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ALL THE WORDS FLOAT IN SEQUENCE - On the works of H  l  ne van Duijne

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A single sentence. I CAN HEAR MYSELF. A single sentence opens the track. As my back presses against the sofa a lady on the dance floor holds her palms against her ears, elbows repeatedly touching in an X shape in front of her face as arms and hands slowly sway her head to the music. I know that when the two of us, the lady and I, hear this track again, each of us will remember this shared experience. According to a study, the so-called "soundtrack" area in the prefrontal cortex acts as an intersection for autobiographical memory, music and emotion. It behaves the same whether activated by hearing a lyric or by the memory of that lyric.

I CAN HEAR MYSELF. This very sentence is written in cut up magnetic tape that looks like it has just been fingered out of a plastic cassette, and pasted down on the paper. "I can hear myself" is a lyric on a track from Future Sound of London, but it can also be found on a track from Clock DVA. H  l  ne van Duijne sites both in her work, cut up clock or fsol, 2009. For many years, van Duijne's "Cut ups" have continued a visual series of lyrical quotes whose titles change according to provenance: cut up Brian, for a lyric by Brian Eno; cut up Michael; cut up Whitney; cut up clock or fsol. Without ever making it audible van Duijne's work often speaks in text or titles of and about music. Her visual typography from audio and VHS tapes triggers a journey through memory, starting from written word, to melody, and ends in re-living autobiographical experiences through music. This path to experience by way of self representation is not one of meditative recollection, but rather occurs in short flashes. Music, the protagonist in van Duijne's productions, operates like a large shadow in the background who although mute is unbowed and determines the piece in its foreground. If one is not familiar with the track or song, the lyric is simply a direct message from the artist to her viewer; without familiarity with the sounds that surround the texts, they read as verses with sharp rhythms and assumed contexts: ALL THE WORDS FLOAT IN SEQUENCE; IT'S MORE FUN TO COMPUTE; LOOK INTO ABSOLUTE RESONANCE; WHO WANTS TO LIVE FOREVER. What do you do with these verses that remain inaccessible if you weren't there, did not hear them, or can't link them to experience?

The second type of reference that underlines the restrained shadow of music in van Duijne's work are the former storage mediums that she has been using for her installations and typographies for many years. In the beginning of the 2000s audio cassettes started to lose value and were already replaced by CDs and MP3s. This is when van Duijne began repurposing her collection of magnetic tapes to use for drawings, typographies and installations. Through her repurposing, van Duijne has created an application for the medium as a material whose patina provides her work with a great deal of (self-referential) information that is also informed by the obscure, invisible and inaudible.

„I CAN HEAR MYSELF“

A metal plate is on the parquet floor, and on top of it is a small electronic spool that supports a tall, skewed metal rod. From the tip of the rod a strip of magnetic tape rhythmically spins soft black loops through the air. Graphically speaking, a loop is defined as an upward, downward, left or right deviation from the original path of a line. Through this deviation of the continuous line an overlap occurs within a part of itself. By definition the loop is characterized by an interior space created through linear overlapping.

An audio tape, according to H  l  ne van Duijne, does not merely store music, but when played back also creates a sphere for the reanimation of memory. Van Duijne treats this space literally and gives it forms that have developed into installations, performance stages and concerts combining magnetic tape with other materials.

When I see van Duijne's „rooms“ that are defined by four curtains made out of black VHS tape which dangles from the ceiling, I am reminded of my first VHS cassette. The tape brought with it the ability to replay a television episode, a music video and sudden accessibility to television and movie images. Now, twenty years later, these strips glisten and glitter broken information into the exhibition space and depending on the lighting alternately cast reflections and distorted shadows into the room and walls. Without a playback device at hand their content remains a secret and their material a mere indicator of stored information. Van Duijne has erected haunting sets for installations such as Night At The Range and Originator, 2009. Without their accompanying performances these works take on a rather eerie presence. The music video runs through my imagination, just like the songs, whose fragmented chorus I can read off the wall in my mind. If you hold on to it long enough imagination alone can arouse belief in the existence of the immaterial.

In the briskly painted Levitation, 2010 series van Duijne references historic photographs of mediums holding seances using mouse pads and carpets as her ground. She establishes both a literal and direct relationship between supernatural communication with the dead by means of the human medium, and the virtual communication that now occurs via the internet. Her use of carpet satirizes the imagery of the flying carpet as an object that transforms from commodity to vehicle of fantasy. The mouse pad on the other hand functions as a surface that helps enable swift gestures in the virtual realm,

serving as a middle ground or vehicle between here and there, now and in a little while.

The images on van Duijne's mouse pad and carpet paintings do not merely depict mediums such as Harry Kellar und Beuget, magicians like Harry Houdini or LSD guru Timothy Leary – entire anonymous circles huddle alongside these individuals around the seance table. Random seeming combinations of letters and numbers are scattered around the scenes which could be imagined as useful in both channeling the dead and to a modern text message obsessed society.

Van Duijne translates areas of interest and thoughts about quotidian life and art into direct contexts that she embeds into her work using her immediate and available means and materials. She goes about her work literally and directly and does not utilize a recognizable signature or visual language. In this sense each of van Duijne's pieces are new and unexpected, mercurial and flexible. What fuses them and renders them precise may be her ever adaptable affinity for the material itself.

Veronika Hauer (translated by Penaloza Patzak & So.)