

## Silent Space – Intensified Integrities by Mika Hannula

It begins with a dilemma. What becomes of silence and space, when combined, is an enigma. It is neither only here, nor just there – it is always on the move, always in-between. It is in-between individual recollections of silence; it resounds off of collectively experienced spaces. While returning back to all the connotations connected to the concept.

*Silent Space* – as an exhibition, but also throughout the process leading from its inception to realisation – takes this dilemma, this enigmatic in-betweenness, and makes it the primary focus, the point of departure and the final destination. It prompts us to ask how we are and where we are – as individuals, as human beings, as members of a given society, and in the framework of our past, present and future.

*Silent Space* strives to ask the big questions. Not to run away, nor to hide, but to confront them – via visual constructions of time and place.

It is a confrontation that begs us to consider the basics: our need to have access to *Silent Space*; to have a space and condition that is our own, protected and respected. At the same time, we must also consider our need to be connected, to be part of a collective, a community and a society. It is a constant and never-ending process of give and take, of intimacy and independence.

Through the process leading to *Silent Space*, we come to recognise a fundamental quality of the concept: that it is not a game of opposites, but an exploration and investigation of the nuances of this interdependence.

That is to say, the opposite of *Silent Space* is not a loud space. It is not about either/or. Instead, a *Silent Space* requires an active participant; an agent with a clear and unwavering agenda. In the words of the conductor Daniel Barenboim: “The lower the volume, the greater the need for intensity, and the greater the volume, the greater the need for a calm force in the sound.” (2009, 128)

*Silent Space* is the very process of trying to gain and maintain the open-ended process. In the exhibition, the works of art approach the *Silent Spaces* in our urban environment. It is an articulation of space and time that is very aware of the places whence it comes and the relationships it has with nature – but at the same time, it is not an act that is nostalgic or purely sentimental. Certainly, it can be melancholic, but never stuck on the dogmas of the past.

*Silent Space* is the reality of the move towards the cityscape; towards the lived experiences of all the internal contradictions of wanting and needing both silent rooms and rooms for loud interaction. Again and again, it puts the finger where it really hurts, but it hurts so good: how are we to negotiate in, and to navigate, our urban daily environment’s paradoxical in-betweennesses: that of being alone and together, that of speaking with and speaking of, that of dealing with and escaping from the nature?

With the exhibition project, the artists are addressing what Hans-Georg Gadamer defined as *Wirkungsgeschichtliche Bewusstseins* (2004, 299). This is nothing less and nothing more than the comprehension of the facts – that whatever we do and whatever we try to say, for it to make any sense, it has to be always tightly connected to where we come from. It is this awareness of the ongoing histories, and the need for their interpretation – this awareness of how our autobiographical background actively effects us, and how the conditions of our societies shape and make us.

With *Silent Space*, the most valuable and also provocative moment is the deliberate choice to focus on female artists who all actively occupy plural methods and roles, combining various means of visual images that range from photography to performance, from fine art to spatial design.

It is this very focus on female artists that motivates the complexities and confusions of *Silent Space*. It is not about giving answers, but facing the questions that emerge in each of these artists’ daily lives, and therefore in their professional practices.

As with the idea of silence – an idea that is not this or that, but always a combination of many aspects that are realised in context and in site – the very same necessity to both allow and respect the procedural complexity of being a woman is extremely important. It is not how something is or is imagined to exist, but how it becomes what it strives to be.

To state it another way: this is not a project riding on a token-type of feminism or gender politics. This is a project that, in fact, is the real deal: what it means to be and act as a female artist who is embedded and

connected to her backgrounds and contemporary sites and situations. As a woman – a daughter, a granddaughter, a sister, cousin, friend, as a partner, colleague, wife, mother, or grandmother. This is not about instrumentalization and it is not about victimization. This about something that is much greater, and it is much more demanding. This is about owning the fact that one has no freedoms without responsibilities.

*Silent Space* – intensified integrities. Not as pamphlets, not as some kind of over-all theory, but as a series of thoughts and fully articulated acts within the field of contemporary art.

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#### References

Daniel Barenboim, *Music Quickens Time*, Verso 2009

Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*, Continuum 2004