

Group Dynamics

By Brian Droitcour on Thursday, September 24th, 2009 at 9:21 am.



Image: Screenshot of MaxMSP patch used in "Quartet without Pyramid Scheme"

"Quartet without Pyramid Scheme" does not, in fact, have anything to do with financial machinations, but the title of this experiment in sound installation and improvisation is a dry foil for how it actually unfolded in Brooklyn's Diapason gallery over four Saturdays in September. Jordan Paul, the organizer of the project, initiated it September 5 with a pair of parallel installations in Diapason's gallery and lounge spaces, both of which used the same set of samples—a water boiler, miked CD and DVD players, a malfunctioning audio player—run through a MaxMSP patch that determined their placement and duration in each channel. A week later Reed Evan Rosenberg introduced some drama by adding the deep rumble of a laundry mangle to a long array of household appliance sounds. But contrast was less a concern for Paul than a close fit as a whole, which is why he chose artists he had collaborated with before and requested they bring field recordings of ambient noise. While the work is declared a quartet from the start, it's not until the last week that all four artists will be present in the gallery, which suggests an understanding of time as being as fluid as space is ordinarily perceived—an approach supported by the use of sounds connected to specific locations, and then shuffling and layering them to further mask any hints of the linear temporal movement. As the artists come to remix the samples in Diapason's lounge each week, they retain equal shares in the project—unlike in a pyramid scheme—and rather than bringing a climax and collapse, the meeting of