

MATERIAL INVESTIGATIONS: first thoughts...

The aim of this project is to investigate and propose a new genre, as a sequel to the notion of “artistic research”, which has become such an integral part of music academies and conservatoires during the so-called Bologna-process. One can say that over time the position of an “artist” has changed from craftsman to artist (18th century), from artist to genius (19th century), and we see certain artistic reasons for an un-going change of the role of the genius to turn into something new: a researcher? It is important for us to stress, that we want embrace the development positively, not to enter a stiff reproductive academia, but rather let a discursive creative activity be in play.

Of course we do not intend a new genre to replace music performance as it is known from concerts, recordings and broadcasts. Even “genre” must be understood in a generous way: something (we call it a “laboratory”) that involves performance of sounds in real time, with or without visual elements and other trans-medias. A tendency will be to be on the conceptual side, rather than the dramaturgical. The laboratory will have other constraints than the one’s which usually are linked to concerts, musical works, composers, performers, instruments etc.

Some of these institutions are already challenged by an institutional critique from within the field of music. A music history, which possibly would refer to Eric Satie (*musique d’ameublement*), certain efforts by John Cage, Mauricio Kagel (*Staatstheater*), Vinko Globokar (*Corporeal*), Cornelius Cardew (*The Great Learning*), Alvin Lucier (investigation of basic phenomena), Ritus Mazulis (systematic exploration of mechanics), Johannes Kreidler (*GEMA-aktion*), Trond Reinholdtsen (*The Norwegian Opera*) and certain aspects of the work of Simon Sten-Andersen, among others.

Sound art has developed as a new genre along music composition during the late 20th century. In many ways sound art has been able to integrate more of the panoply of artistic directions (especially from within the field of visual arts), which characterized that century. In the Scandinavian countries there have been a short discussion about the relation between music composition and sound art (for example *Dansk Musiktidskrift* 1, 1998/99, Copenhagen and *Parergon* December 2007, Oslo) but the uneasy relation seems to be replaced by the trans-medial activities within the youngest generations of musicians: for example the *Dygong* in Denmark and some of the experimenting research fellows within the Norwegian Artistic Research Programme.

Inspiration for the proposal is also collected from documented practises in the visual art directly. The German painter Gerhard Richter is interesting in this respect. In a publication dedicated to the series *Abstrakte Bilder* (abstract paintings), Ulrich Wilmes documents¹ how Richter establishes a depth in the perception of his paintings. *Lucid Incompatibility* is the heading Wilmes uses as a description of the process, which includes a high number of distinct stages: *Zustände*. For one picture *Rot* (Red) the final painting represents the 33rd stage. Depth should of course not be understood as

¹ Ulrich Wilmes: *Gerhard Richter Abstrakte Bilder*, Hatje Cantz Verlag, Ostfildern 2008, pg. 135ff

depth in the sense of perspective. Rather is it so, that depth gradually builds up through the traces of the left behind stages, a vague memory of something that no longer is present in its original state, of something that has changed the course towards the final painting.

In an art exhibition *Matisse – Doubles and Variations*, a collaboration between The National Gallery of Denmark, the centre Pompidou in Paris and the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York 2012, it is shown how Henri Matisse worked with temporal stages (doubling or even tripling the motive in different paintings) and series of paintings with the same motive (Variations). Some of Matisse's own documentation (black and white photos) of different stages in one painting was even exhibited with the final picture, leaving it to be less autonomous as 'original'.

Variation is of course a musical form. Matisse took the form from music and gave it meaning in painting and drawing. Variation is *not* what material investigation is about, rather the notion of abrupt changes and discontinuities between the stages as is found in the case of Richter. Matisse is interesting only because he actually showed his systematic work in public exhibitions.

<http://call-for-papers.sas.upenn.edu/node/44871>

In June 2012 the university of Haute-Alsace in Mulhouse (UHA) arranged a conference on lexiconographic art: Lex-IKON dedicated to multidisciplinary practises between text and visual art².

One of the modern features in teaching on a higher education is to provide for research-based learning. The students should be confronted with the latest forthcoming of research, later learn to refer to and master research in their field of study. However, within the artistic research one could also think of certain reciprocity: that tutoring the individual art student influences the teachers' regards on his (or hers) own artistic practise. Meeting composition students who work with relational art practises, self-surveillance procedures³ and archive forms⁴, the video as a compositional field⁵, as well as improvisation⁶ integrated into composition I certainly felt the necessity to review my own artistic practise.

² <http://lex-icon21.blogspot.it>

³ Victoria Johnson: *Victoria Counting, or I am the Piece and the Piece is Me*

⁴ Trond Reinholdtsen: *Sparta / Des Moines* (2006)

⁵ <http://www.krunglevicius.com/>

⁶ Peter Tornquist: *Improvisation – Interaction – Composition*