

The Middlesbrough Sessions, 2010

# ULTRA-RED

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Ultra-red are regarded for pursuing a fragile but dynamic exchange between art, sound and political organising.

Two AIDS activists founded the group in 1994, and over the years have expanded to include artists, researchers and organisers from different social movements.

Ideas explored in their work include the struggles of migration, anti-racism, participatory community development, and the politics of HIV/AIDS. Describing their work as *'Exploring acoustic space as enunciative of social relations'*, and currently consisting of nine associates, collectively the group have produced radio broadcasts, performances, recordings, installations, texts and public space actions. Space becomes an investigation of social contexts in the acoustic mapping of contested spaces and histories utilising sound-based research (termed Militant Sound Investigations) that directly engage the organising and analyses of political struggles. Much of Ultra-red's work incorporates a process of collective listening to sound objects followed by reflection on what was heard, ultimately developing protocols for facilitating listening and dialogue.

The group also runs the fair-use online record label, Public Record ([www.publicrec.org](http://www.publicrec.org)), an internet-based archive for the distribution of work by Ultra-red members and allies. Artists and aesthetic-political organisations aligned with Public Record include *Ultra-red* (US), *Elliot Perkins* (UK), *Kanak Attak* (DE), *Manoa Free University* (AT), *Terre Thaemlitz* (JP), *Pet Shop Beuys* (CA), *Jack Tactic* (US), *Aeron y Alejandra* (SP), *Random Inc.* (AT), *Needle and Sony Mao* (US).

[www.ultrared.org](http://www.ultrared.org)

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# JANNA GRAHAM & ELLIOT PERKINS

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Individual Ultra-red members involved in *The Middlesbrough Session* include the following artists:

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## Janna Graham

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A writer and educator who has worked between the spaces of culture and political organizing for many years, Janna first collaborated with Ultra-red on the project *Articles of Incorporation* at Art Metropole, Toronto in 2005. She has also been active in the group's AIDS activist project SILENT|LISTEN, Ultra-red's events around the XVI International AIDS Conference in August 2006 and continues to work on *Dub Curriculum*, an ongoing project in England's southwest and the collective's SCHOOL OF ECHOES, in sites across the UK. Originally from Toronto, Janna is a PhD candidate at Goldsmiths, University of London in the programme of Visual Culture.

## Elliot Perkins

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From 1999 to 2003, Elliot Perkins gained acclaim for his dub-inspired electronica as Phonem on Berlin's Morr Music. In 2002, Elliot received support from the Arts Council's International Artists Fellowships Programme for his collaboration with Shahidul Alam, founder of the media activist organization DRIK, to create an electro-acoustic mapping of transitory migration titled EURODAC EXPRESS. Elliot first collaborated with Ultra-red in 2005 on BLOK70 a sound investigation into the impact of the EU expansion and the turbulence of migration movements at the margins of Europe. Based in the Torbay area, Elliot is a field organiser for the community-based anti-racist organisation, The Rural Racism Project.

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# THE MIDDLESBROUGH SESSION

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*The Middlesbrough Session, 2010* will result in a physical presence here and a manifestation in mima soundspace. The work references a series of 'listening sessions' that Ultra-red members have conducted across the UK and Europe in recent years, sharing recordings from site specific investigations made in relation to the struggles surrounding migration, anti-racism, fair housing, youth and HIV/AIDS. 'Listening sessions' enable Ultra-red members to share the sounds of these struggles, engaging with groups in each location and translating their experiences across time and space.

Taking the form of a five-day workshop, the session in Middlesbrough will involve members of three local community groups. Teesside University, mima's own The Modern Times group and MESMAC will explore the sound environment of Middlesbrough through sound walks around the town. Time will be spent processing and editing these sounds before concluding with participants playing their recordings to invited guests and the public.

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# THE MIDDLESBROUGH GROUP

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The three local community groups selected by Ultra-red to be involved in *The Middlesbrough Session* include The Modern Times (TMT), MESMAC and Teesside University. TMT are a group of young people aged 14-21 that meet regularly at mima, getting involved with everything that's happening from talks, tours and workshops to trips to artist studios and other galleries. Recent achievements have included designing, marketing and delivering TMT challenges and public talks as well as interviewing artists Ted Noten and Anish Kapoor. In July 2009 TMT created a newspaper supplement to further inform and support mima's Gerhard Richter exhibition.

*MESMAC* are a gay and bisexual men's community support service with offices in Newcastle and Middlesbrough, but cover the whole of the North East of England. MESMAC's services are open to all gay and bisexual men and offer a range of indispensable health, support and advice services.

*Teesside University* has recently been awarded 'University of the Year' in The Times Higher Education Awards. Working regularly in partnership with mima, a group of students from the school of Arts and Media will be invited to participate in *The Middlesbrough Session*.

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