

## **Greenland Street**

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### **Press release**

# **Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard Silent Sound**



15th September - 26th November 2006

Live Performance - St. George's Hall: Thursday 14th September: 20:00 - 22:00hrs

(For an invited audience including press - RSVP essential)

Exhibition Preview - Greenland Street: Friday 15th September: 12:00 - 22:00hrs

Artists Iain Forsyth and Jane Pollard will use controversial 'mind control' technology to realise their most ambitious work to date as part of Greenland Street's inaugural programme during the Liverpool Biennial of contemporary art.

On Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September Forsyth and Pollard will stage a uniquely emotive experience exploring the possibility of the mind's acceptance of subliminal suggestion, closely referencing the aesthetic of sonic experimentation, early 1970s performance and the attempts of Victorian spiritualists to channel the spirit world.

In 1865 at St. George's Hall, Liverpool, Victorian entertainers The Davenport Brothers performed their public séance act to an audience desperately searching for a bridge between the living and the souls of the dead. Victorian Britain was fascinated by the unearthing of new sciences, 'understandings of reality and 'discoveries about the inner working and potential of the human brain and mind that reached to a belief in new possibilities for the survival of the soul.. Unused for over twenty years, the Small Concert Hall in St George's Hall will reopen for this event and the artists will perform on the same stage used by The Davenports.

Forsyth and Pollard engage the minds of the audience as the site for their artwork. During the performance, the artists are seated onstage inside a soundproof booth, inspired by The Davenport Brothers original 'Spirit Cabinet'. In unison, they repeat a single sentence throughout the hour-long event. Using their specially created machine this spoken statement is then embedded into a live music recital. The message will be inaudible to the audience's ears, but transmitted subliminally to their subconscious.

The artists have joined forces with two uniquely talented collaborators. **Jason Pierce**, leader of the critically acclaimed band Spiritualized, has written the musical composition and will perform the piece on the night with a string quartet and supporting musicians. **Dr. Ciarán O'Keeffe**, a leading authority in psychology and parapsychology from Liverpool Hope University also known for his media appearances on Living TV's "Most Haunted", has worked closely with the artists to underpin a strategy combining modern scientific and pseudoscientific techniques to consume and physically affect the audience to create a deliberately highly charged situation.

At Greenland Street an audio recording of the live performance will be incorporated into a large-scale immersive installation specifically created by the artists to continue the event's exploration of the mind's potential receptiveness to suggestion. A live CD will be presented to each audience member minutes after the performance and will also be available to buy as a limited edition, designed by Vaughn Oliver and Chris Bigg at V23.

[www.silentsound.info](http://www.silentsound.info)  
[www.iainandjane.com](http://www.iainandjane.com)

**For press tickets, further information and images please contact Lucy Wilson, Theresa Simon and Partners, 020 7734 4800 [lucy@theresasimon.com](mailto:lucy@theresasimon.com)**

### Notes for editors

1. Forsyth (b.1973) and Pollard (b.1972) are collaborative visual artists, working predominantly with film, video and live performance. Since meeting at Goldsmiths they have worked together for thirteen years, exploring communication and re-enactment as an artistic genre. Recent projects have included *Walking After Acconci*, a retelling of a Vito Acconci film work from 1973, updated to reflect the aesthetic of a contemporary urban music video using Plan B, a young MC signed to 679 Recordings, as a modern storyteller. In 2003, in association with the ICA in London and the BBC, Forsyth and Pollard made *File under Sacred Music* a re-make of the infamous bootleg footage of The Cramps playing at Napa State Mental Institute in 1978. Earlier works include *A Rock 'N' Roll Suicide*, a meticulous live re-enactment of David Bowie's farewell Ziggy Stardust performance. In making these works, Forsyth and Pollard address contemporary society's increasing engagement with simulation and artifice as a vital part of cultural and emotional expression. They are represented by Kate MacGarry, London.
2. St. George's Hall has been described as 'the finest neo-classical building in Europe'. It overlooks Lime Street station and was built to provide a venue for Liverpool's triennial music festival. The hall first opened to the public in 1854, and represents the prosperity in Liverpool in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Much of the design is by Harvey Lonsdale Elmes, although the Small Concert Hall is the work of CR Cockrell. Charles Dickens was a regular visitor, who held many of his readings in the Small Concert Hall.
3. Ira Erastus Davenport (1839-1911) and William Henry Davenport (1841-1877), better known as the Davenport Brothers, were American performers in the late 1800s. They began performing in 1854, less than a decade after the spiritualism movement had taken off in America. Their public séances would be introduced by Dr. Ferguson, who assured audiences that the brothers worked by spirit power, rather than trickery. They would be tied up inside a large box, containing a number of musical instruments. Once the box was closed, the instruments would sound – upon opening the box the brothers would be found tied, still in the same positions. The brothers performed in the Small Concert Hall at St. George's Hall, Liverpool in 1865. The audience members invited to tie them into their cabinet used knots that could not be easily removed, thus ruining and exposing the act. The audience reacted angrily, smashing the spirit cabinet to pieces. Shortly before his deal, Ira was interviewed by Harry Houdini. He allegedly confessed that their feats had only ever been produced by skill, and told Houdini that he and his brother had never personally confirmed a belief in spiritualism.
4. Greenland Street is open Wednesday – Sunday 10-6pm, Thursday late-night until 8pm. Admission is free. Greenland Street has partial disabled access.
5. For further information on the project see [www.silentsound.info](http://www.silentsound.info)  
For further information on the artists see [www.iainandjane.com](http://www.iainandjane.com)
6. *Silent Sound* is supported by Arts Council North West, Arts Council London and the PRS Foundation.