

APALAZZOGALLERY

em'kal eyongakpa

beats/bits of(f) sPACE(s)

letters from etokobarek chapter 1:i

What space? What spaces? What rhythm? What beat?

Spaces that move in line with improvised yet precise trajectories. Spaces beyond space that have no need for coordinates. Spaces of the present and the past, emerging from the darkness and becoming real.

It is impossible to frame or pin down the artistic practice of em'kal eyongakpa; rather it must be left to flow in the blurring and uniting of various media. Video, sculpture, photography, installation, performance: without the limits imposed by technique they become something else entirely; they melt together, aping the rhythm of reality and at the same time of unreality; they mix contingent and illusory dimensions, continuing to generate old and new spaces, and perhaps even future ones.

Metal is transformed into an upside-down rain of stars and in soft threads of rotating light. Boom! Explosions that violently invade the sky. They fall behind the buildings and are sucked up by the darkness. Boom!

Fireworks that intermittently light up the last night of the year. "Amsterdam is burning!"

eyongakpa creates ecosystems of glows and shades, of noises and music, natural and urban soundscapes, in an ongoing dialogue. These are pulsating environments capable of amplifying space; with a roar they throw windows open, letting in a tornado of unknown perceptions and a delicate zephyr of disorientation.

Is space a place? Is it an undefinable place? Is it a transitory phase? Is it perceptible?

Filters, layers and transparencies lean on the images of a world that the artist documents through his eyes, his camera and the transposition of his own dreams. The interest lies not in the reinterpretation of the real datum, but in dancing with the gaze and the mind among the spaces explored, rethinking its connections and constructing social spaces in which to redefine the relations in a constant process of negotiation between reality and unreality.

The sound intertwines various narratives, culturally dense with hardship and beauty, in a perpetual movement which is that of the universe but also of the journey. For several years, the artist has shifted between Africa, Europe and America, accompanied by ever-changing scenarios that flow past the window of the train, boat and plane.

The music and the field recordings create profound, enchanted and fleeting spaces, which may reference the sound ecosystems of Luc Ferrari, yet they are ones in which the dramatization of the sound story is replaced by autobiographical narratives, blended with the voices of his own land and the one that hosts him: the cries of sellers in the marketplace of Douala, the air bubbles that gurgle in the river that passes not far from where he was born, the chirping of the crickets and the roar of the waves along the coasts of the Mediterranean.

The images and the sound compositions move like reflections on the water, underwater, those waters that accompany the diaspora. These are also the waters described by Amiri Baraka in "At the bottom of the Atlantic ocean there's a railroad made of Human Bones...", which today run through the Mediterranean Sea, or those of "Water No Get Enemy" by Fela Kuti.

Nature is always present, at times unperceivable, at other times explicit: shapes blossoming, branches bending, leaves quivering on the water's surface, the curve of the cosmos, the rotation of the planets. A land-based cosmology reflected in space, or vice versa. Time punctuated by moon cycles. *??full moons later. A time that repeats, ritualistically. Dis sonic rituals.* eyongakpa's natural connection with his shamans grandparents.

Autobiographical impressions appear in the form of soft, swollen reflections, from an unusual radiography of a cast of his own back, illuminated and translucent, to faded self-portraits, shot in the place where he meets his own roots: *naked roots.*

The images and sounds fly through space like letters written on the spur of the moment, without being reread, direct and honest, immediate and visionary. In this moment of suspension, whirling through a vortex, we can make out a new semiotic alphabet, *letters from etokobarek (europe)*, which has the rhythm of ancient languages, signs that are repeated like in a ritual, breaking waves, both stroking and striking the ground

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fiercely and softly.

Poetry settles on every work by eyongakpa, blending with the other media, and overlaying the elements that accelerate or slow down in space; it blurs them with the delicate shades of other realities and redraws them with its own vocabulary. The artist seems to have found a language capable of conserving the ancient wealth and authenticity of the tongue of his ancestors, corrupted by the imposition of two European languages in Cameroon. And the voice of the artist recites potential narratives.

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The spaces that open up in front of us, below us and above us are in constant flow, changing direction, spinning as if there were no force of gravity. In an unprocessed process, they develop outside any possible scheme.

eyongakpa's artistic research is extemporaneous, contingent, and I might even say 'Fluxus' in a contemporary acceptance of the term, by virtue of the creative flow which spreads through the environments, from the street to the art galleries; of the transitory nature of his projects and visions; of the transcontinental diffusion and dispersion of the group's exponents, forever travelling and linked to an epistolary network, and by virtue of the revolutionary force, capable of taking apart and not conforming to the art system. Starting from music, they united the other artistic disciplines, rewrote the rules that they were to break, and without ever defining themselves; they promoted disorientation and at the same time proved themselves capable of adhering to everyday reality, recording its vibrations, enigmas and silences for an audience also made up of common people. An extremely lively approach, one which lets art breathe and makes it move to original rhythms.

Giulia Brivio

Opening Friday 18 March 6 pm
18 March – 10 May 2016