

UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED ARTS, HUNGARY
POSTGRADUATE SCHOOL

PHOTOGRAPHY – SOUND – SPACE
A SYNTHESIS OF PERCEPTIONS

THESIS

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INTRODUCTION

To survive, we must manage time and renounce the many. Firm roots help us to select the minimum needed to organize our lives. I don't believe in wanting to have it all — a desire informed by the shallow reading of images and words. I believe instead in singularities, autonomous choices and individual paths.

It is not by accident that inner freedom is infinite, while walls can rise up in an instant and claustrophobically limit space on the outside. Exterior spaces are built on, and teach us, the finite. We like to comprehend what surrounds us and like to believe that what we see is all there is. We know we are wrong. Yet we seek security in the world; we erect walls and build corners to see it end. From within, this can never happen.

It is hypocritical to cite conventional structures of visual, aural and spatial material in order to legitimise one's fear of the future. Whether you want it or not, new structures will emerge and you will have to act out a role in them, however unpleasant. Instead of trying to escape or perpetuate conventional modes of communication we should work hard to inhabit the new structures and frame the new rules for emerging forms of communication. The accessibility of a visual — aural — spatial realm and its taken-for-granted presence is bound to transform the self and our attitudes to time. The reality implied by the mechanically produced images, the claustrophobia of the built environment and the democratisation of the empire of sounds cries out for us to employ the human faculty to query the new order and determine our position with regard to the present continuous suggested by the image-sound-space. Thus we are in a remarkable, and at the same time,

a troublesome position. We have never learnt how to interpret the realm of image-sound-space. We do learn how to speak, read or write in order to receive and send verbal messages, but we never learn how to look at images, sounds or spaces. The human organism is equipped with the mechanism to read images spontaneously, move about in the built environment and react to aural stimuli, but the depth and the quality of these faculties remain unsatisfactory.

PHOTOGRAPHY

In the 19th century...

Photography is struggling for survival. It is sneered at because everything new is sneered at.

Jealous of their monopoly over making images, painters are outraged; and with good reason (though they don't know it at the time). The images improve; technique becomes of paramount concern. Photography is there, but it cannot speak yet. Technology outpaces mind. Chaos. Defencelessness. Epigonism. Painterly attitudes reign; chemical processes are employed to depict dreadful studio interiors. But where does photography stand?

In the 20th century...

It has arrived. After a long quest for its true self, it finally has the courage to believe in its independence and uniqueness.

Photography has learnt to think, became confident, and now understands that it is more important to concentrate on light, time, framing and the abstract rendering of natural colours than to indulge in endless quarrels.

In the 21st century

Images, including photographic images, ceaselessly transform how we picture the world. We have come to believe in the power of images, which have created for us a parallel reality of sorts. The reality suggested by photography is a print of the real, with the difference that its time is fragmented, and therefore it is capable of manipulating primary reality.

SOUND

Silence is an in-between state of sounds — by articulating sounds it lends them meaning. We create silences in our lives so that we can always go back to sounds. In the vacuum which silence creates between sounds, sounds sprout into meaning. By acting as counterpoint, silence creates rhythmic patterns in the visible world; it amplifies its sounds, spaces and images. It neutralises, withholds and prepares. Yet, just like sound, silence is not free from emotions: it has an affinity with the darker tones, and it can even grow dramatic. On the contrary, sounds are more impulsive, more open, and therefore also fuzzier.

We many speak of sound architecture, a kind of ceaseless building and demolishing. Whereas building and permanence are the essential features of images and spaces, for sounds the same process works both ways.

SPACE

Space is construed in the unconscious. Humans will approach ergonomically each situation that is able to lend itself to such an approach. We don't seem to think about it, but we keep omitting more and more. And we resign to the irrevocability of a mixture of the natural and the built environment, and accept it as the backdrop to our lives.

The centre of our wakeful existence is the world we construct around ourselves: the intimacy of our room/house, the space from which we look out at the world and interpret it. However small and insignificant, it is the point of departure for our existence in space; this is where we escape from and where we return. These intimate spaces are not transferable from one person to another. They wear out and age with us, and if we vacate them, they will perish and become meaningless for others. This perhaps is precisely what warrants their significance. The exterior and interior spaces we use — built or natural — determine our spiritual and physical existence; our paths in the world.

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My investigation of an image-sound-space complex departs from an examination of the relationships between physical dimensions and acoustic environment. Such enmeshments are inevitable since images as physical objects have spatial needs, and spaces are always already acoustically charged. This is the context in which I seek to explore how sound and space relates to the image, and particularly to photography.

Photography is silent. It bids time to stop and keeps silent. The silence, which envelops the image, amplifies its content; which in turn acquires new meanings if placed in an acoustic environment. The relation of the image to sound and space may reinterpret our world. It was this silence of photography that prompted me to investigate the opportunities to expand the medium. For me, it is very important to consciously choose the right sound to accompany the image so as to bring forth the sonic essence in the context of an image-in-space. The equilibrium of the moment of revelation will decide the power and the fate of the image.

CONCLUSION

The reason for the fading of colours is surely to be sought in how I look at things. This is not about black-and-white and grey; rather, this has to do with the different proportions of light and dark – the role of light. When I look back on my works, I see a ceaseless movement toward omission, subtraction and reduction. No more than what is absolutely necessary will be there. The minimum quantity of signs, colours, lines and sounds. Reducing means cutting down to the minimum the number of the tools I revert to. I am hoping to find the border between presence and disappearance – the border where, despite my tendency to disappear, I am still present.