

Reveille

Allora and Calzadilla Wake Up

March 4 - April 15, 2007

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The Renaissance Society

at The University of Chicago

⑪ $\overline{H5-5-}$ $\overline{M5-5-}$ $\overline{H10-10-}$ $\overline{M5-5-}$ $\overline{H5-5-}$

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The story of human kind could be narrated strictly through the history of musical instruments. Questions as to the when, where, how and why of their development amounts to the study of the rites and rituals that, taken as a whole, define human culture. The means and ends of all human activity—work and play, love and death—have their corresponding music to mark the occasion. This includes ceremonies of state as they are announced through anthems and military marches. Even warfare, as an aspect of our social behavior with its own formal expression in music, would have to be acknowledged on cultural terms. Alongside the display of medieval arms and plate armor, which can be found in most encyclopedic museums, it would come as no surprise to find an elaborately engraved trumpet.

The military call *Reveille*, the bugle call which signals the start of the military day, is the subject of *Wake Up*, a sound and light installation by the San Juan-based artist collaborative Jennifer Allora and Guillermo Calzadilla. For *Wake Up*, the artists asked a host of trumpet players from around the world, working in a range of styles, to interpret *Reveille*. Recordings by these musicians will be played over a series of speakers running along a criss-cross series of diagonal corridors that represent a radical alteration of the gallery space. The lighting scheme of sunrise pink and gold neon follows suit. The lights will take their cue from the sound, gradually dimming and brightening in relation to the volume of the music.

Over the past several years, Allora and Calzadilla have produced a body of work distinguished by an adroit mix of poetry, play and politics. Although it has assumed many forms, their work is unabashedly social, adeptly engaging a given locale. While the issues and events of a particular region may serve to illustrate a facet of globalization, by giving them concrete representation, Allora and Calzadilla counter the tendency for such issues and events to become abstract. Whether it is their ongoing investigation into Vieques, an island formerly used as a bombing test site by the U.S. military; their rumination on the fate of wildlife under Puerto Rico's burgeoning industrialization; their paean to a poetry of social protest; or their humorous facilitation of spontaneous public speech with oversized pieces of chalk, Allora and Calzadilla's work is a critique of socio-political agency in the face of increasingly remote authority.

Wake Up is one of a series of site-specific, sound installations the artists have conceived for three venues—The Moore Space in Miami, The Renaissance Society, and the McBean Gallery at The San Francisco Art Institute. For

Clamor, the first in this series, which debuted at the Moore Space this past December, the artists placed a small brass ensemble (trumpet, tuba, trombone and drummer) inside a large sculpture made to look like a concrete military bunker. The band performed a host of war songs, marches and battle hymns. Among the more standard fare were Barney the Dinosaur's *I Love You* and Bruce Springsteen's *Born in the U.S.A.*, as they were used to torture detainees in Guantanamo, and Twisted Sister's *We're Not Gonna Take It*, as that was a favorite of American forces during the 1989 invasion of Panama. Save for the trombone slide poking through an embrasure and a low window exposing the tuba's bell, the band was completely concealed. More monumental than the sculpture itself was the band's performance, which, with over three hours of music, became an endurance test. Bombast gave way to cacophony, which in turn gave way to a peripatetic tumult of disfigured nationalist fanfare.

With *Reveille* as its source of inspiration, *Wake Up* is clearly an extension of *Clamor*. In focusing on the trumpet, however, *Wake Up* has its genesis in *Returning A Sound*, a video in which the artists attached a trumpet to the exhaust pipe of a moped that was driven around Vieques by one of the island's residents. A military call was replaced by the trumpet's steady, shrill vibrato, its pitch changing with the moped's speed. *Returning A Sound* was one amongst several works done and shown in Vieques. Some of the works were didactic, others involved Vieques residents. But unlike *Returning A Sound*, whose gesture was an elegant response to specific geo-politics, *Wake Up* is a work made for a museum gallery. Rather than direct engagement with a public about issues of concern particular to a given locale, *Wake Up* is a sound and light installation conceived on the terms of the autonomous work of art, which holds a separation between art and life. *Wake Up*, whose name is meant to imply a rousing of political consciousness, is grossly metaphorical in its use of light and choice of song on the one hand, and grossly literal in their deployment on the other. Circulating between a mode of site-specific installation calling full attention to the gallery space, and a content engendered through a song as rife with associations as *Reveille*, *Wake Up* is the institutional counterpart to *Returning A Sound*, as specific to the physical, cultural and political character of its site—an art gallery—as the moped circling the island. Allora and Calzadilla are respectful of an art historical trajectory within which the end of art was to question the ends of art. However, more than a full generation removed from the advent of a neo-

formalist abstraction, i.e. minimalism, Allora and Calzadilla's work represents a shift in vantage point: the role of art is being questioned not from the inside out but from the outside looking in. While the ever-pressing question of art's relationship to politics is currently being framed in terms of activist-oriented practices calling for a direct engagement with a public outside the confines of the gallery, the operative model for Allora and Calzadilla's practice resembles more closely that of the late Felix Gonzalez-Torres, whose work generated its charge in abiding by a strict formalism but abandoning the autonomy such formalism was meant to enforce.

Wake Up engages the gallery space with complete integrity to a model of site-specificity that came to fruition in the mid to late 1960s. Allora and Calzadilla are heirs to strategies whose goal was to dismantle and reconfigure traditional sculptural practices. These strategies include a history of multimedia and installation-based activity. By now, however, such strategies have become a tradition in their own right. As artistic strategies, their claims to radically expired upon their institutionalization. No matter how dramatic an alteration of the gallery space, *Wake Up*, when considered as species of form for form's sake, is an empty shell, which is then made to play host to an equally ossified content in the form of *Reveille*, that all but dismissed piece of the trumpet's historical baggage. In this regard, *Wake Up* is a platform for the trumpet recordings, with Allora and Calzadilla looking to the trumpet players to engage a metaphor that is likewise little more than a shell for what, between the many trumpet players, becomes an incredible range of expression.

The trumpet players who have contributed interpretations of *Reveille* represent a broad range of styles, from the starkly conceptual approach of Birgit Ullmer whose score is featured on the other side of this poster, to the rapid-fire, lengthy post-bop phrasing of Paul Smoker, to the breathy, microphone-enhanced atmospherics of Leonel Kaplan and Franz Hautzinger. In most cases the compositions and performances bear no resemblance whatsoever to the familiar tune of *Reveille*. While in some cases the musicians use *Reveille* in a schematic sense—as is the case with Ullmer and Natsuki Tamura whose work is divided into three sections, "A"(startle) "B"(shake), and "C"(awake)—the particular details of their approaches to *Reveille* pale in significance to the deconstruction and expansion of sounds the trumpet is capable of. In these players' hands, it becomes clear that the trumpet, if not the most sophisticated, is easily the most exquisite piece of plumbing outside the human respiratory and gastrointestinal systems. If *Wake Up* can be called an experimental piece, it is not by virtue

The Renaissance Society

at The University of Chicago
5811 South Ellis Avenue
Chicago, IL 60637

Museum Hours
Tuesday - Friday: 10 am - 5pm
Saturday, Sunday: 12 - 5pm
Closed Mondays
www.renaissancesociety.org

Allora and Calzadilla *Wake Up*

March 4 – April 15, 2007

Featuring recordings by:

Jaimie Branch U.S.
Stephen Burns U.S.
Dennis Gonzalez U.S.
Franz Hautzinger Austria
Ingrid Jensen U.S.
Leonel Kaplan Argentina
Mazen Kerbaj Lebanon
Paul Smoker U.S.
Natsuki Tamura Japan
Birgit Ullmer Germany

Opening Reception: Sunday, March 4, 4:00-7:00pm
With an artist talk from 5:00-6:00pm

Related Events

OPENING RECEPTION
Sunday, March 4 from 4:00 – 7:00pm
With an artist talk from 5:00 – 6:00pm
in Cobb Hall room 307 directly below the gallery

CONCERT
Friday, March 16, 8:00pm
Dennis Gonzalez and Yells At Eels
Dennis González, trumpets, keyboards, and samples
Aaron Gonzalez, bass
Stefan Gonzalez, drums
Carl Smith, tenor saxophone

Upon returning to the world of music in 1999 after a 5 year hiatus, renowned jazz trumpeter Dennis Gonzales was approached by his two sons Aaron and Stefan about starting a band with them. The two sons had worked together in their own grindcore punk duo, Akkolyte. The elder Gonzalez agreed. Seven years later, with the addition of Carl Smith on reeds, Yells at Eels is going strong, touring internationally with 3 cds under their belt. This concert will take place in Bond Chapel located one building east of Cobb Hall on the main quadrangle. FREE

CONCERT
Friday, April 6, 7:00 pm
The Van Buren String Quartet and Ensemble Noamnesia
A program of works by Christopher Adler, Carmel Raz and Gene Coleman

Christopher Adler is a composer, performer and improviser living in San Diego, California. His music draws upon over a decade of research into the traditional musics of Thailand and Laos and a background in mathematics. He is a foremost performer of traditional and new music for the khaen, a free-reed mouth organ from Laos and Northeast Thailand. As a pianist and conductor, he has performed with many of the West Coast's finest improvisers. He also performs contemporary solo and ensemble repertoire and is pianist and composer-in-residence for the San Diego New Music resident ensemble NOISE. He is currently an Associate Professor at the University of San Diego. His work may be heard on Tzadik, pMENTUM, Nine Winds Records, Artship Recordings, Accretions, and WGBH's Art of the States. This concert will take place in Bond Chapel located one building east of Cobb Hall on the main quadrangle. FREE

CONCERT

Sunday, April 15, 6:00 pm
Benjamin Reissenberger, clarinet
Markus Stollenwerk, electronics

This bill features two works for electronics and clarinet, *verHärT* by Stollenwerk, and *Around Circles* by Chicago composer Fusun Koksai. Stollenwerk is a young German composer whose work has been performed at festivals throughout Europe. In addition to electro-acoustic compositions, his primary interests include music theater. *verHärT* was inspired by Samuel Beckett's 1989 play *What Where?* Koksai's *Around Circles* was inspired by a work by Kandinsky from 1940 with that same title. In her words: "Made up of two contrasting/complementary sections, the work is based on a very simple musical idea; Trills." Both pieces feature the outstanding young clarinetist Benjamin Reissenberger who is currently a member of Ensemble RuhrKlang based in Essen Germany. This concert will take place in the gallery. FREE

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AA American Airlines

Exclusive Airline of The Renaissance Society's 2006-2007 Season

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