

L8Nite Performance

Back to Technology (Thinking through Making)

An inquiry into nature/technology and thinking/making-dichotomies through performative sound art on the threshold of audibility.

A very intriguing way of describing artistic work comes - perhaps surprisingly - from the field of social anthropology: in the words of Tim Ingold, artistic work is a way of “thinking through making.” And this seems particularly apt for artistic research, which is supposed to generate knowledge - but what does “knowledge” mean within artistic research? I want to raise this question in the context of a kind of performative sound art, that deals with contemporary issues of extractionism, ecocriticism and the colonization of nature. These issues are directly related to the epistemological concerns of artistic research, because they are all fundamentally *ethical*. Any knowledge that presents itself as authoritative with reference to an alleged objectivity further separates us from the non-human world, because it is founded on an ontological split between knower and known, between knowledge and the object of knowledge. And if the non-human world is not present to us, it is impossible to have an ethical stance towards it. Objectivity is a knowing from the outside, whereas thinking through making is knowing from the inside, where there is no split, and this generates a different understanding of what it means to know and care.

Through my work, I want to sensitize us to the complexity and urgency of these issues. Coming from music, with this research project I am traversing into less familiar fields of practice, namely visual, performance and sound art. I am interested in working with a plurality of media and modalities, because of the nature and scope of my inquiries and the opportunities for creating hybrid meanings and affects that a multi-medial method and awareness entails.

I will present three performative installations. They are multi-modal kinetic sculptures that use analog music technologies and natural materials to make very quiet sound, while simultaneously animating physical materials and making a kind of drawing.

Performatively, the works investigate how the setting up of an installation (usually confined to the preparatory stages of presenting installations) can work as a performative gesture in its own right. The performance creates a generative system, with which I can performatively engage, but which can also be left to work on its own, subject to indeterminacy and entropy. Working with tactility, movement, slowness and quietude, they establish a complex correspondence between artifacts and natural materials, and their various registers of meaning and affect. The works create an ambiguous relationship between nature and technology, and between human and machine, in which hierarchies and habitual divisions are destabilized, and a hybrid situation is created, that encompasses material, functional and semantic aspects of the works.

Following Ingold, I will suggest that rather than imposing form on matter (as a traditional hylomorphic idea of creativity modelled on the same ontological split as the standard model of science would have it) the maker – operating within a field of forces that cut across any divisions between body and environment – is working between the anticipatory reach of the

L8Nite Performance

imagination and the friction of materials. And for the maker, materials are what they *do*; they are what happens when you work with them. The properties of the materials are for the maker not objectively measured or subjectively attributed, but *practically experienced*. Thus, art is not a way of arriving at “knowledge” as an end point, but a way of *knowing* as a perpetual becoming. The work of art is poorly understood as a finished object. Through art, phenomena are understood not with reference to what they are, but what they *do*, and this suggests that art is perhaps better understood as a verb, rather than a noun. And this may have profound epistemological (and - by the same token - ethical) consequences for artistic research.

These works and considerations have grown out of my ongoing artistic research into listening and sound art practice under the title *Sound Art as Perceptive Performance* at the Rhythmic Music Conservatory, Copenhagen, Denmark.

Links to recordings of the proposed performance and installations:

Reel-to-reel Drawing: <https://vimeo.com/782880962>

Back to Technology I: <https://vimeo.com/782876363>

Back to Technology II: <https://vimeo.com/784718933>



Name and Last Name: Anders Mathiasen

Institution (City, Country): Rhythmic Music Conservatory, Copenhagen, Denmark

Email address: anma@rmc.dk

Bio:

I have worked as as a professional recording artist and touring performer (mainly as a guitarist) since 2006. I have released fifteen mostly self-produced albums, both solo and in various collaborations, within the fields of alt. folk, rock, improvised and experimental music. Parallel to this, I have been working with sound art and performance in visual art and literary contexts. I hold a BA in Religious Studies and an MA in Modern Culture Studies from the University of Copenhagen. I am currently Assistant Professor of Artistic Development Work at the Rhythmic Music Conservatory in Copenhagen, where I have been teaching since 2017.