

Trash Records Dot Org –
2022 Annual Report



Visual Art:

Chris Clements: *Photographs*







Music:

Pin: *Lachromancy*

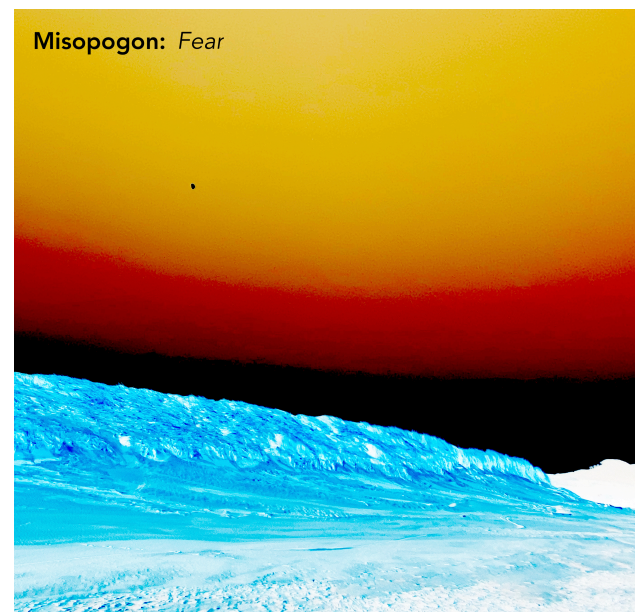
Here's the new 2022 Pin album. The last one (*Seventeen*) was taken off in a different sort of direction by the death of a close friend. It became much more abstract and less song-focused (more like the very first Pin album from 20 years ago). This one has more of a focus on songs, but you can still feel the influence of the last album (I think). The title is a three-way portmanteau of "lachrymose", "romance", and "-mancy"... so there's that.

Enjoy!



Misopogon: *Fear*

The new Misopogon EP, *Fear* is here. It's 7 tracks of mostly plodding noise-rock trauma... Enjoy!



Zeke Mason: *Last*

Last follows up on 2021's *Whilst it Waits* with 9 new instrumental compositions.

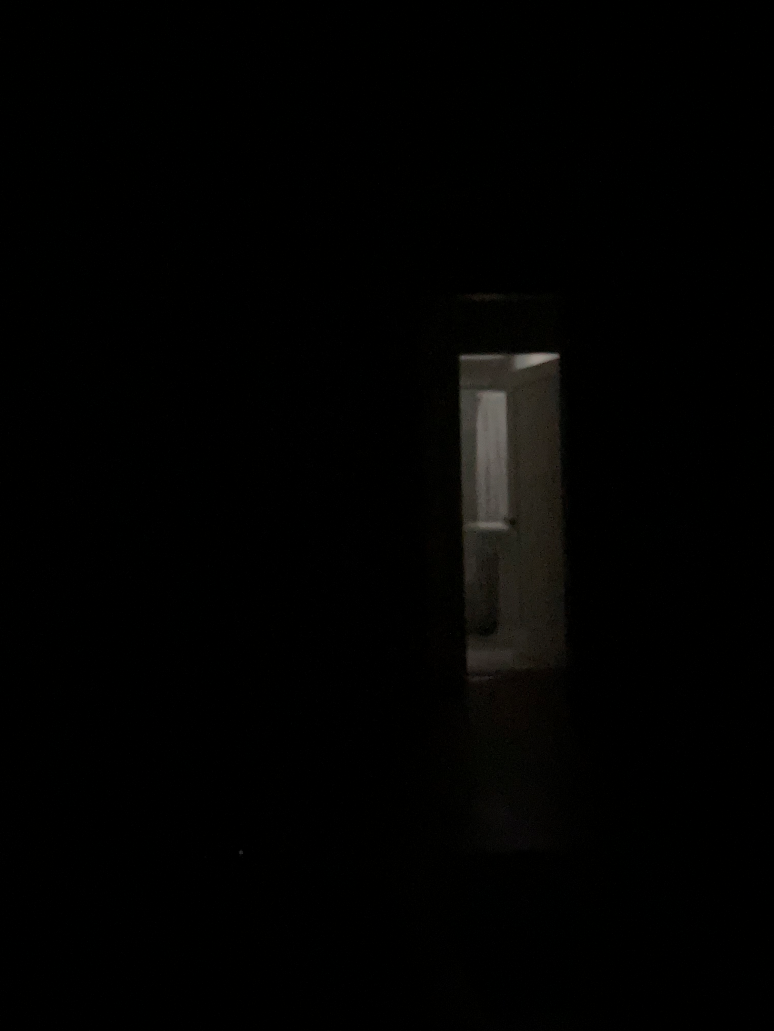


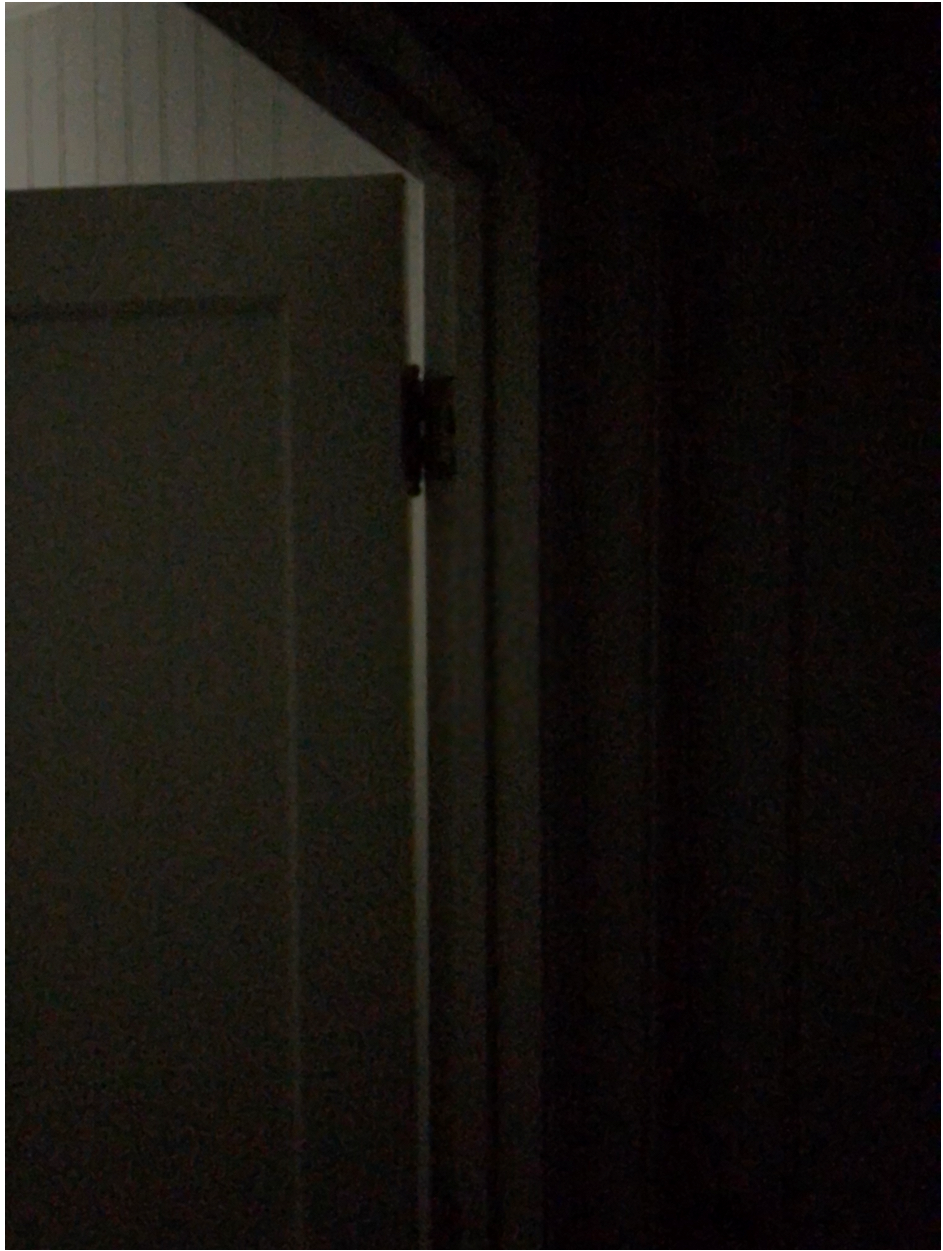
Chris Clements: Photo



Visual Art:

Hannah Tatlin: *Photographs*





This is Why We Can't Have Nice Things, or: Data-Capitalism Co-Opts Everything By P.R. Smithson

Back in the early 90s a bloated mainstream music industry was caught off guard by how much money could be made from a style of music — VERY broadly construed — that they hadn't paid much heed to yet. "Alternative" music took off, and soon major record companies were scrambling to find "alternative" bands to sell to a hungry market. They signed whoever they could that seemed to fit the bill and then flogged the living shit out of them to eager consumers. Once they had gathered their wits back about them however, they soon found their confidence again and reasserted their forming, shaping wills. They began to flog a more and more generic, aimed-at-mass-appeal version of the thing that they hadn't seen coming. By the mid-90s "alternative" was distinctly mainstream. By the late-90s it was a generic form of factory-made bland drivel.

...An old, cliché story, I know.

...

I'm interested in music. And I'm interested in art more broadly.

I'm also interested in artists, and I'm interested in how they make their art. And I'm not alone. Lots of people who are interested in music, and in art more broadly also take an interest in how its made. That's not new to our current media and tech world. In the mid-twentieth century art mags like *Art News* and *Art Forum* already delighted their readers with "in the studio with X" features that included descriptions of the artist at work, photographs of their workspaces, and interviews talking about their practice, approaches, methods, and so on. In the field of music, "making of the album" documentaries have been popular fare for a long time now.

With the advent of youtube, this kind of content found its way onto the platform in a fairly natural manner. Media outlets, like the music-tech magazine *Sound on Sound* produced video studio-tours, showing the workspaces of musicians, talking about the creative process, discussing things like work-flow, how they set up their space, the types of equipment they use, and so on. And amateurs, eager to share their own artistic worlds, began producing their own videos of the same sort. Galleries that deal in visual art, like Goldmark, began producing videos where they went to visit ceramic artists in their studios, and so on. The massive Tate Britain's youtube channel has produced its share of "in the studio with X" type videos... all well and good.

I like these sorts of videos. I find it fascinating to look into the creative spaces of others, to hear about their process, to peer into their workshop-worlds. I liked this kind of content when it came in the form of books like Stein's *Artists Observed* or Kirwin & Lord's *Artists in their Studios*, or magazine articles, like the ones in *Art News*. It's stimulating to get a glimpse into the spaces where the alchemy of creative work

happens... where art itself comes to life. So the advent of youtube videos in this genre was welcome to me.

But we can't have nice things for long can we? No my dears, we certainly can't.

A few years ago I began noticing a change in these videos. I had been watching videos of musicians showing the videographer — and thus, the viewer — around their studio spaces... I'll focus on the music related videos here, but the change is palpable in other media as well. What I began to notice is that they started to look similar. I mean both the videos themselves, and the studio spaces. They all started to look alike. They also started to sound alike. This all happened as “youtuber” became a career goal.

The “Studio” Spaces:

The “studio” spaces in these videos began to look slicker and slicker, and more and more the same. They had “cool” mood lights, “funky” feature decoration, and so on. They looked less and less like actual artists workspaces, and more and more like... sets... film sets... designed for the camera, not for working in. They were no longer actual musician's studios... They were as real as the “wild west” sets for movies. Something was indeed amiss...

The Focus on Things

The videos also increasingly focused on showing and listing-off pieces of music gear... usually with the videographer/host saying things like: “that's so sick!” or “awww yeaaaah!” as each expensive item was mentioned. The litany of gear items and “awww yeaaaah”s became a kind of call-and-response religious ritual at the altar of commodity fetishism. And... *of course*... the video creators began including sponsored links in their video descriptions... if you click on those links to massive online music equipment sellers like Sweetwater, Amazon, etc. then the video producer gets a little kick-back. ... Neat huh? ... “awww yeaaaah!” This coincided with the rise of the now ever-present gear-reviewing videos... not actual musicians or music-tech writers (who have reviewed gear since the pre-internet days of magazines like *Mix* or *Sound on Sound*), but professional music-youtubers, who receive the products for free and then produce videos talking about how cool this new piece of gear is.... “awwww yeaaaah!” Music youtube had devolved from artists talking about their creative process to a series of advertisements for things you can buy.

...And why would you want to buy them? Because you aspire to be a musician! Or... maybe... now... you might aspire to be a music-youtuber instead!

From Musicians on youtube, to Music-youtubers

Indeed, the “how I work when I make my music” documentary/interview-style videos slowly started to be supplanted by music-youtubers talking about how they make their music-youtuber videos... a snake-eating-its-own tale of a situation (or, perhaps, more

like an animal of any kind feeding on its own shit?)... These are no longer musicians on youtube making videos about making music... they are music-youtubers making videos about making music-youtuber videos. It's a vicious cycle.

And what lies at the heart of that change? The desire to make money. "Youtuber" is now an aspirational career-goal and identity. And along with that comes the cynical crafting of product to maximize returns. And to do so, one needs to play the game... The algorithm is all... The youtube algorithm can make or break your channel... And it's a fussy eater... you need to feed it just right... give it a scientifically formulated diet, and it shits out golden eggs in the form of recommendations to many viewers... and more viewers means more money. Youtube wants people to watch lots and lots of youtube videos... so they can sell advertising... of course... but also —and more importantly— so they can mine our data. The more we watch the better for youtube. So the algorithm encourages videos that get people watching and keep them watching. And what do we like? Buying things! And dreaming of buying things! And dreaming that we are successful! We want to dream that we too can have a flashy studio, with all the trappings of success (cool lights brah! exquisite gear ..."awwww yeah!", and so on)... we too can be just like them! And it's not just the studios that they talk about... they also talk about their lives, how they like to hang out with friends, be creative, their personal struggles (they feel insecure sometimes, *just like me!* ...oh, those exquisitely tortured artists! ...as exquisite as their high-end gear and their immaculate studio-sets... "click the sponsored link below and use discount code: "DREAM TO DREAM" ...)... etc. It's *lifestyle selling*, plain and simple. They are selling aspirations to success... to happiness...

Christian Dominance

And who, pray-tell is good at lifestyle selling? Who is good at selling aspirations to success and happiness? Why the Christian lifestyle industrial complex of course... Years ago *South Park* parodied the Christian music industry... If you don't know about it... it's absolutely massive. It goes hand in hand with lots of other Christian lifestyle selling, from books to movies and tv shows to home decor and much more. (One estimate is that the total "Religious Economy" in the US is worth 1.3 TRILLION dollars.¹)

Back in the late 90s I knew someone who grew up in a Christian community, but they listened to secular music... A church friend was very concerned about this... They said: "It doesn't matter what *kind* of music you like... there's a Christian version of it... so just listen to that instead." And that's just as true today... whatever you like, there is a Christian version you can get instead... it's BIG business. There is a shit-tonne of money to be made selling Christian alternatives... and, you have a kind of captive market, along with ready-made avenues for advertising and distribution.

¹ <https://religiousfreedomandbusiness.org/1-2-trillion-religious-economy-in-us>

If you search for “music studio tour” on youtube, the algorithm responds with many, many results from a channel that doesn’t say that it is a Christian channel... but the studios they tour are predominately those of Christian musicians... people you’ve likely never heard of because they’ve been selling their music to a different market that you are not a part of (the studio of the soundtrack composer for the children’s propaganda show *Veggie Tales* was one). They also have toured some non-Christian musicians’ studios, which has given them the difficult problem of having to bleep out words like “damn.”

There’s nothing wrong with having religious beliefs. And there’s nothing wrong with liking your music to have a religious flavour. But the Christian lifestyle industry, like the lifestyle industry more broadly, is a parasitic entity that feeds off of our desires and insecurities. But unlike the broader lifestyle industry, the Christian version of it makes use of the power of religion to make its cash. It serves Mammon under the guise of a different god. And it’s a power-player in music-youtube land.

Commercialize EVERYTHING! Commodify EVERYTHING! “Smash that Like Button!”

So what does this all add up to? What does it all come down to?

The internet is, in many ways, a remarkable thing. It is a powerful medium for the transmission of information... all dominating... and itself a slave to commodification... not just of stuff, not just of our time, not just of our data, but *our very hopes and desires*... The internet, like all of us, is a slave to the commodification of life, which has taken a quantum leap forward in this new stage of capitalism in which we find ourselves.

...and that’s why we can’t have nice things.

P.R. Smithison

Poo Monkey Comic:



www.trashrecords.org

