

# PHOTO, MEDIA AND DIGITAL ART

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## PREFIX.

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## SONOROUS WALL INVITES EYE AND EAR AT PREFIX

Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art presents *Sound Barrier*, a new work by Norwegian artist **Maia Urstad**. Constructed from one hundred and thirty CD players, cassette players and radios assembled as a sonorous wall, *Sound Barrier* emits an eclectic mix of found signals treated electronically. *Sound Barrier* is curated by **Rhonda Corvese** and will be on view at Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art from **June 17 to July 29, 2006**.

The physical construction of *Sound Barrier* bears a loose kinship with the ancient technique of building walls by placement of stone. In Urstad's case, the building blocks are consumer-level audio devices stacked atop one another. The famous "Echo Wall" at the Temple of Heaven in Beijing is an example of a sonorous wall built by stone-laying. In that particular case, the attraction of the site is the wall's ability to return the sound of an individual speaker whispering from the centre of the altar. While the magic of the "Echo Wall" is that it holds secret the information of the speaker, a sort of private audio mirror, Urstad's own sound wall seeks to capture a set of sounds which the artist believes "will be obsolete and forgotten sooner than we might expect." Curator **Rhonda Corvese** describes this category of signals as: "Electronically treated sounds emitted from a multitude of locations and extracted from radio-buzz, static interference, morse code and fragments of speech from FM and satellite radio transmissions." The audio devices thus assembled incite the listener/viewer to reflect on the nature of technical development under the culture of consumption. Reflecting on the function of the work, **Maia Urstad** offers: "The questions it poses are many, including and especially: 'What will become of the ruins after us?'"

**Maia Urstad** is a sound artist working at the intersection of audio and visual art who, for the past fifteen years, has worked with sound in various multi-disciplinary art projects, installations, site-specific concerts and films. She completed formal studies at the Bergen National Academy of the Arts, but also has a background in rock music. Urstad currently runs the production company "Maur Prosjekter" dedicated to initiating sound-related collaborative projects.

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Prefix is pleased to celebrate the opening of the exhibition *Sound Barrier* with a reception on **Saturday, June 17 from 2-5 PM**. The event will be held at **Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art**, located at 401 Richmond Street West, Suite 124, Toronto. The artist will be present. The exhibition *Sound Barrier* continues to **July 29, 2006**.

Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Royal Norwegian Embassy, the City of Bergen and the Office for Contemporary Art, Norway. Prefix also gratefully acknowledges the administrative assistance of Saint Mary's University Art Gallery.

Maia Urstad gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the Arts Council Norway with the creation of her work *Sound Barrier*. For their assistance with the mounting of this exhibition, she would like to thank Marie Nerland, production and organization support; Steinar Hindenes, construction support; Øystein Ask, electronic support; Dana Samuel; Rhonda Corvese; and the staff of Saint Mary's University Art Gallery and Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art.

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Prefix Institute of Contemporary Art is a registered charitable organization based in Toronto. Prefix fosters the appreciation and understanding of contemporary photographic, media and digital arts through exhibitions, publications and related activities.

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