

ARTS DIARY



with
**PHILIP
KEY**

Art that talks to you



Can you hear me? – a previous work in New York by Julianne Swartz

BY PHILIP KEY
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GALLERY art is not always about paintings on a wall or even videos. For New York-based artist Julianne Swartz it can be about sound.

It is a sound piece that she will be bringing to next month's Liverpool Biennial and she will be one of many artists invited to exhibit in the international section.

Although her installation, *Affirmation*, will be at the Tate Liverpool, you won't be able to see it. But you will be able to hear it.

As you walk round the gallery, voices will seep out of the walls. Phoenix-born, the 38-year-old creates works for specific buildings.

"It is a typical work for me in so far as I am interested in an intervention quality with a building, sometimes with sound, sometimes visually," she explains from her New York home. "I like to make some kind of exchange with the

Voices 'seep out of walls'

architecture of a building and I use the architecture or some qualities of the site as materials."

She has already visited the city twice in preparing her piece, the first time to "get a sense of the building and atmosphere of the city" and a second time to record people in Liverpool to supply the voices.

"I thought the Tate Liverpool was fairly nondescript and a little cold," she explains candidly. "So I wanted to enliven and animate it."

Noting that the building at the Albert Dock was "sort of on the edge of the city" she decided to use that as a starting point. "I wanted to make it as if the building was embracing the populace of the city."

She has chosen ten locations around the gallery where voices will be heard. "Some of them are in galleries, others where you might not expect to find them, like

bathrooms and hallways."

She wrote ten different scripts which people were asked to read as well as asking all of the 50 volunteers the same question: What could someone say to you that would make you feel completely loved?

The readings and the answers have been put together as though the voices were having a conversation with someone.

"I am not using traditional speakers so the voices will seem to seep out of the building. They will be almost like the ghosts of the building or the building itself personified."

Swartz added: "We take architecture for granted and we pass through different buildings and spaces and don't necessarily notice what is around us. What I am interested in is that moment of noticing what is around you, being more aware of our surroundings."

■ **AFFIRMATION** opens at the Tate Liverpool from September 16, in the Liverpool Biennial.

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