*"Whether we sing, act, lecture or paint — we are only troubadours."*
(O. Henry, *The Last of the Troubadours*)

Turning to the sound as one of art's basic tools, we understand "sound and listening" as a kind of structure, which reveals how people relate to each other within a society. In a certain aspect, sound is a means of forming inner states and ideas.

The exhibition "House of Impressions. Wandering with a Troubadour" presents a discussion about inner harmony of a human being as well as social harmony in the modern world, the attempts to find and keep one's inner voice, to gain and never lose one's own melody.

The artists are presented to the viewer as contemporary troubadours narrating tales of invisible matters: the sound and plasticity of metaphors, the hidden but omnipresent musicality. Each of them starts upon his own journey — memory, identity, self-determination and freedom are their main themes. The polyphony that is a foundation of the nature of musical sound and melody becomes the main principle of the project's structure. Thus, the exhibition is an orchestra — polyphonic and improvisational — a community of poets, musicians, dancers and artists — of free troubadours.

# HOUSE
# OF IMPRESSIONS
# WANDERING WITH
# A TROUBADOUR

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**1** **André** (b. 1967) and **Michel** (b. 1969) **Décosterd (Cod.Act)** create complex sound installations and performances based on the study of sound, motion and their relations. Preparatory stage of their work involves producing outlines similar to a music score that combine notes of the sound sequence, drawings of the performers' movements, and algorithm of actions of the mechanic part of an installation. These sketches illustrate the evolution of musical and performative aesthetics and the language of its codification.

**2** Poet and artist **Andrey Cherkasov** (b. 1987) reflects on the philistine understanding of poetry, according to which formal elements are enough for defining its belonging to the genre. By making a Google search by image using a screenshot of a poem and choosing the first result from the list of similar images, Cherkasov finds unexpected results of *Something that Looks like Poetry* (2013).

**3** *Theme song* (1973), a classic work by American conceptual artist **Vito Acconci** (b. 1940), dramatizes the artist's interaction with a camera. Accompanied by famous songs, the artist performs an experiment in interpersonal communication and demonstrates the new possibilities of media contact with the viewer, appealing directly to their intimate feelings and experiences. The camera and the screen act as borders between the private and the public: the artist cannot see whom he seduces with his songs, while public demonstration of his comeons makes him vulnerable.

**4** Media artist **Sasha Pirogova** (b. 1986) simulates atypical situations in a familiar context, thereby revealing the mechanism of habit and automatism of perception. Using the language of motion and video editing, she manipulates familiar visual codes to construct unexpected sequences open for interpretations. In her work *MONO* (2015–16), scientists study microphones as if they do not have any idea about these objects. Going too far in their study, scientists do not notice when at some point the microphones 'come alive' and start dominating. As a result, scientists and their subject of research switch places, and the microphones 'sing' in people.

**5** *Pulheim Jam Session* (2015) combines two events and two sound sequences. Sixty cars carrying over a hundred people from the Pulheim region of Germany, situated within commuting distance from Cologne, took part in constructing a traffic jam. Meanwhile, in a barn nearby, the musician is improvising on the piano. Forty years earlier in Cologne, in the same year as Pulheim's reform, the American pianist Keith Jarrett held his live improvised concert, made famous due to a live recording. Swedish video artist **Johanna Billing** (b. 1973) linked past and present in a single space. In her work, a car jam and a jamming session are two similar kinds of activity, both unfolding around their own notions of *freedom and constraint*.

**6** In his 2007 video, Icelandic performance artist **Ragnar Kjartansson** (b. 1976) appears shirtless, buried waist deep in the dirt of a public park, strumming a guitar and singing a piece about Satan. Its lyrics saying 'Satan is real, and he's working for me' are an incidental interpretation of a song by the American country band bearing an opposite meaning. Playing with human perception, when we remember lyrics as it refracts in our minds, the artist shows that the identity and the message may be unstable. Kjartansson repeatedly sings his lyrics, making it sound absurd.

**7** *The Destruction Quartet* (2006) features four films, each presented on a separate monitor, which bring together fragments of symbolic and real acts of destruction. Together with documentations of the 1997 Nam June Paik performance in which he destroys a piano, Danius Kesminas' fire sculpture, and the 1900 demolition of the Berlin Wall, American avant-garde filmmaker **Jonas Mekas** (b. 1922) can avant-garde filmmaker Jonas Mekas' films, he presents the 9/11 as a fairy tale, as if passing on the story as folklore, disconnecting it slightly from its defining date and introducing a sense of timelessness and metaphor.

**8** The American-Norwegian artist and composer **Camille Norment** (b. 1970) works with various media, often addressing the phenomenon of sound. In her graphic series, she also seems to seek for equivalents to sound. Tiny points of ink delicately touching the surface create a multi-layered rhythmic composition. This work bears the beauty of the thickened air, the disturbance of historical residue, and the sound vibrations, while engaging the viewer on multiple levels of depth.

**9** In their technological intervention *Opera Calling. Arias for All* (2007), the Swiss group **!Mediengruppe Bitnik** intruded the routine of the Zurich opera. A system of microphones hidden in the auditorium transmitted performances of the Opera to randomly selected telephone landlines in the city of Zurich, allowing residents to eavesdrop. Everyone who answered their phones had the opportunity to listen to an opera performance live, which results in an opera performance.

**10** In *Unravel* (2013) a DJ endeavors to synch together the two performances of the Left Hand Concerto by Maurice Ravel, which results in a stereo effect of two distinct realities. In this work, video artist **Anri Sala** (b. 1974) continues his exploration of the perception of space and sound, as well as the silent language of the body. The work appeals just as much to the viewer's intellect as to their body, creating a powerful physical and emotional experience, submerging the viewer in its music.

**11** The action of the musical post-apocalyptic miniseries *Tomorrow Will Be the Same* (2015–2016) by **Petr Zhukov** (b. 1982) takes place in fictional future, where humanity died out of irrepressible passion. The only survivors are Sasha Elina and Kirill Shirokov, performers of the ensemble 'the same'. They wander around the empty city of Moscow and fill it with music, trying to find the performance that will save the humanity. Each episode equals one day, one journey, and one performed melody.

**12** Works by the German filmmaker **Julian Rosefeldt** (b. 1965) reveal the absurdity of everyday practices and reflect on the construction of fictional narratives using cinematographic means. The *Soundmaker* (2004) is one of examples of such revelations: in this piece, the protagonist obsessively rearranges furniture in his apartment, while his alter ego — a Foley artist, observes his endeavor and creates sound for this scene. Rosefeld reveals the mechanics of filmmaking, which act as a metaphor for the mechanics of life.
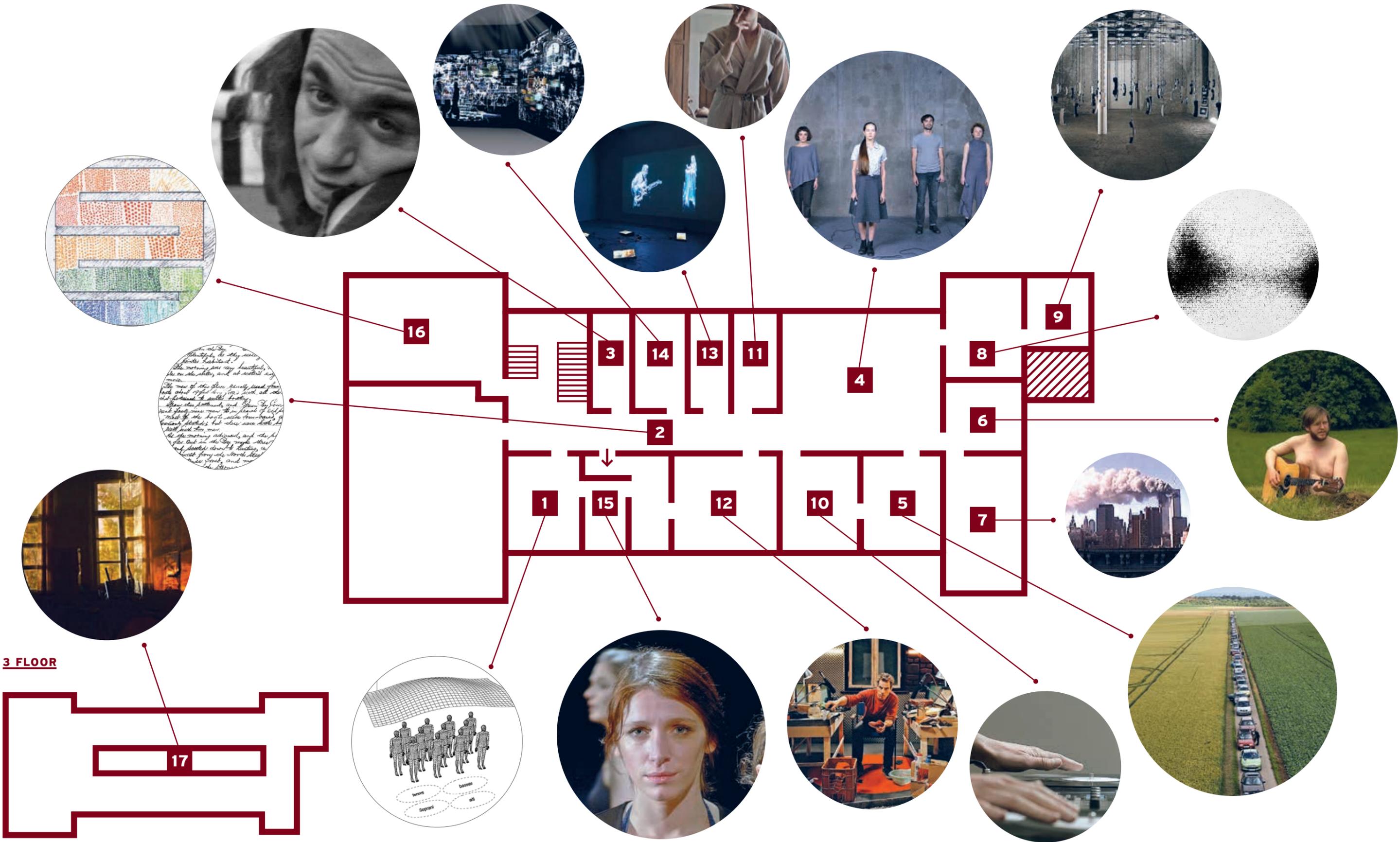
**13** American artist **Gary Hill** (b. 1951) is one of living classics of conceptual video art, pioneer of sound installations and researcher of the corporeal; for more than 40 years, he has been working at the intersection of linguistics, avant-garde poetry, and video art. His key areas of interest is linguo-acoustics: he explores the border between noise and narrative, when words cease to be an array of spoken sounds and acquire meaning. In the *Depth Charge* installation (2009–2012), the action repeats over and over again overlooking the artist's psychotropic experience like some kind of guardian angel.

**14** **Marina Chernikova** (b. 1956) turns audiovisual digital material into a composition, which immerses the viewer into the process of perception, like music. In the *Symphonic Surfing // M 3–16* installation (2016), documentary and computer-generated audio and video fragments transform into sequences similar to music that flow through the exhibition space. The subject of Chernikova's creative experiments is the intersection between everyday life and virtual reality; in her hands, video, as a media aimed at documenting reality, turns into an instrument similar to music creating new harmony.

**15** In the *Innocent One* (2015), three women are involved in a perfectly staged cyclic movement bound to their performing an enigmatic text. Musically, each cycle is constructed of three parts: a chord, an increase in interval up to an octave, and construction of a new chord that ends with utterance of a phrase. **Viktor Alimpiev's** (b. 1973) goal is to find an abstract universal performer, who can mediate the art making process and the very way it works. According to the artist, he sees the score arrangement as a basis of his works as opposed to a narrative.

**16** The works of the composer **Petr Aidu** (b. 1976) transform the understanding of a musical instrument and ways of producing sound, and redefine the seat of power in music performance. The *Sound Transformation* (2016) is a labyrinth immersing the viewer in a space of permanent sound. When the visitor passes through the 'sonic forest' composed of hanging objects, they turn into the performer of this piece, while objects turn into musical instruments, and the surrounding space — into the score, organizing the musical form.

**17** **Semyon Aleksandrovsky** (b. 1982) invites visitors coming to the exhibition at the Golitsyns' Manor to take an audio journey to '*another museum*' of their choice — Van Gogh Museum and Stedelijk Museum in Amsterdam, Musée Rodin and Centre Pompidou in Paris, Peggy Guggenheim Collection and Palazzo Grassi in Venice, Binaural microphones, which recorded these walks, create the effect of presence when listening, and the visitor gets immersed into the ambience of a European museum. Aleksandrovsky, who the founder of the experimental Pop-up theatre, is keen on playing with the viewer's perception and disturbing everyday behavioral patterns.

**3 FLOOR**

**17**