





# ***[In]Form***

**NATE CLARK**

**MAY 23 - JULY 29, 2023**

DETAIL VIEW OF *[IN]FORM*



INSTALLATION VIEW OF *(IN)FORM*



INSTALLATION VIEW OF *(IN)FORM BOWL* AND *WHITE DROP NET*

## EXHIBITION TEXT

In his MadArt Studio exhibition (*In*) *Form*, Vashon-based artist Nate Clark employs laborious methods of creation to ground the viewer within their physical self. Pulling inspiration from broad fields of study, such as architecture, animal behavioral science, literature, and the minimalist art movement, (*In*) *Form* reflects the deep research that drives Clark's creative inquiry. His process-oriented practice and skilled craft can be seen through the various media incorporated into his works and the techniques he employed to bring this substantial installation to life. Immersive cedar sculptures with original percussive audio compositions, wool batting, beeswax, and wool that has been carded, spun, and woven by hand combine to create a multisensory viewing experience. Engaging visitors' senses of smell, touch, sight, and hearing, Clark aims to foster an awareness of one's body within and in relation to the works. This intention reflects the artist's relationship to his practice, which he considers a mechanism to establish patience and tolerance within himself. Translated to a public audience, (*In*) *Form*'s sculptures are collectively presented as tools to cultivate mindfulness and promote bodily presence.

The first component Clark was certain he wanted to include was a navigable twelve-foot-long cedar tunnel, curving in the center

to intentionally disrupt the view through either end. The tunnel is housed and visually supported by a wool curtain that hangs floor-to-ceiling and bisects the studio to dampen transmittable sound. The effect of the tunnel as a mysterious gateway between the two halves of the studio reflects Clark's admiration for animal behaviorist Temple Grandin and her invention of the "squeeze machine," a tool she utilized to ground herself in moments of stress. Grandin applied these mechanics to a corral that herded animals to slaughterhouses, revolutionizing the humane treatment of livestock by creating systems of empathy within structures of control.

Strategically located throughout the rest of the studio are three Alaskan cedar domes, ranging in size from seven to ten feet across. While striving to create flawless domes, Clark embraced the imperfections of each piece, leaning into the process and relinquishing control over the forms as they took shape. Each sculpture is intentionally left unsealed, the raw cedar exposed to the air to breathe and continue to change over time. The largest and most recent of the bowls was built in situ at the front of the studio from precisely miter-cut cedar blocks in a brick-like pattern. Accessible through the tunnel to the rear of the studio are two shallower vessels of thin, delicately

layered wooden strips, reminiscent of an immense woven basket. These forms are a continuation of Clark's solo exhibition, *Squinch* (4Culture, 2022), which featured his first hand-formed wood dome. Spanning seven feet, the original piece surprised Clark by producing unforeseen sonic qualities when first exhibited. At MadArt, Clark expands on this fortuitous discovery by including additional domes and working with sound artist Rose Martin to amplify and respond to the sculptural and material elements of the show. Martin, a Doctoral student of Musical Arts at the University of Washington, studied decolonization in classical music spaces as well as emotional labor within paid artistic settings. For this collaboration, she utilizes an embodied music-making approach, incorporating field recordings and close-mic sampling to build sonic layers that mimic Clark's intention to center the senses and return to the body. Martin adds two original audio pieces, composed of collected sounds such as Vashon ferry waves, clinking saw blades, and Martin's own breath and vocals. These are integrated into the exhibition through carefully placed speakers, creating an auditory collage that immerses visitors further into the sensory experience of *(In)Form*.

In soft reflection of the wooden forms and building's architecture are Clark's textile works. The front of the studio hosts a whimsical net of white mohair and acrylic yarn,

billowing upwards in the airflow of a fan positioned below. In the rear between the cedar bowls hang two weavings that Clark transformed step by step, from raw wool gathered from his neighbors' sheep into intricately patterned woven panels.

Each material and mode of creation incorporated in this exhibition ties back to Clark's rural life on Vashon Island, where he weathered the pandemic, adapted to a slower daily pace, and reconnected with the land through beekeeping, gardening, and wool harvesting from local farmers. Further, the inception of this body of work is attached to the beginning of the pandemic when Clark, like many others, experienced the societal, historical, and environmental traumas of our current world more acutely than ever before. These joining circumstances led the artist to turn towards his practice and create work that promotes contemplative space, patience, and tolerance through meticulous and laborious making. Through these time-consuming methods, Clark makes a connection between bodily presence and therapeutic healing practices that he hopes translate to the viewer.



INSTALLATION VIEW OF *(IN)FORM*



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# IN CONVERSATION WITH NATE CLARK

**SOME OF THE PIECES YOU CHOSE TO INCLUDE AS PART OF *IN(FORM)* ARE EXPANSIONS FROM PREVIOUS SHOWS, WHAT WAS IT LIKE TO REVISIT AND REENVISION THESE WORKS FOR MADART?**

The opportunity to see projects at a larger scale and situated in MadArt gave the work an entirely new feeling. The arched tunnel with a corner was an expansion of earlier arches that had similar height to width ratios and gave the viewer a feeling of embrace as they passed through them. The tunnel gave viewers a chance to engage for a series of steps, and to make a physical commitment to pass through a space that doesn't have a clear exit.

The suspended dish under the skylight, *Dome V3*, was shown at 4Culture in 2022, this piece was the discovery moment for sonic engagement. When installing the work at 4Culture the art handlers noticed that standing directly across from each other over the dome it felt as though you were face to face having a conversation. Plucking the nylon that held up the piece created a deep resonant tone. *Dome V3* sparked my interest in auditory engagement to further draw viewers into the artwork.

**WHAT IS THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE EXHIBITION'S TITLE, *IN(FORM)*?**

My partner, Michelle, came up with the title after numerous conversations about how to frame the show. Spoken it can sound two ways: inform or in form, both support

the artwork. This installation put viewers literally into forms, passing through the tunnel, gazing over the edge of the bowls and pausing to listen, see, and smell.

**WHY WAS IT IMPORTANT FOR YOU THAT THIS EXHIBITION BE MULTISENSORY, AND HOW DID THIS COMPONENT COME TO BE?**

The multisensory aspects were intentionally enhanced to draw the viewer back into their body. Art viewing is always a multisensory experience. I wanted to push forward the smells of beeswax, wool, and cedar, and emphasize a particular sound production, to shape the viewer's experience more directly.

**WHAT INFLUENCED YOUR MATERIAL CHOICES?**

I'm drawn to basic materials that have a deep relationship with humans. This show had three specific materials presented: Alaskan Yellow Cedar, wool, and beeswax. Alaskan Yellow Cedar was used because of the yellow color, the availability and cost in the northwest, and it's rot resistant and can live outside. Wool has been an obsession of mine for a long time, I was an avid crocheter and knitter as a middle schooler/high schooler. Sheep have been shaped by humans to produce fiber, wool in particular has been selectively bred for specific weight and feel for different garments. I worked with wool from Havelock to create the wool curtain, and the weavings were made from fiber I processed from

Sun Island Farm on Vashon Island. The beeswax that was used in the tunnel came partially from my hives and partially from rural Washington.

**CAN YOU SPEAK TO YOUR COLLABORATIVE PROCESS WITH SOUND ARTIST ROSE MARTIN?**

Rose played a sample of her work at our house on Vashon in March before her first PhD recital later in the spring of 2023. I was stunned by the emotional depth of her work. Rose's research and reading interest overlapped with mine, our collaboration process was easy and I am grateful and thankful for the work that Rose produced. I couldn't have imagined better sound pieces to bring viewers deeper into the process of looking.

**THIS WORK CENTERS THE PHYSICAL EXPERIENCE OF THE VIEWER, IS THERE SOMETHING IN PARTICULAR YOU HOPE THEY TAKE AWAY FROM THIS EXHIBITION?**

I made these projects to find balance and stability in my own life, the pieces are a culmination of study and work over the last five years. To have empathy for others you have to have space for yourself. I hope that this work offers space, a connection, or a moment of pause to ground the mind into the body. I hope that people feel more deeply themselves experiencing the show.

**IN CONVERSATION WITH SOUND ARTIST  
ROSE MARTIN:  
YOU CREATED THE AUDIO COMPOSITIONS  
FROM A VARIETY OF COLLECTED  
SOUNDS, HOW DID YOU APPROACH THIS  
COMPILATION, AND HOW DOES IT DIVERGE  
OR RELATE TO YOUR OTHER WORK?**

In the Western canon, found sounds have been a growing part of the percussion instrumentarium since before the 20th century. Sounds such as brake drums, glass bottles, or slats of wood were part of my early percussion education and these sound worlds remain a consistent influence on my research and practice. I'm drawn not only to the practicality of objects from daily life (affordable and often easy to travel with) but to their generative and expansive scope. My research and practice of embodied music making, Deep Listening (see Pauline Oliveros,

*The Center For Deep Listening*), and decolonizing my relationship with sound (see Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (2020)) have patiently led me deeper into the subtleties of sounds and silences around us. My songwriting and compositional work and my performance of historical and contemporary percussion music is often rooted in these sound worlds. However, the sound components I crafted for *(In)Form* emerged as the truest expression of this research and practice so far. When Nate and I began our collaboration, I had just finished a sound art piece for a research project centering on the emotional labor performed by working artists. I had recorded and layered a series of found sound improvisations for that work. Upon hearing it, Nate expressed that he felt

invited to a present and embodied state. He encouraged me to follow the same intuitive process for the *(In)Form* sound component. I gathered sounds, including materials from Nate's installation build (wool, beeswax, Alaskan Cedar blocks). I visited Nate's property on Vashon Island to capture field recordings and record on-site improvisations in his garage with various hand tools. There, I also recorded the breathing of Nate Clark and his partner Michelle Lassaline for the *Net* installation. In my studio, I spent time recording long-form improvisations with each found sound, seeking their truest resonances. What I used in the final pieces were often the sounds that emerged toward the end of a 30 or 40-minute improvisation. I went through multiple phases of recording, editing, and layering (this felt akin to weaving). Each draft led

me to new sounds and I repeated the process. I chose not to use traditional percussion instruments or traditional implements like sticks, mallets, and beaters to activate the sounds. Rather, the sounds were activated by my hands, my voice, by another of the same sound, or by a differing sound in the collection.

***Sound sources:***

<i>Breath</i>	<i>Coping saw</i>
<i>Garlic skin</i>	<i>Bamboo bristles</i>
<i>Tea Tin</i>	<i>Circular saw blade</i>
<i>Silver buttons</i>	<i>Small stones</i>
<i>Ceramic goblet</i>	<i>Small brass bells</i>
<i>Sandpaper</i>	<i>Puget Sound water</i>
<i>Landscape stones</i>	<i>Ferry engine</i>
<i>Canvas bag</i>	<i>Terra cotta pots</i>
<i>Glass marbles</i>	<i>Hemp basket</i>
<i>Crystal teacups</i>	<i>Marbles</i>
<i>Origami paper</i>	<i>Airplane</i>
<i>Nails on peg board</i>	<i>Glass beads</i>
<i>Voice</i>	<i>Train</i>
<i>Alaskan cedar</i>	<i>Honeybees</i>
<i>Tissue paper</i>	<i>Footsteps</i>



**DETAIL VIEW OF (IN)FORM BOWL**



## ABOUT THE ARTIST

Born in Olympia, Nate Clark (1987) is a fourth-generation Washingtonian of settler ancestry. He received his BFA in photography and painting from the University of Nevada, Reno in 2010, and his MFA in painting and drawing from the University of Washington in 2018. He lives and creates on Vashon Island, the traditional land of the Duwamish, Suquamish, and Puyallup tribes. Clark is an adjunct faculty member at both the University of Puget Sound and the University of Washington, and works as Studio Technician for the former's art department. He also served as studio assistant to his mentor, the late Denzil Hurley, for many years. Clark's work is included in the permanent collections of The Sierra Arts Foundation, Nevada State College, The University of Nevada (Reno), Oats Park Art Center, and Isle Royale National Park.

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ROSE MARTIN

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