

Media Release: for immediate use

# Soundtrack for an Exhibition

8 Mar - 11 Jun 06, Musée Art Contemporain Lyon, FR



**SOUNDTRACK** composed by Susan Stenger with contributions by Robert Poss, Alan Vega, Alexander Hacke, F.M. Einheit, Will Oldham, Kim Gordon, Mika Vainio, Bruce Gilbert, Ulrich Krieger, Warren Ellis, Jim White, Jennifer Hoyston, Andria Degens, Spider Stacy  
**PAINTINGS** by John Armleder, Steven Parrino [until 14 May 06]  
**FEATURE FILM** by Kristian Levring [until 14 May 06]

An exhibition conceived by Mathieu Copeland

Co-produced by forma and Musée Art Contemporain Lyon

**Musée Art Contemporain Lyon presents a major new time-based project that confounds traditional expectations of an exhibition.**

Soundtrack for an Exhibition comprises three main elements: a specially commissioned sound score, an exhibition of paintings and a feature film. The soundtrack is broadcast both inside and outside of the museum for 96 days, whilst the paintings and feature film are presented in the gallery space for 69 days.

The sound piece, composed by Susan Stenger and featuring contributions from a stellar list of international musicians, employs an archetypal pop song structure ‘exploded’ in form to last 96 days.

During this period a feature film [*The King Is Alive*, by Danish filmmaker and Dogme95 signatory Kristian Levring], screened not in its final, edited version, but as the entire footage shot in its making - will be shown in the gallery. Presented alongside in the gallery space will be an exhibition of paintings, including the late American painter Steven Parrino’s *Slow Rot* works and large scale commissioned *Puddle Paintings* and *Pour Paintings* realised in situ by Swiss artist John Armleder – all unstable paintings that both evolve and decay over time.

Curator Mathieu Copeland comments:

“It is in the confrontation of these exhibition components with the soundtrack and with each other that this project is essentially defined: not as a singular experience, but as a score evolving over time. Whilst the soundtrack lasts 96 days, the film and paintings are presented for only part of this period, thus the sound piece exists and evolves as a soundtrack for an exhibition, for a film, and for an empty space”

**For further press information and images, please contact:**

**Hannah Civico, Communications Manager, forma,**

**T +44 (0)191 230 4646 | E [hc@forma.org.uk](mailto:hc@forma.org.uk) [www.forma.org.uk](http://www.forma.org.uk)**

### **Listings Information**

7 Mar 06 [preview]

8 Mar - 11 Jun 06 [soundtrack]

8 Mar - 14 May 06 [exhibition of paintings and feature film screening]

Venue: Musée d'art Contemporain de Lyon, 81 Cité Internationale, Quai Charles De Gaulle, 69006, Lyon, FR Tel: +33 [0] 04 72 69 17 17 Web: [www.moca-lyon.org](http://www.moca-lyon.org)

Soundtrack for an Exhibition is part of the Musiques en Scène Biennale

### **NOTES TO EDITORS**

#### **The Soundtrack**

It takes its basic structure from the form of a traditional pop song. The 96-day duration of the score derives from the bridge (the middle eight, as it is known) expanding to eight days rather than eight bars, and the rest of the song sections expanding in kind. (The intro lasts four days, each verse lasts sixteen days, and the choruses span eight days each...)

The three verses relate to specific genres: the first verse, easy listening and old standards; the second, folk, country and blues; the third, rock and heavy metal, and the bridge, experimental music. On this level, the soundtrack offers an insight into a history of western music of recent decades.

Susan Stenger comments:

“Each verse uses sounds and instruments relating to that genre and examines associated conventions and gestures. Describing it this way sounds dry and academic, but the piece is very much about the mood and emotional content, the evocative nature of these gestures, intervals, instruments etc, but re-examining and re-contextualising these in order to create a new, unexpected narrative”.

Contributors include pioneering artists whose musical practices span genres as diverse as rock, punk, electronica, experimental folk, noise, techno, blues, jazz and pop – all recognised for their often seminal contributions to contemporary music practice.

Throughout the duration of the three months the score changes significantly in nature in terms of what is actually heard. Perhaps the most austere section of the piece is the introduction, which adopts only two notes, one low and steady and another starting in unison and very slowly rising (changing its relationship  
forma arts and media, PO Box 637, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE99 1JF, UK, T+44 (0)191 230 4646 E [info@forma.org.uk](mailto:info@forma.org.uk)

to the low note). Visitors are encouraged to revisit the exhibition at several points in order to experience the evolving narrative of the score.

### **The Paintings**

The exhibition features a series of *Pour Paintings* and *Puddle Paintings* realised by John Armleder, new large scale commissions created on-site for the exhibition. Painterly, chemical compositions, created by physically pouring paint onto a vertically positioned canvas from above, and made primarily with glitter and phosphorescent paint, the surface appearance of Armleder's *Pour Paintings* fluctuate and vary dramatically according to the way chemicals settle and the lighting conditions. The *Puddle Paintings* are the result of soaking canvas with large amounts of often incompatible paints, varnish, glitter and other chemicals. These works are essentially ephemeral; changing continuously, they are both unpredictable and unstable in nature. Presenting alongside three *Pour Paintings* by Armleder from 2003, the paintings vary in scale from three metres by two meters to panels of three meters by six meters.

Steven Parrino's paintings, both entitled *Slow Rot*, date from 1985 and 1988. These works comprise stretched raw canvas soaked with motor oil which causes the support to slowly decay. Both an allegory of America's history and its fascination with fast cars, *Slow Rot* also present an insight into the basic constituent of painting - paint stripped to its rawest component. Slowly decaying, the motor oil slowly eating up the cotton canvas, the true nature of Parrino's paintings is revealed over time, through the process of their evolution.

Both series of paintings mirrors the time aspect of the sound piece and the generative nature of the exhibition.

### **The Film**

Screened within the exhibition is the complete footage filmed during the making of *The King Is Alive* by Danish filmmaker Kristian Levring. Presented is the 'reality' of a feature film, rather than its final edited version, where the audience can explore the unedited accumulation of its raw material and can see the film void of its mounted structure and its edited soundtrack. The narrative is of a lost journey made by twelve actors - including Jennifer Jason Leigh and Roman Bohringer - to a deserted town in Namibia to re-enact Shakespeare's King Lear, as a desperate act of occupational survival. The narrative becomes reflected, metaphorically and physically, in the viewer's own journey through the 270 hours of the material filmed over two months on location in south-western Africa.

*The King is Alive* is the last of the four original Dogme95 films, Levring being one of the signatories of the Dogme manifesto alongside Lars Von Trier (*The Idiots*), Thomas Vinterberg (*Festen*) and Soren Kragh-Jacobsen (*Mifune*).

Currator Mathieu Copeland comments:

"The appearance of the digital camera precipitated a new cinema, with an invigorated and freed approach to filming, that permitted hundreds of hours of experimentation to realise a film - something inconceivable with a 35mm camera. If this led to an attempt to reconsider cinema, as epitomised by Dogme95, then 'exploding' *The King is Alive* by screening it in its entirety is an extension of the theory that informed the making of Levring's seminal film".

Filmmaker Kristian Levring comments :

"Somehow this is very close to Dogme. I think that in showing everything of the filming, we realise a deconstruction of the film, a deconstruction of the narrative".

## **Exhibition Catalogue**

forma is publishing a catalogue to coincide with this project. This full colour, hardback publication will include essays and discussions with participating artists and guest contributors. The catalogue reproduces the entire score of the soundtrack, includes film stills, installation shots and includes an audio DVD of an excerpt of the soundtrack.

Texts include an essay by Mathieu Copeland, curator of the project; a discussion with Susan Stenger and Tony Conrad (composer, filmmaker and musician, co-founder of The Dream Syndicate with John Cale and La Monte Young); a discussion with Gustav Metzger (influential artist born in 1936 in Germany, lives and works in London, leading figure of Auto-Destructive-Art), John Armleder (painter born in 1948, influential Swiss artist and founder of Ecart, associated with Neo-Geo movement in the '80s), and Mathieu Copeland; and a discussion with the filmmaker, Kristian Levring.

## **Artist biographies**

### **Susan Stenger**

Susan Stenger has bridged the rock and art music worlds throughout her career. After studying classical flute in Prague, she joined Petr Kotik's New York City-based SEM Ensemble and devoted herself to the performance of new and experimental music, especially that of John Cage, Phill Niblock and Christian Wolff. She soon began composing and performing her own music for flute and electronics, as well as touring with Rhys Chatham's all-electric-guitar group. In 1987 Stenger joined Robert Poss in forming Band of Susans; her role evolved from bassist to singer and songwriter as BOS went on to release nine critically acclaimed CDs.

Stenger moved to London in 1996 and formed The Brood, a unique gathering of musicians from the fields of rock, electronics and improvisation with a common interest in 'classic' experimental music. Performers have included Finnish electronics duo Pan Sonic, Justine Frischmann of Elastica, Bruce Gilbert and Robert Grey of Wire, David Thomas of Pere Ubu and composer/bassist Gavin Bryars.

In 1997 Stenger recruited visual artists Angela Bulloch, Cerith Wyn Evans and Tom Gidley and musician J. Mitch Flacko to form all-bass-band Big Bottom, which has served as both sound and set for dancer/choreographer Michael Clark's productions. Stenger's work for Big Bottom and solo bass explores the fundamentals of sound and structure through the primal power of amplified vibrating strings and reflects her continued fascination with the gestures and vocabulary of rock and heavy metal.

She continues to perform the music of other composers on flute and bass and has toured with Siouxi Sioux, John Cale and Nick Cave.

### **Soundtrack Contributors**

The sound piece includes contributions from some of the most influential and pioneering forces in the contemporary music world: Robert Poss [Band of Susans], Alan Vega [Suicide] Alexander Hacke [Einstürzende Neubaten], F.M. Einheit [ex-Einstürzende Neubaten], Will Oldham [Palace Music, Bonny Prince Billy], Kim Gordon [Sonic Youth], Mika Vainio [Pan Sonic], Bruce Gilbert [Wire], Ulrich Krieger, Warren Ellis [Dirty Three, The Bad Seeds], Jim White [The Dirty Three], Jennifer Hoyston [Erase Errata], Andria Degens [Pantaleimon], Spider Stacy [Pogues]

## **John Armleder**

Swiss artist John Armleder became involved with the Fluxus movement during the late 1960s and 1970s, when he created performances, installations and collective activities. In 1969, with several artists, Armleder co-founded the Groupe Ecart in Geneva, whose ambition is to unite all phases of artistic production from the creation and the presentation to the diffusion of the works. The anti-establishment and anti-formalist philosophy of Fluxus continued in Armleder's mixed-media works of later years. Solo exhibitions of John Armleder's work have been presented in many international prestigious contemporary art institutions including the Kunstverein Ruhr d'Essen (Germany) in 2004; Kunstraum HBK Brunswick Kunsthalle in Zurich (Switzerland) in 2003; Voltes, Caratsch, de Pury et Luxembourg, Zurich (Switzerland) 2002; Inside the 60s, Musée des beaux arts de Lausanne (Switzerland), 2000; Project 72, Museum of Modern Art New York (USA), 1999; At any speed, Staatliche Kunsthalle, Baden Baden (Germany); Kunstmuseum Saint Gall (Switzerland) in 1996; Le Consortium, Dijon (France); Weiner Scession, Vienna (Austria) in 1993; Swiss Pavilion 42<sup>nd</sup> Venice Biennale (Italy) in 1986. He has also participated in numerous international group shows, including the Sydney Biennale 1986, La Couleur Seule in Lyon in 1988, the Dokumenta in Kassel in 1987, the Venice Biennale in 1990, and the Lyon Biennial for contemporary art in 1993 and 2003.

## **Steven Parrino**

Part of a generation of artists whose work evolved in the East Village [NY] scene during the late 1970s and early 1980s, Parrino's work has been positioned in a number of awkward niches, none of which has been sufficiently accommodating to his iconoclastic stance. Shown and read against artists as diverse as Olivier Mosset, Sherrie Levine, Cady Noland, Mike Kelley and Jeff Koons, Parrino's work both traffics in and negates aspects of popular culture, minimalism, the America body politic, and arte povera. Lacking critical support in the US, Parrino's oeuvre has been enthusiastically supported by the European museum and gallery system while remaining relatively unknown in the US. A critical reappraisal of the work is already underway, however, brought about by his growing sphere of influence, particularly on the work of a number of significant younger artists.

His work has been shown at numerous prestigious museums and galleries in major cities across Europe and Parrino was also included in the 2003 Biennale de Lyon whilst a major survey show is currently being shown by Geneva's Musée d'Art Moderne et Contemporain.

## **Kristian Levring**

Kristian Levring was born in Denmark in 1957 and after attending school in Denmark and Switzerland he was educated at the Danish Film Academy as a film editor. Graduating from editing documentaries and feature films, he produced two features himself then made his directing debut in 1986 with a little-seen science fiction project *Skud Fra Hjertet*.

In 1988 he began his career as a successful commercials director, working for clients all around the world on many varied campaigns. In 1995 he was invited by Lars Von Trier, Thomas Vinterberg and Soren Kragh-Jacobson to join their new Dogme movement, a group founded on a cinematic 'vow of chastity' in a bid to return to storytelling basics. For his own Dogme project, the last of the four original dogme film, Levring wrote *The King Is Alive* with Anders Thomas Jensen, which he directed on location in Namibia and premiered in the *Un Certain Regard* section at the 2000 Cannes Film Festival. The international cast included Romane Bohringer, Jennifer Jason Leigh, whose performance won her the Best Actress award at the 2000 Tokyo Film Festival, and Janet McTeer.

Levrings next project, *The Intended*, co-written with Janet McTeer was shot in Malaysia in 2001 and starred McTeer together with Oscar winners Olympia Dukakis and Brenda Fricker. The film premiered at the

Toronto International Film Festival in 2002.

Since then, Kristian has completed a further four screenplays. *Doxa*, co-written with and directed by Swedish director Leif Magnusson, was released in 2005 and Kristian has two projects in development to direct in 2006/2007.

### **Mathieu Copeland**

Mathieu Copeland is a curator living and working in London. A graduate from Goldsmiths College, London, in 2003, Copeland has curated, among others, in 2004 *Expat-Art Centre* with artists Brian Eno, Ben Kinmont, Pierre Huyghe, Claude Lévêque, Didier Marcel, Olivier Mosset, Shimabuku, Dan Walsh and Ian Wilson (ICA, Musée Art Contemporain Lyon, Museum Sztuki Lodz, CAC Vilnius, Kunstihoone Tallinn and Bizart Shanghai), and *Meanwhile... Across Town*, with Cerith Wyn Evans, at the Centre Point Tower, London. In 2003, Copeland curated and published *Perfect Magazine*, and in 2002 initiated and curated the *Anna Sanders Films* world tour (film programme with Charles de Meaux, Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Pierre Huyghe and Philippe Parreno). He also edited the book *The In Between - Anna Sanders Films*, which was published by forma in 2003.

### **forma: arts and media producers**

forma is one of Europe's leading agencies for contemporary, cross-artform projects. Working with artists, venues and festivals worldwide, forma commissions, tours and publishes new hybrid forms of music, visual art, film, new media, dance, theatre and live art. In the last year, forma productions have been presented at major venues and festivals in Australia, Belgium, Brazil, France, Germany, Greece, Hong Kong, Italy, Japan, Monaco, Netherlands, Portugal, Spain, Switzerland, UK and USA.

For further information, please visit [www.forma.org.uk](http://www.forma.org.uk)

forma is supported by Arts Council England.

Photographs left to right:

Susan Stenger, Alan Vega & Robert Poss, 2006. Photo: Frank Schwere

John Armleder working on *Pour Paintings* at Le Musée Art Contemporain de Lyon, 2006. Photo Mathieu Copeland

Kristian Levring, film set of *The King Is Alive*. Photo: Anders Overgaard