

**Susan Philipsz**  
(Glasgow, 1965)

Susan Philipsz sings: the voice is her instrument and existing songs are her language. Responding to the specificity of certain environments or places, the artist draws upon the rich repertoire of popular culture, but also easy listening music and sometimes opera, and then interprets passages and songs in an acappella technique, without musical accompaniment, using only her own voice. Different from what a professional singer might offer, Philipsz's interpretations are characterized by hesitations and slight cracks, minor errors that allow one to sense the body of the artist, giving emotional and sensual form to the place in which the songs are transmitted.

Simultaneously public and private, Philipsz's sound works bring the human voice into the museum or urban space in a form that does not correspond to what is generally experienced in such environments. Instead they trigger a subtle process of transformation and appropriation, on the basis of which the shared space becomes an intimate, almost secret place. Seeming as if she were singing privately for each of the visitors, Philipsz also stimulates their memories, to the point that each work can leave a different impression on each person who encounters it. *The Internationale*, 1999, is an interpretation of the song originally written in 1871 by Eugène Pottier to celebrate the Paris Commune. Translated into innumerable languages, the song became the hymn of revolutionary socialism, and its calls for action is an incitement for workers to unite. Associated with rallies and often sung with a raised closed fist, in the artist's interpretation of it the song assumes new and unexpected connotations that seem to bring to an extremely human and poetic level a song that at this point belongs to history and seems consigned to utopia. (MB)