

Sergei Tcherepnin

Murray Guy, New York, USA



Sergei Tcherepnin, *Motor-Matter Bench*, 2013, mixed media, 72 × 52 × 321 cm

The sounds of shrill chirps, falling rockets and droning whistles spread across the exhibition 'Ear Tone Box' by Sergei Tcherepnin. Together, these deafening notes were a tangible, arresting force. Syncopated rhythms rang out from objects and sculptures dispersed in corners, windows and on walls. To locate the sounds, listeners peered through silk veils, crouched below rusted metal sheets or rested on a bench; the exhibition encouraged a wandering, inquisitive form of viewership. But searching out Tcherepnin's concealed speakers rarely gave a feeling of conclusion; most of the time the composition's placement was alienating or distant, misleading or unexpected.

Thematic ideas of shifts between public use and private ownership resonated in the objects and sounds. *Motor-Matter Bench* (all works 2013) was a wooden New York City subway bench with transducers, an amplifier and media player attached beneath it. The timeworn artefact was one of the many removed by the Metropolitan Transportation Authority and made available for purchase (US\$650 each). The instruments beneath the seats emitted intense low-frequency wavelengths. These sounds were not heard so much as felt;

the bench vibrated with erratic punches and thumps. *Ear Tone Box (Pied Piper Disappears)* was a hanging microsuede and wood enclosure with zinc-lined inner walls and a printed silk square draped over an opening. The speakers, hidden behind the box's thin inner metal lining, played broken tonal chords from an Apple iPod. With one's head in the box, the viewer entered a bitter trance: jarring, cyclic trills drowned out any aural connection to the gallery space outside the work's enclosure.

3 Shields was an arrangement of three corroded rain shields held up by sticks, and with amplifiers attached beneath them. The rusty, wafer-like planes were tilted 30 degrees from the ground, constructing a shadowy space from the floor that served to raise vibrations upwards. Situated halfway across the room from *Motor-Matter Bench*, the shields' low-vibrating timbres seemed to echo the subway bench's grueling bass. Two convex security mirrors were installed at opposite ends of the gallery, making up *Stereo Ear Tone Mirrors*. Behind the reflective glass circles were iPods, transducers and amplifiers. The mirrors emphasized the exhibition's acoustic and physical arrangement, as each fish-eye circle reflected back the entire contents of the room. Viewers could snoop on others navigating the space or, if the gallery was empty, see oneself alone.

On one wall, a flatscreen monitor presented *Pied Piper Playing under the Aqueduct*, a seven-minute HD video showing the artist dressed in diamond fishnet tights, a mini floral frock and wearing a feather cap. He circulates, barefoot, around an open plaza beneath Rio de Janeiro's Carioca Aqueduct. The piper appears not to be playing as much as wandering: looking over his shoulder, glancing up at the surroundings or listening under the aqueduct's arches. Perhaps he's scouting out sonic arrangements, or tracing something missing. Clearly unsettled, the artist-as-Pied-Piper has the air of both a local and a vagabond, with mixed expressions of interest and ignorance. This character might remind us of ourselves in the gallery space, navigating from one object to another within a private space made open to the public. The artist's intentional misuse of the word 'play' in the title to describe a scene of solitude reminds us of neoliberalism's fuzzy confusion between 'work' and 'leisure' – or questions of what is a public activity and what is private. It disrupts the audience's reading of the wandering Pied Piper, an interruption and mediation that is consistent throughout the exhibition.

Nicolas Linnert