

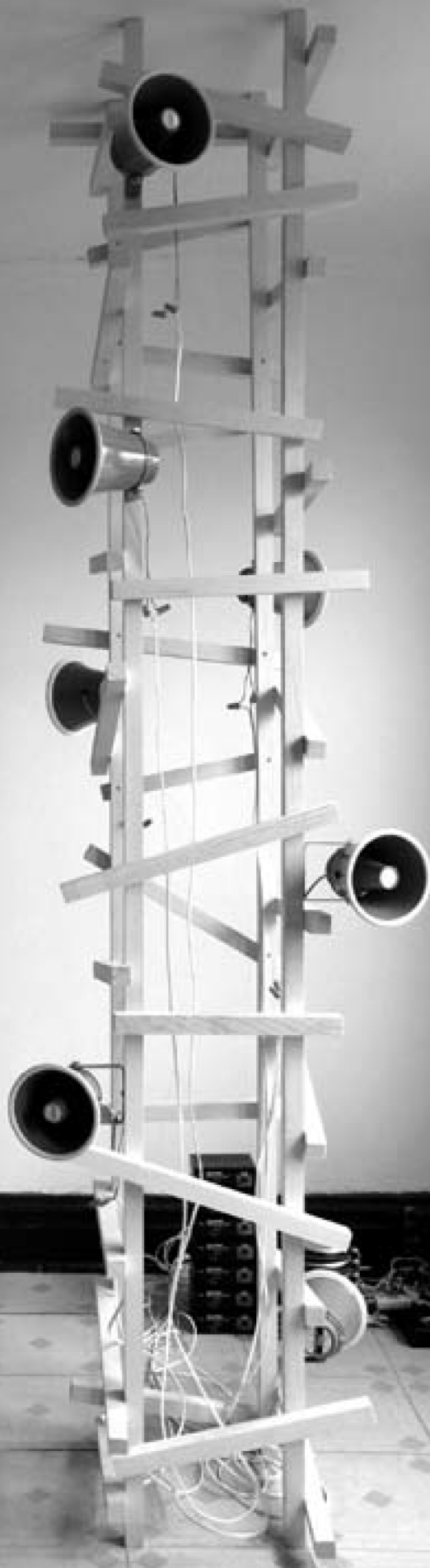
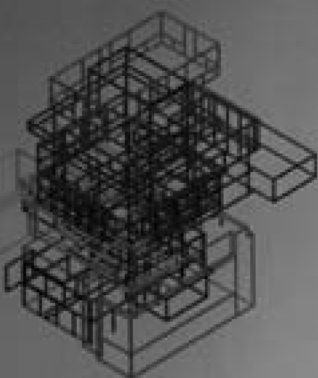
‘PERFORMATIVE CONVERSATIONS’  
IN THE CONSTRUCTION SITE OF SOUND – REFLECTIONS ON THE  
*ROOM TONE* PROJECT

Robin Wilson

*resonance and relay – breath, inhale – shallow/hollows – a foreground of surfaces – light-lock-snap to balcony creak – a space onto outside air – instant birds, park voices – sprung coil, fold back creak – intimate resonance – chair shift, rubber grate – wooden roller-rocker-shaker – door weight – breath step, hard stop – corridor voice*

In 2009 Brandon LaBelle proposed that I (a critic of architecture and art) and Lucy Read (an architect) collaborate together on a contribution to *Room Tone*, to produce a physical model in response to recordings he had made of his Berlin apartment. We began a process of work: listening to the tracks numerous times, making notes (some of which are transcribed above), gathering materials and setting aside time to discuss ideas. Regretfully we never reached the point of completing a model, as another construction project began to dominate our time....

ROSEBUNSHAFTWALTER  
RUSCHILIOJOHNSONERNE  
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...The project findings were simply made accessible within the social/commercial space of the shop. I would argue that there is, in fact, a critical, aesthetic impulse and project in evidence here. It is worth comparing this installation of *Room Tone* with the more complex act of ‘gestural construction’ involved in LaBelle’s gallery installation *Learning from Seedbed* (2003).<sup>11</sup> LaBelle reconstructed the ramp of Vito Acconci’s ‘Seedbed’ performance of 1972, but made its underside accessible rather than as the space of the hidden body. The ramp itself, made of pine-wood battening and sheets of shuttering ply, was thus converted from its original conception as a surface that separates the artist from the audience, to a rudimentary structure that could be occupied and explored spatially and materially as a kind of social, architectural instrument.

A similar approach to the material presentation of sound art installation occurs in the work of David Schafer, who often constructs freestanding metal or wood scaffolding as support towers for speakers. Schafer ascribes to these towers a particular critical discourse regarding issues of authority, institution and a critique of modernism.<sup>12</sup> They engage more self-consciously than LaBelle’s work in establishing an anti-architectural language, an explicitly informal assemblage that stands in contrast to the architecture of the cultural institution. However, Schafer’s installations share with LaBelle’s an impulse to strip and reduce the material component of installation, expressing qualities of the ‘provisional’ and the ‘informal’ as, what we might define as, a material manifestation of the deconstructive potential of sound.

By way of conclusion, I return to the *Room Tone* project contributions and specifically to one work which has an important resonance with my own experience of the apartment recordings and my understanding of LaBelle’s work more generally. The response of the artist/architect collaboration Sophie Warren and Jonathan Mosley was not to model space as such, but to put in the place of the model, or as an alternative form of model, something more akin to a kit of parts. We could suggest that in terms of scale, Warren & Mosley have modelled at 1:1, presenting material components that would seem to represent a collection of actions on wood that correspond to the recorded sounds....