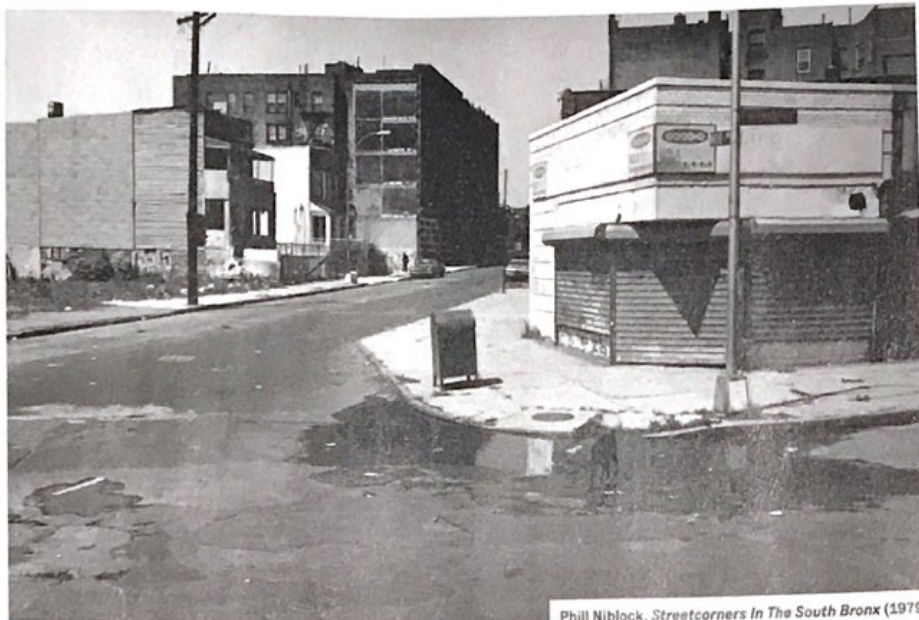


## On Site

Exhibitions, installations, etc



Phill Niblock, *Streetcorners In The South Bronx* (1979)

### Phill Niblock: *Working Photos*

Fridman Gallery, New York, US

There is a plainness to the Fridman gallery that feels just right for this show of Phill Niblock's photographs and videos. The bare white walls are standard, of course, but Niblock's pictures of boatyards and late 1970s South Bronx street scenes – devoid not only of people but the buildings that once stood on the many vacant lots – are on the small size, not much larger than standard printed snapshots, and looking at them seems more like leafing through a scrapbook than gazing at art with a critical or consumerist eye.

Niblock began as a photographer, coming to New York in the late 1950s to, as he relates, take pictures of jazz musicians. 60 years later, one is forgiven for thinking of him more as a musical artist – his videos are most often seen as accompaniment

to one of his grainy, resonant, slab-like drone pieces. And that is indeed the stairway installation, lit by a single red light (a metaphor for the photographer's darkroom?). In the basement is a two channel projection of slides from his *Working Photos* series – that space is otherwise filled with surround-sound audio of a running collection of his drones. *Working Photos* is a deceptive title; the photos are of people working (and landscapes and interiors from China, where this set was taken). And plainness appears to be the key as one instinctively searches for the lock that, once opened, will integrate the audio and visual into a whole that can be apprehended via one concept.

Niblock himself says his fundamental interest is in reproduction, and photography and video are ideal means. While not immediately obvious,

reproduction is fundamental to making his drone pieces – he describes the process as recording a musician playing each note of a scale, then layering reproductions of the same until he achieves the richness of his stacks of overtones and difference beats. Hearing these (re)produced via the PA is visceral and adds a haunted flavour to the images. The sound brings preserved information to life, photography captures ghosts: that still image of a man carrying baskets of straw (?) is a frozen moment of the past that will outlast that man himself, if not his environment.

People working at basic tasks, music (or sound art) made out of basic materials, each leave the viewer/listener responsible for making connections, finding resonances. The strength of the two together at Fridman is that the sound cuts through the voyeuristic nostalgia one feels about documentation of distant

times and far-off lands. The music injects life into everything.

That gets reinforced exponentially at an evening screening of films with music. There is *Terrace Of Unintelligibility* (which is also looped in the gallery), a fairly well known video capturing Arthur Russell recording in the studio, in such extreme close-up that he is reduced to jaw and throat, his vocals to fragments of syllables. William Hooker and Neil Leonard play live along with *Hooker/Niblock* and *Agosta-Ronet* respectively, but the real finds are two films from the late 60s, one of Max Neuhaus playing Stockhausen's *Zyklus* and the other of Sun Ra and his Solar Arkestra. These mesh the music with collages of the action, a wrist rolling a mallet, fingers on a saxophone's keys. They are maximalist and fun and bring out the latent wit in the show.

George Grella

### Jason Moran

Whitney Museum of American Art, New York, US

Moran is one of most original of contemporary jazz pianists, his genre-crossing achievement affirmed by a MacArthur Grant. The exhibition is his first solo museum show as conceptual artist, and includes his own sculptures and drawings, plus collaborations with visual artists such as Kara Walker, Stan Douglas, Carrie Mae Weems, Joan Jonas and Theaster Gates. Originating in Minneapolis's Walker Art Center in 2018, the Whitney is the show's final stop.

The exhibition is focused on one large room, at three corners of which are *STAGED* (2015) – "stage-sculptures" that Moran designed, and had fabricated by assistants. These are life-sized dioramas of historic New York jazz

venues – the Savoy Ballroom in Harlem, swing venue from the 1920s to the 50s; the Three Deuces, a 52nd Street home of bebop; and Slugs' Saloon, the East Village dive that hosted free jazz. Each stage replica includes a display of photographs, souvenir cards and other club memorabilia.

Between these dioramas, projected on the gallery walls, are video collaborations that run in total for two hours before repeating. These include footage of Moran working with Joan Jonas and Theaster Gates; video compositions he made with Walker, Weems and others; and photos from his collaborations. Between the video screenings are solo piano interludes of traditional songs and blues, recorded by Moran, and reproduced on a player-piano baby grand.

The most impressive video contribution was Kara Walker's, whose current installation at Tate Modern's Turbine Hall opened towards the end of 2019. Her project is part of her series *Bureau Of Refugees*, developed from research into the US Department of War's Bureau of Refugees, Freedmen and Abandoned Lands, established in 1865 to help former slaves. The Bureau recorded the violence inflicted on African-Americans during the Reconstruction era, and Walker uses its records in a moving depiction of one case. A filmed puppet show, featuring mobile silhouettes, includes images of rape and violence – the contrast between the entertainment medium and the events depicted is shocking. We catch glimpses of Walker's hands and face as she manipulates the puppets, while Jason

Moran and Alicia Hall Moran's score is gentle and haunting. Also impressive is Carrie Mae Weems's *Lincoln, Lannie, And Me – A Story In 5 Parts* (2012), a video installation that plays with a 19th century special effect called Pepper's Ghost, creating ghostly figures in a stage cartoon.

A small side room screens Stan Douglas's remarkable, bizarre six-hour music video *Luanda-Kinshasa* (2013) – a reimagined Manhattan recording session of the 1970s, treated both epically and kaleidoscopically. Outside the main exhibition room, a foyer displays Moran's works on paper. On the evidence of this show, his evolution in the last decade as a conceptual artist offers striking insights into jazz, and its pre-history and history.

Andy Hamilton

faint voice lingers. But as the album's timeline progresses, memories soften their edges and become feelings, while Lindgren's vocal lines and musical interventions grow in presence. Cradling rich backstories, "How it Sounded in My Mind" and "Just Five Minutes" shape bittersweet impressions of intimate situations and places, while "Anna" and "Quiet Conversations" amend the past in Lindgren's words. And as the sombre "Epilogue" closes the album, the next chapter begins.

Antonio Poscic

## Miaux

### *Black Space, White Cloud*

Ultra Eczema DL/LP

## RTVS

### 1981–2001... *Approximately*

Ultra Eczema LP

### Ignatz & De Stervende Honden

#### *Deadbeat Freedom*

Ultra Eczema LP

Through music, illustration and general demeanour, Belgian multidisciplinary Dennis Tyfus has generally projected a louder than life skater irreverence. His label Ultra Eczema is a pleasantly confounding stylistic jumble of tapes, lathes, art editions and other things you'll often have to source as hard copies should you wish to hear them.

Miaux aka Mia Prce is more or less a mainstay of the label. *Black Space, White Cloud* is her third album and shifts the blueprint established by precursors *Dive* and *Hideaway* – kosmische synth pop instrumentals composed and performed on a basic issue Casio keyboard – into starker, sparser regions. "Prélude Impromptu" recalls Roedelius in spotlessly melodic, quasi-classical mode; "Hullabaloo" and "Hot Glue" the stoic drama of 1980s new agers like Carl Matthews. "Sea Smoke" and "Avalanche" inch towards a sort of swelling grandeur, as much as that's possible with such constrained kit. Miaux could have been dismissable Berlin School redux, but for her impeccably tuned melodic ear.

Based in Antwerp, Radio Centraal is an underground station which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. Two of its founder members Rudi Renson and Roland Rom helmed the improv based show *RTVS (Radio & Television Salon)* and *1981–2001... Approximately* brings together fragments of its broadcasts. These generally short (save for the 12 minute plus "Free Music") extracts form a mulch of Dutch chatter, self-sabotaging electro pop and garbled airwave static. The compilation gives the impression of a public spirited and bloodminded collective who offered Belgian dial-surfers a valuable portal into a hidden world.

*Deadbeat Freedom* is the second collaboration on wax between Bram 'Ignatz' Devens, who bubbled up from the mid-2000s free folk seabed, and De Stervende Honden, a duo with part-similar

affiliations: Tommy Denys was a member of the eldritch Sylvester Anfang II. The three musicians affect an unfussy guitar-bass-drums set-up, and oftentimes their roll is gentle, almost sleepy. Certainly a number like "The Wrong Tree" allows for drummer Erik Heestermans to brush jazzily, likewise Devens and his off-frame wrinkles of guitar.

But in essence this is cut from the same cloth as Ryley Walker or Steve Gunn: a confluence of American primitive, Pentangling electric folk and Crazy Horse arena noodling. This all reaches boiling point on the clanging stomp of "Sweet Dream Ice Cream", where the trio's collective psych itch is scratched raw.

Noel Gardner

## Jay Mitta & Sisso

### *Meet The Modern Institute At The Villa*

#### *Featuring Errorsmith*

Nyege Nyege Tapes DL/MC

## Judgitzu

### *Umeme/Kelele*

Nyege Nyege Tapes DL/10"

Through their releases on Kampala based label Nyege Nyege Tapes, Jay Mitta and Sisso have introduced the wider world to the exhausting electronic chaos of singeli, a genre that's bubbled up in the working class districts of Dar Es Salaam, Tanzania. Their latest release compiles the sweetest fruit from an extended collaboration with Glaswegian collective The Modern Institute and Berlin's Errorsmith, who got together with them after the 2018 edition of Nyege Nyege Festival in Jinja, Uganda.

On this awkwardly named release, eight out of nine tracks pit the tongue in cheek industrial thump of the Scots against the Tanzanians' primary coloured paintbox of drums and melody, with tracks credited battle style – Jay Mitta Versus The Modern Institute. The wording is instructive. Like two arcade fighters locked in a whirling dustball of fists and kicks, they hail down bleeps, burps and blasts on each other at the speed of synapses, thumbs mashing against buttons in fury. Errorsmith draws Mitta and Sisso closer to his own helium rave sound on "Jam For Sisso" for a bubbly, blistering finale. The whole collection was made in just two weeks while the producers were staying at the Nyege headquarters known as The Villa in late September, and in the giddy chaos there's a sense of chores left unfinished and summer homework gathering dust; the kids are on the back porch dropping Mentos into bottles of soda: KABOOM!

Rounding off a stellar year in which the Nyege vision has infiltrated dancefloors around the world, the label also drops a 10" from 'punk ethnomusicologist' Julien Hairon aka Judgitzu. Previously known for releasing field recordings from Australia and Thailand on his Les Cartes Postales Sonores label, Hairon tunes into the enervating racket of singeli for his first electronic productions.

Thankfully, the Frenchman seems to be acknowledging his outsider status rather than muscling in on a hot trend; these two tracks very obviously don't come from Tanzania, but they make perfect sense in the Nyegeverse. On "Umeme", Hairon conducts an era- and continent-hopping conversation between two styles: on one side, 180 bpm floor-is-lava Afroghabba; on the other, grinding avant rock in the lineage of Glenn Branca and "Sister Ray".

Astonishingly or not, it works a treat. If that sounds like dangerous medicine then brace yourself for "Kelele" on the flipside, with its whooping animal noises, disembodied voices and industrial clankage. If you could bottle this stuff it'd be banned immediately.

Chal Ravens

## New Improvised Music From Buenos Aires

### Various

ESP-Disk' CD/DL

This compilation began with a feature in *The Wire* 399. Writer Jason Weiss travelled to Buenos Aires and interviewed many of the players, including reedist Luis Conde, pianists Fabiana Galante and Paula Shocron, cornet player and pianist Enrique Norris and saxophonist Pablo Ledesma. That story, which reappears as sleeve notes here, documented a stubbornly vibrant scene maintaining itself in the face of public indifference (a condition common to improvised music communities across the globe) and governmental hostility – the tiny venues in which it was presented were frequently shut down, forcing the artists to play in private homes and other surreptitious circumstances. Still, as this compilation demonstrates, the creative spirit cannot be contained.

The opening track "Improvisation On Graphic Score" by The Pablo Díaz Quinteto featuring Norris, Pablo Moser on tenor sax, Shocron and Germán Lamonega on bass, sets the stage for what's to come. The players shift seamlessly between subdued (but swinging) free jazz and non-idiomatic, no-after-you improv that lays squiggle and hiss trumpet over haunted house piano and long saxophone moos. "Primer Jugo Bovino" ("Condensed Milk") is a duet between bass saxophonist Luis Conde and electric guitarist Ramon Molina; it has a skronky, bottom heavy energy, like if Anthony Braxton and Derek Bailey had formed a funk rock band. Three short tracks, all titled "Relámpagos", are culled from a 2017 concert featuring Fabiana Galante on piano and Luis Conde on alto sax, clarinet and bass clarinet, under the name Duquesa. Taken together, they paint a portrait of a dark and intense evening of hand-to-hand instrumental combat; Galante's post-Cecil Taylor jabs and runs are countered by Conde's fierce, squalling cries. One of the most unsettling tracks, though, is "1818" by Data Peluda (Conde on bass sax, clarinet and loops; Jorge Chikiar on piccolo clarinet, synths

and electronics).

The two men construct a stuttering, pulsing maze of high and low tones, static crackle and sudden sonic shifts that sounds like something Autechre would have discarded as too off-putting. As a document of a close-knit musical community, this CD is fascinating, but it's equally compelling as pure music, regardless of origin.

Phil Freeman

## Phil Niblock

### *Music For Organ*

Matière Mémoire CD/DL/LP

As the recent reissue of his classic *Niblock For Cello/Cello Plays Niblock* testifies, Phil Niblock's instinct is to pull out all the textural stops, and the wonder is that he hasn't recorded with church organs before. For a composer so deeply immersed in the possibilities of sustained drones, organs are manna from heaven, and also illuminate another key truth about his work. No matter what the instrumental machinery he happens to be working with, that finely honed ear for micro-subtleties of continually reshaped texture and how sound moves across time is entirely his own. You're never likely to muddle Niblock up with anybody else.

However the first piece on *Music For Organ* demonstrates how delicately balanced all those factors are. Performed by Hampus Lindwall in Strasbourg last year, the base alchemy of *Unmounted/Muted Noun* embraces all the technical and sonic pyrotechnics of modern composition organ music by the likes of Ligeti and Xenakis: blowtorched tone clusters, limitless air pumped through the pipes, monoliths of sound. An argument could be made that drones formed triadic shapes are, by definition, rather anonymous – but Niblock shows us that context is all.

*Unmounted/Muted Noun* aims for maximum sonic impact by layering the real-time firepower of the live organist against four prerecorded tracks blasted into the space. The sheer physical assault of the music on one level bypasses the intellect to deliver a kick direct to the solar plexus – but Niblock also provides plenty to think about as, through viscous clouds of screaming clusters, pure intervals emerge from the bowels of the sound picture and brief glimpses of triadic shapes drift by above. The piece occupies a harmonic whole that Niblock reveals very gradually. *Nagro (Organ reversed)*, written in 2007, is another piece for live organist (Lindwall again) playing against prerecorded material. These sounds are opulent and lush, with diligently placed overlays of chords opening out into pure, resonant octaves and, to wrap things up, whistling overtones. The piece was recorded on an organ made in 1787 and Niblock unlocked sounds secreted inside for over two centuries.

Phil Clark

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