

The Tipping Point

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Biographical information

Betsey Biggs is an artist and composer working with sound, video, interactivity, installation and performance. Her work aims to engage the audience, to expose the beautiful in the mundane, and to explore the tension between spontaneity and form. She is currently completing her Ph.D. at Princeton University, where she is researching the ways that public sound art projects can engage the public. Upcoming projects include a series of oversized video projections, entitled Sleepers;, a collaborative performance at Oakland's Music and Thingamajigs Festival, and a series of site-specific mp3 soundwalks.

Description of Piece

The Tipping Point is an interactive installation exploring the hierarchies of relationships by sonically representing power dynamics. Entering the tent, one finds headphones on two cushions on a rug, with wooden bowls of stones facing one another and the space lit only by a video monitor showing a flickering candle. Participants each sit on a cushion, put the headphones on, and move the stones between the bowls, causing a sound tinged with slight feedback. The more imbalanced the stones become (between the two bowls) or the louder the sounds become, the more the candle flickers. At a certain point – the tipping point – the sonic or power imbalance will trigger a sudden change in the sound and video: a flashing red light and the sound of a heartbeat. After a random period of time (less than a minute), the sound and video will return to where they were before the interruption. It's up to the participants to find a sonically pleasing balance.

