

Mikkelborg Riessler Siegel Trio

Louisiana Ritual



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Palle Mikkeltborg, trumpet and flugel horn

Michael Riessler, bass clarinet

Wayne Siegel, motion-tracking system

Mikkeltborg Riessler Siegel Trio/Oluf Ring (1884–1946)

1 **Winter Sun/Sig nærmer tiden** (2023/1922) 8:06

Mikkeltborg Riessler Siegel Trio

2 **Mirages** (2023) 6:23

Mikkeltborg Riessler Siegel Trio

3 **Gothic** (2023) 9:23

Mikkeltborg Riessler Siegel Trio

4 **Live in the Park 2019** (2019) 19:54

Live recording

Palle Mikkeltborg (b. 1941)

5 **Song Tread Lightly** (1998) 4:27

Total 48:15

World premiere recordings



Danish Arts
Foundation

Music in the Park

By Christian Munch-Hansen

In the music video *Pyramid*, filmed at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, a drone camera glides over the museum's Sculpture Park, soaring above the lush slopes that meet the coastline at Humlebæk in North Zealand. In the park, the Mikkelsen Riessler Siegel Trio is seen standing on a pyramid sculpture by Danish artist Poul Gernes (1925–1996) – a striking and visually captivating scene. In another video, *Winter Sun*, close-ups of the musicians in action are interwoven with shots of glistening waves and sea foam washing over the stony shoreline. A powerful connection emerges between nature, visual art, and the sonically evocative music that greets the listener, revealing how deeply the physical surroundings are linked to the creation and expression of this music.

Over a ten-year period from 2014, this Danish-German-American trio met every summer at the museum to carry out a recurring ritual. Over two weekends, they performed live in the Sculpture Park, often to the surprise of the museum visitors, with each musician assuming a distinct physical posture: Palle Mikkelsen with his trumpet held high or with his body curled around it; Michael Riessler upright like an obelisk, his fingers dancing over the keys of the bass clarinet; and Wayne Siegel like a maestro, conducting with mysterious gestures in front of a computer screen, as if creating sound from nothing. Wayne Siegel recalls the trio's beginnings:

'In 2013, I was invited by Louisiana's music director Lars Fenger to perform in the museum park with my *motion-tracking system*. On the same occasion, Palle Mikkelsen and Michael Riessler performed as a duo, and we were all accommodated in the museum's boathouse, eating, drink-

ing and hanging out. I don't know if it was Lars Fenger's secret intention to bring us together, but there was immediate chemistry, and the following year we performed as a trio.'

Since then, these three distinctive musicians, each with their own career and musical style, have formed an unconventional constellation and developed a shared voice in a genre that has no name – music at the intersection of electronic music, contemporary chamber music and free improvisation.

Wayne Siegel originally created the electronic backdrop of *Winter Sun/Sig nærmer tiden* as a sound installation titled *Solkreds* ('Sun Circle') for *Dodekalitten* – twelve monumental stone sculptures by artist Thomas Kadziola, situated at Kragenæs on the island of Lolland. Siegel explains: 'The electronic harmonies are programmed to continuously evolve. It is the same software we use for the trio record-

ings, and which serves as the basis for our improvisation.'

The music opens with dark, electronic textures and the sound of bells. Soon, Riessler's bass clarinet and Mikkelsen's trumpet enter like narrative voices. The music resembles a winter poem in sound – with sun and clear air, yet everything is frozen or covered in snow, as if in a deathlike slumber. This atmosphere continues when the music quotes *Sig nærmer tiden* ('The Time Approaches') – a beautiful and familiar melody in Danish song tradition, composed by Oluf Ring in 1922 to a poem by Steen Steensen Blicher from his famous poetry cycle *Trækfugle* ('Migratory Birds', 1838). Blicher's poem presents winter birds as a metaphor for humankind, compelled to make their final 'migration' upon 'hearing the voice of winter.' In the same way, the music conveys a trace of human existential experience.

Mirages, with an electronic backing track by Michael Riessler, depicts

a dramatic encounter between human and machine. A festive chaos of voices – keyboards, percussion, winds – unfolds, full of motion and drive. After three minutes, the tumbling pulse is interrupted by sudden, dramatic breaks. In the final sequence, the music has moved beyond rupture and conflict, floating like a magical cube in a desert mirage.

The compositional framework for *Gothic* was created by Wayne Siegel. At first, the trio's members act cautiously, as if unwrapping something fragile or unknown. Perhaps wisely – soon, a metallic-sounding pulse materialises, combined with ambiguous melodic gestures from the bass clarinet and trumpet. Here, Siegel opens a kind of gothic play with clichés from horror and film music, with underlying humour: demonstrative minor chords, ominous organ sounds, mischievous glockenspiel and small doses of thunder.

Live in the Park 2019 documents the trio's performance in Louisiana's Sculpture Park, while the remainder of the release was recorded in the museum Concert Hall. Despite wind, weather and technical challenges when recording outdoors, the August 2019 performance emerges clearly: a rhapsody for laptop, trumpet, and bass clarinet, arranged in a series of carefully constructed musical tableaux.

In the work's airy opening, Mikkelsen quotes one of his own melodies, also heard in the music video *Capricorne*, produced by Louisiana Music Channel. The melody frames the composition and reappears in the coda. Following this atmospheric introduction, a more abstract sonic painting emerges: Siegel expands the electronic soundscape with clinking metal, music box tones, bubbling water and mechanical clockwork, while trumpet and bass clarinet reach for melodic motifs. Around six and a half minutes in, the music reaches a

calm intermezzo with blues phrases before a new and inciting pulse emerges – the theme of Mikkelsen's *Glass Painting* (from *Anything but Grey*, 1992). Towards the work's end, a searching atmosphere, as indistinct as in a foggy landscape, prevails before a final fast-running beat is initiated. Winds and electronic effects intensify the increasingly expressive progression before it ends abruptly, giving way to a suggestive, melodic conclusion.

Song Tread Lightly is a composition by Palle Mikkelsen, based on a poem by Norwegian author Olav H. Hauge (1908–1994). The music was first recorded on the album of the same name, as published in 2000. It was originally part of a ten-movement suite titled *A Moon of Light*, premiered at Norway's Maijazz Festival in 1998 with the Stavanger Symphony Orchestra. At that performance, Hauge's poem was recited:

*Song, tread lightly on my heart
Tread lightly as bellheather on watery
moor
As bird on overnight ice
Break the crust of pain
Song you will drown*

'We must take care of life so it does not break,' Mikkelsen has said in reference to the poem's poignant statement on the fragility of existence, which can shatter like thin ice. The poem gained new weight when Mikkelsen reused the music for the memorial concert *Eternity's Sunrise* at Roskilde Festival in 2001, a year after the tragic festival accident in which nine young people lost their lives during a Pearl Jam concert.

In its new trio form, Mikkelsen's flugelhorn gently touches the listener with its warm timbre, serving as a melodic guide over pre-recorded keyboards and choir.

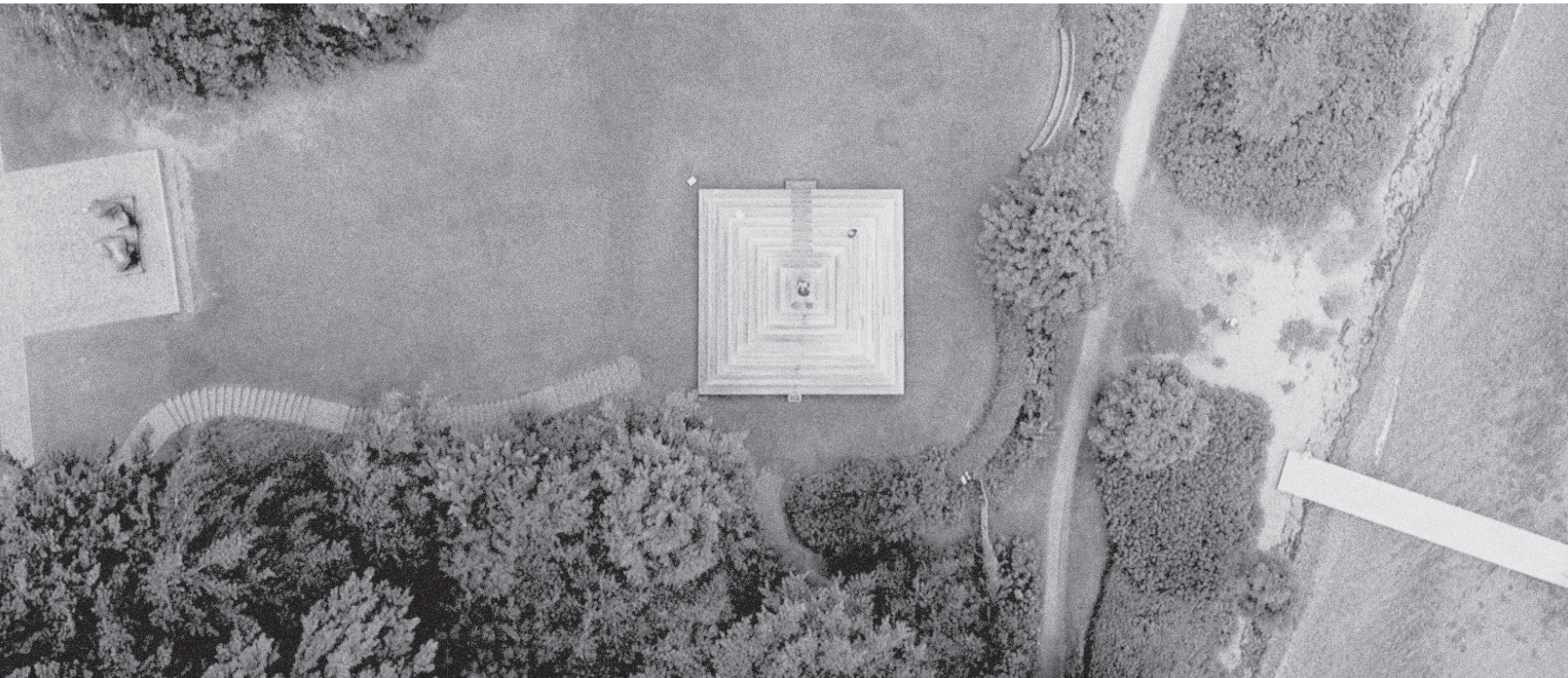
Christian Munch-Hansen is a music writer, author and educator.

Wayne Siegel (b. 1953) originally studied composition at the University of California but settled in Denmark in 1974, where he studied with Per Nørgård. In 1986, he became director of DIEM (Danish Institute of Electronic Music). While Siegel has written chamber and orchestral works in many formats, he is especially known for his development of electronic music and software for musical use. A key invention is his so-called *motion-tracking system*, a technology in which the computer's webcam is divided into twelve fields linked to sounds, which can be activated and controlled by hand movements. The laptop thus becomes a kind of interactive instrument, enabling Siegel to work more intuitively with sounds and backing tracks: 'It's a way of conducting sound, and it takes practice. The structure of a piece is predetermined in terms of duration of each section, but within these fixed boundaries, I have the freedom to do a lot of things,' he explains.

Palle Mikkelborg (b. 1941) is an iconic figure in Danish jazz, fusion and art music, renowned for his genre-crossing works and his openness to new collaborations. He has worked with artists such as Miles Davis, Gil Evans, Terje Rypdal, Dino Saluzzi, Bo Holten and Michala Petri. Mikkelborg's musical hallmark includes his airy, melodic tone on trumpet and flugelhorn, combined with masterful use of electronic effects. His career spans decades and includes a rich discography with landmark recordings such as *The Mysterious Corona* (1967), *Aura* (1985, with Miles Davis), *Anything but Grey* (1992) and *The Voice of Silence* (2001) – a tribute to the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art in collaboration with the Danish Radio Big Band.

Michael Riessler (b. 1957) has been active as a musician and composer in jazz, improvisation and chamber music since the 1980s. A virtuoso

bass clarinetist with a rich tone and wide-ranging technique, Riessler has also composed music for theatre, ballet and cinema, including the acclaimed feature film *Die andere Heimat* (2013). He has collaborated with leading figures such as John Cage, Steve Reich, Mauricio Kagel and Carla Bley. In 2011, Riessler created *Aglaope* in duo with Palle Mikkelborg at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art; the following year he returned with *Woodwinds*, performed in trio with Mikkelborg and accordionist Jean-Louis Matinier.



Musik i parken

Af Christian Munch-Hansen

I musikvideoen *Pyramid*, optaget på Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, glider dronekameraets blik hen over museets skulpturpark, mens man svæver hen over de frodige skråninger langs kystlinjen ved Humlebæk i Nordsjælland. I parken står Mikkelborg Riessler Siegel Trio på en pyramideskulptur skabt af den danske kunstner Poul Gernes (1925-1996) – et spektakulært skue. I en anden video, *Winter Sun*, fletter nærbilleder af musikerne in action sig sammen med optagelser af glitrende bølger og havskum, der skyller ind på kystens stenstrand. Der er en slående forbindelse mellem den lokale natur, kunsten og den klangligt stemningsfulde musik, der strømmer lytteren i møde og viser, hvordan de fysiske omgivelser er uløseligt for-

bundet med denne musiks tilblivelse og udtryk.

I en tiårig periode fra 2014 mødtes den dansk-tysk-amerikanske trio hver sommer på kunstmuseet og gennemførte et tilbagevendende ritual. Over to weekender optrådte de live i skulpturparken, ofte til overraskelse for museets gæster, med de tre musikere stående i hver deres positur: Palle Mikkeltorg med sit instrument højt hævet eller med kroppen krummet sammen om det; Michael Riessler rank opretstående som en obelisk med fingrene vandrende over klarinettens knapper og Wayne Siegel som en maestro, hvis hænder dirigerede mærkelige fagter foran en computerskærm, som formede han lyd ud af den tomme luft.

Wayne Siegel fortæller om trioens tilblivelse:

“I 2013 blev jeg inviteret af Louisianas musikchef, Lars Fenger, til at optræde i museets park med mit motion-tracking system. Ved den

samme lejlighed spillede Palle Mikkeltorg og Michael Riessler som duo, og vi blev alle indlogeret i museets bådehus, hvor vi spiste, drak og hang ud sammen. Jeg ved ikke, om det var Lars Fengers skjulte idé at få os til at mødes, men der var god kemi mellem os med det samme, og året efter optrådte vi sammen.”

Siden har de tre distinkte musikere, med hver deres karriere og musikalske stil, udgjort en utraditionel konstellation og sammen udviklet et fælles udtryk i en genre, der ikke har noget navn – musik i krydsfeltet mellem elektronisk musik, ny kammermusik og fri improvisation.

Wayne Siegel skabte oprindelig lydkulissen til *Winter Sun/Sig nærmer tiden* som en lydinstallation med titlen *Solkreds* til Dodekalitten – tolv monumentale stenskulpturer af kunstneren Thomas Kadziola, som står ved Kragenæs på Lolland. Siegel uddyber: “De elektroniske harmonier er pro-

grammeret, så de hele tiden udvikler sig. Det er samme software, vi benytter på indspilningen med trio, og som vi improviserer over.”

Musikken åbner med mørke, elektroniske klangflader og lyden af klokker. Snart træder Riesslers basklarinet og Mikkeltorgs trompet ind som fortællende stemmer. Musikken er som et vinterdigt i lyd, med sol og klar luft, men alting er stivnet i frost eller dækket af sne som i en dødelig søvn. Denne stemning videreføres, når musikken citerer *Sig nærmer tiden* – en smuk og velkendt melodi i dansk sangkultur, komponeret af Oluf Ring i 1922 til et digt af Steen Steensen Blicher fra dennes berømte digtcyklus *Trækfugle* (1838). I digtet anvender Blicher vinterens fugle som et billede på mennesket, der må ud på sit sidste “træk”, når det “hører vinterens stemme”. På samme måde som teksten bærer musikken en flig af menneskets eksistentielle grundvilkår med sig.

Mirages, med en elektronisk lyd-kulisse af Michael Riessler, skildrer en dramatisk scene i mødet mellem menneske og maskine. Der oprulles et festligt kaos af stemmer – tangenter, slagtøj, blæsere – fuld af bevægelse og fremdrift. Efter tre minutter afbrydes den tumlende puls af pludselige, dramatiske breaks. I den afsluttende sekvens har musikken bevæget sig hinsides brud og konflikt og svæver som en magisk kube i et ørkenagtigt fatamorgana.

Den kompositoriske ramme til *Gothic* er leveret af Wayne Siegel. Til at begynde med agerer trioens medlemmer forsigtigt, som er de i færd med at pakke noget skrøbeligt eller ukendt ud. Og måske er det også klogt at være varsom med, hvad man vækker til live, for snart materialiserer en metallisk klingende puls sig, kombineret med tvetydige melodiske indfald fra basklarinetten og trompeten. Siegel åbner her for en slags gotisk leg med klichéer fra gyser- og

filmmusikken med underliggende humor: demonstrative molakkorder, skæbnsvangre orgelklange, listige klokkespil og små doser tordenvej.

Live in the Park 2019 er en direkte dokumentation af trioens optræden i Louisianas skulpturpark, hvorimod resten af udgivelsens musik er optaget i museets koncertsal. På trods af vind, vejr og de tekniske udfordringer, der kan forekomme, når man optager musik udendørs, står oplevelsen af trioens optræden en eftermiddag i august 2019 klart frem: en rapsodi for laptop, trompet og basklarinet med en række nøje tilrettede musikalske tableauer.

I værkets luftige åbning citerer Mikkeltorg en af sine egne melodier, som også kan høres i musikvideoen *Capricorne*, produceret af Louisiana Music Channel. Melodien danner rammen om kompositionen og dukker op igen i dens coda. Efter den stemningsfulde begyndelse træder et mere abstrakt tonemaleri

frem: Siegel udvider det elektroniske soundscape med klirrende metal, lyde af spilledåse, boblende vand og mekanisk urværk, mens trompet og basklarinet griber efter melodiske motiver. Omkring seks og et halvt minut inde i værket når musikken til et roligt intermezzo med bluesfraser, før en ny og inciterende puls toner frem med temaet til Mikkeltorgs komposition *Glass Painting* (fra albummet *Anything but Grey*, 1992). Mod værkets slutning hersker atter en søgende atmosfære, udefinerlig som i et tåget landskab, inden et sidste hurtigt løbende beat igangsættes. Blæsere og elektroniske effekter intensiverer det stadig mere ekspresive forløb, før det ender brat og viger pladsen for en suggestiv, melodisk afrunding.

Song Tread Lightly er en Mikkeltorgkomposition baseret på et digt af den norske forfatter Olav H. Hauge (1908-1994). Musikken blev første gang indspillet på udgivelsen af

samme navn fra 2000, men var oprindeligt en del af en suite på 10 satser med titlen *A Moon of Light*, opført ved den norske festival Maijazz i 1998 med Stavanger Symfoniorkestret. Ved den lejlighed blev Huges digt reciteret:

*Sang, træd varsomt på mit hjerte
Træd varsomt som klokkelyng på
vändig hede
Som fugl på natgammel is
Bryder du skorpen til smerten
Drukner du, sang*

“Vi må passe på livet, så det ikke går i stykker,” har Mikkeltorg udtalt i en kommentar til digtets stærke udsagn om skrøbeligheden i tilværelsen, der kan briste som tynd is. Digtet fik en ny tyngde, da Mikkeltorg igen anvendte musikken til mindekoncerten *Eternity's Sunrise* på Roskilde Festival i 2001, året efter den tragiske dødsulykke på festivalen, hvor ni unge mennesker mistede livet under en koncert med bandet Pearl Jam.

I denne nye trioform berører flygelhornet os blidt med sin varme klang og glider som melodibærer over de præ-indspillede keyboards og kor.

Christian Munch-Hansen er musikskribent, forfatter og underviser.

Wayne Siegel (f. 1953) studerede oprindelig komposition på University of California, men i 1974 bosatte han sig i Danmark og blev dansk gift. Han studerede hos Per Nørgård, og i 1986 blev han leder af DIEM (Dansk Institut for Elektronisk Musik). Siegel har skrevet kammermusik og orkestermusik i mange formater, men er især kendt for sin udvikling af elektronisk musik og software til musikalsk brug. Især hans såkaldte 'motion-tracking system' er centralt: en teknologi, hvor computerens webcam deles i 12 felter, som er knyttet til lyde, og som kan aktiveres og styres via håndbevægelser. Laptoppen bliver en slags interaktivt instrument, der gør Siegel i stand til at arbejde mere intuitivt med klange og 'backing tracks': "Det er en måde at dirigere lyd på, og det kræver, at man øver sig. Musikken er struktureret på forhånd med hensyn til, hvor lang tid de forskellige sektioner i en komposition skal vare. Men inden for de faste rammer har jeg frihed til at gøre en masse ting," fortæller han.

Palle Mikkelsen (f. 1941) er en ikonisk skikkelse i dansk jazz, fusions- og kunstmusik, kendt for sine genrekrydsende kompositoriske værker og for en stor åbenhed over for nye musikalske samarbejder. Han har spillet med blandt andre Miles Davis, Gil Evans, Terje Rypdal, Dino Saluzzi, Bo Holten og Michala Petri. Mikkelsens musikalske varemærke er hans luftige og melodiske tone på trompet og flygelhorn, foruden en suveræn beherskelse af elektroniske effekter. Han har en rig karriere bag sig, med en diskografi, der blandt andet tæller de banebrydende udgivelser *The Mysterious Corona* (1967), *Aura* (1985 med Miles Davis), *Anything but Grey* (1992) samt *The Voice of Silence* (2001), en hyldest til Louisiana Museum of Modern Art i samarbejde med DR Big Band.

Michael Riessler (f. 1957) har været aktiv som musiker og komponist inden for jazz, improvisation og kammermusik siden 1980'erne. Han

er en virtuos basklarinettist med en rig tonedannelse og en vidtfavnende spillet teknik. Riessler har desuden skrevet musik til teater, ballet og film, heriblandt blandt den roste storfilm *Die Andere Heimat* (2013), og han har samarbejdet med markante navne som John Cage, Steve Reich, Mauricio Kagel og Carla Bley. I 2011 skabte Riessler i duo med Palle Mikkelsen lydværket *Aglaope* på Louisiana Museum of Modern Art; året efter vendte han tilbage med *Woodwinds*, opført i trio med Mikkelsen og akkordeonisten Jean-Louis Matinier.



Recorded at Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Humlebæk, Denmark

Live in the Park 2019, recorded live in the Sculpture Park, August 2019, by the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art. Mixing and editing: Wayne Siegel

Winter Sun, Mirages, Gothic and Song Tread Lightly, recorded in the Louisiana Concert Hall, November 2023. Recording producer, mixing and editing: Wayne Siegel

All tracks composed and performed by the Mikkeltborg Riessler Siegel Trio, except track 1, which quotes Oluf Ring's *Sig nærmer tiden* (1922)

Backing track for *Mirages*: Michael Riessler

Backing track for *Gothic*: Wayne Siegel

Backing track for *Song Tread Lightly*: Palle Mikkeltborg

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Music in the Park, by Christian Munch-Hansen, translated from the Danish by Colin Roth
Proofreaders: Hayden Jones, Jens Fink-Jensen

Cover photo: Louisiana Museum of Modern Art/Morten Lindegaard Jensen
Photo p. 10-11 © Louisiana Museum of Modern Art/Franck Tusolini

The cover features Poul Gernes' *Pyramide* (1967), installed at the Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, 2016, courtesy of the Poul Gernes Foundation – poulgernes.dk

For the accompanying music videos, visit music.louisiana.dk/interpreters/wayne-siegel

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