

# Cybernetics of the Pool

**Tutorials, Exercises and Scores**

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06.03.2020  
23.08.2020

**Tabakalera**  
Exhibition hall

Agency

Ana de Almeida & Alicja Rogalska

Cory Arcangel

Elena Asins

Anthony Braxton

Cornelius Cardew

Guy de Cointet

Hanne Darboven

Edgar Degas

Jon Mikel Euba

Luke Fowler

Pedro G. Romero

Douglas Huebler

Gema Intxausti

Mike Kelley

Sharon Lockhart

Alex Mendizabal

Lili Reynaud-Dewar

Heinrich Riebesehl

Peter Roehr

Constanze Ruhm

Jörg Schlick

Camila Sposati

Don Van Vliet

**Jon Mikel Euba**

*400 Moves to Elude the  
Predictable, 2020*



The exhibition *Cybernetics of the Poor: Tutorials, Exercises and Scores* opens a new season of exhibitions in Tabakalera. This exhibition is named after the international seminar that took place in 2019 and was shared between Vienna and San Sebastian. That collaboration gave rise to this exhibition project, which in December this year will travel to the Kunsthalles in Vienna. It is a collaboration which has not only allowed the production of new artistic pieces, but also means that the work of several Basque artists will be taken to Vienna.

A number of interesting ideas have emerged from this project and these will be seen in Tabakalera, in different ways, during the following months. The exhibition raises important issues and invites us to see how artists approach these through their practice. It also invites us to consider the different possible types of response to the processes of planning, anticipation and systematisation that give shape to the world in which we live and define the space left to art—or the individual—by this absolute domination of cybernetics which reaches virtually every aspect of our daily lives. In other words, referring to the title of the exhibition, it is about how to escape from the score, to deviate from the tutorials, proposing exercises that play with the established rules in order to get to another place.

These tensions between planning and art, a system and its subversion, are in some cases expressed through the idea of the game, and in this way links are created with the second exhibition of the spring: *Bideo-jokoak. Playing Without End*. This project will expand beyond the confines of the new Lau Pareta hall to provoke a series of interpretations, in both a playful and a critical sense, about gamification.

Finally, another important project in the first few months of the year will be the presentation of a new piece created for Tabakalera by the Argentine artist Julio Le Parc, a pioneering artist in the introduction of movement and, in his words, the principle of instability in a “planned” art which has altered the formal constructivist tradition, making room for play and a new aesthetic experience.

**Tabakalera**  
San Sebastian  
March 2020

# Cybernetics of the Poor

## Tutorials, Exercises and Scores

Cybernetics is ruling the world. Initially it was a theory and/or methodology for anticipating reactions to interventions, measures and other planning decisions and included the anticipated reaction to such planning—with the goal of self-controlled, free floating systems. Its understanding of systems originally proceeded from military observations—how to shoot down a plane that is not flying in a straight line? It entered many different types of activities, from traffic planning to complex engineering, and also many social disciplines like criminology. With the digitalization of all aspects of daily life and the rise of data as a commodity, cybernetics began to take over economic relations as well, moving beyond the limits of public planning and politics.

If art is understood as a human activity which avoids or even undermines architectures of power, profit and domination, what is its role in a world of an almost total and global cyber capitalism? As a cybernetics of the poor it can be seen as an attempt to overcome the dominant cybernetics, or as an attempt to interrupt cybernetical regimes. In both cases it needs to be aware of the means and strategies, of the philosophy of the current contemporary cyber-capitalist program.

But art has been reacting to the cybernetical turn in architectures of power for some time now. Whether it is the ideas in movements like conceptualism and Fluxus, which conceive of artworks as plans, tables of contents, proposals for complex interaction, or the tendency to “dematerialize” (Lucy Lippard) the artwork, which has been programmatic at various moments in the art history of the last 50 years. The show *Cybernetics of*

*the Poor: Tutorials, Exercises and Scores* combines historical positions and proposals that respond to the new situation where cybernetics is no longer just a concept of power but also one of profit, with both coming together in the notion of control and anticipation through collected data.

Four contemporary artists respond to this situation in various ways and have produced new work for this show. But there are also many classical or lesser known practitioners who had an interest in this, some of them 50 years ago. They have in common that their work falls under one or more of the three categories: Tutorials, Exercises and Scores—the subtitle of this show.

The Brazilian **Camila Sposati** (1972) works on the border of sculpture and musical instruments, understanding her objects as containers for future use, a use that does not necessarily need to happen in reality but can be defined potentially as a possible (musical) use that is not random, but is also not predetermined, in that way opposing the culture of pre-sets and apps. She also invokes a post- and anticolonial perspective: where does contemporary cyberculture proceed from, how did it reach the non-Western world?

**Lili Reynaud-Dewar** (1975) addresses the architectural and institutional logic of museums and other sites of contemporary culture. This French artist, with a history in performance art, film, literature and especially the history of Queer and Afro-Diasporic themes, dances around and inside buildings, transgressing their functional limits. The way the building anticipates and cybernetically regulates gazes, views and movements is countered not with an anarchist gesture but with a language of dance moves and the alien intrusion of a naked, painted, female body moving in a very specific way, exercising an anti-plan by using well defined elements of the dance lexicon without score, drama or an audience. The dances are filmed and edited.

In the piece titled *29 Conditions for a Self-Imposition*, **Jon Mikel Euba** (1967) explores the ways in which language structures the body. For a number of years, as an extension to his sculptural work, Euba has also been writing. In his practice, thinking about exercise is to think about the ways in which language and body determine each other through a kind of



**Lili Reynaud-Dewar**  
*I Want All of the*  
*Above to be the Sun*  
*(Tabakalera), 2020*

mutual contagion. With this piece, produced specifically in the context of the exhibition, Jon Mikel Euba goes one step further by focusing on the construction of a work system and once again puts the emphasis on the activity itself, on the use of language, rather than on the result.

**Agency** is an artistic initiative based in Brussels whose work involves analysing the legal framework within which artists work. In this way, it provides a response to the cyber capitalist regime in the very place where the basic concepts of intellectual and creative property are defined. Within the framework of this exhibition, the ambitious proposal is to revisit a total of more than 100 cases of collective activity classified in its archive. Those related to the fan phenomenon are among the most outstanding. The work represents the redefinition of the creative subject as an agent intersected by all kinds of anonymous and impersonal authorities.

The exhibition also shows other contemporary artists who regularly react in one way or another to the challenge of cybernetic control and economy. Austrian film director and media artist **Constanze Ruhm** (1965) has made several feature films that are based on the continuation of the life stories of female fictional characters. The many parts of this series of films finally arrive at the question of death and the possibility of burial, a final death of the programmatic potentiality of the

troubled surviving characters—figures that have human fates and are ideological and programmatic abstractions in a human form: the raw material of cyber capitalism. **Ana de Almeida** (1987) and **Alicja Rogalska** (1979) from Portugal and Poland have been working for a while on role plays, feminist versions of so called LARPs, Live-Action-Role Plays. They will do a version of the game in Tabakalera and also present the results within the exhibition.

Some artists are represented by scores and/or work based on scores. The score represents a social programme that has to deal with the dialectics of control and openness, and does so in an exemplary way that is different from the dominant use of such anticipation of human reactions. **Cornelius Cardew** (1936-1981) with his collective The Scratch Orchestra, after experimenting with aleatoric and graphic notation, tried to directly connect utopian politics with musical practice. **Luke Fowler** (1978) has produced a retrospective essay on this attempt with his film *Pilgrimage from Scattered Points* (2016). **Anthony Braxton** (1945), maybe the richest and most wide-reaching innovator of Jazz in the last 50 years, has also tried to notate his musical pieces, performances and operas in different ways, trying to be precise and open at the same time. **Alex Mendizabal** (1961) also highlights the ability of elements such as sheet music to question the authority granted to an institution such as the orchestra. *For orchestra* is the result of an obsessive exercise which began with the simple aim of producing a quantity of compositions per day. While *Famoseca* proposes a composition for a carousel in motion. A path which years later the artist would continue to explore through the *Curva Chiusa* project.



**Anthony Braxton**  
Extract of the  
composition number  
367F, 1967  
© Anthony Braxton/  
Tri-Centric Foundation

**Don Van Vliet** (1941-2010), better known by his stage name Captain Beefheart, did not write scores, but often explained that his turn from music to painting was not a silencing; he understood his paintings to be “very loud”, as a visual statement of an interpretation, a reading that should be heard. Noa Eshkol (1924-2007) was a dancer and dance instructor who was deeply interested in cybernetics and a good friend of Heinz von Foerster, who introduced her to NASA. The space programmes were able to use her knowledge of dance and body movements and her unique notation method. The American artist and photographer **Sharon Lockhart** (1964), who was also important for the rediscovery of Eshkol, has photographed the three-dimensional, “sculptural” notation system of Eshkol. The piece *Scale* by **Elena Asins** (1940-2015) also arises from the artist’s inexhaustible interest in all kinds of notation systems and their application to the plastic arts as a way of restricting the quality of the personal to the minimum. The notion of a computational art, referred to by Asins at different times, demonstrates a radical questioning of the separation between mechanical and sensitive exercise.

**Jorge Oteiza** (1908-2003), a sculptor and artist who is known, among other things, for his unfinished projects, makes a foray into musical composition through scores created out loud with his own voice, proposing a first rehearsal without an orchestra in which the artist reveals himself to be a great ventriloquist capable of occupying and interchanging different positions and sound registers.

The discovery of programmes and scores in nature has often been taken up by cybernetic ideology and metaphorology. The human genome project seems to provide a legitimation of a programmed world via nature and its code writing. The Austrian artist **Jörg Schlick** (1951-2005) used the beginning of the Human Genome Code after it had been documented by a German newspaper (filling their entire cultural section and applied it in the organization of photographs. He used the code as an organizational tutorial by applying it to something completely different, demonstrating the randomness but also the beauty of organizational systems and their potentials. **Hanne Darboven** (1941-2009) has done something similar in her life work of writings and drawings that follow strict organizational systems which function for her like self-ordered laws or rules, replacing social control not by its opposite, but by a different, self-developed set of rules. These kinds of projects often grew out of conceptual practices. Darboven was always known for her seriousness, although we are showing a work that plays humorously with the controlled life of school children.



**Heinrich Riebesehl**  
*Menschen im Fahrstuhl,*  
20.11.1969, 1969  
©Kicken Berlin

Less serious on a superficial level, but very philosophical, are the projects by **Douglas Huebler** (1924-1997), among them a series of photographs showing every human being on earth. Incomplete of course, like Schlick's project to organize photographs according to the human genome, whatever its length, but perfectly illustrating and illuminating the concept of a cybernetics of the poor. This is a hopeless, philosophically honest, tragically funny attempt by a human to behave like a God, or a machine, or a cyber capitalist data collection for profit—and of course failing. Similarly the photographer **Heinrich Riebesehl** (1938-2010), who had no background in conceptual art, took a series of photographs in an elevator of the publishing house he worked for in the German city of Hannover in the 1960s. He portrayed people as if he was a surveillance camera—long before such a thing came into existence. The work *The Rescue of the Ear and the Moustache* (2016) by **Gema Intxausti** (1966) also refers to control and surveillance techniques. Although in this case the action takes the form of an exploration of the Stasi Museum in Berlin. The drawings she creates based on the surveillance systems of the former GDR may well be the result of a delirium of the senses, but they are consistent with the detailed observation of different documentary sources collected by the artist.

The locus of many of the artists in this exhibition is situated between a score and an exercise. **Peter Roehr** (1944-1968), an artist who worked in advertising for most of his short adult life, tried to capture the monotony and minimalist charm of the controlled life in a consumer society. He left behind several hundred works in which he exclusively pursued the idea of serial repetition. **Pedro G. Romero** (1964), meanwhile, entrusts flamenco dancer

Israel Galván with the mission of showing us the space within a dwelling. This is a flat (5th staircase, 10th floor, flat A, number 33 of Calle Cantabria) located in the Catalan municipality of Badia del Vallés marked out by the protagonist with the movements of his body.

It is a well-known fact that the obsession of **Edgar Degas** (1834-1917) with investigating the nature of movement led him to draw, paint and sculpt the bodies of ballerinas during long periods of his life. After his death, more than 150 figurative sculptures were found in his studio, most of which were made of wax, clay or a wax and oil-based modelling material. The copy in Bakelite that we present in this exhibition is titled *Spanish Dancer*.

The work of **Mike Kelley** (1954-2012) is characterised, inter alia, by exploring the psychopathological dimension of cyber capitalism in a singular way through the manipulation of the most common objects. The two-channel video that we present in this exhibition documents an installation with a markedly theatrical character, in which visitors to an exhibition by the artist are invited to interact with objects displayed in an enclosed space. Kelley, and the Los Angeles performance scene in general, has been considerably influenced by the work of **Guy de Cointet** (1934-1983), which reflects a profound interest in the forms of theatricality that are rehearsed within art based on an elaborate textual and objectual production. His investigations and games with language, the use of humour and his ability to move between different media have made Guy de Cointet a point of reference for different generations of artists, as well as one of the benchmarks for the practice of *performance*.

In summary, the exhibition that we are opening to the public is made up of a constellation of works in which artists make use of various tactics to challenge but at the same time learn from the prevailing cybernetic order; strategies and methodologies that can be understood and defined as characteristic of a *cybernetics of the poor*.

**Diedrich Diederichsen**  
**Oier Etxeberria**

## List of works

### Agency

*Assembly (Cybernetics of the Poor: Tutorials, Exercises and Scores)*, 2020  
12 cases based on the question «What if collective things would get mutually included within art practices?»  
New production  
This project has been done in collaboration with Kunststahle Wien and it was granted by Flanders State of Art

### Jon Mikel Euba

(Amorebieta, 1967)  
*29 Conditions for a Self-Imposition Setting of a Body that is Made Available for Writing*, 2020  
Sculpture installation  
New production  
This project has been done in collaboration with Kunststahle Wien

### Ana de Almeida & Alicja Rogalska

(Lisbon, 1987, Ostrofeka, 1979)  
*Nova*, 2019

Live Action Role Play:  
script, installation, video

### Constanze Ruhm

(Vienna, 1965)  
*CRASH SITE / My\_Never\_Ending\_Burial\_Plot*, 2010  
Three channel video, 69'

### Lili Reynaud-Dewar

(La Rochelle, 1975)  
*I Want All of the Above to be the Sun (Tabakalera)*, 2020  
Video HD, colour, 28'48"  
*I Want All of the Above to be the Sun (Camila)*, 2020  
Video HD, colour, 6'  
This project has been done in collaboration with Kunststahle Wien

### Mike Kelley

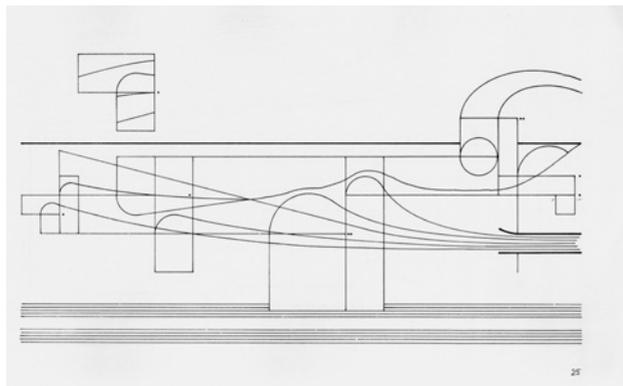
(Detroit, 1954 – Los Angeles, 2012)  
*Test Room Containing Multiple Stimuli Known to Elicit Curiosity and Manipulatory Responses*, 1999  
*A Dance Incorporating Movements Derived from Experiments by Harry F. Harlow and Choreographed in the Manner of Martha Graham*, 1999  
Two-channel video installation  
colour and b/w, no sound, 51'88" and 8'32"

### Heinrich Riebesehl

(Lathen/Ems, 1939–Hannover 2010)  
*Menschen im Fahrstuhl, 20.11.1969, 1969 [People in the Elevator, 20.11.1969]*  
Photography  
21 gelatin silver prints, 2007

### Douglas Huebler

(Michigan, 1924– Massachusetts, 1997)  
*Variable Piece n°8 (Torino)*, 1969  
12 printed photographs  
*Variable piece n°1 (Paris)*, 1970  
Set of two framed panels with photographs accompanied by texts  
*Crocodile Tears II: The Great Corrector (Mondrian III)*, 1989  
Acrylic on canvas, colour photographic print on paper, text, marker  
Painting



### Cornelius Cardew

*Treatise*, 1967  
Peters Edition No. 7560  
© 1967 Gallery Upstairs Press, USA

**Guy de Cointet**

(Paris, 1934 - Los Angeles, 1983)  
*De toutes les couleurs*, 1981-1982  
Installation and theatrical piece  
14 scenic objects

**Peter Roehr**

(Lebork, 1944 - Frankfurt, 1968)  
*Untitled (OB-154)*, 1967  
Paper on paper  
Brown paper reinforcement rings  
*Film-Montagen, 1-2-3*, 1965  
Video, 23'50"

**Pedro G. Romero**

(Aracena, 1964)  
*Arquitectura prematura*, 2005  
*Archivo F.X./La ciudad vacía/*  
*Comunidad*, 2005  
Video, 20'37"  
Edition 1/7

**Luke Fowler**

(Glasgow, 1978)  
*Pilgrimage from Scattered Points*, 2016  
Video in colour and b/w, 45'

**Cory Arcangel**

(Nueva York, 1978)  
*Paganini's 5th Caprice*, 2011  
Video, colour, sound, 3' 41"

**Alex Mendizabal**

(San Sebastian, 1961)  
*For Orchestra*, 1996  
Scores  
*Famoseca*, 1987  
Scores  
Cover by Roberto Clemente

**Don Van Vliet**

(California, 1941 - 2010)  
*Fur on the Trellis and Just up*  
*into the Air*, 1985  
Oil on canvas

**Anthony Braxton**

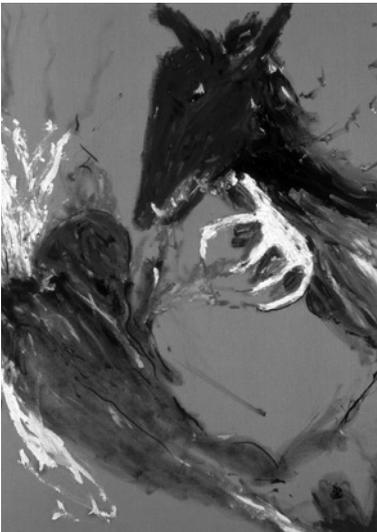
(Chicago, 1945)  
*Excerpts from Compositions Nos 9, 16,*  
*76, 96, 108, 126 (Trillium M), 151, 367,*  
*415*  
Prints in colour

**Cornelius Cardew**

(Winchcombe, 1936 - Leytonstone, 1981)  
*Treatise*, 1967  
Scores from 20-46 and 113-140

**Gema Intxausti**

(Gernika, 1966)  
*The Rescue of the Ear and*  
*The Moustache*, 2016 - 2020  
Pencil on paper  
16 drawings and 18 files



**Don Van Vliet**

*Fur on the Trellis and*  
*Just up into the Air*, 1985

© Galerie Michael Werner,  
Markisch Wilmersdorf / Cologne / New York

**Jörg Schlick**

(Graz, 1951–2005)

*Elementarteilchen*, 2000

24 analogue photographs on  
photographic paper

*Ohne Titel*, 2001

18 analogue photographs on  
photographic paper

**Hanne Darboven**

(Munich, 1941 – Hamburg, 2009)

*Theatre* (edición), 1985

Offset lithography

**Sharon Lockhart**

(Norwood, 1964)

*Models of Orbits in the System of  
Reference, Eshkol- Wachman Movement  
Notation System: Sphere Seven at Three  
Points in Its Rotation*, 2011

Three framed chromogenic prints  
*Models of Orbits in the System of  
Reference, Eshkol- Wachman Movement  
Notation System: Sphere Two at Four  
Points in Its Rotation*, 2011

Four framed chromogenic prints

**Elena Asins**

(Madrid, 1940 – Azpiroz, 2015)

*Scale / Escala*, 1982–83

Pencil, ink and glaze on vegetal paper.  
127 drawings

**Edgar Degas**

(Paris, 1834 – 1917)

X-radiograph of Edgar Degas's  
*Arabesque over the Right Leg, Left  
Arm in Front, First Study*, 2017  
Contemporary copy

**Edgar Degas** (after)

*Danseuse espagnole*, ca. 1969  
[Spanish Dancer]  
Cast resin sculpture

**Jorge Oteiza**

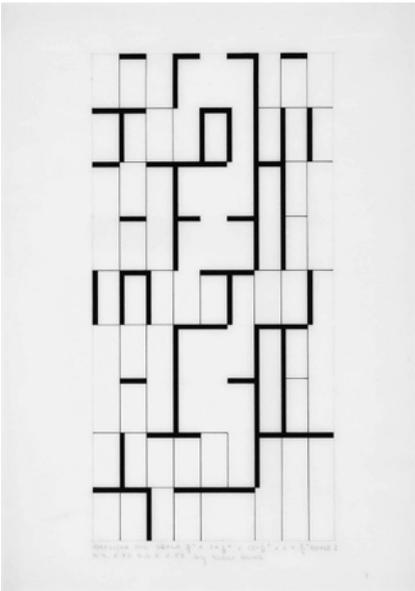
(Orio, 1908 – San Sebastian, 2003)

*Registro FD-11472* (circa 1960)  
Digital audio file from tape

**Camila Sposati**

(São Paulo, 1972)

*Phonosophia*, 2020  
Ceramics  
New production  
This project has been done in  
collaboration with Kunsthalle Wien  
and EKWC, The Netherlands



**Elena Asins**

*Scale / Escala*, 1982–83

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de Arte Reina Sofía, Madrid

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Galería CarrerasMugica, Bilbao

Galerie Kicken, Berlin

Galerie Mehdi Chouakri, Berlin

Galerie Michael Werner, New York/London/Märkisch Wilmersdorf

Gladstone Gallery, New York/Brussels

Mike Kelley Foundation for the Arts, Los Angeles

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neugerrirmschneider, Berlin

Peters Edition Limited, London

The Fitzwilliam Museum, Cambridge

The Modern Institute, Toby Webster Ltd, Glasgow

Tri-Centric Foundation, New York

**TABAKALERA**



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CENTRE FOR  
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CULTURE**



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Tuesday-sunday 12 p.m.-8:00 p.m.  
Closed on Mondays

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