

THE **2012** **SOUND** **PROJECTOR 21st ISSUE**

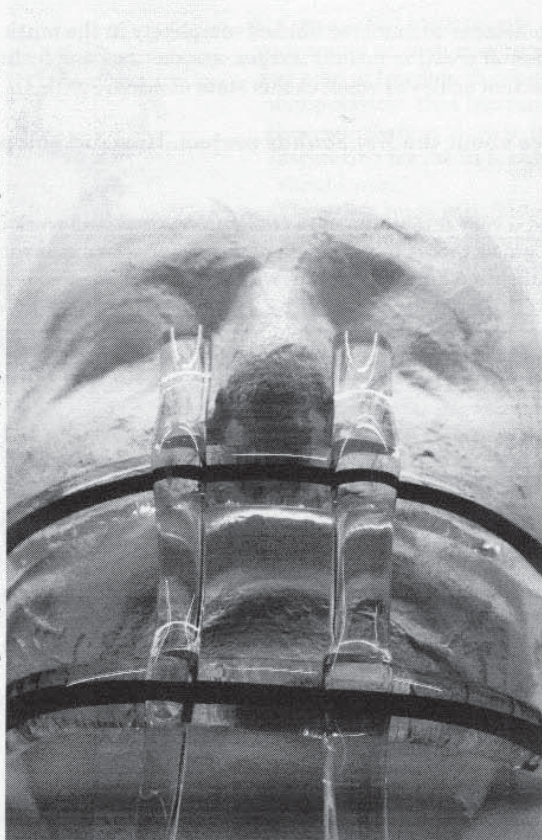
ALL NEW INTERVIEWS WITH PIETRO RIPARBELLI, JESSE STILES, ANNE GUTHRIE, TIM OLIVE, ANDREA PENSADO, ARCHITEUTHIS WALKS ON LAND, BRANDON NICKELL, ST.RIDE, VIALKA, WOZZECK, WARM DIGITS, THE TRUTH ABOUT FRANK, LUTNAHIMAT, MIKE VERNUSKY, NICK HOFFMAN, NATHALIE BLES AND VICKI BENNETT PLUS OVER 250 RECORDS REVIEWED



Nathalie Bles

"I was fighting against the devil himself, he was a green vegetable (yeah) with cold blood bouncing at top speed in all directions, we were both wearing dark glasses & the action was taking place in a dark room closed from the outside, so seeing nothing we were talking telepathically to each other."

Muzzle - One of the glass pieces from the D.A.F. project - 2010 - Courtesy France Fiction



TSP: Bien entendu, you're mainly a gallery and installation artist working with sculptures and video. However I see a few of your works have used audio and music in some way, so can you describe them briefly and explain what the audio component is doing, what is the role played by the sound? For example, in the projects +NewCult+, Hole, The D. double vinyl...

NB: My inaugural collision (collision 'cause I couldn't predict it) with audio took place when I was editing my first video project. That video involved six actors & was mainly filmed outdoors, around bunkers & a barracks where I have my studio. The very space & architecture themselves produced huge reverberation & saturation in the recording & I was such a stranger to audio work that I didn't even think to control my camera sound level during the shooting...It was a mess.

So the post-production - that I was doing alone with my laptop, brought me two months of complete isolation & during those two months, I had the clear sensation of being on the brink of collapse walking near a black hole.

That was my first encounter with audio work process in 2001.

To give an impression of that tremendous situation, I produced a CD edition by way of an invitation card to the exhibition, featuring a singer and musician friends (Louise Vertigo & Leonard de Leonard from the French label Musiques Hybrides). It looked like post sound poetry of the fifties melted together with touches of French electronica of the moment. We did a release of 1300 copies & distributed them on visual art network. That was the second step.

Third step, a lot of the people who had received that CD never listened to it, thinking it was an artefact, I mean they never even tried to put it in their player (sound art didn't quite exist in France ten years ago in term of diffusion & reception habits). So I began to think about that medium (including its physical dimension) & about disjunction & nonsense. Was quite exciting in fact. And audio allowed me a kind of Janus thing you know. That was a real deal.

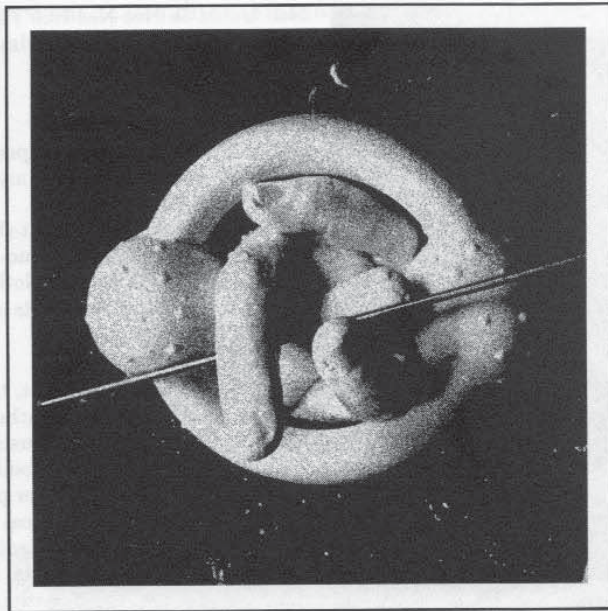
My first LP (The d. self titled for "The devil inside of me") resulted from a one year exhibition program in a Parisian gallery & marks the start of that masked position: I was filming all the exhibitions (that time with a directional microphone customized for my camera) but using only the audio part for editing & proposing a possible collaborative audio work based on those free recordings to other artists that I really liked. It was by mail (I don't remember the exact content) but was quite ritualized as a blood contract from my part.

After recording & collecting that first stuff derived from the exhibits & my own incidental recordings, I invited several musicians sending them that stuff (Hypo & dDamage / see the Tsunami-Addiction label, Groupgris / from the now well known Kap Bambino band, Def / who I'm working with to mix all my albums, the best ears in Paris). The cover was black, the vinyl neither signed nor referenced. It was a kind of white label. I was looking for distribution. Chris from Toolbox was the first to help me.

Gonna be sickening to describe the different releases after that. The main point is I'm not "using" audio &/or music, I'm not at all a 'sound artist', it's very important to recognise, I'm really far away from that. I'm addicted to music & need to compose using my disposable instruments for the moment, my voice & their stuff. Composing is my final des-

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One of the five sleeves of +New Cult+ (m.m Label-ART01) - id.



...tination & deepest wish. My approach is instinctive, I do not read nor write music, my musical culture, just as my visual art culture, is a matter of complete self-education, so this means right away, gaps, errors & a kind of anarchic syndrome. But I'm a really a good selector & a really eclectic one. I like to blur the lines.

TSP: Some of these musical exploits end up as physical releases, or limited editions. Do you see these releases as opportunities to extend your work a little into the marketplace? Do they stand alone as sonic artworks? Do you design the covers and include texts/images as part of the release?

NB: I'm not so much interested in extending my work into the marketplace, all my releases are produced at a loss for sure & each time it's heads or tails to find the money for them. I'm interested to extend it in general: records permit a physical circulation & better accessibility to artwork pieces, using in the best way to my opinion the terms of "series" & "artist multiple" & except for the limited edition part, I sell them at the standard vinyl price.

Btw all my distributors pertain to music networks, perhaps cause I'm just boring about conceptualization dis-

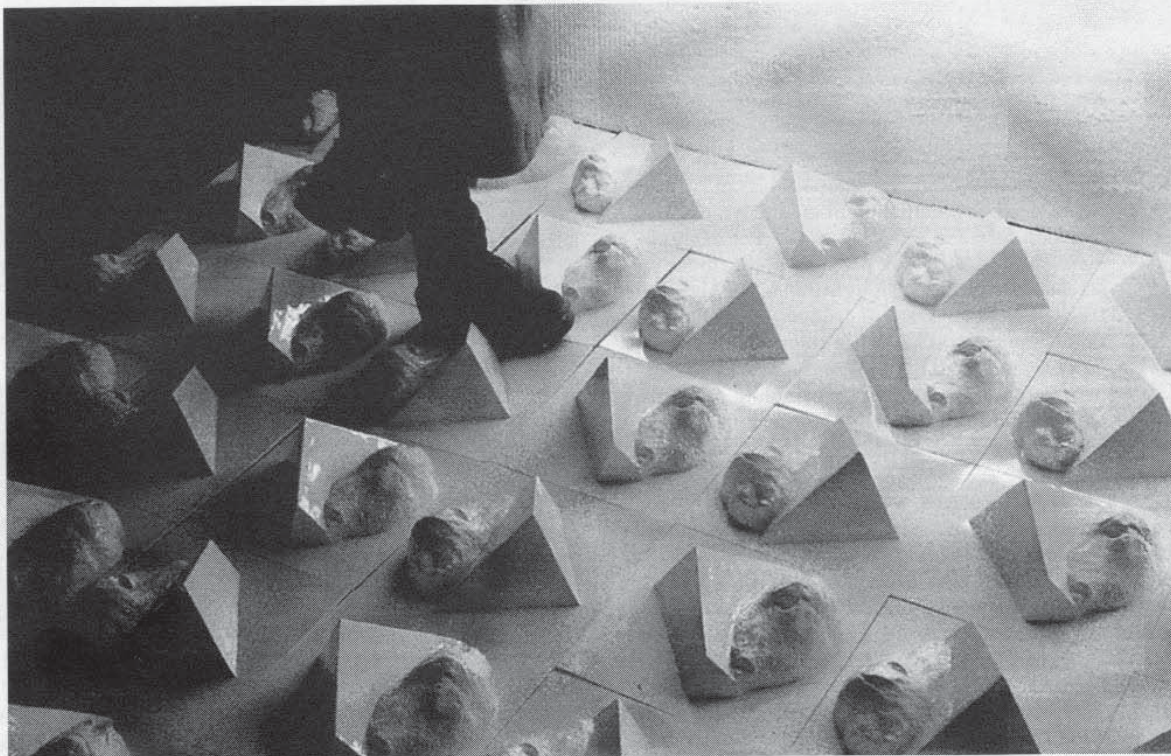
course & will always prefer a good listening to a speech. I'm quite an outsider in that sense.

Btw too, I was very happy to be contacted a few years ago by Ed Veenstra, one of the world's most important collectors of anti-records, broken music & artist's vinyls & to be a part recently of his audio programming in the Radio Web MACBA. "Memorabilia / Collecting sounds with..." Could help me a lot for sure. But it's just an epiphenomenon...

So to recap, yeah, I really hope those releases could stand alone as sonic artworks, that's clearly my goal & for the year 3000 - at least. I've always designed all of my covers (even in 3D for the *Hole* EP). I do everything. I'm regretting just now that I never included the lyrics with it. Well, I suppose my link to text is quite special because I came from writing, but it was in another life & I like to change my priorities...and move on.

TSP: What do you think about gallery artists making records? For example Joseph Beuys made an LP in the 1970s, and Kommissar Hjuler makes several very odd records today.

Hole ep 3D covers in an outdoor berliner performance (these are my feet)
- ©2008 Francis Ginza/Sox/Nathalie Bles



Recording +New Cult+ (pic by Hypo) - 2010



NB: "Ja Ja Ja Nee Nee Nee"???
Funny, I just bought yesterday
the Mike Kelley LP *Vice
Anglais...*

Do you have that French expres-
sion in English: "That's not my
cup of tea"? Self infatuation.
What would you think about that
piece if you're completely igno-
rant about Joseph Beuys? Noth-
ing. Just that he really needs a
beer.

Some things delight me a lot, like
the Tim Berresheim & Jonathan
Meese series (I collect it) cause
it's music, experimental & foolish,
a kind of super defective over pro-
duction, with some great vocal
improv (I sample Persona Grata
in the Hole EP). It's not Dada, it's
not Fluxus, it's Tim & Jonathan. I
love too in another style the Elec-
trophilia project from Steven Par-

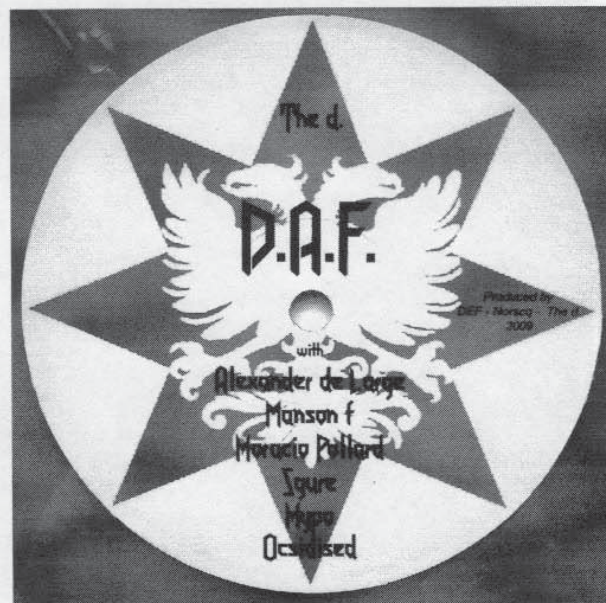
rino (playing Arto Lindsay & DNA for example) in the same way, that is music & could be evaluated in those terms.
Hice versa, Albert Oehlen doing the cover for "I Hate Art Galleries" with Felix Kubin & Mark Boombastik, what
great fun too...I appreciate some modesty & real involvement in that field.

TSP: Do you produce sound / music / audio yourself, or do you prefer to invite collaborators? Do you always rework their contribution in some way? Are you trying to recontextualise noise music to advance the meanings of your own artworks?

NB: I make my own stuff, but there are always collaborators in one way or another, cause I absolutely need surprise & destabilization in my work process to be good. In fact I suppose at one point in time a kind of virtual playlist rises in my mind, so I initiate some invitations, sometimes making really precise demands & sometimes not. I could rob too, but I inform the owners before I do. I do not reveal anything about my final intention at the beginning, I mean do not make any comments about the project & let myself drift. It's a game with only one rule: you must be OK to authorize me making cuts, modifications & interactions. That includes for sure some imposition for the musicians as for the listeners, taking for instance to extremes in The D.A.F. LP which doesn't include separate tracks but two sound continuums (but was a frightening hallucination for me too!).

Reactivation, reappropriation, recontextualisation...I don't know. Noise music gets me closer to white noise & astonishment effects which are common terms in all of my work. For example *Hole Performance* took place by night under a stroboscope with harsh lighting & the high-speed track of *Hole EP* tried to produce a similar sensation (that's why it's a white coloured vinyl). In fact I do not wish to analyze the process. I could just say that I'm looking for complete coherence in my different approaches but each medium should stay untethered.

TSP: The D.A.F. record seems to embody a few of your preoccupations...violence and death; people in jail, locked in chains, blind, unable to breathe, or with restricted movement; revisiting and reinterpreting history (especially French history); telepathic communication. How do these strong themes appear in your other works? What do they mean to you? Which is the most important? I especially like the idea you highlight that Charles Manson, after seeing the impending apocalypse in The Beatles White Album, continued to perceive hidden information and cryptic messages being sent to him while in jail. On dirait de la schizophrénie! How does this narrative affect



D.A.F. A side - The bifid eagle will reappear in my XXS costume.

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you? What do you think it means?

NB: D.A.F. (including its plastic component) was determined by several flashes: first a dream or nightmare where I was fighting against the devil himself, he was a green vegetable (yeah) with cold blood bouncing at top speed in all directions, we were both wearing dark glasses & the action was taking place in a dark room closed from the outside, so seeing nothing we were talking telepathically to each other - pity it was not the Sly Stone wrestling cause I lost... That dream, even with broken words, appears on my "track" with Hypo. Then that interview from Charles Manson which I had sampled on the overture: "music has a lot to do with fear" & third this strange anecdote related in a XIX century book, about Donatien Alphonse François de Sade in his Bastille cell, twisting the exhaust pipe of his toilet to the window and using it as a megaphone to call for revolution in Paris.

In my studio, coloured silicone heads for The d. double LP - 2003



These three stories speak to me about the figure of evil including some of his temporal political incarnations, about rock&roll in general & about some technical recording ways in particular, as the back masking tapes already introduced in The d. & *Hole* EP. They had in common jail & voice, or a broken or missing voice. So what? "Faisceau de présomptions". I could tell I perceive myself hidden information & cryptic messages 24/24 & do my best with it 'cause it clearly means a lot of pressure & excitement. In the D.A.F. project, plastic work came afterwards, I brought the vinyl to the master glassmakers I was working with, body scale accessories were calibrated on my face no doubt because the album cover was showing it for the first time. It took a long time to find the same vermilion red, which by the way was the same of my paintings ten years ago, which by the way is a reference to the great battles (including robberies & murders) between studios in the XVII century ('cause vermilion was produced by a cochineal insect that was never domesticated, cost a lot & was the main ingredient to produce "incarnate" tonality, means well, the colour of the human flesh you know & who had the better recipe to steal?).

Ok. That's really my way to work. "I'm a mechanical man": the last sample of D.A.F. from the Manson family in their better improv. All that matters to me is present on my albums on a literal way, even self-artistic criticism, but just in a compressed way... That's my defect, I really try to go against that now.

TSP: Tell us about your new project for a piece of live music in opera form. It will be a collaboration with musician friends? Are you writing the libretto? Will it be a satire of operatic conventions? Are there characters? What is the story or theme?

NB: The project is called XXS & was initiated last year with another visual artist, Florence Giroud, who is as close as me from music. XXS doesn't mean "extra extra small", it's a fragment of a Roman date: during our first studio session, we were working voices around Tenebrae liturgy & more precisely the resurrection of the dead, listening to Dietrich Buxtehude & so on... There is a singing character & a speaking one & both of us had one text: for my part a

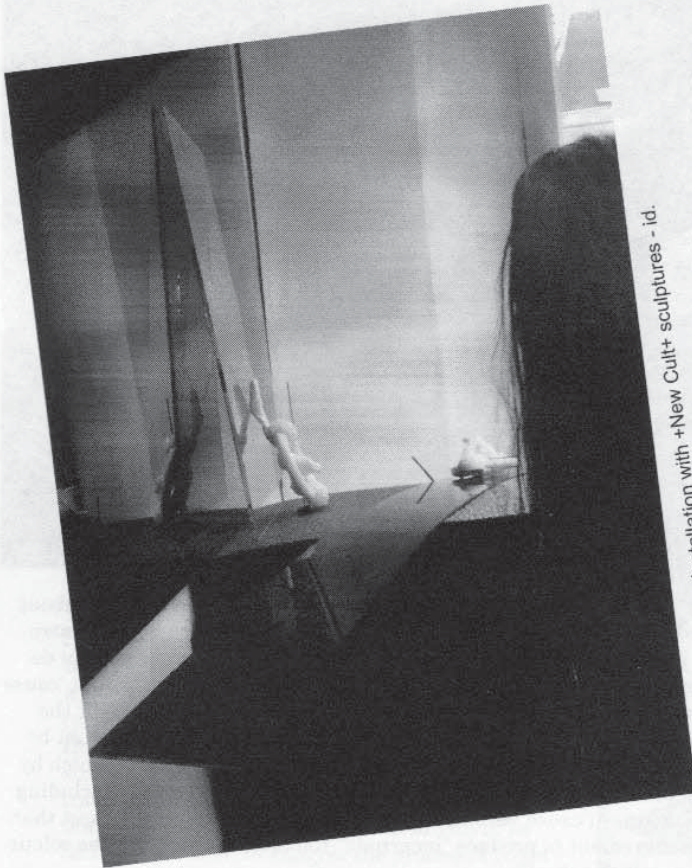
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rewritten cut up of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, for her part extracts from *Victory Against The Sun*, a Russian Futurist opera from 1913. Those two texts interlaced form our libretto, theme is on the titles I suppose. Characters could interact too in the live performance as if they were "Leitmotive".

That winter we first invited for improv sessions Jérémie Sauvage & Mathieu Tilly from the France band (who are running too one of the most interesting post-psych contemporary French labels, Standard In-Fi). We're just waiting now for an intervention by Horacio Pollard to edit our first demo/libretto, a very ltd LP (money talks _yuck) with texts & drawings. (Yeah will be a long process cause we're working completely alone for the moment).

Live performance must introduce actions during instrumental parts, our sculptures for the stage set, even costumes (I will be wearing for instance a huge dark mantle designed with Vava Dudu).

Opera is one of the most coded musical form, I don't think we wish to use it in a satirical way, some Black Metal bands do that so perfectly you know! & respect to the Gesamtkunstwerk! (I remember one of the first & worst reviews I ever had was from Vital Weekly 712: "Probably what the Germans would call a gesamtkunstwerk, of which the meaning somehow eludes me." Well, not to me Monsieur). In 2006, I had invited a side project from Horacio Pollard called Cau_Cational Betreet to play in an outdoor installation of my own. I was reading at the moment the Dan Graham & Marie-Paule McDonald libretto *Wild in the Street* & that invitation was for me in simple continuity with the 24 Hours Live Performance which had featured Hypo & dDamage in the bubble house in 2004. I mean that new work opus is so natural, I really hope we could play it live soon.



Altar - View of a gallery installation with +New Cult+ sculptures - id.

About "Leitmotive"

Pierre Boulez - *Chemins vers Parsifal*

"L'intention de Wagner quant à la compréhension de leur fonction est parfaitement et clairement établie. Les éléments nous sont présentés, au départ, sous la forme la plus simple, la plus directement perceptible -isolés les uns des autres par de longs silences, telles des cloisons, ou séparés de tout autre contexte: on les dirait irréductibles les uns aux autres. D'autant plus irréductibles qu'ils se présentent comme des idées musicales absolument immuables, sur lesquelles la modification et la transformation ne peuvent avoir prise. (...) les possibilités de transformation nous sont d'abord escamotées, pour s'insinuer et nous surprendre ensuite avec plus de force. (...) à travers un habile procédé de séparation, puis de recomposition des éléments fondamentaux, et il s'opère quelquefois sur les figures un véritable changement d'identité (...)"

<http://nathalie.bles.free.fr/>

Nathalie Bles would like to thank

Ed from Dense in Berlin, he had done the promo for D.A.F. album & sent it to Mr Pinsent + thanks to Lionel Fernandez from Sister Iodine band who talked to me about him "if I got 200 euros to leave" & first of all THKS to the musicians who had shared &/or composed stuff with The d.: Hypo, dDamage, Def, Groupgris, Bimbomixer, Black sifichi, Alexander de Large, Horacio Pollard, Sgure, Jérémie Sauvage, Mathieu Tilly. Each project could be the last one :)

Fantom Label, a working note for The d. double LP - id.

