

# Wall Street International

ART

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## Zimoun. Aesthetic Soundings

How sound can activate our actions



250 prepared ac-motors, 325kg roof laths, 1.8km rope Zimoun 2015. Motors, wood, rope, metal, power supplies.  
Dimensions: variable. Installation view: Knockdown Center NYC. Photography by Zimoun ©

Plato in *Timeo* had already legitimated the sight as the best knowledge medium and this has been the position of Western culture until nowadays. After all it is true that an image summarizes a lot of information, so with its immediacy and summary the sight has “cannibalised” the other senses. Our culture has accustomed us to specialize in a single field making us to lose a more complete and realistic world view. Contemporary multiculturalism invites us to an open and more inclusive behaviour that in the artistic sphere it is a “sinaesthetetic” dimension. It is the case of the well-known Swiss sound and installation artist Zimoun who masters very well the languages of architecture, science, visual art and sound and the fact that he is a self-taught artist increases the fascination of his artworks and artistic practice.

The sound architectures created by him are really striking because it is like walking into an anthill, a beehive or a factory. He creates highly ordered systems of movement in which Modernism meets Minimalism. He composes them with simple materials such as cardboard boxes or plastic bags and motorized mechanical units like dc-motors, wires, microphones

etc. producing repetitive and standardized sounds that recall the chaos of our activities in contemporary Western society. In last February Zimoun opened [KE]<sup>3</sup> a series of 3 solo exhibitions in New York (at Simons Center for Geometry and Physics, Knockdown Center NYC and bitforms gallery NYC) starting from “KE”, a notation found in physics equations describing kinetic energy. At Knockdown Center there was Zimoun's largest site-specific project in the US to date: an immersive environment of 250 motorized wood beams and ropes in a 10,000 square foot atrium space with 40-foot ceilings. I had the chance to meet Zimoun on this occasion and talk with him about his projects and artistic practice.

**[KE]<sup>3</sup> is your last exhibition that is really a series of three solo exhibitions one of which hosts your largest project in US. Please can you describe to me this new project?**

Zimoun: The exhibition at Knockdown Center in New York presents a new commissioned installation based on 250 motorized wood beams and ropes. The inner part of the huge, industrial space is used to install a large number of industrial wooden laths; an abstract “forest” of vertical lines, in which the wood is the common material connecting the overall architecture of the space with the installation. Each lath hangs from the ceiling supported only by a thin rope. These are synced with a mechanical system of electric motors that lift each lath individually approximately 25 centimetres off of the ground and then drop them back to the floor at random intervals. Through this system, all laths are in motion and generate complex visual and acoustic patterns, rhythms and structures. As the ropes are slightly longer than the needed distance, each lath is changing its position a little bit after each activity, and the visual lines do not remain totally vertical due to the physical tendencies of falling. The visitors can walk around the installation, as well as enter the installation. Doing so, they are surrounded by the indeterminate orchestra of sounds caused by hundreds laths falling to the floor. Rhythms develop and interlock depending on the individual position of the visitor, and diverse patterns and polimetric rhythms evolve. The title of the piece is «250 dc-motors, 325kg roof laths, 1.8km rope».

**All your installations are very immersive transforming the silent architecture of the spaces into active spaces that let us reflecting on our contemporary life, our relationships with machines and technology, our relation with the memories, the past and the lost simplicity. Which idea of society is related to your artistic practice and what is the aim with which you active the exhibition spaces?**

As creator of the work there is not one specific idea of society which I try to transport to the audience. My work is on one hand very concrete - what you see is what you get: simple mechanical systems in combination with raw materials. On the other hand, my creations carry an abstract dimension. I keep the work very reduced and raw, even the titles are always just short descriptions of the materials used. I connect the works with various things myself, in many different directions. I try to create work, which is able to activate me, to make me thinking about various things and to create connections and associations. In that sense I hope to be able to give this freedom to the audience too.

**If I am right you have started your career as a musician. When did you have changed (if you have changed) your relation with art in general creating visual and sonic artworks? How did your passion for visual arts is born and developed in the years? Have you got time to create music yet?**

Since a very young age I was always exploring sound, making music, playing instruments, creating compositions as well as visual practices like doing paintings, cartoons, photographs, experiments with old Xerox machines and so on. As long as I can remember, I was always fascinated and intrigued by being active in the fields of sound, music and visual creations. In that sense there was not first one interest in music or sound, and after that an additional interest in visual activities grown. Both were somehow always here, but let's say I did visual activities next to music, as somehow two separated things. Later on this visual, sonic and compositional interests melted together into my current work – which involves all this elements in the same work. Even if I am playing conventional music instruments much less today than earlier, I still feel like making music and doing compositions - next to the visual and architectonic elements and interests.

**Science and technology have also an important part in your artistic practice. The relationship between art and science is very ancient and has reached an important success during the Renaissance age. What is the relation between you and these fields and between your artworks and these fields? Do you think that the dialogue between art and science is always actual? Which are its key factors?**

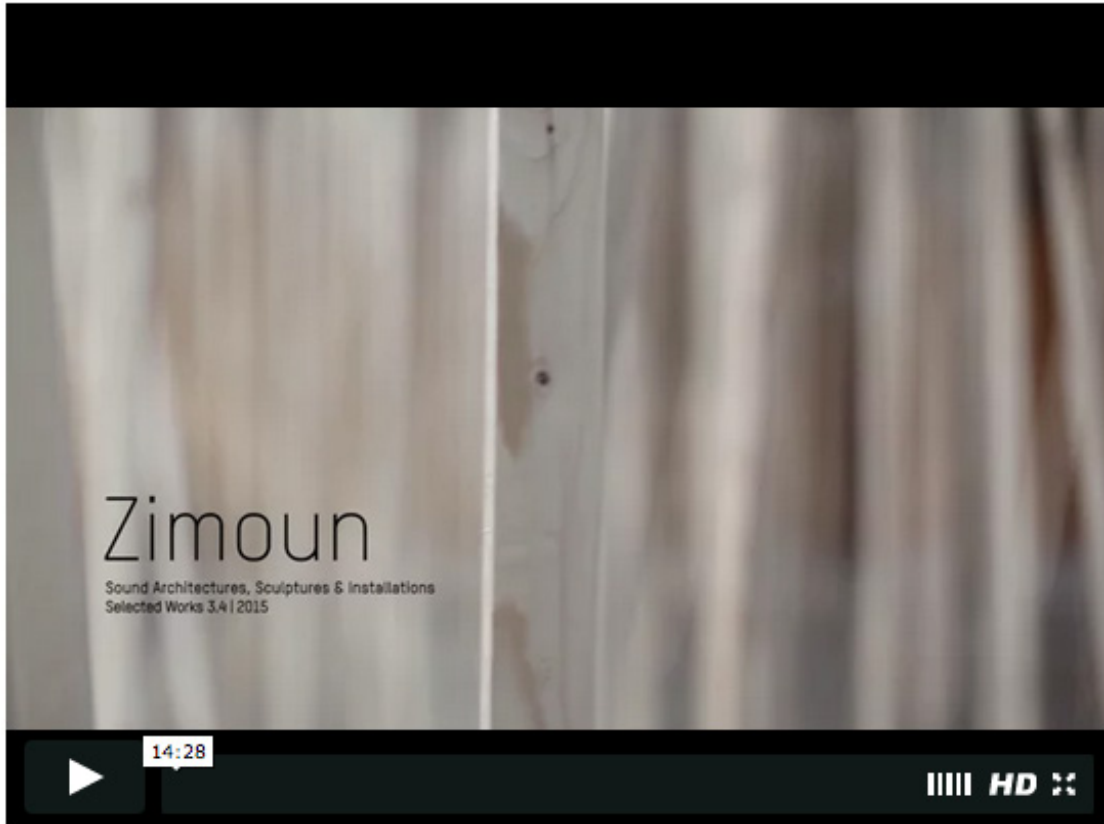
Probably since ever arts, philosophies and sciences were inspiring and influencing each other and took part in human's evolution and culture. All of them are somehow exploring the situation we find ourselves in and are wondering about it. At a point all those fields and questions behind are getting very close to each other - or can even be exactly the same. In that sense I think there will always be connections between contemporary forms of philosophy, science and art. Often things mix up very fast anyway; for instance I am wondering about perception. How, why and when do we perceive things? Could stability exist? Could there be an objectivity we can reach? Do we generate all we perceive ourselves and how do our perceivers work? Such questions immediately connect with philosophical topics and ideas, as well as with neuroscience. I think as soon as we start to wonder about things we will reach various fields immediately. If arts would exist in a totally isolated context with no connection to anything outside of the arts, I guess it would make no sense at all.

**When I see your artworks I think that there is no separation between rationality and creativity as many people think giving rise to a limited and limiting vision of the world. Which is the key with which you make these spheres in a productive dialogue?**

I don't think there must necessarily be clear borders between rationality and creativity. But such borders are helpful to create stability. And stability then means somehow limits. So on one hand stability helps us to function in societies and systems as we have them today. Instability is generally not that welcome. On the other hand this stability is mostly constructed. We construct our own stability to be able to navigate and to orientate ourselves. Up to a specific point this might even make sense. But at a point it will also block us and limit the range of things we think could even be possible, imaginations and visions. If you are questioning this border between rationality and creativity after seeing my artwork, then that's a great compliment. But it also reflects you making the connection. I constantly try to find balances between various things, such as order and chaos, the artificial and the organic, chance and structure, precision and imperfection,... to open spaces for thoughts, reflections and connections.

### What are your future exhibitions?

Tomorrow we are heading to Bordeaux, France to install a larger solo exhibition in an old submarine base. A very impressive building. The walls are about 8-10m thick (!), it's a huge, very massive architecture. The Germans built it during the second world war, but it never got finished. Today a smaller part of it (which is about 2000m<sup>2</sup>) is used as Art Museum. The opening takes place on April 7. After that a show at Klangraum Krems in Austria will open on May 27. This exhibition will present a site-specific and new commissioned work in an old, beautiful church. Starting middle of June there will be an exhibition taking place in Tokyo, at the 21\_21 Design Sight Museum built by Architect Tadao Ando. 3 shows, and each of them taking place in a very unique architecture.

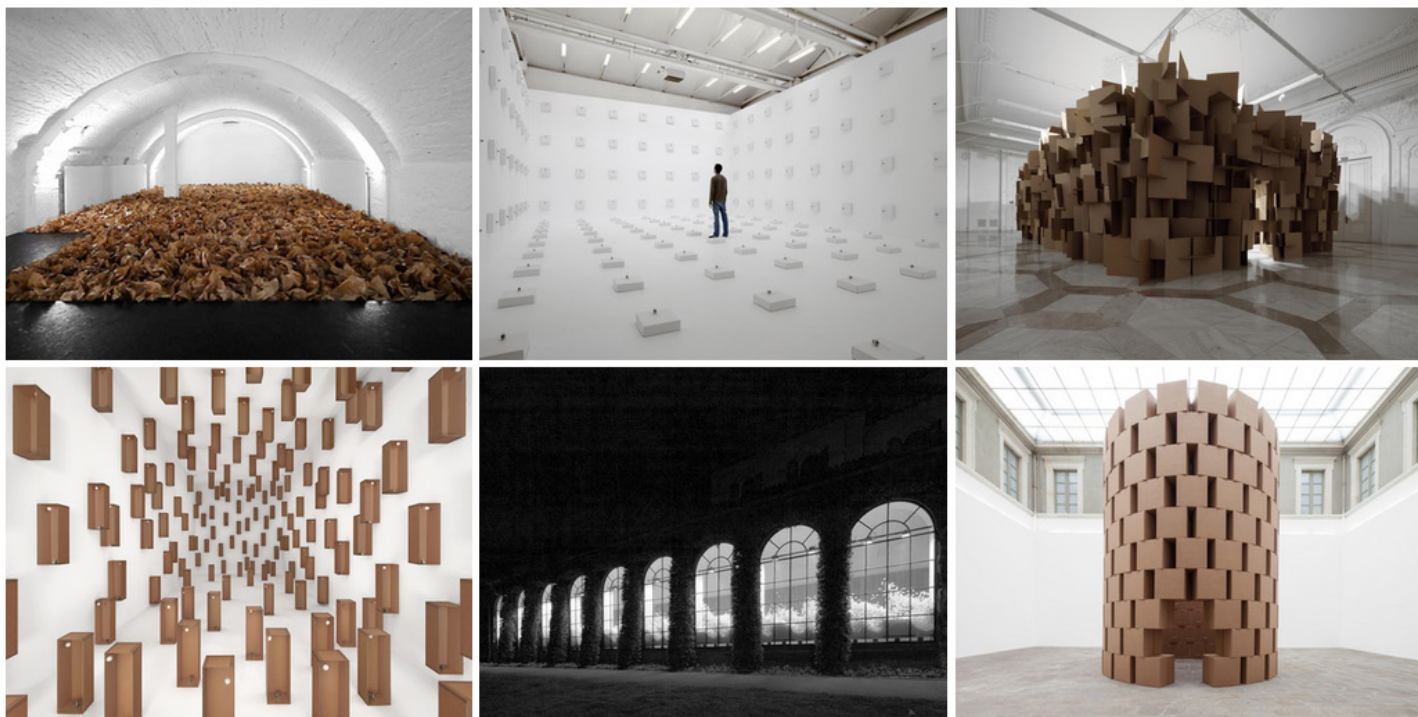


[Zimoun : Compilation Video 3.4](#) from [ZIMOUN](#) on [Vimeo](#).



**Raffaele Quattrone**

April 30, 2015



### Captions

1. 43 prepared dc-motors, 31.5kg packing paper Zimoun 2013. DC-motors, paper, nylon, wood, power supply. Size variable. Installation view: Orbital Garden Bern, Switzerland. Photography by Zimoun ©
2. 198 prepared dc-motors, wire isolated, cardboard boxes 30x30x8cm Zimoun 2012. DC-motors, wire isolated, cardboard boxes, laboratory power supply. Dimensions: 4.75 x 8.5 x 14m / 15.6 x 28 x 46 ft. Installation view: CAN, Neuchatel, Switzerland. Photography by CAN Neuchatel ©
3. 200 prepared dc-motors, 2000 cardboard elements 70x70cm Zimoun in collaboration with Architect Hannes Zweifel 2011. Motors, power supply, circuitry wire, cardboard. Installation view: Contemporary Art Museum MNAC Bucharest, Romania. Dimensions: 14.7 x 49.2 x 29.5 ft / 4.5 x 15 x 9m Photography by Zimoun ©
4. 157 prepared dc-motors, cotton balls, cardboard boxes 60x20x20cm Zimoun 2014. Motors, cardboard, wood, metal, cotton, pvc, power supply. Dimensions: 12m x 4m x 4m. Installation view: private collection. Photography by Zimoun ©
5. 36 ventilators, 4.7m<sup>3</sup> packing chips Zimoun 2014 Motors, metal, styrofoam, nylon, wood, controlling system. Dimensions: variable. Installation view: Art Museum Lugano, Switzerland. Photography by Zimoun ©
6. 186 prepared dc-motors, cotton balls, cardboard boxes 60x60x60cm Zimoun 2013. DC-motors, cotton balls, filler wires, cardboard boxes 60x60x60cm, power supply. Dimensions: 4.9m x 6.0m height / 15 x 19.7 ft. Installation view: Musée des Beaux-Arts Rennes, France. Photography by Zimoun ©