

Extended statement by Adrián Villar Rojas:

What if we could see and think of ourselves – humanity – from an alien perspective; detached, unprejudiced, even amoral? What if we could see and think of ourselves from the border of our own completed path?

Sapiens have always been obsessed with matter. Since the invention of the first stone tools thousands of years ago, communities and societies have set themselves to accumulate an ever-broader archive of their material culture for the next generations to inherit. The creation of museums crystallised this inherent vice preserving, for instance, armours and swords from the French-British battles of the XV century. But, where are the sounds of those traces of bloodshed between the two reigns? Where are all the painful shouts, the clash of the iron against and through the iron, the whistle of a thousand arrows stubbing the air? Where are the endless crying of all of the mothers mourning the dead of all of the wars? Forever lost, may be the answer.

And what about planets and stars? Black holes and galaxies? Rats and worms? Dinosaurs and deer and spoons stirring cups of tea? What about all that secret and forever-lost symphony played in the universe by the friction of matter and energy against the surface of time and space? As the string theory asserts, there is nothing but notes and chords in a delicate pentagram.

Imagining a speculative history of sound, Adrián Villar Rojas tries to deconstruct the obsessions and agencies of our species' preservation culture, questioning the strong bias towards accumulating value in certain kinds of enduring objects, perhaps traversed by a key – though often disregarded – element: human labour.

John Locke, the father of political liberalism, said four hundred years ago that property was the extension of the human body over land through labour. In that undissolvable linkage between body, land and labour called *property*, he founded the essence – and the only guarantee – of individuals' freedom. And Marx, of value, as he conceives labour – the consumption of brain and muscles – accumulated in things – goods – as the basis of capital. We have thus *human labour transforming matter* as the foundation of society in both liberal and Marxist visions. We need it to exist, to project ourselves, to reproduce our way of life, to feel safe and secure, to impose our will, *to preserve and increase our patrimony*.

Why is this key role of accumulation played by labour-transformed matter? This is what Villar Rojas seeks to explore removing matter from its central place in the equation.

From spices, coffee beans or salt to gold and silver, from them to currency, and from currency to cryptocurrencies – a new digital kind of precious metals resorting to the metaphor of “mining” as a way of limiting issue – the human species has always tried to represent value with some enduring, hard-to-get, and above all scarce means. Sound is infinite. Adrián Villar Rojas challenges us and himself to reconsider this logic of accumulating wealth through scarcity from the infinite immateriality and abundance of sound.

Churches are also a means of spiritual and epistemological accumulation. Reformists rejected Catholic idol worship as the fetishist slavery of religious conscience to senses, as well as the episcopal corruption as the surrender of the supposedly highest souls to the delightful sins of the material world. The Vatican had become, more than a church, a bank accumulating gold and silver on walls, ceilings and doors instead of in safes. Reformists were somehow demanding Catholics more abstraction. Even the Lutheran call to translate the bible from Latin into national languages and in massively printed copies could be understood – in its last consequences – as a radical assertion of the cognitive presence of God in the mind more than in any other place.

Villar Rojas' proposal sets in sintony with this iconoclast travel towards abstraction by turning the hall of this Catholic-Reformist-community-shared church into a shadowy cavern of sonic introspection. There would hardly be a better place to make Plato's allegory – that journey from pure senses to pure thought he depicted as a walking inside a cavern only lit by scattered fires up to the final exit – afterwards taken by Christianity as its core eschatology from flesh to soul – somehow return to help us go back to our minds in search of primal connections with universal noise.