



Ursonate / **URSONATE** English script of speakers in film.

People who are talking, in order of 1st appearance: Marina La Palma, Joseph Franklin, Jacki Apple, Jack Ox, Hank Schuler, Kristen Loree, and Debbie Knotts.

MARINA

"One of the hallmarks of modernist art is this blurring of boundaries, overlapping, replacing one thing for another, substituting, for example a constant of a musical score as a metaphor for a set of instructions to do painting, dance, things that aren't strictly speaking music."

JOSEPH

"One of the things that intrigues me is that it really comes out of the avant-garde jazz movement, for me, which is another of breaking down those structures clearly; theme and variations concept—it disbands and you're dealing with long and short narratives, a flow of musical narratives."

JACKI

"Schwitters is like an early jazz scat artist, especially in the translation of that to what you brought to it."

MARINA

"Well there's also the aspect of what he is doing that is so remarkable is taking the plastic material of spoken language— bak too ee— and using it as material for art."

MARINA

“What Schwitters did was take the plastic material of human speech... phonemes. Phonemes are the unit of construction. But here you have translated that dimension to a completely different medium.”

HANK “Being more visually oriented person I was more taken by the change in intensity of hues.”

MARINA

“In those sections that are just plain color—is that both an esthetic choice and visually part of the instructions because each color represents a certain sound?”

JACK

“Yes, it’s actually part of the algorithm; those are the silences. With Schwitters voice alone, the silences had to be at least as important as the sound parts. I wanted the spaces to be jumping out at you, the pauses, and so I color-coded them so that the shorter spaces are breaths – This is a breath – it is a kind of lemon yellow, you see when they are slightly wider they keep getting into a deeper color.”

HANK

“The visual aspect...spoke to me much more than the music.”

Jack

The ordering, where the images are, how they are cut up, they are all giving me information about Kurt Schwitters own performance of it –his syllables, his pitch levels are all encoded in there — every aspect of his performance is ; you can see twii Ee —it is going down, the pitch is changing. I decided I had to use phonetics, because the Ursonate is phonetically based, and I consider the phonemes to be just like the found objects he used to make his collages. Where Kurt Schwitters took it, you know, that is where we are –that is we sample, we put things together in the computer – the computer today is like the most amazing collage instrument.”

JOSEPH -

“There are certain times in listening to Ursonate that remind me of a kind of free form jazz performance. So you take a quartet or quintet and they hopefully are working together but you get this improvisational burst—and then moves to the next one. Each of these bursts of sound, each of those responses are somewhat symphonic.”

JACK

“ One of the things about the Ursonate is it is two things at once – it is a sound poem, but also has a classical sonata form for music, which means it is INTERMEDIA .” The four movements are quite different from each other.”

Kristen

“They are . This is movement one (arm sweep) it’s huge..... Movement 2 and 3 are very brief drastically different in the way that they read and the way that look and the way that

they feel..... so movement two in juxtaposition to movement one, which has a lot of life to it and sort of vivacity to it, is very dark and...

JACK “..moves down...O O o....”

KRISTEN cont.

“... right —because with number three just goes — it just goes like all of a sudden the flute section comes out- and the symphony starts to play and you can see the rhythm, see the difference between the 2nd movement which is very slow with a lot of pitch changes – same longer images—and they look like O-O coming out of the mouth like O-O-O and AAA landscape

MARINA –

“So you can think of a life as a symphonic structure with movement and dark parts. So how did you select the images to use in the piece?”

JACK

“ The first theme is the very first Merzbau that was destroyed in Hanover during World War 2- and you can see it here (pointing) ... ta tatwii Eee..”

1:16 **JACK** “ I needed to have images because you wouldn’t see all the shifting of images for pitch and you wouldn’t see all the specific collaging based on the vowel sounds...you wouldn’t see it if you didn’t have images, so I needed images and I wanted it to have as much of his life and his thought as I could put into it.”

JACK..because he was building the Merzbau in the same ten year period in Hanover that he was like building the Ursonate...”

DEBBIE-

“So these are actually areas where he lived..”

JACK

“and then you see all these landscape images in them – and some of them come from – from Norway – where he went when he first left Germany, went to Norway....and then he took that last ferry out of Molde Norway to get to England when the Nazis were invading. And then he did all this work in the Lake district in England. So the first two movements have all these Norwegian landscapes and the second two movements have these landscapes from where he was in England.”

JACKI

“ It’s a journey ... his whole life...”

JACK

“ I felt that I wanted as much information encoded in this work about Schwitters and how he thought, and where he was , and his work – as I could put in.”

Marina:

“Here is this gesamptkunt - this document, this monument—it’s an object and it represents this sort of historical milestone of the person who triggers it, but it’s sort of been reincarnated a bunch of times in different form.

JACK

“That’s what I always considered my work –taking a score and performing it visually. Later on a friend of mine who was a German musicologist said ‘No you are really doing visualization---But I sill think of it as a visual performance.’”

JACK

“This particular painting is actually directly visualizing Kurt Schwitters own performance.”

Hank

“The visual rhythms that attracted me --the use of colors – and then I started seeing what I thought of as a lot of underlying structural components.”

JACK

“At a certain point in making this work I realized that the processes that I followed which I had analyzed and taken from Kurt Schwitters performance and my score of it – I realized that it was like algorithms that a computer programmer would use.”

MARINA

“Metaphorically, in the sense that you didn’t feel you have to make this on a computer because it is like a computer algorithm.”

JACK

“No, no, no, it is really important that this be handmade, completely handmade. If you’re a cellist and you are playing the same figure over and over, it’s different every time because it is coming through the body, an embodied sound, and if you just copy something and repeat it, it’s boring, it doesn’t have that infinite variety that a human being playing an instrument has.”

JACKI

“When Jack talks about algorithmic structures then it leads us into whole other areas of new knowledge in the 21st century and the merger where the collaboration of art and science.”

KRISTEN

“When we went into the motion capture studio – we had this long discussion about digital and this digital as opposed to something inside a computer that isn’t already found in other organic content—and so putting the motion capture onto my body while we actually doing that made so much sense.”

- JACK

“ And we were able to map it to my painting syllables. I had a duet with Schwitters and you did too – and when we came together it became a trio between the three of us.”

KRISTEN –

“Yes – we were all in the room.

MARINA

“ So another wonderful aspect of this work for me is the way it is a repository – we talked about information – all these layers - it’s like a library or an archive of Schwitters life, his techniques, and subsequently a lot of modern art movements. And ideas

JACKI

“ And so this work – the painting – is this repository of that history that leads us into the next century. It is both an archive and its also a prophesy in a sense. It tells us where we can go. This film is in itself an extension of the painting, the structure of the film is a mirror image of how the painting is structured, not only in the collaging of images, but also in the construction of the sound. ”

MARINA

“ Once again we are adding another layer of meaning in that the video you are watching is in fact constructed through the same process of layering and sequencing”.

JACKI

“ So the performance of the work – of the painting – with Kristen’s interpretation of Schwitters, and then this interpretation of the painting in another medium, which is also a time- based medium.”

MARINA

“ So the viewer becomes a performer of the work. Each time you encounter it and interact with it you are creating another iteration of it...”

- JACKI

“..to live with this work is a journey; each time that you experience it; each time you move through it you broaden your understanding, It becomes deeper, it becomes richer. But the journey is one you take over time yourself, so in a sense a person who lives with this work is perormatively part of it because they keep traveling through it, moving through it. It gets richer and richer with each viewing”