



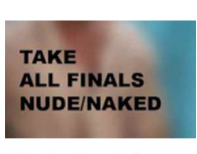
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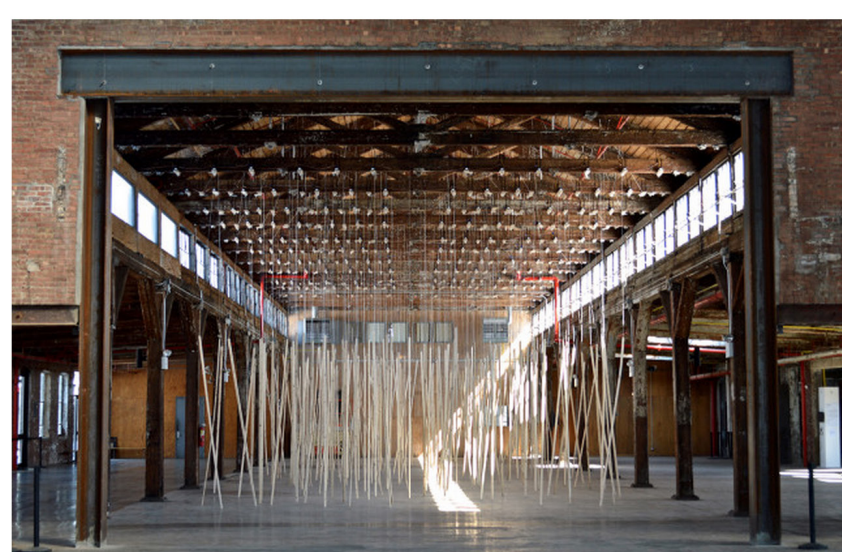
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GALLERIES

Kinetic Energy Transforms Humble Materials into Minimalist Drums

by Kemy Lin on March 11, 2015

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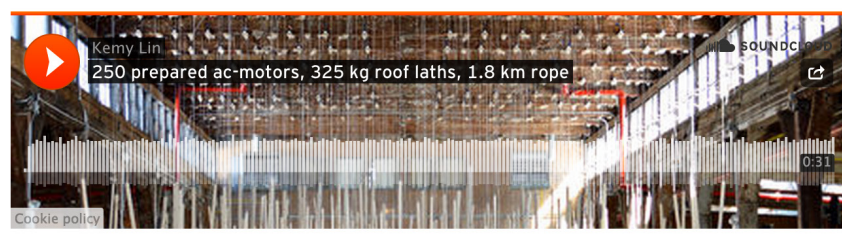
Installation view at Knockdown Center of Zimoun's "250 prepared ac-motors, 325 kg roof laths, 1.8 km rope" (2015) (all photos by author for Hyperallergic)

Swiss installation artist [Zimoun](#), who specializes in immersive soundscapes and acoustic architecture, has seemingly turned all of New York into a giant aural installation. Over the past two months he has had three solo exhibitions in and near the city collectively titled *[KE]3* in reference to the [physics equation](#) describing kinetic energy. Currently, Zimoun has [works on view](#) at [bitforms gallery](#) on the Lower East Side and the [Simons Center for Geometry and Physics](#) at Stony Brook University. The installation component of *[KE]3*, titled "250 prepared ac-motors, 325 kg roof laths, 1.8km rope," was on view at the [Knockdown Center](#) in Queens through last weekend.

The reductive titles Zimoun gives to his pieces refer to the exact quantity and weight of the raw materials used to construct each system and reflect the utilitarian spirit and straightforward presentation of his work. With the simple introduction of kinetic energy, Zimoun's systems and their materials are activated. At the Knockdown Center, wooden roof laths sat suspended, very lightly brushing the ground until power was introduced into the system. Each wooden lath was connected, by way of a rope, to an electric motor that raised the lath off the ground and dropped it back down at random intervals. When the motors attached to the ceiling beams began to turn, a forest of 250 boards slowly began twirling, tapping, and bouncing on the concrete floor in a cacophony of sound — not a chaos but rather a steady murmur reverberating through the 50,000-square-foot warehouse.



Zimoun, "250 prepared ac-motors, 325 kg roof laths, 1.8 km rope" (2015), motors, wood, steel hooks, nylon fiber, power transformer (gif by author for Hyperallergic)



In an interview with *Space* magazine, Zimoun [suggests](#) that his work is about "creating a situation and focusing on the vibrations happening at the current moment. It's about creating a simple system, which then gains dynamism, becoming richer in its behavior." In his Knockdown Center installation, Zimoun constructed what he calls a "blank zone of play" which was then set into motion and transformed by a number of different factors, including gravity, resistance, chance, and repetition.

When I viewed the installation, Knockdown Center artistic director Michael Merck explained how these factors had shaped the material and acoustic nature of the installation. First, he pointed out places in which the ends of the wooden roof laths had splintered and split from repeated contact with the ground. The areas of the floor with the highest impact frequency were clear from fragments of wood that had fallen away from the beams. According to Merck, the splintered pieces of wood made a distinct sound when tapping against concrete, a sound noticeably different from the original sound of the new wood on concrete, and, over the course of the month-long installation, the overall soundscape had shifted toward a more hollow, brassy tone.



Detail view of Zimoun's "250 prepared ac-motors, 325 kg roof laths, 1.8 km rope" (2015)

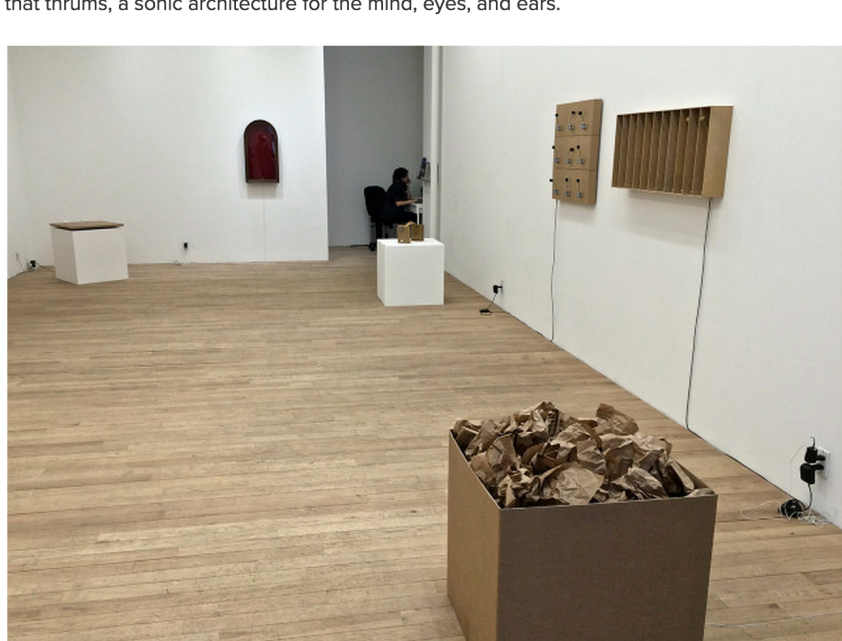
Merck also showed me a cup of wood knots that he had collected after they were knocked loose from the boards during the run of the installation. Though there were certainly elements of malfunction, like a few motors that had stopped working and had to be repaired, it would be simplistic to characterize the dislodged wooden knots and splintering beams as a failure on Zimoun's part. Instead, by its final weekend, Zimoun's piece had become more complex, gaining new dynamics and nuances. Time, repeated movement, and the unrelenting hardness of the concrete floor had changed the materiality of the piece and its acoustic quality.



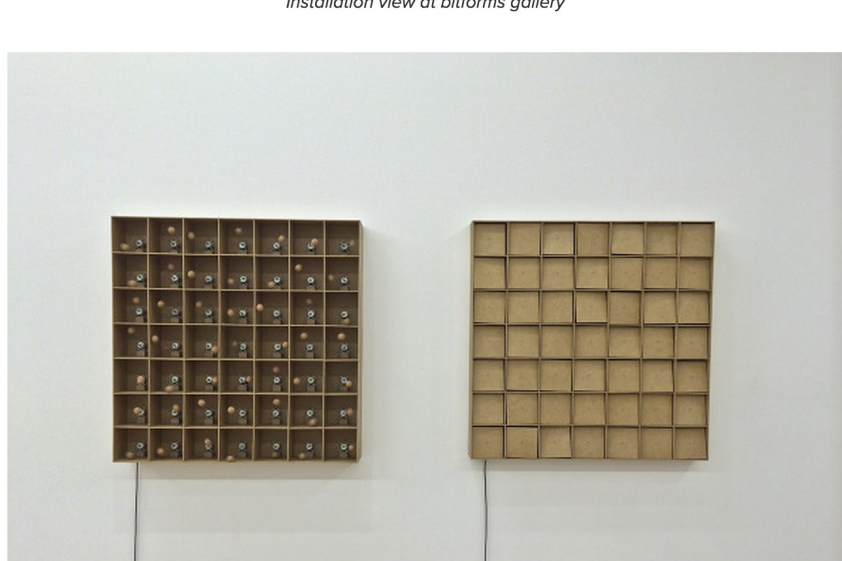
Knots that have popped out from the the wood beams over the course of the installation

Zimoun's pieces at [bitforms gallery](#) are similarly titled and constructed in accordance with his minimalist aesthetic. Every work is composed of shades of brown, white, and black, save for "1 prepared dc-motor, rubber ball, display case, 2014," which features an uncharacteristic pink rubber ball in a display case with red velvet lining. Zimoun's systems — prior to the introduction of kinetic energy and power — have a formal sculptural aesthetic to them that makes their materiality and assembly plainly clear to the viewer. The components of "1 prepared dc-motor, cardboard box 60x20x20cm," which include a motor, cardboard, and packing tape, are easily obtained at any home improvement store. Though the motor, contained in the interior of the cardboard box, is not visible, the viewer is aware of its presence because of the piece's title.

The low price of Zimoun's materials of choice, the simple, low-tech construction of his systems, and his insistence on naming his pieces exactly after what they are composed of fosters a sense of democratic and populist accessibility. If they so wish, visitors can even get inside Zimoun's head by donning his headphones-like piece "2-prepared dc-motors, cotton balls, cardboard boxes 16.5x12x5cm." What does it sound like? A [fast-paced beat](#) that thrums, a sonic architecture for the mind, eyes, and ears.



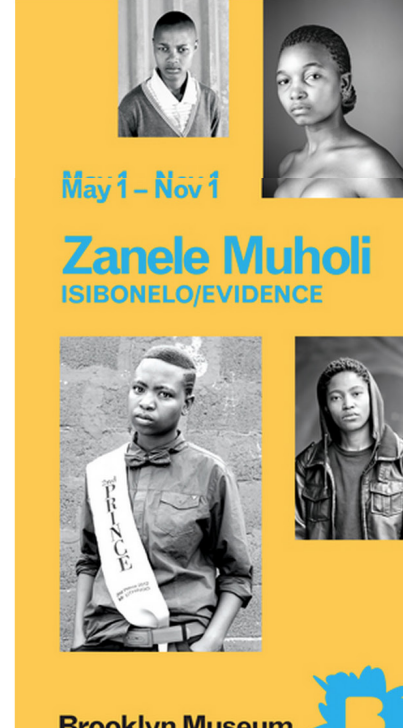
Installation view at bitforms gallery



Zimoun, Left: "49 prepared dc-motors, cork balls, mdf boxes 13x13x13cm" (2015), motors, mdf, wires, metal, cork, power supply. Right: "49 prepared dc-motors, mdf elements, mdf boxes 13x13x13cm" (2015), motors, metal, mdf, power supply

Zimoun's [\[KE\]3](#) continues at [bitforms gallery](#) (131 Allen Street, Lower East Side, Manhattan) through March 15 and at the [Simons Center Gallery](#), Stony Brook University (Stony Brook, New York) through April 9. The [installation](#) at the [Knockdown Center](#) (52-19 Flushing Avenue, Maspeth, Queens) concluded on March 8.

Tagged as: [bitforms gallery](#), [Knockdown Center](#), [Lower East Side](#), [Maspeth](#), [sound art](#), [Stony Brook](#), [Stony Brook University](#), [Zimoun](#)



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