

# Sound Installations

[Art Projects by Edwin van der Heide, Valentina Vuksic and Herwig Weiser]

*Pneumatic Sound Field* is an open-air audio sculpture which **Edwin van der Heide** first realized in 2006 at the sonambiente festival in Berlin and is reproducing for DEAF07 in the courtyard of the Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen. It consists of a latticework with 36 + 4 valves attached – a kind of breathing architecture. *Pneumatic Sound Field* is based on the principle that sound consists of pressure differences moving through the air, which has its own atmospheric pressure. In the sculpture, air pressure creates sound

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Edwin van der Heide, *Pneumatic Sound Field* (2006)



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and wind: the valves modulate the air pressure and cause fluctuations in it. *Pneumatic Sound Field's* appeal lies in its execution: sound and wind, coming from different directions at varying intensities and speeds, pass through the 36 + 4 valves on the lattice, creating a complex pattern of sounds – comparable, in a sense, to the waves in *Ondulation*. The viewer can walk back and forth, looking for the best or most surprising place. In navigating the piece, the viewer forms his or her own composition, which will never be the same twice – however many times the same route is followed.

**Valentina Vuksic's** *Harddisko* – or *Noise & Disturbance Amplifier System for Harddisks* – looks like a classic sound sculpture. Sixteen hard disks with their housing removed sit atop small pedestals. When turned on, they perform an initialization procedure: the reading head rhythmically and rapidly checks the hard disk as it spins at high speed. These hard disks are out of order, so that each of them, in its own way, sticks, repeats the procedure, and makes a characteristic ticking sound (which can leave no one who has ever endured a sudden disk crash completely unmoved). Because the hard disks do their job in full view, the parallel with obsolete turntable technology also becomes patently clear. What we hear is an impressively chaotic composition. The sound is amplified, but since each disk is connected to its

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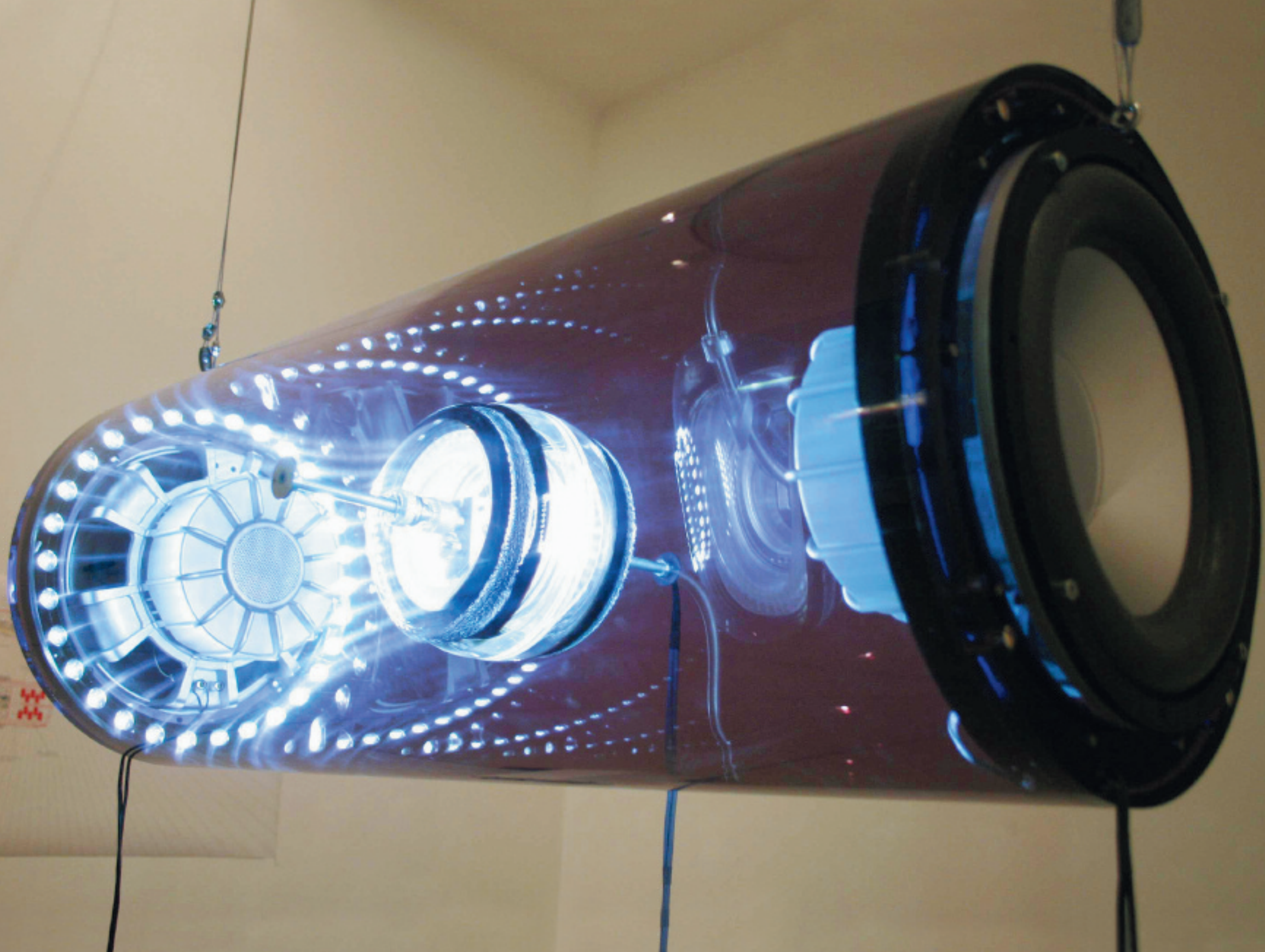
Valentina Vuksic, *Harddisko* (2004)

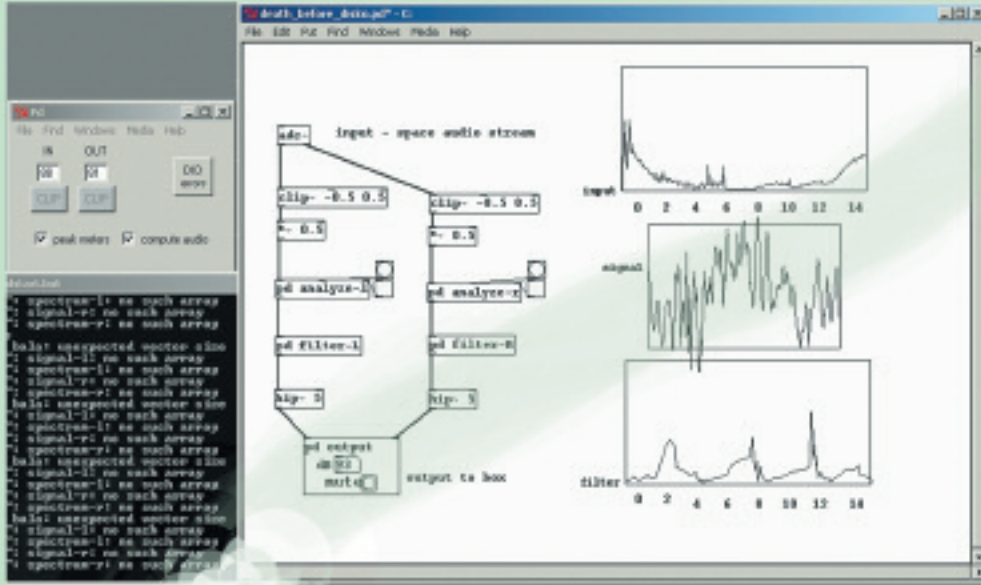
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own circuit which switches on and off according to a schedule set by Vuksic, there is variation and layeredness. Sometimes the disks seem to react to each other or carry on a conversation; at other times, they all chatter at once. *Harddisko* is also a game played with (malfunctioning) contemporary technology, a literal breaking of the black box of technology. Broken things are transformed into a sublime sound sculpture (watch the hard disks spin awkwardly and powerlessly ...).

The title of *Death before Disko*, a sculpture by Herwig Weiser, is a reference to the classic techno record by Christian Morgenstern. Like the hard drives in *Harddisko*, *Death before Disko* seeks to show us the innards of technology. Weiser says he is resisting the trend in consumer electronics whereby complex technology is becoming more and more cleverly shrouded in immaculate design: white plastic boxes with one button, user surfaces that no longer tell you anything about what is going on underneath. The iPod is the symbol of this superficial consumer relationship to technology. Weiser wants to show us the beauty and complexity of the raw components: the material through which the information flows. Using the plastics, metals, magnets,







conductors and semiconductors that make up the backbones of our communication networks, Weiser has made a highly aesthetic sculpture. *Death before Disko* looks very "techno"; it celebrates the aesthetic of the airplane engine rather than that of the iPod. Just as in *Ondulation* and *Roots* (see p. 44), a conversion of data takes place. *Death before Disko* transforms live input of data from the universe, collected over the Internet, into sound and image. The sculpture thus also becomes an audio piece that surrounds the viewer in a world of sound which represents outer space.

Arie Altena

