

stimulus → *respond*

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Twenty-tens

Sitting in North Bar in Leeds in 2010, Derek Horton asks if I'd be interested in taking over as Arts Editor for the online journal *Stimulus Respond*. You probably won't ever meet the editor – Jack – he says and into this quasi *Charlie's Angels* world I enter. Sounds interesting, Derek, I say as we down another over-priced pint, and so it begins in the narrow bar that doesn't do food. It feels like an opportunity to catch up with, interview, think about and showcase some artists I know and some I don't. I invite Ben Parry to co-edit the arts sections with me and off we sail through eight sporadic single-word themed issues. I'm also able to present works by students I teach and we set up an audio page to accompany each article, with grand visions of returning to paper one day (*Stimulus* began as a printed journal I believe) or even establishing a vinyl or cassette imprint.

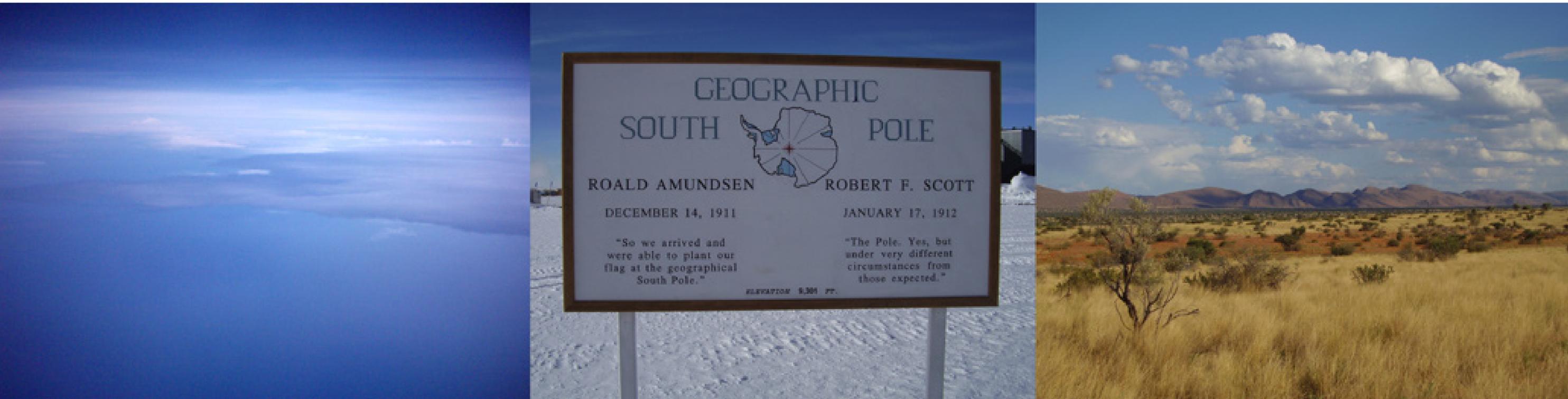
There is the printed anthology *Hand Picked* from 2014 but the journal remains online apart from that. Every few months, we receive from Jack – or gradually negotiate with Jack – a one-word theme to set us off. We love this - strip it back to one word (even harsher than the *FOUR WORDS* project I am developing) and spend the twenty-tens writing about artists and their brooding concerns: captive, omen, post-truth, psychedelia or wonder.

Our themes sound cinematic and slightly paranoid and Jack does a wonderful job laying out each short text in a seductive and spacious style. This is important, to allow our sombre texts to breath. The twenty-tens start with a global financial meltdown and end with a global viral and financial meltdown. If we are ever allowed to return to North Bar, if it is ever allowed to re-open, we'll sit again and sup an extortionate pint and raise a ceremonial glass to *Stimulus Respond* as I now pass the baton on, just as Derek did to me and it will continue into the twenty-twenties. So, Alan, looking back, what does the decade mean for you, he asks? I sup my Lindeboom and think aloud

... Virgil's ACL, moving house, Jürgen Klopp, Barcelona *corner taken quickly*, doing a PhD, police, social services, walking with Lulu in the woods, Melt Banana, the MA, Instagram, destroying and collecting second-hand vinyl, Leeds Met to Leeds Beckett, trains, films on trains, becoming grandparents, *FOUR WORDS*, Guided by Voices, *TAPE BRITAIN*, winning the Premier League, tattoo, wine, Spanish *Ticka Tacka*, Liverpool Art Prize, Champions League, RedmenTV, Netflix, *The sounds of ideas forming*, CIA Black Sites, turning 50, *Dead Baby Mice*, redaction, setting up Alternator Studio & Project Space, Anthony Burgess & Malcolm Lowry, Board member of ESA, Mo Salah, COVID-19, *Ein-stürzende Neubauten*, centralised administration and bureaucracy, risk assessments and ...

What do we do when ideas dry up, what are the projects we return to for re-energising, who are the designers or activists we look to for values and levels, what are the songs that remind us of irresponsible youth, what machines elevate our capacities beyond our capabilities, what are our desert island concepts, what drum sound makes us stand still and listen, what apps make us smile, what hacks make us panic, what lyrics make us look at our speakers, what amount of money will we do it for, who are we trying to impress, what do we do if we lose all our jobs, what can we do if we can't travel, where inside do we look, where does help come from, what sleeves make our hearts flutter, which stories do we actually believe, which games make us grind our teeth, whose compliments do we crave, whose eye do we want to catch, what do we want to leave for posterity, how often should we make stuff, how many projects are the right number, is it ok to look back to the eighties, which TV series make us drool at the budgets, which artworks make us want to give up ... for a while, how much should we leave after we die, what would it take for artists to go on strike, what is your Degree worth, what's wrong with being silent, which type do we rely on or which font do we dream of, which family member drives us mad, where does our dog go in her mind when she gazes off, which new colour should we invent, what is the point, is there a future for banners, what makes us click our fingers, which dream makes us perspire, what projects do we direct students to, what makes our eyes water, when are our most creative times of day, do creativity lessons belong on TV, what is blended learning, who do we sing for and why?

Thanks, Jack ...



Thanks for Listening

Chris Watson by Alan Dunn

Founder member of Cabaret Voltaire, award-winning wildlife sound recordist with David Attenborough and recording artist for Touch, Chris Watson is an artist with a unique background and sensibility. In 2004 Alan Dunn and Watson worked together on the *Winter's Tale* project at the Foundation for Art & Creative Technology in Liverpool, collaborating with a community of elderly high-rise tenants. Recording their immediate and surrounding locale at all hours of the day, two new soundscapes were

created for the scenes the residents could see from their windows but could not hear. These two pieces were re-fed into each living room free of charge via the internal CCTV system.

The project brought together Watson's interest in creating portraits of habitats using sound alongside his generous sharing of professional skills towards new ways of listening to our world. Having travelled extensively since first working for *The Tube* on Channel 4, Watson has recorded in some of the most remote and

challenging parts of this planet. Dunn invited him to select three photographs from his travel collection to reflect upon the planet's silence, remoteness, the nature of time, perspective, chaos, complexity and human nature.

CW: It was really interesting when you asked me to select three photographs because even though I chose three remote locations across the world, there is a clear connection in habitats. Although I am a sound recordist, when I go to any

of these places, the geographic South Pole, the Pacific Ocean or the Kalahari Desert in the North West Cape of South Africa, the first thing I do is to look. Through my visual sense and then my auditory sense I start to absorb what I consider to be the essence or spirit of these places. I am very much visually guided and the one thing these places all have in common is the distant horizon. Even though the three habitats are radically different and far apart, when you scan them you can see far into the distance and, with the lack of

noise pollution, you can also hear across great distances. Each location has remained relatively unchanged and standing at the South Pole I realised that what I was hearing was exactly the same type of sounds that Roald Amundsen heard when he arrived a century ago. In fact there has probably been no change in several thousand years and I am really interested in that idea of a kind of perspective. All three places exhibit that potential of reaching into the past with a microphone.

AD: This notion of distance changes everything because we are not used to hearing that far.

CW: Yes, it is a real challenge for any technology to represent it, because all technology does in a sense is to confine something to a widescreen image or a stereo sound. In those habitats it is literally very hard to take it all in, but that is what I find exciting and challenging about those places, coupled with the lack of human interference. There is actually very little wildlife sounds at these places. There are literally none at the South Pole and relatively few in the Kalahari Desert when that picture was taken. It was about 4 in the afternoon, 40° Centigrade, gathering clouds of an evening storm and that golden hour colour on the grass, but 85% of the wildlife there is nocturnal, living in the dark, so you hear very little. The photo of the surface of the Pacific Ocean was taken from a Boeing 737 about 1,000km off the coast of Ecuador as we started our descent to the Galápagos Islands. In a place like that on the surface there is very little sound but when you go below the surface you enter another world in which sound travels five times faster. The ocean is the most sound-rich habitat in the planet.

AD: These three photographs are without humans and it must be quite an existential experience for you to work alone in locations, without other animals, seeing further than most humans are used to and putting microphones literally where no human has ever listened before.

CW: I find it really challenging, particularly at the South Pole. You realise that as you scan the far horizon there comes a vanishing point where the ice and sky merge because of the ice and the clear blue sky. I also realised at the South Pole that every way you turn and everywhere you look is north. Standing at the Pole, every time zone on

“The other thing I realised from talking to scientists at the South Pole is that there is only one sunrise and one sunset a year”

our planet converges. Beyond the left hand side of that board is the Americas with one time zone and to the right of it is Russia with another time zone and it does make you wonder about time, or lack of it, in a very particular way. Perhaps there is no time there at all?

AD: For those time zones are a man-made construct to deal with day and night?

CW: They are, but the other thing I realised from talking to scientists at the South Pole is that there is only one sunrise and one sunset a year. The sun will rise for the first time in late September, breaking the horizon, and it won't set again until about March.

AD: Stretching a day into a year?

CW: Yes, a kind of day in a life. While I was working there I stayed at a Russian base where they used Russian time and the American base used American time. But there is no new timescale that I am aware of specifically for the Pole, just some commonality. But whatever they use, it's arbitrary, because all the sun does is circle around the Pole.

AD: These photographs are hence documents?

CW: They are snapshots that I find too two-dimensional, records of visits. That sign in the

photograph for example is on its own and behind it you can just see the Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station run by the United States Science Foundation. The actual South Pole is a ceremonial point within walking distance of the canteen, but I noticed this wooden board on its own, perhaps 200 yards in the distance. I walked up to it and it actually marks the exact geographic South Pole. I was there on my own and it was quite a moving experience, particularly when you read what's on it.

AD: You were at the three locations recording, with different technical challenges and different briefs?

CW: I was at the South Pole with David Attenborough for a BBC documentary series called *Frozen Planet*, in the Kalahari Desert working on a feature film and the Galápagos Islands was for a National Geographic series. These jobs get me to places and I then take the opportunity to explore them in ways that are outwith the remit of my original reason for being there. I make lots of recordings, photographs and notes and when I return I start to create pieces that find that sense of spirit of place. It is a personal interpretation of it from my experiences of spending a lot of time in these places.

AD: When you do a portrait of someone you try to get the essential features and you are creating portraits of this planet's largest human-free expanses. Does that lead you to insights about the overall picture?

CW: The painting analogy is really good as that is how I imagine my work, a personal representation with sound. Spending time in places such as these makes me realise that these are not what we often call quite derogatorily barren wildernesses or hostile environments. What I have begun to realise and what I am thinking more about trying to articulate in my work is how complex they are. They are not chaotic at all. They are complex systems, complex eco systems, and to that extent they are fragile. Working with scientists in particular I am interested in how they try to articulate that complexity and how you start to unearth the beauty of these places.

AD: The word complexity suggests a form of mathematical pattern that permanently underpins

things?

CW: It is not permanent. Part of the complexity is that it is changing constantly, affected by the weather or geology or even by our influence. However, I am sure there is a mathematical structure to it. I did a residency at the Wired Lab in Australia which was set up by Dr Alan Lamb to explore the acoustic properties of the long fencing wires stretched across the country. While I was there I talked at length about this very subject with David Burraston, a mathematician who has studied the complexity of the wires. They are simple when compared to many other habitats but he is unearthing some incredibly interesting information and forming some new ideas about the complexity of these sounds in wires. He is actually looking to describe it which I feel is almost beyond my function as an artist, being able to annotate or explain complexity. I can grasp it without fully understanding it but I did start thinking about how I may start to articulate the complexity of the sounds in these three locations for example. Or, how knowledge may affect how I record in such places.

AD: Are you suggesting there is no such thing as chaos?

CW: I think there probably is but I could not describe it. I feel it is too easy to look at the surface of the sea and say 'it is chaotic'. It is not and neither is air movement nor falling snow. It is an easy romantic notion to say 'chaotic' but for me it just means that it is outside my knowledge, I just can't understand it.

AD: How may a better understanding of complexity start to alter the way you record places?

CW: When you start to investigate these places, you could probably stand and hold a microphone and get three recordings that I could say were from any one of those three places, because they are so quiet. And this is where notions of perspective play such an important role. In these far distant horizons I am also interested in listening literally under the surface and under the skin. What became interesting with the Pole was to put hydrophones and geophones under the sea ice and start to draw out sounds from there, which were astonishing. I am interested in finding the real essence and spirit of that place and that

is also by putting microphones in unusual places, at new perspectives to start to reveal other complexities. In the Kalahari I put microphones down holes where animals or insects live and I have recently been doing a great deal of underwater recordings. Armed with a fairly basic knowledge of the biology of places, I start to investigate habitats from new perspectives.

AD: That is what is interesting for me, the pioneering and burrowing that you do, going beyond the surface and away from the visual. Do you see that as a next phase in your work?

CW: Absolutely, and also the idea of spatialising places as technology is now catching up with our ideas. I have an ambisonic recording system that enables me to record in any of those places and then spatialise it into a three-dimensional audio environment. And this is genuine three-dimensions using third order ambisonics to spatialise a place so for the first time you can recreate a space which has planar (horizontal) sound, which is how we see, but also with height and depth, which is how we hear. It is still a very complex system. I work with Tony Myatt at the University of York to create the hardware for it and that really culminated recently in *The Morning Line* project at TBA21 that is currently exhibited in Vienna. *The Morning Line* is a sculpture by Matthew Ritchie that has a 40-speaker system within it to allow the public to really hear the sounds of any recorded place. The presentation is crucial. In the past, sound has been very poorly presented but galleries in particular have caught up and the public now 'get it', the very direct emotional response to good quality well presented sound.

AD: You often refer to the 'beautiful sounds' of animals or places, but do you think there is a relationship between the more complex sounds and what we find 'pleasing' to listen to?

CW: The commonality of these places is the lack of man-made noise and I often make that judgement not to use any man-made noises in any given location. I represent a place as I would like to experience that place. It is not like a photograph in that sense. It is a composition that is very simple, not complex, although I am becoming interested in how I may start to articulate the inherent complexity of the sounds.

There is always a narrative element, which

is time. Time is not always regular and I often stretch it for example. The *Vatnajökull* piece on *Weather Report* was a representation of 10,000 years in 18 minutes. I am quite happy to play around with time and this is what many of my compositions are based on. I create a timeline and create simple scores that are based on lapsed time, the seasons or animal behaviour.

I am looking at the moment into doing a piece with a raven roost in Wales in which the sounds happen over about 20 minutes and I am trying to expand it to closer to 60 minutes. It is a way of getting into the rhythm and behaviour and the pattern of the animal. I think this is part of the complexity, this idea of temporal resolution. At the Pole I can hear a hundred years ago. In the Kalahari, insects live their lives much faster than us. We can hear birds and see them and try to describe them but the fact is that, as organisms, we are all living our lives at different speeds. We can hear birds sing but we cannot capture that information with the same resolution as the bird is doing at that moment. The classic example of that is a wren singing. That wren can produce 64 notes in an 8-second song phase. We hear that as a trill. If you slow it down 4 times you can see and hear the individual notes. The scientists at the University of St Andrews with whom I am working suggest that another wren can resolve those notes at that speed, which is beyond our temporal resolution. Another wren can separate out all those individual notes and extract information about its sexual status, its position within its habitat and whether or not it has a mate. The raven is similar and for me slowing down is one very simplistic way of working with it. It allows us to start to hear it.

AD: And that is akin to early photographers examining motion?

CW: Curiously enough I have a project with the British Film Institute who have given Mike Harding at Touch some animated films from the early 20th Century by two French film makers and I have one to create a soundtrack for. It is the metamorphosis of a caterpillar into a butterfly and some of it is slow-motion film, some of it is actual animation and at some stages they even built an actual artificial caterpillar to understand its behaviour and to represent the behaviour. They made a new time resolution as perhaps because the real thing was too slow! It's interesting to see the techniques they used to film

that, methods you have to put in place to start to perceive complexity.

AD: Which leads us to a final question of why do you think it has to be so complex? If the wind system and the waves and ravens and wrens are so elaborate and in flux, why do you think we, as part of it, struggle to understand it?

CW: Firstly, I think all these time systems are interconnected. They must be because that is how things work and evolve. Secondly, we are only here for a very small span and are simply not able to understand it. Things are evolving all around us but we do not have the capacity to notice it, or to comprehend the temporal resolution on a daily basis.

Why things appear to be so complex is of course a difficult question to answer. It is like trying to understand the universe. We can understand what we can and we all do our own little bit, but maybe all that does is add to the complexity of it rather than resolve it. And in order to try and find answers at each stage of our development, we do simplify things, it is in our nature. That is, we try to find out what it is, we give it a name, we classify it and then move on.

I do not think we can contain it because in 10,000 years this cafe won't be here and we find it impossible to imagine what will be here. But there can be no 'answer' as it is always evolving and never stops. Even crocodiles are continuing to evolve but we cannot perceive it from our position. We can look back at evolution and recognise it but not observe it up close. So, new perspectives, differing time systems and temporal resolutions do play a part. It is hard to understand temporal resolution when you visit those places but perhaps it is possible to absorb it, to record it from certain perspectives, albeit a simplified portrait.

Chris Watson's new CD El Tren Fantasma (The Ghost Train) is released by Touch. See www.chriswatson.net and www.touchmusic.org.uk

Audio tracks selected by Chris Watson for Stimulus Respond at www.alandunn67.co.uk/stimulusaudio.html

*go degrees South
Pacific Ocean
The Kalahari Desert*

**EVERYTHING
MUST**

GO

**TURN THE WORTHLESS INTO THE BEAUTIFUL
WITH FOREIGN INVESTMENT**

*Foreign
Investment*

Made up of artists based in the UK but born outside those shores, the all-female artists' group Foreign Investment have conducted radio symphonies on traffic islands, collaborated with street musicians to entertain construction workers and exchanged jokes at community colleges. On each occasion, a free exchange of ideas or creativity has been at the root of the event, creating situations in which artists and the public come together to question the value of things in unexpected ways. Members of Foreign Investment have roots and family in Brazil, China, Germany, France, Turkey and Norway. They invest in the cultural life of the UK through their daily jobs and as Foreign Investment they perform at home and abroad. Dressed in their stitched yellow and red aprons, their slow and calculated performances have brought a serene sense of order to the hustle and bustle of festivals such as the London Biennial, Trajetórias in Rio de Janeiro, Istanbul Biennial, Gogol Fest in Kiev, DeptfordX or the Venice Biennial Agendas. Their response to the fluctuating global economies of the past fifteen years has been a series of projects involving gold in Rio de Janeiro, London, Oslo and most recently in *Everything Must Go* at the Chinese Arts Centre in Manchester. During the Private View, members of Foreign Investment discussed their gold work with Alan Dunn.

Gold-X-Change in Istanbul in 1997 was the first time Foreign Investment worked with gold, in only the second year of our existence. We had been invited to Turkey by the curator Beral Madra to do a work for Istanbul during the Biennial. While researching, we became interested in questions of value, particularly the value of women's life and work in Turkey and we wanted to do something that was generous and connected to Turkish culture. We learned that gold plays quite an important role in social life. At dinner parties for example, guests bring the hostess a tiny little piece of gold instead of flowers. At first this seemed odd but in the current crisis of turbo Capitalism it becomes clear that in fluctuating financial markets gold gifts make sense. In a system that has little or no social welfare nor pensions for women, gold becomes the tangible pension fund. It is practical, with the added benefits that you can wear your funds. Women collect these gold gifts and they also receive gold bangles which are basically their dowry. They know gold will always have its value, whereas money gains and loses value all the time.

From the beginning we had this idea that

"Our aim is to invest in exchange, in the dialogical processes that underpin both the private and the public economy"

Foreign Investment would be very generous. We wanted to bring art to the public for free, to remove it from its pedestal and to make it accessible to everyone. We also wanted to stay clear of adding more objects to an already cluttered world. Our aim is to invest in exchange, in the dialogical processes that underpin both the private and the public economy. The notion of investment in the art context is short charged if it is only understood as unregulated capital investment. There is a completely different thinking going on here. We as Foreign Investment invest in the process and those who come along and join in or stand by are investing too! These investments are complex for they certainly include time, dialogue, thoughts and ideas.

With the full title *Gold-x-change - Gold For Every Body* we almost caused a small revolution in Istanbul. People were queuing up outside the BM Contemporary Art Centre in their hoards. No money was involved. We gilded things that people brought us, basically things they had in their pocket. They had to give us something in order to take away something else that had already been gilded. What seemed initially a straight forward exchange sealed with a handshake turned into micro and macro analysis of non-monetary trade relationships. Interestingly enough, the worry of everybody that engaged in the transaction circled around value: is a crumpled up empty cigarette packet good enough to be traded in? Was there something in the handbag that could be given away or exchanged for a gilded object? The Istanbul public invested time and knowledge. The table around which the transformation of objects took place became the heart of long and informed discussions on gold mining practices, corruption and pollution caused by gold mining in Turkey, unstable currency markets, the Eurozone, alchemy and the political, economic and cultural position of Turkey at the end of the 20th century. In addition, the event coincided with violent protests against the exploitative and destructive

policies of the international gold mining industry.

Gold demand in the first quarter of 2011 totalled 981.3 tonnes at a value of 43.7 billion US dollars. This was a 100-tonne increase from the previous quarter, put down to a "strong growth in the investment sector".¹

We were on the 'fringe' of the Biennial but the artist Orlan came to see our project at BM and she loved it so much that she sent many people from the main Biennial over to see what we were doing. We were taking worthless items from people's pockets and giving them value. In those days we did not work out exactly how much value we were adding, but that is something that we have grown more interested in and is much more integral to this current exhibition. In Istanbul it was more the alchemy, the transformation and the fact that anything at all becomes a really beautiful and valued object once you put gold on it.

¹ World Gold Council, GFMS Ltd, Gold demand trends, First Quarter, May 2011

Today, China is the second largest gold consuming market in the world. In 2010, gold demand grew by 32% and for the first time, annual gold demand (jewellery, investment and technology combined) surpassed the 700-tonne mark).²

The second time we worked with gold was in Rio de Janeiro in 2001³. As we are all 'foreigners' in Foreign Investment, we always want to relate to the cultures we are invited to. What we are problematising here are two interlocking principles. Firstly we recognise that we are foreign (fremd) and secondly that we invest in the foreign. That is, in that which is not yet known to us. These principles are applied across everything Foreign Investment does including its working methods, organisation and idea banking authorship. These principles lead to multiple quasi-schizophrenic, or better erratic processes. In so doing, Foreign Investment shakes the seemingly robust foundations of trade,

² ibid

³ *Gold Exchange*, Palácio Gustavo Capanema, FUNARTE, Rio Trajetórias, Rio de Janeiro, curated by Cristiana de Melo, 2001



commodity, value, authorship, money and art. We bought Brazil nuts in London and brought them back as a clandestine imports into Brazil. Returned to their land of origin, the nuts were measured, weighed and gilded. We sat around a giant table, measured each nut in millimetres and grams, gilded them and recorded the data. After gilding, we weighed each nut again as each one naturally had a slightly different dimension and we collected this data on the dark tables like blackboards. Packed and labelled, the gilded nuts once again entered the trading floor, this time offered to people to take away freely. We did the gilding performance at the Palácio Gustavo Capanema, FUNARTE and three other venues across Rio, each time adding more value to the imported (returned) nuts. We also noticed the stark difference in size - Brazil nuts sold in Rio's markets and shops were half in the size of those exported to London. Then again, pineapples and mangos destined for export were far inferior to the ones sold on the markets.

Foreign Investment zooms in and magnifies automated, automatic and manual labour involved in import and export. Whilst transformation and ex-change value were the focus in Istanbul, in Rio the focus shifted onto the administration, the data gathering and the gesture of re-patriation for both the nuts and the gold.

*Jewellery is by far the most dominant category of the Chinese gold market, accounting for almost 64% of all gold demand in China in 2010 (27% accounted for by investment and remaining 9% by technology).*⁴

In 2008 we looked at a different cycle of value. During DeptfordX⁵ we concentrated on Deptford High Street in London, a street dominated by the weekly market, small independent international food shops and a handful of Charity Shops. We noticed that there was a lot of rubbish around the High Street and we decided to pick up one hundred pieces of rubbish that were suitable to gild. Each piece was then coated in gold and subsequently displayed in the local pub The Deptford Arms right in the middle of the High Street. Sadly this pub does not exist any more as it is now a betting shop, the eighth betting shop on a relatively short street! We wanted to question and challenge the established routes of commerce and transaction, including those

4 ibid

5 www.deptfordx.webeden.co.uk

set by the cultural sector. After Modernism, rupture and disruption is expected and carefully choreographed in national and international exhibitions. With our actions we create a mini parallel universe, often played out on the streets like Dada, Beuys or the Situationists. Picking up rubbish by hand, gilding it, displaying it in the local pub and returning the gilded rubbish is absurd and poignant at the same time. We kept a map of where we had originally found the rubbish and on the last evening of DeptfordX we returned the gilded rubbish back to where it was found. We left the one hundred pieces for some lucky winners and it was soon all gone!

*Since ancient times, gold in China has been associated with good luck and is considered to be the colour of emperors. Chinese people with a high status traditionally wear more gold jewellery and gifts of gold items are considered to be highly valuable. It is a tradition to give gold as a gift after a child is born, on birthdays, at Chinese New Year and it is also an integral part of wedding jewellery.*⁶

In October 2010 we were invited by the Kulturbyrået Mesén⁷ to work in a multi-cultural neighbourhood of Oslo. We worked with about 100 children who spoke around 50 different mother tongues, which was absolutely beautiful and mad at the same time! Up-cycling, child labour and circular economy lay at the heart of this 7 day marathon. Together with the children we gilded 230 abandoned toys that were donated by them and their families, toys that had been loved at one point but relegated to the rubbish box. Retrieved from there, they underwent a transformation and an adding of value. Once gilded, the objects were up-cycled back into the world through a raffle held at Galeri Format, raising a great deal of money for a local charity that worked with the children. Many parents and children came of course and each raffle ticket had a winner, leading to smiling faces clutching golden cars, elephants or bricks. For seven days we invested into the unknown and foreign of this particular place and that seems all the more poignant now given this summer's horrific attacks in Oslo and Utoya Island. It was exciting, taking stuff that was cluttering the world and the children even looked under each toy to see

6 ibid

7 *Oslo Gold Exchange* was part of Hva Gjør Du Her? a project supported and produced by Kulturbyrået Mesen (www.mesen.no), October 2010

“There are different chaos theories but we are neither physicists nor mathematicians.”

where it was made and told a story of how they got them. The toys formed an assembly line on which it was not possible to beautify your own object – it had to be someone else's. That would have been craft whereas our project was about labour. And small children's hands are indeed infinitely better at gilding than adults!

*Growth in demand for gold in electronics was recorded in most other markets with China a frontrunner. There was a growth of 10% as demand for semiconductors grew and of particular note were gains for mobile and smart phones, tablets, netbooks and notebooks.*⁸

There are different chaos theories but we are neither physicists nor mathematicians. But we are all economists which is why we find it important to devise very tangible models of economy. We are told, and are meant to believe, that the market is out of control like a natural disaster. That is a lie as we know it to be man-made chaos. What Foreign Investment do is in one sense blasphemous, putting 18-carat gold leaf onto rubbish, inviting children to engage in child labour to up-cycle unwanted toys or re-patriating goods made for export. But we think economy is people not numbers and that art (culture) makes us human. Throughout our projects we have used real gold, 18-carat gold leaf and Dutch Gold that looks like gold but is not gold. In this project *Everything Must Go* at the Chinese Arts Centre (CAC) in Manchester we are using Dutch gold since the focus is again on labour. We are trying to compare the minimum hourly labour rate in the UK with that of China. Despite intensive research by staff at the CAC we could not extrapolate an exact minimum hourly labour rate for China. However we have some data regarding monthly and yearly wages in different regions of China but unfortunately we do not know for sure how many hours a Chinese labourer works per month. We are constantly told that labour is

8 ibid

cheap in China yet what does that actually mean? Cheap is a relative term.

In Manchester we are using objects made in China and we are timing how long it takes us to gild each one. We have no reliable data about the labour costs of the plastic piggy bank or dinky car made in China handed in to the CAC for *Everything Must Go*. Thus the object must undergo a new 'secondary' labour process in order to make tangible and ascertain the new value of an up-cycled object. We began the process ourselves but we also trained a team of temporary staff to gild for the duration of the exhibition. We then added a percentage for the time it takes to prime and apply the size to each object and calculate its 'worth' from time multiplied by the gold rate at the given moment of completion. For example, gilding a basic object can take between 20 minutes and 30-35 minutes for a beginner. The more often you do it, the faster you become, but the longer it takes to gild, the more precious it becomes since the price of the object depends on the labour time invested. At the end of the exhibition, we will have a one-off 'sale day' during which the public can purchase an artwork for the price determined by the labour cost and gold price of the day.

Working with gold is a matter of using a finite resource that is mined under very difficult labour conditions and refined using enormously toxic and environmental hazardous methods. On the wall here at the CAC we have a map of the world showing all the major gold mines owned by about 20 global mining companies. Having abolished the gold standard in the 30's, gold was marginalised for decades. However the gold price has rocketed since Foreign Investment first worked with it. As economies are experienced as unstable or chaotic, we seem drawn to gold like magpies. Whilst money is replaced by the virtual credit and debit card and labour has become increasingly invisible, hidden away in generic corrugated sheds and glass towers gold remains the old/new mana.

Everything Must Go was at the Chinese Arts Centre, Manchester, 5 August – 17 September 2011

www.foreign-investments.com

Audio tracks selected by Foreign Investment for Stimulus Respond at www.alandunn67.co.uk/stimulusaudio.html

Taken

Alan Dunn



Taken is a sound installation by contemporary classical composer Ailís Ní Ríain at Clitheroe Castle Keep, Lancashire, in the north west of England. During the 400th anniversary of the Lancashire Witches being held in captivity, *Taken* takes the notion that sounds never fade to create a haunting four-seasons long evocation of isolation and persecution. Alan Dunn chats with Ailís about the development of the piece.

AD: Could you firstly tell me a bit about the context of your work in general and *Taken*?

ANR: Alongside concert music, opera and music-theatre I have been composing music for outdoor and unusual structures in recent years including a K6 red telephone box at Manchester's Museum of Science and Industry, a lighthouse in Maryport, a disused mill in Ancoats, the old area of Temple Bar in Dublin and a retail unit in a Birmingham Shopping Centre. I visited Clitheroe Castle at Christmas 2010 when the whole area was deeply covered in snow and I began imagining what my musical and conceptual responses to the space would be. The landscape around Clitheroe Castle is stunning, overlooking East Lancashire, and the Keep itself towers over the whole town. It is a magnificent place and for me made an immediate impact; I knew I had something to create something for it.

AD: This year is the 400th anniversary of the witch trials across England and Lancashire in particular. Did this influence your research?

ANR: *Taken* was launched in June 2011 and the original commission was completely open in respect of subject matter. It was my own idea to re-imagine the Keep through the last days

of the Lancashire Witches, I didn't realise that 2012 was the 400th anniversary of the Trials when I proposed my idea. I typically approach the researching of a new public realm work in a number of ways and in the case of *Taken* I visited the site several times in different weather conditions as I felt it was essential to experience the Keep and the surrounding grounds in a variety of light and natural sounds before beginning work on the piece. In addition, I read some books, researched online and visited the fascinating Clitheroe Castle Museum itself in order to begin the process of release. By that I mean the point where I consciously let go of the facts and begin to imagine, fantasise and visualise about the space I am making work for.

AD: The relationship between *Taken* and the architecture is very strong with the geographical height of the Keep and the temperature. It was freezing when I visited it and the cold air seemed to carry the sounds that are already some of the highest sounds in Lancashire. The light levels and background noises also seem to carry the legacies of outdoor concerts or rituals.

ANR: I'm pleased that you've picked up on these elements. I see *Taken* as a collaborative work between myself and those local men who built the Keep that has dominated the local skyline for over 800 years. I simply re-interpreted the structure in the context of local history. There are two particular experiences of *Taken* to be had. The first is inside the Keep, where the visitor is enclosed, save for the giant boulder hole in the stone that can cause a ferocious wind in the Keep.



AD: Could you talk us through that last night in the Keep for those condemned?

ANR: This is a special question for me and one that is difficult to answer. I suspect if I could answer the question eloquently in words I wouldn't have needed to respond through music. For me, *Taken* is a re-imagining of the last night of the twelve accused Lancashire Witches after three months of captivity in a cell that measured just 20x12 feet and was reportedly dark, dank, cramped and airless. It is a spot where one of the accused actually died awaiting trial and others were beginning to suffer mentally in the appalling conditions.

The experience of the piece inside the Keep is very different from the outside. Some visitors have spoken of being overwhelmed by it, especially when the music becomes particularly contrapuntal at the point I am trying to evoke the voices of twelve human beings being held captive - the absolute terror, fear, sadness and maybe for some the final defiance and eventual sense of peace found through memory of better times and hope for the next life. The effect inside the space is unrelenting, there is no escaping the voices of the accused and some visitors have described it as unsettling, haunting and eerie. For others it is

too much as they hear the work filtered through their own memories.

The second experience of *Taken* is from the outside, where you can walk right around the Keep on both an elevated walkway and at ground level. This was a deliberate decision on my part. I was not content with the music simply wafting out and being carried off by the wind so we ensured that speakers were cunningly concealed around the Keep to ensure that the music carries. The visitor has the experience of being a voyeur, aware of people being held captive in the Keep, hearing them humming however now at a comfortable distance as the music is mixed with the sounds of the everyday world continuing to spin, spin, spin and they can walk away from the wrongly accused...

Taken weaves the humming voices of twelve local men and women into a composition for classical harp and bells

AD: I wondered whether you did any research or thinking around other notions of captive sounds, of gallows songs, the use of song as final prayers and so forth?

ANR: No. Deliberately not. I wanted to keep my mind as free as possible from these influences which of course I know is never actually possible. As an artist my sub-conscious does most of the conceptual work. I allowed myself the time to let the idea come to me, embed itself and direct me to what I needed to do. Which, for me, is to suspend my ego and allow my mind inhabit the space with the accused in captivity, not an easy thing to do, for me it was necessary to excavate my own psychological response to captivity as I have experienced it personally, only then do I feel as an artist that I have the right to express myself in music what this feeling is like for me and maybe others.

AD: The humming from your collaborators - was there something about the wordlessness that attracted you? How relevant is it for us to know which tunes were hummed?

ANR: *Taken* weaves the humming voices of twelve local men and women into a composition for classical harp and bells. We put out a public call for people based in the area to contribute their humming voice to the composition in the form of a tune that holds a special resonance to them. We had a lovely long day in March where I met with all the hummers and introduced them to my work as a composer and talked to them about my idea for the project. Up until that point none of them knew what the subject matter was. I discussed my research and told them of the Lancashire Witches, their supposed crimes, the witnesses, court proceedings and individual trials. I could tell they were fascinated and moved. Like me, they had heard of the Lancashire Witches but were not knowledgeable about the specifics. We spent the rest of the day recording where I met with each hummer individually in a quiet, low lit, peaceful space where we talked about their choice of melody, why it was special to them, discussing why people hum as opposed to sing and finally imagining the captivity of the twelve accused.

I treasured these one-to-one meetings and am very grateful to each hummer for sharing something so meaningful and personal with me to incorporate into the work. I was careful to allow each hummer to imagine those last days and nights of the twelve (then eleven) accused, when words, I imagine, were redundant and the full realisation of what lay ahead became clear. Each of them will have known that they would hang based on the little and terribly inadequate misrepresented 'evidence' from (including others) a girl of nine and a teenage male that today may be labeled with learning difficulties who incriminated himself and his whole family. The whole trial was a tragedy and of course similar injustices are taking place daily today in our own lifetime.

AD: Do we know any more about that teenager?

ANR: As I understand it, those investigating the case coerced him. When they realised that he was loquacious, they gave him 'special attention', encouraging him to speak at length in a way he was probably not otherwise regarded. In a similar vein, I came across this in a recent BBC documentary: *Jennet Device*, a beggar-girl from Pendle in Lancashire, was the star witness in the trial in 1612 of her own mother, her brother, her sister and many of her neighbours and, thanks

to her chilling testimony, they were all hanged. Jennet's appearance in the witness box cast its shadow way beyond Lancashire, impressing lawyers, politicians, clerics and even King James I himself, and setting a dark precedent for child testimony in witch trials as far away as America.

AD: As I was approaching the Keep I was also thinking of Paul Rooney's 'Lucy over Lancashire' 12" that wove threads between the region's relationship with satanic worship and Pendle witches. As each work evolves, do you seek out new music or sound experiences?

ANR: For me, each new project absolutely has to involve something new, either to my development as an artist or to my development as a human being. I only take on projects that I am passionate about; if I don't have the right gut feeling around an idea, I drop it. For me, being complacent as an artist, or a human, is not why we were put on this earth and given a talent. Artists, in my view, have a duty to hone their craft and demonstrate humility.

Taken has been at Clitheroe Castle Keep from 18 June 2011 and has been extended until 3 June 2012.

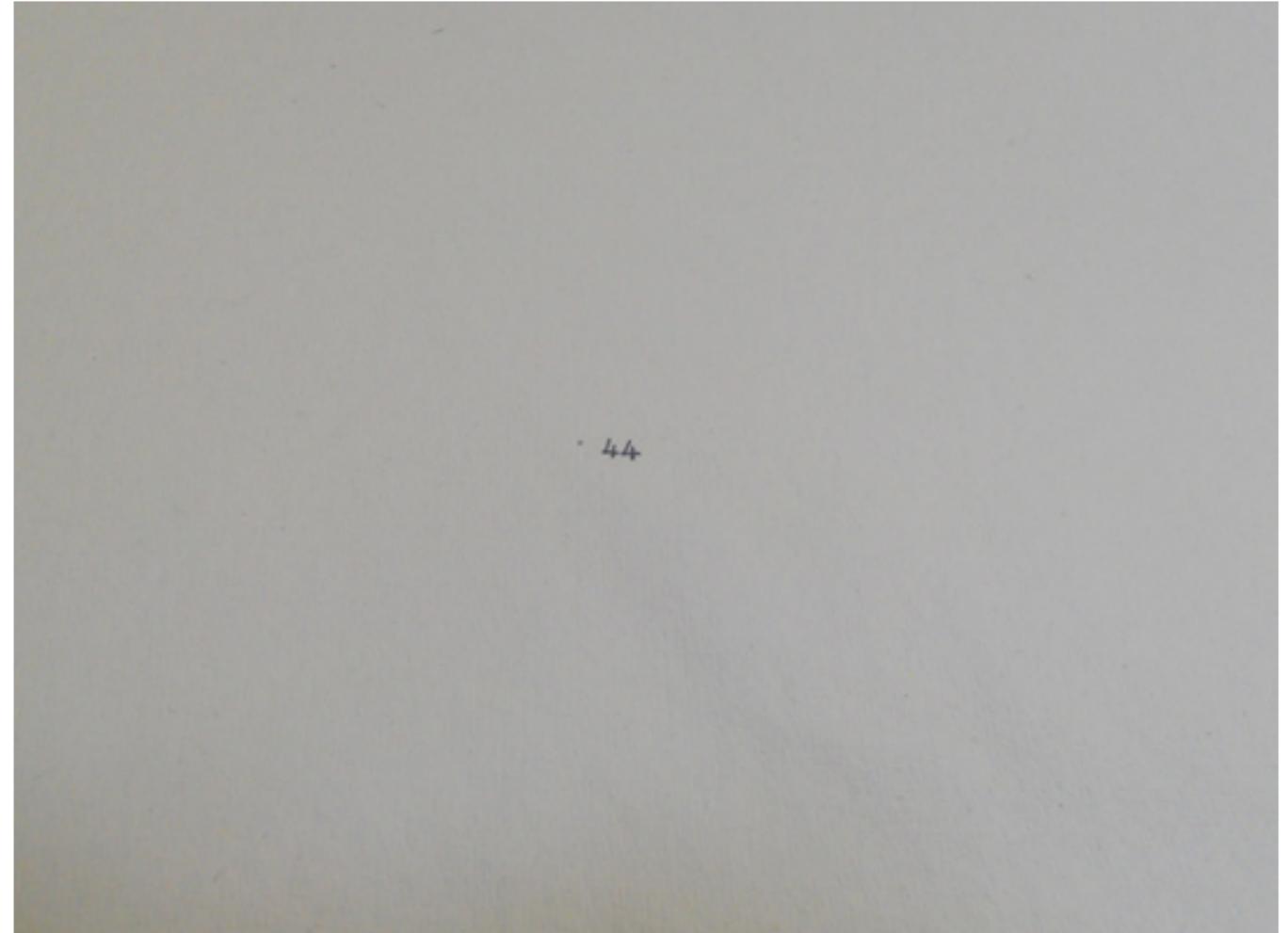
Ailís is an award-winning composer whose music has been performed all over Europe and in the USA. Recent work has been commissioned by MetalCulture for the Liverpool Biennial, The Royal Liverpool Philharmonic Orchestra, Cornerhouse and the AND festival.

See www.ailis.info

For audio excerpts, see: www.alandunn67.co.uk/stimulusaudio.html

The elephant in the room:
Bill Drummond's *Curfew Tower*

Alan Dunn





Since 1999 the Curfew Tower in Cushindall, County Antrim, Northern Ireland, has been run as an artists' residency programme by a Board that includes Bill Drummond and Susan Philipsz. Throughout 2012, all the artworks ever produced during these residencies have been removed and locked in the Tower's dungeon. This act has been instigated by Paul Sullivan from Liverpool's Static Gallery, selected by Drummond to curate the year of activities. In place of objects, Sullivan is inviting a series of creative practitioners to stay in the Tower to make analogue audio recordings of the building and its locale. Alan Dunn was the first artist in residence after the confinement took place and this is his report.

Arriving into Belfast International on a crisp first day of March, I am met by the Spurs-supporting Micky and his Radiohead-loving brother Zippy, fourth generation fleshers (butchers) from the beautiful small village of Cushindall on the stunning north east coast of Northern Ireland. I am driven up and over the highest town in Ireland and down into one of the nine Glens. The Scottish coast is now nearer than Belfast and before the coast road was built the main trade route

was between these Glens and the Mull of Kintyre.

The 40ft high Tower was built in 1809 by Francis Turnly, freshly returned from services with the East India Company. Designed as a garrison for a single soldier with a Curfew Bell to be rung nightly at 9pm, for many it remains a symbol of British Imperialism. The locals I ask seem nonplussed by it. Driving down into Cushindall is akin to entering someone's warm and homely living room, with a large hearth in the middle. The elephant in the room. The librarian seems flustered when I ask if there is any literature on the Tower and the tourist board raise an eyebrow when I say I am spending the night there.

Zippy lets me in and points out the two analogue tape recorders that have just arrived. In 1999 Drummond bought the Tower from the Hearth, an organisation responsible for historic buildings, and offered it to artists for short residencies. Work produced during residencies are exhibited at the annual Festival of the Glens and a prize for best artwork awarded. Walking along the narrow ground floor corridor, a red door flanks a thin brown one with eye-level window and two metal bars. Unlatching it and pushing

it open brings one into a 6x8ft dungeon that is now packed with around 120 artworks including postcards, framed photos, gold covered guitars, models of towers, paper boats, shells and surveys, evidence of artists desperately trying to make sense of the context. Voices from outside constantly float through cracks in windows. Young men looking for the restaurant. Sitting in the dungeon, the pointlessness of making art permeates the damp walls, as does the pointlessness of not making art.

The art in the dungeon feels absolutely useless, clutter for our modern world. Failures. Fireworks. Drummond's previous work comes to mind, his burning, cutting up and 'NO MUSIC DAY' billboards. I think of Michael Landy's 'Breakdown', rumours of great artworks stored under Liverpool's Stanley Dock during wartime, the MOMART fire and the burning of 'Hell'. Stacked right at the back I find a panoramic frame with ten faded photographs of blank billboards. These grey billboards have faded until they are the same grey as the sky. A blank billboard merely serves to advertise its own slow death as marketing budgets shrink; ten postcards from an analogue city.

I take the billboard images upstairs to the warm living room to revive them. I place next to it a copy of the new 'Adventures in numb4rland' CD I put together as I turned 44, in homage to Drummond's '45'.

I go to the kitchen to make coffee and sit under the Echo & The Bunnymen poster cellotaped to the ceiling and flick through the large logbook that has been kept since the first residency. 'Surrounded by Foot & Mouth, after five days we concluded that the Tower is peculiarly Irish and the Irish are great writers', writes John in April 2001, 'shouldn't we be writing here?'

I turn to the next blank page and write only a tiny '44'. I go back upstairs and slip the copy of 'Adventures' into the shelf of other CDs. Ask me why but don't ask me why.

AD: What made you decide to remove all the artworks from the Tower?

Paul Sullivan: Before I went to the Tower, my first mental image was that it was on its own in a field, removed from a town. After some initial research I found out it was in fact in the town and very

much part of the identity of that town. Before my first site visit in November 2011 with Craig Pennington and Bill Drummond I had started to think about removing all the artworks as I wanted to remove the possibility of the invited residents responding to the previous works.

I wanted the idea that when everyone arrived they were faced with an architecture that was itself the object of response. I was interested in the idea of the stories of the previous thirteen years worth of artists and artifacts being mediated to the residents not through the works themselves, but through talking to the local community. I wanted the community in effect to make the images, if indeed the residents were interested. The moment I walked into the Tower for the first time, I knew that we had to incarcerate all the previous works in the dungeon, apart from one, which was Bill's original NOTICE, the first thing you see when you walk in. It informs you of what you are meant to do. I liked the idea that we had returned the Tower to the state it was in when the first resident walked in 13 years ago.

AD: You simply carried all the artworks into the dungeon?

PS: Yes, myself and Alan Scroggie visited in early February 2012 and systematically removed all the works from their locations and placed them in the ground floor dungeon. We made plans of each floor and drew up a simple system that allowed us to name, number and place each item just in case they ever have to be repositioned.

AD: Removing the artworks makes one focus more on the details that are left such as the one-handed clock, the handprint and 'redrum' text in the bathroom. In a sense you un-gallery the building.

PS: Yes, as stated earlier, we wanted to remove everything and un-gallery it, however, as you mention, it became clear that by removing the artworks, it heightened your awareness of a number of works that were actually in-situ, fixed to the walls. We also left a series of audio works and texts in the Tower as we wanted to leave some media traces of previous activity, traces that could potentially be used or deciphered by new visitors. In this way we were acting as anonymous members of the community, leaving our selective or curated history of the tower in order for it to become part of our record.

AD: And the aim is to replace them all at the end of the year?

PS: The aim was to itemise, name, number and show the previous location of each item before placing them in the dungeon and leave it up to Bill to think about what he wants to do with them. We will replace as we found them if required, or maybe not.

AD: What is to happen to the recordings made in and around the Tower?

PS: The recordings made in the tower will be made into two things. Firstly, a full and unedited radio transmission of all the field recordings that will be broadcast from the Tower as part of the Antrim Festival of the Glens in August 2013. This is the time when previously the people of Cushendall have been invited into the Tower to choose their favourite artwork from the previous years residency. However, in 2013 they will only be able to choose from a series of field recordings. The usual temporary radio license in the UK that is still run by the government is an 8-mile radius and you can normally get a Sunday night shift from 9pm onwards.

AD: Similar to the four very successful Sunday radio slots that Static programmed as part of the 2002 Liverpool Biennial?

PS: Yes. As the Tower is near the coast some of this radius will be in the water. To listen to the live event you will need to be in the radius thus the project starts to play around with invisible geometries and a movement of people from the outlying towns and cities who may make their way to within the radius to listen. It will also examine who controls the radio waves in Northern Ireland.

Secondly, the field recordings on tape will be collected between each residency as each participant will be required to put it in a stamped self addressed envelope and send to Static guaranteed delivery. We will then edit and produce a record. The recording of a record or cassette tape of course references Bill's own music industry history as well as providing a delivery mechanism for the ideas of the invited residents. We will then put 50 copies of the record (25 signed and 25 unsigned) on an e-bay auction sale exactly 5 days before the ONLY ever live broadcast of the piece in its raw state which will be transmit-

ted from the Tower as a radio broadcast. At the exact time the e-bay auction finishes the live radio broadcast will begin.

This will be the time that the normal prize-giving event happens as part of the Heart of the Glens Festival. This element of the project examines the relative fame or celebrity of the recording artists as the records are bought without ever being listened to. During the 2013 summer Festival we will also sell a further 50 copies of the record and may also develop it into a larger art/music event.

AD: Your project is in a sense a coming together of Bill's ideas and your own. Could you sum up what are the fundamental ideas involved in staying at the Tower and recording?

PS: The fundamental idea from Static's perspective was to continue with some of our current ideas about residency and practice. As we are working across the disciplines of art, architecture, music, film and writing, we wanted to invite all of these practices to have a residency. The idea of making a record came first, the idea of field recording then followed and then the idea of analogue rather than digital. The idea of asking these practitioners to each make a field recording was like making them force their ideas through an analogue interchange, some form of neutral space which allows all of them operate as opposed to asking them all to make a piece of visual art.

We also wanted to invite practitioners to stay between 1 day and 3 weeks as we know that everyone is at different points in their practices and some have more time for residencies than others. We also wanted to tap into a transient community of practitioners who may be visiting Belfast, Derry or Dublin to give a talk, do a gig or open an exhibition. By setting up contacts in these places, we wanted to create a flexible network of agents who would be able to ask people who were only in Northern Ireland or Ireland for a short period of time to participate in the project. We wanted to tap into travel networks. We have also asked three practitioners to make a series of works remotely, firstly because we want to work with these practitioners but also because when we come to edit the record we are interested to see the difference of recordings and to give ourselves different possibilities in our decision making due to the field recording vs. remote recording geographies.

Although many of the ideas are Static's and

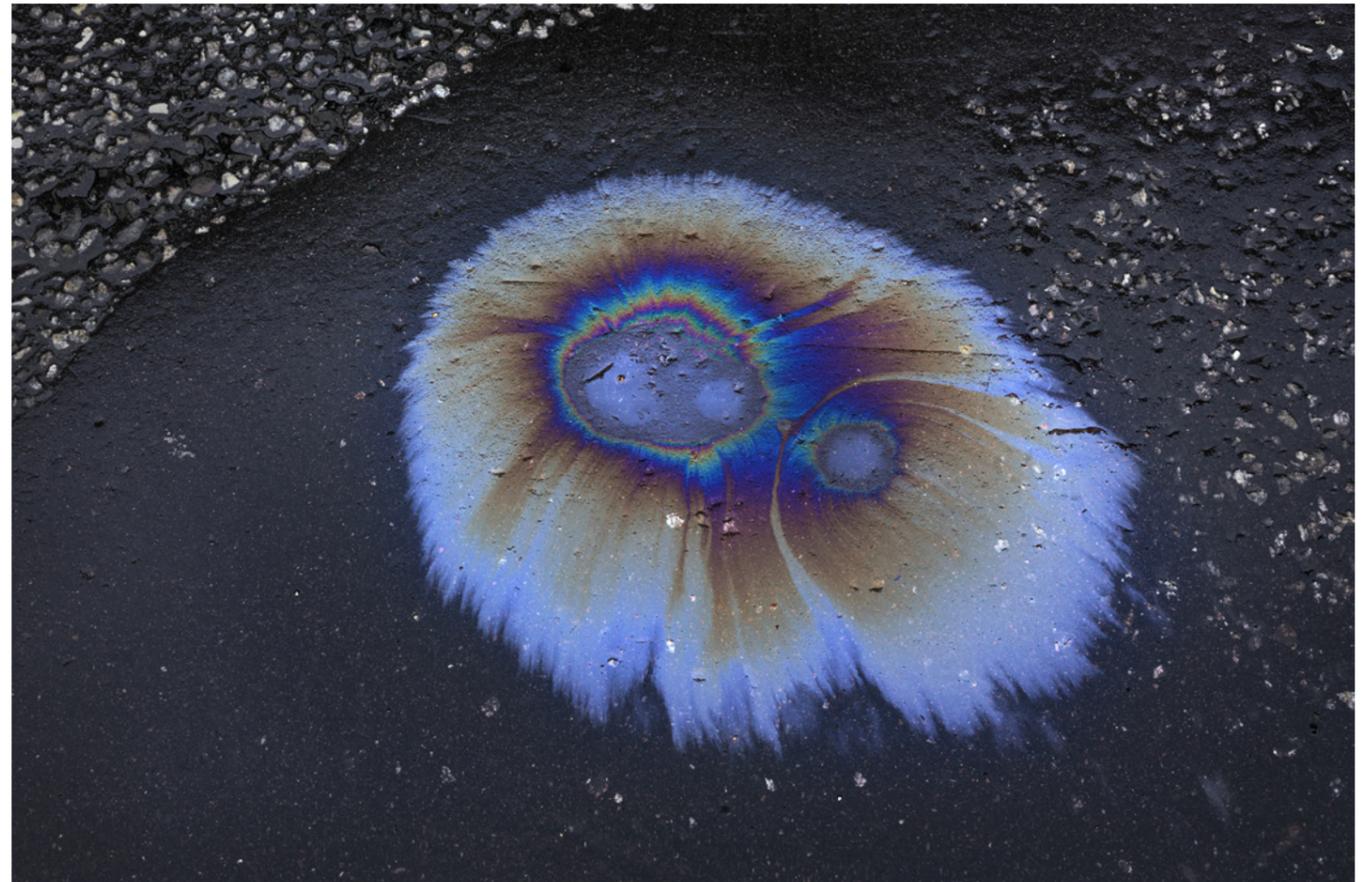
come from the moment Bill invited us to do the project, there are of course a number of obvious linkages to Bill's practice and history, not least the production of a record, the use of invisible geometries, in our case a radio circumference, and the use of media, celebrity or publicity stunts within elements of the project, in particular the sale of the record on e-bay and during The Festival of the Glens in 2013.

For further information:
The Curfew Tower
www.curfewtower.com

Static Gallery
www.statictrading.com

Bill Drummond
www.penkilnburn.com

For supporting audio files:
www.alandunn67.co.uk/stimulusaudio.html



THE END IS NIGH

Alan Dunn on Mats Bigert and Lars Bergström's The Last Calendar

In a May 2012 episode of the British hospital drama *Holby City* entitled *Last day on earth*, nurse Chantelle Lane is confronted by unbalanced patient Mr. Wellington who has a notebook full of scribbles from the Mayan Calendar, convinced that the world is about to end at midnight. "According to my calculations, the Mayan Calendar does not run out on December 21st 2012 as everybody endlessly blogs about," he nervously tells her, "it runs out tonight. It's the end. The end of everything."

We are given the impression that he is a retired teacher, perhaps post-breakdown. As midnight approaches he crawls under his sheets to await his fate. The tone is slightly mocking, portraying him as the oddball doom merchant, unshaven and recently split from his partner. As the clock ticks to one minute past midnight, Chantelle looks over at him and smiles, "Mr. Wellington, it's a new day, we're still here". He holds his head in his hands before glancing up at her, muttering, "I don't understand. Is this delusion?"

Notions of the end of time softly creep into British consciousness in this innocuous evening drama, yet the second narrative running through the episode is the successful rush to save a life with a heart transplant. A more complex dialogue is thus set up between faith in everyday science and a belief in human divination.

In 2011 artistic duo Mats Bigert and Lars Bergström created *The Last Calendar* to "examine the temporal nature of truth within celebrated ideas, scientific or otherwise, that history has proven to be wrong. The end-of-the-world Mayan long calendar scenario was floating around in these discussions, and we were interested to see whether there were other earlier and precisely dated opinions about the apocalypse."

AD: Could you outline what *The Last Calendar* is and how it came to exist?

MB: *The Last Calendar* is an art project that we did in collaboration with Cabinet Books in Brooklyn, New York. It is a wall calendar for this year 2012 up to 21st December when the new age reading of the Mayan long calendar claims that the world as we know it will end. In the months leading up to this disruptive event we present an odyssey of other Armageddon scenarios in which

people have imagined precise dates for the end of time.

There are generally between six and twelve entries per month, spread out through history and culture. They form an interesting thread of accounts of human obsession with living in the end of times, the recurring idea that "we are the last." Also in connection with these small anecdotes we have created a series of art works, one for each month, inspired by old methods of divination, like reading the intestines of an animal, or looking at the pattern of coffee grains. So when studying these images, the viewer is invited to make his/her own prognosis.

AD: Reading through it, one is very aware that humans have looked to the sky for omens, for signs of impending doom or change. Did you consider using any more stellar notions of divination or were you focused totally from the start on earthly objects?

MB: I haven't thought of that, but it's true, most of the "mancies" we have used are all very materialistic and we have left the ephemeral aside – the wind, the stars and the birds are all extremely useful as methods of divination, but difficult to work with as objects/images. The bird especially has a central position in the history of divination, perhaps because of its placement in the sky, transmitting messages between man and the divine. In ancient Rome one of the official priests was the Augur. He looked at the flight of birds to interpret the will of the Gods.

AD: You mention a technique of divination called molybdomancy in another interview and the fact that it is still used in Germany and Austria. Could you say a little bit more about that?

MB: Molybdomancy is carried out through pouring melted lead or tin into cold water. The metal instantly coagulates into weird cauliflower shaped sculptures that will trigger your imagination. And as you mention it's a ritual that is still practiced, also in Sweden and Finland, but especially during New Years Eve when the shiny piece of spiky metal is supposed to give you a hint on how the New Year is going to turn out. If you see a boat you are looking at long travels, a scythe signals there will be ties cut, a key might indicate a career move and so on. We are dreaming of making a huge public sculpture

using this method. Melting tons of tin and pour it into, let's say the Thames, then put it on a plinth on New Year's Eve and re-cast it every year.

AD: In your introductory text, you write of "the human need to discover patterns within the formless structure of nature." In a previous issue of Stimulus Respond we spoke to Chris Watson about this theme and his experience, from sound recording across the planet, that there is in fact a structure behind it all, but one that is far too complex for humans to comprehend. Are omens in fact glimpses of such a structure? Or, what we like to think of as glimpses?

MB: Unfortunately I am more of a believer that omens are signs of our amazing innate ability to confabulate in order to cope with the huge amounts of meaninglessness that surrounds us. What I mean with that is that our brain dislikes the seemingly meaningless and produces meaning even if there isn't any. We are great pattern readers and will see figures in clouds and hear music in a hail storm. And it seems like people inclined to be more right hemisphere oriented and thus more prone to unfiltered sensory input, have had central positions in the art of reading omens like religious persons, savants, oracles and artists. I would like to label it as creative misunderstandings, a type of Aeolian harp playing the axons and synapses that make the storm of impressions mutate into new ideas and visions.

But of course it is a bit depressing to not acknowledge the possibility that there is a complex structure behind it all. And if one likes to think so, tea leaves, molten lead and a boiled head of a donkey are great tools to study it with.

AD: As opposed to the artist's role as documenter, working with ideas of predictions, visions and signs has always been one of creativity's fundamental roles, the human ability to project, unlike other creatures. Do you see these as themes that span a few of your projects, such as *Temporary Truth*?

MB: Well many of our projects, like *Temporary Truth*, deal with the elusive truth concept of science where new findings and revolutionary theories are changing over time. Something that was believed to be absolutely true 70 years ago is now looked upon with great disbelief. Like lobotomy, which won a Nobel Prize in 1949 and

was the most celebrated method of treating psychosis in the late 1940's. By 1951 over 20,000 lobotomies had been performed in the USA. A small cut in the frontal lobe and voila, neurosis gone! But with that also the visions you're mentioning disappeared - the apparitions, the phantoms and the spectres. Today neuroscience is trying to tackle the question of creativity and how ideas actually occur, using more subtle instruments like the MRI. Maybe the spark of divine inspiration is just a vague epileptic seizure?

So sure, the human ability to project is a recurring theme and as artists we always try to dream up something completely new, something we've never seen before. It might sound utopian and I've often asked myself why this is, but maybe it's because new experiences generate stronger emotions, and strong emotions creates memories. And all that together amplifies the experience of being alive.

AD: You presented photographs and objects from *The Last Calendar* as *Meditations on divinations*. I am curious how did entering that space feel for the visitor and how did you arrange the objects and artifacts?

MB: I wish to think of the experience of entering the exhibition as coming into a laboratory where a set of tools is on display that triggers the imagination. I like the idea that the artworks are tools and that you are supposed to use them productively. An abstract painting is not only an abstract painting but also a map made of coffee for you to navigate in. The context of the artwork made the viewer look for useful information like signs or omens if you like. Your immediate future could be materialized as the sprouts of a petrified potato or a shimmering pool of oil on asphalt.

AD: You ended *The Last Calendar* with a guide to making your own *The end is nigh* banner. Was it ever used by anybody or were you more interested in triggering that image we all have of a lone figure proclaiming imminent doom?

MB: Yes it's been used, and not only by lunatics. The editors at Cabinet have proudly carried it during readings from the calendar both at the PS1 and Guggenheim. And I went around New York with one after a reading during the art fairs earlier this year. I was amazed how happy people looked when seeing someone presenting such a gloomy

message.

AD: And you have a really interesting list of mancies too you'd like to include here?

MB: Yes ...

Aeromancy: divination by weather or by throwing sand into the wind

Ailurumancy: divination by the actions of a familiar cat

Alectryomancy: divination by roosters pecking grain

Aleuromancy: divination by flour or messages baked in cakes

Alphitomancy: divination by barley

Ambulomancy: divination by walking

Amniomancy: divination by the caul of a newborn infant

Anthracomancy: divination by watching a burning coal

Anthropomancy: divination from human entrails

Anthroposomancy: divination from facial or bodily characteristics

Arachnomancy: divination using spiders

Arithmomancy: divination by means of numbers

Armomancy: divination from the shoulders

Astragalomancy: divination by knuckle-bones or dice

Astromancy: divination using the stars, astrology

Austromancy: divination or soothsaying from words in the winds

Axinomancy: divination by heating or throwing an axe

Belomancy: divination by marked arrows

Bibliomancy: divination by random Bible passages (pagans preferred Homer or Virgil)

Bletonomancy: divination by ripples or patterns in moving water

Botanomancy: divination by plants

Capnomancy: divination by smoke, or bursting poppy heads

Cartomancy: divination by cards

Catoptromancy: divination by a polished shield or mirror

Causimomancy: divination from the ashes of burned leaves or paper

Cephalomancy: divination by a boiled donkey or human skull

Ceraunoscopy: divination by lightning and thunder

Ceromancy: divination by molten wax poured into water

Chaomancy: divination from the appearance of the air

Chartomancy: divination from written pieces of paper

Chiromancy: divination by the nails, lines, and fingers of the hand

Chresmomancy: divination from magic sounds or foreign words

Claiguscience: divination from the taste or smell of a food that is not present

Clednomancy: divination from hearing a chance word

Cleidomancy: divination by a suspended key

Cleromancy: divination by the casting of lots

Coscinomancy: divination by a sieve suspended on shears

Crithomancy: divination by grains sprinkled on burnt sacrifices

Cromniomancy: divination by onions

Crystallomancy: divination by crystal ball or the casting of gemstones

Cubomancy: divination by throwing dice

Cyclomancy: divination by the wheel of fortune

Dactyliomancy: divination by suspended finger ring or pendulum

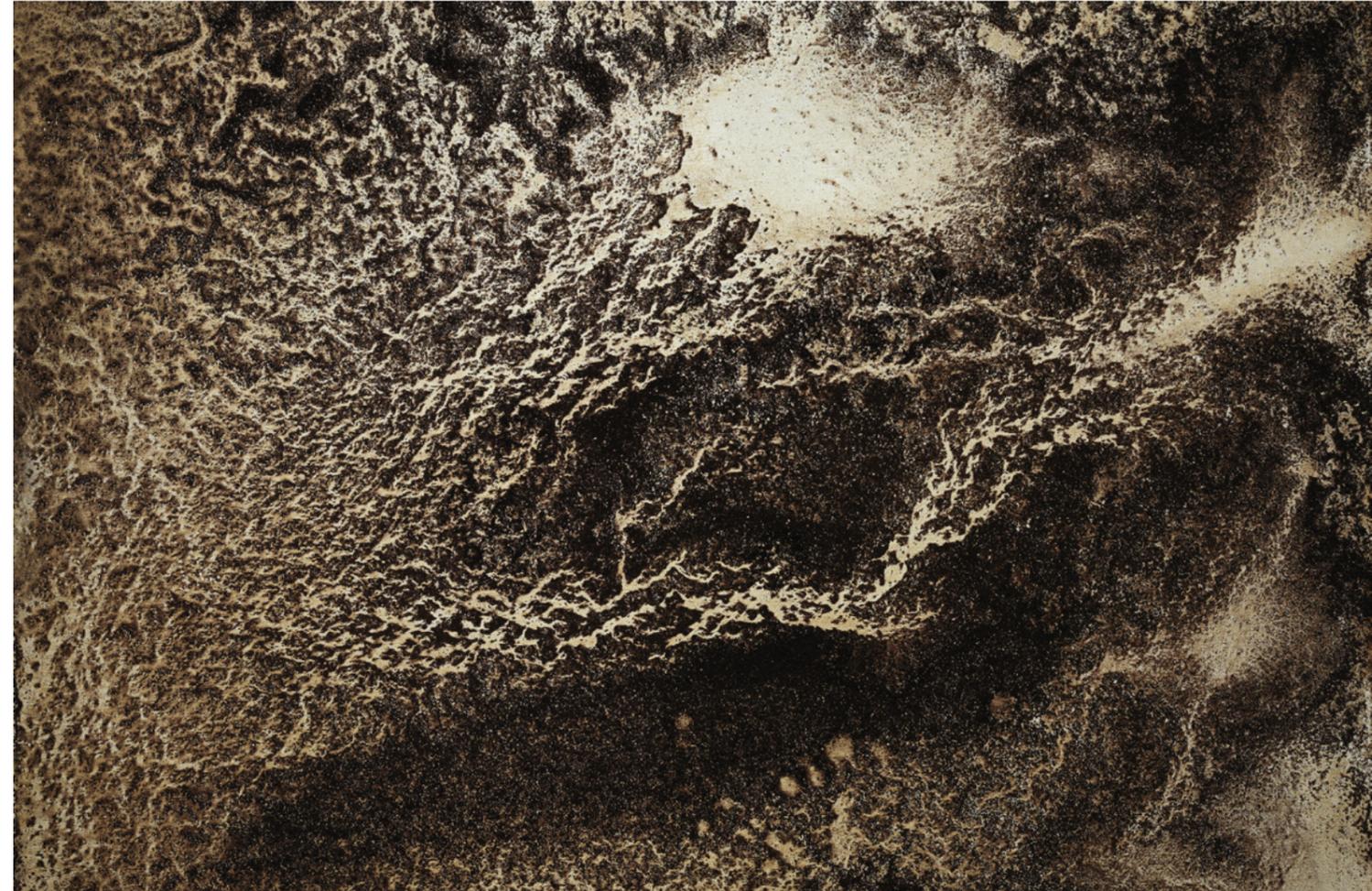
Daphnomancy: divination by the crackle of roasting laurel leaves

Demonomancy: divination with the help of demons and spirits

Dendromancy: divination by oak and mistletoe

Elaeomancy: divination by the surface of water

Enoptomancy: divination with a mirror





Epombriamancy: divination from the sound of rain.

Felidomancy: divination from the behavior of wild cats

Gastromancy: divination by food, or sounds from the stomach

Gelomancy: divination from laughter

Geomancy: divination by cracks or lines in the earth, or dots on paper

Glauximancy: divination using owl castings

Graptomancy: divination from handwriting

Cyromancy: divination by spinning in a circle until dizzy

Haemocapnomancy: divination by the smoke of burning blood-soaked paper tissues

Halomancy: divination with salt

Hepatoscopy: divination by the liver of a sacrificed animal

Hieromancy: divination by interpreting sacrifices

Hippomancy: divination by the behavior of horses

Hydromancy: divination by water or tides

Ichthyomancy: divination from the movements or entrails of fish

Idolomancy: divination from movie or rock stars

Lampadomancy: divination by the flickering of torches

Lecanomancy: divination by looking at oil or jewels in water

Libanomancy: divination by staring at the smoke of burning incense

Lithomancy: scrying with gemstones and natural crystals

Logarithmancy: divination by logarithms

Lychnomancy: divination by flame of an oil lamp or candle

Macharomancy: divination by knives or swords

Maculomancy: divination from the shape and placement of birthmarks

Margaritomancy: divination by heating and roasting pearls

Mediamancy: divination by scanning police radio or random TV shows

Meteoromancy: divination by storms and comets

Metopomancy: divination by examining the face and forehead

Molybdomancy: divination by dropping molten lead into water

Myomancy: divination by squeaks of mice

Necromancy: divination by ghosts or spirits of the dead

Nephelomancy: divination by appearance of clouds

Nigromancy: divination by walking around the graves of the dead

Oculomancy: divination by observing the eye

Oinomancy: divination by gazing into a glass of wine

Ololygmancy: divination by the howling of dogs or wolves

Omphalomancy: divination by counting knots on the umbilical cord

Oneiromancy: divination by the interpretation of dreams

Onimancy: divination using olive oil to let objects slip through the fingers

Onomatomancy: divination by the letters in names

Onychomancy: divination by polished fingernails

Oomancy: divination from drops of fresh egg whites in water

Ophiomancy: divination by the coiling and movement of serpents

Ornithomancy: divination by the flight or songs of birds

Osteomancy: divination from bones

Ouleimancy: divination by the appearance of scars.

Pegomancy: divination by bubbles in springs or fountains

Pessomancy: divination by pebbles

Philematomancy: divination by kissing

Phyllomancy: divination by the patterns and colors of leaves

Phyllorhodomancy: divination by clapping rose petals between the hands

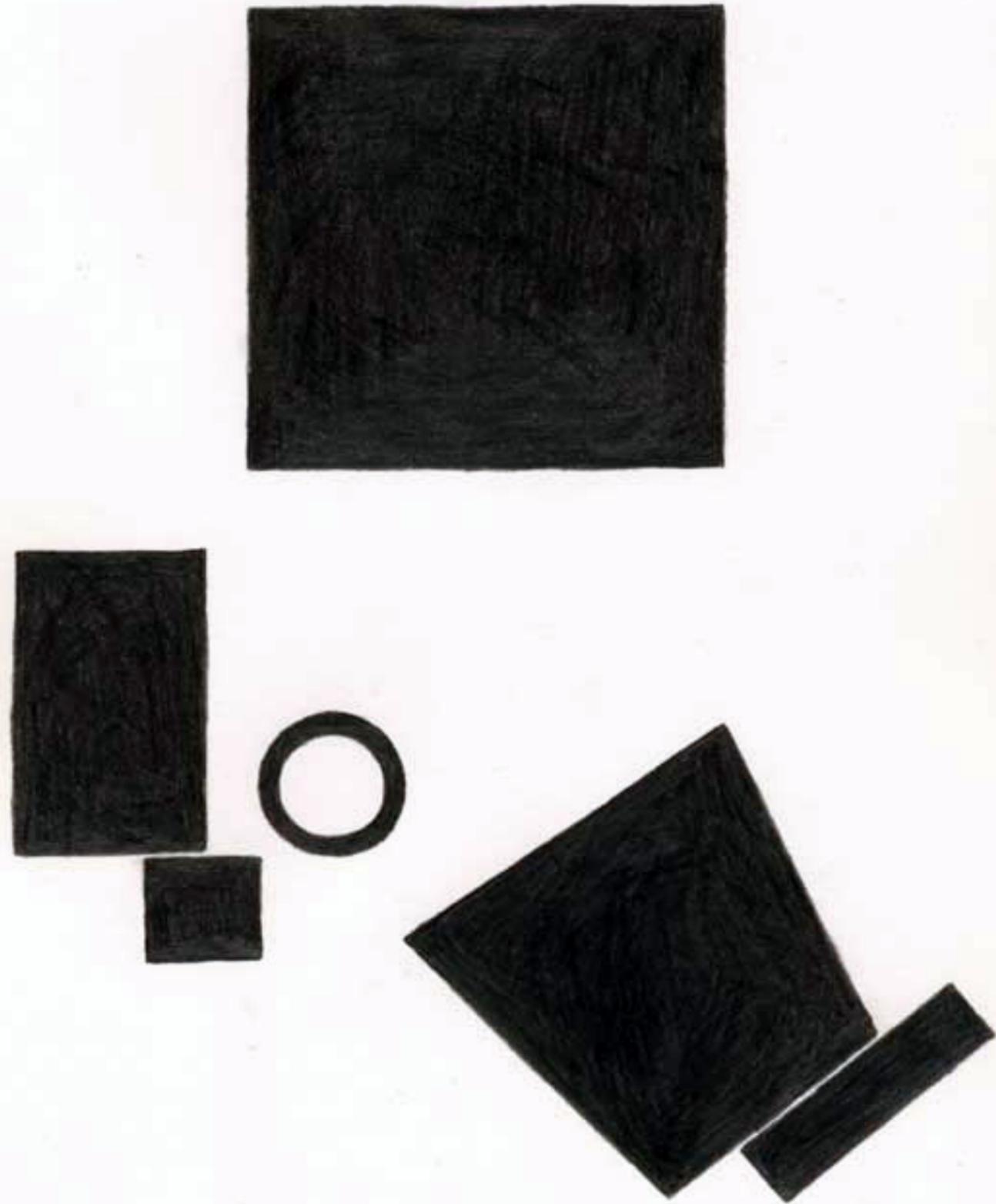
Physiognomy: divination by shape, marks, and proportions of the body

Plastromancy: divination by tortoise shells

Podomancy: divination by the soles of the feet

Psephomancy: divination by rolling small stones, or selecting them at random
Pseudomancy: fraudulent fortune-telling
Psychomancy: divination from the state of the soul, alive or dead
Pyromancy: divination by fire or flames
Retromancy: divination by looking over one's shoulder
Rhabdomancy: divination by branches or rods, dowsing
Rhapsodomancy: divination by a book of poetry
Scapulimancy: divination from cracks in a charred shoulder blade
Scatomancy: divination by studying feces
Sciomancy: divination from shadows or the shades of the dead
Scyphomancy: divination by cups or vases
Selenomancy: divination from the phases or appearance of the moon
Selenosciamancy: divination by the shadows of moonlight through trees
Sideromancy: divination by the burning of straws
Spasmatomancy: divination by twitchings of a body
Spatilomancy: divination by animal droppings
Sphondylomancy: divination from beetles or other insects
Spodomancy: divination by ashes
Stichomancy: divination from random passages in books
Stigonomancy: divination by writing on tree bark
Stolisomancy: divination by the act of dressing
Suggraphamancy: divination by studying history
Sternomancy: divination by the breast-bones
Sycomancy: divination by drying fig leaves
Tasseography: divination by tea leaves
Tephramancy: divination by the ashes on an altar
Theomancy: divination from the responses of oracles
Theriomancy: divination by watching wild animals
Tiromancy: divination by milk curds, or the holes on cheese
Topomancy: divination by the contours of the land
Trochomancy: divination by wheel tracks
Thumomancy: divination by intense introspection of one's own soul
Transatuaumancy: divination from chance remarks overheard in a crowd
Tympanimancy: divination from the rhythms of drums
Urimancy: divination by casting the Urim and Thummin
Urinomancy: divination using urine for scrying
Xenomancy: divination by studying the first stranger to appear
Xylomancy: divination by wood or fallen branches.
Zygomancy: divination with weights
Zoomancy: divination by the behavior of animals

For further details, see <http://www.bigertbergstrom.com> and <http://alandunn67.co.uk/stimulusaudio.html>.



CIA BLACK SITE #4

Seeing in the Dark

Alan Dunn on Suzanne Treister's 20 CIA Black Sites

Between the years 1972 and 1995 in the USA, inspired by the psychic abilities of the New York artist Ingo Swann, the CIA funded a Remote Viewing program at Stanford Research Institute in California and at Fort Meade in Maryland, where trained psychic spies attempted to use remote viewing to identify and draw remote and inaccessible sites, primarily in the Soviet Union/Russia, such as missile silos, submarines, POWs and MIAs. Black Sites is the name given to CIA run secret research facilities and secret detention facilities, where enhanced interrogation techniques are used on high value detainees. These sites are erased by the CIA from aerial satellite imagery before it is made publicly available on the Internet or elsewhere so that the facilities show up as blanks on the map. While the U.S. has generally refused to disclose the locations of these facilities, the specifics have slowly leaked out. A recent study found evidence confirming CIA black sites in 20 locations around the world, including Thailand, Poland, Romania, Lithuania, Afghanistan and Kosovo. (http://ensemble.va.com.au/Treister/CBS_Malevich/CBS_Malevich.html)

Suzanne Treister's series 20 CIA BLACK SITES from 2010 consists of twenty pencil drawings of forms obliterated by graphite, hand-drawn estimations of masses. The artist takes her pencil and blocks in solid shapes where suspected terrorists may lie and she surrounds settlements with white voids. We are invited to conjure up images of what structures lie beneath the black cloaks, from secret corridors, escape hatches, cooling towers to cramped living quarters. The pictorial arrangements remind us that drawings are treasure maps full of promise, or threats. They are accurate within their own scale but not necessarily precise within a three-dimensional universe.

The drawings are steeped in humankind's desire and duty to cast eyes and ears into every nook and cranny of our universe. We want to lift every stone, but in search of what? We want to be in the place of Gods, but what then? Thomas Harriot's drawings of the surface of the moon from 1609 strained to the very tip of his pencil to capture details that were simply beyond his reach. More recently, Chris Watson stood in the Antarctic with headphones on and lowered his sensitive modern microphones down below the surface where no ear has ever been. He was the first human being to hear the emerging sounds.

In the early 1970's Ingo Swann was invited to take part in a Remote Viewing session of the planet Jupiter six years before the Voyager probe's visit. It is recorded that during the three-and-a-half minutes Swann made several reports on Jupiter's surface, atmosphere and weather, even suggesting that the planet had rings, which was later confirmed.

After the Revolution, Russian intellectuals hoped that human reason and modern technology would engineer a perfect society. Malevich was fascinated with technology,

and particularly with the airplane, instrument of the human yearning to break the bounds of earth. He studied aerial photography. For Malevich, that realm, a utopian world of pure form, was attainable only through nonobjective art. Indeed, he named his theory of art Suprematism to signify "the supremacy of pure feeling or perception in the pictorial arts"; and pure perception demanded that a picture's forms "have nothing in common with nature." Malevich imagined Suprematism as a universal language that would free viewers from the material world. (http://ensemble.va.com.au/Treister/CBS_Malevich/CBS_Malevich.html)

As artists such as Malevich stretched the artistic focal length away from representative painting towards abstraction, technological advances sped rapidly in the other direction, pulling the universe into focus. In the words of Kinetic artist Bernard Lassus, flight and satellites guided us from horizontal into vertical beings. We flew up and looked back upon ourselves, before realising we had to cover up some of our now-visible tracks. In this context, Treister's drawings set up a fascinating conversation, a pictorial and aerial game of Battleships, between Swann and Malevich, between superimposition and suprematism and between what we 'can see' physically and what we 'can see' politically in these vertical times.

AD: Could you outline how 20 CIA BLACK SITES evolved into the final piece?

"NATO Supply Classification (NSC) 9915 includes Works of Art and for this category, as well as some other artworks, I chose Black Square by Kasimir Malevich."

ST: Well the starting point for this work goes back to an earlier project, NATO (2004-2008) which was a kind of illustrated dictionary of things in the world as codified by NATO for military procurement. NATO Supply Classification (NSC) 9915 includes Works of Art and for this category, as well as some other artworks, I chose Black Square by Kasimir Malevich. As with the rest of this series I included a text caption below the watercolour image of the artwork including details of how this item could, if necessary, be procured. While making this particular watercolour I learned a lot about the histories of what had become of Malevich's work, how it had changed hands and the various controversies. As well as information from the internet I had some personal contacts.

Watercolour text caption on work:

Black Square

Kasimir Malevich

(1913) Final version - Late 1920s - early 1930s

Oil on canvas 53.5 x 53.5 cm

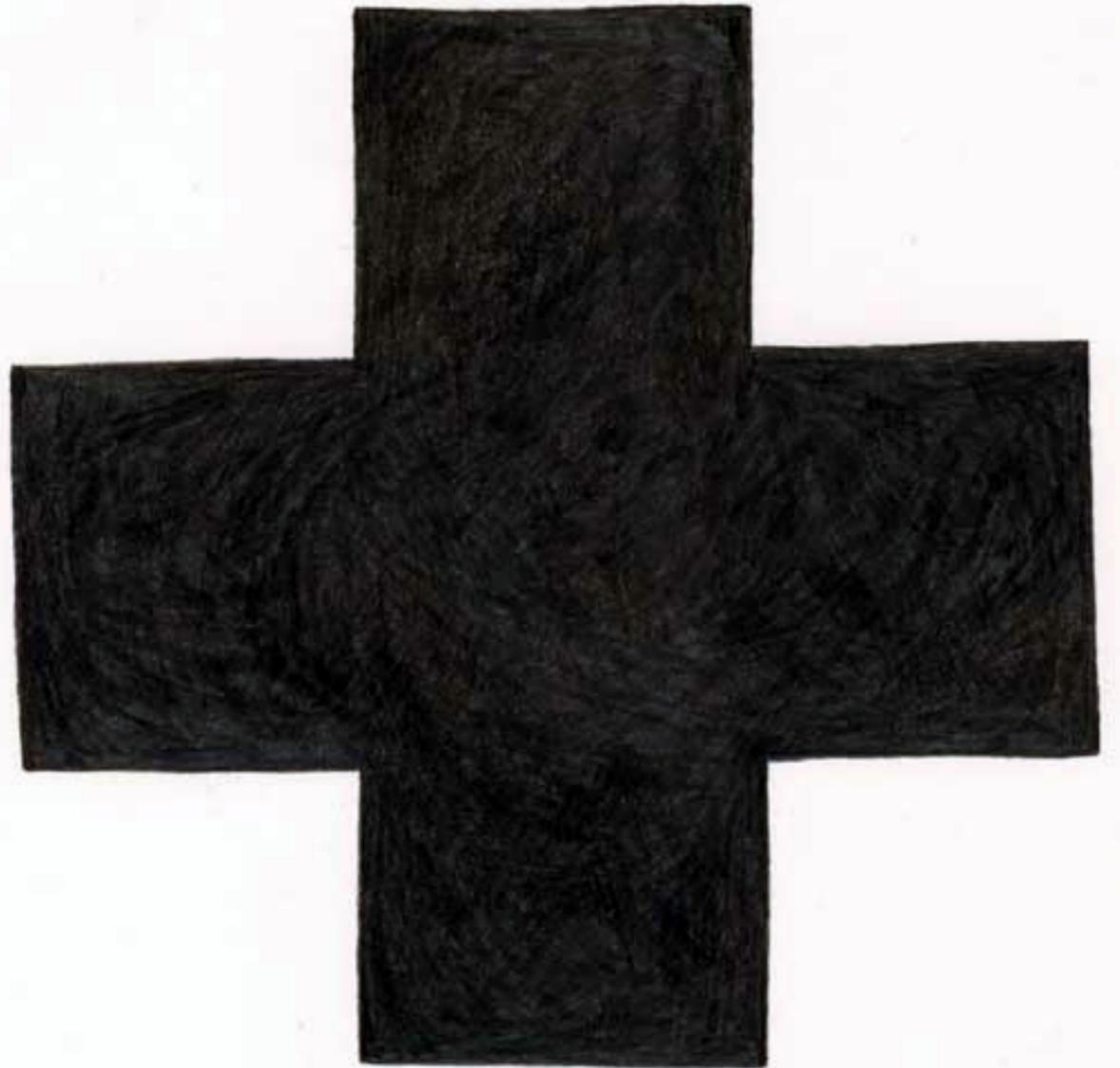
Collection: State Hermitage, 2, Dvortsovaya Ploshchad, 190000, St Petersburg

Acquired 2002 by the RF Ministry of Culture from a donation by Vladimir Potanin, a benefactor of the arts and head of the Interros holding company.

See: http://ensemble.va.com.au/Treister/NATO/Natopages2/NATO_Malevich.html



CIA BLACK SITE #20



CIA BLACK SITE #3

In 2010 I was invited into an exhibition in New York at the Leonard Hutton Galleries who specialise in this period of Modernism and I was asked by the curator Yuko Shiraishi to make something relating to a work owned by the gallery. I chose a Malevich drawing. These are the details that were sent to me:

KAZIMIR MALEVICH
MAGNETIC SUPREMATISM

1917
Pencil on paper
7 7/8 x 5 1/8 inches
20 x 13 cm
Dated lower right: "17"

"My first idea was to make copies of a group of Malevich Suprematist works and put inside the shapes handwritten narratives of war escape stories."

My first idea was to make copies of a group of Malevich Suprematist works and put inside the shapes handwritten narratives of war escape stories. These narratives were to be non-specific in terms of historical time and place. I had recently been trying to get my father to write down more details about his WW2 escape story and this was on my mind.

In the end I abandoned this idea. I was at the time reading something about CIA Black Sites, an article about where they were located and all of a sudden these Suprematist drawings looked like they might hypothetically be aerial views of these sites, with their groups of buildings, outhouses and in some cases their fence like boundaries. The drawing owned by the gallery then became one of the 20 drawings of the CIA Black Sites group.

AD: Could you briefly touch upon where 20 CIA BLACK SITES sits in relation to your broader interests in military information and the military's experiments with the occult and alternative belief systems?

ST: As you suggest, I have a broader interest in the military and histories of the intelligence services. This goes back to my family history and has informed a lot of my work, from my 'Soviet' paintings of the early 1980s, through work about video games of the late 1980s and my involvements with new technologies and politics of the net during the 1990s. Then there was the Time Travelling with Rosalind Brodsky project (1995-2006) involving my alter-ego who works at an imaginary military research institute in London in the future, and many recent projects of which the most relevant here would be MTB [MILITARY TRAINING BASE] (2009), a wall sized drawing of plans for a military training base. MTB includes proposals for a Federation Against Mind Control, a Herb Garden, a Communist Statue Park, a section of the Israeli West-Bank Barrier, a simulation of the ruins of the Palace of The Queen of Sheba and a Museum of Science Fiction, from a total of 72 sites.

When I was working on the final Brodsky project, HEXEN 2039, and researching connections between the military and the occult I uncovered a deep history of military involvements with occult practices, from the Druids to the Soviets and from the Elizabethans to the CIA; in particular the Remote Viewing experiments of the

1970s-1990s that took place as part of the CIA's MK ULTRA program, where so called psychic spies were left in an old building on a military base in Maryland to view remotely such un-surveillable sites as Soviet missile bases and to make schematic drawings of what they 'saw'.

While I was evolving the idea for 20 CIA BLACK SITES I was reminded of these experiments and in turn they can be seen as one of the historical references of this work.

AD: Ingo Swann is a fascinating character, often discussed in the same sentence as Uri Geller, but Geller was much more of the showman. Certainly for me growing up, Geller represented a world of signs, divination, omens, one that a lot of my family members followed, crossing over into séances and Ouija boards. Thinking back I was probably puzzled as to why they thought they could fortune tell, yet they always considered art as weird or incomprehensible. I wonder whether you had any similar early or teenage experiences?

ST: Yes, during my teens I think my father was a fan of Uri Geller. Geller always seemed to be on the TV and at the same time my father had no interest in art or in my taking it up seriously. He also played fortune telling card games. I don't really see a default connection between art and the occult though. I don't think any of my family thought art was 'weird' although perhaps some of my English relatives thought artists were weird because of the kind of lives they imagined they led.

AD: Perhaps this is an obvious question that you don't have to answer, but do you feel that the CIA send representatives to see your work?

ST: I have been told they have in the past. I think some of them may like it. There are a lot of smart people in the CIA; I've read some of their books too.

AD: The 20 CIA BLACK SITES drawings reminded me of something and I realised that it was the unfinished maps of the Williamson Tunnels in Liverpool (<http://dobraszczyk.files.wordpress.com/2012/01/21.jpg>), folly digs to give employment to men after the Napoleonic Wars. There is an ambiguity in the drawings between the aerial and the subterranean, the obliteration of virgin white paper by the dark marks, the white negative spaces.

ST: Yes, tunnels and bunkers and nuclear shelters, all these are suggested by the Malevich Suprematist works. Interesting isn't it, how a project that was ostensibly about creating a utopian world of pure form can so easily be perceived as its opposite. But you have to remember that Malevich also studied aerial photography.

AD: The act of drawing, the pencil, the graphite, you once spoke of working with materials that could not be "erased by the National Security Agency in the Cloud", suggesting a desire for longevity but

"During my teens I think my father was a fan of Uri Geller. Geller always seemed to be on the TV and at the same time my father had no interest in art or in my taking it up seriously."

also containing an inherent desire to keep the work rooted within the art world. I was at a talk recently by Paul Sullivan of Static Gallery in Liverpool and when speaking about his Noodle Bar project he stressed the importance of having it printed in the Liverpool Biennial catalogue, in order that when the local authority came along questioning his building's change of use to a food business he could point and say "no, it's a relational aesthetics art project."

"I'm not so worried about rooting all my work in the art world, although my forays outside the art world haven't always been inspiring."

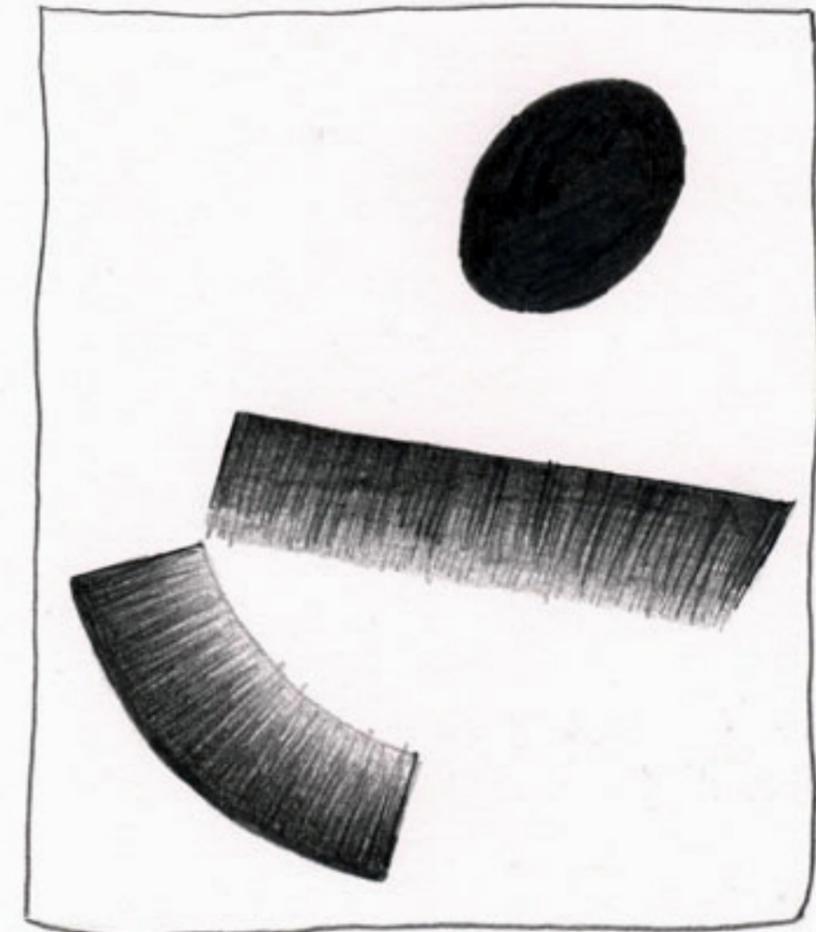
ST: People in offices, as well as artists, use pens and pencils. I'm not so worried about rooting all my work in the art world, although my forays outside the art world haven't always been inspiring. I'm just keen on things remaining under my control, rather than keeping them as digital information in a data warehouse in the US where someone else holds the key. I was brought up with filing cabinets and bookshelves to keep my things in.

That said, 20 CIA BLACK SITES is definitely an art project, unlike some of my other projects which have online audiences who sometimes have no idea that what they are looking at is supposed to be art. This is far more interesting to me than a lot of 'relational aesthetics' work, which often exploits audiences for the benefit of the artist who wants to have his cake (made by someone else) and eat it too.

AD: BLACK SITE 8 is the only drawing we see with faded areas, with architecturally ambiguous edges and literally grey areas. The eye is immediately drawn to it, like a small window of hospitality.

ST: Aha, yes, that is the one I mentioned earlier, which is in the collection of the New York gallery. It is very different from the others, less map like and more suggestive of perhaps a descending space, like the sides of a quarry or facing hillsides. It's less aerial, for example the round shape looks like it might be floating above the softer comb-like shapes. Perhaps it's a black hole above two airport car parks?

See <http://ensemble.va.com.au/Treister/> and <http://alandunn67.co.uk/stimulusaudio.html>



CIA BLACK SITE #8

Below the words I once
underlined

The author conveys
feeling by his choice of words,
not by the expressiveness of his
lines.

Writing is to orientate
yourself

Writing is not equal to
inscription.

An author is not
a scribe.

Could we say that an
author is akin to a wordsmith?

But what about this performance
What about this writing.

The end
is never approaching.

'I' WONDER

Alan Dunn on Claire Potter

Claire Potter is a London-based artist and editor of the journal *soanyway*, an online repository of words, pictures and sounds that tell stories, founded in 2008 by Derek Horton and Lisa Stansbie. Claire's own practice is located between writing and performance and Alan Dunn interviewed her about three recent live pieces. ...*nonetheless bears witness* (September 2012) was created for the *PRIVATE* event at the top of Liverpool's Radio City Tower. *Performance with Sam Keogh* (July 2013) was presented at The Hardy Tree Gallery in London as part of the *Enemies* exhibition and *The audience is delayed* (June 2013) was at the Whitechapel Gallery in London.

AD: If we begin with ...*nonetheless bears witness*, a three-part spoken word piece based around the voice of an abused woman who we find out has six children; she describes incidents of domestic violence and her children gradually leaving her. It is a very harrowing work, could you reflect back on it, a year on?

CP: I remember wearing a blue shawl in adherence to the event's dress code. I drank blue WKD that was served at the bar. I held three sheets of A4 paper, sometimes I read from them, sometimes I didn't need to and delivered the content with my eyes closed. I spoke up unannounced three times from areas not designated for performance and I remember making a lot of people unsure as to

whether I was part of the programme or not. I spoke from an unclear position, at once an announcer and then a confessor. I know the content and the delivery were uncomfortable for people at *PRIVATE*.

AD: What were you reading or looking at when developing the piece, both as direct influences but also as those ideas that float around with us?

CP: What it means to say 'I' as a writer and as a performer. I was introduced to the idea that 'I' as a pronoun is 'promiscuous'. It belongs to whoever is speaking it and so, as an apparatus for writing and speaking 'I' can be said to be a site of temporality. It is a slippery site: 'I' can produce great impact but is also gone in a flash. Furthermore, 'I' is divided like a cell down to each thought or impulse. Around the same time I read Chris Kraus commenting that women writers operating within the first person are 'still subject to memoiristic interpretation as though female experience itself were so troubled the female 'I' could only be intensely self-reflexive.' Theoretically, this was how the work emerged. I wanted to demonstrate this problematic female 'I' by addressing it through the shifting/shifty temporal conception of the pronoun - shifting and utterly subjective.

'I' began to form as a character for me: a troubled drunk, which is something I decided to run with

during the performance. The speaking 'I' was a self-absorbed, stuck voice that disregarded anything other than its own emergence, its moment of speaking. It got drunk, butted in and made people uncomfortable. I had begun to read at poetry events around the time of making this work and was thinking around the uses of the A4 sheets of text and how it provided a textual site for the pronoun and how that delineated what was within and without the game of speaking to an audience.

AD: The accompanying text mentions Colin Wilson's seminal study of the outsider in twentieth century literature and Cathy Caruth's *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History*. Is it fair to say the work drew on the uncomfortableness of trauma, especially within such a confined social space as the one you performed in?

CP: Yes definitely. To talk about this demonstration of 'I' in another way we could talk about trauma. Colin Wilson's book is a cartography of the divided self with many examples of literary characters in various states of consideration of a stable or whole self: the returning soldier, the wandering exile, the existentialist, the preacher, the outcast, the victim. The subject living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) for example, has no delusions of objectivity. They are a walking testament to the *nouveau roman* - all detail, fracture and repetition.

The other text you mention by Professor Caruth took for its cultural example Margeurite Duras' *Hiroshima Mon Amour*, directed by Alain Renais. This piece of writing, and the film itself, illustrate PTSD as a rupture of narrative, a blind return that confuses the space and time of the self. I wanted to extrapolate these ideas for the delivery at *PRIVATE*. I wanted to use the exclusivity of the event, and the mannered tone that accompanies such a setting to amp up the performance. I would shout up, be too confessional and self-concerned. I'd have to not only talk about a singular experience, I'd have to enact it by having a total self-regard for my own speaking. I'd have to be the unwanted guest: the sentence that starts with 'I'.

AD: You've always drifted towards words rather than images. Can I ask which visual artists, if any, had some bearing on your practice over the years?

CP: Working with words and/or images are essentially ocular practices and to that end I don't see myself as having drifted from one to the other as such. But it's funny, whenever someone asks me a question like this, I think of watching Tracy Emin's *Why I Never Became A Dancer* in Tate Liverpool when I was about fourteen and I also think of trying to move the cabinet of Mark Dion's *Tate Thames Dig* with my

shoulder when the invigilator wasn't looking on a school trip to London. For better or worse, these adolescent experiences don't leave me when I am asked about visual art. I refer back to them perhaps because I haven't yet analysed them to death. They are protected by being before art education. They came a bit too early to be used as fodder for a pedagogical essay or presentation. They are remnants from the childhood memory vault.

AD: *Performance with Sam Keogh* was presented at The Hardy Tree Gallery in London as part of the *Enemies* exhibition earlier this year. As Sam Keogh spoke outside the gallery, a speech based around Oscar - from *Sesame Street* rather than Wilde I believe - you were inside, creating a live textual response to his words, is that correct?

CP: Yes that's right, however I'd stress that though I was writing a response, it was not textual. My conception of writing is more akin to orientation; it doesn't always have to take the form of inscription but serves to produce a line in, or a pathway through signification in order to produce meaning. This is as important a key for my reading practice as it is for writing performances.

Footage of my work is intentionally low-fi and subjective so I'll talk through the work and it's backstory a little. *Enemies* has been a year-long series of events and publications directed by the poet S.J. Fowler. For the closing night of the two-week residency at The Hardy Tree, Steven invited me to work within a fifteen-minute slot and to perhaps invite some other artists and/or writers to work with.

I have seen Sam perform *Taken out of/put into Oscar's Bin* a few times but always within the context of contemporary art. Fundamentally it is a script about the cultural history and uses of Oscar the Grouch that he has committed to memory by the allocation of a series of pictographs. The performance is the remembrance of these signifiers and the delivery and omission of recalled and forgotten information.

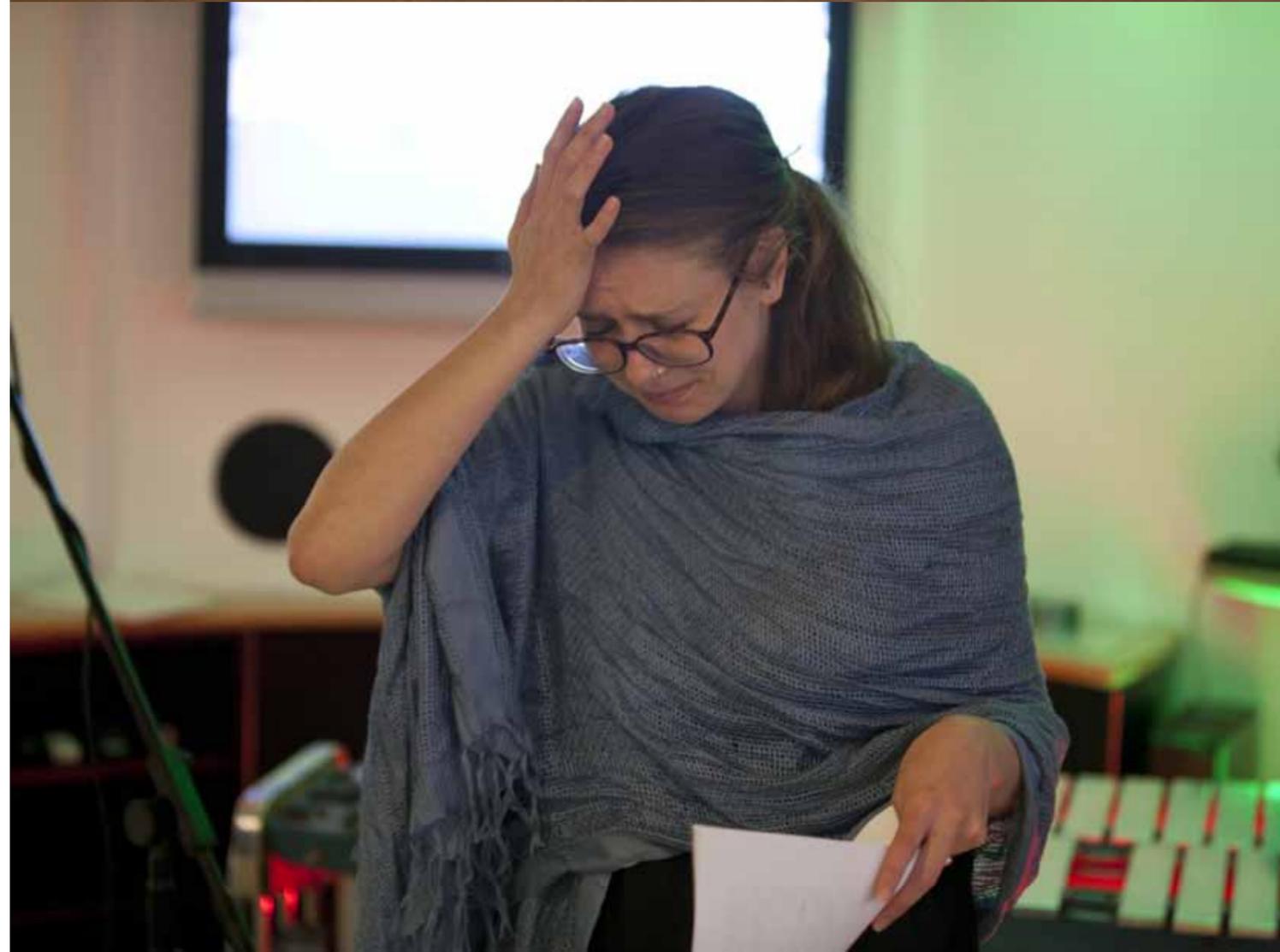
Generally, my writing performances develop through audience sensitivity and context. I have delivered the same texts in pubs as I have at art galleries and the variables not only alter the reception of a work but they act as an editing tool or a filtering system for the content. I wanted to invite Sam as an artist-performing to deliver something with me as a writer-performing. I felt like there was something to unpick there, particularly as the context was a poetry event at an art gallery. Blurring the fields of writing and art is a popular concept but as an art writer, it is very important for me to clarify the terms of my practice without it reducing to a juxtaposition.

The audience left the small hot gallery space for

Image by Alex Bell



Image by Lella Romanya



the pavement for a ten-minute break, Sam began his performance and I navigated the situation: the physicality, the theoretical divisions and unities between both our performances and also the role and responsibility of the audience and the host. I couldn't really think about these things without being in them and that situation is something that I had to induce. I walked about a lot, I talked myself through the situation, I arranged objects on the floor to mark and retrace what I'd said and statements began to emerge. These statements serve as the beginnings of a much bigger research practice, the results of an experiment if you like.

AD: The work seems to have been contingent on a lot of things from the way you describe it. Was there significance in having window between the two performers right up until the last minute when you join Sam on the street?

CP: Only in that Sam wanted his performance to spring unannounced from among the crowd. The window was a necessary and fortunate element that allowed me to refer to Sam's work while maintaining his performance specifications. That was the practical intention. Though I do concede that the bearing that the window has on the development of the work is great, not only in the reception of the mobile phone footage that you see, but in developing the writing performance at the time.

AD: Again, I am interested in what you were absorbing around this time, in terms of theory, fiction, images or sounds, particularly the manner in which the documentation sets the window as a background frame.

CP: It was Miwon Kwon's use of Mark Dion's *On Tropical Nature* in her book as an example of a site-specific artwork that divided over multiple sites. That spurred this work on. The idea that a work exists in its conception as a project AND in its existence in the gallery AND in its relation to the event AND in a site of discussion and documentation, excited me. I participated in Sarah Pierce's performance work *Campus* in London a little before Sam and I were at the *Enemies* show and this affected me too. *Campus* is a group rehearsal. About six participants were given a simple script of chants and actions. We ran through this a few times in an open rehearsal and then performed it without the script twice. What was miraculous about being involved in the piece was the activation of different forms of memory, linguistic, spatial and sonic, and how this produced a communal body of knowledge for us to access in order to perform a play we had only read forty-five minutes earlier. Though *Campus* was delivered among guests, I really felt that the work had existed among the performers and was not accessible to the

audience in the gallery. That has stayed with me.

AD: The texts you wrote could be said to have links with Joseph Kosuth's billboard *Text/Context* or even Alvin Lucier's soundwork *I am sitting in a room*. Did you plan these beforehand to some extent or do you ever wonder what would happen if your mind actually went blank and language deserted you just when you needed it?

CP: I think the two works you mention collapse the binary of delivery and reception. They both implicate the audience in their generation or emergence as artworks. The work is only there when it is happening. They are performance works. They both also exist as actions, demonstrations that fuse method and content. This is something that I am very interested in as it is crucial for my conception of art writing and I consider both these works to be examples of that, so yes, I do see similarities with my work.

In terms of planning, there is very little I plan. There are things I want to pull apart and assess about writing and its relationship to performance and I can't do that until I am in the midst of it and thinking to myself: right, now what's going on here? It's so fundamental a position for me that language doesn't get in the way of that. And anyway it's good when you get nervous or forget something, that's when I'm really performing writing, really navigating the situation. Yve Lomax once described language as having the burden of expression. But it can be freed up and invigorated. Language doesn't have to just serve some end, describing something; pointing outside itself, it can be active and do something or demonstrate something. And its absence is equally as useful as its presence.

AD: *The audience is delayed* was at the Whitechapel Gallery in London as part of an evening of writerly performances. Is it appropriate to describe your performance for those who did not witness it, or would you rather talk about the ideas around it?

CP: The event at the Whitechapel, *Language is the creek on a stair*, was conducted for two hours in two rooms on different floors. The three performances in each of the rooms had the same time slots. The guests congregated by the makeshift bar on the stairwell and when the time came were instructed to pick their room. There was no pandering to the audience. I really enjoyed that. There are no descriptions to help you choose; you have two minutes, pick a room. The show was really about delivery in that way and paid a little less attention to reception. I had a typewriter on a plinth, located on the stair well. I typed here for the duration for the event. I typed on the reverse of old bookplates that illustrated Persian and Turkish

carpets. I then posted these texts in production order on a partition window behind me. The guests could read them but I couldn't refer to what I had written, I just had to continue with a forward action without revising.

Essentially *The audience is delayed* was an act of performed writing, not only in sense of inscription and publication on the window but also the production of knowledge and content from pulling together and assessing the intersection of sites of performance: my body in the physical environment, my social relation to guests, my practical use of and the cultural location of the manual typewriter, and the intellectual and inter-textual application of my reading *Lines: A Brief History* by Tim Ingold and my study of Persian and Turkish carpet weaving techniques. It was a work of writing my experience of writing about what writing is.

I'm still considering what to do with the 27 pages that were produced. I can't decide whether their emergence in the performance was their publication, their life if you like, or if they might make a book themselves. Perhaps they are doomed to only be a document. Perhaps I shouldn't be so precious about it. In the end, I wasn't there to make a product. Selfishly, I was there to have a good live think.

AD: *The audience is delayed* has the phrase *writing engenders performance*, also used with Sam, which suggests you see the performances as events driven by texts which is an anti-improvisational approach rooted in a classic scripted theatre context?

CP: That's an interesting response to the phrase and yes in one way events are driven by language but writing in the way that I mean it is an action. In that way, writing for me essentially engenders performance. An action is performed from within a system of rules producing something sensible. Reading too for that matter begets performance. The activation of language is a well-remembered dance in that way. So I suppose theatre is not so far removed from that. It's important for me to make statements like that as part of the research. If for nothing other than to generate friction at a later date.

See clairelouisepotter.blogspot.co.uk. Links to video footage of *...nonetheless bears witness* and *Performance with Sam Keogh* - alandunn67.co.uk/stimulusaudio.html

DEAD BABY MICE

Alan Dunn on Jeff Young
Images by Leila Romaya



Jeff Young is a Liverpool-based artist whose practice spans theatre, radio, sound art, writing and television. *Carandiru*, recorded in a Sao Paulo prison, was nominated for a Sony and he has been shortlisted for Prix Italia and Prix Europa awards. Alan Dunn interviewed him about two recent live spoken word pieces. *Ouija* (April 2012) was presented in collaboration with Moongoose at Metal, a former railway station on the edge of Liverpool's Lime Street. *Sputnik Jesus* (September 2012) was presented with Martin Heslop and Vidar Norheim during an event at the top of the Liverpool's Radio City Tower.

AD: *Ouija* was originally a 28-part piece, when does it date from?

JY: I've been writing *Ouija* for about eight years but it grew out of particular pieces I'd written for radio in which I tried to write a sort of autobiography based more on fevered memories than actual events. Certain memories have fallen into my thoughts over the years - a haemorrhaging horse, an escapee from a psychiatric hospital running over a potato field, the roar of football crowd voices coming over the rooftops when I was in bed, a floating woman singing lullabies outside my bedroom window when I was eight, these sort of half remembered dream

visions. I started writing a sort of epic poem in 28 parts, inspired by Kenneth Patchen's *Journal of Albion Moonlight*, which is a key text for me. Patchen's imagination was like a menagerie and there is a vernacular robustness to the heightened, Romantic and fabulist world he created that feeds into what I do. Patchen was a radical precursor to the Beats. Mark E. Smith of The Fall is another important writer for me. These people are awkward, mis-shapes and hallucinators.

AD: Can you locate *Ouija* within your output? What else were you working on and absorbing during its gestation?

JY: *Ouija* connects with radio plays such as *The Hunt For Billy Casper* and *Red Rock, Grey Rock* which were broadcast by BBC Radio 3 and 4. I wrote four radio drama documentaries that tried to paint a picture of four stages of my early life. They were montages, or collages, of memories, which used dissonant juxtaposition of clashing styles and tones as a modus operandi. I thought that if I jammed a story of a dying grandfather with maggots in his turn-ups up against a fleeting vision of Billy Fury walking on water on the Leeds & Liverpool canal, up against the Milky Way clinking like xylophones, glimpsed through a skylight in a Liverpool terraced house, up against readings from favourite books and so on it

would make more interesting radio than the usual.

I was writing stage plays such as *River Fever*, which were based in similar landscapes of blighted industrial zones, ruined warehouses, bonfires on wastelands and half demolished asylums. All of this is now called *edgeland* writing and there is a touch of psychogeography about it but as far as I was concerned I was just trying to get across a sense of a boy in Liverpool, slightly unhealthy, medicated, bed bound, dreaming of travelling fairgrounds and Waltzers and dodgems on fire. *River Fever* used imagery such as polluted canals and ramshackle caravans to get across a sense of hallucinatory fever.

saucepan of dead baby mice is true. We found a nest of baby mice on a pan and took it out onto a piece of derelict land in Kirkdale where we sat around watching them die. It's all haunting, all part of the phantasmagoria.

AD: If you were given free reign with the education of young people in Higher Education in relation to art and literature, what would you introduce?

JY: I teach at Liverpool John Moores University and one of the things we do with students is to get them to engage directly with the city. It's difficult for students to break through the confines of the immediate student experience and I encourage them to explore Liverpool more deeply. We walk the city, make maps and drawings and scrapbooks and listen to the city's noises. If I were given free reign I would encourage young people to see themselves as artists and writers and to engage actively in the culture – establish creative relationships with working artists, make work, live in the city as well as study. An institution that teaches art and literature, creative writing and so on should be commissioning work, bringing the public in to the building and also sending the students out of the building and into the world.

AD: Can you tell me about *Sputnik Jesus*? You performed it accompanied by Martin Heslop and Vidar Norheim at the top of Liverpool's Radio City Tower, the city's futuristic beacon that is both private and public. It was set in 1969 and floated Neil Armstrong over Liverpool amidst 'metal rainbows' and sadly foresaw the arrival of 'the future.'

JY: Neil Armstrong was a childhood hero of mine, and still is. He's been mentioned in loads of stuff I've written and in every script I've ever written I think there is a reference to the moon, Yuri Gagarin, Sputnik, the 1950s and 60s or sci-fi. I followed the space race through the 1960s and I was eleven years old when they walked on the moon. I like pulp sci-fi novels and there is often a sci-fi element in the mix. A metal rainbow is something poetic and evocative like the xylophone Milky Way I mentioned earlier. It's a world made by Chad Valley, Triang Toys and bits of old Meccano.

AD: You conjure an image of a child sitting in wonder, peering out at the tower from his bed, seeing it as a space beacon, as Dali looked at the telephone handset and saw a lobster. The child climbs the tower, as a throat, up to its eyes.

JY: I couldn't actually see the Radio City Tower from my bed but I could imagine it. I watched it being built. The old Liverpool market was a magical labyrinth full of caged animals and exotic fruits

and fabrics. The city visionaries – or philistines - demolished it and replaced it with this futuristic edifice and old men watched the demolition and rebuilding of the city. I reckon old men were killed by this brutality. Alasdair Gray's novel *Lanark* is a huge influence on me, and the tower as throat is nicked from that. Lots of the buildings in the city, especially the gothic Cathedral, have faces; Brutalist modernity, astronauts and cosmonauts, comic book imagery, it's another collage of dissonance. Liverpool's powers that be have often conspired to ruin our glorious cityscape. They're doing it as we speak with their systematic flogging off of the city to property developers. The more they flog off the more the city dies but its ghosts will come back and haunt them.

AD: We're also interviewing Claire Potter who performed at the same event at the top of the Radio City Tower. What are your memories of her piece?

JY: I think Claire Potter is an astonishing artist. My memory of the piece is vivid. I couldn't work out where the performance stopped and the reality began and neither could anyone else in the tower. It was emotionally so raw and vulnerable that I wanted to protect her but I was scared of her intensity. At one point the whole space lapsed into silence for an uncomfortable length of time and we couldn't work out if she'd stopped performing or not. She made me feel conservative and that was a good thing. I came away from watching her and wanted to take more risks. She's amazing.

AD: Billy Bragg's track *The space race is over* is a man trying to tell his son there will be no more missions, only cyber space, and there is a similar sadness at work here; wonder replaced by melancholia.

JY: Yes, there is nostalgia here again. It goes back to that feeling of looking up at the moon with your dad or your school friends and realising with a sense of wonder that there are men up there walking on it. The moon used to follow me home and now there is a man walking there. It's beautiful.

AD: What were you absorbing when you wrote this?

JY: Sun Ra. Seeing Sun Ra and his Arkestra perform at the Liverpool Bluecoat in 1990 was terribly important. *The Night of the Purple Moon* by Sun Ra is just deranged. The music for *Sputnik Jesus* by Vidar Norheim and Martin Heslop was vibes heavy and suitably Sun Ra-esque. And Alice Coltrane's *Astral Meditations*. I was dipping into Alfred Bester's books *The Demolished Man* and *Tiger, Tiger* and a bit of Ballard and Philip K. Dick. It's useful to think *What would Ballard do?* and then to dip into him at random and try and *do a Ballard*.



AD: Imagine for a moment you were brought up in Rio de Janeiro, Auckland or Dakar – would you be making the same work with the same references?

JY: I think so. I'd be responding to the place in the same way, absorbing the sensory and sensual atmospheres. Essentially what I do is hang out in a place and get to know it and sooner or later something about the light, or the architecture, or perhaps someone I observe or eavesdrop on or interview...that feeds into a rough outline of a piece into which I pour any of my own memories and experiences that resonate with the work in progress. Out of that I assemble a finished piece. I did a Radio 3 project in a prison in Sao Paulo and it was an assemblage of materials including fragments of stories that happened to me, thousands of miles away from Brazil in Liverpool. I'd be doing the same in Dakar, Rio or Auckland yes. But having said that, I prefer places where it rains.

AD: As can be seen on the video footage, as you read Part 3 of *Sputnik Jesus*, the sun started to go down and everyone appeared mellow as the rhythm slowed. This was the Tower as space station and the audience as space travellers?

JY: The best thing about the event was that magical moment when the rain stopped and the sun broke through the clouds just in time to set beyond the river. The sun did its bit beautifully and everyone

was excited and moved by its appearance. It was the perfect light show and we were in a space station temporarily anchored over the rooftops.

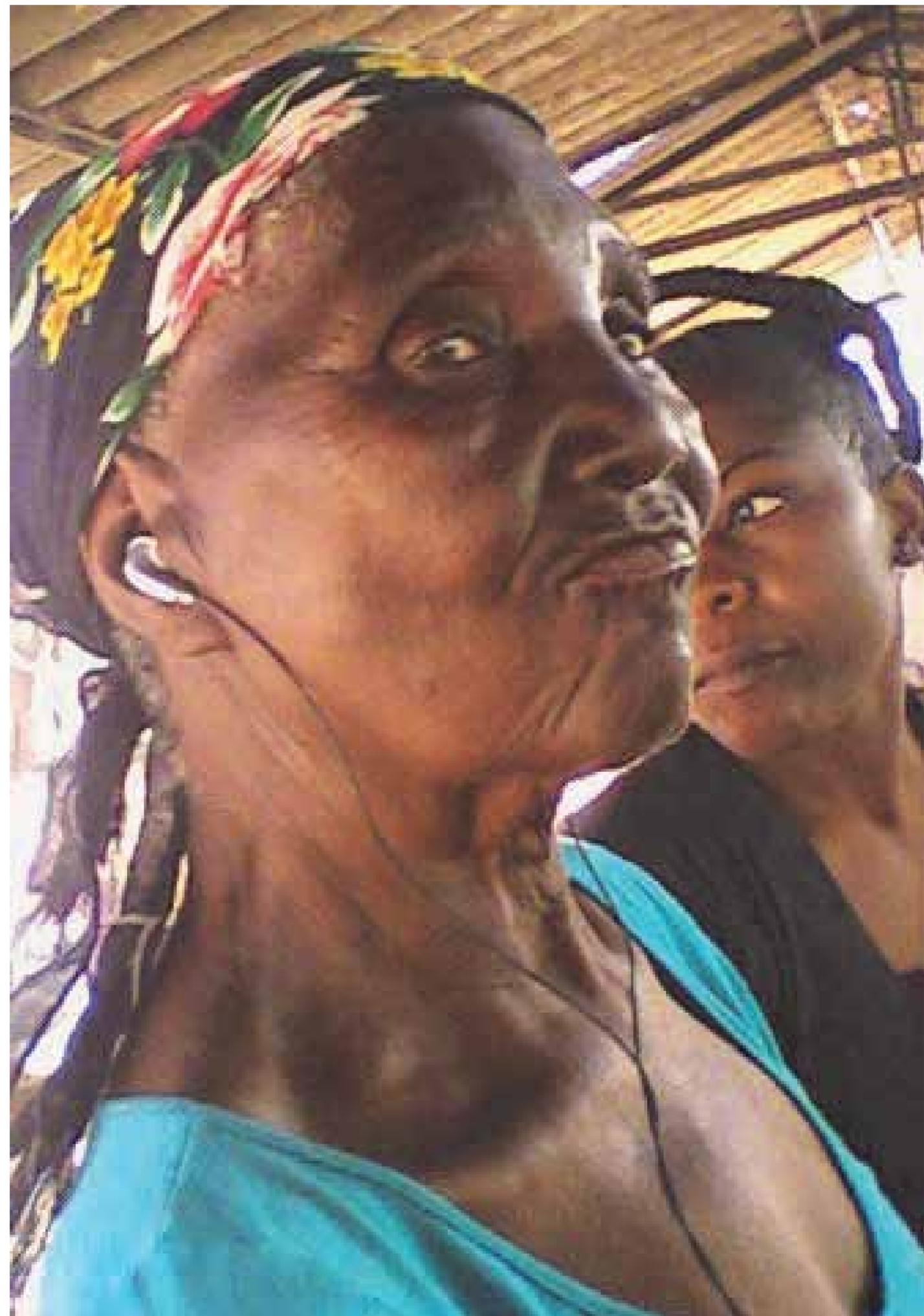
See jeffyoung26.wordpress.com. Links to video footage of *Ouija* and *Sputnik Jesus* - alandunn67.co.uk/stimulusaudio.html

THE SOUNDS OF A LISTENER WITH A BAG

Alan Dunn introduces Radio Continental Drift

ARTIST CLAUDIA WEGENER, working as Radio Continental Drift, has been recording sounds across Southern Africa for the past ten years. In this feature, we present an audio interview Claudia gave as part of the international symposium *Radio as Art* in Bremen in June 2014, alongside her exclusive selection of images for *Stimulus Respond*.

Claudia was a founding member of the artists' group Foreign Investment (see our *Chaos* issue). Through performances such as *Good Morning Camberwell* (curated by Mark McGowan, London 2005) and *The Venice Oratory* (curated by William Furlong, Venice 2005), Foreign Investment used sound to explore notions of free exchange and the airwaves as a meeting point between publicly and privately owned space. Around this time, Claudia's own practice increasingly focused on sound and in particular her role as observer,



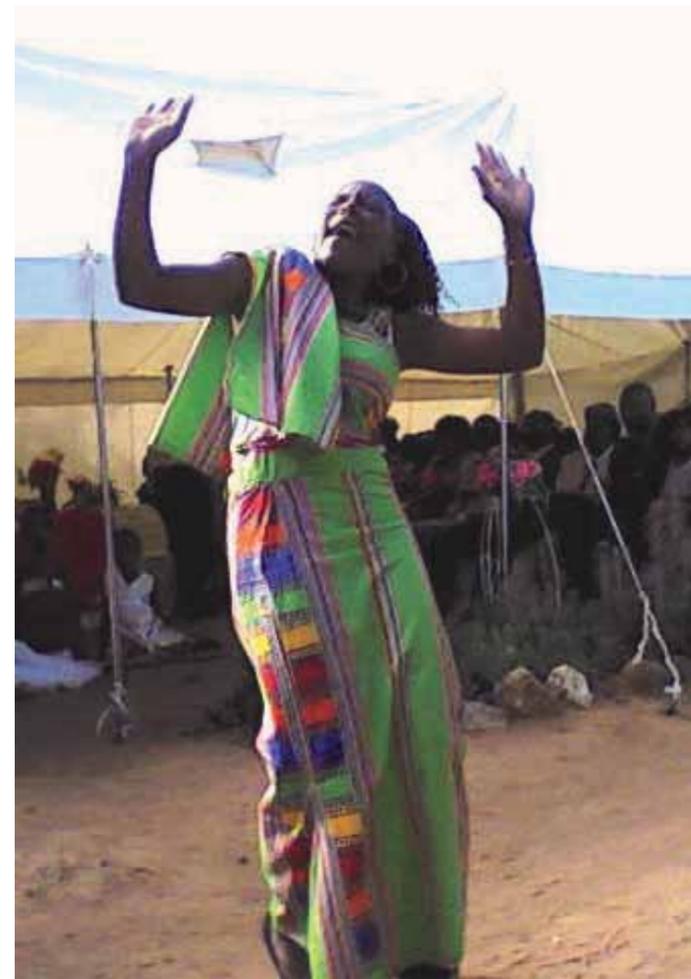


or in her own phrases, “an artist with a bag” or “a listener with a bag”. Translating observational writing into audio, followed by composing audio observations into broadcasts, projects such as ‘Street Writings’ and ‘NO-GO-ZONES’ were frameworks to bring voices and listeners on a more equal footing as “active listeners”. With workshops and joined broadcasts, these projects passed the microphone on to homeless people and black youths in South London.

Throughout her work is the image of the “artist with a bag”, the light-travelling nomad with microphone and spare batteries, part Alan Lomax in the 1930s recording American farms and prisons, and part Annea Lockwood’s sound maps. In 2005 Claudia began spending increased time in Africa, firstly in South Africa, living in Johannesburg and later in Durban, travelling across Botswana and Namibia, then also in Kenya, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

There is a soundwork composed around 2006 entitled ‘Radio Armed Response’ that I play to visual art students each year as part of my ‘A history of sound art’ lecture. We hear Claudia ringing buzzers and happily saying “Hallo, good morning, how are you?” over the background sounds of vicious guard dogs. “Good morning, I am collecting public opinion for a radio programme about private security, would you have a few minutes for me?” she continues determinedly. When a voice does respond, the accents tell us we are in South Africa, and specifically Johannesburg, and we are hearing intercom conversations. We eavesdrop on these short-distance broadcasts between the artist and residents of two suburban neighbourhoods, one in the wealthy northern suburb of Sandton, the other in Soweto. Gradually, the opportunity to speak, or be heard, or be recorded, unravels into reflections on security and gated and scared communities. It is *intercommunication* confessional meets prison phone. It is an economic and effective, but also chilling, soundwork, a very simple expose of a private closed-system broadcast system, then re-broadcast by the artist across ‘public’ webradio platforms such as ResonanceFM.

Over the past few years, Claudia’s recordings across the African continent have focused more and more on the female voice. “I wanted to listen to my sista artists and storytellers, since it’s them and their on-going activities I wish to join with my mic and “radio bag”... we’ve a long way before us towards a new “global information society”, which would truly deserve its name...”, she reflects and that she is “seeking beautiful



knowledge and how that is transmitted by the women in cultures with deep roots in oral traditions”. Where the recording process is important – it takes the voices and makes them permanent and repeatable, a cultural resource potentially ever-available to all global listeners - it is the broadcasting process that ‘gives voice’. It gives the voice distance, duration and resonance space. It gives it a route to potential new ears. In her interview for ‘Radio As Art’, Claudia reflects upon over seventy interviews with African women and the subtleties of who is listening, and how, when we hit the TRANSMIT button. Radio Continental Drift takes an understanding of webradio and mixes it with knowledge of the important relationship between community radio and taxi drivers in Africa. Concepts like “slow broadcast”, “hard-cover radio” and “interaction between listeners” tap and tune in to available distribution channels, super-locally and in Cyberspace. Radio Continental Drift is a long-term project and there is something reassuring about such an artist’s project that spans ten years; a sense of commitment and assuredness in decisions and providing some stability across changing times.

If you wish to experience for themselves how all of this might work, sound and look like you are invited to go on a journey of listening on the Aporee Radio Project, the All Africa Sound Map:

www.aporee.org/maps/projects/all-africa-sound-map

Interview:
www.soundcloud.com/mobile-radio/radio-as-art-conference-in-conversation-with-claudia-wegener-of-radio-continental-drift

Website:
radiocontinentaldrift.wordpress.com

Additional audio files:
www.alandunn67.co.uk/stimulusaudio.html

THE TRUTH WILL NOT BE TELEVISED

Words by *Alan Dunn, Leo Plumb, Bex Ilsley and Ben Parry*

Skimming through Leo Plumb's pages rapidly, as we should, we see a series of photographic streaks, blurs, blacks and reds. They are made from a process of exposing and scanning camera film before television screens that are broadcasting 24-hour newsreels. The final compositions that exist digitally for now, and collectively known as Lucky Escape, are the result of playfully arranging these photographs.

The works come about from a period of the artist marvelling at the different 24-hour news channels available to stream or watch globally. Leo considers this continual sequence of programming an abundant cycle of source imagery from which to make new work while becoming increasingly drawn to the phenomenological sensations one experiences when watching this type of broadcasting. Raymond Williams describes this as the 'flow' of television: the effort of creating uninterrupted programming, designed specifically to hook and hold viewers. For Williams, 'flow' is "the defining characteristic of broadcasting, simultaneously as a technology and as a cultural form."

Leo's work is born from a preoccupation with the news ticker, the feed of text running right to left or vice versa, a form of text communication emerging from the stock market and televised sports. In the West, the ticker is usually positioned in the red or blue ribbon in the lower portion of the television screen. The first continuous news tickers, that is those that were not just used periodically, were rolled out hours after the September 11th World Trade Centre attacks in New York by Fox News with CNN following just twenty minutes later. Within weeks, virtually all stations were doing the same.

Leo unwinds the camera film at the same

speed as the ticker to track the news images from right to left and mimic the motion, translating the continuum of news into a series of moments caught on film. He considers this approach to image-making as speaking to an imagination we have of news information travelling in these beams of light from news source to TV studio via satellites. This process symbolises the constant nature of news broadcasting. Keeping those satellites in orbit costs phenomenal amounts and news broadcasting is so expensive it is pushing itself towards extinction. As an artist, Leo enjoys the idea that the tickers reproduce and mirror the death drive of the media.

The quality of the scanned negative film has a real poignancy here; it demands close examination. It is creatively satisfying to scan in and to finally get to grips with what has been exposed. It also denies true clarity and Leo quotes Susan Sontag in regarding the pain of others, where she describes the distance employed by journalistic images: "For the photography of atrocity, people want the weight of witnessing without the taint of artistry." Throughout the development of these works, Leo refers to the website wwiTV.com that links to the world's different satellite news broadcasting stations. It is a reminder that many different news providers exist and equally that they all have an agenda. It is also fascinating if you wish to know what is going on in the Congo at 5am or what Hungarian breakfast time debate is like.

I ask Leo about truth. He expresses his current fears around the threshold between fact and law exercised at state level, a slippage that Agamben writes about. He is as scared as anything about the interchangeability of law and fact, those chicken and egg scenarios that always serve as a means to an end. Then there is truth as we tend

to experience it, aligned somehow with a notion of responsibility. We stand back shocked and offended, as individuals and institutions operate beyond what we understand to be the reach of the truth or legal parameters. There remains an issue about truth seemingly operating at different scales; within, and beyond the individual. We know if we were ourselves to become those exceptions to the rule, to act as they do, we would have to face different consequences involving our own convictions.

Can any artist then be objective? Why would they be, replies Leo. We remain interpretative creatures, absorptive to different features of the world around us. We appear to function best when we operate on different scales and can therefore think beyond the different hierarchies of truth. In this way we can be receptive for example to different issues, struggles, comforts and celebrations affecting different groups. Eventually we tend to turn this fluid practice to something more plastic, so that we can align ourselves with particular causes or beliefs, usually at a time when it is most urgently needed. Being subjective gives you a position from which to align yourself with others.

LEARN TO READ (DIFFERENTLY)

Wednesday 20th January 2016 at 3.40pm and the sun drops behind the Holiday Inn Hotel and Radio City Tower in Liverpool city centre. A large crowd, wrapped up against the cold, stares at the 31x7m digital screen adjacent to the lower section of the hotel. A series of bold four-word statements appear on the screen, each for ten seconds: I MISS DOING NOTHING, MAKE JAM NOT WAR, NO COMFORT NO JOY. There are no

questions, no products, no lifestyles, no special offers, no ... YOU WILL NEVER LEARN, WE CAN DIE BETTER, IT AINT A GAME, TIRED BOY AT BREAKFAST, WISH IT WAS CHRISTMAS.

The large digital screen below the tower is installed to mark Liverpool's year as European Capital of Culture in 2008. It is a commercial advertising space and its graphic frame is decorated with references to local landmarks such as the Liver Birds, the Beatles and the Mersey Ferry. There are also visual references to public artwork such as Jorge Pardo's Penelope and Antony Gormley's Another Place; public art about other public art. Or rather, public design about public art and public art as tourism. Over the years, the area around the screen presents numerous bland and meaningless straplines about the city: A WINNING SPIRIT, THE BEAT OF A DIFFERENT DRUM, FEEL ITS PASSIONS, A PLACE WHERE THINGS HAPPEN, USUALLY FOR THE FIRST TIME. These mantras are ingrained into a population over time. The screen faces the entrance and exit of the city's main railway station, Lime Street, and is seen by an estimated one million adults per fortnight.

REVOLUTION WILL BE TELEVISED,
MAKE THE ECONOMY CIRCULAR. I
REALLY HATE JANUARY. LOOK! NEW
HUMAN TRAFFIC.

Working with commissioning agency Metal, I hire this digital screen, known as the Liverpool Media Wall, for one hour to present one-hundred ten-second four-word animations. At the time, it is Europe's largest full-motion outdoor screen. I invite

a range of people to create four-word statements that reflect upon January, a complex month in which many of us contemplate self-image, debt, the weather and our future. It is also a culturally-void month, grey and bleak. GET OFF OUR LAND, WOMENS PAY IS LESS. VALUE CRASH CRUNCH BOOM. Contributors range from the known such as The Andy Warhol Foundation, David Shrigley, Fiona Banner, Paul Morley, Gerhard Richter, Shaista Aziz and Jamie Reid through to those for whom having a voice writ large in public is a new experience. I invite an A Level student, priest, retired footballer, poet, imaginary school, seafarer, disability arts festival, community gardener, economist, urban planner and journalist to compose these statements that are seen by around 4,000 people between 3.00-4.00pm. Every few minutes we interject a fake advert from stock library footage of swaying palm trees or rotating confectionary, void of text, logo or strapline.

From where we are, how do we picture the world and ourselves? The arts community have different memories, experiences and truths across a city. We access a its public and private spaces, towers, tunnels, closed buildings, billboards, empty shops, car parks, hotels, flagpoles, offices, radiowaves, TV feeds and pavements. We land projects gently over the city like particles falling over time. Our projects are occasionally fleeting and require documentation to exist in any tangible form. Our project documentation becomes our instrument of navigation and our PDFs are our atlases. What do we see in ourselves when we use our city as playground? FOUR WORDS reflects order amidst chaos, the static within the commute, personal statements framed by abstract jingoism

and broadcast against reception. The economist and the journalist write: PEOPLE RESPOND TO INCENTIVES and at 4pm it ends with a teenager and art student respectively: I OWE YOU NOTHING. THIS WAS ONLY TEMPORARY: <http://alandunn67.co.uk/fourwords.html>.

Looking at Bex Ilsley's images, we see a blank-looking female avatar casually located in a futuristic interior environment. Puerta del Cielo is a set of seven photographs taken during a single night in the Hotel Silken Puerta America, Madrid - www.bexilsley.com/Puerta-del-Cielo. The floors of the hotel offer Y2K-era sci-fi sterility alongside soft edges and blob-like malleable forms. The lighting is harsh and institutional. We, the viewer, look down on the avatar.

The images are part of a wider body of work Bex makes while thinking about the effect that living in cyberspace has had on her. There seems to be complex implications for the relationship she has with her physical form and her work queries the authenticity of the constructions of body and personality inside and outside of cyberspace. Her existence is sucked into something unavoidably performative, but is a costume worn purposefully more honest than pretending to be real? Is cyberspace a refuge from an equally wobbly wider reality, and should we run to it? Is it problematic to use it as validation engine, something to fill the voids in our self-esteem? Is it okay to admit all of this, or should we, you, me be ashamed of all this self-indulgent mirror-gazing?

Her avatar, Bex Ilsley's own Bex Ilsley, forms many intense relationships online and becomes a kind of therapeutic object, a safe receptacle for confession and a site of projection that adapts to the needs of its audience. She continues: No, that is

an older interview. She continued: "I question my authenticity. I think about fantasy and retreating to the safe stages of cyberspace. This place can be a refuge from an equally wobbly wider reality, post-truth, while also providing the instant (and questionable) service of being a validation engine for the filling of my psychological voids. What does that say about a human, or about these times?"

We return to her eyes. Look me in the eyes and tell me the truth. FOUR WORDS. We never catch Bex's gaze. Post-9/11 ticker-tape. Her eyes are hidden behind a visor, virtual reality glasses or directed towards her selfie-stick. But even then she is looking beyond it into nothingness off screen. Four eyes. Her eyes are black pools and lifeless. These are eyes that will never cry, never blink under pressure, never twitch nervously, never look down in shame, never see life for the first time, never say goodbye, never coil in horror at atrocity, never reveal her soul, never widen in arousal, never flicker wildly, never sleep, never feel the sun hitting their insides, never roll in disgust, never glare with anger and ultimately never ever lie.

FURTHER READING

<https://readymag.com/tribe/520061/52/>

LEO PLUMB



FOUR WORDS



BEX ILSLEY



ThePsycheDeliaSmithPaisleyHeadArtSchools

Alan Dunn

Summer of love

August 1967: During the first four days of the month, a depression moves from the Atlantic across Scotland to the North Sea. It is rather cool over most of the United Kingdom during these four days, with occasional rain giving way to thundery showers and long sunny periods on the 4th. (Monthly Weather Report of the Meteorological Office, Volume 84 Number 8).

I am born in Glasgow on that 4th August 1967.

Mix up the 1967 Summer of Love and it sounds like Are You Heart Pepper's Lonely Piper Club Band at the Gates of Dawn Experienced and feels like The 13th Strawberry Monkees Airplane Alarm Clock Boxtops, but it takes me 13 years to be bitten by the psychedelic bug when fellow pupil Graeme Ainslie (RIP) starts bringing weird records to music class: Velvet Underground, The 13th Floor Elevators, The Doors, The Teardrop Explodes, The Fall, The Cure and Echo & The Bunnymen.

I can draw, so he lends me these records to copy the sleeves and I sneak a listen to each and every one. They aren't singing about our grey east end of Glasgow but instead The Slide Machine, The End or Villiers Terrace, times and spaces that exist only in their addled minds. I don't do the LSD, dope, magic mushrooms or pass-out games of the times but through primal fanzines of Lindsay Hutton in grey Grangemouth followed by the visceral trippy recommendations of Edwin Pouncey aka Savage Pencil in Sounds, I get The Paisley Underground infection instead. As the Singh Twins exhibition at the Walker Art Gallery in Liverpool notes, shawls from the Kashmir and Punjab regions of India were exported to Europe from the 18th century. They typically had a teardrop-shaped motif known as an ambi, from the Punjabi word for mango and in Britain this is known as the paisley pattern, as the town of Paisley in Scotland was an important centre for shawl production.

The Paisley Underground was a new set of American West Coast guitar-driven psychedelic bands that conjured up Andrew Wyeth's 'Christina's World' or Wim Wenders' 'Paris, Texas'. They were delicate and summery but with glimpses of teardrops and killers: Green on Red, Long Ryders, Rain Parade, Bangles, Fuzztones, Plasticland, The Last, Three O'Clock, Clay Allison and my particular favourite The Dream Syndicate, whose name connects us with La Monte Young and The Theatre of Eternal Music. I would go to the town of Paisley in the grey rain to watch St. Mirren Football Club in their rigid black & white vertical stripes while listening to the Paisley Underground singing of endless hot summers in wet impressionistic Monet colours. It wasn't about the weather.



PsychedeliaSmith

... I might mention that Arthur Brown and myself will be appearing at Middle Earth tonight. I shall be wearing my latest rather daring ensemble of hand-laminated rice paper which I had whipped up over the weekend. (John Peel, Top Gear, BBC Radio, 1st October 1967).

Delia Smith: And how do you cook the brown rice?

Kate Bush: It's very easy, really, you just boil it in water with salt.

Sat on the sofas in our Fine Art studio in 2018 waiting for a tutorial student, I watch an unfolding set of highly saturated video images on the wall screen. I ask a tutor who has made these and then start to meet the two responsible, Marie Collier (<https://tinyurl.com/ycnszpdw>) and KT-LI. We discuss psychedelia and I purchase the 'Monster' (1998) 12" by PsychedeliaSmith for them to responded to through a series of videos from which we take these stills.

They delve into old Delia Smith cooking shows and create nonsensical baking programmes. KT-LI's amateur cable TV presenters - Benn Archer as Benn Boil and Joe Brennan as Joe Jumba - are trapped inside the machine and we yank the colours up to stained glass levels as the video transitions swipe from scene to scene: Welcome back to this week's episode of two big strawberries and a pot of grapes! Join Benn Boil and Joe Jumba as they show how they really take the slice. They'll show you how to make a baker's perfect treat. A piece of cake they say. They'll show you how you CAN take the cake AND eat it! But watch out - too many slices might make you feel strange. Watch out for the full episode here - <https://tinyurl.com/y88f69av>.

Monster: Your friend has gone for a lie down and you're alone in your front room. The walls are melting. You're in your parents' house and it doesn't feel like home. Kate Bush is pounding on the speakers, and you like the way the drums sound. You need a glass of water so you go into the kitchen. There's a Delia Smith cookbook lying on the table - every home has one. Delia is looking straight at you, taunting you with her sweet, happy smile. Delia is so out of place in your world right now, so unwelcome, or is it you who's out of place and unwelcome? Delia and Kate Bush are going to take you on a trip you'll never forget!

Marie's Delia becomes possessed by her innocent brown rice cooking guest Kate who places her pink hands against our screens, enticing us inside while pleading to be released from her trip. Watching the videos and flicking the online pages, our eyeballmarbles see everything in constant flux and transition, a key element of psychedelia - <https://tinyurl.com/yaogvek4>.

Fantastic Voyage

Inland Taipan shared The Beauty Witch's event.

22 November 2017

Hey pals, we don't stop.

Playing AATMA tonight with some psychedelic fuzz from Sundays & Cybele and Silver Vials. Message us for cheaplist xoxo xoxo

The final act of 'Ice Cream for Crows', John Hyatt's extraordinary Captain Beefheart-inspired event in the north Liverpool Docks, is Manchester band Inland Taipan featuring Aisling Davis and two Manchester Metropolitan University art (history) students, drummer Thomas Walmsley and bassist Bryony Dawson. It's so cold inside the warehouse - ice cream cold - that Bryony keeps her coat on. The Winter of Love. They don't sing of freezing November Liverpool but of West / America / inside / tomorrow / heaven / fire / or maybe the blues? Hear for yourself, courtesy of Jelly Universe Productions - <https://tinyurl.com/yckxfx26>.

John and Aisling aka Inland Taipan aka Thalia Styx collaborate on 'The Psychedelic Adventure of Clean Machine' inspired by the movie 'Fantastic Voyage' (1966) starring Raquel Welch and Donald Pleasence. The film is about a scientist who is dying of a blood clot and his only chance for survival is for five scientist colleagues to be miniaturized in a ship called the Proteus and injected into his bloodstream. The only hope for the body of art is to be injected by the serum that is John and Thalia's eight-page pseudo psychedelic comic-book, as psychedelia is the adventure inside the machine, the soft machine, inside the machinehead, the transitionhead, inside the head head Head HEAD.

Head

Fifty years ago, The Monkees release 'Head', the psychedelic film unlike any other pop band film and the subject of Dr Peter Mill's brilliant book 'The Monkees, Head, and the 60s' (2016). Scripted by Jack Nicholson and Bob Rafelson and with cameos from Dennis Hopper, Frank Zappa and Toni Basil, 'Head' is an angry collage of anti-war, anti-corporation and anti-fame vignettes. Peter uses it within his film theory lectures each year at Leeds Beckett University and photographer Ceri Oakes captured a particular Autumnal screening at the Hyde Park Picture House in Leeds, while for this text, Peter invited four graduates to reflect back on their first ever viewing of the film:

... within minutes the film was infiltrating our space. Just utter madness. Prior to this I thought maybe the film would offer some solace from the previous 20 minutes of trepidation, instead, it came with the same uncertainty, but I wasn't necessarily disheartened by this. I was dealt with a highly-charged barrage of wacky, unsystematic yet completely absorbing scenes. Saying that, every time I felt like I had a grip of the film, I was transported back to a state of confusion. As there were a few occasions I lost focus and peered to see others' reactions, looking for social cues as to how to perceive this film. But it was the undying energy of



it that helped me re-engage. Equally, having the prior knowledge of The Monkees as a band, trying anything to resist the mould that they were managed under, the film gives you a new found perspective. Yes, 'Head' defies unity and succession, it offers no reason into the narrative structure, but does that mean you shouldn't watch it? Not even. (Marina Haigh)

... my experience of watching 'Head' for the first time was very much like that of those who watched it back in 1968. It was a disclosure of The Monkees, a revelation, an introduction to the 'real' Davy, Micky, Michael and Peter. As the opening theme song ('Porpoise Song') suggests, the film is about waving goodbye to the 'old' Monkees and the band finding the freedom to express their authentic selves, 'Wanting to feel, to know what is real'. 'Ditty Diego - War Chant' pokes fun at the theme song for their 1966-68 fabricated, false and only-for-profit TV show: 'Hey hey we're The Monkees, we've said it all before. The money's in, we're made of tin, we're here to give you more'. The soundtrack, also named 'Head', sees them make a similar musical transition to The Beatles, from pop-rock to harder rock, inserting psychedelic elements like the sitar, but The Monkees did so FASTER, in a desperate attempt to shed their undesired image by force. (Gemma Rayner)

... it was essentially 1 hour and 26 minutes of an intense LSD trip. They took LSD in the sixties, right? But really, after Peter's brief introduction of the film and the dimming of the lights, nothing could have prepared me for the whirlwind of images that would bore themselves into my retinas. With its purposeful lack of narrative both linear and cyclical, scenes range from The Monkees playing the role of dandruff for a shampoo advert - an allegory for the film's title? - followed by being sucked into the dusty belly of a Hoover. Michael Nesmith picks up the remnants of a cigarette and exclaims "whoa...not one of your standard brands!" which aptly summarizes 'Head's humorous and playful style. In another scene which alludes to corporate America's relationship with sixties youth culture, a cameo from Frank Zappa depicts him telling Davy Jones after a dance sequence to 'Daddy's Song', "you should spend more time on it, on your music, because the youth of America depends on you to show the way." (Francesca Scott)

The strangeness of this movie is demonstrated in the first 5 minutes, whereby the lead singer of the band Micky Dolenz commits suicide by jumping off a bridge - all the while the theme for the movie 'Porpoise Song' plays to accompany his slow decline towards the mermaid ridden depths below. The movie appears to be laced with metaphors and riddles, though getting the answer to these riddles can be somewhat of a speculative task. As a metaphor of my own, you could almost say that Micky's suicide was the symbolic destruction of the bands image. Not only did the movie crash at the box office but the popularity of The Monkees also saw a decline in the post-'Head' era. The detachment from their Hollywood image may have cost them their careers, but it also gives the movie a sort of tragically genuine feel. You can empathise with the desire to escape the tight chokehold of their curated image. (Daniel Kirby)

Summer of RIP

After The Paisley Underground, The Summers and Winters of Love continued onto cassette, minidisc, mp3, streams, festivals and back to vinyl: The Brian Jonestown Massacre, The Jesus & Mary Chain, Cocteau Twins, The Cramps, Creation Records, Psychic TV, La Revolución de Emiliano Zapata, Boo Radleys, Ride, Acid House, Sgt. Pepper exhibitions at Bluecoat in Liverpool, Mazzy Star, Hüsker Dü, Tricky, Primal Scream, The Liverpool International Festival of Psychedelia, Stone Roses, Malcolm Lowry, Cavalier Song, Spiritualized, Portishead head head, Radiohead head head, EX-EASTER ISLAND HEAD HEAD HEAD ...

Graeme Ainslie's funeral will be at Daldowie Crematorium on Saturday 31st Jan 2015 at 12pm. Thanks for the memories and the music via facebook. When I work out soundcloud I will upload a playlist. Love to you all and remember when the going gets weird the weird turn pro.

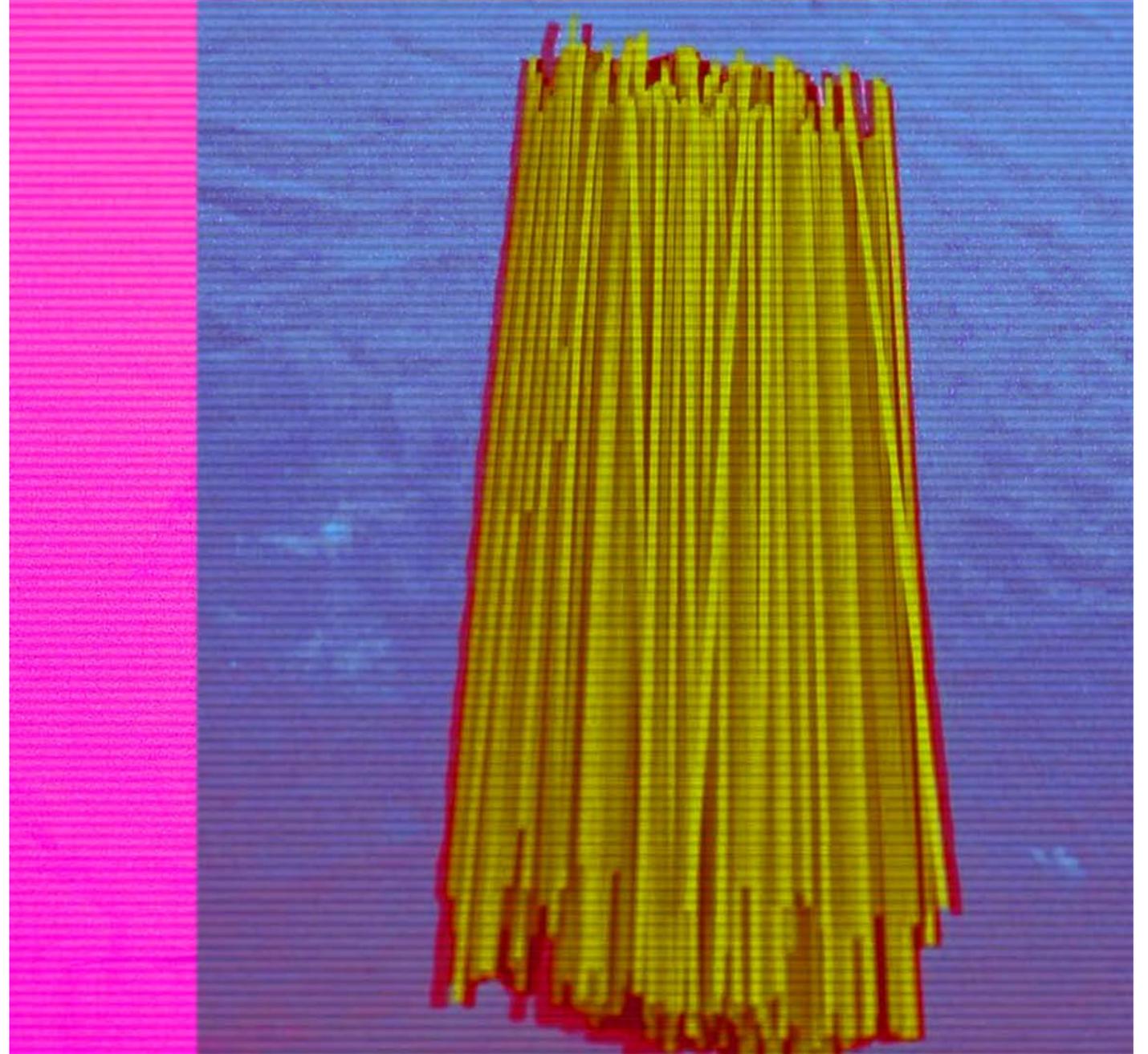
Browsing through Graeme's Facebook photos, a digital life beyond his own, he kept up the vinyl frontier, from Sgt. Pepper to the Bunnymen to Mesquite to Ibrox to YEAH YEAH YEAHS eyeballs to Irn Bru placed on RAY + JULIE. All these images now sit as pixels inside Facebook's Luleå data center in northern Sweden just 70 miles south of the Arctic Circle, crushed into increasingly small corners by the 350m new photographs per day that have been added since his death, meaning 402,150,000,000 at the time of writing and millions more as you read this. His reality starts my interest in psychedelia. It's cold in the Node Pole. Winter averages -20C (-4F). Freezing air from outside is pumped into the building and acts as a natural coolant, with hot air generated by the servers circulating out, but somewhere in there sits the first seeds of a Summer of Love which was never ever about the heat head heat head HEAD HEAD HEAD.

RIPsyche.



MARIE
COLLIER

KT-LI



THE LOBSTER 6 00 8

HEAD-PLUS INTRODUCTION 6

THE LOBSTER 8 40

THE LOBSTER 11 00

IRRATIONAL MAN 1 45

THE LOBSTER 4 00

BACK TO THE FUTURE PART

THE LOBSTER



PETER
MILLS

STIMULA®TION

What do we do when ideas dry up, what are the projects we return to for re-energising, who are the designers or activists we look to for values and levels, what are the songs that remind us of irresponsible youth, what machines elevate our capacities beyond our capabilities, what are our desert island concepts, what drum sound makes us stand still and listen, what apps make us smile, what hacks make us panic, what lyrics make us look at our speakers, what amount of money will we do it for, who are we trying to impress, what do we do if we lose all our jobs, what can we do if we can't travel, where inside do we look, where does help come from, what sleeves make our hearts flutter, which stories do we actually believe, which games make us grind our teeth, whose compliments do we crave, whose eye do we want to catch, what do we want to leave for posterity, how often should we make stuff, how many projects are the right number, is it ok to look back to the eighties, which TV series make us drool at the budgets, which artworks make us want to give up ... for a while, how much should we leave after we die, what would it take for artists to go on strike, what is your Degree worth, what's wrong with being silent, which type do we rely on or which font do we dream of, which family member drives us mad, where does our dog go in her mind when she gazes off, which new colour should we invent, what is the point, is there a future for banners, what makes us click our fingers, which dream makes us perspire, what projects do we direct students to, what makes our eyes water, when are our most creative times of day, do creativity lessons belong on TV, what is blended learning, who do we sing for and why?

Alan Dunn, May 2020

LOOK, LOOK: OP ART/POP ART IN XTC SINGLE SLEEVES 1977-83

Words by *Peter Mills*

F= believes in the revolutionary act of connecting people, to empower us all to feel able to speak up and to find common ground. We use art to make visible and listen to voices of the past present and future. Patriarchy has tried to disconnect us but histories continue and together we can reclaim the discarded, repressed and brushed aside. It takes just a sideways view, an opening of the third eye, to see what really lies before us and inside of us. In this we make space for clarity and understanding that we all hold within us.

F= explores the significance of feminism in creative practices and use playful acts to activate sites of learning.



<http://www.fequals.co.uk/>

Andy Partridge is a true believer in pop, and the aesthetics of the 7" 45rpm record: the single. Indeed the last commercially issued new XTC track penned by Partridge was his tribute to the 45, 'Spiral' (2005). In an irony which would not have been lost on him, it was an internet-only release. Between 1977 and 1983, the first period of XTC's life *en publique*, they were touring and recording incessantly, yet Partridge designed all but one of the sleeves for XTC's singles of that period. While producing one's own cover art may be commonplace at the DIY /Indie level it's much more unusual when the band is working at a high level of success, as were XTC back then. We can't discuss them all here, but I've chosen a representative sample illustrating how the band's music was packaged by their own chief songwriter. It's art to look at as well as listen to.

To be clear: XTC was by no means just Andy Partridge. Colin Moulding was there throughout and wrote many of the band's biggest hits. Terry Chambers, Dave Gregory and Barry Andrews all proved irreplaceable. In matters of design, however, Moulding told me that while he had some input on 45s featuring his own songs, 'Andy was fiercely protective over what he thought was his domain. I think the people at Design Clinic did the donkey work'(1). Partridge's very strong visual sense – he *sees* the music- comes over in his songs; in the documentary *This Is Pop* (Charlie Thomas 2017) he explains and demonstrates how this works, how certain musical tones suggest visuals to him, which are then turned into words and melodies. It's a music-focussed synaesthesia. This visual realisation of the musical tone or chord goes way back to his adolescent musical endeavours with early versions of XTC trading under the names Star Park and The Helium Kidz (that 'Z' evoking mid 70's British pop at its Sladest). Furthermore he knows the lineages of pop music; what it sounded like, what it looked like. He also loved comics, pulp sci-fi (recording a whole instrumental album inspired by the art of Richard M. Powers) and pop art. That pop/comic sensibility informed the covers he designed for XTC singles; wit, invention, and an extension of musical meaning into the visual.

XTC were signed to Virgin in Spring 1977 and despite future difficulties with the label they were the ideal home for someone with Partridge's creative sensibilities. Virgin had welcomed mavericks since the label's 1973 launch: Mike Oldfield, Slapp Happy and Hatfield & The North albums all sported striking, wilfully eccentric covers. Indeed, legendary 49p album *The Faust Tapes* may have influenced XTC in unexpected ways: Bridget Riley's kinetic op-art piece 'Crest' on the back cover was echoed in a 1983 single sleeve, as we shall see, and the label design was recreated/revived for XTC alter-egos The Dukes of Stratosphear's *25 O'Clock*.

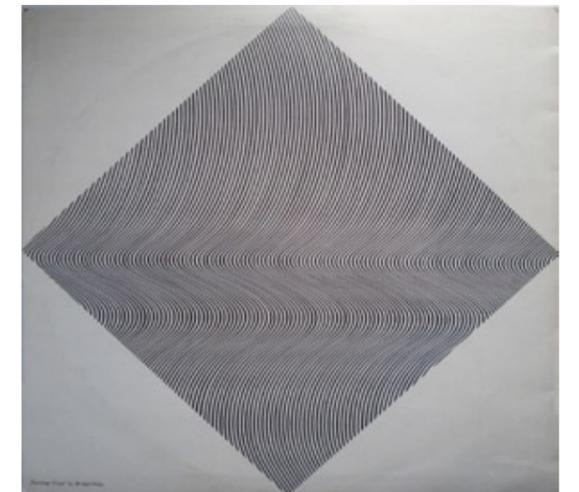


Figure 1 Bridget Riley 'Crest' on back cover of *The Faust Tapes* (Virgin 1973)



Figure 2 Original Virgin Records label (1973-76)



THIS CO-AUTHOR DOES NOT EXIST



THIS CO-AUTHOR DOES NOT EXIST



THIS CO-AUTHOR DOES NOT EXIST



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