

Karl Salzmann

Rotation/Notation

Roland Schöny

The way that since the early 20th century, sound—tones, din and noise—have been integrated into the context of artistic production by the avant-garde as a material, as a medium and thus as an essential new level of meaning is reflected by Karl Salzmann in his oeuvre on different levels drawing on the full gamut of present-day experiences. As an artist coming from digital and medial modes of procedure, with an explicit affinity to Pop, DJ Culture and sub-cultural trends, Salzmann approaches the dimension of sound not only as a phenomenon that can be heard, but that can be experienced in a spatial and temporal sense, too.

He takes up both visual and architectural aspects when he, for example, alludes to the sound-producing objects of the futurist Luigi Russolo in his sound installation *ignotorumori* (2013), which consists of several single elements with horns; when in his work *correlation* (2013) he carries forward the motif of the ventilator from contemporary installations and from the realm of sound art; when he employs turntables, or reactivates the cultish, mythical significance of the vinyl disc as a conveyor of sound by mounting several hundred rave records from the 1990s on the wall of a Viennese club, in the manner of Christian Marclay, for instance.

This involvement with various forms of representation of sound always leads to updates and modifications, and so to new interpretations of a significant cultural narrative. For example, Salzmann furnished the interior of his environment, which recalls Russolo's famous sound objects, with diverse electronic devices such as hard discs, monitors, or simply computers, transforming their own electro-magnetic activity into a ceaselessly audible composition. In his installation *unerwartete schleifen*, which consists of several record players, he in turn de-contextualised the original meaning of analogue music recordings, by taking the repetitive sound patterns of damaged records as material for a digitally generated composition.

Just as Salzmann puts the focus on turntables as sonic machines, or on Russolo's *Intonarumori* as icons of sound production in modernism, so, in his space-based installation work *Rotation/Notation*, does he treat Steve Reich's 1968 work *Pendulum Music*, which stands as an emblem for the introduction of minimalism as a concept of the acoustic avant-garde in New Music. Programmatically—besides Bruce Nauman and Michael Snow—those involved in an early performance of Reich's original version of the piece in Whitney Museum were the electronic music pioneer James Tenney and the architect Richard Serra, who worked with industrial material such as steel. Technically it is based on the parallel interplay of two, three or four microphones, which are suspended on their cable or which swing to and

fro over a loudspeaker, with feedback vibrations created in successively shorter structured intervals. Precisely in a historical period, therefore, in which feedback progressed to an essential moment of rock improvisation in the communicative dyad between the electric guitar and stage loudspeakers, while compositional music increasingly incorporated electronic sounds and opened up in the direction of aleatoric music, Steve Reich had in this way illustrated processes of sound production by simplifying and slowing down on the visual and acoustic plane. In so doing he created a transition towards Minimal Music. The cult status of the piece is shown not least in a recording by the band Sonic Youth on their album *Goodbye 20th Century*.

Experimenting himself with the sphere of sound, Karl Salzmann creates a homage to Steve Reich's concept with his work *Rotation/Notation*, leading his basic ideas into a new media format as a sound installation. By means of a microphone that is made dynamic by a small motor and is kept in permanent motion, and which swings in irregular movements to and fro over 16 loudspeakers, which are controlled in groups by four amplifiers, Salzmann creates an apparatus-based composition which is continually re-generating in new loops. The multi-channel sounds of modulating frequencies are set up on the principle of feedback, overlapping and gradually fading away again. Yet the movements of the microphone suggest not only their field of reference in terms of sound history and art, they also trace the physical topography of the changing sonic formations.

Roland Schöny, cultural expert, curator and author on modern art, teaching appointment with emphasis on sound at the Department of Digital Art at the University of Applied Art Vienna, 2004-7 Project head in the Public Space Vienna (today the KÖR). 2002-5 curator at the O.K. Centre for Contemporary Art, Linz, conception of the series OK-spektral (with C. M. v. Hausswolff, MESO / Involving Systems, Bernhard Gal, Christof Kurzmann, Michaela Grill among others). Exhibitions: *Open House*, 2004; *The Promise The Land*, 2003 (with T. Edlinger and S. Rollig); 2001-2 artistic director of Klangturm St. Pölten, 2000 *soundsandfiles*, (in the collective SPK), k-haus, Vienna; 1989–2001 ORF Radio Österreich 1 and FM4, cooperation with institutions such as Centre Pompidou, Vancouver Art Gallery, Kunstmuseum Luzern or TBA21. Co-editor of *skug – Journal für Musik*, published in *artmagazine.cc*, *springerin*, *camera austria*, *spike*, *IDEA*, *FAQ*, *derivé*, among others.