

Mark Garry

I am listening to you.

A text in response to

Martijn Tellinga's *presence (Un) presence*

MARK GARRY is an artist, curator and occasional musician based in Ireland. His practice is multifaceted and incorporates a variety of media, mechanisms and material interests. These include drawing, film making, photography, sculpture, sonic sculpture, performance and collaborative music projects. Driven by a fundamental interest in observing how we navigate the world and the subjectivity inherent in these navigations. Garry has held exhibitions at museums and art venues in Europe and North America and he represented Ireland at the 2005 Venice Biennale | www.markgarrystudio.com

I am listening to you has been written for the occasion of the exhibition of 'presence (Un) presence' at D-Light Studios, Dublin, 5 – 11 October 2023.

The work traces the increasingly blurred distinction between our physical real and a simulated technological reality. Fusing site, movement, video technology and the human senses, the piece stages a radically slowed-down choreography for 4 performers who scan our fundamental postures —standing, walking, sitting, lying down— as the means to negotiate a heavily medialised installation environment. The performances become gradually expanded and displaced through non-linear video feeds, image transmission and occasional text mediation on large-size canvases mounted in the space. While subject of perpetual broadcast, the postures slowly take shape as still acts of resistance, protesting the never-ceasing scrambling of their time and location and quietly (re)enacting the relational space the performers share between them.

With performers Francis Fay, Isabella Oberländer, Ben Sullivan, Claire Keating.

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Sound is fugitive it pervades, it persists, it continues,,,

After its birth, in its infant years, the universe - all energy, all matter - was packed so tight that the temperature blazed into billions of degrees. No atom could exist in such heat. Instead protons and electrons roiled in a hot lava, a plasma. The plasma was a mire so dense that particles of light, photons were trapped. Inside this furnace, sound was born.

Irregularities in the plasma sent out pulses. Each pulse was a sound wave, a travelling wave of high and low pressure, just like the waves of compression in air that we create when we snap our fingers. The sounds travelled through the plasma hundreds of thousands of times faster than sound on present-day earth.

.....the brains that ponder the first sound waves are themselves made from these waves because our own planet and stars are, like all planets and stars descendants of the primordial plasma. And so our bodies and the

thoughts that emerges within them are made from the remnants of acoustic waves in the plasma. From inside ancient sound, we listen. ¹

One of the present day incarnations of these primordial waves pulsate within us, as theta waves that generate neural oscillations in the brain that causes an occurrence known as the theta rhythm. In both humans and other animals the theta rhythm regulates cognition and behaviours including learning, memory and spatial navigations. The theta rhythm enables an interagency between memory, bodily transference and location within space.

Martijn Tellinga's 'presence (Un) presence' involves a proposition that uses latency and expanded telematics to enable a particular form of mediated interagency. This interagency involves a form of corporeal listening and an invitation to improvise, where the resources of two bodies are called upon to move beyond the confines and capacities of their singular bodies. Listening is a key component of 'presence (Un) presence', it facilitates a silent dialogue where listening lies deep within the body and is as yet a mysterious process involving myriad time delays.²

I am listening to you, as to another who transcends me, requires a transition to another dimension. I am listening to you: I perceive what you are saying, I am attentive to it, I am

¹ Haskell, David George. *Sounds Wild and Broken*. Faber and Faber. 2022. p375-374

² Oliveros, Pauline. *Improvising Composition. How to listen in the time between*. Duke University Press. 2016. p75

attempting to understand and hear your intention. Which does not mean: I comprehend you, I know you, so I do not need to listen to you and can plan a future for you. No I am listening to you as someone and something I do not know yet, on the basis of a freedom and openness put aside for this moment. I am listening to you: I encourage something unexpected to emerge, some becoming, some growth, some new dawn, perhaps. I am listening to you prepares the way for the not-yet coded, for silence, for a space for existence, initiative, free intentionality, and support for your becoming.³

Improvisation is implicated in 'presence (Un) presence' as a means of facilitating a purposeful fluidity, enabling forms of conscious responsiveness where, as David Borgo suggests:

.....improvisation as a not deterministic, non-rehearsed engagement and expansion can show us a different way of being in the world, one in which our very notions of ourselves and our relationships with the social-material world we inhabit are constantly in flux, under continuous negotiation.⁴

³ Irigaray, Luce. I Love you. Sketch of a Possible Felicity in History. In *Almost Absolute silence*. Routledge. 1967. p116-117

⁴ Borgo, David, Schroeder Franziska; O'Haodha, Michaeál. *Sound-weaving: Writings on Improvisation*. Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. p48

Michel Foucault suggest that the modern body is “manipulated, shaped, trained” by social institutions and is thus an “object and target of power”⁵ that our bodies are living evidence of social geographies and ideological regimes.⁶ The contemporary body has to also contend with being manipulated, shaped and trained by its proximity to, relationship with or indeed location within contemporary simulated technological realities. The questions proposed by presence (Un) presence have to do with distinction, where does the distinction lie (if one still exists) between what is lived and what is mediated, and what is involved in the formation of a contemporary spatiality ? Henry Lefebvre contends that spatiality is made up of interconnected physical, conceptual and lived realms that all contribute to the production of human experience. For Lefebvre, the material conditions of our spatiality (site, architecture) are accompanied by conceptual understandings of space that shape and constrain behaviour (abstract space, geography, borders) and by the less measurable, embodied spatial activities of everyday citizens (lived, experience, place).⁷ These three elements are both produced by society, and produce the conditions on which society is based. Lefebvre felt that many people have become fundamentally alienated from taking part fully in the production of space which he sees as dominated by uneven forces of capital.⁸ He suggest that by reuniting the perceptual, conceptual and lived strands of spatiality could reunite citizens with the means of understanding and challenging how the

⁵ Foucault, Michel. *Discipline and Punish. The Birth of the prison*. Translated by Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage . 1995 p136

⁶ Foucault, Michel. *Language, counter memory, practice. Selected essays and interviews*. Edited by Donald Bouchard. Ithaca: NY. Cornell University Press. 1977 p41

⁷ Lefebvre, Henry. *The production of Space*. Oxford : Blackwell. 1991 p38-39

⁸ *Ibid* p48

spaces around them produce and control their contemporary lives.⁹

'presence (Un) presence' uses a constructed, carefully arranged spatial encounter to recognise a fundamental disjunct between the perceptual, conceptual and lived strands of spatiality, questioning how the proliferation of simulated technological realities has impacted the balance of Lefebvre's spatial paradigm and how this enables a spatially imbalanced dislocating among humans in contemporary society.

It employs forms of slow encounter to engage with extended structures of temporality, with strategies of hesitation, delay and deceleration, in an effort to make us pause and experience a passing present in all its heterogeneity and difference.¹⁰

This work acts and reacts, calls and responds, it folds time upon itself, it persists, it continues. It reminds us that we are affective bodies, constantly pulsing with waves, evolving and creating new energies as we react and interact with other bodies.

⁹ Ibid p222

¹⁰ Koepnick, Lutz. *On Slowness. Toward an Aesthetic of the Contemporary*. Colombia University Press.2014. p 15

The artistic practice of MARTIJN TELLINGA occupies an intermedium between spatial installation, music, and durational performance. Drawn from a reduced formalist-seeming vocabulary, it engages site, sound, moving image, choreography, the temporal and the textual. Exploring processual dynamics and open-form composition processes, he seeks to address questions of place, agency and environment from within evolving exhibition settings. He presents worldwide, lectures and works in residence. He lives between Amsterdam, The Netherlands and Dublin, Ireland | www.martijntellinga.nl

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