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On the Interrelationship between Music and Visual Art in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries: A Possible Typology Derived from Cases Originated in Argentinean Artistic Field

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Resumen

Tras una breve referencia al estado del conocimiento sobre la relación entre música y plástica en los siglos XX y XXI, este artículo propone una tipología que puede servir como herramienta conceptual para caracterizar aquellas producciones o prácticas artísticas que articulan lo visual y lo sonoro en el proceso creativo o en la concretización de la obra. Se definen dos fenómenos básicos –migración o convergencia– y se desglosa el primero a fin de distinguir varios niveles de intercambio. Luego, mediante el análisis y la consideración del proceso creativo y las operaciones que tienen lugar en la subjetividad de quien trabaja con ambas artes se examinan distintos casos de estudio provenientes del campo artístico argentino en los que se pone a prueba dicha tipología.

Palabras clave

música, plástica, relación, siglo XX, siglo XXI, Argentina

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Abstract

After a brief literature review concerning the relationships between music and the visual arts on the last and present centuries, this article proposes a typology that could be useful as a conceptual tool in order to characterize those artistic productions or practices that articulate visual and sound dimensions in the creative process or the final result. Thus, two basic phenomena are defined, migration or convergence, and the former is broken down in order to provide more details about the levels of interchange. This typology is then tested by applying it to a selection of works produced by Argentinean artists and composers of the mentioned period, incorporating fragments of Adorno's writings on the subject in the discussion.

Key words

music, visual arts, 20th century, 21st century, Argentina

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On the Interrelationship between Music and Visual Art in the Twentieth and Twenty-first Centuries: A Possible Typology Derived from Cases Originated in Argentinean Artistic Field¹

Cintia Cristiá

In their contradiction, the arts merge into one another. [...]

The arts converge only where each one pursues its immanent principle in a pure way.

Theodor W. Adorno, *On Some Relationships between Music and Painting*

The presence of music in the visual arts is first detected in the representation of musical instruments on walls, friezes and vases, passing later to other supports. The growing interest about the visual representation of musical topics resulted in the exploration of specific procedures in order to emulate musical effects (see Kandinsky 1989). As well as establishing music as the model of the arts (see, among others, Nietzsche 1977, Baudelaire 1993 and 1999, Wagner 1982), Romantic thinking aspired to reunite music and the visual arts. In painting, this tendency is evident in the attempts to visually translate musical works (see Barbe 1992 and 2005 for Fantin-Latour's paintings in particular and Barbe 2011 for a broader discussion) or to imitate its effects (see the case of Delacroix in Barbe 1999). The twentieth century brings about visual art experiences that delve into musical genres and techniques (Arnaldo 2003). One of the most interesting cases is undoubtedly the visual emulation of polyphony, particularly attractive to those artists who explore abstraction. The pictorial fugue as a genre, if it is possible to define it as such, has been cultivated by Ciurlionis, Kandinsky, Kupka, Klee, Marsden Hartley and others (Maur 2005). In fact, the study of the musical aspect in certain visual artists, as those mentioned below, illuminates aspects of their work that are invisible or perhaps neglected by traditional art critique, since they escape its professional scope.

The interest in what lies on the other side of the border can be seen in both fields. Many twentieth century composers enrich their work by exploring the visual arts, where they find technical solutions, formal challenges or simply poetic inspiration (see Boulez 1989, Bosseur 1998, Messiaen 1986). This “productive reception” (a concept taken from Moog-Grünwald 1993) is acknowledged in various ways. While Luis Mucillo (2006 s/p) declares having composed the piece which would later become his Piano Concerto taking a watercolor by Klee “as a starting point”,

¹ The present article summarizes the author's research on this subject, including the work produced at the Instituto Superior de Música of Universidad Nacional del Litoral (Santa Fe, Argentina). It gathers, thus, fragments of past publications, detailed in the bibliography.

Jorge Horst (2010 s/p) affirms that he wrote the piece entitled *Bruma* [Mist] “thinking about the painting” of English artist Joseph Mallord William Turner and trying “to transfer technical constants from visual arts to music”. Both compositions bring us to the present century, in which technological developments allow for new types of interrelationships between visual and sound dimensions, blurring the limits established by traditional artistic categories. While Sound Art, for example, lies in the intersection between sight and sound and incorporates the latter as a material susceptible to manipulation (see, among others, de la Motte-Haber 2009, Estrada Zuñiga 2010), the installation articulates both dimensions with total freedom. In *La ascensión* [The Ascension], the installation that represented Argentina in 2005 Venice's Bienale, visual artist Jorge Macchi collaborated with composer Edgardo Rudnitzky to intervene the space of the Antico Oratorio San Filippo Neri alla Fava, Palagraziussi, including the participation of an acrobat. The music composed for the intervention was a piece for viola da gamba and the percussive sounds were produced by the acrobat as he jumped on an elastic bed whose size and shape reproduced that of the hall's vaulted ceiling painting. It could be heard every hour live or constantly on the provided headphones (Macchi and Rudnitzky 2005).

This broad subject –the relationship between music and the visual arts, with the eventual addition of literature– has been studied by history of art and musicology in different ways. The traditional approach has been able to draw from valuable organological data as well as information about the history of instruments and their symbolism from the study of musical iconography (Pomme de Mirimonde 1975 and 1977, Wardega 2002). This approach informs us also about musical practices, the history of musical performance and composers' lives (see Mayer Brown 1980 for a general bibliography on the subject). Incorporated in a sociological and anthropological discussion, paintings that portray musical topics can also be interpreted in order to study the role of music in a particular social context and, through the representation of the body, connected to sexual and gender related issues (Leppert 1993). Assuming a correspondence between the arts, the comparative perspective assesses the shared ideas and/or production strategies to which artists, composers, and writers resort (Souriau 1967; Lockspeiser 1973). The scope is sometimes panoramic and can embrace large historical periods (like in Bosseur 1999; Denizeau 1995; Sabatier 1995 and 1998), privileging a parallel view instead of a debate that leads to specific conclusions about the phenomena. Comparative perspective can also concentrate on a defined aesthetic tendency, like *German modernism* (Frisch 2005) or minimalism (Bernard 1993). One aspect that has attracted the most interest is the comparison between color and pitch as paradigmatic

elements of visual and sound dimensions (Gage 1993) or the possibility of their sensory conjunction, leading to the phenomenon of synaesthesia (Rousseau, 2000-2001).² On the other hand, interesting essays have been produced to accompany exhibitions devoted to a particular related topic –see the catalogues entitled *Analogías musicales. Kandinsky y sus contemporáneos* (Arnaldo 2003), *Sons et Lumières* (Lista and Duplaix 2004) and *Von Klang der Bilde*, later published in English (Maur 1999)–, or centered on an artist –see for example *Klee et la musique* (1985), at Centre Pompidou, and *Richard Wagner, visions d'artistes* (2005), at Rath Museum in Geneva.

Among the studies that focus on the 20th century, the work of composer Jean-Yves Bosseur (1998) stands out. He organizes the material in chapters whose titles reveal certain classification of the different types of relationship between music and the visual arts: The first three chapters are called “Sensorial correspondences”, “Time/space interactions” and “Structural equivalences”. The fourth and fifth chapters assess the presence of one art in the other, such as the representation of music by visual artists –main issue of his previous book, *Musique, passion d'artistes* (Bosseur 1991)– as well as the composers' attitude towards the visual arts. Those cases that fall between categories are grouped in the sixth chapter. Notwithstanding its undeniable interest, the book makes clear the impossibility of classifying complex phenomena according to those categories. As a result, studies that are devoted to only one artist or composer predominate. The musical-visual relationship is sometimes studied as a particular aspect in a composer's general production, like Kelkel (1994) does with Scriabin's. Other scholars study this relationship by exploring the musical aspect in a painter's oeuvre (Kagan 1983 and Düchting 1995 with Klee, or Stévance 2005 with Duchamp, among many others). Narrowing the scope even more, other works concentrate on just one painting –Ciurlionis's pictorial fugue (Kazokas 1994) and the painting *Musiciens Juifs de Mogador* by Delacroix (Barbe 1999)–, on a theoretical text –music in *La création dans les arts plastiques* by Kupka (Villot 2005)– or on a specific aspect –Symbolist and Impressionist techniques in Debussy's work (Joubert 2000) and Bach's influence in modern composers and painters (Arnaud 1990)–, to mention just a few. This perspective allows a deeper study on the creative process itself and on the operations that take place in the subjectivity of an artist who works with both arts, in spite of the proportion of each one of them and regardless of the material used in the final outcome. Is it possible to characterize and ultimately define these operations? This leads us to the question that guides the present work: how to approach those artistic productions which involve,

² A section of the dissertation *Xul Solar et la musique* (Cristiá 2004), later summarized in the published book (Cristiá 2007) covers the main precedents of this topic.

in their genesis and/or in their material, both music and the visual arts?

In the course of my research I have observed two basic types of music and visual interrelationship that can be identified as migration or convergence phenomena. In the first part of this paper I will examine these two categories separately, breaking down the first one in order to provide more details about the level of interchange between music and the visual arts. Then, I will test this typology by applying it to a selection of works produced by Argentinean artists from the twentieth and twenty-first centuries and incorporating fragments of Adorno's writings on the subject in the discussion.

1. A possible typology: migration (in five levels) or convergence

Combining the data about the creative process and the strategies employed by the artists with the works' analysis, especially with regards to the materials and their configurations, I observe two basic types of relationship between the arts involved: migration or convergence. Inspired in an article by Raquel B. Kreichmann (1992), I define *migration* as the passage of an element, of a technique, or of subject matter from one art to the other. Secondly, –following Adorno– I use the term *convergence* to describe the interaction between two or more arts in the same work. In opera, for example, music, drama, literature and the visual arts converge. This convergence can also derive, in many cases thanks to the use of new technologies, in new artistic genres like videodance, installation, or performance.

Leaving convergence for a future work, we will focus our attention on the first phenomenon, particularly in the transformation from music to the visual arts and vice versa. How does a drawing become a melody? What type of operation allows the passage from one material to the other? The migration from one medium to the other, from one art to the other seems to happen on five levels: emotional, material, morphological, textural, and conceptual. Even if it is evident that this theoretical sketch should be tested and deepened, we can provisionally define its basic characteristics as follows:

1. Emotional level

This is a first level of interchange of holistic nature. Painting a picture “letting oneself go” or trying to evoke the atmosphere of a piece of music while listening to it constitutes two examples. It is one of the most commonly employed levels in pedagogical experiences that aim at developing artistic

and perceptual awareness.³

2. Material level

It is based on the correspondence or association of pairs of constitutive elements and/or analogous parameters. They can be previously established or spontaneously drawn, theoretically justified or arbitrary. Some pairs of elements usually associated include color and pitch (i.e., the higher the sound the lighter the color), color and timbre (i.e., yellow can be used to represent the sound of a trumpet), or graphical shape and sound configuration, as in Kandinsky's (1991) correspondence between a point and a single percussive sound.

3. Morphological level

It involves imitating macro shape –the structure of a work–, or micro shape –the material configuration– in a different artistic medium. Certain parallelisms concerning the material level and the parameters usually related to the musical score and the conventions associated with it are tacitly established. Needless to say, Western musical notation is the meeting point of music and visual expression. Thus, the association between the position of a symbol on the staff and its pitch (i.e. the higher the symbol according to the vertical axis, the higher the pitch) tends to be used as fundamental for morphological associations (i.e., an undulating line usually turns into a melody that ascends and descends by steps). Symmetrical or asymmetrical relationships and internal articulations among other aspects are liable to pass from one art to the other through this level.

4. Textural level

Related to the previous one, this level specifically refers to the internal or synchronic relationship of the materials between themselves.

5. Conceptual level

Finally, this is the case where the migration from one field to the other is achieved by resorting to an idea or a concept.

We will now consider different case studies originating from Argentinean artistic field of the last

³ This was apparent in the projects presented by most of the participants in an online course entitled *Interchanges between music and painting: discussion, creation and pedagogy*, conducted by the author (CEMED, Universidad Nacional del Litoral, 2010). More than forty music, literature, and visual arts teachers from different parts of Argentina took part in it.

one hundred years, trying to apply the above mentioned categories.

2. The correspondence of the arts

Like many other creators (see Klee 1968, for example), Alejandro Xul Solar (Oscar Agustín Alejandro Schulz Solari, Argentina, 1887-1963) had in his youth a rather diffuse vocation. He drew, read, and wrote poems, he listened to and performed music, and he ventured into composition. At his coming of age, he declared to be a “musician and painter”. Later, like those other musical and visual arts creators, he would choose a main field of expression in which to concretize his works with various materials. Even if Xul is still known as a visual artist, his production in other fields –like poetry (Nelson 2005)– is being gradually known and valued. Accusing a strong Wagnerian and Baudelairian ascendance, he affirms himself as a painter without abandoning his primordial belief in the correspondences, not only of the arts but of all elements in the universe. His *Hiercoeco ziele según Natura* (fig. 1), as entitled in neo-creole, a language that he invented, can be translated as “Sacred celestial correspondences according to Nature” and includes elements at first sight dissimilate like planets, signs of the zodiac, and vowels.

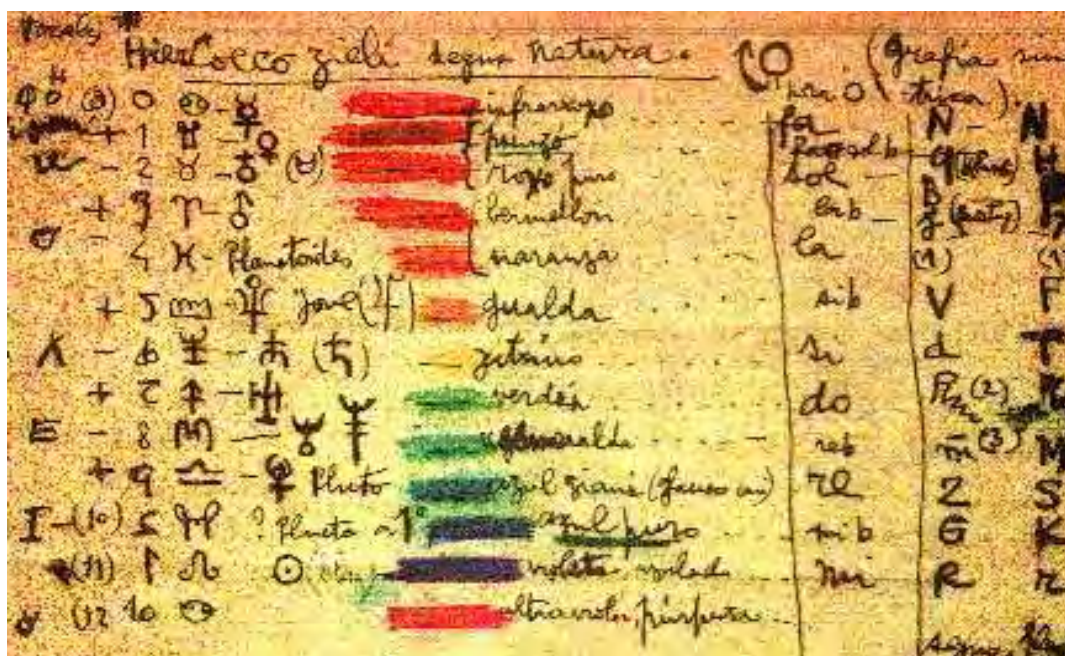


Figure 1: Xul Solar, *Hiercoeco ziele según natura*, List of correspondences, [s.f.], Pan Klub-Museo Xul Solar Foundation Archive (FPK-MXS from now on).

Ten symbolic systems are organized here, from left to right: vowels, polarity, numbers (two extra numbers are added between nine and ten), Zodiac signs, planetary elements, colors, musical notes,

and two sets of consonants. Each system consists of twelve elements since the graphic is based on a duodecimal basis. The last line, marked with the number ten, is equal to the first one, indicating that the series start again. In a later version (fig. 2), between the colors and the musical notes, one extra column will be added featuring two-hour units (called bi-hours).

HIER COECO ZIELI SEGUN NATURA

VOCAL	CLAVRO	NUMERO	SIEMO	PLANETA	COLOR	BI HORAS	NOTA MUSI	CONSONA
Q	NEUTRO	0	☉	♀	INFRARROJO	1	FA	N̄ N
W	+	1	♈	♀	PURPURA	11	FA# SOL b	Q (II, FURATE) H
AL	-	2	♉	♂	ROJO PURO	2	SOL	B P
Ü	+	3	♊	♂	BERMEJON	3	LA b	§ (FURATE) X
Ø	-	4	♋	PLANETAS	HERMISTA	4	LA	(1) (1)
Ø	+	5	♌	♀	VERDE	5	SI b	V F
A	-	6	♍	♂	ZETIMO	6	SI	d T
AA	+	7	♎	♀	VERDE	7	DO	R(2)
E	-	8	♏	♂	ESMERALDA	8	RE b	m(3) M
RE	+	9	♐	♀	AZUL BIANCO (GLACIAS)	9	RE	Z
I	-	10	♑	♂	AZUL PURO	10	MI b	G K
Y	+	11	♒	♀	VIOLETA	11	MI	R
Ø	-	12	♓	♂	ULTRAVIOLETA	12		

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Figure 2: Xul Solar, *Hiercoeco zieli según Natura* (detail of the second version), [s.f.], FPK-MXS Archive.

These correspondences are applied in a game created by the artist towards the end of 1930: the Pangame. Also called Panchess, Universal chess or Creole chess (figures 3 and 4) it gathers “various complete means of expression, that is, languages, in various fields that correspond to each other on the same basis, which is the Zodiac, the planets and the duodecimal system of numeration” (Xul Solar Panajedrez s.f.). Xul Solar explains that since it integrates “most of the player’s knowledge and even his sensitivity”, the aim of this game is “to search, to investigate, to study, to create, always aiming at the perfection of the soul” (Xul Solar Panajedrez s.f.).



Figure 3: Xul Solar, *Panchess*, ca. 1945, FPK-MXS.

The Panchess is fundamentally the dictionary of an *a priori* language “of easy, musical phonetics” (Xul Solar, quoted in Foglia 1953: 50), the Panlingua [Pantongue or Panlanguage], whose words are formed as the game progresses. Thus, the phonetics of this universal language “built on two polarities, the negative and the positive and its neuter middle point [coincide] with the notes, chords and timbres of a free music and with the basic lineal elements of an abstract visual expression, which are also [a kind of] writing” (*Ibid.*).

It is worth pausing for a moment in the parallel which is established between sound (phonetics, notes, chords and timbres) and image (graphics and abstract visual expression). But, in what way are these elements combined? What are the rules of this universal game? Trying to understand them through the only –brief and hermetic– written text left by the artist, the two main components must be clearly separated: the board and the tokens are both polisemiotic. For example, if we consider the astrological aspect, it is necessary to remember that the big tokens represent the planets; as a consequence, their various dispositions on the board –a sort of map of the sky– draw a series of astral cards, of destinies. If we consider the musical field, we must know that each square corresponds to a musical note; thus, as the tokens are placed on each one of them we should imagine a resulting melody, as if they were fingers pressing keys. Furthermore, given that some tokens also correspond to musical notes, their superposition results in different chords, even though the reading sense, the sound duration and its timbre is not clearly established. The artist explained that the different positions of the tokens on the board during the game result in “all kinds of (abstract) drawings and musical combinations” (Xul Solar Panajedrez,

s.f.). Like other works, this is an eternal project, a never ending one –which is somehow coherent with the spirit of Panchess.



Figure 4: Xul Solar, *detail of the Panchess*, FPK-MXS.

Another practical application of the theory of the correspondences is the modification introduced in the traditional keyboard, as it can be appreciated on the three instruments altered by Xul Solar: a *dulcitone*, a harmonium (fig. 5) and an upright piano (fig. 6).



Figure 5: Xul Solar, *color keyboard Harmonium*, FPK-MXS.

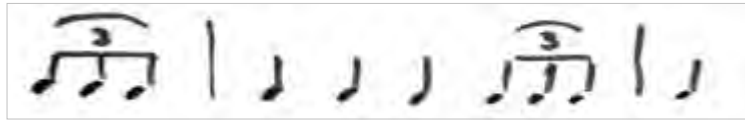


Figure 6: Xul Solar, *color keyboard Piano* (1946), FPK-MXS.

Given the artist's evident interest in music, the strong presence of the musical universe in his visual work is not surprising. Moreover, different stages can be identified. In his works from the first period (1912-1925), Xul explores the rhythmical parameter, trying to incorporate it on the pictorial plane by means of figures whose disposition in the composition imitate rhythmical structures. In *Entierro* [Burial] (1912, fig. 7), mentioned by the artist in a letter as "a funeral march" (Xul Solar 1912 s/p), the monks' dark outline could allude to note's shapes, suggesting a rhythmical *ostinato* (musical example n. 1) according to their relative place in the spiral they describe towards the grave.



Figure 7: Xul Solar, *Entierro* [Burial], 1912. Copyright Fundación Pan Klub - Museo Xul Solar.



Musical example 1: Possible rhythm suggested by the clockwise placement of the figures in *Entierro*.

In the beginning of the 1920s, the chromatic treatment seems to function as a dynamic vector. *En ritmiko* [Rhythmical] (1922, fig. 8) is one of the first works in which he uses colors and shapes to suggest a musical atmosphere. In 1926, Kandinsky (1991:34) writes in *Point and Line to Plane* that “the prime sonority of the point varies according to its dimensions and its shape”. Likewise, the color stains that appear irregularly disposed on the painting's background and are repeated in other music-and-dance related works, create various resonances that provide the scene with a musical frame.



Figure 8: Xul Solar, *En ritmiko* [Rhythmical], 1922. Copyright *Fundación Pan Klub - Museo Xul Solar*.

In the *Sandanzas* or series of sacred dances dating from 1925 (fig. 9), in which dancing figures are also combined with abstract visual elements, the musical atmosphere is established not only as the space in which primordial forces are opposed but also as the link that allows their reunion.



Figure 9: Xul Solar, *Sandanza* [Sacred danse], 1925. Copyright *Fundación Pan Klub - Museo Xul Solar*.

Going back to our typology, we can say that in *Entierro* the musico-visual migration is produced through the material level. Meaning, a rhythmical motif is turned into a monks' procession by establishing a correspondence between the notes' shapes and the monks' shapes. There is also an implicit parallel between time and space disposition with regards to a basic line. Thus, the three monks that are close to each other correspond to the triplets, while the figures that are more isolated represent the quarter-notes. To a smaller distance in time corresponds a smaller distance in space. We prefer to favor the material level over the morphological one since the structure of the procession is not very clear (the monks' figures transform themselves as they approach the tomb). We should also repeat that in this case the basic rhythm is purely conjectural and has no documented basis.

En rítmiko and *Sandanza* are also examples of migration through a material level even if the paired-associate parameters are different. On these paintings, music is present through the disposition of shapes and colors in their background. The Kandinskian idea of the *sonority of a painting*, for example, alludes to a double parallel between sound (be it pitch or timbre) and color on one hand, and disposition in time and disposition in space on the other. From the first parallel others evolve, like harmony and chromatic values combination, or key modulation and color transformation. Ergo, the migrations through the material level can establish a relationship

between the basic elements and/or the organization systems of these elements, as clearly illustrated by Xul Solar's list of correspondences (and their application on his keyboards and on the Panchess).

3. Musical writings

The second stage of Xul Solar's musical exploration (1926-1938) delves into piano and sheet music. This period involves keyboard modifications (figs. 5 and 6), linguistic developments, creation of the Panchess (fig. 4), and experimentation with notation systems (fig. 10). When music reappears in his visual work it has different characteristics. The third stage deals with music's graphical potential, both in the symbols known by its initiates and in their configuration and resulting texture.



Figure 10: Xul Solar's transcription of *Milenberg Joys* (blues by Morton, Roppolo and Mares) into enharmonic notation (detail).

In paintings such as *Marina* [Seascape] (1939, fig. 11) musical signs can be guessed while other pictures, like *Contrapunto de puntas* [Counterpoint of points] (1948, fig. 12), give evidence of the "musical" character of the *multiwaves* series (an ensemble of around thirty paintings produced in the late 1940s featuring overlapping mountains or urban skylines, see Cristiá 2007), representing a polyphonic texture as a path of spiritual pilgrimage. Music is able to accept the wildest metaphors, all of them linked with Xul Solar's artistic and existential quest.



Figure 11: Xul Solar, *Marina* [Seascape], 1939. Copyright *Fundación Pan Klub - Museo Xul Solar*.

With the experience of *Marina* –analyzed in depth in a book devoted to Xul Solar, like his other pictures–, the artist continues to explore the musico-visual migration on other levels. According to my interpretation, the conceptual level has been fundamentally employed here, since musical notation is compared to a primordial writing and, under the light of that concept, incorporated into an aquatic atmosphere. By exploring the graphic potential of musical symbols as the basis for the development of a visual language designed for the initiates, on the other hand, he points to the morphological level.



Figure 12: Xul Solar, *Contrapunto de puntas* [Counterpoints of points], 1948. Copyright *Fundación Pan Klub - Museo Xul Solar*.

Using terminology that reflects a musico-visual migration through the textural level, *Contrapunto de puntas* and other pictures of that series (the *multiwaves*) can be described as visual polyphonies. Of course, in order to allow more audiences to understand the polyphonic texture, a tacit correspondence graphic and musical materials must exist (the lines are melodies, the points are notes, etc.). As in other cases, this work's title endorses this interpretation. *Contrapunto de puntas* is a clear example of musico-visual migration through the textural level (counterpoint texture is evoked by means of the superposition of undulating lines), combined with the conceptual level (by alluding to religious compositions, the polyphonic texture functions here as a metaphor of a path of initiation and self-perfection).

In the rich ensemble of watercolors and temperas bearing sound implications that conforms Xul Solar's legacy, two works stand out by establishing direct references to composers and musical genres. *Impromptu de Chopin* (1949, fig. 14) and *Coral Bach* (1950, fig. 13) commemorate the death of two musicians admired by the artist and demonstrate his interest in deepening the musical possibilities of the pictorial plane. Indeed, in an interview published in 1951, he declared having created some pictorial techniques "that try to bring into the canvas the sensorial, emotional world that a Chopinian 'suite', a Wagnerian prelude or a stanza sung by Beniamino Gigli can produce in the listener" (Xul Solar, quoted in Sheerwood 1951: 14). Whether the mentioned paintings result from the practical application of those synaesthetically-oriented techniques is yet to be established.



Figure 13: Xul Solar, *Coral Bach* [Bach's Chorale], 1950. Copyright *Fundación Pan Klub - Museo Xul Solar*.

Speaking about the many advantages of his colored keyboards, Xul mentioned that, among other things, they made it possible “to draw musical movements with lines maybe readable as music” (Xul Solar, quoted by Foglia 1953: 51). This might be related to the caption of a photograph featuring the painter's hands on his colored piano that illustrated a later interview which read: “The astrologer composes on the piano, whose keyboard he has simplified, melodies that he will later develop and use on his canvases, adjusting them to the drawing and color” (Xul Solar quoted by De la Torre 1961).

In *Coral Bach*, migration transits again the textural level (the painting's background is built by planar stratification and motivic imitation) and the conceptual level (religious thought acts as the nexus between Bach's music and lyrics and the picture's chromatic restriction). The flying figures that we see on the painting could be representations of the different voices of a chorale, which would imply the material level (voice = figure) and at the same time the textural one (the voices' superposition and imitation), even if their direction contradicts conventional direction of vocal lines in the musical score. But we must also consider that *Coral Bach* could be an example of those techniques “that try to bring into the canvas the sensorial, emotional world that a Chopinian ‘suite’, a Wagnerian prelude or a stanza sung by Beniamino Gigli can produce on the listener”. This points to an emotional level. If this is the case, then we could say that this painting integrates four migration levels (all but the morphological one).



Figure 14: Xul Solar, *Impromptu de Chopin*, 1949. Copyright Fundación Pan Klub - Museo Xul Solar.

While *Coral Bach* seems to evoke the religiosity of its musical model through chromatic asceticism and polyphonic writing, through imitation and stratification of triangular pointed shapes, *Impromptu de Chopin* (fig. 14) is to this day the only proof of a practical application of his musico-visual translation principles. Indeed, even if it seemed to be a more specific variant of Xul Solar's visual polyphonies, related to them by its stratified composition, when we compare the mountain-like motives (fig. 15) with the opening bars of Chopin's *Impromptu Opus 29* in A flat major (musical example n. 2), the translation principles are self-evident.



Musical example 2: Incipit of Chopin's *Impromptu* n. 1 in A flat major

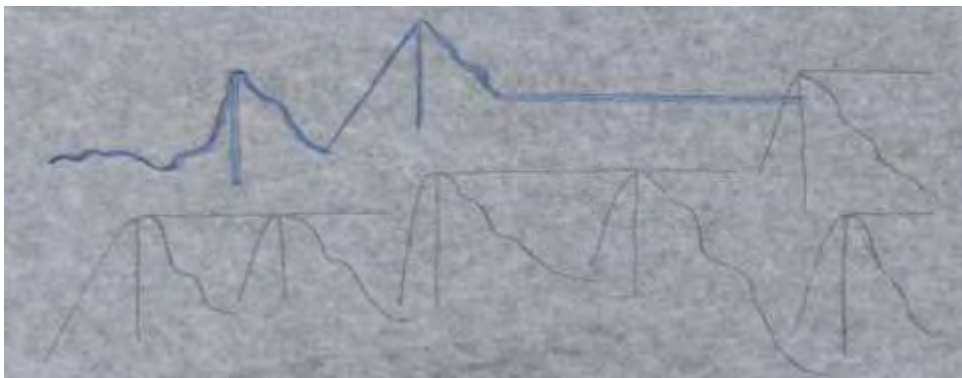


Figure 15: Detail of *Impromptu de Chopin's* graphic notation

The blue-shaded arabesque starts by representing a mordent as a sinuous line (very similar to the sign used in traditional notation), and it ascends or descends following the pitches of the melody of the first bar, repeating in the second. The reddish motives placed below the top melodic line represent the accompanying triplets. The chosen colors for each of these melodic outlines could indicate the initial note of each musical line. Indeed, according to Xul Solar's *Hiercoeco zieli segun Natura* (fig. 1) pure blue corresponds to E flat and red to A flat.

While *Contrapunto de puntas* and *Coral Bach* represent polyphonic textures, can we assert that *Impromptu de Chopin* tries to represent a homophonic texture? Even if the main

anthropomorphic figure seems to indicate that the melody is the *heart* of the piece (notice its glowing red heart), both lines have been represented in a very similar manner. This picture, which is unique in Xul's production because it is related to a precise musical source, is also a clear example of his attempt to translate music into visual expression using the material level for that migration. For instance, the melodic line is drawn according to the axes that govern the score (the horizontal axis organizes time or duration; the vertical axis, sound pitch). Even if the result of this migration is a series of undulating lines very similar to others that we will later see (Klee's arabesque, for example), we must remember that our typology does not try to describe the outcome but the process of transposition from one art to the other. By this mechanism, in this case, a succession of sounds becomes a drawing. Indeed, Xul Solar himself indicated that his color keyboards would allow us "to draw musical movements with lines maybe readable as music".

The use of the term translation designates the relationship of Xul's picture with its musical model reminding us of the parallel between arts and languages used by Wagner (1982: 110) in *The Artwork of the Future* to evoke the primordial unity of all the arts in the drama:

In the same way that, in the construction of Babel's Tower, after its languages were mixed and turned incomprehensible, the peoples separated in order to follow each one its way, in the same way the arts specialized when all common national [element] was divided into a thousand egotistic particularities as it abandoned the proud building of the drama, which rose to the sky, and in which they had lost their understanding that was their collective soul.

In "About Some Relationships between Music and Painting", an article in which Adorno declares his skepticism vis-à-vis the possibility of a deep convergence between music and painting, especially criticizing synaesthesia, he quotes Benjamin to accept that both arts meet on a third dimension: both are language. "There is a language of sculpture, of painting, of poetry", says Benjamin (quoted by Adorno 2000: 46, from Benjamin 2001), and Adorno (2000: 46-47) adds: "The convergence of the various media becomes evident through the emergence of their character as language." But he does not refer to linguistic behavior, to the extent that they are about telling a story, but that they "speak by virtue of the way they are constructed" (Adorno 2000: 47). They do not construct a language; they are themselves signs, especially those works that lack of object-relatedness, which break free from everything designated. "Music and painting become writing through their renunciation of the communicative, which is precisely the element, in both media, that is in truth alinguistic, because it suggests what is merely subjectively desired" (Adorno 2000:

47). “*Écriture* in music and painting cannot be direct writing” (otherwise it remains mere imitation), but encoded writing, “what in painting, with a devastating expression, people have taken to calling abstraction” (Adorno 2000: 47).

Adorno introduces in his discussion an aspect that has been considered accessory and thus frequently neglected: musical notation. “The act of notation is essential to art music, not incidental”, he says, since without it there can be “no highly organized music”. Far from a Romantic conception of music as an ethereal, ungraspable, immaterial art, he acknowledges a “qualitative relationship of music to its visible insignia, without which it could neither possess nor construct out duration” and which “points clearly to space as a condition of its objectification” (Adorno 2000: 47). In this way, the incorporation of musical writing on this issue legitimates the use of this “visible insignia” by visual artists as a means to evoke sound. Among those artists, Paul Klee stands out because of his multiple attempts to prove the connection between music and painting, enriching thus his visual language by using musical signs in order to create effects involving time or atmosphere. Such is the case of the pause or *fermata* placed near the center of [Stage Landscape](#) (1937).

Formed with an arch over a point, this musical sign indicates that the value of a note, a chord or a silence should be extended according to the player’s criteria. In the same way that the player suspends the musical movement when coming across this sign the viewer’s eye is attracted once and again towards that part of the canvas, perchance due to the chromatic arrangement and the disposition of the forms. As well as visually emulating the original function of the *fermata*, Klee explores its graphic potential disarticulating, amplifying, or inverting its components, transforming it into an organic part of the piece’s structure.⁴

Esteban Lisa seems to have used a similar procedure in a *Composition* dating from the same period (fig. 16). Here, musical notation intervenes openly through the presence of two beige eighth-notes and of some parallel lines that seem to create a staff, or so it is suggested by, again, a pause. Composed by a white arch and a big yellow point and turned slightly more than ninety degrees, this sign stands out in the general composition because of it contrasts with the dark green plane underneath it.

⁴ This artistic elaboration of a musical symbol is even more self-evident in [Singer of the Opera Comique](#) (1923), where Klee builds most of the singer’s silhouette from a *grupetto*. See DÜCHTING, Hajo, *op. cit.*, p. 52.



Figure 16: Esteban Lisa, *Composición*, 1941, Private collection

Lisa, like Klee, plays with this basic figure: he eliminates the point and fills the sector with white painting (up and left) or he paints it, he cuts part of it and adds a point with a clearer tone (near the center). Another variation appears down on the left, where he rotates the sign again, opens it and draws two points instead of one, alluding maybe to repeat points.

It could be said that, since he worked with arches, lines, points, and other simple graphic components, Lisa evokes the musical art simply unintendedly. However, some pieces entitled *Spatial acts* seem to rule out any doubt concerning the existence of an inspiration arising from musical notation. In a pastel dated March 30, 1955, for example, (fig. 17) Lisa plays with small circles that resemble notes without stems and with straight horizontal segments that may have been parts of a music staff.



Figure 17: Esteban Lisa, *Acto Espacial* [Spatial Act], 1955

Some undulating lines, even if they are vertically disposed, bring to mind Xul Solar's pictorial translation of the initial trill in Chopin's Impromptu in A flat major. Finally, different variations of a sign known by the denomination of the "number sign", that corresponds to the sharp in music, is apparent. This piece suggests an explosion of the staff whose component parts end up scattered. In Lisa's world, signs abandon their original context and their linear disposition in order to freely orbit in a virtual four-dimensional space.

Let us try out our typology on the last three paintings. Like Xul Solar's *Marina*, Klee's *Stage landscape* and both of Lisa's works incorporate the sound dimension by including or suggesting elements from musical notation. Together with the representation of instruments, musical notation is one of the visual cues that more directly refers to music. In the same way that instruments are not themselves music but means of performing it, notation insignia and even the score are just means of preservation and communication. In any case, images of musical instruments and musical signs function as icons of the musical dimension as well as evidence of the artist's interest (at least in representing them), but they do not correspond to a specific migration level. In *Stage landscape*, the conceptual level (the idea of a pause associated with the image of

the *fermata*) is combined with the morphological level, used by emulating that same time suspension with the means of an abstract visual art (forms and colors). Even if there does not exist here a precise musical source, it is possible that Klee tried to create a visual version of a stage's soundscape through the correspondence between the elements of music and the visual arts (material level). A music lover, Klee particularly frequented opera theaters. Through the selection of graphic material similar to certain musical signs (apart from the fermata there are F-clef-like curves and staircases that allude to scales, *scala*) and a manipulation that indicate some compositional techniques (imitation, retrogradation, inversion, motivic development, etc.), he seems to evoke the sounds of a concert hall. Something similar takes place in Lisa's *Composition*: the title moves away from musical representation to concentrate in its materials and techniques. The migration is achieved here through the material level (by pairing colors with pitch or timbres) as well as through the conceptual one. Indeed, to many of these artists music is a synonym of temporality, and this concept of time acts as a bridge between one art and the other.

With this idea in mind and reminding us that Lisa admired Einstein, works like *Acto Espacial* can be interpreted as a means of using the pictorial plane to explore the space-time dimension. Migration is produced, once again, through the material level (musical signs correspond to simple graphic elements, losing their original sense and preserving only a purely visual one) and the conceptual one. It is quite possible that this kind of practice aimed to conceptually incorporate a time dimension to the pictorial space since, as Adorno points out (2000:45), it is in musical notation where time and space converge.

4. Artists without borders

While the works mentioned so far, even if they are permeated by other arts, stay in one artistic field, others straddle the border of the two arts. This is the case of part of Jorge Macchi's (Buenos Aires, 1963) production, who explores the fertile zone between the arts. Like Xul Solar and Lisa, Macchi had meaningful musical experiences during his formative years. These experiences nurture his work in various ways. In 1997, in Colchester (England), he presented an installation entitled *Incidental Music* in which three big staff pages, measuring 230 x 150 cm, hang from a wall (fig. 18). Like in other works (*Pentagrama* [Staff], 1993, pillow, strings, coils, nails, Macchi and Rudnitzky 2005: reprod. n. 16, and *Canción insomne* [Sleepless song], 2004, paper, 170 x 130 cm, Macchi and Rudnitzky 2005 reprod. n. 8) Macchi uses the staff as an icon of music. As one gets closer to the pages, it becomes apparent that the lines of the staff are made of cutouts from various London newspapers

glued to the paper. The news refers to accidents and murders suffered by normal people. Between a piece of news and the other there are 1 cm wide blank spaces, which, according to the line on which they appear, determine one pitch (from only five possible notes; on G-clef: E, G, B, D or F). The distance between those blank spaces indicates the duration of the sound. The elaborated piece following these instructions can be heard on a pair of headphones that hang from the ceiling in front of the gigantic score (see fig. 18).



Figure 18: Jorge Macchi, *Incidental Music*. Newspaper cutouts on paper, cd, cd player, headphones.

130 x 500 x 150 cm. Installation at *Delfina Studios*, London, 1997.

The title of this work refers to a type of music composed for a dramatic production and, by extension, to any music which is interpolated in a theatrical piece, even if it was not composed for dramatic use (Evans 1980). But it also suggests something different. The music of this piece is produced by the incidents (murders, burnings, accidental deaths), or more precisely *between* them, since the notes appear by default between the register of one event and the following. As if it were a bi-dimensional theatrical piece, music is interpolated between the different dramatic acts. On the other hand, the underlying discussion about the distance of a real fact and its interpretation, by the transformation

between reality and art stands out. A person's death, a real event, turns into an informative text. Extirpated from its original context and manipulated by the artist, the text reveals a new facet, becoming part of a visual work and, by default, originating a musical piece. With this relatively new artistic genre, installation, music irrupts in a space traditionally reserved for visual arts: the art gallery. Nonetheless, most of the time this is not achieved by migration but it is a concrete presence, a convergence of music and visual art. The key element for this categorization could be the need to hear in order to achieve a complete appreciation of the work.

In addition to the staffs, Macchi incorporates other objects related to the musical universe. The representation of pianos, maybe related to the artist's infantile and youth experiences, is particularly frequent in his watercolors and gouaches (one can be seen in free fall, another turned into a cascade in *Waterfall*, 2008; a third one on the verge of smashing a pianist in *Instant*, 2008). A disco ball is the central object of the installation *Still Song* (2005, fig. 18), recently recreated in the individual exhibition *Music Stand Still* (2011, SMAK, Municipal Museum of Contemporary Art, Gent, Belgium).



Figure 19: Jorge Macchi, *Still song*, 2005.

Mirrored ball in a room of 500 x 700 x 300 cm.

Installation at the *Italian Pavillion*, in the exhibition *La experiencia del arte*, curated by Maria de Corral, Venice's Bienale 2005.

In *Still Song* there is a migrate on from music to the visual arts that uses mainly the conceptual level. Like in the previous case, the artist uses the title to guide in a certain way the interpretation of the work. We could argue that in many of his works' titles, Macchi incorporates a literary or poetic element to the work's semiosis by a special interest added through a pun or word game. "Still song" could be translated, in Spanish, as "canción quieta, fija o inmóvil" [a fixed song, one that does not move], but there is an interesting double meaning. On one hand *still life* is a term that designates a traditional painting genre ("naturaleza muerta" in Spanish), and, on the other, *still image* is an instantaneous image or a picture that shows a freeze frame of a moving object, person, or situation. If the song is something alive and dynamic, how do we represent a moment in its evolution? By choosing a disco as setting, Macchi implies dancing, bodies, and social encounter and represents the material traces of that song. The mirrored ball and the lights placed in the unions between the walls and the ceiling create a sort of scenography. The dramatic effect is emphasized by the presence of numerous irregular perforations on the five sides of the open box that suggest reflected beams of light. This immobile song, a Polaroid of a live experience, is a representation of a lifeless (absent) body visible only by the marks left by light drilling the space in the way that the sounds did it before. In this case, migration from music to visual art passes through a conceptual level and possibly an emotional one, provided that the work derives from an emotional association established by the artist with past experiences.

Andrea Giunta (2008: s/p) defines Macchi's relationship with music as a "fascination" and remarks the presence of staves in certain works, pointing out to the importance of notation: "The thoughts produced by the performer through the synthesis of the composer and the sound, entering a new dimension –written music– a visual relationship in which music is perceived as a drawing and turned into sound". Music is also evoked by the titles of the pieces, coming both from art music and from jazz (*Nocturno. Variaciones sobre el Nocturno nro. 1 de Erik Satie*, 2002; *Nocturno*, 2004; *Canción a tres voces en diferentes profundidades* [Three-voice Song in Different Depths], 2004; *Canción marginal* [Marginal Song], 2004; *Round Midnight*, 2008). However, when referring to music, Macchi (quoted by Cohen 2004: s/p) mentions its abstract essence:

On the other hand I consider music as an absolutely formal language, a pure abstraction, and in this sense, when it is originated by an image figuration, or the brutality of a police report, it produces an estrangement, a sort of *realentamiento* [sic], that changes forever the character of the original material.

In the past years, Macchi has developed the musical component of his works by collaborating with Argentinean composer Edgardo Rudnitzky. Hence the works *Buenos Aires Tour* (installation and then object-book, 2004, with texts by Maria Negroni), *La ascensión* (installation with sound and performance, 2005), *Light Music: Twilight* (installation with sound and performance, 2006), *Light Music: The Singers' Room* (installation with sound and video, 2006), *Little music* (installation and performance, in open air, 2008) and *Last minute* (installation with sound, 2009). Rudnitzky (2009: s/p) declares that in these works, “the visual and sound dimensions unite more and more, structurally and perceptively” and that as time goes by “the [divisive] line between both media, both heads and both sensibilities disappears more and more”.

Adorno (2000) observes that the fundamental problem between these arts is their dialectic relationship with the dimension that defines them and at the same time limits them, synthesized in the concepts of *Zeitkunst* and *Raumkunst*. Even though it is clear that fifty years after Adorno's text the possible relationships between sight and sound have considerably multiplied, partly due to technological development that has that has exaggerated the intertwining of the border lines between the arts (observed by Adorno in 1966; Adorno 2008: 380), is it possible to deny the pertinence of those concepts? Indeed, we are under the impression that Macchi, like many other artists, recurs again and again to music in search of a time element (a concern which also becomes apparent in the number of clocks represented) with the probable intention of impregnating the other materials with that dimension. This media combination can also be considered in the light of drama. Speaking about theater, Macchi (quoted by Rudnitzky 2009: s/p) observed:

Another important element, specifically originated in the phenomenon of theatre, is the crossing of different artistic disciplines. Doubtless, the best collaborations are those in which the text, the sound and the visual elements work in the same level but at the same time are absolutely dependent one to the other.

This dramatic intention, an echo of Wagnerian ideals, is certainly perceptible in *Incidental Music* as much as in *Still Song*.

5. From the easel to the music stand: visual-musical transformations

Let us consider next Paul Klee's closeness to music, not only to performance –since he played the

violin almost professionally– but, and more importantly, his interest in the theory of music. This is apparent by the number of musical elements to which he refers to in his theoretical texts (Klee 1985) and his notes from his Bauhaus classes (Klee 2004). Thus, it is not surprising that his work originated a considerable amount of musical compositions. I have previously argued (Cristiá 2010) that Klee is an influential figure in the Piano Concerto, as well as in its first version for solo piano, by Luis Mucillo (Rosario, Argentina, 1956). For the purpose of this study, we will leave aside the numerous literary components (the score includes three epigraphs and Klee's painting – [Tale a la Hoffmann](#) refers to the story *Der goldene Topf* [The Golden Pot] by E.T.A. Hoffmann 2002), to concentrate here in the passage from painting to music.

The absence of univocal transposition logic precludes us from talking about a strict translation from painting to concerto but it is evident that certain pictorial elements result in musical materials and composition intentions that I will try to synthesize as follows. The predominant golden, luminous hue of the picture is related by the composer to the brightness of crystal. This element, also present in the title of the Concerto and in the epigraphs, is musically emulated by Mucillo by the use of instruments and registers that recall the sonority of the glass harmonica. In this way, the fantastic, fairy-tale-like atmosphere of Klee's painting is evoked, complementing those high and crystalline sonorities, especially in the beginning, with musical gestures of suspense and indetermination (musical example 3).



Musical example 3: Opening bars of the *Piano Concerto* by Luis Mucillo

One of the challenges faced by the composer originates in the successful combination of that bright background and the figures that have been neatly drawn on it. Observing “the adequacy of two [pictorial] manners, a non-figurative painting and a figurative one, without causing a relationship of antithesis or eventually one of stylistic absurdity”, Mucillo (2006: s/p) wondered:

In a piece whose language does not depend on traditional tonality nor on the forms or motivic construction methods associated with tonality, how can one derive towards more “figural”, more pregnant musical constructions without falling into incoherence and without giving the impression of a quotation? [...] How to achieve a certain fluidity or continuity between contrasting musical materials?

The application of the term abstraction to the absence of tonality and the use of the adjective *figural* for musical constructions in which there is a predominance of a triadic type of harmony can be traced to other composers. In a book where he explores the musical potential in Klee's work, Pierre Boulez (1989:25) explains the coincidences between Webern's and Mondrian's production by stating that both of them went "from representation to abstraction". As Boulez (1989: 168) imagines "a music that, like clouds, does not really evolve, but just changes its appearance" when contemplating other abstract backgrounds conceived by Klee, harmonies in Mucillo's Concerto unfold like a diffuse atmosphere on which Klee's Hoffmanesque figures gradually appear transformed into musical elements. Let us consider them in detail.

The eighteenth-century wigged character on the left is interpreted by Mucillo as an underlying homage to Mozart because of its resemblance to Casanova. Derived from this association, the second section of the Concerto (Mucillo 2001: 13, bar 65) works as a parody of the *forlana*, a Venetian dance of seduction, which at times turns into a phantasmagoric Minuet (Mucillo 2001: 15-18, bars 75-90). A group of four chords with appoggiatura played by the pianoforte and illuminated by a triangle is introduced in the Minuet rhythm and reappears throughout the whole piece referring to the two clocks and the bell tower-like building depicted on the painting (musical example 4, Mucillo 2001: 17, bars 83-86).

The image shows a musical score for piano (Pf.) Solo, spanning four measures (bars 83-86). The music is written in 4/4 time. The first measure features a half note chord with a flat (B-flat) and a dotted quarter note. The second measure has a half note chord with a flat (B-flat) and a dotted quarter note, with a circled 'Ped. Sostentuto' marking above it. The third and fourth measures each contain a half note chord with a flat (B-flat) and a dotted quarter note, with a circled 'sfz' marking above each. The score includes various performance instructions such as 'scintillante sfz', 'L.V.', and 'Ped. Sostentuto'. The bottom of the page has an asterisk.

Musical example 4: *Bell stroke chords*. Mucillo's Piano Concerto, bars 83-86

Casanova's curly wig seems to grow into a spiral of smoke that extends across the painting. This arabesque is translated by ascending and spiraling gestures in the piano built by linking several *grupetti* (musical example 5, Mucillo 2001: 35, bars 171-174).



Musical example 5: *Arabesque*. Mucillo's Piano Concerto, b. 171-174

To the left of the said character we can see a little wheeled-boat and some sort of rails. This ensemble, interpreted by Mucillo as a defective and ridicule machine, is transformed into an irregular melodic and rhythmical motif marked *quasi meccanico*, played by the marimba and the vibraphone (musical example 6, Mucillo 2001: 31, b. 147-152).



Musical example 6: *Quasi meccanico* motif. Mucillo's Piano Concerto, m. 147-152

It is worth emphasizing that, far from being merely ornamental, the grupetto is an organic element in the Concerto. Present throughout the piece and “strongly associated with erotic contents” (Mucillo 2006: s/p) it plays a fundamental role in the Adagio (musical example 7, Mucillo 2001:38, c. 191-195). Related to the heart placed in the middle of the painting, the central Adagio constitutes a sort of romantic interlude contrasting with the rest of the composition.



Musical example 7: Fragment of the *Adagio (grupetti)*, Mucillo's Piano Concerto, m. 191-195

The figures' organization on the pictorial plane suggests an axial symmetry with regards to the central group conformed by the arrow/pot, the lily and the heart. Following this mirror-like disposition, Mucillo articulates his concerto in a symmetric seven part structure (fig. 20).

I	II	III	IV	V	VI	VII
Animato, fantástico	Giocosó, "alla Forlana" Minuet	Meno mosso [orchestra]	Adagio	Piano Cadenza	Gigue Violent	Quasi tempo del inizio
A	B	C	D	(C)	(B)	(A)

Figure 20: *Specular form* of Mucillo's Piano Concerto

Each of the three pairs of internal sections, split to both sides of the central Adagio, presents opposing visions of the same theme, an original-negative duality that recalls many Hoffmanian characters' dual identities.

Migration can be verified on various levels in Mucillo's Piano Concerto. The composer transposes the emotional level when he attempts to recreate in his musical work the fairy-tale atmosphere that he observes in the painting. The association of the golden background with the glass harmonica's crystalline sonority combines an emotional component with a passage through the material level, since it determines the orchestration and the register. In the same way, we could adduce that most of the subjective-based material level associations –the male character with the *forlana*, the wheeled-boat with the marimba melodic-rhythmical motif, the bell tower

with the bell stroke chords – have an emotional shade. We are inclined to say that the migration by which the heart becomes the Adagio combines four levels: emotional (romantic character), conceptual (the idea of love), material (use of the grupetto) and morphological (central position). A clear example of a passage through the morphological level is the transformation of Klee's arabesque in an ascending succession of grupetti, a *curly* melody played by the piano. As we said, this implies two tacit associations: a graphical line with a melodic line and the horizontal/vertical axis that rule the music score, in the same way that the melodic profile was drawn in *Impromptu de Chopin*. Would it be more convenient to point out here the material level, like we did in *Impromptu*? Although they seem analogous, we consider that in the passage from the arabesque to the grupetti succession a global conception of the configuration predominates, while in the passage from Chopin's composition to Xul's painting is more closely associated with basic elements (resulting in a configuration). In both cases, the importance of the music score and the conventions associated with it cannot be overseen. Musical notation is indeed the intersection of music and visual expression. The morphological level migration from Klee's picture to Mucillo's concerto reaches even the macroform, since the existing symmetry between the concerto's sections is related to the painting's global form.

Adorno (2000: 43) writes about a “pictorial manner” in which music is manifested in a large scale, spatializing time as if it were a visual surface, like in certain works by Morton Feldman (2009), or in a smaller scale, as it happens in electronic music, where “they work with individual sounds as in coetaneous music they work with individual values of color”. There may be some of this pictorial manner in Mucillo's Concerto as well as in *Bruma*, by Jorge Horst (Rosario, Argentina, 1963).

Horst has always been interested in visual art. In his piece *Esferas* [Spheres] (1994) he reprocessed some aspects of M.C. Escher's work (see Molina 2007). In 2003, upon being asked to write for a specific group of instruments –oboe, violin, viola, and cello– he took it as an opportunity to finally turn into reality his desire of composing a piece related to Turner's work (1775-1851). He was especially drawn by a certain effect that Turner achieves in his painting, which he defines as “climate” and technique. Horst (2010: s/p) declared: “I have always been impressed by his [Turner's] transgressive way of representing figuration, in which the latter is so much forced to the limit with abstraction that it questions the ontology of figuration itself, only that he did that in the beginning of the nineteenth century”. From this conscious approach, Horst tried “to create a sound analogy, to render homage, to metaphorize, to transliterate, to create various

intertextualities” with the “irreverent, totally subversive character” of Turner's aesthetics. One of the ideas he was most attracted to was that of “blurring, like seeing through a cloud, or through jeweled glass, breaking the expected, and moving the attention focus from the supposedly perfect figure representation as the ideal of beauty to indefinable, grayer, more unsaturated areas (to use a technical term of painting)” (always Horst 2010: s/p).

Turner specially worked the luminous effects, substituting the principles of the primacy of outline and modeling with an optical system able to give the appearance of light by playing with small juxtaposed touches. His work is characterized by the absence of a precise definition of objects: the painter is interested in representing them when they are half-hidden. Mist is a recurring element in his work and helps to create a sensation of indetermination emphasized by the settings (dawn, dusk, stormy or rainy scenes, etc.).

The intention to evoke a Turner-like atmosphere as well as the proposed instrumentation played an important role in the genesis of the compositive technique. From the start, Horst decided to accentuate the timbric contrast between the oboe and the strings through texture. The strings merge in a sort of sonoric *cumulus*, a mist in which the oboe appears and disappears. In the same way, the composer indicates that the oboe player should stay backstage, invisible to the public while maintaining visual contact with the other musicians. In his words (Horst, 2010: s/p):

The contrast between a marked linearity (the oboe) and some sort of noise-like sound clouds (the strings, with *arco in fascia*, for example), point to, among other things, the extreme degrees of the usage of sound fields that range from what I call complex sounds (noises) to tonic sounds (pitches), defining a varied sound continuum which, like a painter's row of colors but also of uncertainty levels, live dialectically but also organically side by side.



Figure 21: Joseph Mallord William Turner, *Snow Storm - Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth*, exhibited in 1842, London, Tate Britain.

In *Snow Storm – Steam-Boat off a Harbour's Mouth* (1842, fig. 21), for example, it is clear that Turner wants to represent the drama, the energy of a sea storm. Snow, steam and waves merge forming a swirl that seems to swallow the boat. Drawing the simplest parallel, suggested by the composer himself, this stormy fog corresponds to the strings and the oboe is the boat, partially unseen in the context. It is an atomized presence that appears musically as motives or notes that emerge unexpectedly, together with a time ambiguity achieved by the use of different rhythmical figurations. Aleatority greatly contributes to the piece's instability. Indeed, six of the seven platforms (sections of the piece) have maximum and minimum durations, but it is specified that “in no case are they an imposition, but only a suggestion” and can be modified at will by the musicians “so as to be able to mold the piece particular and general temporality”. The first five platforms can be repeated as many times as desired and, they also contain materials that can be repeated or reiterated at will. The transition from one platform to the other is not strictly defined and can be initiated by any of the instruments, with no need of synchronization between them. In fact, Horst indicates on the score that “the performers must not coordinate the synchronization of any of their materials, not even their changes”. This incoordination could be a way of achieving a blurred texture, an effect also sought by the indication of avoiding “the predominance in intensity

of any of the instruments”, except when stated otherwise (always Horst 2007: 2).

Horst particularly works with timbre, using non-traditional sonorities. At times the bow is rubbed onto the side of the instruments (*arco in fascia*), to the side of the bridge, between the bridge and the tailpiece attached to the base of the violin or sliding only the tip of the bow all along the strings. As for the oboe, multiphonics are used. According to the composer, these “fairly complex sound blocks predetermined in their conformation and orchestrated by the strings, so underlying their polyphonic nature, also generate the idea of internal mobility (as if the painting moved)” (Horst 2010: s/p). This sound fusion or confusion, which makes it difficult to identify the different instrumental timbres, derives from Turner's *sfumato* effect. Thus, the aleatory or indetermination embraces time, pitch (by using also undefined frequencies, for instance, when the score reads “the highest possible sound”), texture and timbre.

Considering the textures and the register of the musical material, we propose the articulation of the piece in five sections (fig. 22):

Section	I		II	III		IV	V
Platform/ instrument	A	B	C	D	E	F	G
Oboe	Tacet	tacet	Defined and modeled pitch, with leaps, pp	Multiphonics pp	Idem D, shorter	Multiphonics + defined pitches	3 ascending glissandi pp a niente
Vn + Va	Arco in fascia	Arco perp alla punta	Mixture of various effects: 5 ad libitum combined materials	Ascending and descending arpeggios	Idem, shorter, dim ab niente	Defined pitches and glissandi	3 ascending glissandi from bichords to almost undefined high tones (screeching). p ab niente.
Vc	Arco in fascia	Arco in fascia					
Comments	Just strings: cloud, undefined background – 1 minute		Non-definition, with some high modeled pitches in the oboe – 1 min 10 sec	Multiphonics + arpeggios. More dense but more apprehensible texture – 1 min 20 sec		Climatic section: greater textural definition – 1 min 30 sec	Conclusive section – 1 min

Figure 22: Internal sections of *Bruma* by Jorge Horst

There is certain directionality in the piece, which is caused by the *mist* and the figures that seem to appear behind it. This direction is also suggested by the intensities and the textural complexity, which goes from platforms A to F, with some defined intermediate stages. Platform G works as a closing section, but far from resolving, it affirms the tension present throughout the piece; in an analogous effect, Turner submerges the viewer in the mystery of the picture.

In the last two compositions migration is achieved through the conceptual level. While *Bruma* is

based on the concept of indetermination present in Turner's work, Mucillo concentrates on the special relationship established by Klee between abstract and figurative elements to elaborate his Concerto's musical language. Horst also transits the textural level. Turner's blurred image turns into *Bruma's* musical texture. Atomized, fragmented, built by complex or short sounds of uncoordinated production, it successively hides and reveals a more or less precise melodic configuration.

* * *

After all that has been said, it is clear that the migration levels are not exclusive; on the contrary, they are combined in many occasions. In Mucillo's Piano Concerto, for example, the passage from one art to the other is achieved through the emotional level (evoking a fairy-tale atmosphere), the conceptual level (turning abstraction/figuration into absence of tonality/triadic configurations), the material level (by associating the picture's color with the sonority of the glass harmonica, then with certain timbres and register) and the morphological level (deriving from the painting, in the macroform, symmetry and internal sections; in the microform, a grupetti-chain related to the arabesque). Likewise, *Bruma* combines the conceptual level (the idea of uncertainty) with the textural one (aiming at a musical representation of a visual texture). As mentioned with regards to the emotional level, it is evident that to ascertain the use of the conceptual level it will be necessary to have specific information about the composer's or the artist's intentions; in other words, to possess data about the *poietic* level.

When testing our typology it has become clear that it is sometimes difficult to discriminate between the material, the morphological and the textural levels, since the second and the third imply the first. In consequence, it might be better to define only three main migration levels (emotional, material and conceptual) and then subdivide the material level into three possibilities (elemental, morphological and textural). This will have to be dealt with in future work. Since this article has considered mainly the migration phenomenon between music and visual arts, it might be also useful to try its application when studying the transformation between other arts (music and literature, for example). In addition, as mentioned by Adorno (2000: 50) the possibilities (and difficulties) of the phenomenon of convergence, a field in clear expansion, are yet to be considered:

The difficulty is grounded in the fact that the convergence is not located only in procedures, tensions, linguistic elements (although, admittedly, it can only be realized in them); the materials themselves are pushing in that direction, although they make sport of those artists who expect convergence to come from them, rather than from the articulation process.

The articulation process of the materials would be, then, the *locus* where a convergence between the arts is possible. In any case, it is evident that the Adornian categories of *Zeitkunst* and *Raumkunst* are not only far from being absolute, but they hold a dialectic relationship. As we have seen here, it is this tension that allows different types of experimentation and encourages an incisive critique in order to characterize its areas of conflict and resolution.

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