

Sound On

Audio Scene '79 at Modern Art Galerie, Vienna.

A report by Hank Bull and Robert Adrian

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Joachim Diederichs (second from left facing camera) delivers the opening lecture at international sound symposium, Audio Scene '79, which took place outside Vienna at Schloss Lengenfeld.

Grita Insam's Modern Art Gallery is sponsoring a summer long show called Audio Scene '79. It opened with a Symposium, continues with an exhibition and will conclude in September with a performance series. The symposium took place at Schloss Lengenfeld, a beautiful medieval building about two hours from Vienna. We drank wonderful village wine, danced in a very international local disco and were constantly heckled during our discussions by comments from the rooster, the donkeys and the peacock. The weekend opened with a performance by Arlene Schloss and then leaned into a series of historical arguments, the strongest of which came from Peter Frank, now curating performance etc. at P.S.1 in New York. He sounded forth on Fluxus and the reaction against the modernist orthodoxies of abstract expressionism, 12 tone composition etc. Much mention was made of John Cage, by Frank and others, as a kind of father figure of "Intermedia" until it was pointed out that there are many lineages and that in fact Hollywood's music and sound effects have had at least as great an effect on the current generation of "post-modernists". This remark came from Bob George, another producer - and sometime distributor - of records by artists. Producer of the "Airwaves" album, he has done some thorough research into record sales and talked about getting the work into record stores. Distribution emerged as the

central practical issue and the question: whether to go for a straight distributor or do it yourself met with the consensus that the former method is ideal but difficult to pull off and that the latter is a lot of hard work.

Some progress was made. Rene Block, who brought Beuys to his N.Y. gallery to do the Coyote Piece, now lives in Berlin where he is developing a large sound show to include installation and performance aspects, as well as a thorough history (back to 1500!) of sound work. The show will open in January 1980. Block is one of many European "galeristes" who are leaving their traditional roles as dealers for the more challenging job of promoting the new media. He and Grita Insam retired at one point with Bob George and Bill Furlong for strategy talks. Furlong brought a suitcase full of his Audio Arts editions. He stressed the cheapness, ease and speed of audio cassette distribution and in fact published the performances from the weekend less than a week afterwards. This is unconfirmed but as far as I know the whole symposium is available now by writing to Audio Arts, 6 Briarwood Rd., London SW4. Also present was Michael Kohler of "S. Press", Munich, with an equally impressive catalogue of tapes.

Ian Murray is involved in radio production. His concern is to produce peoples' work not only specifically for radio but so that it will be broadcast in its entirety, for good money. His determined thinking was a strong presence. He complained constantly that the hardest thing to do at the symposium was to actually play a tape. Too much talk. (Murray, George and Frank were quickly dubbed the Three Stooges). Heidi Grundmann, a radio producer from Vienna and behind the scenes wizard, talked about her regular national broadcast and the problems of funding in Austria. Her show is the only one in Europe that deals seriously with performance and sound art. It is truly international as well as local in scope and she, like Bill Furlong, covered the symposium for sound. In fact the number of cassette tape recorders was phenomenal. Frank remarked at one point, "This is a nice vacation from video!"

Maurizio Nannucci gave a performance disguised as a lecture which he called an "auto critique". He talked about the space between word and image (or the space that the two make together) making reference to the rhythm of cave painting, and the echo and the shadow being at the same time a doubling and a negation of the source. He is involved with Zona in Florence and is also using radio to widen the audience. There were also performances by Hank Bull, Jana Haimson and Ingrid Aperque, a young Viennese artist whose presence at the symposium was a continuous performance with the children, the animals and the building. She ended the weekend with a very loose vocal improvisation from the courtyard. She was joined by a five year old boy named Matti, a black poodle and the old man of the farm, who walked unknowingly into the middle of the performance.

It was the most unstructured piece I have ever seen. Excellent. A catalogue is being compiled and is available by writing to the Modern Art Galerie, Kollnerhofgasse 6, A1010 Wien.
