

AMBIENT



Presented by
OLIGARCHY Studio



A Study on Sound,
Ambience and Duality

AMBIENT / BREATHE
is the first project released
by OLIGARCHY Studio. It is
a visual and written study on
sound, ambience and duality.

A small batch of 50 t-shirts
were produced for the project
along with this zine.

OLIGARCHY Studio

THE ABSURD HERO
SHEDS NEW LIGHT ON
THE HUMAN CONDITION

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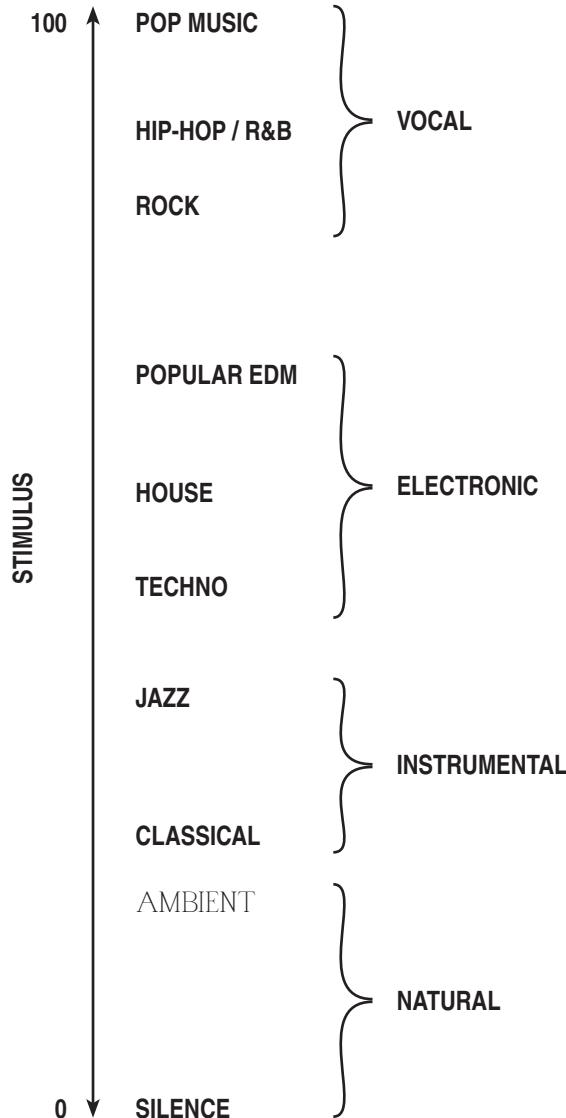
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IF WE MEASURE SOUND BY STIMULUS,
AMBIENT IS SOMEWHERE BETWEEN
CLASSICAL AND SILENCE



MUSIC AS PASSIVE
STIMULUS OR
SONIC BACKDROP

ACTIVE LISTENING
BECOMES LABORIOUS

FLOW STATES AND
MEDITATIVE PRACTICE

TRUE AMBIENT IS
SILENCE

THE SOUND OF
FUNCTIONAL ANARCHY





AMBIENCE AS INFLUENCE

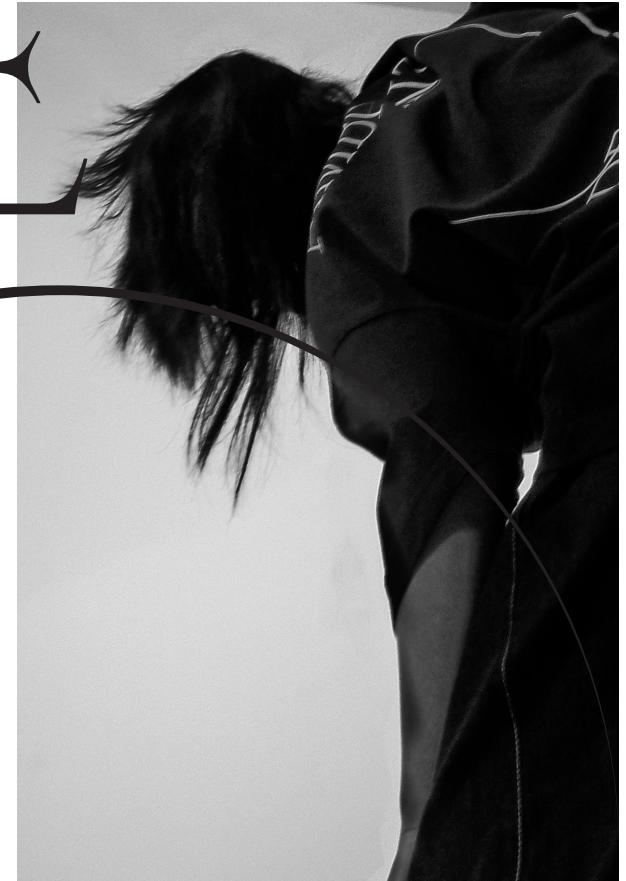
"At a certain point, effectively abstracted infrastructure like global shipping, tap water and the internet become ambient—harmonious and invisible—as the output energy necessary to use them continues to fall below a noticeable threshold.

Additionally, various larger systems become so well established in social groups as to become ambient and invisible to their participants, without actively looking. Culture and customs. Money. Capitalism. Consumer behaviors. etc.

And of course there are natural systems that govern how we have evolved and how we continue to think and act in the world, which cannot be perceived without formalized processes like The Scientific Method, or languages like mathematics."

—A. Singh, *Ambient Product Design*

NOISE



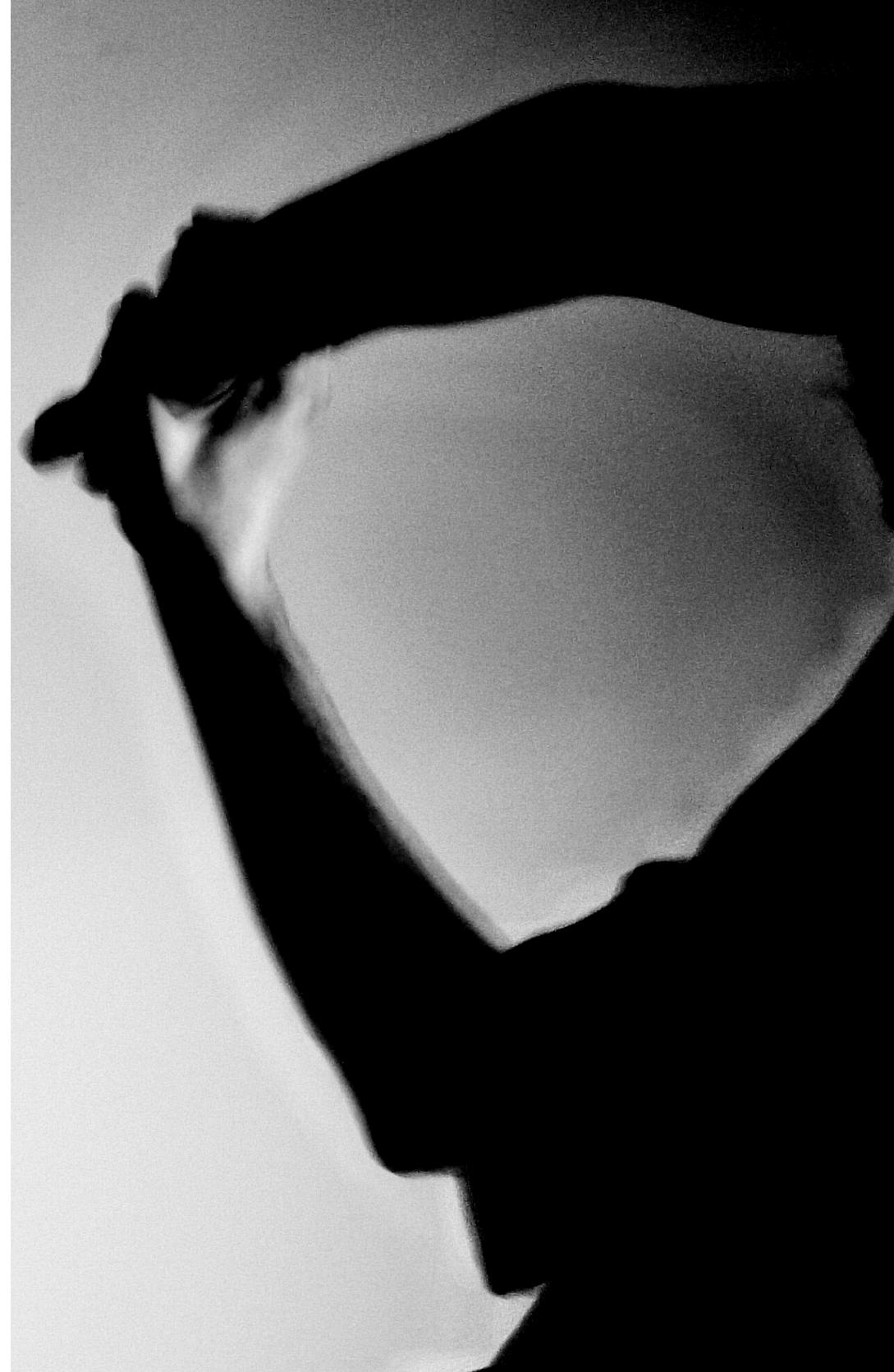
"For most of human history the AMBIENT noise was wind, rain, insects, birds, animals and people talking. Now the soundtrack of our lives is the hum of computers, the drone of appliances, the dull roar of traffic. Various kinds of noise — white, pink, brown, blue — are ever present. Trying to live your life above the noise of our wired world is like living next to a freeway: you get used to it, but at the cost of your mindfulness.

Less noise is what we need. Silence is to a healthy mind what clean air and water are to a healthy body. Long ago we learned to watch what we dump into our bodies; now we need to be equally careful about what we dump into our minds."

—K. Lasn, *Design Anarchy*

AMBIENT AWARENESS

A mindful guide to reclaiming the world
by ADVIL400

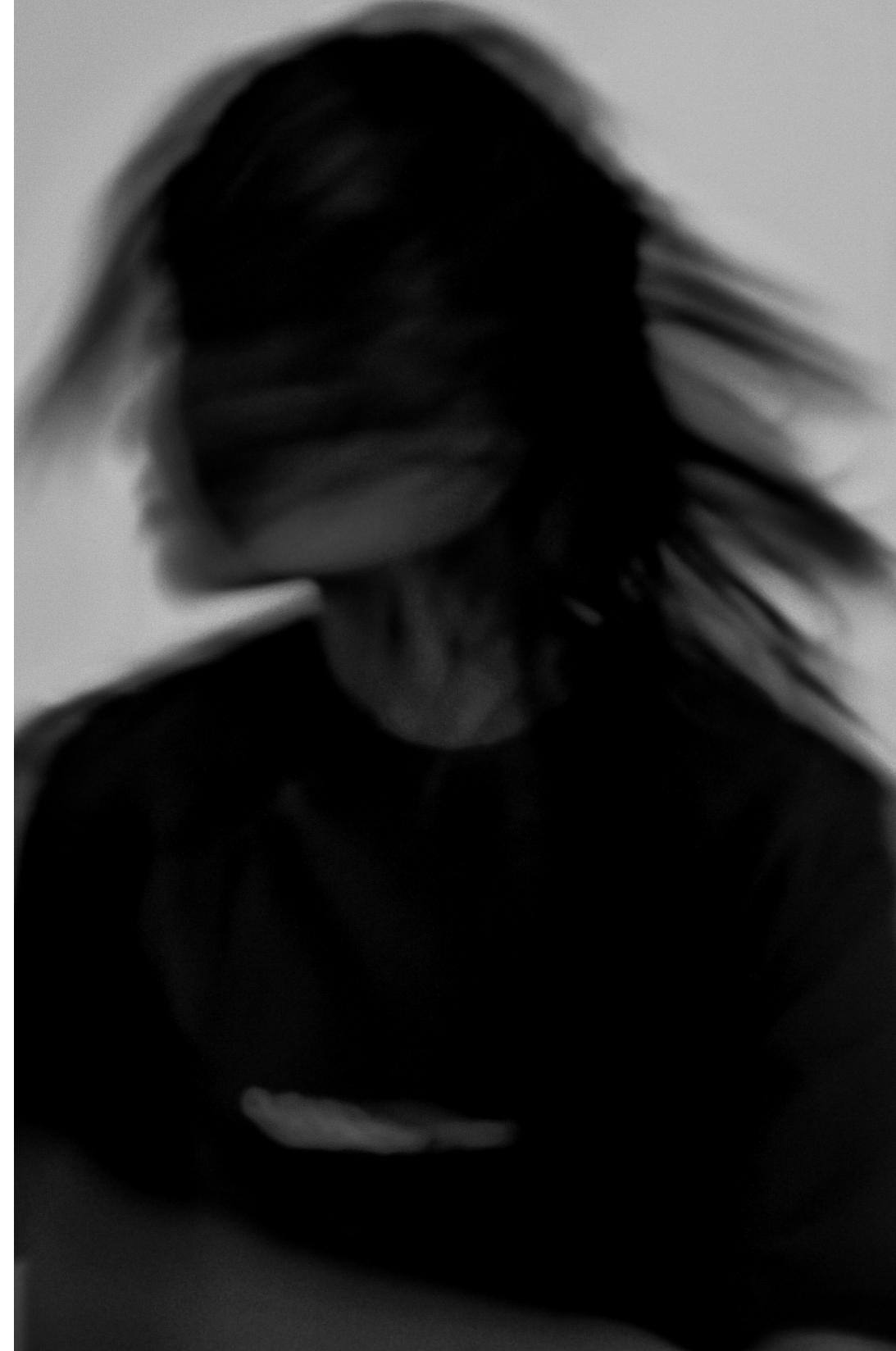


Consider the context in which you are reading these words in this moment. Become aware of the environment you are in: the sounds wavering in, out, and around you; the visual stimulus of your surroundings. Perhaps a fan gently hums across the room interrupted by intermittent traffic outside the window. Your phone rings, someone is playing music. The weather's nice today. The sun is bright but you're in the shade, you're comfortable with just a t-shirt on. It was always there in plain sight. Now back to the action at hand. You were reading this whole time and yet you perceived external ambience. You observed it within the simulacrum created by reading, you perceived it as its own entity described to you. Perhaps you even felt it — an induced tacit feeling. It was there all along. Breathe, look up, and realize for yourself the true nature of your ambience. It was there all along.

...

We experience the world around us in scopes of varying focal lengths, from blurry macrocosm to sharp microcosm and everything in between. This makes sense from an evolutionary perspective since there is no reason to constantly absorb our environment and get distracted when the prime task is survival. This works well in an environment where perceptual inputs only needed to be classified into simple categories: prey/predator, food/poison, danger/shelter... ultimately whatever was determined to be favorable to an individual's pursuit of life based on animal instinct. Unfortunately, this does not translate so well into our current times where everything is in perpetual motion, refreshing at the speed of light. Even though our needs for survival have considerably shifted in the past millennia we must now be hyper aware of a whole nebula of independent variables constantly fighting for our attention. Luckily, nowadays we are granted a lot more time and space to feel overwhelmed. It's almost like it's profitable to create dissonance

within consumer minds. Where we were once instinctively selective of where our attention was directed for the sake of self preservation, we are now forced into choosing the path of least resistance to the mind. While different in context these two conditions are unfortunately essentially the same. Even though we now live in a time and place where our safety is more or less guaranteed we are still in a position where we need to focus our scope on what will overwhelm and hurt us the least. We shelter ourselves in what is manageable for us at a given time and find refuge within the inner sanctuaries of our mind. Simply being downtown in a big city can be an assault to the senses thus creating a hostile environment in which we have to shut ourselves off for protection. This is not only a mental problem but also a physical one: overstimulation of those senses triggers a mass secretion of epinephrine (adrenaline) and norepinephrine from the adrenal glands to the sympathetic nervous system resulting in increased





anxiety and stress levels (high cortisol). Furthermore, chronic overexertion of the endocrine and autonomic nervous system due to overstimulation and stress can lead to degradation of the body and is tightly linked to Major Depressive Disorder due to the intensity and imbalance of the neuronal response^[1]. We are hardwired to shutdown and flee (fight or flight reaction) when confronted with sensory overload and yet we are shepherded into it without our consent. There is no more room for space, there is no more time to breathe. We are suffocat-

have our own intricate personal ambience we are also at all times part of someone else's. While this is a beautiful thing adding complex depths and layers to the human interpersonal experience, it's important to reflect on what makes our space sacred and to apply that respectfully to the space of those around us. Being social creatures we naturally aggregate towards other people that are open to sharing a similar space with us thus forming a complementary harmony of mutual ambiences. This is what allows communities to strive and grow through

“IT WAS THERE ALL ALONG”

ing ourselves without realizing it. This is not to say that we are fragile beings unable to be resilient and adaptable in the face of adversity but it's important to understand that this struggle is manufactured and held against our will whether we resist it or not. Being aware of this finely veiled trap is the first step in allowing ourselves to play an active part in our ambience.

As important as it is to be “woke” about the effects of capitalist society on our ambience, we must now consider our own position within it and the possibilities that are available to us to reclaim it. Having acknowledged that it is more than possible for your environment to be modulated against your will by external agents, we must now realize that even though we each

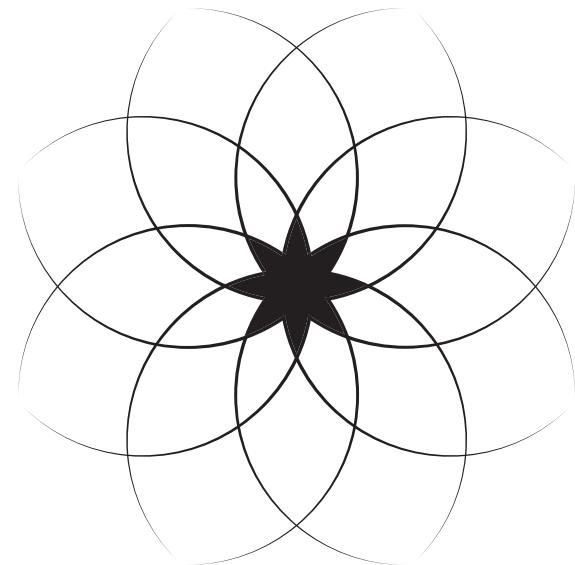
mutual acceptance of shared space and through the creation of a cohesive sensory culture (music, art, food...).

Culture is always in the air and is an integral part in reclaiming what has been stolen from us. Music, for example, is omnipresent in our daily lives and plays a large role in modulating the environment in which we exist. It can modulate our mood, improve concentration or simply just exist in the background. While Ambient Music as discussed throughout this zine is an actual genre describing a specific kind of music, any song can be part of your ambience as long as you let it. There's a high degree of freedom available in the fact that music acts as an external vector for your inner will. You can project it into your environ-

^[1] Won, E., & Kim, Y. K. (2016). Stress, the Autonomic Nervous System, and the Immune-kynurene Pathway in the Etiology of Depression. *Current neuropharmacology*, 14(7), 665–673. doi:10.2174/1570159x14666151208113006

ment allowing you to be in control of your own ambience at any time, or you can share it with friends and coexist in a mutual sonic agreement. Of course, this applies not only to music but to the grand fields of art, design, cuisine, literature, etc. The beauty that comes out of this freedom is essential to our lives and realizing that we are constantly experiencing the fruit of it applied to every single individual at once is a wonderful thing. In the same way you unconsciously open yourself to the music in your room or

the warmth of the sun, open yourself to the implicit symphony of everyday life and embrace the worlds that exist within each and every one of us. Protect your will and passion, share it, and celebrate the world around you. Simultaneously find and lose yourself in the ambience. Escape the beautiful stronghold of your mind. Now breathe, it was there all along.



Adel aka ADVIL400 is an independent artist and designer from Toronto.

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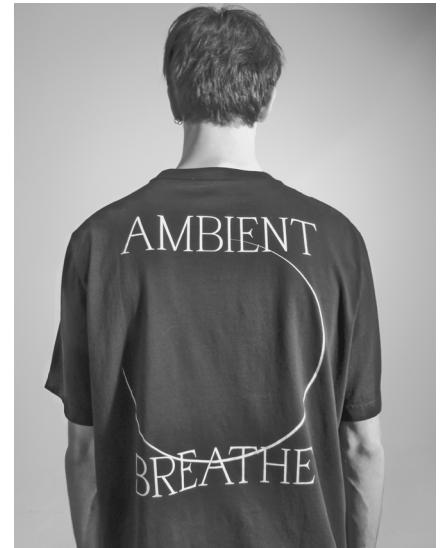
AMBIENT Tee by OLIGARCHY Studio

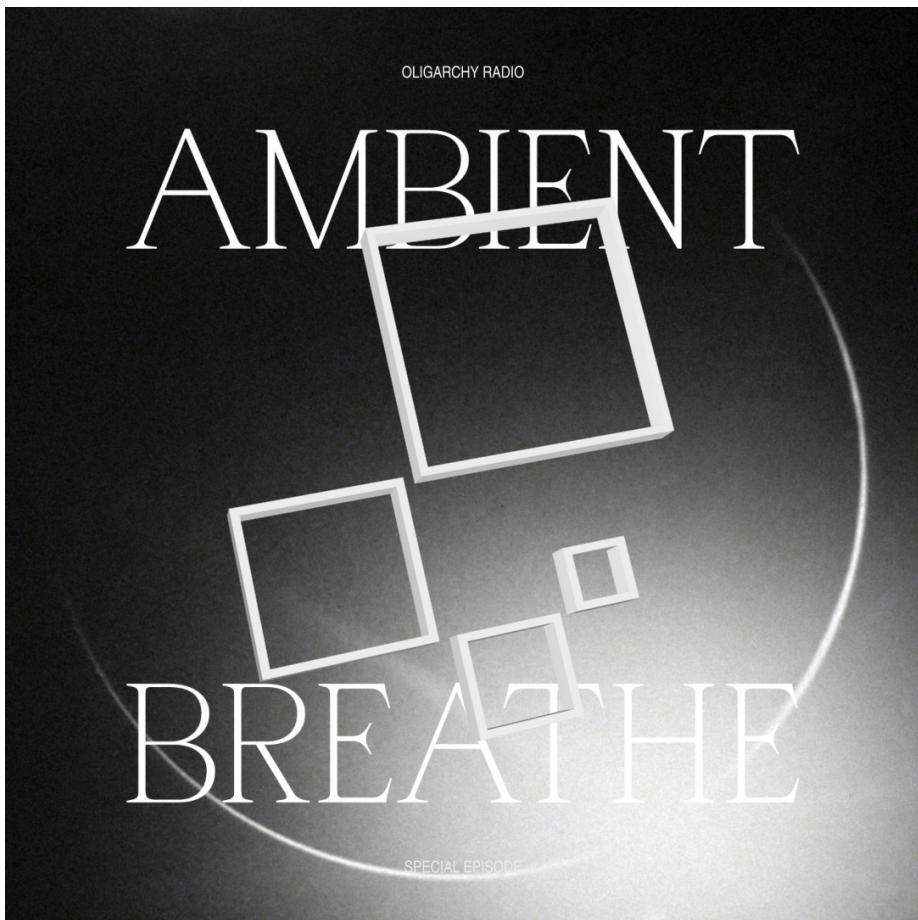
The blank garments used for this project are sourced from Denver Hayes, a private label owned by Mark's Work Warehouse. Silk screen print on front & back.

Relaxed and wide fit with slightly dropped shoulders. Comes in size M and L only. Fabric is 100% pre-shrunk, pill-resistant cotton and becomes softer over time with washing.

A small batch of prototypes were screen-printed in-house and the final production batch was handed off to two local businesses in Mississauga, ON.*

This product is available in limited quantities at www.oligarchy.studio





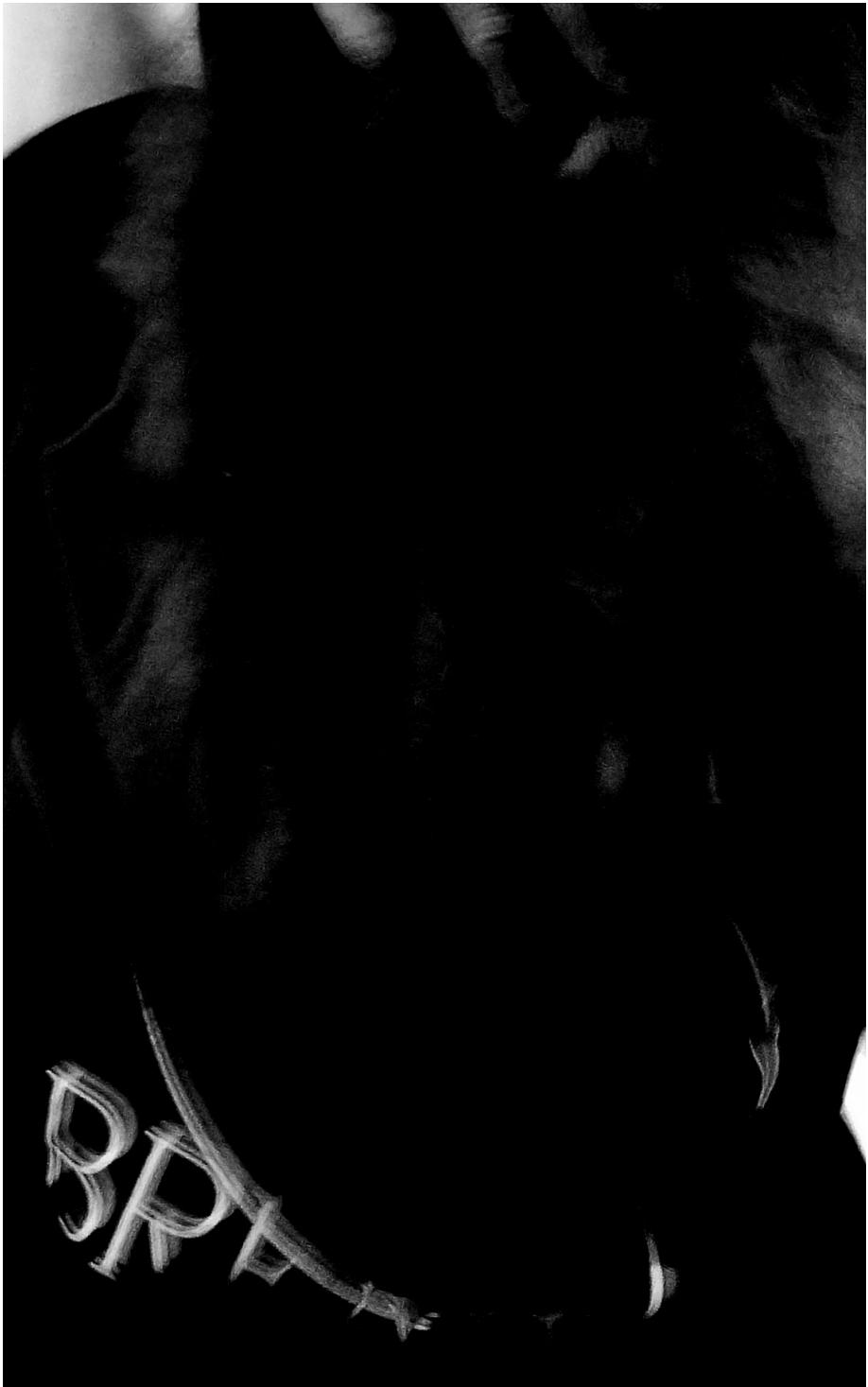
Available to stream and download on
www.soundcloud.com/oligarchystudio

This month we dive into deep, ethereal soundscapes in a 1h36 long ambient mix.

Tracklist

1. Yosi Horikawa – Bubbles
2. Oneohtrix Point Never – Melancholy Descriptions of Simple 3d Environments
3. Tangerine Dream – Phaedra
4. Anthony Naples – 365
5. Aphex Twin – #7
6. Oneohtrix Point Never – Last Known Image Of A Song (Ryuichi Sakamoto Rework)
7. Frank Ocean – In Here Somewhere
8. Aphex Twin – Tha
9. Brian Eno – Tal Coat
10. Tangerine Dream – Birth of Liquid Plejades
11. Gaussian Curve – Broken Clouds
12. Yves Tumor – Limerence
13. Harold Budd, Brian Eno – An Arc of Doves
14. Buddy Ross – Running Around
15. Aphex Twin – #20
16. Laraaji – Meditation No. 1
17. Aphex Twin – I
18. Oneohtrix Point Never – Sand Partina
19. Ecco2k – Fragile
20. Susumu Yokota – HAGOROMO
21. Frank Ocean – Impietas + Deathwish
22. Aphex Twin – #3
23. Brian Eno – Always Returning
24. Hidden Spheres – Beachy
25. Matthieu Faubourg – Please, Stay
26. Shinichi Atobe – Butterfly Effect
27. Supreems – Amygdala
28. Project Pablo – Sofware
29. Unknown Artist – Untitled 02
30. Ben Buitendijk – Apollo
31. Unknown Artist – UNKNOWN - 3

Available to stream and download on
www.soundcloud.com/oligarchystudio



FURTHER LISTENING



SKEE MASK
“Compro”

2018



Oneohtrix Point Never
“R Plus Seven”

2013



Greedy Dig Presents Anarcho-Ambience Vol 1

2008



Motohiko Hamase
“Technodrome”

1993



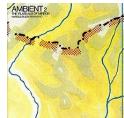
William Basinski
“Watermusic”

2001



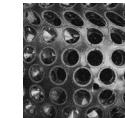
Tangerine Dream
“Phaedra”

1974



Harold Budd & Brian Eno
“Ambient, Vol. 2: The Plateaux of Mirror”

1980



Actress & London
Contemporary Orchestra
“LAGEOS”

2018



Mika Vainio, Ryoji Ikeda &
alva noto
“Live 2002”

2018



Rainforest Spiritual
Enslavement
“Ambient Black Magic”

2017



Unknown Artist (Chikyu-u
Records)
“Unknown 01”

2018



Floating Points
“Reflections - Mojave Desert”

2017

ADDITIONAL READING:

Brian Eno — A Year With Swollen Appendices (Brian Eno's Diary)
Brian Eno's Website & Blog (<https://www.moredarkthanshark.org>)

SOURCES & RESEARCH

Alexander Singh — Ambient Product Design
Kalle Lasn — Design Anarchy

Ambient and other electronic records for contemplation

OLIGARCHY STUDIO

THE ABSURD HERO SHEDS NEW LIGHT
ON THE HUMAN CONDITION

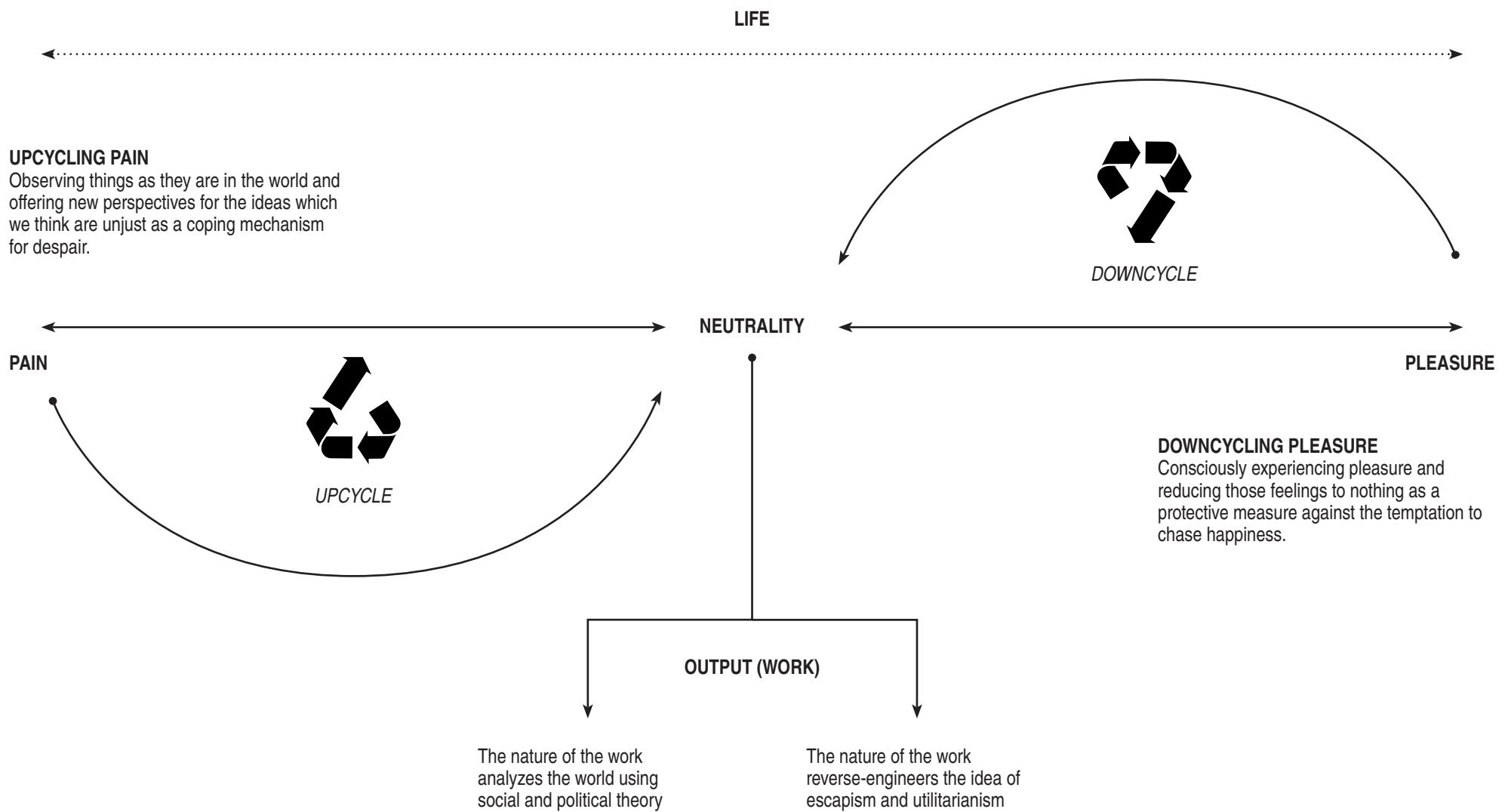
Studio Guiding Principles

Under the human condition we are forced to experience the dichotomy of pleasure & pain.

A basic utilitarian approach to life is to seek pleasure and avoid pain. However, pursuing happiness as an end in itself ultimately creates waste; wasted time and energy spent on fleeting emotions.

Our practice focuses on repurposing both feelings in order to reach a neutral position. Pleasure is downcycled to neutralize the restless pursuit of happiness. Pain is absorbed and upcycled to neutralize the inevitable despair of human life.

Being neutral means being present and alive, not necessarily happy or pleased with existence.



Breathing Room



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