

## **That's No Way to Go: Giving Your Body Over to the Telecom Lacking Sound Festival 44**

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### ***Shall we return the disused body or give our body over to the telecom?***

Burst of laser and flashes of electrical current magically disappear and reappear in the hands of the artist. In Yao Chung-Han's work for Lacking Sound Festival Listen 44, entitled "Laser - Lamps - Sound Performance" (LLSP), the artist dances on laser beams as if pounding at piano keys, blocking beams of light with the body, and simultaneously sets off a clash of sound with a blast of fluorescent light. The interim space is strung together with chaotic noise edited by the body. Short bursts shoot forth. Rapid fire. Collision.

As a member of the audience, I relinquish my eardrums and retinas. The pupils have no time to react to these rapid lighting effects that push the limits of visual perception. Visual cues momentarily freeze on the supplied images and currents of noise. They are on auto-receive, and a psychedelic spectacle of sound and light is constructed.

### ***A Codified Body***

LLSP is a cybernetic musical instrument. It is an artistic assemblage consisting of fluorescent tubes, laser beams, distance sensors, and laptop computers; a "musical instrument" installation that can be "strummed," "performed" and "danced" by the human body. The body is not used here to produce a voice that originates in the pudenda and rises to the throat, nor is it Alice Hui-Sheng Chang's body-as-instrument, created from the body itself. What is performed in the LLSP is the body that is coded by the music/noise instrument that the artist has assembled himself.

To invent a noise instrument, then to subordinate the body to that system -- the dynamic of that body is thus translated into coded signals that initiate and edit electronic noises and lights.

The stellar performance report card that is the LLSP is, in short, a cybernetic musical instrument that can be immediately performed by converting the noise of electrical currents in fluorescent tubes. The solution to locating the body within this telecom-instrumental process was a simple and clever one: laser light. Lasers not only provide an interface between the body and the instrument, using lasers is an automatic "A-Plus" grade for its psychedelic and shock lighting effects.

Applications of laser sensor interfaces to sound are not an innovation of the LLSP, but here, the sound artist does not sit motionless behind his laptop, awkward but calm as he directs the digital control board -- where the audience has no choice but to direct their eyes to images in the background. Instead, Yao Chung-Han jumps directly onto the stage and controls the entire scene with his body. Taken separately or as a whole, he appears to have smoothly integrated the visual, auditory and tactile elements.

Here, the artist's physical silhouette has become the focal point of the performance. He is a debonair magician, disappearing and reappearing on the stage as he exercises precise control of the overall performance. Understandably, audience members are curious as to whether the artist contemplates his own stage persona and projected image the way a rock star might.

### ***Why the body?***

What does it mean when the artist focuses on how he inserts his body into the sound performance installation? This is a problematic concept that was first introduced in the 1970s by technological art in the West, and has become part of the construct of technological art. Half of the problem originates in the genesis of installation art, wherein concerns arose about how the body (as defined by phenomenology) should be included. It is a shout-out from the 1960s, when paintings emerged out of two-dimensional flatness to the theatricality of multi-dimensionality. Today, issues of interactivity have gradually shifted to addressing problems of translation between different media and dimensions. LLSP responds to this problem presented by aesthetics. An imagined solution to the prevailing crisis of the disused body in the digital age is created by using the fundamentals of aesthetic theory and by using the phenomenological body as a switching device within an instrumental installation.

### ***Is the body located within the installation or outside of it?***

#### ***The body within the work***

The artist's body necessarily endures a training process before a performance, much like a pianist requires practice to control and negotiate the necessary precise manipulations between the sheet music and the hands. A similar sacrifice occurs in the LLSP. Specific motion by the performer must always trigger an intended effect. The artist's body is in fact codified by the instrumental installation. The leveled laser beam that crosses the stage is used as a body-sensing signal device, but acts as an ersatz impenetrable wall for the performer on the stage, too. When the performer moves out of the range of this beam of light, his body no longer exists. The body of the artist within the installation must eventually return to his own system of aesthetics: a system of aesthetics that belongs to technological art.

#### ***The body outside the work***

The dedicated focus to the world of telecommunication technology, and the attempt to process issues of aesthetics that arise from the context of technological art unwittingly bring up the question: "Whose art history is this?" How do discourses of media arts, specifically writings on media arts developed in the Western world inform our understanding media art? Will we have a media art history that belongs to "us"? In techno-cultural history, does a techno-political economy exist between us and the Western world: between the front-end and back-end of technology production, between R&D and OEM? Why do we need technological art? Fortunately, there have been heated discussions on how to begin to write a text about "sound art" that belongs to "us." How this act of writing will affect creators of sound art will soon become a phenomenon of concern and expectation.