



Moving Silence

Although there are exceptions to the rule, most present-day filmmakers, video- and new media artists are increasingly abandoning the metier of constructing cinematographic space from mere visuals (e.g. movement, angle, frame, choice of décor, colour, editing, after-effects, animation) in favour of interlocking visuals with sound or sound effects. More to the point: they basically have become dependent on audio to complement or complete the visuals. Conversely spectators are growing accustomed to seeing with their ears, consequently developing an unwanted 'deafness' to images. Where for example the films of Hitchcock induce, famously effective, a visual apprehension of 'the scary parts', later suspense thrillers count wholly on the suggestive effects of 'daunting audio' (Stephen Spielberg's *Jaws*). Nowadays most horror movies probably make one laugh (or yawn) when one mutes the sound. A master of the silent movie era, Sergei Eisenstein, stressed the decisive importance of visuals. He meticulously took care that the images on the silver screen, albeit devoid of audible voice (i.e. synchronised recorded sound), were singing a song of their own. Perhaps logically his theory of film editing does not deviate much from basic guidelines to music composing, with a strong emphasis on metric, rhythm and (over) tonality. But even Eisenstein used a separate musical score to accompany his features, as was common in his time. In the time-based arts sound (i.e. noise/music/dialogue) is often employed – intelligently, superbly and admirably - as thematic adhesive and 'emo-managing-device': to (re) direct the spectator's gaze, to keep his attention (e.g. Bill Viola), to induce active participation (e.g. Bruce Nauman) or to create unity in large-scale multi-screen video collages (e.g. Doug Aitken). However in the worst case scenario's sound is utilized to patch up floundering or failing visuals. This can only happen because also in the arts (and not just in the film making industries) there is a growing dependence on sound as an image-enhancing tool. Erecting fluid architecture, open-textured sculpture and pictographic narratives from light and shadow (for what is a projection other than a fleeting show of light and shadow?) is a profound artistic challenge and should not be the pleasure and privilege just reserved for the likes of movie editor Pablo Ferro, who stringently edits without soundtrack. Yet undeniably it is hard to make a beguiling film or video without sound. Likewise it is hard to watch a silent film or video without growing impatient or anxious.

The Sound of Shadow wants to make amends. The project seeks to re-enliven the quick-witted resourcefulness induced by the sharp stitch of deprivation which a hundred years ago caused

the first silent movie pioneers to come up with groundbreaking and paradigm-shifting ideas. It aspires to create time-based projected works that are as engrossing as their 'regular' counterparts *with* sound, thereby not only demanding a heightened attentiveness of the artist but also a newly inspired involvement of the sensitive and sensual spectator - thus gently plugging into the field of synaesthesia, where currently innovative art forms are being brokered. It endeavours to create meaning, beauty, fascination, marvel and sublimation with one hand tied to the back.

Also *The Sound of Shadow* aims to come off with a slightly political edge. Sound artist Bill Fontana once remarked that inventors of the industrial apparatus never took (nor take) into account the additional noise production (or: noise pollution) of their devices. Urban live is unwittingly cluttered with noise because eminent importance is given to the faculty of vision. From an opposite position video artist Artur Zmijewski argues in his manifesto *The Applied Social Arts* (2007) that the public has lost its ability 'to read images' because contemporary society is so cluttered with visual incentives it is difficult for any person to establish focal reference. Deafened by clatter, blinded by clutter: the predicament of modern man? It's not just urban myth to state that when a person becomes deaf, he develops better vision. *The Sound of Shadow* wants to defy the burden of 'visual illiteracy' by dipping its series of moving images in an arena of silence, like a mystic descending into the void, and thus making room for the breath of God.

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