The Serpent´s Logic

Erik Samakh

sound installation in the schlossberg civil air defence tunnel

Animals always sing for a good reason: to ensure propagation, to mark out their territory, to outwit their hunters or to warn against impending danger …

At times it would appear to be useful to be able to recognize the thoughts that are driving their voices and their behaviour.

Once in the body of the serpent, the frogs challenge us to come out of our shell, whereby it is absolutely necessary that we pay attention to our movements.

The AAM's (autonomous acoustic modules), designed especially for very "animal" installations, are set against a very dark, damp room and only the battery ensures the autonomy necessary for this individual type of communication, the sound of which largely depending on the energy available during the four days of its existence.

The audience enters through the serpent's head (see the official plan, should one give credence to a diagram of reality?) and can only leave again through this head.

As has been the case with several of my installations (Animal en Cage 1988- Animal in a Cage) the bait is of a tonal nature, but it has nothing to do with music ("Let's go to the concert" this is the right phrase to lure us into the trap). The AAM's are diffident dividing lines (very receptive to the slightest movement), "resonant life belts" for the drowning. Every emission, every boundary stone spread throughout the area corresponds to a number ranging from 1 to 20 (code necessary for orientation).

The entire layout behind the installation lures the listener into the trap in the light of the helmets.

In every AMM installation, machines (unobtrusive vectors) disappear entirely (camouflage and/or access to the machines is forbidden).

This is why it was forbidden to land on the "bird island" or to penetrate the "acoustic oasis" of Talcy park, as the installation only becomes perceptible behind a park fence. The uncertainty is sometimes terrible for the badly informed public ("Le Rossignol de Heinz").

The setting (the area used) is completely integrated in the design of the installation and forms an integral part of the work.

Embracing the most diverse of experiments, AAM's make it possible to completely break away from the "traditional setting or area" like the video screen, projections, the performance hall, the concert hall, the theatre, the museum, the gallery, etc …

They may even create a greater degree of independence from the institutional "setting" (in principle for the moment). The fact that the work involves sounds which directly influence the perceptible and tangible reality of the "landscape" is of fundamental significance.

It is easy to superimpose a virtual room, a product of the mind assisted by machines (unobtrusive vectors) and their sounds, on a real room.

The body and the mind are now caught up in a kind of "sandwich". The real room and its inhabitants are set vibrating and this gives the whole thing a manipulated, blurred picture.
These unobtrusive vectors (virtual and sonorous) which pass through the transparent material set vibrating, are responsible for this.

The confrontations and the repulsion these interventions have with the human visitor as well as the animal world, now appear to me to be exciting. Scientists and hunters have long given a great deal of thought to the vocal communication between animals who use these sounds as bait, or to hunt, to lure, to communicate and to try and understand the widest variety of species: (insects, amphibians, birds, mammals …).

Scientists a CNRS are currently working on the development of highly specialized acoustic machines which are very similar to the AAM, with the intention of confronting the animals being studied with them in the countryside (certain biotope).

Very often animals memorize repeated sound and information (parrot) and absorb them in their vocabulary. This again leads to the experiment being prolonged, exceptionally … Such "acoustic communication" (virtual realities) can confuse them and prevent them from living normally, by forcing them to leave their native ecosystem.

For this very reason I regard the installation of machines as being more the artifical implantation of a new type of parasite in a certain biotope as they can be programmed to adapt themselves easily to a certain area, and just the opposite, they can upset the balance of a place and its inhabitants and destroy it.

MAA (AAM)

Autonomous Acoustic Machines Vision and Reflection 1991

A variety of experiments, acoustic installations with "animal" behaviour resulted in my inventing different tools of my own: "autonomous acoustic modules".

As with most animals and plants, especially, acoustic modules go into hibernation in winter when the sun distances itself from the earth.

Then the machines only consume the minimum necessary to maintain the elementary functioning of their cycle.

The transmission time and the intensity of this depends on the energy accumulated during the day and consequently on the capacity of the battery and the surface of the solar collector. This autonomy forces the systems to adopt a special kind of behaviour as it depends on the amount of sunshine received by their place of implantation.

The sensor which the acoustic robots can be fitted with, make it possible to analyze the "climate" of a corresponding place. Anemometers, thermometers, hygrometers, radar, all can be connected to the digital analogous inputs which the microprocessor card is equipped with.

As a result the module remains in constant resonance with the environment in order to spread its sounds.

This is a new species which is about to integrate itself and by doing so will influence the adopted world.

From the very first emission, as far as it is concerned, the room vibrates – a vibration which is created by a virtual presence and a new energy. The machine is the unobtrusive vector which prolongs and perpetuates the first action whereby the process of creation is maintained by the sound occurring. In doing so the realization of the installation's area is impaired. In view of this 'virtual reality' the mind forms a personal, poetic and magical picture of this area, influenced by the quality of the sounds transmitted and the behaviour of the modules and their positions.

There are numerous consequences behind the emission of sounds in a certain ecosystem, and if certain information from the milieu influences the behaviour of the machines through the sensors, the circulation of these sound reactions can alter the acoustic communication between certain indigenous species (animals and/or humans). As a result of this intervention, these individuals, birds, insects, amphibians can become agents of the repeated AAM experiment.