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Mike Blow: Subtle Objects: Pickup – an Interactive Sound Artwork

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in three directions. This means six distinct attitudes of the object can be

sensed, equating to the six sides of an invisible cube, plus any number of intermediate positions. Being the same control paradigm that is used in Wii controllers and the iPhone, among others, tilting has recently become an accepted and intuitive method of interacting with electronic equipment. The sensor was bonded into the base of the shoe using epoxy resin and a wire run to an arduino microcontroller which converts the three tilt measurements from analogue to digital signals and transmits them over USB to a Mac mini. A MAX/MSP patch running on the Mac receives the information from the shoe and uses it to control the volumes of the 6 sound files which continually loop.

The Sound File

After some experimentation the sounds chosen for this piece all referred to the shoe's origins, manufacture or status as a desirable consumer object. They were: a sewing machine, some chinese speech, a cow mooing, a spoken description of the rubber tapping process over a rainforest ambience, the

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and creating essentially the same product in multiple versions or colours), and echoes Jeff Koons' comment in relation to commodity-based work:

'...through this procession of contingencies, discourses are being pulled together into the object itself, promoting an awareness of the fact that all meanings are contingent upon some other meaning, where meanings are appropriated for their relationship to external forces, the larger social schema in which they're involved.' (Koons 1986, cited in Harrison and Wood 2003, pp. 1051-1054)

Like the re-contextualisation of Duchamp's *readymades* (Duchamp 1917, after Harrison and Wood 2003, p. 252), presenting the shoe in this way strips away associations of its practical use, perhaps reminds us of its presentation in a shop display, and reinforces the idea of an object which is coveted and revered as a signifier of personal status.

In e a c i o n

As previously mentioned *Pickup* is interactive, a word which has been used in many ways in an art context, from describing the cognitive processes involved in understanding a static piece, to the navigation of a website or the interpersonal communication between

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