



# Epi-thet

A term used as a descriptive substitute for the name or title of a person eg Richard the LionHeart. In biology, the formal naming of a species eg Homo Sapiens is the species name: sapiens is the epithet.

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**Epi-thet** expresses the poetics of the unique individual and the given moment, and is a unique sonification and visualisation of public-domain data from genetic research, archived at Stanford University. Each actualisation of the data will be a new composition, read through the specific time, the co-ordinates of the space, and physical data sensed from each audience member.

Epi-thet reflects on the relationship of the minute and the epic: which places human genetic material at the centre of an experience of the scale of being human.

## Description

Five microscopes stand in a very large space on platforms. The microscopes are lit from above. The rest of the space is dimly lit. The audience (from one to five) takes their position(s). As she/he lean down to look through the microscope, the sound slowly becomes more focussed and increases in dynamic until a grand 'orchestral' sound emerges around the viewer, and vibrating under them. The viewer is the conductor of this enveloping sweep of sound: the individual at the centre of the sound world of self. As they watch, the visual image in the microscope is a continually changing pattern of luminescence comprised of thousands of single gene chip arrays in sequence. The light on the viewer fades as the sound rises. As the viewer moves away, the light rises in intensity again, and the sound fades. Others in the space watch the five conductors/researchers at their platforms and experience an ensemble in sound and movement. The five microscope sculptures arise and fall in intensity of sound and light as the viewers move, creating an ensemble of interaction across the space.

## Background

In 2008, Madeleine Flynn and Tim Humphrey undertook an ANAT Synapse Residency at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research in Sydney, working on the sonification of genetic materials. Analysis of genetic material occurs through micro-arrays which visualise data. In addition to being visualised through intensity of luminescence, data can be sonified making it possible to **hear** as well as **see** a representation of the genetic process.

**Epi-thet** builds on our previous developments of installation that is focussed on the contextual and relational qualities of sound in culture. The title suggests both the biological and metaphoric nature of the material, proposing an experience that is simultaneously concerned with both the minutiae and the epic of the human experience.

**Epi-thet** also builds on our relationship with the Garvan Institute, and Dr Shane Grey, leading scientist in researching potential cures for Diabetes, who continue to be very supportive of potential performance/installation outcomes related to the research materials. We see the work as an affirmation of the work done by the Institute- great impact on human life.

Using an original algorithm that maps the data from the genetic process to sound parameters, we have created an extended musical composition, with associated variations of intensities, frequency ranges and dynamics that are integrally tied to the source material. Genetic process occurs in life at a physical scale that approaches the quantum level. Through ingenious process, scientists measure, then display evidence of this infinitesimal dynamic.

**Epi-thet** continues our interests in interactivity defined by the morphology of sculptural shapes: rather than by conventional interface devices (that is, no buttons, touch-screens or keyboards just the sculpture and its qualities that make it attractive as something to handle within the context of its meaningful assemblage). Intimate and constrained sound-fields that are responsive to spatial architectures – these kinds of multi-channel works feature independent single-point sound sources. The subversion of the dominance of screen as interface and outcome in contemporary multi-media arts practice, by re-siting gaze in the context of sound spatiality, and through a radical de-centering of screen into obscured and/or discovered places within material forms.

## Summary

**Epi-thet:** Live constructions in sound and re-situated microscopic screens using data from the public-domain genome research database from Stanford University. Audiences activate and are immersed in a grand personalised composition in sound and screen that pays homage to the power of the gene and the epic nature of genetic research. For audiences of all ages. In development at Arts House, City of Melbourne

**Audience Experience:** The interactivity is defined by the morphology of sculptural shapes. The gestures and postures of the audience will be observable and instrumental as poetic elements within the assemblage. These same gestures and postures will enable those audience members to articulate the artwork, in the same manner as a conductor, or orchestral musician.