

Notes.

Delving into the Oxford English Dictionary reveals a myriad of meanings for the word 'note.'

The word can range from signifying 'a single tone of definite pitch' to the description of something *noteworthy* - as regarding special attention. But as well as being these things notes are also the marks, signs and tokens that both document and communicate them; scribed articulations of specific moments. Whether its a lofty minim suspended high on the stave or a centred 'g' swinging from the pinky lines of some office A4, notes oscillate between a performance and its direction.

In the process of gathering material for Notes on a Return The Laing amassed a miscellany of texts, images and sounds in an effort to recall important performances from the gallery's past. These materials operated as both documentation of these performances and as a score for their development/reworking. In fact, 'note' comes from the Latin *Notare*, to mark; the notes from Notes on a Return operate as etchings - recollections cut into a variety of mediums. But typically these impressions range from notches to grooves - some memories entrenched whilst others are just lightly scratched into on the surface. All of these marks inevitably erode.

Bruce Mclean's 1986 performance 'Good Violence and Physical Manners' was described as a performance where Mclean conversed with artist and collaborator David Ward whilst being continually interrupted by televisions and radios that were being tuned in and out.

In 'Good Violence...' Mclean and Ward enact a failure in communication - it is impossible to be heard, or indeed to speak, against the relentless din of the modern world. In fact, 'Good Violence's...' overwhelming sense of inability reveals the intrinsic failure of all signifying systems. For Jacques Derrida the iterability of the sign functions not to reveal univocality and the effective transmission of a singular idea, but instead exposes the plurality of both intentional and accidental meanings. For Derrida the word and concept 'communication' is a mutable system, its inevitable failure as a vehicle of, and for, meaning is confounded in its every use. This failure is one matched also by the score; the scores inability to impress a flawless record or a consummate set of instructions is enacted in every mark both written and read.

Unable to access the work - the meaning - through the entangled web of notes, both written and performed I became obsessed with the idea of 'tuning in' to Mclean and his performance - this was primarily through the medium of radio, a medium that became central to the piece and lead to its title - 'Stimmung'. The German word *Stimmung* refers to the process of tuning in music and the mood or emotive state of a group of people; it is often used when talking about 'public opinion'. *Die Stimme* = Voice and *Stimmen* is to harmonise, to be correct. *Stimmung* was famously used as a title by Karlheinz Stockhausen in 1968 for a piece involving six vocalists and six microphones. In the piece the singers strike an inaudible B \flat and by changing their mouth shapes gradually expose

an array of overtones and harmonics. In my Stimmung radios were tuned to two closely aligned sound sources transmitted live via two radio beacons installed in the Laing. These sounds were in constant conflict with each other and were picked up by multiple radios scattered across the gallery. In a performance, by a

local choir, tones were built up and tuned-in across the surface of this shifting sound work. Random letters and syllables mined from this ether were introduced by the singers as they calibrated in and amongst the cacophony. This assortment of disintegrated syntax collected into pools of near-sentences and almost-words, as the singers filled the space with their own fragmented utterances. With this performance (and indeed with this text) I deposit my own notes on the Notes on a Return stave - weaving 'a tune' that will sit in both harmony and discord with those both before and after me.

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