

Anthony Elms

A machine running is worth two standing still.

Every essay on Thomas Bayrle starts with, or quickly moves to make connection via his time working at a textile factory. OK. Done. Let us not make too much of this historical fact here. You may protest, given that this record brings three tracks of 4-track recordings of textile machines looming, segmenting and winding made by Bayrle and Bernhard Schreiner. I'd argue that the time with a textile machine, his description of the work, the patterns and hours, is more relevant to Bayrle's prints, paintings and films where patterns are manipulated to twist, buckle, warp and bow as they extend and seduce and cover, perhaps endlessly. On these recordings, by contrast, the sound of the machinery is as captured. None of the typical Bayrle manipulations or distortions or tweaks. Here it is important to listen. Spending time with the recordings puts the listener with the machine patterns, to twist, buckle, warp and bow your own extended seduction. The component pivot points:

1. CONTRADICTION

These are machines. Machine rhythms. Not music. It should be dry and equivocating. This is not the case. I encounter these recordings as intentional beats. Compositions. For reasons I cannot explain, three months in and numerous listenings later, "RAPIER (LOOMING)" is the stand-out single. It rocks. A real chart topper. The fullness of the sound carries overtones and propulsive force. Also a sly syncopation that may or may not actually be in the grooves. The complexity of the rhythm immediately pushes you front and center. "SHUTTLE (SEGMENTING)" and "YARN (WINDING)" are thin and repetitive by comparison. Which is not to say without pleasure. They are post-punk before punk.

2. SUBMISSION

All three tracks put me in my place. Would this be the case if I was on the factory floor working the machines for an eight hour shift? I'm not sure. When I worked in factories the sound never bothered me too much. I cannot say I remember the sounds either, though. I'm currently humming a bastardized version of "YARN (WINDING)" to myself. The tracks put a spell on me. The rhythms of the automotive plant didn't engross like this LP. Maybe distance helps. This isn't my factory. The minute differences catch me, the steady chooglin' focuses me. And the fact that instead of the rhythms driving me to bicker and drink at the end of my shift, here I sit back and sip--preferably a gin martini, as this drink lubricates gears best--the metallic churn lures me into its method. The repeat is master.

3. SCALE

This record is the textbook definition of Better Louder. I am smaller than WARP WEFT. Playback should be loud and louder. Feel the engineered beat in your fillings, that is when the voices start. Wait for the grooves pulsing in built-up calluses. This is pure metal machine music as Lou Reed never knew how to construct. This is larger than any power trio. "RAPIER (LOOMING)" dwarfs every room in which I have listened. This is industry. Industrial music for post-industrial people. It's reverberations are felt globally. Particularly in absence. The swarm that follows upon the heels of sorted chunk on "SHUTTLE (SEGMENTING)" engulfs and expands against the constraints of the skull and trade agreements alike. "YARN (WINDING)" is not large but rather piercing. If I walk out of the room, I can hear it's incisive schlub-schlub-schlubbing three floors down. Cold klick extending pulse through wood, lathe, plaster, carpet, paint.

4. BLUNTNES

The ending of the tracks is jarring. How? How now? How dare you? Who is to blame for the cuts? Bayrle? Schreiner? Small World? (You couldn't press a nine LP set?) Would Udo Van Der Kolk not allow more shift time to record? These three rhythms are paced to hit the horizon. Third shift at the

least. Instead they are a curt ** minutes. I'm cheated. Like the employer who caps my time at 30 hours a week to save on supplying health benefits and pension. My days are numbered by another's ill-tempered delineations. Large rhythms sound of big business. Business isn't supposed to sleep. Every pause to industrial pulse is a traumatic end.

5. ARBITRARINESS

This is more than an interruption of groove. I had more in me. Potential. Each of the three recordings ends just when cycles are revealing themselves and offer something to me. At the brevity of the current LP, the cuts go silent just as I am feeling a comprehension of differences between clock beat, body beat, and machine beat. There is no beat to the day or night. Capital is beyond beats. The specious decision to base the segmentation of the day around seconds minutes and hours slowly opens as you listen. The beat of the machines is its own. But if these rhythms were your day, seconds would lose their feel. Another tempo would guide. An indifferent techno where the subwoofers hold the heart at a slower and cheaper pace but higher anxiety. Marxing time with a tap of the toe.

6. WEAR

There is nothing as round and full and resolved as a warm bounding reverb on this LP. It is thin, tin-sheared clack. The fullness comes from metal on metal. Full stop. Keep on and get the lead out. With every repetition the shard and sliver and shaving metal on metal antagonism are perceived in the drag regularity. Parts need tightening and replacing. Quick edges losing decisiveness. The limits of construction are not perceptible--exactly--on this LP, but you can sense increasing devaluation if not invested in properly.

7. PRODUCTION

Industry is in a perilous step the world over. Production doesn't serve. Service is what is expected of us today. But this fact is a gloss. You can't taste the steel until it is forged. You can't serve without something to deliver. A trade. We can try to elevate our mind above dirty and tired hands. Pretend our knees aren't tired. We can invent machines that result in fewer opportunities for hands to get productively dirty and fingers to get caught and mangled. But everything would stop, hearts included, if materials were not regularly being converted from one state to another. Even in diminished ruin, the sounds captured in WARP WEFT bear repeating the world over. Give the worker some.

8. MUSCLE

Kraftwerk should be jealous. Between each chug on WARP WEFT I know my body and feel the artificial tendons stretch beyond my fleshy borders. Muscles track blood flow as pulse struggles to slow the mechanical rhythm, and when that fails, pulse speeds to match the greased and piston rhythm. It is a workout of perception perspiration. Exhausting the oil of mind and body. The feet feel unforgiving concrete as phantom limb. It has been this way for nearly a century. Time to exercise a way to be in lubricated fitness amidst this chemical rhythm. Be the man-machine just as the steel is being sold for scrap. The pulse and rhythms of contemporary life are not biological alone. This isn't a problem either. Too, at this stage bodies are equal parts fragile flesh, industrial pace, and communication systems tissue. Move in industrial repetitions. I feel the animalistic pull of the "RAPIER (LOOMING)" calling my muscles to exercise in anticipation of its systemic shore. This ain't no disco, the work week weight demands more reps. You always need an equal and opposite release. Don't forget to boogie.

9. YOURSELF

Through the sympathetic resonances I hear Fordist angels directing me from the base of my spine to the top drop of my nervous production line conveyer system. Don't you? Twist, buckle, bow, bend, warp, weft, whoop.

WARP WEFT: Thomas Bayrle / Bernhard Schreiner
LP Released: September 2, 2016
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