

Tamaki Fujino

Andrew Blanton

ART 175

February 20, 2020

Nic Collins, a Hacker of Instrument with Electronic Music

Nic Collins, a professor of the department of Sound at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, loves a stage performance rather than a recording in a studio and has been seeking a new possibility of electronic music. He was influenced by Alvin Lucier, who created "*I am Sitting in a Room*." His department, "sound" instead of "music" is digitally orientated, and his opinion towards music makes me rethink about the definition of "music"; how do I separate sound from music?

Collins explains that music doesn't have to be like classic beauty such as Beethoven. Lucier's creation tells him that music could be produced from anything. Related to the difference between sound and music, I would say no if I were asked to listen to his sound art because I think his sound art is not comfortable to listen to all the time compared to typical music we usually listen to. It is not similar to birdsong in wild nature either.

However, his concept, like how you can "destroy" the art world that is conventionalized, makes me think about Picasso. I heard that his father was a painting teacher and he taught Picasso how to paint. When Picasso was just around ten years old, he stopped teaching him because Picasso was already over his father. Then, Picasso started producing a sort of "weird" painting that looks like a kid painted without thinking about anything. Collins' parents are

art-oriented, so I assume that he grew up with receiving a lot of concepts of art, and that was an ordinary acceptance. Under that situation, what he is great about is going back to the nature of music, sound, and art, creating new possibilities of music such as his totally renewed, so-called “hacked”, trombone. Collins explains hacking has “some value that goes beyond just making weird noises is that it makes people aware of how things work.” I can tell that Lucier’s work affected Collins a lot.

We use music with our creations. A video might be the most music-oriented field. Music easily sets the mood into an image or space. I need to rethink the sound in my piece. Music or sound is not an additional decoration; it is the main driving force of artwork. Also, I do not have a much-expanded view of sound art yet, but my work could be only sound with nothing. Sound art is not about how beautifully the sound appeals to us, but the process of how an artist reaches the performance and the sound. I love Lucier explains that sound is three-dimensional force, not two-dimensional. Sound does not exist within a speaker and our ear. Learning mechanisms of how we hear a sound and how a musical instrument and equipment work would inspire me to challenge sound art in the future.