

# Douglas Henderson

## *summer of love*



Opening Friday September 6, 2019 at 6:30 pm

September 7 – October 26 2019

Galerie Mario Mazzoli is proud to present its first solo exhibition by Douglas Henderson in its Düsseldorf grounds.

When the American artist Douglas Henderson arrived in Berlin in 2007 from New York, he added a very particular flavour to the already well-defined SoundArt scene. The sculpturality and colourfulness of his work, informed by a witty, content-lead approach, stood out against the predominantly conceptual SoundArt orthodoxies then prevalent in the city.

Henderson had already made his mark as a SoundArt artist and composer and when Galerie Mazzoli Berlin (formerly Galerie Mario Mazzoli) invited him to present his first Berlin solo exhibition *Dukatenscheisser* in 2009, where, amongst vertical sound sculptures and sound installations, he showed his first kinetic sound sculpture *Flash Gordon*. In the following years, this rather particular and little-explored SoundArt area became one of Henderson's primary spheres of practice. Especially intrigued by sound's kinetic properties, he began to explore the techniques and mechanisms by which sound could set objects in motion, honing in the process his sculptural craftsmanship.

The first results of this investigation formed the content of his second solo show *Poets and Superheroes*, mounted in this gallery in 2012, and two years later his sound sculpture *Under Way* was awarded the German SoundArt Prize. The current exhibition showcases one of the techniques Henderson has evolved to harvest the

kinetic power of sound – a simple mechanism that transmits, through bristles, the movement of a speaker membrane to the sculptural component attached to it; turning the speaker, de facto, into a motor.

In *summer of love*, 17 flowers of various sizes, distributed throughout the space, rotate in a curiously orchestrated dance. Passing amongst them, one hears voices, noises and sometimes music, emanating from the funnel-shaped blossoms, which continually approach or swing away - throwing their sounds in ever-changing directions. Henderson's way of working is multifariously associative, interweaving inspirations from numerous sources into open textures of fleeting traces. The underlying complexity of his work resists literal interpretation, inviting visitors to bring in their own experiences, feelings and thoughts. *summer of love* relates to a memory of 1967, when Flower Power thrived against the backdrop of the Vietnam War and the immanent threat of nuclear annihilation. Gregory Corso's 1958 poem Bomb! sets the tone, providing the material for the vocal parts of the work's 16-channel composition. Treated, layered and mixed with live music and film soundtracks into a multi-streamed sonic current, the sounds projected from the revolving flower heads produce a somewhat solemn and inscrutable mood. But "not too dark" as Henderson stresses, since he sees his art as a means "to keep darkness at bay"; an attitude that links his '60s memory poignantly to present times.

*summer of love* plays on the paradoxical fear of, and dependence on, the threat of global annihilation. Our obsessive fears of apocalypse, nourished by the media, seem to become the subject of a bizarre fashion show: each generation has its threat. In 1967 it was the atom bomb, while today global warming competes with ISIS on the catwalk of doom. With this work Henderson embraces these fears as a means of conquering them, cultivating a dancing garden to survive the Flood.

Featuring readings by actors Meret Becker, Anna Clementi, Julia Stefani Möller, and Hedda Oledzki, the composition weaves together the readings of the poem, cross-synthesized with archival material and percussion phrases played by Tony Buck.

Born in Baltimore in 1960, sound artist and composer Douglas Henderson studied music composition and theory with Milton Babbitt, Paul Lansky, and J.K. Randall, receiving his PhD. in composition from Princeton University in 1991 and his Bachelor's degree in composition from Bard College in 1982. He has chaired the Sound Arts Department at the School of the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston, and conducts master classes in electroacoustic composition, multi-channel audio and recording arts.

In 2015 he was awarded the PrixArs Award of Distinction at Ars Electronica, in 2013 the Deutscher Klankunst Preis / European Soundart Award, and in 2012 the Gigahertz Prize for Electronic Music.

In addition to numerous gallery shows, his work has been featured in major museum exhibitions such as "Writing the History of the Future (2019 ZKM)", "Negative Spaces: Trajectories of Sculpture in the 20th and 21st Centuries" (2019 ZKM), "Asche und Gold. Eine Weltenreise" (2012 MARTa in Herford), "Sound Art. Klang als Medium der Kunst" (2017 ZKM in Karlsruhe), "Does It Fold?" (2017 The Drawing Center NYC), "Resonant Spaces" (2005 The Whitney Museum of American Art), among others. He has been awarded a 2008 Rockefeller Foundation Multi-Arts Program Award for Music for 100 Carpenters (2009), was an artist-in-residence of the DAAD Berliner Kuenstlerprogramm in 2007, and received a 2007 Foundation for Contemporary Arts Individual Artist Grant.