Miniaturen 15

(version 1.0.1)

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Miniaturen 15 is a series of visual notations for solo performers. The series consists of four groups of pieces, each of which is based on a particular generative algorithm that renders a possibly infinite number of related pieces. In this edition, three sets of parameters have been chosen for each group, giving rise to **twelve pieces with a duration of 62 seconds.**

Each piece of *Miniaturen 15* is intended to be **performed by a solo instrument**, but there is no rule regarding the choice of instrument. The pieces have been rendered as black-and-white, square format video sequences of said duration. Although the musicians are free to decide whether the passing of time in the videos corresponds to their interpretation of the piece, the performance includes a **projection of the corresponding videos.** The videos thus not only function as notations for instrumental interpretation but as autonomous aesthetic objects themselves. The audience is presented with questions of **interference** between the visual and the auditory sense, between writing as a sign-system and writing as pure trace.

Each group presents a different strategy or material which is visually rendered. The materials have been chosen for their poetic quality and their personal value to me. The following section explains how these pieces are to be performed in general, followed by individual sections for each group of pieces. Please read these sections carefully.

Instructions for the Performer

A performance of *Miniaturen 15* may include a subset of the provided pieces in any chosen order and interpreted by any musical instrument. Being primarily a sound artist and electroacoustic composer, the idea of telling you, the musician, precisely what sound to make at what moment with what articulation not only appears foreign to me but also uninteresting. This does not mean that a performance is arbitrary. On the contrary, the visual notations are precise and ask for a thorough and precise interpretation. You may find it useful to improvise over these scores, but you should settle on a clearly defined interpretation before the performance in front of audience.

The performance of each piece should last 62 seconds during which the video is projected. **Time as it passes in the video need not correspond to the time of your musical performance.** That is to say, you must only ensure that you begin and end simultaneously with the video, but you may have extracted musical parameters and actions from the score that unfold their time independent from the movement of images. Indeed, decoupling these two time dimensions may yield the most convincing results.

Try to avoid the obvious. The contours of *Peripherien* (one of the groups) may suggest the upward and downward motion of pitches, since this is how the vertical dimension in a traditional score is understood. But this interpretation is banal. It

could equally be the motion of your arm, your foot, your head, your motion on the stage, etc.

When studying a score, you may find it useful to print individual frames from the videos (perhaps with inverted colours) and annotate them on paper. Try to understand the following aspects of each piece:

- the particular rhythmic and spatial structure

- the context of the generating system

- the "camera" and "photography"

- the surface, the haptic and textural quality of the material

- the different scales from micro to macro

Try to establish a relationship between you and the material. What does it remind you of—not superficially but on second thought—can you relate to it and in what sense? Are you a neutral observer or entangled? You may choose a focus on a subset of aspects in each piece. If you feel overwhelmed, stop and reduce. **Choose your own pace, do not let the piece dictate a speed or tempo.** Think of the format of a miniature, a **reduction to small scale and sparseness.** But at all times, be acute and read the score meticulously.

A successful performance is one where an interesting interference occurs between the visual and the sonic layer. Avoid musical patterns you are accustomed to. Think purely in sound. Do not think of the sound as a direct translation of the images you see, but allow both media to breathe, to support and complement each other.

There is no hierarchy between the pieces within each group or between the groups. The following sections describe the groups in alphabetical order. These descriptions are by no means replacements or commensurate to the visual scores, their purpose is merely to provide context.

Partikel

The three *Partikel* pieces, *Partikel 50982b9*, *Partikel 1ff54f0f*, and *Partikel 589db7b0*, are based on text fragments. Shifting forces are attached to letters and words, producing different motions and arrangements. Some traditional conceptual art pieces reduce to ideational-textual descriptions or instructions, but here text also becomes physical, with changing neighbourhoods and occultations of words. Although the number of parameters controlling the layout is rather small, the algorithm is complex enough to make it difficult to exactly control the outcome. Thus, an overall theme of these pieces is the emergence of geometries that are enabled by algorithms precisely when we abandon the wish of total control.

Partikel 50982b9
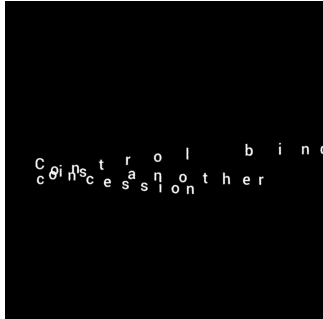
This piece is composed of three statements: «A basic impasse of all control machines is this: Control needs time in which to exercise control» / «Concession is another control bind» / «But words are still the principal instruments of control». In fact time does not circulate in control systems, it is effectively annihilated. Think of the pairs conceptualisation–perception or goal-setting (intention)–goal-attainment. If one is the fulfilment of the other, process and time would not be of the essence and we would not need a performance.

The paradox of control is condensed in another statement from Burroughs' text (not depicted in the video): «All control systems try to make control as tight as possible, but at the same time, if they succeeded completely, there would be nothing left to control». When performing this piece, try to reflect your relation to control when it comes to the play of the instrument and when it comes to your audience. Can you put yourself in a situation where control ceases and something surprising emerges? Something that is not the depiction of the loss of control but the interference between you, the sounding machine, and the site. You may think of Lone Man in Jarmusch's movie, at once commanded by the appearance of paper shreds, at once capable of overcoming time and space.

Partikel 1ff54f0f
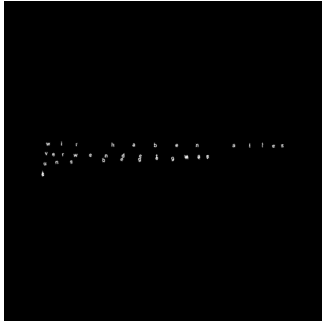
The text fragment reads: «Wir haben alles verwendet was uns begegnet ist (das Nächstliegende und das Entfernteste)», or in the English translation of A Thousand Plateaus: «we have made use of everything that came within range (, what was closest as well as farthest away)». We could read this as a general statement of the parasitic nature of art, its drive to appropriate things. It is the idea of excess, that we go and dissolve the apparent boundaries by crossing them to the outside and to the inside. It is also a statement about topologies, the acknowledgement that sometimes there are tunnels, connections between two things that seem the farthest away.

How do we group things together, how do we establish neighbourhoods, similarities, congruencies? Are there extremes that are at the same time closest to each other? What is the relationship between the individual and each chosen group—chosen by an intrinsic dynamic of the element, chosen by us, or chosen through an interference between the element and us—and how does our view of it change when we get closer or more remote? Try to get rid of psychology, forget the concept of psychology and the crafting of musical perception. Think of the notion of form as established by this interference and by the absence of cognition.

Partikel 589db7b0
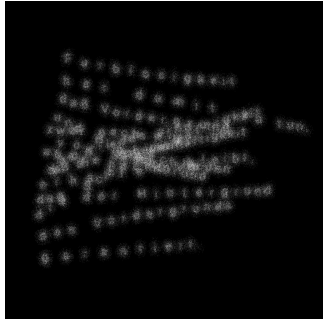
The text fragment reads: «Farblosigkeit hat damit zu tun, daß Vordergrund und Hintergrund zwar nach wie vor geschieden aber nicht ver-schieden sind, daß die Schemenhaftigkeit erhalten bleibt, daß der Hintergrund die Schemenhaftigkeit des Vordergrunds garantiert.» Or in English: «Achromaticity has to do with a condition where foreground and background are separated but not differentiated, where things remain apparitional and the background warrants the apparition of the foreground.»

In a way this reiterates the idea of a non-psychological gestalt, a request to imagine something that we are not really capable of imagining except perhaps in semi-somnolence or through a (possibly unbounded) circumscription process. For this piece it may be useful to think about the difference between a sound and everything that is not that sound. Also, to think of a sound that cannot be differentiated from its background, from the ambience. Or, that becomes one with its ambience. Or, that anticipates its background. Or, that is background to an already existing foreground. To produce a sound that forestalls its reverberation and decay, thereby undoing it and putting you back to square one.

Peripherien

The three *Peripherien* pieces, *Peripherie 45bc013a, Peripherie ac0d8490,* and *Peripherie c20b1a57,* are based on scans. The first scan was a manual process in which the contours of pruned branches of trees were transferred onto wax paper using crayons. This happened many years ago and the original purpose was to produce moulds for ceramics that would constitute sounding discs in an sound installation on these trees. This installation was never realised, but I was always thinking of the collection of dozens of wax papers and the beauty inherent in these drawings. The second scan was to digitise the papers in the highest possible resolution so they could be used for computer processing. The third scan is a geometrical transformation from the closed round contours to an entirely horizontal or vertical linear form, constituting the "scores" to be performed.

Peripherie 45bc013a
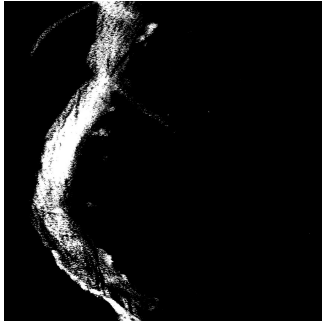
This scan unfolds in a vertical "sinking" motion. Instead of being infinitely fine, the beading of the branches that kept growing after the pruning resulted in a thick structured boundary that now appears as a patterned band, sometimes partitioned, sometimes yielding offshoots. There is a quality of earth and moss to it, as if the contour was replaced by the growth of new branches, as if its flatness was replaced by pronounced depths.

Perhaps this piece is about the suspension of the distinction between natural and artificial, about the always already invested possibility of thickness and depth. About verticality. About difference and repetition. . . there is the reappearance of the initial image at the end of the piece, albeit from a different perspective. One thing I value most about Tarkovsky's movies is the slow scanning motion of the camera that eventually returns to a previous position only to reveal that everything has subtly changed.

Peripherie ac0d8490
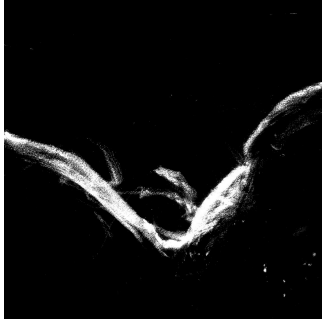
This scan unfolds in the almost expected conventional Western left-to-right reading direction. The panning is slow. There is again something forestal about it, the resemblance of root systems, gradually obtaining a character of bones and X-ray vision that finally reveals a strongly resonating mark.

For the performance of this piece it may be useful to revisit the scene of Chris Marker's Tarkovsky portrait where he analyses the camera position that looks slightly down on the characters, exposing their growing together with the landscape. In the ensemble formed of player, instrument, sound, space, who is who—camera, motion, landscape, character? Many permutations are conceivable.

Peripherie c20b1a57
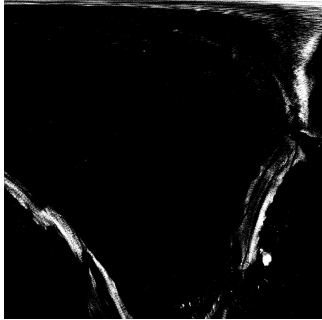
Perhaps the most evocative of the three renderings, the overall motion is from right-to-left, while emphasising the elasticity of the imaging process through a modulation of the geometry that results in concurrent opposite motions. The stretching and thinning undermines the promise of the scan as a fixed picture. Distances and angles are not what they seem to be. Territories open and finally lead to a calligraphic extension.

Phasen

The three *Phasen* pieces, *Phase 1de991d8*, *Phase 5aeddbc9*, and *Phase e224f03c*, are based on Lyapunov fractals. These structures are produced by the recursive application of a logistic map function, representing a simple dynamic system that can yield very complex trajectories. I chose these functions because I had experimented with them a long time ago and I had found their visualisations highly attractive. The *Miniaturen 15* project is all about bringing previously encountered elements into new contexts, so I am curious to see how these dynamic systems act in their role as scores. Being scale-invariant and self-similar, fractals possess the fascinating property of endlessness, they operate in a space that is bounded but nevertheless inexhaustible.

Phase 1de991d8

This is a very rapid succession of seemingly disconnected images, some lasting barely longer than the blink of an eye. It is the result of an interpolation of the characteristic binary string that determines the fractal. Start and end situation have the same parametric representation except for a single added digit. Therefore, while in one representation the transition is maximally reduced, in the other "representation"—the actual rendering—it is maximally excessive. This is what interests me: How a different choice of representation is a source of novelty and irreducible material production.

For the preparation of the performance it may be useful to skim through the video frame by frame, perhaps selecting only a few frames based on which the sound is developed. The relevant principle is that the mere fact that one frame follows the other produces, in the eye of the beholder, a continuity and coherence. Even if you decide to use disconnected gestures or sounds, they suggest a connection and textuality through their immediate temporal succession.

Phase 5aeddbc9
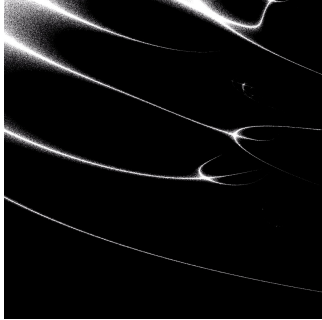
This rendering is characterised by moving lines, opening and closing of bifurcations. The contrast between black and white denotes the change from instability to stability. The boundaries of this balancing act are continuously shifting. The boundaries are what is interesting. For example, Varela, while not really speaking *about* the boundary, says there is a dance around the boundary of organisationally closed systems (such is a self-computing fractal), between self-governance from the inside and control from the outside.

When performing this piece, one might think about bifurcation and the inversion of boundaries. That not the inside and the outside establish the boundary, but that there is a place called a boundary that has its own dynamic and that produces insides and outsides, makes a one become many and makes many become a one.

Phase e224f03c
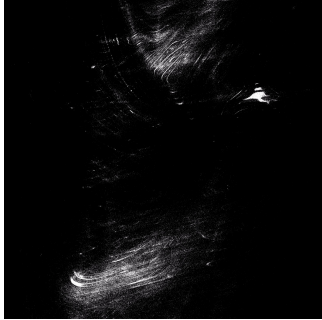
This piece uses a very long binary string for the algorithm, resulting in a large number of thin semi-transparent layers, a sort of polyphony or multiplicity. There is a dominant impression of interferences with allusions to ultrasound recordings or diving in deep sea, with all the strange things and creatures appearing, something of a 'Wild Blue Yonder'. As the piece progresses, the image becomes more foggy, we seem to sink deeper. The atmosphere is contemplative and calm, time is suspended. The piece is only a short transitory window into this enduring world.

Prothesen

The three *Prothesen* pieces, *Prothese 521f9faf*, *Prothese 7a510609*, and *Prothese b3a70216*, are based on the leaked video recording of the gunsight camera from a USA military helicopter, depicting the murder of several men in Baghdad, including two journalists. When the video surfaced in 2010, I was like many deeply shocked by it. We have all grown accustomed to the video games aesthetics of contemporary wars, beginning with the green night vision simulacra from the first Iraq war. We now know, although our governments are not taking any action, that in this very moment death machines are flying over Yemen and other countries, controlled by fathers of families that live in the idyllic surroundings of Ramstein and many other sites thousands of kilometres away. Committing murder remotely though the use of high tech protheses, sanctioned by authorities, has become a regular job, but we should always be reminded of the existence of these fascist configurations.
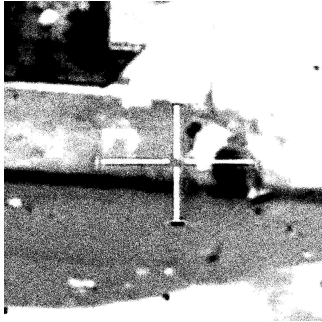
Prothese 521f9faf
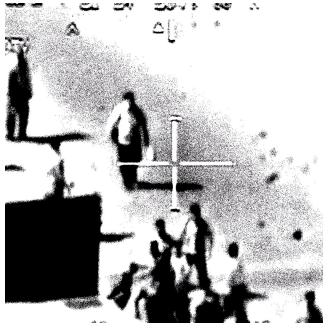
People are noisy blobs that move slowly in the heat. The crosshair initially follows Saeed Chmagh who carries a photo camera, then moving over to his colleague Namir Noor-Eldeen. There is an overall motion, people join in pairs, shadows oscillate.

Prothese 7a510609

Saeed is crawling wounded after the first helicopter attack. The helicopter is circling its prey. We do not hear the sarcastic voice that begs Saeed to pick up "a weapon" to legally finish him off with another round of 30mm bullets. Time is reversed. There is some dirt on the gunsight lens.

Prothese b3a70216
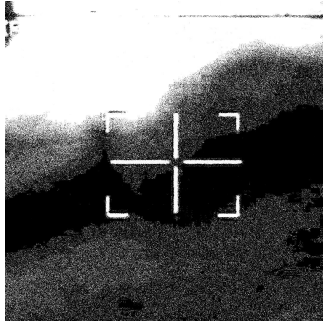
The gun is idle, seemingly randomly scanning the landscape. Noise is increased to maximum. A temporal resampling applied produces particular afterimages and contours resembling high-pass filters. Automatic gain control of the prothesis turns brightness up and down. A circulatory collapse.