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The Return of Internment: Ashcroft & His Love of Camping

The United States is edging closer to a new style of fragmented and partially secret internal authoritarianism by creating a new denizen: the "enemy combatant." This Enemy is not found on the battlefield, but like all paranoid signs of fascism and the rise of the police state, at home and within. Unlike the Japanese Internment Camps of World War II, this fascism operates upon a micro-scale, a micro-endo-colonisation for the select denizen; and like Stalin's Purges, operates with secrecy and mostly beyond the public eye. 1. The suspect's Constitutional Rights in the US are stripped, thereby allowing the suspect to be held without charge for any length of time. *No evidence is necessary for this stripping of all Rights and Citizenship* (a Federal Judge was recently denied such evidence in the case of Yaser Esam Hamdi). 2. The suspect, *if even named or acknowledged*, is held in prison, and subject to *any means necessary to obtain information*, ie torture. The Geneva Convention no longer holds; and no lawyer nor judge can attain confirmation of the suspect's existence within government clutches. 3. The suspect may be indefinitely interned at a new invention of Atty. Gen. John Ashcroft: the Camp for Enemy Combatants—if indeed the suspect is not demurely executed through a secret military tribunal. Throughout, the suspect receives neither lawyer, judge, nor jury. Prof. Jonathan Turley of George Washington University, writing in the *Los Angeles Times* ("Camps for Citizens: Ashcroft's Hellish Vision, Aug. 14, 2002), says that "Ashcroft's plan...would allow him to order the indefinite incarceration of U.S. citizens and summarily strip them of their constitutional rights and access to the courts by declaring them enemy combatants... The proposed camp plan should trigger immediate congressional hearings and reconsideration of Ashcroft's fitness for this important office."

Dontmiss Jeremy Turner and the Discreet Objects of Sound

[See <www.dont-miss.net>, click on "Before," scroll to Jeremy Turner.] Vancouver artist Jeremy Turner offers new sounds and the question: how to differentiate between a theory-based and considered creation of sound and the product of a VST plug-in? While Turner does not explicitly consider this relationship in his attempt to create Tonic, post-Schenkerian sound—following the sculptors Donald Judd, Carl Andre, and Robert Morris, the object of sound could "be itself," outside of a "goal" oriented composition—the final end-result of sound—a quick burst of sound, perhaps "noise," ambiguous in "content"—resembles and is indistinct from the average product of a VST-plugin. If I had not read the accompanying theory, which, interestingly enough, neglects to mention Russolo, Cage, Varese, or Musique Concrete, I would not have known a difference: "I have composed pieces that do not seem to be 'composed' out of a hierarchical set of relationships even though they actually were composed by interlocking hundreds of anthropomorphic samples at the macro-scale and then compressing the total

composition down to size. Regardless of the process, both the perceived content and traces of programmatic composition have been deliberately cropped from each specific audio object in the post-production phase." That hierarchy is overdetermined in the moment of theoretical exegesis, inadvertently embraced through the secret of process, the creation of form, and the crutch of theory, is not so much lost on Turner insofar as it forms the basis for a degree zero art. For Turner, an exegesis naming the "obvious" influences (as he puts it), ie the Futurists and Musique Concrete, would delimit the process of "personification" that originates each piece. To historicise the sculptors draws attention to a *personal* beyond the limits of normative history. For why go to all the trouble of taking *entire albums*, zipping them down to one-second samples, and stacking them, when a VST plugin would do the same in less time? The exegetical gesture of—"regardless of"—process surfaces several possibilities. 1. process becomes art, conjuring Cage; yet, "regardless;" 2. process becomes Zen; work approaches degree zero art; 3. process becomes Calvinist: work means personal salvation. That process remains hidden save for the exegesis speaks a particular, secret relation between work/world, word/sound, to create a *personified* history that, through its absence of reference to that which is obvious, hints at a secret, personal level of explanation—or, the troubling absence thereof. Even theoretical exegesis fails to crutch the sound, for it too, betrays the ambiguous presence of a secret lack.

Has Turner succeeded in creating a discrete, sonic object? It is his goal: and yet, as he explains, he wishes to compose goal-less sound, discrete from Dominant teleological composition. That he cannot create what he desires, and cannot create without desire, forms a ceaseless paradox. After discussing these problematics with Turner, I discovered that each piece has a secret meaning and a secret name that only Turner knows. A hidden Dominance? Whereas Cage proposed to "let sound be itself," Turner carefully encrypts sound to be itself in his own sonic image, which is a secret gift to the Other.

Turner proposes that "Each of my pieces are only meant to exclusively contain the Tonic. The whole is something other than the sum of its parts." In this search for aimless purity, the teleological returns in the attempt to create, through painstaking process, that which is non-compositional, displacing the compositional teleology into process and its exegesis, into post-production where all evidence of process is removed—except for the theory explaining the process of removing process, non-process as a meta-process of sound-processing—and a secret, a lack in the exegesis, which gestures towards the presence of a secret document explaining the secret names of each discrete object. This document exists. What does this mean?

Why "remove" that which signifies, and leave only the trace? If one desires—for the teleology is inescapable, as Cage found, silence unattainable—a movement beyond Schenkerian composition, then we edge closer to chaos, fractalising simulacra. Heard without theoretical explanation, these sounds are

indistinguishable from VST-plugin burps—"glitches." And yet, they have been infused with so much *significance*, enough for me now to write sentences and paragraphs, composed and articulated.

Does not this sound lend itself to discourse, discourse becoming the sound of sound itself as itself? Is discourse a deferring of the Dominant or its erotic doppelganger? Is the discourse surrounding the small sonic object the sculptural "base," becoming art itself? Unless Turner simply lied, telling me that it took time, creating a history for simulated sounds. We cannot know. There must be an ethics here, and therefore a politics, not in the usual sense, but in some affect of force, some affective aesthetic.

Until Ashcroft Goes Camping...!