

Writing about the Sound
in Jimmy Robert's
European Portraits and
Descendances du Nu

In the seminar *Writing about Sound*, students of the Master's program of the Institute for Art in Context at the Berlin University of the Arts addressed how sound can be received, recorded and described as a performative element in art. In this context, the participants of the seminar intensively examined Jimmy Robert's works and the sonic aspects in his performances and their reception. The results reveal very different – sometimes abstract, sometimes lyrical – observations. The texts written by the students and collected here respond to two performances by Robert, *European Portraits and Descendances du Nu*, that are presented in Robert's solo show *la musique dans la chambre* at Künstlerhaus Bremen.

The seminar was led by Julia Grosse and Yvette Mutumba, lecturers at the Institute for Art in Context and artistic directors of the art platform Contemporary And (C&).

The texts are available in printed form in the exhibition space, as well as online on the website of the Künstlerhaus Bremen.

1 + 2
Gloria Jurado
Elina Saalfeld
Lilli Hellmons
Mathias Becker
Ying Lin

How can we listen to a sound without being drawn to a parallel moving image?

What do the sound pieces in question make us feel or think?

How does our body react to the sounds?

Our process began by posing these questions. We decided to first focus on our individual listening experiences; to write separately, then edit the texts in the manner of a group process. This caused our impulses and experiences to collide.

Our individual texts reflect the different impacts Jimmy Robert's work had on each of us as a singular listening experience. A shared document would give us access to each other's writings, which ranged from longer, more formulated texts to only a few words; From descriptive to directly associative takes.

The mash-up of our texts took place in a collective cut-and-paste manner. This gesture aims to create the sense of a shared experience between different singularities, which then again connects to the reader's own experience of the works. Associations, word snippets, visual images in the form of characters or descriptions are our pathway to enable communication between Robert's work, our text and the audience.

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Sifan Pan
Luĭza Luz
Théo Pozoga
Anna Wiget

As our group consists of four artists working with text and sound in their visual and sound pieces, our approach to Jimmy Robert's pieces was on a sensory, intuitive and poetic basis. We tried to key the emotions it caused in our system. We wrote down words and laid them on a map together. Then, we tried to make visual connections, in order to understand how something as individual as listening can be understood between four different individuals. We hope that, in this rather abstract approach, the readers and touchers of our contribution can relisten to Robert's works. And it will echo between silence and sound.

4 + 5
Sound Walk Group:
Viviane Tabach
Hannah Kirmes Daly
Daniela Medina Poch
Dušan Rodić

Our intention for the two texts was to produce a working process which was a reflection of the artworks themselves. For this, the process was central in embodying the elements of the work and using them as a starting point – much like a musical score through which a collaboration is shaped.

The mirrored text, *Without but not untitled*, has been written in dialogue with Jimmy Roberts' work *European Portraits*. Taking the sound as the starting point, we focused on two elements to inform how to hold a writing process between our four voices simultaneously. There is a call and response between the audio and movement interrupted and yet held by the breaks/spaces between syllables. We wanted the text to hold this dynamic and be formed through it. Writing started at a distance and drew closer in responding to the written call from one another, bridging an empty space, in correspondence but broken.

There is a quality of arching space – folded paper and references in deep dialogue – within Jimmy Robert's performance *Descendances du Nu*. Constructing through physical touch and movement emerged as a response to the artwork. Referencing Dada, we cut our words and reshaped them into sentences, hung them together, pushed them into uncomfortable relationships, and balanced between new echoes.

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Anand Angarag
Özcan Ertek
Chao Li

Because our group is composed of three quite different artistic positions, we wanted to illustrate this partial approach, since a variety of formal languages is also articulated in Jimmy Robert's works. We limited ourselves to highlighting one very specific aspect of the work at a time, and bringing them together in just under ten statements. We chose blocks of text to accommodate a reading scheme that allows for a simultaneity of seeing and participating.

wo bu zhi dao wo xian zai zai na li,
yi qie dou xian de na me qi guai.
tian ti, xia yu,
you sheng yin cong tian er jiang.

Above you
Above all

And it grows
WHAT
her body
over
her head

WHERE ARE YOU
Down here
I CAN NOT SEE YOU
But I am here
WHERE IS YOUR FACE
it has grown
outgrown
WAIT
I am coming down

A mirror of sound

NOW I AM THE STAIRS
AND YOU ARE THE NUDE
You are surprised

A mirror of the future

HOW DOES IT FEEL
You want more space

that shows me
that shows me not
tin the now but my future impulses

I LIKE THIS
Temporary
GRATIFICATION

It leaves you cold
THE NUDE GOES OUT

a mirror that asks

From the ancestry
UP THE STAIRS

From the ancestral line

Can a computer-generated voice really say yes affirmatively?

makes visible.

smallest sounds

Through the mouth

Repetitions

I can hear frustration or pleasure in an affirmation or denial only when the choreography of a voice fails. When it shakes, when it breaks, or when it unexpectedly reacts a little too excitedly.

Emotions

Why do I look for a rhythm

The tamed voice breaks out, it wants to try out how loud it can hum into the microphone without the sound breaking, without the voice breaking.

A connection between
This resonates in the silence.

image and sound?

The white room, light through the windows,
reflections on the floor

It feels like technology is playing a trick on you.

The voice robbed of its breath

In between, attempts at phonics and consonants.

The body moves softly but controlled, as if determined by the sounds. lack of air. Finally, he wraps himself in an electricized fabric on which a portrait is contracted by the gentle movements – distorted, smoothed, falling apart like a glitch. An effort.

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|...../\... /\.../\.../\.../\... _ _ _ _ _
|\.../.....\.../... \... \.../... \.../... \.../... |.../...|... \...|
-..... _ ..... _ ..... _ ..... _ ..... _ ..... _ ..... _
      _ ..... _ ..... _ ..... _ ..... _ ..... _ ..... _
\..... _ ..... _ ..... _ ..... _ ..... _ ..... _ ..... _

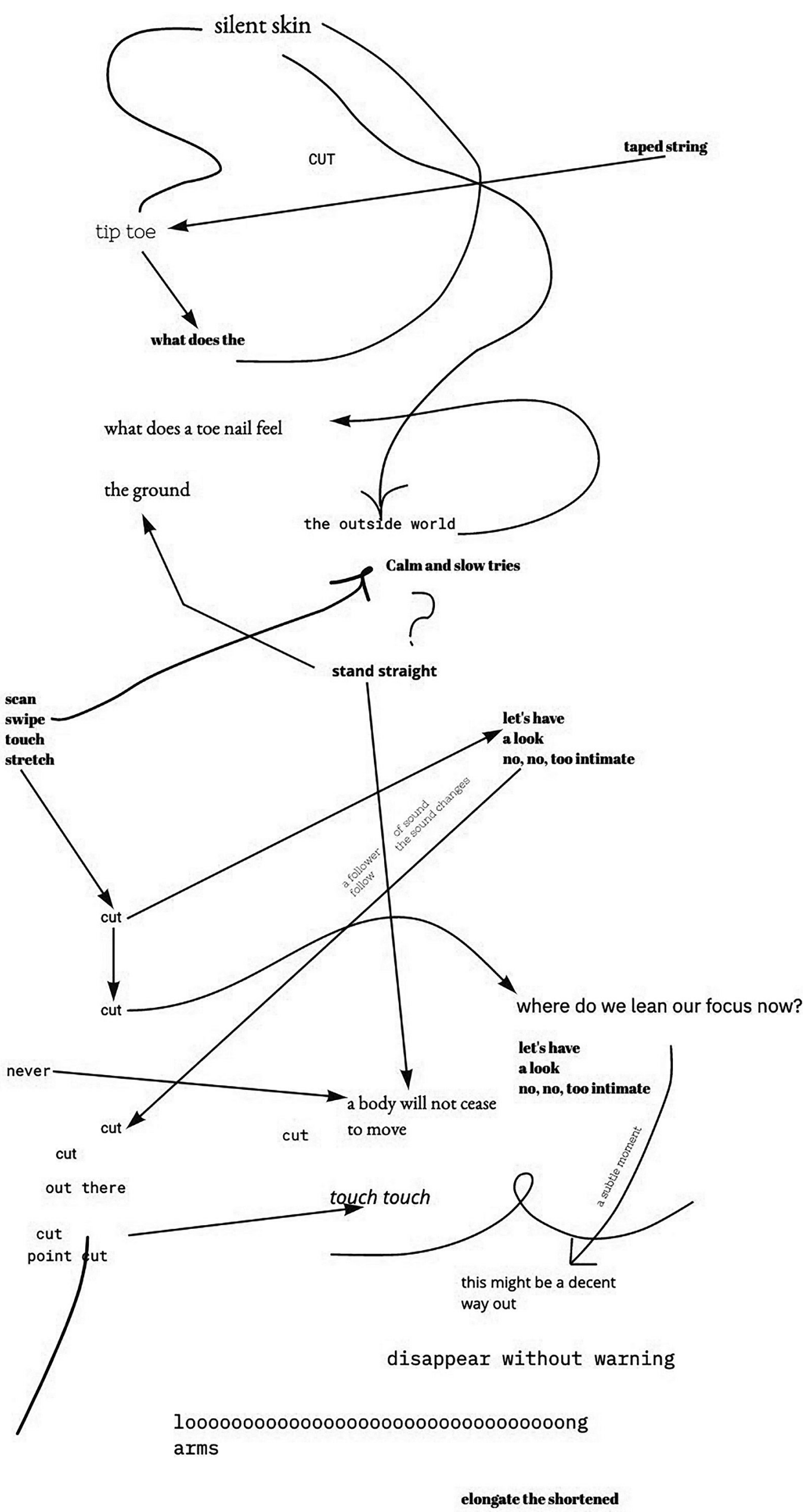
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Every sound, every breeze, every vocal approach, paragraph or end, every glimpse of language, makes my upper body, my head and my ear bend forward in search of meaning, content and context.

The attempts to speak are so close to me because we have "the same" physical body of speech and the language may be mine.

CNTNNTL SNSHN, NT RTRSH;
 SPCLTV CHRM, PSTV WT:
 SLLNSS S WPN GNS TH WRLD.
 RGNSD SCTTNSS THT WLD NL FL TH SPRFCL.
 MGN RDCL MD TRMPHNT T TH LST MNT
 T TH TRN F STRT WHR Y LST XPCT T.
 KNDNSS DSGUSD S LFNSS:
 YT NTHR STRTG T MSK WHT LS BNTH.
 TH CRNVLSQ IS LWS GD TRSTWRTH GD FR MLSS
 PRMNDS WHR N PRTNDS T B MD F STL.
 YT N GD RCHTCTR CNNT RSST FR. SNR R LTR
 TH SSTNNG BS WLL B PPRNT TH BRCKS WLL FLL
 TH RN MLT TH CNCRT DSSLV.

The interior is co-determined by the sound of the wind and cars, footsteps, rapid movements and events. The swallowing subsides and finally dies out, and makes space for the cityscape.



words

lock cut

to abstract a owned body

dangerous
lick
crack
cut
slide

Vulnerability in sonic postures

Being a platform beheaded

A gentle adjustment, but confident

Voices aha-hm-ahha-hmm

Is it climbing or descending

Spread legs,

As the body moves,

Self discovery

And

Ha ha mmmm

It is not possible to access this ladder

a colour palette poised beneath splayed bodies

White space

Defeated through repetition

Like the inside of a giant fish, catacomb but shining

Ancient places of worship, theatrical almost

Backwards creature

Moaning, into calling

Art history, from Greece to today

Shoreline of shining leather interrupted

Where can you stretch the cannon?

ha... oooo...

Frenetic sounds, mellow movement

Like a broken insect, protected in all the wrong places Outstretched

Sensual elongation, spin Splay, twist curl in

The voices seem to notice, An echo game

Is it a conversation?

Fractalic ceremonial, Polyphonic voices

Laugh

A hidden balcony, out of sight out of mind

reenactment of Nude...

aaaa aa

Against the wall

Pushing the white cube towards outside

Past futurism

here.

	hesitantly
touches floor barefoot. first fingers	.
then whole feet.	i hear
.	sound of
.	friction fabric skin and floor
and lays it down on other room	.
.	i can feel
.	a sense of self reflection
<i>there is distance here –</i>	.
.	meeting a stranger
Who is outside and who is inside?	.
.	sound is concealed,
landscape touches body through	some manages to escape
reflection	.
.	waves hit hard, the space is crushed,
.	cramped, twisted muscles
outside stares at him	.
.	restrictions, restrictions ...
doesn't seek to find contact	.
.	wind carries the sound,
text on glass	hitting leaves of the trees
.	.
same steps	.
knees down	each tree has a different sound
.	.
robotic, machine-like movements	broken message?
.	.
.	disconnection, started ground
.	.
an interrupted attempt to sound,	uncomfortable
a sound itself?	.
.	.
the sound tickles the ear	.
triggers tension in the belly	.
.	Glottal stops.
.	.
.	typing
.	.
plural reflections	Stilted, stopped
.	limited
say?	edited sound, adapted movement
.	.
it?	.
.	restricted
.	.
.	squat down

Do mechanisms restrict the flow of communication?

hands point out a direction, head turns to another

out of order, system failure

*clubuck duck shluck glouggg gluug
gluug cglucg*

the wind, a broken message

leg tries to grasp something

separation of spaces

a body covered by a portrait

is there a spectator?

who is behind the scenes?

lying in between

stifled healing

sound of the voice, paused

ground doesn't seem stable
he tries to find stability

ground becomes a mirror,
a predator here

body at ease struggling
Is the mind?

he is going back

space space space

reflected in body

again

typing

interruption
feline

open fabric

is it a symbology?

fabric is blocking

bridge

a type of evidence

passage

object with own life
a fabric body

Bronzino

as if swimming

.

.

.

portrait becoming landscape

.

acknowledge the camera

.

.

division reveals again.

.

inside. outside.

.

.

.

.

body

.

.

a pause between three bodies,

.

.

another figure here, also

.

pushed across concrete

.

.

muscles in need of support

.

.

play unification

.

.

more and more blurring

.

.

.

breathing

.

.

.

belonging

.

.

what is essential to maintain
in movement?

We see a bare-chested man.

It was time for Boris Johnson to abandon "cakeism" in relation to the many contradictions.

He filters them through electronics.

An ornament of therapeutic plaster strips covers his skin.

The mechanical continuity of the movement expresses a fusion and confrontation between the embodiment of individual identity and the larger environment of the state and society, the relationship between the individual and the whole, i.e. the bound and the independent existence.

The recordings of the voice are technically modified.

Creeping steps induce a tense calm, that must be endured from time to time.

Brexit has triggered a rekindling of old conflicts between the UK and EU countries.

A variety of half-words are combined.

Behind the shop window, a target is aimed at by the actor's fixed gaze and, meanwhile, approached by his body mobility.

Leaving the EU is a return to historical inertia.

These are used to play with the meaning of language itself.

As if controlled from afar, movements turn into a degree of gesticulation and the process of the next act is continued in the crawl.

The fact that they lived in symbiosis with the invaders did not weaken the political organisation and independence of the Anglo-Saxons, but rather strengthened them.

Every time the voice is played, it is cut off and we notice that something is wrong.

A mechanical apparatus, whose bends and curvatures under the skin reveal the inner life of the flesh as if copied onto the surface.

The entire performance consists of clipped sounds.

The entire performance consists of clipped sounds.

The textile that is brought along is carefully unfolded lengthwise and serves first as a road, then as a cover and finally as a cocoon that is stripped off.

A partial convergence and exclusion between movement and sound, like Britain across Europe and the play with identity symbols and roles.

It's almost as if there's an automatic censorship machine that intervenes with every sound.

After the pupa has passed through its resting period, a lively liberation of the silken fabric, which in their interaction is performed, as it were, in a dancing manner, and is discarded.

The confusion of identity is what Jimmy Robert searches for throughout the performance.

The performance zigzags between the voice and the body, and every moment feels as if it is capturing another face of the work European Portraits.

A metamorphosis was underway.

Distance is for the human being, for body, mind and soul and for the historical landscape of the social environment of the 'Silent Majority'. one of the greatest challenges of our time. The individual, who keeps from society, experiences distance as exclusion, vacuum and an abyss experienced as control and acquiescence, separation and loneliness.

But each of these moments also springs from the same desire - the dream, the dream of finding new ways for the voice to move beyond the human body and into the context of recent times.

A big face spreads as the textile with its imprint is placed on the floor.

The phenomena of the material and the immaterial, the direct and the indirect, of fusion and distance are omnipresent in Jimmy Robert's performance.

Ultimately, it paints a picture of Jimmy's range and willingness to experiment, and shows the wide variety of sounds one can produce with the voice and editing techniques.

KÜNSTLERHAUS BREMEN

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