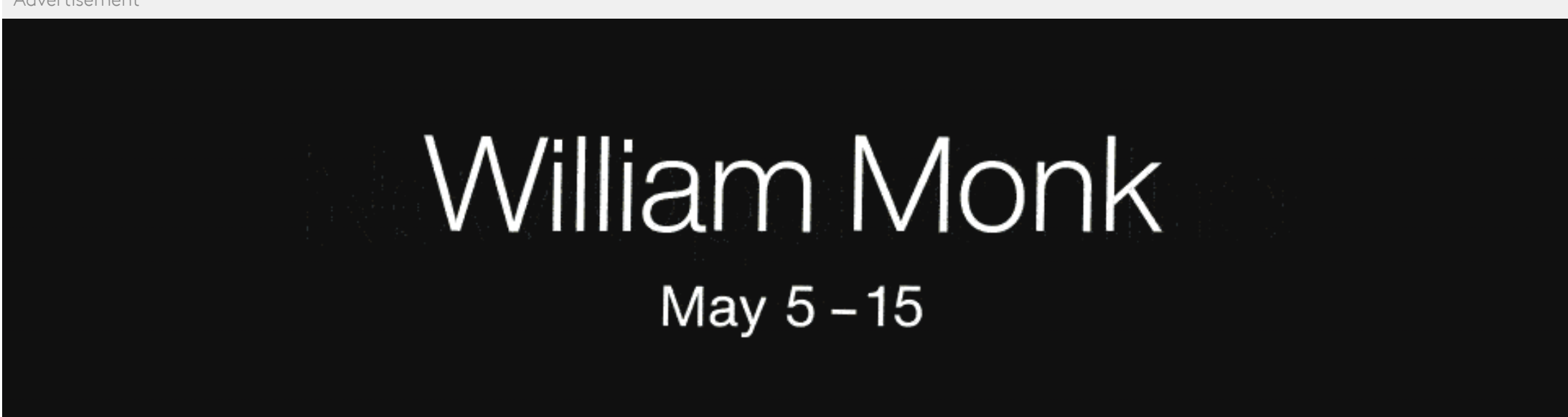


Advertisement

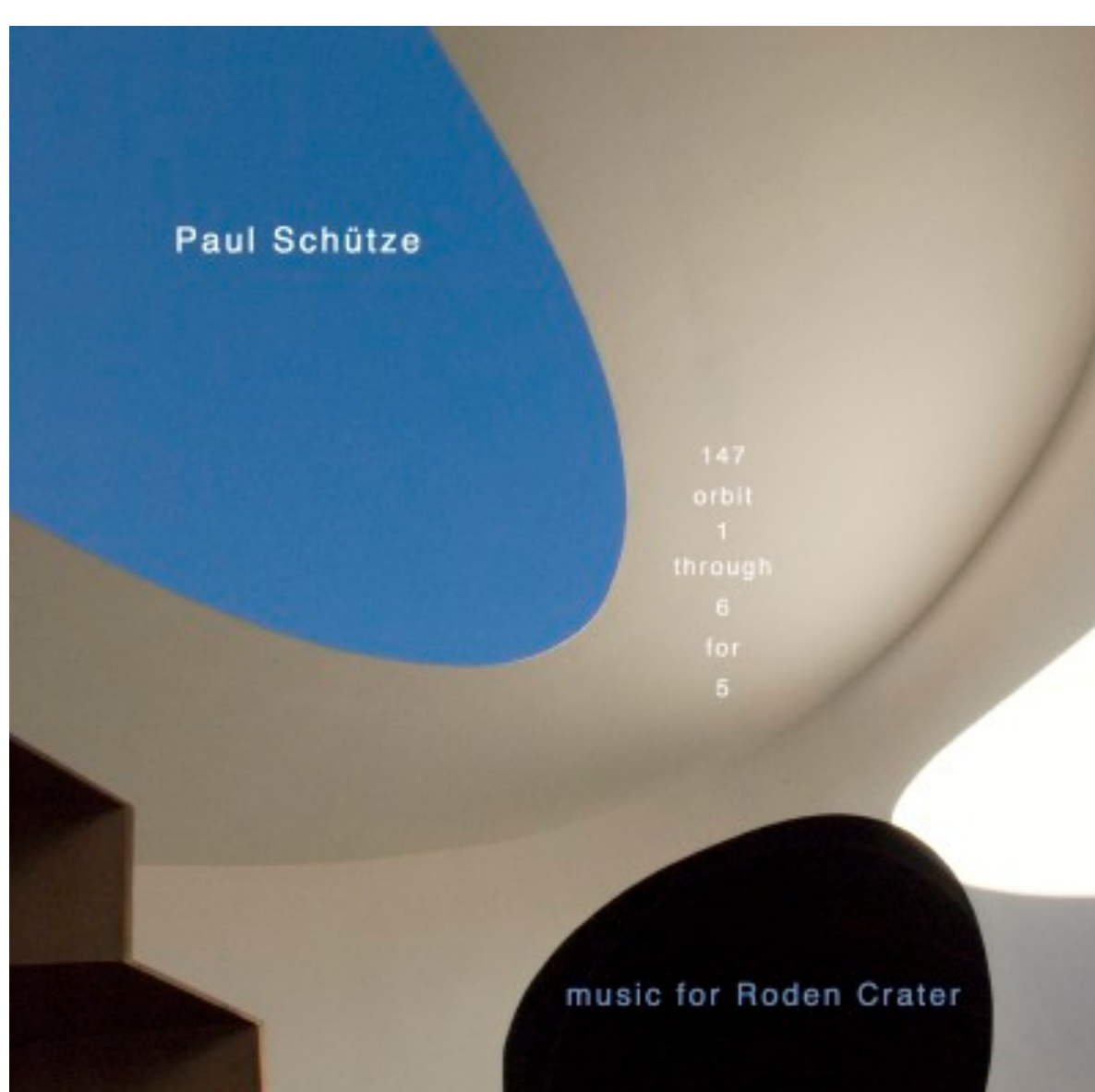


Culture Digest / **147 orbiting 1 through 6 for 5**

Twitter Facebook Email Print

BY JENNIFER HIGGIE
01 OCT 2008

Paul Schütze (free [download](#))



147 orbiting 1 through 6 for 5 – eight years in the making, recorded in Tokyo, London and New York, and just over five hours long – is the artist Paul Schütze’s portrait of James Turrell’s momentous ongoing project at the volcanic Roden Crater in the Arizona desert, which he bought in 1977 to transform into an observatory for the viewing of celestial phenomena. Many artists and composers have mined the relationship between landscape and abstraction by creating impressionistic responses to it, but Schütze’s approach is a little more literal: the sonic frequencies used by the musicians on his album respond directly to frequencies to which the rooms and corridors at Roden have been tuned.

Whereas most commentators have emphasized the extraordinary visual and philosophical qualities of Roden Crater (some apertures, for example, are made to view events of such infrequency that they will not happen in our lifetimes), Turrell’s meticulous treatment of its sonic components has received fewer column inches. It’s a little-known fact that every physical space is tuned to a resonant frequency. Turrell employed an acoustician to gauge the frequencies of the crater, the results of which were then built into the architectural spaces. Someone whispering in the central chamber, for example, can be clearly heard on the outer rim, and in one corridor footsteps will each produce two notes. This is one of the reasons Turrell intends no more than eight people to visit Roden Crater at any time – crowds would ruin the sonics.

147 orbiting 1 through 6 for 5 is designed to be either installed temporarily at Roden Crater or performed in the amphitheatre as part of the opening. When certain frequencies are hit in the music, the corresponding frequency in Roden Crater will resonate. As Schütze observes: ‘You can in theory cause all the spaces to sing like organ pipes.’ The title of the album is also a description of the composition, which is made up of 147 elements (from a complete phrase to a single note played by one instrument, which is repeated at a various intervals and located at a specific distance away from the listener) that orbit a single point (the listener) over time while moving very slowly across the six channels over five hours.

Schütze, who plays percussion and organ for the album, asked each player – Ko Ishikawa on sho (a Japanese bamboo mouth organ), Kevin Pollard on piano, Simon Hopkins and Raoul Björkenheim on guitars – to improvise, in isolation, to a set of instructions that were different for each musician, which Schütze then digitally rearranged. He wanted each instrument to be heard in a manner analogous both to the unpredictable way we observe astronomical movements and to the overwhelmingly visceral experience of being subject to the whims of the dramatic weather, light shifts and sky at Roden Crater.



The result is an extraordinarily distilled, unhurried and, surprisingly, occasionally lush soundscape; bass notes rumble like distant thunder, a piano phrase swoops in like a hawk only to dissolve into a single high note, while a lightning tone will be sustained to a point of almost unbearable intensity. As though echoing the space of sky and desert, there are long, atmospheric silences, punctuated only by the whoosh of a sho or the distant tremble of a cymbal. The sounds of different instruments occasionally weave or clash, before dispersing once again into space.

As no date has yet been set for the opening to the general public of Roden Crater, your best bet might be to travel there by sound: don your headphones, stare at the night sky and listen to 147 orbiting 1 through 6 for 5. It is, I suspect, the closest you can get to experiencing the sparse beauty of a desert without leaving the city.

JENNIFER HIGGIE

Jennifer Higgie is editor-at-large of *frieze*, based in London, UK. She is the host of *frieze*’s first podcast, *Bow Down: Women in Art History*. Her book *The Mirror and the Palette* is forthcoming from Weidenfeld & Nicolson.

First published in Issue 118
October 2008

Share this: Twitter Facebook Email Print

Advertisement



MORE LIKE THIS

‘Masculinities’ at the Barbican: An Impossible Map

Theater Gates Wants You to Browse This Archive of Black Excellence

The Cognitive Dissonance of Sara Cwynar’s Media Haven

How Contemporary Art Can Help Create a Culture of Remembrance

What to See and Do in Digital Paris

How Martin Margiela Transformed Fashion’s Cast-Offs

For Nicole Eisenman, Historical Memory is a Blunt Instrument

Jeremy Shaw’s Exit Strategy for a Technology-Driven World

Otessa Moshfegh’s New Murder Mystery Novel is a Tale of Paranoid Isolation

Prem Sahib Revisits His Past at Southard Reid, London

Michael Armitage Renders Political Violence in Kenya with Fauvist Colour

Luiz Roque’s Films Pay Tribute to Marginalized Subcultures

Advertisement



Culture Digest

- MUSIC
- PAUL SCHÜTZE
- REVIEW
- JENNIFER HIGGIE
- JAMES TURRELL

MORE CULTURE DIGEST

SEE ALL



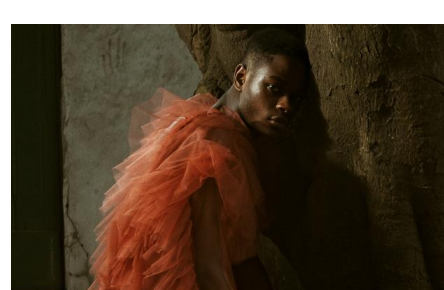
A Spooky Feminist Reading List for Halloween



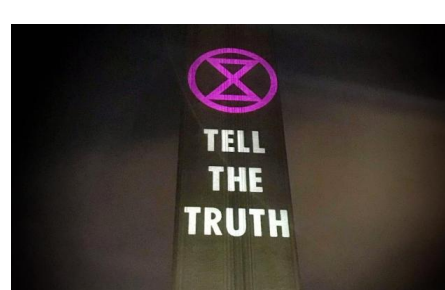
In Pictures: A History of Food Photography



In Pictures: London’s Queer Nightlife



In Pictures: The New Black Vanguard



The Defiant Art and Design of Extinction Rebellion



In Pictures: The Defiant Art of the Protest Poster

MOST READ

SEE ALL



The Threat to Freedom of Expression in Japan



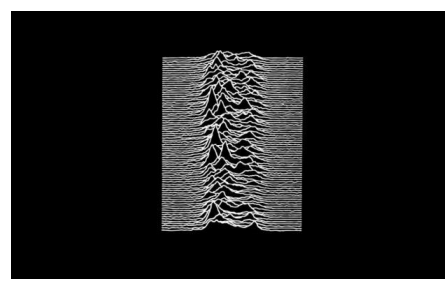
I Learned Enormous Things: Hans Ulrich Obrist Remembers Marisa Merz (1931-2019)



Editors’ Picks: Our Favourite Art World Holiday Destinations



An Afrofuturism Show With No Black Artists: What Went Wrong at Berlin’s Künstlerhaus Bethanien?



Pop Culture Is the Great Educator: An Interview with Peter Saville



‘Learning How to Be Queer Again’: Remembering Douglas Crimp (1944-2019)

LATEST MAGAZINES



frieze magazine
Issue 209
March 2020



frieze magazine
Issue 210
April 2020



frieze magazine
Issue 211
May-June 2020

Subscribe now and save up to 40%

SUBSCRIBE