

An
Ecology
of

Noise.

Three
Orientations

124.

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The installation work by Kerstin Ergenzinger, *Navigating Noise*, eases into an existing space, spreading in and around found structures, tensing architectural borders with another type of logic. It nestles amongst the life of a place, animating particular movements through added layers of sonic matter, as small events that contribute to a growing, organic operation. I start to hear the work, and its complex unfolding, as an ecology of noise, one that I'd like to detail by way of three orientations. These are offered as speculative pathways into the work's *eventness*, as well as extending away, to reach for associations and spectralities, for every ecology is a complex configuration of overlapping and intersecting entities and life-forces that interweave an array of presences, some more tangible and concrete than others. In this sense, I approach the installation as an extended body of related singularities to highlight its aesthetic of multiplicity, this interweaving, as well as my place within it: as an organic body myself, navigating noise while also contributing to it – my breath, my footsteps, as well as my *dreaming sensibility* that follows the work's aesthetic project as a platform for journeying and participating.

Stars

Like a constellation of secret stars, the installation draws my attention upward, to what is above – to marvel at the bristling of these bright sounds. I'm placed upon a vertical axis, relating what is above to what is below, to the events of an auditory plane that invites one to look up – to listen upward. There is a shimmering quality to the sounds, these sounds that hover within a small universe. In looking up, I'm also brought down; I'm drawn to the floor. Lying down, I'm reminded of summer nights when my brother and I would lie in the grass to look at the stars, with the sound of crickets in the nearby bushes, adding their singing to the mesmerizing array of small lights above. Within Kerstin's installation I'm drawn back to this memory, associating the interplay between the senses – the concrete feeling of the body on the ground, the plane of earthly presence, in contact with the dimension above, this listening upward which invites us into an aerial thinking: to meditate upon the universe as my brother and

I would do. Why do the stars inspire us to reflect upon the conditions of life? To pause, and to seek the hidden meanings that seem to exist above, out there? Staring up at the honeycomb-shaped frames suspended in the gallery, it's as if I'm asked to listen beyond: beyond the hard matter, the metallic elements, and the concrete surfaces, and toward the deep void above, the one that is always lurking. I would say that the void of the sky, with its aerial characters and nebulous events, orients us toward a height that is deeply physical as well as purely imaginative. It is by way of the lofty dimension, as Gaston Bachelard (1992) suggests, that we orient ourselves as *dreaming beings*. Climbing upward, toward eternal heights and the aerial expanse, thoughts lighten; filled with the air of imagination and the trembling softness of poetic capture, they take flight. While the ground, and further down, the underworld – the cavern or the cave, the cellar or the subterranean – bring us deep into the body, toward the ground of pragmatic thought and daily chores, as well as the corporeal appetites, the aerial, in contrast – by way of the upper storey, the attic, the cloudy dimensions – invites us to speculate, to dream of other worlds and other selves. The stars give animation to such dreaming; they are the final points, the deepest reach such thoughts may travel, and as such, they orient us toward the beyond, and the celestial life, through their shimmering. They illuminate journeys, being not only poetical triggers by which thoughts may travel, but the guiding configurations that enable navigation. Stars, in this regard, are deep partners to the human condition, enabling a spirit of drift and distraction as well as the possibilities of finding new worlds. Yet stars, as must be remembered, are full of noise; as bursts of primary matter, they carry the thrust of an expanding universe – stars may be seen and heard as planetary objects thrown from a shattered structure and vibrating with energy. The airy dimension and the celestial plane are thus reverberant with a type of violence, a rending intensity. In listening upward, we are oriented as well as elevated by the primary thrust of origins.

I try to find a beginning and an end; for some reason, I grow curious about edges. I walk toward the gallery walls, I search for points of entry and exit: where does the installation begin? Instead, I am always circling back in, each step folding upon itself, retracing its path. Rather than a loop, I discover an array of interconnections – the installation is constituted by relations, with things rushing forward, to form a type of micro-structure, and others receding, scaled back, to articulate on a macro-level another dimension, another stratum. Everything becomes a question of detail, with one nested inside the other. With the structure full of vibration, something starts to tremble: lines become nerves, strings become threads, the structure becomes a transmitter. If I start to enter into the installation's trembling composition, this array of interconnections, it's as if a mysterious labyrinthine form appears; a maze into which my listening enters, one that is inspired to interconnect and, in doing so, the often dominating linearity of one's direction diffuses: *where is the beginning and the end, I wonder?* Within this particular ecology of noise, one is always close to that formless 'bubbling' Michel Serres (1997) describes as the fundament of language: a mass of matter, a static, a noise that underpins and makes possible the formation of meaning. From within the matter of noise, words start to appear; they take shape from within the formless ooze of babble – we find our way, as we must, through the labyrinth of worldly existence. In short, we become immersed in relationships. Yet, language is always connected to its origins within babble, and the noisy rush of things, as the energetic fundament of materiality perennially glides around our social formations to interrupt at times, and to interfere. Finding my way in and around Kerstin's installation, I seem to hover on the edge of language, close to the rush of noise this orientation is based upon. Instead of the beginning and end of articulated speech, I'm placed within a maze of interconnections, rushing forward and receding back, amidst fragments, like an oceanic flux into which my listening is tossed: suddenly, I surrender to the trembling vibrations, this babble that gently interferes. In doing so, I start to detect

the order within the chaos, and the chaotic foundation every order contains. That is the beauty of this particular ecology of noise, one that orients by remaining close to the power and poetics of disorientation.

Reflections

In relating to the particular form and events of Kerstin's installation, I'm also relating to myself as a figure within the gallery space; as a work based on real-time processes, I am given back to myself the features that constitute the time and space of the work, and the moment of its becoming, which always includes myself. Small whirring sounds that shift and erupt as blossoms of metallic tones, and that I intuit as being connected to my presence; the movements of vibrations that tremble its structures and that move along with my own; and the acoustic reflections that echo around, forming another movement of time and space, *like a ghostly other*, bringing to life the life that is. As a participant, I am implicated in the slow unfurling of this ecology of events, this realm of sensitivity and sensing, as a body brought into attunement with all that surrounds it and that is always closer than imagined, to form a greater composition. In this instant, I begin to hear not only the installation, but additionally my own hearing, the hearing of and in myself. It draws myself out of hiding, animating myself through a second body, this metallic structure and its resonant armatures. In doing so, it shows myself to myself, yet as an external figure, a reflection amidst other reflections, pronouncing in its subtle way the entanglement that always is, and that is defining for any ecological view: the entanglement of life forms, the compositions that unfold as fragile constructs, that mesh and that require of us a state of deep sensitivity. I move, I listen; I relate and am brought into relations. I am tuned and I am interrupted, at the same instant, by these events that I sense, and that sense myself, and which participate in a greater constellation of sensations, what Jane Bennett (2010) suggests by way of what she terms 'vibrant matter'. Considering the interconnectedness and 'vital materialism' at play across matter and things, subjects and objects, Bennett leads us toward the emergent force that

arises as bodies join together. A becoming set in motion from the assemblage of parts, and which gives way to an energetic construct of relations. Accordingly, I'm tempted to suggest that under the force and power of such vibrant models, art may form the basis for drawing out a deeper relation to the extensiveness and interdependencies of which we are a part; for assisting in navigating through the glowing and gripping entanglement at work in and around and through us. Art, which fundamentally relates itself to the question of materiality and the possibility of other worlds, is a type of compass, leading us into the arenas of power and force, territorialities of meaning and representation, of sensate bodies and their desires, and the discourses drawn from conflicts of culture and social structures. In doing so, art may orient us within the complicatedness of all this movement, and as vibrant matter it may inspire the project of consciousness, inciting a depth of reflection that turns us toward essential questions.

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Stars, labyrinths, reflections ... these become focal points as well as vanishing lines that emerge as I encounter Kerstin Ergenzinger's installation. Attending to the work's materiality and eventful dynamics, I'm led to experiences of seeing and listening that are no less ecological than they are sensorial, singular as well as immediately plural. *Navigating Noise* is both factual and speculative, insisting upon its metallic construct and wiring as well as its shimmering vitalism, its *otherness* – these sounds that I listen to and alongside. Moving in and around the installation, the work acts as a floating coalition – a structure that gives residence to matters and memories, actualities and associations. Noise, in this regard, seems to be a force that agitates the architectures and environments that surround us while prompting us to find creative routes through sonic interruptions. To take the encounters with strange sonorities as opportunities for deepening the listening sense.

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References

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