

ARTGENÈVE

MUSIC GETS A FOOT IN THE DOOR

A new project seeks to bring out the musicians in artists

ARTGENÈVE-MUSIC BRINGS TOGETHER visual artists who are as interested in music as musicians. By inviting such artists to create a work, musician, composer and curator Augustin Maurs seeks to fuse music and visual arts within the project. The event will take place during Artgenève (January 29 to February 1) in a 19th century villa, in a very different environment than that of an international art fair. Maurs explains what the project is about:

What is Artgenève-musique?

Artgenève-musique is a platform within Artgenève which commissions new musical, performative or ephemeral works created by artists.

What do you mean by ‘musical, performative or ephemeral works’? Are these created by musicians or visual artists?

They can be collaborations with musicians, music pieces connected to shows, performances or sound works but also situation-related pieces. There is a focus on live interventions, but music here doesn't mean “concerts”. On the contrary, the program wishes to overstep the ideas such as “concert” and “performance”.

What is the principle or idea behind involving visual artists in creating music? What is the need to do so?

Well, there is a need, or an interest in music, and I think, for good reasons. One of them is that music immediately reflects time and sociability. The other side of the momentary aspect of music is that it is inescapably embedded in the context where it takes place. If you create a music work for a concert hall, for example, the concert hall and all its parameters — dressed up audience, silence, time limitation, etc. — contribute to the form of the piece. So, in my view, creation of music is not limited to the rendition or the organization of sounds, it is also to create a ritual. This relation between music and ritual becomes interesting when it comes to visual arts, because visual artists are particularly sensitive and inventive there, and visual-art settings offer greater possibilities for the invention of rituals.

So, I think the interest in music is not so much about parallels or “translations” as about junctions, and cohabitations between different time layers; about experimenting with presence. For instance, Saâdane Afif speaks about the music performances he makes for his exhibitions as “vernissage” in the original,



Left: Augustin Maurs; Above: Anri Sala; Below: Villa Sarasin, the spacious 19th century mansion that will host Artgenève-musique

dimensional composition, while gravitating again around the ongoing interpretations of “Long Sorrow”. In this rather complex musical texture, the idea of the bridge is crucial for Anri Sala, as a way of dealing with fixed material and live improvisation. For him the bridge becomes a “time breach” that releases a process from itself. It was my co-curator Catherine Othenin-Girard's idea to invite M/2 collective, comprising Jean Crotti, Alain Huck, Robert Ireland, Jean-Luc Manz, Christian Messerli, and Catherine Monney. Their project fully plays with the atmosphere of the venue, Villa Sarasin. The piece is a mise en scène of the singing voice in a rehearsal situation. Each day, singers from a classical, contemporary or other repertoire are invited to rehearse at the Villa Sarasin, going through their daily exercises and practicing their current pieces in different rooms. The visitors hear and see the musicians through the doors left ajar.

The program is not taking place at the fair venue but near it. Why? How is it connected to the fair?

Artgenève-musique takes place in the Villa Sarasin, a spacious 19th century villa adjacent to the main hall of Artgenève. The villa stands in the midst of urban activity and infrastructures. I like the fact that the villa brings about exactly the features which a fair doesn't really stand for: a private, intimate atmosphere, rooms of different sizes and great acoustic, protected from the “noise” of the booths. When the director of Artgenève, Thomas Hug, saw the villa, he immediately thought about the possibility of a music program there and invited me to propose projects.

- Artgenève runs from January 29 through February 1



literal meaning of the word “varnishing”. The performative, ephemeral moment becomes the varnish which enables the work to remain in time.

Tell us a little about the two projects — Anri Sala's “A Longer Sorrow Where the Moon Notes Equal the Beach Bridges” and M/2 Collective's “VOX”.

When I talked to Anri Sala about a music project, he came up with several ideas and then decided to combine two of them, resulting in an ongoing live music performance with a film projection. As you can tell by the title, the piece is a juxtaposition of his film “Long Sorrow” (2005) with a work he made for the Arles Amphitheatre in 2012, “Where the Moon Notes

Equal the Beach Bridges.” The piece consists, at first, the musical multiplication of the “Long Sorrow” sound track, based on the recordings of a performance he created for the Serpentine Gallery in 2011. That was a marathon series of 400 concerts where the saxophonist Andre Vida had musically “answered” Jemeel Moondoc (who features in the film and had played the original sound track). For the Artgenève-musique project, Vida will be performing together with his own, recorded improvisations. Then, another musical process interferes with this first performance: “Where the Moon Notes Equal the Beach Bridges” is a musical dialogue between Vida and the trombone player Hilary Jeffery, that plays with the idea of the “bridge” in pop music.

Usually, the bridge is a contrasting moment of transition in a song, but in this piece, every single note of the Montana song “Moonflower” has an exterior, individual bridge section. So the music unfolds to a multi-