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RHYTHM AND EVENT

From the start, the proposition is this: a close affinity with sonic thought might open a portal to the emergence of autonomous, invisible and molecular events, subsisting outside sensuous perception and linear time. In order to investigate this abstract proposition in a more concrete manner, my book *The Rhythmic Event* (in which the present text features as a Conclusion), endeavours to explore a tendency in media art to create situations of affective interactivity. The book gathers a body of, mostly, installation work, which handles a shift from the purely sonic to the construction of asymmetrical, immeasurable rhythmic and vibrational forcefields. These particular projects emerge from encounters between alternative architectural practices, interactive installations and technoscientific experiments. Such encounters are interesting in terms of the potential relations they could be argued to encourage between body, space, and technology—at the microscopic scale. The situations these works create (between biological and technological entities, discrete and continuous aesthetics, virtual and actual scales) are understood to no longer require the active participation of human perception. These events are understood instead as having an additional impact on our understanding of perception, as potentially nonconscious, nonsensory and emptied from lived experience.

The broader concern of the book was to follow the hints and traces that the sonic alludes to and which might enable a more dynamic ontogenetics of the event. The traces lead me to the engineering of three different layers in the conceptual architecture of the rhythmic event: virtual digitality (the technological), hypersonic sensation (the bodily), and rhythmic time (the spatiotemporal dimension). This extra-sonic assemblage is by no means an exhaustive list and there are undoubtedly other plateaus whose plug-ins and connectivities are waiting to be explored, perhaps by other writers. The architecture of the rhythmic event is one of imperceptible intensity not actuality; that is, of a differential quality that distinguishes between spacetime, body, and technology in terms of degrees (potentials) rather than substances (formed matter).

Certain general conclusions can be drawn from each level. To begin with, the manifold, multiple (topological) varieties between discontinuous and continuous approaches to time, is not exclusive to digital processes. Yet, there is something else occurring in digital spacetime that allows for the speculation of new forms of attention, feeling and experience within digital media assemblages. But also, within digitality there are coexistent diversities and varieties across its textural aesthetics that further complicate the limiting continuous versus discrete debate. Looked at in this way, the digital could be argued to incorporate processes that do not merely homogenize and converge all other systems, qualities and processes into its own binary language. A notion of rhythmic intensities (vaguely sensible differential qualities in-between quantification) can help us resist the metaphysical distinction between continuity (the notion of time as continuous duration) and discontinuity (the discrete spatialization of time common in digital processes); by considering them as microscopic deviations, cuts or breaks, running underneath and across the stream of temporal experience. Numbers, symbols, and digits, hold no absolute, precise and predetermined truths in them. Rather, code includes anomalies and peculiarities that are not sufficiently explained as errors in the system, and need to be looked at as tensions or tendencies towards an incalculable and fuzzy dimension.

Secondly, to try and permeate deeper into the complex modulations of perception in sonic experiments means facing an unidentifiable yet real dimension of inaudible audio. This layer requires disentangling rhythm from measurable frequency and the unavoidable possibility of audible sound. Hypersonic events feature a capacity to reveal vibration as an elementary rhythm of matter that does not rely on our observations. The micro-neural realm proposes to think hypersonic energy as an inkling of the affective states of a body's perception. As my book

suggested, the inaudible impact of hypersonic energy on a body can affect its capacity to perceive by amplifying it. Microrelational unsensed energies can be shown to expand perception beyond the phenomenal level. These indeterminate and unexpected forces, as they are summoned by new media events, explore a body's capacity to affect and be affected by deeper experiences leaking into its consciousness. These self-referential rhythms invite the paradox of a 'defective ability' in bodies to feel a memory not yet lived. In so doing, perception becomes amplified appearing to pick up unknown and unperceivable qualities. A non-contradictory consideration of the internal and external rhythms that compose a body points to a nonhuman and nonconscious aspect immanent to human perception.

Third culmination of the rhythmic event: time, duration, becoming, and event are relational concepts with explicit philosophical meanings, so what happens to them when they are rhythmically unfolded? The course of time is twisted, played with, and unsettled by experiments in new media art and intriguing modes of interactivity that emerge from them. A specific approach to their operations allows for the conceptualization of a new mode of time, felt in nonsensuous ways; rhythmic but not musical, abstract yet real. It moreover helps push the notion of the rhythmic event towards a slow, uneventful, middle state of enduring the reality of time, beneath sensory perception and between the actual and contingent phases of the event. Rhythmic time lurks in the unknown and 'unthought' dimensions of experience; expressed within audiovisual experiments that treat time as a complex ecology of speeds and slownesses extending beyond the realm of the here and now. The rhythms emerging from such projects are not confined to their chronological duration or the character of a particular sound (its genre, pitch, etc.), nor are they determined by them. Rather, they become the very building material of the spatiotemporal zone as it self-generates at the point of contact between organic and artificial entities. Feeling them involves the stretching of perception to include that which is not given in subjective action.

The concept of rhythm, considered as disentangled from physical phenomena (for example, physiological or musical) is crucial in approaching the rhythmic event. This idea of rhythm as an uneven discontinuous movement (cut or break), running across and reshuffling the continuity of lived duration, turns the concept into a relational quality. This is rhythm as a third, in-between milieu, challenging the Platonic-Cartesian 'either/or' binary and enabling the resonant cross-wiring of differences, across diverse realms. Rhythm indicates that there are other virtual events enveloping actual movement, sensory perception, and chronological time. Although sonic theory was the driving force of my book, the task was primarily to probe a tendency in the sonic to point towards amodal and irregular forces due to its connection to rhythm and vibration. In this way, one of the book's ambitions is to attempt and move altogether past the remits and enclosures of sonic theory and conceive of a newly extended rhythmic theory: an alliance of, among others, art practices, (science) fictions, and philosophies, whose assemblage can deal with the real implications of imperceptible, uncertain and unknown dimensions of events.

My work attempted to investigate the possibility of a rhythmic event by situating its emergence at the meeting point between different areas of thought. To this end, it proposed that the experimental nature of certain new media artworks, interlinking technoscientific, aesthetic, and philosophical dimensions, allows for the emergence of novelty as a quality immanent to the abstract yet felt nexus of rhythmicity. However, the capacity of a virtual theorisation of technological art and how it might be able to account for the new was not equated with a deterministic celebration of technology. My tactic was attempting to a move away from the impasse of positioning technology in either purely positive (technophile) or absolutely negative (technophobe) terms. *The Rhythmic Event* hints at an aspiration to permeate the perceptible orders of spacetime, body, and machine, and unfold a deeper order of forces and relations immanent to the media art event. This virtual order is understood to exceed directly lived and perceived experience, encompassing the clearly distinguished forms and structures of actual processes. At this level, bodies and machines acquire unusual definitions, according to which a body is not straightforwardly human and a machine is not merely technical. In this sense, the book

endeavoured to follow a body of work that, in a way, seems to undertake an impossible task: human thought attempting to acquire non-human perspective. In another way, then, my work also seeks to inquire what happens when nonhuman factors infect the field of the arts and humanities.

It may be difficult to see how universal notions may be sidestepped by abstract speculations. However, suggesting the contemplation of unusual and strange angles is only ever as odd as its opposite notion of normality implies. For example, commonly, numbers are thought to correspond to precise calculations and binary code to be the ultimate precision engine. Perception is usually understood as a process of receiving and comprehending information (with the brain or the senses), thus, reality may be said to correspond to the total sum of sensed phenomena. Additionally, our idea of bodies and machines is universally understood to stretch as far as our knowledge of them; and nature is by and large considered as a given ontology or articulation of our scientific discourses. Yet, building alternative more abstract configurations of these concepts that necessarily disregard the model of (Western) thought that dominates our perception of them, seems a project worth pursuing.

The cross-pollination of theory and practice are crucial in conducting abstract but real experiments with techno-aesthetic concepts. The symbiotic contagions between them exceed a mere correspondence, deconstruction, or representation between the different areas as well as the concepts extracted from them. The rhythmic event is therefore situated within a middle space of intersection—where technoscientific ideas emerge on the edges of obscure, creative, fictional thought and media art is a living laboratory of unpredictable results. The hope is to convey how unexpected encounters allude to an unpredictable and incalculable dynamism, which is indispensable from the transmutational fabric of life.