A Manifesto for the Experimental Music Producer of the 21st Century

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Bachelor of Arts Thesis and Research Paper

Submitted to the Department of Sound Arts and Design 2022/23

In February 2023

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Introduction

To summarise my path in the world of Sound Arts and music production, and create a piece of writing as basis to my future practice, I have decided to create a manifesto as final dissertation for my course in Sound Arts & Design, with the hope of it being of help to other people like me in the future. The manifesto will be developed through practice-based research with the creation of a series of two projects to support the points made in this writing. The dissertation will be structured in four chapters, offering personal views supported by other practitioners and theorists in the related fields of Sound Arts, electronic music and philosophy in order to answer the question: How does the experimental music producer develop an informed practice in the context of the virtual social spaces of the digitalised society?

The writing will define the idea of the experimental music producer, contextualising this figure through an analysis of the sonic world and its locations in our contemporary reality: an event sitting between a physical and virtual location, as it will be discussed later. The first chapter will delve into a reflection on the virtual spaces introduced by society's digitalisation, supported by arguments from Pierre Schaeffer, Michael Nyman, Jennie Gottschalk and Micah Silver, identifying the main issue at the basis of this manifesto's critique. Subsequently, the manifesto will focus on an analysis of the history of the connection between technology and music, highlighting examples from the phonograph to DIY culture in the late twentieth century, in order to identify the role and implications of technology on an experimental artistic practice. In the third chapter, contemporary technologies will be questioned to understand tools, spaces and community of the experimental music producer. The concerns and possibilities related to a musical practice in the 21st century will be investigated, analysing topics and concepts like new challenges brought by new technology, toolmaking practices and online communities. Lastly, a reflection on imagination and music will conclude the manifesto, delineating approaches to virtual social spaces for the practice of the experimental music producer involving concepts like imaginative world building and Digital Folklore.

Chapter One: The Technological Issue and Experimenting in the Digital Era

This first chapter will define the figure of the experimental music producer and introduce an overview of the issues related to the contemporary context. The meaning, parameters and possibilities of an experimental practice will be investigated to question experimentalism as an intellectual tool to overcome the issues related to the virtual context.

Defining Music Producer

Traditionally, in the history of the music industry, the figure of music producer was regarded to be an element of support for artists or economic funding for a record release (Moorefield, 2010). With the recent developments in music technology and the availability of music equipment to a larger audience, a more central role has been made possible by the new phenomenon of home-recording studios and a new DIY scene of music producers has been developing in the last two decades (Jackson, 2018). Throughout this dissertation, we will refer to this figure with its latest, more independent nuance, investigating the challenges originated by the contemporary context.

The digitalised society: researching the identity of an artistic practice

Writing in 1952 *In Search of a Concrete Music* (2012), Pierre Schaeffer, experimental composer and inventor of musique concrète offers a definition of the two main elements at the basis of an artistic practice: ‘Art is the relationship between subject and object. The exercising of this relationship is the very stuff of art’ (p. 130). In the last two decades, with the advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution and virtual social spaces, identifying these elements throughout the creation of a piece of art has become a more challenging task for the music producer. The research for an artistic identity and a clear vision on a topic becomes blurred by the virtual layers introduced by the digitalised society. Manuel Castells, Spanish sociologist focusing on the network between technology and society, writes in *The Rise of Network Society* (2010) about the generational division between ‘those born before the Internet Age (1969) and those who grew up being digital’. Castells claims the existence of a new mode of information processing for a new form of network society. In his words:

> The shift from traditional mass media to a system of horizontal communication networks organised around the Internet and wireless communication has introduced a multiplicity of communication patterns at the source of a fundamental cultural transformation, as virtuality becomes an essential dimension of our reality (2010, p.2).

The question of how to interpret the new digital and virtual dimensions, while acknowledging the event of a technological shift in contemporary society, sets the starting point at the basis of the critique of this Manifesto. Subsequently, a reflection on the *raison d’être* for using the Manifesto as literal device and the Manifesto core bullet points will be presented.

Why a Manifesto?

The format of the manifesto expresses a revolutionary sentiment and speaks to a universal interlocutor. Starting from the Realist Manifesto (1855) (Howe & Courbet, 2013) and achieving international resonance for the first time with Marinetti's Futurist Manifesto (1909) (Umbro, 2009), it has been adopted by artistic movements to describe a line of thought in competition with the contemporary society of their own times, inspiring new aesthetics, methodologies and societal change. Choosing a Manifesto as literary form of writing for this dissertation aims at exposing a problematic starting point and establishing a practical plan of action to overcome the issues related to the practice of experimental music producers of the current times. Following an established tradition in the literature of previous manifestos, in order to express the core ideas brought up in this writing, a list of bullet points providing the theoretical tools for the comprehension of this paper will now follow:

1. Authority over your work: Based on what could seem a confusing, overloaded of understanding parameters age for experimental music producers, this manifesto advances an invite to investigate the process and research the background to one's sonic practice to allow the prosperity of synaptic connections and a contextualisation of one's work. Given the challenge of the unpredictability to one's work outcome, it is pivotal to pursue an awareness of the choices made throughout the process of creating a piece of art.

2. De-virtualise reality, navigate the experience: To de-virtualise reality is to embrace the elements of dissociation, reinterpreting them through a personal storytelling of the experience. The tools introduced by the Magic Realism, literary and figurative movement, can be adopted as an example of how to deal with a digital environment immersed in an information overload. The artistic process adopted by Magic Realists consisted in inserting extra elements from imaginary "new realities" in order to create a new form of narrative for a realist picture (Angulo, 1995). In the same way, the experimental music producer adopts the Magic Realist approach in his research to capture a chaotic reality through the influence of the personal experience of virtuality.

3. Toolmaking: In *Structure and Synthesis* (2010) The electronic music composer Mark Fell argues the need for musicians to create a relationship and understanding of the tools employed in their practice and suggests engaging in the act of toolmaking. The digitalised experience has the tendency to portray the user in a position of passively operating tools developed by third parties, obscuring the relationship between the artist and the tools, the tools and the piece of art, the piece of art and the physical and virtual reality.

4. The Physical realm: Following Pierre Schaeffer's effort to scientifically portray the spectrum of morphologies of the sound matter with the concept of Sound Objects, sound is now celebrated as a physical event, identifying its physical features as ontological proof of its existence in order to allow a reminiscence of the

non-virtual experience. Schaeffer's reduced listening, defining the approach to the perception of sound objects, highlights the importance of perceiving sounds regardless of their source. This is essential to clarify that digital sounds, shaping contemporary music, are still considered as physical events, even though of the controversies related to the discourse of their virtual source.

The experimental approach in the virtual context

In the present reality, endlessly shifting towards a chaotic future, the experimental music producer is faced with the challenge of questioning what is experimental. The process of identifying past practices and traditions to critique and reinterpret through an experimental point of view becomes blurred by the communication tools and virtual contexts. Micah Silver, artist, theorist and curator expresses the failed attempts at making connections in the digital era with the models instituted by the contemporary capitalist society: 'The hegemony of reconcilability; the illusions we created to categorize and exclude and construct a security from false-unities represented in tremendous pseudo-diversity via Capitalism' (Silver, 2014, p.16).

Defining experimental: Michael Nyman's view

Although the context of art making the experimental music producer finds himself in could seem deprived of the possibility of creating connections between reality and the arising virtual environment, as Michael Nyman argues in his book *Experimental Music: Cage and Beyond*: 'The experimental composer is interested not in the uniqueness of permanence but in the uniqueness of the moment' (Nyman, 1999). Creating experimental art implies creating a relationship with the past, whether the artist decides to explore and further investigate previous aesthetics, methodologies, topics or to differ and critique them. Nevertheless, locating a contemporary point of view on artistic precedents is a challenge amplified by the capitalist society and its virtual features.

Defining experimental: Jennie Gottschalk's view

In the words of Jennie Gottschalk, as expressed in the book *Experimental Music since 1970* (2016), it is possible to categorise as experimental in music those works that include within their process the features of indeterminacy, change, experience, research and non-subjectivity. Gottschalk highlights the value of analysing previous artistic practices and emphasises an understanding of one's individuality in correlation to the surrounding experience of the social and artistic environment. In this theorisation the relationship between the two is performed and expressed through the sound matter amplified and expressed in the context of the artistic performance.

From Nyman and Gottschalk's reflections on experimental music it is possible to argue that the intention of the experimental music producer is not to create art to last decades in itself, instead, to absorb the elements of the virtual context and photograph a moment with attention to the process, questioning the challenges faced in his personal experience.

In the next chapter:

In the following chapter, the manifesto will guide the reader through an analysis of the history of music technology, researching the influence of technological progress on music. Examples starting from the invention of the Phonograph in 1877 will be employed to contextualise a contemporary practice, investigating the implications and changes generated by technology occurred throughout history and provide tools to understand today's musical, social and technological context.

Chapter Two: Contextualising Music Technology

Introduction

The history of music production and recording since 1945 has been characterised by an exponential democratisation of music technologies. An example could be how consumers being able to buy magnetic tape for cheap prices before, are today in the music equipment market consumers being able to buy more advanced microchips and digital technologies. All music is a product of technology and the experimental music producer is challenged with questioning this relationship throughout their practice. This chapter will focus on further researching the history of the relationship between contemporary technologies and the experimental music producer to support the first bullet point of the manifesto and allow an informed artistic practice. Technology will be analysed both as functional tools as well as social phenomenon, researching how these two declinations might end up blending with an effect on the experimental music producer. Starting the analysis from early examples of the relationship between music and technology in prehistoric civilisations, this chapter is eventually going to focus on researching the developments in music technology from the phonograph to home recording studios. In the process of researching the history of music technology, the focus will remain on tracing the main events defining the development of the experimental producers' spaces and community.

Tracking the relationship between music and technology

Since the first examples of musical instrument in humans' history, it is possible to understand how technology has always had an essential role on the growth of music in its aesthetics, technical requirements and accessibility. Instruments from prehistoric civilisations like early aerophones and idiophones, are examples of the longevity of the connection between music and technology. Bull-roarers, ribbon reeds and flutes from prehistoric times all represent human being's technical engagement into creating early sound-making tools (Sachs, 2006). These examples lead to a reflection on the history of music technology and on the importance of its employments throughout history.

To investigate technology is a task involving a research into the very essence of the human civilisation and probably too big of a topic to be dealt with in this manifesto. As just discussed, technology has been at the basis of many aspects of human beings' lives since the early civilisations. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this manifesto, the attention will be focused on the period of time starting from music technologies in the society of late nineteenth century, and conclude in the next chapter with an analysis of contemporary topics relevant to the experimental music producer.

Phonograph, Gramophone, society & industrialisation

The process of investigating the recent history of music technologies starts with one major revolution, the introduction of recording and amplification technologies. The earliest example of recording technology is the phonograph, invented by Thomas Edison in 1877, device able to record short snippets of sound on a tinfoil cylinder (Beardsley & Leech-Wilkinson, 2023).

The purpose Edison imagined for the device was to serve the late nineteenth century businessman as recording tool to take notes to then be transcript in words by a secretary. Being a pragmatical inventor, Edison would create tools functional to the contemporary society, without realising the whole potential of the new technology and the impact of its technological successors on music (Brady, 1999). The purpose behind the invention of the phonograph describes accurately the futurist spirit of the growing industrialisation and colonialism happening at the time, as explained in *A Spiral Way: How the Phonograph Changed Ethnography* (1999). What this historical example suggests is a reflection upon the values carried by the first device invented for recording sound, to therefore understand the political, economical and social implications related to later technologies

A later example of a piece of technology describing the influence of a technology on the history of music is the one brought up by Mark Katz in his book *Capturing Sound* (2010, p. 3). Katz tells how avant-garde composer Igor Stravinsky created his 1925's Serenade for Piano with a limited length of 3 minutes for each of its four parts, same duration of one side of the 10 inches, 78 rpm records adopted at the time from the gramophone company he was collaborating with. This example portrays a limitation, and practical change of direction, influenced by technology, for music itself, the composers behind it and the industry.

The Electrical Era and the microphone

The very first improvements in recording technologies were allowed by the introduction of electronic devices in the years between 1925-45. An improvement in recording quality and the introduction of cables, made the microphone a revolutionary technology and a standard for recording sound. These were the years in which the first condenser and ribbon microphones would be developed and adopted by radio and television like BBC for broadcasting sound (Robjohns, 2001). The microphone would also inspire more philosophical considerations on what is the meaning behind recording and listening to mediated sound. The introduction of a new found relationship with the temporal and spatial natures of music, was first made possible by recording devices like the microphone and further radicalised with later technologies like the tape, where a physical manipulation of music would allow even more control on them, as it will be also discussed in the next chapter, through theories from composer Brian Eno (Holmes, 2016). This could be identified as a starting point for broader conversations researching the influence of technology throughout the recent history of music and sound arts, also thanks to the influence of later pioneers questioning sound technologies and adopting them for artistic purposes.

The Magnetic Era: tapes, SFTMC, early synthesisers

With the end of World War II in 1945, war technologies found new employments all across the world. Between the 50s and 60s, especially in America and Japan, tape technologies were the new standard for hi-fi recordings, thanks to their magnetic capabilities, conferring superior quality, and the amount of control that could be exercised upon them in post-production through tape splicing techniques. In 1966, 560 tape studios were already documented all around the world, supported by private and institutional funds. Forty percent

of these studios were private and self sufficient, thanks to the growth of the music technology's market, allowing equipment like mixing desks, microphones and oscillators to be bought for cheaper prices (Holmes, 2016). Music equipment was starting to populate new contexts like independent studios, and assume new kinds of employment, resulting in research and experiments with sound, technology, community.

The San Francisco Tape Music Center, is example of an early independent studio with a focus on a social agenda and community through the development of experimental sound practices, distinguishing it from other studios of the same period (Bernstein, 2008). The SFTMC, founded by Morton Subotnik and Ramon Sender, and later joined by Pauline Oliveros and David Tudor, gathered sound artists, composers and performers with a focus on experimenting with tape techniques and electronics from all around America and Europe (Reyes, 2018). The development of early synthesisers was also allowed by the Centre, in order to introduce new experimental techniques for music compositions and performances. 'The Modular Electronic Music System' was built by Don Buchla with the employment of repurposed war technologies and electronics gathered through the collaboration of the members of the community around the SFTMC (Buchla Associates, 1965). The avant-garde scene of San Francisco has been example of a new way of experiencing technology, tied to community and experimentalism.

Early DIY practices

In the 1970s punk movements from Britain would oppose and critique society by adopting DIY methods. These movements would arise in contrast with the de-industrialisation of rural areas and the growth of youth unemployment rates, opposing the capitalist and consumeristic ideals of the time. On a musical point of view, these groups would create 'alternative networks of music production, performance and consumption that characterised a proliferation of local, trans-local and from the mid-1990s, virtual scenes', as cited in the book *DIY Cultures and Underground Music Scenes* (Peterson and Bennett, 2004 as cited in Bennett and Guerra, 2018, p.4). In the analysis of the development of the figure of the experimental music producer, DIY cultures represent an historical example to the methodologies later employed by contemporary practitioners in the Digital Era. A movement vernacular to one geographic location has resulted into a mass behavioral pattern through socio-economical and technological factors like online resources and an higher demand of music equipment and electronics.

Conclusions and next chapter

From the 1960s, an economical trend of reduction of prices has been observable in the market of music equipment. Starting from cheaper tape recorders, cheaper synthesisers later in history, and arriving to cheaper digital technologies today, audio equipment and a general understanding of its functions will be available to a growing number of people from most social classes. Nevertheless, as already pointed out in this chapter through the earlier examples documented, technology, society and economy progress influencing one another. Aware of the historical context, the next chapter will investigate what are the spaces and tools available to the contemporary music producers and reflect on experimental approaches to an artistic practice.

Chapter Three: Approaching Contemporary Technologies & DIY Practices

Introduction

Building from the reflections made in the last chapter, this next part of the dissertation is going to focus on analysing the contemporary context of music and technology, identifying and questioning the tools and spaces of the experimental music producer. The possibilities and concerns tied to a contemporary artistic practice will be researched while discussing topics like home recording studios, digital consumerism and theories on approaching technology. Supporting arguments and theories from Brian Eno, S. Umit Kucuk and Mark Fell will be employed to analyse these topics.

The home recording studio

DIY culture, availability of online resources, affordability of music equipment are some of the factors resulting in the appearance of home recording studios, spaces where the practice of the music producer of the twentieth-first century takes place. The ‘home’ nuance has been employed in recent years to describe how the processes that were only possible to specialists in professional studios for a major part of the last century are now available to a larger group of music makers’ homes, with mutations to contexts, meanings and concerns. This has been allowed by the exponentially growing number of laptops and computers populating the houses of people from all kind of backgrounds and social classes. The introduction of laptops has resulted in new tools and new virtual spaces providing the knowledge necessary to employ these. Digital Audio Workstations (DAWs) have been at the core of the development of this phenomenon in the last fifteen years, allowing results once only available through expensive hardware to be achievable through more affordable digital technologies. On the other hand, online blogs, YouTube videos and the growth of an online community in general, has been providing music production beginners with the necessary knowledge to start employing these tools. The situation in which music producers find themselves today portrays a duality of the perception of reality. As society and communities move towards a digital and virtual realm, the contemporary music producer is at the same time in his studio and on social media platforms. This newly introduced relationship with technology and its effects on an artistic practice will be analysed in the following paragraphs, expanding on the second and third bullet points of the manifesto.

Concerns on contemporary music technology

The analysis enacted throughout the previous chapter evidences how the introduction of new technologies can limit, change, enhance an artistic practice. New tools and new approaches to music production challenge the practice of the experimental music producer with different sets of new questions. An overview of the artistic and socio-economical concerns and challenges will now follow.

New technologies and new compositional approaches

In the 1979's essay *The Studio as a Compositional Tool*, the musician, composer and record producer Brian Eno describes some of the new creative challenges and approaches tied to the introduction of the studio as new place for music production. The topics discussed by Eno evidence the endless compositional possibilities brought by technology, highlighting the changes brought by recording technologies and the resulting repeatability of music. Eno explains how the music producer, differently from past composers, has the ability to listen back to his work and revisit it creating more depth to it then ever (Eno, as cited in Cox and Warren, 2004).

Contemporary music producers can approach music making similarly; however, more compositional layers are added today by the amount of possibilities available through new software and hardware technologies. The prosperity of resources and the depth brought by repeatability, has resulted in making today's experimental approach to music composition a matter of selection, conferring value in restrictions and limitations to the creative process.

Reflections on consumerism and music technology

As previously discussed, today's music producers experience the process of music making both in their personal home recording studios, as well as in virtual social spaces like social media platforms and digital marketplaces. What this can result in on a socio-economical point of view is that, even in personal spaces like their own houses, music producers are subject to the digital market of music technology, promoting the consumeristic behaviour, typical of a capitalist society. As evidenced in the essay *Consumerism in the Digital Age*:

> Digital consumerism is the development of the paradigms of consumer empowerment and vulnerability in digital markets. Investigation using these paradigms reveals areas where more protection is needed because consumers are losing power and becoming more vulnerable. (Kucuk, 2016)

In what is supposed to be a personal, creative space like the studio, music producers, as digital consumers, are vulnerable to marketing strategies from music equipment manufacturers. Destabilised by the overwhelming number of creative possibilities offered by today's music equipment, music producers are persuaded to invest personal funds in technology, while believing to invest these in tools for their practice. The manifesto suggests approaching music composition and the relationship that music producers have developed with technology differently, through DIY practices, a toolmaking process, and as it will be discussed later, a de-virtualisation of the experience of music making.

Toolmaking

Writing about the sound artist, composer and SFTMC member David Tudor, and addressing the perception of technology in the past 80 years of development, the composer, sound artist and writer Nicolas Collins describes two of the past methods employed in the history of music makers to understand and interact with technological tools:

> The streamlined, antiseptic, utopian vision in which technology allows us ever more control […] and the messy, chaotic, dystopian vision in which electronics multiply and decay, leaving us at their mercy […].

Subsequently, Collins suggests a third option available for artists to perceive technology:

> There is, of course, a third vision: one in which we accept the machine as a collaborator, rejoice in its inexplicable intransigence and, like Michelangelo finding the figure in the marble, pause to listen to the composer inside the electronics. (Collins, 2004, p. 1)

Questioning two past conceptions of technology, which, after the previous reflections made in this chapter, could seem to still have perpetuated to this day, Collins condemns a situation of prevalence of human beings on technology in the artistic process, as well as the opposite one. Instead, describing the methods employed by Tudor, technology is presented by the writer as collaborator and as a tool to reflect upon in its features, to avoid a misunderstanding of its purposes in the creative process.

Toolmaking, as explained in the third bulletpoint of the manifesto, is a practice which has the aim to decode technology, approaching it from its conceptual and practical origins. As Mark Fell describes it in *Structure and Synthesis* (2021), building the tools that are going to be employed in one's practice allows:

- The development of a connection with the technology employed, allowing a collaborative relationship with it;

- A deeper understanding of the methods and identity of a personal practice, and a contextualisation of its implications in a socio-economical context;

Today, toolmaking could be approached both with software and hardware. Examples on both sides could be:

- Software: coding algorithms, starting from basic functions to arrive to complex digital music softwares. Examples of softwares allowing this depth to the process are Pure Data, MaxMSP, or even traditional DAWs like Ableton, with the option to build plug-ins and creating patches for VSTs;

- Hardware: building machines with electronics, like building synthesisers, samplers, drum machines;

In my personal practice, and as part of the major portfolio for the final year of my course, I have engaged in toolmaking by turning materials like plastic, wood and aluminium into musical instruments like wind instruments, percussions and idiophones. In the future, I am planning to build patches in Pure Data to process their sound and create instruments blending hardware and software. This process, along with writing this manifesto, has resulted in a change of perception of my own work, allowing me to reflect upon my practice through new economic, political and social points of view.

Conclusions and next chapter

As discussed throughout this chapter, contemporary technologies have established challenges and new horizons to music making practices in the Digital Era. The newly introduced duality of the spaces of music production, between the physical studio and a virtual dimension, faces the experimental music producer with questioning their relationship with technology in order to develop an informed practice. While this chapter has been focusing on today's physical tools available to music producers and their concerns, the next one will question and investigate virtuality by juxtaposing it with imagination and other creative approaches like world building.

Chapter Four: Imagination, Online Communities, World Building

Introduction

This final chapter of the manifesto will focus on theories on sound and imagination, world building in the Digital Era and online underground communities. A broad idea of creative process will be explored through Bruno Munari's work on fantasy (Fantasia) to identify how sound travels around the world and what the relationship between sound and imagination is. A reflection on virtual social spaces and their implications on the process of music making will be presented, with a following analysis of the digital underground online music scene.

Munari's Map

In his book *Fantasia* (2017), the Italian designer Bruno Munari, had the aim to share with his readers a description of the artistic approach he employed in order to provide a guide to understand and navigate the world through the tool of imagination. In doing so, Munari came up with a simplified map to describe the interaction between external world and individual, deconstructing the process of how ideas are born, develop in the world, and there end up feeding humans's brains creating new ideas (Fig.1, Munari, 2017). The map is a closed circle system, nevertheless, it is possible to start analysing it from human beings' sensorial and intellectual perception of the external world (Intelligenza). The information from our senses is successively stored in our memory through a personal interpretation of the perceptive signals received (Memoria). The information stored is then reprocessed though deductions of the brain with the tools of fancy, invention, creativity (Fantasia, Invenzione, Creativitá). The process ends with a final representation of the outcome of the inventive tools which is identified in imagination (Immaginazione), and a *mise en place* of the ideas generated with a practical production (Produzione).

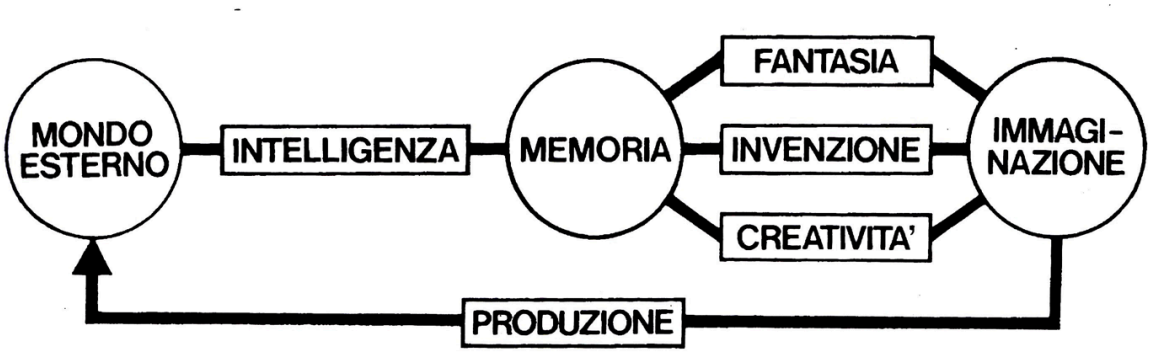

Figure 1: (Munari, 2017)

The creative process, briefly summarised in the map, could be interpreted by positioning the experimental music producer on the individual's side of the map, including memory and immagination, while positioning virtual social spaces and the online community on the external world's one. At the same time, technology, understood as collaborator, as discussed before through Collins' theories, would hold a position on both the individual side as well as on the external world one. The map shows a pragmatical interpretation of the flow of ideas distinguishing between the individual and the external world. It is possible to identify the way the two subjects in analysis end up flowing into each other, provoking a feedback loop between the individual's creative process and its consequences on the external world. The following part of the chapter is going to explore online communities, understanding the feedback loop happening between them and the experimental music producer.

Virtual social spaces and music

In the last two decades, the relationship between music and technology as a social phenomenon has become evident through the growth of social media platforms and a consequent generation of virtual social spaces. These platforms have been radically reshaping the perception and understanding of the past, present and future of music. Through informative virtual spaces and allowing a digitalisation and distribution of music, social platforms have been essential to the development of music communities and made possible an independent approach to the production of music and to the independent music industry. To quote the most popular ones, platforms like Soundclud and Bandcamp have been an example of alternative pathways to share audio files and creating engaged underground communities giving birth to new tools and points of view on how music can be understood and distributed. The introduction of online communities for music producers has resulted in allowing new spaces for interaction and resources for DIY practices. Nevertheless, concerns may rise on the virtuality at the basis of these communities' dimensions of perception.

Concerns on online communities

What are the consequences of the Internet on community?

In her essay *The Internet and the Death of Jazz* (2016), Margret Grebowickz analyses the progressing annihilation of the jazz community through an analysis of the social spaces where the conversations related to this topic would take place. Grebowickz carries out her analysis on systemic racism in music while developing reflections and expressing concerns on online communities themselves:

> As the Internet appears to create conditions of sharing finally free of the pesky constraints of human time and human life cycles, simply because anyone can virtually reach out and touch someone anywhere and at any time, these technologies actually impede the possibility of authentic relation, creating instead conditions of radical individualism and the breakdown of the experience of time in common. (Grebowicz, 2016, p.79)

Grebowickz's thesis describes how the term community used on social media platforms can be misleading in describing the status of relationships happening in virtual social spaces. While social media platforms allow interactions and sharing of knowledge, it should be

questioned how experimental music producers approach them, being part of their process of developing a personal practice.

Conclusions and World building in the Digital Era

Laptops have allowed the experimental music producer to connect in virtual social spaces as well as to make music through digital tools, all from one place. Therefore, the question that may arise is: how should music producers approach the Internet, through the creative tools provided by contemporary technologies?

As discussed in the 2023 CTM Festival's panel *The No-venue Underground & Digital Folklore Music Subcultures*, experimental music producers approach the laptop as a portal, or as a form of escapism from the contradictions of virtual social spaces, where they are vulnerable to music equipment consumerism and misconceptions on the perception of online communities, as evidenced throughout the last two chapters. Experimental music producers engage in world building through technology, like their laptops, and imagination, at the basis of Munari's reflection.

The second bulletpoint of this manifesto suggesting to de-virtualise reality is pointed at questioning and critically responding to the dissociative elements of virtuality, by portraying them in a personal practice. In Munari's map, the external world inspires the individual in their creative process. Similarly, experimental music producers gather their inspiration and ideas from the external world, its virtuality, its technologies. The worlds portrayed borrow elements from virtual social spaces, constituting a *Digital Folklore*, or a culture vernacular to the internet, as described throughout the book *Digital Folklore: To computer users with love and respect* (Lialina and Espenschied, 2009). The music producer approaches the external world including in the worlds portrayed in his experimental practice elements borrowed from the same virtual social spaces, critically responding to these and avoiding individualism, consumerism and a disassociated experience.

Conclusions

Researching artistic practices in the Digital Era, is a task that requests an analysis of many aspects of our contemporary society. Their connection to technology, requires that scientific, economical, historical and sociological factors must be taken into account in their analysis. This dissertation offered an overview of the questions arising when investigating the practice of the contemporary experimental music producer. The artistic practice of this figure evolves constantly with the technology surrounding it and even though its relatively recent appearance in the world of music making, many are already the implications, challenges and reflections to be addressed. The idea of the manifesto has the aim to critique the consumeristic, individualistic and diassociative behaviours introduced by the Internet and present alternative pathways to the development of an informed artistic practice.

The methodologies outlined to approach virtuality and technology have been allowed by a personal research on my artistic practice as well as conversations over the last year with colleagues, tutors, friends and PhD researchers specialising in topics akin to the ones discussed in this dissertation. The practical research has resulted in formulating the questions, meanwhile, in the process of writing about the topic, I have had the occasion to investigate a more general context and gain a deeper understanding of its challenges. In the future, I expect to be further investigating these topics by engaging in toolmaking for the musical instruments adopted in my solo and collaborative performances as sound practitioner and by delving more into the research of contemporary technologies, Digital Folklore, experimental approaches.

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