GRID :: PRESET

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Blyth Gallery
London, SW7 2AZ

9 Jan - 4 Feb 2019
PV 15 Jan 18:00-20:00 PM

Repeat After Me

I'm writing this in a space of time, which is limited, purposely confined, in a box, formed in a constraint, caught in a grid. What I mean is I've given myself a set number of minutes, a parameter to work in and against. This formula is somehow a device so that I get this written rather than skipping endlessly around the request to write a text for a show, an exhibition at a set time with a selection of artworks completed by three artists. Already there's a parameter enough, a set template that will be used as a playground for our interpretation. A number that divides; three positions, three angles. The three form this temporal whole with holes, cut gaps, printing errors and missed stitches.
Stop.

You see I'm already moving close to jumping out of my frame and meandering elsewhere. So back to the plan, write a text in a short amount of divided segments of what we call time. There will be a start and an end, and I'm allowing myself a certain amount of reflection and correction, which will form footnotes. Mechanical structures, small sub-parameters parasitically hanging off the main frame. These, as is the main hub they refer to, will be divisible by words each divisible by letters. Letters forming signs; visual data, code looped and layered, lines cut to reveal other lines, jack in the box needles pulling language in and out of nonsense, fingers tapping tablets, inscribed on stones, garble, babble, stuttering and hiccups.
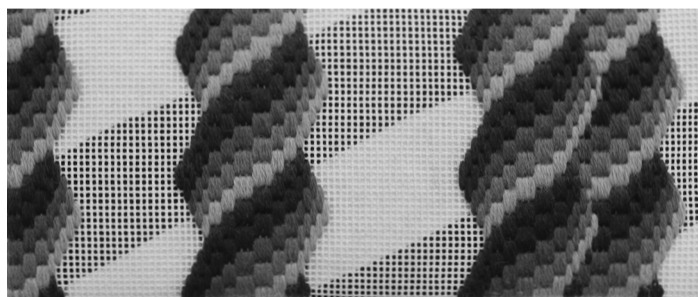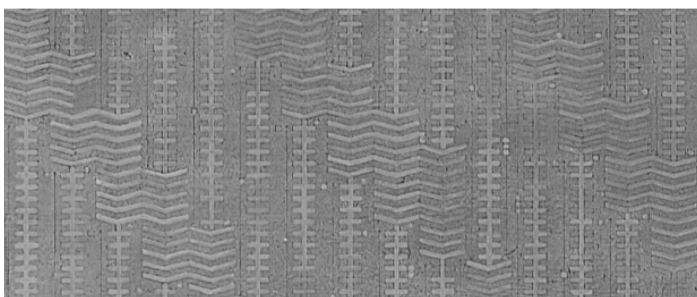Stop.

Again I'm shuffling off the subject so I will again bring myself back, loop intact to my starting point[1]. What did Mark E Smith write about repetition[2]? Which brings me back to another thought I have to confess, I may repeat myself and return numerous times to a repeated point. This is intentional and though probably tragic for the text I will give myself the freedom to do so. So let me repeat, I may repeat. Say these words over and over again, look into my eyes, mantras, I've told you time and time again, repeat after me, over and over, in and out, through and through, never learning from the past, doomed to repeat
Stop.

Where was I, let me back step a little.
Stop.

Which brings me back to where I started. Time is limited so I'll get on with it. But why not return back to parameters I was/am working with and against? These works all set their individual parameters; each is a rule system, which is set and results documented. Like some New York musician phasing strings to simply see what happens or swinging microphones to watch time ebb and flow[3]. Didn't the much-missed Finnish artist do something similar with clocks inspired by observing traffic lights slowly, really slowly shifting in and out of synchronization[4]. Taking the time to see the pattern in things, Christ I miss having that time. Get up, dress, make pack lunch whilst drinking first coffee, teeth, wake up the little one, sit and lie that its a really good idea to get out of bed, make breakfast for her, dress, teeth, pack bag, move onto tea and drink half of it, out the door shoes on, to the tube, sit on tube, out and on tram, run into school, sign in, see you at 5, back on tube, home computer on, emails, pay bills, worry, panic, pack computer, walk fast to studio, finish painting start painting repeat, check mails, worry. Fuck its 4, leave studio, on tube, Hi how was school, sign out, on tube, home, dinner on, draw blue princess with fangs, eat dinner, bit of TV, no, now its bed, pajamas, teeth, story, another story, sleepy story, lights out, check mails, worry, Hi you how was your day, teeth, check mails, sofa, wake up, where am I, get up, dress, make packed lunch.
Stop.

Ivan Seal, Berlin, 2018

Some throw in the towel and leave, take the family and set up in a forest and live off berries and squirrel meat, some just switch off, on plug, go minimal, get simple and drop out. Off the grid. Anyway where was I, I'll return back to parameters, didn't Mark E Smith say something about that? These artists each start with a parameter, a system, a stage, cage, and grid. Then line-by-line, cut-by-cut, thread-by-thread they follow and organize. They put in and remove; they weave in and out of their skins, the membrane, which keeps all that pumping, sticky stuff in, the grid. Works, artworks, completed pieces (always a parameter of start and finish, in and out) create their own personalities from their errors, their glitch or the ghosts formed by putting similarities close together[5]. The details, which formulate the sum. Even with these shifts from the grid, the web keeps its strength through its stubbornness. Its rigid math, its refusal, its uncompromising grip, its fixed stare and its dominance. However within the works presented here there is somehow fluidness, warm immersion and even confession. The difference is the dance between the rules and the unruly, the cage and the free, the grid and the scribble, the mass and the individual, the machine and the human. We the sum of our errors.
Stop.

1 How does one begin, a tricky game "to start something". Yet games need rules. Again a set of parameters. Something, which sets the ball rolling, yet makes sure it doesn't roll away. Starting points, a given template be it the minute holes in fabric, needle thin lines carved in paper or manic divisions set across an impossible math they start with a mission and roll with it. But weird workings are at play in these games, errors, phase and tangents pierce our retinas, trip our real and scramble our logic

2 This is the three are's
The three are's
Repetition, Repetition, Repetition
Mark E Smith/The Fall Repetition August 11, 1978

3 Pendulum Music by Steve Reich For microphones, amplifiers speakers and Performers Three, four or more microphones are suspended from the ceiling or from microphone boom stands by their cables so that they all hang the same distance from the floor and are all free to swing with a pendular motion. Each microphone's cable is plugged into an amplifier, which is connected to a loudspeaker. Each microphone hangs a few inches directly above or next to its speaker. Before the performance each amplifier is turned up just to the point where feedback occurs when a mike swings directly over or next to its speaker, but no feedback occurs as the mike swings to either side. This level on each amplifier is then marked for future reference and all amplifiers are turned down. The performance begins with performers taking each mike, pulling it back like a swing, and then holding them while another performer turns up the amplifiers to their pre-marked levels. Performers then release all the microphones in unison. Thus, a series of feedback pulses are heard which will either be all in unison or not depending on the gradually changing phase relations of the different mike pendulums. Performers then sit down to watch and listen to the process along with the rest of the audience. The piece is ended sometime shortly after all mikes have come to rest and are feeding back a continuous tone by performers pulling out the power cords of the amplifiers.
Steve Reich 8/68 revised 5/73

4 Mika Vainio (RIP)

5 Phill Niblock's music is a bit like the ocean, always the same and always changing. On the face of things, not much happens. Eight of Touch Three's nine pieces were created by taking computer recordings of single tones on an individual instrument, editing out the breathing spaces and initial attacks, which he then assembles into 20-minute-long multi-tracked expanses. The only variation in the material comes from the minimal differences in how a musician plays the same note and some subtle ProTools pitch-shifting. But just like the sea rewards your gaze with endless patterns and variations, the microtones that arise from those tiny differences create fields rich with activity. http://www.touch33.net/archives/reviews_phillpniblock/