

# Experimental sound art with poetic, political references: Fear of the Object

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## **Fear of the Object - Leaves never fall in vain (True Blanking, 2024)**

Fear of the Object is an experimental audio-visual project of Norwegian video artist and video synth player Kjell Bjørgeengen, known for his work John Tilbury and Keith Rowe, and American, Mexico City-based percussionist and electronics player Chris Cogburn. The project is titled after a quote of German philosopher Georg Hegel, given by American philosopher Robert Pippin during a lecture in Oslo in 2017 (“Critical philosophy did indeed already turn metaphysics into logic but, like the subsequent idealism, it gave to the logical determinations an essentially subjective significance out of fear of the object), but it has no direct relationship to Hegel’s Logic.

The project focuses on the notion of resonant frequencies of objects, the wild harmonics of physical objects and the exactness of sine tones and just-intonation, intensified by an additional layer of video is produced by using live audio signals as raw video voltages, as something physical to sit with, to both listen to and look at. *Leaves never fall in vain* is the sophomore album of this project, following the self-titled, four-disc boxset (Sofa, 2023).

The new album features the European lineup of Fear of the Object - Bjørgeengen on Dave Jones video/audio synthesizer and Flood Coil, Norwegian double bass player Inga Margrete Aas (of the duo Vilde&Inga) and Ingar Zach on vibrating membrane/transducers (he is a co-founder of the Sofa label), and Mexican, Amsterdam-based Aimeé Theriot on electric cello (she plays in Magda Mayas’ Filamental Ensemble). Audun Strype (of the mastering studio Strype Audio) did the live mix and the recording. It was recorded live at Kunstneres Hus in Oslo in October 2023.

The album is titled after the death poem of Japanese haiku poet Chori (1739-1778, *Leaves never fall / in vain - from all / around bells tolling*). Coincidentally, this haiku was used recently in the liner notes to Norwegian double bass player Sigurd Hole’s new ensemble album, *Extinction Sounds*, (Elvesang, 2024). The 51-minute piece ends with American poet David Henderson reading - alone - his prophetic poem “Democracy Destruct”, reflecting on the global, inhuman repercussions of the war in Iraq, happening in the “cradle of civilization” (and produced by Bjørgeengen at Harmolodic Studios in New York 2003).

This piece is a dark, deep-toned drone that fills the architecture of any given space with its unsettling, subtle resonant and almost static ambiance. All the instruments - acoustic and electric, are mixed into one, minimalist resonant entity that foresees in its understated manner the inevitable, drowning into the coming darkness. It faithfully captures the dark poetic references of Chori and Henderson's poem. It offers a listening experience that is more than an expressive endeavor and demands political awareness and activity about the world around us. Bjørgeengen said that this project is an "activity that modifies and negates our material world so we can recognize ourselves in it in ways that are not subsumed by capital and its instrumental demands. The work is a precarious balancing between our ideal and its execution".

Kjell Bjørgeengen (Dave Jones synthesizer, Flood Coil); Inga Margrete Aas (double bass); Aimée Theriot (electric cello); Ingar Zach (vibrating membrane); David Henderson (poem); Audun Strype (audio).

<https://fearoftheobject.bandcamp.com/album/leaves-never-fall-in-vain>

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