

---

# Nauru Elegies, by Annie Kwon and Paul D. Miller (aka DJ Spooky)

Contributed by Deborah Turnbull  
Monday, 30 November 2009  
Last Updated Thursday, 22 July 2010

Exhibition Dates | 19 December 2009 - 30 January 2010

Launch Date | Saturday 19 December 2009 @ 2pm | GET RHYTHM! Performances and Talks by Paul D. Miller and Annie K. Kwon with guests Andrew Johnston, Ben Marks, Jon Drummond, and Shannon O'Neill | Target Theatre | Level 2 | Powerhouse Museum, Sydney

Guest Curator | Deborah Turnbull | New Media Curation

As advertised in Museums & Galleries NSW, Cyclic Defrost and Ampersand Magazine

PRESS RELEASE Available Publication: Rhythm Science, by Paul D. Miller (MIT Press, 2004)

## About the Artwork

'The Nauru Elegies: A Portrait in Sound and Hypsographic Architecture' is a technical synthesis of a live string ensemble, projected high-definition video footage, digital animation and live internet feed. It is an orchestration of content retrieved and processed in multiple localities including research in New York City, documentation in Nauru and performed in Yokohama by local musicians. It is a statement of technology and media processes in the 21st century that is exponentially progressing to a more dematerialized and delocalized state.

Audio and video recordings will be taken with the most current and mobile digital technologies in addition to the exploration of medical isosurf modeling techniques appropriated in architectural form and rendering. Economic dynamics will be mapped using current open source satellite and geospatial technologies including NASA World Wind to map hypsometric and bathymetric contours. The Nauru Elegies is realized in multiple technical layers, a manifold performance that has identifiable localities held by a complex global structure.

Text contributed by Paul Miller and Annie Kwon via KWON MILLER PRODUCTIONS.

## About the Research

KWON MILLER PRODUCTIONS has contracted New Media Curation to exhibit the Nauru Elegies in its final iteration across Australia. Prototyping in Beta\_space will provide Sydney venues such as Artspace and Performance Space a sneak preview of the final iteration to be designed and coded by the Interaction Consortium. Paul and Annie spent 8 weeks with a production crew on Nauru filming, researching, and interviewing the inhabitants to provide the global audience with a cross section of contemporary existence through the mediums of sound, music, and light, highlighting how an isolated culture struggles to survive at the cusp of financial, cultural, and social displacement.

The Republic of Nauru is a small island in the South Pacific Ocean. It is the world's smallest independent state and, at its core, represents a place at the most remote extreme of the planet. Its seemingly utopic geography and landscape stages a dystopic economy and society. It was, by consensus of several "Great Powers", used as a raw resource until there was literally, nothing left. Nauru has been mined throughout the last two centuries for its phosphate deposits, which occupied 90% of the island. In the 1980s, phosphate exports briefly gave Nauruans one of the highest per capita incomes in the Third World. It is anticipated that the phosphate reserves will be completely exhausted before 2050. Despite this, the unemployment rate currently stands at 90%.

As a small territory with no exploitable resources, in the 1990's Nauru turned to offshore financing, and the creation of "virtual banks" as a way of earning sorely needed foreign currency. As such, it mirrors the offshore island economies of The Cayman Islands, and continental havens like Luxembourg and Switzerland. The Nauru Elegies project looks at the combination of unique qualities that make a remote place like Nauru a core member of the 21st century global economy: It explores an island in a state of environmental collapse. The music component of the Nauru Elegies reflects colonial and postcolonial issues facing the digital economy of the 21st century translated into a string quartet, composed by Paul D. Miller/DJ Spooky, while the architectural component conceptualized by Annie K. Kwon spatializes and formalizes otherwise invisible economic flows and irreversible ecological devastation. A new architecture reclaims a local hypsographic territory at a culmination of global currents.

The poet Goethe once wrote: "architecture is nothing but frozen music." The Nauru Elegies asks what happens if we reverse engineer that process through on-site recordings and footage translated through the prism of music and architectural form?

#### Artist/Technologist Biographies

Paul D. Miller (aka DJ SPOOKY) is a composer, multimedia artist and writer. His written work has appeared in The Village Voice, The Source, Artforum and Raygun amongst other publications. Miller's work as a media artist has appeared in a wide variety of contexts such as the Whitney Biennial; The Venice Biennial for Architecture (2000); the Ludwig Museum in Cologne, Germany; Kunsthalle, Vienna; The Andy Warhol Museum in Pittsburgh and many other museums and galleries. His work New York Is Now has been exhibited in the Africa Pavilion of the 52 Venice Biennial 2007, and the Miami/Art Basel fair of 2007. Miller's first collection of essays, entitled Rhythm Science came out on MIT Press 2004. His book Sound Unbound, an anthology of writings on electronic music and digital media was recently released by MIT Press. Miller's deep interest in reggae and dub has resulted in a series of compilations, remixes and collections of material from the vaults of the legendary Jamaican label, Trojan Records. Other releases include Optometry (2002), a jazz project featuring some of the best players in the downtown NYC jazz scene, and Dubtometry (2003) featuring Lee 'Scratch' Perry and Mad Professor. Miller's latest collaborative release, Drums of Death, features Dave Lombardo of Slayer and Chuck D of Public Enemy among others. He also produced material on Yoko Ono's new album Yes, I'm a Witch.

Annie K. Kwon is an architect and artist who holds a Bachelors of Architecture and Bachelors of Fine Arts from the Rhode Island School of Design and a Masters of Science in Advanced Architectural Design from Columbia University. Her international architecture and urban design work includes the comprehensive master plan of Bahrain Bay in Manama as a head designer with Skidmore Owings and Merrill New York, design team member for EMBT Barcelona prize-winning Central European Bank Competition in Frankfurt and currently is the architect for James Turrell's studio in New York City. Her interdisciplinary work includes the scenography design for the Merce Cunningham internationally travelling performance, Nearly 90, that premiered in April 2009 at the Brooklyn Academy of Music. She is also a professor of architectural design at Pratt Institute and involved in collaborative teaching projects at Parsons School of Design and at RISD. Her work has been featured in A+U: Tall Buildings, Abstract of Columbia University and The New Premises of the European Central Bank released by Birkhauser Boston. She is the founder of Kwon Studio, an architectural design group based in New York City.

Dr Greg Turner (@gsta) is an interaction designer and computer scientist who specialises in emerging forms of interaction, online and otherwise. His PhD at the Creativity and Cognition Studios at the University of Technology

Sydney, blended computer science, psychology and sociology, with a dash of art, and looked at how to effectively build interactive systems to support creative users.

Aram Dulyan (@Aramgutang) is a computer scientist with a highly diverse set of interests. As a researcher he specialises in the field of human-computer interaction, computer graphics, and mobile technologies. His current research aims to improve the accessibility of cultural sites for vision impaired persons through the use of audio based virtual tours. As a technologist, he has been the technical manager of Beta\_space exhibition space in the Powerhouse Museum since 2007. During this time, he has assisted in the realisation of a number of complex new media artworks and provided technical support and maintenance for many more. Aram has continued his practise as a technologist through his technical support of projects curated by New Media Curation. He now spends most of his time as a software developer for the Interaction Consortium, where he develops innovative web applications and the occasional interactive artwork. Aram holds a Bachelor's Degree in Computer Science from the Worcester Polytechnic Institute in Massachusetts, USA, and is currently completing his Mater's Degree in Computing Science by research at the University of Technology, Sydney, where he is a member of the Creativity and Cognition Studios and the Games Studio research groups.