



Chelle Macnaughtan  
Spatial Listening

Ainslie Murray  
Intangible Architecture

Malte Wagenfeld  
Aesthetics of Air

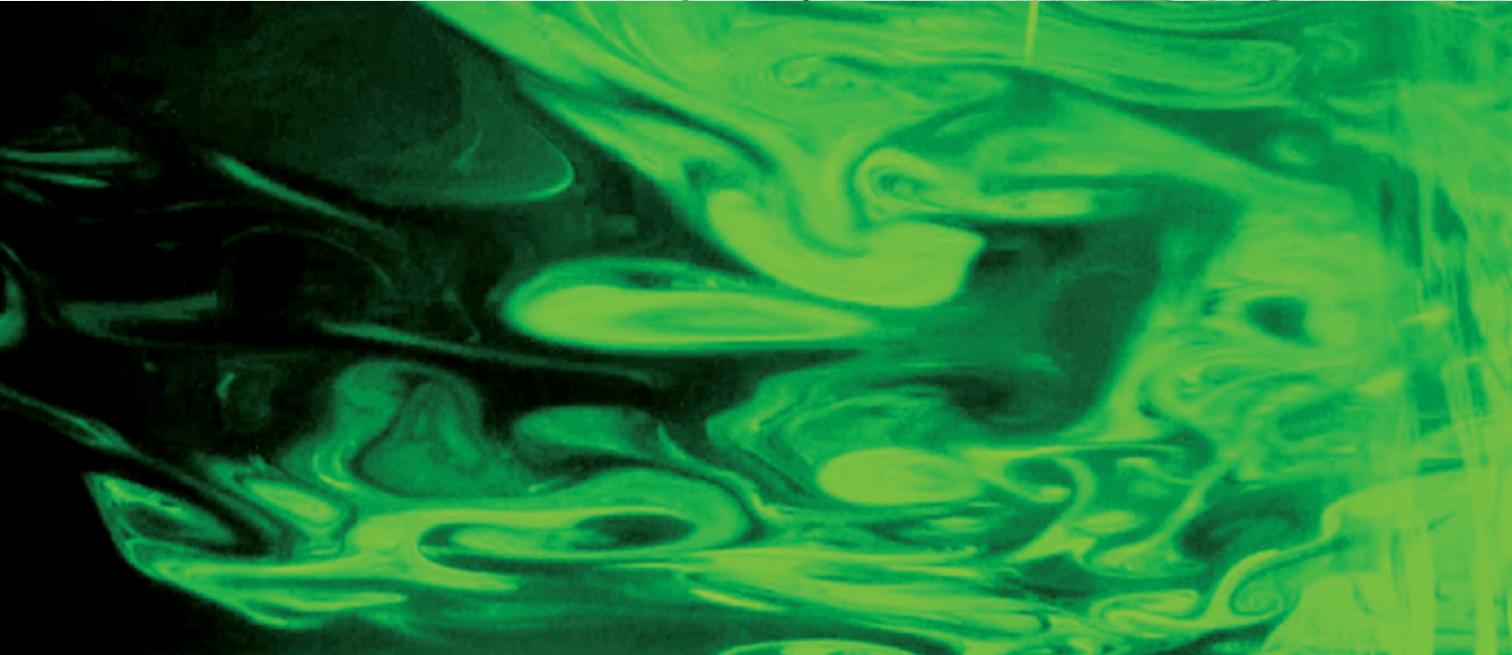
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## Touchstones

The sense of self, strengthened by art and architecture, allows us to engage fully in the mental dimensions of dream, imagination and desire. Buildings and cities provide the horizon for the understanding and confronting of the human existential condition. Instead of creating mere objects of visual seduction, architecture relates, mediates and projects meanings. The ultimate meaning of any building is beyond architecture; it directs our consciousness back to the world and towards our own sense of self and being. Significant architecture makes us experience ourselves as complete embodied and spiritual beings, in fact, this is the great function of all meaningful art.

**Juhani Pallasmaa** *The Eyes of the Skin: Architecture and the Senses*  
John Wiley: New York, 2005, p.11

Architectural form is today no longer seen as a result of functional requirements, but rather as the trigger to new programmes an occupations of space. The desire is not for an architecture that communicates one meaning directly, but rather for material and spatial forms that produce multiple associations and ambiguous situations... As Howard Caygill argues of Walter Benjamin's later work... [it is important that] 'we are sensitive to the incompleteness of a work and the negotiability of its formal limits... dedicated to revealing the unrealized futures inherent in the work.'

**Jane Rendell** *Art and Architecture: A Place Between*  
London: I. B. Tauris, 2006, p.120

RMIT Gallery is always exploring new ways to experience different creative practices. This exhibition of selected works by Chelle Macnaughtan, Ainslie Murray and Malte Wagenfeld, in their transdisciplinarity and poetic yet rigorous expansions of current discourses in design and architecture, was irresistible to us. We began the discussion with Chelle Macnaughtan quite some time ago, and, primed by her investigations into indeterminacy via John Cage, her engagement with music and architecture focussing on spatial listening, we briefly pursued a parallel Iannis Xenakis presentation, which proved impossible to realise. We then discovered the work of Ainslie Murray with its *wabi sabi* resonances and seductive engagement with intangible spatial forces. Malte Wagenfeld eloquently completes the presentation with his phenomenological investigation into sound, light, air, breezes, smells, humidity and temperature. We thank the artists for providing us with three distinct but highly complementary, deep, slow, sensual experiences of space.

**Suzanne Davies** April 2011

# Chelle Macnaughtan

## Spatial Listening

Chelle Macnaughtan's universe of work, located at the productive boundary of architecture, is characterised by indeterminacy, intertextuality, iterability and sound. Her reconfigurable aluminium constructions, notations, etchings, scores and realisations, pavement photographs, and cartographies that become architectural details augmented through listening, continue the legacy of John Cage's experiments in indeterminacy, and bring these procedures into the arena of architectural thinking and doing.

— Hélène Frichot, extract catalogue essay, 2009.

Emerging from the multifarious permutations of my research into Cagean indeterminacy is a meticulous awareness of the present self at all times within the intellectual, aesthetic and personal currency of my creative practice. This includes an attunement to the notion of what I call experiential-aesthetic spatial listening, and an acknowledgement of the necessarily unresolved demands in my work such as gesture, 'acoustic' signature, and the removal of 'self' or ego. It is within the consciously attentive and persistent details of my past and present work that I am exhibiting three projects at RMIT Gallery under the title *Spatial Listening*. Two of the projects, one a series of etchings, the other a collection of pavement photographs, explore an indeterminacy of spatial listening through line, signature and sonority. Following my recent fieldwork in Japanese dry landscape gardens known as *karesansui*, and corresponding monastic architecture, the third project to be exhibited is a floor-based collection of etched black aluminium panels. Activated through the auditory and supported by photographs courtesy of Günter Nitschke, the work's calligraphic-like etched cartographic fragments present as a spatial listening score awaiting performance. My intention is for the virgin metal to be walked on by gallery visitors in whatever footwear worn at the time. The aural immediacy in this performative act simultaneously registers an interpenetrating echo of the *karesansui* sites, as well as directly archiving into the aluminium the indeterminate marks left by unknown performers as part of the work's spatio-temporal realisation. Assimilating my slow engagement with detail, the project requires a gradual process of minute awareness to its spatial listening properties and references. Through participation, the work evokes a re-porealisation of deep listening as an engagement not only through the ears, but through the mind as well. It invites an inward journey and process of acutely concentrated self-perception that is augmented by sustained receptiveness to the natural and cultural breath.

— Chelle Macnaughtan, March 2011

Chelle Macnaughtan first studied at the Elder Conservatorium of Music in Adelaide before completing degrees in Interior Design, University of South Australia, Architecture (Hons) University of Melbourne and a PhD in Architecture at RMIT University. Chelle has been the recipient of numerous awards and scholarships, including the inaugural Australian Institute of Architects Lysaght Research Scholarship, and a Japan Foundation Fellowship. Her practice concerns a transdisciplinary methodology of indeterminacy from music into architecture, incorporating fine art, design and performance, as well as private architecture commissions and sessional teaching. Her research is published in various edited books, journals and conference proceedings.



Chelle Macnaughtan 74'56" (*Sound in the Space of Architecture*)  
2005, editioned prints, 100 x 77 cm. Installation views, Über  
Gallery, Melbourne, Australia. Photographs: Robert Colvin.





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**Chelle Macnaughtan**  
zinc etching plate and editioned print, plate 50 x 50 cm  
editioned print 100 x 77 cm, from 74'56" (*Sound in the Space of Architecture*) 2005. Photographs: Robert Colvin



# Ainslie Murray

## Intangible Architecture

These works explore the intangible qualities of architectural space through attention to air, the body, and light. As Merleau-Ponty describes in *The Visible and the Invisible*, in order to fully comprehend visibility there is an implicit need to understand the invisibility it houses. This intuitive internality also exists in architectural space. To realise the tangible structure of space we must also realise the intangible structure that it houses – the ultimately intangible space of inhabitation that is registered only through memory and the now-absent wake of our movement in air. The elusive tracks and traces of human inhabitation that enliven architectural space, that activate it and indeed create it, are always present but they are simultaneously always gone. Rather than constantly striving to visualise what is immediately lost upon visualisation, intangible architecture can be imagined and sensed as a circular phenomenon between the inhabiting body and its shadow. The shadow as a spatial memory is just distant enough to allow an external perspective of our inhabitation of space, yet close enough to understand it as an essential internality of our being. In this way, our awareness of the shadow conditions our understanding of the body and the space it inhabits. Intangible architecture is an imaginative dimension of architectural space; it exists as an evanescent, shimmering, precarious identity that stirs our thinking regarding the unseen and the unseeable.

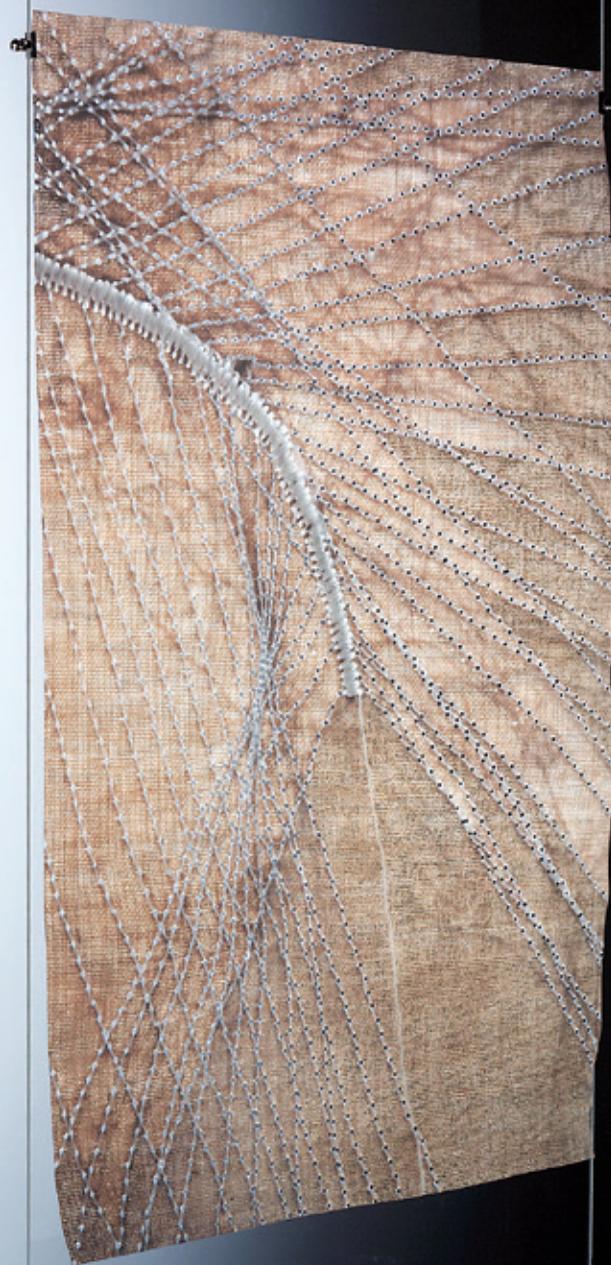
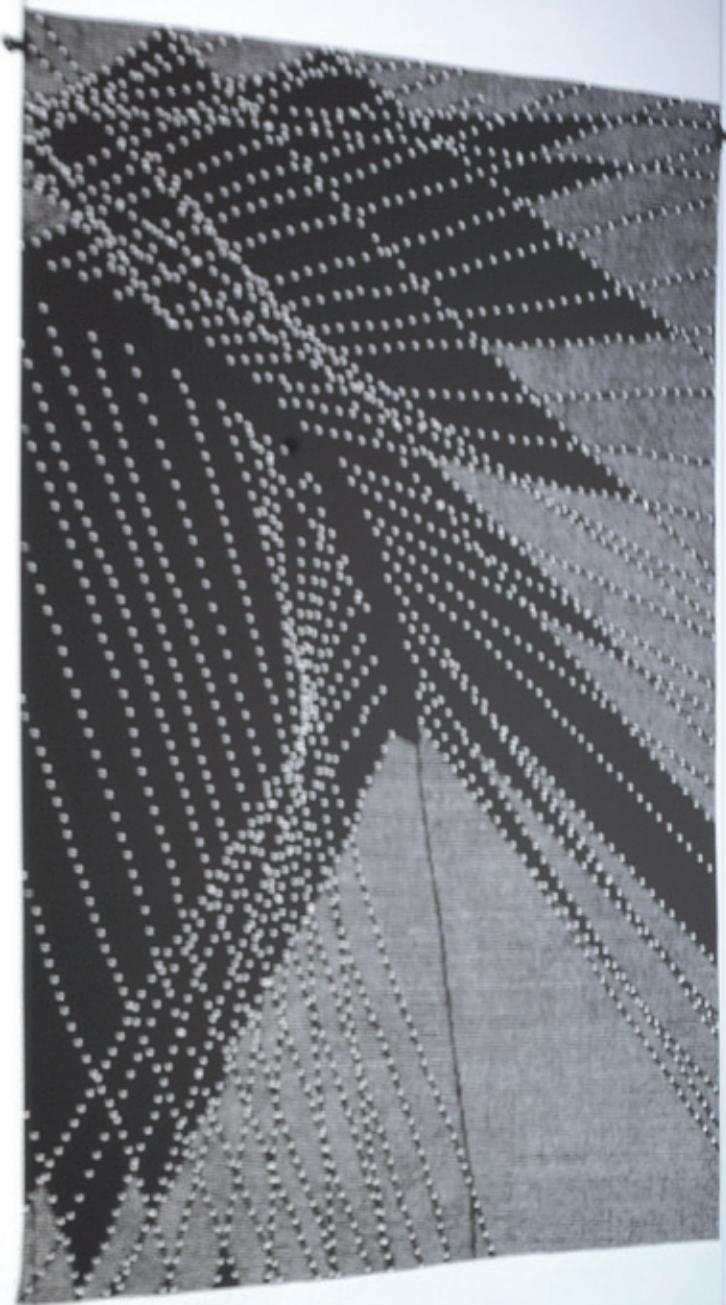
In these works abstract spaces are formed by hand, characterised by time-taking detail and the repetitive, ritualistic gestures of pattern making. The moving, productive bodies that danced these structures into being have now departed, and all that remains is the physical trace of that process; the works themselves become a memory of inhabitation. Space quivers, fragile materialities float away leaving only the body in space, content in its imaginings of the spatial history of the built environment.

— Ainslie Murray, March 2011

Ainslie Murray is an interdisciplinary artist, architect and academic working principally in installation. Her work explores the augmentation of architectural space through subtle realisations of intangible, hidden, and forgotten spatial forces. The air of architectural space, the choreography of the body, and the repetitious rituals of the construction process each find a focus in Murray's work. Her two and three-dimensional works may be considered as active architectural spaces, where undulating surfaces draw attention to both artefact and process, and evidence sequences of conception, assembly and inhabitation. Murray has received an Australia Council New Work Grant (2008), NAVA NSW Artists Marketing Grant (2007), Banff Centre Scholarship (2007), three successive UNSW Early Career Researcher Awards (2006, 2007 and 2008) and was a finalist in the Japan Foundation New Visual Artist Award (2008). Recent exhibitions include *Untitled Studio 11 Installation*, Artspace, Sydney (2010), *Momentum: 18th Tamworth Fibre Textile Biennial*, Tamworth, NSW and other venues (2008–2011), *An Architecture of Thread and Gesture*, Japan Foundation Gallery, Sydney (2008) and *Walks*, Banff Centre, Canada (2007).



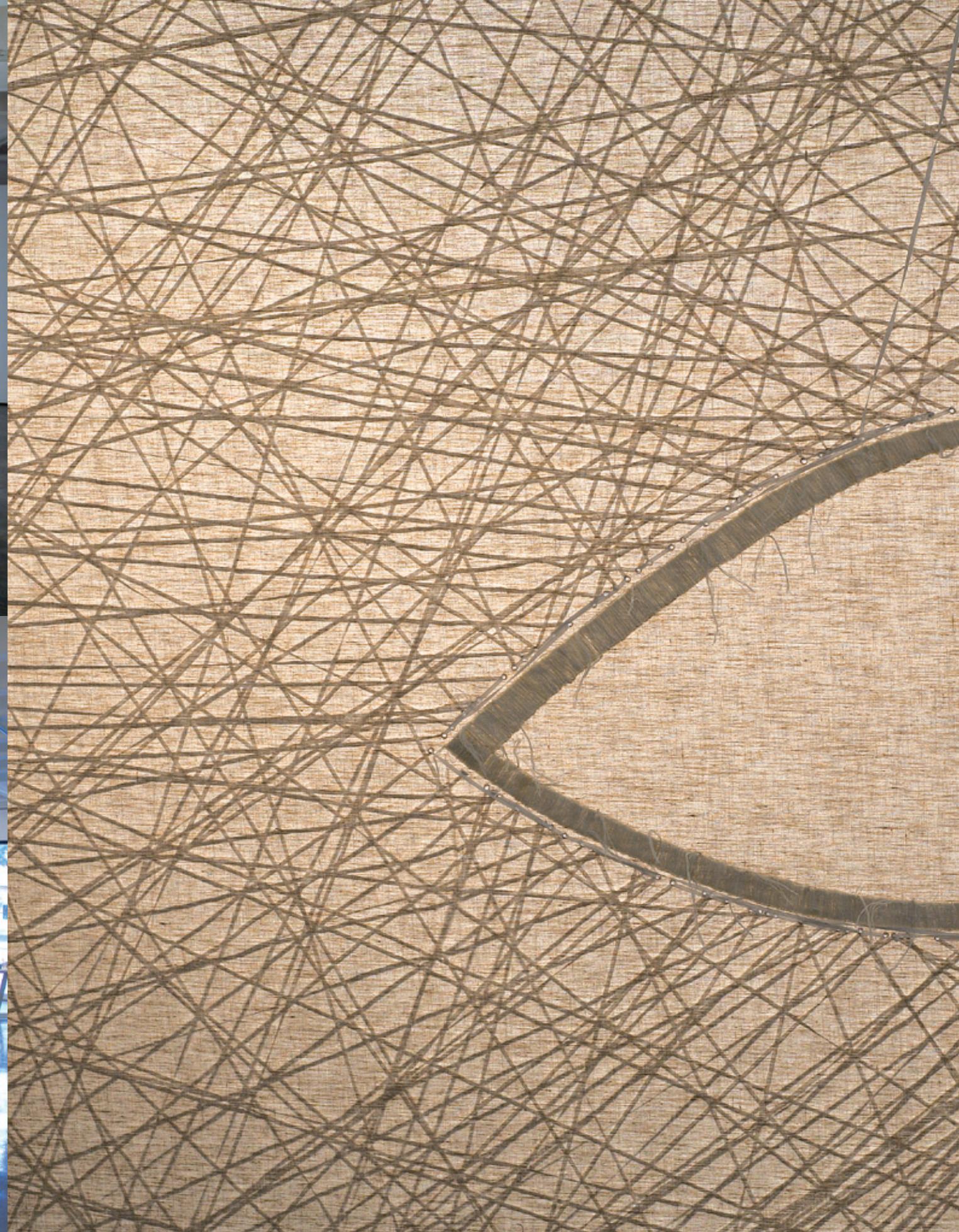
Ainslie Murray *An Architecture of Thread and Gesture* 2008  
installation views, Japan Foundation Gallery, Sydney, Australia  
Tyvek, monofilament, carbon fibre, aluminium, dimensions  
variable, approx 2.5 m x 4 m x 6 m. Photographs: Ian Hobbs



Ainslie Murray *Untitled (detail)* 2010  
installation view, Artspace, Studio 11, Sydney, Australia  
Tyvek, acrylic, dimensions variable, perforated photographs 101.5 x 67.5 cm  
Photograph: Ian Hobbs



Ainslie Murray *Interference* 2007  
installation views & detail, Tin Sheds Gallery, University of Sydney, Australia  
Belgian linen, viscose ribbon, cotton thread, linen thread, plywood  
dimensions variable. Photographs: Ian Hobbs



# Malte Wagenfeld

## Aesthetics of Air

Over the past five years I have been exploring air as a perceptual medium with which to create interior atmospheres. Exploring the perceptual qualities of air, so that they can be envisaged and fashioned, opens the possibility for a new realm of design: the design of an intangible medium. This exploration has been primarily experimental; numerous devices and techniques have been devised with which to observe and manipulate air, and the various stimuli and effects it produces. These experiments have generated their own momentum and become discrete works in themselves. The installation at RMIT Gallery highlights three of these works.

The notion of aesthetics in this context considers the qualities of the perceptual encounter and the physiological and psychological effect that this engenders. As the philosopher Gernot Böhme notes: "...aesthetics of atmosphere shifts attention from 'what' something represents, to the 'how' something is present. In this way, sensory perception as opposed to judgment is rehabilitated in aesthetics and the term – 'aesthetic' is restored to its original meaning, namely the theory of perception."

Air envelopes us in sensual effect. It can warm or chill us, it carries smell and sound; breezes stimulate the skin, and wind can literally move us; sometimes we can even taste the air. Although we cannot see air, it reveals its presence to the eye through swaying branches and windswept landscapes, and the particulates it carries - dust, smoke and fog. The latter is the focus of this installation: using fog, smoke, lasers and other devices, air is rendered visible.

Revealed is an ethereal world of transient and turbulent fluid movement. A world of complexity and mesmerizing patterns, surprisingly structured yet highly sensitive and dynamic, responding to almost indiscernible impetus; even the faint exhale of a human sigh or the radiant heat from a fingertip will make a discernible impact. Revealed is a forgotten world, one we inhabit but seldom contemplate.

— Malte Wagenfeld, March 2011

Malte Wagenfeld is an industrial designer, academic and researcher whose explorative designs and writings have been exhibited and published internationally. Recent projects have seen a shift away from the design of the material objects towards the design of interior atmospheres and experiential environments. "The Aesthetics of Air" is a phenomenological investigation into sensual and perceptual atmospheric encounters (sound, light, air, breezes, smells, humidity and temperature) and how these can lead to new possibilities for a design typology of air and atmosphere within interior spaces. Malte is senior lecturer of Industrial Design at the School of Architecture and Design, and a member of the 'Urban Interior' research group at the DRI (Design Research Institute) at RMIT University.

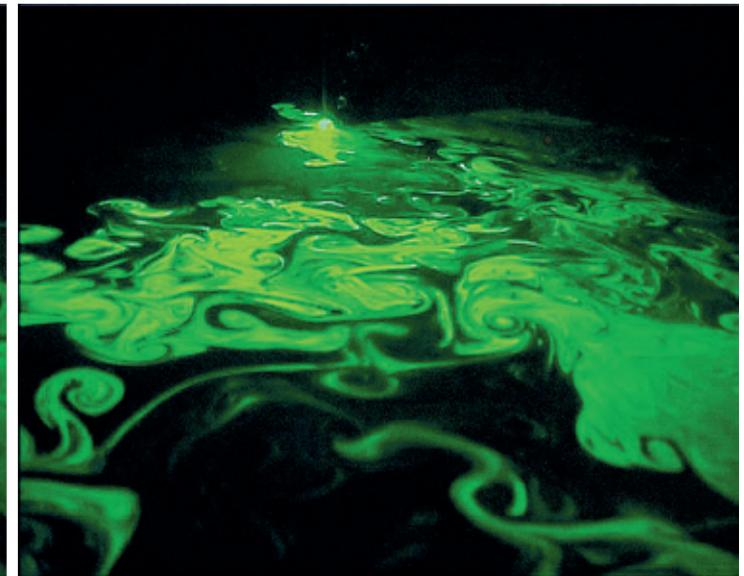
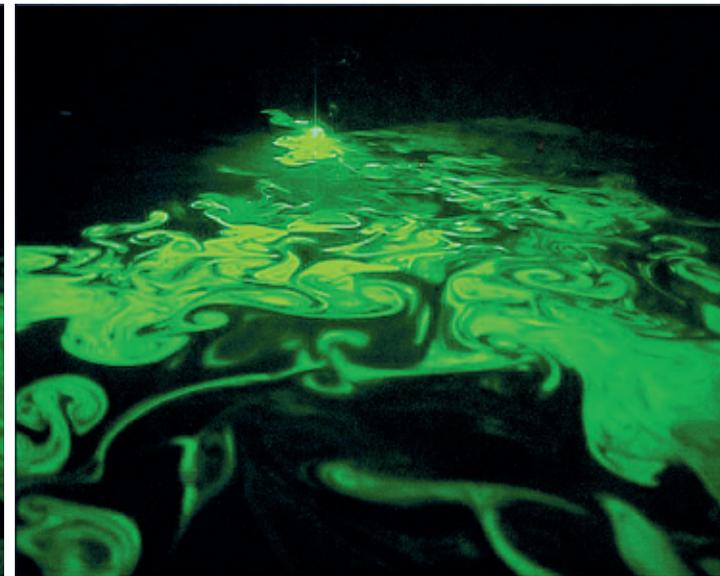
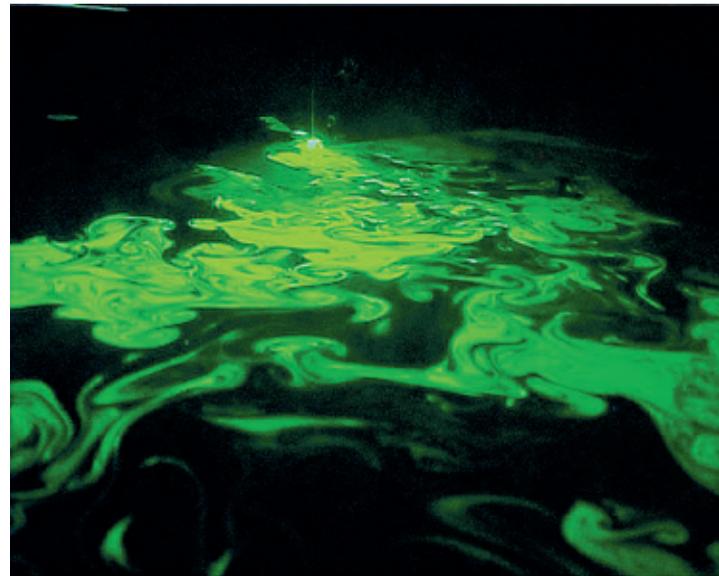


Malte Wagenfeld *Laser lights dissecting a woman's breath* 2007  
Video still: M. Wagenfeld, J. Parmington, P. Watkins, R. Ayyar



above: **Malte Wagenfeld**  
*Smoke is used to reveal a vortex of air moving through an interior space 2007*

right: **Malte Wagenfeld**  
*Slowly moving patterns of air 2007, video still*





Malte Wagenfeld  
*Body, Air & Space*, Craft Victoria 2008  
Photograph: Jake Walker

## List of Works

### Chelle Macnaughtan

*74'56"* (*Sound in the Space of Architecture*) 2005

Editioned prints, 100 x 77 cm

Courtesy of the artist and private collection

*Les Trottoirs des Paris* 2003–2007

Digital photographs, 20 x 26.6 cm

Courtesy of the artist and private collection

*Listening through the stillness* 2011

Etched aluminium plates, 210 x 420 cm

Courtesy of the artist

Photography courtesy of Günter Nitschke

### Ainslie Murray

*Dissolution and Departure* 2011

Tyvek, monofilament, lead, carbon fibre,  
dimensions variable, approx. 400 x 600 x 300 cm

Courtesy of the artist

*Utterances* 2011

Tyvek, acrylic, dimensions variable, 8 panels 67 x 203 cm  
3 perforated drawings 67 x 101 cm

Courtesy of the artist

### Malte Wagenfeld

*Atmospheric Complexity* 2011

Scanning laser, fog machine, electronics, mixed media,  
dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

*Atmospheric Structures* 2011

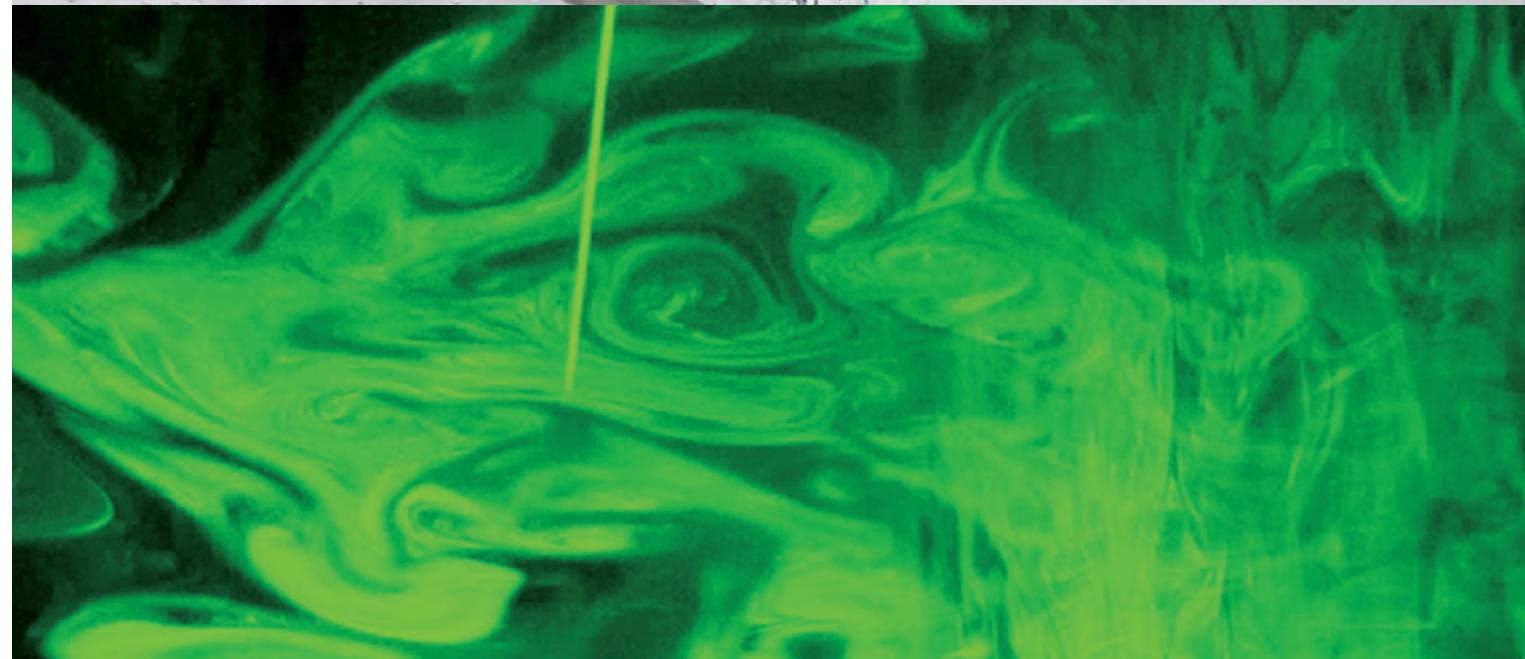
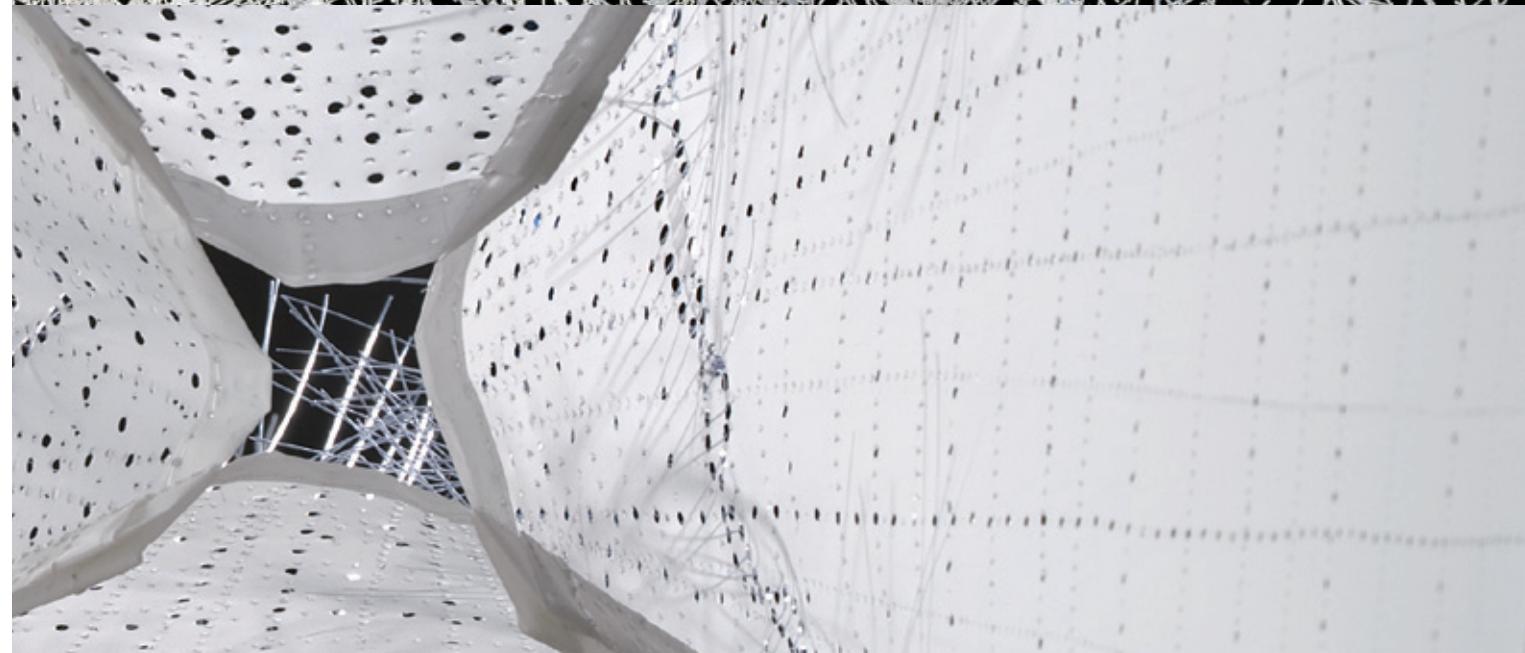
Pneumatic actuator, fog machine, electronics, acrylic pipe,  
aluminum and mixed media, dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist

*Atmospheric Sensitivity* 2011

Piezoelectric ultrasonic transducers, electronics, plastic  
and mixed media, dimensions variable

Courtesy of the artist



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Spatial Listening

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Intangible Architecture

**Malte Wagenfeld**  
Aesthetics of Air

Curator: Suzanne Davies

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14 April – 28 May 2011

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**Chelle Macnaughtan**

Plate No. III (details) from a special sized collection of 74'56" (*Space in the Sound of Architecture*) 2006, zinc etching plate, 20 x 20 cm. Made for exhibition at the *Architecture, Music, Acoustics Conference*, Ryerson University, Toronto, Canada  
Collection of the artist

**Ainslie Murray**

*Footfall* (details) 2007, approx 50 x 50 cm  
Mylar, monofilament, cotton, timber  
Banff Centre, Canada  
Photograph: Banff Centre

**Malte Wagenfeld**

*Slowly moving patterns of air* (details) 2007  
Video still: Malte Wagenfeld

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Installation Manager: Peter Wilson

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