

LISSON GALLERY

Press Release

Devon Turnbull / OJAS: *HiFi Listening Room Dream No. 1*

12 July – 26 August 2023
27 Bell Street, London

Opening: 11 July, 6 – 8pm

Music is the most powerful art form. When we think about music venues, we have concert halls, jazz bars and nightclubs – and those are really cool ways of experiencing music – but a lot of the time the recorded music becomes the masterpiece.

- Devon Turnbull / OJAS

Presented in London for the first time, the Brooklyn-based speaker sculptor and sound guru, Devon Turnbull – aka OJAS – introduces *HiFi Listening Room Dream No. 1*, a free, drop-in experience for all to surrender to the act of listening, with rare intention, to recorded and live music. Featuring a high-performance, handmade sound system composed of a wall of brutalist speakers, a turntable, a series of amplifiers and seats typically reserved for meditation, this site-specific acoustic setting creates a transformative environment to absorb and reflect. Described by Turnbull as a “shrine to music”, each week a varied, curated programme of recorded tracks is presented, from unreleased music to all-time favorites across a range of mediums including vinyl, analogue tape and more.

Devon Turnbull (b. 1979, New York) is known under his creative pseudonym OJAS, a Sanskrit term that loosely translates to ‘life vitality’, and one that has been used multi-disciplinary, from graffiti to streetwear, music, high fashion and graphic design. Having originally studied Audio Engineering, Turnbull went on to co-found and design for the influential subterranean clothing brand, Nom de Guerre, in 2003. During this time he regularly visited Japan, where he was exposed to the now almost-extinct craft of the audio-building, and began to turn his attention to experimentation and engineering of underground audio. Over the decades, Turnbull has created a countercultural following for creating handmade, high-fidelity home-audio equipment that is committed to conveying the naturalistic quality of music. These monolithic speakers have been seen and heard in spaces including the homes of celebrity music producers like Mark Ronson; Virgil Abloh’s ‘Figures of Speech’ exhibition at the Brooklyn Museum; the Nine Orchard Hotel, NYC Ace Hotel and Public Records in Brooklyn, NYC; and the fashion retailers, Ssense and Supreme Stores. Through all of these collaborations, Turnbull’s devotion to utter sonic purity remains unparalleled.

First launched at Lisson’s New York space last summer in the group exhibition, ‘The odds are good, the goods are odd’ (29 June – 5 August 2022), Turnbull now brings *HiFi Listening Room Dream No. 1* to London for the first time, creating a purpose-built space at 27 Bell Street. In New York, Turnbull selected music from the legendary jazz imprint Blue Note Records, Spiritmuse and other recordings from Turnbull’s own collection, ambient music by Brian Eno, and live performances recorded directly to tape. Now in London, Turnbull plans to also engage with the history and culture of music within the UK and Europe.

Previously referred to as like a “spiritual gathering”, the contemplative nature of *HiFi Listening Room Dream No. 1* was influenced by Turnbull’s upbringing: raised by former Transcendental Meditation teachers, Turnbull’s family relocated from New York to a remote town in Iowa where he attended the Maharishi School, an academy connected with the movement, with hours each day devoted to meditation. While Turnbull no longer observes this form of meditation, the sense of community and shared practice, as well as the power of mind and consciousness-altering behaviours – in tandem with his parents who now academically advise on psilocybin studies – has inspired the energy and identity of *HiFi Listening Room Dream No. 1*. While music is now listened to more than ever, rarely do we listen with focused attention rather than passivity. Turnbull equates a musician with a Shaman, maintaining that they similarly manipulate the functioning of the brain.

Turnbull recognized, when Lisson Gallery approached him with the idea for *HiFi Listening Room Dream No. 1* – that it was an opportunity to achieve his dream of creating a democratic, public listening space, where people could experience music through a high-quality stereo system without needing to own it. With this in mind, the exhibition will also be accompanied by a series of workshops to promote the craft of DIY hi-fi, an attempt to empower visitors to learn this skill, while also a homage to the Japanese audiophile culture.

Throughout the run of the exhibition, the gallery will also host a series of live musical events, which will be announced in advance on social media.

OJAS merchandise will be available for purchase at the gallery, including T-shirts, posters, zines and speaker kits.

About Lisson Gallery

Lisson Gallery is one of the most influential and longest-running international contemporary art galleries in the world. Today the gallery supports and promotes the work of more than 60 international artists across spaces in London, New York, Los Angeles, Shanghai and Beijing. Established in 1967 by Nicholas Logsdail, Lisson Gallery pioneered the early careers of important Minimal and Conceptual artists, such as Art & Language, Carl Andre, Daniel Buren, Donald Judd, John Latham, Sol LeWitt, Richard Long and Robert Ryman among many others. It still works with many of these artists as well as others of that generation from Carmen Herrera to the renowned estate of Leon Polk Smith. In its second decade the gallery introduced significant British sculptors to the public for the first time, including Tony Cragg, Richard Deacon, Anish Kapoor, Shirazeh Houshiary and Julian Opie. Since 2000, the gallery has gone on to represent many more leading international artists such as Marina Abramović, Ai Weiwei, John Akomfrah, Susan Hiller, Tatsuo Miyajima and Sean Scully. It is also responsible for raising the international profile of a younger generation of artists led by Cory Arcangel, Ryan Gander, Van Hanos, Hugh Hayden, Haroon Mirza, Laure Prouvost, Pedro Reyes, Wael Shawky and Cheyney Thompson.

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