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## ‘Electro-Dynamic Drawings’ at Henry put Vitiello on local radar

By Michael Upchurch

“Electro-Dynamic Drawings” and “With Hidden Noise,” at the Henry Art Gallery through Sept. 7, 2014, put artist-curator Stephen Vitiello on the local radar, whetting curiosity about what his sound-installation on the post-viaduct Seattle waterfront will be like.

### Exhibition review

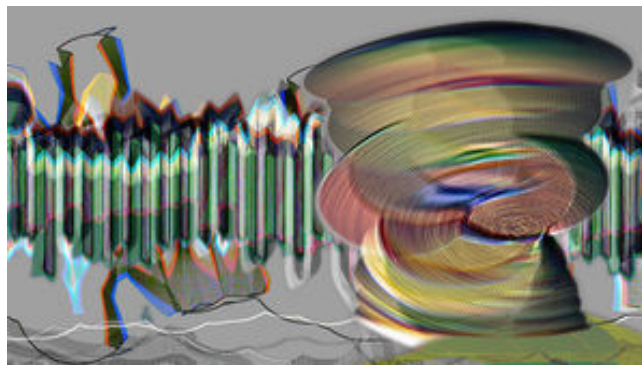
#### ‘Electro-Dynamic Drawings’ and ‘With Hidden Noise’

11 a.m.-4 p.m. Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, 11 a.m.-9 p.m. Thursdays-Fridays, through Sept. 7. Henry Art Gallery, University of Washington, Seattle; \$6-\$10 (206-543-2280 or [www.henryart.org](http://www.henryart.org)).

Why bother with hallucinogens when you can listen to “With Hidden Noise” and look at “Electro-Dynamic Drawings” at the Henry Art Gallery?

These two shows, up through early September, are nothing if not trippy. They’re also quite the calling card for visual/sound artist Stephen Vitiello, who curated “With Hidden Noise” and co-created “Electro-Dynamic Drawings” with sound-artist Andrew Deutsch.

Vitiello, an associate professor in the “kinetic imaging” department of Virginia Commonwealth University, is a name to watch locally because he’s one of the artists soon to be featured on Seattle’s redeveloped waterfront, along with Ann Hamilton, Norie Sato, Buster Simpson and Oscar Tuazon.



COURTESY OF THE ARTISTS

A still from Andrew Deutsch and Stephen Vitiello’s “Trans-scape” (2014), a single-channel video included in “Electro-Dynamic Drawings” at the Henry Art Gallery through Sept. 7.

“Working with the sound-filled setting of the Seattle Waterfront,” Seattle’s Office of Arts & Culture announced last year, “Vitiello will use sound as a major component in a new work that will expand visitors’ experience of the place.”

If “With Hidden Noise” and “Electro-Dynamic Drawings” are anything to go by, future waterfront visitors are in for a transcendent treat.

“Hidden Noise” is an hour-plus collage of soundscapes that you listen to in a dimly lit room arrayed with chairs and cushions. They range from the purely instrumental (accordionist Pauline Oliveros’ experimental “Pauline’s Solo”) to the minimalist digital wizardry of Steve Roden’s “ambrotos” and Michael J. Schumacher’s “Filters and Filtered.”

Vitiello himself, collaborating with electronic musician Taylor Deupree, contributes “Decay, Decay, Delay, Decay,” an ethereal seven-minute shifting cloud of sound. Like several pieces in “Noise,” it’s clearly influenced by Brian Eno’s ambient albums of the 1970s and ’80s.

Other pieces are more varied in character. The New Mexico field recordings assembled by Seattle sound artist Steve Peters in “The Very Rich Hours: Canyons” are accompanied by meticulous spoken-word descriptions and beautiful sung fragments, listing local endangered species in Latin.

Andrea Parkins serves up more of a pulsing funhouse of sounds in “Room 1, Study B: Three Rooms in the Memory Palace.” Moments of drone, rattle and chime are punctuated by giddy slide-whistle glides of pitch.

The one drawback to “Noise” is that parts of it are so quiet that the hum of the Henry’s ventilation system is as much a part of the sound texture as the recordings.

That’s not a problem with “Electro-Dynamic Drawings,” being shown in the Henry auditorium. These four pieces, ranging from four to 10 minutes in length, use sound to trigger remarkably intricate and vibrant visuals.

“Hypnoball” is a flickering spiral mantra in myriad shimmering colors. Its protean changes happen almost faster than the eye can see, set off by wind-up-toy rattles and gamelan-like chimes.

In “Bells Over Sci Fi” waterdrop-like splashes of electronic sound spur visual vibrancies, while “Trans-scape” offers several contrasting visual fields doing their own thing simultaneously at warp speed.

“Twilight Zone” is the one anomaly, using snippets of dialogue from the old TV series rather than abstract sound to put the visuals into action.

All four pieces toy with the idea that “sound can be a driving force in image creation.” To accomplish that, Vitiello and Deutsch used a software program called “After Effects” to “manipulate audio and simple graphic forms” and a Sandin Image Processor, built in 1972, that “encodes audio signals as video.”

The rich detail in all four works gives them the feel of full-fledged compositions: a sort of digitally ramped-up extension of Jordan Belson’s “visual music” experiments of the 1960s.

There's even some witty, self-deprecating "phrasing" in the way these pieces start out and wrap themselves up.

Above all, they whet your appetite for Vitiello's waterfront project.

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