

Volker Straebel

***"For this shall never be proved, that the things that are not are; and do thou restrain thy thought from this way of inquiry. Nor let habit force thee to cast a wandering eye upon this devious track, or to turn thither thy resounding ear or thy tongue; but do thou judge the subtle refutation of their discourse uttered by me."***

***Parmenides explorations***

for two performers and video projection (2025)

*for Tim Feeney*

**Performance:**

The two performers (Player 1 and Player 2) create sustained, granular fields of sound. Dynamics are soft (*pp* to *mp*). The means of sound creation should be visible to the audience for one player (e.g., bowed or brushed percussion, rotation of exciting objects on resonators, etc.) and not recognizable for the other (e.g., electronics, voice with mouth shut, etc.). The musicians need to perform in close proximity so that their sounds cannot be spatially distinguished.

The piece is a series of two-part events, where the first part fades in with a short crescendo and stays, once established, rather unchanged. The second part enters ten seconds later and remains masked by the first sound until the first part vanishes. Sometimes, both parts stop at the same time.

The two performers should be seated in front of the audience. The video is projected on the wall behind or close to them so the audience can comfortably observe their actions and the video at the same time. Projecting on a screen should be avoided.

No additional visuals are to be presented.

The performance should create an atmosphere of concentration and sympathetic appreciation for the sounds and silences.

**Documentation:**

First performed at Automata, Los Angeles, on April 19<sup>th</sup>, 2025, by Tim Feeney and Volker Straebel.

The two-part events are separated by 10" of silence, except for two instances when they are 15" apart. The first part always lasts for 30". The second part starts 10" later and lasts for 20", 30", or 40", depending on I-Ging chance operations.

The Projections begin every 40" and last for 10", 15", 20", or 25", depending on I-Ching chance operations, and resulting in dark periods of 15" to 30". The projected words were chosen from a glossary of 411 terms based on I-Ching chance operations.

Program notes:

*Parmenides explorations* addresses the presence of the absence. The title is Fragment VII from the *Poem of Parmenides*, translated by John Burnet (1892).

Duration ca. 20'30"

The projected terms are taken from the glossary of the textbook *Introduction to Oceanography* by Paul Webb (open source, 2023):

backwash — the wash of wave water down the slope of a beach

barrier reef — a reef that forms a barrier to waves along a coast; it is separated from land by a lagoon

beach face — the area of a beach between the high and low tide lines

berm — a flat area of a beach in the backshore area (above the high tide level)

brackish — seawater of low salinity; part freshwater, part seawater

breaker — an unstable wave that has collapsed

calving — when ice breaks off of the front of a glacier and collapses into the water

capillary waves — small ripples that form on the water surface under light winds; their restoring force is surface tension

celerity — the speed of a wave

cobble — sediment particle that is between 64 and 256 mm in diameter

continental rise — the area at the bottom of the continental slope, where it transitions to the abyssal sea floor

eddy — a rotating water mass

fetch — the distance over which wind blows to form waves

fjord — a deep, U-shaped estuary that was carved out by advancing glaciers

glacial groove — scratches and grooves carved into bedrock from rocks carried by moving glaciers

headland — a point of land extending out to sea

internal wave — waves that form below the surface at the interface between water masses of different densities

jetty — a long structure built to protect a harbor from filling with sand due to longshore transport

littoral zone — the region of a coast between the high and low tide lines. Also called the intertidal zone

longshore bar — an offshore deposit of sand parallel to the shoreline

plunging breaker — a breaking wave on moderately steep beaches that curls over on itself as it breaks

rip current — a strong flow of water outward from a beach

slack tide — period of little water movement between an incoming and outgoing tide

sonar — acronym for sound navigation and ranging; a method of using sound echoes to detect objects

spherule — a microscopic piece of space dust

spilling breaker — a breaker on relatively flat beaches that slowly increases its height and collapses

spit — a sand or coarser deposit extending from shore out into open water

surf beat — an irregular surface wave pattern caused by mixed interference

surf zone — the near-shore zone where waves are breaking into surf

wave base — the depth of water that is affected by the sub-surface orbital motion of wave action (approximately one-half of the wavelength)

0:00 0:30 Player 1  
0:10 0:50 Player 2  
0:40 1:00 Projection: plunging breaker

1:00 0:30 Player 2  
1:10 1:50 Player 1  
1:20 1:35 Projection: fetch

2:00 2:10 Projection: calving  
2:00 2:30 Player 2  
2:10 2:40 Player 1

2:40 3:00 Projection: glacial groove  
2:50 3:20 Player 1  
3:00 3:30 Player 2  
3:20 3:35 Projection: capillary waves

3:40 4:10 Player 1  
3:50 4:10 Player 2  
4:00 4:20 Projection: berm

4:20 4:50 Player 2  
4:30 5:10 Player 1  
4:40 5:05 Projection: celerity

5:20 5:35 Projection: slack tide  
5:20 5:50 Player 1  
5:30 5:50 Player 2

6:00 6:10 Projection: continental rise  
6:00 6:30 Player 1  
6:10 6:50 Player 2  
6:40 6:50 Projection: surf zone

7:00 7:30 Player 2  
7:10 7:40 Player 1  
7:20 7:35 Projection: sonar

7:50 8:20 Player 2  
8:00 8:40 Player 1  
8:00 8:10 Projection: spilling breaker

8:40 9:00 Projection: backwash  
8:50 9:20 Player 1  
9:00 9:30 Player 2  
9:20 9:30 Projection: fjord

9:45 10:15 Player 1  
9:55 10:35 Player 2  
10:00 10:25 Projection: cobble

10:40 10:55 Projection: wave base  
10:45 11:15 Player 2  
10:55 11:35 Player 1  
11:20 11:30 Projection: longshore bar

11:45 12:15 Player 2  
11:55 12:15 Player 1  
12:00 12:10 Projection: littoral zone

12:25 12:55 Player 1  
12:35 13:05 Player 2  
12:40 13:00 Projection: beach face

13:15 13:45 Player 1  
13:20 13:30 Projection: headland  
13:25 13:45 Player 2

13:55 14:25 Player 1

14:00 14:25 Projection: spit

14:05 14:35 Player 2

14:40 15:00 Projection: internal wave

14:45 15:15 Player 2

14:55 15:25 Player 1

15:20 15:35 Projection: eddy

15:35 16:05 Player 2

15:45 16:25 Player 1

16:00 16:10 Projection: breaker

16:40 17:00 Projection: jetty

16:40 17:10 Player 2

16:50 17:30 Player 1

17:20 17:40 Projection: barrier reef

17:40 18:10 Player 2

17:50 18:20 Player 1

18:00 18:15 Projection: surf beat

18:30 19:00 Player 2

18:40 19:10 Player 1

18:40 19:00 Projection: brackish

19:20 19:30 Projection: rip current

19:20 19:50 Player 2

19:30 19:50 Player 1

20:00 20:20 Projection: spherule

20:00 20:30 Player 1

20:10 20:30 Player 2