

The penetration of sound on the still photographic digital image. Annie

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Key words:

– Still Digital Photography, Installation, positioning, physical, dichotomy, empathy, sound. –

Traditionally sound has supported a narrative with a moving image, and often is used to compliment rather than direct that narrative:

What happens when the image is a digital still photograph?

And when ‘sound’ is ‘placed’ away from the image within an installation space?

If the projected image is of this/a moment can sound inject a ‘time’ element through its use of ‘direction’?

What does the audience bring to this?

Why put sound and a still digital photographic image together?

What can they give each other?

The main area explored is the question of how ‘sound’ changes our perception of the still-image. This is largely un answered.

The Paper looks at and analysis’s the above in the following different ways:

The human voice, abstract sound, sound from objects, and the position of sound within an installation space. This is discussed through sound and narrative, including sound directing a narrative. The use of ‘music’, electro acoustic artists and ‘abstract’ sound, looking at the difference in using sound

that has a visual link to the image to one that has no visual link, what affect this could offer the work? The positioning of the sound and image with in the designated space, how this alters the received understanding.

The presentation of the paper will discuss these through looking at my own and other practitioners work in sound art, installation, still and moving image.

Asking more questions than giving answers.

The paper:

Firstly I want to look at the difference of light forming an image through a projector compared to an image formed in a print. The projection's use of light has connection with stained glass windows, cinema, installation and an early slide lantern. (Crary, 1990).

Why I use projection and where my work is placed within the 'photographic' field.

As already mentioned this form of presentation has more in common with cinema or the 'lantern' slide than the photographic image based within the inherited art tradition in composition, lighting and print outcome, therefore the research will take reference from areas of cinematic and photographic theoretical thinking in its analysis of the image's use of content and intention.

What makes a photograph a photograph?

In Peter Osborne's essay 'Photography in an expanding field: Distributive Unity and Dominant Form' (Green, 2003) (Where is the Photograph edited by David Green) he uses Bazin's (Bazin, 1967) description of cinema and its relationship

to death 'the embalming of time' and corresponds this to Barthes's 'excessive monstrous mode' the immobilisation of time. The reference of the photograph preservation of the past compared to a 'projection' into the future, but referring to Debray and the need to address present 'productive techniques'. I would argue that my work sits in the present both in its use of digital capture, application and presentation, in order for its comparative use of sound and that in doing so it not only address its own inclusion within a historical context (by use of present techniques) but also gives the audience an immediacy in concept, application and endorses the perception of the 'moment' that is not to be repeated. The position that 'Sound' holds, the invisible instant, or series of instances.

Sontag argues that the 'photograph is not only like its subject, homage to the subject. It is part of, an extension of that subject...' (Sontag, 1973)

The holy grail to unite the invisible and the visible. The perception of the audience is used as the device, the glue if you like that completes the piece, for example when listening to the radio.

The position that the audience is placed, physical and contextual, historical, cultural etc. is exciting when instilled within the architectural space, physically placing the audience through direction and position of sound. Acoustic sound art 'places' the sound within the space, how can this contribute to the image. The image fixed, the container, tv, screen, wall, etc adds to the understanding.

All the works shown are experiments into using sound and image that will lead to final pieces.

We see a phone, we hear a ringing, we connect the two, but in reality what we hear is a speaker behind a screen, is this our need for 'stories' ? The same happens with radio, it's a box but our perception is in another place. So, how can this be used with a still image?

'4phones' uses a sound of a telephone and is placed/presented/shown on a tv screen, a traditional moving image platform, the movement is in the sound, tracking from speaker to speaker.

'4 phones' <http://vimeo.com/18255116>

Using a non-abstract sound

'4 phones' is taken from Barthes *'Image, Music Text'* (Barthes, 1977) where he examines a Bond film, and its use of the four phones that are not directly driving the narrative, but add to our perception of the organisation behind the main character, James Bond. My interest in this is to explore how we perceive unseen connections in society that are fundamental to its function. And to do this by showing an installation of a projection of an object of communication, but one that cannot perform its function, because by being a projection has become a facsimile.

Each phone although the same will have a different identity because each is given an individual tone, its function is never fulfilled for two reasons one because we the audience cannot pick up the receiver, and two because the phone has no connection lead, of cause it could be wireless but these phones have no visible signs of an outside connection.

Then you may ask where is the sound coming from?

This is from the narrative that gives a perceived connection; the audience could take this further and fantasize the voice at the other end.

The whole piece is a metaphor for the functional aspect of society that is needed in order for that society to fulfill its desired standards.

The work is a projected sound and image installation; a transient piece using projected image, the projection ethereal like the sound. An image that is not a printed artefact, but echoes the fleeting nature of sound, by only being seen at the moment of viewing, and only existing outside that space as digital data.

The human voice used for narrative, too easy?

Chris Marker, 'La Jetee' using a series of still images with a spoken narrative.

Using a public location with different 'stories' to give that understanding that a place has many associations, based on personal history.

'This was where...' <http://vimeo.com/16893411>

Using the human voice and narrative. This work explores at structure and sound

This work is about 'function' and 'identity' (the identity of the place invested in the individual 's understanding of its functioned for them).

Looking at different responses (through sound) to a specific space, interweaving sound and image together to create a mishmash of history, time and spatial

elements. This piece uses voices in response to a question asked by the artist and the image is never shown or described to the participants. They are asked to complete the sentence 'this was where...'. The image is a train station in Tokyo, a transient space. The installation shows how the actual function of a space may not be the main one that is remembered, another function takes over in the memory of the individual, 'listening to the beyond-meaning' (Nancy, 2007). This work uses sound and the human voice to change the perception we have of the image, seen alone is in one context, but with sound becomes a triple meaning dependent on the viewer's understanding. Directed in one way into 'function' of a place and then into a different form of 'function' through the voice, narrative and memory (Kahn, 2001). This changes through the understanding of speech, if the audience does not understand English, the piece stops making sense in the intended way and become 'image and sound', the sound becoming 'beyond meaning' transforming the work into another form, in that the sound becomes structure. Simon Biggs's 'Document' (1996) uses sound that we understand as language but the words are not definable, whereas in 'This was where...' the language used is to disrupt the image by challenging the understood function of the place, if the words are not understood the sound takes on a separate function beyond the meaning of the piece. These voices were recorded in a room, not in the image's location, not even in an outside location. Aspects arise, firstly the use of the voice and 'Phonogeny' (Chion, 1994) (Chion p.101) and how different voices respond to being recorded and then as a development from this the inclusion of 'accented' voices. The role of location 'effects track (FX)', to include sounds from a railway station, or any ambient sound; does this 'voice only' help to underline the concept of

'functionality' or does the image alone give enough clues? The image has Japanese text, but no signage in any language that says Tokyo station. The image is also stretched through Photoshop and the uses falsified colour both in camera and through manipulation in a photography lab to exaggerate the colour cast from the lights. What would a location or FX track add to the concept?

Chion (Chion, 1994) examples the film maker Eric Rohmer in his lack of location sound, using only necessary sounds to complete the scene, such as footsteps as they climbed the stairs, no extraneous sound over shadowed the dialogue. As mentioned the voices are 'accented' no mediated voice, except some give the appearance of mediation through they choice of delivery. If another version was developed using the looped sound to give an opportunity to develop location sound that interrupts the flow of word, it may give the audience an unfolding of the piece with less straightforward rhythm, more pause and thus becomes more intriguing.

'AND more...' <http://vimeo.com/16892848>

Uses abstract and functional sounds and is about 'listening'.

'AND more...' is based on the function and identity of the space in which the work is shown. AND is a gallery and education centre in East London. People gather there to discuss/debate local issues, art, politics and raise activity, its an open centre with free access, work shown there includes: John Latham and Ismail Saray.

The installation looks at 'practical' sounds that are utilised in the running of the gallery, boilers, computers, doors, etc these sounds are largely 'blocked out'

through our attention to less familiar sounds. The work uses this as a metaphor for the functional aspects of society that are ignored again largely through familiarity, for example, cleaners, postal workers, sewer workers etc. The work asks us to re-invest our attention back on to these sounds and how these are a part of the utilisation of this particular space. Therefore the installation impacts upon the gallery by using its integral structure in placing the image and sound separately, projected image 'hung' above the space and only seen by turning towards the entrance, and the sound is in speakers at the entrance, therefore the work is heard before it is seen, not unlike a shop, cafe or bar that draws the attention through deliberate use of sound or smell. The projected image is a series of images of different parts of the gallery space taken at different times, layered together to give a sense of both 'time passing' and designed to produce intrigue. This is done through the use of the layers and through the images 'mise -en- scene', I include the sound in this, through its use of timber, sound level and speaker distribution, and in the image, through the lighting, lens, digital 'noise', colour palette and layering of the content. The image is a composite, the same scene/place from different perspectives, a series of visual edits transposed onto the place it records. The sound a recording of a domestic act of sweeping and echo from a boiler. The piece asked the audience to reflect upon the function of the space through looking at the multi layered image and hearing some of its functionality, this work is more a statement told through signs (pre-arranged elements, place together within the piece) although the following do not have sound this work does in some way have link in their use of signs in signifiers. Olivier Richon 'Real Allegories' (Dick) placement of object, clothe and lighting, based on traditions of lighting and position within still life

painting, and Karen Knorr's 'Gentlemen' (1981–83), a portrait series of both 'man and status', shown within the photographic frame by the styling of the room, this work is a portrait of a space with attention to its function, 'AND more...' is without a central figure, the role of this is taken up by the sound, again the work has no direct placement of objects in space but does organise the reading of the image through the placement of colour and light and object within the layers. Paul Graham's 'Beyond Caring' (1984–85) interiors have a more direct connection, using their colour, shape, object size and essence of the function of the room described using simple photographic devices, whereas 'AND more...' is complex in its 'presence', a projected image through light only viewed at the moment, not an artifact with its own history, a composite based on a seen place but converted into a 'made up' place, made up of different views and times, this is its beauty but also its failure, its sense of 'past' is through its composite nature and its sense of immediacy through projection. In Jordan Baseman's 'Don't stop 'til you get enough' a series of drawn images are viewed with a voice over explaining the significant of these drawings on his life, we never see the face of the voice, but understand their importance as most as a third element completing the story.

The main issues is how the sound and image link given that they are not directly physically positioned, therefore the link must be in the perceived reading of the audience. In electro acoustic performances I noted that sound floated in the air like an unseen force or structure, even with eyes open, and room distractions, the sounds took on 'a life of their own', how?

As mentioned, the positioning of the image and sound is designed to produce a reaction in the audience; the image has no horizon line as a focal point but is

projected so that the work is positioned as a part of the room. The room and the piece create one work in which the horizon, (the lower ceiling area) is the connection of both. The position of the speakers in the entrance, the image is unseen until the audience turns back towards the exit, executed to produce a different reaction to the work, one that is controlled by the shape and use of the space.

'Baro 1' <http://vimeo.com/16892961>

This large projection piece is a collaboration with electro acoustic musician Robert Dow. Using sound that has no visual link to the image.

Using the sound to create a dichotomy an opposite to the image, this can set up an argument/discussion between image and sound, the audience is the witness to this.

'Another view, another time'

Using sound that is deliberately un-hearable either through the position of sounds or the sound level. Used to enable/induce an experience within the audience/spectator, this could be frustration, shock, a way of physically placing the audience/spectator.

How the speed of a sound can hold the viewer. If Hockney is correct, and the number of images controls the amount of time the viewer 'looks' at the work, can sound hold the attention through it's speed as well as it's narrative?

'Another view, another time' uses photographic image signatures, rebated edges, cross processing and lack of focus to express a 'sense' of a place and time, explored through the perceived recollection, Sally Mann's 'The Family and The Land' 2010 (The Photographers Gallery) uses a similar technique, but whereas Mann uses the wet-plate collodion process, 'Another view another time' uses a mixture of digital and analogue. Mann's use of process comes from a traditional method and evokes a past and deep resonance from the area photographed and death. 'Another view, another time' has a haunted quality echoed in the use of sound, a feeling of absence/presence within the space.

Of course all images are the past, but these embrace and immerse in what 'is before' in what Rosalind Krauss describes as 'photography's simulacral' (Krauss, 1990) the techniques used devise a world of submersion through the perception of the audience. By using soft focus that suggests an 'un-realness' and through manipulation of the colour to underlie this, these images, although actual documents of an actual place, become transformed into deam-like mysteries that form a rhetoric.

The images are four sets of triptych each with their own set of sound, surrounding the audience like a square 'panoptic' (Foucault, 1977) with the sound intermingling/interweaving not unlike Christian Marclay's 'Cross Fire' (White Cube Gallery 2007) in which the sound confronts and combines with the image to 'pierce' the audience, in what Barthes refers to as 'punctum' (Barthes, 1993) The sound is a mixture of abstract and 'actual', produced to 'give a feeling' an emotional response through a perceived unconscious understanding, as described in phenomenology (Merleau-Ponty, 1948).

'leave my name at reception' uses a spoken narrative, the sound of objects, an underlining 'abstract' sound designed to create 'unease' as is the image.

'leave my name in reception...' <http://vimeo.com/1689325>

'leave my name at reception...' is an installation piece designed as part of the 'Bathing Beauties Beach Hut' event. This work is an installation piece containing a garment, image and sound, these combine in a narrative utilising the beach hut as the central pivot. The sound may describe the past and the image the future or visa versa and the garment and hut, the present, or all four could describe the present or just be incidental. This is for the audience to discover/decide. The title links to all or each, again one for the audience. The garment was devised and made by designer, Collette Paterson, the collaboration conducted by Internet. The piece has a complex soundtrack that is a mixture of voice, effects and devised abstracted sound, the image is black and white and abstracted and composed within Photoshop to produce an image that has an 'atmosphere' that is in contrast with the sound, the garment and beach hut complete the piece adding to the narrative. Each element drives a narrative, although structured has deliberate ambiguities in order for the audience to form their own conclusions. The image has surface qualities not unlike, Nadav Kander's 'Arctic Circle' or Hiroshi Sugimoto 'In Praise of Shadows' 2003, although two different approaches, Kander's is a landscape witnessed from a 'position' whereas Sugimoto's is a representation from Junichiro Tanizaki's book of the same title (Tanizaki, 2001). They both use black and white as a method to enter the perception of the viewer, the image is more than the subject photographed, and the meaning lives outside the content within the frame.

(Burgin, 1982). Adding to this is the physical presence of the garment and location, the sound complementing this in its use of familiar iconic sounds of both location and voice. Gregory Crewdson's *'Sanctuary'* (White Cube Gallery 2010) departs from his 'cinematic' 'staged' lighting and takes 'uncanny' (Royle, 2003) images of an abandoned film studio in Rome. Through the use of a colour palette of monochrome tones he recreates a perception of 'strangeness' and a narrative of an area of theatre (the abandoned film set), this also uses a specific location as part of the narrative, 'Leave my name in reception...' uses both the situated space and external location including the sound to communicate the narrative.

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