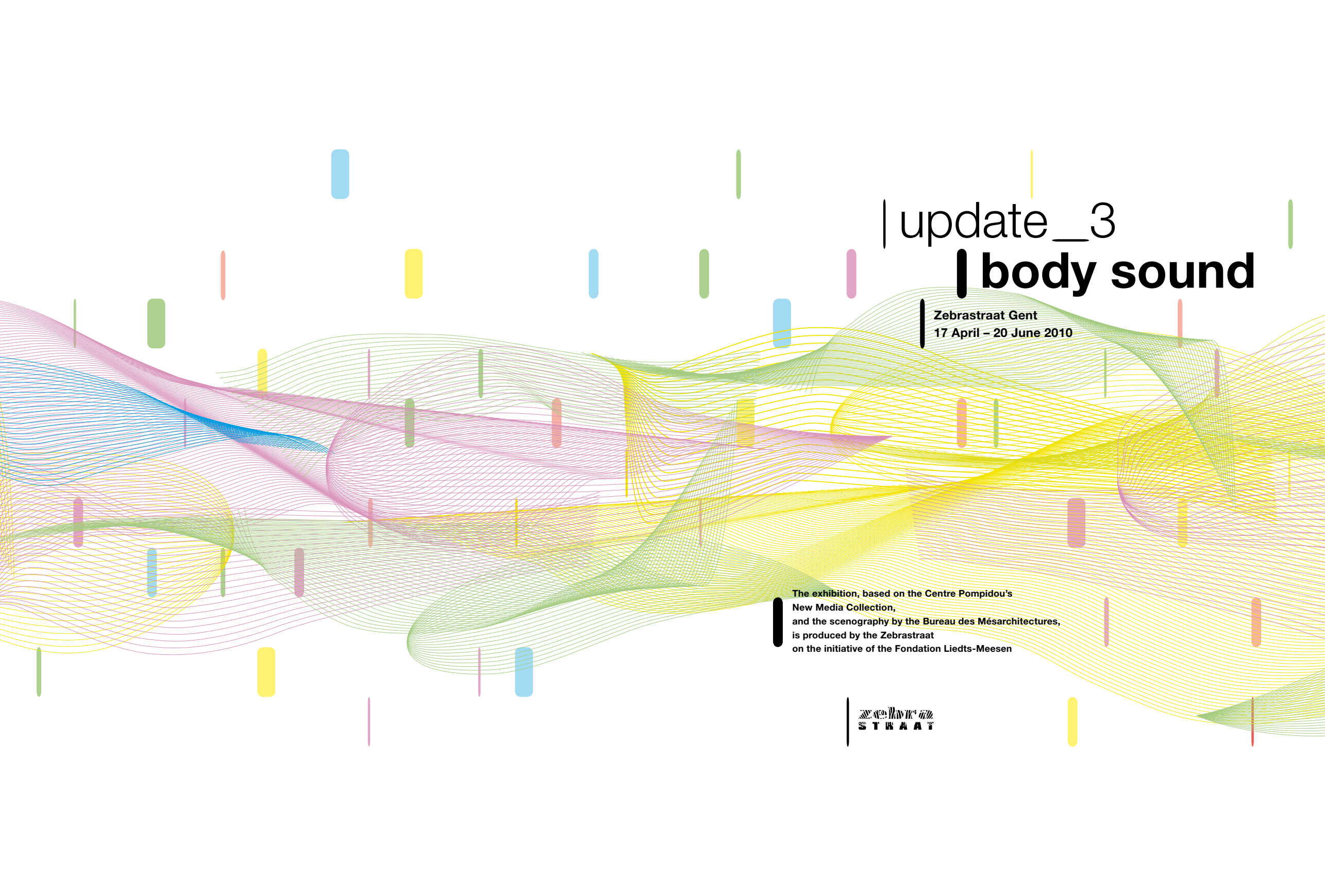


update\_3 / **body sound**



| update\_3  
| **body sound**

Zebrastraat Gent  
17 April – 20 June 2010

The exhibition, based on the Centre Pompidou's  
New Media Collection,  
and the scenography by the Bureau des Mésarchitectures,  
is produced by the Zebrastraat  
on the initiative of the Fondation Liedts-Meesen

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## Introduction

**F**or the Zebrastraat project, the Fondation Liedts-Meesen has elected to pursue a development based on housing, economy and culture. This cultural element consists of readings and performances held on Thursday nights; of allowing young contemporary artists to exhibit their work in the Zebrastraat's meeting area for a month, and of systematically providing 750 m2 of exhibition space to third parties for cultural manifestations that are compatible with the goals of the Fondation Liedts-Meesen.

However, we would like to focus our artistic identity around the Fondation Liedts-Meesen biennial centred on Technological Art. There is a limited interest for diverse forms of artistic realisations, but it is growing. Contemporary art is just a small part of the spectrum although it is gaining importance. Nevertheless, contemporary art based around modern technological advances remains largely unknown to the general public.

From its inception, the Fondation Liedts-Meesen has adopted this uncommon form of artistic expression. This is a conscious decision, which ties in with the Fondation Liedts-Meesen's transgressive goals, because both the foundation and the Zebrastraat are aimed at the future, and because my professional career based on a scientific

education pursued the use and development of new technologies in information and telecommunications.

Finally, this choice takes into account the fact that the means and the infrastructure available at the Zebrstraat do not allow us to best or to equal classic, subsidized institutions. We have consciously chosen a limited fringe of contemporary art, aimed at the future, which has seen significant growth in diverse fields of the arts.

## What is Technological Art?

What is meant by Technological Art? A daring description, but by definition limited. It is undoubtedly easier to start from a new philosophy, or simply factor in the contemporary, ever-accelerating evolution. In the past, artists had very few means to express their emotions, commitments and values.

What words, letters could not express, was supplemented by artistic talent, but durable expression came in the form of a two dimensional image of paint and canvas, or by sculpting wood or stone into three dimensional objects. The visual arts were complemented only by music and theatre, with that crippling disadvantage that the artistic creations had to be repeated, to varying degrees of success.

New forms developed: architecture, photography, cinematography, broadcasting, multimedia... all of which broadened the boundaries of artistic expression, erasing limitations of the past. It is only natural that today, new materials such as steel, glass, plastic and fluids are being used, along with new techniques.

Better suited than a definition, a personal choice of examples is more appropriate. And so, one finds examples of various origins, based on scientific truths from the past:

*Rivelatore Cromolinettico* (1965) by Piero Fogliati (Italy): this work consists of a vertically hung, taut elastic and a projection that evoke the illusion of a colour spectrum through vibrations. *Le cube électronique A et B* (1967) by Piotr Kowalski (France): for the first time, diodes from electronics are integrated for decorative purposes, which results in an evolution in public attitude. *Untitled (1 tetrahedron + 1 cube + 1 octahedron = 1 icosahedron)* (1999) by Attila Csorgo (Hungary): the kinetic structure is an example of mathematical propositions and mechanical ingenuity. The artist constructs a moving model in order to come to a visual presentation.

The knowledge of life and ecology are also a source of inspiration:

*The Telegarden* (1995) by Ken Golden (United States) is installed in the Ars Electronica Center and allows gardeners from all over the globe to grow and manipulate living plants over the Internet. In *Ecosystem* (2005) Nella Steil (Romania) delivers a burlesque performance through a combination of telecommunications, random number generators, virtual machine guns and domestic waste. *Nomadic Milk Cameroon Version* (2004) by Esther Polak (The Netherlands) is an investigation into the visual and narrative possibilities of a GPS (Global Positioning System) applied to the nomadic Fulani family in Cameroon.

Of course, we find applications in the world of data processing, electronically managing and manipulating data, images and sound.

*Electronic Superhighway* (1995) by Nam June Paik (Korea): The continental part of the United States is represented by 313 televisions, Alaska by 24, while Hawaii is represented by one television per island. Joined by 50 CD players, approximately 60 VCR's, 20 ventilators, a video camera and scaffolding, the "borders of the States" are marked by steel and neon, and a 200 watt sound system. Paik's work is strewn with waste products of mass media culture, but they do not stop revealing images that bring wars and cultural crises to public attention. *Hello* (1991) by Tony Oursler (United States): Oursler's video images in this installation, which are charged with political resonance, but full of humour, are not shown on a monitor as might be expected, but instead, are projected on the surface of everyday objects or people. *Messa di voce* (2003) by Golan Levin (United States), Zachary Lieberman (United States), Jaap Blonk (The Netherlands) and Joan La Barbara (United States) is an audiovisual installation where a computer mouse is replaced by real voices, and where tone, intonation and resonance are translated into computer instructions that created three dimensional images on the screen. *Je souffle à tout vent (plume, pissenlit)* (1996) by Michel Bret (France) and Edmond Couchot (Algeria): a dandelion or a plume is blown away on the video monitor through interaction between a spectator and a pressure sensor. In this work, the image is digitally inscribed. This also means that from now on it can be deformed using computer programs. *The Gate (or Hole In Space)* (2007) by Yves Bernard (Belgium) and Yannick Antoine (Belgium) is both an installation and a collective performance platform, which functions as an interactive portal between the real world and the universe of

Second Life. An image from the Second Life Gate is projected permanently in the real-life space; when a user comes to the Gate in Second Life he can actually be seen in the public space and vice versa.

## Technological Art transcends boundaries

In the catalogue for *Stippels en Pixels* (2005), Stef Van Bellingen wrote: “The mathematical orientation of artists during the Renaissance, with the development of perspective being the single most salient feature, has defined the reorganisation of the different arts in that period. As far as hierarchy goes, the digital world seems to resemble the Renaissance, since mathematics bind several kinds of art together (for now). Many works of art are made with the help of a computer and its tools. This does not mean that there are and continue to be no differences, but it is striking that these tools connect several disciplines.”

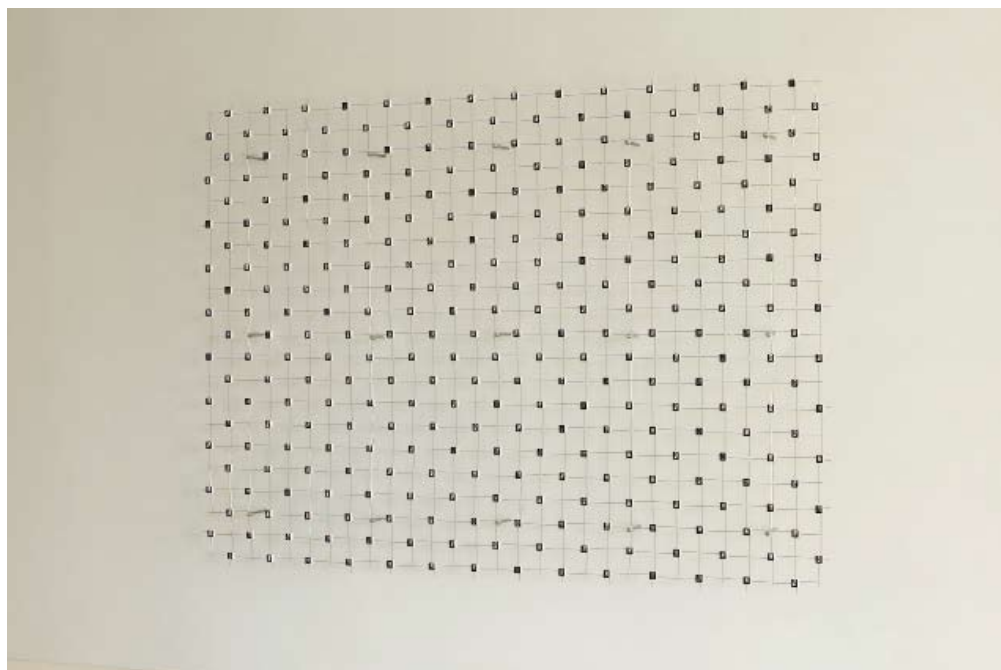
All this leads to unbridled forms of art, that sometimes turn into games, gadgets, new communication media, computer material and virtual creations. For the artist, the banks are becoming ever wider and vaguer. Let us hope he does not drown in this sea of creativity, freedom and means. In this multitude of forms, colours and sound on ever

### This page

Tatsuo Miyajima  
*C.F. Lifestructurisme*–  
no. 5  
2008

### Pages 11-12

Nick Ervinck  
*Warsubec*  
2009



new media, a classification is almost impossible, yet certain characteristics recur.

The creations have transgressive or universal properties: boundaries of religion, philosophy, economic background and geographical borders are meaningless. This is due to the fact that the chosen media are universally distributed. Artists of this kind belong to a group that has become cosmopolitan thanks to the Internet. Technological Art transcends boundaries with relative ease and must be open to diverse sensibilities. A work of Technological Art belongs to the cosmopolitan culture, not to a tradition of minorities.

In the past, a painting or a sculpture had the ability to evoke emotions, to make an adolescent blush, but the interactivity was not reciprocal or was in any case very limited. In works of Technological Art, the spectator can intervene, directly or indirectly, in that which he sees, hears, smells or feels. By moving around, blowing, screaming... he can influence the result of the creation.

Indirectly, he can intervene in the chemical, electronic or software-based procedures, thus influencing the necessary degrees of freedom to make interactivity complete and reciprocal. This was impossible in earlier forms of art, not even in music, film or broadcasting. There have been some attempts in theatre and architecture, but these have always been limited and usually not constructive.

The large diversity and its resistance to being classified are characteristic of Technological Art, and may be seen as two of its properties. The designs are unlimited, every day media are being improved and innovated. New means and technologies are developed. In the majority of the works, originality and the uses of several parallel procedures or techniques are key. These means are being used in many different existing forms of art, after all. This combination of means and forms of art are at the basis of diversity.

## Multimedia Award Liedts-Meesen

Parallel to the biennial of Technological Art, started off by *Stippels and Pixels* and “Update\_1”, “Update\_2” was combined with presenting the Multimedia Award Liedts-Meesen.

The first time the Award was presented, in 2008, was a success, with 70 submissions, 10 nominees, an audience award and a jury award. These prizes afterwards allowed for the presentation of these works in several locations all over the globe, which in turn led to widespread



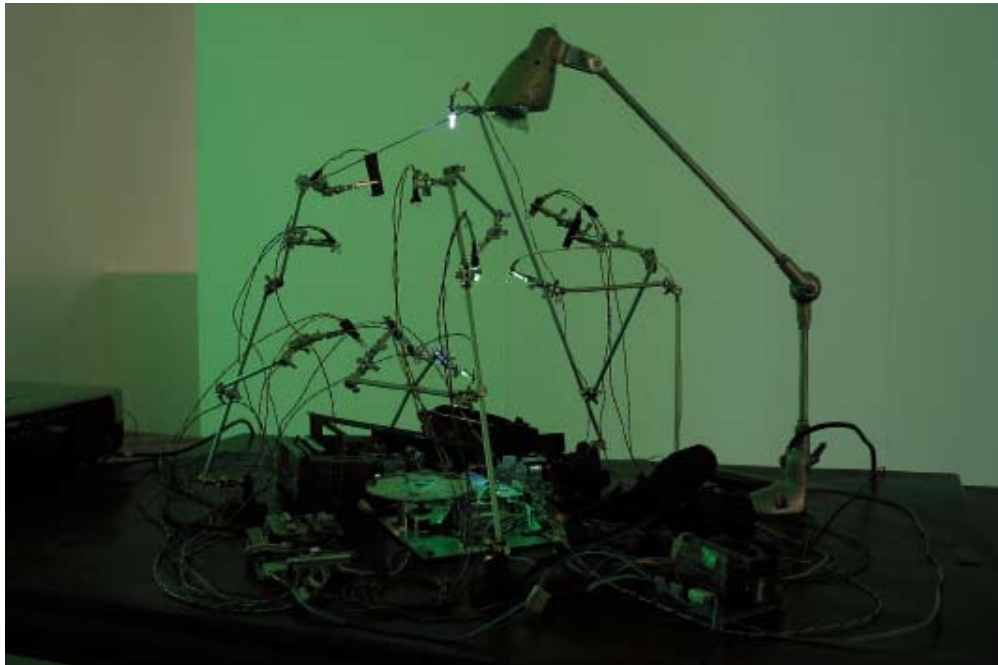
communication surrounding this award culminating in an Internet campaign spanning some hundred websites from across the world, finally producing 262 submissions from 47 different countries for the Technological Art Award 2010.

An international jury chose 10 nominees whose works will be exhibited in parallel to the exhibition "Update\_3: Body Sound". The ten artists contribute diverse forms of Technological Art. Aside from three Belgians, seven artists from abroad have been nominated. At the end of the biennial, a jury award as well as an audience award will once again be presented. The complete list of candidates is included in this catalogue, as well as an introduction of the ten nominees, with a description and illustration of their work.

## Fondation Liedts-Meesen's art collection

For over 20 years, the Fondation Liedts-Meesen has been expanding its art collection, contemporary art in its diverse guises. Of course, some of it belongs to what has been described above as Technological Art. In the context of this catalogue, we would like to bring some noteworthy works of the collection to your attention:

Julien Maire  
*Exploding Camera*  
2007



*Exploding Camera* (2007) was the work which won Julien Maire (France) the Fondation Liedts-Meesen Multimedia jury award in 2008. For Maire, the camera that exploded in the assassination of Massoed has continued to record, producing a war movie during the next six years. This vision, like the death of the mythical figure of Massoed, has brought the artist to producing the installation *Exploding Camera*, a destroyed medium capable of making a live experimental historic film, that sheds new light on the events of the post-2001 war. The Audience Award went to several designs by Nick Ervinck. At the Fondation Liedts-Meesen's request, Nick Ervinck installed the organic structure *Warsubec* in the Zebrastraat in 2009. *Warsubec* (2009) by Nick Ervinck (Belgium) is the name of two identical, but mirrored, glossy framework constructions, sits on the roofs of the Zebrastraat. Characteristic is the fact that Ervinck did not produce an actual scale model of Warsubec, but designed it entirely on a computer. Warsubec is hybrid in every way: structure and sculpture, blob and box, function and form, fiction and reality. *Life-structurisme (3)* (2008) by Tatsuo Miyajima (Japan) is a framework construction made of LED-units, referring to both spiritual as well as mathematical notions. There are three defining elements: constant change, the connection to everything and the everlasting existence of objects. The digital digits continue to change between 0 to 9 at a fixed rate.

For the past few years, the Fondation Liedts-Meesen has been purchasing digital art in the form of CD-ROMs and DVDs. In that context, we would like to mention *Stria* by Golan Levin, *Poeros* by Plumage, *Paintshape*, *Paintscape* by Stephan Balleux, *Orquideas* by Ben Dierick, *E-Volver* by Driessens & Verstappen and *Rem 13* by Liu.

Finally, we prefer projects that feature technology for our month-long exhibitions aimed at young artists wanting to present their work to a broad audience in the Zebrastraat lounge. In 2009 this concerned: *Internet Mozaiek* by Wim Vanhenden and *Cinema Sonore* by Stefan Martens.

## A dedicated effort at Zebrastraat

The Fondation Liedts-Meesen has taken the first humble step in the chosen direction. Our name is no doubt more readily recognised in specialized and international circles.



The Fondation Liedts-Meesen means to continue to strive forward in this direction. We can already announce the 2012 biennial, which will again be accompanied by an award, presented for all kinds of artistic expression. Now more than ever, we must focus on candidates that stress the properties of Technological Art, interactivity, diversity of means and media, combinations of technologies and forms of art. In order to reinforce this bi-annual event, it seems fitting to organise fringe activities at the location and during the period of the next biennial, within a forum of lectures, colloquia and unique presentations. We would like to involve other sites than that of the city of Ghent for this purpose.

Every day, the Zebrastraat, under the guidance of the Fondation Liedts-Meesen, strives to uphold these key values of Technological Art, and to maintain them as a common thread for all the events held at the Zebrastraat. A dedicated effort will be made to ensure that young artists continue to be given the chance to exhibit their work for an entire month in the Zebrastraat lounge, within this atmosphere of innovative and rapidly evolving art, whenever quality and means are present to make it possible.

**Alain Liedts**

## Digital Daedalus

**D**oes contemporary art still connect with today's technological advances? And if so, where are these new forms of art exhibited? This question led to the inception of the "Update" Biennial, with its focus on artistic creations broadly categorised as "new media". The Biennial has a dual purpose; on the one hand it displays the organizer's vision, on the other it exhibits a selection of works competing for the Technological Art Award, presented by the Fondation Liedts-Meesen at the Zebrastraat in Ghent.

A unique housing accommodation, the Zebrastraat has living, meeting and culture as its keywords. Residents, or visitors using the Zebrastraat's infrastructure, are met with a surroundings where state of the art technology is structurally embedded everywhere. In our day to day lives, this is a normal, even desirable condition. Many artists interact with new cultural conditions that have arisen from technological advances. Especially the digital technology develops at a pace that is hard to follow for some. Some opinion leaders claim it is the biggest generational difference since rock & roll. Because of an already extended portfolio of functions, a lack of financial vigour and an art historic conditioning, many museums face that selfsame alienation. And so, "Update" wants to literally contribute to giving an update on contemporary evolutions.

In the Zebrastraat's central lounge, there is a sculpture by Panamarenko. It clearly references the mythical figures of Icarus and Daedalus. The latter, with his ingenious machines and creative thinking, can be seen as a forerunner of the type of artist featured in the "Update" exhibitions. Like engineers, artists usually start from practical problems, and yet there is a difference between engineers and artists. The former must reach a practical solution, while the latter may start from a practical problem, (s)he will always end up with a "plastic" solution. Art does not need to be a practical, useful tool; it succeeds if it leaves a surprising mark on how we experience reality. This reality is today's reality, which is obviously diverse and complex. Means of communication such as letters and emails continue to co-exist, yet the letter can hardly be considered typical of the 21st century, despite the fact that messages still tend to get delivered through that channel. To put it differently: the Stone Age did not end because we ran out of stones, but because other developments came to dominate human existence and culture.

In contemporary society, information, and its processing, evolve from visual to auditory and even tactile components with astonishing ease. If we choose to discuss lineage, we should not only look at the past, but also at the future, which is what the "Updates" are aimed at. Cave paintings became canvas painting, photography, film or video, but the evolution continues beyond that. This journey of discovery is the Zebrastraat's creed, specifically manifested in the Biennial. A first summary was made by Professor Jean-Marie Dallet of the European School of Visual Arts (Poitiers, France). The exhibition gave an overview of art where instruments, machines and technology all played key roles. Icelandic pop star Björk's video clip *All is full of love*, produced by the artist Chris Cunningham is exemplary. The evolution of the prosthetic creates possibilities of man becoming a little more machine, while machines become aware.

These exhibitions have always gone hand in hand with special attention to the architecture of the exposition, and a redesigning of the Zebrastraat's exhibition space. This was also the case for "Update\_2", which featured the first collection presentation. Peter Weibel, artist and director of Karlsruhe's ZKM (Germany) selected several works from his museum to be presented at the Zebrastraat. His approach and genealogy stems from the performance art of the 1960's and 70's. Whereas performance uses a few rules that are executed, a computer works with numerical parameters. Despite a clear connection to preceding expressions of art, an exploration of contemporary technology

enriches traditional categories of art. Despite the temporary nature of the exhibition, "Update\_2" leads to a permanent integration, as in Nick Ervinck's case. His participation and nomination in the new media contest led to the creation of a completely new architectural sculpture on the Zebrastraat's roof.

The current edition is led by Christine Van Assche, chief curator of Centre Pompidou. A selection of works of art from that museum will be enriched by loans from additional collections. The exhibition "Body Sound" chooses to focus on auditory works. The provided architecture of the exposition is possibly even more drastic than before. It is exactly this flexibility which marks the engagement and care given to allowing these new forms of art to come into their rights in a stimulating habitat. It shows, once again, how the Zebrastraat is building a place where contemporary art can be at home.

**Stef Van Bellingen**

## “Body Sound”: A Laboratory

*Sound fills the space where it resounds, all the while resounding in me. [...] In the interior or exterior space, it resounds [...].* Jean Luc Nancy, in “À L'Écoute”.<sup>11</sup>

Since La Monte Young (*Dream House*), Karlheim Stockhausen (*Symphony for 20 Rooms*), John Cage (*4'33"*), Nam June Paik (*Exposition of Music, Electronic TV*), artists, be they visual artists or musicians, have been concerned with the spatial environment devoted to their sound works and the “sensory” reception thereof by the listeners/spectators in the room.

Exhibiting sound stems from an experimental enterprise or research laboratory. Evidently, contemporary art institutions are increasingly interested in this vast domain highly valued by artists. Several exhibitions have recently taken place; “Voices” by Witte de With of Rotterdam (1998), “Lost in Sound” at the Galego Centre of Contemporary Art in Santiago de Compostella (1999), “Sounds and Files” at Vienna’s Künstlerhaus (2000), Sonic Boom at the Hayward Gallery in London, “Sonic Process” (2002) and “Sons et Lumières” (2005) at the Centre Pompidou, “Sound of Music” at Kortrijk’s Broelmuseum (2007). This list is far from exhaustive, and represents only a small part of the projects that research the intersection of sound and visual art.

Today, artists have shown a growing interest in works that integrate sound. And the devices that put into effect these interactions are ever more present in the art world. Furthermore, and more importantly, the technologies used in the creation of sound works have certainly been democratized and broadcasting equipment has also been perfected. To be sure, museums can no longer ignore audio works where a relationship is drawn between sound and more visual elements, as they did in the 1970’s and 80’s.

<sup>11</sup> Jean-Luc Nancy, “À L'Écoute”, Galilée Edition 2002

Accordingly, the Centre Pompidou has acquired, and continues to acquire audio works, whether they are in the form of spatial devices, CD’s or sound files by artists specialized in sound like Eliane Radigue or Mika Vainio, but also of multi-disciplinary artists such as Ugo Rondinone or Emmanuel Lagarrigue.

Exhibiting sound means: creating relationships between the material space of the exhibition, the physical and mental “body” of the spectator or listener, immaterial auditory elements and the visual elements of the works, thus bringing together seemingly incompatible parameters. Given that sound resounds in a space at the same time as it resounds in the body of a spectator/listener, to return to Jean Luc Nancy’s quote, in view of its expansionist and ubiquitous nature, it is necessary to reflect upon the multiple connections between the external space, the place of the spectator/listener and his internal space and this sensory domain.

“Listening” Jean Luc Nancy writes, “is entering that spatiality by which I am, at the same, penetrated.”

The body of the spectator/listener is put to the test in the “Body Sound”, whether he wants it or not, whereas when he only looks at a work, he can maintain a relative distance.

La Monte Young  
& Marian Zazeela  
*Dream House*  
1962–1990  
Exhib. “Sons & Lumières”  
Centre Pompidou, 2004



Making sound “corporeal” in an exhibition means rendering the spectres of sound audible through different means and transmitting the echoes, vibrations, timbres, resonances, waves, etc to the audience in their totality.

Moving from spatial listening to bodily listening, from spaces specially designed by the artists in order to achieve the exact conditions necessary to transmit the work, to an internal space where listening resonates within the body and spirit. Recreating a “grand body” in the white cubic space, destined for the exhibition of visual works is one of the objectives of this project.

The Bureau des Mésarchitectures (Didier Faustino and Cláudia Martinho) have come up with a global physical, sensory and conceptual space for a collective and narrative experience for the entirety of the works, but also for the creation of individual receptive spaces.

This is not a retrospective of sound art, nor is it a historical exhibition, but rather a “laboratory” exhibition, mainly based on the works from the New Media Collection of the Centre Pompidou, a collection that is constantly evolving and growing. Here, audio-visual works, multi-disciplinary works stand side by side with purely audio works. The works can be divided into four large categories, whose limits are

Nam June Paik  
*TV Experiments*  
(*Mixed Microphones*)/  
*Sound Wave Input*  
on two TVs (*Vertical*  
and *Horizontal*)/  
*Horizontal Egg*  
*Roll TV/Vertical*  
*Roll TV/Oscilloscope*  
*Experiment /*  
*Magnet TV /*  
*TV Experiment (Donut)*  
1963–1995  
Exhib. “Sons & Lumières”  
Centre Pompidou, 2004



sometimes hard to define: the first of these (de-materialisation) draws attention to the “white cube”, a reference to the museum space of the 1960’s and 70’s and to anechoic rooms. This “white cube” is deconstructed, work after work, until it is immaterial.

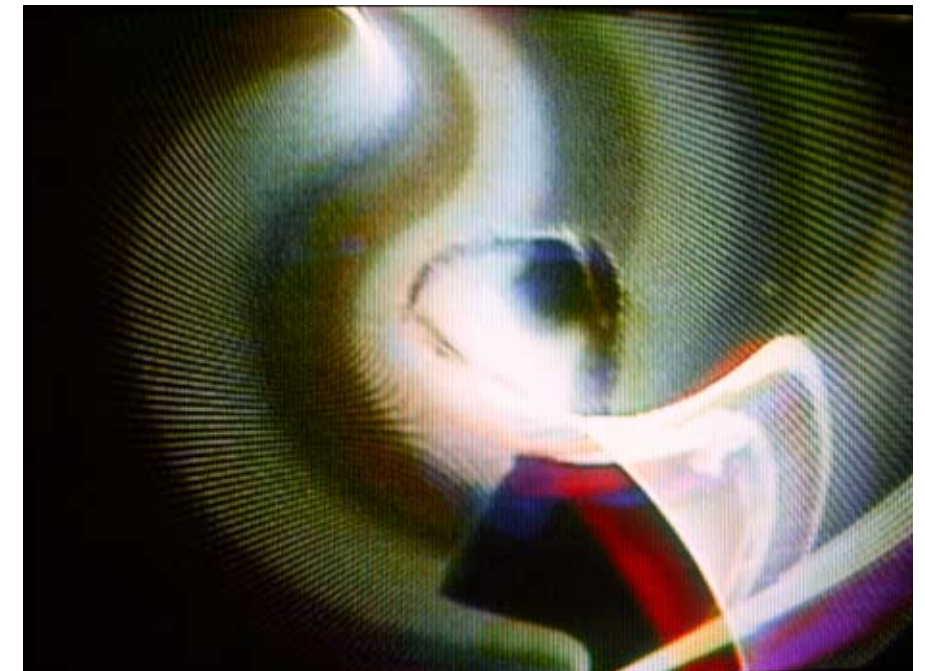
The second section (immersion/internal listening) looks for the intersection between the visual and the auditory, through several propositions by the artists, conditioning the spectator to share in common experiences, as a medium for experimenting.

The third part (silent geography) is “an empty theatre”, to cite Didier Faustino’s expression, in which the immaterial work from Chris Marker’s “second world” and the artists’/architects’ individual listening devices stand side by side and interact.

The fourth division (spatial listening) proposes a phenomenology of space, a sound vibration whose intention it is to progressively dissolve the architectural space.

The narrative trajectory of the exhibition guides the visitor/spectator/listener by means of a common thread: that of an imposed passage of sound in *Get out of my Mind*, *Get out of this Room* by Bruce Nauman, transmitted in a traditional museum space (the celebrated white cube), specially conceived for this work created in 1968,

Nam June Paik  
*Global Groove*  
1973



simultaneously attracting and rejecting the spectator. The tension between the interior and the exterior is here so obvious that it reaches a kind of paroxysm. “While not quite conceptual, Nauman’s work on sound and space gains mental connotations in the paranoid passive-aggressive wordplay of his first acoustic installation”, writes Douglas Kahn. *Get out of my Mind, Get out of this Room* is a completely empty room, where a sound recording tirelessly repeats the same text in different tones, progressively becoming more aggressive.

Vito Acconci, a sound poet since his début, has made several recordings of sound performances, such as *Under-History Lessons* (1976), staged by the Bureau des Mésarchitectures in a fake cube made of foam that incorporates the listener in reserved spaces. Vito Acconci’s voice is itself the symbol of a bodily voice, a voice that little by little unfolds in the space-time of the work.

“Silence is not a deprivation, but an arrangement of resonances, like a perfect condition where one can here his own body resound”, writes Jean Luc Nancy in “À L’Écoute”. In *Two Times 4’33”*, Manon de Boer chooses this emblematic piece by John Cage where silence is considered to be a sound in itself, because it allows the non-intentional sounds of the surrounding environment to be heard as well as the

12 Douglas Kahn, “Plénitudes vides et espaces expérimentaux. La postérité des silences de John Cage”, dans le catalogue *Sons et Lumières*, Centre Pompidou Editions, Paris, 2004



**Left page**  
Mathieu Briand  
[[SYS\*11. MiE>AbE/SoS\  
[SYS\*10.MeE/SoS\BoS]]  
2002

Exhib. “Sonic Process.  
Une nouvelle  
géographie des sons”  
Centre Pompidou,  
2002–2003

**This page**  
Flow Motion  
(Anna Piva, Edward  
George)  
*Ghost Dance*  
(*Hallucinator mix*)  
2002

Exhib. “Sonic Process.  
Une nouvelle  
géographie des sons”  
Centre Pompidou,  
2002–2003

sound of one’s own body, like in an anechoic chamber. We perceive that celebrated silence from the point of view of the performer and the listener. In order to prolong the “non-space”, the work is presented in a transparent glass box, thus broadening the listener’s or spectator’s vision beyond the first glance.

Artists also experiment with the modes of sound creation where vibrations transcend the architectural boundaries, walls and ceilings, in order to take part in a communal experience. In *Schizoframes*, Céleste Boursier-Mougenot invites us to meditate in front of a wall of sonorous images, generated by the auditory frequencies themselves in a 180° environment, allowing the sound to invade the spectators, seated on a sofa stuffed with loudspeakers, as well as the surrounding space. Here, the experience of the work becomes “political”, in the sense that the spectator/listener from now on participates in a shared experience.

∞ [*Infinity*] by Noto aka Carsten Nicolai consists of 72 recordings transmitted by small loudspeakers, repeating itself infinitely. They are spread throughout a space designed by the Bureau des Mésarchitectures, an acoustic labyrinth in homage to Robert Morris and Joseph Beuys, where the visitors hear without seeing, wandering endlessly.



Sound “helmets” were conceived by Didier Faustino, as a specific place for listening to works by Owada/Martin Creed, Mika Vainio and Mike Kelley/Scanner, with no regard for anything but the interior.

*Me +* by Anouk de Clercq is a metaphor for the electric body, disembodied, reduced to the + symbol, walking in the space of the screen, which here becomes the space of the room. The electronic sound by Anton Aeki mixes with a warm and sensual voice, and is transmitted in such a way that the spectator/listener is captivated by the intimacy of the sonorous space.

Two environments, entirely designed by the artists as phenomenological spaces, emit a hypnotic ambiance. Here, the walls dissolve into infinity. In the environment *The evening passes like any other...* Ugo Rondinone offers the audience “an experience of the body as a source of knowledge, thus making the spectator a participant in this ‘performance poem’”, writes Gaby Hartel in the exhibition’s catalogue. Sounds and a voice play on loudspeakers, hidden in enormous white rocks that hang inside a room delimited by a horizon of uncertain yellow.

In the environment *I never Dream otherwise than Awake* the artist Emmanuel Lagarrigue transmits sounds, melodies, music, from small

Ugo Rondinone  
*The evening passes  
like any other...*  
1998  
Musée national d’art  
moderne,  
Centre Pompidou, 2001



suspended loudspeakers, responding to one another, in a slightly surreal space, inviting the audience to meditate and dream.

The exhibition ends with *Brilliant Noise*, a visual and auditory 180° projection by Semiconductor (Ruth Jarman and Joe Gerhardt). Scientific images of the sun are reconstructed and given a rhythm according to particular frequencies and pure electronic sounds. *Brilliant Noise* pulls the spectator into a cosmic vision/listening, where the difference between sounds and images are eradicated, and space dissolves into a multitude of entropic effects.

Between the second and fourth sections there is a visual and auditory voyage on the Second Life platform *L’Ouvroir 123/63/39* by Chris Marker. “Guillaume”, the famous 3D cat, invites the Internet user to participate in a number of collective experiences. “Now, I have my island in SL”, Chris Marker writes on the site [www.popotronics.fr](http://www.popotronics.fr). “I have had gatherings with people from all corners of the world here. It is beyond doubt that we have achieved something completely new in the history of communication. It is not quite reality, and yet... The telephone, e-mail, even video conferencing do not abolish distance, rather, they highlight our effort to overcome it. In SL, it has been eradicated. We are there and we are not there at the same time. Like my other cousin, Schrödinger’s cat, no-one had ever proven this.”

The exhibition starts by “exhibiting the body of sound”, to pursue, throughout the exhibition, sounds as shared experiences of bodies that have become actors in collective works, in reality and – why not – in the virtual world.

Christine Van Assche

# Music Exhibitions from Music Hall Seats to Sound Installations<sup>\1</sup>

**E**xhibiting music, is it possible? If so, what exactly is exhibited under this designation of “music”? In fact, what do we expose music to when we expose music to techniques, which might be considered alien to it, that is to say, exhibitions and installations, characteristic of the visual arts<sup>\2</sup>?

## Nam June Paik: “I exhibit music”

In 1962 Nam June Paik published a text entitled *On the exposition of music*<sup>\3</sup> in the journal *Décollage*, edited by Wolf Vostell. Paik, having studied musicology and written a master’s thesis on Arnold

<sup>\1</sup> Some parts of this text have been published in a different form in *Résonance*, no.12 (Ircam/Centre Georges Pompidou, 1997) and in *Espaces (Les Cahiers de l’Ircam, 1994)*. That the value of an exposition in the broad sense constitutes a musical, is what I am attempting to show, by reading, most notably, Adorno and Benjamin in *Musica Practica*.

<sup>\2</sup> *Arrangements and Phonographies from Monteverdi to James Brown*, “Esthétiques”, L’Harmattan, 1997. The matter at hand then is the exhibition in a strict sense (or at least, more constrained in appearance): that of the museum and the gallery.

<sup>\3</sup> Reprinted in Nam June Paik, *Du Cheval à Christo et autres écrits*, Lebeer Hossmann edition, 1993.

<sup>\4</sup> Among the “howling”, “electoral campaign discourse”, “birds”, “female Italian presenter”, and other “railway station public announcements”, and also found here as auditory material Stockhausen’s *Gruppen* and Cage’s *Concerto pour Piano*.

Schoenberg, spent a few years in Cologne (Wolfgang Fortner had recommended him to the electronics studio of the West German Rundfunk, to which, however, he was not admitted) and Darmstadt. His letters to Wolfgang Steinecke, the driving force behind the celebrated summer courses at Darmstadt (Messiaen, Boulez, Stockhausen, Pousseur, Nono, Maderna taught there as well as organized conferences), revealed the impact a meeting with John Cage had on Paik. On the eight of December 1958, he wrote to Steinecke:

“Schoenberg wrote ‘atonal’. John Cage has written ‘a-composition’. Me, I write ‘a-music’. To achieve this, one needs a normal piano, or a grand piano and a very bad ‘prepared’ piano and a scooter. [...] The musicians read the paper, ‘speak with the audience’, push the grand piano around, knocking over a piano, which falls off the stage onto the venue floor. The audience throws fireworks against the stage, fires pistols, breaks glass. The scooter arrives from behind. On top of all that, plenty of toys, the weather forecast, some boogie-woogie, water, the sound of a megaphone etc., that is to say, functional sounds freed from their functions. Of course – it’s a very sad ‘a-music’ (musical art), a Schwitters sound. John Cage has shown much interest in this idea”.

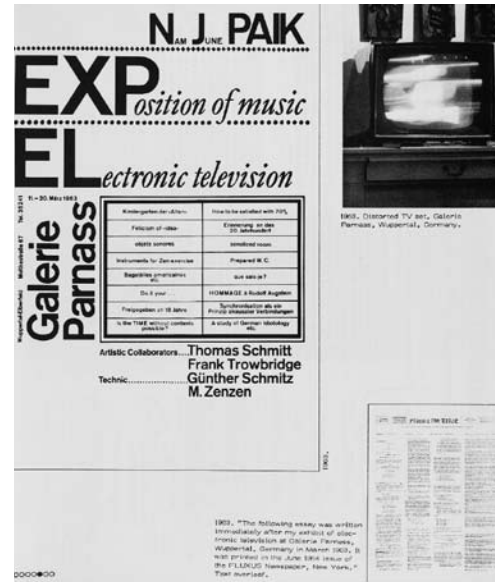
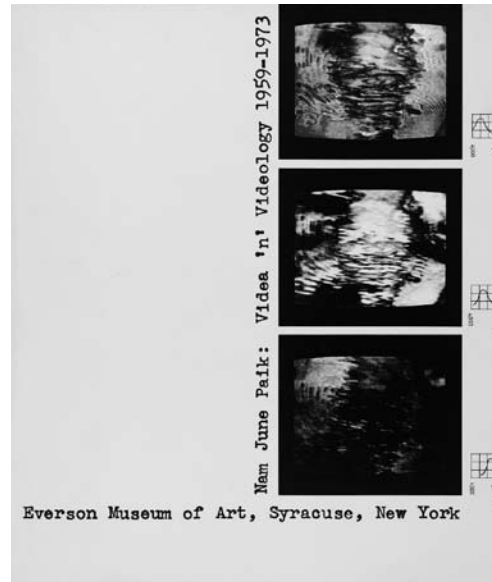
On the second of May 1959, Paik wrote to Steinecke again, to suggest an “anti-music” entitled *Homage to John Cage* for the summer course of that year, which was never completed:

“I hope, or I believe (if you will allow it) that you give this serious (and non-restorative) antithesis of ‘dodecaphonic mannerism’ a chance. (Although I still really like Schoenberg and Stockhausen).”

In a text on the subject of his *Symphony for 20 Rooms*<sup>\4</sup>, Paik pays homage to the “Stockhausen Idea” consisting of “allowing listeners to enter and exit as they please”. It is from this idea that the text entitled *On the exposition of music* draws its conclusions: it constitutes “a step towards abandoning that form of blindness”, denounced by Paik as a blindness which “most often” condemns the indetermination so exalted by so-called open works to consider none other but the performer:

“The audience has no other choice but that of listening or not listening to music, a very antiquated liberty that he enjoyed, or was forced to enjoy even when listening to tedious music such as Brahms’ symphonies or ‘Tristan and Mélisande’”.

Moreover, according to Paik, “if the performer were to rehearse if only once, the degree and character of the indetermination no longer distinguishes itself from that found in classical music, baroque,



15 That cruising of the space of the *concert exhibition* which reunites sounds that are in themselves changing and shifting was one of the demands made by Mondrian, when he described the concert hall adapted to the music of neo-plasticism: "The place for performing neo-plasticist music must satisfy new needs. The 'hall' must be completely different from the traditional 'concert hall'. [...] It will be possible to come and go without disturbing others, to listen and to observe comfortably." ("Neo-plasticism: Its realization in Music and in Future Theater", in *The New Art The New Life*, The Collected Writings of Piet Mondrian, edited and translated by Harry Holtzman and Martin S. James, Thames and Hudson, 1987, p.163; the original text was translated into French by Mondrian in *La vie des lettres et des arts*, August 1922.) And Mondrian added, not without a touch of humor, that he did not know whether it was a church or a theater, that if it were a buffet it must be an automatic one. Or rather, "Not a buffet at all, since we may leave this place without missing out on anything: the compositions must be repeated, like in modern cinemas."

renaissance or medieval". Adding, "That is why I have not composed any undetermined music, nor graphic music, despite my large respect towards Cage and his friends". Stockhausen, then, cleared that path for Paik, which he followed in the first draft (spring 1961) of his *Symphony for 20 Rooms*, "where the audience had the choice between at least twenty different sources of sound, in which they were free to circulate"15. Paradoxically (especially considering what Benjamin described about the exhibition as a loss of a certain "here and now"), by exhibiting music of this kind (with or beyond Stockhausen – we will return to this point), Paik attempts to render it as an absolutely unique and irreproducible performance by jumping over its Western history: "One single time", every time. The next step (and undoubtedly the last) on this path will soon consist of "letting the audience [...] interact and perform himself". This step, we introduce in Paik's own words: "I have thus renounced the performance of music. *I exhibit music*. I create all kinds of musical instruments, sonorous objects in order to exhibit them in a room where the public may play with them as they please." The difficulty that catches up to Paik here in his euphoric line of thought, step by step, is situated in the caesura between these two phrases: "I exhibit music", an astonishing phrase – impossible even – that is effectively replaced by "I exhibit instruments" or other objects that produce sound.

**Karlheinz Stockhausen: "The practice of a concert [...] is relayed by a practice corresponding to visiting a painting gallery."**

*On the exposition of music* reversed the question of the open oeuvre or the indetermination to one of the place where music is situated. The idea that "the position of the listener is no longer fixed", and that he may "move around in situ and choose his acoustic perspective freely"16, that idea developed by Stockhausen, notably in *Ensemble*, can be understood as a resistance to the unfolding of multiple and complex paradigms of the open oeuvres in syntagm: "The simultaneity of the compositions [*Ensemble* is in fact a collective 'oeuvre'] demands that we listen to different 'pieces' at the same time, and connect them. This 'verticalisation' of the perception of events



\6 Karheinz Stockhausen, *Texte*. Vol. 3, DuMont, p. 212.

\7 Ibid.

\8 Ibid. p. 216.

\9 Ibid. p. 144

\10 Ibid. p. 154

\11 Numerous other texts by composers might be cited as going in that direction. Thus, Konrad Boehmer writes, in an article entitled *Raum-Formen*: “By renouncing the traditional concept of authenticity, partitions have been composed where the succession of formal sequences happens in such a way that their combination becomes mobile. Performance only gives but one version of the piece, not the piece in its totality. However, the affirmative character of each of these versions partially contradicts the project of mobile construction from which they originated [...]. The performance of several versions one after another also fails because of their being too alike, or strenuous to the memory capacity of the listener [...]. This chain of contradictions can not be solved, unless the *praxis* of performance changes as well as the form of the work.”

as well as the relativisation of the definitive form (a ‘piece’, signed by an individual), are also relevant in other domains other than that of music.”\7

A year later, in 1968, *Musik für ein Haus* continued in the same vein, by specifying the spatial conditions:

“The compositions of 14 different authors will be executed simultaneously in four rooms, over several hours [...]. The optimal conditions for *Musik für ein Haus* would be different sound-proofed spaces, spaced out next to and on top of each other, separated by a network of corridors, without an obligatory order for the listener. Each listener comes and goes as he chooses in his own time, and changes his auditory perspective freely within the house. The instrumentalists’ performance is more or less amplified in each room, by microphones and loudspeakers. Each of the four rooms is connected to the other three through loudspeakers. Not only do the performers interact with one another, but they also react to the music from the other rooms. In a fifth room (Klangbox), all the music from the four rooms can be permanently heard, from four different loudspeakers. [...] Thus, the house in *synchronized*.”\8

This idea for a “musical house” (*Musikhaus*) was also revisited in *Musik für die Beethovenhalle* in 1969:

“A house where music can continuously be heard, a house made of a complex of several auditoriums which are used separately or at the same time for a composition; a sound labyrinth of spaces, corridors, balconies, bridges, mobile platforms, nooks and crannies, caves, ‘sound attics’ (*Schallspeicher*), ‘vibratoriums’, ‘sound-boxes’ (*Klangboxen*). [...] We must begin to try new forms of collective listening to music, contemporary forms. The ancient form is not put into question, it merely becomes one particular case.”\9

Finally, when Stockhausen elaborated his project for the International Exhibition in Osaka (1970), he resolutely turned towards new architectural spaces for music; writing:

“Like this, the practice of the concert, as it has remained until present – in terms of listening to spatial electronic music – would be relayed by a form, which corresponds to that of a visit to a painting gallery.”\10

The ideal form of the concert would have become that of the museum. The museum, with its space open to all sorts of routes, would become a metaphor for a new musical concept of the open form. Aiming to reduce the indecision, even to be rediscovered elsewhere.\11

## Listening Point

One may perhaps judge the metaphor of the museum to be ill-suited to the idea of openness, when considering museums as institutions and a practices of “collecting and imprisonment”\12. One could see, like Valéry, “this abuse of space that constitutes a collection\13”, one might think, according to another museum-musical metaphor by Valéry that “the ear could not handle listening to ten orchestras at once”\14. But *for music*, one must understand this metaphor with regards to a contradiction revealed by Konrad Boehmer; which is that the majority of the “mise en espace” in a concert situation (including the most eccentric) reconfirm the existence of a kind of *listening point* (similar to a talking point), seen even to accentuate the uniqueness, centrality and the specular character:

“The internal multiplicity of musical structures, their several stratifications, have lead these past years (especially in electronic music) to a *praxis* of execution where auditory sources (groups of loudspeakers), scattered in a space, separately broadcast (*Ausstrahlen*) the different layers of its structure. Here, still, traditional concert halls are dreadfully inadequate. If, for example, four groups of loudspeakers are distributed over the four walls (or in the four corners) of a room, *the most advantageous position for the listener to be in is very close to the center*. That position is however always occupied by the composer, who regulates the dynamics of each channel from a mixing table.”\15

An interesting paradox, for we find ourselves thus with a *listening point*, no longer decentralized, but *radically re-centralized*: the surroundings would establish the composer as the principal subject, *around* which the listeners convene. It is exactly the contrary of that situation that the museum represents as a metaphor of *passage*.

## Alphabet, or How to Move from Passage to Route

Having barely established this metaphor and its efficiency in musical practice, we must nevertheless take into account an inflexion, a sort of inverse movement: that which transforms a *passage* into a *route*. Yet, the route always supposes the existence of a common core to the multiplicity of deployed perspectives, even if it complicates the analysis thereof.

(*Das böse Ohr*, DuMont, 1993, p.83). And that is why Boehmer proposes a “simultaneous performing of those versions in auditory spaces, separated from one another, but which remain accessible to the listener by the shortest route”. (Ibid., p. 85, emphasis mine).

\12 These are the words of François Dagognet, in *Le Musée sans fin*, Champ Vallon, 1993, p. 31.

\13 “Le problème des musées”, in *Pièces sur l’art*, Œuvres, p. 1291.

\14 Ibid.

\15 “Raum-Formen” op. cit., p. 84. Emphasis mine.

It is exactly that reinterpretation of passage as route that we can see in progress in Stockhausen's compositions after 1971.

*Alphabet*, indicates Stockhausen's<sup>16</sup>, was conceived as a journey through the cellars of the Belgian Radio, connecting thirteen "situations" where "acoustic vibrations [...] modulate a matter (or a 'living being')". The majority of situations then were aimed at *giving sound body*: "revealing the specters of sound" in *Situation 3*, "shattering the glass with sounds" in *Situation 4*, "transmitting the vibrations from an instrument to the body of a dancer" who thus becomes a living loudspeaker in *Situation 6*, etc. And the audience's wandering is directed this time (Stockhausen states that there is a separate entrance and exit), becoming a kind of journey of initiation: it is a matter of "refusing and keeping away thoughts through sound" in *Situation 10*, and of evoking the spirits of the dead with sound" in *Situation 12*, and finally, in *Situation 13*, of "praying with sound".

Since the creation of the *Ensemble* at Darmstadt in 1967 up until that of *Alphabet* in Liège in 1972, there is a notable reorientation.<sup>17</sup> Undoubtedly, it is not a coincidence that *Alphabet*, operating a reversal or conversion in regards to the preceding musical-spatial experiences, re-transposes precisely that notion of the *interior* to the auditory space: the "leader" of the musical game (*der musikalische Leiter*) marks the time between "pillars of sound" (Klangssäulen), that must provide the music with an "acoustic frame", Stockhausen writes<sup>18</sup>; framing, that is to say, by defining an *internal space of levels*, through alternating between the extremes of a "deep" sound and a very "high" sound. By making the passage a route (with a clearly marked entrance and exit), Stockhausen, after having toyed with the framework of the concert; after having exhibited music by taking it out of its framework (understood as a place where it is meant to be heard), strongly reaffirms that that framework is *primarily* a matter of *melos*, that it is governed *first and foremost* by the laws of music (*melos-centrism*). In other words: after having wavered in its status, the framework of the concert once again becomes a kind of function of the musical context in the strict sense. The passage, in Stockhausen's work, did nothing but pass.

## So,

"Exhibiting music", for Paik and Stockhausen, tends to break away from the principle of the enclosure and teleology in a musical oeuvre. It would be to restore sound to its "one single time", to its *here and now*.

Stockhausen however, leaves the gates wide open for the imminent return of an *orientation* of listening, where the exhibitions are conceived as a route rather than a free passage.

Paik, then, by cheerfully making the leap from exhibiting music to exhibiting "sonorous objects" moves towards the *installation*. Instead of reducing the confusion surrounding the nature of music, which makes it impossible to exhibit, it draws attention to it once again.

## So What is an Installation?

Despite what one may think, the word ("installation") is far from self-evident. The dictionary states that its primary meaning is "Relig. Solemnly establishing sth. or s.o. in its dignity. ex.: *Installing a pope, a bishop.*" It also mentions its etymology, from medieval Latin *installare* "to place in its stall".

So what is a stall? Again, according to the dictionary: "1. Each of the wooden high-backed seats that line the choir of a church, reserved for the members of the clergy." In regards to its etymology, it goes from the Old French word *estal*, meaning "stall, or table where merchandise is displayed at a public market."

"Installation", then, means both the solemn establishment of authority (religious) as well as the display of merchandise, seemingly lawless and governed only by chance (or the market). No doubt it is pointless to look for the initial use of such a word to describe a work of art. It is equally futile to attempt to present a rigorous definition of this word, which seems to extend (almost) without limits to *every* contemporary oeuvre placed somewhere.

The authors of *Installation Art*, the "first" book on that subject in general<sup>19</sup>, cautiously state in their preface, that the term is "relatively new" and that the process of establishing a "history of the installation" may seem "curious", considering its "relative youth". However, they state that such a history could be established on the condition that it be more than a mere inventory of "similar forms" – assemblages, happenings, land art, "*arte povera*"... – which would simply be "a history of modern art, no more, no less". Their work, they claim, does not strive towards giving a "definitive definition" of installation art either. The word has been in use to describe a "kind of artistic practice, rejecting the focus on an object in favor of a focus on the connection between several elements or the interaction between things and their contexts"<sup>20</sup> for barely a decade. Indeed a non-definitive definition, but it allows a field to be marked out, without being overly defining.

<sup>16</sup> *Texte*, vol. 4, p. 193.

<sup>17</sup> It can also be found in other works, notably in the project *Sternklang*, *Parkmusik* for Berlin, in 1971: "*Sternklang* is a spiritual music (geistliche Musik), written for five groups of singers and instrumentalists, very distant from each other in terms of spacing. [...] *Sternklang* is music for concentrated listening in meditation and immersion (Versenkung) of the individual of the All of the cosmos. Moreover, it is destined to become other stars in their place. (Ibid., p. 172-174).

<sup>18</sup> Ibid., p.196.

<sup>19</sup> *Installation Art*, Nicolas de Oliveira, Nicola Oxley and Michael Petry (ed.), Thames and Hudson, 1994. "This first book on the subject", read on page 7.

<sup>20</sup> "It is really only in the last decade or so that it [the term of installation] has been used to describe a kind of art making which rejects concentration on one object in favour of a consideration of the relationships between a number of elements or of the interaction between things and their contexts." (p. 8)

An artist like Ilya Kabakov writes: “Basically, I don’t know what an installation is, although I have, for several years now, practiced it with enthusiasm, even passion”<sup>\21</sup>. This means a singular extension of the genre (if installations may be called a genre), for which the boundaries are, at this point, indefinable, but which we can affirm nonetheless, as Kabakov does:

“For me it [installation] heralds a new period in the history of art, of equal importance as the three big eras which have succeeded each other throughout the centuries: the icon, the fresco and the painting. In that genealogy, I believe, the installation will have its place by replacing the painting, and absorbing it.”

In order to find its place among the genres and their genealogies, the installation must include them all, with its “capacity” which Kakabov recognizes as that “of attracting and assimilating, besides visual arts (drawings, paintings, objects), other genres (literature, music, show), in short, becoming a *Gesamtkunstwerk* (the complete oeuvre) that was dreamt of at the beginning of the century.”

## And What is a Sound Installation?

What happens when we place a frequently used substantive next to this unstable word “installation”? How should we understand that phrase: “Sound Installation”?

Let us pay attention first to another meaning of “stall”, which was not mentioned at first:

“2. In a theater, separate numbered seats. Renting a stall. Stall in a music hall, gallery or amphitheater. Stall ticket. Sell one’s stall.”

Thus, hidden in the heart of the word “installation” and its history, a tendency towards the theater, and the concert st/(h)all. Yet, the etymology cannot erase the eminently paradoxical character of the phrase “Sound Installation”.

To be sure, in an (obvious) sense, every installation is or can be sonorous (the phrase “sound installation” has something of a redundancy, particularly in the perspective of a “complete” installation). The enthronement or the display may, evidently, produce some noise or be accompanied by sound. In fact, it is exactly that *production*, as in *produce sound* that Robert Morris attempted to retain in *The Box with the Sound of its Own Making* (1961):

“The box, Morris writes, is made up from six pieces of walnut assembled into a closed cube. I made it with the tools at hand: hammer, saw, etc. It took me three hours. During this work, I recorded the

sounds of the construction onto a tape recorder. Before I sealed off the box, I placed a small loudspeaker inside of it. I left an opening in one of the sides in order to be able to connect a tape recorder to the loudspeaker. In this manner, the recorded sounds can be played back. The measurements of the box are approximately 23x23x23 cm and the thickness of the walnut about 2 cm.”<sup>\22</sup>

By recording the “accompaniment” of the *production*, by reproducing it and placing its sonorous history at the heart of the object, Morris welds sounds of inadequacy or disjointedness to its hollow body: the object precedes (or succeeds) itself; beyond its presence (solid, hard and closed), it dislocates itself. This is undoubtedly contrary to Morris’s intentions, conflicting as it does with his *unitary* designs (the box, as well as the sound of its fabrication); the dislocation is situated exactly at the inexpressible point between the integrity or the dignity of the object (its “installation” in the sense of solemn enthronement) and its sonority. That which does not hold, that is to say, that which undoes the box itself, is the fact that the sound is neither real nor false it belongs to a different time.

Admirable music box! If it is not yet a sound installation (one could qualify it rather as a sculpture or an assemblage), this dislocation that works away at it, tends to make it explode to, according to the authors of *Installation Art* “reject the focus on an object in favor of a focus on the connection between several elements or the interaction between things and their contexts”, in the words of the authors of *Installation Art*. Driven by the sound that disjoints it, the Morrisian music box already tends towards installation. Not only does it contain its own history (if that history is truly its own), but also all the difficulties which are characteristic of sound installations. They are just waiting to spread when the box opens (and that opening is a *structural* element, as Morris explains.)

## With Hidden Noise, or the In-exhibitability of Sound

Difficulties arise when we strive to understand the word “sonorous” as anything other than a simple qualification applicable to installations in general; and regard the installation as *sound as installation*. These difficulties are not “conceptual”, they are not to be shrugged off as “theoretical”, or strangers to “realistic practice”: what sound installations (not mere installations with sound) make visible, or rather, audible, are exactly those difficulties. If they are not the theme of

<sup>\21</sup> “L’installation totale” (Conference held at the Staatliche Hochschule für Bildende Künste, Frankfurt), French translation in *Et tous ils changent le monde*, catalog of the second biennial of contemporary art, Lyon, 1993, p. 268 onwards.

<sup>\22</sup> Quoted in *Écouter par les yeux. Objets et environnements sonores*, catalog of the exhibition at the Musée d’art moderne de la Ville de Paris, 1980, p.106.

sound installations, they are at least a kind of recurring and privileged motif, either implicit or explicit.

What are those difficulties? They can be summed up in an impossibility: *sound does not show itself as such*. In that sense, Morris's box echoes Marcel Duchamp's work entitled *A Bruit secret* (1916):

"This ready-made, Duchamp explains during a conversation with James Johnson Sweeney<sup>23</sup>, is a spool of thread between two squares of copper... Before I finished it, [Walter] Arensberg put something inside the spool; without ever telling me what it was, and I never wanted to know. It was a sort of secret; it makes noise, so we called that ready-made "with hidden noise", and we can hear why. I will never know whether it is a diamond or a coin."

What this title (*With Hidden Noise*) expresses, through a strange sort of metonymy, is the in-exhibitability of sound. But when one tries to decipher the title, to explain or to expose it, what hides is no longer the sound, but "something": its source, the object that produces it. If then the sound is secret, it cannot hide itself like an object. Sound withdraws into its own shelter. Although, as Duchamp says "something" instead of sound, it is not a metonymy like others (perhaps it can no longer rightly be called metonymy): Duchamp asks without answering the question that is at the root of every *sound* installation.

Despite the fact that the sound itself neither hides nor shows itself, sound installations show in a privileged way the basis for sound, the mechanisms that produce sound, the physical phenomena that are linked to the propagation of sound. In this manner Sarkis, who conceived an "end of the century sculpture" for the exhibition *L'Œil musicien* held in Charleroi that arranged "the entire oeuvre of Webern in silence on tape" on several thousand bricks. Christian Marclay for his part, covered the floor with empty vinyl records at the Shedhalle in Zurich in 1989 (once they were trod upon, they could be played back). Takis, then, exposed the moment when a percussionist strikes the resonating body, in all its purity. Bill Viola, finally, in his *Hallway Nodes*, exploited the heterodyne effect on very low frequencies to render sound tactile (rather than audible) in nodes in a corridor.

Viola's sound installation dates back to 1973. He writes<sup>24</sup>: "In 1973, I met a musician, David Tudor, and I participated in his project "*Rainforest*", which was performed in a number of concerts and performances throughout the seventies". *Rainforest* existed in several versions, and in that evolution of the project, it is the musical instrument that becomes a kind of installation. A first version (1968), composed

<sup>23</sup> Quoted in Arturo Schwarz, *The Complete Works of Marcel Duchamp*, Thames and Hudson, 1969, p. 462.

<sup>24</sup> Bill Viola, "Statements", in *Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House. Writings 1973–1994*, Thames and Hudson, 1995, p. 151.

for Merce Cunningham, connected audio transducers to small objects, which thus became resonators for sound signals giving them a specific "voice" (in Tudor's words). In *Rainforest IV*, those objects grew and thus had "their own presence within the room", so Tudor could describe that fourth version as "an environmental work". And this time, not only do the several objects hanging from the ceiling (such as kegs, watering pipes, gas canisters,...) give "voice" to the signals that they receive, but the resonating nodes of the materials are detected by contact-microphones and re-transmitted into the surroundings.<sup>25</sup>

What Viola claims he learned from Tudor, is an "understanding of sound as a material thing". And that search for the impossible (and untraceable) materiality of sound seems to be one of the rare recurring characteristics in sound installations, maybe even their only truly distinctive trait. But it is an attribute, which is always hollow, empty. It is in reserve. *In reserve*.

## By Assumption (Entrances and Exits)

1. What is called an exhibition has, as its principle, the (theoretical) infinite series; the collection: the object is an example in a succession of examples, it represents by metonymy the reason behind the series; that is to say, the principle of the exhibition-collection. The installation, on the other hand, upholds a principle of closure, even if that principle is overwhelmed by the reception of the work, owing to the presence of random contextual variations at the heart of the installation. In other words (in a formal way), an exhibition attempts a process of infinite cataloging through a collection which is in reality always finite; while an installation, despite the disturbance of infinite contextual variations, has the possibility of closure.

2. Those principles of exposition and installation, *imported* into the field of music ("exhibition of music", "sound installation"), causes the basics of musical practice to move in two opposite directions: that of the "one single time", never to be repeated; and that of permanence, the availability of an object.

3. And one is always lying in wait for the other.

## P.S.

It is without a doubt one of Viola's earliest sound installation projects that comes closest to a "sonorous" version of that "enigma": worded very well by Lyotard on the subject of Buren:

<sup>25</sup> These quotations and descriptions are taken from texts featured on the website devoted to David Tudor: [www.emf.org/tudor](http://www.emf.org/tudor).

“Problem: supposing that the presuppositions of a visual art exhibition are not visible, create an exhibition of visual art that exhibit these presuppositions.”<sup>26</sup>

*In the Footsteps of Those Who Have Marched Before* is an installation (1973) where at least four contact-microphones re-transmit the footsteps of the visitors and mixes them with a recording of a pounding and resounding footfall: “That which returns” Viola writes, “is a decision of synchronization; people being either in sync or out of sync with the recording”<sup>27</sup>. What also recurs – and as an irreducibly sonorous mode – is *the passage itself*.

*In the Footsteps...*: That title can be translated and understood as: “In the footsteps of those who have already passed”.

Peter Szendy

<sup>26</sup> *Que Peindre ?*,  
La Différence, 1987,  
p. 99.

<sup>27</sup> Op. cit., p. 34.

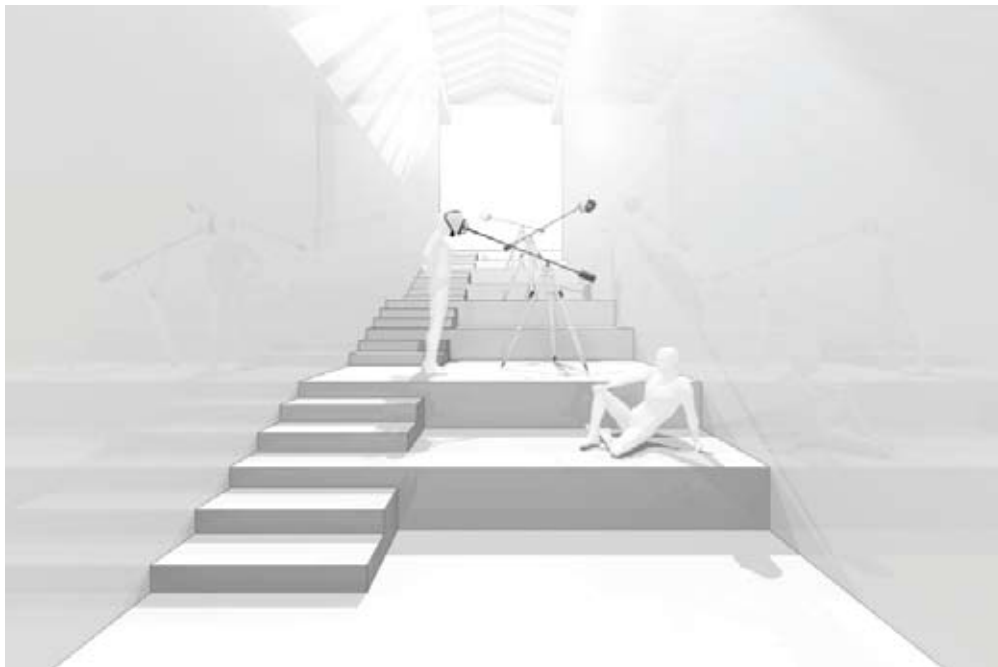
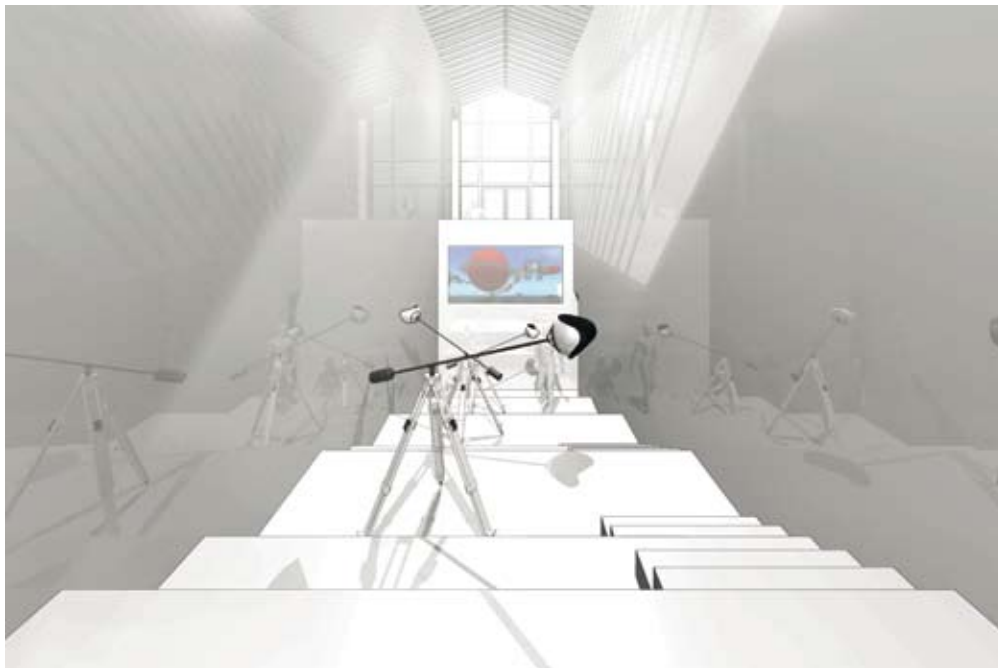
## Scenographic Principles The Bureau des Mésarchitectures

**F**or this exhibition, where it is a matter of making sound “corporeal”, the scenographic principle rests on a game of perceptible amplification of auditory sensitivity by exacerbating or neutralizing the other senses. This perceptual experience is close to that of synaesthesia, a neurological phenomenon where two or more senses are joined together. Here, the experience of the “invisible” dimension of sound, is explored not only through modes of listening, but also through the psycho-physical way in which the body is (de-) conditioned.

This “invisible” dimension takes form thanks to a spatial device linked to sensory listening, unique to each work. A succession of micro-environments invites the public to explore different perceptions of sound through their interactions with the materials, their position when listening and the movement of their body within the space. The journey develops in four sequences:

### 1. [de-materialization]

The point of departure is the installation *Get out of my Mind, Get out of this Room*, where Bruce Nauman’s voice resounds in a white cube. The de-materialization of that same cube takes place all along the journey. First through erosion: a cube that incorporates intimate



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Didier Faustino  
*Erase your Head /  
An Instrument for  
Blank Architecture*  
2010

alcoves where Vito Acconci's work can be heard. Next through the disappearance of its visual boundaries: a glass cube whose emptiness amplifies the silent dimension of Manon de Boer's work, echoing John Cage.

## 2. [immersion | internal listening]

Immersive environments submerge the body into an internal listening: the installation of the meditative auditory sofa by Céleste Boursier-Mougenot, the felt envelope suspended in an infinite loop by Alva Noto, and the timidness of the loving words whispered by the walls, by Anouk de Clercq; that come to inscribe themselves into the proportions Bruce Nauman's cube.

## 3. [silent geography | individual listening]

The central space, in the middle of the journey, materializes a silent geography. An immaculate stand reveals an overexposed void of white light, to a soundtrack of amplified silence. Contrary to a showroom, here, the public finds itself in an empty theater; a sensory reset. The individual sound devices, conceived by Didier Faustino come to occupy the space of the stands, in a fragile and precarious equilibrium. Exacerbating the dimension of sound by nullifying the sense of sight, they offer an intimate listening experience of the works of Mika Vainio, Martin Creed and Mike Kelley/Scanner. In front of the stand, Chris Marker's work on *Second Life* and his world of avatars and networks connect the body to a parallel reality.

## 4. [sonorous objects | spatial listening]

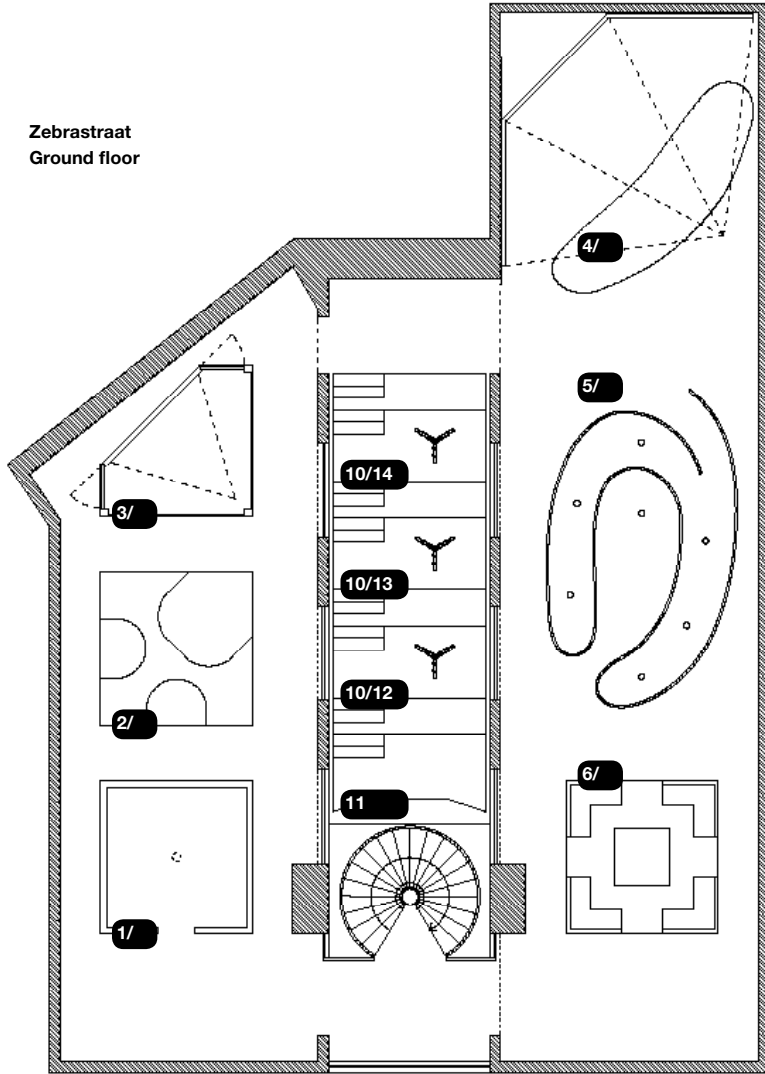
The journey continues with Ugo Rondinone's and Emmanuel Lagarrigue's installations of sonorous objects, which call upon the body to listen in movement. Ugo Rondinone's enormous, suspended sound rocks slow the body's rhythm and its place within a timeless universe. Emmanuel Lagarrigue scatters a multitude of auditory and luminous sources that cause the body to drift between attraction and repulsion.

The journey comes to an end with the audiovisual work by Semiconductor, where a horizon of projections and cosmic drones produce a material disintegration and return to a spectral spatial-temporal dimension.

Didier Faustino and Cláudia Martinho

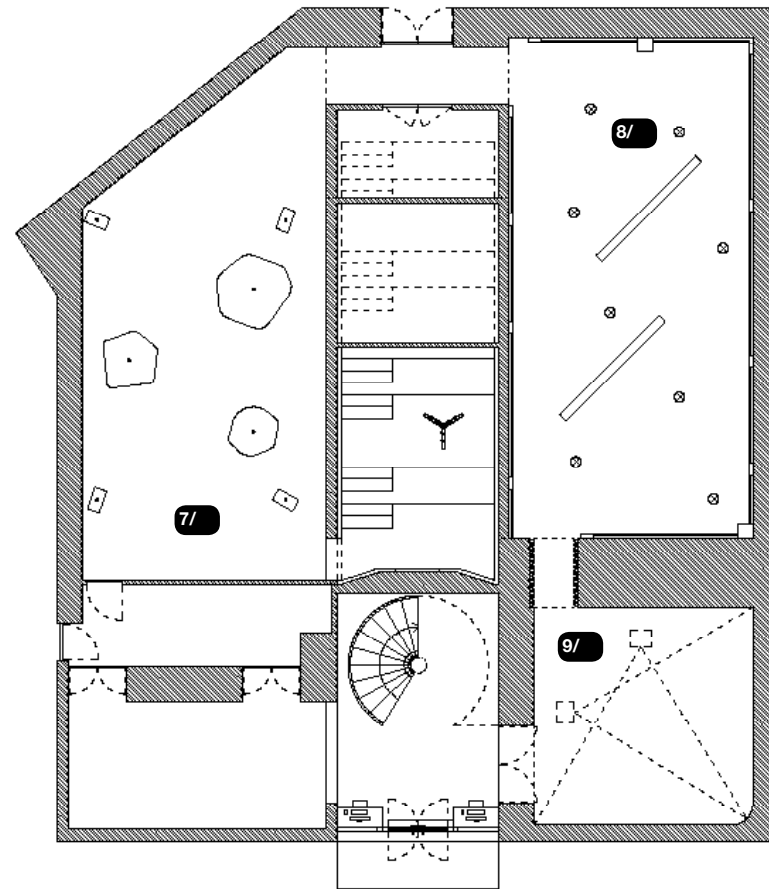
# Exhibition floor plan

Zebrastraat  
Ground floor



- 1/  
Bruce Nauman  
*Get out of my Mind,  
Get out of this Room*  
1968
- 2/  
Vito Acconci  
*Under-History Lessons*  
1976
- 3/  
Manon de Boer  
*Two Times 4'33"*  
2008
- 4/  
Céleste  
Boursier-Mougenot  
*Schizoframes*  
2003
- 5/  
Noto aka  
Carsten Nicolai  
*∞ [Infinity]*  
1997
- 6/  
Anouk de Clercq  
*Me +*  
2004
- 7/  
Ugo Rondinone  
*The evening passes  
like any other...*  
1998

Zebrastraat  
First floor



- 8/  
Emmanuel Lagarrigue  
*I never Dream  
otherwise than Awake*  
2006
- 9/  
Semiconductor  
(Ruth Jarman  
Joe Gerhardt)  
*Brilliant Noise*  
2006
- 10/  
Didier Faustino  
*Erase your Head/  
An Instrument for  
Blank Architecture*  
2010
- 11/  
Chris Marker  
*Ouvrir 128/63/39*
- 12/  
Mike Kelley/Scanner  
(Robin Rimbaud)  
*Esprits de Paris*  
2001
- 13/  
Owada  
(Martin Creed,  
Adam McEwen  
Keiko Owada)  
*Nothing*  
1997
- 14/  
Mika Vainio  
*Three Compositions for  
Machines (Track 01)*  
1997