

The Micro Series

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[See table of contents](#)

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Christof Migone

The Micro Series

Saturate every atom.¹

Virginia Woolf

Oberon is a numeral with a water-jet diameter of 10,000 hours and a height of about: 2,220,000 hours.²

Adolf Wölfl

What if every moment of the day, and of our lives, were punctuated? Every gesture marked? What if the infinitesimally small were amplified to become noticeable, recordable, replayable? To “saturate every atom,” as Woolf exhorts, would be to imprint the everywhere and everytime of everything, to suffuse space until it suffocates. *The Micro Series* asks these questions, but adds an element of absurdity like the one suggested by the idiosyncratic and eccentric composer Wölfl in the second epigraph. With the Oberon he was attempting to devise a numbering system that would encompass infinity; in *The Micro Series* I settle for numbers that allude to infinity but are infinitely more manageable. The numbers (e.g., one thousand, one million) that I use serve as arbitrary and abstract constants, and the concrete and repetitive actions performed to attain them establish an infinite variety of microgestures among the seemingly indistinguishable actions. In short, the difference in repetition is made manifest. The goal is a segmentation of the mundane to reveal the extraordinary in the ordinary.



Hit Parade (Porto), 2011

The Micro Series consists of two principal components: the first, alluded to above, is a structural element that translates into the staging of simple actions that count, repeat, and parcel out time. The second component is more tangible, and it could not be more concrete: a microphone. In this series the microphone is foregrounded; it is exploited not only sonically but also as an object and image. In other words, the microphone's iconicity is explicitly explored. At its origin, as noted in *Chambers Concise Dictionary*, the word *microphone* meant “an instrument for



Hit Parade (Winnipeg), 2011

intensifying very small sounds,” which, of course, is reflected in the word’s etymology: from the Greek, *mikros*, “small” and *phone*, “sound, voice.” Thus, in its very definition the microphone can be related to the attention paid to the diminutive. In this series the microphone is utilized metaphorically as a surveying tool, a mapping device, a mining implement. It also becomes, literally, a sounding device that not only amplifies an instrument but is itself turned into one—a crude, hammer-like instrument made to produce a simple rhythm. And since it is not designed to undergo the abuse produced by such repetitive action, the mic becomes an instrument that, over time, displays the damage it has incurred both physically and, in its diminishing ability to reproduce sound, sonically.

The accompanying set of images attests to the abuse endured by the microphones used in *Hit Parade*. This performance is one of the works comprising *The Micro Series*, which also includes *Microhole*, *Microfall*, *Hit Maker*, *Hit*, and *Micro* (this last gives its title to the entire photo series). In *Hit Parade*, the hitting is collective. Participants are asked to lie face down on the ground and pound the pavement with the microphone one thousand times. The sound of each person’s hitting is amplified. Performers choose their own rhythm and intensity. They take a pause of whatever length they wish at every multiple of one hundred.

The Micro Series: simple actions requiring no specific skills, playful and immediate, yet also violent and obsessive. Sound, presented at its most basic rhythmicity. An accumulation of tiny moments, heretofore unnoticed and dismissible. An instrument punctuating time and marking space. An investigation of the microphone as instrument of its own abuse, its own demise. In this spirit, and in conclusion, I will let Alfred Jarry sketch a surreal scene in which the microphone makes an appearance:

Concerning the Musical Jet

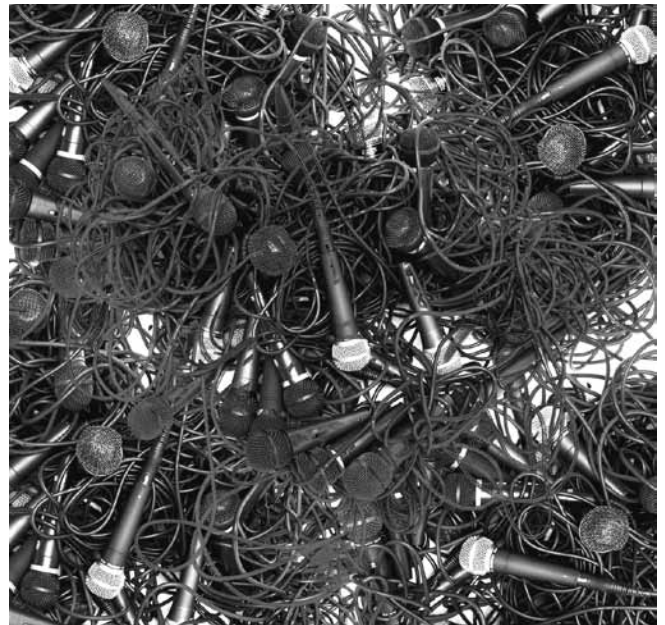
Now, it is necessary to know that the valve installed at the neck of the pit’s mouth was of thin rubber; and to be familiar with the discoveries of Mr. Chichester Bell, cousin of Mr. Graham Bell, the illustrious inventor of the telephone, one should be aware that a stream of water falling upon an india-rubber sheet stretched over the upper end of a tube constitutes a *microphone*, that a liquid jet breaks up at certain rates more easily than others and, according to its nature, will respond to certain sounds in preference to others; finally, one should not be scandalized if we mention that the bishop’s loins secreted this quite unconsciously musical jet whose amplified vibrations he perceived at the moment of taking leave of his reading.³

Notes

¹ Virginia Woolf in Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia* [1983], trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis, 1987), 329.



Micro (One on One), 2014



Micro (Compound), 2014

² Adolf Wölfl, *In the Realms of the Unreal: “Insane” Writings*, ed. John G. H. Oakes (New York, 1991), 94.

³ Alfred Jarry, *Exploits and Opinions of Doctor Faustroll, Pataphysician: A Neo Scientific Novel* [1911], in *Selected Works of Alfred Jarry*, trans. Simon Watson Taylor (New York, 1965), 233.