Over the past seven years, Atoui has researched the relationships among sound, vibrations, instruments, and the body. This inquiry, encapsulated in his project WITHIN, grew out of a 2008 residency at the Sharjah Art Foundation, in the United Arab Emirates, culminating in his contribution to Sharjah Biennial 11 in 2013. Throughout the course of his residency, he conducted workshops at the Al Aïm School for the Deaf in Sharjah, and it was the conversations he had with students there that formed the core of WITHIN and became the foundation for concerts, events, and lectures at the biennial. In 2013 Atoui joined forces with the research agency Council (founded by Gregory Castéra and Sandra Bauman) from Gallaudet University in Washington, DC to present DeafSpace Project (DSP), a system of techniques outlined by DSP have amplified Atoui's own thinking about and approach to the possibilities of exploration into how sound is perceived by both the hearing and nonhearing. In March 2015, Atoui spent three weeks at UC Berkeley co-hosting an instrument-making seminar with art professor Greg Niemeyer, with the ultimate goal of realizing a few of the designs for instruments explored during the course. During this initial residency phase, Atoui gave a public lecture on campus introducing WITHIN and his experience with making musical instruments. He also performed a concert utilizing his own customized electronic instruments at Meyer Sound's acoustically unique Pearson Theater.

WITHIN 2, the second instrument Atoui is developing for MATRIX, is a percussive instrument played by one to four musicians in front of a limited audience ranging from twelve to twenty-four. Soft, Subpac speakers that induce vibrations press against the audience members' backs as they are seated and generate a physical experience rooted in felt vibrations. These speakers connect electronically to a computer station and to a set of tables that have unique surfaces that can be played like a drum with objects such as mallets or sticks. A conductor stands at the computer station to control the sensorial connections between the performers and the audience.

WITHIN 2 will continue during the months of September 2015 and January 2016, when Atoui will be in residence at EMPAC in Troy, New York. He will work with musician and Distinguished Research Professor of Music Pauline Oliveros to engage RPI students in designing and building additional instruments and interfaces for performance. The entire project will culminate at the Bergen Assembly 2016, a citywide series of performances, workshops, events, and lectures Atoui will organize in Norway, working with local institutions, musicians, artists, and audiences centered on his expanded exploration of sound with deaf communities.

Apsara DiQuinzio
Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art and Phyllis C. Wattis Matrix Curator

Tarek Atoui
MATRIX 258 MARCH 2–NOVEMBER 8, 2015
University of California, Berkeley Art Museum & Pacific Film Archive

MATRIX 258 features the work of artist and electroacoustic composer Tarek Atoui (b. 1980). Born in Lebanon and based in Paris, Atoui initiates and curates multidisciplinary interventions, concerts, performances, and workshops. His work often radiates around large-scale, collaborative performances that develop from extensive research into the history of music and instrumentation, while also exploring new methods for production. Using custom-built electronic instruments and computers, Atoui often articulates social realities and histories in his work, while presenting music as a powerful mode of expression and identity.
Biography

Tarek Atoui was born in Lebanon in 1980 and moved to France in 1998 where he studied sound art and electroacoustic music. In 2006 he released his first solo album as part of the Mort Aux Vaches series for Staalplaat Records, and in 2008 he served as artistic director of the STEIM Studios in Amsterdam, a center for the research and development of new electronic musical instruments.

Atoui has presented his work internationally at the Sharjah Biennial in the United Arab Emirates (2009 and 2013); the New Museum of Contemporary Art in New York (2010); Mediacity Biennial in Seoul (2010); the Haus Der Kunst in Munich (2010); Performa 11 in New York (2011); dOCUMENTA 13 in Kassel, Germany (2012); the Serpentine Gallery in London (2012); and the 8th Berlin Biennial (2014).

He was recently appointed one of the artistic directors of the 2016 Bergen Assembly, a triennial for contemporary art in Norway.

1. Council made TACET into a web platform that outlines and articulates their activities and research project. http://www.formacouncil.org/enquiries/30_tacet_or_the_cochlear_vertigo
3. Atoui’s lecture was part of the Art, Technology, and Culture Colloquia hosted by the Berkeley Center for New Media (BCNM) and the Arts Research Center (ARC), and can be accessed at http://bcnm.berkeley.edu/index.php/event?id=215.