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Alexis O'Hara *SQUEEEQUE! The Improbable Igloo* 2009 Installation view Courtesy the Blackwood Gallery and Justina M. Barnicke Gallery (Image 1/5)

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Sound Artists Raise The Volume At U Of T



Justina M. Barnicke Gallery, Toronto & Blackwood Gallery, Mississauga January 16 to March 10, 2013

By [Nives Hajdin](#)

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Sound is all around us, even when our environment is seemingly silent. Changing frequencies, white noise and echoes are sounds that are often overlooked, as are electronic beeps, the communicative “sound” of sign language and even some attempts at lyrical expression.

Curator Christof Migone explores these relationships in his latest exhibition, “Volume: Hear Here,” a joint presentation of two University of Toronto galleries: the [Blackwood Gallery](#) and the [Justina M. Barnicke Gallery](#).

Migone’s curatorial framework stems from his own status as a practicing sound artist, and it successfully disrupts traditional notions of the gallery space by way of sound-based interventions that welcome viewers to interact with their surroundings.

A number of works are completely mesmerizing, including Rafael Lozano-Hemmer’s *Last Breath*, in which a respiratory tube is connected to a machine on one end and to an expanding and retracting paper bag on the other, thereby simulating the process of breathing quite convincingly. Indeed, Lozano-Hemmer has written that this is a machine “designed to store and circulate the breath of a person forever.”

Pieces such as Alexis O'Hara's *SQUEEEQUE! The Improbable Igloo* and Darsha Hewitt's *Electrostatic Bell Choir* are heavily reliant on the participation of the viewer to be set into motion—an intimidating expectation that proves rewarding if you take the time to engage with each piece. O'Hara's igloo, constructed mainly of speakers, invites you to project your voice into the hanging microphones within, while Hewitt's television sets are triggered by a

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Ian Wallace: *Chaquequet Profet* (August 9, 1983) / *IX, 1955-05* (detail) photoluminate, ink
monoprint, acrylic on canvas, 9 panels. Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery. Gift of the
Artist. Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery.

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Ian Wallace, *Pan Am Scan*, 1970, 5 silver gelatin prints, 33.2 x 47.6 cm (each), 205 cm x 122 cm (overall). Collection of the Vancouver Art Gallery, Vancouver Art Gallery Acquisition Fund. Photo: Trevor Mills, Vancouver Art Gallery.

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motion sensor in a pitch-black room and generate enough static to ring a series of bells in front of each screen.

There are a number of other unexpected, yet transfixing, installations, including Neil Klassen's deliberate refusal of music in *Requiem and Ruin #1*, featuring a trumpet covered in black tar that seeps onto the gallery floor. The exhibition is rounded out by works from Marla Hlady, Dave Dymont, Ryan Park and other artists.

Visually and aurally, "Volume: Hear Here" is an immersive experience that beckons the viewer not just to observe, but to listen as well.

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