

+COA+ : A DADAIST SCIENTIFIC INTERVENTION



HEITOR ALVELOS

halvelos@fba.up.pt

ID+ and Faculty of Fine Arts
University of Porto, Portugal

RUI PENHA

ruipenha@fe.up.pt

INESC TEC and Faculty of
Engineering, University of
Porto, Portugal

ANSELMO CANHA

anselmocanha@gmail.com

ID+ and Faculty of Fine Arts
University of Porto, Portugal



Abstract

+CoA+ is a short concert / performance using xCoAx 2017 abstracts as source material for live reinvention. It is part of an ongoing series of performances that aim at addressing the epistemological chasm between cognitive and expressive delivery. The authors elect the conference environment as a particularly suitable context for this exercise; in it, they engage in an intuitive, improvised dream sequence

Keywords

Scientific Dadaism
Conference
Deconstruction
Paper Improv

of glimpses and fragments of various threads present during said conference—in this case, xCoAx. Using self-contained analogue and digital gear, as well as live vocals, the concert/performance relies on conference participants' donations of their abstracts as advance source material for prior preparation of a wealth of audio and voice content, to be rummaged in an improvisational setting. The provenance of this content remains identifiable, while largely reinventing the expectations of scientific delivery.

1. OVERVIEW AND PREMISES

How to decipher and convey the potential wealth of dynamics and dissonances between aesthetic shards, computational trends, scientific content, and the current zeitgeist—all present at xCoAx?

+CoA+ means to bring together the various conference streams and contributions on a live exercise of intuitive reinvention: the cognitive gives way to the expressive and dramatic; the hermetic and codified reveals the cathartic.

Conference participants are invited to donate their papers as source material for live deconstruction and methodological mash-up. This source material is then reconfigured by a core trio made up of two musicians/sound makers and a vocalist: a concert that works as scientific stream-of-consciousness, as much as it invites those present to re-consider the tacit assumptions regarding conference delivery modes.

Possible historical, contemporary and conceptual anchors include Dadaism, the cut-up exercises of William S. Burroughs and Brion Gysin, Fluxus poetry, TED Talks, oracles, Concrete Poetry, The X Factor, Woodstock, American Idol, Beat poetry, Situationism, Shamanism, the Cabaret Voltaire club, Eno and Schmidt's *Oblique Strategies*, and stand-up routines. One could go on forever, really: the point here is to unravel the harmonious potential and reciprocal resonance between the live setting and the preceding heritage it congregates, the *now* conjuring its own ancestry and repertoire.

2. METHODOLOGY

Two weeks prior to the conference, speakers and participants are contacted by email and invited to donate their abstracts to the +CoA+ team. These are printed out and used as starting points in a series of preparatory jam sessions that occur in private. These jam sessions aim at testing synergies and compatibilities between the various ingredients: texts, instruments, musicians, acoustics. No notes are taken, no structure is set—or rather, the envisioned structures are purposefully kept out of focus, as the live environment may dictate a change of approach on the spot. It is therefore crucial that the live experience becomes primarily empirical, even shamanistic, rather than a replication of prior expectations. The Conference "vibe" is just as decisive a factor as all other ingredients.

A good example of the need for this open-endedness occurred on the very first concert of the series: a pre-recorded track made up of cross-fading loops had

been prepared as an acoustic foundation for musicians to build upon; however, at sound-check the ensemble realized the track was a hostile ingredient within the venue's acoustics. In a matter of minutes, all agreed to drop the track and proceed without a safety net. It turned out to be the best decision.

In line with this spirit, depending on the energy gathered and congregated on the occasion, audience members may participate in the live delivery if they so wish—subject to on-the-spot orchestration. This is a key factor in the performance's success, as it readily ensures the dissolution of the "fourth wall", a surprisingly prevalent anachronism in an age of media connectivity. Still, all catharsis needs regulation if it wants to blossom as a creative force, so the spectrum of the "session moderator" returns in the guise of the MC.

Instrumentation and musicianship is decided upon based on the conference's themes and disciplines; for example, at the *Keep it Simple, Make it Fast!* Conference 2015, the performance incorporated instruments and competences pertaining to Punk, the conference's overall subject—and this included the presence of two musicians with no prior experience. Accordingly, the +CoA+ performance incorporates digital technology while keeping the spectrum open through the use of analogue media and musical toys.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND OUTLOOKS

The overall focus of this series of performances is a purposeful address of the apparent irreducibility between knowledge and entertainment. As such, it acknowledges humour as a valid resource for self-actualisation, just as it mirrors the current multiple dissolution of traditional protocol for formal address—the-reby rummaging its ideological implications. In addition, there is a belief in the exploration of a further paradox: that of an artistic legacy in avant-garde performance that has somehow given way to a fairly restricted setup, at a time when media could provide the most extraordinary forms of engagement—while instead often (and strangely) leading to a perverse orthodoxy of roles and behaviours between artists and audiences.

The authors will maintain their availability to explore this performance template to a selected set of interested conferences, adapting the line-up, technical specifications and semantic undercurrents to the conference premises. As such, an ever-changing balance is sought: between familiarity and possibility, between logic and epiphany.