

{ urban meadow }

by BREAD

{ overview }

Urban Meadow is an opportunity for participants to explore a space using digital media to turn the environment into an interactive soundscape.

While working on *Tide* with Luke, we spent a lot of time installing the work over nights in a gallery next to a hot house. Throughout the evening we would hear the sound of crickets chirping. Eventually we decided to track them down but found none. When we asked gallery staff about this, we found out that none existed, the sound was simply a recording. I was struck by how curious this had made us and how it had prompted us to explore.

I revisited this thought recently on holiday in Greece. The evenings were filled with the sound of cicadas. Once again I was prompted to explore (and once again found none – although I'm sure that they were real that time!). Sitting on our balcony listening to them gave me a real sense of my environment and the space that I was in.

It occurs to me that if I insert objects that make percussive sounds into an environment, passers by will take time to stop and notice and explore their surroundings.

David Boultonbee – Jan 2010

{ cicada development }

We will develop a simple mechanical cicada. The cicada will contain a motor which will make a striker vibrate and allow it to 'play' a surface it's placed against. Different surfaces will create different sounds so placing a number of cicadas will create a soundscape that uniquely reflects the space they're in.

The cicadas will have sensors to enable them to detect aspects such as light, temperature and noise. A control unit will switch the motor on and off according to what the sensors pick up so the cicada, and therefore soundscape, will change with and respond to its environment.

We will use simple and open source technologies to provide opportunities for participation from a variety of groups.

The cicada will be controlled using the open source Arduino platform popular with makers and artists globally. We will build a website and publish the code used to control the cicada, along with plans on how it is built. This can then be promoted and contributions to further development sought from communities locally, within Manchester and beyond.

{ location and installation }

The piece is suitable for installation both indoors and outdoors – from arts cafes to community centres, leafy parks to busy shopping arcades.

Ample opportunities are offered to engage local communities by exploring the spaces with them, using the cicadas before placing them for a final piece.

{ contact }

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