

erscheinung A sound form emerges, surfacing and then sinking back down again, revealing its complex nature upon each encounter, continually changing its texture, now introducing elements of surprise, now displaying its full force, now asserting itself with rhythmic precision. Through constant movement, it highlights the dimensionality of its medium, boldly and confidently conquering new uncharted territory.

zustand This state is characterized by a combination of stability and the simultaneous natural oscillation of several different layers of varying intensity with different positions. Although there is a trend that seeks to assert itself, its intention inevitably interferes with its surroundings, by which it is influenced and manipulated. The essence of the state is constantly transformed with unpredictable dynamism. In effect, a state it is not.

inseln Awe-inspiring sound entities drift in the sea of temporality, appear unexpectedly according to the rhythm of the naturally formed topology – conical karst figures of a foreign world. Shimmering, they appear boldly on the horizon like the eerie ancient sites of the elder things, deeply rooted in our subconscious.

quadrate Weightless square-shaped entities drift by, some near, some far. Each encounter reveals sharp contours, which, seen from afar, melt into the background. Following infinite linear pathways, they move, undeterred, through a serene lattice-like structure on to the next encounter.

varianz Two related states interact in a constant whirlpool of closely intertwined sound layers and probe their boundaries; They define themselves and complement one another by gently feeling around, through superposition and avoidance. The absence of the one causes the other to fade and falter. In the course of events, each is the other's vital complement.

regung In a labyrinth of silence, a sound moves around agitatedly in a Minotauresque way; It wanders tentatively, listening attentively to its own qualities as they fade into the distance.

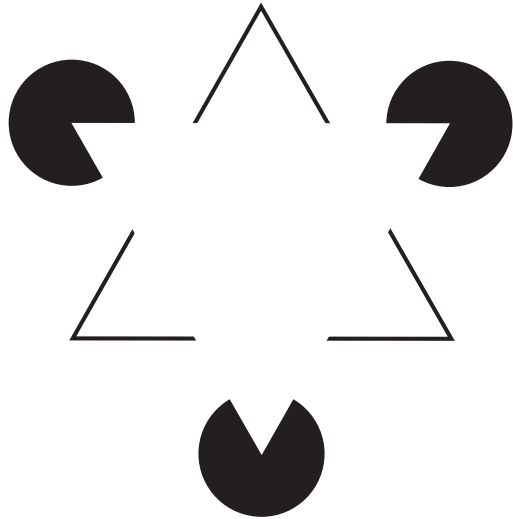
gefülle All that can be perceived is the vague outline of a distant terrain. In the depth of space, streamlined elevations appear pushed up against one another. Eroded materials and metabolised substances are deposited in primordial undulating dunes.

entität Erratic roaming. Nothing disturbs the perpetual circling with an ever-changing radius. This shattered figure is destined to roam restlessly.

gebiet After diving into a sphere of highly dense matter, one's gaze suddenly settles on the artificial texture of something living. The space is filled with many different sections, each striving to assert itself through mutual interplay. An abrupt halt in movement releases all the energy into the open.

partikel Objects swinging as if on a pendulum, colliding within an isolated cell. Slow trajectorial movements end in vibrating impacts – a kaleidoscope of molecular activity.

transzendentalie Time is being transcended in three steps in a multi-layered, crescendoing fashion. Transparent levels lead to the brink of dissolution.



Kanizsa triangle ¹

The forms portrayed here appear to be overcast by a peculiar absence. Everything seems to have a tendency to disappear, never really having been present at all. The forms appear to retreat into the infinite expanse of the white background. (...) With an air of detachedness, objects float between presence and absence, between being and not being. They express nothing definite. (...) All the figures merge, clinging to and mirroring one another as though emptiness were a medium through which friendliness is conveyed. (...) What is odd about this landscape is that the emptiness does not cause the specific shape of the objects simply to disappear but lets it shine in its graceful presence.²

subsegmental Mathias S. Oechslein

Within the context of acoustic phenomena, the „subsegmental“ quality refers to information that is situated beneath or in between distinctly perceptible sound segments. In the case of language reproduction – an area in which the concept of „subsegmental“ is commonly used – it refers to acoustic events which cannot be identified as linguistic segments (or phonemes). However, as phonemes are considered the smallest distinguishable units of speech, subsegmental information must be discernable either beneath or between these. For the purpose of articulation, the ends of phonemes, in particular, show certain dynamic qualities (stress, sharpening, lowering etc.), which are characterized by constantly changing spectral properties. This type of subsegmental information is therefore made up of constantly changing periods of time between the individual segments that cannot be broken down.

From a broader point of view, language is an acoustic phenomenon and, as such, is perceptible only when it stands out from its acoustic surroundings, i.e. the background. Likewise, a dot on a white surface is perceived only if it stands out sufficiently against the background. Therefore, linguistic information is not decodable for auditory processing in the brain and, therefore, is not consciously perceptible to the listener if the acoustic background is too strong or the linguistic utterance too weak. Consequently, language remains incomprehensible as long as the listener is unable to perceive it as a gestalt or „structure“. From a

gestalt-psychology point of view, in this respect we could speak of a „figure-ground principle“ in relation to language: Clearly, there has to be a certain acoustic relationship between the linguistic utterance and the background in order that the former may be consciously perceived as comprehensible language.

The work entitled *subsegmental* deals with the fact that the figure-ground principle of language – in its most common form – can also be applied in the field of music. Here, the conceptual counterparts of phonemes (the segments) that make up language are sound objects, which can emerge from a background in the form of individual sounds, groups, clusters, motivic gestures and highly emphatic musical themes. However, in contrast to natural language, the creative, selective use of musical material offers a much vaster array of compositional options for creating an acoustic gestalt, which can be transmitted to the human sensory system in any chosen manner.

In music, „subsegmental“ refers to all acoustic information that arises as interference from the interaction of sound structures and can even be increased excessively and thus expressed in concrete terms through specific sound manipulations. This gives rise to moments of transformation, which can be experienced on a conscious level, whereby elements that are initially subliminal suddenly enter the range of perception. In addition, the entire sound background constitutes a quasi-subsegmental breeding-ground from which sound structures can emerge and into which they can blend – a condition which implies the presence of said structures in the background. This context has two consequences regarding the existence of acoustic structures: firstly, in music, subsegmental information is a necessary condition for the creation of acoustic structures: there can be no shape without a background; secondly, the background – empty and quiet as it may be – holds a certain creative potential, which can also be recognized in that which is only subconsciously perceptible.

notes

1 Kanizsa, G., *Margini quasi-percettivi in campi con stimolazione omogenea*, Rivista di Psicologia 49, 1,; p. 7 – 30. The Kanizsa triangle enables us to understand, on a visual processing level, how a shape can emerge from a background. Here, a triangle is perceived although, perceptually, most of the shape blends into the background. In other words, it is an optical illusion whereby a white triangle with white sides is clearly seen, but in fact none is drawn. Furthermore, the presence of this perceived shape creates the illusion of depth: The perceived white triangle with white sides appears to be in the foreground, i. e. in front of the one with black sides.

2 Byung-Chul Han on a painting by Chinese painter Yu-Chien, *eight views of Hsiao-Hsing*, in: Han, Byung-Chul, *Philosophie des Zen-Buddhismus*, Stuttgart, 2002, p. 44 ff

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