

# Open Source

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(Lisbon 2019-2023)  
with Mattin, Margarida Garcia,  
DJ Marfox at Galerias Municipais  
in Lisbon (19. September 2021)

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**DISCLAIMER:**

I take no responsibility for the pronounce “I” as a container for individual authorship.<sup>1</sup>

The experience of working as an exhibition attendant and art handler at the international documenta 2 in 1959 when he was 23 years old, was fundamental for artist Hans Haacke’s understanding of the rules that govern the art world. In 1981, the renowned art critic Walter Grasskamp found a photographic print of poor technical quality in the documenta archives depicting two students in front of a Kandinsky painting. Grasskamp published the photo with the following caption: Photography is the art called upon to represent the notorious non-simultaneity of the simultaneous, and this unknown photographer succeeded in creating a relevant masterpiece at documenta 2. It transpired that Hans Haacke, a student at the Werkakademie at the time, had been the creator of this masterpiece. Grasskamp considers *Photographic Notes* to be a key work of his, because the characteristics of his work are already clearly recognisable: scepticism, criticism, seriousness, irony, pleasure in exposing issues.

At documenta 14, the series *Fotonotizen, documenta 2 (documenta 2 Photographic Notes, 1959)*, belonging to the collection of the Museum für Gegenwartskunst Siegen in Germany, was the only work presented at the Fridericianum whose entire space was dedicated to the collection of Greece’s National Museum of Contemporary Art (EMST). The Museum Fridericianum was the head or the top of the pyramid for all the quinquennial documenta of contemporary art that followed the establishment of this event in 1955. In 2017, documenta 14 broke with the distribution of roles, spaces and time that characterised previous editions. Holding it simultaneously in Athens (Greece) and in Kassel (Germany) reversed the visual, temporal and spatial perspective of the event. In a revolutionary act, also in the physical sense of the word, the curatorial concept literally cut off the head of the event, embodied by the Museum Fridericianum, breaking the verticality of the gaze, which had been directed there until the exhibition

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.mattin.org/essays/essays.html>

by the curator of documenta 13, the eloquently titled 'brain'. At documenta 14, horizontality prevailed and extended beyond the structural walls of the West, Northern Europe, and Kassel in particular, creating an open plan that extended towards the East, the South and the Mediterranean. From the very first editions, the series *Fotonotizen documenta 2* testified to this reversal of the gaze effected by art and under whose regime we still remain today. As Grasskamp, who rediscovered these images, points out, they contain everything that makes Hans Haacke's work so influential for generations of artists: the awareness of a shift from an aesthetic of production (disciplinary) to an aesthetic of reception (biopolitical). The fact that National Museum of Contemporary Art, Athens EMST's collection was displayed at the Fridericianum, was not so much to obey any hierarchy of locations from previous editions, but rather concerned the need to exhibit an example of a national contemporary art collection, of which there are many, but whose social role is rarely questioned in this way.

Meanwhile, at the rear of the documenta Halle, which is not far from the Fridericianum, Mattin, who can be considered a direct heir to Hans Haacke's strategies, was working on his 180-day concert *Social Dissonance* (2017). By means of a prose score, he initiated *social dissonance* within the context of this public event. During the six months of the event in Athens and Kassel, four players played members of the audience as instruments. This audience then heard themselves and reflected on their own conception and self-presentation. The score *Social Dissonance* claims that amplifying alienation in performance and participation can enable us a better understanding of structural alienation or what philosopher Ray Brassier calls in his preface to Mattin's forthcoming book *Social Dissonance* 'not the experience of estrangement, but the estrangement of experience.'

What appears so intense in Hans Haacke's view of the visitors at documenta 2, through his photographs, can be found in Mattin's focus on the audience at documenta 14. Haacke's photographs move us because he breaks from the gaze directed at the works to bring us to the gaze of the 'viewers', as Marcel Duchamp called them in *Le processus créatif*, (*The Creative Process*) or to the consciousness of the 'livers' as Guy Debord described them in his *Rapport sur les constructions de situations*, (*Report on the Construction of Situations*):

The role played by a passive or merely bit-part playing "public" must constantly diminish, while that played by those who cannot be called actors, but rather, in a new sense of the term, "livers," must steadily increase.

In shifting the emphasis from the sonic to the social, Mattin continues the path forged by Cage in his relationship to silence. Mattin undertakes an investigation into the concept of alienation as a constitutive part of subjectivity but also as an enabling opportunity for performance and practice in order to understand what he calls social dissonance: a structural form of cognitive dissonance emerging out of our individual narcissism and the conflation of selfhood with subjectivity. This instrumental approach to the audience can be linked to that developed by Pauline Oliveros (1932-2016) in relation to the place where music is played. Oliveros coined the term Deep Listening in 1989 to describe her collective improvisations with trombonist Stuart Dempster and singer Panaiotis. *Deep Listening* was recorded in a huge underground cistern in Washington State that Dempster had discovered some years earlier. The space, which once held two million gallons of water, has a reverberation time of 45 seconds, and the recordings are a surreal mix of tones. 'The cistern space, in effect, is an instrument being played simultaneously by all three composers,' Oliveros said in her original album notes. Oliveros considered listening as exercises in concentration and reflection designed to deepen daily engagement with sound. She saw sound not only as the audible vibrations of the air around us, but also as the totality of the universe's manifold vibratory energies. To listen is to become aware of oneself in this collective whole. The 'Deep listening' that she described as 'a practice that is intended to heighten and expand consciousness of sound in as many dimensions of awareness and attention dynamics as humanly possible' is arguably similar to that which Mattin dedicates to the listening public. For Oliveros, as well as for Mattin, it is a process of radical attention. Listening is an inherently empathetic act, requiring receptivity to the intentions of others and the natural world. Mattin pushes this approach of receiving the audience's emotions right up to the brink of irritation, caused by the silence he allows to set in and the disappointed expectation he nurtures by adopting the position of listener. The importance of Deep Listening lies in its contradiction with the trajectory of the dominant entertainment culture, which directs the listener towards media and politically compartmentalised environments.

This practice, shared by Oliveros and Mattin, also opposes the hypnotic listening habits encouraged by streaming, which positions music as a utilitarian productivity tool, something to be ignored while your concentration lies elsewhere. In this respect, 'Deep Listening' or 'Social Dissonance' is the opposite of the *Furniture Music (Musique d'ameublement)* composed by Erik Satie in 1917-18: 'Music to be played in such a way that no one hears it'. According to Ornella Volta, who wrote the preface to the French composer's score, 'The audience was advised above all not to pay attention but to stroll,

drink and chat while the piece was being played 'as if it didn't exist'. But Satie's objective was the same as that of Oliveros and Mattin at the most extreme level: to break with the division that segments the musical ceremony, separating the producers of sound from its listeners, or at any rate to adjust the slider to a different measure.

Mattin also uses an inverted strategy that ultimately produces sound formulated by the impatient audience, a sound sometimes comprising speech, a noise often emitted in the form of chaotic declamations. With Oliveros, each musician listens carefully and reacts accordingly, not only to the other but also to the space around them. The cistern represents the world, the entire universe, as they listen to its contours. With Mattin, it is the bodies present that become the musical material of a song dedicated to the geographical and political context into which emerges a concert in the sense of a harmonic tuning of instruments.

Mattin owes this focus on context to the legacy of musicians such as Alvin Lucier (1931-2021). It is the interconnecting principle of his *Expanding Concert (Lisbon 2019-2023)*, dispersed in time over five years and in space via various media: 5 public performances in the 5 Galerias Municipais spaces in Lisbon and 5 texts exploring the notion of call and response in improvisation in an expanded form: each public performance being a form of call. As a response, a writer is invited to attend the performance and to write a text about it afterwards. These responses attempt to contextualise the performance in relation to the artistic, political and economic situation of Lisbon in its time. According to Mattin, *Expanding Concert* is an improvised concert that attempts to think itself historically while it is unfolding..

In Alvin Lucier's *Chambers* (1968) we find the same concern for interweaving spaces and sounds, as can be deduced from the very beginning of the score:

*Sounds of fixed resonant environments such as cisterns and tunnels may be made portable by means of recordings, or radio or telephone transmission, and carried into inner or outer environments. When carried into inner environments, such as theatres into beds, the sounds of the now-portable resonant environments may either mingle with or take over the sounds of the inner environment. When carried to outer environments, such as boilers into parks, the sounds of the now-portable resonant environments may be treated as original portable environments. Mixtures of these materials and procedures may be used. Increasing and lessening of any characteristics of any sounds may be brought about. A.L.*

However, the space's acoustic signature is different for Lucier and Mattin. The latter gives vital importance in terms of his fathers and mothers when it comes to the social relationships that populate the sound landscapes that weave together.

This text, which indirectly recounts the third edition of the *Expanding Concert (Lisbon 2019 – 2023)*, presenting Mattin performing with Margarida Garcia and DJ Marfox at Galeria Av. da Índia (Galerias Municipais) in September 2021, thus transforms the sound into material that will be presented on photocopied A4 sheet of paper, itself located in another space, which will allow it to further resonate.

What brings Mattin closer to his eminent predecessors is the intention to break down the relationship between the individual and the collective and to offer a non-segregated field of experience. But what accentuates his distinction from them is that he pushes this limit to the point of freeing up the appropriation and use of all his initiatives by giving them away as Anti-Copyright material. He is therefore less an heir than a desecrator of the principle of property. He produces the antidote to all attempts to recapture his labour force as an object of speculation. This is not to impede the circulation of his ideas or sounds through commerce, which he occasionally avoids, but rather to keep others (individuals or institutions) from reducing the radical nature of these offerings in the future under the pretext of protecting his rights.

Mattin takes part in open source and, as such, everything related to his work, including this text, is open source. Mattin is the haunting of capital and its trinity formula applied to silence, noise and sound: firstly, money (or music) considered as an extractable chain becomes, secondly, capital (or noise) as a divested object, to exist thirdly only under the fetishistic aspect of stock and scarcity (or sound and silence). With Mattin, sound and silence escape in a deluge, an inundation.

Anti-Copyright

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