

## Eleanor King - No Signal

Although she was educated as a sculptor at NSCAD, I am not sure Eleanor King considers herself one now ten years later. More 'ephemeral' media such as audio especially when utilized with the radio have been central to her practice as if she were turning her back on the college's infatuation with traditional object making and the processes of chipping away at stone. Whether consciously or not, she has looked to resuscitating the college's historic engagement with conceptual aesthetics practices that have not always been easily pleasing to the eye. Or the ear. Or, for that matter, the mind.

And, as an aside, given the NSCAD/Halifax milieu post-1985, Eleanor's aesthetic directions and decisions have likely been inflected by gender issues if not by outright feminist angst.

But what can be more conceptual than radio? It is after all the transmission of signals through free space by modulation of electromagnetic waves with frequencies below those of visible light (<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Radio>). You can't see the art! And, having come of age in 1920 when the first signals were broadcast to public audiences, radio is intimately allied with classic modernism which most of us figure is now dead. Supporting that supposition, the radios and other equipment Eleanor uses in her installations are 'junk,' apparatus discarded with the relentlessness of 'the state of the art' that continuously replaces what was. The only signals they now transmit are those of their own making and meaningless in themselves – noise rather than sound – perhaps a metaphor for the contemporary state of modernist abstraction?

Looking at Eleanor's work, certainly since 2007 and her Cuppa Cups Collection project (see <http://eleanorking.com/>), it becomes apparent that traditional sculptural considerations are essential to her practice. She tends to stack things, to layer and sculpt a vertical, repetitious mass. The 'junk' isn't just a garbage heap but a highly organized sculpture at times not unlike the master modernist carver Constantin Brancusi's *The Column of the Infinite* (*Coloana infinitului*) (1938).

This is but a small suggestion as to the complexity of Eleanor's critique of everything that claims to be new.

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