

I Just Called Version 2.0

Everybody's plans and habits have been chewed up and spat out by Covid19. For artist Colin Woods that means completely reassessing his work *I Just Called*.

I Just Called is a curated series of voice recordings of people pretending to make a phone call to a loved one. The recordings were collected in Northern Ireland and Aotearoa/New Zealand. Each anonymous caller's words are unscripted and devoid of context, but the result is very affecting for the listener. The original piece relayed the content via eight telephone handsets suspended from a ceiling panel.

"It's no longer a safe option to have visitors to an exhibition pick up a handset and listen to the messages," Woods says, "because the handsets are potentially vectors for transmission of pathogenic organisms, particularly as they involve hand contact and are then brought into close proximity to the face.

"At the same time, the pandemic has made us very aware of the importance of communication and connectedness, so I feel that the work is more important than ever." Woods' solution has been to move the work online, as a browser-based interface that is optimised for smartphones. (<http://ijustcalled.online>)

"This piece plays with the dynamic between intimacy and voyeurism," Woods says. "We hear people saying heartfelt and private things to ones they love. By agreeing to be recorded for the work, they have given us permission to listen, but still there is a sense that we might be intruding – and that's both delicious and slightly uncomfortable!"
"I'm fascinated by humans and the theatre we perform as we all go about our daily activities."

Woods still intends to collect further voice contributions to the project and is hoping to run socially-distanced events to do so. He envisages presenting the original installation as a non-interactive object to focus the minds of the participants. Expressions of interest about hosting an event are welcome.

Woods was born in Northern Ireland in 1961 and grew up in the Protestant community during the troubles. He embraced punk music and non-sectarian politics as a teenager. "Being in a punk band, it didn't matter that my working-class family couldn't afford a piano, or piano lessons – I got a guitar, learned a few chords, and started a band with friends." He left school at 16 to earn money to buy a guitar amplifier. His first job, in a hospital laboratory, became a 30-year career as a biomedical scientist.

Colin emigrated to Aotearoa in 2002 but maintains connections with Northern Ireland. In 2009 he fulfilled a lifelong ambition to study music, enrolling in the Diploma of Contemporary Music at Unitec. He then completed a Bachelor of Music at the University of Auckland and a Master of Creative Technology at AUT. The first iteration of *I Just Called* was part of his Master of Creative Technology exhibition at the Audio Foundation in 2017.

Woods' other work-in-progress includes *Braid Gabs*, a long-term project gathering structured video interviews exploring the contemporary situation of Ulster Scots culture from a range of perspectives. This will eventually be presented as a multi-screen installation. "I was back in Belfast for an extended visit in 2018 after being away for a long time, and I noticed that something had changed about how the Protestant community sees itself. I wanted to unpick what was happening there in a manner that honoured the nuances and dynamic tensions rather than presenting heavily-edited soundbites and glib solutions."

Notes about I Just Called: <https://colinjameswoods.com/i-just-called/>

Video about version 2: <https://youtu.be/A8SIFs7r9jw>

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