaging directly with the history and culture of North East England, Korda used local resources and creative networks to develop her practice-led research in the following ways:

- The frequencies generated by planets and stars, visible in Northumberland's dark sky areas, are audible with the use of specific radio devices. Korda collaborated with scientists to create radio telescopes, making recordings at remote locations in the North East of the sounds of planets and stars.
- She researched the concrete acoustic mirrors still found along the North East coastline; pre-radar military devices used to detect enemy aircraft. These were used as the basis for a series of large ceramic works - 'portals' that acted as sound resonators within the gallery.
- Korda worked with the North East-based acapella group *Mouthful* to develop live performances that played with the harmonics of each portal, exploring ideas about

invisible planetary and cosmic forces, particularly historic philosophical ideas of the 'music of the spheres', and how they may impact on human consciousness.

- Bringing these diverse and multidisciplinary explorations together at BALTIC, Korda staged a series of public talks in the gallery with the experts she had worked with during the Fellowship.



Korda making sound recordings for *Missing Time* 2017



*Missing Time* culminated in an exhibition at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art (9 February – 3 June 2018), a performance (9 March 2018) and four public events, where Korda interviewed the experts she had worked with: John Bowers, Professor of Creative Digital Practice (Newcastle University); Johanna Sheehan, Sound Healer; Andrew Fletcher, Senior Lecturer in Applied Mathematics and Angela Voss, Honorary Lecturer in Myth, Cosmology and the Sacred at Canterbury Christ Church University (links to each talk available on Slide 18).

The installation involved a series of ceramic 'portals', which drew on Korda's research into the sound mirrors, found on the North East coastline. Each projected original compositions made during the research outwards to the audience. Seating and a rug in the centre of the room, turned inwards, looking away from the walls, invited visitors to pause and engage in sonic meditation and deep listening.

For the performance, Korda worked with sound engineer Fred Hollingsworth, acapella group *Mouthful*, and members of the Tyneside Amateur Radio Society. The composition at the heart of the performance was created by Korda and *Mouthful* during a series of closed workshops. Korda mixed the sound live and coordinated the performance, in which members of *Mouthful* sang while interacting with the sound mirrors.

Serena Korda: *Missing Time*, performance with *Mouthful* at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead, 9 March 2018





Installation view: Serena Korda: *Missing Time* at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (February – June 2018). The ceramic sound mirrors and speakers are installed on the walls (L & R), the broken ceramic sound mirrors on the back wall, and seating to allow for deep listening and sonic meditation in the centre of the room.





Installation view: Serena Korda: *Missing Time* at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art, Gateshead (February – June 2018).  
Ceramic sound mirrors with speakers

Serena Korda *Missing Time*





Serena Korda: *Missing Time*. Performance with *Mouthful* at BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art Gateshead, 9 March 2018.

In 2013, Northumberland National Park and most of Kielder Water & Kielder Forest Park became the first place in England to be designated an International Dark Sky Park by the International Dark Sky Association (NNPA, 2021). Korda explored the sounds of the dark skies in collaboration with Andrew Fletcher, a Senior Lecturer in Applied Mathematics at Newcastle University who studies galactic magnetic fields, radio astronomy, cosmic rays and interstellar fields. Korda and Fletcher worked at Allenheads Contemporary Arts, a location free from radio and electromagnetic interference, facing the southern hemisphere, with a clear horizon. They built a custom-made radio telescope, drawing on Fletcher's work on LOFAR, a radio telescope network. This telescope captured radio waves emitted by Jupiter and nearby stars, and converted them into audible sounds. The device had to be installed and used in specific conditions and times according to the planet's orbit.



Serena Korda: sound recording at Kielder, 2017



Concrete sound mirrors are found on England's northeast coastline. They were used to detect the sound of enemy aircraft prior to the invention of radar in the 1930s. As part of her broader investigation into the relationship between material and sound in different landscapes, Korda explored this technology for its potential outside of warfare and military surveillance, to record the acoustic soundwaves generated by planets and stars. Korda undertook a site visit and field recording session at the Concrete Acoustic Sound Mirror, on the coastline near Sunderland. Pauline Oliveros' deep listening practice and Henry David Thoreau's writing on unpremeditated scores found in nature (and how we receive these being determined by where and how we place ourselves in the landscape) were two key influences on this aspect of the research process.



Serena Korda: recording with acoustic mirror on the North East coastline near Seaham, 2017



Korda used these concrete acoustic sound mirrors to produce new audio work and to inform the ceramic and sound works installed at BALTIC. Drawing from her collaboration with Fletcher, Korda explored how principles of random order found in astrophysics and applied mathematics could be reflected by using the *nerikomi* process used to produce ceramic sculptures. *Nerikomi* is a Japanese ceramic technique in which clay is stained with pigment, rolled, sliced and re-rolled, resulting in a marbled pattern. For the ceramic sound mirrors, Korda used stain embedded in the body of the clay to create a marbled effect, evoking representations of the strata and sediments that make up the earth. These ceramic sculptures created an opportunity for the audience to experience the 'sound' space of the gallery in new ways.



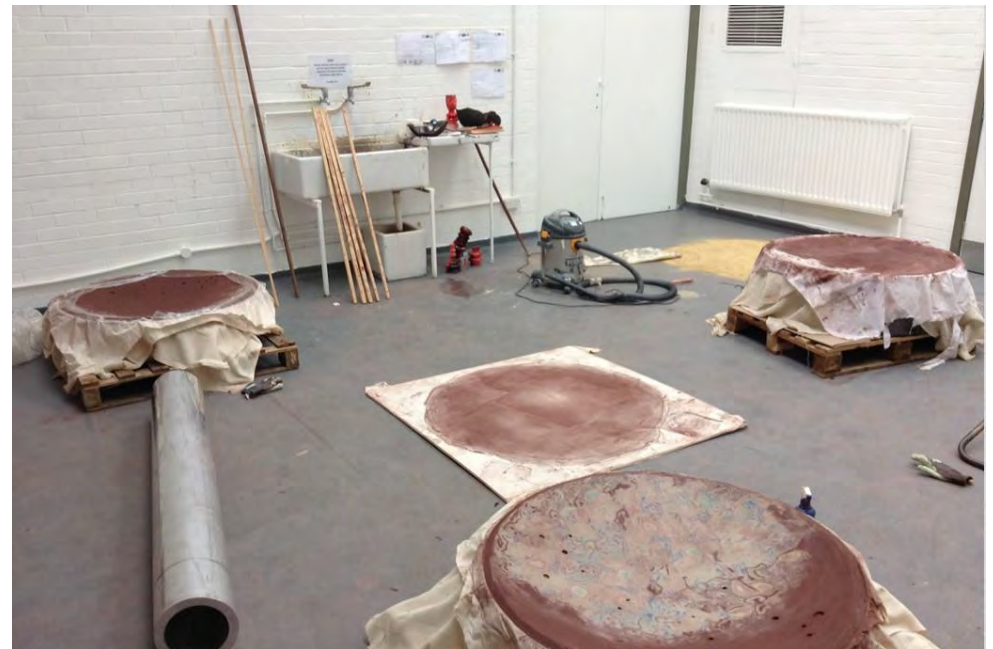
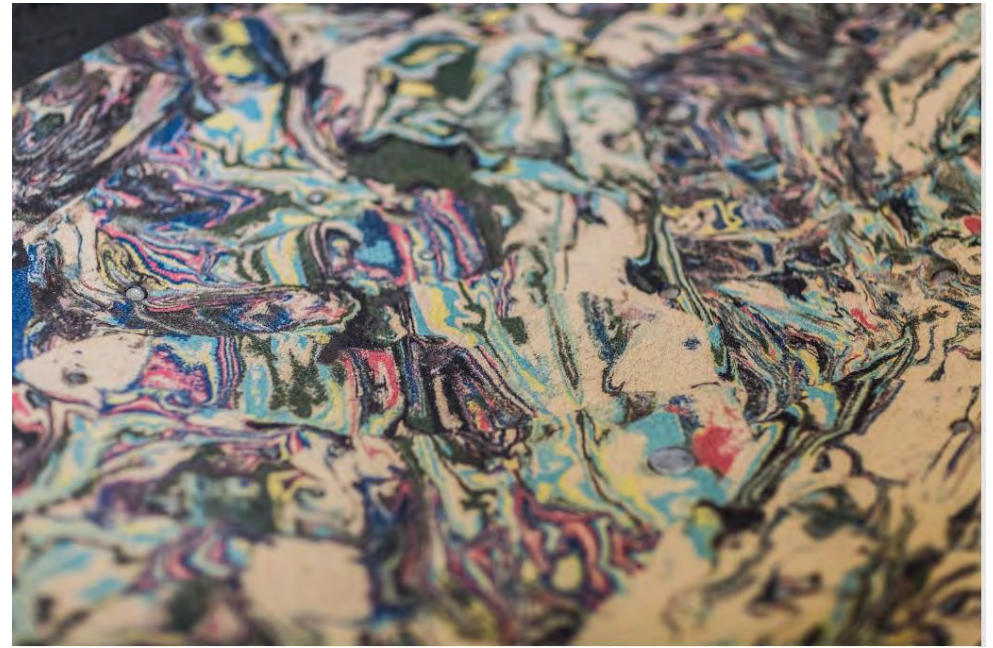
Korda working with the unfired ceramic sound mirrors, 2017



Above left: Developing the ceramic 'portals' in Korda's studio, Fine Art Department, Newcastle University. Korda experimented with the Japanese *nerikomi* technique to achieve random patterning of the clay. 2017.

Above right: Detail of the ceramic after firing.

Right: Forming the portals over plaster moulds in the studio





The recordings made with Fletcher formed the basis for a composition and the score for the performance at BALTIC. This was developed with vocal improvisation group Mouthful (Katherine Zeserson, Bex Mather, Dave Camlin and Sharon Durant). For six weeks, Korda and *Mouthful* held day-long closed workshop sessions in which they experimented with binaural technology. Korda also consulted with colleagues at Culture Lab, Newcastle University (Dr Tom Schofield, Dr Tim Shaw, Professor John Bowers) about the use of binaural sound in the composition. Each week, Korda and *Mouthful* devised different configurations of planetary frequencies to work with, improvising within those parameters. Korda directed *Mouthful* to sing specific frequencies connected with each planet's harmonics – frequencies based on, among other factors, its circumference and the speed of its orbit. Korda recorded these workshop sessions and developed the arrangement, combining the recorded voices with her own field recordings and sounds collected from her custom-made radio telescopes. These sounds were mixed electronically during the improvisation workshops and were sent to *Mouthful* between sessions, for them to develop the improvisation techniques used before the next workshop.

The collaboration with Mouthful was supported by grants from Arts Council England and the Elephant Trust.

Above: Field recording at Kielder. Below: Workshop at Newcastle University  
Serena Korda *Missing Time*







Excerpt of rehearsals, experimenting with binaural sound for 'Jupiter' section.

Above: workshop at Newcastle University with the acapella group *Mouthful*.  
Right: performance at BALTIC, 9th March 2018.



Drawing on her study of the ancient philosophical concept of the 'music of the spheres', Korda was also interested in the healing properties of sound and the idea that planetary frequencies may have an effect of the human psyche.

She worked with local sound healer Johanna Sheehan, who uses 'planetary' gongs whose dynamic range is extremely wide. These draw on ideas of planetary harmonics and frequencies and are tuned according to the orbit and circumference of each planet in our solar system. The shape and audibility of the gongs informed the shape and form of the ceramic sound mirrors.

Combining knowledge drawn from the hard sciences and from more spiritual approaches, the project contributed to research in its broadest sense – by being both formal and informal, scientific and unscientific at the same time.

Korda also worked with David Stansfield, a local Morse code operator, to turn the lyrics for the score by *Mouthful* into audible Morse code, which Korda then recorded and incorporated into the final composition. Additional Morse code, produced by Stansfield and other members of the Tyneside Amateur Radio Society, were incorporated into the performances.

Sound recording session with Johanna Sheehan, sound healer, Hexham, Northumberland, 2017

Serena Korda *Missing Time*







*Baltic Bites* – documents the exhibition and performance at BALTIC alongside video documentation showing the process of making the work.  
<https://vimeo.com/254705404>



**Talks:**

A series of in-conversation events with artist Serena Korda and invited guests, exploring some of the ideas that have informed her practice.

**10 March 2018**

Andrew Fletcher, Senior Lecturer in Applied Mathematics at Newcastle University, and Serena Korda talk about the ionosphere, radio astronomy and their shared experience of making a radio telescope: <https://vimeo.com/260207836>

**7 April 2018**

Sound healer Johanna Sheehan talks to Serena Korda about how sound can heal, reconnecting to nature through shamanism and the importance of inviting your ancestors into a room: <https://vimeo.com/269847707>

**14 April 2018**

Angela Voss, Honorary Lecturer in Myth, Cosmology and the Sacred at Canterbury Christ Church University, and Serena Korda discuss the importance of symbolism and imagination as an antidote to Post-Enlightenment reason:

<https://vimeo.com/265145567>

**10 February 2018**

John Bowers, Professor of Creative Digital Practice, Newcastle University, talks to the artist about their shared interest in noise, interference, earth signals and the paranormal: <http://balticplus.uk/in-conversation-professor-john-bowers-serena-korda-c31883/>

**A-N magazine feature**, interview with Korda:

<https://www.a-n.co.uk/news/qa-serena-korda-artist-working-ceramics-sound/>

Since the exhibition at BALTIC, Korda has developed the Missing Time project in two ways:

### **1. *Missing Time*, The High Line, New York (June 2018)**

Korda expanded on the exhibition at BALTIC and the practice-led research that informed it in an immersive sound performance for the High Line, New York (5-7 June 2018), responding to the mythology of the High Line as a ‘thin place’, a portal to other worlds, and to the area’s recent transformation. The High Line is a public park in Lower Manhattan with a dedicated contemporary art programme. This version of *Missing Time* was commissioned by High Line Art Associate Curator, Melanie Kress. The piece features the acapella group *Mouthful*. Visitors experienced the singers’ voices and manipulated radio waves through stereo headphones, which played a version of the sounds captured through a microphone located under the pathway, mixed live by Korda during the performance.

Documentation of the event can be accessed on [YouTube](#).

### **2. *Gää: Holistic Science and Wisdom Tradition* at Newlyn Art Gallery, Cornwall, UK (February – May 2019)**

Three of the sound mirrors and a binaural version of the sound piece were shown as part of *Gää: Holistic Science and Wisdom Tradition*, a group exhibition at Newlyn Art Gallery and The Exchange, Cornwall (16 February – 18 May 2019). The exhibition featured work by Gemma Anderson, Serena Korda, Delfina Muñoz de Toro and Abel Rodriguez.

The Exchange hosted an artist’s talk with Korda to accompany the exhibition, available on [Soundcloud](#).