Théophile Langer

BET WEEN

Four Gestures

Seek · Inhabit

Open · Share

Contents

Presences

How an artist learns to see

I Seek 3
presence in creation

II Inhabit 6
presence in listening

III Open 11
presence in reality

IV Share 15
presence with the other

Models

How the contemporary world forgets how to see

I Seek 19
recommendation models

II Inhabit 25
consumption models

III Open 31
prediction models

IV Share 35
ownership models

Presences

How an artist learns to see

I SEEK

For a long time, I believed that creating meant choosing between reproducing and inventing.
I did not yet know that I was seeking something else.
I was seeking.

Back then, making music mostly meant going deeper into what I already knew how to do.
Each new track built on the previous one.
Through composing, I came to know my tools better and better.
But I also came to know my habits better and better.

I could spend twenty minutes on a single loop.
The track hardly changed at all.
I was the one who was changing.

Sometimes I deleted half of a project.
The silence that followed taught me more than what I had just written.

Even before I played a single note, I often knew which synthesizer I was going to open, which preset I was going to select.
I thought I was choosing.
I was recognizing.

Some habits no longer even wait for us to decide.
Experience is said to set us free.
It can also make us predictable.
At first, this predictability feels like mastery.
Then it becomes a way of always returning to the same place.

I knew which sounds would draw me in.
Which tensions I would build.
Even when I felt like I was improvising, something inside me was following a path I’d already taken.

I was no longer afraid that I might fail to make a track.
I was afraid of succeeding at making the same one every time.

I no longer wanted simply to write new music.
I wanted to find my way back to a place where I would no longer know what to do.

A few weeks later, I found myself facing a keyboard whose notes no longer fell where I expected them to.
The gestures were the same.
The result was not.

I produced less.
I deleted more.
I spent more time listening than composing.
I hadn’t lost my tools.
I’d lost my bearings.

At the same time, the platforms seemed to know better and better what I wanted to hear.
The next track resembled the previous one.
Then the one after that.
I never asked myself how they did it.
I wondered how long my music had been doing the same thing.

I didn’t start by looking for new sounds.
I started by looking for a place where my habits would stop working.

I wasn’t looking for the unknown.
I was looking for a place where the familiar would lose its power.

I used to think that inventing meant creating something new.
I realized that seeking sometimes meant losing what one already knew how to do.

I thought I was choosing.

I was recognizing.