









# Katya Ev

Katyan Ev has a background in political science and art, which she combines in her time-based, performative practice. Her work explores institutional critique, issues of power and control, and the potential for individual agency within dominant power structures. She is part of a media collective in charge of the estate of Oksana Shachko (1987-2018), artist, feminist activist and co-founder of Femen in Ukraine.

On the 21<sup>st</sup> June 2016, the day of the summer solstice, twenty-four performers departed simultaneously from each of the twenty city gates of Paris, heading to the former central market place, Les Halles, in the centre of the city. The performers carried flashing blue police emergency lights, while police sirens transported in their back-packs emitted a piercing alarm sound. They progressively arrived at their destination one-by-one, set down their lights and back-packs on the ground, and silently walked away. The fragmented sounds of the sirens, when conjoined, produced a familiar yet unlikely sound: that of Johann Sebastian Bach's unfinished *The Art of the Fugue*, fragmented into 24 one-fifth intervals (a French siren chord), while the timing of the whole performance corresponded to the length of Bach's magnum opus of polyphonic composition.

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Ev made the work in the wake of the state of emergency that was declared by President François Hollande on the night of Friday 13<sup>th</sup> November 2015, during the Bataclan terrorist attacks which left ninety people dead. She hijacks the police siren, a symbol of state power, and symbolically transfers this power to individual citizens. Converging on the city centre, as if in an ancient agora, the performers engage in the practice of performative democracy. The polyphonic nature of Bach's composition can be likened to the polyphony of the collective, while the siren can be likened to the silencing of the majority. Ultimately *Augenmusik*, 2016, tests the limits of state power, by subverting a penultimate symbol of that power and turning it into an empowering act of civil disobedience.

**Augenmusik**  
2016

Photo of performance (performer: Camille, location: Porte de Bercy, Paris)  
Courtesy of the artist and M HKA (BE)  
Photo: Mathilde Geldhof

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