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Bem Le Hunte on Mat Ward's *La morte mi trovera vivo* (<https://contemporaryarttasmania.org/programs/la-morte-mi-trovera-vivo/>)

In the vastness of undifferentiated space, we make our temples, we make our sacred spaces and places. And so, in the vastness of undifferentiated noise, we make sacred sound to enliven our Being and connect us with the many vibrational layers beyond the material world...

...I hear you. You don't really need anyone speaking through this experience of *La morte mi trovera vivo*. Why words? Why images? You've shut your eyes and the journey beyond the human voice and worldly noise has already begun...

So I will speak softly...

We're going to travel through multiple dimensions, and you're going to find yourself going deeper and deeper, travelling to the boundless inner sanctum of sound – as well as across and along and through waves that bind together every human language and transcend them all. You might find yourself transcending, too – beyond, across, further... allow for this. And you might find that trees can speak, too. Or daleks from another world are attempting to converse. Whoever, whatever speaks to you from this world or the cosmos beyond, simply listen, even if it's just the wind.

We know this much – that time is infinite and so too is sound. And you can hear a distant, alluring, calling presence. The frequencies are frequenting your body in subtle pulses. Travelling over your being. *There is a reason why we were all designed with an inner ear as well as an outer one.*

And so, an inner receptor enlivens and hears the spirits of the land calling, echoing with presence, summoning your presence. Everything now is connected through these waves, and that includes you. Layer and layer and layer of existence, no longer distinguishing between the human and plant or animal or mineral worlds or words. It feels strangely peaceful, this lack of differentiation. This connectedness to all things. The nature spirits don't often speak to human ears, because they cannot expect these waves to reach past those large outer lobes.

Feel the peace as you leave the ordinary world of noise far behind – a world that fills every crack of perception with endless clutter – a world that paints a thin veneer of plaster over the human soundscape and calls it reality. We're travelling down to a far quieter realm well beyond the walls of any gallery...breaking the fourth wall, the fifth, the sixth and even more...

You may feel as if you're listening to the mist, before its dewpoint, before it joins the ordinary, fully manifest world of water. And then you will hear metal... then complete silence. Don't be surprised at the conversations between machines and minds that follow. If you had thought you would be lulled to sleep, now you are asked to awaken. You hear explosions, tearing of layers between dimensions. But you have no coordinates to link any of them to time and place, because those coordinates have slipped away long ago.

...continue...please, you can still return to that state of bliss you were in... there will be more silence...

I wrote this piece as a personal response to Mat Ward's *La morte mi troverà vivo* while I was listening to his work, writing mostly with my eyes closed. It came out (rather oddly) as a guided meditation, because this seemed to be the most appropriate sense-making device. Trying to make sense with the rational mind now seems less appropriate – with its privileging of common sense rather than uncommon sense – its ability to retro-fit any response to art.

Forgive me, please, if you don't relate to the meditative practice I've chosen. And forgive me if you're reading this without your headphones on... I have only words, not sounds to make sense of the mist I travelled through.

Even the artist was asked to use words – we all must rely on these tools, it seems. He says this:

I 'felt like the inside of me was being changed through noise. The air was replaced, it seems.'

And whilst Ward brought forth the metaphor of air, mine was of air turning to water. Whilst listening, I was thinking of a line from a Kate Lilley poem about the mystical power that poetry takes on when it replaces everyday language. She writes that 'daily usage hastens beauty's senseless dewpoint' (Lilley 2002) – hastens that moment when mystery (of air) manifests as object – (dew). Similarly, our ordinary contact with sound has numbed us to its mystical, intangible qualities.

So, this piece is really about pre-language or post-language, using unfamiliar sounds that communicate well beyond our trained perception, and that's the power of it. Like any spiritual practice of transcendence, this work uses the known tools – metaphors, stories, myths or sounds to reach out to beyond all that is unknown to engage with mystery. Ward describes it as 'occult' and perhaps this is meant in the original sense of the word – 'that which is concealed or hidden.' This piece reaches past the act of concealment.

Inspired by the work of Futurist and occultist, Russolo, it seems as if Ward has gone back to the future as homage to this sound machine's inventor. Some of the vibrations were captured from Russolo's graveside 'with the aim of communicating with the spirit world using noise'. Together with cosmic details incanted from Pythagorus, the algorithms were created. The result? A rare opportunity to enter the world of 'spiritualised sound,' and the boundlessness that comes with provoking a faculty to perceive the sublime.

Lilley, Kate (2002), *Versary* (Applecross, W.A. ; Cambridge: Salt) xi, 98 p.

Bem Le Hunte

Bem Le Hunte is the author of four novels – the most recent is *Elephants with Headlights* (2020). Her previous novels, *The Seduction of Silence* and *There, Where the Pepper Grows*, have become number one bestsellers and been published internationally to critical acclaim. She is also the founding Director of the Bachelor of Creative Intelligence and Innovation, a transdisciplinary, future-facing degree that teaches creativity across 25 different disciplines and explores the porous boundaries between fields, disciplines and industries. She has a BA and MA in Social Anthropology from Cambridge University and a Creative Doctorate from the University of Sydney where she wrote an exegesis on creativity and transcendence. She has a research interest in the extraordinary possible, spiritual realism and in creative practice across disciplines. She has worked in the creative industries and the arts across three decades. Throughout this time, writing has always been her elemental passion, and the gift of this calling has allowed her to flourish in many ways and worlds – well beyond the written word.

Contemporary Art Tasmania acknowledges the original and traditional owners of the lands around us, the muwinina and palawa; we pay respect to their elders across all times and recognise today's Tasmanian Aboriginal families as custodians of lutruwita / Tasmania.



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Contemporary Art Tasmania

 (+613) 6231 0445 (tel:+61362310445)

 info@contemporaryart.org.au
(mailto:info@contemporaryart.org.au)

 27 Tasma Street, North Hobart TAS 7000

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