

City of Miami Beach SoundScape Park  
Art in Public Places Recommendation  
Design Review Board Presentation  
October 3, 2017



# BILL FONTANA BIOGRAPHY

One of the world's leading sound artists, Bill Fontana has installed site-specific public art works at iconic locations in many of the world's great cities and sites, including the Golden Gate bridge in San Francisco, the Arc de Triomphe in Paris, Pritzker Pavilion in Millennium Park, Chicago, and the Millennium Bridge in London. In a body of work spanning 45 years Fontana has unearthed the hidden music that surrounds us every day, magnifying it and drawing our attention to it in striking ways.



# BACKGROUND

- Spatialization of sound important compositional element in his sound sculptures.
- Since mid 70's began making real time 8 channel recordings and live sound sculptures.
- Sound sculptures mapped sonic and spatial complexities of environmental sound phenomena.
- Recent projects combined practice with use of multi-channel control systems like Meyer Sound Dmitri system to translate sculptural properties of sound into architectural spaces.
- Soundscapes use Meyer Dmitri system as musical instrument to program and spatially choreograph large scale sound sculptures that interact with the unique qualities of these spaces.
- Recent examples:
  - "Soaring Echoes," Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park, Chicago, USA (2012)
  - "Sonic Mappings," MAXXI Contemporary Art Museum, Rome, IT (2014)
  - "Shadow Soundings," MATT, New Contemporary Art Museum, Lisbon, PT (Oct. 2017)

# HISTORY

The seven project descriptions that follow were realized between 1976 and 2014, and were key points in the development of Fontana's career as an audio artist .

## “Kirribilli Wharf”, Sydney, AUS, 1976

- Earliest example of a multi-channel sound sculpture.
- Goal was to record what Australia sounded like.
- Real time sound map of wave patterns beneath a floating structure in Sydney Harbor.
- Eight microphones were placed in different positions and picked up the movements of resonant waves below the structure.
- Work was first real time 8 channel recording/sound sculpture.
- Work been exhibited in museums and exhibitions all over the world, including the Whitney Museum of American Art, New York City.
- Permanent collection of the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art.

## “Distant Trains”, Berlin, GR, 1984

- Sound sculpture created for abandoned ruin of a famous bombed out train station, the Anhalter Bahnhof.
- Eight loudspeakers were buried in the empty field that had been the station hall.
- Real time 8 channel sound map of main train station of Cologne was acoustically rebuilt here, invoking the sonic memory of the place.

“Landscape Sounding”, Vienna, AU, 1990

This sound sculpture was created for the large public plaza situated between two parallel museums, the Museum of Art History and the Museum of Natural History. A live network of 16 microphones and several hydrophones were placed in an ancient Danube wetland in Eastern Austria and transmitted live sound to Vienna where it was spatialized by a matrix mixing system into a 72 channel work.





## “Sound Island”, Paris, FR, 1994

“Sound Island“ was commissioned by the French Ministry of Culture to commemorate the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of D-Day. A network of live microphones and hydrophones were installed on the Normandy coast. They were connected to a digital network and transmitted live sound to a loudspeaker system on the four facades of the Arc de Triomphe. The sound of sea wrapped the monument as a form of natural white noise that nearly silenced the audible perception of traffic around one of the busiest traffic points in Paris.





“Harmonic Bridge”, Tate Modern, London, UK, 2006

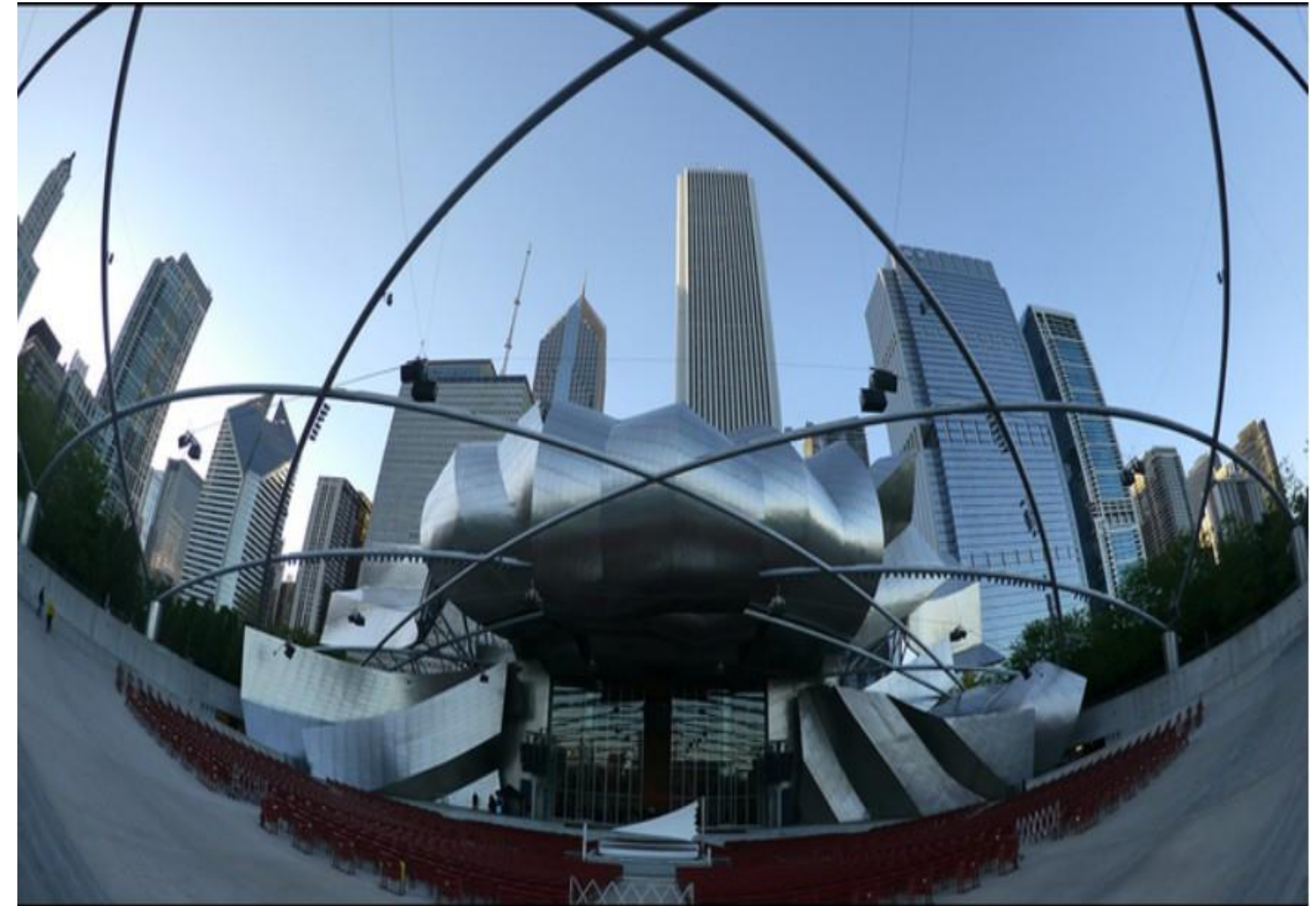
This site-specific sound sculpture was created for the Turbine Hall of Tate Modern. It was a real-time artwork with a network of vibration sensors installed on the Millennium Bridge, designed by Sir Norman Foster, revealing its hidden sound which was transmitted to the Turbine Hall.





## “Soaring Echoes”, Pritzker Pavilion, Millennium Park, Chicago, USA, 2012

“Soaring Echoes” is a site specific sound sculpture created for the multi-channel loudspeaker system permanently installed in the Pritzker Pavilion and Trellis over the Great Lawn of Millennium Park, by Frank Gehry. This sound sculpture creates a myriad of spatial sonic clusters that are moving, flying and floating through the air below and around the Trellis. Its presence is a transparent, kinetic and evocative overlay of sounds that interact with the physical scale of the Pavilion, the Trellis and the urban context of Millennium Park. The compositional mixes created for “Soaring Echoes” use field recordings made from various natural, urban, marine and historical environments of Chicago and its surroundings. The sound mix playing with this slide is a diffusion mix based on song bird recordings in the Hackmatack National Wildlife Refuge, an hours drive NW of Chicago.



## “Sonic Mappings”, MAXXI, National Museum Contemporary Art, Rome, IT, 2014

“Sonic Mappings” is a permanent sound sculpture installed in the entrance hall of MAXXI, National Museum of Contemporary Art in Rome by Zaha Hadid. This museum is not in the historic center of Rome, and he was asked to realize a project that created a sonic connection. Since the flowing shapes of the architecture are suggestive of flowing water, this sound sculpture maps a 2000-year-old Roman Aqueduct, the Acqua Vergine. A 48 channel Meyer loudspeaker system is installed in MAXXI, translating the flowing sounds into the architectural shapes of the museum. A Meyer Dmitri system was used to program and tune this installation.





# ARTIST STATEMENT - “SONIC DREAMSCAPES” - A PROPOSAL

To create a unique musical vocabulary for "Sonic Dreamscapes" will involve conducting intensive field research about important environmental, social and cultural sounds of Miami Beach and South Florida, and to plan a series of field recording visits. These recordings will form the sonic language of this artwork.

My approach to recording sound is holistic. I will use a combination of microphone arrays, accelerometers (vibration sensors that reveal the hidden sounds in structures and materials) and hydrophones.

Parallel to recording sounds, I will also record moving images. These videos will be of an abstract nature and will explore the idea of an image that a sound makes and the sound that an image makes which I call Acoustic Visions.

As I have often taught field recording seminars at art schools and universities around the world, I would be very interested to involve any of the New World Symphony Fellows in my field research and recordings.

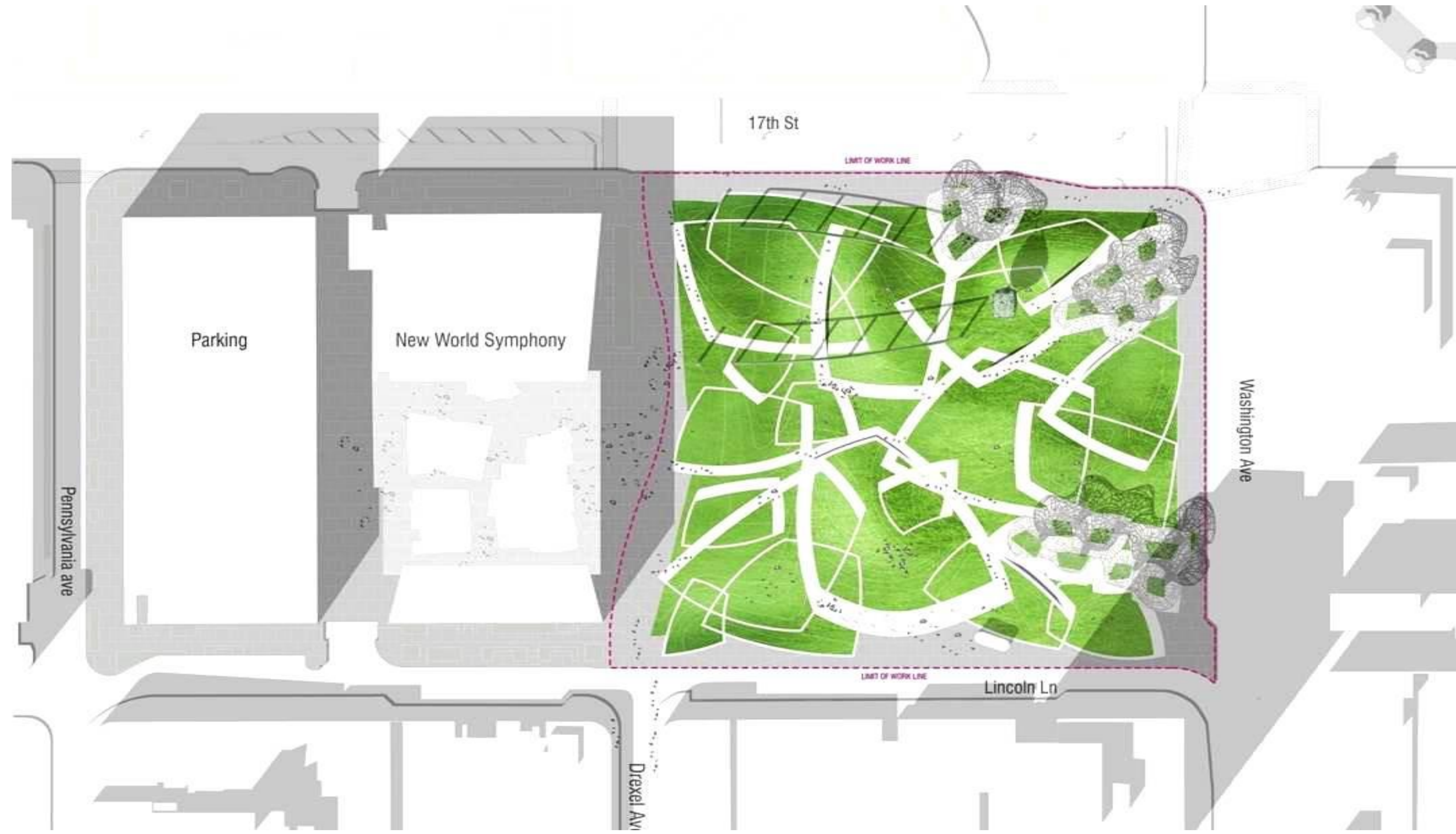
I propose the creation of a hybrid sound and video projection artwork designed to run through the course of a day and evening in SoundScape Park. I will also create two additional types of work that will have more of an event quality about them. One would be a series of multi-channel sound mixes that can be played at lunch time or before NWS concerts. The other would be a series of projection works that will have abstract visual and audio content inspired by the rich environments of Miami Beach and South Florida.

All the sound mixes in each of these versions will make full use of the 72-channel loudspeaker system to realize a spatially articulated sonic choreography.

The all-day media artwork will begin in the morning with a mix that has silent gaps of varying lengths between the individually appearing and disappearing spatial sound occurrences that answer each other from different points in the spatial loudspeaker matrix. By the afternoon, it will become a series of continuous sound mixes of varying durations with gaps of silence between each mix episode. These will have an acoustically transparent quality that will not overwhelm the park. As day turns into evening, environmentally inspired abstract videos will emerge on the video wall allowing visitors to experience a mirage of floating sounds and meditative images. Later in the evening, the spatial sound composition gradually passes away and a silent abstract video remains.

The 72 channel loudspeaker system in Soundscape Park is an ideal platform in which to create a sound sculpture that has magical spatial presence.

# SITE PLAN SOUNDSCAPE PARK





“Acoustical Visions of the River Alde Marshes”, Aldeburgh Festival, UK, 2017

This media artwork was created for the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Aldeburgh Festival, one of the most famous contemporary music festivals in the United Kingdom. The location of the festival is in a nature reserve 2 hours NE of London on the North Sea coast. This is an immersive sound with abstract moving images artwork and stylistic example of a hybrid sound and video installation that could be shown in SoundScape Park.





“Surface Reflections” was created as a study for a future project about the Mur River, Austria for the Kunsthaus Graz Contemporary Art Museum, Vienna, Austria, and is another example of the kind of hybrid audio and video work that could be shown in SoundScape Park.

