

# Mirnyj

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**Preview link (scroll down):**  
<http://kosunde.no/2018/08/22/mirnyj-2/>  
**Technical Rider:**  
<http://kosunde.no/-/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/MIRNYJ-rider-20190404.pdf>



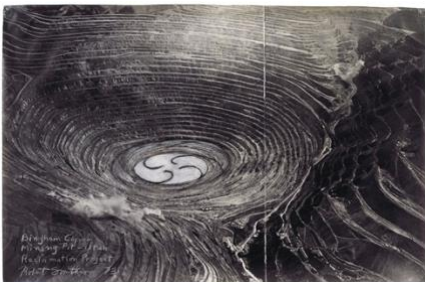
Still image from film – within the Mirny mine, 2018

## SUMMARY

Film with four channel surround audio, based on a travel to Siberia and the diamond mine in Mirny. The work is intended for a lying audience on flat floor surrounded by a 4 channel loudspeaker system, watching upward on one flat suspended projection screen. At the premiere we instead used a tilted frontal screen and deckchairs. Cinematic show is fully possible. An exhibition setting is also possible with several shows a day in a separate room. The work is a dcp file or a 330 GB proresHQ.mov file at an SSD-drive. Video format 16:9, audio 48 kHz 24 bit surround 5.1.

## THE MINE OF MIRNY – SIBERIA

I have pursued what *land music* might be, as a parallel to *land art*. Robert Smithson worked in the core of the land art period. His *Bingham Copper Mining Pit Utah / Reclamation Project* from 1973 is basically an edited photograph, proposing a landscaped (shaped) reuse of the pit after closure. I find the potentiality in such a work astounding, amplified by the modesty of its physical manifestation. I tried to imagine how various loud sounds would behave in such a gigantic acoustic space, and came across Mirny. Adjacent to the town of Mirny in Siberia is an abandoned open pit diamond mine of a rare clean geometrical form. It is circular – conical – and of enormous dimensions being the world's second largest man made hole in the ground, a ruin pointing downward, backwards in geological time. In 2016 I visited Mount Athos in Greece to better understand the prevailing idea of ascetism and a holy mountain, researching for a potential work. The conceptualization instead became a mirror negative, as an inverted mountain, based on the excavated void in Mirny, dug out in the atheistic Soviet Union. This lined up for several dicotomies of foreign perspectives. The location opened the scope for contextualizing the place in a broad political and territorial spectacle, creating an impression of the vastness of Russia's cultural, social and political landscape and the country's many sorrows, where the void is both physical and emotional. Mir means world, peace, quiet, system, and *Mirny* means peaceful and silence. I conducted a research and production trip to Mirny Feb-Mar 2017.



Robert Smithson, Bingham Copper Mining Pit – Utah / Reclamation Project, 1973

## AUDIO, VIDEO AND TEXT

The overall musical appearance consists of sustained, sparse and tense sound situations. The music can be described as durational music – extended, sustained, sparse and tense sound situations. Information density speed is key to this kind of musical work, marked by a continuous flow of extremely slow minor changes of seemingly monotonous situations. Claiming the attention of the senses over time is crucial to create a mental zone of experience. The four surround audio channels and the large tilted screen are elements to contribute for this zone to appear.

The audio material consists of prerecorded violin, synthesizer processings and soundscape recordings from Mirny. The violin consists of prerecorded material of long tones, planned to fit in a harmonic structure. Then it is freely composed in studio to become a pure, sharp sustained high pitched acoustic structure. This immediately establishes a slowness. The harmonic relations results in summation and difference tones.

The function of the synthesized sound is to make a more or less mechanical sounding monotony with stretched-out sound walls, of sound masses, as drones. A sonorous, subtly changing bass fill the auditory field for a substantial time, enabling a sensation of largeness, of a vast space. The soundscape from Mirnyj starts as foot steps in the snow with the first images from the ground, halfway through the work. Traffic, wind, and barking dogs come along. These are ordinary, honest sounds, from the area around the pit and the town, although the soundscapes are blended with the continuous voice of the abstract, synthesized drones throughout. The last part consists of layered evolving and pulsating fields of different speeds, built up by bass drones, slowly decaying and being dissolved into a noisy granular texture.

The footage is mainly long observational shots. Views from the train to Yekaterinburg, in the town of Mirnyj, around the pit as landscape overview, from plane, a generated flimmering sequence, and a generated bird's-eye hovering over satellite imagery. It is sustained distanced observation of a landscape that just goes on, inconclusively.

For me there is much poetry in facts and in the randomness of reality. The texts are concise fragments, sober and objective – verse-like, without pathos. The textual language avoids emotions and evaluations. It rarely stands in a concrete, direct relationship with the footage. The font size is large, bold, in capitals and centered on the screen, becoming part of the visual expression.

### SYNOPSIS

The film opens with black screen and a sustained pitch violin harmonic structure. Text appears with a long-term historical approach, over a visual train scene eastward from Moscow with intensified violin blended with an intensified high pitched synthetic sound situation where the text presents the revolution. Audio is transformed to a low frequent, bass layer, and an abstract video flimmering sequence, then zooming in on earth. We are on ground in Mirnyj, later city scenes. Text presents bare and factual information on the mine and the town. Audio very slowly disintegrates to a grainy pulsating field. During this situation a flyout scene and a birds-eye perspective hovering over satellite imagery, where text scene is about the evacuation of the industries and Russian sacrifices. Audio ends with pathos with the Soviet war-time song *Pesnya o Dnieper*.

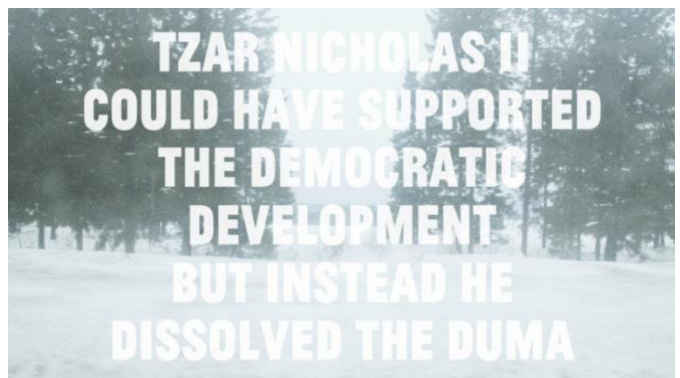


Still image from film – hovering over Magnitogorsk, 2018

### ASSOCIATIONS AND THE ROLE OF RUSSIA

My enquiry into a question of context in a broader sense is to try and create *a sensation of another place*.

Russia appears in the work as a metaphor for thought patterns, for what we – a western European perspective – have been taught to think. My outlook is from Norway, a small northern neighbour of Russia. When I grew up the Soviet Union was something clearly outside our realm, inaccessible, huge and hostile. Why is the antagonism so strong even in our own time? In WW1 ordinary people were cannon fodder, and it is no wonder they protested against the prevailing order and the regimes that had led to it. This came from somewhere. But *without WW1* one can imagine there would have been no Russian Revolution; nor would there have been the intense bitterness among surviving soldiers all over Europe (and large parts of the rest of the world) and among the family members who reached their forties in the course of the 1930s, and by then had reached the authoritative age when they were in central positions everywhere in society. There would not have been a strong feeling among both sides in the war, that WW1 had all been for nothing – many had stated that the armistice was nothing but a long truce that would end with a new war. The Ottoman Empire would maybe not have collapsed, not even Austria-Hungary; maybe the new-old European countries would not have appeared. Self determination in the Middle East (and then to almost everywhere) would have evolved in another way. Perhaps the nationalistic aura from the 19th century wouldn't have had enough fuel for its chain reaction leading to holocaust. No WW1 would not have led to a WW2 and not have fueled the antagonism of the Cold War. And maybe we would not still cultivate so intensely the antagonism, the very idea of hostility between integrated groups of neighbouring countries with lots of interaction in the same parts of the world. Interests change according to standpoint and worldview. Interests shift across a border. Exchanges of knowledge are vital, transfers of meaning are vital. The attempt to understand other people's views and arguments is fundamental to collective existence. This work is thus an attempt to create a sensation of another place. Not only physical, but both mentally and as a utopia.



Still image from film – train scene, 2018