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**who/IS**

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# On Taking Back An Artifical Separation

Intermodal perception in *Energie-Passagen*  
by Monika Fleischmann and Wolfgang Strauss

( Introduction to the panel *Sound Art Visual  
transmediale.05* February 4th 2005 )

*[Tonbeispiel: Audio Fleischmann Strauss, Energie-Passagen, 0:00-1:28]*

Imagine that:

We find ourselves in a space, surrounded by words and movements, colours and shapes, shadows and noises. They run through us

And we move through this space. We see bodily forms, plants around us, architectural elements.

The words vibrate through our bodies. On we move, we read words, perceive shapes and forms, colours and sounds around us.

All of this description might seem pretty trivial and vague to you - or even basic.

But still:

We *do* claim that those diverse sensory fields, brought together in my descriptions and in every single moment of our present perception, that these fields *do* exist with no connection to each other – when we speak about art.

We even seem to believe that sensual perception could merely be *possible* whilst separating the sensory fields.

So: Why do we stick to such bluntly paradoxical beliefs?

In this brief introduction I will not force you to dive too deep with me into the ramifications of the history of art, music or culture. But speaking of multisensual artifacts, of sound, art and visuals, we need at least to be aware that our contemporary trivial separation of single senses and single media was not trivial to all times.

Most of the artworks we see, hear or feel these days, in this exhibition, are – as strange as this might seem to you – still part of the european-occidental tradition of producing artifacts: made for no other purpose than to percieve them, to contemplate, to talk about or to play with or in them – or to refer to them in making another artwork. And this now even makes things much more complicated.

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The question is: Does there truely exist one artform or one form of expression, that works on one of those sensory fields – really separated from all the others?

Strangely enough, since the first efforts were made to define and to establish such a special and noble cultural practice that we know by the name of ›Art‹, there have been on the other side frequently recurrent efforts to bridge and to delete this *artificial separation of the senses*. Several forms of intermodal sensual perception and production emerged; artists, critics and philosophers spoke of »synaesthesia«; and the by now notorious »Gesamtkunstwerk« with its Wagnerian origin came to life. We saw *Inter-, Multi- or Transmedia*.

Numerous examples could be named here – and you will name them, our guests will name them; and probably most of you do work on them.

And in looking at them, listening to them and playing or visiting them, we could ask us: Why the hell an author, composer or producer did feel the urge to bring together diverse media, artforms and sensory fields at all?

In this context here, under the title of *Sound Art Visual* I would like to shed a light on an artwork that is *not* explicitly a work of audio or visual art exclusively.

But so it allows us to gain an revealing insight on how those factors of basic perception and connection between the senses can come into play – even if this linking of sensory fields is *not* the main issue of an artwork.

## Energie-Passagen

November last year, 2004, one could see, in front of the *Literaturhaus in München*, at the *Salvatorplatz*, how people went through lines of words – flowing on the ground.

Words, extracted from the daily online-version of the biggest local newspaper, the *Süddeutsche Zeitung*. Filtered to give a lexical representation of the news that daily invade the minds of the city of munich, one could select single words – by touching a screen or speaking into a microphone.

The selected one popped out, went green and went on on the stream of words.

Above all one could hear the voice of an almost human sounding synthetic voice speaking the flowing and the selected words.

*[Bildbeispiel: Fleischmann Strauss, Video Energie-Passagen, 0:00-1:22]*

## Movements and Interferences

So, what connects this multimedia-installation-work in public space, fed by newsstreams to the topic of this panel?

Obviously there is generated sound; we read textual visuals; move through a strangely changed space of light and sound. And all this is brought together in an artifact that places itself in the tradition of transatlantic, international media art. Signalized by the specific habitus of the viewers, listeners and visitors; *and* signalized by the presence of this example on this panel, in this little introduction – on a media art festival.

But what happens here? If we had possibility to visit and experience this work, we could have the impression all the current newsstreams were running through ourselves. We would – given an open attitude towards the work – feel a kind of connection to many of those streams. And we would experience that in colours and types, sounds and projections.

You might say: That is not *completely* new to me. I know »search engine art« and I know those notorious »mapping«-projects. And you would be completely right with that.



Because this artwork manifests a basic concept of media and even sound art that is historically recurring – at least since the beginning of the 20th century; in part we could even go back to the avantgarde of the 18th century.

A concept, that is really basic to the issue on this panel: how to bring back together the sound, the art and the visual in a deliberately designed melange.

The concept I am talking about, you could call: *The Orchestration of sensual and perceptual Media and News Streams*.

If we look for the big shots, we could go back to the newspaper collages of the early avantgardes; we could blink in direction of the neoavantgarde, for instance the german mixed media and radiophonic artist of the 1960ies, 70ies and 80ies Ferdinand Kriwet;

we could think of the *Time Capsules*, those carboard boxes, in which Andy Warhol collected all the remnants of one day; or look at the writing projects of german writer Rainald Goetz, who collects textual-visual items of present life, of news and pop culture in texts and collages since the early 1980ies.

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I do not want to claim that the Energie-Passagen of Fleischmann

and Strauss are simply the same;

but I would like to draw attention to the fact, that there is an underlying current, connecting media and sound art as well:

in the intention to give a – sometimes even ecstatic – representation of our present times and perceptions;

and to orchestrate them, time-based as music ever was, in one, ever changing, inconsistent, but aesthetically formed artifact out of single movements and interferences.

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But did we hear the sounds?

We did hear sounds. And this fact refers to another subtle, but important change in media art. As Cathérine David pointed out yesterday, sonically emanations become more and more important, audible, hearable and designed in media art – even in artworks that are not made by sound artists or musicians only.

Boldly I would even say:

Sound becomes more and more the framing sensual field, that allows us – almost similar to real life – to perceive a given artifact or situation: without even having to look at it.

Sound, one might say, is becoming a more important interface – to be used also with your eyes closed.

Thank you.