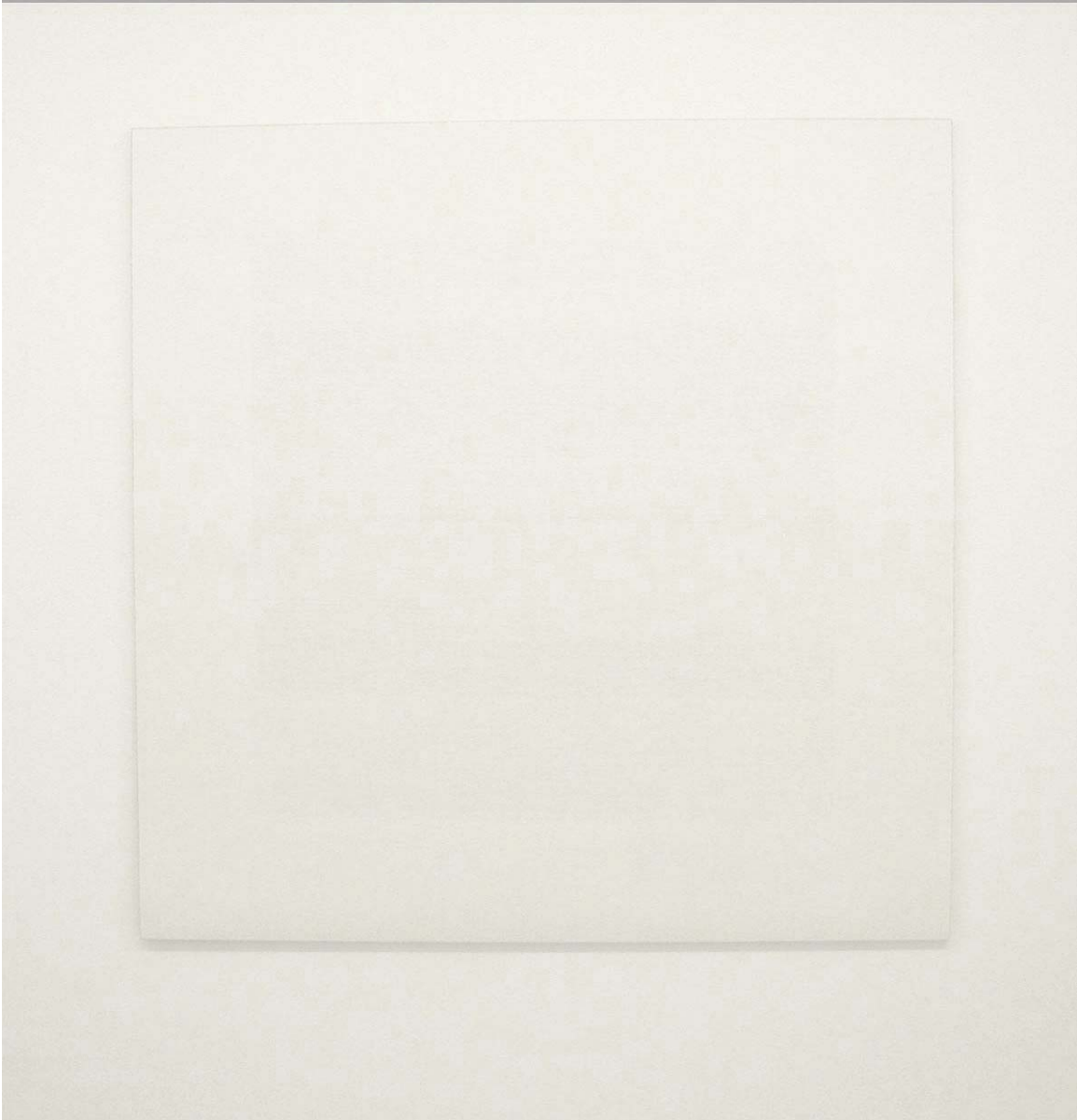


apophasis

david connearn

tim hodgkinson



This is a collaborative project between artist David Connearn and composer Tim Hodgkinson, first realised at the Sleeper Gallery, Edinburgh in April 2001. The project was documented on the audio-visual disc available as BIPHONIC BIPH 03. It has also been exhibited at :-
Prospects show at the Truman Brewery, London, May 2003,
Fruits de Mhère International Music and Sound-Art Festival, July-Aug 2003.

The Sleeper was ideal because it's underground and feels isolated from the outside world. You went down stairs and along passages to find it. When you got there, you came into a brilliantly white room with David's drawing opposite you. Behind you, in the two corners on either side of the door, were the loudspeakers for the sound....

After Tim's piece: Crackle of Forests (Sang isbn6575), which uses my drawing like a visual score, I started to look for a way that we could both work on the same material outside a mimetic framework. Its discovery was accidental. Some of the pencil leads in the batches I was drawing with made an unusual high pitched sound. I recorded several sessions of work using different microphone configurations, and after slowing these down, realised that the density of frequencies produced by this minute instrument could be a starting point.

For me, the activity of drawing is the work, in the way that free improvisation is the music. Its subject matter is the presence and temporality required. There is a formal context, a site and circumstance which conditions and frames activity, but within this, drawing itself is purposeless, an enactment of and within the contingency which surrounds and permeates it. I think of the drawn, what's left by the repetition of drawing, as a residue, a detritus: as a trace rather than a record or sign.

This 'presence' of working is unrepresentable, already lost to its enactment. The erasure of the drawn in Apophasis is an earnest for this. The sound recovers part of the original circumstance, some of what is lost to the conventions of interpretation within which drawing is 'seen'. Erasing the 'seen' makes space for what this convention obscures, arresting the analogical contraction of the wonder that there is something, by its reconfiguration as something.

Meanings which can't be shown can't be whistled either. But in pushing outwards from the virtual center of convention, towards its porous, fragmentary extremity, we open a space within fabric of representation, pushing towards an unprefigured ground of event, between and underlying the recognisable elements of experience.

We worked independently and put the piece together in the gallery at the opening of the original installation at Sleeper, Edinburgh, in May 2001.

David Connearn

The sound-material for this piece is recordings of David making lines. The microphone is sometimes on the pen, sometimes on the hand. Either way it is a very close-up listening to the friction of the pencil across the paper.

I didn't feel any obligation to make a representation of David's work. I simply treated the recordings he gave me as sound-material to work with. Let's just say that my awareness of his work was hovering in the background. And of course the sound of David drawing is different from the sound of other people drawing, and there is a connection between this difference of sound and the visual appearance of David's work.

As a composer I'm more used to working with groups of instruments with contrasting sound-colours or timbres. When I've worked with concrete sounds

before, they've tended to be quite varied and recorded from a wide range of sources in a wide range of acoustic spaces. So this is the most stripped-down piece I've ever done.

But as I got more involved with the material I discovered just how varied it was. I discovered the sounds of David's sleeve as he moves his hand into position for the next line, and the sound of his breathing. I learned to discern the differences of vertical pressure whereby at times the pen seems to gouge into the paper, at others, to skate on its surface.

But primarily, as I listened to the recorded traces of David working I found myself recovering not so much the temporal structure, the actual rhythm of the lines, but rather a certain quality of granulation brought on by the precise and continuously changing balance of physical forces.

So what I've tried to do with the material is not to make it an equivalent to the drawing, but to find the levers of musical tension in it, the pressures between surfaces, and the tension, also, between vertical pressure and forwards motion. And the concentration of the ear through dynamic tension.

I'd known all along that the sounds David had given me were of the making of a drawing that would be erased before it was shown.

Tim Hodgkinson

apophasis

Because of the nature of this work it needs to be set up away from background audio and visual noise.

Please let us know if you have a special space and a time in which it might work.

Link to original work - <http://showcase.commedia.org.uk/article/view/709/1/1/>