



DANIEL JODOCY /Soundboxgarden

08.29–10.10 /2020

Before the first case of COVID-19 had ever been recorded, Daniel Jodocy welcomed us to his studio in Midtown, a tiny space filled with ephemera related to percussion instruments, building materials, and mechanical geegaws purchased by the case in Chinatown. As the pandemic washed across the globe, however, Jodocy took to the hills, rather literally, relocating to just outside the Minnewaska State Park Preserve, past Storm King but well before Albany. Atop a mountain, he rebuilt his studio and was forced to reconceive his practice, fitting together his mechanical skills with his interest in sound in a way better attuned to the new environment.

Undercurrent is delighted to exhibit the result of this reconsideration with Daniel Jodocy's inaugural show, *Soundboxgarden*, opening August 29 and running until October 10. *Soundboxgarden* is the first show back onsite at Undercurrent's space in Brooklyn, and just as Jodocy reimagined his own art within his new surroundings, so, too, does *Soundboxgarden* enable a gallery visit in the time of COVID, sketching new plans for how we feel and belong in space and place.

Growing up in his father's mechanic's shop in Belgium, Jodocy left to pursue a music career in New York. But both pasts merged into building for sound. He threw himself in constructing hand-built percussion instruments of all sorts, like a PVC pipe cuíca or an accordion mounted on a frame with a crank that mechanically manipulates its bellows

Anything from updated versions of hurdy-gurdys, reeded instruments resembling giant kazoos, or èrhús with beer can resonators would appear onstage when it was time for Jodocy to play musical performer, often as one half of the group *Dizzy Ventilators*, where contact mics competed with Korg Volcas to shape the group's improvised, DIY dance sound..

With *Soundboxgarden*, however, Jodocy removes the presence of the hand in the process. The instruments play themselves, revealing their sensual nature without calling for handling. The tactile, mechanical processes are limited to the parts of the instruments interacting with each other, allowing the visitor to passively admire them, like watching a bird warble in the park. In fact, the park—the garden in the city—is an apt metaphor for Jodocy's efforts in *Soundboxgarden*. Interactivity is limited to that old camper's adage: take only memories, leave only footprints.

In lieu of the oppressive noise and cacophony of pre-quarantine New York, Jodocy invites us in for a sonic massage, to a space of contemplation much like his mountaintop. *Soundboxgarden* is uncrowded in every sense of the term, allowing the visitor to immerse themselves without overwhelming themselves. To let go of the decision trees and gardens of forking paths that defined New York life before COVID-19: Do I get pizza or kebabs? Do I take the A or the 1? Do I tip 20% or 25%? Do I read on the train or just stare ahead? The structured environment of *Soundboxgarden* offers, instead, a garden of a single, unforked path. The anxiety of choice is pushed aside by the calm of belonging.

We asked Jodocy whether *Soundboxgarden* would be a show about being in utero. No... no... he assured us. There is no connection when inside the space. There are no umbilical cords to limit movement, just the path Jodocy has painted on the floor. The space is detached and elevated.

We wonder, then, about competing visions of the garden in the city. Frederick Law Olmsted and Calvert Vaux's terrifying Central Park with its Romanticist pedigree competes against the Vauxhall Gardens of Hamilton-era New York, where the Baroque pathways made it easy for imminent sexual conspirators to eye each other from across the lawns. *Soundboxgarden* aligns with neither tradition, opting for a more affective response without the affected manipulations of creating a faux natural setting. The instruments that make up *Soundboxgarden* come from the land, come from Upstate New York, but they still employ their artifice to draw in the viewer.

For *Soundboxgarden*, Jodocy builds drums that look and sound like water. "Urban materials dressed in nature," he describes them, erasing the distinctions between town and country. Importantly, however, Jodocy is not rebuilding Minnewaska in our 300 cubic meters of space in DUMBO in Brooklyn, a Disneyland ride of chestnut oak forests and animatronic bobcats. Perhaps instead of forcing an urban/natural binary, then, it benefits the visitor to think of *Soundboxgarden* as anti-urban, as allowing the visitor to escape the urban within the urban. Some of us fled the country to the town, for a place where we could be nobody. And now we flee the town into the anti-town of *Soundboxgarden*. Here, we flee the daily routine, even if (or perhaps especially if) that routine is staying in our apartment under shelter-in-place orders.

/ Written by Moacir P. de Sá Pereira

/ Image: Daniel Dodocy's handbuilt "Musicbox"



70 John Street
Brooklyn, NY, 11021

| undercurrent.nyc
| contact@undercurrent.nyc

| [ig: undercurrent.nyc](https://www.instagram.com/undercurrent.nyc)
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