

Meditation 2

Of Intermusicality and Intermediality

Music is always more than music. Music transcends itself. That is, if we also consider as falling within music the (never definitively established) fields of sounding tones, written notes, performances, concerts and CD's. Music is always *intermusical*. Music reacts to other music(s), incorporates them, transforms them, gives them other meanings. All music continually refers to other already produced music. Therefore, every music can be described as a network, a fabric, a texture. In addition, music is always in one way or another in a proportional relationship with 'the concept' music: it is involved in a dialogue with the prevailing definitions of music, often affirmative but sometimes protesting and meddling. Concrete music gives substance and content to the concept of music. But music is also connected with other, so-called extra-musical narratives: music is political, (un)ethical, philosophical, societal, religious, feminine or masculine, nationalistic or internationalistic, critical or conformist, etc. Music reacts to developments, gives its specific viewpoint, but also sets developments in motion. As such, it is always more than itself. As such it is a medium.

Music as medium. A means. And a middle. A medium always mediates signs *between* people. But a medium does not exclusively make communication processes possible; it also actively produces signs, identities, and qualities. A medium structures, determines our perception and cognitive organization and gives direction to individual and collective behavior (a process evidenced by television even more than music); media has become necessary sustenance. (Everything begins with the medium, an insightful observation in Derrida's *Of Grammatology*). One might, with a certain knack for understatement, say that the medium leads its own existence.

In the last decades, developments in the world of art reveal a shift from medium-specific expressions towards an increasingly elaborate intertwining of different media: multi-mediality or inter-mediality. This has (had) certain consequences for the way we interact with art. Through the interplay of diverse media, a more passive consumption is being transformed into an interactive communication. Interactivity between different senses - seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting, touching - forms a dynamic foundation for a (physical) experience evoked by multimedia events.

(At this point) in the multimedia experiment, a continual shifting is taking place in the mutual relationships between the different artistic disciplines. Connections are continually challenged, and therefore, the relationships remain indefinite and open; each time they must be established anew by the recipient: a process requiring reflectivity and interactivity. In other words, it is the auxiliary tensions between the diverse media that repeatedly break open a 'Gesamtkunstwerk' and compel activity.¹

Intermediality. The space *between* different media. An unfathomable interspace which withdraws itself from definite demarcations (an 'interim' or 'in-between' instead of a 'symbiosis', 'integration' or 'cohesive whole') and does not allow itself to be

¹ The intermedial can actually not exist outside of a 'Gesamt': the scattered senses must be focused by an image or an idea, a multitude must be gathered.

conceptually analyzed. To what extent can much contemporary art be regarded as an 'in-between'? What can an experience with this 'inter' mean for a contemporary or future art-recipient? What is the meaning of the shift from communication to commune-icating, a taking-part that takes place in contemporary art? Does multimedia art (inevitably) spur us on toward what the Dutch philosopher Henk Oosterling calls *reflective sensibility*, that is to say an area within which thinking and sensing implicate each other anew?

Art will be/is multimedial. This statement does not make the possibility of coming to an unequivocal denotation any less problematic. Perhaps in the current juncture, the micropolitical power of art lies more than ever in a radical imaging (sounding) of the 'in-between'.