

# CRYSTAL VISIONS FROM CAPTURED VOICES

Now your conversation really can sparkle—just transform the sounds into unique gemstones

**Each human voice is unique, shaped by** a multitude of factors, from height and weight to emotion and the environment. Then there are the many different components of speech: pitch, pace, pronunciation and more. Think of your voice as a sonic signature of sorts—one that's as distinctive as your fingerprint.

This idea is at the core of Voice Gems, a project that translates voices into one-of-a-kind digital and physical gemstone sculptures. It's a collaboration between London-born beatboxer and vocal experimentalist Harry Yeff (aka Reeps100) and Vietnamese creative technologist Trung Bao, both of whom harbor a deep fascination with the human voice. "It's quite strange to think that something so old and profound still has so many uncharted capacities," Yeff says. "There are discoveries being made every day."

Visualizing the human voice has been an integral part of Yeff's artistic practice. "I'm particularly interested in voice-generated design—taking the information contained within a voice and using that as a flower bed to produce artworks," he says. "When you see a visual interpretation of voice, it creates a much deeper connection."

As such, Voice Gems was a natural progression. While the project is around ten months old, the concept first crystallized several years ago, when Yeff created a public art installation that used people's

voices to create abstract shapes. "There were about 500 people who queued up to see what this system could do, including this very shy young girl who was like a koala bear on her father's leg. When she walked up to the system and made these tiny sounds, she saw her voice start to manifest three stories high. Soon, her quiet noises became screams, laughs, shouts," Yeff recalls. He soon realized that he could take the idea a step further.

To create each Voice Gem, Yeff and Trung take the associated voice recording and analyze different characteristics—such as pitch, resonance and frequency—

also contributed their vocals to gems.

On a wider scale, Yeff notes that there's the opportunity to "capture dying languages and critically endangered species", as well as messages to future generations. To this end, he and Trung have worked with acoustic biologist and National Geographic Explorer Ben Mirin



to produce a sculpture using the voice of the indri, a singing lemur found only in Madagascar. The duo also produced a series of Voice Gems for the World Economic Forum in Davos in May, encompassing "messages of hope" from leading minds such as primatologist Jane Goodall.

"The aim is to work with cultural institutions and individuals to preserve the most unique and vulnerable voices on Earth. We want to build this huge archive of remarkable artworks, each associated with a key voice," says Yeff. "The poetic exploration of what a voice is, and capturing that in the form of a gem—it's a lifelong practice now." [reeps100.com/project/voicegems](https://reeps100.com/project/voicegems)

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to determine the colors and contours of the gemstone. The data is then fed into a generative system and used to shape 200,000 individual particles "almost like clay," Yeff explains. The resulting sculpture is first rendered digitally and can be shared as a video, displayed as a large-scale projection, minted as an NFT, cast in bronze, or sculpted as a physical gemstone using a 3D printer.

To date, the duo have synthesized around 100 Voice Gems using everything from a newborn's first sounds to conversations between a mother and her daughter. Among their most memorable sculptures is a gemstone created using the laughter of two lovers, which was used to propose in lieu of the traditional diamond ring. World-renowned artists including Ai Weiwei and Felipe Pantone have

↑ This Voice Gem was generated by the sound of a couple's laughter, and then 3D printed