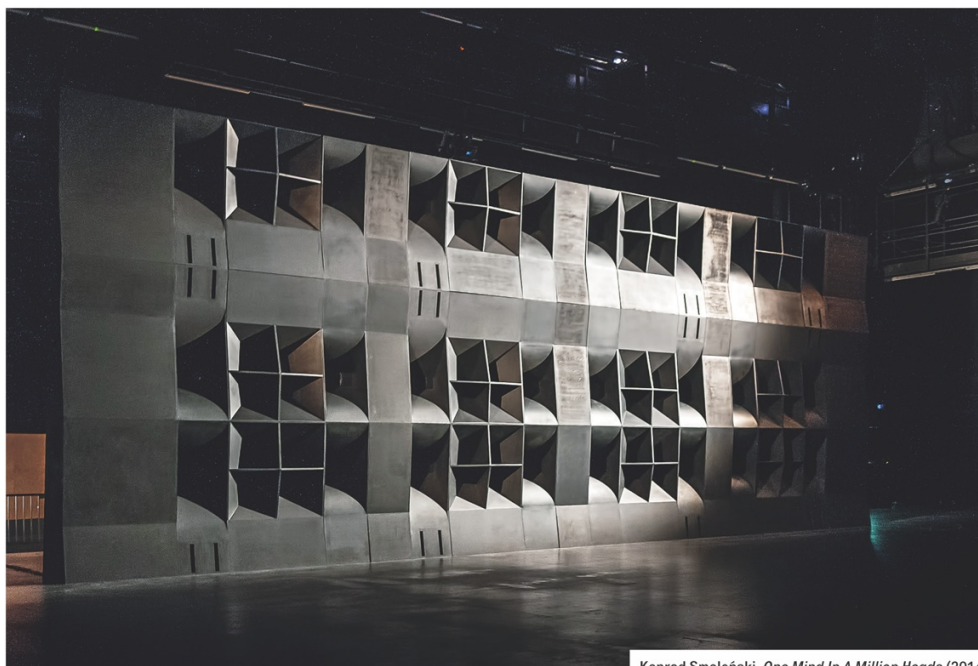


On Site

Exhibitions, installations, etc



Konrad Smoleński, *One Mind In A Million Heads* (2014)

Konrad Smoleński

One Mind In A Million Heads

Zuiderstrandtheater, The Hague, NL

Needing four lorries and a construction crew of ten to transport its parts from Poland to The Netherlands, *One Mind In A Million Heads* is Konrad Smoleński's biggest installation to date. The Warsaw based visual artist and noise musician Smoleński stood out at last year's Venice art biennale, turning the Polish Pavilion into a sound art installation called *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More*. The exhibition space was crammed with two church bells opposite a comparably huge sound system, leaving a lasting impression on ear and eye alike.

With a title referring to Alexei Yurchak's anthropological study of the end of the Soviet era, that Venice work was inspired both by that period of history and by Smoleński's youth in Poznań, where he first encountered noise music. His new

project in The Hague – a collaboration with curator and Bôlt label head Michał Libera – continues his apparent mission to convince audiences of the evocative, transformative power within musical forms generally perceived as alienating.

Arts foundation Volkspaleis (People's Palace) commissioned Smoleński to create this site-specific work at the brand new but unused Zuiderstrandtheater. This almost industrial configuration of concrete and metal boxes, located behind the bunker-filled dunes of Scheveningen beach, was designed as a temporary site for several theatres in the city centre about to be joined in a new building. With that plan postponed indefinitely due to Eurozone crisis-related political hiccups, Volkspaleis sprinkles a pinch of salt in the wound by setting up shop at this controversial site. It's typical of The

Hague: the folklore of the Dutch residency tends to gleefully exploit the ugliness lurking beneath the sheen of its palaces.

Smoleński's installation willingly delves under those surfaces. Part one occupies the orchestra pit of the theatre. Earplugged visitors enter through a lighted corridor, whose interior is mounted with 44 speaker cones. Steps lead down to the bottom of the pit, where the pine and plywood corridor reveals itself as a giant bass port pushing out low end rumbles that reverberate throughout the hall. Steps going back up don't take you to the seated area, which is closed off, but to the darkened stage containing the second part of the installation, a six metres high, 15 metres wide matte black rectangular structure resembling a stack of speaker cabinets. The distorted midrange noise coming from this wall is mirrored across the audience gathered on stage by the installation's third

part, a cinema screen with a dance video by choreographer Noa Shadur. The images, rhythmically corresponding with the sound, suggest a relationship between a boy and a girl that has been disturbed by two men assaulting the girl – a reminder that, besides euphoria, social fluctuation can also inflict severe anxiety.

Temporarily constructed at a site of political inertia and unrest, *One Mind In A Million Heads* turns this site into a massive speaker crying out for revolution through noise. Smoleński invites everyone to participate, with the audience taking the stage while musicians perform over the installation. Following the dense cacophony of Wolf Eyes and Cut Hands on the opening night, the music curated by Libera grows increasingly quieter over the next four weekends of performances in anticipation of the exhibition ending in silence.

Marinus de Ruiter

Mat Jenner

Foam

Andor, London, UK

A man's voice deep in the digital uncanny valley, synth pads swelling from the crash of waves, intones: "Imagine a world where labour, consumption, marketing, leisure and protest have all been hybridised, automated, outsourced and off-shored into something both ubiquitous and unrecognisable". Daniel Keller's "Lazy Ocean Drift Promo v1", the A side of a 12" dubplate racked among more than a hundred others in a black display unit, presents a techno utopia brimming with promise, if a strangely aseptic one. The piece occupies a curious position within the context of Mat Jenner's *Foam* exhibition at Andor in Hackney, East London, being at once complementary and contradictory. For

Foam is all about presence, touch, and the aura of the original – things presumably made obsolescent in Keller's singular universe. But *Foam* also partakes of a world in which the act of putting a record onto a turntable and listening to it has become evicted from everyday life into the space of the museum.

Towards the back of the white-walled space, shelves hold an amp, a record player and a block of records in identical black sleeves. Each disc comes in an edition of one. Two speakers on slender stands do not quite face each other. A gallery assistant in a crisp white dress offers to show me how to use the equipment, which seems absurd at first but here her help becomes an oddly essential part of the ritual. White cotton

gloves must be worn before handling the vinyl. On the walls, three untitled Jenner works complete the exhibition. Each presents, on first examination, a simple unframed mirror. But close up, the surface is broken up by four half-centimetre-thick copper discs and dirtied by a swirl of finger smudges. These smears conspire with the white gloves to remind us of the way our physical presence at once forms and deforms our experience of the world.

Several of the records featured enter into this play of presence and absence. Yuri Pattison's *Colocation Sounds* presents field recordings from the inside of a data centre in Stockholm. Rob Chavasse's *Fire.rar* and *Water.zip* transform concrete sounds with digital modulations. Ultimately, however, there are too many records to listen to

during a single sitting, let alone meaningfully pass judgement on. Cecile B Evans perverts an extract from *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf?* with cartoon voices and Muzak-y strings. Haroon Mirza simply offers us 53 seconds of "my wife expressing breast milk into Marina Abramovic's sink".

If some of these pieces would scarcely survive in a normal listening environment, they exert an uncanny effect in the clinical gallery. Apart from anything else, the set-up raises questions about just what constitutes a normal listening environment anyway. At a time when listening inevitably seems to soundtrack something else, it's a pleasure to enter into a ritual in which putting a needle on a record and hearing it through is all that is required of our attention.

Robert Barry

Jhoeko