



PERFORMANCE  
PHILOSOPHY

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## EDITORIAL: THINKING THROUGH PERFORMANCE TECHNOLOGY IN MUSIC / SOUND

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WITH ADDITIONAL CONTRIBUTION ON [MARGINS] BY EDITOR DIANA DAMIAN MARTIN

This hybrid publication is based on a mutually catalytic approach that identifies and works through common practices, values, and worldviews within the journals *Performance Philosophy* and *ECHO*. The broad intention is to challenge the constituency of the two journals, to facilitate a dialogue between readers, to gently probe different modes of research content, to investigate the impact of juxtaposing related materials across the virtual distance between the journals, and to encourage a general change of approach to the technologically informed humanities—to invigorate scholarly engagement.

Why this hybrid issue? *Performance Philosophy* interrogates and tests the relationships between its titular terms in all possible configurations. *ECHO* brings together thought and practice at the confluence and interferences of music, thought, and technology. Given the ongoing expansion and proliferation of practical, environmental, and conceptual thought spaces, and the technological innovations and re-visions of the research field in general, not to mention the fabulously speculative plenitude of creative work, it has become necessary to address wider definitions of 'technology' and 'performance' with regards to sound making and music making. These two ground-breaking journals offer an opportunity to explore and share perspectives from various cultural horizons that delve into a wealth of inherited knowledge and current critical thinking. Concerns such as identity, reality, virtuality, artist, archive, and receiver can be re-examined from the perspective of redefined—and continually evolving—musical phenomena, the very notions of redefinition and evolution being heavily influenced by developments in theories and practices of virtuality.

An essential value in the artistic positions of *Performance Philosophy* and *ECHO* alike is an emphasis on embodied practices of doing, rather than theorizing away from the relevant interfaces, an emphasis on practical action with and through research materials over and above reflective research into otherwise separate actions: in this, both journals emphasise that research into art making and into performance must always itself be an intervention into the world, not just a commentary.

In this light, this hybrid issue of *Performance Philosophy* and *ECHO* contains contributions that both reflect an engagement with the above concerns and consider the inter-disciplinary and non-specialist nature of the journals' diverse readerships. Many of these contributions are literally interactive and should be explored through direct access to the materials themselves and by explicit consideration of the way in which these materials have been presented on the platform. They have been designed and curated with this in mind, with the purpose of problematising the relationship between "abstract" and "text" amongst other binaries. Research, as these contributions show, is literally performed for its producers and consumers together, for what counts as meaningful in research is the unholy alliance of input and output, researcher and audience, material and engagement: in short, the embodied engagement of all invested parties. This hybrid issue aims to explore some of the various functions played by the materials (artistic materials, research materials, plus various fusions) and their presentations (textual, visual, and sonic media swirling around each other). The consumer's physical and virtual interrogation of these materials should be configured as a matter of creative co-curation: Research as Performance.

It is worth unpacking briefly the mutual challenges faced by *Performance Philosophy* and *ECHO* in this collaboration. How might *Performance Philosophy* learn from *ECHO*? How might *ECHO* learn from *Performance Philosophy*? How can the space between journals be shared?

Our editorial curiosity about the function of the online platform in respect of its contributions leads us to ask what precisely is the role of the platform. In this respect, there has been a fascinating learning process for both journals during the development of this hybrid issue. *ECHO*'s choices of mediatic diversity within a presentation aligns with its message, an opening up of form in relation to content, and a proliferation of content through its multiple technological mediations. The different technological affordances of the two journals' platforms have posed challenges to each other, as research dissemination continues to move, in fits and starts, sometimes fast, sometimes slowly, beyond the essay. This is explored by practitioners at the intersection of creative technologies and disciplines who have re-aligned their approaches and found optimal expressive means in which to formulate these. *ECHO*'s aim is to move outside of a limited and limiting understanding of the term 'technology'. It brings together thought and practice at the confluence of music, thought, and technology; technologies of imagining, creation, and production. It sees the confluence of music, thought, and technology as a matter of both intervention and interference: things will be different afterwards! Musical works, *ECHO* suggests, have much in common with virtual or digital objects. They exist in a unique state of materiality / immateriality, and while they are intensely tied to direct experience, to technologies, and to techniques and materials, their physicality can exist in multiple instantiations, they can be manipulated, engaged with, and acted

upon as cultural abstractions in a variety of ways. Digital humanities research and computer-based creation use the same repertory of tools. The medium of *Performance Philosophy* works with a similar multiplicity of materials and forms, and is equally driven by a passion that content must not be compromised, but it is perhaps slower than *ECHO* to surf the oncoming tsunami of digital and virtual modes of presentation, to embrace the newer technologically driven modes of affordance. More emphasis is needed on the practicality of doing in respect of technology's role in the research process, as exemplified by *ECHO*: technology is not merely a tool.

*Performance Philosophy* extends *ECHO*'s philosophical basis in a cosmology derived from science's approach to technology by re-opening ontology towards thinking: an emphasis on 'be-ness' / being alongside that of creation and development. It offers a distinctly performative approach to technology, a rethinking of its forms as real / virtual 'object-beings', insisting on their presence as manifesting in ways that are other than merely functional—indeed, in ways that resist, challenge, and sometimes simply ignore the documentary / archival desire of research (not all results of *Performance Philosophy* remain after the event of their curation and emergence, and this is not an unhappy ontology). *Performance Philosophy* challenges the intersecting areas of music, thinking, and technology in *ECHO* by arguing for a non-quantifiable approach towards the materials involved: the chosen medium is the message, action, and thinking are non-divisible. Thought emerges from an interaction between music / sound / technology / other media, without there needing to be advance knowledge of a result. What emerges cannot be based on purely operational procedures, and it eludes terms of pre-definition.

Reflected in the issues raised here is the importance of thinking around the performance of music and sound in an interdisciplinary way, together with a mutual curiosity about the platform of each journal that manifests itself as a learning process. In fact, a link between *Performance Philosophy* and *ECHO* already exists, based on their mission statements as quoted from at the beginning of the introduction. In essence, this collaborative attempt addresses the challenge of bringing the sciences and humanities philosophies together, strands that have parted ways in history. Music and sound have their basis in cosmology, in technology as quantifying the possible, but also in ontology, as in the nature of being and making the seemingly impossible possible. Sound and music are essentially a mode of thought.

Two sets of criteria were used in the collaborative selection of submissions. The first was the appropriateness of the material in its relevance to technology and performance practice, artificial reality / virtual reality / artificial intelligence / musicking / sound / mediation. The second was the presence of a critical response to the chosen media. Curation has sought to emphasise varied structures that exist away from the essay format: those based on practice as research, process-oriented thoughts, artist statements, digitally native storytelling, and the non-narrative, the contexts of which should include subjects specific to BIPOC and the Global South. Group submissions were encouraged according to the prevailing themes and modes of presentation offered by both journals.

Emerging from the selection process are four broadly thematic groups: Telematic Dance and Live Coding, Instrument De / Reconstruction, Embodiment and Design, and Technological Accelerationism.

The first group concerns technologically mediated and embodied interaction in dance-driven music performance, where the latter are combined with live coding. All three contributions from [Iannis Zannos / Stella Dimitrakopoulou](#), [Stella Dimitrakopoulou / Vasilis Agiomyrgianakis](#), and [Zander Porter](#), are concerned with the subject of dance, music, and cyber-physical performance, whether in the context of an educational research project, an experimental audio-visual experience, or as a 'play' between text and image. Technology is embedded into a process of interaction between bodies and digital narrative.

Where are our objects and foci in music / sonic performance? What do we mean by 'instruments' in this context? These fundamental questions are both challenged and answered by two contributions that widen our conceptions of musical sound and technology both in relation to the environment and to historical tradition. Contrasting perspectives on Instrumental De / Re-construction are explored here by [Maureen Wolloshin / Khabat Abas](#) and [Sam McAuliffe / Louise Devenish](#). Whereas the former re-align their practice within a feminist approach towards free improvisation, thereby inducing a paradigm shift in the musical material itself, McAuliffe / Devenish expand definitions of instrumentality through an intermedial connection with our environmental world. Both contributions offer an innovative approach towards a wider context of cultural traditions for performance.

The design and making of a technological medium follow on from the previous theme, emphasizing in turn an integral element of embodied experimentation with a chosen format. Embedded within the compositional process is an ongoing refinement of materials that manifests itself in a sound art performance given by the artists themselves. Two artist statements by [Jaehoon Choi](#) and [Alexandre Bento](#) deal with this interaction in different ways, involving in both cases the contact between gesture and object by means of electromagnets or sensors. Whereas Choi is concerned with a constant feedback-loop between his finely articulated control of brushing movements across an electro-sensitized surface, Bento brings a strong awareness of energy fields generated by electromagnetism that play with his own physical, motoric memory. Musical performance, whose design is inherent to the compositional process of each artist, is generated in real time. Former distinctions between creative roles and materials are blurred, generating an entirely different performative aesthetic.

Finally, the following questions are also taken up: How does our current and coming technological reality shed new light on performance and practices from other times and places, however near or distant? And how do such transformations affect the subjects of and approaches to performance? Do our identities shift, and with them entire cultural bodies of education and criticism? The acceleration of technology cannot ignore its socio-political consequences if we consider our multiple identities and realities within a perspective of wider cultural horizons. For [Jörgen Dahlqvist](#), in his discussion of an intermedial theatre production, the use of audio and video

technology is central to mediate a manifold of perspectives on societal challenges concerning migration and xenophobia. Choosing the medium of audio podcast plus script for her contribution, **Flavia Pinheiro** radically unpicks issues of interspecies entanglements, contamination, and ghosts as symbolic manifestations of colonialism, whilst exploring a wide interdisciplinary field in her quest for 'transversal research'.

The [Margins] section of *Performance Philosophy* brings together formal and technological inquiries that probe listening and viewing as creative critical modes of thinking and doing. There are resonances across the contributions to the musicality of language, the performativities of sound and echoes of philosophy as a speculative practice, as well as embodiment and technology. **Michael O'Connor** examines the performance philosophical edges of imagined lines as dialogical practices, looking to listening and interference. 'The problem with imagined lines,' he argues, 'is that without the ability to see them, they possibly resist coming to an agreement between people.' Taking his cue from ideas on listening, non-straight interference, and bodily processes, the article is a multi-faceted reflection on spatial and bodily proximities. From interference to assembly, **Stefan Paulus** brings together the sonic and the visual to explore non-standard aesthetics 'without objects'. Thinking with François Laruelle, Gilles Deleuze, and Felix Guattari, as well as through photographic, sonic and other material inquiries, Paulus speculates on methodologies for new epistemes through superimpositions and transitions, resulting in immanent relations. In *Listening is Action: a soundwalk with Hildegard Westerkamp*, Luis Velasco-Pufleau probes the edges of listening as critical practice. In his two-part work, a commentary and a sonic documentary, Velasco-Pufleau probes recording as inhabiting human and more-than-human, and articulates a mode of engaging with listening informed by the work of Pauline Oliveros and Hannah Arendt, foregrounding relationality and the political. The collaborative work of Mauricio Carrasco and Fernando Garnero, *Midnight Reflections*, begins from an open question on positioning in the context of the North when rooted in the Global South. Through an audio exploration that includes electronic interludes alongside unpublished scores, the piece thinks through voice, in-betweenness, dialogues with talks on YouTube by Thirusha Naidu, Rosi Braidotti, and Achille Mbembe; it convenes around Naidu's notion of Northern Ventriloquism as well as the musical notion of the feedback to explore identity, global politics, institutionality, and technologies of resistance.

Caroline Wilkins contributes to the ReView section of *Performance Philosophy*, writing in '*ReListening to Derrida and Benjamin*' about a parallel sound-world spontaneously invoked during a reading of two plays *Derrida | Benjamin* by John Schad and Fred Dalmasso, and referring to key phrases / quotes in the texts that became pointers for triggering sonic responses.

A final note on how to engage with this hybrid issue. There is no one correct way to engage with it. Rather: let yourself find a space between the two platforms and dive in; take pleasure in the distribution of related content across the journals; read from one journal towards the other; juxtapose the materials and let the space between journals bloom in a riot of provocations; follow the authors' contributions but let yourself drift around; relax, wonder, ponder, and enjoy this hybrid issue.

## Biographies

Independent composer/performer/researcher **Dr. Caroline Wilkins** completed a practice-based PhD in Sound Theatre at Brunel University, London in 2012. She comes from a background of new music performance, composition and theatre, and has worked extensively on solo and collaborative productions involving these. Her particular interest lies in exploring new forms within the field of inter-medial sound theatre.

She has presented extensively at (inter)national conferences and published articles / essays in both book and journal form, including O.U.P., Intellect Books and Journal of *Performance Philosophy*.

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**Anthony Gritten** studied the organ with Harry Gabb, Anne Page and David Sanger, and is a Fellow of the Royal College of Organists. He has given over 300 recitals all over the UK, Paris and Canada, including several premieres of works by Daniel Roth.

Anthony's research spans a variety of issues in performance studies, the philosophy and aesthetics of music, and the music of Igor Stravinsky and John Cage. He is a core convener of the Performance Philosophy network.

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## TRANSINDIVIDUAL EQUATIONS/MATRICES

ZANDER PORTER DAS CHOREOGRAPHY



{{ video-documentation: [4-player] 3M0T1NG: <https://vimeo.com/749687235/7d0a5220d7> }}

\*\*(second phase/performance in its four-phase evolution; find phase four at the end of the text)

## {1} Schizoid Therapeutics for a Post-neoliberal Cyber-worlding

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The writing that follows attempts to unfold (an articulation of) contemporary (dis)embodiment through specified glances at (post-)internet, psycho- versus schizoanalytic relational and affective constructs, schizoid emotionality, and network/device matrices. "Matrices" are denoted as metaphysical, psychosomatic, and mortal/physical/gridded networks of (relational) reality. This writing experiments with form and inquiry, positioning itself in words that seek not ultimate clarification, explanation, or conclusion, desiring towards and with a curiousness, a meandered epistemological, and an otherwise-productive (re-)knowing. Technogenetic (and hormonal) play and transductions for transindividuality on the transparency-obfuscation (or personality/anonymity) binaries arrive as choreographic therapeutics for moving-sensing-feeling-thinking-communicating bodies in a potentiated post-neoliberal matrix. This conceptually kindled matrix queers and re-illuminates "networking," which inherently invokes the abundance of worlds colonized and controlled by big-tech and social media corporations. Generated is a set of direction-possibilities both written and danced/visualized for a post-internet-bodied world consumed by individualizations and self-captures – desiring instead towards new "ceremonies," "rituals," or telepathic forms of care/presence/therapy for being-together technogenetically. The concurrent/ongoing choreographic research/performance *3M0T1NG{/n3tw0rk1ng}* peeks into this togetherness as a xeno-spacetime containing relating, cyber-worlding (meta-)selves. In *The Undercommons* (2013), Fred Moten and Stefano Harney write that the "hard materiality of the unreal convinces us that we are surrounded, that we must take possession of ourselves, correct ourselves, remain in the emergency, on a permanent footing, settled, determined, protecting nothing but an illusory right to what we do not have" (Moten and Harney 13). Let this virtual hardness not only algorithmically re-possess selves but also dephase such illusory protections/narcissisms. Potentiated, at least, as a start, are isolated, artistic experiments and inquiries for a technogenetic and transindividual under-/xeno-commons of intellectual, relational, therapeutic, queered, and affective play-being-seeing-sensing-plasticizing (body).

### {1-A} Relational Matrices and the Post-internet

Relational matrices organize and depict (object-)bodies in specific constellations and network-maps. These include citizens/subjects, (software) "users," legal family units/containers/containments, consumers of similar/wedded/monopolized brands, and invited guests/dancers/entities/audiences into a performative (studio) practice/setting, et al. Often at once functional and derived from realms of mathematical precision (e.g., social media network algorithms), a matrix also permeates fixedness as a superstructure (e.g., psychic, cosmic, or hallucinogenic alignments between entities), above and between the hard fleshiness of corporeality. The corporeal thus emerges as an entirely complicated, plural site of psychic, social, mediated, moving, subject(ive), using-used, legal-colonized, consumer-consumed assemblage of

bones, organs, sensations, psyches, and emotions. In a sociohistorical and cultural articulation of this complicated corporeal, it is impossible for one matrix not to be always and already enmeshed with other matrices, which is to emphasize the intersectional with regards to identity and its submatrices (race, class, gender, sexuality, etc.). In abstracted terms, matrix can operate as a synonym for surrounding, a metaphysical spatiality which leans towards “reality,” leaning towards subjective/personal projection, and perhaps ultimately demarcating differences in sensuality (in how such realities are constructed/“seen”/textured), namely yet not exclusively vision. The performative inquiry and practices proposed by this research seek to interpolate and complicate vision as an ocularcentric crux for an arrival at rethinking/rewriting/re-feeling/(re)moving the (matrix of) self. It is important to note that transparency (e.g., unprotected data and free-online labor through internet participation and clicks) and individualization (e.g., capitalist-colonial erasure of the significance of collectivities/socialities/welfare) paradigms influence arguably delusional singularizations and self-isolations of a (psychosomatic) matrix/reality. Phased from this difficulty are questions about live(d), perceivable, or collectively-experienced body-borders, and how such pillars of isolated selfhood can be problematized in performative (corporeal and intellectual) inquiry. This is also to articulate that an emergent, apocalyptically neoliberal body-normativity fails to preclude questions around the interconnected and interrelational functions of identification, personhood, and selfhood. Experienced by the bodies projected from the self as both flesh and pixel, post-internet transindividuality presupposes (some of) these functions.

### **{1-B} Cyberspace, Pubescence, and Reproduction**

Proposed is a thought-experiment (or case-study-experiment) which considers the intersection of Generation Z and Millennials, a timeframe (approx. 1990-1997) in which folks born with access to the internet would/could/might effectively grow up, accumulate muscle/bone mass and psychic relations as the World Wide Web itself transformed from a more horizontal, unhinged, public matrix towards the platform for monopolized (Google, Meta, Amazon) control over most mainstream online traffic data and social interaction. Thus, young individuals amassing selves at this generational interchange experience(d) technologically-textured matrices of “bio” development. Puberty, normalized as the hormonal transduction towards reproduction capacity, finds a compromise with the internet-space, in which some young selves in the ‘90s (e.g.) practiced reproduction (of image, text, game, avatar, as well as masturbation-cum-computer). In order to research and communicate a working understanding of spacetime for transindividual matrices of a “contemporary” or virtual order and in this essay-context, puberty is articulated as both pre- and post-internet, “post-internet” articulating a temporal/generational marker as well as a reference to art, aesthetics, and thought which move beyond the pure novelty of internet domain/space, implementing its tools towards multiple/misc. subjects. Addressed is a post-internet-body (and performer) which moves through the world having experienced a deeply intertwined (pubescent) relation with internet-mediated forms and images of the/self’s body. The body is thus a post-internet entity with internet-bodies/forms contained and archived in psyche-, flesh-, and data-domains.

With the internet operating as a historical phenomenon which no longer arrives exclusively after the “development” of the human-body (again, namely the hormonal bio-technologies that make possible normative reproduction), it is possible to ask about the emergence of the post-pubescent body from which puberty and internet can dialectically interchange. Ultimately, from this, a hypothesis emerges for a post-neoliberal therapeutics of cyber-/embodied-communication in the form of an artistic and choreographic research made explicit/visualized/shared here through moving image (*3MOT1NG*). At stake are pedagogical/epistemological/practical/philosophical interstices for the demonstration, reception, production, and experience of (artistic) research and performance. Beginning in a cyber-grounding, an excerpt (below) from *Psychoanalysis in the Technoculture Era* (2013, Alessandra Lemma & Luigi Caparrotta) introduces cyberspace, simultaneously a proposition for the contextualization or launchpad of post-internet bodying. Spliced by personal interjections in braces and italics, the enumeration below arrives/opens a matrix perhaps called elaborated or distilled – at least in intellect and understanding, if not in experience or sensation. Detail and specificity here therefore may promise a crisper portal through which to ask and/or answer more metaphorical, playful/poetic/philosophical, and performative-practice questions around transindividual equations for choreographic/psycho-therapeutics.

1. *It denies corporeality*: cyberspace defies the history, the transience and, indeed, the very physicality of the body. The exhilaration of virtual existence and experience comes from the sense of transcendence and liberation from the material and embodied world. The limitations and history of the physical body are thus suspended and may be disavowed. This presents the individual with the illusion of limitless possibilities – an ‘order of pure decision.’ *{This order functions as a freedom-framework matrix: a digital, algorithmically designed landscape of supposedly limitless expression and bodily containment. Purity of freedom-decision is thus blissfully infinite yet paradoxically compromised.}*
2. *It abolishes the reality of difference and separateness*: it achieves this in two ways:
  - a. By promulgating the illusion of a disembodied self, the tyranny of the specular *{pixelated-mirrored-copied-bodied-}*image need not apply in virtual space: we are all just bits and bytes. Virtual reality thus promotes the fantasy that despite differences, we are ‘all the same really.’ It is this promise of sameness that makes it so compelling for some young people because it bypasses any exposure to an experience of difference, and the sense of insufficiency we all have to find ways of managing in ourselves. In virtual reality, however, the promise of sameness with an ideal (as projected into an avatar, for example) is forever such that the painful awareness of the given body and of bodily separateness may be sidestepped *{in styles that might be self-harmful, where fixedness or spatiality of self is anyways already compromised}*.
  - b. Through circumventing the reality of geographical boundaries, physical presence is no longer required to initiate or sustain a relationship as bodily presence is converted into pseudo-presence (Žižek, 2004). The reality, and I [Lemma] would

argue the necessity of distance, and separation (Josipovici, 1986), are replaced by immediate communication bypassing the otherwise painful psychic work required to allow for the mourning of the absent or lost object. Instead, the thrill of speed substitutes for the reality of a real 'other' who cannot be ever fully controlled by the self. *{The pubescent-internet transformative world can thus function as a nullification of processes that normalize embodied shame, anxiety, and social awkwardness. What emerges in the post-pubescent or post-internet form of the body are communications, performances, and movements with cyber-altered/xeno-transformed semiotics, iconographic vocabularies, expressions, and languages.}*

3. *It suspends the history of the subject:* and hence the link to the anchor of the past is eroded, especially as it is recorded in the body. Multiple identities, like the Windows programme, can be opened and closed at will. *{This pace of creation and deletion supersedes the speeds of familiar, historical modes of identity-multiplicity, e.g., in diaristic writing with selves, pseudonyms, character licenses/acts, etc.}* We have, effectively, the creation of what Raulet (1991) has referred to as 'floating identities.' This could conceivably have some constructive uses if a more positive experience of a 'new' self in cyberspace can be integrated with life 'offline' (Turkle, 1995; Allison et al., 2006). But where this kind of integration is not possible, the potential for pathological splitting is considerable. *{Pathologizing this splitting is an articulation that can be reconsidered therapeutically-otherwise via schizoanalytic and transindividual thinking, posited beyond/aside psychoanalysis; this follows in the paragraphs after these excerpts. The conventional psychoanalytical articulation of this divide is thus politically mistrusted in this writing-research.}*
4. *It promotes the illusion of interpersonal transparency:* we can enter a world where there are 'no zones of disorder or darkness,' as Foucault (1980) put it. The strangeness and opacity of the other is circumvented because the other is effectively the self's creation. Here the object – who is also disembodied – can be fully known and hence possessed (Arias et al., 1990; Gibbs, 2007). *{It then becomes interesting to conflate: [A] liberal property and material possessions, [B] neoliberal privatizations of the self's psychic and physical space, and [C] the cyber-potentiated possessiveness of the body of the other via its disembodied set of pixels. This [ABC] triangle yields a destabilization of the transparency-opacity binary, rendering a confused veil of vision and capture between the air and particulate matter separating mutually seeing-sensing bodies-in-space.}*
5. *It encourages the use of mimetic defences and the development of imitative identifications:* which are primitive in nature and based on an appropriation of the other through imitation. As Gaddini (1969) has observed, imitation precedes identification. Such imitations are fantasies of being or becoming the object. The aim is to become the ideal, and not simply to strive to be like it, as we would expect if a more ordinary identificatory process were at work. This is especially apparent in those virtual games where people can look like and 'become' someone else according to their own specifications. *{Now introduced is one foundational-relational matrix function: imitation – which permits the movement and expansion*

*of self-image within relational networks of body-images. A body becomes towards the likeness of the image, render, pixilation, or representation of those bodies on which it focuses its relational and social attention. This dance already bends the physical-cyber spacetime binary.}*

6. *It alters the relationship between internal and external reality:* because it offers an illusion of what is real, thus bypassing the need for the psychic work necessary for understanding that inner and outer reality are linked instead of being either equated or split off from each other. In the virtual world the psychic equivalence mode of reality (Fonagy & Target, 1996) dominates whereby the internal world that is projected into virtual space is seen to correspond to external reality. The technological environment of cyberspace thus confuses the boundaries between internal and external worlds, creating the illusion that internal and external reality are isomorphic. *{The self loses the contextual referent of its body, compromising the relevance of reality as it has been normatively constructed by prepubescent spaces: the womb-matrix, for example, as well as plenty 'offline' engagements with other bodies, objects, and architectures.}* (Lemma, "An order of pure decision: Growing up in a virtual world and the adolescent's experience of the body")

Situating observations made in her clinical psychoanalytic praxis, Lemma's informative introduction to (psycho-)cyberspace, neatly/adjacently fitted into an analysis of two adolescent patients, helps orient towards asking the following critical/core questions of this (performance) research: what is the experience of space (or spatiality as such) for the post-internet (aka post-pubescent) body? (And thus, how has the body, as a relational object, transformed here, psychically and otherwise?) Which demonstration (as opposed to definition) of choreography invokes a post-internet spatiality with integrally social nodes? (Metaphorically, how can the virtual dance and intercommunication of cyberspace entities and selves be rendered, exported, and translated to a spacetime of, for example, the theater/gallery?) If psychoanalysis aims at treatment via intersecting conscious and unconscious fears, conflicts, and experiences, what is the psycho-/analytic articulation of the complex states and feelings of being that emerge in post-internet choreographies? And, in reflection/analysis, how are these affect-byproducts both embodied thoughts and feelings as well as corporeal semiotics (rich/ripe with undefined power and vocabulary) of cyberspace?

### **{1-C} Artistic-choreographic Research**

In *3M0T1NG{/n3tw0rk1ng}* ("emoting/networking"), the [my] choreographic/artistic research of Zander Porter [me] at DAS Choreography – Amsterdam University of the Arts, ze [I] speculate[s] how starting from the simulation of eye-contact, the dancing, mirroring face renders complex images, disconnecting from "true" feelings/expressions. Practicing the manipulation of the face and feelings through sustained eye-contact points towards a transindividual state of presence and time, of not knowing what is being embodied, of dissociating from normative emotionality and manifesting, queering inter-relational languages anew in "real" and virtual time. Since 2019, Zander [I] has[/have] crafted "emoting exercises" to build upon research questions around the introduced topics post-internet (dis)embodiment, (dis)individuality/subjectivity, and technologized eyes. Past

choreographic works, developed in important instances via intimate duets, have incorporated these exercises to research and choreograph new characters, gamified movement landscapes, and forms of staged togetherness/*onlineness*. *3M0T1NG* works to upgrade and score a complicated matrix of “emoting exercises” – for a group of two, four, six, or eight (parallel, rectangular, hexagonal, octagonal ceremonies). New forms/modulations/computations of partnership emerge as well as metastable shapes/edges and transitional, micromovement duets between emoting partners. In practice and performance, a choreography of communication emerges from symbols, gestures, faces, feelings, gazes, attitudes, characters, and representations whose wonkily-mirrored souping-together proposes a context for unimaginable/unknown vocabularies of exchange, communication, empathy, and therapy to emerge for the performers, their selves, the collective, its held/spliced/concatenated selves (from “different” individuals), as well as invited guests/audiences. This plural and interweaving matrix of somatic and psychic relations asks about how to proceed here in writing: which terminology or psychosomatic discourse can tap into or unveil an abundance/overwhelm of images and faces explored by *3M0T1NG* scores and matrices?

### **{1-D} The Schizoid and the Disembodied**

The choreographic meditation towards an emoting, frenzied container for transindividual equations may, perhaps, in all its intensity/compounding/density, flatten/nullify the intensities of felt/exchanged images and feelings, yielding a schizoid affect-atmosphere. Pathologically, the schizoid personality type is characterized by emotional aloofness and solitary habits. A consideration is made otherwise for the psycho-therapeutic potentiality of schizoid arrangements and performances of mirrored/empathized affects/states in social choreography. This occurs in question through a collective embrace of “too-many” affected objects and exchanges, a particular sort of overstimulation not thrown to the wind but collectively held and contained in careful scores and attention. In *For a Pragmatics of the Useless* (2020), Erin Manning describes the “schizoid pole” from Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari’s *Anti-Oedipus* (1972):

The schizophrenic process, or what they call the schizoid pole, refers to the manner in which desire invests itself in sociality. At the schizoid pole, knowledge schizophrenizes, passing beyond its own axiomatics, creating new operations. [...] Multiplicity in differential, the schizoid pole explodes the great tepid aquariums of our psychological imaginations. Beyond pathology, there are no criteria. (Manning 2020, 289–291)

Related to the prefix “schizo-” (divided/split), schizoid offers a textural and nuanced prefiguration for the relational-affecting multiplicities of *3M0T1NG* which likewise desire towards/beyond pathologized therapy. Recapitulating the pathologizing of madness, schizophrenia, chaos, or aloofness is the anti-aim; instead sought and imagined are such “new operations” (e.g., transindividual equations) for the self-cum-device (post-internet, cyborg) entity as well as the matrix-entity (bodies) of the choreographic-social. Reiterated: the etymological specification of “division” in “schizo-” triggers a mathematical language of *3M0T1NG* towards a function (plural exploration) of the (trans)individual-social in the proposed choreographic matrices of the practice

and performance inquiry. Through psychic, physical, and emotive dimensions of mirroring/emoting practices, multiplicity and division are experienced via dissociation (from known/familiar reactions and expressions), disembodiment (via “relocating” possessed eyes and kinesthesia via/through/between eyes of other flesh and devices), and psychosomatic skepticism (through questioning, resisting, and remixing intuitive modes of seeing/sensing self/other, exposing/expressing an emotion or face, or gesturing/adjusting segments of the moving body, particularly the hands). This is a form of “deliberately scrambl[ing] the codes” (15) from Deleuze and Guattari’s writing on the schizoid pole in *Anti-Oedipus*. In its refusal of policed, regulated, and normalized psychological functionality and sociality, this code-scrambling carries forth anti-capitalist (post-neoliberal) ideology/worlding.

Imagined in this research as a sibling of the schizoid, the disembodied is introduced as a state of recognizing the possessed or felt body as somehow disconnected or altogether separate from the self (or: the flesh-body, or the first-person [e.g., gaming] perspective). The schizoid and the disembodied share an affinity for detachment, scramble, dissociation, and forms of privacy, somewhat regardless of the body and a subjective reality’s proximity to other bodies and matrices. Proximity also thus reveals its own illusiveness. In *For a Pragmatics of the Useless*, Erin Manning delineates relational affect-states as “Practicing the Schizz,” where schizoanalysis (against psychoanalysis) asks which modality of relationality is produced in the psychiatric/psychosomatic encounter. Schizoanalysis asks: “What kinds of conditions facilitate a shift in how subjectivity is produced, and what kinds of practices can be invented to support and sustain it? [...] Practicing the schizz involves developing techniques for the creation of machinic propositions that orient the appetites activated by the production of collective bodying” (Manning 2020, 156–157). Proposed by 3M0T1NG are some of these facilitated conditions. How can choreographic matrices for relational bodying and emoting precisely/cosmically yield this “shift” invoked by Manning? In practicing and rehearsing a queer-urgent desire for this shift, strategies for provoking and compromising subjectivity and individuality emerge through intertwining the schizoid and the disembodied. Schizoid, or unhinged, relations to ways of psychically contacting other bodies are unlocked through hallucinatory, collective eye-contact and facial (off-)mirroring. Rehearsed transference, copies, and retransmissions of supposedly subjective face- or body-states give way for known, “normative/healthy” expression vocabularies to mutate and detach from corporeal familiarity. Conceptually imagined are their detachments from the body: re-placements of their mythically individualized origins for altered, schizo-psychic spacetime. 3M0T1NG dancing asks how new somatic-social syncs, affect categorizations, and ultimately sensations can be birthed (reproduced) from forms of psychic and corporeal detachment from familiar correlations between (in the score-based plane) image, expression, vocabulary, gesture, and (in the therapeutic plane) self, (trans)individuality, subjectivity/subjection, and collectivity/groupthink. To borrow Manning’s term, 3M0T1NG schizzes, is schizzing, will/must schizz.

### **{1-E} Body without Organs (BwO) → Body without Emotions (BwE)**

The schizzing post-internet body recalls personal/possessed corporeality in relation to literally disembodied entities floating, hollowing, and tracking onscreen. This is a modality for rethinking self/subjectivity in relation to the network of the supposedly single entity that is the one body. This can also be articulated as a virtualized version of body without organs (BwO) – a literal shell, a hollow mesh of pixels enclosing “empty” digital space/corpus around a very thin layer of pixels placed in three-dimensional engine-space. This three-dimensionality encloses an “empty,” non-organs interior to the (e.g.) avatar/character, an interior which actually is seamlessly spatial with the “outside,” as though “oxygen” were flowing crisply between pores of the avatar mesh. In game engines, it’s quite easy and mundane to maneuver the camera to phase through “skin” (mesh) and sit/see momentarily “inside” the empty shell of a self/avatar/character. The only prevention for this for “users” or gamers/interactions is a coded physics script which most often fixes the camera at a certain distance-spectrum from the avatar/character. This digital (non-)body/self without organs/interiority recalls the term BwO, which sees little agreement between scholars of Deleuze and Guattari who expanded ambiguously on the idea in their *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972/1980). They theorized the BwO as an unregulated body potential without imposed organization structures/hierarchies – sourced from thinking with fantasies of psychosis and schizophrenia. Desired here for notation is a sync between the queering of psychic/organic interiority in Deleuze and Guattari’s schizo-BwO and the post-internet subjective-BwO entity dancing/moving/feeling in *3M0T1NG*. The choreographic research wants to understand a “BwE” – a kind of “body without emotions,” whose algorithmically/socially taxonomized emotions (and/as expressions, images, faces, affects, brainwaves) are re/un-hierarchized, “flattened,” or disembodied and “remixed” in a social matrix which exists at the intersection of performance, rehearsal, event, and ceremony. Transindividual, “BwE” equations for *3M0T1NG* emerge alongside terminology like BwO.

### **{1-F} Transindividuality and Transduction**

As introduced, the post-internet body arguably always recalls its formation (or pubescence) as a period of schizoid disembodiment, a processual replacement of organic interiority with pixelated enmeshment and hollow, virtual shapes. “Schizzing” the orientation towards the post-internet body (without organs) is an invitation for a non-pathologizing therapeutics for the body-subject(s) in question and for affect-states which surround it/them – a collective “BwE” bodying (re-invoking Manning’s “collective bodying”). Paradigmatic matrices of “therapy” expand beyond conventional frames in consideration of the transindividual articulation of the body. In her essay “In States of Transindividuality” (2016), Bojana Cvejić claims that transindividuality “happens in the situation in which the individual suspends the function of its (interindividual) relations to the others, or, in other words, disindividualizes itself by putting itself into question, by forcing itself to become aware of what in itself is more-than-individual” (Cvejić 6). Additionally, in her book with Ana Vujanović, *Toward a Transindividual Self* (2022), the two introduce a sociopolitical and aesthetic-performative transindividuality which “possibilizes” change through unblocking notions of the social in advanced

capitalist individualism. Here, transindividuality banks on a politically-articulated disindividualization as a cognizant activation of the multiplicity of the self, the more-than-oneness of the singleness of the individual in/of analytic question. Held in memory and socially-represented reality is the subjective (hyper)individual. Which “suspensions” of the individual’s self-possessiveness are possible in front of another body or bodies – articulated as collectivities morphing between contexts of dance-event or schizzed grouping? Erin Manning clarifies that the “transindividual precedes and cuts through any notion of the individual (see Simondon 1989). Unlike those accounts that begin with the individual to add from there, building collectives from the sum of individuals, the transindividual works transversally” (Manning 2020, 161). A “process,” she clarifies, is “phasing transindividuality” – with the individual its “apex.” This apex is socio-historically questioned and analyzed by Cvejić and Vujanović through the dramaturgical-social and West-East (European) political histories/imaginaries, while Manning reminds that there is no individual which precedes the transindividual. What *3M0T1NG* seeks in experiment is a negotiation between these considerations: relational/performative/choreographic scores as transindividual equations for de-emphasizing the neoliberal individual – while also exploring subjective apexes of person(ality), character, and representation, and mirages of the production of the individual. This tension between subjectivity and transindividual carries forth embodied paradoxes performed by the research.

The transindividual in internet pubescence composes selfhood as a scattered, undemocratic assemblage of dying, discarded, rebirthed, invented, and appropriated avatar humanoids, screennames, and playable characters. Affect and communication as such, when mapped to a body which maps to this kind of transindividual articulation, ask about what kind(s) of individuation (as opposed to individualization) influence the bodies-selves in question. In her *Always More Than One* (2012), Erin Manning emphasizes that individuation happens through what Gilbert Simondon calls dephasing, which spurs transformations regarded as transductions. Post-internet individuation thus perhaps overlaps phasings (as neither dead nor alive virtualized selves) in a nonlinear spacetime of the World Wide Web matrix superimposing itself above/with/through/below global-networked matter. (This superimposition can be imag[in]ed as either metaphysical, à la invisibility of dark matter, or as the entire matrix-network of technological hardware interlocution.) Manning writes:

Dephasings, seen from the point of view of the transduction they call forth, are at once how force takes form and how the rift in the continuity of an ongoing process is felt. Dephasing is about the activity of phases commingling to the degree that they generate a turning point that resolves, momentarily, into this or that singular event or discrete occasion of experience—a remarkable point that shifts how an occasion continues to become. (Manning 2012, 74)

The idea of this turning point, articulated as a resolution towards singular events and occasions, resonates with those demarcated, hollow-shaped selves in webspace, in the thinness of the bytes that compose sometimes prevailing and sometimes lost-forever databases for online profiles and identities. These selves arrive thanks to the dephasings that coproduce their emergence: the forces

concocted via the affects, relations, and experiences that trigger a body towards its virtualization. The transduction(s) that result(s) is-are perhaps the study at hand.

Through meditating on *Always More Than One*, a queered mathematics emerges and renders a crisis for conventional matrices and computations, which in turn very much informs scores for space and time in choreographic and performative experimentation. When “one” as the archetypal individual quantity demarcation is also one as in “1” in binary code, what can it mean to be more than one/“1”? Can one also be “0” or must one be regarded merely conceptually as “beyond” (aka “more than”) one? When one is beyond oneness, it is imaginable also to be zero, or nothing, or “0,” or one-and-a-half, or pseudo-infinitely intersecting matrices for all living, nonliving, anti-, and dark matter. *3M0T1NG* inspires imaginations of these numbering alternatives in relation to altering parallel and perpendicular interfaces, adjusting (improvising, challenging) rhythms and metric scoring, and exploring symphonic combinatorics via relational-communicative desires (remixing imitation, innovation, and rejection between zero, one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, or eight performer/body-possibilities). The multiplicity of answers/orientations queers relationality in the capitalist-neoliberal matrix-construct, whereby individuation might not always be regarded as a crisis of self-as-oneness-actualization.

### **{1-G} Networking**

How does the more-than-oneness of the post-internet body generate transductions in a relational matrix/network – and which languages or framings suitably-enough describe and resonate with the spacetime that holds these transductions? Post-internet-commingling bodies necessarily individuate in proximity (and almost always in contact) with network devices, namely smartphones, laptops, and surveillance/aerial/biometric cameras/data. (No coincidence lies here in this coexistence/codependence. The main questions thus regard the spectrum of post-internet embodiment across generations which survive the development of the World Wide Web.) On the body, this individuation collapses the flesh and the aluminum alloy, the eyeballs and the sapphire glass lens, the face and the silicon, the intestines/heart/arteries/genitalia and the gold/silver/copper/tungsten. Intercommunicative matrices not only rely on but are structured via the sub-matrices that intertwine flesh and device. In *3M0T1NG{/n3tw0rk1ng}*, each body possesses/dons a smartphone on a unique exterior surface of the body (forehead, occiput, hip, sacrum, sternum, thoracic back), networked via a local router and whose sapphire eyes-visions are mediated/selected/edited and projected onto theater/studio/gallery walls via dramaturgical assignments for a live-technician. This clarifies the dance between the terms in the research title (“emoting” and “networking”), proffering also a proposal for the transindividual tethers of the cyborg (a sweet/retro term invoked now as the contemporary human-smartphone pairing). In her *Updating to Remain the Same* (2016), Wendy Hui Kyong Chun marks apparent the unique and relational world of the network cards that function as the intercommunicative souls of human-bodies’ “possessed” devices. She describes:

At a very basic level, our networks work by ‘leaking.’ A wireless network card reads in all the packets in its range and then deletes those not directly addressed to it.

These acts of reading and erasure are hidden from the user, unless she executes a UNIX tcpdump command or uses a packet sniffer in promiscuous mode so that her network card writes forward these packets to the computer's central processing unit (CPU). [...] The technical term 'promiscuous mode,' however, is a misnomer: whether or not you make your network card promiscuous, it acts promiscuously. A network card only appears faithful to its user because it discreetly erases—that is, does not write forward—its indiscretions. [...] Our devices, our computers, constantly leak. [...] It is important to remember that, although networks are imaged as graphs, they are analyzed numerically as matrices. (Hui Kyong Chun 51–52)

The transductions of interest are the ones that might perform similarly to Chun's "UNIX tcpdump," a command line utility that allows one to capture and analyze network traffic moving through a system, often used to help troubleshoot "network issues." Rather than necessarily becoming the computer-coding or hacking algorithms-master (and thus embodying the self even deeper as above-below data), how might the body transduce relationally such that the (dis)embodiment and intercommunicative/telepathic functions of social matrices make apparent/ceremonious/transindividual the post-internet spawning/fraternizing of (our/these/those) network cards? Reworked: as a research alternative to computer science, which social choreographies for bodies illuminate the sociality of ("our") networked devices? How can possession over selves and devices come undone or reimagined through performance? *3M0T1NG* performs these questions with epistemological openness, without concluding or imagining solutions/conclusions.

The above and following questions also simmer and segue between the first (lengthier) and second (shorter) sections of this essay. In addition, with regards to choreographic scores and performance strategies, which matrix-functions permit/prosper the dephasings of post-internet selves yielding a post-/altered-individuation (transduction) towards the post-neoliberal transindividual? This might also leak-ask: in which ways can selves deluded by hyper-individuality move, emote/feel, and relate such that different versions of selfhood (dephasings) spur a transformation (transduction) that invites selves/bodies towards (trans)individual, processual states/presences? And how might these states, when considered within the dialectical proposal of post-internet/disembodied (schizoid), suggest (schizoid) therapeutics for neoliberalization-selfhood/individual(ity)?

## {2} *3M0T1NG* Technogenesis

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As artistic research, *3M0T1NG* scores two supposedly distinct dramaturgies/choreographies: one for bodies-cum-eyes and one for devices-cum-lenses (sapphire). The research presents and rehearses itself for itself (including its technological/theatrical architecture) and for intermittent audiences, inviting the intersected collectivities of personal selves/bodies and personal devices (of both "performing" and "non-performing" participant-groups) to intermingle and unbecome through emoting exercises – exploring psychic dissociations with familiar emotive-somatic landscapes through increasingly fractured, fractal, and asymmetrical mirroring of other

bodies/selves. Through rearticulation and practice, a mythos and chimerical semiotics of the networked device infects and affects the socially configuring matrices of relational emoting/expressing/moving. This infection/update/effect/affectation reminisces of transhumanist discourses around the technological “advancement” (or devolution, mutation, annihilation, transcendence, etc.) of corpo-reality. Explored here, alongside moral/ethical meditations about the anthropogenic/apocalyptic unfolding/destiny of the “human” amidst colonial-capitalist-extractivist “technological advancement,” is this mythos and semiotic capacity for networked devices to clarify and texture more complicated corpo-cyborg-reality, for folks as performers/spectators/workshop-participants and possibly also readers/thinkers/“publics”/movers. Nothing “better” or more cosmically-clearly illustrates such than the relational, nonverbal spirit of the performance/event/rehearsal/ceremony itself.

In *3M0T1NG{/n3tw0rk1ng}*, the “UNIX tcpdump” command conjured by Hui Kyong Chun is a type of technogenetic hack caricatured and taken up by the performance’s live technician. The ability to work with software (Resolume) which collects, grids, and displays output options for networked device lenses paints an artistic and improvisatory stroke into and around the conventional dimensions and interfaces of smartphones and their lenses. This increases/warps the dimensionality of spacetime (in question) which is inherently technologized.

Technogenesis rewrites conventional ontologies within relational matrices of selves/bodies towards a contemporary transindividuality that clarifies the post-internet inflexion of the threads in writing here. In her *Relationscapes* (2009), Erin Manning describes technogenesis as “ontogenesis of the bio-technological not as a technical additive to the biological but as an emphasis on originary technicity. [...] Technogenesis defines bodies as nodes of potential that qualitatively alter the interrelations of the rhizomatic networks of space-time in which they are ephemerally housed” (Manning 2009, 66). These rhizome-networks sense in-movement bodies, open systems that reach-toward becoming through relational matrices. “To make sense technogenetically, the couple dance/new technology must ask how a technology can make relation felt” (73). Technogenetic transduction comes into view as a function-umbrella for networked-and-bodied matrices. How can the protagonist narrative of devices invite new understandings for relationality? With which rescripting/articulations can devices move beyond prosthesis towards participation in “pure plastic rhythm” (66)? Through challenging the ontological dominance of human over technological, technogenesis opens a dephasing of transparency-opacity binary mandated by neoliberalism and upheld by social surveillance mutated by personal information interfaces and application usage. This challenge, which permits the mythos/spirit of the device to ask its own questions unto corporeality, struggles at the boringly hard edges of Meta (Facebook) and Google, whose data/profile-monopolization/extraction corporate protocols feed-profit off of the exacerbated willingness of its “users”/subjects to spill and leak their bodies and labor in societal contexts which excessively regulate transparent articulations and images of the self, body, connection, interest, career, sex, affect, and biography, etc.

## {2-A} Transparency and Obfuscation

Transparency, the veil of paradoxical non-veiled thinness, has emerged as a primary function of the neoliberalized internet. This transparency has become mandated by a panoptic gaze totally enmeshed by the era of internet-/networked proliferation. In *The Transparency Society* (2012), Byung-Chul Han emphasizes that transparency is “hostile to pleasure” and “annihilates room for play [Spiel-Räume]” (Han 30). This room for play describes a pure plastic rhythm (Manning) articulated or made possible by technogenetic transduction. Transparency implies that eyes and sapphire lenses really see, objectively; it suggests a kind of gamified capture of and ultimately absorption/consumption of others’ selves into an isolated oneness of individualizing individuation. To make space for forms of technogenetic play, transparency must be mistrusted.

The panopticon as such is also poetically prolapsed/historicized alongside hormonal transduction in Paul B. Preciado’s *Testo Junkie* (2008). Following the logics of the “pharmacopornographic era,” demarcating the panoptic operations of pharmaceutical and pornographic companies onto relational and sensing/sexualizing bodies, how can Preciado’s deployment of testosterone towards undoing embodied, neoliberal commodification be extended towards other “substances” and technologies? A few which become namable and also relevant for articulations of technogenetic play, schizoid disembodied, and (queering-)spacetime include: ketamine (an anesthetic for disembodiment and technogenetic spatiality and distancing), dopamine (a neurotransmitter correlating to pseudo-pleasures experienced through and beyond digital/virtual connectedness, information access/download, and application usage), and adrenaline (a hormonal reality of social, physical, or virtual heightened-play-presence or pure plastic rhythm). Although *3M0T1NG* does not condone/disperse/theatricalize/tokenize such substances, it does draw inspiration from contexts which intensify their technogenetic potential, e.g., amusement parks (roller coasters), Berghain (nightclub), TikTok/Instagram reel (short video) binges, and others. These sites as examples offer offline/online portals for remixing scripts of engagement with hormonal selves and ultimately serve as memory-experiences/selves for inclusion in *3M0T1NG* collectivities and playtime/playscape. The improvisatory invitation of *3M0T1NG* asks its bodies/performers to reveal, expose, and co-witness/enter conjured technogeneses through downloading the hormonal, affective, and ultimately playful textures of special/spatial/relational memories. These “special” memories are drawn upon and selected for their specificity and connection to technogenetic potentiality, thus clarifying the brief (exemplary) invocation here of some forms of hormonal technogenesis coinciding with the more lengthily discussed iteration of the smartphone-object.

## {2-B} “Conclusion-phase” and Video-link

In an all-seeing society and sociality, in which sight is more clarified by data and image capture than bio/eye/soma capture, *3M0T1NG* gestures towards a therapeutic technogenesis as a protest, meditation, ritual, groupthink, (clothed) orgy, and live-networking-event through inviting and exacerbating/emphasizing/upsizing the potency, power, scale, and vision of personal “devices” – where the device intentionally crystallizes the image of the smartphone while also referencing the

device of (trans)individual selves-in-exchange. Rather than downsizing, retreating, or “turning everything off” to “unlink” or “take a break” from neoliberal abundance of surveillance protocol and information/consumption, *3M0T1NG* asks how such modes of reconfigured attention, mentality, corporeality, and sociality can be felt and shared through a hyper-dimensional panopticon of techno-spacetime, activating equations for transindividual release, exposure, vulnerability, cooperation, refusal, disgust, amazement, ecstasy, and horror through/within/between/inside each other: each other’s body as flesh-cum-device entity. “The society of [transparency and] intimacy is a psychologized, deritualized society. It is a society of confession, laying-bare, and the pornographic lack of distance” (Han 30). Relevantly, Han alludes here to the paradox between image proximity/detail/resolution and the extreme alienation promoted by hyper-networked individualities. *3M0T1NG{/n3tw0rk1ng}* proposes/queers/invents/strategizes for sensations, psychologies, and rituals for this precise paradox to be danced and reinterpreted by bodies-devices transducing between the sensual, social, visual, and psychic valences of (them/their)selves and each other.



► {{ video-documentation: 3M0T1NG{/n3tw0rk1ng}: <https://vimeo.com/816467522/7ea674bb9f> }}

\*\*(fourth phase/performance in its four-phase evolution; find phase two at the beginning of the text)

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## Biography

Zander Porter is a Californian artist based in Berlin. Working between liveness and *onlineness*, ze interpolates (dis)identification and (dis)embodiment between surface, portal, psyche, and corpus. Zander's practices negotiate attention, gender, affect, subjectivity, and role play through an approach to internet semiotics, hormonal technologies, and surveillance paradigms with a mixture of curiosity, reverence, and skepticism. Byproducts (performances) of this negotiation are articulated as (technogenetic) *matrices of queerer relationality*. Ze has been a core member of XenoEntities Network (XEN), a platform for discussion and experimentation focusing on intersections of queer, gender, and feminist studies with digital technologies. Holding a BA in Art Studio (with additional coursework in Computer Science and Performance Studies) from Wesleyan University and an MA in Choreography from DAS Graduate School – Amsterdam University of the Arts, Zander has worked or participated in residencies at Swiss Institute / Contemporary Art New York, Cité internationale des arts, Trauma Bar und Kino, ACUD Macht NEU, the Saison Foundation, and National Institute for Space Research (INPE), among others.

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PERFORMANCE  
PHILOSOPHY

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## EXPLORING SONIC WORLDS: THE SIGNIFICANCE OF INSTRUMENTALITY

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### Introduction

Growing numbers of performers, composers, and theorists working in contemporary music today frequently explore practices that blend standardised musical tools and methods (such as instrumentation, notation, and concert presentation formats) with contemporary technologies and approaches drawn from both musical and non-musical disciplines. These explorations have resulted in analysis and writing seeking to describe and understand contemporary music practices and their role in the evolution of Western art music. Particular focus has been placed on the way musicians engage a wide range of materials for both sonic and non-sonic purposes in their work, and to further probe questions surrounding the instrumentality of these materials. Regarding 'non-sonic' materials in a musical context, the most common are gesture, lighting, gaming technology, stage sets or space, and other techniques that draw from various performance-based artforms. The roots of these practices and their accompanying discussions relate to twentieth-century musical concepts such as John Cage's 'all-sound music' (Cage 1973), the sub-discipline of instrumental theatre exemplified by Mauricio Kagel's work and others, or the happenings staged by Fluxus artists in the 1960s, all of which employed a vast range of instruments, objects and materials drawn from music and everyday life.

While the question of what can be used as an instrument has long been considered fertile ground for creative musical practice, a wide range of artists have built upon these historic examples to embed interdisciplinarity and intermediality more deeply in new work. Recent explorations in this area have further developed the use of the ‘non-sonic’ towards a ‘more-than-sonic’ approach to instrumental materials: How can materials be used both for sounding and seeing in musical performance? How does a more-than-sonic approach to instrumental materials and performance techniques influence audience engagement with the subject matter? How can we harness the power of ‘things’ through sound to help us understand our place in the world (Bennett 2011)? In what way is aesthetic experience paradigmatic of everyday perceptual experience (Noë 2015)? And how do artworks possess a claim to truth that shapes our understanding of the world (Heidegger 2013; Vattimo 2010)? Perhaps a result of these questions, instrumental materials are increasingly being used to fulfil multiple roles in a performance context. For example, materials might function as both instrument and set design simultaneously, such as in Speak Percussion’s *Polar Force* (2018) and Chamber Made’s *SYSTEM\_ERROR* (2021). *Polar Force* is an investigation of sound, wind and light inspired by the Antarctic landscape and set in a white domed structure reminiscent of a laboratory. In the centre of this performance laboratory is a row of apparatus that appear at first to be scientific research equipment but are revealed by a pair of percussionists to be the musical instruments. *SYSTEM\_ERROR* is a theatrical work exploring the relationship between human and technological systems. It is set in a sparsely filled space, dominated by a projection screen at the rear of the stage and electrical tape on the floor. As the work unfolds, it becomes clear that the tape on the floor is not only part of the set but is also a musical instrument. The electrical tape is conductive, functioning as a live circuit that the performers dance upon to activate electronic sound and an accompanying lighting design. In these works, the materials form an instrumental infrastructure within and of the work. In other work that can be described as instrumental sculpture, materials function as both instrument and sculpture, such as in Simon Loeffler’s *e* (2015), where a percussion trio performs on a structure of fluorescent lighting tubes. This move towards the more-than-sonic in the form of instrumental infrastructure and instrumental sculpture are representative of practices that build upon a long history of instrumental development in Western art music using an interconnected meshwork of tools, technologies, and methods. Although much of the literature on these practices looks through the lens of individual compositional practice or explores a particular sub-discipline of contemporary practice (see ‘music in the expanded field’ (Ciciliani 2017), ‘the new discipline’ (Walshe 2016), ‘non-cochlear music’ (Kim-Cohen 2009), for example), the key characteristics of these practices are not restricted to a single ‘type’ of creator (e.g., composer, performer, improviser), nor are they restricted to a particular instrument, style, or genre. Rather, approaches to creative practice inform all aspects and stages in the creation of new work in a range of contexts, are highly collaborative, and, crucially, rely on technique transferral to facilitate the blurring of boundaries between artforms, materials and their role or contribution to performance work, which we will refer to as post-instrumental practice (Stene 2014; Devenish 2021). Importantly, these practices do not reject traditional or established modes of music making but build upon and extend them using twenty-first-century tools and methods to speak to a contemporary context.

While there is much to be discussed with respect to these practices and processes, in this paper we are concerned with what may be described as the ‘revealing’ character that post-instrumental practice facilitates. The blending of perceptual engagement facilitated by post-instrumental practice results in a mode of aesthetic experience that offers a unique engagement with the world. Post-instrumental ‘musical’ practice extends beyond the sonic and draws audiences into an engagement with the auditory and the visual concurrently and therefore has an overall outcome where emphasis is placed on cognitive aesthetic contemplation—audience members are drawn to consider the relationship between the instruments being played and the subsequent sounds, for instance. Specifically, we are interested in how works informed by this approach can lead to new ways of engagement with real-world concepts and materials. This way of thinking echoes the thought of German philosopher, Martin Heidegger, particularly his idea of ‘revealing’ or ‘unconcealment’ (*aletheia*), which refers to the fundamental ground of truth (Heidegger 2013). While Heidegger does not discount the commonplace view of truth as ‘correctness’ (Malpas 2014), he argues that the foundation of truth is ‘unconcealment’, where aesthetic experience is an exemplar. For Heidegger, truth is not merely that which is verifiable but is that which is illuminated or ‘revealed’ through our engagement with the world. The truth of a painting, for instance, is not only its verifiable characteristics such as the period in which it was painted, the artist who painted it, the material on which it was painted, and the painting’s form, content, and molecular structure. The truth of the painting also relates to the way in which it reveals a certain character of the world to the person experiencing the artwork; perhaps a landscape painting draws attention to a certain character of the painted landscape that the spectator had never considered or noticed before. Thus, the artwork has ‘revealed’ truth about the world to the individual who has experienced it. The truth an artwork reveals is tied to the dialecticity between artwork and audience. That is, precisely *what* an artwork reveals will be particular to the relationship between artwork and person because what is revealed must be something *new*—something that the person was not previously aware of. That is not to suggest, however, that truth is merely subjective or relational. The audience member is not free to project whatever meaning they please upon the artwork. What is revealed must be given by and relate to the material objectivity of the artwork. The relationship is hermeneutical—there is a to-and-fro or back and forth between subject and object, artwork and audience.

Traditionally, musical works tend to reveal something of the sonic character of the world. For example, we might consider the way in which *musique concrète* artists ‘reveal’ a certain musicality in what may otherwise be considered banal or everyday sound. Luc Ferrari’s *Presque Rien No. 1* (1970), for instance, began with field recordings of a small fishing village, where Ferrari would leave a microphone recording on his windowsill from 4am–6am every morning. Ferrari begins with banal, utterly familiar sounds and then through his compositional process creates an intriguing soundscape that amplifies and draws out certain characteristics of the fishing village that may otherwise pass us by. To the extent that artworks reveal or disclose a character of the world previously ‘hidden’, they possess a claim to truth—they reveal truth about the world in which we find ourselves. Post-instrumental works such as *Polar Force*, mentioned above, by wedding the musical with the visual, reveal the world in ways that conventional music does not. For example, while one may listen to Ferrari’s *Presque Rien No. 1* with their eyes closed and still have the ‘full’

experience of the revealing character of the work, much would be concealed if one were to prioritise either the auditory or the visual character of *Polar Force* at the expense of the other. It is the way in which *Alluvial Gold*, the case study that will be discussed in depth below, reveals the world through the interrelation of music, sculpture, visuals, and story, which further relates to notions of instrumentality, technique transferral, and multi-functionality, that is of particular interest.

The aim of this paper is to outline the way in which post-instrumental practices in new music, by virtue of their focus on engaging with a range of tools or instrumental materials in performance, (re)structure or alter the listener's engagement with the world. All works of art, especially from a hermeneutic philosophical perspective, where aesthetic engagement involves a conversational to-and-fro between interpreter and artwork (Gadamer 2013), reveal the world to those who experience them in some way. Music, for instance, thematizes sound and makes us appreciate sound and the sonorous character of the world in a way that 'everyday' experiences of sound do not. Musical practices that employ instrumental materials that are diverse in form, material, and function, however, have the capacity to extend our engagement with the world beyond what can be achieved within traditional Western art music practices that use standardised instrumentation in conventional ways. While there are various ways in which this may occur, here we investigate the way in which these practices can reveal a certain 'musicality' of the world that is always there but is commonly overlooked or concealed. Post-instrumental practice, it is argued, draws attention to the sonic stories and possibilities of 'things' that are not typically thought to possess an innate instrumentality, not only through simply including these materials within an instrumental set up (as a percussionist might include a stone or piece of metal within a multi-percussion setup of objects), or in how they are sounded by the performer, but in how they are presented or used in multiple ways across the sonic and the visual.

By experiencing musical works that employ unconventional instrumental materials that are used to fulfil plural sonic and non-sonic roles in performance, a certain character—a certain truth or possibility—of the world beyond the instrumental material alone may be revealed to the audience. Thus, these works can facilitate a broader conceptual engagement with environmental or social concerns, for instance (as will be discussed below). That is, by revealing musical characteristics or possibilities of otherwise non-musical things, audience members may, in the ideal, be drawn to consider those things/instruments as not merely commodities to be used and consumed but as things that possess a wealth of possibilities and beauty.

In what follows, this notion of revealing will be discussed using *Alluvial Gold* (Devenish, James, and Coates 2022) as a case study. The choice of a work by one of the present authors is a conscious choice, as this facilitates insight into the artistic research framework of the post-instrumental process, as well as analysis of the completed work. An analysis and discussion of the completed work alone would not yield a complete picture of the 'revealing' character of the work. This paper will proceed as follows: first, our case study, *Alluvial Gold*, is described as is common in artistic research methodologies, with a focus on both the aims of the work and the instrumentation employed. As well as audio examples and figures, brief excerpts of creative text written in *italics*

introduce each section and are included to further illustrate the nature of the work and situate the reader. Second, we discuss the relationship between the performer and instrument(s). We offer a distinction between merely drawing attention to sound in what might be considered a 'blunt' or 'scientific' sense and drawing attention to sound in a 'poetic' or 'musical' sense. Third, we consider the relationship between the work performed and the audience, with a particular consideration of what the work 'reveals'. Following this exploration of the way in which *Alluvial Gold* reveals a certain character of the world to the audience, we conclude by arguing that post-instrumental practices can offer a particularly remarkable way to encounter the world anew.

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*Drifting just above the riverbed, close to the crushed shells, the rocks, the matter upon them. Sediment made beautiful by filtered light rippled with shadows, green then gold. The slowly drifting vision is paired with slowly drifting sound, floating through the space. Singing bowls produce complex, ringing pitches, their beating interactions with ceramic bowls blurred by sine tones emitted from the surrounding speakers. Vibraphone tones pulse gently as the slowly rotating fans beneath them breathe air into the sound world as the vision moves to shallower water. Here the light is clearer, grains of sand and sediment articulated by the light. The sand obscures everything, the individual presence of each grain heard in the grain of a bow quietly sounding a single low vibraphone tone. Kelp and anemones drift into focus, as single pitches, then clustered chords of ceramic and metallic materials are gently added to the sound world. Immersed in floating sound, our sense of direction, our sense of perception floats to match sound with source.*

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### **Alluvial Gold: Background**

*Alluvial Gold* (2022) is a 50-minute performance-installation work for percussion, sculptural instruments, field recordings, electronics, and video projection by percussionist Louise Devenish, composer Stuart James, and visual artist Erin Coates. *Alluvial Gold* draws audiences into the often forgotten and changing worlds below river surfaces, taking the histories, human practices, and ecological matter within and around metropolitan rivers in Australia as a point of departure. The project started with the Swan River in Perth, Western Australia, known as Derbarl Yerrigan in Whadjuk Noongar language. During the Swan River Settlement establishment in Western Australia in the mid-1800s and continuing until the 1910s, native shellfish reefs in the Derbarl Yerrigan were heavily dredged and ground up for mortar, roads, and building materials at sites across the city, likely including Heathcote Goolugatup, the arts precinct where *Alluvial Gold* was developed. The heart of Perth city, many surrounding suburbs, and roads are built upon and around Derbarl Yerrigan, and much of the population comes into regular sight or contact with some part of the river. However, what lies beneath the surface is rarely highlighted. Similar histories of dredging and other human interventions can be found in river systems across southern Australia,

particularly in areas used as colonial ports or trading routes, heavily impacting and changing estuarine ecology in these river systems.

The artistic team took a post-instrumental approach to the creation of this work and had three main aims:

1. Create an interdisciplinary work using percussion performance, electroacoustic composition, sculpture, instrumental objects, field recordings, film, video projection, and drawing.
2. Develop the work using a distributed, non-discipline-dominant order of creation: a collaboration where all artists have input into each component of the work at all stages of development regardless of discipline.
3. Produce a modular suite of work, with various components to exist in multiple formats and therefore able to be experienced as a piece of visual art in exhibition, as instrument in performance, or both simultaneously.

The resulting work explores the confluence of multiple narratives connected to rivers, from the continuing impacts of industrialisation since European colonisation, the sonic ecology and chemistry of larger river systems, and the sonic properties of river systems and water. *Alluvial Gold* has since been presented both as an exhibition and as performance season, including presentation of all components, and presentation of individual combinations of components.<sup>1</sup> The pluralities of presentation modes and combinations offers different formats for audiences to engage with the river and parts of its history, illuminated in different ways.

Below, we will explore some of the ways in which *Alluvial Gold* might be said to 'reveal' certain characteristics of the world enhanced by its 'post-instrumental' nature. While all artworks *are artworks* precisely because they possess this 'revealing' character, we are particularly interested in exploring how those elements that make the work 'post-instrumental' reveal the world in ways that may not otherwise be possible via other musical practices. Thus, we focus on the composer's/player's use of a range of instrumental materials, the interweaving of visual and sonic elements, and the 'story' of dredging that sits at the centre of the work. We argue that *Alluvial Gold* 'reveals' truths about the river, and thus the world, that are typically right in front of us but are otherwise obscured or overlooked.

### Instrumental materials

*Alluvial Gold* uses standardised percussion instruments (metal), human-made objects not originally designed for musical use (metal, ceramic, glass), natural materials (shell, seedpods, water), sculptural instruments modelled on dolphin bones, native oyster shells, and estuarine ecology (metal, porcelain, shell). The sculptural instruments, conceptualised by Coates, point to ecological stories under the river surface. Circular, electronically sonified curtains of massed oyster shells reminds us of the now-extinct native oysters that were a casualty to dredging activities, and a set

of dolphin bones cast in bronze and porcelain from a skeleton held by the WA Maritime Museum shows evidence of the bone damage resulting from the introduction of heavy metal pollutants into the river by human industry. The sculptural bronze bones were poured using wax moulds, and the black porcelain using slip cast moulds. In the porcelain bones, the damaged areas were highlighted using gold leaf. These instruments are coupled with field recordings of water and air sounds within and around the river, and further developed using live electronic processing.<sup>2</sup> The total setup is organised around two multi-percussion 'stations', each comprising numerous instruments that could be engaged simultaneously. The first station can be understood as an 'expanded vibraphone', the second as an 'expanded bass drum'. The main components of the expanded vibraphone were a specific pitch set of crotales, sculptures, ceramic bowls, and metal bowls, selected to diversify the range, timbre or tuning of the vibraphone's standard sound world, while also considering the practicalities of each expanded setup. Throughout the work, instrumental materials at each station, as listed in Table 1, are played individually and also used as extensions of one another in various combinations. For example, the bronze dolphin bones (shown below in Figure 3) produce light, sparkling clusters of harmonics when struck and spun, and are highlighted as a solo instrument in the central improvisational interlude, whereas in movement four they are used as an extension of the vibraphone's range and timbre.

The other station was the expanded bass drum. Although the bass drum was the central instrument, its role was primarily as a resonator or vibrational surface. Shown below in Figure 1, this station comprised a 36-inch concert bass drum, laid horizontally and prepared throughout the work with oyster shells.<sup>3</sup> At times, a speaker monitor placed beneath the bass drum transmitted low frequency fixed media (including sine tones and samples of dredging machinery in action), to activate the skin of the bass drum by sympathetic resonance. At other times in the work, the skin of the bass drum was activated simply by friction, dragging a superball mallet. In *Alluvial Gold*, the bass drum was not a percussion instrument to be struck, but a resonator for recorded sound, and a vibrational surface upon which loose oyster shells were placed. This allowed an additional textural, clustered sound to be drawn from the oyster shells, which were free to tremor and crash against each other without being muted by a performer's hands or mallets. Although this approach to the bass drum for abstract sonic explorations has appeared in the work of percussionists such as Lê Quan Ninh, among others (see for example, Zach 2020; Schack-Arnott 2019), in *Alluvial Gold* this practice is used for both abstract and representational reasons. The visible disruption of the shells resting on the bass drum skin and instrumental chaos caused by vibrations from recordings of dredging machinery, made visible in performance, is suggestive of the disruption and chaos caused by dredging oyster shell reefs otherwise concealed under water.



Figure 1: The bass drum station in the Alluvial Gold setup. Photo credit: Nik Babic.

From these acoustic materials, electronics were then developed with the aim to further extend the instrumental range or capabilities of each station, and to blur the sonic space between them using both live and fixed electronics to create a tapestry of sonic material. Layers of notated and improvised material are performed before they are captured and processed live to create a mysterious world of floating sounds that spin off one another through the performance space. For example, in the fourth movement heard in listening example 1, the combination of vibraphone with motorised fans on a very slow setting, with ceramic bowls and bronze bones tuned just a few cents higher than the vibraphone, and layers of electronics comprising sliding and sinking sine tones, produces a textural wash of sound. The placement of a quadraphonic speaker array around the audience (and in front of the percussion setup) blends the material, making it difficult for the listener to perceive how and from where various sonic effects are being produced.



Listen to audio recording of excerpt of the fourth movement, titled *Alluvial Fans and Meanders*.

<https://soundcloud.com/performancephilosophy/alluvial-gold-excerpt1>

Instrument	Implement	Activation method
Water	Oyster shells	Swirled with lip of oyster shells Small, single drops poured from cup of oyster shell
Oyster shells	Bass drum skin	Skin set vibrating by speaker set underneath Skin set vibrating by rolling with yarn mallets, or rubbing superball
	Hands	Pile of shells slowly rustled in bowl Rustled in chime array
	Sensors	Samples activated by sensors (light responsive)
Bass drum	Oyster shells	Placed as single shells Dropped from a low height in small handfuls Poured from a bowl held 30cm above skin in cascades
	Mallets: Yarn mallet Superball Shoebrush	Struck Rubbed across surface of skin Dragged across surface of skin
	Hands	Fingertips
	Microphone feedback, electronic sound	Activated by vibrations from the loudspeakers
	Bow Hard plastic mallet Water Children's finger cymbal	Bowed Struck Dipped into water to bend pitch Struck lightly, off-centre
Dolphin bones (bronze, porcelain)	Small hard plastic mallet	Struck
Vibraphone	Soft rubber mallet Medium yarn mallet Hard yarn mallet Light timbale sticks Custom thread+wood mallets with rubber sleeve Bow Children's finger cymbal	Struck Struck Struck Struck Struck Bowed, and manipulated using porcelain resonator Struck lightly in centre of bar
Cymbal	Medium yarn mallet Bow	Struck Bowed
Ceramic bowls and temple bowls	Hard yarn mallet Custom thread+wood mallets with rubber sleeve	Struck Struck
Capiz shell chimes, oyster shell chimes, seed pod chimes	Hands	Rustled

Table 1. Instruments, implements and activation methods used in Alluvial Gold (2021).



Figure 2: The expanded vibraphone station within the Alluvial Gold setup.

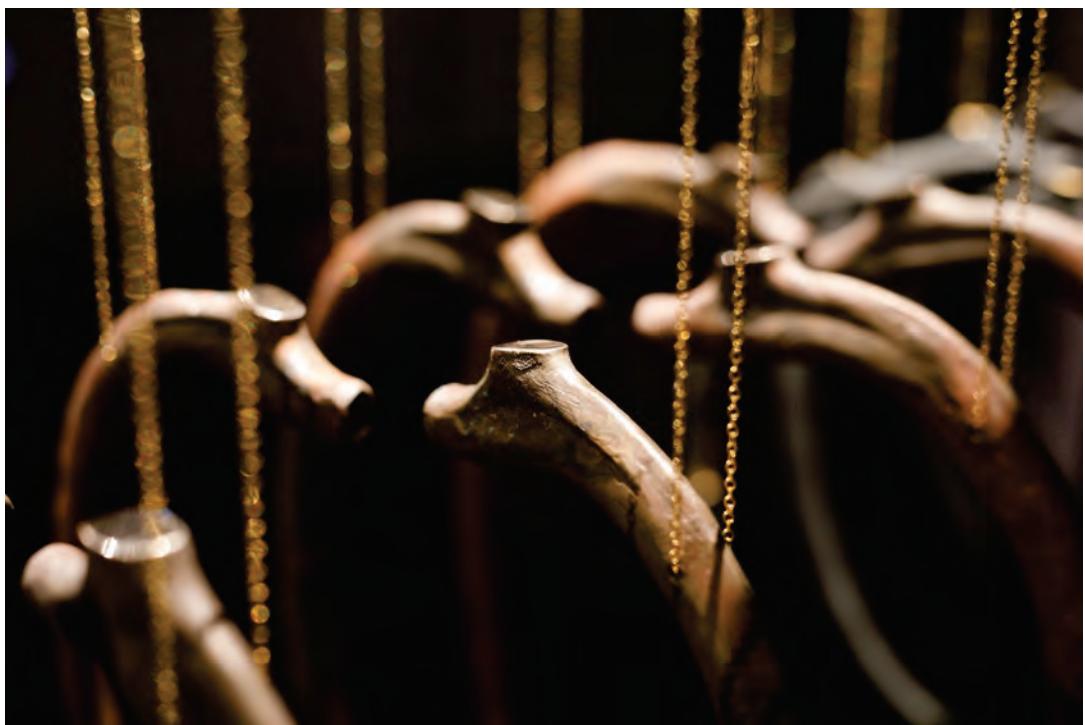


Figure 3: Close-up of the bronze and porcelain dolphin bones in Alluvial Gold, created from moulds of a dolphin skeleton housed in the WA Maritime Museum, and hung using gold chain. Bronze and porcelain were selected for both aesthetic and sonic possibilities, and the hanging points were determined by calculating the nodal points of each bone for maximum resonance. Photo supplied: Erin Coates.

The two instrumental stations—expanded vibraphone and expanded bass drum—were nestled against a 3-x5-metre sonified oyster shell curtain and fabric panels in the pre-premiere of the combined installation-performance outcome of the project. Shown below in Figure 4, the original oyster shell curtain is fitted with sensors used to trigger audio samples of the percussive instruments and hydrophone river recordings. This was later adapted into a series of circular curtains and integrated into a set design, shown in Figure 5. The setup is immersed in video projection of underwater footage of the riverbed and surface, as well as air bubbles, shell, crustaceans, algae, moss, and plants. The performance space is saturated in both the sonic and the visual, and it is this combination that allows us to encounter certain aspects of the river in a new way. As mentioned above, the audience is surrounded by a quadraphonic speaker array, placed at a distance from the instrumental setup that plays with perception. The placement of the speakers conceals the source of the live electronic sound, further hidden by the blend of pre-recorded, fixed audio material with live processing and amplification from the speakers, and the acoustic sound reverberating in the performance space. This leads audiences to question which sounds are acoustic, which sounds are electronic, and which sounds are a composite of acoustic and electronic sound, and which are natural interactions of sound and space.



*Figure 4: The original oyster shell curtain from Alluvial Gold, hung at Heathcote Goolugatup, Perth.  
Photo supplied: Erin Coates.*



*Figure 5: The largest of the circular oyster shell curtains in Alluvial Gold, hung at Perth Institute of Contemporary Arts. Photo credit: Edify Media.*

Having provided an overview of the aims and design of *Alluvial Gold* from the perspective of the creators, the next section will discuss how the use of diverse instrumental materials facilitates a unique cognitive engagement with the world for the audience. We will focus primarily on the interweaving of story (the dredging of Derbarl Yerrigan), instrumentation (the use of oyster shells and custom designed instruments such as the ceramic dolphin bones), and visual theatricality (the way in which the audience sees and can recognise that sounds are being created by specific instrumentation). By exploring the way in which these three elements are irreducibly entwined, we offer an analysis of the way in which *Alluvial Gold* engenders a unique perceptual aesthetic experience as a result of the post-instrumental approach taken by the creators.

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Listen to excerpt from the third movement, titled *The Cascades*.

<https://soundcloud.com/performancephilosophy/alluvial-gold-excerpt2>

*Short, intermittent bursts of bubbles prick a soundscape of muffled underwater rippling noise, recorded beneath the surface of the Derbarl Yerrigan. Light attacks (striking vibraphone pitches almost inaudibly) occur in unison with the bubble soundscape, creating an illusion of cause and effect. Which sounds are metallic, which are air and water? The bubbles reach the surface of the river as the surface comes into view, unrecognisable at first, reflecting the sky, reflecting light from the sun. The muffled underwater soundscape grows into a roaring, rush of watery sound of the river cascades. Individual bubbles are lost in the rush of sound.*

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### Instrumentality as a mode of engagement with the world

As already mentioned, a key characteristic of post-instrumental practice is the exploration of instrumentality. Rather than attempt to define precisely what is and is not an instrument, instrumentality refers to the way in which any 'thing' can be appropriated into a musical context such that the 'thing's' musicality is drawn out in performance. Explorations of instrumentality are a key feature of post-instrumental practices, aiding in the expansion of the already vast array of everyday objects or natural materials employed in a musical context. This often involves exploring not only the sonic identity of materials but also their instrumentality in a non-sonic sense (for example, their visual or reflective qualities). Instrumentality has a much broader implications than the term 'instrument', where what classifies something as an 'instrument' has more to do with culture and tradition than anything else. As Hardjowirogo (2017) points out, in Western culture a radio is not commonly considered to be an 'instrument', despite the fact that it is more or less exclusively used as a device to produce sound. In the hands of John Cage, however, particularly, his *Imaginary Landscape No. 4* (1951), the radio is used precisely as an instrument. Culturally at least, Cage's work has done little to alter most people's understanding of radios—they are still unlikely to be referred to as an 'instrument' in the same way that a piano would be. While many people would likely resist labelling a radio an 'instrument', few would argue that radios do not at least possess the *potential* to be used as instruments in particular contexts. And so, anything from which sound can be extracted, by whatever means, possesses musical potential, and therefore has a musical identity. It is precisely a thing's 'instrumentality' that makes it an instrument within certain cultural contexts. Issues of defining precisely what a musical instrument is aside, the idea of 'instrumentality' is apt to describing what is at issue in post-instrumental practice.

The idea of appropriation is central to post-instrumental practice insofar as things that are not typically regarded as musical instruments are appropriated into a musical context. Everyday household items such as ping pong balls, hair combs, vibrators, and knives, for instance, are frequently appropriated for musical use. Performers rely on technique transferral to play a range of 'things' that may, over the career of the performer, be a 'one-off' instrument. It is quickly becoming standard that contemporary music performers must be able to transfer their technique from one instrument to another. While technique transferral is a key skill for performers of all instrumental families in various ways (strings, woodwinds, brass, percussion, etc.), it is perhaps most clearly recognised and understood in terms of percussion where, in simple terms, the percussionist transfers their knowledge of how to strike traditional instruments such as timpani and cymbals to other things such as everyday urban objects, natural materials, and instrumental materials made especially for a particular work, such as the casts of dolphin bones used in *Alluvial Gold*.

While the idea of instrumentality has been effectively used to address the way in which performers play a range of instruments (Hardjowirogo 2017; Stene 2014; Bittencourt 2019), the idea of instrumentality also refers to a mode of engaging with the world that is typically unacknowledged

in the music literature. What the idea of instrumentality brings to the fore is not only the way in which performers make music from non-traditional instruments but the way in which things in the world possess a certain musical potential, and the way in which drawing attention to the musicality of things can alter a person's relationship with the world, however slight. A consideration of instrumentality leads us beyond an exclusively musical context toward a consideration of how post-instrumental practice unveils and thematises a certain musical character of things that typically passes us by in everyday experience.

The blending of visual and auditory elements that is common in post-instrumental practice is significant for the revealing character of *Alluvial Gold*. As noted, from an exclusively auditory perspective demonstrated in Listening Examples 1 and 2 above, it is not always clear what instrument is generating what sound. Indeed, heard only as a recording, it is unlikely that audience members would be able to identify oyster shells, for instance, as the generator of sounds. A result of the visual component of the work however, audience members can complement their auditory experience with visual information. In some respects, the way in which a post-instrumental approach facilitates blending of sonic and visual elements or a certain theatricality may be seen to stand in stark opposition to Pierre Schaeffer's acousmatic listening (2017, 64–72), where he is concerned only with the materiality of the sound itself, separate from the instrument that generated that sound. Post-instrumental practice, in contrast, often celebrates the relationship between sounds and the objects that generate those sounds. Indeed, an important aspect of *Alluvial Gold* is that the audience notices the way in which casts of dolphin bones and oyster shells are being used to generate sound.

Since these 'things' are not commonplace instruments, the performer's engagement with these instruments is particularly intriguing. The player's engagement with sculptural instruments that clearly and visibly reference an aspect of the river and our impact upon it—and the fact that audience members can discern that the player is engaging with those instruments—heightens the cognitive dimension of aesthetic experience. That is, the work is not merely sonic, nor is it merely visual or the wedding of sonic and visual art components. Rather, the work is thought provoking and elicits contemplation. Of course, all aesthetic experience involves a cognitive aspect (Davey 2013; Gadamer 2013), but works emerging from a creative process influenced by post-instrumental practices, especially given its emphasis on performance and wedding the sonic with the visual, heightens and draws attention to the thought-provoking character of art—particularly with respect to instrumentation and instrumentality—more so than traditional artworks, if only because audience members inevitably come to recognise and understand the role and possibilities of certain things/instruments.

Sound art, for instance, also typically incorporates these ideas to generate sound and encourage musical listening to the world. Christina Kubisch's *Electrical Walks* that she curated in various cities between 2004 and 2017 (Kubisch), for example, require participants to wear specially designed headphones that amplify the electromagnetic fields present in the environment—one hears the hums and buzzes of telegraph lines, ATMs, cell phones, light globes, and so forth (Kim-Cohen 2009, 109–110). Unquestionably, such works are thought provoking—participants hear sounds that they

might not otherwise know existed, despite those sounds being emanated from everyday things that they routinely pass by. Those sounds may even possess a certain beauty and musicality to the extent that the 'walk' may constitute a musical work and not merely a thought-provoking experience. But as Kim-Cohen (2009) has pointed out, the 'blunt materiality' (115) of Kubisch's *Electrical Walks* perhaps discloses an otherwise 'hidden' character of the city, but it comes across as 'scientific' disclosure at the expense of possessing any real 'aesthetic value' (112).

The literal and didactic nature of *Electrical Walks* results in a 'revealing' character that is scientific or technological rather than poetic or artistic. Simply drawing attention to something is not necessarily artistic. As Heidegger says, highlighting the difference between 'everyday' writing and 'artistic' or 'poetic' writing, 'the poet also uses the word—not, however, like ordinary speakers and writers who have to use them up, but rather in such a way that the word only now becomes and remains truly a word' (2013, 46). In drawing attention to something such as the sonorous character of what is typically considered to be a non-musical thing, artists must not merely make the thing sound as a carpenter makes a board sound as they hammer it, but they must make it sound as it has never sounded before, it must sound 'musically'. Like the poet who does not 'use words up', but instead allows the word to come forth *as a word*, the musician is tasked with bringing forth the *musicality* of things, as opposed to merely making them 'sound'. To put it another way, as Kant writes, the work of art 'evokes much thought, yet without the possibility of any definite thought whatever, i.e., *concept*, being adequate to it' (Kant 2008, 142). That is, works of art may reveal the world and be thought provoking, but insofar as they are *works of art*, they must not be didactic, what they convey must go *beyond* the concept.

The revealing character facilitated by a post-instrumental approach to musical practice—or any practice—cannot be too blunt or didactic if it is to go beyond the concept, as Kant asserts, with which Heidegger would agree. It must resist being reduced to explanation. And so, the challenge for those engaged in post-instrumental practice is making their work 'art'. It is the role of the scientist to explain the ecological impact that the dredging of the Swan River/Derbarl Yerrigan in exclusively ecological terms. It is the role of natural artifact museums to put those things that were dredged on display for viewer contemplation. *Alluvial Gold* refers to ecological impact and displays natural artifacts for contemplation, but it does so 'poetically' or 'musically', such that the aesthetic contemplation it elicits cannot be reduced to a concept or explanation. Let us now turn to that experience and discuss some of the things that *Alluvial Gold* made be said to reveal to those who experience it.

\* \* \*



Video example 1: Excerpts from *Alluvial Gold*. <https://vimeo.com/835375151>

*Dolphin rib bones and vertebrae hung from gold chains. Cast from black porcelain and bronze, signs of bone disease are highlighted in gold leaf clinging to irregularities on their otherwise smooth surfaces. These bones were cast from a preserved dolphin skeleton, the irregularities attributed to the impacts of heavy metals present in the river. Near the bones hangs a curtain of scrubbed oyster shells interlinked like chainmail with gold metal rings. A fine wire is threaded through the rings, with small sensors clinging to it. From a distance, the shells are still, quiet, appearing inert. Responsive to light, the sensors hidden within the weave of shells signal disruption. Electronic sound is triggered as we move towards it, the intensity of the disruption responsive to human proximity.*

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### Experiencing *Alluvial Gold*

To the extent that *Alluvial Gold* appropriates a range of 'things' and employs them within a musical context, *Alluvial Gold* may be said to reveal a certain musicality of those 'things' it appropriates. While there are countless ways to experience music, many of which, in the age of technology, threaten music's status as 'art' (McAuliffe 2020), in the discussion to follow we are interested in a mode of aesthetic engagement that McAuliffe has described as 'improvisational' (2020). That is, we are concerned with a mode of engagement where listeners attend and respond to that which they encounter in the happening of the event. Rather than allow the music to be 'background sound', as it were, or an object that one analyses and reduces to its formal structure, improvisational engagement consists in the audience engaging with the work on its own terms—the audience allows the work to guide their experience, allows the work to reveal itself, and yet, the audience is

not merely passive, they actively participate in the happening of the work. In the language of philosophy, the improvisation of aesthetic experience is analogous to hermeneutical engagement (Gadamer 2013). It is from this perspective of improvisational engagement that we offer the following description of *Alluvial Gold*.

When the audience experiences *Alluvial Gold* they are drawn into an engagement not merely with the work as an object but with the *world*—the work thematizes a certain character of the world that we each find ourselves both situated in and engaged with. That is, unlike many forms of ‘entertainment’ that attempt (if unsuccessfully) to shield us from or allow us to escape the world, where Netflix is an obvious example, *Alluvial Gold* does not attempt to offer escapism. Instead, the blend of visual and auditory phenomena, where the audience sees Devenish performing with oyster shells and bronze dolphin bones, for example, draws the audience into thoughtful aesthetic contemplation. The work is not only something sensible but something that illuminates a certain character of the world by drawing us into the world, or, better, *its world*, which, of course, is not distinct from *the world* that we all inhabit. As the French phenomenologist Mikel Dufrenne writes, ‘there is nothing but *the world*, and yet the aesthetic object is pregnant with *a world of its own*’ (1973, 149). The work draws the audience into an engagement with *the world*, but not the world as a whole; rather, the world as it is given in the happening of the work. The work presents the world, or a certain musical or artistic character of the world, to the audience.

Precisely ‘what’ will be presented cannot be determined in advance, however, for ‘revealing’ is always a revealing ‘to someone’. What is revealed is never independent of the prior understanding of the individual who experiences it. As noted, this is not to suggest that aesthetic experience is merely subjective or relative. What is revealed by the happening of the work comes from the objectivity of the work itself. However, the work possesses infinite possibilities—it can reveal elements of its world in countless ways—the individual, however, is never predisposed to encounter those possibilities in any complete or absolute sense (therefore we can attend to the same works again and again and continually find something new in those works). Rather, by virtue of their prior understanding of music and the world more generally, the individual receives certain, limited, possibilities for aesthetic engagement. What the work reveals emerges from the dialectic between presentation and reception.

Instrumentation plays a significant role with respect to what the work reveals, as does the multimodal nature of the work, as discussed above. Both the sonorous character of the sculptural instruments and objects, and the fact that audiences can visually identify those instruments as the source of those sounds contributes to the elevated cognitive engagement of the audience experiencing the work. For example, there is a delicacy and fragility, an innocence perhaps, that comes forth as Devenish plays the oyster shells in a bowl of water. Devenish’s performance highlights the musicality of oyster shells and reminds us that the earth is not merely something to be ‘used’ and ‘consumed’—it is not something that has to be ‘used up’, as Heidegger might say. *Alluvial Gold* encourages the audience to take a ‘step back’ from the world as we ordinarily perceive it so that they might expand their horizons. The work allows a certain musical character of oyster shells to stand out against the non-musical backdrop that we usually attribute to oyster shells.

*Alluvial Gold* does not merely make the oyster shells 'sound', however. Devenish's performance draws attention to the 'musicality' of oyster shells and by drawing the audience into thoughtful consideration of the musicality of oyster shells, highlights the otherwise 'hidden' depth of the world more generally. What other sonorous, beautiful, or sublime characteristics of the world are *there* with us in everyday experience that we typically overlook or pay no attention to?

Moreover, if we consider the way in which Devenish's playing of oyster shells is, approximately 35 minutes into the work, underpinned by deep, ominous electronic sounds and recordings of dredging machinery in operation that grumble below the fragility of Devenish's contributions, we are reminded that there can be an immense power that underpins the world's fragility. Thus, not only does the work illuminate a certain character of the earth that is immediately present to the audience—the oyster shells, for instance—but it encourages thoughtful engagement with the complex relationality of the world. Oyster shells do not exist independently from the rest of the world. And so, to return to the fact that *Alluvial Gold* was conceived in response to the way in which oyster shells were dredged from the Swan River/Derbarl Yerrigan in Perth, the audience may begin to consider whether the dredging of the oyster shells may have implications beyond those individual shells and beyond that period of dredging.<sup>4</sup> And, in the ideal, consider how all actions go beyond the immediate situation in which those actions are enacted. We may say that what the work asks us to consider is this: If we proceed thoughtlessly, as those who dredged the river arguably did, we increase our chances of encountering unforeseen and perhaps dire consequences in the future.

If we live with the recognition that things in the world typically go beyond what we ordinarily consider to be the limits of the 'use' they are presently known to serve and acknowledge the complex relationality of things in the world, we are led to consider the world not as a mere commodity, or something that we control or are the rulers of, but as something that extends beyond the individual, beyond a single human lifetime, and, indeed, beyond human beings. The significance of *Alluvial Gold* is that it offers a means to expand our horizons, for it reveals the world, which involves illuminating *our place in the world* by drawing us into an active engagement with the musicality of the world.

### **Post-instrumental practice as a means to encounter the world anew**

The character of processes and work that reflect post-instrumental approaches to music creation offer the opportunity to rethink the limits and possibilities of musical practice, and their relevance in our contemporary context. By virtue of the emphasis on instrumentality, technique transferral and multi-functionality, post-instrumental practice offers new ways for us to encounter and engage with the world. As noted, this engagement necessarily includes but also extends beyond music and so has the potential to reconfigure our relationship with the world more broadly—engagement with art can influence ethical and environmental decisions about river dredging, for instance. Post-instrumental practice does not necessarily change the world—it is not so naive as to seek a revolution—but it does, or at least *can*, illuminate and provide thoughtful access to the world in ways that differ from 'traditional' musical practice.

Of course, all great works of art reveals the world in the way we have described in their own way. And the avant-garde has regularly appropriated everyday 'things' into an artistic context. Our claim is not that post-instrumental practice 'reveals' the world any more or less than other artforms. Our aim has been to take those initial first steps to acknowledge the ways in which post-instrumental practice contributes to this tradition of appropriating and revealing differently to other artforms by virtue of the way in which it routinely involves the wedding of the auditory and the visual, performer's technique transferral, the use of a range of instrumental materials, and so forth. While 'instrumentality', 'technique transferral', and 'multi-modality' are not necessarily particular to post-instrumental practice, they are certainly emphasised in ways that are worth discussing in terms of post-instrumental practice. As we have attempted to demonstrate, post-instrumental practice offers a unique blend of musicality, visuality, and conceptuality. And so, in the ideal, post-instrumental practice offers a unique form of aesthetic experience that can reveal the world and draw attention to both the horizon of our knowledge and the possibilities that await.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For example, an excerpt of the short 10-minute film titled *Alluvium* can be viewed here: <http://www.erincoates.net/alluvium>. The video used in this film work is reconfigured into a spatialised projection design, and the sound components rearranged for live performance.

<sup>2</sup> The artists acknowledge support and advice from the City of Melville and Whadjuk Noongar Working Party regarding thoughtful recording in the river for this project.

<sup>3</sup> The oyster shells used in *Alluvial Gold* were not collected from the Derbarl Yerrigan during the making of this work, as the artists did not wish to contribute to the removal of matter from the river. The artists used recycled shells collected from restaurants and oyster shuckers, inspired by Australian shell recycling initiative Shuck Don't Chuck. This initiative collects oyster, mussel and scallop shells from restaurants that are otherwise destined for landfill. The shells are then cured in the sun, then used as a foundation for reef reconstruction projects that aim to counteract the impacts of dredging on oyster populations, by providing suitable 'settlement substrate' for juvenile oysters to grow on. <https://www.natureaustralia.org.au/what-we-do/our-priorities/oceans/ocean-stories/shuck-dont-chuck-shell-recycling/>

<sup>4</sup> The audience may, of course, be drawn to consider any number of other scenarios. We do not deny that there is a chance an audience member could be drawn to the commodification of the natural world for entertainment purposes, for example. There is always a plurality of ways in which revealing may occur, specific to the relationship between that particular audience member and the work of art. We are suggesting, however, that given the broader context of *Alluvial Gold* that this 'negative' revealing is a less likely scenario.

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## Biographies

Dr Sam McAuliffe is Dean of Studies and Careers at Mannix College, and an adjunct research fellow at Monash University. He is the author of *Improvisation in Music and Philosophical Hermeneutics* (Bloomsbury) and editor of *Gadamer, Music, and Philosophical Hermeneutics*. McAuliffe has published numerous scholarly articles on philosophical hermeneutics, improvisation, music, aesthetics, ethics, and place/topology.

Dr Louise Devenish is a percussionist whose creative practice blends performance, artistic research methodologies, and creative collaboration with composers, visual artists, designers and improvisors. As a soloist and with ensembles Decibel, Speak Percussion and others, Louise has appeared at festivals including MONA FOMA, Shanghai World Expo, Ojai Music Festival, Tage für Neue Musik, Darmstädter Ferienkurse, Tongyeong International Music Festival and Huddersfield Contemporary Music Festival. Her performances can be heard on international labels HatArt, ezz-thetics, Immediata, Navona, Tall Poppies, and room40. Louise is currently undertaking an Australian Research Council DECRA Fellowship at Monash University, where she is director of artistic research project The Sound Collectors Lab, and Percussion Coordinator. Louise's creative work has been recognised by a Churchill Fellowship, WA Music Awards, and numerous APRA AMCOS Art Music Awards, including Performance of the Year Award and Luminary Award. Her writing on new music is published in academic books and journals, industry publications, and zines.

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## HOMO ELECTROMAGNETICUS II: PARADIGMS AND PARADOXES AN "AFTER THE MEDIA" MUSICAL PERFORMANCE

ALEXANDRE BENTO UNIVERSIDADE NOVA, LISBON



Watch and listen to *Homo Electromagneticus*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vO8d8qmn2Tl>

*Homo Electromagneticus* is a musical performance realized in 2022 through a set of original instruments created with open-source and low-cost technologies. Arduino microcontrollers, sensors, brainwaves, MIDI, algorithms, and the interaction with plants' capacitance provide digital, acoustic and mechatronic sound production forms. Cognizant of the material and energy dump that is the signature of the Anthropocene, the piece thrives on a commitment to the conscientious and responsible production of waste. Thus, in addition to original musical instruments, I also utilized old bottles, kitchen tools, electronics equipment taken from the dump, obsolete musical instruments, human gestures and brain waves as research and performance tools.

*Homo Electromagneticus* reacts to the exclusivity of digital sound production, choosing instead to revitalize and promote acoustic sound production. Thinking along with Zielinski (2010), the piece helps us to consider art "after the media," meaning that it foregrounds the production of acoustic sound mediated through electromagnetic interfaces. The technological aspect of production is prevalent, but digital and electric sound production does not dominate the performance of the work as a whole.

The performance relies on the emergence of a *mix compositum* in which the distinction between performer and composer becomes blurred. Each performance of the piece requires the players to generate sound anew. Additionally, the very definition of musical "instrument" undergoes a transformation since the performer becomes, in a sense, a necessary instrument in the production of the piece.

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## Biography

Alexandre Bento is currently developing a PhD thesis on musical mechatronics at Universidade Nova in Lisbon, Portugal. He is an integrated researcher at [INET-md](#). Over 31 years, Alexandre has worked with hundreds of musicians in concerts, performances, pedagogical actions and recordings. Learn more at [www.alexbento.com](http://www.alexbento.com)

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## 7 ABIKU SOLOS FOR 11 BACTERIA FALLING THROUGH

FLAVIA PINHEIRO

CHOREOGRAPHER AND RESEARCHER, BRAZIL AND AMSTERDAM

**7 Abiku solos for 11 bacteria falling through** is a research project centered on the unique cosmology of the macrobiotic world that foregrounds interspecies entanglements: ghosts, birds, bacteria migrating... It mingles a personal story: forgotten and erased memories with a sensation craved in the guts. In this speculative fabulation, the past is not located behind us; in this sense, we can create and change the narratives that have been taught to us. As if it was possible to make an ontological shift, "mirando atrás y adelante podemos caminar en el presente futuro"? (Rivera Cusicanqui 2010). It means that the past is ahead of us, you can acknowledge it, but the future, however, is not new because it is behind, in the back. The understanding is that time is not linear and that history is not factual. How to bring to the foreground the complexity of the ongoing process of colonial modernity by dismantling hegemonic systems of knowledge? How do we challenge language and its legitimization through the use of pseudoscientific and technological discourse that contributes to the obliteration of cosmologies and worlds? In this way, the research proposes the transversality of languages and disciplines intersecting a scientific vocabulary with images and allegories to dismantle/shake the fixed structures of power and unveil invisible and neglected ones. This intersectionality happens through the contamination of proposals in non-linear hybrid formats, an open and exponential system that enables mediation between a more diverse public concerning backgrounds, heritages, ages, race, and gender; integration of different capacities, and communication skills. Expanding meanings: saying names in many languages, evoking counter-narratives, casting spells, retelling stories, crossing media, and using technologies to open translation procedures.

Contamination might be the main key of this essay as a radical alternative to the sanitisation and hygienic conditions demanded in the current times. In the research, I describe myself as bacteria – because I come from a highly contagious environment, far from the aseptic conditions that are expected of a solo artist bound to a studio. As bacteria, I find it very easy to mutate and coexist: I adapt to an insalubrious environment without difficulty, in an ongoing attempt to create breathing and vital conditions. All throughout my body of work, I highlight the difference between the *in vivo* and the *in vitro*, happening outside the body in artificial conditions often in test tubes, used in scientific discourse in the entanglement of different technologies, to imagine choreographic devices in collaboration. By consistently balancing the artificial ("in vitro") environment of a studio with engagements in public spaces ("in vivo") I am attempting to create a diverse set of artistic works that reverberate in cross-contamination procedures, expanding audience and artistic disciplines. Interspecies collaborations are of absolute importance for survival. For Anna Tsing (2015), collaboration forms a thread that intertwines with the rejection of progress to produce latent commons. Collaboration is indeterminate; it involves contamination that changes the parties involved in unforeseeable ways. Nonetheless, Tsing argues that in order to survive we need the help of others. We must engage in collaboration, both within and across species, subjecting ourselves to inevitable contamination. Through collaboration and ensuing contaminated diversity, new historically contingent, relationally determined possibilities emerge.

After being outdoors in a long, embodied learning experience of becoming bacteria, the artistic proposal now deals with the captive condition of the studio; indoors. What remains is the superpower of reproduction of the bacteria, the transmutating reproducibility, always becoming others, never alone, always in collaboration. The multiplicity allows that one becomes more in a blink of an eye; a condition of not belonging to the body or not being one. The bacteria do not exist alone; they are transindividual by definition.

[...] transindividuality happens in the situation in which the individual suspends the function of its (interindividual) relations to the others, or, in other words, disindividualize itself by putting itself into question, by forcing itself to become aware of what in itself is more-than-individual. (Cvejić 2016, 6)

The sound composition and spatialisation in the piece make it possible to navigate through all the different technologies. It serves as a key to open up portals. The sound mediates the speculative fabulation, it bridges the audience and non-humans; bacteria, ghosts, and birds. The voicing out loud aims to make a highly accessible open system with many entrances. The language includes lower tones and high pitches. Those variations stress fixed spaces of knowledge and regimes of visibility, cracking their hierarchies. The characteristics of the digitalisation of space shape our ways of working, thinking, and being. The language here bridges us back to an embodiment experience, it highlights the apnea as an analogical way of sharing the invisible, it forecasts spells that are not intelligible, and it addresses that translation is always a loss.

The piece **7 Abiku solos for 11 bacteria falling through** is the result of the Master's in Choreography at DAS Graduate School. I am assuming that sound is used to "glue" the pieces together and create the atmosphere. Contamination is the methodology for a collective creation process; an interspecies ecology between Flavia Pinheiro, Leandro Olivan, Tom Oliver, Kris Macdonald, Misha Douglas, Chakirou (Baba Ketu), Mario Lopes, Rodrigo Batista, Ana Lira, Willem, Eric Lint, Jakob Povel, Emanuel Nijkerk, and others, more than humans and invisible voices.

The collective was made in an assemblage with the virtual presence of Jakob, with the previous experience together with Chakirou; intertwining places, cosmologies, languages, and technologies. "Collaboration is working across differences, yet this is not the innocent diversity of self-contained evolutionary tracks. The evolution of our 'selves' is already polluted by histories of encounters; we are mixed up with others before we even begin any new collaboration. The diversity that allows us to enter collaborations emerges from histories of extermination, imperialism, and all the rest. Contaminations make Diversity" (Tsing 2017, 29).

An immaterial knowledge has been built; enchantments and spells gathered through body practices, conversations, reading, listening, being, and eating together, surrounded by the invisible and in a wake of the past as an absent presence. A secret hidden in between the words and their translations, a code that cannot be deciphered. An important part of the work was materialised in sound, sometimes harmonic, sometimes textual, sometimes rhythmic, sometimes digital, sometimes written, sometimes dissonant and chaotic: whistles, voices, screaming, murmurs, apneas, whispers, in a format of a podcast, an installation and a music composition for a live performance.

I am not going to focus on the technical aspects, but in the crossing between them, half of the crew was there to make this happen. Nevertheless, tools become obsolete, while new ones are perpetually born, but the elements of the performance can't remain the same. Although I believe it is interesting to say that the database of the images at the beginning of the process was a very complicated and extended decision-making process. Some of us were standing for the importance of having "real scientific images of bacteria" to be used, others believed that the images would be just a representation of scientific allegory to dismantle perception and humanity.

### Making science instead of art

Empirical sciences often pride themselves on being devoid of a subject while they are in fact highly fictional, narrative-based research fields. From the vantage point of an artist, the evolutionary story can be considered a fable (Scott 2017), and the whole field of empirical science a violent fabrication in which (as history shows) some lives are inherently devalued. In the realm of this particular fable, the *in vitro* condition reverberates across all domains of scientific discourses and practices: characters such as Petri dishes, microscopes, magnifying glasses, compasses, greenhouses, and zoos fill the stage – in an ongoing attempt to capture and catalogue non-human subjects. The attempt is to highlight the violent effects of this fable: What is true in a microcosmic, micropolitical way is also true in a macropolitical way. Bacteria, for example, are able to change their

surroundings and transform their environment into a living, breathing, vital life. However, when they are captured, this is no longer the case. An in vitro condition, in other words, is a slow death for all life forms. The aim of the project was to tell the story not through the lens of a subject whose existence had been captured but from the opposite vantage point: That of a vibrant, dancing bacteria who refuses the conditions of captivity, that insists on staying alive through a choreography of contamination. It is searching for the re-enchantment of the world through entanglement with microorganisms, to dismantle the evolutionary tale of humanity and recast it toward decolonizing nature. To resist colonizing systems of knowledge and the regimes of invisibility, the micro-politics of bacteria are a metaphor for the grammar of exclusion in the patriarchal, colonialist, capitalist macrosystem. This microscopic study investigates the ever-changing dialogue between a bacterial body as material and bone and flesh and imagination as invisible, intangible, immaterial. The sound was a creation of a specific ecosystem of practices, which aims to learn from bacteria to accelerate the metabolism, activate the immunological system, transform our visions, contaminate each other and create a dissonant community of cells that, unbalanced, moves together without a purpose, exploring the thin line between bacterial growth and inactivation, focusing on some emerging bacterial survival strategies, both from an individual cell and from a population perspective.

The fable unveils the mechanism of living in a state of being kidnapped from Life with all its colonial(ist), anti-biotic, anti-zootic impulses and implications. To create a dance with a broader engagement is, nevertheless, moving at the edge of an impossibility. The radical turn of this process is to continue to develop the research on the fine line between representation and the anti-colonial(ist) imperative, to detonate with the very logic that makes it possible even to conceive that such entrapment could ever make any sense at all. How to get totally rid of any "genre of the human" that posits captivity, hollowed-out life, anti-biotic being, living in vitro, as the only mode of understanding the living?

It is quite easy to draw a connection between these experiments and the fascination that people have with the audiovisual experience, when connecting to narrative storytelling, through the fabulation; scattered connections can be made also by the audience.

### **Frags, complexity discontinuity, non-linearity, sound visuality, meanings, multiplicities**

I will share the written text, the audio file, and the score of this fable, the performative installation named "7 Abiku solos for 11 bacteria falling through"; an in vitro experiment, that merges sound, texts, images, and movement in an attempt to engage the audience in imagination of the unborn. The language and translations used in "7 Abiku solos for 11 bacteria falling through" address urgent issues of macro political structures, emphasizing the importance of taking action towards a political shift.

This is why we stay with poetry. And despite our consenting to all the indisputable technologies; despite seeing the political leap that must be managed, the horror of

hunger and ignorance, torture and massacre to be conquered, the full load of knowledge to be tamed, the weight of every piece of machinery that we shall finally control, and the exhausting flashes as we pass from one era to another—from forest to city, from story to computer—at the bow there is still something we now share: this murmur, cloud or rain or peaceful smoke. We know ourselves as part and as a crowd, in an unknown that does not terrify. We cry our cry of poetry. Our boats are open, and we sail them for everyone. (Glissant 1997, 35)

The trans-disciplinary approach relates to the search: how multiple voices can be heard differently through time? The choice to dive into multiple media was to hack the system of perception with analogical and digital devices in transduction procedures to complexify the meaning and the affective relations with the audience to address the invisible. For the philosopher Simondon (2017), transduction refers to a dynamic operation by which energy is actualized, moving from one state to the next, in a process that individuates new materialities.

Shifting the materiality of the experience into a plurality of voices, languages, and devices to aim at the questions: How to communicate with ghosts? How do we materialize the sensations and memories embodied in our guts, remembered by bacteria and tissues throughout generations? How can different technologies expand the experience and allow our imagination to form complex associations? How can a critical speculative fabulation address the embodiment of the unborn towards contamination procedures that could be fracture and dismantle sovereignty within neoliberalism, fostering the emergence of super-bacteria?

I will tell you a story.

It seems that the new scientific research results show that individuals with an imbalance in bacteria, with a ratio favoring harmful to healthy bacteria, were more likely to have the Alzheimer's signature. I wish I could tell you my dream, but I must tell you a story about a forced choreographic displacement. About memories stolen by colonialism that caused forgetfulness and loss in the transatlantic endless journey of no return. It is about imagining the past based on partial traces and opaque connections between an oral tradition, the presence of the Males at the port region in Recife, where my mother spent her life, and the magic realm of the Abikus in Ouidah. The legend tells that a pregnant woman was wandering around the baobab tree in an enchanted realm. Due to her sorrow and pain, her soul sunk into tears and sadness allowed the spirits inside her unborn child. A life of persistent effects of oppression, even after the oppressive system has been removed, in which silence, and annihilation takes place. Nothing has been left. She forgot everything. She cannot draw a clock due to an impairment of the frontal cerebral lobe; time has vanished away. Anatomic disrupting attention in the cerebral network. Thus, the present mingles disconnected events from the past with the future. After all, to whom does time belong? The research was an attempt to find refuge in this stolen life.

## Inside/out

In the first room, this story was materialized through a transduction procedure using sound, spoken words, and written texts. 700 black feathers and 3 fans. An attempt to protect memory, a hidden secret, a spell uncodified, an immaterial story of the Abiku and field research in Benin. The installation with 12 LCD screens was programmed by Leandro Olivan and the sound/text composition plays with the overlapping of translations. The use of repetition, empty spaces on the screens, different font sizes, and a delay between what we see and hear were some materials used to foster this experience; a complex machine of perceptions where we fool the spectators' linear reading comprehension. On the screens, you have words, sentences, letters, graphics, and sometimes only a glitch that overlaps the multiple layers of sounds and noise emerging from the speakers.



Listen: <https://soundcloud.com/performancephilosophy/pinheiro-1>

## TEXTS

7 Abiku solos with 11 bacteria falling through

Such a long night in the forest  
Such a long night away from the forest

---

« Être un ABIKU n'est pas une fatalité. La fatalité est de croire qu'être un Abiku en est une. C'est là, la grande Ignorance »

---

I want to tell you a story about my past/future

Need	trauma	
Wish	I could	life/death
Must	mother	
Will	Companion spirit	
Never	Curse	

---

Being an ABIKU is not a fatality.  
Reality  
Between frustration and celebration  
Remembrance and forgetfulness.

I belong to the disembodied entities,  
spirits who live in a parallel world.

My mother lay down under the Baobab  
to take refuge  
Days of pain follow one another  
"baobab", the sacred tree,  
the nest of all spirits,

She uttered angry expressions  
She uttered words of pain that gradually made her energy dirty  
So angry; she didn't realize that she was surrounded by beings of magic  
In the spirit world  
some feed on the tears of our tears  
others on the tears of our joys,  
others on our negative or positive thoughts

---

Je ne suis jamais seule car les miens sont toujours avec moi et me suivent partout

the atmosphere of the forest settles in with the calls of birds and animals of several species.

---

You belong to the disembodied entities, spirits who live in a parallel world.  
a child who is born with the intention of not lasting.

---

Emi " Bànjkò " Stay (sit) by my side  
Emi " Yemijan " Stop deceiving me  
Emi " Kòkumó " This one will not die  
Emi " Dúrojaiyé " Stay and enjoy life

---

powerful spirits  
Encantados  
Forgive me for my silence  
nightly adventures in the forest  
Like my shadow, I sense you

---

Comme si mon âme chante ibéré, Imon ; Iwa ;  
Between irokos, baobas

---

Entre mundos que não podem desaparecer

they incarnate into a child

Who came to this world  
Into the mother's womb.  
Coming back again and again

born-dead"  
asphyxiated,  
stillborn  
Breathless  
An attempt to survive in apnea  
An absent presence

---

The ones who have not been born yet.

Who Will never be born

Who Will die right after birth

Many of us/ them with no right to live

Monadrénaline monte :

colère, tristesse, anxiété, arrogance sont au rendez-vous !

my system is always corrupted  
(Disease- Epidemic- Inaction Bacteria, virus malaria, tetanus, salmonella )  
I received then a very violent blow, mine are always of good mood,  
It was necessary to appease them,  
chained them and fed them  
so that they stop being a handicapped with my return and my success.  
The captive-born bird

The angry bird who can not fly

FIGHT - FIGHT -FIGHT - FIGHT- FIGHT

V- I -O-L-E-N- C-E

Violence

Rage rage rage rage rage

Vomitando depois de nausea, cólera e dor

To stop this cycle of births and deaths, your parents will have to perform certain rites to make the spirit forget its world of origin and to keep death away,

The first spirit that comes to me in my trance was a beautiful soul

A- Disguised and wearing a costume and a mask on which is written the letter "A" Akôkôkù (the first dead)

B- The second one with the same costume on which is written in bold the letter "B" Banjoko (sits with me)

I- The third belongs to the rank of spirits "I" inscribed on his back Ikukôhê (death has refused you)

K- The fourth has the letter "K" Kokumo (Do not die any more) on his back

U- The fifth has the letter "U" on his back, without a name or definition, he walked with his head

The five spirits brought together finally gave my identity.

Still in my trance,

I could not hold back from shouting loudly

A-BI-KU,

which had such an echo that the earth, the heavens and all that constitutes them relayed my voice and that of babalawo, which coincided exactly with mine; so I came back to myself for a few seconds and then .....

### **the re-enchantment of the world through technologies**

The second room entails an immersive performative score with touch design programming to visualize bacteria through generative art and three live performers embodying bacterial behaviors. You have troublemakers, errors, defaults, disobedience, and restless insistence in the body. It is about an inversion acknowledging that human bodies are colonized by bacteria and microorganisms. When the body fabulates a non-human to become a gendered technology mingled with non-hierarchical relation of the tissues to evoke the invisible that has not yet been born throughout devices that shift spatial notions, the inner/outside perception, the verticality, the bottom up, the anus instead of the head, a tentacular creature, a monster in a crossroad with species, in apnea. There is no air. The ontogenetic interfaces of the parasympathetic control allow the unknown to take place, the unborn to become. There is also a disruptive bird. The drive is to materialize and give shape to nonhegemonic voices, to imagine cosmological futurities that bring ways to collaborate for a radical aesthetic approach theoretically and poetically grounded in anti-racism, anti-colonial, anti-patriarchalist to rethink the archives, the undocumented, the original narratives towards repatriation, reparation, and restitution. Abiku was meant to build a public machine to acknowledge non-humans as an art of living in disruption, the art of surviving in the other way round of the art of living. We worked in a across academy in IDLab, with a light designer, sound designers, programmers, and performers. These complex constellations were a decision to

expand collaborations and interdisciplinarity to reach diverse audiences, a performative engagement to open up different points of access through a diverse encounter.

To understand a strong opposition between the world of the living and the world of death in the western cosmology to which I belong, to mingle with and migrate to impossible choreographs of humans and non-humans in states of survival. I focused on technologies of forgetting and remembering to speculate about an ontological radical turn between bacteria, birds, and spirits.

Édouard Glissant, in his *Poetics of Relation* (1990), reminds us that "difference itself can still contrive to reduce things to the Transparent" (189).

The proposal is to work as an ensemble where thinking promotes a shared unknowability that breaks through the dialectical limits of opacity and transparency.

The research was an attempt to fabulate my mother's past history, grief, and forgetting. I went to Benin in West Africa for field research trying to track back if it was possible to understand the meaning of abiku, and spiritual journey to face the ghosts of my heritage and the unnamed and undocumented past of my mother.

It is the "new mission of being the theory/practice of the permanent decolonization of thought" (Viveiros de Castro 17). It might be a complex network of interspecies relationships and ghostly string figures combining methods of doing, telling stories, thinking thoughts, making dances, creating images, decolonizing gestures, unlearning references, training to die, and forging ( in ) discipline.

With Abiku we would like to share the potential of fabulating narratives, a pathway of self- discovery and reconstruction that allows openness to communicate to the unborn, to more than humans in a listening procedure. This process converges into a deep reflection of the ongoing colonization technologies and all the neoliberal power dynamics when it presents a gap, a portal to the world of those who have not yet been born. As a breath of hope, I present us with a world to come.

The unborn fabulates into micro cosmologies and micro-politics documentation speculation, a solo score with resistance, celebration, repetition, shapeshifting, rage, anger, air, the ocean, a crossroads: bacteria and ghosts.



Listen: <https://soundcloud.com/performancephilosophy/pinheiro-2>

## Text and sound

comment

this creepy soothing voice welcomes people to kill themselves (towards the middle) “the intestinal tract... diversity.... take your finger up and insert it inside the person next to you.”

Welcome to the dark world of invisible microorganisms. To make science instead of art

A simple life of a single cell.

Transmitting to humans and non-humans and all those almost alive. It concerns the spectral presence of ghosts, the actual war but the borders that stand between the captive and their freedom, they can never be successfully crossed. For those who do not exist yet, those who were not born, and all imaginary, imagined beings, including those who have disappeared.

For all who have had their existence captured by the world of data digitalization and to remember that movement never stops.

Stop Stop Stop.

Close your eyes. Imagine an existence without a core, a breath without air, a world of adaptive possibilities of survival, permeability, super-fast reproduction power, transmutation, and membrane resilience. Good luck!

...

In vitro is Latin (the Golden language of Science) for “within the glass.” When something is performed in vitro, it happens outside of a living organism.

You have just entered this bacterial experiment where proportions, scales, and constellations matter for everything we can perceive, imagine and realize,

This is an in vivo experiment. An ongoing, hopeless fight against the antibiotic forces that surround us from all sides.

Bacteria are able to change their surroundings and transform their environment into a living, breathing, vital life. However, when they are captured, this is no longer the case. An "in vitro" condition is a slow death for all life to be and to come.

The cecum is a pouch within the **peritoneum** that is considered to be the beginning of the **large intestine**. It is typically located on the right side of the body (the same side of the body as the **appendix**, to which it is joined). The word cecum is Latin for **blind**.

The oldest life on the planet that speaks to you is more than 3.5 billion years old!

Humans did not know of our existence until 1674 ...even though the human body is made up of 10 times more bacteria than human cells!

Since the time of the bacterial discovery, we have been plundered and looted, displaced in Petri dishes across the globe, ambient bodies in isolation in an ongoing spectacle. This stage show is available 24/7. Unable to sleep, we remain in a continuous and perpetual motion.

If we organized ourselves into a protest lined up membrane to membrane, end to end, we'd span about 10 billion light-years. That's the distance from here to the edge of the universe. No wonder we are exhausted, yet you never hear us complain. And yet we never stop

(But not all of us have been discovered yet)

Become superbug! The possible alternative in the fight against antibiotics.

Be a superbug!

Be a queerbacteria, nanobacteria divabacteria, transbacteria, necrobacteria, cyberbacteria, pornobacteria,

Make your own bacteria, Do It Yourself. Stick together:

Bacteria manifest as a new microscopic, unhealthy way of life. If now we are three, there will soon be three million of us. And when the good bugs go bad you better run for your life.

We bacteria have developed a great resilience to antibiotics ( like u )and if there is a future ... we'll be there.

To over come the tradition of silence  
is a contra attack movement  
A choreography of insistence, resilience, repetition, and accumulation. IN VITRO  
Captive drawing fugitivities  
emphasizing multi-species  
Entanglements  
Bacteria mingled with a bird in cholera.  
Petri dishes, microscopes, magnifying glasses, compasses A complex microbial choreography  
In which the (non) humans are a tiny part A state of Refusal  
to make the revolution irresistible  
In an absent presence  
When the storm glitches with slippery memories. In between Forgetfulness and Remembrance  
In the spirit world,  
some feed on the tears of our tears;  
drawing their pain in the air  
A vortex an uncontrolled acceleration The (non) Future of Art Research intertwined with profiles,  
zoo catalogs, green houses, apes, and birds A spiral of interspecies interdependence. assemblages  
fractals noninfectious inflammatory contamination of a harmful bacteria Not belonging to your  
own body Fighting against pathogenic intruders parrots, Quakers, parakeets, and macaws.  
Crossing the borders flying With a broken wing and withered feathers In a Violent disruption  
Throughout dominant immunological hygiene whiteness Bleach The illness of all times

#### CONTAMINATION NOW

the composition of the gut microbiota Memories for forgetfulness.  
AFFECTS the insulin resistance  
Antibiotics  
The recruitment for microcolony formation Swimming in the Hippocampus  
Diving in the cerebral cortex  
A Microbial shift  
Into the cerebrospinal fluid  
That tears up the tissue  
An alveolar bone loss memory  
outer membrane  
IN VITRO  
Mediates invasion and colonization of host cells

#### IN VIVO

The gut and the brain are deeply interconnected autonomic pathways,  
modulating permeability,  
Traumas (dis)located in  
The gastrointestinal tract  
Attempts to survive in apnea

Glimpsed of puking  
(de)formations pedagogies transmission cross-seeding

The unstoppable troubling spirits

Somersaults levitates , turn their heads, tear their limbs apart

Shattering the edges

A restless soul Unsettled  
Scattered desires

walking between

Irokos, baobabs, and other big trees of the forest, by magic a wind carries me I belong to the disembodied entities,

the countdown began,  
fractures of the deconstructed, erased, disrupted, and denied memories. The endless no return.  
I am ABIKU  
The wondering soul  
Dance to not die

The unborn

## SCORE

*The unstoppable troubling spirits*

*I am ABIKU, The unborn*

*A crossroads*

*Of despair and celebration*

*Becoming a flock of birds*

*The endless path of no return.*

1. Audience in – everything dark, performers whistling insistently with back and forth movement that stretches time, evoking the invisible and opening the space through the silenced voices of spirits
2. Moving around a petri dish, 7 circles crossing movement ontogenetic patterns: crawling,

3. Fast and short movements of bacteria (Live performers) -the spleen produces antibodies for a counter-attack, purple color, fighting back the invasion Transformation and Transport- let go the air ( in front of the screen 2 bacteria - behind another angry one)
4. The “characters” individual bacteria appear on the screen (they are more soft- light-transparent than the violent ones that we saw live, they shift, and float)
5. Migration movements- very fast head movements like birds- switch gazes between objects, perceive depth, and switch between lateral and frontal viewing, with minimal eye movement they have while observing their surroundings. Attentive state of the live bacteria.
6. The bacteria on the screen also start moving fluently touching each other
7. Flock of birds- contamination bacteria procedures, reproduction on the screen and live. The music is building up and the bacteria transmuted.
8. Freefall- falling under the sole influence of gravity building up something that will be destroyed - score for the performers
9. Constrictions in apnea that develops an inversion, a radical shift, bottom up- “music someone”. (Front space full of smoke and dry ice - only one performer)
10. Volcanic explosion - the destruction of brain cells CAOS

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## Biography

**Flavia Pinheiro** is a choreographer and researcher from Brazil currently based in Amsterdam. She graduated from DAS Choreography Master program (AHK) in 2022. Her master's research was carried out in Benin with fellowship assistance from AHK Internationalization Fund and the Talent Grant/AHK. She is currently part of the DAS Third research program developing M.I.M.O.S.A that intends to dismantle hegemonies of thought and species through an expanded choreographic and somatic approach. Her research foregrounds networks of resilience and resistance to systems of knowledge through fabulative speculations around Science and Technologies. Her artistic practice is an ongoing attempt to create breathing and vital conditions; in an unstoppable dance, she creates improbable exchanges with nonhumans such as bacteria, plants, birds, antelopes and ghosts. She focuses on states of survival and refusal of captivity by proposing a radical ontological turn.

In 2021 she received The Fonds Podiumkunsten/Performing Arts Fund /NL grant. Her graduation piece "7 Abiku Solos for 11 bacteria falling through" was supported by Aart Janszen Fund and ID Lab and it was awarded the Andre Veltkamp Beurs Grant.

In 2022 Flavia was awarded the 3Package Deal fund for International Talents by AFK for the "Engaged Art" coalition.

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PERFORMANCE  
PHILOSOPHY

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## DIALOGICAL PRACTICES FOR IMAGINED LINES: LISTENING, INTERFERENCE, & (NON)STRAIGHT

MICHAEL O'CONNOR VRIJE UNIVERSITEIT AMSTERDAM

Lines are problematic. Some initially think of only straight lines. Others want to distinguish between a line, an edge or a trace. When it comes to imagined lines, the difficulty is intensified as it appears there is nothing to look at. This does not mean imaginary lines, as *imagined lines*, are not not-there; they appear as fictive motion, remembered motion, cognitive mappings or spatial relations in the mind's eye. The "imagined" of imagined lines refers to their location and, as described, imagined lines can have multiple variations, even when not visible. Imagined lines can entail not just imagining how a body can move or shapes of our mental architecture, but they also appear in how our language about language captures it as something physical (e.g., reciting *lines* of poetry). Imagined lines have to be constructed through the body.

In this essay, imagined lines produce an entanglement of concepts where parts but not wholes line up. The entanglement of imagined lines and the different modes they present themselves, provides the body a material to be in the present with—and opportunity to sense withness<sup>1</sup> as a dialogical practice. John Shotter says that as humans, our nature is indeterminate and unfinished; "what is of importance to us exists not *only in relation to* what else is around it and us but also in our sense that there is always a *something more* beyond it" (2015, 232). Imagined lines can give us the opportunity to sense this unfinished movement that continues between bodies and words.

We are used to correlating a body in motion with imagined lines when we simply see a bird swoop through the sky and map the path of its flight. A body is inseparable from the shapes and traces that it simultaneously creates. In dance, the body is the material of motion. These shapes and

traces can also be called linear designs and linear patterns.<sup>2</sup> Linear designs are perceivable as the sculptural aspects of the body, but linear patterns are imagined. Maxine Sheets-Johnstone describes linear patterns as the traces of gestures or pathways the body makes in space while moving. Linear patterns therefore bring forth an imagined line. Imagined lines appear in the interplay between thoughts and body, visually placed *out there* or mentally imagined *within*. When connecting two points in space, the lines we visually imagine are what Tim Ingold would call ghost lines (2007, 47). However, the imagined lines that are made through movement and do not necessarily connect anything visual in our environment are felt in our body and in the embodied language we use. Ingold admits the taxonomy of lines cannot match the lines that seem “to wiggle free of any classification” despite living in a world of profound linearity (50). The problem with imagined lines is that without the ability to see them, they possibly resist coming to an agreement between people. There are, however, ways we can espouse the materiality of an imagined line through metaphors, embodied language, and features of the body. The following essay uses imagined lines as a tool to link bodily processes with concepts of listening, interference and (non)straight, by looking at the embodied language of stretching, straight and spatial proximity.

### A Reading Practice: The initial setup

Two texts by John Shotter were used in this practice: *James, Dewey, and Mead: on what must come before all our inquiries* and *Wittgenstein and his Philosophy of First-Time Events*. Four participants were asked to read one text and another four were asked to read the second text. The participants were put in pairs so that one person in each pair had read a different article. The four pairs were asked to speak *through* the texts, while engaging in a thirty-minute dialogue, knowing that they had each read a different text. The term *through*<sup>3</sup> was used so that participants did not feel they had to speak *about* the texts, which is at the core of Shotter’s argument. The conversations happened immediately after reading the texts. As the essays focus on “what comes before all inquiries” and “first-time events,” the participants were given an opportunity to embody the situatedness that Shotter brings to the reader’s attention. The conversations were video recorded on Zoom. Each person also audio recorded their side of the conversation. A group video and audio were fabricated out of these dialogues. Explorations of the editing processes and works are incorporated into this writing.<sup>4</sup>

### Stretching

#### **intendō, present infinitive intendere, perfect active intendī, supine intentum**

Borrowing the Latin *intendō*, defined as “to point out” or “be directed toward,” the French language has etymologically developed the word in different ways. One usage evolved towards the verb *entendre*: “to hear” and “to understand.” Another derivation can be found in the verb *tendre*, “to reach or stretch.” We can find the latter term developed in ballet terminology, *tendu*: “tight or outstretched.” In ballet, a *tendu* is the physical act of stretching the foot out. This action is mirrored in the Latin etymology, where “to hear”—*entendre* in French—is also to stretch, to aim, to direct. In this example, we see the developments in the French language correlate stretching the body and

the act of hearing. Both acts utilize imagined lines, but slightly differently. The imagined line that comes from the body moving is a remembered trace by a viewer or a felt line from within by the dancer. With hearing and understanding, in other words a type of listening,<sup>5</sup> the pointing out or stretching is fictive motion or a mental spatial relation.

A person reaching for something with their hand or the foot of a dancer stretching out on the ground both make a linear design with their body. They also draw a linear pattern or trace in space, which, as explained, is imagined. It is these imagined lines and the actions of the body that allow us to find meaning within the imagined lines of verbal language. Sheets-Johnstone points out that our human ability is to “think analogically along the lines of our bodies and, in turn, to think in movement” (2009, 294). According to her, this is how our kinetic corporeal experience brought meaning to our verbal language. The act of listening and the act of extending the body both create imagined lines because they both are movements that are *directed towards* something.

Let us compare the physical logic of the lines of the body to propose a conceptual logic for the imagined lines of listening. In a *tendu*, the dancer's foot draws a linear trace on the ground as it extends the leg forward, flexing in the hip—a fold in the hip joint. Within the realm of the human body, to draw a line is to also make a fold, literally, as a dual action.

*Instruction 1:*

*Reach your arm in one direction and notice a fold also materializes in your body as a co-action depending on which direction your arm reaches.*

If we apply the same causal relationship to the subject of listening, then the reaching out of listening is to trace an imagined line and also to make a fold. The imagined line cast in listening could be focus, or the desire to comprehend. The act of listening reaches out to sound qualities and reaches out to content. In the case of listening, does the fold happen the same as it does with the hip?

Gilles Deleuze points out that different materials fold differently (1992, 34). Why does the hip fold? It is a response, an entanglement with the design of the leg. In drawing a trace on the ground, a linear pattern with the foot, the linear design of the leg is changed in the hip socket as the head of the femur rotates backward. The leg moves from under the dancer, where it stands on itself securely, to stretching out. It creates a fold—causing a need to restabilize. The adjusted linear design of the body is a response to the linear trace. The dancer does not think to cease or fold in the hip socket. The dancer thinks to stretch out from the toes at the distal end. The fold and the backward action in the joint are a response in time. Distal and proximal points move in relation.

The material of the trace and the design are the same—the body. To question where the fold is made in listening, first, we must look at the materiality of listening as Deleuze has pointed out. In listening, the trace from reaching out is our ear's capacity to receive sound and our mind's to understand the meaning. Accordingly, we are looking for a change in the linear design, or in other words the fold, as its response. The fold could be the inter-mingling of lines of thought that arrives

milliseconds after the cast listening—it is the return, backward and down. The fold as a response in listening is the “knowing how to go forward,” the witness to use Shotter’s term. We often think of listening as only this backward motion, as the “that which comes to me.” However, knowing that the first step of listening is to “tendu,” to stretch out, the backward action that creates the fold is the second part, when we use the function of the corporeal ballet tendu as *a line to think along*.

We could say that the linear trace in listening is to hear and attend to the sounds, and the fold is to bring those sounds into an *understanding-with*. Additionally, a fold consequently makes a type of container. The cast line is not just something with an edge anymore, but by returning and making a fold it now has the capacity to contain. Informed by the body, listening as a *reaching out* creates not only an imagined line but also an imagined fold.

### Editing Practice 1: Responsive Listening as Dialogical Interference

Thinking of listening as an imagined line developed from the video *Unfinished dialogical responses*. This video work was built from the recordings of duet conversations that were part of the reading practice. The collection of the four dialogues was then combined into one. For each video conversation, the camera captures the non-speaker listening. By omitting the speaker, what is captured are bodies contained in folded listening. Though imagined lines may not at first come to mind when viewing the video, they are being cast by the listener. The listener’s capacity to attend is directed out towards the other, and the conceptual linear fold produces visible responses in their bodily movements. We see them contained in the speakers’ words—caught in the two-step imagined fold.



Watch *Unfinished dialogical responses*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5XtqOGYImhA>

## Dialogical Interference

The bodily motions one makes while listening as a response to a speaker dialogically interfere, often without words. Inhabiting the situatedness of our words and the bodily expressions of another is what Mikhail Bakhtin termed dialogical. Explaining the dialogic, Richard Sennett says: "Though no shared agreements may be reached, through the process of exchange people may become more aware of their own views and expand their understanding of another" (2012, 19). Bad listeners don't attend "to those small phrases, facial gestures or silences which open up a discussion" (20). Dialogical listening, therefore, is not only the act of attending to those very components of utterances and gestures, but also contains the understanding that those components are responsive entanglements amidst imagined lines. A good listener becomes entangled in the imagined lines and folds of exchange. Sennett reminds us that empathy is part of dialogical conversations. Sometimes the meaning or understanding is not in the content of the words but also in the felt sense of the tone of voice, the sound—not just the musical note, but the way it is played. Shottler reminds us that Wittgenstein called on us to pay attention to:

tones of voice, bodily movements and gestures, facial expressions, eye directions and so on – and thus place our everyday utterances back into the circumstances of our everyday lives then, rather than bewildering us, the detailed relations between particularities within the complexity can arouse quite specific responses in us. (2007, 4)

Through shifts of body weight, bones moving backward and rotating in sockets, a tendu shares its dialogical agreements and exchanges with its corporeal self. Linear designs and linear patterns of the moving body share these dialogical agreements. In listening, the exchanges happen with imagined lines found in the arguments the person is laying out—the intermingling of different lines of thought. In the case of this practice, lines are found in the thought from the author, lines of thought from the speakers, and one's own inner thoughts that come from the lines and folds of listening. In the same way physical objects move toward targets leaving imagined lines behind (a train carrying people or a ball aiming for a goal), ideas and concepts could be looked at with the same imagined traces. Sweetser proposes:

When speaker and hearer understand each other, they are thus in a (partially) shared mental state, which is metaphorically mapped onto a shared location. When they continue to understand each other through a shifting sequence of mental states, they metaphorically travel from location to location together, remaining co-located throughout the shared journey. (1992, 716–717)

*Do you follow me?*

*Your train of thought may go in different directions than mine.*

*Before you reach any conclusions, let's keep going.*

To be present in the dialogical, what Shotter calls witness, is to let a type of interference incite responses. Interference is something getting in the way of a path or trajectory. A movement between lines. Interference happens also when affect attunement volleys between people allowing for openings in the dialogue. Ammaniti and Ferrari state: "Facial mirroring illustrates that there are interactions organized by ongoing regulations and experiences of mutually attuned interactions, which are fundamental to the developing sense of the 'we'" (2013, 4). The "spontaneous, relationally responsive, living, bodily activity" Shotter describes is a realm for activity between people that, "only has the character it has in relation to yours, that is, in relation to your response to it" (2007, 3). Taking these notions into consideration, it is possible to look at interference as a response from being within the words of another, contained in the folds of listening.

### Interference as not straight

Implicit in the traces that are made when reaching out to listen or made with a bodily limb is the characteristic of *straightness*. The words used in the definition of *entendre* and *tendu* noted earlier—*pointing, tight and outstretched*—evoke a straight quality. According to conceptual metaphor theory, the way we use *straight* and *not straight* as concepts in our society comes from our body and physical interactions in our environment. Alan Cienki outlines how the image schema of STRAIGHT is developed in our language through bodily actions. An image schema is a structural understanding the mind uses to make meaning that is developed from repeated behaviors in our environment (Lakoff 1987, 459–461; Johnson 1987, 19–21). In his essay "STRAIGHT: An image schema and its metaphorical extensions" (1998), Cienki provides evidence of how visual and perceptual experiences of straight extend into abstract language domains.

**reg**- 'to move in a straight line' Latin *regere*, 'to rule, govern', German *Reich*, 'empire', *Recht* 'law'

Compared to *intendō*, where a straight line is implicit and concealed, in the Latin *reg* we see an overt etymological link to a straight line and through the linguistic developments relating to those straight lines—rule(r), govern, law. Straight can mean to put something in order (Cienki 1998, 110) and logical thought is straight (122). "The qualities of straightness, control, being up, strong, and firm, therefore commonly group together in our experience given how our bodies function, with a contrasting grouping being bent/curved, lack of control, down, weak, and soft" (111). A few examples of primary metaphors that are structured from the STRAIGHT image schema are:

UNCOMPLICATED ACTION IS MOTION ALONG A STRAIGHT PATH (123).

LOGICAL THOUGHT IS STRAIGHT (122).

TO SPEAK IN A MAXIMALLY INFORMATIIVE WAY IS TO TRANSFER WORDS ALONG A STRAIGHT PATH (116).

UNINTERRUPTED SEQUENCE IS STRAIGHT (119)

Cienki gives us examples of how the STRAIGHT image schema leads to everyday language expressions and conceptual understandings. We view straight as uncomplicated as in *He went straight home* or *She gave a straightforward answer*. We see complicated action as not straight, as in *They're talking in circles*. Straight is correct: *Let me set the record straight*. Wrong is therefore not straight. We also view logical and intelligent thought as going along a straight path. And people who speak in ways that sound illogical or insane are said to have warped, bent, or contorted thoughts. These concepts are understood conceptually because of our understanding of them physically.

Let us look at the physical actions of being not straight. For some things to make a change, a bending is required. For example, when the direction of a tree growing straight up is blocked, it bends. We see this logic appear in non-material realms; a plot *twist*, a *turn* of events, or when saying something is dishonest is to *bend* the truth. As an UNINTERRUPTED SEQUENCE IS STRAIGHT, a linear comprehension is normally associated with speaking and understanding. As we are accustomed to linear comprehension, interference can be a practice that forces the listener to come to terms with their anticipated imagined trajectory of logical thought. Complicated, illogical, and bent conversations are an attempt to resist straightness. Interference forces the listener to understand diffractively<sup>6</sup>—meaning to let words and images be in two places at the same time—entangled, cut, re-worked and threaded through one another.<sup>7</sup> Words can exist in the context they were originally spoken in and in a context within which they are now placed. We could say that interference during dialogues makes straight things not straight.

Straight is examined here to show how the straight line is strongly constructed in our language and thinking, even implicitly when hidden inside listening, understanding and the way we follow someone's words, like this very writing. However, we can listen or think in non-straight ways. That is not the binary opposite of straight but results in diffractive openings of possible differences. Cienki writes that there is one way to be straight and many ways to be not straight (142). The multiplicities of not straight are what I am associating with diffraction. As Donna Haraway describes, "Diffraction is a mapping of interference, not of replication, reflection, or reproduction. A diffraction pattern does not map where differences appear, but rather maps where the effects of difference appear" (1992, 300). In this way, diffraction is seen as the results of many differences made through interference. Through embodied language and image schemas, we can find common ground between Cienki's not-straight and Haraway's nuanced idea of interference and diffraction in that they both produce multiplicities of possible differences.

### Editing Practice 2: Listening for the (non)straight

In *Entangled Thoughts/Entangled Texts*, eight audio recordings of one-sided dialogues were cut and rearranged together in an editing program. The aim was to interrupt the sequences so that thoughts were neither maximally informative, uncomplicated nor logical. To make sure all speech is taken out of context throughout the entire track, the original conversation partners' words never follow each other. Instead, reasons to determine which audio fragment would come next were: key phrases and specific words that repeated, a causal relationship like

question and answer, or when a speaker started with conjunctions like ‘and’ or ‘but’ that could be used as transitions. Another tactic that was used was to sense the imagined lines stemming from the mental imagery evoked through a speaker’s words. The subjects of the sentences were different, but the movement and imagery that came to my mind while I listened had similar imagined shapes or trajectories within another sentence. These then were arranged in a sequence, so the imagined lines that were pictured and felt were what brought the statements into proximity. Sensing the lines in the speaker’s use of imagery and the cutting of straight linear comprehension between the speakers were two ways to use imagined lines as a method for practicing interference.

*Instruction 2:*

*Feel the imagined lines from the mental imagery evoked in the following utterances from five different speakers:*

*individual pullings on a center*

*different forces working at the same time*

*from a root center that is interconnected*

*a thinning out... a piece of elastic being pulled from different directions*

*in terms of perspective, where you’re standing, where your feet are entangled*

### **Imagined lines in speech**

Imagined lines are not only found in the etymology of words or metaphorical image schemas, but as seen above, can also appear in the mental imagery that a speaker is creating. During one of the conversations in *Entangled Thoughts/Entangled Texts*, one speaker questions the difference between *perspective* and *orientation*, saying;

*Perspective is the act of looking at, and orientation is the act of looking towards... Perspective is a separation that bridges a gap through viewing. Orientation is more like—already linking the thing. Like there is a suction between the two; there is already a way there, you don’t have to bridge anything.*

In listening to this speaker’s words, I see imagined lines enacted from the prepositions that each have different qualities. The word “at” as a line, to the speaker’s understanding, functions as a bridge and, at its definition, creates distance. The distance is felt like how a bridge operates on the premise of two points needing connection. If these points were actually visible, for Ingold, they would create a ghost line. Since the images stay mentally constructed through language, they are instead imagined lines from fictive motion and spatial relation in the mind’s eye. As the speaker describes “towards,” the self is situated and therefore is already linked. They use the term suction as if there is perhaps some mutuality. The imagined line that is conjured is a path already felt, known, and agreed upon. Though the speaker is describing the act of looking in both phrases, the

sense of the whole body appears important within the “orientating-towards” explanation. Their use of “suction” and “way there” does not describe vision but is of the body.

*Instruction 3:*

*Imagine a drawing showing the lines conjured for “at” and “towards.” Using pen and paper, actually draw these imagined lines into physical forms through the traces of your hand.*

“At” and “towards” become different types of imagined lines. Qualities of these imagined lines drawn from “at” and “towards” become associated with the concept they’re linked to; at-perspective, towards-orientation. Accordingly, we could say *perspective* is a longer, sharper, thinner line with an intention as those are qualities associated with the *line of at*. *Orientation* is softer, easier, and known because the *line of towards* has proximity. While listening to the speaker compare the concepts, imagined lines felt in my body and visualized in my mind allow me to understand their proposition. Sheets-Johnstone has called this the imaginative consciousness of movement (2007) whereby movement’s imagined linear qualities are how we come to understand metaphoric concepts. My own felt response makes me think perspective is visual and orientation is of the body. Looking from a perspective, we focus and our eyesight is narrower; vision is formed by light. Light as a line also has properties; we might say longer, sharper, and thinner, with already preconceived “intents” or rules.<sup>8</sup> With orientation, I think of my body and I know that my skin senses do not go as far as my sight. My skin is more proximally stimulated, soft and familiar than that which is only seen in the distance. Through this comparison, I can make associations between “at” with sight and “towards” with the body. Through experience, I can proclaim that the lines light creates belong to my vision, and the lines my body makes belong to movement. The conceptual and metaphoric understandings of linear quality are attributed to having a body and experience with moving it (Sheets-Johnstone 2007, 120).

Therefore, I suggest when “perspective at” or “orientated towards” are spoken, different imagined lines are evoked based on properties of light and motion, or vision and body. Cienki comes to a similar acknowledgment through linguistic metaphor: Truth is seen as light. Truth is also straight. Our perception that light travels in a straight path is why we find coherence between truth, straight and light (1998, 121). When a concept is associated with certain physical properties, those properties become mapped onto the concept. These prepositions take on linear qualities depending on the usage and concepts they are linked to: *an at line* associated with light is thin and straight, and *a toward line* associated with the body is bent, thicker and shorter. As stated by Sheets-Johnstone in the beginning of this essay, it is a fundamental human ability to think along the lines of the body when thinking metaphorically. Using the body and its senses is the very point between body and language Sheets-Johnstone claims we do metaphorically and analogically to create meaning. Metaphors based on lines are ubiquitous in our language.



Listen to *Entangled Thoughts/Entangled Text*:

🎧 <https://soundcloud.com/mike-oconnor-649946845/entangled-thoughtsentangled-texts>

### Relationally responsive, dialogically structured understandings

Imagined lines have their very presence in this work of writing. The felt entanglements of Shotter's lines of thoughts, metaphoric language, the parallel lines of etymological development, the hidden image schemas that bend concepts— they resist when tried to be drawn into a straight linear argument. Lines easily become entangled. Sometimes linearity means controlled, understandable, and in order, and other times lines are curved, unfinished, and bent. The lines spoken about here are sometimes straight when perceived but become non-straight when imagined and vice versa. Imagined lines find tension in dialogical thoughts. The visual lines I imagine when I think of interference oppose the cohesive linear aspect argumentation intends to weave. My thoughts burst out in different directions as imagined traces, but the words typed here strut across the document evenly spaced and horizontally stuck. Caught between the words that leave traces in my mind and the words that make it onto this page is my body.

This sentence has a perceived straight linear form—different from sentences spoken or heard.

Imagined lines come from traced lines we once made with our body. Etymologically, we could understand listening as a type of straightness, but perhaps it benefits us to think of it as an imagined line that is bent and folded. In the same way the linear trace of an outstretched foot or arm appears to be straight, but is also made by the arching of bone joints, folding and unfolding tissues and muscles in distal areas, an imagined line made of dialogical listening is also bent and folded. To respond with interference, the body must stay flexible, less rigid and able to change.

These works propose using interference as a strategy to bring distant and multimodal lines into proximity whereby new effects through entangled reading, listening, and speaking are produced. "Entanglements are not unities. They do not erase differences; on the contrary, entanglings entail differentiatings, differentiatings entail entanglings. One move—cutting together-apart" (Barad 2014, 176). In this way, the audio and video works in Barad's notion of cutting together/apart. Where the video subtracts the dialogues, creating conversations without words, the audio disrupts and entangles the dialogues resulting in words taken out of context. Interference can be seen at

different stages of the practice, and within the editing process. In the reading practice, providing dialogue partners with different articles subjects the conversations to interruptions and entangled thoughts. Using the choices of Zoom to subtract the speaker's main thoughts brings absence into focus—yet upon closer analysis, it discreetly shows the speakers' words caught by the listener. In both projects, bringing all eight speakers together fabricates a group conversation that did not happen. The participants are cut into proximity—together their words and images highlight responsive differences.

This entanglement of imagined lines is what this writing brings into proximity. Imagined lines move in ways that are hard to pin down. These artworks and writing do not attempt to solve the behavior of imagined lines, but to bring to light their often unnoticed presence and the corporeal movement their invisibility orchestrates. In summary, what has been thought through and taken from these works is as follows: Imagined lines allow us to embody the proposals from Shotter, and, by becoming aware of their presence, allow the possibility of withness. In order to achieve withness, we cannot keep going in straight directions. When listening is seen as an imagined line, it is an active intermingling and intertwining element. It has in its construct a fold—a bend. It is a bodily orientating *towards* and not an intellectual straight line *at*. It appears as a line of silence but is seen in the relationally responsive bodily actions of the listener. The Dialogic is the product of interfered, folded and non-straight listening. Lines of thoughts are not reflected back on the listener but are diffracted lines from the entanglement of past thoughts, present readings, speakers' utterances, and the traces of listener's tendu-ing.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Shotter defines withness-thinking as "a way of thinking in which we permit, allow, or invite the *unfolding time-contours* of our experiences to shape our expressive activities" (Shotter 2016b, 107).

<sup>2</sup> Linear design and linear pattern are terms from Maxine Sheets-Johnstone (2011, 115). In this essay, I substitute linear pattern sometimes for the term linear trace to bring attention to the aspect of movement involved with this term.

<sup>3</sup> Sweetser proposes that thinking *through* something means you have come to a conclusion, while thinking something *over* means to still be in a process (1992, 716). She explains that these linguistic positions come from the physical act of having walked through a place and therefore one is not in that place anymore. However, in line with that same logic that physical acts influence mental linguistic meanings, *through* does not only mean one has reached the other side, but also that one has been touched by what one has experienced. For example, going over a country by an airplane is not as experiential as going through it by car. It is this sense that I am using through, and not the sense that one has come to any conclusions, but in fact is still in the process of experiencing.

<sup>4</sup> See Editing Practice 1 and 2.

<sup>5</sup> A distinction to note is that entendre in modern French usage means to passively hear and écouter means to actively listen. However, as seen in the etymological developments, entendre originally means to point or direct outwards, which is not passive but in fact is active. Therefore, under this viewpoint entendre can also resemble the act of listening, if listening is considered the active form of hearing and placing attention.

<sup>6</sup> In quantum physics, interference and diffraction are related. Richard Feynman has stated: "no one has ever been able to define the difference between interference and diffraction satisfactorily. It is just a question of usage, and there is no specific, important physical difference between them" (Feynman, 1964).

<sup>7</sup> Karen Barad uses diffraction as a metaphor for a methodology when reading and writing. Barad explains this proposal in the essay "Quantum Entanglements and Hauntological Relations of Inheritance: Dis/continuities, SpaceTime Enfoldings, and Justice-to-Come" (2010).

<sup>8</sup> Considering intents and rules for lines of light, we could pull from different sources. Firstly, light as a force in physics travels in a straight line. Secondly, in drawing, the invention of linear perspective brings all the lines in a picture to the same horizon focal point from the viewer's vision. Additionally, in language we say someone has a piercing glare, exemplified by cartoon characters where beams of light stretch out of a superhero's eyes.

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## Biography

Michael O'Connor, currently a PhD candidate in practice-based research, previously graduated from the DAS Choreography program in 2015 in Amsterdam and has a BFA in dance from University of Utah. Working at the intersection of cognitive science and movement, his artistic work attempts to recreate and articulate some of the basic building blocks of human perception as performative tools. He teaches creative practice and feedback to university students throughout Europe and is currently adapting dancer-based abstract thinking and collaboration skills for use in businesses. His piece TERTIARY was nominated for the Prix d'Jardin in the 8:Tension series at the ImpulsTanz Festival. His solo premiere work a waiting dog dies earned him Vienna's 'dancer to watch' in BalletTanz Magazine 2008. He has also performed in works by Deborah Hay, David Zambrano and Willi Dorner among others.

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## ASSEMBLAGE AND NON-STANDARD AESTHETICS

STEFAN PAULUS OST - OST SCHWEIZER FACHHOCHSCHULE

For Deleuze and Guattari the body without organs (BwO) is like an assemblage, composed by a multitude of intensities, gradients, molecules, splits. When Deleuze and Guattari ask how to make a BwO (1987, 149ff), their instruction to settle on a stratum, a layer of rock, can be understood literally. At heights, on vertical lines, between rocks, streams, mudflows, on firn fields and sedimentary layers, it is not only possible to escape the *socius*, the striated space (Deleuze/Guattari 1977, 183f); in these open, boundless, smooth spaces, unique experiences and sensations can be created (Deleuze/Guattari 1977, 28) ... and that's how I tried it too. This article deals with my attempts to make a BwO.

Thus, the BwO can be understood as a concept that implies a psychophysical experience of the self through a critique of societal modes of subjectification, of a de-subjectivation. Accordingly, in order to create a BwO, it is necessary to get rid of the meanings and regularities of society and to fill oneself with intensities. For Deleuze and Guattari life is more intense the more it is molecular and inorganic (Deleuze/Guattari 1987, 520).

Dissolving the organism and becoming intense can also be understood in a figurative sense, not by killing the body but by developing multiplications, superimpositions of meanings and codes, and by going into the unknown, the undescribed, the unorganized, the formless.

Deleuze and Guattari suggest that this aggregation of intensity to smooth, reduce and remove subjectivity takes place in experimentation, sound production and movement. For Deleuze and Guattari, making oneself a BwO is a tactile and haptic experience. The BwO emerges in ecstasy, in experimentation, in hearing, in listening to, in making sound (Paulus 2022a).

For me, the concept of BwO therefore has less of a philosophical fascination than a practical function. I seek out places where the impermanent, formless, vast and pathless can be found. Those searches in my work, as part of being aimlessly on the move, have become "vagrant pilgrimages" into the smooth space: mountain expeditions in the European Alps, in the Caucasus or north of the Arctic Circle, journeys in sandy or stony deserts, crisscrossing continents (<https://frameworkradio.net/2013/05/419-2013-05-05/>) or to the terra nullius, the no man's land, like the West Sahara (<https://dai.ly/x3xgew>) or the Murmansk Oblast (<https://vimeo.com/70965224>). The undertaking of finding the organless has led to documenting elements and substances of the elements stormy weather, avalanches, sounds from inside crevasses, the howling of winds in the wide plains of deserts.

In this regard, this article invites readers to take a trip in place, to make their own BwO: "keep moving, even in place, never stop, moving, motionless voyage, desubjectification" (Deleuze/Guattari 1987, 159), so that transversal connections of intensities, the coupling of sensations, the defunding and diffusion of perception can emerge (Paulus 2020a).

Deleuze and Guattari have not developed a consistent and systematic application of the concept of BwO outside of *Anti-Oedipus* (1977), *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) and *The Logic of Sense* (Deleuze 1993), but they simultaneously offer their concept of BwO as an analytical tool to produce multiplications (n articulations) (Deleuze/Guattari 1987, 159), so this essay embarks on an audio-visual search for traces of the BwO. This search for traces leads with the documentations from the smooth spaces to assemblages of visual, audio and film material, i.e., to double and multiple exposures, field recordings and soundscapes, video montages and thus into areas of the perception of the imaginary, to superimpositions of experiences and to images without objects. This search for traces does not aim to develop an ontology of the BwO (cf. Paulus 2022a on this), instead this material is contextualized by means of Laruelle's (2014) non-standardized aesthetics (Section i), so that the unknown, the unconscious, the formless can be tracked down in addition to the pictorial (Section ii) also in the audible (Section iii) and in the audio-visual material (Section iv), to create speculations of the performative about the organless.

### i. Non-Standard Aesthetics

Deleuze and Guattari did not develop a clear definition of the Body without Organs (BwO). They refer to it as an egg (Deleuze/Guattari 1977, 27; 1987, 164) or as the Spinozist immanent substance (Deleuze/Guattari 1977, 422). That is, just as for Spinoza nature exists as a single substance declined in an infinite number of variations, Deleuze and Guattari also describe the BwO as a variation of different intensities that have no obvious structure: The BwO is a permanent becoming, a developing, a life before the formation of established structures, opinions, meanings, interpretations. For Deleuze and Guattari, the BwO is less to be found in the visual (Deleuze/Guattari 1987, 382), because the pictorial is the encoding of the real through hegemonic interpretations, aesthetics, norms, and values and this is nothing other than a codification and fixation of perception. Through such hegemonic representations of the real, the production and normalization of perception takes place.

François Laruelle's concept of non-photography and non-standard aesthetics describes in detail such a hegemonic representation of the real resp. an "onto-photo-logical appropriation" (Laruelle 2014, 13, 57ff translated by S.P.) of the perception of reality: e.g., in the photorealism of passport photos, product photos (fashion, food, cars), and so on, representations of the world get created which act as copies of reality. These copies help to organize the perception of reality and make it an unchallengeable fixed idea, because these images take the place of the real. With an onto-photo-logical perception, one views the real itself through a photograph—not the object, but a representation of an identity (Laruelle 2014, 43). Accordingly, onto-photo-logical perception has a symbolic dimension: it is not based on the free choice to interpret an object; instead it is based on the pre-reflexive classification of what is seen. It is based on memories that classify what is seen and make it identical with reality. In other words, before perception occurs, the senses are already predetermined by the conceptual apparatus, and the viewer of a photograph sees the world as the substance from which the viewer makes it. This leads in turn to the problem that we become incapable of discovering the new, changing processes, the becoming in the world, because we strive to discover the known in the unknown.

Laruelle's concept of non-photography and non-standard aesthetics offers the possibility to use methods and techniques to defund hegemonic organizational schemes of perception. Here, non-standard aesthetics is to be understood as a practice that has its own theoretical operations. That means to create the vision-in-one, a radical form of radical immanence (Laruelle 1998, 165), to create one's own non-autopositional rules by defunding the hegemonic interpretive power through radical immanence (Laruelle 1998, 124) and to adopt a chaotic universe of multiple "as-if" representations. That implies the creation of philo-fictions or photo-fictions of alternate meanings (Laruelle 1998, 124, 99).

Assemblages create such theoretical operations to look out for the immanence (Deleuze/Guattari 1987, 406), possess their own non-autopositional rules (437f), and set up philo-fictions through the deterritorialization of space, codes, feelings (505). Experiments, installations, connections, layers, superimpositions with and of photographs as double and multiple exposures, but also audio recordings, soundscapes or moving images, and video montages possess the characteristic of withdrawing the onto-photo-logical causality from the object forms through the mixing and merging of the objects. A non-standard aesthetic emerges as spaces of possibility of imagination and experience an epistemological, spatial and sensual in-between (Laruelle 2014, 67ff).

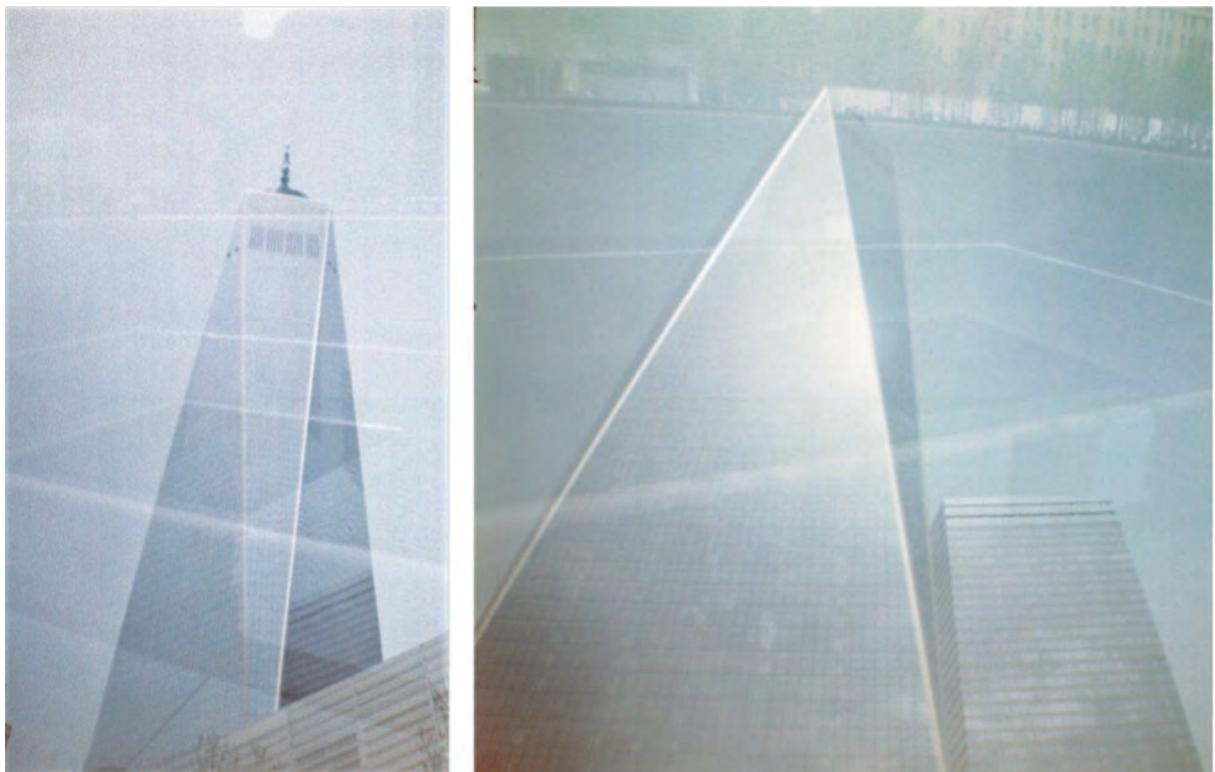
## ii. Multiexposures

A non-standard technique of observing an image begins by "distinguishing the ideational appearance and the empirical appearance by removing the object form itself" (Laruelle 2014, 60 translated by S.P.). For this purpose, double and multiple exposures in particular form the possibility to defund the empirical appearing within the object form and create therefore non-autopositional rules, because the multiexposures detach objects from their original territory. That means, in photographic multiple exposures, individual exposures or different intensities are produced on one surface. On this one surface, the objects become translucent, or they darken and

so they can be seen as the vision-in-one, because the objects blur into each other and the interpretation of the objects produces then new meanings, which can become philo-fictions.

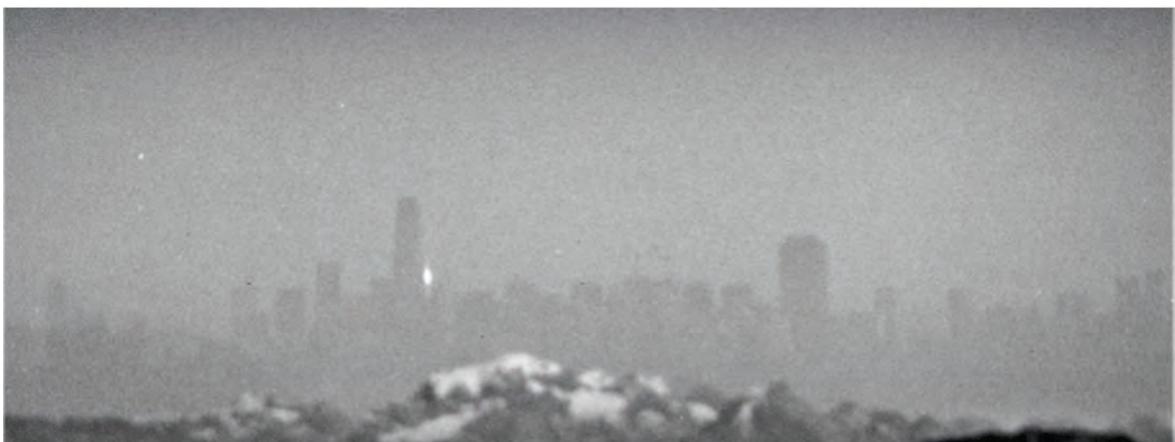
Methodically, double or multiexposures can be produced in different ways. In my case, first I expose an analog film once, then the film gets rewound. By using a film extractor, the film is pulled out of the film container again and will be exposed once more. This process can be repeated several times.

In the following series of double exposures, I have created a smooth layer by interlocking image layers over angles and planes. Entirely in the spirit of a non-standard aesthetic: lines, shadows, reliefs emerge to create a single interface, a vision-in-one:



*Figure 1. "uSa/nw", 35mm film for color prints, Stefan Paulus (2018)*

The process of multiple exposures can also achieve a long distance between locations (any location on Earth) and a long time (months, years, decades) between exposures, as shown in the following series SFxCH (2020–2022). In this series I superimposed the striated space of the city with the smooth space of the high alpine, in order to develop a deterritorialized perception.



*Figure 2. "SFxCH", 35mm black and white film, Stefan Paulus, 2020–2022*

Nevertheless, references to the original locations (San Francisco and the Glarus Alps) can be established with the corresponding information on the individual image levels. This in turn can trigger a coded perception or an onto-photo-logical staging of reality ("This is a montage, because these places are many thousands of kilometers apart," etc.). Nevertheless, with the help of the practice of the vision-in-one, places beyond the original locations can be imagined.

But, as Deleuze and Guattari described, how to make oneself a BwO is more a tactile and haptic experience. The BwO emerges in ecstasy, in experimentation. When Deleuze and Guattari ask, "How could lines of deterritorialization be assignable outside of circuits of territoriality?" (1987, 34), however, such double exposures are only one answer. Another answer is to create a new sound, a *ritornello* (311ff), which involves a molar extension and a human hyperconcentration (34).

### iii. Soundscapes

To seek out and record the inorganic, to create the organless from this material, all that is needed is a medium, but in order to hear the intense droning sound of the cosmic chant, the "song of the Earth" (Deleuze/Guattari 1987, 339), someone must also be willing to enter the smooth space and go where the crashing and cracking of ice surfaces, the indistinguishable in a snowstorm happens, the howling of the winds in deserts of ice and stone take place. The organless, according to Deleuze and Guattari, is found in smooth space, in the crashing and cracking of ice surfaces, in the indistinguishable in a snowstorm, in the howling of the winds of ice and stone deserts (1987, 387).

The first sound sample is called "Subterranean Contemplation In A Pyrith Labyrinth" (20:42 min)



Sound example 1: "Subterranean Contemplation In A Pyrith Labyrinth" (20:42 min). Part of: Stefan Paulus – *Halo From Inside The Mountains* // Label: Buddhist On Fire – BOF-074 // Format: 2 x File, FLAC, Album // Released: Jul 25, 2015. <https://on.soundcloud.com/RachW>

This sound example contains field recordings of wanderings through the Swiss Alps: stormy weather, high alpine winds, avalanches, and sounds emanating from glaciers and from the insides of crevices and caves, but also the overtone improvisations of the Appenzell alpine herdsmen, the natural yodel, can be heard resp. modulations of it. The resulting audio mixes, compounding a multiplicity of spatio-temporal excursions, were then further encased in drones: The sound

samples, such as the natural yodel, were morphed in time and space. Pitch and length changed to produce a drone, a standing tone. I.e., the drone is to be understood as a permanent becoming. These superpositions of inorganic sounds, the molar extension of the natural yodel to a human hyperconcentration, the reference to the territory, to the individual subject, becomes imperceptible by making those forces perceptible that dissolve the relationship of the space and the organized body of the yodel groups. Technically and epistemological, this example is a soundscape. A landscape of sound, consisting of hundreds of layers of sound samples, in the duration of a few seconds to a maximum of a few minutes, digitally layered on top of each other: an analog to the geological strata of their geographic sources to create – again – a vision-in-one resp. the sound-of-the-one with non-autopositional rules that can becomes philo-fictions in the perception of the listener.

The second example, "A Journey Into A Spatial Fold" (14:11 min), also allows open, boundless spaces of imagination to emerge.



Sound example 2: "A Journey Into A Spatial Fold" (14:11 min); Part of: Stefan Paulus – *Salt Sea Island //*  
 Label: Treetrunk Records [treetrunk 263] // Format: 5 x File, FLAC, Album // Released: March 14, 2013.  
<https://soundcloud.com/stefan-paulus/3-a-journey-into-a-spatial>

This Soundscape is a sound cartography collected through field recordings across the world. For these records I dislocated myself, followed animal trails deep into German woods, crossed the alpine valley of Ötztal or the continent America, recorded on Atlantic and Pacific islands and seaports. I connected with unknown persons. I jumped into the next subway, the nearest bus and got somewhere out. These records are done during what Guy Debord describes as '*dérive*' or 'psychogeography drifts': the experimental exploration of the environment, the mindful or transient passage through urban or country areas (Deboard 1955). This method can also be used to map the inner space—to create different thematic maps of reality. Epistemologically, this method produces a chaotic universe of multiple "as-if" encounters because the meaning and purpose of the journey is left to coincidence and thus random experiences and unknown intensities can be produced. In such smooth and deterritorialized spaces of assemblages of sound and intensities, the distances between the acoustic landmarks can enable the imagination and experience of unknown regions. The sound molecules, the superpositions of sounds, and the dissolving of reference points on territories allow listeners to create philo-fictions.

#### iv. Video Assemblage

The last aspect of a non-standard aesthetic taken up here is the experimentation with soundscapes, motion images and time images (Deleuze 1996), but not with the intention of creating memory images, as in home videos, commercials, documentaries, but in the creation of cross-fades to detect the unknown, to experience the formless.

In the first video assemblage "Stratum" (2020), the concept of territorialization and deterritorialization was taken up again.



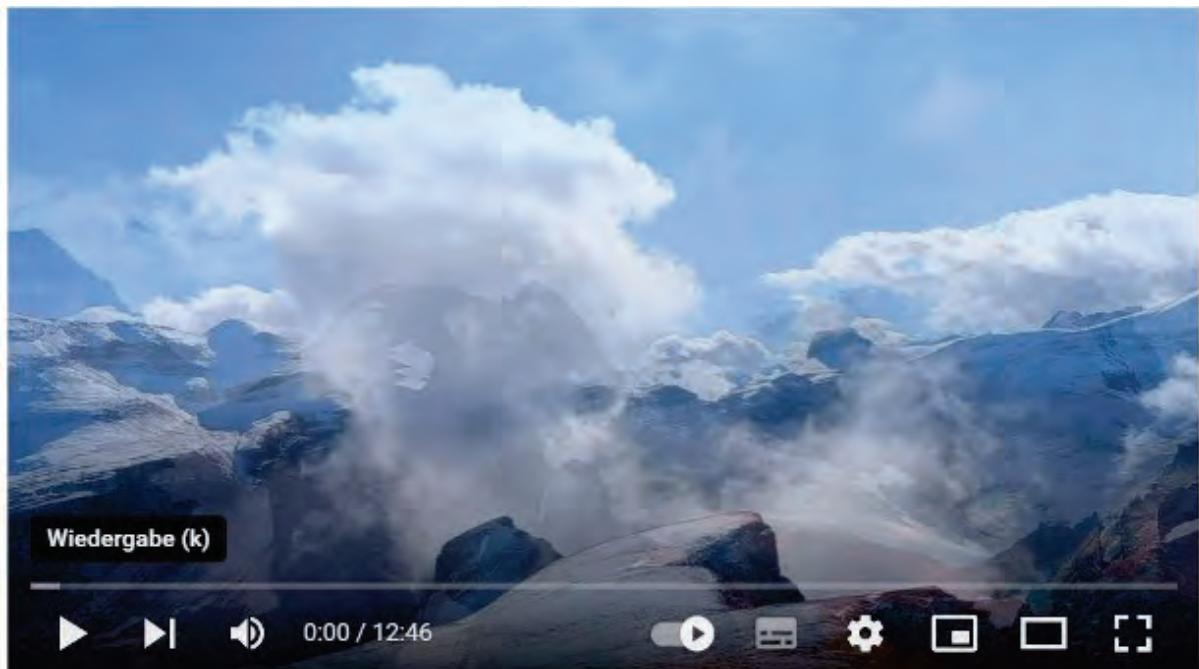
▶ Video 1: "Stratum" (14.14 min); taken from the Mille Plateaux book/compilation „Ultrablack of Music“. Achim Szepanski (Ed.); Frankfurt/Main (2020b). <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NnsuXj8CYVY>

In the Video example you can hear and see elements of the striated space: traffic, streets, electricity, pedestrians, civilization noise, machines in factories and much more. The break of the striated space begins with the musical drop (2:17 min) and the representation of sparks and fire, as a symbol for transforming, changing, dissolving molecules of the striated space, in order to let the imaginations of the smooth flow. But this assemblage does not represent cities, deserts, or mountain landscapes, nor multiplying their idea-like being, but creates, as in the multiexposures or soundscapes, a flatness and smoothness of space, levels of contingency, or a flat ontology (Deleuze/Guattari 1992, 700; Laruelle 2014, 67, 70; De Landa 2006). Within a flat ontology matter is no longer a passive substance brought into existence only by the intentionality of the observer, but by co-construction or intra-action between matter and observer. With this assumption, a reality model can be constructed in which elements and substances do not stand in hierarchical relationships to one another, but rather interconnect in assemblages of organic and inorganic

matter. Specifically, superpositions of territorialized and deterritorialized spaces were generated here. Like the alloying of Damascus steel, layers of moving images and soundscapes were digitally overlaid and interconnected by reducing the density of color and sound, so that technically a flat ontology came into existence.

Here, too, this method to create assemblages creates epistemologically—in accordance with the non-standard aesthetics—transitions and mergers of objects through superimpositions in order to make their relations immanent. Each layer becomes a part of another layer. If the shining through of different layers in the result cannot be grasped in a conceptual identification or as a synthesis, it cannot be reduced to any original matter or to an empirical reality, it is a matter of a unilateral duality in relation to the immanent (Szepanski 2015, 78) and then it is the vision-in-one. Compared to the photo- or video-clone of the real, in superpositions many realities shine through in a single surface: What appears is not transparent or transcended by the Other, to be perceived only as a copy again, but a generic model of the immanent emerges that cannot be tied back to the familiar, to memory (Laruelle 2014, 153). This One-in-All is a never-ending becoming, event and intensity, singular and incomparable, that takes the infinite path of flight lines.

The second example "Säntis", in collaboration with the Canadian sound artist Automatisme, works on the level of listening also with the concept of territorialization/deterritorialization.



▶ Video 2: "Säntis" (12:45 min); taken from the album: *Automatisme/Stefan Paulus "Gap/Void"* / Label Constellation [CST164] // Format 180gLP / CD / DL // (2022b). [https://youtu.be/wovF-zsi\\_tE](https://youtu.be/wovF-zsi_tE)

Here, too, this assemblage focusses visually on the technique of crossfading and the work with translucidity to create the vision-in-one. Through translucidity, the crossfading detaches perception from its self-referential territorialization or from autopositional rules. The image surface as a projection layer of the real with its undisturbed view to the object is hindered by the

reality of translucidity. I.e., an indifference of forms arises. In these pairings of sensations, the in-between emerges, as morphing, phenographic layers, which fills the zones of indistinguishability. Such porosities blur the view of the real, dissolve copies of images and codes. What remains, or rather the materializations of the superpositions, give rise to ambiguous perceptions. The absence of object completions forces the memory to complete an imagined, dreamed world through philofictions. Translucency allows the clear object to be overlooked in favor of things that call attention to themselves through increasing densities in the viewer's imagination. This, in turn, generates the non-copiable, and the non-copiable brings contingency to light. Crossfades allow a non-standard perception to be introduced, which is porous enough to let in multiple imaginings, narratives, and reveries of assemblages. The sound resp. beat/rhythm is supposed to provide associations of pulse and walking (esp. from min. 2:50), until the soundscape changes in favor of pure field recordings of the inorganic (from min. 8:08). In this way, the infinite possibilities in video assemblages also give rise to infinite spaces of possibility. In these spaces of possibilities, intersecting parts of all forms become a unity. In assemblages with multi articulations everything multiple becomes one as an infinity of modifications.

In summary, viewing and listening to assemblages with and through a non-standard aesthetic is itself an experiment to arrive in an ontological indeterminacy, to create images and concepts that capture the appearance of the world in its deterministic relation, but do not overdetermine the objective appearance; instead they under- or indeterminate it (Laruelle 2014, 140ff).

By the standards of non-standard aesthetics, assemblages are therefore not images of objects, not copies or doubles, but signals which make an event and unilateral appearances possible (Laruelle 2014, 60). By pushing the coincidental to the surface, perception and the production of meaning itself become limited, and the moment of "crossing reality or passing through a certain tunnel to the other side" (Laruelle 2014, 179; translated by S.P.), to the body without organs, becomes possible.

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## Biography

Stefan Paulus (1978), Dr. rer. pol., is a professor at the University of Applied Sciences of Eastern Switzerland in St. Gallen. Since the 2000s, Paulus has published essays and books on the theory of society and agency of subjects. He has also produced sonic and visual works, including videos, photo essays, field recordings and notes based on the theory of Deleuze and Guattari. His multimedia works can be viewed on his blog <https://nowhere-nowhere.org/> and actually at the "[Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Cosmic Art: A Virtual Exhibition](#)".

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## LISTENING IS ACTION: A SOUNDWALK WITH HILDEGARD WESTERKAMP

LUIS VELASCO-PUFLEAU UNIVERSITY OF BERN AND MCGILL UNIVERSITY

### I. COMMENTARY

#### Soundwalking with Hildegard Westerkamp

Through listening, we experience places, space, and time, creating connections with ourselves and with other humans and more-than-humans. The sound work *Listening is Action: A Soundwalk with Hildegard Westerkamp* [a link to the work and transcript appear below] explores these connections within Hildegard Westerkamp's path as a composer, her thinking in the field of acoustic ecology, and her use of recording technologies in her compositional practices. It was created as part of my Marie Skłodowska-Curie research project **ONTOMUSIC**, conducted at the University of Bern and McGill University, which explores the relationship between compositional practices, political thinking, and ethical concerns in the work of living composers.

The material of *Listening is Action* consists both of Westerkamp's soundscape compositions and my recordings of the time and spaces I shared with her in April 2022. For four days, I listened to her thoughts and recorded our conversations at her home and during our soundwalks<sup>1</sup> in and outside the city of Vancouver, which is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̥əm (Musqueam), Sḵwx̱wú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations.<sup>2</sup> Together, we visited and listened to the places she used to go and record more than thirty years ago, such as those now called the waterfront, Kitsilano Beach, Spanish Banks, and Vancouver's Downtown Eastside. The recordings she made in these places were the sources for some of her

soundscape works released in 1996 in her album *Transformations*,<sup>3</sup> such as *A Walk Through the City* (1981) and *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (1989), compositions to which I have an aural connection as a long-term listener.

When soundwalking and revisiting those places with Westerkamp in 2022, I used recording technologies to create an archive of the present-day sounds of the places, as well as capture her memories of the humans and more-than-humans that inhabited and sounded them in the past. Each of her words was situated in both time and space. Westerkamp was there with me, talking about the past while listening to the present and thinking about the future. A few months later, I used these recordings as materials in a similar way to how she had previously used hers, to create a sound work in which I mixed her soundscape compositions from the 1980s with my own field recordings and her memories. Like Westerkamp, I let the sound materials “emerge” and “bring about the essential structures and sound development” of my work (Westerkamp 2002, 54). Her voice from 2022 and her soundscape compositions from the 1980s led the narrative, creating a new “musical assemblage” (Born 2005): a hybrid space in which the boundaries of sound materials, compositional intentions, authorship, and time are blurred. *Listening is Action: A Soundwalk with Hildegard Westerkamp* explores the “network of relationships” created by sound (Solomos 2023, 19). It aims to provoke a reflection on the performative dimensions of technology and listening, and how we can use them to mediate subjectivities, time, and places.

### Listening, Experiential Knowledge, and Radical Relationality

The title of my sound work *Listening is Action* draws on Westerkamp’s thinking and artistic practices. She considers listening a deliberate action that creates “an entirely new experiential knowledge” (Westerkamp 2019, 47), which can be used both for rethinking our relationships to the world and as a point of departure for new scholarly collaborations in the fields of acoustic or soundscape ecologies.<sup>4</sup> Her approach to listening is rooted in and connected with the work of Murray Schafer and her fellow members of the World Soundscape Project, but also with the work of other composers, such as Pauline Oliveros’ sound practices and Deep Listening philosophy. As Westerkamp has written elsewhere, a *Sonic Meditations* workshop led by Oliveros in the late 1970s at the artist-run centre Western Front in Vancouver was a foundational experience that changed her “listening perception and meanings of music and performance” (49). For both Oliveros and Westerkamp, there is an ontological relationship between listening, knowledge, and action: “listening is directing attention to what is heard, gathering meaning, interpreting, and deciding on action” (Oliveros 2022, 30).

*Listening is Action* also references Hannah Arendt’s concept of action, the idea that “one can only act with the help of others and in the world” (Arendt 2018, 242). For Arendt, freedom coincides with action, and to act is to begin something in the world. However, actors cannot control the *result* of their actions: the result of any action “has the character of a story, which continues for as long as people continue to act, but the end and the result of which nobody, not even the person who began the story, can foresee or conceive” (242). People only can control the *performance* of their actions, which “remains directed toward the constantly renewed actualization of freedom, with new

beginnings constantly flowing into what has once been begun" (242). The result of listening is unpredictable and can disrupt the ways in which humans make sense of and inhabit the common world. Listening is political since it allows actors to participate in the co-creation of new narratives (Thiele 2009) and non-representational knowledge that drive them to new actions.

Listening is a relational and political action involving humans and more-than-humans. It involves and provokes particular ways of feeling and being in the world. As Sarah Amsler asserts in a recent article advocating for an "interbeing relational sensorium," "just as certain ways of being require and foster certain ways of listening, certain ways of listening allow us to sense and relate with certain ways of being" (Amsler 2023). Through listening, we experience the interconnectedness and vulnerability of our common world; and as Margaret Werry points out regarding how Arendt's thinking can be useful for considering the rights of more-than-humans, "we exist in a web of relations that enable us to build a world together as well as destroy one another" (Werry 2019, 11). Through listening we can understand and experience the radical relationality that links humans and more-than-humans in this world; "the fact that all entities that make up the world are so deeply interrelated that they have no intrinsic, separate existence by themselves" (Escobar 2020, xiii). Listening fosters our experience of radical relationality and, at the same time, initiates something new in this web of relations.

### Engaging with Critical Listening Positionality

This commentary is an opportunity to engage in "critical listening positionality" (Robinson 2020, 10), and reflect on ways of listening, contradictions, and silences. Listening positionalities involve specific politics of listening (Bassel 2017) and ethics of listening (Shah, Singh, and Gibbons 2021). During our conversations, Westerkamp's thoughts were situated in both time and space, as we engaged in some of the contradictions of her work. She said that, because the Vancouver Co-operative Radio valued the voices of marginalised people, they aimed to "give voice" to these unheard voices in the 1970s. This was meaningful for the people working at the radio since, as Julie Reid points out, "having a voice relies on the prerequisite of having that voice matter, to be heard and listened to by others" (Reid and McKinley 2020, 4). But is "giving voice" enough to bring about fundamental changes? Westerkamp pointed out in our conversations that today she thinks about agency in a different way and that, to be consistent with her ethics, it would have been necessary to build relationships and collaborations with those communities.

Westerkamp also talked about the importance of listening to Indigenous voices which have been quashed for too long in Canada and all over the world. However, she recognises that she did not include Indigenous sound epistemologies and knowledge in her soundscape compositions from the 1980s and 1990s, even though she was working on the ancestral and traditional lands of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tsleil-Waututh Nations. As Westerkamp acknowledges elsewhere, she took too long to open her ears to these voices:

That there was a profound cultural and social silence of indigenous voices and expressions, or to say it another way, that the indigenous presence had been

relegated to specific places and contexts in the Canadian societal landscape, only dawned on me gradually when I was not such a new immigrant anymore. It was quite shocking to discover how long it took me—this immigrant of European descent, who thought she was so progressive—to open my ears, my entire being, to this cultural presence that had been silenced for too long. (Westerkamp 2019, 54)

A necessary step in learning to listen to Indigenous knowledge and contemporary struggles is to recognize their ancestral presence on their territories, acknowledge the illegal dispossession and displacement they have experienced (Barman 2007; Baloy 2016), and challenge “settler colonial forms of perception” enforced through processes of oppression and assimilation (Robinson 2020, 14). And we need to go a step further. In order to avoid any kind of appropriation or misrepresentation, it is essential to build meaningful and long-term collaborations with Indigenous thinkers and, in a dynamic of “reciprocity of thought” (Todd 2016, 19), acknowledge and incorporate their theoretical contributions in our work. The omission of Indigenous knowledge in Westerkamp’s soundscape compositions of that time is a contradiction that is also present in my sound documentary. For example, Westerkamp’s reference to the sounds of barnacles in *Kits Beach Soundwalk* would better illustrate the radical relationality and interrelated existences of humans and more-than-humans if we included the knowledge and referred to the relationships that Indigenous populations have with them.

Considering the act of listening as a means of co-construction of knowledge in the field of acoustic ecology, Westerkamp highlights our collective responsibility to create the conditions for reconciliation and decolonization: an atmosphere of mutual respect in which we can truly listen to indigenous “deep-seated knowledge of how best to live in a respectful relationship with the natural environment” (Westerkamp 2019, 60). In this way, listening is also the act of recognising “what others *have to say*,” and recognising that “they, like all human beings, have the capacity to give an account of their lives that is reflexive and continuous, an ongoing, embodied process of reflection” (Couldry 2009, 579–80).

I argue that listening is a disruptive ongoing action capable of creating meaningful narratives and sensorial knowledge.<sup>5</sup> It is our responsibility as composers to recognise and include in our sound works the accounts and perspectives of people with whom we share places, time, and knowledge. As Arendt asserts, “the actual space of the political comes into being along with the stories that action generates” (Arendt 2018, 243). Paying attention to how these stories emerge and create embodied knowledge of relationships and events is at the centre of performance philosophy. Listening is an essential action for imagining and creating new, plural, and unforeseen realities. Soundscape compositions can mediate and let these realities emerge. *Listening is Action: A Soundwalk with Hildegard Westerkamp* is an invitation to do precisely this, while listening more attentively to the multiple voices that inhabit our environments, so we can evolve our relationships with ourselves and the wider world.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Hildegard Westerkamp defines a soundwalk as "any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment. It is exposing our ears to every sound around us no matter where we are" (Westerkamp 2022, 216).

<sup>2</sup> We acknowledge the inherent rights and jurisdiction that Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh hold to their territories.

<sup>3</sup> *Transformations*, empreintes DIGITales, IMED 1031, 1996. Months after I finished my sound documentary, I happened upon the CBC *Ideas* episode "How opening our ears can open our minds: Hildegard Westerkamp", hosted by Paul Kennedy and produced by Jennifer Schine and Nicola Luksic, in which Westerkamp addresses similar issues (see Kennedy 2017). As I listened, I was pleasantly surprised by some similarities to the form and sonic content of my work, linked to Westerkamp's narrative and the use of her works *A Walk Through the City* (1981) and *Beneath the Forest Floor* (1992).

<sup>4</sup> See Westerkamp 2002; Pijanowski et al. 2011; Solomos 2023.

<sup>5</sup> This perspective further evolved during my research with survivors and families of the victims of the Paris Bataclan terrorist attack. Their listening practices in the aftermath constituted an active way to connect their past with their present in order to allow self-continuity and recover an ongoing narrative of life (see Velasco-Pufleau 2021).

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## II. SOUND DOCUMENTARY

### *Listening is Action: A Soundwalk with Hildegard Westerkamp*



🎧 *Listening is Action: A Soundwalk with Hildegard Westerkamp*. Luis Velasco-Pufleau, with Hildegard Westerkamp. <https://soundcloud.com/luisvelasco-pufleau/listening-is-action>

The sound file of the documentary is available at <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7679234>

#### Notes on the sound documentary

In the sound documentary *Listening is Action*, the composer Hildegard Westerkamp engages in a conversation with Luis Velasco-Pufleau at her home in the city of Vancouver, which is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sk̓w̓x̓w̓ú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. She talks us through her first field recordings and her soundwalking practice, her work at the Vancouver Co-operative Radio, and her participation in the World Soundscape Project, all of which started or took place in the 1970s. Furthermore, she takes us on soundwalks at places she used to go and record more than thirty years ago, such as those now called Kitsilano Beach and Vancouver's Downtown Eastside, and that constitute the sources for her soundscape works *A Walk Through the City* (1981) and *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (1989). This sound documentary is an invitation to listen more attentively to the multiple voices that inhabit our environments in order to imagine new, plural, and unforeseen realities.

#### Documentary map

1. Introduction [01:05]
2. Kitsilano Beach, Vancouver [02:45]
3. *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (1989) [12:08]
4. Kitsilano Beach [13:13]
5. Excerpts of *A Walk Through the City* (1981) [from 13:51]

6. Recording technologies in the 1970s [14:41]
7. Vancouver Co-operative Radio [15:41]
8. Ethics of listening [19:08]
9. Politics of recording [19:29]
10. Pigeon Square, Vancouver's Downtown Eastside [22:37]
11. Excerpts of *Beneath the Forest Floor* (1992) and *Cricket Voice* (1987) [from 22:47]
12. Murray Schafer [24:43]
13. World Soundscape Project [27:16]
14. Listening *is* action [29:03]
15. Credits [30:51]

### Sound Documentary Credits & Acknowledgements

*Listening is Action: A Soundwalk with Hildegard Westerkamp* was recorded in the city of Vancouver, which is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̥əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. We acknowledge the inherent rights and jurisdiction that these Nations hold to their territories.

This sound work was part of the research project [ONTOMUSIC](#), led by Luis Velasco-Pufleau and conducted at the University of Bern and McGill University. It was financially supported by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement No. [101027828](#).

Credits:

Narrated by [Hildegard Westerkamp](#)

Producing, recording and editing by [Luis Velasco-Pufleau](#)

Music by [Hildegard Westerkamp](#)

Mixing by [Christophe Rault](#)

Lead voice by [Chanda VanderHart](#)

## Transcript

[SOUND OF WAVES RECORDED AT KITSILANO BEACH IN VANCOUVER]

[EXCERPTS OF CRICKET VOICE (1987)]

### Hildegard Westerkamp:

My name is Hildegard Westerkamp. I am a composer. I live in Vancouver. The kind of composition I do is mostly based on the recordings I make of environmental sounds. Most people call what I do soundscape composition.

### Chanda VanderHart:

*Listening is Action: A Soundwalk with Hildegard Westerkamp*

### Hildegard [whispering]:

When there is no sound, hearing is most alert.

### Hildegard [at Kitsilano Beach, Vancouver]:

Right now, I'm sitting on Kits Beach on a windy, sunny day. April 15th, 2022.

*Kits Beach [Soundwalk]* is a kind of an interesting piece because it just came out of nowhere for me. There was no commission, there was no plan, nothing. One evening I was just here on the beach, without a tape recorder or anything, just walking, thoughtful. And I come to this particular area here, where there's a bunch of rocks. Right now, the tide is high and they're almost covered. But at that point, the tide was a bit lower.

It was a calm evening; it was dark and the water was flat. Not like now – right now it's windy and it's chopped up. I heard these strange clicking sounds and I got very excited. So, I decided to just go back home as quickly as I could, got my tape recorder and recorded those sounds. I recorded these sounds and then... this text came to me:

[KITS BEACH SOUNDWALK (1989)]

**Hildegard [at Kitsilano Beach]:**

My voice-over was not recorded at Kits Beach, not like I used to do it in the soundwalking show, where I would go out and I would have this voice-over telling the radio listener where I was, and it was part of the field recording. In this case, I transferred the experience of making those field recordings into this more compositional environment, and I wrote that as a text.

**Hildegard [whispering]:**

When there is no sound, hearing is most alert.

**Hildegard:**

When I started all this, it was in the seventies. We were all so excited about the technology that we could actually record the whole world. That was completely new. We had portable equipment. My first portable cassette recorder was a Nakamichi, big machine, heavy, but we could carry it around and we could walk around and record everything.

*[EXCERPTS OF A WALK THROUGH THE CITY (1981)]*

**Hildegard:**

The original soundwalking idea, there was no idea of recording soundwalks. It was more like you just open your ears to the environment and you learn from that. When I converted that idea to have a radio program called Soundwalking, then of course you get into that question of what can you record, what can you broadcast? Right?

The Vancouver Co-operative Radio was a leftist station. The ethics there were and the politics there were that we were the kind of station that would give voice to the voices that did not have a voice in other media.

I remember when I was recording on the square outside of Co-op Radio, called Pigeon Square, which was sort of a small triangular park with benches and a few trees. Some of the alcoholics were sitting down there, singing and drinking.

*[VOICES FROM THE DOWNTOWN EASTSIDE]*

I just placed myself on one of those benches with my microphone and they came up to me.

One [of the] ethics in my mind was that I wasn't going to be a reporter who sticks the microphone into their face. I was just here to record, and they used the microphone as a mouthpiece really, to say things that went on for them. Some were complaining, some were making long speeches, but saying something, expressing something. And it felt for me at the time that it was a good thing.

*[EXCERPT OF A WALK THROUGH THE CITY (1981)]*

**Hildegard:**

When you say the ethics of listening, it's also about the ethics of recording, right?

*[EXCERPT OF A WALK THROUGH THE CITY (1981)]*

*[FIELD RECORDING AT PIGEON SQUARE, VANCOUVER]*

**Hildegard:**

Thinking politically, that if the CBC is giving me a commission in the contemporary music context, I would like people of that audience to hear what's going on in the Downtown Eastside of Vancouver. So, it was a political decision, it was a social decision.

**Hildegard [at Pigeon Square, Vancouver]:**

We're on Pigeon Square right now, and we are in front of this totem pole; and the totem pole at its base has a kind of a philosophical thought written. These words down here read: Sing your song, friend. Tell your story...

**A man at Pigeon Square selling stuff:**

I'm sorry...

**Hildegard:**

It's okay. I'm just reading the words down here.

**The man at Pigeon Square:**

Would you like to buy that?

**Hildegard:**

No, thank you.

Tell your story. The map we inherited isn't any good. The old roads mislead. We need a new map.

I just want to tell a story. I used to hang the microphone out of the window from the studio as the introductory music of the show for soundwalking. And so, the really clear, repetitive thing every Sunday at the beginning of my show was: this traffic stopping at the traffic light, the voices from down here – more apparent when the traffic stopped – then the traffic starting, sirens, and usually a lot of seagulls like we heard them, not many pigeons.

*[EXCERPT OF A WALK THROUGH THE CITY (1981)]*

**Hildegard [whispering]:**

When there is no sound, hearing is most alert.

*[FROM THIS POINT TO THE END: EXCERPTS OF BENEATH THE FOREST FLOOR (1992) AND CRICKET VOICE (1987)]*

**Hildegard:**

I was studying music in Germany, but also here in Vancouver. During my studies in Vancouver, I heard a lecture by Murray Schafer. He was a guest lecturer from Simon Fraser University coming over to the other university. And that lecture was kind of covering new music, but it was also

covering his travels, soundscape and noise issues, composition. He had organized it in a way that was structurally very unusual for the time. In a sort of Cagean manner, he put stands on different parts of the stage, and each music stand had a different topic. And so he would walk back and forth. You know, I came from a fairly conservative background in Germany, classical music upbringing. And here I was in the audience, and he was this guy walking back and forth on stage, seemingly randomly. It was, of course, a composed talk. And he had staged my future colleagues from the World Soundscape Project in the audience, and they seemingly interrupted him. They got up in the middle of his talk and said things like: "How many airplanes have you heard today?" "What was the first sound you heard this morning?" "How many birds have you heard today?" And it was just this sort of ear-opening experience, all surprise in terms of ideas, but also in terms of the composition of that talk. And I came out of that talk like my ears had popped open in ways I had not experienced and just never forgot that experience.

It kept accompanying me. But one day I just thought, I've got to phone Murray Schafer and see whether I can work with him because I was so fascinated. I called him and he invited me to come up to Simon Fraser and we had a long conversation, and a few weeks later I was hired.

That was at the stage of the completion of the Vancouver Soundscape Project, where we had explored Vancouver as a sonic environment. Vancouver from the soundscape perspective, really one of the first studies that approached an urban environment from the listening and sound perspective. Then he was writing *The Tuning of the World*, his book now titled Soundscape, and I was his researcher there with the other colleagues from the World Soundscape Project.

I learned everything. We learned everything we could about sound from all perspectives, because we also wanted to be able to speak to other scientists. That was Schafer's vision: we need to work together. It was based on the idea that we have an ecological problem with the soundscape, we have noise, we have to deal with this issue. And the really revolutionary idea was that we weren't fighting noise, but we were making a point of listening to it and trying to understand it through perception. And that was a very new idea at the time.

All the anti-noise fights and studies were fighting noise, that was what we used to call a negative approach. As we said, we took a positive approach. We said, okay, let's open up to it, let's listen to it, and let's see what our perception can tell us. Along with all the studies that were done about noise as well, viscerally begin to understand what's going on in our sound environment.

We have the power as composers and musicians to learn to design the soundscape in a way that it's more humane, perhaps, or less damaging to living beings.

Personally, learning to listen like that, something very profound changes in terms of your relationship to the world. We need to learn to listen to the environment, learn to study the sound environment, be in touch with scientists, architects, different professions, so that we can actually recognize that there is an issue and make changes.

In this time of climate change, the pandemic, it is beginning to make even more sense that we need to learn to listen and create a new relationship to the environment. And listening can really be an agent for changing relationships between who we are and how we live inside this environment, how we take care of nature.

There is an agency in listening. Listening itself is an action that has its influence on how we live and how we act in life.

*[CREDITS]*

**Chanda VanderHart:**

*Listening is Action: A Soundwalk with Hildegard Westerkamp*

A sound documentary by Luis Velasco-Pufleau

*Listening is Action* was recorded in the city of Vancouver, which is situated on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̥əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and səlilwətaɬ (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. The authors acknowledge the inherent rights and jurisdiction that these Nations hold to their territories.

Narrator voice: Hildegard Westerkamp, recorded by Luis Velasco-Pufleau, on 14th, 15th and 16th of April 2022

Soundscape compositions Hildegard Westerkamp:

- *Kits Beach Soundwalk* (1989)

Excerpts from

- *Cricket Voice* (1987)

- *A Walk Through the City* (1981)

- *Beneath the Forest Floor* (1992)

The compositions are part of Hildegard Westerkamp's album *Transformations*, released by empreintes DIGITales in 1996.

Original idea, additional field recordings and composition: Luis Velasco-Pufleau

Mix: Christophe Rault

Lead voice: Chanda VanderHart

This sound work is part of the research project ONTOMUSIC, conducted at the University of Bern and McGill University, and was financially supported by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme, under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie grant agreement no. 101027828.

*[END]*

## Biography

Luis Velasco-Pufleau is a Marie Skłodowska-Curie Global Fellow at the University of Bern and McGill University, as well as an affiliate professor at the Université de Montréal. As a musicologist and musician, his research focuses on the relationships between music, ethics, and politics in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. He is also interested in exploring the political dimension of sound communities, aural memories, and wartime sonic environments. He is the editor of the open access research blog *Music, Sound and Conflict*, an editorial board member of the journals *Transposition* and *Filigrane*, and a member of the Swiss Young Academy.

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PERFORMANCE  
PHILOSOPHY

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## MIDNIGHT REFLECTIONS ABOUT OUR OWN NORTHERN VENTRILOQUIST'S SKILLS

AN AUDIO ARTICLE BY MAURICIO CARRASCO AND FERNANDO GARNERO  
IN DIALOGUE WITH YOUTUBE LINKS BY THIRUSHA NAIDU, ACHILLE MBEMBE,  
AND ROSI BRAIDOTTI



🎧 Listen to the audio article: <https://soundcloud.com/performancephilosophy/midnight-reflections>

*Midnight Reflections* is structured around three works composed by Garnero and performed by Carrasco: *Campo Amniótico* or *CA* (2021), *Interlude* (2014) and *Neon Pig* (2017). In *CA*, synthetic voices recite Bruce Nauman's text from his work *Good Boy, Bad Boy* (1985–86), which arise randomly as the musicians operate the volume pedals.

Through autoethnographic accounts and perspectives, Carrasco and Garnero refer to their origins in the Global South, interrogate their identity and inquire about how the performative and creative self can thrive in the north when coming from the south.

The musical trajectory of this collaboration between composer and performer culminates in the uncertainty of feedback or the Larsen effect in *CA*, where the score becomes a navigational tool rather than an accurate notation system, as was the case with *Interlude* and *Neon Pig*.

## Campo amniótico (2021)

F. Garnero

For 2 instruments with feed-back device & synthetic voice samplers

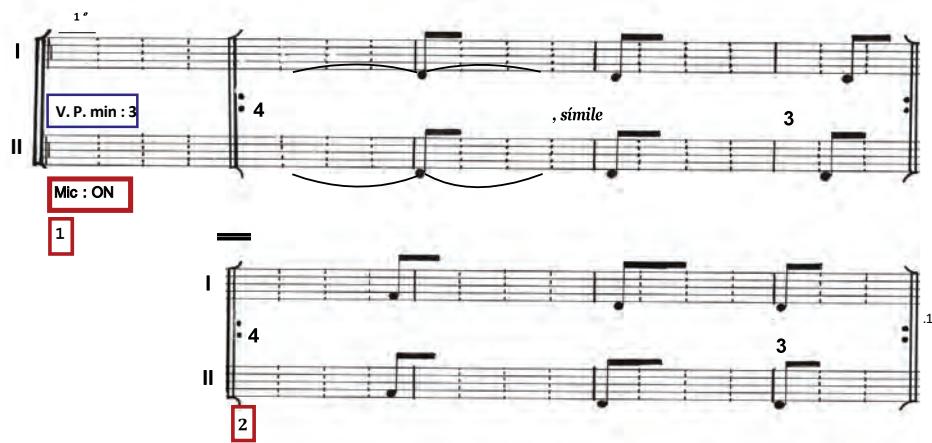


Figure 1. Fernando Garnero, Campo Amniótico (2021), unpublished score, bars 1-9.

Figure 2. Fernando Garnero, Interlude for e-guitar (2014), BabelScores, bars 1-13.



Figure 3. Fernando Garnero, *Neon Pig* (2017), BabelScores, bars 1-4.

Taking the acoustic phenomenon of feedback as its constituent element, CA becomes a metaphor for the elusiveness of an artwork, positing as an alternative to highly technologically enhanced virtuoso new music works. Instead of accomplishing performative prowess, composer and performer reflect on Mbembe and Braidotti's comments on the societal role of technology and on transhumanism, while aiming to find artistic strategies that attempt to evade Naidu's Northern Ventriloquist and Mignolo's Latin American tokenism concepts.

## Audio Article: Transcript

MAURICIO. Midnight reflections on our own Northern Ventriloquist's skills.

[*Campo Amniótico* begins]

An Audio Article by Mauricio Carrasco and Fernando Garnero in dialogue with YouTube links by Thirusha Naidu, Achille Mbembe and Rosi Braidotti.

FERNANDO. We met at the turn of the millennium at the Geneva Conservatory, and soon after we started collaborating in what constitutes by now a solid body of work. By then, none of the intersectional taxonomies related to gender, race, or geographical origin were taken into account by the musical institutions we attended, or by society in general.

MAURICIO. During the nineties, during our bachelor studies in South America, it seemed that the only way for us to achieve something and leave our repressive societies behind was to migrate to Europe.

FERNANDO. There was an almost axiomatic belief circulating in our environment at that time: to settle in Europe—at least for a few years—was the only way to acquire a 'real' compositional technique, to obtain a 'real' experience of composition. You had to 'be there', 'soak in', 'breathe that air'.

MAURICIO. The rather unquestioned path consisted of coming to a European country where the conservatory was not too expensive, especially without a scholarship, where one could survive doing student jobs or some teaching while getting the classical music education from the first hand, the original source.

FERNANDO. How could we know by then that we were going to be cursed to play a Southern role? Who could have foreseen this mirror movement, this symmetry? Our character carried performative mandates that were the opposite of those of the colonised South we had left behind. We rebelled against both in a symmetrical movement, sometimes retroactively.

Bruce Nauman

*Good Boy, Bad Boy* (1985-86)

*The highlighted passages correspond to the parts where the voices are clearly audible throughout the audio article.*

I was a good boy  
You were a good boy  
We were good boys  
That was good

I was a good girl  
You were a good girl  
We were good girls  
That was good

I was a bad boy  
You were a bad boy  
We were bad boys  
That was bad

I was a bad girl  
You were a bad girl  
We were bad girls  
That was bad

I am a virtuous man  
You are a virtuous man  
We are virtuous men  
This is virtue

I am a virtuous woman  
You are a virtuous woman  
We are virtuous women  
This is virtue

I am an evil man  
You are an evil man  
We are evil men  
This is evil

I am an evil woman  
You are an evil woman  
We are evil women  
This is evil

The first thing I knew when I was born was exile: well, what an idea to be born in Argentina in 1976, child of a left-wing militant couple. That was the year of the coup d'état, in which the bloodiest dictatorship in our history began.

Having been born on the periphery, the only possible milestone left for us to be part of the 'real' musical universe was to emigrate.

MAURICIO. We grew up attending conservatories that had this admirative look towards Europe, which shaped the musical education we received in Chile or Argentina from an early age.

THIRUSHA NAIDU. "Northern Ventriloquism is a term that I created to describe when Global South researchers appropriate northern ideas and repurpose them for their own purposes, where they will speak northern ideas on systems and structures and values and ways of seeing the world to the north" (Naidu 2021).

MAURICIO. I remember that as a bachelor student, any visitor who landed in a pretty locked up country as was Chile in the nineties, was received as a huge event. For instance, I remember how exciting it was to see Ensemble Modern performing at the Goethe Institute in Santiago some years after the end of dictatorship. To see such effervescence—crowded, enthusiastic young audiences. I remember the ensemble musicians seemed surprised by such a reception. Of course, now, living in the Global North, and a few decades later, the presence of a major new music ensemble is quite common in festivals and venues, and I experience it more like something on the order of a normal event.

FERNANDO. I spent months searching in libraries, consulting with contemporary music geeks in Buenos Aires, asking those who had the chance to travel to help me get the scores of two works that I came to know almost by chance, and which had a profound impact on me. Gerard Grisey's 1986 work *Talea* was one of them.

I'm alive  
You're alive  
We're alive  
This is living

I live the good life  
You live the good life  
We live the good life  
This is the good life

I have work  
You have work  
We have work  
This is work

I play  
You play  
We play  
This is play

I'm having fun  
You're having fun  
We're having fun  
This is fun

I'm bored  
You're bored  
We're bored  
This is boredom

I'm boring  
You're boring  
We're boring  
This is boring

I have sex  
You have sex  
We have sex  
This is sex

I love  
You love  
We love  
This is love

Grisey was a reference to a spectral movement that existed for more than twenty years, but that was practically unknown in Argentina. The second was by another fundamental composer, and also inaccessible for us by then: *Lo spazio inverso* (1985) by Salvatore Sciarrino. As both were published by Ricordi, I went to their office in Buenos Aires. I remember the astonished faces of the employees when asked for the Sciarrino score—people who were used to selling mainly solfeggio methods or musical instruments. Finally, a somewhat more avid manager told me that the simplest way to obtain them would be to go directly to Milan.

THIRUSHA NAIDU. "And you start to speak in this northern voice" (Naidu 2021).

FERNANDO. When I began to write a diary about my stay at the French Academy in Rome, a recurring starting question was: in which language should I write it?

MAURICIO. The foreign language is not English (or any other language for that matter), but the language of the Global North: the language of civilisation, the language of progress. The one that colonisers' history manuals exalted as a main instrument of transmission of the superior legacy offered to the colonised, namely their culture.

FERNANDO. Xenos, the stranger, the foreigner, was the signifier around which was possible to build an 'I'.

MAURICIO. Curiously enough, as a student, I had to learn a classical guitar's repertoire largely constituted by original works written by Latin American composers. Lots of those having a folkloric root.

Walter Mignolo starts his article on epistemic disobedience like a fairy tale: "And once upon a time scholars assumed that if you 'come' from Latin America you have to 'talk about' Latin America; that in such case you have to be a token of your culture" (Mignolo 2009, 160).

I hate  
You hate  
We hate  
This is hating

I like to eat  
You like to eat  
We like to eat  
This is eating

I like to drink  
You like to drink  
We like to drink  
This is drinking

I like to shit  
You like to shit  
We like to shit  
This is shitting

I piss  
You piss  
We piss  
This is piss

I like to sleep  
You like to sleep  
We like to sleep  
Sleep well

I pay  
You pay  
We pay  
This is payment

I don't want to die  
You don't want to die  
We don't want to die  
This is fear of death.

FERNANDO. What would epistemic disobedience mean for someone who creates music and knowledge about making music? Wouldn't the re-appropriation of the folk music tradition be another sign of obedience? Wouldn't it embody what the North sees or thinks about someone from the South? As an Argentinean composer, should I recreate tango over and over again? If tango is already a product of the encounter between Central European folk and African rhythms, is the South American component agogic then? A form of pronouncing?

MAURICIO. We met as students in a European higher musical institution.

Mignolo points out that "institutions are created to accomplish two functions: training of new (epistemically obedient) members, and controlling who enters and what knowledge-making is allowed, disavowed, devalued, or celebrated" (176).

I remember I had sort of two versions of the works I played: the one for my professor, with the phrasing she wanted, and which I played within the institution's examinations, and the more personal one, the version I would play in concerts and competitions outside the conservatory.

Perhaps one way to escape—both the performative obligations imposed by my guitar professor and a repertoire I disliked, characterised greatly by original works imbued with the colours and rhythms of Spain or its former colonies, to which the guitar lent itself so easily with its *rasgueados* and tonalities that I still avoid today—was to undertake an exploration of different expressive, technical, and aesthetic alternatives to the classical guitar, which I experienced as an asphyxiating milieu.

NARRATOR. "Tell me the thing that you desire and I can provide it for you" (Koltès and Wainwright 2001).

[*Campo Amniótico* fades out. *Interlude* fades in.]

FERNANDO. That's how we started collaborating first as students, and then by creating the Vortex ensemble.

For instance, let's look at the *Interlude for Electric Guitar* I composed for you in 2014.

NARRATOR. In this interlude, the guitarist holds objects in both hands: a sponge and a slide on the left, a ruler on the right. The tablature specifies: the rhythm, the areas where the objects need to be placed, the placement of the objects in a specific spot on the guitar, which determines the pitch, the direction in which the objects will move, indicated by arrows, the level of pressure of the objects over the strings, indicated by rectangles: white for light pressure, black and white for medium, and black for hard pressure, the control of the wah pedal indicated by a circle for ON and a cross for OFF.

ACHILLE MBEMBE. "All the tools, machines, technological artifacts, and devices with which humans interact, serve to fulfil two key functions, either to replace human action or to respond to human expression or sensation" (Mbembe 2019).

NARRATOR. The repetition of elements has little to do with a minimalistic intention, but with an obsessive, constant repetition of a short pattern that has an obstacle in front of it that prevents it from going further.

Once the obstacle is overcome, there may be a doubt about continuing, manifested by seemingly lengthy fermate. Like a toy running out of batteries, those become longer and longer by the end of the *Interlude*. The last fermata, the longest of the *Interlude* (eleven seconds pause), succeeds the last loop of the work, a seven-times-repeated 2/4 bar of a rising gesture in diminuendo produced by gradually closing the wah pedal. A fragile last gesture in pianissimo finishes the work.

ACHILLE MBEMBE. "That is, technology as *instrumentum*, a means to an end, and technology as an anthropology, that is, simply, as an activity performed by humans, an activity that sets humans apart from other species" (Mbembe 2019).

NARRATOR. Musical instruments reflect on this double essence mentioned by Mbembe, they serve to convey human expression, and they have historically evolved together with societal technological evolution. In this respect, electric guitar has played a major role in the passage to a mass reproduction and accessibility of music through the 20th century, contributing to, as Jacques Attali (1985) points out, enable music to be fully integrated into the global political order.

MAURICIO. However, in new music, we are far from feeling integrated into a global political order. At the most, we modestly try to comment on our contemporaneity from a peripheric point of view.

[*Interlude* fades out. *Neon Pig* fades in.]

FERNANDO. The "technique" to produce music and the language to talk about it is learned in the North.

I regularly use electric guitar in chamber settings: an example of that is *Neon Pig*, a work premiered at the Bendigo International Festival of Exploratory Music BIFEM by the Argonaut Ensemble conducted by Elena Schwartz in 2017.

MAURICIO. I was an Artistic Associate to the festival, and our main interest with artistic director David Chisholm was to render accessible to Australasian audiences works that were otherwise far from their radar. Although Australia doesn't officially make up part of the Global South, together with New Zealand, they have faced their own postcolonial challenges. BIFEM started as a festival in response to a programming policy that was always repeating the same names, those of the composers supported by a big publishing house. It was either that or the alternative scene—which Melbourne is a great place for—but it was logistically complicated to program, commission, and present more ambitious works, such as *Neon Pig*.

FERNANDO. So, in *Interlude* and in *Neon Pig*, we are in a different mindset than in *Campo Amniótico*, this audio article opening and closing work. Finally, we use the language of the North to discover whether we have our own purposes in the South. We are left to imitate, to mimic, but also to re-situate a place that can never really exist, to situate something impossible.

This impossible is the only universal to which a being from the Global South can aspire in this world ruled by the North.

[*Neon Pig* fades out. *Campo Amniótico* fades in.]

The lack, the absence, the desire, is the only place from where we can do our northern ventriloquisms.

ROSI BRAIDOTTI. "Oxford University has set up a few years ago a massive institute run by Nick Bostrom. It is called—and I'm glad you're sitting down—'The Institute for the Future of Humanity'. The ethos of the institute is Transhumanism. Transhumanism is human enhancement, human enhancement through brain implants or rather interfaces between brains, computational systems, clinical psychology, philosophy of mind. Millions in subsidies, incredible postdocs and PhDs, so get in there. Artists are very welcome, so long as you have your maths and physics under control" (Braidotti 2015).

NARRATOR. *Campo Amniótico* distances itself greatly from transhuman influenced music works that showcase this human enhancement, a sort of new brilliant instrumental virtuosity that demonstrates the technical prowess not only of the performer but also of the technological cyborg elements that reinforce them and allow the human to surpass them. Instead, *Campo Amniótico* questions the sacralisation of the musical instruments and of the symbolic support that is the music score: composers and performers are left to the arbitrariness of the medium they must inhabit through feedback, and where synthetic voices remind them from time to time of what Bruce Nauman had in mind as early as 1985 in his work *Good Boy, Bad Boy*, not as a jouissance of our own demise, but rather as a reminder that...

### Recordings

This audio article contains the following recordings of Fernando Garnero's compositions:

*CAMPO AMNIÓTICO* (2021) for two performers playing self-regulated feedback devices, ring modulation, and two synthetic voices.

Performed live at the Inter Feral Arts, Malmo, Sweden, October 2021, by the Ensemble Vortex: Rada Hadjikostova & Mauricio Carrasco.

The text from *Campo Amniótico* corresponds to the work *Good Boy, Bad Boy* (1985–86). Installation for two monitors and sound by Bruce Nauman.

*INTERLUDE FOR THE EXPERIMENT* for electric guitar (2014). Part of the Monodrama written by Mark Ravenhill and composed by David Chisholm.

Mauricio Carrasco, electric guitar.

Recorded live in Fonderie Kugler, Geneva, Switzerland, March 2018.

*NEON PIG* (2017) for ensemble and electronics.

World Premiere performance Friday 1 September 2017, Ulumbarra Theatre, Bendigo, Australia.

ARGONAUT ENSEMBLE.

Elena SCHWARZ, Conductor.

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## Biographies

**Dr Mauricio Carrasco** (1973) is an artistic researcher interested in queer performativity, particularly in tracing performativity's 'queer lineage' through a multiplicity of autoethnographic, posthuman and scientific rhizomatic approaches. He argues against the stranglehold of the specialism of artistic disciplines and aims to develop a transdisciplinary holistic vision that can accompany humans and non-humans in this critical historical convergence.

Carrasco's autoethnographic research examines the identity and corporeality of the classically trained musician in a repressive, dictatorial, and homophobic society (Chile in the 1980s and 1990s), which approaches trauma, hysteria, and gender issues in the musical theatre projects he performs. He assures the artistic direction of CRI *création recherche interdisciplinarité* and performs with the Ensemble Vortex.

**Fernando Garnero** (1976) is an Argentinian composer, co-director of Swiss ensemble Vortex, Guest Artist by Festival BIFEM (2019-2020), PhD candidate in Artistic Research by Lund University (Sweden) and former Fellow at the French Academy in Rome, Villa Medici (2020-21).

His works are played by Contrechamps, Vortex, Accroche Note, Phoenix, Proton, Repertorio Zero, Cairn, Lucilin, Distractfold, Wet Ink, L'imaginaire, Françoise Rivalland, Donatienne Michel-Dansac, on festivals such as Biennale de Venezia, Musica, Huddersfield, Archipel, Unerhoerte Musik Berlin, Mixtur, Warsaw Autumn and commissioned by Biennale de Venezia, Festival Archipel, SUISA, Fondation Mika Salabert, Fondation Royaumont, Radio France, French Ministry of Culture, Teatro Colón, among many others.

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## RELISTENING TO DERRIDA AND BENJAMIN

CAROLINE WILKINS INDEPENDENT COMPOSER/PERFORMER/RESEARCHER

John Schad · Fred Dalmasso, *Derrida | Benjamin, Two Plays for the Stage*, Palgrave Macmillan 2021, ISBN 978-3-030-49806-1 ISBN 978-3-030-49807-8 (eBook) <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-49807-8>  
video trailer: <https://vimeo.com/503549632>

### Introduction

*Derrida | Benjamin* is a remarkable volume that brings together theatre, performance and philosophy. It takes the form of an introduction by John Schad that places both philosophers within a 'theatre of the world' (Schad 2021, 4). For Benjamin this world is a series of tiny theatres to be found in the museum, the fairground, the puppet play, or the staircase drama enacted in an apartment building. Derrida draws much darker parallels with the world of the French insane-asylum, its inspection-and-spectacle, or the theatre of killing exemplified by acts of murder and the death camps. The two plays follow, each displacing its key philosopher to a different time/place. A conclusion by Fred Dalmasso relates the various strategies used in both plays to a context of performance philosophy. Each play, whilst reaffirming the presence of theatre within the thinking of Derrida and Benjamin, explores at the same time an underlying absence of the main character that is highlighted by these strategies.

Throughout the book certain key themes emerge that related, on first reading, to a performative context surrounding my own spontaneously awoken audio memory. References in the plays to Artaud's theatre-world or Benjamin's love of miniature machines, for example, evoke sounds taken from my own compositions. Sometimes I recall reading a similar 'theatre of sounds' to the ones

described by the authors, in a work by another contemporary author, or I make analogies between techniques of film and staging, as outlined by Dalmasso in his stage notes, and those of sound. Themes such as the syncope, disruption or darkness all have parallels in terms of audio. I re-invoke 'theatres of the world' that are reflected in environmental sound, whether natural or machine-made, chance encounters with voices in a public building or sinister acts of eavesdropping. These sonic 'events' lose their original context, become ambiguous and timeless, in a suspension of narrative that allows for other unconscious associations to surface on the part of the listener. Each section of *ReListening* begins with a series of phrases / sentences emerging from the original content that is added to my remarks and followed by a response in sound. The sonic material itself stems from my creative archive of recordings. Specialising in the area of sound theatre, I also critique the traditional role of background sound in plays, acknowledging music and sound's capacity to equally generate a dramaturgical argument alongside word and image. This approach results in independent lines that intersect, collide as well as support, and create multiple realities during the course of a piece of theatre.

The sections can be roughly headed as follows: *The performative text*, *The theatre of machines and objects*, *The theatre of shadows and ghosts*, *Film and sound in theatre*, *The syncope*, *The 'art of the impossible'* (Dalmasso 187, citing Badiou [1982] 2009, 317), and *The unimaginable*.

Inevitably there will be cross-references between some of these themes, but they are all linked by Dalmasso's concluding quote from Benjamin on the statement and counter-statement that 'displace each other in order to think each other'. Highlighted by the former as a definition of performance philosophy, it re-affirms that thought moves, shifts, goes back and forth in dialogue (Dalmasso 189, citing Benjamin 2002, 410).

### **The performative text**

Derrida as an actor in dialogue with the *other*. His texts are performative. The seminar as a theatre. His stage directions to self, written into the text, act as multiple voices. An actor/thinker on the stage. A process of speaking to the self / the other in/as performance.

Benjamin's radio as a 'Voice Land' (Schad 3, citing Benjamin [1932] 2014, 247).

The 'radical un-decidability of meaning' in Artaud's theatre, as quoted by Derrida (Schad 3) is a play (*jeu*) of fluidity, of suspension, of meaning as performance. I find a parallel here with the Russian Futurist language *zaum*, meaning 'beyond sense' (Wilkins 2010 / 2017). The following excerpt is taken from a poem by Alexei Kruchonyck entitled *Zaum in Tiflis*. Written in 1917, it reflects a break with narrative in favour of the force or weight of each vocal sound, inviting an essentially acoustic engagement with the words.

Listen to: zaum 7

🎧 <https://tinyurl.com/Tk1zaum7>

*Track 1: zaum 7 (length 02:55), from Zaum: Beyond Mind, Wilkins/Ben-Tal, 2009. Reproduced with permission from the authors.*

### **The theatre of machines and objects**

Benjamin's love of machines as miniature theatres, their role as performers. His attachment to objects that contain a world, leaving their traces behind by haunting the stage in their presence.

The following is an excerpt from a longer work for several historical mechanical instruments that would have been familiar to the philosopher in his time. (My apologies for the unedited abruptness of the ending.)

Listen to: miniature musical box

🎧 <https://tinyurl.com/Tk2mmbox>

*Track 2: miniature musical box, (length 02:01), excerpt from Music for mechanical instruments, 1986, Wilkins, reproduced with permission.*

*Object-beings* that retain a kind of memory, one that can remain in sonic form, such as the keyboard instrument that remembered all that was played upon it in *D'Alembert's Dream* by Diderot ([1769] 1830).

Benjamin's theatre of objects extends to the exterior worlds of streets or a staircase in Naples, where the scene unfolds itself. A contemporary example of this is found in the works of author Elena Ferrante such as *Troubling Love* (Ferrante 1992. See also Martone and Ferrante 1995).

### **The theatre of shadows and ghosts**

Ghost voices that appear during the two plays. Shakespeare's often-used stage direction to his characters: '*Enter fleeing*' (Schad 8). His characters draw breath and take air from the audience who become their witness. Another parallel reality occurs during performance.

Benjamin addresses radio listeners as 'invisible' (Schad 9 citing Benjamin [1929] 1996–2003 250); the audience performs in a theatre of hospitality, there is faith, on the part of the performers, in the shelter of audience presence:

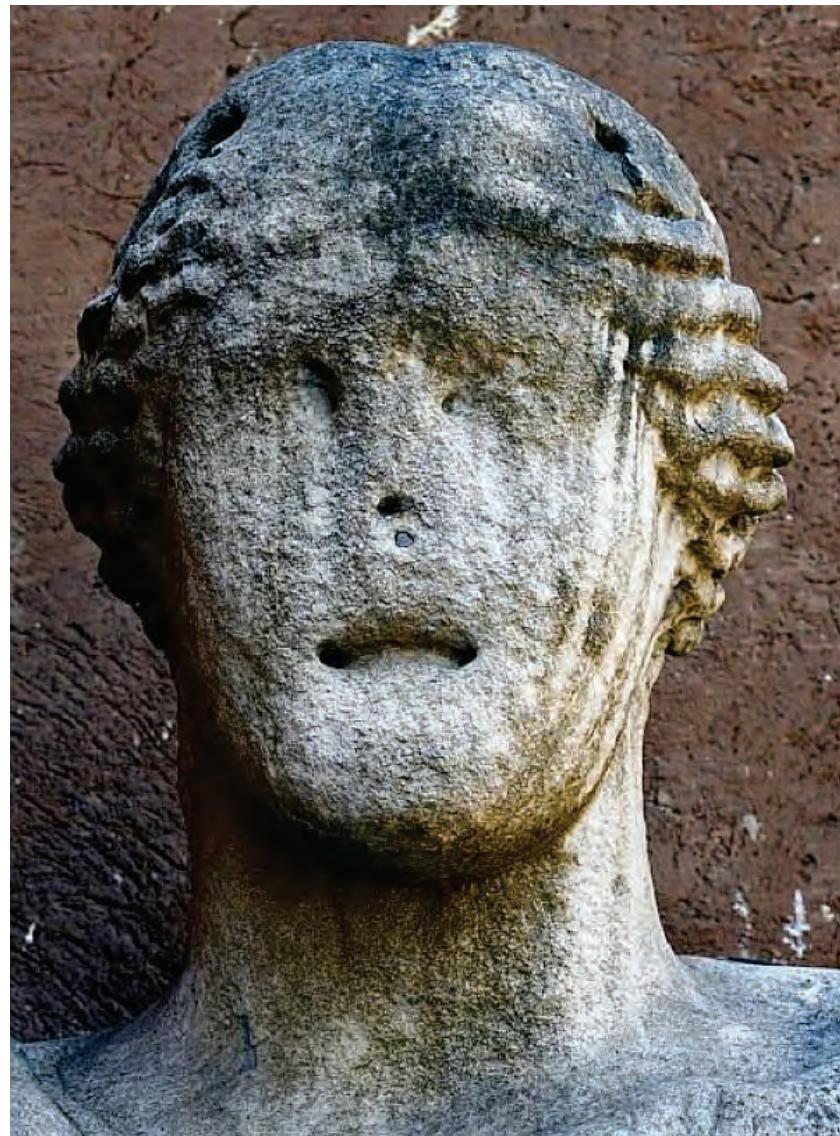
Listen to: *Talking Bust*

🎧 <https://tinyurl.com/Tk3TalkingBust>

Listen to: *Windswept Angel*

🎧 <https://tinyurl.com/Tk4WindsweptAngel>

*Tracks 3 and 4: Talking Bust (length 01:58) and Windswept Angel (length 00:18), taken from the original script to The Panacousticon, 2016, Wilkins, reproduced with permission.*



*Figure 1: Madame Lucrezia, the talking statue, creative commons*



Figure 2: *Angelus Novus*, Paul Klee (1920), creative commons.

### Film and sound in theatre

Film plays a central role in both the content and performance of *Benjamin*. I compare Dalmasso's use of film in the play's production with sound, which can also be used in the same way as a dramaturgical device.

The original sound listed for *Derrida* evokes Oxford (where the play is set in 1968) and includes background sounds of WWII, the sea, clocks, telephones and steam trains. However, in my view, sound could assume more than an atmospheric role here. It has theatrical possibilities. It can be used dramaturgically in theatre as an active protagonist. It can also be distant, past, absent, but occupy the performance space as another world not visually represented.

Dalmasso's 'long shot' and 'close-up' of film projected live on to the performance space during *Benjamin* evokes a 'micro-choreography' of limbs that dissolve into images (184). They have their equivalent in sound. For example, a change of audience sonic perception can occur through the electronic magnification (amplification) of small sound-objects onstage, transforming a microcosmic world into a macrocosmic one. The work of theatre-maker Heiner Goebbels, such as *Max Black*, is a perfect example of this (Goebbels 2017).

Dalmasso also uses a bird's-eye view of the stage by placing a camera above the action, recalling, as he acknowledges, a technique used by theatre/filmmaker Lars von Trier (2022). It engenders a virtual, labyrinthine view of the stage that takes place in parallel with the live action, creating a

perspective of distance, a past, an absence. This has its equivalent, for example, in the use of panoramic sound recordings:

Listen to: *Multiple voices resonating in dome of building, Perugia*

 <https://tinyurl.com/Tk5Perugia>

Listen to: *Sea cave*

 <https://tinyurl.com/Tk6SeaCave>

*Tracks 5 and 6: Multiple voices resonating in dome of building, Perugia (length 02:01) and Sea cave, Cornwall (length 01:59). Field recordings by the composer, Wilkins. Reproduced with permission.*

### The syncope

An in-between, a time-lag. In musical terms it means to vary the emphasis on a series of sounds and thus avoid a regular rhythm, accenting a weak instead of a strong beat or introducing a sudden change of time.

The various meanings of the word according to Marsilio Ficino, as referenced by Dalmasso (2001), include that of the sleep or the swoon, signifying a state of emptying, a release. In terms of sound this comes close to a suspension of time generated by the repetition of cyclic sounds, or by a series of compressions, collisions, sonic frictions. A non-narrative form of musical discourse that cuts into its own sonic material, producing fragments not normally included – parentheses, a-vocal sounds, hesitant repetitions.

The gap, according to Dalmasso, that renders groundless/speechless on 'coming-to' (188) from a state of syncope. Speech as an 'audible gaping' (188) invokes Figure 1 of *Lucrezia, the Talking Statue*:

Listen to: *zaum 2*

 <https://tinyurl.com/Tk7Zaum2>

*Track 7: zaum 2 (length 01:53), Wilkins/Ben-Tal, O. 2009. Reproduced with permission from the authors.*

### The 'art of the impossible'

An emergence of something that arises unexpectedly, from the recesses of a situation, if it is indeed allocated a place of possible disruption.

Un-thought.

Badiou's 'language of *flight* [...] locating a vanishing point' (Dalmasso 187 citing Badiou [2008] 2009 132):

Listen to: *zaum 1*

 <https://tinyurl.com/Tk8zaum1>

*Track 8: zaum 1 (length 00:35), Wilkins/Ben-Tal, O. 2009. Reproduced with permission from the authors.*

### The unimaginable

Darkness onstage, the end of a film, the un-heard of:

in sonic terms the flip-side of a recorded source such as the mechanism of a piano roll re-winding like that of a reel of film. Or the shellac disc of a gramophone repeating at the end of its 'locked groove' (Wilkins 1986).

Extraneous sound exposed as an underside, a reversal:

Listen to: *Mecanica Natura*

 <https://tinyurl.com/Tk9MecanicaNatura>

*Track 9: excerpt from Mecanica Natura (length 02:00), radiophonic work, (Wilkins, 1999). Reproduced with permission from the author.*

Dalmasso's 'collective cantillation' (188), a play of chanting, reciting voices, delves into an unconscious world that surfaces unknowingly.

It recalls Track 6 of my sonic fragments:

multiple voices of an audience recorded in the resonant space of an anteroom before a performance.

### Conclusion

This encounter with two plays framed by their authors' essays has led me on a journey of creative responses that plunge into a personal aural memory and association of things read or otherwise experienced. For the practitioner-philosopher this journey reflects a movement of thinking through doing, in other words, through performing, whereby the two can never really be separated. There is the philosopher- actor addressing their own multiple identities, leaving each of these strands open to interpretation. A 'theatre of the world' is created, one in which objects and everyday occurrences can assume another more timeless role. Parallel realities occur within the plays, both between the performers themselves and with their audiences. There is an ambiguous sense of time and space, of absence and presence, made possible by combining different strategies of theatre taken from film, sound, gesture, word and scenography. The result is an

expansion of thought into areas of perception not otherwise encountered. What is unknown is allowed to surface and re-encounter conscious thought on a slightly different plane. The suspension of the possible occurs through surprise, shock, and an emptying of expectations. Freed from representational values, creative thought delves into multiple levels of existence, giving initial credence to its powers of un-thought in the process.

These are some of the arguments that invite performance philosophy into the arena of this book and vice versa. *Derrida | Benjamin* has profound importance for any practitioner working in this field through its framing of the performative *within* the act of thinking. Indeed, from the viewpoint of any future realisation of the plays themselves there is tremendous scope for their adaptation to other forms of live/virtual performance, such as radio drama, film, inter-medial performance and even installation-performance.

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## Biography

Independent composer/performer/researcher **Dr. Caroline Wilkins** completed a practice-based PhD in Sound Theatre at Brunel University, London in 2012. She comes from a background of new music performance, composition and theatre, and has worked extensively on solo and collaborative productions involving these. Her particular interest lies in exploring new forms within the field of inter-medial sound theatre.

She has presented extensively at (inter)national conferences and published articles / essays in both book and journal form, including O.U.P., Intellect Books and *Performance Philosophy*.

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