

IMMA

BAROQUE CHAPEL

21 February – 19 April 2026

# Souffle Continu Tarek Atoui

IMMA

GALLERY 3

21 February – 19 July 2026

# Sunflowers Tarek Atoui



Tarek Atoui has, over the past two decades, profoundly reshaped how sound is conceived, produced, and experienced within contemporary art. Based in Paris and working internationally, Atoui foregrounds listening as an embodied, social, and political act. His work consistently challenges the dominance of auditory norms, questioning who sound is for, how it is accessed, and how it might be felt beyond the ear.

Atoui's practice unfolds at the intersection of sound art, experimental music, sculpture, and performance. Central to his work is an expanded understanding of musical instruments: not as fixed, virtuosic tools, but as open systems that invite collective activation, experimentation, and reinterpretation. His projects frequently emerge through long-term collaborations with musicians, instrument makers, educators, and people with diverse hearing abilities. Rather than presenting sound as a finished composition, Atoui creates conditions in which sound can be generated, transformed, and perceived in multiple ways.

The exhibition at IMMA brings together key bodies of work that explore breath, vibration, rhythm, and material resonance. Unfolding across the Baroque Chapel and Gallery 3, Atoui constructs immersive environments that invite visitors to engage with sound physically, spatially, and socially. These works do not demand our singular attention, rather they encourage listening, drifting, lingering, entering, and sensing. Conceptually, the exhibition proposes listening as a form of knowledge; rooted in the body and shaped by context, material, and movement.

*Souffle Continu*, presented in the Baroque Chapel, takes its title from the 'continuous breath' or circular breathing technique used by wind musicians to sustain a note without pausing for air. Here, it alludes to an installation that explores sound generated through air and movement. Through a system of air circulation, the works create low frequencies and physical sensations that can be felt as much as heard. Atoui describes this body of work as "a set of possibilities and a potential sound generator," capable of producing multiple interpretations, collective situations, and musical outcomes.

The installation consists of multiple instruments: *Wind House #1* and *Wind House #2* are immersive sound chambers that visitors are invited to enter. Modelled on the SubBass Prototone, *Wind House #1* replicates the monumental scale of the experimental organ pipe created in the 1980s by Johannes Goebel. *Wind House #2* features a more elongated structure, producing a distinct spatial resonance. In both works, sound is generated through a sliding pane controlling the flow

of air from a compressor. As sound waves vibrate through the walls and floor of each chamber, they are transmitted through the visitor's body, transforming the listener into an integral part of the instrument itself.

At the centre of the installation is *Organ Within*, developed in collaboration with Léo Maurel and Vincent Martial. Drawing on research into church pipe organs, modular synthesizers, and the perception of tone by deaf listeners, air is channelled through pipes laid across the ground like tentacles, producing amplified vibrations and deep frequencies that resonate in the body. *Organ Within* is presented together with *Reedboxes*, small instruments shaped like wooden boxes assembled using materials with different acoustic properties that produce melodies.

Atoui began researching these ideas in 2013 through conversations with deaf students, leading to the development of an earlier project titled *WITHIN*. Rather than prioritising traditional auditory perception, these works emphasise physical, visual, and gestural ways of experiencing sound. Each object is the result of close collaboration with musicians and artisans, with their playability tested and refined through workshops with educators and students. This process reflects Atoui's commitment to learning through making and shared experimentation, allowing the works to evolve sonically and sensorially through demonstration.

The exhibition continues in Gallery 3, where Atoui presents *Sunflowers*, a body of work inspired by the rhythmic and material traditions of Korean drumming. These works mark a shift toward percussion and resonance, while maintaining Atoui's ongoing interest in listening as a relational and collective act.

*Sunflowers* occupies multiple rooms and functions both as sculptural objects and as listening devices, subtly recalibrating the acoustic environment of the gallery. Rather than isolating sound sources, the works reflect, absorb, and transform ambient noise, drawing attention to the existing rhythms of the space. The gallery itself is conceived as an immersive listening environment; continually shaped by movement, conversation, and activity.

*The Whisperers*, located in Room 2 of Gallery 3, is an installation that examines sound as a material phenomenon shaped by its passage through matter. Composed of listening devices made from plastic, wood, brass, water, bronze, glass, and stone, the work foregrounds how different materials alter vibration, resonance, and transmission. The installation was initially developed through a

series of workshops conducted by Atoui with pupils from an infant class at the École Alsacienne in Paris between November 2020 and June 2021.

Functioning as an open system for improvisation and experimentation, *The Whisperers* invites listening as an active practice. The soundscape is not a fixed composition, but one continuously activated through interaction, movement, and material response. By amplifying subtle vibrations and everyday sonic occurrences, the work encourages a reconsideration of ordinary objects as acoustic agents, revealing how sound behaves, transforms, and accumulates as it travels through different materials and states.

*Whispering Playground* is a circuit channeling sound and vibration from multiple sources, including industrial noise, flowing water, percussion, and vinyl recordings. This space invites exploration and play, encouraging visitors to experience familiar, everyday objects as active sonic materials.

The exhibition will be punctuated by two live activations at IMMA, during the exhibition preview on 20 February in the Baroque Chapel, and on 21 March at the Baroque Chapel and Gallery 3. These events allow audiences to experience the artworks in resonance. Over the exhibition run, workshops hosted by the IMMA team will offer opportunities for public experimentation and improvisational activation.

Experiencing Atoui's work can feel elemental, referencing earth, water, and air. The use of materials such as ceramics, soil, plants, wood, and stone heightens our awareness of sound in its material form. Atoui understands the world as populated by animate things rather than passive objects. Jane Bennett's concept of vital materialism is relevant here, foregrounding the idea that matter possesses an inherent agency or "thing-power" that can act independently and in relation to human presence. Through this approach, Atoui cultivates a sense of wonder and recognition of our shared existence with the material world, fostering a more symbiotic and potentially more ecological approach to art-making. As Atoui reflects, "the choice of material identifies who you are. It's not just about sound, it's also about a relation to the world and a state of being."

## Gallery 3

### Room 1

#### ***Underwater Birds, 2022***

From The Whisperers, 2021–2022

Courtesy of the artist.

#### ***Sunflowers, 2024–2025***

From The Rain, 2023–ongoing

Concept: Tarek Atoui

Research and technical development: Khodor Elliak

Materials: Seo In Seok (Korean Traditional Drums), Changart Hee Chang Jung (Onggi), Ji Hyang Kang (Celadon)

Courtesy of the artist.

#### ***Reedboxes, 2022***

Concept: Tarek Atoui

Realization: Jad Atoui, Thommas Besset, Sevag Babikian

Courtesy of the artist.

### Room 2

#### ***Whispering Playground, 2021***

From The Whisperers, 2021–2022

Courtesy of the artist.

#### ***Talking Drum, 2023***

From The Rain, 2023–ongoing

Concept: Tarek Atoui

Research and technical development: Hyeong-wook Kim & Khodor Elliak

Courtesy of the artist and Vitamin Creative Space.

#### ***Sunflowers, 2024–2025***

From The Rain, 2023–ongoing

Concept: Tarek Atoui

Research and technical development: Khodor Elliak

Materials: Seo In Seok (Korean Traditional Drums), Changart Hee Chang Jung (Onggi), Ji Hyang Kang (Celadon)

Courtesy of the artist.

Room 3

***Sunflowers, 2024–2025***

From The Rain, 2023–ongoing

Concept: Tarek Atoui

Research and technical development: Khodor Elliak

Materials: Seo In Seok (Korean Traditional Drums), Changart Hee Chang Jung (Onggi), Ji Hyang Kang (Celadon)

Courtesy of the artist.

***Reel Tape Machine, 2022 - 2023***

From The Whisperers, 2021–2022

Design: Daniel Araya

Courtesy of the artist.

Room 4

***Sunflowers, 2024–2025***

From The Rain, 2023–ongoing

Concept: Tarek Atoui

Research and technical development: Khodor Elliak

Materials: Seo In Seok (Korean Traditional Drums), Changart Hee Chang Jung (Onggi), Ji Hyang Kang (Celadon)

Courtesy of the artist.

Souffle Continu I Baroque Chapel

***Organ Within, 2022***

From WITHIN, 2013–ongoing

Concept: Léo Maurel and Vincent Martial

New version by Tarek Atoui, Alan Affichard, Loïc Martin, Vincent Martial

Courtesy of the artist.

***Wind Houses (#1 & #2), 2024***

From WITHIN, 2013–ongoing

Concept: Johannes Goebel (*Wind House #1*) and Tarek Atoui (*Wind Houses #1 & #2*)

Research and modelling: Alan Affichard

Construction and design: Gérard Perrin and Mayeul Reignault (Perron et Frères)

Courtesy of the artist.

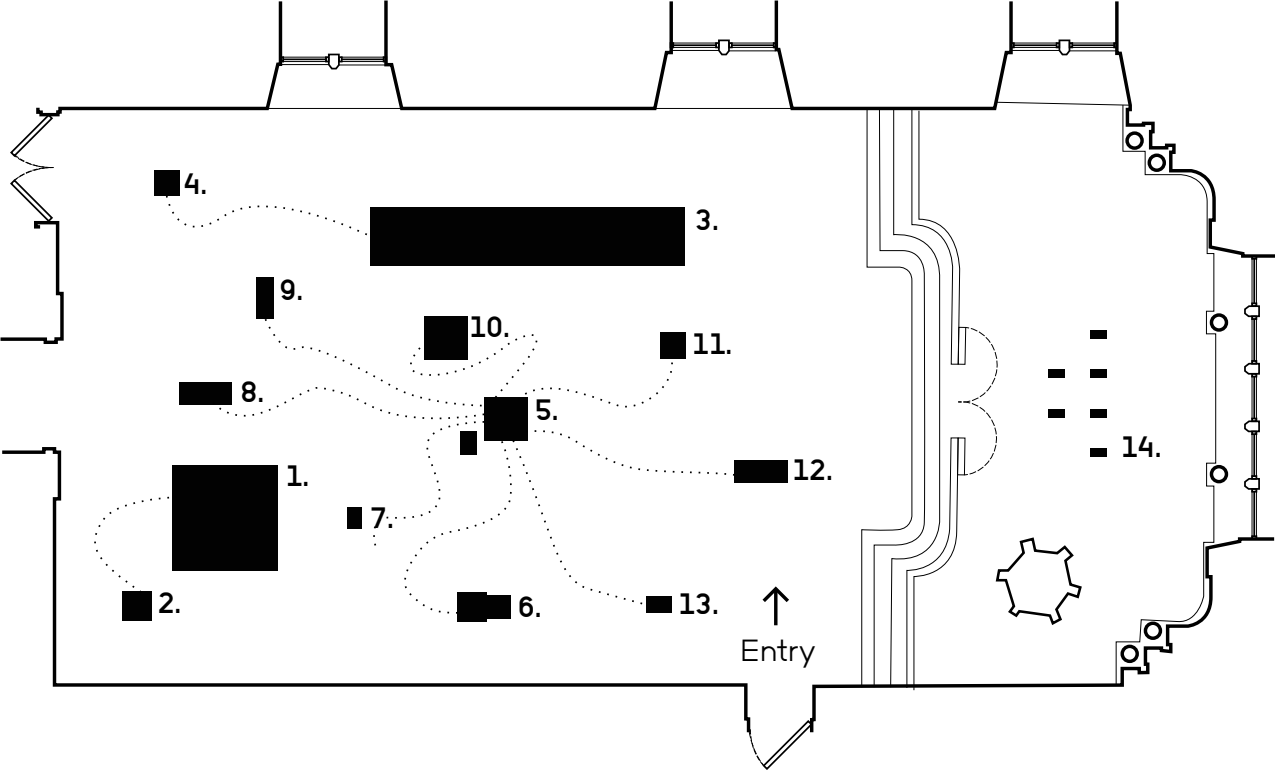
***Reedboxes, 2022***

Concept: Tarek Atoui

Technical development: Jad Atoui, Thommas Besset, Sevag Babikian

Courtesy of the artist.

# Souffle Continu I Baroque Chapel Map



- |                 |                   |
|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Wind House 1 | 8. Reeds Flute    |
| 2. Blower 1     | 9. Sub Flute      |
| 3. Wind House 2 | 10. Drum Flute    |
| 4. Blower 2     | 11. Latex Flute   |
| 5. Organ Within | 12. Pipes Flute   |
| 6. Blower 3     | 13. Ocarina Flute |
| 7. Cajon Flute  | 14. Reedboxes     |

## Acknowledgements

Tarek Atoui: Sunflowers I Gallery 3  
Tarek Atoui: Souffle Continu I Baroque Chapel  
Curated by Mary Cremin  
Curatorial Assistant Aisling Clark

IMMA's Exhibition Team:  
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MONO LOGS, a set of three vinyls by the artist, featuring sounds produced by international musicians performing solo on Atoui's instruments in a variety of contexts is available in the IMMA Shop.

Front cover: Tarek Atoui, *Wind House 1 & 2*, Kunsthaus Bregenz, 2024.  
Photography Markus Tretter. Courtesy Studio Tarek.

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