

there there, here now: sound-space, abstraction, embodiment

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February 2009

bodies and a world

We are surrounded. We are surrounded by a combination of forces simultaneously sensed and unforeseeable. We are surrounded by air - the most ephemeral and volatile of materials. Air (1): swarming and penetrating the depths of us - a matter inhabiting us completely. It is through air that light vibrates. Shimmers. It is through air that sound reverberates. Within air dwells a multitude of materials articulated into an infinite combination of forms - provided by the ongoing encounters between a ceaseless stirring of forces. Sound arises in and as these events - of material encountering material. Sound arises from the motion of the material world articulating itself into sonic actualities - it is the world announcing itself as a groaning, stretching, colliding, screeching (2). Sound becomes the vibrational diagram of variously violent connections-disjunctions. It is ephemeral. It comes. It goes.

We are surrounded. We are surrounded by a sound working to orient us. Sound spaces. It spaces out distances and opens up depths. We receive sound by virtue of our particular form of embodiment, manifest with the ear. Sound unites with darkness (3) as it requires no light for its audibility. The ear then, allows us access to a kind of depth of spatial existence that our eyes could never provide. Our ears stretch perception deep into a formless darkness situated beyond the limit of vision's capacities. Our ears plunge us into the depths of space and hook us into an ever-shifting field of sound-matter.

We cannot access the possibilities of the world in its teeming entirety. Our bodies connect with and in turn frame this world by virtue of the limits of our sense organs (4). The body's physical limitations are expanded by the virtual capacities of these organs (eyes, ears, hands, nose, tongue). In turn the world becomes strangely 'organized' (5). As they stretch us out into the material universe they do so only so far. Thus the sensorium within which we dwell is simultaneously made available and inaccessible by the limits of these organs - for beyond the limits of our perceptual-embodiment "everything else remains in obscurity, unperceived and unsignified" (6) making the world "fully accessible by no living being" (7).

a sculpture, emerging

Our sense organs organize the becoming visual-aural-oral-tactile phenomena of the world and this is a process of abstraction - because it is always partial. We experience an exquisite sliver of possibilities that proliferate far beyond. And like the abstracting process of our bodies - as they go about partially fusing with and arranging (abstracting) their environments - Geoff Robinson has fashioned a precise structure that emerges from an associated process of abstraction that extracts and reconfigures sonic and spatial material from two distant, yet now interrelated, milieu. Robinson's work emerges from a cartographic impulse and so becomes a diagram that maps relationships - in turn organising a new situation for experience.

Rendered in construction-based and sonic materials this diagram interposes two expansive fields - Jokulsarlon (Iceland) onto Inwood Hill Park (Manhattan, New York) - by mapping aural singularities from each field, scaling them and plotting them into a plan-and-elevation orientation so as to arrive at a definite spatial-sculptural configuration. This wooden configuration indicates the connection between the two recordings - it staggers them across the entwined wooden structure and in the process a set of interconnected aural-events is fashioned. The vast, almost mythological spaces from which the recordings are extracted (which prior to the existence of this work resided far beyond the scope of our perceptual horizons) are now given form through sculptural means thereby providing us partial access to a sequence of aural fragments belonging to each respective space-time field.

Even as the work functions as a kinaesthetic device indicating the existence of phenomena 'outside' (8) - it is not representational but operational - for it works to produce an entirely new space through the presence of its own sonic, sculptural and architectural particularities. It exceeds the recordings that it supports by opening up another perceptual field. It is a precise staging of a terrain of relationships - abstracted and redistributed, into a new sequence of events.

A third space emerges in the process. This is the space of the specific 'here' - which is produced by the process of the sculpture encountering the 'actual' space presently accommodating its current presentation - a space remade, or made over, by the presence of this resonant sculpture. It opens up other worlds - a world of fragment within a world of echo. A site of and for listening-through-moving splinters into existence. We are lodged deep inside the material universe of this sculpture before becoming reflexive of the fact. It poetically organizes a field of sonic and spatial possibilities and in turn promises to reorganize us through a dynamic process of encounter.

Notes:

1 "...Is not air the whole of our habitation as mortals? Is there a dwelling more vast, more spacious...than that of air? Can man live elsewhere than in air? Neither in earth, nor in fire, nor in water is any habitation possible for him. No other element can for him take the place of place. No other element carries with it - or lets itself be passed through - by light and shadow, voice or silence.

No other element to this extent opening itself - to one who would have not forgotten its nature there is no need for it to open or re-open. No other element is as light, as free, and as much in the...mode of a permanent, available, "there is". IRIGARAY, Luce. (1999) *The Forgetting of Air in Martin Heidegger*, London: The Athlone Press, p. 8

2 Nature is musical, composed of material notes which play their own melody, a melody complicated, augmented, syncopated and transformed through the melodies of the other living and non-living things with which it engages. Music is not just a useful metaphor for understanding relations between living elements, it is a model by which nature can be understood as dynamic polyphony, a playing out of the vibratory structure of life". GROSZ, Elizabeth. (2008) *A Thousand Tiny Architects: Art and the Animal*: paper presented to Department of Architecture, University of Sydney, 2008. p.5

3 Night and Music - the ear, the organ of fear, could have evolved as greatly as it has only in the night and twilight of obscure caves and woods, in accordance with the mode of life of the age of timidity, that is to say the longest human age there ever has been: in bright daylight the ear is less necessary. That is how music acquired the character of an art of night and twilight. NIETZSCHE, Friedrich. (1977) *A Nietzsche Reader*. (Hollingdale, R.J. trans.) London: Penguin Books, p. 158.

4 GROSZ, Elizabeth. (2008) *A Thousand Tiny Architects: Art and the Animal*: paper presented to Department of Architecture, University of Sydney, 2008. p.10

5 *ibid*

6 *ibid*. p.11

7 On first encounter this work appears to be a formal kind of sculpture. It is not! The resultant form was developed through very precise cartographic methods. The form was not arrived at for its own sake but emerged through a kind of 'blind' process. Thus what we are confronted with is the process of form-coming-into-being through a sequence of diagrammatic strategies.

8 In this sense Robinson's work has interesting similarities to Robert Smithson's notion of 'site' and 'non-site'.