

Brainwashed - Held There, Beside the Signified

Written by Creag Dunton

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Following the Idle Chatter's label curated tape set *Transparens* by Wren Turco, the label has released another, similar project, this time by Drekka's Mkl Anderson. Again consisting of three artists, each contributing their own tape (Drekka, Pillars and Tongues, and Skrei), there are a multitude of different experimental sounds and approaches here, blending traditional with electronic instrumentation on this trinity of albums. Like the label's previous collection, each artist's work differs greatly from one another others, but the big picture is a series of works that complement one another splendidly.

[Idle Chatter](#)

Drekka's tape (credited to the nine person Drekka Ensemble, conducted by Anderson) consists of material initially recorded between 2000 and 2002, but reworked last year. The two part piece differs significantly between the two halves. The first part of "Songs of Reunion" is an immediate burst of metallic clatter and bowed strings, heavily shrill and abrasive. The piece quickly builds to a dull roar, sounding like a gamelan ensemble full of unconventional instruments that eventually relents, allowing the bowed strings to take center stage, paired with some delicate chimes. As it goes on, layers are reversed and the whole thing takes on a weird, hallucinatory feeling before concluding with the denseness it opened on.

On the other half of the piece, treated (but still obvious) guitar becomes the focus as a multitude of effected, non-specific noises drift in and out. As the piece goes on, more painful and harsh tones and sounds are brought into the piece. While it begins somewhat pleasant, the mood shifts as time goes on and eventually becomes dense and full of abrasive sounds, piled upon each other until eventually drifting away with a surprising lightness, with a palindrome-like structure as the piece that preceded it.

Pillars and Tongues contribution is comparably a much more restrained affair. "You/Attempted" begins with a rather inviting ambient space, intentionally sparse and muted. The level of subtlety makes it stand out more, especially following the Drekka tape. On "Painting Dust" the

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stripped-down mix is eventually filled with a gentle crackle, some sustained tones, and even a bit of piano. The second half of the tape, "Counted Utterance, Meaning Countenanced", features a nice, understated bed of gliding tones and piano, but eventually the focus shifts to some conventional singing. Towards the end what sounds like railroad bells herald the conclusion, but before then a large number of false stops where the piece fades away only to come back again and again.

The ambiguous Berlin based Skrei rounds out the three tapes with an untitled piece spread across both sides of the cassette. Compared to the other two artists, this work is more synth-heavy in nature. The first half begins with a droning, prickly bass synth and echoing dialog samples. Layers are piled on: pitch bent voices, bleak electronics, and the occasional noisy stab of electronics. Wet electronics mesh with abrasive static scrapes into a wall of heavily reverberated noise. The second half begins with crunching static and almost string-like low frequency swells. Things congeal into the dull roar of a HNW piece before quickly fading away to a hollow vastness. Rushing white noise and a factory-like ambience come back, eventually balanced out by a natural sounding guitar and some more gentle tones. The piece reaches a conclusion via shrill squeals and harsh feedback, however, ending on a high (and harsh) note.

The three tapes that make up *Held There, Beside the Signified* all differ from one another: Drekk's excursion is more of an organic discord, Skrei's is more synthetic and inhuman, and the Pillars and Tongues work sits right in the middle is a pleasant, more ambient work that bridges the two extremes. Mkl Anderson has done an excellent job at curating this work with friends and associates, resulting in a compilation that is just as strong together as it is taken individually.

samples:

- [Songs of Reunion \(Part One\)](#)
- [You/Attempted](#)
- [Untitled](#)