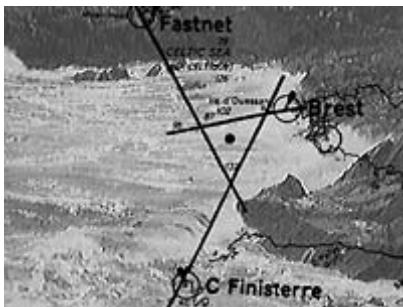


Le triangle d'incertitude — The Triangle of Uncertainty

Suite for maritime landscapes

Cécile Le Prado



Concept

Sailors and seafarers find their bearings at sea by means of natural points of reference located along the coast. These points, for example church spires, hills, water-towers or lighthouses that generally stand out from the rest of the coastline, are called amers [seamarks or landmarks]. All you have to do is identify three such landmarks in complementary directions so as to be able to construct a triangle which inevitably contains your ship. This triangle drawn on the navigation map is called the "triangle of uncertainty."

The sound installation principle *Le triangle d'incertitude* takes up the principle of triangular navigation substituting these visual seamarks with acoustic "landmarks" — also information elements used in navigation — that can be recognised by listening carefully. Lighthouses, buoys, ship's radio and many other technical facilities warn the sailor of hazards or obstacles.

This installation project is concerned with constructing a triangle of uncertainty on the ground of a fictive, virtual space on the basis of sound recordings made at the following locations: the southern tip of Ireland [Fastnet Rock], the western edge of France [Brittany], and the westernmost point of Spain [Cap Finisterre].

In essence, the installation refers to the position of sounds in space, constantly chopping and changing between orientation and uncertainty.

Realisation

The recordings play an important role for the conception of the work and are made by Cécile Le Prado. Both pre-selected sounds are recorded, such as a lighthouse foghorn or the whistle of a buoy out at sea, as well as sounds discovered coincidentally during recording. The sounds are recorded because of their extraordinary, innate acoustic and musical qualities which gives the recording a very specific, irreversible three-dimensional image. One example is water gushing through a hole in the pier in the port of Malpica in Spain. Owing to its musical aspect, this sound resembles a reworked studio sound, albeit maintaining its typical harbour quality. The history of the recording also plays an essential role during composition work in the studio, for although the ear is indeed stimulated at this particular moment, certain recollections of the circumstances, visual and other impressions will actually decide on what nature the installation will assume at a later point.

In the studio the recorded sounds are digitally sorted and cut, and some of them are reworked before taking their place in a kind of storyboard. This reworking is often triggered by a harmonic or temporal quality [to widen the concept of rhythm], a quality that already existed when the original recording was made. By simulating an acoustic space in real time and by selecting the paths these sound sources take in this space, what is created is an "écriture de la spatialisation," writing for spatial recording, as an element of composition. It is gradually refined by repeated listening and modification.

This work was created with the aid of the Spat® spatialisator. This newly developed software by IRCAM and the Atelier Espaces is a virtual acoustic processor that is essentially based on a perceptive analysis of space. With the aid of the Spat®, this construction simulated in the studio can be adapted to meet the requirements of various playback sites.

The final stage of realisation consists in integrating the installation implemented in the studio into an outdoor or interior setting. The interplay between the composition, the "natural" acoustic environment and the acoustics of the installation site is always very interesting. Certain aspects of the studio composition vanish, while others become more important. The site develops and gradually takes on the form of the suggestion made in the studio, particularly depending on the time of day, weather conditions, etc. The interaction of a given site and installation determines a specific combination of restrictions and options. In this sense, the "triangle of uncertainty" is extremely constraining. It is heard under very precise conditions. The loudspeakers have to be equidistant to each other and set up in a circle. The ideal space of perception, in which the spatial effects can actually be perceived, is limited to a relatively small area within this circle.

Credits

Musical arrangement: Cécile Le Prado in the IRCAM studios [Institut de recherche et de Coordination Acoustique Musique]

Scientific adviser [Spat®]: Jean-Marc Jot

Master mixing adviser: Frédéric Prin

Sound men: Mar Pazos Oviedo, Christian Dubet

The sound installation "Le triangle d'incertitude" is a production of Clameurs, realised and transmitted by "l'autre rive".

Co-production: Centre National Dramatique et Choréographique Le Quartz de Brest, Etablissement Public du Parc et de la Grande Halle de la Villette.

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