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Author: Paola Lopreiato
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A portfolio of works
by
Paola Lopreiato

A thesis submitted to the University of Sheffield
for the degree of
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ABSTRACT

This dissertation consists of written observations on my research project, a portfolio of audiovisual work, interactive installations and their description. It is divided into two parts.

The first part explains my initial project that will be carried out in the next three years. In this part I describe my research design, problems and methodology.

The second part is a description of what I have achieved during my MPhil year. I explain here how I carried out the first part of my project and give details of the portfolio of audiovisual compositions, which I created in this year.

BACKGROUND

I began my studies in Sheffield in autumn 2010. In the three years before coming to Sheffield for the MPhil I had had a constructive period during which I did a two years Masters in Music and New Technology at the Conservatory of Florence and in which I began creative production building, I hope, a solid foundation for future research.

During these years I mainly worked on projects in which I could use several media such as video, music, installation, digital photography, drawing and painting, literature and storytelling, combining them through manipulation and interaction.

In my undergraduate studies I did visual art (graduating in painting from the Academia of Fine Arts of Florence) and classic music (graduating in piano from the Conservatory of Florence).

I have always been fascinated by the arts generally and during my undergraduate studies I had the opportunity to practise some of them. But I also felt that in order to express myself, to the best of my abilities, I should have included more varieties of art and other means of expression.

I felt that what I wanted to express could no longer fit well onto a canvas, a video, into a song, into an ensemble piece or a dance performance. This is not to say that painting, music, dance are not enough to express art on their own: after all great masterpieces have been created in these fields.

However, I found that different means of expression helped me to express different parts of the same idea and artistic creation.

That is why in the last three years I experienced and created works in which sounds, images, colours, movements and smells blend together: works that are multisensorial and simultaneous like the experiences of everyday life.

At the very beginning this was more an intuition than a firm belief. I gradually began to use different tools, directing myself towards new technologies and mediums that helped me express my ideas and helped me to understand what I wanted and needed in order to make art.

In 2007 for my first multimedia work, *Umori Mediterranei*, I played around with different media for a live performance. In this performance the piano represents an important element. Other elements of this work were video projections, one frontal and one from behind, photography, and speech with live electronic interaction. There was also a little part involving food and a scene in which I get off the stage and continue the action among the audience.

The feedback I had from this first multimedia performance helped me to understand better what I wanted to tell people and how important it was for me to be in contact with the audience, 'inside' them.

In my second major multimedia work *Il Giradino della mente* (that was also my master thesis) I decided to give more importance to scenic and visual impacts. I employed three frontal projections (three different videos) that covered the whole scene and me as well, creating a play of light and shadows. I gave more importance to the acting element and sounds. The work is shorter than the first, has no spoken part and involves smells. All these

choices were dictated by the desire to create a stronger more intense experience: a 'flash' rather than a theatre play.

Multiplicity of senses, points of views, contents and the simultaneity of these elements is prominent in my work and has been the starting point for my research. The research project I have started to develop in my MPhil naturally has its roots in the work I have already carried out. I can, therefore, say that what I have begun in Sheffield is a project of growth: it is emphatically not a new beginning.

INTRODUCTION

When I decided to start an MPhil research at the University of Sheffield I intended to further expand the artistic ideas that I had experienced and experimented with between 2006 and 2009. I wanted to develop making art in practice and, at the same time, mature a better structure for understanding art.

The environment that I found at Sheffield University was very different from the one I was familiar with in Italy. But with the guidance and advice of my supervisor this proved an occasion for growth. Without doubt dealing with new software and technical instruments has sometimes been confusing and certainly proved hard at the beginning. I had to face a new way of thinking and communicating. I had to learn a new way to express myself in a language that is not my own, but above all I had to face a new culture with all that entails. I was able to turn all this into a challenge which made me stronger and gave me an opportunity for growth. The MPhil experience made me more aware and confident in what I wanted to do and gave me the technical and organisational know-how to do so.

CHAPTER I

CONTEXT

In my research I have explored a number of compositional techniques and communication strategies always confronting and taking inspiration from twentieth-century artists and movements. This chapter aims to give an overview of those individuals whose ideas helped me create my own artistic language and awareness.

My usual creative process is based on four main points:

1. Reconsideration of everyday perception and life
2. Use of every medium of art
3. Art into life
4. Use of body

These points are contained (implicitly or explicitly) in theories of artistic movement such as Futurism, Fluxus, Body and Performance Art.

In the early twentieth-century Futurists tried to raise questions about the very meaning of art and to reassess perception and everyday life. They tried, indeed, to find a new way of communicating and reaching people, deliberately provoking their audience.

Futurism was mostly an Italian and Russian movement that explored every medium of art, including sculpture, painting, poetry, music, architecture, theatre and even gastronomy. The Futurists attempted to convey feelings and sensations experienced in time, using new means of expression to simultaneously lead the direction of objects through space. Using means of expression which combined memories, present impressions and expectation for future events, they created “emotional ambience” and tried to find links between the external world and interior emotions.

In the *Technical Manifesto* they attempted to express what they called “universal dynamism”, which was strongly represented in their painting. They proclaimed that objects were not in reality separate from one another or from their environment:

Objects in reality were not separate from one another or from their surroundings: The sixteen people around you in a rolling motor bus are in turn and at the same time one, ten four three; they are motionless and they change places. ... The motorbus rushes into the houses, which it passes, and in their turn the houses throw themselves upon the motorbus and are blended with it¹.

Futurist painters, especially Umberto Boccioni, were influenced by the ideas of Henry Bergson, in particular the idea of intuition. By using the word “intuition” Bergson meant an elementary, indivisible experience of sympathy through which a person is moved into the inner being of an object and can comprehend what is unique and indefinable in it. Futurists wanted their audience to understand the inner essence of what they were representing.

¹ I Technical Manifesto of futurism Painting, by Umberto Boccioni, Carlo Carrà, Luigi Russolo, Giacomo Balla, and Gino Severini, Milan, February 11 1910

In the *Manifesto of Dynamic and Synoptic Declamation* (published in 1916), they stated that the artist should try to represent reality and its essence concretely. Filippo Tommaso Marinetti (founder of the Futurist movement) proposed involving the whole body's potentiality and the employment of as many means of expression as possible in order to reinforce the realism of the artistic message and to help people understand it. Futurists performed their texts "using the whole range of voice tone, bodily movements and all parts of the theatre".

A famous example of what was called "sound literature" is Marinetti's *Zang tunb tuum*, which was published in 1914 and performed several times between 1913 and 1915. *Zang tunb tuum* describes the events of the Balkan War and Marinetti usually performed it using the whole body and all the sounds and gestures he was able to. During his performances he also wrote the text around a blackboard to let people see "words in freedom" which was his way of spreading the contents of a poem across a page. Futurists enhanced the physical aspect of linguistic expression using words as a subordinate instrument that could help the body in its expression of corporal qualities. Their experiments became models and the climate of experimentation they created increased the value of art as a process and brought about the growth of performance art and happenings.

"Performance Art" is a term that has been used since the 1950s in the United States. It was related to any live artistic event that, in addition to traditional visual art, included multiple means of expression including poetry, films and music. Performance art or live art is a unique event, ephemeral, in the "hic et nunc" (here and now) and arises from contact between artist and audience. It is a live creative process and not a set product presented to the audience when it is finished (art as is usually shown in museums). It revolutionised the world of culture and the idea of art itself. This revolution began with the words that, in 1963, George Maciunas wrote in his *Fluxus Manifesto*:

Promote a revolutionary flood and tide art, promote living art, anti art, promote non-art reality to be fully grasped by all people² [...]

In the second half of the twentieth century most of the artistic movements tried to break and change the rules of academic art, keeping the vanguard's concept of art as a process (stated by Futurists) and developing it, not only by creating works in front of the audience but also by involving the audience in the act of creation.

18 happenings in 6 parts was an emblematic happening created by Allan Kaprow and performed in 1959 at the Reuben Gallery. In this event he included the audience as an active element of the work, involving people in a collective play.

In his groundbreaking happening Kaprow synthesised his training in action painting with his study of Cage's scored and performed events. Working from a carefully conceived and tightly scripted score, he created an interactive environment that manipulated the audience to a degree virtually unprecedented in 20th century art. The audience were given programs and three stapled cards, which provided instructions for their participation: <The performance is divided into six parts...Each part contains three happenings which occur at once. The beginning and end of each will be signalled by a bell. At the end of the performance two strokes of the bell will be heard...There will be no applause after each set, but you may applaud after the sixth set if you wish.> These instructions also stipulated when audience members were required to change seats and move to the next of the three rooms into which the gallery was divided. These rooms were formed by semitransparent plastic sheets

2 2 Fluxus Manifesto, by George Maciunas, visual document, 1963

*painted and collaged with references to Kaprow's earlier work; by panels on which words were roughly painted, and by rows of plastic fruit. (...) Audience members in many of Kaprow's Happenings became props through which the artist's vision was executed.*³

Performance art broke the rules of theatrical performance and art exhibitions. Performance artists create their masterpieces with the audience and choose objects from everyday life (such as boxes, cans, chess or playing cards), objects that cancel the border between the world of classical art and the reality in which we are immersed. The result is the creation of remarkable and innovative happenings that retain their strong driving force even in the twenty-first century. You can see, for example, today performances by artists who hurt their own body, which becomes a tool for their art, stimulating strong emotions and generating suspense. In this way the audience does not perceive "action" as an art work but also as the performer's body. This concept was clearly expressed by one of the most important artists of Body Art Gina Pane:

*The body become the idea itself whereas before it was only a mean through which the idea was communicated. From this point we can go further, from art to life...body is no longer representation but transformation*⁴

Unknown Author 14/1/12 14:00

Commento: Becomes?

Unknown Author 14/1/12 14:00

Commento: Means?

Gina Pane was a French artist who in the early 1970s created and performed four important works in which she cut herself employing blades and spines of roses (Esalade, Azione sentimentale, Death control, Laure). Although masochism is an important component of her work, her performances were always characterised by a great calm and composure and this, naturally, added to the audience's surprise. Her actions were always calibrated: she followed a specific ceremony and her gestures were evocative and symbolic.

Unknown Author 14/1/12 14:01

Commento: Razor blades?

Unknown Author 14/1/12 14:01

Commento: Rose thorns?

In the 1980s it seems that performance artists, involving mass, popular and folk culture, moved from a raw form of postmodernism to a highly sophisticated and technologically astute form of the same and what Rosalee Goldberg calls "a Media Generation":

*This generation of artists rejected the aestheticised art object, critiqued the meaning of art, and attempted to find ways to take their polemic concerns far away from the confines of the art gallery and the elaborate system that supported it. All of them, particularly the ones working "live", such as Meredith Monk or Robert Ashley, Laurie Anderson, Joan Jonas or Robert Wilson, set their own terms. They found alternative venues for their work, recorded their own music, and made art especially designed as a vehicle for their varied talents. These artists simply could not think in terms of one discipline at a time. Rather, their creative impulses took visual, aural, and spatial form, and their multidimensional thinking resulted in remarkable works that appealed to all the senses. They had the discipline, control, and impetus to keep all mediums working simultaneously, like a row of plates spinning in the air.*⁵

Meredith Monk, present on the American art scene since the 1960s, was one of the pioneers of the use of multimedia in performance and she continues to experiment with new technologies and materials to create powerful images in her performances. Her work as a singer, composer, filmmaker and choreographer pushed her to combine perceptions. Her research was focused on the association of feelings coming from one sense with

3 3 Leap into the Void : Performance and the , by Paul Schimmel, MoCA Los Angeles, New York/London, 1998, pp. 61

4 4 Blessing Jennifer, Tronche Anne, Linde Gaillard Inge, (2002), Gina Pane University of Southampton

5 5 Laurie Anderson, by Roselee Golberg, Abrams Book, New York, 2000, page 1.

phenomena typical of another. The use of the body and its control, the creation of choreography and gestures that recall ceremonials, is also widely present in her work. Thanks to her sophisticated use of technology, she is able to manipulate her body and voice giving importance to mime and gesture. In this way all she does acquires a ritual connotation, be that connotation solemn, enchanting, playful or frenetic.

Inspired by cultures in which performance is considered a spiritual discipline with healing and transformative power, she has sought to re-establish the unity that underlines music, theatre and dance ... her images, her voice and her themes resonate with the power of myth and legend⁶.

Another pioneer of using multimedia in performance is the American artist Laurie Anderson. In her work Anderson takes a subtle approach to revolutionise people's way of thinking and of perceiving the world around them. She used pictures, in the form of film or slides projections and streams of words, straight-forwardly delivered but always full of surprising meanings. Through the use of a range of tools and means of expression, technological and classical, she has made a product that is accessible to anyone:

One of my jobs as an artist is to make contact with the audience, and it has to be immediate⁷

Technology and media can be used to constantly change sensorial relations and ways of perceiving and allowed her to become a new kind of artist. Through technology she could create shadow puppets, extend the stage space into the auditorium with illusionary projections, make collages of images and texts, change voice, manipulate instruments and create new ones. But the most important revolution was that even being an *avant-garde* artist she had recognition from a large audience and from the art industry. With her work she broke through the high-art/low-art dichotomy.

In this chapter I have given an overview of the most important figures in Performance Art. I have offered a brief look at avant-garde's experiments, a short journey through the cultural and technological innovations that have radically changed the way we think and the way we make art and the way we perceive it.

6 6 Meredith Monk, by Deborah Jowitt, The Johns Hopkins University Press, back cover.

7 7 Laurie Anderson, by Roselee Golberg, Abrams Book, New York, 2000

CHAPTER II

RESEARCH DESIGN

Research subject

My first objective is to create multimedia performances.

The aim of my creative work is to be in touch with people, to reach the greatest number and variety of individuals in the most direct, immediate and profound way. In order to achieve my aim I decided to use a globalising logic, to involve several media in a complementary manner. Thanks to the use of technologies and media I can convey to the audience different messages and contents at the same time in a non-consequential manner. In this way my contact with people is not based on their rationality or their knowledge but on their intuition. Intuition is the human ability to see many things at once, of viewing the whole picture, in other words the ability to understand something immediately without the need for conscious reasoning. I chose multimedia communication because it is a way to get to introspection and to reach people straight away. In a multimedia environment I can communicate quickly and directly, I can reach the widest range of people because in this way I do not need people with special expertise, knowledge, background or education. I just need people to sense and perceive in order to exchange experiences with them.

Problems

A number of questions emerged during the process and are summarised here:

- How to skip what might be called “usual thinking”, how to prevent linear logic and push people towards non-consequential thoughts.
- How to involve the audience profoundly in an experience that is both mental and corporeal.

Consequently my efforts were mainly directed towards:

- Stimulating perception, awareness and insight in the audience
- Creating an immersive, multi-sensorial and multidimensional form of communication that facilitates this stimulation

Methodology

In the early stage of the creative process I needed to define the steps that could bring me to that conclusion.

I outlined five possible stages in my work:

1. Audio/music

Collection and creation of audio material:

- Listening and observing intently to the sources, relationships, reverberations and movements of sounds and images in order to understand them and then express that understanding
- Construction of musical structures
- Connecting and stratifying acoustic and synthetic sounds, live and recorded material.

2. Video/image

Collection and creation of visual components:

- Still images: photographs, drawings, paintings
- Moving images: videos, animation, live creation of graphics or manipulations of video recording

3. Motion/acting

- Creation of the gesture and motion structures

4. Smell

- Create olfactory scenery, diffusing smells in order to influence the audience's state of mind
- Associate smells to "emotional images" recalling olfactory memories

5. Taste

- Include in the performer's action of eating live or through images on screen.
- Find expedients to make the audience eat and experience tastes themselves.

The phases I outlined above are not mentioned either in order of importance or, indeed, in chronological order. All these phases are complementary and interrelated so in some cases I worked on more than one at the same time.

CHAPTER III

THE CREATIVE WORK

I have created a series of works that range from minimal electro-acoustic pieces to video and interactive audio visual installations.

The pieces in this portfolio were composed in Sheffield 2010-2011. This dissertation is organised into work descriptions: pieces are examined in detail, as are concepts and designs.

List of composition:

Per non sgocciolare nel silenzio / Not to drip in the silence (5'10'')

Non mi bastava il ricordo /The memory was not enough (10')

Piano Trilogy (10' 30'')

- I. Un cuore sotto una sottana/ A heart under a skirt
- II. Le combinazioni che si asciugano/ ending combinations
- III. Silenzioso, invisibile /silent, invisible

Variation for Tarogato (25')

- I. Con forze che si svolgono sferiche / with forces that spherically wind
- II. Sospensione e attesa/ suspension and wait
- III. In Equilibrio/Balance

PER NON SGOCCIOLARE NEL SILENZIO

Not to drip in the silence

5'10"

Title: Per non sgocciolare nel silenzio/ Not to drip in the silence

Audiovisual composition

Duration: 5'10"

Year: 2010

Introduction

The sonority of this piece evoke spaces, silences, depth, the memory of an inner world. A world that constantly oscillates between moments of calm and moments of great agitation, between obsessive movement and calm and stillness. Acoustic sounds are combined with electronic sounds and exhort to get to the depth of insight, in a balance between music and silence, between sorrow and serenity. It is a composition in which the formation of large and calm spaces alternates with dynamism and vigour, reflecting the fluctuations of our inner world.

Structure

The composition is divided into two sections, the first one is 2'15" and the second one is 1'38". There is a bridge in the middle (*intermezzo*) that lasts for 1'17".

Section I (0:00 to 02:15)

In the first section, structures generated by digital synthesis systems alternate and intertwine with acoustic sounds. The first sound element that occurs is a band (a continuous sound) created with the Ezerbee synthesiser. This band has a meditative and calm nature. Its structure modifies and adapts to the changing characteristics of the section: we can see how it is smooth and punctuated by the slow rhythm of percussion for almost all the section and how it then decreases until it disappears into the *intermezzo*.

The visual part is characterised by light. It has a fixed shot and the subject is oscillating dense vegetation. It is characterised by the contrast between the immobility of the fixed shot, the constant green colour and the incessant movement of plants.

Intermezzo (2:15 to 3:32)

In the *intermezzo* the percussion of *section I* is still marking time almost trying to keep the atmosphere of calm and meditation. But this atmosphere is interrupted and a sound made with Wavsonik synthesiser brings a feeling of excitement and expectation which will lead to *section II*.

The video keeps the natural element of the plants but replaces the oscillating movement with a trembling. Images are less sharp and defined anticipating a change in light.

Section II (03:32 to 05:10)

It may be noted that even if this section originates from the sounds of a mild *intermezzo*, it is actually very excited, in very great contrast with the first section.

Section II is composed of acoustic sounds (manipulated with a bank of filters) that introduce an intense and obsessive rhythm supported by synthetic sounds produced with a Karovect synthesiser.

The video in this section maintains a basic fixed shot that changes images with the rhythm of the sounds. In complete opposition with the first section, the video is dark and the human element comes in glimpses. The image of a hand randomly appears in the frame and these visual events gather up the excitement but they are not able to create a real

Unknown Author 14/1/12 14:06

Commento: This phrase is still unclear. Do you mean something like 'in an attempt to make a profound relationship'? (it may be that the sentence is understandable without this phrase if it's too difficult to translate)

climax. The atmosphere breaks suddenly with the final exit of hands from the visual field.

Content

With regard to contents, as already noted in the general description of the work, this is a composition that speaks of the inner world, of the tumults, the variations and turmoil that shake it every day. The structure of the work, divided into two parts, describes two different states of our inner world. In the first part sounds are meant to describe an environment in suspense, a kind of limbo; the incessant movement of plants describe the feeling of anxiety when we are at a deadlock, when our lives are suspended, sometimes just before or after a big decision. A time when we are stuck, like the frame of the video, in a life moment, when, in stasis, we don't go forward or backward and in which the direction of our existence no longer seems very clear.

The second part, with its tumultuous rhythm and images of hands that continually break the stillness of the shot, is the moment of action and upturn of life. The rhythm of music represents the excitement of "doing" and of projects going ahead. The hands constantly immersed in water at irregular intervals represent ourselves searching our consciousness, extracting energy and ideas from our minds, from our innermost selves. I use water as a symbol of our soul, our mind that we imagine as being dark, obscure, unknown but liquid, fluid and deep; it is a source from which ideas and energies flow fast and endlessly.

NON MI BASTAVA IL RICORDO

The memory was not enough

10'51"

Title: *Non mi bastava il ricordo* / The memory was not enough

Audiovisual Interactive installation

Duration: 10'51"

Year: 2010/2011

Introduction

Non mi bastava il ricordo is an audiovisual interactive installation started during an artist residency at the Bundanon Trust in Australia. The video recordings that are part of this installation were, in fact, mostly filmed in Australia between Bundanon and Riversdale (west cambewarra) in December 2010.

The project, therefore, comes from a recent life experience but also includes images and memories from my past, from the region where I grew up in south of Italy (Calabria). The meaning of this interactive video installation is contained in places and memories. It is a video installation that comes from the desire to connect, interact and to merge the world I have discovered in Australia, which is new to me, unknown, distant and unfamiliar to the world I come from: the usual, the fully internalised, my roots, my past...

Structure and description of the installation

General characteristics of the room:

- empty room, darkened, with at least one white (or clear) wall to use for the projection

Scenic elements:

- one wall of the room is completely covered by the projection
- people who visit the installation are asked to remove their shoes at the entrance
- about 2 cubic meters of minced paper are spread out on the floor and people can move, sit, lie down, roll over or play with it.
- a fan continuously pushes the paper towards the centre of the room. The fan also animates the room with a constant breeze
- a nebuliser spreads perfumed essence (lavender) in the room

Audio and video

Images and music are strictly connected. The audiovisual work consists of two elements:

The first element is the recording of spots in the Australian countryside and the sound is the original one. Different spots of nature from different angles are recorded but they all have a fixed shot. Each spot represents a new day, a new point of view, discoveries and new parts of ourselves that come out in everyday life. Pieces of ourselves that, day after day, build into our evolving personality.

The second element is the recording of a street in an old town in the south of Italy. The

video slows to give the idea of “far away”, of indefinite distance but keeps motion thanks to the hand-held shooting. The wave motion of the camera together with the continuous pulse of music represents our past, our life path, the steps and decisions we have made constantly at the inexorable rhythm of months and years that have passed.

Content and purposes

It's an interactive video installation that connects the video and projected images with the real world bringing them into a new dimension. The installation transforms the room, a tangible environment, into a whole with the video in which images of places are no longer real and tangible but just visible, audible and so documented. In this way, my past, my memories that are represented and stored in the video are merged with the present (the room), with the place and time in which the installation occurs. This installation calls into question the conditions of a passive viewer. The floor of the room is completely covered with shredded paper. When the audience enters the room it not only occupies the space but changes it. As the floor is covered with materials, the room is transformed by the passage of people. The audience not only sees and hears my work but also their own interaction with it and their presence, so that they become part of the work. In this space the places of memory become memories of the audience as well, the images and sounds in the room become part of audience's life since they share a single space, they immerse in it, change it and interact.

PIANO TRILOGY

10'30"

- I. Un cuore sotto una sottana/ a heart under a skirt
- II. Le combinazioni che si asciugano/ ending combinations
- III. Silenzioso, invisibile/ Silent, invisible

Title: Piano Trilogy

Audiovisual Interactive installation

Duration: 10'30"

Year: 2010/2011

Introduction

The "Piano Trilogy" is based on material from an artist residency in Australia and also from the place where I grew up.

The video material used in the piece *Un cuore sotto una sottana* is recorded in Australia. The video shows a beautiful countryside and the legs of young woman repeatedly walking backwards, away from the camera. The shot is static and frontal.

The video material used in the piece *Silenzioso, invisibile* is recorded in Calabria, the place where I grew up. The video shows a street and a lady repeatedly walking forward on the pavement. The shot is static and side view.

Structure and Content

Audio and video

These two parts of the trilogy are full of oppositions:

- Countryside/city
- The newest continent/ the old continent
- Young woman/older woman
- Walking backward/ walking forward

They also have some similarities:

- The gender of the person in the video (female)
- The shot (only the legs are framed)
- The repetitiveness of the action

As with the other piece *Le combinazioni che si asciugano* (that has a black video), there is the piano. In each piece of the trilogy the sound is based on piano sounds and sonorities

This is the establishment of the formal elements of the work. Each element I have outlined has a weight in term of content, they are symbols that strongly represent myself and my history. Already in *Non mi bastava il ricordo* I was talking about places and memories about the desire to connect, interact and to merge what is new to me, unknown and distant to the world I come from. The repetition of walking over and over again is representative of gestures in my life. The distance I do everyday in one direction or in another, going right or wrong but always repeating. The young woman is what I was and the older woman is what I will become, the new world and old world and in the middle is what I am now in this moment, what I cannot see (the black video) because I am being that person.

Interactive element

Another important part of the installation is tactile and tangible. In this installation the floor is covered with slices of bread and the audience, without shoes, can experience

walking on this unusual surface. I wanted this work to be interactive, to involve people in the experience that I myself have lived, the feelings and memories of what I am, the way I was and the fear and excitement of the unknown future. I think that these are shared feelings and situations: we all change, we all decide to be one way or another, to walk in one direction or the other. Repetition and movement is what life is based on.

Driven by the desire to make this installation a linking experience I chose bread as a symbol of union. “The universe begins with the bread⁸”, Pythagoras argued that bread with wine civilises the “savage”. Even in the Homeric poems “bread eaters⁹” means man.

Bread is a mark of distinction between cultures but also a means to unite. The etymology of the word company (*cum panis*, “with bread” in Latin) and *convivio* (*cum vivere*, “live together” in Latin) brings us back to the aggregate nature of food. Sharing bread and, more generally, food brings people into the same community. I chose bread as a symbol of communion and sharing. I placed it on the floor to stress that this is the base of our culture and of being human and of being a community. Bread, which is often considered a natural product is instead a man-made product, produced with farm work and through cooking. It is food that does not exist in nature that separates the civilised from those in nature.

By using this symbol I wanted to underline the moment of sharing and involvement, of the “incarnation” that takes place in the room during the installation.

Description of the installation

General characteristics of the room:

- empty room, darkened, with at least one white (or clear) wall for the projection

Scenic elements:

- one wall of the room is completely covered by the projection
- people who visit the installation are advised to remove their shoes at the entrance
- slices of bread cover the floor
- a device spreads the smell of warm, freshly baked bread

8 8 **Diogene Laerzio**, *Vite dei filosofi*, VIII, 8 e 21, quoting an old saying of Pythagoras

9 9 VI book of *Odyssey*

VARIATIONS FOR TAROGATO

24'

I. Con forze che si svolgono sferiche/ with forces that spherically wind

II. Sospensione e attesa/ Suspension and wait

III. In equilibrio/ Balance

Title: Variations for Tarogato

Electro-acoustic composition

Duration: 24'

Year: 2011

Introduction

Variations for Tarogato is about the meaning of existence and the awareness of a soul launched on the adventure of life. The sounds are processed and altered using unexpected effects, broken, complicated by particular resonance, forced breaks; try, discard, sing, try again, in an attempt to bridle the energy in music. The vital impulse that filters through the musical structure is fragmented by the explosion of an unquenchable spread of energy. Inside the sonic texture, sound and meaning are competing for significance. Starting from the open melodies, to the vocal style and sound compression, all the fragments that form the composition drag in a dynamic ensemble, whirling meteorites in a single orbit.

Structure and compositional tools

Creation of sounds: I used digital virtual synthesisers in Reaktor software to create synthetic sounds. The use of a filter bank in Protools software, meanwhile, allowed me to manipulate acoustic audio samples producing sounds with a synthetic feel but with the rich texture and timbre of natural ones.

Connections between sounds and compositional strategies: The relations between synthetic sounds and acoustic sounds is very narrow. The synthetic sounds in some parts of the composition are used as an expansion of the tonal concrete sounds or as an accompaniment to them. In other areas of the composition the concrete sounds are placed in the background to let synthetic sounds come out. More often, however, the two types of sounds will contribute to a dynamic, complex, structurally coherent timbre.

The techniques used in the composition of musical structures are:

1. Typology of timbre:

The use of categories of sound (voice, piano, synthesiser, cello) gives structural unity and meaning to the whole composition and characterise the different sections at the same time.

2. Psychological association with elements of the experience:

Acoustic sounds like hammers, earth, dripping, everyday objects, associated with synthetic sound structures create a technology-nature dualism, a harmony of opposites so that synthetic elements have more strength and meaning in relation to natural sounds and *vice versa*.

Contents

The first and second variation start from the same sounds then go in two different directions and develop two distinctive personalities.

The *first variation* is about someone who is waiting and listening. Someone silent, patient who has no hurry to expose him/herself but who would rather observe and take what other people want to give him/her.

His/her voice arises as a distant call searching for contact. But it is a faint call, an outstretched hand that immediately withdraws and comes back to wait and listen. He/she is listening to a storytelling, to the silence or simply to his/her own breath.

On the contrary the *second variation* is about talking and the overwhelming desire to communicate. In this variation three voices of the same instrument (tarogato) are chasing each other, they talk on the others and intertwine, driven by the desire to reveal themselves and to be heard. They have no patience to wait, to listen to the answer of the others and so they start an interweaving and overlapping. What takes shape is a single complex interplay of voices that follow the path marked by the electronic sounds.

The *third variation* start from what in the *second variation* is the final sound. It starts from a different attitude, nether shy and patient, nor excited and muddling. This is a variation in which sounds and structures of the *first* and *second variation* are re-proposed but in new forms as they have been rediscovered. What comes out is the strong link with the other two works, recalling the common elements and their new and indefinable character. This variation re-invents itself starting from the end, proposing the voices of *tarogato* in a new and unexpected way. Each voice, while maintaining the flavour and colour from other variations, is able to surprise as if it were conceived and perceived for the first time. This is the representation of how we can be ourselves and change, of how even while we are changing, looking from other angles and trying to show the world another version of ourselves, we still are attached and connected to our background. From here comes the coherence and continuity of variations. They represent three versions, three different points of view, three parts of the same personality.

SMELL

Installations involving odours:

Non mi bastava il ricordo

Piano trilogy

My work originates from the desire to express myself and get in touch with people through this expression. I would like to link myself to the audience, to recall *their* memories and engage *their* thoughts. I would like my experience to also be other people's experience, that my works could lead people to empathise, to remember and think about their own lives. But to start this connection and interaction using only sounds or images is not enough. The audiovisual has just two dimensions, involves only part of our brain and body capabilities and becomes, all too often, a one-way and passive experience.

What we practice in everyday life is far from linear, two-dimensional or non active. When we walk we don't only see what is in front of us: we also hear and smell, we touch and feel what is around us. The same is true of every action we make. We don't have one idea at a time as we don't experience events separately. Simultaneous and multidimensional structures are at the base of humans thinking and they help us to communicate and to elaborate elements from the outside world.

The thinking process does not build new ideas one at a time, starting at an empty state and turning out each idea as a finished product. Thinking instead continues at several fronts at once, developing and rejecting ideas at different levels and on different points in parallel, where each idea depends on and contributes to the other¹⁰.

In order to lead an audience to empathise, to "slip" into my work and recall their own life events I felt the need to create new stimuli, to include more instruments and an olfactory component was one of these. Smell makes content immersive and absorbing, intensifies emotions and the sense of reality. It is important to communicate, to recall memory and recognise each other: for example mothers can recognise their babies by smell and new-borns, likewise, recognise their mothers. Smell evokes memory in a particularly powerful way. Memory and smell are closely linked: in order to identify a smell we must first associate it to a memory, to something that is already somewhere in our mind.

It (the human mind) operates by association. With one item in its grasp, it snaps instantly to the next that is suggested by the association of thoughts, in accordance with some intricate web of trails carried by the cells of the brain¹¹.

Many writers and artists have marvelled at such mind mechanisms and how memories are stored and recalled. In *The Remembrance of Things Past*, Marcel Proust described what happened to him after drinking a spoonful of tea in which he had soaked a piece of cake (a madeleine):

No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shudder ran through my whole body, and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary

¹⁰ 10 J. Conklin, "Hypertext: An Introduction and Survey." *IEEE Computer* 20, 9, September 1987, page 32

¹¹ 11 V. Bush, *As We May Think*, *Atlantic Monthly*, July 1945 Section 6, par. 2

thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses. With no suggestion of its origin. Suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was of a little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings my Aunt Leonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea. Immediately the old grey house on the street, where her room was, rose up like a stage set and the entire town, with its people and houses, gardens, church, and surroundings, taking shape and solidity, sprang into being from my cup of tea¹².

Proust noted how just seeing the madeleine had not brought back these memories, he needed to taste and smell it.

When nothing else subsists from the past, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, the smell and taste of things remain poised a long time, like souls; bearing resiliently, on tiny and almost impalpable drops of their essence, the immense edifice of memory¹³.

What Proust describes in this passage is the situation that I want to create in my installations. In *Non mi bastava il ricordo* the smell of lavender can be the spark that triggers all sorts of memories and feelings. Flowers can be associated with a happy situation like a date or birth but also with illness and death. A smell of flowers together with the gentle wind of the fan can recall countryside or summer, can encourage people to lie on the floor, lie in the shredder paper as on grass, in the snow or sand. In the *Piano trilogy* the smell of bread can evoke memories, such as the last meal people had and consequently the situation and persons they were with. It can recall a particular moment of the day or even make them feel hungry.

We are probably not able to describe a smell to someone but as soon as we smell something we know it and we know it as Proust says “with all our body”. Through odours we immediately have awareness of things even before we can explain them in words and with reasoning. The use of odours can open the door of “the immense edifice of memory” that people have inside them. I try to design installations so that when someone has access to them, they also have also access to his/her own inner world, memories and emotions.

Associations, interactions and contrasts activate what is inside the room but also what is inside the audience and this makes the installation truly interactive.

¹² 12 Marcel Proust, *The Remembrance of Things Past*, 1927

¹³ 13 Marcel Proust, *The Remembrance of Things Past*, 1927

CONCLUSION

The work described in this dissertation was undertaken to create a multimedia performance in which sound, movement and static images, smell, live action, taste and tact merge and interact.

The portfolio reveals the interaction in a practical form and this written dissertation explained the formal aspects of the work.

In the research design I outlined that my efforts would be directed towards two important directions :

- Stimulating perception, awareness and insight in an audience
- Create an immersive, multi-sensorial and multidimensional form of communication that can make this stimulation effective

I can verify that I was able to focus on these two aims, especially in the installations which represent an immersive and multi-sensorial work: *Non mi bastava il ricordo* and *Piano trilogy* were designed to elicit unconscious and contrasting emotions in an audience through a multidimensional communication.

In the research project I outlined five aspects of my work:

1. Audio/music collection and creation of audio material
2. Video/image, collection and creation of visual components
3. Motion/acting, creation of the gesture and motion structures
4. Smell, olfactory scenery, diffusing smells in order to influence the audience's state of mind, to associate smells with "emotional images"
5. Taste, include in the performer's action eating live or eating images on screen, find expedients to make the audience eat and experience tastes themselves.

All these phases are so complementary and interrelated that it was necessary to work on more than one at the same time. During my MPhil year of research I achieved four of these points. I started my artistic research from the creation of sound and video structures. In parallel, I carried out some tests of olfactory scenarios to integrate smell together with sounds and images in interactive installations.

The result is a portfolio of interactive installations and audiovisual works aimed at involving the audience's senses of hearing, sight and smell.

In the future, my work will focus on trying to get the audience to eat and to experience taste.

The last stage of my work will be centred on a more direct contact with the audience through the development of live performance, which will lead to interaction not only between the audience and the artistic work but also between the audience and the performer.

APPENDIX I

SOUND SOURCES AND THE PROCESS OF COMPOSITION

The music of these artistic works is based on acoustic recorded sounds and synthetic sounds produced with software.

The recorded material of my pieces can be divided into two categories:

- acoustic instrument (piano and tarogato)
- environmental sounds (recording of streets, places, voices and objects in their original environment)

The synthetic sounds produced with software were mainly generated with Reaktor and Pd. Before composing a piece I usually investigate the source materials and then extract some phrases and short samples (these typically have a duration of less than a minute). During this selection process I investigate each sound for its spatial and spectral properties by listening for particular traits and characteristics.

The next stage involves processing the phrases and sounds in order to create different kinds of processed materials. I always make copies of samples so that I preserve the original ones.

The third stage consists in creating synthesiser patches with which I produce a database of electronic sounds.

The fourth stage is making layers of electronic, processed and non-processed sounds that lead to the final electro-acoustic composition.

Examples of this compositional process are *Variazioni per tarogato* and *Piano Trilogy* that were mainly made with recordings of acoustic instruments (piano and tarogato) and recording of coins, hummers, water and footsteps. These acoustic sounds were also manipulated and processed and used together with original sounds to create the pieces. I processed these sounds through a pd patch and I also added some synthetic sounds created with Reaktor using layering techniques and counterpoint.

But I think that the most characteristic element of my compositional aesthetic is the use of acoustic space and the disposition of sounds in it.

I often use digitally altered parts or copies of the source materials sustained with reverberant sounds to produce the impression of a transforming space.

The mixing of varied reverberate sounds with raw material presented as it has been recorded, without substantial changes and manipulations, create a strong sense of spatial depth and expansion of the acoustic space, in which sounds are strongly connected to each other but in which they move in a delicate balance.

It must be emphasised that the techniques and procedures described above are a starting point for the compositional act: they are subordinate to the content of the artistic work.

APPENDIX II

THE CHOICE OF CLOSED AUDIO VISUAL STRUCTURES FOR THE INTERACTIVE INSTALLATIONS AND THE POSSIBLE USES AND EXPERIENCES OF THOSE STRUCTURES BY AN AUDIENCE

The audiovisual structures that I created for my installations and for my multimedia works share the same closed form with a clearly defined beginning and end. This might seem at odds with the fact that I define my work and my installations "interactive".

More and more often today interactive installation means a place where the audience is more or less equipped with the same tools as the artist and in this situation the audience is able of re-interpreting or even take the place of the artist, the musicians or the critic.

Art online is also a situation commonly associated with the concept of interactivity, with the important difference that it generates a much more intimate experience for the audience. Internet art is almost entirely based on engagement and can only express its potential with the active participation of people: it allows users to change or add contents therefore the audience is brought into a closer relationship to the person and work of the artist, and a little further from the detachment and coolness of the traditional museums and galleries. But it is also true that without an audience which adds contents, navigates, reacts or accepts an invitation for participation, nothing happens and there is almost no art experience.

However I think that in between the total openness of art on internet and projects in which the only interaction consists of the capability to switch a particular process on or off, there are different levels of interactivity.

The desire to capture the attention of the audience and involve the viewer as much as possible is very strong and giving them tools of manipulation and creation is certainly one of the most effective ways to involve people. Nevertheless I think that is also a way for the author's role to become obscured inside a device which receives, manipulates and sends data in a place.

Thinking about this kind of issues and choices and the reactions they cause, I had to decide to what level I want to keep control over my work and in which way I want to present it.

I thought that the best way to capture the attention of the audience and make the artistic experience stimulating and effective was to show hospitality, to create an amusing and interesting space of engagement. I decided that even though the audience is left as free as possible to engage in this interpretive process, the artwork is still my own creation.

My works have a closed form, a beginning and an end set, but the viewer is free to enjoy them as and when desired. I invite the audience to an involvement but not to an entirely free domain of action and interpretation in which participants have the same influence on the works form and meaning that I have.

In my installations is reported video length and even the title and contents, but the room is open and admission is free. Within the installation people are free to move in space, using the objects in the room, come and go as they wish, speak or be silent, sit, stay still or move.

I like to think of my works as gifts. Of course, not knowing well the recipients of it would be easier to give a gift card so that they can choose to buy what they want (with the only restriction of the store and the amount of money). But I prefer to choose a definite gift, a personalized one with a specific form, color and size as well as a special packaging. Customizing the gift I restrict the choice of who receives it but at the same time people have the freedom to use the gift as they wish, to associate it with other things, to use it at different times and in different ways or not to use it at all.

This is the kind of interactivity that I have chosen for my installations, a refined balance

between my thinking and actions and the reactions and thoughts of those who participate in or see my works.

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