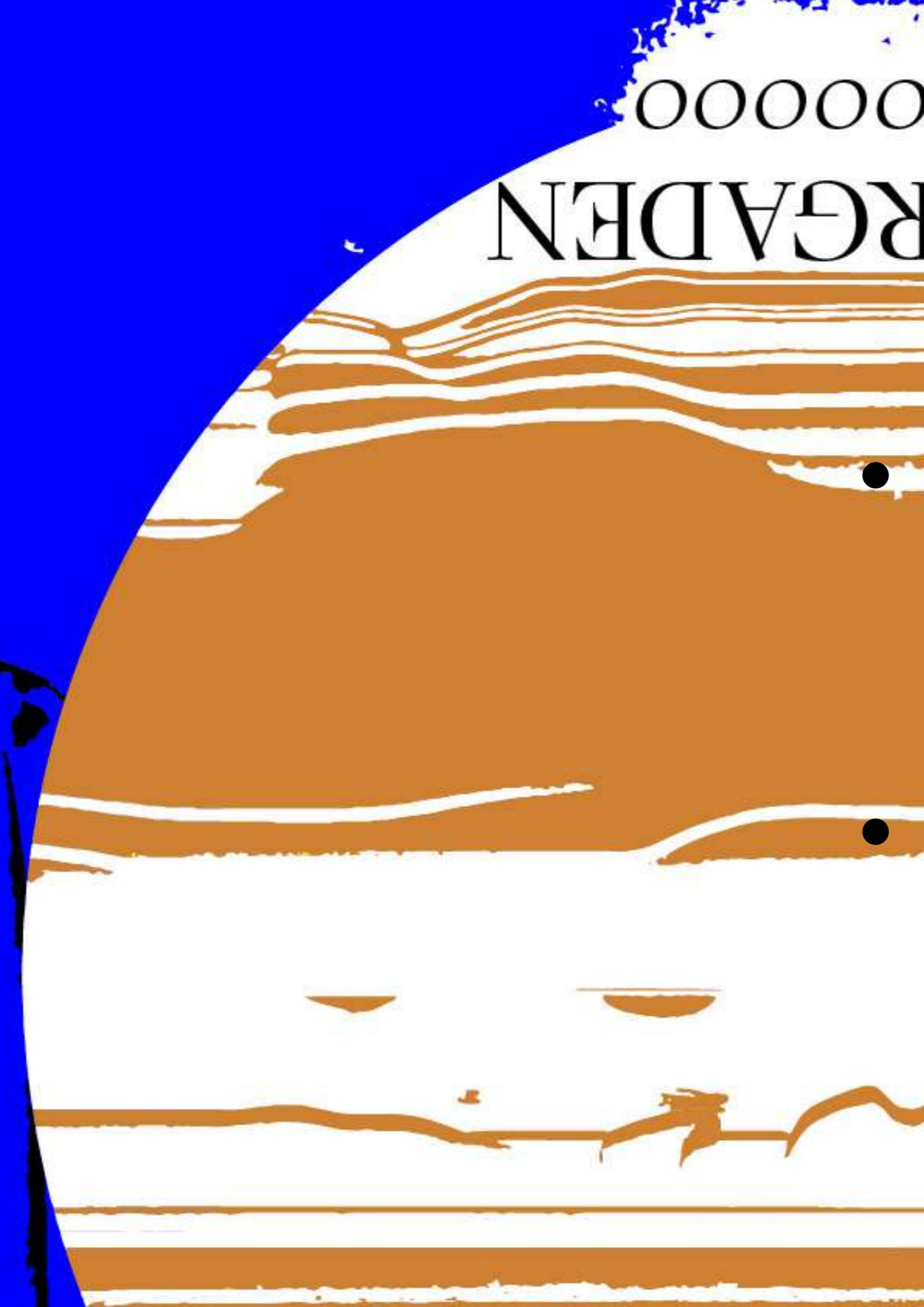




Alexander
Tillegreen

Shift



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Shift

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O - OVERGADEN
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FORORD

At træde ind i den danske billedkunstner og komponist Alexander Tillegreens eksperimenterende lyduniverser er en kropslig og fysisk oplevelse. Det er både eneroverende og transcenderende, meditativt og voldsomt. Ja, det er nærmest som at få en heftig omgang lydmassage. Gennem både lyd og billeder arbejder Alexander Tillegreen med at sløre de auditive koder, vi normalt navigerer efter – heriblandt vores sprog – og opbygger deres velkendte betydningslag til abstrakte lydbilleder.

Tillegreens aktuelle arbejde udspringer af et længere forskningsprojekt på Max Planck Institutet i Frankfurt, hvor han undersøger det psyko-akustiske lydfænomen kaldet ”fantomord-illusioner”. Fantomord er lyde, der hos den enkelte lytter skaber indre illusioner af ordstrømme og sætninger, men som reelt set ikke er til stede. I stedet er det hjernen og underbevidstheden, der spiller en et puds. En interessant kropslig mekanisme, der instinktivt og automatisk søger efter mening for at tilfredsstille hjernens higen efter identifikation.

Udstillingen *Shift*, som Tillegreen har skabt særligt til O - Overgaden, centrerer sig omkring to større lydværker, men inkluderer også maleri, fotografi, tegning og skulpturelle installationer, der understøtter Tillegreens undersøgelser af det akustiske felt. Lydværkerne er skabt specifikt til at fremkalde fantomord i lytterens hoved,

Shift

der ændrer sig afhængigt af, hvordan man bevæger sig i rummet. Ofte resonerer de ord, man hører med ens egen kulturelle og sproglige baggrund, underbevidsthed, erfaringer og aktuelle humør, hvilket i udstillingen bliver et billede på, hvordan vi afkoder virkeligheden fra helt forskellige og dybt individuelle udgangspunkter.

I 2021 påbegyndte O - Overgaden arbejdet med en serie nye, monografiske publikationer, der udkommer løbende i relation til husets soloudstillinger. I sin essens fokuserer serien på nye stemmer på den danske kunsts scene og på at løfte disse ind i en bredere samtale og et større følgeskab. Publikationen udkommer både i trykt form, hvor coveret består af en udfoldelig plakat, og i en online version, der kan downloades gratis i PDF-format fra O - Overgaden's hjemmeside.

Denne publikationsrække er muliggjort gennem generøs støtte fra Augustinus Fonden, som skal have hjertelig tak. En tak skal også rettes til Knud Højgaard's Fond, Bestles Fond og Statens Kunstfond for at støtte udstillingens realisering. En særlig tak til Vanessa Joan Müller for hendes grundige og værkspecifikke indføring i Alexander Tillegreens seneste arbejde og til Kathrine Børlit Nielsen for sin personlige tekst om strømme af ord. En stor tak til in-house redaktør Nanna Friis, der i tæt samarbejde med vores grafiske designere fra fanfare, César Rogers og Miquel Hervás Gómez, har redigeret publikationen og en uendelig tak til O - Overgaden's øvrige kerneteam, der sammen med Alexander har kurateret, bygget og formidlet udstillingen. Sidst men ikke mindst vil jeg gerne udtrykke den varmeste tak til Alexander Tillegreen. Ikke alene for det virkelig inspirerende samarbejde, men også for at åbne nye eksperimenterende døre ind i lydkunstens forunderlige, psyko-akustiske univers.

Aukje Lepoutre Ravn,
interim leder, O - OVERGADEN

STRØMME AF ORD OM ALEXANDER TILLEGREEN

Kathrine Børnit Nielsen

Hvis du hører godt efter og giver dig hen, skrånere hovedet en smule eller knejser med nakken, så kan du høre dem, ordene der opstår i Alexanders fantomordsværker. Først som et enkelt lille ord måske, det bliver udtalt gennem højtalerne igen og igen, under ordets form ligger en strøm af noget andet, et stykke elektronisk musik eller en bas, de omkringliggende lyde som en pude, ordet kan springe op fra og lande på igen. Jeg fandt selv hurtigt ud af, at efter det første ord kommer det næste. Hvis jeg gik rundt i lokalet frem for at sidde ned, ville jeg høre andre ord end de foregående. Fantomordene er et fænomen først og fremmest, de er ordlige fatamorganaer som opstår i dit indre, og på den måde eksisterer de kun i dig. Ordene dukker op for at forsvinde igen.

Da Alexander første gang indgående fortalte mig om fantomordene, havde vi kendt hinanden en måned. Alexander sagde, at fantomordene var et udtømmeligt materiale, og at hvert lydværk, der blev skabt på baggrund af ordene, var et led i processen med at lære dem at kende, begribe deres måder at opføre sig på og deres potentiale. Men også hvordan deres største kvalitet var, at de alligevel hele tiden undveg at blive forstået til fulde. Nye perspektiver opstår hele tiden.

Alexanders fantomordsværker udgøres af mellemrum og lyde, det er sammensætninger af energier og rytmer. Selv kredser Alexander hele tiden om sproget og stemmen. Alexander bevæger sig hurtigt, smiler meget, han trækker enkelte ord ud af vores lange samtaler. De ord råber han højlydt i dagens løb, han er et arkiv af disse udvalgte ord, der opsummerer vores snakke og vores fælles indtryk. Han bærer ordene i sig gennem dagene, og de bliver sagt igen og igen, han vækker konstant vores nære fortid til live, han insisterer på ordenes videre liv, og det føles som om de ting, vi fortæller hinanden hober sig op i os begge, vokser ovenpå hinanden, forgrener og strækker sig, og vi slipper aldrig ordene igen. Alt hvad vi gør og siger fra nu af bliver lagt oveni det fundament, Alexander har bygget til os med sine opsamlende ord. Der sker noget mærkeligt med ordene, når de efterlades hos Alexander.

Fantomordene skaber og udsletter på samme tid. Alexander griber fat i sproget, udvisker det og lader det opstå på ny i en anden form, der nærmer sig sin lytter med en åben poetik. Jeg er forfatter, og det meste af mit liv og min hverdag handler om ord, det er dem jeg hele tiden arbejder med. For mig er fantomordene magiske, fordi de opstår som komplicerede størrelser ud af de simpleste bestanddele. Ordet har historisk været viklet ind i kultiske og religiøse forståelser, der har brugt sproget som materiale til at indrette og forstå verdensordenen. Jeg tror, det er en dyb menneskelig drift at gribe verden gennem ord. Når menneskelig erkendelse tidligere har været knyttet til en forståelse af, at der findes en lighed mellem mikro- og makrokosmos, at det store og små mimer hinanden, så er det i sproget at samme erkendelse finder sted.¹ Der er altid en bagvedliggende betydning i et ord, det vil altid være lyd, form og mening på én og samme gang. Alexanders fantomordsværker er på denne måde kun halvdelen af selve værket. Lydværket udgør basen, og det fuldendte værk opstår i den resonans, det skaber i dets lytter.

Når jeg skriver, at der altid er en bagvedliggende betydning i et ord, kan det selvfølgelig være det gængse udtryk for, at ord kan være hinandens synonyme, de kan fortælles på måder, der farver forståelsen af dem, og de kan være koder for andre meninger. Men den bagvedliggende betydning bliver magisk, når ordene du hører i fantomordsværket også kan tolkes som ord, der specifikt har noget at gøre med dig som menneske. At ordene du hører, kan tydes som stjernerne på himlen og sige noget om dit liv og din fortælling.² Fantomord som fænomen blev først formuleret af den engelske psykologiprofessor Diana Deutsch. Siden 2019 har Alexander sammen med andre drevet forskningen videre. På tværs af discipliner undersøger de, hvordan og hvorfor de ord du hører, er afhængige af ikke kun dit modersmål men også af sociale, psykologiske og ligefrem stemningsmæssige forhold. Og hvorfor nogle mennesker simpelthen hører flere ord end andre. Det åbner op for nye perspektiver på, hvad det vil sige at være et åbent lyttende menneske.

Der opstår en betydning i Alexanders værk, og den tegner sig i mig som en kæde i tykke led; ordene strækkes og formes af Alexander, indtil de er enkelte lyde og effekter, der udgør et lydværk, en lytter hører ord, der alene opstår i lytterens sind, mange tusind fine facetter af betydning omkring det menneske, lytteren også er, og de bliver en smule tydeligere, når vi tolker ordene, lytteren har hørt i værket. Det er her, det magiske opstår.

Ord er magiske, fordi de synes at bryde frem ud af intet. Ord er et væsentligt led i måden, mennesket erkender verden på, og ord bliver brugt til at skabe strukturer og systemer. Samtidig evner ord at transcenderes. Det skrevne sprog består efter en forfatters død, et ord kan siges i forskellige sammenhænge og tider

og stadig blive forstået, og ordet kan læses igen og igen, det kan påskønnes af nogen, der ikke har været del af skriftens samtid. Sprogets betydning er aldrig fuldkomment kontekstafhængig, skrift og tale kan forstås og fortolkes forskudt fra tid og rum. Alexanders fantomordsværker brager derudaf, de invaderer lytterens krop, og de er så processuelle, styret af et fremadrevet tempo eller en vis form for fart, der ikke er til at fastholde. Din individuelle erindring vil altid spille en rolle i oplevelsen af sproget og ordets virkemidler. Erindringen er på den måde også en erkendelsesform, den er væsentlig i din måde at fortolke ordene og kunsten. Betydning opstår aldrig alene for sig selv, den eksisterer i dit møde med fantomordsværket. For at du kan få en relation til værket, for at kunne høre ord der strømmer undervejs, er genkendelse nødvendigt. Alexanders fantomordsværker kommunikerer noget genkendeligt, de samme lyde gentages i værket, de bliver forskubbet og forvrænget en smule, ændrer sig umiskendeligt som værket skrider frem, men netop rytmen består, tonerne forbliver. Jeg mener, det er i gentagelsen af lyde, rytmer og toner, at genkendelsen af ord bliver mulig. Gentagelser er en forudsætning for, at et ord kan opfattes, at et sprog kan forstås, og derigennem skabe betydning, og der knytter sig på den måde genkendelighed til Alexanders fantomordsværker, det er lyde, der gentager sig selv i potentielt endeløse strømme, og ordene du hører, deres betydninger, vil altid have fundament i de genkendelige træk, værket præsenterer.³

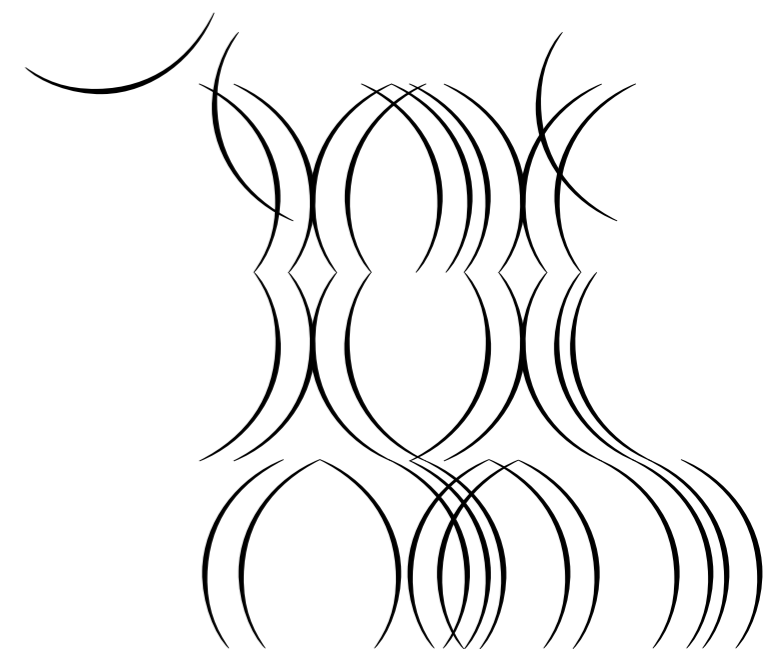
En eftermiddag i indre København optog han min stemme, mens jeg læste en 14 sider lang liste af danske tostavelserord højt. Han instruerede mig, første gang skulle jeg sige ordet, som jeg ville sige det med en klar og tydelig tale, ikke for langsomt. Den næste gang enten med et knæk i stemmen, som om ordets endelse ragede højere op fra den linje, jeg kunne forestille mig, at det var skrevet på. Så lyder det næsten som et spørgsmål. Eller jeg kunne sige ordet højt med min egen dialekt, jeg sluger ordets sidste stavelse, inden den fuldendte lyd når at forlade min mund. Jeg kunne også hviske ordet. Optagelserne er til stede i udstillingen på O – Overgaden. Min stemme kan høres i værket sammen med andres, og Alexanders optagelse af min stemme er tæt forenet med hans måde at arbejde på. Han optager stemmer, hos de mennesker han møder, løbende og undervejs, i forbindelse med rejser, udstillinger, samarbejder. Når han herefter vender og drejer ordene, omformer dem og komponerer omkring dem, er der tale om en langstrakt proces. Det er som om, sproget har en indre logik eller et regelsæt, der ikke er til at gennemskue. Alexander kan ikke selv bestemme, hvilke ord der kan bruges i værket, og ud af hans mange optagelser, er det tit kun en håndfuld, der kan moduleres til fantomord. Når jeg hører hans fantomordsværker, kan jeg en gang imellem selv kontrollere, hvilke ord jeg hører. For nyligt spise jeg aftensmad med ham, og han afspillede efterfølgende et værk for mig. Jeg fortalte ham, hvad jeg hørte, han kiggede på mig og forklarede,

hvilke ord der formede sig for ham, og da han udtalte ordene, materialiserede de sig pludselig også i mig. Om du siger et ord højt i en autentisk situation, eller om du fortæller dem til en optager, lidt foroverbøjet og uden reel anden kontekst end videre lydmodulering, om du anser ordene for at være meningsfulde eller blot et materiale, så eksisterer de betydningsskabende. Ordene virker, de giver mig en genklang af forståelse. Lyd og ord har billedskabende kvaliteter, og lyd kan aktivere menneskets hukommelse, der viser sig som scener og motiver i dets sind. Sådan kan ordene være en konstant tilstedeværelse, der alligevel er under forandring, og du vil aldrig opleve Alexanders fantomordsværker to gange og høre det samme. Selvom ordene transcenderer tid og rum, vil du opleve fantomordene forskelligt, som udtryk for de små forskydninger i dit eget sind, som magiske portrætter af dig selv. Din erindring vil både aktivere og påvirke de ord, du hører, og det er så svært for mig at sige, hvordan ordene opstår. Ligesom Alexander har pointeret, at hans arbejde med fantomordene altid vil åbne nye perspektiver på sproget, ordene og vores forståelse af dem, at vilkårene for at begribe hele tiden er under forandring, tordner ordene også derudaf som en evighedsmaskine, de skal nok bestå. Da jeg først stiftede bekendtskab med fantomordene, fortalte Alexander også, at arbejdet med dem aldrig behøvede at slutte.

1. Walter Benjamin: "Om den mimetiske evne". Redigeret af Søren Kaspersen, Jørn Guldborg og André Wang Hansen. *Argos. Tidsskrift for kunstvidenskab, visuel kommunikation og kunstpædagogik*, Modernisme, Odense Universitetsforlag, nr. 7-8, 4. årgang (1990 [1929]): 113-115.

2. Dorothee Kimmich: *Ins Ungefähre. Ähnlichkeit und Moderne*. Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2017.

3. Jacques Derrida: "Signature Event Context". I *Limited Inc*, redigeret af Gerald Graff, oversat af Samuel Weber. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1988 [1972]: 1-24.



ORD,

RUM,

LYD

Vanessa Joan Müller

At lytte er en proces. Den kan være som et lynnedslag, brat og øjeblikkelig, eller den kan bestå af gode, intuitive gæt og en eftertænksom bearbejdelse af tidligere erfaringer. [...] På et øjeblik kan den forvandle lytteren for evigt.

– Pauline Oliveros, *The Roots of the Moment*.

Interactive Music

Som en del af udstillingen på Museum für Moderne Kunst / MMK i Frankfurt i 2017 lånte Alexander Tillegreen en serie skulpturer af den tyske kunstner Charlotte med titlen *Vierkanthrore Serie D* fra museets samling og re-konfigurerede dem i rummet. Disse serielle værker, som i virkeligheden er ready-made industrigenstande, er karakteristiske for kunstnerens kritiske tilgang til stedsspecifikke og beskuerinddragende praksisser. I 1967 præsenterede Posenenske sine rektangulære rør under en performance, hvor publikum blev opfordret til at samle eller ændre værket gennem instrukser givet til et hold arbejdere.¹ På MMK smeltede Tillegreens opsætning af *Vierkanthrore* elegant ind i omgivelserne, idet de blev en del af hans installation *Figur (Diffusion, Synchronisierung, Ausgleich)*. De optog ikke plads, men eksisterede i samklang med arkitekturen. I samspillet med gulv og loft redefinerede deres tilstedeværelse stedets relationer og skala. Desuden inddrog *Vierkanthrore* beskueren, således at han eller hun blev til en del af deres konfiguration og værket pegede dermed på menneskekroppen som yderligere faktor i et komplekst rumligt scenarie.

Se på mig ...

I første omgang henleder Tillegreen med Posenenskes værker vores opmærksomhed på minimalistisk kunst, der er kendt for at flytte fokus fra objektet som autonomt, selvstændigt værk til værkets rumlige kontekst og forholdet mellem objekt og beskuer. Det minimalistiske kunstværk reagerer konsekvent på enhver form for specifikt indhold med abstraktion, og inviterer på den måde til refleksioner over oplevelsens form, de grundlæggende betingelser for dens subjektive realisering og ikke mindst tid og rum. Posenenskes interesse for bevægelse er flygtig, da den skulpturelle konstellation af de elementer, hendes værker består af, aldrig er fastlåst: de modulære værker er åbne for forskellige konfigurationer, ændringer og fortolkninger. De kan være anbragt i et interiør, men blev også vist i offentlige rum som banegårde, indkøbscentre eller kontorer. her bruges hvid støj til at manipulere det akustiske miljø, og det er netop hvid støj, som Tillegreens lydværk i *Figur (Diffusion, Synchronisierung, Ausgleich)* anvendte til at maskere 'uønskede' lyde og dermed manipulere den enkelte lytter. Den kollaborative tilgang, som kendetegner Posenenskes nu historiske værk, blev aktiveret af et kunstigt lydlandskab, der indbød til at bevæge sig rundt og opleve et miljø uden megen akustisk kolorit. Ved at 'maskere' den naturlige lyd, ved at sammensmelte lyde og dæmpe lydinformationer til 'anti-formation', dvs. støj, isolerede det såkaldte auditive rum lytterne fra omverdenen og fremmedgjorde dem for deres omgivelser – en virkning, der også er implicit i Posenenskes placering af de industrielle readymades i et uvant miljø.²

I Alexander Tillegreens kunstneriske praksis forbindes det lydæssige, det skulpturelle og det visuelle, den omfatter objekter, installationer, malerier og især lyd som immaterielt fænomen, og relationen mellem objekt og beskuer spiller en vigtig rolle – ganske som i minimalismen. Særligt lyd former og omdefinierer et rumligt miljø. Lyd indgår i harmonisk samklang med arkitekturen, bliver moduleret af den og kræver en modtager. Oplevelsen af lyd er ekstremt subjektiv – ingen lytter vil opleve den på nøjagtig samme måde, eftersom det at lytte er en aktiv proces, der, når man reagerer på et lyd miljø, indebærer bevægelse i rummet. Med dette udgangspunkt tager de computergenererede lyd klynger og intense loops, Tillegreen har komponeret, afsat i resultater fra psyko-akustikken, dvs. studier af og audiologi og måden, hvorpå mennesker opfatter og reagerer på forskellige lyde, herunder støj, tale og musik. Tillegreens lydværker behandler spørgsmålet om psykologiske såvel som fysiske virkninger af lydbegivenheder, når de udfordrer grænserne mellem virkelighed og fantasi, sanseopfattelse og konkret lyd. Lytterne inviteres til at undersøge deres egen opfattelse af svævende, akustiske virkeligheder og andre pirrende lydbegivenheder, der udfordrer vores logocentriske tænkning. Dermed bliver deres auditive oplevelse lige så meget en del af værket som det akustiske scenarie, der præsenteres.

Færdiggør værket ...

Til sin udstilling på FuturDome i Milano, et udstillingssted hvor futuristiske kunstnere mødtes, arbejdede og diskuterede i 1940'erne, udviklede Tillegreen en lang række værker, der forholdt sig til rummet og dets historie. Han arrangerede fundne genstande fra stedet – en grill fra et komfur, en vinduesskodde, et spejl, en lysekroner – hvilket mindede om det fællesskab, der herskede i den futuristiske bevægelse, hvis hovedpersoner plejede at samles i huset. Han indlemmede også værker af den brasilianske kunstner Mary Vieira (São Paulo 1927 – Basel 2001), hvis arkiver forvaltes af Isisuf/FuturDome, og skabte derved en rumlig koreografi, hvor de forskellige atmosfærer, der karakteriserede bygningens tidligere lejligheder blev gestaltet. Vieira er selv en hovedfigur inden for kinetisk kunst og hun er kendt for sine dynamisk udformede skulpturer, hvis energiske kvaliteter ligger tæt op ad filmmediets visuelle æstetik. Selvom Vieiras værk tager afsæt i et meget anderledes kunstnerisk koncept end Charlotte Posenenskes, er det også baseret på beskuerens aktive deltagelse. Den bevægelse hendes skulpturer stræber efter, eksisterer ikke som sådan, men skal foregribes af publikum, og indgår således i et dynamisk forhold mellem værket og det omgivende rum. Da Vieira engang blev spurgt om, hvordan hendes værker aktiveres af beskuerne, svarede hun: "Mit arbejde slutter med nogen. Nogen fra publikum [...], folk skal deltage for at afslutte værket, det er betingelsen."

Tillegreen udvalgte en af Vieiras såkaldte *poly-volume* (*polyvolume multidevelopable surface*, 1966), og værket *crossing of opposite directions - 7 conditions of chromatic saturation* fra 1978, et silketryk på papir, der udfolder sig som en abstrakt skildring af et temporalt forløb svarende til et partitur, som en bevægelse i tid. En ældre optagelse af Mary Vieiras stemme er også blevet anvendt i et lydværk og indlejret i en komposition, der fremhæver hendes tale og sætter den i relation til det aktuelle rum ved hjælp af feltoptagelser. Stemmen der taler om kosmiske kræfter i et ellers tomt rum, skabte forestillinger om sansning hinsides det fysiske synlige, samtidig med at den gjorde et fravær nærværende.

Lyt til mig ...

En sådan perception der rækker ud over det fysiske, hvad enten den er personligt stemningsskabende eller fuldstændig imaginær, er nøglen til Tillegreens lydværker, og den kommer især til udtryk i hans såkaldte fantomordskompositioner. I eksperimenter med disse fantomordsillusioner, et fænomen, der oprindeligt blev opdaget af musikpsykologen Diana Deutsch, forestiller lytterne sig, at de hører individuelle ord, selv om disse ikke nødvendigvis eksisterer rent akustisk. I stedet er de ord, der opfattes baseret på lytterens subjektive sproglige baggrund, underbevidsthed og/eller mentale tilstand i lytteøjeblikket. Fantomord opstår, når en sekvens bestående af to ord eller et enkelt ord med to stavelser gentages mange gange over to stereohøjtalere med en tidsmæssig forskydning, således at den første lyd kommer fra højtaleren i venstre side, den anden lyd fra højtaleren i højre side eller omvendt. Når lydsignalerne blandes i luften, skaber lytterens hjerne forskellige kombinationer, hvoraf nogle er meningsløse, mens andre ligger tæt på tydelige ord eller sætninger.³ Det lader til, at de ord, som lytterne hører, ofte er forbundet med nyligt indtrufne begivenheder, oplevelser eller minder. Personens fysiske tilstedeværelse i rummet, dvs. hans eller hendes position i forhold til højtaleren, påvirker også oplevelsen af det auditive materiale og forvandler publikum til 'medkomponister' af deres egen oplevelse. Ved hjælp af egne bevægelser skaber lytterne deres egen koreografi med hensyn til aflytning og afkodning af ord. At lytte bliver en involverende handling, da værkerne skaber en form for immaterielt materiale, der opfattes og materialiseres gennem den meget subjektive proces, som vores møde med det er: Vi konfronteres med vores eget situationsbaserede ståsted i form af vores sproglige, psykologiske og fysiske forståelse af musik og lyd.

A + A (five phantom streams for FuturDome), 2021, et værk udviklet til FuturDome-udstillingen, bruger fantomord fra optagelser af museumspersonalets stemmer. Vi hører italiensk intonation, måske endda italienske ord, der kommer og går (hvis man er bekendt med sproget), eller rytmisk artikulerede stavelser,

der opstår fra lyd billedet. Disse fonetiske partikler, der er indkapslet i en minimalistisk komposition, svinger mellem betydning og tilfældige kombinationer af bogstaver: et sprog, hvis semantik er splintret og reduceret til elementære betydningsbærere, som vores veltrænede hjerner forsøger at gøre meningsfulde. Skiftende lyde ændrer vores forståelse af noget, der faktisk ikke er der, eller i hvert fald ikke er fuldt udviklet – et proto-sprog, der artikuleres af menneskelige stemmer filtreret gennem loopede lyde. Men hvad betyder 'menneskelig' egentlig, når sproget kun er en illusion? Den psyko-akustiske forvrængning af stemmen i den loopede fantomordsillusion undergraver kønsbegrebet, da den stemme, der høres, kan skifte fra mandlig til kvindelig, være noget midt imellem eller endda, sløret og flydende som den er, fremstå trans-menneskelig.

Husk ...

Tillegreens fantomordsværker – *Phantom Streams* (Zyklus I), 2020 og *episodic currents* (*phantom streams for O - Overgaden*), 2022 – skaber en fascinerende mulighed for at opleve den radikale subjektivitet i lytteoplevelserne. Dette afføder også det grundlæggende ontologiske spørgsmål: Når vi hører noget, der i virkeligheden ikke er der, reviderer vi så antagelsen om en direkte og nødvendig korrelation mellem subjektet og objektet i en perceptionsproces? Det er fantasiens kreative kraft, der opdager fantomordene, der er ikke nogen egentlig relation mellem oplevelsen og lydkilden. Som filosofen Robin Mackay formulerede det, da han diskuterede de hallucinatoriske aspekter ved lydopfattelsen i psykoakustiske eksperimenter: "Den auditive scene er imaginær, et syntetisk produkt: vi hører altid mere end det, der når frem til øret."⁴

Når vi oplever fantomordene, kommer der et øjeblik, hvor sædvanlige parametre for oplevelse, virkelighed og kausalitet forekommer irrelevante: Vores perception er i krise, den tvivlsomme, ja, endog 'patologiske' undtagelse, som hallucinationen udgør, tager over. 'Erkendelse' bliver en proces, der har frigjort sig fra begrænsningerne i sproget, som vi kender det, og bliver til en subjektivisering af det objektivt givne. Når vi lytter til tale, er de ord, vi hører, stærkt påvirkede af vores viden, overbevisninger og forventninger. Fantomord tydeliggør, at lytning kan blive offer for overbevisende illusioner. Ved at bryde erfaringens strukturelle sammenhæng åbner Tillegreens lydværker op for en oplevelse af noget, der ikke kan beskrives tydeligt med ord. Og de understreger samarbejds- og fællesskabsaspektet, når de efterlyser en frisat beskuer og lytter, der er en del af værket, afslutter værket, som Mary Vieira udtrykte det. Den fælles og sociale tilgang, der findes i Posenenskes og Viciras kunst, finder genklang her og føjer et mere politiseret synspunkt til en praksis, som ved første øjekast kan virke formel.

Kom tættere på ...

Subjektiveringer med udgangspunkt i menneskers individuelle positioner træder også tydeligt frem, når vi ser på skulpturelle værker som *Untitled (diffusers)*, der er baseret på forestillingen om et mentalt arkiv. De hvide træobjekter med deres gitterlignende struktur bruges normalt som akustiske sprederer i lydstudier for at reflektere lyd i rum. Da de er løsrevet fra deres oprindelige kontekst og præsenteret som autonome skulpturer, nuancerer de ideen om subjektiv lytning baseret på erindringer og et individuelt ordforråd lagret i bevidstheden og underbevidstheden. Når de præsenteres side om side med lydværker, bliver andre ligheder åbenlyse. De rytmiske, gentagende elementer i de serielle forløb og disses variationer ligner grundstrukturen i kompositioner, der skaber fantomord. Deres modulære opbygning indtager rumlige konfigurationer. De virker autonome, men ændrer sig alt efter synsvinkel, fordi de reliefagtige strukturer leger med lys og skygge, og inviterer publikum til at reflektere over deres sanseropfattelse og bevægelse og iagttagelse, hvordan farverne netop ændrer sig afhængigt af synsvinklen. Eftersom dybden i genstandens rum er forskellig, sker der et konstant samspil mellem deres visuelle fremtrædener, alt efter hvor i rummet beskuerne befinder sig. Dette minder igen om de psyko-akustiske virkninger af Tillegreens lydinstallationer, hvor lytteoplevelsen ændres drastisk af kroppens bevægelser. Fantomordsillusionen aktiveres og vinder adgang til lytterens hukommelse og sprogapparat, mens denne samling af skulpturer fremkaldt forestillinger om et mentalt arkiv. De ligner velkendte genstande, men det er svært at identificere dem med noget præcist.

Værker som *floor plan – prelude (spatial remembrance)* (2021) eller *Room plan (prelude)*, 2022 udtrykker ligeledes, hvordan hukommelse og afkodning af velkendte tegn skaber et imaginært scenarie, der forveksles med det virkelige. En grov skitse på et træpanel med falsk marmormønster eller farvede abstraktioner påmalet minder om en grundplan, men den rumlige konfiguration og rækken af 'rum' og gange, den viser, giver ikke meget mening i forhold til funktionel arkitektur. Alligevel spiller vores erindring om rum, som vi kender eller har besøgt os sådanne puds: døre, der åbnes til den forkerte side, skrumpede dimensioner, for lange korridorer eller tilstødende rum uden nogen indbyrdes forbindelse. De abstrakte grundplaner henviser til erindringens rumlige struktur og til den fejlbehæftede erindring om oplevede rum, som skaber fantomarkitektur. Ligesom vi har spurgt til, hvilke intensiteter der udløses i modtagerens sansning i mødet med forskellige typer auditive stimuli, synes spørgsmålene her at være: hvilken type rumlig konfiguration fremkaldes i beskueren af hvilken slags mønster og struktur?

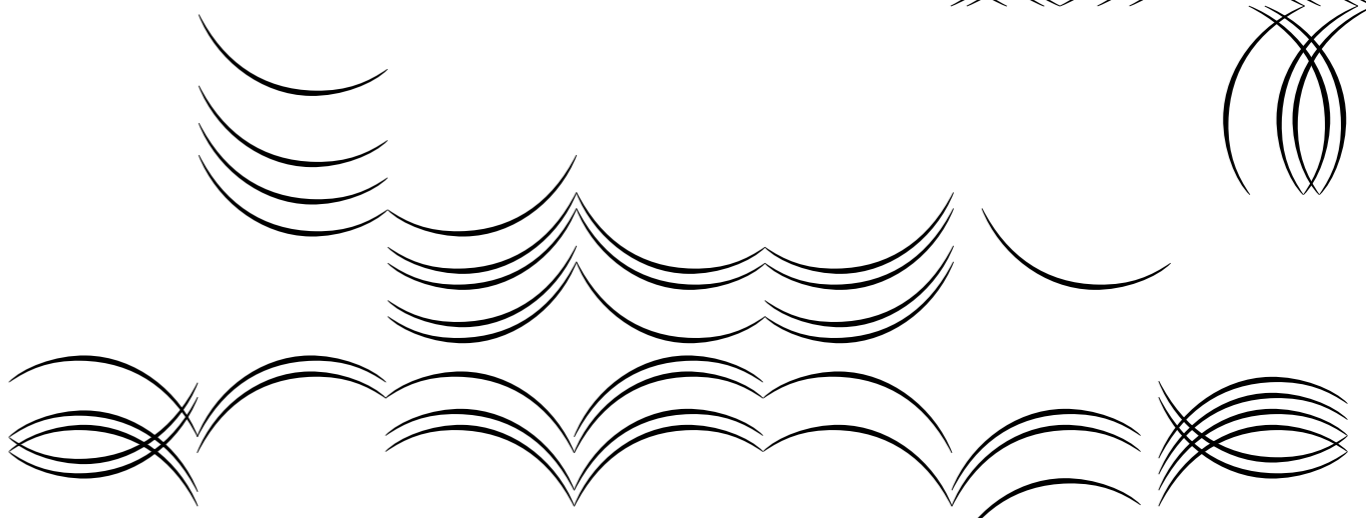
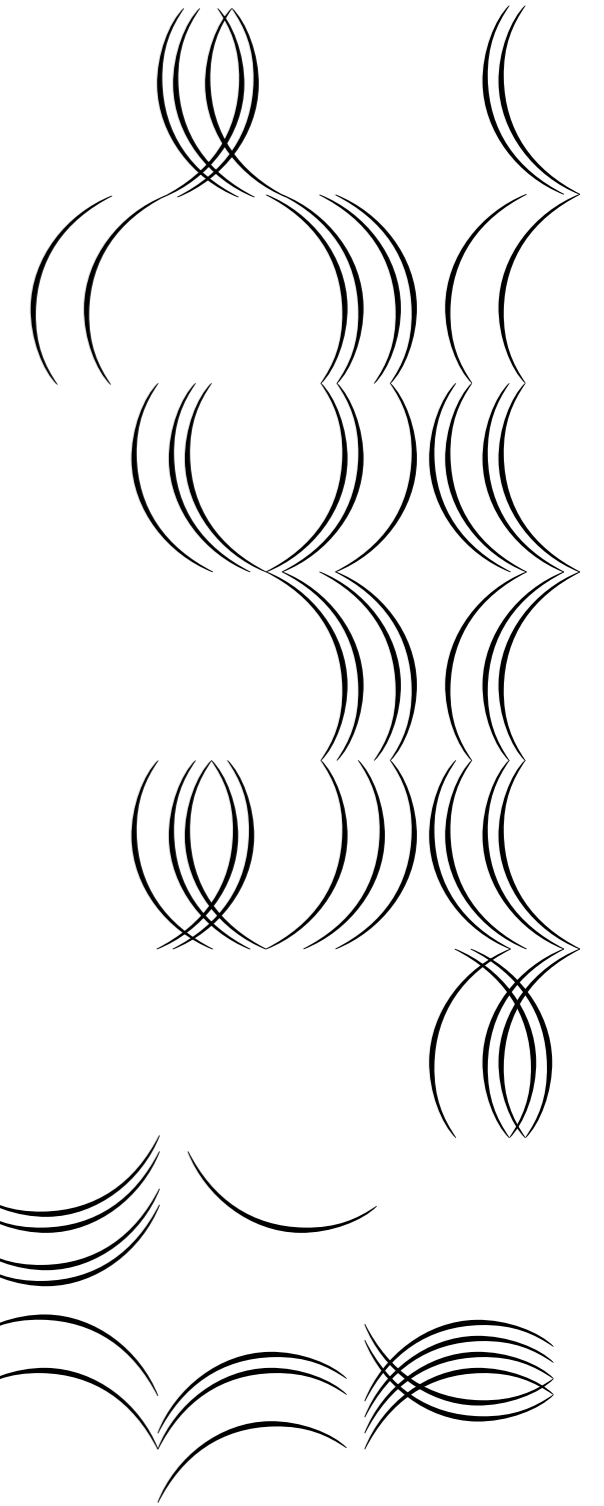
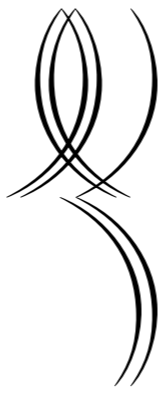
Kig endnu engang ...

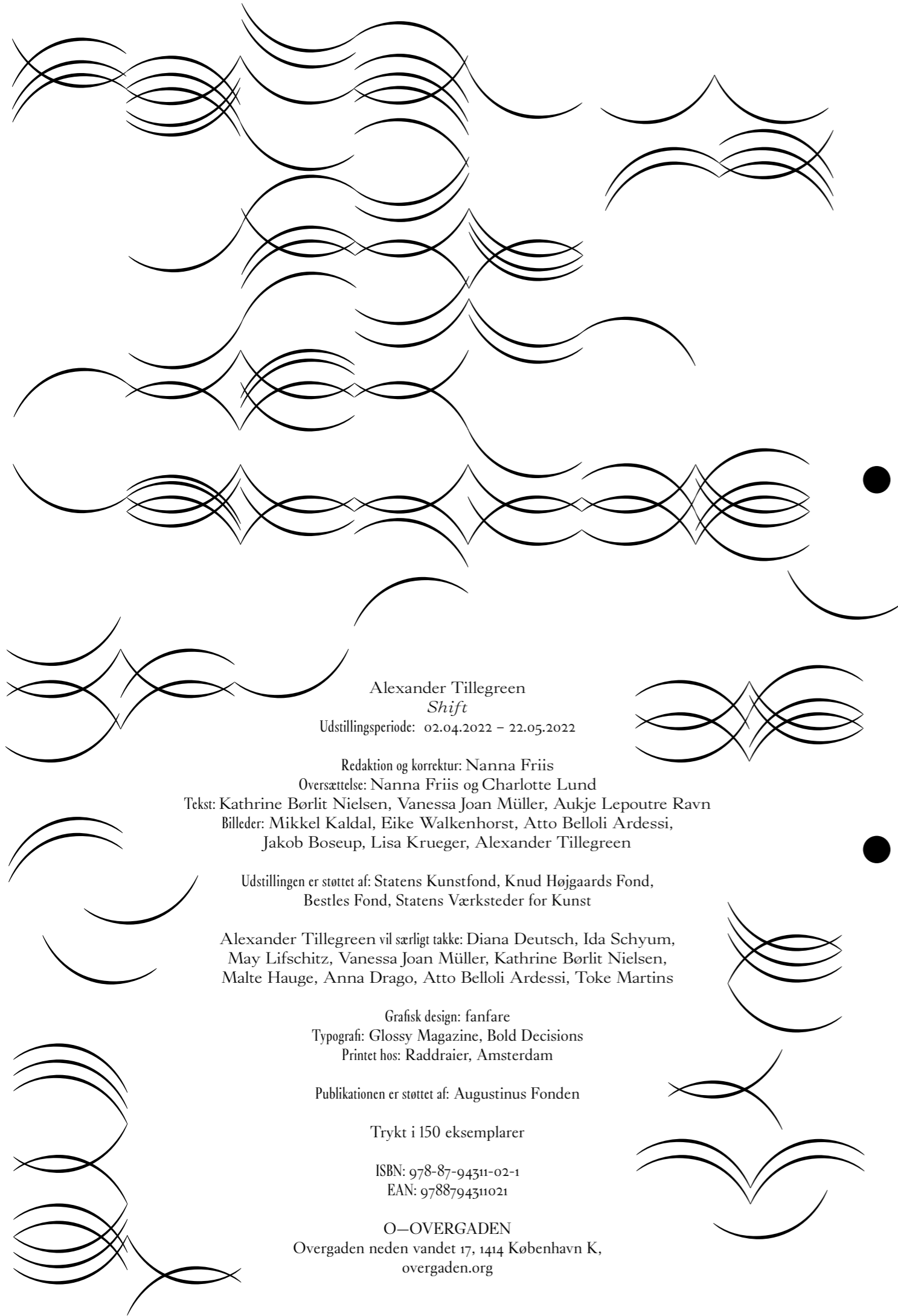
En fotoserie udbygger denne idé yderligere, når den indfanger rum, hjørner og trapper på O – Overgaden, og forvandler dem til spøgelsesagtige billedlige ekkoer af tidligere besøg på stedet. De lagdelte billeder, der er taget fra forskellige vinkler, viser en transitorisk arkitektur, der er sammensat af et væld af indtryk. Når man ser på disse billeder efter at have passeret de afbildede rum, føles det som et møde med mentale billeder, der ubevidst er lagret i ens hukommelse: spor og ekkoer af en rumlig struktur i forandring.

rythmic circuit (towards each other, around each other), 2022 tager udgangspunkt i og intensiverer et mangfoldigt perspektiv og tematiserer publikums fysiske placering. Menneskets opfattelse af rum er betinget af visuelle stimuli, fordi synet er en fjernsans. Ofte anses rumopfattelsen for at være baseret udelukkende på synet. Men dette visuelle rum suppleres faktisk af auditive, kinæstetiske oplevelser, sågar dufte. Det er en meget fysisk oplevelse at betragte vægge og vinduer, trapper og ovenlysvinduer. På fotografierne ses synlige spor af sollys på væggene, der både tilføjer en fornemmelse af flygtighed, og en fornemmelse af andre former for erfaring. Samspillet mellem forskellige sanser sættes i gang, når vi ser på disse billeder som visualiseringer af forståelsen og erkendelse af rum og subjektivitet, der ligger i sådanne oplevelser – og forbinder dem med lydværkernes dissocierende, måske endda desorienterende præg.

Det er på baggrund af disse overvejelser, at Alexander Tillegreens værker diskuterer lytning og forståelse på kanten af sprogets grænser og sætter spørgsmålstegn ved den individuelle hukommelse. Værkerne undersøger det ubevidstes magt og de mentale arkivers struktur i krydsfeltet mellem lydlig og visuel erfaring. I hans scenarier aktiveres publikum og alle dets sanser: værkerne materialiserer sig gennem den subjektive proces, som mødet med selvsamme sanser repræsenterer. Værkerne ender med nogen, og denne person kan være dig.

1. Cf. Charlotte Posenenske, *Dies alles, Herzen...*, red. Maïke Behm, Berlin: Distanz 2011.
2. Cf. Kendall Wrightson, "An Introduction to Acoustic Ecology", i: *Soundscape*, årg. 1, nr. 1, forår 2000, p. 11.
3. Cf. Diana Deutsch, *Musical Illusions and Phantom Words. How Music and Speech Unlock Mysteries of the Brain*, Oxford: Oxford University Press 2019.
4. Robin Mackay, "These Broken Impressions", i: *Florian Hecker. Event, Stream, Object*, udst.kat. MMK Frankfurt, Köln: Walther König 2010, p. xxx.





Alexander Tillegreen
Shift

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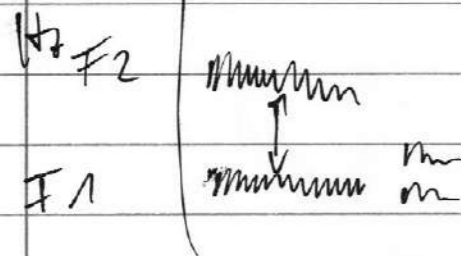
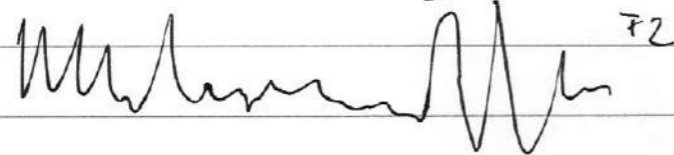
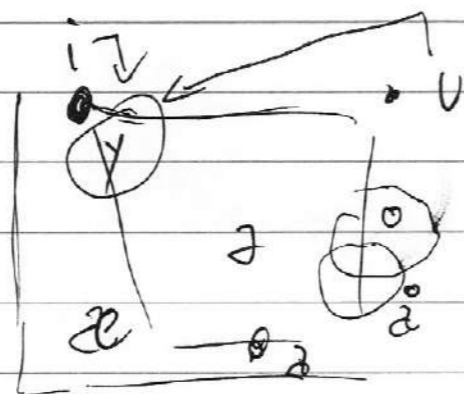
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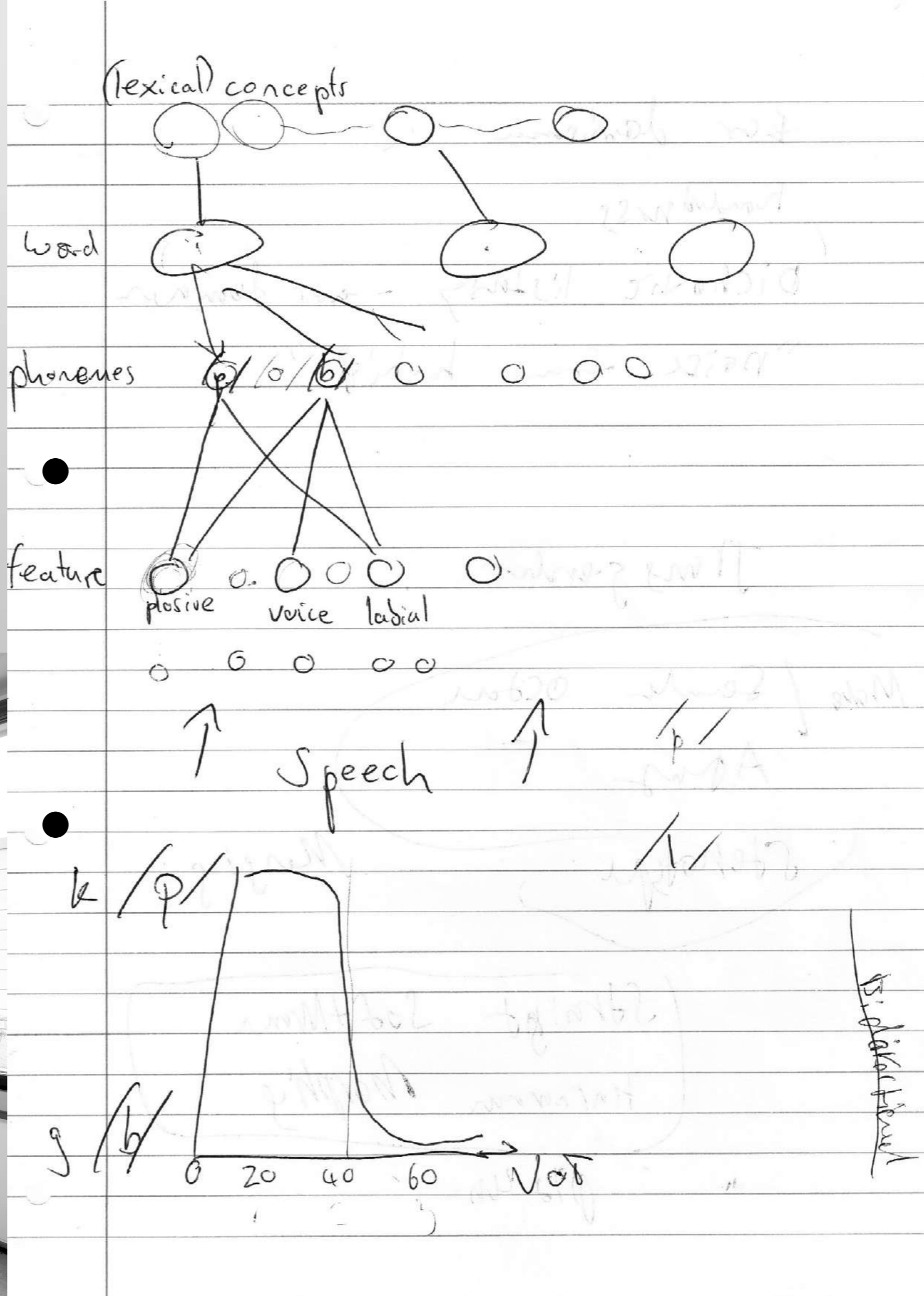
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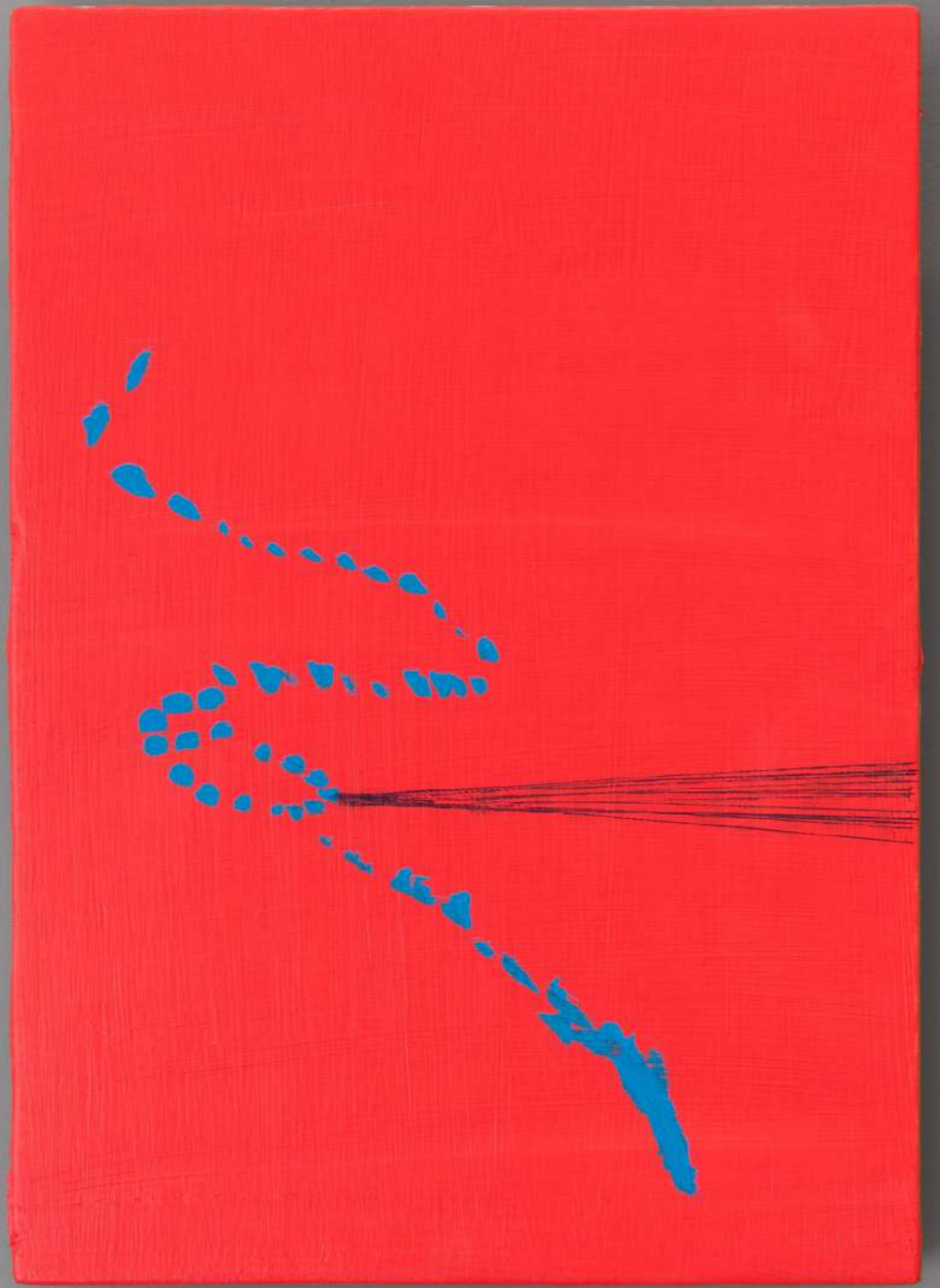














Phantom word experiment

In this audio presentation people tend to hear different things. We would like to know what you hear! Please move freely around the space and write down all the words and sentences that appear to you while listening. No matter what language, Six different streams of phantom words are being played in succession, each for 3 minutes.

Phantom word 1

UNCLE, UNCLE, AND GO, GO, EACH, GIRL, AND GO, CAMP, AIM

Phantom word 2

BLIND LAMA LAMBA LANGUE UNE NINE DENVER

Phantom word 3

AND PAROLE OPAL GO BLOW BEAUM CLAW OVAL DRIVEN AVALE BOL FOUL HUM

Phantom word 4

HALTE LA! BLOW HELP TARD TARTARE PAS DE PLAN BILAN BLANC NON

Phantom word 5

HIGHLIGHT HELLO BLUE BAILAR PA'CUA PAS LA EUE L.A. FIND THEM ÉLÈVE ! LEARN

Phantom word 6

PAVOT PAS BEGON AUO OH! HUM LOW CAGAS DEBANS COME NO. NOW GO LOOP HOP KNOW

The Max Planck Institute for Empirical Aesthetics will use this data for research purposes.

Are you in a creative profession? Yes No

If yes,

what is your main creative activity? STUDENT AT FINE ART AIX-EN-PROVENCE (VIDEO, PHOTO, PAINTING)

If no,

what is your profession?

What is your first language? FENCH

What other languages do you speak? ENGLISH AND A LITTLE BIT SPANISH

THANK YOU VERY MUCH,
THAT WAS AN EXPERIENCE VERY INTERESTING.



Study
setup.
Please do
not touch.

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Shifting sounds alter our understanding of something that actually is not there or at least not fully developed – a proto-language articulated by human voices filtered through looped sounds. But what does “human” actually mean when language is but an illusion? The psychoacoustic distortion of voice in the looped phantom word illusion subverts the concept of gender, as the perceived voice can flicker from male and female, remain something in-between or even appear in its blurry fluidity, as trans-human.

Remember...

Tillegren's works based on phantom word illusions

– *Phantom Streams (Zyklus I)*, 2020 and *episodic currents (phantom streams for O—Overgaden)*, 2022 – provide

a fascinating possibility to experience the radical

subjectivity of auditory experience. This also implies

fundamental ontological questions: When we hear

something that actually is not there, we revise the

assumption of a direct and necessary correlation

between the subject and the object of a perceptual

process. It is the creative power of our imagination

that discovers the phantom words as there is no actual

correlation between the experience and the source

of the sound. As philosopher Robin Mackay

puts it, discussing the hallucinatory quality of

sound perception in psychoacoustic experiments:

“The auditory scene is imaginary, a synthetic product

we always hear more than that which reaches the

ear.” When we experience the emergence of phantom

words, the customary parameters of our experience,

reality, and causality, for a moment seem irrelevant:

our perception is in crisis, the questionable, even

pathological exception of hallucination takes over.

Understanding becomes a process that has freed itself

from the limits of language as we know it and becomes

a subjectivation of the objective given. When

listening to speech, the words we hear are strongly

influenced by our knowledge, beliefs, and expectations.

Phantom words demonstrate that listening can become subject

By disrupting the structural cohesion of experience,

Tillegren's sound works open up an experience of something that cannot be

pinned down by way of a clear verbal description.

They emphasize the aspect of collaboration and

communality when they ask for an emancipated viewer

and listener, who is part of the work and finishes the

work, as Mary Vicitra put it. The communal and

social approach inherent in Posenenske and Vieira's

work resonates here, adding a more politicized view

to a practice that might look formal at first sight.

Come closer...

Detached from their original context and presented

as autonomous sculptures, they elaborate on the

idea of subjective listening based on the subjects'

vocabulary stored in their conscious

and subconscious memories.

When presented alongside sound

pieces, other similarities become

apparent. The rhythmic, repetitive units of serial

sequences and their variations resemble the basic

structure of compositions creating phantom words.

Their modularity takes up spatial configurations.

They seem autonomous, but look different when

viewed from different angles as their relief-like

structure plays with light and shadow, inviting

the audience to reflect on their perception and

movement, and observe how colors change depending

on their point of view. As the depth of the objects'

compartments differ, there is a constant interplay

of their visual appearance according to the shifting

position in space of those looking at them. This in

turn is reminiscent of the psychoacoustic effects of

Tillegren's sound installations, where the listening

experience is altered drastically by bodily movement.

The phantom word illusion activates and accesses

this body of sculptures evokes imaginings of a mental

archive. They resemble familiar objects, but it is

difficult to pin them down to something precise.

Pieces like *floor plan — prelude (spatial remembrance)*

(2021) or *Room plan (prelude)*, 2022 – equally articulate

how memory and the deciphering of familiar-

looking signs produce an imaginary scenario

mistaken for reality. A rough sketch on

a wooden panel covered with a painted

fake marble pattern or colored abstractions reminds

us of a floor plan, but the spatial configuration and

the array of rooms and hallways it displays do not

make much sense in terms of functional architecture.

Nevertheless our remembrance of spaces we know or

have visited plays tricks like that: doors that open to

the wrong side, shrunken dimensions, corridors

that are too long, or adjacent rooms

without any connection. The abstract

floor plans refer to the spatial structure

of memory as well as the erratic remembrance of

experienced spaces that produce phantom architecture.

As we have asked what kind of intensities are triggered

in the recipient's perception by what type of auditory

stimuli, the question here seems to be what kind of

spatial configuration is evoked in the viewer by what

kind of pattern and grid.

Look once again...

A photo series takes this idea further, capturing

spaces, corners, and staircases at O—Overgaden and

transforming them into ghost-like pictorial echoes

of past visits to the place. The layered images taken

from different angles show a transitory architecture

composed of a multitude of impressions. Looking

at these pictures after having passed the depicted

spaces feels like an encounter with mental images

unconsciously stored in one's memory – traces

and resonances of a spatial structure in mutation.

Taking up and intensifying a multiple perspective,

rhythmic circuit (towards each other)

2022, thematizes the

audience's actual physical situatedness.

Human perception of space is dominated

by visual stimuli because vision is a distance sense.

Often the perception of space is considered to be based

exclusively on vision. However, this visual space

is actually supplemented perceptually by auditory,

kinesthetic, even olfactory experience. Looking at

walls and windows, stairs and skylights is a very

physical experience. In the photographs, there are

visible traces of sunlight on the walls that adds both

a sense of an ephemerality frozen in time and a sense

of those other modes of experience. This interaction

of different senses is activated when we look at these

images as visualizations of spatial understanding,

spatial cognition, and the subjectivity that lies in

experiencing a building or room, linking them to

the dissociative and maybe even disorienting quality

of the sound pieces.

It is with these considerations that Alexander

Tillegren's works discuss listening and understanding

on the verge of language's borders, questioning

individual memory. They investigate the power of the

unconscious and the structure of mental archives at

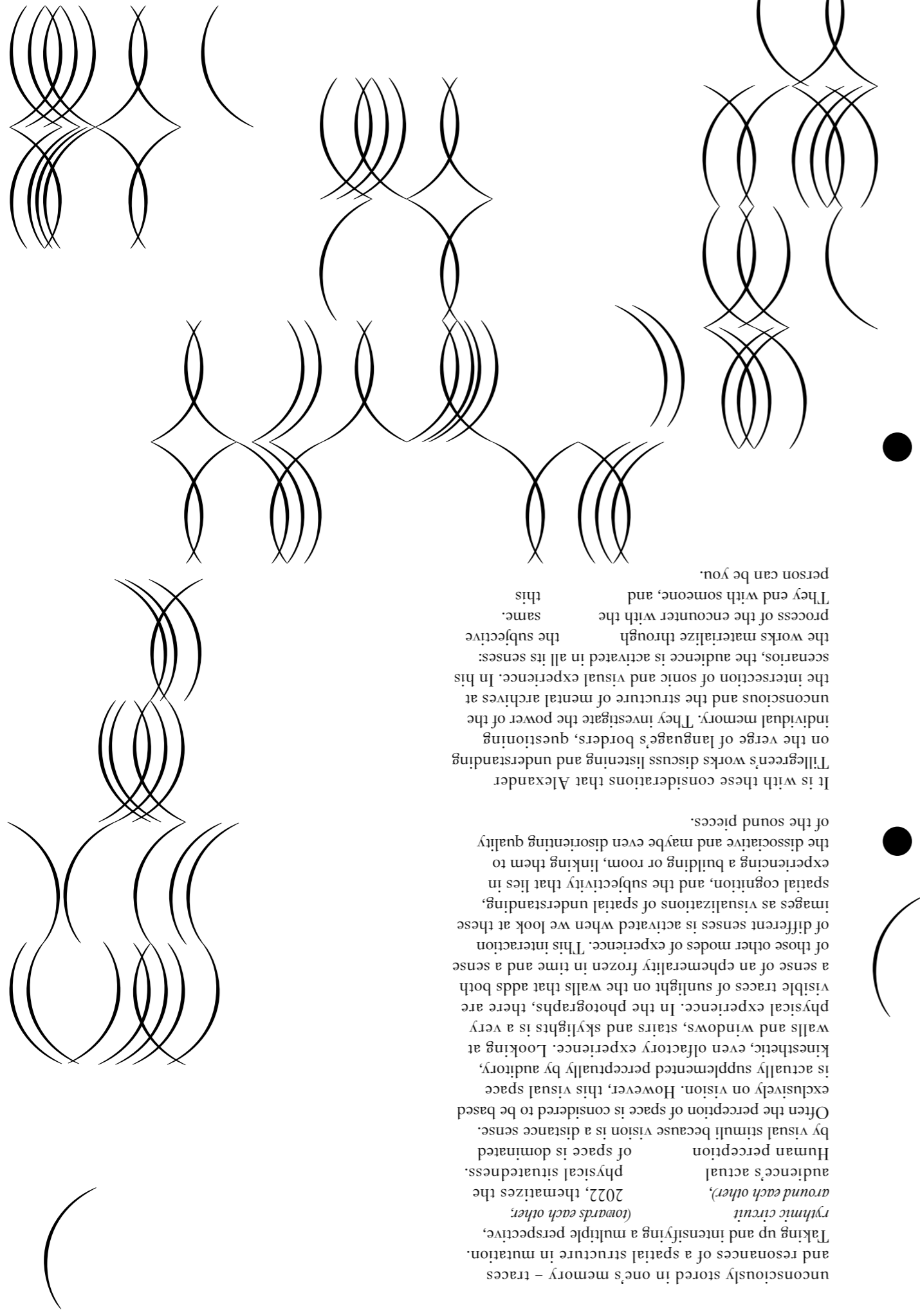
the intersection of sonic and visual experience. In his

scenarios, the audience is activated in all its senses:

the works materialize through the subjective

process of the encounter with the same.

They end with someone, and this person can be you.



unfolding an abstract depiction of temporal succession similar to a score that represents movement in time.

A sound piece sampled the voice of Mary Vieira from a historic recording and embedded it in a composition that accentuates her speech and establishes a relation to the actual space by way of field recordings. The voice speaking of cosmic forces in an otherwise empty room evoked ideas of perception beyond the actual and visible, while giving presence to an absence.

Listen to me...

Such perception beyond the actual, whether an evocative or entirely imaginary one, and is, in particular, articulated in his compositions using so-called "phantom words". In experiments with "phantom word illusions", a phenomenon originally discovered by the music psychologist Diana Deutsch, listeners imagine they hear singular words even though these might not necessarily be acoustically present. Instead, the perceived words are based on the listeners' subjective linguistic background, subconscious, and/or subjective mental state at the specific moment of listening. Phantom words occur when a sequence consisting of two words, or a single word with two syllables, is repeated many times via two stereo loudspeakers with an offset in time so that when the first sound is coming from the left-side speaker, the second sound is coming from the one on the right, and vice versa. Because the speakers' signals are mixed in the air, the listener's mind creates various combinations of sounds, some of them meaningless, others close to distinct words or even phrases. The words the listeners seem to hear are often connected to recent events, experiences, or memories. The physical presence of the person in the space, that is his or her relation to the loudspeaker, affects the experience of the auditory material as well, transforming the audience into embodied "co-composers" of their choreographic experience. By way of their movement, listeners create their own choreography of listening and deciphering words. Listening becomes a participatory act as the works produce a form of an immaterial that is perceived and materialized through the very subjective process of our encounter with it. We are confronted with our own situatedness in terms of our linguistic, psychological, and physical understanding of music and sound.

A+A (five phantom streams for FuturDome), 2021, a work developed for the FuturDome show, uses phantom words made of recorded voices from among the museum staff. We hear Italian intonation, maybe even Italian words, coming and going (if you are familiar with the language), or rhythmically articulated syllables that arise from the soundscape. Enclosed in a minimalist composition, these phonetic particles oscillate between meaning and random combinations of letters: shared semantics of a language reduced to its elemental signifiers that our well-trained minds try to decode as meaningful.

and most notably sound, the object/viewer relation as figured in minimalist art plays an important role.

Sound, in particular, shapes and redefines a given spatial environment. Sound resonates with architecture, is modulated by it, and needs a receiver. The auditory reception of sound is also highly subjective: no one listener will experience sound in exactly the same way as listening is an active process that, when responding to a sonic environment, involves movement across space. Taking this as a point of departure, the computer-generated sound clusters and intense loops composed by the artist take up findings from psychoacoustics, the study of sound perception and audiology as well as how humans perceive various sounds, especially their psychological responses to sound including noise, speech, and music. Tilligreen's sound pieces address such questions of the psychological as well as physical effects of auditory events when they challenge the boundaries between reality and imagination, sensory perception, and actual sound. Listeners are invited to explore their own perception of floating acoustic realities and other irritating sonic events that challenge our logocentric thinking. Their auditory experience thereby become as much a material of the work as the acoustic scenario the latter provides.

Finish the work...

For his exhibition at FuturDome in Milan, an exhibition space in the former premises of Futurist poet Carlo Belloi, Tilligreen developed an array of works relating to the space and its history. He arranged found objects from the place – a cooking stove grill, a door, a mirror, a candlelicer – reminiscent of the communality of the Futurist movement whose protagonists used to gather in the house. He also added works by Brazilian artist Mary Vieira (1927–2001), who was married to Belloi and whose estate is part of FuturDome's collection, thus creating a spatial choreography that activated the different atmospheres of the former apartments in the building. Vieira herself a protagonist of kinetic art, Vieira is known for her dynamic shaped sculptures, which own an energetic quality close to cinévisualism. Despite departing from a very different artistic concept to Charlotte Posenenske, Vieira's oeuvre also relies on the viewer's activity. The movement for which her sculptures strive does not exist, as such, but has to be anticipated by the audience, thus making it part of a dynamic relation between work and surrounding space. Asked by an interviewer how her works were being activated by the viewers, Vieira once answered: "My work ends with someone. Someone from the audience... people must participate to finish the work, these are the conditions."

Tilligreen selected one of Vieira's so-called "polyvolumes" (*polyvolume multidevelopable surface*) a metal sculpture from 1966, and *crossing of opposite directions – 7 conditions of chromatic saturation* from 1978, a silkscreen on paper

As part of his exhibition at the Museum für Moderne Kunst (MMK) in Frankfurt in 2017, Alexander

Tilligreen borrowed a group of sculptures called *Verkantrohere Serie D* (1967), by German artist Charlotte Posenenske from the museum's collection and reconfigured them in the space. The serial works – created using ready-made industrial items – are characteristic of Posenenske's critical approach to site-specific and participatory practices. In 1967, she presented the rectangular steel tubes during a performance at which the audience was invited to assemble or manipulate the piece by giving instructions to a team of workers. At MMK, the *Verkantrohere* arranged by Tilligreen elegantly blended into their surroundings as they became part of his installation *Figur (Diffusion, Synchronisierung, Ausgleich)* (2017). They did not occupy space, but resonated with the architecture. In their correspondence with floor and ceiling, their presence redefined relations and sizes. In addition, the *Verkantrohere* involved the viewer to make them part of their configuration, referring to the human body as a further measure in a complex spatial scenario.

Look at me...

At first, with Posenenske's work, Tilligreen draws our attention to minimalist art, known for shifting the focus from the object as an autonomous, self-contained work to its spatial context and the relation between the object and the viewer. The minimalist artwork consistently responds to any kind of specific content with abstraction, thereby inviting reflection on the form of the experiential conditions of its subjective implementation as well as space and time. Posenenske's interest is in the transitory nature of her sculptural constellations, as the constituent elements of her modular works are never fixed, but always open to various configurations, alterations, and interpretations. They can occupy interiors but were also presented in public spaces such as train stations, shopping centers, and offices. In these places, white noise is used to manipulate the sonic environment, and it is white noise that Tilligreen's sound piece featured in *Figur (Diffusion, Synchronisierung, Ausgleich)* uses to mask unwanted sound, thus manipulating the listener. The collaborative approach characterizing Posenenske's now historic work was activated by an artificial soundscape that invited viewers to move around and experience an environment without merging sounds, and by muting sonic information into 'anti-formation' (that is: noise), the so-called aural space isolated listeners from the environment, alienating them from their surroundings – an effect also implicit in the placing of the industrial ready-mades by Posenenske in an unfamiliar habitat.

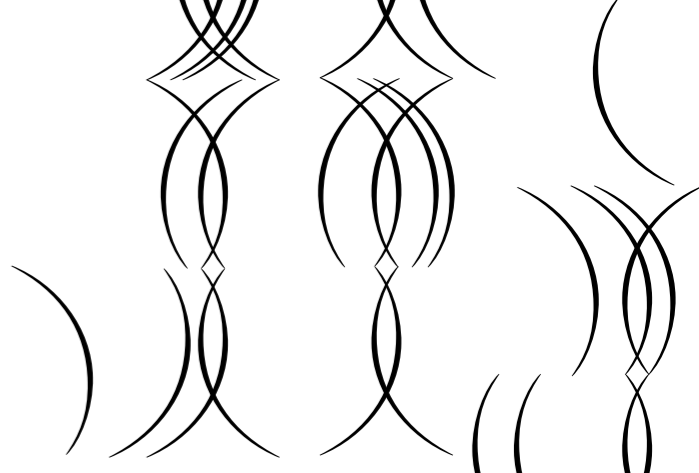
In Alexander Tilligreen's artistic practice, which links the sonic, the sculptural, and the visual, and involves objects, installations, paintings,

WORDS,

SPACES,

SOUNDS

Vanessa Joan Müller



Listening is a process that occurs at varying speeds. It can be like a bolt of lightning – all at once in the moment – or it consists of good intuitive guesses and thoughtful references to past experience... It has the potential of instantaneously changing the listener forever.

– Pauline Oliveros, *The Roots of the Moment* (1998)



NOTES

These are excerpts of participant responses on them or imagining them, very interesting to discover.

You have a lot of control/influence over what you hear, and it's possible to hear many different things by concentrating on them or imagining them, very interesting to discover.

PARTICIPANT 138

PARTICIPANT 149

It was very interesting to experience how the soundscape changes fluently, and you can hear new words bit by bit. I also felt like I could control what I heard to some extent and as soon as I thought of something, I heard it very clearly. So all in all an exciting experience.

PARTICIPANT 117

Head position and direction impacted the listening impressions.

PARTICIPANT 140

Hi, it was really very fascinating and interesting to me how one can possibly capture so many different words from various sounds and different volumes and rhythms. I had heard the words 'stupid' and 'loser', because my sister and I always call each other these names in good fun, so hearing these exact words made me grin.

PARTICIPANT 118

It's a new way to scramble the brain and I like it. I could imagine this as an alarm clock.

PARTICIPANT 141

Mr. Trillegreen loves techno, very good sense of rhythm and phonetic kalidoscope. I enjoyed it.

PARTICIPANT 121

It was exciting to notice some phrases and words triggering thematically related matters, such as meat and fish for example, in other words how our neural networks also influence our hearing.

PARTICIPANT 144

I wonder if words were actually spoken, or if it was just sounds that have similarities and stimulate the brain or the imagination, so that you hear what you want to hear and get carried away. Beautiful thing!

PARTICIPANT 137

That was totally crazy! I felt like I could control the sounds myself! For example, when I turned 'Ballon' into 'Ballin' or 'Ballen' inside my head, I started actually hearing that! As if I could see into the future.

PARTICIPANT 148

Sounds like 4:00 a.m., in the club, on drugs.

PARTICIPANT 178

The composition was interesting throughout, some parts reminded me of a techno concert, others of sound installations, almost like a trance, impressive and reminiscent of a David Lynch movie.

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PARTICIPANT 144

PARTICIPANT 137

PARTICIPANT 148

PARTICIPANT 178

PARTICIPANT 183

Exciting and never before heard or experienced like this.

PARTICIPANT 206

Interesting but a bit annoying

PARTICIPANT 187

Extremely fascinating, as well as the urge to identify speech in this. Sound art.

PARTICIPANT 188

Interesting, as soon as I concentrated on a word I was hearing, I would only perceive that particular word. Was able to simply switch between the different words after I wrote them down.

PARTICIPANT 213

Interesting pieces that can be interpreted differently depending on location, exciting design.

PARTICIPANT 233

It is a joy to search for meanings, to try to make sense, and to match what I understand with what I'm hearing. Can I trust what I think I've heard?

PARTICIPANT 191

I was surprised how often I could form something new from the same sounds.

PARTICIPANT 219

Very exhausting due to the volume, there was a beautiful melody in the background during one of the rounds on seat 3.

PARTICIPANT 234

I liked that the abstraction blurred the line between speech utterance and speechless noise. And contemplating that I constructed mainly two-syllable expressions, but was flexible about the order.

PARTICIPANT 224

Very, very interesting material, especially the change from one syllable to the next or from one word to the next is interestingly designed.

PARTICIPANT 237

Pretty wild and fast, it sounded like two voices wanted to get something off their chest quite urgently. Was fun to listen to.

PARTICIPANT 197

It was partly disturbing and you start doubting yourself for not being able to clearly understand a word.

PARTICIPANT 225

It was very fascinating to learn about the receptiveness of my own mind through this acoustic journey.

PARTICIPANT 244

For computer voices unusually clear perception at times, smooth transitions, many intelligible words to make out, mix. Mutual interference of the loudspeakers differed depending on seat position.

PARTICIPANT 200

I felt like I could hear whatever I wanted.

PARTICIPANT 226

Very interesting, never experienced acoustic noises like these before. Would like to see more studies like this.

PARTICIPANT 257

Unusual listening experience, difficult auditory identification, therefore rather frustrating.

PARTICIPANT 202

Very interesting, fluid, unsure to what extent I was reading into it.

PARTICIPANT 155

In some cases it was possible to hear the individual sounds that were previously making up a word as well as to turn meaningless sounds into a word while listening. Very exciting!

PARTICIPANT 170

It was very interesting to notice the terms constantly changing inside one's head and how it was possible to actively refocus on terms already heard. I'd be interested in the original words and whether actual words came from both of the speakers. Sometimes I had the feeling that one speaker produced a word, while the other was merely producing noises such as honking, this also made concentrating difficult. In any case, very interesting and entertaining!

PARTICIPANT 178

The composition was interesting throughout, some parts reminded me of a techno concert, others of sound installations, almost like a trance, impressive and reminiscent of a David Lynch movie.

PARTICIPANT 178

CURRENTS OF WORDS ABOUT ALEXANDER TILLEGREEN

Kathrine Børlit Nielsen

If you listen carefully and surrender to it – tilt your head a bit or reach it upwards – you can hear them, the words occurring in Alexander Tillegreen's phantom word pieces. At first, maybe just a single tiny word, uttered through the speakers again and again, but beneath the shape of the word lies something else, a piece of electronic music or a bass, the surrounding sounds as a pillow words can jump from and land on again. I quickly realized that after one word comes the next. If I walked around in the room rather than sitting down, I would hear different words than previously. The phantom words are a phenomenon, first and foremost; they are mirages of words occurring inside of you and so they exist within you. The words occur only to disappear again.

When Alexander first told me about the phantom words, we had known each other for a month. He said that the phantom words were an inexhaustible material and that every sound piece created from these words was a part of the process of getting to know them, of comprehending their potential, and how they behave. But also how their biggest quality was that they always avoided being fully understood. New perspectives arise all the time.

Alexander's phantom word pieces are made up of gaps and sounds; they are juxtapositions of energies and rhythms. Alexander himself keeps circling around language and voice. He moves fast, smiles a lot, and draws out individual words from our long conversations, yelling them aloud during the day. He is an archive of these chosen words that sum up our conversations and our shared impressions. He carries the words within him through the days and they are uttered again and again. He constantly resuscitates our near past, insists on these words living on, and it feels like the things we tell each other accumulate in both of us, grow on top of each other, branch out and stretch themselves, and we never let the words go again. Everything we do and say from now on is added to the fundaments that Alexander has built for us with the words he collects. Something strange happens with words when they are left in Alexander's possession.

The phantom words simultaneously create and annihilate. He seizes the language, erases it, and lets it rise in a new shape that approaches its listener with an open poetic.

I am a writer and most of my life and days are about words, as the material I am constantly working with. To me, phantom words are magical because they occur as complicated beings made from the simplest components. Historically, words have been entangled with cultic and religious modes of understanding, using language as material to furnish and understand the world order. I think it is a profound human instinct to interpret the world through words. While earlier on, human realization was connected to the belief that a similarity exists between micro and macro cosmos, that the large and the small mimic each other, it is within language that a similar realization takes place.¹ A word always possesses underlying meanings; it will always be sound, shape, and meaning at once. And so, Alexander's phantom word pieces are only half of the work as such. The sound piece constitutes a base and the completed piece comes into being through the resonance created in its listener.

When I write that a word always possesses an underlying meaning, this could of course be the prevailing evidence of words being each other's synonyms, that they can be told in ways that color their meaning, and they can be codes for other meanings. But the underlying meaning becomes magical when the words you hear in the phantom word pieces can also be interpreted as words specifically in relation to you as a person; that you hear can be deciphered as stars in the sky, that they convey something about your life and your story.² The phenomenon of phantom words was initially coined by the British psychology professor Diana Deutsch and, since 2019, Alexander has continued the research in collaboration with others. Using a cross-disciplinary approach, they investigate how and why the words you hear depend on not only your mother tongue, but also on social, psychological, and outright atmospheric conditions; and why some people simply hear more words than others. It opens up towards new perspectives on what it means to be an open, listening human. Meaning arises in Alexander's work and it manifests itself inside me as a chain made of chunky links; the words are stretched and shaped by Alexander until they are singular sounds and effects comprising a sound work. A listener hears words occurring in their mind alone – thousands of delicate facets of meaning around the human that the listener also is – and they become a bit clearer when we interpret the words the listener heard in the works. This is where the magic happens.

Words are magical because they seem to arrive from nothing. Words are a substantial part of the way humans understand the world, and words are used to establish structures and systems. At the same time, words are capable of transcendence.

The written language endures after a writer has passed; a word can be said in different contexts and ages and still be understood; the word can be read again and again, be appreciated by someone who has not been a part of its written time.

The meaning of language is never completely dependent on context; writing and speaking can be understood and interpreted dissociated from time and space. Alexander's phantom word pieces are thundering forward. They invade the listener's body and are processed, controlled by a moving tempo or a certain kind of speed that is not possible to maintain. Your individual memory will always play a part in how you experience language and the meanings of the words. In that sense, memory is a mode of recognition, essential to your way of interacting words and art. Meaning never occurs alone; it exists in your encounter with the phantom word piece. In order for you to relate to the piece, in order to hear the words streaming by, recognition is necessary. Alexander's phantom word pieces communicate something recognizable. The same sounds are being repeated in the work, become slightly displaced and distorted, and unmistakably change as the work proceeds, but the rhythm remains and the notes stay. I would say that the recognition is enabled by the repetition of sounds, rhythms, and notes. The repetition is a prerequisite for words being perceived, for languages being understood and to create meaning. In that way, recognition is tied to Alexander's phantom word pieces. The sounds repeating in potentially endless currents, and the words you hear and their meanings, will always be founded in the works recognizable features.

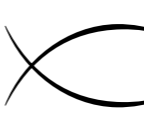
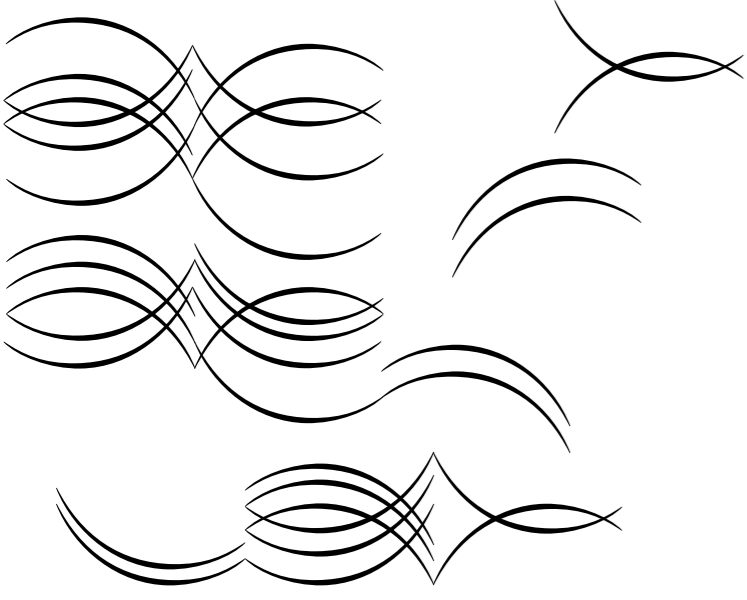
One afternoon in Copenhagen, Alexander recorded my voice while I read a 14-page list of two-syllable Danish words. He directed me: first I had to say the word as I would pronounce it, with a clear and distinct manner of speaking, not too slow. Then I had to do it with a crack in my voice, as though the suffix of the word were protruding from the line I could imagine it being written on, so that it almost sounds like a question. Or I could say the word with my own dialect; I would swallow the last syllable before the completed sound left my mouth. I could also whisper the word. These recordings are present in the exhibition at Ö—Overgaden. My voice can be heard in the piece alongside others, and Alexander's recording of my voice are closely intertwined with his way of working. He records voices of the people he meets, continuously and in connection with traveling, exhibitions, collaborations. When he afterwards twists and turns the words, reshapes them and composes around them, it is an elongated process. It is as though the language possesses an internal logic or a set of rules that is impossible for the listener to figure out. Even Alexander himself does not get to decide which words can be used in the piece, and from his many recordings it is often only a handful that can be modulated into phantom words.

When I hear his phantom word pieces I am, once in a while, able to control which words I hear. Recently we had dinner and afterwards he played a piece for me. I told him what I heard, he looked at me and explained which words took shape in his mind, and as he pronounced the words they suddenly materialized in me.

Whether you utter a word in an authentic situation or tell them to a recorder, slightly stooping, without any other real context than some further sound modulation, and whether you consider the words to be meaningful or mere material, they exist as meaning creators. The words work; they provide me with a resonance of understanding. Sound and words contain image-creating qualities and sound is able to activate the human memory, manifesting itself as scenes and motives in the human mind. In that sense, the words can be a constant presence which is still subject to transformation, and you will never experience Alexander's phantom word pieces and hear the same word twice. Even though the words transcend time and space, you will experience the words differently, as an expression of the small displacements in your own mind, as magical portraits of yourself. Your memory will both activate and affect the words you hear, and it is so difficult for me to say how the words occur. And just as Alexander pointed out that his work with the phantom words will always open up new perspectives on language, words, and our understandings of those; just as the comprehending conditions are always changing, the words themselves are thundering forward, and surely they will last. When I first became acquainted with the phantom words, Alexander also told me that working with them never had to end.

1. Walter Benjamin, "On the Mimetic Faculty", Margaret Lock and Judith Farquhar (ed.), *Beyond the Body Proper* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2017), pp. 150-152

2. Dorothee Kimmich, *Ins Ungefährte: Ahnlichkeit und Moderne* (Konstanz: Konstanz University Press, 2017).





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Alexander Tillegreen
Shift
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FOREWORD

Stepping inside Danish artist and composer Alexander Tillegreen's experimental sound universes is a physical experience. It is both challenging and meditative and powerful. Indeed, like getting an intense sound massage. Through images as well as sound, Alexander Tillegreen blurs the auditive codes we normally navigate by – including our languages – and breaks open their well-known layers of meaning into abstract sound images.

Tillegreen's current work emanates from an extended research project at the Max Planck Institute in Frankfurt for which he investigates the psycho-acoustic sound phenomenon known as "phantom word illusions": Phantom words are sounds that create illusions of word streams and sentences within the individual listener, but otherwise do not exist; rather it is the brain and subconscious that plays a trick. Through this interesting bodily mechanism we instinctively and automatically search for meaning in order to satisfy our desire for identification.

The exhibition *Shift*, made specifically for O—Overgaden, is centered around two large sound pieces but also includes painting, photography, drawings and sculptural installations that underpin Tillegreen's investigations into the acoustic field. The sound pieces are created to evoke phantom words inside the listener's head, the details of which change depending on how visitors move in the space.

Often the words heard resonate with each listener's cultural and linguistic background, subconscious, experiences, and mood. In this way, Tillegreen illustrates how we decode reality from totally different and individual standpoints.

In 2021, O—Overgaden launched a series of new, monographic publications in relation to our solo exhibitions. In its essence, this series focuses on new voices in the Danish art scene and on elevating these into a broader conversation and a larger followership. Each edition in the series is published both in print – with a special, grand fold-out poster as its cover – and as a free-to-download PDF version on O—Overgaden's website.

The series of publications has been made possible through generous support from the Augustinus Foundation for which we are extremely grateful. Warm thanks also goes to Knud Højgaard's Fond, Best's Fond, and The Danish Arts Foundation for supporting the exhibition. Thank you in particular to Vanessa Joan Müller for her thorough introduction to Alexander Tillegreen's recent work and to Kathrine Børlit Nielsen for her personal essay about streams of words. Thank you to our in-house editor Nanna Friis who edited this publication in close collaboration with our graphic designers from fanfare, César Rogers and Miguel Hervas Gómez, and to the entire team at O—Overgaden who, in collaboration with Alexander, have curated, constructed, and mediated the exhibition. Last but not least, I also wish to express heartfelt thanks to Alexander Tillegreen, not only for the truly inspiring collaboration but also for opening new, experimenting doors into the puzzling, psycho-acoustic universe of sound art.

Aukje Lepoutre Ravn,
Interim Director, O—Overgaden

Shift

