CTM.12 THEME – SPECTRAL

Ever since unspectacularly leaving the last millennium behind, the feeling has been creeping up on us that, in the face of the simultaneity of a permanent state of crisis and an exponentially expanding technological archive, our entire future now lies in the past. There is no renaissance on the horizon. Instead one has an overriding impression of staggering through or colliding with collective and private phantasmagoria.

Western societies seem to be obsessed with the technical and cultural artefacts of their own recent past. Mournful lament about this condition and loss circulates through the media machine at an accelerated pace, just as the enthusiasm for post-production or parallel worlds evaporates faster than it can be digested by the pop culture theory market. Digital technologies for the manipulation of media artefacts along with media capabilities in distributing and archiving information culminate in an Internet anarchive, that is gorged on superfluity, stored within the set pieces of private mythology, and taken in by obsession or in the mundane alchemy of pop culture, thus leaving modernity's key players – the authentically passionate artistic existences, individuals, heroes and real characters – looking remarkably pale. Xeno-communication prevails in the flea markets (or dumps) of global civilization. Nowadays, alone that which opens me up, forces itself upon me, deciphers me, and thereby temporarily simulates the feeling that I am connected somehow to the power of an impending newness and otherness, enables me to cope with the fact that this putative novelty seems to have become more improbable than ever.

This persistent, coercive intrusion of a seemingly insurmountable past that daily outstrips itself at an ever faster pace and thereby defines our horizons, leads also to a kind of retreat that appears at first glance to be pervaded by something uncanny. It manifests as homesickness, as a yearning for transcendence, or as retro-mania, and grows all the more forceful, the more compelling our experience of technological dis-appropriation and delocalization becomes. Its depressive variations are equally widespread: the mass phenomenon of post-traumatic symptoms, a universal tiredness and, as a last resort, Bartleby's line: »I would prefer not to«.

Yet such an attitude, if grasped as an actual or potential condition, can overcome other forms of disparity and asymmetrical exclusion and disrupt the normative power of power relations, even in cases where one is inclined to assume, one lacks the means to do so. Faced with the ghosts who stalk us, one seeks another response and further responsibility, a dual responsibility: namely to those who are not yet born and to those who are already dead – a generational concern, therefore. The latter is no more the realm of the family man (Kafka) than it is of

filiation, but rather is directed towards a whole new economy, another concept of globalization, and a different way of organizing the body politic. It is compelled not only to stay open to a future that is permanently coming into being, but also to welcome it wholeheartedly. And it must evade both the stranglehold of materialism and the constantly restructured variations on accumulations of the past.

It is imperative to take time for this, and to hold in check any rash claims that it might now, at last, be possible to box through supposedly existing and long overdue regulatory mechanisms, or to pin our hopes on the imminent, eventful moment (be this apocalyptic, messianic or revolutionary). Parallels to this can be found among critical reactions to current protest movements, from <u>Occupy Wall Street</u> through to <u>Anonymous</u>. To renounce, during such protest, any claim to a concrete countervision (manifestos, official spokespersons, clear operative structures, etc.) is to formulate an unsettling response to a confusing situation: public involvement that makes no specific claims amounts today to demanding the impossible, and hence directly addresses the most radical challenge facing our current social order. In this lies, not least, the mystery of the cry for justice, a cry raised by the <u>other</u>, be this s/he, who is no longer, or s/he, who has yet to be. It is this we have to answer to, and it encompasses all that is manifest in human or non-human form.

Simultaneously however, we find ourselves at the mercy of the phantom effects that have settled into the material plane and whose ventriloquism invites our compliance. This state of affairs may make it advisable at times for individual positions to adopt reenactment as a means to work through it or, alternatively, to actively endeavour to forget it by attempting to appropriate it in part only. In either case, we would evidently require a new form of angst management, one that »frames dangers rather than repressing them, not so as to serve senselessly as victims but rather, so as to accept and grow accustomed to their presence« (Francois Roche).

For the theoretical framework under consideration here, an emphasis on the variant use either of <u>fantôme</u> (by Abraham/ Torok) or of <u>spectre</u> (by Derrida) is largely irrelevant. The crux of the matter rather, is to demonstrate how both approaches to these phenomena intertwine against the backdrop of all things trans-generational, as well as legacy issues. It is these respective modes of approaching this still incomplete legacy that determine the future. If we fail to take account of the current interdisciplinary analyses of such experiences and their impact, as well as of the strategies for dealing with such phenomena now being tested, then the violent implementation of short-lived and totalitarian models for resolution will be inevitable. Whether and how diverse undertakings to this end may be connected or consolidated – which is to say, may become attractors of social renewal – remains still to be seen.

In this rapidly shrinking space – between the terrifying prospect of every last mystery being deleted by the harsh crystalline brilliance of unrelentingly informative illumination, and the »dark and vibrant matters« of our landscapes and silicon architectures, which nurture the hidden risk of uncontrollable proliferation and entropic dissolution in the very places they seem to unfold without end – it is imperative neither to be dazzled by the glare nor to drown in opaque material streams. In this <u>Interzone</u>, the semionauts are snared between soundclouds and deep level recordings by streams and transmissions for which their previous transistors (transfer resistors) are unsuited. Captured by regressive, depressive or resigned perceptions, they dive into the symbol and material streams generated by constantly recycled cultural artefacts and the media apparatuses that produce them, and draw on combinatorial games, tinkering, and crude

bricolage in order to keep open the gaps that permit articulations of the other to shine through. This is not an intentionally artistic agenda. Rather, this meticulous, painstaking, sometimes dark, sometimes joyful experimentation with the eerie, the dust-choked, and trash, this recourse to the past, the discarded or even the archaic, this desire to deform, defocus, distort and liquefy, to disjoin, paste and splice is precisely what we are left with in the end, whenever a master plan is necessarily absent.

Under the title SPECTRAL, CTM.12 devotes itself to a musical and medial review of historic aesthetic designs and all unfulfilled utopias and dystopias, and to penetrating deep into the material structures of their physical storage media.

We welcome the plastic force of the fluctuations, vibrations, rawness, and instability that surge forth from the independent physical existence of sounds, images, and devices, to confront us with their strange or uncanny presence.

We take sides with the spirits and check out what the »phantom effects« transmitted at an apparently, increasingly accelerating pace from one generation to the next, are all about.

We welcome the »visitors of someone else's memories«, but hope they won't want to stay around.

We assume that it is not the dead or decrepit that haunts us, but the gaps left within us by the mysteries of others. For this reason there is no cause for mourning. Rather, we work with that which lives on and which now addresses us from the beyond – from beyond our own complacency and stylized self-image.

We lend our ears to the whispers seeping from the walls and apparatuses on which the shadows of »many thousand departed friends« (E. A. Poe) are cast.

Thus, arrayed before you at CTM.12, is a spectrum of singular responses and artistic positions that move beyond the living present to address the mutations and distorted transmissions of these mysteries. Be it drag, hauntology, hypnagogic pop, spectral synthesizer music, re-edits or neo-gothic, be it drone, psychedelic or new industrial music, no matter: via all these gateways, it is possible to penetrate present-day constructions of reality, make contact with the spirits within, and decipher (decrypt) and encode (encrypt) their messages and transmissions. The goal is thereby not the addition of further or novel individual viewpoints, but the psycho-plastic transformation that is a prerequisite of survival in the Interzone. The strategies proposed here are diverse: hypnotic deceleration and other forms of psychedelia; a return to analog media and physical metamorphoses; the fictitious, virtual and retroactive re- or new articulation of personal fantasy landscapes, and their subsequent exploration; the creation of artificial mysteries; DIY-historiography and homemade media archaeology; specific negativity as a bitter thru euphoric rejection of the living present; or an experience of disembodiment, whereby one steps neo-mystically into the light from whence one can then view the world – »as if (one) were dead«.

To follow the cry, »Vive les fantômes!« (Jacques Derrida in Ken McMullen's movie, Ghost Dance) implies also, one has been summoned by phantoms. For after all, this cry, like any other, reaches us by means of telecommunication. It is insofar irrelevant whether we find ourselves in the year 1983 or 2012.