

Voicing Pieces: Left Speechless

By Pieter T'Jonck - 22 May 2017



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The artist Begüm Erciyas has created an amazing audio device in which one's own voice does all the work

***Voicing Pieces* by Turkish artist Begüm Erciyas is an incredible experience. It lets you listen to your own narration of a few simple texts, briefly turning your world upside down.**

You stick your head into a hollow space three times. The first space resembles a rough meteorite, the second a large pouch, the third a futuristic oven with a tall chimney. In each space there is a text you just have to read out, speaking into a microphone attached to your headset.

Through this headset you can hear yourself saying words and sentences, the context of which you only discover little by little. In this respect, the performance is very similar to the act of reading: As you let your eyes glide over the letters and lines, you start seeing things, and you gradually lose yourself in the story – until you find yourself again.

The amazing thing about the performance is that it intensifies the reading experience. The rendering of your voice is sometimes imperceptible, sometimes controlled and distorted. Hearing a recording of your own voice is strange enough as it is: You realize, over and over again, that something as familiar and intimate as your voice sounds very strange in reality.

Babbling Like a Drunk Writer

Just which heart are you wearing on your sleeve then? This feeling of confusion is driven to its head here. At the first stop, you still have control of the situation. You yourself turn the pages of a book and read simple sentences – a voice test with echo effects of sorts.

In the second hollow space, the texts appear and disappear automatically. But just as you no longer determine the rhythm yourself, you are being challenged even more. While you hear your own voice counting from one to eight over and over again, you have to add words to the rhythm. It's like singing an unknown score. In the end, your own voice becomes a crowd in which you gradually lose yourself.

By the time you reach the last station you are completely lost. Your voice drops and babbles as you read about an inconsolable drunk writer. You are caught up in a wild vision of a voice which encompasses the world, and, all worked up, you end up in a reflection on how this piece was an echo of itself.

It is a long journey, although it lasts only half an hour, which eventually brings you back home to yourself, to your own voice. And it will never sound the same again. Magical.

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