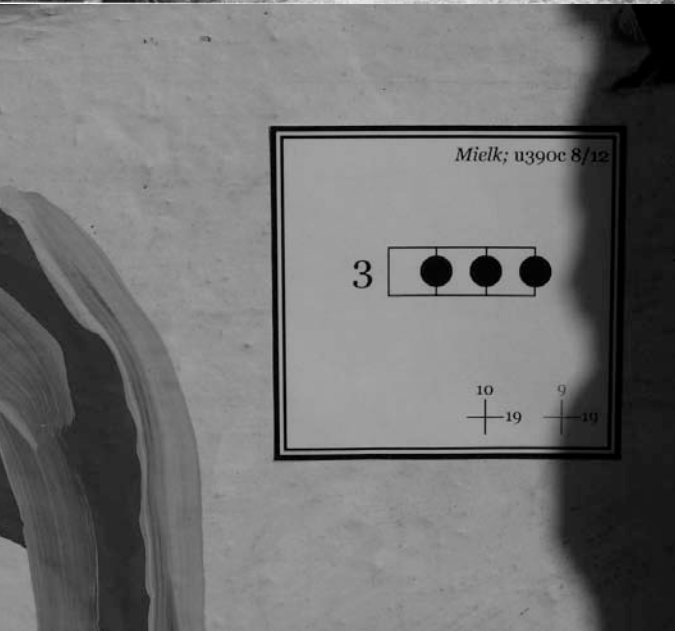


Bulletin M





Once described as “an anarchist Derrida with a spray-can and a boom box”, Bulletin M has distinguished himself by managing to combine the youthful energy of pranksterism with a striking theoretical depth and reach. He applies anarchic techniques to reach utopian goals, and works to engage the world in a dialogue with and about art that demands to be political, aesthetic, and ethical all at once.

Bulletin M started young. While still in secondary school, he began organising and DJing underground raves, while at the same time developing his first sound pranks. These pranks ranged from hiding homemade album covers for his fake band in the stacks at record shops to spray-painting the bass-lines of his favourite Gang of Four songs on walls around Lucan. He considers his first serious work as an artist to be his 1989 intervention (“*Fuck the Police*”), which saw him rigging a ghetto-blaster to play during a secondary school assembly, in response to a school-wide ban on walkman tape players. This musico-political act earned him a three-day suspension from school. In the early 1990s he worked on a variety of guerrilla-style installations, including *The Bless Project* (1992), which focused on confessional booths in Catholic churches in the Tallaght area. In *The Bless Project*, Bulletin M investigated the practice of confession in a variety of ways: by masquerading as a deaf priest who told people to listen to Mariah Carey recordings as penance, by bugging confessional booths, and by planting recordings of fake confessions and filming people listening in on them. *Oh, no Granny* (1994) saw Bulletin M using the humble litter bin as his chief medium, planting recordings

of bees buzzing and babies crying in various bins at bus stops around Tallaght and Lucan, then recording and replaying the reactions of passers-by. In *Hey Guy!* (1994), he deposited tapes and CDs of his music in the demo machines at electronics shops, creating miniature multi-layered guerrilla sound installations, shocking shoppers with the ear-splitting sounds of explosions and gunfire.

In 2002, a project grant from the Arts Council of Ireland gave Bulletin M a chance to reconsider his approach. He used the grant to hire a PR company to focus-group his music, resulting in a series of bizarrely bland recordings entitled *The People United*, and afterwards began to transform his punkish guerrilla installations, graffiti, pranks and raves into a multi-layered artistic praxis informed by Marxist critique, Situationist utopianism, Fluxus experimentation and post-structuralist theory. Bulletin M writes of this shift: “I’m currently working on my PhD at Trinity College Dublin, focusing on time—specifically as regards what Henri Bergson calls *la durée*—as it functions in rave culture. And this has led to a lot of thinking back on my rave days. I would characterise the early work I did as ‘hard’ or ‘rough interventions’, and what I’ve been interested in more recently as ‘soft interventions’. When [we] were putting on raves, we intervened in the landscape in a fairly heavy way—we had speakers and generators and the noise levels were quite high. Though there was something wonderful and unique about creating those sorts of temporary autonomous zones, eventually I wanted to move away from that. I began to get more interested in how I could intervene in a lighter way—more subtle and at the same time more strategic, something that might nudge rather than jolt people into some sort of awareness of sound and space.”

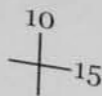
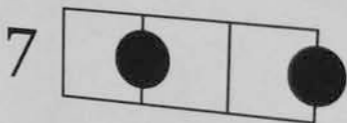


This interest in soft interventions can be seen in Bulletin M's more recent work. His graffiti projects no longer employ spray cans—the artist has now turned to non-permanent and ecologically-friendly materials. *Listen*, a rendering of Max Neuhaus's 1960s text score in moss on a wall in Griffioen Valley Park, written in both English and Irish, exhorts passers-by simply to "Listen". In another graffiti project, *Mielk, Bo, Fa* (from Ukeoirn O'Connor's *Three Songs*) (2007), Bulletin M took the chords from Ukeoirn O'Connor's *Three Songs* and used rice paper, stones and chalk to graffiti them in New York, Tallaght and Stuttgart. Plotted on a map and seen from above, the clusters of graffiti spell out in Braille the name of each song. These graffiti clusters function both singly and as a whole, delicately scoring O'Connor's music across the globe. Most recently, Bulletin M has begun creating geocache installations, situating his own and others' art objects in geocaches around South Dublin County. As

usual in geocache culture, the objects are free for geocachers to take, so long as they are replaced with some other object. Of this experience the artist writes: "Geocaching allows me to bypass the commercial art world in favour of a more personal interaction—artworks in geocaches are explicitly 'gifts', in the sense that Lewis Hyde writes about. It's a very rich exchange—I receive e-mails from geocachers who find the works, I read their comments in the logbooks, I'm engaged with a community."

Bulletin M's move toward "soft" interventions can also be seen in his sound work. Since 2000, the artist has been working on *The Bulletin M Book*

Mielk; u390



of Songtags, an open work consisting of hundreds of sound files, many of them field recordings made in South Dublin County. These sound files are arranged in various taxonomies, ranging from “Ducks; Tymon Park” through “Grannies, Square; complaining” to “Luas Hair Band Vocals; David Lee Roth”. According to Bulletin M, “People tell me how many sound sources they have at home, and I make them a version of *Songtags* tailored specifically to their space. A CD in the kitchen, a CD in the front room, two more upstairs, one in your car? You get five CDs. You play them simultaneously, on shuffle, preferably for days. The idea is to change your relation to space completely.” Listened to over an extended period of time, *Songtags*, like much of Bulletin M’s work, erases the distinction between art and life, recuperating the beautiful through chance and intervention.