

Broken Music

artistsbooksandmultiples.blogspot.com/2020/06/broken-music.html



[Ursula Block, Michael Glasmeier, eds]

Broken Music

New York City, USA: Primary Information, 2019

280 pp., 26 x 21 x 2.5 cm., softcover

Edition of 2500

The first ‘art’ job I ever had was for a now-defunct space called Lake Galleries, the first Toronto venue (that I was aware of) to dedicate itself to conceptual art.¹ It was an offshoot of the antiquarian bookstore D&E Lake, which remains active today. My first curatorial project ever was compiling a slim catalogue for the store, of artists’ records, and records designed by artists.

One of the resources I used was a book they had in their second story office called *Broken Music*. I asked to buy this book from them, and the owner Don Lake said “I can’t sell that book. That book *makes* me money”.

The record catalogue became the impetus for an exhibition by Roger Bywater at Art Metropole, which became my second arts employer. They too had a copy of *Broken Music* on the office shelf and I also pleaded with them to let me buy it, and was told no. It was too valuable a resource to part with.

Both of these jobs paid very little, so the three hundred dollar price tag on the secondary market for the 1989 out-of-print book meant I was resigned to never owning it. I would check Ebay as often as possible, in the hopes of finding an affordable copy, but an autobiography with the same title meant scrolling through pages and pages of sellers with buyer's remorse from purchasing a memoir by Sting.

One year we went to the Berlin Art Fair for Art Metropole, bringing mostly multiples, some artists' books and a small flip-display of CDs. On the second day of the fair a woman arrived and seemed to beeline to the audio works. She quickly and expertly filtered the good from the bad, and made a pile to purchase.

Sizing up her selections, I exclaimed "Who *are* you?".

She quietly introduced herself as Ursula Block. Excitedly, I said "Oh, very nice to meet you, you produced the best book on sound art ever published. Please sell me a copy!"

Like Lake and Art Metropole before her, she declined, with a demure shaking of her head. "I no longer have copies for sale."

We spoke for a few minutes before she stopped, her eye catching a book behind me on the shelf. She asked about it and I said "That's the *second* best book on sound art ever published".

She enthusiastically flipped through it, and promptly proposed a trade.

We scheduled an appointment for us to visit Gelbe Musik, a record store she had been running since 1981 (it closed a few years later, in 2014). The store felt a bit out of the way, and seemed fairly unassuming from the street, but inside had an incredible selection of records (I bought as many as I could carry) and also a space for very small sound art exhibitions.

While wondering how there could possibly be enough interest in Artists Records to sustain a store dedicated only to them, a few customers trickled in - on a Monday, when they were usually closed. Both of them made purchases. It was pretty heartwarming. I attributed it to the strength of her reputation.

Urusla was followed around the store by her pet terrier, who (by no coincidence, I'm sure) closely resembled Nipper, from the HMV logo (and the painting by Francis Barraud titled *His Master's Voice*, which provided both name and graphic to the record store chain). She went to a cabinet in the office area and pulled out a sealed copy of *Broken Music*, and handed it over.

For the price of the Art Metropole book *Sound by Artists* (minus my employee discount) I finally had a pristine copy of a book I had wanted for years.

It didn't take long for the volume to begin to show signs of wear. Like Jon Hendrick's *Fluxus Codex*, the book was regularly consulted and frequently scanned. There was soon a real danger that the spine would give out.

The news that Primary Information (already with a stellar track record of essential facsimile reprints of difficult-to-obtain texts) were set to produce a reprint was most welcome. I'm surprised it took me this long to order a copy (the donation of 100% of the proceeds to Black Lives Matter last month made it a very easy decision).

Broken Music was one of the first books published on the subject of artists' records and remains the most comprehensive. It includes essays by both Block and Glasmeier, as well as Theodor W. Adorno, Jean Dubuffet, Milan Knizak, László Moholy-Nagy, Christiane Seiffert, Hans Rudolf Zeller and dealer/publisher René Block (husband of Ursula). Perhaps most essential is the 200-page bibliography of artists' records, including works by Vito Acconci, Laurie Anderson, Joseph Beuys, Marcel Duchamp, Jack Goldstein, Hans Haacke, Joe Jones, Martin Kippenberger, Anna Lockwood, Yoko Ono, Nam June Paik, Michael Snow, Jean Tinguely, Ben Vautier, Yoshi Wada, Andy Warhol, Lawrence Weiner and many others.

Like the Art Metropole2 book I traded for it, *Broken Music* also features a flexi-disc, a recording of the Arditti Quartet performing Milan Knizak's "Broken Music", the book's namesake.

Available from the publishers for \$30 (a tenth the price of the secondary market price a few years ago), *Broken Music* is an essential book for anyone interested in artists' recordings and audio art. Order your copy [here](#).

1. It quickly branched off into many other things, including a distasteful exhibition of court drawings from the trial of serial killer Paul Bernardo, which led to my brief appearance on an episode of the American tabloid 'news' show *Hard Copy*.

2. *Sound by Artists* (also recently reprinted after being worth around \$300 on the secondary market) also includes a flexi-disc record, by Christian Marclay. Unlike the Knizak disc in *Broken Music*, Marclay's cannot be played, as it is bound into the book.

Smyth

Smyth, David

→ Revolutions Per Minute



Snow, Michael [C/S]

Title: 1016 NEW YORK EYE AND EAR CONTROL

Contents: Dons Dawn, A Y, ITT

Part: Albert Ayler (ts), Don Cherry (tp), John Tchicai (as), Roswell Rudd (tb), Gary Peacock (b), Sonny Murray (dr)

ø 30cm, 33 RPM, 1966, ESP-DISK, New York ESP 1016

Cover: b/w, design: Michael Snow

This music was recorded on July, 1964 by New York artist Michael Snow for use as the soundtrack of his film entitled New York Eye and Ear Control. The music was recorded prior to the production of the film.

MICHAEL SNOW
MUSICS FOR PIANO, WHISTLING
MICROPHONE AND TAPE RECORDER

My first consideration in writing the text which you are now, I presume, reading ("presume"? I guess that this text will still be here to read later even if you aren't reading it now) was to write something which when printed would cover all four faces of this album. Of several ideas for a design for this album cover or jacket this seemed at the time to be the best. Remains to be seen. Functions gradually clarified to this stage: I would write something that would fulfill several requirements, the basic one being that it function as a "design" or "image" that would be both decorative and "graphic". Another requirement that might better be approached now as an intention or ambition was the image

Snow, Michael [C/S]

Title: Musics For Piano, Whistling, Microphone and Tape Recorder

Contents: "Falling Starts" (Beginning), "Falling Starts" (Conclusion), "W in the D", "Left Right"

2 LPs, ø 30cm, 33 RPM, 1975, Chatham Square New York No. LP 1009/10

Cover: b/w, gatefold, with a text by Michael Snow



Snow, Michael [S]

Title: The Last LP, Unique Last Recordings of the Music of Ancient Cultures Assembled by Michael Snow

Contents: A: 1.Wu Ting Dee Lin Chao Cheu, 2.Si Nopo Da, 3.Ohwachira, 4.I Ching Dee Yen Tzen, 5.Pöhi/nov-yessnikh, 6.Speech in Klögen, B: 1.Mbowunsa Mpahiya, 2.Ouula-sukpu Quai Gami, 3.Amitäbha Chenden Kälä, 4.Roiakunluo, 5.Raga Lalat

ø 30cm, 33 RPM, Art Metropole, Canada No. 1001

Cover: multi-color print, gatefold

But recording itself has recently gone through some subtle and important changes which might - ought to - will alter the above-mentioned form of aural belief. From being an instrument of documentation, sound recording has become a musical instrument in itself. Recording has become as much a process of creation as of memorization.

Excerpt from covertext

Snow, Michael
→ The Artists' Jazz Band

Sobieralski
→ Piotr Nathan



Sonnier, Keith [S]

Title: Air To Air

ø 30cm, 33 RPM, 1975, limited edition of 1000, Gemini G.E.L. Los Angeles

Cover: b/w

Stereo LP of amplified space installation with transmission systems for communications by long distance radio connection between Los Angeles, California and New York City, New York



Sordide Sentimental [P/S]

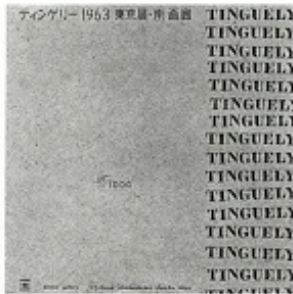
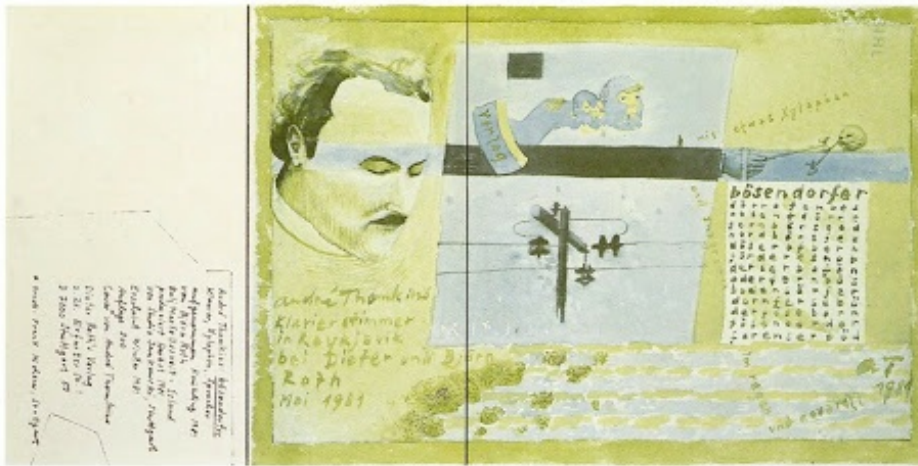
Music: Throbbing Gristle

Contents: We hate you (Little girls), Five knuckle shuffle



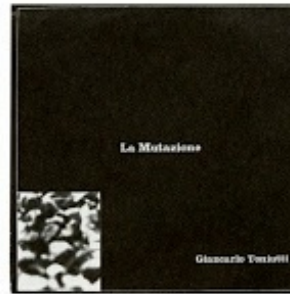
Die besten Tonabnehmerpatronen (es sind auch immer die teuersten) arbeiten für gewöhnlich selbst bei der niedrigsten für sie angegebenen Auflagekraft noch einwandfrei, sofern sie in Tonarmen höchster Qualität verwendet werden. Bei der Festlegung der Auflagekraft für einen Tonabnehmer ist es im allgemeinen am günstigsten, mit dem höchsten zulässigen Wert zu beginnen und schrittweise die Auflagekraft so lange herabzusetzen, bis diejenige Einstellung gefunden ist, bei der die Patrone in dem verwendeten Tonarm am besten arbeitet. Bevor man diese Einstellung endgültig belässt, führt man zweckmäßigerweise noch eine Überprüfung mit der am schwierigsten abzuspielenden Platte des eigenen Repertoires durch; es ist diejenige mit den lautesten und orchestermäßig am stärksten besetzten Passagen etwa z.B. das „Dies Irae“ im Requiem von Berlioz.





Toeboch, Moniek [C/S]

Title: I Can Dance
 Contents: Ja, Ja, Collages 1, Throatscratching, Collages 2, Collages 3, Love, Chattering Ladies, Dukflat, I can dance, Klap Klap, Klap Klap, Klap Klap
 ø 30cm, 33 RPM, n.d.(1981), Claxon-Records Amsterdam No. 81-8
 Cover: b/w, design: Moniek Toeboch



Toeboch, Moniek
 → DUTCH "DIFFICULT" MUSIC

Cover: b/w, photos and design: Giancarlo Toniutti

Tödliche Doris
 → Die Tödliche Doris

In every event the tension to the disaster adds to itself new conscience. Before the disaster the environmental cauterization, as exposure of such an event's evolution. And in the cauterization the final event, the last mimesis, the last remaining still human act. (the mutation)
 Giancarlo Toniutti (Covertext)

Toniutti, Giancarlo [C/S]

Title: La Mutazione
 Contents: part A - the tree, part B - Nekrose
 ø 30cm, 33 RPM, 1985, BROKEN FLAG, Udine BFV 6

Topor, Roland [C/S]

Title: The Golden Years





Milan Knížek. *Untitled*, 1963-1987





Milan Knizak
BROKEN MUSIC
(Details)

Arditti String Quartet

PI13 (2018)

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Primary Information

Beilage für den Katalog zur
Ausstellung **Broken Music** (1988)
organisiert von
Ursula Block und Michael Glasmeier
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