

# PROJECT 20

## Stephen Vitiello

### 2010

#### *The Sound of Red Earth*

13 August - 12 September 2010  
Sydney Park Brickworks, Sydney

#### *The Birds*

11 August - 12 September 2010  
Art Gallery of New South Wales, Sydney

## BIOGRAPHY

Internationally renowned sound and media artist Stephen Vitiello, concerns himself with the physicality of sound and its ability to define spatial environments. Vitiello started his career as a punk guitarist, however his practice now revolves around the transformation of incidental atmospheric noise into perceptually challenging soundscapes. Recognised for his ethereal installations, Vitiello's work has been shown extensively across Europe and the Americas.

## FACTS

- *The Sound of Red Earth* is culled from field recordings created in Western Australia in July 2009 and May 2010.
- For the installation three sound pieces were created and based on recordings of wildlife, wind and water.
- Vitiello and his crew visited the sites in WA a number of times. During their first visit they travelled by land and slept under the stars. On their second visit they travelled by sea and Vitiello captured the sounds as the boat tossed about.
- The results were installed in the Sydney Park Brickworks.
- The work featured 5.1 channel soundscapes within three of the arc-shaped, red brick kilns.
- New environments were created inside them, displaying the textures and colours of golden sand, black rock and red earth. Collaged together in these immersive environments, Vitiello evoked his experience of the Kimberley.
- *The Birds*, created for the Art Gallery of NSW, plays on Vitiello's cacophonous recordings of Australian birdlife. It is based on Daphne du Maurier's story of the same name. A reading of du Maurier's short story (the basis for Hitchcock's film), has been recorded and mixed with the sounds of native bird calls.
- Positioned outside the gallery, *The Bird* caught listeners by surprise as it merged with the sounds of the street and parkland.

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#### PROJECT OVERVIEW

Installed in the historic former Brickworks at Sydney Park for Project 20, Stephen Vitiello's major new multi-channel sound installation, *The Sound of Red Earth*, was the result of extensive recordings captured by the artist throughout the Kimberley region in Western Australia. The works were mixed from recordings of dust-filled winds, the roar of waterfalls, the rush of tidal flows and the sounds of native wildlife, reflections on the different locations Vitiello visited on his field trips to the region. Resonating with sound and light, the old brick-making kilns were transformed into three immersive environments, evoking the remote Australian landscape.

Collecting sounds from different environments in locations across the globe, from New York's city streets to the flutter of hummingbird wings in the Amazon, Vitiello has created unique soundscapes for exhibitions around the world. He captures the imperceptible details of the world around us, mixing them to create harmonic reflections on environments and places. Comparing phonography with its visual counterpart, photography, Vitiello's works act as an auditory collage of carefully chosen fragments. Together his recordings become a singular interpretation of a place or experience.

*The Sound of Red Earth*, 2010, transformed the former brick-making kilns in Sydney Park. Using three different soundscapes to represent the dominant sounds of the Kimberley – wind, water and wildlife – Vitiello created 5.1 channel soundscapes within three of the arc-shaped, red brick kilns. New environments were created inside them, displaying the textures and colours of golden sand, black rock and red earth. Collaged together in these immersive environments, Vitiello evoked his experience of the Kimberley, revealing both the grand and microscopic sounds of this elemental landscape.

In the soundscape of 'Wind', Vitiello mixed field recordings of wind from the Kimberley, capturing the sounds and sensations of wind interacting within the environment – wild storms rushing through trees, the rustle of a breeze shifting the grass, gales and gusts that shook the artist's tent at night. Layered together, his multi-channel composition evoked the sway and movement of objects in the landscape. The 'Water' composition captured the sounds of the flows and tides of the Kimberley rivers and waterways. Familiar sounds from above the water, from waterfalls, swimming holes and open sea, were mixed with the extraordinary sounds of the currents, rips and tides that swirl below, captured with specialist hydrophone equipment. Vitiello's 'Wildlife' soundscape captured the distinctive character of local birdsong, sometimes highlighting singular calls, at others their voices overlapped or in concert.

Stephen Vitiello recording *The Sound of Red Earth* for Kaldor Public Art Project 20

Image courtesy of Kaldor Public Art Projects



Kaldor Public Art Project 20: Stephen Vitiello, *The Sound of Red Earth*, 2010, Sydney Park Brickworks, Sydney, 13 August - 12 September 2010

Photo: Paul Green

