

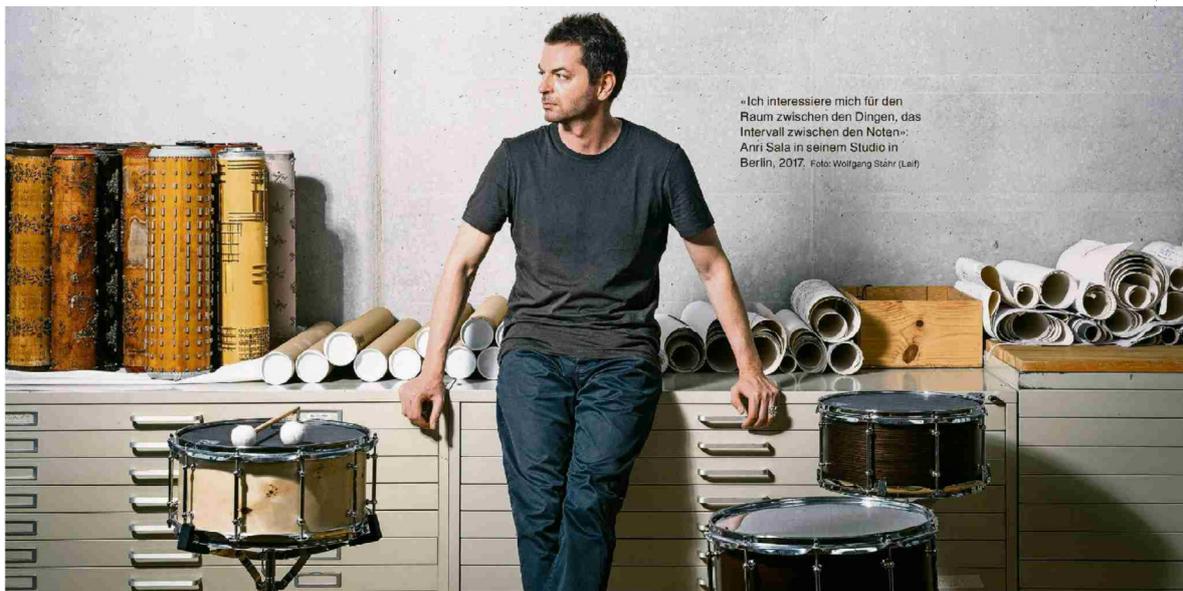
GALERIE  
CHANTAL CROUSEL

# Anri Sala

REVUE DE PRESSE | SELECTED PRESS

# «Kunst gibt den subtilen Tönen Raum, die im Kriegslärm überhört werden»

**Anri Sala im Interview** Im Vorfeld der Art Basel ist der albanische Künstler im Schaulager zu sehen. Er sagt, man müsse gerade auch in herausfordernden Zeiten über Feinheiten nachdenken können.



**Ewa Hess**

Für seine grenzüberschreitende Kunst wurde Anri Sala (49) vielfach ausgezeichnet. Geboren in Tirana, ausgebildet in Paris, lebt er jetzt in Berlin. Er repräsentierte Frankreich an der Kunstbiennale Venedig und wurde mit Ausstellungen in Turin, Taipeh, Mexiko-Stadt, Paris oder Bregenz geehrt. In seinen Filmen und Installationen erkundet Sala gesellschaftspolitische Auffälligkeiten, oft vor der Kulisse persönlicher Erfahrung. Zurzeit wird eines seiner zentralen Videowerke in der Ausstellung «Out of the Box» gezeigt, mit der das Basler Schaulager im Vorfeld der Art Basel sein 20-Jahr-Jubiläum feiert.

**Herr Sala, der Titel der Basler Ausstellung, in der Ihr Werk gerade zu sehen ist, verweist auf das Credo des Schaulagers, nachdenkliche und nicht «modische» Kunst zu zeigen. Inwiefern ist Ihre Arbeit «out of the box»?**

Ich interessiere mich für den Raum zwischen den Dingen, das Intervall zwischen den Noten. Wenn etwas weder A noch B ist, sondern die Lücke dazwischen, zwingt es einen, aufmerksam zu sein, entzicht sich gängigen Vorstellungen und ideologischer Vereinnahmung.

**In Ihrer Arbeit «Ravel Ravel Interval» spaziert man sozusagen zwischen den Händen von zwei Pianisten, die**

**dasselbe Maurice-Ravel-Konzert spielen.**

Ja, zwei verschiedene Interpretationen von Ravels Klavierkonzert für die linke Hand sind zu hören und werden nebeneinander sowie hintereinander projiziert. Die Besucher können vor oder zwischen den beiden Projektionen spazieren.

**Was hat Sie dazu bewogen, ausgerechnet «Konzert für die linke Hand» von Maurice Ravel so zu inszenieren?**

**Sind Sie Linkshänder?**

Nein, das bin ich nicht. Obwohl, wenn ich es wäre, wüsste ich es vielleicht nicht einmal, denn in Albanien, wo ich aufwuchs, wurde die Linkshändigkeit den Kindern ausgetrieben.

Ewa Hess

*Kunst gibt den subtilen Tönen Raum, die im Kriegslärm überhört werden*  
SonntagsZeitung, June 11, 2023.

**Im Westen war das nicht anders.**

Ja, damals gab es überall einen Zwang. Gerade darum fasziniert mich die linke Hand, weil sie als unbeholfen gilt. Dabei kann sie so viel! Stellen Sie sich vor, was für eine Herausforderung es für die linke Hand ist, allein über die gesamte Länge der Klaviertastatur zu spielen. Interessanterweise gibt es Tausende von Kompositionen, die nur für die linke Hand geschrieben wurden, und nur ein paar Hundert für die

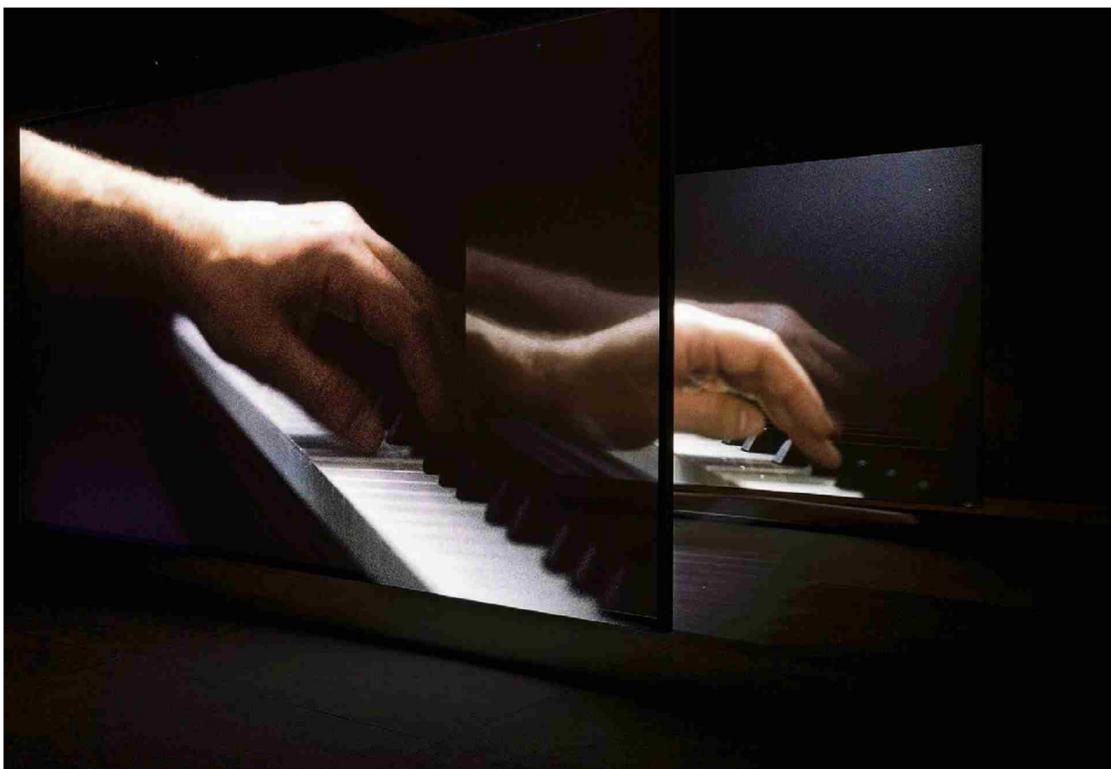
rechte Hand allein.

**Gibt es dafür eine Erklärung?**

Die öfter gebrauchte rechte Hand ist anfälliger für Verletzungen. Deshalb entstand überhaupt erst das Bedürfnis, Klavierstücke zu komponieren, die nur mit der linken Hand gespielt werden

können. Im Ersten Weltkrieg kam es dann zu einer Explosion von Körperverstümmelungen. Waffen wurden mit der rechten Hand bedient, Granaten und Schrapnells machten viele Musi-

ker, die in den Schützengräben kämpften, zu Invaliden. Einer dieser Musiker war Paul Wittgenstein, der Bruder des berühmten Philosophen Ludwig. Paul verlor im Krieg seinen rechten Arm, und um seine Pianistenkarriere nicht aufgeben zu müssen, gab er bei vielen grossen Komponisten seiner Zeit Musikstücke für die linke Hand in Auftrag – insgesamt 40 Kompositionen. Das berühmteste unter ihnen ist eben Maurice Ravel's «Concerto pour la main gauche».



Bei «Ravel Ravel Interval» sind zwei verschiedene Interpretationen von Maurice Ravel's Klavierkonzert für die linke Hand zu hören.

Foto: Gina Folly, Anri Sala, ProLitteris

Ewa Hess

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SonntagsZeitung, June 11, 2023.

**Der Krieg steht oft im Hintergrund Ihrer Arbeit.**

Welche Werke sprechen Sie an? Zum Beispiel «Time No Longer», in dem Olivier Messiaens «Quartett für das Ende der Zeit» vorkommt, das Messiaen 1941 in deutscher Kriegsgefangenschaft schrieb. Oder «1395 Tage ohne Rot», das während der Belagerung von Sarajevo spielt. Sind Sie sensibel für kriegsbedingte Brüche in der Geschichte?

Die Geschichte hinterlässt Narben, und das tut sie nicht nur auf dem Balkan oder in Osteuropa. Anderswo gab es mehr Kontinuität – aber auch an diesen Orten gab es Geschichte, und damit gab es auch Brüche.

**Sprechen Sie von der Schweiz?**

Ja, zum Beispiel. Oberflächlich betrachtet, hat die Schweiz mehr Kontinuität erfahren als Albanien. Aber das macht ihr historisches Narrativ nicht weniger komplex.

**Warum?**

Weil die Brüche diskreter sind. Die Ereignisse sind lange im Verborgenen geblieben. Damit man sie versteht, muss erst die scheinbar problemlose Kontinuität infrage gestellt werden.

**Wenn man an Ihre Arbeit «Intervista» denkt, in der Sie die Vergangenheit Ihrer Mutter als kommunistische Jugendführerin in der Diktatur Enver Hoxhas thematisieren, wird deutlich, dass auch klare Systemwechsel Raum für Interpretationen lassen.**

Als ich «Intervista» machte, war ich Kunststudent in Paris. Bei einem Besuch in Tirana fand ich einen alten 16-mm-Film aus dem Jahr 1977, auf dem meine Mutter bei einem Interview im staatlichen albanischen Fernsehen zu

sehen ist, aber die Tonspur war verloren. Ich habe die Worte, die sie im alten Film ausspricht, von Gehörlosen rekonstruieren lassen, die von den Lippen lesen können.

**Im Film sieht man, wie Ihre Mutter diesen rekonstruierten Worten zuhört, aber sie versteht die Sätze, die sie einst sprach, nach 20 Jahren nicht mehr. Warum?**

Weil nicht nur die Bedeutung der Worte, sondern auch die Art und Weise, wie Sätze gebildet wurden, von der Ideologie und der Diktatur bestimmt wurden. Das Regime kontrollierte die Syntax ebenso sehr wie den Inhalt. Der stalinistische Machtapparat, der in Albanien eingesetzt wurde, war enorm effizient, auch weil Albanien ein kleines Land ist, viel kleiner als die Sowjetunion – die Kontrolle war total.

**Was bedeutet es für Sie, dass das Gespenst des Krieges in Europa wieder aufstanden ist?**

Das Schreckgespenst des Krieges ist leider eine quälende Konstante auf dem Balkan. Westeuropa betrachtete den Krieg hingegen jahrelang als ein Ding der Vergangenheit oder als ein Stigma unterentwickelter Regionen. Mit dem Krieg in der Ukraine ist sein Gespenst durch die Fernsehübertragungen in die Wohnzimmer ganz Europas gewandert.

**Wie reagiert man als Mensch, wie als Künstler darauf?**

Es kann keine Ambivalenz geben in der Unterscheidung zwischen den Verursachern der Aggression und denjenigen, die unter ihr leiden. In diesem Sinne verurteile ich als Mensch das tyrannische und imperialistische Verhalten eines Landes gegen ein anderes auf das Schärfste. Gleichzeitig halte ich es für wichtig, dass die

Kunst auch weiterhin den subtilen Tönen Raum gibt, die inmitten des Kriegslärms übersehen und überhört werden.

**Aber kann Kunst überhaupt auf die Aktualität reagieren?**

Die Kunst muss sich nicht von den lautesten Themen der Aktualität vereinnahmen lassen, sie hat andere Möglichkeiten, auf die Ereignisse zu reagieren.

**Welche?**

Sie kann dem Einzelnen die Möglichkeit bieten, in seinem eigenen Tempo über Feinheiten und Nuancen nachzudenken, die auch in herausfordernden Zeiten für menschliches Verhalten von grösster Bedeutung sind.

**Sie brechen hier eine Lanze für eine geheimnisvolle Kunst. Politische oder aktivistische Kunst, die klar Stellung bezieht, ist aber wieder aktuell.**

Ist das, was Sie als politische Kunst bezeichnen, wirklich politisch oder eher ideologisch?

**Worin liegt der Unterschied?**

Politisch zu sein, bedeutet, andere infrage zu stellen, angefangen bei einem selbst. Ideologisch zu sein, schliesst die Selbstkritik aus und verleitet dazu, «zu den Bekehrten zu predigen», wie es heute oft praktiziert wird. Es ist politisch, nicht ganz mit unserer Zeit übereinzustimmen, während es ideologisch ist, sich kritiklos den Anforderungen des Zeitgeistes anzupassen. Ich orte übrigens noch eine andere Gefahr für die Kunst unserer Zeit.

**Wo?**

Im Wunsch nach fabrizierter Immersion. Alles will heute immersiv sein, aber die Immersivität hat politische Auswirkungen. Diese Tendenz, sich lieber in den Mittelpunkt einer technologisch erzeugten Van-Gogh-Landschaft zu stellen, als das Originalwerk zu erleben, scheint mir ein ge-

fährliches Symptom unserer Zeit zu sein.

#### **Warum gefährlich?**

Wegen des Verlusts der kritischen Distanz. In diesen sogenannten «immersiven Installationen» wird die Technologie zu einem stumpfen Werkzeug. Verstehen Sie mich richtig, ich habe nichts gegen Videospiele oder virtuelle Realität. Unkritisch eingesetzt, können sie jedoch auf eine billige Weise dem Ego schmeicheln und den Eindruck

erwecken, der Zuschauer befindet sich im Zentrum der Welt. Es entsteht eine Kluft zwischen Erwartung und Wirklichkeit, die der Demagogie und der Desinformation Tür und Tor öffnet.

#### **Die Rolle der Kunst**

**für die Gesellschaft wird sowieso gerade durch die Ankunft der künstlichen Intelligenzen neu verhandelt. Hat die Kunst, wie wir sie kennen, überhaupt eine Zukunft?**

Ich bin ein Optimist und glaube, dass Kunst immer Kunst bleiben wird, ein Seismograf der ständigen Veränderung und Befreiung.

#### **Auch die Kunst, die Computer eines Tages produzieren werden?**

Der Moment der Schöpfung kann nicht an einen Algorithmus delegiert werden. Es erfordert einen Moment des Staunens. Und ein Code kann sich selbst niemals überraschen.

### **Art Basel und andere Highlights**

Im Juni kulminiert die Kunstmarktsaison, und die Schweiz wird für eine kurze Woche zum Mittelpunkt der Kunstwelt. Es ist nicht nur die Messe Art Basel (15.–18. Juni), welche ihre Tore für gut betuchte Kunstkäuferinnen und Kunstkäufer öffnet. Eine Handvoll Parallelmessen gesellen sich in Basel dazu, wovon die beliebteste «Liste Basel» ist, wo junge Galerien ausstellen und die Sammler gerne Entdeckungen machen (12.–18. Juni). Auch die Kunstinstitutionen in Basel profitieren von der Anwesenheit des Publikums, um ihre Jahreshighlights vorzuführen.

Die Kunsthalle Basel zeigt erstmals in der Schweiz die US-Künstlerin McClodden (42), die Fondation Beyeler versammelt

den noch nie zusammen gesehene Modena-Bilderzyklus des frühverstorbenen Stars Jean-Michel Basquiat (11.6.–27.8.) und stellt die noch zu wenig bekannte Kolumbianerin Doris Salcedo (65) vor (21.5.–17.9.).

Mit einem Paukenschlag feiert das Privatmuseum Schaulager sein 20-Jahr-Jubiläum und zeigt in der grossen Gruppenausstellung «Out of the Box» (10.6.–19.11.) Werke jener Elite tiefeschürfender zeitgenössischer Kunst, welche die Basler Mäzenin Maja Oeri mit Vorliebe sammelt: David Cleabout, Tacita Dean, Katharina Fritsch, Peter Fischli oder Anri Sala, mit dem diese Zeitung im Vorfeld der Ausstellung in seinem Berliner Atelier sprechen durfte.

## Le Monde

### Anri Sala et Bertrand Chamayou transcendent le « Concerto pour la main gauche » de Ravel

Après l'installation « Ravel Ravel Unravel » présentée à Venise en 2013, le plasticien albanais a confié au pianiste français « Ravel Ravel Revisited », dont la création a eu lieu à Paris dans le cadre de l'exposition « Time No Longer », qui dure jusqu'au 16 janvier.



Le pianiste Bertrand Chamayou, le 6 janvier 2023, lors de l'installation musicale « Ravel Ravel Revisited » à la Bourse de commerce, à Paris. YASMINA GONIN

Une installation musicale a ponctué, jeudi 5 et vendredi 6 janvier, l'exposition « Time No Longer » consacrée au plasticien Anri Sala par la Bourse de commerce – Pinault Collection, à Paris, jusqu'au lundi 16 janvier. Un dispositif intitulé *Ravel Ravel Revisited*, suscité par et avec le pianiste Bertrand Chamayou, fasciné par une précédente installation de l'artiste albanais exposée au pavillon français de la Biennale de Venise en 2013, *Ravel Ravel Unravel*. Le dispositif projetait alors en simultané le montage de deux films du *Concerto pour la main gauche* (1930), de Maurice Ravel, simultanément interprété par les pianistes Louis Lortie et Jean-Efflam Bavouzet. Une « oxydation de la musique » ravélienne, selon la formule d'Anri Sala, en référence, par des effets d'écho, de brouillage et de distanciation au verbe anglais *to ravel*, qui signifie « emmêler », et son contraire, *to unravel*, « démemêler ».

Marie-Aude Roux

*Anri Sala et Bertrand Chamayou transcendent le « Concerto pour la main gauche » de Ravel*

Le Monde, January 9, 2023.

<https://cutt.ly/ewaZHMqS>

C'est au Festival Ravel de Saint-Jean-de-Luz (Pyrénées-Atlantiques), où Bertrand Chamayou avait invité Anri Sala, qu'une suite à *Ravel Ravel Unravel* a été élaborée, agrégeant cette fois la présence d'un musicien. Le public s'est installé dans l'auditorium tandis que Bertrand Chamayou, penché sur le grand Steinway de gauche, prélude de la main gauche quelques bribes du *Concerto*. A sa droite, un autre Steinway, muet. De part et d'autre de l'espace, des écrans. Au sol, des haut-parleurs, qui diffuseront la bande-son enregistrée par l'Orchestre national de France sous la direction du percussionniste et chef d'orchestre Didier Benetti. Les lumières se grisent tandis que se module plus distinctement la dernière partie de l'œuvre. Dernière rafale conclusive, le bras droit retombe, comme fauché, rappelant la destination tragique de l'œuvre composée en 1930 pour le pianiste Paul Wittgenstein (1887-1961), amputé du bras droit pendant la guerre de 1914-1918.

« Ces œuvres ne sont pas là pour être vues comme des contenus, mais plutôt pour cultiver à l'intérieur de chacun ce potentiel d'intervalle, de décalage, de perte d'équilibre », explique Anri Sala. Impossible de ne pas penser, à l'écoute de cette distorsion musicale, aux effets de la maladie cérébrale incurable qui condamna, dès l'été 1933, Ravel au silence pour les quatre dernières années de sa vie. Le *Concerto* sera joué deux fois par Chamayou. Lortie et Bavouzet sont également de la partie dans le contrepoint découpé des vidéos, portant parfois le nombre d'interprètes à trois. A quoi s'ajoutent les décalages de tempos préparés de l'orchestre (cela nécessite pour Chamayou le port d'une oreillette), ainsi que la spatialisation sonore du sound designer Olivier Goinard. Ainsi le beau solo plaintif de basson sur l'ostinato rythmique du tutti, dont l'écho angoissé semble envahir l'espace.

## Complexité supplémentaire

Une complexité supplémentaire attend l'auditeur dans la dernière partie. Bertrand Chamayou s'est installé sur le clavier de droite. Le voici désormais en confrontation directe avec sa propre interprétation du précédent *Concerto pour la main gauche* reproduite par le piano de gauche grâce au spectaculaire système Spiriocast, qui peut désormais équiper les pianos Steinway demi-queue et grand piano de concert (modèles B-211 et D-274) sans affecter la destination initiale de l'instrument.

Marie-Aude Roux

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**Le spectaculaire système SpirioCast permet, entre autres, d'inviter chez soi, via la bibliothèque des artistes Steinway et leurs bandes renumérisées, des grands pianistes du passé**

Cette technologie est développée par la prestigieuse maison depuis 2015 via une application sur iPad, dotée de 1 020 niveaux de dynamiques (pour 800 répétitions par seconde) et 256 positions de pédale (pour 100 répétitions par seconde), capables de restituer nuances, couleurs et vitesse d'attaque, au profit cette fois d'un détournement créatif que n'avait sans doute pas prévu Steinway. SpirioCast a, en effet, été conçu pour permettre à l'artiste de s'enregistrer, pour retranscrire en audio haute définition un concert live sur un clavier, voire inviter chez soi, via la bibliothèque des artistes Steinway et leurs bandes renumérisées, des grands pianistes du passé.

Dans la salle, ce sont désormais potentiellement quatre pianistes qui jouent, conférant à la main « sinistre » une manière de surpuissance. Avec ses sombres et angoissantes basses orchestrales, les tirs en rafale des vents et du piano sniper, son rythme de marche rageuse, et jusqu'à la déflagration finale qui semble couper court à la musique, le *Concerto pour la main gauche* est désormais un champ de bataille pour piano héroïque, transcendé par la saisissante vision d'Anri Sala. Une « partition » que Bertrand Chamayou espère reprendre cet été dans le cadre de son Festival Ravel à Saint-Jean-de-Luz, patrie du compositeur.

🎧 « Time No Longer », exposition d'Anri Sala, jusqu'au 16 janvier. [Bourse de commerce – Pinault Collection, Paris 1<sup>er</sup>](#).

# CRASH

## A MEETING WITH ANRI SALA



For his latest exhibition entitled *Time No Longer*, Anri Sala has taken over the Bourse de Commerce, creating an immersive dispersion of some of his most iconic videos including title piece, *Time No Longer* (2021) which is projected onto a vast, curved screen inside the concrete Rotunda designed by the architect Tadao Ando. Exploring the notion of creation in captivity the film draws its inspiration from Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, and the tragic story of the Afro-American astronaut and accomplished saxophonist, Ronald McNair. The Albania-born artist, who gained his qualifications in France, evokes here the obsessions that haunt his work.

### **AL WAS THE PIECE TIME NO LONGER PRODUCED EXCLUSIVELY FOR THE BOURSE DE COMMERCE?**

AS No, I originally designed it in 2021 for a project at the Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern in Houston, Texas. But it was shown in a very different way. I always try to have my work interact with the spatial and contextual qualities of the exhibition space. In this case, the circularity of the Rotunda and the presence of a cupola suggested a relationship of scale with the convolutions of the turntable's spatial choreography, a relationship that seemed likely to create an interesting sensation, like a sense of uneasiness in the gut, the stomach.

### **LIKE THE WAY THE AUDIENCE MAY FEEL NAUSEOUS OR OVERWHELMED WHILE LOOKING AT THE SPACE?**

AS I always try to make sure that the artistic experience is not just cerebral, so that the piece can also resonate with the body.

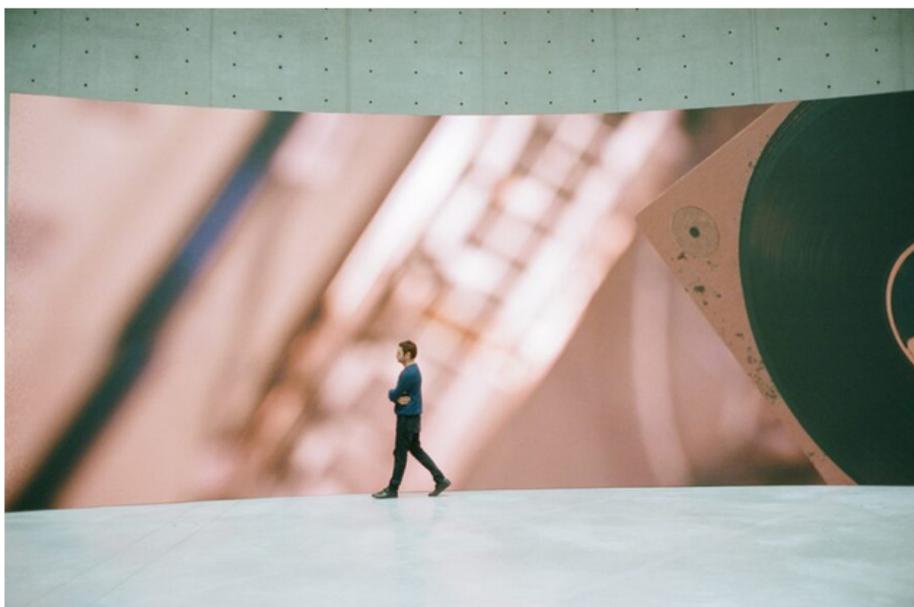
Armelle Leturq  
*A meeting with Anri Sala*  
Crash, January, 2023.  
<https://cutt.ly/X2Qp6Q5>

**AL FIRST YOU DID THE TIME NO LONGER VIDEO. BUT HERE, FOR THE ROTUNDA OF THE BOURSE DE COMMERCE, YOU HAD A RARE OPPORTU- NITY TO SCREEN THE VIDEO IN A SPECIAL WAY WITH THE LED SCREEN.**

AS It's an exceptional opportunity to discover the piece under a cupola, as if *Time No Longer* had landed in the middle of the Rotunda, like a body arriving from a place far, far away. But I also tried to place the film in dialogue with the marbled canvas dating back to 1899, which is present under the cupola and displays French advertising campaigns from the era. I had to find the right scale so that *Time No Longer* would take on the aspect of an odyssey or a contemporary frieze. A partially cylindrical frieze, obviously, because the screen does not cover the entire circularity of the rotunda. I also wanted to underline what world exploration and space exploration have in common in order to offer a new kind of space-time.

**AL WHAT WAS IT LIKE MAKING THE VIDEO BEFOREHAND? AS A VIEWER, THE SEQUENCE CAN SEEM RELATIVELY EASY TO CONCEIVE, BUT I AM NOT SO SURE...**

AS It's true that it's rather complex. But in a way, that's also the point: to create the impression of simplicity while metabolizing the complexity through the artistic process. In itself, *Time No Longer* could theoretically have been filmed in the International Space Station. Except that such a project would have been much more expensive and require certifications that are very hard to obtain. All these variables made such an approach impossible. So the video is done in computer generated images. The whole thing is virtual. The only difference is that the behavior of the turntable, its revolutions when it floats in weightlessness, as well as the movement of the sapphire are based on mathematical models identical to what would have really happened if the turntable had been in the Space Station. We are, in fact, able today to simulate very accurately the behavior of objects in a given physical condition. For me, this is important because in some sense the weightlessness acts as a conductor that directs and decides the moments of contact and lifting of the sapphire, like a ghost arm. Periods of letting go, of losing control, alternate with a desire to return to the music by regaining control.



## BeauxArts



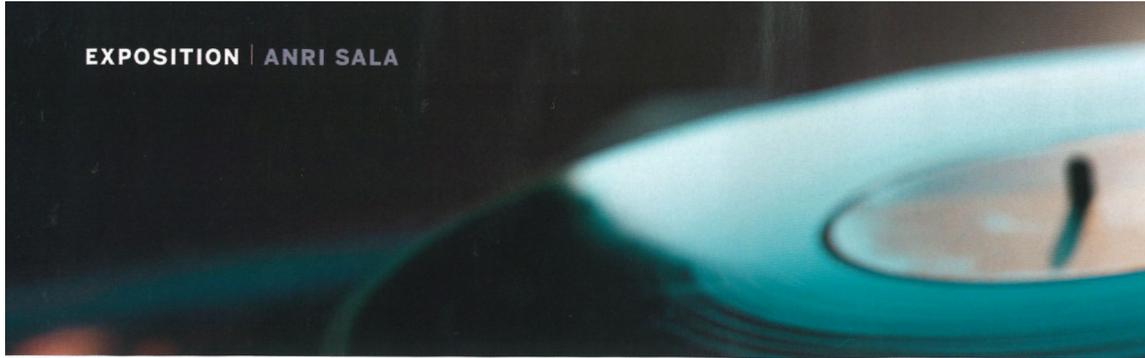


**Take Over**

D'un côté, *la Marseillaise* jouée par un pianiste; de l'autre, *l'Internationale* composée par un clavier mécanique. Un duo inspiré par le fait que, durant ses dix-sept premières années, *l'Internationale* n'avait pas de mélodie allouée: ses vers étaient donc chantés sur l'air de Rouget de l'Isle. «C'est un peu comme si je réveillais l'inconscient de *la Marseillaise* endormie sous l'hymne ouvrier avec lequel j'ai grandi», évoque l'artiste.

2017, projections vidéo HD dos à dos, couleur, son à huit canaux, éléments en verre, 7 min 56 s.

EXPOSITION | ANRI SALA



Oublions la bourse, oublions le commerce... Anri Sala nous propulse dans une quatrième dimension avec cette nouvelle exposition orchestrée pour la Collection Pinault. De la Bourse de Commerce il fait une zone trouble où le temps pulse comme nulle part ailleurs, où la musique bat dans nos veines, où les histoires s'effilent en mille et une feuilles. Pièce maîtresse, son dernier film, *Time*

### Qui est Anri Sala ?

L'aria de *Madame Butterfly*, le *Concerto pour la main gauche* de Ravel, *Should I Stay or Should I Go* des Clash joué à l'orgue de Barbarie... La musique est au cœur du travail de l'artiste et structure ses films et installations depuis ses fulgurants débuts. Des œuvres toujours plus enchantées qui ont fait le tour du monde.

**1974** Naissance à Tirana (Albanie).

**1992 à 2000** Fait ses études à l'Académie des beaux-arts de Tirana, puis à l'École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs de Paris et enfin au Fresnoy-Studio national des arts contemporains de Tourcoing.

**2001** Lion d'argent à la biennale de Venise.

**2006** Participe à la 4<sup>e</sup> biennale de Berlin.

**2012** Expose au Centre Pompidou.

**2013** Représente la France à la 55<sup>e</sup> biennale de Venise.

**2019** Exposition personnelle au Centro Botín à Santander (Espagne) et au Castello di Rivoli (Italie).

*No Longer*, est «semblable à un météore qui aurait transpercé la coupole et atterri dans la rotonde, la transformant en une sorte de cenote, comme au Mexique», explique l'artiste. Nous voilà donc dans l'une de ces cavités souterraines engendrées par la chute d'une énorme météorite dans la péninsule du Yucatán ? La terre a tremblé, *Time No Longer*, le temps n'est plus.

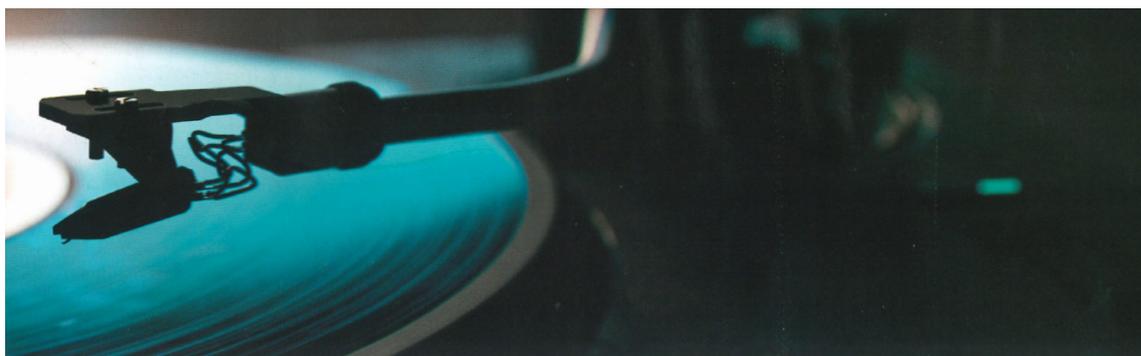
Au fil de ses expositions, Anri Sala est passé maître dans ces brouillages temporels. Son outil de prédilection : la musique, autour de laquelle il construit la plupart de ses projets. C'est grâce à elle qu'il parvient comme nul autre à aiguïser nos états de conscience, à nous inviter à une vigilance extrême au temps présent. «Pour moi, la musique est un moyen d'étendre au maximum cette sensation, elle est le seul médium capable d'embrouiller notre cerveau en le ren-

dant, quelques secondes, incapable de faire la distinction entre passé, présent et avenir. Le langage ne peut nous perdre ainsi dans le temps», assure l'artiste, habitué à passer de l'albanais maternel au français, appris durant ses études aux Arts déco et au Fresnoy, ou de l'anglais à l'allemand, qu'il pratique au quotidien depuis son installation à Berlin il y a une quinzaine d'années. Dès son premier film, *Intervista*, qui raconte comment il a appris que sa mère faisait partie des cadres du parti communiste albanais et maniait à merveille la langue de bois stalinienne, il a «compris l'opacité de la langue, comment la syntaxe plie les volontés. Ce premier film m'a mis en alerte.»

Plutôt que les mots, c'est donc la musique qu'il a choisie pour «articuler le monde». Souvenir des études de violon qui l'accaparent de 4 à 11 ans ? Pas vraiment. «J'ai un lien intuitif à la musique, un rapport extramusical plutôt qu'un rapport de musicien : c'est ce qui me permet d'oser des choses avec elle. Je l'utilise non pas pour embellir ou meubler un film, mais comme quelque chose qui est là avant que toutes les choses n'y soient. Elle déplie le temps.» *Time No Longer*, donc. Il nous faut préserver un brin de mystère sur cet opus complexe, treize minutes de film qui passent en boucle dans la rotonde. Quelques indices cependant. L'écran a des proportions hors du commun : 55 mètres de long sur 4,5 mètres de haut. «Une échelle nécessaire pour être en lien avec l'espace.» Tout autour, des lumières cliquent au rythme des images, donnant à l'ensemble «l'allure d'un vaisseau spatial un peu endormi, mais qui semble fonctionner malgré tout».

Entièrement réalisé en images de synthèse, ce film s'inspire du destin tragique de Ronald McNair. Saxophoniste, cet astronaute afro-américain rêvait d'être le premier musicien à enregistrer dans l'espace. Son rêve devait se réaliser en 1986, avec un solo joué dans la navette Challenger pour un concert de Jean-Michel Jarre à Houston. Elle explosa





soixante-treize secondes après son décollage. Anri Sala n'est pas Christopher Nolan : il n'a pas cherché à illustrer cette histoire terrible. Elle est plutôt comme un spectre qui hante ses images. Nous voilà donc propulsés dans une station spatiale. Nulle présence humaine. Un tourne-disque flotte en apesanteur. Il ne joue pas la mélodie perdue à jamais de Ronald McNair. «Je ne voulais pas faire exister ce qui n'a pu exister, mais plutôt la forme d'une intention. Accompagner la profonde solitude de cet être qui se retrouve, éminemment fragile, dans une construction ultra-scientifique, avec juste une voix.»

#### De l'effet de l'apesanteur sur les tourne-disques

Cette «voix» est tirée du *Quatuor pour la fin du temps* d'Olivier Messiaen. «La grande composition moderne d'un grand religieux, inspiré par le Livre de la Révélation du Nouveau Testament, où il est dit qu'à un moment donné, il n'y aura plus de temps», décrit ce fin mélomane. Alors soldat, Messiaen l'a composée en détention dans un Stalag allemand, en 1941. «Je l'ai choisie notamment parce que c'était la pièce de musique occidentale la plus connue qui ait été réalisée en captivité.» Messiaen l'a écrite pour quatre voix, celles de quatre de ses codétenus. Pour l'un d'eux, joueur de clarinette, il a composé le chapitre intitulé «Abîme des oiseaux», qu'a retenu Sala. Mais ce solo fait, comme toujours chez l'artiste, l'objet d'une manipulation sophistiquée. «Alors que le disque tourne en le jouant, le saphir perd aléatoirement le contact, revient sur la piste, se perd à nouveau... Cet effet de l'apesanteur a été simulé par un logiciel. À partir de son poids, de sa masse, les modèles mathématiques ont permis de calculer les mouvements du tourne-disque.» Mais ces saccades ont été finement retravaillées par l'artiste afin de les harmoniser avec «le sentiment du tempo de Messiaen». La clarinette comme

«J'aime faire en sorte que quelque chose arrive à la musique. Dans mon travail, elle a un rôle de syntaxe, de structure, plus que de contenu.»

un souffle. Et parfois, en bruit de fond, le fantôme d'un saxophone : mémoire de Ronald McNair qui affleure. «L'intention musicale est comme une lumière blanche qui se diffracte dans le film en deux instruments.

Deux solitudes en dialogue, deux captivités, deux êtres qui furent l'objet de circonstances, d'une histoire...» C'est ce qui les lie au chef-d'œuvre de l'artiste, projeté au sous-sol : *1395 Days Without Red* [ill. p. 108], stupéfiante évocation des 1395 jours de siège de Sarajevo à travers le parcours d'une musicienne qui tente de rejoindre son orchestre en échappant aux snipers. Ensemble, ils jouent la *Symphonie pathétique* de Tchaïkovski : elle, dans sa tête ; eux, dans la salle de répétition. À chaque carrefour, elle peut tomber sous les balles. «C'est le rapport de la musique au danger : arriver ou pas au bon moment, c'est une question musicale, mais pour elle, cela s'avère aussi une question de vie ou de mort.»

L'ici et maintenant de la musique, sa capacité à se distordre, aussi : voilà de quoi l'artiste joue. «J'aime faire en sorte que quelque chose arrive à la musique. Dans mon travail, elle a un rôle de syntaxe, de structure, plus que de contenu. Avec les images de synthèse, on peut tout faire, mais j'ai besoin de choses qui m'obligent : la rotation du vinyle m'oblige, comme dans un autre film, cet escargot que j'ai posé sur l'archet du violoniste m'oblige. J'ai besoin de quelque chose sur laquelle ma volonté va se frotter. Entre désir et lâcher prise.»

#### Time No Longer

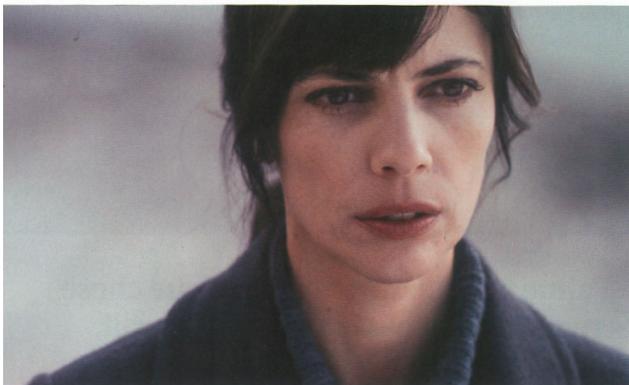
Avec ce film au format inédit, Anri Sala met la Bourse de Commerce sur orbite.

2021, images UHD de synthèse UHD et son à trois canaux, couleur, 13 min.

»»»



EXPOSITION | ANRI SALA



**1395 Days Without Red**

Elle est à bout de souffle, mais rien ne l'arrête : la musicienne (interprétée par Maribel Verdú) doit retrouver son orchestre. Elle court dans les rues vides, elle chante en haletant ; parfois elle s'arrête à un carrefour, se précipite pour traverser. Autour d'elle, les balles des snipers sifflent. Parfois, un corps tombe... Pour traverser Sarajevo assiégé, la musique lui donne l'énergie du désespoir. Un chef-d'œuvre de film !

2011, projection vidéo monocale, couleur, son, 43 min 46 s, en collaboration avec Liria Bégéja, sur un projet de Šejla Kamerić et Anri Sala avec Ari Benjamin Meyers.

**Pour en savoir plus**

■ UNE EXPÉRIENCE DE TOUS LES SENS

Bourse de Commerce ou vaisseau spatial ? Anri Sala met la rotonde sur orbite, avec *Time no Longer*, pièce maîtresse qui donne le la de l'exposition. Comme toujours chez le plasticien, il s'agit de «jouer de l'architecture comme d'un instrument». Emporté comme dans un souffle, le visiteur assiste aussi à la projection de *1395 Days Without Red*, bouleversant film évoquant le siège de Sarajevo, avant de retrouver le premier opus d'Anri Sala, *Nocturnes*. Un moment hors du temps.

«Anri Sala» jusqu'au 3 janvier • Bourse de Commerce-Collection Pinault  
2, rue de Viarmes • Paris 1<sup>er</sup> • 01 55 04 60 60 • pinaultcollection.com

Courbe, l'immense écran de *Time No Longer* «donne la ligne courbe à l'ensemble de l'exposition», dévoile Sala. Courbe, donc, cette torsion qu'il impose aux cartographies de pays, dans une série de dessins disséminés dans les vitrines de bois qui cernent la rotonde. Digression en cabinet de curiosités, cette trentaine de diptyques fait dialoguer deux types d'images : d'un côté ces gravures d'histoire naturelle des XVII<sup>e</sup> ou XVIII<sup>e</sup> siècles qu'il aime à collectionner, «cette histoire naturelle dont l'exploration et l'exploitation vont de pair avec la naissance de la Bourse de Commerce». Contraintes par le cadre des gravures anciennes, ces espèces découvertes lors de voyages s'y «plient», jusqu'à être déformées. «Cela répond au besoin de mettre quelque chose dans le cadre pour pouvoir le comparer.» En écho, l'artiste a transposé cette technique à des cartes de pays. «Que deviennent la mer Baltique ou la Sicile une fois courbées ? Les contrées se retrouvent déformées comme on a plié ces espèces.» Contraindre le monde pour le faire entrer dans sa grille de compréhension. Sala a complété cette série commencée il y a quelques années pour faire écho à la géographie de la fresque immense qui orne la rotonde et, dédiée à l'histoire du commerce entre les pays, «va de la Russie aux Balkans en passant par l'Orient et l'Asie».

**Des sons comme des empreintes digitales**

Remixé in situ, le son se plie lui aussi à la dynamique courbe de ce rond panthéon. Car l'architecture est un des instruments essentiels dont Anri Sala aime à jouer. «J'essaie de mettre une idée, un espace, sous l'influence du monde, pour les "mettre en fréquence" par le biais du son et de la musique», résume-t-il. À la biennale de Venise 2013, où il représentait la France, c'est le pavillon allemand, échangé avec le pavillon français, qui accueillait le *Concerto pour la main gauche* de Ravel, écrit pour un soldat qui avait perdu un bras pendant la Première Guerre mondiale. À Berlin, les grands ensembles méprisés ou l'aéroport de Tempelhof. À Bordeaux, un quartier de HLM. À ses yeux, chaque architecture produit un son unique au monde, comme une empreinte digitale. À chaque fois qu'il rejoue l'un de ses projets, l'espace impose ainsi à son tour sa propre partition. Déjà montré à Houston, dans une citerne désaffectée, *Time No Longer* vibrait autrement, dédoublé par l'eau. À Paris, Anri Sala compose une valse d'orbites où se croisent les révolutions imaginaires de la Bourse, du tourne-disque, de la station spatiale. Sous la courbe de ses yeux. ■

■ À LIRE

**Une seconde d'éternité**

par Emma Lavigne (dir.)  
éd. Bourse de Commerce /  
Dilecta • 45 € (bilingue  
français-anglais)

► Embrassant toute la saison  
«Une seconde d'éternité», le  
catalogue offre une lecture de  
l'œuvre d'Anri Sala et un  
magnifique essai du philosophe  
Emmanuele Coccia sur le temps.

■ À VOIR

**Performances**

Réservations sur  
pinaultcollection.com

► Une série de performances  
est orchestrée en écho  
à l'exposition, solos de jazz  
ou de clarinette en octobre  
et novembre, mais aussi un  
concert de piano en janvier  
autour de l'œuvre Ravel/*Unravel*  
conçue pour le pavillon français  
de la biennale de Venise 2013.

# Wallpaper\*

## Anri Sala's subterranean installation is out of this world

Albanian artist Anri Sala's hypnotic film and sound installation, *Time No Longer*, in Houston's Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern, pays homage to African American astronaut and saxophonist Ronald McNair



Anri Sala, *Time No Longer*, 2021. Four-channel HD computer-generated imagery and five-channel sound, colour, translucent screen, pulse-generating speakers, dynamic lights. Duration: 13 min. Courtesy of the Artist and Marian Goodman Gallery. Copyright: Anri Sala. Photography: Lawrence Knox, courtesy of Buffalo Bayou Partnership and Weingarten Art Group

Anri Sala's work explores the moment between the tangible and intangible. It exists somewhere between a time and a space, perhaps even ricocheting between the two. Sala's thought-provoking and evocative time-based work goes to often difficult places, giving voice to thoughts, feelings and events for which language is not enough.

His latest major work is a monumental installation at the Bayou Buffalo Park Cistern, an underground reservoir in Houston, Texas. It combines film, sound and installation, tapping into the sense of equanimity of above and below that the artist associates with the 'Space City'. Titled *Time No Longer*, the immersive work is inspired by African American astronaut and saxophonist Ronald McNair, who was launched on the Space Shuttle Challenger in 1986 with the intention of recording music in space. Had the rocket not exploded seconds after take-off, he would have.

Amah-Rose Abrams  
*Anri Sala's subterranean installation is out of this world*  
Wallpaper, March 18, 2021.  
<https://cutt.ly/1xPd6i2>

GALERIE  
CHANTAL CROUSEL



Portrait of artist Anri Sala with his installation, *Time No Longer*, 2021, in the Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern, Houston

Subterranean and vast, the Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern is 87,500 sq ft large and 25ft tall, with 221 columns throughout. It evoked space exploration to Sala, who visited the space with one idea in mind, but recalled the story of McNair when standing inside the unique structure and went with that instead.

‘Every person who travels so far away from Earth is a pioneer by nature, but McNair was also a man who aimed to be the very first person to seriously record music in space,’ Sala says.

Projected intermittently onto translucent Hologauze is a turntable, floating, weightless. The stylus grasps for purchase on the record’s grooves, sometimes managing to communicate music, other times skipping and revolving back into space resonant of the moment McNair never played. As the motion repeats we hear snippets of music.



Amah-Rose Abrams  
*Anri Sala's subterranean installation is out of this world*  
Wallpaper, March 18, 2021.  
<https://cutt.ly/1xPd6i2>

GALERIE  
CHANTAL CROUSEL

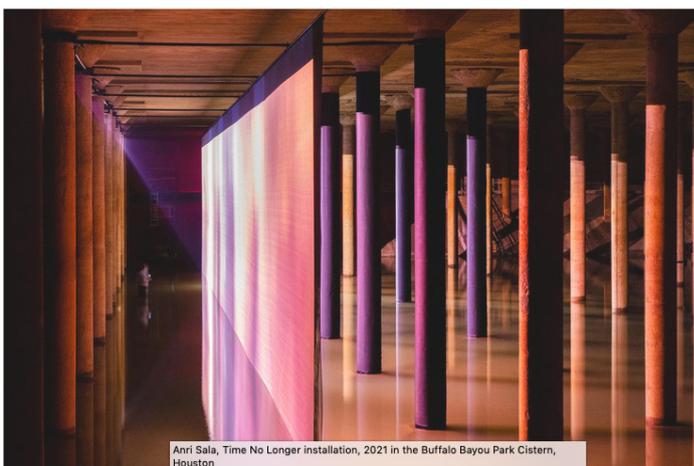


Anri Sala, *Time No Longer*, 2021

‘It’s like a train of thought, or of music being continuously interrupted and us somehow wanting to make sense of this interruption,’ Sala explains.

The screen is only visible when the film is projecting, leaving the viewer to contemplate the space in darkness. When the film is running, it is reflected in the surrounding water, creating the illusion of infinite turntables tumbling through infinite space.

The work’s soundtrack is a mixed clarinet and saxophone rendition of Olivier Messiaen’s *Quartet for the End of Time*, perhaps the most famous piece of music composed in captivity. Written by Messiaen while in a German prisoner-of-war camp during the Second World War, the music communicates a deep sense of loneliness for Sala.



Anri Sala, *Time No Longer* installation, 2021 in the Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern, Houston

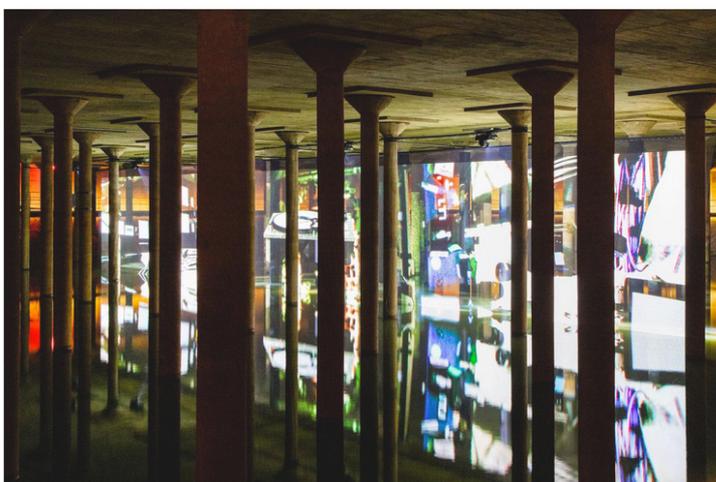
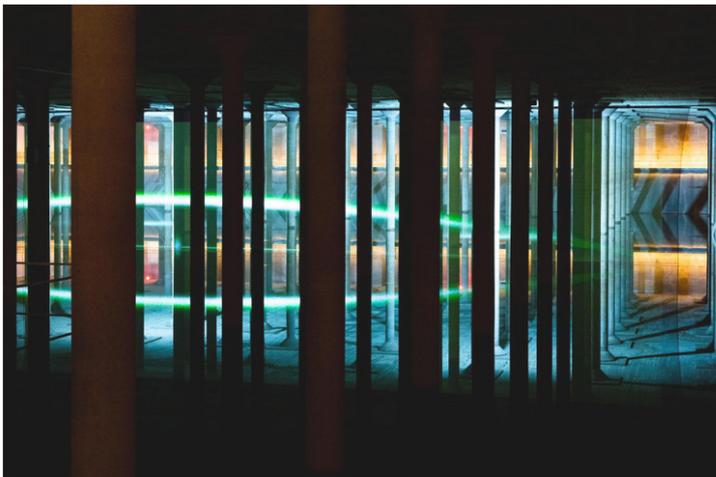
Amah-Rose Abrams  
*Anri Sala's subterranean installation is out of this world*  
Wallpaper, March 18, 2021.  
<https://cutt.ly/1xPd6i2>

GALERIE  
CHANTAL CROUSEL

In the recording, it's hard to distinguish one instrument from the other, a deliberate effect. 'Sometimes it sounds like one and sometimes like the other. It is also playing with this idea that the clarinet might sound like a saxophone before it exists, in a sense asking what would a song sound like before it plays?'

The original music McNair intended to record was due to feature on the album *Rendez-vous*, in collaboration with French composer Jean-Michel Jarre. It was later performed and recorded by Jarre at a tribute concert following the accident. Sala has used jazz in his work previously and is drawn to the music for its lack of narrative. The work *Long Sorrow* (2005) saw him suspend the saxophonist Jemeel Moondoc 60ft in the air from a disused housing project in Berlin.

'He was anchored in space and he used music as a way to make his mind drift away from the situation he was in, while *Time No Longer* is the other way around, because it's about drifting in space, like the turntable, but being anchored in time.'



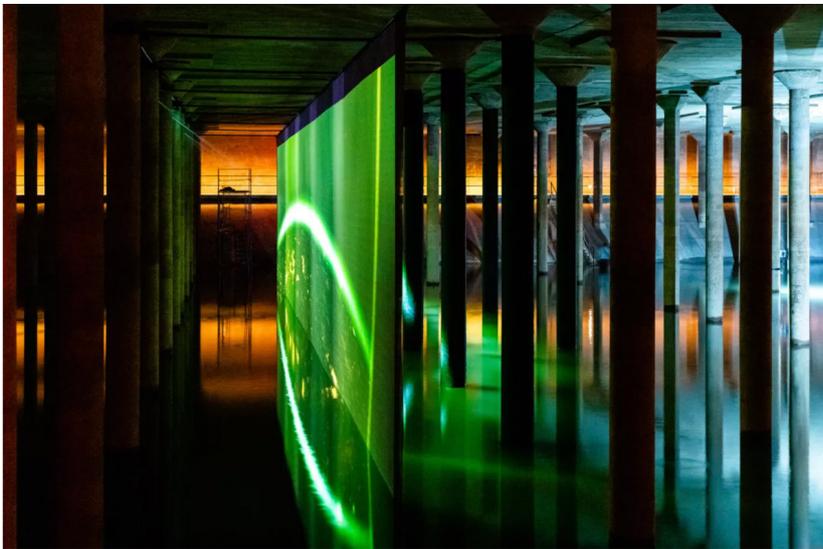
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GALERIE  
CHANTAL CROUSEL

*Time No Longer*, like *Long Sorrow and Answer Me* (2008) – which was shot in a geodesic dome at Teufelsberg in Berlin – relates to its architecture. ‘I like to find a narrative that conveys the attributes of the space. One which treats the space as if it was an organ, not merely a receptacle.

‘In other words, I tend to try to approach space as an instrument, rather than a backdrop to a narrative that’s being played solo within it.’ Sala explains. ‘When the space becomes tangible, allowing it to play a collaborative part in a form of retelling, it elicits curiosities about context and history, quite unlike and beyond those that storytelling conveys.’

A performance without a performer, a lonely turntable floating through space, this reflective work speaks to the experience of many of us in recent times. ✱



(Image credit: Lawrence Knox)

INFORMATION

'Time No Longer', until 12 December 2021, Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern, Houston

[buffalobayou.org](http://buffalobayou.org)

ADDRESS

105b Sabine St  
Houston, TX 77007

[VIEW GOOGLE MAPS](#)

Amah-Rose Abrams  
*Anri Sala's subterranean installation is out of this world*  
Wallpaper, March 18, 2021.  
<https://cutt.ly/1xPd6i2>

CARTE BLANCHE À **Anri Sala.**

UN ENFANT, UNE POMME. UNE MORSURE, UN EXIL. EN 2017, À BERLIN, LE PLASTICIEN ALBANAIS ANRI SALA A ORCHESTRÉ UN ATELIER AVEC DES ENFANTS MIGRANTS. IL LEUR A DEMANDÉ SIMPLEMENT DE CROQUER UNE POMME, MOTIF QU'IL A TRANSFORMÉ EN NOTES DE MUSIQUE DISPOSÉES SUR LES PARTITIONS DE DIFFÉRENTS HYMNES NATIONAUX. "CROQUÉES" PAR KHADIJA, BAHEA, SAMIRA, LAISA, RAMAN OU DYLLAR, LES NOTES DE "LA MARSEILLAISE" OU DE "GOD SAVE THE QUEEN" SE DISSÉMINENT, JUSQU'AU 4 AVRIL, DANS LES PAGES DE "M", COMME UNE MÉLODIE ÉCLATÉE DANS LE TEMPS ET L'ESPACE.



**Power**

**BESIRA**

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**in dread**  
JEHAD, BAHEA

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gloire  
REZA

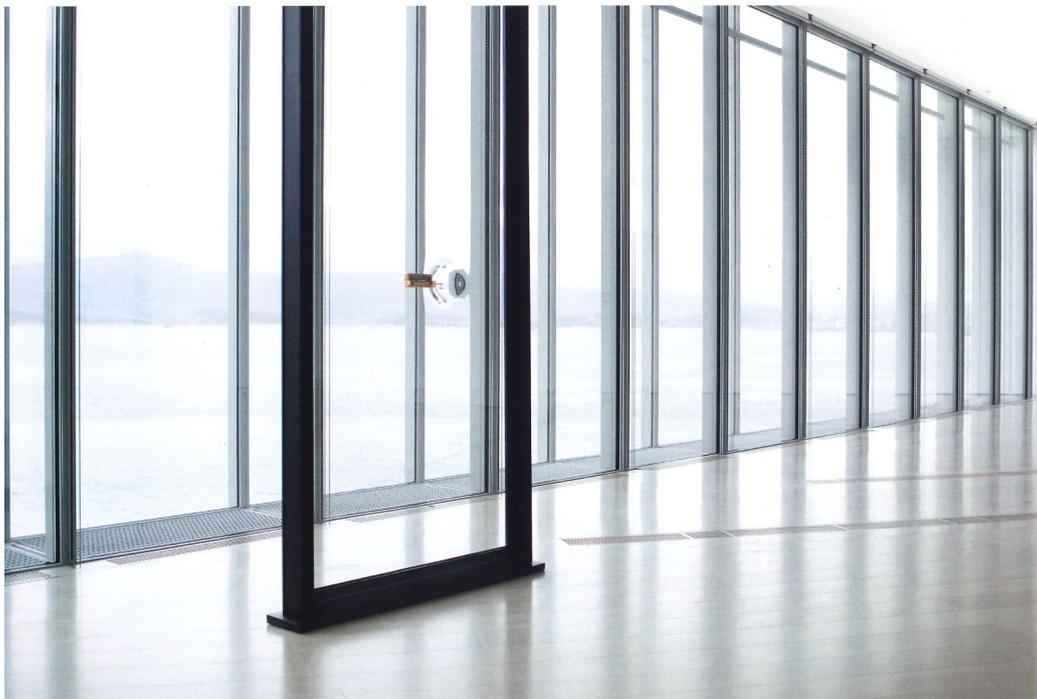
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remontage/remixage

Après le Castello di Rivoli, près de Turin, au printemps 2019, Anri Sala expose dans deux nouveaux lieux, le Mudam Luxembourg (12 octobre 2019 - 5 janvier 2020) et le Centro Botín à Santander, en Espagne (14 décembre 2019 - 3 mai 2020). Deux expositions majeures où, en plus de présenter des œuvres inédites (au moins en Europe), il rejoue, avec virtuosité et profondeur, quelques-unes de ses œuvres antérieures.

## ANRI SALA la conjonction des temps

Bastien Gallet



Page de gauche/page left:  
«Anri Sala. AsYou Go (Châteaux en Espagne)».  
Vue de l'exposition au/exhibition view at Centro Botín,  
Santander. 2019-20. (Ph. Belen de Benito)  
(Tous les visuels/all images: Court. de l'artiste,  
galeries Chantal Crousel, Paris, Marian Goodman,  
New York, Esther Schipper, Berlin)  
À droite/right: «The Last Resort». 2017.  
Installation sonore. 58'28", en boucle  
Vue de l'exposition «Anri Sala. Le Temps coudé»  
au / exhibition view at Mudam Luxembourg.  
2019-20. (© Ph. Rémi Villaggi)

■ Au milieu d'une immense salle plongée dans l'obscurité, une chaîne d'images défile lentement sur les deux bords d'un écran qui a l'air d'un ruban sans fin. Chaque image est séparée de celle qui la suit d'un vide qui laisse au regard le temps de la voir passer et disparaître. Des deux côtés de ce mur cinématique, Anri Sala a disposé deux écrans translucides, l'un de la taille d'une image, l'autre presque aussi long que lui, sur lesquels d'autres images sont projetées qui dédoublent celles qui passent derrière elles, s'y superposant comme des fantômes. Ce dispositif de projection est accompagné d'un dispositif de diffusion sonore non moins complexe, composé de vingt-quatre haut-parleurs disposés autour des écrans et qui accompagnent le visiteur où qu'il soit dans la salle.

Qu'y entend-on et qu'y voit-on? Trois œuvres de l'artiste remontées et remixées, il faudrait dire «réinstallées» tant ce remontage-remixage les transforme: *Ravel Ravel* (Venise, 2013), *Take Over* (Berlin, 2017) et *If and Only If* (New York, 2018). Cette installation audiovisuelle est présentée au deuxième étage du Centro Botín, le musée que Renzo Piano a conçu il y a quelques années pour la Fondation du même nom face à la baie de Santander. Son statut est ambivalent. D'un côté, il s'agit bien d'une œuvre d'Anri Sala, elle possède même un titre, *As You Go*. De l'autre, elle donne à (re) voir et à (ré) entendre trois œuvres qu'on reconnaît immédiatement sous ce nouvel habit, mais qu'on découvre étrangement tout autres.

#### PRENDRE LE CONTRÔLE

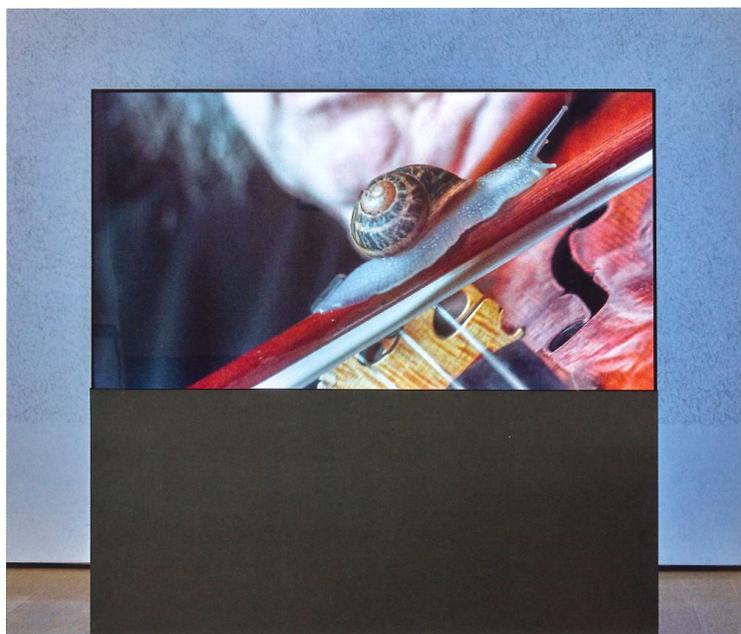
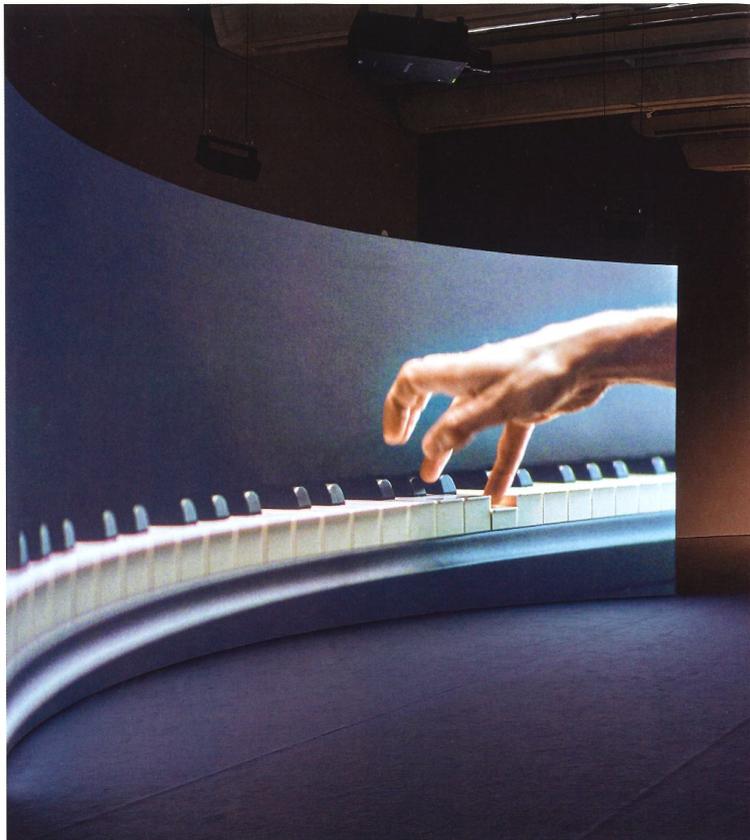
Deux d'entre elles (*Take Over* et *If and Only If*) sont présentées en même temps au Mudam Luxembourg qui accueille une autre vaste exposition d'Anri Sala, intitulée *Le Temps coudé*. La première y est projetée sur deux écrans incurvés disposés en quasi vis-à-vis dans une vaste salle obscure (une installation qui, déjà, différerait sensiblement de celle de sa création dans l'espace de la galerie Esther Schipper à Berlin). Deux claviers de piano mécanique y jouent l'un *la Marseillaise*, l'autre



*l'Internationale*. Quand j'y ai pénétré la première fois, les pianos répétaient les deux mélodies sous les doigts des pianistes, enfonçant leurs touches après que les mains s'y étaient posées, donnant progressivement corps et cohérence aux deux hymnes. Quelques minutes plus tard, les pianistes tentaient de réduire au silence les deux pianos en plaquant leurs avant-bras sur les claviers. Il me fallut quelques minutes pour découvrir que leurs clusters reproduisaient le rythme des deux chants. L'œuvre avait commencé ainsi: chacun des deux pianistes joue sur son clavier l'hymne que joue l'autre, *la Marseillaise* contre *l'Internationale* et vice versa, chacun tentant de prendre le contrôle – « take over » – du piano conte ce qu'il joue. Une micro-guerre – on ne voit de cet affrontement que des touches et des doigts – opposant deux musiques qui, pendant longtemps, n'en furent qu'une seule (les paroles de *l'Internationale* furent, dit-on, longtemps chantées sur l'air de *la Marseillaise*). Remontée sur l'installation du Centro Botín, la bataille des hymnes (celle qui opposa par exemple les États nations au mouvement de l'Internationale ouvrière) prend une autre tournure, moins antagonique. On y voit des mains qui luttent contre les touches de leur clavier et non deux hymnes s'opposant par écran interposé. Le mélange des mélodies y est premier, il dissout leur message derrière la similarité de leurs carrures métriques.

#### LE TEMPS DE L'ESCARGOT

La transformation qui affecte la seconde, *If and Only If*, est plus grande encore. Au MUDAM, l'œuvre est projetée sur un écran unique. On y suit le lent déplacement d'un escargot d'un bout à l'autre d'un archet en train de jouer. L'altiste Gérard Caussé interprète *l'Élégie* d'Igor Stravinsky, que celui-ci composa en 1944 pour l'altiste du quatuor Pro Arte à la mémoire du fondateur de l'ensemble, le violoniste Alphonse Onnou, décédé en 1940. Ce que cette œuvre opère, à notre avis remarquablement, est l'entrelacement, en un même temps, de trois temporalités différentes dont l'une est radicalement hétérogène aux deux autres: celle de *l'Élégie* (qui comprend une longue polyphonie à deux voix), celle de son interprétation et celle de l'escargot. L'escargot se déplace à son propre rythme, indifférent à des sons qu'il n'entend pas, seulement affecté par les mouvements de l'archet. La temporalité de l'altiste est, elle, prise entre ces deux nécessités contraires: accompagner l'escargot jusqu'au terme de son parcours et interpréter l'œuvre de Stravinsky sans la déformer. L'escargot mettant plus de temps à parcourir l'archet que Gérard Caussé à jouer *l'Élégie*, il doit, à certains moments préétablis, reprendre une des deux voix de la polyphonie et donc, en quelque sorte, en déplier certains passages afin de suivre le rythme de l'escargot, car c'est bien lui



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Ci-contre/opposite: «Take Over», 2017.

Page de gauche, en bas /page left: «If and Only If»,

2018. Vues de l'exposition «Anri Sala. Le Temps coudé» au l'exhibition view at Mudam Luxembourg, 2019-20. (© Ph. Rémi Villaggi)

des dispositifs inédits? Il n'y a là nul accident. Ces œuvres d'Anri Sala (d'autres, plus objectales, le sont moins) se définissent par leur plasticité: chacune est un essai pour conjointre des temps hétérogènes et surmonter leur disjonction première. Des fils qu'il faut sans cesse retisser tant ces conjonctions sont fragiles, tant elles dépendent des lieux où elles s'exposent et de l'attention fugace de leurs visiteurs.

### L'ALTÉRATION DE MOZART

Dans un espace à l'écart du parcours de l'exposition du Mudam, au bout d'une longue passerelle vitrée, Anri Sala a installé *The Last Resort*, une œuvre qu'il avait conçue en 2017 pour le kiosque à musique du parc de l'Observatory Hill, qui surplombe le port de Sydney, en Australie. Trente-huit caisses claires suspendues, têtes en bas, au dôme du Pavillon du Mudam jouent des bribes du *Concerto pour clarinette* de Mozart. Cependant, avant que celui-ci ne soit audible, et parallèlement à lui ensuite, elles battent une musique qui semble bien militaire, et il faudra attendre qu'on ait reconnu Mozart pour déchiffrer autrement ces battements martiaux. Chacune des caisses claires est équipée de deux haut-parleurs: l'un, basses fréquences, qui fait vibrer les membranes et rebondir les baguettes accrochées au fût de l'instrument; l'autre qui diffuse les fragments du *Concerto*.

Le visiteur est accueilli par ces battements de caisses claires d'où émergera, d'abord méconnaissable ensuite altérée, la musique de Mozart. Anri Sala a modifié d'une manière différente chacun des trois mouvements du *Concerto*: le premier en ôtant ses trois centres de gravité harmonique; le second en remplaçant les indications dynamiques par les vents que l'explorateur James Bell décrit dans le journal du voyage qu'il fit de l'Angleterre à l'Australie en 1839; le troisième en changeant l'ordre des solos et des tutti. Mozart composa son *Concerto* en 1791, trois ans après le débarquement de la flotte anglaise à Botany Bay, treize kilomètres au sud de la baie de Sydney. Dans les jours qui suivirent son arrivée, Arthur Philip (alors gouverneur des New South Wales), y installa une colonie pénitentiaire.

Ce que le visiteur entend est la musique de Mozart réarrangée par ce qui, à l'autre bout du monde, se déroule simultanément: la colonisation et l'esclavage, l'envers des Lumières, non pas un accident du développement de la civilisation occidentale, mais sa condition structurale et son destin économique. Mozart réarrangé, et bouleversé, par son présent. Le

qui dicte au film sa durée. Remontée sur l'installation du Centro Botín, démultipliée en une chaîne d'images mouvantes, *If and Only If* devient autrement perceptible. C'est qu'une autre temporalité s'ajoute aux trois premières, celle de l'installation elle-même, de ce défilement continu des images qui semble rejouer sur l'écran-ruban le mouvement de l'escargot sur l'archet. Le temps de l'escargot perd alors un peu de son étrangeté, parce qu'il est rabattu sur celui de l'installation, sa durée étant comme mesurée par celle qu'il faut aux images pour longer les deux bords de l'écran.

### FANTÔMES RAVÉLIENS

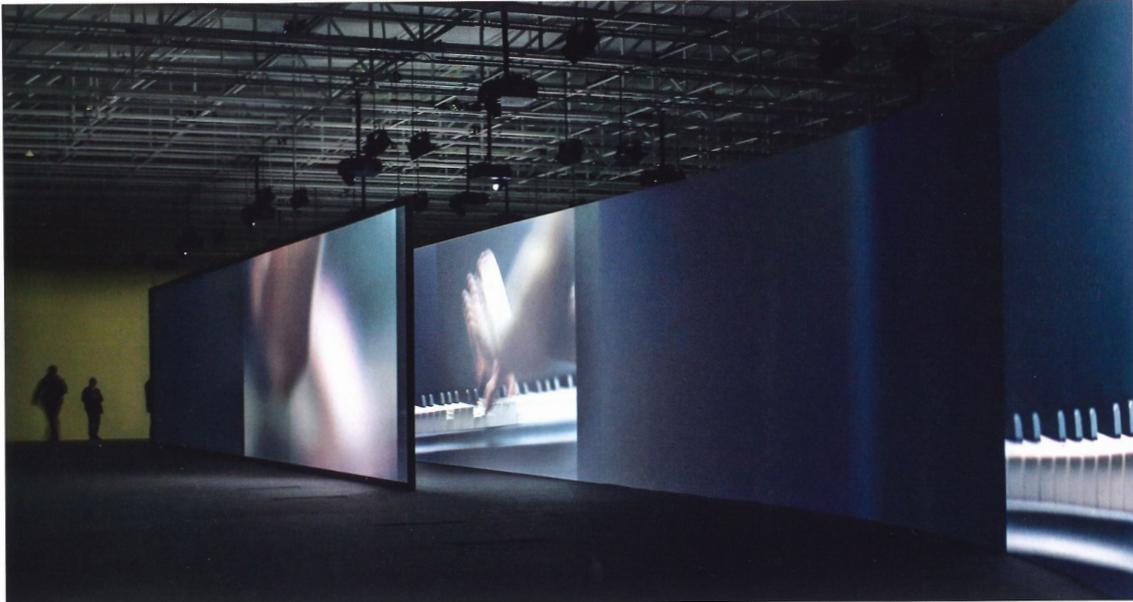
La troisième – *Ravel, Ravel* – absente de l'exposition du MUDAM, représentait la France à la Biennale de Venise 2013. Elle était installée dans une chambre anéchoïque: deux mains sur deux écrans (l'un au-dessus de l'autre) interprétaient le *Concerto pour la main gauche* de Maurice Ravel. Chacune appartient à un pianiste différent (Louis Lortie et Jean-Efflam Bavouzet), elles ne jouent donc pas tout à fait au même tempo, elles se décalent un peu, à peine, suffisamment pour produire un espace que seule une chambre sourde (parce que sans écho) pouvait nous faire entendre. D'un différentiel de temps naissait un espace audi-

ble. Quant à l'installation du Centro Botín, une autre histoire se raconte. Les écrans translucides donnent à ce décalage un caractère spectral. À la main projetée sur le mur se superpose, sur l'écran translucide, son double déhiscent, elle-même l'instant juste avant ou juste après, son fantôme temporel. On a l'étrange impression d'un mouvement décomposé à la manière des chronophotographies de Muybridge, alors qu'il s'agit au fond d'une décomposition du temps, qui produit ici une figure visuelle quand, à Venise, elle était auditive. Décomposé, dédoublé, le temps produit des fantômes. Sur l'installation du Centro Botín, le présent devient simultanément passé et futur, mais un autre passé et un autre futur, ceux d'une autre main: nous pourrions dire que le présent s'y potentialise. En jouant ces trois œuvres, l'installation les plie autrement, les ouvre à d'autres sens possibles, les enrichit. Mais, pour que de tels remontages soient possibles, ne fallait-il pas que ces œuvres fussent dès l'origine des installations provisoires? Dès le début inachevée, c'est-à-dire achevée pour tel site, pour telle configuration muséale, pour tel contexte institutionnel? Des œuvres qu'il faudrait sans fin remonter, adapter à de nouveaux lieux, installer toujours autrement, sur

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présent ici ne s'étend plus seulement au juste passé et au juste à venir, fussent-ils encore potentiels, il comprend aussi l'autre spatial, le présent de ce qui était, jusqu'au débarquement anglais, un autre monde. *The Last Resort* renverse l'opération des trois films dont nous avons observé les remontages: il ne s'agit plus d'utiliser l'espace pour conjoindre les temps, mais pour distendre le présent, le rendre étranger à lui-même. C'est ainsi certai-

nement que l'on pourrait décrire les expériences que sont ces deux expositions d'Anri Sala: des expériences de dilatation et d'extension du présent qui obligent le visiteur à accorder sa propre durée à des temporalités tout autres, à feuilleter autrement son temps. ■

Deux très beaux catalogues accompagnent ces expositions: *Coudées – Quatre variations sur Anri Sala* de Peter Szendy (Presses du réel & Mudam) et *Châteaux en Es-*

*pagne* de Gianluigi Ricuperati (Fundacion Botín). Un philosophe et un écrivain se penchent avec un bonheur certain sur l'œuvre de l'artiste.

De haut en bas / from top: «As You Go»,  
Détail de l'installation au / exhibition view at  
Centro Botín, Santander. 2019-20.

«All of a Tremble (Delusion / Devolution)», 2017.  
Exposition au / exhibition view at Centro Botín,  
Santander



## Anri Sala and Conjunctions of Time

**After the Castello di Rivoli near Turin in the spring, Anri Sala is being exhibited in two new spaces, Mudam Luxembourg and Centro Botín in Santander, Spain: two major exhibitions where, in addition to presenting works previously unseen (at least in Europe), he returns with virtuosity and profundity to some of his earlier works.**

In the middle of a vast room plunged into darkness, a chain of images slowly scrolls along the two edges of a screen that looks like an endless ribbon. Each image is separated from the one that follows it by a blank that allows the eye to see it pass and disappear. On both sides of this cinematic wall, Anri Sala has placed two translucent screens, one the size of an image, the other almost as long, on which other images are projected that duplicate those passing behind them, superimposed on them like ghosts. This projection device is accompanied by a no less complex sound system, made up of 24 speakers placed round the screens, and which accompany the visitors wherever they are in the room.

What do we hear and what do we see there? Three works by the artist reassembled and remixed: it should be said "reinstalled" as this reassembly-remixing transforms them: *Ravel Ravel* (Venice, 2013), *Take Over* (Berlin, 2017) and *If and Only If* (New York, 2018). This audiovisual installation has been presented since December 14 on the second floor of the Centro Botín, the museum that Renzo Piano designed a few years ago for the Foundation of the same name, facing Santander bay. Its status is ambivalent. On the one hand, it is indeed a work by Anri Sala, with a title even, *As You Go*. On the other, it allows us to see or see again and hear or hear again three works that can be recognized immediately in this new guise, but are discovered to be strangely quite different.

### TAKING CONTROL

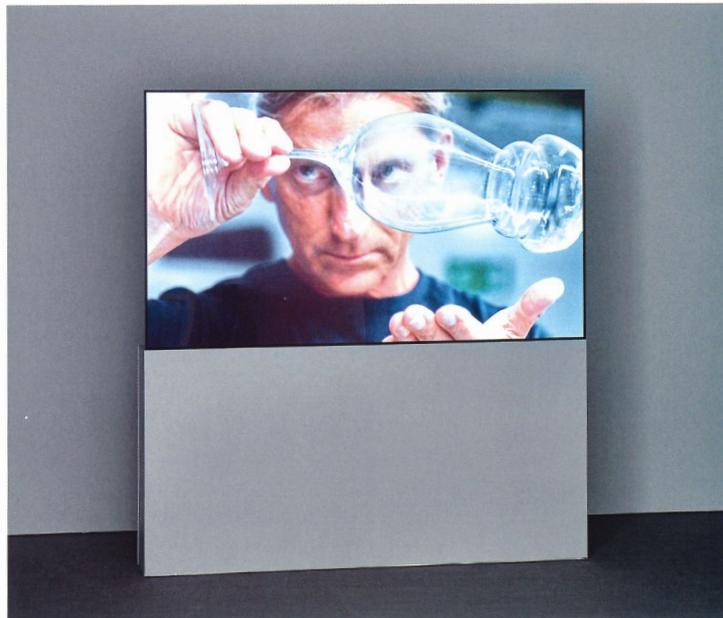
Two of them (*Take Over* and *If and Only If*) are presented at the same time at Mudam Luxembourg, which has hosted another large-scale exhibition of Anri Sala's work since 12 October, entitled *Le Temps Coudé*. The first is projected on two curved screens arranged almost opposite each other in a vast dark room (an installation that already differed significantly from that of its creation in the space of the Esther Shipper gallery in New York). Two mechanical piano keyboards, one that plays *The Marseillaise*, the other *The Internationale*. When I first entered it, the pia-

nos were repeating the two melodies under the fingers of the pianists, pressing their keys after the hands had landed, gradually giving body and coherence to the two hymns. A few minutes later, the pianists tried to silence the two pianos by pressing their forearms on the keyboards. It took me a few minutes to discover that their clusters reproduced the rhythm of the two songs. The work had started thus: each of the two pianists play on their keyboard the anthem that that keyboard isn't playing, *The Marseillaise* against *The Internationale* and vice versa, each trying to take control of – "take over" – the piano, imposing what it is to play. A micro-war – one sees of this confrontation only keys and fingers – opposing two pieces of music that for a long time were only one (the words of *The Internationale* are said to have been sung for a long time to the tune of *The Marseillaise*). Raised on the installation of Centro Botín, the battle of the hymns (that which opposed for example the nation-states to the movement of the Workers' International) takes another turn, less antagonistic. We see hands fighting against the keys of their keyboard and not two opposing hymns by interposed screen. The mixture of melodies is there at first before dissolving their messages in the similarity of their metric constructions.

### A SNAIL'S PACE

The transformation that affects the second, *If and Only If*, is even greater. At Mudam the work is projected on a single screen. We follow the slow movement of a snail from one end to the other of a musician's bow in the process of playing. The violist Gérard Caussé interprets Stravinsky's *Elegy* composed in 1944 for the violist of the Pro Arte quartet in memory of the founder of the ensemble, the violinist Alphonse Onnou, who died in 1940. What this work operates, remarkably in our opinion, is the intertwining at the same time of three different temporalities, one of which is radically heterogeneous to the other two: that of *Elegy* (which includes a long polyphony for two voices), that of its interpretation and that of the snail. The snail moves at its own pace, indifferent to sounds it doesn't hear, only affected by the movements of the bow. The violist's temporality is caught between these two contrary needs: to accompany the snail until the end of its journey and to interpret Stravinsky's work without distorting it. The snail taking more time to travel

«Slip of the Line». 2018. Vidéo UHD et installation sonore en stéréo, couleur. 9'47". Vue de l'installation au / installation view at Mudam Luxembourg (2019). (© Anri Sala; Ph. Rémi Villagi). Single channel UHD video and stereo sound



the length of the bow than Gérard Caussé to play the Elegy, he must at certain pre-established moments take up one of the two voices of the polyphony and therefore, in a way, unfold certain passages in order to follow the rhythm of the snail, because it is the one that dictates the duration of the film. Going back to the Centro Botín installation, multiplied into a chain of moving images, *If and Only If* becomes otherwise noticeable. There is another temporality added to the first three, that of the installation itself, of this continuous scrolling of images which seems to replay on the ribbon screen the movement of the snail on the bow. The snail's pace then loses a bit of its strangeness, because folded over that of the installation, its duration as if measured by that which it takes for the images to move along the two edges of the screen.

### RAVELIAN GHOSTS

The third – *Ravel, Ravel* – absent from the MUDAM exhibition, represented France at the 2013 Venice Biennale. It was installed in an anechoic room (echo-free): two hands on two screens (one above the other) interpreted the *Concerto for the Left Hand* by Maurice Ravel. Each belongs to a different pianist (Louis Lortie and Jean-Efflam Bavouzet), so they don't play at quite the same tempo, they shift a little, barely, enough to produce a space that only a muffled room (since without echo) could allow us to hear. From a time differential an audible space arises. On the Centro Botín installation another story is told. The translucent screens give this shift a spectral character. The hand projected onto the wall has superimposed on its translucent screen its double in motion, the instant just before or just after, its temporal ghost. One has the strange impression of a deconstructed movement in the manner of Muybridge's chronophotographs when it is at basically a deconstruction of time, which here produces a visual figure when, in Venice, it was auditory. Deconstructed, split, time produces ghosts. On the Centro Botín installation, the present becomes simultaneously past and future, but another past and another future, those of another hand: we could say that the present is potentiated there.

By replaying these three works, the installation folds them differently, opens them to other possible meanings, enriches them. But for such reassembly to be possible, should these works not have been temporary installations from the outset? From the beginning unfinished, that is to say, completed for such and such a site, for such and such a museum configuration, for such and such an institutional context? Works that would have to be endlessly reassembled, adapted to new places, always installed differently, on new devices? There is no accident there. These



Ci-dessus/above: « Untitled (Anguille, congre, carape, passan...) ». 2018. Exposition « Anri Sala. Le Temps coudé » au/exhibition view at Mudam Luxembourg, 2019-20. (© Ph. Rémi Villaggi)

works by Anri Sala (others, more object-based, less so) are defined by their plasticity: each is an attempt to combine heterogeneous times and overcome their primary disjunction. Threads that must be constantly re woven as these conjunctions are fragile, as they depend on the places where they are exhibited and on the fleeting attention of their visitors.

### THE ALTERATION OF MOZART

In a space apart from the Mudam exhibition display, at the end of a long glazed footbridge, Anri Sala has installed *The Last Resort*, a work he had designed in 2017 for the bandstand in Observatory Hill Park, which overlooks Sydney Harbour, Australia. 38 snare drums hanging upside down at the dome of the Mudam Pavilion play snatches from Mozart's *Clarinet Concerto*. However, before that piece can be heard, and in parallel afterwards, they beat music that seems very military, and it will be necessary to wait until Mozart has been recognized to decipher these martial beats otherwise. Each of the snares is equipped with two speakers: one, on low frequencies, vibrates the drum skins and bounces the sticks hung on the barrel of the instrument while the other delivers the fragments of the *Concerto*. Visitors are greeted by these snare drums from which Mozart's music will emerge, first unrecognizable and then altered. Anri Sala modified each of the three movements of the *Concerto* in a different way: the first by removing its three centres of harmonic gravity, the second by replacing the dynamic indications by the

winds that the explorer James Bell described in the travel log he wrote from England to Australia in 1839, the third by changing the order of solos and the tutti. Mozart composed his *Concerto* in 1791, three years after the landing of the English fleet at Botany Bay, thirteen kilometres south of Sydney. In the days following his arrival, Arthur Philip (then governor of New South Wales), established a penal colony there.

What the visitor hears is Mozart's music rearranged by what at the other end of the world was simultaneously taking place: colonization and slavery, the reverse side of the Enlightenment, not an accident in the development of Western civilization, but its structural condition and its economic destiny. Mozart rearranged, and upset, by his present. The present here no longer extends only to the just-past and the just-about-to-come, even if still potential, it also includes the other space, the present-of-what-was, until the English landing, another world.

*The Last Resort* reverses the operation of the three films, the new edits of which we have observed: it is no longer a question of using space to conjure times, but to distend the present, to make it foreign to itself. This is certainly how one could describe the experiences that these two exhibitions of Anri Sala are: experiences of expansion and extension of the present, which oblige the visitor to grant their own duration to entirely different temporalities, to leaf through their time otherwise. ■

Translation: Chloé Baker

Two substantial catalogues accompany these exhibitions: *Coudées – Quatre variations sur Anri Sala* by Peter Szendy (Presses du réel & Mudam) and *Châteaux en Espagne* by Gianluigi Ricuperati (Fundación Botín).

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artpress, N°474, February 2020, p.58-64.

GALERIE  
CHANTAL CROUSEL

**CURA.**

130 CURATOR'S  
DIARIES

TEXT BY  
MASSIMILIANO GIONI



ANRI  
SALA

Massimiliano Gioni  
*Curators Diaries: Anri Sala*  
CURA, N°30, April, 2019, p.130-141.

## REQUIEM FOR A DREAM

The first work I ever saw by Anri Sala was *Intervista (Finding the Words)* (1998), a video presented at the 1999 Venice Biennale in the Albanian Pavilion, curated by Edi Muka and co-organized by Edi Rama and *Flash Art*. I was working at the time for the Milan branch of this magazine, and Sala's name was already being mentioned around the office as one of the young Albanian artists who were beginning to emerge after the country's civil war in 1997.

*Intervista*, the work made for his thesis project when Sala was a film student in Paris, stands as a milestone marking the shift between the late 1990s and the new millennium. In contrast to the '90s generation of video art—the various neo-structuralist experiments by Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Douglas Gordon, Pierre Huyghe, Philippe Parreno, and the spectacular videos of Doug Aitken and Pipilotti Rist—Sala's video seemed very simple, almost primitive, using disarmingly humble tools and letting narrative win out over images. *Intervista* was a sort of detective story in which Sala tried to reconstruct the soundtrack of an old film that showed his mother talking about socialism and revolution. Like other artists of his generation, such as Phil Collins, Artur Zmijewsky, or the older Steve McQueen, Sala brought the focus back to reality, to documentary, even autobiography: a reflection on history and its traumas, but woven out of personal, private, almost confessional experiences. Along with *Intervista*, his subsequent *Nocturnes* and *Dammi i Colori*—which Sala showed at Manifesta in 2000 and at the 2003 Venice Biennale respectively—formed a sort of trilogy of the Balkans; they described the collapse of communism and the open wounds of history through the existential adventures of solitary characters, swept up in the flow of events and sometimes driven by delusions of grandeur. *Nocturnes* alternates the monologues of an obsessive aquarist, always anxious that his fish may die, with the confessions of a young veteran who seems to get reality mixed up with video games as he recounts his gruesome missions. In *Dammi i Colori* ["Give Me the Colors"], Edi Rama (then Mayor of Tirana, now Prime Minister of Albania) tells of how he tried to transform the capital by painting its buildings, but his monologue turns into a meditation on art as a regenerative force and utopia as poetry and politics. A psychological tension snakes through the Balkan trilogy, as if Sala's characters were prey to a sense of instability and fragility, a sort of "borderline syndrome," to quote the title of Manifesta 3.

A similar mood can be found in *time after time*, a short video shot in the same period as *Dammi i Colori* and in the same streets of Tirana. We see an emaciated horse standing petrified by the divider of an almost deserted highway; it lifts one hoof every time a car passes, as if to defend itself or perhaps gallop away, yet remains inexorably frozen. Like the characters in the trilogy, the horse in *time after time* could be seen as a lone survivor of the collapse of ideology, bewildered by the sudden turn of events. The video also seems to explicitly play on the tradition of eque-

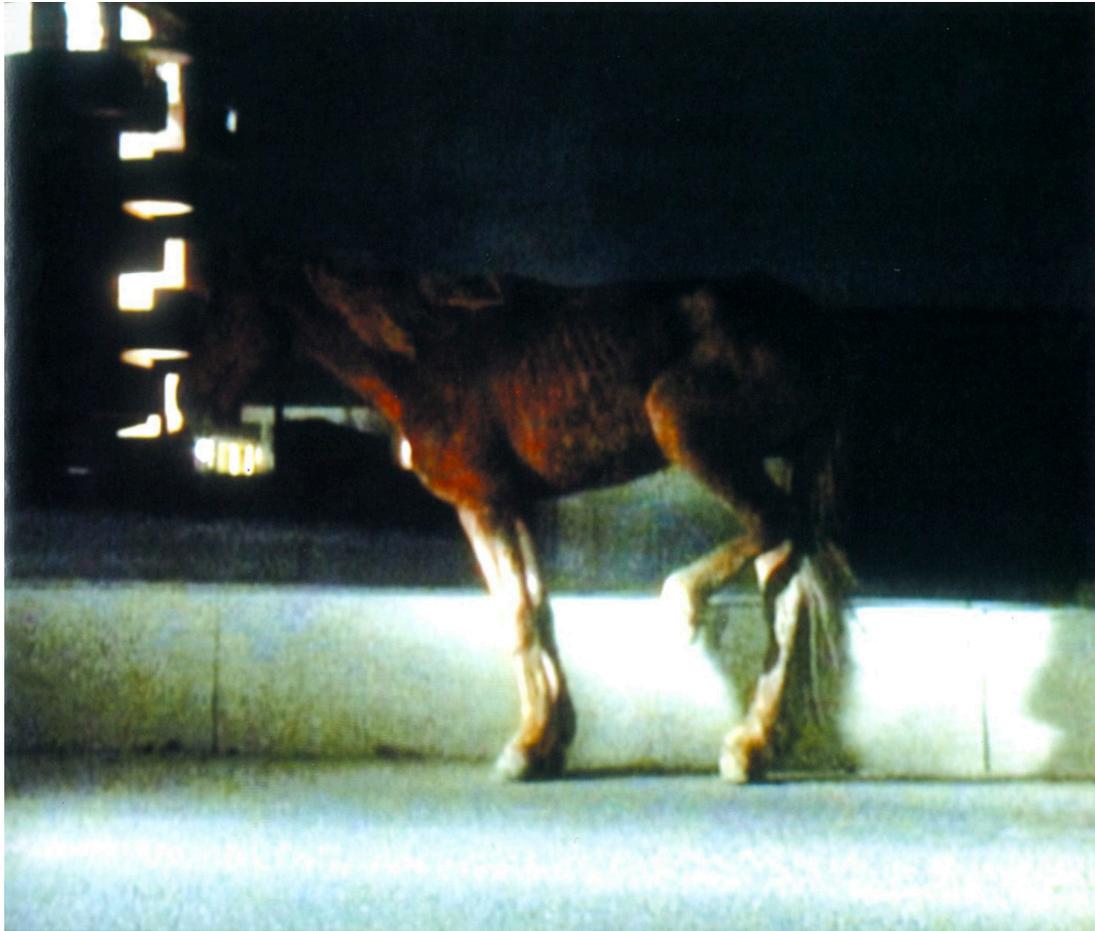
trian sculpture and celebratory monuments.

But rather than a heroic horse and rider, Sala presents a wounded animal that transforms this work into a monument in reverse, an image of surrender. It was owing to this sense of anguish and imminent loss that *time after time* was chosen as one of the opening images in the Berlin Biennale that I curated with Ali Subotnick and Maurizio Cattelan. Sala's work was installed on the ground floor of a former Jewish girls' school, whose architecture served as a time capsule of 20<sup>th</sup>-century traumas.

Like other coeval works, *time after time* marks an important turning point in Sala's career; it was around this time that he abandoned the words and narrative that characterized his early videos and began to focus on more abstract images, in which sound and music almost became characters in their own right. Nowhere is this transition more evident than in *Long Sorrow* (2005), originally produced by the Fondazione Nicola Trussardi and presented in a solo show at Milan's Circolo Filologico in 2005. *Long Sorrow* is one of Sala's most touching and mysterious works: one long, slow take reveals the interior of an apartment in a modernist building in Berlin that residents have nicknamed the "Long Complaint," or "Sorrow." Outside the window we can see a saxophone player who is improvising a wild rhapsody as he hangs 30 meters off the ground, suspended like a figurehead on the prow of a building that sums up the aspirations and failures of 20<sup>th</sup>-century modernist ideology. Like many other works by Sala, *Long Sorrow* weaves music and architecture into a sweeping, abstract vision of history, a synopated requiem for the great illusions that inflamed the 20<sup>th</sup> century: modernity, utopia, equality, and exceptionalism.

Some of these themes turn up again in a series of video-installations that Sala has been developing in recent years, such as *Ravel Ravel*, presented at the Venice Biennale in 2013 and then at the New Museum in New York in 2016, or *Take Over*, shown in Berlin in 2017. Both of these works—large, complex installations where video and sound take on a sculptural quality—revolve around pieces of music connected to 20<sup>th</sup>-century history: respectively, Maurice Ravel's *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D Major* (1929-1930) and the famous political anthems *La Marseillaise* and *The Internationale*, which Sala takes apart and fits together like musical jigsaw puzzles. Two decades after *Intervista*, Sala is still reconstructing sounds and images as a way of giving a voice back to the ghosts of the past. If history had a soundtrack, its dissonances, harmonies, and cacophonies would surely resemble Sala's aural assemblages.

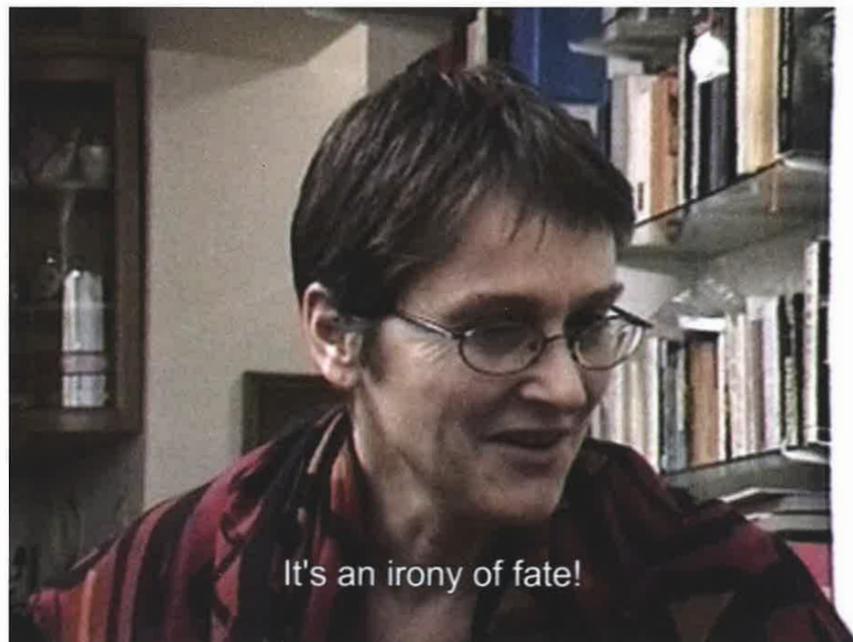








## Afterall



Anri Sala, *Intervista*  
(*Finding the Words*),  
1998, single-channel  
video and stereo  
sound, 26min,  
edition of 6+2 AP.  
Courtesy the artist  
and Ideal Audience  
International, Paris;  
Galerie Chantal  
Crousel, Paris; Esther  
Schipper, Berlin;  
Galerie Rüdiger  
Schöttle, Munich;  
and Marian Goodman  
Gallery, New York

## Subtitling Communism: Beneath Anri Sala's *Intervista*

- Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei

In Anri Sala's film *Intervista* (*Finding the Words*), which ostensibly deals with the traumatic legacy of the communist period in Albania, the reconstruction of the lost soundtrack to a mute video reel becomes a metaphor for the uncertainty and subjectivity of memory and remembrance.<sup>1</sup> The film opens with the artist finding an old reel of footage featuring his mother, Valdete Sala - a member of the communist elite and later director of the National Library of Albania - attending a congress of the Labour Youth Union of Albania in 1977 at which she was interviewed by Albanian National Television.<sup>2</sup> In the footage she dons a red partisan scarf and smiles, positioned next to

dictator Enver Hoxha, the First Secretary of the Party of Labour of Albania (PPSh) from 1941 until his death in 1985, amidst a standing ovation. The sound for the film has been lost; Sala sets out on a quest to reconstruct it - to translate the silence into sound - and confronts

### Vincent W.J. van Gerven Oei investigates the politics of Anri Sala's work and its relation to the legacies of communism.

his mother with the result. Upon hearing his version, she is in disbelief about her own nonsensical and ideologically predetermined statements. But their conversation subsequently turns into a dialogue about the communist past in Albania.

In an early interview with Hans Ulrich Obrist from 2000, Sala refers to the film as follows: '*Intervista* is more personal and could be very dangerous politically, all this dealing with the past and the truth and so on, but if you don't believe the story at least you can believe the character, who in this case was my mother.'<sup>3</sup> It is precisely the issue of *belief* that I aim to problematise here. Which mother are we supposed to believe: the mother who speaks in Albanian, or the one who reaches us through the English subtitles? This question relates to what art critics such as Mark Godfrey have called the 'meticulously formal' quality of the work.<sup>4</sup> It also addresses how Sala approaches 'the traumatic transition from communism'<sup>5</sup> in Albania in the midst of the country's attempts to overcome its society's 'widespread amnesia'.<sup>6</sup> What has been overlooked in these interpretations, which nevertheless continue to stress the importance of 'language' and 'politics' in Sala's work,<sup>7</sup> is the formal and ideological role that the mistranslations of the subtitles play in front of an international art audience in the film. A close reading of the subtitles in *Intervista* reveals a very different politics from simply 'dealing with the past and the truth and so on'.<sup>8</sup>

Such a reading of the subtitles in *Intervista* is particularly relevant given they are the point of access through which the film is consumed and understood by an international art audience.<sup>9</sup> *Intervista* was shown only once to the public in Albania, in the now destroyed Kinema Millennium in Tirana.<sup>10</sup> However, it has had a wide international distribution outside the country despite never having been shown on Albanian public television, or included in any local art show. It therefore did not face scrutiny in its original language. At the same time, *Intervista*'s subtitles allow us to understand Sala's intimate and unacknowledged relation with the current Albanian regime.

1 *Intervista* (*Finding the Words*), 1998, single-channel video, 26min, stereo sound, colour.

2 She was certainly not one of the 'ordinary people', as erroneously suggested in Mark Kramer's article, 'Getting Lost Is of the Essence: Anri Sala's Cinematic Parables', *Afterall*, vol.5, 2002, pp.78-83. Nicholas Pano observes: 'As is the case with many of the communist-era elite, Valdete has prospered during the post-communist period. She is now an executive with the Soros Foundation in Tirana. In contrast, Todi Lubonja, like most Albanians who ran afoul of the communist regime, lives a modest life' ('Review of "Intervista" by Anri Sala', *Slavic Review*, vol.60, no.3, Fall 2001, p.600). Although this is nowhere explicit in the film, Charles-Arthur Boyer suggests that Valdete Sala was already director at the time of the interview. See C.A. Boyer, 'Images Never Sleep' (trans. C. Penwarden), *Art Press*, vol.268, 2001, pp.25-27.

3 '(No) Paris No Cry: Hans Ulrich Obrist interviewing Anri Sala', *Nettime* [online mailing list], 28 April 2004, available at <http://nettime.org/Lists-Archives/nettime-bold-0104/msg00653.html> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

4 See Mark Godfrey, 'Anri Sala', *Art Monthly*, vol.278, July-August 2004, p.18.

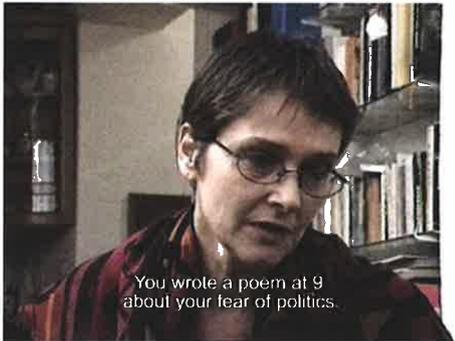
5 David Ryan, 'Anri Sala', *Art Monthly*, vol.351, November 2011, p.29.

6 Paolo Magagnoli, 'Documentary Fictions: New Concepts of Truth and Representation in the Works of Anri Sala and Hito Steyerl', *Object*, vol.12, 2011, p.44.

7 Ossian Ward, 'Beyond Translation', *Art in America*, vol.92, no.11, 2004, p.111.

8 '(No) Paris No Cry', *op.cit.*

GALERIE  
CHANTAL CROUSEL



Anri Sala, *Intervista*  
(*Finding the Words*),  
1998, single-channel  
video and stereo  
sound, 26min,  
edition of 6+2 AP.  
Courtesy the artist  
and Ideal Audience  
International, Paris;  
Galerie Chantal  
Crousel, Paris; Esther  
Schipper, Berlin;  
Galerie Rüdiger  
Schöttle, Munich;  
and Marian Goodman  
Gallery, New York

In an analysis of *Intervista*, Søren Grammel suggests that the film makes 'clear how language is always ideological and itself produces ideology as a constitutive element of belief systems and political constructions'.<sup>11</sup> He further observes: 'The formal difference between visuality and language appears as a metaphor for the problem, and in *Intervista* this is constantly emphasised, reflected upon and applied to the medium itself.'<sup>12</sup> This observation is entirely correct, but not in the way that Grammel suggests. I propose that the main ideological device of this film is not the transformation of mute lip movements into comprehensible speech, but the consistent alteration of his mother's words when translated into English. On the one hand, spoken claims about objective truths are transformed into written subjective perceptions. On the other, Valdete seems to be deliberately isolated from her social context, thus allowing her to become an 'ideal' post-communist subject. As a result, the subtitles make it possible for *Intervista* and its maker to be understood as post-communist and thus, as post-authoritarian.

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According to the story behind *Intervista*, the audio that originally accompanied the film reel of Valdete's interview with journalist Pushkin Lubonja was lost. Valdete claims to no longer remember what was said. In search of the missing words, Sala pays a visit to Pushkin's parents Todi and Liri Lubonja, former members of the Central Committee.<sup>13</sup> Todi is the former director of the national radio and television, where Pushkin worked as a journalist and director. Todi informs Sala that all interviews given on public television were completely predictable and that everyone knew what was going to be said in them. They were scripted performances aimed at rehearsing the party line. But Todi doesn't have any recollection of the specific congress at which Valdete spoke, which took place after he and his wife had been interned as political prisoners in 1974 for agitation and propaganda against the government.

After this meeting, Sala goes to a school for the deaf mute to ask a lip-reader to reconstruct the words spoken during his mother's interview. The content indeed turns out to be 'predictable' regarding ideological content, containing stock phrases such as 'struggle

***The artist is taken out of the equation, to fade into the background, to function as a neutral chronicler in history, to make him – in short – merely 'the artist'.***

against imperialism, revisionism', 'youth uniting its efforts under the guardianship of the Marxist-Leninist Party' and so on.<sup>14</sup> When Valdete is confronted with her own phraseology, she exclaims in Albanian 'Nuk mundet! Se është e absurde! Nuk është e vërtetë!' (It cannot be! Because it's absurd! It isn't true!). These statements are translated incorrectly in the subtitles, which read: 'I don't believe this! It's absurd. I just

can't believe it!' There are two crucial issues at stake in this crucial moment in Sala's film. First, Valdete's utter denial of her own words, a clear sign of repression. Second, the way in which Sala transposes this repression, from claims of objective falsehood ('It isn't true!') to subjective claims about belief ('I just can't believe it!'). Sala's insertion of 'believe' here tempers Valdete's clear rejection of her own words. She explains, 'S'ka asnjë mendim. Nuk

9 It doesn't matter whether Sala made these and other translations himself or not. They are part of the film as it is distributed on the art market and should therefore be considered an integral part of the work. There also exists a version of the same work with French subtitles. I have been unable to verify whether the analysis that follows below can be equally applied to that version of the work. But see Nadia Fartas, 'Temps de la transmission, écarts de la familiarité. *Intervista* d'Anri Sala' ('Transmitting Experiences of Temporality: Gap of Familiarity. *Intervista*, Anri Sala'), *Images Re-vues*, vol.9, 2011, available at <http://imagesrevues.revues.org/1629> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

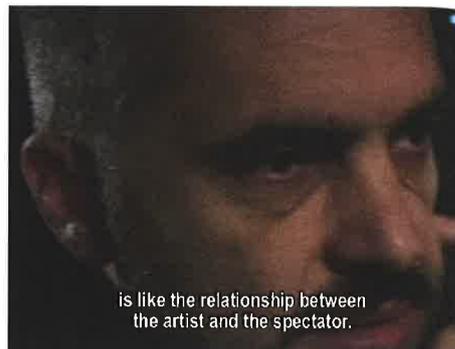
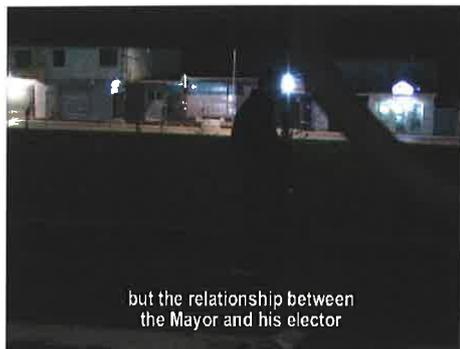
10 An iconic cinema during the communist period.

11 Søren Grammel, 'Finding the Words', *Afterall*, vol.5, 2002, p.69.

12 *Ibid.*, p.68. See also Magagnoli, 'Documentary Fictions', *op. cit.*, p.43: 'In this documentary, truth appears to be inseparable from the mediation of opaque archival images and from an equally obscure language'.

13 The Central Committee was the second-highest level institution in the party hierarchy of the Party of Labor of Albania, and included all key government officials and prominent members of the intelligentsia.

14 See for a full analysis of the rhetoric of communist Albania, Ardian Vehbiu, *Shqiptja totalitare: Tëpër të ligjërimit publik në Shqipëri në viteve 1945-1990* (Totalitarian Albanian: Characteristics of Public Discourse in Albanian During 1945-1990), Tirana: Çabej, 2008.



*jam njeri që s'artikulon dot mendim'* (There is no thought. I am not a person who cannot articulate a thought). However, Sala turns the double negation into an affirmation and the statement about existence into a statement about knowledge: 'I know how to express myself.' I stress here the details of the translation from Albanian to English because these are vital to understanding Sala's own attitude towards the memory and recollection of his mother.

*Intervista* explicitly thematises the act of translation, from the muted movements of lips to a transcription of spoken words, and from one ideological period to the another. Moreover, the film, like most of Sala's early work, gave the outside (art) world its first glimpse of Albania. As a result of the far-reaching dissemination of *Intervista*, Sala's mother became representative of the entire Albanian population that lived through the communist period, and her supposed 'disbelief' became the disbelief of all Albanians.<sup>15</sup> Yet, as I pointed out, Valdete's emotions are much stronger than those that would have been provoked by mere disbelief given her straight-up denial that 'this isn't true!'

In response, Sala replays the footage to Valdete, uttering his mother's reconstructed words in sync with the images. Valdete still denies having said these words: '*Nuk i ke këto fjalë*' ('You don't have those words' or 'Those words aren't there'). Once more the artist mistranslates these words into the following subtitles: 'Those aren't my words.' Again a statement about objective truth is turned into a subjective perception. Later on, Sala asks his mother how she felt about deaf mutes having made her speech in the past accessible to her; she responds, '*ironia e madhe*' (the great irony). However, Sala translates this as 'It's an irony of fate!' Valdete doesn't refer to 'fate' and its insertion into the translation has an orientalisising effect, turning her from a woman of reason, conviction and objectivity into a stereotypical Balkan subject who abandons herself to the uncontrollable waves of history.

Anri Sala, *Dammi i colori*, 2003, video, 15min and 24sec. Courtesy the artist, Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Hauser & Wirth Gallery, Zurich; Johnen & Schöttle Gallery, Cologne and Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

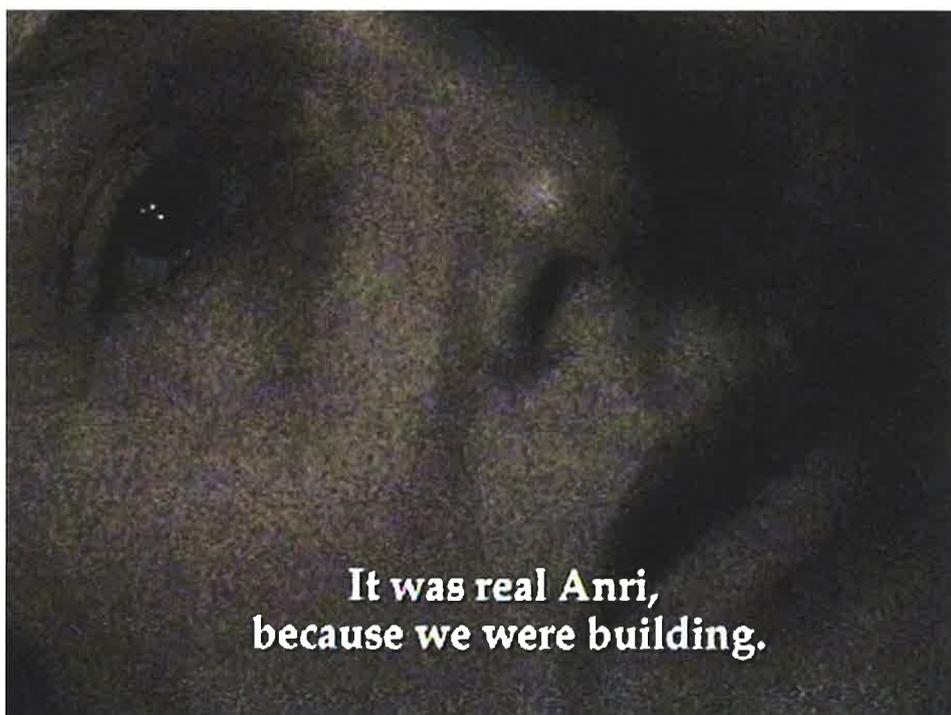
15 As Edi Muka states, '*Intervista - Finding the Words* addresses a personal story but reaches the full dimensions of an Albanian universe. It is the personal story of every individual'. Cited in S.Grammel, '*Finding the Words*', *op. cit.*, p.69. The description on the website for distributor Icarus Films speaks of a 'reflection on the country's - and one woman's - history and present state', available at [http://www.icarusfilms.com/new99/inter\\_vis.html](http://www.icarusfilms.com/new99/inter_vis.html) (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

These mistranslations obfuscate the fact that Sala's family's social status and associated connections to the communist establishment were conditions for making *Intervista*. These connections granted him contacts within the Lubonja family, meaning he had access to top-tier members of communist society. When he calls them early in the film, he introduces himself as the son of Valdete Sala, saying '*Besoj se njihen*' (I think that you know each other), implying familiarity. In the film, Sala translates her words into 'I think that you know her', avoiding the mutual implication of 'each other'. The result of Sala's investigation is that Valdete's role during the communist regime seems to be relatively isolated from her actual social context. There are other significant moments in which the artist conceals his mother's relationship to the regime. For instance, when Liri Lubonja speaks about those who continued '*të ushqenin ideal*' (to nurture the ideals) of the revolution, Sala translates this into 'to cling to their ideals'. The implication of the original claim is rather different from that in Sala's translation. Lubonja's use of the word *ushqenin* is neutral with a positive tendency, whereas the translation 'cling' has a negative connotation. Valdete, Liri continues, '*ka qenë një e re aktiviste, vajza e pastër. E donim, e donim gjithë neve Valdete*' (Valdete has been a young activist, a proper girl. We loved her, we all loved Valdete). But this last sentence is translated simply as 'honest, sincere',<sup>16</sup> thus again severing the ties between Sala's mother, his family and those 'others' identified with the regime – others, who, different from his family, fell afoul of that same regime.

Sala's ideological sub-titular translation device, through which his mother appears as the 'ideal' post-communist subject, becomes even more problematic at the moment she addresses the conditions in which they used to live as members of the communist elite. She states that, if she could go back, she wouldn't do anything differently, '*sepse kam besuar se bënj mirë*' (because I have believed that I did good). The artist, once more, protects his mother from herself, by removing the moral qualification: 'I believed in what I was doing.' He asks his mother whether she sees anything '*rustësish të përbashkët*' (incidentally in common, the 'incidentally' is left out in the subtitle), between the regime and the deaf mutes. Valdete half-heartedly obliges with this cue from her son in order to develop the following analogy: '*Ai ishte një sistem që ishte shurdh dhe fliste me një gojë, me një zë*' (It was a system that was deaf and spoke with one mouth, one voice). Yet, Sala translates: 'Yes, we were living in a deaf and dumb system, where we only spoke with one mouth and one voice.' The objective 'it' is turned into the subjective 'we'. This we is avoided, however, at the moment the artist himself becomes implicated. His mother continues, '*Kjo është, por në një mënyrë shumë simbolike, sepse nuk kemi qenë kaq... kaq strikt*' (It's that, but in a symbolic way, because we haven't been that strict). Only here when Valdete speaks of 'we', the we of the elite families – a we that includes Sala – does he suddenly become the one who is removed. He translates his mother's 'because we haven't been that...' as 'because in certain milieus [sic] things were less strict'. This mistranslation cannot have been a matter of economy; it clearly shows that Sala wants to avoid being implicated in a logic that should remain outside his film. The most problematic omission of this kind is perhaps that which follows the above translation, when Valdete turns to her son and says '*Edhe ti e di këtë*' (You too know this); these words were never translated into the subtitles! She continues, '*A e mban mend, vjershën që ke shruar 9-vjeç që ka frikë nga politika?*' (Do you remember, the poem you wrote nine years old, that there is a fear of politics?). This is a direct question, but again Sala erases himself by turning it into a statement: 'You wrote a poem at 9 about your fear of politics.' The artist's answer is no longer needed, because the English-speaking audience never picked up on the question.

The translations in *Intervista* accomplish two things. First, they provide Sala's mother with an acceptable and recognisable subjectivity. She is a person with common beliefs and hopes with which foreign viewers can sympathise. She is not a traumatised figure who grew up in a totalitarian state who refuses to relate to or acknowledge her past ideological statements while *at the same time* twice stressing her belief that she 'did good'. Second, the translations gently remove anything that would implicate Sala in his mother's history – his mother may be a product of the communist regime and the relative privileges she enjoyed in that period, but he certainly isn't. The artist is taken out of the equation, to fade into the background, to function as a neutral chronicler in history, to make him – in short – merely 'the artist'.

16 Even in the French translation: 'honnête, sincère'. See N. Partas, 'Temps de la transmission', *op. cit.*, p.12.



Sala's treatment of the subtitles in *Intervista* gives us important pointers with respect to the politics of his artistic practice. In the film he absolves his mother (and himself) from involvement in the communist régime. A later work, which engages with the current Albanian political leadership, betrays a similar tendency. Once again, Sala removes himself from the political equation. This 2003 film somewhat eclipsed *Intervista* in contemporary overviews of the artist's work: *Dammi i colori* features Sala's former art academy teacher, former minister of culture and then Mayor of Tirana, Edi Rama.<sup>17</sup> In spite of Sala's 'fear of politics', which according to his mother he had expressed as a boy, *Dammi i colori* portrays a political action, an urban renewal project initiated by Rama in his first term as mayor. Evening shots of the Tirana façades, painted in colourful patterns, are interspersed with a monologue delivered by Sala's former teacher filmed inside a taxi. Even more than he does in *Intervista*, Sala withdraws from the situation – his questions and reactions are never shown. In the film, Rama expounds on a totalitarian vision of an artist-mayor, who is not politically responsible to the people, but rather 'performs' for them: 'The relationship between the Mayor and his elector is like the relationship between the artist and spectator'.<sup>18</sup> This of course is not a democratic situation, but rather an 'avant-garde of democratisation, a process that precedes [...] democratisation'.<sup>19</sup> All of this passes without comment or reflection. Sala's film has in fact become a powerful advertorial for Rama, elected Prime Minister in 2013, and who has continuously deployed *Dammi i colori* as propaganda for his own policies.<sup>19</sup> Ironically, however, Rama's politics continue to 'precede' democratisation fifteen years later, even though some in the art world erroneously continue to qualify them as 'Beuysian'.<sup>20</sup>

Like Sala, Rama came from a prominent communist family. His father Kristaq Rama was the most prominent socialist-realist sculptor, and member of the Presidium of the *Kuvendi Popullor* (People's Parliament).<sup>21</sup> It is not only Rama's political ascendancy that signals the survival of the former communist nomenclature in contemporary Albanian politics. Last year, Gramoz Ruçi became Speaker of Parliament after Rama's election victory. Ruçi was former first secretary of the PPSH (Albanian Communist Party) in Tepelena and communist Minister of Interior Affairs in 1990, during which he was responsible for the destruction of the archives of the feared Sigurimi and the 'April 2 massacre' in which four pro-democracy protestors were shot dead in Shkodra when they invaded the local PPSH offices in 1991.<sup>22</sup> Rama's new government also saw the return of former Minister of Interior Affairs Fatmir Xhafaj,<sup>23</sup> who had been a prosecutor under the communist régime.<sup>24</sup> Meanwhile many former nomenclature members or their direct family continue to hold high positions in the government, while families of former political prisoners often continue to live in poverty without their former tormentors going to prison.

This complex background to Rama's political career is erased in *Dammi i colori*. Ever since its release, Sala has held a key function in mobilising the international art world to support and legitimise Rama's political régime (an act that we might call 'art-washing') – first through a series of international biennials and later through initiatives such as the Centre for Openness and Dialogue,<sup>25</sup> of which he is a board member.<sup>26</sup> There is also a strong pattern of events that show up Sala's support as essential to the development of Rama's personal artistic career. Before his election as prime minister in 2013, Rama did not enjoy such international

17 *Dammi i colori*, 2003, video on DVD, colour, sound, 15min 24sec.

18 In this sense, Rama's political style needs to be analysed as a predecessor to *Trumpian* politics.

19 For further discussion see my 'Give Me the Colors... And the Country: Albanian Propaganda in the 21st Century', *ArtPapers*, March/April 2016, pp.10–16, also available at [http://artpapers.org/feature\\_articles/2016\\_0304-Albania.html](http://artpapers.org/feature_articles/2016_0304-Albania.html) (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

20 Hans-Ulrich Obrist, 'Hans Ulrich Obrist on Why We Need Artists in Politics', *Artsy* (18 September 2017), available at <https://www.artsy.net/article/artsy-editorial-hans-ulrich-obrist-artists-politics> (last accessed 25 December 2017).

21 The People's Parliament was the name of the legislative body during the communist dictatorship. As there were no free elections, its role was mainly symbolic.

22 The Sigurimi, officially the Directorate of State Security, was the state security, intelligence and secret police during the communist dictatorship, responsible for the arrest, imprisonment and torture of many political dissidents. An internal order from the Ministry of Interior Affairs dated 2 April 1991 signed by Ruçi states 'Hit hard from the beginning of the protests, [...] take up high positions with prepared snipers [...]'. 'Dokument: Masakra e 2 Prillit '91, zbulohet urdhri i Gramoz Ruçit: Qitësit të zënë lartësisë, goditni ashpër!' ('Document: The massacre of 2 April 1991, the order of Gramoz Ruçi discovered: Let snipers take up high positions, hit them hard!'), *Balkanweb*, 14 September 2017, available at <http://www.balkanweb.com/site/dokumenti-masakra-e-2-prillit-91-zbulohet-urdhri-i-gramoz-ruçit-qitesit-te-zene-lartesite-goditini-ashper/> (last accessed on 23 January 2018).

23 Xhafaj was also briefly Minister of Interior Affairs in Rama's first government, from 12 March to 22 May 2017.

24 See Desada Metaj, 'Sikur Fatmir Xhafaj...' (When Fatmir Xhafaj...), *Exit*, 17 March 2017, available at <http://www.exit.al/2017/03/17/sikur-fatmir-xhafaj/> (last accessed on 23 January 2018).



recognition as he has now.<sup>27</sup> His presence was clear in Sala's recent solo show *Anri Sala: Answer Me* at the New Museum, New York in 2016, in their collaborative work *Inversion - Creating Space where there appears to be None* (2010). Several reviews focussed on the Albanian prime minister's contribution.<sup>28</sup> Rama's first solo show in Italy took place at Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, also in 2016, just after Sala's show at the same gallery in 2015. And on 11 November 2016, Rama opened his first solo show in the United States at Marian Goodman Gallery, New York, which also represents Sala. The press releases made for both the Italian and US show made sure to prominently mention Rama's 'friend and collaborator Anri Sala'. Undoubtedly, without Sala's help, Rama's work would never have found entrance to the international art world.

Despite the fact that Rama, like his fellow Balkan leaders, has developed his own brand of authoritarian leadership and propaganda,<sup>29</sup> Sala has never openly addressed his close ties with a politician who considers his country to be his private 'canvas'.<sup>30</sup> Rama casts himself as the visionary leader of an avant-garde of democracy, while at the same time leading one of the most corrupt governments in Europe.<sup>31</sup> If anything, Rama's authoritarian discourse should set off all kinds of alarm bells for someone who has so intensely studied the language of the communist regime and its traumatic effects on memory. But Sala has remained silent. Like his mother back in the day, he stands next to the 'great leader', and the soundtrack is mute.

Installation view, 'Edi Rama', Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples, May 2016. Photograph: Francesco Squeglia. Courtesy Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples

25 See Raino Isto, "It's Very Exciting to Talk About Artist-run Countries": Edi Rama, the COD, and the Problematics of Celebrating the Artist-Politician', *ARTMargins* [blog], 22 December 2016, available at <http://blog.artmargins.com/index.php/74-it-s-very-exciting-to-talk-about-artist-run-countries-edi-rama-the-cod-and-the-problematics-of-celebrating-the-artist-politician.html> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

26 For board members see the Centre for Openness and Dialogue website at [http://cod.al/?page\\_id=21](http://cod.al/?page_id=21). The board also includes Philippe Parreno, Christine Macel, Meja Hoffman and Alastair Campbell.

27 See 'Edi Rama', *Artfacts* [art information database], available at <http://www.artfacts.net/en/artist/edi-rama-21/83/profile.html> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

28 For example, Jason Farago, 'Anri Sala: Answer Me Review - Art Cures 20th Century's Broken Dreams', *The Guardian*, 4 February 2016, available at <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2016/feb/04/anri-sala-answer-me-review-art-cures-20th-century-s-broken-dreams> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

29 V.W.J. van Gerven Oei, 'Give Me the Colors', *op. cit.*, pp.13-15.

30 Edi Rama, keynote lecture at '2014 Creative Time Summit: Stockholm', available at <http://creativetime.org/summit/2014/11/15/edi-rama/> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

31 See, for example, 'RCC Balkan Barometer 2017: Unemployment remains the chief concern, while anxiety over corruption grows' [press release], Regional Cooperation Council, 9 October 2017, <http://www.rcc.int/news/304/rccs-balkan-barometer-2017-unemployment-remains-the-chief-concern-while-anxiety-over-corruption-grows> (last accessed on 25 December 2017).

Already within Sala's earliest work, *Intervista*, we can discern the processes that allow him – and maybe even the entire nation of Albania – to deal with the political past, and, by extension, with the political present. In the transformation of objective truth into subjective perception, and the self-effacing gestures that we have seen in the subtitles (the subtext) of *Intervista*, we see repression at work – the will to 'not see'. Sala never approached those who, unlike the Lubonjas or his mother, *refused* to be card-carrying PPSH members, or those who, simply because of the family they belonged to, were persecuted systematically for more than 50 years. He never publicly questioned the conditions that made the production of his first film possible and, in a way, never left the life communism prepared for him. This is even more visible in the way in which he has chosen to allow Rama to use one of his most well-known and widely shown works, *Dammi i colori*, as political propaganda, without ever questioning the relation between Rama's propaganda and that of the former dictatorship – a relation that is far from incidental.

In an interview with Obrist, Sala says of the footage of his mother, 'I found that this image of her belonged much more to me, to my age, to my moment, than to her age'.<sup>32</sup> This is, indeed, *Intervista's* 'great irony of fate'. The work, I argue, reveals to us much more about Sala's generation – the one currently in power – than his mother's. Valdete refuses to acknowledge that she ever spoke the hollow pre-fab phrases of communist discourse; but Sala refuses to acknowledge the background of that categorical refusal and the implications for him and his work. Valdete represses *a fact*; Sala represses *that it is a fact* – he represses *facticity*. And the last of these is more dangerous than the first, because it denies that *possibility of truth*, rather than *truth itself*. In the absence of any *possibility of truth*, why bother interrogating the politician or political system one serves?

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32 '(No) Paris No Cry', *op. cit.*

## ARTFORUM

### Anri Sala

NEW MUSEUM

Occupying three floors of the New Museum, and fully energizing exhibition spaces that can ordinarily feel disproportionate, “Anri Sala: Answer Me” traced the reorientations within the Albanian-born video artist’s practice. The survey, which was organized by Massimiliano Gioni, Margot Norton, and Natalie Bell, was dominated by work from the past decade, when Sala’s ongoing ruminations on past versus present—initially expressed in a more-or-less straightforward documentary form—moved toward more elliptical studies of sited music renditions.

The large-scale installations reorganized early-twentieth-century classical-music compositions from a contemporary perspective. *Ravel Ravel*, 2013, a double-screen video, shows the tightly framed left hands of two pianists playing Maurice Ravel’s Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D Major (1929–30), a piece commissioned by pianist Paul Wittgenstein, who had lost his right arm fighting in World War I. Sala made variations in the score’s tempo markings to generate occasional lags between the two performances, creating short delays and realignments reminiscent of Steve Reich’s phase pieces; he also transformed the viewing room into a towering semi-anechoic chamber, buffering its high walls with dark foam wedges to eliminate natural echo. Down the hall, the accompanying *Unravel*, 2013, shot in the German pavilion of the 2013 Venice Biennale, found a DJ attempting to “correct” the imposed phase differences by manipulating two albums of the same performances on two turntables, her hand movements taking on an otherworldly quality through deft close-ups.

Sala’s alterations of written music are even more drastic in *The Present Moment*, 2014. He isolated notes from Arnold Schönberg’s *Verklärte Nacht* (Transfigured Night, 1899), reshuffled them according to the Austrian composer’s twelve-tone system (which this late-Romantic-era

Anri Sala, *Ravel Ravel* (detail), 2013, two-channel HD video (color, sound, 20 minutes 45 seconds), sixteen-channel sound installation, dimensions variable.



piece predates), and played the notes individually through separate speakers in the gallery space, arranged so that it sounds as if each tone is darting laterally overhead across the room. A pair of videos, *The Present Moment (in D)* and *The Present Moment (in B-flat)*, both 2014, present a string sextet doggedly bowing only the D and B-flat notes in the score—another Minimalist gesture. Like the DJ in *Unravel*, the musicians show a steely determination, deep in the concentration required to deal with a deceptively simple yet abnormal task. They are stationed in an airy building, which turns out to be the Haus der Kunst in Munich, a relic from Nazi Germany that would have been off-limits to Schönberg (whom the Nazis ranked among the “degenerate” artists). The deconstruction of the music and the pointed choice of setting are of a piece: Sala seeks to highlight a potential impermanence in both musical and physical architecture, whether due to artistic intervention or societal change.

Unfortunately consigned to weekly screenings in the museum’s basement, outside the exhibition proper, Sala’s debut, *Intervista (Finding the Words)*, 1998, is critical to understanding the evolution of his recent work. The events recounted in the twenty-six-minute-plus-long documentary are prompted by Sala’s discovery of a 1970s television interview with his mother, then a leader of the Communist Youth Alliance. The sound track is missing, and his subsequent recovery efforts lead him to a school for deaf students, who read her lips. He transcribes their findings as subtitles, and his mother, watching herself on-screen all these years later, is shocked and alienated by the results: During the Albanian dictatorship such encounters were practically scripted, and her propagandistic words, which she deplors as “gibberish,” were the Communist Party’s, not her own. Here are the seeds of the resyncings and, presumably, of Sala’s interest in modifying or circumventing musical scores. Also descended from *Intervista* are the inaudibility of a woman’s moving lips in *Answer Me*, 2008, and the title of *Làk-kat 2.0 (British/American)*, 2015, which means “gibberish” in Senegal’s Wolof language. The music is diegetic, but not indigenous, in the later videos: These works’ probing nature leaves open the question of whether Sala’s shooting locations, like *Intervista*’s salvaged footage, lack a sound, or whether music itself needs to be situated in unexpected places.

—Alan Licht

## The New York Times

### 'Anri Sala: Answer Me' Offers Symphonic Experience From Floor to Floor



"Answer Me" (2008), single channel HD video, by Anri Sala at the New Museum.  
Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

Certain artworks imprint themselves on the brain. "Dammi i Colori," a 2003 video by the Albanian artist Anri Sala, seems permanently lodged in mine. I first saw it at the Venice Biennale that year, mesmerized by this D.I.Y. documentary's effortless argument for the necessity of art and its potential as balm for a traumatized city.

Now it can be seen in "[Anri Sala: Answer Me](#)," the artist's austere yet impassioned survey at the New Museum. The video is an apt introduction to his roiling explorations, mostly in video, of sound, time, color, architecture and the politics of modern life.

This exhibition is brilliantly installed and is as much for music as for art folk. Organized by Massimiliano Gioni, the New Museum's artistic director; Margot Norton, its associate curator; and Natalie Bell, an assistant curator, it spreads a dozen videos and video installations through three floors, encompasses some 16 years of artistic growth and includes a smattering of fairly inconsequential sculpture and drawings. (Example: a snare drum stacked with four real human skulls and dedicated to Cézanne.)

Roberta Smith

*'Anri Sala: Answer Me' Offers Symphonic Experience From Floor to Floor*

The New York Times, February 4, 2016.

<https://cutt.ly/2wsmwNZM>

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"Still Life in the Doldrums (d' apres Cezanne)" Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

Black-box viewing rooms have all but been eliminated, and the sound quality is extraordinary. The music flows through the museum's spaces, defining them floor by floor. In a work collectively titled "The Present Moment" on the second floor, Arnold Schoenberg's tumultuous late Romantic "Verklärte Nacht," a string sextet from 1899, starts out whole and its notes are fragmented across the entire space and 20 separate ceiling speakers. It re-emerges, performed by musicians on two video screens, having been subjected to the modernist 12-tone technique that Schoenberg developed in the 1920s. It sounds a lot like the Minimalist Philip Glass.

Several videos play in wide open spaces, especially on the third floor, where a large screen hangs from the ceiling to accommodate projections on both sides, their sounds mixing and conversing. And the fourth floor presents Mr. Sala's masterpiece, "Ravel Ravel," a dual-screen, 16-speaker symphonic installation, accompanied by its aural doppelgänger, "Unravel." Both works were seen at the 2013 Venice Biennale and did not stick in my brain. They will now.

But for a minute, back to "Dammi i Colori," whose title — "Give Me the Colors" in Italian — is from "Tosca." It was made in Tirana, Albania's capital, where Mr. Sala was born in 1974 and lived until 1996, when he left for Paris, studied film and video for four years and subsequently settled in Berlin. At the time of the filming, 2002, Tirana resembled a war zone in recovery, rising precariously from decades of Communist neglect and corruption; basic services were intermittent, the roads were barely paved.

With his camera giving us a passenger-seat view, Mr. Sala drives along these byways, past scaffoldings and piles of dirt. Shooting mostly at night with a spotlight, he focuses on rows of modest Eastern-bloc concrete buildings, which Tirana's mayor is having painted an array of bright, booming colors.

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The jubilant blocks of color and eerie disarray remain, gripping for their unexpected combination of poetry and politics. It's like the rebirth of the more populist principles of Constructivism and the Bauhaus. It's Mondrian in action, proof positive of the transformative power of color. In the film, the mayor, Edi Rama, a friend of the artist (and he is now Albania's prime minister), talks fervently about the benefits of his somewhat monomaniacal undertaking. The city's most heated discussions, he says, concern "what are the colors doing to us." He adds that while most cities wear color like a dress, "in a way colors here replace the organs." Which is to say they are sustaining life.

In newer works, Mr. Sala has done with music what he does with color, which is to convey its nurturing power in the face of disruption, a theme undoubtedly influenced by growing up in Albania during its rough transition from communism to democracy.

He usually achieves this with disorienting combinations of spatial, visual and aural elements that are rarely devoid of politics. On screen, modern architecture figures prominently, as a symbol of government incompetence and control and as a measure of change, but also as a container that modulates sound. Other political points about history, progress, age, language and displacement are frequently woven into the fabric of his pieces, to be extrapolated by the viewer.



In "Anri Sala: Answer Me," the saxophonist André Vida, improvising alongside Jemeel Moondoc's performance in a video shot on the balcony of a building in Berlin. Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

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In “Tlatelolco Clash,” shot in Mexico City, several elderly street musicians take turns playing different fragments of “Should I Stay or Should I Go?” — a hit by the Clash — on a mechanical barrel organ while a beautiful young woman hovers about. Around them rise Aztec ruins and, just beyond, a modern skyscraper. At one point a worker starts cleaning the ancient stones.

In “Long Sorrow,” the free-jazz musician Jemeel Moondoc improvises on the saxophone, from what seems to be the balcony of a stark apartment in an unloved mile-long Berlin building known as the Long Complaint, or Sorrow. Only gradually do we realize that there’s no balcony: He’s hanging in midair. As he floats away, and other massive buildings come into view, the piece conjures both Magic Realism and an artistic refusal of architecture’s numbing anonymity. At approximately the top of every hour throughout the show, the saxophonist André Vida improvises alongside Mr. Moondoc’s video performance (13 minutes), their sounds blending and separating as Mr. Vida moves around the space, an option for the viewer as well.

Mr. Sala has arranged the show as something of a sound installation in itself. Sounds from different pieces bleed together. The light rhythmic voices of the video “Lak-kat,” in which two young Senegalese boys practice Wolof — one of their country’s indigenous languages — impinge on the pounding noise and abrupt silences in the video “Answer Me.”

Here a slightly crazed-looking young man drums wildly, the sound reverberating inside an abandoned geodesic dome built by Americans to eavesdrop on East Germany. He sometimes pauses but always ignores the woman anxiously lurking behind him, who is occasionally heard to say “Answer me.” The children of “Lak-kat” seem to respond, although it turns out that they are actually learning the many words that distinguish skin tones.

Throughout this show music is taken apart and reassembled, but is never the same. This is most apparent and complex in “Ravel, Ravel” on the fourth floor. In a darkened space, everything is magnified: the sounds of orchestra and piano buffet you, while the two videos — one above the other — each presents a close-up of a giant left hand playing the piano. Even the walls and ceiling seem exaggerated: They’re covered with two-foot high wedges of foam that mute echoes.

Roberta Smith

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"Ravel, Ravel" includes two performances of a piano concerto. Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times



"Unravel," a single projection, shows the disc jockey Chloé Thévenin trying to sync records of two pianists. Nicole Bengiveno/The New York Times

The music is Maurice Ravel's Piano Concerto for the Left Hand in D (1929-30), which was commissioned by Paul Wittgenstein, a pianist (and the philosopher's brother) who lost his right hand in World War I. The hands on the screens belong to the pianists Louis Lortie and Jean-Efflam Bavouzet, who each performed the concerto with an orchestra, using scores with tempos altered by Mr. Sala slowing or accelerating different parts. Their hands play tag up and down the keys, moving in and out of sync, finishing each other's passages. The music is at once luxuriant and turbulent; if you know the back story, it can be traumatic. It swirls around, filling and then abandoning the crenelated space, whose protrusions add their own suggestion of violence.

The video "Unravel" is an attempt to straighten out the ravel, or tangle, created by "Ravel Ravel." Installed in a smaller, lighter room next door, "Unravel" shows the disc jockey Chloé Thévenin with a record of each performance on her turntables, trying to sync them up. In contrast to the pianists' sparring hands she gently taps or pushes the discs, stops them completely or sets them spinning, sometimes with slurring sounds that can evoke sappy movie music.

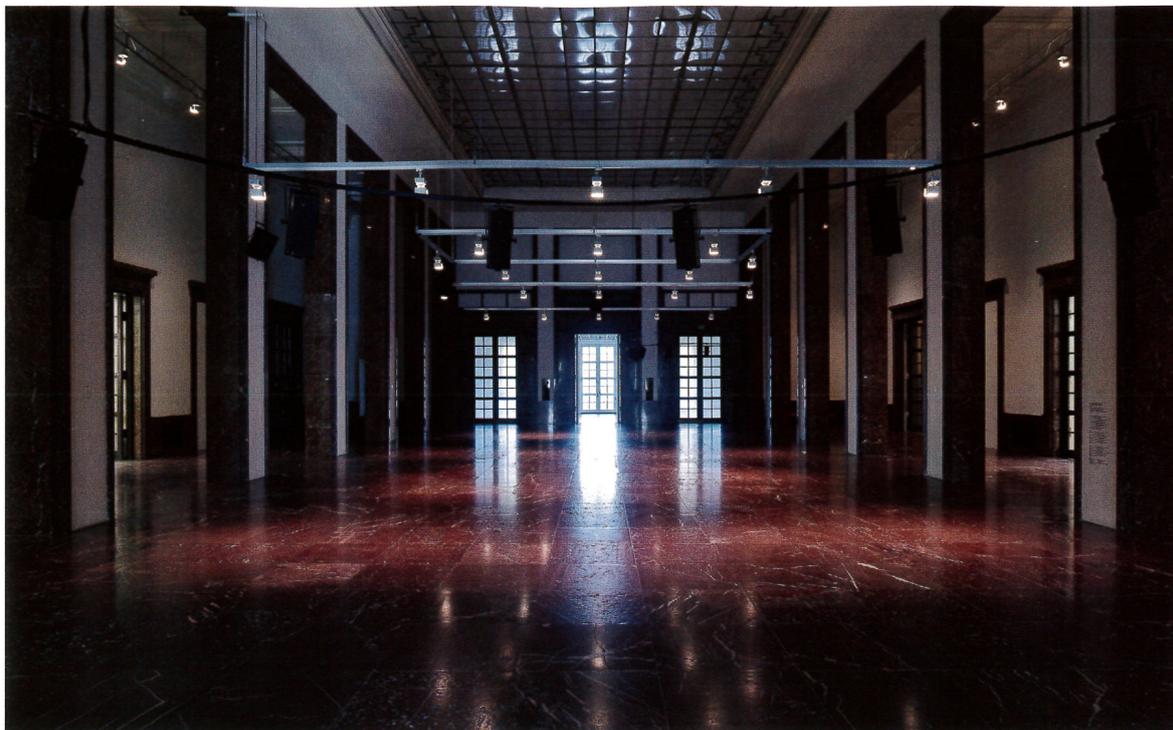
Synchronization is fleeting and impossible to sustain, but it is invigorating to follow her fierce concentration. The two versions of Ravel's music cannot be reunited, but as with this singular show, we experience Mr. Sala building art upon art, as well as life, in inspiring ways.

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# ARTFORUM



1000 WORDS

## Anri Sala

TALKS ABOUT THE PRESENT MOMENT, 2014

FOR ANRI SALA, sound has always functioned as both an expressive medium and a register of memory, hauntingly subject to erasure. In the work for which Sala first garnered acclaim, the 1998 video *Intervista*, silence is the sensory analogue of historical amnesia, a condition the artist seeks to reverse, specifically by trying to find, and later re-creating, the lost sound track of a reel of 16-mm footage showing his mother speaking at an Albanian Communist rally, circa 1977. Since then, the artist has produced a series of videos in which sound becomes a means through which to investigate the relationships between past and present, place and displacement. In *Naturalmystic (Tomahawk #2)*, 2002, an actor from Belgrade sits in a Paris recording studio, vocally simulating the sound of missiles falling on Serbia's capital during NATO's 1999 bombardment, as if to articulate trauma's repetition compulsion as syncopated composition. In *Long Sorrow*, 2005, a saxophonist suspended on a narrow ledge near the top of a West Berlin skyscraper appears so absorbed in his playing that he is not perturbed by his precarious situation; at times, however, he emits notes that echo the sounds around him, showing his awareness of his environment. While at every moment of his playing one feels the saxophonist's intense immersion in the present, Sala has chosen to stage this performance in a housing project nicknamed *lange Jammer*, or "long sorrow"—a gesture that prompts reflection on all the historical

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Opposite page: Anri Sala, *The Present Moment*, 2014, HD digital video (color, sound, 21 minutes 30 seconds), nineteen-channel sound installation. Installation view, Haus der Kunst, Munich. Photo: Jens Webber. This page, clockwise from top left: Anri Sala, *Long Sorrow*, 2005, Super 16 transferred to HD digital video, color, sound, 12 minutes 57 seconds. Anri Sala, *1395 Days Without Red*, 2011, HD digital video, color, sound, 43 minutes 46 seconds. Anri Sala, *Intervista*, 1998, digital video, color, sound, 26 minutes.



sorrows crowding in on this fleeting instant, from the violence of Berlin's past to the failed promises of modernist design. And in *1395 Days Without Red*, 2011, set in Sarajevo during the mid-1990s siege, an actor playing a musician on her way to rehearsal hums a melody to help her negotiate the terror of her journey through streets relentlessly monitored by snipers.

Like Philippe Parreno and Pierre Huyghe, artists he came to know during his post-art-school years in Paris, Sala conceives each exhibition not just as a gathering of works but as a distinct *place* where sound can help choreograph the viewer's experience. Sala's presentation *Ravel Ravel Umavel* at the 2013 Venice Biennale, an exemplar of this approach, was a masterpiece: Representing France but showing in the German pavilion, Sala blocked the building's grandiose main entrance, requiring visitors to detour through a side door, past a video projection of a woman shot in tight close-up, and into the vast main gallery. There, viewers found two projections of two pianists playing Ravel's *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand*; in an adjacent space, another film showed a DJ (the woman from the projection) trying to mix the disparate renditions back into a coherent whole. Though the focus was on the manual effort of the musicians, the strange space between their interpretations of the score, and the way the intensity of their performances was matched by the concentration of the DJ, the setting itself was also very much a subject of the work. Sala had filmed the DJ within the empty German pavilion, sometimes directing the camera up to the high windows so that the bright light of that particular day scorched the image: Watching this video in the exact same space, one became conscious of the overdeter-

mined layerings of physical, representational, and historical strata that constitute any given place. Certainly it was difficult to conceive of a more historically overdetermined situation: This was a work by an Albanian-born, Berlin-based artist, representing France in the German pavilion, using a score composed by a Frenchman (Maurice Ravel) for an Austrian pianist (Paul Wittgenstein) who was injured fighting for the German side in World War I and who was later barred from performing in Austria on account of his Jewish ancestry.

While recent critical accounts, especially Michael Fried's excellent essays on the artist, have dwelled on Sala's absorbed protagonists and the ways in which his videos, as Fried puts it, "invariably convey the sense of taking place in the present, as opposed to the implied past-ness of traditional narrative film," I have wondered for some time how these qualities or concerns connect to the ways in which Sala has continued to deal with the impact of the past on our sense of the here and now. Rather than history

threatening to shatter either the absorption of Sala's characters or our own experience of presentness as we encounter his works, perhaps it is this very intensity of presentness in his art that allows a unique perspective on the meaning of *now* and its correlate, *here*. To be fully in the present is to be paradoxically aware that the present is not a discrete moment—not the gap between past and future, but the experience of these things converging; immediacy is never truly immediate, because it is separate neither from the burdens of the past nor from the possibilities, both hopeful and dire, of moments not yet lived. Arguably, music—so singularly evocative and transporting, yet so conducive to a feeling of immanence, of fully inhabiting a particular moment and a particular body—has unique capacities to mirror and intensify this paradoxical condition, or what Sala calls the "overlays of past and future in the present." And so it was fascinating to hear that, for his current show at Munich's Haus der Kunst, Sala had chosen to fill the space that once hosted the Third Reich's "Great German Art" exhibitions with the music of "degenerate artist" Arnold Schönberg, and that Sala had named his project for something he has wanted to both complicate and intensify since the very beginning of his practice: the present moment.

—Mark Godfrey



**BACK IN THE FALL OF 2013**, I was invited by the Haus der Kunst to make a new work for their large central hall. Considering the physical characteristics as well as the history of the site, I decided to create a work that would confront the space through a series of contradictions: I wanted to contrast the monumental size of the hall with the intimacy of a chamber



Anri Sala, *The Present Moment* (detail), 2014, HD digital video (color, sound, 21 minutes 30 seconds), nineteen-channel sound installation, dimensions variable.

I'm interested in how the idea of the present comes across in a time of boundless acceleration.

composition, and to oppose a space that was once dedicated to authoritarian speech with a rational conversation among six voices—a sextet of two violins, two violas, and two cellos, with no conductor to guide them; that role is nonexistent. Knowing that people are constantly crossing the space to get from one part of the museum to another, I sought to complement the visitors' random movements with a sort of choreographed walkabout through the site. I wanted to create something you can't quite hold all at once, from a single vantage point, but that you're compelled to try to grasp and comprehend, through a succession of distinct phases and locations.

Once I had decided to use a chamber composition, the choice of Arnold Schönberg's *Verklärte Nacht* [Transfigured Night, 1899] was mostly intuitive. I believe that what strikes me most about Schönberg's sextet, besides its outstanding beauty, is how it both speaks of a period that is coming to an end and announces the suspenseful anticipation of the times ahead. Although it is a late Romantic piece, in my opinion *Verklärte Nacht* already hints at the sounds of the new music that was to come.

Taking the score of *Verklärte Nacht* as a departure point, my collaborator and sound designer Olivier Goinard and I created three supplementary scores, using a method of subtraction and accumulation

based on the principle of the twelve-tone system—the compositional method that Schönberg pioneered two decades after he wrote *Verklärte Nacht*. The first of these supplementary scores singles out each appearance of a new tone in the original score of *Verklärte Nacht*. Only solitary notes obeying Schönberg's dodecaphonic rule are played: In his system, and therefore in this score, a tone may be repeated only after all the other eleven tones with which it forms the chromatic total have been played. Each tone in *Verklärte Nacht* that disobeys Schönberg's rule, appearing before the eleven others in the series have been played, is filtered out of the first supplementary score and removed from the staves, so that only the first appearances of the respective tones remain.

In the second supplementary score, having passed through this dodecaphonic filter, each of the notes is played repetitively in the same rhythmic value until replaced by the next note—a new tone—from the aforementioned score. And in the last score, the sextet only plays a single tonality—the D notes—from *Verklärte Nacht*. Each D note is played repetitively until the next D note from *Verklärte Nacht* replaces it. The only distinction among the notes is their original rhythmic value, as well as the ensuing melodic differences when D changes octaves while remaining one and the same tone. At this point we

are seeing the musicians perform the composition's ultimate reduction.

We recorded *Verklärte Nacht*, which was to become our reference point, first, before proceeding with the recordings of the other scores. Although the sextet performed each score together, each musician had to rigorously follow the tempo indications and the pace with which he or she had performed in the previous recording. The real challenge and particularity was in creating this peculiar reliance on a previous recording. As a result, each musician was more “in touch” with his or her previous self in *Verklärte Nacht* than with the fellow musicians playing simultaneously. This reliance between the different scores of *The Present Moment* is indispensable to the work; it stops them from acting like competing chapters in the piece and instead enables them to become complementary instances of the same presentness.

All through this process of transforming and supplementing the Schönberg score, I had been thinking about how the viewer would hear these concurrent renditions of *Verklärte Nacht* simultaneously (hearing all the scores together from one standpoint) and sequentially (moving through the hall). I imagined that one's encounter with the different scores would spark a string of present moments that would exist both beforehand and at once with one another. Turning

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Left: Anri Sala, *The Present Moment* (detail), 2014, HD digital video (color, sound, 21 minutes 30 seconds), nineteen-channel sound installation, dimensions variable.

these scores into distinct locations within the space of the Haus der Kunst was vital to the experience of the work.

As you enter, you find yourself below an arc of six speakers, and you listen to the recording of the original score. You become aware of a second set of speakers, and of certain solitary tones drifting across the space as if expelled from the main body of the music, thus producing a sense of direction and trajectory. As these tones reach the far end of the hall, they accumulate and play repetitively—under another arc of six speakers—seemingly trapped in a dead end, a space where acoustic memory is condensed. Some notes, all belonging to a particular tone, extend their journey farther to conclude in a video in which they

Anri Sala, *Unravel*, 2013, two-channel HD digital video, color, sound, 6 minutes 25 seconds, 20 minutes 45 seconds.



are embodied by the sextet seated together in a semicircle against a wall. There they are instantly transformed into a series of recurring movements of shoulders, elbows, arms, and hands: the physical manifestation of musical gestures. The musical instruments remain nearly invisible, to stress the physical effort that precedes the sounding of the notes.

I called the work *The Present Moment* because I'm interested in how the idea of the present comes across in a time of boundless acceleration. In addition, it is believed that the longest present "moments"—those pieces of time in which memory is not yet activated and notions of past and future do not arise—occur while one is listening to music. The extents of these present moments often correspond to the lengths of what are known as musical phrases or gestures. Observation has shown that the present moment only lasts three to four seconds during most of the activities of everyday life. The exception is when one is listening to music, when it may lengthen to eight seconds.

*Verklärte Nacht's* own trajectory across the hall is, in a manner of speaking, a journey of a past event toward its own future, since the music was rearranged using the technique Schönberg developed twenty years later. Further, *The Present Moment* produces sounds and induces actions that echo historical events and procedures (such as serialism in music and the increasing specialization and division of industrial labor under Taylorism) that were to occur only later. And as one walks through a space and hears the sounds of *Verklärte Nacht* drifting across

a place that was erected to expel those sounds, the past is also summoned. These overlays of past and future in the present assign to the current moment a special aura within the flow of time.

This interest in the experience of a "continuous presence" is increasingly reflected in my work, especially in how the characters in the films negotiate the next moment while being absorbed by the present one—for example, Jemeel Moondoc in *Long Sorrow*, suspended outside the top floor of a tall building and coping with the stress of his situation by improvising on a saxophone, or the woman who hums her way across the besieged city of Sarajevo in *1395 Days Without Red*, or even Chloé, the DJ who endeavors to manually sync two distinct executions of Ravel's *Piano Concerto for the Left Hand*.

I'm especially interested in how music gives weight to the present moment, how it spreads it open. And when I conceive an exhibition, I do not see it as a space where works are exhibited together, but rather as a place where the trajectories of the characters and their presentness in the respective films converge with the trajectory of the viewer in the here and now of the exhibition site. In that regard, I do not see a difference between constituting an exhibition from preexisting works or elements and composing a new work where different elements and sound tracks converse together. Instead, I see an exhibition as a possibility, an opportunity to explore what I would call the now-moment and its contending instances. □

"Anri Sala: *The Present Moment*" is currently on view (through Sept. 20) at Haus der Kunst, Munich.

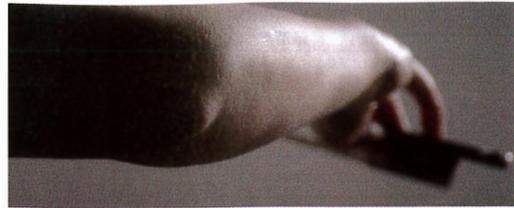
**INSTALLATION.** La Haus der Kunst de Munich expose jusqu'au 20 septembre 2015 une œuvre de l'artiste.

## Anri Sala, la part de flou

Il y a toujours un malentendu caractérisant les œuvres d'Anri Sala. Or ce malentendu, il nous faut l'appréhender au sens propre comme le concevait son premier film, *Intervista* (1998), où il nous racontait l'histoire d'une pellicule muette – découverte lors d'un déménagement sans sa bande-son – sur laquelle figurait sa mère interviewée en 1977 lors d'un congrès de la Jeunesse communiste albanaise. Il s'agira pour lui de retrouver le son manquant en sollicitant des sourds-muets pour déchiffrer, à même les lèvres, les paroles de sa mère. Cette enquête sur un vieux monde socialiste, sur la perte des sons et des mots, nous ramène à la matérialité du langage pour affirmer un paradoxe. Car penser, entendre ou comprendre quelque chose, cela procède ici d'un écart selon lequel il s'agit de regarder : de voir ce qui se dit. Voir, parler, écouter, marcher, il n'y a pas d'autre puissance à en croire Anri Sala, éprouvant à chaque fois les langages et les sens pour matérialiser un déplacement de notre attention.

Avec *The Present Moment (in D)*, il investit aujourd'hui le hall de la Haus der Kunst à Munich. À chaque heure nouvelle nous assistons à un étonnant concert où Sala reconstruit, pour la réinventer *La Nuit transfigurée* (1899) d'Arnold Schönberg, dont on entend des variantes diffusées simultanément, via des enceintes, en divers foyers de la salle. Il suggère ainsi une partition marchée dès lors qu'on déambule dans l'espace en écoutant tout à la fois une musique qui a lieu *ici* tandis qu'une autre est diffusée au même moment *ailleurs*, et ce voyage acoustique s'achève

par un film troublant qui y est associé. Si cette œuvre est une sculpture sonore dans laquelle on circule, ce que l'on retient est que l'on ne sait pas trop où se situer : il se passe toujours en même temps quelque chose au loin, à l'autre bout de la pièce ou alors juste à côté – le son se réverbérant partout en écho. On se déplace donc en cherchant la position la plus adaptée pour entendre, raccordant des phrases et des temps musicaux déliés. Mais déjà la lumière s'éteint et un film commence où l'on découvre un enchaînement de plans serrés et partiels de coudes, d'épaules, de dos, de visages attentifs, de mains ou de bras, d'un sextuor à cordes interprétant la partition en ré. Alors que les musiciens démultiplient à coup de gestes cette même tonalité, tout se passe comme si la caméra cherchait à localiser l'origine des sons à même les corps. Il faut dire que parmi les plus beaux plans, il y a ces alignements de gestes de musiciens saisis de profil : tandis que la focale appréhende ici un avant-bras, dans le prolongement flou, on discerne les contours des mouvements d'un voisin. Or nous avons là un paradigme de notre attention puisque l'on regarde aussitôt la part de flou avant de revenir au bras qu'on avait laissé. Cette part, on la retrouve en réalité tout au long d'un film où le point de la caméra accroche systématiquement des parties de corps abandonnant le reste du plan au flou. La focale s'attache aux seuls gestes, anticipant sur le son, sans chercher à attraper les instruments, la musique, la situation. Le point mise exclusivement sur les gestes en reléguant



*The Present Moment (in D)*, extraits de la vidéo.

matériellement au flou et au hors-champ « l'oreille » (l'appréhension de ce que serait la localisation du son au sein de l'image). La caméra affirme ainsi un décentrement en aggravant le strabisme de la perception : l'intervalle entre l'œil et l'oreille. Et ce strabisme, on le compense en déportant à notre tour le regard dans le flou tout comme on se déplaçait dans la salle pour aller écouter ce qui se passe à côté. Autrement dit, ce qui fait loi dans le film caractérise aussi bien l'ajustement de notre position comme de notre attention dans l'espace : nous sommes toujours convoqués par ce qui reste dans le flou de la perception. Car on entend en écoutant ici une partition et là-bas une autre qui entrave, sature, déporte notre attention.

Si Anri Sala conçoit une aire où il nous appartient de conjuguer en marchant des bandes sonores pour résorber des intervalles, un écart qui se donne entre un ici et un là, c'est peut-être qu'il cherche à localiser dans ce trajet les coordonnées d'un « moment présent » – ce que par ailleurs

toute la tradition métaphysique et politique assimile à un *ici et maintenant*. En d'autres termes, tout se passe comme si en démultipliant les points de vue et les points d'écoute, ce territoire accueillait quelque part un « ici et maintenant », quelque part dans le flou de notre attention. Car le problème qu'il soulève, et que l'on retrouve aussi bien dans l'œuvre de Kafka dont les personnages partent à la recherche du monde émancipé, est le suivant : entre ici et là-bas, entre les territoires de l'œil et de l'oreille, que compensent nos pas, où a bien pu passer le *maintenant* ? Un maintenant qui serait peut-être juste à côté. On le disait, on ne sait pas où se situer en arpenter cet espace et pourtant, à bien les regarder, chacun des spectateurs prête attention. Ne pas savoir où se situer exactement et du coup prêter attention à ce qui se passe ici et à côté, telle serait finalement la formule poétique et politique de l'œuvre d'Anri Sala, selon laquelle il nous appartient constamment d'inventer notre position.

Alexandre Costanzo

# ARTFORUM

## Elected Affinities

HANS ULRICH OBRIST TALKS WITH EDI RAMA AND ANRI SALA

**EVEN IN OUR AGE of endless multitasking, few artists have become world leaders and few world leaders artists (George W. Bush's watercolors notwithstanding). But Prime Minister Edi Rama of Albania is that extraordinary hybrid: A noted painter and professor at the state art academy in the 1990s, he became mayor of Tirana in 2000 and assumed his current office just this past year. *Artforum* invited curator Hans Ulrich Obrist to talk with Rama, along with his frequent artistic and political collaborator, Anri Sala, and unravel the complexities surrounding his ambitious aesthetic and social reforms.**

**HANS ULRICH OBRIST:** Would you call yourself an artist-activist?

**EDI RAMA:** When I was young, yes. Politics has always interested me, but I never wanted to enter politics formally. I was making a life as a traveler—selling artworks, buying plane tickets, discovering the world. But at the same time, I was always writing opposition papers against this or that, being a kind of professional troublemaker. Finally, I was a painter who was caught between colors and conflicts: My works were like an abstract pattern, a code for a secret movement.

I'm nearly fifty years old. But from the beginning, I think it was the fact that I started making art on the edge of the Communist regime—when the Academy of Arts was still totally controlled and socialist realism was the only acceptable method, but when there were also ways to escape if you used your imagination—that made me an artist-activist. In a way, all nonacademic

art or even discourse at the time, in this situation, could be seen as activist—a way to get to the other side of the wall, whether formal or literal.

**OBRIST:** And then you became extremely involved with the student movement; after the Communist government fell, you began teaching at the academy. It's a heady time, and you discuss some of the intersections between the utopias of politics and art, and their ensuing corruption, in your book *Refleksione* [1991].

**RAMA:** Yes. I wrote it with a friend of mine, Ardian Klosi, one of the leading figures of the anti-Communist protests, who tragically committed suicide last year. We had been thinking of reprinting it, adding a chapter about the years since, because it turned out to be quite prophetic. Klosi and I were very upset, from the very first moments of change, with the way the democratic movement was being manipulated. It was the first opposition party recognized by the regime, and it was turned into a kind of faux-populist movement. The city squares were full of people, and full of a strange energy—you could feel controversy and hate in the air, but no positive outlook, no view for a future. Crowds were being misused; they became a kind of decoration. Our “reflections” were very much posed as a diagnosis and an alternative—looking inside as opposed to the movement of screaming outside.

Around that time, Ardian and I staged an event in the old theater hall at the academy: no tribune, no stage, no panel, nothing but a dark space. People could not see each other, so it was all about voices. The microphone went around and people could hear voices that were not

recognizable, voices spilling truths that people were otherwise afraid to speak in public. This was the first time the situation was articulated clearly, and it brought about a very rapid, radical positioning against the regime.

**OBRIST:** But then you went to Paris, where you lived with Anri [Sala]. How did you reenter Albanian politics?

**RAMA:** In 1998, my father died from a heart attack, and I planned to come back to Albania for three days for the funeral, but instead I never left. My father and I were very close. But we also continually fought: He was a Communist and I was an anti-Communist. He was a very

**“Culture is infrastructure. It's not mere surface. How can we start something through culture?”—Edi Rama**

famous official artist, and I was firmly opposed to official art. But he was also a man of tolerance, and I will be always grateful to him for allowing me to grow up without any limits in my way of thinking. When he died, it was terrible. After the funeral, at the reception at our house, I went to make coffee in the kitchen. The phone rang, and it was the prime minister, Fatos Nano, who was presiding over the reorganized government after the political upheavals and economic collapse of 1997. He asked me point-blank: “Mister Minister of Culture, do you want to stay or do you want to leave?” He was proposing that I take a position in his cabinet. And without hesitating, I said, “I'll stay.” He said, “Really? You want some more time to think?” I replied, “If I think, I'll leave.” He hung up.

Later, his office asked for my CV, and I just wrote: “Edi Rama, born on the fourth of July. That is enough.” And then a day later, I became minister of culture, and my life changed forever.

**OBRIST:** There is a great tradition of artists and intellectuals as statesmen. And of course in Eastern Europe,

Edi Rama speaking to Socialist Party supporters, Tirana, Albania, April 2, 2006. Photo: Arben Ceji/Reuters.



Left: Painted apartment building from the Tirana color facade project, 2001–11, Tirana, Albania, 2007. Photo: David Dufresne/Flickr.

Below: A 2003 preparatory drawing by Edi Rama for the Tirana color facade project, 2001–11.





From left: Demonstrators surround the Tirana pyramid (formerly the Enver Hoxha Museum) during an antigovernment protest, Tirana, Albania, January 21, 2011. Photo: Gent Shkullaku/AFP/Getty. Former residence of Enver Hoxha, Communist leader of Albania from 1944 to 1985, Tirana, Albania, September 7, 2012. Photo: Groundhopping/Merseburg/Flickr.

there was the playwright and poet Václav Havel, who became the first president of the Czech Republic. Were these the kinds of role models you looked to?

**RAMA:** You know, this cultural-political overlap was typical for the former Communist countries, because the political class simply evaporated along with the regimes, so writers, philosophers, artists, social activists, and the like filled the space that was left. But at the same time, the intelligentsia's political rise didn't bring a lot of actual change in terms of policies. Take Havel, who remained marginal until the end. He *was* much more representative of the people, but he had little influence in the government.

**OBRIST:** And yet you view your own term as minister of culture, I think, as actually shifting policy. What were the main things you changed?

**RAMA:** When I began as minister of culture in 1998, I was totally independent. I was not even a member of a party. And the first and most important thing that I learned about politics and image had to do with the way I was dressing, which was the way I dressed before I became minister: in a completely nonconformist way. With my red jackets, flamboyant shirts, or yellow pants, I was like an unidentified flying object in the middle of a sea of dark suits and ties! And I think this made many young people feel like I was representing them, just by my style.

I was very young, too, at the time: I was thirty-four. I began organizing a lot of events for youth, as well as international competitions for art, opera singers, young filmmakers, book and art prizes, and then a biennial. I reopened movie theaters, which were nonexistent here; avant-garde cinema had been banned. And I spoke out very harshly against tradition, against the establishment. So I became popular. That's why I won by a landslide in the election for mayor of Tirana two years later. It was the largest rate of youth participation in an election here.

**OBRIST:** The 1990s was, in fact, a time of a serious return to thinking about the youth vote in Western politics.

**RAMA:** Yes—I really liked and really followed Bill Clinton and Tony Blair. I think they changed politics forever. They also made it an affair of young people. They were the avant-garde of all that came after in terms of young generations getting involved, communication, image—I know that to say this now, it seems a bit retrograde—but it might also be proof that I'm getting older! I was very affected by Blair and impressed by the idea of the Third Way, because it was the first anti-ideological approach, an alternative to neoliberalism, but also to socialism. You don't privatize because you are liberal, but because it's needed, and you don't socialize because you're a socialist, but because it's needed. And in both cases, you do it because it works. If it doesn't work, you don't do it.

For me, as an Albanian, these two great men were instrumental in forever changing the history of the Balkans by liberating Kosovo and opening a path of peace and democracy for the region as a whole.

**OBRIST:** We first collaborated after you became mayor of Tirana, in 2000, and you started your painting project in the city—that's how we met, discussing this at "Utopia Station" at the Venice Biennale in 2003. I've always wanted to ask you: How did your epiphany about painting and color happen?

**RAMA:** When I took office, there were very high expectations. Tirana was stagnant. And political campaigns in Albania were likewise completely frozen in time: people sitting in auditoriums just as they had under the Communist regime, a table on the stage, no real images, thoughts, or communication. So I brought the campaign to the streets. There was also always an authentic aesthetic dimension, thanks to my background and to the collaboration with Anri.

**OBRIST:** Did Anri make the first campaign video clips?

**RAMA:** Yes. It was the precursor of what would become the urban painting project: We took an old picture of the center of Tirana. We put the photograph in water, then

dripped colored paint into the water, and filmed the whole thing.

**OBRIST:** It was a teaser.

**RAMA:** Because it was just this sequence, no message.

**ANRI SALA:** It emerged like a colorful virus on TV.

**RAMA:** People would see this black-and-white picture at the center, and then red, yellow, blue, or green suffusing the picture, and that's it. Just a few seconds. It was before the actual campaign started in earnest. So it was announcing something—

**SALA:** But you didn't know what.

**RAMA:** Once I was mayor, we actually started to paint buildings. We simply painted bright, colorful facades on rows of grim socialist block housing—and it was transformative. The colors bound together all the volumes that had been wantonly added to the original surface, piecemeal, by residents who needed to expand their living space but who were not concerned with the forms produced by such alterations and the consequent disfiguring of facades. I thought it would be a cheap, effective way to change people's perception of the country and their common space. It worked. And the project generated the first good international press about Albania after the regime change.

**OBRIST:** It triggered an avalanche of things.

**RAMA:** After the initial color project, after the first Tirana Biennale, in 2001, after acclaimed artists came (thanks to you and Anri inviting them to participate in the facade project in 2003), everyone seemed to want to do something connected with the colored facades. I am very, very upset that this project stopped because of lack of funding.

**OBRIST:** But it could start again, no?

**RAMA:** Yes, it could.

**OBRIST:** Maybe on the scale of a country. It could happen in every city now. And not just in urban centers, but in the villages—as Rem Koolhaas says, the future is the countryside.

*continued on page 236*

OBRIST/SALA/RAMA *continued from page 88*

**RAMA:** We will go forward with the demolition of illegal buildings, with developing an economic plan, but we need visual change too. So there are, for example, beautiful villages on the Ionian coast where we could try to build a synthesis between old houses and new ones. The idea wouldn't be to simply repaint them, as we did in Tirana, but perhaps to differentiate the new from the old, while still producing a coherence. And color is not necessarily the only answer. Maybe live events and performances would produce new traditions, artistic rituals that leave behind traces and forms that will eventually reconfigure those spaces. I'm actually going to visit the southern coast soon, with a few artist friends previously involved with the facade project in Tirana, so that we can debate whether and how existing ideas would apply on a countrywide scale and discuss new approaches.

**OBRIST:** It would be a *Gesamtkunstwerk*. In fact, I can't help but think of your early projects as Beuysian social sculpture at an unprecedented scale: In 2000, for example, you initiated your "Clean and Green" project, in which illegally built structures were knocked down to create more park spaces. It reminded me of Beuys's slogan for his *7000 Oaks* [1982–87]: "City forestation instead of city administration."

Many architects are very interested in Albania because it is relatively unregulated, unlike the rest of Europe. Yet at the same time, there is obviously a downside: all these illegal buildings. You seem to face a quandary: to get rid of these illegal structures, yet at the same time not to fall into the trap of squelching innovation—because many parts of Europe are so overregulated that real architecture can no longer happen.

**RAMA:** Culture *is* infrastructure. It's not mere surface. What can we do in terms of culture here? How can we start something through culture? Of course, financing these ideas is always the problem—but we have had ideas that worked incredibly well despite the lack of funds. We organized the only biennial in the world that didn't really cost anything. And Harald Szeemann was so fascinated by what was happening in Tirana that it inspired him to curate an entire show ["Blood and Honey" at the Essl Museum—Kunst der Gegenwart, Klosterneuburg, Austria, in 2003]; he even participated as an artist in the second edition of our biennial [in 2003].

**OBRIST:** I remember it was one of the last shows he did.

**RAMA:** Yeah, and many young people came. So I want to return to these kinds of cultural benchmarks.

**OBRIST:** Biennials put different places on the map. But at the same time, the biennial is obviously not a sustainable presence: Every two years a city gets an injection and then nothing. You need that kind of injection every day, not every few years.

**RAMA:** Yes, and that's how I want to see Albania and Tirana and the Balkans as a whole: as a kind of repeatable and recombinant event.

**OBRIST:** Performance—ritual—is paradoxically enduring because it's infinitely iterable. And I don't think it's far-fetched to connect this idea of the iterable event to your use of social media—a model of continuous interaction.

**RAMA:** I was pretty much the first person to use Twitter for public debate, or really at all, here. And this sort of debate in real time is fantastic. As prime minister, I decided to hold regular sessions on Twitter. I go online for two hours answering people's questions.

**OBRIST:** But how many Albanians actually have Internet access?

**RAMA:** We've made a lot of progress.

**OBRIST:** How can these digital platforms translate into physical public space?

**RAMA:** Well, one thing I want to do is to build an interfaith museum. Albania is a unique case because Muslims, Christians, Catholics, Orthodox, all coexist in peace here. We had a period of horrible persecution under Communist rule, churches blown up with dynamite and religious artworks burned in the streets. And yet we also, historically, have had an atmosphere of great tolerance.

A museum like this could examine the entire Balkan region, too, perhaps bringing together new generations of Albanians both from here and Kosovo, as well as Serbs, Montenegrins, Macedonians, Greeks, as part of a shared history of beliefs. The younger generations are completely ignorant about Communism and its crimes: They didn't live it, they don't get it, they don't care about it, they are indifferent to how we got to this point as a harmonious society in terms of faith, and to what the dangers of taking all of it for granted might be.

**SALA:** It's refreshing to think of the region as a community of shared references, rather than as solitary places or appendices on the edge of Europe.

**RAMA:** The museum would activate this cross-cultural history, not only with exhibitions but also with spaces for workshops, debates, conferences. It shouldn't be a frozen, official space where you go to passively look. We've already held a competition for the museum's design; one component that I especially love is the garden museum, which would display the plants mentioned in the Bible, Koran, and other sacred books.

**SALA:** At the same time, it's not only about building new museums. There are existing buildings such as the pyramid—the deserted, surreal mausoleum built for [former Albanian leader] Enver Hoxha—that could be reconceived and given a new role, a different use.

**RAMA:** And Hoxha's former residence, too. I really like the idea of using it as a neighborhood guesthouse. To keep the house as it is, to keep everything, even Hoxha's furniture—but to change the nature of the life inside. At the moment, it's a guesthouse for politicians, but it could be a guesthouse for many people, a place for everything and everyone that Hoxha would have hated to have around. He would hate a contemporary artist being there.

**SALA:** It would be like a blood transfusion. You could also open it to the public. Right now, it's closed off behind walls, like so many spaces were under Hoxha's regime. But if you turned part of its garden into a park—

**RAMA:** Yeah, I want to open up the garden surrounding the house. Before, the whole area—several blocks comprising all the residences of the politburo leaders—was completely forbidden, protected by armed soldiers. And

when it was finally opened, in 1991, the streets were overflowing with crowds who had never been able to catch a glimpse of it, let alone what was inside. A bit later, when I first saw the house myself, I was shocked. I had this incredible feeling of awkwardness. You see a man who kept this country under his thumb for years, and then you see such banal taste and his utterly banal way of living. □

CHAFFEE/TUERLINCKX *continued from page 191*

found in newspaper reportage becomes a kind of self-parody, both because Tuerlinckx isolates the stock figures and photographs of gold bars from their normal justificatory context in the business pages, and because she seems to weigh them against abstract drawings that, in their incredible simplicity, look like reasoned antidotes.

Some works, such as a rectangle on the floor composed of a thin trail of confetti, have become legendary. This nearly invisible line of paper fragments, *Stukjes, stukjes en dingen, ding, dingen en stukjes* (Pieces, Pieces and Things, Thing, Things and Pieces), was created for the group exhibition "WATT" at the Witte de With Center for Contemporary Art in Rotterdam in 1994. In a gallery filled with compositions involving line and demonstrations of scale, this work's own "line" is always a broken series of points; the merest footfall causes it to drift, and thus it breathes, as so much of Tuerlinckx's work does—as if in respiration with the subjects around it, literally sensitive to the social and political space of the institution and of hierarchies of display.

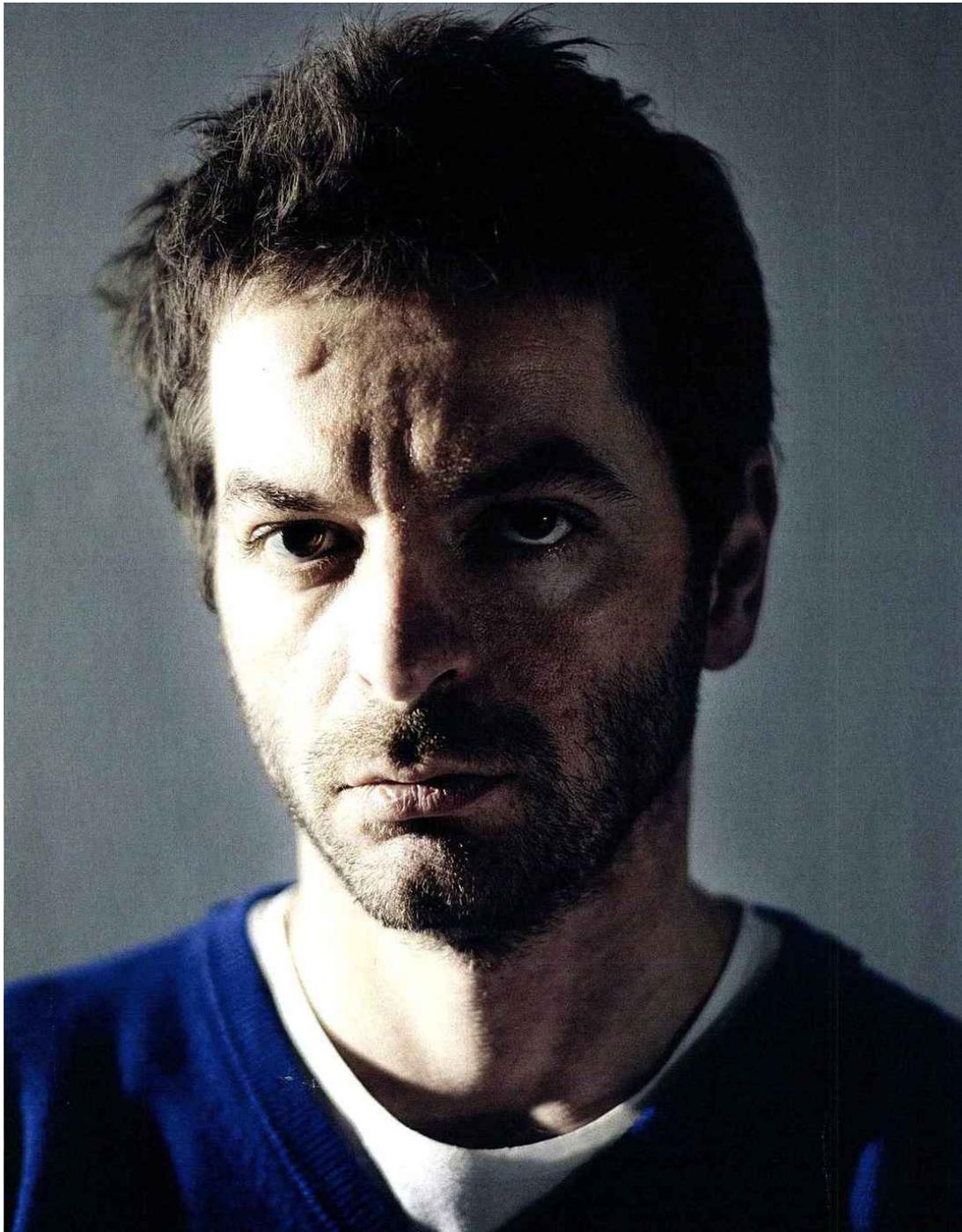
Many of these works were remade for installation in the retrospective, such as the confetti; other works were wall drawings and installations, which were specifically introduced to expand and respond to the conditions of each venue. In this way, the earliest works quite reasonably appear to exist in contiguity with the latest. Her intermittent or understated labeling of objects is therefore hardly a caprice—it may be one of the artist's most rigorous decisions. In a visit to a more typical retrospective, it is easy to view "early" work with nostalgia and "late" work more critically, but the present is always the time in which a work of art is being judged. Tuerlinckx's retrospective illustrates just how fully this temporal collapse, which continually makes past works contemporary, is also tied to the artist's lifetime. When she is no longer present to reactivate them, her works will assume a weight of responsibility that is hard to imagine: These traces, objects, drawings, books, sculptures, photographs, and films will have to stand in for the part of the artist's work that can no longer exist—her own agency. Until then, Tuerlinckx's arrangements frustrate attempts to parse a career or "retrospective" view; her objects create encounters and moments of discovery in real, rather than chronological, time, much as they did in the quotidian context from which she took them. □

"Joëlle Tuerlinckx: WOR(L)D(K) IN PROGRESS" is on view at the Arnolfini in Bristol, UK, through March 16, 2014.

CATHLEEN CHAFFEE IS CURATOR AT THE ALBRIGHT-KNOX ART GALLERY, BUFFALO.

GALERIE  
CHANTAL CROUSEL

L'œiil



Philippe Piguet  
*Anri Sala À Venise, L'Image (Et Le Son) De La France*  
L'œiil, N°659, July 1, 2013.

Anri Sala.  
© Photo : Julien  
Mignat/Été 1980.

# Anri Sala

## À VENISE, L'IMAGE (ET LE SON) DE LA FRANCE

### Biographie

**1974**  
Naissance à Tirana,  
en Albanie.

**1992-1996**  
École des beaux-  
arts de Tirana.

**1999-2000**  
Son court-métrage  
*Nocturnes* est  
sélectionné  
aux Rencontres  
cinématographiques  
de Tourcoing  
et au Festival du  
court-métrage à  
Clermont-Ferrand.

**2005**  
Après la Tate  
Modern à Londres,  
son installation  
vidéo *Dammi i  
colori (Give me  
the colors)* est  
présentée à la  
Galerie DAAD  
à Berlin.

**2013**  
Il représente la  
France à la Biennale  
de Venise.

Il est un film qu'il a réalisé en 2003 et qui a fait le tour du monde. C'est un interminable travelling sur les façades colorées de sa ville natale, Tirana, capitale de l'Albanie. La voix *off* qu'on entend est celle de l'un de ses anciens camarades de l'Académie des arts (Edi Rama) dont il a suivi l'enseignement de 1992 à 1996. Lui n'a pas poursuivi dans cette voie, il est devenu le maire de la ville et a fait le pari fou de la couler comme réhabilitation du désir de vivre ensemble. Anri Sala, l'auteur de ce film, s'est installé quant à lui à Paris et y a développé une œuvre très personnelle, fondée sur les rapports de l'espace, de l'image et du son qui lui vaut aujourd'hui

de représenter la France à la Biennale de Venise. Un véritable sacre après un parcours qui l'a mené d'institutions en institutions à travers le monde, notamment l'an passé au Centre Pompidou.

### Sujets universels

Né à Tirana en 1974, Anri Sala appartient à la dernière génération d'artistes ayant grandi sous le régime communiste en Albanie et à la première à entrer en contact avec le monde de l'art international. Après avoir fréquenté l'École nationale supérieure des arts décoratifs, à Paris, puis Le Fresnoy, à Tourcoing, et après avoir été naturalisé français, l'artiste n'en a pas moins fait le choix d'aller vivre à Berlin. Question de facilités économiques et d'espaces de travail. C'est dire s'il est de cette nature d'artistes nomades, toujours prompts à s'adapter aux situations qu'ils rencontrent. Si c'est possiblement là le secret d'une ascension qui le porte aujourd'hui à la première place du classement des artistes de la scène française [selon *Le Journal des Arts* du 10 mai 2013], cela tient d'abord et avant tout à la qualité d'une œuvre singulière en phase avec l'esprit du temps et à l'écho de problématiques qui demeurent universelles, sur le plan tant du contenu que de la forme.

Anri Sala, qui a pratiqué le violon jusqu'à l'âge de onze ans puis a quelque temps hésité entre devenir mathématicien et artiste, compose ses pièces comme un musicien, voire un chorégraphe, sur des bouts de papier qui

prennent dès lors l'allure de diagrammes, sinon de figures quasi mathématiques. Il y imagine dans l'espace le placement des éléments sonores et celui de ses projections filmiques, envisageant avec maints détails la déambulation des spectateurs. Il en résulte des images cabalistiques animées de ponctuations, de triangles et de flèches qui ne sont pas sans familiarité avec le dessin hâtivement croqué par Duchamp de la première pensée de son *Grand Verre*.

Cette similitude d'esprit avec la pensée musicale, qui caractérise sa démarche, n'aurait certes pas déplu à un certain Vasily Kandinsky qui jalouait la musique et enviait l'aisance et la facilité avec lesquelles cet art, le plus immatériel qui soit, parvenait à exprimer l'univers intérieur de l'artiste. La façon qu'a Anri Sala de concevoir ses installations relève d'une subtile réflexion sur la spatialisation sonore dans cet objectif de soumettre le corps du spectateur à l'épreuve émotionnelle et invasive d'une expérience sensorielle. Aussi tous ses efforts visent-ils à orchestrer les relations secrètes que peuvent entretenir l'image et le son. ■ **Philippe Piguet**

Anri Sala, *Ravel Ravel Unravel*, 2013,  
Pavillon Irançais, Biennale de Venise.  
© Photo : Marc Domage.



### → Biennale de Venise, pavillon

français, installation d'Anri Sala.  
*Ravel Ravel Unravel* (2013), commissariat  
de Christine Macel, Giardini, Venise  
(Italie), jusqu'au 24 novembre 2013.  
[www.institutfrancais.com](http://www.institutfrancais.com)

# MOUSSE

MOUSSE 37 ~ *Philippe Parreno & Anri Sala*



A

For Philippe Parreno and Anri Sala the object is always a thing in transit: one phase of a detailed itinerary taken by an idea amidst multiple forms, and in parallel one phase of the itinerary the visitor takes in the context of exhibitions conceived as choreographed routes. Films, at this point, have taken on great importance for both artists, and the work on the acoustic environment of exhibitions is based, to a great extent, on their shared taste for the dialectic of image and sound in cinema. For the upcoming Venice Biennale, Anri Sala is preparing a work involving sounds, visuals and space. Cyril Béghin asked the two artists to discuss these themes.

## A MATTER

A. Anri Sala, *Long Sorrow*, 2005. Courtesy: Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Hauser & Wirth Zürich, London; Johnen Galerie, Berlin; Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

B. "Anri Sala", installation views, Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples, 2004. Courtesy: Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples

C. Philippe Parreno, *The Boy From Mars*, 2003. Courtesy: the artist; Air de Paris, Paris; Esther Schipper, Berlin; Pilar Corrias, London

D. Philippe Parreno, *June 8, 1968*, 2009. Courtesy: the artist; Air de Paris, Paris; Pilar Corrias, London

E. Anri Sala, *Now I see*, 2004. Courtesy: Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Hauser & Wirth Zürich, London; Johnen Galerie, Berlin; Marian Goodman Gallery, New York



F. Philippe Parreno *Marilyn*, 2012. Courtesy: the artist and Pilar Corrias, London

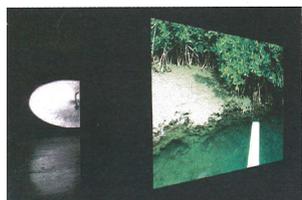
G. Philippe Parreno, *Invisible Boy*, 2010. Courtesy: the artist; Air de Paris, Paris; Pilar Corrias, London

H. Anri Sala, *Le Clash*, 2010. Courtesy: Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Johnen Galerie, Berlin

I. Anri Sala, "La mano di Dio", installation view, Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples, 2008. Courtesy: Galleria Alfonso Artiaco, Naples

J. Philippe Parreno, *The Boy From Mars*, 2003. Courtesy: the artist; Air de Paris, Paris; Esther Schipper, Berlin

K. Anri Sala, *Intervista*, 1998. Courtesy: Ideal audience international, Paris; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris; Johnen Galerie, Berlin



B

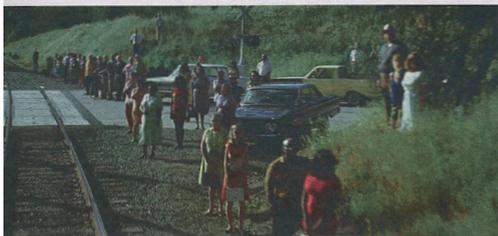


MOUSSE 37 ~ Philippe Parreno & Anri Sala

# OF SYNCHRONIZATION



A CONVERSATION BETWEEN PHILIPPE PARRENO AND ANRI SALA,  
MODERATED BY CYRIL BÉGHIN



**ANRI SALA**

Someone sent me a phrase from Lacan we might use to start our conversation: "The hysteric is a slave in search of a master over which to rule."

**CYRIL BÉGHIN**

*This might be a good way of getting ready for the latest film by Paul Thomas Anderson, The Master.*

**PHILIPPE PARRENO**

I saw it in September, it's great. But I don't know if it really corresponds to this quotation from Lacan... I really like Anderson's films, especially *Punch Drunk Love*, which is a kind of fable, with an amazing soundtrack. Anri, do you remember that scene in which a pianoforte is left on a sidewalk?

**AS** No. But I do remember a film with Tim Roth, which tells of a boy born and raised on a ship. There is a nice scene in which he plays the piano during a storm, with great energy, and they both slide into the saloon [*The Legend of the Pianist on the Ocean*, Giuseppe Tornatore, 1998]

**PP** You invented that, there's no such film.

**AS** If there's no such film then I'll shoot the scene myself, right away!

**CB** *There is a significant difference between your recollections: Anri evokes a scene in which we see someone playing the piano, while Philippe speaks of a scene in which there is just the instrument. Music has a large part to play in your working process, especially in your films. But with Anri we always end up seeing the musician/s, while with you, Philippe, we seem to never see them.*

**AS** It's true, apart from the opening credits of *Intervista* [1998], I have never used music that is not produced in the action of the film itself. The music is always the result of the screenplay. I am not talking about "film music" in the conventional sense of the term, though there are some ambiguities: when do we realize that what we are hearing comes from the scene itself? In *Long Sorrow* [2005] a saxophonist is hung up high, on a window sill, but it takes a while to realize that someone is playing hanging in the void. I am not interested in having the music insert an image in a context, I want the image to produce the music.

**PP** The first time I used music was for the film *Credits* [1999], a sort of re-composition of the view of a "priority urban development zone" where I grew up. I asked different people to remember those places, to make the re-composition starting precisely with their memories. And I had asked Angus Young, the guitarist of AC/DC, to play while imagining he was me, as a teenager, who imagined being him, looking at this landscape from a window. A sort of backwards air guitar. So the music was part of a "procedure", in the sense assigned to the term by Raymond Rousset.

**AS** You had already produced the image and you showed it to him?

**PP** Yes, it was an already established subject. I did the same thing with Devendra Banhart for *The Boy from Mars* [2003], which is a building that has generated a film, or a film that has generated a building: an animal with two heads, one in reality, the other in fiction. The idea was to continue the game: the film, in turn, generated the music. I showed it to Banhart, and I edited in his improvisation after the images, on black.

**AS** You never already have music, which you use to do the editing.

**PP** At least once, for *Invisible Boy*, the Godspeed piece already existed.

**CB** *But you also wanted to continue Invisible Boy by writing an opera, which would have permitted you to continue the making of the film.*

**PP** Yes. I wanted to make an orchestra "speak", to produce words with musical instruments.

**AS** There is always an ambiguity between sound and music. In *Le Clash* [2010] it is hard to believe that the small music box is spreading its sound into the abandoned building. For *Now I See* [2004] I asked a group from Iceland, Trabant, to give me a song that still didn't exist. At the time, Trabant was famous in Iceland, but they also had another group, The Funerals, that wasn't so well known. The members of the group used to switch roles, between Trabant and The Funerals: the bass player became the drummer, etc. I wanted to make a film where each of them would have yet a different role. In *Now I See*, we see them playing, and the vibrations make a balloon in the form of a dog attached to a speaker fly away. At this point the musical piece begins. Instead of staying on the musicians, the camera tracks the balloon, which stays in the air thanks to the low frequencies, and the musicians become secondary. It is a sort of voyage in which the music produced during the film is held hostage by its own low frequencies, which in turn are joined by another melody, transforming the whole into "film music" that accompanies the flight of the balloon.

**CB** *Anri is always looking for a moment of synchrony between soundtrack and image, while you, Philippe, seem to favor gaps and duplication.*

**PP** With music, yes, but with sound the relationship is different. For *Zidane* [2006] we began to edit the sound prior to the image. For *C.H.Z.* [2011] we put microphones in the ground in the garden before starting to shoot. But above all we should not forget that the films are designed for their display contexts, where they appear and disappear. The problem is always the same, between sound and image: what comes first? It is a question of automation: who is the master, who the slave? Often it is the sound that, technically, "guides" the image. Because it is simpler to position a time code on a soundtrack than to make a long image to which a sound or an event is attached.

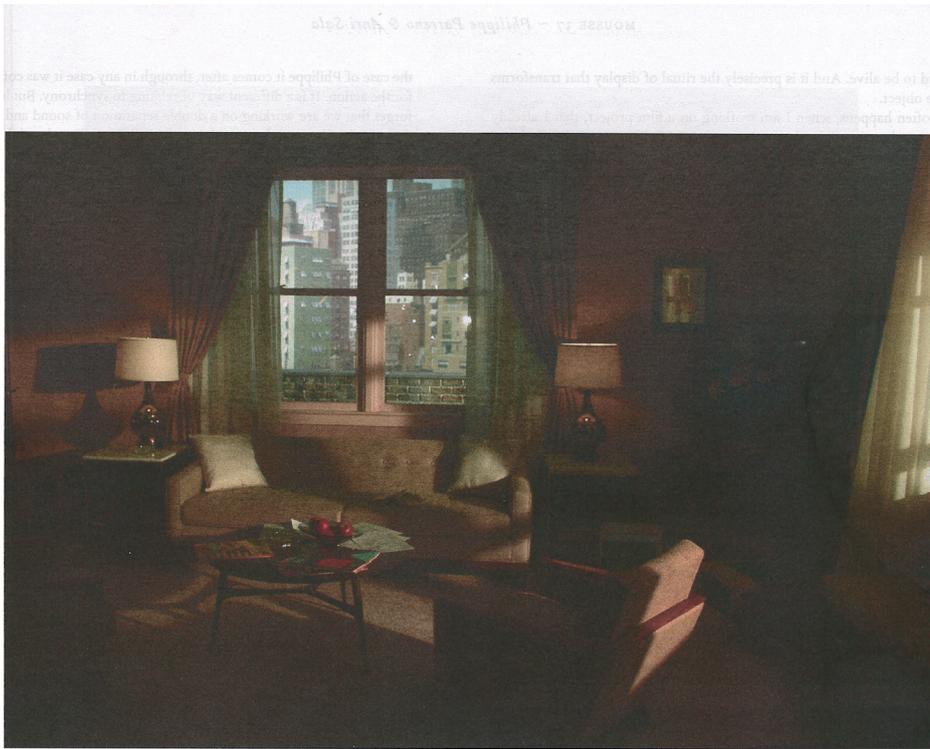
**AS** Also because sound can be moved gradually in the exhibition space, unlike images, which leap from one space to another. Or we can easily create or re-create a sound in space, but not the image. Precisely as you did at the Beyeler Foundation with the underwater speakers, that played the sounds of the films, or like I did with the drum kits that played on their own at Centre Pompidou. Sound remains a material that can be shaped



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in space, something that doesn't happen for the image, if not in the form of collage or multiple projections, which do not interest me, a priori.

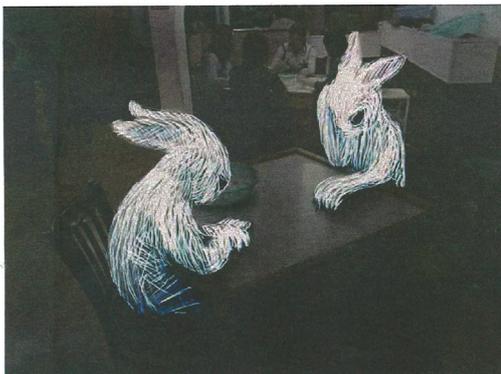
**PP** Making a film, as we do it, means somehow signing a contract with ourselves, saying that every time the object appears, it is necessary to renegotiate its appearance, or even its status as an object. In fact, it takes on different forms, generating as many different interpretations, while in the time capsule of the movie theater nothing changes, except the mood of the spectators. My first film showed a bouquet of flowers, an image of very little meaning, which I had given to several television stations *Fleurs*, 1988. At one, it had become an advertisement for Interflora: the fact that it was broadcast produced the meaning. This is something fundamental: most of the objects we produce are never really concluded. And sound takes part in this elasticity, this uncompleted aspect that can be taken on by film. I am reminded of the sculptures of Mali, the so-called *boli*. These are ritual, vaguely zoomorphic objects. Between one ritual and the next the *boli* are covered with earth, blood or excrement, so well that each time they appear they are never the same. They are



said to be alive. And it is precisely the ritual of display that transforms the object.

**AS** It often happens, when I am working on a film project, that I already know where it will be shown. It is a piece of information I already have, and it influences the production. The device is included in the production thinking. It is something that is part of the trip: the film is not finished in the moment of mastering, but when it reaches a screening surface.

**PP** Now that the technical tools allow it, there are films I remaster to change a hue or a sound. *The Boy From Mars* for example, where I completely altered the soundtrack. Just like the *bolli*: so why not propose to museums that have purchased these works, some time ago, to give them new objects? We should do this for everything: you could also go back to a



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drawing, so it would be in constant movement.

**AS** At times this means putting further layers onto an object, which come from outside, through reflections and transparencies, as you did at Centre Pompidou with the curtains that opened and closed.

**PP** There are some things that belong to this category, but it took some time for the thing to become evident. Not so long ago, with Anri, we complained about the fact that every time a work is re-presented or re-produced, for us it was like a form of constriction. To re-present or re-do the same thing is not very interesting. We are not craftsmen, we don't reproduce forms: we re-create them.

**AS** And let's not forget that the art world is essentially visual. Negotiating sound technique is very hard. The culture of hearing requires a sensibility that is rarely that of the world in which we operate.

**PP** But in the moment in which we manage to get our hands on the "master", it all gets easier, and more amusing as well.

**CB** *This is how you have learned to think about objects, and films in particular, with this elasticity, the possibility of their changing in the area of the display context.*

**AS** The film has a perimeter, which can be enlarged depending on the different spaces in which we project it. It is a temporal sculpture. We began by saying that in my films the music comes from the action itself; while in

the case of Philippe it comes after, through in any case it was composed for the action. It is a different way of relating to synchrony. But let's not forget that we are working on a double separation of sound and image: those of the film, and those of the exhibition. In Philippe's exhibition at the Serpentine or in my show at Centre Pompidou, you have *one* sound and *many* images. While you travel with the sound, you encounter images. In this dynamic, I am increasingly interested in "destabilizing" the films, to create other relationships between them. To produce a reality in the abyss between two screens, when the sound is present and the image is out of the frame. An image has just finished, and another begins, farther away: the viewer is held in an intermediate space, where it is the image that is off-screen, rather than the sound, as usually happens.

**CB** *I'd like to insist on the idea of synchrony, though: while in Anri there are these effects of an image out of its role, perhaps it is to better underline the moments in which the image and the sound are joined, moments that ensure a sort of reality effect. While for Philippe the reality effect never happens in this point.*

**PP** I'll go back to Roussel's procedure. The form is not important: it is the procedure that takes us back to the form. For me, the construction of the image is simply one element of the automaton. So the question of synchrony can arise in different moments: during shooting, editing or screening. You talk about synchronization in the classic way, thinking of cinema. But we have to pay attention to the word "film". For me, the film is but one moment of the form. The camera is used to capture, in that given moment, a form in a space, but it is just one of many moments. In *C.H.Z.*, I begin to place the microphones in the ground, then I construct a garden; the thing starts to come alive, and it is already an element of the display. Then I film it. The terrain continues to grow. And then the film is done, a sound has been given back. It is a chain of elements in which you can never say what comes first: the synchrony isn't there, where you think it is. For me, nothing could have been more synchronous than Angus Young playing in front of the re-composed images of *Credits*. It was a moment of display, but not the one I then chose to exhibit.

**AS** It's like the autofocus of the camera. The camera makes things clear adjusting the focus where the light encounters an object, not necessarily where there is a meaning. The same thing happens in the exhibiting: will the meaning of synchrony take place in the film or elsewhere? You choose the best moment in the space, which will become the master. And to play this game, in every phase there have to be potential synchronies.

**CB** *Is this why you, Anri, film musicians, immediately triggering a very strong possibility of synchrony in the film itself?*

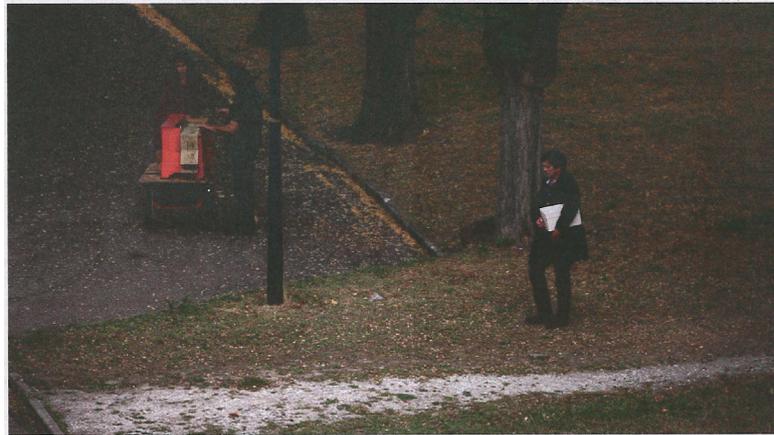
**PP** For me, the sound does not make image in the recording of the image. And the shooting is not the moment in which the film is made. As Anri said, the cursor of synchrony can be continuously moved.

**AS** Where is the difference between making the sound come first to help you to produce an image—in my case—and making it come first to "prepare" the moment in which it will encounter the image? As far as I'm concerned, it is always sound that leads me to the starting image. For *Long Sorrow*, I got the idea of the saxophonist, Jemeel Moondoc, hanging in the void. So I needed a window, i.e. a view. But the starting point was neither the window nor the view. My problem was: how can I have someone who produces sound through breathing, suspended in the air, capable of negotiating with this void only by virtue of being a human instrument?

**PP** And then, you find the window.

**AS** Yeah, and the problems increase. Because if I have a window, then I also have a view, a possible metaphor, a symbolic environment. What I have to cross is the process: the sound demands a given image, but how can I keep that from becoming a trap? I have to constantly reduce the image that springs of the sonic reality. While you think about sound and image in a more simultaneous way.

**PP** Perhaps... for *Marilyn* [2012], I had to invent two robots: the vocal robot that produces the voice, and the mechanical robot that writes. The image was literally subordinate to the sound, given the fact that the voice describes the things that are filmed. This is rarely the case, because I usually prefer one thing to be triggered by another, like a series of links in a chain. The film *C.H.Z.* leaves a terrain behind it that gets covered with vegetation, and with trash. The two things go together, the "abject" and the "object". The nature of the object becomes an "other" nature: it has produced something that is alive. To get back to the idea of elasticity, it is as if the object rested attached to something it has produced and, at the same time, has not completely emerged from its shell. It is projected into the future, but it is still a little bit in the past. This is the thing that interests me most: to produce diffractions of the object that will develop, to become its pollution, its project, its screenplay, without ever ceasing



to change. And this has to be constantly negotiated, all the way to the presentation or re-presentation of the object.

**CB** *What do you mean by "negotiation"?*

**PP** First of all, negotiating with a figure. This is why I was talking about the procedures of Roussel. What Anri tells us in his thinking about *Long Sorrow* seems at first to be a mad hypothesis: "hanging a saxophonist in the air". This hypothesis takes form in the paroxysm of the display. The question of the chain of meanings is often raised, and probably the thing has no solution. At times one has to wait for the publication of the catalogue before the film is finished. It is the revolution of the pleasure of play, as they said in the Seventies. The permanent revolution: if you stop, you die.

**AS** In this chain you are describing, made of objects, exhibitions and books, there are often slippages. Sometimes you have to make decisions about the space before the film is finished. I find it interesting: of course it can create problems, but also interesting hypotheses. These are procedures that do not exist in cinema.

**CB** *It is like a non-stop discussion with many people involved. For example, I was struck by the way Philippe speaks openly of his projects, always using discussion as an open moment of reflection.*

**PP** In cinema there is more of a culture of secrecy. Also in art, but it is something new. What we have done, just as many others have done before us, is to open the practice of the atelier. The production emerges and flows everywhere. It is precisely the painter's nightmare: you construct an atelier that is different each time, modified, exchanged, taken into the exhibition space. Forms are created in these negotiations. But nobody does it,



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because there is the risk of things getting diluted. For the exhibition at Centre Pompidou I spent months making the film *1968* [2009]; at the end of each screening, the curtains of the room opened automatically, something that was organized in 5 minutes. Often, though, people remembered the curtains opening more than the film. But it is a bit like dining: you need a bit of bad taste to appreciate the good flavors. The exhibition has to have ups and downs, it is still thought of too much like a treasure chest. These are questions that date back to the avant-gardes. The influence of sound on the production of an image is already there in the synesthetic paintings of Malevich. When Duchamp does a painting under a chandelier, his palette is influenced by the color of the light. These are games. Someone should start to write a history like this. There are more books that talk about the history of objects than about procedures, that sort of slippage of the terrain. The protocols of apparition of forms in space that we define as display are rooted in a particular moment, contemporary to the birth of cinema. In his *Dictionary of Received Ideas* Flaubert defined exhibition as the "cause of delirious excitement of the 19th century". With our way of proceeding, Anri, me, and others, we undoubtedly lose immanence, solidity, but we gain something like joy.

**AS** To get back to our earlier terminology, it is like losing certain achievements of synchronization to rediscover other synchronies with the viewer.

**CB** *This is exactly what was created by the opening of the curtains at Centre Pompidou: you simultaneously transmitted, inside the room, a sound taken from outside, in a literal form of synchrony.*

**PP** Precisely. But that was a last-minute gesture, found during the installation of the exhibition. And this is the dangerous moment. The sentence is not complete, it is painful. You are still writing your theater piece one hour before the audience enters.

**AS** The economy of live performance makes this type of operation possible, but we don't make theater. In general, we do not work with a technique that has been produced for our purposes.

**PP** They are found objects!

**AS** Or, more than anything, found techniques.

**PP** There is something terrible about not having your own technique. You have to always base what you're doing on those of others. Generally the thing works, but you have to spend a lot of time convincing people.

**AS** And the equipment has not been designed for the uses we make of it. Often I use only one part of its potential, and I may use more than one device, combining them. The machine or the show control that can combine all the different qualities still doesn't exist. It is like renting a castle and using only the vestibule. And it is a serious economic problem.

**PP** Now, for Palais de Tokyo, I'm thinking about turning things upside-down: to display only the procedures of installation of the objects, eliminating the presence of the objects themselves.

**AS** In other words, you remove the destination to produce the itinerary.

**CB** *Recently you worked at the Philadelphia Museum for an exhibition on Marcel Duchamp.*

**PP** It took them a while to find a definition for my work: "set design" or "choreography", then in the end they borrowed the term from French, *mise-en-scène*. For the first time, I did a show without my work: there were all kinds of devices, but without my objects. It is a sort of mental, non-authoritarian choreography, with a direction of interpretation, but not clear, apparently without text. The eye is attracted by a light, a sound, by forms that move. There are many sounds, sometimes excerpts from sonatas for prepared piano by Cage, or maybe a chorus that sings a score by Duchamp. I made a piece with some interpreters of Cunningham: with microphones attached to the floor, in the theater I recorded the steps of the dancers. In the museum space, on the other hand, we installed a platform with speakers in place of the microphones. When the dancers are not there, we can still hear them moving. At times they are really there, and dance the same steps, shifted or out of synch, in a very unpredictable way.

I think it would have been awful to see poor videos in black and white of Cunningham's choreographies. We needed to invent forms to understand how, at a certain point, he asked his dancers to move from one position to another in a random way, without any relationship to the music. This fact becomes the object of an experience: we hear dance steps, a musical excerpt, and the thing works. You understand without having read any text. It is the exhibition that produces knowledge.

**CB** *Another case of desynchronization?*

**PP** Yes, but Anri could have done it too, a bit like there were exchanges between Cage and Cunningham. At a certain point there is this simultaneous presence of strong personalities that have something in common. The time has come to realize this. If a sense of community is no longer possible in art, the world is truly in a bad way. Getting involved in the practice of exhibition also means making a commitment to others, to the fact that the other may have similar ideas. No form of copyright exists to protect practice, but this is always renegotiated in its terms and its authority.

**CB** *The difficulty might be that by crossing so many different practices, each of you embodies, in himself, a form in common?*

**PP** The true danger is that the common can get transformed into academia. Anri does his exhibition for the Venice Biennale, I will be at Palais de Tokyo, Douglas Gordon will soon be at the Museum of Modern Art. The procedure has been accepted, now it is up to us to play, to question ourselves. Because we are only at the beginning, there is still so much to invent.



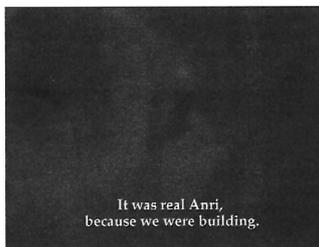
## A Matter of Synchronization

Una conversazione fra Philippe Parreno e Anri Sala, moderata da Cyril Béghin

Per Philippe Parreno e per Anri Sala, l'oggetto è sempre qualcosa di transitorio: una fase dell'articolato itinerario che un'idea compie tra molteplici forme, e in parallelo una fase dell'itinerario che il visitatore compie nell'ambito di esposizioni concepite come percorsi coreografici. Per i due artisti i film hanno ormai acquisito un'importanza capitale, e il lavoro sull'ambiente sonoro delle esposizioni deriva in gran parte dal loro gusto comune per le dialettiche dell'immagine e del suono nel cinema. Per la prossima Biennale di Venezia, Anri Sala sta preparando un'opera insieme sonora, visiva e spaziale. Cyril Béghin ha invitato entrambi gli artisti a interessare un dialogo su queste tematiche.



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**Anri Sala:** Mi hanno inviato una frase di Lacan che potrebbe aprire la nostra conversazione: "L'isterico è uno schiavo in cerca di un padrone sul quale regnare".

**Cyril Béghin:** Può essere una buona chiave per prepararsi all'ultimo film di Paul Thomas Anderson, *The Master*.

**Philippe Parreno:** L'ho visto lo scorso settembre, è molto bello. Ma non so se corrisponda davvero a questa citazione di Lacan... Amo molto i film di Anderson, soprattutto *Punch Drunk Love*, che è una specie di fiaba, con una colonna sonora strepitosa. Ti ricordi, Anri, di quella scena in cui un pianoforte viene lasciato su un marciapiede?

**AS:** No. Ma mi ricordo di un film con Tim Roth, che parla di un bambino nato e cresciuto su una nave. C'è una bella scena in cui lui suona il piano, durante una violenta tempesta, e ambedue scivolano nel salone [*La leggenda del pianista sull'oceano*, Giuseppe Tornatore, 1998]

**PP:** Te lo sei inventato, questo film non esiste.

**AS:** Se non esiste, allora questa scena la giro subito io!

**CB:** C'è una differenza significativa nei vostri ricordi: Anri rievoca una scena in cui si vede qualcuno che suona il pianoforte, Philippe una scena in cui c'è solo lo strumento. La musica occupa un grande spazio nel vostro processo lavorativo, in particolare nei vostri film. Ma con Anri si finisce sempre per vedere il musicista/i musicisti, mentre con te, Philippe, sembra che non si vedano mai.

**AS:** È vero, a parte i titoli di testa di *Intervista* [1998], non ho mai utilizzato una musica che non sia prodotta dall'azione stessa del film. La musica è sempre il risultato di una scrittura scenica. Non sto parlando di "musica da film" nel senso convenzionale del termine, anche se ci sono delle ambiguità: quand'è che si capisce che quello che si sente scaturisce dalla scena stessa? In *Long Sorrow* [2005] un sassofonista se ne sta appeso in alto, sul davanzale di una finestra, ma ci vuole un po' prima di capire che qualcuno suona sospeso nel vuoto. Non mi interessa che la musica inserisca un'immagine in un contesto, ma piuttosto che l'immagine produca la musica.

**PP:** La prima volta che ho usato la musica è stato per il film *Credits* [1999], una sorta di ricomposizione della veduta di una "zona a prioritario sviluppo urbano" in cui sono cresciuti. Avevo chiesto a diverse persone di ricordarsi quei luoghi, per realizzarne la ricomposizione partendo proprio dalle loro testimonianze. E avevo chiesto ad Angus Young, il chitarrista degli AC/DC, di suonare immaginando di essere me, adolescente, che immaginavo di essere lui guardando questo paesaggio da una finestra. Era una specie di *air guitar* al contrario. Quindi la musica faceva parte di un "procedimento", nel senso in cui lo intendeva Raymond Roussel.

**AS:** Avevi già prodotto l'immagine, e gliel'hai mostrata?

**PP:** Sì, era un soggetto già stabilito. Ho fatto la stessa cosa con Devendra Banhart per *The Boy from Mars* [2003], che è un edificio che ha generato un film o un film che ha generato un edificio: un animale a due teste, una nella realtà e una nella finzione.

Si trattava di continuare il gioco: il film a sua volta ha generato la musica. L'ho mostrato a Banhart, e ho montato la sua improvvisazione dopo le immagini, sul nero.

**AS:** Tu non hai mai una musica già pronta a partire dalla quale fai il montaggio.

**PP:** Almeno una volta, per *Invisible Boy*, il pezzo di Godspeed esisteva già.

**CB:** Ma volevi anche proseguire *Invisible Boy* scrivendo un'opera, che ti avrebbe permesso di continuare la realizzazione del film.

**PP:** Sì. Si trattava di far "parlare" un'orchestra, di produrre parole con gli strumenti musicali.

**AS:** C'è sempre un'ambiguità tra suono e musica. In *Le Clash* [2010], è difficile credere che sia la piccola scatola musicale a diffondere la sonorità nell'edificio abbandonato. Per *Now I see* [2004], avevo chiesto a un gruppo islandese, i Trabanti, di darmi una canzone che ancora non esistesse. All'epoca i Trabanti erano famosi in Islanda, ma avevano anche un altro gruppo, The Funerals, meno conosciuto. I membri del gruppo avevano l'abitudine di scambiarsi i ruoli tra i Trabanti e The Funerals: il bassista diventava il batterista, etc. Volevo fare un film dove ciascuno avrebbe avuto un ruolo ancora diverso. In *Now I see*, il vediamo suonare, e per effetto delle vibrazioni sonore, un palloncino a forma di cane, attaccato a un altoparlante, vola via. È a questo punto che inizia il pezzo musicale. Invece di restare sul musicista, la camera segue il palloncino, che rimane in aria grazie alle frequenze basse, e i musicisti diventano secondari. È una specie di viaggio in cui la musica prodotta durante il film è ostaggio delle sue stesse frequenze basse, che a loro volta, sono raggiunte da un'altra melodia, trasformando l'insieme in una "musica da film" che accompagna il volo del palloncino.

**CB:** Anri è sempre alla ricerca di un momento di sincronia tra colonna sonora e immagine, mentre tu, Philippe, sembri privilegiare lo scarto e il doppiaggio sonoro.

**PP:** Con la musica sì, ma con il suono il rapporto è diverso. Per *Zidane* [2006] abbiamo cominciato a montare il suono prima dell'immagine. Per *C.H.Z.* [2011] abbiamo messo dei microfoni nel terreno del giardino prima di girare. Ma soprattutto non bisogna dimenticare che i film sono progettati per dei contesti espositivi, dove appaiono e scompaiono. Tra suono e immagine, il problema è sempre lo stesso: cosa viene prima? È una questione di automazione: chi è il padrone, e chi è lo schiavo? Spesso è il suono che, tecnicamente, "guida" l'immagine. Perché è più semplice posizionare una *time code* su una colonna sonora piuttosto che fare una lunga immagine cui viene applicato un suono o un evento.

**AS:** Anche perché il suono si può spostare progressivamente nello spazio di un'esposizione, contrariamente all'immagine, che salta da uno spazio all'altro. Oppure possiamo facilmente creare o ri-creare un suono nello spazio, ma non l'immagine. Proprio come hai fatto tu alla fondazione Beyeler con gli altoparlanti piazzati sott'acqua, che diffondevano i suoni dei film, o io con le batterie che suonavano da sole, al Centro Pompidou. Il suono resta una materia plasmabile nello spazio, cosa che non esiste per

l'immagine se non sotto forma di collage o di proiezioni multiple che non m'interessano a priori.

**PP:** Fare un film, così come lo facciamo noi, vuol dire in qualche modo firmare un contratto con se stessi dicendo che ogni volta che appare l'oggetto, bisogna rinegoziare la sua apparizione, o addirittura il suo stesso essere oggetto. Esso, infatti, assume forme diverse generando altrettante letture diverse, mentre nella *time capsule* della sala cinematografica, non cambia nulla, salvo l'umore degli spettatori. Nel mio primo film veniva mostrato un mazzo di fiori, un'immagine di scarsissimo significato, che io avevo dato ad alcuni canali televisivi [*Fleurs*, 1988]. In uno, era diventato una pubblicità per Interflora: era la trasmissione televisiva a produrre senso. È una cosa fondamentale: la maggior parte degli oggetti che produciamo non sono mai veramente conclusi. E il suono partecipa di questa elasticità, di questo aspetto incompiuto che il film può assumere. Mi vengono in mente le sculture del Mali, i cosiddetti *boli*. Si tratta di oggetti rituali con forme vagamente animali. Fra un rito e l'altro, il *boli* viene ricoperto di terra, sangue o escrementi, così bene che ogni volta che appare non è mai lo stesso. Si dice che viva. Ed è proprio il rituale dell'esibizione a trasformare l'oggetto.

**AS:** Mi capita spesso, quando lavoro al progetto di un film, di sapere in anticipo dove lo presenterò. È un dato che è già in mio possesso e che andrà a influenzare la mia realizzazione. Il dispositivo è incluso nel pensiero della produzione. È una cosa che fa parte del viaggio: il film non finisce nel momento della masterizzazione ma quando approda su una superficie di proiezione.

**PP:** Ora che gli strumenti tecnici lo permettono, ci sono dei film che rimasterizzo per modificare una tonalità o un suono. *The Boy From Mars* per esempio, ha cambiato completamente colonna sonora. Esattamente come il *boli*: perché allora non proporre ai musei che hanno acquistato questi lavori tempo fa, di dar loro dei nuovi oggetti? Si dovrebbe fare così per tutto: anche poter riprendere un disegno, affinché sia in costante movimento.

**AS:** A volte, questo vuol dire riportare sull'oggetto ulteriori strati provenienti dall'esterno, per riflessioni e trasparenze, come hai fatto tu al Centro Pompidou con le tende che si aprivano e si chiudevano.

**PP:** Qualcuno c'è che rientra in questa categoria, ma c'è voluto un po' perché diventasse una cosa evidente. Non molto tempo fa, con Anri, ci lamentavamo del fatto che ogni volta che un'opera veniva ri-presentata o ri-prodotta, era per noi come una forma di costrizione. Ripresentare o rifare la stessa cosa non è molto interessante. Noi non siamo artigiani, non riproduciamo forme: le ricreiamo.

**AS:** Non dimentichiamoci poi che il mondo dell'arte è essenzialmente visivo. Negoziare la tecnica sonora è molto difficile. La cultura dell'udito esige una sensibilità che raramente è quella del mondo nel quale operiamo.

**PP:** Ma nel momento in cui riusciamo a mettere le mani sul "padrone", diventa tutto più facile, e anche più divertente.

**CB:** È così che avete imparato a pensare gli oggetti, e in particolare i film, con questa elasticità, la possibilità di un loro cambiamento nell'ambito del contesto espositivo.

**AS:** Il film ha un perimetro, che si può ampliare in funzione dei diversi spazi in cui proiettiamo. È una scultura temporale. Abbiamo cominciato dicendo che nei miei film la musica nasce dall'azione stessa; mentre nel caso di Philippe arriva dopo, sebbene sia stata comunque composta per l'azione. È un modo diverso di relazionarsi con la sincronia. Non dimentichiamoci però che lavoriamo a una doppia separazione del suono e dell'immagine: quelli del film, e quelli dell'esposizione. Nell'esposizione di Philippe alla Serpentine o nella mia al Centro Pompidou, ci sono un suono e molte immagini. Mentre si viaggia con il suono, si incontrano immagini. In questa dinamica, mi interessa sempre di più "destabilizzare" i film, per creare fra loro altre relazioni. Produrre una realtà nell'abisso tra due schermi, quando il suono è presente e l'immagine è fuoricampo. Un'immagine si è appena conclusa, ed ecco che un'altra comincia più lontano: lo spettatore è stretto in uno spazio intermedio, dove è l'immagine a essere fuoricampo mentre invece di solito è il suono.

**CB:** Vorrei però insistere sulla sincronia: se in Anri ci sono questi effetti di immagine fuori ruolo, forse è per sottolineare maggiormente i momenti in cui l'immagine e il suono si uniscono, momenti che garantiscono una sorta di effetto del reale. Mentre per Philippe l'effetto del reale non è mai in questo punto.

**PP:** Torno sul procedimento di Roussel. Non è importante la forma: è il procedimento a condurci alla forma. Per me la costruzione dell'immagine non è che un elemento dell'automa. La questione della sincronia può quindi porsi in momenti diversi: durante le riprese, durante il montaggio, o alla presentazione. Tu parli di sincronizzazione in modo classico, pensando al cinema. Ma occorre fare attenzione alla parola "film". Per me il film non è che un momento della forma. La camera viene utilizzata per cogliere in quel dato momento una forma in uno spazio, ma è soltanto uno dei tanti momenti. In *C.H.Z.*, comincio a sistemare dei microfoni nel terreno, quindi costruisco un giardino; la cosa comincia a prendere vita, ed è già un elemento dell'esposizione. Poi filmo. Il terreno continua a svilupparsi. Ed ecco che il film è fatto, un suono è stato restituito. Si tratta di una catena di elementi in cui non puoi mai dire ciò che viene prima: la sincronia non è lì dove pensi che sia. Per me, non c'era nulla di più sincrono di Angus Young che suonava davanti alle immagini ricomposte di *Credits*. Era un momento dell'esposizione, ma non è quello che ho scelto di mostrare.

**AS:** È come l'autofocus della camera. La camera aggiusta il fuoco là dove la luce incontra un oggetto, e non necessariamente là dove c'è un senso. Lo stesso accade nell'esposizione: il senso di sincronia avrà luogo nel film, o altrove? Si sceglie quale sia il momento migliore nello spazio, e che diverrà il padrone. E per giocare a questo gioco, occorre che a ogni fase ci siano potenziali sincronie.

**CB:** Per questo, Anri, tu filmi dei musicisti, ponendo da subito una possibilità molto forte di sincronia nel film stesso?

**PP:** Per me il suono non fa l'immagine nella registrazione dell'immagine. E le riprese non sono il momento in cui si fa il film. Come diceva Anri, il cursore della sincronia può essere spostato di continuo.

**AS:** Dov'è la differenza fra anticipare il suono per aiutarci a produrre un'immagine – è il mio caso –, e anticipare il suono per "preparare" il momento in cui questo incontrerà l'immagine? Per quanto mi riguarda è sempre il suono che mi conduce all'immagine di partenza. Per *Long Sorrow*, mi è venuta l'idea del sassofonista, Jemeel Moondoc, sospeso nel vuoto. Mi serviva quindi una finestra, vale a dire una veduta. Ma il punto di partenza non era né la finestra, né la veduta. Il mio problema era: come poter avere qualcuno che produca suono attraverso la respirazione, sospeso nel vuoto, in grado di negoziare con questo vuoto unicamente per il fatto di essere uno strumento umano?

**PP:** E poi, trovi la finestra.

**AS:** Già, e i problemi aumentano. Perché se ho una finestra, allora ho anche una veduta, cioè una possibile metafora, un ambiente simbolico. È il processo ciò che devo attraversare: il suono necessita di una determinata immagine, ma come fare perché non diventi una trappola? Devo costantemente ridurre l'immagine che nasce dalla realtà sonora. Mentre tu, pensi il suono e l'immagine in modo più simultaneo.

**PP:** Può darsi... per *Marilyn* [2012], ho dovuto ide-

are due robot: il robot vocale che produce la voce, e il robot meccanico che scrive. L'immagine era letteralmente subordinata al suono, dato che la voce descrive le cose che vengono filmate. È raro che sia così, perché di solito preferisco che da una cosa ne scaturisca un'altra, come una serie di anelli concatenati. Il film *C.H.Z.* lascia dietro di sé un terreno che si ricopre di vegetazione, come dei rifiuti. Le due cose vanno insieme, l'"abietto" e l'"oggetto". La natura dell'oggetto diventa una natura "altra": ha prodotto qualcosa di vivo. Per tornare all'idea di elasticità, è come se l'oggetto restasse attaccato a qualcosa che ha prodotto, e allo stesso tempo non è completamente uscito dal proprio guscio. È proiettato nel futuro, ma è ancora un po' nel passato. Questa è la cosa che mi interessa maggiormente: produrre le diffrazioni dell'oggetto che si svilupperà, diventare la sua contaminazione, il suo progetto, la sua sceneggiatura, senza smettere mai di cambiare. E questo deve essere negoziato costantemente, fino alla presentazione o alla rappresentazione dell'oggetto.

**CB:** Cosa intendi per "negoziazione"?

**PP:** Prima di tutto negoziare con una figura. Per questo parlavo dei procedimenti di Roussel. Ciò che ci racconta Anri nella sua riflessione su *Long Sorrow*, all'inizio sembra un'ipotesi folle: "sospendere un sassofonista nel vuoto". Queste ipotesi prendono forma nel parossismo dell'esposizione. Spesso si pone la questione della catena dei significati, e probabilmente la cosa non ha soluzione. A volte si dovrebbe attendere la pubblicazione del catalogo per concludere. Non bisogna mai fermarsi, è la rivoluzione nel piacere di giocare, come si diceva negli anni settanta. La rivoluzione permanente: se ci si ferma, è la morte.

**AS:** In questa catena di cui parli, fatta di oggetti, di esposizioni, di libri, ci sono spesso degli slittamenti. A volte occorre prendere delle decisioni sullo spazio prima che il film sia terminato. Trovo la cosa interessante: certo può creare dei problemi, ma anche delle ipotesi interessanti. Sono procedimenti, questi, che a cinema non esistono.

**CB:** È come una discussione non stop con tanti interlocutori. Ad esempio sono colpito dal modo in cui Philippe parla apertamente dei suoi progetti, usando sempre la discussione come momento aperto di riflessione.

**PP:** Nel cinema vige più una cultura del segreto. Anche nell'arte, ma è una novità. Ciò che abbiamo fatto noi, come tanti altri prima di noi, è aprire la pratica dell'atelier. La produzione esce e scorre ovunque. È esattamente l'incubo di un pittore: si costruisce un atelier ogni volta diverso, modifica, scambia, riportato nello spazio espositivo. È in queste negoziazioni che si creano le forme. Ma nessuno lo fa, perché c'è il rischio della diluizione. Per l'esposizione al Centro Pompidou, ho impiegato mesi per realizzare il film *1968* [2009]; alla fine di ogni proiezione, le tende della sala si aprivano automaticamente, cosa che è stata realizzata in 5 minuti. Spesso, però, la gente si ricordava più dell'apertura delle tende che del film. Ma è un po' come a tavola: ci vuole un po' di sapore cattivo per apprezzare quello buono. L'esposizione deve avere alti e bassi, è considerata ancora troppo come uno scrigno.

Sono questioni che risalgono alle avanguardie. L'influenza del suono sulla produzione di un'immagine si trovava già nelle pitture sinestesiche di Malevich. Quando Duchamp dipinge un quadro sotto il lampadario, la sua tavolozza è influenzata dal colore della luce. Si tratta di giochi. Bisognerebbe cominciare a scrivere una storia così. Ci sono più libri che parlano della storia degli oggetti piuttosto che dei procedimenti, di quella specie di slittamento del terreno. I protocolli di apparizione delle forme nello spazio che definiamo come esposizione, hanno origine in un particolare momento, contemporaneo alla nascita del cinema. Nel suo *Dizionario dei luoghi comuni*, Flaubert definiva l'esposizione come il "l'argomento dellirante del XIX secolo". Con il nostro modo di procedere, Anri, io e altri, perdiamo senz'altro di immanenza, solidità, ma guadagniamo qualcosa come la gioia.

**AS:** Per tornare alla terminologia di poco fa, è come perdere alcune acquisizioni della sincronizzazione per ritrovare altre sincronie con lo spettatore.

**CB:** È esattamente ciò che creava l'apertura delle tende al Centro Pompidou: tu trasmettevi simultaneamente all'interno della sala un suono captato all'esterno, in una forma letterale di sincronia.

**PP:** Proprio così. Ma si è trattato di un gesto dell'ultimo minuto, trovato durante il montaggio dell'esposizione. Ed è questo il momento pericoloso. La frase non è conclusa, è una sofferenza. Stai ancora scrivendo il tuo pezzo di teatro un'ora prima dell'ingresso del pubblico.

**AS:** L'economia dello spettacolo da vivo permette questo genere di operazioni, ma noi non facciamo teatro. In generale, non lavoriamo con una tecnica prodotta a nostro uso e consumo.

**PP:** Sono oggetti trovati!

**AS:** Più che altro tecniche trovate.

**PP:** C'è qualcosa di terribile nel fatto di non avere una tecnica propria. Ci si basa sempre sulle altre. In genere la cosa funziona, ma si passa molto tempo a fare opera di convincimento.

**AS:** E le apparecchiature non sono progettate per gli usi che ne facciamo noi. Spesso lo sfruttiamo soltanto una parte delle loro potenzialità, e magari ne adopero più d'una combinandole insieme. La macchina o lo *show control* che possa riunire tutte le diverse qualità non esiste ancora. È come affittare un castello per usare solo l'ingresso. È un serio problema economico.

**PP:** Adesso, per il Palais de Tokyo, penso di rovesciare completamente le cose: esporre soltanto le procedure di installazione degli oggetti, eliminando la presenza degli oggetti stessi.

**AS:** Cioè, togli la destinazione per produrre l'itinerario.

**CB:** Recentemente hai lavorato al museo di Filadelfia per un'esposizione su Marcel Duchamp.

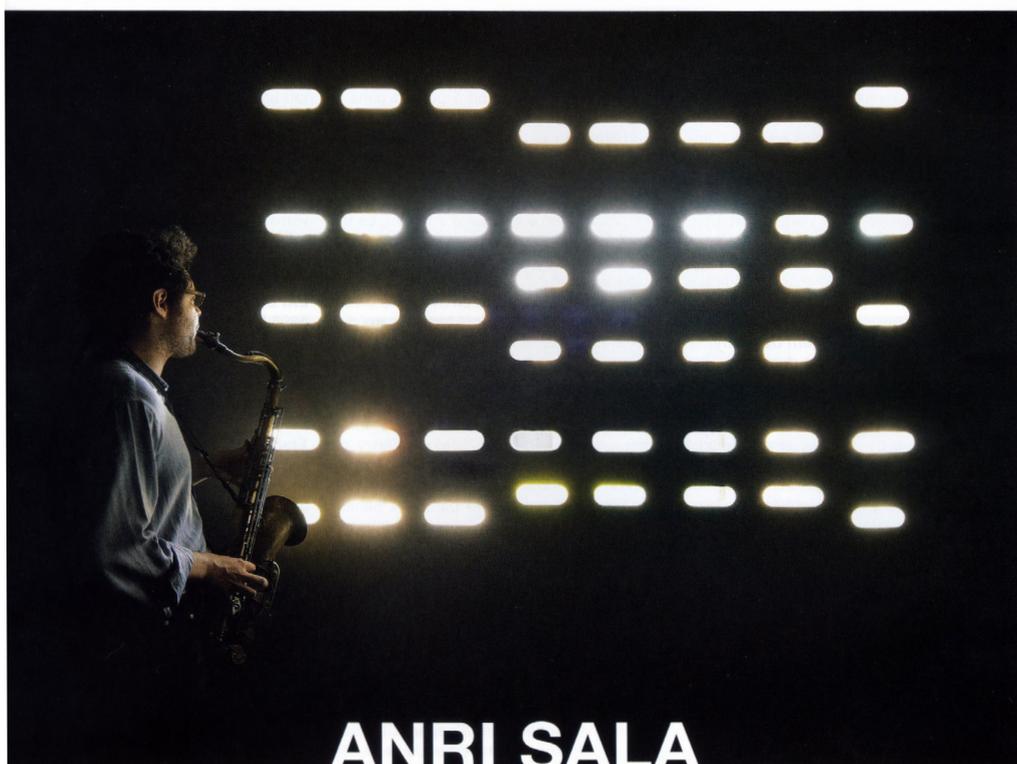
**PP:** Ci hanno messo un po' a trovare una definizione per il mio lavoro: "scenografia" o "coreografia", poi alla fine hanno mutuato dal francese il termine "messa in scena". Per la prima volta ho fatto un'esposizione senza il mio lavoro: c'era ogni sorta di apparecchi, ma senza i miei oggetti. È una specie di coreografia mentale, non autoritaria, con un senso di lettura, ma non chiaro, apparentemente senza testo. L'occhio è attratto da una luce, un suono, da forme che si muovono. Ci sono tanti suoni, a volte estratti di sonate per pianoforte preparato di Cage, o magari un coro che canta una partitura di Duchamp. Ho fatto un pezzo con alcuni interpreti di Cunningham: con dei microfoni attaccati al pavimento, ho registrato in teatro i rumori dei passi dei danzatori. Nello spazio museale, abbiamo invece installato una piattaforma con altoparlanti al posto dei microfoni. Quando i danzatori non ci sono, li sentiamo muoversi. A volte sono realmente presenti, e danzano sui loro stessi passi, sfalsati o desincronizzati, in maniera del tutto imprevedibile. Vedere video scadenti in bianco e nero di coreografie di Cunningham, per me sarebbe stato tremendo. Si trattava di inventare delle forme per capire come, a un certo punto, lui ha chiesto ai suoi interpreti di passare da una posizione a un'altra in modo casuale, senza alcun rapporto con la musica. Questo fatto diventa l'oggetto di un'esperienza: si sentono passi di danza, un estratto musicale, e la cosa funziona. Si capisce senza aver letto nessun testo, è l'esposizione a produrre conoscenza.

**CB:** Un altro tuo caso di desincronizzazione?

**PP:** Sì, ma avrebbe potuto farlo anche Anri, un po' come ci fossero degli scambi tra Cage e Cunningham. A un certo punto, c'è stata questa compressione di personalità forti che avevano qualcosa in comune. È venuto il momento di prenderne atto. Se non è più possibile un senso di comunità nell'arte, il mondo è ridotto davvero male. Impegnarsi nella pratica dell'esposizione, significa impegnarsi anche verso l'altro, verso il fatto che l'altro può avere idee simili. Non esiste copyright che sancisca la pratica, ma questa è sempre rinegoziata nei suoi termini e nella sua autorità.

**CB:** La difficoltà potrebbe essere che, attraversando tante pratiche diverse, ciascuno di voi incarna per se stesso una forma di comune?

**PP:** Il vero pericolo, è che il comune si trasformi in accademia. Anri prepara la mostra per la biennale di Venezia, io sarò al Palais de Tokyo, Douglas Gordon, presto, al Museo d'arte moderna. La procedura è stata accettata, ora sta a noi continuare a giocare, a interrogarci. Perché siamo soltanto all'inizio, c'è ancora tanto da inventare.



## ANRI SALA

### architecte du son et de l'image

interview par Kathryn Rattee

artpress.com

*1395 Days without Red* est un film qui raconte un jour parmi les 1 395 que dura le siège de Sarajevo, et dans lequel s'entrelacent la répétition de l'Orchestre Symphonique, qui répète la *Pathétique* de Tchaïkovski, et la progression d'une jeune musicienne qui traverse la ville assiégée pour rejoindre l'orchestre. C'est autour de ce film que prend forme l'exposition d'Anri Sala au Centre Pompidou, à Paris (2 mai - 6 août 2012), conçue comme une chorégraphie dans laquelle les multiples espaces, temps et sons se télescopent en une cartographie spatiale et sonore. Anri Sala représentera la France à la Biennale de Venise en 2013.

« 3-2-1 ». 2011. Performance interprétée par  
Andre Vida (saxophone). Durée variable.  
(Court. de l'artiste ; Ph. S. Deleu). Live performance  
featuring Andre Vida on saxophone responding  
to the film "Long Sorrow." Duration variable

Depuis le début des années 1990, l'œuvre d'Anri Sala est axée sur l'image animée. Vidéo ou cinéma, ses premières œuvres traitaient de son expérience personnelle dans le contexte des bouleversements sociaux et politiques qui agitaient alors son Albanie natale. Depuis peu, il accorde de plus en plus d'importance au son, élaborant des pièces complexes dans lesquelles il renouvelle son rapport à l'image. Il a également beaucoup travaillé sur le dispositif de l'exposition, utilisant l'architecture, la chorégraphie, le son et la performance dans des installations innovantes qui ont bousculé les modes traditionnels de présentation du cinéma en galerie.

■ Vos expositions constituent des œuvres autonomes, pas seulement des présentations de films ou d'objets. Ma première question concerne donc votre façon de les préparer – par quoi commencez-vous ?

Je commence par penser aux genres de correspondances que je veux établir entre les œuvres que j'ai choisi de présenter, et qui sont susceptibles d'éveiller l'intérêt du public. Mais, en même temps, je dois adapter cette idée à un lieu concret, physique. Les caractéristiques de l'espace et les conditions d'exposition peuvent suggérer à leur tour d'autres choix, qui vont enrichir ou élargir mon idée de départ. Je ne veux pas dire par là que je ressens l'espace physique comme un bloc de contraintes, mais qu'il arrive que ce type d'obstacles soit productif. Et bien sûr, le fait que je tiens à ne pas me répéter joue aussi.

#### JEUX DE MOUVEMENTS

La notion de performance est centrale dans votre travail. La plupart de vos films récents sont nés d'une performance, ou peuvent en amener une. Dans votre dernière exposition à la Serpentine Gallery, vous avez intégré ces deux courants de votre travail – cinéma et performance. Et l'idée de performance s'applique aussi bien à vos sculptures, par exemple la boîte à musique de *No Window No Cry*, ou les *Doldrums*, ces tambours qui ont l'air de jouer tout seuls.

À la Serpentine, c'est la performance qui primait. L'idée était d'élargir un des films avec un élément vivant, pour en faire un événement récurrent à l'intérieur de l'exposition : une performance en live qui briserait le rythme toutes les demi-heures, neuf fois par jour, de manière imprévisible et improvisée. J'avais invité le saxophoniste André Vida à répondre in situ au *Long Sorrow* de Jemeel Moondoc ; dans cette performance, Moondoc est suspendu dans le vide au 18<sup>e</sup> étage d'un immeuble berlinois et il improvise au saxophone sur les bruits de la rue qui montent vers lui. La performance-réaction d'André Vida s'intitulait 3-2-1, et se déroulait dans les trois principaux espaces de la Serpentine ; dans le premier, il

jouait sur un enregistrement de Jemeel Moondoc improvisant sur le film de sa propre performance lors de la projection de *Long Sorrow* à la galerie Chantal Crousel, ce qui donnait un trio ; puis André passait dans le deuxième espace et ne jouait plus que devant les images du film ; il y avait donc un duo entre le musicien présent et le musicien filmé. La performance se concluait par un solo dans la troisième pièce. On était donc dans la répétition, mais avec une dose d'imprévu, ce qui permettait une sorte de dilatation. À la Serpentine, je voulais insister sur la nature performative du cinéma, alors qu'au Centre Pompidou je veux mettre en avant les divers jeux de mouvements en présence : ceux des personnages des films, ceux des spectateurs dans le Centre, et enfin ceux des passants, puisque leur image est projetée dans la salle, les rendant ainsi partie prenante de l'exposition. Par ces jeux de mouvements, on se « promène » (*le Clash* ou *Tlatelolco Clash*), ou qu'on « reste planté » (*Answer Me* ou *1395 Days without Red*), pour ce qui est de mes films ; qu'on suit le parcours balisé, s'agissant du public dans l'espace du musée ; qu'on participe du flot incessant de la circulation piétonne à l'extérieur. La signification de chaque type de mouvements se définit par sa juxtaposition avec les autres, ceux qui sont hors champ, qu'il s'agisse du cadre des films ou de celui de l'exposition.

Un autre aspect de l'exposition au Centre Pompidou concerne le son. Il tient littéralement le rôle de balisage en orientant les mouvements du public dans l'espace. Le son prime sur l'image, contrairement à ce qui se passe le plus généralement, d'une manière ou d'une autre. Christine Macel, la commissaire de l'exposition, parle d'instruments de musique à propos de mes derniers films. Au-delà de chaque histoire particulière, ils ont cela en commun. On pourrait dire qu'il y a le film orgue de barbarie (*Tlatelolco Clash*, 2011), le film boîte à musique (*le Clash*, 2010), le film tambour (*Answer Me*, 2008), le film saxophone (*Long Sorrow*, 2005), même s'il n'est pas dans l'exposition, et le film basson (*1395 Days without Red*), dans lequel cet instrument à vent est associé au souffle et au fredonnement du personnage principal qui trace son chemin dans la ville assiégée. Dans cette exposition, j'imagine les films comme autant de voyelles différentes, qui se mélangent avec l'espace pour le faire sonner.

Pour l'exposition au Centre Pompidou, *1395 Days without Red*, le plus long des films, est fractionné en plusieurs parties, qui sont intercalées dans les trois autres films. Il y aura cinq écrans, mais aucun ne sera « dédié » à un seul film. *1395 Days without Red* sautera d'un écran à l'autre, progressant ainsi simultanément dans sa narration et dans l'espace. Il sera de temps à autre interrompu, sur le même écran, par un autre film qui nous ramè-

nera aux images de départ, celles de *1395 Days without Red*. Les films sont entremêlés de telle sorte que *1395 Days without Red* agisse comme un conducteur guidant le spectateur d'écran en écran. La progression physique dans l'espace se calque ainsi sur le déroulement du film et de sa bande-son.

Trois grandes baies vitrées courent sur trois côtés de la galerie ; deux rangées seront masquées et une seule laissée telle. Ce mur de verre – avec vue sur l'extérieur – sera comme un écran de cinéma projetant les scènes de la rue et de la fontaine devant le Centre.

#### EXPLORER LES ESPACES INTERSTITIELS

*1395 Days without Red est donc le moteur, la colonne vertébrale de l'exposition.*

C'est la colonne vertébrale, c'est-à-dire l'os le plus souple. De nombreuses petites vertèbres lui donnent son élasticité.

#### Établissez-vous une connexion entre l'espace de l'exposition et l'espace du film ?

Quand j'installe une exposition, j'essaie de délocaliser les bandes-son du film dans l'espace, de dégager le son de l'image et des films auxquels il appartient. Dans mes expositions récentes, le son est détaché de son point d'origine. Il ne s'agit pas seulement d'une dissociation du son et de l'image, ce qui n'est pas inhabituel au cinéma ; il s'agit d'un son qui n'est plus associé à l'image, mais à l'espace, qui n'est plus dans l'image, mais dans l'espace.

Je suis fascinée par l'idée que l'on puisse percevoir les notes de la gamme non plus seulement avec les oreilles, mais avec les yeux. Cela fait penser à cet état que l'on appelle la synesthésie. Dans une de ses formes, on entend des sons en réponse aux mouvements qu'on perçoit visuellement. Le stimulus visuel se traduit par une réponse auditive. Ce type de translation me semble proche de ce que vous décrivez. Absolument. C'est d'autant plus fascinant qu'il y a là quelque chose qu'on peut tester empiriquement : dès qu'il s'agit de son et d'image, on a souvent tendance à penser au potentiel poétique de cette combinaison, au fait qu'un son fait penser à une image et vice versa. Ce qui est intéressant, ce sont plus les modifications de la perception susceptibles d'être observées objectivement que l'appréciation consciente ou inconsciente que l'on en a. Il ne s'agit pas d'évoquer quoi que ce soit, mais d'articuler les failles entre les différents médiums de manière à pouvoir faire passer l'esprit par un trou de souris, de lui faire explorer les espaces interstitiels entre les sens.

Nous avons évoqué l'espace et ses rapports avec l'exposition. Qu'en est-il de la relation de l'architecture avec vos films. Elle donne sa forme à la narration.



De haut en bas/from top: « Answer Me », 2008. Vidéo HD. 4' 51". (Court. galeries M. Goodman, New York ; Hauser & Wirth, Zurich/Londres ; Johnen/Schttle, Berlin, Cologne, Munich ; Chantal Crousel, Paris). HD video, Dolby surround sound « 1395 Days without Red ». (Collaboration L. Bégéja) À partir de/from a project by S. Kameric et A. Sala, collab. A. Benjamin Meyers. (Court. M. Goodman, NY Hauser Wirth, Londres © Artangel, Scca/pro.ba)

Elle donne forme en effet. La question est alors de trouver comment l'architecture peut devenir l'acteur principal, mais indirectement. Elle doit influencer, donner sa forme à la narration et nouer l'intrigue. Pour *Long Sorrow*, *Answer Me* et *le Clash*, j'ai d'abord choisi les lieux de tournage, et ensuite seulement ce que j'y tournerais. Le lieu n'est pas seulement l'arrière-plan de l'histoire, posé là pour l'esthétique. Il faut trouver des espaces qui articulent les films grâce à la bande sonore. Les relations sont bien plus fortes entre le son et l'espace qu'entre le son et l'image. Il y a des exemples dans la nature où cette interdépendance son-espace est essentielle.

#### Pour les chauves-souris !

Oui, ou pour le roitelet de Caroline. Il a développé un chant structuré de manière à lui permettre d'évaluer la distance qui le sépare d'un congénère en train de chanter, en « lisant » les déformations imprimées au chant par la topographie, et pas simplement en se fondant sur l'atténuation du son, critère peu fiable puisque des changements atmosphériques

peuvent affecter l'absorption des sons dans des proportions impossibles à calculer à l'avance. Ce que l'oiseau estime plutôt, c'est la dégradation des différents composants du chant, et il en déduit la distance par comparaison. Dans le futur, peut-être le roitelet de Caroline pourra-t-il anticiper l'effet de la topographie sur la détérioration sonore et parviendra-t-il à la compenser de manière préventive. De telle manière qu'en reconfigurant les dynamiques entre les fréquences hautes et basses des ondes sonores, il donnera l'impression de chanter en plusieurs endroits à la fois, mais sans changer de place en réalité. Si je pense à cela, c'est parce que l'anticipation est de plus en plus l'importante dans mon travail. Je l'ai déjà évoquée à propos des effets de la gravité dans *Title Suspended*. Quand on a filmé *Answer Me* dans le dôme de Buckminster Fuller, sur la colline du Teuffelsberg, à Berlin, on voulait jouer avec l'écho particulier de ce dôme, en tirer le maximum d'effets. Le batteur a expérimenté diverses fréquences, en adaptant son jeu aux propriétés acoustiques du lieu, jusqu'à ce qu'il trouve le *beat* parfaitement en accord avec la réverbération. Cela revenait à composer une musique anticipant les effets de l'espace sur le son.

À l'Ircam, on a conçu une pièce qui ne renvoie aucun écho. Dans cette pièce, il est difficile de s'y situer, car, quand on parle, on ne sait pas d'où vient sa propre voix. Le corps est déstabilisé, pris d'une sorte de vertige. La connexion son-espace est vraiment fondamentale pour notre coordination sensorielle.

*Je voudrais revenir à 1395 Days without Red. L'architecture de la ville détermine la progression du personnage. Pour ce film, vous avez créé une structure liant architecture et musique.*

*1395 Days without Red* imbrique deux histoires : les répétitions quotidiennes de l'orchestre philharmonique de Sarajevo, et le trajet d'une musicienne se rendant à cette répétition à travers la ville assiégée. Les deux histoires suivent la « partition » de la même symphonie, avec les tempos prescrits par le compositeur. L'orchestre joue la musique, la femme la fredonne. Une série d'arrêts et de reprises perturbent l'interprétation, tandis que la progression de la femme à travers la ville est ponctuée par les franchissements hasardeux de carrefours transformés en pièges mortels. Elle essaie de garder le tempo, alors qu'elle doit accélérer le pas à chaque croisement pour « sauver sa peau » et que ces courses éperdues laissent pantelante. Le souffle court, elle ne fredonne plus de la même manière, or c'est ce fredonnement qui la relie à l'orchestre. Lorsqu'elle peut faire une pause, c'est le tempo de la symphonie qui l'aide à reprendre son souffle, qui lui permet de recommencer à fredonner. C'est la marque du temps opposée à la marque de l'espace. En un sens, la partition orchestrale et la « grille » architecturale sont désynchronisées – comme si, pendant un siège, la trame urbaine plaquait les accords de la musique aux mauvais endroits. C'est la topographie de la ville qui dicte la mesure.



« Tlatelolco Clash ». 2011. Vidéo. 11' 49"  
(Court. kurimanzutto, Mexico City, Marian Goodman Gallery, New York ; Hauser & Wirth, Zurich, Londres ; Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris ; Kaikai Kiki, Tokyo).  
Video, Dolby surround sound

**CHORÉGRAPHER UNE GESTUELLE**  
*Vous revenez sur l'idée de la ville dans beaucoup de vos films. Vous allez cadrer un morceau très connu de Paris à partir de votre exposition du Centre Pompidou.*

Je suis toujours intéressé par l'histoire du lieu, même si je préfère ne pas en tirer le sujet de mes films. Il n'est pas nécessaire que le spectateur connaisse cette histoire, mais s'il le fait, cela ajoute une couche de sens supplémentaire. J'ai choisi de tourner *Tlatelolco Clash* dans le quartier éponyme à Mexico. Un site important, puisque c'est là que les Aztèques ont livré et perdu leur dernière bataille face aux Espagnols, et où, des siècles plus tard, en 1968, eut lieu le massacre des étudiants. Architecturalement, c'est un mille-feuille de périodes et de styles. Il y a les ruines des

pyramides aztèques ; à côté, on trouve une église, bâtie avec des moellons récupérés sur les pyramides, et tout autour s'élèvent les grands immeubles modernes dessinés par Mario Pani, certains d'entre eux ont d'ailleurs été complètement détruits par le tremblement de terre. M'intéressait le fait que cette continuité apparente ait été brisée à plusieurs occasions, ruptures évoquées comme en écho par la bande-son du film, la mélodie tronquée de *Should I Stay or Should I Go* [des Clash], jouée à l'orgue de barbarie. Exploiter visuellement cette juxtaposition de ruines aztèques, d'église catholique et d'immeubles modernes est un peu compliqué, mais le lien, c'est l'histoire du lieu. Parallèlement, il est difficile de reconnaître le titre punk dans les fragments constamment interrompus du morceau, d'autant qu'ils se chevauchent de façon aléatoire.

*Dans 1395 Days without Red, cet arrière-plan historique semble plus prégnant. C'est bien l'histoire de la ville qui joue un rôle de premier plan.*

Elle est peut-être moins en retrait. Pourtant, le but n'était pas de raconter l'histoire de la ville assiégée, mais de chorégraphier la gestuelle imposée par l'état de siège. L'action est sous-tendue par tous ces gestes qui sont la mémoire de ce que la ville a eu à endurer. J'accorde aux postures un rôle significatif dans tous mes films. Mouliner pour l'orgue de barbarie ou remonter délicatement la boîte à musique, ce sont avant tout des gestes.

**Quelle importance accordez-vous au temps dans votre travail.**

Je pense que ce qui compte le plus, c'est la relation entre le temps et le tempo, entre la permanence et l'impermanence. C'est l'oscillation entre le temps régulier et le temps des à-coups qui m'intéresse.

**La manière dont vous avez conçu votre exposition, telle une boucle fixe, s'inscrit elle aussi dans le temps.**

Une exposition se déroule aussi bien dans le temps que dans l'espace, comme une chorégraphie qui aboutirait à une cartographie spatiale, où le temps enregistré des films rejoint le temps de la déambulation du public dans l'espace de la galerie. En face d'ailleurs, mais comme en arrière-plan de l'exposition, les gens vont et viennent dans la rue Saint-Merri, chacun suit son tempo personnel sans se douter qu'il participe au décor d'un espace intérieur qu'il ne fait que longer. ■

Traduit par Michel Pencreac'h

Kathryn Rattee est commissaire à la Serpentine Gallery, à Londres.

Installation à la Serpentine Gallery, Londres 2011  
À gauche/left: « No Window no Cry ». 2011.  
Au centre : « Le Clash », 2010.  
À droite/right: « Score », 2011. (Ph. S. Deleu)



## Anri Sala Architect of Sounds and Images

**1395 Days without Red** is a film which recounts one of the 1,395 days of the siege of Sarajevo, in which the Symphony Orchestra's rehearsals of Tchaikovsky's *Pathétique* are interspersed with shots of a young musician walking through the besieged city to reach the orchestra. This film is the centerpiece of Sala's show at the Pompidou Center (May 2–August 6), which has been conceived as a choreography in which multiple space-times come together to form a spatial and aural map. Sala will represent France at Venice next year.

Since the late 1990s, Anri Sala has worked mainly with the moving image. His early videos and films mined his personal experience to reflect on the social and political change taking place in his native Albania. More recently, Sala has attached a growing importance to sound, creating complex works in which he recasts its relationship with the image. Sala has also increasingly been interested in exploring the possibilities of the exhibition format itself, using architecture, choreography, sound and performance to develop innovative installations that challenge traditional modes of presenting film in the gallery space.

### THE PLAY OF MOVEMENTS

*Your exhibitions operate like works in themselves, rather than as collections of discrete films or objects. I'd like to begin by asking you about your process of making a show—where do you start?*

I start by thinking in an abstract sense about what kind of correspondence I want to establish between the works that I'm choosing to present in the show and what kind of relationship aspects of their correspondence will inherently trigger with the audience. But at the same time, I am also thinking about matching this idea with a real, physical space. The space's specific characteristics and conditions can suggest further choices, which can expand or enrich what I am already thinking about. I wouldn't say that the physical space enters into the process as a set of limitations, but sometimes restrictions like this can be productive. Of course, another consideration is that I do not want to repeat what I have already done.

*The idea of performance has become very important in your work. More specifically, most of your recent films are born of a performance or could lead to one. In your recent show at the Serpentine Gallery, you were able to integrate these two strands of your*

*work—film and performance. And the performative idea can also be applied to your sculptures, for example the music box of No Window No Cry or the Doldrums, which are drums that appear to play themselves.*

Performance was very important at the Serpentine. The idea was to expand one of the films through a live element and transform it into a recurrent offshoot in the show: a live performance that would interrupt the show's time-coded program every half an hour, nine times a day, in unpredictable and improvised ways. I invited the saxophonist André Vida to respond live to Jemeel Moondoc's performance in *Long Sorrow*, in which Moondoc is suspended in mid-air outside the 18th floor of an apartment building in Berlin and improvises on his saxophone in response to the urban void under his feet. The performance with André is called 3-2-1 and it took place through the three main spaces of the Serpentine. In the first space André played to a recording of Jemeel Moondoc improvising at Galerie Chantal Crousel along with his own earlier performance in *Long Sorrow*; resulting in a trio. Then André would move into the second room and respond to the film; a duet between the musician in the exhibition and the musician in the film. Ultimately the performance would end in a solo coda when André finishes playing on his own in the third room.

So there was repetition but also unpredictability within this repetition, which allowed for a kind of expansion. While the Serpentine show foregrounded the performative nature of the films, for the show at the Centre Pompidou I want to highlight the distinction between the movements of the characters in the films, of the audience in the show and the passersby outside the exhibition, whose visibility from inside the show makes them part of the experience of the exhibition. The distinctness of these movements extends from "wandering" (in my films *Le Clash* or *Tlatelolco Clash*) to "being stuck" (in *Answer Me* or *1395 Days without Red*) in the films, to the scripted flux of the audience inside the exhibition space, to the uninterrupted fluidity of the passersby outdoors. The significance of each type of movement will be defined through their juxtaposition with the other movements outside the frame, whether this is the frame of the films or the frame of the exhibition.

Another aspect of the show at the Centre Pompidou is the role of sound, which will literally direct the movement of the audience within the space. Sound will lead the image rather than the more usual situa-

tion in which sound follows the image in some way. Christine Macel, who is the curator of the show, spoke of my recent films as musical instruments. Beyond their individual narratives, the films share this common feature. In a manner of speaking, there is the barrel organ film (*Tlatelolco Clash*, 2011), the music box film (*Le Clash*, 2010), the drum film (*Answer Me*, 2008), the saxophone film (*Long Sorrow*, 2005), although this will not be in the show, and the bassoon film (*1395 Days without Red*), where the wind instrument is associated with the breathing and the humming of the main character trying to make her way across the besieged city. In the show I imagine the films like distinct vowels that merge with the space to sound with it.

So for the show at the Pompidou, *1395 Days without Red*, which is the longest film, is cut into parts, which are interspersed with the other three films. There will be five screens and the films do not "own" their own screens. *1395 Days without Red* will proceed from one screen to another simultaneously advancing in both its narrative and in the space. On its route around the exhibition space it will sometimes be interrupted in the same screen by another film, which will eventually lead us back to *1395 Days without Red*. In the exhibition, the films are interwoven so that it is always the conductor in *1395 Days without Red* that leads the viewer to the next screen. In both the film and the show, physical progress through the space is conducted by him and conveyed by the sound of the orchestra. The gallery has three long walls of windows, two of which will be covered while the third wall of windows is left open. This windowed wall—its view unobstructed—will be a bit like a cinema screen looking out onto the street and the public fountains outside the gallery.

*And 1395 Days without Red is like the engine or the backbone of the show.*

It is the backbone but at the same time it's the most broken bone. The backbone is broken into so many pieces, and this is what gives it its elasticity.

*Are you making a link between the space of the exhibition and the space of the film?*

When making a show I try to relocate the soundtracks of the films into the space, to disengage sound from the image and the films to which it belongs. In my recent exhibitions, sound is detached from its point of origin. I'm not just speaking of the disassociation of sound and image, which is not uncommon in cinema, I'm speaking of

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sound no longer being associated to the image but to the space, of making sound one not with the image but with the space.

*I'm fascinated by this idea that the note of a score becomes something that you experience with a different sense, not with your ears anymore but with your eyes. It makes me think of this condition that exists called synaesthesia. In one particular type, people hear sounds in response to movement that they perceive visually. Information is perceived visually but is experienced aurally. This kind of translation seems very close to what you are describing.*

**Absolutely.** This is fascinating because it is also something that can be tested empirically. The moment you talk about sound and image, people are often drawn to thinking of the poetic potential of their combination, of how a sound makes you think of an image or vice-versa. What is more interesting to me is that these shifts in perception can be objectively surveyed, however conscious or unconscious their appreciation may be. It's not about evoking something, it's about articulating the gaps between different media in order to bring the mind through the rabbit hole and into the interstitial spaces between the senses. *We have spoken about space in connection*

*with your exhibitions, but what about space, and more specifically architecture, in relation to your individual films? It often has a role in shaping the narrative in your films.*

Shaping is the best way to put it. The questions is how can architecture become the main character but indirectly. So it is about using architecture to influence and shape the narrative and enhance the drama. With *Long Sorrow*, *Answer Me* and *Le Clash*, I first found the location and then considered what could happen in it. The location is not just the background of the story, there to enhance the aesthetic. For me, the important thing is to find spaces that can articulate the film via the sound. There is a much stronger relationship between sound and space than between sound and image. There are examples in nature where this interdependence of sound and space is essential.

*Bats?*

Yes or this bird called the Carolina Wren, which is a type of small bird that can estimate the distance that separates it from a conspecific singer thanks to its understanding of the impact of geography on its song. The Carolina Wren has developed the ideal song structure to enable it to estimate distance based not simply on the overall

« Friday 10.07.2009 (Why the Lion Roars) », 2011.

Photographie couleur, 41 x 52 cm.

(Court. Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris). *Color photograph*

attenuation of the sound, which would be an unreliable clue because weather changes can affect the atmospheric absorption of sound in unforeseeable ways. Instead, the bird can estimate distance by comparing the degradation of different components of the song. I like to think that in the future, in an evolutionary leap forward, the Carolina Wren could do more than calculate the distance of the conspecific singer. I hope that one day it can anticipate the effect of geography on its song's deterioration and compensate for it in advance. So that by recomposing the dynamics between high and low sound waves, the Wren could sing as if it were in different locations without ever actually changing place.

Perhaps I think of it because of the growing importance of anticipation in my work. I spoke earlier of anticipating the effect of gravity in *Title Suspended*. When we filmed *Answer Me* inside the Buckminster Fuller dome in Teuffelsberg in Berlin, we wanted to compose with the dome's echo in mind, triggering it as much as possible. The drummer experimented with different frequency arrangements, adjusting his

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drumming to take into account the acoustics of the dome, until he found the perfect drum beat for the frequency response of the space. It was like composing music in anticipation of the effect of the space on the sound.

At IRCAM (Institute for Research and Coordination in Acoustics and Music, Paris) there is a room designed to have absolutely no echo and what is amazing is that being in the space, you lose your balance. It becomes difficult to situate yourself in the room, because it's as if when speaking you can no longer sense where your voice comes from. The body feels unbalanced and it produces a feeling of vertigo. The connection between sound and space is fundamental to our sense of coordination.

#### CHOREOGRAPHING GESTURES

*I want to return to 1395 Days without Red because it is the music that drives the main character's movement through the film, but it is also the architecture of the city that, in the end, determines her progress. You have brought both music and architecture together in this film to create the structure..*

*1395 Days Without Red* intertwines a daily rehearsal of the Sarajevo Philharmonic Orchestra with a musician crossing the besieged city on her way to the rehearsal. They are both following the "score" of the same symphony at the prescribed tempo, which is set out in the score. The orchestra plays it, while the woman hums it. A series of difficulties with the tempo interrupt the orchestra's run-through, as the woman's progress through the city is halted by a succession of street-crossings that the siege has turned into probable dead-ends. The woman tries to keep the same tempo but at the same time, because at each crossing she has to run for her life, her breathing is affected. This in turn has an impact on her humming, which is what ties her back to the orchestra. When she has a moment to rest, the tempo of the symphony helps her catch her breath and start humming again. It's time signature versus space signature. In a sense the musical score of the orchestra and the architectural 'score' of the city are off register, out of sync—it's as if, under siege, the urban grid puts the bars in the wrong places in the music. The topography of the city becomes like a set of measures itself.

*What about the role of the city in your work? It is obviously central in 1395 Days without Red but also Tlatelolco Clash and earlier works such as Dammi i Colori. You've returned to the idea of the city in many of your films and, as you've described, you will also frame a view on to a well-known part of Paris in your exhibition at the Pompidou.*

I'm always interested in the historical background of a location, although I prefer it not to become a subject in my films. The viewer doesn't have to know about the history of the site, but, if they do, it certainly adds another layer. I chose to film *Tlatelolco Clash* in the Tlatelolco site of Mexico City. It is an important site because that is where the Aztecs were finally beaten by the Spanish and where centuries later the student massacre of 1968 took place. Architecturally, it is a mix of different layers and periods. There are the ruins of the Aztec pyramids, and next to the ruins is a church that was built with stones plundered from the pyramids and surrounding these structures are modernist buildings designed by Mario Pani, some of which no longer exist as they were destroyed by the earthquake. What interested me was that the continuity of this area had been severely broken more than once, a rupture that echoed somehow the soundtrack of the film, the broken melody of *Should I Stay or Should I Go* played on a barrel organ. Visually speaking it is hard to explain the juxtaposition of the Aztec ruins with a catholic church and to the modernist buildings, but they are all connected in one location following one history. Similarly, it is hard to guess the punk song from the randomly played different sections of the song constantly interrupting each other in the film.

*In 1395 Days Without Red this historical content seems to be less in the background, however. The history of the city plays a more prominent role in the film.*

Yes, perhaps it's less in the background. Nevertheless, the aim was not to tell the story of the besieged city, but to choreograph the gestures that the siege prompted. The action is driven by gestures that carry the memory of what the city went through. Gestures are significant in all my

films. Playing the barrel organ or carefully cranking the music box are gestures too.

*One last thing I wanted to ask about, Anri, is the importance of time in your work. I think what is relevant is the relation between time and tempo, even and uneven. I'm interested in this oscillation between even and uneven time.*

*And of course, with the way you have conceived the exhibition, as a fixed loop, it also becomes something that is described in time. For me an exhibition unfolds in time as much as it unfolds in space, like a choreography of time that creates a cartography of space, joining the recorded time of the films with the time the audience spends navigating the exhibition space. Just outside the gallery space, in the background of the exhibition people pass by Rue Saint-Merri at their own pace unaware that they have become the background of an adjacent interior space. ■*

*Kathryn Rattee is exhibition curator at the Serpentine Gallery, London.*

#### Anri Sala

Né en / born 1974 à / in Tirana (Albanie)

Vit à / lives in Berlin

Expositions récentes / Recent shows:

2009 Marian Goodman Gallery, New York

2011 Musée d'art contemporain, Montréal

Kaikaiki, Tokyo ; National Museum of Art, Osaka

Serpentine Gallery, Londres

Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris

Kurimanzutto, Mexico

2012 Centre Pompidou, Paris

2013 Biennale de Venise, pavillon français

« Le Clash ». 2010. Vidéo HD  
8'31". (Court. Galerie Chantal Crousel, Paris)  
HD Video, Dolby surround sound



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