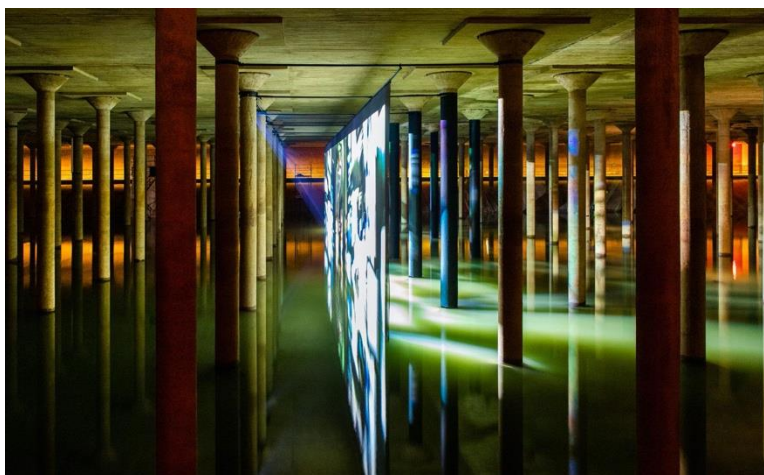


Wallpaper*

Anri Sala's subterranean installation is out of this world

Albanian artist Anri Sala's hypnotic film and sound installation, Time No Longer, in Houston's Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern, pays homage to African American astronaut and saxophonist Ronald McNair

by Amah-Rose Abrams (March 18, 2021)



Anri Sala, *Time No Longer*, 2021. Four-channel HD computer-generated imagery and five-channel sound, colour, translucent screen, pulse-generating speakers, dynamic lights. Duration: 13 min. *Courtesy of the Artist and Marian Goodman Gallery. Copyright: Anri Sala.*
Photography: Lawrence Knox, courtesy of Buffalo Bayou Partnership and Weingarten Art Group

Anri Sala's work explores the moment between the tangible and intangible. It exists somewhere between a time and a space, perhaps even ricocheting between the two. Sala's thought-provoking and evocative time-based work goes to often difficult places, giving voice to thoughts, feelings and events for which language is not enough.

His latest major work is a monumental installation at the Bayou Buffalo Park Cistern, an underground reservoir in Houston, Texas. It combines film, sound and installation, tapping into the sense of equanimity of above and below that the artist associates with the 'Space City'. Titled *Time No Longer*, the immersive work is inspired by African American astronaut and saxophonist Ronald McNair, who was launched on the Space Shuttle Challenger in 1986 with the intention of recording music in space. Had the rocket not exploded seconds after take-off, he would have.

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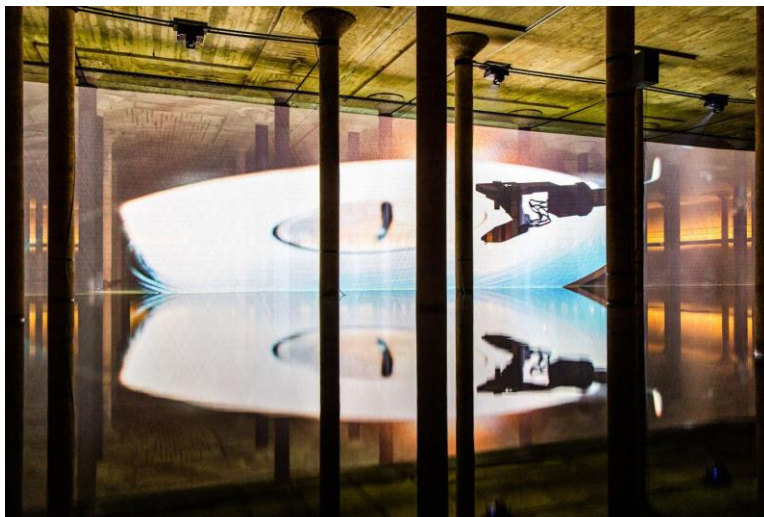


Portrait of artist Anri Sala with his installation, *Time No Longer*, 2021, in the Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern, Houston

Subterranean and vast, the Buffalo Bayou Park Cistern is 87,500 sq ft large and 25ft tall, with 221 columns throughout. It evoked space exploration to Sala, who visited the space with one idea in mind, but recalled the story of McNair when standing inside the unique structure and went with that instead.

'Every person who travels so far away from Earth is a pioneer by nature, but McNair was also a man who aimed to be the very first person to seriously record music in space,' Sala says.

Projected intermittently onto translucent Hologauze is a turntable, floating, weightless. The stylus grasps for purchase on the record's grooves, sometimes managing to communicate music, other times skipping and revolving back into space resonant of the moment McNair never played. As the motion repeats we hear snippets of music.



Anri Sala, *Time No Longer*, 2021

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Anri Sala, *Time No Longer*, 2021

'It's like a train of thought, or of music being continuously interrupted and us somehow wanting to make sense of this interruption,' Sala explains.

The screen is only visible when the film is projecting, leaving the viewer to contemplate the space in darkness. When the film is running, it is reflected in the surrounding water, creating the illusion of infinite turntables tumbling through infinite space.

The work's soundtrack is a mixed clarinet and saxophone rendition of Olivier Messiaen's *Quartet for the End of Time*, perhaps the most famous piece of music composed in captivity. Written by Messiaen while in a German prisoner-of-war camp during the Second World War, the music communicates a deep sense of loneliness for Sala.



Anri Sala, *Time No Longer*, 2021

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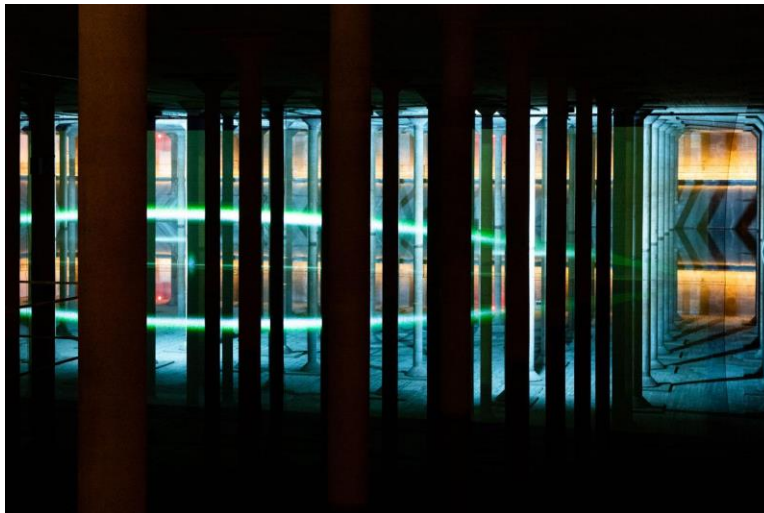
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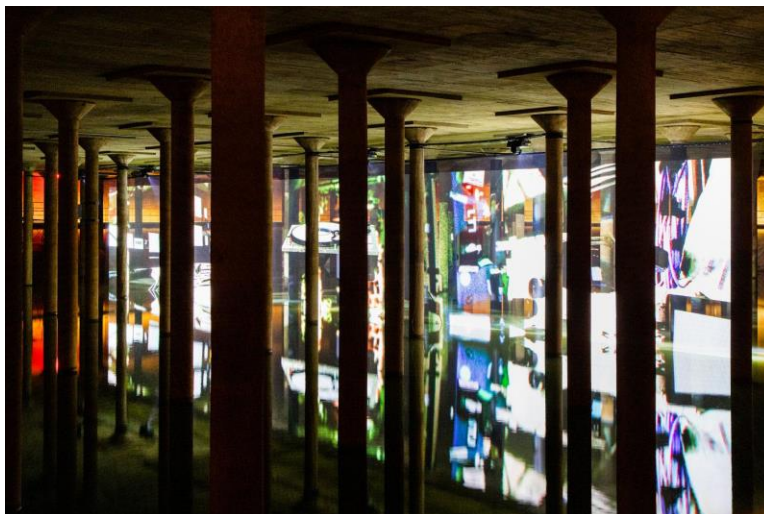
In the recording, it's hard to distinguish one instrument from the other, a deliberate effect. 'Sometimes it sounds like one and sometimes like the other. It is also playing with this idea that the clarinet might sound like a saxophone before it exists, in a sense asking what would a song sound like before it plays?'

The original music McNair intended to record was due to feature on the album *Rendez-vous*, in collaboration with French composer Jean-Michel Jarre. It was later performed and recorded by Jarre at a tribute concert following the accident. Sala has used jazz in his work previously and is drawn to the music for its lack of narrative. The work *Long Sorrow* (2005) saw him suspend the saxophonist Jemeel Moondoc 60ft in the air from a disused housing project in Berlin.

'He was anchored in space and he used music as a way to make his mind drift away from the situation he was in, while *Time No Longer* is the other way around, because it's about drifting in space, like the turntable, but being anchored in time.'



Anri Sala, *Time No Longer*, 2021



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Time No Longer, like *Long Sorrow and Answer Me* (2008) – which was shot in a geodesic dome at Teufelsberg in Berlin – relates to its architecture. ‘I like to find a narrative that conveys the attributes of the space. One which treats the space as if it was an organ, not merely a receptacle.

‘In other words, I tend to try to approach space as an instrument, rather than a backdrop to a narrative that’s being played solo within it.’ Sala explains. ‘When the space becomes tangible, allowing it to play a collaborative part in a form of retelling, it elicits curiosities about context and history, quite unlike and beyond those that storytelling conveys.’

A performance without a performer, a lonely turntable floating through space, this reflective work speaks to the experience of many of us in recent times.



Anri Sala, *Time No Longer*, 2021