

## :: Fällt Interview with Christopher Willits ::

**Fällt:** Your source for these recordings was the guitar. How do you integrate the guitar into the software processes you use?

**Willits:** For 'Pollen' I began with a system of sampling and folding processes. These are homemade modules that sample what I am playing on the guitar, and while recording they skate to different playback locations within that recorded sound. I assigned different patterns and proportions to the way the guitar could be folded and then allowed the system to drift between these. I improvised within these constraints, gently pushing the process in a direction that felt good, always listening, playing more when needed, and I recorded what happened.

I like to focus on the process. The final form of each piece is really important to me as well, but to get there I embrace the process first, working from the ground up. It is kind of like locating control on a more horizontal plane, allowing the music to emerge.

**Fällt:** Do you use Max/MSP?

**Willits:** Yes, I use Max/MSP to design these systems. I love working with that software.

**Fällt:** Your last cd, or follow-up to 'Pollen' more like, was 'Folding, and the Tea' on 12k. What does 'folding' refer to?

**Willits:** Folding... well it's about form generated from other form, a kind of morphogenetic process, emergence, and the interrelation of parts; parts folded into other parts, things being separate yet continuous. The fold is about lines, folded lines weaving together and forming other masses, but lines still; not atomized points. In terms of the music, the folds are creases in a rearranging plane of sound that is being spontaneously generated. The notion of a fold is a really accurate way to describe the way I'm thinking about this particular music and the actual synthesis technique that is being applied; that of indexing continuous flows of live guitar samples.

In the 'Folding...' 12k press release I really wanted to make the idea of the fold clear, but it still managed to be misinterpreted in many reviews as just a fancy name for a 'glitch'. The folds are not glitches. On the surface it may sound like a glitch, but it is not generated by any type of malfunction, and it is not some comment on the beingness of digital audio. I am really not interested in foregrounding the medium of digital audio in such ways. Video and film perhaps, but not so much with audio.

So - to set the record straight - ontologically speaking, there are no glitches in this music. I don't find accentuating the malfunctions or failures in the medium to be incredibly interesting. It's important to distinguish between these things. The notion of 'glitch' has been abstracted and misused to the point of meaninglessness. I think it's important for us to find new ways to talk about what is happening in the music we make, the processes, the structure of it, and where it is located in a cultural sense. I'm much more in love with the geometry of music and how it emerges. ...the dynamics of complex systems, the richness of process, warm harmonic chords, interlocking times, folds within folds, and what structures certain processes create. I'm also interested in how all of this relates to other things in the world like biological forms and linguistics, and flowers, insects, eating organic food, and living sustainably.

**Fällt:** You mention that you establish processes then siphon off the results, how does this work? For example, do you work with the audio once you extract it from the process or do you leave it relatively untouched?

**Willits:** 'Pollen' is pretty much untouched. I made a few edits here in there in the longer pieces, but the spontaneity of the process during recording was a main concern. When I respect that moment of recorded performance it tends to produce patterns that feel more natural to me, the process takes on a life of its own, it feels more alive, and less canned.

Then as time passes I look back at the recordings I've made and decide what tracks feel good together, and curate the CD.

The spontaneity is really important to me. And that overlaps into a certain honesty and efficiency of form I aim for in this music. In relation to 'Folding, and the Tea' this CD is pretty stripped down. Pollen was designed as the first widely distributed release of this folded guitar music, so the bare quality of the sound was an intentional starting point, a foundation and introduction from which to build this focused work. It's very easy to do too much with a guitar and computer, or with anything for that matter.

**Fällt:** Is this where the idea of minimalism in your work resides ?

**Willits:** Yes in the sense of efficiency and trying to do a lot with little, clarity of structure, and eliminating extra material or baggage that can cloud the geometry of the music. But, I don't really use the term minimal to describe my music. It's such a loaded term in relation to the 20th century avant garde. And I don't particularly feel like this work is very minimal in those terms, especially compared to the recent branches of minimalistic strategies evoked by those who are experimenting with sound/silence and thresholds of perception. I tend to think of this music and the music of a lot of other artists that get lumped into the 'minimal' description, as being efficient, not minimal.

For instance I would not consider a bicycle minimal in relation to a car. It just makes sense in a different way for different situations; you get exercise with a bike, no insurance is needed, or gas, and parking is easy.

'Pollen' will be released December, 1st, 2003