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# THE FILE CABINET PROJECT

## Concept

The File Cabinet Project investigates the sculptural system and kinesonic mechanism of information storage furniture.

The digital age didn't kill the old hardware of information technology and the metal office furniture is now part of the new electronic communication network. There are file cabinets in every office all around the world.

While in the old times all data was stored in the metal hardware of this specific furniture, today file cabinets are extended with computers and are interconnected through the electronic system of communication.

Information kept in the cabinet drawers is transferred to the computer and distributed through cyberspace.

Files are accessible through the opening and closing of the cabinet drawers. The kinetic movements of the drawers produce mechanical sounds.

The single monolithic file cabinets are linked together by computers and integrated into a giant network that functions as both kinesonic mega-machine and world wide monument serving the entire planet with information.

## Office

The art of architecture belongs to the world of business, the government and the church. Everyone is hypnotized by production and conveniences - subway system, bankmachine, cellular phone, video game, recycling container, drugs. There are countless office buildings in the city. From the lobby elevators take us to any floors. We can listen to ambient elevator music. A short walk and we are in the office. Work stations are divided by acoustical panel systems. The sound-dampening fabric panels offer an attractive, contemporary look, create a pleasant, private office environment while reducing the distraction of unwanted noise.

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## Furniture

We take a closer look at the office. Let our eyes wander from an executive multi-tilt arm chair to a heavy duty operator chair via an "all-in-one" computer desk. We remark the newly installed file cabinets. The steel hardware of information storage survives even in a digital world. Cabinets combine function, economy and attractive styling. Lateral and vertical cabinets are available in two, three, four or five drawer heights. They accommodate all types of files and change easily from legal to letter size. Front to back filing is maximized by the deep cabinets. The cabinets have smooth operating, durable roller systems. They are equipped with full cradle suspension and sound dampened drawer

fronts, so drawers open effortlessly and close silently. Stresspoints are reinforced. In some cases mechanical interlock allows only one drawer to open at a time to prevent tipping. They are complete with pull handles, latch, lack and fully adjustable removable follower block. A range of colors are available, black, grey, sand, beige, nevada.

## **Performance**

Information stored in file cabinets is also digitally processed in computers. The mechanical movements of people working in offices keep the cabinet closely connected to the computer. Gestures are made. File cabinets are opened and closed, opened and closed, opened and closed. The smooth operating roller system wears out and cant reduce all the sound anyway. Simultaneous and similar sounds are made. Noise. The sounds of the file cabinets. A chain reaction. The digital file is sent to another office. The receiver has to look for more information in the metal drawers of file cabinets. Impulse and feedback. It is repeated unlimited times. Number of participants unknown. Every computer is linked to a network. Networks are linked together. Thus file cabinets are directly linked together all around the world. My concert/performance is a model of this socio-sonic action, illustrating it in an extreme form and under the traditional circumstances of a concert/spectacle.

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## **Accumulation**

If we could accumulate the sounds made by all the file cabinets around the world by a single day we would perhaps listen to the most dramatic, super-chaotic, ultra-radical, fuckoff-revolutionary aural irritainment. This ongoing work-in-progress concert is a contemporary (di)version of what Erik Satie called "furniture music for law offices, banks, etc". He meant some kind of ambient music that is composed for specific environments. The origin of this musical form can be traced back in history: devotional atmosphere for worship, carnival tunes, etc. The herein explored socio-sonic office sound goes beyond the original idea of furniture music as it explores distracting noise, the unwanted by-product sounds of office work that nobody supposed to listen to. It is not intended to be an enjoyable sound to inspire office employees. It has nothing to do with composition, nobody planned it, nobody controls it. There is no need to call it music. The world is filled with these type of sounds. Factories are the best examples where the noise of machines and mechanical movements are more evident. File cabinet sounds would become evident only if we would be able to accumulate it and play it back. But its nobody's aim.

## **Short history of the project**

In jan/1993 I opened my new office, Puppet Government, located at 372 Richmond Street West, in Toronto. My interest in file cabinets developed at around this time, and, as it

happened at so many previous occasions, it has been induced by chance. I've found a four drawer lateral cabinet at the freight elevator waiting to be thrown in the garbage. I moved it immediately into my office and at that moment I knew it was the object I was waiting for. For the first time in my life I looked at a file cabinet as someone would look at an alien device with astonishing interest. I started pulling-pushing the drawers in and out and I was fully amazed by the noise they made.

I have been using scrapmetal junk for performances and installations for many years collecting them from junk yards and from the streets, but, for some reason, I've never paid enough attention to the file cabinet. It took a special moment to discover the nature of this perfect noise instrument and potential monument.

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Soon after this major discovery I have made a couple of motor powered kinetic cabinet-sculptures. The function of these machines is based on gravity and the pulling power of AC motors. When the cabinet tips forward the drawers slide out and when it tips back the drawers slide back. A very significant thumping sound is created by the mechanical movements of the slamming drawers. In performance I use digital samples of this sound and accumulate it in the form of multi-layered loops.

The very first time I used a lateral file cabinet on stage was at The Music Gallery in Toronto, nov 12, 1993, in a performance entitled ARENA, part of the Freedom In A Vacuum experimental music festival. Since then I keep exploring the cabinet as noise-machine and sculpture. My most recent work, Executive Machinery, is a computer controlled machine with pneumatic cylinders. It was shown at many international performance and new media festivals in Canada, England, Germany and Hungary. Beside exploring the cabinet as multi-functional object (sound instrument, kinetic sculpture, machine, monument) I also developed a theory about the principal role of the file cabinet in the world wide territory of office/information system(s). The file cabinet and the related sound-action refer to socio-sonic networks and technology.

## **Conclusion**

This project demonstrates the system of bureauphonic sounds and introduces the file cabinet as socio-sonic noise machine and interactive sub-monument. It creates a special occasion to take a closer look at the inter-operable strategic architecture of the worldwide conspiratorial monument of Bureauphony. I have no interest of claiming the file cabinet as a ready-made for old fashion museum display. In fact I'm not interested in the ready-made at all. As an object of over-tournement the file cabinet does not mutate into something else that an outmoded situationist would like to appropriate, but it stays in the hand of the original user thus negating to negate the negation of negation. Therefore my re-actionary concept of the "reintegration" of objects to their place of origin proposes to leave everything as it is and where it is. Pleasing inactivity becomes an act of vandalism that radically destroys the obstacles of creativity. That's what I call fuckoff-revolutionary machinery.