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TIME PERSPECTIVES

Schriflicher Teil der künstlerischen Abschlussarbeit

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ECHO

XXI. Wollen wir also Eingeweihte des Lebens sein, müssen wir zweierlei bedenken:

Einmal die große Melodie, in der Dinge und Düfte, Gefühle und Vergangenheiten, Dämmerungen und Sehnsüchte mitwirken, – und dann: die einzelnen Stimmen, welche diesen vollen Chor ergänzen und vollenden. Und um ein Kunstwerk, heißt: Bild des tieferen Lebens, des mehr als heutigen, immer zu allen Zeiten möglichen Erlebens, zu begründen, wird es notwendig sein die beiden Stimmen, die einer betreffenden Stunde und die einer Gruppe von Menschen darin, in das richtige Verhältnis zu setzen und auszugleichen.

Notizen zur Melodie der Dinge, Rainer Maria Rilke

XXI. If, then, we want to be initiates of life, we must keep two things in mind: First, the great melody, in which things and scents, feelings and pasts, twilights and desires, all play their parts, — and second : the individual voices which augment and complete this full chorus.

And to lay the foundation for a work of art—that is, an image of deeper life, of our more than daily, always possible experience—we have to put both voices, the voice of this hour and the voice of a group of people within that hour, into a proper relationship and reconcile them.

Notes on the Melody of Things, Rainer Maria Rilke

What does this great melody, a choir of individual voices mean? Does this melody reflect the «inherent» time that we all share, an original clock giving the tempo? Are we then these individual voices, creating our lives through our own eyes?

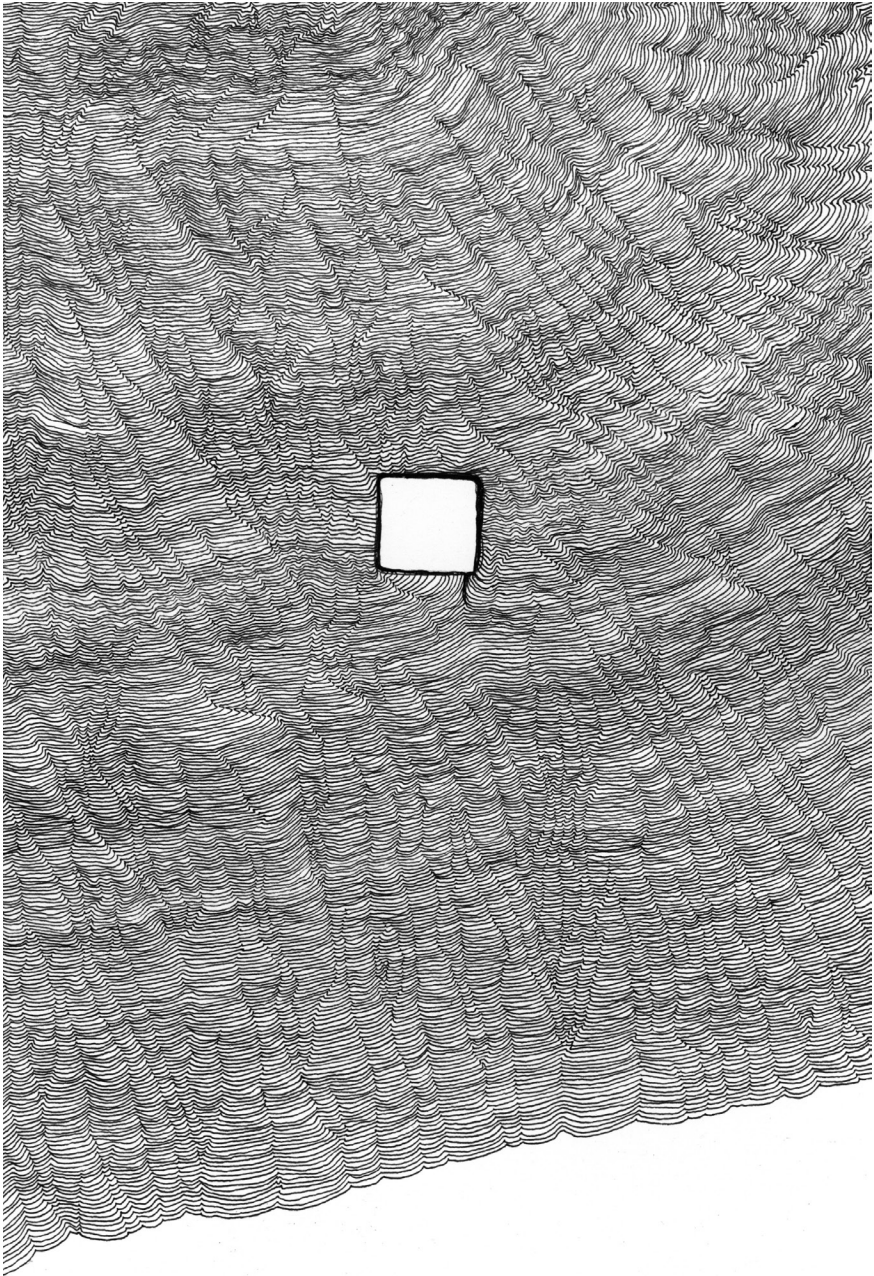
We are fragmented beings. Present, absent. Fragmented by language, our senses, and our memories. We all have our own time. Time that is relative to our comprehension, time that is constantly changing as we come in contact through other perspectives. What was unimaginable a moment before is now possible.

How can we begin to live and define ourselves within a moment, when throughout time we are ever changing through our experiences? My work relates to that question, and tries to show that we live by understanding the importance of the occasion's moment and our trust in its transient nature, where everything can still change. Each moment then moment will complete the composition of the great melody.

In this essay I will be discussing in detail the notion of time. How time enables the propagation of sound into space, how it acts on our perceptions, and how this depends on the moment, as only a second later, the situation could be totally different. By doing so, I aim to show how learning about time is after all learning about ourselves.

It is difficult to establish a well-defined meaning of time, as time represents an individual and subjective experience. Nevertheless, my goal is to put forward questions about how to define the relationship between art and time. I will do this from the point of view of the individual who is coming into contact with and experiencing art.

This essay is the final point in completing my master degree. Here I will be discussing my experiences, opinions and how I position myself within the current context of art. Having said that, it is worth remembering that opinions and ideas are constantly evolving and providing new perspectives.



SPACE SHAPES THE SOUND WHICH SHAPES THE SPACE

« Depending on the positioning of hearers, a space may sound totally different. If you hear the same sound in two different spaces, you may not even recognize it as the same sound. Hearing requires positionality. »

Jonathan Stern, Sonic imaginations (The sound studies reader), 2012

In the quote above Jonathan Stern presents two essential things that connect sound and space. First is that space, through its shape and materiality, acts on sound as a filter. Second, he establishes that sound needs someone to hear it, to interpret it, and that these hearers have a position in space. The sound I hear creates a connection between my position, the source of the sound itself and all other elements that are present in the space.

SHAPES AND MATERIALITY

First, how do we define a sound? Sound is the mechanical vibration of a material, which propagates as a wave through the elastic deformation of this material. Sound not only needs a source but also a receptor. We can then use the following outline to describe sound:

Production > radiation > propagation > perception of the sound

Production involves a vibrating object, whose vibrations cause the material to diffract. This leads to displacement throughout the material until it comes into contact with a receiver.

Now we can begin to analyse what components are present in a vibration. Excluding the particular case of synthetic sound that is made of only a single wave, all « natural » sounds are a superposition of different harmonics (overtones). Whatever the sound is - « harmonic » (we can recognize a fundamental pitch), « enharmonic » (we can recognize different pitches but not based on the natural harmonic scale) or « noisy » - sound is a complex combination of harmonic partials which through their intensity or expression give a timbre (color) to the sound. That's why the same note played by a flute or a trumpet does not sound the same. The same can be said for a glass or a ceramic that is broken; the sound will not be the same. This is why we can recognize the voice of someone we know well from thousand other voices.

When we place sound within a particular space, we can use a spectrometer to measure the intensity of sound as a function of frequency. Our observation will reveal how space modifies the expression of harmonics. In addition to using a spectrometer we can also simply listen to how the harmonics are being expressed. By doing so we can establish an experiment to hear the same sound in different spaces to determine any variations in the expression of the sound.

The variations are caused by the reflection and the absorption of sound by the walls, the ceiling, the ground and other elements present in the space, in addition to the architectural configuration of the space itself. Thus, the space amplifies certain frequencies, absorbs others, and then modifies the spectrum of the sound. However these conditions are not the same everywhere in the space. It most often depends of the position of the source of the sound and on the position of the hearer. The modification of the sound might be different depending on every single point in the space, even if the hearer can't hear it properly due to the limited range of our

hearing. We perceive the space around us, as we can understand it, with our own experience. I will go into further detail later regarding this point.

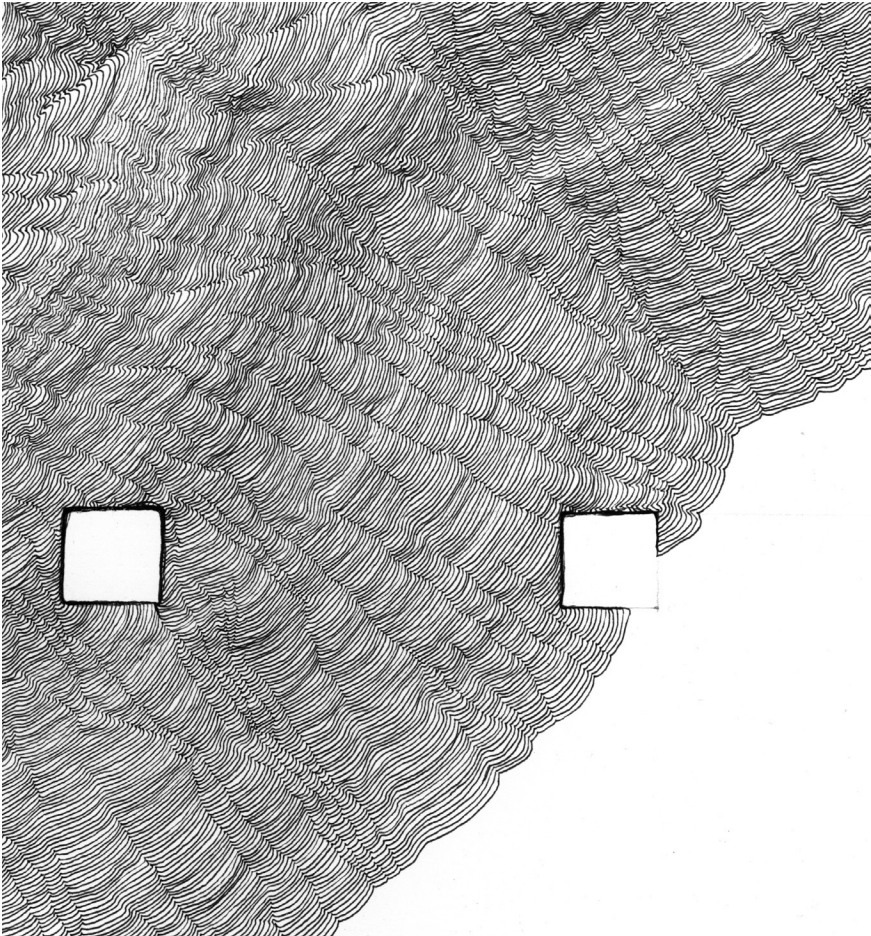
By drawing a parallel between art and music production we can ask can we conceive a sound installation or a music concert, without first taking into consideration the factors that can have an impact on the sound itself? This question reflects, I believe, the main problem of commercial music today, where every concert is an act of conformism. An act that erases the peculiarity of the concert space for the benefit of music that is easily transposable to any space. The acoustic can just be « good » or « bad » according to what the « style » of music needs. It is impossible for musicians to take advantage of the natural acoustic of a place because of the concert's configuration they are conformed to. But, also because of their impossibility to think of the space as what it is - a sound amplifier colored by its own characteristics.

« Each space, furthermore, has its own personality that tends to modify, position, and move sounds by means of absorptions, reflections, attenuations, and other structurally related phenomena. Conventional acoustic engineering practice has historically defied these phenomena in an attempt to deliver the same product to everybody in the space. Accepted as natural occurrences to be enjoyed and used, however, they open up a whole new field of musical composition. » Alvin Lucier, 1979

Alvin Lucier is an experimental composer who defines the space not as an element to dissimulate but as a constituent part of the art process. One of his most famous piece, *I'm sitting in a room*, deals with the internal acoustic parameters of the space which becomes the main material of the piece. He defines his own piece that way:

« In « I am sitting in a room » (1969), several paragraphs of human speech are used to expose sets of resonant frequencies implied by the architectural dimensions of various sized rooms. By means of a pair of tape recorders, the sound materials are recycled through a room to amplify by repetition those frequencies common to both the original recording and those implied by the room. As the repetitive process continues and segments accumulate, the resonant frequencies are reinforced, the others gradually eliminated. The space acts as a filter. We discover that each room has its own set of resonant frequencies in the same way that musical sounds have overtones. » Alvin Lucier, 1979

Now let us return to our experimental space where we analyze the influence space has on sound. The idea of a space being completely empty and perfectly isolated from the outside might be true only in very particular conditions. We can consider that in most instances there might be other people, animated things such as machinery or simply the sound of air coming out of the ventilation system. The space is not isolated and will have a symphony of sound coming from it. All these sounds have a « mask » effect on the perception of sound itself. The mask will cover a range of frequencies or might have the same frequency as other sounds, therefore influencing how we perceive the sound.



DISTURBING SPACE BY SILENCE

*« There is no such thing as silence. Get thee to, an anechoic chamber and hear there thy nervous system in operation and hear there thy blood in circulation. »
John Cage, Silence, 1961*

The concept of silence developed by John Cage ought to be brought into this discussion. After his own experience in an anechoic chamber, he concluded that absolute silence doesn't really exist, except maybe in empty space. And even in this condition, your head while still being full of air will be able to hear the sharp sparks of your nervous system. Absolute silence is somewhere close to death or experiencing the void of space, and hence no one is able to perceive it. Therefore anywhere there are people, animals, machinery or simply air, there is sound. The important question we must ask is, how do we hear it?

By shifting our attention to listening, John Cage also focuses on the spatial dimension of sound. How does a sound resonate in space and what is it made of? A « spatialized » sound is influenced by the space around it, the echo it creates, the position of the listener, its physiology and the position of structures in the space. There are many other parameters present that can influence the development and expression of sound.

« We're passing through time and space, our ears are in excellent condition. A sound is high or low, soft or loud, of a certain timbre, lasts a certain length of time, and has an envelope. » John Cage, Silence, 1961

*Is it high?
Is it low?
Is it in the middle?
Is it soft?
Is it loud?
Are there two?
Are there more than two?
Is it a piano?
Why isn't it?
Was it an airplane?
Is it a noise?
Is it music?
Is it softer than before?
Is it supersonic?
When will it stop?
What's coming?
Is it time?
Is it very short?
Very long?
Just medium?
If I had something to see, would it be theatre?
Is sound enough?
What more do I need?
Don't I get it whether I need it or not?
Is it a sound?
Then, again, is it music?
Is music—the word, I mean—is that a sound?
If it is, is music music?
Is the word « music » music?
Does it communicate anything?
Must it?*

If it's high, does it?
If it's low, does it?
If it's in the middle, does it?
If it's soft, does it?
If it's loud, does it?
If it's an interval, does it?
What is an interval?
Is an interval a chord?
Is a chord an aggregate?
Is an aggregate a constellation?
What's a constellation?
How many sounds are there altogether?
One million?
Ten thousand?
Eighty-eight?
Do I have to ask ten more?
Do I?
Why?
Why do I?
Did I decide to ask so many?
Wasn't I taking a risk?
Was I?
Why was I?
Will it never stop?
Why won't it?

John Cage, Silence, 1961

We must not forget another important parameter: that sound is not an immediate process. Sound takes time to travel from its source to a receiver. In normal atmospheric conditions, the speed of sound in air is approximately 340m/s. It is approximately 1500m/s in water. Two people in the same space do not hear the same sound at the same time. They do not perceive the reflection of sound of the wall at the same time. And because of the speed of sound, and the relative length of waves, they do not experience the same intensity of sound (what acousticians call static waves). At any moment and in any point of space the soundscape is different. By moving across a space you are not only changing your own experience of sound, but you are also influencing how another person perceives sound in that space. At the same time you are also creating sounds, which again will be heard differently by you and another person. As such, sound and its perception has a strong connection to the now, helping to inform our present, and to be forever evaluated as a part of our day-to-day experience.

FROM TIME TO TIME

« Il y a bien un objet qui est capturé, mais comme le serait un oiseau qui ne cesserait de voleter dans sa cage et dont on ne pourrait arrêter le mouvement pour l'observer. Même enregistré [...] le son continue de bouger, parce qu'autrement il n'y a pas de son. » Michel Chion, Le Son, 1998

« There is effectively an object captured, but like a little bird which would not stop to fly in its cage, and from which it could not be possible to stop the movement to observe it. Even if it is recorded, the sound continue to move,[...] otherwise there is no sound. » Michel Chion, Le Son, 1998

Time enables the propagation of sound in space. It moves it, brings it into contact with walls and the listener's ears. However time is also a listening process. We all need time to perceive, to hear, and to understand what has happened. More than a physical notion, time has its reasons and meaning in an in-calculable number of fields. In this brief essay I won't be going into detail discussing the use of time, but, I will discuss its meaning in the perception of art.

[...]
Was it an airplane?
Is it a noise?
Is it music?
[...]

SPONTANEOUS LANGUAGES OF MUSIC

Perfect authentic cadence. The last notes decrease in the resonance of the room. The music piece finishes as it resonates in the minds of the audience. They leave the concert hall, music still feels quite strong but is already beginning to diminish. The feeling of flow of the notes and the tempo persists. The music gets weaker. After waking up the next day feeling the sensation of the concert I experienced the day before. The music is now different, it is the music of a person's own life augmented by the memory of great moments.

Each piece of music has its own time. In fact, time is a crucial aspect of music. It gives it structure, it gives it a dynamic flow, and it involves the audience in its flow, as they are able to listen in unity with the musicians and other audience members. For over a century now the note, as a pitched sound, has not been the principal meaning of music. Instead, we can now define music as the art of organizing sounds and silences. According to Victor Hugo: music is noise which thinks.

During any concert, no matter the type of music playing, something is being shared simultaneously between the player(s) and the audience. This link, while the music is playing, is re-evaluated in every instant. I might define three different situations to describe the phenomenon.

The first situation is a music composition or a traditional music piece that the musicians and the audience know. They hold the music together while it is played. They anticipate the moment of tension, and hold their breath together. The meaning of the music is already known by both sides, no other elements can interfere with its meaning, elements can only disturb the common experience. This experience is a celebration in the sense that we are sharing in a moment where we know the intended outcome and experience it together.

The second situation is when the musician knows the piece and the audience doesn't. There is then a delay. The audience discovers the music a little at a time, and tries to follow the story, but must wait until the end to understand the flow of sounds that is the music. The meaning is then delayed until the end of the piece. This delay stops the audience from being able to analyse the music immediately, instead they must follow every low and high. It is necessary for them to have time to experience the music, evaluating how they feel and judging their interpretation of the musician's intentions. Analyzing not only the musicians but also the style of music, the way it is played and its sociological context.

This process can often be completely unknown to the individual, unaware of their unconscious projection into the music.

The third situation is when neither the audience nor the musicians know what will be played. This process involves improvisation, by which I don't mean musical styles like bebop jazz that maintain a very strict layout of harmony, rhythms and traditions. This style might be best fitted for the second situation above, even though it has some long solo moments that could fit very well with the improvisation element of the third situation. For this third situation we are describing a process where the musician does not know the music and is only discovering it at the same time as the audience. It is at this point that we are reminded of Cage's point about silence, where it is not possible to experience it unless in its truest form. This observation becomes relevant and very apparent as we experience the improvisational nature of this type of music. Certain elements that were not apparent before are now obvious and become very important parts of the music. These external elements that can also be external, they are now involved in how you interpret the music. Tempo, pitch, tone, position and cadence all become important parts of the whole. Overall, it is the improvisational nature of the process that reveals a truly subjectivity experience. The musician(s) and the audience are both immersed in an immediate process of analysis together. Audience and musicians are invited to bring their own perspective to the music. Both are reacting and influencing the meaning and their own understanding of the music. We can describe it as language, which takes all its sense in a never-ending immediate process of interpreting the current moment.

The presented analysis cannot accurately describe the role of time in music without considering the anthropological point of view as well - assessing what is « music » and « time » in a societal context. While this type of analysis is complex for achieving my goal of discussing the notion of time in music, I will only very briefly discuss this anthropological perspective.

The concept of time might be very different according to the type of music produced. The time it takes to process music can vary from one situation to another. We can understand this better by drawing parallels with other areas that are also concerned with the idea of time in their development - a duality that exists between a producer and an audience in dance, theater, performance, language. To describe the art forms above, we use the term « alive ». On the other hand, we use « static » to describe other forms of art.

However, static is not in reference to the movement of the piece, it is referring to the delay in the production of the piece and its presentation to the public. Therefore static art allows the artist/musician to create their piece before allowing the audience to view it and take part in its experience.

So there are two phases of time in static art: the first phase being the creation phase, which belongs to the artist and can not be described by constants; And the second phase, reception phase, where the audience can take part in experiencing, observing and analyzing the piece. Whether a piece is static or alive critically impact the role that subjectivity and time play in audience's understanding. What is the time of observation? Of perceiving? Of comprehension of the piece? Of the space in which the piece is included? What is the end of it? Is there one? Is the time infinite? How can the artist use it?

KAIROS

The Greek god Kairos is a young man with a tuft of hair on the front of his head while on the back of his head he is bald. On his feet he has two wings, which allow him to move very quickly. When he comes to you, you have a brief moment to catch him by his hair otherwise it is too late. The occasion is already missed. Kairos is the god of the opportune time. He is sharp and quick with a blade in his hand that divides time. He has a weighing scale in the other hand, to weigh his decisions as good and appropriate. He stands between the « not yet » and the « too late ». Exactly at the right moment.

Kairos represents an ephemeral notion of time, fleeting and ever appropriate. In opposition, Chronos is the time we can calculate, with a past, a present and a future. It can be easily compared to our current notion of time (more precisely in our European/occidental way of thinking). This concept of time is predictable and has a future that is determined. It is a periodic notion of time. Chronos is the God of destiny. Kairos and Chronos are joined to Aïôn (time of the cycle of life- eternity) to compose the concept of time in Ancient Greece.

« Chronos, le danseur, [qu'il] s'affirme comme le modèle de la régularité et de la répétabilité ; sa danse, cyclique, périodique, est décomposable, analysable, imitable ; [...]. Kairos, lui, se révèle à la fois sauteur et acrobate déroutant ; sa sikinnis saccadée quasi dionysiaque confère à ses mouvements unicité et totalité, défi et irrépétabilité, risque, engagement et aventure ; il invite les consciences à demeurer, comme lui, intrépides. »

Evanghélos Moutsopoulos, Le statut philosophique du Kairos, 1988

Chronos the dancer, is recognized as a model of regularity and repetition. His dance is cyclic, periodic, decomposable, analyzable and imitable [...]. Kairos, on the other hand, proves to be at the same time a jumper and a disconcerting acrobat. His erratic sikinnis, almost Dionysian in nature, represents unity and engagement, a challenge, an adventure and a risk. His movements cannot be repeated, and reside within totality, he invites the conscience to stay as audacious as himself.

Evanghélos Moutsopoulos, The philosophic status of Kairos, 1988

Kairos might be sublime in the instant. It is the moment of any possibility, but a possibility that must be caught first. The Kairos involve an intention. An involvement of the person able to understand the opportunity.

Could it be acceptable to describe time this way? Time that has to be caught to be experienced? A time we have to make ours? How does art impact us when we are involved in this process?

Dealing with art is difficult; it a brief moment when it is possible to touch our sensibility. It is concerned with our own perception and our cultural background, in addition to our own intentions.

*« The music is a continuation, just the listening is intermittent. »
Henry David Thoreau, Journal of Henry David Thoreau, 1906*

*- D'où vient ton créateur ? - De sicyon. - Son nom ? - Lysippe. - Et toi ? - Je suis Kairos, dompteur de tout. - Tiens ! tu avances sur la pointe des pieds ? - Je cours sans cesse. - Ces ailes doubles déployées à tes chevilles ? - J'erre en volant. - Dans ta main droite, ce rasoir ? - Aux hommes il signale que je suis plus aigu que tout tranchant. - Et ces cheveux sur ton visage ? - Puisse me saisir qui vient à ma rencontre. - Par Zeus ! ton crâne est chauve ! - C'est pour que nul ne me capture, dût-il me poursuivre avec acharnement. - Et dans quel but l'artiste t'a-t-il façonné ? - A votre adresse, étranger ; et, placé dans ce vestibule, je sers de leçon.
(Epigramme de Poseidippe, Anthologie grecque, XVI, 275)*



TIME IN SANDBACK'S SCULPTURE

du

What role does time play?

Sandback

I believe that, for the viewer, time plays a role in my works that is diametrically opposed to that in a more or less classical sculpture. In Michelangelo's David, for example, you have to walk around the work to collect the individual pieces of information necessary for understanding the work as a whole. Meaning that the process of perception lasts until you have arrived at a feeling for the unity. By contrast, in my works the unity is given from the beginning, and the subsequent process of perception can last for ages. So my works exist in normal, everyday time.

Fred Sandback, Interview by Ingrid Rein, 1975



Fred Sandback defines an opposition between the sculpture which can be understood as a whole (unity) and a sculpture « that the subsequent process of perception can last for ages ». This sounds like a « never ending process » where the position of the audience has also an impact on art. Art is then not a process, which can be self-sufficient and the object can't be the concentration of the art. The art comes from a coincidence of different parameters including the audience as the main part, with its view always being re-evaluated. Marcel Duchamp stated already that it is the viewer who makes the painting. If the situation depends on everyone's perspective, then we can also think of how perception depends on what Walter Benjamin calls the perception modes of human's societies. These considerations describe in different scales the importance of the notion of time in the creation of art. How do I apprehend what happened in a space? How can I see it and hear it? What does it evoke in me? Where do these evocations come from? Is my perception a relevant part of my being?

Fred Sandback, Lisson Gallery, London, 1977



Pierre Schaeffer au phonogène à clavier, 1951 © Serge Lido

MECHANISMS OF PERCEPTION

THE GIVEN TO HEAR by Pierre Schaeffer

« On me parle, je pense à autre chose. Mon interlocuteur, vexé, se tait. J'entends ce silence de mauvais augure. Je parviens à arracher au fond sonore, avant qu'elle ne s'y engloutisse définitivement, la dernière moitié de la phrase qu'il avait prononcée, ce qui me permettra, avec un peu de chance, de lui donner la réplique et de le persuader que la distraction n'était que apparente. »

Pierre Schaeffer, Traité des objets musicaux, 1966

« Someone is talking to me, I m thinking something else. My interlocutor, upset, stops talking. I hear a silence of bad omen. I find out from the sound background, before it is definitely erased, the last half of the sentence he pronounced, that provided me with a chance to react and convince him that the distraction was only an appearance. »

Pierre Schaeffer, Treatise on Musical Objects, 1966

Sound resonates in space and in our heads. We first have a sensation, triggered by something that makes us alert: in the example given by Pierre Schaeffer, it is a silence of bad omen. Something that sounds abnormal in the background. An abnormality is actually our « abnormal » that our brain analyzes using our own memory.

Therefore, we can understand that we are somehow dependent on the reaction our brain has when it hears a sound. Some sounds cause little to no reaction because they are a usual part of the « natural » background that we are used to. Others can make us react in various ways, causing our muscles to contract, readying ourselves to react physically. A car horn beeping in the street might make us jump on the pavement before even consciously becoming aware of the direction the car is coming from. These are the instinctive mechanisms to hearing; they have a basic influence on your body.

Knowing that « I am listening » to something makes a big difference in my conscious awareness. As I focus my attention on a sound to hear it more clearly, to analyze it and to understand what is being said or is happening. In English there are only two words to distinguish between the perception (hearing something) and the action (listening to something). In French, three words describe the actions related to the perception of sound and listening:

« Ouïr » is the perception to hear. It is a passive action. I cannot stop hearing (d'ouïr). It is the natural process of hearing, always being open.
« Écouter » is the action of listening. It is an active action. I focus my hearing on something in order to analyze it or to hear it clearly.
« Entendre » is also an action that is active but does not focus on anything in particular. « J'entends », I hear, my brain is able to hear all that is happening around me.

The fact that these three words are often confused and substituted for each other reflects the inherent complexity of talking about listening. For example, French are using « je t'entends bien », (« I hear you properly ») to mean that the sound is sharp enough to understand the forms of words, but it can also mean « I understand what you are saying ». In other words, I was paying close attention while listening to you and I understand what you are talking about.

The last important mechanism involved in the action of hearing is how to « understand » the sound. Herein lies the major problem: what do I have to understand? Must I know the source of the sound? The meaning behind the sound? its message? Is the sound related to a dysfunction or an alteration around me? In every circumstance sound is relative to memory, because it is memory that gives it meaning. The form of the sound allows us to recognize it and say « it is the sound of my mother's voice ». Reverb and echo, which filters the sound, helps recognize the general size of the place, I can then speculate whether it is a classroom or a church. And this is possible only because I have experienced being inside such spaces, I can therefore evaluate the echo of the space and recognize something familiar. The same can be said for languages, I may be able to guess that someone is speaking Dutch while not knowing a single word of Dutch. But because I know how English and German sound, I can hear a connection, listening to the form of the accent and by deduction know that the speaker might come from the Netherlands. I could provide many more examples, but what is important here is what Pierre Schaeffer calls a specialist's hear.

To illustrate this phenomenon, Pierre Schaeffer provides a musical example of someone playing violin. Two hearers, one a violinist, and the other a sound technician. They will not listen, hear and understand the same things.

Two additional parameters must be considered here. One is the physiology of the hearer. We are not made in the same mold, our ears are shaped differently, our head, the thickness of our cranium and our heights are not the same. Our body also acts as a filter and shapes the form of sound that comes in contact with our ears.

Second is the spatial position of the hearer. Two people cannot stand in the same space at the same time, and according to the room, the resonance and the reflections off the walls, the sound might be different.

In our example we will not consider these two notions, and think of our two hearers having the same perfect physiognomy and are standing in the exact same place. We can then say: They are hearing the same (in the sense of « ouïr ») but they are not listening to/hearing (in the sense of « entendre ») and not understanding the same. The violinist will listen to the way the violin is being played; he will hear the intonation and a lot of other parameters relative to way of playing a violin. He will then have an idea as to whether the musician is playing technically well, if he has a good energy. Using these types of considerations, a violinist would apply his own standards of interpretation to evaluate the sound he is hearing. The sound technician will listen to see if he can hear the violin properly, listening to see if the violinist is well placed in the space to enable the majority of those listening to hear it clearly. The technician will know how to position the microphones in order to record the concert and the specific acoustic characteristics of the instrument in term of frequencies and dynamic.

What is important in this example is how the method of hearing and listening are relative to the background of each person. A specialist will listen to something with the ears of a specialist, and understand it with the memory of a specialist. It is important to understand that behind every sound there is meaning. The attitude of hearing the « sound object », as Pierre Schaeffer describes it, means listening to a sound for its own sonic interest and not for its meaning or its source, and this ability needs training and alternative experiences hearing.

VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE

What would happen if we apply the analysis of Pierre Schaeffer to the other senses? For sight, what is the difference between to look, to see, to observe, to watch and to view? The main objective for me is to describe what I would call the conscious intention. There are several steps that need to be described: events/objects that are imperceptible to my perception; events/objects that can be perceived but are however concealed in the background. Events/objects I perceive without needing to focus on them; events and objects that are my main preoccupation at the moment.

The different forms of perception we have are relative to time and are in a perpetual evolution. Our attention shifts from moment to moment, one thing to another, according to our thoughts and the alertness of our senses. If I hear an explosion or if I smell something burning my mind will immediately change its focus. If nothing « special » is happening, my mind will wander through time, stopping occasionally on certain details or follow what I consciously dictate to it. I use the terms events and objects to describe not only the things that are either in motion or constantly changing, in terms of how we perceive the moment, but also those objects that seem to be constant. Events constitute those things that can easily catch my attention, because events directly interfere with the individual: « Something happened ». Objects describe not only a static form but also focus of my perception in more of an active way : « I will use this. I will look at this. »

So the question can be asked: what makes us focus on something? Or how do we decide to focus on something? What constitutes the perceptible and what the imperceptible at any given moment? Visible or invisible? How can I act on my conscious? How can I focus my attention to be attentive to other details? How can I see, hear, smell, taste or touch differently?

For the French Philosopher Maurice Merleau Ponty, subjects and objects are not separate entities but are linked and interdependent: the thing is inseparable from a person perceiving it. Perception is also relative to experience. As an observer, I put my own perception into the object, charged with what I know about it. How, by my own experience, I relate some factors and make associations between objects, myself and the object, space and the object, myself and space? These considerations are unconscious most of the time. The main question to ask then, is how can we activate the conscious intention? I can try to focus on something, to learn and discover, to have an active way of perceiving my environment and create pleasure from it.

Going further, I can try and understand things as they are, in an eternal philosophical research of truth. That can be finally applied to ourselves because everything is related to how we perceive. Developing our perception means developing our identity as well. Learning about our environment is learning about ourselves.



SHORT MUSICAL STATEMENT

As an « artist » (and here I also include my musical work), the relationship between time, experience, and environment has always been a central point. My work in improvised music is focused on what I consider to be my environment: how can you improvise if you're not including yourself in your own environment? Improvisation that is related to the moment of its own existence, involves time and spatiality as its own substance. The music then does not dominate the space but makes the space relevant from the point of common experience. The question is then, how to engage the listener to be involved in the common experience?

In my opinion, the main mistake would be to play in a demagogic way. By this I mean playing with the intention to touch the basic emotional instinct of an individual. Even if that emotional instinct is different for everyone. I have observed by experience a common idea of what « should be » considered an emotional instant. This can be seen in arenas full of people taking part in a common action led by the singer. To witness such a mass of people who identify so differently all partaking in a common experience is interesting. In my opinion, however, there is a limit to this conformism to a community. Demagogic way of playing music is also to conform and reduce the audience's possibility to project their own perspective into the music. To make this idea more present and relevant, I will reveal what an experimental music DJ confided in me during a concert: « Look! When they're not stupidly looking to the DJ, it means they're dancing for themselves. That is what we call a good dancing music ». I find his comment very revealing of how it is to be a part of a common experience as an independent person. Even if I do not consider my music to be best fit for dancing, I am still interested in this independent way of thinking, where listeners try to place their own intention into listening and not to liquidate into a river of emotions.

My musical practice of improvisation leads me to explore space in different environments: an acoustic space, a musical space, a social space, and an experimental space. I explore how I can influence these spaces myself but also how listeners act on it. I think space has to be considered multi-spatial, with different layers of meaning. It also has to be thought of as four-dimensional: if the experience of space exists through the perception, constantly reevaluated, it involves undoubtedly the notion of time. Space is spatiality and temporality.

Stéphane Clor, Perspektiven (detail), 2016

PERSPEKTIVEN

Intuition. Something is here. I try to perceive it. It is almost invisible, almost inaudible. It makes the whole space vibrate. What is it exactly?

The work reflects some component forms of the architecture of a space. Strings are stretched through space in forms evoking the same dimensions as architectural space. They create new spaces and interact with the space that already exists. The association of these spaces creates new possible dimensions and reflects itself. The vibrations of the speakers transmit the vibration of the strings. The frequencies played are based on a spectral analysis of the acoustic characteristics of the space. They are slowly and imperceptibly changing, as all speakers are not playing the exact same frequency. The difference between frequencies creates a « resultant », a very slow frequency we use to hear more as a swinging. The speakers are placed intuitively according to the reflections of the walls and the vibration results in their interactions.

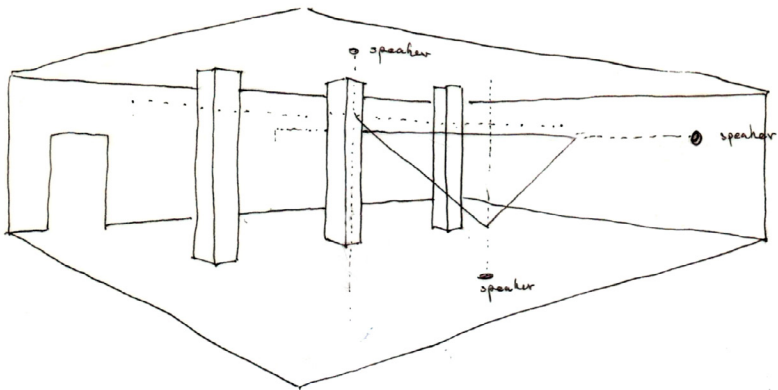
My intention is to constitute what I would call a « kinesthetic space » where neither the sound nor the visual are dominant, but are constitutive of a whole relative to individual's perception. I focus on the relativity and spatiality of perceiving space in its different layers. The work offers infinite possibilities of points of views according to the position of the viewer and the evolution of the sound (time), as well as its interaction with the space and the other persons present in it. The viewer is included in the space reflecting its own capacity of perception. The fragmentation of architectural elements of the space sends the viewer back to his capacity as an analyst and interpreter, to its own mental space. Perception is fragmented in a multitude of perspectives that the brain tries to contentiously re-evaluate, so that an individual can understand the environment as a whole. To divide up is to understand.

The integration of the installation into the space as an integral component of this space allows me to recreate an idea of movement and displacement into the space. The architect Stan Allen defines this idea under the concept of « Field condition » as « *the complex dynamic of architecture's users resulting of the space's configuration.* »

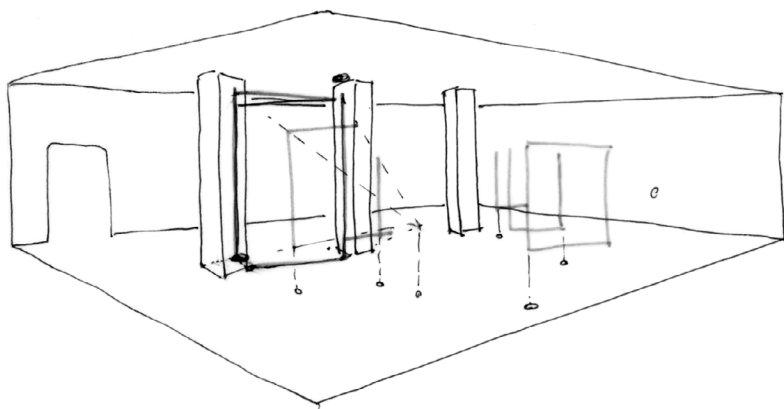
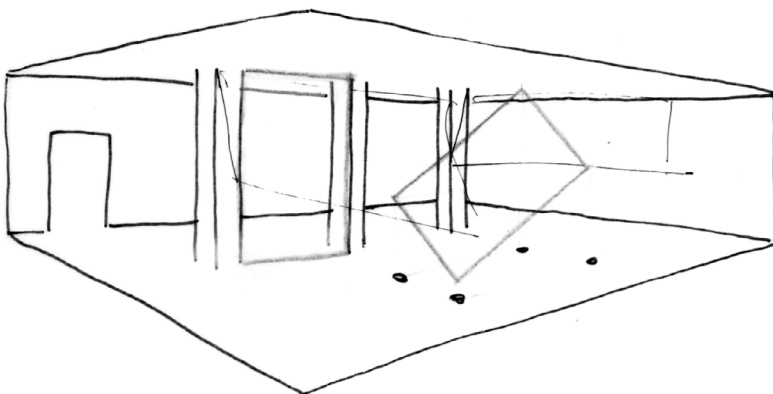
« *Field condition offers an opening in architecture to address the dynamic of use, the behavior of crowds, and the complex geometries of masses in motion.* »
Stan Allen, *Field Conditions, in Point + Lines*, 1985.

The installation creates different layers of organization and re-models the space. It also questions the indeterminate situation created by people's motion into the space and the possibilities of interaction.

What do I want to hear? What do I want to see? The installation activates intention - what happens if I move? Where are the details? What can I hear? What can I see? Inside or outside? Visible? Invisible? The fragmented space invites the viewer to project his own perspective, to focus on the question of his own perception, and to make a spatiotemporal experience of it. What we are or believe we are, is never a completed process, but in constant evolution.



Stéphane Clor, sketches about Perspektiven's setting up, 2016



ASCETICISM AND FUNDAMENTAL PLEASURES

Jörg Hausmann

Mr. Sandback, as an artist you are very sparing in your use of artistic means and yet you use them to great effect. Would you like to tell us what Minimal Art is?

Fred Sandback

Minimal Art-that's just a term, and for me it's inappropriate as an expression. You could just as easily speak of Maximal Art. Light, space, facts are involved. But of course that has a lot to do with the viewer's personal standpoint.

1969 Interview by Jörg Hausmann

The Idea to get more by doing less might be one of the most basic philosophical principles. I should make it clear that my intention is not in anyway to define any kind of « universal theory », but try to understand the implications it could have on the development of my personal art practice. Thus, I would describe « less is more » through the aspects of materiality and time, time that is also related to pleasure. The questions put forward might be of some relevance to other topics such as education, consumption and politics.

ZEN THROUGH CAGE

In the beginner's mind there are many possibilities; in the expert's mind there are few.

[...]

So the most difficult thing is always to keep your beginner's mind.

[...]

This is also the real secret of the arts: always be a beginner.

[...]

Shunryu Suzuki, Zen Mind, Beginner's Mind, 1970

If a sound disturbs you, listen to it! This might be one of the most essential lessons to come out of the work of John Cage. If I listen carefully to something, it might start to be interesting. Not because things are necessarily changing but my way of listening might begin to change. I perceive details, things I have never observed before or would have suspected. I try to get deeper within the sound, listening to it with the ears of a beginner.

How can I understand what I am listening to? How can I learn something from it? Learning is the key to pleasure and happiness. And, if you are able to get something out of nothing, it would mean that out of the illusion of having, that the « true existence comes from emptiness and goes back again into emptiness ».

« Moment after moment, everyone comes out from nothingness. This is the true joy of life."

As « emptiness » does not actually exist, there is always something to listen to, always something worthy of interest. The question is how you are able to comprehend it. Readiness, mindfulness.

My answer is that understanding, and knowing, has always something to do with the moment. 4'33 is a musical piece that is always different according to what happened in the moment. It becomes more than a musical piece, becoming a way of thinking.

Am I able to understand every instant as it is? Probably not: my mind is always fragmented, jumping from one place to the other. If something happens, my mind immediately focuses on it; I forget what I was thinking about to focus on what has just happened. What I said before has already been forgotten.

How to free my mind? How to focus on the moment and look around and see? Not to think too much, but to listen - that is already a start. I would take my time to look at it better, to listen to it, trying to observe all its peculiarities and to recognize its interest.

Take time to look. Take time listen. Take time to smell. Take time to perceive.

What is the purpose of doing art?

According to John Cage transcribing the answer of Gita Sarabhai, a classical Indian musician: To calm and appease the mind, in order to let it host the divine influences.

What would it mean to give enough time?

INTERVIEW WITH EPICURUS

If art was actually a way to philosophize through our sense and intuition, then what is art looking for? What am I looking for? What is the reason of my own existence in the society? Or more basically, what are the goals of my own existence?

Basic questions.

No answer.

« So we must exercise ourselves in the things which bring happiness, since, if that be present, we have everything, and, if that be absent, all our actions are directed towards attaining it. » Epicurus, Letter to menoeceus

For Epicurus, one of the reasons of being is to acquire happiness.

Happiness is impossible to universally define. It is simultaneously a simple and a complex notion. We have somehow an impact on its experience; but so do events and factors outside our control. For me the question arises about how we can define « happiness » when considering time, especially when recognizing how our perception and conscience can often be fragmented. What time scale could we establish in relation to happiness?

I would like to contrast the experiences of joy and pleasure, in relation to their immediacy and the moment, the right-now. The French philosopher Robert Misrahi describes joy as a sentiment of self-coherence. The coherence between the being you desire to be and the one you are in the present moment. I first desire, then I fully realize my desire and then indulge in the pleasure of it. By consequence, pleasure also involves a notion of immediacy. It is a result. And it could be interesting to consider pleasure as an instantaneous occurrence while joy has to be considered in a larger scale. Pleasure is or isn't. Joy is built up over time, it is an accomplishment, but it has an end. It is worth remembering the concept of Kairos, which can also be defined with a « not yet » and an « already done » in a process involving a peak. A peak that is difficult to evaluate in its ephemerality. Is joy a concept to be evaluated by using a Kairos perspective of time? How do we define this ultimate moment of pleasure? Can we define different ephemeral time scales? If the instant might be shorter than the moment, can I associate pleasure to the immediate and joy to a moment? Does pleasure define the moment of joy? What is then its relationship to happiness?

For Epicurus pleasure is the alpha and the omega of a blessed life. Pleasure is our first and kindred good. It is the starting-point of every choice and of every aversion, and to it we come back, inasmuch as we make feeling the rule by which to judge of every good thing.

We are attracted by the instant of pleasure, by the desire of pleasure. But what kind of desires and pleasure are we attracted to? According to Epicurus: We must also reflect that some desires are natural, others are groundless; and that of the natural some are necessary as well as natural, and some natural only. And of the necessary desires some are necessary if we are to be happy, some if the body is to be rid of uneasiness, some if we are even to live. He who has a clear and certain understanding of these things will direct every preference and aversion toward securing health of body and tranquility of mind, seeing that this is the sum and end of a blessed life.

It is then necessary for each of us to define what could be natural desires and pleasures to obtain. We are then to push away all groundless ones, in pursuit of a healthy body and the tranquility of mind. This happiness does not arise out of randomness but is constituted by moment of joy (constituted by instant of pleasure) we somehow create for ourselves. It isn't an ordinary joy coming out of a passive position and randomness, but an active joy depending on you. A joy we create ourselves by imagining and accomplishing. Created by doing.

Would the instant pleasure and moments of joy consist of, or be related to, the background melody of happiness? And if so, how is art a part of it?

In my opinion, art should strive to, at all points, be connected both to the time of the creator and the time of the listener. Art needs to fragment time into moments of joy and instants of pleasure, which can only exist through the perspective of everyone. As such, art has nothing to do with an absolute.

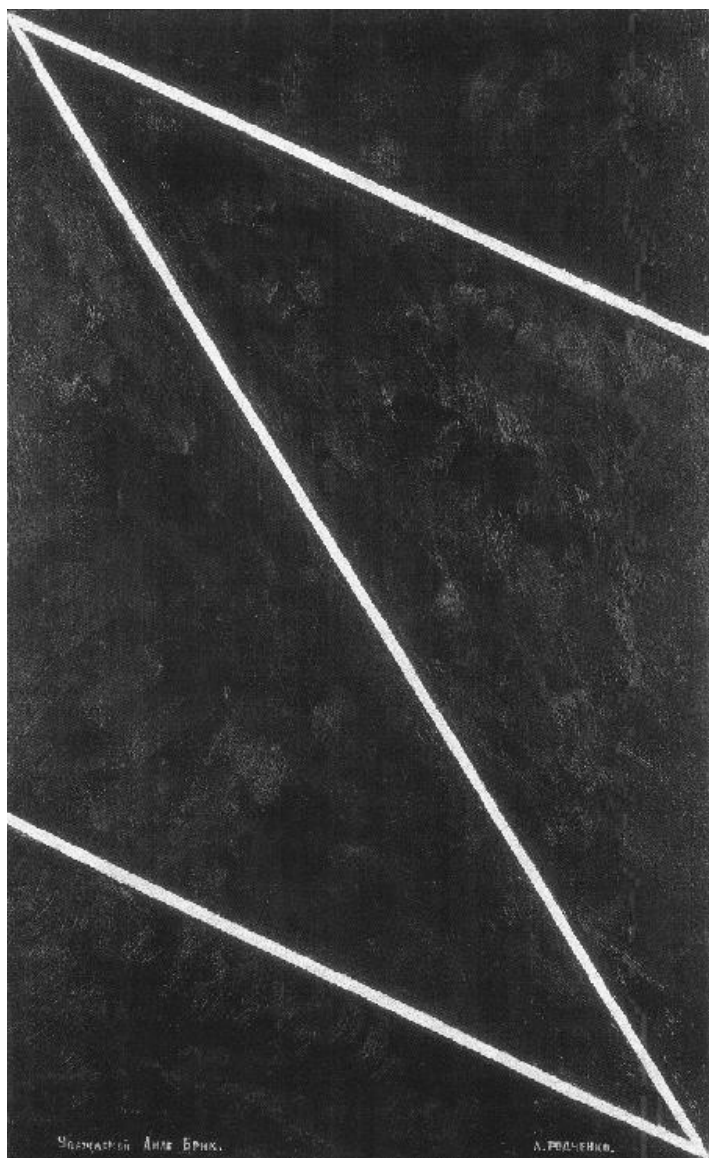
Creating happiness is about grabbing onto opportunities. By learning how to see them, creating them, by accepting new things and making decisions. Most importantly by erasing what Epicurus calls the groundless desires.

« When we say, then, that pleasure is the end and aim, we do not mean the pleasures of the prodigal or the pleasures of sensuality, as we are understood to do by some through ignorance, prejudice, or willful misrepresentation. By pleasure we mean the absence of pain in the body and of trouble in the soul. It is not an unbroken succession of drinking-bouts and of revelry, not sexual lust, not the enjoyment of the fish and other delicacies of a luxurious table, which produce a pleasant life; it is sober reasoning, searching out the grounds of every choice and avoidance, and banishing those beliefs through which the greatest tumults take possession of the soul. »

Epicurus, Letter to menoeceus

« Exercise yourself in these and related precepts day and night, both by yourself and with one who is like-minded; then never, either in waking or in dream, will you be disturbed, but will live as a god among men. For man loses all semblance of mortality by living in the midst of immortal blessings. »

Epicurus, Letter to menoeceus



УДАЧА ИЛИ БРИК.

А. РОДЧЕНКО.

II. Ich kann mir kein seligeres Wissen denken, als dieses Eine : daß man ein Beginner werden muß. Einer der das erste Wort schreibt hinter einen jahrhundertelangen Gedankenstrich.

Notizen zur Melodie der Dinge, Rainer Maria Rilke

II. I can imagine no knowledge holier than this: that you must become a beginner. Someone who writes the first word after a centuries-long dash.

Notes on the Melody of Things, Rainer Maria Rilke

ECHO (and conclusion)

After writing this essay I am left with a feeling of being unaccomplished. I would have written more but time is passing. I am persuaded that this essay is a new step in my research life and these topics will occupy my thoughts for some time to come. Writing a master thesis has made me confront the contemporary art world, and the political world as well. While I mostly tried to describe what my theoretical research is, I would like to close this essay with more personal opinions.

I think the image of being an artist also needs a political dimension, because it has to be strongly linked to the current evolution of society. I cannot imagine being outside of the political and societal sphere of interaction. When I say political I am not speaking about only putting on a piece in a public space or joining a political party. I am talking about engagement, involving myself in the everyday moment, developing a coherent approach to speaking out and acting on social issues. This engagement involves starting a dialogue about the quality and openness of art, investing myself entirely in the work of an artist, for artists also have a responsibility to society.

Happiness is an important and significant part of art that must not be forgotten. Here we are not talking about happiness that is empty, but one that is built on the choices we make in obtaining our happiness. Unfortunately here is where the problem lies in our society. There is an unequal possibility of choices that lay within the hands of the few, and for various reasons, aren't available to all on a global and worldwide platform. In addition to this inequality of choices, we have a huge difference of financial resources between people. How is it possible today that people are dying due to poverty when we produce more than enough riches than are necessary to live? This is directly related to our preoccupation with consumption and appearance, where the materialism is the basis of social hierarchy. When I see prominent art institutions participating in the market and speculating, I wonder what it means for society. What is the reason for creating art for the purpose of money when it should be created for the common good?

The second area to discuss is often a consequence of the first one, and it is the role of education. It is apparent to me that there is an unequal allocation of resources between public and private education. Children are not born with the same social status and therefore already face limitations in the standard of life. By privatizing education, our society does not offer the same opportunities to each citizen.

University education is hard to obtain when you are not being supported. How, then, can we talk about equality? What makes this situation even more desperate is the omnipresence of the media. We are overwhelmed daily by publicity, images, and useless information in conditions that push us to hysteria, leading to a loss of the the capacity to analyze properly. When art participates in this media propaganda, by focusing on commercial publicity and demagoguery, it is no more than a simulacrum. Art acts as a source of inspiration for the people, giving them the opportunity to create and experience something themselves. However, when there are only a few educational possibilities and constant media propaganda, the right environment is created for totalitarianism, especially the capital kind. Edwards Bernays understood this problem a long time ago when he published his book *Propaganda* in 1928. Propaganda focused on « how to manipulate public's opinion in a democracy ». There is no need for further commentary, because everything has already been said.

« Chapter I - Organizing the chaos

The conscious and intelligent manipulation of the organized habits and opinions of the masses is an important element in democratic society. Those who manipulate this unseen mechanism of society constitute an invisible government which is the true ruling power of our country.

[...] »

Edwards Bernays, Propaganda, 1928

Art, in my opinion, has a direct connection to the human part of a human being. It is, and should be, a part of everyday life. Art has its own responsibility in our future. Not only in its message but also in its forms.

