



Anri Sala
Ulysses
made in collaboration with
Franz Ferdinand and
Jeremy Millar 2007

■ Anri Sala: A Second Look

Hauser & Wirth London November 9 to December 22

Those of us who spend our daily adult lives thinking, speaking and dreaming in a tongue unfamiliar to us in our childhood know that changing languages, or existing in-between them, can be complex matters. You obtain not one but two second languages, forever distanced from the so-called first language, while always having to struggle to pronounce some of those acquired words that give away the fact that you are not from 'around here'.

'Like my life,' Anri Sala explains, 'my work is continuously shaped, inspired and constrained by rupture, and transitory or intermediate stations.' Born in Albania and living and working in Berlin, he often returns to tensions between presence and displacement in his work. His exhibition, 'A Second Look' at Hauser & Wirth, presents a gathering of pieces, some of which echo each other or draw upon references from his earlier works.

A melody plays in the entrance of the gallery. Upon arrival, I do not pay much attention to it, rushing straight into the exhibition space, only too happy to escape the madness that is Piccadilly near Christmas time. But then tunes are funny; they stay with you if you are not careful.

So, with the melody semi-present at the far back of my mind, I move into the main gallery. One of the videos playing here, *Air Cushioned Ride*, 2006, is shot from Sala's car as he circles a wall of trucks parked at a roadside rest area in Arizona. The baroque chamber music on his car radio is continually interrupted by another signal transmitted from a local country music station. The signals alternate as he drives

around the car park, the classical music set against the brutal architecture of the trucks, with the latter taking on a strangely romantic appearance as songs of unrequited love momentarily surface in the soundscape.

In *A Spurious Emission*, 2007, he has commissioned a composer to transcribe the findings from *Air Cushioned Ride* into a musical score. The work exists here in three different forms: the score itself, a performance that took place at the private view and a video recording of an earlier performance of the piece. As before, all manifestations consist of the representation of two conflicting sound spaces – baroque and country – and in the recorded performance, this battle of ‘coming to the fore’ is extended as the off-screen drummer appears as a ghostly, transparent figure superimposed on the video.

After Three Minutes, 2007, appropriates an earlier work and consists of two video projections: that of *Three Minutes*, a silent video piece from 2004 showing a cymbal quivering in strobe lighting, and a video documenting the installation of the same work, again from an earlier exhibition. The limitations of the equipment are integral to the work as the frames fail to capture the 60 light flashes per second. Shown next to each other, visible from the mezzanine and partly discernible from the main gallery through a mesh net, the videos add another layer to the dispersion of site. In the main gallery, the work, playing only in the time gaps in-between the other pieces, turns into a visual representation of a distant, intervening signal.

The apparitional figure of the drummer haunts the exhibition. The melody, playing at the entrance, forgotten but nonetheless there, re-emerges in the downstairs vault gallery in the work *Ulysses*, 2007, made in collaboration with Jeremy Millar. Here, visitors are invited to test their musical skills on a drum kit, rehearsing what turns out to be an unreleased Franz Ferdinand song of the same name, and, if participation is not your thing, there is the option of listening on headphones, either to the original, unfinished version, or to the poor person on the drum kit who unlike you is not afraid to make a fool of herself.

I see Sala’s work as being less about the reverse-order of original and copy than about the possibility of navigating through a complex network of information and experience, replacing the early postmodernist loss-of-the-real dictum with a sense of reality-in-flux. If his work was spoken it would be a stutter, or a ‘stutterance’, choking on its own elocution while still producing a rhythm interspersed with meaning. Language, translation and memory have been at the core of some of his previous works, such as *Intervista*, 1998, and *Làkkat*, 2004, neither directly cited in ‘A Second Look’. In the present pieces, he successfully manages to extend these concerns to include a wider sense of everyday experience, reminding us that the everyday is forever new, yet, as Maurice Blanchot observed, it can only be revisited, only looked at as if for the second time. ■

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