

**October 2016 – May 2017**

This is a website that hosts my finished and unfinished work on a weekly basis: a way to keep track with my daily research and a way to stay active and develop my practices as a writer, composer and mixing engineer. The result of this ongoing manoeuvre is posted every Wednesday, and sends out an e-mail to its subscribers which links directly to the online issue. To each issue is associated a 'poster'. These 'posters' also act as individual factors as they include the title of the work which tends to be the most representative of the issue itself yet must stand on its own for the sake of the viewer's imagination. Each issue has sound for pivotal point though is often associated with iconography such as video, photographs, or other pictorial representations. The purpose of this enterprise is to continually express the sum of the daily scrutinisation I perform on the web, in conversations or in other forms of communication. These decisions are taken with the intention of deepening my subjects of research, archiving them more or less thematically as a way of tracking my progress and of building who I am. There is no final object, as the object I am building is myself, therefore will never be finished (I assume). Although the last issue will be released on the 10th of May, I will not stop recollecting citations, songs, sounds and images that I find. All of the website's contents will be archived and freely browsable.

Firstly in this methodology, I collect documents that translate as words, links, any kind of direct citation that I then store on my personal laptop. This primary process of gathering was inspired by Michel Foucault's *Hupomnemata*. Etymologically, *Hupomnemata* are reminders, memorials, or means of remembrance. Foucault wrote about them in *Self Writing* defining them as constituting "a material and a framework for exercises to be carried out frequently: reading, rereading, meditating, conversing with oneself and with others." He carries on saying "one should be able to use them, whenever the need was felt, in action. It is a matter of constituting a *logos bioethikos* for oneself, an equipment of helpful discourses, capable —as Plutarch says— of elevating the voice and silencing the passions like a master who with one word hushes the growling of dogs." He says they must be "deeply lodged in the soul [...] and they must form part of ourselves: in short, the soul must make them not merely its own but itself." Nevertheless, according to Foucault, *Hupomnemata* must not constitute "a narrative of the self." They must not be of "purificatory value. The movement they seek to bring about is the reverse

of that: the intent is not to pursue the unspeakable, nor to reveal the hidden, nor to say the unsaid, but on the contrary to capture the already-said, to collect what one has managed to hear or read, and for a purpose that is nothing less than the shaping of the self.”<sup>1</sup> In this context, Hupomnemata take the shape of various on and offline sources: pictures, footage, sounds, songs and music, lectures, written texts, poetry, stand up comedies, footage shot on my iPhone, etc. They constitute an ensemble of information that constitute my work and to a certain extent, myself.

Secondly, I intentionally superimpose these Hupomnemata to create what Walter Benjamin would have called a Dialectical Image. In Benjamin’s work, the use of image has been subject to a wide spectrum of interpretations, ranging from purely metaphorical understandings to comparisons with more radical contemporary visual practices such as montage, but also to readings of the image as a mental model of reality (Wittgenstein). Here of course, my use of the dialectical image is less visual, and more virtual, or in larger parts, based on sound: “an image tries to recreate the complexity of the world without suppressing one thought by another, without exerting conceptual violence. It operates by collecting, gathering and juxtaposing the mass of thought, which explains why Benjamin, for instance, dreamed of writing a book made entirely of citations.”<sup>2</sup> In Benjamin’s words, the dialectical image “comes about through action and is action.”<sup>3</sup> For him, the image has transformative effects, such as profane illumination and awakening which both terms carry a notion of “the now of recognisability,”<sup>4</sup> an always present time which bursts through the continuum of history to reveal the unfulfilled, utopian potentialities accumulated throughout humanity’s past, a past “charged with the time of now.”<sup>5</sup> In her text about the dialectical image, Iva Jevtic writes about images as “not being about ‘meaning’ – they are to do with experience, awakening, illumination: historical materialism [...]” In Benjamin’s view, Surrealism is “all about experiences, not theories”<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Michel Foucault, *Self Writing*, in *Dits et Ecrits*, Vol. IV, Gallimard:Paris:1983, pp.415-430.

<sup>2</sup> Iva Jevtic, *Between Word and Images: Walter Benjamin’s Images as a Species of Space*, p.5.

<sup>3</sup> Irving Wohlfarth, ‘Die Passagenarbeit’, in *Benjamin Handbuch*, Ed. B. Lindner, Stuttgart, 2006, p. 263.

<sup>4</sup> Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Cambridge (MA), 1999, p.462

<sup>5</sup> Walter Benjamin, *Illuminations*, Pimlico, London, 1999, p.253

<sup>6</sup> Walter Benjamin, *One-Way Street*, Verso, London, 1997, p.237.

Surrealism in The Arcades Project has a big role in the recollection techniques surrealists used to shape the self. Benjamin wants the image to show, to represent the experience. In that respect it is similar to the Hupomnemata and both ideas merge together in my work. In the dialectical image, these Hupomnemata, these experiences coincide: “the reader is made to follow the multiple paths of meaning without being able to secure for herself a definite position; she is left with a multiplicity of insecure positions. By tracing the paths between them, in other words by reading, we are creating an image.”<sup>7</sup> And therefore, we are creating an experience: “the multiplicity of perspectives and insecure positions within an image points towards the relativity of discourses, a certain absence at the heart of what we expected to be full and absolute, to contain unequivocal meaning.” Jevtic suggests that Benjamin’s dialectical image was “a way of writing and a mode of thinking that crossed the boundaries between the visual and the linguistic, in order to discover new and singular ways of experiencing the world.” My use of the visual and the linguistic here are used uniquely through sound, sometimes combining image and sound (in such works as Achilles Heel, Cci or Purple Pink – listed below) although are still part of linguistics. I will explain below.

Generally here, I am trying to create sonic landscapes, historical contexts for one to experience, textual and textural atmospheres that must be read as a documents of my existence. In that respect, I would suppose myself as a writer, in that my intention here is to formulate experiences, recite history and document the everyday. I will give an example of what I believe could be a form of ‘sonic writing’: recently, Lamin Fofana was commissioned e-flux journal’s “first ‘text’ as track. [...] What we got, what we are still getting, as the thing unspools its textured strands, is our increasingly derelict Now, compressed and distilled, the good shards extracted from it, into a flexible terrain that flickers in and out of different configurations. At one moment, it is riot-space; at another, thinking-space; at yet another, chill-out-and-recharge-space; and at yet another, historical-space. At all times it is a delicate synthesis of multifarious strands and an enterprise in gauging dirt patches in this mad moment, in exposing little bits of hard ground on which our desires for another world, certainly for the end of this one, can

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<sup>7</sup> Iva Jevtic, p.5

continue to find traction.”<sup>8</sup> Again emphasising on the Now, editors at e-flux make a good definition of Lamin Fofana’s hour-and-five-minutes long “track” or mix of songs, sounds and words from others. There is definitely a way of experiencing the world through sound and to me it is a new way of resistance, escaping the tyranny of the textual and fleeting towards fleshy feelings and communal movement.<sup>9</sup> I want to express the Now by the feelings, a Now that, similarly to Paul Klee’s *Angel of History*, propels us into the future with our backs turned, faced toward the past, while the storm of Paradise before us grows skyward. This storm is what we call progress.<sup>10</sup>

The aim of this project is more about building a research proposal rather than proposing a final product. In fact, in my aim to emancipate myself, I have gathered bits and pieces of information to shape my own identity as a pop musician, writer and artist. I have explored different sonic themes, created accidents using chance operations and constructed textual train of thoughts using found music and original compositions. This enterprise perhaps resembles that of auto-ethnography. Auto-ethnography, as argued in Adams, Jones and Ellis’ book, describes a manner to tell stories which, according to them, “allow us to lead more reflective, more meaningful and more just lives.”<sup>11</sup> These stories would be artistic and analytic demonstrations of how we come to know, name and interpret personal and cultural experience. It would be a way to use personal experience to “engage ourselves, culture(s), politics and social research.” They give a quick methodology that I have been surprised to have followed without prior knowledge of its existence:

- “- Use a researcher’s personal experience to describe and critique cultural beliefs, practices, and experiences.
- Acknowledges and values a researcher’s relationships with others.

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<sup>8</sup> Lamin Fofana, *Dis/Continuum: Sounds for M4BL*, e-flux journal #79, Feb 2017, <http://www.e-flux.com/journal/79/94534/dis-continuum/> accessed 02.2017

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> Walter Benjamin, *On the Concept of History*, Suhrkamp Verlag, Frankfurt, 1974 (1940).

<sup>11</sup> Adams, Jones & Ellis, *Autoethnography*, p.1

- Uses deep and careful self-reflection—typically referred to as ‘reflexivity’—to name and interrogate the intersections between self and society, the particular and the general, the personal and the political.
- Shows ‘people in the process of figuring out what to do, how to live, and the meaning of their struggles.’<sup>12</sup>
- Balances intellectual and methodological rigour, emotion, and creativity.
- Strives for social justice and to make life better.”<sup>13</sup>

These qualitative values glorify the use of auto ethnography as a research method. A question remains whether “practice-as-research projects are in themselves sufficiently discriminating as to produce knowledge and disseminate it even if they remain embodied in the sense that their outcomes are not further articulated in another mode of cognition such as words, spoken or in writing.”<sup>14</sup> This question asked by Robin Nelson raises the intelligible point of the ‘statement’, which he illustrates using a quote by Pears which reads: “a piece of factual knowledge must be at least true.”<sup>15</sup> But I digress here for none of the practical research done on my website necessitates factual qualifications, there are present to raise curiosity and curate a multiplicity of readings which arguably are exclusively build on the desire to experiment.

I have acted impulsively, for the most part, on my receptions of weekly discoveries, acknowledgements and/or experiences, making these works (in progress) or part-works or even finished works the reflection of my own perception of political events as well as personal. For example, week #8 (‘Controversy’) was created with large a bang from Pink Floyd’s song ‘Another Brick in the Wall, Pt. 3’, in direct response to Donald Trump’s presidential election. But week #17 (‘HeatTech HardCore’) was simply an exploration of my voice as a result of my desire to expose myself more and make pop music a central aspect of my work, using the tools (such as research and experimentation) that have been explored in the chronology of the website to create a more complete work on sound and

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<sup>12</sup> Arthur P. Bochner and Carolyn Ellis, “Communication as Autoethnography,” in *Communication As...Perspectives on Theory*, eds. Gregory J. Shepherd, Jeffrey St. John, and Ted Striphas (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2006): 111.

<sup>13</sup> Adams, Jones & Ellis, *Ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Robin Nelson (2006): ‘Practice-as-research and the Problem of Knowledge’, *Performance Research: A Journal of the Performing Arts*, 11:4, 105-116

<sup>15</sup> Pears, David (1971) *What is Knowledge?*, London:Allen & Unwin Ltd

pop music. None of these experimentations require truth nevertheless, and perhaps are also a critique of truth, but still therefore are statements, reports of an ongoing curiosity of the cultural, economic and political complexities of western societies today. And at the same time for the building of my own emancipation.

On the other hand, this progression was shared with subscribers (about 130 in total) which therefore made accessible the advancement of my search for identity, as well as I believe the curiosity of the followers, finding themselves confronted to a curated trans-disciplinary space as well as a private space. Much like Domino Record's 'Domino Drip' or Nicolas Jaar's 'Other People' imprint (subscription based labels which are similar to newspaper subscriptions where the audience pays little money per month to get access to exclusive content), [nelsonbeer.net](http://nelsonbeer.net) allowed followers to access the reports of my researches and experiments, but for free. Subscription based labels have gained notoriety since the raise of music platforms such as Spotify or iTunes Music and independent actors within the scene have emerged creating online platforms promoting young artists.

For example, 'Domino Drip' combines "the direct to consumer philosophy with the ongoing relationship with the ongoing relationship that a subscription model provides" says Kurt Lane, head of digital at Domino. Trusting a label with its identity forces the listener to delve into a discoverer position, being delivered curated material on a regular basis. On one side, it is a smart merchandising mode and on the other it keeps a close relationship to close followers of a label's activities: "Mark Mulligan said: 'The concept of drip-feeding content to consumers is a very good one. However, this is certainly stage one, rather than the end game.' He said the service needs to expand into adding other types of content, such as video or exclusive access to the artists themselves. Ultimately Mulligan believes artists will adopt a similar model for releasing new music, turning fans into subscribers."<sup>16</sup> Certainly, subscribing even to an artist has got to reflect the diversity of an artist's work.

Music producer Nicolas Jaar has also started his own subscription based label entitled 'Other People' and digitally publishes music weekly for only \$5 a month. The label

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<sup>16</sup> Shane Richmond, "Domino Drip heralds the subscription record label", <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/technology/news/9507046/Domino-Drip-heralds-the-subscription-record-label.html> accessed 1/05/17

was created in part for a desire to move away from the tradition of releasing music physically, an idea that he had since 2012 when he said “Why release music physically, at all? Isn't it irrelevant in 2012?”<sup>17</sup> Jaar, like others, has been thinking of alternative modes of distributing music and commercialising it. Similarly, other artists or online galleries have been exhibiting on the web. Cosmos Carl - Platform Parasite hosts links provided by the artists they curate, be it encrypted within an archive, through open source software, the dark web etc: “The platform encourages artists to reclaim (commercial) online platforms to produce and display their art. The fact that the work is made on an existing online platform implies that visitors may stumble upon it, not necessarily viewing it as art.”<sup>18</sup> Constructing [nelsonbeer.net](http://nelsonbeer.net) was an exercise on the necessities created by online curation, an epistemological research on the possibilities of public exposure and episodic publishing.

As an archived website now, web users will have access to the entire chronology of the research as a marker of that evolution and its various experimentations around the sonic and personal identity, as well as online publishing. It was also a way to be as exposed as possible, another one of my quests in the making of music, fragments of a mirror that reflects not myself, but the infinite list of authors that constitute and perpetuate that particular memory. Barthes said that “[t]he reader is the space on which all the quotations that make up a writing are inscribed without any of them being lost; a text’s unity lies not in its origin but in its destination.”<sup>19</sup> By this, we might as well understand that any language, any use of symbols is in fact an infinite reference to the notions of authorships which must be evaluated as irrefutable *parti pris* in any creative enterprise, a fundamental acknowledgement that one does not invent, but transmits, transforms, and pursues ongoing endeavours. Deleuze & Guattari wrote in the introduction to *A Thousand Plateaus*: “The two of us wrote *Anti-Oedipus* together. Since each of us was several, there was already quite a crowd. [...] We are no longer ourselves. Each will know his own. We have been aided, inspired, multiplied.”<sup>20</sup> In fact in this

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<sup>17</sup> <https://www.theguardian.com/music/2012/mar/24/nicolas-jaar-prism>

<sup>18</sup> <http://www.cosmoscarl.co.uk/>

<sup>19</sup> Roland Barthes p.148

<sup>20</sup> Deleuze & Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus. Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, p.3

research process, I have encountered many different artists, whose work also contains an infinity of quotes to the past of music, noise, literature, etc.

On the other hand, the research I have pursued originated from various sources that did not cite their own sources and therefore motivated me to endure an investigation which was strewn with necessary stops on the way. On several mixes such as week#5 'Garden Of Eden', I have blended existing material with original compositions to blur the line between my work and those of others. What I intend here is as I said earlier, create a dialectical image, but also convey the listener to partake in her own investigation, perhaps in vain of satisfactory results, but to find that perhaps the quest itself is the result. That would create perhaps a win-win situation, where my benefits of participating in a research also creates a desire to search in the listener's point of view. On the same note, Nicolas Jaar originated a mock online radio with 111 shows, based on chance operations and other compositional and research practices: "The stations are made up of more than 20 hours of Jaar's own mixes as well as original music, [...] the remaining are constructed 'fakes', conceptual audio works created with the help of voice actors. Billionaire FM counts down and offers commentary on the annual Forbes list of world's top billionaires one by one. MATTA CLARK DEMOLITIONS is comprised of "noises" gathered from the structures which artist Gordon Matta Clark transformed into architectural cut-ups."<sup>21</sup>

All of these different research methods and assemblages, compositions and experimentations present themselves as a whole, a light shed on the progression that constructs my work and identity as an artist and active human being. There is a quest for revolution, or perhaps a question that if revolution happens, what shape will it take?

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<sup>21</sup> <https://www.printedmatter.org/catalog/47011/>

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