

Julius invites us to experience the vision of sound, listening with the eyes. Neither more nor less. From “Musik für die augen” (Music for the eyes, 1981) to the most recent “Large piano piece”, Rolf Julius’ work, while finding expression in a wide range of ways, is clearly moving in one direction. In many of his works little CD players transmit sounds so as to buzz the membranes of variously sized loudspeakers turned to face upwards. These sounds shake the powdered pigments covering the loudspeakers as if they were alive, provoking small coloured earthquakes. The loudspeaker membranes convey a physical component of sound, its very vibrations, which make its acting visible.

Julius also integrates these loudspeakers with other raw materials, such as stones or water, and diverse devices, such as glass or metal sheets, clay pots, bowls, japaneze cups, woks, which resonate or act as sound diffusers. Through these elements, supporting the music diffused by loudspeakers, the conceived sound becomes concrete. They reveal the sound, act as traps for the eye. Attracting the viewer’s glance, they allow her/him to hear through the organ of sight what otherwise would eventually be perceived as a noise, due not only to the low volume but to a so-called perceptive supremacy of the eye. Approaching the works, the listener-viewer is able to distinguish and make sense of the music diffused by the speakers. For Julius this experience of the listening has a concreteness which opposes the abstractness of musical writing, just as the sound itself is concrete, a palpable, physical thing, lived as such.

After having lent the ears to the picking up of sound, like a zooming in, a second action becomes logically possible, using the same optical metaphor, a zooming out which culminates in a pan shot, wide enough to relate all the works to each other, creating a sort of contamination between them. Something like a hidden vibration appears between the works thanks to this superimposition, this mixing, this *friction*. So, for a moment, we hear what exists between one sound and another.

Julius says: “I’m concerned with the interval, the space between sounds. How far can this space expand?”. It is up to the visitor to find her/his own answer, wandering among the works. Julius’ target is to testify “humility before nature”, increasing the awareness of the listening experience. Nature which we are part of and where, he believes, any separation between visible and intelligible doesn’t exist: spiritual matter isn’t disjoined from perceptible matter. His work displays the invisible through sound and, just like Chinese landscape painting, through a fusion of full and empty.

So, the action of seeing and listening links us “to the real, that which has already begun, always” (E. Grazioli), to the flow we are living in, which we are part of. Neither more nor less.

Giuseppe Furchieri, March 2001

(translated by Simon West)