THE MALADY OF WRITING
PODCAST. Modernism You Can Dance To

Mark Klienberg's proposition: "Could there be someone capable of writing a science-fiction thriller based on the intention of presenting an alternative interpretation of modernist art that is readable and appreciated by the wider public?" has actually been answered affirmatively in a certain undercurrent of artist's audio production over the past century; let's call it an unofficial unofficial history of modernism (doubly unofficial since artist's audio production has been viewed as secondary to the their plastic / marketable production).

1. Summary

Mark Klienberg's proposition: "Could there be someone capable of writing a science-fiction thriller based on the intention of presenting an alternative interpretation of modernist art that is readable and appreciated by the wider public?" has actually been answered affirmatively in a certain undercurrent of artist's audio production over the past century; let's call it an unofficial unofficial history of modernism (doubly unofficial since artist's audio production has been viewed as secondary to the their plastic / marketable production).

I'd like to propose an audio companion to The Malady of Writing that actualizes Klienberg's proposition in sound; one that presents a pleasurable, humorous and fun version of modernism: call it "modernism you can dance to." But this is serious business. If we can seize upon the notion of guilty pleasures in midst of modernism – a place which disdained such gestures – we may be able to unfurl a secret thread which may help to shed a new light on contemporary gestures.

Somehow, if we understand how The Beatles detourned Stockhausen's tape music into "Revolution No. 9," we might be get a glimpse into what Sue Tompkins was thinking when she sings the chorus of The Beach Boys "God Only Knows" again and again for ten minutes straight; or why Seth Price would string together hours of New Jack Swing – a genre of music so unloved that it's practically been written out of the history books. Guilty pleasures, reclamation, resurrection and recontextualization are key to understanding these phenomena. But why now? One of the first things that struck me about Napster was how impure (read: eclectic) people's tastes were. Whilst browsing another user's files, I was stunned to find John Cage MP3s snuggled up next to, say, Mariah Carey files in the same directory. Everyone has guilty pleasures, however, never before have they been so exposed – and celebrated.

Impurity and guilty pleasures, as viewed through the lens of the historic avant-garde: If there's one thing that recent revisionist history has done, it's been to bring historically marginalized figures into front and center. One of the best examples of this might be the resurrected reputation of filmmaker Jack Smith, who, upon his death in 1989, was deemed "eccentric," "queer," and "frivolous." Today, of course, Smith occupies a central position in the cultural discourse on so many levels. It's this sort of transmigration I'm interested in: work that challenges its received histories and genres, and by doing so, speaks directly to our sense of the present, ruled by the constructive chaos of decentralized horizontal media, as well as the celebration of notions like "incorrectness" and "uncreativity," the rise of the 'outsider', the canonization of the underdog.
And humor. And narrative. Remember that Gertrude Stein, for all her kudos went – and continues to go – pretty much unread. Her high modernist writing is great to talk about but nearly impossible to read. What made Gertrude Stein a household name? It wasn't her poetry. It was her wildly readable memoir of her fascinating life, The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklass. Had Stein not written pleasurably, today most of us would never know who she is. There may be something to this after all...

02. Playlist

Alfred Jarry and Charles Pourny; music by Claude Terrasse "Chanson du Décervelage" (1896), recorded 1950.
Erik Satie, "Entr'acte" (1924), cond. Henri Sauguet, original soundtrack from René Clair film.
George Antheil, "Ballet mécanique," (1924) played by Ensemble Modern, from the album Fighting the Waves
Allen Ginsberg, "Birdbrain" (with the punk band The Gluons). Recorded 1980.
Karl Holmqvist, "I'm with you in Rockland," soundtrack from 2005 video.
Karheinz Stockhausen, "Gesang der Jünglinge (1955-56)" from the CD Elektronische Musik.
The Beatles, "Revolution No. 9" (1968) from the LP The Beatles.
The Mothers of Invention, "Are You Hung Up?" from the LP We're Only in it for the Money (1968).
The Beach Boys, "God Only Knows" from the LP Pet Sounds (1966).
Flanagan & Allen, "Underneath the Arches," written 1931.
Karen Finley, "I'm An Ass Man" (recorded 1985-86), from the LP The Uproar Tapes, Volume 1 (1986).
Joseph Beuys, "Ja Ja Ja Ne Ne Ne", 1970, Mazzotta Editions, Milan, 33 rpm, 500 copies. (excerpt 2:00).
René Clair, "Ja, Ja, Ja, Nee, Nee, Nee (Für Erwachsene)" from the compilation Greatest Hits; 17 years of Martin Kippenberger's Music.
Miranda July, "Untitled" from the CD 10 Million Hours In A Mile (1997).
Seth Price, "NJS" (2002) from CD released by Free 103.9.

03. Related links

Michael Taylor on Alfred Jarry's Ubu Roi
http://www.ubu.com/sound/taylor_michael.html

Andrew Hugill on Pataphysics
http://www.mti.dmu.ac.uk/~ahugill/pataphysics.html
Pataphysics CD and booklet by Andrew Hugill published by the Sonic Arts Network.

Erik Satie
http://ubu.com/sound/satie.html

Flabby Preludes for a Dog: An Erik Satie Primer
http://wfmu.org/~kennyg/popular/articles/satie.html

René Clair
http://www.ubu.com/film/clair_enttracte.html

http://rwm.macba.cat


Gertrude Stein Recordings on PennSound: http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Stein.html

Salvador Dalí sound works: http://ubu.com/sound/dali.html

Allen Ginsberg
Sound: http://www.ubu.com/sound/ginsberg.html
Film: http://www.ubu.com/film/ginsberg.html

Karl Holmqvist:

Jack Smith:
http://www.ubu.com/film/smith_jack.html

Sue Tompkins, "More Cola Wars":
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ge5hXh5nn-8&feature=related

Gilbert & George:
http://ubu.com/film/gg.html

Laurie Anderson:
http://ubu.com/sound/anderson.html

Karen Finley:
http://ubu.com/sound/uproar.html

Chris Burden:
Sound: http://www.ubu.com/sound/burden.html
Film: http://www.ubu.com/film/burden.html

Joseph Beuys:
Sound: http://www.ubu.com/sound/beuys.html
Film: http://www.ubu.com/film/beuys.html

Martin Kippenberger:
http://ubu.com/sound/kippenberger.html

Seth Price:
http://ubu.com/sound/price.html

Sean Landers:
http://ubu.com/sound/landers.html

**04. Credits**

Produced and mixed by Curtis Fox http://www.curtisfoxproductions.com/. Thanks to Andrew Hugill.

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