

ONLY EVERYTHING LASTS FOREVER

By

Kyle McDonald

An Abstract of a Thesis Submitted to the Graduate

Faculty of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF FINE ARTS

Major Subject: ELECTRONIC ARTS

The original of the complete thesis is on file
in the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Library

Approved:

Curtis Bahn, Thesis Adviser

Michael Century, Thesis Adviser

Shawn Lawson, Thesis Adviser

Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute
Troy, New York

May 2010
(For Graduation May 2010)

This thesis explores the definition of “noise” as “non-contextual sound”. It defines “context” using examples from philosophy, science, and art, examining our ability as observers to misunderstand and misinterpret context. It presents the notion of an “embedded context”, using examples from the sonic and visual arts. These examples reveal embedded contexts through empty work, glitches, enumeration, and unusual durations. The sound composition “Only Everything Lasts Forever” is presented, drawing on all these topics. This composition enumerates all the sounds we can distinguish as humans, as defined by the MP3 digital audio format. The historical and structural aspects of the MP3 format are discussed, along with a technique for enumerating the large space of MP3 in a way that exhibits variation on a human scale.