

HYPERALLERGIC



GALLERIES

Experimenting with Sound in an Artist-Built Pool

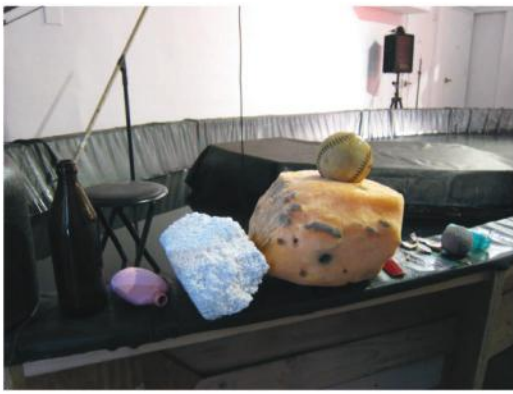
by Claire Voon on May 3, 2016

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Marie Lorenz with Rachel Golub on violin as part of 'Flow Pool' at Recess (all photos by the author for Hyperallergic)

There's a large pool taking up most of the floor space at Recess. Built on site by Marie Lorenz for her project [Flow Pool](#), the 24-foot-long oblique tub with a wooden base is filled with six inches of water and has since April served as a site for readings, a film screening, and weekend pool parties. While seeing it reminded me of the inflatable kiddie pools that dotted yards in my childhood neighborhood, Lorenz's is actually inspired by the [high-speed towing tank](#) at the Stevens Institute in New Jersey, designed to test water movement and floatation possibilities. Here, in downtown Manhattan, her small iteration also hosts experiments, but those of a rather different nature.

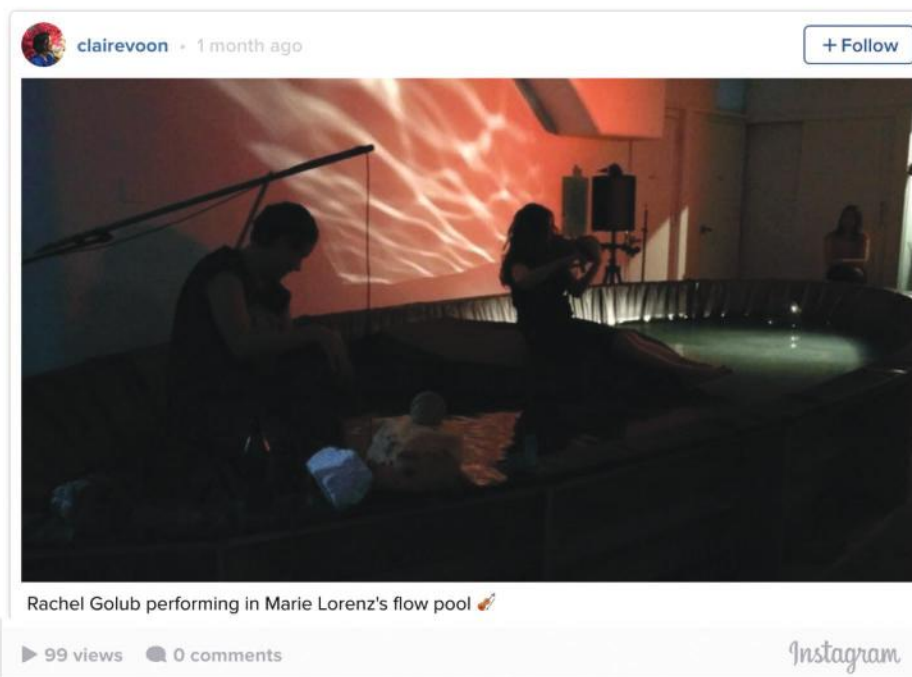


Objects used by Marie Lorenz to interact with the water (click to enlarge)

Over the course of the last month, *Flow Pool* has hosted a talk by oceanographer Alan Blumberg about experimental marine hydrodynamics, a screening of Jennifer Baichwal and Edward Burtynsky's "WATERMARK" documentary on our relationship to water, and a number of open-to-all object flotation trials — where visitors have tested the buoyancy of everything from a birdcage to a cupcake. When I visited last Saturday, the water was serving as the stage

for a sound experiment featuring violinist [Rachel Golub](#), who collaborated with Lorenz to manipulate strings and splashes into a melancholic composition. Lorenz had submerged microphones in the water, and they picked up small noises as she dropped stones into the pool, pumped water in and out of a small bottle, and slowly guided a large, glass ball across the glistening surface. Accompanying the looping, atmospheric sounds were Golub's measured melodies, creating a lush soundscape that brought the room and its small audience to stillness. At times Golub also entered the pool to create splashes with her feet or to lay across a raft, all the while drawing her bow across her instrument or plucking it with her fingers.

Like Lorenz's [Tide and Current Taxi](#) service, her sound experiment — and *Flow Pool* more broadly — drew close attention to the properties of water, an element we often overlook in New York City (it's surprisingly easy to forget that Manhattan is an island). The plinking of droplets, heavy plops, gurgles, and waterfall-like gushes illustrated the range of sounds water can make, with the unique texture of each percussion augmented by the violin's precise voice. Golub's sustained, wavering notes, for instance, echoed the gentle splash of Lorenz's ripples, while a simultaneous dance of shadows against a wall bathed in red light offered a visual resonance.



As the performance unfolded, I became increasingly aware of the fact that we're not at our most natural when dealing with water. Seeing Golub tiptoe along the edge of the pool surrounded by microphones, and at times twiddling electronic equipment, introduced a sense of precariousness to the performance that also made the music sound slightly ominous. As Lorenz pulled on tall galoshes to enter the pool, carefully steadied herself on the raft, and towed off her hands after each exit, the inconvenience of the water became ever more apparent. In spite of the music's calmness, I couldn't shake from my mind thoughts of climate change, rising sea levels, and the threat of New York City being underwater one day. If that future is indeed the coming reality, how prepared will we be when we have to face it?

As the last rustles of recorded water faded away and the cry of the violin fell to silence, I was pulled back into the present day. Beyond the front door, which had been left slightly ajar, Soho continued moving at its rapid pace, its traffic and passersby invisible behind the gallery's blacked-out windows but all the noise suddenly and incredibly apparent. It had lasted less than an hour and left me wanting more — a reminder that you don't need extravagant hardware to transport the mind.



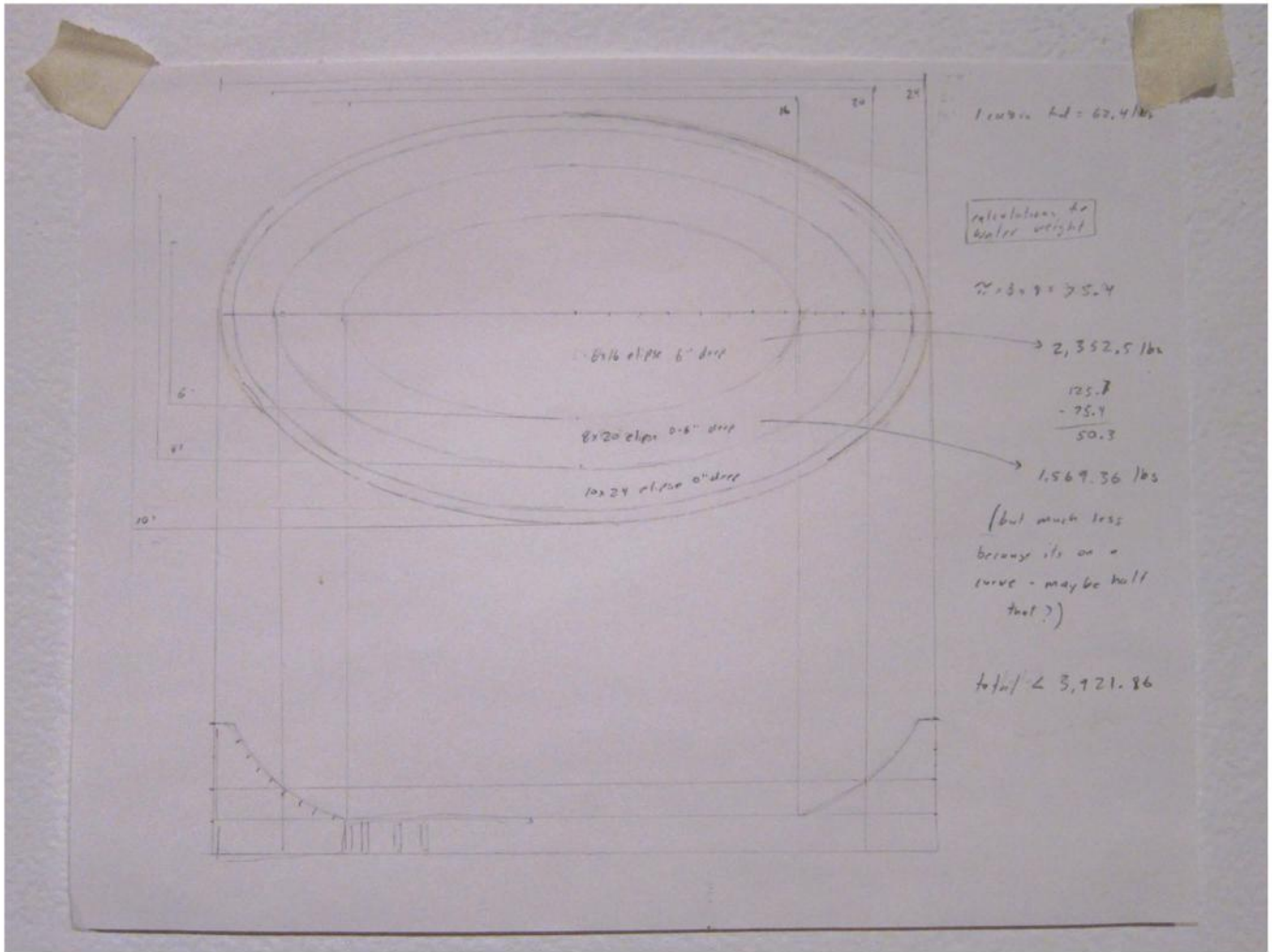
Marie Lorenz with Rachel Golub on violin as part of 'Flow Pool' at Recess



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Objects used for water experiments



Marie Lorenz's design for 'Flow Pool' (click to enlarge)

Marie Lorenz: [Flow Pool](#) continues at Recess (41 Grand Street, Soho, Manhattan) through May 7.