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Marco Fusinato  
 Guitar, Electronics  
 Birthplace: Melbourne, VIC

**SELECT DISCOGRAPHY:**

- Ripping Skies* (LP, No Fun Productions, 2009)
- 0\_Synaesthesia Editions* (4x LP, Synaesthesia, 2006)
- Free (Auckland)* (7", Circle Records, 2002)
- Slobodna (Zagreb)* (7", Circle Records, 2001)
- Free (New York)* (7", Circle Records, 2000)
- Libero (Milan)* (7", Circle Records, 1999)
- Vrij (Amsterdam)* (7", Circle Records, 1998)
- Feedback 1 - 4* (4x 7", Circle Records, 1998)

Curated Pages:

Marco Fusinato, Mass Black Implosion (ST/48-1, 240162, Iannis Xenakis), 2007  
 ink on archival facsimile of score, Part 3 of 8 parts, 53 x 64 cm each. Private collection Los Angeles

Early on in our discussion, Marco Fusinato raised the spectre of “the beauty of time.” What we were talking about in particular has escaped me, but that phrase has been rolling around and around in my head over the five months or so since our conversation. Bruce Russell\* writes that music can be distilled as thus ( $\{Music=Time\}=\{Time=Music\}$ ). That is, at its absolute level music is about time that it occupies and how we situate ourselves and sense the passing of that time.

Fusinato’s practice is punctuated by a beautiful austerity that is as much driven by the gargantuan implosions of noise-based improvisation and music as it is by the conceptual concerns of La Monte Young, Bruce Nauman and John Cage and the politico explosions (and pitfalls) of collectives such as Situationist International and the Brigade Rosse (Red Brigades). Combining the above in an art-music continuum, Fusinato’s music is heavily influenced by his art and vice versa. Schematically this could be surmised as ( $\{Music=Art\}=\{Art=Music\}$ ).



DOMINIC KIRKWOOD: What’s your background? Did you study?

MARCO FUSINATO: I studied visual art in the mid ’80s. I didn’t enjoy art school. At that period there was an overriding style of expressionistic, crusty painting, which I wasn’t into. I was interested in conceptual practices, so I spent a lot of time in the library discovering stuff. Also, I was really interested in and influenced by music, primarily by punk.

DK: What artists were you looking at when you were in the library?

MF: Joseph Beuys, Fluxus, Cage, ’60s avant-garde. Obviously, this was a time before the Internet, so it was a lot more difficult to get information. One thing would lead to another: You would discover something and in turn they would be influenced by something else. There

was a lot of legwork and a lot of crossovers with my interests. [You would] find out about the Situationists, Fluxus, American Conceptualism...

You can’t underestimate the importance of punk for a kid in the suburbs in the late ’70s/early ’80s. If you saw a kid dressed in punk gear, they stood out. The important thing about it for me was that it was widely distributed. You could get the records — The Clash, Sex Pistols, The Ramones — anywhere. The lyrics were interesting, but what I really grabbed on to was the interviews. These guys didn’t speak about girls, fast cars. They spoke about social engagement and politics, which leads you on to further investigations. All of a sudden you’re listening to Throbbing Gristle. Then it starts getting lower and lower, and you’re really down in the pit; you’re listening to Noise music.

DK: So with the Sonic Youth inspired Sensational Fix exhibition in Malmö, was it primarily the TM/MF work that was shown within that exhibition?

MF: That's in there, and also another series, *Mass Black Implosion*.

DK: In TM/MF you're literally jamming with Thurston Moore, painting ten red monochromes as he performs ten improvised noise pieces on video...

MF: The crux of that piece has to do with the idea of non-technique. Thurston's improvisations are non-traditional ways of playing guitar. My response with the paintings is that anyone can do it. It's also the idea of what a painting can be. I've only ever used one colour, covered the surface as quickly as possible, and titled the painting with the time it takes to cover the surface. All the paintings I've ever done have been made in that way. They are very immediate works and are about getting the job done — from point A to point B as quickly as possible, using whatever implements are available in the studio, whether it's a brush and all the hairs fall out or a plastic bag tied around my hand smearing the paint over the surface as quickly as possible.

DK: Sensational Fix featured artists such as Richard Prince, Vito Acconci, Robert Longo, etc. I find Prince's work quite stinky, for instance. Is there a fine line between making your work commercially viable and still staying true to your own aesthetic and concepts?

MF: That side of it is so uncontrollable. You can't just sit there and make work that may sell. You just make the work. Where it ends up or where it goes, I can't determine that. I just follow my instinct and put it out there, and then it's out of my hands. I think it also depends on context and applying certain ideas to particular contexts.

DK: Quite often, you blur contexts. What becomes apparent through this is a love of punk and a love of noise-based compositions that then filter through a piece — which leads me to *Free*. The way that was realised is a perfect case in point.

MF: With *Free* I use the music store as a ready-made music studio. I walk into a music shop, a hidden microphone and recorder in my pocket, and I ask to use a distortion pedal. For you to do so, they have to give you a guitar and an amplifier. I then turn everything on full and do a free noise improvisation until they tell me to turn it off or I get kicked out. It's always awkward at the end of that action, giving equipment back and saying, "No thanks." [The recordings were] pressed as 7" records, which came out on a label called Circle Records.

They're all very different when you hear them. The noise produced in the store is dependent on where you are placed in the shop. I have to work myself up into a state, because it's quite confrontational. For example, I walked into a shop in Copenhagen and there were these big guys working behind the desk and they set up the amp right next to the desk, so I played really timidly. Then there are other ones where they put you into a supposedly soundproof booth, which produce really different results.

DK: It's interesting, because you have the TM/MF work, which is almost 10 years old, showing in Malmö and the 2008 piece *Parallel Collisions*, which was exhibited in the Still Vast Reserves exhibition in Rome. What changes do you think have occurred in your practice over that time period?

MF: It all seems to be similar thoughts. It just comes out in different manifestations.

DK: I don't know much about *Parallel Collisions*. What is that work about?

MF: It's a commissioned score for a new music ensemble in Melbourne called Golden Fur. Because I don't have any formal music training, my approach to the commission was to write a pictorial score. I had this idea of taking some images from the media that referenced violence and altered states and then cutting them up and reconfiguring them into shapes



that referenced explosions. The score is 24 pages. So if it's a trio, each performer gets 8 pages. If it's a duo, each performer gets 12 pages, etc. Each image is quite specific, [so I] talk the performers through each image — what I'm referencing and what each image might mean. I then ask them to be in that state when they perform that page.

DK: So it's essentially performing in a state of violence...

MF: Yeah, or whatever way they want to take it. [Gestures towards screenshots of pages in the score] So, that's a cut-up from *The Simpsons*; this is a still from the Japanese anime master Tezuka; this is an image from a riot in Melbourne; these are photos of the terrorists who blew up the London Underground; this is a drawing by my daughter referencing my *Mass Black Implosion* series; an exploding star; images from avant-garde composers who have used explosions in their scores, etc.

The reason it's called *Parallel Collisions* is because each musician performs each page simultaneously. As they work through each page, they throw it on the ground. The audience gets to see what they've played. It ends up on the floor around them as a scatter piece. [It] ends up being quite a visual performance.

DK: As far as the actual performance goes, what sort of sounds have you been getting from this particular piece?

MF: Interestingly, similar to the imagery — a lot of tension, quite spirited in their attack on their instruments. [It's] quite exciting to witness the rapport between the three of them as they work through each page and throw it on the ground. It's quite visceral and powerful.

DK: Whilst we're on this topic of attacking instruments, I want to talk about *Mass Black Implosion*. You have taken music scores and drawn a line emanating from each individual note; it feels as if each note is being played together at the one time in one instantaneous burst of noise. Was there a similar sentiment behind that work?

MF: The idea for the *Mass Black Implosion* series is to take existing scores, primarily by avant-garde composers who are known for attempting to extend the language of music, and for me to apply something over the top to extend — or destroy — the language even further. [I] choose a point on the score and then rule a line with an ink pen from every note on the score back to this point. It is a proposition for a noise piece. Imagine if all the notes on this score were played at the one time. What would it sound like? A lot of people ask me, "How



was the point chosen?" And let's say someone like Cage, who used chance operations to make decisions — [my] point was chosen according to... taste! It's perversely the opposite.

*DK: With that particular work, you've chosen what looks aesthetically pleasing, but in TM/MF, for instance, chance and randomisation play a big part. For example, Thurston rubbing a bottle against his guitar whilst you're painting a monochrome furiously with a bag tied to your wrist. Even with Parallel Collisions you're giving a musician a composition and saying, "Interpret this." Does chance and randomisation still play a big part in your practice?*

MF: I like keeping it open and seeing what happens. Setting up a framework, but within that framework it's open to possibilities. It keeps [the work] alive for me each time; I'm not sure which way it's going to go. It's the same when I perform.

*DK: It makes it interesting for me, because your work seems to inhabit its own microcosm and has its own self-perpetuating stream of logic. You must be very methodical about the way you think and execute your work.*

MF: Each project is very considered. It's a matter of setting up this framework that will allow for the unknown to happen and for it to be of interest.

*DK: Collaboration seems to be a key part of your practice. I'll start off with Poletopra, a noise duo you are in with Anthony Pateras. Where did you get the name from?*

MF: Anthony is Macedonian, and I'm Venetian Italian. "Poletopra" in Macedonian means "burning," and "pra" in Venetian dialect means "fields." The name is Burning Fields.

*DK: Do you get together regularly and rehearse?*

MF: We don't rehearse. Initially, we spoke about what we might do. For example, "Let's start off quietly and then work up." Or inversely, "Let's go full on." We decided that doesn't work. We don't talk about it, we just do it.

*DK: It's interesting to see with musicians how constricting their classical training can be. You can have a really well trained musician, but they can make the most terrible music you've ever heard...*

MF: It's like visual artists. The good ones all have to unlearn their craft and start up again with their own language. A lot of the guys I work with musically have done that.

*DK: So is that something that you did early on in the piece with your practice?*

MF: You know when you're a kid and you go into music stores and you look in the book section "How to play in the style of..."

*DK: How to play like Tom Morello — that was big when I was a teenager!*

MF: I learnt early on that I could never do that. I never had the ear or technical ability to play like anyone from those books, nor was I interested. So I realised there's no section here in the shop entitled "How NOT to play like these guys." I thought, "That's interesting, that world doesn't exist, to create your own thing out of dissonance, cacophony and chaos."

*DK: You also curate the YOU DON'T HAVE TO CALL IT MUSIC: Music by Visual Artists series. What's your interest in bringing musicians who are also artists together in a series of concerts?*

MF: There's a long history of visual artists doing interesting things with sound. There was an opportunity in a club here in Melbourne to curate stuff. I know a lot of visual artists who work with sound and music, and [I thought], "Here's an opportunity to take them out of the white cube and place them in a black hole." [I invited] three acts per night to see what they would come up with. It's been really interesting to see what the approach has been to performing.



*DK: You've got quite a wide variety of artists who have played the night — from Beaches to Philip Brophy to Paeces to Bum Creek...*

MF: There's a lot. It's been incredibly satisfying to see all that; for it to be part of the artists' practice, for that context to be available.

*DK: You mentioned taking the artists from the white cube and placing them in a black hole. This evokes memories of Aetheric Plexus. I remember seeing that at the Australian Centre for Contemporary Art in Melbourne earlier this year and it looked and sounded like the skeletal remains of a hair metal concert — a bank of bright lights and an intense burst of noise. How did you come about the idea for that piece?*

MF: There are a few ideas that fed into it. I had been performing a lot, and there is a lot of down time when you're performing. I'd look up and see the lights, see the scaffolding, the stage. In a club context all that equipment is there to highlight the performer. So then I had the idea of taking that gear, turning it upon the audience and making them the spectacle. A lot of the time as an audience in a gallery your physical reaction is passive. I really wanted to make the audience realise that they're alive, that they've got a pulse.

When you entered the space, you would see the work from behind and it looked like a very elegant, beautiful sculpture. When you walked around the front, a sensor in the corner of the gallery would trigger more than 13,000 watts of white light and 105 decibels of white noise. To see someone hit by that is the work. *You* are the work.

*DK: I sat through two bursts of noise and light and it scared the shit out of me. One great element of the work was hearing the noise from afar and then the audience's scream echo through the gallery. It was a very visceral experience.*

MF: I was there one day, and a school group of 15 year old boys came in, bored out of their minds. To see them walk in front of that work, be hit and then jump and start screaming was a real moment. I thought, "If you can make a pack of 15 year old boys excited, jump around and scream, fucking great! It worked!" They were alive again.

*DK: Ripping Skies, you're latest release, is a very visceral work in itself. Was there any conscious choice in using a detail from a Joseph Lyett print on the cover? I vaguely remember learning about him in high school.*

MF: I'm interested in Australian Colonial art and... mistakes. A lot of Australian Colonial art looks so wrong. It's a real metaphor for what are we all doing here — the way they would paint the landscape as if from European memory. I kept the record sleeve without information so there would be no pre-conceived notion of what you are about to hear.

*DK: You use music as a form to communicate other ideas. With the 0\_Synaesthesia and 0\_King series, did you want to use vinyl records as a vehicle to have the sound of "nothing" on there?*

MF: It's that old question of "What is silence?" and "What is noise?" When I was making those [early 2000s], it was at the moment of "the DJ as superstar." So my take on it was to make a whole series of 12" records with no sound on them, so it would clear the room. [Laughs] It was in opposition to people dancing and having fun... I want to send them home and make them think about something.

*DK: Some of the designs of the grooves are wild — ellipses, squiggles...*

MF: They end up playing themselves. The needle jumps around and creates its own patterns. Ironically, they end up being brutal noise records.

*DK: Were they ever played together as a DJ set?*

MF: The *0\_Synaesthesia* editions were played live. It works really well. There's nothing on there, but there's always something.

*DK: Can I ask you one dumb question? Do you ever listen to Beyoncé or anything like that, when your ears get tired of noise music?*

MF: I don't listen to any of that stuff. It's very specific, what I listen to. I've stopped going to Coles Supermarkets, because they play muzak and I can't cope because a lot of it is music from when I was growing up, which I totally rebelled against, like '80s pop, Eurythmics, etc. I hear it now in supermarkets and it just fucking kills me. What music do you listen to?

*DK: It's funny you saying you hate Eurythmics. I quite like bits and pieces of their work.*

MF: You're from a different generation. When you live through it, it's something you have to oppose. What year were you born?

*DK: 1984.*

MF: Year 10, 11 and 12, what were the fuckwits that you hated at school listening to?

*DK: It would have been shit hip-hop and this trance song, Darude "Sandstorm." I fucking hated it.*

MF: In 15 years time, when someone says to you, "I'm listening to 50 Cent and it's awesome," you'll fucking flip.

\*Russell, Bruce, 'Thinking My Head To The Sky', <http://www.audiofoundation.org.nz/articles/discourse/practical-materialism-lesson-two-thinking-my-head-sky>, 2000.

