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## Ocean Viva Silver, 'The Sleep in Opera'

Posted by [Veronica Anne](#) on April 28, 2016

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[The Sublunar Society, 2.8.16](#)

*The Sleep in Opera* from French artist and experimental composer Ocean Viva Silver (Valérie Vivancos) is an ambient sound exploration into the soft hums of bodily relaxation. The conceptual album is devised wholly of field recordings made from a series of sleep happenings that transpired in Denmark and France in 2002. Silver approached the initial recordings by doing research and documenting sounds of sleepers at a neurological center in the south of France. Readied with only a minidisc recorder, Silver acquired the breath, snores and moans of the troubled sleeper alongside doctors and researchers.

A participatory performance originated as a result of her research and was curated by the Copenhagen art group the Contemplation Room Project. Silver delivered her premise: A sleep happening in a bunker under a park in Copenhagen. The performance was scheduled and an audience was then invited to come bring their own pillows and blankets to sleep in the bunker. With the help of a sound engineer Silver placed microphones on the dome of the bunker. To ensure an optimum recording, Silver was advised by Dr. Michel Billard, a prominent professor specializing in sleep troubles, to attach tennis balls to the clothing of the audience in order to

have them avoid sleeping on their backs. Audience members were also given a smidgen of whiskey to relax their throat muscles.



Silver then surveyed her sound collection for various frequencies, textures and modalities in the style of music concrète. In an email interview with *Decoder*, Silver mulled through her process, “I like exhausting a ‘sound object’ (in Pierre Schaffer’s terminology) in a monomaniac way. I only use one type of sound and process it away from its source so that it becomes unrecognizable.” The result: Silver’s compositions are swirling, gentle soundscapes of lulling rhythms chiseled from gurgling snores and heavy breathes that explore the natural process of the sleep cycle. The opening track, “Solitude Entonnoir” is a soft introduction to the album. The swelling track moves to and fro and mimics the natural rhythms of breath. The babbling track the “The Spiral Staircase” transforms field recordings into an airy, lucid dreamscape while the airy, ambient “Playing Cards” leaves listeners in a heavy haze.

While the tracks drift seamlessly from one to another not a lot of dynamic action takes place. However it is the inaction that gives *The Sleep in Opera* an esoteric quality. The album is not an excessive hypnotic but more of a hazy spell for sleep. Silver takes us through a bedtime ritual with oscillating soundscapes and emerges with a fully conscious composition of the body.



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