

On Site

Exhibitions, performance art, installations, etc



Haroon Mirza's *Paradise Loft* installation

Systematics

197 Gallery, London, UK

Systematics is a group exhibition themed around artists who use systems, though a more descriptive title would perhaps be 'process'. Out of the eight artists taking part, a majority look at how meaning changes or gets lost through process, rather than addressing or using any kind of system in their art making.

Take Cory Arcangel's *Apple Garageband Autotune Demonstration* which applies a widely used harmonising software plug-in on a Jimi Hendrix performance of "The Star Spangled Banner". It's a blunt example of the limitations of Auto-Tune technology when used to gloss over something that was intended to be dissonant. But Arcangel's piece is less about a system than it is about process and subverting the widespread homogenising effect of commercial technologies. Justin Beal's *Fruit Tables* consists of small tables with oranges wedged beneath the glass tops, showing the process of decomposition, while Katie Paterson's *Earth-Moon-Earth (Moonlight Sonata Reflected From The Surface Of The Moon)* had Beethoven's composition cosmically processed by translating the score into Morse code, bouncing it off the Moon and then decoding it, resulting in a familiar but mutated arrangement.

In contrast, the work of Haroon Mirza could be seen as one large collection of smaller processes, or an actual working

system. Experiencing his installations of kinetic sculptures is like stepping into a charity shop whose contents have been possessed by occult life-giving forces and end up forming their own micro-ecology. His *Paradise Loft* installation – a reference to New York City's legendary disco venues Paradise Garage and The Loft – is centred around an old portable radio attached to a spinning turntable. As the radio haphazardly sweeps around in steady circles, its fully extended antenna nearly whacks a light bulb dangling from the ceiling, the energy from the light causing a thick and dull oscillation of static from the radio's speaker. The tip of the antenna slightly knocks a Piezo transducer, producing a hollow pop which echoes from another speaker in the room. Surrounding this are more jury-rigged assemblages made of old furniture, household electronics and video projectors emanating short bursts of degraded footage onto the objects and walls. Placed about the chaotic room are more tatty speakers broadcasting rhythms made from lo-fi pops and thumps, dragging the listener's attention about the room but also providing a jilting groove to move through the space to. The effect of the clunking mechanical beats is both comical and unsettling in its mindless and jarring persistence, as if Mirza is forcing all his creaky collected detritus back into reluctant and noisy life.

Nathan Budzinski

Chelipa Ferro *Jungle Jam*

Sprovieri Gallery, London, UK

"It's no good objecting that noises are exclusively loud and disagreeable to the ear," Russolo warned in his 1913 *L'Arte Dei Rumori (Art Of Noises)* manifesto. Indeed, the very idea of objecting to the noise of everyday life would today draw suspicious looks: "you think there's an alternative?" How then to extract and construct noise in an environment filled with rumbles, beeps, shouts, the purring of engines and the endless march of aural progress? Russolo suggested that "noise in fact can be differentiated from sound only in so far as the vibrations which produce it are confused and irregular, both in time and intensity". And this is Chelipa Ferro's approach in *Jungle Jam*, a perfect attempt to demonstrate exactly what the 'art of noises' might mean.

Lined up against the walls are dozens of contraptions, consisting of the top part of a food blender attached to a plastic bag. The bags are generic, though subtly international in their origins. Some are from São Paulo, like Chelipa Ferro themselves (comprised of artists Barrão, Luiz Zerbini and Sergio Mekler), some are more recognisably British-mundane: Boots, Marks And Spencer. The blender-bag machines are wired up to a computer that switches them on separately or, at times, together in a random sequence. The

plastic bags twist and whirr as the blender mechanism rotates: the noise is simply incredible. As the bags tighten up against the mechanism, develop air pockets, or bash against the wall, an entire army of clamourings emerges: the sound of machine guns, of marching patterns, a menacing barrage of bellicose effects. Some of the bags are frayed at the edges, others have left marks on the white gallery walls, others are twisted so tight they resemble angry, trashy knots. The celebration of the whimsical flight of the plastic bag in Sam Mendes's *American Beauty* this most certainly is not.

There is something so simultaneously intimidating and silly about being audio-harassed by such odd-yet-everyday objects that you start to wonder whether the types of noise you hear are really there, or whether you're imagining them. Even though the abrupt jolting eruptions of sound are random, patterns seem to emerge. The sounds generate an insistent desire for intelligibility – there must be some meaning behind the fact that a whirring Brazilian sports nutrition bag is putting you in mind of 20th century military campaigns, surely. Whether an entire wall of blender-bags are moving, or one alone, the sense is much the same. The tight, ordered yet contingent, marshalling of noise in the name of a disturbing vision of the contemporary world: modern life is a rubbish bag.

Nina Power