

**IMAGE FILES 005:  
ALISON O'DANIEL**



This image of Louise Nevelson smoking a cigar was a major beginning point for my film *The Tuba Thieves*. I'm currently fundraising for the film. We have a few days left of the campaign. In June we shot the first scene and plan to continue adding scenes as we secure funding and have venues to show the individual scenes in. It's a production model that arose out of economic necessity, but became infinitely interesting to me as an exploration of an exploded binary of non-linear / linear narrative. We are showing it completely out of order in different locations, despite the relatively straightforward narrative that exists in the screenplay.

I started the process of this film by cultivating a list of references and images and ideas and poems together for three different composers. I asked them to look at these photos and read poems and study images of certain architecture and think about some ideas and then respond in musical form. I did offer a few more parameters such as length of the scores and in some cases a type of instrument. Louise Nevelson's eyelashes were one of the elements on the list. In 2009, I made a short film called *We Hear without Eyes*, which is the first line of a (two line) Helene Cixous poem. This is the whole thing: *We hear without eyes, / We scratch the night with our eyelashes.*

I always read that poem as a very contradictory personal description for my experience of hearing. I am hard of hearing. I wear two hearing aids and I lip read, which means that I hear with my eyes. This title for my video didn't include me. I would never be its audience. I continued that thread with my first feature film, *Night Sky*, in which two monologues are spoken without closed captions. Again, I was not my film's audience. But I like to sit inside of the idea of scratching the night or the film or the song with my eyelashes as a way to hear. This makes sense to me. Scratching the surface of something with the sensitive hairs of my eyes is not all that different from how my ears work.

And back to Louise. Her work has always reminded me of elaborate walls and constructions meant for soundproofing. I hope she would take that as a massive compliment. The most beautiful soundproofing ever!

I gave a bunch of images of Louise Nevelson to Christine Sun Kim, a sound artist and composer who created one of the three scores for *The Tuba Thieves*. I also gave her news stories about tuba thefts that have been happening in Los Angeles high schools over the past few years, an image of Louisa Calder's dressing table with jewelry by Alexander Calder, a quote by a physicist who saw Tarkovsky's film *The Mirror* and attempted to unravel the meaning of it, as well as a list that said Ice Skating and Roller Skating and Levitation. Out of these completely disparate things, Christine created a beautifully abstract soundscape that jumps between the ears. Christine is Deaf, and built the score in 30 second sections so that she could visually contain it for herself on the editing timeline. She told me the process was a complicated one for her, as she was creating something that would immediately be out of her reach - accessible to an audience, but not her. I'm still not sure where Louise's eyelashes fall in the score. But there are moments when it feels as if the only way to access the sounds Christine made are through eyelashes, through opening our eyes very wide, maybe placing eyelashes on speakers, through hearing without ears.



[THE LIPS ARE PUT TOGETHER WITH THE TEETH OPEN INSIDE THE MOUTH]

*Image from The Tuba Thieves, Scene 29, score by Christine Sun Kim  
([click here watch an excerpt](#))*



[A BIT OF AIR IS PUSHED OUT OF THE THROAT...]

*Image from The Tuba Thieves, Scene 29, score by Christine Sun Kim  
([click here watch an excerpt](#))*

THE TUBA THIEVES

Scene 22

Alison O'Daniel

INT. ICE SKATING RINK - MORNING

Arcey is nailing dark grey soundproofing foam to the interior walls of Nyke's office.

He knocks into the drum kit several times, quietly clashing the cymbals.

He reaches into the big, bulky bag he carried in earlier and pulls out more foam.

Nyke comes to the office door and watches him.

He stops what he is doing and moves to her. They kiss affectionately on the cheek and exchange hugs.

NYKE  
(Sign Language)  
Someone complained?

ARCEY  
(Spoken)  
Nah. It's good. It's just in case.

Nyke puts her things down and helps him.

They finish nailing up the final soundproofing panel together, creating what looks like a Louise Nevelson sculpture.

Arcey gathers his tools and leaves, closing the door behind him.

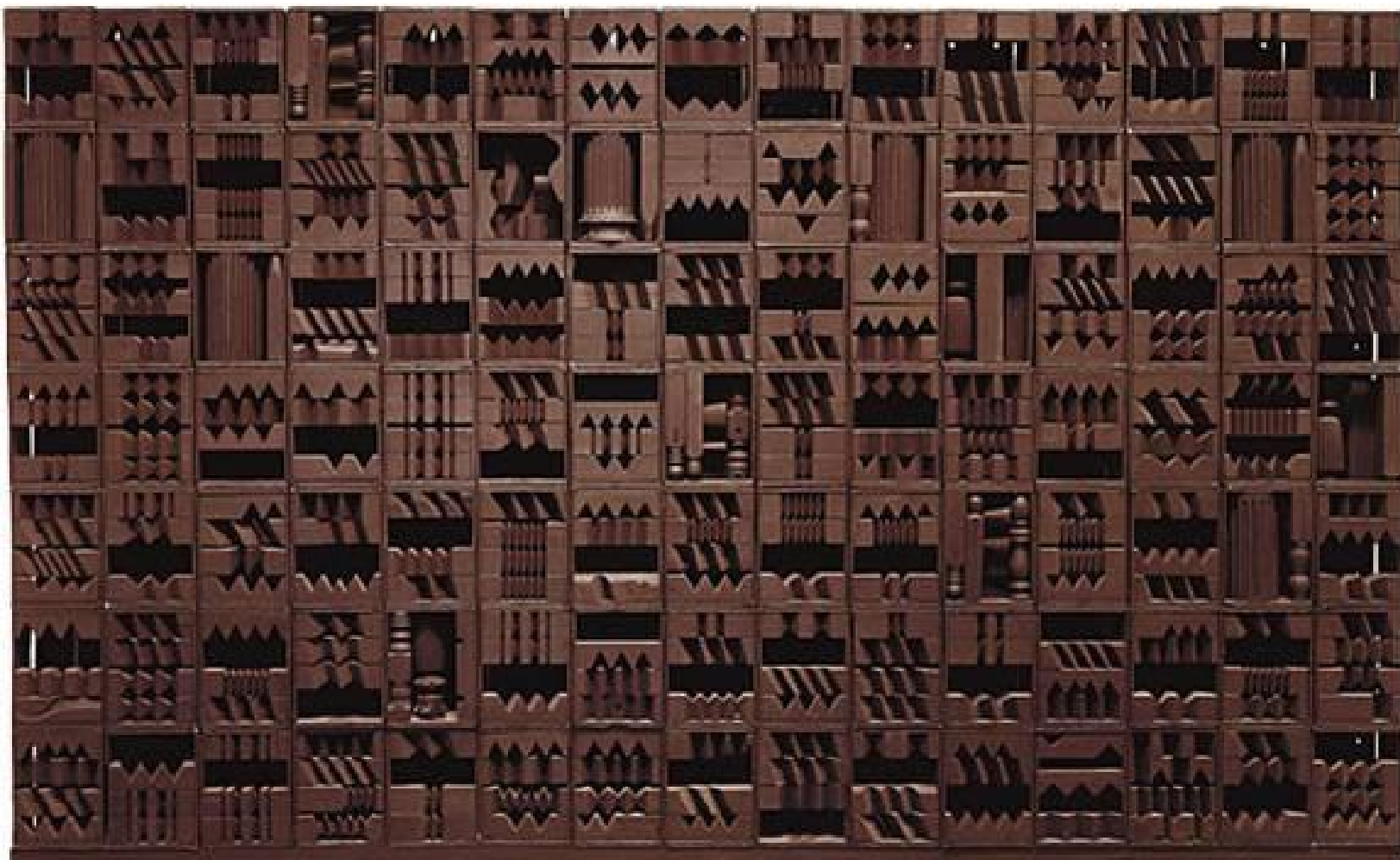
Inside, Nyke looks around at the panelling for a moment, and then sits down to begin practice.

*This is a page from the script. I gave those lists to the composers and then once I got their music back sometimes elements from the lists crept back into the screenplay. This is one example.*



*A photo of the Benefield anechoic chamber at Edwards Air force base in the Mojave Desert. I tried to shoot something there and surprisingly got high up in the chain of command, and then they just ignored me. It's a dream of mine to shoot something there. I have this image in the back of my head pretty much constantly when I think of sound and silence. They test radio waves on planes here.*





*Louise Nevelson, Luminous Zag: Night, 1971*

Alison O'Daniel is currently in production on her second feature film, *The Tuba Thieves*. She recently received an Art Matters grant and a Franklin Furnace Fund fellowship and completed a fellowship at the Fine Arts Work Center in Provincetown, MA. She holds an MFA from UC Irvine, a BFA from the Cleveland Institute of Art, and attended the Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture. Select solo and group exhibitions include Quasi Closed-Captions, Samuel Freeman Gallery, Rogue Wave, LA Louver, Walking Forward-Running Past, Art in General and The Archaic Revival, Zip Zerc Gallery, Rotterdam. She has screened films and performed at the Museum of Contemporary Art, Detroit, the Cleveland Museum of Art, the Museum of Jurassic Technology, Rencontres Film Internationales, Paris, Kunstlerhaus, Vienna, and others. Writing about her work has appeared in ArtForum 500 words, the L.A. Times, L.A. Weekly, Angeleno Modern Luxury and Whitehot Magazine.

<http://alisonodaniel.com/TOUCH>

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