

# Alexander Tillegreen: *Shift*

(UK)

Across sound installations, paintings, sculpture, and photography, visual artist and composer Alexander Tillegreen examines how we attempt to create significance in the world via our senses. The works in the exhibition *Shift* – Tillegreen’s first institutional solo exhibition in Denmark – show how this sensation is influenced by our cultural background, subconscious mind, and spatial surroundings. Thus, the exhibition paints a larger picture of how we each decode reality based on our various individual backgrounds.

From loudspeakers placed within the entrance to the exhibition flows a rhythmic series of sounds materialising into a profusion of ever-changing words in our ears. However, these words are not necessarily real. The phenomenon is known as the *phantom word illusion*, defined by the British psychology professor Diana Deutsch as words that emerge when we hear something which, acoustically, does not exist. Based on Tillegreen’s research into this phenomenon, he has created sound works to specifically evoke word illusions in the heads of listeners. Often the words will resonate with earlier experiences in our lives, our linguistic background, or mood on the given day. Sometimes we hear unexpected and odd words; at other times we hear words and names that may link to personal memories or collective events in society generally.

As an acoustic mirror, listeners are made aware not only of their own mental archives but also of how everyone’s approach to the world is potentially governed by individual experience. This situated way of listening is further thematised in glass heads hanging in the exhibition along panels illustrating how our listening is directional.

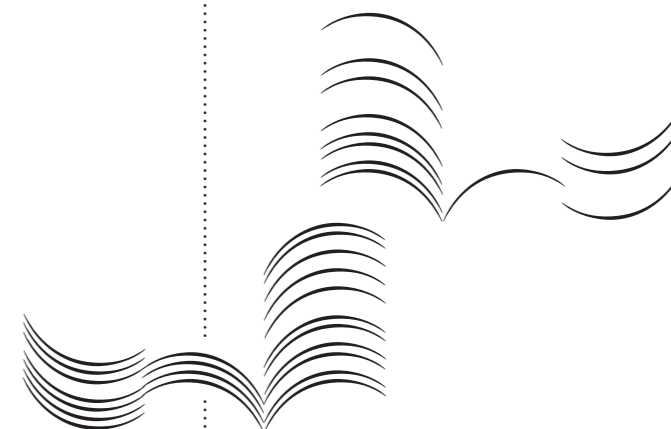
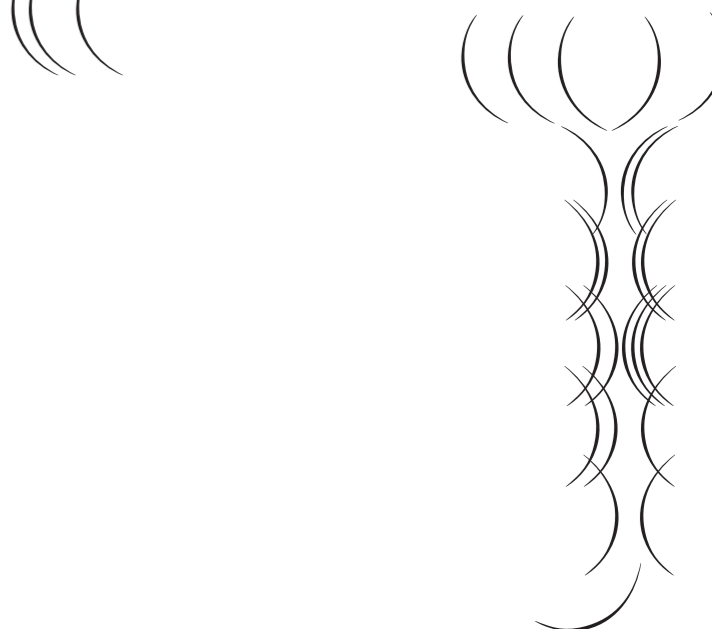
Although we often decode people’s gender, mood, and age based on their voices, all these signs appear distorted and ambiguous in the sound work. This form of ambiguity is repeated in the abstract paintings in the exhibition with small hints and signals suggesting figural motifs in the brushstrokes. One specific painting, for example, seems to depict a floor plan but collapses once we try to find our bearings in it, instead becoming psychological space. Next to it hangs site-specific photos of O—Overgaden’s architecture in disorienting misty layers, echoing the rooms we are in. Collectively, the works offset customary visual, spatial, and auditory layers of meaning and we are thus confronted with our desire to understand the world fully as signs.

A large grey structure further into the exhibition plays the same kind of sounds as the previous sound work. This time, however, they are accompanied by changing light and musical elements. The various kinds of specific staging influence what we hear, further emphasising our brain’s plastic and fluid ways of perceiving sound and reality. The listening experience is also sensitive to our position in the room. Even a slight turn of the head will trigger a drastically different experience and we thus become co-creators of unique experiences by moving about.

Involving visitors is a central element in the exhibition, which is also evident in the display cases that appear towards the end of the exhibition. They contain a series of works on paper, visual records of conversations, and empirical studies from Tillegreen’s extensive collaborative research into phantom words with the Max Planck Society in Frankfurt. As concrete illustrative mind maps of the words heard by listeners, these drawings exemplify how word-flows emerge and can be sensed. Thus, several people’s experiences of the sound work are integrated into Tillegreen’s further work. If you would like to contribute to his works and research project, you can describe what you hear in the work by scanning the QR code on the exhibition text after your visit.



2 April – 22 May 2022



Alexander Tillegreen (b. 1991, DK) was educated at the Städelschule in Frankfurt and the Cooper Union School of Art, New York. In tandem with this, he studied art history and sound studies at the University of Copenhagen, and he conducts artistic research on an ongoing basis at the Max Planck Institute of Empirical Aesthetics. Tillegreen’s works have been shown at the Museum MMK für Moderne Kunst (DE); the CTM Festival (DE); Roskilde Festival (DK); Strøm Festival, (DK); CPH:DOX (DK); Fotografisk Center (DK); the National Gallery of Denmark; and Kunsthalle Darmstadt (DE). He has just opened a solo show at the museum FuturDome in Milan and in the autumn he will be releasing his first solo album on the German label raster-media.

