# The Rock Concerts

A practice-based research project by Uta Kögelsberger 01.01.2015 - 06.07.2020



















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#### 300 Word Statement

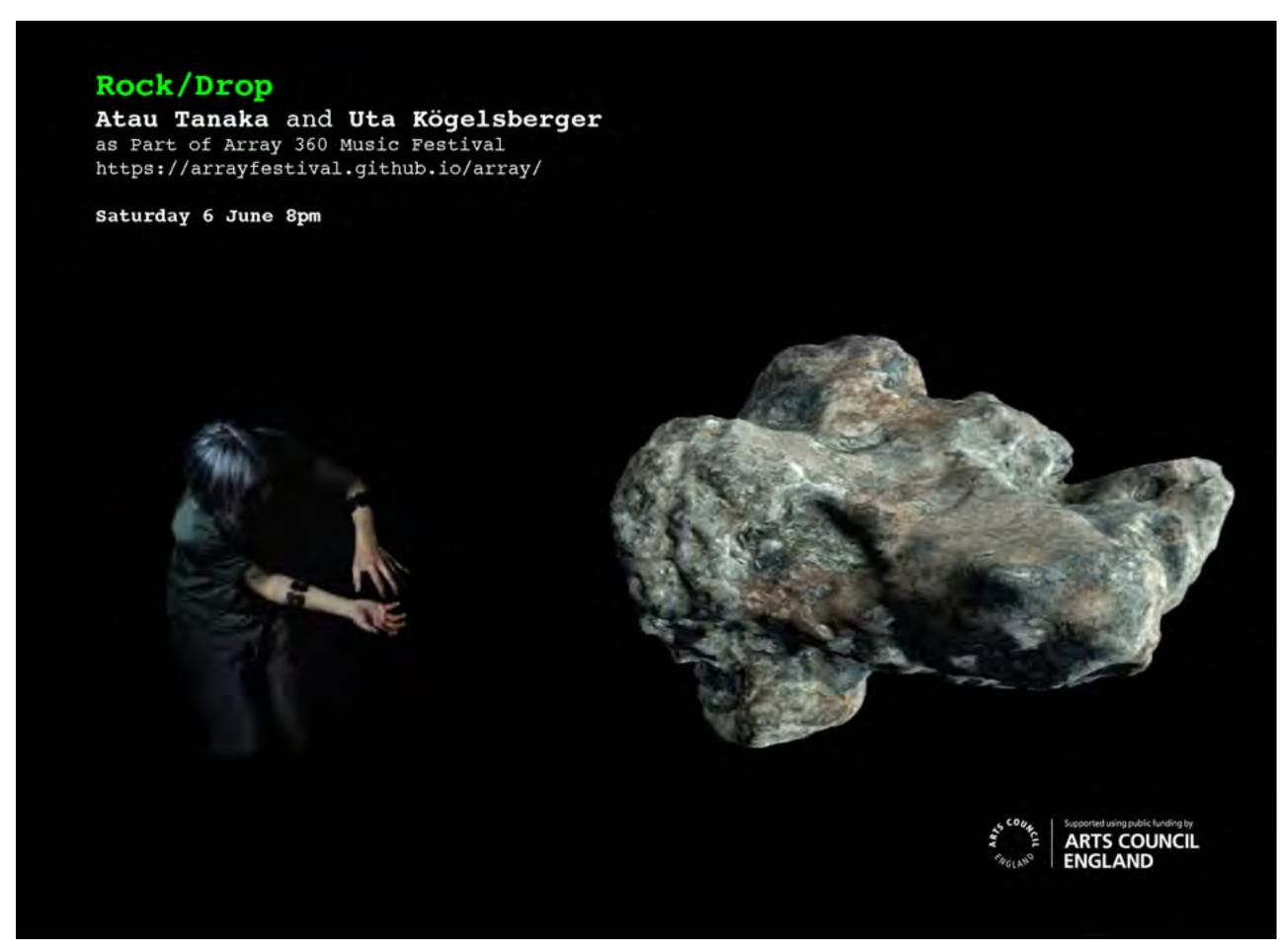
The Weather Works was an extended practice-based research project (2014-20) that brought together video installation, sculpture, performance, experimental sound and new technologies. At its core was an exploration of humankind's complex relationship with the natural world through creative engagements focused on affective impact.

The early stages of the research were carried out during a commission by the Cumbria Museum Consortium and culminated in solo exhibitions at Abbot Hall, Wordsworth Trust and Tullie House Museum (2015). The research situated itself in response to two aspects of the Lake District represented in the museum's collections: In the first instance, the region as an epitome of conceptions of the picturesque. Kögelsberger responded by looking for alternative ways of understanding the landscape - literally going beneath the surface of the earth, to reveal its longstanding history of industrial exploitation.

Secondly the research took the impact of climate change in North West England as manifested through the increase in rainfall as the starting point to develop a non-representational understanding of landscape, questioning modes of representation that re-enforce established hierarchies of perceiving the natural world, by introducing elements such as chance, and non-human centric perspectives.

A key output from the initial research were sound recordings gathered by Kögelsberger in a disused mine during heavy rainfall. These became the basis for expanding the research into new cross-disciplinary and collaborative engagements developed in contexts beyond Cumbria. The three-stage 'The Rock Concerts' (Art Night, London (2017) and Boiler House Newcastle (2018); were sculptural installations, with multi-channel sound and live performance, culminating in an amplified reality live-interactive work staged at the Albany Theatre London (2020)

Throughout its stages of development, the research was funded by the Cumbria Museum Consortium, Arts Council England and English Heritage; Newcastle University; Goldsmith's University.



Exhibition Invite, Rock/Drop

#### **Research Questions:**

- 1. How can cross-disciplinary practice in the fields of lens-based media, sculpture, performance, experimental sound and new technologies develop an alternative, non-representational and non-pictorial understanding of landscape to help us re-think our complex relationship to nature, and how it manifests itself in man's often futile attempts at control?
- 2. How can diverse creative engagements focused on affective impact bring about a new and different embodied experience to open up new forms of understandings of our relationship to the natural world? This question is posed in the context of an urgent need to re-evaluate human-centric positions, in the wake of climate change?



#### **Exhibitions**

**South by Southwest**, solo exhibition including video installation Playing the Cave, video installation South by Southwest, and photographic installation Never Hatched, 24 October 2015 - 29 November 2015, Abbot Hall, Kendal.

**Playing the Cave,** Solo exhibition, video installation, Playing the Cave, 24 October 2015 - 29 November 2015, Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle.

**Orchestra of Rocks: Not a Rock Concert**, Art Night Associate Programme, London. (2017), in collaboration with Whitechapel Art Gallery, curated by Fatos Ustek. Exhibition with live performance: A sculptural installation combining 8 channel, spatial experimental, sound, live recordings, and sculpture with contributions by invited sound artists based on Kögelsberger's ambient recordings.

**Orchestra of Rocks: Not a Rock Concert on Tour,** The Great Exhibition of the North, Newcastle Upon Tyne. (2018) Solo Exhibition with live performance at the Boiler House, Newcastle University. A sculptural installation combining 8 channel, spatial experimental sound, live performance and sculpture with contributions by invited sound artists from Newcastle, based on Kögelsberger's recordings.

**Cave Music** (Rock Concerts – Version IV) The Hub, The Ugly Duck, London (2019), Exhibition with live performances at The Hub, London curated by Geraldine Atger. An 8-channel sculptural and sound installation, combining experimental sound and live performance by a new group of invited sound artists including the Battle of the Rocks, a collaboration between the beat boxer Marv Radio and Kögelsberger.

**Rock/Drop** (2020) as part of the 360 Array Music Festival curated by Tom Slater for the The Albany Theatre, London. An amplified reality, interactive pulsation rock, reacting to Kögelsberger's live sound recordings in combination with Atau Tanaka's wrist bands that sense muscle tension through an electromyogram signal and translate complex organic data into sound.

#### Talks, Symposia, Colloquia (Uta Kögelsberger):

Mondes Spatialises (2020): Composition et Spatialisations Sonore et Musicale dans les environments en réalité virtuelle, augmentée et mixte. Colloquium, University Jen Monnet Sait Etienne.

Rock/Drop (2020): Albany Theatre online talk for the launch of the 360 Array Music Festival including Atau Tanaka and Tom Slater amongst others

Rock Concert (2019): In conversation with Atau Tanaka, as part of Rock Concert exhibition, the Hub, London

Earth Lab: An Investigation of Earth as a Laboratory' (2017): This colloquium brought together a number of artists, inventors and thinkers who re-imagine Earth, sea and sky from a bottom-up, post-anthropocene position, in a wide-ranging, broad-brushtroke survey of current thinking about Earth as a living laboratory. Featuring Tomás Saraceno, Nicola Triscott, Lise Autogena, Joshua Portway, Uta Kogelsberger, John Beck, Neal White and chaired by Lucy Reynolds. Insitute for Contemporary Culture, University of Westminster

'The Artist in a Collected World' (2016) Symposium, Chelsea College of Art
The Artist in a Collected World brought together artists, curators and museum professionals to explore the different ways in which visual artists have worked with national collections. Speakers include: Andrew Grassie, Claire Gulliver, Uta Koglesberger, Jo Melvin, James Peto, Ilaria Puri Purini, George Shaw, Ben Tufnell and Colin Wiggins. Convened by Mark Fairnington.

Artist Talk (2016), Fine Art, University of Westminster

Global Resonances (2016), Northern Bridge Autumn Conference, Baltic CCA Gateshead

#### Talks about the research:

Sonic Interaction: From gesture to immersion, Atau Tanaka, keynote as part of ICMI 2020, 22nd ACM International Conference on Multimodal Interaction, Utrecht

Physically distant: online talks on telematic performance, Atau Tanaka, School of Music in Pietea, Lulea University of Technology, Sweden



#### **Research Context**

Kögelsberger approached the commission with two contextual concerns:

The first was in reference to the impact of idealised representation of nature has on our understanding and relationship to the natural world.

The other was to develop a body of works that explored the weather as an alternative way of establishing an understanding of the landscape.

#### **Research Context: The weather**

Data shows that the region has seen a significant increase of rainfall. This increase of rainfall is attributed to climate change. During her period of research spent with the curatorial team at Tullie House, Kögelsberger sought out elements of the collections that made the impact of changing weather patterns visible to establish means to look beyond the visual representation of landscape and to instead consider a more complex social and ecological perspective.

In this process, Steve Hewitt, Curator of Natural Sciences at Tullie House introduced Kögelsberger to

the un-hatched eggs of the last golden eagle pair resident in England. According to the ornithologist

Dave Walker (author of 'Call of the Eagle') the eagle population has declined due to the impact of changing weather patterns. This became the starting point for the development of 'Never Hatched' and 'South by Southwest'.

During research at the collections at Dove Cottage Kögelsberger came across an Aeolian harp. The instruments ability to played by natural forces (wind) without human interaction is what triggered the experiments with the sound recordings in the disused slate mine during heavy rainfall that became the starting point for playing the cave and the subsequent Rock Concerts.

Each of these works seeks to create a hierarchy where the natural environment shapes us rather than us changing the environment. It is these relationships of control and these revised power structures between us and our environment that are the driving force behind this project developed in the context of the Lake District.

#### **Research Context Industrial heritage:**

During her research in the region and of the museum's collections, Kögelsberger became aware of the Lake District's history as one of the most heavily mined areas of the UK. The impact of this history upon the landscape is still visible today, with over 5,000 shafts for lead, copper, zinc, baryte, hematite, tungsten, graphite, fluorite, slate and coal mines. This stands in contrast to the cultural narrative of sublime that is promoted through the Lake District as a tourist destination. The Rock Concerts, shot in the mouth off a disused slate mine, seeks to question idealised representations of landscapes by directly going below the surface of the earth and by looking for alternative means of understanding these picturesque landscapes.

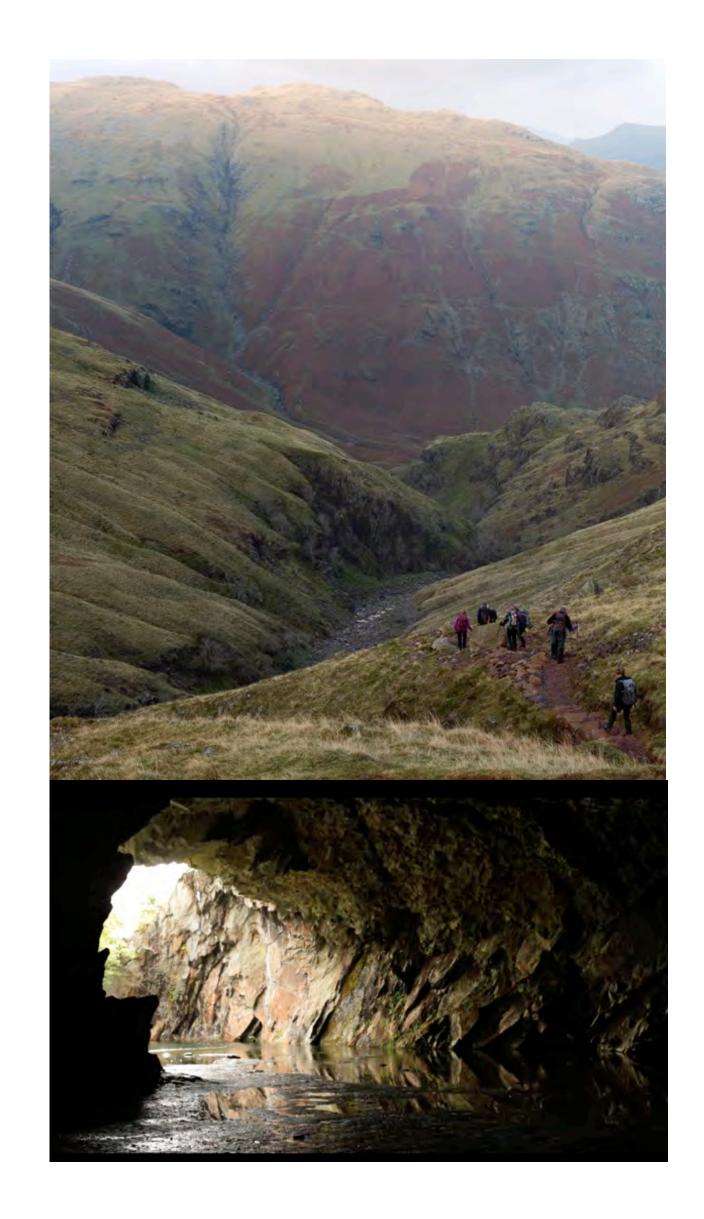
# Research Context: Art Research Through Practice

The research situates itself in relationship to other works making reference to the histories of mining, such as Uriel Orlow and Mikhail Karikis 'Sounds from Beneath' (2011) which creates a vocal score and performance captured on video of ex-miners a disused mine in East Kent, UK.

However it differentiates itself from practices in the field in the following ways:

It developed a series of alternative visual and acoustic strategies, using sound and video (version I) sound-art composition for live performance (versions II-IV), and sound, photogrammetry and coding (version V).

These developments responded to the sonic properties of the context of a disused mining cave. They combined sound, sculpture and visual technologies to visually embody sound. They probed the boundaries of established hierarchies between sound and image, sound and performance, and sound and sculptural objects.



# Approaches that could compel the audience to rethink how they define themselves in relation to nature the natural world

The Rock Concerts seek to explore alternative visceral acoustic and visual strategies to compel the audience to engage with the environmental issues. For this Kögelsberger looked to ethnographic research regarding the individual's sense of identity in relation to their surrounding landscape.

Rebecca Solnit (2005) discusses the indigenous 'Wintu' Native Americans: "the native American tribe who think of the self only in reference to the landscape instead of thinking of the landscape in reference to the self, creating a hierarchy where the natural environment shapes us rather than us changing the environment." (p. 17)

The research developed under the Umbrella of the Rock Concerts probes how we can consider an understanding of landscape where we are shaped by the landscape and nature rather than having impact upon it.

#### **Research Context: Past Work**

The Rock Concerts expand on Kögelsberger's photographic and moving image that investigates how society's ideology and belief structures become manifest in the complex relationship between us and our environment and its representations in photography and moving image.

Recent projects include: Antipodes ('14-'15) a series of photographs that investigated relationships between two exactly opposite sides of the world, commissioned by WIRED and published in WIRED USA 2014, WIRED UK 2015 and selected for American Photographers (2016), Human Nature, ('03-'20), a series of photographs about manmade nature, exhibited as part of les Nuits de L'Annee, Arles, France, 2018 and the Tbilisi International Photography Festival, Georgia, (2018) On Freedom, ('08-'15), a trilogy about how the interdependence of the notion of freedom and the political society that sustains it, is lived out through the landscapes of the American West, included in the collections of LACMA and a touring exhibition that will culminate at LACMA, Los Angeles, USA in ('20-'21)

### PART I

- a) Never Hatched
- b) South by Southwest
- c) Playing the Cave

**South by Southwest**, solo exhibition including the photographic installation *Never Hatched*, the video installation *South by Southwest*, and the video installation *Playing the Cave*, 24 October 2015 - 29 November 2015, Abbot Hall, Kendal.

**Playing the Cave,** Solo exhibition, video installation, <u>Playing the Cave</u>, 24 October 2015 - 29 November 2015, Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery, Carlisle.

Funded by and with the support of:









# Never Hatched

Never Hatched was the central work of a three room solo exhibition at Abbot Hall. It consisted of 12 large scale photographs shot on a 4x5 field camera of the un-hatched eggs of the last pair of golden eagles in England.

Magnified on a scale of 1 to 300, the eggs begin to resemble planets, each bearing distinct characteristics different from the others, each bearing witness to the eagle's failure to procreate, to hope and unfulfilled potential.



**Never Hatched II**, Colour Photograph, Inkjet Print on extra matt photo rag paper, 40" x 50" inches

# South by Southwest

South By Southwest traces the movements of the last golden eagle pair in England. Footage of the territory occupied by the golden eagle pair, is superimposed with eagle-defined co-ordinates to propose a new kind of mapping, where human and non-human living spaces come together in mixed arrangement of knowledge and ecology.

The narrative of the eagle's trajectory is based on the meticulous tracking notes of the ornithologist Dave Walker. Walker was employed by the RSPB from 1979 through to 2009 to study the eagle pair and protect them from disturbance. The shots of the eagles' territory are intersected with shots from Walker's living room, a testimony to his 30-year relationship with the bird.

link to video

https://vimeo.com/152079063



**South by Southwest**, video installation, Abbott Hall, Kendall (2015)

# Playing the Cave

Shot in the mouth of a disused mine during heavy rainfall, <u>Playing the Cave</u> rejects an understanding of landscape through traditional representation by going below the surface and looking at the tunnels left behind from one of the most actively mined areas in the United Kingdom.

The trancelike, rhythmic soundtrack is composed of individual raindrops recorded inside the cave with the help of experimental recording techniques. Each beat triggers a new image. Fractured experience becomes a means of subjugating content to image, image to sound and sound to chance.

link to video

https://vimeo.com/151054720



Playing the Cave, video installation, Abbott Hall, Kendall (2015)

### Methods and Processes (Playing the Cave)



Rydal Cave, Grasmere, photographed during the production of Playing the Cave



Production Stills, Playing the Cave, 2015

**Sound:** Live sound recordings were gathered in the mouth of the now disused slate mine (Rydal Cave) during heavy rainfall.

Recordings gathered in the Cave provided the basis for an electronic, drum-pattern sample based sound-track, composed of up to 20 tracks of rain drops.

The sounds were gathered with experimental and random recording techniques such as taking a series of objects: wooden buckets, metal trays, plastic containers into the cave.

The recording equipment was placed inside these containers as well as a as regular ambient recordings.

Positioning of speakers in relation to the space and added objects, and movement were techniques used to distort the sound to increase accident and chance.

The sound was the basis for the visuals in producing the video. Video images from the cave were cut according to the rhythm of the sound-track to subjugate image to sound.

The recordings gathered over repeated visits over the duration of the project, provided the basis for the recordings used for all the later stages of the Rock Concerts

**Video:** A large section of the video recordings consisted of intentionally out of focus footage gathered in the cave, with the intention of instead of revealing the physical qualities of the cave true to nature, viscerally translating the experience of the cave.

The cave was lit with artificial lighting responding to sound during the process of video recording.

The video edit was based on 16 visual channels each consisting of different video footage of the cave. Footage was cut in accordance with the beats of the sound to create a random interlocking of imagery.

# PART II: ORCHESTRA OF ROCKS: NOT A ROCK CONCERT (2017)

A sculptural installation combining 8 channel, spatial experimental sound, live recordings and sculpture by Uta Kögelsberger. Art Night Open, London in collaboration with Whitechapel Art Gallery, curated by Fatos Ustek, funded by NICAP and the SSRF, with the Support of St Olav's, Heart Street, and Goldsmith's University.

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#### Overview;

Orchestra of Rocks: Not a Rock Concert consisted of a sculptural installation of 8 simulated rocks, each containing a speakers linked to an 8 channel sound installation,

The rock sculpture speakers were developed in response to the site of the performance, to contrast with the natural stone of the church, the rocks were produced with 3\_D computer simulations and referenced the colours in the stained-glass windows of the church.

Each Rock was connected to a separate sound channel, each channel containing a separate sequence of drop sounds. New sound compositions based on Köglesberger's original recordings were performed by invited collaborating sound artists including:

Adam Parkinson, Prof Atau Tanaka, Dane Law, Eleonora Oreggia, Nathalia, Shelley Parker

#### Methods and Processes

Orchestra of Rocks: Not a Rock Concert,

Orchestra of Rocks: Not a Rock Concert on Tour,

#### **Cave Music**



#### **Sculptural Installation**

Whereas *Playing the Cave* probed the hierarchies between sound and moving image, the research produced as part of Part II, III and IV of the *Rock Concerts* explored the hierarchies and relationships between sound and object. The intention was for the sculptural objects to physically embody sound.

Each Rock was connected to a separate sound channel, each channel containing a separate sequence of drop sounds, based on Kögelsberger's recording's gathered in Rydal Cave during heavy rainfall to create an 8 channel surround sound.

The formal intentions with the sculptural rocks was to evoke the equally material and immaterial quality of computer generated models.

This was achieved, through the use of hand mixed pure pigment paint on gesso surfaces to achieve maximum colour intensity.

The material immaterial quality of the objects, their deceptive weight, was further pulled into focus through their positioning on speaker stands.

#### **Collaborations: Sound**

Each sound artist was given Uta Kögelsberger's original recordings captured in the cave, with the following guidance:

- 1) To use only the material of the provided sound recordings from the cave as the basis of a new composition and performance.
- 2) To analyse the sound recordings in terms of the environmental and spatial information the sound files communicate or suggest and develop their own subjective interpretation of this reading.
- 3) To consider the broader ecological issue of the increase of rainfall due to climate change in their interpretation of the sound recordings.
- 4) To use 8 channel sound, to develop a spatial composition and performance for a live audience.
- 5) To apply their own research and approach to the recordings.







### Orchestra of Rocks: Not a Rock Concert (2017)

Art Night, London

Sculptural installation with 8 channel sound based on Kögelsberger's recordings

### Links to performances by

Atau Tanaka

https://vimeo.com/249107757

Nathalia

https://vimeo.com/249062783

Shelley Parker

https://vimeo.com/248794201





Orchestra of Rocks:Not a Rock Concert, for Art Night Associate Programme, in collaboration with Whitechapel Art Gallery

# PART III: ORCHESTRA OF ROCKS: NOT A ROCK CONCERT ON TOUR (2018)

Boiler House, Great Exhibition of the North, Newcastle-upon-Tyne.





Orchestra of Rocks: Not a Rock Concert on Tour, Boiler House, Newcastle Upon Tyne, 2018

A sculptural installation combining 8 channel, spatial experimental sound, live recordings and sculpture with contributions by invited sound artists.

Collaborating sound artists: The Noize Choir, Dr. Mariam Rezaei, Dr. Will Edmondes and Prof. Atau Tanaka.

#### **Developments from Part II:**

- 1) Integrate the notion of sound and voice and live performance through a collaboration with the Noize Choir
- 2) Refined and revised sculptural rocks to respond to new space and to emphasise their material immaterial qualities.
- 3) A new collaborations with experimental sound artists opening up to the North East including leading figures in their field from Newcastle University.
- 4) The use of voice in dialogue with the ambient sound recordings
- 5) Expanded performative element.
- 6) The exhibition was open during the daytime as a sound installation only with a sound work by the Noize Choir based on Kögelsberger's recordings.

Link; https://utakogelsberger.net/rock-concert-ii/





#### PART IV: CAVE MUSIC (2019)

The Hub, The Ugly Duck, London

An 8-channel sculptural and sound installation, combining experimental sound and live performance by invited sound artists, with contributions by invited sound artists:

Prof. Atau Tanaka, Maeve Radio, Chooc Ly Tan, Shelley Parker and Dane Law.

Curated by Geraldine Atger

Funded by and Art Council Lottery Grant and with additional support by Newcastle and Goldsmith's Universities.

Link to performances: <a href="https://vimeo.com/362135782">https://vimeo.com/362135782</a>

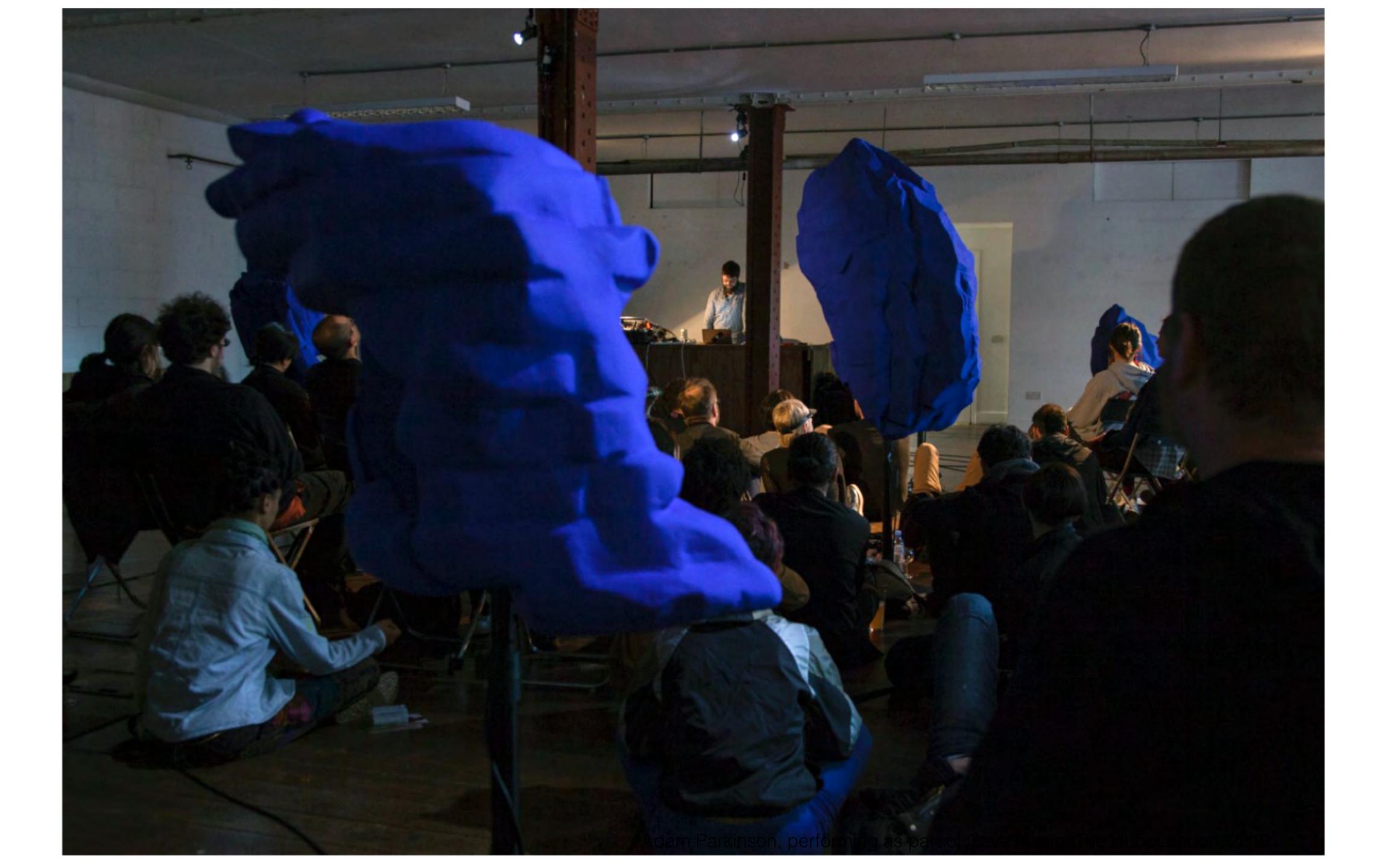


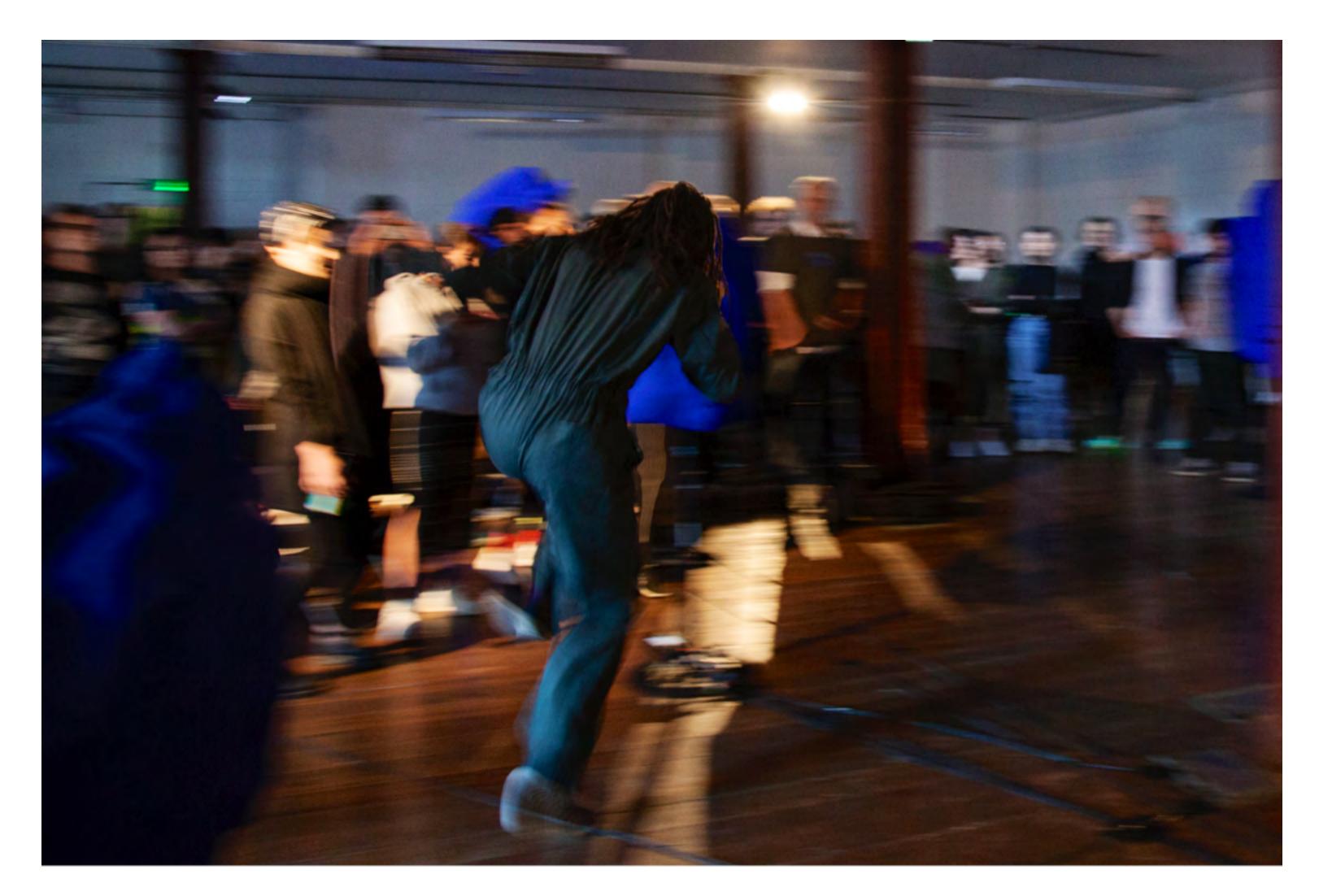












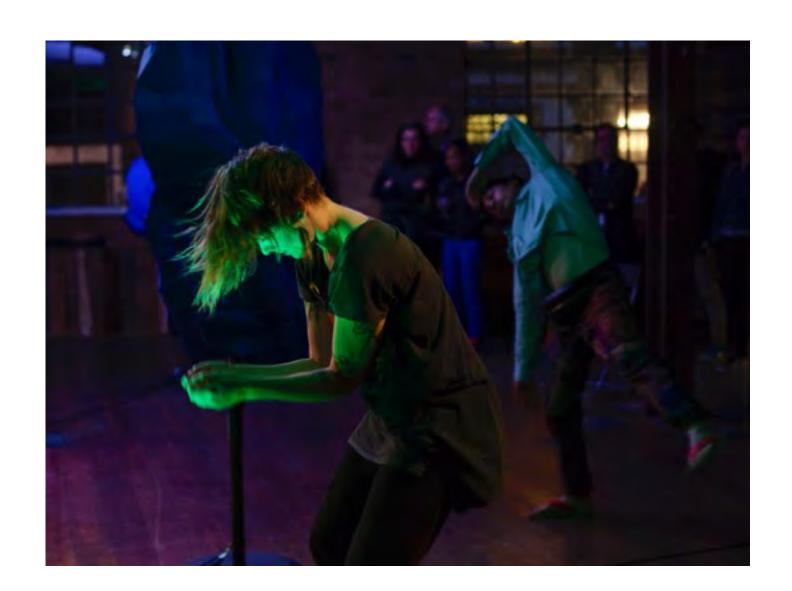
#### Developments from Part III

New set of compositions with the source sound recordings.

#### Development of Battle of the Rocks:

- 1) Uta Kögelsberger in collaboration with Beat Boxer (Maeve Radio) in an exchange where voice (Maeve Radio) and sound (Kögelsberger) alternate in a playful but competitive relationship.
- 2) DJ and artists Chooc Ly Tan developed a series of interpretations of the sounds that were specifically targeted at encouraging audience participation in the shape of dance.
- 3) A new sound composition by Kögelsberger for the opening hours of the exhibition when there is no live performance.







### PART V: ROCK/DROP (2019)

Array 360 Music Festival, The Albany Theatre, London A surround sound 360 video, combining photogrammetry, programming, experimental sound and live performance. Curated by Tom Slater

Lead Artist: Uta Kögelsberger.

In collaboration with: Atau Tanaka.

Programming by Vytautas Nievadras in collaboration with Uta Kögelsberger and Atau Tanaka

Photogrammetry by Eva Sbaraini, Sam Roe in collaboration with Uta Köglesberger

Live performances by Uta Kögelsbegrer and Atau Tanaka

Link to performances:

https://utakogelsberger.uk/rock/drop

Funded by and with the support of:











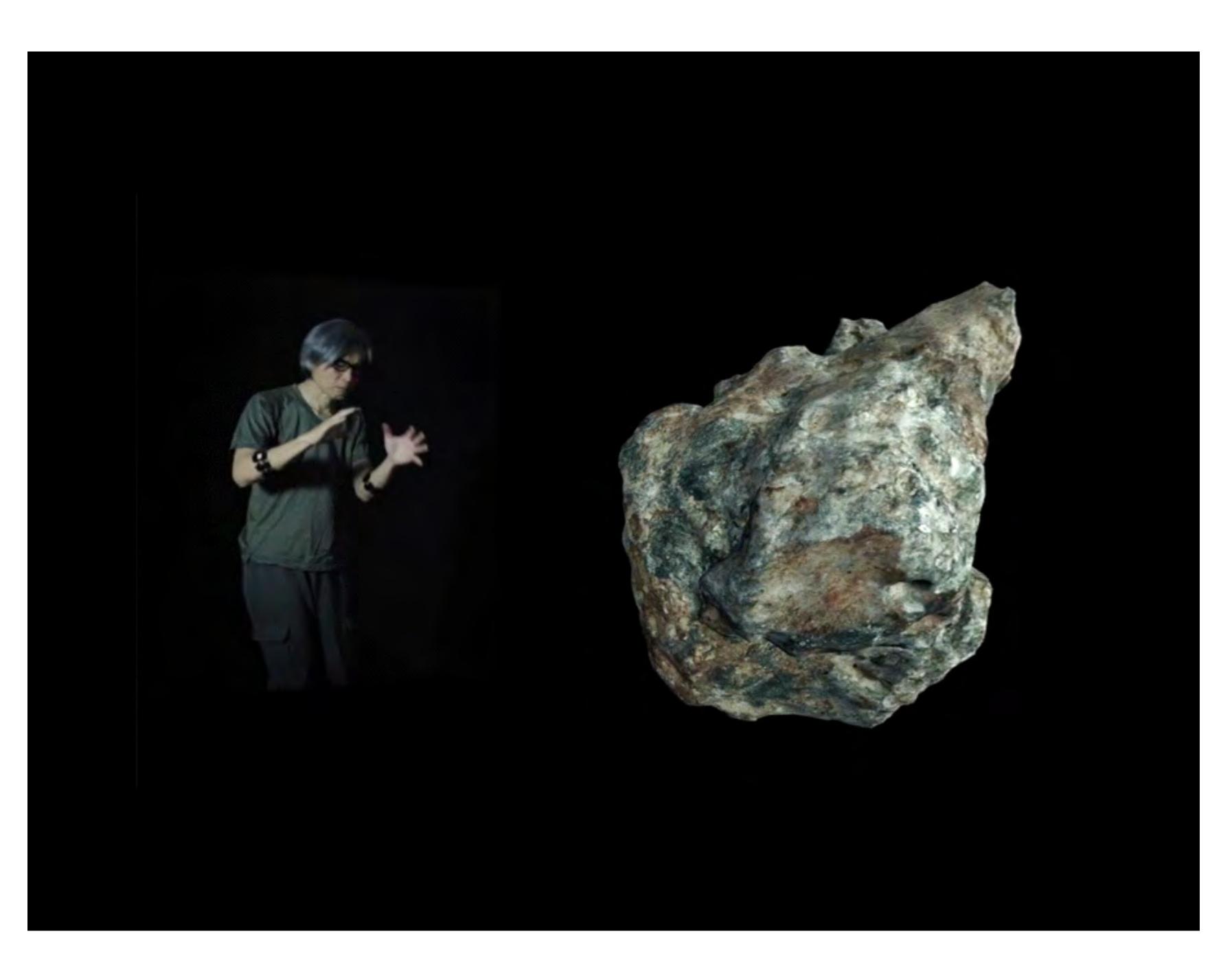
#### **Rock/Drop: Methods and Processes**

Rock/Drop moves the research back into the projected image to look for alternative ways to bring the interaction between sound and object closer to one another It consists of the development of a series of 8 amplified reality, pulsating rocks, responding directly to live music.

A series of 8 rocks provide the subject of a high resolution (8K), 3-D model of Rocks built through photogrammetry shot on a high resolution, medium format, Digital Camera (Phase 1). Texture mapping composed of composed of polygon 15.000.000 polygons each, further distorts the scale of each rock, leading the rock to oscillate between a small rock and the appearance of a planet.

New programming developed in close collaboration between Vytautas Nievadras and Kögelsberger shapes and complexifies interactions between sound and virtual object. It 'teaches' the rocks new unexpected ways to react to live sound, creating unique improvisations between the simulated rock model and the live performance.

The intention of these programmes and live interactions is to transfer the solid mass of the rock into something that acts more like living matter taking the notion of embodied sound further than in the rock sculptures that were the basis for stage 2-4 of the *Rock Concerts*.



# Rock/Drop Methods and Processes continued;

In a live performance Atau Tanaka channeled Kögelsberger's recordings of rainfall through is muscle sensing wristbands. In this process sound is shaped and activated through physical motion. This motion is echoed in a dialogue with the Rocks.

#### Response to Covid 19:

Venue closure (Albany Theatre) due to Covid 19 made what was supposed to take place as an installation in space with 8 flat-screen monitors and a 22 channel sound system with a collaborative live performance between Atau Tanaka and Uta Kögelsberger as part of the 360 Array Music Festival impossible to realise as a live performance.

As a result the work was developed in the gaming engine Unity and materialised in the shape of a 360 video with surround sound. The work can be experienced with virtual reality head-sets and headphones in order to experience the spatialisation of sound.

**Rock/Drop,** stills from 360 video performed for 360 Array Music Festival, (2020)





Rock/Drop, stills from 360 video performed for 360 Array Music Festival, (2020)

Link to Rock/Drop: https://utakogelsberger.uk/rock/drop

#### Summary of key links to works and performances:

#### Playing the Cave (2015)

Tullie House, Carlisle
Abbot Hall, Kendall
Video Installation
<a href="https://vimeo.com/151054720">https://vimeo.com/151054720</a>

#### **Never Hatched**

Installation of Photographs, Abbot Hall, Kendall (2015) <a href="https://utakogelsberger.uk/never-hatched">https://utakogelsberger.uk/never-hatched</a>

#### South by Southwest

Video Installation Abbott Hall Kendal (2015) <a href="https://utakogelsberger.uk/south-by-southwest">https://utakogelsberger.uk/south-by-southwest</a>

#### Orchestra of Rocks: Not a Rock Concert (2017)

Art Night, London

Sculptural installation with 8 channel sound based on Kögelsberger's recordings

Performances by

Atau Tanaka

https://vimeo.com/249107757

Nathalia

https://vimeo.com/249062783

Shelley Parker

https://vimeo.com/248794201

#### Orchestra of Rocks on Tour (2018)

The Great Exhibition of the North, Newcastle Upon Tyne. Sculptural installation with 8 channel sound based on Kögelsberger's recordings

Performances by:

**Noise Choir** 

Will Edmondes

Mariam Rezaei

Atau Tanaka

https://utakogelsberger.net/rock-concert-ii/

#### Cave Music (2019)

The Hub, The Ugly Duck, London

Sculptural installation with 8 channel sound based on Kögelsberger's recordings

Performances by

Uta Kögelsberger in collaboration with Marv Radio

Dane Law

**Shelley Parker** 

Atau Tanaka

Chooc Ly Tan

https://vimeo.com/362135782

#### Rock/Drop

360 Array Music Festival Albany Theatre
Amplified reality live interactive rock in collaborative performance
Uta Kogelsberger and Atau Tanaka
<a href="https://utakogelsberger.uk/rock/drop">https://utakogelsberger.uk/rock/drop</a>

