



London

Anri Sala

9 Nov — 22 Dec 2007

Hauser & Wirth

Outside it's teeming. Shoppers in Christmas frenzy Hoover up Piccadilly, and all its old-style excesses. Inside it's dark. Pushing a heavy door of the discreetly labelled Hauser and Wirth gallery, the cold blackness is a relief.

Here, Albanian-born artist, Anri Sala, now based in Berlin, has installed reworkings of two works and one new one. The high-vaulted interior feels like a church, although until recently, it was a Midlands Bank. In one corner, spot-lit on a lecturn are gallery notes – written as part-musical score, part-scientific explanation. The creamy parchment and elegant type provide high-minded accompaniment to the videos that are alternately beamed on opposite walls.

Circling in slow, dizzy motion, one film hypnotises with meditative surrealism. The scene is the forecourt of a truck park in Arizona. Sala drives around in sweeping circles while listening to Arizona Public Radio – baroque strains and country riffs phase in and out, switching favour on the air-waves. It could be a loop, but the tarmac, dominated by the sleeping red, blue and silver beasts, emblazoned with 'Landstar', 'Air-cushioned ride', 'Prime Inc Swift', dispels this in the presence of the odd returning trucker.

In the lecturn notes, Sala explains the sound phenomenon as 'cross-modulation', where the trucks are blocking and opening-up passageways for radio waves. Such physics is transformed into elegiac disorientation in 'Air Cushioned Ride', 2006.

But Sala has taken the work a step further. Commissioning a composer to transcribe the sounds into full musical score, the second film, 'A Spurious Emission', 2007, depicts the live recording. A presenter makes

an announcement, lost to a burst of Baroque strings, in turn swept away by a rousing country chorus, and so on. The musicians, positioned together, perform with po-faced seriousness, as if unaware of each-others' presence. It is the bringing together of 'ruptures' that so concerns Sala's work. Where the

randomness of life provides coincidence and gaps that occur with no conceived alignment.

A recent account by Sala of his childhood in Albania, where his mother was director of the National Library, reveals how she gave Sala access to *le font noir*, 'the dark store' – where all the banned books were kept. This illicit introduction to art in a culture that was enduring its own enforced rupture of artistic and political life, helps explain Sala's fascination for imaginative leaps in the dark, and indeed the allure of darkness itself. Images, he said, were often cut-out, so texts would appear without illustration.

Heading down into the basement of the old bank, where the safes that guarded gold still stand, Sala's final work sits ready for play. The tune of an unreleased Franz Ferdinand song has been hummed, and the drum beat translated into words from Joyce's *Ulysses* co-written with writer Jeremy Millar. There is a drum kit and a microphone hooked up to a computer, and a Franz Ferdinand-esque gentleman to aid in your task of bashing out a tune.

Each effort is recorded and Sala and Franz Ferdinand will make something of these attempts to sing and play along to a new tune, directed by words corralled from the modernist legend of the 20th century.

Each of Sala's works is immersive, and the randomness navigated and brought into alignment with deft mental agility. He expresses beauty in chance, and an intellectual rigour in taking this further. His art has a restorative quality, and the collaborative nature of this exhibition, *A Second Look*, is part of making links between the material world, music, science, video, literature and art.

Ruth Hedges is a writer based in London

Above: Anri Sala, 'After Three Minutes', 2007, exhibition view