

To: [Tom](#)

Subject: Does dust have a sound?

Hey Tommy!

How are you? I haven't seen you since MTV in Scotland, I hope your well?

I'm writing to you because I was wondering if you might be able to spare a day to assist me in recording sound on a small shoot, in Stepney, in a few weeks. I'm afraid I don't have any money to pay you, but I'll treat you to a delish lunch, what do you think?

The shoot is at The George Tavern, have you ever been there? It's a very interesting location. It's a fully operational pub/venue, residence and film location. The woman who owns it, Pauline, is quite a character. She bought the building some years ago and has been restoring it. Its chocka block with little trinkets; skulls, dried fruits, insects and old clothes, objects and furnishings she has collected since childhood, things she feels comforted by. Pauline talked to me about a billboard J C Decaux or someone erected on the North, exterior wall of the building, they tapped her electricity to light their posters to passing drivers. She dislikes fashion and advertising, but in order to carry out the lengthy restoration works, she has been hiring her home out as a shoot location. The list of people to shoot there is incredible; Kate Moss, Grace Jones, Mario Testino, Nick Cave, Justin Timberlake... I think even Jay Z?! So there is quite an interesting micro economy at play there, the industry pays to use her (authentic) aesthetic as a backdrop to their campaigns and that payment in turn pays for her to develop and improve the building, as per her taste.

Anyway, on visiting her, what is really beautiful (besides her stories) about the property are the sounds it makes. The poor place has been so visually raped over the years that I feel a bit sad for it, like the building must feel as though no one cares that its breathing. I need your help, to point your microphones at it, to capture its breath. We need to record the creaking floorboards, the crackling AGA, the dust particles floating up, between one floor and the next.

Let me know what you think and what equipment you imagine we will need.

As always, much love and thanks

Rors x

To: [Ruaidhri](#)

Subject: Re: Does dust have a sound?

Rors! Great to hear from you! I've been fine thanks, a bit hectic - I just got back from Lisbon, been on a shoot over there.

The project sounds fun, and don't worry about the £ you wally. I think I probably have the equipment we would need, so we wouldn't need to hire anything in. We could use a DPA 4060 radio mic on the interviewee, which exhibits an exceedingly

accurate omnidirectional pattern so doesn't need to be aimed directly at the sound source to achieve a quality pickup, they are also really inobtrusive. I'll also hang a stereo mic for the interview that will capture a more ambient image of the room. For the atmos and wild track I recommend we use a pair of Sennheiser MKH40/60 shotgun mics that operate very well in lightly reverberant rooms.

Something for you to consider also is the weather of course, if its cold and your interviewee turns the boiler on then we will really hear the central heating coming to life, this is a problem I face often (that or air conditioning!), though in your case the sounds of pipes warming up and fluid being transported around the building like a 21st Century aquaduct will add to the ST. If it rains, we might hear the damp floorboards begin to swell and warm around doorframes and skirting boards, and if it's windy, the sound of the windowpanes will shimmer through the hallways and passages.

To: [Tom](#)

Subject: Re: Does dust have a sound?

Oh wow, wonderful! I've never been to Lisbon, but I saw Wenders's *Lisbon Story* a few years ago and loved it "In broad daylight even the sounds shine".

Thank you so much for your advice on how to record everything, and your unyielding enthusiasm and support! I'll write you soon with more details x

To: [Ruaidhri](#)

Subject: Re: Does dust have a sound?

Rors, I'm sorry, I've never seen *Lisbon Story*, so I don't know this quote, sounds nice though (pardon the pun!).

On movies, your project sounds very reminiscent of *The Tenant* by Polanski, have you seen it? It's about an immigrant (played by Polanski) who moves into a Parisian apartment. Something mysterious had happened and the previous tenant had committed suicide. Anyway, all the sounds of the apartment are recorded meticulously and are amplified throughout the soundtrack. These amplified sounds upset the tenant's neighbours, whose complaints eventually lead him to suicide... well...attempted suicide, I'm not sure he actually succeeds.

To: [Tom](#)

Subject: Re: Does dust have a sound?

Gosh, we are as bad as eachother! On your recommendation, I just watched *The Tenant*, its fantastic, and yes, you got it right – that is the perfect vein

To: [Ruaidhri](#)

Subject: Re: Does dust have a sound?

Brill! What I love about *The Tenant* is all the noises of rattling windows and desk lamps being clicked on, it's what makes the location come to life, it's the sound that makes it authentic, which is what, it seems, your project is seeking to do, locating the authenticity lost in a location steeped in images? There is a great essay Mark Cousins wrote about it in his book "Widescreen", which discusses the use of real location that can generate vitality, versus a studio set, which design out the flaws of reality.

To: [Tom](#)

Subject: Re: Does dust have a sound?

Exactly right Tom! I just read the Mark Cousins text, perfect. I was singing, in tune, from a slightly different hymn sheet with an essay by a different Mark Cousins, called *The scene of art*. He notes

"... location shots are used as a substitute for the studio, when it becomes easier to generate certain effects outside the studio. This doesn't mean that the "location" is represented by the film; it is used by the film... The truth is that cinema has not had any systematic relation to the city, though it has plundered cities and buildings, deserts and mountains, rivers and subways, just to sustain the narrative, the causality of its movement. The Paris or London represented by 'Classical Hollywood Cinema' barely got beyond a shot of the Eiffel Tower and Big Ben. But that is hardly the point. The really powerful relation that cinema has bequeathed the city is to leave it layered with points of view, and with a new vocabulary of light, darkness and shadow."

What's so strange about The George Tavern is that it isn't typically a studio, nor a location. It is *someone's* reality; it is Pauline's home, hired out as a location. What is more is that the location *used* might be 'The Studio', one of the rooms in Pauline's home that she uses as a studio (for painting) but is hired as a 'Studio', backdrop...

P.s. I've attached a little story I wrote about *Lisbon Story*, in case you don't get to watch it, I think of you as the character Winter whenever I watch it, I should get you a blue sun visor!

To: [Ruaidhri](#)

Subject: Re: Does dust have a sound?

When d'ya wana shoot buddy?