

sonic process

A new
geography
of **sounds**



4 May - 30 June 2002

Extendet until september 1, 2002



This exhibition has been conceived
and organised by the

 **Centre
Pompidou**

Musée national d'art moderne (Paris)
and produced in collaboration with the MACBA

PRESS RELEASE

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Extendet until september 1, 2002

- Inauguration: Friday 3 May, 7.30 p.m.
- Exhibition dates: from 4 May to 30 June 2002
- Curator: Christine Van Assche
- Conceived and produced by the Centre Georges Pompidou, Musée national d'art moderne de Paris and held in collaboration with the Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona

Martí Guixé; Mike Kelley and Scanner; Doug Aitken; David Shea; Gabriel Orozco, Richard Dorfmeister and Rupert Huber; Coldcut and Headspace; Flow Motion; Renée Green; Mathieu Briand.

Sonic Process. A New Geography of Sounds is making its international début presentation at the MACBA accompanied by an ample schedule of activities. The exhibition in Barcelona is part of the FESTIVAL SONAR programm (Barcelona, June 13-15, 2002).

SONIC PROCESS. A New Geography of Sounds is sponsored in Barcelona by



Sonic Process. A New Geography of Sounds presents an approach to the electronic musical creation of the last ten years from the perspective of its hybridisation with methodologies of the visual arts. Traditionally art history has made a clear separation between the visual arts and music. However, in recent years the value of the notion of process in creation has been increasingly emphasised and the sound factor has taken on greater importance, spontaneously incorporating itself into artistic ideas based on the image, and giving way to a hybridisation of certain musical and visual procedures.

Moreover substantial changes have taken place in the mechanisms of musical production and distribution. The widespread use of internet and the accessibility of computer home production resources through cd are highly influential factors in those changes. In that way circuits parallel to the distribution networks of the big record companies have been opened up, allowing electronic musicians to maintain relative independence from the hegemonic commercial culture through alternative networks of production and distribution.

Those new methodologies correspond to the new conditions of virtual work which are typical of the post-modern economy, in which aspects connected with communication and socialisation prevail over the purely productive ones, which are typical both of the modern industrial economy and of an artistic activity based on the production of independent object works. Moreover, the work methods and public exposure of music have become paradigmatic for the new artistic processes, in which notions of entertainment and performance are central. Those new processes involve a redefinition of the figures of author and audience, and consumer culture and the new processes of construction of social identity are fundamental elements in shaping them.

Sonic Process is laid out in **three different sectors**, whose specific natures will provide visitors with different experiences. The **first sector** is the exhibition in itself, which deals with the relation between image and electronic sound through a set of eight audiovisual installations done specially for the occasion. The show takes the form of a narrative itinerary which, by means of *sampling*, underlines breaks and continuities between image and sound at the present cultural moment.

The **second sector** is a data base which can be consulted at the installation *Data Square / MPTree*, by the designer Martí Guixé, a space that acts as an

introduction to the exhibition and a reading, listening and document room on the problems tackled by *Sonic Process*.

Internet implicitly becomes the **third sector** of the exhibition: a public space of non-linear relations, which grow exponentially and end up blurring any preconceived geography of aesthetics.

www.sonic-process.org

www.macba.es/proces-sonic.html

Martí Guixé, *MPTree*

This installation, which is presented in the space *Data Square*, offers consultations of various kinds (cd, web pages, videos) which extend the exhibition with other works that show that the “centres” of musical creation are not the same as those of the visual arts. Some cities –such as Kingston, Detroit, Sheffield, Brussels, Manchester, Marseille and Nantes– and the routes generated between them alter the conception of centre-periphery which characterises other forms of artistic expression. Electronic music is undergoing a process of wide diversification in the youth subculture environment; around it, in the dance and club cultures and underground groups, a series of symbolic and aesthetic codes have emerged and are analysed at this exhibition from different perspectives.

Mike Kelley and Scanner

Esprits de Paris is the result of a series of recordings of visual and sound environments done in different parts of Paris. The recordings, made at places to which supposedly supernatural characteristics have been attributed, are presented as documentary records, while images recorded at a club full of people dancing are projected. In this work, sound experimentation is combined with an application of the method which Burroughs, in his work *The Invisible Generation*, describes as “the control machine”.

Doug Aitken

In *new skin* the sound slowly takes over the centre of attention from the light. Speculation on the possible mutations which can be structured between light and sound provides the conceptual framework for a work that highlights the psychological component of the spatial experience. At this audiovisual installation the viewer comes up against the metamorphic processes that take place between the different projected images Aitken has recorded for the exhibition and the soundtrack, which is outstanding for its high artistic quality. The artist has worked with sightless people to structure a dark space where the experience of the void is gradually transformed into an approach to the scenes projected.

David Shea

In *Sound Film in Eight Scenes* the space is conceived as a cinema devoted to the sound experience. Shea has composed the eight acts of his piece based on experiments suggested by different sources which allude to musical traditions. The central idea of the work is to explore the interconnections between sound and image generated by music in itself, and a kind of sound and vision show has been produced for the purpose. In this process Shea isolates elements originally belonging to more extensive cinematic narratives: text, everyday sounds, musical styles, emblematic figures and cinematic references.

Gabriel Orozco, Richard Dorfmeister and Rupert Huber

The origin of *Sophiensäle Wien, Mai 1999* goes back to two concerts given in May 1999 at the Sophiensäle in Vienna as part of the Wiener Festwochen Festival. The artist Gabriel Orozco was in charge of the visual part and created a collage of some four hundred slides which were projected while the Tosca musicians –Dorfmeister and Huber– took care of the turntable and the piano respectively. Rupert Huber has restructured the recording of that performance and produced a mix with other works by Tosca.

Coldcut / Headspace

Gridio is the result of a collaboration between the members of the London group Coldcut and the Brighton group Headspace. It is an audiovisual environment which provides the viewer with an opportunity to contribute to the sound and vision projection of different collages. By pressing a system of interactive cells in the floor of the installation as he walks over them, and thanks to the Vjamm programme produced by the two groups, the visitor triggers the audiovisual device.

Flow Motion

Ghost Dance is a complex exploration of the spectral sounds generated by electronic music made by black musicians, mixed with the real sounds of the museum relayed live. As Kodwo Eshun points out, the central idea of this installation is to make palpable the boundaries of real and representational space between phonography and its imaginary representation, between the spectral dimension and its acoustic representation, between presence and absence.

Renée Green

WaveLinks, Renée Green's contribution to this exhibition at MACBA, is a documentary presentation of a detailed examination of the history and mythology of electronic music which she herself has carried out through conversations with musicians, directors of independent record labels and music theoreticians, such as Diedrich Diederichsen, Mika Vainio, Dorder Sounds, Christian Marclay, Electric Indigo and Ultra Red. Structured as a videographic production, *WaveLinks* investigates the relations and conditions of the medium, its individual voices, its memories and the audiovisual ocean it generates.

Mathieu Briand

[SYS*11. Mie@AbE/SoS\SYS*10. MeE/Sos\BoS] is a circular space designed for simultaneous musical listening and action where, during the exhibition, a series of performances and concerts will be held. For his part, Briand uses it to experiment with the potential of ephemeral sounds and the accumulation and archive of actions. The visitors have access to a master composed of

vinyl discs on which the audience can record electronic sounds and samples in a loop system.

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Activities around the exhibition

⇒ Round table

Saturday 4 May, at 6 pm

With Christine Van Assche and some of the artists taking part in the show, such as Gabriel Orozco, Rupert Huber (Tosca), Jonathan More and Matt Black (Coldcut). Auditorium.

⇒ Performance

Saturday 4 May, at 8.30 pm

With David Shea.

Exhibition rooms.

Limited number of seats.

⇒ Workshop

Clariaudiènces

From 6 May to 8 June

Directed by V'ctor Nubla, with debates and performances open to the public.

⇒ Video programme

Good vibes. Resistance policies and musical cultures

Screenings: Mondays at 7 pm, until 17 June

Auditorium. Limited number of seats.

www.macba.es/bonrotllo.html

⇒ Sonar Complex 2002

13, 14 and 15 June 2002

www.sonar.es

⇒ Procés Sònic Lounge

23 May, and 6, 20 and 27 June 2002, at 00.00

Live. La Paloma



Some Essays from the Book SONIC PROCESS

Sonic Process. A new geography of sounds

Christine Van Assche

“Art is defined in keeping with a future to be constructed; it joins forces with all the utopias of transformation.” Jacques Rancière¹

“Between a simple acoustic recording using a single microphone at the beginning of the century, and the subtleties of digital reproduction today, there is a world of difference, both technically and artistically.”
Gérard Genette²

Exhibiting sound

Eleven years after the *Passage de l'image* exhibition, organized and put on in Paris and Barcelona,³ with the objective of looking at the relations between the cinema and other visual arts (relations which would be re-examined in a number of other exhibitions), we have now decided to examine electronic music creation from the past ten years and its relationship to the visual arts.

The 1970s bore witness to numerous musical performances, given by such musicians as Laurie Anderson, Tony Conrad, La Monte Young, Terry Riley and others, as well as to countless sound experiments done by such poets as William Burroughs, John Giorno, Brian Gysin, Patti Smith – to quote a few. Though it flirted conceptually with the visual arts, this sound-based expression never found its place in a museum.

Indeed, by tradition, art history distinctly separates the analysis of these two disciplines: visual arts and music. Naturally enough, museology has integrated this scission. It was not until the advent of cinema (with its soundtrack), and especially video, which integrated sound and music as components intrinsic to the work itself, that museums raised the question as to the place of sound in the multiple realms of creation.

One should not hesitate to bear in mind that this “music” from the 1970s, being very close to performance art and minimal or conceptual installations, was at the time only played in parallel festivals, in certain alternative spaces or in the homes of the artists themselves. It was afforded no “official” status or recognition. It is only recently that certain exhibitions, *Les Immatériaux* (1985), *Hors Limites* (1994) at the Centre Pompidou in Paris, *Out of Actions* (1998) at the MOCA in Los Angeles, *Crossing* (1998) at the Kunsthalle in Vienna, *Minimalismos* (2001) at the Centro Reina Sofia in Madrid, *010101. Art in Technological Times* (2001) at the SFMOMA in San Francisco, have integrated musical or sound works into their multidisciplinary approaches.

Several exhibitions, more specifically focused on the realm of sound, were nevertheless held in museums over the past several years, including *Voices* (1998), at the Witte de With in Rotterdam, *Lost in Sound* (1999) at the Centro Galego de Arte Contemporánea in Santiago de Compostela, *Sound and Files* (2000) at the Kunstlerhaus in Vienna, *Sonic Boom* (2000) at the Hayward Gallery in London, *Sound Art – Sound as Media* (2000) at NTT/ICC in Tokyo, and *Bed of Sound* at PS1 in New York (2000). Annual festivals have been established: Ars Electronica in Linz, Sonar in Barcelona, Nouvelles scènes in Dijon, while certain other sites have devoted programming to sound-related events: Confort Moderne in Poitiers, Noise Museum in Nevers, Podewil in Berlin, and so on.

These different events, each time more numerous, bear witness to the construction of an electronic (sound-based and musical) culture over the course of the past fifteen years. Today, this culture is gaining momentum, as a result of the interest of creators, producers and listeners for the creative potential of the electronic sphere. Conferences, symposiums, meetings of musicians and critics – primarily in the English-speaking countries – have accompanied these events. “In many respects”, Jean-Luc Nancy recently pointed out, “music is probably the art practice which, over the past century, has undergone the most significant technical transformations – both from the perspective of its devices and its internal materials (its sound values as a whole), and from the perspective of its means of reproduction, amplification, propagation, which have also become, through electronics, means of creation, and of which the word “synthesizer” may be seen as a sort of emblem. At the same time, and along a path rich in consequences [...], the social and cultural conditions of musicality as a whole have changed.”⁴

On that basis, and beyond the misgivings expressed in the article “An Academic Cut-Up” by Mike Kelley regarding the museum’s ill-adaptation to any “exhibition” of music,⁵ it struck us as important to present today – if only to assert the federating concepts – within the framework of a museum and an exhibition, musical and sound-related research stemming, on the one hand, from specific inventions dating from the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries, such as the laptop computer, Internet databanks, the sequencer, MP3, M.I.D.I., the home studio, and on the other hand, linked to new attitudes such as nomadism, “frequent flyer” programs, Internet communications, computer sampling, and so on.

The word “sonic”, which appears in the exhibition’s title, covers the research carried out either in a purely sound-based realm, or in the field of musical experimentation. The association of the two terms “sound” and “musical” stems from the desire to go beyond the borders of these realms, to better grasp the creative flux.

Given the profusion of creation in the field of electronic music, the objective of the exhibition *Sonic Process* is obviously not to provide an exhaustive presentation of the (constantly shifting) tendencies and ramifications of the past few years.⁶ It is not certain that it would even be possible to do so in the necessarily restricted framework of an exhibition. For similar reasons, it was not conceivable to explore all the continents and all the sites of creation.

Hence, it was a subjective choice that guided this event toward computer-generated music and sounds – generated principally by small computers (equipped with sequencer-type software) – enabling experimentation with parameters linked to rhythm and flux. The project took shape around a selection of works which recycle material stemming from the recent history of music, thus having to do with memory. It might initially seem paradoxical to bring computer-conceived works into relation with the work of memory, but the methodology used by the musicians is based upon the appropriation of existent sounds, their repetition, juxtaposition,

layering – operations which are all made possible by computer techniques (pasting, cutting, flowing and so on). Even if the practices of collage, cut-up and appropriation are commonplace in the realm of art, computer technology reactivates them by giving them new meaning.

This aesthetic thus offers an extremely contemporary vision of the world using data related to the recent history of musical creation, and is based upon certain tendencies connected to such shifting categories as drum'n bass, ambient, post-dub, jungle, and electronica...⁷

Also included in our selection are forms of music characterized by cultural cross-over. It was already known that music, more than any other artistic form, has chosen integration as a way of rethinking, reinventing and remixing creations stemming from different cultures, origins and continents. This is the case for jazz, funk and world music, amongst others; in this regard, amongst the inventors of modernity, one might mention John Cage, Pierre Henry, La Monte Young, Pierre Schaeffer, Karl Stockhausen, Edgar Varèse...

Internet, that infinite space of cultural connections, must also be henceforth added to the list. Artists' sites are cropping up everywhere, making it possible to follow the development of their research, thereby enriching the work of the whole creative community through information flux and data exchange. The world of the Internet thus confronts us with a highly "rhizomorphic" vision of aesthetics and a "deterritorialisation" of our aesthetic-geographic knowledge.

Processes

Processes of creation are obviously dependent on the information that musicians glean from the Internet, but also on the small machines and software available on the market (G4, sequencers, MP3, M.I.D.I., audio-numeric cards and so on). The latest generation of computers and software has now made it easy for the musician to record, create, produce and edit music alone, in his or her own home studio.

There is no doubt whatsoever that the extraordinary take-off of electronic music was provoked by factors similar to those Jean-Yves Bosseur set out to identify for electroacoustic music, that is, "the proliferation of production units facilitated by the development of more accessible and mobile technologies, able to respond to the most diversified aesthetic aspirations: the aspiration to work directly on sound material without necessarily having to withstand the test of writing or depending upon the constraints of instrumental performance; the passion for practical information and the extensions it supposes with regard to the use of synthesizers."⁸

On the other hand, it is not rare to discover certain musicians inventing their own tools: Robin Rimbaud, a.k.a. Scanner, developed the so-called "Scanner" microprocessor "making it possible to go into an intimate and vulnerable space, without being either seen or known, with the objective of finding very clear sounds and signals, recording voices, choosing samples, fragments of atmospheric frequencies, as well as radios."⁹ Musicians like Matt Black and Jonathan Moore from Coldcut, meanwhile, have come up with their own software – called "Vjamm" – which enables the identical treatment, on the basis of the same flux, of sounds and images; a software, which, during the exhibition, will be made available to the public, along with a databank made up of the musicians' archives.

Rather than leaving us indifferent, relations between visual and sound processes have gripped our attention all the more so that portable computers and their software now generate images

and sounds conceived according to the same criteria. “What you see is what you hear”, assert Jonathan Moore and Matt Black. Yet, as Jean-Luc Nancy has pointed out, “it would be captivating to study the differences and similarities between ‘musical’ synthesis and visual ‘synthesis’: how the latter refers more obviously, at least at first glance, to the re-composing of pre-given forms, whereas the former seems more to extract new ore from its machines.”¹⁰

Production processes refer back to the artist as such. Not only does the artist himself focus on creating his work, but also producing and distributing it, as opposed to most filmmakers and video artists, who have to resort to producers, or to classical and rock / pop musicians, who also turn to intermediaries to produce and distribute them. The electronic musician thereby preserves his autonomy with respect to economic systems.

Distribution processes take a variety of paths. First of all, the performance; or musical creation in the presence of the public. One should bear in mind the connections which were established, in the 1970s, between music and the visual arts. Obviously there is little apparent aesthetic complicity between Glenn Branca, Allan Kaprow, La Monte Young, Alvin Lucier, Meredith Monk, Charlemagne Palestine, Steve Reich, Terry Riley or even John Zorn, and electronic music. Yet one of the things these artists have in common with the musicians of today – and this is something which is of interest to us here – is the desire to address a public, to have contact with listeners, to be receptive to sensitive feedback.

For contemporary electronic musicians, live performances remain a preferred form of distribution. However, they are by no means tempted by the spectacular aspect of performance art. They seek out neither stages nor theatrical lighting. The cult of the star that one comes across in pop and rock culture is unknown in this domain. Andy Warhol has no acolytes amongst electronic musicians.

Looking at distribution processes leads us to reflect on the possibilities for exchanges and distribution over the Internet. “The personal computer’s Internet connection splits open the walls of the home studio ever wider. For a long time now, musicians have gotten used to downloading both tones and cutting-edge software from the web, as Bruno Heuzé has pointed out.¹¹ To be permanently in contact with movement, change, shift and transformation via the web can scarcely fail to influence the processes of creation.

Another important factor is the distribution by means of cds – a multiple that can be listened to everywhere and can be cut at home. With electronic music, the artwork moves from the era of mechanical or “technical reproducibility” to the era of digital hyper-reproducibility – to an extent that even Benjamin himself might not have dared to imagine. Henceforth, there is no longer any question of an original. Everything takes place through duplication. The computer and the network have merely accelerated a process that has been underway for some fifty years.

The opportunities for cutting cds and digital diskettes, and the ease with which distribution over the web is possible, has enabled creators to elude the traditional circuits of publishing companies. Artists are able to create their own labels. Thus, Scanner and David Shea launched Sulfur, Coldcut launched Ninja Tune, Carsten Nicolai Raster-Noton, and so on. These micro businesses eliminate commercial distribution circuits just as they distance them from the subtle and restrictive visual-arts markets.

Geography of *Sonic Process*

This project was initially to have covered the musical creation of the entire world. But was it not utopian to want to grasp creation as a whole? All the more so that, in the initial phases of research, it became obvious that merely listening to a cd over the Internet would not suffice for the preparation of an event of this kind. An inquiry had to be carried out on the locations of creation and distribution. With one crucial observation: the music “centers” are not the same as those of the visual arts. Hence the need to draw up a new international topography of creation. A cartography emerged, highlighting trajectories: Berlin/London, Kingston/Detroit/London, Vienna/New York, Mexico, Brussels/Sheffield; as well as cities such as Marseilles, Nantes, Manchester and Porto.

The exhibition

It might seem unusual to put together an exhibition of sound works – even if the exhibitions mentioned above already raised the issue, though without totally resolving it. *Sonic Process* is thus conceived as a further attempt in this direction, drawing upon others’ experiences in the past.

Musicians and visual artists were offered spaces to present works in the form of installations. Databanks have been used to broaden and bring up to date this first selection by making some hundred extra titles available.

The invited artists were thus provided with a physical space, comprised of a certain number of square meters. Certain musicians chose to team up with visual artists for a collective creation, obliging the organizers to adapt to the production processes in order to transpose into a physical space what is usually expressed through performance. Moreover, the exhibition of sound works runs up against museology. For the museum still remains a site principally conceived for the hanging of two- or three-dimensional visual works.

The project’s acoustic architecture consists of inventing solutions enabling the best possible listening conditions as well as the most adequate phonic insulation, in order to foster the concentration and comfort needed for listening. The museological objective thus lies in recreating the best model ever conceived for listening to sound: the sound studio. The circulation and placement of the works with respect to one another was governed by functional questions alone. Under such circumstances, it was not conceivable to imagine a conceptual trajectory the way curators are accustomed to doing.

A second set of spaces offers a consultation of multiples (cds, sites, video tapes) drawing upon a dozen databanks (*Data Square/Mptree*). These make it possible to broaden the concept of the exhibition to other works, other aesthetics, other territories and geographies.

However, the question of presentation arises once again. Although several artists have given it thought (Dan Graham, Vito Acconci, as well as Angela Bulloch, Johan Grimonprez, Douglas Gordon, to mention only a few), museums have nevertheless not yet managed to put together a museology of presentation perfectly adequate to these types of products. Artist-designer Marti Guixé has conceived a configuration of spaces, warmly incorporating the technologies which make it possible to consult these many works in optimized visual and sound-sensitive comfort.

A third type of space contains the website (an information, documentation and current-events site).

Lastly, a series of concerts and performances by the musicians involved reconsiders the relations with the public.

The sound work: status, aesthetics, audience

The objective of this project is not to present at all costs “art objects” that the historian could fit into a continuity. Contrary to the exhibition *Crossings* (in Vienna), which proposed the traces of sound or musical performances, or *Sonic Boom* (in London), which sought to provide visual and sound-based “installation sculptures”, the sound installation in *Sonic Process* is presented in its performative and inevitably changing form, at the risk of the artwork losing its limits, as certain critics fear. It remains that there is still no common understanding as to the definition of these limits or of their temporality. Does the provisional character of electronic compositions, inasmuch as they are subject to permanent enrichment, throw their existence into question? Notwithstanding this permanent question, and despite the pressure of current aesthetic trends, *Sonic Process* presents several artistic-project models. In the 1970s, visual and sound performances were not inscribed in a memory process. Numerous performances by Tony Conrad, La Monte Young, Alvin Lucier, Charlemagne Palestine, Nam June Paik, and so on were never done with the intention of being recorded and preserved. They only existed at the time of the action itself. In the current decade, these works have sought out a new status, notably on the basis of their displacement, their shifting state, and their metamorphosis in space and time.

In a recently published book, *Écoute. Une histoire de nos oreilles*, the author, Peter Szendy, points out that the paradigms of listening and of the listener are important for the author/artist.¹² The work is able to exist for certain musicians only in permanent confrontation with a public. Thus, David Shea, who spent a year developing the creation software *2001 – A Soundfilm in Eight Acts*, will continue, throughout the exhibition, to modify the different parameters of his work, either over the web, or through his active presence on the exhibition sites. In the same way, Flow Motion’s installation, *Ghost Dance*, will be permanently reinvented through the interference between the surrounding sounds (four microphones placed at the four cardinal point of the building) and a specially prerecorded creation. “The death of the author,” writes Ulf Poschardt, “coincides with the resurrection of the reader; transferred into music, the death of the composer coincides with the resurrection of the listener. [...] The Barthesian reader is not a person in possession of a history, a biography, a psychology. He is merely the being who accumulates in himself all the voices and tracks which constitutes the text.”¹³ Mathieu Briand, on the other hand, has conceived for *Sonic Process* a space to present his own work and the permanent remix and recording, by the public, of pieces to be cut onto; a permanent confrontation between an old support – vinyl – and an attitude of today – the mix – is thus created in this space. Briand’s work emphasizes the importance of the vinyl support for independent musicians – an importance that sociologist Gérome Guibert accounts for as follows: “Vinyl is an active gesture against the race for the perfect sound, in other words, for the clinical and soulless sound. Contrary to the laser recording, vinyl is a living object, whose wear – through crackles – is personalized.... It is not dead because of the activism of the independent labels.”¹⁴

Shared sources

It is not rare that the electronic musician borrows bits and pieces from his peers and draws upon archives that are now available to all. The issue here is not, as in the visual arts, appropriation or ironic misappropriation. This way of working – which differs from collage, or from ironic visual quotation in the cinema and the visual arts, collage and cut-up in literature, the use of found footage in experimental cinema – reveals growing interest amongst artists for the re-conceptualization of material, upon which the world of creation has already conferred meaning. It is not an aesthetics of recuperation or a poor man's art, but a prospective procedure. Michel Chion, in an essay devoted to electro-acoustic music, published in 1982,¹⁵ refers to this process by listing off the manipulations carried out by the composer on his source material: visible or invisible editing, looping, reverse playback, changing speed, frequency modulation, reverberation, echo, layering, mixing, spatialization – an inventory to which we can add other more contemporary notions such as sampling, breaks (and other perturbations) in rhythm, frequency filtering, repetition, mix or remix, equalization, distortion, amongst others.

Theory / catalogue

To accompany the work of musicians and creation processes, it seems indispensable to discern the field of electronic music in theoretical terms. The latter has another acoustic dimension which links it neither to electro-acoustic music nor to concrete and electro-instrumental music. Computer technologies opened up new territories. As Diedrich Diederichsen has argued, the recordings are neither tonal nor atonal: "A considerable quantity of 'fractal' notes are recuperated in the 'intervals' of the notes themselves, which, far from disappearing into an infinite chaos of possible combinations, establish new rules on a case by case basis, thus disclosing to the listener the extent to which they elude any sort of musicological classification."¹⁶

In France, it was in journals such as *Nomand's Land* and *Octopus*, during the 1990s, in the debates organized by Confort Moderne in Poitiers in January 1998,¹⁷ the special issues of *Art Press* devoted, respectively, to "Techno, anatomy of electronic cultures,"¹⁸ and to "Territories of hip-hop,"¹⁹ which made it possible to become more familiar with the theories of (or related to) electronic music. Nevertheless, despite these early disclosures, French researchers and critics took very little interest in the theoretical territories linked to the musical models of today, leaving it to their counterparts in the English- and German-speaking worlds the task of defining a model based on the humanities, philosophy and music criticism. Diedrich Diederichsen, Kodwo Eshun, Ulf Poschardt, Peter Shapiro and David Toop are the indisputable historians and critics in the field, supported in their task by the English journal *The Wire*, which took a very early interest in electronic music, and organized debates in London and elsewhere (Sonar in Barcelona, for instance). The same goes for the German journal *De: Bug*, which enabled an in-depth approach both to German and international events.

Forgive us for not mentioning here in a more exhaustive way the events, debates and workshops which have been held in Germany (Make it funky), in Belgium (amongst others, thanks to the Incident and Constant organizations), in Italy (thanks to Link), in Great Britain in the framework of various festivals or organized by the ICA in London, and so on, as well as in the Nordic countries.

This work does not tackle head-on the aesthetic issues linked to these creations, but deals rather with how they fit into our era. Thus, it looks into questions related to context, to the status of the work and the author, the economy of the field, production processes, as well as questions concerning crossovers between the visual arts and electronic music. The various authors' contributions form a sort of cartography of electronic music, sketching out the political, economic, anthropological trajectories, respecting aesthetic and creative flux...

The analysis of electronic music both through its history, its social context, and its otherness as well as in terms of its instruments and supports, constitutes the backbone of the work, which thereby seeks to account for the new conditions of production and distribution which appeared in this domain toward the end of the twentieth century.

Similarly, it seemed indispensable to offer the reader a (non exhaustive) inventory of the terms (along with their meanings) supposed to characterize the many and varied aspects of this shifting terrain which is electronic music. However, because most of the musical movements are in perpetual evolution, and subject to forms of recycling, scission, revival, remixing, the glossary makes no claim to anything but shedding light on the state of this music at a given moment of its relatively youthful history.

Lastly, as the history is still ongoing, we did not seek to assign any "father figure" to electronic music. We have worked with the present situation and will leave it to future projects to inscribe this music into broader historical perspectives. We have observed tendencies, sought to capture shifts, grasp a certain memorization of the world in an era of hyper-reproducibility and the globalization of exchange.

Christine Van Assche

Notes

1. Jacques Rancière. Lecture given at the Louvre, Paris, 28 January 2001.
2. Gérard Genette. *The Work of Art: Immanence and Transcendence*. Translated by G. M. Goshgarian. Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997.
3. Exhibition *Passages de l'image*. Paris: Centre Pompidou, Galeries Sud, September - November 1990.
4. Jean-Luc Nancy. "Ascoltando", preface to Peter Szendy, *Écoute, une histoire de nos oreilles*. Paris: Les Éditions de Minuit, 2001.
5. Mike Kelley. "An Academical Cut-Up". *Sonic Process*. Paris: Éditions du Centre Pompidou, 2002.
6. See the glossary in this catalogue, where these various tendencies are mentioned. Other future events will deal with industrial, garage, house, dance and noise music, along with their numerous rhizomes.
7. It would, however, be interesting to pursue this event through a series of other projects, presenting such other tendencies as minimal electronic music.
8. Jean-Yves Bosseur. "Quelles musiques contemporaines?" *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, "À quoi sert la musique contemporaine", January 2001.
9. Peter Shapiro. *Modulations*. New York: Caipirinha Productions, 2000.

10. J.-L. Nancy. "Ascoltando". *Op. cit.*
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Metamorphosis of the muses

Jacques Rancière

Rectangles and mazes filled with loudspeakers and screens. These are above all sculptural objects architecting and sculpting a space. They are also instruments for the production of images and sounds, surfaces for their dissemination, but also metaphorisations of the activity that produces them, of the meaning of this activity and its way of world-making. On these surfaces, in these volumes, bits and pieces of story are created and undone, engendered by sounds, programmed by computers, triggered by select participants or by the footsteps of passers-by as they move about through a squared-off area. Abstract lines or excerpts from films, images of opera choruses or bus routes, advertising jingles or shots on goal flash by on the screens. Sounds of water engender desert images, symphonic flights of fancy transfigure scenes of everyday life. The screen sometimes goes black to attest to music's power to create images all on its own. Conversely, the tricks of sound dissolve into the projection of light – asserting itself as if it alone generated the visible. These metamorphoses of the sound-image – inasmuch as they tend to identify with the very processes of the production of all seen and heard stories – themselves lead back toward two great narratives, two large demonstrations of metamorphic power. On one of the installation's coupled-up screens, two stories face one another, as if revealing the truth of all the others: on one side is a cloud of immaterial matter, where light and sound dissolve into their primal unity; on the other, images of DJ's at work or of spinning turntables. Two great metaphors of aesthetic ultima ratio: on one hand, the immaterial luminous-sound material in movement, which, within its eternal desirelessness, engenders all form and all melody. On the other, the activity of sovereign artistic will, which grabs hold of all matter, form or technique, which makes art with the noises and silences of the world, with the voices on the radio or the TV and advertising jingles as well as with all recorded and remixed music, from Bach to Michael Jackson, Balian gamelans and Senegalese drums to electronically produced sounds, which for that purpose make use of the computer's silent calculations like the scratching of the needle on the record-player or the crackling sounds of the amplifier. This double game of spiritualised matter and of sovereign manipulation splits the exhibition space in two. It makes it at once into a closed room, where art can exhibit the contradiction of its principle, and a space shot through by the voices of elsewhere – reconfigured by their noise. Indeed, the sound device which constructs a closed-off space by reproducing all forms of music – including that made up of the conditions of its production and distribution – thereby opening up to voices and sounds on the outside: both the noise of the world that surrounds the museum and – or so we are assured – the voices of the dead, recorded in cemeteries.

Let us leave the ghosts aside for the time being. They have a well-known penchant for becoming talkative whenever the inventions of technique propose new means of exploration of an unknown world and a poetics of remythologisation of the world as a substitute for revolutionary nostalgia, and as a supplement to the rationality governing the exchange of commodities, opinions and leisure. Let us concentrate, rather, on what is behind the encounter

of electronic sound and images, just as in the early years of the phonograph and the cinema, of radiology and the telephone. The voices of ghosts metonymise the device by which the sound and the image are doubly united: through their common dissolution in a cloud of matter similar to that of the spirit, and, conversely, through the collection of voices and recorded sounds, constantly augmented and made available for an infinite number of transformations, in the same way that unusable commodities such as visual artworks, street posters and shop signs have, for a long time now, been brought down to the common identity of fragments available for any new art arrangement. The fusion of sound and image in a single and, at once open and closed space, also has to do with the equality between art and non-art: artistic sovereignty competes with infinite reproduction; just as computer operations compete with the rhythm of ancestral gongs and the grating of the mechanical tool; just as the manipulation of microphones compete with the evocation of the dead; social critique with board games; and the recycling of fragments and waste with loss in the great primordial ocean.

In all of this, some will perceive a new age of art – critical and egalitarian – deposing not only the hierarchies of the visible and the audible, music and noise, but also those of production and consumption, artistic creation and mechanical reproduction. The circulation between the high and the low, the old and the new, the inside and the outside, composes for them the figure of a critical art, reconsidering – with the laws of property – all the signs and messages in which art, business and domination merge and disband. Unless it draws up a new geography, a figure of the “fourth world,” erasing the economic and geopolitical divisions of wealth and domination. Others, however, will deplore the triumph of an art which has become similar to its opposite, rejecting all materials and techniques through which each art asserted its difference from the commodities and signs of business, and has ended up blending into a common undifferentiated sensorium. The fusion of the inside and outside, sound and image, music and noise, the visual artwork and the reprocessed message is for them but the latest in an interminable list of transformations of the primordial disappearance, through which the work of the tailor is hidden in the commodified clothing. It is nothing but spectacle, that is, the ultimate accomplishment of commodity fetishism. Things are beginning to come to light: nothing is closer to the exhibition of market domination than the critical misappropriation of its emblems; nothing is closer to the total artwork than the construction of advertising environments. However, rather than deciding upon what is indiscernible about these proximities, it may be useful to reactivate the elements and to release the stratifications which problematise the aesthetic and political meaning of this audio-spatial sensorium.

At the outset, one would doubtless descry the wrath of the philosopher Plato, at the all too ingenious machines which facilitate the further debasement of the mimetician, pushing him to new extremes: “He will think nothing unworthy of himself, so that he will attempt, seriously and in the presence of many, to imitate all things – claps of thunder, and the noise of wind and hail and axles and pulleys, and the notes of trumpets and flutes and Panpipes, and the sounds of all instruments, and the cries of dogs, sheep, and birds – and so his style will depend wholly on imitation in voice and gesture, or will contain but a little of pure narration.”¹ Narration, of course, is monophonic speech which states only the content of actions and discourses. It is the speech of one who addresses citizens who have but one thing to imitate: to embody, that is, the virtue which puts them in their place and renders them apt for their task. It is in this way that the mathematical and ethical essence of music is achieved: the submission of the multiple to the law of unity. To which the philosopher opposes the anarchistic space of mimesis, which is, above all, the location of the multiple: the space of poets and actors who imitate all characters, of machines that imitate all sounds, multitudes

that acknowledge through their applause the celebration of their (counter) virtue, the space of that big noisy animal whose name is the people. Thus the Platonic ethical prescription durably establishes a negative figure of the audio-spatial, by denouncing the conspiracy of theatrical space with the noise of generalised reproduction and the amorphous equality of the “rule of the masses.” Notwithstanding those who would relegate it to an antique store or circumscribe it in a totalitarian hell, one has little difficulty in hearing the familiar sounds of the dread of modern art and the polemics of our liberal societies. Through all the turns and detours of the negative dialectic, it inspired the Adornian denunciation of the “rhythmico-spatial,” the pictorial “pseudomorphosis” of musical time and the return to primitivism by means of technique of which Stravinsky was the exemplary representative.² No doubt the unresolved contradiction in Adorno’s thought takes the place of Platonic unison. But on top of the Schönbergian tension of mastered time and the subjective suffering it expresses, comes the “Doric” tension which provided calm and courage to the Platonic warriors, just as the spatial and sound-oriented slackening-off specific to the “Lydian” mode, stigmatised by Plato, finds in the embryonic melisms and wild rhythms of the *Noces du printemps* its modern version. The same repulsion with regard to the theatrical wedding of sound and image, of space and machine, today inspires the denunciation of these rectangles and mazes – where recorded images and remixed music plays endlessly at coming in and out of tune, of fusing or separating. It was believed, at one time, that the reproductive machine would in the end liberate art from mimetic sin. Whereas, on the one hand, it relieved it of the servile tasks of copying and enabled it to assert its pure essence, on the other hand, it put its precision in the service of the reproduction of works. When the instruments of reproduction become instruments of creation and configure a space where the very distinction between the model and the copy, activity and passivity, is lost, it appears that mimesis is something entirely different from the archaic servitude of a not-yet-emancipated art; that it is every bit as much a political and social manner of dividing up – with the possibilities of art – the spaces and times, the places and roles which define a community. Music, of course, is the concern of the Muses before being that of the instrumentalists. Which is as much as to say that before being an art, music is a form of sharing the sensitive, conferring space and meaning on the distribution of the bodies and images, voices and instruments in a given time and space – which makes music homologous of a certain disposition of the community. It is at once an idea of sharing and a place within its distribution.

The classical mimetic order is the organisation of this double place. Music would be once again in Aristotle’s *Politics* what it had been for Plato: the generic name for the education which shapes noble souls and bodies, subjected to divine proportion. But the *Poetics* also assigns music a very determinate place in the hierarchy of elements in the tragic poem, which is at the same time the hierarchy of the arts: after the construction of the fable and the elaboration of the discourse, before the “spectacle” which is the least noble, most incidental element. The privilege of song over the displacement of bodies and over the shimmering of the visible – of the *Lied* over dance, as Adorno once again would argue in characterising the sonata form – is obviously a principle of internal sharing: the song separates its excellence from the ordinary nature of sound by linking up with discourse, known to be what opposes the political animal with the ordinary animals, endowed with the only voice that expresses pleasure or pain, and with those who only make noise with their body. He is thus in agreement with what places the poem at the summit of the arts: the superiority of the intrigue, that of causality constructed on the basis of empirical succession, that is, of action, subjected to fortune and misfortune, over life which is forever identical to itself, of noble subjects who act

upon indistinct bodies, handlers of tools and procreators. In this framework, the relative privilege of music over spectacle quickly turns out to be the other face of a subjection. If music is song, and song is akin to speech, that also means that they are too close to music to serve as an analogon. The radical exteriority of the spatial makes it possible, conversely, to make the visible quality of painting into an analogy of the poem. The matrix couple of the poem that depicts and the painting that recounts, which commands in the representative regime the correspondence of the arts, thus accuses music of “mutism.” It deports “pure” music that is, the mute music of instruments that are not subject to the meaning of speech and the rationality of history – toward the only charms of sound that accompanies the pleasures of the easy life – dinner-table music or background music – to the extreme point where the art of the Muses is finally subdued: the attraction of a sensation, according to Kant, rather than the beauty of free play; a pleasure rather than a culture.³

The verdict, however, is given in the company of its opposite. *Tonkunst*, art with neither speech nor form, could very well be the superior art of mute interiority, for it is, the philosopher argues, the art best adapted to setting the intimate sense into motion. It is there that one encounters the first appearance of those ghosts which were to come take refuge in the grooves of records and that the sound of today’s dubs causes to dance on the screens of dark rooms: *Glänzenden Geisterscheinung*, as the poet calls them: radiant appearances stemming, as if by magic, from the radical vulgarity of technical rigs to which the golden number was ultimately reduced: “an impoverished weave of relations of numbers, palpably presented (*handgreiflich dargestellt*) on perforated wood, on a rig (*Gestell*) of catgut strings and brass wires.”⁴ Wackenroder provides a pithy expression of the upheaval, which, in the aesthetic age, conferred its privilege upon an art of sounds: the gap, the indetermination even, of the relationship between cause and effect, between the action of the workers’ hand executing a combination of numbers and the “movement of the mind” leading to the immaterial and insignificant unfolding of sounds. The overthrow of the representative order has its primary principle there, in this non-relation of means and ends that destroys the representative paradigm of the intelligent form given to inert material. What collapses at the same time is the principle of correspondence between the poetic art of time and the pictorial art of space. The unrelated relation of the vulgarity of the catgut cords that are made to sing by the hand and the interior vibration of the mind give new measure to the relationship between the arts, to the space of the arts. This measure is that of the identity of opposites – consciousness and unconsciousness, the voluntary and the involuntary. It is that of the fusion founded on non-correspondence itself. The mixtures brought about by our multimedia arts are not the post-modern negation of Romanticism, but rather its accomplishment. The “ghost” story, in fact, has to do with the relationship between art and sounds, speech and space in the aesthetic age. It is the movement which brings about the disjointed correspondence between two mutisms – that of celestial music and that of the vulgar instruments of production and reproduction – which, in the era of popular sovereignty and working-class emancipation, supplants the representative correspondence between poetry and painting.

Before being the dead, the “ghosts” that talk are mutes. The aesthetic revolution which puts down the representative order is the assertion of a form of speech which is more faithful than the language of words, inscribed in whatever this order considered mute: it may be the speech of the signs of history written upon visible things – from grooves in stone to the leprous mould on the walls and the wear of clothes or faces – or inscribed in the thickness of the language, the yellowing of papers and faded accounts. This particular mutism – whose grooves in the vinyl will one day compound the double power – speaks like a cipher of

history. But there is the still more radical mutism of what neither speaks nor shows, from the great background that “speaks to the spirit” in the indecipherable language which is always there before all meaning and all history – the Kantian “thing in itself,” transformed by Schopenhauer into the unconscious and desireless “will,” of which music is for him the direct manifestation: no longer the representative, spatialised copy, but the thing itself, productive and destructive of all figurative form. But, it is above all there that one finds the origins of the “promotion” of music, its capacity in Nietzsche’s time to re-engender the tragic poem, and, in our own era, the visual space of exhibitions or the theatrical space of the multimedia. It was doubtless Wagner who best summed up its aesthetic and political formula, at the cost of providing two contradictory versions: the happy union of contraries, between the poem – masculine and conscious, voluntary and talkative – and music – feminine, unconscious and mute redeemer of the poem’s pride – at the time of the 1848 Revolution and the Feuerbachian philosophical revolution; pessimistic affirmation of the “will,” mother of illusions and stretched toward its ultimate self-destruction, at the time of triumphant Schopenhauerism and counter-revolution. This double political figure of the musical drama still governs contemporary forms of the combination of the arts: working-class and an-archic power of speech and the mute instruments which undo the hierarchies constructed by the correspondence between speech and the visible; fusional power, where the contraries compete only to plunge together in the ecstasy of the originary or the spectacular indifference of the reasonless.

In both cases, what is asserted with all the predominance of the noise of a musical backdrop, is another idea of space: the representative topography of the analogies between speech and the visible is opposed to the paradoxical space engendered by the art of sound vibration, that is, of de-spatialised materiality. It is not merely the “visions” that music evokes for the imagination that are set into space. It is the contradictory union between speech, stripped of sense-based form, and the art of sounds, stripped of its meaning. The art specific to the aesthetic age is neither abstract painting nor atonal music nor “intransitive” literature – which are the paradigms of modernity in all its glory, which today some have made into the pathetic sentinels of the “irrepresentable,” disarming all thought and all will. It is rather the art of space which shows what cannot be seen and which can only be heard in discord: the contradictory union of speech which does not show and music which does not speak. The generic name of all properly aesthetic art is staging: the autonomous art of heteronymy, the constitution of a space able to put into the element of visibility what music says through not speaking and what speech keeps silent through talk. A Mallarméan art of the dancer-form-sign who, with her steps or the folds of her dress, writes the latent poem; an art of raising to the level of sensibility the speech of the mute, the “third person” that Maeterlinck found lurking behind Ibsen’s dialogues, or of ordering the stage composition in keeping with the musical tone set by the phantoms in Shakespearean drama;⁵ Appia’s scenography, aiming at making visible the unexpressed content of the Wagnerian musical drama by replacing the painted sets of Bayreuth with the play of spotlights, in order to divide up on the bare stage the sculpted forms of the characters and the geometry of the working scenery.⁶ The art of “staging,” which, in a century, has slowly eaten away at the claims of “pure” painting, music or poetry, was born in an era when the “ghosts” – hitherto confined to the somewhat unreliable virtues of animal magnetism and table-turning – found their adequate technical medium: electricity, pure luminous energy, matter reduced to the point of immateriality apt to coincide with the immateriality of mute art and to construct a space for it.

When luminous projection gives a space of visibility to “mute” speech and music is also of course when reproductive devices are in the throes of development. The fact that these devices served for a time to capture the images or voices of the dead and that they are again being proposed for the same purpose at the beginning of the third millennium is not the key issue. The essential thing is in the new radicalisation that the devices of technical reproduction confer upon the constitutive principles of aesthetic art. They do so in two principal forms: through revitalising the relations between active creation and passive reproduction and by the generalised availability of images and sounds.

Mechanical reproduction is known to have successively led to two analyses: firstly, the prophecy of the death of art, stricken by the copy industry; subsequently, and quite to the contrary, a verdict of emancipation, where industry was to restore to the creative imagination and artistic autonomy all of their prerogatives, thereby definitively relieving them of the tasks of mimetic reproduction. The two diagnostics both turned out to be equally erroneous because both relied upon the overly simple opposition between original creation and the servile reproduction that the Romantic revolution had already revoked, by asserting its will to rewrite ancient poems, by dealing with them both as material for new constructions of art and as forms for new contents. The concept of the “unique work” that Benjamin vainly sought to link to art’s “cult-based” past emerged at the same time as the Romantic identification of the creator with the traveller, collector or archaeologist, who recollects, reinterprets and recreates art’s past. And, in fact, it developed along with the new forms of multiplication: with the promotion of the interpreter – that is, the instrumentalist, director, conductor, critic – and the technical forms of reproduction. From Romantic fragmentation and the Schlegelian idea of the “poem of the poem” to the contemporary practices of deejaying, sampling and remixing, which multiply the “unique copies” created by the artisans of reproduction, via the development of the industry that deals with conserving heritage and obliges its constant broadening and “rejuvenation,” it is possible to trace an empirically erratic but theoretically coherent line.

The upheaval in the relations between consciousness and unconsciousness, the old and the new, creation and reproduction, is also the scrambling of the opposition between art and non-art itself. Still contrary to the image of a Romantic modernity – alleged to have separated the autonomy of art from forms of life – the art of the aesthetic age has incessantly identified itself with its opposite. But this identification itself takes two forms. There is, on the one hand, the Dionysian roar of music which claims for itself the Apollonian shimmering of images. This roar is also the shift from an art of notes to an art of sounds, from the art of sound to the art of noises and from the latter to the boundless and anonymous murmur of life and/or machines; the passage from the kingdom of songbirds to that of insects, experts in stridulating, scratching and scraping, as Deleuze and Guattari would say.⁷ Let us add that the insect is an eclectic animal. It can be serial or spectral, concrete or virtual. It can be in harmony with a tortured violin as much as with a misused electrical device, a synthesiser-produced sound, an electronic beep, the crackling of the loudspeaker or a recorded birdsong. It is the true interchangeability of these modes of production of “sound particles.” Its artistic promotion is thus in agreement with the other form of identification of art and non-art: the infinite multiplication of images, the great metamorphism which incessantly reprocesses usable things, commodities and the disaffected icons of business, to make “images,” that is, something henceforth entirely different from copies: metamorphic elements, at once bearers of the signs of history and of the affect of the disaffected, susceptible to entering into all the combinations where expression can be given either to the meaning of a common destiny or the

mute splendour of what is useless, reasonless. It is well-known how the surrealist poetics of collage (taking these terms in their broadest sense, which goes beyond a mere school and technical procedure) played on this metamorphicity, which would transform any commonplace thing into a dream image and art material, but also any image of art into a profane and profanable commodity. The speed with which useful things become obsolescent and the speed with which art things are reproduced joined forces to infinitely spread the domain of this metamorphism. A certain artistic, anthropological or historical fundamentalism was only too happy to make music into the standard of resistance against this generalised metamorphicity of images, which means, with the erasure of the borders between the arts, the increasing indiscernability between art and non-art. The spiritism which dominates today in the new marriage of music and space, of art and technique, expresses in its own way this late “becoming-image,” this “becoming-surrealist” of music. It is where the vast poem of yesterday’s music and sounds runs up against that of the needle that scratches and the amplifier that crackles, the synthesiser that creates and the computer that invents, that the fusion of the two contradictory powers comes about: that of the grand Schopenhauerian background – indistinct as it is mute – of the “ocean of sound,”⁸ whence all images emerge like spectres, only to disappear once again; and that of the Schlegelian “poem of the poem” – of metamorphicity, collage and infinite recreation produced on the basis of the great storehouse of images, ultimately identical to the life of the storehouse itself.

The art of the projection of sounds and images, which equalises media from different eras and identifies the improvisation of performance with the making available of archives, offers itself then as eminently appropriate for configuring this space of installations which materialises the union of artistic decision with the raw factuality under the sign of living memory. To situate these small theatres of memory, which contemporary-art exhibitions are inclined to become, one can indefinitely construct contradictory scenographies – mystical oceans of sound, blessed in the name of Bachelard, Stockhausen or Sun Ra, or the storefront windows of shopping malls, stricken by the maledictions of Adorno or Guy Debord. But for a long time now, these topographies have become confused, the romantic sirens have learned to take all figures and to accommodate themselves in all places: ships’ sirens (Varèse), old-fashioned umbrellas in the Opera passageway (Aragon) or stock-exchange prices (Broodthaers). Unanimity of modern noise and life, plunged into the perennially-renewed ocean of dream images, critical atlas of signs and of misappropriated icons: these three great figures of the identification of art and non-art have not finished offering themselves to, and the same time of eluding, judgments that deplore the spectacle-king or exalt the ultimate figure of its radical critique. There is always the danger, as Deleuze and Guattari pointed out, of confusing cosmic machines and machines of reproduction. It may well be that they all have the same genealogy and that what clashes in the background of the great proclamation is above all the different ways of archiving, narrativising and theatralising the archive: of slowing down or speeding up the metamorphoses of use objects and art documents into the material of memory and into forms of its theatralisation. The politics of art which redistributes the forms and time, the images and the signs of common experience will always remain ultimately undecidable.

Notes

1. *Republic*, III, 397 a-b.
2. See the *Philosophy of Modern Music*, trans. Anne G. Mitchell and Wesley V. Blomster (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), in particular the second part, entitled "Stravinsky or Regression."
3. The problematic nature of the art of music is dealt with in sections 14 and 53 of the *Critique of Judgment*.
4. Wilhelm Heinrich Wackenroder, *Confessions and Fantasies*, trans. Mary Hurst Schubert (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1971).
5. See Mallarmé, "Ballets" and "Autre étude de danse: les fonds dans le ballet," in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1945), pp. 303-09; Maeterlinck, "Le tragique quotidien" in *Le Trésor des humbles*, (Brussels: Labor, 1986), pp. 99-110; and Edward Gordon Craig, "The ghosts in the tragedies of Shakespeare" in *On the Art of the Theatre* (London: Heinemann, 1980), pp. 264-80.
6. Adolphe Appia, "Musique et mise en scène", in *Oeuvres complètes* (Lausanne: L'Age d'homme, 1986), vol. 2, pp. 43-207.
7. Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaux*, trans. B. Massumi (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota, 1993).
8. See David Toop, *Ocean of Sound, Aether Talk, Ambient Sound and Imaginary Worlds* (London: Serpents Tail, 1995).

Digital electronic music: between pop and pure mediality

Paradoxical strategies for a refusal of semantics

Diedrich Diederichsen

Since around 1992 or 1993, developments in the still relatively young techno culture led to the introduction of various new terms. The distinction between house and techno, which was supposed to be constantly renewed over the course of time, was no longer adequate to conceptually master the numerous changes (including those at the level of marketing). In particular, one could no longer overlook the fact that techno had expanded from purely functional dance music based on repetitive beats to a new (pop-) musical paradigm, which had affected and altered all modes of reception among young and sub-cultural listeners. This music, produced on the computer and often rendered publishable at home and without a studio, was mostly unburdened by vocals and text while no longer always structured by beats. It therefore demanded new terms and names.

Then, as a term like “intelligent techno” appeared in connection with compilations such as the *Artificial Intelligence* series, it seemed to present a clear case of the latest edition of a familiar script from the history of pop music: an initially egalitarian music and lifestyle movement is followed by a phase of expansive “de-individualisation” or “commercialisation.” Eventually the middle-class participants long to disassociate themselves from this development in order to take on another privileged status, namely, that of a “true avant-garde” or even “intelligent” techno music. In the history of punk music this moment is found in the split between new wave and punk; in hippie music it was the appearance of progressive rock that activated comparable distinctions. Following an initial phase of a relatively class-neutral cultural movement – after adherence to the movement is no longer solely determined culturally, but has also become marketable – an elite moment takes place in which differences and routes of access are re-established through the classic means of artistic differentiation. While one cannot reduce the relevant musical cultures to this function in the battle over distinction, it cannot be overlooked.

Fortunately the term “intelligent techno” didn’t catch on. Instead, since around 1993 or 1994 people have talked about “electronic music,” at least in the German language arena. In a corresponding operation in English, especially in the USA, the term “electronica” took over somewhat later. Interestingly, many of the authors and musicians who helped to establish this term always insisted on using it to re-describe a unity and a shared history of all musical styles emerging from techno and house. They also spoke out against a separation between “functional” and “artistic” uses of digital vocabulary. Thus, within the scene there was an awareness of a cultural class war from above, and appropriate measures, or at least appeals, against such a use of terminology were taken.

Over time another connotation of the new name began to weigh heavily, that of historical electronic music. This refers less to the totality of electronic sound production before techno and after the Trautonium and Theremin than to the post-war centres of electronic music that developed out of serial composition with an artistic, avant-garde, high-cultural self-awareness: from the Cologne-based Studio für neue Musik to GRM in Paris. On the one hand, such a

connection was made by musicians themselves, who publicly declared their interest in this other electronic music; on the other, journalists speculated in articles on Cologne about a putative genius loci: for example, a collective spirit including Stockhausen and Eimert at one end and Mike Ink and Mouse on Mars at the other.

On a musical level, this connection is highly misleading. In contrast to the electronic music of the 50's and 60's, music emerging from techno was concerned with an electronic and digital administration of sounds of all possible origins. Electronic music that followed the "classic" output during the first decades of exclusively analogue production dealt with electronic sound creation. The main emphasis here lies in the nature of the sounds and their components, in the organisation of found or variously created sounds. The old electronic music sought to generate novel sounds and to possess new and more refined production parameters with which to determine music more precisely. The new music treats the administration of all kinds of sounds as digital records assisted by music programmes. And often the artistic philosophy (or its weakness) consists of allowing the artist/author to step back behind the programme and give up his ability to control it.

One doesn't need to say much about the mistaken belief in a direct line of tradition between both versions of electronic music. Ultimately, the enthusiasm of today's digital-electronic musicians for the old electronic music brought about numerous interesting results, whose quality isn't diminished by historical misunderstandings and conceptual confusion among journalists and young musicians. Still, the equality of terms plays an important role in discussions about how current digital-electronic music sees itself. It also applies to questions about the possible dimensions of events that document the music's current expansion.

An essential effect of the term and the elevated tone accompanying the reverently pronounced description "electronic music" arises from the fact that the relevant authors and producers increasingly do not situate themselves in the continuum of the various pop- and sub-cultural musical forms – for example, from blues to industrial, from reggae to hardcore punk, from psychedelic to free improvisation – but rather in a history of avant-garde composition. Indeed, there are actually good reasons from a production-aesthetic standpoint for such a self-assessment. The conceptual methods of working with computer programmes more closely resemble those of a composing artist than a conventional pop musician in the studio. The cultural environment surrounding many labels and record stores, and in magazines like *The Wire*, more often derives from the current and earlier avant-gardes than the pop music of the present; this context is in many cases at least as important as that of the earlier pop music in the beginning of techno and house. Above all, however, the alleged continuity targets an electronic music from Stockhausen to Mouse on Mars in order to oppose the old interpretive parameters of pop with another that is determined both by technological theory and media theory – and not especially in terms of music theory. In all other attempts to compare "pop music" and "serious music," pop music was until now defeated by the defensive measures of music theory (claims for complexity, score- and composition-centring). First and foremost, electronic music links itself with a tradition of medially and technically legitimate advanced art and thus suggests the connection to an art legitimated by social, external, and semantic determinations – in typical pop-music fashion.

Of course there are many producers who still often have marked ties to a sub-cultural sense of self, occasionally even accompanied by political ideas. But their semantics are only connected in exceptional cases (like with Ultra-Red) with musical decisions. If there is a political self-consciousness, it generally has to do with one's own relation to the mediality of music, not to

its “material” – in other words, not to a legitimate and coherently conceived totality of means. And it is also only through mediality and interface relations that commonalities emerge. In the light of these developments, one can ask what this new digital electronic music is in the most definitive sense. Such an interest in definitions should not be misunderstood as a critical attempt by the discursive partners of music to establish order. Rather, it is an explicit understanding of long implicitly maintained definitions with sometimes far-reaching consequences. Is it, or does it conceive of itself implicitly as, a media praxis, pop music, or music in the aftermath of the traditional avant-garde? And in contrast to which earlier pop music would it be the foremost media praxis? Where does it most clearly belong and how can one combine reception and production aesthetics with intentions, uses, and cultural environments?

A typical point of argument from the camp of today’s digital-music producers is based precisely on media theory. This fixes in place all significant differences regarding the digital status of (almost) all currently available sounds and defines one’s own production as the one that – even in a somewhat “critical” sense – displays digitality, makes its special effects audible, and, in contrast to other music, does not just use digital sound manipulation to optimise already known musical practices. However, this argument operates – and this is perhaps the most decisive thing – independently of a pop/classic distinction. It legitimates the “new,” “individual,” digital music, not in the usual pop-music manner of tribalist, scene-specific, populist, or political arguments, but with a media-technical approach, as “new.” This itself is relatively new, even if there are precursors.

Already in the 60’s – e.g., with John Sinclair in his treatise *Guitar Army* – the electronic amplification and resulting distortion was described as one general criterion of new music as it related to the specific functions of pop music. It was certainly closely connected with the typical political and tribal arguments based on newness. Digital newness is based on a media theory that explains the ultimate digital quality of all cultural mediums and archives as a deep-seated cultural shift, before which all others shrink to epiphenomena. At first glance this may not be just a reductive position that privileges the relatively arbitrary (or interfaced with Heidegger) single perspective (that of mediality) over all other components of a musical product (not only semantically). Nevertheless, the inclination toward a personal association with such a totally media-driven perspective, the wish to understand oneself completely in terms of the connective digital emergence, is widespread. Many representatives of the digital electronic music we’re discussing here have such a desire to separate themselves from other pop-music practices.

My assumption, however, would be that this very discourse has succeeded an earlier paradoxical discourse that now belongs especially to pop music. Its true desire is the exclusion of any semantics. The increase in pure functionality (techno) was the strictly repetitive asemantics of loops and minimalistic twists, the trend toward an empty world perfectly arranged out of restrained sounds and graphics that no longer make a semantic offering, no longer open up uncool interpretive interfaces. Yet exactly this form of communication thoroughly relates to an advanced, insulated variation on the old outsider communication model of subcultures: “I want you to understand that there is nothing to understand (you all don’t understand me anyway).” The corresponding insider communication model finds itself in a community of jointly incommunicable particularities and enjoys it. In this way the effort again brought about a semantics of the desired communication of non-communicability through the retreat into a music only committed to its

own mediality – as a strategy of the asemantic. This was a paradoxical development for the once specific, concrete examples of such musical applications.

An opposing argument rests on the term “sonic fiction”, launched by Kodwo Eshun. It maintains that, specifically in the realm of universal availability, electronic sounds can thoroughly communicate something and indeed do so. Instances of the term are mostly related to the specific semantics of the environment, so that it doesn’t merely consist of functionalist graphics – accompanying texts, names of projects and people, origin of samples – but most often simply associative interpretations supported by certain sounds. Other than the attempt to quickly retreat from semantically determined pop music into a meaning-free world of pure designs or pure mediality, this discourse attempts to outdo pop through a new directness. It presents a density of musical semantics that, moreover, is also protected like a secret society and defends itself against obvious adaptation from outside insofar as its musical core has meaning, but meaning that is totally nonverbal.

Upon closer inspection, we find parallels with such conceptions of sound in many forms of pop music. A general agreement over the greater semantic terrain of producers and receivers allows the sound to be steered in a purely musical direction, without the music turning ambivalent – like so-called pure music. In the world of heavy metal the listener also knows which fantasy culture he is stimulated to imagine when he hears a certain type of guitar solo. He then “envisions,” as a fan recently confirmed for me, “scenes from non-existent knight films.” This is also exactly the way in which sonic fiction functions in connection with Eshun and others. Strictly speaking, it is not a fiction in a narrative sense, but rather a non- or polylinear fantasy – though this term could sound too much like hippie culture.

A third approach describes digital-electronic pop music as primarily intrinsic. Different from all other (pop-) music styles, it always establishes the internal references (the beat is less than a second) so strongly in terms of external references (where I have already heard the sound), that it radically refers the receivers to their immediate present; this distinguishes it sharply from pop, if it doesn’t in fact present its absolute opposite. It therefore only opens up references to inner worlds, microstructures, and the interior of the social context. Doubtlessly, such a description allows itself to be combined harmoniously with the paradoxical mode of communication of media-based asemantics. Such a combination might correspond to the mainly implicit sense of self among most producers – from techno to the diverse contemporary minimalistic successors. Sonic fictions are more evident in drum’n’bass.

Naturally, listening to repetitive music is not entirely internal. Beats don’t just appear repeatedly, but in specific forms of repetition, in patterns that at the same time become known in a particular sound design. Listeners don’t just internally recognise beats in reference to the last beat, which would simply be the radical maximum of techno. Rather, as a rule they recognise patterns and connect them, if not exactly with meanings in the strict sense, then certainly with actual experiences – sound patterns combine themselves with these meanings as symbols do with specific meanings. In addition, the establishment of meaning through open patterns and grooves, even if only private and contingent at first, offers more possibilities and eventual routines. It then connects these points more purposefully with meanings that naturally originate in the social environment of digital-electronic music. In this sense it is pop music. Yet one might need a broader definition of pop music than is used in numerous countries. In many languages pop music is only about chart music. In my terminology, which is directed toward its use especially in German, pop is any kind of music emerging from industrial music production while still having developed independently. It never simply

consists of music, but always also other accompanying levels of the visual and the textual. Thus one needs a term for pop music that distinguishes all musical forms, which consist simultaneously of different denotative, signifying, classically ambivalent and open symbolic systems, from those that are primarily ambivalent and at most receive a second level through a text. With pop music, these tasks are always already mingled, the music itself always simultaneously symbolic and not symbolic.

As a rule, digital-electronic music doesn't clarify what its specific communicative and artistic material consists of. It dreams an ideological dream of self-referential mediality and non-meaning, or is complemented by sectarian secret writing. But even this is typically pop: to dream an ideological dream without being hindered by it; indeed, to first become productive through this dream, possibly in a much better sense. It reaches the enviable condition of simultaneously possessing exact clarity without leeway and great openness, which can hardly be planned or calculated. One can only reach this through the double negation of a misstep into a false dream.

SONIC PROCESS

A New Geography of Sounds

Doug Aitken

new skin, 2002

Born in 1968 in Redondo Beach (California)

Lives and works mainly in Los Angeles

Audio-visual installation: 4 video projectors, 4 DVD, 1 surround sound system.
Centre Georges Pompidou Collection, Paris

In *new skin*, light is slowly replaced by sound. The work follows a progression towards darkness, but as reliance on the visual decreases, sounds begins to define psychological and perceptual space. As we move further into the void of darkness, we begin to examine and explore a world in which sonic textures create a vast map of reference markers, guiding us on a journey into a landscape filled with change and motion, a world of constant flux.

The filmed content of *new skin* will be structured around a very specific progression of scenes and locations. Every scene is filmed through a point of view where the imagery appears to be seen as through the eyes and exact perspective of the viewer. *New skin* is designed in this way, so as to give the viewer a direct relationship with the work. The viewers should fall into it. There should be no distance. They should lose themselves in the work. There will be a sense of narrative that engages the viewer on an emotional, intellectual and visceral level [...] Light gradually decreases from scenes almost as if the process of blindness was sped up and condensed. The progression must be a gradual one, where the viewer incrementally experiences the transformation from bright luminosity to low contrast, de-saturated colors, lack of illumination, de-focused imagery, incremental stages of darkness, monochrome tones [...].

As the visual topography vanishes, we begin to experience an increasing reliance on the nature of sound. As we struggle to hold onto narrative space and physical reality, we find sound creating and defining the concept of three dimensional space. We listen for sonic footholds and reach to recognize distant sounds to provide a sense of place. As we transform and adapt to our world without vision, we must leap over the abyss and reach to a world of liquid sound. We begin to experience sound expanding [...]. Our awareness is heightened, we begin to perceive purely on a sonic level. As an installation, *new skin* is a vector of experience. The structure of the work is the field of the spirit, the psychological space.

Mathieu Briand

][SYS*11. MiE>AbE / SoS\][SYS*10.MeE / SoS\BoS][], 2002

Born in 1972 in Marseille.

Lives and works mainly in Marseille.

Sound installation: 1 sound system, 1 mixing desk, 5 turntables, 1 vinyl recorder, 4 vinyl masters, 500 blank vinyls.

In association with Éric Lecoïn (Cerclerouge).

In an environment conceived in a spiral to receive a series of performances and a sound installation simultaneously, Mathieu Briand experiments with the ephemeral as well as with the collection and accumulation of actions.

The master offered to the public consists of four vinyl records on which a loop of electronic sounds has been recorded. Five turntables and a mixing desk are made available to the public and enable them to piece the sounds together simultaneously in a variety of modalities.

A vinyl recording machine, regarded in this environment as an active instrument, provides the public with an opportunity to record their own compositions. Unlike the initial masters which offer sounds in a loop, the new recorded “bits” are structured according to the spiral model with a beginning and an end. Thus the consultation mode changes from the infinite loop –separated sounds– to the spiral –the “bit”–, which brings the system to a halt. Mathieu Briand then invites the public to reinsert the “bit” into the flow of sounds to be mixed and used as a new master to be recorded. A different sound involving random elements springs from the accumulation of these different levels. Free access to the mixing desk also makes it possible to record dubplates for home studios outside the exhibition.

The concept of sampling is re-examined through the intermediary of the rather archaic analogue support that is vinyl. In this performance, the viewer / listener takes on the role of the creator who sends a whole system spiralling down on itself.

Coldcut & Headspace

Gridio

2002

Matt Black was born in 1961 in London.

Jonathan More was born in 1957 in Thame (UK).

Based in London, they founded the Ninja Tune label in 1990

Mark Scarratt was born in 1968 in Rugby

Russell Blakeborough was born in 1973 in Rochford

Based in Brighton, they are members of the Headspace group.

Audio-visual installation: 1 computer, 3 video projectors, 3 screens, 1 surround sound system, 16 interactive tiles on the floor.

Coproduction Ninja Tune, Londres.

At the core of an environment, *Gridio* offers a variety of audio-visual collages which are staged by the *Vjamm* software of which Coldcut is joint author with the Headspace group. The floor of the installation is tiled with Grid cells connected to an MIDI interface which enables interaction between the cells and the sound and video creations projected onto three screens.

The visitors are invited to travel to the centre of this environment, where they can compose a polymorphic visual performance in permanent mutation. The visual and sound elements are simultaneously activated.

In his work *Chaos and Cyberculture*, Tim Leary explains: "A clear technoart challenge for the 21st century is to create a device that makes the chaotic media universe "user friendly" allowing the byte-beleaguered individual to process, remix and reflect the audio-visual subprograms that make up their personal iconographic diet, rather than be poisoned by them [...]"

Gridio explores the human interfaces computerised by the brain and the body and takes part in their evolution. The visual and sound elements are selected by Matt Black and Jonathan More from their personal image and sound archives, which they tirelessly accumulate in the course of their wanderings.

Flow Motion

Ghost Dance

2002

Anna Piva was born in 1961 in Feltre, near Belluno (Italy).

Trevor Mathison was born in 1963 in London.

Edward George was born in 1960 in London.

They all live and work mainly in London.

Audio-visual installation: 2 video projectors, 2 DVD, 1 surround sound system, 4 live sound systems, 4 processed sound systems, outboard processors, 1 mixing desk, 4 microphones.

A collaboration between the artists' collective Flow Motion (Anna Piva, Edward George, Trevor Mathison) and writer Kodwo Eshun, *Ghost Dance* explores the ghosts and processes of ghosting in the secret technologies of black electronica. *Ghost Dance* is a collaborative forging of an opening into the poetic space of dub and post dub culture, a rerouting of dub's territorial imperative, dub's evocation of place and subject.

"Picture a large, dimly lit room. On one wall, above a column, a movie image. A static monochromatic shot of the reflection of a turntable on a wall. Spectral, translucent. On the opposite wall a second movie image in the same style; looped billows of drifting billows of drifting smoke, slow to the point of stillness. Along the walls, four speakers, one in each corner, sculptural, built to resemble a sound system rig. What we hear is a digitalised soundtrack comprised of the material components of amplified sound; the hum and crackle of amps and speakers [...] the murmuring of the sound system's unconscious. And suspended from the cable strewn ceiling, eight speaker cones, small and naked mounted in perspex. These speakers are wired up to four microphones placed at strategic points around the exterior of the MACBA, at the four points of the compass. With this set up we record the world around the installation – transforming the leakage and the indifferent clamour of the outside world from what some might consider 'noise to be blocked out' into raw materials for the space of sound art. An elision of the boundaries separating interior space from exterior space."

In Kodwo Eshun's text and the installation *Ghost Dance* the idea is to bring into play the boundaries between real space and representation space, between the phonographic and its imaginary representation, between the spectral dimension and its acoustic representation, between presence and absence. The collaboration between the artists and the writer suggests the relation between the space of art and the practice of texts, between the reproduction of an electronic music and the music that comes from the reproduction apparatus itself.

Renée Green*WaveLinks*

2002

Born in 1959 in Cleveland (Ohio).

Lives and works mainly in New York and Vienna.

Audio-visual installation: Video projection, 7 monitors, 7 VHS, 1 surround sound system.

How does sound circulate among other forms of circulation? How is the listener's attention maintained and how is it interrupted? What is beyond what is controllable in the way we hear and the way we are affected by sound, whether it comes from outside or whether it emanates from our bodies and our heads? How do we see our relation to sounds and images? How does sound touch us at a distance, beyond time?

WaveLinks is the title of an ongoing work collecting videos. Begun in 1999, it samples documents dealing with relations with sound, at the heart of environments that are global, local and urban at once, and through time. The work refers to certain real places such as Barcelona, Geneva, Lisbon, California and New York.

The version of *WaveLinks* for "Sonic Process" is a video work done on seven monitors and a video projector. It is part of an extension of the method used by Digital Import / Export Funk OfPce (installation, 1993 ; CD-ROM, 1996), Partially Buried in Three Parts (videos and CD audio, 1997) and Some Chance Operations (videos and CD, 1999), which consists of bringing together under a single title a host of supports and forms of expression. The network relations are examined and thought here in their temporal, spatial, sensory and linguistic aspects. *Wavelinks* proposes an exploration of the problems of presence and absence and, in parallel, of the cracks at the heart of "globalisation and its discontents" in connection networks which are in rapid mutation.

The power of individual voices, the voices of memory –an ocean of language–, what is lost in translation or non-translation, the sounds of horror, of love, of resistance, familiar, abstract sounds, sounds which can caress, sounds which appear to save your life, the diversity of information, the possibilities opened up by transmission to unknown receivers, the innumerable effects caused by the levels of intensity of sound and silence; all those sounds make up so many "frequencies" to be captured in this work.

The idea is to create an introductory space to the exhibition, in which the public can discover a collection of videos, made up of sound associations through references to the history and mythology of electronic music, as well as conversations with musicians, managers of independent labels, theoreticians and listeners, among them Diedrich Diederichsen, Christian Marclay, Mika Vainio, Border Sounds, Greg Tate, Female Pressure, Ultra Red and Cosmos.

Martí Guixé*Mptree / Data Square*

2002

Born in 1964 in Barcelona.

Lives and works mainly in Barcelona.

Multimedia installation: 14 computers, 3 internet connections, 7 tables and benches, plants.

Mptree (Multi-purpose tree) / Data Square is a space conceived and designed by Martí Guixé whose aim is to provide the public with interactive consultation of about a hundred music titles, thirty video programmes and a hundred internet sites. Through its educational concept and aesthetic scope, this space proposes a complement to the nine artists' installations presented at the exhibition.

All the information (books, magazines and data bases) comes from real plants - which make up the metaphors of the MP3 musical computer system.

This is a space conceived for research, reading, viewing and listening, but also for rest, for chilling out.

The selection of works presented in *Data Square* does not aim to trace an exhaustive historical perspective of the genesis of electronic music; it provides an overview of present day creation through the presentation of works by artists from the different currents that make up its wealth. The choice of sound works, video documents and internet sites proposed at the venue places particular emphasis on the most daring and most innovatory creators in sampling and processing sound.

Mike Kelley & Scanner

Esprits de Paris (Paris en direct par satellite sur 14 chaînes) [Spirits from Paris (Paris, live by satellite on 14 channels)]

2002

Mike Kelley

Born in 1954 in Detroit (Michigan).

He lives and works mainly in Los Angeles.

Scanner

Robin Rimbaud, alias Scanner, was born in 1964 in London.

Audio-visual installation: 2 video projectors, 12 monitors, 1 double-faced screen, 1 flat screen, 14 DVD, 1 sound system.

"*Esprits de Paris* [...] consists of a series of recordings of visual and sound environments done in different parts of Paris. The recordings are presented on video monitors as if they were live materials collected outside. On a screen we present another "live document" recorded in a club where we see people dancing against the mix of noises we have collected. [...] The idea of presenting the cassettes as real video documents is to heighten the "reality" of the information and to suggest that the museum is not the proper place for experiencing our artwork.

My research aiming at combining extreme sound experiments and critical intention is to bring recording trials to William S. Burroughs' tape recorder as described in *The Invisible Generation*. [...] As critical practice, he proposes the systematic recording and playback of everyday life. For him it is a matter of storing ambient sounds, then doing a counter-editing job on them: cutting, slowing down... so as to reveal what he calls the "control machine": a pre-recorded "grey veil" that separates you from real experience. [Those experiments are different from John Cage's collages] of tapes which are the product of a playful strategy of the random, the *William Mix* of 1952, for example. [For Cage] the modifications of the background noises are perceived as tonal variations [...] and not as documents connected to certain specific places. Burroughs' interest in the political ramifications of the processes of recording and editing bring his research much closer to my concerns. That is why I regard it as important to keep track of the places where Scanner and I have recorded and to explain how they have been selected. We chose them following two guides to supernatural Paris."

List of places where the audio and video recordings were made:

1. 7, Rue du Faubourg Montmartre. This is where the writer Isidore Ducasse (1846-1870), better known as the Comte de Lautréamont, died. [He] is often regarded as [...] one of the first practitioners of the literary procedures of appropriation.
2. Joseph Pujol (Le Pétomane) at the Moulin Rouge cabaret, Place Blanche.
3. The interior of the waterfall grotto in the Buttes-Chaumont Park. [...] One of the terror sites of Paris.
4. 5, Rue Montmartre. The old studio of the spirit photographer Jean Buguet.
5. 39, Rue Condorcet. The place where the turn-of-the century medium and ectoplasm hunter, Éva Carrière, practised her arts.
6. 17, Rue Beaubreillis. The place where Jim Morrison (1943-1971), American poet and singer, died.
7. The tomb of Allan Kardec (1804-1869), one of the great gurus of spiritism of his time in Père Lachaise Cemetery.
8. 72, Rue de Belleville, Edith Piaf.
9. 15, Avenue Junot. The home of the Rumanian poet Tristan Tzara (1896-1963). Tzara [...] is thought to be the inventor of the random cut-up poem in the 1910s.
10. Charles Cros, ..., in Montparnasse Cemetery.
11. Olivier Messiaen, in the Sainte Trinité Church.
12. Serge Gainsbourg, in his home at 5, Rue de Verneuil.
13. ...
14. and 15. Club Batofar

Richard Dorfmeister, Rupert Huber, Gabriel Orozco

Sophiensäle Wien (mai 1999) [Sophiensäle Vienna (May 1999)]

2002

Gabriel Orozco

Born in 1962 in Jalapa (Mexico).

He lives and works mainly in Paris, New York and Mexico City.

Rupert Huber & Richard Dorfmeister (Tosca)

Richard Dorfmeister was born in 1968 in Vienna.

Rupert Huber was born in 1967 in Mödling (Austria).

They are "based" in Vienna.

Tosca was created in 1994.

Audio-visual installation: 8 slide projectors, 1 screen, 1 DVD audio, 400 slides, 2 surround sound systems.

In May 1999, on the occasion of the Wiener Festwochen Festival, two concerts were held in the great hall of the Sophiensäle in Vienna. They brought together the musicians Richard Dorfmeister and Rupert Huber and the artist Gabriel Orozco. Gabriel Orozco composed a collage of some 800 slides and projected them to the rhythm of the music from Tosca. Richard Dorfmeister handled the turntables, whilst Rupert Huber played the piano.

As part of the "Sonic Process" exhibition, the recording of that performance has been restructured by Rupert Huber and mixed with other parts by Tosca. A 35-minute spatial adaptation has been designed by Rupert Huber in association with Gabriel Orozco. The sound installation involves eight tracks playing the high frequency signals (voices, noises and natural sounds) with great precision and four broadcasting the low frequency signals at maximum volume and power, though without spoiling the listening.

Three sources of sound made up of noises, instruments and voices integrated in dub sounds have been mixed for this project, each at a different level. At the same time, the viewers / listeners watch a kaleidoscope of images taken by Gabriel Orozco, all from everyday life, organised according to a whirlpool mathematical structure and blending with the sound sources.

Artists' project summary.

David Shea*2001-A Soundfilm in Eight Acts*

2002

Born in 1965 in Springfield (Massachusetts).

He is "based" in Brussels.

Sound installation: 1 quadraphonic sound system, 1 sampler, 1 computer, 1 keyboard.

"The principle of this piece for sampler finds its sources in the natural interconnections of sound and image in music itself, sound cinema, view cinema, the link between simple forms or successive layers of sound and image.

The space is constructed like a small cinema designed for listening. The eight acts make up a group of short sound films whose origin is some of the following visual and listening experiences: the films of Godard, Kubrick (2001, *A Space Odyssey*), the works of a large number of film music composers –from Georges Delerue to Ennio Morricone and Bernard Herrmann– and sound engineers in the cinema, the work of Dennis Potter and the "exotic" musicians of the 1950s such as Les Baxter and Esquivel, to the works of composers of *musique concrète*.

The eight acts make up a series of tributes and investigations into different traditions which interact in the field of these connections. Each act isolates elements of a more evolved cinematic narration, with text, everyday sounds, musical styles, emblematic figures and references to the cinema. The characters are the music, the sounds and the stories themselves; it is their own expressions I track in something that comes as much from investigation as from musical composition. My approach is that of a composer, and I propose a music that allies a musical material with a power of visual evocation to the construction of more abstract environments. [...] Each piece, each style has its own territory, its own economy, its own history, its energies and its particular forms; the perpetual growth of its gestures takes the shape of a theatre being made, offered for exploration.

The sampler is a computer with which I play as with a physical instrument. It acts as screen and sound source: it is an empty machine designed to be filled with recorded sounds. The pressure of the keys of the keyboard (in this precise case) makes it possible to perform and arrange the sound fragments in a score – a soundtrack. I regularly perform the pieces over a day at the exhibition venue. [...] The projection of the music is close to a performance and an installation undergoing perpetual transformation. The seats placed in front of the sampler are surrounded by speakers which bring into play a high technicality in the sound spatialisation. Deploying these methods is one of the ways of probing the sound material, of coming into contact with it, and that process is carried out in the theatre of our memory, which it leads us to visit. I explore a layer taken from a broader network where the connections are revealed to us each time we listen and look."