

LISSON GALLERY

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Light fantastic: Haroon Mirza experiments with sound in his art works

In the realm of the senses, he leads the way

Artist Haroon Mirza invites us to listen as well as look, says **Hannah Duguid**

A semi-circle of DJ decks dominates the space in Haroon Mirza's studio, but the records they play won't be vinyl. Made from paper, bits of wood, or plastic, they make a sound that hovers between noise and music. A base line, a scratching sound, it could be a tune, almost.

Sound is as much part of this British artist's work as objects and light. His work engages all the senses and, as experienced, feels somewhere between a night club and a recording studio. Images flash on a screen, sharp slices of grey sponge line the walls like the sound-proofing in a recording studio. They echo minimalist sculpture but also bring a threatening vibe to the space. Mirza uses the sound of electricity in his work, which is electronic music broken down to its elemental parts.

"There's a perceptual shift from hearing to listening, a moment when you're enticed to listen to it, when a noise becomes music. It's a shift, a space in between. One moment it might be anything, background noise, then it becomes something. The sound of electricity might be noise or we might listen to it, which is a completely different activity. When sound does something with rhythm or tone to become what music is: a bunch of sounds organised. Then your perception might change and you might listen to it," says Mirza.

Mirza has a fluid approach to his work. He moves through different media: film, sound, objects and light. His work is not self-centred, but gathers people in; he works collaboratively with other artists and musicians such as Jellyman from Django Django, Factory Floor and James Lavelle of Mo' Wax and UNKLE. Working with these musicians, he has posted a series of samples on his website o-o-o.co.uk, which artists can download, remix and then repost.

"I like the idea that the things I do aren't just me. Nothing is an individual achievement but is built up around someone else, even when you think

around ideas about influence and inspiration. Ideas are exchanged every moment, and you can't really map them, it's impossible. If it's too easy to map influence then the work will probably be quite boring," says Mirza.

Around his studio old transistor radios sit dumped on a shelf, and a rickety model of the Emley Moor mast in Yorkshire lies in a box. Mirza pulls it out and explains that in a new work, he will light up the 300m-high television and radio transmission mast with red, and flashing green lights. He will then broadcast the frequency sounds from the mast on a radio station, which it will be possible to tune into countrywide.

In an exhibition at the Hepworth museum in Wakefield, Mirza collaborates with other artists' work. He drapes ropes of light, like the rope barriers at a nightclub entrance, around work in the museum's collection, clustering artworks together in a way that critiques the usual museum display. His electric sounds will

"THERE'S A SHIFT FROM HEARING TO LISTENING – A MOMENT WHEN NOISE BECOMES MUSIC"

echo through the rooms, altering our perception and experience of the artwork on show, perhaps in a way similar to that in which a soundtrack works in a film.

The museum is built over the river Calder. Mirza responds to this by arranging a painting of the weir from the museum's collection, along with his own video piece, and he displays them together, with a recording of the sound of the river, which is visible through the Hepworth's giant windows. He's an artist who seems alive in every possible sense. Combining past and present, spinning sound, images and light into something extraordinary.

Haroon Mirza, The Hepworth Wakefield (hepworthwakefield.org) to 29 September; Lisson Gallery, London NW1 (lissongallery.com) to 29 June