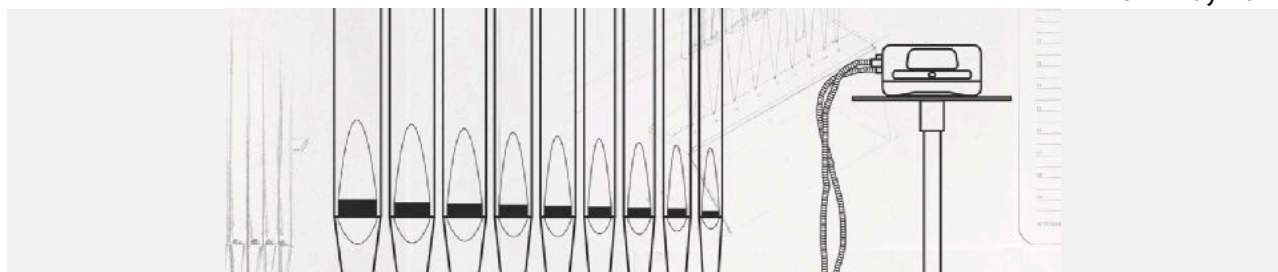


Ad libitum

MICHELE SPANGHERO

March 20TH

8TH May 2021



47 rue de Montmorency - 75003 Paris
Vernissage: March 20TH
Opening hours: Tue-Sat 10am - 5pm

Alberta Pane Gallery is pleased to present *Ad libitum*, the second solo exhibition by Italian artist Michele Spanghero in its Parisian space. The title of the exhibition refers to the name of the sound sculpture *Ad lib.* that is an abbreviation of the Latin expression *Ad libitum*, which generally refers to the personal freedom to act according to its own judgment in a given context.

The exhibition presents a sound sculpture composed of an breathing machine and a set of organ pipes that play a musical chord, creating an organ that is in a metaphorical way, a mechanical requiem that plays incessantly. The sculpture aims to make reference to the situation of people, who suffer from serious health problems and who see their survival linked to a respirator, thus questioning the limits that men delegate to technology.

The sculpture is surrounded by a set of preparatory drawings and the exhibition is accompanied by a critical text by Dominique Moulon.

Michele Spanghero is a multidisciplinary artist, who graduated in modern literature with a specialization in dramaturgy. As a musician, he practices electronic and experimental music. In his artistic approach, his preferred mediums are sound installations linked to acoustic principles, sculpture, and photography. Known for his sound-emitting sculptures and for presenting the result of sound recordings of empty spaces, the artist is often associated with Sound Art. In his practice we find a strong conceptual and semantic link between sound, space, and emptiness, which materializes in his (sound) sculptures. Moreover, his work displays connections between space, white and architectural elements, from which the artist extrapolates almost ideal and minimalist forms that allow him to create images that evoke drawing and abstract painting.

His works have been presented in museums, institutions, galleries, festivals, and fairs. Among his recent projects we can mention his participation in the *Némo Digital Art Biennial* in Paris and in the *Eufónico Festival* at the Castle of Ulldecona in Spain in 2019; the presentation of *Dià*, a sound sculpture created in 2016 for the *Walking Art project* and shown at the Jardin des Tuileries as part of the *FIAC Hors les murs* in 2018; his participation in the *Artissima sound section* in Turin and in the *Future Humanity* exhibition in Beijing in 2018. He received the mention "Best Young Italian Artist 2016" according to *Artribune magazine* and was a finalist in 2020 for the *PowSOLO Awards*, with his sculpture *Ad lib.* in the category "Best Soundart".

A BREATH OF ETERNITY

As the average lifespan gets longer, *the end* concerns us more than ever. With, on the one hand, the States that legislate on the end of life, and on the other hand, the spokesmen of transhumanist thought promising us eternity. We are dealing here with one of the greatest taboo of humanity: death. Or how to offer it to those who ardently await it when we conceive, at last, the possibility of eradicating it. But at what price? Scientists are in the habit of stirring up the world of ideas, like Michele Spanghero, and it is up to artists to give shape to this societal problem. In 2010, it was in such a context that Spanghero had the intuition of a work that he hastened to document in his sketchbook, as if not to lose it. His idea, unexpected to say the least, was to connect a set of organ pipes with an artificial respirator. Since the organ is as essential to sacred music as the respirator is in a hospital environment, two points of view on eternity coexist in the creation of the first sound installation *Ad lib.* in 2013. Since then, the Italian artist has created other versions, as engineers and other luthiers do.

Ad lib. refers to the Latin expression *Ad libitum*, which means "at the discretion" or "at-will". It's also an annotation that composers add to their scores to allow performers to repeat musical phrases as many times as they see fit. What is at stake here is the decision to continue or to interrupt, as in ethical debates regarding what is termed "therapeutic persistence." The forms of Michele Spanghero's sound sculptures are just as harmonious as the notes they simultaneously repeat until the audience is fully satisfied. The different versions of *Ad lib.* also have in common to be rhythmized on human breathing. Inexorably, they end up dragging us into a common breath. Spectators of such a wind sculpture tune their breathing into the unconscious experience they collectively make of what is also an instrument. By slowing down our biological rhythm, this sculpture-instrument, somewhat literally at the crossroads of the visual arts and those of the performing arts, soothes us to the point of even reassuring us.

If there is a time when we collectively need to be soothed, reassured, it is indeed the time of this pandemic that affects us all in various ways. And we remember that in the spring of 2020, many companies temporarily interrupted their usual production to design the artificial respirators that were sorely lacking in the intensive care units of our hospitals. Suddenly, the life support device crystallized our visceral attachment to life.

Our individual or collective experience of *Ad lib.* is reinforced today, in this new world that is emerging. The sculpture-instrument with the unique score that revealed itself to the Italian artist long before this pandemic is today even more contemporary. Yesterday we mostly observed organ pipes, whose sounds evoke the sacred, today we focus on the artificial respirators that have saved so many lives. When, from such an assemblage in the sphere of art – a sphere which is more than ever essential to us – a breath of eternity emerges, it projects us well beyond the political debates and health crises agitating our society.

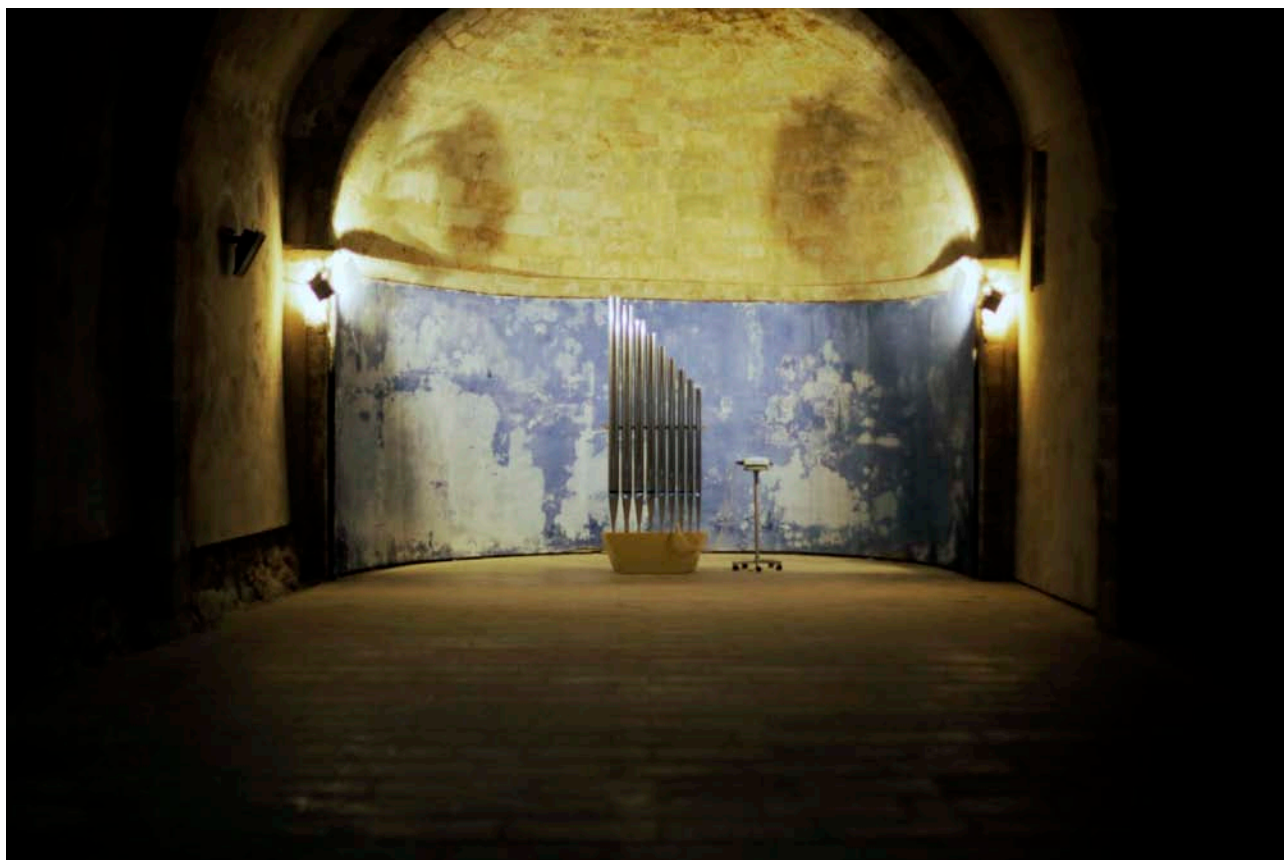
Dominique Moulon
December 26. 2020

**Dominique Moulon is an independent curator, art critic and teacher. He holds a PhD in Arts and Art Sciences and is a member of the French Association of Exhibition Curators (CEA), the International Association of Art Critics (AICA) and the Observatory of Digital Worlds in the Social Sciences and Humanities (OMNSH).

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Ad lib. Future Humanity – Our Shared Planet, 2018, curated by Lee Daehyung, Qiu Zhijie, Martin Honzik, Hyundai Motorstudio, Beijing (PRC)



Ad lib., Eufònic Festival 2019, curated by A. Horta, Castle of Ulldecona, Ulldecona, Spain
[Video and images](#)



Dià, FIAC Hors les murs, 2018, Jardin des Tuileries, Paris, France
[Video and images](#)



High Rise, 2017, Fabbrica Alta, Schio, Italy
[Video and images](#)



Listening Is Making Sense, 2017, Sammlung Finstral Studio, Friedberg, Germany
[Video and images](#)



Audible Forms, 2013, Mart Museum, Rovereto, Italy
[Video and images](#)

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EcheaAeolica, 2015, Sculptures parc, Syracuse, Italy
[Video and images](#)



Monologue – Gran Teatro La Fenice (2016)

Monologue – Lyric Opera House (2017)

Video installation, Art Institute of Chicago, 2017

collateral event Chicago Architecture Biennial, Chicago, USA

[Video and images](#)