**Common Exchange**

A PUBLIC ART PROJECT PRESENTED BY CAMBRIDGE ARTS, CITY OF CAMBRIDGE

PERFORMING THE CAMBRIDGE COMMON

SOUND

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Common Exchange is a special- edition newspaper that serves as a companion to a series of interactive public art performances, installations, and exhibitions that present responses by ten contemporary artists to the historic site of the Cambridge Common.

Situated at the heart of the city, the Cambridge Common, like all public spaces, only acquires meaning when citizens use it. Since its early days dating back to the 1600s, when it was a place for livestock grazing, and during subsequent periods when it became a site for military training and housing, a place for concerts and protests, and public for contemplation and play, it has remained an important community space that houses and reflects the changing temperament of public participation in civic life over time.

In 2016, a renovation of the Common brought many improvements and increased its accessibility and connectivity to surrounding neighborhoods for pedestrians and bicyclists. It is on this occasion that we celebrate an improved civic space at the heart of the city with a unique suite of public artworks.

The four issues of Common Exchange revolve around themes addressed by the public artworks: sound, histories, access, and (dis)connection. The newspaper is available at selected park benches on the Common and in various public buildings around the city.

We hope that you check out the Spring–Fall 2017 schedule of events and exhibitions and all issues of Common Exchange. Please visit our website for schedule updates: cambridgearts.org.

— Lillian Hsu, Director of Public Art and Exhibitions, Cambridge Arts

As the city’s official arts agency, Cambridge Arts commissions temporary, and permanent public art throughout all neighborhoods of Cambridge. We are pleased to present Common Exchange—a newspaper of public art performances, exhibitions, conversations, and sound. The newspaper is produced through a collaboration of the Cambridge Arts Public Art Program, curator Dina Deitsch, and Lesley University College of Art and Design (LUCAD).

SPONSORS: Common Exchange is made possible through multiple partnerships and sources of support, including the National Endowment for the Arts, Cambridge Arts/Cambridge Community Foundation, Community Design Studio of MASS Design Group, and the City of Cambridge.

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Andy Graydon
Paul Ramirez Jonas
Carmen Papalia
Aki Sasamoto
Kelly Sherman
Xaviera Simmons
Allison Smith
Julianne Swartz
Lee Walton & Jon Rubin

EDITORS:

Dina Deitsch and Lillian Hsu

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Issue: Sound

What defines a place? This is the underlying question for all eight projects of Common Exchange, in which each of its seven spaces becomes an artist’s canvas. In this issue of the Common Exchange newsletter—"Sound"—we explore how sound and, particularly, the human voice can enrich layers of meaning and shape our experience of a place.

In an urban park, the Cambridge Common has very specific acoustic properties. It is nearly silent at its edges, where it is ringed by commuter traffic and a playground, but eerily silent at its center, providing a public quiet space. For some, this is a place of solace and contemplation; for others, it is simply lonely. These varying noise levels reflect how and why we use this public green—as a commuter route, lunchtime retreat, playground, or sports field. Sound shapes our understanding of a place and space in otherwise abstract ways—that is, until you change it.

The featured artists in this issue, ANDY GRAYDON and JULIANNE SWARTZ, present two new sounds that pull on the park’s own history and use to refresh our experience of it. Graydon worked with the neighboring First Church Congregation and developed an abstracted choral performance of one of the very earliest psalm books produced by the Colony in the seventeenth century. Swartz will perform in the park by singers who will be scattered in the Green, singing hymns to the people and one another at a time. Stretching the piece through the entire space of the Common, the performance throws into question the relationship between an individual and group while bringing the edges of the park, the various congregations that line the Common, and its history into the present.

Johanne Dewitt presents We Com- plain, an interactive sound bench near the Alexander W. Kemp Playground that only operates when two people sit and hold hands. Using our own bodies to complete an electrical circuit, the installation plays spoken texts and song fragments, read and sung by area students, that address unity. Iconic speeches from Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., quotes from Barack Obama, and lines from Miley Cyrus songs blare out from a speaker in a public proclamation of the importance of gathering and coming together for the greater good in public space.

— Eva Delanty, Editor

Decibel Readings: a soundscape

Output (dB) [listening level] in the faintest sound a human can detect while 140 decibels [a gunshot] can cause immediate hearing loss. The maximum decibel level allowed in the area of the Cambridge Common is 70. The strongest decibel level measured in the 2016 map was 75.


Metal Spoons: the love/hate sounds of the city

Municipalities regulate sound in quantitative terms, measuring the decibels produced by people, animals, devices, and machines. To learn more, we talked with Andrea Boyer, Chief Licensing Investigator for the City of Cambridge.

What is the maximum noise level allowed in Cambridge? Does this level change at different times of day or with specific activities?

There are numerous types of noise and noise-making sections, each with specific regulations. The Cambridge Noise Control Ordinance includes a table of Maximum Noise Limitations that details acceptable (dba) levels for different Cambridge zones at different times of day (Section 8.16.070).

For instance, the maximum levels of noise permitted from a construction site in the MHA (commercial) level (Section 8.16.070B). Places note that daytime is 7 am–6 pm.

Can you outline a process to make exceptional noises?

Our office reviews applications for a Special Noise Variance.

What is the procedure for reporting and resolving noise violations?

Complaints may be phoned in, emailed, or made to our office or the Cambridge Police.

Once we receive complaints, we investigate them to determine if a violation exists. If it does, we contact the property owner and discuss the violation and possible solutions.

If the property owner does not fix the Cambridge Noise Ordinance violation, a hearing may be held with the Licensing Commission Board to discuss the issue.

What are the most common violations?

Cambridge is a densely populated city with little buffer between properties. Often residents do not consider whether their HVAC AC units emit noise above the allowable dba levels at their property line.

If the complaints you have detailed, which sound out?

Wind chimes may be surprising by how many different types of chimes exist and how polarizing they can be. An unpleasant tone is often the main concern, and the most frequent offenders are the wind chimes made of metal spoons.

Noise is no more than an undesirable sound.

— Andrea Boyer

Bicycle [ SOUND ]

Airplane [ NOISE ]

Bird song [ SOUND ]

Barking dog [ NOISE ]

Playground [ SOUND ]

Human voice [ SOUND ]

Traffic [ NOISE ]
ARTIST STATEMENT

Gathering Note (a facsimile), 2017
Live performance, 40-page score, 1 hour

In 1640, the Bay Book of Psalms was printed in Cambridge, the first book to be published in British North America. The book is a metrical translation of psalms from the Christian Bible, intended to set a range of common tunes and songs to hymns. As a musical guide, the book left a great deal open to interpretation by individual congregations, including the tune and pace for any verse by which there was wide variation in the singing of these hymns. Most Puritan congregations in New England learned and sung their songs together through an oral tradition known as “lining out,” in which a clear would set the pitch of the song by singing a “gathering note” and a line, which the congregation followed. Over time, that led to forming the shape of the songs to such an extent (altering the meter to a crawl, producing a wide variation in pitch and quality of voice) that a reform movement of singing schools was launched in the 1720s to bring congregations back to a common standard.

Gathering Note is a public art performance work in which one of the Bay Book’s psalms is reinterpreted into a graphical score for church choirs. This score provides an intentionally open set of cues that allows the shape of the work to emerge from a balance between instructions and each performer’s independent choices, guided by their attention to their surroundings. Gathering Note celebrates American notions of unity and diversity: how disparate voices become cohesive wholes, growing organically from disparate abilities and approaches, and an ambivalence to hierarchical structures.

ARTIST BIO:

Andy Graydon, b. 1971, Maui, Hawaii; lives and works in Cambridge, Massachusetts

Andy Graydon’s work includes films, installations, sound works, photography, and performance. He often works within sites to generate situations of absence and displacement. Graydon’s work has been exhibited internationally as well as released on record by various labels and group exhibitions include shows at MASS MoCA, North Adams, The New Museum, New York, Berlinische Galerie, Berlin, Fine Art Museum, Seattle, Utah Museum of Contemporary Art, Salt Lake City, Kunsthalle Eichstätt, Vienna; Honolulu Museum of Art, Hawaii, among others. Graydon is on faculty at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts at Tufts University.
A READING: A graphic soundwave representation of a voice reading of the City of Cambridge Noise Control Ordinance.

Chapter 8.16 Noise Control
ARTIST BIO:
Julianne Swartz, b. 1967, Scottsdale, Arizona; lives and works in New York, New York
Julianne Swartz works with installations, sound, sculpture, and photographs to explore concepts of space and time, as well as the fluctuating interface between inside and outside, private and public, and people and their surroundings. Her work can often be as much about human connection and communication as it is about the intersection of ephemeral art with the built environment. Swartz has exhibited widely, including site-specific commissions for MASS MoCA, North Adams, The New Museum, New York; Tate Liverpool, United Kingdom; and the Tang Museum, Saratoga, New York; and exhibitions at the Jewish Museum, New York; Colby College Museum of Art, Waterville, Maine; and Indianapolis Museum of Art. She is represented by Mixed Greens and Josée Bienvenu Gallery in New York and Lisa Sette Gallery in Scottsdale, Arizona.

ARTIST STATEMENT:
We Complete, 2017
Bench, MP3 players, speakers, audio files, touch-sensitive pads, signs
Julianne Swartz's We Complete invites visitors to launch a soundtrack by simply sitting and holding hands. Songs, poetry, and quotations echo from a串联ed bench as two people sit and touch heart-shaped plates to complete an electrical circuit to run the speaker system, manifesting connectivity in a joyful and playful encounter. Cooperative touch performs public address. The system plays a soundtrack of children of various ages speaking short bursts of texts—poems, quotes, parts of songs, manifestos, and other writings—on the subject of interdependence.

PARTICIPANTS / VOICES
Bo, Camille, Eno, Felix, Jon, J.D., Joseph, Julia, Mego, Mike, Ali, Mei, Nora, Sadie, Sean, and Tomas.

The moment we cease to hold each other, the moment we break faith with one another, the sea engulfs us and the light goes out. James Baldwin We are all in the same boat, upon a stormy sea. We owe to each other a terrible and tragic loyalty. G.K. Chesterton No (person) is an island, entire of itself; every (person) is a piece of the continent, a part of the main. John Donne The world is last for want of sweetness and kindness. Do not forget we need each other. Mother Teresa See others as yourself. See families as your family. See towns as your town. See countries as your country. See worlds as your world. Tao Te Ching A person is a person through other persons. Desmond Tutu We are all cells in the same body of humanity. Peace Pilgrim I celebrate myself, and sing myself. And what I assume you shall assume. For every atom belonging to me, as good belongs to you. Walt Whitman We know from science that nothing in the universe exists as an isolated or independent entity. Everything takes form from relationships, be it subatomic particles sharing energy or ecosystems sharing food. In the web of life, nothing living lives alone. Margaret J. Wheatley To see one in all and all in one is to break through the great barrier which narrows one's perception of reality. Thich Nhat Hanh We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly. I can never be what I ought to be until you are what you ought to be. Reverend Martin Luther King
One day you will ask me which is more important? My life or yours? I will say mine and you will walk away not knowing that you are my life. Khalil Gibran Not us, Bernie Sanders. The experience of separateness arouses anxiety; it is, indeed, the source of all anxiety. Being separate means being cut off, without any capacity to use my human powers. Erich Fromm Just like a sunbeam can't separate itself from the sun, and a wave can't separate itself from the ocean, we can't separate ourselves from one another. Marianne Williamson Each one of us has lived through some devastation, some loneliness, some weather superstition or spiritual superstition, when we look at each other we must say, I understand. I understand how you feel because I have been there myself. Maya Angelou As we tell stories about the lives of others, we learn how to imagine what another creature might feel in response to various events. At the same time, we identify with the other creature and learn something about ourselves. Martha C. Nussbaum Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distances continue, a wonderful living side by side can grow Rainer Maria Rilke
It is not our differences that divide us. It is our inability to recognize, accept, and celebrate those differences. Audre Lorde: We are at a crucial crossroad in the history of this nation—and we either hang together by contemplating those forces that divide and separate us or we hang separately. Do we have the intelligence, humor, imagination, courage, tolerance, love, respect, and will to meet the challenge? Time will tell. None of us alone can save the nation or world. But each of us can make a positive difference if we commit ourselves to do so. Cornel West Awakening to love can happen only as we let go our obsession with power and domination. bell hooks Our job is to love others without stopping to inquire whether or not they are worthy. That is not our business and, in fact, it is nobody’s business. What we are asked to do is to love, and this love itself will render both ourselves and our neighbors worthy. Thomas Martin The love of our neighbor in all its fullness simply means being able to say to (them) “What are you going through?” Simone Weil Because love is an act of courage, not fear, love is a commitment to others. Paula Freire Love doesn’t just sit there, like a stone, it has to be made, like bread, remade all the time, made new. Ursula K. Le Guin Love costs out fear. Dorothy Day Find the sweetness in your own heart, that you may find the sweetness in every heart. Hannah Land The path to loving everyone is loving ourselves, and loving ourselves completely. Angela Hoyes Williams: We must strive every day so that this love of living humanity is transformed into actual deeds. Che Guevara Compassion is a spiritual technology. Krista Tippett Never forget that justice is what love looks like in public. Cornel West After the verb “to love,” the verb, “to help,” is the most beautiful verb in the world. Bertha Von Suttner You can rest assured that if you devote your time and attention to the highest advantage of others, the Universe will support you, always and only in the nick of time. R. Buckminster Fuller Citizenship is going from a culture of me to a culture of we. Kelly Keeley. If the structure does not permit dialogue, the structure must be changed. Paulo Freire Those who build walls are our own prisoners. I’m going to go fulfill my proper function in the social organism. I’m going to go build walls. Ursula K. Le Guin Walls turned sideways are bridges. Angela Davis Now, we don’t always have to agree, but we must be there for each other, we must empower each other, we must find the common ground, and we must build bridges across our differences to pursue the common good. Let me tell you, we cannot devolve into a nation where our highest aspirations are that we just tolerate each other. We are not called to be a nation of tolerance. We are called to be a nation of love. Cory Booker The only real nation is humanity. Paul Farmer Tomorrow belongs to those of us who conceive of it as belonging to everyone. Audre Lorde There is no way to peace along the way to safety. For peace must be dared. It is the great venture. Dietrich Bonhoeffer
Please note that use of fire in street performing is not allowed.

The Second Line Social Art & Pleasure Society was founded by Jon and Joni Bannicoff, Lonely Joe, and Jerry C. Davis in 2005 as a response to the destruction of the street performing program in Cambridge, Massachusetts.

What is special about performing on the streets of Cambridge?

We love bands in Cambridge. It is on the map as a music city, and we always perform on the streets. We are a family of performers, and we are proud of our roots.

How would you describe your music?

We are a collective of improvisational jazz performers, and we are all about community. Our style is a mix of traditional jazz and contemporary composition.

Can you tell us about a time someone stopped and paid attention to your music?

One night, we were performing in Harvard Square, and a woman stopped and listened intently. She was moved by our music and left a tip.

LEON RICH

Leon is a musician and recording engineer. He has been performing and recording since the early 1990s. In 2007, soon after Kevin began playing as a solo acoustic artist, he put together the street performers band.

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**Conversation: the language of the Common**

The “common” is a place of shared knowledge and resources while also being a contested area of collective action and possibility. It is the terrain by which we collectively frame our public rights and belief our democratic freedoms. It is the issue of dialogue itself, as philosophers Cesare Casarino and Antonio Negri noted in, “Conversations is the language of the Common.” The “Common” (badly missing the “s”) is the physical manifestation of this idea in space, publicly shared and historically a field of grass or a city’s center used for collective cattle-grazing.

The Common—as both a literal and conceptual site—is defined by gathering, exchange, and the multitude of voices and actions that take place within it. In effect, the Common is the landscape of citiship and a place defined by dialogue, between people, cultures, and histories that can echo the best and worst of our civic states.

**Why are sounds perceived better at night?**

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**Event Schedule / Map:**

**Tune In: hear the grass grow**

Scan this QR code. Tune in closely and let the sound transport you to a fine day in the Cambridge Common—say it out loud.

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**PARK INSTALLATIONS:**

*In addition to the performances and events listed below, look for these park installations in the Cambridge Common, May-September 2017: Kelly Sherman’s parks memory banners (A); Paul Ramirez Jonas, contributory monument (B); and the Scheffer family interactive bench featured in this issue of Common Exchange (D).*

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**PLEASE NOTE:**

The Common Exchange event schedule is subject to change. Please confirm listings at cambridgeartscouncil.org.