

Silbadores 4

This piece uses and transforms the sounds of whistling vessel jars, archaeological musical instruments from the Andes. These instruments work by connecting two ceramic vessels and filling them with water; when moving them, water displacement generates air pressure that activates a whistle in unpredictable patterns. Due to a lack of pictorial representations, archaeologists are uncertain about whether they were musical instruments or not. I recognize in the sound of these jars the sound of several birds of the Peruvian coast, and would contend that these vessels might have been a “recording device” of sorts; a device that would allow one to hear a sound away from its source, its place and time.

When asked by the Mexican Center for Music and Sound Arts (CMMAS) in Morelia to make a piece with pre-columbian instruments, I decided to move away from the idea of a mystic pre-columbian virgin music. Using visual art patterns found in ceramics and textiles as a point of departure, the piece generates geometric and angular processes that contrast the fluidity created by the sounds of water, air, clay, and human gesture.

I recorded these sounds in 2004-6, in the National Museum of Archeology of Perú in collaboration with the Waylla Kepa project.