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reviewing and promoting minimalist art, music and culture

Skoltz_Kolgen - Silent Room - Multimedia - Optical Sound



www.optical-sound.com

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Skoltz_Kolgen should be a familiar name to anyone who hasn't been residing on Mars for the last few years. With an enviable series of precisely honed releases for an assortment of musical curators, theirs is a name that crops up at festivals and live events the world over. Their work constantly breaches the boundaries of multimedia, exploring the intersections of sound and image, with conceptually precise presentations that challenge expectation, and inspire at a higher level than most of their contemporaries. I am overawed at this latest work, Silent Room, a beautifully presented 7x7 box of treasures that includes DVD's (in both formats), a book of photographs, and two CD's, I can only surmise that Dominique and Herman have not slept for the last two years, devoting every waking hour to this master work. Provocatively dubbed as a "film poem", Silent Room is an extraordinary multi-dimensional work that is at once an intimate, surreal portrait of the occupants of a fictitious apartment block, and a slightly disturbing poetry of the macabre. Not only is this an amazing undertaking, it is also an epic piece for me to summarise in just a few paragraphs, requiring a robust, and intense audience to pick apart the conceptual and sonic possibilities presented here. The stark, obtuse atmospheres on display lie somewhere between David Lynch, or Peter Greenaway's stark, metaphorical, and darkly comic imagery, to living manifestations of Joel-Peter Witkin's photographic nightmares, staged as they are in muted sepia tones. Overlaid with S_K's idiosyncratic, and highly reduced soundtrack, that flickers and fluctuates like the last dying moments of a light bulb, this is unsettling, yet highly compelling stuff, an intensely cerebral experience that requires time and energy to absorb and assimilate. The appearance of stock surrealist props such as chessboards, disembodied creatures, and obscurely juxtaposed objects indicate S_K's creative leanings. I am not entirely surprised to discover that they are followers and admirers (like myself) of Joseph Beuys, whose works operate at a highly

metaphorical, ritualistic, shamanistic level. These vignettes, for want of a better phrase, go beyond verbalisation and the simplistic parsing of an average art house film. This slow-mo investigation uses the characters and their habitat as symbolic constructs for a sequence of dream-like scenarios that are simultaneously haunting and provocative. The accompanying book serves to freeze-frame selected segments of the film for further exploration, accompanied with revealing subtexts about the artists and their work. To add further to the whole project, Skoltz_Kolgen invited a host of sound artists to interpret and reveal their own “Silent Rooms”, and amongst these, can be found familiar names in the form of the ubiquitous Scanner (seemingly without whom no compilation is complete), Steinbruchel, Steve Roden, Sebastien Roux, and a host of others. On the other CD, S_K remix, and re-interpret the work of other friends and associates. Those of you who know me, will doubtless understand my reluctance to review any kind of compilation, but needless to say, the sound works on display are lush, creative, and add further weight to the whole Silent Room project. This is a massive and ambitious undertaking that will resonate further over a period of time, and serves as a bench-mark for visual artists and film makers alike. Once again, S_K have given us an intelligent, beautiful and thought provoking piece, that I can only say is my favourite art object of all time. A resoundingly essential work. BGN

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About



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WHITE_LINE was set up three years ago, in order to play and promote the work of artists and musicians working under the banner of “minimalism”, in all its many guises. This has led to a regular and highly successful mix slot on the Garden of Earthly Delights radio show in the UK, and guest appearances on Resonance FM (frequenzen show) , and Darkness Drops Again radio in Czechoslovakia. I now aim to extend the remit of the mix slots by reviewing (as often as possible) material that encapsulates and crystallises the minimalist ethic, and hopefully I’ll be leading artists and audiences alike towards a deeper appreciation of this and other marginalised genres. I welcome your comments, and criticisms, and would love to hear from labels and artists who would like their work showcased on the show, or reviewed here. I regret that due to time constraints with my own recording schedule and visual art works, I cannot review everything that is sent to me, but will endeavour to give exceptional work an “honourable mention” at the very least, and links to quality sites that I think worthy of mentioning.

Having worked for most of the more reputable underground magazines in the early 90’s, I was never afforded the luxury of taking as much time and care over reviews as I would have liked, as aggressive deadlines, inter-label politics, and column space were always hanging like the sword of Damocles over me.

With WHITE_LINE, I have the luxury of being able to review when I have time, and I am receptive to a particular mood, and hopefully this will reflect in the quality or length of some of the reviews. If you like what you see, please link to me to encourage more traffic through the site, and cross promote whatever is happening out there.

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