

What about doing nothing? Just be where you are, in your room, with the thoughts coming and going. It's kind of what we do, all the time, isn't it? Like right now, when you are reading this text?

There are obvious links between Jesper Norda's sound installation *The Centre of Silence*, created for an exhibition at Kalmar Art Museum 2009, and Alvin Lucier's 1969-classic *I'm Sitting in a Room*. The two text pieces both use the factual information about the room where the works are performed as starting point for a series of minimal variations. But where the room's ambience in Alvin Lucier's case give the sounds an increasingly thick and complex texture, it becomes a conceptual ambience in Jesper Norda's radical transformation of the material conditions. It stays the same, but it never feels the same. The effect is somehow the complete opposite to Alvin Lucier's work. By thinning out it becomes complex.

You are there, at the centre of the piece, with a voice reading a formal text telling about the geometrical dimensions of the room and how the ears will react to changes in sound and resonance. But the neutral voice and the dry character of the text will slowly create a tension in the thinking about the piece, a sense of drama. A multitude of rooms will open up.

The mysterious effect of the sober aesthetic and the reduced set of expressions is a peculiar and even melodic romanticism. You listen carefully and suddenly you hear the most wonderful harmonies. Where do they come from?

This paradox of using seemingly boring and non-agitated text materials to bring about a personal presence, characterize several of Jesper Norda's works, for example two of his latest pieces, both from 2009: *Resist With All Your Heart* and *Microgram of Light*. In the first work a short text is repeated many, many times – "Stay in a place infected with truth and resist with all your heart" – but for every repetition the word truth is replaced with another word. In the second one a light projector is directed to a big print consisting of an extremely long series of zeros, 17 521 zeros after one another, ending with the figures and letters "123 microgram of light".

Jesper Norda started as a composer, but changed direction while he was studying in the composition class at the Music Academy in Gothenburg in the end of the 90s and switched to the Art Academy in the same town for his master degree. A main thread in his artistry since then has been a constant questioning of the borderlines between sound and silence. The visual and the sounding materials are juxtaposed in conceptually challenging ways. Even if his works look and sound quite differently from theirs, he is probably the Swedish sound artist that is closest to the conceptual tradition of artists like La Monte Young, John Baldessari and Sol LeWitt and the reductionism of musicians like Toshimaru Nakamura, Sachiko M and Taku Sugimoto.

Several of Jesper Norda's works play with the concept of silence. For example the sound installation *Tear Gravity* from 2005, where two loudspeaker membranes were put on the floor of a gallery, vibrating slowly like heart or a lung, but the frequency making them move – 0,3 Hz – much lower than the human ear can hear (the average human can hear sounds between 20 Hz and 16,000 Hz). Or *Field of Love (Hommage à Dimitrios K)* from 2007 where an extremely strong bass loop was played on a big PA-system buried 2 feet under the ground; the best position to hear any of the bass tones was to lie down on the grass and listen with an ear to the ground. This literally subconscious underground music materialized as vibrations in the body and in the field where it was played.

When asked about what kind of quality he looks for in a piece, Jesper Norda answers: exactitude. He wants his works to be as singular and clear as possible, and so pedagogically plain that they border on the abstract and incomprehensible.

This is the enigma of sound art. The attention to what is going, both in the presence and in the absence of sounds, brings the work right to the centre of silence. And one of the best ways to achieve this is to do nothing. - Magnus Haglund

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