

vorhergehende Seite: Javier Pérez, *Carroña*, 2011

Brown glass, preserved ravens, 200 x 150 x 150 cm

Courtesy of Berengo Studio, Venice Projects

(wird in der Galerie Mario Mauroner Contemporary Art in der Alten Residenz gezeigt)

The Breath of Loneliness

On Javier Pérez' new work *The Carousel of Time*

Javier Pérez, born in Bilbao in 1968, is considered one of the most important Spanish contemporary artists. With his work *The Carousel of Time*, he accepted the invitation from the Salzburg Festival to enter into an artistic dialogue with Bernd Alois Zimmermann's opera *Die Soldaten*, which is being produced at the Felsenreitschule for the 2012 season (Ingo Metzmacher, Music Director • Alvis Hermanis, Stage Director and Set Designer).

Sonorous Interaction

The close relationship of the Salzburg Festival with the visual arts goes back as far as the history of the Festival itself. This sonorous interaction resulted from the integration of great artists as set and costume designers, especially since the 1950s, when Oskar Kokoschka, for example, designed sets and costumes for *Die Zauberflöte* – all the way to Jonathan Meese's grandiose visualization of Wolfgang Rihm's opulent musical theater work *Dionysos*, which had its world premiere in 2010, on the occasion of the 90-year anniversary of the Salzburg Festival. Like a red thread, the interaction of the most important visual artists of their times with the fleeting "world-theater" in Salzburg runs through the Festival's history.

Furthermore, many of them created lasting works for the Festival's performance venues. We continue to encounter them today when touring the Festspielhäuser, as visible proof of the integration of all the arts into the Festival's *Gesamtkunstwerk*, or "total work of art" – masks and genii, mosaics and reliefs, tapestries and frescoes, ceramics and sculptures, and many more.

During the most recent past, another facet was added to the attempts to integrate the visual arts. Since 2007 exhibits with a close relation to the Festival's program have taken place regularly, introducing artists whose works complement the dramaturgical program and add their own ingenious note – always at the invitation of the Salzburg Festival. The first of these was the Belgian painter and playwright Jan Fabre, who not only created a piece for the Festival (*Requiem für eine Metamorphose*) but also provided the leitmotif image for the season. He was followed by the young German photo-artist Stefanie Schneider with her Polaroids, rich in associations, the Korean photographer Bae Bien-U with his meditative, large-scale images of pine forests, and Stephan Balkenhol with his mysterious reliefs. – They all had a profound influence on the visual image of the Festival for one season, showing selected works at the Festspielhäuser and at Salzburg galleries during the summer season.

While these presentations of works took place on a smaller scale and were relatively modest in the beginning, Stephan Balkenhol's examination of the figures and characters on stage last year resulted in an opulent



Javier Pérez, *El Carrusel del Tiempo* (Das Karussell der Zeit), Entwurf, 2012

spread at the Haus für Mozart, the highlight being the erection of the monumental sculpture *sempre piú* at the Karl-Böhm-Saal.

This year, the web of interrelations becomes denser yet again: the Festival invited the Spanish artist Javier Pérez to create an installation with reference to Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Die Soldaten* – far from the action on stage and as its own, autonomous work. Actually, the initial idea had been rather different. Bettina Zimmermann, daughter of the composer Bernd Alois Zimmermann, had contacted the Salzburg Festival with the suggestion of an exhibit that was to accompany the opera production. Soon, however, it became obvious that a half-hearted and superficial presentation, a series of autographs and sketches, photographs and posters advertising performances would be insufficient to reflect the multi-layered personality and the challenging oeuvre of this composer. However, a voluminous and scientifically correct Zimmermann exhibit could not be realized in the short time available, since the necessary archive research could not be completed in time, and also because the available space during the Festival season was insufficient. Still, the wish to help give this oeuvre, often singled out as an "oeuvre of the century", the prominence it deserves had remained with us, and never let us go. After all, it was also our goal to continue to give the visual arts the place they had occupied in the past at the Festival. Thus, the idea was born to confront a contemporary artist with the *opus magnum* of one of the most important composers of the 20th century, adding another layer of meaning to the idea of contemporaneity – epitomized by the name of the current series *Salzburg contemporary*.

After extensive conversations with the gallery owner Mario Mauroner and a process of tracing the philosophical and musical cosmos of Bernd Alois Zimmermann, it was soon clear that Javier Pérez might be the artist able to engage in such a difficult dialogue. – And Javier Pérez agreed. Not only was the selection of the artist successful: the complexity of the elaborate

construction of the work to be created turned out to be a stroke of luck, enabling us to accompany and observe the realization of the installation from the idea to its final implementation.

Rosaries and Horsehair

On a freezing winter's day, Javier Pérez visited the Festspielhäuser for the first time. Accompanied by our colleagues from the technical departments and the building administration, we walked through empty hallways and cold flights of rooms, through generous foyers and grand vestibules. Pérez seemed almost overwhelmed by the dimensions of the Karl-Böhm-Saal – very quietly, we began to worry that this master of filigree delicacy, this virtuoso of fragile technique might capitulate in the face of this enormous space with the all-domineering fresco of the Rottmayr school. In fact, however, his reticence reflected an intense fathoming of the dimensions, a cocooning within his first ideas, breathing with the space.

Only a few weeks later, we met again with Javier Pérez in Vienna, at the opening of an exhibit. The gallery was bustling in preparation for the vernissage. Many objects were still packed in large crates. A dancing skeleton was being mounted on the ceiling, an oversized rosary draped on the floor. Heavy bronze shoes were placed, leaden, on top of balls made of thin glass. And yet, everything was imbued with delicacy, fragility, a gentle sense of enchantment. The walls exhibited delicate lines; thin horsehair was woven into unique shapes. Glass, shards, glittering spikes were everywhere. Crows were artfully stuffed and perfectly arranged in brilliant reds; transparency everywhere – and then again, red and black.

In the midst of all this activity it seemed almost obscene to discuss a new project already. Yet, once again, appearances were deceptive. The ideas had been carefully written out, preliminary sketches were on the table, and Javier Pérez explained his delicate installation, his *Carousel of Time*, which he intended to create for the Karl-Böhm-Saal.

Javier Pérez, *Capilares III*, 2009
Black horse hair, 100 x 500 x 50 cm
Mario Mauroner Contemporary Art
Salzburg & Vienna

Lonely Dance

17 couples find themselves in a monotonous dance of loneliness that is repeated over and over – and is symbolized by 34 pairs of shoes, in other words by 68 used, partially worn-out objects of everyday life, which start out dangling from red linen strings attached to the ceiling of the Karl-Böhm-Saal, just above the fictitious dance floor. They are arranged in strict symmetry, like a mandala, in large and small circles that blend into each other – and whose order still shows a jumble of strings and shoes and couples and figures.

Then – as if by magic – an intricate mechanism begins to move on the ceiling, in three levels of rotation, hidden by an aluminum structure which conceals not only the strings and the source of movement – 21 tiny motors. At the center stands a gramophone – after all, what would a dance be without music? But is it really dance music? The soundtrack quotes all kinds of genres – harmony within disharmony – one great colorful carpet of sound – everything and nothing.

The dancing pairs of shoes constantly find each other back at their point of departure; again, they start out, only to return once more; time passes inextricably, and yet seems to stand still in its passing, ever the same. In a mathematically clever and complicated chronological order, and programmed at 21 different speeds, the pairs start moving one after the other, until they have all joined an inscrutable, almost disharmonic choreography. There is disorder within this mathematical order. Disharmony in the apparent harmony of dance and its poetic expression. Man and woman. Stagnation versus movement. And the fragility of the mobile, the gently whirling objects within the torpor of the sumptuous representational hall which drowns out everything else.

A Mechanical Ballet

Yet where, in all of this, one might ask, is Bernd Alois Zimmermann's oeuvre reflected? What constitutes the dialogue between serial composition and mechanical installation?

Bernd Alois Zimmermann used to refer to an "imaginary ballet" when he discussed composition, an "abstract formation of context based on serial principles" (Klaus Ebbecke): "musical 'meaning' is no longer conveyed by listening, but is given over to an authority that is quasi external". "As if in a military exercise, a composition that is structured only by symmetries marches 'on the spot'" – "All of that works mechanically, it's all mechanical," as Captain Pirzel cries in Zimmermann's opera. – However, within the massive overall gesture of the composition, one still finds that minute detail that characterizes serial compositions in general.

Time and again, it is the contrasts, the contradictions that interest Javier Pérez in his artistic reflection – and which he also associated spontaneously when approaching Zimmermann's work: impartially, almost unimpressed by the philosophical dimension with which the composer invariably interpreted his own work. Pérez' works "express the fragmentary and transient nature of circumstances of our lives that we believed to be fundamental," they reflect the identity of being and the tension between basically irreconcilable contrasts. – Does that not describe the fate of all the Maries? – And thus, Pérez comes closer than almost any other interpretation to the fundamental gesture of Zimmermann's musical work, using his own artistic language.

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Translated by Alexa Nieschlag