



Prix de Print No. 17: *Metamorphosis music notation* by Annesas Appel

by Thomas Cvikota, from Volume 6, Number 1

Annesas Appel, *Metamorphosis music notation* (2015)

Piezo print in 100 strokes, hand perforated, with music CD, each stroke 225 x 7 cm, 225 x 1000 cm overall. Unique work.. Printed by Bernard Ruijgrok, Amsterdam. Published by Annesas Appel, Haarlem. Available through Johan Deumens Gallery, Amsterdam. \$30,000.

In this iteration of the Prix de Print I was presented with a very strong group of works to consider. As I am an active participant in the world of print, it was inevitable that I would recognize many of the submissions and thus find myself struggling to remain impartial. With so many works deserving recognition, I began to ponder the fundamental question that drives much of the discourse in this magazine: What is a print today? I hoped the Prix de Print would be an opportunity to find a project that deeply challenged my understanding of what a print is and what it can be.

The image and statement for Annesas Appel's *Metamorphosis music notation* (2015) defy many assumptions about print: the work exists in an edition of one (plus one artist's proof), is built from color piezo prints (a digital pigment print process) and uses no traditional print techniques. The entire thing, installed, is more than 40 feet long and plays music.

Challenge accepted.

Metamorphosis music notation consists of 100 narrow strips of paper installed *en masse* to produce a room-sized spectrum. (Think of the total immersion of MoMA's installation of Monet's *Water Lilies*.) Each strip is printed a different color and is perforated with a unique set of holes; if fed through the small, hand-cranked music boxes known as Pling-Plongs, the perforations produce a specific set of notes. Each also corresponds to a specific numeral, zero through nine, in one of ten non-Western notation systems (10 x 10 = 100), which is "translated" into an individual hue and specific sequence of notes by a logical system of the artist's invention, applied uniformly to all strips. The artist explains:

A number refers to mathematics and is also part of linguistics. As such, a number can be translated without losing its value. Translations and the conversion to self-chosen systems result in an image in state nascent, a constant metamorphosis of the image as the process continues, resulting in color images, line notations and music scores. The following numeral systems of a selection of non-European languages are used: Thai, Khmer, Tamil, Hangul, Indian, Bengali, Chinese, Tibetan, Japanese and Eastern Arabic.

Appel is not rejecting the conventions of traditional printmaking; rather she is embracing a new standard of production and creation. Her question, I think, is not *what* a print is today, or *how* can a print be made today, but *why* make a print today? She notes:

The computer has rendered all equal and information is arranged differently. In this way, other links arise. From a visual analysis of issues, my contemporaries and I discover new arrangements that, in their original context, had nothing to do



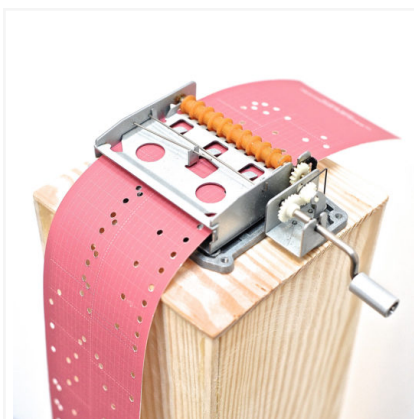
with each other. For me it's a way to get a grip on reality.



Annesas Appel, *Metamorphosis music notation* (2015), installation view at Bradwoff Projects, Amsterdam, 2016. Photo: G.J. Van Rooij. Image courtesy Johan Deumens Gallery, Amsterdam.

Though the artist's hand may seem to be absent, Appel's digital fingerprints are all over what we see. Computers are a way to locate inspiration and retain knowledge—a surrogate brain where unstructured ideas float as data, waiting to be arranged and presented as tangible “proof” that there was an idea. Appel regards the act of printing as fundamental to her art. The “proof” becomes evidence, the concrete and objective result of a hypothesis.

Precedents for such a systems-based approach to creation can be found in the work of Sol LeWitt, Josef Albers, Daniel Buren and others (and it is worth noting that those artists have also made significant contributions to printed art). Nor is Appel the first to use large-scale installations, sound or digital printing, but her logic of translation legitimizes the application of digital print processes, integrating concept, vision and sound with compelling consistency. Her decision to make noise is the final departure from the norm. Most prints are silent.



One stroke of *Metamorphosis music notation* being played in a Pling-Plong music box. Photo: Daria Tuminas. Image courtesy Johan Deumens Gallery, Amsterdam.

I wanted to be challenged to think about print in a new way, and Appel has brought me closer to understanding what that might be. Approaches such as hers do not marginalize the traditions of printmaking; they bring it forward to a world that is metaphorically flat. Some 56 years ago Jasper Johns' use of zero to nine helped usher in a profound rethinking of the function and meaning of the artist's print; Appel may be pointing the way toward our next adventure.

Juror Note: The sum of my experience publishing, collecting and making prints has trained my eye to recognize proficiency and also the lack thereof. None of the works submitted to the Prix de Print were short on ideas, technique or ambition. Many exemplified best practices in lithography, intaglio, screenprint, relief monotype and letterpress. For these stalwart artists, I would like to invoke the appropriated phrase, “No Pressure, No Diamonds.” Press on and shine on you crazy diamonds. The Prix is ongoing.

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