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# VibraFusion Exhibition Turns Sound Into Sensation

By **Gerard Creces** -November 1, 2017

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Music is a universal language. It doesn't just cross cultures and borders, but the senses themselves.

Play a favourite record and you can feel the music flow through you – metaphorically speaking.

But for those without hearing, feeling the music takes on an entirely different meaning.

From Oct 10 – November 13, VibraFusion Lab is combining the senses, turning sound into touch with a special touring exhibition at 629 Dundas Street.

## Sounding off

Bridging Practices in Accessibility, Art and Communication explores vibration as an independent medium. The artists' works make sound tangible in a variety of ways – seats made of speakers, floors that rumble like bass bins, cymbals that act as speakers for their own sampled sounds. There are even transducer-fitted cushions that allow patrons to share the vibrations close to the body.

“We try to present another sensory experience around art making and art appreciation,” said curator and exhibitor David Bobier. “We also consider deaf audiences and blind audiences and give them the opportunity to access the work.”

Everything in the exhibit is done with complete accessibility in mind. It's what Vibrafusion does best.

## Sound setting

Bobier said the exhibition had a difficult time finding a home, but eventually found the perfect space in an empty Old East Village storefront.

It's exposed brick and large ceilings amplify rather than deaden the sounds – making it all the more intimate when you're able to (as Marky Mark put it) feel the vibration.



*Cymbalism by Gordon Monahan turns cymbals into speaker cones.*

The lineup features four deaf/disabled artists and three non-disabled, each with some connection to VibraFusion. Bobier said the exhibition is an opportunity to combine those perspectives.

“It brings artists from both communities together,” Bobier explained. “People get to explore and experience the aspects of other communities... trying to equalize the opportunities.”

In addition to Bobier, artists Lindsay Fisher, Marla Hlady, Ellen Moffat, Gordon Monahan, Alison O’Daniel, and Lynx Sainte-Marie are also exhibiting.

## Getting the feel

Bobier's piece features a music box mounted on a projector, which acts as sort of a player piano. Phrases in Braille are punched onto player paper for the music box, and the resulting sounds are pumped through the seat of an old school desk, retrofitted with several speakers.

As soon as you walk in the door you hear Monahan's *Cymbalsim* – four suspended cymbals with transducers to play back samples of the cymbals themselves.

Hlady's work allows visitors to feel the sounds from the ground up, with a raised platform equipped with speakers inside. Participants use sound balls, which alter the vibrations with movement.



*Ellen*

*Moffat provides a hands-on approach to understanding and celebrating disability.*

Other works, such as Moffat's *Small Sonorities*, show the visual side of vibration, while Fisher combines visual and tactile sensations through a wooden ball and hand fitted with transducers.

## Crippling it up

The whole experience is an example of 'cripping' the arts – sharing experiences and changing public perception of disability from less than to different.

"It's using their own ability and experience and often different types of technology to celebrate (disability)," Bobier explained. "Crippling becomes a positive tool for understanding it."

Visitors still have two weeks to experience the exhibition, which heads to Toronto and Hamilton in the New Year.

Bridging Practices in Acessibility, Art and Communication is open from noon to 5 p.m. Wednesday, Friday and Saturday and from 12-9p.m. Thursdays.

Meanwhile, you can hear, see and feel the vibrations for yourself at 629 Dundas Street.

*Photos by Gerard Creces*