SIGNAL TO NOISE

S/N

S/N

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BOYCE & BAILEY
BUERHAUS
COLEMAN
DE BOER
LA BARBARA
MORRIS
PLACE
REINKE
RHODES
SCRAAATCH
TUPITSYN
ULTRA-RED
USTVOLSKAYA
WANG

S/N

INTRODUCTION

S/N, an abbreviation for signal-to-noise ratio, refers to the balance between a message and the background noise emanating from the materials and environments it traverses. An exhibition of diverse practices including video, sound art, conceptual writing, and music, *S/N* examines the material complexities of sound as a force that both allows and frustrates communication. While the works on view employ various media, they all interrogate the historical and political contexts of audibility: how, where, and when something can be heard.

The exhibition begins with a performance of Piano Sonata no. 6 (1988) by Russian composer Galina Ustvolskaya. Working in Leningrad/St. Petersburg from the 1940s until her death in 2006, Ustvolskaya created works characterized by a striking brutality achieved through demanding, even violent, performances. The score for Piano Sonata no. 6 instructs the performer to hit the instrument especially forcefully, requiring bodily actions that cause the performer physical pain. The harrowing music that results speaks, wordlessly, to life under a repressive power.

Like Ustvolskaya, Tracie Morris aggressively emphasizes the performing body behind the production of sound. In *The Mrs. Gets Her Ass Kicked* (1996), Morris evokes a scene of brutality when she sings fragments from Irving Berlin's "Cheek to Cheek" while slamming her hand against her chest with increasingly forceful strikes. As Morris intentionally breaks her voice into wheezes and growls throughout the song, the words escape in fragments, distorting the song's presumed optimism and romance, evoking a body broken into pieces. Vocalist Joan La Barbara also breaks down the process of performance in *She Is Always Alone* (1979) by switching between virtuosic vocal improvisations and stream-of-consciousness monologue. Her singing is not lyric but abstract, featuring extended vocal techniques such as ululation and multiphonics that contrast sharply with the spoken commentary she inserts throughout the performance.

Both La Barbara and Morris introduce interference into their vocalizations to break down and question the form in which they work. Sonia Boyce and Ain Bailey bring a similar approach to their video *Oh, Adelaide* (2010). In this work, Boyce and Bailey transform archival performance footage of jazz and scat singer Adelaide Hall, creating visual effects that both highlight and obscure Hall as she moves across the stage. The soundtrack, mixed by Bailey, begins with a haunting rhythm that then becomes more aggressive. Hall's characteristic scat singing emerges, but is only briefly audible before the dominant soundtrack reemerges. The work's visual and aural interference point to Hall's legacy as a groundbreaking and influential performer whose contribution to musical history has been largely forgotten.

Boyce and Bailey's use of interference and visual masking resonates with the other film and video works in the exhibition.

Both *Light Reading* (1978) by filmmaker Lis Rhodes and *Love Sounds* (2014–ongoing) by artist and writer Masha Tupitsyn break the coherent synchronization of sound and image, manipulating the audience's experience to underscore relations between looking and listening. These works address concerns raised by feminist and psychoanalytic film theorists like Laura Mulvey and Kaja Silverman. Mulvey, for instance, demonstrates how misogyny operates in the terrain of the visible, showing how the male gaze instrumentalizes female bodies as objects to be looked at. Silverman extends the work of an earlier generation of film critics in her 1988 book *The Acoustic Mirror* in order to reveal how the mode of fantasmatic projection which occurs through female voice-over and narration (at the hands of male directors) contributes to the ideological production of sexual difference through sound.

In the video *The Cybernetic Cop* (2015), Jackie Wang matches her own voice with appropriated footage from Paul Verhoeven's 1987 film *RoboCop* to create a narrative that interrogates the technological underpinnings of the police state. The work opens with Wang's story about a toy modeled on the cyborg RoboCop that addresses its young owners with a list of phrases, speaking to them as if they were already criminals. This seemingly playful childhood toy evokes a foundational moment when, addressed by the law, the listener identifies him or herself as under its command.

The experience of being addressed by the law constitutes a dramatic illustration of the power differential that often exists between speaker and listener. In *Last Words* (2014–ongoing), the recorded voice of poet-lawyer Vanessa Place reads aloud the last statements of every inmate executed by the state of Texas since 1982. The immediate experience of *Last Words* may position the audience as listeners, receiving a message from an individual speaker, but the troubling and complex power dynamics which animate the work far exceed a simple speaker/listener binary. The specters of other individuals and institutions, including the executed prisoners and the state that both recorded their words and took their lives, intercede between the speaker's recorded voice and listeners in the gallery.

The complexities of the listening experience are taken up, in a different register, by the collective Ultra-red. The group employs protocols for organized listening to mine aural experience for its subversive possibilities. The protocols urge participants to approach listening as an active practice and foreground speaking as a mutual process, one that requires the act of listening to activate its true potential. While Ultra-red emphasizes sound and audibility, the ultimate goal of the protocols is to privilege the intersubjective dimensions of experience, using the complexities that characterize our position as listeners to build collective understanding.

Taking a cue from Ultra-red and other artists in the exhibition, *S/N* invites its audience to consider their own position as listeners. Approaching sound as we experience it in the world, the exhibition considers sound as a crucial component of a broader material landscape. Reverberating through the bodies and materials of this landscape, sound is a physical force that can make communication possible even as it rattles against meaning. As a vehicle for speech, sound carries the voice of the law but also serves as the means for subversive language. Examining sound as both a vector for power and a possible tool of subversion, *S/N* moves from language into noise and back again in order to explore the limits and possibilities of the audible.

CALL AND RESPONSE

BLAIR MURPHY

Previous: Ultra-red, *What Is the Sound of Freedom?* 2012. Workshop, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, May 5, 2012.

While speaking is often associated with authority, knowledge, and certainty, listening is frequently assumed to be disengaged, inactive, even subservient. Even an attentive listener—described as receptive, engrossed, or absorbed—is imagined as an emptiness to be filled or a substance to be consumed. In some cases, the vulnerability of listeners is turned against them, as in the use of extended exposure to loud music as a form of torture or the deployment of sound cannons to disperse protesters.[1] While listeners are rarely so powerless, the power dynamic that clings to the roles of speaker and spoken-to is revealed more subtly in the recent popularization of the portmanteau *mansplaining*.[2] The term—and its brethren *whitesplaining*, *straightsplaining*, and *cisplaining*, among others—calls out the frequency with which members of privileged groups claim the authority of language and speech even when the topic at hand is removed from their own area of expertise.

But listening is not, or not only, passive. Listening—and the more obviously fraught condition of being spoken to—involves action, even though this action may not always be visible or audible. The listener absorbs, but also processes and, in all likelihood, speaks back. The artworks in *S/N* invite active listening, complicating the audience's experience of the gallery, a space where vision is typically prioritized above other senses. While most of the works in the exhibition involve a visual component, they all utilize sound in a way that invites the audience to shift its focus away from the visual and toward an engagement with the aural as a crucial register of human experience.

The process by which the listener is spoken to, or hailed, provides a foundational experience for many accounts of subject development. Louis Althusser uses the vocal call of the police officer—"Hey, you there!"—as the most basic example of the ideological hailing that, he argues, interpellates individuals as subjects.[3] In this foundational scene, an individual is hailed from behind by the force of law, understands that the call is directed at him, and turns to respond. In the moment of turning, the individual identifies himself as the addressee of the call; his understanding of himself as a responsible subject is founded on and inextricable from recognition by an external authority. In turn, the subject's own self-awareness develops by recognizing a power outside himself. Similarly, in Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, the call "Look, a Negro!"—shouted by a white French boy to his mother upon seeing the Martiniquais author in Paris—represents the moment when the colonized is fixed as Other by the gaze of the colonizer.[4] The fact that the subject relies on an external, sometimes oppressive, power for its beginning and continued social existence (in Fanon's case, French society has positioned him as a racially other, colonized subject) poses a challenge for political discourses that attempt

1. The tactic of blasting prisoners with loud music has been documented at U.S. military prisons in Iraq and Guantanamo Bay. See Clive Stafford Smith, "Welcome to 'the Disco,'" *Guardian*, June 18, 2008, http://www.theguardian.com/world/2008/jun/19/usa.guantanamo; and Suzanne G. Cusick and Branden W. Joseph, "Across an Invisible Line: A Conversation about Music and Torture," *Grey Room* 42, Winter 2011, 6–21, http://www.mitpressjournals.org/doi/pdf/10.1162/GREY_a_00024. On police use of sound cannons, see Matthew Weaver, "G20 Protesters Blasted by Sonic Cannon," *Guardian*, September 25, 2009, http://www.theguardian.com/world/blog/2009/sep/25/sonic-cannon-g20-pittsburgh; and W.J. Hennigan, "Police Are All Ears When It Comes to Sound Cannons," *Los Angeles Times*, December 2, 2011, http://articles.latimes.com/2011/dec/02/business/la-fi-sound-cannon-20111202.

2. Although Rebecca Solnit's 2008 essay "Men Who Explain Things" preceded the term *mansplaining*, the essay is often credited with originating the term. See Rebecca Solnit, "Men Who Explain Things," *Los Angeles Times*, April 13, 2008, http://articles.latimes.com/2008/apr/13/opinion/op-solnit13; and Lily Rothman, "A Cultural History of Mansplaining," *The Atlantic*, November 1, 2012, http://www.theatlantic.com/sexes/archive/2012/11/a-cultural-history-of-mansplaining/264380/.

3. Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127–186.

4. Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove Press, 1967), 93.

to alter those existing systems of power (such as the liberation movements that sought to end colonialism).

Tackling this seeming impasse, Judith Butler argues that the subject must be thought as both the effect of power and as the "condition of possibility for a radically conditioned agency."[5] For Butler, although the subject is inaugurated through power, the subject also emerges, through this founding, as a site where power can be reiterated and thus altered. Power persists through reiteration, through repetitions that are carried out by the very subjects inaugurated by power. In this reiteration Butler locates both the continuation of power and the possibility for agency.

Language plays a crucial role in Butler's account of subject formation and agency. According to Butler, the subject is "the linguistic occasion for the individual to achieve and reproduce intelligibility."[6] The power that conditions the subject is expressed through language, especially through social categories that make the subject legible to others while signifying "subordination and existence at once."[7] By arguing that subjects may alter, through reiteration, structures of power, Butler suggests certain ways of approaching language. In her analysis of hate speech, Butler draws on the subversive potential of reiteration to argue that when hateful pejoratives name their subject, they might, paradoxically, give their target a "certain possibility for social existence," thus exceeding the harmful intent of the one who flings the derogatory name.[8] "If to be addressed is to be interpellated," she writes, "then the offensive call runs the risk of inaugurating a subject in speech who comes to use language to counter the offensive call."[9] It might be possible, Butler suggests, to locate a repetition that "confounds rather than consolidates" the "injurious efficacy" of the original slur.[10] In one such instance, groups targeted by a slur may sometimes appropriate that word as a positive term—a common, if sometimes controversial, phenomenon. One can imagine, for example, an alternative version of Fanon's example of "Negro" being yelled out on the street as a greeting between friends. Butler's analysis attempts both to take seriously the harm caused by derogatory language and to locate possibilities for agency, complicating the position of the subject who is addressed with such language.

Butler's theoretical formulation broadens the foundational tableaus presented by Althusser and Fanon, suggesting ways in which a subject addressed by a dominant discourse or law might locate agency in the discourses through which they are addressed. While this address is not solely a matter of listening (subjects may be addressed by written text, for example), the listener serves as a figure for the addressee in all three formulations. By locating agency in the experience of the addressee, Butler shows the complex power dynamic that shapes the positions of listener and speaker, suggesting ways to reimagine listening as a site of potential agency.

5. Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1997), 10.

6. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 11.

7. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 20.

8. Judith Butler, *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative* (New York: Routledge, 1997), 10.

9. Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 2.

10. Butler, *Excitable Speech*, 20.

The collective Ultra-red has spent the last several years using listening to produce social solidarity through dialogue and as a tool for collective reflection, analysis, and action. The group has developed protocols for organized listening that balance open attentiveness and intentional commitment, leaving space for both consensus and dissonance, in order to accommodate complex, multivalent subjectivities—what they term "listening in tension."[11] Their practice rethinks listening as an active, rather than passive, exercise that cultivates intersubjectivity and collective identity.

While Ultra-red carries out workshops and individual events as part of exhibitions and other programs, the group's primary use of the listening protocols has come as a part of long-term engagement with various community and activist groups. *Vogue'ology*, a collaboration between Ultra-red and the Ballroom Archive and Oral History Project, is one long-term project in which the listening protocols operate both in the collaborative practice of making the work and the presentation of the project to the public. In Ultra-red's description of the fieldwork with which *Vogue'ology* began, listening played an important role during the initial research stages when the investigation team met to define its own priorities, investments, commitments, and goals. Listening sessions were then used during initial conversations with community members and occurred again when the oral histories that composed a large portion of the project were presented to the community during a listening session. Finally, listening also constituted an important part of the public reception of *Vogue'ology*, which included listening sessions with the public as part of the presentation of the project in two different exhibitions.[12] In some instances, the listening protocols are used as part of a long-term project to build existing relationships and

Hector Xtravaganza follows the listening protocols in the Ultra-red exhibition *Vogue'ology: Ballroom Archive & Oral History Project*, Arnold and Sheila Aronson Galleries, Parsons The New School for Design, New York, November 18, 2010. Photograph by Gerard H. Gaskin. Courtesy Ultra-red

11. Ultra-red, *Five Protocols for Organized Listening with Variations* (n.p.: Ultra-red, 2012), 2.

12. Ultra-red, *Five Protocols*, 13.

clarify goals; in other occurrences, they build dialogue between members of the public who have come together for a one-time event. In both situations, the protocols provide a structure that, ideally, creates a foundation for shared experience and mutual exchange.

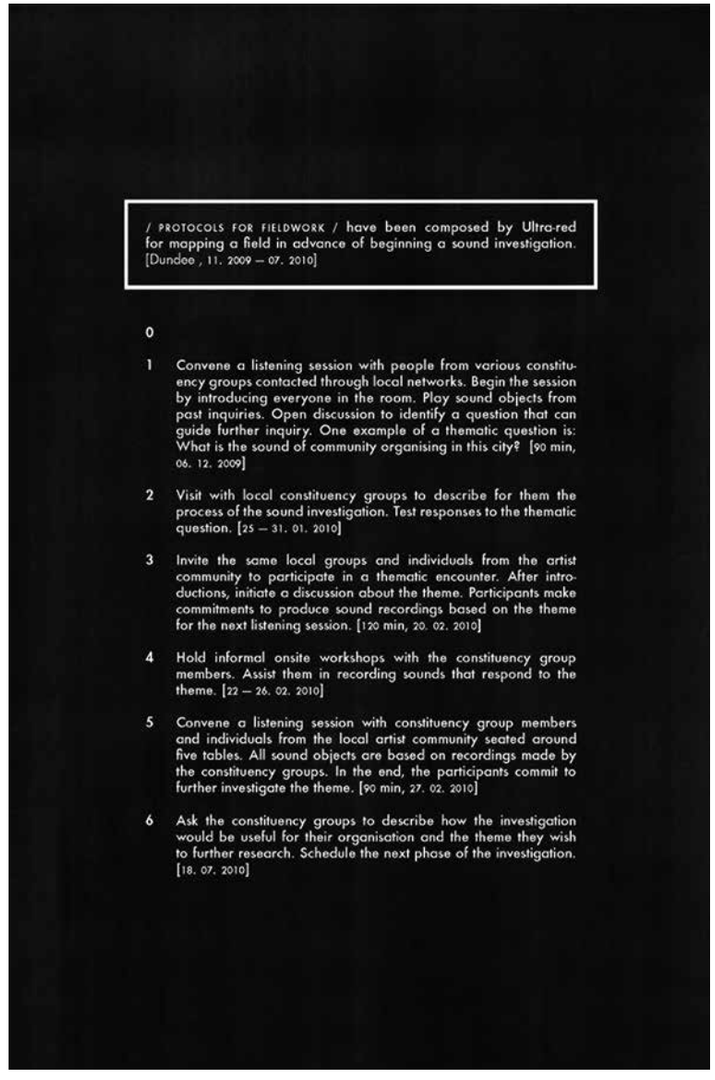
This notion of collective listening as a mutually shared exchange thus works against the unequal distribution of power between speaker and hearer that characterizes the accounts of subject formation discussed above. In many descriptions of the development of subjectivity, subjects are formed, in part, by being named and spoken to by a power outside themselves. Collective listening, in contrast, seeks a more reciprocal relation between speakers and listeners. In this regard, Ultra-red has been influenced by the work of Susan Bickford, a political scientist who holds that listening is a crucial component of democracy. For Bickford, democratic listening requires participants who alternate between listener and speaker. Highlighting the complementary nature of speaking and listening, Bickford argues that democracy and civic participation require "an active willingness to construct certain relations of attention, relations in which neither of us has meaning without the other."[13]

Even if Bickford's formulation may seem utopian, Ultra-red attempts to create a structured environment within which to carry out these idealized exchanges. That the group refers to the listening practices as "protocols" partly shows how structured interactions are crucial to Ultra-red's methods. They invite participants into a very particular space, thinking through the details of the environment, the way ideas are presented, and the staging of the individual interactions that take place. While one might imagine that a highly structured environment could decrease the likelihood of an open exchange, their experience suggests the opposite, that the very possibility for this moment of identification, understanding, and exchange is enabled by the implementation of certain codified structures. The possibility of equal exchange is dependent on bringing participants into a structure that constructs them, from the outset, as participants rather than passive listeners.

In contrast to Ultra-red's use of shared listening as a means of cultivating collectivity and dialogue, mass entertainment often functions as a one-way channel of communication. As one of the dominant shared experiences of twenty-first-century life, mass culture shapes even the most intimate aspects of human experience. If our identities as subjects are formed through recognition, through identification with the exterior world, then cultural artifacts—film, television, books, and other mass media—feed off of that process. As Butler argues, the norms and categories transmitted to us by the outside world provide "a recognizable and enduring social existence."[14] The alternative

13. Susan Bickford, *The Dissonance of Democracy: Listening, Conflict, and Citizenship* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1996), 147.

14. Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power*, 20.



Ultra-red, *Protocols for a Listening Session*, 2009–11. Laserjet print on paper, 23 ½ x 16 ½ in. (59.7 x 41.9 cm). Los Angeles variation, annotation by Walt Senterfitt. Courtesy the artists

to embracing, or at least navigating, these norms and categories is a total lack of social existence. Nonetheless, mass culture is not received only passively. Audiences certainly respond to and produce counter-readings of texts, a phenomenon that has become more visible with the rise of online fan communities, entertainment forums, and content-sharing sites.

Altering the normal viewing experience of cinema, Masha Tupitsyn's twenty-four-hour sound montage *Love Sounds* (2014–ongoing) opens up a space for popular counter-readings of movies. By archiving the contradictory yet durable ideologies of love transmitted through popular culture, Tupitsyn's work highlights an ambivalence about romantic love. While popular film might be expected to present an optimistic perspective

Masha Tupitsyn, *Love Sounds*, 2014– . Digital video, black-and-white, sound; 24 hours. Courtesy the artist

on romantic relationships, the audio collected in *Love Sounds* vacillates drastically between ecstasy and cynicism and despair. The voices emanating from *Love Sounds* are desperate, angry, dictatorial, anxious, melancholic, sarcastic, or apologetic. They rarely sound happy. If the viewer/listener of popular film is interpellated as a romantic or sexual subject through these cultural texts, they are hardly the joyful advertisement for the pleasures of love that one might expect.

By excluding the visual register that is often the primary experience of film, *Love Sounds* destabilizes its audience. Without the visual cues to discern setting, time period, or other details, listeners attend to aural cues, becoming hyperaware of the textures, intonations, and nuances of voices and background noises. Denied a visual connection to the material and without a continuous narrative thread, the audience alters its habitual modes of experiencing cinema. For an audience accustomed to visual absorption, approaching cinematic material as a listener requires heightened attention. Simply hearing *Love Sounds* isn't enough—it requires listening, a state of active attention that walks a line between absorption and distance. As in Ultra-red's listening protocols, *Love Sounds* positions listeners as absorbed but critical participants, engaged in an activity that requires active attention but provides space for a critical distance that counters the ideological absorption usually experienced by cinematic audiences.

The role of the listener is also freighted with ambivalence in Vanessa Place's *Last Words* (2014–ongoing), an audio recording of the artist reading the last words of each inmate executed by the state of Texas since 1982. Place's recitation of the statements is straightforward, even deadpan. The weighty emotion of the text is clear from its content but absent from Place's recitation. This lack, registered as emotional distance, acts as a reminder of the drastically different social position held by the speaker in comparison with the prisoners whose words she repeats. Although the recitation of another's words, and their final words no less, might seem to act as the most straightforward form of speaking for another, Place's measured recitation strongly discourages the idea that her own voice is standing in for the voiceless. There is a distance that seemingly cannot be bridged.

Place's own distance from the material also calls into question the relationship the listener has both with the artist and with the deceased individuals whose words she speaks. With their references to God and love, to close family and friends, to cellmates and even guards, these statements, though apparently made for public consumption, seem to speak to a specific audience. Yet, as a ritualistic step in the process of state-sponsored executions, the last words are also addressed to the general public, to the members of the social body

ostensibly represented by the government that carries out these death sentences.

If listening is not a passive act, but rather one that contributes to the individual's formation as a subject, how does *Last Words* interpellate its listeners? The work might evoke discomfort from listeners who are disturbed by the prospect of eavesdropping on the dead. Listeners will also draw on their own histories with and opinions about America's criminal justice system, including their perspective on the death penalty. Place's performance of the text provides little emotional guidance for responding to these words.

Because Place's piece covers such a long period of time, it raises the possibility that one or more of the executed may have been innocent. The guilt of several individuals whose statements are included in the project has, since their convictions and subsequent executions, been seriously questioned.[15] Regardless, many of the individuals documented in *Last Words* did, in fact, commit the acts for which Texas has put them to death. By reciting the statements one after another, Place makes no distinctions that might comfortably separate the innocent or unfairly prosecuted from the guilty. Their guilt or innocence is not the question here; their commonality is that society has chosen, in the most explicit and bureaucratic means at its disposal, to take their lives. The very state that is about to put them to death also provides the platform from which each may make a final statement.

Prisoners are given the opportunity to make a final statement in the moments before they are executed. Those last words are documented and made publicly available on the website of the Texas Department of Criminal Justice, where they are attached to information about the individual's criminal record and the crime for which they were convicted.[16] Having taken their lives, the state now claims their words, drawing a direct line between the state's power over life and its power over language.

Individuals who are going to be executed are not required to say last words and some choose not to. To represent those individuals who chose not to provide a statement before their execution, Place leaves five seconds of silence. Highlighting the silence of those individuals—their decision to refuse to speak—evokes Butler's analysis of subjecthood, language, and social existence. How are we to interpret the speech of, or the refusal to speak by, those who have been denied existence by the state and, by extension, society at large?

It may be tempting to see the silence of those who refuse to speak as the passive acceptance of the state's verdict about them, as indicative of listeners who have properly heard and internalized its judgment. But their silence could also be seen as an active refusal to recognize the call of an authoritative

15. For specific examples of individuals executed in Texas whose guilt has been called into question, see Maurice Possley, "Fresh Doubts over a Texas Execution," *The Washington Post*, August 3, 2014, http://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/national/2014/08/03/fresh-doubts-over-a-texas-execution/; Andrew Cohen, "Yes, America, We Have Executed an Innocent Man," *The Atlantic*, May 14, 2012, http://www.theatlantic.com/national/archive/2012/05/yes-america-we-have-executed-an-innocent-man/257106/; and Lise Olsen, "Did Texas Execute an Innocent Man?" *Houston Chronicle*, November 20, 2005, http://www.chron.com/news/houston-texas/article/Did-Texas-execute-an-innocent-man-1559704.php.

16. "Executed Offenders," Texas Department of Criminal Justice, last modified February 5, 2015, http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/death_row/dr_executed_offenders.html.

voice that identifies them as culpable individuals who deserve to be put to death. Returning to the potential for listening to be an active mode of engagement also explored by Ultra-red and suggested by Tupitsyn's *Love Sounds*, how might the listener's experience of *Last Words* exceed the meanings dictated by the strictures of the state? While audience members may attempt to position themselves as merely passive listeners placed outside the context from which the piece emerges, their existing relationship to the law, the state, and society suggests that they are already implicated in the scene both as listeners and as subjects. By inviting its audience to attend to the aural, *S/N* seeks out a more complex relation between speaker and listener, sound and audience. While habitual and unexamined practices of hearing may reiterate existing structures of power and ways of being in the world, the transformative potential of a deeply but critically engaged form of listening opens up new possibilities for subjectivity.

SENTENCED WORDS

ANYA KOMAR

Lis Rhodes, *Light Reading*, 1978. 16mm film, black-and-white, sound; 20 min. Courtesy Lis Rhodes and LUX, London

"Language enters life through concrete utterances (which manifest language) and life enters language through concrete utterances as well," writes Mikhail Bakhtin.[1] This pairing of language and life in speech suggests that the history of society and the history of language are interrelated. For Bakhtin, an utterance does not constitute a unit of language; rather, the utterance is permeated with "dialogic" elements that include the extralinguistic conditions of both speaker and recipient such as context, affects, and social, political, cultural, and economic histories. While language is a system of repeatable, normative forms, speech and utterances are *chronotopic*: they are shaped by and enact the social relations between speaking subjects belonging to particular milieu at a specific moment in time.[2] Utterances take place within a social interaction and carry the contexts of previous articulations, evaluations, and codifications within them. Because any semiological system is a system of values, the specific historical social formations in which utterances are embedded necessarily privilege particular interests over others, thus perpetuating ideology. As Valentin Vološinov points out, "The word is the ideological phenomenon par excellence."[3] For Vološinov, "We never say or hear *words*, we see and hear what is true or false, good or bad, important or unimportant, pleasant, unpleasant, and so on."[4] When uttered, linguistic forms are imbued with judgments and interpretations conditioned by ideological context.

The works of James Coleman and Lis Rhodes reveal the mechanisms of language and call into question the role language plays in subject formation. In his "work for theater" *Ignotum per Ignotius* (1982–84), Coleman intersperses pre-recorded harmonium music with the utterances of two actors who perform controlled, choreographed movements.[5] A narrative unfolds around a mysterious death presented in parallel to mythical, allegorical actions and stylized dance and gestures. A female actor and a male actor perform multiple roles: a detective investigating a possible murder, a suspect, a lawyer, a priest, relatives interested in an inheritance, and a corpse. Coleman uses theater within a broader conceptual art practice and deliberately differentiates his "works for theater" from both performance art and conventional dramaturgy. His engagement with theater furthers his earlier investigations of representation, illusionism, and the dialectic of the real and the staged but also allows him to reflect on the operations of language.

Ignotum per Ignotius elucidates the relation between script and live performance typical of theater: even when the script remains the same at the time of the performance as when it was first published or rehearsed, its text forms a "new link in the historical chain of speech communication" whenever it is uttered and thus anchored in a given time and space.[6] As in many of his

1. Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Problem of Speech Genres," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 63.

2. Mikhail Bakhtin, "Forms of Time and of the Chronotope in the Novel," in *The Dialogical Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981), 84.

3. V.N. Vološinov, "The Study of Ideologies and Philosophy of Language," in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik (New York: Seminar Press, 1973), 13.

4. V.N. Vološinov, "Language, Speech, and Utterance," in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 70.

5. *Ignotum per Ignotius* was first performed by Roger Doyle and Olwen Fouéré of Operating Theatre at the Shaffy Theater, Amsterdam. The music was written by the Operating Theatre band.

6. Mikhail Bakhtin, "The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis," in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, 106.

works, in *Ignotum per Ignotius* Coleman forms his narrative plots around familiar tropes: the detective story or popular romance, for instance. The speech and actions of the actors are also sourced or recognizable phrases, such as "Nothing ventured, nothing gained." However, Coleman uses the elements of ordinary narratives for extraordinary ends. Many aspects of the work evoke the weight of the past and are a strong demonstration of the way ideology reverberates through language. The central thematic element of *Ignotum per Ignotius*—the inheritance or heirloom—also points to history, memory, and the influence of the past in the present. As one actor chants: "In arrested . . . past . . . telepathic . . . history." The subtle use of clichés in *Ignotum per Ignotius* also brings out the connection between every speech act and the utterances that precede it. That is, an individual act of speech is not self-sufficient but is permeated by heteroglossic forces—other utterances reverberate through each enunciation. Theater, in which a preexisting script comes into life when uttered, can serve as a literal demonstration of Bakhtin's account of language and life.

Similar to the way that Coleman's work points to the logic of the semiotic chain and the extralinguistic context that frames every speech act, Lis Rhodes's *Light Reading* (1978) attempts to break the continuity of the ideological chain and investigates the role of the dialogic in signification. This essay film opens with a black screen accompanied by the artist's voice delivering a nonlinear narration, followed by repeated and fractured images of a bloodstained bed that suggests a crime scene. Since the same voice narrates the entire film, it could be considered a monologue. However, as Vološinov, argues, the notion of a monological utterance is an abstraction.[7] All listening and understanding are a response to a speaker. And because speakers are oriented toward such a reaction, anticipating it, any apparently monological utterance is inherently responsive. Rhodes stages this by being the only speaker but presenting what appears to be an inner dialogue, which can be understood as a multivocality of suppressed meanings or silenced enunciations. Like Coleman, Rhodes takes this allusion to the dialogic further by incorporating quotations. For instance, her central reference is Gertrude Stein's essay "Forensics," a text that investigates how dominant discourse is formed by an asymmetry between genders and how power relations are inscribed in grammar and syntax.[8]

The inflexibility of the recited, whispered, or sung words in *Ignotum per Ignotius*, as in all theater, points to the limitations and oppressiveness of language and its rules. As the voice in *Light Reading* narrates, "The scene of her dream is disturbed by the present of her past not past, the past that holds her with fingers turned on logic, nails hardened with rationality." In this sense, both works demonstrate how power is inscribed in language when it is performed, whether uttered, read, or written. (All of these

7. V.N. Vološinov, "Language, Speech, and Utterance," in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, 72.

8. Lis Rhodes interviewed by Maria Walsh, "Structural Slips," *Art Monthly* 354, March 2012, 2.

operations are staged in *Light Reading*.) As Roland Barthes writes:

> Once uttered, even in the subject's deepest privacy, speechenters the service of power. In speech, inevitably, two categories appear: the authority of assertion, the gregariousness of repetition. On the one hand, speech is immediately assertive: negation, doubt, possibility, the suspension of judgment require special mechanisms which are themselves caught up in a play of linguistic masks; what linguists call modality is only the supplement of speech by which I try, as through petition, to sway its implacable power of verification. On the other hand, the signs composing speech exist only insofar as they are recognized, i.e., insofar as they are repeated. The sign is a follower, gregarious; in each sign sleeps that monster: a stereotype. I can speak only by picking up what loiters around in speech."[9]

Yet by disrupting the chronological flow of the narrative, *Ignotum per Ignotius* and *Light Reading* question the linear sequences that dominate texts. Coleman's engagement with the inherent repetitiousness of theater and the use of clichés and quotations in both works bring to the fore the dialogic nature of language—how past utterances are conditioned by present ones. Employing restaged memory and recitation, they evoke the dominance of the past over the present but attempt to undermine its logic of cause and effect. As Rhodes narrates in *Light Reading*, "the end began where the beginning ended." As one of the actors in *Ignotum per Ignotius* repeats several times: "Let's return to the present. Let's return to the present." And both works begin with an end: a mysterious death.

9. Roland Barthes, "Inaugural Lecture, Collège de France," in *A Barthes Reader* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 461.

Lis Rhodes, *Light Reading*, 1978. 16mm film, black-and-white, sound; 20 min. Courtesy Lis Rhodes and LUX, London

Paying attention to the act of enunciation also reveals not only how voices are shaped by previous utterances but also how voices reshape those utterances. The sonic materiality of the voice lies outside of, or underneath, the linguistic message, but also plays an important role in making meaning. Mladen Dolar points out that when linguistics treats the voice as a mere phonic support of language that does not belong to linguistic categories, it overlooks the vocal yet extralinguistic aspects of signification.[10] For instance, intonation connects the utterance to its extraverbal context by showing how speakers feel about the semantic content of their utterances. Sonic qualities of the voice like accent, pitch, timbre, cadence, and inflection contribute to meaning. Because these manifestations of the voice codify racial, gendered, and classed identities, the process of enunciation serves as a locus of subjectivity. It matters that many utterances in *Ignotum per Ignotius* are sung, including the mournful closing of the piece:

> Dreams a shadow
> Lacrymosa
> Infants scowl
> Lacrymosa

When chanted, the abstruseness of the verse brings the physicality of the voice to the forefront, thereby dismantling the subordination of the "mere" means of the utterance (the voice) to the linguistic signifier (the words). In a 1983 performance at the Teatro-Estúdio do CITAC, in Coimbra, Portugal, much of the text in *Ignotum per Ignotius* was sung by an actor who was an opera singer. Singing in opera is an extreme example of the voice flourishing at the expense of the text. The words become less intelligible when sung, but at the same time their

10. Mladen Dolar, *A Voice and Nothing More* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2006), 17.

Lis Rhodes, *Light Reading*, 1978. 16mm film, black-and-white, sound; 20 min. Courtesy Lis Rhodes and LUX, London

melody and texture contribute signification which cannot be expressed verbally. The texture of enunciation contributed by sonic materiality recalls what Barthes defined as the *geno-song* or "the *diction* of the language":

> The *geno-song* is the singing and the speaking voice, the space where significations germinate "from within language and in its very materiality"; it forms a signifying play having nothing to do with communication, representation (of feelings), expression; it is that apex (or that depth) of production where the melody really works at the language—not at what it says, but the voluptuousness of its sounds-signifiers.[11]

Light Reading similarly stresses the materiality of the voice while resisting the subjectivity produced by voice. In the beginning of the film, the darkness of the screen evokes the zero degree of visual representation, which is also a refusal of a visible female character. The narrator's voice intones, "She would be present in darkness, she would be placed in darkness, only to be apparent, to appear without image, to be heard, unseen." In contrast with the usual role as a mute object of the gaze assigned to women by conventional visual culture, here the black screen directs the audience to listen to, instead of look at, the female protagonist. Again, the elusive meaning of the words draws the listener's attention to the materiality of the voice. Yet the fast pace, repetitiveness, flatness, and monotony of the voice in *Light Reading* make it sound declarative and lacking texture. Not only does the narrator refuse to be the conventional object of visual aesthetic pleasure, she also repudiates aural seduction by the voice. The monotonous voice also resists gendered stereotypes reproduced through the material qualities of the voice. By focusing on the feminine subject and the representation of women, *Light Reading* asks, as Rhodes narrates, "whose voice is heard, whose image is used by whom, and whose meanings are meant?"[12] In other words, *Light Reading* shows the role of ideology in the interrelated processes of making meaning and constructing subjects.

As soon as the narration in *Light Reading* ends, a sequence of photographic stills follows in silence. This sequence incorporates Rhodes's earlier work *Amanuensis* (1973), in which she dismantles the graphic representation of language with cut, fragmented, and superimposed letters that become illegible and ungraspable. Rhodes used as source material a typewriter tape perforated with letters of preexisting text, the movements of which she printed onto film. The title of the piece alludes to writing or typing text that is dictated, turning aural speech into graphic text. The term also evokes gendered connotations and the subordination of the stereotypically female secretary who types dictation.

11. Roland Barthes, "The Grain of the Voice," in *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991), 270 (emphasis in original).

12. "Lis Rhodes in Conversation with Anna Gritz," February 17, 2012, website of the Institute of Contemporary Arts, London, https://www.ica.org.uk/blog/lis-rhodes-conversation-anna-gritz.

In addition to this hierarchy of authority, *amanuensis* may also be a reference to the subordination of graphic text to aural speech, which Jacques Derrida has called phonocentrism.[13] To this end, the dispersed letters, like the project of Futurist poetry, are liberated from strict linearity and echo the multidirectional nature of sound. As the narrator of *Light Reading* says, "The words dance in a moment of light, regale to the sound of her voice, rigged to the rhythm of her body. And now she wrote, and now." The images of letters alternate with the photograph of what appears to be a crime scene. By repeating, cutting, cropping, and manipulating this image as well as the image of her reflection in a mirror, and interspersing these photographs with the torrent of letters, Rhodes suggests parallel constructions of meaning in both visual and textual representation. The photograph, which can be broken into smaller parts, functions like a set of linguistic signs that can be reduced to elementary units like letters. She disrupts and distorts the denotation and connotation of both the photographic and linguistic signs. By multiplying the image, creating grids out of it, and magnifying its details—a procedure that echoes scientific uses of photography by Eadweard Muybridge and Étienne-Jules Marey—Rhodes contests the conventional view of photography as a pure denotation of reality. Scrutinizing the image does not help to decipher it or to discover the truth.

Like Rhodes's earlier structuralist films, *Light Reading* materially disrupts synchronized sound and image. In this way the film resembles *Ignotum per Ignotius,* which destabilizes the continuity between a voice and the movements of the actors, whose abrupt gestures do not relate to the narrative flow. In Coleman's work, the recited and sung utterances of the actors, sometimes belonging to absent sources, do not match up with the actions and physical presence of the performers. This tactic recalls the use in his earlier works of voice-over narration with slide projections. By subverting the relation between utterances and visual representation, both Rhodes and Coleman attempt to disrupt the fixation of meaning in particular identities. The actors or protagonists cannot be understood as unified subjects. In addition to the estrangement effect produced by disjoining speech, action, and narrative, in *Ignotum per Ignotius* the two actors continually shift roles and subject positions, alternating between a detective, a suspect, a priest, relatives, and a corpse. At the end of the piece the female actor abruptly stops performing a finger dance, which was representing an actual dance earlier in the work, and inscribes on the wall the phrase "A message is found." She appears to be not in control of her action. While she writes, while the script is becoming language, the actor lying down on the stage, apparently playing the corpse, is resuscitated and rises to erase her words. The inscription is cancelled while it is being written. The resurrection of the dead demonstrates another

13. See Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, corr. ed., trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997).

relation between the past and the present. While the female actor is writing, her hand becomes stained with wax and seems to disappear into the text, to become indivisible from it; the hands of the other actor are also covered with the wax of inscription. The actors then rub their hands and touch each other's faces so that the wax appears as a kind of mask. This stages a metaphoric connection between the body, the language it produces, and the subjectivities formed through language. After this transfer of the inscription to their faces, they attempt to remove it. Since the face is the most common and distinct representation of one's self and identity, their attempt to remove the mark of inscription from their faces may be seen as a cancellation of the process of subjectivation, which operates through language. Similarly, the resurrection that erases the inscription suggests a refusal to enter into language and, because individuals become subjects through language, to become a subject.

Rhodes's work also stages a process of desubjectivation. The narrator slips away from being a fixed subject; "she" is spoken of in third person and in first person and both singular and plural: "I," "she," "they." The representation of this person occurs not through the image but in language, although her text does not always obey the rules of that language. She refuses, in Barthes's words, to subjugate and be subjugated by language: "To speak, and, with even greater reason, to utter a discourse is not, as is too often repeated, to communicate; it is to subjugate: the whole language is a generalized *rection*."[14] By refusing the constraints and rules of the language, Rhodes refuses to be fixed by it.

The disruptions at work in both pieces prevent the viewer

14. Barthes, "Inaugural Lecture," 460 (emphasis in original).

James Coleman, *Ignotum per Ignotius*, 1982–84. Work for theater, performed by Isabel Carlos and Rui Orfão, Teatro-Estúdio do CITAC, Coimbra, Portugal, 1983. Courtesy James Coleman and Marian Goodman Gallery. © James Coleman

from identifying with any single actor or protagonist. This also allows the viewer not to be contained by discursive structure.

> She saw that she was both the subject and object,
> she was seen and she saw, she was seen as object,
> she was her subject, for what she saw as subject was
> modified by how she was seen as object, she objected,
> she refused to be framed . . . She watched herself being
> looked at, she looked at herself being watched, but
> she could not perceive herself as the subject of the
> sentence as it was written, as it was read. The context
> to find her is the object of the explanation.

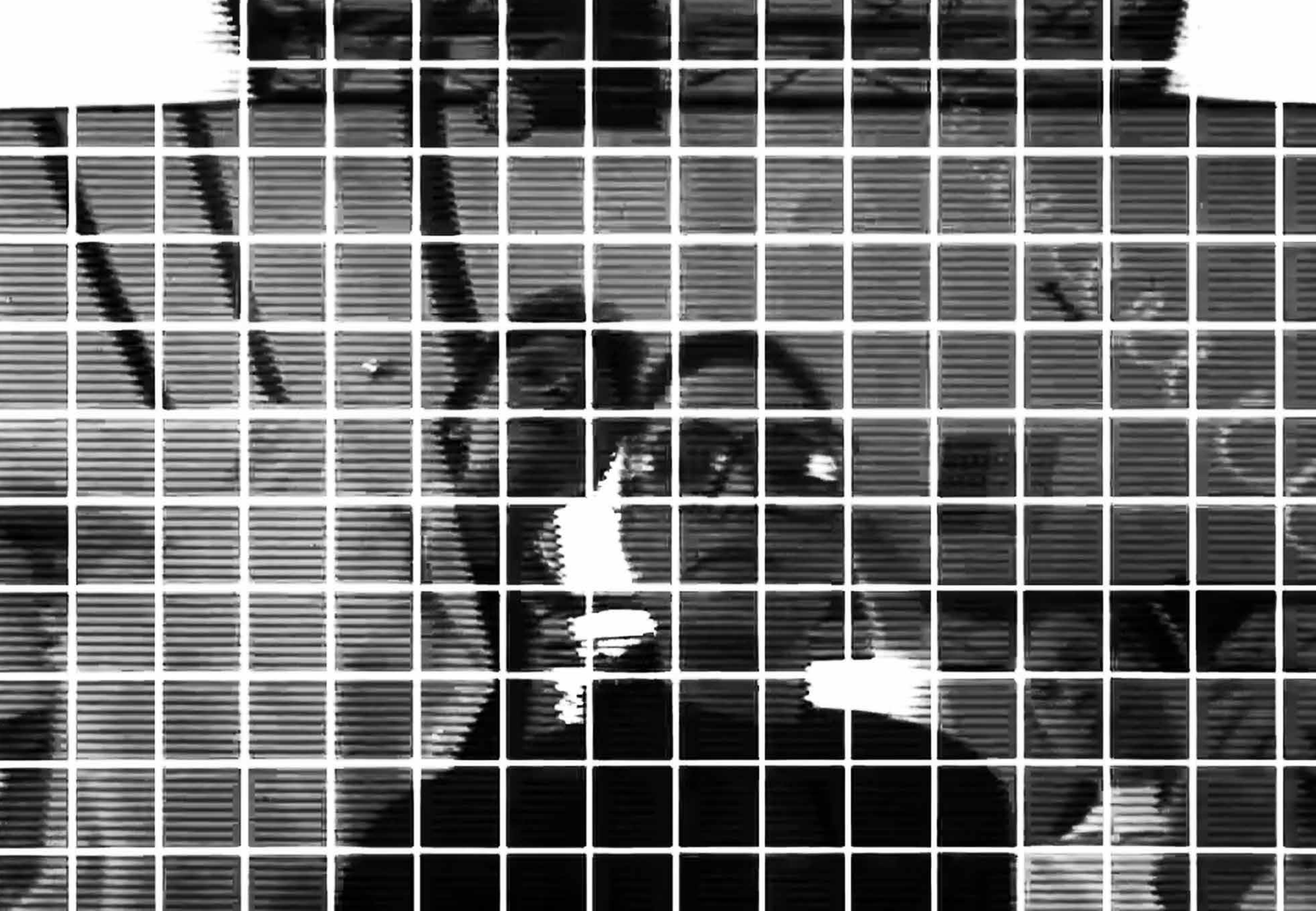
Attempting to overcome the duality of subject and object, the narrator of *Light Reading* constructs an individual agency outside dominant cultural codes, specifically outside the visual codes of (masculine) agency in looking and the (feminine) object of the gaze. Coleman's work also destabilizes the boundaries between subject and object by constantly disrupting determinate references to plot and character and by "pausing" the actors' poses. When static, the actors resemble tableaux vivants and they take on the status of objects, recalling Coleman's slide projection works. By staging desubjectivation and fragmenting visual and linguistic signifiers, both artists elucidate and elude domination by the past while renewing discourse and agency.

Rhodes's and Coleman's work not only alludes to memory as representation of the past; the mysterious deaths around which the crime narratives in both works turn also suggest an eschatological theme and may be a metaphor for the incapacity of language to produce closed, unified meaning. The lyrical resurrection of a dead body in *Ignotum per Ignotius* can function as a metaphor for memory and history, and by erasing the message as soon as it appears, the work intimates that no meaning produced by memory or history can be fixed. The Latin phrase *ignotum per ignotius*, which refers to an argument that explains the unknown by reference to a greater unknown, suggests that a single, internally coherent meaning cannot be achieved through representation. Using polysemic words in different contexts, Rhodes similarly shifts their meanings, showing how their sense emerges relationally through language: "She lightens her own reading, she reads by light of herself. Could she not mind for herself? Could she not change her mind?" The uncertainty of meaning—suggested, for instance, in the sung text of *Ignotum per Ignotius* or the images of the bedroom in *Light Reading*—reveals that meaning is constructed dialogically, within a chronotopic context. However, this inherent indeterminacy of meaning is obscured by ideology, which instrumentalizes language to fix identities and meanings.

Taking crime scenes and the unknown as their subject matter, both Coleman and Rhodes point to the ways language and other forms of representation condition and determine the perception of phenomena and the judgments that follow. The interpretation of the will and the inheritance of the deceased in *Ignotum per Ignotius* demonstrates how the indeterminacy of meaning in language can be abused in order to pursue one's interests at the expense of others (in this case, to obtain the possessions of the demised). Both works reveal that a comprehensive, universal representation of the real is impossible—they repudiate the idea "that it is possible to attribute to the sign traits that are positive, fixed, ahistoric, acorporeal."[15] They attempt to subvert the claims to truth of instrumentalized representations of reality by fragmenting language and introducing incongruities into ideologically constituted semiotic chains. Revealing the nature of discursive formations, both *Ignotum per Ignotius* and *Light Reading* suggest that the crime is committed in the sentence—according to Rhodes's narration, "words already sentenced, imprisoned in meaning."

In addition to pointing to crimes internal to language, both works also point at crimes that precede the utterance, and at the way those crimes are adjudicated or interpreted. Coleman and Rhodes show that dominant power formations (such as the law or gender) can appear to fix indeterminate or unstable meanings through language. In order to rearticulate or reconfigure these interpretations, both artists attempt to create new systems of signification, partly by presenting aporias within existing discursive structures. By loosening some meanings and fixing others, the works aim to go beyond established interpretations of history and its subjects.

15. Barthes, "Inaugural Lecture," 473.



ATMOSPHERE, SIGNALS

ALEX FLEMING

In 2001, cyberfeminist, transgender theorist, and pioneering sound engineer Allucquére Rosanne "Sandy" Stone was asked to present at "ID/entity," a conference at MIT exploring the topic of identity and communications technology.[1] In preparation for the event, Stone decided to present her paper in the manner of a hoax. Instead of delivering the lecture she had submitted, she decided to present a cut-up talk made from the other papers presented at the conference. Stone then hired an actress to perform her on stage, while she sat in the audience at the back of the auditorium. As her double read from the podium, Stone began to cause a great deal of commotion by singing, talking loudly, and disturbing those around her in the audience. Eventually a security officer removed Stone, believing her to be an intruder in her own lecture, and thus the hoax was complete.[2]

Stone's hoax incisively performs a signature aspect of her broader theoretical project: an analysis of the ways identity and bodily presence are disrupted and reconfigured through our repeated interactions with technology. In her book *The War of Desire and Technology*, Stone explores the decoupling of self and body at stake in the digital age.[3] In this work Stone highlights how technological prostheses extend the self and body into virtual and real spaces simultaneously—and often separately—thereby changing notions of embodiment and identity formation. For Stone, these altered processes of subject formation confound conventional understandings of identity and refigure social relations. The self formed around these prostheses extends itself into a material-informational world in which the boundaries between self and thing are inextricably entangled.

S/N is an inquiry into sound and voice as they traverse our cultural environment. Much of the sound in the exhibition includes human voices moving in spaces and disconnected from their original bodily source. In the late 1940s and 1950s the French composer and artist Pierre Schaeffer, considered the central figure in *musique concrète* (literally "concrete music," which includes radio, nonmusical sound, and collage), pioneered the idea of "acousmatic sound," or sound divorced from its point of origin.[4] Schaeffer argued that the experience of acousmatic sound grounds the listener's perception in sound alone. The listener attends to the "sonorous object," a sensory event considered in relation only to other sounds.[5] However, the majority of the works in this exhibition can also be explained by Michel Chion's account of sound in media, in which recorded sound is animated by its dynamic interplay with other phenomena. Chion anchors his account in the ways image and sound interact in cinema, using the opposition between acousmatic sound and visualized sound to explain the distinction between off-screen and on-screen space.[6] Similarly,

1. "ID/entity," October 10, 2001, MIT, http://identity.media.mit.edu/.

2. Allucquére Rosanne Stone, conversation with the author, February 14, 2014.

3. Allucquère Rosanne Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology at the Close of the Mechanical Age* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1995).

4. Pierre Schaeffer, "Acousmatics," in *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*, ed. Christoph Cox and Daniel Warner (New York: Continuum, 2004), 76–81.

5. Schaeffer, "Acousmatics," 79.

6. Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*, ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), esp. 71–83.

Previous: Jackie Wang, *The Cybernetic Cop*, 2015. Digital video, color, sound; 7:33 min. Courtesy the artist

many of the works in the exhibition explore the interplay between sound and space.

Voice and audibility can create a spatial field that relies on but is not limited to sound itself. These spaces are not unitary but diverse and topographically complex, and they contain several points of entry and escape. Much of the work in the exhibition is preoccupied with sound's capacity to resist capture. While many works are anchored in the human voice, these works locate a speaking subject that presents itself *diffusely*, whether by disrupting the unitary voice or by tactics of ventriloquism that evade attempts at fixing the body behind the voice.

The work of three poets in the exhibition—Tracie Morris, Vanessa Place, and Jackie Wang—demonstrates the capacity of sound to define and construct spaces, as well as to stretch and contort our experience of presence. Place's installation *Last Words* (2014–ongoing) deals with presence, absence, and proximity. The work takes the form of a recording of the artist reading the last statements of all the inmates executed in Texas since 1982. The reading covers 521 executions to date and is updated every six months, when the artist records all of the statements associated with recent executions. For each inmate who declined to give a final statement before being executed, Place includes several seconds of silence. These audio recordings are then installed in empty rooms and played across multiple channels.

The architecture of empty space in which *Last Words* is installed creates a space of resonant absence. The frequent periods of silence further underscore this absence. Because this voice is acousmatic—it is not locatable as coming from a person in actual space—the voice overwhelms and saturates the space. This saturation increases the psychological and emotional demands of the work, creating an environment of quiet intensity. Not only strongly affective but also associative, the work reproduces historical connections between recorded speech and contact with the dead.[7] Through *Last Words*, listeners are forced to engage with absence, in particular the absent and invisible corporeality of the prisoner. It is the prisoners, even more than the speaker, who remain in our minds, bodiless.

Place's work often appropriates materials with macabre associations that are mined from the internet. For *Last Words*, Place's text is directly appropriated from a frequently updated website maintained by the Texas Department of Corrections that makes public the details of prisoners who are executed in that state.[8] The installation is a re-enactment of the prisoner's statements, translated from online information back into speech. The arresting effect of presence and absence in *Last Words* is also achieved by pointing to the jarring disconnect between life lived inside and outside prisons. The installation highlights

7. See, for example, Joe Banks, "Rorschach Audio: Ghost Voices and Perceptual Creativity," *Leonardo Music Journal* 11, December 2001, 77–83.

8. "Executed Offenders," Texas Department of Criminal Justice, last modified February 5, 2015, http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/death_row/dr_executed_offenders.html.

the degree to which incarceration, like the acousmatic voice in *Last Words,* is seemingly everywhere yet invisible. As much as the executed inmate is dematerialized in Place's installation, this immaterial or ambient presence is affecting and contrasts strongly with the somewhat dehumanizing online archive from which it was drawn. Place's voice is captured in a recording that is smooth and near, producing a sound that is analogous to close talking. Her tone, often cold and distanced in other works, though serious here, is sonorous and empathetic.

Place's work frequently appropriates legal and administrative texts unaltered from their original contexts. These texts are often violent or disturbing and in print Place's act of re-contextualization is cold and direct. However, in her live performances Place often introduces purposeful distractions into the space of the reading to expand and complicate the site of reception. Intriguingly, though these staged distractions tempt the viewer away from focusing on Place's performance, they have the odd effect of bringing the audience somehow closer to the content of her reading.

At a reading of *Tragodía* held in 2011 at CAGE, an alternative space on the Lower East Side of Manhattan, Place performed alongside a large-screen television playing a popular James Franco film at the same volume as her voice. The resulting polyphonic mash-up was dynamic yet beguiling, with lilting music from certain romantic scenes giving a perverse and disquieting sonic backdrop to her descriptions of violent sexual assault. Placing further demands on the attention of the audience, the poet put almost all of the chairs meant for the audience in front of the television screen and positioned herself pointed away from the screen, addressing only three chairs.

"Death Row Information," Texas Department of Criminal Justice website, March 7, 2015, http://www.tdcj.state.tx.us/death_row/.

At the same reading, Place used an elongated extension cord to connect her microphone to an amplifier located in the back of the performance space, near the drinks and refreshments. Because of this decentralized placement, the sound was amplified but its source was hidden. Listeners could look at her body, but heard her voice from far away. If an audience member, perhaps overwhelmed by the audible content, attempted to walk away, she instead came closer and closer to the poet's voice. To document the reading, Place positioned a video camera immediately behind her, taping the audience. Pointed at the audience, the camera reminded viewers of their own frustrated and divided act of looking. Yet paired with Place's reading of depositions, the camera also seemed to suggest dispassionate observation, even surveillance, which echoed the content and administrative tone of Place's text.

Place's use of polyphonic layering, cacophony, and distraction creates a tense and animated environment in which the audience must actively decide for themselves how to attend to the work. The artist plays with sonic proximity, redistributing the bodily presence of the poet and her voice. This voice and its simultaneous framing by opposing poles of attention and distraction suggest an identity rendered in space. Like Stone's MIT prank, this identity also functions as a space, as a kind of ecology or environment. The disorientation that follows speaks to sound's capacity to deeply affect environments and bodies, in terms of both the imposition of sound on the ear (and thus mind) and the physical manifestation of sound in space as waves of vibrating force moving through the air. In *Senses of Vibration,* Shelley Trower writes about how low bass sounds exemplify the material and physical impact of sound.[9] Situating her introduction to the book in her experiences of nightclubs packed with high-power speakers and subwoofers, Trower highlights the physical sensations of pleasure and pain associated most closely with low frequencies. These sounds primarily affect the listener through strong, palpable vibrations felt in the torso and chest, vibrations that recall the material and spatial—the atmospheric—aspects of all sound.

The sound poet and conceptual writer Tracie Morris registers the deeply affecting, bodily intensities enacted by sound. Morris often appropriates materials to produce her poetic works. Yet Morris enacts a disruption through voice in a very different way than does Place. Using iconic songs drawn from the twentieth-century, Morris uses acrobatic vocal interpretations to open the crevices and breaks *between* utterances, giving voice to aesthetic and sonic reverberations which ordinary communication and speech hide from perception. Morris's sonic dissections show how, when communicating through everyday language, we often ignore or push beyond the ways in which voices cleave, break, hum, ring, click, or literally move air. Morris's performed poetic

9. Shelley Trower, *Senses of Vibration: A History of the Pleasure and Pain of Sound* (New York: Continuum, 2012).

"improvisations" on these songs break apart their smooth surface to unhinge the sounds from the words that they convey. These formal abstractions point to meanings difficult to put into words, meanings that, like the poet's voice, are amorphous and shape shifting.

The Mrs. Gets Her Ass Kicked (1996) highlights how the medium of communication—the material that bears meaning but is also fundamentally alien to it—involves noise or static that obstructs, swallows, or antagonizes the meaning it conveys. In *The Mrs.*, Morris employs techniques of interruption in speech, voice, and sound to investigate the materiality of the human body from which the voice emanates. A charged vocal deconstruction of Irving Berlin's 1935 classic "Cheek to Cheek," Morris sings fragments from the song ("Heaven, I'm in heaven") as she beats a clapping rhythm against her chest, sounding the words in a resonant yet distorted manner. As the performance continues, both Morris and the song seem to break down into pieces. By the middle of the poem Morris begins to half-scream, wheeze, and choke the words, all the while keeping the haunting rhythm against her chest. The physical location of the Mrs. who "gets her ass kicked" becomes more and more diffuse and difficult to locate. The dislocation of the body being described, acted upon, or both, presents the Mrs. as exterior to the performer (Morris sometimes introduces the poem with derisive statements about Peggy Lee, who covered the song) and within the performer (the physical beating against her own chest, coupled with the still legible first-person perspective of the poem that states "I can barely

Tracie Morris, *Poetry Will Be Made By All*, 2014. Documentation of performance, Zurich, Switzerland, February 16, 2014. Photograph by Robert Huber

speak"). As the tones emanate from Morris's vibrating body, a cloudlike formation of sound emerges and listeners are lead to wonder where the limits of the body inscribed within the piece lie: whose cheek against whose?

Morris's performance does not merely point to the violence lurking beneath the song's plucky sensibility—it actively *de*forms that sensibility. The material texture of Morris's voice simultaneously delivers the text, disrupts it, and interrogates it; her voice is an instrument that resists the gliding smoothness of the song's tone. This instrument comes under attack from within, from both the vaporous quality of her utterances and the forceful pounding of her fist against her chest. In this sense Morris's work evokes the brutal piano compositions of Galina Ustvolskaya. Ustvolskaya, a twentieth-century Russian composer who lived a kind of creative exile in the era of Socialist Realism, created compositions in which the piano is played *espressivissimo* ("as expressively as possible"), with instructions to slam and strike the performer's body against the instrument itself. Ustvolskaya's piano sonatas tear at the instrument and player simultaneously. Yet the physical pain undergirding both Morris and Ustvolskaya's projects also exemplifies the ability of sound to exert force beyond the body from which it originates, to be projected into other spaces and materials.

In a performance of another work called *Mahalia Theremin*, Morris combines what she calls the "speculative futurism" of Léon Theremin with the "concrete futurism" of gospel singer and civil-rights activist Mahalia Jackson.[10] Morris reprises Jackson's performance of the early-nineteenth-century slave spiritual "Joshua" while vocally imitating the warped reverberations of the theremin, an early electronic instrument invented by its namesake. Jackson's futurism existed in an immediate future envisioned through the civil rights movement, while the theremin was popularized in 1950s science-fiction films that invoke a dystopian future staged as cinematic soundscape. Morris's compression of gospel singer and musical instrument points to the conflation of human actor and tool, recalling the instrumentalization of slavery, the collapse of person and thing, at the heart of slave spirituals.

Poet, prison abolitionist, and scholar Jackie Wang also uses poetry and performance to reflect on posthumanism and African-American identity. Wang's essay/sound-poem "The Cybernetic Cop" (2014), presented on video in the exhibition, reflects on a talking toy she shared with her brother as a child.[11] Set to a soundtrack of futuristic sounds and drum-machine beats and paired with a mash-up of cinematic clips from the 1987 film *RoboCop*, the piece depicts a dystopian view of the future of policing. Drawing on her childhood memories, she recalls the voice of the RoboCop character. When triggered, the toy's mechanical voice would intone one of three messages: "Drugs are trouble,"

10. Tracie Morris, *Mahalia Theremin*, reading at the Kelly Writers House, University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, November 14, 2013, available online at http://media.sas.upenn.edu/pennsound/authors/Morris/11-14-13/Morris-Tracie_17_Mahalia-Theremin_KWH-UPenn_11-14-13.mp3. The comments on futurism occur during her introductory remarks. An excerpt of a 2014 performance of *Mahalia Theremin* at 89Plus, Zurich, Switzerland, is also online at https://vimeo.com/101142641.

11. See also Jackie Wang, "The Cybernetic Cop," performed at Semiotext(e) Fortieth Anniversary, MoMA PS1, Long Island City, New York, November 17, 2014, available online at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRaK4IVNbnU. Wang takes the stage two hours and forty-four minutes into the video. The title of my essay is also drawn from "The Cybernetic Cop."

"Drop it!" and "Your move, creep." Wang examines how, as children holding the toy, she and her brother came to occupy the role of criminals in response to its call.[12] Wang states, "We were the creeps of 'Your move, creep' [. . .] this toy RoboCop seemed to be saying 'everyone is a potential enemy.'" In discussing RoboCop's voice, Wang connects the speech of the toy to Althusserian models of interpellation, in which the call of a police officer simultaneously inaugurates both the subjecthood and the guilt of the one who is called.[13] In so doing, Wang's text calls attention to the role of ideologically weighted notions of control and obedience in the formation of subjectivity, in this case acted out through a "certain idea of the police that circulates as a public fact."

For Wang, contemporary practices of policing create a technologically mediated ideology and environment of *potential* guilt. In "Against Innocence," Wang argues that "A liberal politics of recognition can only reproduce a guilt-innocence schematization that fails to grapple with the fact that there is an *a priori* association of Blackness with guilt (criminality)."[14] Concerned with the operations of coercive state power and racism, Wang compares the figure of RoboCop to statistically based crime-management tools developed to work with data-mining and database-mapping systems, such as the New York City Police Department's CompStat, since adopted by many other cities.[15] In the unpublished essay "This Is a Story about Nerds and Cops," Wang explores the recent history and evolution of PredPol, a leading provider of "predictive policing software."[16] These software programs use proprietary algorithms based on statistical data about past crimes to predict where and when future crimes might take place. In the essay, Wang claims "PredPol is remaking and rearranging the space through which we move."[17] Wang indicates that the algorithmic space depicted on the screen of PredPol, which highlights with red square boxes places it predicts are the likely crime scenes for the day, literally transforms the space in which living bodies traffic. Not only do the algorithms change how police interact with that space—by sending extra patrols to the area or being increasingly suspicious toward even innocents who find themselves there—but those algorithms are also hidden from public knowledge and scrutiny. PredPol can be understood as another emblem for the digital age, one in which the policeman's speech or call becomes hyperextended, producing a regime of criminal suspicion and a space of paranoia and *yet-to-be-realized* guilt.

Wang's work is deeply political, with clearly concrete stakes. Yet her performed poems also employ lyric ambiguity and a cultivated formal language. In a way similar to Place and Stone, Wang creates mediated, hybrid readings that open multiple channels of communication. The inclusion of audio adds a musicality that often makes Wang's speech uncanny.

12. Much of Wang's research and writing about techno-policing, prison abolition, and police corruption is motivated by the incarceration of her brother, who has been serving a life sentence since he was seventeen.

13. See Louis Althusser, "Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses," in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays*, trans. Ben Brewster (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1971), 127–186. In the film, the character is a police officer killed in the line of duty who has been revived as a cyborg, with his body nearly entirely replaced by a metallic robot skeleton. With his helmet on, only part of his lower face remains unshielded and visible. RoboCop's mouth and, by extension, his speech are the most human elements left of his transfigured body. Wang is concerned less with the robotic male body—however much that body represents a cinematic fantasy of state violence—than with the ideological force materialized in his automated voice, marketed in the form of children's toys.

14. Jackie Wang, "Against Innocence: Race, Gender, and the Politics of Safety," *LIES: A Journal of Materialist Feminism* 1, 2012, 148, available online at http://liesjournal.net/download/.

15. On CompStat, see the University of Maryland Institute for Governmental Service and Research, "What Is CompStat?" http://www.compstat.umd.edu/what_is_cs.php.

16. See the PredPol website at http://www.predpol.com/.

17. Jackie Wang, "This Is a Story about Nerds and Cops," unpublished manuscript.

Insurgent, high-pitched tones and heavy bass beats emerge and disappear, giving the piece a strange momentum. Like Place's appropriation of the James Franco film, Wang's use of film footage from *RoboCop* also introduces remediated material from Hollywood into her reading. But in contrast with Place, Wang uses the video component not to create the effect of a distracted cacophony but rather to aggressively focus and ground the audience in the text she is reading. The visually jarring scenes she chooses to include—human and cyborg police sending endless bullets into RoboCop's metallic shell—create a directed visual encounter that intensifies the listener's attention and increases the work's psychological weight.

In the introduction to *The War of Desire and Technology*, Stone shares an anecdote about sneaking into a Stephen Hawking lecture at the University of California, Santa Cruz, in the 1980s.[18] She first arrived outside the auditorium, on a large lawn where many audience members had gathered to listen to the lecture over loudspeakers. Attempting to get closer to the lecturer, Stone snuck into the auditorium to see the man himself. Yet the closer she got, the more frustrated she became because all of his assistive devices, including his well known computer-generated voice, prevented her from locating Hawking himself in any conventional way. Eventually, Stone recognized that Hawking's presence made manifestly visible mediating technologies required to generate and extend his physical capacities, technologies that are often disavowed or ignored by abled bodies. She asks, "Where *does* he stop? Where are his edges?"[19] In much the same way that Place experiments with the amplification of her voice and forms of public address to create a tense and provocative environment for the audience, Stone here identifies the tendency of communication technologies to stimulate and yet fragment our perception of the body. In both cases, the live presentation of a text often conflated with its writer's voice—and by extension, that writer's body—is extended beyond the locus of the body and opened up to encompass other spaces. Like Hawking's presentation, Stone and the artists in *S/N* explore the interaction between body and self, and self and thing, in relation to the politics of audibility. In the process, identities are stretched across different technological media, displacing and fragmenting our connection to the source of speech and, more broadly, the felt dynamics of bodily presence and proximity.

Stone's prank, her account of Hawking, and her theoretical work at large open up politically charged questions about our technologically mediated experiences of bodily presence and proximity. Stone's presence as a trans woman at MIT plays a role in her stunt, where her own forcible removal forms an integral component of the task of "representing" herself in an invited talk, a task that she both enacts and refuses. As transgender

18. Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology*, 4–5.

19. Stone, *The War of Desire and Technology*, 5 (emphasis in original).

politics becomes an increasingly visible site of political struggle, there is a broader and more widespread understanding of the horrific violence transphobia enacts on the lives of trans people. Similarly, Place, Morris, and Wang take up themes of biopolitics and the coercive regimes which manage life and death in neoliberal society. Their topics range from state violence to domestic violence and they raise questions about the way power is unequally distributed along the lines of sex, gender, and race. And against a certain mythos associated with the internet, where virtual space is conflated with unfettered access and free circulation, these works ask what is at stake in the simultaneous production of spaces or zones of forcible closure, dislocation, violence, and slow death from which audibility has been removed. They also point to the dead spaces in which audibility is blocked, from which we cannot hear. By attempting to problematize our reliance on the field of the visual to examine contemporary political spaces, these works emphasize the importance of the audible as a register in which power is articulated.

IGNOTUM PER IGNOTIUS 1982–84

JAMES COLEMAN

PERFORMED WORK FOR THEATER

Performed by Olwen Fouéré and Roger Doyle. Shaffy Theater, Amsterdam, 1982. Courtesy James Coleman and Marian Goodman Gallery. © James Coleman

The following text is a review of the performance at the Shaffy Theater, Amsterdam, by Jean Fisher, originally published as "James Coleman and Operating Theatre," Art Monthly *61, November 1982, 11–13.*

Ignotum per Ignotius is a short dramatic work with musical score whose plot centres on an enigma. It extends James Coleman's association with the actress Olwen Fouéré and the actor-composer Roger Doyle, which began with the artist's video installation, *So Different . . . and Yet*, and includes his performed work *Now and Then*. *Ignotum per Ignotius*, however, written and directed by Coleman for Fouéré and Doyle's company, Operating Theatre, represents a more integrated collaboration in terms of the players' participation in its inauguration and its presentation as theatre.

Coleman's move into theatre seems, with hindsight, to be a natural development given his involvement with the language and meaning of social roles and gestures expressed through narrative devices, and particularly his emphasis on the 'dramatised recitation,' presented as either a pre-recorded narration, as in the early *Slide Piece* (recently shown at the Tate Gallery), or performed live as in *Now and Then*. The central importance of narration in his work lies in its versatile function as a relay, which allows the 'presentness' of his visual imagery to move in and out of socio-historical reference points or a plane of phantasy. In all Coleman's 'texts,' however, there are displacements, which fracture the orthodox codes of the visual medium, disturbing its usual role as a transparent 'screen' through which 'reality' is perceived by the viewer. *Ignotum per Ignotius*, likewise, although technically a drama, presents a deliberate play on reality and artifice, which, unlike traditional narrative, reveals rather than resolves enigmas and juxtaposes 'real' with 'mythic' time. Consequently, it does not abide by the rules of theatrical language either in terms of its narrative structure or acting conventions. The nearest theatrical equivalent may be the mediaeval mystery play.

The work opens with the pre-recorded sound of Doyle's composition for harmonium, and an empty stage with a simple white backdrop, suggesting perhaps a church or funeral parlour. The two players—the man with a whitened face and dressed in a black suit, the woman with a silvered right arm and wearing a sleeveless black dress—walk onstage carrying the only props, a tape-recorder and a microphone. Following preliminary moves, which suggest a coming-to-life, they indicate—or rather warn us—that what we are about to witness is not a straightforward piece of illusionism: "Anyone wearing binoculars is looking for trouble." This discourse between the play as an illusion and the performance as a reality continues through a number of visual

devices: controlled, choreographed movements which, together with the shifts in lighting, define psychological and sculptural space; actions which draw attention to the operation of the sound equipment; and abrupt body gestures which occur out of context with the narrational flow, indicating an order of meaning that lies elsewhere, perhaps in memory. The economical script, a combination of realism, plainsong and inscrutable metaphors, acts in counterpoint to Doyle's score, whose shifts in mood evoke the funereal, the heroic, the hymnal, and the nostalgic waltz of the fairground.

On a 'realistic' plane, the scenario revolves around a funeral to which a number of characters have gathered. They go over the mystery of the death and seek to apportion guilt. The two players move in and out of various roles: a detective investigating the possibility of murder, the butler who is a suspect, the family solicitor and relations who are primarily interested in the inheritance, and the corpse itself. Parallel to this is a plane of myth, or allegory, expressed partly as ritualised actions and recitative. The central pivot of the work is a silent dance duet of stylised moves and gestures which functions as a metaphor of love and passion. This is repeated later in miniature (as if now a memory of a lost feeling) by Fouéré's improvised and spot-lit 'finger dance' using the silvered arm, whose 'otherness' eventually pulls her (as if outside her control) into a violent spin back to the present. The suggestion of betrayal, resurrection, and the lament which closes the piece, are articulated through several temporal and psychological moves—memory and regret, phantasy and guilt, the present and the real—and refer us to the universal elements of the hero myth. Thus, the narrative plot—the investigation of a mysterious death—may be redrawn, in abstract terms, as a search for unified meaning in a world of unresolvable contradictions. The 'death,' therefore, becomes a metaphor for the dissolution, or alienation of, the self from its self through its absorption into, and rationalisation by, the language and institutions of culture.

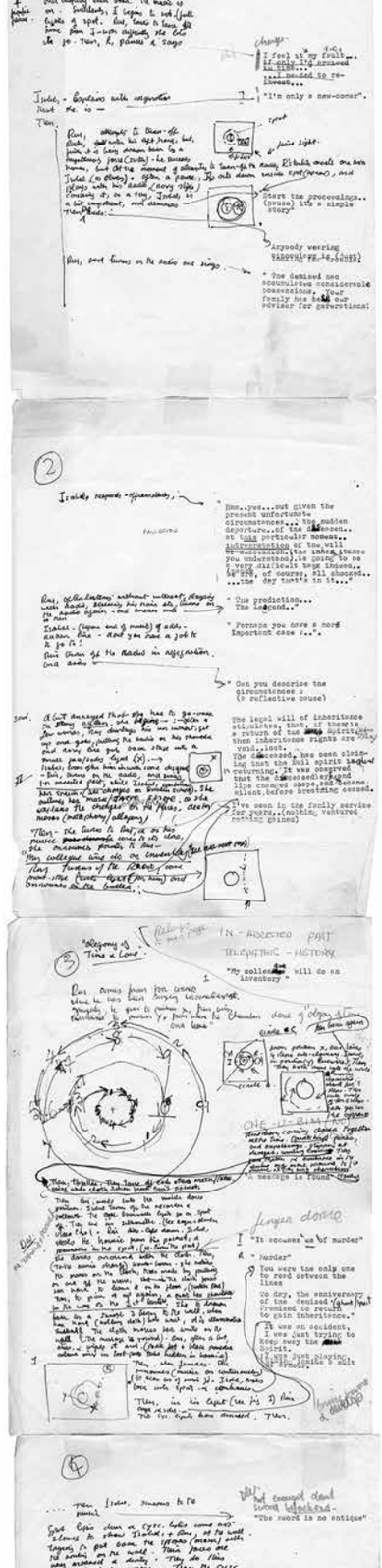
Lévi-Strauss identified both art and myth as attempts to create a view of the world that seems whole. The fundamental contradiction in the patriarchal order of things, and whose 'resolution' is the primary function of the hero myth, is reputedly the conflict between nature and culture: man's attempt to achieve transcendence from 'base' nature through a disavowal of his material origin of birth in favour of an abstract construction, a superhuman being. The rules and institutions, the very language and rituals of society, are constructions that support this paternal hypothesis and establish man's sense of identity, but the consequence is a disjunction between reality and artifice, the real and the phantasy.

This issue is central to Coleman's work, and one which he has explored in various ways through the image of the cultural hero:

in *Kojak and Zamora*, the displacement of reality into phantasy embodied in the fictional media hero; in *Box (ahhareturnabout)*, the psychological conflict between the public and private images of a sporting hero; and in *Strongbow*, the ambivalent historical relationship between a conqueror and an alien people. *Ignotum per Ignotius* returns to the issue as an ironic commentary on the deadening effects of social institutions and rituals which are predicated on an essential absurdity: the explanation of human contradictions in terms of an abstraction, a 'higher authority,' which is itself even more unknowable. Coleman's work seems to invert the meaning of the traditional hero myth by unpicking the sutures in language that present the world as a seamless unity. The result is a 'text' of over-determined signs and 'absences,' as elliptical as the thoughts and images of dream and reverie, and likewise saturated with 'sense' but resistant to rational interpretation. That is, the meaning of the work seems to be experienced and constituted in the space between its immediate perception and conscious thought, rather than in consciousness itself, where it refuses to satisfy a logical need to form 'wholeness.' The final irony is that the rationale for the existence of this text is precisely what *Ignotum per Ignotius* reveals as a less-than-divine madness: an attempted explanation of the inexplicable.

Detail of contact print.
Olwen Fouéré and Roger Doyle.
Shaffy Theater, Amsterdam,
1982. Courtesy James Coleman
and Marian Goodman Gallery.
© James Coleman

Olwen Fouéré and Roger Doyle. Shaffy Theater, Amsterdam, 1982. Courtesy James Coleman and Marian Goodman Gallery. © James Coleman



This page and following pages: Rehearsal notes. Performed in Portuguese by Isabel Carlos and Rui Orfão, Teatro-Estúdio do CITAC, Coimbra, Portugal, 1983.

Pages 56–57: Isabel Carlos on stage. Teatro-Estúdio do CITAC, Coimbra, Portugal, 1983.

Page 58: Performed by Isabel Carlos and Rui Orfão, Teatro-Estúdio do CITAC, Coimbra, Portugal, 1983.

Courtesy James Coleman and Marian Goodman Gallery. © James Coleman

[Belongs to over page]

"alegory of Time & Love":

(3)

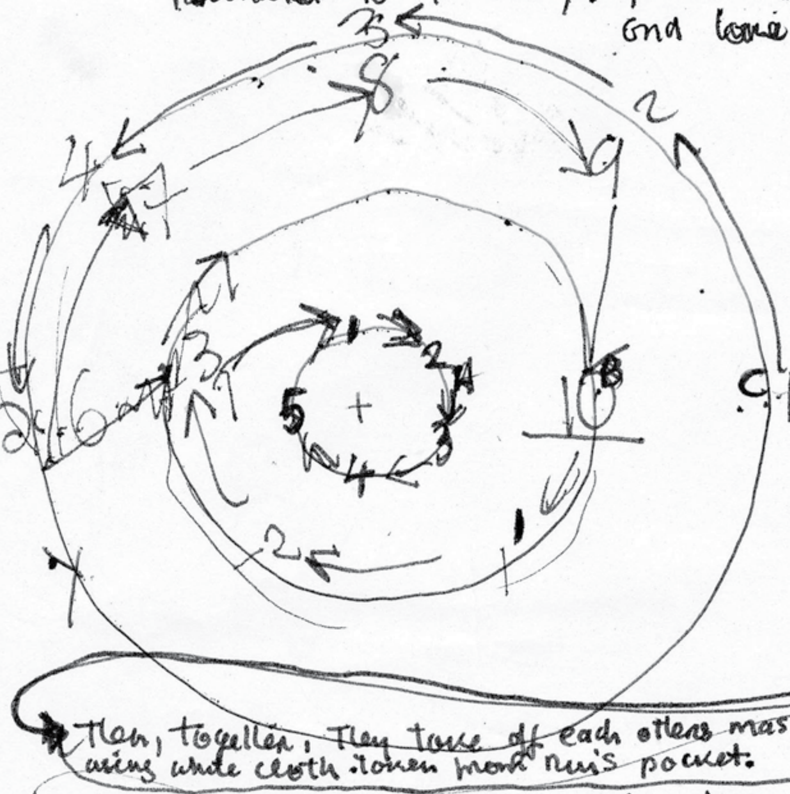
IN - ARRESTED PAST

TELEPATHIC - HISTORY

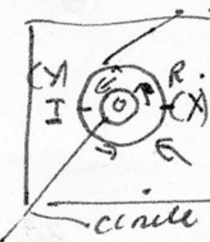
"My colleague will do an inventory"

1

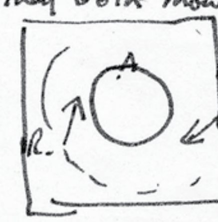
Rui comes from far corner where he has been singing in arrested past. Sprightly, he goes to position X, then turns reconciled to position Y, from where the Cherubim dance of "alegory of Time and Love"



circle BC — then back again



from position X, Rui takes 4 steps anti-clockwise. Isolde in position (Y) likewise. Then they both move into the circle moving clockwise about for 3 steps. Then into circle of for 5 steps - each go in the opposite



CHE - U - BIM (NO)

direction, coming closer together all the time. Courtship poses, and expressions. Stopping at changes, waiting looks. They come together & embrace in the centre and move around to the music. They sing cherubim together

"A message is found"

Then, together, they tease off each others mask/tattoo using white cloth taken from Rui's pocket.

Then Rui, moves into the middle dance position. Isolde turns off the recorder & follows. The cyc. Gauze lights go on. Spot off. They are in silhouette. (See Roger + others video tape 1. Rui dies - Cops down. Isolde, steals the hankie from his pocket, & reminisces in the spot, (re-living the past)

She dances around with the cloth. Then, (To the music change) womb-boom - she notices the marks on the cloth, those made by pulling on one of the masks, she is the cloth forces her hand to leave it on the floor, (Twitch line) Then, to pick it up again, & over her shoulder in the way of the 1st twitch. She is drawn back in a swirl 3 turns to the wall, when her hand (holding cloth) hits wall, it is illuminated suddenly. The cloth makes her write on the wall (The message is found). Rui, after a bit, rises, & wipes it out. (Pork fat + black powder colour mix in tooth-paste tube hidden in hankie)

Dev. re "Hankie + pocket"

finger dance

I "It accuses us of murder"

R " Murder"

" You were the only one to read between the lines

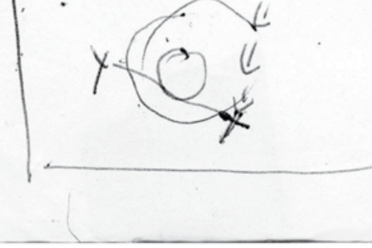
To day, the anniversary of the demised (ghost/spirit) Promised to return to gain inheritance."

" It was an accident, I was just trying to keep away the [struck out] Spirit.

I was just playing, hiding inside a suit of armour.

bring drama & develop

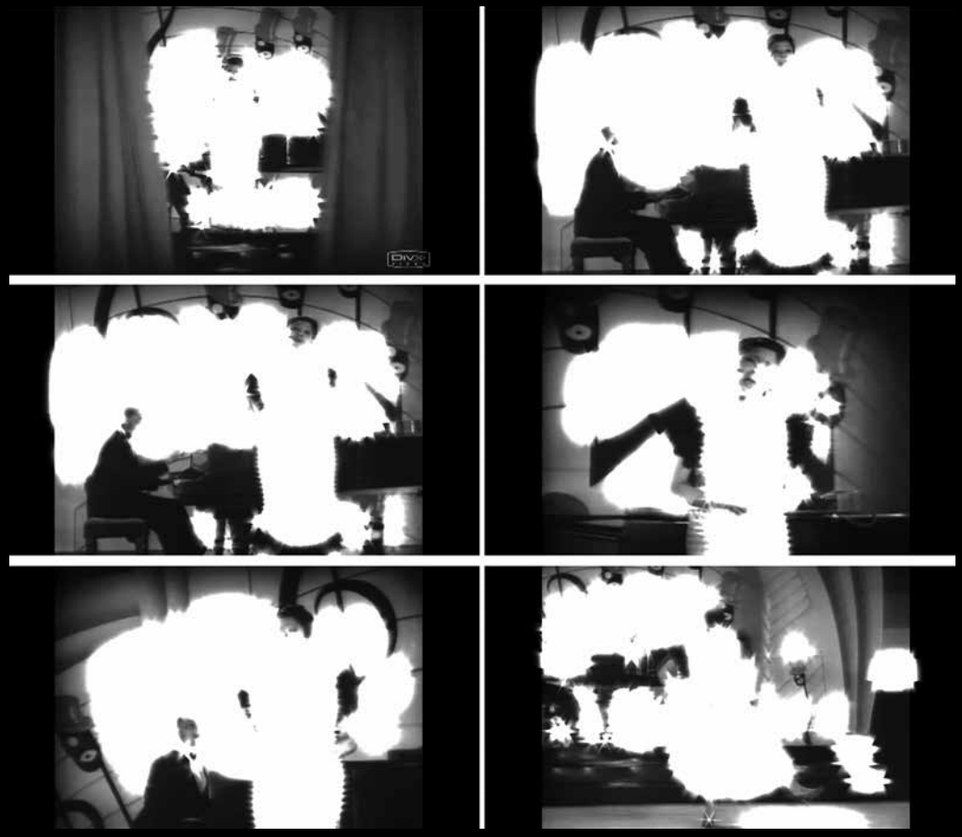
I



Then when finishes. She announces (music on continuously) (It acts as if mimi). Isolde, rises back into spot & continues.

Then, in his light (see fig I) Rui cuts sideways... The cyc. lights are dimmed. Then.

SONIA BOYCE & AIN BAILEY



Sonia Boyce is a multidisciplinary artist who came to prominence in the 1980s with work that explores race, religion, and politics in contemporary Britain. Boyce has continually expanded her practice both through the exploration of new media and through collaborative efforts with other artists. Ain Bailey is a London-based sound artist and DJ whose compositions incorporate diverse sources, including field recordings and found sound. She has composed new works for a range of forms, including mixed-media installation, live performance, and moving-image soundtracks. Boyce and Bailey collaborated on the project *Oh, Adelaide* (2010), which grew out of Boyce's *Devotional Collection* (1999–ongoing), an archive of CDs, cassettes, vinyl records, and other ephemera related to black British women in the music industry. *The Devotional Collection* archive was constructed with the involvement and feedback of many contributors to preserve the collective memory of a diverse range of public listeners.

Oh, Adelaide combines a soundtrack created by Bailey with digital footage manipulated and remixed by Boyce. The work's title refers to Adelaide Hall, an American-born jazz singer and entertainer who was one of the pioneers of scat singing and a central figure in the Harlem Renaissance. Hall moved to London in 1938 and continued performing, recording, and touring to great success until her death in 1993. In *Oh, Adelaide*, Boyce and Bailey manipulate performance footage of Hall to create a dreamlike mash-up. The viewer's attempts to visually locate the performer onscreen are thwarted by a dazzling whiteness that highlights, surrounds, and subsumes Hall's figure. Meanwhile, Bailey's soundtrack—constructed from audio drawn from *The Devotional Collection*—moves in and out of sync with the video. Hall's distinctive scat vocals are audible for a few fleeting seconds before they melt back into Bailey's composition. Scat singing plays with the line that separates language from nonlanguage. Similarly, the central figure in *Oh, Adelaide* fades in and out of visibility, suggesting the frailty of archives and the ever-present risk of erasure.

Sonia Boyce in collaboration with Ain Bailey, *Oh, Adelaide*, 2010. Digital video, black-and-white, sound; 7:11 min. Courtesy the artists

CAMMISA BUERHAUS

Cammisa Buerhaus is a multimedia artist who works with sculpture, sound, and performance. She is a founding member of the theater group Full Disclosure and the improv duo Daikyo Furoshiki and proprietor of the record label Wild Flesh. As a member of Richard Maxwell's New York City Players, Buerhaus has performed in *The Evening* (2015) at The Kitchen, the Walker Art Center, and On The Boards.

Buerhaus has produced a number of multimedia projects that deal with cultural information, authority, and the voice. *Private Lives* (2014) is an ongoing project combining saxophone, movement, and script for manipulated voice. It premiered as a two-woman play at Cooper Union's Rose Auditorium in February 2014 and has since been adapted for different contexts. *Private Lives* is an exploration of the hyperreal world of political figures, including their mythic proportions and amorphous, shape-shifting tendencies. Conceptually the work is constructed around a hallucinatory reworking of Bill Clinton's public statements during his impeachment. Presented here as a multimedia installation, the work deals with Clinton's sexual identity through the refractory lens of popular "talking head" entertainment television programs like *E! True Hollywood Story* and *Entertainment Tonight*. Yet where these programs seek to distill a condensed essence through abbreviated testimony, *Private Lives* expands and speculatively perverts cultural memories.

Cammisa Buerhaus as William Jefferson Clinton, 2015. Photograph by Yuko Toriko

JAMES COLEMAN

Since the early 1970s James Coleman's central preoccupations have been the questions of representation, illusionism, interpretation, myth, and the construction of identity. He has worked with film, video, photography, and theater but is best known for his use of slide projections with synchronized audio narration. Focusing on acts of looking and speaking, his work reveals that listening, perceiving, and interpreting are themselves forms of projection. In this sense, Coleman's work exposes the inherent ideological implications of linguistic, sonic, and visual representation.

Ignotum per Ignotius (1982–84) was the second live performance work to be written and directed by Coleman and was produced in collaboration with Olwen Fouéré and Roger Doyle's Dublin-based company Operating Theatre. *Ignotum per Ignotius* premiered at the Lantaren Venster theater, Rotterdam, in 1982 and enjoyed subsequent performances throughout the Netherlands that year. The actors differed in each location; for instance, Fouéré and Brendan Ellis performed the work at the Douglas Hyde Gallery, Dublin, and later in 1983 the work was performed by Isabel Carlos and Rui Orfão at the Teatro-Estúdio do CITAC, Coimbra, Portugal. Pages 46–59 of this catalogue contain documents from *Ignotum per Ignotius* that have been selected by James Coleman for this exhibition.

James Coleman, *Ignotum per Ignotius*, 1982–84. Work for theater, performed by Olwen Fouéré and Roger Doyle, Shaffy Theater, Amsterdam, 1982. Courtesy James Coleman and Marian Goodman Gallery. © James Coleman

MANON DE BOER

Dutch artist and filmmaker Manon de Boer lives and works in Brussels, where she is a member of the artist collective Auguste Orts. Her works stage personal narration and music as a way to consider relations between time, language, and memory. Her films reference their own materiality and her formalism intersects with her explorations of personal histories, as when formal cuts in the material signify the loss of memory.

Resonating Surfaces (2005) is a part of De Boer's series of cinematic portraits of the 1970s centered on the memories of women. The film unfolds through the introspective narrative of Brazilian psychoanalyst Suely Rolnik, with the city of São Paulo acting as a second protagonist. Among other topics, Rolnik discusses the dictatorship in Brazil in the sixties, her exile in Paris in the seventies, her experience of imprisonment in Brazil for her dissidence, her psychoanalytic work, as well as her relationship with Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. The work undermines its narrative by misaligning the images in the film with the narration and music. As demonstrated by the film's opening sequence featuring fragments from Alban Berg's operas *Lulu* and *Wozzeck*, De Boer explores the materiality of sound, especially the physical relationship between the body and the voice.

Manon de Boer, *Resonating Surfaces*, 2005. 16mm film transferred to digital video, color, sound; 39 min. Courtesy the artist and Auguste Orts

JOAN LA BARBARA

A composer, sound artist, and vocalist, Joan La Barbara has spent her career exploring the voice as an instrument. Her unique vocal technique, including multiphonics, circular singing, ululation, and glottal clicks, expands the notion of what a voice can do. Currently based in New York City, La Barbara has been contributing to avant-garde music and performance since the early 1970s. Her unique vocal talents and techniques have been highlighted in compositions written for her by noted American composers Phillip Glass, Robert Wilson, Morton Feldman, John Cage, and Robert Ashley and in collaborative projects with Judy Chicago, Kenneth Goldsmith, Jane Comfort, Matthew Barney, and Bruce Nauman. She has created works for multiple voices, chamber ensembles, musical theater, radio, orchestra, and interactive technology.

She Is Always Alone (1979), recorded in Berlin, demonstrates the analytical rigor and vocal prowess that drives her work. Described by the artist as a two-channel work for the left and right side of the performer's brain, *She Is Always Alone* features the artist in a hotel room, performing for a private audience, moving back and forth between vocal performance and casual conversation. Moving erratically between singing and speaking, La Barbara demonstrates the physical and formal capacities of sound while intermittently unpacking her own thought process in a stream-of-consciousness dialogue. While her casual manner and the environment demythologize the role of the performer, La Barbara's ongoing dialogue provides a deeper, more complex perspective on the vocalist's practice. As a performer, La Barbara pushes her instrument to meticulously crafted extremes but, as a vocalist, her instrument is coterminous with her self. The limits she pushes are, in many ways, the physical limits of her own body, a process that collapses the boundaries between the artist's mental and physical capabilities.

Joan La Barbara, *She Is Always Alone*, 1979. Digital-video documentation of site-specific performance, black-and-white, sound; 17:32 min. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie; Gift of Mike Steiner, 1999. Courtesy the artist and Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie

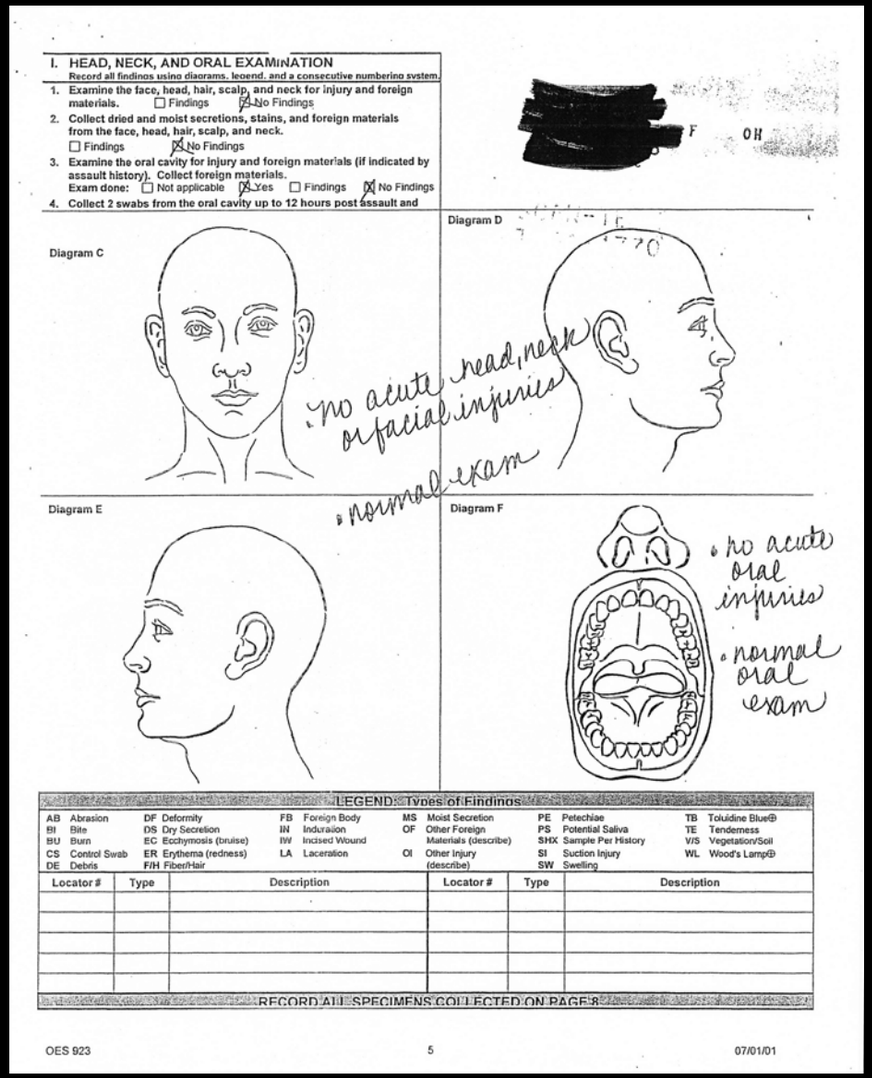
TRACIE MORRIS

Tracie Morris is a poet, vocalist, and scholar based in Brooklyn. She began as a vocalist in the East Village slam poetry scene of the 1990s and holds degrees in creative writing and performance studies. Her performances combine African-American vernacular with highly abstract sonic deconstructions of language. Her complex, precise, virtuosic vocal style sculpts extended linguistic sounds and noises into a dissonant yet musical form. Her poems often exist apart from printed texts altogether, existing as loose improvisatory frameworks that are renewed and expanded with each iteration.

The Mrs. Gets Her Ass Kicked (1996) takes apart Irving Berlin's classic 1935 song "Cheek to Cheek." In *The Mrs.*, Morris disarticulates Berlin's lyrics by singing fragments from the melody, breaking the smooth continuity of the song. Pounding her fist against her chest, she disrupts her voice from the outside. This repetitive, self-inflicted aggression eventually leads to a breakdown of the text when Morris's voice becomes wheezing gasps. As the rhythmic beating quickens, the lyrics are transformed into screams and wails, as if the words themselves were fighting to emerge from Morris's throat. This struggle disengages the performer from the words she speaks and further disperses the couple constructed by the original lyrics across space and time.

Tracie Morris, *Poetry Will Be Made By All*, 2014. Documentation of performance, Zurich, Switzerland, February 16, 2014. Photograph by Robert Huber

VANESSA PLACE



I. HEAD, NECK, AND ORAL EXAMINATION
Record all findings using diagrams, legend, and a consecutive numbering system.

1. Examine the face, head, hair, scalp, and neck for injury and foreign materials. ☐ Findings ☒ No Findings
2. Collect dried and moist secretions, stains, and foreign materials from the face, head, hair, scalp, and neck. ☐ Findings ☒ No Findings
3. Examine the oral cavity for injury and foreign materials (if indicated by assault history). Collect foreign materials. Exam done: ☐ Not applicable ☒ Yes ☐ Findings ☒ No Findings
4. Collect 2 swabs from the oral cavity up to 12 hours post assault and

F OH

Diagram C

Diagram D

• no acute head, neck or facial injuries
• normal exam

Diagram E

Diagram F

• no acute oral injuries
• normal oral exam

LEGEND: Types of Findings

AB	Abrasion	DF	Deformity	FB	Foreign Body	MS	Moist Secretion	PE	Petechiae	TB	Toluidine Blue⊕
BI	Bite	DS	Dry Secretion	IN	Indruision	OF	Other Foreign Materials (describe)	PS	Potential Saliva	TE	Tenderness
BU	Burn	EC	Ecchymosis (bruise)	IW	Incised Wound			SHX	Sample Per History	V/S	Vegetation/Soil
CS	Control Swab	ER	Erythema (redness)	LA	Laceration	OI	Other Injury (describe)	SI	Suction Injury	WL	Wood's Lamp⊕
DE	Debris	F/H	Fiber/Hair					SW	Swelling		

Locator #	Type	Description	Locator #	Type	Description

RECORD ALL SPECIMENS COLLECTED ON PAGE 8

OES 923 5 07/01/01

Vanessa Place attends to language both in her work as a criminal-defense attorney and in her practice as a conceptual poet and writer. Combining analytic lenses from these disparate spheres, Place explores the role of language in constructing guilt and innocence as stable signifiers within the legal system. An appellate criminal-defense attorney who specializes in cases of sexual violence, Place draws on texts from her practice in her writing and poetry. In *Tragodía*, a trilogy that includes *Statement of Facts* (2010), *Statement of the Case* (2011), and *Argument* (2011), she presents testimony from court cases she was involved in as an attorney. Place's work often engages in an antagonistic mode of poetics that displaces easy ethical positions.

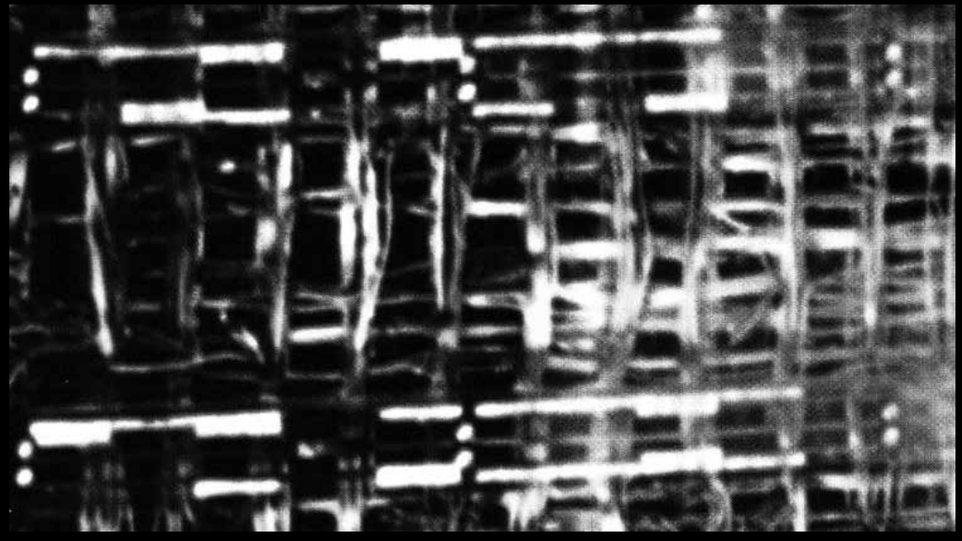
Place's *Last Words* (2014–ongoing) is a recording of the artist reciting the final statements of all inmates executed by the state of Texas since 1982. The Texas Department of Criminal Justice invites inmates to make a final statement immediately prior to their execution and the state's documentation of their words is made publicly available. This online archive acted as Place's source for *Last Words*, which lasts over four hours and includes five seconds of silence to represent each inmate who declined to give a final statement before execution. Place's recitation of the text is steady and direct. Though she takes up these words, her delivery places distance between herself and the original speakers. *Last Words* oscillates between presence and absence, using the human voice, paired with the empty room in which it must be installed, to foreground the missing body from which the statement was made.

Vanessa Place, *Headshot*, 2015. Photocopy, 8.5 x 11 in. (21.6 x 27.9 cm). Courtesy the artist

STEVE REINKE

Steve Reinke is a video artist, writer, and professor of visual arts. He is well known for his epic anthology of short-form video works grouped together as *The Hundred Videos* (1989—96), which investigates themes ranging from the erudite to the carnal, the intellectual to the hypersexualized. Reinke's more recent video works are grouped together under the title *Final Thoughts* (begun 2007). Throughout his practice, Reinke relies on voice-over and juxtaposition, creating character and narrative through flamboyant combinations of text and image, interspersed with dark wit and references drawn from psychoanalysis and philosophy.

My Name Is Karlheinz Stockhausen (2010) explores sound through quotations excerpted from interviews with the composer in the late 1970s and 80s. Reinke recombines Stockhausen's statements into a text read by artist Vera Frenkel. The work recounts a number of associative layers of Stockhausen's thinking, beginning with his claim, "This is the atomic age; the material itself must be part of the creative act. One no longer forms a given material, one must also create the material. We must make our own sounds, like plastic." By placing the materiality of sound at the center of the work, Reinke presents sound as a substance to be molded and manipulated in order to achieve new modes of perception. Stockhausen's remixed ruminations play alongside sequenced slides which depict images of mid-century industry, technology, and science. Cropped and somewhat abstracted, the images glide sinuously under Frenkel's disembodied voice. The juxtaposition of visible and audible materials is characteristic of his investigation in his larger body of work of human speech and voice-over as rhetorical and aesthetic devices.

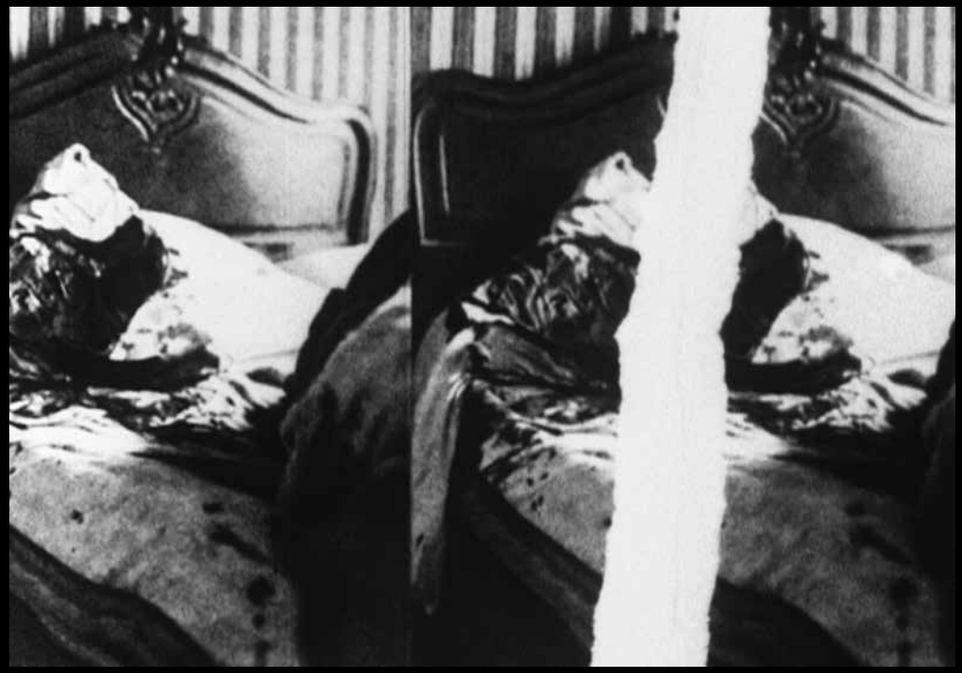


Steve Reinke, *My Name Is Karlheinz Stockhausen*, 2010. Digital video, color, sound; 6:15 min. Courtesy the artist and Video Data Bank

LIS RHODES

Lis Rhodes is a central figure in the history of artists' filmmaking in Britain and was a leading member of the London Filmmakers' Co-op. Since the 1970s, her work has dealt with the history of film as a medium, combining the investigation of its materiality with an engagement with political issues. While her early films, which explore sound-image synchronization, can be considered structuralist, her later work, taking as its subject matter street protests, for instance, questions whether language can convey political truths.

Light Reading (1978) was Rhodes's first departure from strictly formalist film. This work specifically addresses the representation of women, a sign of her emergent political project in the 1970s. Through its use of the female voice, the work also investigates the ways gender informs our understanding of speech. In *Light Reading*, Rhodes uses her own voice in her work for the first time, a gesture she thought of as giving voice to feminist meanings that are lost or suppressed. The visual and sonic interplay of fragmented sentences and manipulated images in the film disrupts the synchronicity between the aural narration and the images. The sound and image both point to the constructed nature of language and suggest the impossibility of conveying univocal meaning through either sonic or visual representation.



Lis Rhodes, *Light Reading*, 1978. 16mm film, black-and-white, sound; 20 min. Courtesy Lis Rhodes and LUX, London

SCRAAATCH

The duo SCRAAATCH consists of chukwumaa and E. Jane, two artists whose work ranges across media, including photography, video, sound, and performance. Currently based in Philadelphia, where they are both MFA candidates at the University of Pennsylvania, SCRAAATCH's wide-ranging approach breaks down divisions between disciplines and platforms, circulating online, being shown in art spaces, and infiltrating their DJ sets. Identifying the particular audience expectations and performative norms that govern these different spaces, the artists take up these platforms themselves as media, manipulating, utilizing, and reshaping them.

In a series of self-titled performances begun in 2013, SCRAAATCH combines digital audio soundscapes and musical improvisations together with movement and interaction drawn from histories of conceptual art and theater. Beginning with a set of limitations that dictates what tools they can use and how they can move in space, the two artists communicate nonverbally from within this system, developing an intricate choreography. Through play and improvisation, the artists attempt to communicate without language. In *SCRAAATCH no. 7* (2014), the buildup of the audio is accompanied by an increasingly frenetic game of absurdist tic-tac-toe, carried out on an overhead projector. While playful, the performances often veer into a darker aggressiveness, suggesting the difficulties of direct communication and exchange.

SCRAAATCH, *SCRAAATCH no. 7*, 2014. Performance, Philadelphia, October 25, 2014. Photograph by Wayne Kleppe. Courtesy the artists

MASHA TUPITSYN

Throughout her work as a writer, critic, poet, and artist, Masha Tupitsyn explores cinema—both its history and its present—focusing on the ways it invades and influences the daily lives of viewers. Her short story collection *Beauty Talk and Monsters* (2007) continues Tupitsyn's interest in the blurred boundaries between popular culture and daily life by constructing characters based on cinematic allusions. In 2011, she published *LACONIA: 1,200 Tweets on Film*, the first book of film criticism written entirely on Twitter. In all of her work, Tupitsyn crosses literary boundaries, allowing criticism, poetry, and fiction to infect one another.

Love Sounds (2014–ongoing), a twenty-four-hour sound montage, creates a tension between sound and image. The work mines the aural performance of love in cinema, matching appropriated audio from popular films with title screens organizing them into categories such as "Falling in Love," "Desire," "Betrayal," and "Sexual Politics." In the absence of visual cues to help the viewer contextualize a given relationship, well-known clichés take on a surprising new energy, even as the similarity from one clip to the next blurs the boundaries between the selections.

Masha Tupitsyn, *Love Sounds*, 2014–ongoing. Digital video, black-and-white, sound; 24 hours. Courtesy the artist

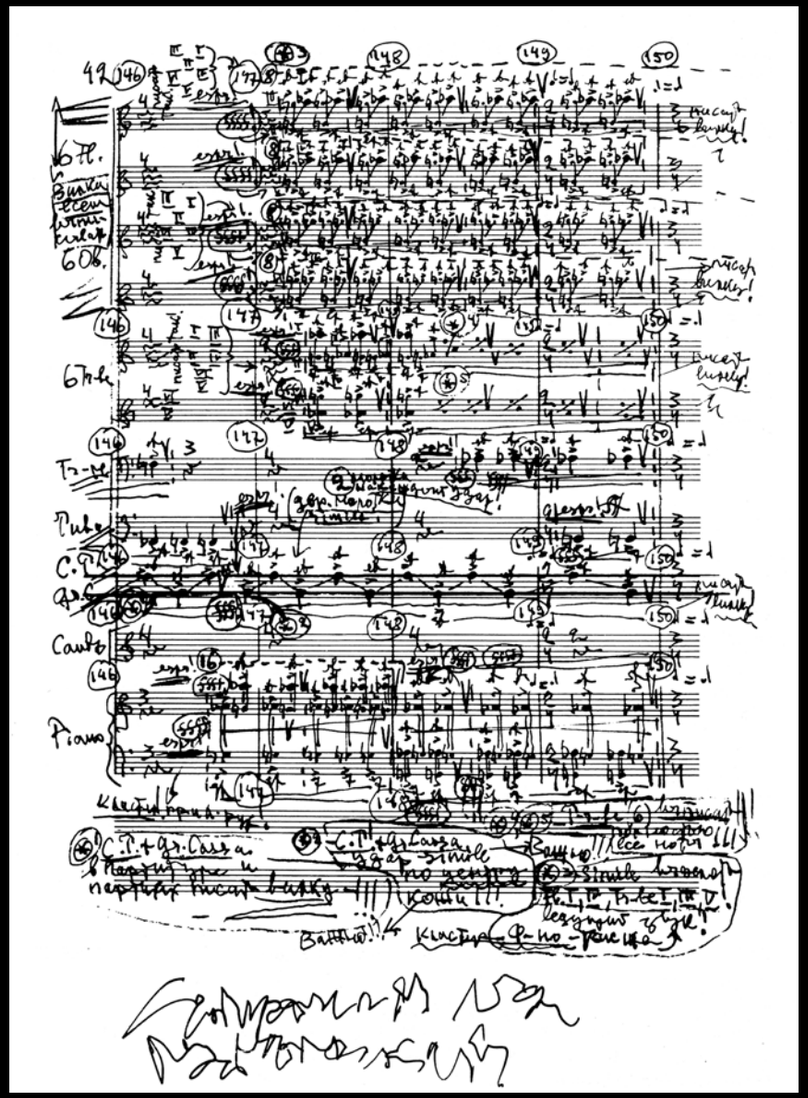
ULTRA-RED

Founded in Los Angeles in 1994, the collective Ultra-red has an extensive history of using sound as part of their engagement with political organizing. While initially focused on investigating spaces of needle exchange in *Soundtrax* (1992–96), the group has engaged globally with various political struggles, including those over public housing (*Structural Adjustments*, 1997–2003), antiracism (*Surveying the Future*, 2001–ongoing), education (*School of Echoes*, 2001–ongoing), and HIV/AIDS (*Silent|Listen*, 2005–ongoing). The collective has produced radio broadcasts, performances, recordings, installations, texts, and public actions with the overarching goal of both analyzing and contributing to political struggles. As part of the group's commitment to long-term engagement with such struggles, Ultra-red uses aesthetic tools to contribute to organizing strategies rather than to represent politics.

While initially focused more closely on the production of sound, Ultra-red has turned in recent years toward an exploration of listening as a practice. The group's protocols for organized listening are structured exercises for intersubjective exchange. While the cultivation of open dialogue is the goal of the protocols, they pursue this goal through a highly regimented format, creating structures for listening and response that foster a shared experience and, ultimately, a collectivity. Members seek to identify specific moments of organizing when the listening strategies are effective. In the early stages of a newly formed group, the protocols serve to outline the group's priorities and commitments; in later moments they are used to engage with community members and to introduce the public to the project.

Ultra-red, *What Is the Sound of Freedom?* 2012. Workshop, Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, May 5, 2012.

GALINA USTVOLSKAYA



Russian composer Galina Ustvolskaya (1919–2006), born in Petrograd (now St. Petersburg), was a student of Dmitri Shostakovich. At a time when the Soviet regime advocated for Socialist Realism and rejected work that did not conform to its style, Ustvolskaya protested against the repressive regime by producing distinctly formalist musical compositions. She is known for her use of staccato, asymmetrical polyphonic constructions, and tone clusters. Because of her refusal to conform, her work was persecuted, rarely performed, and was only published decades after being composed. Ustvolskaya's contributions to the field of music are still not fully recognized today.

Ustvolskaya's late composition Piano Sonata no. 6 (1988) consists almost entirely of very loud tone clusters. The tone clusters are created when a performer pounds the piano with the palm or forearm landing on the keyboard. By requiring this distinct physicality, Ustvolskaya's compositions create a complex relationship between the pianist, the instrument, and the infliction of pain. As scholars like Maria Cizmic have pointed out, the physicality of her performances, in addition to the violence to standard musical notation produced by her compositional directives, can bear witness to suffering under repressive regimes. Ustvolskaya's late works re-enact the trauma of their social and historical context. She communicates the experience of pain, which linguistic means often fail to convey, into a public realm of representation and performance.

Galina Ustvolskaya, manuscript of Symphony no. 2 ("True and Eternal Bliss!"), 1979. Courtesy ustvolskaya.org

JACKIE WANG

Jackie Wang is a poet, musician, prison abolitionist, and scholar based in Cambridge, Massachusetts. Her theoretical work focuses on the police state and its relation to violence and racism. Wang's poetry and online prose take on these and other personal and political themes in experimental, lyric form. Wang also reads and performs her work frequently, often pairing poetic texts with sound and musical accompaniment from drum machines and synthesizers.

The Cybernetic Cop (2015) is a video adaptation of Wang's 2014 performance of the same name, which centers on the writer's reflections about a toy based on the main character of the 1987 film *RoboCop* she shared with her brother as a child. Wang uses this recollection to explore the "hailing" of children by the voice of the toy. Wang shows how the voice of the toy turned children into potential targets, repeating one of three phrases: "Drugs are trouble," "Drop it!" and "Your move, creep." This exploration of the voice in interpreting state power is set against footage from the film. The film's protagonist, Agent Murphy, a formerly human police officer turned weaponized cyborg, embodies a hyperbolic manifestation of the "recombinant assemblage of hard and soft police technologies" that Wang identifies in contemporary police power.

Jackie Wang, *The Cybernetic Cop*, 2015. Digital video, color, sound; 7:33 min. Courtesy the artist

Sonia Boyce in collaboration with Ain Bailey
Oh, Adelaide, 2010
Digital video, black-and-white, sound; 7:11 min.
Courtesy the artists

Cammisa Buerhaus
Private Lives, 2014
Mixed-media installation, dimensions variable
Courtesy the artist

James Coleman
Documentation from *Ignotum per Ignotius*, 1982–84, with a text by Jean Fisher, 1982
Courtesy the artist and Marian Goodman Gallery

Manon de Boer
Resonating Surfaces, 2005
16mm film transferred to digital video, color, sound; 39 min.
Courtesy the artist and Auguste Orts

Joan La Barbara
She Is Always Alone, 1979
Digital-video documentation of site-specific performance, black-and-white, sound; 17:32 min. Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie; Gift of Mike Steiner, 1999
Courtesy the artist and Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Nationalgalerie

Tracie Morris
The Mrs. Gets Her Ass Kicked, 1996
Audio recording of performance; 7:03 min.
Courtesy the artist

Vanessa Place
Last Words, 2014–
Audio recording; approx. 250 min.
Courtesy the artist

Steve Reinke
My Name Is Karlheinz Stockhausen, 2010
Digital video, color, sound; 6:15 min.
Courtesy the artist and Video Data Bank

Lis Rhodes
Light Reading, 1978
16mm film transferred to digital video, black-and-white, sound; 20 min.
Courtesy the artist and LUX, London

SCRAAATCH
SCRAAATCH no. 9, 2015
Performance with live sound processing, live video projection, Rives paper, pens, time and date to be announced
Courtesy the artists

Masha Tupitsyn
Love Sounds, 2014–
Digital video, black-and-white, sound; 24 hours
Courtesy the artist

Ultra-red
Protocols for the Wojnarowicz Object, or What Is the Sound of Building Up and Tearing Down? 2012
Laserjet prints on paper, dimensions variable
Courtesy the artists

Galina Ustvolskaya
Piano Sonata no. 6, 1988
Performance by Cheryl Seltzer from Continuum Ensemble, time and date to be announced

Jackie Wang
The Cybernetic Cop, 2015
Digital video, color, sound; 7:33 min.
Courtesy the artist

S/N would not have been possible without the generous contributions and support of many friends, colleagues, and advisers. We extend our deepest thanks and gratitude to Ron Clark, Director of the Whitney Independent Study Program, Trista E. Mallory, Instructor for Curatorial Studies, and Alex Alberro, Cassullo Fellow during the 2014–15 academic year. Their support, guidance, patience, and good humor enriched every aspect of this project. We would also like to thank the ISP's program assistant, Cassandra Guan, for her organizational support during the exhibition planning process and Nora Alter, faculty at the ISP, for her comments early on in the process. We have benefited greatly from working with all of our colleagues in the Independent Study Program, whose insights and critical feedback were invaluable. In addition, the ongoing discussions that took place at the ISP during the year have greatly informed this curatorial project.

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Set in Neue Haas Grotesk

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Г. Уствольская и А. Янсонс. Большой зал Ленинградской филармонии

конкретное вы
в своеобразных
усеченных» р
где основной
лишь бегло
нается.

Я уже говорил
но-белом» колор
фонии. Иные и
ров, выступав
дискуссии, скло
ли рассматрив
как серьезный
ток и упрекал
в унылой и б
ной «тональност
нения [1]. Как и
гих участников
дения, я счит
упрек несправ
Смысл музыки
ской — в пред
нии: она застав
шателя не про
маться о страд
счастного обез
детства, но пос
его драматизм.

В этом смыс
но значителе
симфонии. Пов
как будто в
к строю образ
части. Но
развертывается
ное динамич
растание (ед
большое нара
всем сочинени
гающее яркой
но трагической кульминации. В этот моме
звучит страстный авторский протест, обр
людям, призыв к тому, чтобы этого ужа
не было. И следующее далее краткое,
тельное просветление воспринимается как
подобное апофеозам греческой трагедии.

Трудно понять, почему столь интересно
его спорности сочинение, написанное свы

пожалуй, заключительная песня «Солнце», где одинокий призыв как бы теряется, замирает в пустом и холодном пространстве. Любопытен «строительный материал» вокальной партии, представляющий собой сцепление нарочито простых «праинтонаций» весьма малого объема при непрерывном скандировании текста. Далее иногда возникают более широкие интервалы, неожиданные ладовые «повороты», но они звучат подобно мимолетному, хотя и очень заметному штриху.

В этих вокальных миниатюрах поразила меня одна особенность. Все они завершаются не просто в нужный момент, но словно чуть-чуть раньше необходимого; кажется, автор, высказав самое существенное, избегает поставить последнюю точку. Это находит

[1] Вокальная партия написана для двух
солистов. Однако почему-то было решен
ее детскому хору, поющему за кулисами.
залась неудачной, так как слова можно
рать с огромным трудом и то не всегда.
тенки по существу пропали, что в кон
усилило ощущение однообразия, однок

Photographer unknown.
Galina Ustvolskaya and Arvids Jansons in the Great Hall of the Leningrad Philharmonic.
From *Soviet Music*, 1966.
Courtesy ustvolskaya.org

BOYCE & BAILEY
BUERHAUS
COLEMAN
DE BOER
LA BARBARA
MORRIS
PLACE
REINKE
RHODES
SCRAAATCH
TUPITSYN
ULTRA-RED
USTVOLSKAYA
WANG