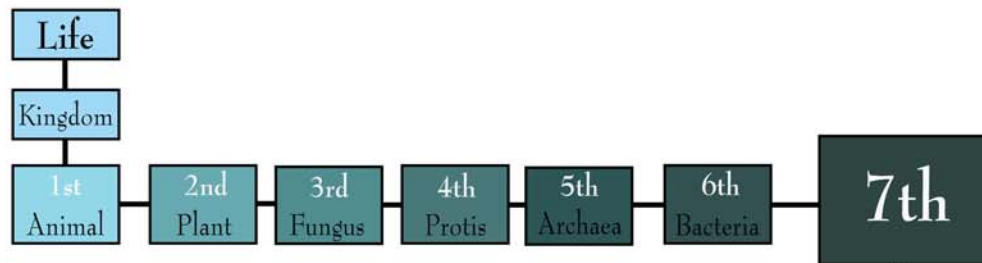


CHINA BLUE

Seventh Kingdom



A selection of active, interactive and reactive works from a new biological kingdom.

Sim-phon-y: Sound as the Seventh Kingdom

by Jill Conner

As Brandon LaBelle states, “The noise of the social is articulated and made public through technological advances and their subsequent aural by-products – the crackle of the phonograph, the static of telephone lines, radiophonic noise, cinematic stereophony – which form the basis for an expanded aurality advanced throughout the twentieth century.”¹ The medium of sound is generally perceived as an organized set of intonations that appear in either music or spoken words, revealing the limitations that have been placed upon the understanding and reception of sound. China Blue combines art with science in her exhibition of new work titled, *Seventh Kingdom* in order to create a new platform within the scope of nature while expanding on both the aesthetic of sound and sound as art. Initially presented as one component of a larger flow chart, *Seventh Kingdom* falls into the rubric of the various biological taxonomies. By classifying sound as the seventh, China Blue places this medium on the same level as animal, plant, fungi and bacterium, suggesting that sound is a natural element that is part of the basis of environmental growth. Subtle vibrations of sound, for instance, are transmitted throughout the atmosphere and

inside physical bodies, which ultimately leads to the lifecycle of growth, pollination, movement and distribution. China Blue's work joins a larger movement in contemporary art that has returned to the subject matter of nature in an effort to find either new meaning or create new metaphors, except focuses on sustainability and the re-use of recyclable materials.

"City Fish," (2007) is a video projection that captures the paradox of urban living while exposing the stark contrasts between natural and industrial sounds. As a pair of gold fish is seen swimming inside a narrow space, the sound of water bubbling from a tank emerges. The trapped fish suddenly freeze to a still once the sound of bubbling water is interrupted by a screeching car, the bark of a dog, the pop of a gun or the smattering of lightning. Since we are continually inundated with sounds, most of us are unable to notice a distinct difference between a prosthetic tone and a natural one. In fact sound is a part of nature whereas the plastic arts, like painting and sculpture, are not. "8 Bit Cricket Chorus," (2010) expands further on the China Blue's replication of nature and features a series of speakers and electrical components that render the sound of small insects which is heard frequently during the

summer dusk hour and yet the insects themselves are never seen during their ongoing performance. This process is featured as an interactive environment in “Sconic Primodia,” (2010) which is a 6-foot tall pair of lungs with bronchia that transmits a combination of sounds such as breathing, heart beat and the big-bang explosion. Each of these tones can be adjusted and modulated using either one of the two joysticks that are a part of the installation.

Sculptures like “Hygro Rhyzome” (2010) and “Rose Plant,” (2009) are both faux botanical structures made of recycled guitar strings, cast resin, recycled plastic and anti-static bags. Neither of these pieces contain audible sounds that can be detected by the human ear but each consists of a specific series of electrical interactions that render both light and movement that appear sporadic and natural. China Blue’s work emerges from the subjective-objective dichotomy that is shameless in its fabrication while suggesting an authenticity that occurs through the creation of an action for every reaction. “While such aurality,” La Belle claims, “may infiltrate the social, occur as everyday events, and filter through daily conversation, it may remain outside cultural reflection and subject matter.”² However China Blue’s “E-Rosa,” (2010) is very subtle and incredibly convincing. As depicted in two

drawings that serve as studies, a series of small red blossoms dot sporadically among a swath of light gray and white leaves. The plastic materials become secondary once the leaves begin to tremor lightly, as if a light breeze is blowing. Two small iridescent blue lights snap on every minute or so as the leaves continue to tremor from electrical current.

Seventh Kingdom removes sound from its definition within an empty space and embeds it within objects that were created to function independently, using recycled materials. China Blue's work stands out as a series of systems that utilize sound to trigger seemingly random events. Macro works with micro, mixing and creating feedback that is independent of the artist's hand. When sound art evolved in the early 20th-century, it was about creating a voice that spoke to the politics of the day, finding purpose and meaning within situations. However by the 1960s, John Cage moved the role of sound to a new level, one that was indivisible from the random noises heard throughout the course of everyday life. Sound became part of an event that existed outside of spectacle but was part of a gestalt. It became hard yet easy to find. In *Seventh Kingdom* China Blue aligns the medium of sound with

the various microbiological levels of nature, mirroring spontaneity with the transmission of electricity as it strikes sculpted bodies that illuminate and move.

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¹ Brandon La Belle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (New York: Continuum International Publishing, 2006) 16.

² *Ibid.*, 16.

“Sonic Primordia” is an installation based on Carl Sagan’s statement in “The Cosmos: “We are all star stuff harvesting star light.” The structural elements of the piece consists of a pair of 6 foot tall human lungs with bronchia made from dryer vents, recycled vinyl sheeting and PVC pipes. Housed within this structure are speakers connected to a discarded stereo amplifier which plays biological and data-derived channels of sounds through the lungs, controlled via a laptop. Viewers can interact with and control the sounds of the piece via a pair of digital joysticks, modifying sounds including human heartbeats and the audio shifted sounds of the big bang explosion. A video of the installation can be seen at: www.chinablueart.com/Seventh Kingdom.htm.

Size: 72"h x 18"w x variable

Materials: This free form design is fabricated from every-day recognizable materials: vent hose (commonly used for household dryers), plastic, an audio amplifier, game controller, computer and speakers. 2 joysticks operate audio program enabling 2 people to gig with the piece.

Sonic Primordia, 2010



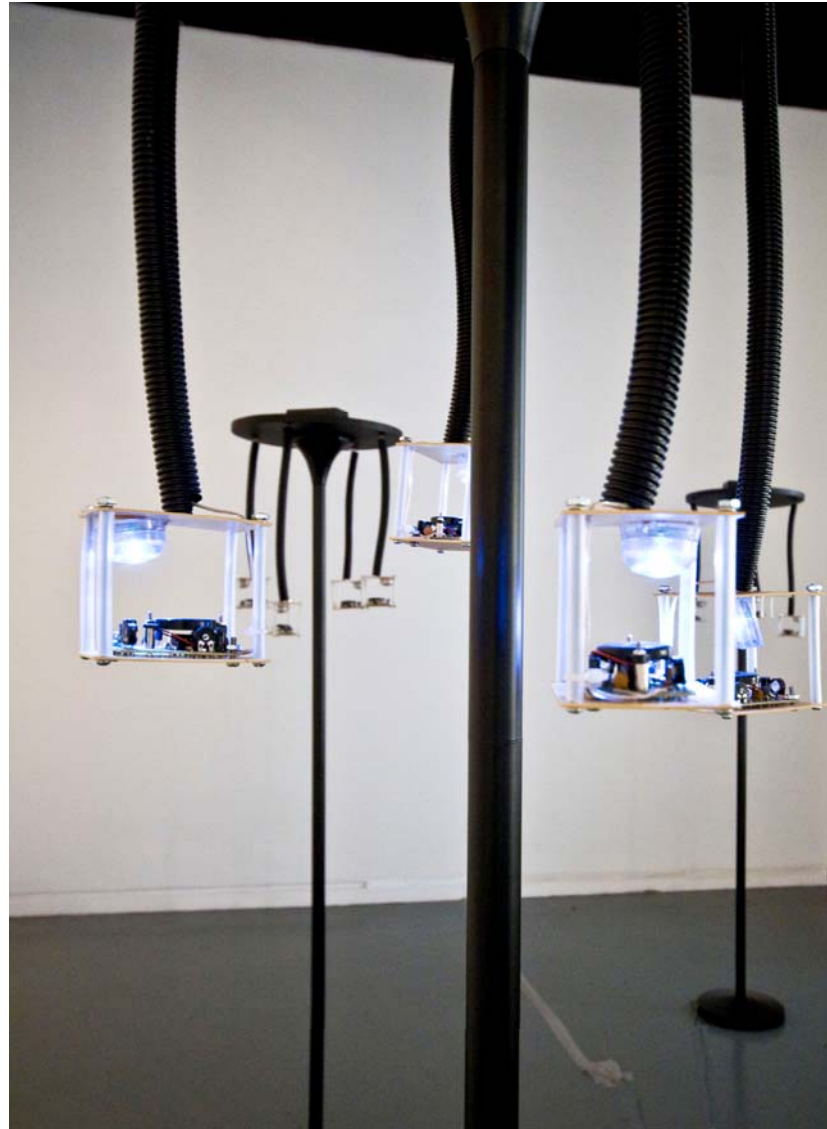


The group of four “8 Bit Crickets” consist of antiphotoreactive electronic crickets in circuit cages that sing only in the dark, growing silent in the light like their biological counterparts. These crickets create their own dark-dependent rhythmically compelling songs, entitled: “The 8 Bit Cricket Chorus.” A video of the work can be seen at: www.chinablueart.com/Seventh Kingdom.htm.

Size: 70"h x 16"w

Materials: Mixed media and electronic components.

“8 Bit Cricket Chorus,” 2010

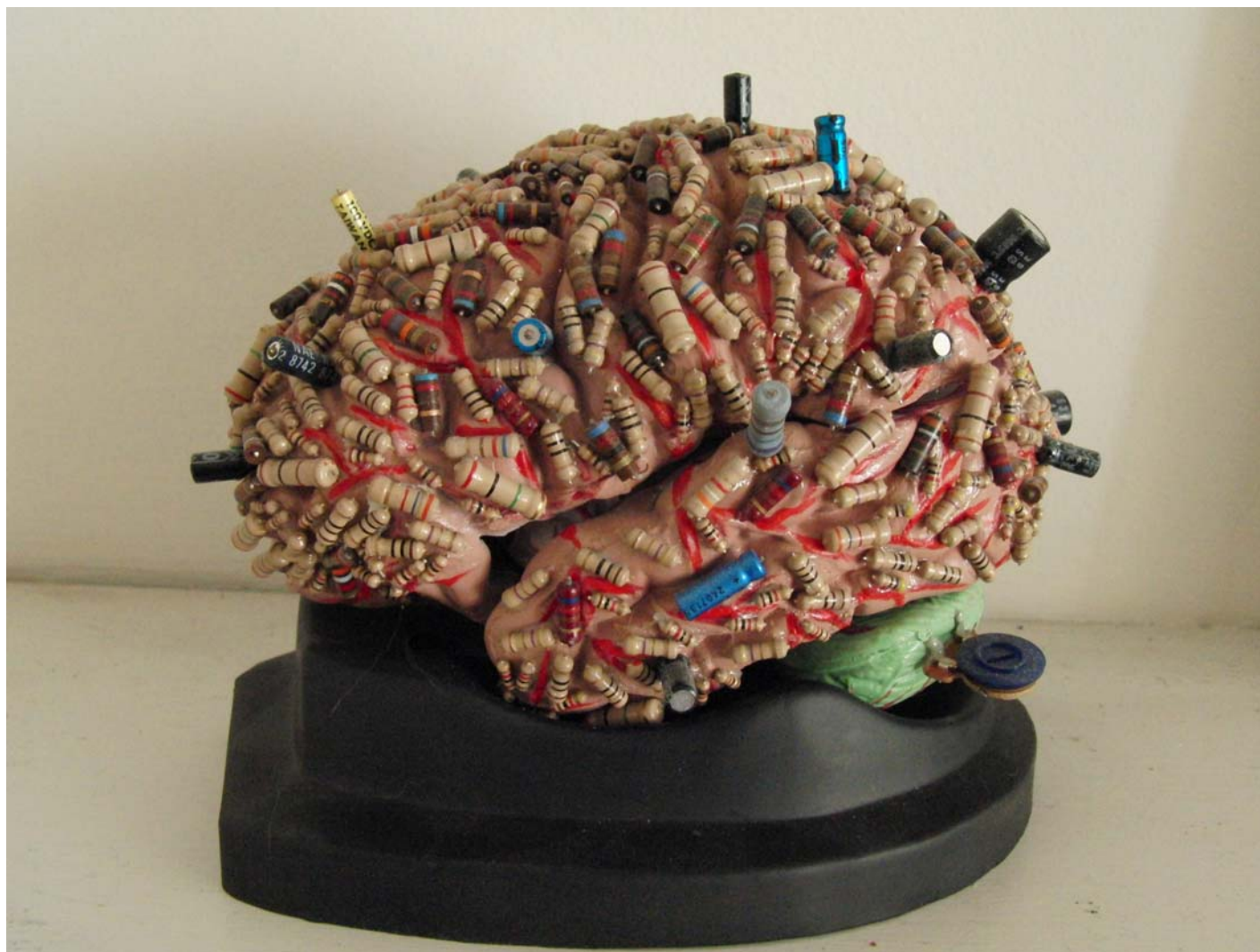


“Circuit Cerebellum” is a sculptural work which combines an anatomical model of the human brain with recycled electronic components, symbolizing the posthuman possibilities of expanding the human consciousness with additional components of our own manufacture.

Size: 7" w x 6" h x 6" d

Materials: plaster brain, resistors and capacitors

Circuit Cerebellum, 2008

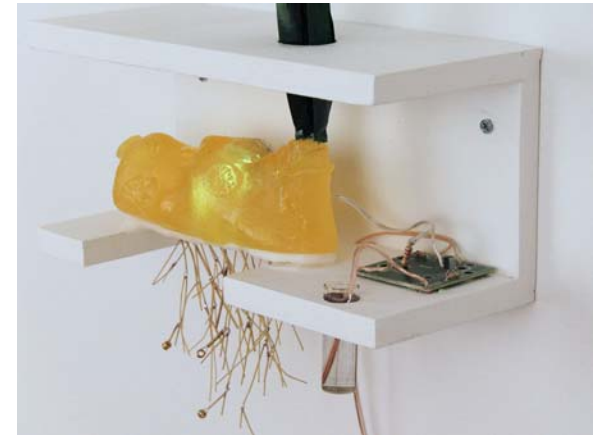


“Hygro Rhizome” is group of 6 interconnected sculptural rhizomes, root-like structures of biological plants, each with their own circuit that measures the water supply in an attached beaker. As long as there is water, the rhizome remains internally illuminated, dimming and going dark as the water evaporates or is contaminated.

Size: 4.5" h x 4" d x 10' w

Materials: recycled guitar strings (roots), cast resin (body), painted recycled water bottles (leaves) and water sensing circuit.

Hygro Rhizome, 2010



“E-Rosa” is a light responsive, vine-like piece, fabricated from recycled anti-static bags, guitar strings, acetate and electronic circuits. When their self-contained illumination turns on, the vine reacts by trembling. The series of drawings of the “E-Rosa” are works that capture this technological transformation of nature with elegance. A video of the work can be seen at: www.chinablueart.com/Seventh Kingdom.htm.

Size: 10”w x 24”h

Materials: guitar strings, pager motors, recycled anti-static circuit bags, acetate, electronic components.

E-Rosa, 2010





E-Rosa Drawings

5 drawings Size: 23" x 29"

Materials: Recycled anti-static circuit bags, acetate and acrylic on paper.

E-Rosa, 2010



“City Fish” is an animation of two gold fish in a fish bowl, who responds humorously to the ambient city noises, demonstrating how our environmental noise applies stress even to those surrounding us. A segment of the video can be seen on the website: www.chinablueart.com/Seventh Kingdom.htm.

10 minutes.

City Fish, 2008



China Blue is an internationally exhibiting artist who was the first person to record the Eiffel Tower in Paris France and NASA's Vertical Gun at the Ames Research Center in Mountain View, California. Her work has been shown, galleries and non-profit spaces in Finland, Sweden, France and the US. She was the US representative at OPEN XI, Venice, Italy, an exhibition held in conjunction with the Architecture Biennale. Her work has also been shown at the Melbourne International Arts Festival in Australia and the Armory Fair in New York. Reviews of her work have been published in the New York Times, Art in America, Art Forum, artCritical and NY Arts to name a few. She has been interviewed by France 3 (TV), for the film "Com-mu-nity" produced by the Architecture Institute of America and was the featured artist for the 2006 annual meeting of the Acoustic Society of America. She has been an adjunct professor and Fellow at Brown University in the United States. Her work can be seen at Galerie Barnoud, Dijon, France and Art Currents, New York, NY and can also be viewed at her site www.chinablueart.com.

"her work is real art...brilliant work"

Paul Hasegawa-Overacker, Director (first director) of Guest of Cindy Sherman, and the Director and Publisher of GalleryBeat Media

She is "pioneering a really challenging terrain and doing so with incredible formal strength"

Ed Winkleman, Winkleman Gallery, New York, NY

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