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ANGER
LOVE

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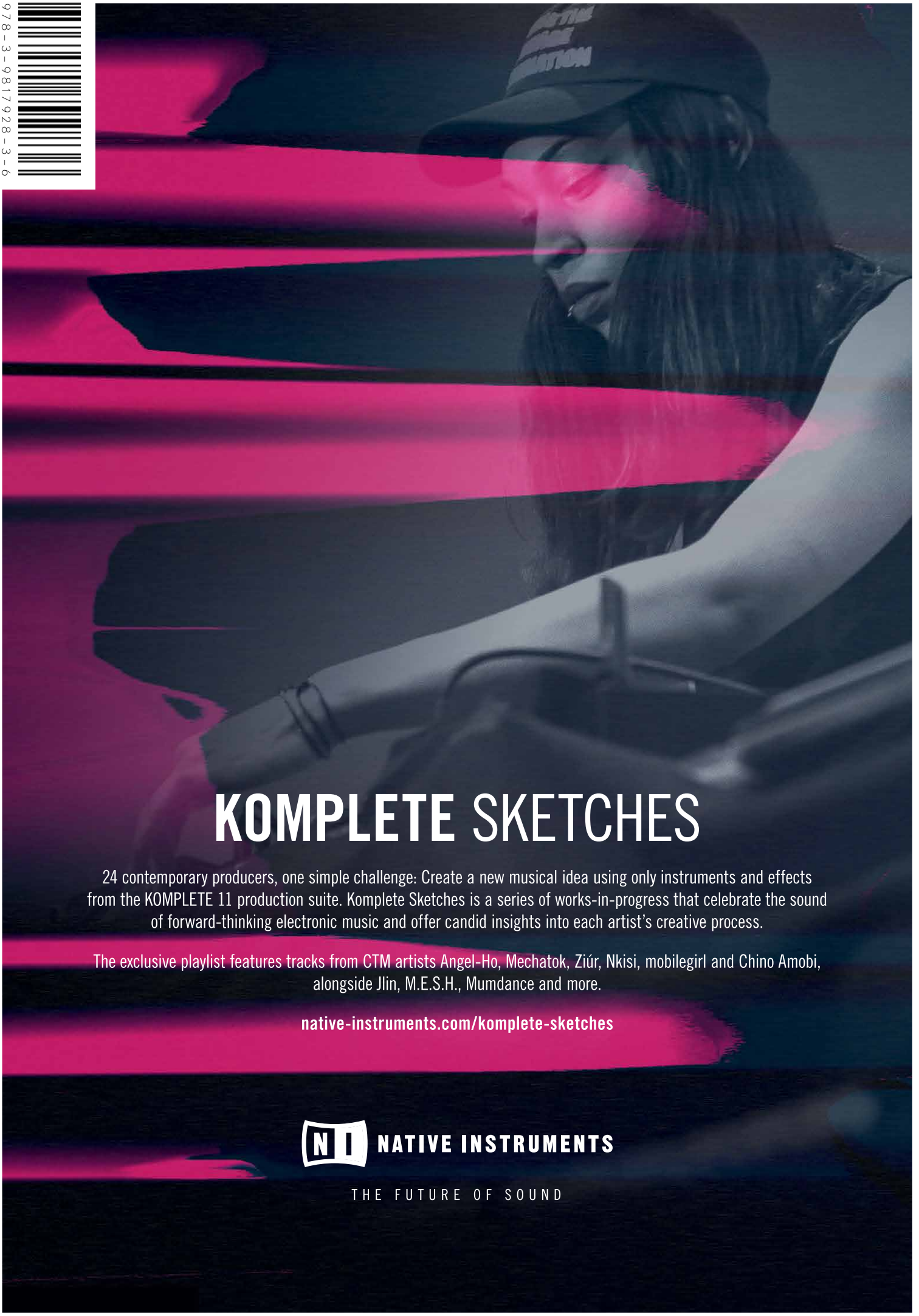

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FEAR ANGER LOVE

CTM FESTIVAL 2017
FESTIVAL FOR ADVENTUROUS MUSIC & ART
18TH EDITION – BERLIN

TOWARDS ANOTHER FORM OF LOVE

BY JAN ROHLF

As an art uniquely placed to express and engender emotions, music has always been firmly tied to the explosive janus of its emotionality. In fact, the debate about the manipulative, seductive or emancipatory potential of resonant emotion is as old as music itself.

As far back as ancient times, music's potential to threaten moral and political order due to its physical power and hypnotic sensuality was discussed with apprehension. Likewise debated were its opposite power to civilise our animalistic drives and to help us transcend earthly misery, or its practical usefulness in scaring off enemies, in emboldening faint-hearted spirit and in reinforcing group cohesion in times of defiance.

Throughout history, as James Kennaway argues in this magazine, it was repeatedly feared that certain unruly types of music could undermine individual autonomy, induce uncontrollable group dynamics, feminise and soften male self-control. Musical sirens threatened delusion and ruin. This problem was first met with the attempt to spiritualise music by coupling it to a heavenly harmony and by describing it in purely mathematical terms, such as to detach it from our real bodies. Later, when scientific advances made such detachment implausible, pathologising certain forms of music allowed for the repression of unwanted forms of music and people involved with them. Another strategy to keep music's powers in check was to confine music to formal definitions of styles and musical systems attached to specific constructions of racial, ethnic, cultural, national or other kinds of group identities, and using those definitions to render music's powers undesirable or to hinder cultural transgression. More recently, the ways in which music can be harnessed by authorities has taken an even more sinister step, as is seen in Lawrence English's introduction to the alarming advent and increase in sonic weapons.

What underlies all these attempts to harness and neutralise the emotional powers of music is that they have always been undertaken by those in power, in order to perpetuate their reign or to hinder social change. In order to do so, it was at all times crucial to be able to control which emotions were allowed in public and which needed to be stowed away in the private domain. All the while, meticulous care was taken to keep the private and the public domains, respectively our affective lives and political interests, separate.

But why such control? Because, on the other side of the spectrum stand forms of music that are powerful subjective expressions of divergent feelings and of the experiences that produce such dissonant emotion. As Ewa Majewska explains in her article, by facilitating a platform for going public with an individual's or marginalised group's troubled experiences, thus connecting the private with the public, music contributes to raising consciousness towards non-hegemonic experiences and to making them politically effective. Such music provides accounts of social conflicts, and rallies against the suppression of dissonant feelings and types of experience. It gives a powerful voice to those who are marginalised and excluded from equal participation, helping propel their demands for change and for more just, diverse, inclusive and open societies.

Deviating emotions, however difficult they may be, give access to experiences beyond social norm – a norm that still is all too much defined by a ruling majority, and that ignores the perspectives of other social groups. But it is precisely these groups that we must listen to, as it is exactly from their experiences and viewpoints that we can expect social change and transformations that, in the end, will be beneficial to the whole of society.

It is from such perspective that CTM Festival has, since its inception, aimed to make space for vastly diverse (and radical) forms of musical expression and the differing emotions they transport.

But what to do with our readiness to listen to such dissonant feelings, when the worrisome upswing of right-wing political populism shows all too clearly that such affective politics are not at all exclusive to the progressive forces in society? Looking back, it used to be easy to celebrate the disruptive powers of divergent emotion without a second thought, because society seemed to be rooted in ossified conservativism and an oppressive squeeze, such that the only direction in which things could possibly go seemed to be »forward.« Yet with Brexit, Trump, emotionalised post-truth politics and new right-wing movements fiercely pushing their fear, anger and love into the public, these times are times of the past.

If the forms of political activism applied towards greater diversity, social justice and equality are in essence adopted and mimicked by those fighting for the opposite – a homogeneous culture in the form of hegemonic nationalism, and authoritarianism based on principal concepts of inequality – then how do we actually distinguish between progressive and reactionary expressions of fear, anger and love?

After all, there is a fundamental difference between the fears produced by centuries-long oppression and the fear of losing inherited privilege – especially as we have not even fully begun to explore what kinds of possibilities could arise for all of us, no matter our identity, if we combined the abandonment of privilege in favour of diversity and inclusion with questions that affect us all, like raging economic inequality? While on all sides anger allows us to overcome fear and provides us with a call to action, the most decisive differences lie in divergent concepts of love.

»Love conceived as a process of unification is an obstacle,« says Michael Hardt in his 2011 essay »For Love Or Money«, and continues: »Such narcissistic love – the love of the same and the love of becoming the same – can be conceived as political form of love, but one that is author of the most reactionary political projects: the love of the race at the foundation of white supremacy, the love of nation that grounds nationalism, the love of both race and nation that supports fascism, and so forth.« And while he is aware that »identity projects, conventionally conceived, including those based on class, race, gender, and sexuality, operate according to a similar conception of public love« – sameness and unification – he advocates to develop »another form of love«:

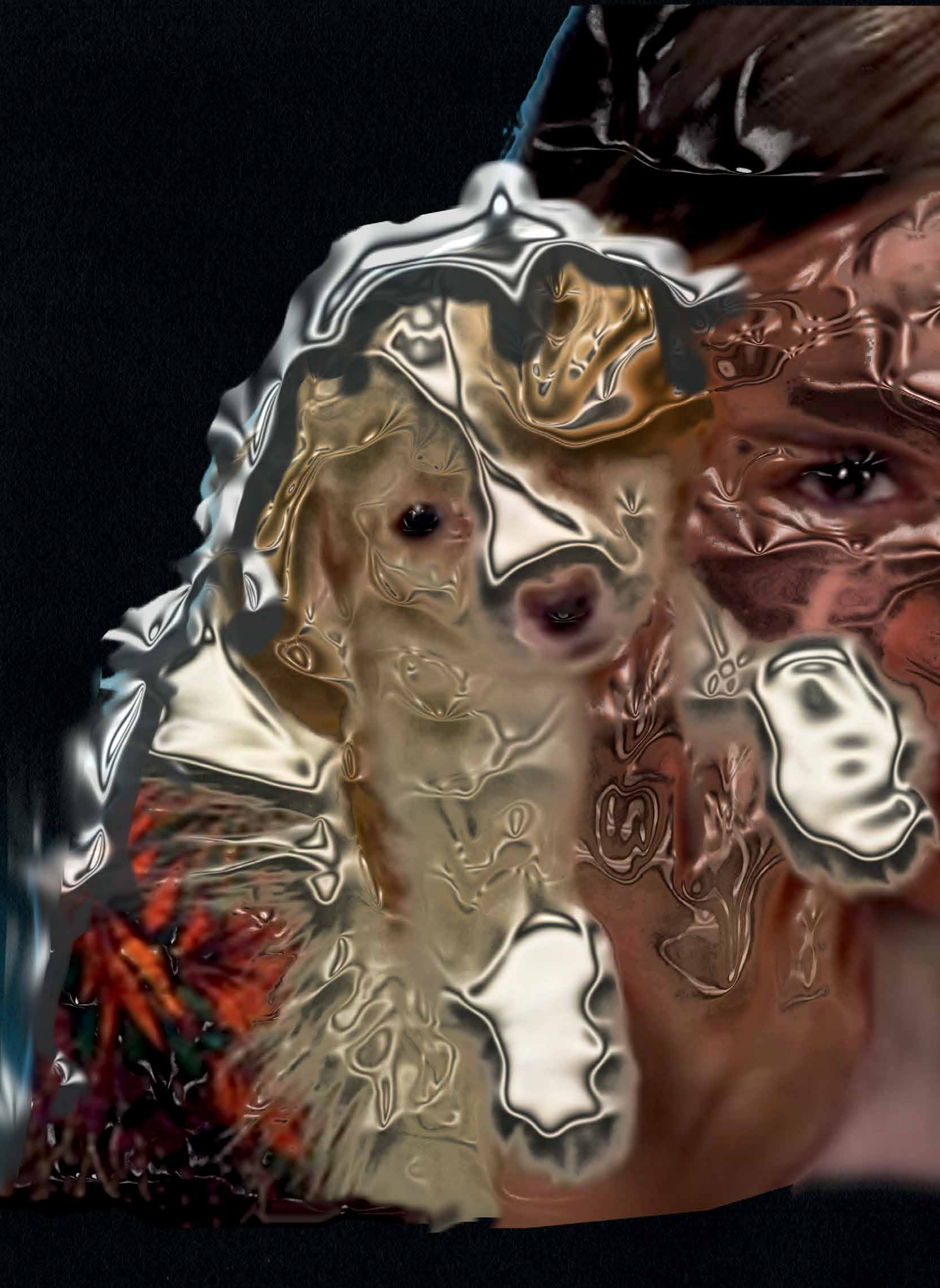
»But what if we were able to identify or invent another love, a love that is properly political? Such a political concept of love would have to be characterised by at least three qualities. First, it would have to extend across social scales and create bonds that are at once intimate and social, destroying conventional divisions between public and private. Second, it would have to operate in a field of multiplicity and function through not unification but the encounter and interaction of differences. Finally, a political love must transform us, that is, it must designate a becoming such that in love, in our encounter with others we constantly become different.«

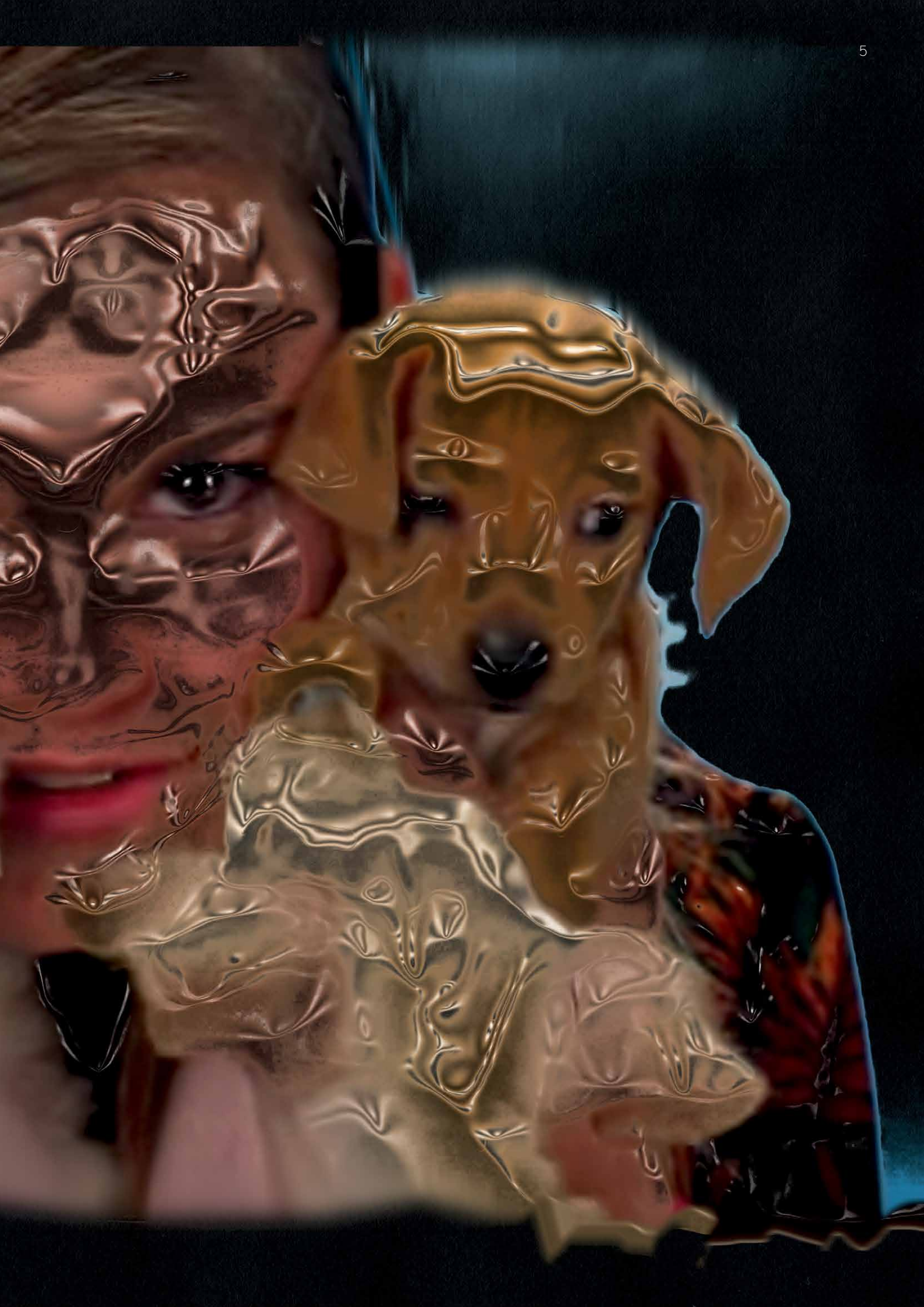
Thinking about such a concept of love, the things we intuitively felt drawn toward when conceptualising our festival become more defined: the wish to make the festival a shared place that fosters encounters between diverse people, groups and experiences, both on the side of artists and audience; the interest in affective experiences and the joy of being affected by others; to think of the festival as an environment for learning and unlearning that leaves you as someone slightly different from what you were when entering it.

We hope that CTM 2017 is another step in such a direction, and that its programme and also this magazine provide some inspiration to further explore such ideas. All of this is possible thanks to the steadfast cooperation of a large number of partners and guest curators, among them Carlos Prieto Acevedo, curator of this year's exhibition, and Dahlia Borsche, Annie Goh, and Taïca Replansky, who provided crucial contributions to this year's Discourse programme.

For their support of our organisation and in particular of this 18th festival edition we – Oliver Baurhenn, Remco Schuurbiers and I – would like to give our heartfelt thanks to our many partners and sponsors: Berlin's Senate Chancellery – Cultural Affairs, Musicboard Berlin and Initiative Musik for their support of our music programme, and also, along with the Federal Agency for Civic Education, for enabling our daytime conference and workshop programme. We also thank the Goethe-Institut and the Federal Foreign Office of Germany for supporting the participation of the many artists based outside of Europe, as well as the Dual Year Mexico-Germany programme, the National Fund for Arts and Culture Mexico and other Mexican partners for supporting the festival's focus on Mexico. Furthermore we wish to thank our longstanding partner transmediale; the Creative Europe programme of the European Union; the Federal Commissioner for Culture and the Media; HAU Hebbel am Ufer for co-producing and premiering NON Worldwide's new project with us at CTM 2017; all of the partners providing their fantastic venues to the festival; the many embassies, consulates and cultural institutions involved; and our media partners and supporters in the private sector. We also sincerely thank the authors of this publication for sharing inspiring reflections informed by their broad range of disciplines and walks of life. And, last but not least, we thank our guests, all the participants and artists, our dedicated team, and the numerous volunteers and fans of CTM, without whom the festival could not be realised.

JAN ROHLF is co-founder of the CTM Festival.





WHY MUSICAL EMOTIONS ARE SPECIAL

BY MATS KÜSSNER

GUIDED BY RECENT SCIENTIFIC EVIDENCE, MATS KÜSSNER EXPLORES MUSICAL EMOTIONS FROM A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE, ARGUING THAT OUR EMOTIONAL REACTIONS TO MUSIC ARE SPECIAL FOR (AT LEAST) THREE REASONS: THEY CAN BE TRACED IN BOTH BRAIN AND BODY; THEY ARE HIGHLY COMPLEX AND NUANCED; AND THEY ARE MULTIMODAL. IF DONE CONSCIOUSLY, ENJOYING MUSIC, WHOSE EMOTIONAL POWER IS AT THE CORE OF ITS FAR-REACHING CAPACITIES, WILL CONTINUE TO CONSTANTLY TRANSFORM OUR LIVES AND SOCIETIES.

Audience response at CTM's WASTED I night, 2005, © Marco Microbi.

INTRO

Did you know that the Queen doesn't like dissonant music[*1)]? »So what?«, you might think. It hardly comes as a surprise that an old (Western) lady doesn't like dissonant music. Tastes are different, after all. But in his article, the Guardian journalist Martin Kettle suggests that not only does the Queen not like dissonant music, but that she doesn't like music at all. Although his argument that the Queen is culturally conservative with no interest in music whatsoever seems plausible, there might be another, more revealing angle to this phenomenon. What if the Queen is genuinely unable to enjoy listening to music? What if she recognises that music represents or expresses different kinds of emotion but can't feel anything herself? If that were true, she might belong to a small percentage of people suffering from »specific musical anhedonia« – a condition that was recently discovered by chance while screening participants for a study on music and emotion[*2)]. For a number of reasons, it is not surprising that the discovery was only made just now and by accident. First, people affected by this condition are perfectly able to navigate their everyday lives. They do not run away from music in panic, nor do they suffer seizures in public places when exposed to music. In fact, they might even choose to go to concerts with friends (if not for the music, then at least for the company), which makes it even harder to identify them. Secondly, and more pertinently to those able to gain pleasure from music, listening to a favourite record or attending a musical performance is presumably the most natural, pleasant thing to do. It's hard, if not impossible, to imagine what it must feel like to not be able to enjoy *any* kind of music. Such a disorder simply didn't cross any researcher's mind until the chance discovery. The inconceivability of this condition highlights, in turn, the importance of affective engagement with music for us. Listening for pleasure is a vital part of our lives. Provided you are healthy and don't lack any other basic human needs, losing the ability to gain pleasure from music is probably one of the worst things that could happen to you. No other human activity stimulates our emotions in a similar fashion, and that's why musical emotions are special. They engage our brains and bodies; they show the most complex and nuanced patterns; and they are multimodal.

I.

The intensity of affective responses to music encompasses a rather broad spectrum. At one end, you may simply like or dislike particular music; this affective category is commonly known as musical preference or taste. It is stable over a long period of time and usually low in affective intensity. At the other end of the spectrum you find so-called »strong experiences« with music[*3)]. Those are rather infrequent, very intense – positive or negative – emotional responses to music that may or may not be associated with life-changing events, and that leave deep traces in your memory. (You'd certainly remember if you had experienced such a musical episode.) But most affective reactions to music – those that are so important to us in our everyday lives – lie between these two extremes and are much more common than strong experiences with music. They may generally be called ›emotional responses to music,‹ or simply ›musical emotions.‹ To be able to understand why they are special, let's first look at what an emotion actually is. In psychological terms, an emotion is usually regarded as a short period of affective reactions that involve (more or less synchronised) sub-components such as subjective feeling, physiological arousal, facial or bodily expression and action tendency[*4)]. The following examples illustrate how these generic features of an emotion could apply to various (random) musical contexts. A musical emotion is present if you feel fear, anger, happiness or any other emotion when listening to a song on the radio; if you experience shivers down the spine or goose bumps during a musical performance; if you change your posture or facial expression as a direct consequence of being exposed to music through your headphones; or if you choose to leave a concert or stop a track on your MP3 player that you find overwhelming (either in a positive or negative sense).

»NEUROBIOLOGICALLY SPEAKING, LISTENING TO MUSIC IS LIKE EATING CHOCOLATE, HAVING SEX OR BEING ON DRUGS.«

These examples give a glimpse into the different facets of musical emotions. Moreover, they highlight how music engages both our brains and our bodies, with results ranging from subtle (unconscious) physiological changes to overt, deliberate behavioural consequences. Research has shown that music is able to activate emotional hubs of the brain associated with the most basic functions, such as the reward system[*5)]. Neurobiologically speaking, listening to music is like eating choco-

late, having sex or being on drugs. Musical sounds are treated as highly rewarding stimuli by our brains, and since organisms seek to re-instantiate such rewarding states, we never get tired of listening to music and might even develop an addiction to it. On the other hand, studies have shown that music is just as capable of tapping into our neurobiological networks of fear. Listening to scary, fear-inducing music can activate the amygdala[*6)], a centre for the detection of emotionally significant stimuli and hence an important brain structure for registering potential threats. Even more intriguingly, fear networks are not exclusively active when listening to scary music that is loud, fast or dissonant and that thus shows similarities with auditory features accompanying dangerous »real-life« situations. Even the deviation from an expected pattern of simple chords within the Western harmonic structure can activate the amygdala and signal to the organism that an emotionally relevant stimulus is present[*7)]. These processes happen in the range of milliseconds, without us even becoming aware of the subtle neurophysiological changes that, by design, serve the purpose of preparing a fight-or-flight response. Importantly, these brain activities are not separated from the rest of the body. They start a cascade of physiological reactions via hormones and neurotransmitters that affect the whole organism.

Some of these physiological changes are directly observable. Music affects our heart[*8)] and breathing rate; it changes the temperature of our skin and modifies the amount of sweat secretion at our hands[*9)]; it modulates the size of our pupils[*10)]; and it creates the aforementioned musical chills, i.e. shivers down the spine, during intensely pleasurable moments of listening[*11)]. Above all, these findings make one main point: musical emotions are deeply rooted in the biology of our bodies; they are intricately linked to our neuro- and psychophysiological processes.

The examples provided so far refer to basic emotions such as fear, anger, happiness, surprise, disgust or sadness[*12)]. These emotions have clear evolutionary functions and some of their underlying neural substrates had millennia to evolve, resulting in very stable neurophysiological patterns. But you might (rightly) interject that musical emotions are much more complex, much more nuanced than simply ›happy‹ or ›sad.‹ The complexity of musical emotions is the second reason attribute that makes them special.

II.

The question of whether musical emotions are rather just a subset of garden-variety emotions has long been debated. Garden-variety emotions are the emotions we experience in everyday life: the surprise of bumping into an old friend; the sadness of losing a loved one; the anger at a pickpocket stealing our wallet; the fear of a snake; or the happiness of being greeted with a big smile by our child. All these emotions helped our ancestors to adapt to the environment and thereby increased the chances of survival or reproduction. But why should music activate these emotions if it is not even clear whether listening to music has any adaptive value? If, in an evolutionary sense, music is just »auditory cheescake« (Pinker), are the neural pathways of musical emotions really the same as those of garden-variety emotions? Just think of people reporting that music makes them feel sad. Is this in fact the same quality of sadness you experience when mourning the loss of a loved one, if to a lesser degree? And is experiencing fear when listening to music really the same type of fear as when being faced with a snake in the forest? After all, we know that we're »just« listening to music.

An important aspect of musical emotions is that there isn't a one-to-one correspondence between a piece of music and a certain emotional state – not even for one individual in one listening context. Over the course of a musical performance (whether live or recorded), we may experience many different kinds of emotion; we may feel different shades of one emotion or even feel two emotions at the same time[*4)]. Thus the range of basic emotions is far too small to capture the full breadth of musical emotions. If you think about the emotion(s) you experienced the last time you listened to music, you might realise that some (or all) of them are *not* garden-variety emotions. And you might find it hard to come up with the right words to describe your musical emotions. (If you manage, the verbal descriptions may seem insufficient). Compiling a list of hundreds of affective terms, researchers have tried to map out the full range of musical emotions and group them into meaningful categories[*13)]. What they finally arrived at were nine affective categories: wonder, transcendence, tenderness, nostalgia, peacefulness, power, joyful activation, tension and sadness. Intuitively, these categories fit nicely with our experiences of musical emotions, and apart from sadness, which is a complicated case[*14)], and joyful activation, which resembles happiness, none of these emotional categories would be considered basic emotions. Instead, they are highly complex affective aggregates that are hard to pin down and perhaps gone the moment you start to notice them. And yet these musical emotions are just as real as the basic emotions described above.

The dynamic unfolding of music over time might be one reason for the complexity of musical emotions. States of homoeostasis, although present in musical pieces, are ephemeral and may just give you time to take a breath before the musical journey continues. And a journey of emotions it is as well. Understanding the complex and nuanced time course of musical emotions is one of the biggest challenges researchers face today. While neuroscientific and psychophysiological measures are not advanced enough to capture these variations, introspective methods, i.e. focusing one's attention on the various shapes of musical emotions, biases the experience at best and

»AN IMPORTANT ASPECT OF MUSICAL EMOTIONS IS THAT THERE ISN'T A ONE-TO-ONE CORRESPONDENCE BETWEEN A PIECE OF MUSIC AND A CERTAIN EMOTIONAL STATE.«

Audience response at CTM's Wasted Prague event, 2006; Photo © Marco Microbi.

makes it disappear at worst. There is a final twist to these complex and nuanced patterns of musical emotions, and that is that they are not simply auditory phenomena. The third reason why musical emotions are special is because they are multimodal.

III.

The results of a neuro-imaging study in which participants were asked to listen to fear- and joy-inducing music seemed puzzling at first. Individuals showed strong activations in the visual cortex when listening to fear-inducing music[*6]. The »problem« with this finding is that no visual input was presented. People listened to the musical tracks with their eyes closed. But what seems perplexing at first is in fact a pseudo-problem. A short post-experiment interview revealed that people imagined scenes of horror movies when being presented with fear-inducing music. They experienced vivid visual imagery that became an integral part of their musical emotions – to the extent that it was no longer clear what the driving force behind the emotion is: the music or the visual imagery.

What this example shows is that listening to music activates other sensory modalities too. For instance, the kinaesthetic sense is known to be involved in the process of listening to music – we may have the feeling of being moved up and down, or being pulled and pushed by the music[*15]. Another key to unlocking multimodal experiences of music is the activation of autobiographical memories including visual, tactile or even olfactory senses. Associating music with past events enables us to re-experience emotional episodes of our lives. Strong experiences with music are an extreme example of such multimodal re-enactments. Of all the senses involved, the visual is perhaps the most prominent one, as it is our main source of information in everyday life. Recent evidence shows that a large number of people experience visual imagery in response to music and that interactive auditory and visual modalities equally drive the experienced emotions[*16]. Visual imagery may range from concrete scenes such as landscapes or musical performances to abstract shapes and patterns; images may be dynamic, stable, clear or fuzzy; there may be fixed correspondences between particular musical pieces and visual images or random connections between sound and image. The power of music to engage so many of our senses has, inevitably, a profound effect on the experienced emotions. Musical emotions can turn an abstract form of art into lived human experience via a multimodal stream of consciousness that is fed by current and recalled sensory input. To think of causes and consequences of musical emotions in purely auditory terms would thus severely underestimate the inherent emotional power of musical sounds.

CODA

Industry has long been aware of the effects of music on our mind, brain and bodies. New apps that promise to enhance whatever part of your life with specifically designed music surge incessantly onto the market. And some of these applications, especially in clinical settings where they may be used to treat dementia, strokes or Parkinson's disease, indeed have the potential to transform people's lives. That's because at the core of music's wide-ranging capacities lies its emotional power. Intended or not, music does nothing else better than it expresses and induces emotions. Music opens up a world of unexplored emotional spheres that wait to be discovered and felt. If we take the time to listen to music, we are likely to be rewarded by a plethora of sensual delights. And with a bit of luck (and empathy), listening to music may even enable us to transcend cultural borders and create transcultural (affective) understanding[*17], as music allows us to discover and experience novel affective states and learn about ourselves as well as others. The music we listen to and the emotions we experience shape a part of who we are and how we interact with others. To be moved by music, to gain pleasure from it, is a capacity that gives meaning to our lives and our societies.

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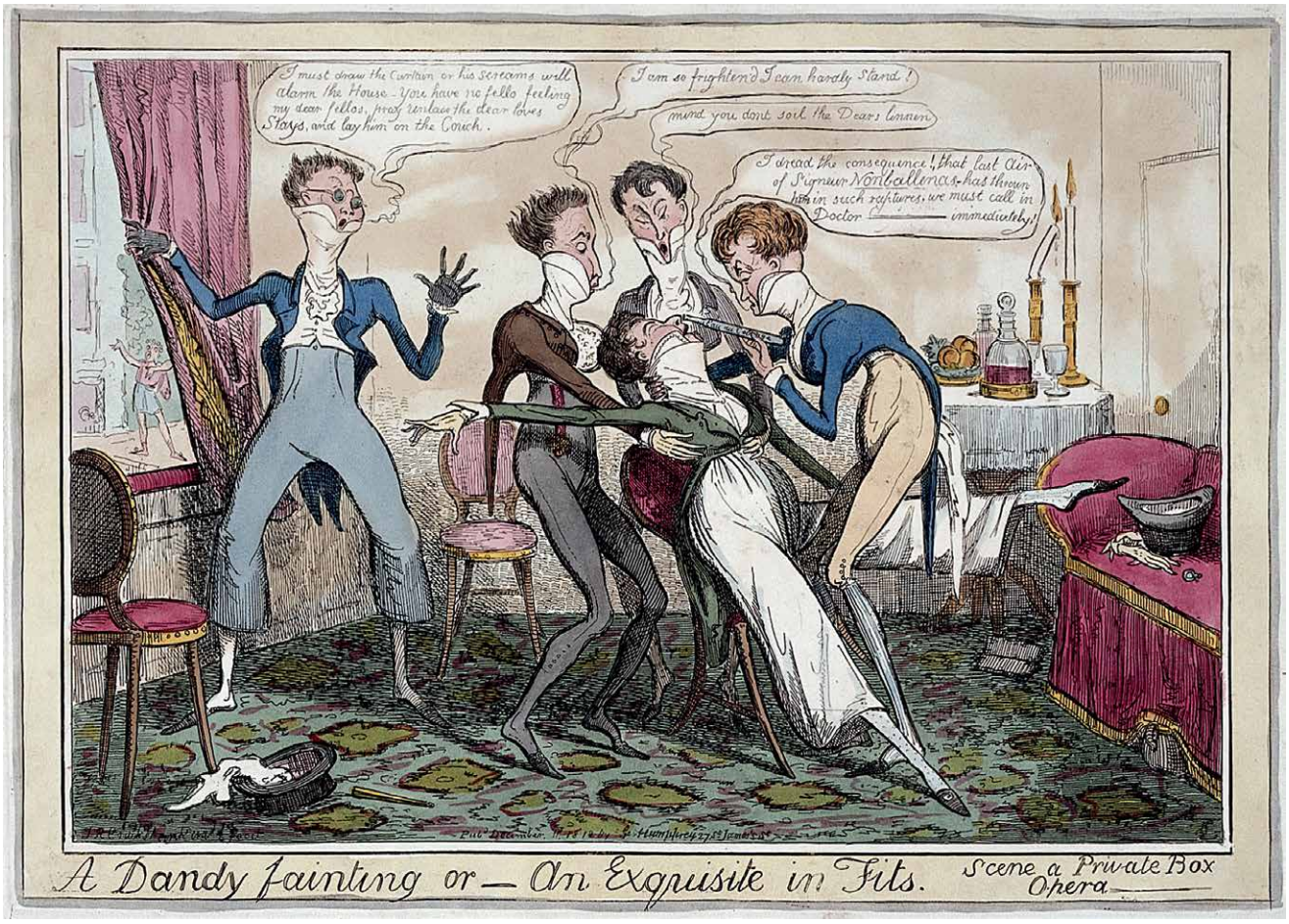
BAD VIBRATIONS: FEAR, ANGER AND LOVE IN MEDICAL PANICS ABOUT MUSIC

BY JAMES KENNAWAY



Dandies at the opera, one of them swooning, overcome with emotion. Coloured etching by I.R. Cruikshank, 1818. Wellcome Library, London, CC BY 4.0 via Wikimedia Commons.

IN THIS ARTICLE, HISTORIAN JAMES KENNAWAY EXPLORES THE »UNHEALTHY« FACETS OF MUSIC. CITING EXAMPLES ALSO PUBLISHED IN HIS BOOK, BAD VIBRATIONS: THE HISTORY OF THE IDEA OF MUSIC AS A CAUSE OF DISEASE, *KENNAWAY POINTS OUT THE MOSTLY POLITICISED AGENDAS BEHIND THE NOTION THAT MUSIC CAN CAUSE ILLNESS, FROM 18TH-CENTURY FEARS OF OVER-STIMULATED NERVES TO THE NAZI CONCEPT OF »DEGENERATE MUSIC« TO A DISCUSSION OF THE USE OF MUSIC IN THE »ENHANCED INTERROGATION TECHNIQUES« AND ACOUSTIC WEAPONS OF THE »WAR ON TERROR.« HIS RESEARCH REMINDS US OF HOW IDEOLOGICALLY SOAKED IMAGINARIES IN THE GUISE OF ALLEGEDLY AUTHORITATIVE FACTS CAN BE EMPLOYED TO INSTILL FEAR AND RESTRICT OUR FREEDOM.*

Everyone has songs they can't stand, and some of us are even tone deaf, but most people think of music as a very positive and healthy part of their lives. In the context of music therapy, it is even supposed to have medical benefits. However, discussions of music also have a darker side. As I show in my book *Bad Vibrations: The History of the Idea of Music as a Cause of Disease*, for the last two hundred years, many doctors, critics and writers have strongly argued that music, or certain kinds of music, have the power to cause neurosis, madness, hysteria and even death. Over and over again, fear and anger about social order and cultural change has been expressed in panics within the medical community about musical genres. Often this fear and anger is in relation to forms of love or sexuality, with the threat posed by undisciplined women or homosexuals and the demand for musical manliness reflected in scientific language. The ancient Greeks generally conceived of music as the 'harmony of the spheres,' as a reflection of deeper cosmic order. This conception, which persisted for centuries, left little scope for music as a medical danger. By the 18th century, however, music was increasingly regarded less as an expression of universal harmony and more as a form of nervous stimulation. And like other dangerous stimulants such as novels or coffee, music, it was believed, could be the root of a whole range of modern illnesses. The glass harmonica (or armonica), which works on the same principle as rubbing a finger around a glass of water and makes a similarly eerie sound, was regarded as especially dangerous. Its popularity was such that Mozart composed for the instrument, but the idea that the instrument caused dangerous tension in the nerves was commonplace. In 1786 the German composer and harmonica player Karl Leopold Röllig suggested it could »make women faint; send a dog into convulsions, make a sleeping girl wake screaming through a chord of the diminished seventh, and even cause the death of one very young.« There are accounts of the instrument being banned by physicians who cited possible ill effects including prolonged shaking of the nerves, tremors in the muscles, fainting, cramps, swelling, paralysis of the limbs and seeing ghosts. The fact that the instrument was mostly played by women, with their supposedly weaker nerves, was also significant. The sisters Cecily and Marianne Davies gave up the instrument in 1784 because of the nervous strain, and Marianne Kirchgässner's death in 1808 was widely understood to be the result of nervousness caused by playing it.

The first serious medical panic about a specific composer's work relates to Richard Wagner. His patron King Ludwig II of Bavaria, who would later succumb to a peculiarly Wagnerian form of madness and drown with his psychiatrist in mysterious circumstances, reportedly passed out during a performance. Even more dramatically, the first singer to perform the role of Tristan, Ludwig Schnorr von Carolsfeld, died in a Tristanian delirium at the age of 29. Von Carolsfeld was not the only person to apparently 'die of Tristan.' Aloys Ander, who had played Tristan in the abortive Vienna production, died insane in 1865. Such was the atmosphere of elicit eroticism surrounding Wagner's work that the French writer Léon Bloy suggested that Wagner's innovative idea of turning off the lights in the theatre was in order to allow secret groping in the audience. The American psychologist Aldred Warthin at the University of Michigan claimed that he had been informed by colleagues of quasi-hypnotised listeners being brought to orgasm by the composer's music, but reported that he could not replicate this result in his experiments. He did however suggest that such Wagnerian trances »may be attended by danger.« »The symptoms of collapse developed at times,« he wrote, and »the accompanying emotional shock, might be increased beyond the point of safety.« Warthin's experiment drew on work done at the Salpêtrière hospital in Paris in the 1880s, where physicians published studies suggesting that lullabies and gongs could put hysterical women into catatonic fits.

Other observers suggested that the sexual power of Wagner's music could be related to what was seen as the medical condition of homosexuality. The famous sexologist Richard von Krafft-Ebing interviewed several men who said that listening to Wagner had made them homosexual. And in his 1907 book The Intersexes, Xavier Mayne included a questionnaire in order for the reader to discover if he was »at all Uranian?,« a euphemism for homosexuality. Along with more obvious questions such as, »Do you feel at ease in the dress of the opposite sex?,: it asked, »Are you particularly fond of Wagner?« Since it was widely believed that homosexuals, despite their innate musicality, were

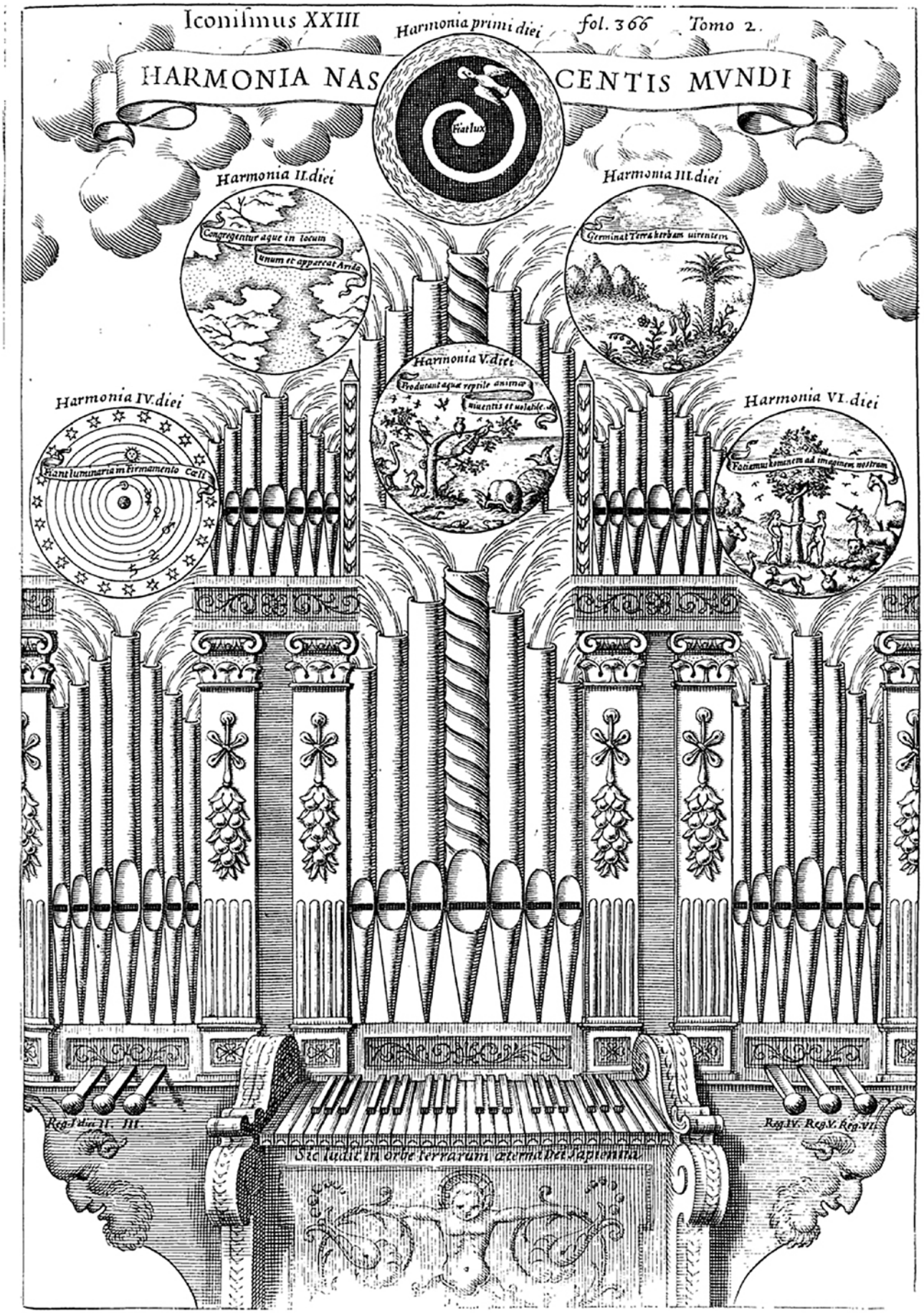
unable to whistle, it also asked, »Do you whistle well, and naturally like to do so?« Surprisingly, the Wagner cult thus prefigured 1970s disco in its associations with gay lifestyles and their supposed dangers.

In general, however, the warnings about the effect of sexual excitement were generally aimed at women. Physicians argued that even piano lessons could have disastrous consequences for female health. In 1900 the doctor J. Herbert Dixon wrote that it could lead to »pronounced neurasthenia« with symptoms such as »headaches, neuralgia, nervous twitchings, hysteria, melancholia and madness.« The consequences of modern musical over-stimulation for female fertility were a common topic of debate during the final decades of the nineteenth century. Some gynaecologists argued that musical stimulation could over-excite the female reproductive system, causing premature puberty and excessive menstruation. The Argentine psychiatrist José Ingegnerios described a case in 1907 that demonstrated, he believed, that female »morbid musical feeling« peaked when the women concerned were menstruating. He also reported the case of a »melo-sexual« young woman who achieved »complete sexual satisfaction« from playing the piano, which had led to her »sexual neurasthenia.«

In the poisonous atmosphere of the Weimar Republic, anti-Semitism came to play an increasing role in attacks on »sick« music. The Nazi takeover of power in 1933 was regarded by many critics of »degenerate music« as the basis for a restoration of musical »health« and liberation from the »bacillus of putrefaction« of bad music. To this end, all foreign music sold in Germany had to be approved by the Reich Ministry for Propaganda. The combination of racism, reactionary politics and misused psychiatry that had developed in discussions of music through the Weimar Republic and into the Nazi era reached a peak with the Degenerate Music exhibition in Düsseldorf in 1938. Musical »hygiene« had become state policy, leading an official ban on »harmful music« and to thousands being silenced, exiled or murdered.

Race has played a major role in most medical panics about music since ragtime. Already in 1904, an American critic commented on the popularity of the argument that the »peculiar accent and syncopated time« of ragtime could have a »disintegrating effect on nerve tissue and a similar result upon moral integrity.« The association of ragtime with nervousness was such that a whole sub-genre, the »nervous rag,« came into being, including examples like Paul J. Know's »Every Darkey has a Nervous Spell« (a song about stealing chickens). When jazz hit the mainstream after the First World War there was a wave of anxiety about its effects on the body, sometimes involving the authorities on public health grounds. The Health Commissioner of Milwaukee, Dr George C. Ruhland, opined that jazz excited »the nervous system until a veritable hysterical frenzy is reached. It is easy to see that such a frenzy is damaging to the nervous system and will undermine the health in no time.« The orchestra leader at Napa asylum near San Francisco stated that »from my own knowledge about fifty percent of our young boys and girls from age 16 to 25 that land in the insane asylum theses days are jazz-crazy dope fiends and public dance hall patrons.«

After the Second World War, the influence of Pavlov's concept of the conditioned reflex combined with an atmosphere of Cold War paranoia led to a panic about the supposed ability of music to »brainwash« listeners, causing mental illness and political trouble. The term »brainwashing« emerged during the Korean War, when it was feared that Communists had developed powerful forms of mind control. The CIA then promoted the term to explain the behaviour of American POWs and began its own research into such techniques, some of which used music. The prominent English psychiatrist William Sargant advanced a Pavlovian account of musical manipulations in his book, Battle for the Mind, which portrayed rock 'n' roll as a dangerous threat to the mind. He later argued in an interview in Newsweek that Patty Hearst had been turned from an heiress kidnap victim into a politically motivated armed robber by loud rock music.
In America, right-wing evangelical Christians have used the idea of rock music as a sinister form of brainwashing to argue that it was literally a Communist plot. Author David Noebel argued that »The Communist scientists and psycho-politicians have devised a method of combining music, hypnotism and Pavlovianism to nerve-jam the children of our nation without our leaders, teachers or parents being aware of its shocking implications. If [such] scientific programmes [were] not exposed,« he warned, »degenerated Americans will indeed raise the Communist flag over their own nation.« He provided ingenious if paradoxical reasoning to explain why Communist states themselves banned rock music although it was their own sinister invention – it just showed that they knew how danger-



Harmony of the birth of the world, represented by a cosmic organ. From Musurgia Universalis by Athanasius Kircher, published in 1650. Public domain, source Wikimedia Commons.

ous it really was! Along with well-worn themes relating to sex and drugs, Noebel also brought to light a less common aspect of music's dangers – the threat posed to plants. He reported an experiment conducted by Mrs. Dorothy Retallack of Denver that demonstrated, he claimed, that avant-garde classical music made plants wilt and Led Zeppelin made them die.

The American anxiety about musical brainwashing that developed in the context of the Cold War in the 1950s was in part shifted onto another supposed worldwide conspiracy during the Reagan era – Satanism. During the 1980s and 1990s a full-scale moral panic swept the country, linking the pseudoscience of brainwashing, the literal belief in a supernatural satanic threat and the musical genre of heavy metal. A wide range of books with titles like The Devil's Disciples and (my personal favourite) Hit Rock's Bottom accused certain bands of brainwashing innocent American teenagers with subliminal messages which turned them towards devil worship, sexual immorality, murder and suicide.

One apparent element of this diabolical plot was the use of so-called »backmasking,« hidden messages that could only be decoded when music was played backwards but, when music was played forwards, could influence listeners subliminally, damaging their mental health. Bands like The Beatles popularised backmasking techniques pioneered by 1950s musique concrète composers, sparking conspiracy theories relating to what the messages really said. Self-proclaimed experts often disagreed about which dangerous message was hidden in the music, and exposed themselves to ridicule with their analyses of backmasking tracks. One well-known preacher in Ohio publicly burned a recording of the theme tune to the TV series Mr. Ed (which featured a talking horse) because he said it had »Someone sing this song for Satan« when played backwards.
Just as the novel became more respectable as the cinema became the bugbear in the early 20th century, and just as the cinema was replaced by the »video nasty« in the 1980s only to be replaced in turn by the internet, so each new musical medium has been viewed by many as especially »modern,« immoral and bad for the health. In the last couple of years, a new medical/moral panic about the danger of sound has taken the place of backmasking in the public imagination: »i-Dosing.« The Daily Mail was among the first to hype this potential new moral panic, with an article describing »the world of ›i-Dosing‹, the new craze sweeping the internet in which teenagers used so-called 'digital drugs' to change their brains in the same way as real-life narcotics.« I-dosing involves so-called binaural beats – a tone of slightly varying frequencies is played to each ear and the listener can perceive an extra low beat.

More real – and much more worrying – is the deployment of music and sound in warfare. Like waterboarding, the use of music to »break« a prisoner leaves no visible scars that might cause an outrage if they were shown in the media. As early as May 2003, the BBC was reporting that the US army had played Metallica's »Enter Sandman« and Barney the Dinosaur's »I Love You« to »uncooperative« detainees at high volume in shipping containers. It seems that although almost all the panic about music's effect on health over the past couple of centuries has been disproved, this more modern application of music may be seriously bad for the health after all.

Throughout the last couple of centuries, then, we have seen repeated occasions on which new musical genres and styles have been attacked on medical grounds, with remarkably little effort expended on finding evidence for their supposed ill effects. In fact, there are rare occasions when music can have a direct negative effect on health – causing epileptic fits, for instance – and the indirect impact of music in causing excitement can be the occasion of ill health. Nevertheless, the medical attack on music has generally reflected different agendas related to politics. The prestige of (white male) doctors was called upon to explain the necessity for musical order and the perils of the free expression, especially in connection to women and racial or sexual minorities. Nor does the scene today seem so very different. The language of the female hormones may have replaced that of the nervous system, but the internet and media provide countless examples of medicalised panics about the impact of music, particularly if it involves »hysterical« teenage girls and young black men. Fear, anger and love are therefore just as central as ever to today's debates on pathological music.

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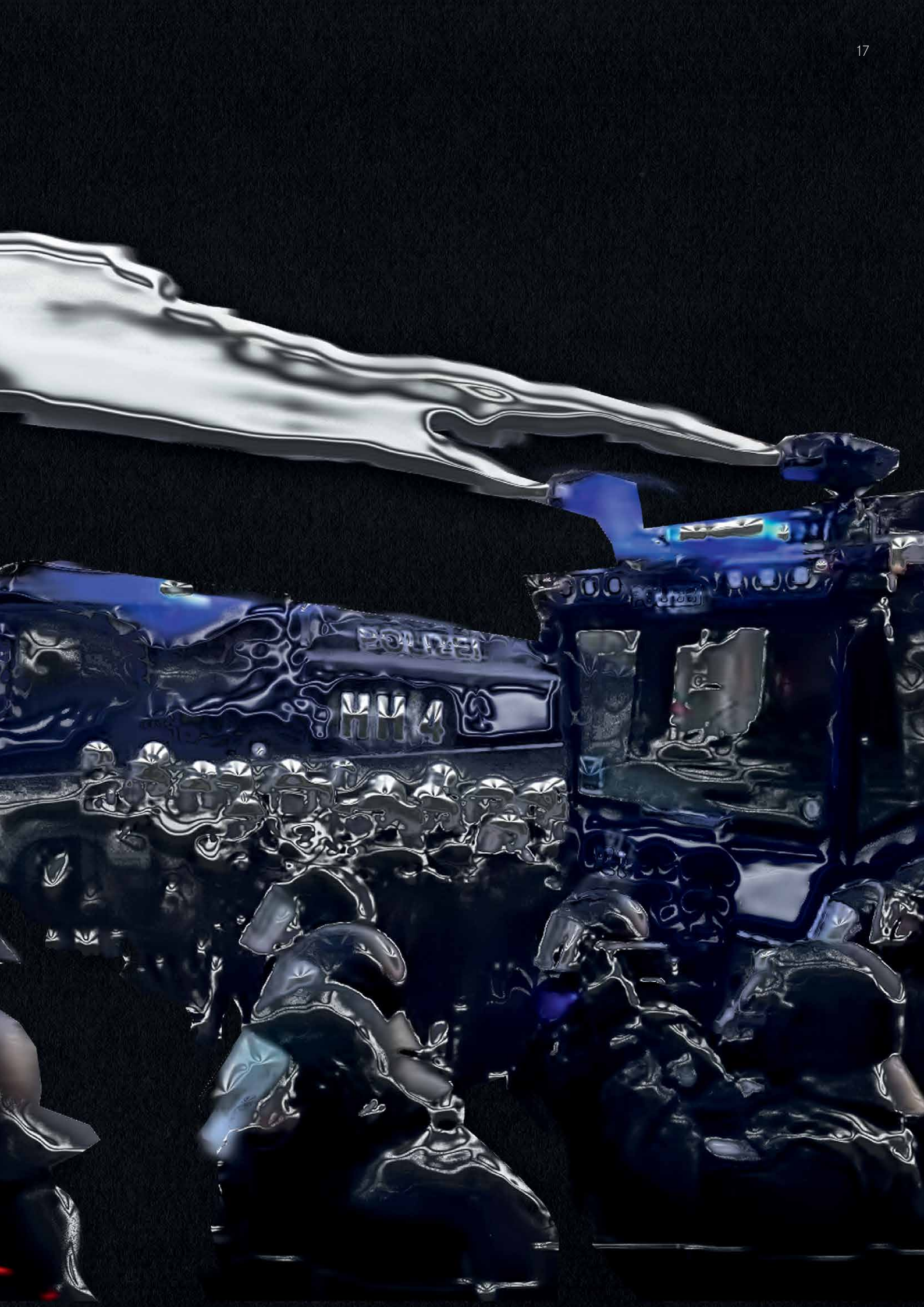
HH 4

THE SOUND OF FEAR

BY LAWRENCE ENGLISH

AN ARTIST, CURATOR, AND THE FOUNDER OF ROOM40, A LEADING AVANT-GARDE IMPRINT BASED IN BRISBANE, LAWRENCE ENGLISH IS ONE OF THE MOST PROLIFIC AND RECOGNISED FIGURES IN CONTEMPORARY AMBIENT AND EXPERIMENTAL MUSIC. HIS WORK UNDERTAKES THE STUDY OF PERCEPTION, MEMORY AND SONIC AFFECT ACROSS A WIDE ARRAY OF CREATIVE FORMS. AS SOMEONE ALREADY HIGHLY ATTUNED TO BOTH THE PSYCHOLOGICAL AND PHYSIOLOGICAL EFFECTS OF SOUND, ENGLISH WALKS US THROUGH A QUICK HISTORY OF SOUND'S MANIPULATION BY HUMANS AS A TOOL OF DESTABILISATION, TERROR AND VIOLENCE. ENGLISH'S NEWEST RELEASE, CRUEL OPTIMISM, *IS A RECORD THAT CONSIDERS POWER IN BOTH ITS PRESENT AND ABSENT FORMS. IT REFLECTS ON HOW POWER CONSUMES, AUGMENTS AND ULTIMATELY SHAPES TWO SUBSEQUENT HUMAN CONDITIONS: OBSESSION AND FRAGILITY. THIS PYRAMID IS AN AFFECTIVE ECOLOGY OF THE (EVER)PRESENT MOMENT. THE ALBUM IS A MEDITATION ON THE VERY PRESENT CHALLENGES WE COLLECTIVELY FACE AND AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO PRESS FORWARD TOWARDS MORE PROFOUND FUTURES.*

Common idioms such as »seeing is believing« give our eyes the central role in our engagement with the world. But there is little doubt that listening plays a critical part in how we navigate and understand our environment. Historically, our ears – not eyes – revealed what lay beyond the light of the campfire. And importantly, our ears helped us recognise what lay behind us, out of sight. Sound has the profound ability to haunt, shock and terrify. It has a primordial quality that reaches deep inside us.

Recently, for instance, in preparation for Riverfire, an annual fireworks display in Brisbane, a pair of FA-18 Super Hornets throttled directly over my house. My two-year-old son was in the yard and, as I stepped outside to look at the planes, I saw him hurtling up our driveway, tears streaming down his cheeks. He couldn't see the planes as they had passed overhead before their sound hit us. But their unnatural volume and the coarse noise of their engines triggered a palpable and overpowering sense of unease and distress.

Sounds heard without a visible source are known as acousmatic. To cope with them, we have created various narratives and myths. In Japanese mythology, the »Yanari,« a word that references the sound of a house in earthquakes, is said to be a spirit responsible for the groaning and creaking of the house at night. In Norse mythology, thunder was ascribed to the god Thor.
Given its profound emotional impact, it's not surprising that sound has also been used as a device for exerting power and control. In recent years, the use of sound (and music) as a weapon has increased, as have our abilities to better exploit its potential. From Long Range Acoustic Devices LRADs used to disperse protesting crowds to military drones that induce a wave of fear in those unlucky enough to be under them to songs blasted on rotation at Guantanamo Bay, we are entering an age in which sound is being repositioned as a tool of terror.

HOW SOUND AFFECTS US

In psychological terms, sonic affect is created through aesthetic qualities: the timbre of the sound and how we receive it through our mesh of social and cultural understandings. The volume, duration and actual material content of a sound all play a part in how it affects us. Broadly speaking, most of us hear audible frequencies between 20Hz (very low sounds) and 20000 Hz (very high sounds). However, in certain circumstances, sound that exists above and below our hearing range

can also be experienced. When considering the physiological impact of sound, the two critical aspects are frequency and volume. The sound we feel in our bodies is usually a low-frequency sound. And infrasound is of such low frequency that it cannot be heard with human ears. Yet it still causes an unconscious physiological anxiety. It's this dual recognition – of the ears and the body, the psychological and the physiological – that's vital to the use of sound as a weapon.

The Battle Of Jericho, described in the Bible, is an apt place to begin an examination of how sound came to be utilised as a weapon. Loosely, the story goes that Joshua's Israelite army was able to break down the walls of Jericho using trumpets. Though there is no historical basis to this story, it recognises the physiological and the psychological implications of sound in warfare. Sound can be used at high volume to create powerful effects on objects. It's unlikely, of course, that brass instruments could crush a city's walls without serious mechanical and engineering assistance. But the shock wave from a trombone is nothing short of a micro-sized explosion.

The Battle of Jericho also reminds us how sound can fatigue us. Like noise pollution today, sonic fatigue leads to psychological debilitation. Perhaps the Israelite army was able to wear its enemy down through prolonged, high-volume sound projection causing sleep deprivation and fatigue-induced panic. Moreover, the constant blasting of the horns would act as a constant reminder that at any point the armies might attack. The audible threat in and of itself becomes a device of terror.

One of the most frightening recently discovered weapons of sound is the Aztec Death Whistle, a pottery vessel, often shaped like a skull, that was used by Mexico's pre-Columbian tribes. Blowing into it makes a sound that has been described as »1,000 corpses screaming.« Used en masse, an army marching with death whistles would surely have been terrifying.

20TH-CENTURY TERROR

One of the most iconic representations of sound as a means of creating fear was developed during the Second World War. Germany's Stuka Ju-87, a dive-bomber fitted with a 70-cm siren dubbed the »Jericho Trumpet,« was a sophisticated terror device. Its success influenced the V1 Flying Bomb, known as the Buzzbomb due to the acoustic design of its engine. While its blast capacity was modest, its power as a sonic threat demonstrated the growing recognition of psychological terror as a destructive tool of war.

Following World War Two, the development of supersonic flight heralded unprecedented exploration of aerial sonic phenomena, including the »sonic boom.« A sonic boom is the sound made when a plane exceeds the speed of sound – 1236kph in dry air at 20°C. In 1964, Oklahoma City became a US Government testing ground for sonic booms. A wealth of information was produced, including an assessment of the phenomenon's rather pointed psychological impact on the city's citizens. Two decades on, the US government was using sonic booms against Nicaragua as part of a campaign to destabilise the Sandinista government of the day.

Meanwhile, during the Vietnam conflict, US troops played a soundtrack known as »Ghost Tape Number 10« against the soldiers of the National Liberation Front. As part of Operation Wandering Soul, American forces played an unsettling tape collage that tapped into Vietnamese beliefs that ancestors not buried in their homeland roam without rest in the afterlife. This spooky mix of voice, sound and music was intended to haunt Vietnamese soldiers and encourage them to abandon their cause.

THE SOUND OF FEAR IN THE 21ST CENTURY

In the past decade, the increased military use of Unmanned Aerial Vehicles, colloquially known as drones, has led to new forms of sonic terror. The word »drone« refers to both a worker bee and the sound that it makes. Like the bee, drones have distinct sonic characters depending on their design. These sonic characteristics have been shown to produce, for those living under them, degrees of annoyance, anxiety and fear. Civilian descriptions of drone activities in the report *Living Under Drones* prepared by a team at Stanford University document what some interviewees describe as a »wave of terror« upon hearing them. Their sound, both up close and at a distance, is particular and pervasive. En masse the reference to bees is obvious.

A recent military exercise undertaken by Israel against Palestine in 2012, titled »Operation Pillar of Defense,« extensively used the sonic capacity of drones. During this operation, sound was used as a constant reminder that at any stage strikes could be made. This auditory threat – added to the general discom-

A Polish police truck with the LRAD-500x system during protests in 2011. CC BY-SA 3.0 pl, via Wikimedia Commons.

fort of constant buzzing and whirring of machinery overhead – proved a powerful weapon.

On the ground, too, sonic weapons such as the Long Range Acoustic Device are being increasingly deployed. Originally created as a means of long-distance communication in marine settings (over distances as far as three kilometers), the device has been widely used since the early 2000s. During Pittsburgh's G20 protests in September 2009, it was deployed to disperse crowds with incredibly high-volume, directional sound. Use of the device led to subsequent legal action against the city of Pittsburgh, with one claimant, Karen Piper, receiving damages of $72,000 after suffering permanent hearing damage.

Almost all states in Australia have acquired these acoustic devices in recent years, though their usage is primarily for communication during siege and disaster situations – not crowd control. Still, the law and enforcement implications of these devices and the emergent field of acoustic jurisprudence are sure to become of greater interest.

THE TERROR JUKEBOX

Recorded music, too, is an increasingly powerful weapon used to »break« prisoners during interrogation. The formula for music as a form of terror is equal parts volume, aesthetics and repetition. It's a methodology that recognises we have no earlids. Unlike our eyes, we cannot shut out sound and this means we're vulnerable to it in ways we don't always consider.

In the early 20th century, Luigi Russolo's Intonarumori – a group of experimental acoustic instruments – heralded an assault on the harmonic canon of music. The performances he gave with these instruments created outrage and discomfort in his audiences. In his manifesto, *The Art Of Noise*, he espoused a violent rethinking of the potentials of music and noise.

In Greece between 1967 and 1974, the Military Police and the aptly named Special Interrogation Unit used music in two distinct ways. It was played very loudly over long periods of time to detainees. And prisoners were pressured to undertake periods of forced singing, with renditions of the same song over and over again.

Similarly, in Northern Ireland in the early 1970s, a so-called »Music Room« was used to break hooded detainees placed in internment. Extremely loud white noise was blasted at them. Outside the Music Room, a device called the Curdler was also used to torture prisoners – it emitted a loud sound at a frequency range specifically sensitive to humans.

Meanwhile, in 1989, the US Government launched Operation Nifty Package. Its aim was the extraction of the opera-loving Panamanian dictator Manuel Noriega, who had sought asylum in the papal nunciature of Panama City. After a lengthy playlist of loud rock and heavy metal – including Styx and Black Sabbath – was blasted at the building in which he sheltered, Noriega was ejected from the diplomatic quarter.

One of the most extraordinary sonic duels occurred in 1993, when the Branch Davidians and officers from the Bureau Of Al-

A F/A-18C Hornet in transonic flight producing a flow-induced vapor cone. US Navy photo by Ensign John Gay; public domain, via Wikimedia Commons..

cohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives faced off during the infamous siege of Waco. The government agencies assaulted the Davidian compound with repeated plays of Nancy Sinatra's »These Boots Are Made For Walkin'« droning Tibetan mantras, recordings of rabbits being slaughtered and Christmas carols. In turn, the Davidian leader David Koresh retaliated with broadcasts of his own songs – until the compound's power was switched off. Still, this encounter was primitive when compared to contemporary methods of music torture. The sound systems used during Waco, for example, were largely directionless, and agents working for the government needed earplugs to block the effects of their own soundtrack.

In the past decade, the use of music as torture has been cemented in facilities such as Guantanamo Bay and other undisclosed detention camps. Psychological Operations, a branch of the United States military, is renowned for its ability to influence behaviour and assist in the psychological »breaking« of detainees through the use of sound.

The choice of music used as part of these interrogations at Guantanamo was wildly disparate. Death metal band Deicide's infamous song »Fuck Your God« was often used, as was aggressive hip hop. But so, too, were the songs of Britney Spears (»Hit Me Baby One More Time« was played often) and, perhaps most surprisingly, »I Love You« from Barney and Friends. Bob Singleton, the writer of the Barney and Friends song, was shocked at its use. How, he wondered, could a song »designed to make little children feel safe and loved« drive adults to an emotional breaking point?

Singleton's disgust at the use of his music in this context wasn't isolated. Indeed, artists such as Massive Attack, Nine Inch Nails, Rage Against the Machine and others teamed up with the NGO Reprieve to create the Zero dB coalition against the use of music-related torture. Tom Morello, then-guitarist with Rage Against the Machine, spoke of inmates being blasted with music for 72 hours »at volumes just below that to shatter the eardrums.« The Canadian electro-industrial band Skinny Puppy took things one step further: in 2014 it invoiced the US Defense Department $666,000 for the unauthorised use of its music at Guantanamo Bay.

There's little doubt that music will continue to play a role in the struggles around terror. Indeed, the potential of sound as a weapon is, sadly, still in its infancy. Sonic weapons, after all, leave no physical marks – thus, they're perfect for those who wish to remain untraceable.

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Left and right: from the series Exotic Birds of Prey and their Environs, *Lawrence English, 2016.*

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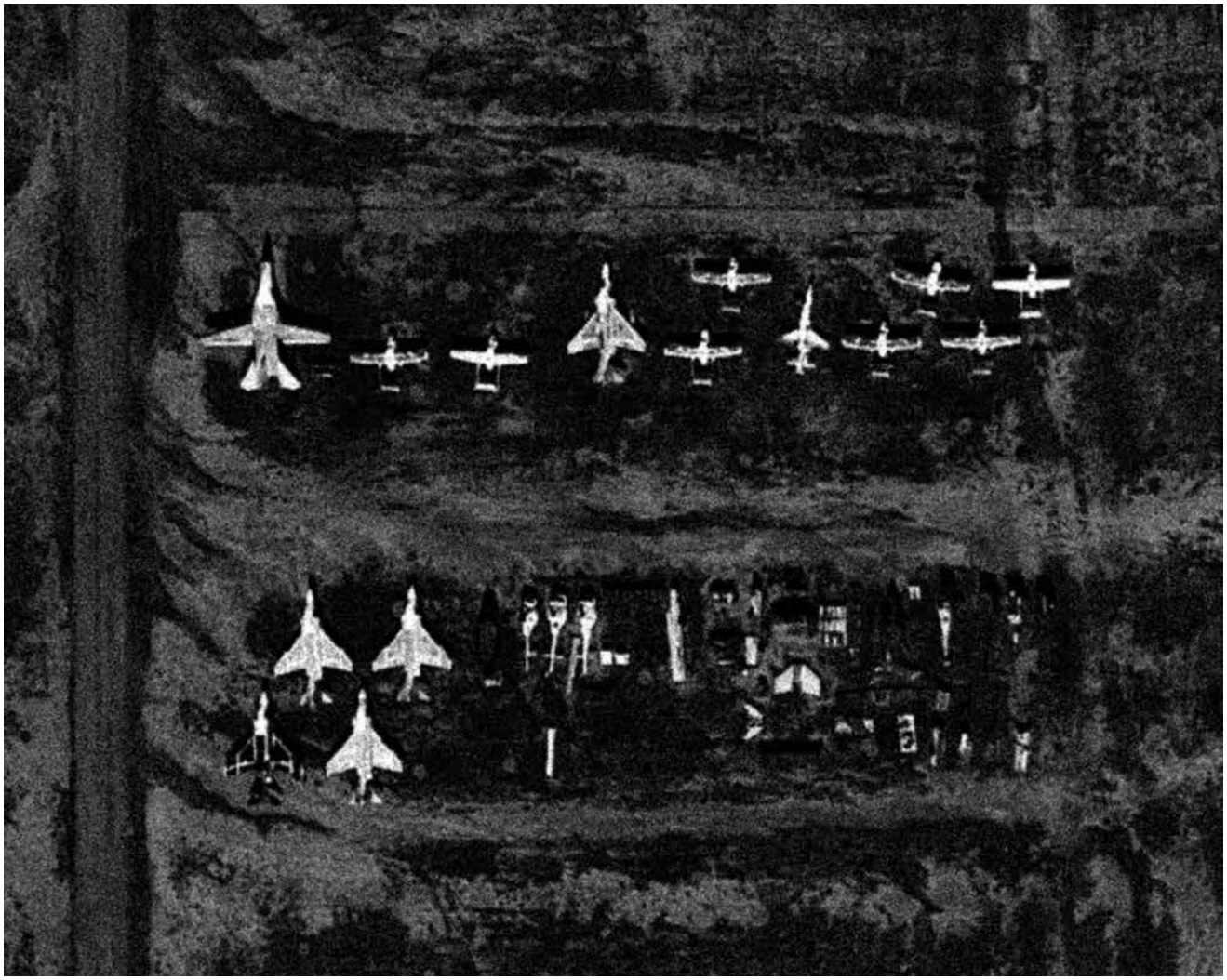


LOSING CONTROL

KURT HENTSCHLÄGER IN CONVERSATION WITH G. ROGER DENSON

THE AUSTRIAN ARTIST KURT HENTSCHLÄGER CREATES IMMERSIVE AUDIO-VISUAL INSTALLATIONS AND PERFORMANCES THAT PROMPT VISITORS TO LEAVE THE COMFORT ZONE OF SAFEGUARDED CONSUMERIST EXISTENCE, COLLAPSING SENSORY REALITY AND ILLUSION INTO DISORIENTING, VISCERAL AND AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES. HIS NEWEST WORK, »SOL,« WILL PREMIERE AT HALLE AM BERGHAIN DURING CTM 2017 AND WILL LATER BE SHOWN AT THE OK CENTER FOR CONTEMPORARY ART IN LINZ. IN THIS EXTENSIVE INTERVIEW, HENTSCHLÄGER SPEAKS WITH ART CRITIC G. ROGER DENSON ABOUT THE THEORIES AND INTERESTS THAT HAVE INFORMED THE TRAJECTORY OF HIS WORK TO DATE.

Kurt Hentschläger, »FEED.« Photo © Kurt Hentschläger.

G. ROGER DENSON *Over the course of thirty years you've made four big leaps in the media you've devised. 1) Firstly, your early work with* Granular Synthesis *between 1992 and 2003 was largely photographic and cinematic. 2) After that you innovated the flicker and strobe video projections, which are essentially Structuralist in their self-referential form, process and temporality as subject. 3) Then you invented and elaborated emissive environmental installations in which the vision of the participatory audience is hindered so that their other senses are heightened. 4) Finally, you developed hybrids of virtual or 3D imaging. When considered as a successive evolution of your concerns with media, you can be said to be unifying four very different kinds of artistic and cognitive processes with two basic models of knowledge acquisition: the representational and the experiential, or what theorists like to call the difference between psychological, meaning rationalised, and phenomenological, meaning lived. To put it bluntly, you went from making work in the 1990s that largely consists of recording and projecting real human subjects representing conditions of psychological and perceptual dehumanisation, to perceptually abstract work that is both experienced as and representative of our perception of the dehumanising effects of media on modern life. You keep coming back to representing bodies, but now they are 3D animated virtual bodies.*

Loss of control is a continuous thread in both your figurative projection work and your more perceptually sublime environments such as »FEED,« »ZEE« and »SOL.« When we find ourselves amid the synthetic fog and strobes of »ZEE,« we have the definitive experience of losing all reference points perceptually, almost physically. I say »almost physically« because we retain the experience of feeling the floor beneath us and the awareness of our own bodies, but little if anything else. So I guess that that is a substantial loss of perceptual and physical control that corresponds to the analogous loss of control we witness in your projected bodies.

KURT HENTSCHLÄGER I think that's quite accurate. The »loss of control trauma« links to what I like to call the primal narcissistic injury to the emancipated, conscious human being – namely that despite all the insights, knowledge, efforts, accomplishments of our technologically addicted civilisation, there is no way out of the basic human trajectory, which always ends in our demise. I stick with my suspicion that most of our technological obsession orbits around our desire for heightened control over our lives, specifically through attaining stability, longevity and ultimately the promise of transcending our destiny on this planet rather than in whatever mythological scenarios beyond.

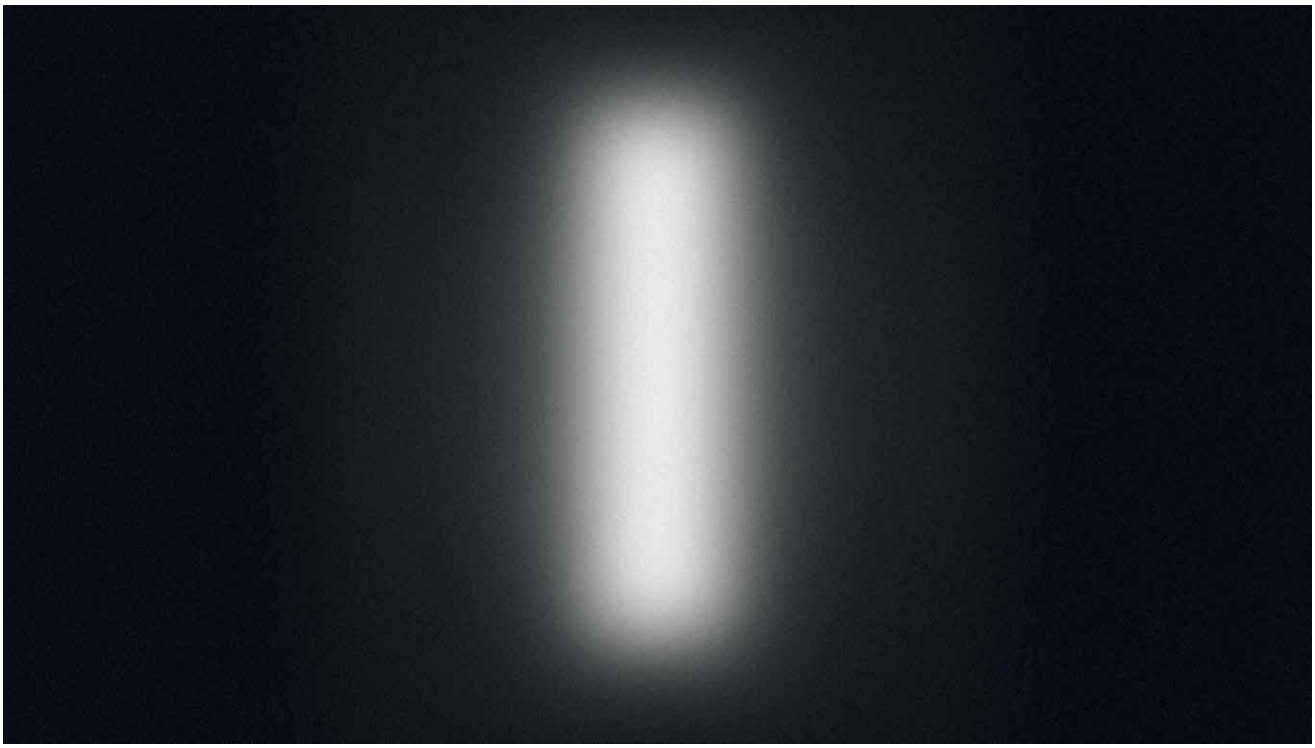
GRD *This loss of control motif helps explain why, even though you're not a believer in God or the soul, you reference William Blake, who was a profound believer in both. What is it that you've intended to convey with the clustering-bodies work that people identify with spirituality, with or without knowing Blake's work? You introduced the bodies in tumultuous flux in videos projected in gallery spaces, but now you've begun to incorporate them within your phenomenological voids, starting with »FEED.«*

KH Blake today can be acknowledged in the context of my work without referencing spiritualist notions. I think the clustering-bodies work can be described analogously as unconscious bodies in a kind of neverland, in-between state. In this sense, I'm not referencing Blake as much as I'm recontextualising him for our scientific age. It's true that »FEED« is part of the fog/strobe phenomenological work. But the first half is a traditional audiovisual work, with projection of agitated bodies on a single frontal screen with surround sound. Each virtual body doubles as a sound instrument, creating and shaping sound through motion and changes in position in the zero-gravity space. The greater the quantity of virtual bodies in the environment, the more complexly and richly the droning sound builds, creating a synchronised audio-visual impression. Then, halfway through, fog machines placed all around the audience rapidly render fog and wipe out perception of both the space and projection, and, voilà, off to phenomenology…as a live performance, »FEED« is quite a different animal. It was my »monster,« loud and intense, with the entire second strobe/fog/sound composition being created by myself as improv, all by hand and in the moment, thus making each show quite different from the next.

GRD *But knowing your Structuralist sensibility, there is some interactive purpose of introducing both virtual and real spaces in tandem.*

KH The concept of »FEED« was to overlay a physical venue and virtual space at the same time. The discussion in my head was all about a parallel digital planet (bodies in 3D space on/behind screen) affecting the »real« world and vice versa.

GRD *I think we should pause here to make something very basic to your work clear to the reader, and that's the physics and technology of the real production that grounds the ideological analogies, systems and mythologies. In your 1990s productions with Ulf Langheinrich under the collective name* Granular Synthesis, *you were known also for designing your own computer software, and for your requirements of an elaborate audio-visual armature that travelled everywhere with you. The critic Christopher Phillips called it all »unwieldly« in that you*



Left and right: Kurt Hentschläger, »SOL.« Photo © Kurt Hentschläger.

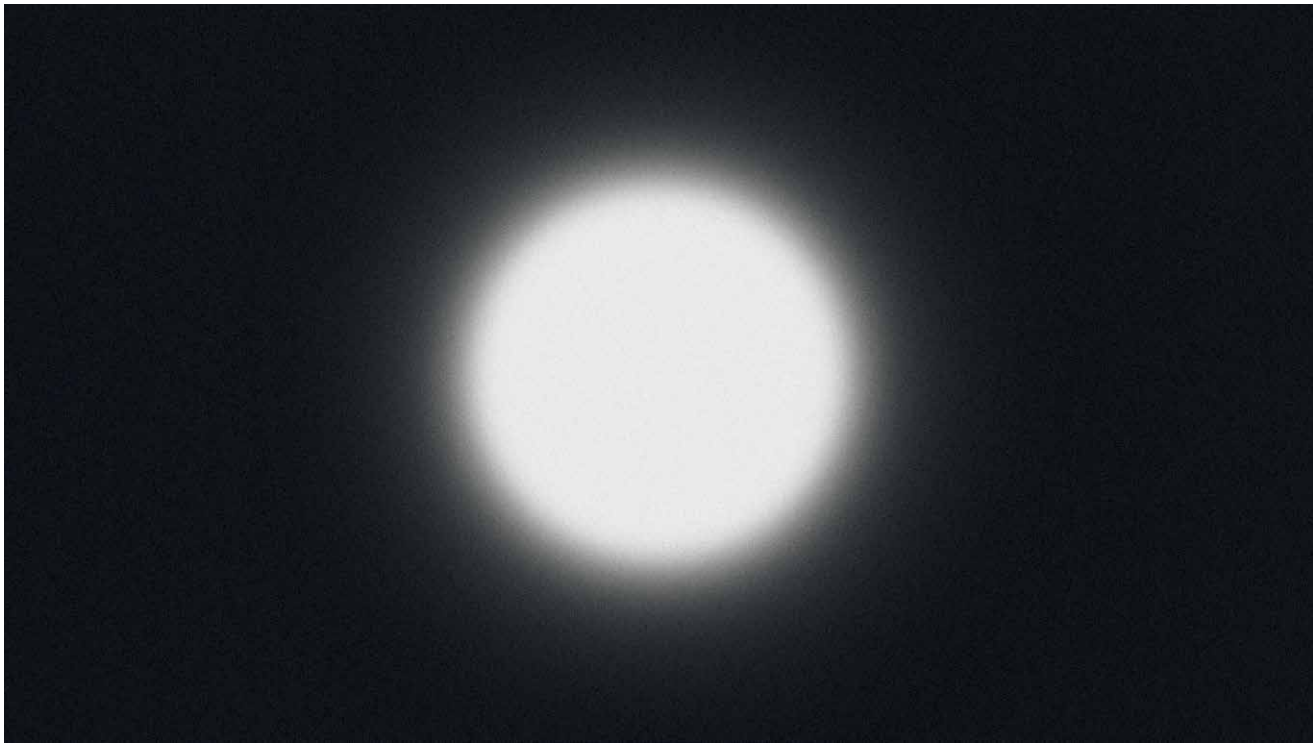
had to transport two tons of equipment – projection screens, mixing boards, speakers, computers. I know that when you and Ulf went your separate ways, you pared down the equipment you needed for your abstract projection and sound installations and screenings. But now that you've returned to large-scale projection installations, do you also have the same audio-visual requirements? And more importantly, are you still designing your own software?

KH Any large-scale installation, no matter what the medium, comes with equipment. But, yes, there is a sculptural element just in terms of the mass of equipment needed in realizing immersive media-based work, despite the promises of the immaterial nature of New Media-based art. »CORE,« for instance, ships in 11 road cases, including six computers and interfaces, six projectors and a sound system with 30 speakers and cables. None of it, other than possibly the projector beams, is visible to the audience, but it is indeed quite a massive undercarriage. It's also a highly customized one, wherein the »pleasure« of acquiring, configuring and bundling equipment lies in the hand-selected certainty that all components together will diffuse the artwork at its best possible realisation within a budget. The gear will both emit and become the work, as increasingly all AV mixes and tunings will be custom set for it. So equipment in media work is always, to some extent, defining the aesthetic of the work (no news here since Nam June Paik).

The same, if not more extremely so, goes for software tools. These always define a baseline »look« or »sound,« for instance the time-stretching algorithms of a specific era such as the now-forgotten fabulous (analogue) »motion control« of the more expensive Beta SP video tape decks. Indeed, with *Granular-Synthesis*, we developed an audio-video sampler in 1997 that became the main, midi-controllable, audio-visual instrument on which we composed all our work between 1998 and 2003.

Since 2004, I've designed two major iterations of the floating body software with the help of two amazing programmers/software developers, Rob Ramirez and Ian Brill. It was just a matter of there being nothing readily available on the shelf that would have allowed me to create the floating bodies as envisioned. Unfortunately, software development is a horrendous resource drain and a major distraction from moving the work beyond technological accomplishments. Software development is never finished, and there's a near certainty of going over budget in time and cost, finally leading to exhaustion, which then marks the natural end of the process.

GRD *I ask this question of you precisely because I had hoped to show the illusion that underpins the New Media installation. But really, illusion also perpetuates a long legacy of art-historical deception. I'm referring to the way that art has long propelled grandiose myths of the ephemeral, the esoteric, the sublime and the spiritual, all culminating in an ideology that whimsically exalts the dematerialisation of the world and its capital. Yet in nearly all the art systems invented and modernised, the achievement of the »ephemeral,« »spiritual,« »sublime,« even the »dematerialised,« is dependent on intensive labour, costly equipment, massive spaces and intricately engineered visual effects. I'm just wondering if you find this irony something you would like your work to someday reflect in a more »truth to materials« presentation, or are you personally invested in the illusionistic spectacle? By »spectacle,« I mean in the sense that Guy Debord and the Situationist International meant when they coined the term in the 1950s (and which never was surpassed),*



as the array of capitalist entertainment and promotions keeping people alienated from the natural world. Why is such a spectacle valuable to you, and how does it gratify you in ways that your simpler, more abstract work made before 2004 didn't?

KH Indeed, the art-related myths of the ephemeral, the esoteric, the sublime and the spiritual are in contrast with the worldly craving for precious objects and material possessions, aka the market's/ego's needs and wants. The ideological confusion seems to correspond to the human body/soul conundrum.

GRD *A conundrum your work entirely models.*

KH As for illusion and spectacle, when, throughout its history, does art not affiliate with either illusion, spectacle or both? If in »spectacle as the array of capitalist entertainment and promotions keeping people alienated from the natural world« we would replace »capitalist« with »church,« »aristocratic« or »communist,« it would still ring true. Art, starting with its museums, its theoretical, historical and maintenance systems, before even including the market and its galleries and art fairs and speculative bubbles, is one illusion of its own importance; one spectacle of a splendid fabrication. So in that respect I see media-based art work as merely keeping up the »smoke and mirrors« tradition, while both its illusion and spectacle are less stable and durable than any other media invented before it. New Media is a decided irony in that our most advanced technological constructions are also the least sustainable, economical and solid illusions in history. Complexity breeds instability and thus ephemerality, however unintended.

Personally I feel there is no difference between my abstract and figurative work in regards to the illusions created. The strobed-fog works are obviously much more immersive and physical than any of the projection screen pieces, as enormous as the latter can be. But both are dramatically present only so long as there is electricity. Pull the plug and...totally gone. I'm disillusioned by exactly that: the fickle machinery and constant care that media machines need to »live.« The beauty of a traditional painting or sculpture (apart from the stillness in both motion and sound) is also found in the relative autonomy of its environment. We all know that paintings need extensive care and restoration over the centuries, but there it is, the time frame of centuries, rather than the few years that a media art work can survive without assistance. Again, media-based work, by the self-indulgent nature of digital apparatuses, are truly ephemeral. I'm not mourning that, but I embrace ephemerality and feed on the contradictions between the ambitious »omni« goals of our science-driven civilisation and the rather opposite, if not destructive, results from it.

GRD *Your strobed-fog works, such as »ZEE« and »FEED,« are much more than spatially immersive. Because they provide a full sensory experience that we read as a potentially hazardous spatial and perceptual disorientation, they compel us to retreat inside ourselves as a defensive mechanism. I take it that's what you mean by the strobed-fog work inflicting a »primal narcissistic injury,« a terminology that aligns you decidedly with Freudian-Surrealist practices, only reducing the Surrealist experience to its most material, pre-content-laden basis – a return to the womb in a truly Reichian sense. The irony that follows from this retreat to the womb is that we simultaneously experience a kind of reverse abortion from the world – we're severed, however briefly and artificially, from the security of civilisation and nature as we know it and driven back into the womb, where we are denied the faculties of primary sensory recognition.*

»I THINK THE LARGER UNCERTAINTIES FACING NEW MEDIA ARTISTS CONCERN THE EXPANSION OF SUBJECTIVE AND CULTURAL DOMAINS THAT NEW MODES OF SIMULATED OR VIRTUAL REALITIES OPEN UP WITHOUT SUFFICIENTLY UNDERSTANDING WHAT IT IS WE ARE BROACHING.«

In this regard, you take the Surrealist injury to an extreme that the Surrealists could never realise in their more modest image- and object-based art. You show us that we have to be denied all articulated »form« of image and materiality, reducing experience literally to the primordial mists. And yet, except for those individuals who must be escorted out by attendants because of physiological reactions to the fog and strobes, the majority of spectators rebound from their initial withdrawal, and upon acclimating to the fog and strobes, open their sensory faculties more widely than occurs in the everyday world. In effect, we feel an exhilaration that must come close to the physical sensation of floating amid clouds, and which we take away with us after leaving the installation as the kind of awe that we reserve for an encounter with the sublime. I have to say that, really, after the initial primal narcissistic injury of spatial and perceptual disorientation and retreat into ourselves, you supply us with an expansively narcissistic recovery – dare I say a healing inebriation – that in its proclivity for inducing rapture might well be addictive. And in this, you've outmanoeuvred the Surrealists by delivering us to a state prior to the dream state, a state analogous to the pre-experience that is more often induced by narcotics or hallucinogens. As one of the spectators tweeted to friends immediately upon emerging from and installation of »ZEE« at Fact Liverpool in 2011: »it was like legally and safely dropping LSD.«

KH It's true that the strobed fog work, as opposed to my more traditional »illusionary« projection work, doesn't allow the classic comfort of the cultured spectator looking, from a safe distance, at a properly framed artefact. Whether that artefact is an object, projection or concept, the important distinction here is the dominant presence of a civilised, manageable and overall safe format or environment. Indeed, in »ZEE« and »FEED,« such comfort of remaining in a »normal« and (very) controlled setting is obliterated, and the audience is asked to jump, metaphorically, into unknown waters. Taking the plunge will be, as you note, rewarded, but what is required upfront is the visitor's conscious decision to briefly leave behind the comfy cushion of contemporary consumerist existence. Having said that, »ZEE« and »FEED« are both, in aspects, consumerist media constructs in exactly the sense of suggesting »safely dropping LSD,« which really is an oxymoron and impossible. Audience reactions like that one are exclusively referring to the luscious visual phenomena present in »ZEE« or »FEED.« For me, more intriguing is the sensation of transcending the boundaries between what happens and processes inside and outside of us, where an infinite space opens seemingly from within, stretching all the way out. Ok, that sounds like more LSD references...glad for sure to have outmanoeuvred the Surrealists. Not that I intended to...

GRD *I don't want to make a comparative commentary on your work with the Surrealists alone, as it bares more resemblance conceptually to some highly influential international artists of your generation, though not many. »ZEE,« »FEED« and »SOL« can really only be compared to a few productions by Pierre Huyghe and Olafur Eliasson. Other works we haven't explored here find some superficial technical and visual precedents in the virtual animations of Gary Hill, Claudia Hart and in some instances the photographic videos of Bill Viola. But such comparisons are only cursory in that you are undoubtedly charting out new territory for art. On the other hand, your work bares resemblance to extravagant theatrical and operatic stagings, and even to theme parks that employ similarly immersive and atmospheric amusements like fog. The difference is that you isolate and reduce the more ephemeral aspects of these popular entertainments, omit all their props and content, and subject their material strategies and stagings to a minimalist, repetitively mesmerising aesthetic experience in much the same fashion that Andy Warhol, John Cage and Brian Eno did with the visual and aural iconography of popular culture in the 1960s and 1970s.*

KH There was a moment in the late 20th century, about the time that I came of age, when cultural disciplines and sectors seemed to open up to each other in a longing for cross-pollination. It appears such processes were time-stamped and have since stalled. The experimental spirit of that era, however, still informs my work. One of the reasons I embarked early on to work with home computers was that I sensed that these »things« would come to define our lives and thus, as an artist, I needed to know about them and inundate myself with their implications. This ultimately evolved into a love-hate relationship, but at the same time it allowed me an understanding of societal processes I would have otherwise not seen.

Meanwhile I've stopped listing to music almost entirely, but looking back, my sense of immersive art stems from music, concerts, movies and theatrical stagings. Sound, particularly lower and bass frequencies, has a sculptural element, creating immaterial yet physical landscapes into which one is immersed without seeing. I remember meeting a colleague who was born in California but living elsewhere. He mentioned that he would fly out immediately upon any major earthquake just to hear, or rather feel, the aftershock bass rumbles, »otherworldly,« as he described them, from deep below the surface, incredibly intense and omnipresent. Finally, I'm always thinking about architecture, which goes with my affiliation with sound and light, as without these there would be no spatial cues for us to perceive. I think the larger uncertainties facing New Media artists con-

cern the expansion of subjective and cultural domains that new modes of simulated or virtual realities open up without sufficiently understanding what it is we are broaching. But that would apply to any period of time in which societal changes take place. We always fly mostly blindly into such moments, basing our decisions necessarily on prior, and now likely irrelevant, experiences and knowledge. I do think we live in an experimental era, by all means – socio-economically, culturally and environmentally. As with everything experimental, only so much of it will make it beyond the experimental stage and be deemed successful, meaningful and original. I do often find an abject lack of art-historical knowledge in the media field, together with an overemphasis on technology itself, its engineering side and the experiment for the sake of the experiment, the infinite work in progress, etc. But equally, in mirrored fashion, I see in the art market an overemphasis on the dictum of art history and what I like to call the 20th-century art dogma with its fear of risky and possibly unmarketable experiments and subsequent embraces of already canonised forms and processes.

GRD *And yet artists such as you, Huyghe, Viola, Eliasson, Hill, Hart and others more aligned with cinematic effects are no longer confined to historically developed definitions of reality and illusion. Reality and illusion are now sharing real experiential terrain. You yourself are blending genres with new implications for human experience. More importantly, you're engaging international audiences, bringing vastly different cultural origins and heritages to the interpretation of your work – initiating a kind of nomadic interface with the diversity of the new total global civilisation. How do you mediate all these challenges?*

KH I think the nomadic lifestyle operating on a global stage is generally true for the life of cultural producers and participants today. This has drastically changed in my lifetime. It wasn't until I was 16 that I first stepped onto a plane, and then it took another eight years for me to take my second flight. Today I consider myself lucky if I sit in my studio for a whole month.

GRD *Do you feel that the interaction of the audience with your work is so different from audience interaction with conventional media, that those differences require articulation to heighten the audience's understanding? Or is the intuitive experience of the audience enough for you?*

KH In today's cultural modus operandi it's practically impossible to not have secondary material on hand for an audience, even if you wished to avoid it. It's standard practice, and no institution seems to want to risk audience »confusion.« I don't think there is that big of a difference between what I do and conventional media – it's not about media but rather about content/concept. In preparing for an installation in the UK I was asked once about influences and, with England in mind, I named Lucian Freud and Francis Bacon. Not that I would dare compare myself, but clearly their work has the ability to go straight to the hearts of their audience.

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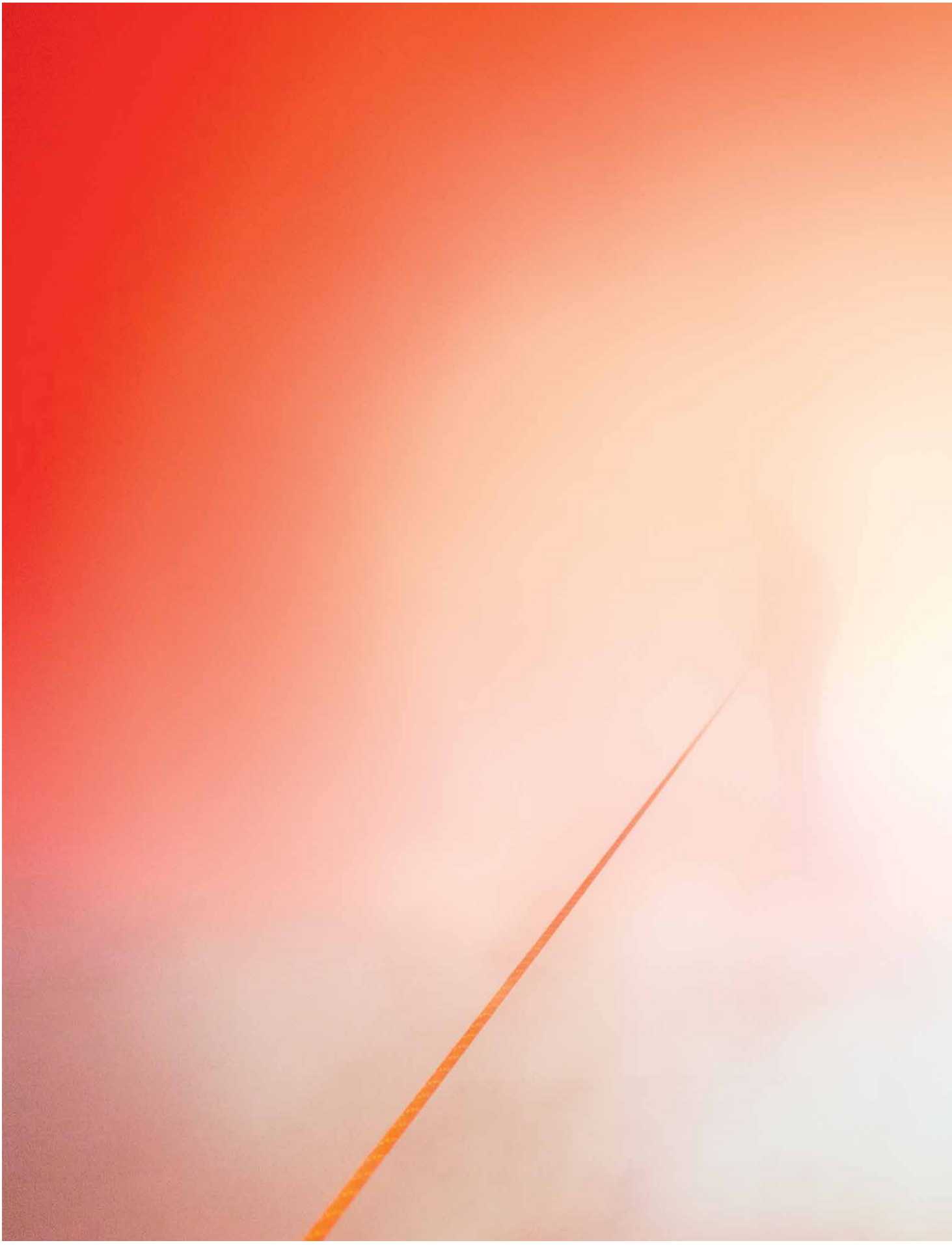
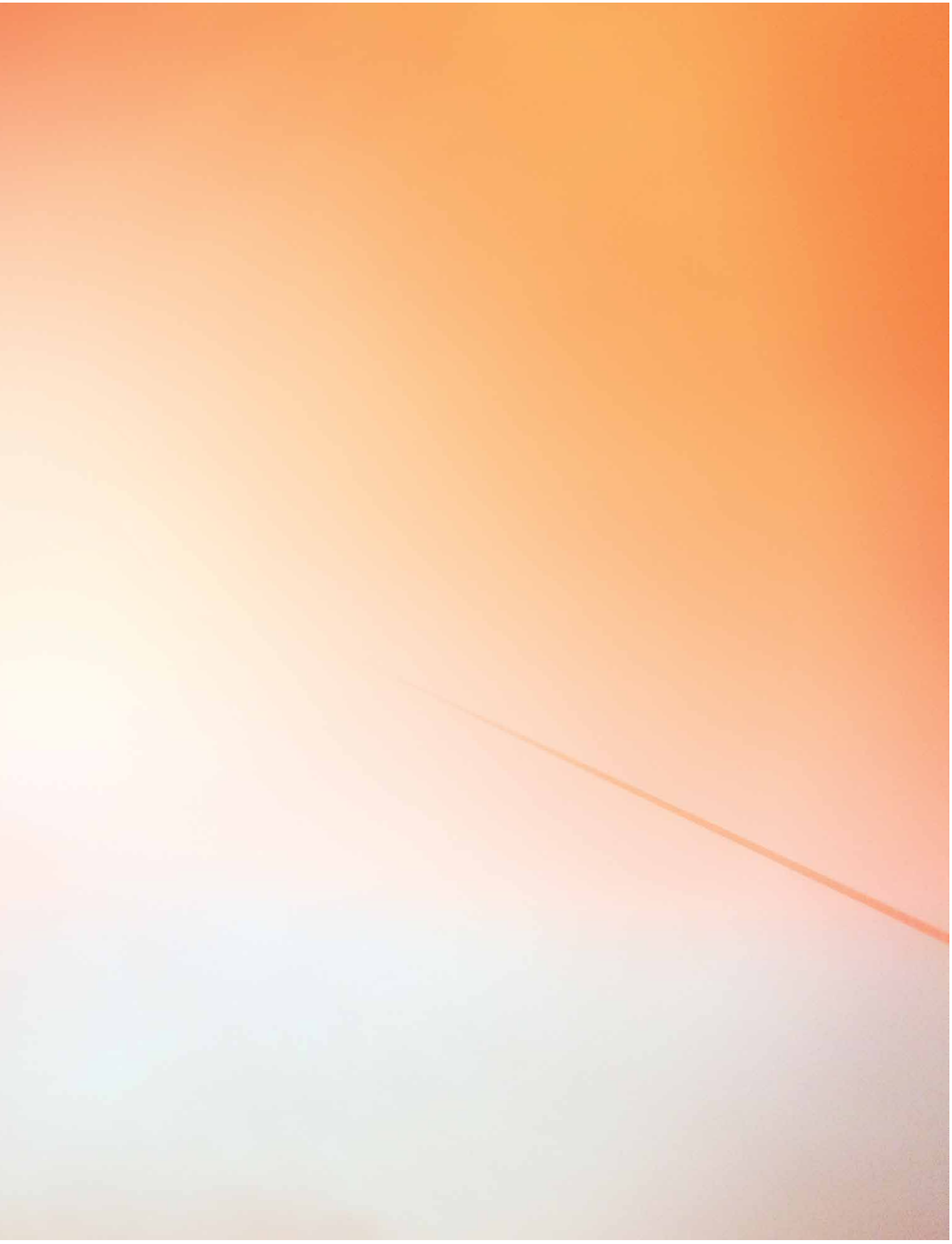
The book Splendid Voids – The Immersive Works of Kurt Hentschläger (ed. Isabelle Meiffert) will be published by DISTANZ Verlag in conjunction with the premiere of »SOL.« It includes an essay by G. Roger Denson.
» www.distanz.de



Kurt Hentschläger »ZEE.« Photo © Kurt Hentschläger.



HOW NON WORLDWIDE IS »DECOLONIZING THE DANCEFLOOR«

TEXT BY KEVIN LOZANO / PHOTOS BY CHRISTINE HAHN

ONE OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE CTM 2017 PROGRAMME IS »THE GREAT DISAPPOINTMENT,« A THREE-NIGHT, VAUDEVILLE-INSPIRED COLLABORATION BETWEEN SIX MEMBERS OF THE NON WORLDWIDE INITIATIVE AND CHOREOGRAPHER LIGIA LEWIS. THIS SHOWCASE PRESENTS SOME OF THE INITIATIVE'S PROTAGONISTS – DEDEKIND CUT, EMBACI AND DJ LADY LANE – ALONGSIDE ITS THREE FOUNDERS – CHINO AMOBI, NKISI AND ANGEL-HO – USING NON'S FULL ARRAY OF IDENTIFIERS AND EXPONENTS: SOUND, GRAPHIC DESIGN, VIDEO, COSTUME. THE SHOW CELEBRATES THE GLORY OF THE DIGITAL NON STATE THROUGH A VACILLATION BETWEEN TRADITIONS. HERE, KEVIN LOZANO OFFERS A PRIMER ON THE BRIEF BUT INFLUENTIAL HISTORY OF THIS SUBVERSIVE MUSIC COLLECTIVE.

One year ago, the first 27 minutes from NON Worldwide appeared. It was called *Death Drop From Heaven*, a mix by the Cape Town-based performance artist Angel-Ho (Angelo Antonio Valerio), one of NON Worldwide's three co-founders. It is a blistering melange of music, and very clearly outlines some of the group's goals.

Using sound as their primary medium, the collective hopes to bring attention to »visible and invisible structures that create binaries in society, and in turn distribute power.« For NON, sound can be weaponised, reclaimed and reoriented into a tool that can destabilise an audience. Whether you're on the dancefloor or just listening to the music on your headphones, you are supposed to feel dizzy, out of place, questioning what exactly you're doing with your life.

Co-founders Chino Amobi, an artist based in Richmond, Virginia, and Melika Ngombe Kolongo aka nkisi, a UK-based musician, both met Angel-Ho online over Facebook and Soundcloud. Across cultures and geographies, they realised that they shared an experience of colonial and personal trauma. Their specific homes – America, London and South Africa – bear the burden of a history that has systematically targeted and oppressed minority bodies. As a result of the music they were sharing and the continuing conversation, they decided to start NON.

Although it might seem confrontational and tinged with violence, the music of NON actually works towards a process of healing »the corporeal trauma« that permeates the experiences of marginalised peoples, as well as those of the artists themselves. In addition to their studio releases and live performances, the label also offers their own print publication, called the NON Periodical. In its first volume, the filmmaker Onyeka Igwe's poem »Migrating Bodies« sums up quite beautifully what NON is getting at: »...to collapse all of this and erase the rigidity of our language – a language that creates hierarchies of worth through naming. I wanted to distill all of the noise into one simple idea: movement.«

It's best to think of NON more as a nascent social movement than a collective of artists or record label. It was incubated on the internet, fueled by growing discontent and a desire to carve out a space of expression that wasn't connected to pre-existing institutions. They chose the name »NON« because it best described the way that Angel-Ho, Chino Amobi and nkisi felt in relation to governments, the music industry, history and society at large. They came together as outsiders to create, in the words of philosopher Paul Gilroy, an »alternative public space« to operate under their own terms. In coming years they aspire to both establish NON chapters across the globe, and make the collective a legible and physical space that opens its doors to those who identify with what they're trying to do.

NON's Soundcloud page was the first host for sharing their individual music, and soon after starting up, towards the end of 2015, they released the searing *NON WORLDWIDE COMPILATION, VOL. 1*. It included everything from South African gqom music and sound art to hardcore, industrial noise and experimental R&B. Since then, NON has brought more artists into the fold, collaborating with other collectives like Mexico City's N.A.A.F.I. and serving as a nexus for an ongoing conversation about stretching the limits of political action and music-making. Music critic Alexander Iadarola mentioned to me how their work bore a similarity to the practice of institutional critique. Looking at NON's work in the studio, in the club and on paper, it really is as if they are executing an incredibly successful and original campaign of critique that is common in the fine arts but virtually missing from contemporary music. They buck the vertical hierarchies of a record label, instead treating their Soundcloud page as an anti-curatorial, ad hoc platform, each piece of music serving as a point of conversation within the continuing critique. They also release music that reveals ways in which African and diasporic influence has been erased in popular music on a global scale.

Take producer and Qween Beat associate Skyshaker's mix *The Brogue Wars: Day Nine Thousand Four Hundred Seventy Nine*, intended to highlight the forgotten names from the history of voguing, 26 years after Madonna's »Vogue« whitewashed a culture and form of dance used mainly and purposefully by marginalised black, brown, queer and trans people. There is also Moro's *San Benito* EP, which generated an entirely new genre of electronic music called ramba, cultivated from sounds that respect and celebrate the erased Afro-Latin rhythmic heritage of tango. Finally, there is a track that NON just released, »Save Our Schools (Richmond City Public Students Led Protest and Walkout),« a sound recording documenting a protest following budget cuts in Richmond's public school system.

Angel-Ho told Truants earlier this year that NON is working through artistic expression as a method of disrupting what they see as a »colonial« and oppressive »vernacular of sound,« and their releases in the last year have demonstrated a concerted effort of highlighting, documenting and fighting the basic inequality minorities face. As Chino has said: »Whenever I see people resisting hegemony then I'm like, ›Ok, this is a NON moment, this is what we identify with, this is what we're going to publish, this is what people need to see.‹« The goal of all this is to implicate and challenge audiences to »decolonise the dancefloor« and challenge them to be more thoughtful in their engagement with music as a whole.

It is to NON's credit that it's very difficult to limit the collective to one thing, or even many things. Its goals continue to multiply, its platforms continue to grow and its frames of reference are so deeply personal and subjective for its makers that it becomes purposefully impossible to offer a comprehensive primer on what the label is trying to do. If anything, the important takeaway from their music and their words is that NON is trying to describe a way of being and way of occupying space that is simultaneously resistant and generative.

Angel-Ho has said that for him, »NON is about being honest with yourself,« and nkisi has expanded on this, saying that NON is in itself a way of being: »...You have non-violence but you have NON's violence, our kind of violence, or you have non-inclusive but you have NON-inclusive, an inclusive space for NON people.« Being »woke« is one thing, but being »non« is a step in a direction of activating art and life in a way that opposes hegemony. And in the span of a short year, even as they continue to grow, their vision is solid. Things are working.

KEVIN LOZANO is a Brooklyn-based music and culture critic. His work has also appeared in Resident Advisor and VICE. He joined the Pitchfork staff in 2015.

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» www.daily.redbullmusicacademy.com


NON IS A HAMMER WHICH WE USE TO CRUSH THE ENEMY
NON


EXORCISE THE
LANGUAGE
OF DOMINATION

ANGER, LOVE AND FEAR. FOR AN AFFECTED COUNTERPUBLIC

BY EWA MAJEWSKA

»MY RESPONSE TO RACISM IS ANGER. (...) MY FEAR OF THAT ANGER TAUGHT ME NOTHING. YOUR FEAR OF THAT ANGER WILL TEACH YOU NOTHING, ALSO.«
– AUDRE LORDE, THE USES OF ANGER

»MY BODY IS THE BODY OF MULTITUDE«
– PAUL PRECIADO

The Western tradition suggests that in order to become public one has to leave the private behind – the private being gender, race, economic position or affect. For centuries, we believed in the idea of noble participation in the public sphere. The notion of »becoming public« offers hope and debate, openness and dialogue, perhaps with some slight anxiety concerning the excluded, but nothing more. Our culture has been dominated by the self-love of white, privileged men disguised as »autonomy,« »subject« or even »community.« Anger, love and fear were supposed to wait at the door to politics, behind which detached, disembodied judgement would be built. This still happens in some music halls and concerts. Now anger, love and fear will be here, in your face.

From the perspectives of exclusion and marginalisation, becoming public is a process of combating racism, misogyny, exclusions and pain. It means fighting for your life and the lives of others, and it often means losing that fight. Think of Martin Luther King, Malcolm X, Stephen Biko – all those who, instead of becoming a part of the public sphere, ended up as »public enemies.« Becoming public also means making certain bodies public – those which for centuries had only strictly limited access to visibility. »(...)the persecution of witches can be interpreted as a war between expert knowledge and the non-professional knowledge of the multitude, a war between white patriarchal power and narcosexual knowledge as it was traditionally practiced by women, colonized peoples, and non-authorised sorcerers,«[*1)] says Paul Preciado, and he wonders about the technobodies beyond such powers and knowledge. Can we have our anger, love and fear? The sex wars of all times have very much been about that as well – about the embodiment of the multitude and exclusion from the public.

Many have argued that parallel to the history of the European public sphere, there grows a history of counterpublics which combines those who are allowed to recompose the visible and speak, and those who are brutally stopped in their efforts to do so: counterpublics, which – as Kluge and Negt suggested[*2)] – grow in opposition to the bourgeois public sphere and express the dissident politics of the excluded. Anger, love and fear are all culturally produced. They fuel the experience of the oppressed as they attempt to become public.

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While translating a book by the black feminist and activist bell hooks*[3] into Polish, I was teaching at the Gender Studies programme in Warsaw and in Krakow. In both cities, my students and all other people I spoke with were excited about her approach to feminism, to race and racism, to class. The ways in which she builds her movement are permeated with hope, which is so absent in many other black feminist theories, and include vital links to film, hip hop and fashion as they are seen from the margins. So blunt. But here is a funny fact: her theory works. It does allow resistance to the neoliberal exclusions and exploitations, and it does allow the multitude to speak regardless of their status, colour, gender or sexuality. It creates a space for solidarity and provides the powerless with power, as the Czech dissident and writer Vaclav Havel would probably say. Openly staging the perspective of the margin in the epistemology, she questions the perspective of the centre while at the same time undermining its weaknesses. The excluded sees it all; the centre is a partial perspective. Does a practice of solidarity mean the end of anger, love and fear? No, it only builds space for experience in which the public is always in opposition. Like a sparkle surrounded by the dark sky.

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It is crucial to define what it actually means to say no. Is it, like Jean Paul Sartre used to think, the work of imagination that makes the whole world disappear to create something new? Or is it refusing to stop before entering the waters of the Mediterranean Sea to get to Europe? Is it an act of disobedience, like when Rosa Parks refused to stand on a racially segregated bus? Or is it organising and responding with violent fights against white supremacy? Is it having a dream? Or a non-violent movement? Is it what the Polish women just did with their #blackprotest and Women's Strike, forced by the fundamentalist politicians of Poland's current government to fight for our basic rights?

The public sphere supposedly constitutes an opposition to the ruling power. How could its participants possibly say no when they are the same kind of subjects as those in the government – white, privileged men? What would that »no« actually mean? Counterpublics are built on a different principle – that the hegemonic division between the public and private is overturned. They therefore allow all those deprived of autonomy – the precarious, feminists, queers, people of colour, refugees – to speak. With their anger, love and fear.

The discourse of the subaltern, of the streets, of counterpublics formed of any kind of excluded and neglected groups and populations, can obviously be articulated. Muteness is just one other prejudice, another layer of dissimulation. »Counterpublics« was a concept introduced to speak about those forming political discourse in factories, as an element of their class struggle. How does this practice differ from industrial sound experiments that wade their way into concert halls? The »private« sounds, disorganised noises of the everyday, the voices of affect, have for a long time been excluded from public performances and sound production. After the explosion of jazz, they re-entered the concert halls and the musical canon, despite the outraged voices of most privileged, white authorities. They still do, with some anger, love and fear. Because little girls still point at their mothers' scars, as in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*[*4], demanding an impossible explanation. Because »the history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire« and not much has changed since the first publication of *Das Kapital*.

The anger, love and fear are what fuels non-linear narratives – those which bend and break, split and unify again, those that are repeatedly corrected by immigration officers, those that demand a straight story in offices, at borders, at police stations and in the courts. Gloria Anzaldua always responded to those allegations with a mix of anger and laughter: »Who, me, confused? Ambivalent? Not so. Only your labels split me.«[*5]

In many ways this stands for a statement of all those whose life practice is always about *metisaje* – a hybrid dance of ever-partial identification with the oppressed and the oppressors, the conquering and the conquered, the Autonomous Subject and its Precarised Others. Anger, love and fear become fury and rage in times of indignation and defence. What happens when colonial heritage is recalled? Anger, love and fear.

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CTM is a festival, a vital point on the cultural map not only in Germany, but also in Europe and in the world. In its best moments it builds bridges between independent cultures globally, between centre and peripheries, between the commercial and the non-profit. It has acquired a special place precisely due to a combination of purposes and methods which follow an intuitive script of non-conformity and at the same time try to reshape the public. Becoming public in the context of CTM is a performative struggle for a togetherness, a communality, which in times of the domination of neoliberal orientation towards profit enforces a vigilant position between market forces, cultural canon and all the expressions of »non« – the refusals, margins, exclusions.

Can a cultural festival become a space for affective counterpublics of the subaltern, with our love, anxiety and anger? Perhaps it can offer a set of inspirations for such a space and the process needed to create it. Or, more concretely, it could be a tryout space, a zone for the »practice of being many,« as depicted by Sibylle Peters in *Truth is Concrete*[*6)], an assemblage of the multitude to explore its own anger, love and fear. Can the confrontation with artists and the sounds they produce become an element of counterpublics which – while reacting to today's microfascisms – explore the multiplication of experiences and exchanges provided by the contemporary plethora of images and sounds? I believe it can become not merely a public experience, but a counterpublics of the multitude where the politics of affect and experience overcome subalterity. It definitely has many reasons not to be a detached and alienated public. It is too emotional, passionate and too involved for that.

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*2) Kluge, A. and Negt, O. (1993), *Public Sphere and Experience*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis.
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*5) Anzaldua, G. (2009), *The Gloria Anzaldua Reader*, Keating A. (ed.), Duke University Press, Durham.
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THE BECOMING-ISLAND OF MEDIA

BY KRISTOFFER GANSING

UNDER THE TITLE EVER ELUSIVE, *TRANSMEDIALE CELEBRATES ITS 30-YEAR ANNIVERSARY WITH AN ENTIRE MONTH OF ACTIVITIES FROM 2 FEBRUARY TO 5 MARCH 2017 AT BERLIN'S HAUS DER KULTUREN DER WELT AND VARIOUS OTHER VENUES. THROUGHOUT THE FESTIVAL, SPECIAL EVENTS AND A CLOSING WEEKEND, AROUND 180 INTERNATIONAL THINKERS AND CULTURAL PRODUCERS WILL INVESTIGATE THE INCREASING PREDOMINANCE OF A STATE OF MEDIATION IN WHICH THE BOUNDARIES BETWEEN MACHINES AND HUMANS ARE MORE BLURRED THAN EVER. IN CONTRAST TO THIRTY YEARS AGO, WHEN TRANSMEDIALE WAS BORN, THE QUESTION IS NO LONGER ABOUT HOW TO BECOME YOUR OWN MEDIUM BUT RATHER TO FIND OUT WHO AND WHAT MEDIATES AND WHERE THE POWER TO ACT AND MEDIATE IS LOCATED. IN THE FOLLOWING ESSAY, KRISTOFFER GANSING, ARTISTIC DIRECTOR OF TRANSMEDIALE, OBSERVES THE IDEA OF »BECOMING-ISLAND« AS AN ELUSIVE PHENOMENON OF CONTEMPORARY POST-DIGITAL ART AND MEDIA CULTURE.*

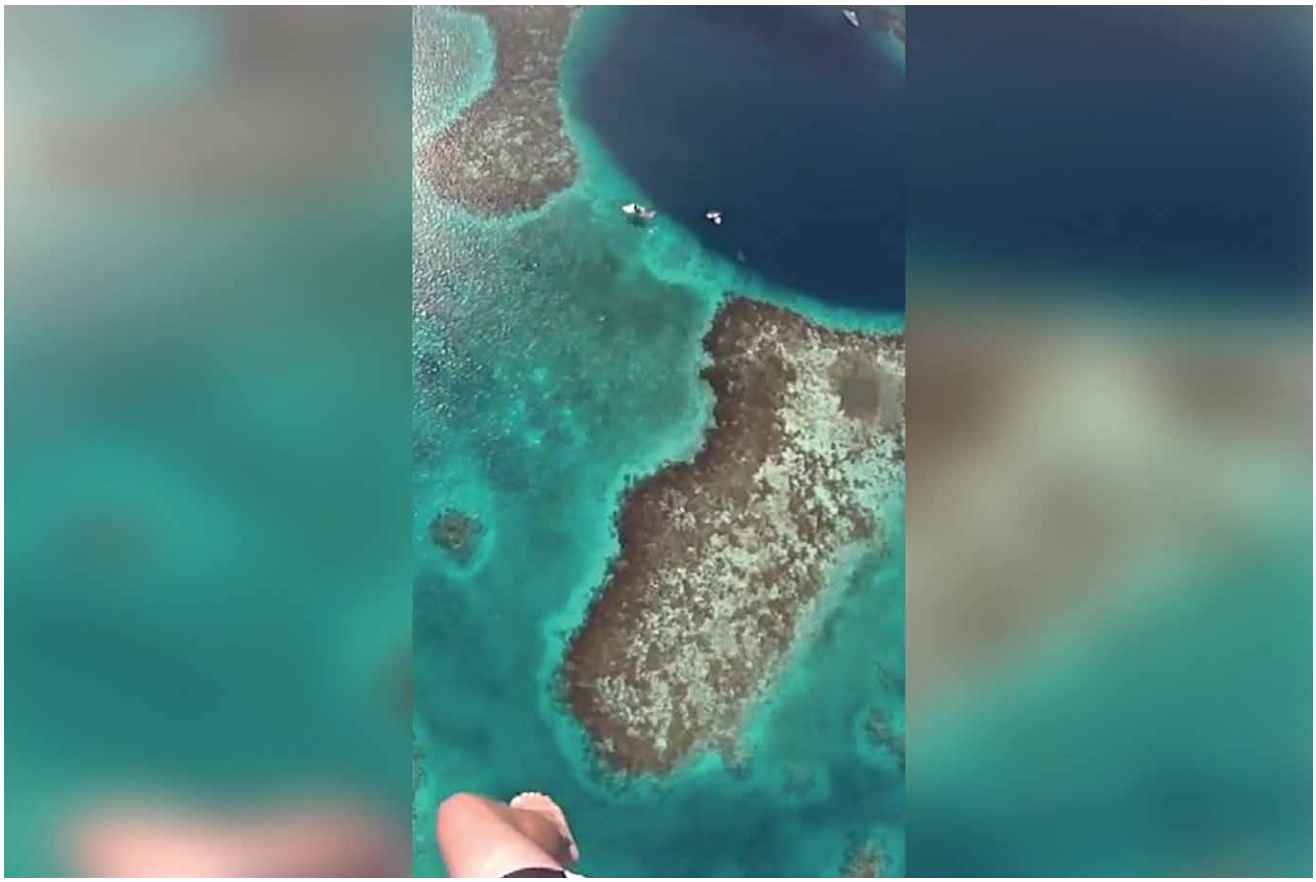
In the 2015 Jurassic Park reboot, *Jurassic World*, as mayhem breaks loose in the island paradise and theme park with live dinosaurs, we briefly catch a glimpse of a pensioner desperately trying to save his two Margaritas. All the while, a cheesy pop song plays over the park speakers and proclaims »The Ever Elusive Future.« This guy's future is likely to be just that – elusive – as the dinosaurs proceed to wreck the island utopia and chomp up its human inhabitants. It's not a great moment in recent cinematic history, but this particular scene is interesting in the way it connects the colonialist utopia of a regained »Lost World« with pop-culture island romanticism and the flipside of that romanticism: the imminent catastrophe.

The island romanticism is provided here not only by the movie as such, but also by the inclusion of this old guy trying to save himself and his Margaritas. He is none other than pop singer Jimmy Buffett, who is not so well known outside of the US, but who has built an entire career on »island escapism.« His songs, such as »Margaritaville,« »Cheeseburgers in Paradise« and »Too Drunk to Karaoke,« are typically about languishing on islands on a diet of tequilas, sex and junk food and, most importantly, doing nothing special at all. Buffett is a veritable cult phenomenon – he founded a chain of »Cheeseburgers in Paradise« burger bars and is worshipped by his devoted followers, who, in a style reminiscent of the Grateful Dead's »Deadheads,« call themselves »Parrottheads.«

»Island I see you in the distance, I feel that your existence is not unlike my own. (...) Island I see you in all of my dreams. But I'm a man with no means to reach your distant shore.«

»Dreaming of islands – whether with joy or in fear, it doesn't matter – is dreaming of pulling away, of being already separate, far from any continent, of being lost and alone – or it is dreaming of starting from scratch, recreating, beginning anew...«

The first quote is taken from the lyrics of the Jimmy Buffett song »Island« on his 1981 album Coconut Telegraph. The second, though, is from Gilles Deleuze, who might be considered a proto-Parrotthead given the attention he gave to islands in his short 1953 essay »Desert Islands,« in which he discusses the ability of islands to organise existence as both particular and imaginary geography. In the contemporary cultural and political environment, following Brexit, the election of Trump



and offshoring scandals, it seems as if we need to seriously investigate not so much the resurgence of Jimmy Buffet, but the apparently increasing desire of becoming-island and the different cultural contradictions that desire produces. This is not least particularly pertinent to the study of contemporary media culture, which represents both such desires and their contradictions and increasingly seems to wish to become island unto itself. That this moment of the becoming-island of media is a conflictual one should come as no surprise, if we go back to Deleuze's understanding of the essential or originary state of an island as always deserted, whether humans indeed inhabit it or not. He writes: »That England is populated will always come as a surprise; humans can live on an island only by forgetting what an island represents. Islands are either from before or from after humankind.«[*1)] Now, transporting this reasoning to media networks and to approach the becoming-island of media today, in order to understand my argument it is important to make a brief media-historical recap. If, in the television age, the term »network« primarily stood for the broadcasting of content that was often seen as the opium for the masses (in effect a form of mass propaganda), in the internet age, the distributed network and its participative feedback paradigm has become hegemonic, completely reversing the marginal position once held by decentralised production while rerouting models of distribution around new centralities (read the big five: Google, Facebook, Amazon, Microsoft and Apple). In this new economy of cultural production – the post-digital one – no human can afford to be an island, and it seems nonhumans can't either, as the Internet of Things promises the ubiquity of information through connecting all (un-)living things.

It is in this context of hegemonic connectivity, then, that a certain »island romanticism« or perhaps »escapism« has resurged in the post-digital condition on a wide-ranging scale, from geographically existing islands that mobilise the renewed nationalist imaginaries of populations and their economies to the more metaphorical becoming-island inherent to practices of mindfulness, or even the return to analogue and offline media forms that promise a chance to disconnect from the command of incessant information flows.

The island promises disconnection, as it is an originary disconnected space – and it is perhaps this that attracts bodies that also already share a feeling of having been disconnected

from the dominant structures of society, the island here allowing that feeling of disconnection to flow and grow stronger. But this disconnection is more than an emotion, of course, and in the becoming-island of media it also concerns an amplification of disconnection through technology. This amplification of disconnection is today used effectively in the propagandistic techniques of increasingly autocratic forces in the political landscape, performing constant disruption in a clash of elements. From a brighter point of view, such disconnection can instead lead to a renewal of business as usual and a commoning of interlinked islands. This might be what Nicolas Bourriaud had in mind when, in the 2009 essay, *The Radicant*, he writes of »a new configuration of thought that no longer proceeds by building great totalizing theoretical systems but by constructing archipelagos. A voluntary grouping of islands networked together to create an autonomous entity, the archipelago is the dominant figure of contemporary culture.«[*2)]

In my short speculative argument, there are already contradictory versions emerging out of this figure of becoming-island. There is a strong nostalgic impulse which, in its most mean-spirited contemporary form, is exemplified by the rise of digital populism and its reliance on binary islands that promise to separate us from them, offering a means of escape and a return to better times. The Nostalgic Becoming-Island is a double-edged sword though, and much like nostalgia itself is a strong driver of cultural production that revisits and re-interprets older forms for new conditions without necessarily being retrograde. This kind of feeling for (rather than the exact reconstruction of) the past has very much informed trends in the music of the last ten years, such as hauntology and hypnagogic pop as well as post-digital and post-internet art practices. This is also where the possibly more positive aspects of Bourriaud's »constructing archipelagos« comes into play, as the cultural landscape after the net has become more like networked niches that are analogue as well as digital and into which the consumer/producer can plug into at will, rather than strictly separated and mutually exclusive subcultures.

The opposite of the above is a more alarming aspect of the becoming-island of media that we may think of as the sovereign Becoming-Island, defined by the exercise of absolute power in a separate, secluded state – for example by cutting off connectivity, by declaring a state of emergency or by imposing a security mindset. An example could be the current drive towards so-called »digital sovereignty,« which scales from the rights and security of the individual to the state. Most often, though, it seems to be about securing the corporation or the state – as when in 2016 Singapore announced that they would be taking their government computers offline with the motivation of securing a critical infrastructure. As Clemens Apprich and Ned Rossiter assert in their contribution to the recently published transmediale reader *Across & Beyond*, participation and connection have become compulsive to the extent that going offline is now a privilege that may even become a necessity to protect critical infrastructures in the post-digital condition.[*3)]

Most often, though, the power to do so does not lie in the individual or in the networked »commons« but rather with political, economic and cultural elites.

The exclusivity of the island as a closed-off space should lead us to consider other kinds of becoming that are less normative, such as queer or de-anthropomorphised islands, if we recall Deleuze's idea of the island as a space before and after humans – the »Jurassic Island« before and after the »Park«, or the »World« so to speak. Here the question becomes how to disconnect while reconnecting on other terms and the terms of others. In a dystopian reading, this might amount to nothing more than cynical offshoring schemes or freeports for tax-free trading – where a highly advanced global infrastructure of information, goods and finance in the end amount to nothing more than increased separation and states of exception. However, artists and activists have always been good at appropriating exploitative structures to other ends, and as always this process will be fraught with contradictions as we face the becoming-island of media and its infrastructures. Can we establish a »Temporary Autonomous Freeport« that re-distributes resources to communities on trans-local scales rather than accumulate exclusive wealth? Or is this buying into neoliberal the dismantling of the state? Are we increasingly reliant on blockchain technologies that are finally achieving efficiency in handling relations between online and offline communities, or are we seeing a new overstated belief in technologically mediated transactions, idealised as island-like spaces separate from human (supposedly corrupt) influence? Is the drive towards so-called »off the cloud« initiatives, DIY networking communities that develop their own post-Snowden networks for sharing information, an expression of the other kind of islands that we need for autonomously managing post-digital life, or should this rather be avoided as a form of nostalgic localism? The only thing that seems to be sure is that the emotional attachment to disattachment, which I outlined here as the desire of becoming-island, is on the rise today, whether as an escapist fantasy or an action towards forming new communities. The mediated realities that accompany these desires are as elusive as ever, but that does not mean that we should give up trying to give them a more tangible and expressive shape – even if your motivation is really just saving your two Margaritas.

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» www.transmediale.de

*1) Deleuze G (1953, 2002), »Desert Islands« in *Desert Islands and Other Texts, 1953–1974*, Lapoujade D (ed.), Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), p. 9.
*2) Bourriaud, N (2009), *The Radicant*, New York: Lukas & Sternberg, p. 185.
*3) Apprich C and Rossiter N (2016), »Sovereign Media, Critical Infrastructures, and Political Subjectivity« in Bishop R, Gansing K; Parikka J and Wilk E, eds., *Across and Beyond: Post-digital Practices, Concepts, and Institutions*, Berlin: Sternberg Press.

CONSTELLATIONS OF ANARCHY: MAKING SENSE OF THE (POST-)NATION THROUGH SOUND

BY ALEJANDRO L. MADRID

THE CTM 2017 EXHIBITION, TITLED »CRITICAL CONSTELLATIONS OF THE AUDIO-MACHINE IN MEXICO« AND CURATED BY CARLOS PRIETO ACEVEDO, TAKES AS ITS FOCUS THE HISTORY AND CURRENT STATE OF ELECTRONIC MUSIC AND SOUND ART IN MEXICO. THIS EXHIBITION IS ORGANISED IN THE FORM OF A CONSTELLATION OF EXPERIENCES THAT UNFOLD IN FIVE SECTIONS: »INDO-FUTURISM,« »THE MEXICAN COSMOPOLIS,« »THE MONSTROUS,« »EMANATIONS« AND »EPILOGUE,« AVOIDING CHRONOLOGICAL NARRATIVES AS IT GUIDES VISITORS THROUGH THE VARIOUS MUSICAL STYLES AND SOUND EXPERIMENTS THAT HAVE EMERGED IN THE COUNTRY SINCE THE BEGINNING OF THE 20TH CENTURY. MUSICOLOGIST ALEJANDRO L. MADRID WALKS US THROUGH THESE FIVE THEMES OR »CONSTELLATIONS,« POINTING TO THE VARIOUS ARTISTIC STRATEGIES PROPOSED IN THE WAKE OF AN IDENTITY AND CULTURAL CRISIS WITHIN THE ESSENTIALIST PROJECT OF THE MEXICAN NATION.

Rodolfo Sánchez Alvarado, Radio UNAM, ca. 1958. From the Carlos Prieto Acevedo archive.

»Constelaciones de la Audio-Máquina en México« (»Critical Constellations of the Audio-Machine in Mexico«) is an attempt to survey the trajectories of sound culture in Mexico in relation to important questions of identity, at a moment when the nation-building project that permeated the country's history during the last ninety years is in a serious political, social, economic and even moral crisis. In doing so, this exhibit not only engages questions about what the Mexican nation may have been, but, most importantly, it creates a utopian map of possibilities to re-read the past and nostalgically re-imagine the future. In order to curate such a project, Carlos Prieto Acevedo resorts to an archive that draws from official, semi-official and alternative sources and that, following the crisis of symbols of the nation-state, may be characterised as being in a current state of anarchy or chaos. In saying this I do not intend to create a gratuitous polemic about the symbols of the nation-state, but rather I wish to emphasise that as the national project that gave meaning to the Mexican constellation of 20th-century sounds collapses, the very sonic symbols developed to support it – as well as those made into icons of resistance – are also decentered. Thus, as sounds and sonic cultures are emptied of naturalized meaning, the narrative of struggle that gave birth to the sonic fantasy of the Mexican nation-state also loses its significance. In that sense, Prieto Acevedo's effort as a curator works as an anchoring point – it creates an archive out of anarchy by putting together a seemingly inarticulate and chaotic field of sonic signifiers into a new dramatic and often unexpected narrative. In doing this, the curator not only offers new ways to trans-historically place multiple pasts, presents and imagined futures in dialogue with one another; he also re-evaluates the conventional leitmotivs that glued together traditional discourses of Mexican nation-building (from *indianismo* and *indigenismo* to modernism and the avant-garde). In sum, Prieto Acevedo's curatorial work is not about sound objects but rather about aurality. It requires not only a disposition toward active and conscientious listening from the audience; it also demands different ears to hear old sounds anew and marvel at the strangeness of new noises and marginally conceived sonorities.

The most productive aspect of this exhibit is not the archive it offers to our ears – a brilliant effort in itself – but rather the way the curator approaches and listens to the open constellation (the larger messy archive) from which such a collection (the exhibit) is developed. Prieto Acevedo's curatorial effort transcends its own material contingency by providing an opportunity to optimistically explore the feasibility and productive potential of anarchy in the archive. His chosen paths show us that a more productive and creative relation between user and

material is possible precisely because the archive is in a stage of disorder, and as its lack of discipline allows for novel ways to relate moments, characters, places and their sounds. Prieto Acevedo's approach to the constellation of 20th-century Mexican sound does not start with a blind belief in the narratives that the Mexican nation-state created for its own nationalist propaganda. Instead, he delves into the archive in order to see and hear what kinds of new narrative connections he can make – connections that may shed light on the current post-national Mexican moment. The result is »Constelaciones de la Audio-Máquina en México.«

The idea of the indigenous played a fundamental role in the post-revolutionary mythology of Mexican nationalism. This was not new to the revolutionary regime; *indianismo* had already played an important part in representations of the national during the last part of the 19th century. Nevertheless, it was after the Mexican revolution that a new imagination of the indigenous took centre stage in helping to racially and culturally validate the new regime. From José Vasconcelos's *raza cósmica* (the ›Cosmic Race,‹ an apology of racial and cultural mixing at the core of the very notion of *Mexicanidad* (Mexican identity) to the *indigenismo* that permeated social, political and cultural life during President Lázaro Cárdenas's administration in the 1930s, a fantasy of the Mexican indigenous world took over the representation of the nation. This mythology was so powerfully instilled that it filtered through decades of discourses about Mexican modernization, surviving in one way or another through the end of the 20th century. This fantasy of indigenous culture was, however, not concerned with the actual indigenous communities that continue to precariously inhabit the national territory; instead, it celebrated an idealised and romanticised past of pre-Columbian splendour. Music played a very important role in developing these fantasies. A good example is Carlos Chávez's *El fuego nuevo* (1921) – an impressionist ballet that was never premiered but that still made its way into the canon of nationalist Mexican music, undoubtedly due to the composer's central place in a nationalist revolutionary narrative that was able to re-write the past and its sounds, even if those sounds had never been heard, in order to secure its heroes a privileged place in history. Likewise, Candelario Huízar's *Symphony No. 4, »Cora,«* (1942) shows how a particular invention of the indigenous sonic world came to dominate the discourse of Mexican identity. It was a move that looked into the past in order to invent the present and imagine the future. Nevertheless, such indo-futurist representations left out many other ways to imagine a relation between indigenous culture and the aspirations of cosmopolitan modernity that dominate Mexico's 20th century. In his exhibition, Carlos Prieto looks back into the indo-futurist archive and places these semi-official and canonic sonic representations into dialogue with more forgotten moments that were equally engaged in creating imaginaries of the the indigenous in an attempt to fulfil the aspiration of a cosmopolitan belonging. Here, the imagined sounds of Chávez and Jiménez Mabarak meet the poetic sonic evocation of the words on the pages of Juan Rulfo's Pedro *Páramo* (1955) and enter into dialogue with the historical field recordings of Raúl Hellmer, the avant-garde noises of Roberto Morales Manzanares and the new-age sonic re-creations of Jorge Reyes and Antonio Zepeda. In doing so, they open up the archival record to a large variety of discursively marginalised retro-futurist inventions of the indigenous. This diversity of representations seems to be in better accordance with a post-national moment in which all-inclusive, homogenous discourses of nationality fail to engage local and regional experiences of relating, and individual ways to relate, to an ever-changing idea of the motherland.

»THE IDEA OF THE INDIGENOUS PLAYED A FUNDAMENTAL ROLE IN THE POST-REVOLUTIONARY MYTHOLOGY OF MEXICAN NATIONALISM.«

If many artists retroactively invented the indigenous as a way to forge a rhetorical path towards modernity, many more decidedly embraced the call of the avant-garde to imagine their place in a world beyond the boundaries of the nation-state. This futurist constellation is full of utopias that never happened. It could not be otherwise – art is not science – and in its liberating creativity it has provided us with a large archive of objects of desire for a future that never came. The avant-garde presupposes a firm belief in the idea that the most radical artistic experiments of the present will only be properly appreciated in the future, when they become quotidian practice. The end of the armed phase of the Mexican revolution in 1920 brought with it the collapse of older institutions and the development of new cultural networks. Artists found inspiration in the revolutionary rhetoric of the avant-garde, and a number of futurist and modernist projects were developed. Manuel Maples Arce, Germán List Arzubide, Fermín Revueltas and Arqueles Vela became defiant *estridentistas* (›strident‹ – *Estridentismo* was an artistic movement inspired by Italian Futurism) and sang the praises, via words and colours, of a world of machines, robots, electric power and technological progress. Tina Modotti froze the bodies of Mexican people along modernist visions of communist icons in pictures that are visual anthems of class struggle; Julián Carrillo explored the cracks between the sounds of the Western music tradition to invent *Sonido 13*, his microtonal music of the future; while Conlon Nancarrow invoked the perfection of machines (player pianos) in order to realise the complex metric and temporal structures of his own musical utopia. The voices of the artists featured in this episode of the »Critical Constellations« exhibit speak with the fervent cosmopolitan desire that shaped the Mexican experiences of modernisation. As such, they all sang of a beautiful future in which technology would make us one with our cosmopolitan brothers and sisters of the world; in their worldly anthems, they sang the beauty of a future of mechanistic equality that never came to be.

1.) Commemorative vinyl record. Message from Mexico to the Men Who Went to the Moon, *1968. From the Carlos Prieto Acevedo archive.*
2.) Vía Láctea, *Discos Momia, México, 1980. From the Carlos Alvarado Perea archive.*

»THEY ALL SANG OF A BEAUTIFUL FUTURE IN WHICH TECHNOLOGY WOULD MAKE US ONE WITH OUR COSMOPOLITAN BROTHERS AND SISTERS OF THE WORLD; IN THEIR WORLDLY ANTHEMS, THEY SANG THE BEAUTY OF A FUTURE OF MECHANISTIC EQUALITY THAT NEVER CAME TO BE.«

Lo monstruoso (›the monstrous‹) is an episode that explores the sonic remnants of the post-national. The estranged sounds and rhythms reverberate beyond the discursive border of the nation-state once their sonic symbols collapse. If the most successful representations of modern Mexico throughout the first half of the 20th century were borne out of the unexpected marriage of the indigenous and the machine, one could interpret that representation as a type of discursive cyborg that dominates the Mexican imagination. Thus, the ›monstrous‹ in this episode refers to the empty symbols that such nationalist cyborgs engendered to the next generation of artists, and to how that next generation in turn reacted to them. As such, Carlos Prieto Acevedo puts together an archive that borrows from artistic projects as dissimilar as Mario Lavista, the Nortec Collective, Manuel Rocha Iturbide, Álvaro Ruiz, Julio Estrada, the industrial project Interface or Manuel Enríquez and Israel Martínez. At first sight (or listen), it would be difficult to find similarities between the quasi neo-classical structures and compositional procedures of Mario Lavista, Álvaro Ruiz's glitch electronica, the sound installations of Manuel Rocha Iturbide, the samples of norteña popular music in Nortec Collective's electronic music, the poetic explorations of the continuum in Julio Estrada's music, the hypnotically repetitive crunched loops of Antiguo Autómata Mexicano's IDM, Manuel Enríquez's visually stunning music notation and Israel Martínez' acousmatic exploration of car accidents. Nevertheless, all of these projects share a common attitude. They all respond in one way or another to an essentialist discourse of national identity that no longer represents the desires and aspirations of Mexicans at the end of the 20th century. From the direct rejection of such discourse – epitomised in José Luis Cuevas's infamous *Cortina del Nopal* (»Prickly Pear Curtain«) – by avant-gardists like Enríquez, Estrada and Lavista in the 1960s and 1970s to the sarcastic, kitschy reinventions of the sounds that the market associates with *mexicanidad* in Nortec Collective's electronic music at the turn of the 21st century, the sonic mosaic prepared by Prieto Acevedo under the rubric of *Lo monstruoso* creatively responds to an idea of national identity that has slowly become less and less relevant, not least by being less and less capable of delivering a sense of unity and cosmopolitanism to the people living in the Mexican territory.

»Constelaciones de la Audio-Máquina en México« closes with a sonic panel in which sound artists like Angélica Castelló and Ariel Guzik rub shoulders with conceptual sound projects like Música de Cámara, a pioneering intermedia group from the first half of 1980s. Again, in looking at the type of interventions and the musical aesthetics favoured by these artists and composers, the elements forming this particular archival constellation seem rather arbitrary. Nevertheless, the curator assembles this archive by focusing on how these sound and musical practices (from Ariel Guzik's efforts to engage the agency of cosmic energies and Carlos Alvarado's synthetic modular mediations to Verónica Gerber's drawings, which trace silences hidden in the wordy spaces of literature) avoid the stereotypical representation of the Mexican, instead engaging discourses and aesthetic visions that attempt to make sense of chaos. The exhibition's last constellation speaks not only of crucial artistic strategies that help the artists avoid the Mexican label (a label that reduces their work's significance to a series of geographic coordinates); it also suggests ways in which anarchy and chaos can be invoked and engaged in order to create a variety of archives that transcend the teleology of nationalist discourse and sentiment.

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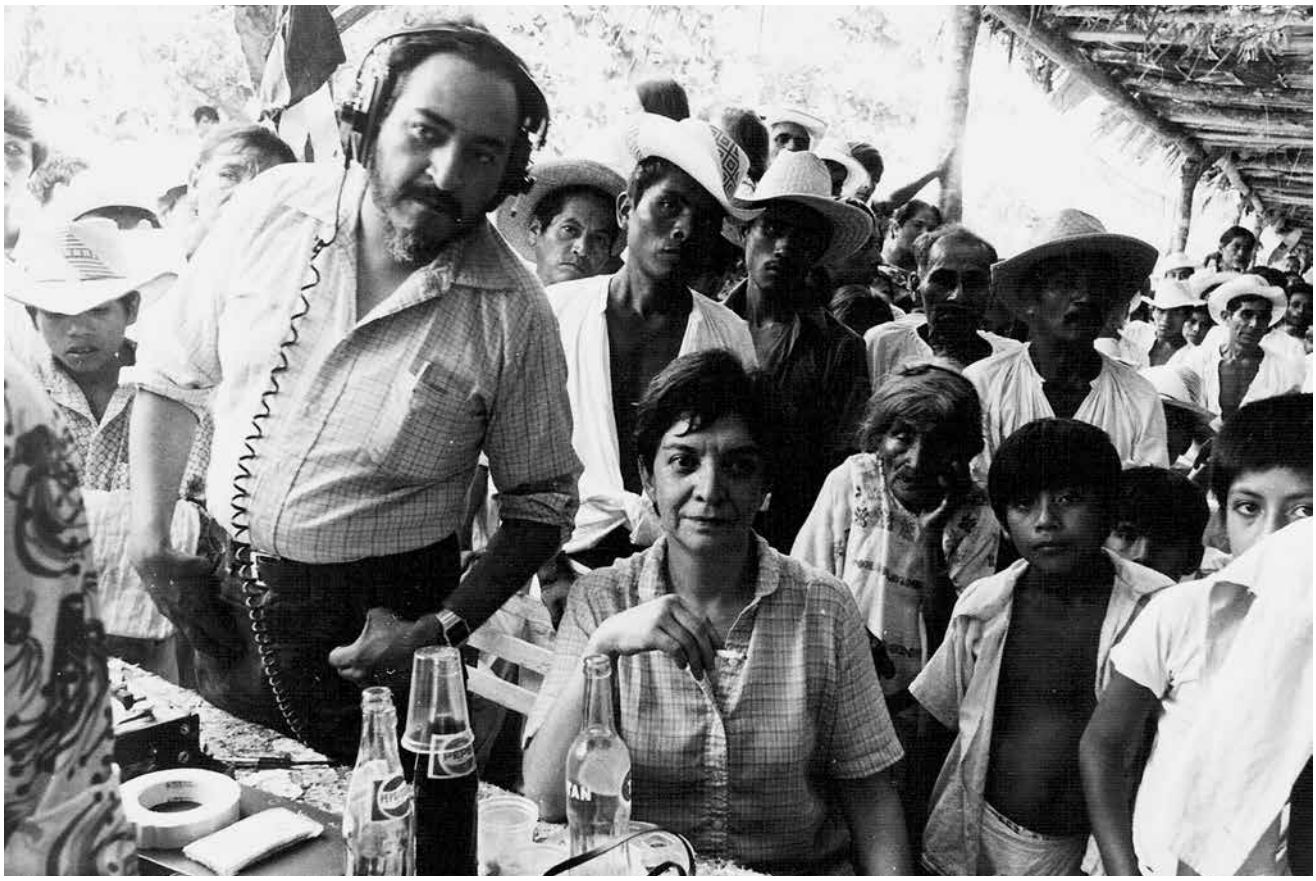
Carlos Alvarado Perea during a Vía Láctea show, ca. 1978, Mexico City. Unidentified photographer. From Carlos Alvarado's personal archive.



Rodolfo Sánchez Alvarado recording testimonies in a rural community during his period as sound engineer for the National Institute for the Indigenous, ca. 1979. Unidentified photographer. From the Carlos Prieto Acevedo archive.

IMAGINARY STORIES

BY GUILLERMO GALINDO

FOR THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, MEXICAN COMPOSER GUILLERMO GALINDO HAS BEEN CREATING WHAT HE CALLS »CYBER-TOTEMIC SONIC OBJECTS,« WHICH ARE SCULPTURAL INSTRUMENTS BASED ON THE PRE-COLOMBIAN BELIEF THAT THERE IS AN INTIMATE CONNECTION BETWEEN THE SOUND OF AN OBJECT AND THE MATERIAL FROM WHICH IT IS MADE. EACH CYBER-TOTEMIC INSTRUMENT BECOMES THE MEDIUM THROUGH WHICH THE SPIRITUAL ANIMISTIC WORLD AROUND US EXPRESSES ITSELF. HIS PIECE »VOCES DEL DESIERTO,« COMMISSIONED BY QUINTETO LATINO IN 2012, INCORPORATED HIS FIRST SET OF CYBER-TOTEMIC INSTRUMENTS, MADE FROM IMMIGRANTS' BELONGINGS FOUND AT THE MEXICO/US BORDER, AND FUSED THEM WITH THE INSTRUMENTS OF A TRADITIONAL WIND QUINTET: FLUTE, OBOE, CLARINET, FRENCH HORN AND BASSOON. THE CONTINUATION OF GALINDO'S BORDER INSTRUMENTS PROJECT IS NOW PART OF A LARGER COLLABORATION, CALLED BORDER CANTOS, *WITH AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER RICHARD MISRACH. MISRACH HAS BEEN PHOTOGRAPHING THE TWO-THOUSAND-MILE BORDER BETWEEN THE US AND MEXICO SINCE 2004. FOR THE LAST SEVERAL YEARS, THE TWO ARTISTS HAVE BEEN WORKING TOGETHER TO CREATE PIECES THAT BOTH DOCUMENT AND TRANSFORM THE ARTEFACTS OF MIGRATION.*

THIS TEXT IS TAKEN FROM THE ACCOMPANYING PHOTOGRAPHY BOOK, BORDER CANTOS, *PUBLISHED BY APERTURE LAST MARCH. ASIDE FROM MISRACH'S PHOTOGRAPHS, THE BOOK INCLUDES DIAGRAMS OF GALINDO'S SCULPTURE-INSTRUMENTS AND GRAPHIC SCORES AS WELL AS LINKS TO VIDEOS OF HIS PERFORMANCES.*

»THE INSTRUMENTS FOR THE CANTOS PROJECT ARE MEANT TO ENABLE THE INVISIBLE VICTIMS OF IMMIGRATION TO SPEAK THOUGH THEIR PERSONAL BELONGINGS.«

Many of my instruments are one of a kind. Others are derived from designs that already exist in different cultures. Because of the heterogeneity of the materials they are made from, their sounds cover a wide range of different and interesting tones and pitches. All of them, in one way or another, offer me opportunities to discover new sounds and invent performance techniques. When designing instruments, my goal is not to obtain the perfect or most beautiful sound, but to allow the materials to sing in their own voices. There are many reasons why I refuse to consider my pieces as recycled art objects. The instruments for the *Cantos* project are meant to enable the invisible victims of immigration to speak though their personal belongings. Using their own narrative, these instruments tell us imaginary stories about places and people that may or may not still be alive. Other instruments for this project came from the apparatus of division itself. These objects of aggression were also given a new life and an opportunity to speak in their own terms.

During my process I followed primordial and universal traditions. Nothing that we found in the terrain was excluded. All of the objects were part of a carefully crafted, complex landscape that comprises the border.

In the pre-Columbian world, there was an intimate connection between an instrument and the material from which it was made. For pre-Columbian cultures, there was no separation between the spiritual and the physical world. Mesoamerican instruments were talismans between worlds, and the sound of each instrument was never separate from its essence, its origin, or its meaning in the world. When the Aztecs were conquered, Spanish Catholicism merged with the old Mesoamerican traditions and incorporated older European practices, including the veneration of relics (from the Latin word *reliquiae*, meaning »remains,« or from the verb *relinquere*, meaning »leave behind«). Relics consisted of clothing, personal objects or any physical remains of a spiritual leader or saint to be worshipped after death. Similar practices incorporating objects belonging to ancestors existed in Buddhism and Hinduism.

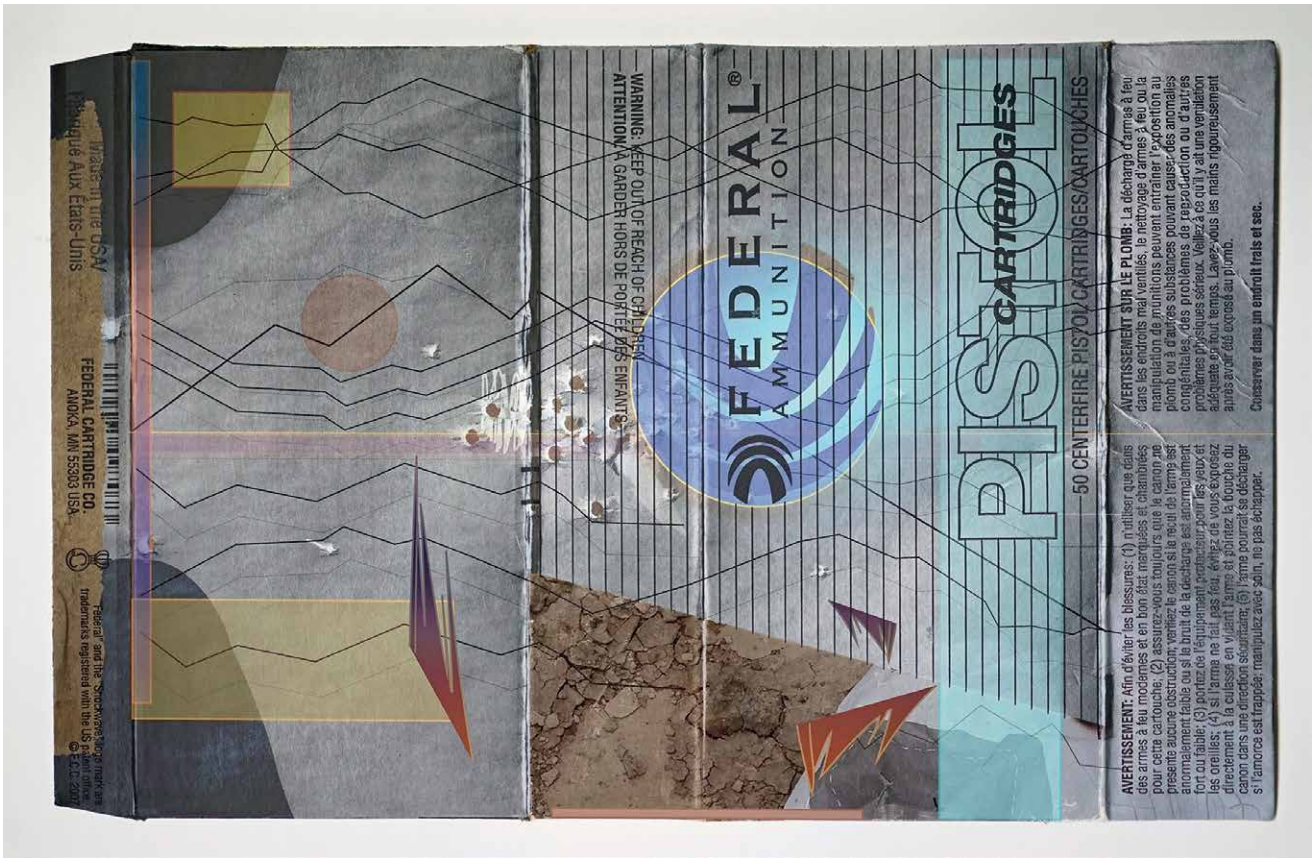
Afro-Caribbean musical tradition incorporated the daily objects discarded by slave owners into musical instruments. Clay jars that once held olive oil were covered with shells to make the »shaker,« called *shekeré*. The wooden boxes that brought goods from Europe became the percussion instrument known as *cajón*, and a couple of spoons hit against each other became an instrument still used in carnival music today. The tradition of reutilising disposed objects and giving them alternative uses has been around for many years. Reappropriation, renaming and reusing have always been important strategies for cultural survival for the conquered and oppressed. Imagining the world and recreating it in one's own terms is the first step for self-acceptance and liberation.

For Chicano artists, the survival practice of mending and making things last longer was turned into the modus operandi underlining the nonlinear, exploratory and unsolemn vision of *Rascuachismo* (a word of Nahuatl origin). *Rascuachismo* is a »nonintellectual, visceral response to the ›lived reality‹ of the underdog where ›things are not thrown away but saved and recycled often in different contexts‹ (e.g., automobile tires used as plant containers, plastic bleach bottles becoming garden ornaments…),« writes Tomás Ybarra-Frausto.

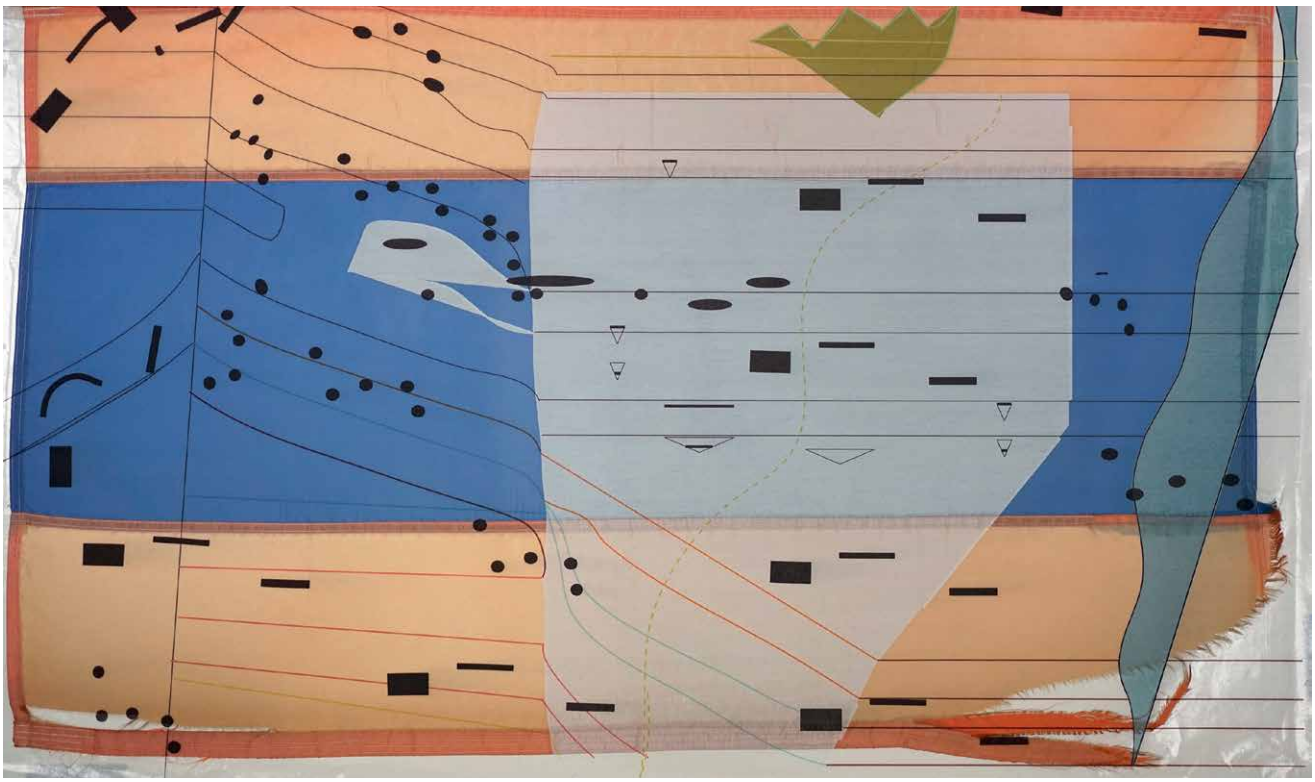
All of these personal objects from immigrants now have a second life as musical instruments. They are the evidence of an ongoing human tragedy that is happening before our eyes. These musical objects sing to us about their invisible owners.

A musical score can be defined as a set of codified symbols written on a piece of paper or any other readable surface, to be translated into sound events to be reproduced in real time. For many years, my interest in the evolution of musical scores, particularly those written in the last half of the 20th century, has turned into a fascination with symbolic language, visual data, codification and the interpretation of arrays of data into other media.

In the 20th century, traditional Western notation broke from the limitations of the five-line staff. Traditional ways to indicate pitch, dynamics or volume, duration, placing of events in time, tempo and many other parameters had to accommodate new ways to conceive and perform music. These scores allowed broader options, both for instrumental interpretation and for visual experimentation. The creation of new music symbols, often invented by the composers themselves, made it common practice to include a key explaining the symbols in the first pages of each score. Many symbols were later standardised and became more familiar in composers and performers' repertoires alike. Nonlinear and modular scores allowed the composer to express new ideas and alternative ways of looking at graphic representations of real time, thus allowing the performer a better understanding of the concepts behind the score and even alternative choices for interpretation.

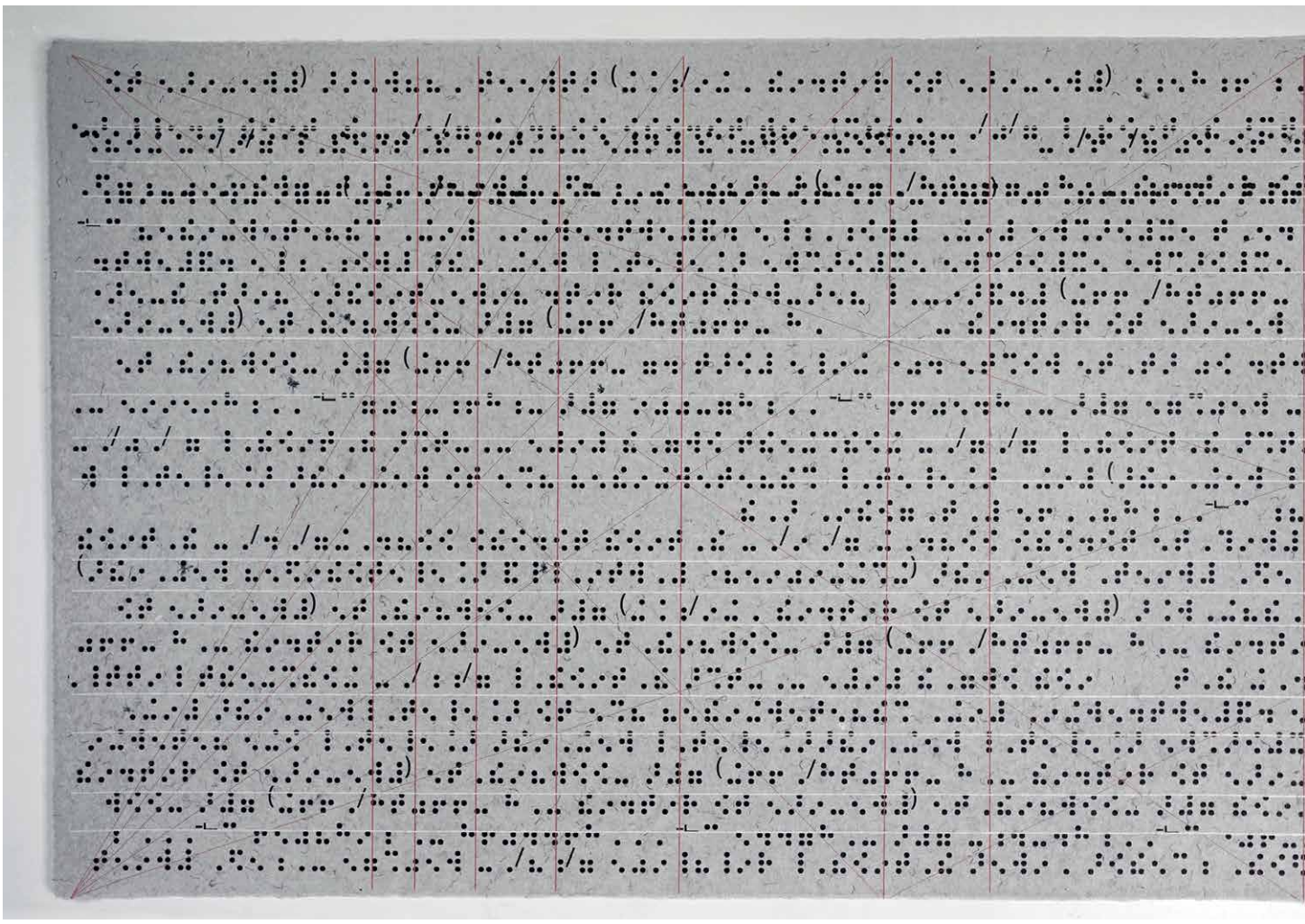


Guillermo Galindo »Horizontal Ammunition Box,« 2015. Archival pigmented inkjet on Somerset. © Magnolia Press.



Guillermo Galindo »Sarape Tracking Flag. Variation,« 2015. Acrylic on beacon flags used by the humanitarian aid group Water Stations. © Magnolia Press.

Guillermo Galindo »Fuente de lágrimas (Fountain of Tears),« 2015. Galindo has reinterpreted a barrel, once set up as a water station for migrants crossing the border and now pierced by bullets as a result of vandalism, as a fountain of tears. Water drips from small holes onto a metal plate, like rain falling onto a tin roof.



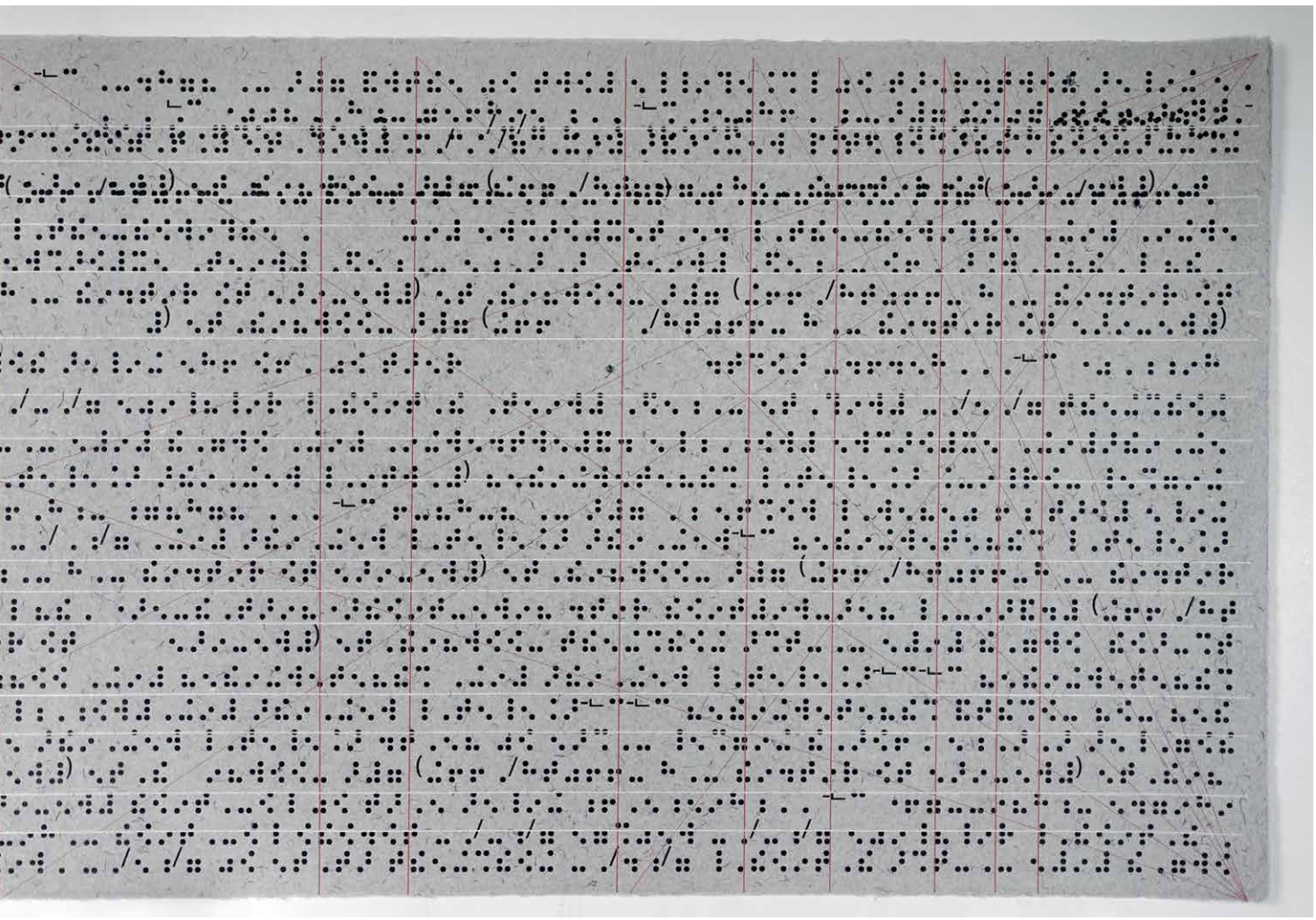
Guillermo Galindo »Braille Forensic Codex,« 2015. Acrylic ink on handmade paper. © Magnolia Press.

The score for John Cage's *Variations II* (1961), in which physical measurements are translated into musical events, consists of eleven transparent sheets: six lines and five points to be arranged randomly. Perpendiculars are dropped from points to lines to determine sound characteristics. In the 1970s, composer Iannis Xenakis completed the UPIC (Unité Polyagogique Informatique CEMAMu), a computer-aided graphic design tool for composers. By the 1980s, graphic scores had evolved so much that composers such Sylvano Bussotti and Earle Brown nearly blurred the lines between music and visual art.

Looking back in history, graphic music notation is as old as the need for humans to express ideas with symbols. Cuneiform tablets found in today's Iraq and dating from 2000 BCE represent fragmentary instructions on how to perform music. The Aztec and Mayan pre-Columbian codices (*Mexihcatl qmoxtli*) were iconographic maps of elaborately detailed histories of events meant to be read in sequence and in very specific ways. Codices were a poem, a song, a story, a painting, and a detailed account of objects and food present at a particular scene, at a particular time – all in one.

The first time I saw Richard Misrach's photograph of a Border Patrol tire drag, with the lines on either side of a sandy desert road, I thought about diagonal staff lines in motion, pulling the viewer into the picture and/or the listener into a sonic sequence. From the beginning I thought of the process of translating the data in the photographs into scores, in the same way that a computer converts arrays of zeroes and ones into pictures, music or words. In my scores I also tried not to exclude the emotional elements, the narrative and the archetypal symbolism: people behind bars, a flock of birds, an empty sky, a surveillance tower, gun shells, etc. Translating photographs into scores also allowed me to challenge the traditional Cartesian tradition of reading music from left to right. These photographs inspired me to think of unexpected events coming from all directions all at once or at different times: a polycentric universe where anything can happen at any given time.

In Richard's photographs of the Border Wall, the thick vertical bars looked like a musical grid where everything seemed to be carefully placed. I also thought of patterns and microscopic codes in the texture of the Wall, some of them like invisible holes where people could come through. A photograph

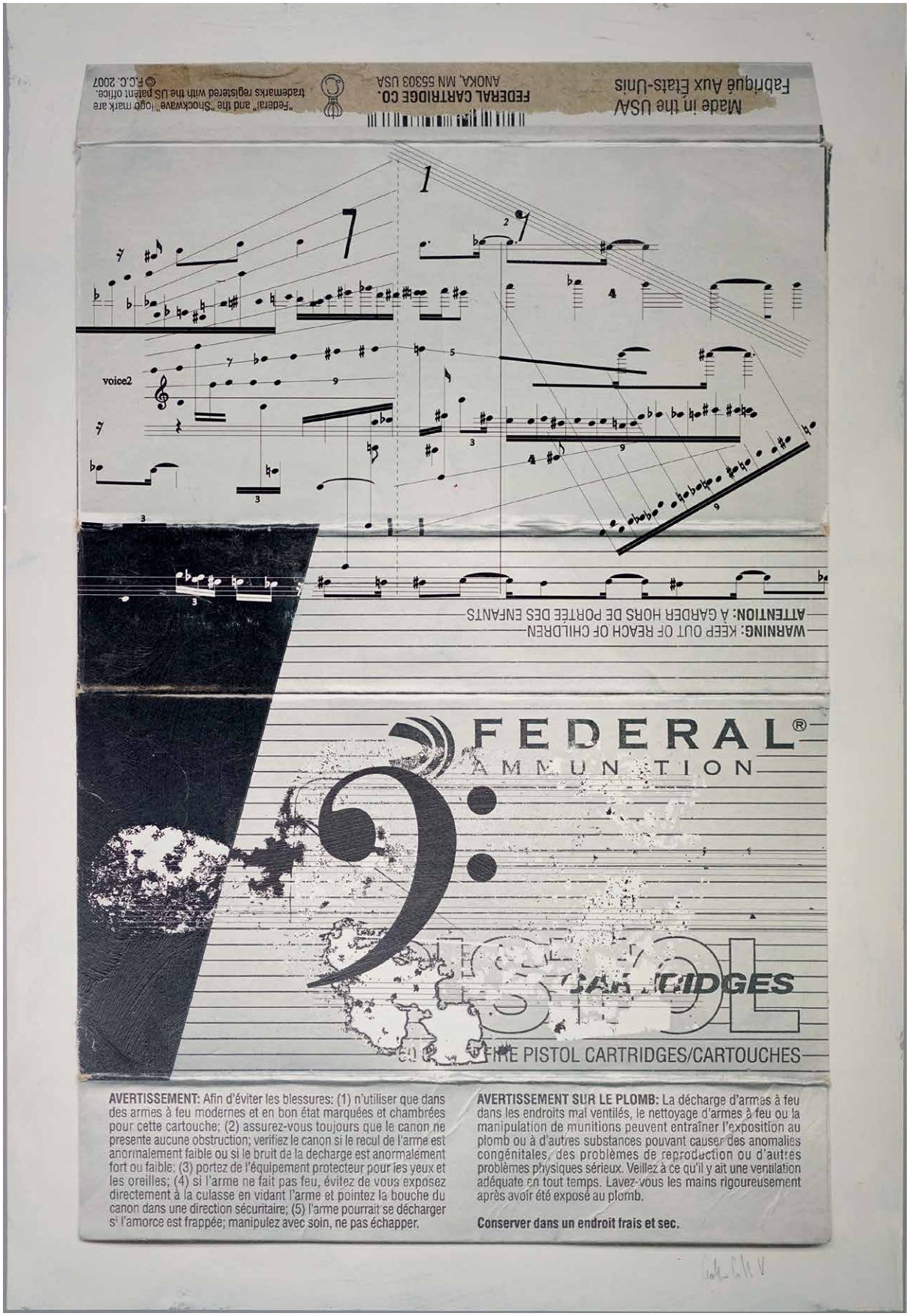


of an abandoned sarape reminded me of the codes and stories recorded on the textiles of ancient weavers. The colours, the fog, and contrasts of daylight at dawn made me think of bright musical passages moving into the opaque. The density of the landscape or the curvature of the mountains became melodic contours. The composition of each photograph made me think of alternative ways of reading the music. The human-shaped targets had ruptures that suggested overpowering deliberate gestures, and the lines in the ammo packages became musical pathways. Official documents regarding the construction of the Wall became structural designs. Large Excel documents provided by the Colibrí Center that listed the precise coordinates of where bodies were found in the desert and the possible causes of death were translated into symbols that can be interpreted as music. Text data about the disappeared was converted into scientific formulas, Braille code, and guitar tablature, and superimposed onto Richard's photographs, creating musical patterns that merged with the elements present in the visual composition. The Braille code was printed on a large paper made from immigrants' clothing. Following the tradition of Aztec banners (*pantli*) used to establish territory, I also printed musical scores onto discarded banners used by humanitarian groups to mark the locations where water is strategically placed for immigrants traveling through the desert.

Translating photographs into events in time reminded me of the conception of space and time by Mayan and Zapotec artists, as described by Octavio Paz, where »space is fluid…and time is solid: a block, a cube. Moving space and frozen time become two extremes of the cosmic movement.«

GUILLERMO GALINDO is an experimental composer, sonic architect, performance artist and Jungian tarotist. His multidisciplinary output encompasses symphonic works, acoustic chamber works, performance art, visual art, computer interaction, electro-acoustic music, opera, film, instrument building, three-dimensional installation and live improvisation. He is concerned with redefining the conventional boundaries of music and the art of music composition. Galindo is a senior adjunct professor at the California College of the Arts.

Guillermo Galindo »Huesocordio.« This instrument, made from vertebrae found along the Mexico/US border in Texas, is a zither that can be plucked, bowed, or activated by toy cockroaches scrambling across the surface of the box. It is reminiscent of a small Japanese Koto.



Guillermo Galindo »Vertical Ammunition Box,« 2015. Mixed media, archival pigmented inkjet. © Magnolia Press.

COMBINING SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY WITH A LUSH IMAGINATION, THE DIVERSE PRACTICE OF MEXICAN SOUND ARTIST ARIEL GUZIK AIMS AT AN EMPHATIC RE-ENCHANTMENT OF THE WORLD. AT HIS NATURE EXPRESSION AND RESONANCE RESEARCH LABORATORY (LABORATORIO PLASMAHT DE INVESTIGACIÓN EN RESONANCIA Y EXPRESIÓN DE LA NATURALEZA, ASOCIACIÓN CIVIL) IN MEXICO, HE EXPLORES NATURAL RESONANCE, MECHANICS, ELECTRICITY AND MAGNETISM, AND CREATES INSTRUMENTS AND APPARATUSES TO ENQUIRE INTO THE VARIOUS LANGUAGES OF NATURE. PRIMARILY KNOWN FOR THE GEO- AND BIOACOUSTIC MACHINES AND INSTALLATIONS HE MAKES IN ORDER TO COMMUNICATE OUTSIDE THE PERIMETERS OF THE EGOCENTRIC HUMAN WORLD, GUZIK ALSO TRANSFERS HIS ARTISTIC THOUGHT TO THE FIELD OF WRITTEN LANGUAGE, AND DOES SO WITH EXTRAORDINARY BEAUTY.

THE TEXT »REMNANTS« SERVES AS A POETIC EMBRYO FOR A PROJECT HE HAS BEEN PURSUING FOR MORE THAN A DECADE NOW. IN IT, HE IMAGINES AND RESEARCHES WAYS TO ESTABLISH CONTACT AND COMMUNICATE WITH WHALES AND DOLPHINS. GUZIK'S EXPERIMENTATION IS ROOTED IN ASPECTS OF CHAOS THEORY AND EXPANDS ON THE OBSERVATION THAT THE PERCEPTION AND COMMUNICATION OF CETACEANS ARE, IN ESSENCE, INSTANCES OF A SINGLE CIRCULAR PROCESS OF EMITTING AND RECEIVING SOUND WAVES. HIS LONG-TERM GOAL IS THE CONSTRUCTION OF »THE NARCISSUS SHIP,« A MANNED SUBMARINE EQUIPPED WITH UNDERWATER MUSICAL INSTRUMENTS. SUCH A SHIP WOULD ENABLE ENCOUNTERS BETWEEN HUMANS AND CETACEANS AS INHABITANTS OF PARALLEL CIVILISATIONS, WITHOUT HIERARCHIES OR INTENTIONS OF DOMINATION AND DEVOID OF UTILITARIAN OR PRACTICAL RESEARCH INTERESTS. BOTH THE SHIP AND THE PREPARATORY TEXT ARE MANIFESTATIONS OF GUZIK'S DESIRE TO CONFRONT THE HUMAN CONSCIOUSNESS WITH AN UNKNOWN OUTSIDE WHERE RULES AND SYSTEMATIC PROJECTIONS HAVE NO VALUE. THE FATHOMLESS OPEN OCEAN IS ANALOGOUS TO THE IMMINENT AND UNDETERMINED WHITE FIELD – IN BOTH, HUMANS FIND THEMSELVES WITHOUT TOPOGRAPHY, WITHOUT ROUTES OR MAPS.

IN THE PHASE PRECEDING THE CONSTRUCTION OF THIS VESSEL WITH NO RUDDER, THIS TEXT ON THE RESIDUAL SPARKS OF LIFE SERVES AS A SORT OF ONTOLOGICAL VIGNETTE IN PROSE. IN IT, GUZIK SHARES HIS ELECTRIFYING VISION ABOUT THE WHITE, MAGNETISED FIELD FROM WHICH LIFE SPROUTS AND WHICH HE USES TO CREATE A UNIQUE, REFLEXIVE FOUNDATION WHERE HE CAN PLACE HIS CREATIONS AND ARTEFACTS, WHETHER THEY BE CONCEPTS OR MACHINES.

REMNANTS

BY ARIEL GUZIK

Eye of a Whale. Photo © Raúl González

The white field is a place from which myriads of agglomerations and mounds can be observed on its periphery. Some of these protuberances accumulate the surplus fragments from every process of creation. In others, countless particles settle after being scattered when something explodes or is destroyed. In yet others lies the remaining dust from everything that once had life or movement. The closer these sinuosities converge at the threshold of the white field, the more atomized and compact are the particles that form them.

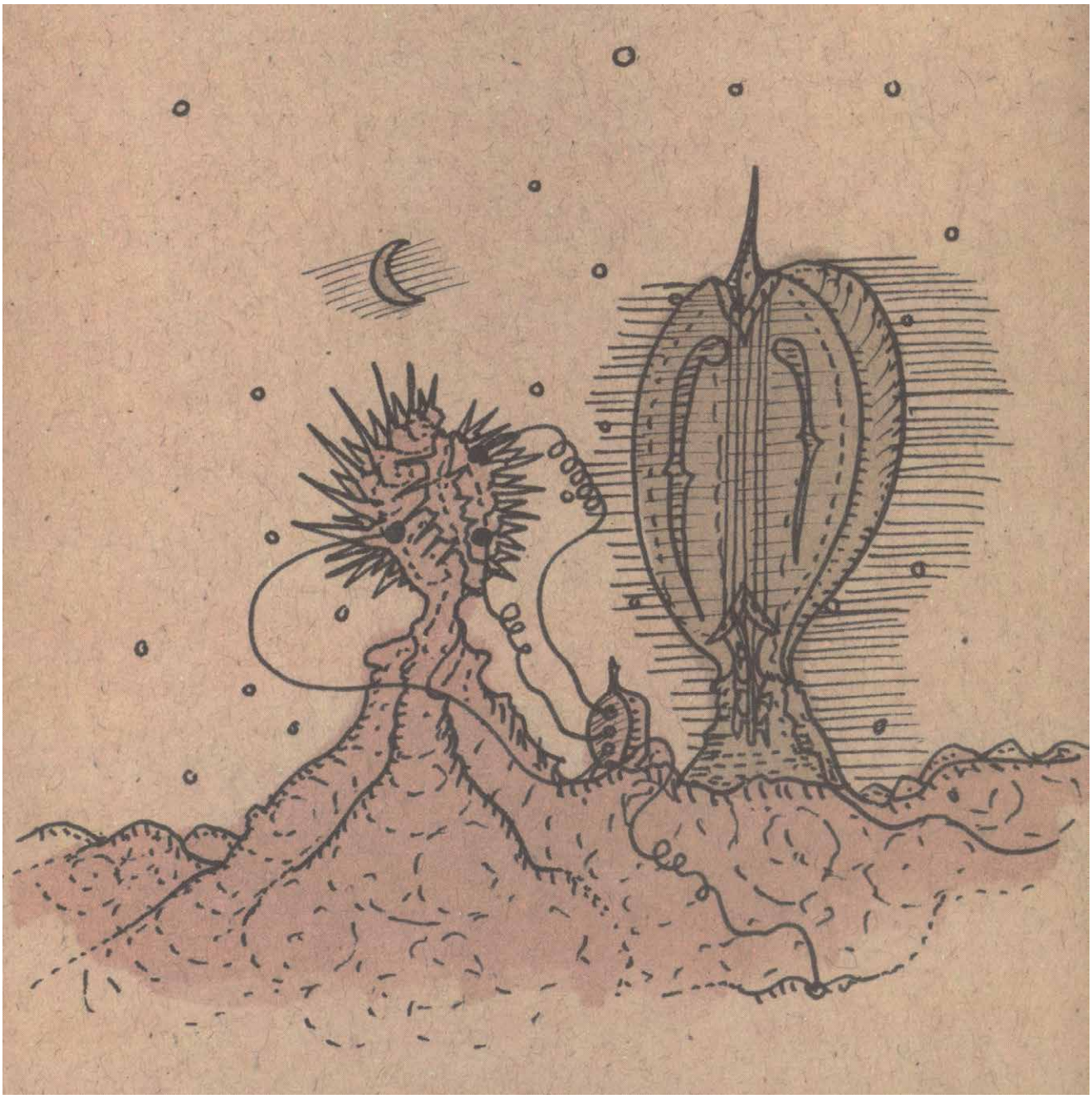
Once at that threshold, where the light is blinding and the heat is unbearable, the corpuscles are infinitely small and luminous; an innumerable amount of particles and vibrations can be found. Seen as a whole, the animate specks form a white, homogenous glow – but if observed separately, each is peculiar and unique. To the ear, the sum of all vibrations is perceived as an endless »S« sound, and every grain of dust constitutes a primordial signal. This white light is the sum of every light and its sound, the sum of all sounds, just as the sun implies every gleam and the murmur of a waterfall embodies the song of every one of its droplets.

However, all of this is perceptible only at the borders of the white field. The place itself is inaccessible, not because it cannot be entered, but because there seems to be no apparent return, and because the field has already been described – not in simple words but with hard laws, one of which forecasts no more and no less than the end of the universe.

Chaos reigns inside the white field: its repertoire of particularities is of such extent that it spreads beyond the limits of our sensorial capacity of classification, and can only be grasped by imagination and mathematical minds. *Entropy*, it has been called: a measurement of all residual scrap from every work process; the inverse of certainty; the paradoxical outcome of the universal quest for equilibrium which, in turn, leads to a progressive, dull homogeneity that sooner or later will end with it all. So dictates the second law of thermodynamics.

Nonetheless, some of those remnants – animated by a whirlwind of miraculous craft that persistently, rebelliously, turns every smidgen into a fresh possibility – fly out of the white field to re-encounter the lattice, where a prodigious weave shall bring forth life anew.

ARIEL GUZIK'S work is included in the CTM 2017 Exhibiton: Critical Constellations of the Audio-Machine in Mexico, curated by Carlos Prieto Acevedo.



Untitled drawing by Ariel Guzik.

Ariel Guzik »Spectral Harmonic Resonator,« a device to communicate with cetaceans. Photo taken during an expedition to Baja California by Raúl González, 2012.

UNDERGROUND TEHRAN: TECHNO & EXPERIMENTAL ELECTRONIC MUSIC IN IRAN

BY MOLLIE ZHANG

FOR ITS 18TH EDITION, CTM WILL TEAM UP WITH THE TEHRAN-BASED SET FESTIVAL FOR EXPERIMENTAL ART TO PRESENT WORKS AT THE FOREFRONT OF THE IRANIAN CAPITAL'S ELECTRONIC MUSIC SCENE. IN A NEW COMMISSION, ATA EBTEKAR AKA SOTE COLLABORATES WITH DUTCH VISUAL ARTIST TARIK BARRI AND PERFORMERS ARASH BOLOURI AND BEHROUZ PASHAEI ON A PROJECT MERGING ELECTRONICS WITH TRADITIONAL PERSIAN ACOUSTIC INSTRUMENTS FOR A »PERSIAN TECHNO APOCALYPSE.« HERE MOLLIE ZHANG PAINTS A VIVID PORTRAIT OF THE BURGEONING ELECTRONIC MUSIC SCENE IN TEHRAN THROUGH CONVERSATIONS WITH SOTE, ASH KOOSHA, HADI BASTANI AND SIAVASH AMINI.

The act of nurturing may not be one of the first things that comes to mind when listening to Sote's *Hardcore Sounds From Tehran* – it's a concept perhaps more often associated with warmth and patience than crushing, noisy techno. Yet it's Ata Ebtekar who first mentions nurturing to me, as it plays a large role in the release and in his practice to boot.

The whoppingly heavy record is comprised of recordings from six of Sote's performances in Tehran in the past two years. Iran is a country whose strict cultural regulations have been a major obstacle for artists for over the past four decades. Today it is the site of a burgeoning experimental electronic music scene in which Ebtekar is one of many artists working to »nurture [the scene] and bring leftfield music to a wider audience.«

»I alongside eight colleagues have started an experimental art event concentrating on experimental electronic music and visual arts to provide a platform for ourselves as well as other Iranian artists who are interested in experimenting with the relationship between art and technology as well as mediums themselves.«

SET Festival brings much-needed sustenance to the experimental music landscape of Tehran. Ebtekar's account of the »maniacal sonic journey« he takes listeners on characterises Side A of *Hardcore Sounds* as »more refined in terms of synthesis,« with »a more abstract and complex form as far as the patterns and structures of the music are concerned.« Side B, on the other hand, he says »takes the listener on an intense journey of harsh and exciting sound systems with a relatively more straightforward feel that comes from my techno and noise background.«

It's difficult to imagine what experiencing the performances themselves would have been like, especially in a city like Tehran. Siavash Amini, a fellow musician who wrote the foreword to *Hardcore Sounds*, says that most attendees were »alien to such music,« and that the first performance left most in »awe, and in some cases confusion.«

»One thing I think is important to remember is that these performances were not raves at all. No part of any performance resembled a party. Everyone sat in the dark, moving discreetly to the music, and most people were listening quite seriously. It was kind of a brain rave.«

The seriousness of such an affair can be quite foreign to residents of many other big cities; the ease at which music can be

heard is often taken for granted. This is something also highlighted by Ash Koosha. Ash, who crafts brilliant, textural electronic music to be heard in *Guud* and *I AKA I*, hasn't returned to Tehran since seeking asylum in the UK. Now a self-proclaimed outsider to the music scene in Tehran today, when asked about his experiences performing in the two cities, he says: »The main difference is that here, a musical event is a casual event. You listen to music, enjoy the arts and have fun. In Iran, it's not a casual event. It's well-prepared (if it's legal, and most Western music is illegal in Iran). So there's a huge element of stress. A lot of adrenalin is involved, regardless of whether you're a performer or an audience member. At any moment you could be arrested. It's an intense state of mind; you're always on edge. You think, ›what I'm doing is so big and so important. I could be arrested but I'm still here.‹ The idea of having fun and having a couple beers at a gig in Dalston really isn't the case in Iran. It's quite the opposite – it's a really big deal.«

Some things have changed since Ash left Tehran, and now the case is a bit different for musicians like Siavash and Sote. The latter tells me, »all music that gets published officially needs to go through the Cultural Ministry for a stamp of approval and a permit, but with the current government, this situation is fading a bit. I think it's getting better day by day. Ten years ago it was almost impossible for young musicians to get permits, whereas now it's relatively easy and it's just a formality.«

Amini reaffirms this: »We haven't had any trouble getting permits or anything that has to do with the government directly. In part it's because of the instrumental nature of most of the music we perform. You only have to get the permits when you want to perform in a public venue, and in the past couple of years we haven't had issues with getting them at all. But that doesn't mean the regulations aren't ridiculous, or that everyone has the same advantage – it's really hard for artists of certain genres to get permits. The hardest part for us is actually finding a place to perform. Even though we have permits, there are few venues willing to let us play, or that have the courage to promote such music.«

»Most of the time they don't support us with the same enthusiasm with which they support other genres of music. I think in part they are afraid of this new thing we're doing – their fear comes from a lack of understanding around what we make, as well as from ignorance about these newer forms of music performance. They're afraid to get in trouble, either with the authorities (because of the kind of audience our shows might attract) or with the music community (since most of them don't consider what we are doing to be music or art).«

Amini, who stumbled upon metal via his cousins, began to discover music – like many of his peers did – through Tehran's pirate tape culture. As consumption was heavily regulated, this was the primary avenue through which many first heard new music. He says, »two of my cousins were listening to 70s prog-rock and heavy metal bands. The attraction for me was both visual and musical. I liked how the long-haired guys played strangely shaped guitars and banged their heads to the beat of the drums, and I was also interested in the atmospheric genius of Black Sabbath. And even the huge light shows of Pink Floyd, too. Then when dial-up internet came to town, my friends and I got deeper into extreme forms of metal that the pirate tape culture of our times missed completely – genres like doom metal and black metal.«

»The really big steps towards electronic music came for me when listening to Massive Attack. I really wanted to make music that sounded like theirs, but I lacked the skills to understand what was happening in it! I started going to university to study classical guitar and met Nima Pourkarimi (Umchunga) whom I shared many interests with, so we started trading IDM albums and listening to a lot of glitch. We started performing in some venues with borrowed laptops and desktop computers.«

Tehran's pirate tape culture, according to Amini, »has died away with the rise of mp3s and external hard drives. People go to each other's houses and trade their collections with one another. We can't buy anything directly, so we have to rely on free downloads, or people who go out of the country and bring music back.«

Siavash Amini with colleagues at SETFest 2016. Photo © Malthe Ivarsson.

»I think the good thing about the tape culture was that you couldn't get 10 albums in a day (let alone hundreds). Having a few well selected albums gave you the time to explore the music in depth and listen to one album hundreds of times. With digital piracy, the good thing is that you can hear many albums from many genres that can open a lot of doors for your mind. At the same time, there's a danger in that people might just be skipping through albums as if it were a competition.«

Now, Amini crafts abstract, textural music, and this is heard in the melancholy »Nonexistent Vicinities.« He can also be heard on the opening track of *Absence*, a compilation of experimental Iranian music for which he also wrote the foreword. Curated by Arash Akbari (also featured on the album) and Kate Carr, the record was released on Flaming Pines. Akbari says of the music, »I'm really interested in what's happening right now in Iran. It's great to hear some quality stuff come from musicians' own experimentation. There aren't any specific guidelines or strict learning methods to shape the whole scene into something formal and boring; that's what I like the most about the scene.«

»Of course there are lots of problems as well – financial issues, finding proper venues and even good sound systems. And in some cases there's lack of interest among people. Pop music covers the most need for music and sucks up all the money, attention and resources available. I guess these are the same problems experimental producers are facing around the world.«

The remarkable sounds of the compilation range from Shaahin Saba Dipole's techno-straying »Remembrance« to Pouya Ehsaei's »RocRast #12« and Umchunga's texturally rich »RS.« *Absence* provides an arousing glimpse into some of the musics emerging from Tehran today. Ata describes the scene as »young and inexperienced, but rich with individual depth and passion. Resources are limited. There are certain restrictions that need to be dissolved by education through lectures, workshops and certainly more performances.«

»I truly believe that once we do more and more workshops, lectures and performances the restrictions will be less and less. There will be more support from the cultural ministry and pri-

»THE HARDEST PART FOR US IS ACTUALLY FINDING A PLACE TO PERFORM. EVEN THOUGH WE HAVE PERMITS, THERE ARE FEW VENUES WILLING TO LET US PLAY, OR THAT HAVE THE COURAGE TO PROMOTE SUCH MUSIC.«

vate sponsors.« Right now, Amini describes the scene as being »at a very early stage, even though it took many of the musicians years to get where they are now. (We) were involved in different communities with different tastes. As these communities get together, I think we can see something resembling a scene shaping up.

»There are so many communities with different attitudes towards culture and art that have their own conceptions of experimental electronic music different from what's happening in Tehran. That being said, the group of musicians gathered, for example on, the *Absence* album are socially, geographically and culturally related. But as I mentioned it took time for them to all get together. That's why in my introductory essay I said that it can serve as a gateway for knowing the experimental scene and not a representation of the whole scene (if that exists at all).«

»Alogia« by Bescolour, or Behrang Najafi, is one of the most noteworthy tracks on the compilation. Noisy textures rumble and sputter over a dense ten minutes that ventures occasionally into dub's periphery. Najafi is also a member of the duo Temp-Illusion with Shaahin Entezaami. Their debut album is still in the works, but what they've shared via Soundcloud is promising. »Deshift« has a delicacy about it that compliments the noise-drenched percussion well, and distortion is abundant in the fantastically hefty »Pressure/Sanity.«

The impact of IDM is notable – from Amini to Najafi and Entezaami, their sounds are undoubtedly coloured by the likes of Autechre and Aphex Twin. For Hadi Bastani, too – it inspired a large part of his practice. Bastani, who is researching for his PhD in sound art and anthropology and is also featured on Unexplained Sounds Group's compilation of Iranian experimental music, has produced radio programmes for Resonance 104.4FM showcasing a number of Iranian musicians. He also runs a Facebook page dedicated to exposing many of these artists to a wider audience. His interests in electronic music developed along a similar path to some of his peers: »I recognised that my experience (along with my friends) with

»TO ADDRESS ISSUES OF INCLUSION AND EQUALITY IN A COUNTRY WHERE WOMEN HAVE BEEN FORBIDDEN TO SING SOLO FOR OVER THREE DECADES IS NO EASY FEAT.«

electronic/noise/ambient/IDM music certainly was not singular; that there were other people in different parts of Iran (and surely not only in Tehran) that had similar interests and experiences. That made me think that this is an emerging phenomenon in the Iranian music scene.«

»This labelling (EEMSI) came about as the emerging 'sound' has been largely based on the individual effort and experimentation, considering the lack of governmental and institutional support for this kind of music in Iran. The knowledge and influences within this scene are mainly in a form of 'cosmopolitan musical affinities' shaped through internet-based research, communication and exchange. It is a wonderful world constructed in Iran with such broad influences.«

Idlefon's »After The Quake« is a more straightforward iteration of IDM's imprint in Tehran. Also featured in Unexplained Sounds' compilation, the track spans soft, abstract textures and noisy percussion before culminating in a crescendo of noise.

These artists are undoubtedly influenced by their surroundings in a myriad of ways. As Sote describes, »Tehran is a city full of life and culture. I think the energy and movement that can be found in my current work is the result of living here.«

»In international outreach and exchanges with other artists, organisers and festivals, I've witnessed growth – of ticket sales and demand. More and more younger artists are applying to perform at our events and workshops. And every time I perform, people are coming up to me to ask for lessons in synthesis, sound design and electronic music in general.«

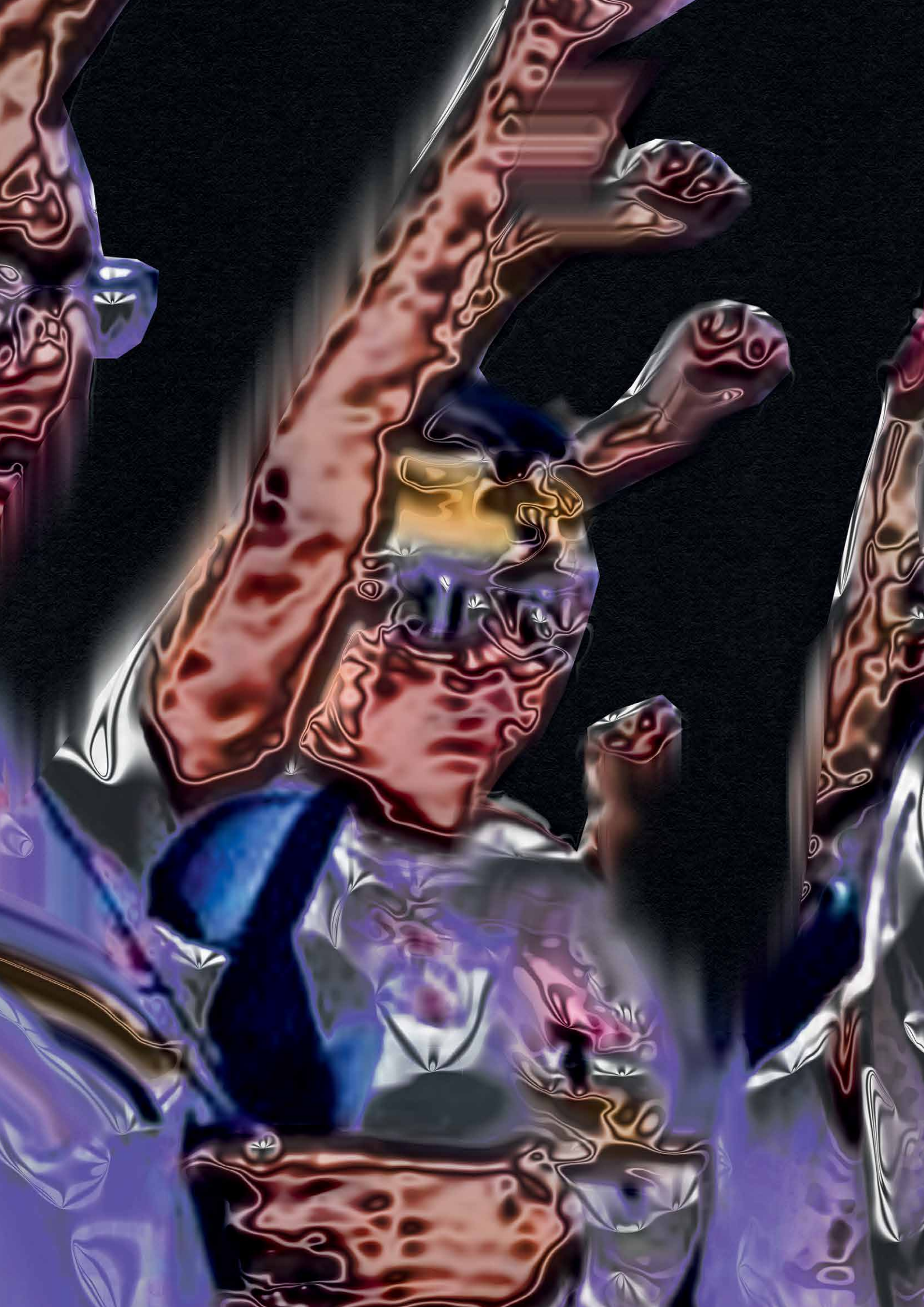
And it seems that Ebtekar and his peers' efforts to nurture are invaluable in helping the scene progress despite the many obstacles they grapple with. To address issues of inclusion and equality in a country where women have been forbidden to sing solo for over three decades is no easy feat. Nonetheless, this trajectory is one that SET organizers remain hopeful for in their efforts to foster equality in the scene, though as Amini says, »we are still facing some serious limitations both political and cultural that resist the type of inclusivity and gender equality that we have in mind for the future of our scene.«

Like London, Tehran is a source of remarkable music. When I asked about how he perceives the two cities, Ash Koosha said he doesn't necessarily see them differently; »the chaos and sound in Tehran is slightly different, but it's the same in London. If I close my eyes in Tehran, it's likely that I would feel like I'm in London. Both are chaotic, and in them I can see chaotic objects and graphics in my head. That's why I think my music is not Tehran or London – it's big city life music.«

This text was originally published in September 2016 in The Quietus. It has been reprinted with kind permission.
» www.thequietus.com

MOLLIE ZHANG is an artist, musician and writer currently based in London.

SETFest 2016. © Malthe Ivarsson.



PAN DAIJING – CALLING OUT

PAN DAIJING IN CONVERSATION WITH SAMUEL SAVENBERG

PAN DAIJING RELEASED HER MUSICAL DEBUT TWO YEARS AGO VIA THE BERLIN-BASED NOISEKÖLLN TAPES. NOT LONG AFTER, SHE STARTED TO MAKE A NAME FOR HERSELF INTERNATIONALLY WITH LIVE PERFORMANCES AROUND EUROPE. HER MUSIC COMBINES ELEMENTS OF BEAT-ORIENTED COMPOSITIONS, FIELD RECORDINGS, SOUND ART AND VOCAL PERFORMANCE, PRESENTED IN AN EVER-CHANGING AND UNPREDICTABLE LIVE ACT INCORPORATING DANCE AND PERFORMANCE. DAIJING WILL PERFORM A LIVE SET ALONGSIDE GAZELLE TWIN AT HAU2 IN THE CONTEXT OF CTM 2017. SAMUEL SAVENBERG OF ZWEIKOMMASIEBEN MAGAZIN MET WITH DAIJING IN DECEMBER 2016 TO TALK ABOUT EXPECTATIONS AND POWER – APPLIED BOTH TO HERSELF AND TO THE AUDIENCE BEING CONFRONTED.

Pan Daijing. Photo promo.

SAMUEL SAVENBERG How has your musical project evolved since its initiation roughly two years ago?

PAN DAIJING I don't use a moniker or artist name. Pan Daijing is in fact my real name and I use it for all the art I create. It started with sound and live performances in a musical context. It involves hardware gear for the music as well as contemporary dance, design and theatrical elements. But I see it all as one project.

I don't have an academic background in art or music. While growing up in China there was also no community or such. But through observations I thought of the club as a space where people come together out of curiosity. And no matter if there is something experimental happening or not, I always see a tension between the artist and the audience in clubs.

The thing with my live performances is that I never play the same set twice. It's roughly forty different sets now since I first played out back in China – all based on different concepts, sounds and even costumes. A certain performance only happens in that one particular club at that one particular time. Therefore I want to know from the curators or the bookers what the space is like, what the concept of the night or the venue is… you know, just all those things. This is a great possibility to interact with an event – so not only with the crowd itself, but with everything involved. It is an important feature of my performance and I'd say this has evolved. Nowadays I definitely feel more comfortable performing and dealing with the feeling of being vulnerable. Same goes for the sound devices. I am more confident and braver in provoking the audience, while also being more aware of an energy exchange that is happening between the audience and me.

SSG *Do you then plan your performance in a different way for a festival like CTM? Can you tell me a bit about what to expect?*

PD Yes, I do realise that there's possibility in the production of shows with theatres, festivals and museums. This year I am gradually building a whole new method of performing live with sound material from my upcoming EP on PAN and visual collaborations. The way I use my voice and body is also very different from before. I don't think it's just an A/V show. Currently I am collaborating with artists from different aesthetic and technological backgrounds. I take visuals as one actor in my whole story together with me, the stage and the audience. So I will be interacting with visuals and using those elements to shape my narrative for the first time. It's a work in progress and I am happy to present it at HAU2 with CTM.

SSG *»Live performance based on architectural space and individual exchange. Sound recordings based on improvisation and stories« – that's a description about your work that was written on a social media profile of yours. Are performing and recording/producing two completely different things to you?*

PD Actually, yes. I do a lot of recordings but I only had one release in more than one year. Personally, I prefer to share my music live with the idea of this once-in-a-lifetime experience: you only get it now and won't ever have it again. I enjoy this and also I don't want to see my recordings getting turned into business. Of course that's what is going to happen eventually after you put out your first record, but this is not exactly my main goal. Still, I record a lot of music. Also a lot of dance music. I enjoy just jamming at home as much as I like playing live. But making an actual record is something totally different, because to me it feels more like something I have to craft very particularly. I need to have a clear concept and statement of what I want to express with the record. People are actually in possession of my music once it's out, and they might listen to it again and again. Therefore I want to deliver a message. Performing live, on the other hand, is about taking one shot, and that's it.

SSG *But then again, when you play live you also have to be able to create a certain tension and an arc of suspense.*

PD Right, like a narrative. At the start of the set – and I actually get this feedback a lot – people are confused. Like, »what the fuck is this?« And I like that a lot, to trigger things instead of just feeding into them. A big part of it is improvisation, but I do a lot of spoken word and monologues together with dance. They are all based on specific concepts together with the playbacks. It feels like every gig I take is a task. I need to create something that's part of me to meet the people and the space.

SSG *You mentioned how the buyer of the record is able to relisten and therefore is in power. In a concert situation, would you say the power lies more in the hands of the performer?*

PD Yes. Maybe it's not the most accurate way to say this, but I sometimes feel like a rapist to my audience. They are there and I want to push them to their limits, to bring them to a certain state of mind and to open something director Michael Haneke once said about the relationship between him and his audience that he rapes the viewers into independence. That's something I can relate to. He also mentioned how – for him – making a movie is easier than watching it.

I don't think I do things on purpose while performing. In fact, I'm trying to be a very honest and vulnerable person on stage. It's about trying to share a sincere, intimate moment with everybody in the club. That's maybe a little unexpected because it seems like people tend not to be very honest in clubs in general. But I like this contradiction.

SSG *It's interesting how you explicitly mention the club as the place to perform, because for me what you are doing is not per se something I'd associate with club music or the venues it comes with. Of course, you play with certain elements and nowadays club music itself has become quite diverse. But still, I'd say there are many other spaces where your performances could take place – probably also because of the confrontational aspect.*

PD I kind of do this on purpose. Why do things when it doesn't make a difference? But sometimes I also just do a machine jam. The last time I played at Berghain I did a very dance-y set. It requires a very special situation for me to want to do that, and when I play this more traditional stuff I want it to be really aggressive. So in a sense I want to be provocative in my own way.

And even if people don't like it, they will think of it as something a little bit different – even if they'd leave after half of the show.

SSG *So your performance should be understood as confrontational?*

PD What do you mean by confrontational?

SSG *That's a big question, but I am asking since you mentioned the exchange between the artist and the audience before. Do you want to confront the audience with feelings they might carry and hide within themselves?*

PD I want to trigger things they don't want to look at. The thing about the »underground« is that it's hidden. In clubs, for example, people come and mostly they want to escape and hide from something, so they get high and dance. I understand this state of mind – I want to get there and look at something that they tend not to look at inside themselves. I try to provoke a specific atmosphere. It happens every now and again. Therefore also my stage set-up is always close to or within the audience. I move around and interact with the audience. And there are always a lot of people coming to hug me while I'm playing. A girl would come up and put her head on my shoulder. Just like that. People suddenly think that you – as the performer – know how they are feeling. It's strange. And I think videos of various performances are not at all accurate to the experience you had while being there, because you just can't capture certain things with a camera. It's what I mentioned earlier: I try to create something only for that particular night. And it's not going to happen again. Ever.

SSG *As far as I know there have been some situations in which you had to change your live sets upon the request of venues, and also bookings were cancelled multiple times. Do you think this is because of the way you perform?*

PD That only happened twice, though for different reasons. My performance involves topics such as sexuality and nudity, and people still are quite sensitive about these issues. It wasn't even about the issues themselves – more a matter of how I wanted to present them. The promoters didn't know what to expect and this uncertainty scared them. To be fair, this seems to be a problem for a lot of promoters everywhere. If they don't know what to expect, they don't want it.

SSG *When I read about that I was wondering if it would be different if you were male. Dealing with these topics is nothing special, especially in dark/industrial techno. But then again that genre is dominated by European men, and that obviously makes a huge difference. But what do you think is the exact reason for the rejection? Fear?*

PD It probably scares some people because I'm a woman. And then there's the bookings coming in because I am a woman and the promoters are obviously just looking for a female act or for someone from a foreign country. Seeing a woman from another continent doing this is definitely not natural and comfortable for Europeans. They immediately shift the focus from your work to your gender and background, which I find very frustrating. I do not like to put those things before my work. For me creative output is the most important and I can say what I want to say through it, instead of letting an all-female or Asian group speak for me. It's important to remind individuals that they are strong enough to speak up for themselves. The machismo not only in men but also in women is something I cannot agree with.

SSG *So the engagement isn't out of interest but more out of the desire for an exotic factor or an image?*

PD Exactly. They're using you. I don't want to get too political here but it also happens in interviews, and I think that's a really Western thing. They come straight up to me, taking advantage of my heritage. »So, I heard you're against the one-child policy?« They want me to say that. They want to victimise me as that girl running away from China. I'm not running away from anything. I'm just growing, learning and eventually I found a more comfortable habitat. But I am by no means rejecting my history – my history is actually a big part of me. That's the kind of situation I feel most confronted by: victimise me and focus on my background, my look and my gender, and not my work. It's disturbing.

SSG *I think there's a tendency for people to demand more diverse bookings, and whatever the laudable intentions, at the end of the day music still is a market. So these people are still club managers or promoters in the first place rather than political activists.*

PD Yes, and it sometimes feels like they are looking at you as a product. It's tricky.

SSG *But where do you go from there? Do you confront them, then? For example, what happened in that interview you mentioned?*

PD Unfortunately, I'm a very stubborn person. That means that if you respect and support me, I give you back the same. But otherwise I'm not going to be quiet. However, I'm also not looking for conflict. I just want people to understand that it's about common sense. Just don't make any misogynist or racist statements unconsciously. If you do, I will call you out.

SAMUEL SAVENBERG produces music under the moniker SSSS and is also a frequent contributor to zweikommasieben Magazin. An extended version of the interview with Pan Daijing will be featured in the Swiss magazine's upcoming issue, #15.
» www.zweikommasieben.ch

Pan Daijing. Photo promo.

NEVER JUST ONE THING

ENDGAME IN CONVERSATION WITH GUY SCHWEGLER & LÉONARD VONLANTHEN

Endgame. Photo © Jennifer König.

THE RELEASE OF ENDGAME'S FLESH *EP ON KODE9'S PRESTIGIOUS HYPERDUB LABEL LAST SUMMER WAS ANOTHER MAJOR STEP FOR BALA CLUB – A LONDON CONSTRUCT SOMEWHERE BETWEEN CLUB NIGHT, LABEL AND VISION – TOWARDS ITS ESTABLISHMENT AS AN ESSENTIAL PLAYER IN CONTEMPORARY CLUB CULTURE. ENDGAME AND THE BROTHERS KAMIXLO AND ULI K, BALA CLUB'S THREE CORE MEMBERS, CELEBRATE A MIXTURE OF HARD-HITTING CLUB MUSIC, REGGAETON, BRAZILIAN FUNK, METAL AND UK DRILL, AND MAKE EMOTIONS CENTRAL TO THE WHOLE AMALGAM. HERE THE LONDON-BASED PRODUCER AND DJ TALKS WITH GUY SCHWEGLER AND LÉONARD VONLANTHEN OF ZWEIKOMMASIEBEN MAGAZIN.*

ZWEIKOMMASIEBEN *You are a co-founder of Bala Club. How did that come about? And do you have a special role within the collective?*

ENDGAME We were all hanging out, doing parties and making music, and I guess it was just a way to put a name to what we were doing. It made sense to call it something, to invent our own thing and create a scene where there wasn't one already. We all felt quite alienated from the club scene in London. This is why we felt that we needed something of our own and on our own terms without having to fit into someone else's idea of what club music is. Bala Club started out with just a few of us. Over time it has grown and evolved. There aren't specific roles or anything. With the compilation and the three EPs released so far, we tried to show what we're all about – even if not all the people on it were strictly part of the collective. Everyone could and can give input.

ZKS *What was it exactly that was missing in dance music and in the clubs that led you to start your own thing?*

EG There was a lack of vulnerability and emotion in dance music. There was no space for weird stuff that didn't fit in. Especially in grime nights, it can become quite macho and far removed from what we are about and from the environment we want to be in. I wanted a space where anyone can do anything and everyone is welcome.

ZKS *We understand Bala Club as one of the most visible signs of a general trend towards reggaeton throughout various scenes in the last years. Would you agree with that?*

EG Initially that was definitely a lot of what we were playing in the clubs and what inspired the first release, the Blaze Kidd mixtape, *Exclusivo*. We were writing beats for that and it made sense, but we were never trying to fit into a certain reggaeton genre. Reggaeton was only part of the inspiration. It was a South American type of thing, but through London sounds. Since then it has kind of shifted to something more influenced by the new wave of rap music in the US.

ZKS *Where did the fascination for reggaeton or also Brazilian funk come from?*

EG Kamixlo, Uli K and some others grew up with that music, so it was always very natural for them. And I was super influenced by them. I've also spent a lot of time in Jamaica – my dad lived there for a long time. But I find it very difficult to keep track of the local music scene remotely. The only way to really understand it is to be there. The output of that country is insane. My interest in Brazilian funk came mainly from DJing – the energy in it as dance music is next-level. It's the hardest I can find. That's what I'm into: energy. If I hear shit that's hard as fuck, I play it – it doesn't matter where it's from or who made it, even if it's some Soundcloud producer with ten followers. It's changing slightly now, but the beauty of Soundcloud is that it's an unfiltered chronological feed. You get shit as soon as it comes out. There's no one saying that this one is better than the other one. You just hear it as it comes.

ZKS *Soundcloud is a limitless resource.*

EG Yes. That's why to me this is the most exciting time that there's ever been for music. The way that sounds travel, and the way people can collaborate – it's amazing and inspiring. We're living in the future, in a way – that's what keeps things fresh and exciting. That's why it's so crazy that anyone would play only one genre of music and be like, »this is me.« I don't know, I find that whole attitude kind of dry, and it's not relevant to me, actually. The world isn't like that. It's messy and there are people from everywhere. Music should reflect the messiness of the world.

ZKS *Has a funkeiro or a reggaetonera ever come up to you or gotten in contact with you because of the music you produce?*

EG Honestly, I think those scenes are too good. The producers, the MCs – they're too on point. The stuff they're doing there is like ten times better than I could ever attempt. They would probably hear my music and think it's weak. And the mad thing is that these producers, who're like nineteen years old and

»I THINK EVERYTHING WE DO WITH BALA CLUB IS HEARTFELT AND SINCERE. IT'S NEVER IRONIC. THAT'S 100% WHAT WE ARE INTO. I'M INTERESTED IN WHAT A LONDON SOUND IS LIKE. AND THAT'S INTERESTING BECAUSE LONDON IS THE MOST MULTICULTURAL PLACE ON EARTH.«

make ten beats a week, are all amazing but no one gives a shit because it's impossible to sell over here. And they don't really care because they're already stars in Brazil.

ZKS *So what happened with bossa nova in the 60s, when all the US-Americans came in, took over and the people from Rio got pushed out, won't happen because these producers are already superstars.*

EG In a way maybe they want to be big in the USA or elsewhere, but they don't need it. I was supposed to play a show with MC Bin Laden in New York, but he couldn't even enter the country. So it's impossible for those guys. They're too real, in a way. A friend in Lisbon put me in touch with the people from the tarraxa scene and – rightly so – there was a lot of suspicion from their side. They were kind of like, »why do you care? This isn't your scene.« And I totally get that. I also wouldn't like it if I created something and then felt like someone was trying to exploit it. But still, I'm desperate to work with them. And I hope that they see with the music I release that I'm genuine about it and not just trying to rip them off.

ZKS *You are kind of opposing a hegemony of standard dance music in Europe by mixing it with reggaeton and baile funk. Do you think these kinds of crossovers could lead to a further popularisation of electronic music in Latin America?*

EG That could be, but a lot of these local scenes are so good already they don't need people from London trying to get involved. That happened with the footwork scene in Chicago – suddenly all these UK dudes are doing it too. But it doesn't mean the same thing. References are fine, but don't try to be part of their scene – they've got their own thing. Same for us: we're super influenced by funk, reggaeton and other styles of music, but we don't want to be part of any scene other than our own. We want to have our own thing.

ZKS *There are two ways of looking at it: either it could critically be understood as cultural appropriation or, in a kind of naïve way, as an acknowledgment of a 'Latin' part of the electronic music scene at large.*

EG Cultural appropriation would be the usage of these elements without understanding what they are. That's what I was getting at with the footwork hint. People weren't understanding the cultural references of anything – they were just purely ripping a drumbeat. I think everything we do with Bala Club is heartfelt and sincere. It's never ironic. That's 100% what we are into. I'm interested in what a London sound is like. And that's interesting because London is the most multicultural place on earth. You have friends from all around the world constantly around you. They influence you and you want to make music that reflects that, rather than trying to block it out and trying to do what is expected.

ZKS *Do you see the use of dembow rhythms and similar reference points as something new in the electronic music continuum / in electronic music?*

EG What's really interesting and lucky about it is that there isn't really a scene for it. As soon as there is a scene and a name for it and a thing that you can pinpoint, it takes the energy out. But there are a few people who are starting to work with similar stuff – Moro from Argentina, for instance. Or the Flex style from New York, which has been a massive inspiration to me. And there are all those crazy things from Lisbon and

Endgame. Photo promo.

the suburbs of Paris. Those are their own things as well. You hear something like that and think, »that's next level and I need that.« It's really emotional music. The way they write melodies reminds me of how people used to write grime melodies back in the day – they're raw, claustrophobic and melancholic.

ZKS *»Deconstructing« or »experimental« are key words connected to reviews of your music. Do you see yourself as an experimental artist? Or what do you see as the central focus or feature of your work?*

EG I don't know, actually. I wouldn't say that the music is very experimental in terms of its structure – in that way it's kind of basic. I guess it's only experimental in its approach and points of reference. But I wouldn't say it's musically experimental. One thing that's consistent through what I do is my work with vocalists who are unexpected and unusual, like Uli K, Organ Tapes and Rules. They are all similar in having a wide pool of reference and never trying to be just one thing.

ZKS *Do you speak Spanish or Portuguese?*

EG I've never spoken Spanish. In a weird way, though, I also have no clue what Young Thug is saying but I still fuck with it. The emotion comes from somewhere else. Even before you hear his lyrics you get what he's saying. It's the same with Organ Tapes: you barely understand a word he's saying, but you don't really need to. I don't want to sound pretentious, but lyrics are only really needed once you understand the music. Listen to any hardcore group. I want music to move people without them having to think about it too much, or to deconstruct it. It feels so relevant now: the new generation of rappers are taking this to new extremes, being really experimental with vocals, almost saying nothing in terms of actual lyrical content but saying so much musically.

ZKS *It's interesting that emotion seems to be quite important to you. Some people might just understand your music as functional club music.*

EG I grew up with dance music but also with emo, hardcore – stuff that is cathartic, I guess. And that's what I'm into. The thing is that I never want it to be boring. The worst thing would be if someone were to listen to my music and just be indifferent. I'd so much rather that they hate it. And emotions are what make it real, made by a person rather than a machine. I'm not interested in a Kraftwerk approach. I want to be vulnerable and as human as possible. It definitely helps to work with a vocalist to achieve that, but that's also what I'm trying to get at with instrumentals – sometimes successfully, sometimes not. Kid D, a grime producer who's kind of been forgotten, wrote stuff where you understand what he was thinking…or Burial. It's about using electronic tools to convey something human.

This interview was originally published in ZWEIKOMMASIEBEN #14. The Swiss magazine is devoted to documenting contemporary club- and sound landscapes. The collective around it also organises concerts, club nights, matinees, raves and other fun events throughout Europe.
» www.zweikommasieben.ch

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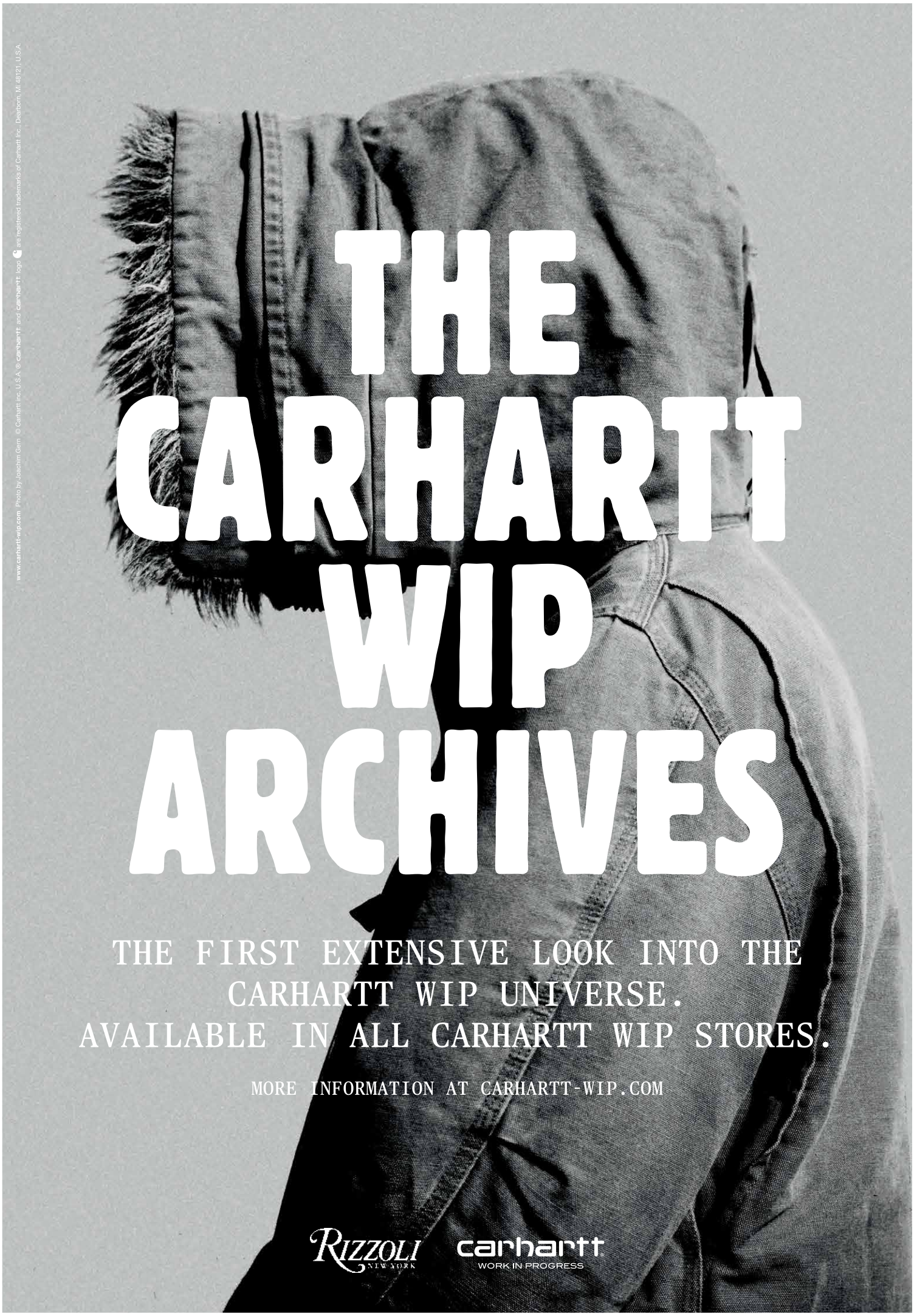


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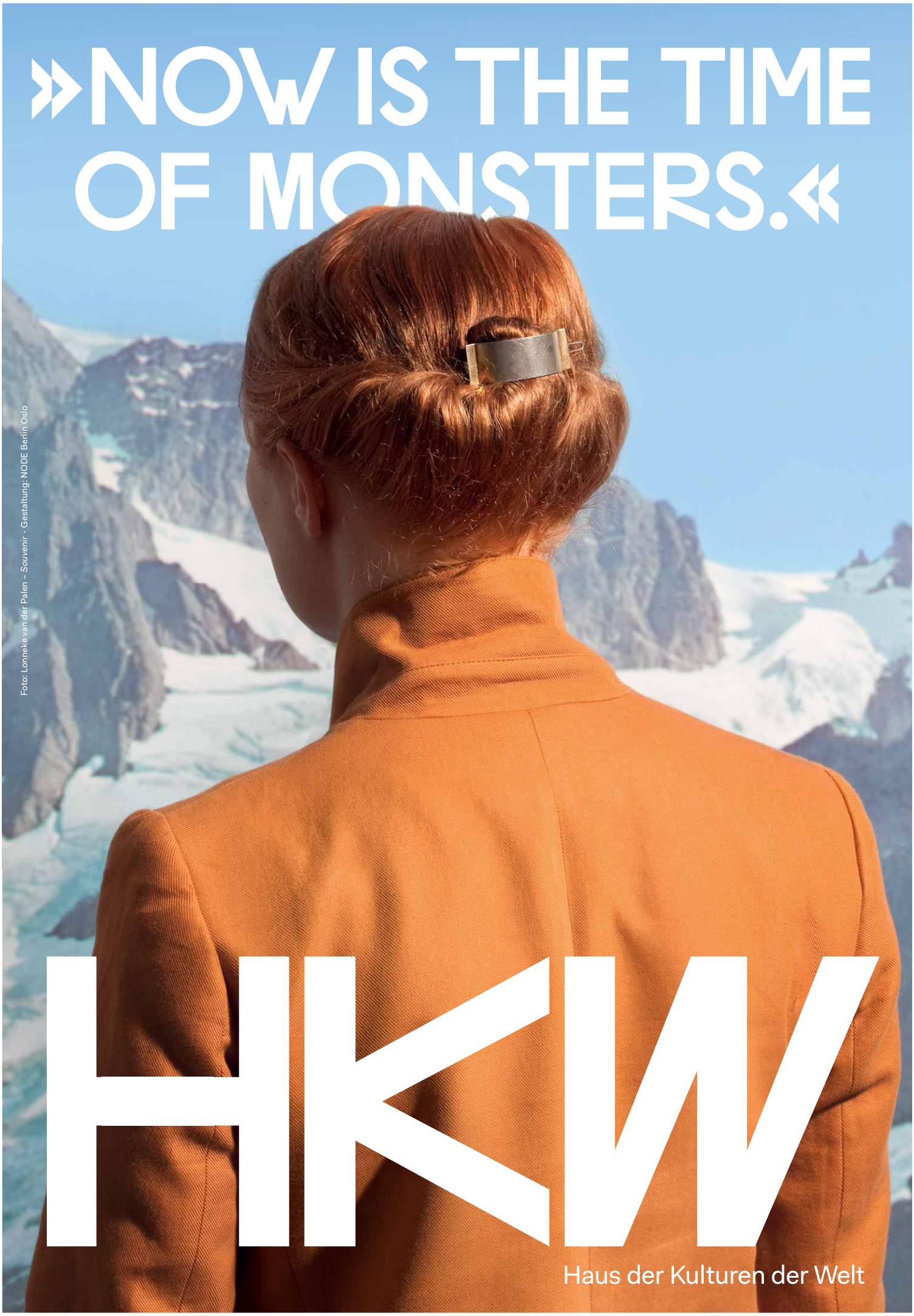
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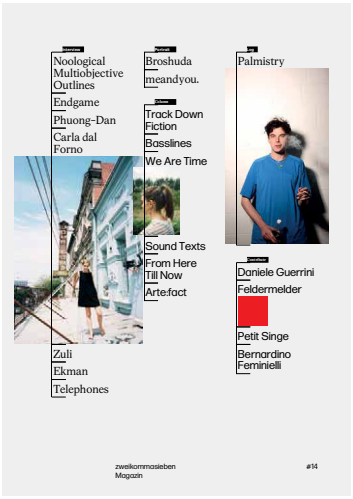

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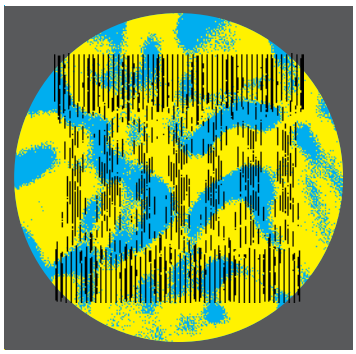
P.Noir — *f 109*



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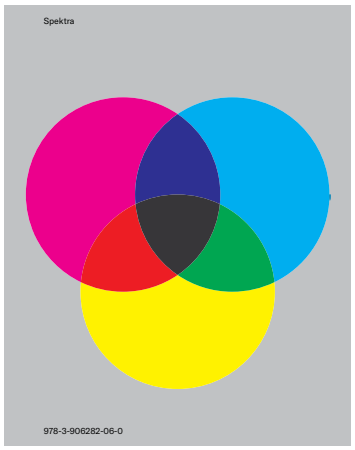
Spektra



A research journal, tool and object by Dorothee Dähler and Kaj Lehmann. Parts of this publication are printed with invisible [!!] colors that glow under UV light.

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