

MARKO BATISTA - Slikanje z zvokom

Prvi projekti, ki so za svoj umetniški izraz uporabljali računalnike in elektroniko, s katerimi sem se srečal v galerijskem okolju, so bili glasbeni projekti, v katerih so v maniri zgodnjih devetdesetih let prejšnjega stoletja umetniki raziskovali možnosti, ki so nastale z obče prisotnimi in cenovno dostopnimi elektronskimi inštrumenti in prenosnimi računalniki. Ni naključje, da je njihovo zgodnje raziskovanje zvoka in elektronskih glasbenih potencialov najprej našlo prostor v galerijah, in ne koncertnih dvorinah, saj so tradicionalno poslušalstvo zamenjali obiskovalci, ki so raziskovanja zvoka spremljali od blizu, participatorno in včasih celo interaktivno. Očitno je tudi, da je bilo galerijsko občinstvo, vajeno vizualnih atrakcij in interakcij med performerji in občinstvom, najbolj senzibilizirano za nova raziskovanja. Mešanje predstavitvenih tehnik, pri katerih umetniki uporabljajo video in audio, enakovredno implicira tudi neobičajne, hibridne dramaturške prvine, ki umetniške dogodke vzpostavljajo kot totalne umetnine, ki jih dojemamo z vsemi čuti. O zvoku in zvočni izkušnji ne govorimo več le z izrazi, značilnimi za glasbeno umetnost (npr: melodija, ritem, glasbena forma, harmonija, tonska lestvica), temveč uporabljamo termine, ki izhajajo tudi iz vizualne in uprizoritvene umetnosti (tekstura, poteza, zvočna pokrajina, odzivnost, interaktivnost). Tako so v polje glasbe in raziskovanje vstopili tudi umetniki, ki izhajajo iz likovnih in uprizoritvenih umetnosti in s svojo vizualno inteligenco interpretirajo zvočni material specifično drugače kot tisti, katerih izobrazbeno izhodišče je glasba.

Legitimnost uporabljanja likovnega materiala kot surovine za oblikovanje zvoka izhaja iz modernistične glasbene prakse, ki je omejenost tradicionalnih notnih zapisov nadgradila z narisanimi in naslikanimi partiturami, kjer je bolj ali manj linearne notne zapise razprla za interpretacije izvajalcev. Za razumevanje takšne glasbe je bila potrebna kombinacija vizualne in glasbene inteligence, ki je od poslušalcev/obiskovalcev zahtevala povsem drugačno čutno izkušnjo. S

pojavi konkretna glasbe (Musique concrete) v petdesetih letih prejšnjega stoletja so posebej za to sestavljeni inštrumenti, mašine in prostorske instalacije popeljali občinstvo v svet zvoka (in ozaveščenje njegove odsotnosti), kot ga ni izkušalo še nikoli v zgodovini. Modernistična estetska izkušnja ter strukturalistična in poststrukturalistična estetska paradigma so polje zvočnosti razprle za občutljivost slušnih, optičnih in haptičnih izkušenj, ki so radikalno zaznamovala razvoj glasbe, glasbeno industrijo in industrijo glasbene zabave, kot jo poznamo danes.

Fizičnost preglasnega zvoka, ki smo jo v osemdesetih letih izkušali na koncertih t. i. alternativne glasbe in hardkora, se je v devetdesetih prerodila v fizičnost digitalnega noise hardkora, ki sta ga v Ljubljano najbolj pristno vpeljala Atari Teenage Riot in Shizuo. Slovenska verzija noise hardkora se je v sredini devetdesetih pojavila v multidisciplinarni desetčlanski skupini KLON:ART:RESISTANCE, ki je svoje masivne zvočne slike podvajala z vizualijami. Te so po žanrski strani izhajale iz emtevejske medijske logike, po vsebinski plati pa so slinavost vsečne televizijske estetike zvočnih videov subvertirale s težkimi prizori in agresivno-invazivno montažo, video hrupom in velikoformatnimi projekcijami. Kiberpankovska estetika in gikovska angažiranost sta praviloma preglasili umetniški učinek, vendar sta s tem opozorili na potrebo po generacijski diferenciaciji in prostoru za umetniško dejavnost, ki s seboj prinaša političnost, ki problematizira meščansko pojmovanje umetnosti in družbeno vlogo estetike nasploh.

Več let po klonartovskem obdobju in opravljenem magistrstvu za likovno umetnost na Central Saint Martins v Londonu (2007) se Batista vrne na raziskovanje zvoka, ki je praviloma v tesni povezavi z izdelavo novih, še neobstoječih inštrumentov. Njegovo raziskovanje zvoka od projekta *Res://Data* leta 2005 najprej vzpostavi hardversko okolje, ki ima status teze, ki jo je treba potrditi.¹ Vzpostavljeno

Marko Batista
Hibridne zvočno-mehanične mašine / Hybrid Sonic Machines
Produkcija / Production: Zavod K6/4 – Galerija Kapelica, 2010
Foto / Photo: Miha Fras



hardversko okolje omogoča, da se vsakič znova raziskuje zvočne možnosti, ki so tako odvisne od prostora, v katerem je postavljeno, kot od avtorjev, ki sistem uporabljajo, in občinstva, ki so na dogodku. Takšni »inštrumenti«² omogočajo odprte zvočne kompozicije, ki s svojo razstavljenostjo dovolijo vpogled v fenomenologijo zvočnosti, ki jo slišimo, materiala/opreme, ki ga proizvajata, in izvora signala, ki ga inštrument bodisi proizvajata bodisi zajema iz tematiziranega izvora. Zaradi razstavljenosti izdelovanja senzorične izkušnje so vsi elementi, ki jih je avtor povezal v sistem, pomenljivi in jih je treba jemati v vsej simbolni in imaginarni razsežnosti. Ni namreč vseeno, ali je npr. zajeti TV-signal predpripravljen ali »v živo«² in ali je zajet v analognem ali digitalnem območju.² Vzemimo primer avdiovizualnega (AV) performansa *Error Trash* (2008). V tem zvočnem raziskovanju je Batista zajemal digitalni televizijski signal, ki sicer potuje čez različne telekomunikacijske povezave,

brezžično in nato ponovno čez serijo inštalacij, tik preden se »ulovi«³ v prevajalnik (decoder), ki ga uredi za prikazovanje na TV-ekranu. Videosignal, ki ga dekodeer ni uredil³, je ves raztrgan v paketke, s katerimi ne manipulira avtor, temveč realnost pomanjkljivih telespredovanih signalov. Vzročna povezava raztrgane slike in akustika napak kljub temu generirata avdiovizualno izkušnjo, ki jo v manj uporabniško izkušnjo in se zavest o upravljanju telekomunikacijskega omrežja sproži vsakič, ko slika ali zvok zatrepeta.

V projektih pod skupnim naslovom *Začasni objekti in hibridni prostori 2008–2010 (Temporary objects and hybrid ambients 2008–2010)* Batista sam sestavlja elektromehanične vmesnike inštrumente,

Marko Batista
Časovni diagrami / Timing Diagrams
Produkcija / Production: Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, 2011 Foto / Photo: Primož Juvan



dekonstrukcija televizijskega protokola se v projektu *Error Trash* podvoji še v zvočni sliki, ki je zainteresirana prav za neurejene in napačne signale, nenavadne kadence in vrhunce, s katerimi ne manipulira avtor, temveč realnost pomanjkljivih telespredovanih signalov. Vzročna povezava raztrgane slike in akustika napak kljub temu generirata avdiovizualno izkušnjo, ki jo v manj uporabniško izkušnjo in se zavest o upravljanju telekomunikacijskega omrežja sproži vsakič, ko slika ali zvok zatrepeta.

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s katerih zajema signale in/ali zvoke. V projektu *Hibridne zvočno-mehanične mašine* so za izvor impulzov vzete neonske luči, ki utripajo v poljubnih (random) intervalih z značilno iritirajočim bliskanjem. Popolnoma nepredvidljivo proženje signalov zajema pretvornik signalov MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface), ki električne impulze spremeni v natančno določene elektronske in s tem proži v računalniku sintezo različnih zvočnih modulov ter hkrati modulira minimalistično mrežo (mesh) na videoprojekciji, ki nam pomaga razumeti, kaj se dogaja v analogno-digitalnem drobno inštrumentu. V tem avdiovizualnem dogodku Batista na zanimiv način sreča visokoestetizirano likovnost avdiovizualnega tehnološkega ter depresiven in iritirajoč svetlobni klišé pokvarjeno utripajočih neonskih luči, ki ga na primer v kinematografski leksiki filmarji uporabljajo kot matrico za prikazovanje skrajno degradiranega, zanemarjenega ali podzemeljskega (underground) miljeja. V tem

performansu smo tako priča shizofrenemu dotikanju dveh realnosti, ki v sodobnem urbanem okolju sobivata, vendar vedno konfliktno in polarizirajoče.

Batista tematizira civilizacijsko izginevanje analognih vmesnikov tudi v drugih dveh avdiovizualnih dogodkih, kjer vzpostavi elektronsko-mehanična vmesnika, kjer natančno na stikanju analognega in digitalnega vznikne inštrument dogodek tako kot v projektu *Error Trash*, ki je zajemal impulze mimo analogno-digitalnega (AD) pretvornika. Če je bil v tem projektu AD-konverter prisoten tako, da je bil iz produkcije zvoka in slike odstranjen, pa je v *Magnetic Matrix 3.1* in v projektu *H220* fokus prav na formaliziranem srečevanju analognega in digitalnega. To srečevanje je omogočeno z intervencijo avtorja, ki v mirujoče, na videz harmonizirano okolje poseže kot moteča intervencija, kot napaka. *Magnetic Matrix 3.1* je sestavljen iz slike podobnega bazena, kjer je v tekočino potopljen ferofluid, občutljiv za magnetne, ki jih po zadnji steni bazena premikajo avtorji. Grafične učinke, ki jih oblaki ferofluidne tekočine rišejo, zaznava oko kamere, povezane v računalniški program za sledenje premikanju, ki v računalniku proži digitalno sintetizirane zvoke. Avtorji, ki manipulirajo z izredno nenatančnim vmesnikom ves čas zvočnega dogodka, težijo k vzpostavljanju vzročno-posledičnega proženja zvokov in s tem ustvarjajo dramaturško napetost, ki visi med živo sliko in zvokom. V nasprotju s projektom Maelstorm Romana Kirchnerja, kjer je identična konstrukcija uporabljena le za proizvajanje grafičnih učinkov, ki jih povzročajo vnaprej programirani magneti v skritem ozadju mehanične slike, je Batista v sodelovanju z Natašo Mušević uporabil konstrukcijo kot dinamičen vmesnik, ki upravljavcem in gledalcem omogoča dojeti zakonitosti zabrisane logike (fuzzy logic) elektronskih aparatov in s tem zaslediti umetno živost (artificial liveness) in imaginarno metafizičnost strojev.

Kontrast med splošno predstavo o eksaktnosti in nezmotljivosti elektronike, binarne kode in njenih merljivih rezultatov ter njenih napak, odpadkov, mankov, oblakov je tema tudi v projektu *H220*, kjer je vmesnik povsem stabilna mreža uporov in diod, ki jih avtor z dotikanjem prisili v interference in posledično produkcijo zvoka in videoslike, ki s tem izgubi tehnično aseptičnost in zaživi v območju interpretacij akterja in obiskovalcev. Prostorska postavitev zvočnikov prisili obiskovalce še v prostorsko izkušnjo, kjer nikoli na nobenem mestu zvočna informacija ni cela, temveč parcialna, slišna le za bližnjega poslušalca in neslišna za poslušalca na drugem koncu prostora. Tako poslušalec oziroma obiskovalec avdiovizualnega okolja, ki je raztegnjeno po vsem prostoru galerije, postane povsem avtonomen interpret umetniškega dogodka. Umetniško delo je tako razstavljeno in partikularizirano, da je nemogoče govoriti o njem kot celoti, glasbenem komadu ali videodelu in niti kot o koncertu. V *H220* gre še najbolj za povabilo v avdiovizualno raziskovanje, kjer ni predpostavljenega končnega izdelka, temveč participatorni proces odkrivanja zvočnega materiala, razumevanja prostora in koreografije izvajalca/cev in obiskovalcev, ki se fizično premikajo po avdiovizualnem prostoru/pokrajini (space/scape).

¹ Oblikovanje teze izhaja iz različnih tehnoloških rešitev, ideoloških zapor v uporabni tehniki, kulturnih fenomenov in različnih uporabniških izkušenj, ki jih avtor problematizira v svojem delu.

² Po eni strani je poznavanje teh dejstev pomenljivo zaradi uporabniške izkušnje in kulture vmesnikov, ki jo danes živimo, saj je večina visoke tehnologije distribuirana preko multinacionalnih korporativnih akterjev, po drugi strani pa se umetniki sami ločijo po uporabljenih prvinah in načinu uporabe tehnologije tako, da je za razumevanje njihovega umetniškega dela skoraj nujno poznati osnove visokomedijske kulture.

³ Batista signal zajema pred videodekoderjem oz. ga v performansu sploh ne uporablja.

Izdaja ob performansu / Published on the occasion of the performance:

Marko Batista
Časovni diagrami / Timing Diagrams
www.aksioma.org/t-diagrams

Stara mestna elektrarna - Elektro Ljubljana
Slomškova 18, Ljubljana, Slovenija
31. marec 2011 ob 20:00 / **March 31, 2011 at 8:00 pm**

Idejna zasnova in izvedba / **Idea and realization:** Marko Batista
Video podpora / **Video support:** Boštjan Čadež
Tehnična podpora / **Tech support:** Primož Juvan, Nataša Mušević, Miljenko Kadič
Izvršna producentka / **Executive producer:** Marcela Okretič



Produkcija / Production: Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, 2011
www.aksioma.org

Soprodukcija / Co-production: Zavod Bunker
www.bunker.si

Zahvale / Thanks: Zavod K6/4 - Galerija Kapelica

Projekt sta podprla: Ministrstvo za kulturo Republike Slovenije in Oddelek za kulturo Mestne občine Ljubljana / **Supported by:** the Ministry of Culture of the Republic of Slovenia, the Municipality of Ljubljana - Department of Culture



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MARKO BATISTA – Painting with sound

The first projects that used computers and electronics for their artistic expression and that I encountered in the gallery environment were musical projects, in which artists, in the manner of the early 1990s, explored the possibilities that arose when electronic instruments and laptops became generally available and more reasonably priced. It is not a coincidence that their early explorations of sound and electronic musical potentials first appeared in gallery spaces and not in concerts halls, for traditional audiences were replaced by visitors who followed sound explorations up close, in a participatory and sometimes even interactive manner. It is also obvious that gallery audiences, accustomed to visual attractions and interactions between performers and audiences, possessed the most suitable sensibility for new explorations. The mixing of presentational techniques, in which artists put video and audio on a par, also implies unusual, hybrid dramaturgical elements, which establish artistic events as total artworks, which we perceive with all our senses. Thus, sound and sonic experiences are no longer described solely with the terms that are typical of musical art (e.g. melody, rhythm, musical form, harmony, tonality...); rather, they are described with the terms that also derive from visual and performative arts (e.g. texture, stroke, soundscape, resonance, interactivity...). As a result, artists who come from fine and performative arts and who use their visual intelligence to interpret sound material – in a way that is specifically different from that of the artists whose background is music – entered the field of music and exploration. The legitimacy of using the material of visual arts as the raw stuff for designing sound derives from the modernist musical practice, which lessened the limitations of the traditional musical notations by introducing drawn and painted scores; in so doing, it encouraged the performers to interpret the more or less linear musical notations. To understand this music, which demanded from its audiences/visitors a completely different sensory experience,

one needed a combination of visual and musical intelligence. With the emergence of concrete music (*musique concrète*) in the 1950s, the presence of specially designed instruments, machines and spatial installations led the audiences into the world of sound (and into an awareness of its absence) that has not been experienced before. The modernist aesthetic experience and the structuralist and poststructuralist aesthetic paradigm extended the field of sonority into the sensitivity of sonic, optical and haptic experiences, which radically marked the development of music, musical industry and musical entertainment industry as we know them today. The physicality of far-too-loud sound, which we experienced in the eighties at the so-called alternative music and hardcore concerts, was regenerated in the nineties in the physicality of digital noise hardcore, most genuinely introduced in Ljubljana by Atari Teenage Riot and Shizuo. The Slovenian version of noise hardcore appeared in the nineties with the multidisciplinary group of ten artists KLON:ART:RESISTANCE, which doubled its massive sound images with visualisations. As regards the genre, the latter derived from the MTV media logic, whereas regarding the content, they subverted the sliminess of the likeable television aesthetics of sound videos with difficult scenes and aggressively invasive editing, video noise and large-format projections. The cyberpunk aesthetics and geeky engagement usually drowned the artistic effect, however, in so doing, they pointed out the need for generational differentiation and a space for artistic activity whose politics problematises the middle-class understanding of art and the social role of aesthetics in general. Several years after the klonart era and after having successfully completed his Master's degree in fine arts at Central Saint Martins in London (2007), Batista returns to explorations of sound, which are usually closely related to design and manufacture of new, as yet non-existent instruments. His explorations of sound from the project *Res://Data* (2005) onwards establish a hardware environment,

Marko Batista
H220
Produkcija / Production: Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, 2010
Foto / Photo: Aksioma



which has the status of a thesis that needs to be verified.¹ The established hardware environment makes it possible, time and again, to explore anew the sound possibilities, which are thus dependent on the space in which the environment is established as well as on the authors who use the system and the audiences who witness the event. These "instruments" make possible open sound compositions, whose display enables an insight into the phenomenology of sonority that we hear, the material/equipment that produces it, and the source of the signal that the instrument produces or captures from a thematised source. Because of the display of the production of sensory experience, all elements that the author has integrated into the system are meaningful and they need to be appreciated in all their symbolic and imaginary dimensions. Namely, it is not irrelevant, for instance, whether the captured TV signal has been prepared in advance or it was captured "live", or whether it was captured within the analogical range or within the digital one.² Let's consider the case of the audiovisual (AV) performance *Error Trash* (2008). In this sound

exploration, Batista captures the digital television signal, which otherwise travels through various tele-communicational connections, in a wireless mode and then again through a series of cable networks, immediately before it is "caught" in the decoder, which decodes the signal and thus prepares it for presentation on the TV screen. The video signal that has not been ordered by the decoder³ is fragmented into packages that travel through the network; if we screen this signal without the decoder, we see a heavily distorted image, which jumps and flickers, gets scrambled and clears up again, yet, it still allows an impression about the image that should appear clear on screen. This contrast between the expected video image and the crude, scrambled image point to a significant locus, that is, to the device (the decoder) that decodes and mediates the signal. This device is obviously crucial for manipulating the video signal; it is so powerful that it transforms hardly intelligible or missing video information into a precise image that the sender wants to broadcast. It is perfectly clear that the possibilities for manipulating the content are limitless for those senders that might be interested in this.

Marko Batista
H220
Produkcija / Production: Aksioma – Institute for Contemporary Art, Ljubljana, 2010
Foto / Photo: Aksioma



In the project *Error Trash*, deconstruction of the television protocol is doubled in the sound image, which is interested precisely in the disorganized and false signals, unusual cadences and peaks, which are not manipulated by the author, but rather by the reality of lacking tele-mediated signals. Nevertheless, the causal connection of the scrambled image and the acoustics of errors generate an audiovisual experience that can be – less explicitly – encountered anywhere where tele-communicational media are used. This is the origin of the so-called glitch aesthetics, in which breakdowns, errors and deficient manifestation of signals are already integrated into the user experience and the awareness of the management of the tele-communicational network becomes is triggered every time when the image or sound start flickering. In projects under the joint title *Temporary objects and hybrid ambients 2008–2010* (*Začasni objekti in hibridni prostori 2008–2010*), Batista himself constructs electro-mechanical interfaces, that is, instruments with which he captures signals and/or sounds. In the project *Hybrid sound-mechanical*

(Hibridne zvočno-mehanične mašine), the source of impulses are neon lights, which pulsate in random intervals with characteristically irritating flashes. The utterly unpredictable triggering of signals is captured by the MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) signal converter, which transforms electrical impulses into precisely determined electronic ones and thus triggers in the computer the synthesis of various sound modules and, at the same time, modulates the minimalist mesh in the video projection, which helps us understand what is happening in the analogico-digital bowels of the instrument. In this interesting audiovisual event, Batista combines the highly aestheticised appearance of audiovisual techno minimalism and the depressing and irritating light cliché of corruptly flashing neon lights, which is used in the cinematic vocabulary, for instance, as the matrix for representing an utterly degraded, dilapidated or underground milieu. In this performance, we thus witness a schizophrenic contact of two realities, which co-exist in the contemporary urban environment, yet, always in a conflicting and polarised manner.

Batista thematises the gradual civilisational disappearance of analogical adapters in another couple of audiovisual events, in which he establishes electro-mechanical adapters, where an instrument-event emerges precisely at the conjunction of the analogical and the digital, like in the project *Error Trash*, in which the impulses were captured without an analogico-digital (AD) converter. While in the latter project the AD converter was present by being absent from the production of sound and image, the projects *Magnetic Matrix 3.1* and *H220* focus precisely on the formalised contact between the analogical and the digital. This contact is enabled by the author's interference, which intervenes into an idle and apparently harmonious environment as an intrusive, erroneous intervention. *Magnetic Matrix 3.1* consists of an image-like pool filled with ferrofluid that is sensitive to the magnets that are moved along the back wall of the pool by the authors. The graphic effects produced by the clouds of ferrofluid are registered by the eye of the camera, which is connected to the computer programme for tracing movements, which generates digitally synthesised sound in the computer. Throughout the sound event, the authors, who manipulate the remarkably imprecise adapter, strive for the establishment of a causal triggering of sounds and thus produce dramaturgical tension, which hovers between live image and sound. In contrast to Roman Kirchner's project *Maelstorm*, in which an identical construction is used merely to produce graphic effects generated by the pre-programmed magnets in the hidden background of the mechanical image, Batista in collaboration with Nataša Muševič uses the construction as a dynamic adapter, which makes it possible for the users and the spectators to grasp the laws of the electronic devices' fuzzy logic and thus to detect the machines' artificial liveness and imaginary metaphysics. The contrast between a general idea about the precision and infallibility of electronics, the binary code and its quantifiable results as well as its errors, waste, lack, clouds, etc. is also the theme of the

project *H220*, in which the adapter consists of a perfectly stable network of resistances and diodes, which the author, by touching them, forces into interferences and, consequently, into the production of sound and video image, which thus loses its technical sterility and is revived in the sphere of the actor's and the visitor's interpretations. The spatial set up of the loudspeakers forces the visitors into a spatial experience, in which the sound information is never whole in any of the possible positions in space; rather, it is always partial, audible only to the closest listener and inaudible to the listener on the other side of the space. Thus the listener or the visitor of this audiovisual ambient, which is spread throughout the entire gallery space, becomes a completely autonomous interpreter of the artistic event. The artwork is exhibited and particularised to the extent that it become impossible to talk about it as a whole, as a musical piece or a video work, not even as a concert. In *H220*, what we are dealing with is closest to an invitation to an audiovisual exploration, in which no final result is anticipated, only a participatory process of discovering sound material, understanding space and the choreography of the performer(s) and the visitor(s), who move physically through the audiovisual space/scape.

¹ The formation of the thesis stems from various technological solutions, ideological obstructions in applied technique, cultural phenomena and various user experiences, which the author problematises in his work.

² On the one hand, knowing these facts is significant because of the user experience and the culture of adapters, in which we live today, for the majority of high technology is distributed through multinational corporate agents; on the other hand, the artists themselves differ from one another in terms of the primary material that they use and in terms of the mode in which they use technology, so that some knowledge about the basics of highly mediated culture is almost obligatory to understand their artistic work.

³ Batista captures the signal before the video decoder, that is, he is not using the latter at all in the performance.

**MARKO BATISTA**

ZAČASNI OBJEKTI IN HIBRIDNI PROSTORI TEMPORARY OBJECTS AND HYBRID AMBIENTS