

TRAVEL

KEITH FULLERTON WHITMAN

MIT LIST VISUAL ARTS CENTER

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Media Test Wall

The music and visual images in Keith Fullerton Whitman's thirteen-minute-long creation *Travel* (2005) work to constantly keep the viewer moving between the state of arrival and departure. Whitman's inspiration for *Travel* is today's frenetic lifestyle: as distances across the world shrink, they are also becoming more condensed and confusing.

A personal and introspective work, *Travel* is a diary of Whitman's globetrotting lifestyle, a consequence of his career as a noted artist in the field of electronic music. Views of landscapes, cityscapes, station platforms, and arrival halls represent a constant state of disorientation—a permanent condition of travel and motion.

Whitman handles his visual images in a manner similar to how he treats components of his music. He deconstructs and recomposes units of time to create a new language of expression and a dynamic audio and visual collage. *Travel* describes his attempt to grasp a moment that continuously dissipates. A world of flux and constant alteration is presented as a given reality—that of a fast-paced, globalized world.

Compared to his typical sound works, in *Travel*, Whitman stretches to create an ambient space where images are incorporated with sound to create an all-together more inclusive effect. It is not clear whether the visual imagery follows the music or vice versa, or whether the two elements complement each other in perfect harmony.

Although Keith Whitman is still an under recognized artist in the contemporary visual art world, he has gained international acclaim within the electronic music genre, working with such electronic devices as transistors and integrated circuits, and with found sounds and environmental noise to compose sound art.

Whitman started his career in the 1990s after graduating from Berkeley College of Music, and his first acclaimed work was produced under the pseudonym Hrvatski. In the words of music writer Cameron McDonald, as Hrvatski, Whitman "typically follows moments of graceful meditation on his guitar or synth with splatters of beats and frequencies tweaked into high heaven."¹

Based in Boston, he worked in the MIT Media Lab in 2004 while working on *Multiples*, three-year-long project that explored the nature of electronic sound. Many artists have influenced Whitman throughout his career including Pierre Schaeffer, who in the 1950s pioneered Music Concrète—the practice of making music not only from sounds made by musical instruments but using real world sounds as well. Whitman's practice was also influenced by Arto Lindsay's *No Wave* sound experiments with his DNA band, along with works by Rudolph Grey, Sonny Sharrock, Michael Karoli, Richard Pinhas, and others.

As Hrvatski, Whitman released two albums of sample-based IDM (Intelligence Dance Music). Since then, Whitman has performed under half a dozen pseudonyms, including Gai/Jin, DJ Hekla, F88vidently, and others. Like a chameleon, Whitman utilizes as many personality swaps as he needs for his experiments. After working under many aliases, he now is producing work under his own name; and he has released two recordings under his own name: *EP 21:30 for Acoustic Guitar (Apartment B)* in 2001, *Playthroughs* in 2002, and a live EP, *Lisbon*, that was released in April 2006.

Travel runs approximately 13 minutes, and it is a prototype for a forthcoming one hour-long version.

Martina Tanga
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¹ See Cameron Macdonald, "Hrvatski: Irrevocably Overdriven Break Freakout," *Pitchfork*, 5 April 2005.
http://www.pitchforkmedia.com/article/record_review/18574/Hrvatski_Irrevocably_Overdriven_Break_Freakout_Megamix

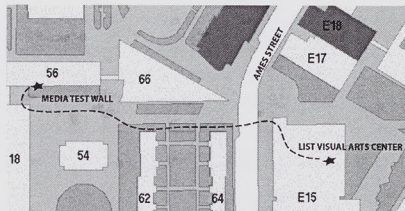
About the Artist

Born in 1973, Whitman started experimenting with music at the early age of nine by modifying Commodore Vic20 basic sound programs to yield raw computer-speak *skronk*. In 1991, he moved to Boston to study Computer Music with Richard Boulanger at Berkeley College of Music. Things started taking off for Whitman in 1999 with the release of Hrvatski's album *Oiseaux 96-98*.

Whitman continues to perform his genre of random computerized rhythms and collagist art-music backings across the globe. He has produced work such as *Multiples*, and *Playthougs*; and he is currently a curator for a portion of a Damon Krukowski-led project that is to be debuted at the ICA in Boston. Whitman is also working on the third Hrvatski album, *Meubles • Møbler • Muebles • etc...*, which will begin its release schedule in early 2007.

The Media Test Wall, an ongoing series of contemporary video, is located in The Whitaker Building (21 Ames St., Bldg 56) on the MIT campus.

Viewing Hours: Daily 24 hrs.



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