

Press Release

After All, Everything Is Different In The End
Sep 25 - Oct 18, 2009
HISK / Higher Institute for Fine Arts

Opening: 25 September 18.00

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Nate Harrison / Jeuno JE Kim / Raimundas Malašauskas /
Joris van de Moortel / Tisha Mukarji / Sarah Pierce /
Thus & Hence / Ultra-red / Katarina Zdjelar /
plus Jean-Luc Godard, Len Lye and Norman McLaren

Curated by Jens Maier-Rothe

THE SOUND OF MY IMAGINATION

Hearing what we want to hear and meaning what we don't want to mean

Synchronicity: a matter of being together, in the end

Synchronicity in social life is a matter of being together and of often failing to accomplish this mode of existence, despite the (rare) opportunity of sharing common cultural codes, space and temporal durations. It questions the ways these various experiences we may have in the same time and space with others can be experiences of the same thing, and be regarded as "same experiences", in the end. For instance, we may adjust in the same space we can share for a while with our lovers, friends, colleagues or neighbors, but we may well live each of us in different economies of time and in the end we may find out we have never really been together at all. In this sense, synchronicity is a matter of producing the same actions at the same time and giving a common meaning to similar experiences. And last, but not least, it is also a temporary event. We can spend time by mere chance next to a traveler in the same plane, and share the duration of the flight in a temporary community, and we may as well lose a lover or life-companion because our meanings of the same experiences we have passed by are divergent, or they have meanwhile become "out of sync".

So, what is at stake here is both a question of language (the process of signification) and a question concerning the aesthetic production of meaning (its perceptual and material conditions of production). Experiencing synchronicity in a critical manner as a specific instant in the process of living together is also to ask what it really means to share common experiences and how can this be possible, in the end.

But is synchronicity meant to suppress or rather to produce difference? Does it only occur at the linguistic level as common meaning, or is it just a matter of the way we experience time? And in the end, is it not difference in relation to the other rather than sameness and identity what defines us as subjects "thrown" in the world we are experiencing in relation to others? What

if synchronicity, just as the regulative idea of a perfect translation or comprehension of the other in Romantic hermeneutics, is nothing but the ideal desiderate of a life grounded in displacements, continuous shifts in perspectives and a commonly shared a-synchronicity? What if synchrony is the vanishing point of a never-ending process of subjectivation?

The aesthetics and ethics of listening

Approached from the point of view of sounds and of their production of meaning, synchrony is, first of all, a matter of aesthetics. And, being a matter of aesthetics, that is, of perceptual experience, it asks the oldest question regarding experience: that of the self, and of the structure and processes of subjectivation. In the narrow and specific sense I employ the term here, aesthetics could thus be defined in a Kantian manner as "the free interplay of senses and imagination", the latter being understood as the faculty responsible for the schematization of meaning inside a given cultural field. In this interplay, hearing prompts to our imagination as well as seeing, smelling or touching.

By temporarily disjointing these formats of perception, what is set forth is the very process of imagination in its structural or formal constituency. From the aesthetic point of view, subjectivity is, therefore, displayed as *poiesis*: the act of creating meaning and thus, creating yourself as subject of language: affecting and being affected by others.

We arrive, therefore, also to the question of the conditions of possibility of subjectivity. How these conditions, which are at the same time culturally embedded in the *a priori* forms of space and time defining our modes of perception, can be challenged by artistic experience? What does it mean to have a critical stance in the aesthetic field?

In this field, artistic experience is meant to open up patterns of experiences which allow us to regard them as significant in different ways. Therefore, what can be exhibited is, first of all, the very process of subjectivation itself. Since this process is embedded in the aesthetic experience and in the linguistic production of signification and power, it calls at the same time for a different ethics and regimes of representation.

Critical listening: the sound of my imagination

Aesthetic experience puts the listener or, generally speaking, the audience, at the very core of the subjectivation process. Every time we are saying "I", we are always placing ourselves at the center of this process: it is the place where we are constantly displaced from by every sound we hear and image we see, fragmentarily recomposing our self out of bits and scraps of

images and sounds we encounter. But an aesthetics of listening claims for a specific critical stance and a peculiar ethics of radical alterity.

Then, if it is not just a new cultural vocabulary meant to only conceal the neo-liberal distribution of power through the cultural devices of subjectivation, "criticality" in this sense might mean reclaiming forms of subjectivity and lines of subjectivation (which is an aesthetic question) and asking about the proper and relevant ones (which is an ethical one). Replacing the privilege of the gaze with the one of listening does not merely replace two regimes of power, but it opens up a specific ethics of dialogue. For instance, the way we are listening to the other opens up the question of the "order of speech" and points to the structure of this mode of representation. We can speak at the same time with the other, or we can impose a different order of speaking by means of pauses, ellipses, times of silence where listening is the producing meaning to our dialogical experience. We can also be interpellated by the other and sometimes we may not hear it or even worse, we may refuse to listen to this call. In all these cases, it is the other that precedes me as a subject.

What we imagine and put up together as being significant language, the meaningful experiences we hear and the visual meaning they are accompanied by, as well as the meanings we project upon them, all these play a part in this process of production of subjectivity at the crossroad of various cultural fields and visual representations.

When paying attention to the experience of synchronicity between listening and gaze and between their corresponding structures of signification, what we can always hear, in the end, is the sound of our own imagination. Therefore, critical listening becomes a way of exposing the formal structures of our perceptual production of meaning, but whose reproduction is no more assured according to the cultural patterns we are accustomed to. How is our imagination itself shaped and by what? What happens when we can no longer reproduce our "own" selves in an economy supposed to assure the circulation and distribution of meaning creating subjectivity capital? What role does the other play in this economy?

To propose an experience of critical listening means at the same time to challenge the (historical) "cultural *a priori*" conditioning our experiences of time and space. It is there that every experience starts as being "the same" and, in the process of cultural mediation, gets different, in the end.

Cristian Nae, Art critic, Iasi, September 2009

HISK / Higher Institute for Fine Arts, Gent, Belgium
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Thursday to Sunday from 14.00 till 18.00

Supported by the Flemish Community in the framework of Curator Curator, a project initiated by Maarten Vanden Eynde and Maaïke Gouwenberg in collaboration with the HISK.