

“Serinette pour les oiseaux de bourbe” (2025) Paul DeMarinis

Sound Installation for mud fuel cells, electronics, radios, birdlike electronic chirps

From Earth to Sky:

At our feet, the Earth; in our gaze, the Heavens. Our bodies are pierced through by electromagnetic waves, and we send these same waves to signal those afar, perhaps drifting in some distant galaxy.

On a cloudier planet, like Venus, we would never know there are stars, or contemplate other worlds. The clouds would be our gods. If we had a moon, we might sense its variable light, and pay obeisance. It is possible that fish never know of the stars. What is their "beyond?"

In the thin layer of soil that covers parts of the Earth, between sky and solid rock, dwell a billion million living things who have never seen the light of day, nor perceived the sky or the stars beyond. Species of bacteria hidden in the dark space underground, they have never tasted oxygen - the anaerobes.

Some of these anaerobes, species of *Shewanella* and *Geobacter*, for reasons unknown to us, link together with "nanowires" to collectively increase their electrical charge. With this collective electricity they could potentially transmit a message out beyond the Earth, beyond the Sky, into the Aether beyond. Maybe they are doing it already, and have been doing it for billions of years. Dark energy?

Our ideas seem coded in the language of the Heavens. What might be the conceptual scheme of these mud-inhabiting bacteria? Do they wait? Do they worry?

In “Serinette pour les oiseaux de bourbe” we have constructed a number of Microbial Fuel Cells (MFCs) made with mud from different locations in Switzerland. They accumulate tiny electrical currents produced by the bacteria in the mud and circulate it into devices with a high human symbolic status: a tiny radio transmitter that casts waves out into the Aether.

These messages travel out from Earth to our "beyond" at the speed of light, and, thus taking flight, carry the voice of a birdlike adventurer to radio receivers where they travel forever. On the way, some fragments of the waves.