



**Rinus van Alebeek**  
**Luc Ferrari**

**The initial idea for this release came from the fact that in your musical practice you very often use sounds taken from other records or recorded in everyday life, sometimes without the knowledge of those who were recorded. That was at least the case when you performed here in Krakow in April 2010. We came up with this funny joke that you should release an album which would include only someone else's piece in full length. The idea evolved from a joke into something more serious, I think, but let's start with the definition of stealing. What is your definition of stealing in music?**

I would follow the legal definition, the use of somebody's creation without asking for it, without giving credit and then making money with it.

From there on life becomes complicated, in public places music is played that I don't want to hear. At the same time I want to be in that place, say in a stadium. To see a football game. Recording the music in a stadium or in a supermarket is in this way not stealing, but a comment. Then making money out of it is like a kind of compensation: that music of yours annoyed me, that music of yours helped to create this acoustic environment, it is offending and invading: now let me please make some money out of it.

But the Ferrari recordings have nothing to do with this attitude. Here we take the discussion to another level.

**Initially, when we came up with the idea, you had this feeling of guilt - thinking that somehow it is not right to do such thing, that it would be a scandale. Do you still have any of this feeling in you?**

If there was an initial feeling of guilt, it disappeared completely after I have met Mme Ferrari. It felt and still feels as a right thing to do and it is a very liberating feeling.

**When listening to your recording I was really touched by its, hmm, acousmatic beauty but also I realised that it's not that much stolen. Somehow the original Ferrari's piece has gone transparent or hidden behind the environmental sounds, behind the room's echo, the quality of your tape recorder etc. and music stopped being the most important issue here. Isn't changing the context the only objective result of stealing in music? You know, no fault, no guilt, no reasonable reasons to get angry or upset...**

You know, I am pretty much amazed and equally honoured to hear that my recordings altered Ferrari's piece, yet sounds got added because I have been moving in the house, but the "Cycle du Souvenir" is always there. I think that making clear so early in the recording that I am there in the room and in the house changed the way of listening. So, it is the story that you and I make up that provides the piece with a new context. It is the lovely thing about it, it doesn't change one thing to the original piece, nothing. I took away something, the question is what and from who? Did I take your expectation?

**Stravinsky has once stolen this quote from TS Elliot, saying that a good composer borrows and that a great composer steals. Elliot said the same thing about poets and Picasso is believed to having used this phrase towards the painters. So what's so creative in stealing rather than borrowing? Is stealing creative at all?**

I know it as a Chinese saying regarding books. A good book consists in 80% of stolen material. I never understood this, and I still don't. Or maybe I do. For a book one could dive into the oral tradition and use stories that were with us. To recompose a book with these stories you need the hand of a master. Maybe I don't get the concept of borrowing. You borrow a piece in music, painting and after using it you return it to the owner? How does this work?

Stealing is an act of laziness. But let's not stick to the banal judgement. Maybe stealing has to be understood as a thing that goes beyond plagiat. It makes sense to steal something if it lies somewhere without any chance to get to life again. Then stealing is morally a noble act. Save a good idea and put new life in it. Add a new layer of civilisation. Maybe that is the excitable thing in "stealing" Ferrari's piece. It lays stagnant, away from impulses. Maybe I have succeeded in putting new life into it. Maybe. Maybe I can also be called pretentious.

**Maybe this record is not so much about stealing as it is about experiencing music. There comes this question immediately: is music a listener's experience to the same extent as it is a composer's statement?**

First things first: my idea is that sound is at the heart of all matter; on a fairy tale/scientific level this means that the whole universe is sound materialized. Music therefore is an attempt to connect to the source of everything. A listener will get tuned by music, in the same way when you tune an instrument. Both tunings will lead to a certain way of expression. Therefore music/sound doesn't belong to anyone in an eternal sense. But since time is money and societies travel through time and civilisations get also defined by their law, a composition belongs to its

composer. The experience, however, belongs to the listener and to the composer in an equal way. The listener's experience can be manipulated by the amount of information that comes with the composition - he can also be guided, or even misled. It would be interesting to discuss if a composer through his piece can steal something from the listener.

**Now, in the age of the visual, of images, aren't the field recordings the most socially/culturally critical sound art?**

I doubt it. Art comes from individuals and if they are critical and want to be critical using their art, then they will do so. Don't forget that sound art is a niche: the acoustic ecology thing sounds very sincere but I wonder how many people know about it outside our marginal sound world?

**Going back to the recording - can you tell me about the process of recording of this piece, how was it done?**

The CD was inserted. The music played over two loud speakers. In the living room I held my microphone which is as small as a top of the little finger, in my right hand. I wore an iPod earphone set and held a Sony Professional Walkman in my left hand.

I started static. Then I started to move through the room, paying very much attention not to make a sound while walking. Back to static again, then various excursions through the house, bedroom, guestroom, bathroom, down the stairs to the kitchen and the patio, back to the living room.

I noticed Mme Ferrari came in and out. At a certain point I gave her the booklet of the CD and asked her by sign language to read the liner notes. These were Luc Ferrari's words, a kind of diary he wrote while working on "Cycle du Souvenir".

From there on I started to improvise with my microphone, a kind of choreography for one arm and one recorder: swift and slow movements in front of the speakers and in the room.

The best thing about it, apart from you making it possible and Brunhild Ferrari allowing it, is that the recording was made in the very house where the couple lived and where Mme Ferrari still lives. This presence, I hope, is something you notice.

I felt a great responsibility to both of them while recording. In a way watched upon from another era.

This house is like an oasis. I remember I was surprised when I heard a car passing. This gave a notion of time, another time. The house is a very pleasant one, very colorful. But, of course, I came there way too early. When I walked the street, a street full of trees and houses with gardens, the day a bit darkish as you have when walking under clouds, I had difficulty to see the house numbers, but when I saw the Ferrari's house for the first time, I intuitively knew it was the one, and made another big big round, a 35 minute walk.

### **Have you ever met Luc Ferrari before?**

In the year 2005 I walked into the Staalplaat store on Torstrasse in Berlin. It was one of my very first visits to Berlin. I wanted to ask for an opportunity to play at the store. One thing struck me: the card with the announcement of someone's death. Having lived in Italy such a long time I was intrigued by the name: Ferrari. When I took a closer look I saw his year of birth, and wondered how come this older man got such a prominent place in the shop. I had never heard of him.

A few years later I was invited to play at an homage to Luc Ferrari. Still not familiar with his music, I asked the organizer to send me some CD's.

I've got "Presque Rien" and "Cycles du Souvenir" and another one that slumpy enough I forgot at some stage in my life in someone's cd-player. Up to that point I had always wondered what genre my music belonged to: field recordings and musique concrete didn't say much to me. when I listened to Ferrari's sounds, I knew where I was.

### **The choice of this particular composition for this release seems very appropriate...**

This piece is made with four reel to reel recorders. When I heard this I thought I should use these. But Mme Ferrari, who is a very wise woman, fortunately cut this possibility off: there was only one reel to reel recorder left. Brought back from the temporarily rush of desire, I realised that the setting should be as minimal as possible. Only in this way I would be able to capture the presence of the house.

When recording a presence I get this very liberating, uplifting feeling, something close to bliss and happiness, I don't know... Maybe I have managed to enter my personal mythology, it's like visiting some place, some person outside your space/time reality.

### **All this makes it a tribute-to kind of album. Do you consider it a kind of a duo recording with Luc Ferrari? Or rather a trio with him and his wife? Or a quartet with their house as well?**

I didn't think of a tribute. I thought: 'Hey this is the text, let's use it'. Then I realised that Mme Ferrari's voice was on many pieces. Then, while she was reading it, I thought 'Ugh, this text is long...' and I thought 'Shit, she is reading a text of her late husband...' All those memories then when I started to move around and coming close to her face with the microphone, and I thought she was really a great person to let me do this with her.

So I don't consider it a tribute but a contribution. It is my recording. And the myth and hospitality and the sensuality and the love and the life and the memories of a great couple on a certain day in the year 2010 in the Ferrari's house in Montreuil.