

Portfolio

Rodrigo Toro Madrid

Artist Statement

In the last years my artistic practice often started with a walk along the borders of urban spaces - some of them with an industrial past - collecting waste material where all kind of technological articles are disposed: computer parts, printers, telephones, furniture, kitchen ware, bicycles, etc. What at first was only a strategy to get materials to work with, became a form to imagine and create something like «portraits» of desolated spaces, through the exhibition and intervention of their waste. I am generally interested in the deficiency, the transformation or the loss which is occurring in the manual appropriation of technology.

Since I started, I've built several interventions in Santiago de Chile and Valparaiso, transforming the collected items in hybrids between kinetic sculpture and musical instruments, relating the sound distortion from these instruments with a phantasmagorical howl of abandoned places. The way I often work is based on modifying circuits and mechanisms, adapting the logic of intervention and de-contextualization of objects into something closer to technological «hacking» and the «DIY» culture. Each object that initially had an aesthetic value, is reactivated and becomes an instrument that can store, filter, and physically transform images and sounds. As an example I made a series of turntables with antique household objects (meat mincers, hand cranked drills, demolition wood) where the intention was to distort the sound which they were reproducing. Besides the fact that the disc was being constantly scratched, it was erasing the memory contained in it. I'm interested in the image or sound defect that comes after filtering information by hand-

made machines, which generates a new way to engage with technology and providing a poetic imprint of the physical or social context of each piece. Working mainly with antique processes to capture, record and reproduce sound, I am interested in exploring historical references and connect them with the all over present questions and layers of technological development. I try to provide my vision from a context where the cycle of consumption and disposal of technology has reached the level of a crisis.



«I dr Alphütte», 2021

This work is an ongoing Project that began during the Andreas Züst library residency in November 2021. It is a portable wind-driven turntable, which transforms the cyclic energy of the propeller into rotational energy for the turntable. Variations in wind speed randomly modify the speed of the record, transforming the music into something like frenetic dances or phantasmagoric howls. This machine is designed to harvest the energy of nature and as a way to dialogue with it and its invisible presences.

In collaboration with Mexican artist Daniel Lara Ballesteros we created the piece *Wind Serendipity*, an in situ intervention, where the machine plays a composition designed to exist exclusively in interaction with the wind of a specific place and time.

I dr Alpütte:

<https://www.instagram.com/p/CXb0szKoqFA/>

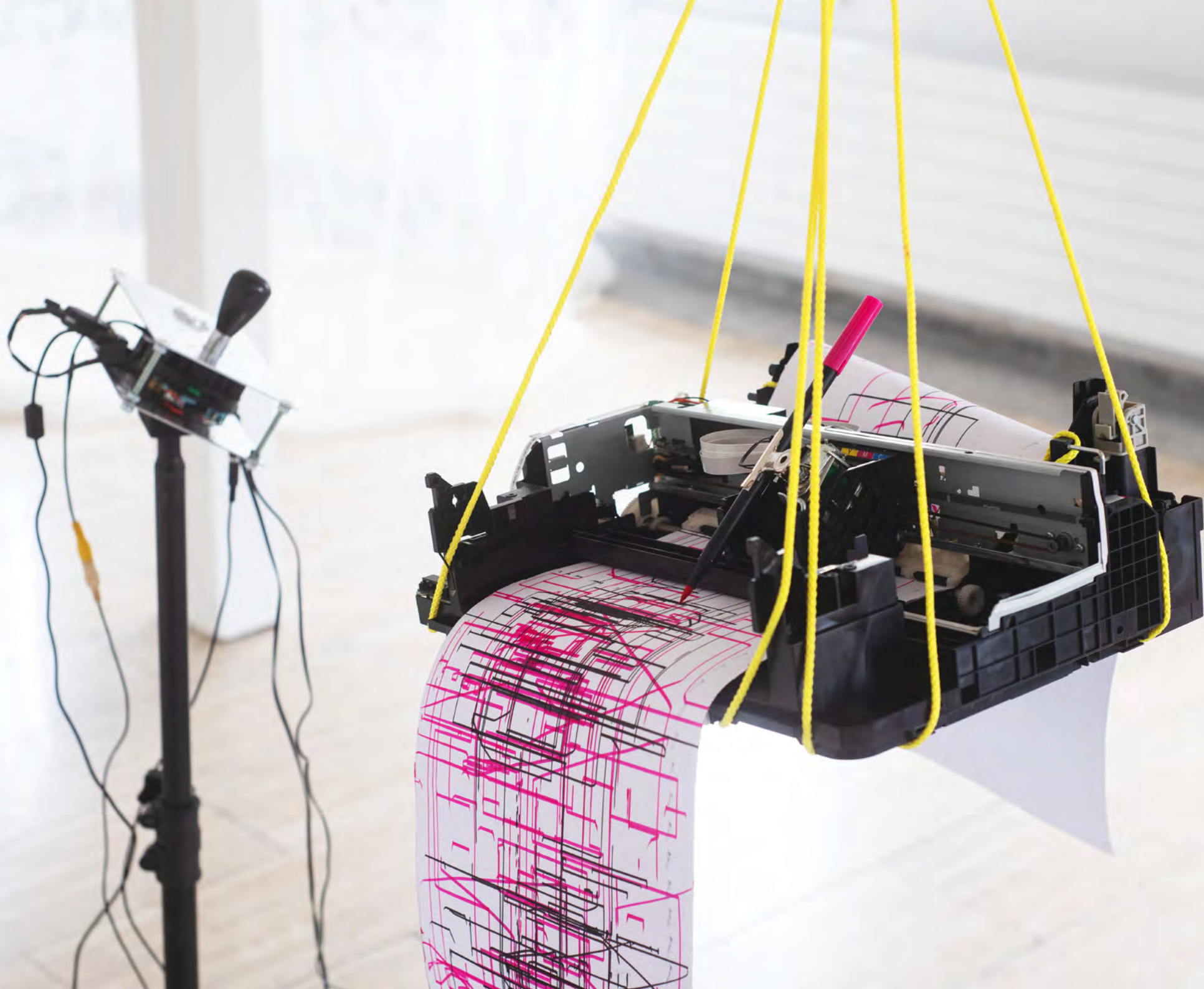
Wind Serendipity

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Je1Wpaf_yWc



«I dr Alphütte», 2021

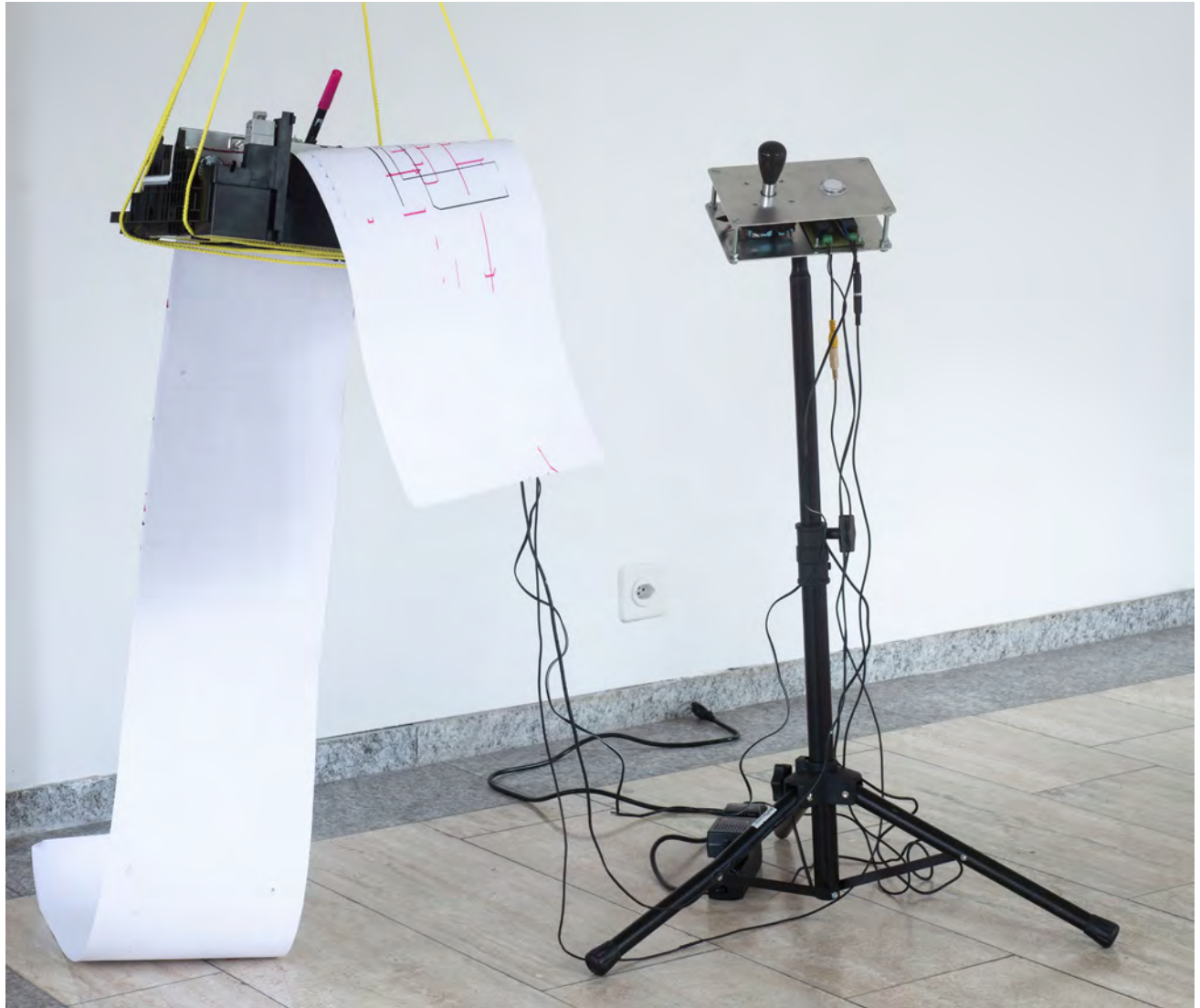
Wood, metal, aluminium tripod, polycarbonate propellers, hand cranked drill mechanism, vinyl record, amplifier.
Variable dimensions



«Impresora», 2017

In 2017 I started a series of work which consist in the precarious re-activation of disposed electronic devices, mainly desktop printers and broken computer screens. These interventions generally start by disassembling the device and exploring the surface of the circuit, applying electrical current and looking for any kind of reaction. I am working here with a intuitive way of procedure but highly inspired by Luigi Galvani's experiments and research which lead him to the discovery of animal electricity (what we know today as the beginning of the study of bioelectricity).

In these works, I eliminate the digital interface which used to control the device originally, and replace it with analog sensors, radio transmitters, mechanical controls, etc. in a way that the device stands in a limbo between the functionality and the disintegration.



«Impresora», 2021

Inkjet printer, electronic components, paper, water based markers
Variable dimensions



«DOPPELGÄNGER», 2021

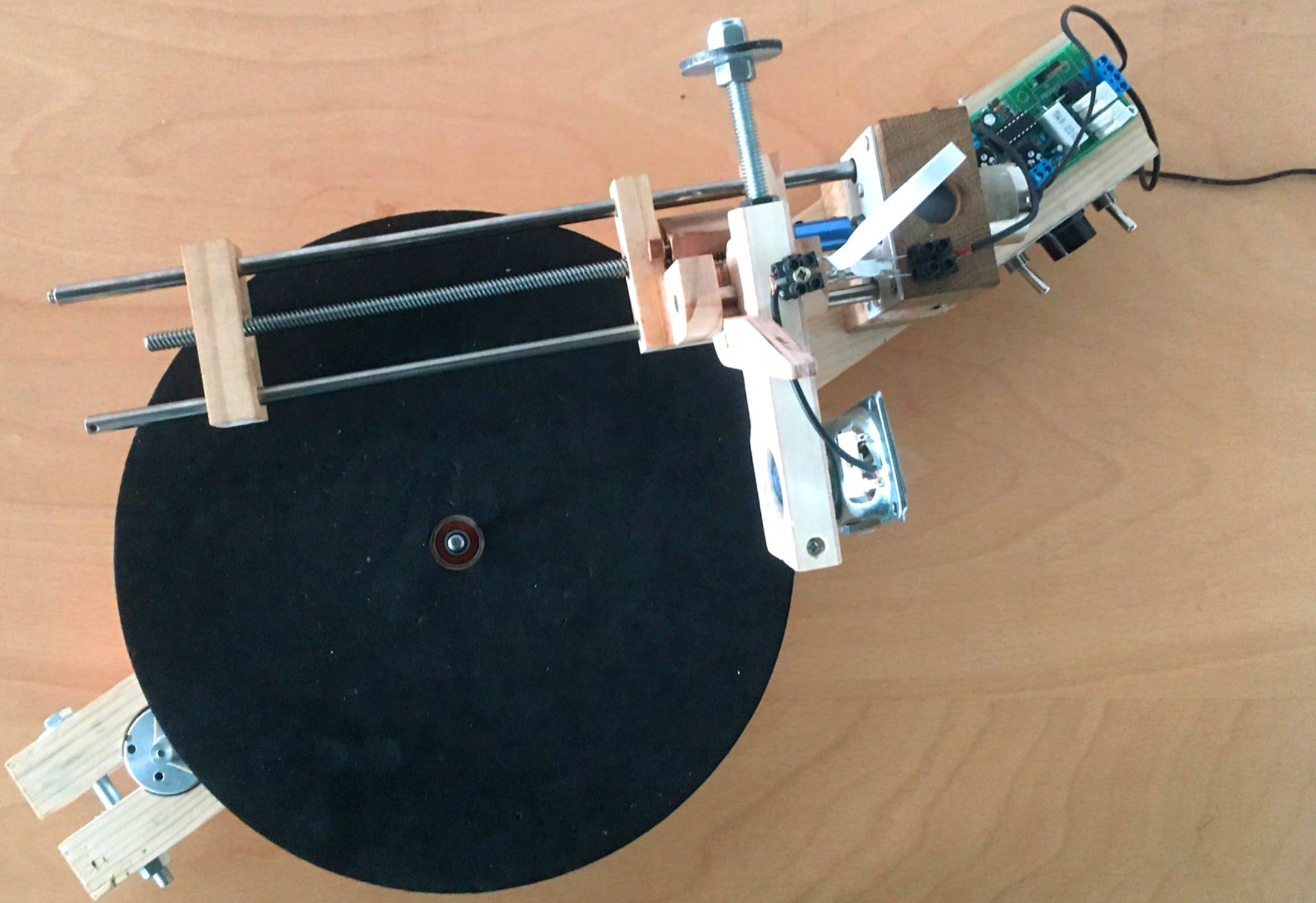
This is a talking machine. I have been investigating different historical ways of synthesizing speech for some time, and one of them is the introduction of pre-recorded sound media in dolls and mannequins. I like that sound has the capability to evoke presences from the past, and how they inhabit and propagate in the air around us.

In this installation, both helium-filled balloons act as the speaker of this installation and appear to “talk” to each other, a variety of phrases contained in a disc composed only of closed loops. The phrases come from recordings of my German lessons.



«Triturador (tromba marina)», 2020

Wood, metal, piano string, drum, crank from meat grinder
Variable dimensions



«Record Cutting Lathe», since 2017

This »Record Cutting Lathe« is a device in a state of constant development allowing me to record vinyl discs in a completely analog way. It works by engraving the sound information on the smooth surface of plastics, such as polycarbonate, pvc, acrylic, petg, etc. With this device I'm continuing to create a series of experiments which relate to the concepts of early sound recording, information, and memory. In those experiments, the musical or testimonial information contained in the discs is formed by scratching the surface of the original substrate, and in the reproduction the information will progressively be erased. Through an archaic procedure and made by mixing information from different sources, the cutting lathe is at a constant exploration and revision. In the future the cutting lathe is thought to be used in artists collaborations, performances, recording sounds and noises from and with different artists and musicians, and even the cration of an experimental record label.

In the exhibition «Within Others' Sounds» which took place in 2019 at Ausstellungsraum Klingental in Basel, the machine was used to produce a vinyl edition which recorded a concert played by all the artists and their instruments in the show.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bS00naZi-CI>



«Record Cutting Lathe», since 2017

Wood, metal, electronic circuits, speaker, tungsten needle, polycarbonat
Cutting lathe: variable dimensions, vinyl edition: 18 x 18cm



PERFORMANCES

I have had the opportunity to participate with several artists in events related to sound research and performance; either in front of a live audience, through live radio broadcasts or invited to record a podcast. My approach generally has to do with the use and manipulation of homemade records as an instrument, experimenting with their speeds, intervening surfaces, and recording live sounds. The resulting records have the quality of being made in the same time, which makes them always unique.



«Rodrigo Toro Madrid & friends», 2021

Live transmission from PRAXIS art space in Basel, part of Sweet tunes from Tambora podcast series in collaboration with Lumpenstation & Laptop Radio.

Photos: Courtesy of Lumpenstation



«Triturador (tromba marina)», 2020

Built with debris material from a house consumed by a fire in Valparaiso (Chile), the work consists in a string instrument based on the idea of Luigi Russolo's «Intonarumori», which were a group of completely acoustic, experimental music instruments built by him between 1910-1930. Valparaiso holds a story marked by the constant displacement of people inside and outside the city, due to gentrification, immigration (since the founding of the harbour around 1810) and the constant stream of cargo ships, military ships, and tourist cruisers.

«Triturador (tromba marina)» aims to condensate those components of Valparaiso through an instrument to be used for a performative sound activation of architectural spaces marked by abandonment and deterioration.

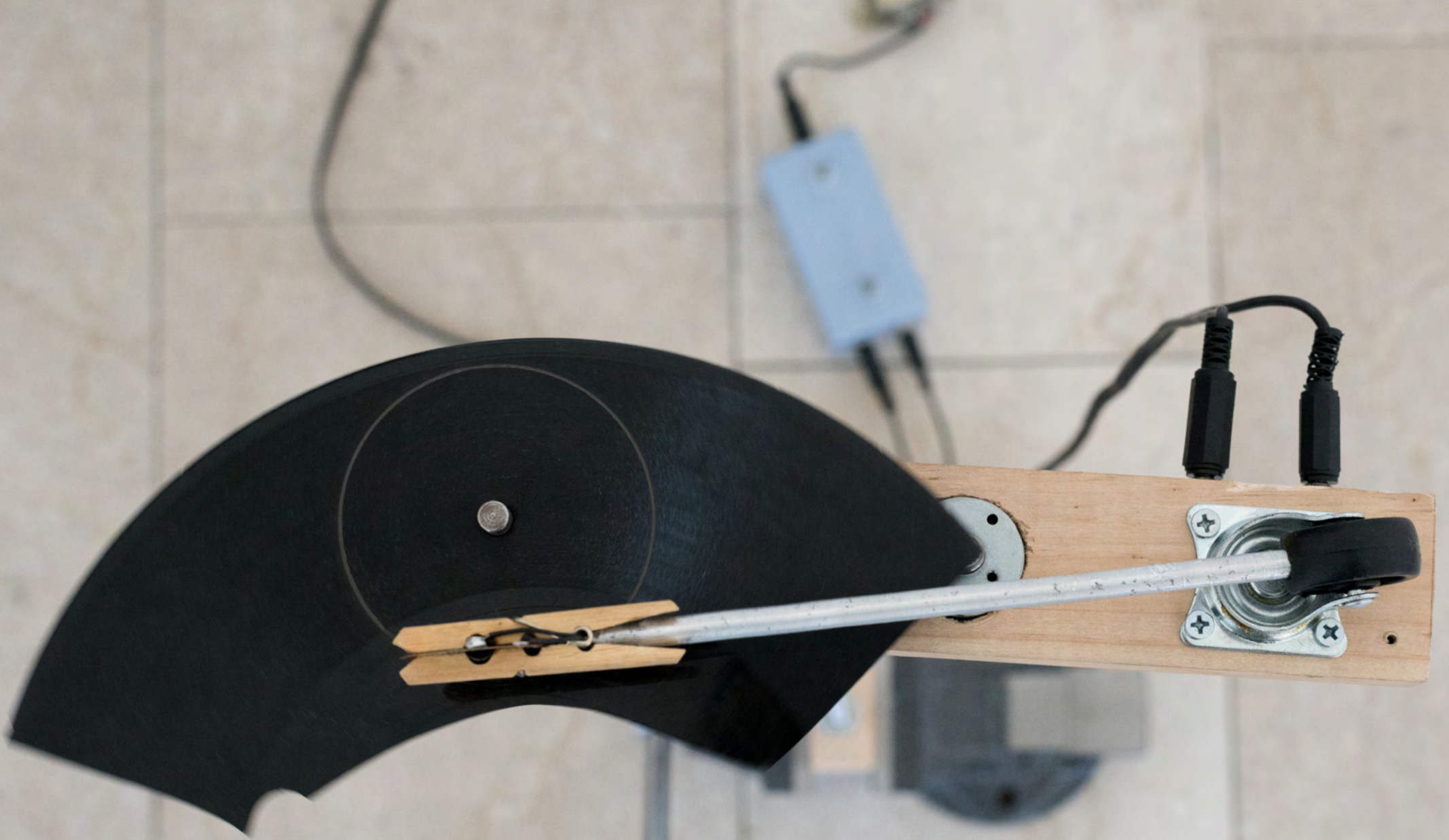
The work was commissioned by the «International Sound Art Festival TSONAMI 2018», for the exhibition «MAQUINACIONES II»

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7imMtvprOuA>



«Triturador (tromba marina)», 2020

Wood, metal, piano string, drum, crank from meat grinder
Variable dimensions



«Now What», 2019

The sound sculpture «Now What» brings together two parts of a shellack disc which were destroyed during a flight. One fragment is trying to reproduce itself within a precarious device, connected to its other half which operates as a loudspeaker.

The title refers to the sound of the work, in which or so it seems the scratching sound constantly asks «now what» over and over again.



«Now What», 2019

Wood, metal, electronic circuits, piezoelectric transducer, shellack record
Variable dimensions



«Hummingbird #3», 2018

«Hummingbird #3» was one of the selected works for the art festival «SACO7» to intervene at the Melbourne-Clark deck in Antofagasta, Chile. The project consisted in creating a site-specific installation connected to that specific landmark, which holds a lot of historical significance in the desertic region. The work is composed of a large scale record player, which was built in a way to resist the strong weather conditions and the impact of the sea nearby. It uses a propeller to gather energy from the wind which then is transmitted to the spin of the record. The variations of the wind produce changes on its reproduction speed, distorting the musical content. Besides the propeller, the device has a crank to be activated by hand. Given the historical past of this place, the machine creates a parallel between the wind and the fragility of memory over time, stretching and shrinking the sound waves contained in shellac records, transforming their sound into a phantasmagorical howl, and eventually, erasing it.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zCn_43ZXNTM



«Hummingbird #3», 2018

Wood, marine spar varnish, metal, mechanical parts, shellac records, small cart wheels
135cm x 86cm x 150cm



GABRIELE KIT
Rodrigo Toro Madrid
The Scavenger

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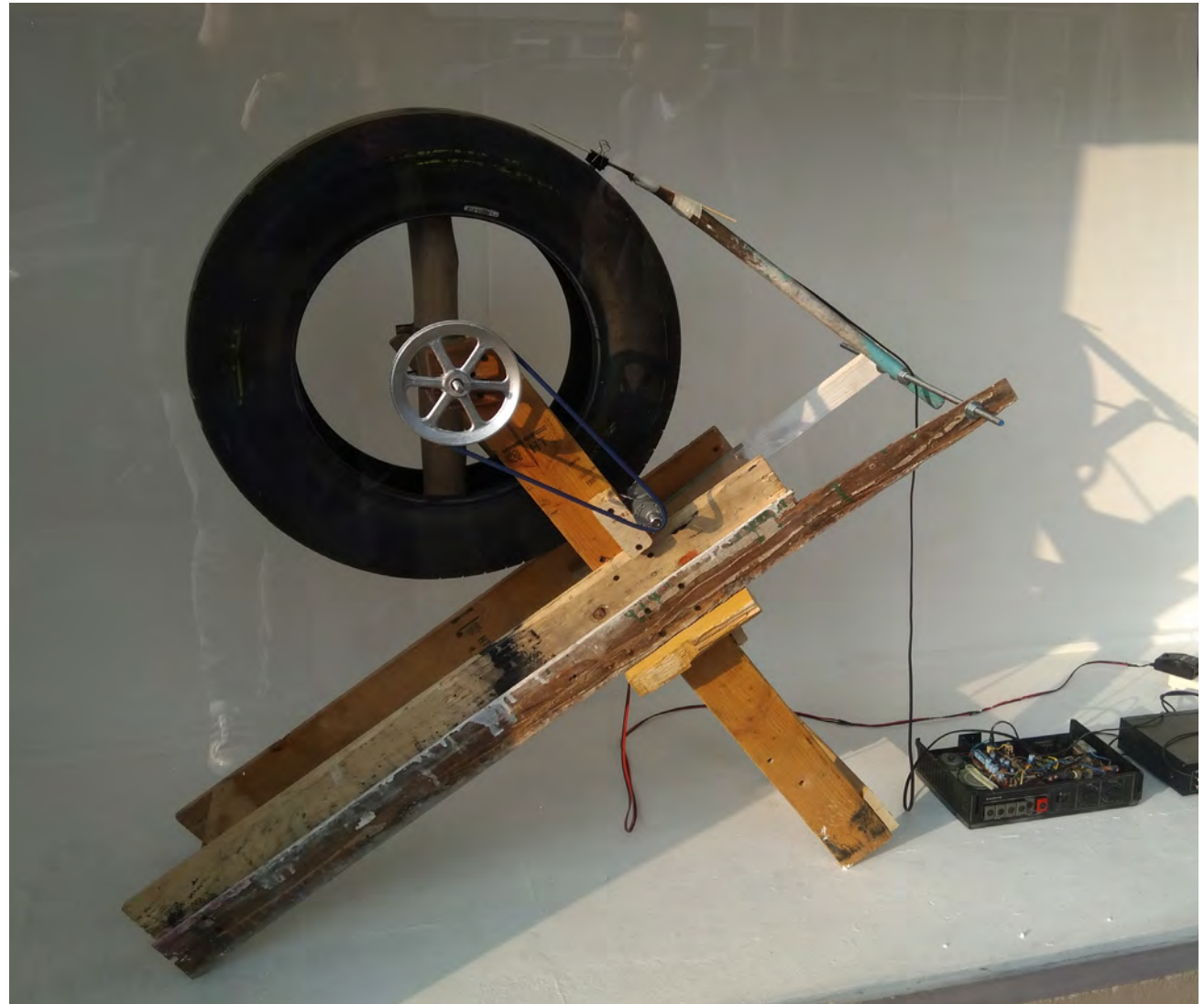


«The Scavenger», 2018

The «Scavenger», was exhibited in a showcase pointing towards the street in the San Felipe neighbourhood in Bogotá, Colombia and consists of a kinetic sound sculpture whose function is to record tiny fragments of the sound landscape of the neighborhood around the art space and residency FLORA ars + natura. In the surface of a wheel's tire, covered with magnetic tape, the sound is transmitted through the glass, turning itself into a loudspeaker.

The San Felipe neighborhood in Bogotá, was a residential area that, due to the real estate speculation and neighbours displacement, became a neighbourhood full of mechanic workshops, night clubs, bars, and in the last years there was a boom of new art galleries, artist's studios and cultural spaces. In Bogotá and especially in the San Felipe neighbourhood I had many encounters with the so called «recolectores» (recollectors/scavengers) who live on the street and search the garbage for collecting food, clothing, cardboard and other materials which then are sold to recycling centers. This material is accumulated in carts, which are often built out of the same found material and serve as their transport and shelter. The work is built with scavenged materials referring to these people, trying to visualize the dichotomy between the inside of the new artistic spaces, versus the precarious and violent reality in the streets.

The «Scavenger» was selected as part of the curatorial program «Gabinete» in FLORA ars+natura, Bogotá, Colombia in 2018.



«The Scavenger», 2018

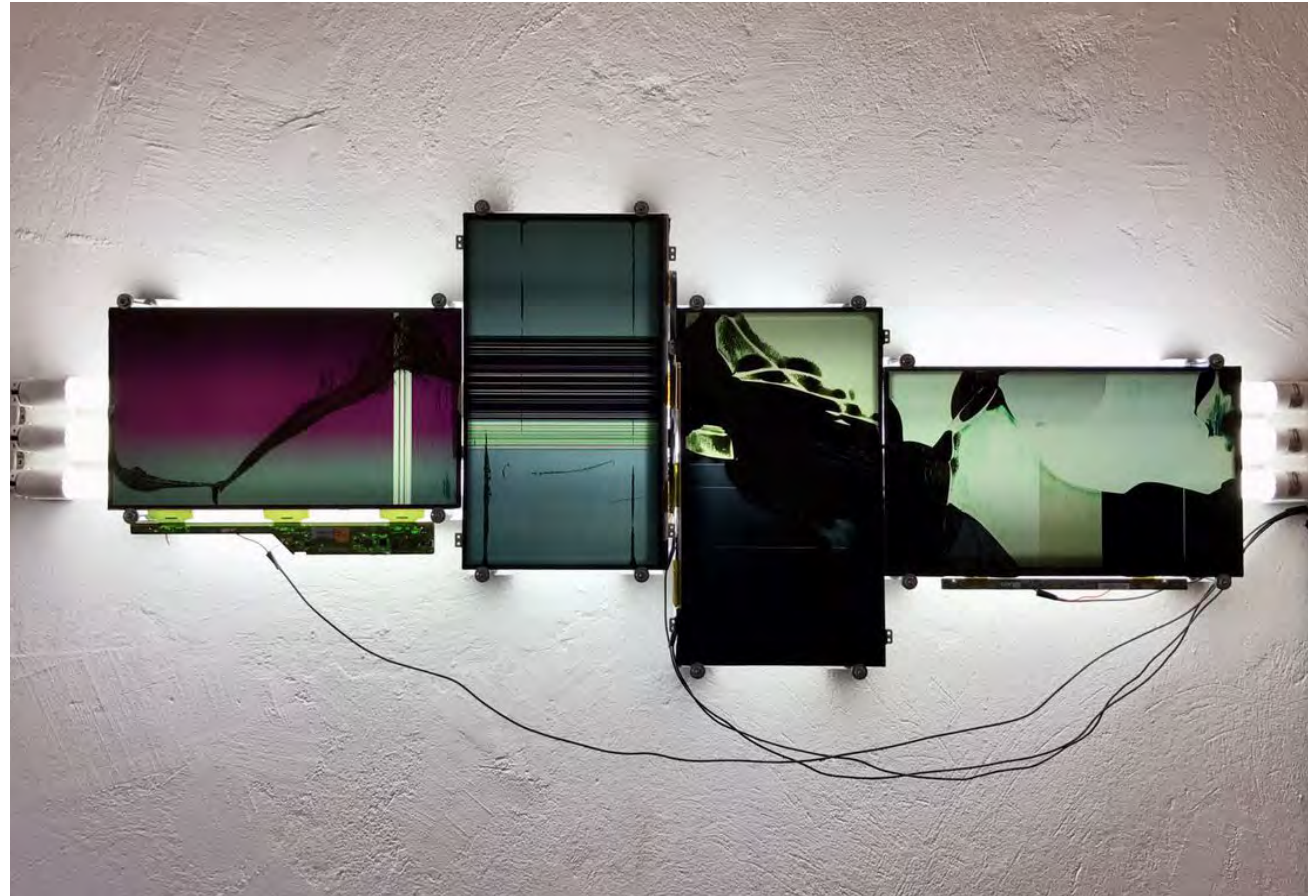
Wood, tire, radio receiver, magnetic tape, amplifier, antique radio, dc motor
Variable dimensions



«Soft Rains», since 2017

«Soft Rains» is a series of abstract compositions made by manipulating the liquid crystal stains present in broken LCD screens, and intervening the circuits with movement sensors, wind sensors, or radio receptors, causing interference and creating geometric patterns on the screens.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4GDDNIF-wDM>



«Soft Rains», since 2017
LCD screens, wooden structure, electronic circuits
Variable dimensions

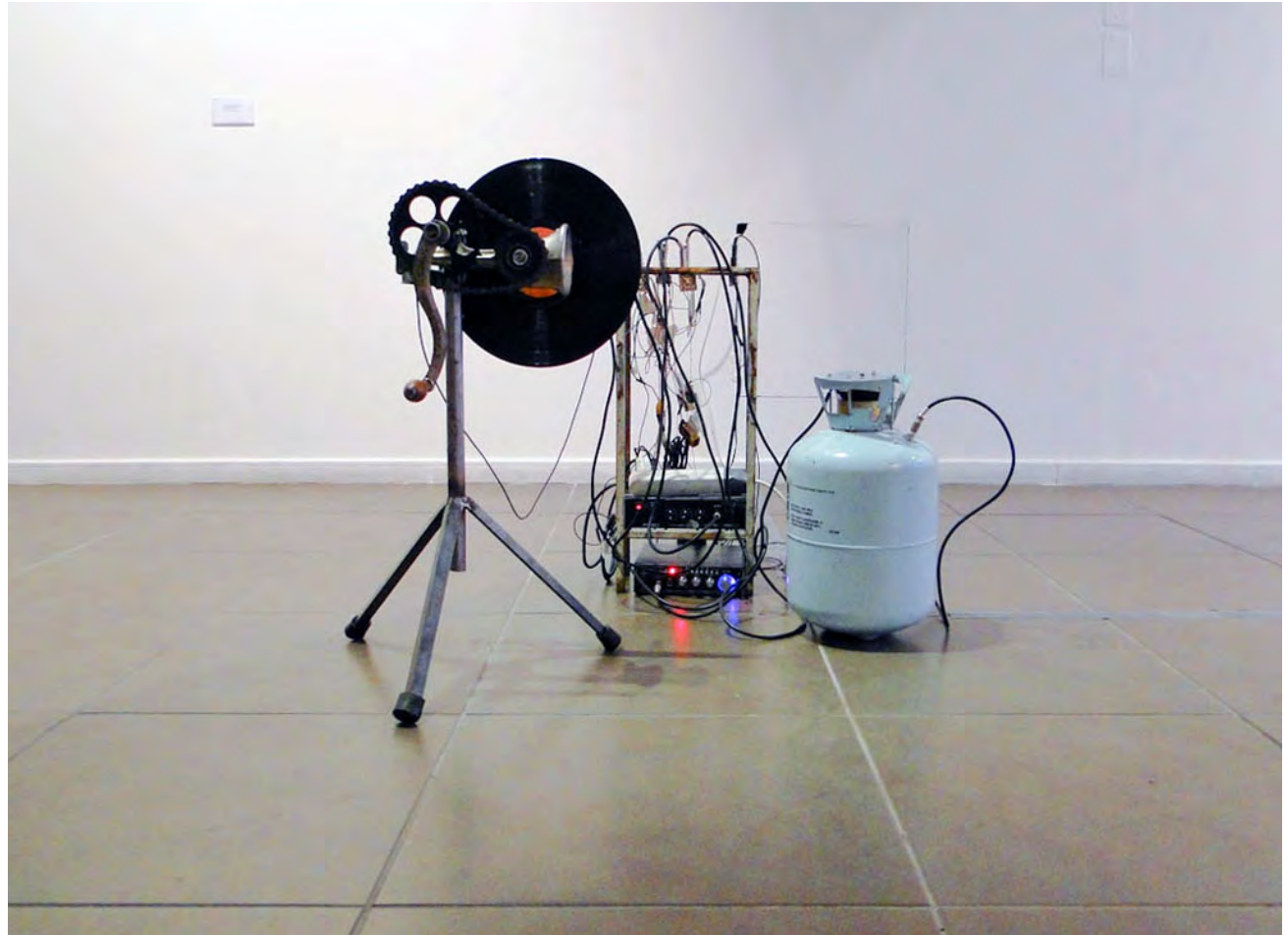


«Hummingbird #1», 2014

The «Hummingbird» serie is an ongoing cycle of work which unites the forms configuring a gramophone: a disk, a turntable, a needle and a loudspeaker.

«Hummingbird #1» was built with waste material which came from junkyards, antique warehouses and demolition sites. The crank, originally from a meat mincer, activates the spinning of the record, in which the lack of a flywheel or a governor mechanism makes it impossible to achieve the correct reproduction speed of the disk. The sound then is transported to a series of self-made mechanical sound filters, and is finally transmitted on the large, round, mirrored speaker at the opposite side of the room.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SsTrzXLJ1yQ>



«Hummingbird #1», 2014

Meat grinder, microphones, amplifier circuits, vinyl disc, gas bottle, mylar plastic, led lights

Variable dimensions

Rodrigo Toro Madrid

born 1990, works and lives in Santiago de Chile and Basel

EDUCATION/ TEACHING EXPERIENCE

- 2020-2022** Master Degree, Zurich University of the Arts, ZHdK
2009-2015 Bachelor's degree in Visual Arts, Diego Portales University, Santiago, Chile
2019 Assistant of Diego Portales University, Santiago, Chile
Workshop «Mechanical sound for kids», TSONAMI International Sound Art Festival, Valparaíso, Chile
2018 Workshop «Lapiz Sonoro», FLORA ars+natura, Bogotá, Colombia

RESIDENCIES/PRICES/NOMINATIONS

- 2022** Nomination to CIFO-Ars Electronica Award Exhibition, Linz, Austria
Sasso Residency, San Nazzaro, Switzerland
2021 Residency Bibliothek Andreas Züst, Appenzell, Switzerland
2018 Exhibition & Residency «Origen y Mito», SACO - Contemporary Arts Festival, Antofagasta, Chile
Second Prize «Concurso Artespacio BBVA», Artespacio gallery, Santiago, Chile
2017 Residency & scholarship «Exequiel Lira del Campo», FLORA ars+natura residency, Bogotá, Colombia
Nomination to CIFO Cisneros-Fontanals grants & commissions program
2015 First prize, Sound Art Category «Premios Municipales de Arte Joven», Posada del Corregidor gallery, Santiago, Chile
2013 Third Prize «EXPO_GANADORES», Third version of Matilde Pérez contest of arts and digital media, Santiago, Chile

SOLO EXHIBITION

- 2018** «The Scavenger», FLORA ars+natura «Gabinete» program, Bogotá, Colombia

GROUP EXHIBITIONS

- 2021** «XIV Premio MAVI arte joven» Museum of Visual Arts, Santiago, Chile
«Crépuscules», Regionale 2021, Strasbourg, France
«In a circle around the corner» Zürich, Switzerland
«Sommerprojekt», Erlenbach, Switzerland
I Ever See, Poster edition, I Never Read Art Book Fair, Basel, Switzerland
2020 «No temas, la isla está llena de ruidos», NAC art gallery, Santiago, Chile
2019 «Within Others' Sounds», Ausstellungsraum Klingental/RANK, Basel, Switzerland
«Sonido Unico», Galeria La Curtiembre, Santiago, Chile
«Art Santiago», Santiago, Chile
2018 «Origen y Mito», SACO Contemporary Arts Festival, Antofagasta, Chile
TSONAMI, International Sound Art Festival, Valparaíso, Chile
«Concurso Artespacio BBVA», Artespacio gallery, Santiago, Chile
«Escrituras», La Casita gallery, Bogotá, Colombia
2017 «Esto es temporal», final show FLORA ars+natura residency, La Casita gallery, Bogotá, Colombia.
«Energ(ética): arte y energía sostenible», Los Heroes Monument, Bogotá, Colombia
2016 «Premio de Arte Joven MAVI/MINERA ESCONDIDA», Visual Arts Museum, Santiago, Chile
«Señales Aleatorias. Chilean sound art retrospective», visual art's gallery of Valparaíso's cultural park, TSONAMI - International Sound Art Festival, Valparaíso, Chile
2015 «Premios Municipales de Arte Joven», Posada del Corregidor gallery, Santiago, Chile
«Audioficción», Espacio Blanco Valparaíso; TSONAMI - International Sound Art Festival, Valparaíso, Chile
«Carácter», Biblioteca Nicanor Parra, Universidad Diego Portales, Santiago, Chile
2014 «Simulacro», l'Espacio Falso, Santiago, Chile
«Agua Profunda», Balmaceda 1215 visual art gallery, Santiago, Chile

- 2013** «Concurso Universitario de Arte Joven», Contemporary Art Museum of Santiago (MAC), Santiago, Chile
«EXPO_GANADORES», Third version of Matilde Pérez contest of arts and digital media, Santiago, Chile

PERFORMANCES/PODCASTS/RADIO TRANSMISSIONS

2022

- 2021** Performance with Franziska Baumgartner during «Die Aufdrängung» by Ariane Koch's book reading in Pilz, Welle, Lust, Basel, Switzerland
Rodrigo Toro Madrid & Friends, Podcast and live listening Session at PRAXIS art Space in Basel, Switzerland
Performance with Sarina Scheidegger in Fructa Space, part of Various Others festival in Munich, Germany
Performance at Kunsthau Langenthal with Sarina Scheidegger, Part of «H.o.me» Heim für obsolete Medien», Kunsthau Langenthal, Switzerland
- 2020** «Notes on Hideouts» Live transmission with Sarina Scheidegger & various artists - in collaboration with Radio Lora (Zurich, Switzerland) and Radio TSONAMI (Valparaiso, Chile)
«SPARK, SPARK, SPARK» Podcast track with Franziska Baumgartner & Sarina Scheidegger for Lumpenstation

PUBLICATIONS/EDITIONS

- 2019** «Within Others' Sounds», Vinyl Edition, Stingray Editions
- 2018** Catalogue SACO, Contemporary Arts Festival, Antofagasta, Chile
Catalogue TSONAMI, International Sound Art Festival, Valparaiso, Chile