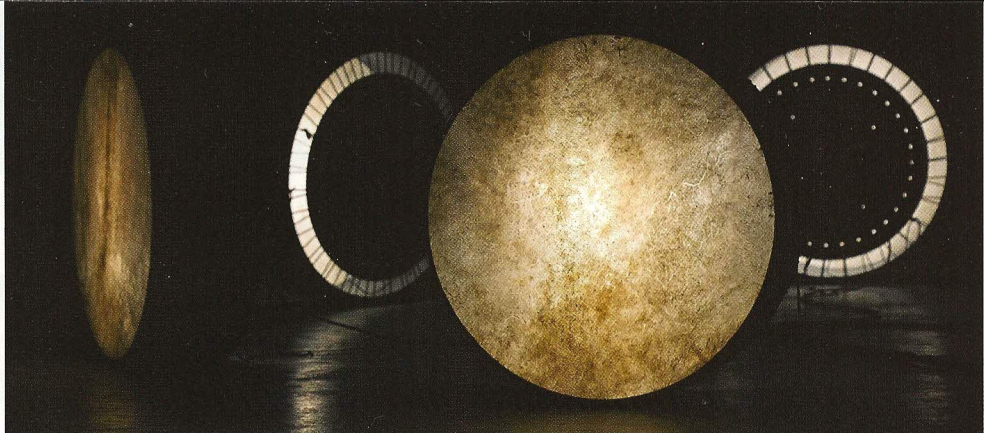


blockage, of storage or transference. They resonated with memories of displaced, possibly abandoned, objects, discarded or even useless. They constituted a multitude of obstructions, both literally and metaphorically.

One obvious question loomed: Who is the “False Spectator?” The viewer who tries to ferret out Tanner’s intent from this purposefully rambling composition? The artist herself, abandoning any stylistic continuity in order to throw the work into a vortex of activity that only ceases because the show must open, even as it hints at continuous re-working and endless noodling? Never giving themselves over as finished things, these perpetually temporary forms didn’t allow viewers to formulate anything other than a changing assessment of what they had before them. It is a curious contradiction because even if the individual works were quite stable, there was something about the loopy sprawling composition that rendered it palpably unstable and utterly captivating.

2016 marks the final year for Suyama Space. Since 1998, George Suyama, together with Seattle curator Beth Sellars, have invited artists to respond to the gallery’s unique architecture with installations that take into account its immense volume, the wood-planked floors, concrete walls, and high, open-beam ceiling—contextual and physical parameters that pose serious challenges. Experimental in its curatorial approach, Suyama Space has been an important experiential forum, bringing together unimagined artworks and a powerful spatial presence to create awkward and exciting unions. The physical answers explored there often catalyzed the later work of exhibiting artists, which is another part of Suyama Space’s unique legacy.

—John David O’Brien



Above and detail: Raul Keller, installation view of “Six Drums,” 2015.

## HELSINKI

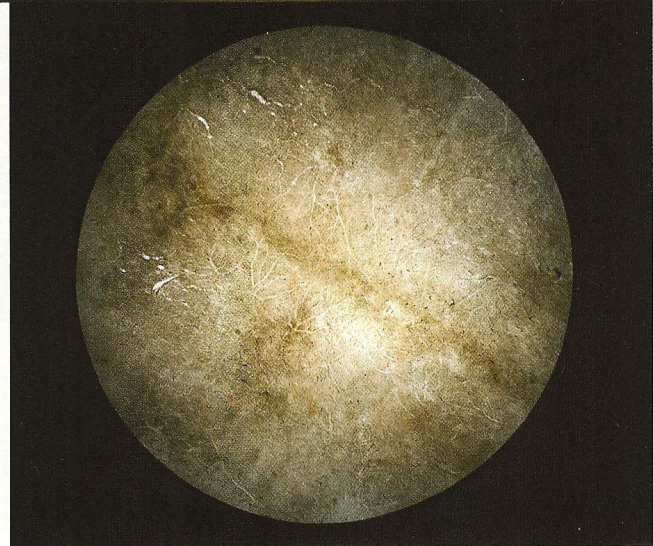
### Raul Keller

#### SIC Galleria

Raul Keller’s artistic trajectory cuts through the realms of sound art, video, photography, live performance, and installation. For his gallery and museum exhibitions, he often brings in elements from several of these spheres to create site-specific installations that immerse the viewer in sonic environments. In recent years, his explorations have tended to use a specific range of sound devices—typically, membrane speakers, trampolines in various shapes and sizes, and parabolic dishes, which he presents in diverse arrangements. At times, colored light imparts an additional aura of drama, mystery, or wonder.

Keller’s recent show “Six Drums” suggested that he might be changing his tack, the heterogeneity evidenced in earlier presentations giving way to a much more integrated and decidedly cogent approach. The appearance of the exhibition was quite deceptive. The initial impression of a meager installation accompanied by a humdrum soundtrack belied the work’s visual power and complex sonority.

Half a dozen instruments—sound machines would be an equally apt term for them—occupied the center of the gallery and played independently in a dark and otherwise materially empty space. The arrangement was visually striking, because Keller had assembled the drums in an open circle, with LED lights mounted inside each frame. This light not only elucidated the structure of each unit, it



also caused the variegated patterns of the sheepskin drumheads to glow beautifully. The manner of presentation coupled with the work’s appearance proffered a host of associations, recalling, for example, the communal warmth of a campfire or the configuration of ancient stone circles. Like such spaces, it operated as a cordon to subdivide space. The center could be viewed as a sheltering or isolating enclosure. Finally, the specific form of the drums evoked notions of primitiveness and ritual. Common to many early cultures, the use of this type of drum dates from prehistory.

Soundwise, the drums could not be considered tranquil, uncomplicated, or sparse. Speakers, fitted into the drum backs and tuned to each unit’s resonant frequency, created an array of unique sounds. Together, they produced a powerful rumble that filled the space with a dense mix of rhythms that fluctuated as one moved about the room. The experience proved captivating, as various patterns advanced out of or receded into that rich bun-

dle of reverberation and various aural phenomena, such as increases or decreases in volume and the rattle of an otherwise inactive metal air vent, contributed to the performance. In the center of the circle, sounds only seemed to reach the ears after ricocheting off the walls. Resonance was found to be most intense in the corners, and no two corners accommodated the same tones.

Keller’s installation stood out for its focus on space as well as the objects in it. It not only made viewers aware of the room’s role in shaping sound, but also showed how sound can alter one’s understanding of space. By integrating the walls, floor, and ceiling into the work, Keller effectively deprived them of their traditionally neutral role. Transformation of these mundane elements into operative components elevated this exhibition to more than the sum of its parts. That might sound like a cliché, but it was the ultimate outcome of a most captivating installation.

—John Gayer