

## Whispers, chants, hums wrap around viewer/listener in UNCC's Swartz exhibition

February 11, 2016 2:34 PM  
By Mark Leach

Bard College artist-in-residence and installation artist Julianne Swartz's solo exhibit "Close" at UNC Charlotte Center City's Projective Eye Gallery contains three works: "Terrain," originally commissioned by the Indianapolis Museum of Art and on loan from the Artist Pension Trust, is installed in the main gallery. "Close," a smaller but no less compelling series of photographic prints, is displayed in the front lobby. "Black and Blue Weave," a multimedia wall hanging, is on the second floor, in the building's atrium.

Swartz said her inspiration for the 12-channel sound piece "Terrain" came from her walks in the woods of upstate New York. "I was captured by the sound that the wind made as it blew against the trees and moved them, too. I was intrigued by my ability to hear the wind, see it and feel its effects against my body.

"I chose the title 'Terrain' thinking of both a landscape made of sound – an undulating, changing topography – (and) emotional terrain, which is also a changing landscape," she said. She instructed each volunteer for the piece to, among other things, perform sounds, say words and whisper thoughts. (See sidebar for her specific instructions.)

### HIGHLIGHTS

**Three-part show encompasses 100 speakers and volunteer voices, photos, multimedia 'hanging'**

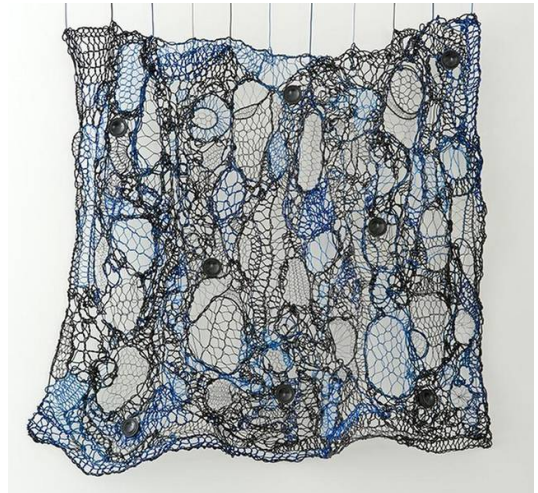
The intonations, repetitions and varying proximity of sounds to listeners create a magical, even soulful, experience.

"Terrain" invites personal reflection, too. As you stand in the gallery space, you can see, through two glass walls, Charlotte's urban landscape. In stark contrast to the traffic, sirens, jackhammers and everyday sounds of urban living, "Terrain" evokes – for those willing to stay and listen intently – memories, intimacy and self.

Swartz provides a different take on intimacy in her series "Close": 10 images here, displayed alongside one another. In each, an inverted finger, bathed by a warm background glow, is photographed close up, capturing the moment before gravity overtakes a drop of water. Look into the suspended droplet in "Close (Breast)" and you see a couple gazing upon one another. Swartz calls the reflection in the drop "a metaphor for intimacy and the ephemerality of the moment."

In "Black and Blue Weave," Swartz weaves multi-colored wires "purposefully," she says, "to achieve an aesthetic and functional result." Exquisite visual patterns in the piece double as structure for cabling and speakers that enliven the quiltlike wall hanging with intimate and soothing sounds.

In her three-part work, Swartz harnesses the emotive properties of the human voice and ably uses other strategies to remind us of our uniqueness, the importance of each moment, and the powerful effects of memory.



"Black and Blue Weave," 2013; wire, speakers, electronics and multi-channel soundtrack by Julianne

Mark Leach, who has served as executive director of the Southeastern Center for Contemporary Art in Winston-Salem and was founding director of the Mint Museum of Craft & Design, writes about the visual arts, and is an independent curator and consultant.

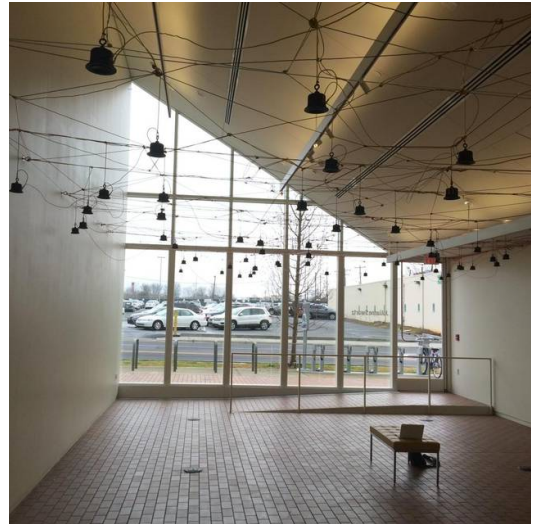
This story was produced as part of the Charlotte Arts Journalism Alliance.

## **JULIANNE SWARTZ: CLOSE**

When: Jan. 22-March 4

Where: Projective Eye Gallery; UNC Charlotte Center City; 320 E. 9th St.

Details: 704-687-8902; [bit.ly/1UY6Tg4](http://bit.ly/1UY6Tg4)



"Terrain," site-specific installation (originally, in 2008, in the Indianapolis Museum of Art) of speakers, wire, electronics, computer software, 12-channel recorded

## **HOW IT WORKS**

What artist Julianne Swartz asked volunteers to do when they recorded their voices (edited for length):

1. Face the microphone and breathe for 1-2 minutes, mouth slightly open. Try to focus entirely on your breath while you do this. Feel the air gently enter and leave your body.
2. Hum a single tone that comes naturally to your voice. To do this, take a deep breath in and hum as you let out the breath. Let the hum diminish in volume and shift tone as the air in your lungs diminishes. You may try to do this 2 or 3 times, or just once if you prefer.
3. If the single tone leads you to recall a song or part of a song, please hum or whistle that.
4. Whisper "I love you" for about 1 minute or until the words start to sound like gibberish and lose their meaning. Try saying it with different intonations, and space the words however you like. You may speak in any language you wish.
5. Imagine you are whispering into someone's ear. You can imagine anyone who you feel tenderness for (child, lover, mother, father, friend, sister, grandmother...) Whisper whatever you'd like to say to them. Perhaps you are soothing, scolding, seducing, relaxing, annoying, complimenting, caressing, protecting, revealing, cajoling, comforting, defending, persuading, remembering ... etc. I don't mind pauses at all in this dialog. When you think you are finished, pause for a little while and see if any more thoughts come to you. You may speak in any language you wish.

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