

Art in America

Dawn Kasper

by William S. Smith
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Pictured: Dawn Kasper: Cluster, 2014-2016, cymbals, cymbals stands, arduinos, motors, motion sensors, power strips, extension cords and AC adapters, dimensions variable. Courtesy David Lewis, New York.

With 63 cymbals arranged in groups throughout the gallery, all wired to electronic devices that sense visitors' movements and play the instruments in response, you'd think that Dawn Kasper's show "Cluster" would be noisier. Instead of a cacophony, the cymbals produce a polyphonic drone that, like the sound in La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's *Dream House*, feels like it deepens and grows more harmonious as you listen to (and "play" it) from various positions. Kasper might be best known for her contribution to the 2012 Whitney Biennial. There, she transformed a gallery into a studio environment cluttered with sound equipment, books, projectors and boxes of miscellaneous art supplies and worked in the space full-time for the run of the show. If that studio could be regarded as a kind of microcosm, a creative universe in a semiprivate room that Biennial visitors could merely glimpse, with "Cluster" Kasper evokes a wider cosmos and removes herself from its center. The cymbals are grouped together according to star-map diagrams (the cymbals become symbols), and visitors circumambulate the mechanical orchestra as if in orbit.