

# OPUS



My name is Sabrina Shirazi and I am an artist and designer who creates installations, events and experiences which are participant led. I work with colour (Motley Collective), tactile affix-able textiles (AFFIX) and food (Cuisine+Colour). My work is orientated around play, visual vibrancy, accessibility and how people use their senses.

I applied to the Food Residency because I had an idea that began two years ago, which brought together the synergies between food, visuals and sound to heightened effect when experienced in tandem. This idea is called OPUS and I had not been able to lift it off the ground since the idea came about. I was motivated to apply to the residency because I knew the concept for OPUS was strong, I was a resident at Pervasive Media Studio and I knew it would be the right place to nourish OPUS. The residency was to create 'something' that combined Food and Technology. My response was to develop OPUS and to learn how to incorporate technology as a delivery method for the food to be eaten by the audience members when prompted. I approached the response and application to the brief with an honest passion for my existing idea and an openness regarding my lack of technology knowledge, to see where my love for learning and exploring took me.



With regards to the programme of the residency, I did not know what to expect because it was my first ever residency. It was also the studio's first food residency and At-Bristol's first artist residency.

I was not expecting to have the amount of support I had, nor was I expecting the drive from the PM Studio and At-Bristol's team to help me to the extent they did. Therefore, without having expectations, I was positively overwhelmed and overjoyed by the outcome and aftermath of the showcase, which has connected me to a greater network of possibilities as to where OPUS could take me.

*First OPUS artwork, Motley Collective*

The development of OPUS during the residency was split into two areas. The first was to find a way of matching food with sounds. It was important for foods to be matched by a public consensus, as it became a way of making the experience relatable and an observation about how people make this connection.



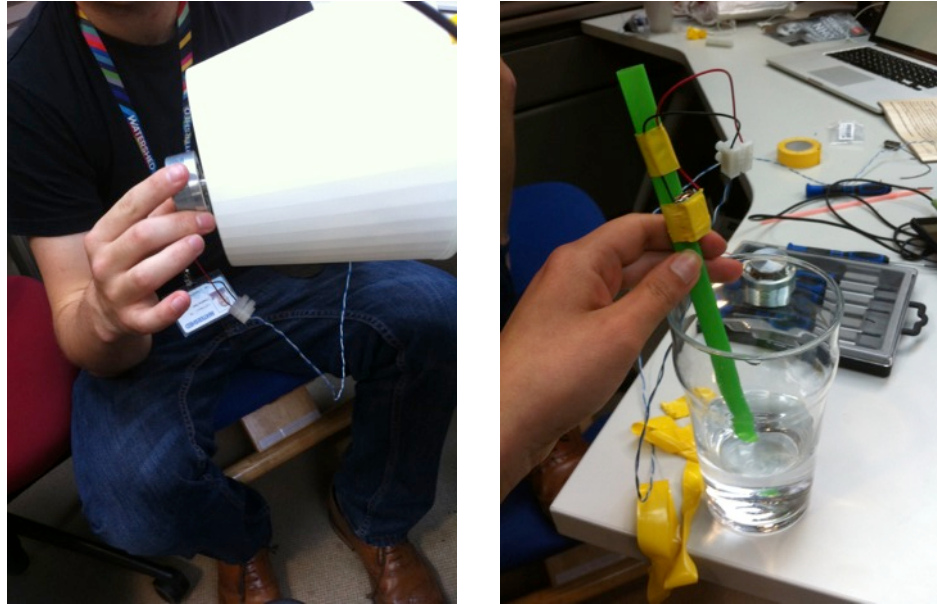
*OPUS workshop at Extract Coffee Roasters*

The workshop formats began as questions to make people feel comfortable about answering these abstract questions. Allowing people to use any language to describe a sound (in reference to colour, texture, temperature, mood, imagery) and how it alludes to taste, worked well. The two elements of feedback and observations from the workshops are that when asked to define the flavour of an instrument, people wanted to identify with their archetypal notion of that instrument. If the food was ready on the table, it proved too obvious and offering foods when people made suggestions worked better as it also allowed for the participant to change their mind. If people were looking at someone playing music, they would comment on the performer and in general, people were more inclined to talk about the type of music that was being played, rather than focusing on the instrument itself. Unlike the cello, a cymbal is considered to be a 'sound' and it was easier to define it as a consensus and flavour rather than the sound of a Bach recital. Offering people different ways to define the sound was useful, like sculpting it and offering the choice for people to create their own recipes. All in all, honing the art of asking questions allowed for people to open up and sparked interest in how the workshops could be used beyond the interest of gathering food research for OPUS.





The second area of research was to find a way of using technology as an integral and innovative way of delivering and experiencing food in a performance, especially as food eaten during a performance is uncommon. We looked at how to visualise sound by putting a cornflower mixture on a speaker, placed on the back of a chair so that the person in front to 'see' the movement of the music. We also looked at how people can feel sound as vibrations using a transducer on a chair or a bone conducting straw that allows people to hear music whilst drinking a beverage.



*Experimenting with transducers and bone conductors*

The prototypes I explored were created from a want to initially prompt audience members to eat food at particular times. This developed into a way of combining how food can be experienced whilst 'feeling' sound. My initial aims and objectives to design, test and create an audience prompter were realistic but evolving the idea meant that the prototypes were able to be more intelligent, unexpected, experimental and integral to the concept. The workshops enabled me to find the consensus between flavours and sound the tech-related prototypes became a way of enhancing more than one sense whilst enjoying food at the same time.



*Peristaltic pump drinks dispenser and speakers in napkins*





*The developing and testing of bone conducting gobstoppers*

The ideas changed over the course of the residency to positive effect, due to being fed market research and information about other projects and products through conversations with David Haylock (Creative Technologist at Watershed ) and the producers across the Pervasive Media Studio (Verity McIntosh and Rachael Burton) and At-Bristol (Ruth Murray and Katie Cooper). The Studio and At-Bristol have a dense black book of creatives and industry professionals who I was able to meet up with and talk about the development of OPUS to help feed more into the idea of how it could be made. Trips to Dans Le Noir, London design studios, Food Conferences and Bristol based companies such as Taste Tech gave me strong influences as to whether the work could go and whom to contact if it were to become a larger performance. It was also just interesting to see and learn of things that may not have directly helped OPUS, but understand what peripheral events and resources there are around the topic of food and senses.



*A visit to meet Danny Kite at Taste Tech. Left image is the scent of a strawberry divided into seven parts.*

Being in the studio and explaining the idea was met with advice on reading around the existing academic research to do with food and sound. I felt this did not help me, as my source of research was talking to people- this was where the body of information for OPUS lay. It was important for me to state at points that there is a lot of research and current projects about pitches and sound's affect on food. I was more interested in people's flavour associations to sound and the consensus that was built from it. I was then interested in applying the feedback in a performance context and offering the same foods to everyone whilst listening to the same music. The aim was to heighten people's experience of food and music in tandem, not affect the food by the sound. Learning my objective and comparing my project to what already existed, offered a point of difference and space to claim a new angle.



My key learnings are to always question things. No one person in a particular field knows everything and it's good to shake and question what people know in order to bend some rules. Being open and letting go of preconceived aims and ideas is helpful to furthering an idea. Meeting and talking to ask many people you are recommended and or introduced to is a valuable and nourishing way to develop your outlook on a project. Since OPUS was quite abstract concept and involved many people, such as a chef, it helped to include everyone in the workshops, meetings and conversations to provide a fuller understanding and context to their involvement. With Sean the chef, translating the feedback of the workshop attendees into dishes was initially difficult to work out. Once he attended the workshop, he was able to lend his skills and experience to the project more. I would also say that thanking each person you have worked with, no matter how minor is incredibly important- especially as I felt the residency was a privilege of an opportunity and paves the way for the studio and it's residents to have a further positive relationship with At-Bristol.

I believe my approach towards the residency was open, experimental and rigorous. I was in tune with the suggestions made by the producers across PM Studio and At-Bristol about how to stretch the idea, which was aided by activities hosted by David and Verity. Imaging OPUS in different contexts and attended by different audiences helped to see how it could expand and offer more as an experience for a broader range of people. OPUS is an exploration about how senses are heightened and the suggestion to consider Deaf and Blind audiences helped me to consider the benefit of being able to 'feel' sound. I tried to promote workshops specific to Deaf and or blind participants. However, it soon became apparent that I needed a longer lead time and more established relationships with organisations in Bristol, to successfully engage participants.

Although the workshops became a strong part of the residency, I found it a struggle to initiate them at the beginning (even though they were fundamental to the project's research), because I was scared that I would not receive the type of consensus I wanted- thus finding a flaw in the concept. But, I was supportively nudged by Verity to start them in the second week, which gave me the confidence to run more and further back the research. The workshops became an offshoot selling point to the project, which I was able to promote to companies such as Extract Coffee Roasters. The workshops helped not only to inform what foods matched sounds, but also through the 'art of asking questions' and opening up conversation, there was agency in offering the activities as a way of exploring vocabulary, perspectives and descriptive language. The team at Extract Coffee found this useful as 'Super Tasters', whose job it was to depict flavour through language during coffee tastings. One member of their team found value in writing answers before vocalising out loud, to avoid being influenced by other people's answers. This was all the more powerful when each people's written answers seemed to match each others, when describing the flavour of Jazz trumpet. There is a way of rolling out these workshops as activities for different people, such as away days for mental health nurses due to the nature of how the questions are asked and how feedback is facilitated.

I think the scheme should definitely be developed in the future. If there were ways to improve it, I would say a formed relationship with a professional kitchen would be important depending on the artist's project. I would also make it longer and with more time spent with the Creative Technologist as David's expertise are a treasured resource.

If there were any specific learning points or observations that I would like to share is that although a network of support was available, it is up to the artist to push the outcome of the residency as much as possible. I also found that people can be, more often than not, less open to new ideas and will find safety in comparing new ideas to previous projects as a way of understanding them. Lastly, when working with Creative Technologists, it is important to do double the amount of research (especially if you are ignorant about Tech), as a measured and fair effort towards working together in finding a solution to an idea.



*OPUS Workshop: Cymbal Ingredients at the Pervasive Media Studio*

## Press

Imperica Magazine: <http://bit.ly/2a2IHML>

Gingey Bites: <http://bit.ly/29I89Io>

Foozie: <http://bit.ly/2bbGvix>

Bristol 24/7: <http://bit.ly/2bhOhMb>

Promo film: <http://bit.ly/2bykkbk>

As a result of the residency, I have a greater awareness of how art can be made accessible by engaging with the senses. I have also gained an interest to learn more about how technology can be integrated into OPUS. The bone conducting gobstoppers are a product that I will continue to develop in the hope of making it into wireless FDA approved product that is used to facilitate silent discos. The residency will continue in the form of how it can be developed further into an Arts Council application to make OPUS bigger and in partnerships with other organisations such as Unlimited. I have created relationships and conversations around potential collaborations with the Paraorchestra, Jo Verrant and Deaf Pub at the Watershed. The project has also been made credible as part of Watershed's PR support in it's coverage in Imperica magazine and Bristol 24/7. Ultimately, this was an amazing residency for me to push and expand and create the beginnings of OPUS and myself as a multi-faceted artist. I would like to give my utmost thanks to Watershed and At-Bristol.