

Preparatory work to conceptual research

Developing a concept

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Introduction

I am conducting this research right now, where I am contemplating what is behind my instrumental music, and what I would like to be behind it.

What attracts me in instrumental music with some kind of emotion or logic behind it, is that it is still so abstract. It is open to be freely interpreted. It can serve as a reflection of people's insecurities, thoughts, desires, moods. This is a craft I would like to get better at. Next to the beauty of ambiguous message, it is very important to me that I find meaning behind my own music; that I am playing from a deeper source than just my melodic, rhythmic and harmonic taste; that I have my own little logic that leads to the musical choices that I make. Lastly, making music inspired on something out of the discipline gives a whole new fluidity to the making process.

However, it took me months of work to get to a solid concept in the first place. This documents describes the preparatory work to get to the starting point of my current research.

1. Beginning, data and music

At the beginning of this year, as the pandemic raged on, I felt like circumstances provided a unique opportunity to really dive deep into one project and do everything ‘properly’ for once. This meant not only spending time on subsidies and marketing, but also doing a lot of orienting around the project. I wanted to be a new thing, I wanted to have the freedom to experiment, to take into practice all that I have learned over the years.

The pandemic had a sobering effect on me. With me being at home and less busy, I had time to read and to realize that I cared about the world we live in. I felt an urgency to do something. My motivation was flickering on and off; can art not be ridiculously selfish, was I contributing at all, what was the benefit of art if nobody were there to see it live? I realized that I wanted my art to have meaning in relation to society, to the world we live in. During a period where the number of experience-related inspiration was very little, books were what kept the fire going. I started thinking about the relation between art and academic disciplines and their contribution to ‘the bigger picture’.

First concept attempt

Out of an interest for ‘meaningful numbers’ I did the first little attempt to bring outer meaning to my music. To me at the time, the numbers I was looking up were data related to global food issues- shortage, waste, veganism.

I had an idea of converting the data into meters and scales. 8 and 9 for example, could be $\frac{9}{8}$ and a scale with eight tones meaning the diminished scale. Out of food waste data I got 3 and 5, which I converted into a phrase of 3 and then one of 5 chords. I made a couple of sketches working on those ideas. I would ironically call my performance ‘the world is Hangry’. The feedback I got was the following: ‘Your ideas do not trace back enough; the impact of the numbers disappears; it is not layered enough; it is too literal’.

Part 2- 'Phenomena'

So back to the drawing board I went, doubting a little on what to do. Should I stick with numbers or try something different?

I decided to try to find something else to translate to music. The idea of 'phenomena' appeared- a concept much more vague and big than data.

The word phenomenon, for me, indicates a thing that is at the border of our known world image/reality. A 'Phenomenon' could be a person (Jacob Collier for example) or an entity, like 'personal context'.

Often mental phenomena are ever-changing, complex in nature and therefore hard to grasp- which I believe is why many psychological phenomena exist.

After long contemplation, I made a first list:

- **persoonlijke context**
- **identiteitsbepaling**
- **donuteconomie**
- **Extravert-introvert/ inner world and outer world**
- **Dutch Politics ***
- **'self-made'**
- **connection- people and trust**
- **appetite**
- **polarisatie**
- **greed**
- **acting out of fear**
- **comfort**
- **opinions**
- **miserable intelligence**
- **excess**
- **core**
- **long term/short term**
- **uomo universalis**
- **monoculture**
- **bubble**

After a while, I narrowed this list down and came up with a new idea.

I wanted to make each piece a concept piece with a transition of one phenomenon to another as inspiration, with a unifying theme called 'battles of the decade':

THE DECADE'S BATTLES / HEALING TRANSITION

- 1. personal context: ignorance -> discovery**
- 2. 20th century economics -> doughnut economics**
- 3. product of the system -> 'self-made'- independent thinking**
- 4. individualism/polarisation -> connection**

- 5. appetite /greed -> taking only the necessary/ sharing**
- 6. fear -> trust/connection**
- 7. comfort /excess -> detachment from consumer greed and materialism**
- 8. monoculture -> Polyculture/ diversity**
- 9. big ego -> 'it is not about me'.**
- 10. lost in rationalism -> anchor within intuition**
- 11. bubble -> wide vision**
- 12. extremism -> nuance and moderation**
- 13. short term thinking -> long term thinking**
- 14. quantity -> quality**
- 15. monetary value on top -> social and ecological values on top**
- 16. only one specialized skill -> flexible and adaptable Uomo Universalis**
- 17. being held back by gender norms -> living life as yourself**

Although this specific idea did not make it either, it gave me the form in which my later process would also take place- beginning with a set list of mini-concepts.

Part 3: the Doughnut

At the time I was reading the book 'Doughnut Economics'. Among the things that struck me while reading it, were the following:

- images are very important to bring messages across;
- it is easier to change the world than you think.

By then, I had already reflected for quite some time about my 'personal context' - what I was generally most interested in, what my natural advantages were and what role I usually find myself in when trying to resolve things.

I found that I am usually the one that gives the positive perspective, the one that mediates and brings in nuance, and the fire starter.

I realized that I wanted to make a positive performance, one that was idealistic and dared to dream. One that looks at the possible future we want to go instead of what is happening now.

Also, the remark about visual imagery would lead to me to deem video/pictures necessary in my performance. At this point, the title I had given the performance was 'the world is healing'

Part 4- positivity

I re-imagined the core theme of my performance as ‘positive insights and developments that would lead us further into the twenty-first century’.

Later, the focus shifted from the external world to the internal world- our mindset.

If we look at the list of transitions now we can clearly see that almost all of these were indeed attitude-related, so this was nothing new.

Only the shape and emphasis was different. I dropped the word ‘phenomena’ for a while and focused on terms like ‘aspects’ and ‘insights’. The newest title was born: In Sight.

The introduction and set list is now the following:

Componist en multi-instrumentalist Linde Tillmanns gaat voor performance ‘In Sight’ de samenwerking aan met video artist Francesca Levi en producer Eddy Abboud om het leidende concept multidisciplinair weer te geven. Vanuit een persoonlijk narratief worden inzichten gedeeld over een open mentaliteit waarmee we verder komen in de eenentwintigste eeuw zonder geleid te worden door angst. Ook gaat het over inspirerende individuen en ontwikkelingen (zoals de spirituele kracht van Alice Coltrane, of een nieuwe manier van economisch denken in het boek ‘Doughnut Economics’ van Kate Raworth). Deze voorstelling geeft een positief geluid, als prettig tegenwicht voor alle negativiteit en scepsis die in onze cultuur zo wordt opgehemeld.

1. Idealist Realm of Art - *dreamy, sketches* - W/Electronics
2. Entering The Doughnut - *trad. composed*
3. Discomfort is what we’re looking for- WIP. W/Electronics transitioning into
4. Real Joy Is Valuable- *groove, energy and comfort. (maybe Electronics)*
5. Sharing - *concept improvisation- no video* transitioning into
6. We’re All Hypocrites But Let’s Try Together - *simple tune, everyone joining in*
7. Processing (Working title. Tribute to Alice Coltrane) - *free, ambiance, sounds*. W/Electronics
8. Free, Flexible and Adaptive (Is how Humans survive) - *snippets composed by everyone, put it together*

Now that the organisation of the concert is coming along too- I found almost everyone I needed to find and working on finding places to perform and on subsidy requests- there is more and more room for the actual composition process.