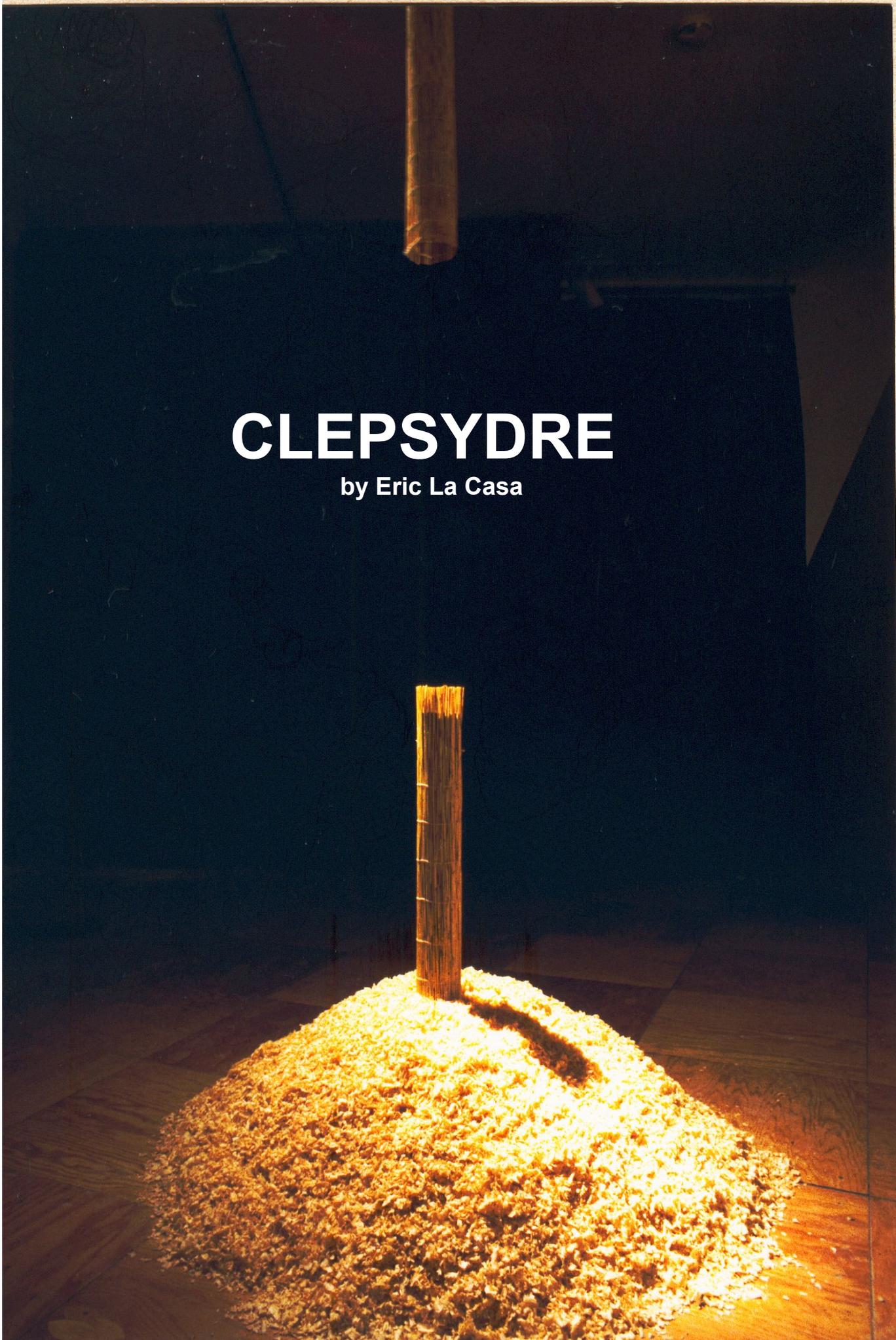


# CLEPSYDRE

by Eric La Casa



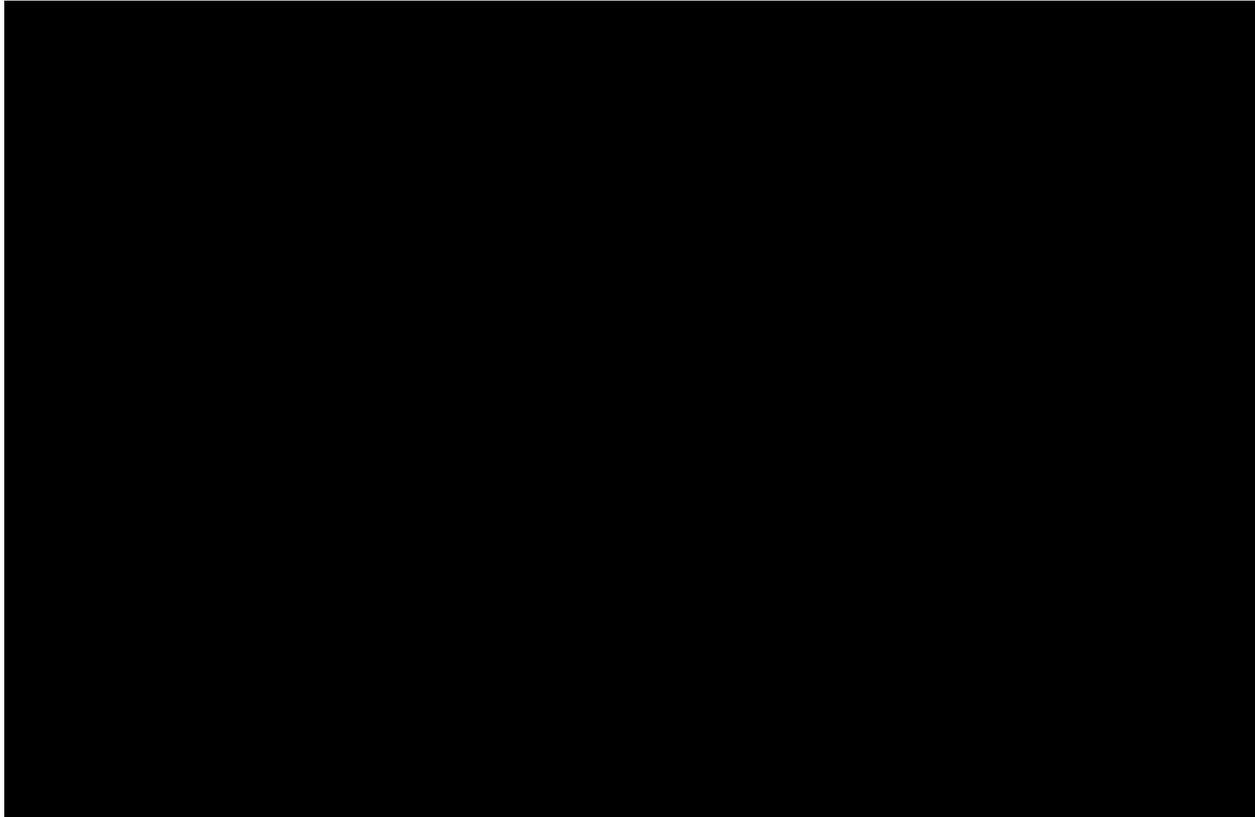
**A bamboo, water, leaves**  
**4 mono channels and 4 amplified loudspeakers**  
**1 hour**

**First exhibition during**

**"Incredibly Soft Sounds", curated by Emmanuel Madan,  
and presented by gallery 101, Ottawa - Canada, 1997**

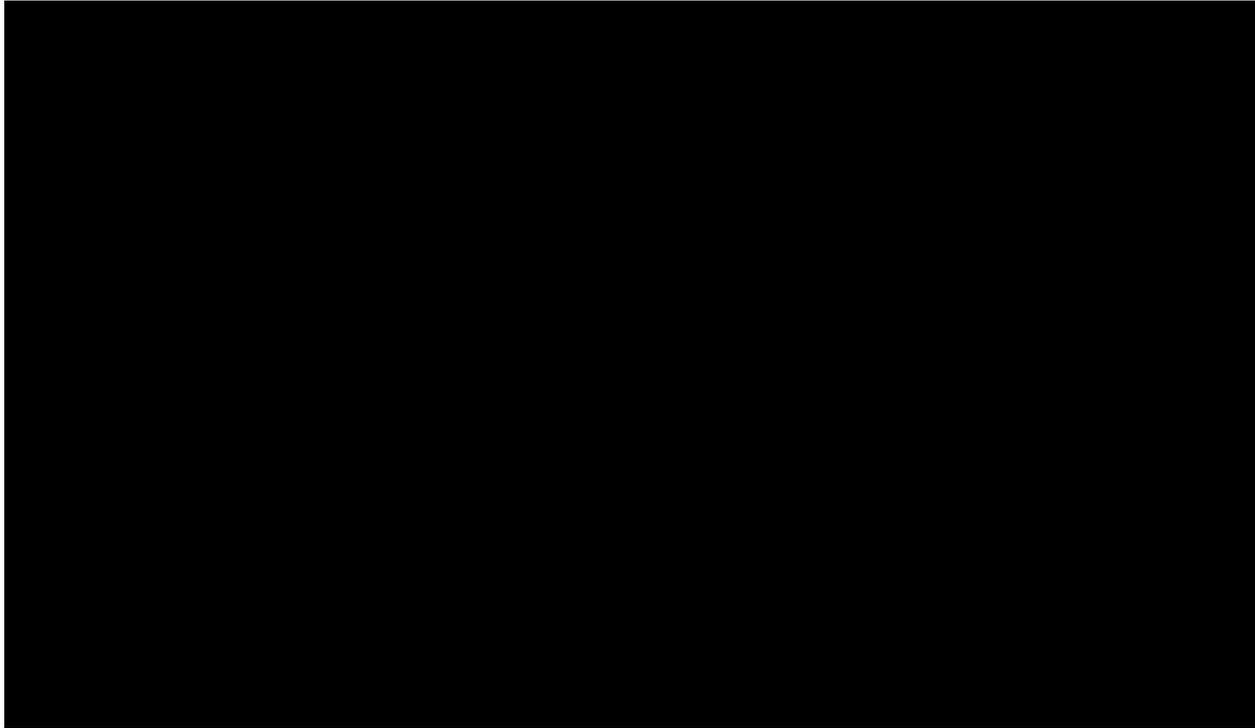


Incredibly Soft Sounds was a curatorial project at Gallery 101, an artist-run centre in Ottawa, Canada. It took the form of a group exhibition of audio art projects solicited from an open call for submissions. The theme of "incredibly soft sounds" suggests audio art and music exploring the barely audible, the very small, the minute detail, the distant, the private, the personal, the fragile, the secret, the interior. The project was proposed as a means to offer visitors the opportunity to listen more closely to otherwise ignored elements of the sound environment. "Listening" in our culture is constructed primarily as an accompaniment to other activities: one might turn on the radio to cook, clean house, do the dishes; one may play a tape while driving to work; a CD might accompany the reading of a book. Incredibly Soft Sounds presented sound environments that are so quiet as to necessitate that the listener stop everything else they are doing in order to hear anything at all. The gallery space was an ideal venue for the project in that it offered a controlled listening environment and an accessible exhibition space.



*“Tomorrow, if we do not take good care of it, we will long not only for history and geography, but we will also feel bad for the loss of time and space.” (1)*

This project questions the individuals in his dealings with the surroundings. So the Installation intends, with its precise and minimal appliance, to be an acoustical perceptive space, as well as a symbolical reflective one, dealing with time, times and thus with the idea of guiding-mark.



## Description

Our daily life is full of acoustical “next-to-no-things” which are conditioning our inner clock. Watches, clocks, alarm-clocks, but also automatic time-switches, meters of all kinds, chronometers..., all these appliances, as they force a rhythm into our bodies, are counting up every bit of our lives.

Here, I have chosen electric meters. The sound of the four machines, each with different rhythm and acoustical properties, is diffused on four speakers at the four corners of the room. Each speaker is turned towards the following one to create a (virtual) sound chain or sound circle.

Against the regular beats of these meters something is breathing, superimposing its unstable rhythms and moving along the four speakers. (2)

Lastly, in the middle of the room, a bamboo hangs from the ceiling by four thin ropes (3) and is letting drops of water drip and ring at regular intervals into another bamboo, fastened to a stand put on the floor and covered with green leaves.

## Intuitions/Intentions

A system opening up on a planetary geography and giving definite guiding-marks : a circle of water and four cardinal points in the middle, and four possible directions linked to the four corners of the room. A system whose centre (and vertical axis) is water (4), linked to the vegetal world. Around it, man is moving along with the guiding-marks given to him by civilization. The visitor is thus revolving around a double setting, between a centre and a periphery. So he is physically and / or symbolically *set* at the heart of a system. As he moves around (in a circular way like the dial of a clock ...) an interplay of meanings and sounds is revealed to him: nature/culture, centre-circle/periphery-square, water/electricity...

Furthermore, in the same way as the visitor is placed between the green leaf and a speaker magnet, the drop of water reminds us of the transitory nature of our life, as it links earth and heaven.

### Notes

(1) Paul Virilio, “L’art du moteur”, french edition Galilée.

(2) This breathing is the sound produced by the sea as it flows back and forth in a rocky formation. It is a unique experience, recorded on the adriatic coast, in Croatia.

(3) The four strings are stretched according to the four cardinal points.

(4) Mircea Eliade tells us in his “Treatise on the history of religions»: “First there are waters, before any shape, and every creation is supported by them.”

## Mode d'emploi

### One place

an empty space of 40-50 m2 maximum

### Light

Subdued lighting, completely focused on the centre the luminousness of the centre is to shed a very subdued light on the periphery.

### Sound

Any precise technical specification. At least, the equipment has only to be good at reproducing the frequencies between 50 Hz and 20 kHz.

2 amplifiers (minimum 60 Watts), 2 CD players, 4 amplified loudspeakers, if possible at the level of a human ear (about 5 feet 3 to 5 feet 7 inches high)

The balance is made with the sound of the drop of the water in reference. This sound must be the most evident in the space. The visitor has to be calm...to start listening all the details of the globality.

### Bamboo and leaves

(if necessary a drawing is ready))

2 section of one large bambou. The most largest section is fixed on the floor and half covered by "fresh" leaves (cut the day bebefore the opening) for their smell ...

Up to this first section the second one is suspended and half filled of water. According to a hole in this bamboo, a drop is regulary falling down into the other bamboo... like a hourglass.

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