

# DISEMBODIED VOICES

VISUAL DOCUMENTATION + SKETCHES

catriona shaw



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pages 2 - 11 \_(OFF VOICES - as included as interspersed sheets in the printed written research)

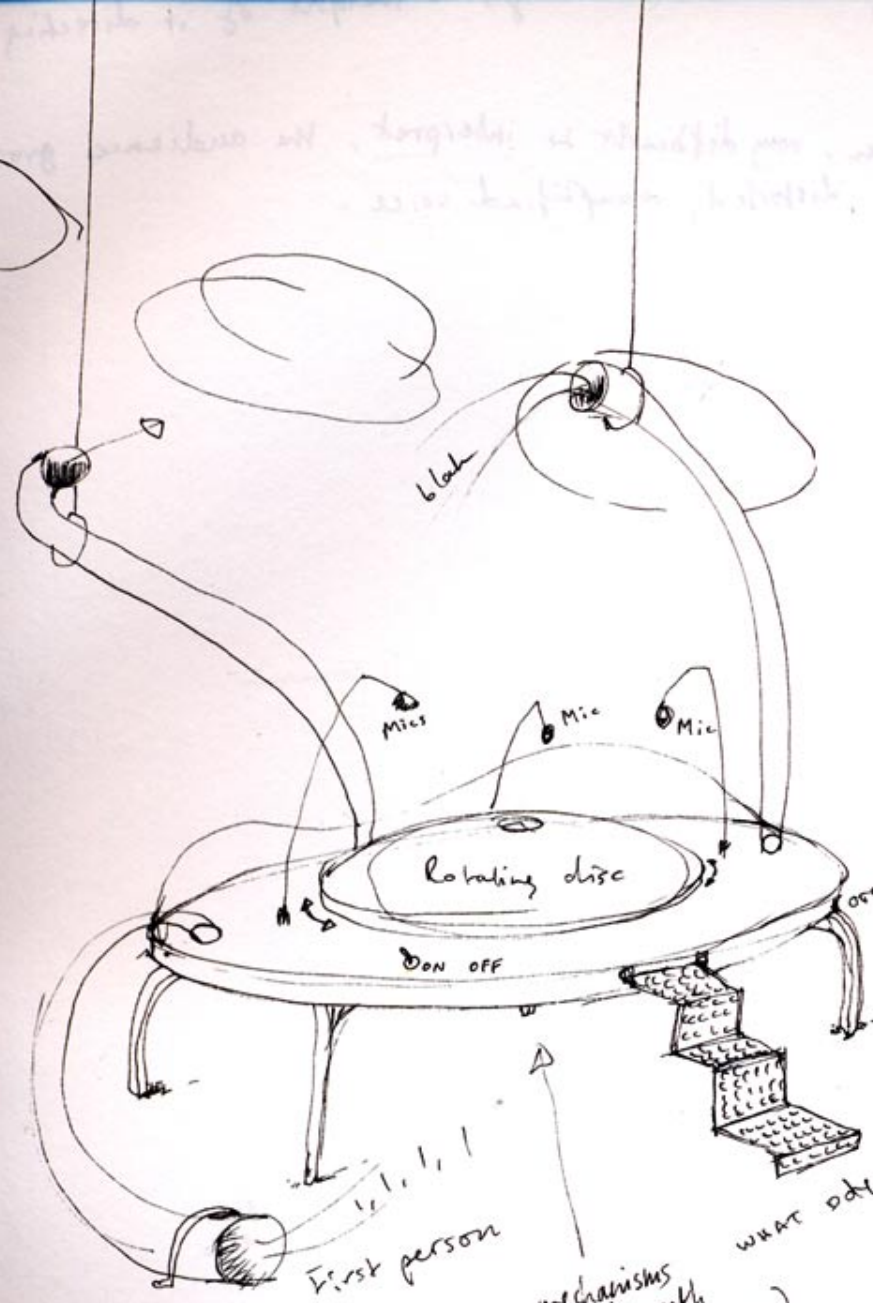
pages 2 - 11 \_(ILLUSTRATIONS - photographs of pop-up proposal, sketches for table, pop-up sketches for tables for Yvonne and Tina)

pages 12 - 14 \_(INTERVIEW WITH MYSELF - as is)

*I am kind of annoyed, during my research I stumble upon several instances, contemporary ones, of thematic exhibitions concerning „the voice“, I wonder to myself, why is the world so gimmicky, what am I doing as part of this, what is the purpose of participation. At the dinner table I speak in a whine about bandwagons, a cliché. Fred tells me that trains have destinations that I am currently travelling. I am still to reach that the place I am going to. But I have to stay precise.*



*Kara from New York is staying here with her brother Julian, I consider asking her about Hey Hey Glossolia. After seeing that one of my favourite vocalists, Ian Svenonious, formerly of the Make-Up, had participated in some kind of performance depicting paranormal voices or at least the possessed voice of Linda Blair in Exorcist I wonder if it was any good. It reminded me of a 'lecture' performance I saw recently in Berlin by a Swedish artist, Eric someone... em... Buenger, held at 'West Germany' club, it was pretty good except his 'technology'fucked up, the ipod to iTunes extension didn't function properly and his disembodied voice suddenly sounded over his normal voice.*



Disc, people are their own record player  
 Loud n' live

Not a pedagogical instrument?  
 WHAT DO YOU HAVE TO SAY  
 a scientific instrument to record white has

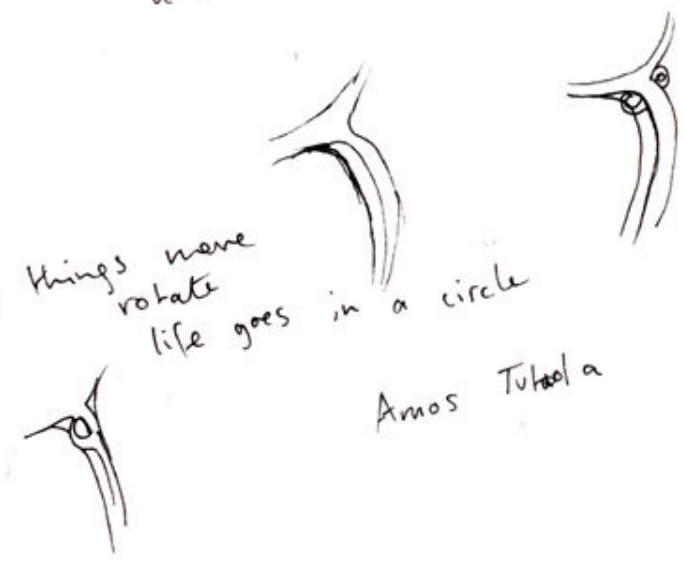
**MONOLOGUE BLOCK**

amplified and not amplified ...

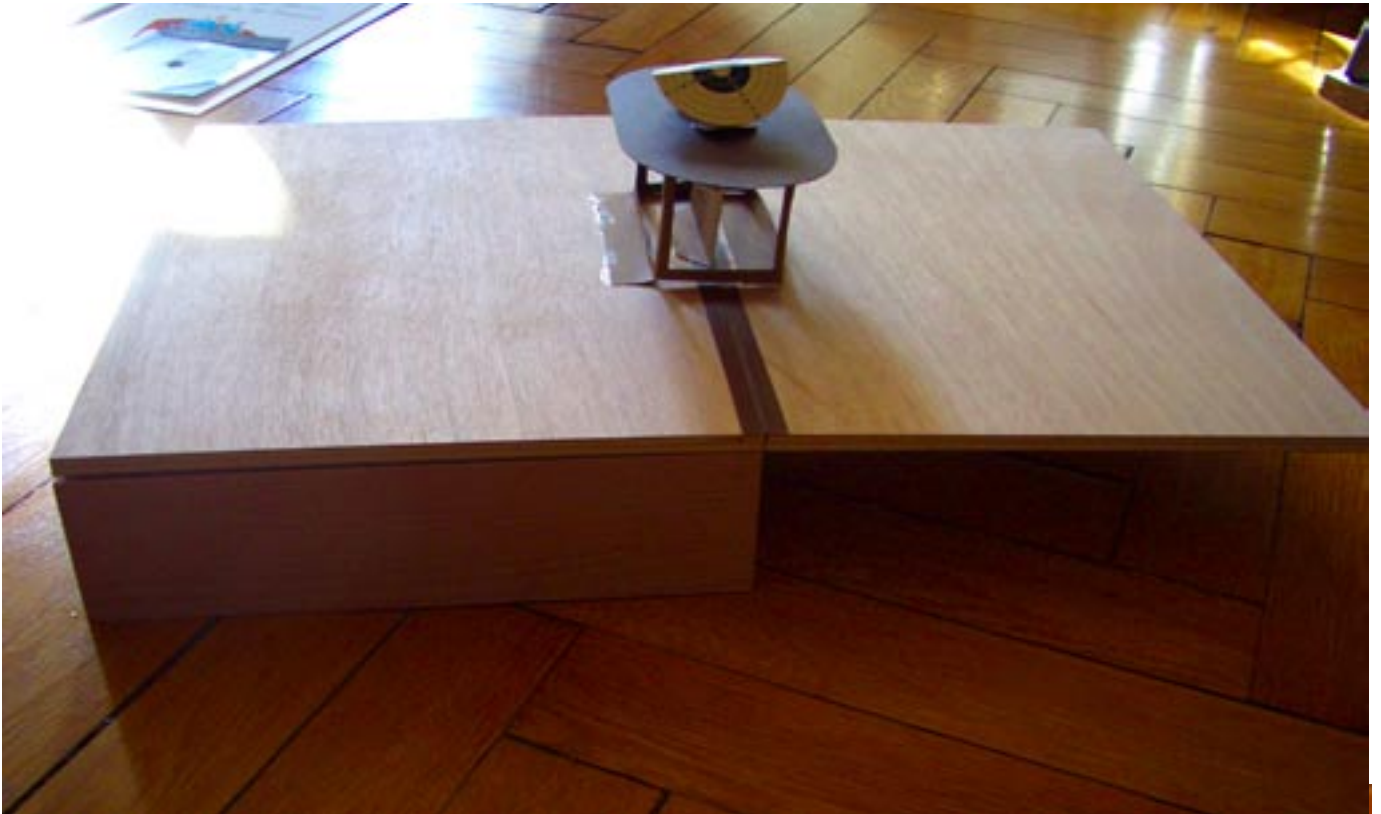
things move rotate  
 life goes in a circle

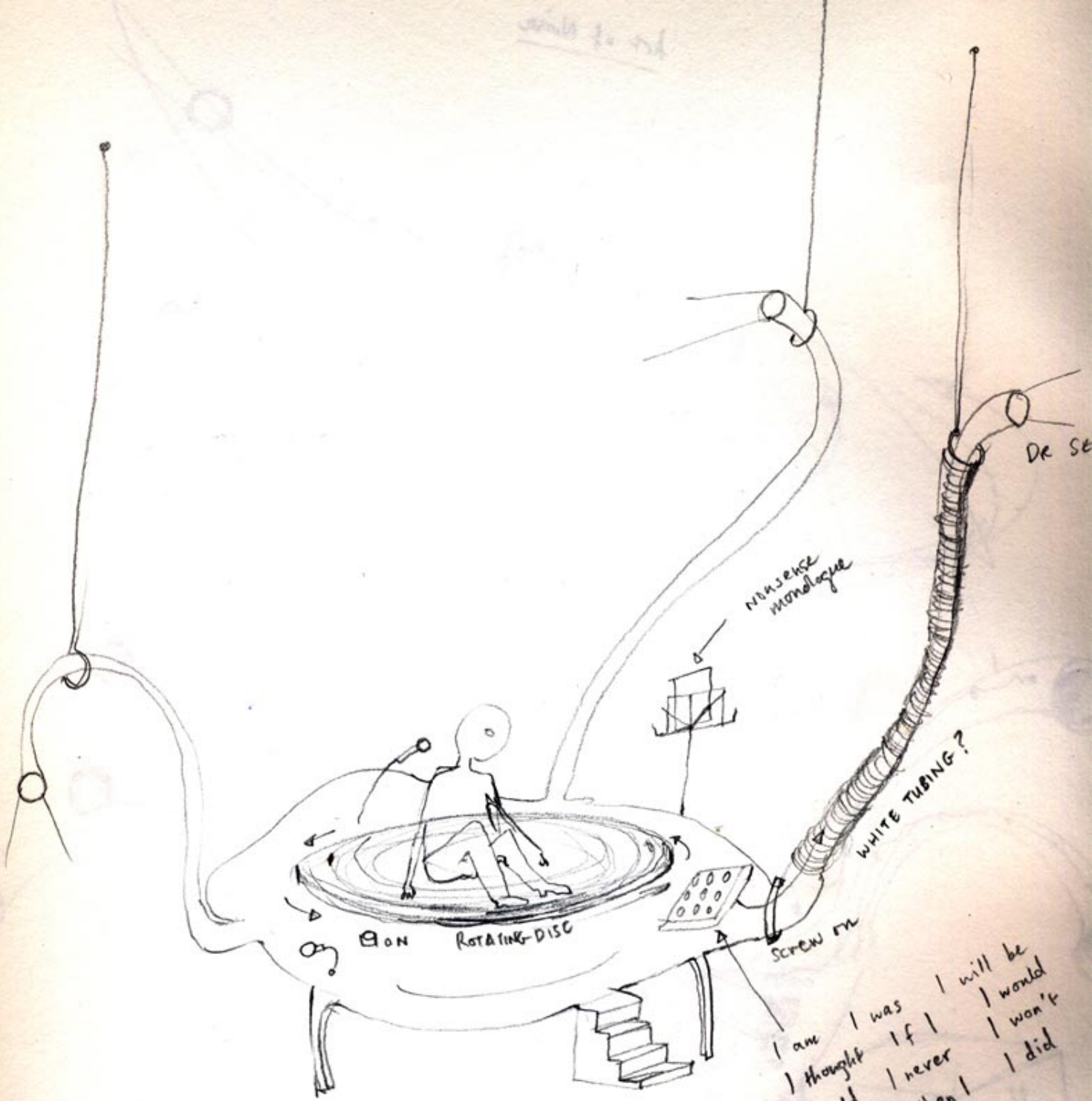
Amos Tutuola

Legs have grasshopper



*Jean-Luc and Arnaud performed on Friday night at Lovelite just before Fred. After that Jean-Luc split up the band as he had experienced a hideous time on stage, apparently due to the sound. This was mainly caused by the XLR cable falling off the microphone just as he started to sing, resulting in a silent and unintentional mime for the audience. This kind of thing has happened to me countless times, its not really something I would quit a band over. I think about that as a strategy for a performance. Wireless mics would ruin that effect, if the battery ran out it would be hard to create a similar gesture out of changing a battery than replugging a cable end.*

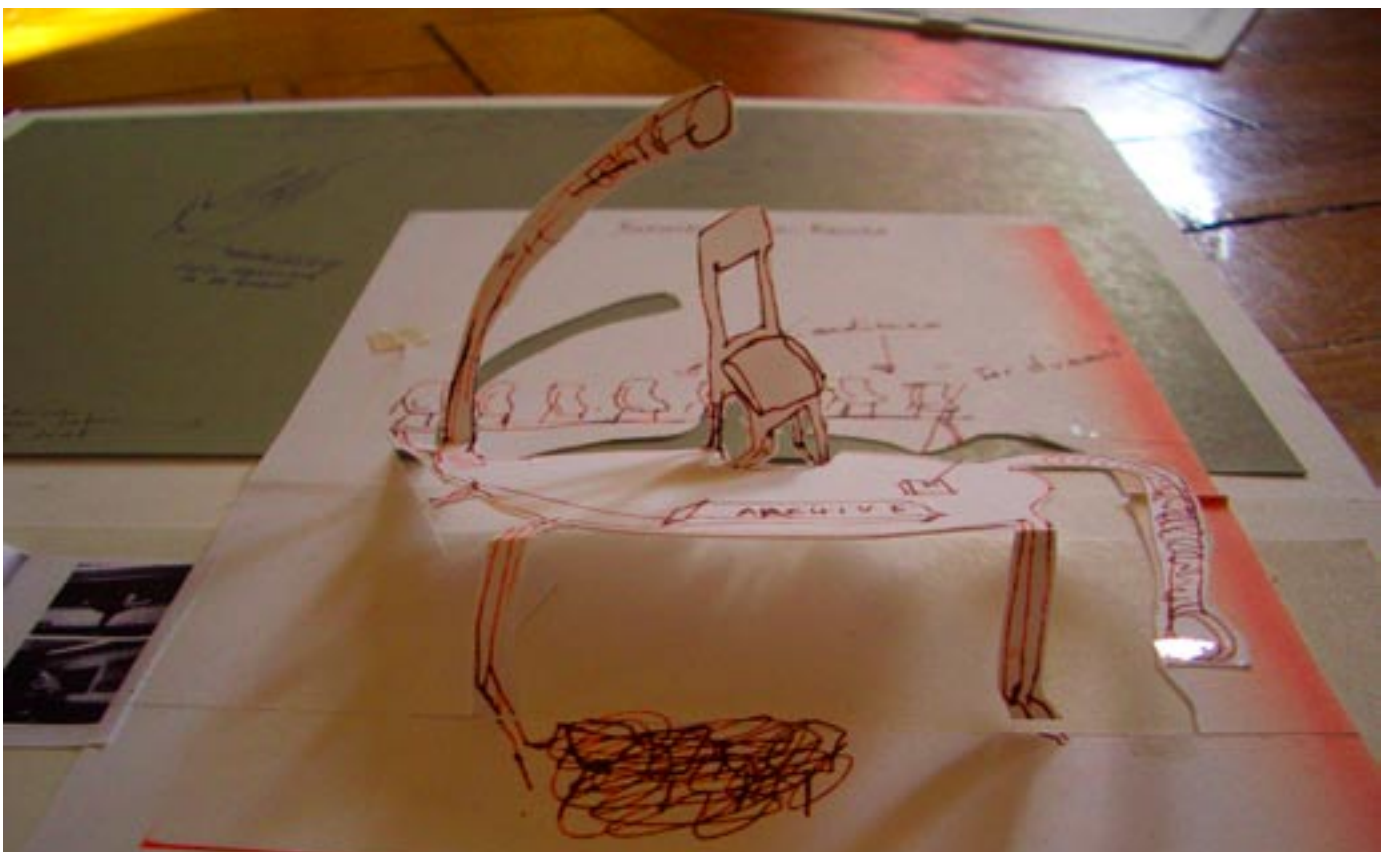




I am I was I will be  
 I thought If I I would  
 I could I never I won't  
 I can't When I I did

Nonsensical Furniture

*My language skills are bad, however: I remember reading recently, McLuhan I think it was, that language is only alive when spoken, warts and all, so to speak. The vernacular tongue.*



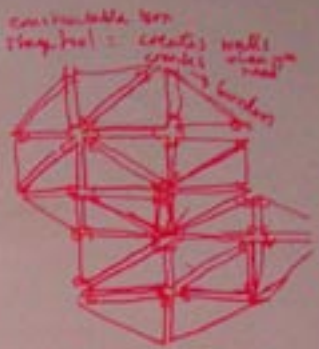
Is there such a thing as typewriter babble? I wonder as I type this, as I think about train-of-thought processes resulting in something called art. I think about my piece about the earthworm, the gustav metzger song, more like a drawing than a song really. A doodle song, something warbled and transcribed as I orally verbalise my nonsense thoughts, transposing them onto the screen via silicon-society trained typing fingers. Words per minute, worse per minute.

working with?

▷ someone sings for me.

How about Tina, Yvonne, Felicity, vocal, dancer, producers. **STAT!**

Am I asking of it if impro and / doing drawings?



constructable box  
 thing that = creates walls  
 creates  
 creates  
 creates

practical (polyhedron or something similar)

→ **DIVISION** get away from the bloody audience!!

Vocal Furniture for Tina



delivered content  
 distanced from reality  
 unpretentious little  
 she's got the music when  
 I have a moment  
 the role is somewhere  
 lowest for my voice  
 why won't people just  
 possibility she from  
 like being at

the cups of you and then  
 she's in L. Kelly  
 because, then, a then  
 (1940s)

under  
 musical  
 calling

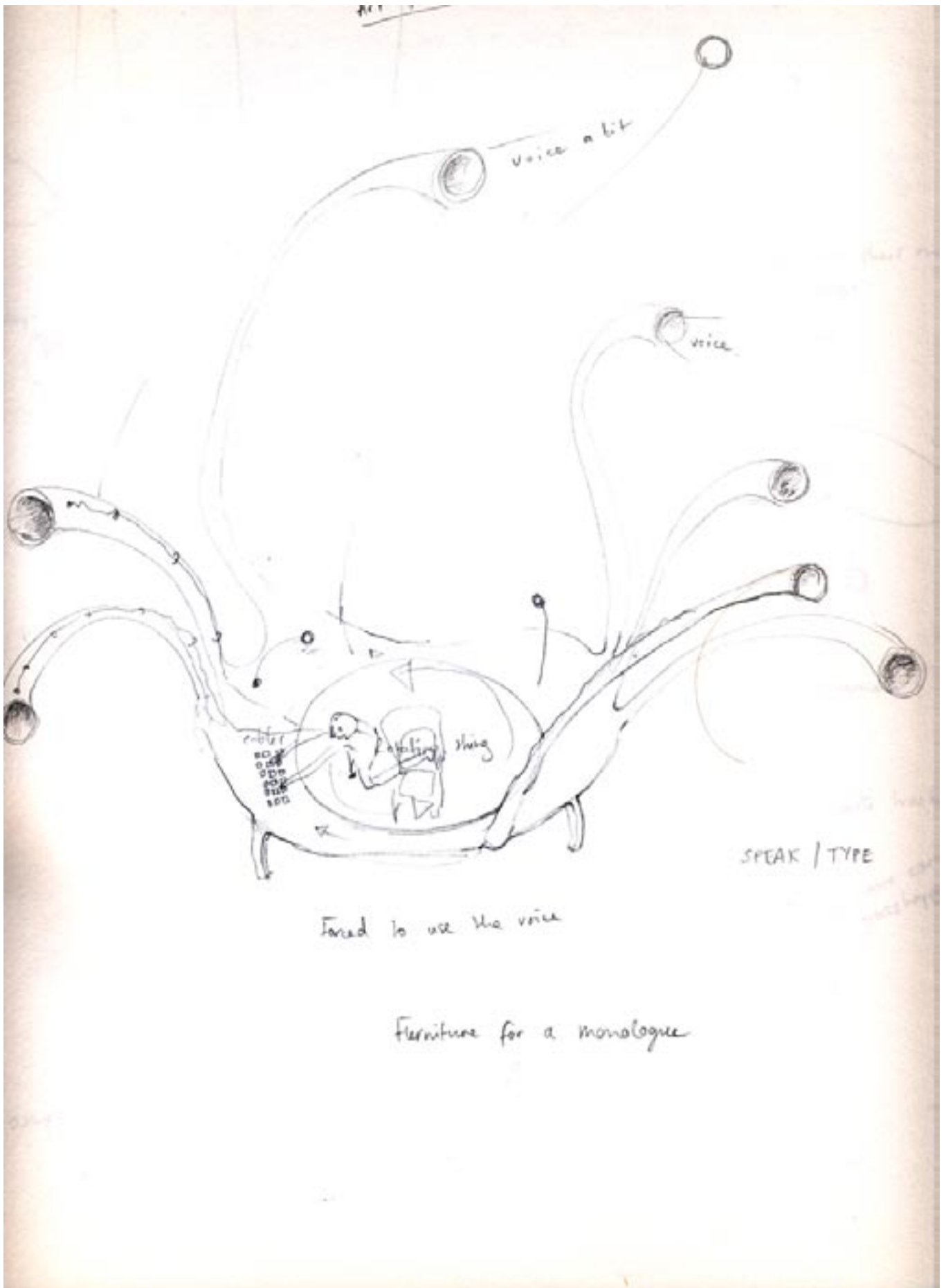
*Yvonne struggles with her computer. Normal stuff for a seventy year old, although Rowan says her Grandmother knows how to delete her history of visited sites on Netscape. My mother types me mails containing phonetic junk phrases, she has invented her own cool-talk, her own 'lol'. She's cooler than me. She also experienced the sixties.*



*A man walks past talking into his shirt; he doesn't look like a crazy person so why is he talking to his shirt. People on the bus answer voices hidden in plastic in unison, 'yeah' they say and then 'no' and then 'aye'. My boss addresses us as individuals but forgets to tag on our names to signify whom he is talking to, leaving us guessing. Fred breathes in while he is sleeping and at the same time manages to expel an uttered 'ah', regularly, rhythmically. Erol can beatbox a drumbeat and melody simultaneously, using only his mouth.*



*Drawing and vocal lines together, I try to imagine distinct connections between the two practices. Of recent I have been intertwining the two media, trying to merge them, trying to combine and also attempting to understand why someone specialising in drawing practice would somewhat naturally turn to music and song using the voice. Vita told me I should check out a book 'A brief history of lines'. I just ordered it.*



*A woman artist*

*“A woman who...”*, combination of text, black and white imagery and woodenly read, bland sounding narration broaching complex emotional states and relationships between men and women.

*Rainer's ouvre: instructive, instructional, gestural. I watch hand movie from 1966, knowing her suffering body is in repose on the bed, her right hand acting as an ersatz, her fingers dancing and fidgeting. I voluntarily copy her movements all the time concentrating on her, and not my own, hand. I wonder about the word 'quotidian'.*

*Yvonne's voice sounds like her lips are stuck up against the microphone. She has that squared-off, cotton wool edge to her voice, a hollow tube-like voice, masculine in quality, deep, reminds me of one of my female cousins. A projecting voice, a loud voice, voluminous. I'm not concentrating on what she is saying as such; I am lost in the little gritty areas between words, the moments where she is thinking what she is going to say next, how to make the sentence coherent and (?) intellectual. Those spittle filled sounds, a certain learned tone, unnatural to become natural. She is divorced from the moment. She is looking at or listening to herself, aware of the recording technology, aware that this is a document. Not letting go she is in control of what is being said and the tone of her voice remains slow, methodical, careful. There are no 'linking' words uttered, no stutters or slurs apart from the very occasional 'uh' when she is first introduced. Now she is listening to herself but she is looking - as she looks in her mind at her own work her voice becomes confused. As the image confronts the academia, the 'urs' and the 'ums' increase - she loses track, she switches her concentration to the film, to the sound, to the work as she was making it.*

## **Interview with myself**

*Catriona:* So you've designed a table for voices. The title is 'Table for Tina, Yvonne, Everyone else and Catriona'. Seems to be for specific voices or is this supposed to be a universally applicable piece of furniture?

*Catriona:* Yes, it's true that one could believe from the title that it's only meant for specific people - although the inclusion of 'Everyone Else' was supposed to make it more accessible. Basically I came up with the design whilst researching different vocal recordings by Tina Turner and Yvonne Rainer. And I am a vocalist myself. I thought it was about time I invent my own piece of recording and amplifying equipment

*Catriona:* Good idea, especially since us ladies sometimes have trouble controlling how our voices are projected in the first place - it seems to be a man's world out there in the music and writing business

*Catriona:* That's right, Catriona.

*Catriona:* So is this piece meant to be participatory at all?

*Catriona:* Well that's another interesting point there. I am interested in participatory art, its true and in making my audience react or respond physically to what they see - in this case they could sit on the table and recite something, sing or just mutter as they feel fit. The microphones would pick up fragments of what is being said and the making my audience react or respond physically to what they see - in this case they could sit on the rotating disc on the table and recite something, and winding tubular speakers would amplify these excerpts, creating a kind of stilted, stuttering soundtrack, creating a kind of stilted soundtrack

Its rather absurd actually - one might ask what the point of such a machine is. Surely amplification of ones voice should be relatively clean and succinct. Well I would tend to agree if we are talking about documentation here. But I wanted to explore the phenomena of the 'disembodied voice'. What I discovered from my research was that the disembodied voice is a lonely entity, a sometimes heard, sometimes unheard thing that can be shut off or turned on off or turned on at the listeners will. The table is just a poetic reflection of these points: it is functional in a playful way, but is more supposed to encourage potential participants to think about their own voices.

Its meant to aggravate awareness of how we increasingly dislocate our physical selves from our voices, be they written or spoken or sung. Therefore if we are put into a situation where we are spinning on a kind of stage-like construction or, in this case, table, we might be persuaded to speak into microphones which we can't clutch and amplified through speakers that dart off in different directions, we may again become more conscious of where our voices are going, what they are used for and our conditioning to leaving traces of voices everywhere we go, spoken and written

*Catriona:* That all seems rather profound - do you think that a participatory audience would really get all of that just by looking at your table design?

*Catriona:* To be honest not really. In fact the table design exists as my version of a structure to support all these deposited voices. But I don't expect that everyone would imagine such an object to support their own voice.

*Catriona:* In that case, do you think what function do you see your table as having?

*Catriona:* Well, *Catriona*, this table is quite personal. It partly reflects my written research process, and partly exists as an idea-in-progress. I'm interested in workshops that develop ideas for new technological structures in the physical field or that redefine pre-existing structures in fundamentally human terms. This table has a rather 'old-fashioned' aesthetic about it - it is reminiscent of a French dressing table, with its spindly legs, ornamental trim and material (polished wood). At the same time the rotating disc could make it appear like a something between a record player and a UFO, actually two 'technological' advances (in the case of the UFO a fictional one) which are now extremely dated, almost antique themselves. As I did a little research on 'aging' voices, I think this subconsciously reappeared in the aesthetics of the table design. I can't say I initially deliberately chose those antique aesthetics but that they just somehow fitted. The speakers and microphones on their long, giraffe-neck like bodies have an organic quality, as does the curved edge of the wood - I suppose this could reflect this 'human' quality or physiognomy I was searching for, to re-embodiment the voice."

*Catriona:* To return to the subject of workshop, how do you see your object fitting into a workshop scenario and with what kind of participants?

*Catriona:* Well I would see this more like an example of something that could be made. I could, for instance, imagine a workshop following on from following on from previous works I have done in the last years that examine the implications of computer interfaces and communication upon our emotions and movement. In that sense, the table would exist like a physical embodiment of something, a demonstration and an impetus for others to imagine their own furnishings for their voices.

During the workshop there could be an initial section where the subject of about disembodied voices are discussed involving a group discussion. After this there would be a practical section where techniques on how to 'disembody' the voice would be tried out: this would involve conventional techniques of writing (typing, handwriting as well as communication technology-based written voices such as SMS, Email, blogging and 'chatting'), microphones and recording technology but also look at the use of physical space, the room, visibility and perhaps even employ props to further disembody the voice (such as mirrors, props...). It would also be examined as to how physical movement further disrupts and in a sense disjoints the voice. In the final part I would encourage participants to go about designing an invention, a kind of apparatus or technology that they feel would benefit their own voice. Anyone could take part in this, although I expect it would be more attractive or beneficial to performers or people interested in vocal projection as part of their work or artistic practice. Concerning age groups, I could imagine the workshop with any age group (from around 10 upwards) but possibly not mixed groups (i.e. children with adults etc.).

*Catriona:* So are you planning on building this table then?

*Catriona:* I certainly am! As long as I can get the funding or some how fund it myself. At this stage it's only in model and sketched form. I would love to build it to full proportions - i.e. something that can hold a person, is stable. Of course, I am interested in producing it not only for workshop purposes but as an artistic object too. I suppose I see it kind of like a silent, functional monument to my own disembodied voice.

*Catriona:* And what of those participants who don't have anything to say? Those who are not used to improvising?

*Catriona:* I think improvisation would be something that we would look at in the workshop. Actually I wouldn't even expect that people only use their voices in an articulate or lingual manner, but can also shout, sigh, scream if they like. I am willing to provide examples though, am also willing to let people take their time if need be - I am not into forced participation at all.

*Catriona:* Thank you for your time

*Catriona:* Don't mention it.

This interview was conducted silently via a keyboard on the 28th of October 2009.