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Rodney Graham's Unexpected Interrupters

Rodney Graham's works invite us to explore a multitude of possible avenues whose tacit or explicit references take us into undreamed of territory. Whether they be plastic, cinematographic, musical, sonic, visual, literary or poetic, but never any single one of these access points in isolation, these works blend fields and time periods with continuously shifting thresholds to cross and constantly shifting boundaries.

Sound is a major element and the scores which it produces are eclectic and involve experiencing sound spaces at the intersection of great historical events, banal anecdotes and major scientific discoveries. The sound material from which Graham's works are formed – be it suggested, silent, interrupted or played at full volume – invariably triggers “a sort of spring to the mind”¹ as is illustrated by the three works studied here: *Phonokinetoscope*² (2001), *Super-Heavy Flute* (2012),³ and *The King's Part* (1999).⁴

The title of the first work, *Phonokinetoscope*, alludes to the earliest attempts made by Thomas Edison and William Kennedy Laurie Dickson⁵ to synchronise film images and sounds in 1895. Edison aspired to synchronise what the eye could see with what the ear could hear. His pioneering device consisted of the Kinetoscope – a single-user viewing device, one of the earliest pieces of equipment in the history of film to create the illusion of continuous motion – and a phonograph with which to synchronise image and sound. The resulting hybrid was named the phonokinetoscope.⁶

This original quest to correlate sound and image, a goal so eagerly pursued by Edison and Dickson, was achieved in Graham's *Phonokinetoscope* not by following the stages of a narrative – no logical synchronisation of image and sound is expected as the equipment does not allow it – but rather in correspondences, congruences and connections in an alternative frame of reference achieved through the medium of iconic sonic, musical, literary and film catalysts.



Fig. 01: Rodney Graham, *Phonokinetoscope*, 2001, installation with modified turntable, 15-minute 33 1/3 rpm vinyl LP, speakers, film projector, 5-minute 16mm colour film loop, exposition view @ All rights reserved.

Graham reveals these via the actors in his film who act as triggers and drive the exploration forward.

The installation consists of a projector wired up to a turntable which is activated when a member of the public places the needle wherever they like on the LP, thus triggering the projection of a film played in a loop until the record ends or another person intervenes manually. As the record plays, the projector and reels also turn and the film is visible. We see the artist riding a bicycle in the Tiergarten in Berlin and performing banal actions such as pedalling, taking a break by the lakeside, and swallowing an LSD blotter.

Graham's ride alludes very explicitly to the historic cycle trip made in 1943 by the scientist Albert Hofmann⁷ who, during his scientific research into the properties of ergot of rye, synthesised acids including the famous LSD. The inventor inadvertently ingested this substance and had the very first LSD experience while cycling home from his laboratory. The effects noted by the scientist include a suspension of the usual perceptual-cognitive reference points:

“Now, little by little, I began to enjoy the unprecedented colours and plays of shapes which

persisted behind my closed eyes. [...] It was particularly remarkable how every acoustic perception, such as the sound of a door handle or a passing automobile, became transformed into optical perceptions. Every sound generated a vividly changing image, with its own consistent form and color."⁸

The coming together of sound and image produced by the psychoactive substance lies at the core of the *Phonokinetoscope* concept, where sound is linked directly to image by a specific mechanical process. Hofmann's reference to this experience echoes Edison's desire to establish equivalences between sight and hearing. However, Rodney Graham's equipment features a significant additional difference: the element of randomness introduced by the intervention of the spectator who can disrupt the attempt to achieve fixed phonokinetic synchronisation between the film and its soundtrack. Moreover, the installation is designed so that without the sound, no image appears. The age-old primacy of image over sound is reversed.

The congruence evoked by Hofmann and Edison is produced in this *Phonokinetoscope* by other prompts which are not narrative, but take the form of new correspondences. Graham draws out these connections using scattered iconic catalysts; a playing card, a hatter, musical scores, a decorated Asian thermos flask, and a specific make of bicycle are shifters for narratives whose sounds adopt multiple registers.



Fig. 02: Rodney Graham, *Phonokinetoscope*, 2001, installation with modified turntable, 15-minute 33 1/3 rpm vinyl LP, speakers, film projector, 5-minute 16mm colour film loop, screenshot.   All rights reserved.

A playing card (the Queen of Diamonds) is attached with a clothes peg to the metal mudguard stays of Graham's bicycle. As he rides, the card flicks regularly against the spokes of the bicycle wheel. This stratagem (revealed by Graham in his storyboard⁹) is designed to create a bicycle engine sound just like in the children's game where a bicycle is transformed by this sound into a make-believe motorbike. The sound of this fictional and silent motor colludes with the very real mechanical noise of the *Phonokinetoscope* projector. A form of circulation is established between the sound space, the exhibition space, and the fictional world that is conjured up. The mechanical sound enters Graham's fictional world and the two soundtracks mutually enrich each other in unison, in an interplay of synchronised rhythm.



Fig. 03: Rodney Graham, *Phonokinetoscope*, 2001, installation with modified turntable, 15-minute 33 1/3 rpm vinyl LP, speakers, film projector, 5-minute 16mm colour film loop, screenshot.   All rights reserved.

The blotter, which is the medium for taking LSD, is printed with a cartoon picture of the Mad Hatter from *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*,¹⁰ an iconic book for Rodney Graham. This character is associated with a different hallucinogen – mercury. Hatters who inhaled this substance suffered side effects whose symptoms were associated with madness.

The Mad Hatter also triggers another sound reference. The Queen in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* orders her armies to cut off the Mad Hatter's head as he wants to sing a song, and in preparing to do so would beat time, an action which is forbidden in this kingdom. In a clever act of revenge on Lewis Carroll's

story, with Graham's *Phonokinetoscope*, this same Queen is condemned to beat time at the whim of Rodney Graham's spinning bicycle wheels.

Echoing these correspondences, the turntable and LP play a song entitled *Theme from the Phonokinetoscope*. The score, lyrics and music are by Graham and Syd Barrett. A founding member of the band Pink Floyd and composer of the album *The Piper at the Gates of Dawn*, Barrett wrote the track *Bike*. The chorus, "You're the kind of girl that fits in with my world", is played on loop as the musical accompaniment to the *Phonokinetoscope*. The word "fit" is eloquent: to "fit" means "to go with, tally, match, be in harmony with, or be in correspondence with". But although the correspondence is effective, it is nevertheless a by-product of randomness and is dependent on the involvement of the public. The *Phonokinetoscope* is a locus for random synchronisation, which is always subject to change. This mobility echoes the pioneering research carried out by scientist Albert Hofmann, which was not initially focused on the psychoactive substance LSD – the accidental by-product of the search for a circulatory stimulant.

During his bike ride, Rodney Graham stops off and drinks from a Chinese thermos flask whose lid is stamped "Sun Flower" (as shown on the author's storyboard).¹¹ This detail creates a direct link to the 1970s band the Grateful Dead,¹² who produced an album entitled *Aoxomoxoa*¹³ which features the seminal track *China Cat Sunflower*.¹⁴

Fig 04: Rodney Graham, *Phonokinetoscope*, 2001, installation with modified turntable, 15-minute 33 1/3 rpm vinyl LP, speakers, film projector, 5-minute 16mm colour film loop, screenshot   All rights reserved.



Fig 05: Rodney Graham, *Phonokinetoscope*, 2001, installation with modified turntable, 15-minute 33 1/3 rpm vinyl LP, speakers, film projector, 5-minute 16mm colour film loop, screenshot.   All rights reserved.

The fantasy world of *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and its Cheshire Cat, whose unusual ability to dissociate from its body in a variety of manifestations, notably in the form of sound in its conversations with Alice, is conjured up again and linked to the scientific experiments of Albert Hofmann and the new perceptual-cognitive associations stimulated by the ingestion of a psychoactive substance.



Fig 06: Rodney Graham, *Phonokinetoscope*, 2001, installation with modified turntable, 15-minute 33 1/3 rpm vinyl LP, speakers, film projector, 5-minute 16mm colour film loop, screenshot   All rights reserved.

Rodney Graham also focuses on the Fisher brand of bicycle used for his ride in Berlin. Here, Gary Fisher¹⁵, cyclist and inventor joins Roland Fischer¹⁶, a pharmacologist mentioned by his contemporary Albert Hofmann in his book *LSD, My Problem Child*.¹⁷ Hofmann and Fischer were in fact research partners who had no qualms about taking a hands-on approach in their experiments and acting as guinea pigs in their

common research into altered states of consciousness by ingesting LSD and mescaline respectively.

In *Phonokinetoscope*, Rodney Graham does not arrange his visual and sonic prompts according to a pattern of accumulation or coexistence, but allows the various elements of the data he is manipulating to inform each other: sound comes from the image, and the image is the product of randomness rather than sound. The shifters of the concealed stories can be identified and followed and their mysteries can be elucidated, thus leading to a multitude of investigations and discoveries. But the opposite is also asserted: we can remain on the threshold of these visual and sonic catalysts and leave these references in a state of mute potentiality. The gaps left by Graham's sound and visual spaces are also a fundamental element of his work and the facts which he offers us.

Similarly, this arrangement orchestrated by the artist carries within itself the seeds of its own uselessness: like Edison's single-user phonokinetoscope, without the living and individual element of the spectator activating it – without the hand that connects the two separate elements of the LP and needle – nothing happens; the system remains closed and the equipment is exhibited but stays mute. Graham operates between the break which closes down the work by plunging it into darkness and silence. This is a mobile synchronisation, a dynamic audiovisual organism, which is the locus for random, mobile synchronisation based on the decision to act and the thought pathways of an individual – a spectator/actor.

Rodney Graham revisits history in the manner of Edgar Allan Poe by blending time periods – the 18th century with its mad hatters; the 19th century with *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* and Edison's attempt at talking sound cinema; the second half of the 20th century with the inaugural experiments of scientists Fischer and Hofmann under the influence of drugs; the 1970s and psychedelic rock, Syd Barrett, and the Grateful Dead; and finally the early 21st century with this *Phonokinetoscope*, which embraces and mixes up all these references during an illuminating and stimulating bike ride. Referring to the volume of information brought back from his travels by the explorer Alexander von Humboldt¹⁸, Poe explains that he is critical of this detrimental plurality, this “amount of de-

tail”,¹⁹ not least because he does not believe it guarantees the “individuality of impression”²⁰ which must be formed. The writer therefore advocates performing “something like a mental gyration on the heel”²¹ in order to apprehend the complexity of the world around us as individuals. Rodney Graham's many sonic and visual references echo the speed of Poe's gyration on the heel: different eras and fields overlap and mutually enrich each other without necessarily crossing the threshold into the complex stories and anecdotes which underpin them. We are left standing at the silent doors of unfettered potentiality.



Fig. 07: Frédéric Le Grand. Rodney Graham. *Super Heavy Flute*. 3. Stereo recording for headphones. Hauser & Wirth, 2012. Limited edition of 250, unnumbered.

Seen through this lens, the work *Super-Heavy Flute* (2012),²² which is closely connected to *The King's Part* (1999),²³ places a unique emphasis on the quality of the silences which are played out in it and which seem to be eloquent short-circuits that encourage us to listen to history with a fresh ear.

In April 1999, Rodney Graham produced a unique version of the *Third Concerto for Flute in C Major* dating from 1750, which was originally composed and performed by Frederick the Great, King of Prussia. In 2012, the artist recorded this performance of the concerto on the A-side of the album *Super-Heavy Flute*.

In this new performance, the solo part is played by flautist Kathryn Cernauskas. The orchestral passages

in the King's score have been retranscribed as silent tracks, identified on the album sleeve by a strike-through: the word "orchestra" is crossed out in black.

Frederick the Great is credited on the record sleeve as co-composer of the album with Rodney Graham, who adheres rigidly to the score written by the King of Prussia. The audible differences lie elsewhere and are determined by two crucial factors: the place in which the musician plays her flute, and the specific features of the instrument selected.

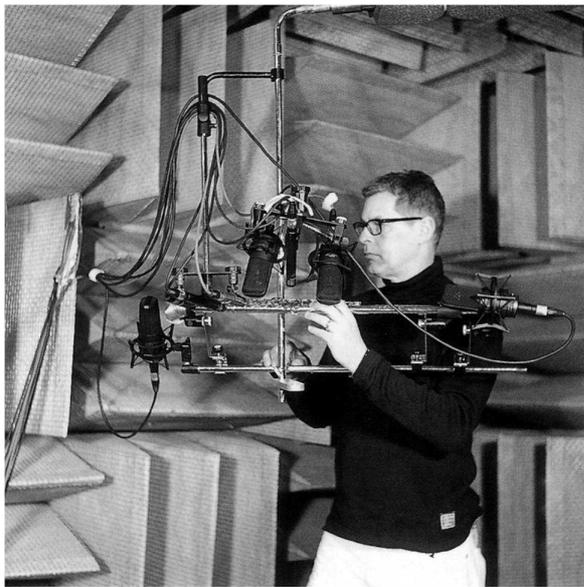


Fig. 08: Rodney Graham in the anechoic chamber of The University of British Columbia, Vancouver 1999. Photo: Shannon Oksanen in *Rodney Graham, Cinema/Music/Video* by Loretta Yarlow, Edition Yves Gevaert, January 2000, p. 64.

The performance and recording of the solo took place in the anechoic chamber of the Department of Mechanical Engineering at the University of British Columbia. The characteristics of this echo-free room ensure that neither the quality of the sound nor the recording process are distorted by reverberation. The flute was fixed to a stand at head height and eight high-tech microphones were also positioned along the flute on the same stand. This arrangement allowed the musician to play her instrument without any breath entering the mouthpiece. At no point did the performer's air column connect with her instrument – only the contact and impact of the pads of her fingers on the body of the flute were recorded. When his LP *Super-Heavy Flute* was released thirteen years later, in 2012, these soundtracks were amplified in the artist's studio with eight amplifiers and then re-recorded with eight micro-

phones. Lastly, the tracks were mixed to obtain a stereo version which Graham intended to be heard through headphones.

The flute used in the artist's arrangement was a model featuring the Boehm system and therefore strikes an anachronistic note in the history of this concerto dating from 1750. Theobald Boehm²⁴ developed his design, which allowed air to circulate by enlarging the tone holes on the instrument, between 1841 and 1847. This amplification was achieved using a system of axle-mounted keys with a series of open rings and hinged finger plates that allow the flautist's fingers to reach and close tone holes with suitable ease.

The ability of this loud system to improve the circulation of air is subverted here by an exclusive focus on the movement of the fingers as they come into contact with the metallic and padded body of the flute. The solo part of this concerto for flute produces a new sound track punctuated purely by the dull mechanical clicks created by the covering and uncovering holes in this key system. These are particularly accentuated by the ornaments in this Baroque score which features numerous "Tr" (trill) notations, an effect created by depressing and releasing keys very quickly.

Rodney Graham also mentions that "the recording was done in short sections determined by how long the performer could play while holding her breath."²⁵ Such was the technical quality of the recording that interference in the form of the musician's breathing would be audible and so Catherine Cernauskas had to leave the room in order to draw breath. When listening to the recording of this apnoeic performance – where the player holds her breath to avoid being heard – the splicing of the different sections dictated by the performer's physiological needs is detectable.

This obliteration of one of our vital functions – breathing – has close links with Diderot, a contemporary of Frederick the Great, who conducted a similar experiment in which he eliminated the sense of hearing. In his *Letter on the Deaf and Dumb for the Use of Those who Hear and Speak*,²⁶ Diderot suggests that we need to "shock the ear in order to surprise and please the imagination".²⁷ The philosopher chooses to take the unusual listening approach of blocking his ears in order to more fully appreciate the performances of actors in a play. This "shock to the ear" in

order to “hear better” has close ties with Graham’s concerto performance.

Furthermore, the mechanical noises deemed to be interference or undesirable elements, to which tech-savvy sound engineers usually pay particularly close attention, are now showcased in the recording and are its principle component. Instead of being ignored or erased, in a complete inversion, these sounds are captured using sophisticated technology commensurate with the oversized apparatus cited on the album sleeve. Furthermore, what is paradoxically made inaudible, and passed over in silence in Graham’s mechanics is precisely the technical skill of the flautist, at least by the standards of the era of the King of Prussia:

“the position of the lips in relation to the embouchure [...] tonguing [...] a brief interruption of air flow [...]”. We are told that it is “by these means that we can amplify and decrease sounds, produce soft and loud, create echoes, and lastly add grace and expression to the tunes we play.”²⁸

These comments about ensuring a graceful and expressive performance, were penned by Jacques Vaucanson,²⁹ an inventor of automata and author of the *M canisme du fl teur automate* [The Mechanism of the Flute-player Automaton], in 1738. The very features which enhanced the human performance of Vaucanson’s flute-player automaton are the aspects which Graham deliberately chooses to remove, using the subterfuge of a different kind of mechanism.

His apparatus introduces a radical counter-typical use of the flute by damping and obliterating all vibrations. The flute is no longer defined as a wind instrument and no longer draws its “grace and expression” from the air circulating in it, but from its role as a percussion instrument. In what Graham calls a “percussion piece”,³⁰ with this unusual suspension of breathing, the musician’s performance skills are transferred to the heart of this percussive density, into the dull yet metallic sound produced by the heavy, dense metal from which the flute is made.

This heavy metal allows us to explore all the ramifications of another of Rodney Graham’s sound refer-

ences. The choice of album title is a clear reference to the heavy metal genre of the late 1960s. It should also be noted that one of the stylistic hallmarks of guitar and bass guitar technique in heavy metal music is the palm mute.³¹ This technique consists of damping the vibrations of the strings with the palm of the hand, and therefore establishes a clear connection between heavy metal and this new version of the Concerto.

After seamlessly segueing in shorthand form from an 18th century figure to heavy metal, passing through the 19th century Boehm system along the way, the artist does not stop there, but makes a foray into another era – the Middle Ages. In fact, for Rodney Graham, the sound produced by his sophisticated equipment is paradoxically reminiscent of an “evolved version of the Medieval player of the fife”,³² that strident little flute that features alongside drums in military bands.



Fig. 09: Rodney GRAHAM, *The King's Part*, 1999, anechoic chamber, painted metal steps, sound equipment, 550 x 1050 x 400 cm, Installation view, *Rodney Graham - Cinema Music Video*, Kunsthalle Wien, Vienna, Austria, 1999 © All rights reserved.

His militaristic interpretation of this contemporary version of the concerto has a direct bearing on his focal point here, the King of Prussia, the literal and metaphorical kingpin at the heart of the LP *Super-Heavy Flute*, who directs us towards another work by Rodney Graham, *The King's Part*,³³ which was produced in 1999. A reproduction of the work *The King's Part* features on a double-page spread inside the record sleeve. This work takes the form of a raised lead-covered box containing a semi-anechoic room. A platform leading to an anteroom is riveted to this monolithic cube which visitors access via wheeled steps reminiscent of aircraft boarding stairs. The closed, hermetically sealed space of *The King's Part*

is the stage for an unprecedented acoustic experiment in orchestrated isolation.

Inside this sealed structure covered with felt and lead, visitors can listen to Frederick II's *Concerto for Flute* revisited by Graham. The eight tracks recorded in the original anechoic room mentioned above are played on eight loudspeakers arranged in a circle on the ceiling of this booth. The eight tracks are played separately and mixed *in situ* for this unique listening experience devoid of all distraction or disturbance which might be detrimental to the sound quality.

In this listening chamber, the ear gradually hones in and becomes familiar with the rhythm and auditory texture of the repetitions, pauses, repeats and syncopated movement, in the manner of eyes gradually adjusting to darkness. Peter Szendy compared this version to an "x-rayed concerto in its skeletal form [...] like a volley of barely muffled shots".³⁴ This volley of shots, this heavy artillery, reflects the personality of the King and his reign. While Frederick the Great has been described as an Enlightenment monarch, he was nevertheless a warlord motivated by a boundless desire for territorial and fiscal power, for which Prussia paid a very heavy price in human lives.

In 1914, Thomas Mann stated in *Frederick the Great and the Great Coalition*: "He revealed the nature of despotism, which had never been so well demonstrated before him [...]. But he created a new type of despotism: he was an enlightened despot".³⁵ This association of two diametrically opposed terms demonstrates the twin-faceted personality of Frederick II, who wavers, as Rodney Graham observes, "between Baroque and classicism, absolutism and revolution, visionary spirit and sensitivity".³⁶

Graham brings a critical eye to bear on this king's reign and transforms one of his iconic attributes – the flute – which was inextricably associated with the places and social circles in which it moved and was played. Creating a politically orientated space – the flute, the King, his orchestra, and the space in which music was played – is an effective propaganda tool. The King's Music Room at the Sanssouci Palace in Potsdam³⁷ is one such device. Adolph von Menzel³⁸, a painter who played a role in enhancing the critical fortunes of the King of Prussia a century later, propagated this humanist version of the despot by offering an

attenuated version of a deceptively cosy court organised around a monarch whose unambiguously central role upholds the illusion of so-called intellectually enlightened company. Graham revives the military aspect, which has been glossed over, by eliminating the pseudo-enlightened ethereal breath of this flute which is responsible for *creating an illusion*. Graham relocates our expectations of this instrument and the soundscapes it evokes by making it play in the alternative register of a mechanism released from the straightjacket of the cultural, social and political conventions of a historical period which bears the hallmark of absolutism and its associated abuses of power, and tacitly feed into the king's performance of his autocratic score. In this series of subversions, wrong-footing and counterpoints, the artist plays with a number of internal contradictions and offers an unexpected new journey:

- a muzzled flute which still produces a sound,
- the transformation of baroque ornaments into mechanical sounds produced by these same ornaments, whose expressive value is relocated but retains its full power and amplitude,
- high fidelity used to accentuate something that is usually unwelcome and must be eliminated,
- abstract hieratic isolation alluding to a court subservient to the central figure of a King,
- mobile steps which remain static and provide access to a journey free from boundaries, which nevertheless has a hint of the prison cell about it.

The King's Part – the best part reserved for oneself to the detriment of others – is also called the "lion's share" and Diderot, a fierce detractor of this "lion" King, dubbed him the "Fox of Potsdam" in an allusion to his treacherous ruses. It offers us an unheard and unheard of version, outside the conventions imposed by the propaganda machine of the 18th century and independent of its critical fortunes in the 19th century.

What Rodney Graham chooses to make inaudible here is in fact the perfect metaphor for what the exercise of despotic power, disguised in clever epithets, has tried to conceal. The silences introduced by the artist in *The King's Part* and *Super-Heavy Flute* adopt a

variety of meanings and materialities: the absence of orchestral playing, a flute without breathing, isolation in a listening booth, breaks caused by editing in sections, right through to Graham's photograph on the album sleeve depicting a staring man with a closed mouth, whose gaze we cannot meet and who cannot hear us. These eloquent silences reveal a circulation of ideas and a breaking down of categories in the arts and time, which prompt us to rethink this royal score and the history and spirit of the Enlightenment.

Breaks, omissions, impediments, strikethroughs, obstructions: the techniques in which Graham immerses us, with silences based on the principle of subtraction, have the radically opposite effect of opening up additional inspired and eloquent contextualisations.

Graham's two works *Super-Heavy Flute* and *The King's Part*, and the internal dislocations which they operate, reveal the artist as a skilled aficionado of the oxymoron. Bearing within themselves the seeds of their own ruin and paradoxes, the silences activated by the artist intervene like short circuits, whose anecdotal, literary, philosophical and political aspects allow us to redirect misunderstandings of history into eloquent ways of thinking the present in the light of the past.

In the work *Kubla Khan, or a Vision in a Dream: A Fragment*,³⁹ Samuel Taylor Coleridge is interrupted while transcribing a dream he has had under the influence of medication, like Albert Hofmann, Roland Fischer, and Rodney Graham in *Phonokinetoscope*. The vision of the poem *Kubla Khan* was fully revealed to him on the night preceding this intrusion. The "unexpected interrupter", as Coleridge calls him, came from Porlock, a village on the Somerset coast. When he visited Coleridge in his retreat on Exmoor in the summer of 1797, the unwelcome visitor interrupted the poet's retranscription of the dream: "all that phantom world so fair vanishes, and a thousand circlets spread, and each misshape[s] the other." The impossibility of repairing the cloudy surface of this stream of nocturnal visions paves the way for the eruption of the creative act. Fernando Pessoa addresses Coleridge's poem in a text entitled 'The Man from Porlock'⁴⁰ in 1934. According to Pessoa, we each contain within ourselves the visitor from Porlock, not as another person, but as an inner facet of our self:

"all that we truly are – as soon as we try to express it, even if only to ourselves – suffers the fatal interruption of that visitor who we also are, that person from the outside who is inside us all".⁴¹

In Pessoa's approach, an interruption is not an obstacle to the emergence of the creative act. Quite the reverse: it is the intrinsic and unalienable condition of the poetic act. Rodney Graham's resolutely Pessoaan montage fits into this vision. Whether it be his meanderings on a bicycle under the effects of a psychoactive substance, the public deciding whether or not a work is visible or audible, an enlightened musical despot, or the avenues opened up by narrative catalysts both auditory and visual, these agents are all iterations of the man from Porlock. These audio and visual "unexpected interrupters" operate so that no mechanism for the soulless accumulation of deadly data can supplant the vitality of an audio and visual arrangement, so that these sound spaces – much to the chagrin of the Queen in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* – can continue to beat time, in both senses of the term, in anticipation of activation. The auditory and visual catalysts created by Rodney Graham in the form of a silent flute, boarding stairs, a playing card, a musical score, a thermos flask, an LSD blotter and a bicycle, intrigue, perplex and stimulate the "mental gyration"⁴² which assures us of a unique approach to the complexity of the world.

Endnotes

1. William Hogarth, *Analysis of Beauty. Written with a view of fixing the fluctuating ideas of taste*, London, J.Reeves, 1752, Chapter V, p. 25.
<http://www.gutenberg.org/files/51459/51459-h/51459-h.htm> (Accessed 22 October 2019)
2. Rodney Graham, *Phonokinetoscope*, 2001, installation with modified turntable, 15-minute 33 1/3 rpm vinyl LP, speakers, film projector, 5-minute 16mm colour film loop. Video available on the 303 Gallery website: <https://www.303gallery.com/gallery-exhibitions/rodney-graham5/video?view=slider> (Accessed 22 October 2019)
3. Frederick the Great. Rodney Graham. *Super Heavy Flute*. Stereo recording for headphones. Hauser & Wirth, 2012. Limited edition of 250, unnumbered.
4. Rodney Graham, *The King's Part*, 1999, anechoic chamber, painted metal steps, sound equipment, 550 x 1050 x 400 cm.
5. Thomas Edison (1847-1931) and William Kennedy Laurie Dickson (1860-1935) inventors and pioneers of the kinetoscope.
6. The Kinetophone or - as Dickson called it - the Kinetophone. Graham initially intended to call his work *The Invention of the Kinetophone (A Space Rock Opera)*.
7. Albert Hofmann (1906-2008), a Swiss chemist who discovered LSD by chance in 1943 while working in Basel. This day is commemorated as "Bicycle Day".

8. Claude Bohuon, Claude Monneret, *Fabuleux hasards, Histoire de la découverte de médicaments*, EDP Sciences, 2006, p. 78 / Albert Hoffman, *LSD – My Problem Child*, 1980, McGraw Hill book Company, translated from the German by Jonathan Ott <http://www.psychedellic-library.org/child1.htm> (Accessed 22 October 2019).
9. Rodney Graham, in *Rodney Graham*, exhibition catalogue, Whitechapel Art Gallery, London, 24 September-17 November 2002, K21, Kunstsammlung Nordrhein-Westfalen, Düsseldorf, 15 February-15 May 2003, [mac], galeries contemporaines des musées de Marseille, 6 July-28 September 2003, p. 108.
10. Lewis Carroll, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, 1865, London, Macmillan and Co.
11. Rodney Graham, in *Rodney Graham*, *op. cit.*, p.108.
12. Grateful Dead, a Californian rock group formed in 1965, which broke up in 1995.
13. Grateful Dead, *Aoxomoxoa*, 1969, Warner Bros.
14. The "Basel Short Stories" exhibition curated by Josef Helfenstein at the Kunstmuseum in Basel in 2018 (10.02-21.05.2018) presented an installation as a tribute to Albert Hofmann, in which headphones were made available to members of the public so that they could listen to China Cat Sunflower by the Grateful Dead.
15. Named after the Californian designer, Gary Christopher Fisher, considered to be the inventor of the all-terrain bike in the 1970.
16. Roland Fischer was born in 1915 in Budapest. Six months before the outbreak of World War II in 1939, he left Hungary to study chemistry at Basel University in Switzerland, where he obtained his doctorate in 1945. Roland Fischer began working in 1946, when he described his psychedelic experience after ingesting mescaline, which featured in his first publication in Switzerland.
17. *op. cit.*
18. Alexander von Humboldt (1769-1859), German naturalist, geographer and explorer. The topographic drawings, and the specimens of flora and fauna collected from his expeditions helped to establish the basic principles of scientific exploration. He wrote *Cosmos*, a five-volume work, in which the explorer described all the knowledge of the era on earthly and celestial phenomena.
19. Edgar Allan Poe, *Eurêka. Essai sur l'univers matériel et spirituel*, Tristram, 2007, p. 13. / Edgar Allan Poe, *Eureka. An Essay on the Spiritual and Material*, [1848], 2002, London, Hesperus Press, p.6.
20. *Ibid.*
21. *Ibid.*
22. Frederick the Great. Rodney Graham. *Super Heavy Flute*. Stereo recording for headphones. Hauser & Wirth, 2012. Limited edition of 250, unnumbered.
23. Rodney Graham, *The King's Part*, 1999, anechoic chamber, painted metal stairs, sound equipment, 550 x 1050 x 400 cm.
24. Theobald Boehm (1794-1881) was a musician and flautist at the Bavarian court. In 1847, he built his first metal flute, with a pierced cylindrical body and a conical head joint, which was the genesis of the modern flute.
25. Rodney Graham, *Super-Heavy Flute*, artist's sleeve notes on the album.
26. Denis Diderot, *Lettres sur les sourds et muets à l'usage de ceux qui entendent et qui parlent* [1751], GF Flammarion, Paris, 2000/ *Diderot's Early philosophical Works* Trans. Margaret Jourdain, Open Court Publishing Company London & Chicago, 1916.
27. *Ibid.* p.194
28. Jacques Vaucanson, *Le Mécanisme du flûteur automate* [1738], available at <https://gallica.bnf.fr/ark:/12148/bpt6k108299h>. (Accessed 22 October 2019)
29. Jacques Vaucanson (1709-1782) was a French inventor and mechanic famous for his human automata.
30. Rodney Graham, *Cinema, music, video*, Vienna, Kunsthalle, First Edition, 1999, p. 70.
31. The "palm mute" is a playing technique for guitar and bass which consists of placing the hand on the strings on top of the bridge to damp the notes to a greater or lesser degree. The notation for palm mute is PM or P.M. If a PM is used, the notes can be replaced on the score by crosses to show that the mute must ensure that the notes eventually indiscernible.
32. Rodney Graham, *Cinema, music, video*, Vienna, Kunsthalle, First Edition, 1999, p. 69.
33. Rodney Graham, *The King's Part*, 1999, anechoic chamber, painted metal steps, sound equipment 550 x 1050 x 400 cm.
34. Peter Szendy "Machin, machine et mégamachine" in the catalogue for the exhibition *HF - RG: Harun Farocki - Rodney Graham*, Paris, France, Jeu de Paume : Blackjack, 2009, p. 68.
35. Thomas Mann, *Les Maîtres*, précédé de *Frédéric et la grande coalition*, [1914], 1979 Editions Grasset, Paris, p. 25/ Thomas Mann, *Frederick the Great and the Great Coalition* [1914], 2005, translated by H.T Lowe Porter.
36. Rodney Graham, *Cinema, music, video*, Vienna, Kunsthalle, First Edition, 1999, p. 92.
37. Summer palace built for the monarch between 1745 and 1747.
38. Adolph von Menzel (1815-1905), German painter, illustrator and engraver. He illustrated the history of Frederick the Great, Army Uniforms under Frederick the Great, The Soldiers of Frederick the Great, and lastly The Works of Frederick the Great (1843-1849).
39. Samuel Taylor Coleridge, "Kubla Khan" dans *La Ballade du Vieux Marin et Autres Poèmes*, Paris, Gallimard, 2007/ "Kubla Khan, or a Vision in a Dream: A Fragment" in *The Complete Poems of Samuel Taylor Coleridge*, London, Penguin Classics, 1997.
40. Fernando Pessoa, 'The Man from Porlock', published in the newspaper *Fradique*, in 1934.
41. *Ibid.*
42. Edgar Allan Poe, *Eurêka. Essai sur l'univers matériel et spirituel*, *op. cit.*/ Edgar Allan Poe, *Eureka. An Essay on the Spiritual and Material* *op.cit.*

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Abstract

The works of Rodney Graham that are analysed in this article, *Phonokinétoscope* (2001), *Super-Heavy Flute* (2012) and *The King's Part* (1999), are invitations to multiple understandings, references which are pointed to or affirmed taking the spectator onto unexpected ground. Whether from visual art, cinema, music, sound practices, literature or poetry, all these approaches are interconnected, as the works of Graham interweave different fields and temporalities. The boundaries between them are constantly pushed and their limits altered. The sound material that traverses his works, which can be suggested, silenced, interrupted, mute or broadcast at a high volume, prove the way Graham realizes the "mental gyration on the heel" described by Edgar Allan Poe, and a singular way of questioning the world.

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