{About the Artist}

Ken Butler studied viola as a child and maintained an interest in music while studying visual arts in France, at Colby College, and at Portland State University, where he completed his MFA in painting in 1997. He has received fellowships from the Oregon Arts Commission, the New York Foundation for the Arts, and the National Endowment for the Arts. Ken’s works have been featured in numerous exhibitions and performances throughout the USA, Canada, and Europe including the Solitude Museum in Arden and East Art, Thread Wasting Space, The Kitchen, The Brooklyn Museum, Sonos Centry and The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City, as well as in galleries in South America, Thailand, and Japan. His works have been featured on PBS, CNN, MSNBC, and NBC, including a live appearance on The Tonight Show, and are represented in public and private collections, including Portland, Seattle, Los Angeles, Toronto, Montreal, Washington D.C., and New York City, including the permanent collection of The Metropolitan Museum of Art. Ken has performed with John Zorn, Laurie Anderson,匝rth Mitchell, The Soldier String Quartet; Matt Darriau’s Parade Trios, The Tonight Show Band, and The Master Gnaa musicians of Morocco. His CD Voices of Anxious Objects is on Zorri’s Record label.

{Artist Statement}

My hybrid musical instrument sculptures, collage/drawings, performances, and audio-visual installations explore the intersection and transformation of objects, sounds, and altered spaces as a function and form recalling the intersection of art and music. I re-imagine objects in an attempt to reveal hidden meanings and meanings, creating new cultural identities for common objects. String instruments become bowls, hooks, toys, keys, magnets, creations, sculptures, fans, and other devices in a “cybernetic architecture” where old and new materials are combined, and the keys activate things other than the strings of the strings.

As we move to increased reliance on electrical machinery, the changing mass of consumer items flows up and splits out common products with transposed names and updates. Some materials of the past remain unmoved and relegated to the junkyard of unwanted resources. From this stockpile, I dismantle and reassemble objects into functional assemblages / groupings in the form of musical instruments / objects, then compose them to sing for their supper.

{About Kidspace}

Kidspace is the 10th year of a collaborative project of the Sterling & Francine Clark Art Institute, Williams College Museum of Art, and MASS MoCA. Kidspace is a contemporary art gallery and art-making space for children, teachers, and families. School programs and educational materials are designed for elementary schools in North Adams, Florida, Chelmsford, and Savoy, Massachusetts, as well as Stamford, Vermont. Kidspace organizes an after-school artist mentor program for 6th – 8th graders in the North Adams and North Berkshire school districts. Working with Kidspace staff and artists, students and teachers learn new ways to connect contemporary art to their classroom activities and to their everyday lives.

The public is welcome at Kidspace to view exhibitions and to create their own art. During the school year, public hours are Saturdays and Sundays, noon to 4 pm, plus holiday hours. The rest of the week is reserved for school groups. Summer public hours begin June 26, when Kidspace will be open every day from 10 am to 5 pm through Labor Day. Admission to Kidspace is free. Public art classes and special workshops are offered during school breaks and the summer, and arrangements can be made to hold birthday parties at Kidspace.

Please call Kidspace at (413) 443-4080 or visit www.massmoca.org/kidspace for more details on hours, programs and program fees, and exhibitions. Check out the Kidspace website at www.massmoca.org/kidspace.

{THE NEW SOUND OF HYBRID INSTRUMENTS}

Image Credits:
Exhibition Overview

The New Sound of Most exhibit features hybrid musical instruments created by Ken Butler of Brooklyn, New York. Internationally recognized as an innovator of experimental sculptural instruments, Ken brings together a diversity of everyday materials including tools, sports equipment, and household objects. He has used bats for "violins" bodies, and turned floor maps and children's skids into "cellos." He has mented keyboards with recycled wire, shelves, and spotlights to create an interactive musical light show.

Ken's work explores the interaction and transformation of common objects, altered images, sounds and silence. He links objects that relate to each other visually and that suggest instruments, while the sounds they end up producing are by-products. Ken has said his work has "an ergonomic relationship" to the body, meaning though they are made out of many protruding objects, he has taken into consideration how the instruments relate to a musician's body.

Also featured in the exhibit is a mural created by local students in grades 6 – 10 who participate in ArtsKIDS, the kidspace after-school art program. With artist/ writer and collage artist Karen Arp-Sandel, the students have designed a textured, Cubist-style collage mural with references to music and musical instruments.

Try This!

Hybrid Violin Cut-Outs

On the violin, add pictures of your favorite objects for draw your own to create a self-portrait hybrid instrument.