

Dearest Reader,

books, articles, tours, a radioprogram, ... it is everywhere, but also nowhere.

The Avant-Guardian is a free newspaper published by KRAAK.

In your hands you hold the 8th issue of **THE AVANT-GUARDIAN**. Whilst writing this, I picture your hands, thinking how much they tell about you. Maybe they are nice and soft, a result of visiting the manicurist regularly.

I could see the hands of a labourer, full of scars and dust because you build houses or install electricity. Or your hands could be worn out by chemicals because you extinguish rats and unwelcome creatures living in the holes and crannies of

a city. Hands can be seen as a *pars pro toto* — the form can tell you a lot about someone's life and identity, without knowing him or her.

Lately I read some essays by the great Dutch writer Charlotte Mutsaerts. She writes about how content and form are condemned to each other. Following question arises: *if you cut off someone's hands, does someone's identity collapse?* Is a plumber still a plumber if he hasn't hands anymore to install tubes? Is a queen still a queen if she can't wave to the crowd adoring her, or if she can't sign Statements of the Queen to enforce new laws? Is a musician still a musician if he or she cannot hold his instrument?

The probability that this magazine could be picked up by random people with a diverse array of hands soothes me. This magazine will be spread randomly, in coffee bars or cultural hotspots in big cities. Or you can pick it up at the local bakery, in bars run by Bulgarian people or at libraries and schools in small towns. **THE AVANT-GUARDIAN** circulates via individuals, whose faces and hands are unknown — possible, but to me, as one of the writers, absent readers.

Looking at the KRAAK program of this fall, I'm wondering what absence means, and how it defines form and content? A printed newspaper lacks fast updates and embraces slowness and in-depth content. The Avant-Garde pushes forward, fast, relentlessly creating new forms and ideas — not unlike tweets and social media updates. What if the core identity of a movement is absent in a magazine that proclaims to be **THE AVANT-GUARDIAN**?

KRAAK, the publisher of this magazine, is very keen on the Avant-Garde, as it imagines the (non-existing or absent) Other and injects it into daily life and reality. Some people see KRAAK as a wise middleaged entity though. A body that once carried the motto "do not bend", a strong-spined identity that does not bend. Nowadays the spine has expanded and transformed into a polymorphous body with a lot of organs, although KRAAK stayed and is still dedicated to imagination and beauty. It incorporates happenings, concerts, records,

identity defined by a vast and unchanging core?

Or is it rather the absence of form that defines a body?

KRAAK highlights musical practices that

reverse the form and content. We embrace

open-ended concepts in which music is broken up by performance, psychedelics, conceptual thinking, straightforward pop-pyness and ignoring tradition or craftsmanship. Playfulness and imagination is the content; the form is a wide spectrum of ever revolving sounds that are undefined and... yes, formless.

The ever great Peter Fengler talks in this issue about his work. He remarks how an opening becomes a performance, how sounds can become sculptures, or how steeple-chasing on LSD can complicate your life so that actions (sports in his case) become art.

Lieven Martens Moana honours his fellow artists in an essay that questions the thriving force of good music. He sees a lot of poetic wisdom in adding elements, influences and ideas to someone's roots. The idea that artists mimetize (or copy their influences) seems to him as if the artist ignores his roots and local tradition. He doesn't like the idea that the artist himself disappears, and uses music to achieve this absence.

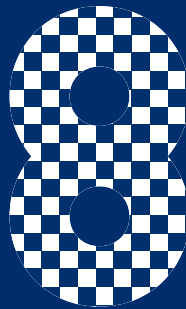
Fengler and Martens are hinting towards an interesting question: good music is appearing and disappearing in various forms. But, if a hand would adjust continuously its form to its context, would we still call it a hand? If your hand became a tool with tentacles when you put it in water, would you call it still your hand? Given the idea that a person without hands loses a part of his identity, does a person stay the same if his hands continuously change?

It's very exciting to see how KRAAK, and its organs — concerts, festival, records, tours, performances, **THE AVANT-GUARDIAN**, De Neus Van God — are chaotic, ungraspable, dynamic and fluidic. It's intriguing how the seemingly absence of a (maybe superfluous) well-defined idea and concept (or core, as you want) seems to create a very specific identity.

Absence can be a core to define identity and form. A heart is empty; it's a pumping, cavernous organ through which the blood is propelled forward into the veins. But if you take out the blood, there is nothing — absence as a thriving force for life.

Its mission is providing background information concerning KRAAK-organised events.

THE AVANT-GUARDIAN



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■ **IGNATZ** 5

LA TÈNE 8

EDDY DETROIT 5

Ignatz returns with his 6th full album to KRAAK. On *The Drain* he reveals himself as a master who as found the essence. You probably know that Ignatz is the moniker of Bram Devens. He stole it from the mouse in the legendary Krazy Kat comics by George Herriman. After several releases on Fonol Records, Ultra Eczema and Goat Tapes, he releases his 4th album on KRAAK, co-joined by the great Feeding Tube records. Ignatz' new album consists of a hypnotic and mystical song cycle that centre around *leitmotifs* as despair, sobriety and the drain on his backyard. *The Drain* is a master piece, on which the Landen based troubadour weaves echos of South American folk music into a complex of harsh folk, shallow blues and loner psych. He flushed the crappy electronics from his early records through the drain and created room for sparse fingerpicking and mumbled singing. In the 11 songs Devens finally reveals himself as the master guitar player and songwriter that he always has been. *The Drain* dissects in grandeur the human void, for which only codeine is the appropriate remedy. We are lucky that Ignatz' version of The Great Void is soothingly synonymous with The Essence. Devens will present his great album at Les Ateliers Claus on october 20th. To make his party a great succes Eddy Detroit and La Tène will cojoin this evening of loner psych, true weird americana and drone trance from the alps. Devens made for The Avant-Guardian nr.8 a comic about his new record, and the village that is the inspiration of it. You can consider the comic as part 2 of a diptych, from which the first part was published at the magazine of our friends of Subbacultcha.

Ignatz (BE) / La Tène (FR) / Eddy Detroit (US)
@ Les Ateliers Claus, Brussels (BE) 20-10-2016

JEFF WITSCHER 6

ERIK FRYE 12

Another installment in the Yung Sheikhs series presenting a deep listening night with two contemporary electronica masters working on the fringe of abstract techno and post-millennial melancholia. You might know Jeff Witscher by his moniker Rene Hell. 10 years ago he popped out of the famous LA-noise scene to update Kosmiese Musik, making it suited for the post-internet generation. He impressed with records on PAN records and Type. You can call Witscher a genuine electronic music pioneer, transcending music to an exercise in futurism. Synth arpeggios, abstract noise and ambient are forged into a beautiful, sonic abstraction that gives the 'new wave of digital music' a hint how it should be done. Music for people who like Object, Oneohtrix Point Never, M.E.S.H. or James Hoff. Jeff Witscher runs also his own label Salon Records, on which Eric Frye released the sparkling *Some Consequences of Four Incapacities*. The liner notes are saying that the record *investigates new modes of perception and spatial cognition*. Interesting words for mathematical beauty a.k.a. far out abstract techno, or the best post-millennial melancholia is currently offering.

Jeff Witscher (US) / Erik Frye (US)
@ Huis 23, Brussels (BE) 26-09-2016

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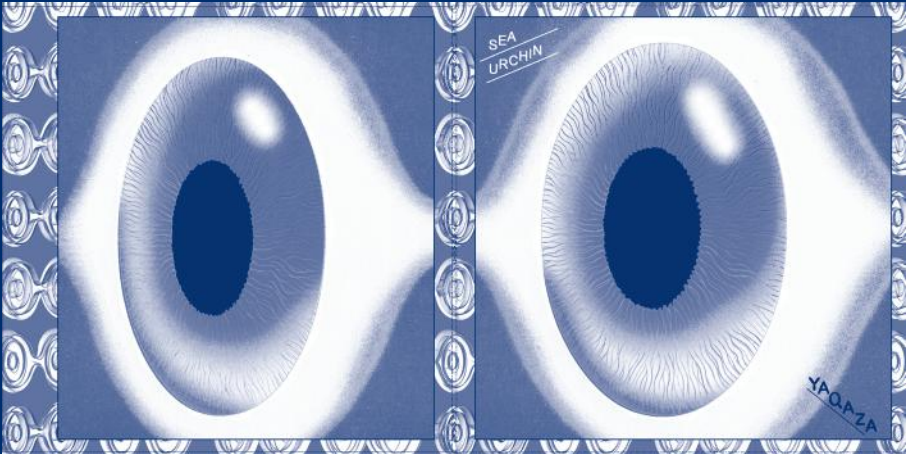
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SEA URCHIN 6/13

TYPHONIAN HIGHLIFE 13

2

Sea Urchin is the Berlin-based brainchild of the Italian Francesco Cavaliere and the Egyptian-Austrian Leila Hassan. Being core members of the underground, they already released a 7" in 2012 on D.A.S., a tape in 2014 on Stenze Quo, and Cavaliere recently released two solo-LP's on Hundebiss.



Yaqaza is their long-awaited vinyl debut. The duo surprises with a multicoloured, mystic and intriguing collage of deconstructed pop hits, Italian music concrète, King Tubby-like dub and Algerian Rai. It is no coincidence that Yaqaza is Arabic for 'day-dream, reverie'. The record is a virtual reality labyrinth in which you wander around sleepwalking, constantly opening new doors and sliding between tableaux vivants. The poetic vocals by Hassan, alternately in Arabic and English, is an absent guide that takes you to ethereal micro-cosmoses. Dubby baselines, a cold drum computer, analog electronics and subtle tape collages come together in an intriguing and wondrous web of unravelling side plots. *Yaqaza* is a magic realist frame narrative. The side roles are performed by Sicilian salt miners, Bolaji Badejo (actor of the Alien in the movie with the same name) or Cheba Nouria (an Algerian pop star). Typhonian Highlife is the new moniker of Spencer Clark. Clark is the ultimate shape shifter, a *trickster* continuously mutating from a sci-fi hero, into a mystic guru or into a speculative visionary. As Typhonian Highlife he assimilates juxtapositions of the natural world and fantastic technology to reanimate the manneristic tradition. His compositions envision possible futures and speculative pasts. They imagine a new vision upon mankind, as a mythical underwater creature who creates meaning through a prosaic mysticism. His latest record, *The World Of Shells* works as an dream expedition that has overflowed itself into real time. Through continual material-world visualization a technological nature music unfolds as series of movements outlining the existence of Mythological African creature. Travelling through Hollywood, Hanging Rock, Australia, and The Ear of Dionysus in Sicily the creature was placed, and has enacted a music and art form that explores a sci-fi aquatic and wind-blown desert fusion to uncover the life and wanderings of this non-material being. The records were presented on a mindblowing and brain release event, in which alien lectures, underwater sculptures and martial arts choreographies will be setting the mood. Affiniado and close friend Lieven Martens Moana wrote from his terrace in Portugal an essay about their music.

Record Release Party: Sea Urchin (IT) / Typhonian Highlife (US)
@ De Studio, Antwerp (BE) 7-10-2016

75 DOLLAR BILL 6
GROUP A 10

“Tent music for tent People”, it must be the best description a band ever has written. 75 Dollar Bill wrote it on of their tapes. The duo of Che Chen and Rick Brown paly out there rhythm ‘n’ blues, taking this dusted genre back to the streets, to tents, to your wedding party, to places where you can dance to it. Injecting Sun City Girls-like jams or West African based psych from the 70ties, they creating an ultimate form of true American music, music in which traditions blend together in a new form of music.

Group A is a Berlin based Japanese duo that has been travelling from Tokyo to London, back and then to Berlin. Their mixture of synth heavy minimal wave, avant noise, striking visuals and performance art carries the very breath of early industrial pioneers such as Throbbing Gristle or Cabaret Voltaire. As their inspirations, group A’s music and performances are constant quest for freedom.

75 Dollar Bill (us) / Group A (de)
@ Les Ateliers Claus, Brussels (be) 12-11-2016

CAPELO 8

KRAAK’s exploration in what’s happening currently in underground music — aka the concert series Yung Sheikhs — presents an true youngsters edition with the finest and hottest acts in noisy post-punk, Finnish exoticotronic and Brussels synth melancholia.

Yung Sheikhs: Myttys (fi) / Dogfeet (uk) / Capelo (be)
@ Les Ateliers Claus, Brussels (be) 03-09-2016

TOM BUCKNER 8

Over more then 40 years, Thomas Buckner dedicates himself to the world of new and improvised music. He studied at the legendary Metropolitan Opera bariton singer Martial Singher, but extended his classical training to experimental music. He is an expert on the body of work of Ashley, as he contributed at several operas by Ashley. He will give a master class at the Conservatory on 3th of November and a concert on November 4th at Logos.

@ Logos, Gent (be) 4-11-2016

OUT NOW

- K088 Sea Urchin — Yaqaza — LP
- K089 Shetahr — 7"
- K090 Ignatz — The Drain — LP
- K091 Typhonian Highlife — World Of Shells — LP

The Avant-Guardian is a free newspaper highlighting the KRAAK output.

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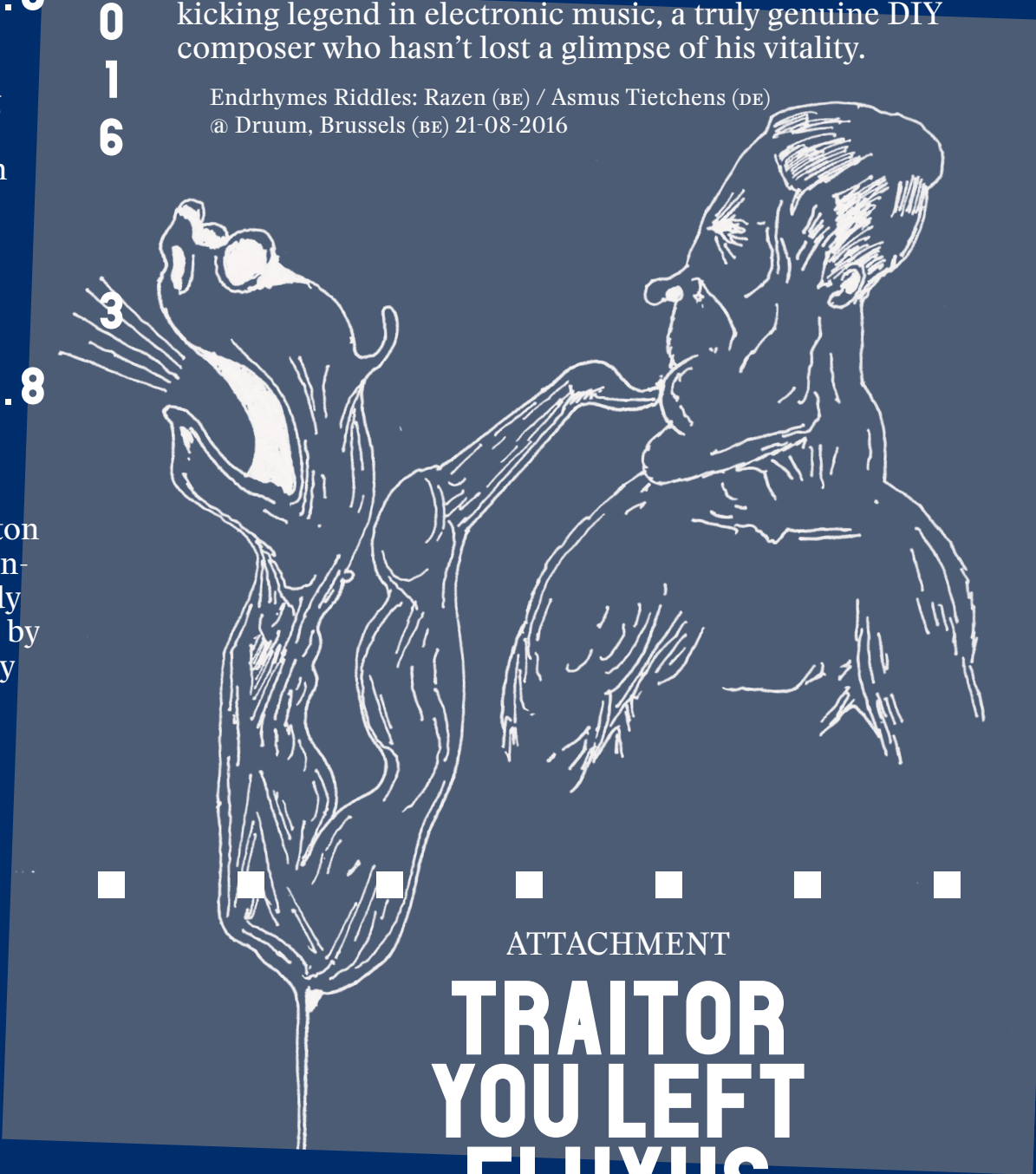
RAZEN 11 ■
ASMUS TIETCHENS 14

This spring, Razen dropped their 2,5th LP on the KRAAK label, the astonishing *Endrhymes*. The sustained tones from their earlier releases sublimated into hardcore melodic minimalism and raw dystopian deep listening. The album proves—once again—the craftsmanship and dauntless approach of the collective. Both records as live shows shows a band that are more intense and focussed than ever. After one year hiatus, they are back in full force and will suck you into their end rhymes. They presented the record on August 21st at DRUUM, and old warehouse-turned-into-a-cultural-hub. Asmus Tietschens joined the bill.

Asmus Tietchens calls himself his own *tonmeister*, a lost profession practised by craftsmen who materialized the ideas of esoteric avant-garde academics into revolutionary pieces.

Tietchens became known when the early industrial and Kosmiese Muzik scene embraced his electronic experiments from the early 60ties. Since the 80ties he explored the notion of absolute music through compositions that entered the terrain of hardcore abstract avant-garde sonic experiments. Texturality, silence and electro-acoustic came in place of automatic melodies and rhythms. We are honoured to present this alive and kicking legend in electronic music, a truly genuine DIY composer who hasn’t lost a glimpse of his vitality.

Endrhymes Riddles: Razen (be) / Asmus Tietchens (de)
@ Druum, Brussels (be) 21-08-2016

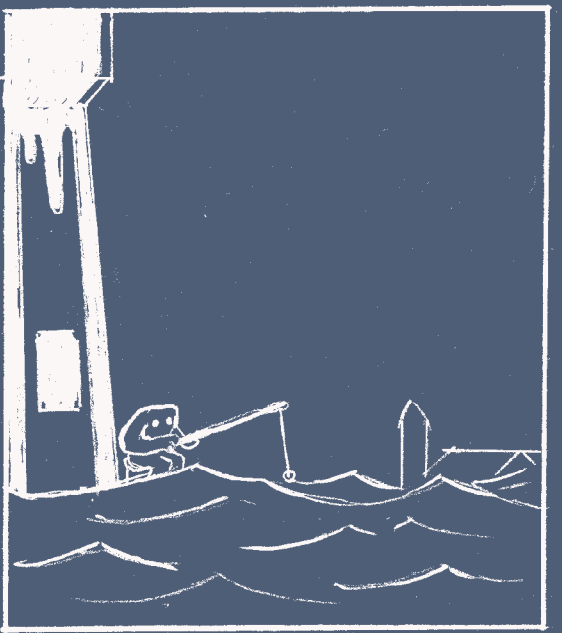
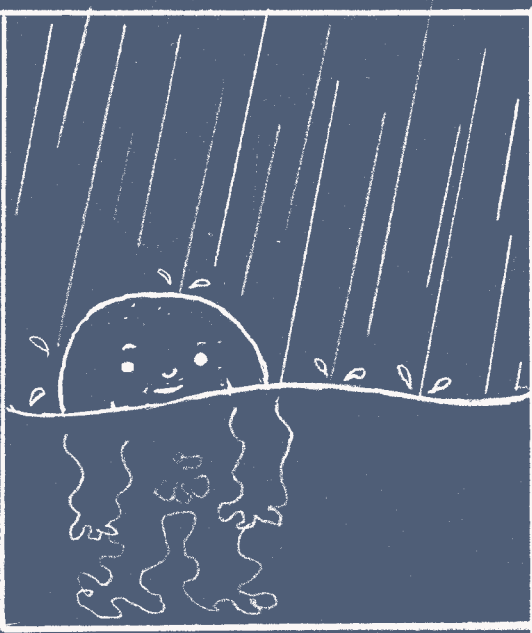
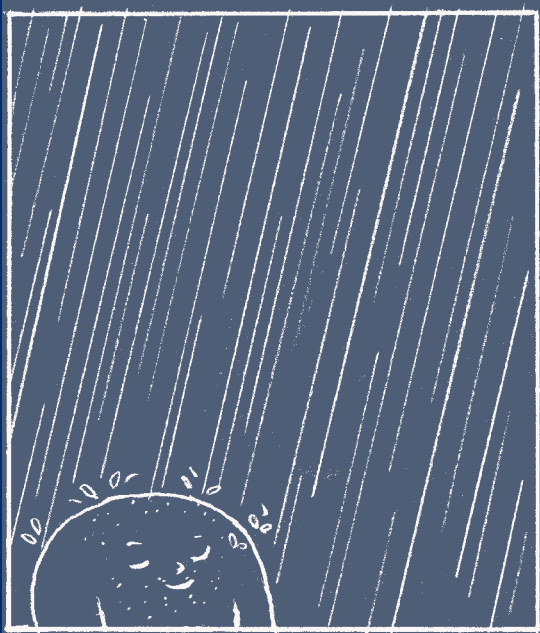
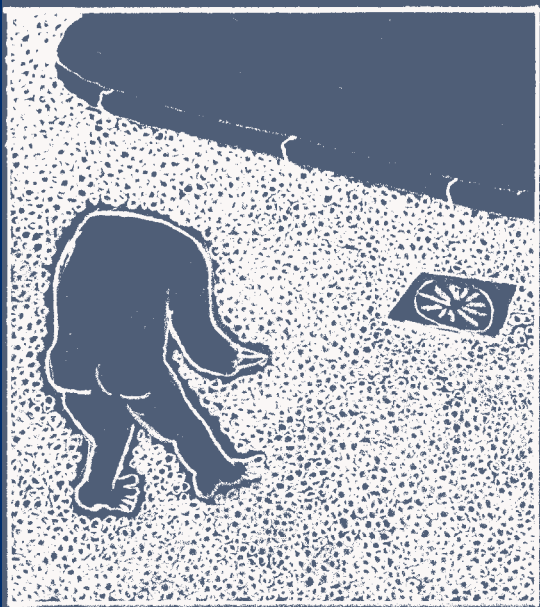
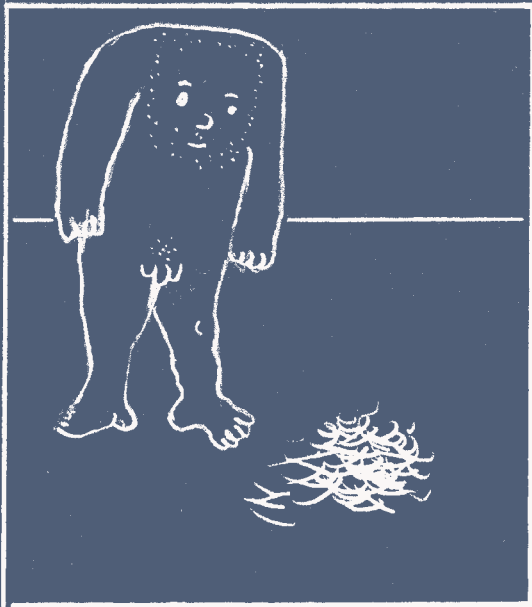
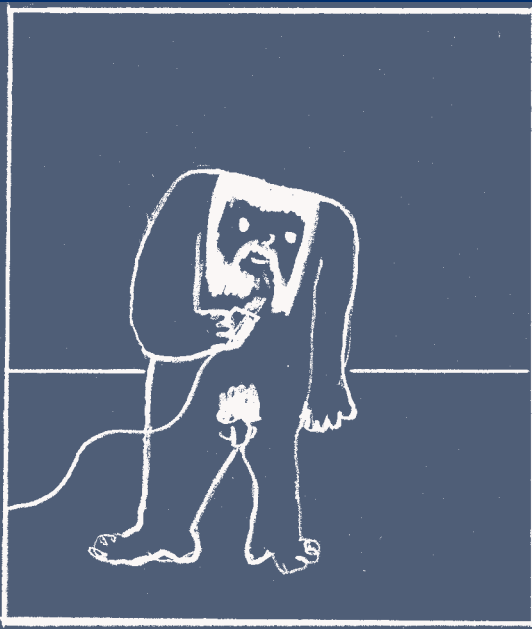
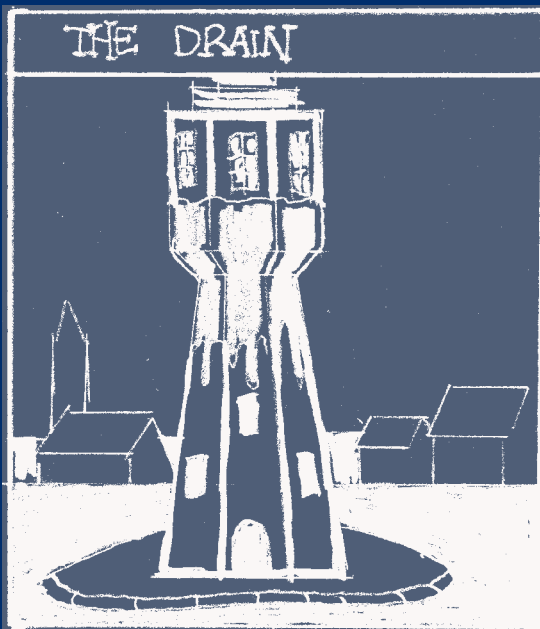


Design: ruttens-wille

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Pictures:
75 Dollar Bill: Damian Calvo
Group A: Yume Satoh





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Journal of
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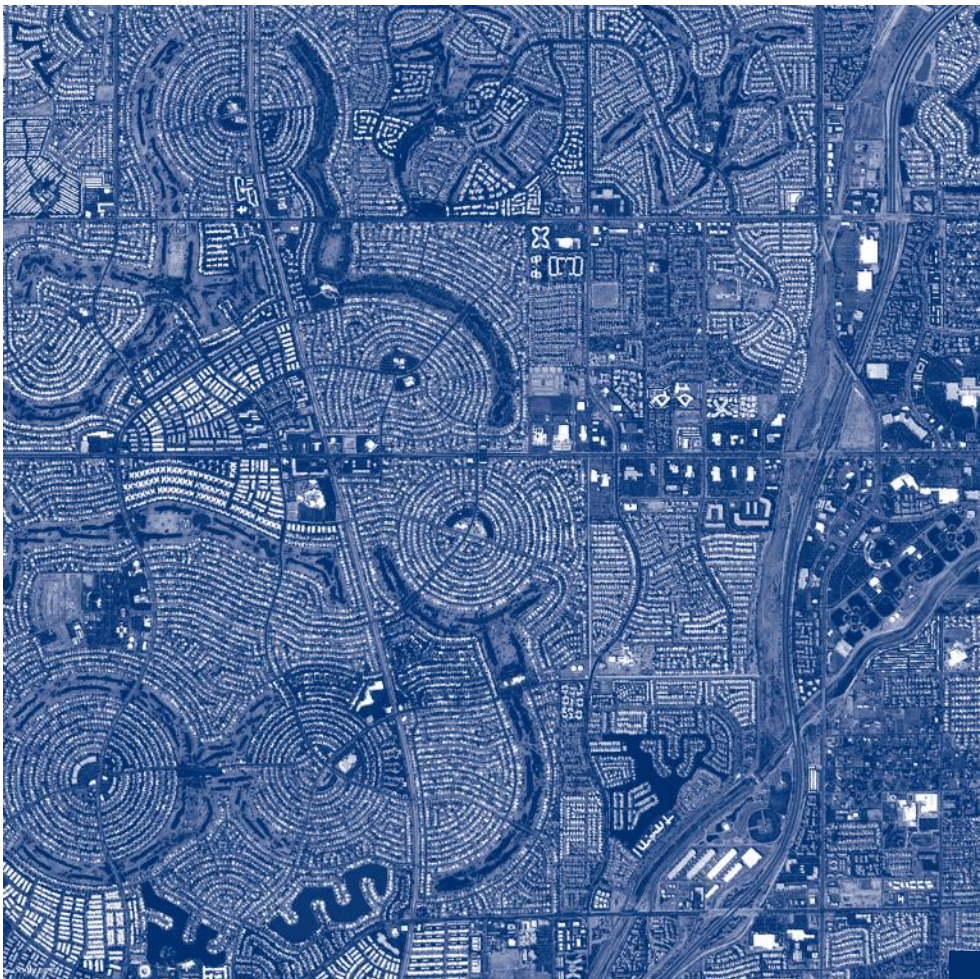
1. **Introduction**

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■ **JEFF WITSCHER** ■ After having read about how the sound of crickets sounds like a sublime harmony of human voices if you slow it down multiple times, and after trying to decide which tea I should have after being overwhelmed by such sonic wonder I suddenly felt the urge to listen to Jeff Witscher his music. He came to Brussels on the 26th of september for KRAAK's Yung Sheikhs series. If the name Witscher doesn't sound familiar, his alter ego Rene Hell might ring a little bell. He aroused 10 years ago from the LA noise scene and hasn't stopped making electronic marvels ever since. I immediately sat down and emailed him some questions.

AMBER MEULENIJZER



AM Jeff, how do you feel about crickets and their sonic possibilities?

JW I think this recording is quite interesting and sounds nice. As for crickets I've never really thought about them but clearly there is some potential here to make a work out of this.

AM What is sound to you?

JW Sound is a medium and a difficult one at that. Due to its inherent ephemeral nature it's played and lost quickly only to remain as a memory and a short one at that. When it's heard there is a lot of energy spent trying to figure out what it's a result of and it also relies on people to listen more than hear which can be problematic. Otherwise it's quite nice to play around with and can be very effective in the live performance.

AM When I listen to your music, it really invites me into a visual dreamscape, I almost automatically start thinking of all kinds of images, is that also how you compose? Or is this something you want people to experience?

JW No I don't see any images. It's more about creating an immersive environment with a palette I find interesting because of the original source of the sound or the timbre or character. However I do enjoy closing my eyes and simply letting sound transport me from whatever state I'm in, I suppose that makes for a successful piece. As far as images, they may inevitably arrive but it's not something I'm aware of. The composing is mostly for live performances and what will work in any given setting eg taking into account the room, the nature of the show, the sound system etc. Also spending a lot of time trying to be clever.

AM Your music is described as melancholic. I was wondering what kind of things arouse melancholy with you? I for instance become quite melancholic of numbers and maths, doing maths, thinking of maths, recognizing maths in the everyday life and in music. How do you experience that?

JW The only things that arouses melancholy for me are thoughts of death, which I consider daily for better or worse. I'm not sure if that comes out in the music, I haven't thought about that really.

AM In Brussels, you are going to be in the company of Eric Frye, who released on your label Salon Records. Tell me about your understanding; how did you guys meet? What binds you?

JW I had a peripheral relationship with Eric before I moved to St. Paul, MN & he was living there so we began to meet and talk. It was a terrible winter there so we'd stay up late and drink and talk and we've kept in touch ever since. We share sentiments on music and performance and process so we have plenty to talk about when we're around each other and we've done some touring together for music which worked well.

AM By the end of my questionnaire I still had not decided which tea would suit the surroundings, so I asked Jeff, who did not turn out to be such a tea fan.

JW You know Amber, I don't drink tea at all so I would recommend some coffee or white coffee especially.

AM Cheers Jeff, see you in AB!

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SEA URCHIN



lately we decided to make music for the shouldres instead that headbanging. dance of the shoulders. like those movements you doing without really thinking but at the end you keep doing it. i can move my scalp, oh yes and i can do it all day long.



move your shoulders like a whirlpool a boomerang in reverse mode! and if u use your keens is even more fluid.. oh yee then the solar plex moves almost automatically in tempo. well.. probably, but what i do is just this shoulders move, like that.



but what are those pics then nothing about your moves? true, those are screenshots taken from a tutorial educational online video in episodes.. showing moves and techinques of the african Montu martial art.



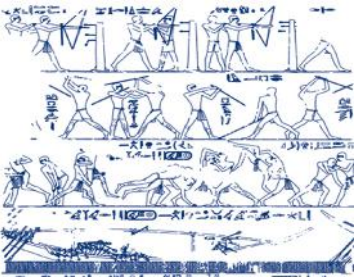
you can find traces of this art in egyptian hierogliphics too like at the ramses III themplum! let's say.. this is what few masters belives. well, i can't get your point then why to use this images in relation with your music? here we are; maybe not my father but my grandfather actually was a Tahtib dancer an ancient stick martial art.



when i saw Leila dancing with her shoulders, listing back to Sea Urchin new mixes she told me; my father does the same! a very funny dance, indeed. oh i also like to do it.. it is a nice stretching too. do you think your father learned the tahtib dance from his father??



I'm not sure.. but it's possible the steps and the moves of the two dacers at the beginning are magical. like a prelude, i believe our music tempo have a natural balace with that.. and look my shoulders are in sinc with it.. or is just my fantasy?



75 DOLLAR BILL “Tent music for tent People”, it must be the best description a band ever has written. 75 Dollar Bill wrote it on of their tapes. They are still the duo of Che Chen and Rick Brown, playing out there rhythm ‘n’ blues, taking this dusted genre back to the streets, to tents, to your wedding party, to places where you can dance to it. Injecting Sun City Girls-like jams or West African based psych from the 70ties, they creating an ultimate form of true American music, music in which traditions blend together in a new form of music.

We asked Che Chen to think about the idea of absence in music, and how form and content is interrelated. I presented the guitar player the questions put forward in this issue’s edito. Intriguing questions that accidentally seems to be questions Che is asking himself about his music: “What happens if you cut off someone’s hands? Does his identity and being collapse by missing just a part of his body? Is a musician still a musician if he cannot hold and play his instrument? And also, has someone a core that defines his identity? In a lot of music the absence is very important. In free music, for instance, the absence of structure. In minimalist music, the absence of melody. Or in your music, it sounds as a new form of American music, but by injected Asian traditions? The American identity seems to be defined by the absence of 1 tradition as it made out of a blend of European, Russian, Italian, African cultures, all newcomers in country without roots. Can a collective identity exist without roots?”

It became an inwards oriented conversation. A lengthy interview with 75 dollar Bill was published on the occasion for the KRAAK festival 2016. Surf around kraak.net and you’ll find it.

CHE CHEN

Niels, it’s a heavy line of questioning but I’ll try to answer. I tend to think of 75 Dollar Bill’s music as a kind of folk music or “social music”, rather than as rock or even “experimental” music. I use the term social music in the sense that Harry Smith used it when he compiled his Anthology of American Folk music. Its second

volume collected music that would have been played at social gatherings and dances or in religious settings. In short it was party music *and* church music, music for dancing, praying, or getting drunk to.

A couple of years ago, working on one of our self-released cassettes, I printed up a batch of calling cards

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that read: “Please Consider... 75 Dollar Bill for your: WEDDINGS – DANCES – PROCESSIONS – FUNERALS – PROTESTS – PLEASUREMENTS. Tent Music for Tent People”. We’d played at one wedding before then, in which we’d provided music before the bride and groom exchanged vows, and then led the wedding party on a walk through a forest and down into a valley clearing where the celebration was set to take place. But the cards were mostly wishful thinking at the time, talismanic objects that I hoped would manifest some of these situations into being. The phrase “Tent Music for Tent People” was another bit of magical thinking, the naming of a community that did not exist yet, and a nod to Sun Ra’s own calling cards which read: “Beta music for Beta People”. We’ve since done another wedding (where we led a slightly more chaotic walk around a pond) as well as a parade in honor of the closing of New York record store, Other Music. It was a kind of “jazz funeral”, where we led a 25 person marching band down Bowery, second liners in tow.

I was born in the US, to Taiwanese immigrant parents, but my family wasn’t very musical. The one exception was my grandmother. She used to sing old folk songs occasionally, but she accompanied herself on a pump organ, an instrument from Europe (Taiwan was occupied by the Spanish, Dutch and Japanese at various points in history). So Chinese music wasn’t something that I grew up with. In fact, on a trip to mainland China as an adolescent, I found the Beijing Opera just as alien as I would later find Puccini. Neither one had been a meaningful part of my experience. So if I were to learn the traditional music of my ancestors now, I’d be hard pressed to make any claims of “authenticity”. As Henry Flynt wrote, “I had to learn the music

of my native region of the U.S. as an assumed identity”.

I got into music the way most American kids did in the 80s, through the radio, listening to rock and pop music. I often loved the energy of it, but there was never anyone that looked remotely like me making that kind of music—or punk music for that matter—so it was hard for me to identify with it past a certain point. I lived in one world at home and another one when I left the house and there was no one who spoke to, or more importantly, *embodied* this experience musically. This pushed my listening habits outside the mainstream pretty early on and I started to make a series of important discoveries: avant-garde jazz, Indian music, minimalism, etc. I didn’t feel like any of these musics belonged to me either, but it started to form a more complete picture of the musical universe for me. It’s a picture that’s still forming, always changing.

I went to Mauritania briefly in 2013 to study guitar and to hear that music where it has developed in it’s own highly specific (and hybridized) way. It’s the part of my musical history that I get asked about the most in relation to 75 Dollar Bill’s music, for obvious reasons, but I’ve also taken lessons from Iranian Musicians and Haitian drummers in New York, and count playing in groups led by Tony Conrad and Japanese bands like Maher Shalal Hash Baz and Che-Shizu as hugely influential parts of my musical “education” too. I tend to approach all these musics as an outsider to varying degrees, coming at them with a punk sensibility, rather than a musicological one. A respectful distance on the one hand but also a practical willingness to cannibalize on the other. If there’s anything I identify with it’s probably this sense of “outsideness”, a condition defined by its instability. This is just one kind of American-ness.



KRAAK

8

EVE DECAMPO: What a shame, I did not even know that Emmanuel was playing guitar! When I see him we always talk about printed matter.



MICHAEL NYARWAYA: We met in art school. We had friends in common. We figured out that we lived really close to each other so we begun to hang out, and one day...

JB How long have you been making music together?

JB Is the 7" on Lexi Disques your first release?

JB Do you have more songs than the two songs on this single?

ED For the moment, when we play live, we play eight songs.

JB Which role do the two songs on this 7" play in your setlist?

ED We don't play 'Danse Des Nénuphars' anymore at concerts. 'Utrecht' and 'Danse Des Nénuphars' are magnificent ghosts from Capelo's first time, crystallized on these wonderful small objects that are 7"s. Now we slowly fade on to something else ...

JB What does the song 'Utrecht' have to do with Utrecht?

MN The title comes from a conversation we had. Eve told me about her holiday with her boyfriend in Utrecht.

JB On Discogs, you mention 'synth-pop' as genre. Accurate?

JB What would your definition of 'pop' be?

ED For me all that is generous, clear, easy and funny or emo and free is pop. This tree over there is pop, just like spaghetti bolognese, everything we meet and understand as humans. I'm not good when I have to assign a genre but I'm secretly relieved and proud that people qualify us as pop.

JB 'Danse Des Nénuphars' reminds me of James Ferraro around 2010: a slick version of 80s pop, made by someone who's too young to have experienced this music first hand.

MN Ferraro did a lecture in our school. Ferraro's influence is not intentional but obvious nevertheless. Hmm, to me 'Nénuphars', it's a bit of a spooky tune. I don't want to be geeky or something but people who speak about Ferraro refer to Jacques Derrida, the French philosopher. I didn't get all of it but his notion of 'ghost' tell that manifestations of the past haunt the present. So maybe the track was like invoking a trace. We just wanted to express something blurry, not really spotted. Unconsciously it took this form. I don't know why but to me, it's like a old perfume ad song.

AD I live in Nantes, but I've grown up in the Auvergne. The other two live in Geneva, in Switzerland. I know D'incise and Cyril since a long time, cause I released solo albums by them on my own label (dronesweetdrone records). We wanted to do for long time something together.

La Tène is the name of small village in the mountains in Switzerland. A lot of our pieces are actually inspired by the mountains.

NL How did you become interested in traditional french or swiss/ mountain folk music?

AD I became interested in traditional music by Old Music. My mother was a professional classical musician who performed a lot of the Baroque and Polyphonic music from the 13th century. At home there were

AD Yes, although it's a lot more complicated in the States. They work on the same idea of combining folk music and minimalism. But in the States they have this complex history of folk music, and it suffers from the same clichés as in Europe.

NL Where are you actually living, your music suggests that you are living on the country side? How did La Tène started?



TOM BUCKNER

Tom Buckner is back in town! The man is a living legend, having worked together with all the great people alike Robert Ashley, Roscoe Mitchell, Jacques Bekaert and more. He will perform at Logos on November 4th, and the day before he gives a masterclass at KRAAK's new crib, the School of Arts.

CRISTINA AMELIA MESSER

Like any respectable spokesman for the American avant-guard music, Thomas Buckner's voice moves in small concentric circles. He spoke as an amnesic spy for Robert Ashley, he sang his invented memory by "Blue" Gene Tyranny, he chanted for Jerome Cooper and Annea Lockwood, he confronted Alvin Lucier's oscillators, he sang with Kirili's sculptures, he accompanied Roscoe Mitchell's sax, and the list can go on ad infinitum. What transpires from his discography is a deep community feeling. It is well known that in the 60's and 70's many independent musicians have created collectives in order to pursue their experiments and improvisations; Robert Ashley's "ONCE Group", Rhys Chatam's "The Kitchen", Thomas Buckner's "1750 Arch" archival/recording studios, and many others. And this feeling is clearly perceived in all his video interviews, wherein he would rather talk about the others to the detriment of his ego. Generosity and a genuine curiosity for the other have made Buckner an icon in small communities of listeners, and young emerging musicians likewise.

A classically trained baritone, he managed to bring together many minimal composers and musicians in a perpetual improvisational flow. I dare to call him a minimal vocalist in contrast to another contemporary of his, namely the dramatic Briton baritone Phil Minton. Both are not estranged from literary and poetic texts, but their approach is different. Thomas Buckner is a soft, solemn,

composed interpreter. Minton is harsh and feral. Buckner is minimal and subtle. Phil Minton is expressive/explosive. Thomas is melodic in the classical sense. Phil is "noisy". To this duo, I would like to insert a third party in order to create a baritone triangle. His name is Scott Walker, whose late manner of singing is similar in timbre and inflexion to Buckner, but whose background music is harsh like Milton. From a certain perspective, Walker seems to be the point where Buckner and Milton intersect. However, each of these three baritones have developed a coherent personality that cannot be mistaken in the sea of vocalists.

Besides being an idiosyncratic vocalist he is also a promoter, the proof being his digital record label "Mutable Music", and countless concerts and commissions. As mentioned earlier, his genuine curiosity for people and cultures enables his versatility. It is enough to have a look at some of the ensembles he performs with—Timeless Pulse (George Marsh, Pauline Oliveros, David Wessel, Jennifer Wilsey), Omegathorp (JD Parran, Mark Deutsch, Kevin Norton), Ilex (Gustavo Aguilar, Earl Howard, Wu Man), Quasar (saxophone quartet), L'Art Pour L'Art—or other performances including Mahler's "Songs of a Wayfarer" with the Philippine Philharmonic Orchestra and the world premiere of Francisco Feliciano's opera "Ashen Wings" in Manila, to grasp how wide his range of interests is.

a lot of records, with Classical music, traditional music. A lot of traditional music I discovered through the collection of Catherine Perrier and through my mother, who knew also a lot of the French traditional music. So, it was always around. The world music records lying around at the house interested me the most, especially the Inuit and Arabic music. They were the reason that I studied Indian music. I decided to study percussion because of the powerful rhythms in non-Western music, or in traditional music — the footrhythms and the sound of it in French music are very strong I think.

Also D'incise and Cyril got into traditional music by their parents. Later they were influenced by roots dub music and by the specific strong sound, rhythm and the repetition in it. We found eachother in repetition, which is the foundation of La Tène.

NL Is it a shared concern for you and Yann Gourdon how to blend tradition and minimalism together?

AD I met Yann in Conservatory and we discussed this a lot back then. Minimalists have an inversed approach, if you compare it to ours. They start form the score and compose pieces to create microtonality

and overtones by juxtaposing all those sounds. We work from a traditional approach, i.e. repetition and drone, the so-called bourdon. The percussion creates the drone. I assimilated also the ideas of the dance form called tarentel.

Trance is maybe the final goal we try to attain, although I think this word is a bit difficult. If you look into non-Western music, the trance is created by a lot of participants. In Arabic music you have the ensembles, and this trance-like music has also aspect of spirituality. I like the idea of Trance, but it's not a word I want to use. I prefer immersion, or repetition.

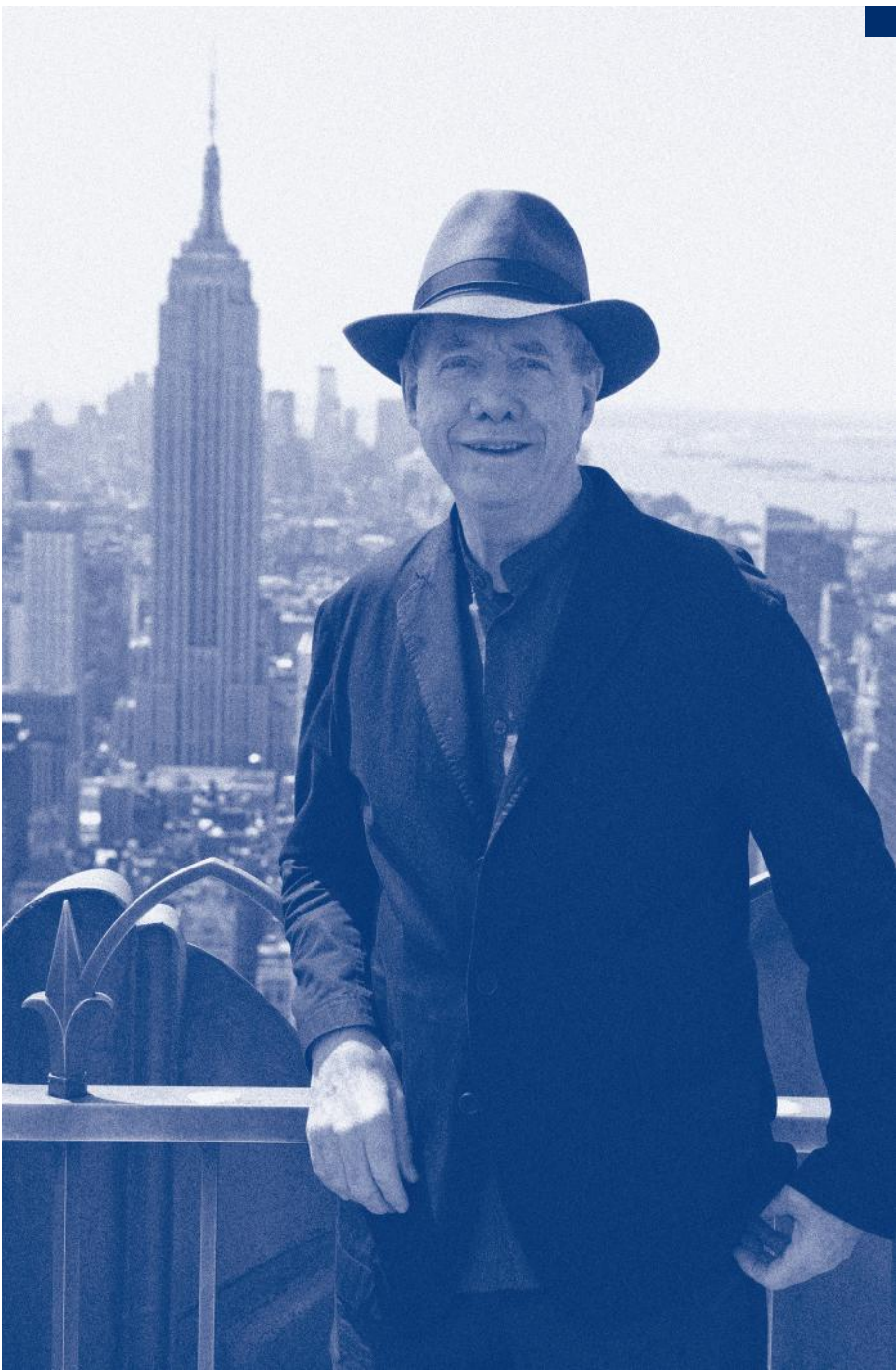
I always looked for a way to bring together this influences, from traditional French music to Indian music, and contemporary music. Also I'd in terms of the instruments, by which I'm very intrigued. A couple of years ago I was in a heavy accident that caused that I couldn't play drums anymore. The Hurdy-Gurdy was the instrument that made it possible to work around that.

NL It seems that your music is part of the new wave of traditional French music, which I feel like a culture or tradition that has been isolated from contemporary experimental music since long,

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Buckner is neither popular nor conformist, but the kind of performer that enjoys compositions that reflect the inner world of the artist, where free improvisation is likely to happen. "Improvement", "eL/Aficionado", "Atalanta", "Concrete",

"Dust" (Robert Ashley's operas), "Totem" (with Jérôme Bourdellon), "Full spectrum voice", "Homage", are a few recommendations worth listening to, although not enough to reveal the complete spectrum of his voice.

but brought back by the guys like Yann Gourdon and his likes?

AD I play together with the guys from La Novia, Toad and France since a long time. I think that La Novia is very important, because they enforced a different approach towards traditional music and brought back the modernity into it. We are actually working together on a bringing Terry Riley's in C to stage. So I'm pretty excited by this.

NL Are you only interested in the minimalist aesthetics and the trance-like state it induces, or is the tradition from where it comes equally important? If so, are you looking for a way to escape a neo-liberal consumer driven society?

AD A lot of the music I like is music from villages, not from cities. It's not music that is the soundtrack of speed. The music doesn't fit in the regular timeframes of cities, as they are way longer than the 3 minute popformat. Although I don't like the time-frame, the obligatory 30 minutes, of experimental music neither. I feel that if someone puts everything in 30 minutes, it's an escape of what actually happens within music. It brings me

to your next question—"How do you feel about the idea that absence is an important aspect of minimalist music? Concrete: the absence of melody, change, rhythm? Or the fact that overtones are actually an illusion created by a malfunctioning of decoding sounds by our brains?"—I really like the idea that something exists because it's absent. If you have a certain sets of elements, how it works when you take away one. Like in Polyphonic harmonies, or, something we didn't talked about yet, how the movement of sound in a space can trigger and chance it. The notion of sounds in a space, and that they become something else by the space, although you create them in a same way. Recently we played a concert, and by accident I forgot to put on one of the drone strings on my hurdy gurdy. In the recording of that show, even though it's not there, you can hear the drone anyhow! It's very interesting I think.

I told that I'm now in a wheelchair, but also physically absence is a big thing. For instance: during a collaboration with Will Guthrie my paralyzed legs start moving again, they got triggered by the music. Peter Szendy writes also a lot about this in a book called "*Membres fantômes. Des corps musiciens*" (by Peter Szendy).

Thank you!

GROUP A Group A is a Berlin based Japanese duo that has been travelling from Tokyo to London, back and then to Berlin. Throughout their 80ties inspired sound and dadaeske performances they are seeking for freedom. Having found it in a big German city, they are on the verge of struggling with the consequences of being a free mind, that seems hard to persue without the limititations full time jobs.

NIELS LATOMME

NL How long does group A exist? How did it started?

SAYAKA BOTANIC (VIOLIN): Four years and half in total.
TOMMI TOKYO (ELECTRONICS): We started out just for fun. Originally it would be a one or two off thing. Luckily we know a lot of people who are involved in the Tokyo music scene, so somehow we kept on doing it and now we are here (*laughs*). Back then it hadn't much to do about music, really. We just wanted to be a bit silly, for fun, take off our clothes and paint each other. We actually couldn't really play any instrument. It was more a performance thing, in which we made noise, screaming and so... We started out as a trio, but in the beginning we already knew that she would go back to London. When she left, we still had some gigs, and realized that we haven't anyone who did the vocals. Then it became something more musical, in which we started really playing. It didn't really change the style, although it sounded more minimal back then.
SB We couldn't play any instrument properly.
TT I couldn't play any either! I brought my first ever tiny synthesizer, which I didn't even know fuck about. We just played around with whatever we had. So it was natural to focus more on the sounds than on music.

NL Sayaka, did you played the violin before?
SB as a six year old girl, my mother put me in lessons, because she

wanted me to be a classical violinist. But I hated it.
TT how many days did you actually go? Not just one day?
SB No, it was once a week, but I often skipped. I sometimes told I did go, but didn't.
TT and your mom found out? They usually find out really easy, isn't it?
SB Yeah. I knew how I have to hold it, but I can't play proper songs.

NL The music reminds me of eighties industrial music. Are you actually influenced by that music, given the fact that you didn't know in the beginning what or how to do it?
TT No, it wasn't consciously. It had everything to do with my personal musical interests. My background is in post-punk bands. That's what I'm still doing in one-way or another. It hasn't bored me yet.

NL What about the performative aspect of your music?
SB We always want to create whole experiences, in which sound, space and visuals come together. It's taking people into this utopia we create.

NL How come you move to Berlin? It's a pretty long way from Tokyo.
TT Last year we toured Europe twice. Actually, when my band split up, I wanted to make music again in order to go back to Europe. Even though we started it just for fun. We were in London, and when we came

KRAAK
back, we got really bored by Tokyo. group A was a way to get back to Europe. Boybands are always touring around, and we thought we could do it as well. After the tours last years we thought it was the right moment, as we created some kind of base here.
SB Tokyo hasn't got such a lively or exciting music scene.
TT The big thing is that you cannot make any money out of it. We were putting so much energy into it, which makes that it gradually needs more time, because you release more, you play more gigs, ... If you then don't make any money, you'd have to have time as well to do a dayjob. And it became a bit too much, you see.

NL Even though the Japanese noise scene is pretty big and well known, you cannot make money out of it?

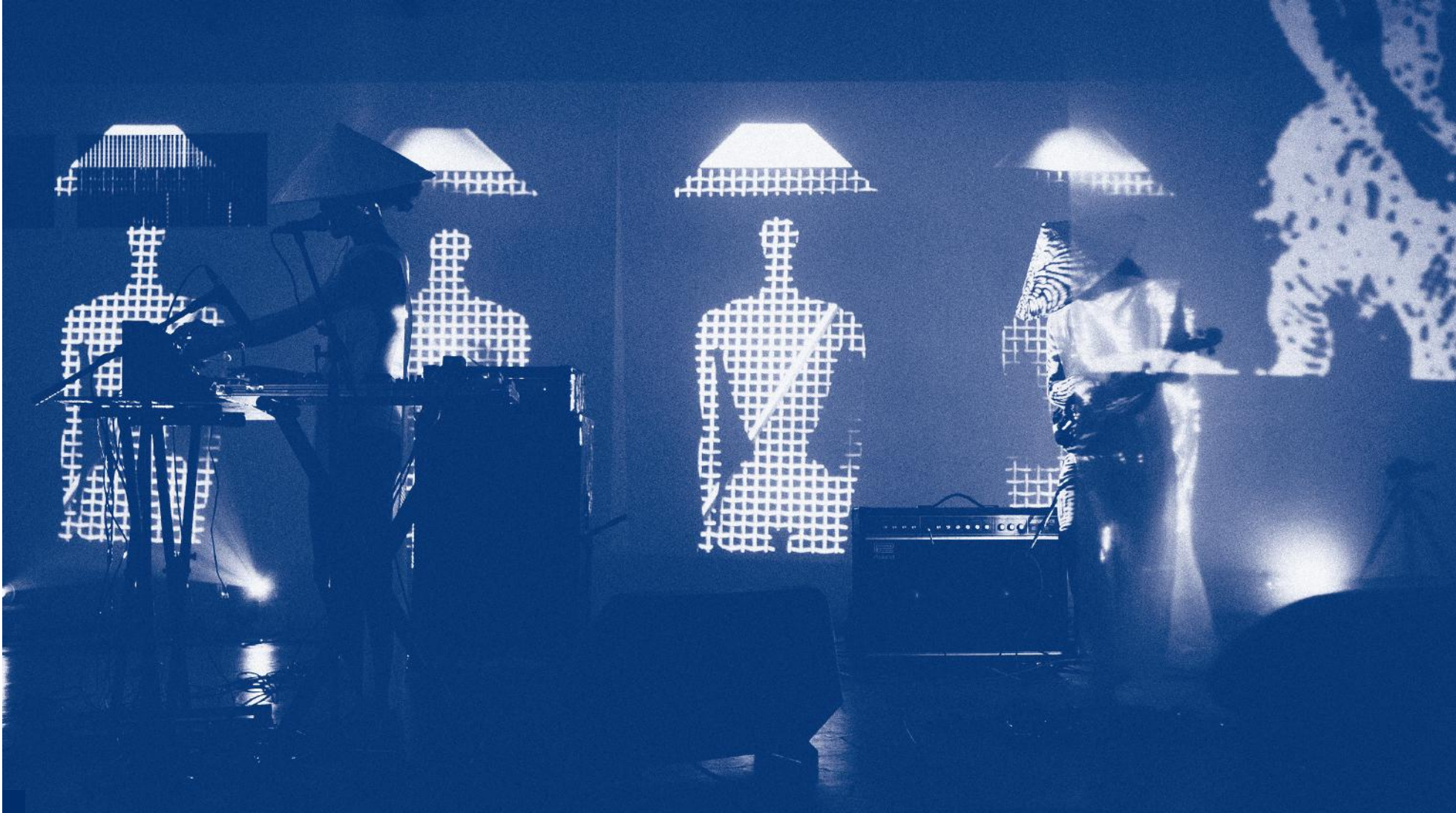
TT That's definitely one thing that makes Japanese music so interesting, because not so many people are actually professional musicians. In Europe and The States it seems to be otherwise, if people form a band, you get pretty easy signed on a record label. Japanese musicians all are for example salary men until 7 o'clock, and then they start making music. I quite like the idea of having a full time job and then creating being your side project. That you don't have to think about money. That's maybe why people create weird things.
SB When I was starting with Group A, I was working full time. After my job I just grabbed my violin to rush to the studio. Fridays we mostly had a show and then Monday I got back to the job.
TT Like two different lives.
SB yeah. The job caused a lot of stress that I could use in Group A's music.

NL You decided to move to Berlin to become a full time musician. Has your attitude towards music changed, as you don't have the stress dayjob from which you'd have escape through Group A? I suppose it's a difficult question as you feel that the weird and

good things come out of the fact that you don't have to make money out of music?
TT Definitely. I'm not sure if it's a good thing or not. No we're in the field that everyone is trying to get better, to get a better deal with labels. In a way it's good to be in that world where everyone is making music. You have to push yourself to do it, but at the same time I'd have to control myself to not to think too much about that, because it stops to experiment. You start to think about your music in terms of selling, which I don't like, I'd rather work in a café. Although it's a lot of fun to be a full time artist.

NL It seems your music is about freedom. What is that for you?

SB For me Group A is the place called Utopia, where I was free from stress. Group is my freedom yes. Even in Berlin, I'm all the time free. But I struggle a bit with this freedom now.
TT I always question myself why I'm doing this, and I still don't know why... We always try to do something a bit different. I didn't listen to experimental music before group A started, so there is no influence. So that's maybe what makes it free?
We actually never exchange music. We do whatever we want in the studio, instead of talking how and what we should do. That 'normal' thing, that bands seem to do, we don't do. Our taste in music are completely different, we don't have anything in common. We share more about anything but music really — art, politics, films. That's why we maybe sound different than bands of which all the bandmates listen to the same types of music. Those bands become bands about the music itself.
SB I try to avoid shared music, otherwise it's gonna be boring.
TT We communicate through the music, rather than talking about the music.
SB I feel fun to have this chemistry.
TT It's more a collaboration then a group.





NL Are you friends?

s&tNot really. (laughs)

NL In Japanese noise, I'd always found it interesting how it has a dimension of Zen in it? It has the same aggressive quality as Western noise, which is more inspired by the anti-art ideas of Dadaism, but there is this more immersive and meditative side to it. How do you feel about that?

s&t(silence)

SB I don't know, I never though about it in that way, actually. I don't know how European people think about Zen, what Zen means. I think we perceive this idea quite different. The idea of zen is 'what'? How do you use 'zen' in Europe?

NL I would use the metaphor of the 'drop in the ocean'. The live performances of Merzbow makes you feel that you disappear in the sound, I think. But maybe this is a sort of exotism towards Japanese culture, and maybe I see more in it then there effective is?

TT No, I think it's true.

SB I haven't really seen the European noise music, so it's hard to compare.

TT Do you think noise started out in Japan?

NL No?

TT Where did it come from actually? When I went to Berghain, I felt the same thing about people dancing about minimal techno. The dj suddenly played a 15-20 minute piece of ambient music. It felt that for the crowd techno isn't just about dancing, but that they feel it as some sort of yoga. A more spiritual thing. I thought 'hm, techno is interesting, but I don't get into it'. Maybe that's because I'm Japanese.

NL It's interesting that you mention the Berlin Techno scene. How do feel being framed in the new electronica wave, started out by noisers gone into techno?

s&tWe don't feel part of it.

SB We don't feel part of any scene actually.

TT I do struggle when people ask what sort of music we make. I become speechless then. I don't think we sound that weird, but it's quite hard to describe. We don't feel of being part of the Japanese noise scene, nor of the European dark wave scene — although I dig that music a lot. We don't really fit in one genre or scene. It's a good thing though, because we played on same nights with a lot of different sort of different acts.

NL You released yourself the 70 + tape. Any plans for new stuff?

TT The album will be released in vinyl on Mechanica records on 26th September. Afterwards we record release something new. Although we want to stay DIY for a little bit longer. It has to do with our freedom, we don't want fit into the format of labels. My interest in music started by listening to self-released stuff of obscure indie bands who released, let's say only one 7 inch in 1978, rather than listening to big bands. I love the feeling that you can have that you are the only one knowing this band.

NL How do you feel then about the second decennium of 2000, in which all music is instantly available through the internet?

TT I hate internet. It definitely destroyed a lot of cultures. Before that we were more hungry about discovering something valuable. That was a pure joy. Now you only know about something you discovered on the internet, which is not real, and superficial.

NL Why do you release stuff on bandcamp then?

TT Otherwise we couldn't make any money. You can't just deny the times we are living in now, I suppose. I'm trying not to overuse it, and still go to gigs and record shops.

SB some people don't go to gigs....

TT or wear t-shirts of bands they never heard or saw live.

SB We are from a generation who experienced music without the internet. So we still take that to 2016.

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■ ENDRHYMES ■ FOR THE AVANT-GUARDIAN BRECHT AMEEL REFLECTS ON HIS FAVORITE PARTS OF RAZEN'S 2ND FULL ALBUM ON KRAAK.

1) *Reaper*

“End of Times”, a track by Black Dog, London 1994—Downie / Handley / Turner one of these guys must have had a shawm preset on his synth. A city hardened by the fire, scourged by the times. London and the River Thames. Mrs Plath and the children without heating in their apartment, a very cold winter. Nerve-racked, no more strength to endure, but a talent for rhymes. Putting the H in a weird place. Heartbreaker, ondes-MartHenot. Harvest: reap what you sow. Reaper as in finisher—a track finished in one take, just a little talk beforehand. Amish Maffia Hold-ups, vividly told by Bryan over dinner. European glances of amazement. American Thrills: Don't Fear the Reaper, sung by geriatric nurses on christmas eve, with quivering voices, deep in the woods. Frail, thus not as strong as a bagpipe wail. But with a similar sense of warning.

7'11" FAVOURITE MOMENT THE MICROTONAL SLIDING CHORD ON 3'53"

2) *Sorcerer*

Continuum, momentum, just a moment: we are back in England. Moors, Mist, Marshes. The apprentice of Thomas Hardy's Conjuror Trendle falls through a loophole and finds himself stuck in the scenery of Stalker. Mazes of eerie vertigo. At every corner, a vague sound that recalls Händel's Royal Fireworks. Crackle and Pop. Have them for breakfast. St Augustine, and the Sorcerer, looking for atoms of alchemy in their hissing cauldrons, cutting equal or parallel spells. Death Bell Monochord. Inhale some of Aga Alêmu “Abatatchen Hoy” to counter the hyper hyperventilation.

7'11" FAVOURITE MOMENT THE MICROTONAL SLIDING CHORD ON 3'53"

3) *Piper*

Rites of the Piper—original title. Bohemia, sometime early 19th century. Fear among miners: the earth has tides. Big blocks move, ebb and flow, just like any regular blue ocean. All those carefully constructed corridors could at any instant encounter a flood of earth. Tides unforeseen. Slow and not to be stopped, like the orange blob in Blake & Mortimer's De Valstrik (era of 5060). Did I read it, or just dream about it? The gaslight on the dirty faces, trolleys in the darkness, the sound of iron wheels. Bohemia, dark forests, very strange lore. Recorder or Pipes? Recorder, then. No catching rats. “Dekalog I” by Z. Preisner, who also seemed to love recorders.

10'33" FAVOURITE MOMENT 8'00"

4) *Sleeper*

Nightsky in magma and coral skeleton colors: mirrors the youth dreams of planets. Future is beyond ancient. Debris circling around without purpose and without safety net. Philip Glass' “Koyaanisqatsi”, always a good reminder of hearing bagpipes where there are none. Overtones, undertones, bourdon tones, all get caught in the sparking circuitry. Thingamajig, who came up with that word? Jigs and Reels, eternal whirls, no wonder that people kept dancing. Ongerijmd. Endrhymes. It was just an idea and it became the tune that seemed to play itself.

11'57" FAVOURITE MOMENT THE RETURN OF THE PIPES AT ABOUT 9'02"



ERIK FRYE

NIELS LATOMME

NL Let’s start with your most recent release. It has the very intriguing title *Some Consequences of Four Incapacities*. What does it mean?

EF The title comes from a text of the same name by Charles Sanders Peirce.

NL I reminds of a book I’m currently reading which is called *Boring Formless Nonsense*. The writer establishes an Aesthetics of failure, and points out the importance of Failure in experimental music and art. Is this concept important to you? It makes sense in a way, because although it has this very serious framing (cfr. The text & the fact you recorded it at the university), it has something very playful, and random.

EF Methodological and intuitive approaches are integral elements in my compositional practice. The seemingly random aspects that you reference are constructed intentionally to be perceived precisely in that way, and, in essence, to challenge the common / ingrained modes perception. This might also be viewed, in certain cases, as a form of antinarrative compositional strategy.

Regarding ‘Failure’ I’m not sure I follow you. Perhaps some specific examples would help clarify exactly what you’re referencing. Although this concept is not disinteresting to me, it isn’t necessarily something that I would readily apply to my own work. Intentional and focused utilization of ‘Failure’ in music seems to be linked stylistically to improvisation, glitch, and noise, none of which I would self ascribe. ‘Playful’ is a bit easier to sympathize with when connected to my work, however, it’s certainly a slippery slope. In my experience, many visual and auditory links to the brain are perceived as ‘playful’ when experienced by the perceiver.

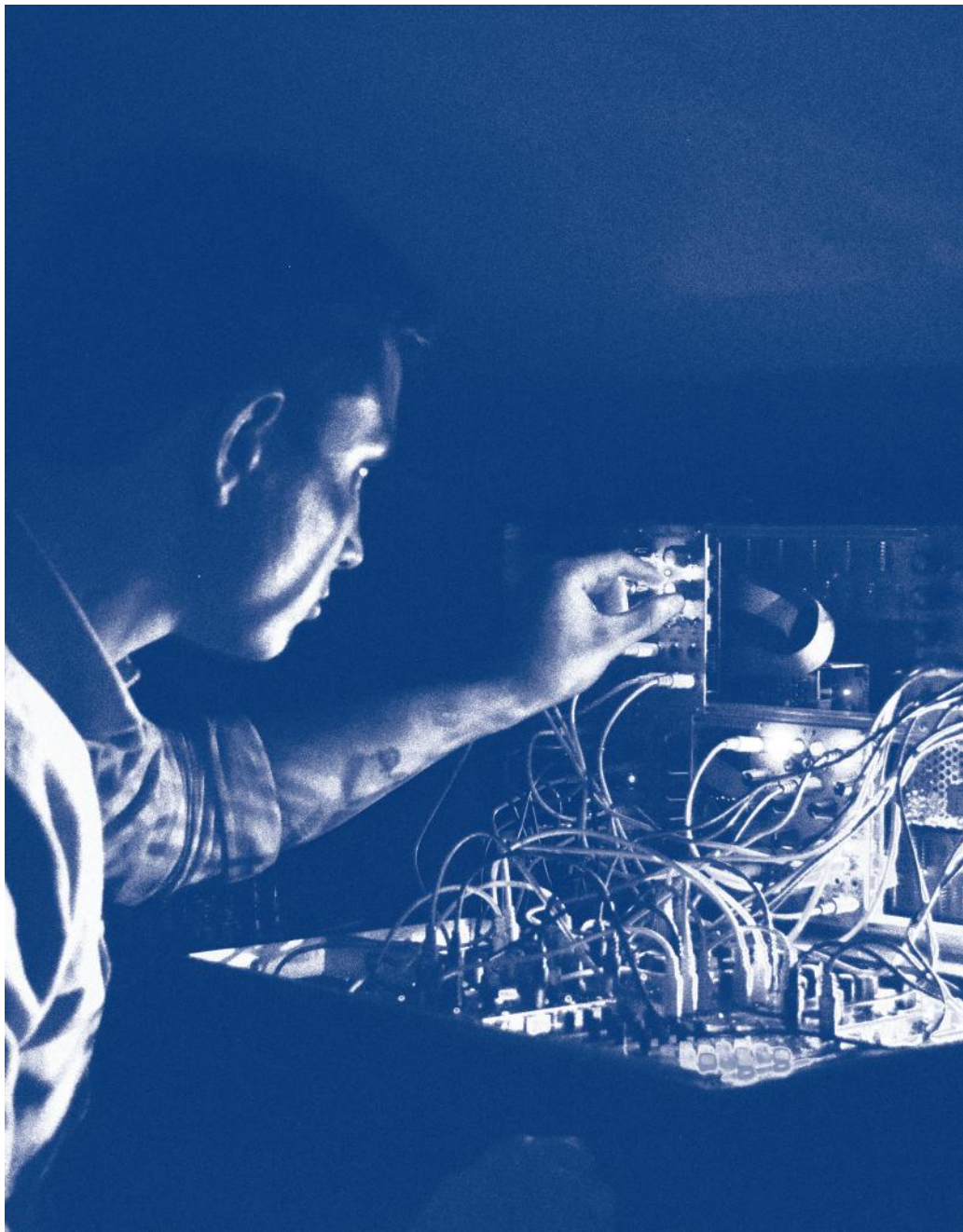
Defining a sound or visual art practice as playful seems to connote a disregard for logic and the absence of a concentrated, considered endeavor. I wonder if this term is applied with equal abandon in other industries. Thaemlitz makes a good case against the ideology of a music practice being shackled to terms like “fun” “playful” “carefree” and “inspirational”. This can have a detrimental effect on composers and artists. Language of this type that commonly surrounds these practices is very generalizing and assumptive which can be corrosive and debilitating because it creates boundaries which not only limit the scope and impact of sound, but also makes approaching sound making or art making in terms of a recognized labor practice nearly impossible.

NL The promotext about *Some Consequences* states that you are researching new modes of perception and spatial cognition? How so?

EF As I briefly mentioned above, using antinarrative techniques is a very direct way of recalibrating common patterns of perception.

When experienced in conjunction with spatial audio, the cognitive streams are interrupted further.

NL It also states that your music is a manifestation of new bodies of new mathematical concepts. First of all, I’m curious if I understood this well, by asking what does it actually mean? Second, the reason why you do this, seems to create new ways of looking or hearing. Can you explain how it actually does? I also wondered if you are consciously ignoring the concept of emotion in music? It seems now that you are in search of Absolute Music, which exists on itself, without relation to



the ‘real’ world, without triggering human emotions (which isn’t a bad nor good thing).

E Fernando Zalamea wrote a text for my new LP. This text focuses specifically on the links between my compositional output and abstract and radical mathematical concepts such as sheafification. There are conceptual links to Grothendieck’s sheafs as a topological representation of electroacoustic diffusions.

It seems that sound cannot help but be linked to emotion in some way. Oftentimes experiences of perplexity, anticipation, irritation, surprise, attraction, detraction, dissociation, physical and immaterial interaction, are all connected to my work. No, I am not seeking to consciously

ignore emotion, In my experience, the sounds are emotionally affecting. These sounds also evoke mental, and physical reactions, absolutely.

As the titles, accompanying texts, compositional palette, and structure would suggest, these pieces are not merely showcases of technical construction but conceptually considered works enabling a multitude of interpretive gazes and evocative personal connections that vary from experience to experience. Whatever links are drawn, be it linguistic, mathematical, philosophical, emotional, the work is evocative and complex in its reflection of its surroundings. Absolute Music seems to be an archaic concept without much contemporary bearing.

NL Are you an heir of the historical avantgarde music, and especially

taking place. Curtis Roads mentioned to me that he is developing an extremely sophisticated spherical audio system. One major obstacle in this ongoing project is funding. ‘Avantgarde’ is another archaic term that is historically relevant but not contemporarily viable. As a society, we are still approaching sound and music as a simple stereo reality in day to day life. This is directly linked to the market and what is currently deemed feasible to produce and consume. We have a long way to go to mature from our infancy (let’s not get started on the current state of radicalized sexism and racism in the world). Mutations will always persist and will simultaneously befuddle and obfuscate misplaced attempts at concrete definition.

NL How long are you making music? And how does music relate to your visual art?

EF I was intently listening to the sound of air conditioning units when I was 5 years old. I was playing abstract improvisational pieces on my greatgrandparents’ baby grand piano when I was around 10 years old. They are inseparable, one and the same.

NL How was it to work in an anechoic chamber? I heard stories that you cannot stay there for a couple of minutes, otherwise you start to hallucinate due to the lack of visual and auditory input. Does this has something to do with the abstract and absolute nature of your music?

EF The anechoic chamber is a very useful compositional tool. I have heard many stories of people sleeping contently in them for several hours. My experience with anechoic chambers is not alienating or antagonistic. I have successfully utilized the chamber’s ability to isolate and refine certain characteristics of sounds. Anechoic chambers are extremely viable and should not be confined to academic or industry only practices. At Orfield Labs in Minneapolis, where I have spent much time composing and recording in the anechoic chamber as well as the multichannel studio, there is a specially built echo chamber (the polar opposite of the anechoic chamber) that I plan to work in during the coming months.

NL I like the way you treated voices in the salon cdr. Are they concrete voices, or synthesized? In relation to the mathematical and absolute concepts why did you use the most human of all sounds, the voice, in some tracks?

EF The voices are synthesized. What isn’t human?

NL And last but not least, for the reader, who sometimes likes to connect to the person behind the music. Can you describe your room, and the neighborhood where you live in?

EF I live in North Minneapolis not far from the fourth precinct that was occupied by protesters for several weeks following the brutal murder of Jamar Clark who was handcuffed by two police officers and then shot in the head.

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of their ideas to create new sounds, new music by means of new technology? Do you see this as still relevant in a postmillennial decade, in which everything seems to be thought, done and created? Do you feel that there is some sort of weariness in Western culture, as if has reached it’s limits in renewing things?

EF When composing with any system over a period of time, new and unexpected events will appear intermittently. Also, the collaborative effort in working with software designers is always creating new angles, strange specificities, and unexpected diversions. One look into software and hardware design, not to mention contemporary composition, will reveal the unmistakable and continued transitions that are

TYPHONIAN HIGHLIFE & SEA URCHIN

TRANSPARANT:
Zuid-Italië, mei 2016. Ik kreeg een staalkaart van lokale experimentele muzikanten voorgeschoteld. En één act is sindsdien door mijn gedachten blijven deinen. Want puur afgaand op zijn geluiden vond ik het onmogelijk in te schatten of de man nu afkomstig was uit de getto's van Compton, of uit een lokaal zonovergoten boerendorpje. Dat vond ik frappant.

LIEVEN MARTENS MOANA

Ik ben altijd al fan geweest van het magisch realisme van een Leo Pleysier. Zoals geen ander zet hij het Kempenland, wat ook mijn kiem is, in bloei in zijn boeken. Onmiskénbaar Kempisch en persoonlijk, niet te verwarren met eender welke exotische kracht. Maar daar tegenover staan natuurlijk ook verkavelingsdadaïsten en dergelijke, of gehuchtpunkers. Neigend naar een zieltogend escapisme, de gevaarlijkste raadgever in de kunsten. Het is een wankel evenwicht.

Terug naar Zuid-Italië en de muzikant in kwestie. Geboren en getogen in een prachtig ontiègelijk klein dorpje beneden in de laars. Omzoomd door olijfbomen en de wonderlijk lekkere *Primitivo* druif. Ontsloten door landerijen ooit bezongen door literaire zwaargewichten als D.H. Lawrence, Ezra Pound en andere. Bezocht door de beste mystici, muzikanten en ander creatief volk. Met helaas ook de economische en sociale problemen zich doorgaans aftekenend in een soortelijk achterland, verlaten door hoop en rede.

De artiest in kwestie liet niets van dit alles doorschijnen, en bediende zich van een melange van ietwat saaie hiphopbeats, vermengt met een vreemde Amerikaanse slang. Gespeend van lokale ideeën, kritiek of invloeden. Van personalisatie. Muziek die, zoals ik dus al aangaf, evenzeer door de eerste de beste idioot uit Compton zou gecomponeerd kunnen zijn – én van het soort *net-niet* die men aantreft ná het ledigen van het vat.

Als je het een beetje historisch benaderde, was het enige dat die man dreef zowat de wens der groot deel van zijn voorlopende generaties. De wens om te emigreren naar Noord-Italië, of beter nog, het buitenland. En vooral Amerika dan. Al dan niet via schip.

Hij projecteerde zichzelf in iemand anders. Liever dan het

podium te vullen met zijn eigen ego, speelde hij een soort van imaginaire talentenshow, waar hij even geniepig in de schoenen mocht staan van zijn grote hiphophelden. Hij cijferde zichzelf dus weg, als het ware. Iets wat me deed denken aan pakweg een Metallica-coverband, zich amuserend in één of andere kelder.

Ik las jaren geleden in *De Witte Raaf* een interview met een Antwerps beeldend kunstenaar. Omdat langs beide kanten echt pertinente vragen en antwoorden werden gesteld én gegeven, een situatie doorgaans verzoek in de courante muziekers, boeide het schrijven van begin tot einde. Zonder pseudo-intellectualisme, of zonder het nog ergere anti-intellectualisme. Zonder franjes, rechttoe rechtaan. Van dichtbij, want zo voelde ook het interview aan. Het had persoonlijkheid. Het had een idee. En alles kwam van hier en daar.

De heer in kwestie had het over enkele ideeën, ontsproten aan jarenlange blootstelling aan dorpse middenstand. De heer was van oorsprong *Van Den Buiten*. Wemelend van een landelijke ambachtelijkheid creëert hij nu al decennia een explosie van pure esthetiek. Ook vandaag is de bewuste kunstenaar nog steeds erg goed én vooral actueel. Want er wordt niets afgezworen, maar in tegendeel heel veel toegevoegd. En hij was voor al zichzelf. Tegen wil en dank.

Maar moet je daarom per se je afkomst koesteren al dan niet tonen? Een briesende lul in Het Schoon Verdiep zal alvast “ja!” bulderen. Maar afkomst is in zo’n klootzak zijn hoofd ontbeerd in een soort van circus van onbestaande hechting. Ik spreek in dit stuk dan ook niet over het zich geforceerd vastklampen aan ingebeeelde – dominante – cultuur. Het gaat er meer om of iets al dan

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niet interessants kan zijn, omdat er achtergronden worden gekoesterd. Invloeden vanuit de omgeving ook. Context. En dat men puur zichzelf is.

Spencer Clark, Francesco Cavaliere, en Leila Hassan zijn niet bepaald millionsellers. Het zijn zelfs niet 5.000 sellers. (alhoewel, als je bijvoorbeeld al de projecten van Spencer Clark optelt, zal je wel aan een behoorlijk getal komen) Het zijn wel stuk voor stuk personen die reeds jarenlang in alle starheid werken aan een bijzonder persoonlijk project. Starheid niet te verwarren met conservatisme.

Een starheid, ontsproten aan een stel hersencellen, ideeën en zelfbewustzijn. Geen tafelspringers, wel duidelijkheid. En vooral, doorheen de jaren van uitgaves, optredens, installaties etc, iets dat wordt gecommuniceerd. En waarnaar mensen luisteren, en kijken. En waarvan mensen leren, en zelfs gebruiken. Een starheid die toch invloeden durft tonen. Maar tevens een starheid die het eindproduct niet laat verkneuteren tot tijdelijke onzin.

Een dame en twee heren die niet te beredeneerd te werk gaan. Beredeneerd in de zin van, “met welke boter lepelen we ons nieuwe broodje op?” Een dame en heren die het belangrijkste instrument onderzoeken, de hersenpan. Gestuwd door passie. Soms gedoemd tot relatieve eenzaamheid en onbegrip. Andere keren overladen met complimenten, eervolle vermeldingen en kansen. Die zeker niet altijd met perfect gelukte platen en optredens voor de dag komen. Maar waar de mislukking nooit de reden is tot toegevingen.

Spencer Clark, ontsproten aan een jeugd in San Diego. Een stad als een gestileerde 80's strandbroek, omgeven door militaire barakken, jaloers loensend naar de massa hysterie geheten Los Angeles. En gevleid doch afkerig tot broederschap gedoemd met de psychedelische wanorde van Tijuana, net over de grens met Mexico. In deze realiteit groeide San Diego uit tot een secundaire hoofdstad van het strand, maar evenzeer tot een hub voor aan PTSS lijdende jonge militaire van over het hele land. Op zoek naar wat brandende zon voor hun getormenteerde hersenpan. Of naar wat rust als voorbereiding op een mogelijke PTSS.

Zou het kunnen dat deze uitgetekende gekte zich heeft binnengedrongen in Clarks unieke wereld? Een wereld *vermeerderd* door vele reizen en verblijven hogerop in Californië,

aan de Amerikaanse Oostkust, in Berlijn, Antwerpen, etc.

Francesco Cavaliere bracht zijn jeugd door in Calabrië. Terwijl Leila Hassan met haar Egyptische ouders zich nestelden in het provinciale Linz, Oostenrijk. Hun gezamenlijke project Sea Urchin is een schilderij van Mediterrane gronden waarin een Noord-Afrikaanse gelaagdheid communiceert met een land badend in introversie enerzijds en extraversie en corruptie anderzijds. Perfect verknippt in een bed van liefde. Later uitgediept in Berlijn, een stad badend in culturele rijkheid, artistieke doodsheid, een waanzinnige geschiedenis en zuipende expats. Is hun oeuvre getouchéerd door afkomst? Ik denk het wel. En is dit belangrijk? Misschien wel, misschien niet. Muziek is altijd gedreven geweest door het nabootsen. En het is heerlijk voor de kleinburgerlijke collectioneur een soort van gefingeerde vrijheid in huis te halen, onder het mom van een dure provo LP. En dat mag allemaal. Maar waarom?

Als we niet willen evolueren naar een toekomst waarin experimentele muziek zowat het minder begaafde broertje wordt van zogenaamde normale muziek. Waar het een soort van Afrit9 gehalte krijgt, onderbetaald uiteraard. Waar we genoeg nemen met het nabootsen van universele figuren à la de vrije beatnik, de punker, de hiphopper, de modulaire synthesist, de abstracte techno dj, de componist, de metal idioot (inclusief schmink), de poët, etc. Waar men het nabootsen verkiest boven het interneren. Is het tonen van persoonlijkheid én context én achtergrond toch wel meegenomen. Achtergrond als mogelijke katalysator.

Anders verworden we misschien tot glas in plaats van een spiegel. Puur transparant.

Op de nieuwste langspeelplaat Yaqaza klinkt Hassans stem gewoon-tegetrouw alsof elke flard tekst je persoonlijk wordt toevertrouwd, met uitdrukkelijk verzoek van geheimhouding. Gedrenkt in een bad van klanken die, *Cavalieresque*, het midden houden tussen de historische radiospeilen op de RAI van vroegere jaren, *library music*, en vooral, een Italiaans landschap, getekend door pijnbomen en zon. Een geluid dat *completely dry* is, in zijn eigen woorden. Deinend op ritmes die niet zouden misstaan op de soundtrack van El Topo. Een prachtig staaltje van heerlijk Mediteraans magisch realisme, zoals het enkel daar verzonnen kan worden, in de tuinen van Calvino en Landolfi. Een ode aan de leegte tussen geluiden. Of de kracht van een aanzet. Een vergeten ambacht.

Typhonian Highlife is een compositie schipperend tussen bedrieglijke eenvoud en aangename complexiteit. Samples en melodielijnen worden op het eerste zicht at random uitgestrooid. Invloeden en historische stromingen steken de kop op, om meteen op een bizarre manier weerlegd te worden. Een LP die in de psychedelische Californische traditie een amalgaan aan identiteiten bezit. Zonder angst voor een Groter Verhaal. Zwevend tussen het impressionisme en neoclassicisme à la De Falla enerzijds, Marin County 70's new age, en de spirituele jazz van Alice Coltrane anderzijds. En onderweg tal van maffe gedaantes aanneemt, maar toch ook coherent en uniek “Clark” klinkt. Idiosyncrasie, in de betere zin van het woord. Maar perfect in te passen in dialoog met vroeger én met het hier en nu.



■ ASMUS TIETCHENS ■

NUANCES IN SELF-SUFFICIENT MUSIC: Asmus Tietchens — a name that popped up about 40 years ago for the first time on an album of ambient music by *Cluster&Eno* (1977) and can be found in various fields of electronic and experimental music ever since, mostly on the fringes of certain genres like industrial, synth-pop, acoustic, reductionist electronic music or krautrock. It's hard to fix his position to a specific scene, instead he seems more like a curious and peculiar mind working his way through all the spheres that catch his curiosity. Although he can be classified as a consistent solo-artist, quite a few collaborations have been exercised with people like the percussionist Jon Mueller, the reductionist electronic composer Richard Chartier, Chrysanthemums' Terry Burrows or his duo Kontakt der Jünglinge (a combination of titles of two early Stockhausen pieces) together with media-artist and composer Thomas Koener. He also appears on an album by the ephemeral Krautrock band-project Liliental (one of the few records featuring studio-wizard Conny Plank as a musician), probably the only real band he ever played in, not to mention his general dislike of most Krautrock.

MARC MATTER



But let's start at the beginning: Asmus Tietchens was born in Hamburg (*1947), has lived there ever since, and works there mostly in the studio of his old friend Okko Bekker—a composer of filmscores and advertisements who also guest-starred on the *Cluster&Eno* album, but has also produced whole works together with Asmus, most notably a concept-album called *E* that contains succesful imitations of modern classical and avantgarde music. His attachment with the city of Hamburg is close: being a key-figure and a close inspiration to a younger generation of experimental electronic musicians such as Felix Kubin, who admired Tietchens as a kind of chinese master, a laughing monch, an existentialist audio-scientist leaning to impressionism who produces real science-fiction with his music. He also used to be involved in the infamous Odradek fanzine, has been rumored of being behind the mysterious Werkbund ■ and Mechthild von Leusch

projects together with Uli Rehberg aka Ditterich von Euler-Donnersperg (Tietchens repeatedly denied his participation) and still co-runs the monthly Hörbar events of experimental music in a small cinema (B-Movie). Even his dayjobs that he once had to execute for the sake of his parents' peace were typical for Hamburg: trained as a tradesman working in the harbour and later being a copywriter in the advertising business.

Confronted with early german electronic avantgarde music and french musique concrete on the night-programs of germany's state-radio as a 12-year old kid, because he somewhat felt obliged to follow the development of the arts as a grammar school student due to his vanity, this kind of music caught his curiosity. The idea to make music himself developed, and after giving it a try with guitar-playing which failed due to his left-handedness, he started tinkering around with splicing prerecorded tapes and doing random collages

of found sound and music as a young teenager. In the mid-60s he system-atisized his approach and got access to a Revox tape-machine, and his first piece of tape-music dates back to 1965. Making music continued as a hobby for 15 years, before getting the opportunity to make it public. The LP *Formen letzter Hausmusik* (transl. Last forms of family-music, 1984) that was released by Nurse With Wounds Steven Stapleton for his United Dairies label contained mostly material dating from the mid-70s. His active entry into the music-scene as a composer was via the industrial scene, not only releasing on the NWW label but also on Esplendor Geometrico's later on, but he does not call his own music industrial: "like i have been on the fringes of industrial music in the 80s, i am nowadays working on the fringes of reductionist music" he tells me in a telephone interview. A period in his work as a composer that dates back to the early and mid 80s should not be forgotten—back then the german intellectual pop-magazine Spex (in the July 1985 issue) speculated that "atonal veteran Asmus Tietchens will

never lose his reputation as a hippie-electronic (musician) because of his releases on the german Krautrock-label Sky", although he still respects these records for what they are: synthie-pop.

While also some of his experimental pieces work with rhythms and repetitive patterns, his current compositions however are rather abstract, sparse and stern, a music not easy to access but starring an idiosyncratic beauty; they explore very subtle differences in tone, texture and sound while not hesitating to use silence as an element. He is more and more interested in nuances: "an unattentive listener could gain the impression when listening to an eight minute piece that nothing is happening here" he remarks. After starting out with tape-collages and going through phases of synthesized music and a long period of mixing both, he is back to pure electronic sound: "nowadays i hardly work with concrete sound-material like field-recordings anymore, but

use synthetic sounds". Nevertheless, two of Tietchens relatively recent radiopieces that he composed for the WDR Ars-Acustica broadcast series exclusively use concentrated field-recordings: *Trois Dryades* is based on microscopic recordings of a tree that is cut, and *Sechs Heidelberger Studien* on recordings of an old Heidelberger printing-machine. Both were awarded with the Karl-Sczuka Price for Radio-Art in 2003 and 2006. Unlike other artists who start out radical only to become tamed by habit, his musical abstraction and quaintness increased over time and moreover his curiosity lead him into different genres and styles without losing a certain kind of handwriting.

Some of Asmus Tietchens recordings display a twisted sort of humor: an LP of seemingly lost tapes by german hardrock band The Scorpions trying out some electronic Krautrock (of course NOT produced by The Scorpions but by Tietchens in collaboration with Felix Kubin aka Knoth and Tim Buhre as *Spiders on Phasing*), or the *Aroma Club* series containing bizarre synth-pop with matching artwork are funny though sarcastic examples of his broad approach to electronic music and his playful mocks on musical trends and genres. In some of these projects he uses pseudonyms which happen to be anagrams based on his real name like Tussi Schemante or Achim Stutessen. Artwork and album- or tracktitles (which are, beside a few exceptions, all in german) are further dimensions in Tietchens records in which a jejune kind of humor can be found in homeopathic doses, but besides of that, he considers his music to lack humor. It might be a specific critical sensitivity and playfulness within the way he approaches music, art and life, making him more of a dandy-noir (more in a spiritual sense instead of a blasé fashion-attitude) than a tongue-in-cheek ironymonger.

Asmus Tietchens doesnt mind to talk about his music before his performances, and he is a great talker. He is also a gifted writer of critical essays on experimental music or linernotes for records by Cluster, Günther Schickert or Institut fuer Feinmotorik that contain remarkable literary qualities. However, he considers his music a music without words, a kind of 'absolute music'—a concept dating back to mid-19th centuries hardcore romanticism—a music that is absolutely self-sufficient, that is not 'about' or 'stands for' something but for itself, that does not intend to provoke specific thoughts or feelings amongst the listeners (he is a diligent listener of his own music by the way)—in that way being as open for interpretation as it can get: "i have no messages to spread, and i dont know to whom i should adress those". But nevertheless, he can't help but stick to his habit to include a quotation of the thinker of extreme pessimism EM Cioran on each record since *Seuchengebiete* (transl. Pestilence Fields, 1985); thats because he really wants to share those aphorisms—not because he wants to entertain the listener, but to show what intellectual influences he bears. Thus he is not reflecting a worldview or philosophical convictions through his art, "there's still some philosophical background noise that inspires the music". Therefore it does not surprise that he characterises his music of the last 20 years—without any evaluation—as "an attempt to establish a maximal 'human-distance'".

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