# Endoplexed

**MH Sarkis​**

[You can listen to this work on Youtube](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4d9aEUb2f4k)

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## Introduction

Niamh Schmidtke  0:11

Hello, you're listening to Future Artefacts FM radio show hosted by Niamh Schmidtke. And Nina Davies.

Nina Davies  0:19

Earlier this year, several radio frequencies were discovered airing a collection of broadcasts. At first they sounded like regular news stories and interviews. They felt familiar, but also not quite belonging to our present. Slowly, the listeners came to believe that what they were listening to, did indeed belong to their world, just not their time. They were looking into the future through the mundane edges of radio recordings and public service announcements. While this material is still being meticulously studied by researchers in various universities and museums, your hosts have managed to gain access to this collection to air a selection of these broadcasts for you, our listeners.

Niamh Schmidtke  1:00

For full disclosure, we will not be sharing this collection with you, as this introduction is based on a fictional event. In this monthly broadcast, Future Artefacts FM, we will present speculative fiction pieces by artists and writers, followed by conversation with hosts Niamh Schmidtke and Nina Davies. The programme will focus on fictional works intended for broadcast, such as radio plays or fictional interviews, to carve out a better understanding of the now by exploring various interpretations of the future.

## Artist Introduction

Nina Davies  1:34

Welcome back to our fourth episode of future artefacts. Today we're joined by artist MH Sarkis who will be sharing her work Endoplexed which is a 16 minute audio work.

Niamh Schmidtke  1:46

Yeah, we're really excited to have MH Sarkis on the show. It's really great to have another guest. So a little bit of background, through a blend of various mediums including textiles, CGI, film, responsive robotics, and machine learning, MH Sarkis' work explores relational dynamics, female experience and soft power within the frameworks of potential posthumanism and techno pro-topia's. Sarkis is a recent Goldsmiths MFA graduate, and winner of the 2021 Almacantar award and currently showing in the London Grads Now show the Saatchi Gallery. Very welcome on the show.

MH Sarkis  2:24

Thank you. Thanks, Nina, for having me.

Nina Davies  2:28

Oh, we're really excited to have you.

Niamh Schmidtke  2:29

Yeah, I mean, one quick question we wanted to ask, before we listen to the work. What do you consider a pro-topia to be? Or techno pro-topia?

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MH Sarkis  2:39

It implies an environment that is neither utopian nor dystopian. And reflects a situation that is perhaps somewhat better than what preceded it, but not significantly better, if that makes sense. Nor significantly worse.

Nina Davies  2:59

This is actually a new term for us when you sent it over. We were both like, what does that mean? We gave it a quick Google. And it's interesting because we kind of without knowing what the term meant. We've been talking about that a bit on the show in previous episodes.

Niamh Schmidtke  3:13

Yeah. Because there is that. I mean, a utopia and dystopia, they're kind of opposite ends of the spectrum. I think one thing kind of we've been talking about is like this mundaneness of the future and it not having to be kind of this very splashy thing of everything is horrible or everything is amazing. It's like well, what's happening in between which a proto topia describes perfectly. Yeah, is there anything else you'd like us to know about the work before we listen to it?

MH Sarkis  3:41

Well, I like to call it a soundscape. I think it's a quite jazzy term. And it doesn't really imply that it's set necessarily musical nor narrative. It just sort of creates an atmosphere that I like to think envelops the viewer, the listener.

Niamh Schmidtke  4:04

We really recommend listening to MH Sarkis' piece through headphones or earphones, as there are quite a lot of the clips within the piece are kind of surrounding and moving from one ear to another and that really helps kind of envelop you in this sensory, sensory experience. Okay, so we'll listen to your to your work and be back in about 16 minutes, enjoy.

## Endoplexed work

Piece  5:00

Hi. You remember the spider that lives in the bushes outside your window. Orange body green legs, watched her build a web all summer. And one day there's a big egg in the egg hatched,

Female Character  7:20

the egg hatched

Piece  7:23

and 100 baby spiders came out

Technological voice  7:27

later Distance tech no animation, assemble and dis-assemble your monstrosity

Unknown Speaker  15:35

The thing that I’m doing here is like overflow I will increase the gain or decrease the gain and sometimes with the ovaries I'll push the ovary button which makes it more sensitive and you can see flow much better sometimes you can of course the end your probe and your settings so if I'm going to use the current probe

Unknown Speaker  16:31

Going to use that all the time, remembering lots of things.

## Conversation

Nina Davies  21:15

Welcome back. I hope you all enjoy the beautiful sounds of MH Sarkis' work. To start off this conversation, I was wondering if you could give us a brief description about where this work has come from for you, before we delve into some of your references, it might be nice for our listeners to understand your position as the artist in relation to this work.

MH Sarkis  21:36

Sure. So in making this work, I instinctively wanted to piece together something that was cinematic and in a sense, immersive enough to help viewers get lost in the piece. And in starting the work, I was reviewing some clips from the 1982 Blade Runner film. And that's, that film has always been a big inspiration for me. And something that really struck me was a snippet, a dialogue snippet from the film, where Rachel is speaking with Deckard about her memories. And one of them entails a spider hatching? Well, a spider laying an egg, and that egg hatching open.

Snippet from Endoplexed

You remember the spider that lives in a bush outside your window, orange body green legs, watched her build a web all summer. And one day, there's a big egg in it the egg hatched,

the egg hatched.

And 100 baby spiders came out and the ate her.

MH Sarkis  22:59

And there were hundreds of little babies that ended up eating the mother. And I thought that was quite a surreal idea. Because it's not only touching on the fear of, that maybe comes along with with motherhood, but also something that supposedly Rachel is not able to do herself, which is give birth, and also something that she doesn't necessarily have autonomy over which is these memories,

Piece  23:34

implants, those aren't your memories or somebody else's, they're Tyrrell's nieces.

MH Sarkis 23:40

And these, just for people who aren't very aware, these memories are supposedly implanted into her so they're not organic, per se,

Niamh Schmidtke  23:51

To simulate the memories?

MH Sarkis  23:53

Yes.

Niamh Schmidtke  23:54

I mean, I wanted to talk to you about what I felt was the unease in the work which when you start off with that, quote of the process of giving birth or of laying eggs is also the process of being consumed because this spider can have, all of these baby spiders come out that they come out from within her. So in the process of giving life, she loses life.

MH Sarkis

Yes.

Niamh Schmidtke

And what I found quite interesting as I was listening through the piece was that the work collages several audio clips together, in a way the audio it feels quite dystopic to me. I know we talked about proto topia's, but it feels very dark, and it's fragments of the future that we're about to inherit. I'm wondering was this process deliberate to create unease for the listener?

MH Sarkis  24:14

You know, what's funny is I don't deliberately go into it thinking I want to create something that makes people feel ill at ease, I all I really want is to immerse the listener in, so that they, in a way forget what is waiting outside for them externally. So I don't know if that answers your your question. I mean, it wasn't it wasn't intentional, but I guess it's part and parcel of some of the themes that are being explored in the piece. So, fertility. And speaking of which I know I mentioned that Rachel supposedly can't give birth, but at that stage in, in the story, we don't actually know, for sure. So there is this, you know, a set of unknowns that are still being dealt with in the narrative, even a near future, per se. That's not to say that I think the near future is dystopic. As we're saying, it's, it's, I mean, judging by the way things have gone in the last century, that's, it's more akin to, as we were saying, a pro-topia, you know, I guess human history has shown that we have progressed and made slight, at least slight improvements in what we were previously subjected to, as, on a whole. So I don't think it would necessarily be fair to say that we have a dystopia coming up. But something that is perhaps different to what we're used to, or what we know. And that unknown can be quite scary in some ways.

Niamh Schmidtke  26:17

So the process of it being unknown is what makes it perhaps, feel dystopic, even when it's not actually?

MH Sarkis  26:23

Yes.

Nina Davies  26:24

Do you see something like something like IVF, which we'll probably come back to later? Unless we cover it all now? Do you see that as a sort of dystopia or pro-topia, I'm really interested to know your thoughts on IVF as a sort of future?

MH Sarkis  26:40

I think it's, it holds a lot of positive possibilities, just because it extends your your window as a woman. And you're no longer bound by your, your body clock necessarily. However, when that then leads on to other kinds of reproductive technologies, I think that's where I feel there should be some caution. While a lot of caution exercised, just because of the huge potential for commodification and abuse of these kinds of technologies.

Niamh Schmidtke  27:23

Skipping ahead a bit, I was wondering if this is sort of a critique of contemporary IVF practices, because, kind of you sent us on a few references beforehand, kind of specifically about kind of the distinction of how IVF clinics will kind of create consent forms for women to know, should your eggs that you are donating, not are giving not be formed into embryos, what happens? And part of that is they might go into stem cell research, which is kind of highly controversial. In reading that research in conjunction with listening to this work, it just, yeah, I was wondering, do you feel like the work is kind of acting to kind of open out that kind of possible future? Or do you feel it's a critique of kind of contemporary or present practices in IVF?

MH Sarkis  28:11

Perhaps it's, I'm inclined to say that it's both, really. I do think that when it comes to women being informed about what is going to happen with their eggs, I think that there needs to be obviously a full, full disclosure. And that's the that would be I would say, the difference between organ donation and egg donation. There's been obviously so much more research when it comes to organ donation. And it's comes from a much more altruistic standpoint, in a way. And you also don't get paid for donating an organ. However, the whole term itself, egg donation, although it's called donation, women who donate their eggs, quote, unquote, donate their eggs, are actually getting paid for that. And that calls into question a whole other host of problems.

Nina Davies  29:12

The commodification of the female body or the female reproductive system.

MH Sarkis  29:17

Exactly. And I do think that bottom line is, women always need to be at the centre point of any sorts of reproductive discussions. That makes sense.

Nina Davies  29:34

Yeah, when Niamh and I were talking earlier, about your work, briefly talking about how it's really interesting that the word infertile or fertility is is always linked to, to the feminine. And what I can't remember what, why we started talking, I mean, obviously, we were talking about it because of your work, but I think we were talking about the movie, weren't we?

Niamh Schmidtke  29:56

Yeah. So I don't know if you've seen the film, Children of Men. In 2006 science fiction film and the idea behind the film is that 18 years ago, babies stopped being born. And we were kind of, yeah, I guess in preparation for today, was just watching kind of a snippet of it. And part of it was talking about, you know, oh, why do you think women have become infertile? As opposed to kind of, I guess maybe a more contemporary understanding that, you know, it's, it's your partner as well. But oftentimes, there is a sense of it being the fault of the woman. I mean, most recently, kind of the TV series Sex Education had their most recent season. And in it, one of the characters, she's going through fertility treatment, but you can see as the show progresses, that she feels that weight, that it is her fault, and that her partner does not want it. And it's put the responsibility, it seems to put entirely on her as opposed to it being a relationship.

MH Sarkis  31:00

Definitely. That harks back to the historic connection that has been placed on women, when it comes to fertility. You know, if a woman didn't produce a male hair, heir, it was pinned as the woman's fault, basically. So while that, as I say, that's an onus, it's also, I think, in a way, something that's, that's unique, to host basically another life form inside your own body. And I think that is, well, has potential maybe to be appropriated through a continued, perhaps, patriarchal nature of bio medical systems.

Nina Davies  31:55

Well talking about fertility being, you know, historically, like the idea of fertility or infertility, being connected to the female, and also, get, I guess, questioning what the female or what the feminine is in future of of the word infertility or fertility. And I guess like, that's something like IVF is challenging, like, I guess the role of of the woman within these systems. The woman is now something that's commodified, is she relevant, I guess, that's sort of something that in Blade Runner, like kind of comes up as well, like, what's the role of the woman in society, in this dystopian future vision?

MH Sarkis  32:39

So I see, yeah, I see that as a source of power, in a way for women to have this innate system, if that makes sense. But also a responsibility that isn't always very welcome. If that makes sense.

Niamh Schmidtke  32:57

Yeah, because it simultaneously is like this, this responsibility of kind of caring for and maintaining life. But then also, there's this massive range of women or feminine presenting people who don't want to ever carry a child. And then the kind of responsibility I guess, of not carrying a child is, then there's, or it's kind of seen as singularity theirs so kind of if a woman is in a relationship with a man or just not in a, if they're in a relationship where, you know, two different sex organs. It's almost in its own, it's typically the woman's responsibility, or the or the female presenting person's responsibility to stop reproduction from happening.

MH Sarkis  33:47

But I think having that option in itself can be very powerful. Having being able to exercise the option of either carrying or deciding not to carry this other, you know, an offspring. I think that in and of itself is, as I say, for want of a better word. It is it is powerful, it is significant. It's,

Nina Davies  34:09

You're not sort of bound to the sort of like rules of society that if you were the one that has given birth to the child, that means that you're the one that has to take time off work, and you're the one that... I mean, I'm sort of thinking about I remember I had a conversation with some people who ran a company in Finland somewhere, and we were talking about it. I don't know how we got on to talking about it. But they were talking about how they wouldn't hire a woman who was like 30 or over. I mean, they would if she was the best person for the job. But if she was next to a man of the same age with the same responsibilities as, they would hire him, because she's a risk because she might need to, she might need to take maternity leave, which they might not be able to really afford to do,

Niamh Schmidtke  34:56

Which I find hilarious in Finland because I'm pretty sure that there's equal paternal to maternal care

Nina Davies  35:01

Oh is there in Finland?

Niamh Schmidtke  35:03

At least in, in a lot of Scandinavian countries I know in Sweden, you get, you get basically parental leave, and you split it between the partners.

Nina Davies  35:13

Yeah, yeah, I have these like words, just sort of like the from this conversation ringing in my head, which I probably had, like, seven years ago. And now that I'm, now that I am 30, I can't believe I'm saying this on the radio show. Like, I'm definitely thinking about it a lot more now, like without having a secure job. But I do think about like, would someone want to hire me, if there was a man who was just as you know, just as worthy of the job as I was?

MH Sarkis  35:41

That's definitely a huge disadvantage that comes with being a woman, I guess. But at the same time, I find these two extremes really, really interesting. And when I say extremes, I mean, the huge benefit to being able to create life and the huge downside to having the ability as well, which is, for example, the discrimination that you've just brought up. And I think these sorts of concepts carry a lot of weight because of these two, very different...

Niamh Schmidtke  36:14

I guess it kind of feels like the ability to carry a child is seen almost as a burden in contemporary society, or at least the ability that, or how it's going to conflict with a working life. They don't really compute because the idea of taking time off or taking time out or focusing on a form of care and a form of work that is typically unpaid, is not seen as positive, often. I think there can be a case, at least when you're, when you're younger, and you're maybe not thinking about having children or you haven't had a child, a lot of it is oh, you're going to give up this and you're going to give up that. But often when you speak with new parents, they're like, I've gained so much. And that side isn't the side that is focused on so much when you're, beforehand.

MH Sarkis  37:06

I really wonder how things are going to develop now that the pandemic and lockdown has radically changed the way that we work. We have a lot more people working from home than ever before. And I think that definitely opened up a lot more doors when it comes to child care, or parenthood. That's it. Yeah,

Nina Davies  37:31

Yeah definitely I mean, I was sort of wondering whether during during lockdown, whether there was going to be another? I mean, I think I'm not the only one who saw this, I think this is the thing that whether there's going to be another baby boom. Because everyone's kind of at home. Got nothing to do, may as well have a baby.

Niamh Schmidtke  37:50

Yeah, but I guess I've also heard a lot of stories of young parents where, because you are at home, there's almost a return back to more patriarchal or kind of like a 1950s housewife kind of mentality where, now that you're both working from home, and you're there all the time. It's like, oh, well, a workplace is now seen as a more equal place. Because you're outside of a home, whether it's a home or a domestic space, still seems to fall under a lot more, or at least in like, from my perspective, growing up in like Ireland, it's still much more of a gender roled space, it's more expected for women to do cooking and cleaning, it's more expected for them to do child work. And that's not to say that, you know, if there's a male partner in that relationship, that they won't also pick up some of that weight. But they'll almost never pick up an equal amount or more. And so it's actually been really hard. I was reading an article released in the Irish Times about artists and the impact of them working from home and drastically for a lot of artists who are mothers. They found that they lost about 80% of the time they would have spent working on art practice through childcare.

MH Sarkis  39:07

Yeah, I think the arts itself is, as a whole very unforgiving, and given its dog eat dog nature, there's, it's not super surprising why one of the most disadvantaged or negatively affected groups would be mothers in that sense.

Nina Davies  39:27

So I just want to bring it up. And I know it's not like directly what your work is about. But I just wanted to ask the work seems to be referencing 80s sci fi aesthetics or sound aesthetics, I guess, and I'm wondering if and why this era is of interest to you, and how you see it in relation to our current conceptions of the future? Do you think there's any sort of credibility to an 80s vision of the future? Or is it perhaps more symbolic for you?

MH Sarkis  39:58

Sure. I think there's a lot of credibility to any sort of prior vision of the future. So, for me, I do like to look back at older forms of sci fi and how people before us viewed what was looming. To put it that way. My interest isn't just limited to the 80s, necessarily, but also sci fi before then. But when it comes to Blade Runner specifically, I don't know if that's what you're asking. Because that there's nothing else in the 80s that I draw from neccesarily.

Nina Davies  40:37

I guess mostly the, I guess the sort of synth-ey the the sort of synth-ey sounds that that are in the work? Which obviously don't play throughout the whole work, but they do sort of, they're sort of like a reoccurring character, or, and I guess it doesn't just make me think of the 80s. It also made me think of, what's that TV show that, Stranger Things?

MH Sarkis  40:59

Oh, yeah.

Nina Davies  40:59

Like a sort eighties show.

MH Sarkis  41:00

Which is heavily inspired by the eighties. Yeah, I think the reason why the 80s is inspirational to a lot of creators is because I think that's when the use of synth really became more of a thing. And part of my interest, in synth is that it's obviously a sound that doesn't exist in nature, necessarily. And the reason why I used a lot of that in the work is because I wanted to take the listeners out of a grounded, real instrument like the piano and into something that's much more artificial sounding, although a fun fact is the artificial sounds were actually made, from the piano playing itself. So it was those notes, piano notes that were..

Niamh Schmidtke  41:57

I mean, it's making me because we were speaking previously about IVF treatments, and that combination of I guess, the more and the less organic sounds or kind of the artificial with this, or synthesised. Were you thinking about that in relation to, for instance, IVF treatment? Where it is this kind of sterilised process of something that is typically quite organic. Did you make that relationship while you were...?

MH Sarkis  42:25

Yes. So like you're saying IVF is a, you know, artificial intervention into a very natural process? And I really am interested in that interplay between the two.

Nina Davies  42:41

Would you say though, someone who's been conceived, someone who was a test tube baby, would you say that their life is artificial in any? I mean, so that's a that's a big question, isn't it like? And also, like, I don't, I don't think that, I don't want to insult anyone that might be a test tube baby that's listening. But I guess it's sort of like, to what point like, when does it become when is artificial? And? And when is it real? It's not an artificial egg? It's not an artificial sperm. It's?

Niamh Schmidtke  43:12

Or even is it? I guess there can be question, is it controversial to tell that child and to tell that person?

Nina Davies  43:19

in the article that you sent us about the comparing the organ donors to egg donors, it's wrapped up in like loads of ethical questions. And obviously, like these kids being able to kids, or will eventually become adults having access to all of that information? Like are they do they get access to the information about their parents or their, their their biological parents?

MH Sarkis  43:45

Yeah, we don't know, the long term consequences, or what might arise further down the line. But I think the idea of IVF is somewhat well, let's put it this way, egg donorship is a step, I think, further removed from something organic than let's say, maybe IVF is just because IVF doesn't necessarily imply that the parents are not the biological parents, if that makes sense.

Niamh Schmidtke  44:16

I guess I'm thinking, maybe because it's a little close to home for me, but I'm thinking about IVF in terms of an ability to give queer partners the ability to have a child with their, with their DNA. I mean, for me, in particular, I keep referencing TV shows, but Master of None, they had a new season that came out during the summer. And there's one episode where one of the main characters, she, she's a queer woman, and she wants to have a child really, really badly. And she goes through IVF treatments, and she harvests her own eggs for it. And the whole process is to be honest, as like a gay woman who is also kind of thinking about what happens if I ever want to have children, terrifying. because it's extremely invasive, but it also makes me think about that biological aspect. And then you kind of reach into these controversies of, if there is this kind of sterile nature of IVF, and then biology, and then that child being more or less organic, depending on how related its biology is to its parents. It's such a slippery slope of then, kind of, I guess, in my mind, like the crux of the question is, does it matter? And if so, why? Maybe part of when I'm listening to your work, and I'm kind of, I have this background in my head, I can't help but be kind of caught in like this dystopia or this like question of, I don't know if this is really the world, I want to, I want to go forward in, like I don't want to be consumed by my eggs. And I don't want to hear kind of a baby's wail. But I don't know if I'm painting quite like a fragmented image of the piece here, though.

MH Sarkis  45:58

I think the piece itself is probably fragmented on its own. But I love that it just brings up so many different threads of thought. And so there is no, I guess, no one way to interpret the piece. And when it comes to all the questions that it throws up, I don't know. I honestly don't know. And like, these are things I'm interested in.

Nina Davies  46:26

Yeah, one interpretation of the piece that I had. I mean, you did sort of, say at the beginning of the episode that you see it as a soundscape. But one of my questions was, whether you see it as a narrative or more of a sensory experience. And so I was thinking about how an embryo experiences the sound of a womb. And that's, I guess, a heartbeat. And there's always that saying that we all sort of want to go back to the womb. And I wonder, but what would be the sounds that a test tube embryo hears? And there was? I mean, not necessarily, I thought that your work is necessarily the sounds of a test tube embryo?

MH Sarkis  47:08

That would be amazing.

Nina Davies  47:09

Yeah. But I guess there was sort of that manmade noise, maybe going back to the question, do you see it as a sensory experience? Or a narrative?

MH Sarkis  47:18

Yeah, I think I saw it as both starting with the scene being set by the dialogue, and then following into a trajectory, where, as we were just saying, things become a bit more fragmented. And you need to sort of piece together what the work could be referencing. But I think as that goes along, that's where it becomes much more sensory, if that makes sense. So in a way, you lose yourself within the, the sounds. There's something that I noticed between, so the work that I've made, and the work that Niamh made, the work that you Nina made, that was on the show, as well. So the first and second episode, and it just really, really struck me how this commonality was a dropping down of the octave, of the voices.

Nina Davies  48:16

Yeah.

MH Sarkis  48:16

And I think that's really it brings up something really, really interesting. I think about perhaps, how we perceive voices of authority.

Nina Davies  48:28

Definitely.

MH Sarkis  48:29

And that's, that's something that I've done a lot in my work as well as to bring down the octave of my voice. If it is my voice that I'm using at the time. I don't know what you guys think about?

Nina Davies  48:41

I'd say that actually, all three of us have I mean, maybe not, maybe not, MH, but I think Niamh and I definitely do have quite deep voices already. So I found it quite weird that we still wanted to make make our voices deeper.

Niamh Schmidtke  48:56

I think we also both have quite different reasons for doing it. I mean, you were inhabiting the voice of a man. Yeah. Yeah. I guess in Yeah, it was for the fictional podcast, and it was kind of a conversation between two, two men, kind of an ex hockey player. I guess, when when I was dropping down the the octave of the voice, it was trying, or it was attempting to do something more genderless. So obviously, I have a feminine voice but if I dropped down the octave, it very quickly becomes is it? Is it a woman is it a man, I'm not quite sure. And because I was trying to voice something nonhuman, it felt more important to blur that line a bit. Because even that kind of concept of gender, you know, like a plant has all its reproductive organs within it. Male and female doesn't really make sense anymore, at least from my perspective, but I'm thinking about it. I mean, the sea can be called feminine, but I don't think we have to consider it as that. It feels a little restrictive to me, but I don't know how successful that octave change was?

MH Sarkis  50:02

I definitely saw the blurring of lines as the blurring of what what is organic, and what is perhaps artificially made. And I think that's also where my interest lies. But also when it comes to, to dropping that octave down, it's it is to, I think, get people or listeners or viewers of whatever pieces to take the work more seriously. It makes me think about, because for want of a better reference, how Margaret Thatcher had to go through voice training, to bring her, her voice down, for that exact reason. I.e. to be taken more seriously and more as an authority figure.

Nina Davies  50:49

Isn't that, it's same one like the the tube, the mind, the gap between the train and the platform is a is a man. And the other announcements are a woman. So it's like when it's something really important, it's a man's voice. And it's a woman's voice when it's like, alight here for..

MH Sarkis  51:08

That's a good point, I actually never noticed that.

Niamh Schmidtke  51:11

I'm also wondering as well, even in general kind of lower octaves of things taken more seriously, or, like I'm thinking about your work is like the kind of the synth sounds in it our I wouldn't say high pitched but I wouldn't say low pitched, whether as the section where it appears like a woman is crying or wailing. It kind of distorts, and it breaks and it goes deeper.

Piece  51:46

low pictched distored wailing

Niamh Schmidtke  51:52

I didn't quite cop this when I was listening to the work. But what I'm thinking now about in relation to this conversation, and how does that make the wail seem more serious? Because it seems less feminine and therefore more, less traditionally heard? Was that something that you were thinking about? Or is this more that like break into distortion?

MH Sarkis  52:14

It was the latter, I think. But now that you mentioned, what you just did. That's, that's interesting to me. It's not something that came to mind when I was first working on it.

Nina Davies  52:26

There's also something I was just, I've just been sat here just kind of thinking about the difference between like a sort of high octave and a low octave, and how, how both of both of those pitches, like have a way of like moving through you. So something that's low has a sort of high vibration, state like way of being so it moves, it can actually physically sort of make you move, whereas something that's really high pitched is also described as piercing. It moves through you in a in a completely different way. It's like really poignant. And..

MH Sarkis  52:59

So if it's if it's low pitched, you sort of feel it in your in your gut. If that makes sense? And I guess that's, that's part of the concept of bass as well. Of music having a really heavy bass. That's something you physically feel.

Nina Davies  53:15

And something that's high pitches, I guess, associated with pain? With pain, yeah.

MH Sarkis  53:21

Actually, part of the soundscape contains a shift from zero to 200,000 Hertz. And once it goes, I think past the point of hearing,

Nina Davies  53:40

2000, wasn't it?

MH Sarkis  53:41

2000 is the point where you can't hear anything anymore. Yeah. But up until that point, you can you can feel it piercing. And it's not very pleasurable.

Nina Davies  53:52

But now it feels it feels like your ears might explode or something it is real. They do that um, near my parents house back in Canada. There's a house that has an alarm, and I think I've heard them here too. There is this high pitched, little like beep. And it's a way to keep teenage loiterers from, like not loitering around the house, because there's a certain point where you can't hear it anymore, because our hearing is slowly getting worse and worse. So I have always had this thing where I always walk past this house every time I go back and see whether like it's like a really good gauge for me to tell whether I'm getting older or not. And if I can still hear it, I'm like yes, I can still hear it.

MH Sarkis  54:32

So teenagers are much more likely to hear that sound?

Nina Davies  54:36

And then not want to, yeah, and not want to hang around the spaces.

Niamh Schmidtke  54:41

This kind of combination of like the pitch and hearing and age just kind of making me think back to talking about kind of children and like growth and so on. Even maybe using this piece as a way to test or to like think about age and fertility in a way. So kind of how different ages of audience will hear the work and will kind of register the changes in that frequency. I guess I'm wondering as well, like, what? What range of frequency can? Could the baby hear? Or could the? Like, could a baby when it's born hear? Or could an embryo when it's in the womb hear?

Nina Davies  55:18

Or your or your dog? You've got like the dog whistles, don't you? They're like, so high pitch that you can't hear it?

Niamh Schmidtke  55:23

Yeah, completely. But I know, there's something about kind of the, how an ear will form and kind of what kind of sounds you can hear. And kind of, I guess how you interpret sounds is like a completely different thing. But even just what your ear perceives, kind of what kind of frequency your ear perceives, sort of like when you're, when you're born, does your mother's voice sound higher to you, and then progressively get deeper as you go older? Also, as kind of, I mean, typically, women's voices get deeper as they get older as well. But I guess I'm thinking of that in relation to this conversation about pitch and how that authority kind of perhaps starts? I don't know.

MH Sarkis  56:06

Yes, it's good point. So pitch is basically mutable, based on purpose, or the course of nature in a way?

Niamh Schmidtke  56:22

I guess I'm kind of continuing that conversation about, about pitch and how it kind of assumes authority or doesn't, thinking about the the sound clip from in the piece where it's the audio of an ultrasound? What, what pitch, does an ultrasound go at? And can can the embryo hear it? I guess maybe? It's an interesting question.

MH Sarkis  56:46

So from my understanding, you need about 20 megahertz to be able to get a scan going. And I think the, the, what you hear towards the end of the audio piece is the embryo as it goes along through its different stages. And that, in itself, sort of seems to be deepening, as it goes along. In in pitch and tone.

Niamh Schmidtke  57:21

When you say stages, you mean the stages of?

MH Sarkis  57:24

Development.

Niamh Schmidtke  57:26

I guess I'm thinking about the, the relation of what we're talking to now, to your bio about techno pro-topia's. And this sort of mundane, near future, technological future. Do you see is that where a lot of your research is kind of coming from? Is that what you're expanding on in the future? Or?

MH Sarkis  57:48

Okay, I'm yeah, I'm more interested in how these concepts fall more generally, along the periphery of female experience.

Niamh Schmidtke  58:02

Talking about like techno pro topia's, specifically in relation to female fertility and IVF treatment. I guess I'm curious about that relationship between something kind of organic and feminine to technology, especially when it seems to largely mean that it's appropriated.

MH Sarkis  58:23

There's that likelihood of appropriation, but then, along with that, there's the, what seems to me quite an exciting possibility to extend yourself as a human with these technologies. So that goes back to what can be perceived as polar opposite expectations of these advancements in technology, in biomedicine.

Niamh Schmidtke  58:50

You're talking about the ability to kind of to freeze eggs and then?

MH Sarkis  58:54

Any advancement, any advancement in reproductive technology, I think.

Niamh Schmidtke  58:58

This is a way to kind of provide ability for more, for more people to conceive if they want to or?

MH Sarkis  59:03

Yes, and at their own timeframe, as well.

Niamh Schmidtke  59:09

Okay.

MH Sarkis  59:09

And no longer being tied to what you might call it their own body clock, per se.

Nina Davies  59:15

Well, I think we're gonna have to finish up there. Thank you so much, MH, for joining us.

MH Sarkis  59:22

Thank you for having me.

Niamh Schmidtke  59:23

It was a really good conversation. Thanks for expanding more on the on the piece and the research.

Nina Davies  59:28

Thank you so much, and we'll see you in for, not you MH, but we'll see you listeners in four weeks time.

'Till next time.

Yeah, bye!