Interview by Federico Sargentone

Lee Gamble: Networked Hallucination

This year, you will be releasing three EPs on Hyperdub, the first of which was released in February. The triplets will form a full-length album titled Flushed Real Pharynx. Can you explain the reason for adopting such a narrative process?

Lee Gamble: I’ve released several albums in a more traditional way, where you put something out and then wait two years for the next one. I wanted to make this one in flux. Making it in triplet form means the first part of the album (in A Para Ventrail Scale) is out there while I’m still making it. That feels exciting, to be able to react to the emotional landscape I find myself in more in real time. It’s a project that’s a moving target. I’m also a fan of the triplet format in art more generally. I’d been re-reading a lot of interviews with Francis Bacon over the last couple of years, and his triplets were some of the first pieces of art to really resonate with me as a teenager. He was able to make static paintings feel like films. This sequential point of view is how animation works—frame-by-frame—and with Flushed Real Pharynx, I’m really thinking in terms of filmic narrative, and linear, accelerated, decentered movement.

You’re also working on your new AV performance. Is the visual, experiential component an important element of your practice?

Lee Gamble: Our brains are now used to receiving constant visual stimulations. Some years back, and occasionally still now, I worked more in what you could call “acousmatic” sound, which encourages people to listen and not have visual reference to the sounds they are hearing at all. I think this is an amazing way to work, but it’s hard to enforce in terms of audience, so these types of works tend to be heard in more academic spaces. The ideas I find myself exploring right now require light, sound and visual aspects. I’ve been building towards these live shows for a couple of years now. I’m thinking in terms of automated systems with my approach to performing live. The transient information from my audio is being used in several ways as data to build and destroy with my approach to performing live. The transient information from spaces.

Audience, so these types of works tend to be heard in more academic and not have visual reference to the sounds they are hearing at all. I mostly try and think in terms of sound, trying to encourage alternative modes of listening. After all, sound is infinite; it’s only once it’s given structural boundaries that it produces genres.

I’ve heard that one of your theoretical inspirations is CCRU (Cybernetic Culture Research Unit), a radical, para-academic unit founded in 1995, counting Kodwo Eskiseh and Kodwo Eshun as affiliates. How does their body of theory, which is centered on post-structuralism, race culture, and cybercapitalism, inform your work?

Lee Gamble: Well, I came across CCRU, Kodwo and Mark’s writings around the end of the ’90s, early 2000s. They linked seemingly disparate things together: Deleuze, Metalheadz, capitalism, haunthology, fiction, reifying the narrative that jungle and techno were more than just functional music to dance to. Having a space like a club as some kind of temporary autonomous zone to be free inside is madly important. It’s a sudden, speculative philosophical ideas weren’t property of the artistic avant-garde—but fittingly, the networked hallucination that is the Internet allowed me to find these speculations, these mental possibilities. I’m now releasing with Hyperdub, so maybe I got a pass into the Miska Networked Hallucination.

You often work the tropes of dance music—especially jungle, UK rave and dubstep. How do you negotiate a space between cerebral abstraction and the club dimension in your work?

Lee Gamble: Fundamentally, all these genres are profoundly cerebral and complex, in narrative as well as form: they’re extremely dancefloor-functional and political at the same time. That is powerful, and that is why these genres continually get silenced—the Criminal Justice and Public Order Act of 1994, for example, which was a major bill aimed at restricting outdoor raves in the UK. Things don’t generally get banned if they aren’t something to worry about, and if they aren’t powerful.

It’s hard to make a distinction between club music and what comes out of academia. But the balance between the theoretical, political ideas and functionally is something I care about. I mostly try and think in terms of sound, trying to encourage alternative modes of listening.

Networked Hallucination

In “A Drop of Sun Under The Earth,” Okoyomon’s debut institutional solo exhibition, on view through 21 April in Heimo Zobernig’s mod

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To the Serpentine Gallery, London, on 5 July 2019.

Words by Harry Burke

As a poet, artist, and performer, Precious Okoyomon works with a fluidity that is tangible and elusive material; the joy of being. Her poetry is like a pail of raw milk that has curdled under a beating sun; it is thick with clumps of life and complexity. Ajebota, her debut chapbook published by Bottlecap Press in 2016, is a shrill of confessionality in which the poet meditates upon the plasticity of language and the self, metalting both. In her first full-length volume, Did You Ever?, forthcoming from Birds, LLC, her observations sharpen, and her blade has gotten, wickedly, a little rusted. Some lines sting. Others are infectious. I didn’t die, but I was humiliated, and it took my breath away. Vitality, in Okoyomon’s poetics, is unstable, and bonded with mortality. In many poems in But Did You Die?, the end of the world is happening—and due to the Second Coming, but because the world has already been ended, numerously, through the reckless logic of colonial modernity. This shit is recursive. The voice drifts. The poetנוoshes by the breakfast, the daydreams at the threshold of the void. The narration is dialectic but immersive. The apocalypse is within us, and of us. Yet, while embracing “the jerky orgasms of the hysterical tale,” we learn that we can laugh, get kinky, get lost. We are one with the earth, so we are dirty. We can grow. We can be fats, too, if we were born too late. “If you think you took something too far, I am flattered and can have it,” the poet sings. There is joy in this, and empathy.

In “A Drop of Sun Under The Earth,” Okoyomon’s debut institutional solo exhibition, on view through 21 April in Heimo Zobernig’s modernist schwarzescafé at LUMA Westbau, Zurich, angels hang from the branches of wintry trees. Rasp, crunchy leaves litter the large mounds of soil that support these trees, and mushrooms sprout out. The angels have long beak-shaped bodies, and angelic through the addition of taxidermied bird wings. Heads droop, they stare downwards. Gazing at them, I recall a phrase from Okoyomon’s Instagram stories: “I don’t know what’s me cuteness is it own violence”. The installation evokes the lynching of Black bodies in the American South, a violence that is irreconcilable with the language of contemporary art. Yet angels can disintegrate through the cosmic effluvia. I am truly a drop of sun under the earth.

The exhibition’s title derives from Frantz Fanon’s declaration that “I am black, not because of a curse, but because my skin has been able to capture all the cosmic effluvia. I am truly a drop of sun under the earth.” A black sun smiles at a bear who smokes a blunt in a forest, and are scattered across the gallery’s floor. The exhibition’s title derives from Frantz Fanon’s declaration that “I am black, not because of a curse, but because my skin has been able to capture all the cosmic effluvia. I am truly a drop of sun under the earth.” A black sun smiles at a bear who smokes a blunt in a forest, and are scattered across the gallery’s floor. The exhibition’s title derives from Frantz Fanon’s declaration that “I am black, not because of a curse, but because my skin has been able to capture all the cosmic effluvia. I am truly a drop of sun under the earth.” A black sun smiles at a bear who smokes a blunt in a forest, and are scattered across the gallery’s floor.