



Q-02
materials

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materials





ABOUT Q-02

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Q-02 has been a workspace for experimental contemporary music and sound art since 2006, and has its own space in the Brussels canal zone.

As a workspace, Q-02 straddles both the burgeoning of artistic ideas and their concrete materialisation with presentation to an audience, and as such is above all centred around process and research. In musical terms Q-02 explores mainly three lines of approach: improvisation (both acoustic and electronic), composed music, and installation/sound art. However, through its conceptual preoccupations, Q-02 easily finds itself open to other disciplines, whether they be artistic or scientific.

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In practice, the Q-02 workspace operates at different levels. At the heart of its activities, it offers working residencies to artists with (if required) the opportunity of feedback and/or visibility as a result of organising demonstration moments. At set times and places, artists who are already established on their own path and are associated with what is happening in and around the workspace, are invited to present concerts, either at the workspace itself or in cooperation with larger venues.

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As well as supporting individual artists, Q-02 is also involved in more general artistic trends, and creates contexts for these. An example of such a context would be to launch a project that brings together a group of artists to carry out research and/or collate results around a certain topic within a well-defined framework.

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Moreover, Q-02 seeks to put experimental music and sound art per se on the map, thereby to underline the idea that research into this area is as necessary as into any other aspect of contemporary progressive society.

In this respect, the communication of artists both among themselves and with the public is given necessary attention. Q-02 believes that the innovation of art is above all a collective event, in which ideas and strategies can be compared against one another, picked up and further developed, with this inspiration then turning into something concrete which can be communicated in a corresponding form (for example as a presentation, installation and such like). In this sense, Q-02 behaves in similar way to a beehive, in that access is available to all at their own pace.

The Q-02 workspace developed from the contemporary music ensemble of the same name. The transition was smooth, given that the ensemble had a similar approach as a workspace, rather than having the profile of a permanent music ensemble, in that both research and the working process were also at the focus of their attention. At this time the theme-based projects were launched, projects which provided a ready framework for certain issues, and in which artists were able to work together. Having already worked with the Anton Webern string trio in 1996, and at 'MuziekxTaalx4' (a series of concerts based around the relationship between music and literature) in 1997, an important milestone in the further development of Q-02 proved to be the project 'De Tijd is Rond' in 2000 (as part of Brussel2000, European cultural capital). In this project, a different event took place in Brussels at various different and unusual venues once a month over the course of a year. By questioning and pushing the artistic boundaries, Q-02 disentangled itself from the traditional contemporary music context.

The consequence of this development was a series of 'Abstract Adventures' which ran from 2001 to 2005. This was an open formula where different artistic and/or formal approaches within experimental and avant-garde music were juxtaposed and presented during three consecutive days. The focus was on the working process and the relationships between different music styles and philosophical views. This confrontation meant that different music scenes merged, resulting in boundaries being blurred between written and improvised music, between composer and executor, and between different disciplines.

'DoUndo/recycling G' was a project which bridged the transition from Q-02 as ensemble to Q-02 as workspace. In this project a reservoir of long, monochrome, exceedingly tone-rich and partly distorted sounds was presented to a number of (sound) artists for further processing, whilst exploring the nature and uniqueness of sound.

2009 saw the launch of the project '//2009// - what do you make of what I say', in which 10 sound artists were invited to make a 7-minute-long sound work as a response to one made by an unknown predecessor. The objective was to explore exactly and specifically how we observe music, and whether it is possible to 'understand' experimental music per se.

The most recent project, which represents a shared research area of the resident artists of the past few years, is the European project 'Sounds of Europe', centred around the theme of field recording (i.e. working with environmental sounds). The increasing use of field recording by residents, in the most diverse ways, prompted the examination of this diversity in more detail. The happy discovery is that, in spite of globalisation, there is still a lot to be discovered outside of our local orbit.

Q-02's own projects help to remind itself of its mission statement and, if necessary, to update it. Its projects interact with those of its residents, and constitute a status quo of what is going on in the workspace in relation to the artistic world outside.

Q-02 started offering working residencies when it became a workspace and had acquired its own space to work in. Just like any scientific laboratory, it allows time and space to experiment and carry out research. The continuous influx of personalities, artistic ideas, ways of approaching things, technical and logistic questions, has fueled its ongoing continuation. The output is just as diverse as the different aspects of the residencies. Whilst some experiments eventually proved to be fruitless, or remained unnoticed by the outside world, others prompted artists to make a giant leap forward, to find their way to bigger stages, in releasing an important CD or in joining forces with others in blossoming collaborations. If useful and desirable, Q-02 helps artists move on to more visible venues and contexts. Linked to this, there is cooperation and partnership with larger establishments to include experimental music and sound art in their programmes, thereby reinforcing and raising the profile of these mediums themselves.

Julia Eckhardt, Ann Goossens
Brussels, may 2012

DoUndo/recycling G

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Residencies

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“Q-02 provided for me the most valuable of resources to work, which is Time.”

“...gave me the possibility to work in total freedom, without asking anything back but committed and good work.”

“During my projects and stays in Q-02, I could meet during presentations very interesting artists, and discover new inspiring approaches to art and music.”

“I think, that the concept of short-residencies works very well.”

“The professional practice of composers and musicians, or sound artists, is very much result oriented, of course for good reasons. But there are also problematic reasons. A problematic reason is the supposed necessity of being permanently present: the ever ongoing pressure of promoting artistic results.

I'm deeply convinced that artists should have the courage to decide on their own economy of artistic production.”

“Q-02 allowed me in the first place to see musicians important for me, to see them playing, to see their method(s) of work, to enrich so my work.”

“In other words Q-02 operated as a cultural intersection, a melting point of across- Europe artistic thought and experimentation, something that is rare and precious.”

“This sense of ‘space’ for ones work is so very fundamental.”

“The paradigm change from “ensemble” to “werkplaats”, is one of the rare encounters of progressive re-structuralisation and analysis related to the current developments in new music.”

“What is good about that place is that people there think outside the box, and they welcome any musical artist focusing on sound art. What’s more, it is also a meeting place for these different artists.”

“At the presentation at the end of the residency, there were a number of people in the audience who I rarely encounter at other similar projects.”

“Q-02 in every respect provides a wonderful context to get artistic work done.”

“...showing at the end of a residency which I found an important feature; to have the opportunity to not only explore and extend my work in a supportive environment, but also the be able to receive feedback on my residency result from outside viewers.”

“It is a very rare thing indeed to be presented with such a period of time in which stress is non-existent.”

“...to make the most of this short time and carry on a creation process further than I would have believed it possible. .. the link between a network of artists sharing common electroacoustic and creation problematics.”

“Q-02 allows a meeting point between genres which adds to the richness of our shared “musical” language.”

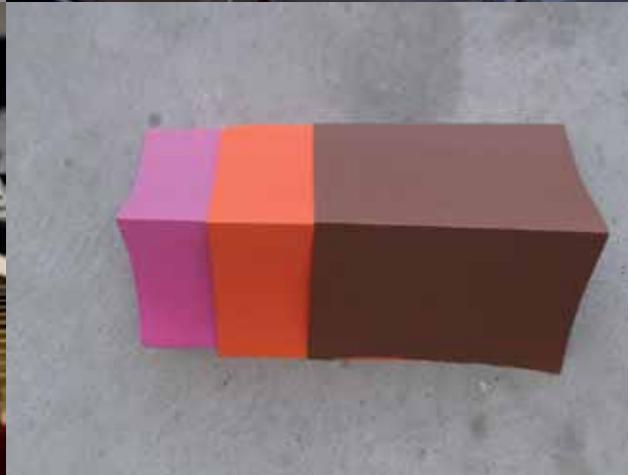
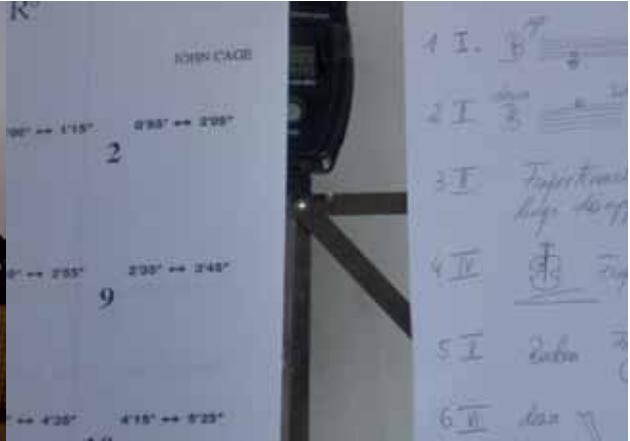
“...the focus was on the process, which for me is the most vital aspect of reflecting about my work.”



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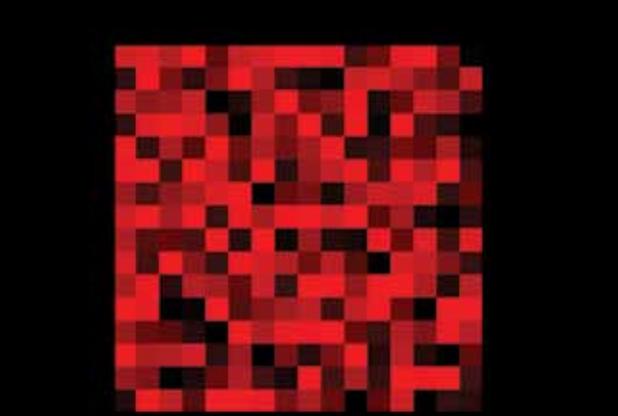
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Els van Riel



Lucio Capece

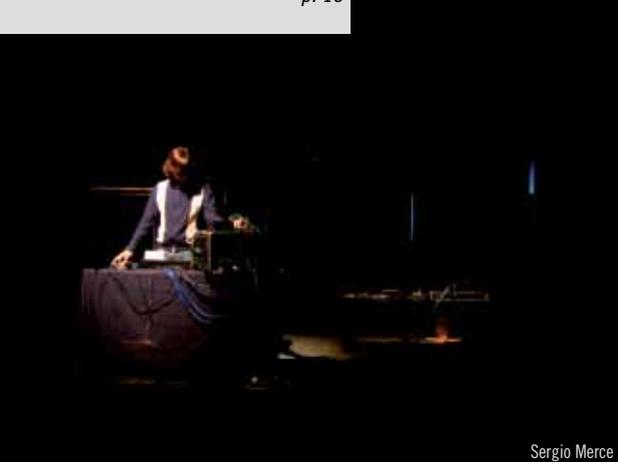


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Stefaan Quix



Anne Wellmer



Sergio Merce



Aernoudt Jacobs



Aernoudt Jacobs



Anne Wellmer

'DoUndo/recycling G' was initiated in 2004, and the project has since continued to develop in many different directions. All the versions were brought together on 6th October 2006 at Netwerk, Aalst. Artists have further on performed and released their own versions on many different occasions, sometimes even further recycling the recordings of their own performances.

'DoUndo/recycling G' stems from an 80 minute reservoir of sound, played on the viola. The C string has been re-tuned to a G, and through varying the point of contact between bow and string, and changing pressure on the bow, different colours are created in the sound.

Subsequently this reservoir of sound has been passed on to nine other (sound) artists as the basis for their own work. This has led to some surprising results, varying from pre-recorded electronic to live acoustic instruments, both as performance or installation, with or without images, improvised or notated.

Ludo Engels initiated this project after he had seen Julia Eckhardt at work on an extended improvisation on viola, with video and dance, based on one elongated tone, which was in fact played out of desperation, in search of a new idea. In many ways stemming from nothing, or a chance constellation, without meaning.

Intuitively, Ludo heard the potential of this sound, fascinated by the drone, both peaceful and with a certain tension. This sound presented many perspectives, and opened up many possibilities. In the first instance, the idea was to make a recording project, but the project very soon outgrew its brief. Ultimately there were a dozen artists who created work with it, with many also using images or installations. Much of this work prompted the artists to continue developing these creations. Recycling of this kind extends the life of works.

It was not until later that, together with the participating artists, a concurrence was discovered of a series of aspects which both made the idea interesting at the time, and also gave it a future, because various questions arose and developed accordingly.

The material aspect: when can sound be regarded as Composition, or when is it purely Material? A visual artist may see this differently from a musician, with the sound artist occupying the space somewhere in the middle. This project straddles both worlds on account of both the material and the choice of artists.

The time aspect: the reservoir of sound needs a period of time for the proposed material to unfold in all its overtones, colours and noises, despite its apparent simplicity. In analogy, the totality of the project took a few years to unfold all its potential.

DoUndo/recycling G

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The improvisation aspect: the impulse to the project was born unintentionally in a situation without plan or repertoire, as improvisation initially is. Nevertheless it had an inspiring power to it which through an act of active listening was given meaning, and transformed into material for further creation.

The minimalism aspect: minimalism can stand on its own, but can also be a starting point to discover infinite potential in something small and unremarkable. A drone is something that opens up such multiple possibilities.

The uniqueness aspect: in this project, there is uncertainty, in the end, as to who owns the copyright, or whether a traditional, uniqueness-determined value of a sound or piece of art can be lost through multiplication.

During the years when the project ran, different notions developed, not least those of improvisation and minimalism, and it seems that the general interest has shifted to other areas. It is not a coincidence that many improvisers eventually prefer to refer to 'instant composition', arranging elements which the musician has in his or her repertoire on an ad hoc basis in an improvisation. Also, minimalism which was discovered in the last few years had been put to one side again, because its meaning had become too broad.

Where exactly, however, we should draw the line of sound art, as a discipline between music and visual arts, is not exactly clear yet, and the questions surrounding copyright are more topical than ever.

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Sergio Merce: Sobre el nivel del mar (for tape and one live improviser)

This piece is born from the assumption that there is a place within music in which time doesn't exist. Musing around this idea, I locate this non-temporal moment between sound and silence. In the exact instant in which they get in contact. The only way to arrive at this absolute void, is to empty ourselves of time. It is sound just slightly scraping silence. This contact is the most important fact, the door which opens the path towards the referred emptiness.

Jens Brand

"HCATS(MPIG)" how come – all the same – (my problem in G) for violin & tape / (trombone) electronics & light

HOW likely is it to do the exact opposite of something?

COMETs can only be seen while they disintegrate.

ALL in all it is unlikely.

THEre is no opposite of anything.

SAME things always differ.

(MY opinion on this always differs as well.

PROBLEMs are like comets.

IN certain moments they don't vanish because they are too bi-G).

Els van Riel

DOUNDO is a dialogue starting with the question: what layer can be added to the rich sound layers of given viola tones. My answer is an image, composed with different layers only visible due to changes of light. At my turn I want to ask a question back to the viola: does my image touch another sensitive string? The viola, if she wants, takes over the sound again, changes it, keeps the dialogue alive.

Jim Denley: wave/particle

Through a series of filters, gates and editing (slits), I turn what was a wave of sound, into the 'particles' that are implicit in that sound. The two live musicians will take complementary roles, one playing a long wave, and the other only discrete particles.

Aernoudt Jacobs: Playground G

'Playground G' is an installation/performance with a number of modifiers, noise shapers and noise makers. They all have the purpose of altering the sound of the viola through different materials (ig. ice, clay, water). It is a research in the resonance frequencies of materials. Every material has a frequency where it begins to resonate and modulate. This influences the sound in a peculiar way.

Anne Wellmer

A composition made from the viola sound reservoir is combined with two spacial elements: a strong green reflecting light and the movement of the viola player who is, with a microphone on her forehead, in search of feed-back in the performance space.

Lucio Capece

Piece one: around 30 minutes.

I took from the sounds moments in which there is no development, static moments in one kind of material. (...)

The idea of the piece is to create music in a non narrative way. Beginning, ends or processes are not considered. Music is considered as a portion of endless time.

Piece two: around 15 minutes.

I took sounds of moments in which the material develops. (...) Music is here raw material that evolves internally. The same experience of endless time is searched. The process and the material are in contrast to what is used in the first piece.

Manu Holterbach

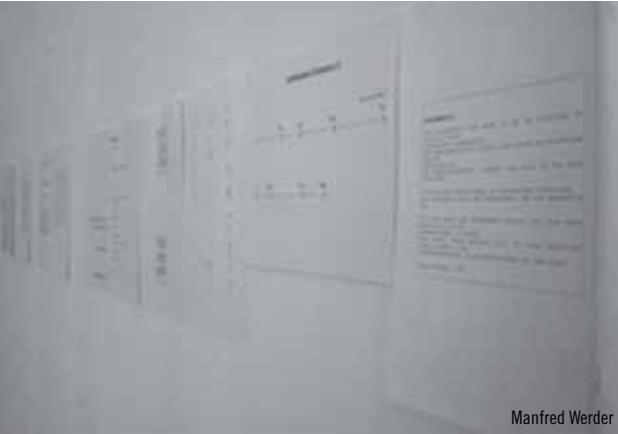
part 1: Pic-nic by the high-tension line stepdown transformer (after Jens Brand)

Electric powerplants, arc lamp, buzz of an amplifier in a Frederic Le Junter installation, Paris subway's electric railways, my friend Jean-Christophe Guédon's fridge, turbular recordings of Jens Brand, Anne Wellmer and Aernoudt Jacobs rehearsals during the Do-Undo night at the Netwerk Aalst, Belgium in october 2006.

part 2: Lady Viola dreaming in a humming cloud of electro-static Viola, electro-static phenomenons in various french trains, alarm of the Netwerk in Aalst, Belgium, a slow afternoon Tonton Macoute drone experience for cheap organ and e-bowed banjo

Stefaan Quix

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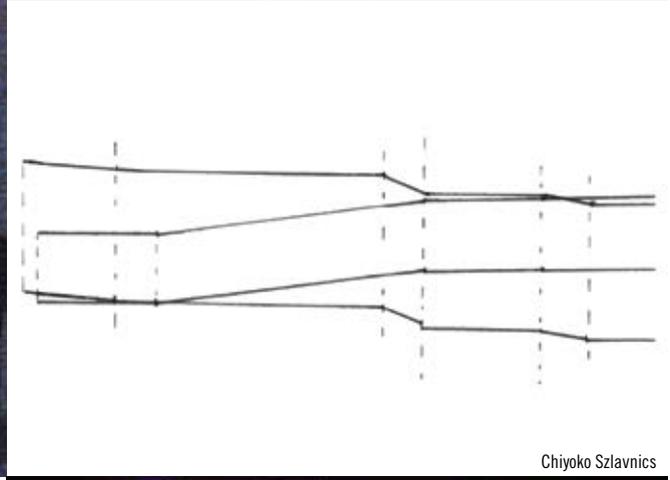


Manfred Werder

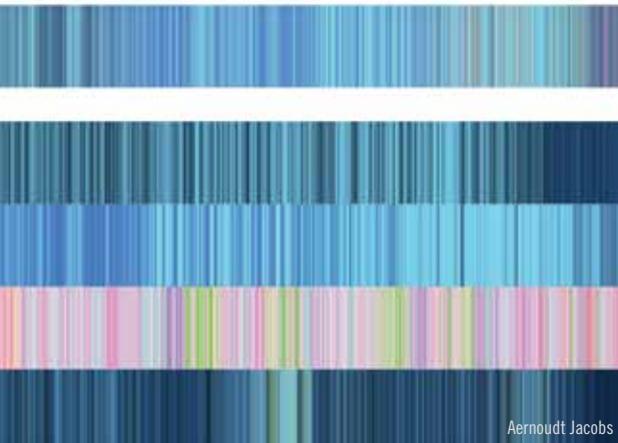


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Anne Wellmer



Chiyoiko Szlavnic



Aernoudt Jacobs



Tim Parkinson

What happened

//2009// started on 4th of January 2009 and ended on 13th December 2009. It was a chain of sound recordings made over the course of one year by ten artists who each had four weeks to respond to the recording of an unknown predecessor. They received no information other than the recording itself: it was like playing 'chinese whispers'. Each recording is 7 minutes long and is accompanied by two pages in a diary, brought together in a cd-book.

The ten participating artists have a common interest in reflection and creative exchange, their conceptual starting points ensuring that there would be interaction in the chain.

The starting question

The aim was to investigate how we perceive music, in a more precise way than 'I liked it' or 'it spoke to me', and whether it is in any way possible to 'understand' experimental music. The proposition was that mis-understanding (in the sense of the accidentally understanding something non-intended) could lead to creative interaction, presupposing that there is an active and open listening. This must be equally as important an activity as the subsequent reaction.

Observations

At the end of the project, after the year's experience, the point of view of the initial question had slightly shifted: since in most cases the participants were free of expectations when receiving the predecessor's recording, and did not have a specific idea what imprint their own recording should leave in the following recipient's mind, the notion of misunderstanding seemed less relevant than the notion of active understanding.

Nonetheless the awareness of the initial proposition made a difference: the moment of reflection ensured that the sound recordings, being sent out into the world as a 'message in a bottle' – without the aim of controlling their reception – always reached their destination. Another effect of the initial proposition was that the process of judgement, the question of whether one liked or disliked the received recording, withdrew into the background.

Come their turn, one of the first questions that the situation presented to the participants was: what does 'react' mean, and what are possible ways of reacting? Of course every action can be seen as a reaction, but still it makes a difference if it is requested to be done in a self-observing way. It can be interpreting, continuing, imitating, contradicting, neglecting, for example to name but a few. Depending on the situation, possibilities need to be examined and decisions taken.

Some participants noticed that they started their turn with a moment of insecurity, with so little notion of the context, having as a lead only the sound information and the awareness that it was ultimately to be a part of a bigger, and at that moment unknown, entirety.

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When they listened to the track which they had received, they felt that they passed through the more familiar aspects of the predecessor's recording, toward less accessible regions. These might have been conceptual, formal or rather technical aspects, or others, depending on the priorities in their own musical language. Without the frame of this project, their intrigue might not have gone beyond the familiar aspects.

It remains unclear as to what extent the frame given by the project changed anything in each recipient's individual musical language. It seems to be difficult to formulate this.

An important issue was the aspect of time: the regularity of interventions, the predetermined period of four weeks for the creation of the recordings, and the constraint to make a miniature of only seven minutes. This formal rigour, the fact that these decisions didn't have to be taken by the artists, provided a certain neutrality and clarity to the project's research and game, and allowed the contributions to bring about an artistic entirety for the final cd.

The contributions are strongly connected to the time and place of those specific ten periods of four weeks during the year 2009, and provide in their wide diversity a reflection of the experimental music field, which seems to be very much in flux at the beginning of this century.

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Julia Eckhardt provided the starting fragment. Without a concrete sound piece to react to she made as a status quo a piece with seven layers using different aspects of the possibilities of her instrument.

Chiyoko Szlavnics captured mainly the aspect of space and improvisation, responding on the same levels. She used the received piece as material and added some of her own.

Mieke Lambrigts attention went firstly to the formal aspect. After receiving the recording she listened many times to the predecessor's piece in a search for understanding, but resulting in ever more questions. She described the relationship between the predecessor's piece and her own as "a lot-little". As a response she kept the form of the previous piece, and based each of the three parts on one cell of 20 seconds.

Manfred Werder experienced the project in quite a general philosophical frame, which is why for his response he decided upon an uncut field recording.

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Annette Krebs found herself facing the challenge of working with a tabula rasa, with too many possibilities. Her choice gravitated towards a strict three-part-form in combination with her personal situation at that moment. An important notion in this piece for Annette was the missing layer of a physical presence in the communication, which made her comprehension of the received piece more difficult.

Tim Parkinson approached the received piece with a certain distance, appreciating its lack of suggestivity. This extended to his response: he let it become part of his life at that moment and rather take it as inspiration than as a found object.

Olivier Toulemonde was immediately fascinated by the extremely clear organisation of the received piece, opposite to his own approach to music. To find a way in to it he re-played it on his own instrument, the 'set de table', and ultimately decided to do this for his response, recorded at different open spaces in Brussels.

Manu Holterbach was at first slightly surprised by the strictness of the received recording. For his response, he decided to unfocus his perception and use it as one sound material among others for his composition.

Aernoudt Jacobs had a feeling of recognition at the listening of the recording he received, detecting a way of working with layers quite similar to his own. He alternated listening with working on his response, adding layers and subsequently withdrawing them, until the he had arrived at the transformation.

Anne Wellmer describes her response as a musical letter, replying to what she received. She realized this with the material she was working with at that moment: recordings made with a long loop antenna.

Interview with Manfred Werder about his participation in //2009//

Could you try and describe what you heard on the recording? In what situation and how often did you listen to it?

I listened carefully to the recording three times. First and foremost I experienced a composed, self-contained form. My impression was that this form was intentionally fitted in the given timeframe of 7 minutes. I thought the sounds were carefully considered and appealing in this respect. I didn't listen to the recording again after that.

Did you wonder where the sounds came from, how they were made and was the fact that you knew the piece was the result of various mutations significant? You mentioned form first of all and quality, but did you notice any other aspects whilst others weren't important to you? What do you mean by 'carefully considered'?

By 'carefully considered' I mean the composer works on a sound that to a certain extent – with regards to its content and weight - contains a certain poetics.

The relationship between this composed, poetic content and that to which my attention is drawn as a listener, seems rather simple to me and perhaps too obvious.

This clearly stems from the fact that in my work it's the relationship of these issues that I'm interested in - What is happening to music? What is the listeners' attention drawn to? - with my strategy probably having a conflicting view: Both questions have their own repercussions, and a possible area of overlap would only arise by chance, as an accidental and momentary combination.

Obviously people are more aware of the aspects they work on themselves, whatever they may be.

Perhaps I wasn't concerned with how the sounds had been made just because of their poetic weight.

In a certain sense, all works are the result of mutations that have taken place. I didn't consider that aspect while listening to the recording, I think I even forgot.

I do find one issue interesting in this respect: the potential for contextuality which all works have in varying degrees and qualities.

Does a work emerge by specific conditions being accepted as a kind of void waiting to be filled with something, with a world?

Does a work emerge by specific conditions being accepted as material in terms of a potential that lets the world appear?

Obviously these questions are very complex and difficult to answer, however I do think they come up in our project.

Now in terms of your own contribution:

How did you decide to react and how did you choose the material you used in the end?

Had you considered certain possibilities before (before hearing the previous piece), and if so did you stick with them or change them?

Early on I decided on a strategy which left various realisations and reactions open.

As I decided to make an outdoor recording on site, i.e. at the Q-02 workspace (which would have also been possible in the workspace) - with or without my own performative contribution - it wasn't just the recording I had to respond to in a certain way, I also had to think about the unfamiliar location, the Q-02 workspace at Rue de la Buanderie 28.

What sort of relationship can there be between two tracks next to each other on a CD, these being among a large number of unfamiliar tracks?

This can sometimes be a classic question of form.

To what extent does this question have potential for contextuality, as represented for me for example by the performers and their sources of sound, and the site of the performance with its own sounds?

As I listened to the earlier recording, my questions weren't answered, but I was reassured. Maybe because the recordings would be very different and so there was still sufficient space in my 'reaction' to expose myself to the second unknown, the location.

Once there I decided on an unedited recording without my own performative contribution due to the richness of sound present.

Obviously the question arises in this project of what 'reacting' can mean. The least that can be said is that everything is a reaction, even if someone doesn't listen to the earlier recording. Perhaps a reaction can be measured by its necessity. If there's no need, there's no reaction. It would then be more a case of coexistence or concurrence. It seems natural to me that people aren't always aware of whether and how they will stay in areas of a reaction or coexistence.

You asked the question of how a relationship forms between two tracks that are next to each other (or one behind the other) and in response said that it can be a question of form.

Do you mean that you intentionally reacted to the form or that a connection is established anyway as a result of the given form?

Also, don't you think that it does make a difference that a reaction was requested in this instance, in contrast to everyday reactions, and that if someone didn't listen to the recording, that itself would be a special and perhaps provocative statement? Is that what you mean by 'necessity'?

Did you think about whether you liked the previous piece when you listened to it, did you judge it in any way?

I think that when reacting, there's a process which first and foremost can clarify our own potential and then lead to a decision.

To a certain extent, the formal relationship between the tracks is the development of various parameters from one track to the next, and between all the tracks as a whole.

Whatever people do, a dynamic form is created.

For a brief moment I did think about using the previous recording as concrete 'found material': as the previous condition which would become the material and thus new potential. Then I sensed a problem because this reaction seemed too exclusive and one-dimensional. Day-to-day and artistic reactions seem to happen like a constant drifting. The parameters involved in the drifting are extremely complex and also often unknown.

I think I actually reacted based on compositional decisions, not just in terms of form but also the material and its 'atmosphere'.

However, I can't say that my decisions were made with reactive inevitability, but rather by intuitively weighing up different issues.

The fact that we're faced with a specific task - the project - obviously makes a difference: I consider a lot of things and the resulting options lead to specific decisions.

If somebody didn't listen to the recording, it'd be a very specific reaction, in fact out of a need to break rules.

I mean people's own need to react, even if they fail to respond to a certain extent, because answers can only ever come from within.

I haven't really thought about judging it. In fact I'd put this question together with necessity. I can like something yet not give a reaction or be forced to react.

What does a misunderstanding mean to you, and do you think it's a term that can be used in the artistic field? Concerning the planning and creation of your piece, did you think about how the listener would or should interpret it?

Language is like a viscous mass, by its very nature having an intrinsic pressure for standardisation, and at the same time subject to permanent change.

The ability to sign and its nature are both permanent repetition and change. Language and speech are constantly forcing us to say something. Anybody talking with 'incomprehensible sense' is immediately seen as crazy. Consequently, 'meaning' and therefore 'understanding' are generally taken for granted when talking, and misunderstandings only describe the apparent failure of an encounter.

(How universal the power of the explicit content of language has become today is manifested in, among other things, our dealings with people who for different reasons cannot use that language: they're ruthlessly locked away and isolated from society, as if explicitly 'being able to speak about something' were the only measure of a social bond).

It may be that our own speech is more of an endless monologue, originating from a long common closeness of the species.

Consequently, we hear the dense, integral sound of a multitude of monologues around us.

This is where the importance lies, in this common closeness, not in the biological and sort of collateral product of speech itself.

This is where my objections stem from to the type of art that explicitly communicates based on an idea of language and focuses on explicit effect.

In this sense I generally object to terms such as understanding and misunderstanding.

I think a work of art forms part of my relationship with the world, and is something that happens between the world and me as a part of this world.

All possible worlds meet and drift apart again.

Thus we get closeness, over and over again and in all possible and random configurations, which is ultimately followed by artistic activity.



Michael Pisaro



Annea Lockwood

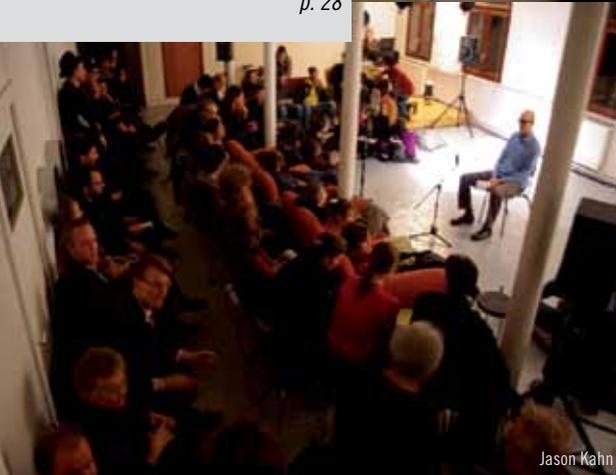


Annea Lockwood



Manfred Werder

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Jason Kahn



Pauwel De Buck

Starting in September 2011, Q-02 has initiated Sounds of Europe (www.soundsofeurope.eu), a European project focussing on the artistic use of field recording, in collaboration with CRISAP (London), IRZU (Ljubljana), MTG/Sons de Barcelona (Barcelona) and different other European organisations and artists.

At the core of this project is a growing website which functions as platform on which artists and organisations who deal with field recording can present themselves.

Each month the blog of the website travels to another European country, hosted by a correspondent who explores and presents field recording activities in his or her country. This gives the opportunity, through a very subjective eye, to discover to what extent artistic conclusions are drawn differently depending on a difference in living situation and cultural references. Field recording is an excellent starting point for this exploration, because on the one hand the material is available anywhere, and on the other hand working with this material requires no specific training.

Sounds of Europe also offers workshop exchanges for schools, in collaboration with The City Rings (www.thecityrings.org) and a summer sound lab for (semi-)professionals.

The project opened with the Field Fest in October 2011, and will close with a symposium and a publication in London in March 2013.

The idea of this project seemed to flow naturally from the residency output at Q-02 workspace, as significantly more and more artists work and reflect on the subject of field recording. The backgrounds of the various artists are very diverse, as are their ideas and intentions. Consequently, in the three areas in which most sound artists could be pigeonholed – i.e. composition, improvisation, and installation – field recordings are used differently each time.

The term field recording refers primarily to the capture of environmental sounds. These can just as easily originate from a situation in the woods or a field as at a busy urban intersection. What those situations have in common is their unpredictability; they are not scheduled in advance, not 'composed'. Artistically, field recordings can be used in many ways: in sound installations and compositions; almost unrecognizably within electronic or electro-acoustic music; or in the most abstract or concrete manner such as in an album featuring recorded silence or, alternatively, pure raw recordings. In addition, some artists work with the sound inside objects; or with natural phenomena, with soundwaves inaudible to the human ear. Conceptual extremes include sonification (converting data into sound), or framing ambient

noise without actually making recordings as exemplified in sound walks.

The lack of a long history in field recording, (which begins at the end of the 19th century with the invention of the phonograph), might at least partly explain the great curiosity and freedom in this field, as well as the diversity of approaches. The boost of interest in very recent years seems due to the growing awareness of the fragility of our environment in combination with the incredible technological improvement and affordability of the recording equipment - two conditions which are not purely of concern to the artistic realm within society.

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The different artistic approaches often blur boundaries with philosophical questions, and also to other sciences, such as technology, sociology, or ecology, and in addition establish links with politics.

With sound art, on the overlap between musical composition and visual art, field recording can become material in each of these disciplines, and can question the dominant power of the visual.

The intention of many artists, however, is not only to use field recording as a working material, but also to question the phenomenon itself: What conditions are required to be able to consider the aural environment itself as artwork; and, from a more philosophical perspective, how do we position ourselves in relation to the world and its manifestations.

Consequently, field recording, on many levels, offers an interesting view both of contemporary (sound) art in particular, and the human condition in general; a viewpoint that artists intensify further by shifting our perceptions by turning an auditory reality into a fiction with minimal intervention.

In the opening festival, the Field Fest, which offered four days of performances of artists, Q-02 aimed to give a stage to this variety of artistic approaches and realizations. Of course there are many realms in which field recording plays a central role, which were not featured in the Field Fest, such as radio, installation art and sound walking.

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Justin Bennett's sound archive is the departure point for a video in which he explores the borders between a personal diary and fiction, followed by a performance playing from vinyl. "The plurality of sound and hearing is intensified, and that is what interests me: this ability to shape-shift between music, language, space, documentary, fiction, representation and abstraction."

Eric La Casa & Philip Samartzis: Whilst the natural world of Kruger Park is wild and occasionally ferocious, the constructed world of roads and settlements is pedestrian. As an installation, in space, a double diffusion structures this doubling of the understanding.

"...As it passes through my microphones, the site of the survey – everyday life – is transformed into a site of play. The dimensions of the real world generate sonic representations whose proportions found another perspective on the world."

Martiensgohome explore their own field-recording repository in sonic and graphic ways.

"...the realistic, representational, quality of the recordings is secondary to their aural properties. Our radio programmes and concerts consist of different moments, various locations, multiple acoustic spaces and times woven together to produce a hybrid place, governed by a composite chronology."

Peter Cusack's presentation include recordings and photographs from Chernobyl, the Caspian oil fields and shipping in the River Thames estuary.

"Sonic journalism is based on the idea that valuable information about places and events is revealed through their sounds and that careful listening will give insights different from, but complimentary to, visual images and language."

Manu Holterbach's aim is to reveal the expressive power and poetic charge of the events which we come close to every day, which otherwise pass unnoticed.

"What interests me is the intense spontaneous musicality of some natural phenomena, whether in animal noises or in the secret sounds made by machines. (...) Essentially, my compositional work stems from the experience of intently listening to the environment."

In **Anne Wellmer's** "fernwärme" hot water pipes sing changing songs... late at night the sound gets really loud.

"Those of my works which are based on field recordings are studies about places and objects. They are accompanied by little stories.

Like entries to a diary and similar to photographs these pieces shape my memory."

Mecha/Orga: Immersive performance in the dark with original source environmental recordings.

"Traveling, meeting people, exploring the acoustic and natural environment creates a strong, personal motivation to make music.

By digitally manipulating the recordings, the purpose is to create and reveal an original world of sounds where both performer and listeners can live through an immersive sonic experience."

Annea Lockwood: An audio portrait of the American Housatonic River and life on and along the waterway.

"Field recording is a solitary activity for me. It is intimate and meditative, my way of recognising/reinforcing my deep connection to the world around me. (...) My intention is not to document a particular river or my own experience of it, but to induce a sense of immersion in its energy flow, and a visceral recognition of its power."

Els Viaene: The newly created aural landscape blurs out the existing boundaries.

"I chose the name Aural Landscape for my website as it says perfectly what I'm interested in: the sounds surrounding us in all kinds of different landscapes, situations and shapes."

Michael Pisaro: 'Flussaufwärtstreiben' is a multi-year field recording and environmental sound installation project. 'Flussaufwärts' for guitar and tape is one piece out of the project.

"I feel I have learned many things about how these complex sound combinations behave ... and see this as a persistent jumping off point for composed work."

Pauwel De Buck: The idea behind this work-process is based on the intrinsic values of the sound, rather than on its origin. "Sound as a plastic means in an artistic context is an intuitive choice for me. (...) The combination of technology and imagination makes it possible to structure and analyse the vast amount of sounds that surround us, and can then be processed into new surrealist situations."

Toshiya Tsunoda: Dissection of the physical nature of sounds and sound waves through filtering with microphones and loudspeakers.

"What kind of condition is ongoing at a metal fence, on the surface of pavement, in a narrow passage or inside a pipe? Is it a secondary incident that is like a by-product of the space, or is it considered to be a nature of the space itself? This question fascinated me and drove me into recordings."

Manfred Werder: An examination of 'the field'.

"How can we think the extension of a place not exclusively projected/experienced by a limited group of privileged subjects (performers and audience)? The extension of a place where everything is permanently drifting in its own right. The intrinsic reality of a situation. (...) The field: be it unconditioned reality."

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Jez riley French: Intuitive composition with recordings of audible silences, quietudes & weaves.

"I am fascinated and passionate about the infinite detail and expanding vistas of life around us, its sights and sounds, often overlooked or hidden."

Jason Kahn spends a day in a place and then, instead of recording this, writes a text about the experience of being in this place. The text itself is the field recording, with him reading the text a presentation of the place.

"...the issue of space, its constitution, creation, social elements and interaction with a space on these different planes. The daily rhythms, the dynamics of time and spacial changes, this all shapes how space is formed and experienced."

Pali Meursault: An attempt to confront composition with improvisation, recorded memory with unexpected events and organic matter with digital machines.

"(...) decontextualization, shifting the attention, filtering the ordinary obedience of perception or just closing eyes... For some time I have been looking for this musicality of the ordinary life."

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Discovering . Observing . Discerning . Naming . Resounding . Concluding . Responding (artistic research)

Is is fascinating to observe how music and (sound) art is permanently renewing and reinventing itself, reaching ever new conclusions and artefacts despite the limited amount of genuinely new material. Self-motion is the basic characteristic of all life (Aristotle), from which it can be concluded that art is alive, as the totality of all those involved. The renewal can only happen collectively. It is a complicated tissue in which each individual has a different role; from experiment to clear definition; between creating, mediating, and assimilating. Nothing significant happens without the world, without the connection to others. No idea can experience a development without resonating from one head into another. Although the ingredients are seldom new, the conclusions are, and therefore have to be made in a context in order to be relevant.

Obviously this complex tissue needs to have its time and place, which is why artistic research is taking place, a notion which in recent years has tended to lose its meaning through its inflationary use for just about any artistic activity which is not meant to have a direct, and often possibly commercial, result. This is a regrettable development because research in this domain is crucial and must not lose its integrity.

However, at the same time there is a certain professionalism in play, in which everyone involved in the process are becoming more aware of their role, consequently and simultaneously systematising their strategies and methods. As well as the many other participants in this field, the places where this artistic research happens, the workspaces and laboratories, become more conscious about their task: that of a supportive housekeeper is no longer sufficient anymore as a contribution.

Research

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The notion of 'research' is traditionally mostly used in the context of science, which is not art, although there can be overlapping. Nevertheless it can be illuminating to have a look at a dictionary definition of the word 'research': "the systematic investigation into and study of materials and sources in order to establish facts and reach new conclusions". (New Oxford American Dictionary)

The investigation happens on two levels which are closely connected: individually and collectively. Without individual research there would be no starting points; but just as crucial for the continuation of the whole artistic biotope is exchange. An artefact as an artistic conclusion gains meaning only by the imprint it makes in others. It cannot exist on its own. At an early immature stage the research ideas have to be tested, experimented, taken up and exchanged by and with others from the field, until they are ready to be similarly valuable to a larger public. Different people take specific positions in this: some are good at proposing, others at listening, observing, verbalising, etc. Yet all these tasks are important, and often intermingle. Re-interpretation, a change in perspective, defining as precisely as possible what is experienced, heard or seen, provides ever more clarity, and thus development. The artistic product can be the ultimate project, but cannot be the immediate goal. Nor is the unity in time and place necessary; it is not exceptional that it takes years or decades to draw everything required out of certain starting points.

In artistic research, just as in scientific research, accidents and coincidences are fruitful for discoveries, and can offer solutions. This makes improvisation (in all its manifestations) a useful means for the working process; the playground within which artistic research is happening, including the possibility of failure. But strategies will change by periods; sometimes the movement in the whole field will be more hermetic and cognitive, deepening out certain realms; sometimes it may be very open and playful, searching for links with all possible domains, either in other artistic disciplines, or even outside the arts. In this way, for example, visual arts bypassed the music scene with the discovery of sound as material, which has recently been re-injected into music as sound-art.

With music and sound the most important and at the same time the most intriguing and necessary quality is an availability to listen. It is the main means of observation in this domain. The receiver of the aural message needs to make inner space to receive an imprint from it. This way of listening does not serve expectations, but requires a genuine openness and availability to experience. Nonetheless there will be a gap in the communication, which the listener needs to actively fill in with his or her own inspiration, if a mutual resonance is intended. Reflecting ideas back enriches the sender's intention and can lead to more clarity in content and form. The fact that at this early stage of the research it will be somebody with a similar background and experience, helps to commonly access the grounds on which to continue.

Form, frame and context are supportive to the advancement of the research: by setting up a good situation, messages can be received by the best means possible, with an open and calm mind; by setting a frame, the amount of options can be pleasantly limited (even temporarily) and habits can be avoided; a specific context can enhance aspects of a work or of an idea, and can provide a feeling of legitimisation. In this same way, silence can clear some space and provide the potentiality of a white sheet of paper - a start from scratch.

To conclude these thoughts, there remain two more definitions from the New Oxford American Dictionary which strike the attention: 'systematic' and 'conclusion'. Are these also imperative in the artistic domain? Yes they are! Although 'systematic' doesn't imply that plans cannot be changed or pursued laterally, and 'conclusions' can be preliminary or retracted in the process. But without the aim for both these notions, artistic research is nothing but a rambling around oneself without permeability and honest communication, and is therefore irrelevant as artistic research.

Which leads to the very last, most delicate question as to whether artistic research and its conclusions need to be useful and beneficial for society. Once again, yes: if the given conditions are respected, there will be a natural, inexhaustive return, which will be a contribution to an honest, non-commercial culture, which makes the human human.

A dictionary by the artist-in-residence

artistic research |är'tistik'rē,şər ch; ri'sər ch |
to re-invigorate ones artistic practice; inquiry; how ideas relate to things (material and immaterial things); time to contemplate, correlate, experiment, discover on all conscious and unconscious levels; options explored; homework; generally looking into things one doesn't know, ideally into something nobody knows; following curiosity, as it branches, twists and turns; might be another way of saying "experimental music"

artistic practice |är'tistik'praktəs |
the result of artistic research; methodology; the daily attempts to increase the chance of a lucky accident; the physical, or otherwise, outcomes of artistic research; to relate ideas to things; a mental and physical space and time for construction; one descriptive phrase for the creative act; coming out; self-evident

working process |'wərkiŋg 'prä,ses |
methodologies for creation; daily work; development; trying to create knowledge by doing; the structure of practice and methodology of research; starting with one goal in mind and arriving at some other goal; elaboration of an idea, moving from the conceptual to the tangible; choices on which one focuses for a time; absolutely anything can be this

laboratory |'labrə,tôrē |
a research time/space; a place to try things out; science; mostly a place within oneself; the setting for all of the above, an individual or collaborative undertaking; hybrid tool; a physical place for experimentation; performance space

listening |'lisən |
awareness of hearing; hard work; awareness, and super awareness on all levels; the act of getting closer to sound; being in a space between active and passive; analytical concentration; an active framing device for paying attention to the world through ones' ears; as important as playing or writing

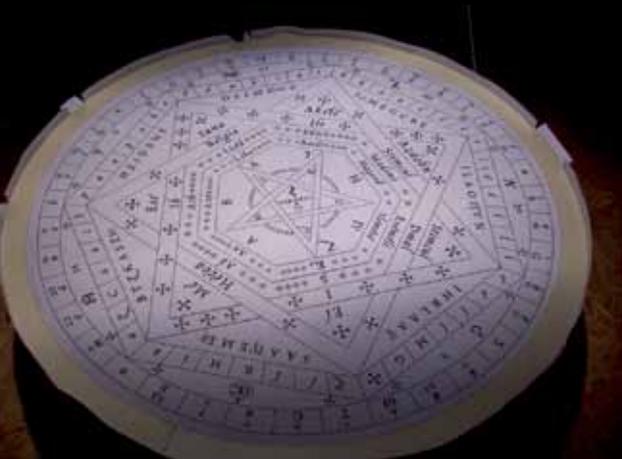
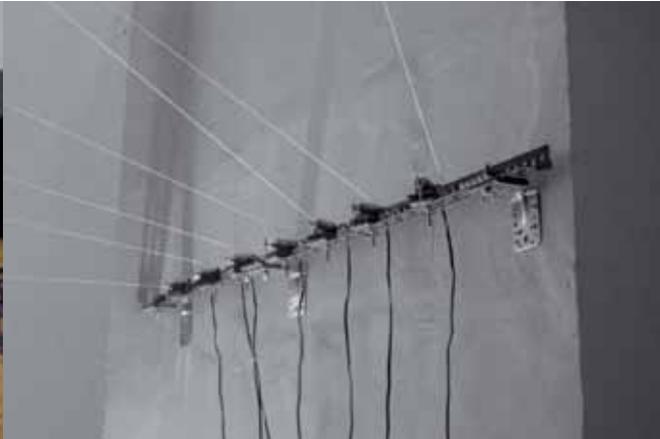
concept |'kän,sept |
ideas at inception of creation; framework; manifested idea; remains after abstracting the physical manifestation; spark, source, enveloping canopy; reflection; constructive restrictions; a starting and/or end point or neither - concept can be derived through research; without it music is just impulse

experiment |ik'sperəmənt |
navigation through the unknowable; try and error; more interesting if it fails; the rational and intuitive way of experiencing a concept; openness; defining an action with unknown results or prove an assumption allowing that it proves something else – as such an experiment can't go wrong; is not science

interpretation |in,tərpri'tā sh ən |
impossibility of repetition; perception; different; chinese whispers; a personal rendering; personal perspective on a flexible subject; needs always to be discovered

creation |krē'ā sh ən |
God method; production; adding more things to the world (full of things); (that's one for the gods); bringing into existence; the meeting of ones artistic impulses and craft; invention; happening all the time

inspiration |,inspə'rā sh ən |
new breath; state of grace; the personal sparks; dogs, plants, mountains, fields





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