

The New York Times

ARTS

Paul Stiller - A Thousand Silent Lives

LOS ANGELES

A legend in his field has taken up residence at the LACMA in Los Angeles, exhibiting his most unusual soundscape to date.

BY 'KATHLEEN BENNHOLD

The heralded sound engineer Paul Stiller has revisited each of the five stories of the famous museum. In order to appreciate the master's approach to his art, his devoted fans, critics and those just plain curious about this enigmatic figure arrive from all over the world to stream through the retrospective. They are all hoping to discern for themselves just who Stiller really is, peering through the fine mesh of his acoustic show. Scavenger hunts, treasure quests and blind galleries lead them all on, playing a unique game of cat-and-mouse with the spectators, full of provoking surprises, homages and unex-

pected twists. At the center of it all: "REVOX: a tale of phantoms", a completely singular, one-of-a-kind audio installation.

The museum's visitors are invited to put on headphones; the surrounding sounds are bewildering: Did the person sitting next to me just sneeze, or was that really a recording? Within the space, on a stage, a perfect living room with a wooden rocking chair is arranged. Various awards, ranging from Oscars to Golden Reel Awards, from Golden Globes to BAFTAs cover the walls. In the dim half-light a narrator can be heard walking around, moving things in the space - but no-one can be seen. Her ghostly presence and the baffling quality of the recording do the title of the piece justice. Suddenly, a bare light bulb suspended a few feet above the ground begins to pulsate to the beat of a heart - Paul Stiller's heartbeat, to be precise. His life story trickles through the headphones, and what starts as an ode to the success of Hollywood's



grand master of audio and his aura of mystery, proves to be a poetic impasse. The narration comes to an abrupt end, and the spectators are asked

to leave, carrying their newfound secret with them.

LACMA
Los Angeles County
Museum of Art
5905 Wilshire Blvd.
Los Angeles, CA 90036

www.lacma.org
January 30th to April 15th

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