

Branimir Štivić

B E L L O W S

3 March–1 April 2023

artKIT

B E L L O W S, an intermedia project by young emerging artist Branimir Štivić, explores the mediality of air, the openness of the breathing body to the atmosphere, and the breathing of all living and non-living things. The artist's fascination with air and the atmosphere stems from the notion that we are »immersed in the air« from the beginning of our lives, with the lungs being the first organ to come into contact with the environment after birth, and that the human being as a respiratory body is part of the atmosphere. Thus, breathing is not a relationship with objects, but with the atmosphere, while the skin is a fragile membrane that separates two spaces filled with air, the external and the internal. The system of respiratory bodies/windsacks and the activity of breathing can be understood as a rhythm of paying off the »oxygen debt« in the constant economic game of inflation of the body.

B E L L O W S is a modular air system based on exhalation, inflation and collision of air with surrounding objects. The work consists of a wind turbine, synthetic fabric, bioplastics, the giant reed (*Arundo donax*), custom-made electronics/mechanics/software, and »breathing bodies«. The air-filled bags reproduce the rhythm of breathing by measuring local variations in the amount of carbon dioxide (CO₂) exhaled. The air flowing out of the container activates the reed mouthpieces that reproduce the sound. Giant reed (*Arundo Donax*) is a Mediterranean plant that uses air pockets along with biomass as a means for rapid growth. Precisely because of its porosity, reeds have been used to make traditional instruments and parts of instruments, such as bagpipes or the traditional Croatian woodwind instruments *diple* and *sopile*. The bellows are in fact the technological extensions of the lungs, used to transmit the action or transform the air into wind oscillators and sonorous objects. They are the instruments of potential vocality of the skin that tells its story through expansion and deflation.

Aiming to emphasize the live performance aspect of B E L L O W S, the author built an instrument in the Max/Msp programming language with a special physical control that allows performance for one breather on multiple bellows. A repurposed industrial sensor to measure the amount of CO₂ exhaled allows the performer to record, process and reproduce the breath record on-the-spot. The same sensor and a similar software combination have been used by the author in many live performances to control baroque church organs, traditional barrel organs, sound synthesis and oscilloscope graphics. Breath is recorded in 4 independent buffers, which are routed to 4 possible outlet valves that inflate the bellows. Reed pipes are attached to the bellows, which convert the air into vibrations and create a composition based on the rhythm of the performer's exhalation. Friction, strain, slippage, and mechanical sounds as the bellows inflate create rhythmic elements in the composition that complement the long rhythmic drones. When not surrounded by exhaling bodies or when sensors are turned off, the system performs an autonomous role of living in the B R E A T H I N G C H O I R as an instrument of production and reproduction. In the presence of breathing bodies, the machine algorithm plays the embodied action and rate of the breathing/inflating body of B E L L O W S. It is a complex techno-biological fake-autopoietic system that relies on using the waste product of the human body (exhaled CO₂) to live. It is an extended chorus of all living things, with machine respiratory bellows; it is a system that depends on exhalation.

BIOGRAPHY

Website



Branimir Štivić (1991, Cerić) received his MA in New Media from the Academy of Fine Arts in Zagreb. He holds a master's degree in software engineering from the Faculty of Organization and Informatics in Varaždin. His primary and starting medium is sound, which is then entangled with other media through an artistic process based on software code, DIY electronics and improvisational techniques. His field of work includes multimedia, performance art, sound art, expanded cinema, video synthesis, experimental music, cybernetics, sound and light installations, algorithm art, neural networks, AI, etc. He is using a multidisciplinary approach as a tool to explore perception, probabilistics, systems theory, mathematical models and cellular automata, process music, sound, pneumatics, kinetics, and machine learning synthesis. His current topics of interest are breathing, air, atmospheres, machine learning, found footage, memories, neural synthesis, biological systems, animism, vitality of objects and matter in the age of the technosphere and Anthropocene. He is a member of the ARBAJT Collective, where he focuses on questioning the relationship between art and work. He collaborated with DB Indoš: House of Extreme Music Theatre in performances I:O: and Kužni Ifrit. His works have been exhibited at the Museum of Contemporary Art Zagreb, Atelieri Žitnjak, Šira, Prozori, Lauba, Pogon Jedinstvo, Kazamat, NMG@Praktika, Gallery SC. He performed at Device_art 7.021, 25fps, Vector Hack, ZEZ, Sonica, SineLinea, Monoplay and Barutana. As part of the »on-the-fly« artist-in-residence program, he performed at Het Orgelpark in Amsterdam; in the frame of the ZEZxSonica AIR program, he performed as a SHAPE+ artist in Cankarjev Dom in Ljubljana. He participated in the Reassemble Lab: Weatherscapes laboratory, organized by the FIBER Festival Amsterdam.

KONTEJNER

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artKIT, Glavni trg 14, Maribor

Opening hours: Tuesday to Friday from 3 p.m. to 7 p.m., Saturday from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m.