

SOUND AS THE DARK MATTER OF THE VISUAL

Sound is not an acoustic addition within my artistic practice. It is not an illustration, not an accompaniment, not an atmospheric supplement. Sound is a dense, invisible substance, an aesthetic depth layer that carries the visual, modulates it, and makes it possible as an event in the first place. When I speak of the “dark matter” of the visual, I do so not as a poetic metaphor, but as a precise determination: sound acts like an invisible force that holds structures together without becoming visible itself. It stabilises, expands, condenses, accelerates, and opens—and yet remains embedded in the background of the image.

In my dynamic Cybernetic Canvas works, sound does not emerge as a soundtrack for a moving image, but as an autonomous sonic pole. A visual pole enters into a tension-charged aesthetic and phenomenological interaction with a sonic pole. Image and sound are two sides of the same coin: autonomous systems that coexist within the same perceptual space and mutually modulate each other. Sound does not follow the image, nor does the image comment on sound. Their relationship does not arise through synchronisation, but through structural resonance.

One dimension of sound is time. Sound produces duration, drift, expansion, expectation, delay. It structures the subjective temporality of seeing, makes a visual moment last longer than it lasts, or shorter than it seems. Yet time is only one aspect of this acoustic energy. Sound cannot be reduced to temporality; it forms the qualities of duration in which perception unfolds. Time is a vector of sound, not its definition.

Sound acts as a force within the aesthetic field. It forms an invisible tension field in which the image is embedded. It changes perceptual readiness, expands the perceptual horizon, and generates inner movement before the image is even read. Sound is not an ornament beneath or beside the image; it is a condition under which the visual can appear as a complex system. It does not make the image explainable, but it makes it permeable.

Sound is also a phenomenological depth layer. It produces atmospheres that cannot be localised; it allows visual elements to act as if emerging from an energetic space suspended between perception and materiality. In many of my works, the impression arises that the image gains its density from an inner acoustic tension—one that can no longer be explained through surface alone. Sound transforms the visible into an event that does not take place solely on the retinal level.

Between sound and image an emergent system arises. Neither leads, nor does the other follow. In their overlap they form a zone in which meanings emerge that belong to neither medium alone. Sound activates latent semantic potentials in the image; the image structures the perception of sound. This mutual induction generates a third field: neither acoustic nor visual, but phenomenological.

A particularly precise description of the role of sound is that of a catalyst. A catalyst enables processes that would not occur without it; it alters reaction paths, accelerates formations, without being consumed itself. Sound functions in my works exactly in this sense: it sets visual elements into relation, allows meanings to emerge, creates transformations that could not exist within the silent image. Sound is the motor of emergence—a force that is not visible and yet shapes the visible.

Not all of my Cybernetic Canvas works are embedded in composed sound. Yet the absence of such sound material does not mean the absence of sound as such. Every space has its own acoustic signature—footsteps, voices, air currents, echoes, architectural resonances. As soon as no composed sound is introduced, these soundscapes enter into an open dialogue with the visual structures. They expand the work installatively by widening the perceptual field and integrating the space as an additional layer of experience. Attention then includes not only the image, but also the acoustic and architectural conditions in which it takes place. Silence—always only a relative silence—makes perceptible that every visual event is embedded in a larger acoustic structure.

The sonic work unfolds through the interplay of intention, perception, and tools. The tools I use—granular systems, synthesis methods, acoustic transformation processes, algorithms, and software tools—are not autonomous agents. They expand my aesthetic possibilities, yet remain embedded in attention, decision-making, and artistic attitude. They add nothing that is not intended; they sharpen, modulate, and differentiate what emerges.

Sound can therefore be understood as the invisible infrastructure of the visual. It is not a supplement, but a foundation. Without sound, the visual phenomenology of my works would be less deep, less open, less intertwined. Sound carries the image and destabilises it at the same time. It holds it together while setting it in motion. Sound is the dark matter of my visual practice: a field of effect that cannot be represented, yet transforms what is represented.

Gerald Trimmel, 16 February 2026