

Jonathan Miles speaking in 'the Templum', Saturday 6th May 2023.

Transcribed by Olivia England 10 May, 2023

I must admit I was a kind of a blank coming down, and situated in this space I thought I'd try and work out what I was going to talk about.

Then a memory came to me. This memory is a journey into south India to look at temples from the 10th/11th century, and as part of this journey, we went to see off-site and residual Jain cave temples. They were carved out of solid rock and in the first chamber they were just... [Jonathan ponders on this image] it wasn't geometrical. It was a womb-like space with a Jain deity, and it was from about the first-century bc/first-century ad. There was a small doorway, in which you enter, and there was another chamber which was even more womb-like than the first chamber. And the guide said to us that these chambers were like *sonic* chambers. When you started overtone chanting there was an extraordinary resonant sound, a complete echo -you were not just in a space but in a sound current.

We went out of the cave and walked up a hill where there was another kind of half-cave at the top. It was incredibly hot, maybe 50 or 45 degrees, my head was burning, and it was rather a pain, and there were these extraordinary butterflies they must have been around this big [gestures with hands about 12inch diameter]. I'd never seen such butterflies before in my life. I had this feeling that these butterflies had been there for well over 2000 years and it was the same butterfly family, and that they had been undisturbed and that the memory of these butterflies was continuous, and that in a way the memories of these echo chambers of these sonic chambers were continuous but they'd been forgotten.

They didn't even know what the use of them was. But when we did overtone chanting, it made sense that they were like healing chambers or meditation chambers.

But we don't know; we forget.

On the way down here, we were talking about AI. About this machinery of complete remembrance. I was thinking about how memory always comes with human beings and with oblivion. And coupled with memory is forgetting. How we forget everything as much as remember everything; and that we've never been able to assimilate AI, which is a remembering machine; a remembering machine with an extraordinary capacity. And so, we need to know the difference- not just the difference that AI is going to make but the difference that humans are going to make or can make.

So, the question came to me when I was sitting here listening to the story. I went to Delphi at Christmas. It's extraordinary in the mountains- the clouds on the mountains, into sections of the mountains. It's an extraordinary place where the oracle stopped speaking.

But when the oracle did speak it spoke in a language which is like almost a form of speaking in tongues or gobbledegook. You had to interpret what the oracle said. So, the speech wasn't logical, it wasn't instructive, and I was thinking that, in a way, art is a form of this recognition and a form of forgetting.

So, in this cave-like structure [referring to the structure of 'the Templum']*] with these sound currents going around, [referring to the sound installation inside the Templum] I remembered the space, the space came back to me, these Jain carvings, cave carvings. They were solid rocks that they made temples out of- just solid rocks and this is a place in which in the temples they keep these dancing Shevas: the birth of time and the destruction of time is represented in the dancing Shevas. The whole of time.

There's a point where possibly we need to remember again in a new way, so that we can forget in a new way. A lot of the capacity of memory is taken over by machines, and the capacity for forgetting is our capacity.

We've got an extraordinary network here. [Referring to the members of the Wild Parlour Philosophy Collective in the audience] And out of the network and social connections, we meet every Monday. A group called Wild Parlour. It's a kind of memory machine – a memory meeting—, and it's also a forgetting meeting. So, we lapse, have interruptions, we fall into silence. It's in this capacity to have lapses, interruptions, falling into silence... that we make art; because something emerges, something arises, that we touch upon a silence which is not ours, an exteriority which is not ours... and AI can't do that.

So, it's the most delicate of capacities that opens out to the universe. This advent of machines that threatens to tear us into obsolete entities... that's what I was thinking when I was sitting here without words to say, without an idea of which works to praise and which works to criticize and which works to... [Jonathan trails off].

In this space [Jonathan gestures to the surroundings of *the Templum*], there's an extraordinary birth of passion, you have to have a passion to make a work like this. Its sound currents... it speaks of both memory and oblivion at the same time, a meeting point between memory and oblivion. Also, a way of remembering the great silence of which we come out of and go back into.

I was thinking last night about how we are born with an *in-breath* and die always with an *out-breath*. We're born into noise, and our *out-breath* is into silence. So, we're in an interruption, in the great silence... and that's all I've got to say. [claps]

I like the project here [speaking of RuptureXIBIT (+Studio)]. I like the way out of nothing something comes, something emergent, because it promises an even greater showing space, an even greater sense of being able to develop a passion for the outside. Networks are very powerful things. Self-connecting networks are even more powerful than given networks. We can go beyond institutions – we need to go beyond institutions; institutions are a limit. They're pathetic. We need to launch ourselves into space and into time... new ways, make a new culture... otherwise caput... anyway, thank you. [claps]

*The Templum, Kate Howe and Jessica Marodon, 2023. Kraft paper, stitching, lights, gold leaf, flowers, scented candle, and dust from the Oracle's Cave at Delphi, with surround sound. The sound piece plays for 15 minutes, followed by 15 minutes of silence. Site-specific installation for The Wild Parlour's *Alternative Airport* at RuptureXIBIT (+Studio), London.