

Press Record

Christof Migone

February 13 – May 8, 2021

(memory isn't magnetic tape, but it's all we've got)

In the time that I've been writing and thinking about Christof Migone's latest show *Press Record* for this text, I've also been parsing my record collection as I prepare to move from my apartment of the last 18 years into a significantly smaller one. Since I spent most of those 18 years playing in touring bands and doing music-related design, it's no minor task.

Most longstanding musicians, including a retired one like myself, have a hoarder's trove of related ephemera. Instruments and recording equipment that have survived several attempts at downsizing, all tucked into whatever available space there is, waiting for the rainy day that one suspects may not come. One's own albums, of course, in various formats, along with their associated master recordings and test pressings. The requisite unwieldy record collection,

one's influences and peers as a focal point of one's home, and also scattered throughout. It's a sprawling personal archive. These things all fill the space without a sound, seemingly growing and self-cultivating as if through spores. Look away for a moment, and 7-inch records and cassettes will have sprouted up.

As a bookend to his 2016–17 exhibition *Press Play* presented at Zalucky Contemporary in Toronto, Migone offers *Press Record* which, with both its title and its focus on the substrates and utensils of sound recording, gives each viewer (listener?) a space to fill in silences with personal histories through sound and recording. It's a strange coincidence that suddenly, all sorts of people must grapple with things like room tone, sound capture, and noise much more directly.

Mirroring the layout of a record store, *Press Record* is a distilled representation that becomes almost uncanny when compared to how even the most curated record store seems to be bursting at the seams with music and ephemera. Instead of overstuffed bins and a loud, ever-changing soundtrack, Migone offers several series of sound works that, for the most part, occupy the space with their varied silences. Many of the sounds are implied.

He sees silence as sound; often overlooked within the disciplinary structure of sound art, where intentional, rather than incidental, sounds are the expectation. My own "silent" apartment is practically vibrating with the sound of the refrigerator, the air purifier, the desk lamp, my cat's water fountain. Silence is noisy, and is also an amplification device, as these background and incidental noises become louder and more insistent as one tries to block them. Anyone who has ever suffered insomnia knows. The cacophony of silence travels on the same waves like any other sound, reverberating in space, bouncing off surfaces, and subtly pushing against the body.

It was the noisiness and varied textures of silence that Cage was harnessing in *4'33"*, he explained, "There's no such thing as silence. What they thought was silence, because they didn't know how to listen, was full of accidental sounds." (Kostelanetz, 2003, 70) In Migone's *4 feet and 33 inches* series (2014–2017), a trio of neon signs can be said to 'play' each movement of Cage's piece by being lit in intervals of the requisite timing. They are described as silent but I still wonder if the neon ever hums or buzzes.

Micro (2014) is a body of work made from photographing the microphone remnants of his performance piece *Hit Parade* (2007–2017). Once percussion devices, these microphones now live their retirement in photographs. I see their barbed surfaces and immediately think about the tonal qualities of a microphone placed inside a mouth rather than in front of it at a polite distance. How the resonance inside one's mouth can bring forth the loudest, most high-pitched sounds. It was something I saw the first time I saw Christof perform 20 years ago; I later copied the gesture for my own musical performances. A mic being smashed screams at the impact, the rough edges can snag on skin and fabric alike.

Record Release (12-inch) (2012–2019) and *Record Release (7-inch)* (2014–2019) and their associated documents and materials are projects that Migone has been enacting for the better part of the past decade. Raw vinyl pellets, full of potential, are presented in different ways and configurations, yet always remain in their state of becoming. We are presented with the material of records as their content, as the artist re-codes sound itself in ways that are simultaneously critical of the object fetishization inherent in record collecting but also seem playfully ambivalent about his position within. The raw pellets of a 12-inch LP (black) and a 7-inch single (white) are sorted, achieved, systematized, performed, and sounded in various ways. They do not, could not contain sound recordings on their surfaces. They are then documented and are re-archived in their emergent forms. Each documentation an absurd object performance.

Collecting in reverse he spreads, or releases, these pieces into the world in series of giving and leaving behind that, to the recipient, can elicit the same dopamine rush of a new record in its fresh plastic outer sleeve. It's not-yet media, yet is already layered in narrative through the parameters of the performance. It's the type of micro-gesture that is associated with performance derived from everyday life, the leaving and giving of these pellets, that puts me most in the domestic space of record collection management, as I box up the records that no longer fit in my home and release them to Renaissance and a second life. The pellets live again and again through their varied performances and re-deployments. They perform on turntables playing the noise of silent surfaces, beam in their documentation, swoon in their cradles of acoustic foam. As if the fetish object had become self-aware, they play (like a record, baby).

Chloé Lum —