

FINISSAGE

Voices in an exhibition

A collage opera
for twenty-two voices & a bicycle

Gabor Stark

Museum
of Openness
12|2021



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& a bicycle

by Gabor Stark
with a foreword by Alf Löhr

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Lautmalerei – Painting with sound

On one of my evening walks along the shore and the beautiful skies that J.W. Turner painted and admired, I ran into to a rumbling man. I was rather intrigued by what he mumbled, looking out at the grey skies and the endless calm of the sea, chin up, as if he was talking to the clouds. “Dialogue, dialogue with nature”, he rumbled, “what is truly dead is not painting, it is dialogue, constructive debate, empathic interest in others and what they do, how they think, what they might feel.” While we passed each other, he looked at me and continued “Everyone wishes to be a brand, and therefore, branded, like a cow, owned by a single supplier”, his voice disappeared in a distance, “and sold to a single market” he added, and then turned away from me. “A work of art is rich when it can be interpreted in many different ways” I replied to him, but I think he was too far to hear me.

His words made me think. Is the world in shatters not because of the covid 19 pandemic but because of the creeping death of what was once a dialogue? Who should we trust to rebuild our post-covid world? After all, most of us will just want to continue as we know.

Usually, we trust architects with building and with buildings. We expect them to build spaces for us, where we can rest without being blown away by storms. We expected them to build places where we can work to the best of our abilities. Lately we also started to ask them to build in a way so we can live with nature rather than against nature. 10% of the destruction of the air we need to breath, is done using concrete alone, a material once glorified. We race against time for survival.

It isn't our time that is running out. It is the time of our children. No, concrete was not a dialogue with nature, was it? What was it supposed to dialogue with?

Gabor Stark's professional training is that of an architect. He has designed buildings, urban parks, he lectures on the subject, but the materials he uses here are very different. He refers to space not in terms of bricks and mortar, or as dimensions, or light and shade. Instead, he lets us look into a space of references and active memories and their meaning. He lets us listen to voices which made us what we are today.

The dialogue he refers to is the one we had with people who shaped our feeling and thinking. People who are somehow in our space although they might long be dead, whose influence can be felt, somehow, somewhere, but who don't matter in the pragmatism of the everyday. Artists who did not simply ruminate on our forever complicated and multi-layered busy world, but instead reacted by pointing out inner sounds and values.

Do you remember the philosopher Adorno who coined the term 'identity thinking' to describe the process of categorical thought in modern society, by which everything becomes an example of an abstract, and thus nothing individual in its actual specific uniqueness is allowed to exist? Do you remember when you first heard Karlheinz Stockhausen's ground-breaking work in electronic music, introducing controlled chance and aleatoric musical techniques into serial composition and for musical spatialization?

Or John Cage's intended silence, or more precisely, ambient sound - what Cage called “the absence of intended sounds”? Who was not struck by the poetic absurdity of Schwitters, or the poems and modernist writings of Gertrude Stein, the silent beauty of Agnes Martin, and the eloquence of Leonard Cohen singing “There is a crack in everything, that's how the light gets in”?

Their influence lingers in our ears and our hearts, not just in our minds. It is here where the architect picks them up, in their original voice, talking like you and me. People of such inventiveness are too big for a museum. An opera might suit them better, and this is what our brave architect started to do. He took their words, their voices, and set them to music. No need to always compose your own when masters like Händel or Mahler are at hand. After all, those composers are, mezzo piano, part of our inner pictures too.

The isolation of the pandemic gave Gabor the time to collage 'sonic portraits' and 'music for voices', which you can listen to on soundcloud.com/precariouspropositions. Each track focuses on one artist's/ writer's/ musician's/ philosopher's voice within a dedicated composition. Here, we find Joseph Beuys's famous “Ja Ja Ja Ne Ne Ne” next to Karlheinz Stockhausen's “Jata-tata Titi-tata Tam” next to Georges Perec next to Nina Simone etc. etc.

The voices that Gabor collected have a transient feel to them. He does not put his heroes on a pedestal. All we hear are fragments, too incomplete to make sense, but repeatedly spoken by a sympathetic voice who we identify with. Similar to the fragments of conversations that we would catch at a vernissage, or in this case, finissage of an exhibition.

In his installation at the Museum of Openness, Gabor Stark suggests that somehow, they all met. They certainly do at the MOO, thanks to his invitation. Many of them will have met in life. For practical reasons, Adorno will not have known Kim Gordon, but Kim Gordon will have read Adorno, for sure. There was definitely a lot of dialogue.

Alf Löhr

Museum of Openness
Whitstable, July 2021

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LIBRETTO

PERSONAE DRAMATIS

A-Z

Theodor W. Adorno
Carl Andre
Hans Arp
John Baldessari
Joseph Beuys
David Byrne
John Cage
Nick Cave
Leonard Cohen
Marcel Duchamp
Kim Gordon
David Hockney
Agnes Martin
Taylor Mead
Georges Perec
Lou Reed
William Rice
Kurt Schwitters
Nina Simone
Gertrude Stein
Karlheinz Stockhausen
Tom Waits
& a bicycle

ACT 1

Look at this!

00:01

The sound of traffic

A door opens and shuts

The sound of tinkling glasses

¹ DB

Look at this!

Who can say it isn't beautiful?

JC ²

We don't see much difference
between time and space

We don't know
where one begins

and the other stops

³ KG

Hey, cool thing

Come here

Sit down beside me

There is something I got to ask you

ACT 2

An artist's duty

00:45

NS ⁴

An artist's duty,
as far as I'm concerned,
is to reflect the times

I think that is true of painters, sculptors, poets, musicians

JB ⁵

Everybody is an artist
Not only painters, sculptors, musicians are artist

Everybody's ability to think,
to feel,

and to will something,
this uprising will in the people,

this protesting will,
this means for me

the quality of being an artist
So, everybody is an artist

KG ⁶

I just think of myself as a person, actually.

NS ⁴

As far as I'm concerned, it's their choice

But I choose to reflect the times and
situations in which I find myself.

That, to me, is my duty

JB ⁷

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

ACT 3

You're alright?

01:47

WR ⁸.
You're alright, Taylor?

TM ⁹.
No, not really

WR ⁸.
What's up?

TM ⁹.
Ahhh, I don't know.
I feel so divorced from the world
I lost touch with the world.
Do you know that song by Mahler
'I've lost track of the world'?

WR ⁸.
No

TM ⁹.
It's one of the most beautiful,
saddest songs ever written

I can,
I can,
I can almost hear it now

Can you hear it?

JB ⁷.
Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

TW ¹⁰.
It's a sad and beautiful world

It's a sad and beautiful world

JB ⁷.
Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

02:33

When did you know
you want to be an artist? ⁶.

KG ⁶.
I guess I wanted to be an artist
when I was five

I learnt how to make an elephant out of clay

When I went to first grade, they asked
if I would go back to kindergarten
and teach the kids how to make elephants

That was my first artistic acknowledgement

TM ⁹.
Ahh, it's gone now
Did you hear it?

TR ⁸.
I think so

TW ¹⁰.
It's a sad and beautiful world

It's a sad and beautiful world

It's a sad and beautiful world

JB ⁷.
Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa
Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee
Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa

TW ¹⁰.
It's a sad and beautiful world
It's a sad and beautiful world
It's a sad and beautiful world
It's a sad and beautiful world

ACT 4

Who can say it isn't beautiful?

03:31

DB ¹.

Look at this!

Who can say it isn't beautiful?

Sky, bricks

TW ¹¹.

Baldessari made a video in which
he wrote the phrase until the tape ran out

JBA ¹².

I will not make any boring art

I will not make any boring art

I will not make any boring art

I will not make any boring art

I will not make any boring art

I will not make any boring art

I will not make any boring art

I will not make any boring art

I will not make any boring art

KG ⁶.

Come on, come on, come, on, come on,
come on, come on, come on

Come on, come on, come, on, come on,
come on, come on, come on

Come on, come on, come, on, come on,
come on, come on, come on

Come on, come on, come, on, come on,
come on, come on, come on

Come on, come on, come, on, come on,
come on, come on, come on

KS ¹³.

Jata-tata-tata-tata,
Titi-tata-tata-tata
Titi-tata-tata-tata
Titi-tata
Jata-tata-tata-tata-tata
Hmmm!

Jata-tata-ta

Jata-tata
Titi-tata

Jata-tata
Tata-tata-tata-tata
Jata-tata
Jata-tata
Jata-tata
Tam-ta-ta-ta
Tam-taaaaaaaaaaaa
Jata-tata-tam-ta-tata
Jiti-tata
Jata-titi
Jata-tata-tam

CA ¹⁴.

I remember when my father
first saw a show of mine,
which was about the same time
and a similar show,
and there was a zinc piece,
I think 144 zinc, and 144 copper,
and I thiuk maybe 144 magnesium,
that piece I believe is in the Tate Gallery,
and my father looked at the zinc piece with total amazement
and he said: That's more zinc than I've ever seen before in my life!

ACT 4 (continued)

BC

Ring, ring!

MD ¹⁶.

After a certain while,
anything becomes beautiful
Now, it takes forty years sometimes:
Beautiful!
And that's the worst compliment
they could give me

You see, I even remember signing a big
painting in a restaurant for the pleasure of
calling it readymade, you see
And of course, it was not manufactured
So, of course, I could not take the painting
with me, because it was attached to the wall

BC

Ring, ring!

KSC ¹⁵.

ziiu-iiiiuuu

ziiu-aaaauuu

ziiu-iiiiuuu

ziiu-aaa

ziiu-iiiiuuu

ziiu-aaaauuu

ziiu-iiiiuuu

ziiu-ooo

ziiu-iiiiu

ziiu-aaaauuu

ziiu-iiiiuuu

lankedrrrslll tete-tete-te
uka uka uka uka

lankedrrrslll pipi-pipa-po
tüka tüka tüka tüka

lankedrrrslll
rmmm-prmmm

lankedrrrslll
ziuulen-trööö-lööö-tööö-trööö

KS ¹³.

Jata-tata

Taaaaaaaaaaaa

Jata-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta-ta

Jata-tata

Jata

Ta-jata-tata-tata-tata

Ta-jata-tata-tata-tata-tataam

CA ¹⁴.

My father never accepted my work as sculpture

He really never did

But he accepted it's material and loved the works as material

And he also said another thing,

when he saw these works on the floor, he said:

Carl, I don't know anything about art, but I know you make a hell
lot more money when you put these things on the wall

And of course, he understood very much what the expectations of
the art world were like

ACT 5

Je me souviens

05:28

GP¹⁷.

Je me souviens du Tac-Tac

Je me souviens de Ploum-Ploum-Tra-La-La

HA¹⁹.

Dada ist eine Rose,

die eine Rose im Knopfloch trägt

Dada redet mit einer Menschenzunge
und seinen unzähligen vollen Flaschen

Dada ist eine Rose, die eine Rose im
Knopfloch trägt

Dada ist Anfang und Ende, fängt mit dem
Ende an, lasst alsdann den Anfang folgen
und schliesst nicht mit dem dicken Mittelteil

Darum sieht Dada so gesund aus, ist gerecht
und vorurteilslos in der Anwendung von
grossen Sprüchen

Dada ist schön wie die Nacht,
die einen jungen Tag in ihren Armen wiegt

KSC¹⁵.

lankedrrrselll

rum-tiff-tuuuu

lankedrrrslll

ziuulen-trööö-lööö-tööö-trööö

lankedrrrslll titi-titi-ti

uka uka uka uka

lankedrrrslll titi-titi-ti

tüka tüka tüka tüka

TWA²⁰.

Darin würden wir sogar übereinstimmen,
dass der Fortschritt, ja und Benjamin hat das
in den geschichtsphilosophischen Thesen
wohl zuerst formuliert, dass der Fortschritt,
soweit man von einem solchen bis heute
reden kann, wesentlich ein Fortschritt in
den Techniken der Naturbeherrschung und
den Kenntnissen zur Naturbeherrschung
liegt. Das heisst also, dass er, wenn man so
will, ein partikularer Fortschritt ist, der aber
keineswegs bedeutet, dass die Menschheit
dabei ihrer selbst mächtig geworden ist, dass
die Menschheit mündig geworden ist.

GS¹⁸.

If Napoleon if I told him if I told him if Napoleon.

Would he like it if I told him if I told him if Napoleon.

Would he like it if Napoleon if Napoleon if I told him.

If I told him if Napoleon if Napoleon if I told him.

If I told him would he like it would he like it if I told him.

Now.

Not now.

And now.

Now.

Exactly as as kings.

Feeling full for it.

Exactitude as kings.

So to beseech you as full as for it.

Exactly or as kings.

Shutters shut and open so do queens. Shutters shut and

shutters and so shutters shut and shutters and so and so

shutters and so shutters shut and so shutters shut and

shutters and so. And so shutters shut and so and also. And

also and so and so and also.

Exact resemblance to exact resemblance the exact

resemblance as exact resemblance, exactly as resembling,

exactly resembling, exactly in resemblance exactly and

resemblance. For this is so. Because.

Now actively repeat at all, now actively repeat at all, now

actively repeat at all.

Have hold and hear, actively repeat at all.

I judge judge.

As a resemblance to him.

Who comes first. Napoleon the first.

Who comes too coming coming too,

who goes there

JBA¹².

I will not make any boring art

I will not make any boring art

I will not make any boring art

I will not make any boring art

I will not make any boring art

JB⁷.

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa

Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee, Nee

Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa, Jaa

ACT 6

Beautiful world

07:04

TW ¹⁰.

It's a sad and beautiful world

DB ¹.

Look at this!

Who can say it isn't beautiful?

It's a sad and beautiful world

Sky, bricks

DH ²¹.

The world is very, very beautiful, if you look at it

But most people don't look very much, do they?

They scan the ground in front of them

So that they can walk

But they don't really look at things incredibly well

It's a sad and beautiful world

AM ²².

We respond to it emotionally

You know, I mean, you do, don't you

when you're listening to music?

You know, all art is, give me a second, that way

Beautiful world

NC ²³.

What I do like about the song itself is that,
which, I think, is different from other forms of art,
is that a whole lot of things go on at exactly the same time

You've got, kind of, the music, and the words,
and the way the words are sung and interpreted,
the melodies, all of this sort of stuff,

and they can, kind of, there is always, sort of,
emotional information that can collide at one time
and say different sorts of things

I don't play my records

I don't ever listen to my, willigly listen to my music

You know, I don't, kind of, put on CDs, or, kind of,

I'm not prone to reminiscing and, you know, reflecting,

I don't do that a lot

I just feel I, kind of, move forward

JC ².

I love sounds – just as they are

And I have no need for them to be anything more than what they are

I don't want them to be psychological

I don't want a sound to pretend that it's a bucket

Or that it's a precedent

Or that it's in love with another sound

I just want it to be a sound

CA ¹⁴.

To me, that seems so clear,
to me, it seems so direct, so simple,
and so inoffensive,
I still don't understand
why people get disturbed about it,
but they do

ACT 7

And as I grew older

08:55

LC ²⁴.

And as I grew older, I understood
that instructions came with this voice
What were these instructions?
The instructions were: Never to lament casually!
And if one is to express
the great, inevitable defeat
that awaits us all,
it must be done
within the strict confines
of dignity and beauty

TW ¹⁰.

It's a sad
and beautiful world

LR ²⁵.

It was so beautiful it made me cry

It's a sad
and beautiful world

JC ².

We don't see much difference
between time and space

It's a sad
and beautiful world

We don't know where one begins
and the other stops

It's a sad
and beautiful world

It's a sad
and beautiful world

ACT 8

I even remember

09:52

The sound of tinkling glasses

MD ¹⁶.

I even remember signing a big painting in a restaurant
for the pleasure of calling it readymade, you see
And of course, it was not manufactured

Audience laughs

So, of course, I could not take the painting with me
because it was attached to the wall

A door opens and shuts

The sound of traffic

But this explains that the difficulty is to make people understand
that is was not through an attraction to the beauty of the object
I would not call it readymade
that's why I made so few
because after a certain while
anything becomes beautiful

BC

Ring, ring!

The sound of a bicycle

The sound of traffic

FIN

FINISSAGE
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SCORE

EXCERPTS

Clarinet
Piano
Guitar
Bass
Marimba
Strings

♩=90

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CLARINET

Musical score for Clarinet, measures 14-45. The score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of ♩=90. It consists of nine staves of music. The first staff (measures 14-20) features a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The second staff (measures 21-23) continues the melodic line. The third staff (measures 24-26) includes a triplet of eighth notes. The remaining staves (measures 27-45) consist of a steady eighth-note accompaniment pattern.

♩=90

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PIANO

Musical score for Piano, measures 1-8. The score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of ♩=90. It consists of two staves. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand (bass clef) plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment pattern.

♩=90

GUITAR

Musical score for Guitar, measures 1-8. The score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of ♩=90. It consists of two staves. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand (bass clef) plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment pattern.

♩=90

BASS

Musical score for Bass, measures 1-8. The score is written in 4/4 time with a tempo of ♩=90. It consists of two staves. The right hand (treble clef) plays a melodic line with eighth and sixteenth notes. The left hand (bass clef) plays a steady eighth-note accompaniment pattern.

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MARIMBA

♩=90

Musical score for Marimba, consisting of ten staves of music in 4/4 time. The score begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one flat. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 90. The music features a series of rests followed by a melodic line starting at measure 28, which includes eighth and sixteenth notes. The piece concludes with a final chord in measure 54.

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STRINGS

♩=90

Musical score for Strings, consisting of ten staves of music in 4/4 time. The score begins with a bass clef and a key signature of one flat. The tempo is marked as quarter note = 90. The music features a series of rests followed by a melodic line starting at measure 7, which includes eighth and sixteenth notes. The piece concludes with a final chord in measure 145.

Voices

¹ David Byrne

Excerpt from 'True Stories'
Directed by David Byrne
1986

² John Cage

Excerpt from 'Écoute' (Listening)
Directed by Miroslav Sebestik
1992

³ Kim Gordon

Excerpt from 'Kool Thing' by Sonic Youth
1990

⁴ Nina Simone

Excerpt from an interview with
American TV
1960s

⁵ Joseph Beuys

Excerpt from an interview with BBC
1983

⁶ Kim Gordon

Excerpt from an interview with Huck
Magazine
2017

⁷ Joseph Beuys

Excerpt from the audio-sculptural artwork
'Ja Ja Ja Ja Ja Nee Nee Nee Nee'
Featuring Johannes Stüttgen and
Henning Christiansen
Recorded at Staatliche Kunstakademie
Düsseldorf
1968

⁸ William Rice

⁹ Taylor Mead
Excerpt from 'Champagne', the final
segment of 'Coffee and Cigarettes'
Written and directed by Jim Jarmusch
2003

¹⁰ Tom Waits

Excerpt from 'Down by Law'
Written and directed by Jim Jarmusch
1986

¹¹ Tom Waits

¹² John Baldessari
Excerpt from
'A Brief History of John Baldessari'
Directed by Henry Joost and Ariel Schulman
Written by Gabriel Nussbaum
2012

¹³ Karlheinz Stockhausen

Excerpt from an interview with Danish TV
1986

¹⁴ Carl Andre

Excerpt from the Channel 4 documentary
'Upholding the bricks'
Directed by Mark James
1990

¹⁵ Kurt Schwitters

Performing his 'Ursonate'
Recorded by Süddeutscher Rundfunk
1932

¹⁶ Marcel Duchamp

Excerpt from an interview with
Martin Friedman,
Walker Art Center, Minneapolis
1965

¹⁷ Georges Perec

Excerpt from his reading of 'Je me souviens'
Recorded by Radio France
1978

¹⁸ Gertrude Stein

Reading her poem 'If I Told Him:
A Completed Portrait of Picasso'
Recorded in New York
1934/35

¹⁹ Hans Arp

Excerpt from 'Dada Sprüche'
1961

²⁰ Theodor W. Adorno

Excerpt from his radio conversation with
Arnold Gehlen: 'Ist die Soziologie eine
Wissenschaft vom Menschen?'
Recorded by Südwestfunk
1965

²¹ David Hockney

Excerpt from an interview with
Louisiana Museum of Modern Art
2020

²² Agnes Martin

Excerpt from an interview with
Chuck Smith and Sono Kuwayama
Recorded at her studio in Taos, New Mexico
1997

²³ Nick Cave

Excerpt from an interview
2001

²⁴ Leonard Cohen

Excerpt from his Prince of Asturias Award
for Literature acceptance speech
2011

²⁵ Lou Reed

Excerpt from his last interview with director
Farida Khelfa
2013

'kɒləf(ə)n

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soundcloud.com/precariouspropositions/finissage-voices-in-an-exhibition
precariouspropositions.wordpress.com

Exhibited at
MOO | The Museum of Openness
With a video by Alf Löhr
museumofopenness.com

Whitstable
July 2021

Museum
of Openness
12 | 2021

*After a certain while
anything becomes beautiful*

Marcel Duchamp

Ring, ring!