

Ray Lee: invisible-forces



photo: Ray Lee, BAC, London 2012

ethometric museum

About the Work

'Utterly wonderful'

Sumit Paul-Choudhury, editor New Scientist magazine

Enter the *Ethometric Museum* and be transported into a parallel universe of cosmic tones and esoteric technology, an Aladdin's cave of exquisitely hand-crafted contraptions.

Inside you will bathe in the resonant sound waves generated by the spinning machines and dancing automata and marvel as Professor Lee flicks the knobs and tunes the dials to play an innovative musical soundscape that envelops you like a 'three dimensional piece by Steve Reich'.

According to the introduction given to you by the earnest and elegantly dressed curator, Dr. Kounadea, each machine emits specific harmonic frequencies and through their precise manipulation Ethometrics 'expert' Professor Lee will realign your 'super-electrical field'.

Appearing to be artefacts from a hitherto unknown branch of science, these extraordinary Ethometric Instruments are curious, fascinating and beguiling relics from a bygone age. Fascinating, compelling and hauntingly beautiful, *Ethometric Museum* is an immersive theatrical journey into a hypnotic and mesmerising world of whirling devices, pulsing drones and *proper* science.

Selected Press

'A kind of musical H.G.Wells' *Ivan Hewitt BBC Radio 3*

'Witty, strange and beautiful...For total strangeness see Ray Lee's Ethometric Museum.'

Lyn Gardner, Guardian

'Gentle, whimsical and resonant with beauty'
*Glasgow Herald *****

'If you're after something different,
Ethometric Museum will take your breath away'
*Three Weeks*****

'A strange, alien, ever changing sound world, at once beguiling and disconcerting'
*What's on Stage *****

Ethometric Museum: The back story

"I started making what I call 'Ethometric' instruments in 2006. At first it was in response to a curious leather case I had inherited from my father. The various dials and knobs of the device inside alluded to a use that was now arcane. I have a fascination with old technology and in particular the way in which what was once cutting edge becomes outmoded, obsolete, and curious to the point of obscurity."

In 2009 I was touring with my sound installation and performance 'Siren' and was performing at the

Walker Arts Center in Minneapolis. There I was encouraged to go the Bakken Museum of Electricity and Life where I was taken into their vault, a room filled floor to ceiling with shelves and crammed full with obscure instruments and devices from the history of electrical medicine. X-rays tubes, electric shock machines, violet ray devices competed for space with endless wooden boxes of all shapes and sizes.

I was overcome with a sense of wonder, of not knowing, lost in a storehouse of obscurity. Some of the objects had a sense of familiarity, I could guess what they were for and how they may have been used, but others were incomprehensible, their use and function lost in the history of technological progress. In response I made the *Ethometric Museum*, my palace of wonderment, and filled it with a large collection of hand-crafted, meticulously created Ethometric Instruments. Ethometrics, according to the 1973 catalogue by Ethometric Instruments Ltd: "is a system of harmonically resonant sound and electro-magnetic waves that can generate 'goodwill' among the recipient organism."

As an artist I make things. I work with objects and sound to create immersive sound installations. I work with performance because I want to shape an experience through time for an audience that leads them on a journey through the imaginary worlds I create. You are up close to the machines and it's almost as if you are inside the performance as it takes place around you.

I hope that visitors will share my sense of wonder at these mysterious machines as they whir, hum, spin and create their ethereal sound world." Ray Lee

Since its premiere at the Museum for the History of Science in Oxford in 2011, *Ethometric Museum* has toured nationally and internationally including performances at Battersea Arts Centre 2012, London, the Asmolean Museum in Oxford 2014, The Science Museum in London 2014 and the Tesla Museum in Belgrade, Serbia 2012. In 2012 Ray Lee won the British Composers' Award for Sonic Art for the *Ethometric Museum*.

Credits

Ethometric Museum was commissioned by Oxford Contemporary Music with support from Oxford Brookes University and the Arts Council of England. Its development was supported by BAC.

Tour information

Venues

Ethometric Museum is a 45 minute indoor work that can be adapted for a wide range of spaces from atmospheric basements, historic buildings, and grand halls to conventional theatre spaces. The work is in a promenade form. The audience are able to move freely around the space. The size of the venue dictates the appropriate audience capacity. For a limited capacity audience, the show can be repeated a number of times during the day and/or evening.

Company

Ethometric Museum tours with a company of two performers, Ray Lee and Stavroula Kounadea, who also assemble the show.

Installation

Ethometric Museum is a complex and intricate installation of shelves packed with around forty working instruments. The work can be installed in a working day, but two days for the installation are preferred.

Technical Support

The company requires two technicians for the installation and the get out. The work can be dismantled in two hours.

Freight

Ethometric Museum tours in the UK a large Transit/Luton. For international touring it is packed in six cases with a weight of 600kgs in total.

Language

Ethometric Museum contains an introductory section of around 8 minutes spoken in English. This can be translated in non-English speaking countries.

Contact

Ethometric Museum is produced by OCM.

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Selected Press-continued:

'Ray Lee's Ethometric museum is an experience that is gentle, whimsical and resonant with beauty... The oscillating sonorities thrum into something exquisite, unearthly, transcendental.' *The Herald* ****

'a truly remarkable aural landscape.... Ethometric Museum is very difficult not to enjoy'
Broadway Baby ****

'a soundscape that builds from relative harmonic simplicity into a complexity of tones and timbres rhythmically falling and rising reaching the eeriness of a three-dimensional piece by Steve Reich. As Lee continues to move around the instruments the sound constantly modulates so Reich gives way to a period of esoteric science fiction, to itself be replaced by murmurings and flutterings and finally to die with a dimming red light and a last burbling hum.'

Oxford Times

'a trip to the Ethometric Museum certainly does have an effect – it's not a scientific one, it's artistic. It's emotional. It's something you feel, something that moves you. It is full immersion in sonic bliss, and a unique experience.'

Notes from the Underground

'As well as undeniably beautiful, Ethometric Museum is also curiously amusing. As the dead artefacts are touched with life, they whizz, clang and rumble into action like funny little creatures, shaking their heads or shivering with excitement. At their best, when interacting with the Professor or each other, their voices make them truly alive. Each instrument has its own distinct modulation, buzzing at the sight of a companion, or grumbling away on their own lower frequency. Gradually the room is filled by an orchestra of electricity, with Professor Lee the meticulous conductor.' *Exeunt Magazine* ****

'Free to walk around as we please, each visitor is partly in control of their own individual concert, getting close enough to the bass to feel its vibrations, or searching out the source of a particular sound. As such, everyone hears the performance differently, which adds to the sense of wonder.'

Exeunt Magazine ****

'I came out of what had become an almost trance-like state to discover my cheeks were aching: I'd been smiling throughout' *Good Energy*

'If you are interested in liminal experiences tracing the boundary between art and science, or simply in exploring an art or sound performance that will be unlike anything you have seen or heard before, then I cannot recommend the show highly enough. It is fascinating, stimulating, and so unusual as to blast you out of your normal habits of thought and submerge you in the strange, beguiling soundscape the instruments produce.

...

Continue through the wooden door, and you're immediately struck by the authenticity of the museum atmosphere that's been created. The tweed-clad curator, Dr Kounadea, has all the measured excitement of the scientific enthusiast sharing their passion. Around the room, displayed on simple wooden shelves, are a bizarre assortment of box-shaped technologies and tall silver antennae.

...

Gradually, the room fills with noise. A unique auditory journey has been initiated, and you're carried through a textured sound forest of interweaving whirrs, groans, beeps, creaks, warbles, thrums, fizzes and beat-like buzzes.'

The Upcoming

