

Spectres, ondes et modulations

[Spectres, Waves, and Modulations]

curator Nicole Gingras

February 3 – March 10, 2018

Notes

1. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fables du lieu*, Tourcoing: Le Fresnoy, Studio national des arts contemporains, 2001, p. 11.
2. Echolocation is used by animals, notably bats and aquatic mammals, to locate the relative positions of elements in the environment by emitting sounds and listening to the echoes sent back when the sound waves meet a surface. In rare cases, the elements can be identified. It is the basis of sonar detection systems. It also helps visually-impaired people locate objects and obstacles around them as they move.
3. R. Murray Schafer, *The Tuning of the World*, Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 1977, p. 11.
4. Georges Didi-Huberman, *Fables du lieu*, op. cit., p. 13.
5. Installation completed in 2004 and presented at the Musée d'art contemporain de Montréal in spring 2017.
6. Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *L'œil et l'esprit*, Paris: Gallimard, 1964, p. 59.

Acknowledgements

The artist thanks the Canada Council for the Arts, Érick d'Orion, Lucas Paris, and Pierre Gaudet.

The artist and the curator thank all the members of the OBORO team.

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TIME FOR INVENTING

These three words—spectres, waves, and modulations—are truly evocative of Martine H. Crispo's installation, *Fantaisie optophonique*, and the selection of films and videos that accompany it. For this collaboration with OBORO, I felt it was essential to bring out the relationship that Martine has developed between light and sound and between space and duration, as well as connections that can be seen with the works of other artists—Diane Morin, Joost Rekveld and Mika Taanila, for example—who are experimenting in the same area.

In recent years, Martine H. Crispo's research into the interplay between light and sound has been manifested in her highly personal way of occupying a site. With each work, she creates a space offering a constantly renewed experience of pulsating sound and light vibrations and the projection of shadows. In her works, variations in light intensity affect the emission of the sound waves. More than a translation of one phenomenon into another, the artist has brought about a synergy between the two elements, the one making the other perceptible.

It takes time to invent a place. What are artists doing today that they did in the past? They take their time. That's how they give concrete form to things that refute our ideas, our expectations, our habits, and our attentiveness to art, even to life in general.¹

The light in *Fantaisie optophonique* defines the surfaces that circumscribe a space. It traces a volume which has, and will have, an incidence on the resonance and circulation of the sounds in this space. Moving light redraws or reconfigures the space, revealing unsuspected perspectives. For their part, the sounds created and transmitted also play a role in defining and modulating the space and in transforming our audiovisual perception. The entire gallery space is a resonance chamber. The artist's deft application of the resonance principle recalls the echolocation technique² used by blind and low-vision people, which consists of emitting sounds that bounce off objects in the vicinity (other people, a car, an animal, a wall, obstacles, etc.), allowing the visually-impaired person to sense where an object is and to conceive a spatial map for navigating around it. The whole experience is one of relative proximity. In the words of R. Murray Schafer: "Hearing is a way of touching at a distance and the intimacy of the first sense is fused with sociability whenever people gather together to hear something special."³ Everything in this process is mobile and perceptible.

Martine H. Crispo is fond of darkness. She especially likes to make it her realm and give it rhythm. The essence of *Fantaisie optophonique* is a dark room and a surprisingly simple mechanism. However, this disarming simplicity is deceptive, as the very nature of the installation takes

viewing and listening into another time/space. *Fantaisie optophonique* is a work that urges viewer-listeners not to rush through it—a sine qua non condition of any site-specific work. To quote Georges Didi-Huberman again: "It is by taking our time that we really look."⁴

Considering the importance given to time and the emphasis on duration in *Fantaisie optophonique*, as well as the association of the notion of passage with looking and listening, a convergence with the works of other artists emerges. One could draw a parallel between Martine H. Crispo and James Turrell, as the first invites us to walk into light and sound and the second invites us to embrace a space with our gaze and walk into colour. With respect to the apparatus in *Fantaisie optophonique*, another correspondance can be suggested, this time with *Your space embracer*,⁵ an installation by Olafur Eliasson: slowly passing over the wall, a shadow occasionally creates the illusion of a three-dimensional object (Eliasson) or space (Crispo). Another important aspect of Martine H. Crispo's work, the visitor's destabilization when watching a rotating optical device, recalls Bruce Nauman installation, *Spinning Spheres* (1970), which was comprised of rotational mechanisms, lights, and projected images and shadows. Although every artist strives to convey his or her vision in inimitable works, affinities between practices arise naturally.

The artist as inventor of places and the artist who takes time are two images that stay with me. With the continuous kinetic optical device of *Fantaisie optophonique*, Martine H. Crispo has orchestrated an encounter between movement, a dichroic lens, electroluminescent diodes, and an electronic circuit, the components of an installation that generates a unique, open sound-and-light composition. Approached as an apparatus, the space becomes an instrument, recalling Maurice Merleau-Ponty's observation: "After all, the world is around me, not in front of me."⁶

–Nicole Gingras