

(a)utom@ton

for 4-channel electroacoustic music and abstract animated video

Clara Maïda

(10'00)

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Residencies at SCRIME (Bordeaux, FR), **ART ZOYD STUDIOS** (Valenciennes, FR), **GRAME-CNCM** (Lyon, FR)

and the STUDIO FÜR ELEKTROAKUSTISCHE MUSIK of the AKADEMIE DER KÜNSTE (Berlin, DE)

(a)utom@ton is an audiovisual work for 4-channel electroacoustic music and abstract animated video and is part of the series *(a)utom@ton*.

The series includes three parts: the work *(a)utom@ton* (music and video, 10'00), the installation *Pendel(a)utom@t*, whose music is played on four speakers arranged around the audience (music and video, 15'00 played in loop), and 108 sound sequences played via the embedded MP3 mini-players and loudspeakers of the six pendular objects of the robotic installation, the six *Ton-Pendel(a)utom@t*.

The title of the work refers to the Greek word "automaton" which names a being-machine that acts on its own account and moves spontaneously.

Both signs *(a)* and *@* inserted in the spelling of the title emphasize the distinction between what drives a human being and a robot.

(a) alludes to the *little a* object conceptualised by psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan, the elusive and unidentifiable object of desire which can take very various shapes for each human being.

@ evokes the connected and robotic objects that often work via WiFi or Ethernet.

The project questions the relationship between humans and machines (particularly robotic ones), the boundary between a machinic *automaton* (algorithms, robotics, AI) and a psychic *automaton*, this term being used by Jacques Lacan to describe the automatism of unconscious psychic processes that condition recurring affective and behavioural patterns.

Whether the individuals are subjected to one *automaton* or the other, what is their degree of free will, their possibility of action, how can they free themselves from ever possible alienation?

The musical part proposes an antagonistic material made of sound figures and timbres reminiscent of mechanisms in motion on the one hand, with sometimes a repetitive quality, as if frozen on motifs that continually recur, and on the other hand, hoarse or strident sonorities, akin to a scream or a death rattle, which remind us that striving to escape from psychic or physical confinement requires effort, if not a twisting to oneself, and can cause suffering, even if the goal of this endeavour is vital.

The animated visual part explores hybridisation through the merging or superimposition of images of machinic cogwheels, robotic circuits, an Arduino board, and neural networks or brain connections, interweaving their textures and creating metamorphic pathways.

(a)utom@ton questions the possible excesses of a political use of AI (widespread surveillance, algorithmic filter bubbles and systems of influence), alongside the temptation to perpetuate the myth of an "intelligence" supposedly surpassing human capabilities, which would therefore take precedence over societal decisions. This ideological stance tends to deny the unconscious, imaginary and affective dimensions of every human being, the question of the real or pulsional body, and advocates a model according to which intelligence, creativity and memory result solely from the processing of a vast collection of data that can be endlessly reorganised according to statistical and combinatorial criteria.

Clara Maïda, November 2024