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# Shamanic drumming, poetry, soundscapes: Barnes welcomes first-ever sonic installation

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## THE BARNES FOUNDATION

Andrea Hornick working on "Unbounded Histories," her sound installation at the Barnes Foundation. Ensemble view, Room 23, Barnes Foundation, 2012.

by **A.D. Amorosi**, For The Inquirer

"I hope we're all remixing," says painter and sound artist Andrea Hornick.

She's talking about how we see and experience art and museums — but you get the sense she also means "all the time."

This weekend, Hornick's "["Unbounded Histories" unfolds at the Barnes Foundation](#). It's the first time the Barnes, that individualistic collection of Postimpressionist art, early modern paintings, African sculpture, and more, will host a sound installation. Hornick sees it as nothing less than a site-specific audio remix. She'll do [a live performance at 6:15 p.m. Friday at the Barnes](#).

In "Unbounded Histories," which can be streamed on any web-enabled phone as you enter the collection, Hornick creates soundscapes and recites poems keyed to individual artworks, all to encourage viewers and listeners to reconsider each work through her series of provocations. "We should be remixing when we enter private collections, those highly personal and regarded for their canonical works," she says. "Everyone must own their experience and be able to shuffle things around, ask questions, and make things anew."

Hornick's "Histories" eschews the logic of the usual museum audio tour, in which facts unfold with stoic seriousness. Instead, it's one woman's iconoclastic, spiritual, feminist view of (in its own way) the equally nonconformist vision of collection founder Albert C. Barnes.

"The Barnes is one man's collection, arranged intuitively by a man who intentionally didn't want to be part of academic or accepted elements of collecting art; who questioned the traditional canon and its authority," says Hornick. "He has his own authorship, the way it's hung; the systematic 'ensembles' where you decide how to interact and approach the work. I do that, too, layering stories upon stories that already exist — art history and

the work's relationship to each other that Barnes was suggesting — only I'm using a different authority, that of the shaman — for a new authority.”

Hornick developed the work by interacting with the various rooms and works, often — drawing on her background in shamanism — in a trancelike state. “I open windows for other people to climb through,” she says. “I see and hear these existing works in another way.”

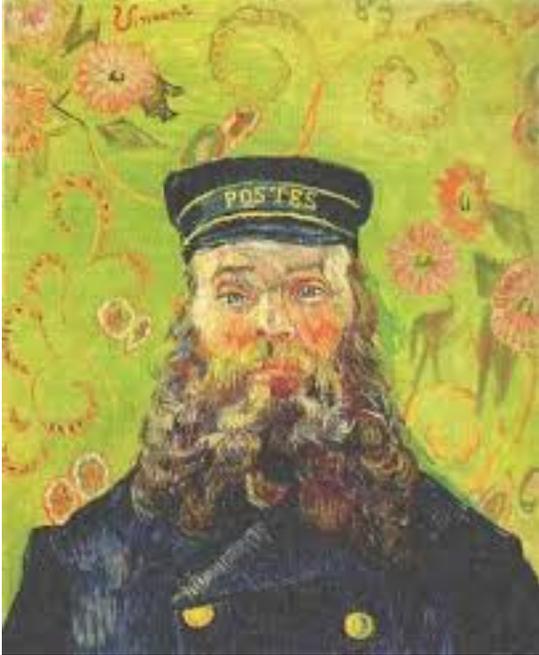
Currently dividing time between New York City and Philly (where she is much involved with the [Savery Gallery](#)), Hornick grew up in Norwalk, Conn. A Harvard-trained anthropologist-turned-shaman was a close family friend, and Hornick's writer parents practiced hypnosis. Hornick recounts how she learned the practice of [shamanic journeying](#), in which drumming allowed her to access the soul's resources through sound-induced trances and meet with spirit guides who led her to other planes of consciousness.

Hornick calls shamanic journeying “always a tool in my box, part of who I am, which inevitably works its way into all of my processes. Making art and shamanism came about organically together.” So did studies in post-feminism, as well as research into her own Jewish and Eastern European roots. They all combined, she says, to form an “intentional” and “healing” aesthetic in which she listens to the works, feels their vibrations, and reports back on her journeys.

In [her 2016 exhibition at Savery](#), Hornick reconsidered early Renaissance portraits of women through the prism of her shamanic drum journeys. She asked “just what animal representation each woman would have.” The result was a surrealistic, dreamlike reinterpretation of these portraits, altered by birds, bears, and other creatures, with text-based sound works and performance that often developed along with the new work.



“Unbounded Histories” began when mutual friends connected Hornick with Barnes deputy director-curator Martha Lucy. Hornick was commissioned to write and record several dozen original poems in response to specific works, such as Seurat's *Models* and Van Gogh's *The Postman*.



In a trance state, she found her own connections to the works. *The Postman*, for example, “feels like a father figure to me,” and it moved her to recall her own father. Through the mysteries of that interaction, Hornick seeks to encourage visitors to find their own connections. [listen](#)

Albert C. Barnes’ idiosyncratic groupings of artworks — he called them “ensembles” — also helped create connections. In the mezzanine level of the Barnes stands a Madonna and Christ child statue set before a series of Navajo blankets and next to a 19th-century French fertility symbol. Hornick’s poem speaks of a “benevolent” Mary looking downward and “imparting the ability to embody magic” onto her child. This particular ensemble represents for Hornick “the earth mother” and “three belief systems” — the Catholicism of the Virgin Mary and Jesus, the Navajo Indian blanket, and the pagan fertility symbol. [listen](#)

“Sound art allows us to put living artists in dialogue with the collection without making any changes to the physical space,” Lucy says in a prepared statement. What might change are the personal connections found through Hornick’s meditative practice, and how that toys with issues of authorship and authority.

“Anything that gives a person another way to connect to art — as little or as much as possible — is good,” Hornick says. “It’s more important that you have meaningful connection to few works than the whole of art.”