



The New York Times

WILLIAM ANASTASI: SOUND WORKS, 1963-2013
Hunter College Art Galleries, 68th Street & Lexington Avenue

William Anastasi's work falls somewhere between a Zen koan (What is the sound of one hand clapping?) and a philosophical proposition (If a tree falls in a forest, and no one is around to hear it, does it make a sound?). More generally, it questions notions of art, perception and reality. Sitting just inside the entrance is "Microphone" (1963), actually a large tape recorder that was placed inside a closet and left to record its own sound. Mr. Anastasi described the work as a "recording of the recorder recording the recorder." Now the machine sits on the floor, playing the results of that experiment. Other works, which Mr. Anastasi called "Sound Objects," feature mundane tools and appliances displayed alongside recordings of their sounds: a fan and a recording of its whirring; a deflated inner tube and the hissing of its air being released; a pneumatic drill, chunks of asphalt and a speaker playing a record of that action. "Beethoven's Fifth Symphony" (1965) uses magnetic tape as sculptural material draped from nails in the wall — although the unheard music on the tape is actually Bruno Walter conducting Beethoven's symphony — while "The World's Greatest Music" (1977) consists of three children's record players with 78-r.p.m. records stuck in their runoff grooves. Both of these forecast the aural and object manipulations of Christian Marclay. Drawings made blind — that is, not looking at the paper — while listening to music, or sound recordings of other artists making drawings, capture a different nexus of sound and vision. In all of these works Mr. Anastasi brushes up against ideas central to 1960s minimalism, process art and conceptualism. Like his friend the composer John Cage, Mr. Anastasi is more idiosyncratic; a bit of a riddle or koan himself.

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