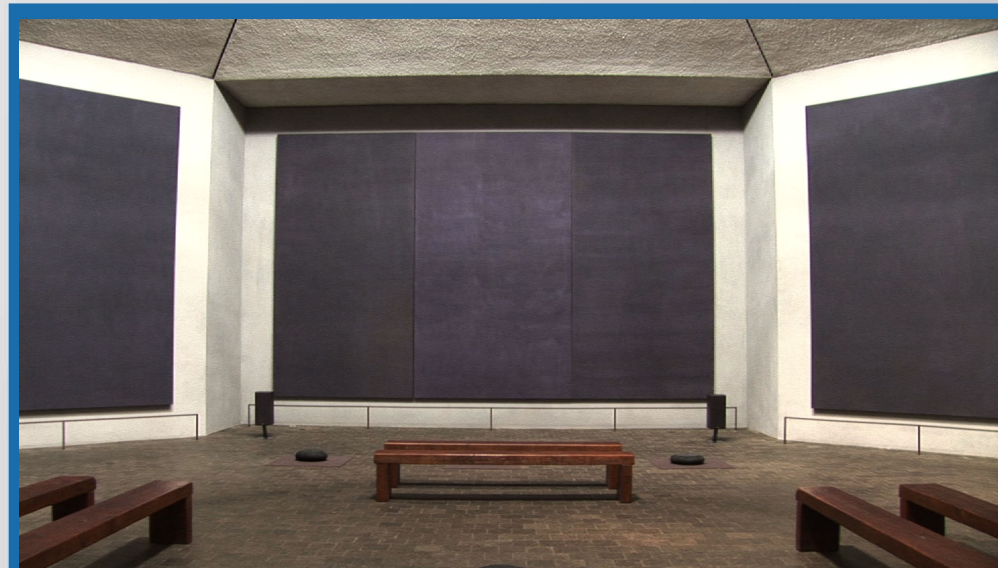


## DUET: Lift Me Up For I Am Dying

*Duet is an audio and film installation featuring Lift Me Up For I Am Dying a composition for viola performed by Tyme Khleifi (Ramallah) and Avri Levitan (Tel Aviv). Duet was presented as an audio installation at the Rothko Chapel, Houston to mark the 65th anniversary of the formation of the State of Israel and the Palestinian Nakba, 14-15 May 2013*

**Submitted by Ross Birrell**  
Output No. 2



*Duet: Lift Me Up For I Am Dying,  
an audio installation for the Rothko Chapel, Houston, 14-15 May 2013  
(installation shot),*

# OUTPUT

Duet is an audio installation and two-channel film installation featuring recitals of *Lift Me Up For I Am Dying* (commissioned by the Swiss Institute in Rome) performed by Tyme Khleifi (Ramallah) and Avri Levitan (Tel Aviv). Duet was filmed in the Speigelsaal (mirrored ballroom) of the Claerchens Ballhaus, Berlin in 2011 as a two channel film installation, audio installation, music score, vinyl record and CD.

Duet was presented in 14 variations over a two day audio installation at the Rothko Chapel, Centre for Art, Religion and Human Rights, Houston, Texas to mark the 65th anniversary of the formation of the State of Israel and the Palestinian Nakba, 14-15 May 2013. A screening of the film version with panel discussion was held at the Contemporary Art Museum, Houston (CAMH), 16 May 2013.

A score of Duet was produced with the Rothko Chapel to mark the installation.

A Double CD of the 14 variations of Duet will be produced in collaboration with Rothko Chapel and Mount Analogue, Stockholm.

## Title

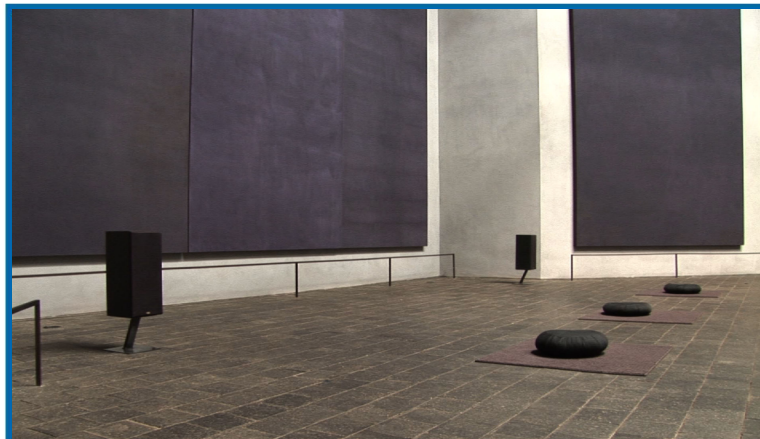
*Duet: Lift Me Up For I Am Dying*

## Submission No.

2

## Authors/Creators

*Ross Birrell*



*Duet: an audio installation for the Rothko Chapel, Houston, 14-15 May 2013 (installation shot).*



# OUTPUT

Duet is an audio installation and two-channel film installation featuring recitals of *Lift Me Up For I Am Dying* (commissioned by the Swiss Institute in Rome) performed by Tyme Khleifi (Ramallah) and Avri Levitan (Tel Aviv). Duet was filmed in the Speigelsaal (mirrored ballroom) of the Claerchens Ballhaus, Berlin in 2011 as a two channel film installation, audio installation, music score, vinyl record and CD.

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*Duet: Lift Me Up For I Am Dying*

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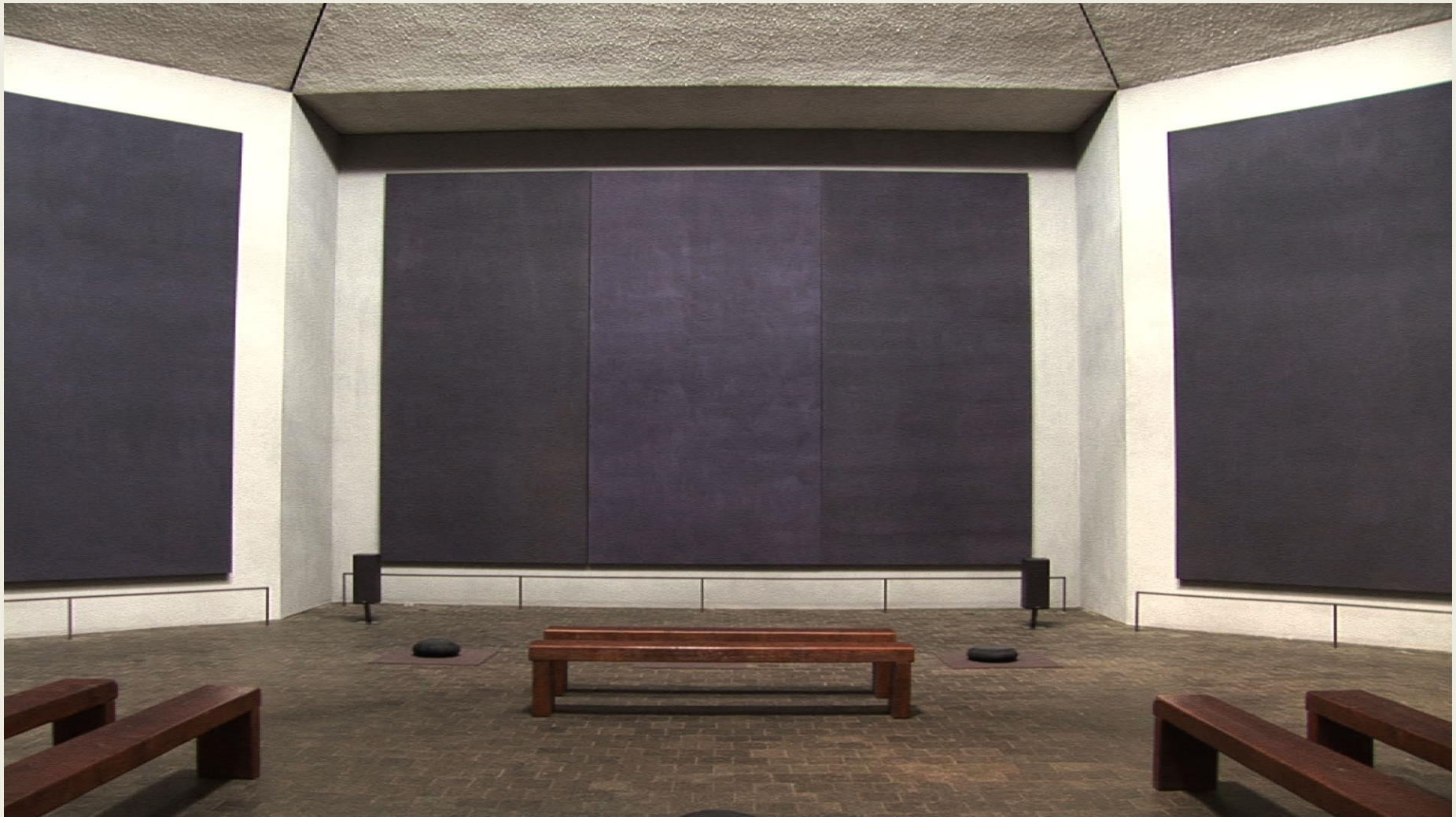
2

## Authors/Creators

*Ross Birrell*



*DUET (film still), Claerchens Ballhaus, Tyme Khleifi (Ramallah) & Avri Levitan (Tel Aviv)*



*Duet*: an audio installation for the Rothko Chapel, 14-15 May 2013

*Duet* installation in 14 variations to echo 14 Rothko paintings



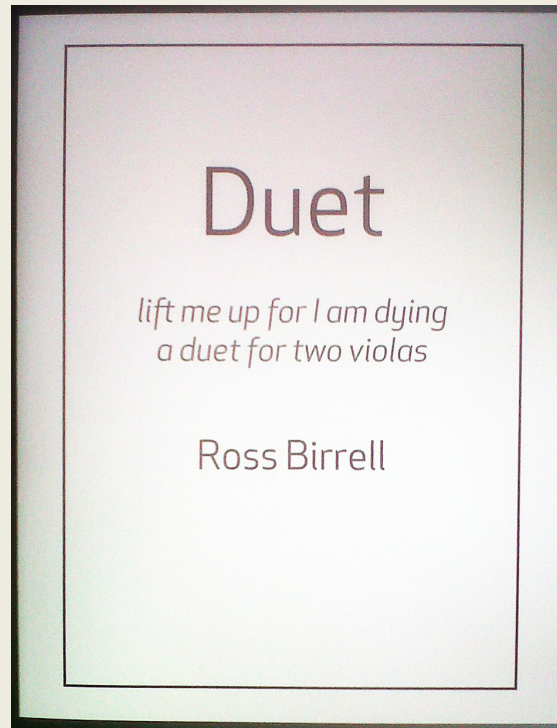


*Duet*, Rothko Chapel installation shot



*Duet*, Rothko Chapel installation shot

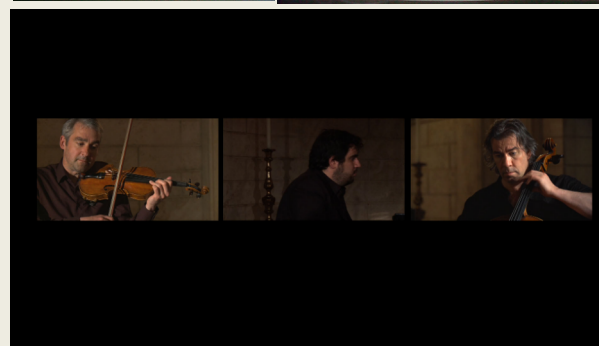
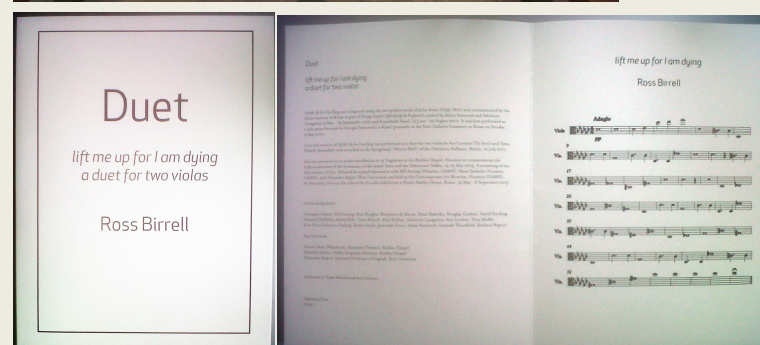
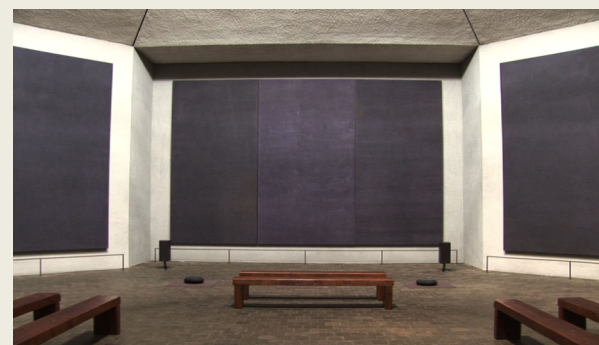
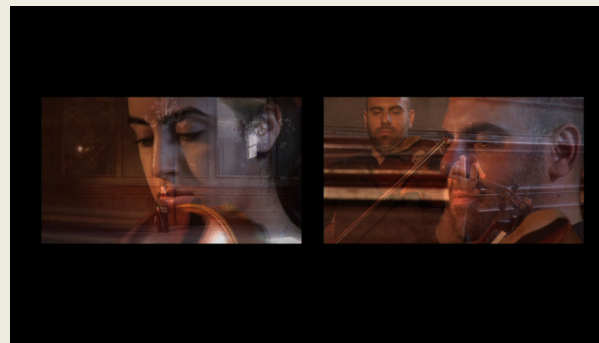
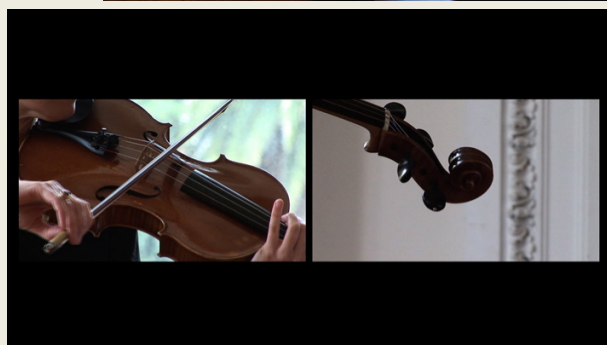
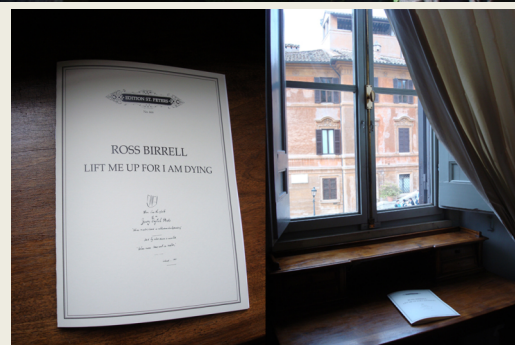




*Duet, lift me up for I am dying* (music score)

Rothko Chapel

Lift Me Up For I Am Dying, a composition for solo viola, was commissioned by the Swiss Institute Rome as a recital for Keats' graveside in the Non-Catholic Cemetery, Rome, 8 May 2010.



Lift Me Up For I Am Dying evolved into a series of related works from recitals, score, sculpture, film, installation, including the audio installation for the Rothko Chapel, Duet (2013) and Sonata, based upon a composition for Piano Trio (Kunsthalle Basel, 2014)

# CONTEXT

The contexts of Duet are musical, political, historical, theoretical, presentational.

1. Musical context: Duet is the performance of a composition, *Lift Me Up For I Am Dying*, based upon the last spoken words of John Keats (1795-1821), by Avri Levitan (Tel Aviv) and Tyme Khleifi (Ramallah) recorded in Berlin, 10 July 2011. Each musician plays separately and at their own tempo (without a conductor) the resulting chance harmonies and dissonance which result when the individual tracks are played back - maintains the presence of irreducible antagonism at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict whilst simultaneously offering the possibility of a potential harmony to come.

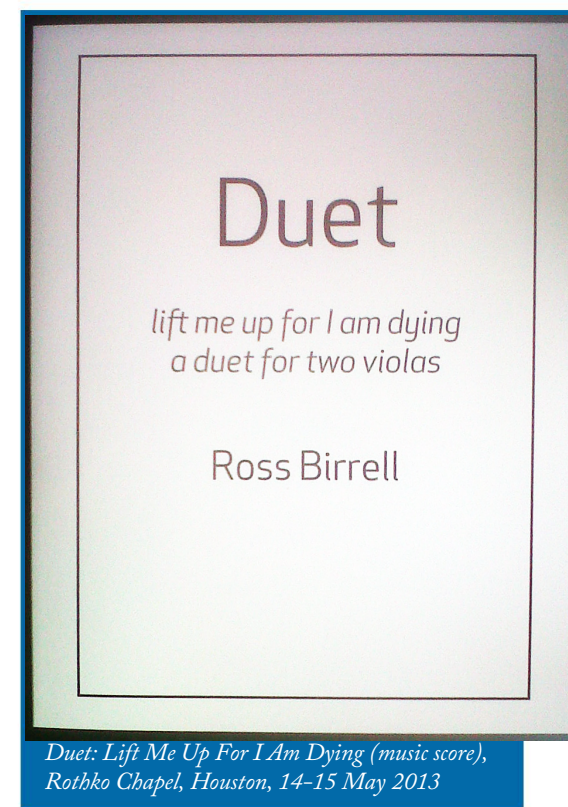
An important context considered was the West East Divan Orchestra, founded by Edward Said and Daniel Barenboim, 1999, in which Arab and Israeli musicians perform together.

2. The political context was the ongoing Arab-Israeli conflict and the approaching vote in the United Nations on Palestinian nationhood, 2011 and 2012.

3. The historical context was the approaching 65th anniversary in 2013 of the formation of the State of Israel and the Palestinian Nakba on 14-15 May 1948.

4. The theoretical context of aesthetic decisions was the 'irreducible character of antagonism' at the heart of the concept of the political in the writings of Chantal Mouffe and on 'disagreement' by Jacques Rancière. In addition, ideas of the 'inoperative' (Nancy) and the 'unavowable' (Blanchot) community were also taken into consideration.

5. The presentational context was the Rothko Chapel, Houston, TX. The Rothko Chapel is a Centre for Art, Spirituality and Human Rights and its octagonal architecture (designed by Philip Johnson) houses 14 Rothko canvases.



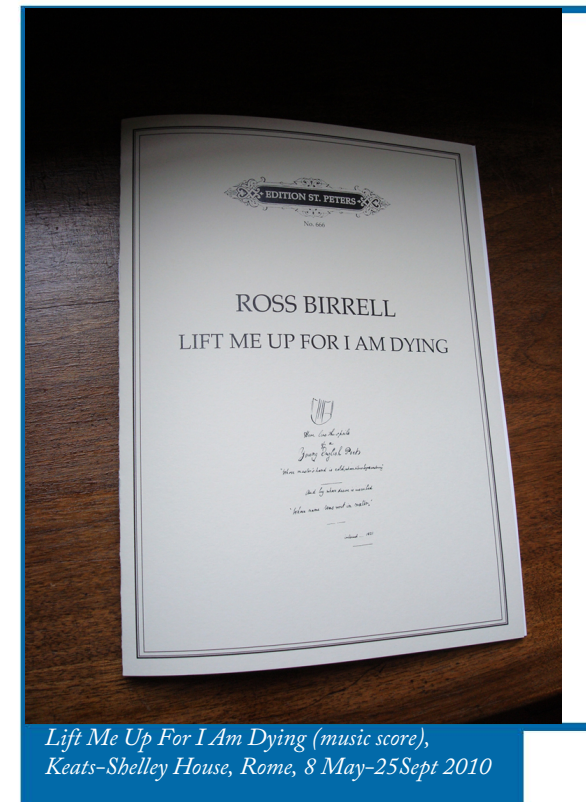


# METHODOLOGY

Method: 'Lift Me Up For I Am Dying' was composed for the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome by transposing the last spoken words of John Keats into musical notation by selecting letters which directly corresponded to notes. Duet, filmed in the Claerchens Ballhuas Berlin, features recitals of Lift Me Up by an Israel and a Palestinian musician. Standing in the same location, each musician performs separately, resulting in renditions of differing tempo and duration. When the individual recitals are played back a tension is produced in the displaced harmonies and mirrored dissonance of the resulting 'duet,' mirroring the shared geography but dissonant history of Israel and Palestine. The film superimposes the scarred context of the Spiegelsaal (mirrored ballroom) of the Claerchens Ballhaus itself - bombed during WWII - upon the faces of the musicians as they perform. In the film and audio installation versions of Duet the harmonies and dissonance are continually evolving and continually different each 'duet'. The failure of the duet to find final harmony and its continued lapse into dissonance mirrors the fractured history of the Arab-Israeli conflict and its seemingly intractable condition. Equally, its evocation of a potential harmony, however fragile, reiterates the necessity of seeking a solution for sustained co-existence based upon mutual respect of the human rights of Arabs and Israelis, and the importance of defending and building upon every fragile ground of peace.

Research questions:

1. How might an artwork mark the 65th anniversary of the Israeli State and Palestinian Nakba in 2013?
2. What presentational modes reflect the concept of the political as sustained antagonism (Schmitt, Mouffe) in the context of the Arab-Israeli conflict?
3. How might Romantic concept of the 'ensemble of fragments' inform the development of a work into number of related forms and practices?
4. How can one speak and remain silent?







*Duet*

Lift Me Up For I Am Dying featuring recitals by  
Tyme Khleifi (Ramallah) and Avri Levitan (Tel Aviv)  
a 2-channel film installation shot in the Spiegelsaal (mirrored ballroom) of the  
Clärchens Ballhaus, Berlin, 2011



*Duet* (2012), film stills

## Context

DUET is both a film installation and audio installation which evolved from the solo composition Lift Me Up For I Am Dying (2010) - commissioned by the Swiss Institute in Rome and the basis of a series of related works (recital, score, film, hand casts) exhibited in Rome and Basel. Lift Me Up For I Am Dying has further evolved into the work Sonata - a composition for Piano Trio and a three screen installation (Sonata was the basis of a £10,000 Creative Scotland Award 2011 and will be presented at Kunsthalle Basel January 2014).

Formally and conceptually DUET drew upon structure and method of Guantanamoera, 2010 (see output 1) but with important key differences outlined in the methodology section.



Duet (2012)



Guantanamoera (2010)



Previous  
related  
work



Work from the Envoy series featured in the large-scale group show Romantic Conceptualism, curated by Jörg Heiser at Kunsthalle Nuremberg and BAWAG Foundation, Vienna, 2007

This led to a renewed interest in the context of Romanticism, which was to become the primary context of Lift Me Up For I Am Dying and the evolution of Duet.



*Cuernavaca: A Journey in Search of Malcolm Lowry* (2006) commissioned by Kunsthalle Basel and which formed the basis of gallery installations in Kunsthalle Basel, Bluecoat Gallery, Liverpool (2008) and Portikus, Frankfurt am Main (2011)

Previous  
related  
work



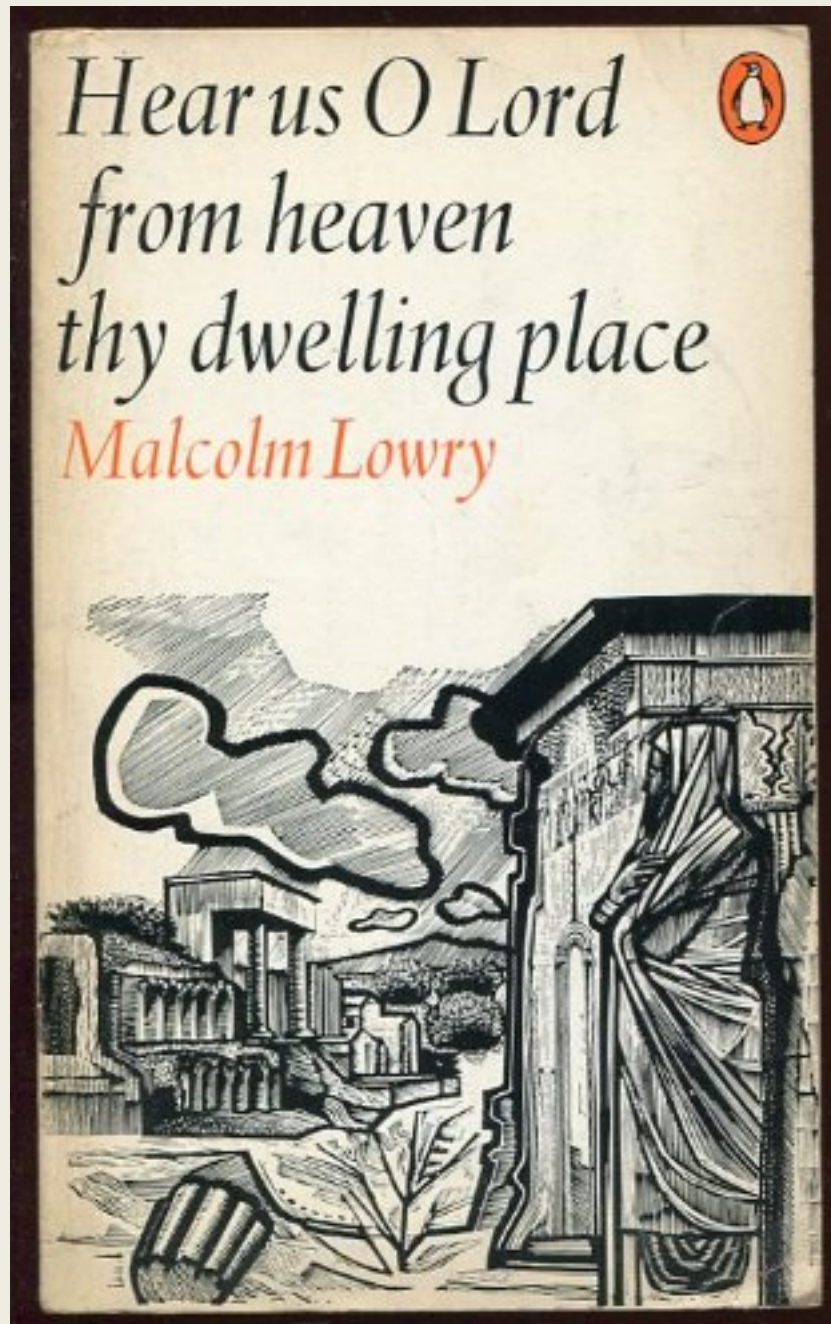
*Cuernavaca: A Journey in Search of Malcolm Lowry* (2006)



*You Like This Garden?...*, Kunsthalle Basel (2006)



*You Like This Garden?...*, Portikus (2012)



Exhibition title derived from Malcolm Lowry short story, 'Strange Comfort Afforded by the Profession' in which American writer visits Keats house in Rome and quotes letter by Severn which contains last spoken words of Keats and mention casting of Keats' hand and feet:

'My dear Brown - He is gone - he died with the most perfect ease - he seemed to go to sleep. On the 23rd at half past four the approaches of death came on. "Severn - lift me up for I am dying - I shall die easy - don't be frightened, I thank God it has come." I lifted him upon my arms and the phlegm seemed boiling in his throat. This increased until at 11 at night when he gradually sank into death so quiet I still thought he slept - But I cannot say more now. I am broken down beyond my strength. I cannot be left alone. I have not slept for nine days - the days since. On Saturday afternoon a gentleman came to cast his hand and foot. On Thursday the body was opened. The lungs were completely gone. The doctors would not -

Much moved, Sigbjorn reread this as it now appeared in his notebook, then added beneath it:

*On Saturday a gentleman cam to cast his hand and foot - that is the most sinister line to me. Who is this gentleman?*

Malcolm Lowry, 'Strange Comfort Afforded by the Profession', *Hear us O Lord from heaven thy dwelling place* (Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1969), p. 101.

## Methodology (Lift me up for I am dying)

“Severn - lift me up for I am dying - I shall die easy -  
don't be frightened, I thank God it has come.”

Following established method from Bach and other classical composers the last spoken words of Keats, select the letters which correspond to musical notes:

e e f e f a d g a d e e a d b e f g e e d a g d a c e -

From this initial phrase of notes performed on piano, a refrain and variation were established. The final composition was then transposed for viola, chosen for its low tone and historic associations with the Italian viola d'amore and origins in the stringed instrument resembling a lute carved on Keats' gravestone. The resulting composition is slow and elegiac and consists of repeatedly rising and falling 'musical breaths', echoing someone seeking breath (Keats died of tuberculosis).

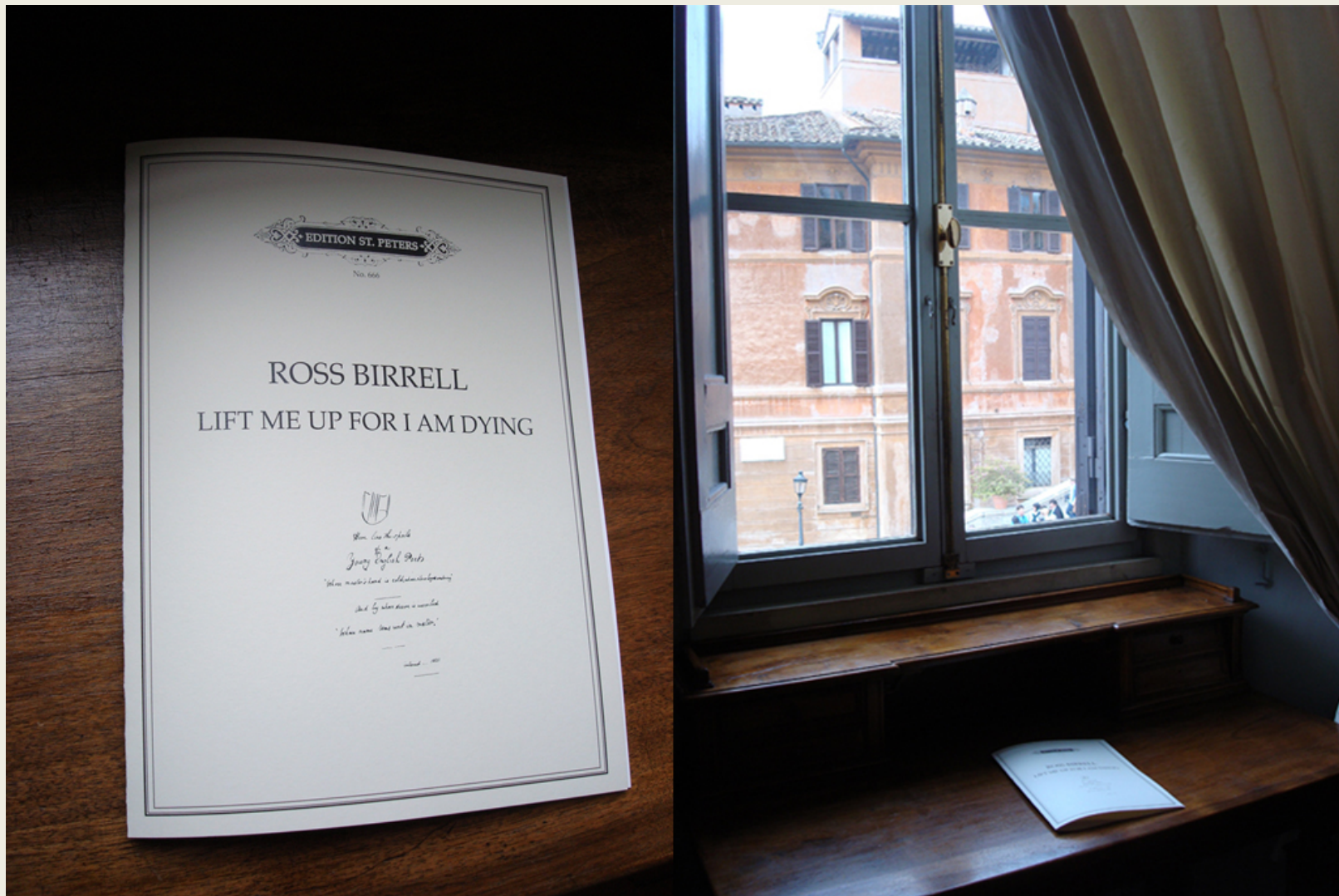
The brevity of the recital (4min) mirrored the brief nature of the poet's life (Keats died aged 26) - a fleetingness and ephemerality implied in Keats' epitaph: 'Here lies one who writ his name in water.'





*Lift Me Up For I Am Dying, recital solo viola performed by Georgia Franceschi, Non-Catholic Cemetery, Rome, 9 May 2010. Commissioned for Strange Comfort (Afforded by the Profession), Curated by Adam Szymczyk and Salvatore Lacagnina, Swiss Institute Rome, 8 May-25 Sept 2010*





*Lift Me Up For I Am Dying, music score, edition of 300,  
Keats-Shelley House, Rome, Commissioned for Strange Comfort (Afforded by the Profession),  
Curated by Adam Szymczyk and Salvatore Lacagnina, Swiss Institute Rome, 8 May-25 Sept 2010*



*Lift Me Up For I Am Dying, split screen video, performed by Georgia Franceschi, filmed in the music room of Villa Maraini, Swiss Institute Rome, 9 May 2010. Strange Comfort (Afforded by the Profession), curated by Adam Szymczyk and Salvatore Lacagnina, Kunsthalle Basel 12 July-31 August 2010*

*Now in the Collection Roger Diener, Basel*

Olivier MESSIAEN

QUATUOR  
pour la  
FIN DU TEMPS



 DURAND S.A. Editions Musicales

Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* (1941) final movement Louange à l'Immortalité de Jésus

"Praise to the immortality of Jesus", for violin and piano from Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* (1941) was one source of inspiration for *Lift Me Up For I Am Dying* (which has been compared to plainsong)

Composing a piece of music from the last spoken words of a dying poet questioned the status of mortality and immortality.

Such a focus on immortality and Keats might be associated with Romanticism (one need only think of Burns and the immortal memory), however, my context was the radical politics and philosophy of Alain Badiou.



## Alain Badiou and the Immortal condition of Man

‘An immortal: this is what the worst situations that can be inflicted upon Man show him to be, in so far as he distinguishes himself within the varied and rapacious flux of life. In order to think any aspect of Man, we must begin from this principle. So if ‘rights of man’ exist, they are surely not rights of life against death, or rights of survival against misery. They are the rights of the Immortal, exercised over the contingency of suffering and death. The fact that in the end we all die, that only dust remains, in no way alters Man’s identity as immortal... and we know that every human being is *capable* of being this immortal... ’ (Alain Badiou, *Ethics*, p 12)

Ross Birrell, *Quartet for the End of Time*, 2010 (Related unrealized project)

Proposed collaboration with Tony Moffat (Professor of Violin and Leader of the Orchestra of Scottish Opera, and who had performed with Messiaen in the 1980s) for music-based film and stained glass work (to be made by Luc Schumacher), based upon on Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time* (first performed in a prisoner of war camp in January 1941) a proposal approved by Merchant's House Glasgow and awarded funding from Messiaen Foundation in 2010 from Yvonne Loriod (pianist and Widow of Messiaen), but which did not proceed as Loriod herself passed away prior to award.

Nonetheless, *Quartet for the End of Time*, a work which opened up a direction of classical music in site work and film work directly influenced the development of *Lift Me Up For I Am Dying* (2010) and the development of *Sonata* (2014) and *Quartet* (see REF 2014 output 3), which employs 'Il Terremoto' the final movement of Haydn's Last 7 Words of Christ for string quartet.



*Lift Me Up For I Am Dying, set of 5 hand casts of violinist Tony Moffat's hand  
in playing position of the title notes of music: F, E, A, D#, G#*

*Strange Comfort (Afforded by the Profession), curated by Adam Szymczyk and  
Salvatore Lacagnina, Kunsthalle Basel 12 July–31 August 2010*

*Now in the Collection Roger Diener, Basel*





*Lift Me Up For I Am Dying, set of 5 hand casts of violinist Tony Moffat's hand  
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Salvatore Lacagnina, Kunsthalle Basel 12 July-31 August 2010*



*Casting the Hand of Paulo Virno, Rome, 2011*

Virno and virtuoso - immaterial or virtuoso labour of the philosopher, poet and musician visualised in the 'hand'. Casting of Hand of Keats in Severn letter, led to casting the hand of musician Tony Moffat who had helped transpose composition of Lift Me Up For I Am Dying from piano to viola. Which evolved from proposal Casting the Hand of Paulo Virno, eventually performed February 2011. The paradox between the performative event (virtuosic, political) and the finished product or object in the context of artistic labour was the subject of a related work, *Casting the Hand of Paulo Virno*, performed in Rome, 2011



*Duet* (2012)

Tyme Khleifi (Ramallah) and Avri Levitan (Tel Aviv)

Duet - transposing Keats into the Arab-Israeli conflict





Shirin Neshat, *Turbulent*, 1998

*Duet* echoes formal elements of Shirin Neshat's 1998 two-channel installation *Turbulent*, which similarly explored Middle-Eastern politics and gender through musical performance. However, Neshat's video alternates each performance, whilst *Duet* presents the recitals simultaneously in a manner which mirrors the attempted and failed harmonies and perpetuating historical and political dissonance at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.



Roddy Buchanan, *Histrionics*, 2007

*Duet* also has parallels with the investigations into sectarianism by Glasgow artist Roddy Buchanan in his 1997 two-channel installation, *Histrionics* which similarly explored community, identity and place through the medium of music, in his case marching bands.

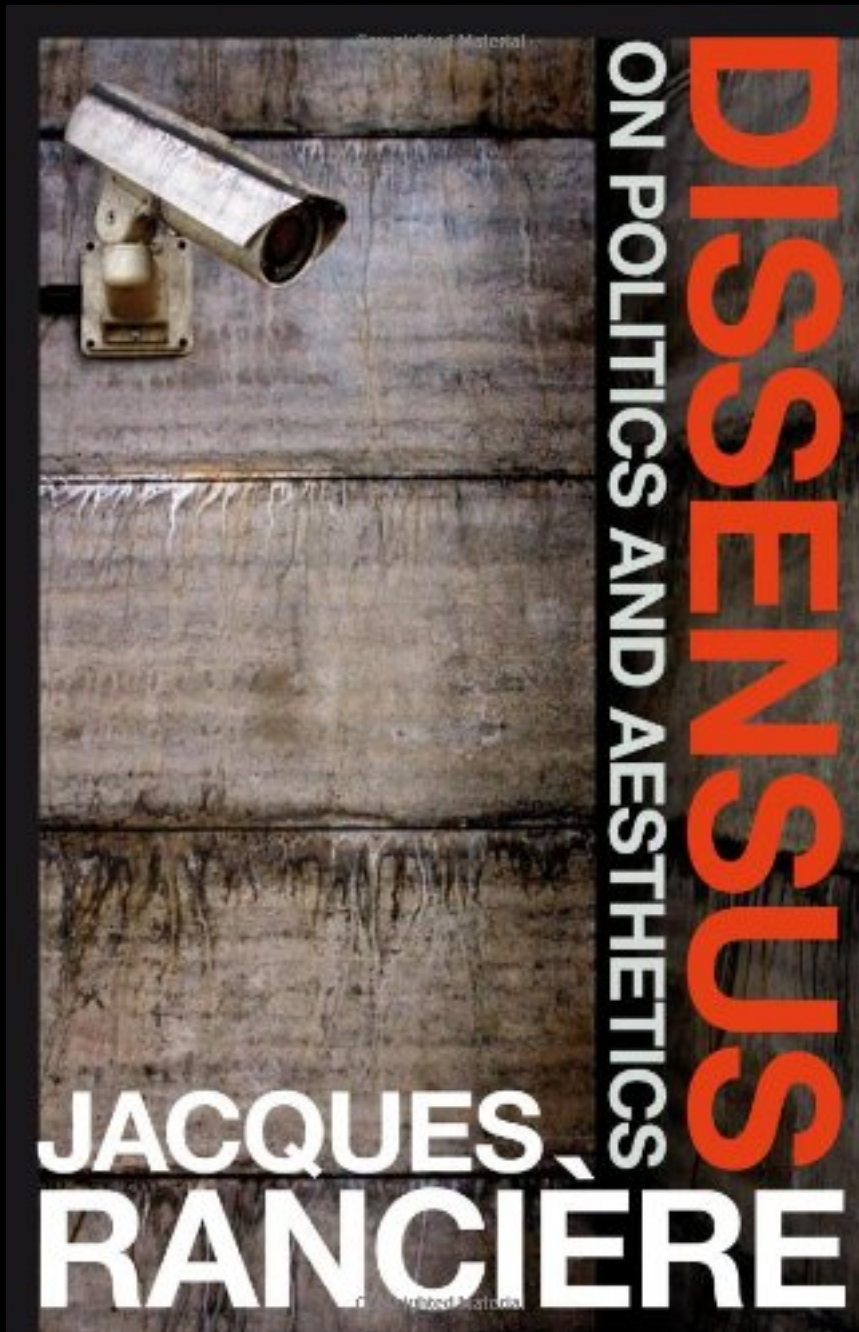


‘My aim is to bring to the fore liberalism’s central deficiency political field: its negation of the ineradicable character of antagonism.’

Chantal Mouffe, *On The Political*, p. 10

In contrast to the ‘agreement’ between Barenboim-Said to establish a music-based ‘consensus’ between Arab and Israeli members of the WEDO, DUET - following on from the form of GUANTANAMERA - proceeds on the recognition of ‘the political’ as ‘irreducible antagonism’.





Alongside the concept of the political as irreducible antagonism advanced by Chantal Mouffe (evolved from the writings of Carl Schmitt) has been the ideas of 'disagreement' and 'dissensus' as articulated in the recent work of Jacques Rancière.

*'The essence of politics is the manifestation of dissensus as the presence of two worlds in one.'*

Jacques Rancière, 'Ten Thesis on Politics', *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics* (2010), p. 37.

*Jacques Rancière*

Translated by Julie Rose

# Dis- agreement

POLITICS AND PHILOSOPHY

‘Disagreement clearly is not to do with words alone. It generally bears on the very situation in which speaking parties find themselves. In this, disagreement differs from what Jean-François Lyotard has conceptualised as the differend. ... An extreme form of disagreement is where X cannot see the common object Y is presenting because X cannot comprehend that the sounds uttered by Y form words and chains of words similar to X’s own. This extreme situation - first and foremost - concerns politics. Where philosophy encounters both politics and poetry at once, disagreement bears on what it means to be a being that uses words to argue.’ (p. xi-xii)





*Disagreement, Vasaplatsen, Gothenburg, 2010.*

*Scene of police shooting of protester during visit of President George W. Bush*

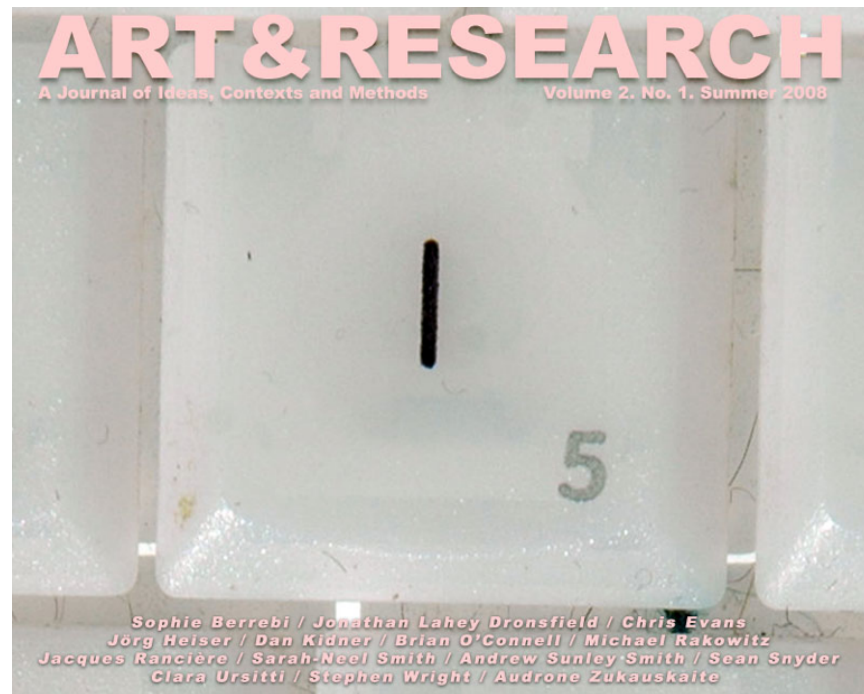
*Part of the ongoing series of Envoy interventions. Disagreement was originally conceived as contribution to*

*What is the Common? A conference with Jacques Rancière, University of Gothenburg, October 2009*



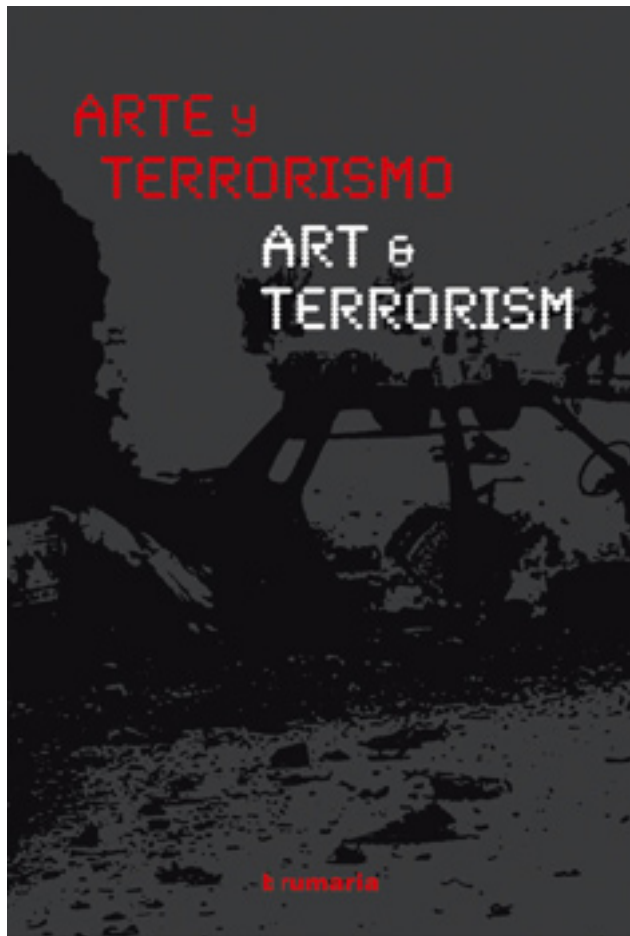
Jacques Rancière issue of *Art & Research*, vol 2 no 1 Summer 2008

Edited by Ross Birrell



<http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n1/v2n1cover.html>

<http://www.artandresearch.org.uk/v2n1/v2n1editorial.html>



Uthericelli with a display of all state spirit  
 spiritual and state culture laboratory  
 and scientific material from spiritus  
 non nihil delictum et non delictum 2004

## The Gift of Terror: Suicide-Terrorism and Potlatch

Ross Birrell

*'Let us emphasize the word "gift." Between on the one hand this detail that involves concealing the self, this obsequiousness of the gift, of goodness, or of the generosity of the gift that must withdraw, hide, in fact sacrifice itself in order to give, and on the other hand the representation that would transform the gift into an economy of sacrifice, is there not a secret affinity, an unavoidable risk of contamination of two possibilities as close one to the other as they are different from each other? For what is given in this trampling, in the actual trampling of terror, is nothing other than death itself, a new significance for death, a new apprehension of death, a new way in which to give oneself death or to put oneself to death in silence in death.'*  
 (Jacques Derrida, *The Gift of Death*, 1996, 30-31)

*'Potlatch enables one to perceive a connection between religious behaviours and economic ones.'*  
 (Georges Bataille, *The Gift of Rivalry: "Potlatch", The Accursed Share*, 1968: 68)

### Potlatch

In *Godfather II* (dir. Francis Ford Coppola, 1974), Robert De Niro as the young Vito Corleone is choosing oranges in a market stall in Little Italy, New York. When the Godfather selects an orange the vendor offers it to him free of charge: 'I don't want money. Take it as a gift.' Corleone responds to this display of generosity with customary gratitude - offering his service in the future should the stallholder ever need a favour in return. It is a symbolic exchange, a contract over which law. The affable nature of this transaction - which is both open and intimate - masks the violent conditions which surround it as a system of obligation. Although Corleone goes through the ritual of preparing to pay, the pretension is one he has come to expect in his role as Godfather. For the stallholder in this instance, the gift of the orange may be a small price

## Political theology of death: immortality and martyrdom

Previous research on the Arab-Israeli conflict led to publication of essay 'The Gift of Terror: Suicide-Bombing as Potlatch', Coulter-Smith/Owens (eds), *Art in the Age of Terrorism* (Paul Holberton Press, 2005) reprinted in *Concerning War: A Critical Reader* (BAK 2006) and *brumaria* 12 (See RAE submission 2008)



In the infinite political theology of the partisan, death forms an 'operative community', in the 'operative immortality' of the martyr.

In contrast, *Duet* - in the finitude of musical form - offers an elegy on the 'inoperative community' of collective loss.





Context of working with Palestinian and Israeli musicians.

Tyme Khleifi is a member of the West-Eastern Divan orchestra, composed of musicians from Israel, Palestine, and other Arab countries formed in 1999 by Daniel Barenboim and Edward Said



Daniel Barenboim and West East Divan Orchestra

“Every player listening intently to the voice of the composer and to each other. Harmony in personal or international relations can also only exist by listening. Each party opening their ears to the other’s narrative or point of view. In 1999, Edward Said and myself formed the West-Eastern Divan orchestra, composed of musicians from Israel, Palestine, and other Arab countries. Countries where the open ear has been too often replaced by the unsheathed sword, to the detriment of all. Now, over 10 years later, we have hopefully achieved an orchestra that is worthy of your ear. And one which shows that people who listen to each other, both musically and in all other ways, can achieve greater things.”

Daniel Barenboim on West East Divan Orchestra <http://www.west-eastern-divan.org/>

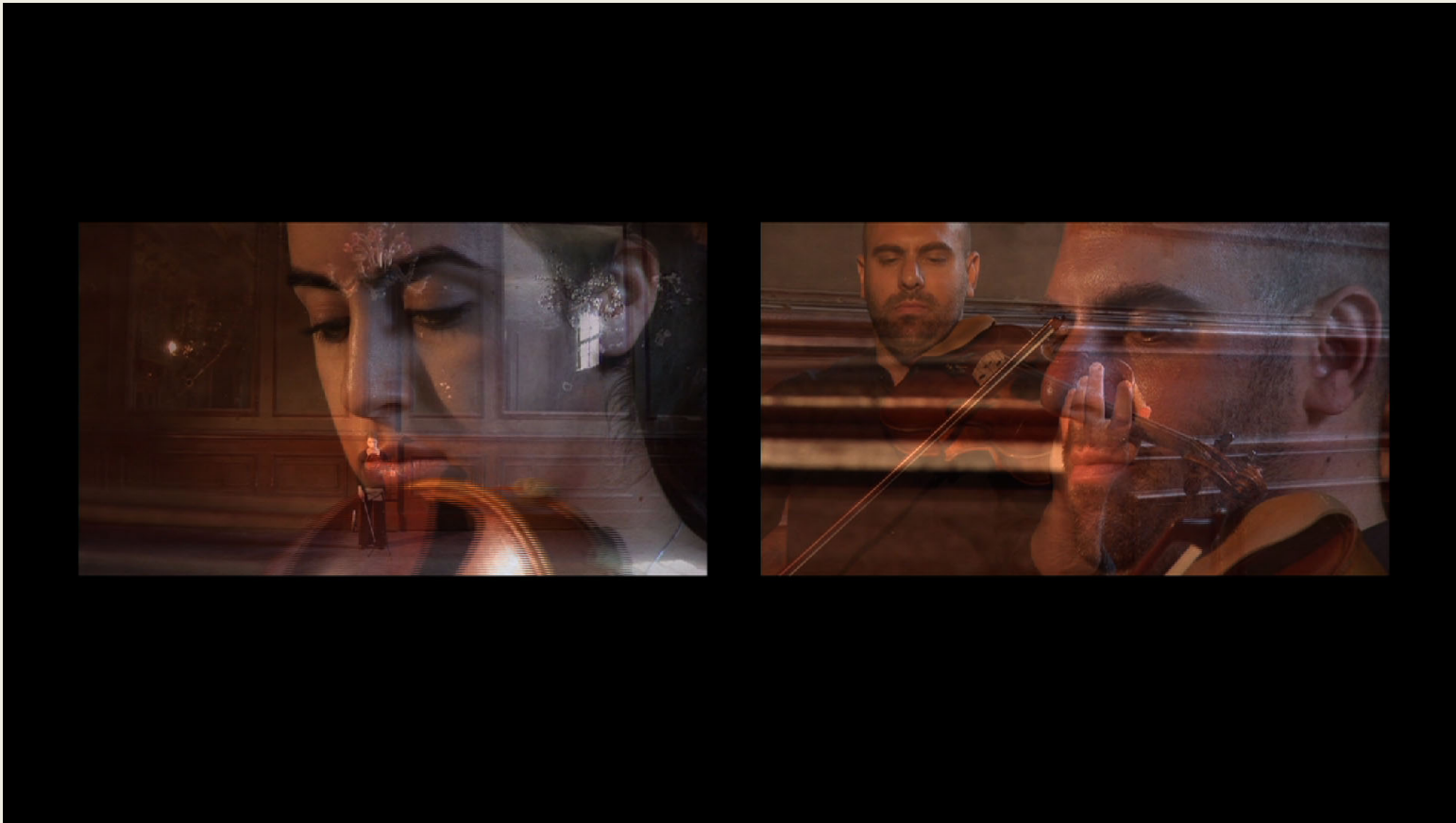


However, an orchestra remains an 'operative community'





'inoperative community'



‘Community means... that there is no singular being without another singular being, and that there is, therefore, what might be called... an originary or ontological “sociality” that in its principle extends beyond the simple theme of man as a social being... [...] ... there is no communion of singularities in a totality superior to them and immanent to their common being.’

Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 28



The orchestra (of the WEDO) is a place of fusion of shared sovereignty, however, *Duet* is a place of shared sovereignty but not a place of fusion. Rather it is a place of dislocation:

‘... these singular beings are themselves constituted by sharing, they are distributed and placed, or rather *spaced*, by the sharing that makes them *others*: other for one another, and other, infinitely other for the Subject of their fusion, which is engulfed in the sharing, in the ecstasy of the sharing: “communicating” by not “communing”. These “places of communication” are no longer places of fusion, even though in them one *passes* from one to the other; they are defined and exposed by their dislocation. Thus, the communication of sharing would be this very dis-location.’

(Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 25)





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(Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 25)

## Methodology (film installation)



### DUET, The Spiegelsaal, Clärchens, Ballhaus, Berlin

The Spiegelsaal ('Mirror Hall') is a concert room in the historic Clärchens Ballhaus in Mitte, Berlin. Built in the late 19<sup>th</sup> Century, the Clärchens Ballhaus was bombed during World War II and the traces of war damage remain in the large cracked mirrors and tarnished grandeur of the Spiegelsaal which was left untouched for 60 years. [www.spiegelsaal-berlin.de/](http://www.spiegelsaal-berlin.de/)

The Spiegelsaal had thus closed at the same time as the Israeli state was formed.

## Methodology (Duet)

*Duet*, production shots





## Methodology (film installation)



In the film of Duet, music based upon the early death and tragic loss of young Romantic poet is transposed into early death, needless loss and martyrdom of Arab - Israeli conflict. each musician plays separately and at their own tempo the resulting chance harmonies and dissonance which result when the individual tracks are played back maintains the presence of irreducible antagonism at the heart of the Arab-Israeli conflict whilst simultaneously offering the possibility of a potential harmony to come.

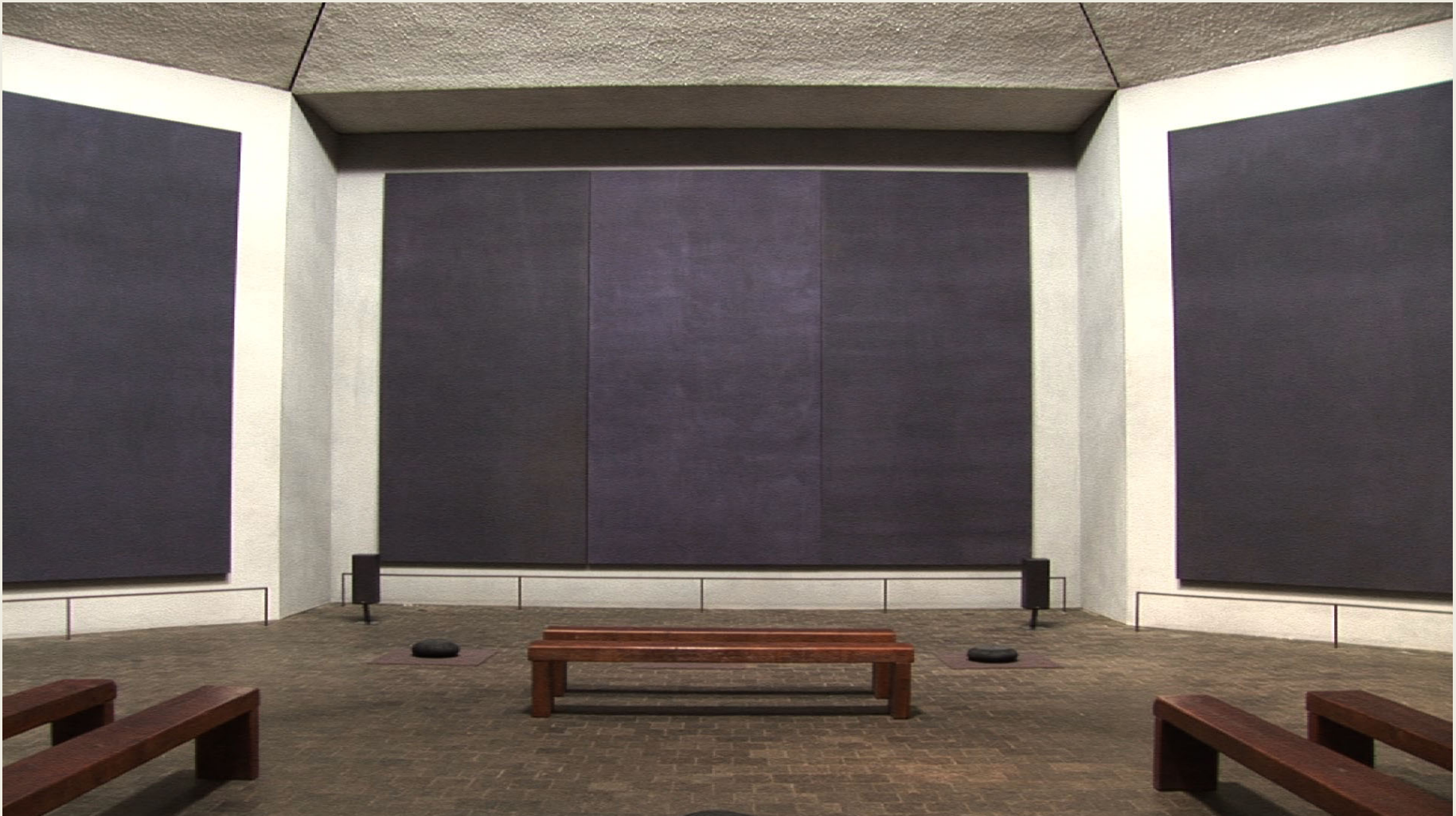
The film incorporates the architecture and evidence of WWII bomb damage in the Spiegelsaal of the Claerchens Ballhaus, where Duet was filmed.

The filming took place in summer 2011 in the lead up to the vote on Palestinian statehood at the United Nations and early discussions took place with Hasan Ferdous, Chief of Palestine, Decolonization and Human Rights Section of the UN Headquarters in New York to host DUET screening event on UN Palestinian Solidarity Day 29 November 2011/2012 and subsequently with James Landale and sponsorship was sought (unsuccessfully) from the UK Mission to the United Nations to host an installation for the 65th anniversary of the formation of the Israeli State and Palestinian Nakba, which took place on 14 May and 15 May 1948 respectively.

An audio installation in 14 variations over two days to mark the 65th anniversary of the formation of the Israeli State and Palestinian Nakba was held at the Rothko Chapel, Centre for Art, Spirituality and Human Rights, Houston, Texas, 14-15 May 2013.

## Methodology (audio installation)

The methodology for DUET a two day audio installation at the Rothko Chapel 14-15 May 2013  
Was the production of 14 variations of the audio installation, played at the top of each hour between 10am-6pm (i.e. beginning 11am and ending 5pm each day) making 7 variations each day.  
The 14 variations formal structural echo of the 14 Rothko canvases which form the composition of the Rothko Chapel.



Duet, Rothko Chapel, installation shot

## Methodology (audio installation)

Separate mono tracks in each speaker

left hand speaker was Tyme Kheifi (Ramallah) right hand speaker Avri Levitan (Tel Aviv)

Presence of the speakers marks the absent human form of the Arab and Israeli musicians

Speakers as figuration of absence confronting the 'metaphysics of presence' in Rothko's abstract paintings



Duet, Rothko Chapel, installation shot



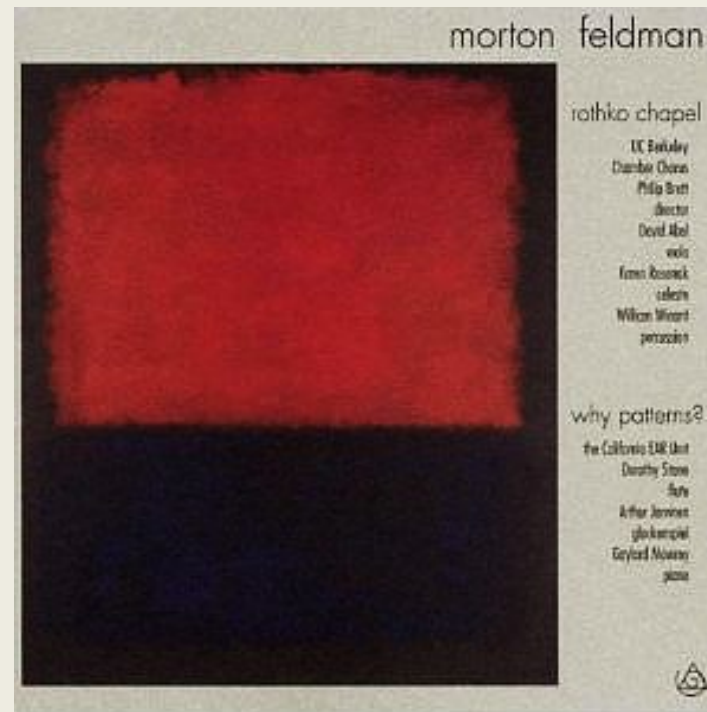


Left channel: Tyme Khleifi



Right channel: Avri Levitan

ELAC speakers form visual echo of dimension and darkness of Rothko canvas



Morton Feldman, *Rothko Chapel*, 1971

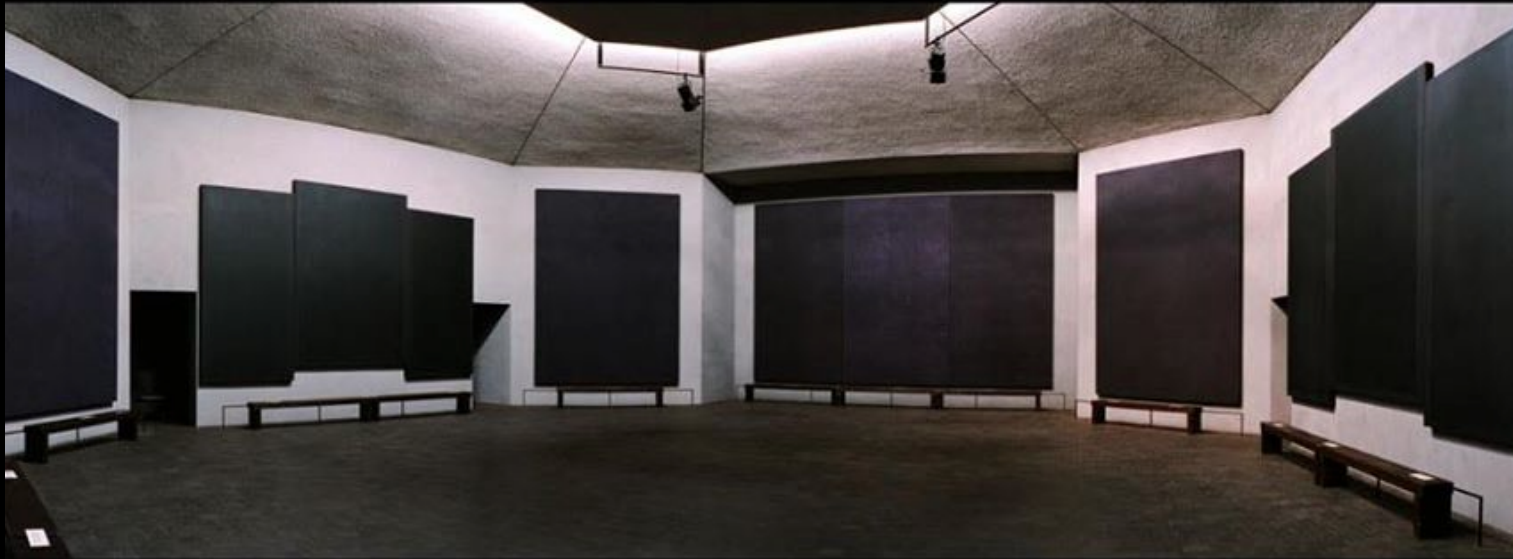
A site-specific audio installation at the Rothko Chapel which is based on music composition raises the spectre of Feldman's 'Rothko Chapel' (1971) - a work for choir, viola and percussion. The fact that Duet also employs the viola is perhaps an echo of Feldman's work but as a composition Duet does not seek to compare itself to Feldman's composition. However, Feldman's work will undoubtedly form the context of Octet, a composition based upon the paintings and architecture of the Rothko Chapel and a proposal to Da Camera, Houston.



Janet Cardiff, *40 Part Motet* (2001)

Although similar in form on the surface, in contrast with *40 Part Motet* - which has taken on many configurations in each new installation - *Duet* forms a duet not only between the tracks on each channel but a duet with the canvases in the Rothko Chapel. The duration of the installation over the specific two-day period of the 65th anniversary of the Israeli State and Palestinian Nakba, 14-15 May 2013 is integral to the concept. The *Duet* audio installation at the Rothko Chapel was therefore both site- and time-specific.

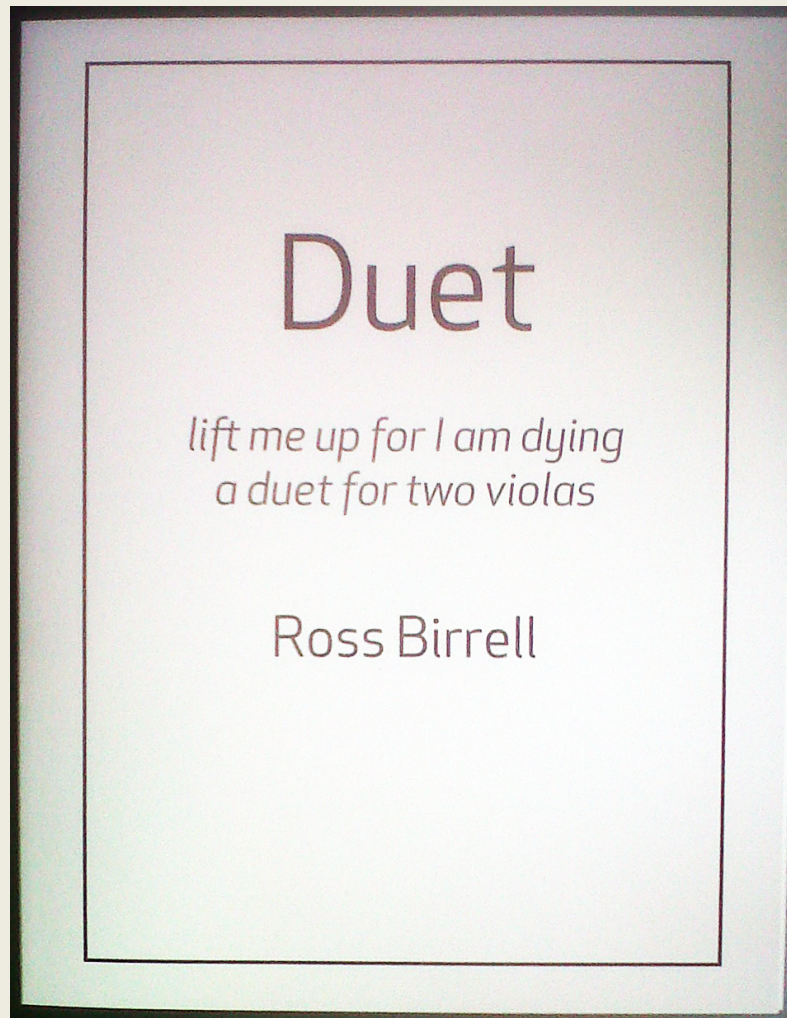




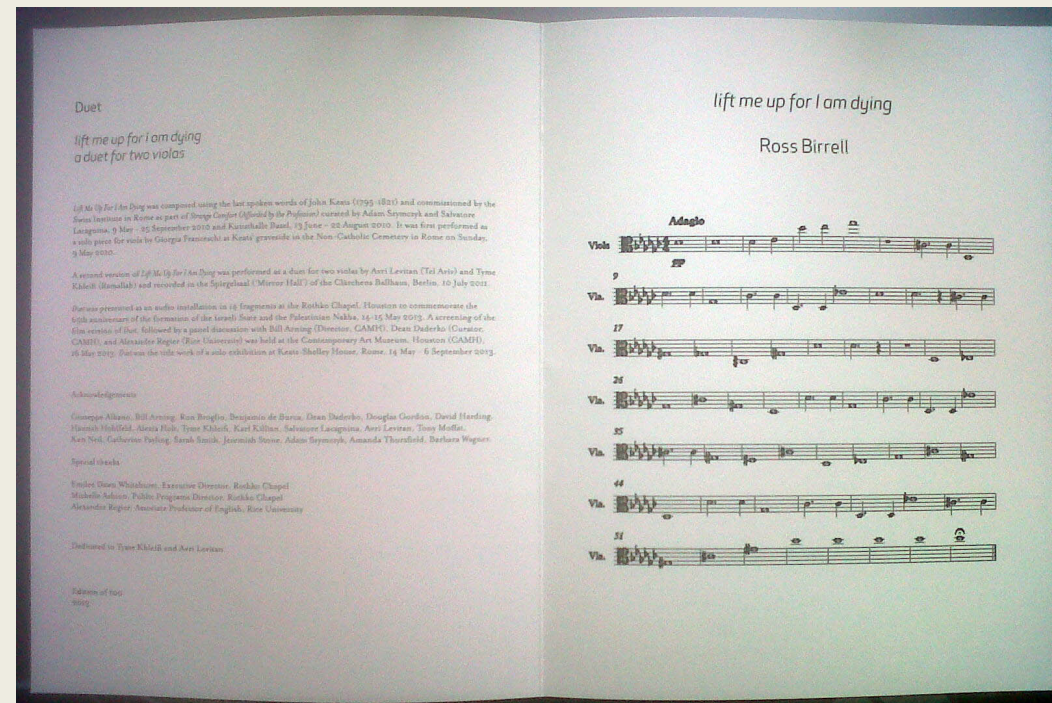
The 14 variation of Duet mirror the 14 Rothko paintings in the Chapel  
The lack of resolution in Duet mirrors the disquiet and lack of resolution in  
Rothko's canvases

'the music is the same colour'

(Toby Kamps, Curator of Modern and Contemporary Art, Menil Collection)

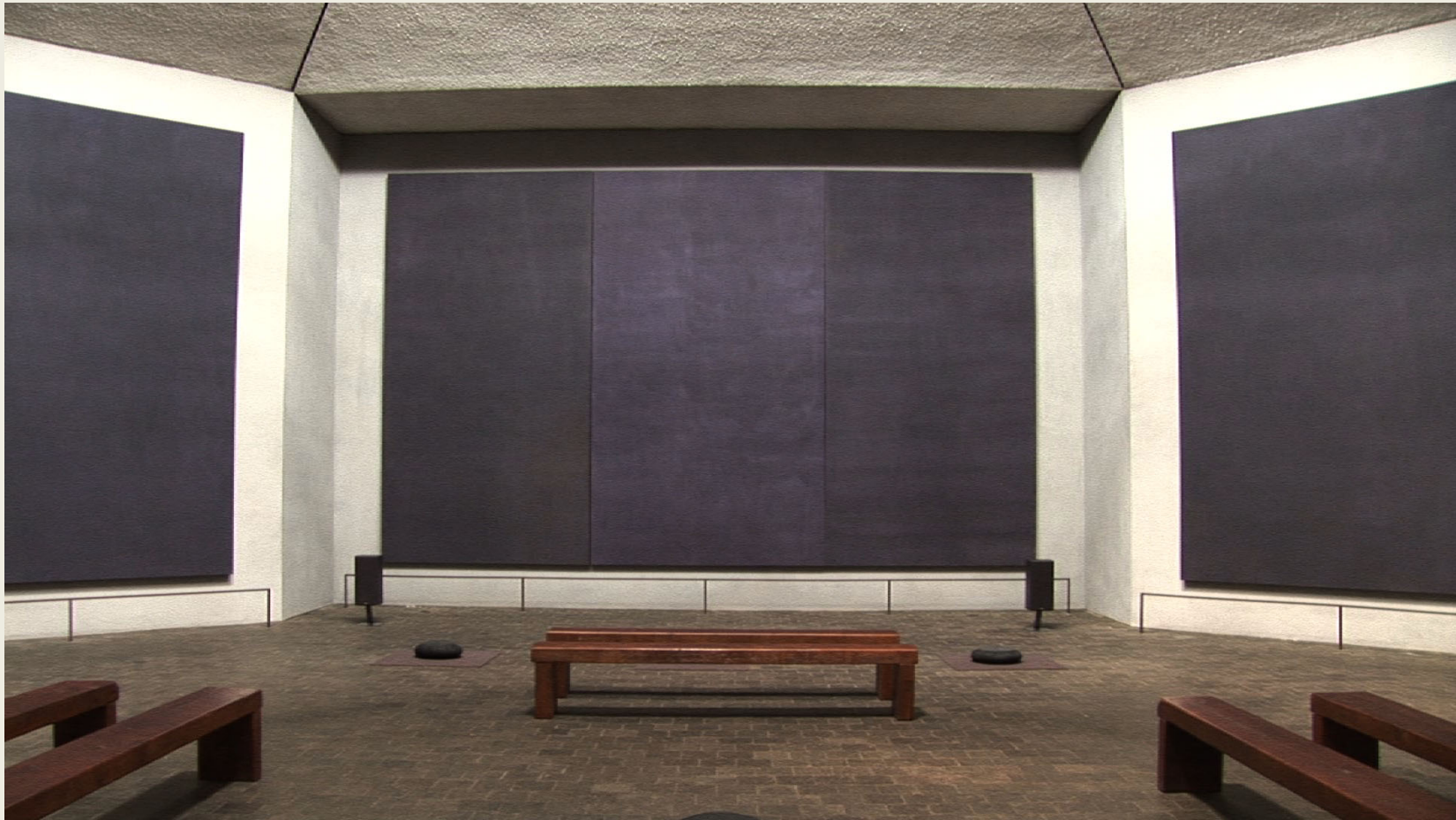


‘It is interesting that the word used in French by musicians to describe their written texts - their scores - is the word *partition*.’ Michel Serres, *Parasite*, p. 129.



Duet music score, edition produced to mark the occasion of the installation at Rothko Chapel. Produced in collaboration with the Rothko Chapel (edition of 100).

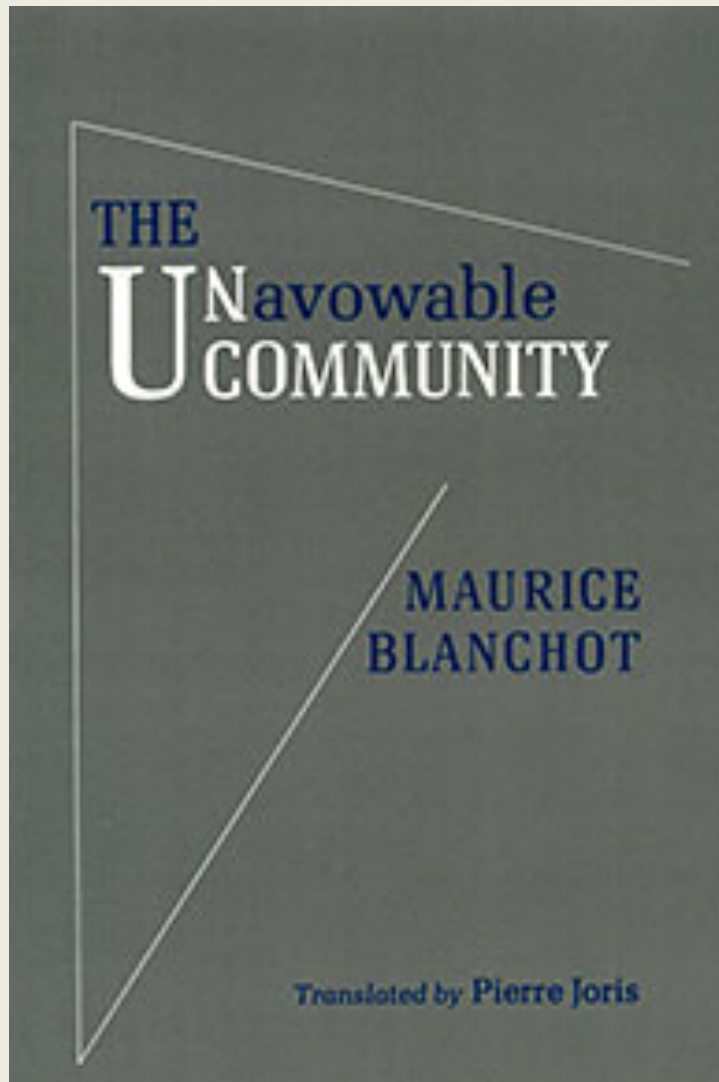




‘... finitude always presents itself in being in common and as this being itself, and it always presents itself at a *hearing* and before the judgment of the law of community ...

Jean-Luc Nancy, *The Inoperative Community*, p. 28





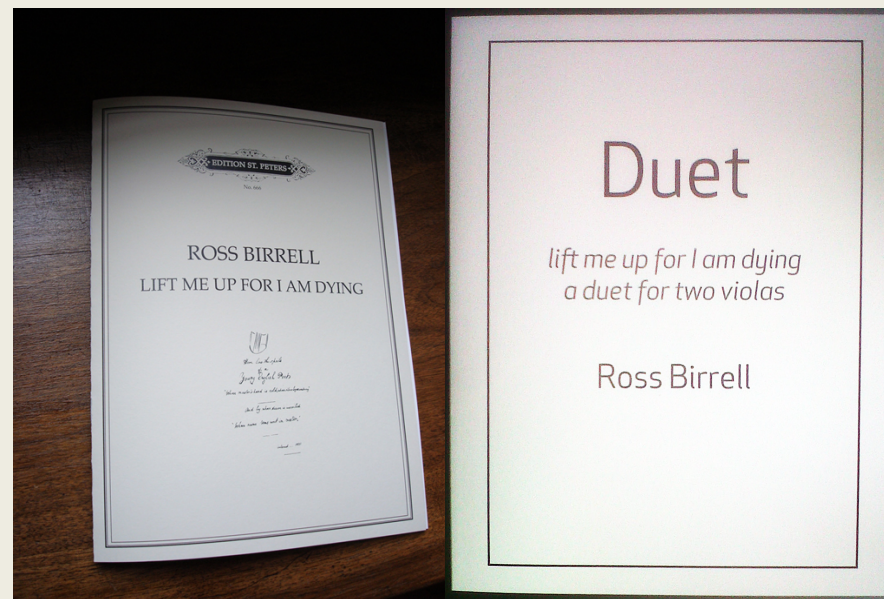
In the face of the fact of the death of another, what words are worth being spoken? In the face of the community of loss of the Arab-Israeli struggle what can be said by an artist with no direct experience of the conflict? Surely we must recall Wittgenstein's final conclusion in the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus* "Whereof one cannot speak, there one must be silent".

Is to talk or make work from the 'outside' of a community an act of hubris? Is such work in the end, 'unavowable'?

'Wittgenstein's all too famous and all too often repeated precept, "Whereof one cannot speak, there one must be silent" - given that by enunciating it he has not been able to impose silence on himself - does indicate that in the final analysis one has to talk in order to remain silent. But with what kinds of words? That is one of the questions this little book entrusts to others...'

Maurice Blanchot, *The Unavowable Community*, p. 56.

My answer to Blanchot's evocative question - which he entrusts to the future, the community to come - is perhaps the kinds of words one must speak to remain silent are words transposed into music. The music scores produced for Lift Me Up For I Am Dying and Duet - integral to the compositions (taken in Deleuze's sense of the definition of a work of art that it is 'a composition') - are equally music, writing and forms of silence.



*'Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard are sweeter'*

*John Keats*

## Methodology - an ensemble of fragments

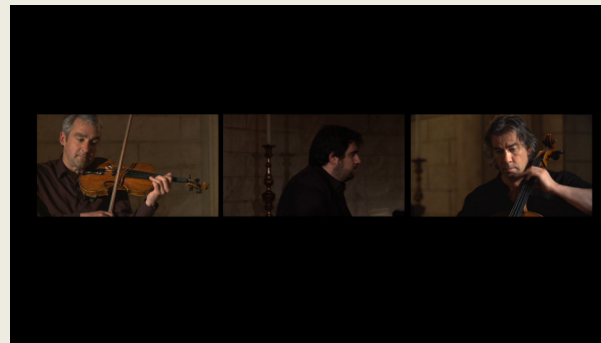
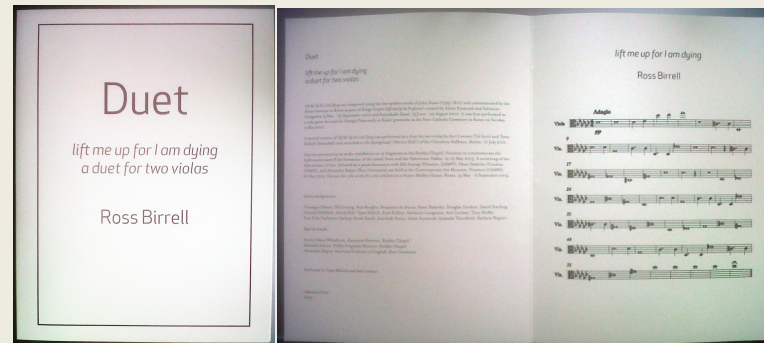
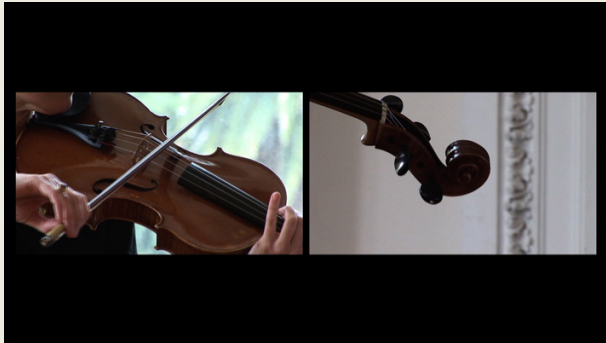
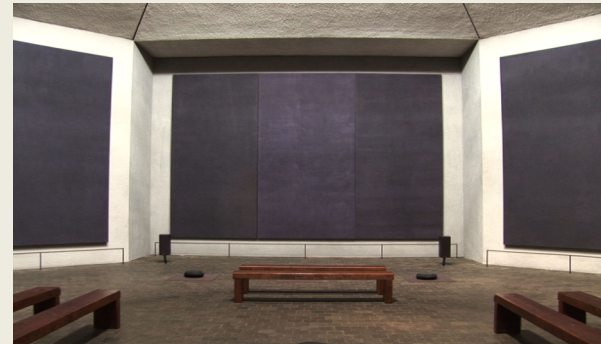
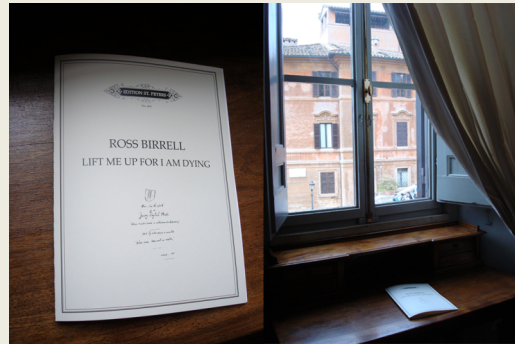
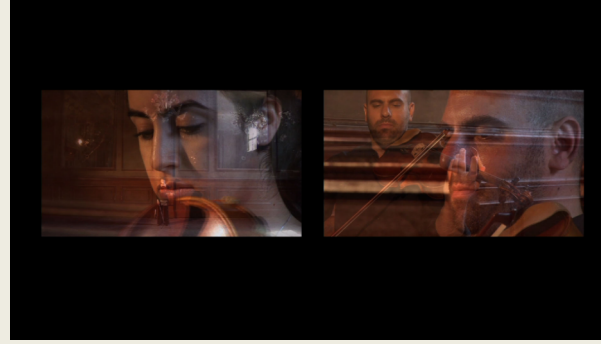
‘An *ensemble* of fragments - for a fragment is never written in isolation - is a discontinuous and uneven *field*. Texts of varying length and worth are typographically, if not thematically, organized across intervals and this lends a certain staccato rhythm or abrupt musicality to their reading. As such, an ensemble of fragments enables a vast number of topics to be treated, and this would seem to be its relative privilege in regard to that other fragmentary form, the essay, that is habitually restricted to the treatment of a single theme... An ensemble of fragments can treat a potentially infinite number of topics that do not have to stand in any agreement or constitute any coherent argument but simply testify to the to the unceasing alteration and differentiation of thoughts.’

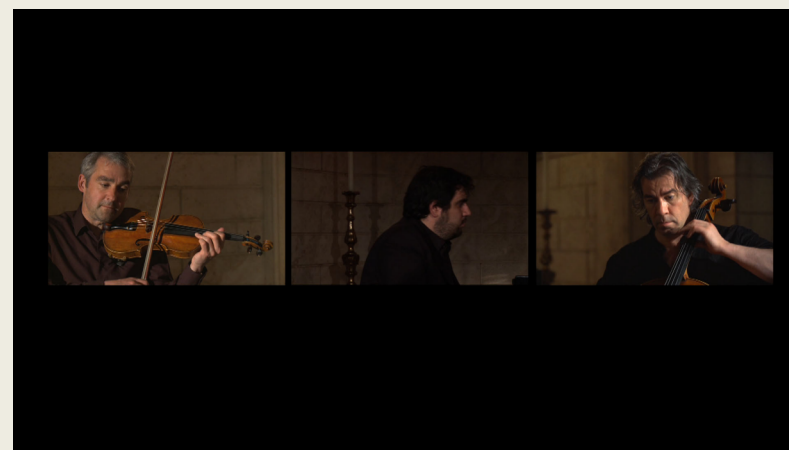
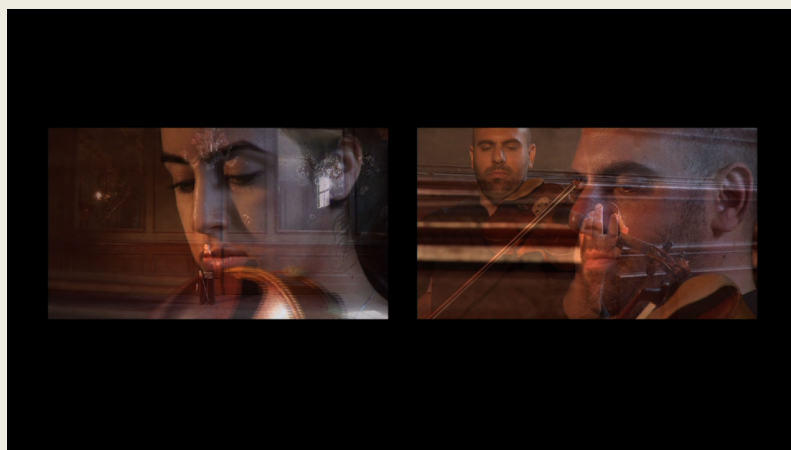
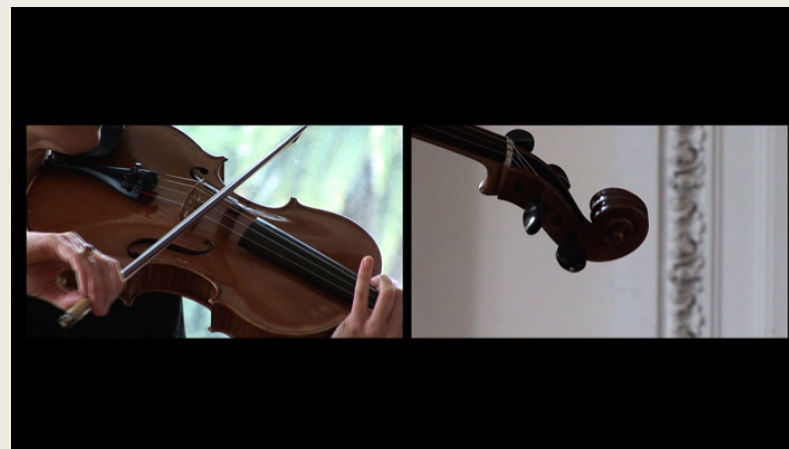
Simon Critchley, *Very Little... Almost Nothing: Death, Philosophy, Literature* (London: Routledge, 1997) p. 107.



# Methodology

## 'An ensemble of fragments'





*Lift Me Up For I Am Dying*  
*theme and (filmed) variations*

In preparation 2013

## DUET DOUBLE CD (2013/14)

A double CD of the 14 variations of DUET played over two days in Rothko Chapel to mark 65th anniversary of the Israeli State and Palestinian Nakba 14-15 May 2013

With pamphlet including documentation and texts

Preface: Emilee Dawn Whitehurst, Executive Director of the Rothko Chapel

Introduction: Adam Szymczyk, Director of Kunsthalle Basel

Essay: Alexander Regier (Associate Professor of Literature, Rice University)

To be published in an edition of 500 in association with the Rothko Chapel, Kunsthalle Basel and Mount Analogue, Stockholm



# DISSEMINATION

## Exhibitions/Screenings/Artist Talks:

Lift Me Up For I Am Dying, Strange Comfort (Afforded by the Profession), Swiss Institute Rome, 8 May-25 Sept 2010

Lift Me Up For I Am Dying, Strange Comfort (Afforded by the Profession), Kunsthalle Basel, 12 July-31 Aug 2010

Lift Me Up For I Am Dying, Artist Talk, Cove and Kilcreggan Literary Society, 17 Jan 2011

DUET, ASU Art Museum, Arizona, 8-24 Nov 2012

DUET, Screening and Artist Talk: Catastrophes:The 2012 International Romanticism Conference, ASU, 10 Nov 2012

DUET, Rothko Chapel, Houston, 14-15 May 2013

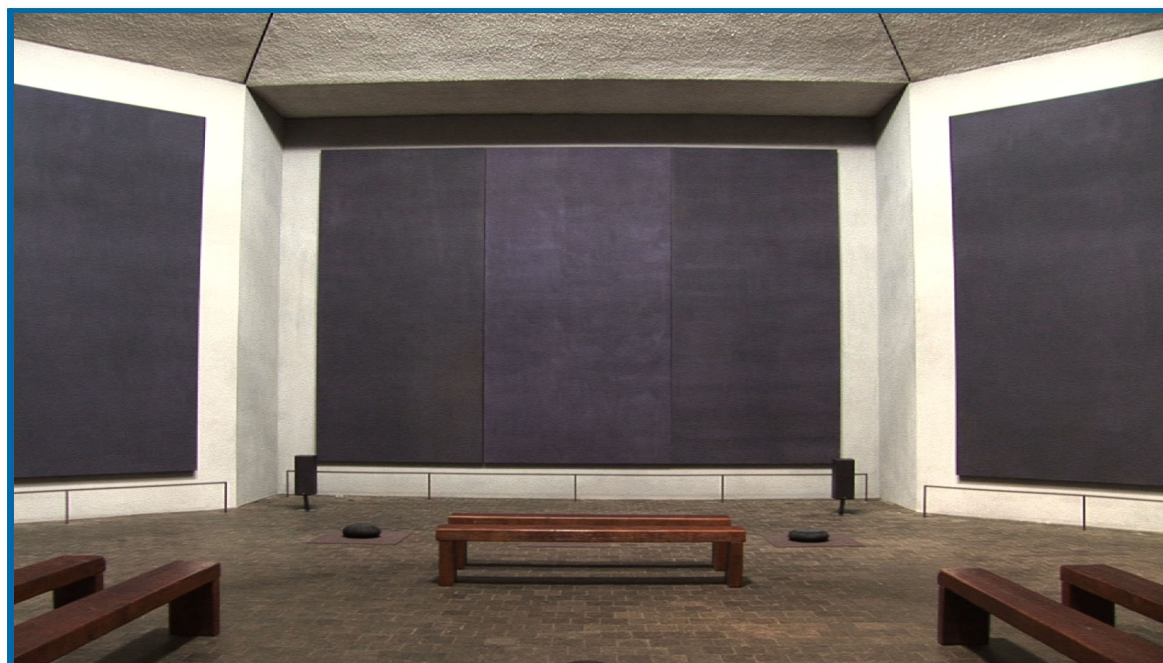
DUET, Contemporary Art Museum, Houston (CAMH) 16 May. Film introduced by Ross Birrell, with a talk by Alexander Regier (Associate Professor of Literature, Rice University) followed by round table discussion with Dean Daderko, Curator CAMH, Bill Arning, Director of CAMH

DUET, Keats-Shelley House, Rome, 18 May-31 July 2013

DUET, Mount Analogue, Stockholm 27 May 2013, invitation from Tris Vonna-Michell

DUET, Artist Talk invitation from Dr Susan Oliver, Literature Dept., Essex University late 2013

Solo show with David Harding, Kunsthalle Basel, Jan 2014



*Duet, an audio installation for the Rothko Chapel, Houston, 14-15 May 2013 (installation shot),*

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# CATASTROPHES:

The 2012 International Conference on Romanticism

Arizona State University  
November 8 – 11, 2012



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## [Pictures and Video from the Conference!](#)

For its 2012 conference, the [International Conference on Romanticism](#) returns to the Sonoran Desert and will be held on the campus of **Arizona State University** in its [Memorial Union](#), the site for the [2006](#) conference. [Mark Lussier](#) and [Ron Broglio](#), the conference organizers, have adopted the theme of "catastrophes," which should be interpreted in its broadest possible context, including aesthetic, colonial, dramatic, ecological, economic, geographic, literary, military, and political catastrophes. Other approaches are equally welcome.

We hope you will join us in November 2012.

## Plenary Speakers

**Plenary I:** "Romantic Sciences: Crises and Resolutions"

[Marilyn Gaul](#), "The Sublime Romantic Sciences"  
[Alan Richardson](#), "The Sublime Romantic Sciences of Mind and Brain"  
[Mark Lussier](#), "The Sublime Romantic Sciences: Towards a Theory of Everything"

**Plenary II:** [Paul Youngquist](#) "'This Disastrous Enterprise': History, Race, and Revolution"

**Plenary III:** [Angela Esterhammer](#) "Speculation, Improvisation, and Financial Catastrophe"

## Art Installation

Ross Birrell's *Duet: Lift Me Up For I Am Dying: A Duet For Two Violas* will be on display at the [ASU Art Museum](#), Wed-Sat 11am - 5pm.

## Duet 2012

from Ross Birrell



DUET, ASU Art  
Museum, 8 Nov-24  
Nov 2012

Screening and Talk  
at Catastrophes: The  
2012 International  
Romanticism  
Conference, ASU,  
10 November 2012

## Online dissemination

<https://vimeo.com/46173932>

[http://www.rothkochapel.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=231:duet-lift-me-up-for-i-am-dying-an-audio-installation-featuring-avri-levitan-tel-aviv-and-tyme-khleifi-ramallah&catid=1:public-programs&Itemid=43](http://www.rothkochapel.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=231:duet-lift-me-up-for-i-am-dying-an-audio-installation-featuring-avri-levitan-tel-aviv-and-tyme-khleifi-ramallah&catid=1:public-programs&Itemid=43)

<http://myemail.constantcontact.com/SteelWired--Screening-and-discussion-of-Ross-Birrell-s--Duet-.html?soid=1102732265599&aid=DOmoLkFk-Z0>

<http://english.clas.asu.edu/icr2012>

[http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:LoATcbPvWYJ:m.eastvalleytribune.com/calendar/visual\\_arts/event\\_0648fffe-2dd8-11e2-8ab1-0bce46447cd5.html+%22Ross+Birrell%22+duet&cd=23&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk&client=safari](http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:LoATcbPvWYJ:m.eastvalleytribune.com/calendar/visual_arts/event_0648fffe-2dd8-11e2-8ab1-0bce46447cd5.html+%22Ross+Birrell%22+duet&cd=23&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=uk&client=safari)

<http://eventoverload.com/lying-and-liars-text-language-and-the-moving-image/edinburgh/35748a70-cfa3-11e1-903d-f23c91aee84c/>

<http://www.kkh.se/index.php/en/exhibitions/spring-exhibitions/1835-mejan-residents-2012-2013>

<http://www.camh.org/calendar/2013/5/screening-and-discussion-duet#.UdKX8l40oUU>

<http://thecamhouston.tumblr.com/post/50504457910/join-us-tomorrow-at-6-30pm-5-16-see-a-screening>

[http://www.arabvoices.net/arabvoices/calendar\\_2013.htm](http://www.arabvoices.net/arabvoices/calendar_2013.htm)

<http://tempekyrene.azcentral.com/news/arts-culture/48547-duet-lift-me-i-am-dying-asu-art-museum-1-day-left>

<http://www.keats-shelley-house.org/en/events/duet.html>

<http://www.mountanalogue.org/publishings/>

[http://www.a-n.co.uk/artists\\_talking/projects/single/377860](http://www.a-n.co.uk/artists_talking/projects/single/377860)

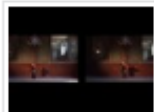
<http://museumdistrict.tendenci5production2.net/events/2013/5/14/>

<http://www.heraldscotland.com/arts-ents/visual/artsnews.1368583486>





## Advanced Stats / All Videos



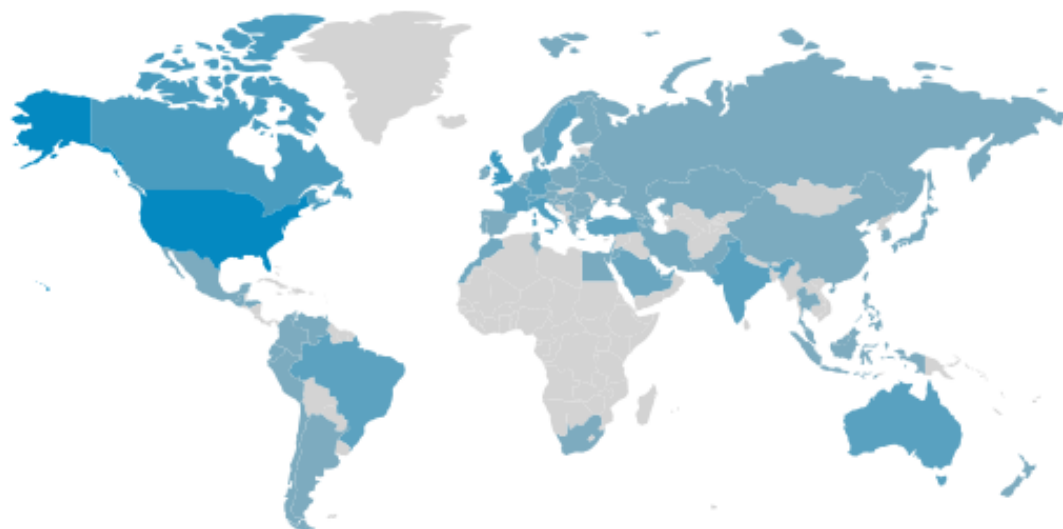
### Duet 2012

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## DEVELOPMENTS

### SONATA

Lift Me Up For I Am Dying and the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome was the basis of a £10,000 Creative Scotland Award (2011) to develop Sonata - a three channel installation based upon a score on the work of Keats, Shelley and Corso (all buried in the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome). Sonata is in development for 2014.

### MURAL

This direction of work has led to the development of Mural, a composition based upon the writings of the Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish and to be developed in 2013 in association with the Edward Said National Conservatory of Music, Palestine supported by Glasgow City Council Lord Provost and International Office (£3000).

### OCTET

The installation at the Rothko Chapel led to a proposal to Literature and the Musical Imagination commissions series of Houston-based musical collective, DaCamera, for Octet, a new composition for the Rothko Chapel based upon the 8 stanzas of Keats Ode to a Nightingale.



Sonata: a three screen installation (dur 30min) based upon a composition for Piano Trio the first movement of which is evolved from *Lift Me Up For I Am Dying*, Sonata will premier at Kunsthalle Basel, January 2014

*Lift Me Up For I Am Dying* and the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome was the basis of a £10,000 Creative Scotland Award (2011) to develop *Sonata* - a three channel installation based upon a score on the work of Keats, Shelley and Corso - all buried in the Non-Catholic Cemetery in Rome.

Sonata features performance by Tony Moffat, Leader of the Orchestra of Scottish Opera, Mario Montore, Leader of the Avos Quartet in Rome and Robert Irvine, Head of Chamber Music, Royal Conservatoire of Scotland.



## Funding:

Glasgow City Council Lord Provost and International Office  
Glasgow School of Art (Research Development Fund)  
Creative Scotland, Rothko Chapel