

Gabo's Opus for solo flute

The Russian artist Naum Gabo (1890 - 1977) was highly influenced in his work and artistic thought by the constructivist movement and by the use of glass and transparency in architecture. Such ideas of dematerialisation with regard to the solid object are found in the series of wood-engraved prints titled 'Opus' made in 1950. The simple, linear designs found in the 'opus' series float against dark, mottled backgrounds with white lines echoing the effect of light glowing along the edge of plains.

In reacting to these prints (specifically opus 2, 5, and 4), the musical narrative is initially fragmentary, surrounded by silences of various lengths - the tangible alternating with the intangible. However, as the work progresses, melodies and larger structural forms emerge from the disjunct backgrounds. A brief description of the three opus prints serves as a musical commentary for each movement:

- i) A mottled, spotted background with a simple linear form in the foreground. These linear forms interact, melt and almost dissolve back into the background.
- ii) A mottled but more stable, slightly more solid background. Two objects, the same but inverted and of different sizes, are in counterpoint to each other. These objects are high and low relatively to their position on the page.
- iii) The background is now almost solid and black. A single central object seems to hover on the background. Two different prints of opus 4 have been set in juxtaposition to each other - the main object brilliantly bright on one, more amorphous and translucent on the other. The primary image is mirrored between the two versions.

The French philosopher Henri Bergson's work **Creative Evolution** summarises my approach to structure in the piece:

Life is an evolution... what is real is the continual change of form which is only a snapshot of a transition.

Gabo's opus is dedicated to Lisa Nelsen with affection.

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