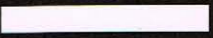
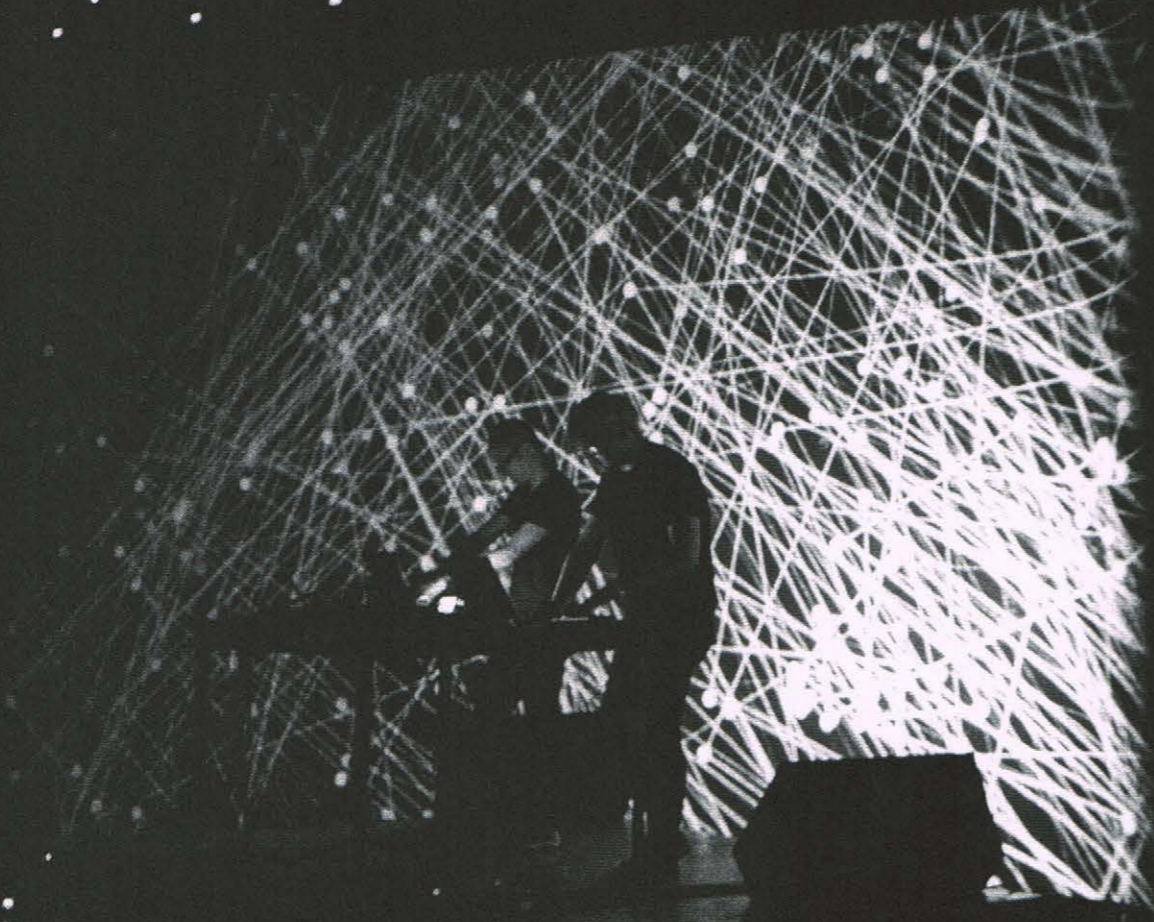


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HH , Walking On The Wire

Although the question of "what is sound art?" has been set aside and is still hard to resolve, two Taiwanese sound artists, who form the group HH, have been probing the grey area of "what is and what is not", once again placing that impregnable question back on the edge of the mesa.

The duo HH was founded in 2013, with Yao Chung-Han in charge of sound and Yeh Ting-Hao managing visuals and lighting. The former transmits digital audio signals to the latter who uses those sound signals as parameters for visual variations. This means that throughout the entire performance the sounds and the lights maintain precise synchronization. Their ambition goes even further when they attempt to use the format of abstract audiovisual performance to trigger the audience, turning the crowd into the subject of synchronization which moves with the music. It requires Yao and Yeh to reduce their egos as artists and induce a techno party-like audiovisual environment that offers an abundant sensory stimulation in order to titillate the still, stubborn

bodies and alienated emotions of the art crowd.

Their sounds are mixed with recognizable beats and basslines, while projectors, stage lights and smoke machines (hazers) are incorporated into their visual production. This is where HH walks a fine line, which borders two opposing forces and distinguishes between "what is and what is not" sound art. If the duo is unable to maintain a certain balance while walking on that wire, it's quite likely they'll become traitors of the art – or half-baked electronic music DJs. HH can't get too comfortable in the in-between, either. Unless they maintain a confrontational situation that challenges their audiences, they'll be reduced to mash-up artists who try to please both sides.

Since HH was formed over a year ago, they have performed in various venues, such as exhibition openings, alternative art spaces, live houses and outdoor concerts. They played in line-ups of divergent hard noise artists, electronic rock bands and electronic

music DJs all on the same stage, so most of these performances were dubbed as "hybrid" or "crossover". From an audience's perspective, each type of performer can set their own standards for their art. When HH steps on stage, they break down the rigid frames around what audiences typically perceive as electronic music. On the other hand, those expecting something more along the lines of 'serious' sound art are likely to find the rhythmic basslines and the special visual effects all too similar to entertaining dance music. But no matter what type of audience comes, they surely would agree that HH excels at the ways they manipulate emotions, structure their audiovisual timeline, and arrange each verse and musical phrase. This is especially evident in "Syn-Infection", a fifty-minute-long, epic theatrical performance, which HH performed in October 2014 in Songshan Cultural and Creative Park at a venue with a three-floor high-rise ceiling and maximum seating capacity of five-hundred people. That performance could be considered their most mature and complete work to date. There, the

audience couldn't help but come under the influence and move freely to the sensory stimulation provided by their richly layered noise, geometric visuals and lighting. When from ultra low-frequency tempos, the beats emerged and became more clear, the variation of visual dynamics became more intense, and the crowd started to dance, even clap and scream up until the end, when still wanting more, they shouted, "Encore!".

Apart from the applause, as always there were some in the audience who reckoned HH was making a nightclub party out of an art performance, and, conversely, some thought they didn't please the eyes and ears enough to meet nightclub standards. Facing these two contradictory responses, we should understand that a performance's brilliance is not found in stability or technical perfection but, rather, in the breathtaking maintenance of a situation packed with tension, always on the verge of dropping. The way toward even more possibilities – that gate has been pried open by HH.

