

# THE AWANT GUARDIAN

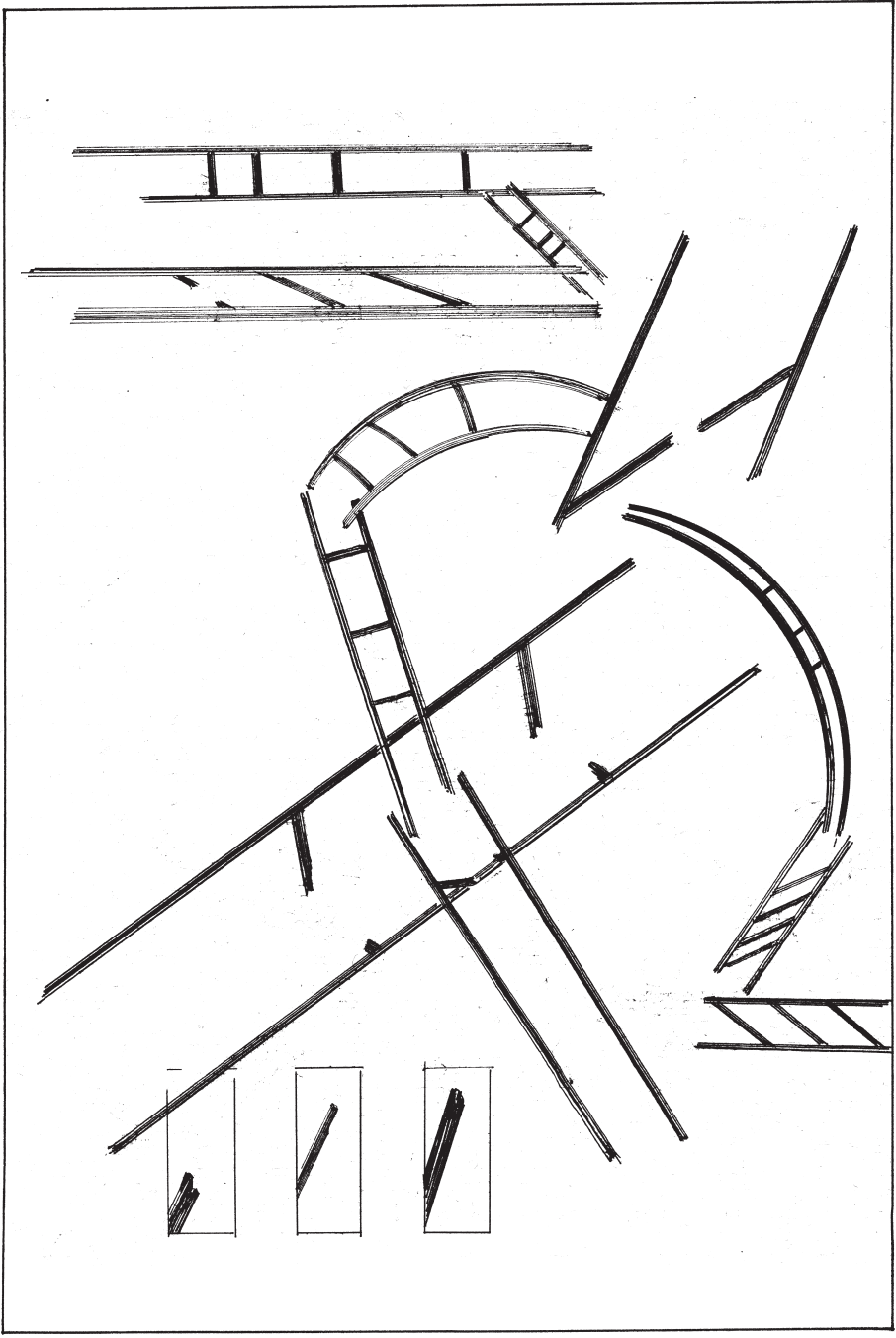
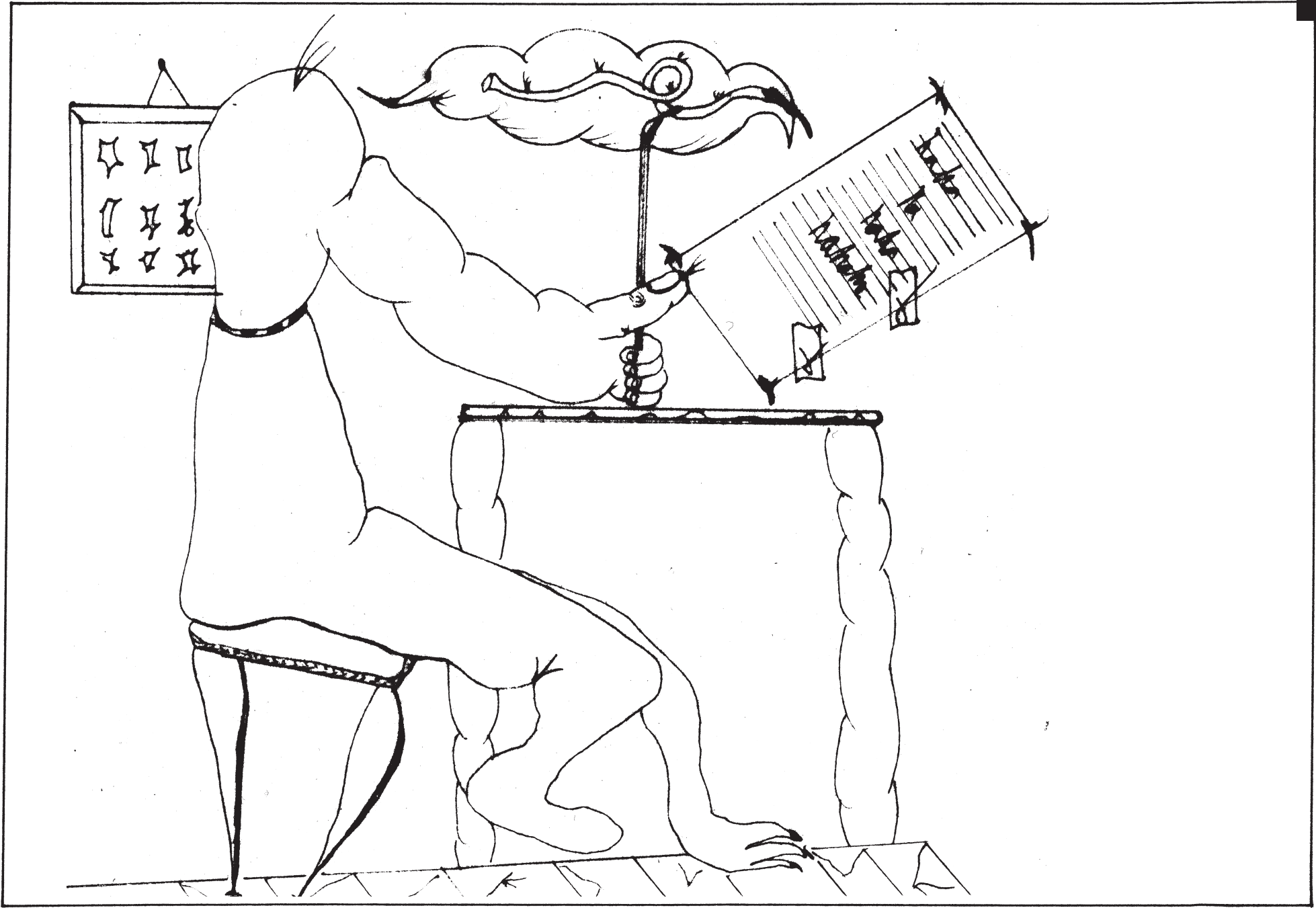
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IS A FREE-FORM/SHAPE-SHIFTING PUBLICATION BY KRAAK WHICH ATTEMPTS TO DISTILL IMMATERIAL EVENTS INTO A MUSIC MAGAZINE FORMAT.

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In this edition of **THE AWANT GUARDIAN**, and indeed of Eastern Daze, time is a reflection that hovers ponderously, sometimes uneasily, over our heads. The drones we escape into, the subliminal states we seek through trance, the lands far and away that we only access through music heard and felt: all are devices that add levity to time. The film *Chronopolis* by Piotr Kamler delivers its approach on the theme, imagining time as manipulable, submissive, yet ultimately unfathomable as control reveals its illusory nature. Ancient modes and artefacts are transformed into sound and transported into modernity by figures such as Laura Cannell and Brighde Chaimbeul, while the Raymondes of this world visit the limbo of an unchanging present, suspending the elements through contraptions of rhythm and transfixion. Seeking aimlessness, Poor Isa dwell in a zone of undefined dimensions, acting as explorers and emissaries of its permanence. And then Maria Ahit comes in, summoning a memory field through deliberate exercises of vagueness. A hole in the continuum, it draws you in. In time, we find answers, but also excuses. We didn't have enough of it, of course. The unfortunate omission in this issue of Kokoko!, Mdou Moctar and Tallawit Tibouctou can partly be attributed to the elusive character of Western/contemporary time management, which we all know and assume. Our words on time may not have done much justice, anyway. Still, the magic of time is that there's always some to be found when you really need it, or at least that's how it feels when reaching over for a last hazy puff.



# MARJA AHTI

## INSIDE/OUTSIDE: MARJA AHTI'S ACOUSTIC PATHWAYS.

Marja Ahti's first full-length release under her own name sees her shifting her focus towards electroacoustic music and moving away from the pattern-built explorations she undertook as Tsembla. *Vegetal Negatives* was inspired by the writings of René Daumal, and repeated listenings of the album lay bare a delicate play of refreshing natural clarity where field recordings and mutated sounds invert and morph into each other, creating a singular otherworldly vibe.

JELLE VANLERBERGHE

**JELLE VANLERBERGHE** Can you introduce yourself? What is your background and how did you get involved in making records? Is music/sound your main occupation?

**MARJA AHTI** I grew up in Luleå, a seaside town on the northern Swedish coast. As a teenager I played guitar and saxophone, starting a band with my friends and studying music at high school. At 18 I moved south to do a masters in literature studies and didn't take up music again until ten years later when I sold my saxophone, bought some recording equipment and started to teach myself to record and compose at home. I'm a late bloomer in this sense. I also only realized quite recently just how much my interest in literature and language has influenced my music. Sound and music form the core of my main occupation these days.

**JV** How did you end up in Finland? Has the Finnish scene influenced your work as an artist?

**MA** My mother is Finnish and my family often spent time on the east side of the bay during holidays. As an

adult I started to travel to Finland on my own, getting acquainted with that part of my history and trying to learn the language better. When I started to see my partner, Niko-Matti, I was living in Stockholm and he was in Turku. We travelled back and forth between countries for almost a year on these huge overnight cruise ships that cross the sea in between. When I moved to Finland in 2008, the Finnish music scene had a great enabling impact on me. There was a spirit of community, experimentation and a DIY ethic that made me feel free to explore.

**JV** Your latest record is inspired by the essay by René Daumal, *On Pataphotograms*, in which inverted animal bodies are imagined as plants [Daumal, the French writer, was influenced by both the mysticism of G.I. Gurdjieff and the pataphysics of Alfred Jarry]. Do you normally work around a theme or concept for your records?

**MA** I hadn't worked around a concept before *Vegetal Negatives* and I was actually quite amazed at how much it changed

my thinking about sound and composition. I found that it opened a lot of new paths to look for similarities between musical and literary form. I wanted to challenge myself and the way I was working. Imagining the musical form as a web of references and single sounds as poetic images, while at the same time trying to make something that is enjoyable to listen to, was a good way to stay alert. At the moment I'm working on a new record that is more like a mystery box, not as straightforwardly conceptual. It has a red thread and interconnected motives, but a lot of it also feels like moments of hidden meaning that I haven't yet become aware of that are on the verge of telling me something.

**JV** Where else do you draw inspiration from?

**MA** Living and listening, music and daily sound environments, literature and science. I sometimes like to work while traveling, wearing my headphones on a ferry or a train, watching the landscape while working out a piece.

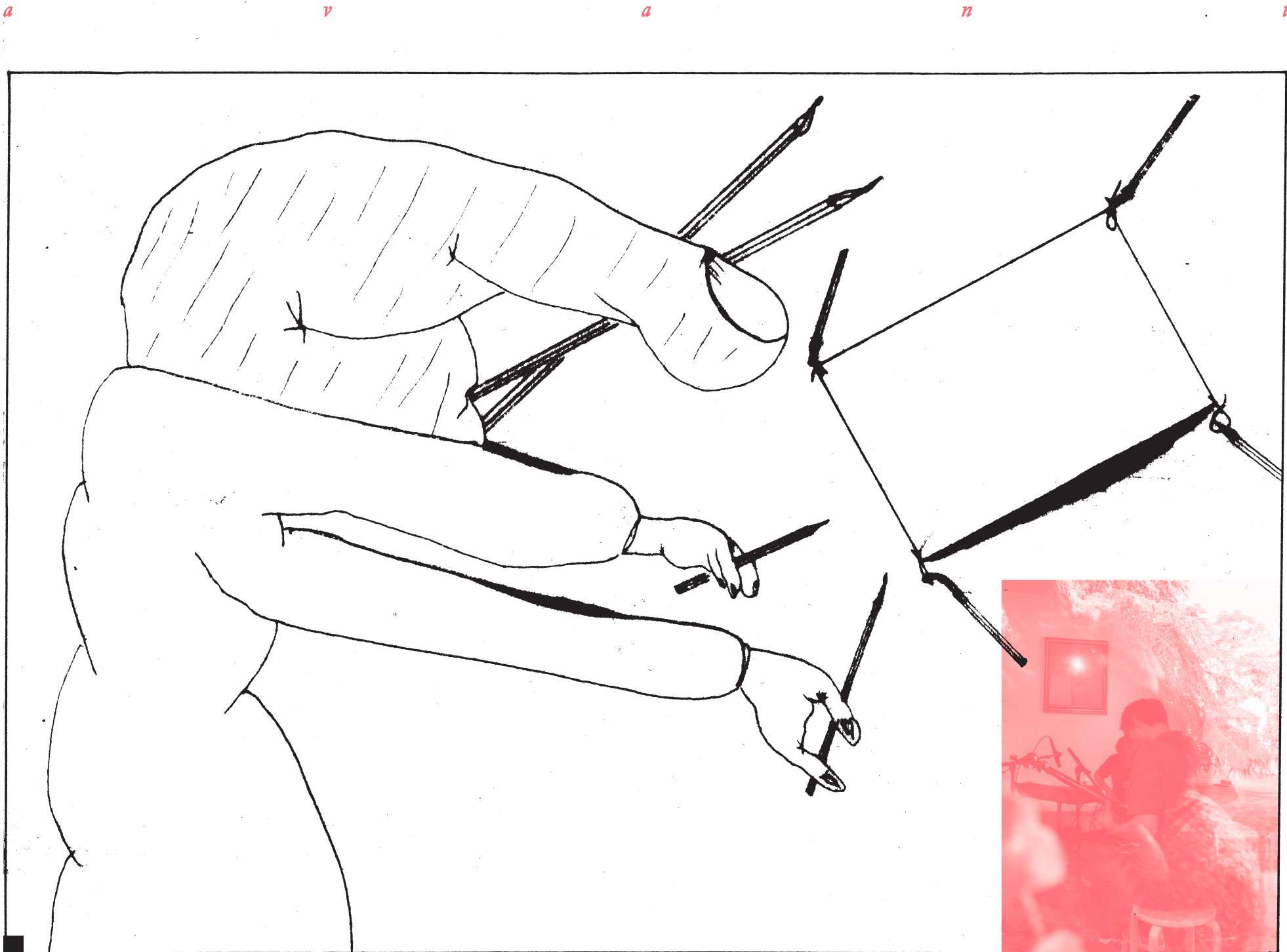
**JV** How is your process of making the compositions? Do you know in advance what sounds you want to record on the field?

**MA** There's always a pendulum swinging back and forth between intention and surprise throughout the whole process. You never really know what sounds are going to enter your realm of attention. That's what I like about field recording. When you have the compass set on a loose concept of what you're working on, you can also choose to leave the route. Some things I do look for intentionally, like interesting acoustic spaces with their own specific resonance that in some drastic way transform what is going on around them. Often small hollows, sewer pipes, trash bins, that

sort of thing. I tend to like sounds that are vaguely familiar but still not quite known, which invoke vague memories but create new, strange ones at the same time. Sounds that have a connection to the elements are also something I seem to record a lot. Wet, airy, metallic, crunchy. The other part of the process is working with synthesis or instruments. In this case I mainly focus on texture, timbre and harmony. Composing with all of these elements has a lot to do with tuning into where the sounds themselves lead you, then gradually finding out what you're actually using them to say.

**JV** Can you tell about your other projects and how they relate to your solo work?

**MA** We have a duo, Ahti & Ahti, together with my partner Niko-Matti. Our work pace is slower than my solo work, just because it's harder to find the time to go to the studio together. But I think the duo work is more than just making music together. It is also a channel to





discuss, listen to music, argue about it and learn things that neither of us could find out on our own.

At the moment I'm also working on a performance piece, a chamber opera, together with artists Essi Kausalainen and Jenny Kalliokulju, who come from the fields of visual art, performance and poetry. I'm writing music for a small ensemble of five vocalists including a viola player, a teenage harpist, objects and electronics. I usually like to let different projects overlap and seep into each other, so I'll probably use some elements from the piece in my solo work as well as the other way around, although in a different form.

**JV How did you end up on Hallow Ground?**

**MA** I sent the album to Remo and I could tell from his reply that he had listened to it carefully before deciding to release it. He is a great person to work with. Communication is everything.

**JV Do you find it difficult to translate the music to a live setting? How was Meakusma?**

**MA** Meakusma was great. I played a late night show in an intimate space upstairs alongside Lieven Martens. Festival audiences can sometimes be a bit distracted, but the atmosphere in the room was like entering a pocket in time, very focused. I enjoyed that a lot.

I use my live sets as a way to try out new material, new sounds and ways of arranging them. I also rearrange pieces that are already finished, trying to open them up to reinterpretation and the input of the moment, but I find this more challenging as there are so many decisions already made. Whatever is new and still unsettled is more interesting for me to play and hopefully also to listen to.

g u a r d i a n

**■ POOR ISA ■**

After discussing the taste of the green tea we are drinking, going over a palette from spinach to grass to moist earth, I sat with Ruben Machtelinckx and Frederik Leroux around the table of Frederik's beautiful home in Brussels, the birthplace of their musical duo formation Poor Isa. They recently released the album *Let's Drink the Sea and Dance* on Aspen Edities, which is entirely composed of banjo, percussion sounds and the occasional voices.

**AMBER MEULENIJZER**

**AMBER MEULENIJZER You've known each other for a long time. How long have you been working together?**

**RUBEN MACHTELINCKX** The first time we played together was on an album by Linus, another duo of mine. We recorded our second album with Frederik in 2015 and since that moment we've been playing and trying things out together. We both experiment a lot with banjo on our own, and we did our first banjo album together some time ago, for which we each recorded one side of the record. That's where the idea do something together arose.

**AM I think it's a beautiful evolution. It went from starting off carefully, each taking care of one side of the album, to making something that's completely blended together like in this latest release. How does that work between you guys? Do you write and create together?**

**RM** This was one of the first projects where everything originated from rehearsals and experimentations. Nothing had been thought of or was fixed in advance. There was no prior ideas or compositions, except that we wanted to keep it acoustic and focused

on the banjo. I'd never really done that in such an extreme way before.

**FREDERIK LEROUX** The previous album contained a lot of processing. We've done a lot of sessions, mostly here at my house. After seeing each other a lot and creating in a very free way, at a certain point the sound started to crystallize. It was really an exploration on the banjo, a search for unconventional sounds and then expanding further from there.

**AM How important is chaos in that process?**

**RM** I think silence was a rather important factor. Because the space where we rehearse here is very sensitive to sound – there is a lot of reverb, you can also hear it as we talk now – silence quickly became a large part of the music. So rather than a feeling of chaos, we experienced a certain calmness or tranquillity.

**FL** It's the kind of state in which you let yourself wander around a bit without the direction or the track immediately becoming clear. It's more about looking around, taking in your surroundings and wandering further from there. And yes, the sound of this space really played

# ■ FILM SCREENING: CHRONOPOLIS ■

**A CONSULAR NOTE: Elastic time, endless leisure, irrelevant time. What are the possibilities for amusement when**

**the world is yours to contort and manipulate? Essential elements, like time and space, are mere parameters. Wary**

**lords oversee their use, warping them and bending them and prodding at them impassively, impenetrably. To reach that**

**status is to accept stasis. Still, what are the other possibilities when, despite this**

**hermetic trance, impermanence reigns beyond? Existential anxiety is not wiped**

**but only played with, and desolation and destruction are inevitable despite true,**

**messianic mantras: Time is elastic. Leisure is endless. Time is irrelevant.**



a huge role in the creation process, and the reverberation of this room also influenced the way we played.

**AM While listening to the record, I had a feeling of weightlessness, but at the same time I feel there's something twisting and almost colliding in the sound. Does that correspond with your feeling of the music?**

**RM** There are a couple of pieces on the record where we used a kind of elbow technique that quickly results in a drone kind of sound. We wanted to be rather careful with that in order to avoid a kind of minimalistic repetitive vibe. When we noticed we were getting into those kind of sound zones we started looking for some kind of tension, exploring more alienated sounds.

**FL** By looking into this alienated soundworld, we tried to stay away from genre connotations as much as possible. We were looking for something more unstable.

**AM Are there any associations with images or feelings for you during the creation process? Is there a lot of perception involved?**

**RM** Of course there are images involved, but I think we certainly didn't consciously consider them as a starting point. It was really an investigation in which things reinforce each other in sound rather than something that emerges from images.

**FL** It's about the search for directionlessness, which for me has been a starting point for many of the projects I've been working on for some time now. The feeling you are in a kind of rippling state instead of in a trajectory. There are elements that come back in different variations; you can wander around and choose which ones you want to follow or focus on.

**RM** While listening, you also often have the feeling that a lot of things are coincidences, and that's indeed how a lot of things came about. I like that. It's almost like a field recording, where things just happen to come together which then form a new whole and suddenly go together in a musical way.

**FL** It's very distilled, too. To come back to the chaos we were talking about, there is not really much of a chaotic part. Except perhaps during the work process, when we let a lot come in and experiment with a lot of possibilities, and suddenly we come to coincidental combinations which become completely purified. It is improvisation, but within a very well defined, precise sound image.

**AM The notion of silence is a beautiful given. A sound that appears suddenly takes on a different meaning, which then shifts to something musical.**

**RM** Yes, a large part of the tension in the music is actually determined by what is not played rather than by what is played. It's also nice to be able to have a very detailed look at what sounds blend together in this way. For example, Frederik uses many different types of brushes on drums, each of them has a different timbre. We've been able to experiment a lot with that.

**FL** Definitely worth a few visits to the Brico.

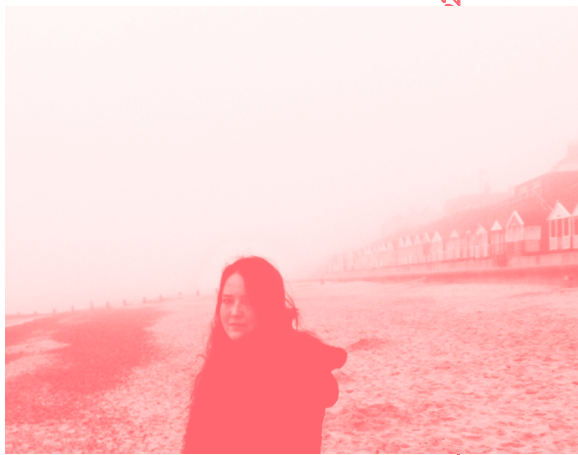
**AM After further discussing quality time at Brico, the length of the Chaussée de Mons and the biotope of secondary roads and front yards in general, we finish our mossy green tea and I leave Ruben and Frederik. They play in Eindhoven that night and still have a long way to drive.**

# ■ LAURA CANNELL ■

DEEP LISTENING

**INTO REVERIES:** Performer and improviser Laura Cannell wields her violin like the keys to an imagined ancestral land. One can see such a

land, where here and there a powerful tension can be felt. Sounds pierce through, feverish and nomadic, over hills of haunting purity. Water is



central. Water drives this

land, a land that is also

an island, powered by

hydraulic phantoms and

vaporous sonorities. In

the melodies that ensue,

a certain forcefulness ripples through the marshes: it clears the path

to a cathedral rooted uneasily on black sands, where sparrows swoop

into the woodlands from atop their solemn perch. In so doing, they hunt

the unseen, diving sharply and unexpectedly, driving sonic ghosts up

into a sky untuned.

a

v

# ■ RAYMONDE ■

Thibaut de Raymond is still really underground. If you look him up on Discogs, only his Vlek release under the name Raymonde is mentioned. But it seems he is involved in a lot more that is still eluding cyber-scrutiny. His music is the outcome of disjoining philosophical assumptions, tribal music and advanced electro-acoustic practice. When performing quadraphonically he goes simply adds IV to his moniker, Raymonde, a simple and elegant contraption of Ray and Monde. A light beam shining on the world maybe? Or just the world of Thibaut de Raymond? I will ask him some questions about what he does, how he does it, where it comes from, why he does it and eventually life, the universe and everything.

JÜRGEN DE BLONDE

**JÜRGEN DE BLONDE** Hello Thibaut, or do you prefer Raymonde?

**THIBAUT DE RAYMOND** Hi Jürgen, as you wish. Or whatever you come up with. I'd be curious.

**JDB** What is the world to you? The *monde* you refer to in your artist's name?

**TDR** The world is an illusion that should be taken with humour and humility, even when I'm a bigmouth with moderate anxiety. However, "monde" in my artist's name... it's more of a coincidence, a concourse of circumstances I'd say. It's the combination of *Raymond* and *deux*, *Raymond II*, which sounds pretty similar to *Raymonde* in French, which is, in its turn, derived from *Raymond IV*.

I wanted to find a simple name, not something too common or symbolic, because that would have too much of an influence. I considered "silence" at first, as a tribute to the

only sound that is impossible to create musically, but I might have ended up making nothing. So, I tried something with the name that's always been used for me: Thibaut de Raymond. After "de" comes "Raymond". It actually means Thibaut OF Raymond. Anyways, I found the name *Raymond* rather funny, a bit archaic, a bit pathetic, referring the France of yesteryear. It made me feel like going for a stroll in my *marcel* to go buy bread, enjoy nature, see the sun set in the mountains, listen to the dawn chorus. The IV refers to the number of speakers that surround me when I perform quadrophonically.

We could continue this game of references – we could make even more associations. Although *Ray* doesn't really mean anything in French, it still sounds like other words in French: the sea animal, a split in a hairdo, the split between the buttocks. A funny association between something one is eager to show and something which is kept

# ■ BRIGHDE CHAIMBEUL ■

**ON BRIGHDE CHAIMBEUL'S OVERWHELMING DEBUT.** Ah, how blissful is the feeling when you realize that after two minutes of playing a new record you know you've got pure gold in your hands: the discovery of a new place with magnificent roads to get lost in, only to examine every bystreet and alley of it and to keep the place close to your heart. Nothing less than a *coup de foudre* – this was exactly the case when I first listened to 20-year-old Brighde Chaimbeul's *The Reeling*: a mystical record, filled with smallpipe drones, ancient Gaelic dances and subtle touches of concertina and *canntaireachd* singing, produced by Aidan O'Rourke. If you like dwelling around in the alley where Kali Malone and Laura Cannell reside, look no further. *The Reeling* might be one of your albums of the year. I called her to discuss the album's origins, compositions and recording process.

DRIES ROBBE

**DRIES ROBBE** Nice to meet you Brighde (pronounced *Bree-Chu* in Gaelic). Congratulations on your amazing debut album! Can you tell me something more about your musical background and the instrument you're playing on it?

**BRIGHDE CHAIMBEUL** I grew up on the Isle of Skye and started playing the pipes when I was eight years old. My neighbour who was from Athens, Greece taught me how to play it. Then, I played a lot of music in primary school: piano, singing, fiddle... and there was a bagpipe teacher too. I learned to play the piano too, but in a more classical way, and my four sisters and brother play music as well. I'm playing the smallpipes on the album, an instrument that is related to

the big and better-known bagpipes but where, instead of blowing, you play it with bellows and you control the air that goes through the pump with your elbow. They sound quite mellow and soft in comparison to the big bagpipes and have a very constant sound. You cannot stop it until you stop the air.

**DR** So you just released this pretty overwhelming debut album. How did you compose the tracks that are on it?

**BC** All of the tunes are traditional and, apart from two, really old. I got them from manuscripts from the eighteenth century, but they obviously existed before that; that was just the first moment they were written down. They are a mixture of tunes that I have been

hidden out of shame. It could also refer to the note "re" or the God Re or Ra, Sun Ra...

**JDB** Your music is rooted in many traditions, how did that come about?

**TDR** First of all, I like the idea of oral traditions, of transmitting and learning by ear. Actually, it's more like this: when a sound comes at you, one way or another, without really knowing where it comes from, to hear it and to see it also and then to feel it and digest it... it's like food and the mouth, you know... and what comes out has to be fertile. As if it's music from beyond the grave that lives on today and keeps influencing people. Recycling and such. I have the impression that life is made up of cycles that cross and interfere all of the time, causing patterns and structures. Rhythm fascinates me by instinct. Rhythm is primordial in many traditions. It's got me hooked. And once you're in, you find it's an inexhaustible source.

**JDB** What are your influences? And where or how did you pick them up?

**TDR** Ooh, that's quite hard to say. When speaking of music, ever since I discovered *musique concrète* and Sun Ra, anything can be an influence. All the styles of the past, present and future, if I were able to listen to the future. Influences come and go, like cycles. The pieces I make for different carriers are more simple than my concert pieces, which are often improvised and more experimental, more rich in sonorous material from all the genres I absorb as time moves on. I have a sonorous cooking pot and I just see what comes out. I have the impression that I'm trying to make a musical entity appear during my concerts, like an invocation. I'm just there, trying

to balance the forces, but eventually the music gives birth to itself. Even if plenty of sounds are produced by me, once in the cooking pot it's not important anymore. It has happened that children were playing with my setup producing the most amazing stuff.

**JDB** You work with tapes and a 4-track, or so I've been told by the information I found on the almost black hole called the Internet. Do these tapes contain merely self-produced material or do you use found material and other's music too?

**TDR** Both. It's the same thing for me. It's sounds put to tape, at a certain time, put together in a haphazardly manner onto the cassette tape. I speed the material up, I speed it down, I mix it all in function of what that sound dictates.

Most of the time it's self-produced material, from an improvisation I made with rhythms or a synthesizer or an acoustic instrument. I also pick up stuff from traditional songs that I mix altogether. Or there is also a capella hip hop voices like one Notorious B.I.G. for example that I often use live, because he has a *fuckin' good flow*. Whether you dub it slow or fast, it's always good flow!

**JDB** You did an in-depth study of Voodoo rhythms. Where did you start?

**TDR** To be honest, I don't really know. I just followed the rhythms I fell across when listening randomly. Haiti is also a sacred corner of the world. Voodoo culture and Haitian history can really interest me when I have time to dive into that matter. It's a big source of inspiration when I'm looking for ways to surpass myself.

**JDB** In his book *Inner Sound*, Jonathan Weinel links Voodoo trance and shamanism to techno and rave



playing and loved since I was little, and tunes that I’ve found in archives, both old recordings and written-down manuscripts.

**DR** How do you work out a tune when you find a new one? Are they originally written for smallpipes?

**BC** I examine the melody and see if it fits for pipes, or change it to make it fit. Then I start adding variations naturally, and play around with the melody. I’m not necessarily tied down to exactly how it’s written, since they are not all originally written for smallpipes. Some of the recordings I found are people singing the tunes *canntaireachd*: a phonetic form of singing those tunes for teaching piping. But I feel that most of the tunes can be played on any instrument.

**DR** Regarding the origins of the tunes, from what region do they come from?



g u a r d i a n



culture. He surely is not the first one to do so, but what is interesting in his book is that he’s also linking psychedelics to that and, in that, he points out that because of the use of psychedelics in arts and music, the general perception has also altered along with that. We have gotten used to so much strange sounds that are actually quite psychedelic on the one hand and on the other side we have come to take art, both audio and video clearly inspired by psychedelic experiences, for granted. He then further projects this into the future and claims that technology might eventually replace drugs. Any thoughts on that yourself? What role does psychedelia play in your art? What role does trance play? What role does communion play?

**TDR** I don’t know the book, but it sounds interesting. Psychedelia can open doors. It must really have had an

**BC** Most of the tunes come from Gaelic songs, hailing from the Scottish Highlands and the West Coast. Gaelic is my first language, so I wanted to make that connection with my music as well. I do have two tracks with Bulgarian music on the album, though. When I was travelling around Bulgaria two years ago, I learned about their piping tradition, *Kaba Gaida*. I sort of fell in love with it a bit, because it was very different from anything I’d heard before. It took me some time to get into it, but it is very interesting and hypnotic. There’s obviously a connection between the music of the two regions, because it’s played both on the same instrument and for a dancing purpose. In Bulgaria, singing and piping is closely related, just as it is in Scotland. All these little connections make it interesting.

**DR** Judging from the song’s titles, I presume you combine different tunes into one song. How do you choose these combinations?

**BC** I usually just play them by ear to figure it out. It depends whether they are set in a related key, if the rhythm works, if they can flow into each other.

**DR** My favorite track on the album is “The Old Woman’s Dance/The Skylark’s Ascension”, which seems to make use of the technique to shift from a minor to a major key in-between the two tunes with quite a glorious feeling as a result. Does it?

**BC** Yes. The first tune is based around B flat while the drone is singing in C, so it has this underlying tension the whole time. But when I go into the next tune, the drone and melody are in the same key, so it releases the tension.

**DR** Do you combine Scottish and Bulgarian tunes?

impact on perception too, much like World War I or Dadaism, I like to think. Everything has its motors.

Personally, I only like to take natural hallucinogens. Also, I have never been in the situation to be able to take in music and sound in that state. The psychedelic effects are in themselves already pretty intense. Besides that, I’m quite the smoker. It can help to relax while playing, but I also smoke because I’m quite anxious. In the end, every time I’ve taken a substance before playing, I’ve had the impression that I felt less close to my music and my position as a medium of this music. I felt more like a spectator of my own physical and mental state. Nevertheless, sometimes I have a little bit before playing.

I can’t really talk about “trance” or “the zone”. Communion? That reminds me of the Communcards in 1871 or “trans-substantiation” according to the dictionary. Love and anarchy! That’s not a bad cocktail, is it?

**BC** I haven’t done this on the album or in other recordings, but you can play around with it, starting with a slow Bulgarian tune and make it flow into a Scottish tune. Maybe I will try this more often.

**DR** What did the recording process of the album look like?

**BC** It was recorded this time last year, in the East Church of Cromarty in The Highlands, a rather old building. The acoustics were really good for the pipes because we wanted some natural reverb so the drones could fill up the room. We recorded for three or four days with microphones all around the church and recorded every track live until we were satisfied with the result. It was very cold in the church; I had so many hot water bottles (*laughs*)

**DR** To me, the album has a sort of contemporary feel. Still, you’re playing very ancient music. Do you agree with this? Do you know why?

**BC** Hmm. I think the tunes are timeless, even though they are very old. The instrument hasn’t changed over the years, but you play them in a modern context, with modern recording equipment. This can change the idea of how old music should sound. There is a lot of room to use modern techniques to make it work in today’s musical society, without ruining the melody. Obviously, you can add lots of contemporary musical elements such as drums and bass, but in my opinion that changes both the basis of the melody and the musicality of the melody. When the melodies were first written, they couldn’t have even imagined the recording techniques, so that already changes it and makes it more contemporary, even when the melody is exactly the same.

**JDB** You sometimes perform in a quadraphonic setting. What is the difference with a stereo performance, besides the more spatial experience?

**TDR** I’m not too fond of the traditional frontal approach of performing. When I perform in stereo, I try to hide in the crowd, in front of the sound system, and when I play in quad I try to put myself in the center to hear the speaker balance as much as possible but with as little light as possible. I love playing in the dark, as dark I can. I stop looking at my faders, it adds a bit of a physical thing. Trying to free oneself from perception and besides, I don’t really care for people watching me, that’s not interesting at all. I only want people to “float”. People can stand in front of each other, anywhere, basically, like at a ball. It provokes encounters for both sound and humans. I would also like to have more animals at my concerts, but they’re hard to motivate, not unlike spirits or UFOs and I don’t have a decoder yet... Also, I use

**DR** What can we expect from your concert in Ghent?

**BC** I’ll be playing a solo smallpipes set with music from my latest record and some other traditional songs. They could originate from Scotland, Ireland, Bulgaria, Galicia...

**DR** When I checked your tour dates, I got the feeling that you’re with one foot in the avant-garde/ experimental music scene, and with one foot in the more traditional folk music scene. Is it that way?

**BC** Yes, I think so. When I was bringing out my album, I didn’t want to put the label of folk music on it. I just wanted it to be music that anyone who is into different genres would want to listen to, and let them decide what they think it is. It think “avant-garde” people like it because of the drones, and the uneasy phrase structures of the moldies – they sound like they go round and round. At the same time it’s traditional pipe music, so there’s a lot of people who love the instrument that are listening to it. I’m really glad that it is able to go into different audiences, because I don’t agree so much with putting music into boxes. Music has different styles, but it’s still music at the end of the day.



polyrhythms and canon when I play in quad, so the pieces may be perceived differently depending on your position in the room.

I quite like the idea that nothing is determined, always mutating, things just come and go. I have never played a single piece that appeared on a carrier... well... except for “la ritournelle des particules” which is a thing I composed a couple of years ago on 4-track cassette and which I redub every so often...

**JDB** What makes you decide to perform stereo or quadra?

**TDR** When possible, I perform in quad; if not, in stereo, and if that’s not possible, I play in mono, and if that’s not possible... I don’t know. I’ve never tried.

**JDB** Raymonde will play on Eastern Daze 2019. Besides that Thibaut de Raymond also runs his own label Mus Joutra which is more than worth checking out: [musjoutra.bandcamp.com](http://musjoutra.bandcamp.com).



**■ RAZEN** THE CIRCULARITY OF RAZEN: Over the last 10 years, Razen have trailblazed the field of minimalist music as cartographers of the unknown, the unfelt and the (im)possible. Their latest record *Ayik Adhista Adhista Ayik* explores new terrains within the endless shadow world of the irrational and the unconscious that haunts or defines mankind. Unlike the objective inhuman transcendentalism of their previous albums, the record lays down an individual, almost classical approach, unveiling subjective emotions like fear, melancholy and fragility. It is no coincidence that the theories of Carl Gustav Jung, explorer of the collective unconscious, showed Razen the way. To set the mood, I met Kim Delcour and Brecht Ameel at the house of Wiertz, painter of the grotesque.

NIELS LATOMME

**NIELS LATOMME** Let's start with the title of the new record.

**KIM DELCOUR** We borrowed it from the book *Memoirs, Dreams, Reflections* by psychologist and anthropologist CG Jung.

**BRECHT AMEEL** Jung visited a village in Kenya, on the border between Kenya and Rwanda. While there he studied a different concept of time and a different position of man in relation to nature.

**KD** He saw a corpse on the street in the village. The villagers stood around it, dripping milk while reciting the words *Ayik Adhista, Adhista Ayik*. Freely translated, these words mean *He came, he's gone*; or *he goes to the good, he came from the bad* – or the other way round. Crucial is the circularity.

**BA** It can also be translated as *from day to night, from night to day*.

**KD** *Adhista* refers to the normal, the daily, the rational, while *Ayik* refers to the unseen, the dark, the night. The

spell enhances a cycle. Jung noticed that the villagers would go on the roof at dawn, spit in their hands and, with their hands, they followed the movement of the Sun. The Laidon, the elder, told him that it had always been that way. Within his theories of the collective unconscious, he explained the ritual as a way to help the Sun.

For the villagers, they have no right to be in the night. It's another world that belongs to demons, spirits and other creatures. People have to stay inside, and they feel responsible for the return of the day.

**BA** Imagine the fear every night, not sure that the day will return. This fear is an important part of our new record.

**KD** The record starts at dusk. At the end of the first side, the subject enters a state of death...

**BA** ... or at least a state of in-between, a state of non-being.

**KD** The second side of the record represents the movement from this

non-state towards life. It's a circular record: from day to night, from night to day; from light to dark, from dark to light; from the rational to the irrational from the irrational to the rational... We hope your portrait of us in front of Wiertz' painting *One Second After the Death* turns out well (*ed. I took the photo with a newly-purchased analog camera, which I wasn't sure was still working*).

This ritual and its presupposition of a shadow world was very important in the theories of Jung: he believed that the conscious is just a tiny part of a man, and that the unseen, the dark, the unconscious, plays a far more important role.

**BA** The night is an archetype... archetypical sounds are very important for Razen – not to evoke the defined, the conscious and the rational; on the contrary, we use sounds to evoke the in-between, the shadow and the irrational. That's probably why we came in contact with the writings of Jung and the *Ayik Adhista* ritual.

I see a lot of beauty in his research: as a rational scientist he wanted to understand the human mind, but he realized that he had to enter the terrain of the unscientific. The irrational became the key to explain and understand the human psyche. His theories and work are injected by the idea that the unconscious is part of nature, and is real – it doesn't lie. A dream is maybe hard to explain, but it's not fake. He entered our domain, art, where we explore the irrational...

**KD** ... or the religious, or even pre-religious. At least, the spiritual.

**NL** Jung had a couple of childhood experiences that defined his research and thinking. One of them was the fact that as a kid he had a small box with some relics. Later

he discovered that non-Western cultures had similar objects and rituals. Which led him to the theory of the collective unconscious – new, compared to Freud's theories. I'm not so interested in the cliché of how certain traumas defined you as grown-ups; rather, I wondered if you had similar childhood experiences which tune in to your current musical practice. I never thought about that.

**NL** Maybe I should rephrase the question: is it relevant to relate certain characteristics of your musical practice to your childhood (like Freud would)?

**BA** Yes and no. It's very relevant to question how the past defines the present. We both are very open to this sort of information.

In your life you meet certain people – teachers, parents, older friends, whatever – who give you certain directions, like maps. Jung wanted to draw a full picture of reality, even if that means throwing away the map of the rational/scientific and go out there in the dark. Jung, like we with our music, and certainly the new record, threw away the map to access full reality, or at least to other and/or possible realities.

**NL** Then it's quite remarkable that the new album sounds more “classical”: it evokes a whole array of recognisable ‘human’ emotions – fear, anxiousness and melancholy – more common terrain in conventional music. Although for Razen it's new: previous records evoke a dehumanized, transcendental vibe, exploring undefined, unfelt and new emotions.

**KD** The pieces are defined by the space. As you know, crucial for Razen



**■ MAIKA GARNICA** The memory of summer turns exceptionally abstract as dense packs of gray clouds lay down a soothing gloom over Deurne's Tweemontstraat. A few houses ahead of us, a sizzling little bomblet is thrown out of a hastily closing door. Its loud bang echoes between the rows of houses. Inside, children can be seen hiding behind the windows on all fours, curiously observing the effects of their prank. Further down the road, Maika Garnica stands waving at us through the drizzling mist. Her new atelier is housed in an industrial building, renovated and managed by Studio Start and home to a dozen young artists. With the complex neighbouring the base of some Polish construction workers as well as a good old-fashioned “drinks center”, she usually finds herself in good company here. Yet on this very last Sunday of the year, the site lies abandoned. Inside, an old, dysfunctional kitchen is the sole reminiscent of times passed. Nowadays, the room functions as Maika's creative headquarters, giving shelter to the outlandish clay instruments she has created throughout recent years, many of which are stripped of their bubble wrap protection during our conversation. More so than mere lifeless aesthetic objects, they appear as stages within an ongoing research into matter, vibration and community.

JANNIS VAN DE SANDE

**Traces to Nowhere**

In the summer of 2015, Maika, together with Chakky Kato en Senne Claes – all freshly graduated – was invited to participate in the annual theater festival “Theater aan Zee” in Ostend. The three of them decided to join forces, which marked the beginning of their ensemble Sui Moon:

“I always find it very rewarding to work together on something.

You have your own practice and interests, which is great as a starting point, but I find it enriching to share this with others, maybe someone doing something completely different, you never know what you will come up with. We stayed in Ostend for three days, doing interventions in the city and on the beach. The invitation came from Theater Zuidpool, the festival's central guest that year.



is the respect for the space, it acts like an extra musician. The church where we recorded this album is different from the other churches: it's built in the 20th century, and doesn't have the classic elongated ground plan. It's more square, and much bigger.

BA The organ was placed as such that I had direct visual contact with the other musicians. We also played in a new way, although it's hard to explain why. On most of the pieces there's only 2 or 3 of us playing at the same time. There are almost no sustained tones. And I had the impression that the echo was longer than on previous church sessions.

KD There was no starting point or defined idea either. Normally we always prepare some rough musical ideas. I remember that this time we used the metaphor of a raffled string or cord, which we had to stretch very carefully without breaking it. It was a matter of using a minimum of words, finding the breaking point where a sentence almost implodes.

NL **On previous records, Razen sounded like an ensemble of nightly spirits, dehumanized presences that are out there; whereas on the new record, Razen sounds like a human individual, occupied with its human, individual and inner emotions. It feels as if there's a shift in your point of view – more subject than object?**

BA It's indeed a very human record, appealing to a very human fear that the night won't stop.

KD Fear of the dark is an archetype in itself. We were surprized ourselves that the pieces sound so emotional. A lot has to do with the fact that we recorded in the evening and at night. Sounds sometimes change at night, and this influenced our overall sound.



BA On previous records we had a more abstract and detached approach to our playing. For this record the emotional engagement is stronger, in the way each tone is played, and in the accentuation. On previous pieces, each tone just kicked the door in.

KD The sounds are more fragile and vulnerable. Even more than before, we listened very closely to each other. Although we did record a lot of pieces that were typically old school Razen. We didn't select them, because they didn't fit into the general idea of *Ayık Adhîsta*.

NL **So was there a concept before you started recording?**

g u a r d i a n

The poster showed a south pole expedition, a scene we recreated with a sleigh on the beach, asking people where the north was etc. Very silly, but equally funny and a great experience overall. This was all partly filmed, and afterwards Theater Zuidpool invited us to rework our intervention for them. Here we combined footage with live sound, which marked our first venture into music.”

The result is *Traces to Nowhere*, a composition later released as a flexidisk housed in a screen-printed sleeve. Both music and cover were left vulnerable to the same temporality characterizing the traces made on Ostend's beach. “Although I have to admit the music lasts longer than I expected. All three of us work with music in our individual practice, but at the same time the visual aspect remains very important for us.”

Genève

This attention to visual appearance testifies to a balance between functionality and aesthetics which Maika intensively explores with the self-made instruments she builds and plays: “I'm still a visual artist, and form and aesthetics really do matter to me. I like how these instruments can function both as an autonomous object in an installation or a room and as an element within performance.”

The first experiments with instrument building took place during an exchange year spent in Genève: “I had to submit a project to be accepted into the ceramics studio and knew I really wanted to incorporate sound into my sculpting practice. After talking to some musician friends and drawing upon my own experience as a trumpet player, I thought it would be interesting

to be able to physically feel the sound you produce.”

Maika started designing and creating instruments which explore precisely this physicality. An example is pulled out of a box for us to try out ourselves: a sort of horn of which the outer end points towards the player's stomach. The individualistic nature of the device turns out to be anything but coincidental: “Looking back on my stay in Genève, I realize that everyone there was quite focused on their own projects. This resulted in a sort of distance to which these instruments attest: you produce something which then returns – you make a connection with yourself.”

As such, Maika's last creation made in Genève could hardly be more significant. It is an “updated” version of the horn, this time suited for two players.

Matter / Vibration

Back in Antwerp, Maika has quickly and fully devoted herself to instrument building: “Nowadays I exclusively focus



KD Not really, it was maybe in the air, but the idea popped while selecting the tracks for the record.

NL **Is this a new step as a collective?**

BA Not really a step, but a new possibility. The record is not made by a group of soloists, the group is still the instrument.

NL **The story behind the record is quite explicit – partly due to the design – compared to your previous records, where there is simply an image and dry liner notes.**

BA We don't see the difference, because every album has a story. Maybe it felt more natural to give an indication this time, because people can relate to it more easily.

KD Originally we wanted to add a time indication for each track, so that it becomes clear which track reflects which moment in the night. But that would have been too explicit.

BA Also the photo we used for the front cover is almost a direct visualization. It's a road, a metaphor for the journey through the night; or it's a river that you'd have to cross; or it visualizes unknown territory, where the map you've got becomes useless. Or it could represent the night, which brings us back to the ritual...

NL **Your music has a very instantaneous character, it drives on the 'now'; the way the pieces materialize during sessions, and the almost ritualistic concerts tend to force people in a mental space where they experience the 'now' in a very direct way – which is a feature of a lot of so-called minimalist music. But since the invention of tape, a record has a historical character:**

on these instruments. I really want to explore sound vibrations in relation to clay, and see how far you can go with this. I spend a lot of time researching both contemporary and ancient instruments from a variety of cultures, gaining insight in their workings. I'm interested in how form and sound interact and influence one another.”

A sketchbook full of drawings and designs of multifarious instruments testifies to the extensive investigations preceding their actual creation. Yet despite this ever-increasing experience and knowledge, it would be a mistake to understand Maika's practice as a fully predetermined affair, as a creative spontaneity is injected into the craft of instrument building: “Generally, I'm quite confident that my instruments will work as planned, yet the exact sounds I do not know beforehand, and I like to keep those as a surprise for myself. I could of course calculate this mathematically, but I find it exciting to discover these sounds myself, and think about how these can be used within a composition.”

This element of surprise points to an ongoing dialogue between the artist and her material. Its amplification in performance invites us to eavesdrop upon the conversation. As such, the self-reflectiveness of her first instruments is definitively exchanged for instruments exploring sound's engaging nature, a pillar of her practice: “For me, dealing with sound and vibration always has to do with communication. This relates to something I often miss: language is still predominant in our culture, while in fact it is just one way of communicating, among so many others.”

as an object it's always released weeks or months after the event when the music happened; and it inscribes the music in some sort of musical history, taking its position to other records. Isn't this a paradox?

BA Yes, sometimes it's a bit difficult; on the other hand, we don't obey the rules of the music industry, where we are supposed to reproduce the songs of the albums on live shows. It's sometimes a pity that there's so much time between the recordings and the release of record, but you have to accept it.

NL **Could you say that a record and a concert are two entities of Razen?**

BA For sure. The goal is a Sun Ra-like discography, putting our own 'cosmic newspaper' out there, and apart from that great live concerts.

NL **So Razen will go on for a while, if you aim for the same amount of records?**

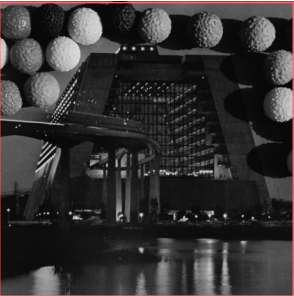
KD In this life and with good health... Absolutely, this path...

BA ... feels so natural.

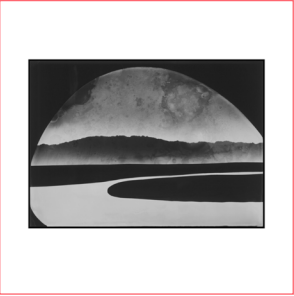
KD When Brecht showed me this picture from our first concert at Les Ateliers Claus, I was a bit shocked actually. Not by the fact that we aged a little (*laughs*), but by the fact that it's already 10 years old.

BA It surely doesn't feel like 10 years, probably because the way Razen works feels very close to who I am as a human.

## K099 – Floris Vanhoof The Fluid Computer

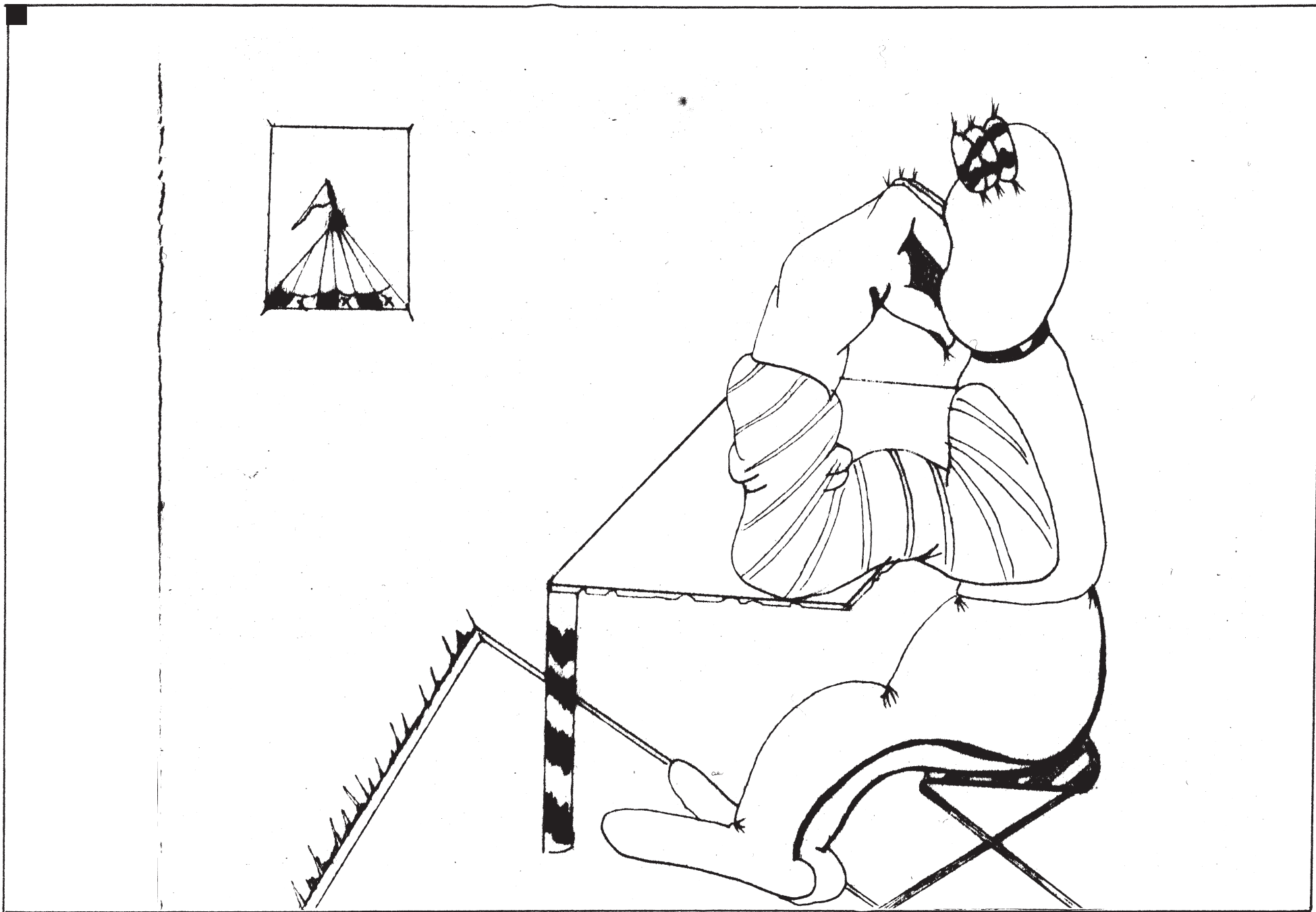


## K100 – Razen Ayık Adhîsta, Adhîsta Ayık



## K101 – Giorgio Dursi Intestinocephalo





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