

again, and one that will appear and disappear many times. There'll be fast-moving ones and slow-moving ones. That's spellbinding, for me.<sup>13</sup>

Eno discussed what he hears in piano harmonics in terms of equal temperament ("There are a lot of books about this. It's an interesting subject."),<sup>14</sup> explaining that the slight out-of-tuneness of piano fifths, thirds, and so on, make for an extraordinary richness in the vertical dimension. He went on to say:

I used to think: Piano? Compromise? Pathetic instrument, can't be tuned. But now I think what makes a piano so interesting is that it's generating so much complex information ... Because of the problem of Equal Temperament and Just Intonation, because you can't tune a piano perfectly, you never have such a simple interval [as a pure fifth, 2:3]. There are much more complex numbers than these involved with a piano, and that means you get some much more exotic harmonics, which really are very transitory. It's the most extraordinary instrument for that.<sup>15</sup>

What we are dealing with here are different modes of perception and receptivity. Expectations – often unconscious – have a great deal to do with how we listen. Beethoven's fifth Symphony is, aside from all of its programmatic "Fate" connotations, a piece of music about the unfolding of a brief melodic fragment in time: the first four notes, G-G-G-Eb, with their characteristic rhythm, appear in all four movements of the Symphony in different guises. The sound of a single piano tone struck with the sustain pedal down, or the sounds of the hum of London in Hyde Park, on the other hand, are, or have the potential to become, purely timbral, though unexpectedly complex musical experiences. One cannot approach Beethoven's Fifth in the Hyde Park mode of perception, or vice versa. One cannot approach a Bach fugue from the "frog's eye" perspective, nor can one approach Reich's *It's Gonna Rain* from the Western, linear-ear perspective. There is an analogy in the visual arts, in the growing field of video artworks. If in his music Eno is interested in cultivating a radically different approach to the listening process, in his video works a similar concern comes into play with regard to the video screen itself. In 1986 he criticized some of the videos shown at "The Luminous Image" exhibition at the Stedelijk in Amsterdam in precisely these terms: "Most of the pieces had a narrative structure, so you ended up looking at the screen, and looking at a screen is a different experience from looking at an object. You look *into* a screen, and by doing so you accept all its visual conventions."<sup>16</sup>

One of the things Eno is after, then, is using the senses – vision and hearing – in new ways, ways that have little to do with traditional artistic conventions. When he speaks as a critic, he is especially preoccupied with innovative uses of conventions, with the vertical color of sound, and with engineering aspects of the work of art.

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<sup>13</sup> Alan Jensen, "The Sound of Silence: A Thursday Afternoon with Brian Eno," *Electronics & Music Maker* (Dec. 1985), 23.

<sup>14</sup> Jensen, "Sound of Silence," 24.

<sup>15</sup> Jensen, "Sound of Silence," 24.

<sup>16</sup> John Hutchinson, "Brian Eno: Place #13," color brochure (Dublin: Douglas Hyde Gallery, 1986), n.p.