# NO 5, 2018 THE PNEK FILES: TRANSITIONS





The PNEK Files (No 5): Transitions

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# THE PNEK FILES #5

### **About PNEK Files**

The PNEK FILEs are publication series published by PNEK - Production Network for Electronic Art Norway since 2015. In these three years we have launched four printed issues each focusing on various topics within the PNEK network. The aim of The PNEK FILEs from the very beginning has been to represent the PNEK nodes through visual documentation of their main activities- exhibitions, festivals, seminars and workshops. Through the printed and online publication series, we present the electronic art field to a broader public as well give an overview of available facilities and other opportunities within the network.

### **PNEK Files - Transitions**

The PNEK Files #5 "Transitions" focuses on the fluctuations and changes that are a crucial element of every active art institution and of course, the art field itself. Therefore this issue also marks a shift in the format and content of the PNEK FILES.

We see need for a more in-depth material and overview of the activities within the PNEK network and the field we are part of. Therefore from the fifth issue on, the visual documentation will be extended with critical reflections and thorough discussions about the state of the art and technology field in Norway. This will come through the interviews by the artists and art experts connected to PNEK activities.

The years 2017 - 2018 have been dynamic for PNEK. After nine years of remaining in almost the same formation of 11 nodes, the year 2017 brought in new actors: Oslo based Vandaler Forening and Noemata as well as Stavanger's Art Republicwhose activities were already shown in the previous issue of the PNEK FILEs. Meanwhile the art organizations: Atopia Kunsthall, Grenland Kunsthall, Utsikten Kunstsenter and Noemata are no longer part of the network.

There also has been other transformations such as several leadership changes in the network, and therefore a possible new directions to be set for the coming years. Atelier Nord since August has a new director - Ida Lykken Ghosh who has previously worked in several art organizations in Norway including PNEK, VKA, LIAF, Fotogalleriet and OCA. Gosh has replaced the former director Ivar Smedstad, who was the artistic leader from 2012 - 2018. In the issue #5 you will find an interview with Ghosh who talks about the future plans under her leadership to be set for the next year and beyond. You can also read more about the Atelier Nord's new Editing Suite, that invites artists to apply through an open call to use the profesional production space and the available equipment with a focus on moving images, sound and net projects.

As part of this issue we also talked to the Norwegian artist Daniel Slåttnes who had an exhibition at the ANX gallery during the spring of 2018. In Vegetal Connections, Slåttnes explores the concepts of inter-species communications - more specifically, how can technology transform our communication with household plants.

Notam is another node that is in a constant state of change and always a place to meet artists working with new sound productions. We talked to Christian Blom who has been Notam's director since 2017 to find out more about the new sound studio to be added to Notams facilities.

We finish the issue with a look into the future through the Summer Sessions Network initiated by V2\_ Lab for Unstable Media in Rotterdam.

PNEK has been a partner of Summer Sessions for six years, sending Norway based artists to V2\_ to develop new productions. And for the first time PNEK took one step further and did an exchange hosting an artist selected by V2\_ to spend time here in Norway in order to develop her work.

This year's PNEK selection was an Oslo based artist and digital futurist Boris Kourtoukov, who had a chance to spend the summer at V2\_. In this issue we talk to both artists about their experiences in the Summer Sessions program and to find out more about how talent development programs can help new artists produce their works in a critical environment.

Enjoy the issue.

## ATELIER NORD Ida Lykken Ghosh

## This is a conversation between Zane Cerpina (PNEK) and Ida Lykken Ghosh that took place at Atelier Nord's office space in August 2018.

**Zane Cerpina (ZC):** How would you describe Atelier Nord's history? Since quite early Atelier Nord has had a focus on video art. How has it changed with time?

Ida Lykken Ghosh (IG): The institution has a rather interesting and eclectic history. Atelier Nord started out as a graphic arts workshop in the 60s, modelled on Atelier 17 in Paris, where Anne Breivik, Atelier Nords funder spent time. This is also where it takes its name from. The shift towards video and more media-based art came in 1993 when Atelier Nord was divided into three units; a graphic arts unit, a computer unit and a video art workshop with an animation unit. This was of course a time when equipment was bulky and very expensive, so the need for a space to work and rent or use equipment was vital for most artists working in this field. According to Anne Breiviks philosophy, the idea of exploring and challenging new electronic technologies and media, as they were developing, became the new fundament for Atelier Nord as a workshop. The focus on video art came with Kristin Bergaust who was appointed as the new Director in 1997. In this period Atelier Nord went through considerable changes. The graphic arts department was closed down and electronic art became the main focus. PNEK was created with Atelier Nord as the administrative base and Bergaust as Director of the interim board. During Kristin Bergausts four years Atelier



### **IDA LYKKEN GHOSH**

Ida Lykken Ghosh has studied photography at London College of Communication. She has since worked as a producer, artistic consultant and administrator for several institutions and galleries in Oslo, as Head of Internal Relations at OCA – Office for Contemporary Art Norway, as Manager of Gallery MGM and Fotogalleriet. She produced LIAF 2011 and was curator and art consultant for DNB Bank. She was also central to developing The Norwegian Video Art Archive, a pilot project initiated by the Norwegian Art Council.

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Nord had a central role in the establishment of Norwegian video art. Under the leadership of Atle Barclay and Lars Gustav Midtbø video art was not a main focus, the organisation was more focused on international collaborations, critical art theory and discussion. Ivar Smedstad secured the gallery space at Grünerløkka where we are currently located and with that opened up a new platform for screening and showing video art installations that I will continue to develop.

## **ZC:** How has / will the closing of KNYT influence artists working with the mediums of art and technology?

**IG:** The closing of KNYT will affect the artists and institutions in the sense that there is no other alternative source or funding body to cater for this specific field. I believe there are a lot of artists and projects that can easily fall between two chairs, and specifically those who work in the multi-disciplinary field who will be affected by the closing down of the program. I don't know the background or motivation for closing down KNYT but there may be some questions attached - do we need specific funding for media-based art? Or should this be absorbed by the funding structure of the contemporary art scene in general? If so, the field needs to be recognized on the same premises as contemporary art and the expertise needs to be involved in the committees and funding boards. It seems to me that the Norwegian funding bodies are now seeking advice and expertise within the organizations that have the needed knowledge. A lot can be solved with conversations, sharing of knowledge and experience and we need to take that as a starting point.

I believe that the there is room for the art and technology field within the contemporary art scene without having to source it out as a separate unit. Many contemporary art institutions show work that would be labelled art and technology or media art and I think these borders are becoming somewhat artificial. I do not think the media art field gains from being separate, on the contrary. The notion in the art scene in general is that the media art field is very narrow and "for people in the knowing" with very internal references and codes.

# **ZC:** As the new leader of Atelier Nord, and considering your background, how do you see Atelier Nord moving further? What should Atelier Nord be from now on?

**IG:** My background is from the more general contemporary art scene. Before working on developing the Video Art Archive with Per Platou I worked for institutions such as OCA, LIAF, Gallery MGM and Fotogalleriet – were my interest in video art probably started. Coming from outside the media art field gives me the advantage of knowing what it looks like from outside, and I have to say it looks rather narrow and excluding, and in many ways hard to penetrate.

My aim is to open up Atelier Nord to a broader audience in all senses. As I see it there is no contradiction between a closer connection between contemporary art and the more experimental and narrow projects within media art. For example I believe that a lot of projects and exhibitions that have been undertaken by Atelier Nord the past years would have been of relevance to a much wider and more diverse audience, but they didn't know, and simply assumed that it was not relevant for them. We need to make people aware of this and change people's mind-set and prejudice that all media art is difficult, weird and inaccessible. There are boundaries that need to be broken down and this is not done overnight. We need to identify ways of slowly turning this around while at the same time making our self more visible and relevant.

My fields of interest include sound art, and maybe specifically the intersection between music and sound art as well as video art and installations. We have a responsibility of showing pioneers in the field, and I will focus here on bringing forward more of the female pioneers, often overlooked in their time. I think it is specifically important for the younger generations to be aware of the history of media art in a time were imitating the analogue and manufacturing glitches and other types of hiccups is present in a contemporary art practice. I will also re-activate the initiative of more hands-on workshops that used to be a bigger part of Atelier Nords activity.

We are in the process of redefining what the organisation should be and where we are heading, this is something we are undertaking in collaboration with our board. This will develop and become more visual over time.

# **ZC:** It seems that it has become challenging for many art institutions to attract new audiences, especially younger generation. How to approach young people?

**IG:** You are quite right, it is challenging, and with Oslo being such an active capital in terms of activities in the art field we need to be more proactive. There is potentially something to miss out on on a daily basis and I think it is wonderful that we have such a diverse and vibrant scene.

We will be undertaking a full evaluation of our strategies, methods and ways of targeting an audience this fall/winter. One of my main goals is to strengthen our visibility through various actions. This will include a new visual profile as well as simple tasks such as just getting a painted sign on our building. We have a prime location and literally need to be more visible.

We have a good core audience and we are slowly attracting more people from the more general art scene, but also recruiting from other environments such as theatre, music and film. I would like to see this happen more. I believe that crossbreeding across the different fields can be very fruitful and productive and bring different perspectives to the table. Two projects that we have implemented over the last year or so that I think has made us a bit more visible to the younger audience is the access to the editing suite and the establishment of our annual Open Call for exhibition proposals.

#### **ZC:** The Editing Suite?

**IG:** The editing suite is now one year in the running we can conclude there certainly is a need for this kind of space. The space is based on a super simple application form where the applicants can use the space for 1 - 2weeks for editing video and or sound material. We are a small organization and do not have recourses to give hands-on support, but that has not really been a problem as most of our users are pretty much self-sufficient. We have funding from the municipality in terms of low rent and the Arts Council granted us funding to equip the space with state-of-the-art equipment, so for us this is a low maintenance project we are very happy to offer the art community. This year we have had 26 artists from different backgrounds and with different needs using the space, and the applications have been more than double of what we can fit in. This shows us that there is a great need for these project-based spaces and it feels like a privilege to be able to offer this free of charge to artists. I really believe in the idea of sharing our recourses and recognize that there is a need for it. This is a supplement to other spaces like NOTAM and Fellesverkstedet, a multi-disciplinary workshop that is relocating and will be opening just up the street towards the end of the year. I think is a great and ambitious project, and welcome more of this shared community way of thinking. The need for a place to work is not only about the equipment and facilities but also about being part of a creative environment and meeting people. We have had only positive feedback from the users and this autumn / winter I am also happy that we have been able to offer it to artists working specifically with new works for upcoming shows in our galley space.

## **ZC:** Can you tell me about the Atelier Nord's Open Call? How long has it been running?

**IG:** We started the open call two years ago, as a pilot project. We received between 60 - 70 application in the first round. There is certainly a need for this kind of opportunities, for younger, unestablished artists and for those who don't necessarily fit in to other establishments. There is also a need to cater for the more experimental part of the art scene.

Interestingly, both editions so far have turned into group shows. In the first round there were three artists applying together, fresh out of the academy. This year Daniel Slåttnes exhibited "Vegetal Connections". He invited a group of other artists to participate, and the exhibition became this organic creature that was just growing downstairs. Quite literally, as there were plants involved. In both exhibitions we left the program quite up to the artists, just giving some advice and practical and technical help. As a result, the artists in both cases took over the gallery completely, and that is a kind of interaction I would like to encourage.

#### **ZC:** Who is applying?

**IG:** I would say that most of the applications come from younger artists, quite a few of them are straight out of the academy. And then there are the more mature ones who are maybe somehow forgotten or looking for a more experimental space to show their work. We do not get so many applications from mid-career artists, because they have other places to showcase their work. It is an interesting way to look for new talent and we intend to continue the Open Call as long as we feel there is a need for it.

# **ZC:** Atelier Nord has historically been an important meeting place for artists to gather and socialize. How would you describe its role in the artistic community now?

**IG:** In earlier days Atelier Nord was a meeting point in its capacity of being a place with workshops, available equipment and people sharing knowledge, maybe in a more educational way. I would say there is plenty of room for improvement in todays situation. We have our gallery space on the ground floor, the editing suite on the 1st and a beautiful, large office space on the 2nd facing an open park in a very central and vibrating part of Oslo. The rest of the house is artist-studios and PNEK have their office here. Traditionally Atelier Nord has had a more nomadic existence and the fact that we have a gallery space now has changed the focus of the organization. The gallery space has its challenges as it is not built for the purpose; it has a long and interesting history from being a room for prayer, a shelter for woman, a youth hostel and a propaganda office for the Nazis during the ww2. I believe we have a responsibility to bring people in and utilize the space in the best way we can, this also includes the other users of the house. We do not have any kitchen or communal space, so I am aiming to open up our office space every now and again for socializing and I would also like to utilize the backyard more in the time of the year when it is not to cold. We need to have a good relationship with the rest of the house, as the galley space is open through from the ground floor to the 1st, which obviously is challenging, especially when dealing with sound art installations.

#### **ZC:** Talking about opening up - are the doors to the office space more open?

**IG:** I Hope so and think so. We want to be an open and including space, and our doors are open for anyone who wants to come by and discuss ideas or just have a coffee. I am also considering opening up the office space for smaller exhibition projects.

#### **ZC:** What to expect from Atelier Nords program in 2019?

**IG:** We will continue to work in the field of media-based art, maybe with a more open approach as mentioned earlier. For 2019 we are planning sound installations, video screenings, talks and concerts. We will focus mainly on programming in our gallery space but we will also do collaborations off site, for example with the new artist residency space in Lofoten, Nyksund Kooperativet.

One exhibition I would like to highlight will be the German sound art pioneer Christina Kubich. Kubich works with electro acoustic noise-fields amongst other medias and was overwhelmed by the amount of this noise that is generated in Oslo due to our digital habits. She has done research in a large number of cities in Europe and elsewhere and says that Oslo is rather unique in this sense. Turning 70 this year she is such a vital, inspiring and curious artist. Trained also in classical music and electric engineering besides her art academy background, she utilizes all of this knowledge in her unique blend. This will be a collaboration with The Ultima festival whom we have been working with for the last 10 years. A fruitful collaboration that brings together several parts of the art scene.

We will also be doing a solo show with Pearla Pigao, a young artist who graduated from KHiO in 2017. Her work for the graduation show caught my attention and I have been in dialogue with her since then. She builds interactive sound installations through weaving with copper threads, and draws inspiration from the likes of Beryl Korot, a ground-breaking figure in the video art scene since the 1970's. She uses a binary numeral system when translating sound to weaving: under the tread and over the tread correspond to zeroes and ones. Inspired by the Theremin she weaves large surfaces in which the audience become the composers by their interaction with the surface and movement in the room. I am curious to see how she will develop this further in our space. There are similarities between Pigao and Kubich as they both initially come from a music background and have moved into the visual arts scene via a deep interest in technology, and I like how generations far apart seek the same sources and ideas for inspiration.

ZC: Thank you, Ida!

## VEGETAL CONNECTIONS DANIEL SLÅTTNES

## This is a conversation between Zane Cerpina (PNEK) and Daniel Slåttnes that took place in August 2018.

**Zane Cerpina (ZC):** Can you tell me about the Vegetal Connections project and the concept behind it?

**Daniel Slåttnes (DS):** I started to work with a houseplant in 2015. I wanted to get impulses from it and try to make sculptures together with the plant. At the same time, I was playing around with EEG. I was recording the activity of my brain. I think I started to do that because I wanted to progress in my meditation practice. But then I thought I could translate the signals into sound. I could listen to them and I could let the plant listen to my signals. It was logical to pick up the plant signals and listen to them too. That was a way to talk to each other without trying to talk. Because that's very difficult. What to say to a plant? A plant can't understand me anyway.

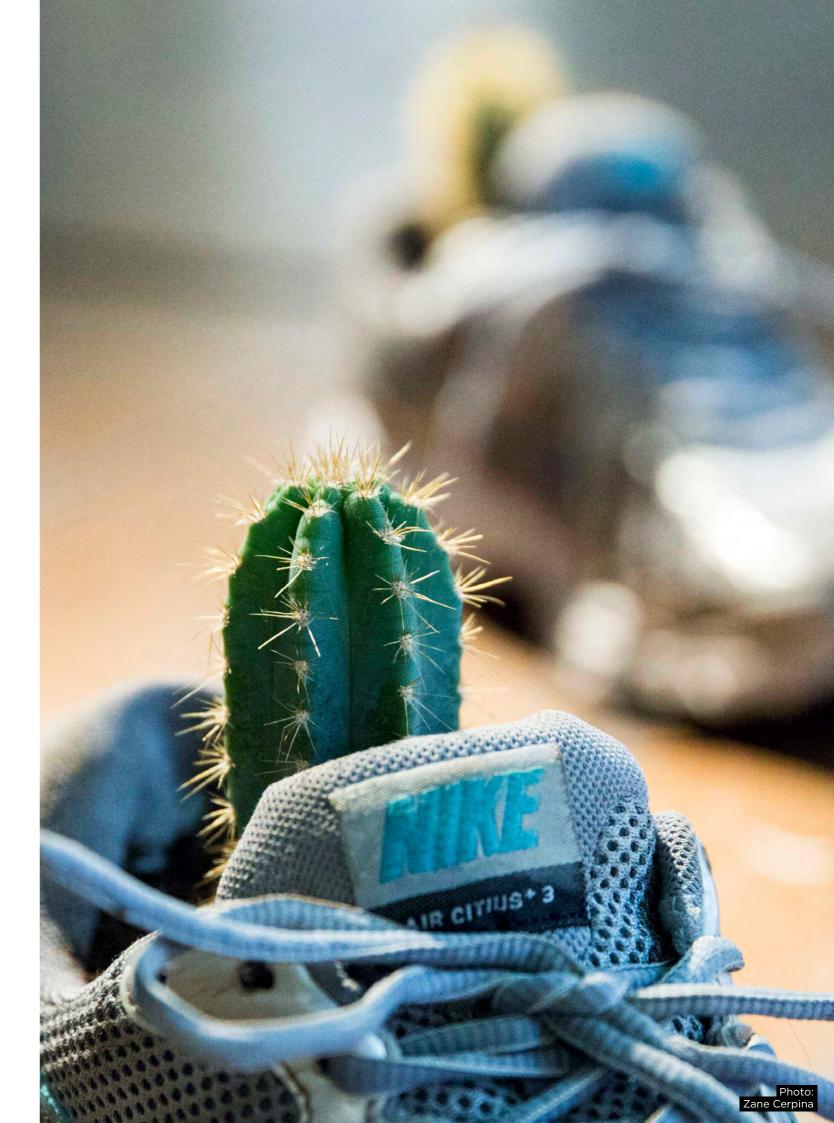
I wanted to get impressions from the houseplant but also impose my experiences of being alive on the plant. In a way you always do that but you never really escape from being a human. Then I started to look into signal processing and into what signals were. There are so many research papers and information freely available on the internet. I got interested in plant electrophysiology and the way to use signals for the plant to move in space. I built a robotic prosthesis for the plant. It was another way to help me talk with, or to communicate with, the plant. We are living in this timescale and the plant is living in a different, slower timescale. I have been working with a researcher, who is looking into how to use robotic prosthesis for humans by using machine learning to categorize and make sense of the nerve signals. Machine learning tries to make sense of the signals so that they can be used

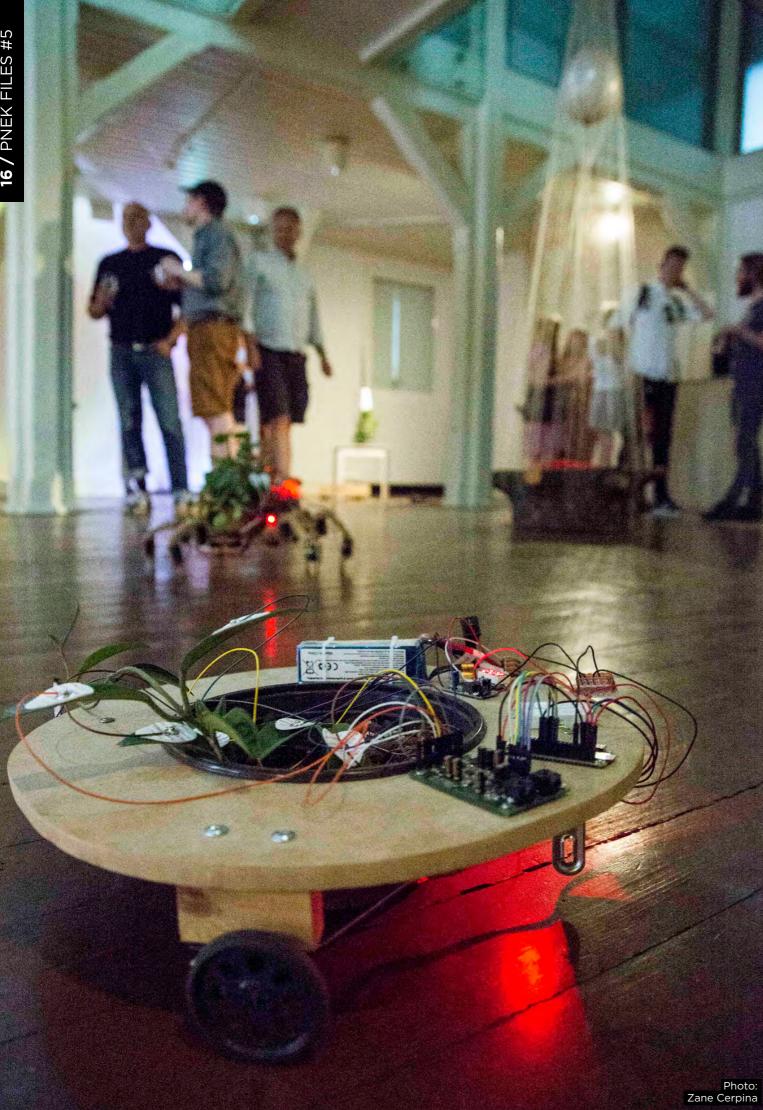


## **DANIEL SLÅTTNES**

Daniel Slåttnes works with performative sculptures to explore boundaries between the artistic input and the materials he works with. Slåttnes is currently working on a series of sculptures in collaboration with a houseplant.

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for motor actuation. The researcher said it wasn't much different than trying to make sense of the plant signals in that way. So that's where I am now with the project.

#### **ZC:** At the exhibition at ANX there were several artists participating. How did you organize the show?

**DS:** I invited other artists that I felt were touching upon the same ideas and had similar interesting investigations. For example, I was showing some of the sculptures that I did with the plant at the Autumn Exhibition - Høstutstillingen, last year. A professor from the Art Academy in Bergen tipped me about Renate Synnes Handal who is also working with plant consciousness.

There is also Sara Rönnbäck and Inger-Reidun Olsen in the show. And Robert Printa and Emil Jessen are working with respectively sound and video signals. I worked with them using the plant signals in an aural and in visual way. Inger-Reidun is a choreographer and an artist. She has this curatorial project called Concerning the Spiritual in Art, where she invited me and Sara to do a book. A book presentation of our collaboration - Conversation Between Bodies. And so we did a book in collaboration with some trees and some rabbits. I asked Inger-Reidun if she would be interested in doing choreography with the plant. So that's how I brought her into the project.

#### **ZC:** Can you tell us more about the Conversation Between Bodies project in collaboration with Sara?

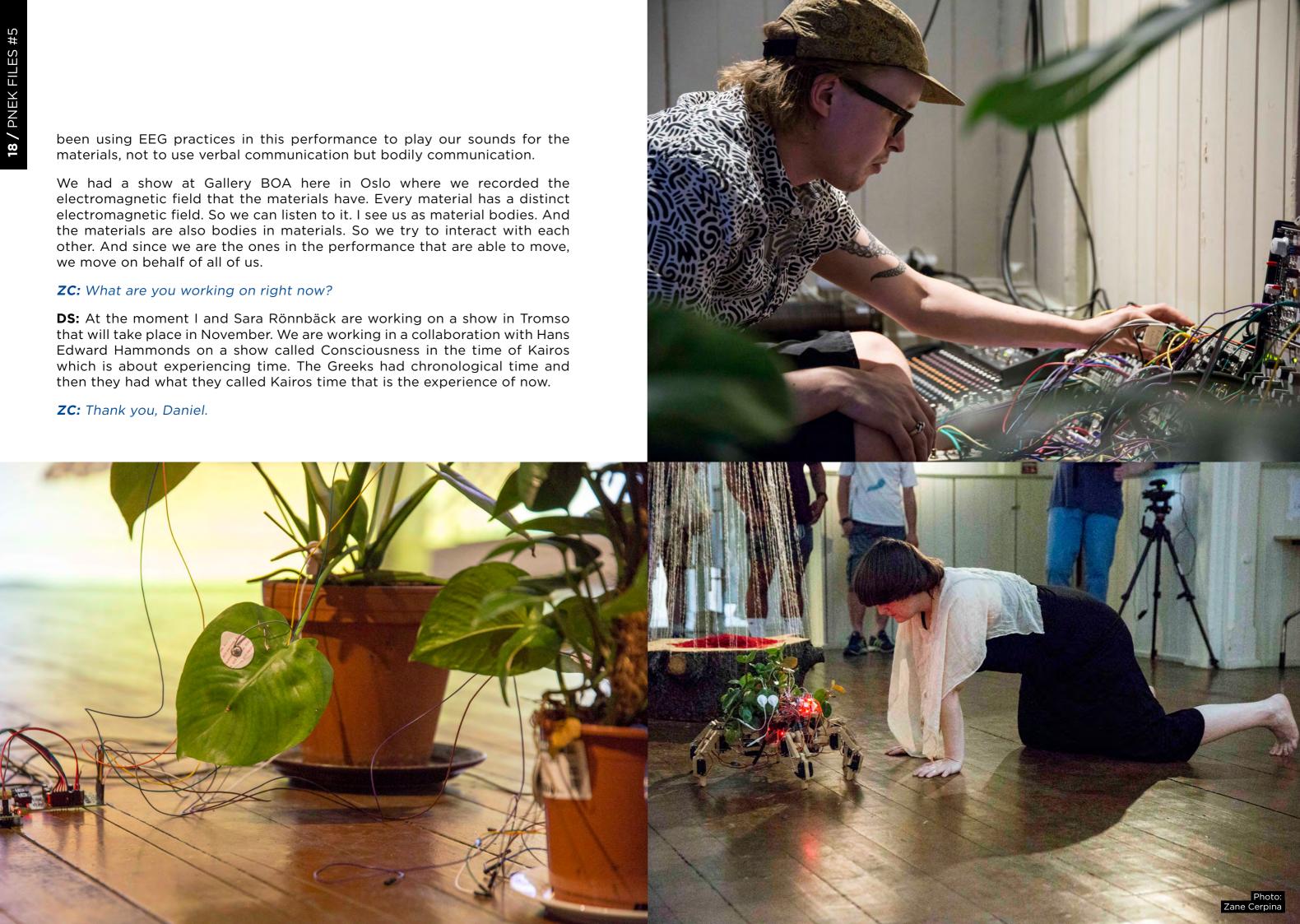
**DS:** We have been working on the Conversation Between Bodies since 2015. I think it was the 10th iteration we did at the Kunstmuseet in Nord-Trøndelag this year. We were talking earlier today about that some people tend to say that the performance looks shamanistic, like if a witch and a mad scientist have come together.

In the project we are working with the materials that we have found around us. And when working on the project we try to let the materials speak and try to listen to what the materials want in a way. We try to do that with each other too in the collaboration. It is difficult to try to see from others perspective not from yourself. It is kind of impossible. As it is difficult to try to talk with a plant or let the piece of a wood tell you something. I find it interesting to insist on seeing the others' point of view.

#### **ZC:** How would you describe the performance itself?

DS: So we try to push this idea of communicating with the materials in different ways, to manifest them as bodies.

We try to interact with the materials and work with them sculpturally. One way is to interact with them as we did in this performance. But I have also



## ELECTRIC RAIN Asbjørn Blokkum Flø

#### This is a conversation between Zane Cerpina (PNEK) and Asbjørn Blokkum Flø that took place at Atelier Nord's gallery ANX in August 2018.

#### Zane Cerpina (ZC): Could you tell us about your background?

**Asbjørn Blokkum Flø (AF):** I began taking piano lessons when I was a kid, around 6-7 years old, and then started a band with my friends when I was around 11 years old. Later on I gradually changed from just playing classical music and playing in a band to exploring the limits of music and sound. In high school I got into experimental music, and when I moved to Oslo I started experimenting with computer programming and electronics. The first installation I worked on was *The Leap*, a collaborate piece made together with Ståle Stenslie, Karl Anders Øygard, Knut Mork Skagen and Lars Nilsson. It was exhibited at Kunsternes Hus in Oslo in 1999 and I've been working on sound installations ever since.

## **ZC:** Could you describe your work Electric Rain, that is displayed here, at Atelier Nord ANX?

**AF:** I have been fascinated by the concept of sound as mass and particles in space for a very long time. I was exposed early on to the Greek-French composer lannis Xenakis who in the 1950s developed very original theories and music based on the idea of sound as mass. He made both electronic works and installations, although most of his music is acoustic.

In 2004 I worked on an installation called *Soundtracks* together with Norwegian sound and installation artist Trond Lossius. The installation had a grid of speakers placed on the floor, and during the process of creating the installation we gave different working titles to various parts of that piece. One of the working titles for one of the parts was "Digital Rain", describing masses of sound particles moving through space. That work is another potential source of inspiration for *Electric Rain*.



### ASBJØRN BLOKKUM FLØ

Asbjørn Blokkum Flø is a Norwegian composer, musician and sound artist. He studied composition at the Norwegian Academy of Music in Oslo and works with sound installations, electronic music and acoustic music.

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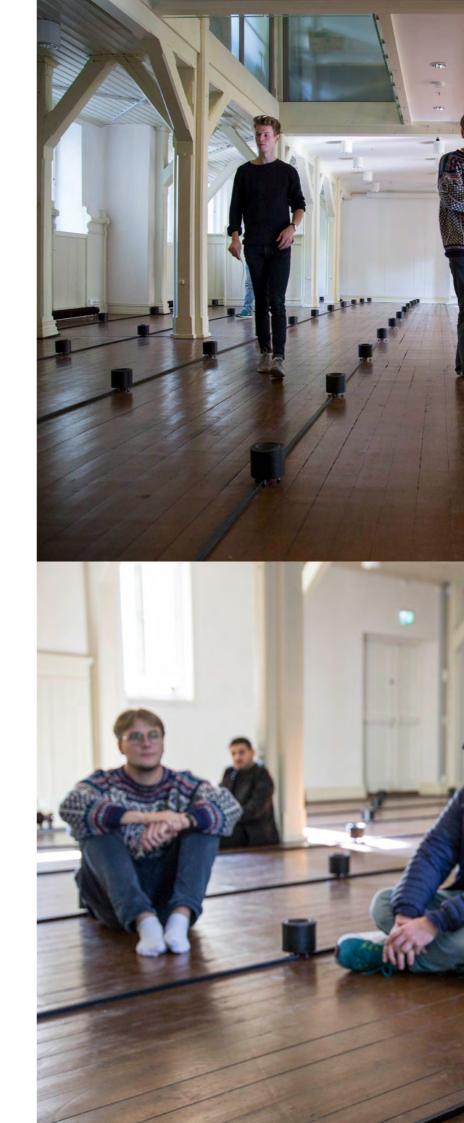


Photo: Zane Cerpina



Another starting point is the actual sound of rain as a found sound object. It has all the qualities and properties of what Xenakis was working on throughout his entire life, such as various distributions of sound and how it moves and continuously evolves. On one hand you have a natural element that is the sound of rain, and on the other hand you have the compositional idea of sound as mass and sound as particles. I wanted to combine these two elements.

Then there is the question of the sound of rain as a metaphor. You can find the sound of rain throughout all of cultural history - in literature, art, music and in sound design for film. In popular culture the sound of rain is very often connected to traditional expressions of romance and melancholy. The history of experimental electronic music is also full of rain sounds, such as the piece Dripsody (1955) by the Canadian composer Hugh Le Caine. Finally we have rain as a result of climatic processes. The sound of rain is influenced by the climate and I think it is impossible to work with something like this or experience the installation without thinking about the climate.

I didn't really want force the listener into any particular reading of the work. The entire cultural history of rain is obviously there, but I wanted to leave the interpretation to the listener. Throughout the exhibition, different listeners have given me very different descriptions of what they've been experiencing.

#### **ZC:** Is it a site-specific work?

**AF:** Yes. Atelier Nord ANX is an old house of prayer and it has a lot of visual and acoustic properties. I've built a 3D computer model of the space to try out all kinds of different variations of placement of sound sources using walls, ceilings and floors as well as organizing the loudspeakers in three-dimensional shapes. I ended up with a very minimal placement of the speakers on the floor in a grid because I wanted to open up the space both visually and acoustically. The installation consists of 96 objects and that could have easily made the space very crowded, which was something I wanted to avoid.

#### **ZC:** Did you make all the speakers yourself?

**AF:** Yes. All the speakers and electronics are made with a specific purpose in mind. By minimizing the size and visual impact of the speakers I was able to make them draw as little attention as possible to themselves, instead turning the attention towards the architecture and the acoustics of the space itself. The other thing is that the speakers have some special acoustic properties. They are coaxial loudspeakers, which means they can radiate sound equally in all directions. It should feel natural to walk around them while listening and they should have no defined beginning or ending. No up, down, left or right.

#### **ZC:** How is the sound distributed in the space? And why so many speakers?

**AF:** The sound is distributed through 96 individually controlled loudspeakers. The high number of speakers is to ensure that wherever you are in the space there will always be a group of loudspeakers close to you. In this way you can shape the space and move the sound, and wherever you are there will always be close sound sources. The installation is also tuned to the acoustic properties of the space. Various parts of the space have different qualities. For instance where we sit right now in the middle of the space there is a very hard, reflective ceiling. Depending on the source material, you will sometimes get the impression of the sound coming from the ceiling, although the ceiling is actually reflecting the sound from the loudspeakers pointing up towards the ceiling.

The space also reacts very differently to different types of material. I use field recordings of rain sounds as well as studio recordings of single drops of water from different materials such as wood, plastic, glass, metal, cardboard and textile. The third type of material is synthetic models of rain sounds based on analysis and synthesis of the acoustic and physical properties of rain sounds. The field recordings creates a diffuse sound field that fills up the space while still moving. This has to do with the relationship between the loudspeakers and the acoustic properties of the space. The small single drops of sound particles on the other hand are very directional.

## **ZC:** The sound art field in Norway is quite strong. Why do you think it developed like that?

**AF:** It is a relatively new field in Norway. Internationally it started 100 years ago, but the term "sound art" as it is used today was not in use before the early 1980s. In Norway this field started in the 1960s with composers and visual artists such as Arne Nordheim, Kåre Kolberg, Sigurd Berge, Marius Heyerdahl, Rolf Aamot and Paul Brand. There was also a lot happening at the Henie Onstad Art Center combining music, art, dance and theatre starting in the late 1960s, and a number of works were created for that space. Furthermore there were several Norwegian artists that worked with sound art both conceptually and in other ways in the 1980s and 1990s. In the 2000s a new wave of young artists and art students started to work with sound art, and galleries exhibiting sound art such as Galleri Rekord in Oslo and Lydgalleriet in Bergen opened during this period. All of this evolved into the field of sound art in Norway as it is today.

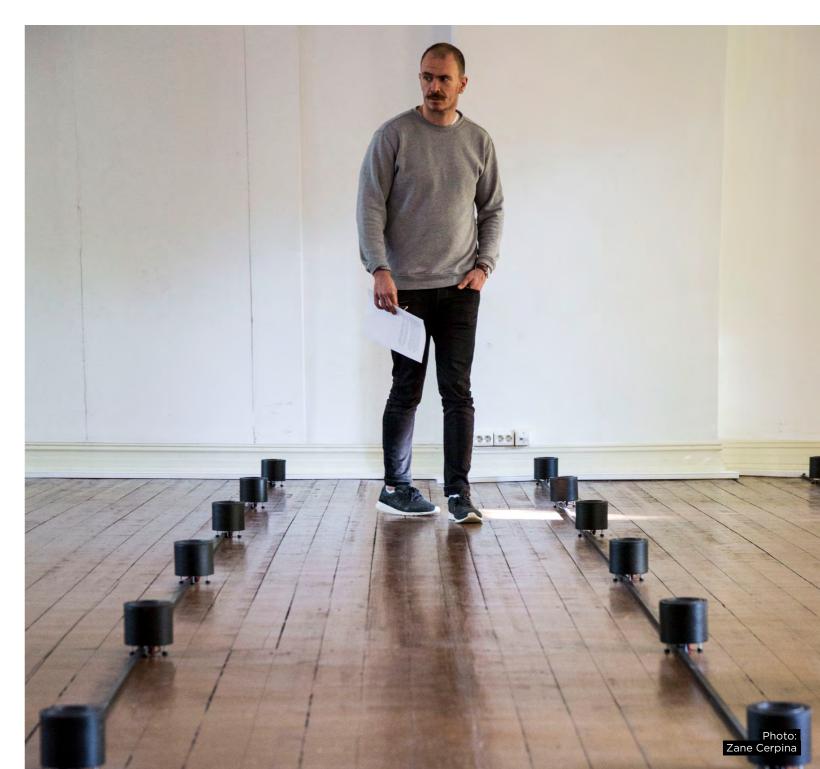
## **ZC:** How would you describe the status of the sound art field in Norway right now?

**AF:** There seem to be an increase in activity. For example, there is the Lofoten Sound Art Symposium taking place this year. Also Norwegian sound artists such as Jana Winderen and Camille Norment have been exhibiting at the Museum of Modern Art in New York as well as representing Norway at the Venice Biennale. This could be seen as a sign that Norwegian sound art is moving into the mainstream of contemporary art. But these trends also seem to come and go in waves. Sound art has somewhat of an outsider position, outside of both music and visual art. This makes sound art difficult to understand for traditional institutions, a similar position to that which photography used to have.

#### **ZC:** Any new projects that you are working on?

**AF:** I have several new works in the making. One is for the sound art gallery Lydgalleriet in Bergen, focusing on the materiality of sound. Materiality has been a central topic in visual arts for a long time, but not so much in sound. I want to investigate the materiality of sound and look deeper into the materials used in the production of sound. Even something as virtual and abstract as sound coming from a loudspeaker starts with a material object with very specific historical and material properties.

#### ZC: Thank you, Asbjørn.



## TRANSITIONS AT NOTAM CHRISTIAN BLOM

This is a conversation between Zane Cerpina (PNEK) and Christian Blom, the director of Notam - the center for the development and innovative use of technology in music and the arts. The conversation took place in October 2018 at Notams studio.

**Zane Cerpina (ZC):** You have been the director of Notam since autumn 2017. How is it to take care of such a busy institution?

**Christian Blom (CB):** It is very interesting in the sense that we have two to three projects going through the premises on a daily basis. I am fortunate that I can stick my head in the studio and experience new things very often and meet a lot of great people every day.

## **ZC:** Now that you have settled in the position, what's on your agenda next, in terms strategic planning?

**CB:** I started with strategic work almost straight away when I got the position. I believe that Notam should be the place for cross-disciplinarity, art and technology. Notam has always been based around sonic practices and it comes out of the electroacoustic music scene from 1993. But we see that the personal computers and microcontrollers have revolutionized the field and that people who work with art and technology very often move seamlessly between visuals, kinetic arts, robotics and sound. Very few adhere just to one specific practice. I am working to reflect this in Notams practice and structure.

## **ZC:** You are also planning to open a new studio in the current premises. Can you tell more about that?

**CB:** We have three sound studios now. We will turn Studio 2 into a studio for digital visual arts. It's purpose will be video and virtual reality systems.



### **CHRISTIAN BLOM**

Christian Blom is the director of Notam - The center for development and innovative use of technology in music and the arts.

NOTAM02.NO

## **ZC:** It is getting easier to edit sound and video on a laptop and even a smartphone. What can artists gain from working in an art and technology lab nowadays?

**CB:** Notams offers technical facilities and a competent staff of engineers, developers and artists. We assist in the development of projects that go beyond what artists can do for themselves.

#### **ZC:** Can you give some examples of activities taking place at Notam?

**CB:** On 17th of November we are having the Norwegian Analog Synth Meeting, which is more than 100 people coming through the doors with their analog sets. This afternoon, the 16th of November we have artist presentations by Sophie Jurrjens and Boris Kourtoukov that participated in the Summer Sessions residency through PNEK.

We have had Njål Sparbo in the studio this week and on Monday Niklas Adam released his CD. Stine Janvin Motland and Cara Tolmie has been in the studio this week and Vin Jaran and Ewa Jacobsson will be here next week. We also have Elvic Congolo using the space right now. He runs a music brewery at Tøyen in Oslo which is an initiative for immigrants who need a gateway to music and media. He uses our studios to make business cards for musicians - small recordings for the immigrants so that they can go to the festival and say, "This is me, this is what I sound like."

We also have advanced courses in selected topics together with BEK in Bergen. We fly in international developers, the actual developers of the software to give a class that last for a full week. The Winter Solstice by Vandaler Forening is coming up on the 15th of December, and before that we had workshops all week with Ann Rosén from Sweden.

## **ZC:** You also have a residency program at Notam. How is it structured and funded?

**CB:** We have several residencies at Notam. Some of them are funded by the Nordic Cultural Council Kulturkontakt Nord, these are up to two months long. In other instances, single artists get in touch to come and work in our studios over a period of time. This international network is important to us.

#### **ZC:** Is the call open only for artists from Nordic countries?

**CB:** Nordic and Baltic. Julia Giertz was here in June. Christian Skjødt was here in August and he is coming again in February for the second month. Zurine Fernandez Guerenabarrena, for example, got in touch with us this spring, and asked if it is possible to come and work in the studio in 2019. Also Hilde Marie Olsen has planned ahead to work on a new piece in the studio.

## **ZC:** You have also started the Female Artist Meetups here at Notam. Where did this idea come from and how are the meetups organized?

**CB:** I talked to Julia Giertz about the imbalance between the genders in music and technology field. She said that at EMS - The centre for Swedish electroacoustic

music and sound-art, they had the same issues and what they had done was just to leave the premises and give all the studios to anyone but CIS men for a full evening. And I thought that is a very good idea. Because it would be wrong if I were to make a night for the women, then we would be sort of starting on the wrong foot with me mansplaining the premises. Luckily Hilde Holsen and Gyrid Nordal Kaldestad took the job. Today is the second meetup and we are working towards a plan for the spring of 2019.

## **ZC:** Do you also have a particular focus on the younger generation of artists, still working on their education?

**CB:** Last year I was at the KHiO - The Oslo National Academy of the Arts and NMH - The Norwegian Academy of Music, to talk to the students during the day of Information. NMH will be bringing a class here in January. I am hoping to do the same with KHiO, and of course other schools that are relevant. To go to them and present is not enough, especially in the middle of a big program. Then it doesn't have the same impact, and they still don't know where we are. Next time they come to Notam we will have more of to offer for art students. We are also going to expand our mechanics and electronics workshop and move it into a separate room.

#### **ZC:** Which are the most exciting things from the Notam's program in 2019?

**CB:** We are working with Ultima festival in Oslo to make an annual arrangement which we probably will call Kringlyddagane - The Immersive Audio Days. We have quite a few pieces now that are being developed in our immersive audio studio, which is a 24-channel dome. However we want to wait with the performances until we can actually rig a proper dome somewhere in the city and do concerts, workshops, talks and demonstrations there. Other than that, this winter we are working with Christopher Nielsen on his flipper games, that should be fun!

## **ZC:** What do you think are the most important transitions or changes in the electronic art field right now?

**CB:** I was reading about a media philosopher Friedrich Kittler who talks about a universal alphabet - the binary code. Kittler explains that in ancient Greece we had one universal alphabet - the Greek alphabet. We used it to write words with, do math and write music. So everything would come through this alphabet making it a mildly shaping force. Everything that goes through it has a mark of it.

And then the Hindu numerals came along around 700 AC, which is 1,2,3,4,5. And the music notation was developed along a separate strand.

So, this trinity was split, math went one way, music the other way, and words the stayed on the old path. And today, thanks to the binary code, we have a new universal alphabet in the sense that everything that goes through a computer goes through 1s and 0s at some point. Of course, we use layers and layers of symbols on top of it, but still there is this subtle shaping force in everything we

do when we use a computer.

To move between aesthetic media has become easier now, because the software tools are similar. It is more frequently challenging to talk about dance, theater, literature, sound and music and visual arts as separate categories. They are still there and they are very vivid, but the closer you get to technology the harder it is to keep these divisions. I am not saying we will stop drawing lines, categorizing and making disciplines. But I think we might see new ones within 10 to 20 years.

**ZC:** Thank you very much, Christian!

# V2\_ THE SUMMER SESSIONS

# TALENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM AT V2\_

Summer Sessions is a talent development program organized by the V2\_ Lab for Unstable Media in Rotterdam, Netherlands. Summer Sessions are short-term, international residencies offering young emerging artists the possibility of developing their work at one of the network's partner facilities.

PNEK has been one of the network partners since 2013 marking 2018 as the sixth year of participation and ongoing chance for artists based in Norway to apply through an open call.

In 2013 PNEK sent Norwegian artist Cecilia Jonsson, who developed The Iron Ring - a multidisciplinary art installation. The Iron Ring has since received several awards, including honorary mention at PRIX ARS in Hybrid Arts category. The following year artist Niklas Adam developed an electronic art installation Reverie. And in 2015 Oslo based Benjamin Nelson developed a sound installation/ sculpture Untitled. In 2016 Bergen based artist Siri Borge worked with research on the female body in medical science. In 2017 Magnus Bugge developed an audiovisual installation that pairs real-time-generated soundtracks with open webcam streams. In 2018 PNEK continued to take part in Summer Sessions, sending an Oslo based artist Boris Kourtoukov to develop his concept at V2\_. For the first time PNEK also did an exchange, and welcomed artist Sophie Jurjeens from Netherlands sent by V2\_.

In the following pages you will find interviews with both of the artists selected this year as part of PNEK partnership with V2\_. In November 2018 both artists showcased their work in Oslo during a PNEK artist presentations event in collaboration with Notam. In this issue you will also find an interview with Magnus Bugge about the work he developed in 2017.

#### SUMMERSESSIONS.NET



#### THE IRON RING PROJECT

The Iron Ring (2013) by Cecila Jonsson explores how contaminated mining grounds can benefit from the mining of metals for jewellery. 24kg of iron-contaminated grass are removed from polluted mining grounds and transformed into a ring of 2g metallic iron.

#### ceciliajonsson.com

#### REVERIE

Reverie (2014) is a work by Niklas Adam. Reverie is the condition of being lost in thought. Oneirism is absentminded dreaming or a dreamlike mental state experienced while awake.

#### niklasadam.oddodd.org

#### UNTITLED

Untitled (2015) is a sound installation/ sculpture by Benjamin Nelson uses a custom designed and built sculptural speaker system of 27 unique channels to create an environmental work.

#### sndpl.com

#### UNDISCOVERED TERRITORY

Undiscovered Territory (2016) is a work by Siri Borge. It has its starting point in a series of MRI-scans of the artist's genital area. They are presented as 49 different slides, both from the front to the back, and from the top to the bottom.

#### siriborge.com

## SOUNDTRACK FOR WEBCAMS MAGNUS BUGGE

This is a conversation between Zane Cerpina (PNEK) and Magnus Bugge, that took place in September 2018, in Oslo. PNEK talked to Bugge about his work Soundtrack for Webcams and how the project was developed as part of the Summer Sessions Network.

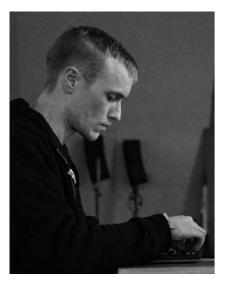
**Zane Cerpina (ZC):** You participated in the Summer Sessions residency at V2\_ in 2017. What was your motivation to apply for the program?

**Magnus Bugge (MB):** Actually, I had an idea for the work for about 18 months before I applied. When I saw the call I just thought, "This is good. I can do this piece." I just thought it was right for me so I didn't try to adapt the application. Which is what you sometimes have to do.

#### **ZC:** How was the production process?

**MB:** I think the residency format fit quite perfectly for me. At V2\_I had technical staff - Jan Misker, who helped me with the program parts that I could not do myself because I am not a web developer. Also other people at V2\_, really picked my piece apart. Every week. And that was maybe the part I needed the most help with. To go out of it and to view it critically myself.

But interestingly, no one during my stay there had anything to say about the sound in my piece Which for me is interesting, because it is a sound piece. We only talked about the concept and the screens and webcams.



### **MAGNUS BUGGE**

Magnus Bugge (NO) is a composer and artist working with sound and audio in a broad range of artistic contexts. Bugge experiments with sound in space and time, using analog and digital synthesis, tape music techniques, generative and algorithmic systems, experimental sequencing and sonification. He works solo with concerts, releases and exhibitions, in the duo Bilayer with Hilde Marie Holsen, in the stage art group Verdensteatret and in other collaborations.

MAGNUSBUGGE.COM



## **ZC:** Could you introduce our readers to the concept behind Soundtracks for Webcams?

**MB:** It is an installation or an audio-visual concert, it can be both, where there is a sound system and a screen. And on the screen there are four pictures that are sourced in real time from webcams, I don't know where they are geographically located.

#### **ZC:** How did you get the access to these webcams?

**MB:** They are just there. You can find them easily online. And there is a program that sometimes changes these four pictures, so you get different combinations.

#### **ZC:** Is it random?

**MB:** It is semi-random, which all random is. There can be static images such as a hotel reception and a beach and a parking garage at the same time. And then one of the pictures changes and you get a different combination. And these pictures are analyzed for color, and these colors, they are the score for the soundtrack which is generated automatically in real time. That is the piece in a nutshell.

#### **ZC:** What's your inspiration? Are you commenting on the topic of surveillance?

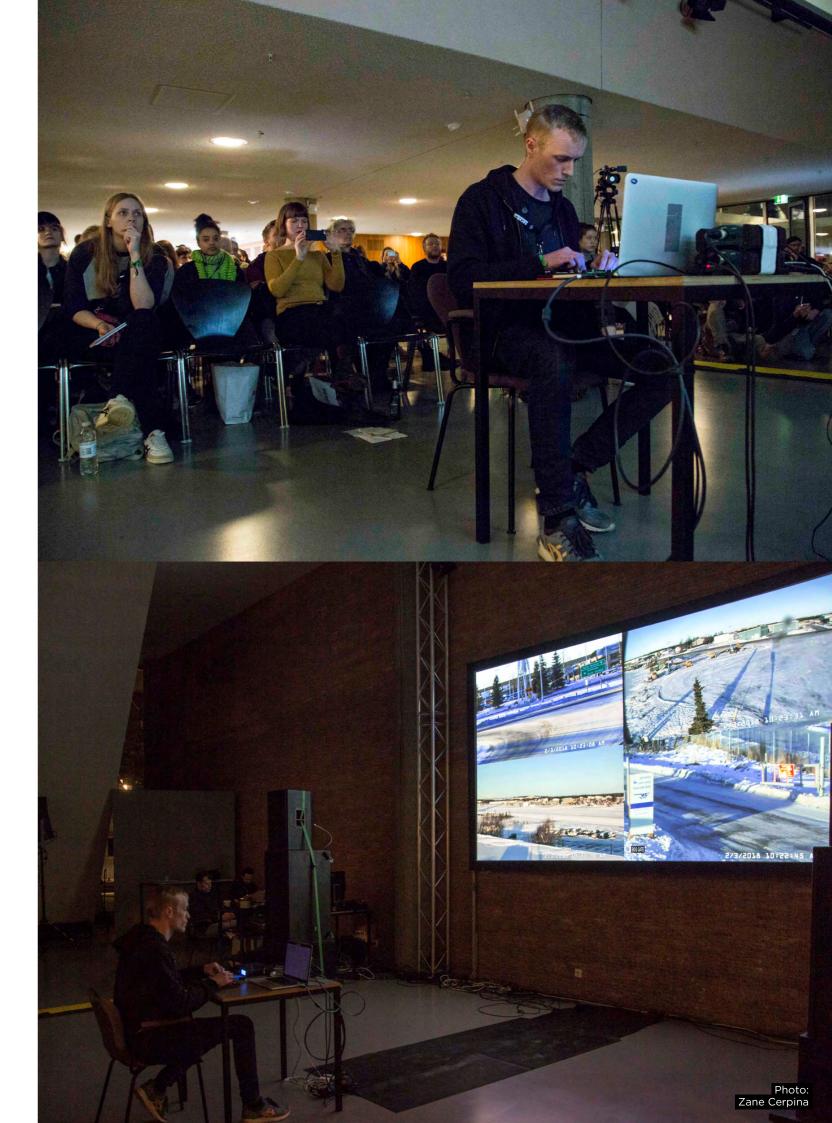
**MB:** It was January and I wanted to make a program that could translate video into sound in some way. I went outside to film but it was very cold. So I went inside and decided to find my material on the internet instead. I don't really know how I ended up looking at webcams that entire evening. I just stumbled upon them. I started looking at them and realized that it was great, just a nice thing to look at.

## **ZC:** It is something one usually doesn't think of as nice thing to look at. People rather see it directly as surveillance and as something negative.

**MB:** Yes, but to me they have a cinematic quality. One of my favorite things in the world are movies and film music. I tried to look at these camera streams as you would look at a movie with scenes, shots, life, stories, etc. Film music is an essential part of the cinematic experience, so it seemed naturally to combine the cameras with a soundtrack that would contribute to tell their stories.

## **ZC:** How much thought do you put into the surveillance aspect of the technology you work with for this piece?

**MB:** I don't think it is possible to make such a piece without thinking about it. At some point I realized I've been sitting for 50 minutes looking at a kindergarten or some people's living room or this office that looks like a mall or a pharmacy. You can't not think about surveillance when working with this piece. I didn't



use any hacking to find the webcams. Everything is just open. Some people broadcast their living rooms, and maybe we should think about cyber security. I think that in a sense these issues are communicated fairly automatically.

#### **ZC:** Did Summer Sessions led to other new projects for you?

**MB:** Absolutely. I joined another project at V2\_. It was a project by P L A T E A U R E S I D U E. They did a movie called Ex Topia that I did a soundtrack for. It is a documentary they made about a melting glacier. That project became very important for me and I am also working with them on a new project. And in 2018 I had my first solo show at Transmediale in Berlin.

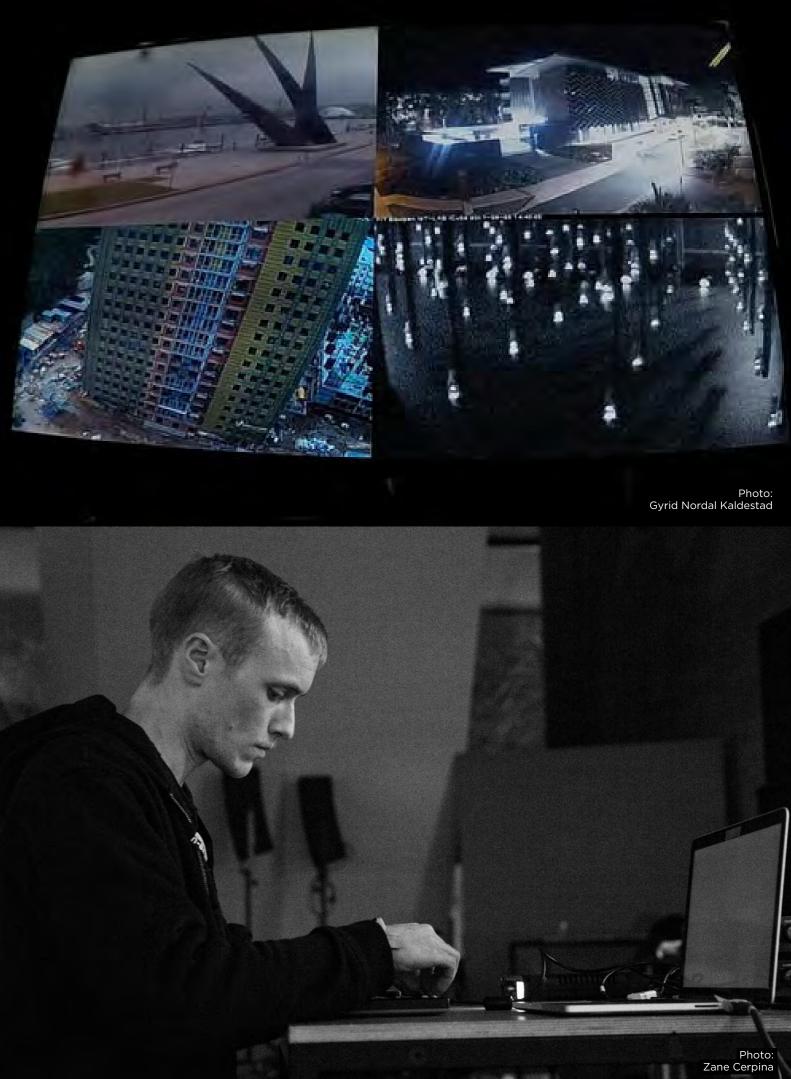
#### **ZC:** How did you perform the Soundtracks for Webcams at Transmediale?

**MB:** I redeveloped some of the software so that the timing of the cameras was controlled by me and I had a fixed sequence of cameras. I was also able to control some of the parameters myself, so it was kind of rebuilt into semi selfplaying instrument where the cameras were kind of one musician and I was the other musician.

#### **ZC:** Going back into the topic of surveillance. It is an important topic in several media artist's works across Europe. There are even full art festivals about the topic. What about Norway?

**MB:** It is very interesting because most of the webcams I found are in Norway. I think considering the population there is an extreme number of webcams in Norway. I don't think we talk about cyber security much. It stops at maybe criticizing how young people are using Snapchat, but not beyond that. Maybe one huge difference to other countries is that for some reason Norwegians tend to trust the state. I don't know why.

**ZC:** Thank you, Magnus!



## MACHINES THAT JUDGE US BORIS KOURTOUKOV

# This is a conversation between Zane Cerpina (PNEK) and Boris Kourtoukov, that took place in September 2018, in Oslo. PNEK talked to Kourtoukov about his experience at V2\_ and the project he developed this summer.

**Zane Cerpina (ZC):** This year you were selected by PNEK, to take part in the Summer Sessions Residency at V2\_, Lab for the Unstable Media. What were you developing there?

**Boris Kourtokouv (BK):** I was developing an interactive installation that was focusing on how algorithms are used to judge us and to attribute a value to us and our presence. I wanted to give a voice to these algorithms in a way that would evoke certain emotions from the people being judged by them. And so that was the start of my artistic exploration.

#### **ZC:** What art mediums and technologies did you use to develop this work?

**BK:** I combined elements of physical computing to create physical objects with speakers and small computers but I also, as far as software, used computer vision in combination with algorithms that estimate age and gender. Then I combined that with programs that I had written to generate conversations from that input and then those conversations were converted into text via text to speech into sound or voices. That was the output.

## **ZC:** You have already briefly exhibited the first outcome at Summer Session Test Lab exhibition in Rotterdam. Tell me more about the exhibition!

**BK:** Yes, we had an exhibition in Rotterdam this September. It allowed the artistsin-residence to let others experience the work in a very public setting and also judge the impact of the work.



### **BORIS KOURTOUKOV**

Boris Kourtoukov RU/CA) is an Oslo based artist and creative technologist that works within a wide range of the digital mediums. Kourtoukov was this year selected to represent PNEK in Summer Sessions talent development program at V2\_ Lab for the Unstable Media in Rotterdam.

BORIS.KOURTOUKOV.COM



## **ZC:** Could you tell a little bit about your experience at the Summer Sessions residency and your time at V2\_ Lab?

**BK:** V2\_ was a very useful environment because the space itself allows the artists to really get down to work. There were roughly 10 other residents accommodated at the lab. The Summer Sessions is also an interesting environment in terms of sharing the knowledge and artistic practices among other artists. It was a very useful experience. The V2\_ staff that were directly working with us provided valuable input and critique into the process. So overall the two months were very fruitful. Rotterdam is also a very nice hub for exploring art and technology.

## **ZC:** How would you compare the tendencies in art and technology fields in Norway and Netherlands?

**BK:** I think that in the Netherlands there is a broader range of technology focused work. There are many projects that look at computer vision and look at the impact of algorithms. There is also a lot of interesting work in the field between art and design. I do think that Oslo and Norway has more rigid artistic communities. We have a more focused tech-art community in Oslo. While in the Netherlands it is more broad and there are different groups and people that do not necessarily spend a lot of time together.

## **ZC:** How would you compare the Summer Sessions experience with other artistic residencies you have been part of?

**BK:** V2\_ Summer Sessions was my third artist residency. The other residences I have participated in were more in the conference format - what is not traditionally thought of as a residency. I think at the Summer Sessions there is a stronger focus on bringing in members of the community in the Netherlands and discussing things outside of the walls of V2\_. There is also a possibility to continue working with V2\_ after the projects have been completed. It is an open invitation to propose projects and further collaborate because I think V2\_ is interested in the longer-term collaborations with artists.

#### **ZC:** What are you working on now, any new projects you would like to mention?

**BK:** Right now I am working with a Mexican artist Arantxa Araujo, based in New York. We have collaborated on another piece DAR a Luz in June 2018. I want to follow up on that, to work together on a larger exhibition combining wearable art, performance art and interactive installation. I am also continuing the development of the "Machines that Judge Us", to exhibit it in another setting, to have another opportunity to iterate the work. I got a lot of very valuable feedback from the people that attended the Test Lab and I would like to incorporate that. I am particularly interested in exhibiting it also in Norway. I think it is very relevant piece of art here because Norway is a very digitally progressive country. From my previous work here and various interviews with people, I have noticed that people are very comfortable with the algorithmic choices that are being made for them. I would like to challenge that.

**ZC:** Thank you, Boris.





#### vision:

Using the on-board processor each machine is able to detect faces in the room they occupy.

From that, age and gender are assumed and extracted

Machines that J



## **OFF - TRACK** SOPHIE JURRJENS

This is a conversation between Zane Cerpina (PNEK) and Sophie Jurrjens, that took place in September 2018. PNEK talked to Jurrjens about her work she developed during the V2\_'s Summer Sessions Residency at PNEK.

**Zane Cerpina (ZC):** What is your background and what art mediums do you work with?

Sophie Jurrjens (SJ): I actually have a classical music background. I started with singing and composing music behind the piano. My mom and my sister are both classical pianists. After a few years I felt this is not the best way for me to express myself, and I decided to see if I can make music on a computer with Ableton. I learned everything myself. I did my Bachelor education at the Musician 3.0 Program at the HKU Utrechts Conservatorium. There I started doing research and did an internship at the Children of the Light (Arnout Hulskamp - Amsterdam and Christopher Valentini Gabriel - Oslo). This visual artist duo creates the most beautiful spherical scenographies and installations and I thought that I want to leaVrn from them. I went to see how they work and I got the opportunity to cooperate in composing music for the interactive light installation 'Zero Time', (https://vimeo.com/129778294) which was the closing exhibition of club 'Trouw' in Amsterdam. Further I did my Masters in ArtScience at the KABK/Royal Conservatoire in the Hague. There I was investigating the combination between music and visuals. In the second year I was more interested in how music and landscape are connected. I felt that landscape and nature are good places to listen to music. That is where the project for Summer Sessions residency started.

**ZC:** Tell me about your Summer Sessions residency. Could you shortly describe the project you developed and what technologies you used?

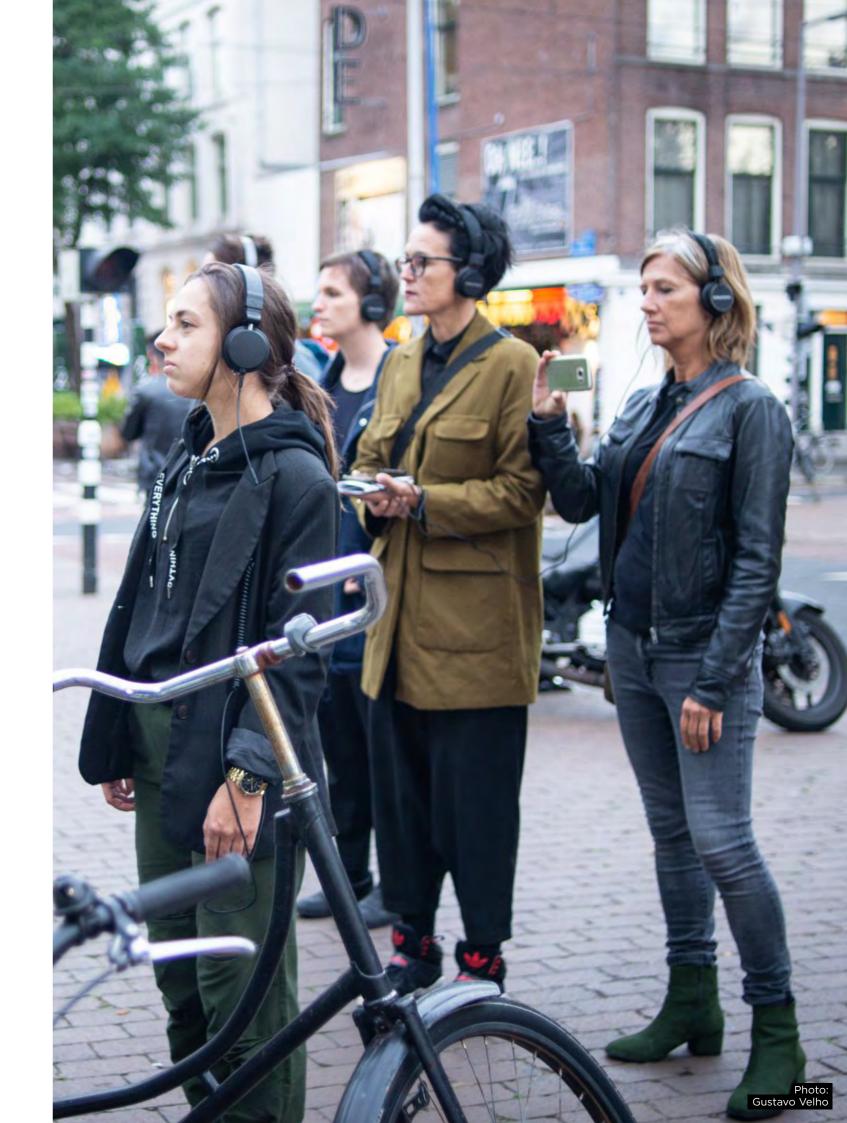
SJ: I applied because I was making the first steps in my project and I needed a



### **SOPHIE JURRJENS**

Sophie Jurrjens (NL) is a composer and interdisciplinary artist interested in combining sound and scenery. After finishing the bachelor Musician 3.0, at the Conservatory Utrecht in 2015, she graduated from the master Interfaculty ArtScience at the Royal Conservatory / Royal Academy of the Art The Hague in the summer of 2017

OFF-TRACK.NL



different environment to work in. Different than home. To be in another place, to have new inspirations. I find it interesting to investigate how music and the environment influences each other. And through composing music for specific locations I transform the experience of going for a walk. With my project I want to invite millennials to go outside and experience their surroundings in a new way. With every walk, I want to create a distinct reality and inspire the user's imagination. I work in Ableton to create the music for the app. I start the beginning of my day with a walk listening to my own music. I write down all the thoughts I have in my phone, often also different sounds come up, and then I record them. When I'm back at home I process the material on my computer and I start composing. In the beginning of 2019 I will have the first prototype finished, in where connecting the music to GPS will speed up my artistic process.

## **ZC:** Are you going to work together with someone that will help you to develop the app?

**SJ:** Exactly. I have few fantastic people around me that have new ideas and they want to help me. I started all by myself but now several people have been giving me input about the first Amsterdam test walk I did on Thursday. The walk was organized in collaboration with the Knowledge Mile community, a vibrant living lab and business innovation district in Amsterdam. With them I am organizing test walks on a regular basis, to test out the user's experiences and to get more people connected with the project. It is really good to have these people around.

#### ZC: What kind of experience do you want to give the users through this walk?

**SJ:** I find that it works for every person quite differently but still there are some correlations. For me personally, when I am on a walk it is like I am in my own bubble and it feels like I am in a movie. I see people passing by. I just see everything in a different perspective. But for other people it is more meditative. I saw an interview with Simon Sinek and he was talking about millennials and why they are not really happy with their lives. He mentioned a few components, and I want every walk to tackle a few of these components. I find that millennials are not really capable of having enough patience. For example with relationships, finding pleasure in their work and so on. I think music can really help with that. I want to change the user's understanding of a balanced life.

## **ZC:** You also want to connect people to nature, right? Why do you want to do that through the use of technology?

**SJ**: It is interesting because I am using technology to take people outside of technology. I am making a work for people the same age as me. Every morning I am trying to not grab my phone before breakfast, and I am doing it all the time. It is hard, and I know everyone around me has the same problem. I'm not the only one, but people do not want to talk about it. They don't feel very comfortable to say: "Hey, today I don't feel that well." I think just switching off your phone is not going to work.

ZC: Thank you, Sophie!









### ATELIER NORD ATELIERNORD.NO

## **ABOUT PNEK**

PNEK (Production Network for Electronic Art, Norway) is a network structure aiming to provide good production conditions for artists working with electronic and interdisciplinary art. PNEK assists artists and structures with competence building, project development, workshops, screening/ distribution of works, and activities aiming to raise the general awareness about hybrid art forms through seminars and social/artistic events. PNEK can provide limited travel support for artistic/structural exchange between the nodes, and for developing international relations (artists, curators, critics etc.).

PNEK also has a guest apartment in Oslo, available for visiting curators, artists, critics etc. Gyrid Nordal Kaldestad is the director of PNEK (2017 - ) and Zane Cerpina is creative manager. PNEK is organized as an independent cultural foundation, funded by the Arts Council Norway.

#### **PNEK MEMBERS:**

Atelier Nord | Notam | Piksel TEKS | i/o/lab | Lydgalleriet | BEK Art republic | Dans for voksne Vandaler forening



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