Artforum, March 2014

Score

The Will To Adorn

George Lewis (2011)

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Above: **First page of score to George Lewis's *The Will to Adorn*, 2011.**

Opposite page: **Terry Adkins, *Sanctuary*, 2003,** mixed media. Installation view, Eastern State Penitentiary, Philadelphia.

Event Scores

TERRY ADKINS AND GEORGE LEWIS IN CONVERSATION

IT'S STILL UNUSUAL to *play* an artwork, no matter how many interactive screens or relational games we've encountered. But playing the piece is often the first thing that happens in the practices of TERRY ADKINS and GEORGE LEWIS—each of whom breached the borders between the visual arts and music, and each of whom came of age in the 1970s and '80s ferment of post-bop and cyborgs, identity politics and institutional critique. *Artforum* invited the vanguard, multidisciplinary artist Adkins—whose work features in the Whitney Biennial in New York this month—to talk with renowned composer and computer-music pioneer Lewis about performance, improvisation, history, race, and sensation. Tragically, Adkins passed away, at the age of sixty, as this issue was going to press. We hope that the conversation that follows might also serve as an unexpected valedictory of sorts, pointing toward the rich possibilities that Adkins's work has opened up—and will continue to open for years to come.

Above: George Lewis on trombone and Terry Adkins on tenor saxophone, American Academy in Rome, June 3, 2010.

Below: The character Blanche Bruce during a Terry Adkins performance, American Academy in Rome, 2010.

TERRY ADKINS: George, when we first started out, it was almost forbidden to be actively creative in more than one field. Everything was railroaded into these categories, and one was forced to choose.

GEORGE LEWIS: Well, you used to read in the *New York Times* that a composer was "eclectic," and that was supposed to be a bad thing. And then several things happened to smash that to bits. Among them were the civil rights and black power movements—I mean, that liberated everybody, not just African Americans. Suddenly, there was increased mobility on all sides, and the term *multivoiced* took on all kinds of new meanings. People would say, "I'm a printmaker, I'm a sculptor, I'm a painter, I make video and do performance. Then I'm doing . . ." You know, all these things that went into what it meant to be a visual artist. So I thought, "Well, how come musicians can't do that?"

TA: When I came along, there were two people who made me feel that what I was doing or what I wanted to do was all right. One of them was the artist Emilio Cruz, who represented, for me, a seasoned painter who had absorbed all these theatrical influences from the 1960s. The other was John Dowell, a printmaker from Philadelphia who was actually reading his prints and had a whole band that was playing them.

GL: I interviewed Emilio in 1999, and I had performed in one of his plays, *Homeostasis: Once More the Scorpion*, in Chicago in 1978. He was a real taskmaster. [*laughter*]

In fact, thinking about Emilio might be a good way to start thinking about the concept of the multivoiced artist, which, I think, is something we both do. It reminds me of what Lowery Sims says about African American artists working in abstract styles: In her view, those artists had to struggle for recognition from certain camps of black self-image-making—and probably not only black self-image-making—with abstraction being perceived as outside the integral black identity. Or we could reference someone like Fred Moten, who brings up the putative notion that blackness and the avant-garde have been represented as having an oxymoronic relationship. In my case, it was, "Well, you're doing technology. That's outside the black identity matrix."

TA: One of my father's favorite saxophone players was Sonny Stitt; he went to Baltimore to hear him, at the time that he was experimenting with the Varitone [electronically modified saxophone]. And the audience members said, "Pull that damn plug out, Sonny!" [*laughter*]

GL: Right. And I'd say, "Well, what about Eddie Harris, who worked with real-time electronics before Miles Davis? Or the pyramids?" I mean, we could go there if you wanted to. Or what about my dad, like your dad, who was really into technology? I think, because of my family, my engagement with technology wasn't something I felt I needed to struggle with that much. But I saw it as an issue that affected a lot of people.

TA: I think this also points to a word that you use quite a bit when you talk about how you approach things—*hybridity*—and how this open attitude toward creative intuition is manifested in all the different things that you do; it's a kind of nomadic mobility.

GL: Basically, I've been trying to talk about a post-genre way of thinking. You know, we don't really need genre as artists to do what we do. It's not an enabler—at least not for me. Musicians in particular are told that we need genre so that people can figure us out or determine what we do. But it just ends up being a kind of procrustean bed. They put you on a rack and start cranking. Then you end up dead. [*laughter*]

TA: It relates to what you've called depicting versus evoking and embodying. In your chamber-music piece *Anthem* [2011], for instance, there is an ongoing dialogue with the audience by the vocalist, with this induced call-and-response suggestion that she ends up answering all the time, and it finally ends with the plaintive "We want to be your band. Please, baby, please." Then, somewhere in the middle, she declares, "Oh, I see, you want to *be* us."

And I was wondering, in addition to its relationship to the tone-poem tradition, all the way up to scat, and how it embodies all those vocal methods, was this piece in some ways an indication of how the American avant-garde was usurped by the European artist?

GL: Well, I was trying to look at power and image, and how societies impute powers and abilities far beyond those of normal people to artists. We're supposed to worship them and admire them. It's an art-world strategy, and we've all had to do it to a certain extent in order to win space in a stochastic environment.

You've talked about this in terms of artists like Sam Gilliam and the power of abstraction as distinct from identity-based career strategies, where we sometimes get channeled into having to represent certain identities. I'm trying to look at that kind of power, too. The bands aim to please, but they also aim to control.

TA: I was also curious about the title, *Anthem*.

GL: Come to think of it, *Anthem* is a Terry Adkins kind of title. [*laughter*]

TA: One of the things that I heard were these rhythmic figures played by the strings that were reminiscent of [Ornette Coleman's] *Skies of America* [1972]. Is that intentional, or am I just hearing something?

GL: You could say that, or you could say it's like Eric Dolphy, with those speechlike sounds, for which I made up a word based on Schoenberg's *Sprechstimme* [spoken voice]: *Sprechspiel*, a play-like voice, which I've now used in a lot of pieces.

"The Mars rover is my model of what I want to make as an interactive artist—an improvising machine that you set down on the surface of a hostile planet, where it makes its own way."
—George Lewis

Six stills from video source material for George Lewis's *Travelogue*, 2008, sound, approx. 240 minutes.

This gets into another way of thinking about sonic and visual reference, about identity representation versus abstraction. I was taken by something you said in another interview: "I got tired of doing aesthetic exhibitions that didn't have much social content."

You also talked more broadly about the aesthetic and the social in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* [1937], and actually, I take a lot of inspiration from an essay she wrote called "Characteristics of Negro Expression" [1934]. It's an example of Hurston's anthropological side, where she's investigating, categorizing, taxonomizing. She starts to talk about something called the "will to adorn." Now, that's also the name of a piece of mine from 2011 that you've probably listened to.

TA: Yes.

GL: What's interesting about Hurston's essay is her description of black homes in Alabama and their decor. My grandma's house in Chicago was like that—all kinds of stuff jumbled up, little altars everywhere, decorations on top of decorations.

When you think about it, it's actually a compositional method. And that was the idea behind *The Will to Adorn*: to just cram as much stuff in as possible. That's why the piece sounds so full—there is a lot going on. It's the exact opposite of, you know, Mark Rothko. It's more like the work of [AfriCOBRA founder] Jeff Donaldson: jam-packed, jelly-tight, subliminally dealing with those histories instead of overtly representing or depicting them.

So that's when you come full circle with the depictive versus the evocative.

TA: Yeah, I know exactly what you mean. I did a recital dedicated to Hurston in Florida called *Deeper Heart* [1999]. What I tried to do is exactly what you just mentioned: to distill qualities from this principle of accumulation and accretion, this will to adorn, to take the principles that underlie these phenomena and focus on the abstract nature of the principles that determine them, rather than getting arrested in the *appearance* of the thing.

That's another parallel that we have.

GL: The more I have looked at your work, the more I've seen the parallels. That was even clear when we met, at the American Academy in Rome in 2010.

TA: Right.

GL: Back then I was getting away from performing in the old ways. As a trombonist, I played with everybody I wanted to play with, and people were very welcoming to me. Then I decided to start concentrating on something else. I was kind of in a transitional period, like Jules in *Pulp Fiction*, and you were gracious enough to invite me to perform with you at the Romanian Academy in Rome, but to perform in my way, which I really appreciated.

TA: There was no previous discussion of anything, really—we just showed up and it happened. The immediacy of that, the unexpectedness, the surprise from moment to moment, it was amazing.

GL: And so we did—was that a recital? What did you call it? "Activating the sculpture"? So was that an activation that we did?

TA: That was an activation. It was a compilation of

“I try to make sculpture that is as ephemeral and transient as music is.” —Terry Adkins

Jeff Donaldson, *Jampact and Jelly Tite (for Jamila)*, 1988, mixed media on canvas, 38 x 50".

facets of other things I had done that I thought would work in the space. As you recall, it was a very theatrical kind of thing.

GL: It also occurs to me that I thought I saw Blanche Bruce there.

TA: Yes, Blanche Bruce was there. He made an appearance in one of the pieces.

GL: The character is an embodiment of the man who was born a slave and became a US senator in the 1870s, right? I didn't realize I had met him until I thought back on it. You didn't say, “OK, here's Blanche.” I mean, this is 2014 and I'm just now figuring it out. [*laughter*]

TA: Yes—he's another way in which I put a twist on collaboration, with this mercurial character who can be occupied by anyone. He's a vacant spirit, if you will.

GL: An empty signifier.

TA: Yeah. Until someone steps in to become him. That could be you. It could be anyone. It's another way of collaborating, of assuming identity. And so anyone that I collaborate with can be Blanche Bruce. It's never a fixed individual, never located to any particular person. It's just another way of broadening my options for multivoicing.

GL: It allows you to deal with conventional authorship and collaboration in new ways. Like your concept of the “recital,” which involves many different elements and participants; I'm thinking of the project about the abolitionist John Brown, *Meteor Stream* [1999–2010], which was a collaboration with the community. In a way, Blanche Bruce represents collaboration and community.

TA: And the dismantling of identity.

GL: I was very impressed by something else you said about the piece—and which is a constant theme in your work: You say it's like being a composer. You have to be sensitive to the people you're working with in a collaboration—what their strengths are, what part to give them to play, and how to make everyone feel they have an investment in the project to work harmoniously to create the experience.

You know, that could be like being a composer, but it's more like being an improviser.

TA: Yeah. Yeah.

GL: You have artists who say, “Oh, I never improvise. I create, I plan, I structure,” as if these things are inimical to improvisation. But your piece reminded me of the philosopher and theologian Bruce Ellis Benson, who talks about improvisation as being the very core of creation. That applies to artmaking more generally. It revalues what it means to be a composer, and what artmaking itself is considered to be.

And so I was thinking about how improvisation is tied to creating a kind of dialogue, an interaction across forms. This is why I embed sound even in my nonperformative pieces. And this is something that I thought you were doing, too, in the sculpture *Off Minor* [2004]—but I've never heard it. Is it soft? Loud?

TA: Even though it looks like a music box that plays a beautifully harmonious tune—you're used to this form emitting that kind of sound—there are springs that hit tuning forks, so it's very percussive. It was meant to evoke what it might be like to experience the onset of deafness, as Beethoven did.

So I was really intrigued by your piece *Born Obbligato* [2013], which is an intervention into Beethoven.

GL: Well, that's why I sent it to you, because of your *Black Beethoven* [2012] recital, which also explores his legacy—trading on the histories we all grew up with, like J. A. Rogers's book [*100 Amazing Facts About the Negro With Complete Proof: A Short Cut to the World History of the Negro (1934)*]: As the story went, not only Beethoven but Haydn—and, by the way, Warren Harding—were all black.

TA: Yeah, isn't it strange, growing up and hearing that as just a foregone conclusion? That's why I wanted to investigate it.

GL: When I came to the AACM [Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians], [Art Ensemble of Chicago contrabassist] Malachi Favors was sort of the critical historian of the collective, and we were reading people like Chancellor Williams and Neely Fuller.

TA: Ivan Van Sertima.

Above: **Terry Adkins, *Sightings in South Florida, Deeper Hert*, 1999,** mixed media, performance. Installation view, University Gallery Florida Atlantic University, Boca Raton.

Below: **Terry Adkins, *Off Minor*, 2004,** mixed media, 48 x 81 x 48".

GL: And John G. Jackson, John Henrik Clarke, Cheikh Anta Diop, Willis Huggins. That was the background.

But that wasn't really my intervention. The International Contemporary Ensemble commissioned *Born Obbligato* as a response to the Beethoven Septet, op. 20. We had a previous collaboration in which they played the Schubert Octet, which the Septet influenced. They would play movements of the Octet in juxtaposition with open-form pieces of mine, and sometimes Schubert would get into Lewis because of the open form.

So in researching this new piece, I got swept up into Beethoven's world—and then you have to break out before you become paralyzed. My piece does perform a kind of conceptual, gestural migration based on the form of the Septet, but adds spatialized electronics in one movement. The plan was to intersperse movements of the Beethoven with the Lewis, so the first opening gesture in the work says, "This is my turn." [*laughter*]

TA: Well, even though the title of my piece is *Black Beethoven* and deals with that alternate history, my purpose really was to highlight the greater triumph of his overcoming deafness, regardless of what color he was. Beethoven was robbed of the sense that is the composer's gift. The gift was taken away, and yet he transcended all that. His deepest interior voice came after the deafness—with the Ninth Symphony, or the "*Et incarnatus est*" of the *Missa solemnis*, where the Holy Spirit dove descends upon Mary. There is a flute passage in there that has to do with his remembering what birds sound like in the forest. Even though it's melodic, it is extremely abstract.

It was this idea of remembering what it's like to hear, conjuring that up within oneself. So when you watch the video, the morphing of the images is very subtle, but the sound is very physical.

GL: Those images are stunning, and they raise a question your piece really confronts: Where is the true locus of the senses? The location of memory?

And this gets into the recitals, because there is memory, there is homage, there is tribute. It made me think about a piece I made in 1978, *Homage to Charles Parker*. I don't have many homages in my work, but I was trying to look at Charlie Parker, asking what his afterlife might be like. His life was very turbulent, very short, and then he kind of ascends, with people paying tribute, like the poet Ted Joans writing BIRD LIVES all over the place.

It occurred to me that the way that you think about presenting the homage is similar. But I think you have a means of visual as well as sonic activation that makes the homage that much richer. You're critiquing the writing of history and also re-creating histories, finding new paths, extending the network. It's like assemblage art, but not in the form. It's in the network that

Above: Terry Adkins, *Synopsis*, 2004, video, color, sound, 18 minutes 1 second.

Below: Terry Adkins, *Riddle of the Sphinx*, 2010. Performance view, Philadelphia, December 2, 2010.

"What your practice shows is the extent to which sound is abstract, functional, and socially embedded, all at once. You can see the tradition, and then you can hear it."
—GL

gets created through all of the recitals you've done.

TA: I guess *afterlife* is the key word here, especially in those instances where I reimagine history. For the 2010 John Brown recital [*Riddle of the Sphinx*], I reimagined that he was successful at Harpers Ferry and was able to amass an army and work his way all the way down to Gainesville, Florida. The geography there would have been perfect for his campaign—plenty of places to hide and conduct guerrilla activities and, in addition, the Seminoles were already there, in league with fugitive slaves. And *Sanctuary* [2003] was a meditation on Brown's experience of incarceration.

So afterlife is key, but I also consider the recital as a kind of abstract portraiture. I see the development of my work as rising to a series of challenges. One is how to distill qualities—and render them abstractly—that would capture the essence of these individuals. Another is to do this without any realistic imagery at all. I guess I'm still more of a composer when it comes to the installation-based experiences, the posing of things to create a voyage of discovery for people who enter into them.

It is a way of dealing with history, of rewriting it, of reimagining it. I have to remake myself for each recital, because it's a period of deep immersion into these people; and hopefully with that immersion comes a period of absorption, where I'm then able to bring it all back out in a way that's refreshing and interesting to me, first of all, and to the audience.

GL: Well, you heard the *Changing with the Times* piece from 1992, which deals with the Great Migration narrative. It started with my dad going to an adult-education class. They told the students—these black men and women in their sixties and seventies who had basically retired—"We want you to write autobiographies," and gave them a copy of the autobiography of Frederick Douglass for a model. *Changing with the Times* is pretty much what he came up with.

TA: Wait a minute. Your father is the author of that text?

GL: A lot of it, yeah. He wrote some of it on paper, for the class, and then I interviewed him, transcribed the interview, and used that for the rest. So the work is basically in his voice, as performed by the actor Bernard Mixon.

TA: That's amazing. When I heard that piece, I thought it really had that kind of tenor to it, in its language flow, in its suggestion of cultural beliefs, the whole dynamic of it. I felt that this was kind of recital-like, too, in that it recovered the acts and stories of an ancestor and it just rang so true.

I said, "Wow, this is not the George Lewis I know."

GL: It isn't. It's his dad. [*laughter*] But you know, I started to do this around the time that CD-ROM technology came out. I started to think that I could extend this to multimedia performance.

Small 8-mm camcorders came out around 1989, and I began making tapes of members of my family. I made a lot of little QuickTime movies and a computer program that decided which ones to play based on what it heard in the musical space. If someone played in a certain way, the audience would see my grandmother complaining about Oliver North or something like that. I can still hear it. "Boy, look what Bush did, told a lie about that Contra affair." [*laughter*] She didn't believe in the lottery either: "You *know* they got that thing fixed." [*laughter*]

TA: This navigational, interactive piece—does *Travelogue* [2008] come after that?

GL: Yes, you've got great ears. I did reuse some of that older material for *Travelogue*. The piece is actually inspired by *Soft Cinema*, a piece by Lev Manovich that I composed music for in 2005. It's an early example of the database aesthetic. Lev made around three or four hundred small QuickTime clips and put them on a DVD, where a program chooses which ones to present. He gave me a spreadsheet with all the clips categorized according to scene, movement, setting (hotel rooms, airport waiting rooms, restaurants, cars) and geographic location—Japan, Berlin, Brazil, Los Angeles, all these different places.

I used his taxonomy to make corresponding sound clips. Then I realized that I'd been making videos of my travels for a long time myself. I have around four hundred hours of this material, shot over a couple of decades, and when I took video, I tended to point my camera at what sounded good, and I was able to extract the sound from some of the videos as material for *Travelogue*. The piece draws on a cosmopolitan sensibility—but also on a kind of rootlessness, something that you have to watch out for.

TA: That brings me to the interactive aspect of your work—the software system Voyager, for instance.

GL: That project started in 1979. I was sitting around talking with [composer and visual artist] Douglas Ewart, and we were asking ourselves, "What if we had a computer that could play music like us? You know, improvising and stuff?"

That's what I was always attracted to about computers; it's why I wanted to create a program for live performance and improvisation. The Mars rover is my model of what I want to make as an interactive artist—an improvising machine that you set down on the surface of a hostile planet, where it makes its own way. It casts down its bucket where it is and goes to work. [*laughter*]

TA: I never thought I would hear Booker T. coming out of that. [*laughter*]

GL: Well, there is something to it when you think about improvisation. You are always at the stage where you have to deal with what's on the table right in front of you. So that's what Voyager-type computer

programs do. They dialogue, they listen, they improvise—agency and indeterminacy rolled up into a ball.

TA: It seems to me that with Voyager there's a certain amount of surrender and a certain amount of anonymity: the will to let go, the will to allow possibilities to somehow take care of themselves, a kind of anonymous authorship where you just supply the matrix for possibility and remove yourself. How is that?

GL: Well, you always have to remove yourself, right? I mean, once you make the piece, it's not you. You could say there's anonymous authorship, but you can also say there's distributed authorship, or a kind of cyborg authorship. The computer programs I make can also play among themselves and even by themselves, without other people. That goes back to '86, maybe, when I did a piece called *The Empty Chair*—an homage piece, actually, in honor of Nelson Mandela. It was a video-sonic piece, and the computer program improvised all the music.

With the computer, just as with any improviser, trust is a big component of the collaborative process. I trust the computer to make good choices.

But then there are the other kinds of interactive pieces, like my installation *Information Station No. 1* [2000], where there is a kind of video-sonic kiosk that responds to physical gesture, and the interaction is relatively constrained compared to what you could do with Voyager. Or something like *Ikons* [2010], which I collaborated on with the Canadian artist Eric Metcalfe, where sounds are activated by a set of embedded ultrasound sensors as people walk through the piece. Visitors inhabit these kinds of works by attending to the visual dimension, and the sonic part emerges from that attending. The computer program sees that you're paying attention to one of the parts of the piece and it sends sonic resources your way. That's my way of trying to think about what visual attention means.

TA: With *The Empty Chair*, for example, is the music that the computer creates for it different each time, or is it a fixed score once it does it the first time?

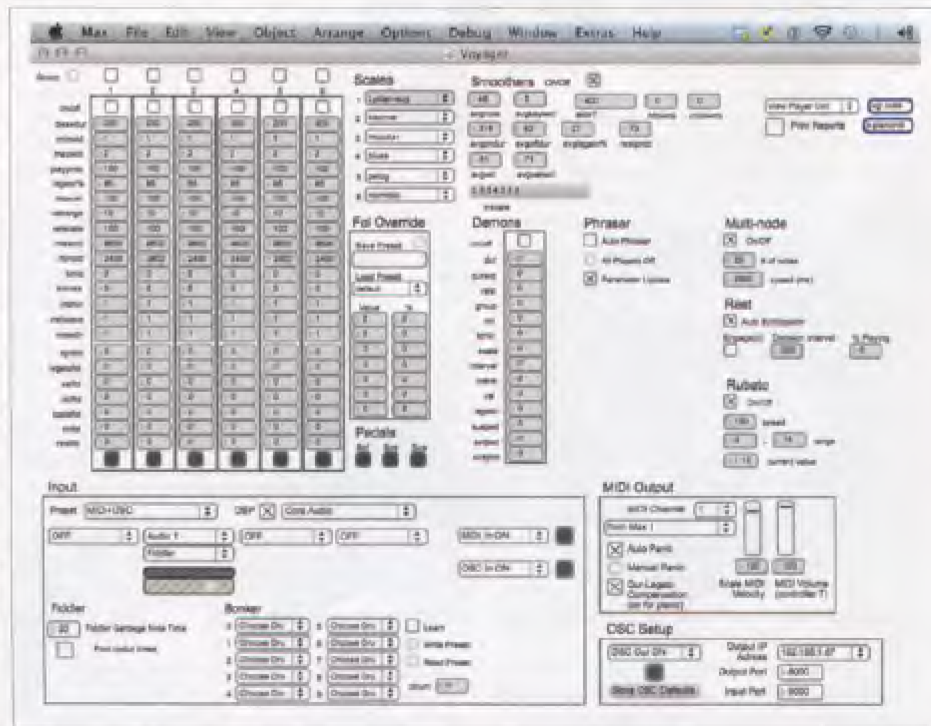
GL: Well, when you ask whether something is fixed or improvised, even in human terms, the part of what we do that's improvised comes from a part of us that we don't know much about. We assume that we have infinite potential, but we don't actually know whether we have intrinsic limits. So we have to assume that we don't, in order to save ourselves psychologically.

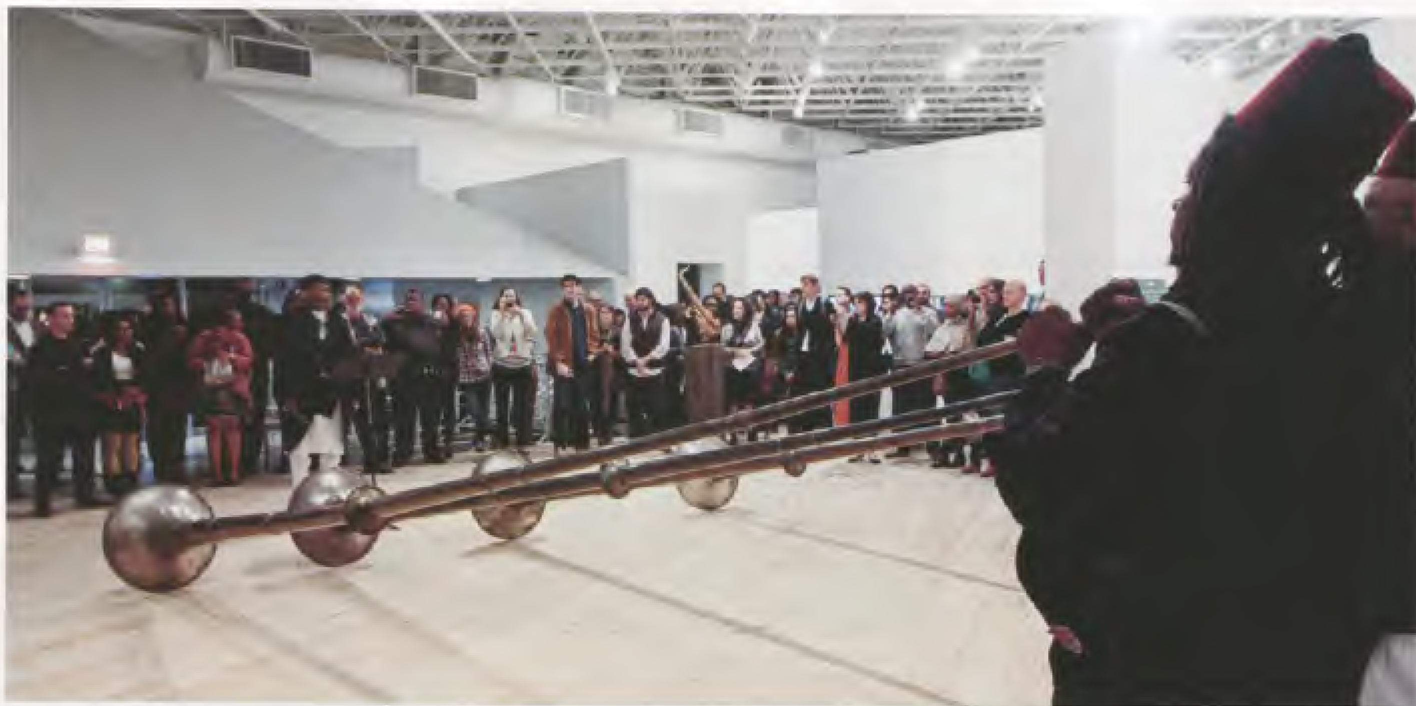
I don't know what the limits of a program like Voyager are. I know that from my standpoint, it's constantly making up new material. The machine in '86 did that, too. But at the same time, I recognize Voyager's playing style in the same way I might recognize John Coltrane's or Sonny Rollins's. It's not a fixed score, but it has what you'd think of as a personality.

TA: That brings us to the impasse where we can

Above: George Lewis in his studio at the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique (IRCAM), Paris, 1983.

Below: Main page of George Lewis's custom composing software Voyager (2014 version) showing Spooky Interaction, 2014, a telematic performance for four pianos between New York and Melbourne, February 13, 2014.





Terry Adkins with the Lone Wolf Recital Corps, *Last Trumpet*, 1995. Performance view, Contemporary Arts Museum Houston, November 16, 2012. Photo: Max Fields.

say that there are still infidels out there who would consider me not to be a very serious musician or you not to be a serious visual artist.

GL: We're lucky that lots of people *do* like us, so we can probably feel free to pay less attention to those who don't. Anyway, I'm not a visual artist, really. I get by through collaboration, from the kindness of friends and colleagues. I'm a sound artist, and I don't really have visual images. I can contribute to the process in collaboration with other artists—filmmakers, visual artists, poets.

TA: So when I saw *Rio Negro* [1992/2007], was that you collaborating with someone?

GL: Yes—with Douglas Ewart. The work is a kind of kinetic-robotic sculpture with multichannel sound; Douglas made the rain sticks and chimes, and I wondered, what if these rain sticks could be animated? I started researching stepper motors, and in the 1992 version, a graduate student created the robotics. I made the computer program that controlled them, and it made other kinds of electronic sounds. In the version you saw from 2007, Douglas Irving Repetto, the founder of Dorkbot, made the robotics, which were locally rather than globally controlled.

Rio Negro is a lot like your *Off Minor*, which is in a long tradition of musical automata that extends all the way from music boxes through the Analytical Engine of Charles Babbage and Ada Lovelace to pieces like Voyager on digital computers. When I saw *Off Minor*, I thought, this is basically a real-time automaton.

There's also an affinity with your Akrhaphones, those giant horns—which are functional sculptures, invented instruments. They're playable.

TA: Yeah. I pick New York's finest to play them. In the original 1995 premiere [*Firmament RHA*], I had two French horn players and two trombonists. You weren't available. [*laughter*] I had Vincent Chancey and Marshall Sealy on the French horns, and Dick Griffin and Frank Lacy on trombones.

GL: Well, they are the best.

TA: Yeah. Basically, the Akrhaphone has no valves. It's an overtone instrument. I had no idea that they would be playable when I first had them fabricated as sculptures, but they are capable of amazing range. The first person to play one was Vincent, and he said, "Wow—you could actually compose with these, because the range is so great." I made them on the scale at which I thought angels would play them.

My father had died, and the whole recital was in honor of him. I was looking to bodies of literature that would make real for me the fact that I would someday see him again: Dante's *Paradiso*, Revelations. Musically, I looked to Negro spirituals, the Vedanta.

"In your work, there's a certain amount of surrender and a certain amount of anonymity: the will to let go, the will to allow possibilities to somehow take care of themselves, a kind of anonymous authorship where you just supply the matrix for possibility and remove yourself." —TA

And so the Akrhaphones actually represented the horns of the first four angels of the Last Judgment. At the original performance, I used text from all of these sources along with the actual playing. Since then, I even conduct with these texts, something I picked up from playing with the great Butch Morris and being exposed to his conduction techniques. I'm able to tell the performers what I want them to do.

The Akrhaphones and *Off Minor*—which is, of course, a title of a Thelonious Monk composition—are at the crossroads where sculpture can make sound. But those are rare occurrences.

GL: Well, maybe not that rare in your work. What your practice shows, I think, is the extent to which sound is abstract, functional, and socially embedded, all at once. You can see the tradition, and then you can hear it. It might be intangible, but it's certainly not ephemeral in any way. It's quite eternal, because its traces persist in memory.

TA: You know, you've pointed out what I have hoped distinguishes my work from that of other artists' by virtue of my being a musician as well: this idea of trace.

GL: Yeah. It's a major part of what both of us are doing. I do it through interactive technology and you do it through the sheer power of the sculpture and the sound, which is also synesthetic and refers to the physical. You know, you actually feel as if you could grab and take a bite out of some of those things you're doing.

TA: [*laughter*] Right. I want these physical things to appear as if they made themselves, but at the same time, I try to make sculpture that is as ephemeral and transient as music is, somewhat in the same sense that we were talking about anonymity.

And when it comes to working with sound, I try to do the opposite. I try to make it more of a physical thing, so that embedded in the sculpture is the trace of sound, the trace of the nature of sound, even if the sculptures aren't sounding. This touches upon the synesthetic as well.

GL: Do you think we should consider stopping here?

TA: Yeah, I think that's a perfect ending, except I would like to say that this collaborative discussion has prompted me to wrestle you into doing something else together very soon.

GL: That sounds great. I would love that. □

Postscript by George Lewis

In fact, Terry and I were already collaborating. Curator Ian Berry had commissioned me to write a critical essay for the forthcoming exhibition catalogue Terry Adkins: Recital *(Prestel) on the deep and abiding structural, aesthetic, and cultural relationships among sound, music, and image that Terry had long pursued. Some pieces of writing are labors of true love, and this was one of them.*

"I couldn't find anything where people had written extensively about your engagement with sound and music," I told him in a recent Skype interview. "There are none," he laughed. "Yours would be the first."

Indeed, maybe we were just getting started—but this is not the end.

Right: **Terry Adkins with the Lone Wolf Recital Corps, *Facets*, 2012.** Performance view, Arthur Zankel Music Center, Skidmore College, Saratoga Springs, NY, November 8, 2012. Clifford Owens. Photo: Andrzej Pilarczyk.

Below: **Terry Adkins, *Omohundro*, 2002,** brass, copper, 60 x 29 x 8".