



WILSON TANNER SMITH

Composer, cellist, improviser, music-theatre artist
wilsontannersmith.com

Portfolio

“Wilson”

for speaking cellist and live electronics
Tallinn, EE | January 2023

Work Sample

Performance Video



Background

“Wilson” is a playful exploration of mutated/prosthetic identity, expression, and certain failures of technology. This short concert presentation represents a work-in-progress in the development of an AI model of the performer’s voice. Randomly-selected samples from hours the performer spent speaking alone in a recording studio are triggered live by attempts to speak on stage, live in the space. Playing with the 4th wall, the result is a reflection of the difficulty/impossibility of being direct with anybody at all, and of the slippery concept of a cohesive identity in an era of murky social technology and data collection.

Credits

- Lukas Xerxes (electronics, co-creation)
- Wilson Tanner Smith (cello, voice, co-creation)



Requiem for Ducks

Live soundscape and offstage voice for stuffed dog and imagination
Stockholm, SE | April 2023

Work Sample

Performance Video



Background

Requiem for Ducks is a live multimedia piece for an offstage performer and onstage stuffed dog. Toy keyboards, vocoder, field recordings, radio scanning, homemade cassettes, and chance samples from around the internet weave into a meandering “story” or guided meditation about what it's like being here, who you're sitting next to, and ability of the human imagination to project meaning and mystery onto any object, place, person, etc.



Credits

- Wilson Tanner Smith (voice, electronics, creation)

Still Point // Perpetual Guest

Site-specific concert series and recording project

Narva, EE | July 2023

Work Sample

Project Trailer



Background

“Still Point” was a series of three concerts, performance installations and accompanying recording sessions at the historic Kreenholm Manufactory in Narva, Estonia, supported by the Narva Art Residency (NART). Each of the three performances (two collaborative, one solo) took place in different spaces in the factory, interacting with the unique acoustics of its massive, reverberant rooms, utilizing sounding objects found during field research, cello, and a 100-year-old harmonium restored by Smith.

The music draws inspiration from the layers of history, labor, conflict, and lives past and present that can be felt as “spirits” lingering in now-quiet factory spaces. It engages as well with the particular kind of silence felt in this small city directly at Europe’s border with Russia, in the midst of the ongoing invasion of Ukraine.

That all these multitudinous influences comprise the “Still Point” found together now.

Credits

- Wilson Tanner Smith (cello, harmonium, synthesizer, found objects, curation & production)
- Katariin Raska (Torupill / Estonian folk bagpipes)
- Kristjann Kannukene (viola, voice)
- Helia Viirakivi (flute, voice)



Wasteland

Solo performer with live voice processing, electronics, and audio spatialization
Stockholm, SE | March 2023

Work Sample

Performance Video



"This place is a message, and part of a system of messages. Pay attention to it!"
– Scandia National Laboratories (1993)

Background

Wasteland is a wordless psycho-monodrama created for the 29.4-channel speaker dome at the Royal College of Music in Stockholm. A person finds themselves cast into an unfamiliar, abject, and alienating landscape and variously tries to make sense of it, cowers in fear from it, wonders if they are supposed to be employed by it. Analogizing the imposing speaker dome to something like the post-apocalyptic earthworks originally proposed for the US-based nuclear Waste Isolation Pilot Plant, *Wasteland* asks the question: if each thing humanity creates is an expression of its/our values, what do we do when we find this creation to be truly terrible?



Credits

- Wilson Tanner Smith (voice, movement-theatre, creation)
- Aaron Gochberg (electronics, co-creation)

Technicentre // Grandes Locos

Site-specific music and video series

Oullins & Lyon, FR | 9 March 2024

Work Sample

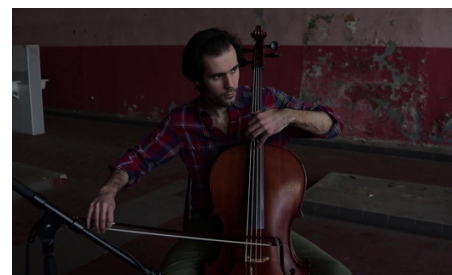
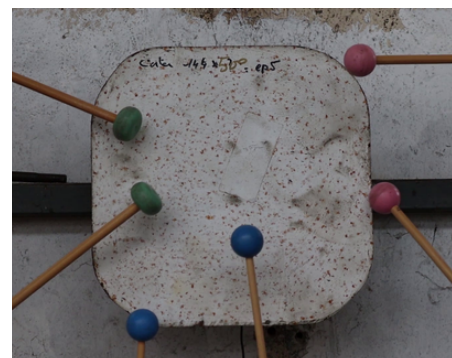
Trio for found objects



Background

For one day in March, I invited a few collaborators to do some recordings in the old maintenance factories of the French national rail company (SNCF), active from 1840 until 2019. The entire center is in the midst of renovations/conversion into a mixed-use cultural center ("Grandes Locos") and so the factories are now in an in-between state: empty and no longer used for their original purpose, and not-yet converted into their new destiny. It's quiet inside, while slowly the work advances outside.

These collaboratively-created, sometimes-playful, sometimes-contemplative recordings were created in response to/embodiment of this history and state of transition, alongside a larger project with the École Nationale Supérieure des Beaux-Arts de Lyon, Université Lumière Lyon 2, École Nationale Supérieure des Arts et Techniques du Théâtre, and artists Isabelle Moulin and Sonja Dicquemare.



Credits

- Wilson Tanner Smith (found objects, cello, audio/video editing)
- Aaron Gochberg (found objects, percussion, video recording)
- Viktória Šinkorová (guitar, found objects)
- Janine Jop (found objects)

A Whisper

For walkie talkie performers and Flute

(or any configuration of white noise generators and solo instrument/voice)

Tallinn, EE | January 2023

Work Sample

Performance Video



Background

“A Whisper” is a kind of dream-like sound forest, or a hazy, gently-undulating space with which a wandering instrumental/vocal line collaborates. A constantly-shifting soundscape of radio static is shaped by the hands of the performers, filtering the white noise sound of walkie talkies using the shape of their hands and walking about the space.

An instrumental soloist navigates the space with sound in a slowly-growing improvisational piece, rooted in the Deep Listening and a considered sensitivity to space and silence.



Credits

- Marianne Sihvonen (flute)
- Helena Atkin, Janine Jop, Viktória Šinkorová, Aaron Gochberg, Alicia Reyes, Wilson Tanner Smith (walkie talkies)

Mad Myth Science

Improvising Quartet / free improvisation & free jazz

Chicago, USA | August 2023 (ongoing since February 2020)

Work Sample

Self-titled album



Bio

Mad Myth Science is the collective musical offering of Molly Jones, Julian Otis, Wilson Tanner Smith, and Ben Zucker. Their through-improvised performances present a rich cross-section of Chicago creativity, bringing experience in jazz and creative music, contemporary composition, electronics, and dance and theatrical performing arts together into a pageantry of sound and spontaneous rituals. Their self-titled album was released August 2023 to praise from *The Wire* "Below the Radar," *Quietus*, and *Stereogum*.

Credits

- Wilson Tanner Smith (cello, flutes, objects)
- Ben Zucker (vibraphone, trumpet)
- Julian Otis (voice, electronics)
- Molly Jones (saxophone, flute, objects)



Everything at Once

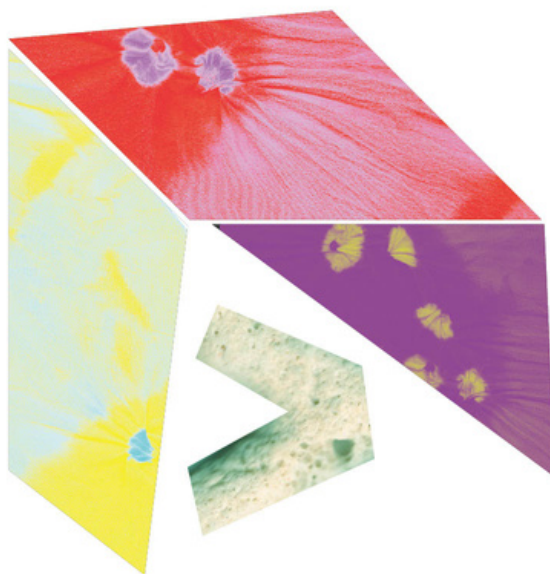
Solo cello improvisation album

Chicago, USA | July 2022 (recorded 2018)

Work Sample:

Sea/Ur (track 2 from album)

Everything at Once



BIVOUAC

Background

“Everything at Once” is an album of solo cello improvisations born out of a deep fascination with detail, specificity, atmosphere, presence — and the wonder that emerges through intentional time spent with any given thing/moment/person/space. Sam Clapp (recording, editing, and mastering) and Smith paired this musical impetus with unique (and a bit excessive) microphone techniques to create a sur-real and hyper-real image of the acoustic cello. This project was made to celebrate the spirit of a gently meditative/focused/honed appreciation of what's possible and rich in the instrument, and more importantly, what's rich in a Moment.

Credits

- Wilson Tanner Smith (cello)
- Sam Clapp (recording, mixing, mastering)
- Ana Maria Bermudez (album art)