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SCHWINGUNGEN 2010 Christof Schläger



SCHWINGUNGEN



The Rhine-Herne Canal was a product of the industrial era. The artificially laid waterway crosses over with a landscape which is uniquely characterized by the striving for optimal economical solutions. The canal hasn't been just a waterway for freight ships for a long time. Instead it has a second life as a centre of culture and leisure. It has however kept its stark industrial character in many places. The places characterized by industry have a magical attraction for Christof Schläger.

Most of all he likes to go there at night. At that time not only the light is mysterious, but also the acoustics. When it is cool and damp the bizarre, indefinable sounds of the area are carried particularly far. In the night atmosphere the industrial buildings seem, all at once to be transformed. The canal bridge near the Herner Steag Power Station is Christof Schläger's new favourite place - a good place for his project: 'Schwingungen'.





The place draws its power from the geometry of the power station, a still life with coal tips, canal and cooling towers. Once you have freed yourself from the thought of having technical buildings before your eyes something new comes into view and then the surroundings can display unintentional abstract aesthetics: an absurd musical landscape with gigantic cylinders, which coincidentally remind one of cooling towers, large snails which have a certain similarity with a cable drum, quietly falling black dust, which piles up

into pyramid-shaped mountains. This charisma of the landscape which is electricity-laden provokes an artistic intervention.

The artist now achieves from a process already being used a stronger reaction like a catalyst. Nothing could be better suited to this than the futuristic instrumental machines of Christof Schläger. From technical machines he builds instruments which are then distributed on the grounds at the Rhine-Herne Canal.





Above: Urbane sound-scapes as a source of inspiration (Amsterdam).
Right: A group of sixteen transformed ships' horns.
Left: The compressed air sirens.

Large snail-like wound horns are tuned with compressed air into giant fog horns. Batteries of ships' horns are accompanied an compressed air whistles made of specially-prepared steel tubes which are played together. There are three of this 'sound-islands', which are widely distributed on the open-air grounds.






Left: A diesel locomotive drives a wagon with transformed ships'-horns

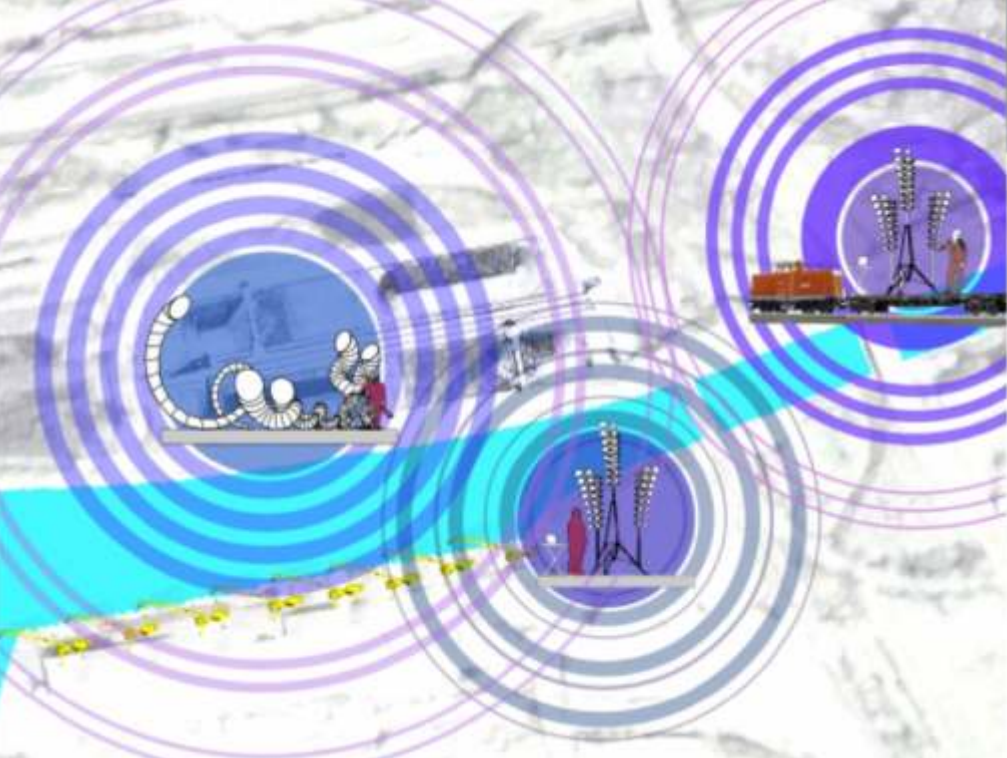
The third sound-islands is mobile. A diesel locomotive drives a wagon which is fitted with further compressed air horns across the area. While they are playing their sequences they fade into the distance.





Choreography for concrete pumps, dredger,
coal terminal, train and pyrotechnic illumination

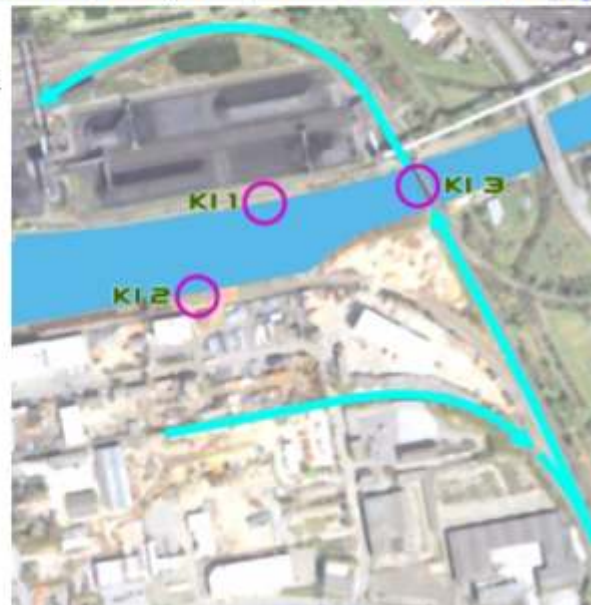
Choreography Marjon Smit & Seta Guetsoyan

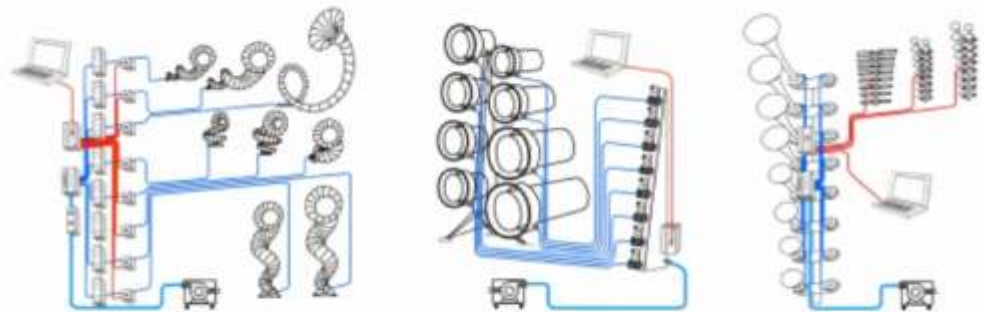


Above: A clip of the score.
 Right: The time table for the sound island on the train.
 Left: When played from the different locations, the compositions 'multiply' at the places where the listeners are standing and become new pieces or new sound experiences.

The 3-dimensional composition

Dr Hanno Ehder wrote about his impressions of the effect of the horn concert in a DLF radio report. 'The music truly changes when one moves from one place to another. The emphasis of the sound moves to the sound-producing instrument which one is currently approaching. Also very succinct echoes are made from the penetrating sound of the ship's horn. They form an independent layer of composition which furthermore causes the sound to be carried far and wide. The sound space which Christof Schläger opens up with his concert covers several square kilometres. In his horn concert Christof Schläger firstly works with simple structures, traditional composition techniques. For example, staggered repetitions as in the fugue or meshed rhythms as in the 'minimal music'. With refined variations and with the interconnection of both instruments Christof Schläger creates a musical structure with many voices. Through the echo effects of the landscape the piece becomes a complex 3-dimensional structure.'





Above: View at the basic structure of the three instrument groups. The compressed air sirens, the 'Membranators' and the tuned ships'-horns.
 Left: View in the studio of the artist.

Futuristic „instrument machines“

Christof Schläger's "instrument machines" which he made himself are not played manually. They are operated like industrial machines with electricity, compressed air. They are also computer-controlled, because the complex combinations of several machines and meticulous rhythms quickly exceed what is humanly possible. The commands to operate are sent by a computer. For every piece of music a data file exists which contains all the commands. This is, so to speak, the musical score. Just as the notes of a piano piece indicate which keys are to be pressed, programme commands indicate which switch, valve, relay or motor is to be played. The actual compositional work takes place in the studio where all instruments are gathered together. The music software makes possible the co-ordinated playing of all instruments. If an exciting piece of work develops from this, then the result can be saved as a score. This procedure is quite the same as the trusty ways of a composer.

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Fotos: Christof Schläger, Marjon Smit



Christof Schläger ist born 1958 in Beuthen (Oberschlesien). After an study of process engineering and civil engineering, he started with first sound performances in 1980. Since 1987 he directed many exhibition projects in the "Maschinenhalle Teutoburgia" (art space) and initiates the "Kunst-Wald"-park in Heme. Participation in many multimedia concerts and festivals at home and abroad., among others in Krakau, Lille, Barcelona, New York, Tel-Aviv, Hong-Kong, often in cooperation with the Goethe-Institutes. He live and work as an artist in Heme and Amsterdam.