

Tarek Atoui Will Alter Your Aural Experiences at Bergen Assembly

A defunct swimming pool in Bergen is filled with unheard sounds.

Hili Perlson (<https://news.artnet.com/about/hili-perlson-261>), September 23, 2016



Tarek Atoui, "Within II" Performance, Bergen Assembly 2016 Sentralbadet, Bergen Photo: Thor Brødreskift

The Snapping Shrimp is one of the loudest creatures in the sea. With a snap of the claw, it creates a cavitation bubble that generates acoustic pressure capable of crushing a small fish—the shrimp's prey.

On a small monitor placed on the floor, a 40-second, black-and-white sequence of the shrimp's killer bubble moving through water is playing in slow-motion. In reality, its speed can reach almost 100 km/h, and release a sound nearing 220 decibels—all qualities that, for me watching the clip, will remain imperceptible. And that's precisely why it's here, displayed inside a disused public swimming pool, the Sentralbadet, in the heart of Bergen, Norway. It's shown among other curiosities and phenomena—some invented by man, some naturally occurring—that relate to sound and its physicality, perceptible or not.

Titled "Infinite Ear," the show—which also includes a film program, a café which pairs drinks with sounds, and a massage room (more on those later)—is curated by the duo Council who are Grégory Castéra and Sandra Terdjman, and Beirut-born sound artist and musician Tarek Atoui. Together, they designed an umbrella project that centers on the experience of deafness and the sensory transformation of hearing (<http://bergenassembly.no/en/tarek-atoui/>) for the three-part, 2016 Norwegian triennial, the Bergen Assembly (<http://bergenassembly.no>). (The triennial's other two strands are curated by Praxes, who staged long-evolving (<https://news.artnet.com/exhibitions/lynda-benglis-talks-bergen-assembly-487205>) shows with Marvin-Gaye Chetwynd and Linda Benglis; and *freethought*, a multi-headed research group which focused on the infrastructures governing modern life).



Tarek Atoui & Council, "Infinite Ear." Installation view at Bergen Assembly 2016, Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Brødreskift

Atoui and Council first collaborated in 2013, on a workshop for students at a school for the deaf in Sharjah. But his own explorations of the different ways in which we hear began earlier on, and were impacted by an arrest in 2006, where he was interrogated and beaten in Lebanon, and suffered partial hearing-loss in one ear as a result.

A long-time builder of instruments in his practice, Atoui created nine new tactile, vibration-heavy devices in collaboration with other instrument makers, as well as hearing impaired volunteers at workshops around the world. Throughout the month of September, the new instruments—including a network of subwoofers played with hand movements like a theremin, and a tactile keyboard that lets the musician listen with their fingers—are played in a series of concerts at Sentralbadet called "Within." When not activated, the instruments are displayed inside the empty pool: handmade and sculptural, they are extremely inviting to the touch.



Tarek Atoui, "Within II", Performance, Bergen Assembly 2016. Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Brødreskift

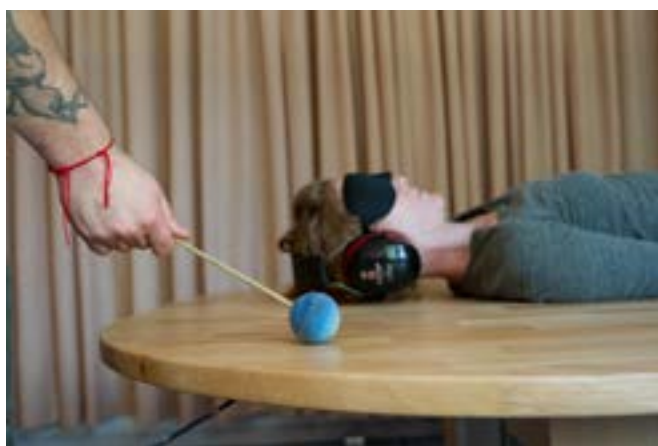
The performers include professional musicians and non-trained performers, deaf and hearing impaired. So successfully designed are the instruments that watching the second series of concerts, "Within II," it was mostly impossible to make out who on stage was differently hearing. During one sequence, performed by three women who I later found out were all non-hearing, Atoui was moving to the music as he watched the concert from the railings around the water-less pool.



Tarek Atoui, "Within I" Performance, Bergen Assembly 2016, Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Brødreskift

Atoui and Council mounted an experiential exhibition that makes use of the functional architecture of the massive 1960s-era public pool. It seems crucial to activate the space wisely as a place for art and culture, as the city is currently weighing different uses for the site which shut down about two years ago, and it could very well end up as a shopping mall.

The main pool is the concert hall, the kiddie-pool is filled with objects, there is a screening room showing a series of films on hearing, sign language (Christian Marclay's *Mixed Review* from 1999), and audio forensics (Lawrence Abu-Hamdan's *Rubber Coated Steel*, 2016). A separate room in the front is dedicated to sound therapy sessions, which apart from being very relaxing, demonstrate that hearing occurs beyond the aural, and with our entire body. Thierry Madiot has perfected the technique over the last 16 years, and uses a large wooden table where the patient lies, and an array of metal and wood instruments played by two or more therapists.



Tarek Atoui "Within," Sonic Therapy Sessions, Sound Massage with Thierry Madiot and guests, Sentralbadet, Bergen Assembly 2016. Photo: Thor Brødreskift

After being treated to a soothing sound massage, I walked over to the White Cat Café—which borrows its name from the curious fact that all deaf cats happen to be white—installed in the pool's old cafeteria. Browsing the sound and drink menu I noticed that the snapping shrimp was on offer, along with acoustic delicacies such as the slow erosion of a rock, or an evaporating puddle. I ordered the pistol shrimp sound along with the recommended matching drink and leaned against sub packs installed on the back of the seats. (Usually used for recording studios, the packs allow you to feel the sound at certain volumes). Though much less sensitive than my ears, I was finally listening, with my body, to the thump of the shrimp's snap.

ELEPHANT

5 Sep 2016

Bergen Assembly: The Art World at a Different Pace

In 2009, Bergen's art community organised a series of talks titled 'To Biennial or not to Biennial'—typical, I'm told, of a traditionally Norwegian sense of thoughtfulness and a tendency to plan rigorously. The conclusion was: yes, Bergen will host a biennial, but it will be slower, longer, and more focused than the now-ubiquitous multi-artist format popping up around European cities.

Bergen Assembly, now in its second edition, chooses 3 convenors to plan a 10-month-long schedule of exhibitions, talks, and performances. This year's convenor panel consists of **freethought**, a loose collective of thinkers, curators, researchers, educators and activists, **Tarek Atoui**, an artist and composer known for his work with sound, and **Praxes**, an initiative dedicated to in-depth material research and collaborative investigations revolving around specific artists for an extended period of time. This year, Praxes chose Lynda Benglis and Marvin Gaye Chetwynd as their focus, and their episodic unpacking of the two artists' quite distinct practices leads viewers from exhibitions in the city's Kunsthall and City Hall to performances in bunkers and artist/curator talks across town.

A highlight of the Praxes talks programme was Judith Tannenbaum's unravelling of the stories behind both Benglis' 1971 work 'Phantom', and also the reasons why the curatorial team were unable to acquire it for the exhibition at Bergen Kunsthall (namely, that it was too delicate to be transported). The five-part piece, made from Polyurethane foam with phosphorescent pigments, was split up for decades, with one piece becoming damaged due to exposure to cigarette smoke and natural light. Having worked with Benglis for many years, Tannenbaum had wonderful insight into her practise, and was able to illuminate the process of acquiring artworks for international shows.

This selection of convenors from different parts of the art world—universities, galleries, theatres—ensured a real diversity in terms of the type of work shown. Marvin Gaye Chetwynd's absurdist comic performance *The Cell Project Episode 2* involved a tiny pink Chewbacca, women making cakes, and a chirpy man

talks from award-winning author Tom McCarthy and artist Wu Tsang) was wrapping up on the other.

Perhaps the most considered and exciting of the projects is WITHIN—Atoui and Council’s exploration into the deaf experience and the transformation of hearing. Hosted in the fantastically playful Sentralbadet (the city’s disused swimming pool), the project brings together hearing and non-hearing communities to consider the question, “what is sound?”

The exhibition includes a slideshow of archive photographs of old hearing apparatus, instruments able to be played by those not able to hear, and bookable therapy sessions such as a ‘sound massage’. The White Cat café, situated just up from the steps of the old pool, is a social space that offers a drinks menu on which each item corresponds to a different sound. Atoui explains, ‘we collected sound phenomena that is usually unheard’—including the ripples of the collision of the black holes that created the Big Bang; sounds of people hunting ghosts in cemeteries, and the emanations from minerals like gold. Atoui plays us one of these sounds (insects photosynthesising underwater) and it resembles someone slowly letting air out of a balloon whilst pinching the neck. It can be heard by hearing persons, and felt by those unable to hear via vibration points on the café benches.

Bergen Assembly’s programme continues on until December but the majority of the events happen this month. So grab your raincoat (seriously—the city had just 2 sunny days last month) and experience the art world at a different pace.



Tarek Atoui & Council WITHIN/Infinite Ear. Bergen Assembly (2016) Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Brødreskift



Tarek Atoui, Deaf Session, Sentralbadet. Bergen Assembly (2016) Photo: Thor Brødreskift



Tarek Atoui, Sound Massage Workshop with Thierry Madiot at Grieg Academy, University of Bergen. Photo: Thor Brødreskift

Rising from the Acid Bath

Av Stian Gabrielsen

Bergen Assembly: September Programme

Bergen Assembly, Bergen
1. september - 1. oktober 2016



Tarek Atoui has transformed the old Sentralbadet swimming pools in the heart of Bergen into a concert arena. From the concert *Within I* featuring Pauline Oliveros, Mats Lindström, Espen Sommer Eide, BIT20 and guests. Photo: Thor Brødreskift.

If your ambition is to break with the temporalities of the art world it is not hard to envision a more bold experiment than Bergen Assembly's all-year programme. Why use the term "triennial" at all, thereby indicating plans for a regular return? Why not simply allow each new version to run indefinitely, slowly building up a crescendo of concurrent Assemblies without any pre-announced end in sight? Yes, this would be difficult to carry out in practice, but more importantly: for an ambitious art event like the Bergen triennial it would be unheard-of not to play along with the conventions and cycles of the art world, and thereby risk invisibility.

Even though the 2016 Bergen Assembly has neither title nor theme and is signed by three curators or curator groups (or "artistic directors" in Bergen Assembly-speak) – Tarek Atoui, Praxes and freethought, all of them responsible for their own, independent projects scattered throughout the year in asynchronous sequences – the organizers nevertheless felt a need to create special focus by staging one month of greater intensity than the rest of the year, kicked off by what can only, in spite of the woolly description "launch of the September programme", be seen as a traditional exhibition opening.



freethoughts' *Moments of Study: Reading Room* in Hagerupsgården, Bergen Assembly 2016. Photo: Thor Brødreskift.

Bergen Assembly 2016 is the scene for a contest between different modes of operation within contemporary art: the aesthetic (Praxes), the social (Atoui) and the academic (freethought). However, one of the things that ties together the projects is the way in which they – in varied ways and to different extents – seek to integrate themselves in the local environment. Invited by Praxes (Rhea Dall and Kristine Siegel), British artist Marvin Gaye Chetwynd has developed a three-act group performance in co-operation with local octogenarians. Some of the sections of freethought's six-part project *Infrastructure* also involve collaboration with local actors; for example, retired firemen contributed to *The Museum of Burning Questions*. Even so, the most diligent efforts to build ties to scenes outside the art world have undoubtedly been made by the musician and composer Tarek Atoui. Together with French curators Gregory Castéra and Sandra Terdjman (Council) he has directed the project *Deaf experience and the transformation of hearing*.

The trio have moved into the former swimming pool and baths of Bergen, a fitting choice of venue in both practical terms – it boasts a natural orchestra pit and tribune as well as walls clad in metal that is only too willing to reverberate – and metaphorically, as water is a medium that, at least to some extent, blurs the divide between the hearing and the deaf. Atoui and Council's objective was to create a field of sonic experience that overlaps the worlds of the deaf and the hearing. The project comprises two parts. Atoui's part bears the title *Within* and focuses on nine instruments that have been specially designed to be played and experienced by the deaf and the hearing alike. These are the results of a year-long process involving contributions from a range of different communities, professions and stakeholders. The instruments occupy the empty swimming pool, where a series of concerts featuring specially invited performers will be held over the course of the next weeks. The opening weekend included a concert where the ensemble BIT20 played the nine instruments while being conducted by a deaf man. A dry scratching produced by pulling a piece of wood across a textured board was gradually supplemented by a clattering rush made by a bunch of marbles swept up and dropped onto a drumskin. The instruments were designed so that the musicians' gestures were clearly visible. Complex and unpredictable, the soundscape gradually reached an impressive volume and frequency range as the various instruments joined in. Musicianship – if we may call it that – of an expansive kind.



From Tarek Atoui's *White Cat Café* at Sentralbadet, Bergen Assembly 2016. Photo: Thor Brødreskift.

Divided up between the entrance area and the adjacent rooms, Council's more conventional exhibition *Infinite Ear* aims for a similar bridging of the gap between the worlds of the deaf and the hearing. One room has been set aside for audio therapy, another houses a film screening programme curated on the theme of deafness. A bar setting called *The White Cat* serves wine in matched with picks from an exclusive selection of obscure and usually inaccessible sounds, such as the sound of a pool of water evaporating, or tadpoles gnawing on a microphone. *Infinite Ear* takes a more playful and noncommittal approach to the theme than *Within*, a light and frothy companion piece to the visionary experiment unfolding in Atoui's orchestra pit.

The complex interplay between human perception and its surroundings forms the basis for a lot of contemporary art these days. A recent example would be the exhibition *New Sensorium* (2016) at Zentrum für Kunst und Medientechnologie in Karlsruhe, which among others featured Atoui. *Deaf Experience and the Transformation of Hearing* stands out by virtue of its explicit commitment to (and from) the deaf community and its tangible work with institutions and professions outside the field of art. Like many participatory works, this places it in a kind of limbo, suspended somewhere between art and social work. Such ambivalence recurs throughout Bergen Assembly; Marvin Gaye Chetwynd's demented sessions also have an element of "social work" about them.



The programme devised by freethought includes screenings of Phil Collins's film short *Delete Beach* (2016) at Bergen Kino. Film still reproduced with kind permission from Shady Lane Productions and Bergen Assembly.

The props used in Chetwynd's performances were obviously not made to last. Even so, Praxes chose to furnish the artist-run venue Kunstgarasjen with a selection of these objects, titling the arrangement *Champagne & Caviar*. Scattered across a low podium in the centre of the room we find twenty shabby creations fashioned from painted textiles, papier-mâché, plastic and wood. Documentary video footage is projected along the walls. In *A Walk to Dover* (2006) Chetwynd and friends reconstruct David Copperfield's walk from London to Dover. The documentary materials comprise a succession of snapshots from the journey and video clips where Chetwynd and friends pose in their nineteenth-century street urchin get-up while trying to keep a straight face. Despite their often festive and slightly manic aura, Chetwynd's performances are in fact quite private sessions, closely akin to a kind of therapeutic roleplay.

The ambivalent status that you naturally feel as a spectator to such therapeutic sessions was palpable in the performance *The Cell Group (Episode Two)*, which was presented twice this weekend. Here we were guided through a long shelter by Chetwynd and her cohorts. Two of them were carrying large foil structures on their backs, looking like crosses between a dream-catcher and peacock tails. Brief, loosely choreographed scenes were played out along the way – most memorably one where the fuzzy *Star Wars* character Chewbacca was making chocolate cake. Dancers wearing beige one-pieces were driving the procession on. After an energetic song, an oasis of confusion arose while some of the performers fetched a face-shaped portal, which was wheeled along to the exit. Then the crowd was ushered into the portal's mouth one by one, in order to leave.



From Marvin Gaye Chetwynd's performance *The Cell Group (Episode Two)* at the St. Jørgen shelter, Bergen Assembly 2016. Photo: Thor Brødreskift.

Under the common title *On Screen*, the artist-run venue Entrée shows three older video works by the American artist Lynda Benglis, who was also invited by Praxes. The works are sketch-like explorations of the medium. *Female Sensuality* consists of close-ups of the faces and hands of two women, similar to the point of being identical, as they explore each other sensuously with their lips, tongues and fingers. A similar haptic mode permeates the group exhibition *Adhesive Products* at Bergen Kunsthall. The central hub of this exhibition is a series of 1970s sculptures that Benglis created by pouring latex or polyurethane

directly onto the floor or onto chicken-wire structures attached to the wall. These have been scattered throughout the first floor of Bergen Kunsthall, entering into dialogue with more recent works by other artists, all of them embodying a similar register.

Benglis's objects have some of the same frayedness about them as Chetwynd's papier-mâché figures – as if they have survived their allotted time, certainly in aesthetic terms, and now need to be legitimised by being placed in an echo chamber alongside more recent and “current” works. Praxes' enthusiastic focus on individual artists' non-current work ties in well with Bergen Assembly's intentions to explore other temporalities than those usually endorsed within the art field, but at times it can also feel strained or forced.



Lynda Benglis, *Untitled VW*, 1970. From the group exhibition *Adhesive Products* at Bergen Kunsthall, Bergen Assembly 2016. Photo: Thor Brødreskift.

At Bergen's former main fire station we are presented with a selection of projects by the London-based research collective freethought (Irit Rogoff, Stefano Harney, Adrian Heathfield, Massimiliano Mollona, Nora Sternfeld, Louis Moreno). They all relate to the concept of infrastructure. Even though it also includes a number of more poetic contributions, freethought's exhibition is mostly a cerebral and information-packed affair. Several of the displays work well on their own, such as *A Utopian Stage: Festival of Arts, Shiraz-Persepolis*, which presents us with rich historical materials associated with a performance festival arranged annually in the city of Shiraz in Iran between 1967 and 1977. But when room after room meld into a blur of sober video interviews, stencilled theory and display cases with newspaper cuttings in Farsi, accompanied by didactic prose reminiscent of funding applications, you unavoidably feel transported back to the heyday of self-satisfied discursive art. I catch myself wishing that more of these researcher-curators had endeavoured to transpose their research into a more performative and aesthetic register.

Aside from a few film and video works, *Infrastructure of Feeling* is the one project among all of freethought's projects to most strongly constitute an autonomous and evocative *work*. It takes its starting point in an algorithm that buys books within categories associated with infrastructure, basing its purchases on analyses of the moods in selected pieces of Norwegian music. The music which governs these purchasing patterns is played aloud in the room, also affecting the colour and intensity of the light. The books are arranged in steel shelves in the middle of the room. Here we typically find titles that mix emotional and analytical vocabularies, such as *Economic Evangelism* and *Human, All Too Human*. *Infrastructure of Feeling* points towards a techno-cultural state where individuals outsource emotional processes to sophisticated software.

Bergen Assembly 2016 is not characterised by such timely, tongue-in-cheek techno-criticism, but rather by being anchored in its local setting and the current moment through a range of participatory projects. Perhaps it is not entirely surprising that a triennial which takes a critical view of its own genre – a type of exhibition often criticised for its lack of local anchorage – should distinguish itself by fostering projects that aim for social integration. But few might have predicted that the one who took this social mandate the furthest – Atoui – would also be the most compelling. Leaving aside Atoui's unfeigned enthusiasm and prodigious talent as an impresario, even though Bergen Assembly throws in with the locals, it is far from a “crowd-pleaser”.



Tarek Atoui, *Within*, testing instruments, Sentralbadet, Bergen Assembly 2016. Photo: Thor Brødreskift.

Bergen Assembly 2016

21.09.2016 | REVIEW

METROPOLIS M

TJDSCHRIFT OVER HEDENDAAGSE KUNST

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Metropolis M

How does one reinvent the format of a perennial art exhibition at a three-year interval? It is a task of no easy accomplishment set by the Bergen City Council after having hosted the Bergen Biennial Conference in 2009, poised to consider whether “to biennial or not to biennial” in response to the ambitions for an international art biennial in Bergen. Following the conference, the idea of a biennial was abandoned, in favor of a triennial and a slower approach. Where the 2013 edition ‘Mondays Begin on Sundays’, convened by Ekaterina Degot and David Riff, scrutinized notions of artistic research, this year’s edition is itself conceived as a year-long study and exploration firmly anchored in the city, with events unfolding over the year, culminating in the September program.

The Bergen Assembly 2016 has no clear beginning or ending, nor does it depart from an overarching theme. Instead it is a complex puzzle consisting of three independently developed propositions by artistic directors Tarek Atoui, *freethought* and PRAXES, which in turn are coupled with different exhibition openings, screenings, performances, and discursive events staged around three main locations and smaller venues. Unfolding on its own terms and in its own ways, the generous program invites the visitor to embark on different sorts of journeys, from framework, even if here and there connections emerge. Perhaps the recurring thread may well be the desire for connectedness itself, be it through infrastructures of feeling, a suspended fluidity or sonorous vibrations.



The Infrastructure Summit, Aesthetic Analytics #2, USF Verftet, Bergen Assembly 2016, Photo: Jonas Boström



Lynda Benglis, *Come*, 1969-74. Private Collection, Lynda Benglis, *Untitled*, 1969-75. Courtesy Cheim & Read, New York, Nairy Baghramian, *Slip of the Tongue*, 2016 (detail). Courtesy Marian Goodman Gallery, London, Installation view, Bergen Assembly 2016, Exhibition *Adhesive Products* at Bergen Kunsthall 02.09-09.10.2016, Photo: Thor Brødreskift

In collaboration with Paris-based Council and the Bergen Deaf Center, Lebanon-born musician and composer Tarek Atoui developed a set of projects, which aim to bridge the gap between hearing audiences and marginalized art and music communities, including the deaf community in Bergen. In Sentralbadet, an abandoned public swimming pool, Atoui filled the empty basin with a collection of nine customized instruments (*WITHIN*), such as *The 0.9* which has a gestural interface through which ultra-low-frequency sounds can be produced that are physically felt, perhaps even before they are heard, or *The SubBass Prototone*, an organ pipe that one can enter and play from inside. Complemented with performances and rehearsals, *WITHIN* challenges how we understand the experience of sound, subverting our inherited hearing knowledges. Council's contribution *Infinite Ear* consists of films, recordings, and sound massage workshops exploring how we can experience sound through bodily sensations or even our vision.

More complicated is the second part convened by *freethought*, an academic collective including Irit Rogoff, Stefano Harney, Adrian Heathfield, Massimiliano Mollona, Louis Moreno and Nora Sternfeld. The group's on-going study of the slippery concept of 'infrastructure' materializes into various installations in the old Fire Station (the Gamle Hovedbrannstasjon) and firemen's union, as well as in Bergen Kunsthall, and is discussed throughout three performative projects: 'Specters of Infrastructure' in the adjacent Partisan café, the two-day

activities such as having a coffee or looking at an exhibition as potential political moments. Despite its academic foundation, *Shipping and The Shipped* is a captivating installation. The exhibition, curated by Stefano Harney and including collaborative work by artists, philosophers and friends Ranjit Kandalgaonkar, Arjuna Neuman, Denise Ferreira Da Silva, Wu Tsang, and Fred Moten, comes together as a poetical rendition of Harney's compelling research into shipping as the "centre of capital's infrastructural imagination" asking whether "the ship is arriving or escaping, piloted or pirated, modularised or marooned". Despite the chapter's importance as a case of cultural infrastructure, articulating a desire for social and spatial liberation, some visitors unfamiliar with the larger discourse were left wondering whether the group's "infrastructure of feeling" could tip over into nepotistic exclusivity. No wonder 'The Infrastructure Summit' was a necessary supplement in order to clarify and expand some of the ideas explored in the show. More directly related to Bergen's current and historical identity as a port town is *The End of Oil*, comprising *Delete Beach*, an animation by Phil Collins, and *Oilers*, a documentary film by Massimiliano Mollona and Anne Marther Dyvu. Especially moving is *Oilers*, which chronicles the possibly last construction of an oil platform in the Norwegian offshore yard, and addresses the workers' anxieties in the face of declining oil prices—a rare instance of film that presents the human side of the controversial oil industry.

But why this sudden interest in infrastructure, which has resurfaced in the art world at different occasions? The urgency to inquire into infrastructure "arises from a recognition that structures govern more than ideology", freethought member Irit Rogoff says in her opening statement at The Infrastructure Summit. "It has become the convincing logic to jump start economies, education and markets. We are infrastructural beings enfolded within the circuits of so-called enablement." This acknowledgement of our new infrastructural condition set the tone for an interesting range of speakers and panelist to appear on stage over the weekend, each addressing the theme from their particular research angles. What are the ways in which infrastructure disciplines bodies, allocates resources, links processes, and where do we locate its subversive and critical potential? At times a little too abstract, the concept of launching a program on infrastructure through the lens of contemporary art is definitely a thought-provoking one.



Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, *The Elixir App*, Installation view (Visningsrommet USF), Bergen Assembly 2016, Photo: Thor Brødreskift



Tarek Atoui / *Sonic Therapy Sessions*, Deep Listening with Pauline Oliveros and Ione, Documentation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016, Sentralbadet, Bergen, Photo: Thor Brødreskift



Tarek Atoui / Sonic Therapy Sessions, Deep Listening with Pauline Oliveros and Ione, Documentation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016, Sentralbadet, Bergen, Photo: Thor Brødreskift

If *freethought*'s curatorial concerns are rather abstract (even if distinctive), then PRAXES, who are Berlin-based duo Rhea Dall and Kristine Siegel, adopted an approach that is quite the opposite. During a yearlong cycle of events, publications, and exhibitions the duo delved into the work of two unassociated artists: Lynda Benglis, an iconic feminist figure whose sensual and corporeal forms complicate the relationship between body and sculpture, and Marvin Gaye Chetwynd who celebrates pop culture in exuberant performances. During the opening weekend additional exhibitions and performances followed, including 'Adhesive Products', a group show at Bergen Kunsthall. The show explores Robert Pincus-Witten's notion of 'the frozen gesture' through the lens of Benglis's work, alongside the work of other artists (Nairy Baghramian, Olga Balema, Daiga Grantina, Sterling Ruby and Kaari Upton), whose sculptures are characterized by the use of bold colors, gooey textures and a fluid materiality.

Mouvement (L)

magazine culturel indisciplinaire



Critiques arts visuels Pluridisciplinaire (</critiques/critiques>)

Avec attention

Depuis Bergen en Norvège, retours sur la troisième édition de la triennale Bergen Assembly. Projet au long cours, il réunit cette année l'artiste Tarek Atoui accompagné des deux artistes de la plateforme curatoriale The Council, les curatrices de Praxes et les chercheurs du collectif Freethoughts.

Par Flora Katz

On peut sentir dans la forme de ces projets aux contenus très différents, une attention bien spécifique à développer des relations approfondies avec des publics hétérogènes, et d'éprouver les possibles de l'art lorsqu'il tend vers des pratiques sociales. Problème complexe, lorsqu'on a le souci de ne pas tomber dans l'écueil du didactisme ou dans la prétention de l'activisme.

Le projet peut-être le plus réussi dans un accord de la forme et du contenu est celui mené par Tarek Atoui accompagné de Grégory Castéra et Sandra Terdjman (The Council). Fruit d'une recherche de trois ans sur les rapports entre le corps, le geste et le son, *Within I* est un projet collaboratif dans lequel Tarek Atoui a testé les marges du son dans sa tendance vibratoire et tactile. Avec des personnes sourdes et malentendantes, ils ont développé neuf instruments et créé un nouveau langage musical. Si l'on perçoit

généralement le son par ses vibrations, c'est plus spécifiquement par le toucher que Tarek Atoui nous propose d'y accéder : textiles résonnants, dessins à l'encre conductrice, tables de percussions solides, etc. Situé à la frontière entre l'outil et l'œuvre, chaque instrument permet d'ouvrir notre environnement sonore à d'autres textures.

Le vendredi 3 septembre a lieu la première activation : Transformé en caisse de résonance, l'ancien bassin de la piscine publique de Bergen vibre au rythme de trois compositions très différentes, dont une conduite par un chef d'orchestre sourd formé pour le projet (Robert Mădălin Demeter), et une autre par Pauline Oliveros, pionnière du deep listening (écoute attentive). À la fin du concert, autant d'applaudissements en langage des signes que de claps sonores. Tout au long du mois de septembre, Tarek Atoui poursuit le développement de ces instruments en créant des partitions en collaboration avec divers musiciens invités à Bergen pour les tester. Des concerts et workshops ouverts au public poursuivent l'activation dans un espace curaté par The Council : autour de la piscine se déploie une série d'œuvres mais aussi un massage sonore, un bar à cocktail accordé avec des sons de minéraux, d'atomes, d'intérieurs d'arbres. On écoute, on perçoit, on ralentit.

Si le projet de PRAXES est plus attendu dans son format, on note la présentation d'une belle exposition collective 100% féminine et la mise en œuvre d'une collaboration sur le long terme avec des artistes aux pratiques très différentes : Lynda Benglis et Marvin Gaye Chetwin. Du côté du collectif Freethoughts (composé en 2011 par Irit Rogoff, Stefano Harney, Adrian Heathfield, Massimiliano Mollona, Louis Moreno and Nora Sternfeld), on rentre à vif dans un travail de résistance politique et sociale à partir du thème de l'infrastructure. Trois plateformes ont été déployées à Bergen, infusées d'une série de conférences : Un symposium de deux jours, un café inspiré par l'historique Café partisan (lieu de culture et de résistance actif à Londres dans les années 1950) et une exposition s'ouvrent pendant le mois de septembre. Entre présentation d'archives et films, le visiteur découvre l'infrastructure comme un lieu d'aliénation et d'isolement, mais aussi d'émergence de la résistance. La problématique du pétrole, majeure dans la ville portuaire de Bergen, est travaillée dans deux films saisissants : *Delete Beach* de Phil Collins (2016) et *Oiler* de Massimiliano Mollona et Anne Marthe Dyvi (2016).

Exercice périlleux, deux heureuses collaborations entre les philosophes Denise Ferreira da Silva et Fred Moten (aussi poète) et les artistes Arjun Neumann et Wu Tsang ont donné naissance à des œuvres filmiques comme *Miss Communication and Mr:Re* (2014) ou *Girl Talk* (2015). « Que deviendrait l'humain s'il était exprimé par des éléments ? » : Images de nature entrecoupées d'archives de soulèvements, les phrases de Da Silva inventent l'individu à l'image d'une nature en perpétuelle transformation. Transformation aussi dans les films de Fred Moten et Wu Tsang dont les portraits en pleine lumière et face caméra nourrissent un dialogue où les paroles intimes de l'un s'apposent sur l'autre. Par le maquillage, Moten glisse d'un genre à l'autre. L'œuvre résonne avec l'esprit fugitif du livre *The Undercommons* (1) écrit avec Stefano Harney, une des pierres de touche du collectif Freethoughts et de nombreux activistes anti-capitalistes : « Être possédé par les dépossédés, et offrir la possession par la dépossession, c'est une expérience qui parmi tant d'autres est une manière de penser à l'amour, qui peut aussi émerger comme étude. »

Attention, recherche. Si les œuvres présentées peuvent être fragiles dans les formes, une réflexion de haut niveau imprègne chaque projet. On apprend, on teste, avec un accompagnement solidaire et attentif qui tend à dépasser l'entre-soi de l'art contemporain. Parmi le flot de biennales qui saturent les espaces, le pari de déployer des formats expérimentaux qui résistent aux pressions économiques est réussi.

1. Stefano Harney et Fred Moten, *The Undercommons : Fugitive Planning & Black Study*, 2013.

INFINITE EAR. ON THE PRACTICES OF UN- OR PARA-HEARING

SEPTEMBER 8, 2016



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As hinted on Tuesday, i?m just back from the opening of Bergen Assembly, a triennial that boldly attempts to challenge and reformulate the good old biennial (or triennial) model.

The event is articulated around three radically different artistic propositions. The one that got all my undivided, unrelenting attention was Tarek Atoui? s. The sound artist filled an abandoned swimming pool with new instruments, historical artefacts, performances, social moments, ideas and of course sounds that challenge our understanding of the sound experience. He transformed the whole space to engage both the deaf and the hearing people.

Tarek Atoui & Council, WITHIN/ Infinite Ear. Production Shot, Bergen Assembly 2016 Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif



Tarek Atoui / Infinite Ear. Installation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016. Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif

Atoui worked with the local deaf communities and with other sound artists to develop the whole project but he also collaborated with Gr?gory Cast?ra and Sandra Terdjman from Council, a curating platform that invites artists to reconsider the way we understand social issues. Everywhere i looked in the exhibition curated by Atoui, there was something i wanted to write about. So i?m going to take it quietly and explore the exhibition over two episodes. This one will be about Council? s contribution to the show. The next one will examine the instruments that Atoui developed together with the deaf community of Bergen.



Tarek Atoui / Infinite Ear. Installation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016. Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif

For Infinite Ear, their contribution to the show, Council explored what hearing means when it is not confined to the ear, when it involves the other senses and even the whole body. They set up a programme of videos, discussions and performances that will take place throughout the month in Bergen.

*Infinite Ear considers practices of un- or para-hearing entities, both biological and technical, that exceed, extend or modulate the modern conception of hearing. **These investigations offer new insights into the traditional separation of the senses, and their boundaries, by revealing specific articulations within sensory ecosystems that imbricate more than the five senses.***

But Council also curated a small exhibition that starts in the White Cat caf?, a bar that overlooks the swimming pool. You can sit down and browse a list of sound recordings that make audible a series of phenomena that are otherwise imperceptible to the human ear. Waiters will not only play the sound of your choice in the space but also serve you a drink to enjoy with it. Not any type of drink but one especially selected by a ?jukebox sommelier? to play nicely with the sounds.



Tarek Atoui / Infinite Ear. Installation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016. Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif



Tarek Atoui / Infinite Ear. Installation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016. Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif

The whole sound list is over here. Without the sound though so i?ve looked online and spotted some of the most interesting to share with you:

Scientists at the Laser Interferometer Gravitational-Wave Observatory managed to convert gravitational waves (minute distortions of spacetime predicted by Einstein?s theory of general relativity) sent out from two massive colliding black holes into sound waves. Through converting wave patterns into sound, gravitational wave astronomy, an emerging branch of observational astronomy, is now listening to the universe and expanding our understanding of space.

LIGO Lab Caltech: MIT, The Sound of Two Black Holes Colliding

Jacob Kirkegaard captured the empty and snowy landscape in Fukushima:

Jacob Kirkegaard, Stigma # 1, 2016

Now this one is a bit of a ridiculous story. The Tsar Bell is the largest confirmed bell ever cast at over 200 tons. Because of a mishap in its casting, it never produced any sound and broke in 1732, before it was even struck. It has been on display in the Kremlin ever since. A team of UC Berkeley, Stanford, and U Michigan researchers replicated electronically the sound emitted by the bell.

Chris Chafe and Greg Niemeyer, The Tsar Bell, 10 April 2016

Also worth mentioning: Carl Michael von Hausswolff used emission spectroscopy, ?a technique that examines the wavelengths of photons emitted by atoms or molecules,? to make audible the wavelengths emitted by minerals in a gold mine near Medellin. Thomas Tilly used an ultrasonic detector that shifts the ultrasounds emitted by bats to a hearing range, and captured the sounds of the bats? sonar and their system of echolocation. And finally, the bullroarer. This one is a Stone Age sound instrument used in rituals but also for communicating over great distances. Examples of bullroarers were found in Europe, Asia, the Indian subcontinent, Africa, the Americas, and Australia. A 5000-year-old one was found in Norway in 1991. Here?s what a bullroarer sounds like.



Thierry Madiot and guests, *Sound Massage*. Installation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016. Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif



Tarek Atoui / *Infinite Ear*. Installation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016. Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif



Thierry Madiot and guests, *Sound Massage*. Installation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016. Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif

Also part of the *Infinite Ear* programme is a series of *Sound Massage* sessions performed by artist Thierry Madiot and people he trained to recreate them. Almost inaudible sounds are produced using vibration and non-aural techniques. They seem to reverberate inside your whole body and can be perceived by both deaf and hearing audiences.



Tarek Atoui / *Infinite Ear*. Installation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016. Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif

Next, Council and Atoui have collected a series of objects, texts and images that they distributed along the caf? and on the floor of the smallest (and empty) swimming pool. Some were sourced from the Norwegian Deaf Museum, others from the Natural History Museum in Bergen and other institutions.

You discover a lot of curious stories about hearing in this collection. For example, there is the ear drum of a blue whale. It turns out that the blue whale is not only one of the loudest animals on this planet, it also has eardrum that have remained unchanged for thousands of years, making it useful to study the hearing system of dinosaurs.

I also liked this photo of the alarm cushion that illustrate how some deaf people wake up in the morning. When it's time to get up, a mechanism will push the cushion placed over the bed head and it will fall over the face of the person sleeping:



Bespoke Alarm Clock (cushion) from the Norwegian Deaf Museum

The objects also include glass prosthesis by Baudouin Oosterlynck:



Baudouin Oosterlynck, Aquaphone Cornemuse (not exhibited but i couldn't find good images of the works on show)



Tarek Atoui / Infinite Ear. Installation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016. Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif

A fog horn from MS INNVIK, a car ferry turned theatre and world-music concert venue in Oslo. Foghorns are instruments used to make a loud, deep sound as a warning to ships when the weather is foggy.



Tarek Atoui / Infinite Ear. Installation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016. Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif

A few wooden balls used in the past in theatre to recreate the sounds of a thunderstorm.



Thunder Clap Balls (theater prop), University Museum of Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif

A series of 236 wooden sculptures made in the early 1970s by Douwe Jan Bakker. They can be placed between the lips, like speech balloons in a comic strip, and provide an alternative visual communication system to express yourself without using words.



Douwe Jan Bakker, Pronounceable Boxes, 1973-1974. Tarek Atoui / Infinite Ear. Installation shot, Bergen Assembly 2016. Sentralbadet, Bergen. Photo: Thor Br?dreskif

Back at the White Cat caf?, you can borrow a copy of the The Hearing Voices newspaper dedicated to the phenomenon of people who hear voices. Apparently, up to one in 20 people hears voices regularly and up to 40 per cent of the population will hear voices at some point in their lives. Some believe it is a special gift. Others cannot cope with the voices in their heads and develop mental illnesses. The phenomenon is not well understood and social movement have formed to challenge narrow understandings of voice-hearing.

Artist Dora Garc?a set up temporary Hearing Voices Caf?s in various cities to enable voice-hearers and other people to meet and discuss the experience and hopefully destigmatize it.

randian 燃点

2016.09.28 Wed, by Theodor Ringborg Translated by: 虔凡

In Rain

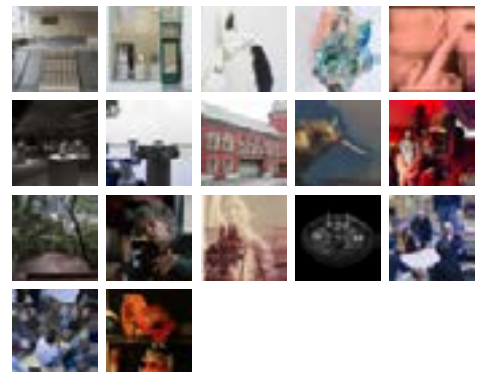
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Bergen Assembly

Various locations, Bergen, Norway, through end September, 2016

It rains in Bergen. A lot, and all the time. It rains so much that when it doesn't it feels somehow wrong. In a city where it pours down on you religiously, irrigation and drainage are key—and Bergen has one of the most advanced systems in the world. But whichever local you talk to about it will, on the one hand, think you're weird for asking about irrigation and, on the other, brush it off as nothing out of the ordinary. Yet it is. This lax attitude toward the formidable funneling of so much water so that the whole county doesn't flood is because they're used to it, and likely fed up with each and every visitor being (like me) astonished at how people settled and continue to live in a place so hellishly wet. That said, it has its perks. Aside from clean air, a certain communal feeling develops when everyone's so soaked. A bond emerges between people. Kind nods, affectionate shrugs, and genuinely polite smiles are exchanged more here than probably anywhere else. We're all *in* the rain, and so it comes to seem as if we're *in* something together.

The relevance of this to the Bergen Assembly on which I am about to report is that this year's theme is (partly) "Infrastructure."





Adrian Heathfield and Hugo Glendinning, "Spirit Labour", Bergen Assembly, 2016 © Hugo Glendinning

The question "to biennial or not to biennial" shepherded the first Bergen Assembly in 2009. Whoever was in the position to choose chose instead to *triennial*, and the Bergen Assembly has since been understood to be a more discursive sort of art event. Most often, it is an exhibition abutting a sizable summit, conference, or such like. So it is this time, organized by three groups. None are "curators" but rather "conveners." Freethought—a loose collective composed of Irit Rogoff, Stefano Harney, Adrian Heathfield, Massimiliano Mollona, Louise Moreno, and Nora Sternfeld—is responsible for a summit on "infrastructure" as well as an exhibition in a ramshackle former office building and café housed in an adjacent old fire station. Praxes—a group of two, Rhea Dall and Kristine Siegel—curated one exhibition at the Bergen Kunsthall and another show at a place called Kunstgarasjen, in addition to organizing a small presentation of works in the foyer of the municipality offices. The artist Tarek Atoui, together with Council (founded by Sandra Terdjman and Grégory Castéra), organized a presentation of a multitude of things—including an installation, film-program, and "sound-café"—that came together as a social space/exhibition/concert hall at a disused indoor pool. In the spirit of convening, all these people have, in turn, involved a teeming mass of other people, too many to mention here.

Nowadays, a lot of great art comes down to questions of how people move about in the world; it also sees that different people move in different ways through what are, by all means, different worlds. The attempt to parse something like infrastructure is therefore nothing less than ingenious. My personal authority on all things infrastructure is Keller Easterling, and her *Extrastatecraft: The Power of Infrastructure Space* (2014) is an extraordinary book. What is immediately laid out is that infrastructure "typically conjures associations with physical networks for transportation, communication, or utilities." Yet it is also "the rules governing the space of everyday life." Easterling ponders the places where we live, like skyscrapers, garages, and free zones, and writes, "In the retinal afterglow is a soupy matrix of details and repeatable formulas that generate most of the space in the world—what we might call *infrastructure space*." It's a way of talking about different people moving in different ways in different worlds, and seeing that they don't move, but rather are moved. Infrastructure doesn't make up the condition of our lives; it is the condition of our lives.

As with any exhibition, there is a lot to say—and this one convenes three organizing groups and comes with a jam-packed summit. It might come off as cursory, but I will try to account for many of the bits and pieces that made up the Bergen Assembly. I will also try to convey why I think it was mostly very good.

The projects by Tarek Atoui and Council were housed in a stunning indoor pool facility that is no longer in use. At the entrance, side rooms, and empty kids' pool, Council organized a film program, a café, and a presentation of objects associatively intertwined, tied to an idea of sound beyond hearing and hearing beyond sound—anyone who has listened to the apparent echo of the ocean in a seashell will understand. In the deep end of the big empty pool stood nine instruments, each developed by Atoui in collaboration with others and then tested and improved by people who cannot hear. It's a project that Atoui has worked on for years, and will continue to work on. The space is a space of production where workshops, concerts, and the like will happen throughout the exhibition. And what's great about it all—especially Atoui's contribution—is precisely the question of people moving about in the world, which, as I've already argued, is one of the fundamental concerns of much of the best art of recent years. The meeting of the hard-of-hearing and deaf with those who can hear is a meshing of perceptions. The project isn't intended to make someone who can hear feel sympathy for someone who doesn't, nor is it to allow the deaf some sense of what it might be like to hear. Nor does it

try to make the two meet halfway between hearing and not. Instead, and rather successfully, it attunes people to an entirely different tenor by tapping into frequencies and modes of sound that all can take part in.



Tarek Atoui, "WITHIN Instrument", testing, Sentralbadet, Bergen Assembly 2016. Photo: Thor Brødreskift

The exhibition by Praxes at Bergen Kunsthall seems, on the other hand, largely concerned with how people move around in the art world. It's terribly museological and firmly set within art-institutional practice—a group exhibition with works by Nairy Baghramian, Olga Balema, Daiga Grantina, Sterling Ruby, and Kaari Upson that circles around the artist Lynda Benglis, whose work is also on view. Now, while Benglis is a remarkably interesting artist, the work here is shown as art-historical artifacts. It is telling that there's a documentary on Benglis screening in another room, casting a very long shadow and practically exhibiting all of Benglis's work "as documentary," flanked by other artworks to illustrate its place in the annals of history. It is unfortunate that wild, fluid, very-much-alive artworks have been tamed into a mode of archival display. Its immaculate installation somehow makes it worse: had the placement of works at least been a little quirkier, then perhaps something interesting might have happened. Alas, everything is placed exactly where it should be placed. Let me say this: I've seen this show before. Not literally of course, but it's textbook enough to seem as though I have. Sure, Praxes had engaged Benglis in a long-term project with several stages before my visit, and there are things that will happen yet, and part of their work is really quite interesting. All this is stuff that I've been told; what I see is this model show. The issue is beyond whether it is wrong or bad—it's more, does it do any good?

There's a similar tendency with the Marvin Gaye Chetwynd exhibition at Kunstgarasjen. A few videos of performances surround props from a few other performances. Like the documentary on Benglis, what is revealing is the low-riding, elongated pedestal on which all props are placed. Chetwynd's work, which is meant to be enlivened, vigorous, and fun, instead becomes museological, archival, and documentary. Propped up, as it were, against traditional modes of display, a practice that had worked on breaking with such terms by taking from amateurish theater loses some of its pitch. There was a performance, too, in another off-site garage-like tunnel. They're often billed as carnivalesque, anarchic, and just totally crazy. Perhaps it was the sangfroid of the Nordic audience, or

perhaps my expectations were too high because I'd never seen one before, but this performance seemed pretty controlled and meek. Much more interesting was Chetwynd's display of works in the foyer of the municipality building, a bijou exhibition of bat paintings—that is, paintings that depict bats—entitled *Are You Bats*, which I took to be a sly nod toward the municipality.



Marvin Gaye Chetwynd, "The Iron Age Pasta Necklace Workshop", installation view (Landmark/Bergen Kunsthall), Bergen Assembly, 2016. Photo: Thor Brødreskift

Freethought developed a multifarious project that really warranted its own review: too much, I realize now, to expound upon in detail. While everything stood out, what was particularly noteworthy was *The Partisan Café*, a play on "the Partisan Café House," a site in London set up by Raphael Samuel, Stuart Hall, and other members of the journal *New Left Review* in the late 1950s. Apparently, it was also called an "Anti-Espresso Bar"—something I am sympathetic to. The Bergen remake was a space for talks, seminars, and debates, but also—and equally importantly—just for hanging out. In the exhibition, one of the nodes in the constellation was the *Anectodated Archives*, a series of filmed interviews with people speaking about exhibitions that had meant a lot to them. None mentioned the canonical exhibitions taught in curatorial courses, but rather shows that, for each interviewee, had been significant on a more personal frequency. Remarkable, too, was the exhibition within the exhibition that had developed from a conversation between Stefano Harney and Ranjit Kandalgaonkar called *Shipping and the Shipped*, which featured work by Kandalgaonkar, as well as collaborations between Denise Ferreira da Silva and Arjuna Neuman and between Fred Moten and Wu Tsang. In the introductory text, Harney writes that "a history of shipping cannot be separated from a history of the shipped" and "shipping remains as much at the center of capital's infrastructural imagination as it was in its first gruesome mobilization."

In many ways, this exhibition ran parallel to the "Infrastructure" summit: two days of talks, films, and music around a question of infrastructure in times of economic disparity, ecological catastrophe, expulsion, and forced migration. I was enlivened by Elizabeth Povinelli, moved by Tom McCarthy, and taken in by the conversation between Wu Tsang, Stefano Harney, Hypatia Vourloumis, and Fred Moten on the not-so-easy subject of friendship. I encourage everyone to listen to recordings from the summit, which are generously provided on the Bergen Assembly's website.

I will say, though—as my word limit draws near—that if we're being moved, the question arises of how we might move differently. Not necessarily in direct opposition, but somewhat more out of sync with the given beat. And it would seem that this would have to happen with one another, along the lines of what da Silva calls a "difference without separation." I've probably come off as exuberant and corny (because I am), and I might as well end on an even more rhapsodic note. So much of what these kinds of events can impart, when they're done well, happens outside the scheduled activities and performances—in the simple meeting of people at lunch, on walks, in bars. On the last day, I trekked halfway up a mountain (for embarrassing reasons, we didn't make it all the way) with someone I will consider a friend from now on. Speculating on what we'd seen, heard, and experienced, I had a sense similar to that of being in the rain. Outside the exhibition and summit, we found ourselves still *in* something, together, and I can think of no bigger compliment to give to this assembly.



Bergen Gamle Brannstasjon, Bergen Assembly 2016 venue. Photo: Linn Heidi Stokkedal



Tarek Atoui & Council, "WITHIN/ Infinite Ear" production shot, Bergen Assembly, 2016. Photo: Thor Brødreskift

