

Delay

Mary Sherman
in collaboration with
Florian Grond

April 16 – May 28, 2016

Excerpt from *What if you could hear a painting?*, presented in May 2014 at the Sound Art Curating Conference, organized by Lanfranco Aceti, Janis Jefferies, Morten Sondergaard and Julian Stallabrass at Goldsmiths, University of London and Courtauld Institute of Art.

Despite repeated cries of its death, painting endures. It is one of civilization's most resilient media, continuing to evolve and fascinate, informed and responding to the advances of its age. The previous generation witnessed painting moving into three dimensions. What Florian Grond and I are proposing, though, is something different: to bring painting into the twenty-first century, into the realm of time with sound.

Our work is a direct exploration of the structural similarities between the auditory, visual and tactile senses. We suggest that the enjoyment of visually surfing along a painting's structural incidents, at the same time that one cannot touch them, instantaneously creates desire. And that desire doesn't stop there. It is compounded

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by a similar tickling of the ear, the sense that complements the eye in our experience of space and time.

In this way, we argue that painting stimulates three senses – most overtly, the visual; more covertly and, perhaps, more indelibly, the aural and tactile. And it is this tease – this suggestion and refusal to be explicit – that allows the viewer’s mind the pleasure of possible closure, while that possibility always slips beyond one’s certain grasp, like any love.

At the heart of the installation *Delay* is one of my early, highly tactile paintings, the surface of which was scanned. The data derived from this scanning was then translated by Grond into sound in a way that both reveals a relationship between the painting’s structure and its resulting sound and – by experiencing them together – augments and complements the experience of both. The sound and visuals, then, are meant to be inexorably linked to the audience’s experience of the work. On their own they may have their merits, but their sum is significantly enhanced by the coming together of their parts.

In *Delay* a conscious attempt is also made to play with the notion of a ‘tease’ – and, specifically, in this case – that a painting ‘teases’ our aural and tactile senses. Thus, when one enters the installation, a painting is presented as an artifact, as suggested by displaying it in the middle of the room – instead of hung on a wall, as is traditionally the case. For a brief period, the whole painting can be seen; but then a metal plate swings in front of it, slowly revealing – one by one – the small, scanned parts (via tiny shutters that gradually open and close) while their corresponding sounds are experienced as a moving soundscape around the kinetic piece.

In the end, the piece is about love, the overwhelming desire to know something as intensely as possible (in this case, a painting), which can also be likened to wanting to know someone, the impossibility to do so, but the nevertheless all too human quest to try. Because, as *Delay* suggests, hearing a painting does not take away from its mystery; instead, it just provides another point of access, fascination and connection. *Delay*, then, is meant to be a lure, to be seen, heard and experienced – to delay people, as love does. And what also makes the word *Delay* so apt for this piece is that Duchamp originally entitled his *The Large Glass, The Bride Stripped Bare by her Bachelors even, Delay*; and Duchamp not only was interested in the connection between sound and visuals but his *Large Glass* also dealt with impossible love.

Mary Sherman

About the Artists:

Mary Sherman is an American artist who proposes to “remove painting from the wall and reinvent it in the realm of space, time, and sound...[which] despite its canny conceptualism... ultimately coalesces into a lush, sensual experience.” (Cate McQuaid, *The Boston Globe*)
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Florian Grond is an Austrian artist and interdisciplinary researcher in the field of sound art, sonic interaction design and multisensory displays of assistive technologies, living and working in Montreal.
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Presented as part of the International Digital Art Biennial (BIAN)
and the Montreal Digital Spring 2016.



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