"Techno As an Artform" Manifesto

⊙ Created	@July 31, 2020 6:22 PM
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Introduction

Techno is a dance genre and as such it is constrained to very strict rules that make it danceable and DJable. The aspects of techno that make it exciting are in fact not found within the restrictions of the genre but within the loopholes of these restrictions. Ways of bending the 4-on-the-floor, looping nature of techno into new shapes.

It is for the best interest of the genre to embrace these deviant characteristics of the genre and free itself of its restrictions, for this reasons it is necessary to establish what techno currently is, beyond the format of a dance genre, but as a stylistic approach to any type of artistic expression.

Hereby are enounced the core pillars of the techno style, which are not to be considered mandatory requirements, but rather a jumping off point, for the eventual future evolutions of the genre. None of this is static, all of this can and will change, with time.

Proposition 1.: Techno is Evolution

Techno is characterized by slow but constant evolution, both at a microscopic and macroscopic scale. Slowly evolving, always retaining recognizable elements, but always changing other elements, never repeating itself entirely. A journey

that feels like its static but always changing at the same time, like the slow passing of time.

This can be seen in the music genre, as the slow introduction and layering of new elements, the repeated breakdowns that remove certain sounds and introduce others. It can also be seen in the way it is djed, each track retaining the same rhythmical backbone, but slowly exchanging one drum loop with the one in the next track. The transitions are recognizable but it is impossible to tell where one track ends and the next begins.

This can also be seen in the history of the genre, an offshoot of house music, abandoning disco samples and embracing the futuristic sounds of experimental european electronic music, but retaining the same fundamental rhythmic backbone of house, which itself has even older origins rooted in african music. From there techno has always evolved and in its path has united cultures, historical moments and nations, celebrating its origins by always re-interpreting itself in the context of new artistic concepts. Mixing a recognizable historical backbone with experimentation and exploration.

On a societal level techno has represented both unity, solidarity and rebellion against the status quo in the name of progress and liberty. Techno has surfaced in the mainstream many times in its history, but has also flowed through dark hidden undercurrents, that bloom in illegal raves and small progressive venues, representing people from many different walks of life, always escaping strict boundaries both sonically, culturally and politically, like the roots of a plants blooming amongst cracks in a concrete building.

Proposition 2.: Techno is Repetition

Techno embraces repetition, rather than shunning it. Techno recognizes that what makes art appealing is the repetition of patterns, shapes and ideas. This might be seen as conflicting with Proposition 1, but in fact it completes it. Evolution and

Repetition being two parts of a whole. Techno is like a flowing mutating stream, that always retains continuity through the repetition and re-interpretation of patterns and motifs. On a microscopic scale it seems to repeat itself endlessly, but when looking from an outside perspective it has walked a long way, towards an unknown destination past the horizon. Through repetition techno achieves a constant progression. Techno embraces new concepts and ideas and integrates them by looping them and mutating them, consuming and digesting the artistic ideas of each historical era, slowly repeating and distilling them until the essence remains, crystallized withing its most internal and visceral backbone.

The techno music of today is completely different from the Detroit techno of the 90s and yet the semblance of its ancient origins is still there, in plain sight. Iconic drum machines such as the TR-909 and synthesizers such as the TB-303 still emerging now and then, like some archaic piece of genetic material that shows itself in a portion of the population. Even more so the almost tribal trance feeling of the drum patterns, that has origins lost in the history of humanity, from the varied musical traditions of african slaves brought to America.

When techno is at its more conceptual and experimental, the backbone remains there, being even more apparent in the genre's more minimal forms. Dub techno and minimal techno being almost reduced to the absolute essential elements of the genre, a condensed and coalesced fusion of many patterns from all over the world. German futuristic electronics of the 80s, house grooves from Chicago, african polyrhythmic trance and spiritual music from the 1800s and earlier, dub music from Jamaica and the miriad of local variations from the different parts of the world where techno is made, each imprinting a characteristic sound into the genre: Japanese techno, Scandinavian techno, Slavic Techno and so on.

Proposition 3.: Techno is Unrest

Techno is a search for a more instinctive and physical meaning, divorced from any form of artistic pretentiousness. Often raw and meditative at the same time. It invites the audience to immerse themselves into it, letting the audience be carried away wherever their subconscious takes them. Free of judgement but always challenging the audience to move forward. Never quite at ease, always restless and exciting.

The structure outlined by propositions 1 and 2 is a framework, a vessel that carries the audience into a mental journey. The repetition being the anchor that the mind can latch itself to, while the evolution moves the vessel forward into unknown currents. Techno doesn't push its own meaning onto the audience, having in fact little to no intrinsic meaning, but rather lets the audience find its own meaning and path. Introspection through a communal experience.

Techno never feels at rest, always intense and offputting at first, like a cold pool of water, but just like that ice cold water, it is also beautiful, exciting and inviting at the same time. It's unknown where the current will carry you, as such it is a bit frightening, but if you're willing to enbrace the unknown, it takes you on a journey into places you couldn't imagine existed.

Because techno doesn't have an intrinsic meaning it also has no recognizable intrinsic figures and objects. It's abstract in all of its form, as it is just a vessel towards a meaning rather than the meaning itself. If art is meaningful then techno shall not be art, but if you let art be the search of meaning instead, then techno becomes the quintessential artform.

Proposition 4.: Techno is (self-)Acceptance

As proposition 3 states, techno is unrest. As such techno shouldn't be just pleasant emotions, but all kinds of emotions. It should be a space where every possible state of being can express itself. It is often relaxing and meditative

for some and exciting for others, these two states coexist rather than exclude each other.

Techno is a space that accepts anyone but challenges everyone. It's a place where raw emotion and feeling can show itself uncensored, as pleasant or unpleasant as it might be. It's a place where the rational and hypocritical boundaries of your superego can fade away and your true nature and all of the conflicting aspects of it can expand and untangle themselves.

The music in fact shows its emotional nature very clearly. Where house music often has an uplifting and laid back feel, techno is more ambiguous, being perfect for both exciting partying but also deep meaningful meditation and catharsis. It lacks any harmony and melodic progression and instead creates a rich and emotionally complex backdrop that can reflect any emotional state back at you.

Techno music allows for emotion to show itself in a club, a place where usually one just has a good time. It invites anyone to feel whatever they want to feel, together. It makes people share their physical space while having different mental states, and yet it makes this coexistence more comfortable and less conflict-prone.

Proposition 5.: Techno is for The Audience

It shouldn't matter who the artist is, how the artist made the art, where nor when the artist made it. If the audience enjoys the art, it is only through the merits of the piece itself.

As much as Techno welcomes the ego-death of the audience it also proposes that the artist's ego should not come through either, as that would impose an extraneous consciousness onto the audience's very personal experience with the piece.

If a piece was made with extreme effort or none at all, it only matters to the extent to which it affects the audiences direct experience with the piece. It has more to say about the

artist than the piece and thus should not be accounted for in judging what's "good" for the piece.

As such it is equally meaningless which pieces of technologies are used for the making of the art (making the name "Techno" seem ironically irrelevant to the actual nature of the genre. It is however a good name as people are already familiar with it.) Techno fully embraces any technology without discrimination. Art can be made with minimal equipment and equally art made with the help of technologies doesn't make it any less valid. Any judgement of the process or the artist should be left out of the discussion of the art itself. What matters for the art is the art itself. What matters is the result not the process.

Corollaries

What follows are some consequences of the points above, they are not rules rather some interesting observations that derive from the core propositions.

Corollary 1.: Techno is Liberated Art

Techno liberates art from all unnecessary convoluted prescriptive interpretation, it liberates the audience to never feel like they are not "good enough" to appreciate the art, it liberates the artist to pursue the pure bliss of creative and transcendental exploration, it liberates the emotions to show themselves freely without fear of rejection. It allows to view aesthetic pleasure as not necessarily beautiful, pleasant or welcoming.

Corollary 2.: Techno Accepts Uglyness

TODO

Corollary 3.: Techno Requires Honesty

TODO

Corollary 4.: Techno Requires Open-mindedness

Techno invites whomever is themselves open to invite others and rejects who is prone to rejecting others.

Its sometimes glaringly abrasive surface acts as a shield towards whomever wants to create conflict and spread hatred within it.

Conclusion

In the propositions above music has been used as an example because so far music is the only form of art techno has shown itself as. It is however not limited to music and in fact should be attempted by any type of artist. All propositions above are generalized to any form of art and can be implemented by any form of art.

Techno could be a visual artform, a theatrical artform, a literary artform, an interactive artform or whatever the artists feels like making.

Most importantly techno is about freedom, in every sense, none of this is mandatory. This isn't a prescriptive manifesto but rather a proposal, something you can take inspiration from and interpret however you like. You might want to only follow some of the propositions, or just take this as a series of suggestions rather than rules. You are free to do with this whatever you want.

(This should not however feel like a restriction for the artist, rather it should give a sense of freedom. You are free to make art however you want to whichever audience is willing to listen. The death of the artist should not mean you should try to please the audience, rather it means the artist should feel as much as an audience as the audience itself and let the art be the artist.)

Signatures

These artists support and have contributed to this manifesto:

- Lorenzo P. (aka XYdamage, Paracosm Collective founder)

- Nikolaj B. S. (aka MalDeCoucou or Jojonojo, Paracosm Collective member)

- Magdalena A. L. (aka Synes, Paracosm Collective member)