

Specials > THE MALADY OF WRITING PODCAST. Modernism You Can Dance To

The *Specials* programs focus on projects by artists and curators who have some kind of connection to the Museum's programming and the MACBA Collection. This program is an audio companion to the exhibition *The Malady of Writing. A project on text and speculative imagination* that presents a pleasurable, humorous and fun version of modernism: call it "modernism you can dance to."

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Curated by Kenneth Goldsmith

Kenneth Goldsmith's writing has been called "some of the most exhaustive and beautiful collage work yet produced in poetry" by Publishers Weekly. Goldsmith is the author of ten books of poetry, founding editor of the online archive UbuWeb (ubu.com), and the editor of *I'll Be Your Mirror: The Selected Andy Warhol Interviews*, which was the basis for an opera, "Trans-Warhol," that premiered in Geneva in March of 2007. An hour-long documentary on his work, "Sucking on words: Kenneth Goldsmith" premiered at the British Library in 2007. Kenneth Goldsmith is the host of a weekly radio show on New York City's WFMU. He teaches writing at The University of Pennsylvania, where he is a senior editor of PennSound, an online poetry archive. He has been awarded the The Anschutz Distinguished Fellow Professorship in American Studies at Princeton University for 2009-10 and received the Quartz Electronic Music Award in Paris in 2009. A book of critical essays, *Uncreative Writing*, is forthcoming from Columbia University Press, as is an anthology from Northwestern University Press co-edited with Craig Dworkin, *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing*.

More about Goldsmith can be found at:
<http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/>
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kenneth_Goldsmith

THE MALADY OF WRITING PODCAST. Modernism You Can Dance To

Mark Klienbergs proposition: "Could there be someone capable of writing a science-fiction thriller based on the intention of presenting an alternative interpretation of modernist art that is readable and appreciated by the wider public?" ¹ has actually been answered affirmatively in a certain undercurrent of artist's audio production over the past century; let's call it an unofficial unofficial history of modernism (doubly unofficial since artist's audio production has been viewed as secondary to the their plastic / marketable production).

¹ Mark Klienbergs, "Conversations pieces", *The Fox*, no. 2. New York, NY: Art & Language Foundation, 1975-76, p 47-48.

01. Summary

Mark Klienbergs proposition: "Could there be someone capable of writing a science-fiction thriller based on the intention of presenting an alternative interpretation of modernist art that is readable and appreciated by the wider public?" has actually been answered affirmatively in a certain undercurrent of artist's audio production over the past century; let's call it an unofficial unofficial history of modernism (doubly unofficial since artist's audio production has been viewed as secondary to the their plastic / marketable production). Who knew, for example, that Jean Dubuffet released several albums of musique concrete? Or that Alfred Jarry wrote and performed bawdy drinking songs? Or that Salvador Dalí recorded an homage to money that was used as an advertisement for a commercial bank? Or that Joseph Beuys fronted a New Wave band and belted out pop songs against nuclear power? All of these artifacts are remarkably easy to love: the problem is that the general public never knew about them.

I'd like to propose an audio companion to *The Malady of Writing* that actualizes Klienbergs proposition in sound; one that presents a pleasurable, humorous and fun version of modernism: call it "modernism you can dance to." But this is serious business. If we can seize upon the notion of guilty pleasures in midst of modernism – a place which disdained such gestures – we may be able to unfurl a secret thread which may help to shed a new light on contemporary gestures. Somehow, if we understand how The Beatles detoured Stockhausen's tape music into "Revolution No. 9," we might be get a glimpse into what Sue Tompkins was thinking when she sings the chorus of The Beach Boys "God Only Knows" again and again for ten minutes straight; or why Seth Price would string together hours of New Jack Swing – a genre of music so unloved that it's practically been written out of the history books. Guilty pleasures, reclamation, resurrection and recontextualization are key to understanding these phenomena. But why now? One of the first things that struck me about Napster was how impure (read: eclectic) people's tastes were. Whilst browsing another user's files, I was stunned to find John Cage MP3s snuggled up next to, say, Mariah Carey files in the same directory. Everyone has guilty pleasures, however, never before have they been so exposed – and celebrated.

Impurity and guilty pleasures, as viewed through the lens of the historic avant-garde: If there's one thing that recent revisionist history has done, it's been to bring historically marginalized figures into front and center. One of the best examples of this might be the resurrected reputation of filmmaker Jack Smith, who, upon his death in 1989, was deemed "eccentric," "queer," and "frivolous." Today, of course, Smith occupies a central position in the cultural discourse on so many levels. It's this sort of transmigration I'm interested in: work that challenges its received histories and genres, and by doing so, speaks directly to our sense of the present, ruled by the constructive chaos of decentralized horizontal media, as well as the celebration of notions like "incorrectness" and "uncreativity," the rise of the "outsider", the canonization of the underdog.



[Erik Satie]



[Gertrude Stein]

And humor. And narrative. Remember that Gertrude Stein, for all her kudos went – and continues to go – pretty much unread. Her high modernist writing is great to talk about but nearly impossible to read. What made Gertrude Stein a household name? It wasn't her poetry. It was her wildly readable memoir of her fascinating life, *The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas*. Had Stein not written pleasurably, today most of us would never know who she is. There may be something to this after all...

02. Playlist

Alfred Jarry and Charles Pourny; music by Claude Terrasse "Chanson du Décervelage" (1896), recorded 1950.
Erik Satie, "Entr'acte" (1924), cond. Henri Sauguet, original soundtrack from René Clair film.
George Antheil, "Ballet mécanique," (1924) played by Ensemble Modern, from the album *Fighting the Waves*
Gertrude Stein, "If I Told Him: A Completed Portrait of Picasso," written late Aug. 1923, recorded in New York, Winter 1934-35.
Salvador Dalí, "L'Apothéose Du Dollar," one-sided, 7-inch flexidisc recorded for the French Bank CCF (1967).
Allen Ginsberg, "Birdbrain" (with the punk band The Gluons). Recorded 1980.
Karl Holmqvist, "I'm with you in Rockland," soundtrack from 2005 video.
Jack Smith, excerpt from soundtrack to *Normal Love*, (1963).
Jack Smith, "Contadina Tomato Paste," from the CD *Silent Shadows On Cinemarc Island - 56 Ludlow Street 1962-1964 Volume II*.
Karlheinz Stockhausen, "Gesang der Juenglinge (1955-56)" from the CD *Elektronische Musik*.
The Beatles, "Revolution No. 9" (1968) from the LP *The Beatles*.
The Mothers of Invention, "Are You Hung Up?" from the LP *We're Only in it for the Money* (1968).
The Beach Boys, "God Only Knows" from the LP *Pet Sounds* (1966).
Sue Tompkins, soundtrack to *More Cola Wars* (2004).
Flanagan & Allen, "Underneath the Arches," written 1931.
Gilbert & George, "Underneath the Arches," live recording (1970).
Kipper Kids, "Sheik of Araby" (1980), from the LP *High Performance*, 1983.
Laurie Anderson, "It's Not the Bullet That Kills You, It's the Hole" (1976) from the LP *Airwaves*, 1977.
Karen Finley, "I'm An Ass Man" (recorded 1985-86), from the LP *The Uproar Tapes, Volume 1* (1986).
Chris Burde, "The Atomic Alphabet" (1982), from the CD *Murs du Son* (Villa Arson, Nice, France, 1995).
Joseph Beuys, "Ja Ja Ja Ne Ne Ne", 1970, Mazzotta Editions, Milan, 33 rpm, 500 copies. (excerpt 2:00).
Martin Kippenberger, "Ja, Ja, Ja, Nee, Nee, Nee (Für Erwachsene)" from the compilation *Greatest Hits; 17 years of Martin Kippenberger's Music*.
Miranda July, "Untitled" from the CD *10 Million Hours In A Mile* (1997).
Seth Price, "NJS" (2002) from CD released by Free 103.9.
Sean Landers, "The Man Within," self-released cassette, Recorded NYC, 1991.

03. Related links

Michael Taylor on Alfred Jarry's Ubu Roi
http://www.ubu.com/sound/taylor_michael.html

Andrew Hugill on Pataphysics
<http://www.mti.dmu.ac.uk/~ahugill/pataphysics.html>
Pataphysics CD and booklet by Andrew Hugill published by the Sonic Arts Network.

Erik Satie
<http://ubu.com/sound/satie.html>

Flabby Preludes for a Dog: An Erik Saite Primer
<http://wfmur.org/~kennng/popular/articles/satie.html>

René Clair
http://www.ubu.com/film/clair_entracte.html



[The Beach Boys]

George Antheil, The Ballet Mécanique Page:
<http://www.antheil.org/>

Fernand Leger, "Ballet Mécanique":
<http://www.ubu.com/film/leger.html>

Gertrude Stein Recordings on PennSound:
<http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Stein.html>

Salvador Dalí sound works:
<http://ubu.com/sound/dali.html>

Allen Ginsberg
 Sound: <http://www.ubu.com/sound/ginsberg.html>
 Film: <http://www.ubu.com/film/ginsberg.html>

Karl Holmqvist:
<http://www.ubu.com/film/holmqvist.html>

Jack Smith:
http://www.ubu.com/film/smith_jack.html

Sue Tompkins, "More Cola Wars":
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ge5hXh5nn-8&feature=related>

Gilbert & George:
<http://ubu.com/film/gg.html>

Laurie Anderson:
<http://ubu.com/sound/anderson.html>

Karen Finley:
<http://ubu.com/sound/uproar.html>

Chris Burden:
 Sound: <http://ubu.com/sound/burden.html>
 Film: <http://ubu.com/film/burden.html>

Joseph Beuys:
 Sound: <http://ubu.com/sound/beuys.html>
 Film: <http://ubu.com/film/beuys.html>

Martin Kippenberger:
<http://ubu.com/sound/kippenberger.html>

Seth Price:
<http://ubu.com/sound/price.html>

Sean Landers:
<http://ubu.com/sound/landers.html>



[Karl Holmqvist]

04. Credits

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05. Licence

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