

AV FESTIVAL

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AS SLOW AS POSSIBLE 1-31 MARCH 2012

Wishful Thinking: In Remembrance of Peter Christopherson

Sat 17 March, 8pm-12am

Peter 'Sleazy' Christopherson was best known as a founder member of Throbbing Gristle and Coil, a designer at Hipgnosis, and a videomaker for Greenback Films. In summer 2010, AV Festival in collaboration with producer Paul Smith, commissioned him to compose a work for the 2012 Spring Equinox, to be staged at Durham Cathedral, where his father was University Vice-Chancellor and Warden from 1960-1979.

The basis of this performance came from a series of discussions between Peter and Paul Smith during the various downtime revelries throughout Throbbing Gristle's performance schedule during 2009 and 2010 and grounded by their longstanding working relationship. These programme notes from Paul Smith represent fragments from these discussions and ideas.

Peter rarely revealed much to me about his past, always preferring to talk about the now or the near future. However one revelation that emerged was that Peter Martin Christopherson was (nearly) a local boy who spent his formative years growing up in nearby Durham. Durham Cathedral was a brooding presence over his young adulthood offering him little or no sanctuary but leaving him with a strong memory of a gloriously transporting boys' choir.

Durham was the town Peter 'escaped' in order to explore and define the facets of his highly individual personality. Amongst these many identities was an adamant non-musician; thus he was much intrigued by the invitation to return to Old Durham Town (Roger Whittaker 1969) under the mantle of composer for a work we eventually dubbed 'Wishful Thinking'. The original plan was to stage it inside Durham Cathedral, where he could revisit the ghosts of his adolescent frustrations and roots of his subsequent triumphant blossoming.

Sadly, with Peter passing on 25 November 2010, this event has become more one of tribute and a sense of loss.

*Tribute – to (only a small part of) Peter's highly varied and eclectic artistic life.
Loss – we enter the void of absence (the heart growing fonder...).*

His departure to an elsewhere state and these disappearing worlds became a thematic guide for the event. Going, going, not quite gone are much of the technologies of Peter's youth. Technologies that fascinated and inspired Peter. For his personal artistic (mis)use.

Sound as transmitted by radio waves (travelling at the speed of light) pass into the stratosphere, and which, they say never die. We commit his voice to that ocean.

Light fired through celluloid to create waking dreams. An alchemical action.

An even older technology is the Cathedral itself: architecture built for the amplification of sound. Religious ritual was the rock concert spectacular of its day.

We simply will never know what Peter would have ultimately done for the commission. Therefore in Part One we present some sketches in sound and light, nuances, essences, loose threads, glimpsed from the peripheral vision.

We certainly talked about a choral work, references to György Ligeti's Requiem and of Gregory Caicco and Christopher Palmer's writings on the simultaneous craving for the sublime and the familiar. Peter's promised self-generating electronic sculptures show no sign (yet) of having ever actually existed or having ever been seriously pursued. These dead ends, and lost connections only amplify our sense of loss and the artistic vacuum left behind wanting to be filled.

But right from the start Peter's highly tuned antennae were a-wiggle as he was introduced to the operatic space chant of Attila Csihar and the erotic mise en scene of Alex Rose's collage work. Rose's work is presented here as originally intended utilizing the dead tech world of 35mm slide projections.

Chris Watson recorded Durham Cathedral's 'silence', and we relocate it here, taking our first steps towards a notion we decided to name 'Portable Ghosting'. Peter thought the overlaying of one sound space over another could be considered a form of time travel. (No noisy tardis for us.) Listening to 'nothingness' we discovered, is a delicate, delight-filled yet haunting experience as audio ghosts willingly manifest themselves and familiar spirits transmit the spacial ether zones.

Part Two osmotes the dying stars or the film ritual: ancient and modern (a practice and ritual Peter lovingly embraced throughout his life). The screening of a 35mm film is unwittingly perhaps more of a ritual now than it ever was when it was first invented, with the closure of film labs and the disappearance of editing skills.

A rare screening of Philippe Garrel's 1972 film 'The Inner Scar'. The film that birthed Nico's 'Desertshore' soundtrack, that in turn inspired Peter from boy to man, and to propose the idea that became Throbbing Gristle's final studio recording project. Which is now steered and stewarded by (and here premiere test driven) by Peter's good friends and long time artistic partners Chris & Cosey who are completing the recordings under the guiding light of Peter's northern star.

*He who will pass on,
The word unknown
And meet me on the desert shore
Meet me on the desert shore*
(Lyric credit: Christa Paffgen aka Nico, 1970)

The evening ends with two films by Derek Jarman, both with soundtracks by Coil. For Peter: "The Angelic Conversation is my favourite of all Derek Jarman's films, not because it was 'made for me' but because it transcends the usual confines of experimental film to become a work of pure poetry. Truly, a timeless work of art".

RUNNING ORDER

EVOCATIO (AIR & METAL, MUSCLE & SPIT)

ATTILA CSIHAR: RE-MAN UNKIND

WISHFUL THINKING: REDUX

CHRIS CARTER & COSEY FANNI TUTTI: DESERTSHORE (Introduced by Cosey Fanni Tutti)

INTERVAL: 20mins (Bars open: Stalls, Circle and Tyneside Bar on Third Floor)

PHILIPPE GARREL: THE INNER SCAR (1972) (35mm, No subtitles)

DEREK JARMAN: JOURNEY TO AVEBURY (1971 / 1990)

DEREK JARMAN: THE ANGELIC CONVERSATION (1985 / 1987)

