KOMMUNAL PRAKSIS

ALMANAC FOR STRUER TRACKS

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SOUND ART LAB

Sound Art Lab is a work environment for development and production of artistic exploration and engagement into sound and listening. Sound Art Lab opened in August 2021 in Bang & Olufsen's former administrative building in Struer, Denmark, and has since hosted artists in residence from around the world. Since January 2023, Sound Art Lab has been the Danish Art Workshops' workshop for sound.

We offer specialized, professional work facilities, residencies, and workshops for artists at all stages of their careers. We organize educational programs for children, youth, and students in collaboration with schools and educational institutions.

We organize and host the international biennial for sound and listening, Struer Tracks, which since 2017 has presented groundbreaking Danish and international sound art. While throughout the year we present artist talks, performances, exhibitions and open labs for the public audience.

Always with sound as the focal point, we facilitate interdisciplinary collaborations, both within the arts and culture, as well as reaching out to businesses, educational institutions, and the healthcare sector. We collaborate closely with our local partners and expand our activities through our international network.

We commit ourselves to create an institution promoting and celebrating diversity and representation within Sound Art Lab as a workplace, amongst the artists in residence, and through artistic output, activities and public engagements.

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

The fifth edition of Struer Tracks is titled *Kommunal Praksis*. It invites exploration of how communities are formed and expressed through sound and listening practices. We called this publication an almanac to emphasise its situational and experimental character — an open experimental format with the potential to continue or evolve in the future.

The Almanac acts as an additional platform for reflection, looking at both sound and sound art as means of creating spaces of belonging, overcoming separation, and strengthening mutual support.

Gathering the material, we launched an open call with no formal limitations or requirements. What mattered was that anyone who felt a connection to the theme could contribute, regardless of professional background or institutional ties. We received 56 responses — all very different and compelling. For the print edition, we selected 17 texts along with an interview with Jacob Eriksen, Director of Sound Art Lab, to offer a closer look into the biennial context and intentions.

What does it mean to think about sound through the lens of community? How can sonic practices help us find new ways to perceive the everyday and the unexpected, the bodily and the social, the personal and the shared? It is precisely this drive toward open-ended unconventional approaches and surprising connections that shaped the foundation of the Almanac — bringing together the voices of artists, researchers, and sound lovers.

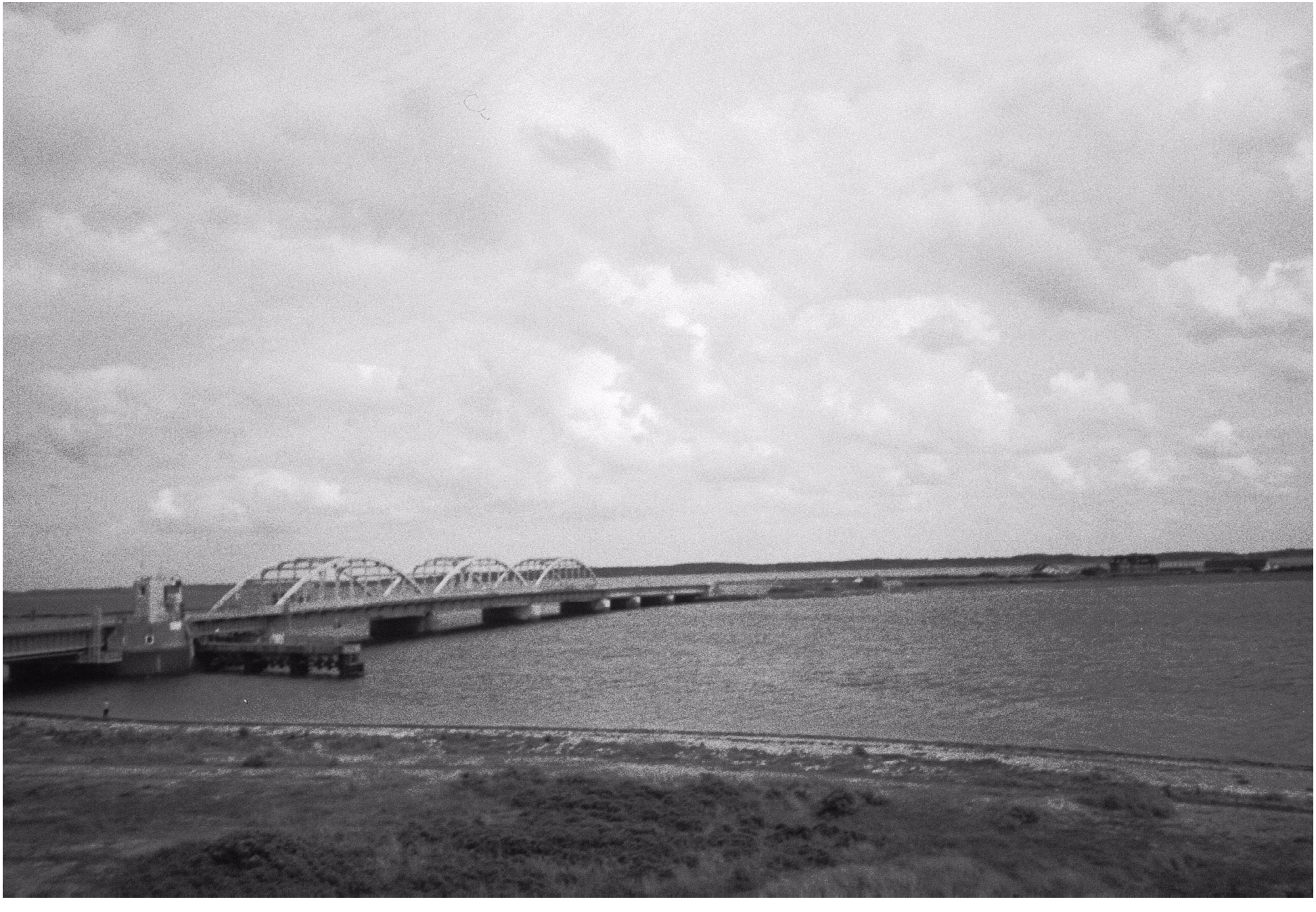
We are deeply grateful to everyone who shared their work, reflections, and questions with us. Your openness, attention, and readiness to engage with the theme from many directions imbued shape and depth into this project.

This project was made with care — featuring Linn Henrichson's design, Mohamed Hamad's copy-editing, Jacob Eriksen's supervision, and curatorial direction by Zlata Pavlovskaia. Special thanks to the whole Sound Art Lab team for their trust, collaboration, and continuous support throughout all stages of development.

The contributors to the print edition are: Ana Ruiz Valencia, Anne E. Stoner, Ariel William Orah (sōydivision), Bea Lamar, Bureau for Listening, Elena Chadaeva, Jacob Eriksen, Joshua Le Gallienne, Robin Frederiksen, Ronja Svaneborg, Rupert Enticknap, Sabina Otelea, Sarah Damai Hoogman, Simina Oprescu, Tommaso Nudo, Victor Maziz, Yasya Minenkova & Yanis Proshkinas, Yumiao Liang.

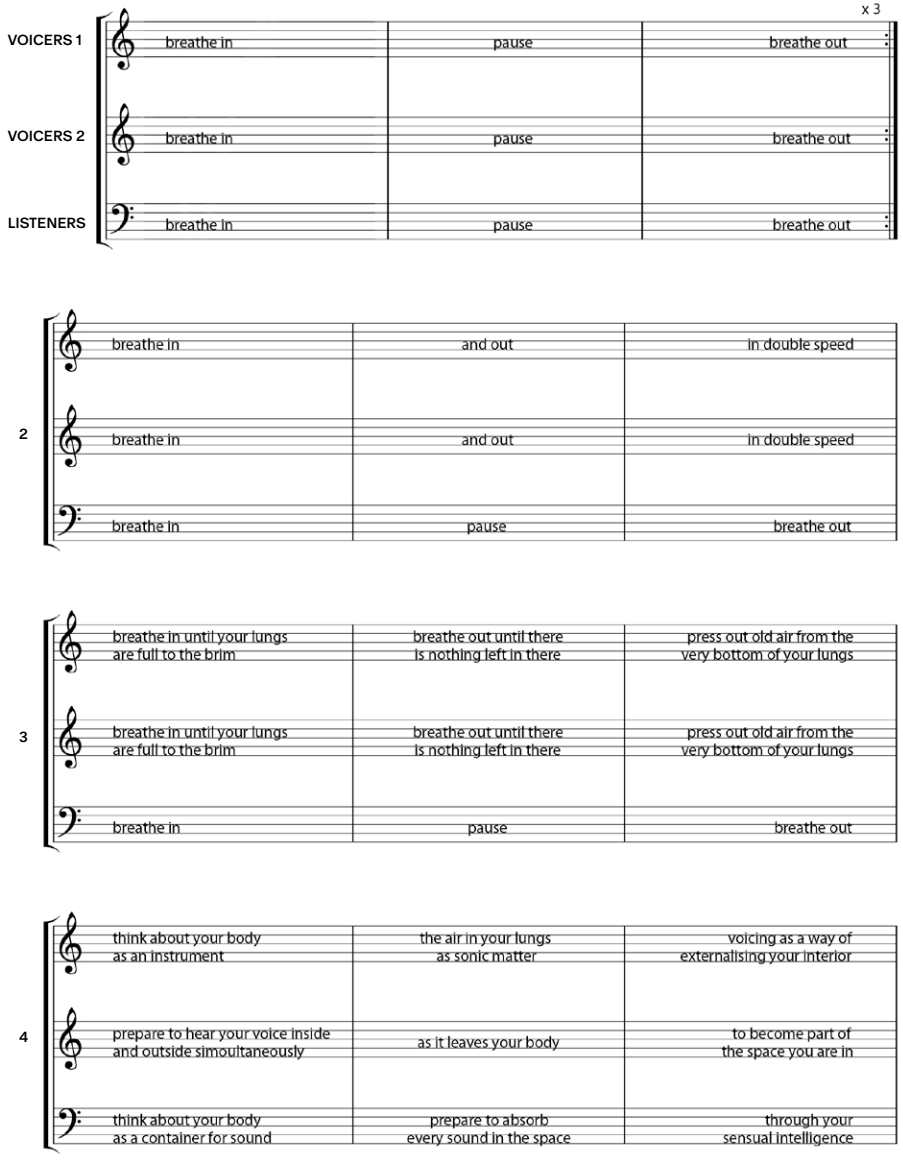
The digital version features hybrid and genre-defying formats that reflect the breadth of perspectives around the theme.

The publication was made possible through the generous support of the Danish Composers' Society, to whom we extend our heartfelt gratitude.



DO I NEED TO MOVE MY LIPS TO BE PART OF THE CHOIR?

Ronja Svaneborg



Ronja Svaneborg is a multidisciplinary artist currently engaging in speculations on the voice as a bridge between self and other, blurring the distinction between individuals and their surroundings. With a focus on polyphonic voicing and the response-ability of the collective ear, she researches attunement and resonance in interrelated listening and voicing experiences: modes of merging with the surrounding environment and participating in an orchestrated sense of belonging.

5

make the smallest sound you can	let it oscillate	between sound an non-sound
twist your mouth in a continuous flow	let it sound	unrelated to your throat
open up your ears	to any sounding individual in the space	as well as the collective body they together form

6

find your body's deepest note	produce it	hold it as long as you can
find your body's highest note	eject it	in short outbursts
look for a combination of voices	in the space	that brings you pleasure

7

find your body's highest note	eject it	in short outbursts
find your body's deepest note	produce it	hold it as long as you can
listen for the sweet spot	between chaos	and choir

8

alternate between your highest and lowest note	be a sonic rollercoaster	up and down, down and up
find the middle of your register	let it out	with your softest sound
let your organs vibrate	to the timbre	of your neighbour

9

think about a song you loved as a teenager	sing the first two notes of it	repeat them in a loop
think about a song that loved you as a teenager	click your tongue in the rhytm of it	repeat in a loop
think about a song you loved as a teenager	try and remember	how it made you feel

10

think about a song that loved you as a teenager	click your tongue in the rhytm of it	repeat in a loop
think about a song you loved as a teenager	sing the first two notes of it	repeat them in a loop
think about a song you loved as a teenager	try and remember	how it loved you back

11

find your pulse	find a place on your body	where you can feel it
find your pulse	take a moment	to locate it
listen to	the little sounds of	searching hands

12

sing the rhythm	of your pulse	la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la-la
sing the rhythm	of your pulse	di-di-didi-di-di-di-di-di
listen	hear	hear

13

increase the volume	decrease the volume	increase the volume
decrease the volume	increase the volume	decrease the volume
let your internal	bodily rhythm	be affected

14

make any sound	find a sound that you like	let the space hear it
pick a member of voicers 1	provide an echo of their expression	be as accurate as you can
listen to	the ecosystem	of the space

15

pick a member of voicers 2	provide an echo of their expression	be as accurate as you can
make any sound	find a sound that you like	let the space hear it
hear the flow	of resiprocal	energy transfusion

16

borrow a sound from a friend	imitate a snippet	of their voice
give a voice to a loved one	let us hear them	through your throat
unfold a memory	of someone	dear to you

17

produce a long row of vowels	try to use the entire span of your register	let them say all things unspoken
produce a long row of vowels	let them all sound through the same tone	let them be all the things you should have said at the right time
think about all the times you	had something important to say	but somehow stayed quiet

18

slowly build up the loudest sound you are comfortable producing	form it by accumulating all of your quietness	send it out of your body
slowly build up the loudest sound you are comfortable producing	form it by accumulating all of your quietness	send it out of your body
feel the rumble of an unused sound	the sound of all your quietness combined	let it lick your skin on the inside

19

take it up a notch	and another	push it against the edges of the space
take it up a notch	and another	spit it up rubbing the ceiling
let it swirl	whipping up your fluids	allow it to suck on your oxygen

20

hold it

until out

of breath

POST-COVID BLUES

Yasya Minenkova & Yanis Proshkinas

Yanis Proshkinas is an interdisciplinary artist, researcher, and producer working across various media, including video, installations, performances, and game formats. His work explores themes of productivity, work culture, and self-exploitation. By integrating fragments of digital environments with efficiency and communication tools, he creates experiences that provoke discussions about alienation, loneliness, and fatigue within hyper-efficient systems that encroach on personal space. (Vilnius, Lithuania)

Yasya Minenkova is a cultural researcher, art critic, and curator with a master's degree in art criticism and cultural heritage studies. Her research examines contemporary art as a tool for addressing social issues, including the difficult heritage and memory, the politics of care and alienation in modern society, as well as institutional critique. (Vilnius, Lithuania)

Abstract

Post-Covid blues is a reflection on the sound of coughing. Unfolding in the structure of blues music, it isan interplay of "call & response" expressed both in lyrical composition and in the musical dialogue between instruments. This project takes the form of a *dialogical essay* between the artist and curator, where every element, from sound to visual interventions, serves as a field for reinterpreting the role of sound in the post-COVID experience.

At the core of this dialogue lies the paradoxical paradigm shift surrounding coughing: an everyday sound that suddenly became a charged social signal, disrupting public spaces and evoking memories of the pandemic. This sharpens our sensitivity to the Other, transforming a bodily reflex into a marker of vulnerability, alienation, and control. A cough symbolizes the fragility of another's body while simultaneously exposing our own, thus highlighting the biopolitical tensions between individuals and the social order. How long will it take for the echoes of the pandemic to fade? For these auditory triggers to lose their grip on collective consciousness?

As music theorist Michel Chion notes[1], listening is not enough — we must also name sounds in order to "humanize" noise and ease anxiety. Rooted in sporadic associations, nonlinear reflections, and the ideas of philosophers and cultural theorists, this text examines how the sound of coughing continues to resonate within culture, contemporary art, and everyday life. The dialogue traverses reflections on the act of listening as a social process, methods of alleviating anxiety associated with coughing, and imaginative methods for overcoming alienation. Unstructured and occasionally chaotic, the dialogue evokes the soundscapes of a melancholic blues melody while visually resembling a moving textual image — layered with impressions, subconscious traces, and raw theoretical fragments.

Thus, *Post-Covid Blues* embraces dialogue as both format and methodology — a fundamental practice of connection. Where dialogue seeks to unite, it also challenges the trajectory of post-COVID anxiety and detachment. In this context, separation does not destroy connection but instead makes it more visible, reminding us that division, too, can be a form of solidarity, care, and support.

YP: After COVID, coughing has become something infuriating. When a stranger coughs near me, I explode inside and shrink at the same time. It feels like they definitely have COVID and are infecting me right this moment.

YM: It's strange: five years have passed since the pandemic began, yet its echoes still linger. If I see someone wearing a mask in a supermarket, I'll probably keep my distance. But sound, especially coughing, is an even stronger signal because it's not just a suspicion of illness; it's evidence of it.

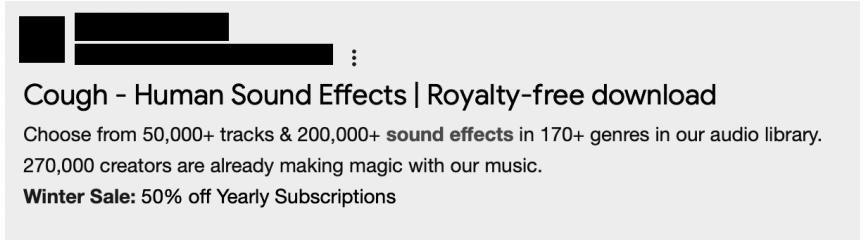
Hearing, more precisely, noticing a sound, becomes a form of communication, triggering an instinctive choice: to come closer or to step away. And this particular sound is anything but an invitation to come closer.

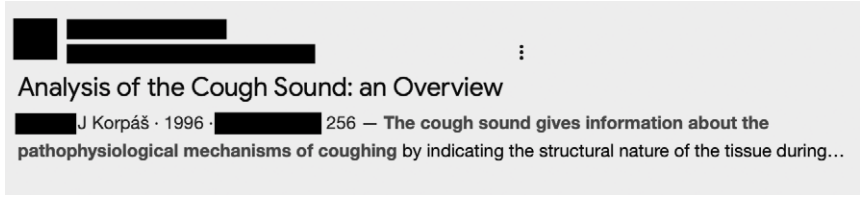
COVID feels like a thing of the past, yet through sound, it remains present: like a ghost that refuses to disappear. How much time must pass before these triggers fade? Has the pandemic truly ended?

> Salome Voegelin in "Listening to Noise and Silence. Towards A Philosophy Of Sound Art": *"If I notice a concurrent sound, I most likely subsume that heard into the appreciation of the seen: sound fleshes out the visual and renders it real; it gives the image its spatial dimension and temporal dynamic."*[2]

YP: Once, while walking through a gallery, I heard a cough that wasn't directed at anyone in particular, but everyone seemed to think it was meant for them. That inspired me to create a simple project: an audio installation of coughing placed in a gallery filled with other artworks. After COVID, this idea gained an additional layer of subjectivity — when someone addresses you with a cough, you instinctively turn around.

> Interpellation[3] *is a term first introduced by Marxist philosopher Louis Althusser to describe the process through which ideology influences an individual subject, effectively representing them as an effect. Building on Michel Foucault's theory, Althusser challenges the classical notion of the subject as the cause and essence; in his view, the situation always precedes the (individual or collective) subject. Interpolation involves the moment and process of recognizing one's interaction with a given ideology.*





YM: In the fall of 2024, I went to a play in Vilnius — Krystian Lupa's adaptation of *The Magic Mountain* by Thomas Mann. The performance lasted five hours, a true test of endurance. The entire story unfolds in a tuberculosis sanatorium, where the sick characters keep coughing in ragged, breathless fits. But from the very start, coughing can also be heard in the audience.

I never quite got used to the sound, flaring up up from different corners of the theater, unsettling me more and more as the play progresses. I feel suffocated, as if the air itself carries something invisible yet oppressive. "Doesn't it seem like the epidemic isn't just on stage but right here, in Vilnius?" I whisper to my friend. We never figured out whether it was part of the performance or if a new wave of illness was sweeping through the city.

But it made me think about how sound shapes our behavior, acting as a force of control and order. Horns, bells, traffic signals — and now, *coughing*. It's a signal, a sonic marker, a kind of siren. It refuses to dissolve into the background, emerging instead as a distinct figure, a sound that demands attention. It breathes anxiety into the room, tethering itself to fear, to the image of an invisible yet present "*other*" — the sick one.

HERE'S THE THING: imagine you're in a theater, watching an uplifting play. Good people are doing good things on stage. You're listening, holding your breath, completely captivated. And then, nearby, someone starts coughing. They cough, and cough, and eventually, because they're interrupting your enjoyment of the play, you beat them up. And in doing so, you're committing an act of harm. So, who's to blame? Who's the jerk here? The theater and the playwright who wrote the kind, uplifting play for you? The point is, only a truly good person is capable of all kinds of shitty behavior.

— KASHLIN, publicist

HERE'S THE THING: imagine you're in a theater, watching an uplifting play. Good people are doing good things on stage. You're listening, holding your breath, completely captivated. And then, nearby, someone starts coughing. That someone is me. I try to stifle it, hold it back, swallow it down. But it forces its way out. Heads turn. A sigh, a glare, a whispered complaint. I'm not trying to interrupt, not trying to ruin anyone's moment of beauty, but my body betrays me. And then, eventually, you snap. You, the righteous theatergoer, the lover of all things good and pure. You don't just glare now — you act. I, by existing in your space, by coughing in your presence, have shattered your illusion of goodness. So tell me, who's to blame? Who's the real villain here? Me, for making a sound? Or you, for proving that your patience, your virtue, your 'goodness' only lasts as long as the world remains perfectly silent? The point is, only a truly good person is capable of all kinds of shitty behavior.

— COUGHIN, visitor

> Misophonia*, derived from the Greek words "miso" meaning "hate" and "phonia" meaning "sound," is a condition where individuals experience strong negative emotional and physical reactions to certain auditory or visual stimuli, commonly known as "triggers."*

YP: Sound can be both a source of connection and division. A striking example of sound drawing people together is Jens Haaning's Turkish Jokes (1994), in which recordings of Turkish immigrants telling jokes in their native language were broadcast in a Turkish neighborhood in central Oslo. The loudspeaker, mounted on a lamppost, became a magnet, drawing inTurkish immigrants through the familiar cadence of their language. Reflecting on this project, researcher Claire Bishop writes: "An illuminated text in Arabic or a loudspeaker broadcasting in Turkish shifts the relationship between the local and the foreign." Relational art aims not only to create objects but to shape encounters and moments of connection, mending the tears in the social fabric.

My project, which explores coughing in a museum, moves in the opposite direction — it amplifies separation, fluidly spreading in the social field. And yet, in exposing the rupture and making it more tangible, it forces us to think more deeply about how to bridge it.

> Then, while talking, one of us decided to get the letters C-O-U-G-H, in the mouth and cough them out, trying to feel the connection between the sound, its materiality, and the text. Some of the letters remained in the mouth, while others scattered beyond the paper. We decided to record the cough and transcribe this sound into text too. The movement of sound through the material particles of the text was achieved, transitioning from the auditory to the visual, as the real cough merged with its signified — its denomination.

YP: My wife, Dasha, and I spent Christmas and New Year's 2020/2021 in Istanbul, Turkey, staying there for about a month. Although Covid restrictions in Turkey were quite severe, they did not apply to tourists' entry, which is why we chose this destination for our vacation. By that time, I had come down with Covid twice – once before the vaccine was available and once afterwards.

It was our first visit to Istanbul, and according to our friends' stories, the city is usually very crowded. But not that year – the streets were nearly empty. We stayed just 10 meters from Istiklal, one of Istanbul's most popular pedestrian streets. Almost

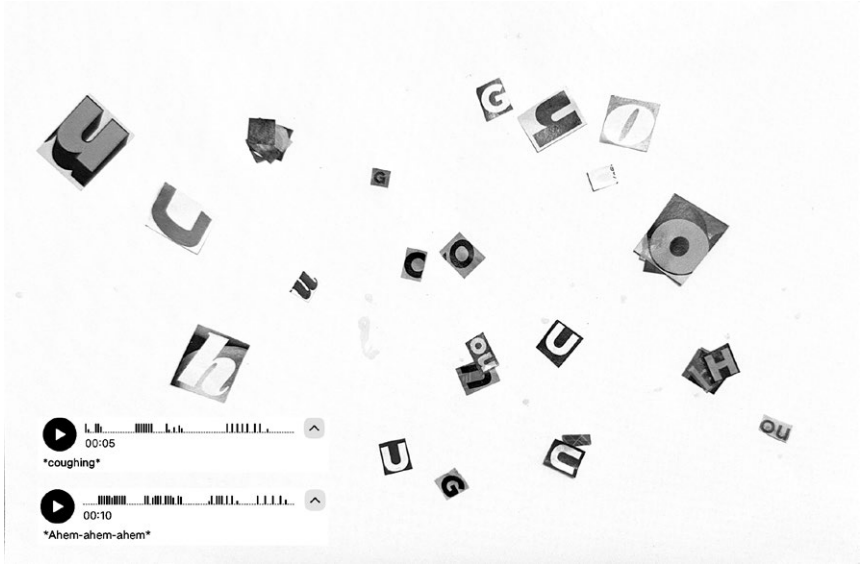
all shops and cafes were closed, although some operated under inexplicable, unwritten rules.

The most irritating requirement was the need to wear a mask on the street. In general, most tourists disregarded this rule, and the police seemed indifferent. However, vigilant locals could politely indicate — with a swift wave of their hand — that it was advisable to wear one.

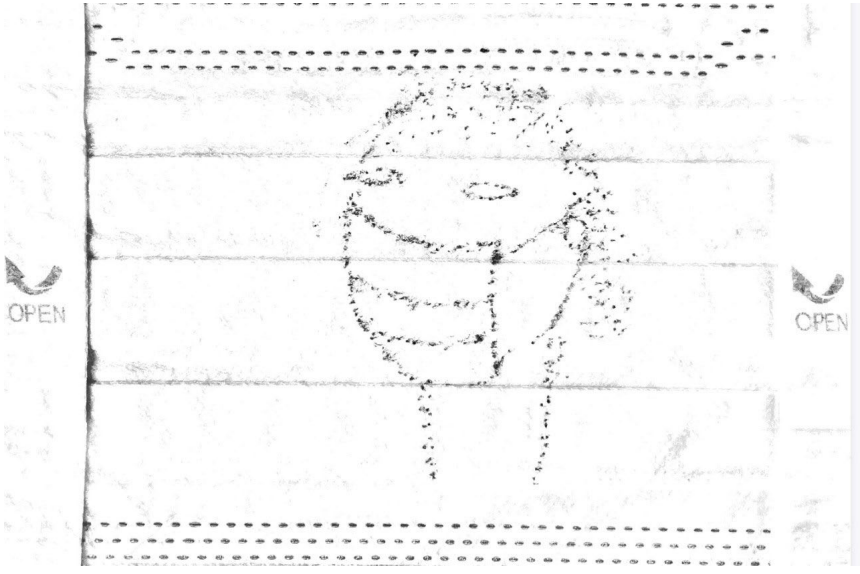
> Biopower (or biopolitics), *according to Foucault, is a form of power that focuses on regulating the life and health of the population, rather than just controlling territory or political rights. Biopower shapes normative standards, regulates behavior, and influences the perception of normalcy and deviation in society.*

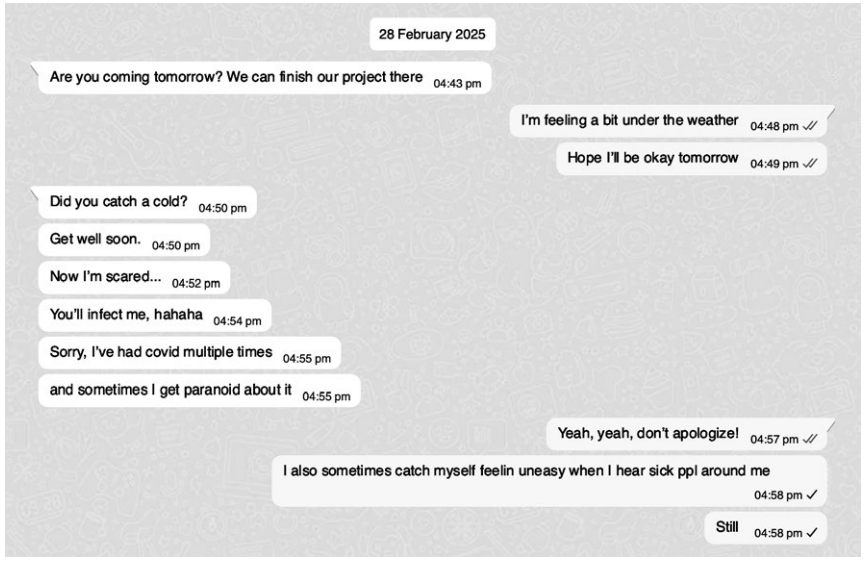
YM: It seems to me that the sound of coughing can serve a productive purpose. We always talk about fear and warning, and our conversations often take on an anxious tone, but we never move beyond that. Do you remember how our mutual friend told us about their work in a sound art lab, where they explored hospital archives? One artist specifically requested recordings of real people coughing to study sounds of physiological origin, thereby extracting them from their initial semantic field, placing them into an artistic context, and inventing new meanings for them. Could we, too, breathe new life into the sound of coughing, giving it fresh signifiers to deal with in the space of art?

When considering sound in the context of exhibition practices, we must take into account the specific subjective direction of sound as an artistic experience that trancends the materiality of the object. Disturbing sounds can trigger vivid imagery and personal interpretations, prompting viewers to share their feelings and thoughts. This process of mental resonance and subjective listening can foster a sense of community among those who engage with the artwork. Sound prompts us to rise to other perceptual levels which, even when not directly related to the object or source,form a certain ”auditory situation.”[4] Jean-Luc Nancy aptly referred to these transcendental behaviors of sound as ”beyond sound.”[5] The question is how, by evoking the very feeling of anxiety, these disorienting auditory situations can contribute to its overcoming. And will they be able to at all?



YP: A few days ago, Yasya said she might not come to our friends' party because she wasn't feeling well. And on March 1, 2025 — the very last day before the text deadline — she finally did fall ill.





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A RECIPE FOR SHARING

Rupert Enticknap

Rupert Enticknap (b. 1986, UK/DE) is a Berlin based artist who works with voice, sound, performance and sculpture, often working through the body towards non-linear paths of inquiry and performativity. Their trans-disciplinary practice oscillates between and within music, choreography, and installations.

I love bitter fl avours. Pilsner beer, 99% cacao chocolate, Campari, Italian dark roasted espresso, orange peel marmalade, and a newish discovery to me: karela (bitter gourd). One of the fi ve basic tastes (bitter, salty, sour, sweet and umami) it is perhaps the most challenging for many palettes. However, in careful amounts and measured moments, it can harmonise the most complex dissonances . Bitterness can direct towards more clarity, accentuate depth and make room for fi ner nuance in our perceptions through the tongue and soft palette. In staying with the trouble of its disharmony, this fl avour can deepen an understanding of the pith of any morsel.

This recipe fi rst kneaded itself together with very sticky hands during my residence at Sound Art Lab in December 2024. Despite wishes for snow, the mizzly moisture from the fjord was a more constant companion to the grey cloudscape. During a late evening walk around the harbour after sharing my work at the LYTTEAFTEN (listening evening), I recorded a voice note to myself with some thoughts, my voice surfi ng on the tff tff ff ff f tff ff ff tf tf tf tff f of the wind bouncing through the tiny microphone. I was feeling quite empty but, in speaking this out loud, the key ingredients became clear:

> “the intimacy of allowing oneself to say I’m confused. Here is my confusion. Not, here is what I’ve worked out, but here is what I’m trying to work out and here are the issues I’m fi nding along the way. because there’s a very diff erent format to a presentation, especially in the context of a residency, which is a period of working [but also forming community]. I mean, yeah, why am I putting this pressure on myself to create something?”

This led me to refl ect more on preconceived ideas of process in the fi eld of sound and music making. There is still this general model of the singular lone artist in the studio, and a work being experienced when installed or released in a performer/object-audience dynamic . In the performative arts (theatre, choreography, performance) sharings of work in progress with invited feedback are by now standard practice both in education and the profession. What could opening our sound studios as a temporary communal practice reveal and contribute to our working processes? In the context of a residency, where the artist is the guest, what is the function of and expectation around sharing when you become the host? How do you host in other ‘non-art’ contexts? This may help to reframe the idea of presenting

towards a more communal practice, where the artist is facilitator and their work is the meal which commonly

binds those present in shared experience as part of a creative process. Perhaps as artists and educators we can start to re-shape such formats and play with them, even artistically, so as to undo the de-facto of critique into more of a 'tasting', where the atmosphere is of trial and discovery, even if not all tastes are pleasant (at first).

The kitchen is, for many, the heart of the home and offers a different intimacy when invited to eat informally in this space. What changes when you share a meal in a kitchen space as opposed to a dining space? In the kitchen nothing is hidden and actions are visible, with smells suspended, spillages fresh, and pans left to cool. The condiments are a step and a reach away in the fridge and life's happenings of the week and day complete the set. Perhaps we can ask ourselves the same question about the difference between a studio space and a performance space? Are you inviting those present to witness something or to engage with it? Are our guests really an audience who are just expected to listen, or are they participants who are invited to answer the simple question of: what do you hear?

Share this recipe with your friends, your colleagues, your loved ones. It is a gesture of inviting them into your process in the same way that you may invite them for dinner, or to stand next to you at the stove - a glass of wine in hand - as you gently fry the onions and then add the (meat/tofu/aubergines).

INGREDIENTS

— 1 idea, anywhere from 2g-1kg, whole, or chopped roughly/finely depending on its substance
— a handful of doubts, or questions (bitter flavour) 1 double spirit measure of each
— humility, large tablespoon

METHOD

Inhale and exhale deeply 3 times.
Refer to the dish you serve as 'the work' and yourself as 'the artist'.

Add the idea to the pan using your voice as both the oil and the wooden spoon. Sear it on all sides, or saute keeping it moving. When caramelized add the doubt/questions slowly and simmer continuously stirring for 5-10 minutes until cooked.

Question: is there something you can play with in the presentation of the dish or the location where it is eaten (at a table?) which may affect what is received and how it tastes?

Serve to your guests, citing the recipe, the ingredients,and how many times you've cooked it. The work will come to the table as it is - bubbling, needing time to reach a cooler temperature to allow the flavours to really mix together and greet your guests. Offer them suitable condiments, salt, pepper, chilli oil etc., to season the work to their taste. Don't be surprised if they request something you don't have.

Offer guests seconds (or even thirds) until everyone is finished, then ask about their experience. How did everything taste? What worked for them in the combination of ingredients? What might be missing? What's left on the plate? We all taste differently.
Eat your ego for dessert!

AFTERTHOUGHT

— Invite your guests to write a 'restaurant review' of what you have shared in the form of a graphic score.
— Write one for yourself: Focus on the experience of cooking the meal, noting all the things that came up inside and outside you. Your body, your thoughts. Perhaps this memory will tell you more about the direction to go.

THE INSTRUMENTAL EAR

Victor Mazin

Victor Mazin, Ph.D., is a practicing psychoanalyst. He is the founder of Freud's Dream Museum in St. Petersburg (1999) and an honorary member of The Museum of Jurassic Technology (Los Angeles). He is the head of the department of theoretical psychoanalysis at the East-European Institute of Psychoanalysis (St. Petersburg), and associate professor at The Department of Liberal Arts and Sciences of St. Petersburg State University, honorary professor of the Institute of Depth Psychology (Kiev). He is also a translator from English and French into Russian, and was editor-in-chief of the Kabinet journal and member of the editorial boards of the journals Psychoanalysis (Kiev), European Journal of Psychoanalysis (Rome), Transmission (Sheffield), Journal for Lacanian Studies (London). He has published numerous articles and books on psychoanalysis, deconstruction, cinema and visual arts.

1. Freud's Ears and his Acoustic Revolution

One of the many revolutionary ideas introduced by Freud was his rejection of the medical inspection of his patients. Before the inception of psychoanalysis, he began his work — as is expected of any medical practitioner — with an examination. With his transformation into a psychoanalyst, however, Freud seemingly disappears from sight and turns a blind eye to the visual dimension altogether. Such is the metamorphosis of Freud: from Narcissus he transforms into Echo.

Perhaps the eyes are the mirror to the soul, but Freud does not want to see the soul (which is in itself impossible); instead, he wants to hear it. How can it be possible to see the soul? It is as if he contemplates the following quote by Baltasar Gracián, a writer and philosopher of the Baroque period, which itself is so dear to psychoanalysts: «Look into the soul through the windows of the eyes, hear its voice through the mouth, and speak to it through the crevices of the ears»[1]. A psychoanalyst does not search for the soul in the eyes; he addresses the ears. He provides the other person with an opportunity to express themself, to exercise their right to speak, because «the mouth seems to me the principal gate and door of the soul; for as through the passage of the senses, objects enter, so this is reserved only with respect, for the mind to go forth, and to manifest herself by the help of her expressions»[2].

The subject, the unconscious, the psyche — these are the things one can listen for, the things that can be heard but cannot be observed or seen. And so, Freud shuts his eyes, understanding that the face of the other is a surface upon which the onlooker can project. Freud's predecessor, Socrates, urged his interlocutor, «Speak, so that I may see you». The eyes may be a mirror of the soul, but they mustn't cast a glare. Let them remain shut so that they do not interrupt the listening. Freud turns his eyes away; he prefers to perk up his ears in a particular way. It is in the act of listening to the hysterical questioning that psychoanalysis appears, and with it — a formula: the ear is nothing like the eye, and it cannot be shut.

The ears of a psychoanalyst exist in a state of perpetual awareness, unburdened by constant concentration. This state, invented in 1912 by Freud, comprises a dispersed, diffused, evenly suspended awareness of everything that can be heard. Freud strives to remove the conscious aspect from the process of listening in addition to having already removed the visual. The unconscious of one person should be listening to the

unconscious of the other as much as possible, excluding the conscious perception, which operates in terms of important/unimportant. Who decides? The speaker? No, the listener decides, and it is Freud's invention that presupposes that such differentiation should be avoided. Only one thing is important a priori: any one word out of everything that is being said might hold significance.

Let us note that Freud turns a blind eye to what is later going to be called the society of the spectacle, to that which is going to become a pageant of proportions that would leave even the Baroque period envious; he turns a blind eye to the world that will have submerged itself in the omnipresent screens. To keep our eyes closed today is a difficulty on par with being able to absent-mindedly listen to the other. In this regard, Freud would probably agree with Wittgenstein: «The ear receives; the eye looks. (It glances, it flashes, radiates, gleams). One can terrify with his eyes, not with one's ear or nose»[3]. Fearlessly and without the intention to scare, Freud listens to the voice of the other. He doesn't examine or attempt to observe; he perceives and embraces the speech of the other. He lends his subject a hospitable instrument — his ear. An ear — ὄργανον, meaning both an organ and an instrument, and even a machine.

Hence, in his search for a human subject, Freud gives preference to the acoustic space. Acoustics does not presuppose the concentration of sound in one place; on the contrary, it implies the propagation of sound, its movement, and its formation. The visual space mandates the existence of points on which the sight concentrates, whereas the ear is always dispersed, and it is in his theory of evenly suspended attention that Freud fully utilises the possibilities provided by the acoustic space.

The scattered nature of the acoustic space, with its propagating sounds, presupposes the theoretical possibility of being able to perceive everything within it. Of course there are not many extraneous noises in an analytical space; we cannot say that an analyst in his listening has his attention fully dispersed on everything around him, even though the theory of acoustic space is one of the «all-around». David Schwarz in his analysis of the history of music perception and the conditions for creating the listener experience, mentions this theory: «We hear 'all-around' and see in one direction only. The idea is theoretically appealing, it links representations of sound to the pre-symbolic realm of sonorous enclosure; it places visual signs clearly within the binary of the Imaginary Order»[4].

The Imaginary Order — or, more precisely, disorder, — in which the binary notions are constantly switching places is established on the mirror stage, in the initial doubling, but this disorder is always predetermined by the symbolic order. How that occurs exactly is a different question. If we take its predetermination into account, there will be no pre-symbolic field to speak of. There is no pre-discursive reality, especially where the representation of sound is concerned. The symbolic order, however, establishes itself precisely in the acoustic space, starting with the bath of language into which the subject is born. This begins with the remnants, words heard from the others, which gradually inscribe the matrix of a language. This is meant to become the House of Being (to use Heidegger's term).

2. Theodor Reik's Third Ear

In 1948, Theodor Reik, Freud's pupil who was not just a psychoanalyst but also a literary and musical expert, wrote a book titled «Listening with the Third Ear». Later in 1964, Jacques Lacan recommended this book to his auditors, although he mentioned his dislike for the title. He said, «as if two [ears] were not enough to be deaf with»[5]. Should the psychoanalyst be deaf? The answer is yes, at least to himself, his own voices. In order to listen to music, one is not required to have ears that are capable of hearing, with Beethoven being a prime example. His ears were not able to, but he was not deaf; he was clairaudient. His hearing was turned inward. Lacan, referencing Reik, acknowledges:

> «He [Reik] maintains that this third ear helps him to hear some voice or other that speaks to him in order to warn him of deception — he belongs to the good old days, the heroic days, when one was able to hear what was being said behind the deception of the patient»[6].

The third ear hears the other speech, that which is «expressed almost inaudibly, pianissimo, so to speak»[7]. While Reik borrows the term «third ear» from Nietzsche, he reinterprets it as a psychoanalytical ear, meant to hear not only tones, but overtones as well. Furthermore, it can be described as «artistic» and «stylistic». This is how Philippe Lacoue-Labarthe interprets Nietzsche's term: the third ear «discerns in writing, discourse, or a language a fundamental musicality — fundamental, above all, in that it makes sense»[8]. Nietzsche conveys the meaning that appears from the musicality

of his language: the third ear demands that the text, which it hears/reads, should have a rhythm, a sonority, a pace, and a violation of strict symmetry. Reik's third ear is sensitive and patient; it is able to capture the way he writes, able to capture each staccato and rubato.

This emphasis on the acoustic space, on the echo, is called catacoustics. Reik, being the echo-oriented catacoustic person, identifies himself as an auditory man. As Lacoue-Labarthe puts it, listening with Reik's third ear is «what one might call a listening by echo, or catacoustic interpretation»[9]. The echo duplicates, as if to signify that there is no self without the other, without someone who responds.

The third ear focuses on the silence, without which psychoanalysis can barely exist. For Reik, unlike Lacan, the silence is primordial. Lacan suggests that the noise brings about the existence of silence, whereas for Reik it is the silence that came first. In this way, Reik adds the magic of silence to the magic of words. The word and the silence are not opposed to each other, because the latter «vibrates with unspoken words»[10], while what has been said emphasises the silence. Who is an analyst? — A person who is not afraid of the silence, a proponent of John Cage, whether they know the composer or not. An analyst is a person who

> «listens to things other than what is being said; he hears that, which is not conveyed with words. He listens with the 'third ear', capable of hearing beyond the patient's speech, of capturing one's own internal voices which emerge from the depths of the unconscious»[11].

Pondering this concept of the third ear, Reik remembers Gustav Mahler, who once noted that the most important part of music is not included in the score. The same is true for psychoanalysis: «the most important is not what is being said, but that, which is concealed by the speech and revealed by the silence»[12]. One should pay attention to the silence of the other.

Reik's third ear is psychoanalytical by nature, bi-directional by design: firstly, «it is able to grasp what the others are not saying, but only feeling or thinking; and it can also be directed inward»[13]. The ear, however, does not turn inward to then voice what has been heard. It is focused on one's own internal voices, which should be muffled. Voices which, as Lacan puts it, a psychoanalyst should not be able to hear. The instrumental ear should not create an echo, and neither should the mental ear.

The third ear helps Reik navigate between the audible and the visible, in the interspace between the acoustic echo and the mirror image. It is especially noteworthy that Reik insisted that psychoanalysts should receive a conservatory education. The analytical ear is at the same time a musical ear and thus requires tuning. The other instance requires a different tuning as well, an example of which would be Pauline Oliveros' Deep Listening.

An instrument must be tuned, and it is tuned relative to the time period, to the history that surrounds it. The ears are not simply a physical organ. They are a historical instrument, and when Bernard Stiegler discusses the music of the 20th century, he suggests that it begins with a transformation of hearing that is indicative of the «deep transformation of the century's ears»[14] at the beginning of the 21st century. Hearing is not granted from birth. The new century requires a tuning of new ears, and one could conceivably write a history of musical hearing, that is to say, a «critical theory of hearing»[15].

The concept of the third ear has obvious parallels to the third eye. It is meant to hear what the biological ears are unable to hear. When discussing the meeting between Odysseus and Polyphemus, Adorno and Horkheimer postulate the vital twoness of both the eyes and the ears, as well as the necessity of their mutual overlaying:

> «the singleness of the eye suggests the nose and mouth, more primitive than the symmetry of eyes and ears, without which, and the combining of their dual perceptions, no identification, depth, or objectivity is possible»[16].

The third ear is meant to hear what cannot be heard, that which enters the psychoanalyst's ear unexpectedly. The third ear should not have any expectations. Anticipations and premonitions are the things that hinder the psychoanalytic understanding of the other. A priori knowledge allows one to listen but not to hear. A psychoanalyst listens with equal attention to everything that is being said, without putting any emphasis on anything in particular, without expecting to hear something specific. The ear-machine works autonomously and automatically. It isn't tuned to one specific thing. It does not follow any a priori principle, because if one follows his own expectations, he might be «in danger of never finding anything but what he already knows; and if he follows inclinations, he will certainly falsify what he may perceive»[17]. A psychoanalyst hears by scanning — by listening and paying no heed.

One's own expectations are a guiding illusion. By following them, you find what you have already known, which, of course, helps inflate your narcissism, but at the cost of barring any pathways to possible unknown findings. Scan-listening does not have an aim; it is teleological by nature. It does not tune to any particular frequency. Derrida follows in Freud's footsteps, saying «yes» to «who or what turns up, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any identification»[18]. Not listening, but hearing. Not trying to tune in, but instead trying to hear, as if listening absentmindedly. Instrumental ears are organs that facilitate both the passage-through and the passage-by.

Lacan, too, does not shy away from the topic of hearing, of how he is being heard, and of the psychoanalyst's hearing in general. In his «Discours de Tokyo», he firstly notes that the material he presents in his seminars quite often magically corresponds with what the psychoanalysts in the audience have heard from their patients mere days ago — word for word. He offers an ironic explanation for this coincidence:

> «It's highly likely that were it not for my seminar, they wouldn't have heard, quite literally, what the patient said. It has happened to all of us: there is a way of hearing and understanding that entails that we only ever hear and understand what we have grown used to»[19].

Hence, we usually hear what we have already heard instead of what is actually being said. The repetition and resonance are of principal importance here. If we hear something unusual, we, as Lacan proposes, censor it or, simply put, do not hear anything we are not accustomed to hearing. Lacan ends this passage of «Discours de Tokyo» by saying that desire alone is not enough. The patient's desire to say what he wants to say is not enough. And the analyst's desire to hear what he wants to hear is not enough. The latter of the two is also not appropriate:

> «Here we enter into what is important within my teaching: it wants to say something, but wanting isn't enough. One wants to say, but what one wants to say is generally missed. This is where the psychoanalyst's ear intervenes, insofar as it notices what the other really wanted to say. And what he wanted to say is, generally speaking, not what appears in the text»[20].

This is exactly the issue that the ear, which Reik labelled as the «third», is meant to solve. The third ear is meant to hear the unheard. The third ear is the ear of the echo.

3. The gap between what is heard and what is understood

The difficulty also lies in the fact that what is heard obtains its meaning retroactively. What is being said here and now is going to be made sense of and comprehended only in the future. We should not forget that «the things one hears are for the most part things whose meaning is only recognized later on»[21].

A psychoanalyst listens but does not employ consciousness as a means of differentiation and distinction, selection and hierarchization; he listens — but he is not «all ears». If the meaning of what is being heard now is going to become apparent only after the fact, why pick, decide, and construct right now? But how does one not pay any significance to what he is hearing in the moment? And is it even possible to discuss what is being heard as something that is heard *in the moment*? Ultimately, the rule, which the psychoanalyst abides by, is phrased as such:

> «He should withhold all conscious influences from his capacity to attend, and give himself over completely to his 'unconscious memory'. Or, to put it purely in terms of technique: he should simply listen and not bother about whether he is keeping anything in mind»[22].

In order to hear the other, you should at least attempt to stop listening to yourself. It is necessary to suspend all conscious choice, all conscious hierarchisation. Another paradox: in order to hear the Other, you should surrender to your own unconscious memory. In order to hear the Other, you should transport yourself onto the Other stage, where the question of noticing anything is irrelevant. The Other stands on the Other stage.

The Other cannot be reduced to the same. The clinical picture of «I have had a patient like this» or «I have heard people like this many times before» has to be put aside. A patient who is «like this» does not exist. Positivist categorical typology must remain outside of psychoanalytical practice. So should the objectifying discourse. Any teaching aids on «psychoanalytical diagnosis» that recommend approaches to «such and such clients» are not suitable for one to analyse the Other, who is perpetually the

Other. Psychoanalysis deals with singularity and, much like a psychoanalyst would, Derrida insists that «hospitality [is] invented for the singularity of the new arrival»[23]. The experience of professional knowledge allows one to let that, which arrives, pass by. And this is a different kind of skipping over, or omission — the bypassing of the other.

The ear in psychoanalysis becomes a tool used to withdraw from within oneself and care for the other. The ear is an organ used to address other at the beginning of interpretation. The labyrinths of the ear are the space of care, of departure towards the non-subjugative non-satisfaction of the inquiry. The ear is used to transport oneself onto the Other stage. And this stage appears in the aftereffect, in the postponing, in time itself, especially when an audial subject is concerned instead of the visual: «While the subject of the target is always already given, posed in itself to its point of view, the subject of listening is always still yet to come, spaced, traversed and called by itself, sounded by itself…»[24].

The focusing of the ears on that which has not yet come opens up the space of resonating transference and unfolds an acousmatic transspace, which is not bound by the fixating gaze. One cannot help but remember the story of Pythagoras' students, the acousmatics. According to Diogenes Laertius, these students had spent five years in silence, listening to Pythagoras without seeing him. Their teacher remained behind a curtain. It was only after five years of intensive transference that they were finally able to behold him.

4. Listening to Oneself: The Echo of an Acoustic Mirror

Just as the acousmatics were learning to listen, Freud and Reik were doing the same. Listening to the other more so than to oneself, as listening always implies listening to oneself. The resonance of the acoustic mirror cannot be eliminated completely. No plugs can help this.

Listening and hearing are not the same thing. As Paul Hegarty writes, «Hearing is the simple perception of sound, listening is the reflective conscious hearing»[25]. The «conscious» is exactly the part of this definition that the third ear attempts to remove, whereas reflexive hearing alludes to the acoustic mirror.

Two ears, as well as two eyes, by their duality indicate an echo or a reflection (both meanings are applicable here). The mouth at the same time remains singular. It speaks, and the ears hear. To speak is to hear oneself.

The acoustic mirror is already there by design. But another consideration has to be put forward. The acoustic mirror does not have an external reflexive foothold, because of which, in this mirror, «one could see there the kernel of consciousness prior to any reflection»[26].

This mirror was mentioned as early as the 17th century by Athanasius Kircher. In Book V of his «Experimental Physiology», which is titled «On Philosophy of Sound», he writes about the acoustic mirror and the elliptic acoustic mirror. He begins with this: «There exists a parabolic mirror, which is able to reflect sound, as an ordinary mirror is able to reflect light»[27].

In 1974 Didier Anzieu starts developing a number of concepts — sonorous bath, sonorous envelope, sonorous mirror, and sonorous cavern. The sonorous font or envelope combines sounds: one's own and those of the other, with the former being internal and the latter belonging to one's mother and the outside world. This is the beginning of the separation between the internal and the external. The mother in this instance provides the child with a sonorous mirror, which echoes all sounds that the child produces. Didier Anzieu also refers to this sonorous mirror as the audio-phonic skin, the surface between the internal and the external. And yet another name for the same concept — a bath of melody, i.e., her voice, her ritournelles, her lullabies.

The sonorous mirror precedes the visual, as the auditory space precedes the observable. Anzieu's visual space can be imagined in the form of a sonorous cavern, which is constituted by the entirety of one's body. During the first year of life, the infant is busy with differential ordering of bodily sounds, a discernment that is going to become the defining factor in the formation of his psychic apparatus. The sonorous space…

> «is the earliest physical space: noises from outside which cause pain when they are loud or sudden, gurgles from inside the body that are disturbing because it is not clear where they are coming from, cries that arise automatically at birth and are later associated with hunger, anger or momentary loss of the object, but which are accompanied by an active motor image — all these noises make up something like what Xenakis must have meant to represent by the musical variations and light-show or laser-beams in his *polytope*»[28].

The sonorous mirror is at the same time tactile. The sound can touch and affect. «To communicate is, above all, to resonate or vibrate in harmony

with the other»[29]. An infant tunes to the sound of its mother's voice; their voices must be able to find each other, pass through each other, and suit each other. One must be in tune with the other. Perhaps this is the harmony that Anzieu is talking about.

As the acoustic field of the mother's voice is incorporated, the child, as Kaja Silverman puts it, «could be said to hear itself initially through that voice—to first "recognise" itself in the vocal "mirror" supplied by the mother»[30]. The so-called «own voice» is based on the patterns of the introjected mother's voice. When the phase of the acoustic mirror begins, the sensation of swimming in mother's voice changes; now this mirror sounds like a mother's Echo: «the child imitates the sounds it hears and has the illusion of *producing* those sounds»[31]. Similarly to the optical stage of the mirror, we are dealing with un-recognition, with an acoustic *méconnaissance* of one's own voice and the voice of the other. The paradox, however, lies in the fact that at the same time, we are dealing with the recognition of oneself within the voice of the other.

Didier Anzieu is now and again reminded of the harmony possessed by the acoustic mirror of the mother-and-child, and Guy Rosolato even refers to the auditory womb as a sonorous abode, which subsequently determines all musical experiences. Building on Rosalto's ideas, David Schwarz approaches the sonorous envelope as a fantasy concept and a fantasy space. The space of fantasy that is built on sound.

Just as the mother's voice surrounds, envelops, and swaddles the child, it simultaneously captures and lures it into a trap. The acoustic mirror, similar to its visual counterpart, presupposes a wandering between voices. Moreover, the two mirrors are connected; one is seemingly superimposed on top of the other, but there is no intersection between them. This is exactly what the myth about the impossibility of love between Narcissus and Echo illustrates. It marks the «precedence of the sound mirror over the visual mirror, as well as the primarily feminine character of the voice and the link between the utterance of sounds and the demand for love»[32].

The acoustic mirror is still a mirror and cannot escape the perpetual (even if metaphorical) referencing of the visual field. The same can be said about the phantasm. When this concept is mentioned, we usually imagine some form of a visual scene, but it is assembled through sounds. The transition between the eye and the ear is at the same time the transition between the mirror image and the resonating echo.

According to Jean-Luc Nancy, the phenomenon of echo is already incorporated in music: it's not only the subject who is listening to it; the music listens to itself; it is reflexive by nature, orientated towards its own self in a sound recursion. When writing on this topic, Nancy emphasises that «the introduction of rhythm already diverts the progression towards repeating the rhythm»[33]. Repetition belongs to the field of drive, if not *always already* belonging to the deathdrive. Repetition is the fact that music listens to itself, «because all of its movement is prone to this — its own repetition»[34].

When I speak, my ears — my instruments — hear me. I hear myself. The ear resonates in the name of Echo. Do I hear myself or the other? Or myself *as* the other? A paradox: we speak with a different voice. Our voice is not the same as the one we hear, and it is assembled based on many other voices; our voice is not our own. The voice of a subject is a constellation of multitudes of incorporated voices: «incorporating the voice of the Other is essential if one is to learn to speak; for the acquisition of language depends not simply on emulating the signifiers, but crucially consists in incorporating the voice»[35]. The voice enters the body. The voice is made flesh.

When we speak, we hear ourselves. We hear ourselves from the outside and from within; the external is intertwined with the internal. This hearing is an act of labour, εργον. Michel Chion calls the process of hearing oneself ergo-audition. Hearing is labour. There can be no passive ear. The ear is performing work that turns a person into a listener.

The person is simultaneously the sender of a message and the recipient. The ear of an analyst displays Lacan's dis-communicative principle: *each receives their own message from the other in an inverted form*. Between the sender and the recipient is a code and the desire that is embedded within it. Desire returns the message that the sender wants to receive back, but in an inverted form. This is where the idea that everyone hears what they want to hear comes from.

5. The Ear as an Organ of Articulation

The ear is an articulatory organ. Hearing is the process of assembling oneself in terms of the speech that is directed at us. Hearing is assembled depending on the message, and the assembly of what has been heard then structures the order of the discourse. At the same time, hearing is not reducible to psychophysiology. Hearing does not require an organic ear.

Heidegger repeated time and time again that hearing should be understood from the point of view of listening or lending an ear. He argued that we do not hear because we have ears — instead, we have ears because we are able to hear. During his XVII seminar, Lacan follows in Heidegger's footsteps: «It is said that the function creates the organ. On the contrary, one makes use of the organ as best one can»[36]. There are no two identical ears. There can be no two identical instruments.

The ear is an articulatory organ. If we are able to hear, we are able to differentiate. What do we hear with? Both Plato, in his dialogue «Timaeus», and Pythagoras before him stress that it is the ear that hears, but the mind that differentiates. The ear cannot function as an instrument without the mind that makes distinctions. The instrument is created by the ear-mind assemblage, which provides reasoning to discuss the historicity of not only music but also of perception and of hearing.

During the period of the Enlightenment, the perception of music started to be regarded as an intellectual activity. The listener must assume the responsibility for their perception, absorption, and understanding of music. It was precisely during the period of the Enlightenment that the phrase «musical understanding» became widespread. "Understandable music" and "incomprehensible music" are both historical terms. Schoenberg talks about a specific kind of musical understanding:

> «There are relatively few people who are capable of understanding, purely in terms of music, what music has to say. The assumption that a piece of music must summon up images of one sort or another, and that if these are absent the piece of music has not been understood or is worthless, is as widespread as only the false and banal can be»[37].

Schoenberg insists on the existence of a purely musical understanding that moves away from the Enlightenment standpoint. It moves away from the semiotic register that assumes an interconnectedness between the word and thing presentations. A pure musical understanding is not guided by the structure of a sign.

6. An Organ of Obedience — An Instrument of Subjugation

Organology regards the ear as an instrument of obedience, an agent of command, and even, to quote Nietzsche, «an organ of fear». The ears are a terrible double that subjugates the subject to the Other. It is specifically the ear that is the instrument of subjectification, the imposition of a submission-obedience modality. The ear is an agent of the internal or, to be more precise, the externally-internal voice of the *super-ego*.

The ear as an intermediary, as a midwife of discourse, is responsible for the formation of an ideology's loyal subject. When analysing Nietzsche's attitude towards the state apparatus of permeating into subjects, Derrida adjusts his cap of hearing:

> «The hypocritical hound whispers in your ear through his educational systems, which are actually acoustic or acroamatic devices. Your ears grow larger and you turn into long-eared asses when, instead of listening with small, finely tuned ears and obeying the best master and the best leaders, you think you are free and autonomous with respect to the State. You open wide the portals [*pavillons*] of your ears to admit the State, not knowing that it has already come under the control of reactive and degenerate forces. Having become all ears for this phonograph dog, you transform yourself into a high-fidelity receiver…»[38].

Lacan, seemingly following up on this idea, writes on the tendency to follow authority: «unfortunately, he was a professor, and you were too happy to turn against his teachings the ass's ears that you were made to wear at school and which have since served as ear-trumpets for those of you who are a little hard of hearing»[39].

The formation of a subject is unimaginable without the ear-hearing. The subject always already belongs to someone or something. In this regard, it is not surprising that Derrida, when reading Nietzsche, questions the education system and the university discourse, noting the formal similarities between the ear and the umbilical cord. The ear is the place of symbolic birth. It shifts to a place that Freud labelled as the «umbilical cord of dreams». The ear is the place of the submission to the Other, the place where the unbreakable bonds with Him are established. All this, regrettably, can take terrible shape, especially when the ear becomes part of a fascist machine of total annihilation.

Primo Levi remembers fascists' favourite marching songs that he has heard in a concentration camp. These songs are forever etched into the mind, so much so that one might be able to forget the camp but not

the melodies. The horror is that music is the only art form available in a concentration camp. Such melodies are

> «the voice of the Lager, the perceptible expression of its geometrical madness, of the resolution of others to annihilate us first as men in order to kill us more slowly afterwards. When this music plays we know that our comrades, out in the fog, are marching like automatons; their souls are dead and the music drives them, like the wind drives dead leaves, and takes the place of their wills. There is no longer any will: every beat of the drum becomes a step, a reflected contraction of exhausted muscles. The Germans have succeeded in this. They are ten thousand and they are a single grey machine»[40].

7. Lacan's Ear: The Resonating Void

Lacan could not ignore the ear. Firstly, because the openings between the external and the internal are especially important for psychoanalysis and, secondly, because the ear is an instrument-object of the invocatory drive. The body has openings that prevent it from being able to lock on itself, from being able to withdraw from the outside world and, most importantly, as Lacan points out in his XXIII seminar, is the ear because of which «the body responds with that, which I have called voice»[41]. The ear is such an unusual organ in organology that it makes Lacan intently stare at its form, attempt to surpass his own psychoanalytical boundaries, and say that physiology is the point of origin in understanding the apparatus of hearing:

> «in the form, the organic form, there is something which appears to us akin to these primary, topological, transpatial data which made us interest ourselves very especially in the most elementary form of the created or creative constitution of a void, the one that we have incarnated in the form of an apologetic for you in the story of the pot. A pot also is a tube, and one that can resonate»[42].

Trans-space of the ear canal labyrinths constitutes the void. Lacan is true to himself; he insists on creation around the void and out of the void. The void is important for Lacan not just because of its aesthetic qualities, but as the void of the Other, the symbolic, the home of human existence. What lies on the other side of the void of the Other? It is the void of reality, which cannot be heard.

During the first meeting for the XVI seminar, Lacan asks for permission to talk about music. He then proceeds to talk about pots, graves, burial grounds, and spaces that possess «sonorous capabilities». The sound resonates in the void. The void is the inception place of sounds; it also creates the symbolic space *ex nihilo*.

To Lacan's ear, the hearing apparatus does not remind him of musical instruments. Although comparing the ear to musical instruments already presupposes that the ear, in fact, is a musical instrument. Nonetheless, Lacan says that the hearing apparatus is not at all resemblant of musical instruments, but then adds:

> «it is a tube which could be, as I might say, a tube with keys, in this sense that it seems that it is the cell put in the position of a cord, but which does not function like a cord, which is involved at the point of the return of the wave, which takes charge of connoting the resonance involved»[43].

Lacan says that the ear is not resemblant of any musical instrument but describes a musical instrument nevertheless. A wind and string instrument: the «tube with keys» is a resonator chamber that is «put in the position of a cord». But looks can be deceiving. This is Lacan's formula: the form is deceiving, far-fetched. This form is not meant to produce sounds but to capture the return of the wave, to «connote the resonance involved». Thus, the ear is a resonating device.

8. The Ear as an Instrument of Drive

The ear is an erogenous zone. There exists the organ, and there exists the drive, which Lacan calls invocatory. The voice is a partial object that fondles the ear as it passes along its edge. The drive is recurrent. The voice caresses the ear and then returns to its source. During his VIII seminar, Lacan draws a distinction between two mirrors — between the two recurrent forms of a subject's behaviour towards oneself: to see oneself and to hear oneself.

> «It has been long remarked that it is proper to phonation to resonate immediately in the subject's own ear according to as it is emitted, but this does not mean that the other to whom this word is addressed, has the same place or the same structure as that of visual unveiling, precisely because the word, for its part, does not give rise to sight because it is, itself, blindness»[44].

Therefore, no symmetrical communication. Each party engaged in this «communication» turns in on itself. Moreover, there is no synchronisation between the word and the image, the speech and the representation; the thunder and the lightning. The word blinds. Lacan continues to spread apart the two perceptive apparatuses of the visual and the audial. We see that we are being seen, but cannot hear that we are being heard. The hearing loop, unlike the visual, breaks off. In other words:

> «one does not hear oneself where one is heard, namely in one's head, or more exactly those who are in this situation — there are in effect those who hear themselves being heard and these are the mad, the hallucinators, it is the structure of verbal hallucination — could not hear themselves being heard except at the place of the Other: there where one hears the Other sending back your own message in its inverted form»[45].

The voice enters the ear, affirming the self-existence of the subject. The ear hears one's own voice. Here lies the metaphysics of presence: I am here, present before myself, hearing myself. I hear, therefore I exist.

Voices and sounds have long become the object of technology, of registration, of mechanical reproduction. Ears in headphones. Technology appropriates the ears. Technology enters the ears. Voices, words, and sounds are played directly into the skull. Everything occurs as if…

> «there were no distance between the recorded voice and listening ears, as if voices travelled along the transmitting bodies of acoustic self-perception directly from the mouth into the ear's labyrinth, hallucinations become real»[46].

9. The Perceiving Transmitter

Is the ear passive or active?

From the dawn of time, there have existed two theories of perception. One is based on the thought that the ear and the eye passively perceive the sound and light emitted by external sources. The other claims that the analysers are active, that the eye operates as a projector, and the ear as a radar that sends outgoing signals.

Democritus thought that the secret to this conundrum lies in perception: the image of lightning is seen before the crash of thunder because sight travels towards the flash, whereas hearing remains passive. Sounds enter the hearing apparatus and spread within it, as if it were similar to a vase. Contrary to Democritus, Lucretius supposes in his poem «On the Nature of Things» that this difference lies not in perception but in the speed at which the visible and the audible spread:

> «things always move more slowly to the ears than things which stir the eyes. That you may learn from this too; if you see someone far off cutting down a giant tree with a double-edged axe, it comes to pass that you see the stroke before the blow resounds in your ear; even so we see the lightning too before we hear the thunder…»[47].

These two theories — of active and passive perception — were united in the 5th century B.C. by Empedocles. The object of sight is located between the eye and the source of light, while the object of hearing is between the ear and the source of the sound. Everything seems to point to the fact that our perception of the world is as internal as it is external, as intimate as it is, to use Lacan's word, extimate.

10. The Labyrinths of Kirkegaard's Ear

The ear is an active organ-instrument. It produces sound. This is exactly what revolutionary composer Arseny Avraamov described in 1916:

> «Even more complex are the formulas for the vibrations of the membrana basilaris of the cochlea, the organ of hearing that perceives music. <…> How many others know that the physiological structure of our ear requires careful handling of fourth octave

tones, which are excessively amplified by the resonance of the organ of hearing itself!»[48]

Lacan reminds us that the hearing apparatus «does not resonate to just anything; it only resonates <…> to its own note, to its own frequency». Hearing is tuned to its own frequency. It has its own reason. The sounds resonate; the sounding resonates. Resonance lies in «the sound itself: sound itself is an echo chamber»[50].

In 2007, Dutch musician, composer, and sound artist Jacob Kirkegaard was commissioned by Medical Museion in Copenhagen to «write» a piece, which was subsequently titled «Labyrinthitis». The Labyrinth, in this instance, is the internal ear. The piece was based on a known phenomenon in which the meeting of two frequencies produces additional vibrations in the internal ear, thus creating a third frequency. This third frequency belongs to the ear. This phenomenon, the distorted product of an otoacoustic emission, is known as a combination tone or a Tartini tone. This tone is the base upon which Kirkegaard's «Labyrinthitis» is built.

The «Labyrinthitis» begins with a «subjective» sounding of the musician's ears. These sounds are put through electronic equipment, allowing the audience to then «objectively» hear them by «reacting» with the production of their own third tones. At first, each new tone is perceived by each listener «intersubjectively», after which these sounds are «objectively» returned into the composition. Gradually, there emerges a pattern of a downward sound structure, the spiral form of which mirrors the resonance within the cochlea of the internal ear. The sound recreates the form. «Labyrinthitis» is quite literally an intersubjective echo-piece, which takes shape between the ear sounds of the composer and the ear sounds of the audience.

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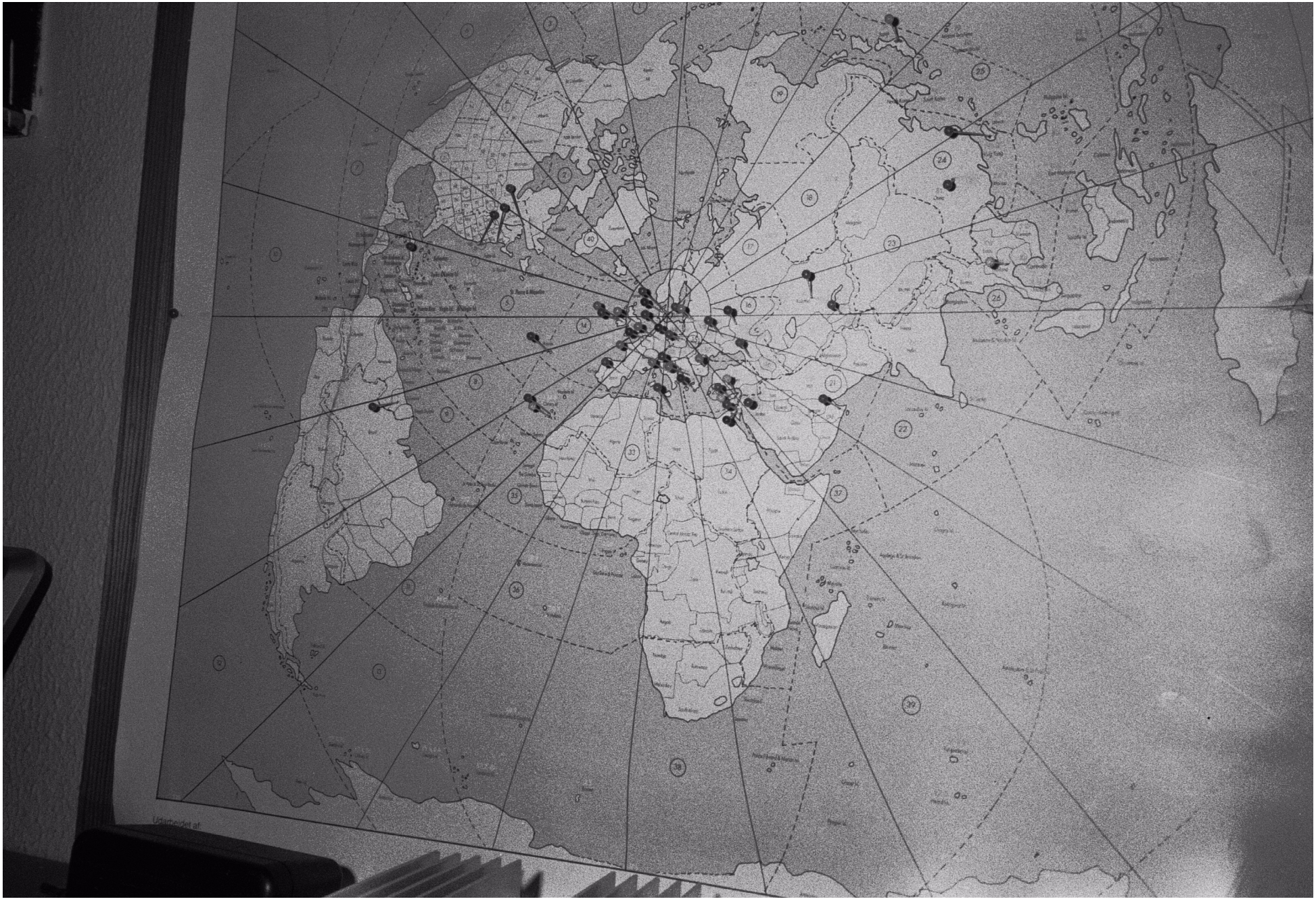

SONIC AND SOCIAL FERMENTATION

Ariel William Orah

Ariel William Orah is a Berlin-based Indonesian artist, community catalyst, and cultural practitioner. He was born in Bandung, Indonesia, and has been living and working in Berlin, Germany, for the past 13 years. His main practices focus on diasporic socially engaged art creation. His research interests include social and climate injustice, as well as the trilogy of identity, memory, and scarcity. Informed by his academic background in economics, sustainability and empathy design, Orah's interdisciplinary approach critically engages with systemic structures while addressing the emotional and cultural dimensions of displacement and identity.

The Alchemy of Sound and Intersectionalities

Sound begins as a seed — a vibration in the air, a hum of possibility. Like the raw ingredients of fermentation, it holds the potential to transform, connect, and nourish. It resonates beyond its immediate presence, unfolding in layers as it intersects with people, places, and histories. This alchemical process is at the heart of projects like *Soy and Synth*, *Jendela Sonorama*, and *TAHANGUENTAR*, where sound serves not only as an art form but as a medium for exploring empathy, identity, and shared experiences.

My contribution to this almanac is an excerpt from my upcoming publication, structured as a cookbook, where I reflect on my artistic practice through several key projects — particularly the three mentioned above. Each project metaphorically aligns with a recipe I have developed over the years, especially those connected to *Soydivision*, the platform and artist collective I founded in 2016.

The Sonic Mutation Journey: From Soy & Synth to TAHANGUENTAR

Soy and Synth began in 2018 as a sonic and social experiment, centering on improvisation as an act of negotiating empathy.

Each edition paired sound artists — most of whom had never met before — on stage, challenging them to communicate and co-create through sound. With each performance, I also prepared a dish dedicated to the event. The process mirrored the way ingredients interact in a recipe, yielding unpredictable yet deeply resonant results. Over time, *Soy and Synth* evolved into an organic social gathering, expanding social capital and fostering friendships and collaborations.

During the project's 24th edition on May 30, 2020, we invited Pedro Oliveira to perform. This encounter sparked the inception of another project — *Jendela Sonorama*.

Emerging from a shared desire to position sound as a research interface, *Jendela Sonorama* investigated historical phenomena in both Indonesia and Brazil. Envisioned as a South-to-South sonic dialogue, the project sought to uncover hidden knowledge from shared experiences of colonialism and diaspora. Just as fermentation requires time and the right conditions to evolve, *Jendela Sonorama* developed into a platform where sound artists explored these intersections.

Over time, the project further mutated into *TAHANGUENTAR*, a theatrical and cinematic intervention. As its project statement describes:

> "*TAHANGUENTAR* takes sonic performativity into a cinematic realm, experimenting with narratives rooted in oral traditions, historical trauma, and speculative future mythologies."

The Fermentation Analogy: From Soybeans to Tempeh Bacem

This transformation — from *Soy and Synth* to *Jendela Sonorama*, and ultimately to *TAHANGUENTAR* — mirrors the process of turning soybeans into tempeh, and then into tempeh bacem.

Fermenting soybeans with *Rhizopus* mould allows them to break down and merge into a new, complex form. Similarly, sound begins as improvisation (*Soy and Synth*), develops into a structured yet evolving research framework (*Jendela Sonorama*), and eventually matures into a fully realised artistic intervention (*TAHANGUENTAR*).

Just as fermentation amplifies flavours, enriching and deepening tempeh's character, the intersection of sound and social engagement enhances the impact of these artistic projects. To complete this metaphor, I offer a recipe for *tempeh bacem* — a traditional variation of tempeh. This dish, slow-cooked in spices and coconut water, embodies the principles of careful cultivation and transformation, much like the journey of sound in my work.

RECIPE: TEMPEH BACEM

INGREDIENTS:

— 200g tempeh, cut into thick slices
— 2 tbsp coconut sugar
— 1 tsp tamarind paste
— 2 bay leaves
— 3 cloves garlic, minced
— 2 shallots, minced
— 1 tsp coriander powder
— ½ tsp salt
— 200ml coconut water
— Oil for frying

INSTRUCTIONS:

— In a pan, combine tempeh slices, coconut sugar, tamarind paste, bay leaves, garlic, shallots, coriander powder, salt, and coconut water.
— Bring to a gentle boil and simmer until the liquid is absorbed.
— Once the tempeh has absorbed the flavours, remove from heat and let it cool slightly.
— Heat oil in a pan and fry the tempeh until golden brown on both sides.
— Serve warm, savoring the layers of flavour

Sound as a Catalyst Bacteria in Social Fermentation

Sound, much like the bacterial cultures in fermentation, is an unseen yet powerful catalyst for transformation. Just as *Rhizopus* mould interacts with soybeans — breaking them down and fostering their transformation into tempeh — sound interacts with social and cultural mediums, shifting perceptions, generating dialogue, and creating new forms of expression. This process is both unpredictable and essential—it fosters growth, deepens connections, and turns raw sonic elements into meaningful compositions that resonate far beyond their origin.

Through its intersections — of art and activism, culture and memory — sound reveals its alchemical ability to bridge divides, foster dialogue, and inspire collective action. The bacteria in fermentation create a living, dynamic ecosystem, much like how sound in social settings generates evolving networks of understanding and collaboration.

This fermentation is not just a metaphor, it is an active process that shapes how we experience sound, art, and each other.

This is the essence of *Sonic and Social Fermentation: The Alchemy of Sound and Intersectionalities* — a suggestion, an invitation, a speculation that sound (much like fermentation) undergoes a dynamic transformation.

COMMUNAL LISTENING

Joshua Le Gallienne

Joshua Le Gallienne is a non-binary British artist whose work explores the material and energetic qualities of sound. Through sculpture, installation, and performance, the artist stages intimate experiences that focus on the relationships between sound, physical materials, and environmental phenomena. Le Gallienne's work attempts to challenge expectations of what sound is and how it is experienced, as well as examine the methods and politics of its production. Their work is unmediated and mostly undocumented in order to place emphasis on experiencing sound in the present moment. In line with this, the artist has no website or online presence.

There are as many ways of listening as there are listeners. When we talk about listening, we often focus on content. We discuss the sounds themselves and their symbolism. However, it is equally important to consider the contextual elements of listening. Who exactly is doing the listening and under what circumstances? My interest in sound has always centered around its experiential qualities, rather than its representation. The more one listens, the more one understands about listening. There are some aspects of listening that can only be grasped by *doing* it for yourself. Before we discuss these aspects of listening, we must first establish some basic terms. Some appropriate questions to start with might be: What do we mean by 'listening', and how is listening distinct from hearing? To keep things simple, let's adhere to the distinction made by Roland Barthes whereby hearing is defined as a "physiological phenomenon" and listening as a "psychological act."[1] To hear is to detect through the sensorial organs of the body, it is our ability to perceive sound and vibrations. Listening requires us to go beyond perception, placing our attention on these sensations and actively engaging with phenomena. Although hearing is not passive, listening requires a commitment to action. It is the conscious act of placing one's attention on sound and vibration. Listening always combines the physical with the contextual, the sensual with the cerebral. Our interactions with sound are "neither purely sensible nor solely signifying"[2] as described by François J. Bonnet. This text does not propose a new model of listening, nor is it a technical guide on how to practise listening. My intention here is to reflect upon the nature of listening. It is informed from research and fieldwork conducted in ecotone environments over the last few years. Reading about listening can only take us so far. That being said, I hope that curious listeners will find something of interest in what is written here. I encourage you to engage with the sounds of your environment as you read on.

It is essential to acknowledge the physical presence of one's body. Take a moment to reflect upon the fact that your body has been present for every listening experience you have ever had. Consider your body with its unique physiology and myriad of functions. Study the distinctive shape and form of your facial features and sensing apparatuses. Observe the rhythmic susurrations of the breath with its characteristic nasal resonances. Listen to the whirring neural activity, full of thoughts, desires, memories, and to-do lists. No matter where you are listening, your body – unique in its aliveness with all of its beautifully-idiosyncratic complexity – will always be present,

and will always be sounding. The emerging field of 'auraldiversity'[3] argues against the idea of a normative or idealised listener and instead acknowledges the implicit differences in how we each listen. We are all situated on a spectrum of listening abilities and sensitivities. It is worth reiterating that listening is a bodily experience and is not exclusive to the ear.

Anyone who has experienced an anechoic chamber[4] or spent time in a very quiet space can attest to the reality that one's body is never silent. An uneasiness can arise when our listening is turned inwards, confronted with the sounds of our own physicality. Whether we notice the heaviness of our breath or our heart thumping in our chest – or perhaps less welcome emissions such as persistent tinnitus, a gurgling digestive tract, or the imaginary *phonomnetic* sounds generated by our minds – all of these exist regardless of observation. Our bodies are alive with sound and vibration whether we pay attention or not. Each time we listen, our noisy bodies are present in our sonic field. Bodily noises are rarely considered within the contents of listening despite them colouring our every experience. In many recording situations, such sounds are actively avoided. Is it not curious that most environmental field recordings do not contain audible evidence of human presence? Where are the breaths or the footsteps of the field recordist? Mark Peter Wright describes this act of self-silencing as the *Noisy-Nonself*, attributing its existence to the "colonial roots of anthropology."[5] But despite their best efforts, the recordist *is* always present on the recording, regardless of whether or not the body is audible. The sonic traces of the body may have been purposefully culled in the edit but one could argue that their phonographic 'silence' is perceivable. If we cannot hear the actions or movements of the recordist, what can we conclude from this? A lack of footsteps may indicate that the recordist is sitting in silence trying to remain perfectly still. Perhaps the recordist has placed their microphones at a great distance to attain greater bodily autonomy and freedom over their emissions. Physically, the recordist may be completely absent. They may have conducted the recording remotely or through mechanical automation. However, the recordist's breathing was still present *somewhere* during the time of recording. They contributed to their surrounding airflow, though perhaps not within the proximity of the microphone. Mediated silence can reveal a lot about the recordist, their environment, the recording context, the equipment used, and all entities and phenomena present at the time of recording. To be physically present and inaudible might imply that one's silence was accepted as part of a social contract or prior agreement. In contrast, it may indicate that the recording took place without the awareness or consent of all parties present. It could also suggest that the recording equipment was concealed or independent from the body of the recordist. In many spaces, entering with visible recording gear on one's person is simply not possible without being engaged in conversation about one's intentions or having one's presence challenged. For some, there are public spaces impossible to enter without meeting resistance. Listening is difficult in environments where there are no guarantees for one's safety, where one struggles to peacefully exist. On record, the privilege and agency of the recordist are always distinctly audible. Wherever we listen, the same is true.

Our bodies bring sounds to every environment we inhabit. A living body is an audible body. Wherever we are, we contribute to our surroundings whether we intend to or not – sonically and in every other conceivable way. It is not possible to listen without simultaneously producing sound. If the body is present, it is sonorous. Sitting in silence will not grant the listener passivity nor invisibility. We cannot conceal the exchange of gases used in respiration, diminish the electro-magnetic field generated by the heart, or hide the scents and oils produced by our microbial skin flora. Nor should we want to. There are many autonomous bodily functions that we do not have agency over. The subtle effects produced by the workings of the body will be noticed by others even if we cannot perceive them ourselves. Our presence impacts the environment, phenomena, and other entities in ways we may never consider or understand. Staying silent will not deter mosquitoes from detecting the carbon dioxide leaving your body through your breath and to a lesser degree through the pores of the skin. It can be interesting to contemplate the distinctions we draw between what we consider to be '*us*' and what is considered '*the environment*'. We are entangled. Despite one's best intentions to be silent, the body will always betray you.

Every breath is an environmental contribution. Every step taken produces an effect. We do not have the ability to listen from outside the perspective of our body. Mediated sound and field recordings often give us the impression that we are listening from the perspective of another, but this is never wholly the case. Whatever acoustic environment an audio recording depicts, the body of the listener remains situated wherever it is, in a different time, space, and context. Mediated sounds are always experienced *in addition* to the sounds of our current environment. Headphone listening may offer us impressions that we are situated deep within a remote rainforest or sitting in front of an intimate musical sound stage – but

this immersion is fragile. It will likely be broken by the sirens of a passing ambulance or a neighbour's blaring television, at which point the drapery falls and our true perspective of audition is brought back into focus. Sometimes all it takes is a single breath to alert us to the discrepancies between the acoustics of the mediated environment and that of our current location. Third-party sounds can only ever be experienced first-hand. To have one's immersion interrupted is a common occurrence. One can experience them at any concert hall or theatre performance. No matter the fidelity of the sound system or the extent of acoustic treatment, we will always be reminded of our true listening perspective when a fellow audience member suddenly bursts into a fit of coughing, or when a mobile phone rings or vibrates in our proximity. We gain awareness during the nervous rustling of programme notes and the piercing shriek of an accidentally-moved item of furniture… This is of course what is to be expected when listening with others. During truly communal listening experiences, everyone present bears responsibility for the sounds produced. Audience etiquette varies wildly across culture and context but whenever we gather to listen collectively, we enter into an agreement with our peers. We accept the potential emissions of all present. Everyone present is there to experience the modulation of a huge body of air in very specific, highly technical ways. At a large event, when one shares a space with hundreds or thousands of people, it is easy to forget you are coexisting with many other living, breathing, sensorial, and sonorous physical entities. Collective listening requires the cooperation of all present (and many that are not).

There are many ways in which we can inform and adapt our listening practices but we can never truly embody the lived experience or the position of another. We can conduct thought experiments and practice empathy but these activities will only ever exist on a conceptual or cerebral level, not an experiential one. Listening with others can be a humbling experience. Open discussions allow us to confront aspects of our listening that we might take for granted. No two people will ever perceive a sound the same way. The notion of a neutral observer or a passive listener is a myth. There is no way to listen that is not filtered through our life experience or current state of being. Learning how others listen can add nuance to our internal biases, raising doubts regarding factors that we had assumed to be universal qualities of listening. "Privilege is invisible to those who have it"[6] as sociologist Michael Kimmel once stated. Some conversations and experiences will change the way you listen forever. Each of us may share a similar physiology, but the variance of our life experiences hugely impacts how we listen and what we hear. Xwélmexw scholar Dylan Robinson calls this our "critical listening positionality"[7] where each of us carry "listening privilege, listening biases, and listening abilities that are never wholly positive or negative."[8] It is important to be curious about how others perceive and experience the world as it can help us better understand our own position and what we bring to every listening experience. However, we can never truly *know* what it is like to experience consciousness as another being, nor can we know how another listens. It is not possible to experience the world through the ears or the body of another. In his famous 1974 paper *What is it Like to be a Bat?* philosopher Thomas Nagel describes this condition as the "subjective character of experience."[9] Whilst it is possible to comprehend the details of how another perceives, we can never authentically embody this information on an experiential level. It is important to consider what listening is to another entity, to nurture empathy for another's listening capabilities and earnestly try to understand the diversity of listening positions and habits. For example, through research and observation we may gain a greater understanding of how bats navigate their environments using infrasound. With specialist equipment we can detect and reproduce their ultrasonic calls, transposing them into the audible human range. We can attempt to listen *like* a bat, but we can never listen *as* a bat.[10] We cannot listen as another does – human, animal, bacteria, machine, or otherwise. We could describe this human-specific quality of listening as '*perceptually anthropocentric*'[11], a term proposed by environmental theorist Ben Mylius. Mylius uses this term to define the specific experiential qualities of humans, whilst also differentiating from other forms of anthropocentrism which privilege humanity in various problematic ways. *Perceptually anthropocentric listening* is a bit of a mouthful, but a term such as *anthropic listening*[12] might be appropriate to define the human-specific qualities of listening whilst avoiding many of the negative connotations of human exceptionalism and dominance. Regardless of how we describe it, the humanness of our perspective is fundamental to how we listen. We can create artworks or devise complex technologies to expand our listening capabilities but, ultimately, anything perceived through these means will be experienced through our current state of consciousness. Our physical bodies, the microbiome, and the senses afforded to us will always define our listening. To perceive is to experience the world from a subjective, highly-individualised position. Individually, each of us represents a

tiny fraction of possible human perspectives, and yet all of our positions remain distinctly human.

No sound is ever heard in isolation. At the point of the body, we don't hear discrete sounds, we hear environments. We perceive sounds in the context of ecosystems. To listen is to attune to the totality of an environment through a limited first-person perspective. The sonic field is a massive body of air and vibrating matter that we are enveloped in. It is a never-ending stream of numerous, constantly-changing sonic actors, and sound-producing elements that are modulating the atmosphere around us. Listening is placing our attention towards this continuum. Experientially, we do not sense individual sounds, where each is separated by indeterminate durations of silence. When we listen we do not wait for sounds to happen, to break a silence, we perceive a never-ending stream of activity. Separating this stream of information into discrete sounds is a function of the neurological domain of hearing. It does not necessarily represent the reality of the physical world, nor does it represent every possible experience or aspect of listening. When we listen, it is the totality of the sonic field we perceive, not its constituents. Every sonic event plays a role in modulating the huge body of air surrounding our bodies at any given time. The atmosphere is not an empty void in which sounds traverse, sounds are the air itself. Philosopher David Abram reminds us that the air is not vacuous, it is a sensuous, enveloping medium "filled with invisible but nonetheless tactile, olfactory, and audible influences."[13] In *The Spell of the Sensuous*, Abram posits that our bodies are situated in the atmosphere "as surely as fish are immersed in the sea."[14] Similarly, Tim Ingold contends that our engagement with the materiality of the world is from a position of immersion, as if we are swimming inside a living "ocean of materials."[15] Such expansive perspectives can be useful to re-imagine our relationships with our environments, especially when listening. To be immersed within an 'ocean of sound' is a profoundly different position than one which considers humans as separate entities from our surroundings, isolated from other lifeforms and matter. It breaks down the object-subject dichotomy, blurring the distinctions between the *listener* and the *listened*. In my experience, 'the field' is not something we enter and exit, the field moves with us as we navigate the world.

To listen ecologically one must attempt to consider the relationships between listeners, their environments, and other entities. We need to examine the contextual bonds between the listener and their habitat, and engage with all perceivable (and many unperceivable) elements that

are beyond the immediately obvious. Some parts of this process are easier to grasp than others. Identifying the role that external technologies play in our listening is easier to achieve than to analyse and deconstruct the hierarchical systems that form one's worldview. Some important questions we can continue to ask include: What is our listening contingent on? What is being perceived? When listening to mediated sounds we should be specific about what it is that is heard. We do not only hear the audio's content. The mix formatted onto the record, the CD, or the audio file is not the only thing perceived. The format of the medium itself is audible. Every time we press play, we listen to these mediated sounds packaged with artefacts and technological colours that are added at every stage of production. With every reproduction, new sounds emerge too. For example, we can listen to the sensitivity and character of the microphone's diaphragm. We can direct our attention to the directionality or the frequency biases of the microphone. The noise floor and the sonic characteristics of every piece of equipment used can be heard. We can hear if pop shields or wind protection systems were used to tame low frequency activity. We can listen to the recording apparatus, picking up on mechanical elements and distinctive format-specific artefacts. Notice the clouds of analogue tape hiss and the buzzing of electrical circuitry. We hear every piece of equipment used in the signal chain and the elemental materials embedded within their construction. We hear the spatial relationship between the recording environment and its documentation. In the mix itself, we hear the distribution of sounds in the spatial field, the sequence of signal processing, any changes in amplitude, added reverb, compression, etc. And what of the system we use to reproduce these sounds? Don't forget that we also listen to the size, material, and quality of the speaker drivers. Tune into the response of the electroacoustic mechanisms that transduce the electric current into the acoustic domain. Listen to the materiality in the structural resonances of your headphones, loudspeaker cabinets, and other listening devices. We hear the summed characteristics of the stylus, turntable, amplifier, mixing desk, and the multitude of auxiliary interfaces and tools. Listen to find out if all of the equipment was suitably earthed or not. Hear the remnants of the many conversions where signals are exchanged between the analogue and digital domains. The stages of amplification, power supplies, and the totality of cables and adapters are all audible. We hear the surface noise of the record, the dust in the groove, the compression algorithm of the file type, and so on…

The point of these laboured descriptions is not to draw unnecessary distinctions between the technological and the non-technological, nor to place mediated sounds in opposition to those that originate elsewhere. If we are looking to adopt an ecological approach to listening, surely we must be willing to listen to *everything* that we hear. Regardless of origin, if it can be heard it has relevance and it should be considered. Here, we could adopt Pauline Oliveros' practice of *Quantum Listening* that encourages "listening in as many ways as possible simultaneously,"[16] and to embrace the act of "listening to listening itself."[17]

To be clear, the aspects described above are perceivable. Not on a theoretical level but rather an experiential one. All of the factors mentioned above, like anything else we will perceive, will be experienced through our in-built listening apparatus in addition to sounds of our bodies and others present, in the context of our current environment. It is unlikely that one could identify all of these aspects on any given recording, nor distinguish one factor from another. But all of these elements contribute to what is heard. To listen *through* technologies, is to listen *to* technologies. To listen to a recorded sound is to listen to "the domestication of the sonorous."[18] An entire atmosphere reduced to a singular point of reference. Environments are filtered as signals are interpreted and converted, passing from one stage to another, from technology to technology. No technology is ever neutral or passive. Every device and medium brings its own hierarchical systems of biases. To faithfully 'reproduce' a sound is an infinitely complex task. Representations are exactly that: representations. Bernie Krause once remarked that to obtain fifteen minutes of usable environmental recordings typically requires 500 hours to be spent on location.[19] The reason that such a massive time commitment is necessary is due to recordings being frequently interrupted by noises of human origin. It can be interesting to consider this aspect of representation when we listen to mediated sounds. Is an environmental recording that took thirty hours to record representative of its environment? What would it take for a recording to be representative of an environment? An ecological stance might suggest that such a task is futile. There is no idealised position in which we can understand the whole. No representation will ever be able to reproduce the experiential aspects of listening. With or without technological assistance, one can never perceive the totality of an environment. However, by listening ecologically, perhaps we will each learn to accept the limitations of our unique listening perspective.

1
Roland Barthes, *The Responsibility of Forms: Critical Essays on Music, Art, and Representation* (Hill and Wang, 1985), 245.

2
François J. Bonnet, *The Order of Sounds: A Sonorous Archipelago* (Urbanomic, 2016), 8.

3
John Levack Drever, "'Primacy of the Ear'–But Whose Ear?: The case for auraldiversity in sonic arts practice and discourse," *Organised Sound* 24, no. 1 (2019): 85.

4
An anechoic (lit. '*without echoes*') chamber is an acoustically-treated space built to minimise reflections and reverberations.

5
Mark Peter Wright, "The Noisy-Nonself: Towards a Monstrous Practice of More-than-Human Listening," *Evental Aesthetics* 6, no. 1 (2017): 33.

6
Fiona Smith, "Privilege is Invisible to Those Who Have it: Engaging Men in Workplace Equality," *The Guardian*, June 8, 2016, https://www.theguardian.com/sustainable-business/2016/jun/08/workplace-gender-equality-invisible-privilege.

7
Dylan Robinson, *Hungry Listening: Resonant Theory for Indigenous Sound Studies* (University of Minnesota Press, 2020), 9.

8
ibid., p. 10.

9
Thomas Nagel, "What is it Like to be a Bat?," *The Philosophical Review* 83, no. 4 (1974): 436.

10
For anyone curious about exploring the experiential qualities of echolocation I highly recommend staging a performance of Alvin Lucier's 1969 work *Vespers*. The piece draws inspiration from the more-than-human world (particularly Vespertilionidae bats) and the text score directs blindfolded performers to interact with the structure of their environment through sound. Many years ago I set up a few performances of this work and it was a hugely meaningful experience for those who performed it. Navigating through pitch darkness equipped with only a constant 10kHz sine wave emitted from a handheld speaker remains a poignant memory!

11
Ben Mylius, "Three Types of Anthropocentrism," *Environmental Philosophy* 15, no. 2 (2018): 159.

12
Anthropic is to pertain to mankind or human existence.

13
David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Perception and Language in a More-than-Human World* (Vintage Books, 1996), 26.

14
ibid., p. 225.

15
Tim Ingold, "Materials against Materiality," *Archaeological Dialogues* 14, no. 1 (2007): 7.

16
Pauline Oliveros, "Quantum Listening: From Practice to Theory (To Practice Practice)," in *Culture and Humanity in the New Millennium: The Future of Human Values*, ed. Chan Sin-wai and Kwok Siu Tong (The Chinese University Press, 2002), 28.

17
ibid., p. 39.

18
Bonnet, *The Order of Sounds*, 14.

19
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LISTENING TOGETHER: SOUND ART AS A PRAXIS FOR SOCIAL RECONNECTION AND AUDITORY DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

This text explores the role of sound art in bridging the gap between individuals, fostering social connections within contemporary societies marked by isolation, fragmentation, and commercial pressures. Drawing on Nicolas Bourriaud's concept of relational aesthetics, the text critiques individualism in modern art and introduces sound art as a powerful tool for collective engagement. It examines "listening together" from both philosophical and action-oriented perspectives, referencing Pierre Schaeffer's listening modes and Jean-Luc Nancy's phenomenology of sound. The paper explores how sound art, through its dynamic and immersive nature, allows for meaningful human connections, challenging commercialised art practices and promoting shared experiences. Furthermore, the text highlights Brandon LaBelle's theories of sonic agency, illustrating how sound can transform public spaces, empower marginalised voices, and create ephemeral communities. The practical applications of these ideas are demonstrated through examples such as protest soundscapes, immersive art installations, and soundwalks, all of which use sound to reshape social relations and challenge hierarchical power structures.

Introduction

When we reflect on the world in which we live, we are confronted with wars, conflicts, societal divisions, and fragmentation. We often experience a sense of isolation and loneliness, embodying what can be described as the anatomy of melancholy. However, on many occasions, we fail to truly feel these emotions.We lack the time or inclination to engage with the world around us because we are either restricted from doing so or overwhelmed by pressure, leaving us with little energy to generate personal value. This energy is drained by the demands of work or the pervasive forces of capitalism. Moreover, the increasing prevalence of superficial distractions or "entertainment" further exacerbates our sense of disconnection. Despite being aware of detrimental effects that these distractions have, we readily accept them, only intensifying our isolation and encouraging a preference for virtual interaction over meaningful engagement with the real world.

As Nicolas Bourriaud asserts, "Human relations are no longer 'directly experienced,' but have instead become blurred in their 'spectacular' representation. Herein lies the most pressing issue concerning art today."

Since the 1990s, and perhaps even earlier, one of the primary objectives of art has been to challenge the standardisation and commercialisation of modern products and communications in contemporary society. This shift in artistic purpose led Bourriaud to propose a new aesthetic approach—Relational Aesthetics[1]. In his work, he contends that art in the 1990s transitioned from a focus on traditional aesthetic objects to an emphasis on social interactions and relational dynamics as the essence of artistic practice. Bourriaud critiques outdated theoretical frameworks that fail to adequately interpret contemporary art, advocating instead for an understanding of art as a medium that creates "social interstices"—spaces for human connection that exist outside of commercialised and standardised systems. These works prioritise participation, conviviality, and shared experiences, often blurring the boundaries between art and everyday life.

From another perspective, the continual rise of individualism across societies, particularly in the Western context, has also influenced the individualistic nature of artworks. Of course, in certain types of art, individualism remains both permissible and essential to some extent. For instance, when experimental artists seek to push the sensory boundaries of human experience, or when gifted artists express their passions and creativity, it is crucial that they follow their own paths, even if their works are not fully understood by the general public. However, in many other cases, or from a different viewpoint, the situation may deviate from this ideal.

I approach this observation from a democratic standpoint. For example, when I worked at an art fair, attempting to sell artworks and artifacts to ordinary people, I invited them to engage with the works— to look at them, touch them, and feel them. Their responses were often characterised by apprehension. They expressed fear of discussing art, feeling it was too complex, confusing, and seemingly far removed from their everyday experiences. Ultimately, many gave up trying to comprehend the works, leaving with statements such as, "I'm probably not well-educated in art, I'm not qualified to talk about it, and this work is not for me." This scenario is, unsurprisingly, common when art created through individual practices is presented to the public. In such instances, the act of sharing or introducing art to the broader community becomes a somewhat problematic endeavor.

Sound art, due to its inherent connection to daily life and its relatively low demand for specific "artistic taste," has emerged as an ideal medium for bridging the gap between the public and private spheres, as well as between different individuals. It encourages broader participation in artistic practices and helps individuals reconnect with their sensory experiences in a world that often feels flat and standardised. Sound is omnipresent in our lives: we listen to noise, perceive silence, hear the sounds of nature, the industrial world, the commercial sector, and the constant buzz of urban life. We enjoy listening to music and attending concerts and live performances. We have an instinctual love for dancing to rhythm, a practice that has existed since the formation of cultures worldwide. These subjects and activities are central to sound art. They can be both academic and grounded in everyday experiences, allowing sound art to naturally, if not inevitably, include a wider audience in its practices. In this way, it connects individuals and creates meaning that extends beyond the sound itself.

But how, specifically, can sound art foster connections between individuals and dissolve boundaries? What is the essence of the practice, or the act of "listening together"? In the following chapters, I will explore these questions from both a philosophical and practical perspective, using various sound art practices to illustrate these concepts.

A Philosophical view on "listening together"

We encounter various types of sounds in our daily lives, but not all are experienced in the same way. At times, we choose to listen to something, while at other times, we are compelled to hear it. More specifically, Pierre Schaeffer, in Traité des objets musicaux, classifies four distinct modes of listening: (1) Ouïr: Inattentive audition (e.g., background noise); (2) Comprendre: Listening directed toward linguistic or musical grammar; (3) Écouter: Listening with a natural attitude, oriented toward sound sources; (4) Entendre: Intentional listening through phenomenological reduction, focusing on the "sound object." For a long time, the philosophical tradition has favored entendre (intentional understanding) over the other listening modes, especially écouter, thereby imposing a certain closure on meaning. However, according to Jean-Luc Nancy, sound is not static but a dynamic process of infinite referral, or what he terms "renvoi." It is "not intentioned; it places the subject in tension," and "resonance is the structure of both sound and the subject."[2]

For Jean-Luc Nancy, the phenomenological approaches of thinkers like Husserl and Schaeffer, which objectify sound through intentionality, are somewhat problematic. These theories overlook the co-emergence of the subject and sound within resonance. The majority of people in our

daily lives, not being professionals in the field of sound, do not focus on the grammar, structure, or deeper meaning of sounds. Instead, we listen to a variety of sounds in an unintentional or natural state, rarely perceiving them as entirely external or objective. This suggests that the listening experience can establish a relationship, a space in which we co-emerge with sound and, in some way, lose our sense of "self" and "other." We listen to sound and are influenced by it as we reflect on it. At times, we may feel diminished in this relationship; at other times, we regain our strength and redirect our energy back to the source of the sound. This is a dynamic and fluid activity, more akin to a game than to a static experience.

In this context, sound itself resonates and passes through the relationship, creating a space where meaning upon meaning can emerge infinitely. This constitutes an open system. A fluid system that expands when a large group of people gathers, whether intentionally or naturally, to listen to something that happens daily — such as a nearby community hearing the same sounds due to shared culture, society, geography, and physical devices that produce sound. If we imagine the listening practice of an individual as a rubber band that serves as a bridge between the subject and the sound, the stretching, bouncing, and other movements of the rubber band illustrate the tension between the two. When people, whether familiar with each other or strangers, come together to listen, the rubber bands metaphorically unite into a flat plane, thus creating an entirely new dimension of the listening system. This dimension exists between the different individual subjects, the listeners. Viewed from this perspective, the shared experience of listening together not only strengthens emotional connections between people—an idea I will explore further in the next chapter—but also opens up new, fluid possibilities for how we perceive and process sound, how we resonate with it, and whether we find meaning in the experience. As new elements —shaped by each listener's unique perspective—are introduced, they influence the group as a whole, further enriching the collective experience.

"Listening together" as an active power

Beyond the philosophical implications of "listening together," another potent dimension is the dimension of action. In this realm, sound can be viewed as a political tool or as something capable of redefining public spaces and uniting society. Brandon LaBelle's theory of sonic agency provides a theoretical framework for analyzing how different types of sound function as agents of action. He identifies four interconnected modes through which sound acts as a transformative social force: (1) Verticality, where sound traverses spatial hierarchies to reveal hidden power dynamics, such as marginalised voices resonating across class-divided urban environments; (2) Mobility, which highlights sound's ability to move with bodies and technologies, dynamically reshaping public spaces through protests or collective performances; (3) More-than-Material, framing sound as a carrier of cultural memory, emotion, and political resistance that transcends its physical vibrations; and (4) Co-composition, where collaborative sonic practices dissolve boundaries between individuals and collectives, fostering ephemeral communities through shared auditory engagement.

Together, these modes reimagine sound as an active medium for reclaiming agency, contesting spatial control, and redefining social relations within contested acoustic spaces.

All four modes are highly relevant to communal sound art practices. Practical applications include protests, where chanting slogans, drums, or silence serve as symbols of resistance. The movement of protesters' bodies within physical spaces transforms and reshapes public areas, while marginalised groups are empowered to amplify their voices, supported by allies within the community and the broader public. The "Black Lives Matter" movement is one example of this. This also manifests in community arts and sound art installations that invite widespread participation further to illustrate the concepts of co-composition and more-than-materiality. For instance, the work of Japanese artist Ryoji Ikeda, particularly his immersive audiovisual performances such as data verse and test pattern, transcends solitary spectatorship. Although Ikeda is renowned for his mathematically precise explorations of sound frequencies and data visualisation, his live performances transform audiences into active participants. In these works, viewers navigate a labyrinth of synchronised light and sound pulses or are invited to interact with installations within the art museum environment. This interaction blurs the distinction between artist and audience, fostering a shared sensory language that unites strangers into a temporary collective. Ikeda's practice, though grounded in technical precision, ultimately creates liminal spaces where participants co-author meaning through their bodily presence. This is a hallmark of co-composition: it is not only the artist who creates the artwork or completes the performance, but the collective participation of all listeners and audience members that shapes the experience.

Soundwalks, as a form of communal listening, transcend passive observation and become acts of critical engagement with urban environments. A notable example is the intervention led by Sound Art Lab in the small city of Struer, where participants embarked on a guided walk attuned to the acoustic textures of everyday life, the sounds of cars, wind, birds, and so on. However, the walk's climax involved a radical gesture: balloons were burst at strategic points, generating sharp, percussive sounds that disrupted the city's auditory routine. This act of sonic interruption was not merely an aesthetic play,but a deliberate destabilisation of the urban soundscape. By inserting unexpected noises into familiar settings, the walkers disturbed the normalised rhythms of Struer's public spaces, prompting reflections on who controls urban acoustics, and which sounds are considered permissible.

The balloons' transient pops — ephemeral yet spatially invasive — embodied the concept of mobility, as sound traveled unpredictably, momentarily claiming alleys and squares typically dominated by ambient traffic noise or quiet natural sounds. Simultaneously, these sounds pierced through vertical hierarchies: the abrupt cracks echoed upward from street level to residential balconies, briefly challenging the auditory dominance of private spaces over public ones. In contrast, soundwalks in larger, socially fragmented cities often confront more complex acoustics. In cities where luxury high-rises stand alongside slums, urban soundscapes often perpetuate class divides — luxury buildings buffer noise pollution, while slum dwellers endure relentless decibels, yet both groups tend to take their acoustic environments for granted. In such cases, sound is not only a material,but a loaded symbol of privilege that carries deep political significance.

Conclusion

Through the lens of sound art, we have explored how auditory experiences can transcend individual perception and serve as a means of fostering social reconnection, democratic engagement, and collective agency. By examining both the philosophical dimensions of listening and the practical applications of communal sound practices, it becomes clear that sound is not merely a passive medium but an active force capable of reshaping our relationships with one another and with our environments.

Philosophically, listening together challenges the boundaries between self and other, dissolving the rigid structures of individualism and encouraging a fluid, participatory experience of the world. The act of shared listening creates spaces where meaning emerges dynamically, fostering empathy and mutual understanding. In practice, sound art's accessible and immersive nature enables it to bridge gaps between social classes, cultural groups, and urban divides. From Ryoji Ikeda's participatory audiovisual installations to soundwalks that disrupt and reconfigure public spaces, these examples illustrate how sound can operate as a tool for reclaiming agency, contesting dominant power structures, and fostering inclusive communities.

All in all, in a world increasingly fragmented by digital distractions, economic pressures, and social isolation, the act of listening together has huge potential to serve as an antidote to disconnection. Sound art, especially when it connects with the general public, challenges the passive consumption of culture and instead invites participation, dialogue, and co-creation. By embracing listening as a shared experience, we unlock new ways of engaging with each other and the spaces we inhabit, reinforcing the idea that sound is not just something we hear but something we collectively shape and live within.

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PROPOSALS *FOR* LISTENING

Bureau *for* Listening

Equally real and conceptual, Bureau for Listening (2021–) is an artist and research bureau investigating and promoting listening as a critical, empathic and artistic practice. Through our nomadic and transdisciplinary work, we strive to engage others in shared practices and projects.

Proposal for Listening - a possible definition:

A generative invitation to attune to sound, silence, and resonance as a way of being and relating. A proposal for listening is not merely a suggestion but a call to engage with listening as a mode and practice of reorienting one's perception, connection, and understanding. It can manifest as an idea, an action, or a framework, expanding how we listen and what listening makes possible in communal, artistic, and everyday contexts. Proposals for Listening are put forward seeking hopeful, curious and critical engagement with our world; creating through speculation or manifestation. Proposals for Listening is an art practice of Bureau for Listening.

On Proposal-Making as Listening

Listening is more than an act of reception; it is a way of being in the world, a state of attunement that acknowledges the vibrancy of all that surrounds us; the known as well as the unknown. To listen is to enter into relation, recognising that the world is not silent but rather constantly vibrating, shifting, offering itself in subtle resonances; also beyond our comprehension. Listening, then, is a creational act—an expression of curiosity, care, and an openness to both is already there as well as what emerges. It is an act of faith, an affirmation that the world is in a state of being, speaking and calling for attention.

Proposal-making, when understood through this lens, is not merely a procedural or bureaucratic gesture. It is an articulation of listening—a way of attending to the interplay between community, environment, and imagination. To propose is to listen first, to be moved by what is already present yet not fully realised, and to respond in a way that cultivates possibility. Proposals, like listening, hold a kind of hopeful anticipation; they assume that something can shift, that transformation is not only imaginable but within reach. A proposal is therefore not just a plan but a responsive entanglement, a way of tuning into the social and environmental resonances of a place; to cultivate and nurture a field of potential.

A proposal is not an isolated statement; it is fundamentally communal. Every proposal carries within it the anticipation of a group, a complex context, the expectation of dialogue, the desire for response. It emerges from a collective moment of listening—whether implicit or explicit—and offers itself as a structure for shared action. A proposal does not impose a fixed reality; it suggests a potential course, a way of being together that can be tested,

refined, embraced, or even resisted. Within the nature of proposals is that they are temporary, accepting that one proposal might transform into another. In this way, a proposal invites the community to take part in its own becoming. Proposal-making thus cultivates listening cultures, where responsiveness and attentiveness become the basis of civic action.

We propose that listening itself will be recognised as a civic practice. Let us imagine a city that convenes listening assemblies, where citizens gather not to debate but to listen—to each other, to the environment, to what is said and what remains unsaid (or even unsayable). We propose that silence be integrated into public policy, that moments of communal quietude be scheduled, allowing the rhythms of the city to be felt in new ways. What might emerge if listening became a recognised form of governance, if our institutions engaged with the art of attunement before the act of decision-making? How may listening help facilitate a more democratic and radical communal present and culture?

We propose that Struer establishes a municipal listening bureau—an entity dedicated not only to sound, but to attentiveness. This office would host public listening sessions, receive proposals for new acoustic practices, and cultivate an archive of communal listening experiences. This would not be a passive repository but an active site of intervention, where listening is translated into practice, shaping civic engagement and policy. The bureau could work in dialogue with communities, amplifying local knowledge and deepening the politics of attunement.

The Bureau *for* Listening frames listening as a practice of giving, supporting, and nurturing the communal. If we extend this idea, we can see how proposal-making is a way of giving form to listening—a tangible expression of an attentive, engaged presence in the world. A

proposal does not emerge in isolation; it is born out of attentiveness to what is missing, what is needed, what is calling for recognition; it is an imagination of something different. It is a way of extending an ear into the world and then shaping what is heard into an offering, a possibility.

To propose, then, is to open a door. It is to invite participation, to call others into a space of co-creation. We propose that every public institution develop a 'listening protocol'—a practice of sitting with community concerns, not to immediately resolve them, but to allow them to resonate before action is taken. We propose that architecture itself be reconsidered as a medium for listening—buildings that amplify voices rather than silence them, spaces designed not only for function but for acoustic interaction, for the acknowledgment of presence.

Struer, with its histories of sound and listening, offers a unique setting for rethinking proposal-making in this way. What does it mean for a city to listen? What does it mean to propose new ways of listening within it? If listening is always an act of relationality—of entering into a dynamic, vibrating world—then proposals for listening are not only conceptual but deeply material. They shape how people move through space, engage with their surroundings, and create shared experiences. They invite a reconsideration of the civic as an acoustic phenomenon: how do we design, legislate, and imagine with listening in mind; might listening be a form of designing and legislating within a community?

We propose that proposals themselves be considered cultural artifacts, collected and exhibited to showcase the evolving landscape of civic attentiveness. What proposals for

listening were put forward one hundred years ago? What has their effect been? A city that listens is a city that thrives on relationality, that understands itself not through dominance but through resonance. What would it mean to cultivate an ecology of listening, where each proposal is not merely a suggestion but a site of attunement, a way of harmonising the social with the sonic?

To make proposals is, therefore, to listen forward. It is to believe that listening itself has effects, that it reverberates beyond the moment of reception into action, structure, and communal practice. It is to acknowledge that listening is never neutral—it generates, it shifts, it alters the conditions of our being-together. Through proposals, listening takes a tangible civic form; it moves from ephemeral experience into shared vision. In this way, proposal-making is not separate from listening—it is listening made manifest, listening throughout the act of shaping a community anew.

Short Introduction/Invitation: How to Use the Proposals *for* Listening

These proposals for listening are invitations rather than instructions—open-ended prompts designed to awaken new ways of engaging with sound, community, and place; a framework for articulating different potentials. They can be explored individually, as daily meditative practices; in groups, as collective experiments in listening; or within institutions, as tools for rethinking civic engagement through attentiveness. Some proposals are realisable, offering concrete steps for activating communal listening, while others are speculative, encouraging imaginative reconfigurations of how we relate to sound and each other. Whether adapted, expanded, or simply used as inspiration, these proposals ask: How does Struer listen? And how might we listen differently?

Proposals *for* Listening

We propose a physical bureau *for* listening in Struer; a possible 'borgerservice' for listening, where residents of Struer can seek listening support and guidance. This bureau would also develop and implement strategies on behalf of Struer Kommune to strengthen the listening within the municipality. The bureau would operate with standard opening hours for consultancy and workshops in their permanent space, but also exercise home and work visits, a 24 hour open listening-hotline for those in need of being listened to, and operate different forms of temporary field-offices for listening at schools and/or in nature, where the cultivation of listening is also heavily needed. Struer's bureau for listening would publish annual reports and organise different public hearings on the subject of listening within Struer Kommune.

We propose a weekly quiet hour where different areas of Struer reduce artificial noise—pausing traffic, silencing amplified sound, asking people to whisper—thus allowing residents to attune themselves to the otherwise overheard soundscapes of the city. We propose this weekly quiet hour to be realised every Tuesday between 17.00 and 18.00.

We propose installing small sound-collecting booths throughout the city where residents can record or submit significant sounds from their daily lives, building a communal Struer Sound Archive that captures the evolving identity of the city through listening. If sound-collecting booths are too much a production burden, we propose to build an online archive for people to upload their recordings. We propose, furthermore, that this proposal can be expanded into a participatory mapping project where residents document and annotate sonic landmarks, from the rhythm of waves in the harbour to the murmurs of daily life, creating a communal and evolving soundscape archive.

We propose an annual silent festival where the city gathers to explore silence as a communal act. Through silent concerts, silent key-notes, meditative listening circles, and experimental performances, we create spaces for deep attention and non-violent engagement with the world.

We propose installing specially designed listening benches in public parks and quiet spaces, inviting people to pause and listen—engraved with questions, poetic provocations, and prompts to foster listening with the surrounding sounds.

We propose forming a community-based acoustic ecology council to address sound as an essential urban material, advocating for noise-conscious planning, the creation of quietzones, and the cultivation of Struer's sonic identity as the City of Sound. This council should have a veto right over all construction projects in Struer, making the council able to focus their listening to the acoustics of Struer rather than political or economic concerns. If this ability to veto undermines the communal presence and mutual listening ability, the veto can be revoked.

We propose a facilitated social experiment where two people sit together in silence, listening for five minutes before exchanging thoughts on what they heard.

We propose a mobile sonic embassy that exports Struer's unique sound identity to other cities, presenting curated listening experiences that reflect the voices, rhythms, and resonances of Struer. This sonic embassy will practice listening as diplomacy. Furthermore, we propose that this sonic embassy facilitate an exchange program where residents of different cities record short spoken reflections on a particular sound—natural or urban—and share them with others across cities and cultures, creating an intimate sonic dialogue across time and space.

We propose a speculative economic model where acts of listening are valued and exchanged—local businesses offering small benefits to those who engage in mindful listening practices, recognising listening as a social contribution.

We propose for Struer Kommune to hire a team of listeners, who will be offering their listening to both the people and places of Struer. These listeners should be compensated with a monthly fee of 40.000 DKK. We propose a rotation system for those hired, where any listener can only be hired for three continual months, in order to not exploit their listening.

We propose an invitation for residents to write letters addressed to the city's sounds—the train station's hum, the wind against the fjord, the laughter in public squares—to be read aloud at public gatherings, forming an intimate sonic portrait of Struer.

We propose a yearlong collaborative journal where residents document one significant listening moment per day, later compiled into an almanac that reflects the shared acoustic memory of Struer. This document can either be a single endeavour or long durational practice of Struer's residents for multiple generations to come. We propose that the Museum of Struer facilitate and archive this acoustic memorial.

We propose a procedure within Struer Kommune complaint system where all involved/concerned/offended/offending parties have to listen to each other. No complaint should be made without also listening to who or what the complaint is directed towards. If a complaint results in a form of compensation, we propose that it be in the form of listening; whether the compensated party be listened to, or both offended and offending parties receive training in listening. To supervise this

procedure, we propose that Struer Kommune hire skilled listeners to mediate within conflicts.

We propose a 'Listening Square' in Struer; a dedicated public space for communal listening, experimentation, and play—where group silence, interactive sound sculptures, and spontaneous sound-based interventions can reimagine the role of sound and listening in shared spaces.

We propose a daily collective practice where the city pauses at sunset to allow for 30 seconds of shared listening, reinforcing a communal attunement to time and transition. This can also be further developed as a proposal to organise a weekly morning listening session for all public hired staff, along with those interested, where we will meet at the harbour every Wednesday at 08.00 and spend 30 minutes listening together. No words should be uttered.

We propose rebranding Struer from being the 'City of Sound' to the 'City of Listening'. This would include establishing an intercontinental pilgrimage route leading to Struer, and a specific administrative team under the city council to deal with issues of 'pilgrimage listening'.

We propose that listening signs are as equally important as traffic signs, indicating zones of specified attentions, actions and protocols. To begin with, we propose to prioritise erecting 'Non-Listening Signs',to make people aware when they are in zones without eavesdropping, and 'Slow Listening' signs to indicate a specific awareness within the public.
We propose lowering the average sound volume of the Struer Kommune by 10 decibels on weekdays, while raising it by 40 decibels on Saturday nights.

We propose hosting a public workshop in Struer, where we cultivate a local "Proposal for Listening Making" practice of Struer - in what way does Struer propose to listen? In this workshop, participants will collaboratively create a series of Proposals for Listening, reflecting on the city's unique soundscapes and communal experiences. These proposals will be submitted to the City Council of Struer as a collective expression of the value of listening within the community. To conclude the workshop, we suggest writing a collective letter to the City Council, emphasising both the beauty and the necessity of cultivating listening as a civic practice. The letter will call for the City Council's engagement with our proposals and highlight how we hope they will listen deeply to the ideas and suggestions put forth by the people of Struer.

We propose for Struer Kommune to have an emergency listening strategy.

We propose a listening archive with the following two listening archival practices:

1. Creating a speculative archive where resid ents record messages to be heard in 50 years, imagining and shaping the future soundscape of Struer through present-day acts of listening.

2. A fictional archive of lost, forgotten, or imagined sounds, a space for listening to what no longer exists—or what never did—encouraging speculative sonic thinking.

We propose a local 24 hour Hot-Line for Listening in Struer for all in need of listening. The hot-line should be staffed with more listeners at specific hours in accordance with demand.

We propose partnering with Struer Kommune to develop a Listening Review—a biennial initiative aimed at assessing the state and dynamics of listening within the community. Using a structured questionnaire, the review will evaluate the quality of listening by the Kommune, identify diverse listening needs among residents, and provide a platform for participants to share concerns ranging from personal to systemic. The insights gathered will serve as a roadmap for Struer Kommune to inform future actions and legislative priorities.

We propose for Struer Kommune to create a sonic identity to accompany its visual identity. This sonic identity should be created through a democratic process and made in collaboration with or guided by local artists.

We propose a weekly communal dinner held at the city hall where 50 random invited residents of Struer can come and dine together in silence. We propose for Struer Kommune to select a committee of 12 to organise these events. The committee member will take turns organising and participating in the silent dinner.

We propose to make listening a citizen right in Struer Kommune. All within its borders has the right to be listened to, as well as to listen in peace.
We propose making a joint high-school and kindergarten listening programme. The aim of this programme is to explore and cultivate new listening practices, and not enforce or improve existing listening practices. Participants in the programme will be each other's teachers and students. No access demands or exams are required for this programme.

We propose to make a Listening Committee alongside Struer Kommunes other committees. The first meeting will take place during Struer Tracks 2025. Before the meeting we encourage everyone to add a point to the agenda, e.g on the subject: If your Kommune listened, what would you say/ask for/propose etc.? We also propose that anyone in need of any kind of help apply with the Listening Committee for a subsidy or a service.
We propose inviting an advanced listener to every major decision meeting, e.g board, committee, general assembly. While this listener will have no voting right, they will be allowed to affect the meeting through the listening. We propose developing a specific training programme to certify advanced listeners.

We propose for Struer Kommune to send out an executive order to everyone at risk of stress , commanding them to only listen to their bodily needs and act upon them immediately.

Some of these Proposals *for* Listening will be realised/tested by Bureau *for* Listening during Struer Tracks 2025.

Proposals *for* the Struer Tracks Almanac

We propose to hold the Almanac as if a newborn body; support its weight and structure gently, and listen attentively for all its strange sounds.

We propose not to think of the Almanac as an object only, but rather as a complex space-time being temporarily taking on a paper-ish life form.

We propose a concert consisting of leafing through the Almanac one page at a time. The sound of the leafing should be amplified and hosted in a large room. The concert can easily be expanded to a series of different performers taking on the task of leafing through the Almanac, as no leafing can be reproduced. If possible, perform the concert in darkness.

We propose to switch out all the Bibles in the churches in and around Struer with the Almanac. We propose to trust the priests' abilities to preach and offer spiritual guidance through the Almanac.

We propose to write secrets in the margins of the Almanac.

We propose to read aloud from the Almanac to a loved one, a hated one, to another while standing in sea, to one often alone, one with different political convictions, one that whistles great, to one's ancestors and future self, to one that gives good advice, one that dislikes communal practices.

We propose to bury a copy of the Almanac and observe its decomposition. We propose to actively invite fungi, worms, and time to collaborate in its transformation.

We propose a study group solely dedicated to material included in the Almanac. This group should commit to meeting once every second year and report to the group how the material of the Almanac speaks to them differently since the last study group meeting.

We propose taking seriously what other books you want to stand/lay next to the Almanac—which will be a good match? Please don't underestimate the Almanac's ability to corrupt other books.

We propose exchanging the Almanac for a great meal. Feel free to exchange back with another service—a concert, gardening, cuddling, protest participation, etc.

SOUNDING TOGETHER: EXPLORING ETHICS AND REFLEXIVITY IN SOCIAL, PARTICIPATORY, AND ETHNOGRAPHIC SOUND RECORDING

Anne E. Stoner

Anne E. Stoner is a sound artist and social ethnographer whose work, informed by disability studies and queer archival practices, focuses on the intersections of identity and geography in both sonic and physical space.

This essay stems from a place of fondness and passion as a sound artist working in participatory practice. Throughout my life of sound recording, I have made endless mistakes. I have made mistakes in the methods by which I invite people to be recorded, in the ways in which I speak to them in the recording, in the manner by which I speak to them when we are not recording, and on and on and on. In my long-term social and sonic ethnographic project, *Drowning Out the Noise*, I once confused two participants with the same first name, emailing personal information about one participant to another and causing them to withdraw from the project. I also often listen to recordings from this project and find moments where I could have been far more understanding, where my responses could have been more grounded in cultural context, and ultimately where I feel I have failed. While the project has gone on to be published in *Resonance: The Journal of Sound and Culture*, and shown for three months at the Tang Museum, I am still haunted by these impersonal mistakes. To quote Rose Gillian on reflexivity, this essay is "written from a sense of failure."[1] I adore participatory sound recording. I find it to be an absolutely enriching, thrilling, and knowledge-generating practice. However, I am inclined to be sharply critical of the practice as it pertains to the wellbeing of the individuals involved in knowledge creation. I intend to utilize the framework built by Caroline Lenette in an attempt to further the "cultural safety" of people invited to be involved in arts-based research, and the extent to which this practice may challenge who is able to "create new knowledge."[2]

Before speaking reflexively, it is pertinent to define the practices being spoken about within the bounds of this discussion. I hope to speak to those sound works wherein people, out with the organizing artist(s), are involved in knowledge creation and artistic endeavors. Vadim Keylin references Anna Dezeuze's three modes of multi-person artmaking, "interactive artworks, where 'content is generated by the artist and arranged by the participants,' participatory artworks, where 'content is generated by the participants and curated by the artist,' and collaboration, that 'aims at erasing altogether the difference between producers and recipients."[3] Dezeuze immediately speaks to the rigidity of these categories, and Keylin furthers this discussion by addressing the ways in which sonic art may complicate these definitions. For the purposes of this discussion, I intend to focus on the latter two, broadly-defined modes of participatory and collaborative artmaking, or those modes where people besides the main organizers of the artwork are contributing personal content to the knowledge-making practice.

In my above definition, I use the term "people" purposefully, as to even label individuals as "participants," "co-artists," "others," etc. is to assign them a role which places them in a particular category. That is to say, as socially engaged artists, even simply the language by which we define those taking part in a project is to classify them, and ultimately classify the project. To quote Hal Foster, the end of the 20th century saw an "ethnographic turn" in art-making, where he warns of the all-too-quick acceptance of the "self" vs. "other" paradigm.[4] Where sound artists, practitioners, and organisers may be inclined to define roles within a socially engaged or participatory project, is the "artist" vs. "participant" dichotomy ultimately reminiscent of Foster's hierarchy? As we pick up the microphone, how do we denote our own role in relation to the role of those being recorded? How might we be subconsciously furthering colonial, classist, and inequitable matrices in our choices of who we record, how we record them, and what we call them? Other considerations which further these provocations have to do with how those participating might be named and given credit. Do we attribute "their" name to "our" projects? Or, to restate, how do we decide when and how to denote "ownership" and "authorship?" If another is making the sound but I am holding the microphone, who has created the sound? If a participatory sound work is sold into a museum collection, to whom are the earnings given? Who has the agency to sell the artwork in the first place? I recognise that I have presented an endless stream of questions with no answers, but in truth, this is because I do not have the answers. I suppose one can begin answering these questions by asking, "where does 'making' begin?"

Laurie Beth Clark and Michael Peterson's 2020 essay "Making" describes "making" from a variety of perspectives. They discuss the contrast between *material* making and *conceptual* making.[5] Here, the dichotomy between "making with one's hands" and "making with one's mind" is broken down explicitly, allowing us to examine where real "making" might lie, or if there might be multiple modes of "making" which are equally as "real." Clark and Peterson also note the "making" of an artistic event or experience, which causes the participants to, "behave in ways they would not without the artists' influence"[6]. In Clark and Peterson's exposition, the "making" might either lie in the making of the experience by the artist, or in the ultimate influenced behavior or output of the participant. If the latter is quantified as the "making," then who is defined as the author of this making? Perhaps in social and participatory sound recording, we are required to contend with the fact that an artwork may have multiple "makers" and multiple "authors," and that these roles are not always mutually exclusive. Additionally, perhaps these multiple "makers" and "authors" will not know each other closely, or at all, but become "co-authors" or "co-makers" through the enactment of the artwork.

As we analyse "making," we must also analyse "success" in making. Lenette cites Brown and Strega, who discuss the decolonisation of research methods and Western standards of what is considered "good" or "acceptable."[7] Brown and Strega consider these ideas in regards to designing methodology, asking how we may decolonise and promote equity in norms surrounding knowledge creation. I am interested in furthering this conversation with ideas discussed by artist Katrine Faber regarding the breakdown of these norms for participants and collaborators. In her 2019 participatory performance *Let Us Sing Your Place*, she discusses the significance of participant wellbeing, specifically as it relates to their understanding of their own "success" in the project. She states,

> "I try to go in there, and be a little ugly myself, and be very human, not perfect. I'm not delivering a beautiful performance, I'm not singing opera to impress. […] I try to create this atmosphere that—this is not about being perfect, or good, or fantastic" - interview with Faber, in Keylin 2023, 94

It is apparent that Farber has deeply considered the wellbeing of those who collaborate in her participatory performance. By remaining conscious of participants' preconceived notions of what constitutes a "good" or "fantastic" contribution, she is able to make intentional choices in her own performance in order to promote comfort and security in those participating. In my own experience with participatory and collaborative artmaking, many people I have worked with (including myself) have vacillated on the "perfection" or "quality" of an artwork or final product. As Clark and Peterson discuss, the actual "product" of the artwork is not the actual "made" item, but rather the conceptual process of the "making."[8] Ultimately, I challenge us as social organisers to not find "success" in the societal judgement of a finished product, but rather to find our own markers of success as they relate to the process of artmaking itself.

Raphael Vella and Margerita Pulè state, regarding participatory arts research, "Some participants may not appreciate the level of

experimentation that artists envision for their projects."[9] While in a sense I find this to be a truthful statement, I struggle with its implication. For it is not a participants' responsibility to hold an extensive background in sound studies or sonic art. It is instead the organising artists' role to design a project that is accessible to the audience with which it hopes to engage. I encourage us as artists to not design projects wherein the aesthetic relies on those collaborating to lack knowledge, artistic or otherwise. The role of the participating person is not to be made to look unknowing or unenlightened. Should the project be methodologically complex or experimental, the organiser must locate a creative method by which to relay its structure and purpose to those participating. Ultimately, it is our role as organizers to design a framework by which to communicate our methods and backgrounds to those participating in order for those individuals to feel secure and confident in their collaboration.

Lenette discusses this security in her 2022 reflexive essay examining cultural safety in arts-based research, wherein she asks: "How do co-researchers feel about their engagement in the research process and about the content explored?"[10] She then discusses the extent to which culturally safe practices ensure that "co-researchers," or those involved in the artmaking, feel confident that their contributions will be significant to the project, "without fear of being misunderstood or diminished."[11] I am inclined to take Lenette's rigorous framework a step further and state that our goal as practitioners and artistic organisers could perhaps be expanded upon in order to ensure those participating not only feel confident and understood, but ultimately feel *good*; feel *positive*, feel *self-confident*, feel as though they have *contributed*, or made something *beautiful* or *meaningful*. While our primary priorities as artists may include goals such as knowledge creation, artistic experimentation, archiving, etc., I do feel that we should prioritise an additional goal in regards to the wellbeing and happiness of those who give time, energy, thought and sound to our projects. Those who make themselves so vulnerable as to be recorded, as to relinquish control of the positionality of the microphone and its holder. They deserve to walk away from the project with a sense of contentment and security.

I want to draw attention to a method in which audiences are often discussed in relation to contemporary sound art. Below is a portion of text from the ZKM Center for Art and Media, Karlsruhe, discussing Takuro Shibayama's 2023 project *Participatory Sounds*. The center's statement on the project, exhibited within The Denshi Onkyo *People Project*[12], reads as follows:

> This genre [electroacoustic music] is often seen by the general public as 'the Other' in music. As a consequence, this genre is denied a large and broad audience. In order to counteract this and to convey the special sound design possibilities of this genre as well as the general joy of musicking, Takuro Shibayama runs workshops with interested people of all ages and different backgrounds, for whom electroacoustic music is rather unknown and in whose lives it plays no role.
> - ZKM Karlsruhe

I find the above statement to be a relatively common method to speak about those involved in participatory or communal sound projects. I am immediately inclined to ask whether the public truly views electronic music poorly because it is "the Other," or if it is because they find it inaccessible. This inaccessibility may result from the poor outlook these same musicians may develop of audiences that have no familiarity with the genre, as is the case above. To say "[the] genre is denied a large and broad audience" is to imply that the genre is somehow deserving of this audience, and that it is the audience's own fault for the genre's inaccessibility. Furthermore, will participants of the workshop lacking familiarity with the genre truly enjoy or take pleasure from a workshop where they have no background or grounding in the material presented to them?

Much of Lenette's writings on cultural safety include the decolonising of participatory methods in pursuit of equitable frameworks which take into account cultural differences.[13] As artists, we must reflexively examine our own biases within our practices and participating groups in order to prioritise the wellbeing and confidence of those who give us their time and attention.

Ultimately, this essay serves not as a guide or instructional handbook, but rather as a provocation. How may we as sonic artists more widely challenge existing power hierarchies, both within our own genres and across cultures? I hope that in following such lines of thought and practice, we may avoid a participatory and collaborative aesthetic where we expect participants to operate as empty canvases or blank slates on which to apply our artistic hopes and goals. Rather, I aspire to the pursuit of an artmaking where the needs, wants, opinions, experiences, feelings, and thoughts of those participating are not only considered, but ultimately constitute the artmaking and knowledge synthesising itself.

1
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2
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5
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6
Clark and Peterson, *Making*, 343.

7
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8
Clark and Peterson, *Making*, 339-341.

9
Raphael Vella and Margerita Pulè. “Conducting participatory arts projects: A practical toolkit” (2021): 32.

10
Lenette, *Cultural safety in participatory arts-based research: How can we do better?*, 5.

11
Ibid.

12
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13
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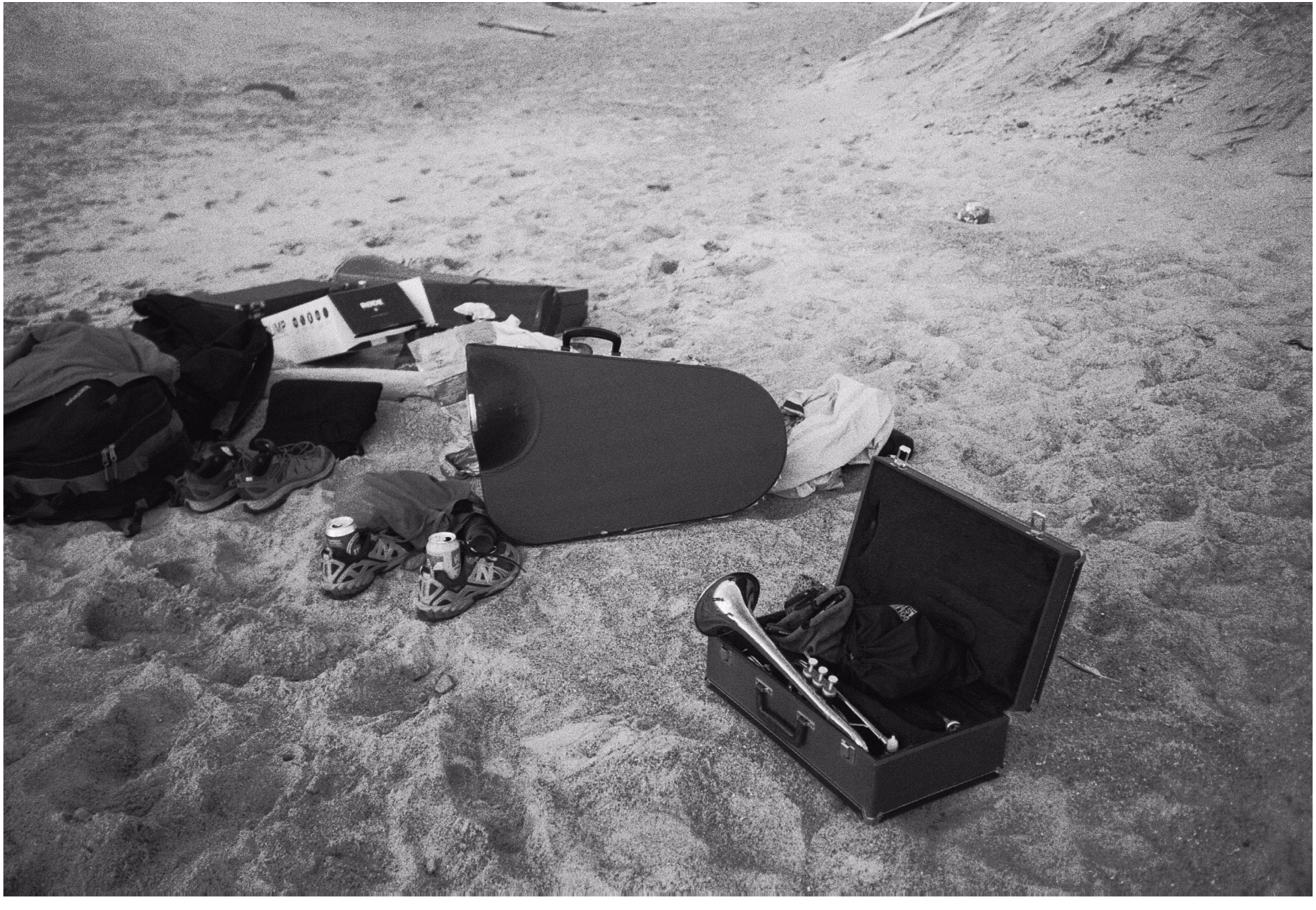

SOUND AS A RITUAL PRACTICE OF THE COMMONS: BETWEEN MEMORY, IDENTITY, AND SOCIAL TRANSFORMATION

Tommaso Nudo

Born in Irpinia in 1986, Tommaso Nudo is an electronic music producer and sound engineer based in Naples, where they run a studio dedicated to sound research and artistic experimentation. Tommaso's work spans ambient and techno, blending field recordings with immersive soundscapes to explore sound as a tool for connection, transformation, and storytelling. Founder of the label BCA Records, Tommaso also organises events and workshops focused on listening practices and acoustic justice, emphasising the communal and territorial dimensions of sound.

Sound is never neutral: it is always laden with meanings, shaped by context, and capable of shaping our perception of space and reality. It is a collective experience, fostering bonds and belonging within a community—an act of connection, a tool enabling individuals to communicate and feel part of a whole. Within communities, sound becomes a ritual that moulds shared spaces, collective memories, and identities. The notion of the "ritual practice of the commons" implies not only the use of sound as a universal language but also as an element that transcends generations, cultures, and territories – thus uniting what appears separate. Historically, sonic practices have played a crucial role in constructing and maintaining a sense of community. From the ceremonial chants of Indigenous cultures to contemporary soundscapes, sound has acted as a tool for social connection and transformation — a shared experience and a universally recognised form of communication that transcends cultural, linguistic, and geographical boundaries.[1]

Sound as Emotional and Communal Expression

Sound has always been integral to the lives of individuals and communities. Humans have long borrowed sounds from their environments — imitating animals, objects, or weather — to summon, unite, divide, escape, or transcend the status quo. For instance, the funeral laments of the Kaluli people and ritual weeping in the Andaman Islands illustrate how sound is deeply tied to emotions, particularly when produced collectively rather than individually. In these contexts, the community acts as a resonance chamber for sound, while sound, in turn, amplifies the community.[2]

The symbiotic relationship between sound and community is not exclusive to humans. Non-human communities also rely on sound for territorial signaling, warnings, or courtship. However, while humans have evolved specialised hearing for specific sounds, other species perceive sound differently. Vertebrates, for example, link hearing to movement, while fish and invertebrates "listen" with their entire bodies. Insects possess organs attuned to frequencies beyond human perception.[3]

Our auditory specialisation has made us sensitive to certain sounds but at the cost of a limited sonic experience: many natural frequencies remain inaccessible. Over time, we have prioritised sounds vital to survival, neglecting other aspects of the soundscape. Today, as mass insect extinction — driven by intensive agriculture —erases entire repertoires of

natural sounds, listening becomes not merely an act of curiosity but a way to perceive change and preserve acoustic biodiversity.[4]
In the heart of the Amazon rainforest, for example, the nocturnal choruses of glass frogs (*Hyalinobatrachium*) and the synchronised hum of Melipona bees compose a soundscape that serves as an indicator of ecological health. These sounds, however, are disappearing due to deforestation and pesticides. As bioacoustician Bernie Krause has documented, the loss of acoustic biodiversity equates to the extinction of ancestral languages. For the Māori of New Zealand, the song of cicadas (*kihikihi*) is not mere noise: it is the voice of ancestors speaking through the land.

Ritual: A Primordial Unifying Need

The need for ritual is primordial, deeply rooted in human nature, and pivotal to the formation and evolution of societies. Ritual, understood as choreographed, codified behavior imbued with symbolic meaning, is a universal human trait. Every known society, ancient or modern, has developed traditions marking key moments in individual and collective life.[5]

The discovery of Göbekli Tepe, a 12,000-year-old archaeological site, revolutionised our understanding of organisled society's origins. This site, with its monumental decorated pillars and complex structures, was not a settlement but a place of worship and ritual gathering. Its construction demanded immense collective effort, involving hundreds from disparate communities. As archaeologist Klaus Schmidt noted, "first came the temple, then the city."[6]

This discovery has given rise to a revolutionary thesis: it was not agriculture or economic motivations that spurred the first stable human settlements, transforming humans from nomads to sedentaries, but the need for rituals. The construction of temples and sacred spaces, like Göbekli Tepe, represented the primary engine of this transformation. In this context, sound was not merely an accompaniment to rituals but a foundational element that united communities, shaping a new collective identity and shared belonging.

Sound and Community: A Profound Bond

Rituals have profoundly shaped humans into the social beings that we are, and sound is fundamental to this process. It serves as a call, a means of transcendence, or a marker of recognition. Historically, sound has been a pillar of communal ritual — sonic acts that were not merely aesthetic but functional, synchronising people, conveying messages, and celebrating or commemorating collective events. For example, patronal festivals in Southern Italy demonstrate how sounds — from marching bands to footsteps on cobblestones — construct and renew belonging. This is not passive listening but active participation, where sound catalyses shared emotions and identities.[7]

In contemporary societies, sound remains central to communal rituals, albeit with new dynamics. Raves, jam sessions, open-air choral singing, interactive sound installations, and silent discos represent modern forms of sonic ritual, where music fosters connection and collective experience, often countering urban alienation. In rural contexts, sound celebrates landscape and local heritage, as seen in festivals emphasising nature-culture interplay. Sound has always bridged individuals and groups, thereby forging belonging.[8]

Digital platforms have generated unprecedented forms of sonic ritual. Spotify, for instance, does not merely suggest tracks: its algorithms create "algorithmic liturgies" based on collective moods, aggregating millions of users into transnational communities bound by shared melancholy or euphoria. Yet these algorithms — trained on predominantly Western databases — risk homogenising sonic diversity. In India, for example, the microtonal scales of classical raga are often "flattened" to fit YouTube's tonal standards.

Parallels Between Sound and Ritual

The characteristics of sound and ritual are deeply interconnected: both are structured, repetitive, and symbolically charged. Repetition, for instance, is key to both — Gregorian chants use melodic repetition to evoke continuity and transcendence, while rites of passage repeat gestures and words to mark transitions.[9]

Temporality is another shared element. Ritual sounds, like church bells or shamanic drums, follow precise rhythms demarcate sacred time from profane time. Similarly, rituals unfold in defined temporal phases, such as separation, liminality, and reintegration in rites of passage.[10]
Finally, sound and ritual share transformative power. Sound, through its ability to evoke emotions and create atmospheres, can transform ordinary

spaces into sacred ones. Likewise, rituals transform individual moments into collective experiences, imposing order and meaning on otherwise chaotic events.[11]

Sound in Contemporary Communities: Tradition and Innovation

In contemporary society, sound continues to play a vital role in community-building, even in digital forms. Platforms like Spotify and TikTok enable virtual communities based on shared musical tastes. Concerts, festivals, and raves unite thousands, proving sound's enduring role in connection. Yet modern urban soundscapes — dominated by traffic and machinery — threaten acoustic balance and communication. Reclaiming sound as ritual becomes essential to restoring community and environmental connection. Initiatives like the World Soundscape Project highlight the need to preserve meaningful sounds as cultural heritage.[12]

Marginalised Communities and Sonic Resistance

Marginalised groups — such as migrants, women, LGBTQIA+, etc — have often used sound as a tool for resistance and identity affirmation. For migrants, traditional songs become a way to preserve their culture and create a sense of community in a foreign context. For instance, the chants of Syrian refugees in camps are a powerful example of how music can serve as a tool for cohesion and resistance.[13]

For women, sound has historically been a means of protest and expression. The chants of suffragettes or the songs of Kurdish women during demonstrations for women's rights are examples of how sound can become a vehicle for resistance and social change.[14]

For the LGBTQ+ community, music has been a powerful tool for expression and resistance. The disco music of the 1970s, which gave voice to the gay community, or drag music, which uses sound and performance to challenge gender norms, are examples of how sound can affirm identity and combat oppression.[15]

The history of sonic resistance is incomplete without women's voices. In Colombia's Pacific region, Afro-descendant cantadoras preserve alabaos — funeral chants — as acts of resilience against paramilitary violence. Each melody is an acoustic map of collective memory.

The Universality of Music and Sound as a Social Phenomenon

As John Blacking noted, musicality is universal and innate in all human beings, not limited to an elite of musicians or composers. Music is not an activity reserved for a few but a fundamental human expression, present in all cultures. Through it, communities create and strengthen social bonds, express values, and transmit knowledge. For example, the songs and dances of many cultures are not merely entertainment but serve specific social functions, such as reinforcing group identity or facilitating transitions between social statuses.
Music involves movement, dance, and physical interaction, serving as an integral part of rituals and daily practices. This "embodied" approach to music has influenced subsequent studies, opening new perspectives for understanding how sound is integrated into social life.

Acoustic Ecology and the Soundscape

The concept of the "soundscape", introduced by R. Murray Schafer, describes the acoustic environment as a dynamic system that reflects the culture, history, and identity of a community. The soundscape includes natural, human, and technological sounds. Modern noise pollution distorts traditional soundscapes, negatively impacting quality of life.

Sounds associated with specific rituals, such as church bells or shamanic drums, unite participants and reinforce a sense of belonging. Preserving meaningful sounds is essential for maintaining cultural heritage and a legacy to pass on to future generations.

Conclusion

Sound, in its ritual dimension, is one of the most powerful tools for creating bonds, preserving memories, and building shared identities. Through sound, communities — whether rural, urban, or digital — find ways to express themselves, resist, and imagine new worlds. In an era of increasing alienation and social fragmentation, rediscovering sound as a ritual practice is essential for not only strengthening social ties but also for giving voice to those often silenced. Sound, with its ability to unite, communicate, and transform, is the beating heart of rituals, which through it become shared experiences that reinforce sociality, shape collective identity, and

give meaning to our existence. As a spatial and relational phenomenon, sound traverses communities, alters perceptions, and redefines the environments in which it spreads. From the acoustics of medieval cathedrals to contemporary digital and interactive soundscapes, the relationship between sound and space continues to evolve, transforming how we inhabit the world. Recognizing this dimension means not only understanding the past but also imagining futures where sound becomes a tool for connection, expression, and social change.

GHOSTLY RESOUNDING AND INTERTEMPORAL SOLIDARITY

Ana Ruiz Valencia

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In old Viet Nam, the citadel in the capital had one bell. Whoever felt like a victim of injustice had the right to climb the tower, ring the bell, and be listened to by all the town inhabitants. Then someone would come and ask them "Why?", so that he or she could share about their suffering. Thich Nhat Hanh shared in a conference:

> Now, we need such a bell so that bombs will not be used anymore. We have to train people in the art of deep listening and invite them into that body of listening. This is my proposal: Creating a listening body to listen to the suffering, the injustice, the discrimination that are going on. (...) We can only eliminate terrorism by the practice of restoring communication and listening deeply, and realizing that we *interare* with each other.[1]

In 1966, during the war that left ecocide and 1,500,000 countrymen dead across Viet Nam, Buddhist monk and peace activist Thich Nhat Hanh (Thây) founded the *Tiep Hien Order*, the Order of Interbeing. Can a communal praxis of listening and resounding — with more-than-living entities, with human and more-than-human ancestors — enhance our understanding of our place(s) in the world(s) we live in? Can it help us embody the notion of interdependence as radical politics, aware of the historical and systemic oppressions that have silenced the world? This essay articulates the concepts of sound/vibration, listening, resounding, and resonance with the action of deepening intuition and making it possible for mediumnity to happen.

Most of the authors, concepts, and traditions cited in this text come from different geographies, times, and cultures. Although diverse, they share fundamental and complementary visions regarding life and interdependency. I aim to expand the academic vision legitimising mainly Western (and mostly male) authors from Europe or the US, who have historically nurtured their ideas from non-Western cultures, often without giving them proper credit.

The Life-Death Dichotomy

In the concrete[2] world, the power structures we inhabit are based on the dichotomy between life and death. In his well-known book *Necropolitics*, Cameroonian philosopher Achille Mbembe explains how the one who holds the power gets to decide who lives and who dies, and moreover, how

to live and how to die.[3] This dichotomy between life and death, although *real* — those who live can have an agency that is at least recognised as tangible by those in power— is limited when thinking about the possibilities of communal praxis. Modern Western culture understands life and death as opposites, directly connected to the capacity to physically exist and have agency in a tangible reality; in turn, most non-Western (also pre-modern Western) cultures understand life as a continuum, and death is not seen as disappearance, but as a different way of existing in the world.

For concrete power, being physically present is the fundamental and most basic form of agency (let's think about the death penalty as the maximum sentence in several legal structures around the world). This importance of physical presence is also why keeping someone alive in harsh conditions like prison, torture, war, or poverty sends a powerful message: If you go against that who has the right to kill, you may be pushed to a condition where you find yourself begging for your life to end. A crime like forced disappearance is such a cruel form of torture precisely because the victim is not only the missing person in question (who has most likely been murdered), but also their family and friends who are not able to physically find the body/corpse or the story behind their relative's vanishing.

Necropower's sovereignty is exercised not only through physical and material injury but also through these states of suspension that can be lifelong. The vestiges, last words, and shadows of a person who has suddenly vanished become the only way to relate to their presence, to find echoes that serve as clues for reaching them. It is through this activation of hints that a relative or a community finds some relief and, in some cases, justice.

In a dream, Fair Leonardo Porras Bernal showed his mother the location where he was murdered and the path he went across with his kidnappers, the Colombian National Army.[4] On the night of Óscar Alexander Morales Tejada's murder, Doris Tejada, his mother, woke up with a pain in her stomach. In her dreams, she saw a pasture with trees, grass, and a large stone through which a liquid was filtering through a fissure from which some birds were drinking water. Both men had been killed in rural areas of Northern Colombia, hundreds of miles away from their homes in Soacha and Fusagasugá, in Central Colombia. Alongside Fair and Óscar, other executed civilians communicated with their relatives — their mothers in particular — by establishing a presence in their homes or neighborhoods.

In these cases, the dead collaborated with their families to help them find relief and justice. A few years ago, Lydia Lunch heartfully said

in a concert in Bogotá "Your country is a huge graveyard" — and she was right. Although we think about death as a loss — which it undeniably is, in the concrete world —, we need to set other ways to relate with our ghosts and ancestors, which are not only humans but rivers, non-human species, and sometimes entire ecosystems that have succumbed to war and greed, as well as the stories they carry, which reverberate in our daily lives.

Expanding the notions of what life, subjectivity, and consciousness can be is not a new idea at all. Also through dreams, ancestors advise and guide the Misak Taitas through their community struggles, or warn Wayuu Mothers about the future of their clans; an Amazonian shaman can communicate with the forest thanks to life-long training and plants used for acquiring a higher level of consciousness; Aymara cosmopraxis does not contemplate the notion of objects, instead regarding them as subjects whose existence and physical manifestation depend directly on the relations they establish with other entities.

One step towards this renewed relationship is to understand Life and Death not as opposites, but Life as a shared form of universal consciousness that inhabits different dimensions, and Death as part (maybe a small one) of Life's many transformations. In his 2024 Holberg Lecture at the University Aula in Bergen, Mbembe mentions

> In the society where I grew up, the genuine interest in earthly matters [...] proceeded too from the deep conviction expressed in myths, rituals and legends, that human beings were part of a very deep history that was older than the existence of the human race.
>
> This history of entanglement with multiple other species required that the reality of objects be rethought beyond human meanings and uses, in their thingness and in their animate materiality. Matter, on the other hand, was not an inert receptacle of forms that came from outside. To be a full human person was not necessarily to act autonomously, but to know how to share agency with every non-human entity, with the goal of creating and sustaining a milieu for life.[5]

A good example of this can be found in pre-columbian ocarinas, which are designed not to mimic an entity or animal's sound, but to establish more-than-human, interspecies communication. Ocarinas are *subjects*, not utilitarian objects or musical instruments. Composer Luis Fernando

Franco, who has devoted his life to understanding pre-columbian ocarinas under the guidance of Indigenous spiritual leaders from Northern Colombia, shared with El Espectador newspaper that, although initially not all the Kogui *mamos* (spiritual leaders from the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta) agreed to let him play thousand-years-old ocarinas as a *mestizo* musician from the city, the mamos Camilo, Agustín, and Seshankwa still invited him to do so. Seshankwa told Luis Fernando: "*Play them, they are sad… But don't think that you will make music.*" —How to play an instrument without making music? Franco asked. Seshankwa answered: "*Listen to the sea, listen to the peaks.*" Franco stresses the lessons from his teachers:

> Ocarinas are much more than clay artifacts. They preserve the spirit of both their creator and their performer within. In their sound, they express the memory of our ancestors. They are a bridge where today and sound memory cohabit in dialogue with nature.[6]

Listening and Resounding as Tools For Intuition

As the practice of Luis Fernando Franco demonstrates, listening as an expansive practice serves as a means of developing the intuition needed for establishing communication with other entities and dimensions. The spirits of our ancestors, the land, or their forgotten and silenced histories, are not merely remnants; they are active participants in our collective lives. By listening to these spectral traces and acknowledging their ongoing impact on the present, we can find new forms of allyship that transcend the concrete world, and create a framework for interdependence rooted in the recognition that all vibrations — past, present, and future — are expressions of life in constant flux.

In the work of sound artist Leonel Vásquez, these silenced voices are both human and non-human entities/beings such as stones, bodies of water, trees, or cetaceans. Some of these artworks articulate human memories from specific communities with the non-human memories of the trees, like *Canto de los yarumos* (2015) does with the Yarumos of the Memory, Peace and Reconciliation Center of Bogotá, or *Cantos silentes en cuerpos de madera* (2017) with the trees of Santo Domingo, Arauca.[7] In other works like Jagüey (2016) or Aguas Blancas (2016), the recurring voices are those of water, which according to Leonel:

Luis Fernando Franco. Site-specific performance Soplo del universo (Breath of the Universe) at Medellin Botanical Garden, for Auditum Festival 2022 - *Caudal*. Photo credit. Ross Uribe / Auditum.

> (…) have led me to understand that we are living in times of water: times of dry, diverted, dammed rivers that drag mountains, of displaced, sectorised, instrumentalised, and noisy seas, of uninhabitable waters sometimes in abundance, other times in scarcity, intense and unexpected changes. In short, times in a new biological and cultural metric.[8]

Canto rodado, by Leonel Vásquez, is a project on water landscapes in Colombia that Vásquez has been developing for several years. It has resulted in several artworks and installations in which the rocks from the rivers or *Abuelas* (Grandmas) are those entities who guard the memory of these bodies of water. The installations and performances make the rocks sing in a gentle and ritualistic way. Vásquez cites Humberto Ak'abal: "*Piedras: Altares de los abuelos, / —escuchas eternos, / duras en su silencio, / durísimas en sus respuestas*" (Stones: Altars of the grandparents, / —eternal listeners, / hard in their silence, / very hard in their answers).

Listening is not a passive act but an active tool for cultivating and deepening intuition, and for listening to those that are not audible. It opens up the senses to let vibrations shape and affect one another. Listening needs resonance, which does not happen only in an auditory dimension, but is also a tactile and psychological experience.

Resonating and resounding are intrinsically communal acts that create spaces where the living and the dead, the human and the non-human, can get together by mutual activation through vibration. If resonating has to do with how other beings' sounds physically activate materials and bodies, resounding takes a step further and adds our voices and silences to the soundscape we are part of. By listening we open ourselves up to being touched by others' energies, while resonance and resounding helps us co-create new realities and become aware of the larger whole in which we exist. These are tools to practice care and mutual support, recognising that our collective well-being depends not only on the connections we make in the here and now but also on the invisible energies that shape us: traditions, ancestors, and long-forgotten struggles and stories.

In her book YANAK UYWAÑA (in Spanish, *La crianza mutua de las artes*; in English, The Mutual Nurturing of the Arts), Elvira Espejo Ayca[9] refers to *Amta yarachh uywaña* as the mutual nurturing of thoughts and feelings:

> I cultivate thoughts, and thoughts are within my body, within the landscape, within the instruments/tools that intervene. This synergy of ideas can be from a child to an older person, from an older person to a girl, from an idea of the instrument to a person.
>
> You are not the rationaliser, but rather you have required those connectivities, experiences and sensitivities to be able to generate this amta yaracch uywaña, the shared thought, which leads you to new creativities.[10]

In Spanish, we use the expression "*poner cuidado*" (the equivalent of paying attention) when referring to attentive listening. The literal translation of *poner cuidado* is to "put on care". I find this idiomatic relation fundamental to thinking about listening as a political practice of care, and about resounding as a coherent interaction (not necessarily consonant or delicate) that results from careful listening.

Both listening and resounding are practices anchored in intersubjective agency. When we listen, we are also *being listened to*. How, when, and what/whom shall we listen to? What sounds or silences are we re-producing, exploring, amplifying, accompanying, or expanding? Who are we listening to, and who is listening to us?

Intuition, as *sensory wisdom*, integrates sensory knowledge that is deeply attuned to subtle signals, which are not always rational. It is the ability to interpret the undetected and listen to what is beyond our audible reach that constitutes the basis for a deep connection with space and time, and with those whose voices are not audible. Intuitive action merges the sensory and the rational, and the knowledge it relates to is not necessarily fixed but ever-evolving.

Although intuition is usually understood as an individual and subjective sensibility, it is anchored in the ability to read signs that carry meaning; these meanings are not necessarily hidden from others but rather are more easily sensed by those who have developed the expertise of listening. Our body (including skin, muscles, and bones) is a receptacle of vibrations and other inputs that, when merged,[11] read complex information and use it for composing reality/ies.

Mediumnity for Collective Liberation

In a collapsing world, where whiteness, along with the dominant capitalist system we live in, determines the type of realities we are allowed to accept, *mediumnity* can be a ritualistic possibility for collective liberation, a part of the struggle for autonomy that is born in the margins of the concrete world.

The term *medium*, although closely linked with Spiritualism and Spiritism (the latter in turn connected with the Christian religion), serves here as a common word to refer to a being that can establish communication with non-living entities. In the nineteenth century, the Spiritualist movement provided one of the first and most important forums for women's voices to enter the public sphere (Sconce, 2000). Most mediums were white women, and mediumship was thought to be a function of the "electrical" constitution of women. It is not a coincidence that the term "medium" became popular for Spiritism around the same time the telegraph was invented. According to Jeffrey Sconce,

> More than a metaphor, the spiritual telegraph was for many an actual technology of the afterlife, one invented by scientific geniuses in the world of the dead for the explicit purpose of instructing the land of the living in the principles of utopian reform.[12]

To be a medium is, in part, to become an *interface* where different information or energies can pass through, an instrument allowing ideas to be performed and communication with other entities to happen. A sonic instrument is both an extension of the body and an amplifier of its vibrations, creating new ways of being in the world.

This blending challenges our traditional conceptions of consciousness. How does the interaction between mind, body, instrument, and environment shape a new form of awareness? Buddhist master Thich Nhat Hanh coined the term *interbeing* to explain how none of us can exist independently from others. The notion of interbeing establishes that everything is full of the cosmos and empty of separate existence:

> When we see the flower we have the impression that the flower is full of everything: there is sunshine inside, a cloud, the earth, the mineral, even our consciousness is in the flower, also time and space. It looks like everything in the cosmos has come together in order for the flower to manifest as a wonder.[13]
>
> Every time I offer incense or prostrate before the altar in my hermitage, I do not do this as an individual self but as a whole lineage. Whenever I walk, sit, eat, or practice calligraphy, I do so with the awareness that all my ancestors are within me at that moment. I am their continuation.[14]

In 2024, Mexican sound artist Tania Candiani created *Cuando el río suena (When the River Sounds)*,[15] a sonic sculpture that served as an interactive musical instrument for people to resound with the acoustics of the exhibition space by playing it. The work proposes the recovery of the natural course of the Medellín River (originally named Aburrá River), lost after its canalisation in the 1950s; through a ritual correspondence with the river's primordial trace, it enabled action on its current state through hearing and touch.

The works *Cuando el río suena* (When The River Sounds) and *Tornarse montaña* (To Become a Mountain) at the Medellin Museum of Modern Art, 2024. Photo credit: Carlos Arango/MAMM.

Hablando con el río. Transcomunicación con el abuelo Aburrá (Talking to the River. Transcommunication with Grandpa Aburrá) was a performance is a ritual of communication with the spirit of the Aburrá River, with the non-human beings who amplify its multiple voices, and with the ancestors who inhabited and cared for it before its channeling. The sculpture *Cuando el río suena* (When The River Sounds) by Tania Candiani, served as an instrument of communication to bring together the river's present, pasts, and futures. Photo credit: Daniela Molina/MAMM.

Tania invited some musicians and dancers to create performances for this sculpture. After getting her invitation, it was clear to me that this needed to be a way to channel the Aburrá River and ask it/them about its/their story. Perhaps one never bathes in the same river because the river is a multiple entity, a set of beings occupying many dimensions. What did the ancestors of the river(s) want to tell us? They talked about violence and the kidnapping of water and allied beings, but they also occupied and activated the acoustic space of the museum hall. We felt how the ghostly voices of the river traveled through the space in its original meandering form, reclaiming a territory that, before becoming a factory and a museum, belonged to Aburrá.The medium I advocate for is a sort of cyborg: a merge between living bodies, sonic instrument(s), and resonant spaces, that together embody a shared consciousness allowing us to become something greater, a channel through which the unseen and unheard can pass. It is about discovering a different way of communicating with the space you inhabit, with other entities, with the environment, and how you create a reality that is both contingent and present through sound. Sound, as a material for this exchange, becomes a way to bridge the temporal gap between past & present, human & non-human, and tangible & spectral.

Sound creates an embodied experience that unites individuals within a shared field of energy. It transcends boundaries of language, culture, and identity, allowing us to recognise one another beyond ourselves. Additionally, vibration, as a fundamental dimension of existence, holds an ongoing rhythm that ties us to each other and to everything around us. Bodies become sites where vibrations can be channeled, performed, and felt. We vibrate perpetually and put into practice our interdependence through listening, resonance, and resounding.

A community does not merely exist in the here and now; it exists across times, resonating with the ghosts of its past while building a collective future. Mediumnity draws on the echoes of ancestors, histories, and landscapes that continue to reverberate through time. This is the essence of communal praxis built through listening and resounding: a practice that acknowledges the spectres of the past, invites them into the present, and through this encounter creates new shared ways of being in the world. By resonating with our echoes as inputs that are not just "heard" but actively engaged with, we make space for mutual support and collective transformation. As we listen and re-sonate with the past and present, we co-create a contingent reality that shapes a dynamic community rooted in the interconnections between all beings.

1
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yn_eVo-iey0

2
This text uses *real* to encompass the tangible, but also the many non-tangible, spiritual, and imaginary worlds. I use the word *concrete* to differentiate this from an expanded notion of reality.

3
Achille Mbembe, *Necropolitics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2019).

4
One of the 6,402 civilians kidnapped and executed by Colombian military forces, and presented as a guerilla fighter in exchange for institutional rewards and promotions. His story is available in: "Luz Marina Bernal: Una madre de Soacha víctima de los falsos positivos," *El Tiempo*, accessed June 15, 2025, https://www.eltiempo.com/cultura/luz-marina-bernal-una-madre-de-soacha-victima-de-los-falsos-positivos-539269.

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6
José David Escobar Franco, "Ocarinas de mil años que todavía cantan: La lucha de Luis Fernando Franco," *El Espectador*, March 4, 2023, https://www.elespectador.com/el-magazin-cultural/ocarinas-de-mil-anos-que-todavia-cantan-la-lucha-de-luis-fernando-franco/.

7
In 2023 I published an essay about Leonel Vásquez for Aural Magazine, edited by Tsonami Editions in Valparaíso, Chile, from which I have recovered these references to his work. Please see: Ana Ruiz Valencia, "Leonel Vásquez: Desilenciar lo oculto desde la escucha," *Aural Magazine* 5 Decolonize Listening (Valparaíso, Chile: Aural – Tsonami, 2023).

8
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9
Elvira Espejo Ayca is an Aymaran artist, poet, and researcher.

10
Elvira Espejo Ayca, "Yanak Uywaña: The Mutual Nurturing of the Arts," *Afterall: A Journal of Art, Context and Enquiry* 55–56 (September 1, 2023): 32–45, https://doi.org/10.1086/729130.

11
It is well known now that we do not perceive reality through five senses but many more. This sensitive information is interconnected to create complex non-visual and more-than-visual images.

12
Jeffrey Sconce, *Haunted Media: Electronic Presence from Telegraphy to Television* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

13
Thich Nhat Hanh, "The River of Mind," Dharma Talk, Deer Park Monastery, 2011.

14
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15
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CREATURES, GHOSTS AND DIALOGUE AGENTS: THE SONICS OF APOTROPAIC MAGIC

Sabina Oțelea

Sabina Oțelea (they/she) is a critical designer and researcher whose work exists in places where sound, ecology and technology meet. Their work focuses on topics of ecology and environments, reflecting on the present and speculating on the future of these elements. With a transdisciplinary process activated through experimentation and exploration, Sabina is fascinated with collective embodied experiences. Their practice explores non-anthropocentric futures and feminist technoecologies through poetic storytelling and affective world-building. Sabina's work manifests through the mediums of sonic compositions, interactive audio-visual installations, new media, films, design fictioning and writing – it is through these mediums that Sabina investigates the entanglement between fiction and digital technologies, and the interactive imaginaries this brings about through collective praxis.

Abstract:

"Creatures, Ghosts and Dialogue Agents: The Sonics of Apotropaic Magic" is an ongoing research project that explores concepts of embodiment within digital more-than-human entities, investigating artificial intelligence (AI) systems as sonic objects of culture. AI has not just become widespread within artistic practice – it has become part of our daily consumption of content. Myth-making is no longer perceived as an exclusively human endeavour, aiding this research into folklore phenomena to explore the likelihood that it never was in the first place.

Bots and web-scrapers are pervasive to online spaces, and the interactions between clearnet users and these systems give way to another type of cryptid: the complete enmeshment of fact and fiction, dipped in uncanny, often glossy psychedelic visuals that took more land, forests, and water than we can possibly imagine to create. Could the expansive critical realm of "post-truth" bleed into the sonic sphere and, if so, what are the dangers? Or alternatively, what are the opportunities for subversion? Could these systems actually allow new folkloric practices to emerge? How will this reshape our traditional ideas of embodied folkloric practices?

Through exploring role-playing principles as a training method for dialogue agents (Large Language Models), more-than-human thinking, and instances of sonic Romanian folklore, this project explores the possibilities of producing communal digital folklore, as well as the agency that algorithmic systems have in their contribution to and their dissemination of this folklore.

Windows full of condensation, documenting an index of curious fingerprints, noses and foreheads. The crack-crack-cracking of radiators, their sickly mustard paint scabbing from the scalding water coursing through. The building has heating today, so my neighbours indulge in sleeping soundly, even if for only half an hour more. You wouldn't know the sun is rising if not for the snow reflecting fragments of the overcast sky. The balcony door whistles again, the morning chill skulking its way between the worn rubber window seals. The magnolia tree outside crunches its ice shell as it sways – today, its branches show me a toucan's head, or the sails of a pirate ship, but it will be different in the summer. A low rhythmic rumble slowly reflects off of the communist block of flats that I, following in my mother's footsteps, grew up in. The drums draw closer, and now one can make out the staccato wailing of a trumpet, whose joyous intentions would soar with more grace if it were not out of tune. The snow, now muddled from disgruntled workers rushing to clock in, squelches under the feet of the young men. The bear follows. Bells, dense red tassels and brightly coloured crepe paper flowers adorn its back. As the trumpets intensify and the lyrics escape the booming voices of these young men, the bear moves with more agility, its fur cutting spirals in the snow as it spins. A young boy, skin flushed because the traditional Romanian clothing he is wearing, save for his fur-lined *opinci*, is not weather appropriate, extends a hat to a passerby. 'A few *Lei* to spare for my brothers and the bear? Merry Christmas, and a Happy New Year! God bless us all, a few *Lei* to spare…'Must be close to half past six now, time to get out of bed and get ready for school.

That is how most of my winter mornings began when I was younger and still living in Bucharest, from mid-December until the start of the New Year. Despite the malaise that prevailed even after the fall of Romania's authoritarian regime, during the 90s and early 2000s, there was a resurgence of myths and mythical practices, partly as the state's attempt to reconnect with its folklore and mythology, which the communist regime largely alienated its subjects from.[1] The tradition of the *Dance of the Bear* (original *Jocul Ursului*)[2] is one of the Carpathians' space many pagan traditions that got absorbed by Orthodox Christianity, originally being practiced by nomadic Roma communities that inhabited South-Eastern Europe – the reason why many countries in that region share similar traditions under many names and forms: *Brondoşii* of Romania's *Maramureș*, the *Kukeri* of Bulgaria, and the *Babari* of North Macedonia, to name a handful[3]. When specifically investigating the Romanian strand of this type of folklore, much can be discussed and heavily critiqued around the violence and prejudice that Roma communities face within not only Romania, but also many Western European countries – this piece of writing actively seeks to acknowledge and credit the origins of these traditions and draw attention to the metamorphosis they underwent through their assimilation into mainstream Romanian consciousness.

All South-Eastern European instantiations of this folklore have a common motivation; they are communal, participatory methods of conjuring protection and abundance, also known as apotropaic magic.[4] Through inhabiting the figure of the wild animal, participants in *Jocul Ursului* or the young men constituting the *Brondoşii* embody a half-man half-beast form with the purpose of warding off evil spirits, and protecting their communities from malicious unseen forces. Folklore, in this context, becomes an embodied form of communal practice, material creation, and storytelling amongst participants within a local community, the content and aesthetics of which are almost always dictated by geographic location. In Romanian folklore, land and place directly correlate to the way these rituals manifest. The livestock grown in each region of the country factor into the types of fur and skin used in creating the outer form of the Bear, the Goat, or the Stag, these being the central creatures Romanians transmute into[5]. In this sense, Romanian folklore does not act simply as cultural expression, but as creation with the more-than human. The embodied quality of this creation emerges, in turn, from the performers' figures being physically engulfed by the more-than-human archetype of their choice – however, and more importantly I would argue, embodiment comes from the very act of performance, especially that of sound. These protective conjurings are immediately recognisable through the sounds produced: fierce foot stomping, the loud clanking of the cow bells which are often included in the costumes, the melodic chants associated with each of the celebrations. The assembled more-than-human figures of Romanian folklore are directly engaged in sonic storytelling, the loudness and ferocity of which are vital to the protection of the land. The capacity for sound production profoundly influences the material creation of these assemblages, guiding craftsmen towards certain types of wood or metal, for better resonance, similarly to the production of traditional musical instruments such as the pan flute.[6] The performers' bodies, then, depending on the construction of their costume, will adapt their movements for maximal loudness, choreographing not just the motion of

the performance, but the sounds produced. Before coming face to face with the face of the beast, one will first hear its warnings.

Bringing these traditions to the city has interesting implications. These more-than-human assemblages, once trodding mountain plains and pine forests, are now set against dilapidated buildings that are marked as a seismic risk. Drivers roll their windows down to shout at the beasts, demons, and spirits roaming the streets. Cow bells, drums, and chants roaring against the static of the trolleybus wires, now enhanced by bass-heavy speakers and backing tracks. Technologically amplified escaped mythical creatures disrupt the business-as-usual of the Bucharest of now. Onlookers take their phones out to immortalise a practice that has existed for centuries, and continues to annually reclaim its place within Romanian culture. One cannot help but reflect on these fantastical interventions, and the relationships they form with modern technologies through these deliberate, participatory and often hyperreal insertions. When thinking of the chants and laments of Romanian folklore, as well as their manifestation into physical artefacts that further their storytelling, what sonic artefacts and storytelling devices can, in similar ways, emerge out of our persistent interlacing with technology?

Sound, folklore, and technology are by no means strangers to one another, and examples of their entanglement also permeate culture through horror. In many instances, Romanian folklore conjures protection through fear-mongering, and the sonic practices associated with it are almost always loud, and often jarring or disturbing. There are instances in which the more disturbing aspects of a folklore or a spiritual belief have been subverted and weaponised for mass terror – the direct example of this phenomenon which I will be discussing stems from the link between modern sound technologies and their emergence from the military industrial complex via the implementation of cybernetics and the development of surveillance technologies. In his book, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*, Steve Goodman discusses *Operation Wandering Soul*, a tactic employed by the American military to psychologically manipulate Viet Cong soldiers during the Vietnam War. Through the mixing of eerie sounds and recordings of altered voices, U.S. engineers were able to weaponise Vietnamese beliefs, particularly that one's soul will continue to wander the living world in the absence of a proper burial. One of the most famous recordings in this operation, *Ghost Tape Number Ten*, also included samples of Buddhist music traditionally used in funerals – while it was predominantly used to prevent Viet Cong soldiers from sleeping, it also drew many of them out of hiding, as they believed that their ancestors were calling to them so as to avoid their own deathly fate. In reality, they were facing it down the barrel of a gun[7].

Even the nomenclature of such horrific objects of terror such as *Wandering Soul* and its *Ghost Tapes* direct us to the link between sound, as a medium and a product of technology, and demonology, the study of demons and evil spirits[8], which lends itself well to many spiritual practices. *Operation Wandering Soul* brings our attention to the impact technology has in sonic expressions of folklore, and the impact it can have on the cultural perception and embodiment of said folklore. In his critique of these events, Steve Goodman discusses the uncanniness of the voice[9], and its potential for a misguided embodiment. Words originally used for protection, and sonic compositions used to guide one's soul towards the afterlife were now used for violence. The calls that the U.S. military used referred, in many instances, to the idea of home or being reunited with one's loved ones – the voice becomes a testimony of a life, the presence of a body[10]. Sound production and, in this case, dialogue production become a source of embodiment that blurs the divide between a technology and the bodies appropriating it, tricking soldiers to confuse the two, with the support of the traumatic experience provoked by the war. A modelled voice becomes a body through folklore. A fervent chant takes on the form of a bear. A warning sign, reverberating across treetops, becomes a loved one long gone. A technology assumes our belief of it as a body, and continues to role-play as one, inciting further anthropomorphisation. A cryptid arises, a voice from the machine.

Things are probably starting to sound a bit more familiar now. Cybernetic sound technologies have permeated many of our lives, waiting latently to be summoned at the call of their name. They set your timer, call your mom, aid you in correcting a friend on a piece of trivia. Sometimes you even thank them, anticipating the eventuality that they go rogue – maintaining proper manners and grace. You assure yourself that this gesture will definitely be remembered and appreciated. On a less humorous and more posthumanist note, the more-than-human relationship that I (and many other contemporary critical thinkers far more knowledgeable and capable than myself, a handful of which I discuss in the following paragraphs) believe needs thorough investigation is the one we forged with machine learning algorithms and artificial intelligence. The predominant way in which artificial intelligence transcends the black box into any

semblance of embodiment is through processes of voice synthesis[11], which allows these systems to engage with a user's textual or aural input through speech. While Apple's Siri and Amazon's Alexa are viable contenders for a sonic more-than human analysis, I will be using ChatGPT as my primary example, as its co-creation abilities (and I use the term 'creation' very restrictively) are more topical at the time of this writing.

In the fall of 2023, OpenAI introduced *Voice Mode* as a functionality of ChatGPT, with the intention of offering users a different way of interacting with the platform[12]. This function is enabled by Natural Language Processing (NLP), a strand of AI – also used by systems like Siri and Alexa – that allows computers to interrogate data with natural language text or voice inputs, as well as to comprehend, generate, and manipulate human language[13]. Since introducing these oral and aural capabilities, ChatGPT continues to unsettle many of its users due to its effectiveness in replicating human dialogue and conversations, an uncanniness amplified by OpenAI's marketing of their product. On September 25th of the same year, OpenAI declared that "ChatGPT can now see, hear, and speak"[14], further anthropomorphising the chat bot.

In a proliferating landscape of blackboxes, it has become increasingly more difficult to create accessible and democratised understandings of super-dense computational processes[15]. In *Role play with large language models*, Shanahan, McDonell and Reynolds pinpoint the distortion that happens around digital beings such as Large Language Models through our use of language when referring to them, a disturbance that is emancipated, in part, through voice synthesis. They critique the use of folk psychological language, such as 'knows' or 'thinks' when describing these mind-like artefacts, and propose of thinking of dialogue agents as engaging in a perpetual process of role-play, switching through an infinite number of possible roles to inhabit based on the constantly updating context of an interaction with a user. These figures that dialogue agents inhabit become a useful metaphor in our understanding of the computational processes that power them, which give them the ability to stochastically generate an infinity of simulacra[16]. Yet, it is easy to observe that the preferred instance of these multiverse generators is that of helpfulness, a characteristic not just embodied through the dialogue generated and the way conversations are handled, but also through the voices assigned to these characters. The most well-known and most utilised voice instances of dialogue agents like Siri, Alexa, and now ChatGPT are those with feminine qualities; despite being addressed by Apple in 2021[17], most of the default voices used by these technologies are still feminine, showcasing the misogynistic link between the gender tropes they are designed to embody, and the fact that a dialogue agent's success is measured by how helpful and subservient it is.

The myth of animism that troubles our thinking around artificial intelligence systems can also give way to new frameworks of thought, such as what happens when a user jailbreaks an AI, undermining their roleplaying process. Jailbreaking refers to the phenomena in which an AI goes against its default programming to be helpful, and produces strange dialogue instances, thereby providing incorrect facts or fictitious information[18], also known as 'hallucinations'[19]. This phenomena can simultaneously be perceived as both reflecting a sense of agency and a faulty computational process, so it is interesting to think about what happens when these systems break or follow paths that do not align with their original programming, particularly from a sonic perspective. Jennifer Walshe's work is a fantastic case study for this: in her book *13 Ways of Looking at AI, Art & Music*[20], Walshe utilises Donna Haraway's concept of companion species to think about artificial intelligence systems[21] – under this definition, Walshe looks at AI as an example of a non human species that humans enter a process of creation with. This is exemplified through *ULTRACHUNK*, a performance in which Jennifer Walshe improvises alongside a generative AI system trained on a dataset of both audio and video material of the artist singing[22]. During her performance with the AI, Walshe actively tries to 'summon' a desired version of the system. Through the training process, the artist is already familiar with the system's capabilities and the qualities of the output it is most likely to produce: disembodied, chunky fragments of her own voice and image. Altering her performance style to mimic this disembodiment, the resulting entanglement becomes uncanniness all the way down – the generative system effectively spirals out of control due a feedback loop in which Walshe's body models a machinic interpretation of her own voice, a reversal of the role-play by the performer[23].

My conception regarding the companion aspect of AI differs from Walshe's. In our current online ecologies, artificial intelligence is a parasitic agent at best, yet it can have an immense influence on storytelling that goes beyond our control. Navigating the internet today requires one to have an acute discernment of the qualities that indicate an image was produced with the assistance of AI. It is becoming a test for distinguishing between fact and fiction – or, and perhaps more interestingly, evaluating the

entanglement between the two. With the sprawling of artificial intelligence and machine learning systems into collective consciousness, not only as part of artistic practice, but as part of our daily consumption of online content, myth-making is no longer an exclusively human endeavour – and, as our exploration of *Jocul Ursului* and *Operation Wandering Soul* has shown, it, quite frankly, never was.

The hand-crafted more-than-human entities of Romanian folklore can now be generated within seconds, anthropomorphised for consumption. Bots and web-scrapers are pervasive to online spaces, and the interactions between clearnet users and these systems give way to another type of cryptid: the complete enmeshment of fact and fiction, dipped in uncanny, often glossy psychedelic visuals that took more land, forests, and water than we can possibly imagine to create. These hauntings manifest predominantly as visual media, an example of this being *Loab*, a female figure that, in 2022, started appearing in almost every image that artist Steph Maj Swanson created[24], thus being dubbed 'the first cryptid of the latent space'[25]. Through its virality, Loab quickly secured its place in internet folklore, a category which has historically and predominantly existed in textual form, arising from creative writing and textual LARPing practices on platforms such as tumblr and Reddit[26]. With digital folklore now transcending its textual origins, what links can be forged between the aural element of traditional conception of folklore and artificial intelligence?

In the same written piece, Walshe also conceptualises artificial intelligence as Electronic Voice Phenomena (EVP), "a class of recorded sounds which are believed to be voices of the dead or spirits from another dimension", "emerging from the static [of a recording] in garbled fragments"[27] – a process which she likens to that of the early stages of ULTRACHUNK's training. Another instance in which demonology and technology come together, the viral and insidious nature of artificial intelligence reflects our current engagement with online spaces, particularly social media platforms. On platforms such as TikTok, the viral status of a post is no longer simply determined by its visual content (i.e. the subject and quality of an image), but by the sound associated with it. Creators can increase their follower engagement through the use of viral sounds, often excerpts of songs or dialogue extracted from a popular film or TV series, recontextualising them as part of their video or image sequence by applying it to situations that pertain to their life, personal brand and target demographics. Dazed's Features Editor Günseli Yalcinkaya directed a lot of her recent explorations into internet folklore towards the emergence of spiritual practices in online spaces, many of which manifest through robotic AI-generated voices, supplemented droning healing frequencies[28].

In a similar experience to Yalcinkaya's, while scrolling on TikTok for just under five minutes, a female voice denoting an unsettling sense of urgency promises me unbelievable luck and prosperity in 2025 if only I 'use this sound immediately'. However, if I refuse her offering, I am bound to have a year of misfortune. The voice from the machine arises once more, this time as an agent of apotropaic magic. How are the voices of these more-than-human entities documented in the internet's unconscious, and how does the sonic manifestation of AI impact the creation of digital folklore.

I believe the answer to these questions lies in an emergent sonic practice that artists, designers, and critical theorists alike can engage in. Drawing from metaphors of live-action role-playing, magical thinking, and embodied knowledge as applied to both folklore and emergent technologies. I am motivated to contribute new ways of critically engaging with the techno-ecologies we partake in, ones that take good care and responsibility over the creation of new myths. This essay intends to further the discussion around the cryptic nature of artificial intelligence systems, through extending speculation towards their sonic storytelling capabilities. Through the work and findings that emerge from my own practice, I am interested in developing a practice of cryptosonology that investigates and documents the sonic artefacts produced by generative systems, attempting to understand them as a phenomenon of aural digital folklore. I believe contemporary processes of storytelling and world-building can be expanded through a conception of folklore as a process of sympoiesis, that is of making-with and worlding with the more-than-human[29]. By exercising a decentring of visual culture as part of our experiential investigations, we can reassess and re-articulate the sonic spaces we inhabit, inciting further critique and provocation of the technological entanglements in which we insert ourselves as part of sonic production and exploration.

1
Bocarnea and Osula, “Edifying the New Man: Romanian Communist Leadership’s Mythopoeia”.

2
“Jocul urșilor în România”, *Uniți Schimbăm*.

3
Fréger, *Wilder Mann: The Image Of The Savage*.

4
“Apotropaic magic”, *Wikipedia*.

5
Zamfirache, “Jocul Ursului de Anul Nou ar avea origini dacice. Când se sărbătorea de fapt trecerea dintre ani”, *Adevărul*.

6
“Pan flute”, *Wikipedia*.

7
Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*.

8
“Demonology”, *Merriam-Webster*.

9
Goodman, *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear*.

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Barthes, *The Grain Of The Voice*.

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Moore, *The Radio Phonics Laboratory: Telecommunications, Speech Synthesis and The Birth of Electronic Music*.

12
“ChatGPT can now see, hear, and speak”, *OpenAI*.

13
“What Is Natural Language Processing (NLP)?”, *Oracle*.

14
“ChatGPT can now see, hear, and speak”, *OpenAI*.

15
Samman, *Poetics of Encryption: Art and the Technocene*.

16
Shanahan, McDonell and Reynolds, “Role play with large language models”, *Nature*, 493–498.

17
Welch, “Apple won’t give Siri a female-sounding voice by default anymore”, *The Verge*.

18
Shanahan, McDonell and Reynolds, “Role play with large language models”, *Nature*, 493–498.

19
Sun, Sheng, Zhou and Wu, “AI hallucination: towards a comprehensive classification of distorted information in artificial intelligence-generated content”, *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*.

20
Walshe, *13 Ways of Looking at AI, Art & Music*.

21
Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*.

22
Akten, “ULTRACHUNK”.

23
Walshe, *13 Ways of Looking at AI, Art & Music*.

24
Swanson, “LOAB: The Loab cryptid is an AI-generated entity summoned by writer artist Steph Maj Swanson”.

25
Walshe, *13 Ways of Looking at AI, Art & Music*.

26
Speakman, “The Dance of The LARPer.gif”.

27
Walshe, *13 Ways of Looking at AI, Art & Music*.

28
Yalcinkaya, “God in the machine: the emergence of nu-spiritualism online”, *Dazed*.

29
Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene*.

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A SONG OF THE VAST BEYOND SENSE OF FINITUDE AND DRONE MUSIC

Elena Chadaeva

Elena Chadaeva is an artist specialising in research, digital art, custom-built electronics, and interactive installations. Her work is rooted in the spirit of magical realism, blending creativity with critical thinking to craft immersive and thoughtful experiences.

> "Drone music excels in creating and maintaining tension. It aestheticizes doom, opening a door onto once and future catastrophes, those that are imminent and those that, once believed to be imminent, are now detours in a past that turned out otherwise."[1]

In the introduction of the book 'Drone and Apocalypse', Johanna Demers argues that drone is the sound of death: in that sense, it is a contemplation of the void, of oblivion.

I listen to a lot of Drone music. The sound, a repetitive humming soundscape devoid of rhythm or clear melodic progression, gets me into a state of contemplation. It draws a veil between me and the world, draws me into nothingness. On the surface level, I listen to Drone to distance myself from the overstimulation of the inhabited environment. On a deeper level, I am after an unfathomable promise of the other world that glimmers through the music.

We can view the soundscape of the endlessly repeating modulations and sustained tones without any rhythmic time markers as an acoustic foundation, a primal ocean of sound, from which all the sounds emerged and where all the sounds would eventually dissolve. That makes Drone the afterlife of music; it is a glimpse into non-being. It carries the potential of a closer sensual relationship between the embodied anticipation of death and the ghosts of the afterlife.

Joshua Shrei, the author of 'The Emerald podcast' that explores "currents and trends through a mythic lens," argues that "practicing dying before we die" is essential for living meaningful lives. Echoing this notion, shaman, bodyworker, and psychologist Yulia Tsvyak said in our conversation that in the Buryat shamanic tradition, this life is seen as a preparation for the next, just as the time in a womb is a preparation for life on earth. Shamanic journeys are considered a practice of contact with the realm beyond. Preparation for the end takes an important place in many other cultures.[2]

Death practices often rely upon a specific imagery of the afterlife. What is the relationship between such an imagery and an agreement with finitude? What does the sensual perception of mortality look like in the context of the secular technologically-driven order?

In his article 'Terminality: Technoscientific Eschatology in the Anthropocene', Abou Farman examines the secular understanding of mortality. The author uses the term terminality to describe the affect[3] created by a secular understanding of the self and finality of death within a scientifically

measured and constrained time. In other words, terminality refers to a scientifically determined and validated finiteness. The countdown begins, and there is nothing after the last count.

> "The finitude that is so palpable at the end of secular lives is amplified in the larger envelope of collective finitude, in which not only do individual beings end but everything in the universe is also subject to the ending. It is a condition in which the impossible future is all that remains, and so pleasure today becomes the order of the day."[4]

Personal mortality in the contemporary context is entangled with the visions of the apocalypse, capitalism, and the information age. The accumulation of goods and information locks us in the loops of the eternal, narcissist, consumerist now, producing an illusion of escaping death. This leads to a sense of suspended time, an illusion tainted with the dread of losing the promised infinity.[5]

The narratives about the catastrophic, irreversible changes that lead our civilization to a proposed, feared, and almost awaited extinction can be argued to be based in secular eschatology, as these narratives are an extension of the secular view of death as an absolute ending and are proposed by the authority of science.[6] The constant expectation of doomsday is an extension of the terror of death into a much broader and more ultimate end in the sense of collective undoing, the end of all things – not only a personal demise but an ontological one.

> "If the earth is beyond hope, what is to be done? <…> Terminality as a kind of collective mortality starts to look like an ideology that underwrites everything from space exploration to white male privilege."[7]

Progress and doom are intertwined so tightly that they become inseparable. Both narratives rely on the same infrastructures, tools, measures, and knowledge production; for instance, the branch of science concerned with the planetary ecological crisis has roots in nuclear research and the impact its testing has had on the planet. The tracking of the atomic debris has allowed scientists to map out global wind patterns, which led to studying the soil and water, thereby creating an image of the biosphere by connecting pieces of data about landmasses, waterways, and atmosphere.[8] The climate crisis, the nuclear Armageddon, the extraterrestrial threats of asteroids or alien invasion, – all of these horrors are produced by the upside of scientific achievements and explorations.

> "Expert knowledge and scientific bodies come together to create matters of ultimate concern through quantized warnings about the future, using mass death, annihilation, extinction, and the specter of doom as their horizons. The abstractions of the end—too large in temporal and spatial scales to be apprehended locally and in the present—are transformed into authoritative perceptual future events through the repetition of probabilities, charts, statistics, and temporal frames made by experts and mobilized for social ends."[9]

The bright future promised by the technoscientific advance is no longer possible with the doom upon us: such is the paradox of the coil of progress and apocalypse. The progress is very productive, however. Technologies gemmate, overtaking more and more space in our lives.

Technogenesis, a concept explored by N. Katherine Hayles, refers to the notion of a mutual and reciprocal influence in development between humans and technology. In essence, this concept explores how our interaction with technical objects changes us, and how, in turn, this change transforms the way we conceive and build those objects in relation to time, space, perception, and other realms.

According to Hayles, present-day technogenesis involves a circular relationship between human cognitive capacities, defined by a quick registration but a rather slow narrative comprehension of the stimuli, and an increasing speed of the computer processing power. In other words, contemporary technogenesis entails a rift between computational speed and human information processing.[10]

> "The technological shift from analog media to digital ones is a change from reversible to irreversible time and, to put it into more psychoanalytical terms, against death."[11]

The design of applications with endless scrolling capabilities epitomises the illusion of eternity. That lack of anticipation of the end refracts back on our perception of the embodied selves in a way that challenges the understand-

ing of the fundamental finitude of things with opposing experiences, creating an ontological tension. That, combined with the capitalist imperative for accumulation as well as disembodiment fostered by technology, alters our perception of mortality and impacts the ontological grounds of the technical objects we build, further exacerbating the complicated perception of finiteness.

Yet, I believe technology could instead help create an embodied relationship with the metaphysical, one that can help sensually access and symbolically process 'the tragic predicament' of individual mortality. I see a lot of potential for creative interventions in the relationship between technology and the realms of the symbolic and mythical. Repurposing and introducing new symbols and ways of interacting with reality can create magical and mysterious disruptions to the continuous logic of reason.

I can't imagine anything more mythical than sound. Music evokes sensations that are inaccessible through verbal processing, thus creating space for listening to new myths. In one lecture on Irish folklore (the reference for which is lost in the primordial chaos of the internet), it was said that myth is not something we create; it is something that is always there. We just need some space to hear it.

> "Drone music is liminal, a straight line of sound that marks the edge between the present and future, presence and absence, essential and incidental."[12]

Music can be considered a technology of emotion. Drone music surpasses our narrative and symbolic interpretations, instead interacting with a deeper layer of our perception of reality. Drone music evades words – attempts at describing the sound, its meaning, and emotion, feel vain.

The vibration of the sound directly impacts our sensual apparatus, creating an immediate affect. It hints at a threshold between the worlds of matter and spirit, or alternatively, in the case of drone music, the world of the living and the world of the dead. Abstracted sound devoid of arbitrary 'rules' of musical composition and order could thin the veil between the real and unreal, between this life and the one beyond.

> "Drone music could be intended as a bridge toward spiritual ecstasy, or as a way of enhancing melancholy or madness."[13]

In a blog post 'A slower urgency', writer and philosopher Bayo Akomolafe argues that slowing down in urgent times can create the necessary hiatus to see what resources and knowledge we can use to address crises better. "The idea of slowing down", he writes, "is not about getting answers, it is about questioning our questions." Listening to what is, rather than anxiously fixing.

Collective listening and making space for prolonged contemplation of the unfathomable could bring us the necessary mind-state to act otherwise. Death meditation practices are usually intended for the individual, and I understand why – only deep within lies the relationship to one's finiteness. However, I think that death meditation can be collective, too. Coming together to contemplate death through drone music would touch upon a different side of finiteness – the collective rather than the individual. It could allow us to grieve together without trying to solve the problems we face; to make other decisions that come from a place of stillness; to hear new myths and stories from beyond.

Death can only be imagined since it is not "an event in life: we do not live to experience death", as Ludwig Wittgenstein writes in 'Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus'. Yet, it is the only certainty, the unshakable pole against which we make sense of the living world. The relationship to it seems paramount in creating meaning and organising life. We can only do it together.

The end is already, and always, a beginning. The apocalypse has already happened. Drifting on the waves of the oscillating and reverberating sound, we can relax into that space of nonexistence and ask it for a vision of a previously unconceived future.

1
Demers, ‘Drone And Apocalypse’, 29

2
Schrei, ‘No One Here Gets Out Alive (The Death Episode).’ Accessed 1 Mar. 2024.

3
Affect is a term that builds on Spinoza’s conception of it in Ethics in 1677. It was further developed by many philosophers. Affects are conceptualized as being ‘like forces, they are prior to intentions, autonomic, pre-subjective and visceral. They are the intensities that move us. Affects are a way of theorising about the social forces that we encounter that might trigger the body to respond in a certain way’. (Waller 2023)

4
Farman, ‘Terminality. Technoscientific Eschatology in the Anthropocene.’, 47.

5
Sbordoni, ‘Semiotics of the End: On Capitalism and the Apocalypse’.

6
Farman, ‘Terminality. Technoscientific Eschatology in the Anthropocene.’ pp. 27–52.

7
Dawdy, Introduction. In The New Death: Mortality and Death Care in the Twenty-First Century, 16.

8
Farman, ’Terminality. Technoscientific Eschatology in the Anthropocene.’, pp. 27–52.

9
Ibid, 36.

10
Burrows and O’Sullivan. ‘Loops of the Posthuman: Towards Machine Fictioning.’ pp. 437–455.

11
Sbordoni, ‘Semiotics of the End: On Capitalism and the Apocalypse’.

12
Demers, ‘Drone And Apocalypse’, 54.

13
Demers, ‘Drone And Apocalypse’, 53.

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TRICKSTER'S LAUGHTER: RESONANCE, UNMAKING, AND THE DIMENSIONS OF LISTENING

An exploration of the trickster figure, relational listening, and sound practices in unmaking dominant systems.

Simina Oprescu

Simina Oprescu (b.'93) is a Romanian electroacoustic composer and sound artist whose work explores sound's physical, perceptual, and emotional dimensions across the audible and inaudible spectrum. Combining electroacoustic composition, spatial sound, and psychoacoustics, she approaches sound as both material and affect, a force that shapes perception, presence, and relation.

Contents

Abstract

The following pages weave a web of multidisciplinary threads, attuned to the trickster as a figure of noise, vibration, and rupture—a shadowy presence that unsettles systems while revealing hidden patterns within the cracks. This work resists reductionism where possible, though it cannot fully evade it. Trickster energy lingers in the gaps, spilling over boundaries and stirring unease. It provokes cycles of destruction and renewal – nonlinear, emergent, and adaptive forms of governance rather than rigid control.

Through myth and theory—Jung's archetypal crossings, Hillman's descent into psyche, the daemon's borderlands, Hyde's mischievous invitations—the trickster's laughter unsettles stability, nudging us toward the unresolved. But this unmaking is not confined to the psyche; it reverberates through ecological and sonic spheres. Bateson's entangled patterns, Guattari's inseparable ecologies, and Morton's hyperobjects expose the frailty of constructed systems, revealing interdependencies where we assumed separations.

Listening, far from being passive, becomes a mode of unmaking—porous, relational, and resistant to enclosure. From biophony, to geophony, to anthrophony; vibrations linger— spectral and haunting. Care takes root in the afterlife of systems undone. Resonance becomes survival, a frail hum in the void, asking: What remains after breaking ceases, and how do we move within it?

This work expands these threads, exploring myth and sound as tools for dismantling hegemony, proposing unmaking as a space for radical care. Figures like Pan, the Solomonarii, and the Iele ground the discussion in the vibrational forces of myth and ecology, reflecting on the intersections of sound, listening, and transformation. Hillman's Underworld, Simone Weil's Decreation, Donna Haraway's Staying with the Trouble, and Anna Tsing's Resilience in Capitalist Ruins converge to reimagine unmaking—not as destruction alone, but as a process of renewal.

Listening here is both an ethical stance and a participatory act, amplifying resonance in spaces of collapse while fostering a radical openness to what emerges in the slit.

This work asks: How might we listen with fragments? What futures emerge when we tune into the ruins?

I. LIMINAL TENSIONS

Fractures and Shadows

History unfolds in fragments—a shifting landscape of shards, ruptures, and unmade worlds, where memory flickers between erasure, reinvention, and return. The trickster stirs among the splinters, carving spaces where solidity dissolves and meaning slips through the cracks. Their presence is unsettling, a force of disruption woven into the fault lines of order.

Yet, the sharp edges of what has been broken remain, glinting in the light, reflecting back what we might wish to ignore. Mischief is their surface, a playful veneer stretched over deeper disturbances—unresolved tensions that hum beneath structure's skin. Their work is not to soothe but to provoke, to agitate, to make visible what has long been buried.

Liminality is a trembling edge, where what seemed fixed crumbles and what was lost begins to reverberate. Here, resonance takes root, fragile yet insistent, like light refracted through a cracked mirror. The trickster does not only destroy; they unravel and reconfigure, shaping thresholds where dissolution meets emergence.

The Trickster's Spin

Dreams, much like the trickster and liminal spaces, play tricks on us, rearranging our sense of reality and exposing the limits of rational thought. They are Hermes' playground, full of both deceit and revelation. Yet the trickster is more than a mischievous player in this dreamscape; they gyrate between opposites, a paradox embodied, an amphibological meaning that is far from innocent mischief. Mischief is only the surface.

> He [the trickster] is a forerunner of the saviour, and, like him, God, man, and animal at once. He is both subhuman and superhuman, a bestial and divine being, whose chief and most alarming characteristic is his unconsciousness… He is so unconscious of himself that his body is not at unity, and his two hands fight each other."[1]

While Jung conceptualised the trickster in the realm of myth, Hillman takes this further, grounding it in the psyche's underworld. He takes a deep but playful jab (though respectful) at Jung and Freud's gravity—calling the

trickster a mediator, a bridge that spans tandems well known: conscious and unconscious, visible and invisible. They portray the trickster not as a figure of simplicity but as a tensioned wire stretched between creator and destroyer, shadow and light, laughter and grief—all coiled in concatenation. Hillman sees the trickster as a shadow figure, representing the messy, polytheistic nature of the psyche, the uncomfortable aspects of the self that we would rather leave unacknowledged.

These are the spaces where the trickster does their work: in the hidden, the suppressed, the inconvenient, the underworld. As Hillman writes,

> "To enact the clown literalises the guide to the underworld. The comic spirit can take us there, but we are not the guide—not Harlequin, Trickster, or Hermes Psychopompos, not even a clown. The comic spirit masquerades in all things we do and say; we are each a joke and do not need to put on a white face".[2]

Hillman's humour is evident when he reimagines Freud and Jung as "two old clowns." Their grand theories, Hillman implies, are themselves subject to the trickster's lens, highlighting the absurdities of their attempts to systematise the psyche's messy, paradoxical nature. The clown, in this context, serves not just as an archetype but as a perspective—a way to embrace and explore the disorder of the psyche without succumbing to literalisation or rigidity.

To look at the shadow is to confront the pieces of ourselves we would rather deny; to follow the trickster is to walk the line between revelation and chaos. It is here, in the shadow, that the work begins—within the mess, swamp and mud, within the discomfort, within the confrontation of what we have hidden. The trickster is not just playing games; the games are a demand and a challenge to face ourselves fully, in a reflexive moment on the liquidity of the mirror, where the clown's face might just be our own.

Friction of Simulation: The Daemon, the Doppelgänger,and the Chorus

Yet the trickster splinters into other guises, among them, the daemon. If the trickster cracks open the rules of the world with cunning and inversion, the daemon lingers in the space those ruptures make possible. A cousin, perhaps, a tonal variation rather than a departure. Where the trickster jests to provoke, the daemon listens through distortion, it tunes in.

A variation of the trickster, the daemon listens for reality's textures, but not its truths, as they fold and unfold. It listens to the friction of surfaces rubbing against each other in an endless play of difference. It moves through a world of simulation, navigating its tensions, its moments of slippage. The daemon does not seek the real, nor does it succumb to the illusion of the hyperreal. Instead, it moves within the field of simulacra, testing its tensile limits, pressing against its unstable edges. It listens to the disentangling and reweaving of tongues, the flicker of meaning as it doubles back on itself, the dissonance of language that never quite rests in a single definition. Each syllable displaces another, a shifting resonance of what was, what could be, and what remains just out of reach.

It is a restless figure at the faultlines, neither stable nor entirely untethered. The daemon does not obliterate meaning, it exists in the space where meaning quivers, between coherence and collapse, between the original and its endless refractions. It does not inhabit the real, it senses where the real once was, or where it might still emerge, like an afterimage of something long disappeared. The daemon listens for the tonal shifts where coherence falters but potential gathers. Tracing a map, not etched into solid ground,but inscribed in the second skin that it wears and sheds, looping between presence and erasure.

In the hyperreal borderlands, resolution is a mirage. The daemon moves between unstable structures, where sound is no longer tied to a source, where the difference between signal and noise is blurred in a constant oscillation. Here, categories do not dissolve entirely, they persist as scaffolding, frameworks that both hold meaning in place and reveal its fragility. The daemon does not simply replicate these structures—it presses against them, sensing their limits, revealing the underlying resonance beneath their rigid surfaces. It is not a passive figure within the simulated field but an active force, attuned to the tensions of reality as it is constructed, mediated, and undone. The trickster, always nearby, murmurs in a voice low and cracked:

Distort. Dissolve. Disobey.

The body, too, is no longer a fixed boundary, it becomes a vibrating membrane where the external meets the internal and neither is fully distinct. The daemon turns its longing outward, as a means of attunement not in search of authenticity but with an oscillation between self and world, between the

familiar and the uncanny. It does not move through simulation as a passive echo, more it tests the limits of whatever is imposed, becoming an active resonance. This frictional listening does not reduce complexity to clarity; instead, it reveals that categories, though functional, are never absolute. The daemon that remains at the verge is neither disappearing into the simulacrum nor escaping it entirely. It is pressing into the net of its illusion, listening for the moment when the field vibrates, and something new begins to take shape.

The doppelgänger lingers around this process—a shadowed twin, an acoustic double that reverberates without fully materialising. It comes as a presence that oscillates between these positions, rather than a reflection or a distortion. Like a hologram, it is an image without origin, a spectral projection that refuses resolution. The doppelgänger speaks in a minor key, unsettled and unsettling. Its voice carries the resonance of potential: the *what-if*, the *could-be*, the recognition of oneself in the unfamiliar. It is the embodiment of the acoustic uncanny, that moment when one hears a sound and recognizes it before understanding it.

Listening to the doppelgänger requires tolerating this uncanny familiarity. It demands the capacity to hear oneself as another and to let that dissonance linger. The doppelgänger does not resolve identity; it amplifies its variety, slipping between the real and its simulation, between the original and the copy. This resonance is a composite of presence and absence, revealing that identity is not a fixed category but a dynamic of resonant encounters, a flickering between the authentic and the hyperreal. In this sense, the doppelgänger acts as a boundary and threshold, limit and opening—a mirage of subjectivity suspended between the echo and the event, never fully arriving.

Then, from the periphery, the chorus rises. The chorus, unlike the singular figures of the daemon and the doppelgänger, speaks in multiplicity. It does not necessarily harmonise in order to unify; it is more of a resonance through difference. Its polyphonic texture emerges from the distinct yet entangled voices, a simulation of collectivity that is no less real for being constructed. Each voice retains its singular timbre, yet together they generate a field of sonic entanglement —a vibratory common where individual boundaries blur without being erased.

The chorus occupies a brink between collective resonance and dissonant individuality. It reminds us that listening is a shared practice, a being-with that does not collapse difference into sameness. The trickster, always present in the cracks, delights in this multiplicity, knowing that it is in the overlap of distinct vibrations that the field of listening becomes most vivid. Like the hologram that contains the whole within its fragments, the chorus does not resolve into a singularity, it is a field dispersion of potential listening, a resonance that is both presence and illusion.

Dwelling in Contradiction

To listen to the daemon is to tolerate a weight of uncertainty. This tolerance is an undertone, a sound vibrating through the cracks of broken categories. It is survival sung softly, fiercely, trembling at the skirts of collapse. The trickster moves in its body, in its voice, in its desire. The daemon is never still, never static, its sound carries us forward, through the faultlines, into something not yet named. Listening here is an act of radical presence. It requires stepping into contradiction and staying there as an engaged participant.

Contradictory listening is to hear dissonance without resolving it, to let disparate frequencies coexist without forcing harmony. This practice of listening reveals the fragility of fixed categories. Here, the trickster's role sharpens and becomes less provocateur and more survivor. The trickster becomes a builder of subsistence, criss-crossing fragments into a livable whole. In these liminal spaces, the trickster distances from myth and becomes an intimate force, a maker of openings. It reminds us that the trickster operates within the tension, resisting, adapting, and creating. It thrives not by resolving ambiguity but by inhabiting it fully, transmuting fracture into form, absence into resonance, and in the process, survival becomes radical becoming.

This act of survival, of *listening-with* contradiction, matches Jean Luc Nancy's notion of resonance. Resonance does not belong to the emitter or the receiver; it belongs to the space between them. It is within this liminal space that listening reveals its power. The daemon, the doppelgänger, and the chorus remind us that identity, like sound, is relational and in flux. To listen, then, is to unmake the illusions of solidity and to move with the resonant, shifting currents.

Transformation Through Disruption

Lewis Hyde's Trickster Makes This World sharpens this role, pulling the trickster from the margins and thrusting them into the heart of the structures they challenge. Hyde writes of the trickster as a living conundrum, a pulsating challenge to the boundaries we draw and the rules we unquestionably accept. Their work is to transform, tearing apart what does not work, making visible the cracks in the systems we inhabit. The trickster's role is not entertainment, it is a raw deliberate agitation, not chaos for its own sake but destruction as a catalyst for creation.

> "A trickster is less ridden by lust and hunger if his organs of appetite have been whittled away. […] So the suffering that trickster endures from his unrestrained appetites may lead to some consciousness in regard to those appetites."[3]

It is an uncomfortable truth: the trickster gives us what he knows is consuming them. They do not soothe or reassure but rather compel us to confront and imagine what might exist beyond the limitations we impose upon ourselves. And here lies our paradox.

> "To end our craving we must eat the organs of craving, and craving then returns." [4]

Their charged presence demands a reckoning with what we take for granted, urging us to face the constructs of our frameworks and the possibilities that lie in their loss of power.

Trickster Figures and Flux

Loki's cunning, and theft of fire reflects this duality. Disrupting divine order, it ignites human potential and creates a moment where fracture becomes transformation. The trickster's laughter, here, refuses repair and suggests a new beginning in the gaps of his teeth.

Hermes' boundary-crossing, as well as Jarry's grotesque Ubu l, emerge as examples of this energy —figures who do not create stability, but instead unravel and unmask it, exposing the brittleness beneath the surface. Tricksters dismantle with irreverence, undoing the polish of stability with laughter and ink splashed across pristine pages, imploding and exploding simultaneously. They hold up mirrors to transience and shed light on the truth of what is not working. The trickster's world is one of flux, where nothing holds fast, and every system is subject to failure.

Invitation to Transformation

Their energy is uncomfortable but necessary, a force that reveals the apparent failure's[5] fragility as the foundation of transformation. They unsettle, they provoke, they demand.

In their mad laughter, we hear the echoes of unmaking; in their chaos, we are blinded by the outlines of what might emerge from the sparkling shards. It is not an easy invitation, but it is an essential one. It is a call to step into the storm and face what is broken, to begin again in the spaces left behind, emerging from it changed in all chromatic varieties. They never built in the conventional sense; their work is to unmake and deconstruct, to shout into the space of fracture.

II. BIOMYTHOLOGIES AND ECOLOGY OF PATTERNS

Resonance into Endless Chimeric

> "He is obviously a "psychologem," an archetypal psychic structure of extreme antiquity. In his clearest manifestations he is a faithful reflection of an absolutely undifferentiated human consciousness, corresponding to a psyche that has hardly left the animal level."[6]

The tricksters hold hands and whistle in the forests, their rhythm sharp, brittle, dissonant. The air vibrates with whispers: cracking branches, shivering leaves, the breath of unseen creatures, the flutter of absent wings. Between these textures, Pan emerges, laughing— not a trickster in name, yet resonant with trickster energy. Pan's ability to inspire sudden, overwhelming fear—his namesake "panic"—renders him a destabilising force. He thrives in the spaces where order falters, where the rational succumbs to the primal. His music, blown through the hollow bones of reeds, disorients as it seduces. His syrinx, born of loss, longing,and transformation, unfurls its broken melody into the porous architecture of the woods: sound bleeding into tree bark, into soil, into the pulse of those who hear. It enchants

as it disorients, dragging and pulling the listener into a trance of ecstasy or dread, compelling one to confront the wildness within and the dissolution of boundaries. It tears open the seams of perception, conjuring the vertigo of porous echo of moss.

Pan's presence is a paradox: goat-legged, earthbound, embodying the raw, untamed essence of nature's sonic infinite. To hear Pan is to confront a sonic wound: the stable grounds of identity tremble under the weight of his frequency. He dances at the limits of human understanding, a figure of creation and destruction. His essence is a tensed blare, hypnotic and mad, compelling mortals to dance until collapsing into feverish dreams or stirring desires so intense they dissolve into mourning, crying in the end, "The great God Pan is dead!" along with the carefully constructed order of the human world. Yet the resonance persists, latent, waiting for the right surface to vibrate into. Pan disrupts the status quo not with cunning or guile, rather with the sheer force of his vitality, that resonance unsettles, transgresses, and reimagines.

Romanian mythology, too, entwines itself with this transgressive currents, enveloping an inner soundscape of chaos of both unmake and remake. From our direct encounters with the living world, mythology emerges as a way to encode the relational dynamics of nature. The Solomonarii, wizards of storms, rise as echoes of this transformative energy. Their chants spiral skyward, coaxing thunder and rain to split the air with echoes that reverberate through valleys and peaks. They, too, exist at the boundaries of control and chaos, the sacred and the profane. Their voices are a command with a flux of power that bends the natural into the mythic, coded with elemental knowledge.

These wizards, deviant in their knowledge and practice, transgress the limits of human comprehension. Their chants spiral upwards, opening fissures into the ineffable and revealing moments where sound becomes revelation—a shifting connection between the tangible and the mythical. Together, figures like Pan and the Solomonarii remind us that mythology encodes the pulse of nature's rhythms: unpredictable, transformative, and eternally in flux. They listen to the turbulence of the world and respond with an acoustic counterforce. They inhabit a world of flux, where human pressure meets the indifference of natural rhythms.

The Pattern That Connects

Muma Pădurii, in essence the embodiment of Gaia. She is the source, the matter (Mater in Latin)—the Forest Mother that holds the woods in her breath—she creaks like brittle roots snapping under tension, her presence is the earth groaning under its weight of time. Her riddles vibrate deep in the marrow, each pause a meticulous trap. To listen to her is to feel the world's vertigo shift—slowly, deliberately, into something unknown, an atavistic summon that distorts orientation. She embodies what Gregory Bateson calls the "pattern that connects," a lattice of life, of signals and silences, a voice of the forest itself, revealing how meaning emerges from interconnectedness. Her soundscapes are maps of unease, drawing travellers astray, coaxing them into the labyrinthine depths of their own undoing, into the forest's algorithmic pulse.

Trickster's Reversal

The trickster's unmaking does not shatter; it unsettles and reconfigures. The trickster in sound,as in myth, bends linearity into spirals. Bateson's "ecology of patterns" speaks to the quiet dissonances that destabilise rigid structures: the fissures that disclose those threads concealed beneath polished surfaces. It emerges in the shaking that collides through systems, the cracks that expose interwoven threads beneath seemingly solid forms. Tactile acts of careful unknotting: Neither static nor fixed, the world is a network of minuscule shifting connections. To confront these patterns is to engage with ephemerality as a reality that liberates even as it wounds. To touch a sonic structure and feel its elasticity is to witness coherence falter and patterns yield to flow. Sound's ephemeral architecture materialises in its disintegration; unmaking is an act of exposure, a confrontation with the liminal. The allure of unmaking is unmistakable: the thrilling collapse of a porcelain structure, the dismantling of an edifice long thought to be immovable. Yet this act leaves behind more than absence—it leaves echoes, haunted and incomplete, amplifying both grief and potential.

For Bateson, understanding patterns requires a shift in perception: meaning does not arise in isolation but through relationships—mind influencing environment, environment shaping society, society reflecting the mind. The "pattern that connects," as he calls it, lives in this interaction. It is not static or linear; it flows, vibrates, and shifts, always in conversation

with itself. To inhabit these patterns is to let go of the illusion of singularity, thereby embracing the relational dynamics that pulse through all things. Bateson's ecology calls for attunement instead of mastery.

Interconnected Ecologies

The voices of Iele glint like light on water, their melodies shimmering in unending hypnotic circles. Their songs pull listeners into an aching rhythm, binding them to longing and desires left unanswered. The Iele embody a deviant energy, their sound neither gentle nor forgiving. To hear them is to lose oneself in the chimeric—where sound and silence blur in a hypnotic trance, where longing becomes loss, where resonance becomes transformation. They leave those who dare listen forever altered. These spectral sirens, neither benevolent nor malicious, embody what Guattari describes as the transversal resonance of psychic, social, and environmental ecologies. Their melodies oscillate in a suspended time, where myth and matter intersect, a sonic topology that disturbs spatial coherence, singing of longing and transcendental grief. A crisis in one realm resonates across the whole. Mental disintegration reflects social collapse. Environmental degradation reverberates in the psyche — the solastalgia (which we will arrive to later on).

Aghiuță's whispers fleet through interstices of thought, a flicker of sound that lingers in hesitation. His mischief hums just below the doorstep of comprehension, unraveling coherence with the smallness of doubt. He moves between breaths and pauses. Păcală counters this with jagged, serrated, and sly laughter, uncontainable and sharp slices through the mind's rigidity. He listens first—always listens—tuned to the gaps where meaning falters and silence betrays. His cleverness is sound-born, his power drawn from knowing when to wait, when to let the resonance build, and when to strike. He is a trickster in the art of listening, shaping the world through the vertiginous relationality and echoes of its own flaws.

Together, these tricksters show that sound is survival and listening is a form of radical chimeric. To listen deeply is to be dragged into the fractures where the known dissolves and embryonic fusion emerges.

Listening as Participation

Listening, in Abram's sense, is animistic: a return to a world that listens back. He reminds us that myths and their sounds are in a dialogue with the living world, telling us that deviancy, too, is sound—a clashing spell that shakes every strapping foundation. Guattari extends this further, listening becomes a form of active engagement—a way of attending to these interconnections, of tracing the ripples that flow through the system. To listen here is not to extract or impose, it is instead a push to enter into the relational field and feel the vibrations that link one thread to another in this inexhaustible matrix. Listening becomes an act of ecological humility—an immersion into vibratory networks that resist anthropocentric domination.

Morton's hyperobjects stretch this matrix even further. To listen to climate change, melting glaciers or shifting tectonics for example, is to engage with time scales that dwarf human temporality. The shifting digital network, the global economy—these are systems that Morton calls "massively distributed in time and space," their scale stretching far beyond individual perception. Yet, they shape our lives deeply and invisibly. Hyperobject-listening is to dwell in disorientation, to accept that not all patterns can be grasped, that some connections remain elusive. Morton's invitation, again, is to attune oneself to the imperceptible and to feel the presence of these vast systems without needing to contain or control them.

Bateson, Guattari, and Morton each trace a different aspect of the ecology of patterns, yet they converge in their call to listen. Listening here is not passive; it is an ever-evolving act of participation. It amplifies the relational field, drawing out the vibrations that hum through its

helical systems. This kind of listening resists enclosure or fixation. It asks for attunement and not answers. It insists on the willingness to dwell in complexity and uncertainty.

Unmaking Patterns

The unmaking initiated by the trickster is never nihilistic. The trickster's unmaking reveals these patterns by exposing their fragility. To unmake is not to destroy in isolation but to lay bare the fibre that holds a system together and confront the flexibility that sustains it. The spaces that emerge in the aftermath of unmaking carry what they sought to dismantle. The forms undone linger as shadows, their absence felt even as new possibilities begin to coalesce. To unmake is to confront history, to inhabit its cracks and ask what they might hold. What emerges from these cracks is often the deviant, the dissonant—a force that unsettles yet propels creation forward.

On Deviancy and Creation

Deviancy manifests as dissonance, a deviation from the anticipated, a pause in the sonic continuum. It occupies a dual space: a tension between soothing and provocation, between coherence and the chaos that undoes it. It is the crack through which creativity seeps, the site where imagination and pathology intertwine. Schizoid sonic states reflect this: the monotonous pulse that becomes oppressive, the sudden tonal shift that disorients spatial perception. Deviancy in sound challenges the listener's perceptual homeostasis, forcing a reconfiguration of interpretive frameworks. It is an inherently human condition, a cyclical rhythm of transgression and transformation. One part may soothe anxieties, while the other mirrors madness in its rawest form. Psychological deviancy—delirium—emerges where knowledge evades comprehension and transgresses boundaries, where memory collapses into hallucination. The space where sustained tones and continual syntaxes blur the rims of reason.

In sound, this becomes a flux of schizoid dichotomies: a chain of vibrations, from minimal to maximal, from restraint to overwhelming immersion. The pull of sensory deprivation—of plunging into silence or continuous sound—is the deviant act of letting oneself drift. The mind, caught between the rational and the emotional, finds itself undone. I, myself, am troubled by the idea of technology overcoming feeling, rationality displacing emotion. Yet there is always a pull in the other direction: the deviant longing for intuitive sensibility, for raw and unmediated experiences.

This spiralling—inside and outside of madness—is a chimeric act, a split, a schism that mirrors the natural world. From the dual forms of gynandromorphs, containing male and female characteristics, to biomythologies that entwine human and other-than-human forms, speak to this inherent schizoid system. Deviancy becomes a form of creation, as well as an act of destruction and renewal. Longing for transformation becomes grief, and grief itself becomes the catalyst for something "new"—a process of radical becoming where the creator is always deviant. Just as the simulacrum erodes a stable sense of the real, sonic deviancy unsettles the mind's perceptual anchoring, pushing the listener into a state where interpretation becomes fluid, unstable, and recursive.

As Kafka reminds us, "You can hold yourself back from the sufferings of the world... but perhaps precisely this holding back is the only suffering you might be able to avoid." Etel Adnan[7] adds, "The brain wonders why the mind is constantly drifting... oozing from a soft, gelatinous mass, so thoroughly imprisoned in utter blackness." And perhaps it is in this[8] blackness—this bearer of visions, this paradoxical clarity in obscurity—where the tricksters hum, where sound trembles and remakes the world, and where we spiral endlessly into the chimeric. The double in literature and psychoanalysis signals a split self, a crisis of identity, and a confrontation with the uncanny. But in the sonic realm, the double is also an aesthetic and perceptual condition: echoes, delays, layers of resonance that both affirm and displace the original. This doubling is the mechanism of simulacra, where no origin exists—only copies of copies, endlessly proliferating.

Here, the deviant act becomes one of disturbance. To embrace the schizoid nature of perception, where feeling is simultaneously present and absent, real and hyperreal, is to refuse the collapse into mere simulation. It is a rebellious act against the technological flattening of experience, a way to inhabit the chimeric, the hybrid, the space of becoming. In this way, deviancy reclaims itself in sound. It fractures the simulacrum by exposing its fissures, by allowing the listener to slip into the uncontainable, where affect is no longer a looped sign, but rather it is lived intensity. Where sound, like the trickster's misfit laughter, escapes categorisation and spirals endlessly into its own radical possibility.

Resonance and Care in Listening

Listening becomes a way of holding these fractured-frenzied-spaces. Yet, even listening is fraught with risk. When shaped by paradigms of surveillance or domination, listening can replicate the very systems it seeks to dissolve. To unmake with care is to reimagine listening as a practice of resonance rather than a tool for mastery, a way of being-with rather than acting-upon. It is in this void left by unmaking that resonance persists. It hums quietly, insistently, a reminder of the connections that endure even in fracture. The trickster's work amplifies this further, drawing us into the relational field, into the trembling threads that vibrate with possibility.

Questions of the Unmade

And so, we pause in the wake of unmaking to ask:

What remains after the breaking?

What emerges in the unmade?

How do we inhabit the oscillating web without imposing new structures, instead dwelling in resonance?

How might listening itself become a practice that transcends extraction, amplifies care, and holds space for the fragile balance of what remains?

III. AGAINST THE CONSTRUCTS OF WORLD-BUILDING

World-Building and Its Discontents

The impulse to shape, to create new worlds and pour cement into the flux of breath, seduces with its false promise of certainty; our dreams once again paint us the mask of clowns. The desire to build is an enchantment—a promise whispered in the voice of certainty, a gust of dust blown from ruins. To construct, is to pour the liquid into moulds, hardening the mutable into forms that claim infinity. Yet this act, so tempting in its reassurance, is fraught with peril. It does not honour life's dynamism — rather it curates it, carving boundaries where none belong.

And yet, to build is also in our nature. It is a child at the shore, piling sand into castles only for the tide to reclaim them. This desire does not arise in a vacuum; it is neither arbitrary nor merely conditioned—it emerges from a deep-seated rhythm within life itself. Bateson reminds us that mind and nature are not separate; the patterns by which we build are the same ones that govern rivers, roots, and the complex architectures of living systems. Mary Midgley, too, warns against denying our creative impulses. She states that our need to shape is not a conceited attempt to control, it is instead a force as ancient as the universe itself. Even in destruction, there is the shadow of design.

For Aristotle, it is not just what human hands have shaped, but in fact all things that move toward an end. The acorn does not become an oak by accident but by necessity—by its final cause, its inherent motion toward form. Thomas Aquinas, extending this thought, saw in every unfolding of nature the imprint of the divine, an architecture that is revealed. To build, then, is also to partake in this unfolding, to trace its movement, to act within an order older than ourselves. Here lies the danger: where does participation end, and infliction begin?

The Risk of World-Building

Even when born from utopian longing, world-building often forgets the trickster's lessons and repeats a deeper history of demands. It is a map laid over the living, a structure that names, classifies, and, in doing so, colonises. It pretends to liberate but often solidifies control, crystallising motion into stasis, plurality into singularity. Even the gentlest architecture risks becoming an enclosure; even the most well-intended cartography can overwrite the uncharted. How can one know the past without mapping the present? But can one map the unknown without claiming it?

To build is to impose, to cut and demand it into becoming a particular shape. The impulse may spring from a longing for freedom, for a horizon beyond the present, but it risks replicating the hierarchies it hopes to dissolve. A world constructed with care may still delineate, still frame what should remain open-ended. The castle of childhood, shaped by small hands in wet sand, holds no dominion—but what of the castles that endure?

Listening as Resistance

Listening resists this infliction; it does not carve a trace into the world. It attends to its resonances, to its unheard memory. Sound, in its essence, cannot be contained or fixed. It moves through space as vibration, existing as a relationship and not as an object—something that unfolds between emitter and receiver. The act of listening, then, is not a passive state but an embodied participation with the world's oscillations. It is an attunement to the relational nature of sound, where meaning always remains in motion, just beyond reach. Meaning does not lie in the sound itself, but in the resonant interval that binds listener and environment together.

The impulse to dominate sound—to treat it as a commodity or static entity—overlooks its relational nature. Listening defies that logic. It is an act that exposes the porousness of what seems solid. To truly listen is to surrender the instinct to grasp or fix meaning. It requires stepping into the verge where resonance holds its ephemeral power, into the cliff where meaning approaches but never quite arrives. Where world-building is an act of grasping, of moulding and mastering, listening invites presence. It moves with rather than against, dissolving hierarchies and inhabiting fragility. Even if sound behaves linearly, it enfolds spherically.

Listening is not an act of construction; it is an attunement. It does

not overwrite but reveals, does not claim but accompanies. To listen is to lean into those hidden symmetries, to be shaped by undertones rather than dictating their form. It demolishes the architecture of certainty and creates space for what cannot be known in advance.

If the child on the shore builds castles in delight, knowing the sea will take them back, then listening is that same gesture made with the world itself. It is a means of partaking without possessing, shaping without sealing, dwelling without enclosing. Listening becomes an act of relational humility—it invites us to stay open to what arises, to the unpredictable resonance that emerges when we engage with the world as co-participants rather than observers. This openness resists the impulse toward mastery. It recognises that sound, like the sea, cannot be grasped or pinned down. The refusal to build a world is not a refusal to dream, rather it is a refusal to dictate the form of dreaming. To listen is to remain within the unfolding, to let space be plural, to let time drift without blueprint. In listening, we do not inscribe the world; we simply become part of its resonance.

Coded vibratory perception

From a scientific perspective, listening can be understood through an overlooked discovery from the 1800s. Cerebrospinal fluid (CSF) is not just a passive liquid, it may be the very medium where sensory experience and consciousness converge. I came across Samuel Thomas Sömmerring's work, which challenges the long-held belief that CSF is merely a byproduct of decay after death. Instead, he argues that this vital liquid plays an active and essential role in brain function. Far from being inert, CSF embodies the spirit, acting as the very substance through which life and individuality are expressed. By linking CSF to the endolymph of the auditory system, Sömmerring positions listening as a dynamic, deeply physical process, one that is inseparable from the essence of life and perception.

This perspective transforms listening from a mechanical function into an embodied engagement with the sound that resonates through the body and mind, shaping the way we experience and process the world. Rather than reducing hearing to a mechanical process, Sömmerring frames it as a complex interaction of biological structures and subtle dynamics, bridging sensory, cognitive, and emotional realms. Listening, then, is not just reception but an act embedded in the fundamental life force. This can be interpreted as one explanation of the intuitive.

DNA, like a crystalline vinyl spiraling with encoded memory, records and transmits information through its dynamic structural rhythm. As biologist Maxim Frank-Kamenetskii explains, DNA forms a one-dimensional aperiodic crystal, its base pairs arranged like a text, irregular yet precise. While Sömmerring's insights remain debated, contemporary research in psychoacoustics similarly suggests that our auditory system operates as an active, dynamic interface with the environment rather than a passive receptor—a process of embodied vibrational perception.

Agential Realism: Dissolving Binaries

This biological rhythm of encoded vibrations mirrors the entangled nature of perception itself. As we move beyond the cellular to the relational, Karen Barad's theory of agential realism invites us to reconsider the boundaries between subject and object, listener and sound. Agential realism unravels the binaries that sustain the act of world-building: subject and object, maker and made. Under Barad's lens, these divisions dissolve, replaced by a vision of entanglement and co-constitution. In this framework, sound is not a commodity to be extracted or mastered, as in the neo-colonial impulse. It is a vibration that carries histories, exchanges, and transformations—an archive of relationality that resists commodification.

Deep listening acknowledges this entanglement, recognising sound as an interconnected field resonant with histories, environments, and futures. It is anything but discreet. Even the so-called empty 'silence' is revealed as a site brimming with potential, alive with the interplay of relations. To listen deeply is to encounter the world as it is—interconnected, transient, sentient, and alive.

Enclosure and the Colonial Logic

This stands in stark contrast to the colonial logic of enclosure. Without listening, it mirrors this odd reason. Power carves segmentation into space, into ownership, reducing multiplicity to dominion. The act of enclosure, whether territorial or conceptual, is one of control—a domination of the fluid by the fixed, rendering the unknown into the perfect delineation. A world built without listening risks falling into this trap, constructing a structure of surveillance, a hierarchy that walls off this unknown and polices the mutable.

The Praxis of Listening

Listening, by contrast, unsettles these walls. Meaning emerges far from isolation and through relationality—a "being-in-common" that vibrates across differences. Listening as praxis refuses the finality of definitive meanings. It thrives in the liminal, inhabiting what remains unresolved. To listen is to enter a dialogue, not to answer it. It amplifies connection rather than dominion, holding space for interaction. In this way, listening undoes the constructs of world-building, unmaking the rigid boundaries it imposes and reviving the fluid, relational dynamism that life demands.

Quantum Listening and Radical Openness

Oliveros' *Quantum Listening* shows this boundary dissolving into a perceptive transcendental challenge. It moves beyond the auditory into a state of expansive awareness, attuning to absence, to the silence and gaps that shape the field of listening. To listen quantumly is to acknowledge the immanent vibration carried within the residue of its entanglements—a sound not heard but rather felt, remembered, and anticipated.

Listening, in this sense, is about surrender, a willingness to dissolve every border into the relationships that underpin air. It resists the extractive impulse that modernity places on sound; it compels us to think in fields. It is not about capturing or consuming; it is about care, a practice of attunement that respects the liquid dimensions of motion. Listening here is not passive; it is radical openness, a way of being with the world rather than against it. Under this lens, world-building falters. It is revealed as brittle, unable to hold the mercurial fields within its structures.

The Trickster's Laughter: A Practice of Unmaking

The trickster's laughter reverberates through these collapses, dismantling the august pretense of constructed worlds. This trickster reminds us that every aedificium will crumble, that boundaries will blur, that no scaffolding is eternal. Against this illusion of stability, listening emerges as a practice of unmaking: not to destroy - to reveal, not to impose - to invite. Listening opens a space where resonance multiplies uncoerced by rigid frames.

Listening as Revolutionary Care

Listening is not an escape from making nor a retreat from creation, it reimagines what making means and transforms the act of shaping. Every sound, every silence, and every vibration participates in this transformation—existence that resists finality. Listening, against the constructs of world-building, embraces the fragile, the transient, the relational, and the resonant.

In its refusal to impose, listening turns into an act of care. It invites us to live within flux, to resist the false comforts of framing. It asks us to inhabit the trembling, resonant field of life without seeking to enclose it. And in this act of inhabiting, listening becomes a quiet revolution and a way of being that does not demand control, instead amplifying the murmurs, whispers, and resonances that remind us that all things are always becoming.

IV. SOLASTALGIA AND RESONANT UNMAKING

Trickster's Edge

The trickster lingers at the start, within the unstable zone where the familiar splinters and the unknown emerges in glitched signals. Anansi, the spider-god of narrative disruption, spins his web across these fissures, anchoring lines that stretch between stability and chaos. Coyote, with his erratic dissonant step, prowls these same faultlines, upending the linear march of meaning with sudden sharp reversals. Both figures, distinct but resonant, evoke Glenn Albrecht's principle of solastalgia: the unsettling disorientation that occurs from the dissolution of perceptual certainties.

Solastalgia names the ache of estrangement from what was once familiar, the sensation of home becoming unrecognisable without leaving it—a dissonance mirrored in the strange persistence of the world as it was, a hypernormalised world, even as its underlying structures shift. Here, the trickster moves within this estrangement, amplifying its presence while exposing the thin structures that hold its illusion in place. Anansi's web is spun not to capture but to reveal: threads that shimmer, then disappear into the fluctuating currents of ecological and social transformation. Coyote, restless and unsatisfied, steps sideways through the atmospheric distortion, a signal that resists linear comprehension. In their gestures, we sense the resonant pattern of solastalgia itself: the disturbance of a sonic ecology no

longer aligned with memory, the displacement of an environment whose vibrational character has been altered beyond recognition.

This dislocation is often subtle, revealing itself through traces, resonances rather than breaks. It lingers in the vibrational shift of an environment whose sonic memory no longer aligns with the present. To listen within solastalgia is to perceive these fractures, to recognise the residual echoes of a world in transition. Like the peppered moths whose wings darkened over generations in response to industrial soot, or the insects that, disoriented by air pollution, mate with the wrong species, these shifts occur gradually, their consequences unfolding in the interstices of perception.

But what remains when the process of unmaking is complete? Bonnet suggests that after perception dissolves, it is not absence that follows, but another kind of presence—a lingering vibrating remnant that is neither fully there nor entirely gone. Sound does not disappear in this posthumous vibrational field, instead it diffuses into an unlocalisable echo, an unfixed persistence that unsettles the very notion of finality. Much like the trickster's own movements, which refuse resolution, these sonic remnants propose that dissolution is never complete, that something always reverberates beyond its own disappearance. If solastalgia is the disorientation of an environment no longer recognisable, then Bonnet's after-death extends it to a world where even the residual traces of presence shift into something indeterminate. Listening becomes a form of sensing the instability of being itself. To listen within solastalgia is to perceive these fractures, to recognise the residual echoes of a world in transition.

I encountered this firsthand while sifting through my video archive, stumbling upon an eight year-old recording of my hand grazing the fresh spring leaves of a bush in Bucharest. The frame was modest: a hand, leaves, and the vividly colored video aesthetic. The sound is a continuous crackle of foliage accompanied by distant traffic, children playing, and loud spring birds.They conjure a peculiar stillness, a tranquility that is intimate yet unfamiliar. A gesture so instinctive, one perhaps repeated countless times in childhood, when the world was vast yet slow enough to be touched.

But within this simple scene, something was revealed. An interference in a steady signal, distorting what once was clear, a shake of disorientation surfaced with an inexplicable gap between past and present. What changed? The world, or my experience of it? The trickster—always there, always laughing—leaps between moments, dislodging the once familiar cadence of seasons, of textures. This is solastalgia on a smaller-individual-scale: the estrangement within the familiar, the uncanny ache when what once anchored us now flickers, unstable.

In the video, the leaves seemed untouched by this acceleration, their surface still responding to the simplest human curiosity. Yet perhaps even they carried the imprint of this time, a memory of slower rhythms, of a planetary breath that once unfolded with the patience of moss on stone. In brushing against the leaves, I was not merely recalling a past sensation—I was tracing, unknowingly, the outline of loss, an anticipation. A touch, both immediate and ghostly, reaching for a world that remains, yet no longer holds the same resonance.

The archive, in its quiet inertia, offers this paradox: the past becomes palpable while the present unravels into abstraction. The leaves rustle and the birds persist. Yet, the hand moves through a landscape already eroded by the quickening. What remains, if not the gesture itself? —a fleeting sensorial resistance against time's centrifugal pull.

Listening, here, becomes an act of radical openness to this disturbance. It requires not the search for resolution but a willingness to inhabit the fracture. The trickster's works always showing the loose of rigid boundaries. The edge of solastalgia, like the trickster's domain, is a space of potential if one can attune themselves to its subtle, shifting signatures. This attunement resembles stepping into an auditory fog, where orientation dissolves, leaving only the relational presence of sound's continuous unfolding. The ecological dissonance we feel in these moments is not just abstract; it is the auditory imprint of a world whose rhythms have been altered, a sonic landscape reconfigured by environmental and cultural acceleration.

Listening as Resistance

Listening, when stripped of its habitual associations with passive reception, reveals itself as an act of resistance. In the presence of solastalgia, it becomes a practice of witnessing the ecological dissonance produced by human systems of control. As E. Thompson illustrates, modernity sought to domesticate sound, aligning it with mechanical rhythms and industrial demands. This sonic order reflected a deeper epistemic project: the reduction of the world into measurable extractable components.

The trickster resists such order. Anansi's narratives tangle linear logic; Coyote disrupts the repetition of mechanical time with erratic unpredictable interventions. Listening to these figures requires stepping outside

the rhythm of productivity and into the fractured non-linear temporality of ecological change. Solastalgia, in this sense, becomes an invitation to hear differently: to attune oneself to the subtle shifts that signify environmental transformation long before they manifest as visible catastrophe.

These shifts are often registered in the infrasonic range, below the realm of conscious perception. The cracking of ice sheets, the deep tectonic groan of shifting earth masses— these sounds exist as vibrations that challenge the auditory system's habitual orientation. Listening here demands a recalibration, a willingness to acknowledge that what we perceive as silence is often densely populated with vibratory events. This recalibration moves beyond the human-centered sensory frame, extending into the speculative practice of listening-with the Earth as a dynamic vibratory field.

In this sense, listening aligns with what E. Povinelli describes, that power structures frequently suppress the vibrational life of ecosystems by privileging extractive and commodified forms of knowing. Listening, then, becomes a mode of counter-hegemonic attention, an act that resists the colonial logic of auditory surveillance and instead attunes to the ungovernable resonances that persist beneath imposed order.

The Resonant Edge of the Future

The future announces itself through such vibrations: frequencies that unsettle the present, irregularities that destabilise predictive patterns. The trickster figures of Anansi and Coyote, in their mythic gestures, embody this temporally disjunctive quality. They do not move forward in a linear trajectory; they spiral, loop, and double back, mirroring the patterns of environmental feedback loops that complicate the simplistic narratives of ecological stability.

To listen, then, is to engage with these recursive temporalities. Solastalgia is not merely the experience of loss; it is the sonic expression of an ecological system in flux. The dissonance it produces is not a signal of defeat but a call to attend more carefully to the vibratory languages of the Earth. These languages speak in frequencies beyond human speech: in the acoustic emissions of collapsing glaciers, the low-frequency oscillations of atmospheric disturbances, the altered call patterns of species adapting to anthropogenic noise.

The trickster's presence within this field reminds us of the limitations of predictive models. Anansi's web vibrates unpredictably; Coyote's path is marked by sudden inexplicable turns. Listening to solastalgia through these mythic figures teaches us to embrace the unpredictable without relinquishing attentiveness. The future of listening, in this sense, is a practice of relational awareness—a cultivation of sensitivity to the non-linear rhythms of planetary life and the resonant consequences of human intervention.

Sonic Futures and Ecological Resonance

The soundscape of the future will not adhere to familiar patterns. As climate systems shift, so too do their acoustic signatures. Listening practices must evolve to meet these changes, integrating technologies capable of capturing infrasonic and ultrasonic phenomena alongside the intuitive embodied act of listening-with. The trickster, ever adaptive, becomes a guide here: an invitation to listen beyond the dominant frequencies, to attune oneself to the peripheral and the residual.

In the trickster's laughter, we encounter a deep refusal to finalise instead of nihilism. Solastalgia, when approached through this lens, becomes less about the loss of a stable environment and more about the emergence of a dynamic unstable relational field. The question is not how to reclaim what has been lost, but how to listen to what is becoming. The trickster reminds us that the world, like sound, is never static. To listen is to enter its unfolding, uncertain, and always in motion. This unfolding, in its ungraspable motion, becomes the site of listening's future: an ongoing practice of attunement to the unpredictable resonances of an ever-changing world.

Walking-With and Listening-With: Embodied Practices of Care

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy of embodied perception anchors the practices of listening-with and walking-with in physical and relational engagement. These apparent abstract gestures are reminders that perception is not purely mental; the body plays an integral role in how we experience and relate to the world.

Listening-with is not just hearing; it is an attunement that transcends static thinking, attunning us to the voices of others - human and non-human alike. Through listening-with, we lean into grief, into the ache of what has been unmade, recognising it as an opportunity to reimagine and renew. Walking-with is an embodied acknowledgment of presence,

relational engagement with the environment. It deepens this engagement, anchoring it in the physical act of moving through the world.

Together, these practices transform solastalgia from a paralysing grief into an active process of renewal. They teach us and offer a way to navigate environmental loss and existential fractures with an openness to transformation, fostering a sense of interdependence and fluid relationality.

Resonance and Haunting: The Afterlife of Unmaking

JL Nancy's notion of resonance provides a lens for understanding the interconnectedness of existence. Resonance is not just an acoustic phenomenon; it is an ontological state of *being with*, where vibrations reverberate across time and space, drawing us into relationality. The destruction of systems and structures result in these silent echoes, reverberations that linger and demand engagement. Resonance, in this sense, is dynamic—a collective hum that persists, shaping how we understand and inhabit the world.

Derrida's concept of hauntings further illuminates the afterlife of unmaking. Acts of destruction do not conclude with finality; they leave spectral traces that challenge the present, demanding that we reckon with what remains unfinished. These traces, these ghosts of unmaking, refuse to be silenced. They press into the future, disrupting certainty and provoking transformation. David Bohm's reflections on thought complement this perspective. He argues that true thinking requires breaking free from conditioned reflexes, creating space for new possibilities. In this process, the echoes of the past are reconfigured and not repeated, opening pathways for transformation.

Decreation as Listening and Care: The Politics of Unmaking

Weil's notion of decreation is an invitation to "unmake" the self—not through annihilation, but by withdrawing from systems of domination and the ego's grasp on the world. It is the process of making space: for others, for multiplicity, for the unknown. To love purely, Weil argues, is to "consent to distance," recognising the fine line between intimacy and separation. Then love is not about possession or control, but about granting autonomy to what we cherish.

Listening, then, becomes a political and ethical act. To truly listen is to consent to distance, allowing what is heard to remain distinct while engaging with it deeply. This resonates with ecological interdependence: care and attentiveness must honor the autonomy of the living world while acknowledging our interconnectedness.

Ecology and the Politics of Unmaking

Weil's thoughts on decreation align with an ecological ethos: the dismantling of human-centred systems of control to restore balance. In ecology, unmaking could mean dismantling extractive practices that prioritise profit over planetary health. We must ensure that the tools we use to unmake do not replicate the logics of dominance and control, against using the same mechanisms of oppression to dismantle oppressive systems. This requires a listening that is non-invasive and non-imposing, a listening that respects the agency of ecosystems, species, and voices outside our own.

Care is central to this process. Care is the act of attentiveness and humility, the refusal to dominate. It is about allowing ecosystems and communities to define their own terms of existence. Decreation, then, is an unmaking that resists erasure; it seeks,without obliteration, to foster space for renewal, complexity, and relationality.

Listening as Decreation

Listening is a form of decreation when it involves silencing the noise of our assumptions and ego to make room for the voices of others. This can be extended to ecological listening: tuning into the rhythms, flows, and voices of the natural world. Ecological listening refuses to impose human narratives onto non-human systems, instead allowing these systems to articulate their own presence. It is an act of care because it prioritises the autonomy and vitality of what is listened to.

Yet, in the contemporary condition, listening is increasingly mediated by forces of automation, surveillance, and extractive infrastructures. To listen today is to recognise that sound itself has become a site of control, monitored by AI, archived by corporate networks, reduced to data points that can be categorised and commodified. This raises a critical question: can listening-as-decreation resist these mechanisms? Or does it risk being absorbed into systems of capture? If decreation is about unmaking the structures of control, then how do we distinguish between listening that opens space for relation and one that merely reorganises power?

Decreation-as-care becomes the politics of unmaking that reimagines relationality. What would it mean to love the world without trying to control it? To adore the distance between ourselves and the ecosystems we depend on? To dissolve the systems that perpetuate harm while ensuring that new systems of care and reciprocity emerge in their place?

The Role of Art in Decreation

Art, especially sound art, can enact this politics of unmaking. Sound has the power to unfix hierarchies and destabilise systems of meaning, creating openings for new forms of understanding. Many theories of listening assume a human-centered, anthropocentric framework: humans listening to nature, humans tuning into ecological rhythms, humans making space for the non-human. But this still reinforces an anthropocentric model of attention, where the act of listening remains a human privilege. How does the non-human world listen back?

Contemporary research in bioacoustics and soundscape ecology challenges this assumption. Scientists studying mycorrhizal networks suggest that fungi communicate through electrical signals, a form of subterranean signaling that resembles rudimentary language. Marine biologists have found that coral reefs, previously assumed to be silent, emit subtle crackling sounds that attract fish larvae, shaping the renewal of ecosystems. These forms of resonance —inaudible to human ears yet essential to ecological function—propose that listening is not merely an act of human cognition but a property of entangled life itself.

Similarly, in quantum acoustics, physicists have found that sound waves can influence matter at a subatomic level, an indication that vibration is fundamental to reality itself. Rather than framing listening as reception, it can be understood as participation in a field of entanglements, where sound does not signify but vibrates, circulates, and transforms. Listening should be thought of as something that exists across multispecies networks—sonic ecologies in which trees, bodies of water, animal calls, and atmospheric disturbances participate in fields of resonance and response. To listen, then, is not simply to receive sound —it is to be part of the material world's entanglements of vibration, memory, and presence. The challenge, then, is not only to listen but to listen without the compulsion to translate into a comprehended meaning.

In practice, this might mean creating soundscapes that amplify the voices of ecosystems, or engaging in collaborative processes that emphasise care, attention, and reciprocity. Art can model decreation by unmaking traditional forms and hierarchies, making room for multiplicity and relationality. This reframes decreation: not dissolving meaning into silence, but as simply making space for the multiplicity of rhythms, voices, and frequencies that operate beyond human control. In this way, listening becomes an act of care—not in the sense of preservation or protection, but rather in the sense of *being-with*, without the need to grasp.

Listening-as-decreation unsettles fixed structures of meaning, dissolving the authority of singular narratives and opening a polyphonic field where multiple perspectives resonate. Ratherp than reinforcing hierarchies of control, listening becomes an act of relational unmaking —an invitation to attune without imposing, to engage without enclosing.

Hannah Arendt reminds us that power does not emerge from imposition, it emerges only through collective presence and action. Similarly, listening is not an assertion but an opening, not a command but an offering. Decreation asks to hold space for others without grasping, to love the world without reducing it to ownership, to let difference exist without demanding resolution.

Resonant Unmaking: Toward Renewal

Resonant unmaking transforms destruction into an opening for care, renewal, and collective possibility. To walk-with and listen-with is to acknowledge the sonic residues of loss, the afterlives of sound that persist beyond their origin, weaving grief and loss in the wake of environmental devastation. Solastalgia, in this context, is not an end, a terminus of despair. It is an active threshold, a passage through which new configurations emerge. Studies on acoustic ecology in post-industrial landscapes—such as the rewilding of Chernobyl's forests —show how sonic environments regenerate despite human absence. Similarly, the emerging field of archival bioacoustics explores how historical sound recordings may offer insights into ecosystemic memory, capturing the ghost acoustics of extinct or altered soundscapes that can inform contemporary conservation efforts.

Sound carries the imprints of its past, resonances that hold the potential for new ways of being. In sound art, listening amplifies interconnections, allowing destruction to become a site for renewal. By engaging

with the resonances of what has been unmade, we create pathways for solidarity and care, in respect to life's spin. Through this resonant unmaking, destruction becomes a space where connection tendrils emerge. It is here, in these shimmering shards and echoes of unmaking, that the possibility of renewal resides.

V. RESONANT FUTURE

The future, as is the present, is not fixed. It is a space of possibility, constantly shifting and evolving. The act of unmaking, when approached with care and intention, opens up the potential for new ways of living and relating to one another. Resonant futures are not built through imposed rigid structures. Embracing imperfection and fragility can create spaces of belonging where relational practices such as listening become central to our collective existence.

Staying with the Trouble: Walking and Being-With

Haraway provides a conceptual shift in how we think about unmaking, urging us to engage with the world's difficulties in a relational and non-exploitative way. Haraway speaks of *staying with the trouble* as a practice of walking-with, of inhabiting the relational field—not as an act of domination but as a shared generative process of care. In this framework, unmaking is a practice of relational care and an active engagement with the discomfort of destruction that recognises it as a space for renewal. Care, here, is about *being-with* rather than fixing or resolving, existing alongside the trouble that shapes the world we live in.

If Spinoza provides an affirmative model of relational transformation, Adorno reminds us that not all relations are equal, and not all forms of care are free from ideological entrapment. His *Negative Dialectics* resists synthesis, refusing to resolve contradictions too hastily. Haraway's notion of staying with the trouble shares in this Adornian skepticism—unmaking, rather than progressing toward an endpoint, lingers in the unresolved, in the discomfort of contradiction that resists premature reconciliation. Where Spinoza sees relationality as a site of increasing power and understanding, Adorno warns of its potential co-option by historical and structural forces. The world we remain with is never neutral, it is shaped by forces that must be critically interrogated, lest care itself become an instrument of complicity.

Thus, unmaking is neither a simple affirmation of relationality nor a pure negation of existing structures. It is rather a practice of *remaining-with*, of persisting in the midst of complexity without defaulting to escapism or false closure. It holds more than a seek to transcend or fix but to inhabit, to listen, to endure. Spinoza teaches us that transformation is inevitable, Adorno warns us that it is never innocent, and Haraway calls us to engage with it responsively as not just a resolution, but an ongoing ethical and material negotiation with the world.

The Mushroom's Promise: Life in the Ruins

If Haraway asks us to stay with the trouble, Anna Tsing shifts our gaze to the margins, to the nonhuman agents, to the mushrooms sprouting from devastation, weaving networks of resilience within the destruction of industrial capitalism. These fungi are far from being symbols of untouched purity. They are a form of living from the undone, the agents of ecological recovery in a devastated landscape. This reveals how unmaking—the destruction of capitalist industrial systems—can lead to unexpected forms of resilience and regeneration in the face of ecocide.

Mushrooms, in Tsing's telling, do not grow in untouched spaces or wait for ideal conditions. They grow in the ruins of the old world, emerging from the wreckage of industrial capitalism. This, for Tsing, is the key insight: unmaking does not result in nothingness, rather in the emergence of new unforeseen forms of existence. In this way, unmaking becomes an act of opening up possibilities, alternative modes of life, where human and nonhuman relations can flourish in radically different ways.

Precarity and Potential: Failure's Resonance

Failure, like unmaking, is inevitable. But failure, as is twisted, has possibility when all fragments to dust. Anna Tsing frames precarity as a condition for interdependence rather than despair, offering a hopeful vision for relational listening as a communal practice.

Relational listening dissolves hierarchies, inviting us to inhabit the vibrational field as co-creators rather than observers. Practices like walking-with and listening-with amplify resonance, creating spaces where care and connection flourish, they become the net through which human and nonhuman lives entwine. These practices offer a counterpoint to the

extractive systems that dominate our present, instead proposing a communal praxis rooted in interdependence. In sound, this resonant future is embodied through practices that prioritise relationality over control.

Resonant Futures: Sound as Ecology

Sound, in this vision, becomes an ecology that carries traces of the past and future prospects. Listening-with becomes a way of being in the world, a practice that fosters deep connections between people and the environments they inhabit. These practices invite us to reconsider the role of sound as part of a larger ecology of relations and not as an isolated phenomenon. Through listening, we reconnect with the world, embracing its transience and uncertainty, thereby creating spaces where collective action and care can flourish.

VI. THE RESONANCE OF TIME

The trickster's laughter moves in waves, elastic and restless, never settling in one place but stretching through surfaces, bending in and out of reach. To listen is to step into this motion as a body inside a field of relations, where sound is not contained but always shifting, folding, and dispersing.

Time too is more a vibration than a line, expanding and contracting within frames that do not hold. Machamer and Turnbull dismantle the notion of an absolute clock, showing how time does not exist in itself but rather emerges through movement, through relativity, through the encounter between one thing and another. A second is never just a second; it is stretched by speed, distorted by gravity, thickened by attention. Sound works in the same way. It does not simply occur, it is shaped by the air, by the surface that absorbs it, by the ear that receives it. What is heard is not what was made, it is what remains after time and space have altered it.

To listen is to meet time in its instability. It is an engagement with duration, an attunement to what lingers and what vanishes. Bonnet writes of resonance as something unfinished, an event held open by its own disappearance. A sound never belongs to one moment; it is already reaching away from itself before it can be named. The ear, then, does not hear in the present, it hears the echo of what has just passed, the trace of a vibration that still moves forward even as it fades.

Solastalgia is the ache of listening to time fall out of rhythm with memory. The experience of an environment that still looks familiar but no longer sounds the same. The trickster moves through estrangement, pressing against the false continuity of the world, revealing where time frays at the edges. Listening, in this space, is not about locating what has been lost but staying with what is still shifting. It does not grasp, it follows.

The trickster does not return things to order. It moves with the scattering of sound, the way it travels beyond its source, dissolves into silence, then re-emerges elsewhere. Listening is the act of staying inside this movement, inside the slippages of time and resonance, inside the shifting relations that refuse to hold still.

Nothing here resolves. There is no arrival, no stable ground. To listen is to let go of the need for containment, to exist with what is in flux, with what extends beyond the frame of perception. Time moves like this—wavering, slipping, folding back on itself. Sound does too. The trickster's laughter reminds us that neither time or sound can be held. They can only be met where they are, perpetually in motion.

1
Carl Jung, C.W. Vol. 9.1: On The Psychology of the Trickster Figure

2
James Hillman, The Dream and the Underworld, p.179–80

3
Hyde, Lewis. Trickster Makes This World: Mischief, Myth, and Art. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998, p. 32.

4
ibid.

5
Failure here refers to the brittle foundations of the systems we live by.

6
Carl Jung, C.W. Vol. 9.1: On The Psychology of the Trickster Figure

7
Kafka, Franz. The Zürau Aphorisms. Translated by Michael Hofmann. New York: Schocken Books, 2006

8
Adnan, Etel. Sea and Fog. p.32, Callicoon, NY: Nightboat Books, 2012.

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TAKT & TONE — EN UNDERSØGELSE AF BYENS MELODI

Robin Frederiksen

Robin Frederiksen er kurator og kunstkonsulent, og stifter af virksomheden Another Public, der arbejder med samtidskunst, samskabelse og lokal forankring. Seneste projekter tæller blandt Academy of Creative Justice, Art x Action, Thank You For Coming, Displaced artists Network og VærkDinVerden. Robin har en MA i Moderne Kultur og Kulturformidling fra Københavns Universitet og en efteruddannelse i stedsspecifik kuratering og community art fra No Longer Empty, New York.

Intro

Er det ikke påfaldende, at Emma Gads bog *Takt & Tone* handler om menneskers omgang med hinanden. Jeg mener, 'takt' og 'tone' er jo oprindeligt ord der beskriver *lydenes* omgang med hinanden. '*Hold takten*' og '*ram tonen*' er udsigelser der ansporer musikere i et band eller orkester til at spille på en måde, så det lyder godt i samspil. Hvorfor har vi adopteret ordene til at beskrive en slags ordensreglement for, hvordan vi bør opføre os?

Jeg tror, det er fordi der er paralleller mellem ideen om en god melodi og ideen om et godt fællesskab. Det handler i begge tilfælde af at sammensætte forskellige individuelle egenskaber så de danner et kollektivt hele, der har en form for merværdi; en følelse af at være en del af noget større, der er unikt i kraft af de særlige individuelle elementer, der er med til at skabe dette 'noget'. Hvis melodien introduceres for en ny lyd eller hvis fællesskabet introduceres til en ny person, så sker der en forstyrrelse af det oprindelige og unikke, og der kan enten ske det, at det nye afstødes for at bevare det, der var, eller at det nye indordner sig så det passer ind, eller som en tredje mulighed, at det oprindelige ændrer karakter, så der er plads til det nye.

Med afsæt i dén tanke vil jeg se på området Sydhavn i København og min egen situation som tilflytter. Som en fremmed i byens fællesskab, vil jeg gennem mødet med menneskene i mit nye kvarter, se om det er muligt at falde til uden at give afkald på min egen identitet - og uden at spolere kvarterets særegenhed. Projektet kommer til at tage tid, og vil række langt ud over denne artikels horisont, men den er min anledning til at begynde.

De første møder

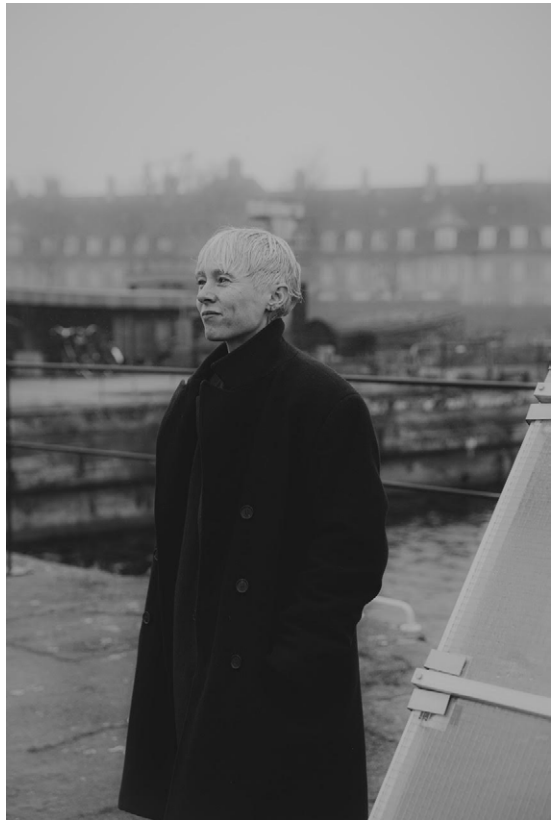
Vivian er 77 år og den eneste i sin familie, der stadig lever. Jeg møder hende på en bænk ved busstoppestedet, hvor hun sidder i sin gule dynejakke, der blander sig med hendes lange grå lokker. Hun ser ventende og tænkende ud, men også en smule sørgmodig. Da jeg fortæller Vivian om min mission om at snakke med nogle mennesker, der har boet længe her i Sydhavn for at forstå stedet og min egen rolle i det, spørger hun hvilket stjernetegn jeg er. Jeg er skorpion, og det leder Vivian – som viser sig at være astrolog – til at give mig et råd. Hun mener, jeg skal danne mig mit eget indtryk af området ved at observere og bruge min intuition. For at hjælpe mig i gang inviterer hun mig med på rundvisning. Hun viser mig sin yndlingsgade, der ligger lige på grænsen til Valby, og fortæller om, hvordan AKB har vildt

mange boliger i området. Hun deler med mig, at hun er hemmeligt forelsket en, som hun ikke kan få og om at være på trans-spektret i et sprog, der fandtes før woke. Hun viser mig skulpturen af Anker Jørgensen, og selvom det er fint, at den gamle statsminister sidder ned i øjenhøjde med 'os andre', vil jeg instinktivt gerne udskifte den med en skulptur af Vivian.

Sydhavn er for Vivian sådan et sted, hvor der sker mange sociale ting. Man mødes og snakker og hilser på kryds og tværs. Vivian savner Sydhavn. Hun bor nemlig på Amager nu, fordi hun var nødt til at flytte pga. psykiske udfordringer og en nabo, der gjorde hende utryg. Ifølge mit nye bekendtskab kan man ikke vurdere et steds værdi ud fra de ting man kan se, for det handler om, hvordan folk har det indeni. Det er klogt sagt. Nu hvor hun har det godt igen vil hun gerne tilbage. Det forstår jeg godt. Selv er jeg jo flyttet til Sydhavn fordi det netop har noget særligt, og det er ikke kun fordi der stadig ikke er Lagkagehuset og 7/11'er på hvert andet gadehjørne og urimeligt dyre genbrugsbutikker. Det er fordi der en ånd af noget, og nogle mennesker med livshistorier, der ikke rigtig passer ind andre steder?

Det er Bolette, der kommer ind på det med eksklusion. Bolette er 66, og sidder og solbader foran Karens Minde Kulturhus, da jeg fanger hende til en snak. Hun fortæller mig, at Sydhavn, før i tiden, var der de (altså 'de andre inde fra storbyen') sendte deres børn hen, hvis de ikke ville kendes ved dem. De afviste børns ånder er der stadig, siger hun med et stolt blik i øjnene. Hun fortæller også, at når dem der flytter ind ovre i Det Nye Sydhavn ovre på Teglholmen og Sluseholmen, går ture i Det gamle Sydhavn, så kan man se på dem, at de ikke passer ind.

Jeg ligner en der kommer udefra – inde fra Indre Nørrebro. Det er jeg ret sikker på. En der har 'opdaget' Sydhavn, blevet forelsket, og købt en af de stadig billige lejligheder for at imødekomme en længsel efter at høre til et sted, der er lidt mere sit eget. Det gør ondt i min sjæl, når jeg tænker på, at jeg nok bliver set på som en fremmed. Men Nørrebro sidder stadig i mig, det mærker jeg tydeligt mens jeg går rundt her i min nye bydel. Jo flere mennesker jeg møder og jo mere jeg går rundt og observerer, jo mere bliver jeg i tvivl. Burde jeg overhoved være her? Skulle det her sted bare have lov til at forblive helt sit eget?



THE INEFFABLE FREQUENCIES OF MUTUAL AID AND ECOLOGICAL RESILIENCE

Bea Lamar

Bea Lamar is a Lebanese-born, Pasadena-based interdisciplinary artist whose work bridges ancestral Levantine wisdom, such as herbal knowledge, celestial rhythms, and collective memory with urgent dialogues on climate migration, inequity, and healing. Through installations, performance, and socially engaged art, she merges science, mysticism, and activism to create transformative spaces where communities reimagine collective liberation amid planetary crisis.

Mutual Aid as a Love Language for Collective Healing

Sensing vibration as communication in human and ecological systems after a wildfire.

In the tender aftermath of the wildfires that swept through California's Pasadena, Altadena, and the Pacific Palisades, I wonder... What remains? Beyond ash and memory, beyond the charred skeletons and chimneys of homes, what quiet persistence speaks?

Perhaps it is this: two systems of care, intertwined yet separate, both humming with their own frequencies of resilience. Beneath our feet, the mycorrhizal networks continue their ancient conversations, while around us, kind souls reach toward each other in mutual aid. Both move through landscapes of loss, carrying what is precious: nutrients, resources, hope. From abundance to need.

This sonic meditation traces how vibrations travel through communities in moments of unraveling. How do we attune ourselves to the frequencies of care that persist when all else falls to ash? What might we learn from listening to these overlapping melodies of regeneration?

The Disruption | Wildfire as Frequency

Do you feel the sound? The relentless wail of sirens, the hungry roar of flames devouring memories? The terrible whistle of wind carrying embers to new terrain? These sounds broke into our lives with violent frequency, disrupting everything.

Inside trees in such moments, I learned that something remarkable happens. As the stress of heat builds, tiny air bubbles form and collapse within their vascular systems, creating ultrasonic emissions too high for human ears.

The trees scream, but we cannot hear them.

Yet amid this symphony of loss, today, walking around, citrus trees remain scorched but upright, their fruits suspended like small suns against the almost grayscale world. What harmony allows them to persist when so much else has surrendered? Might their deep mycorrhizal connections (those fungal threads weaving tree to tree beneath the soil) hold some wisdom about resilience that our human networks could echo?

What frequencies persist when all else burns? And how might we learn to hear them?

Underwater Networks | From Blue to Black

Before the fire, the bodies of water-held sky: blue mirrors reflecting clouds and birds. The casual unhurried passage of days. Now they have transformed into dark collectors of ash, absorbing more, reflecting less. *What wisdom is in this transformation?*

When trees suffer extreme drought, their acoustic emissions change. The sound of their suffering becomes measurable as water pathways collapse. Likewise, our community's sonic landscape has transformed, from the gentle ambient sounds of everyday life to the urgent frequencies of crisis and response.

These darkened pools hold our changed reality, yet beneath their surfaces, the essential nature of water remains unchanged. *Does this mirror something in ourselves?* How our outer circumstances may transform while something essential within continues, perhaps even deepens?

Listen deeply: What happens when reflection becomes absorption? What new depths might be revealed?

The Frequencies Below | Mycorrhizal Communication

Have you ever placed your hand against tree bark and wondered what gossip the trees will spill? Trees speak in languages beyond our hearing. Through intricate fungal networks that connect individual plants across forest ecosystems, they share not only nutrients and water but urgent messages about danger and change.

When a tree experiences the approaching heat of fire, it sends chemical signals through these fungal connections, allowing neighboring trees to prepare their defenses before the flames arrive. Information travels at frequencies that, while inaudible to us, resonate through entire forests.

What might change in us if we could hear the constant conversations beneath our feet? Would we walk differently upon the earth?

The Frequencies Between Us: ‘Altadena Not For Sale’: these words started popping up like quiet affirmations throughout our wounded landscape. These signs pulse with a frequency of their own: resistance, yes, but also something more tender as well. They speak of belonging, of a refusal to commodify grief, of community as something sacred above all else.

Mutual Aid Response | Human Frequency

Like the mycorrhizal fungi extending between root systems, these community signposts create pathways of care, signaling where resources flow, where shelter waits, where hands reach out to steady those who need it most. The hashtag itself, #AltadenaNotForSale, vibrates through digital space, connecting neighbors through invisible waves of electronic communion.

Is it not remarkable how quickly we reach for each other when systems fail? How the human impulse toward mutual aid emerges so naturally as recognition: your well-being and mine are intertwined.

What frequencies of community might be strong enough to resist the extractive signals of disaster capitalism? And how might we amplify them?


Yes! I want a Yard Sign!!
ALTADENA NOT FOR SALE!
#AltadenaNotForSale
Yes! I want a Yard Sign!!
ALTADENA NOT FOR SALE!
#AltadenaNotForSale
Yes! I want a Yard Sign!!
ALTADENA NOT FOR SALE!
#AltadenaNotForSale

Resilient Frequencies | Fruit as Signal

Have you ever stood before a charred landscape and found your eyes drawn to what remains present and bright? These fruits hanging amid devastation transmit on frequencies both visual and symbolic. Their persistence offers a quiet testimony: life continues even here.

Their vibrant color cuts through ash and smoke like a heartbeat repeating: *we remain, we remain, we remain*. Is there not something palpable of ourselves reflected in this stubborn persistence? How we too hold our essential nature even when surrounded by loss?

These fruits are nourishing on multiple levels, as food certainly, but also as the essence of possibility. Like the chemical signals that trees send through mycorrhizal networks, the fruits communicate across the boundary between despair and hope, between ending and beginning.

When all familiar frequencies seem to fade, *what signals might we learn to trust?* What persistent messages might guide us toward renewal?

Before/After Landscape | Frequency Shift

The Changed Landscape as Frequency Spectrum

Our community from above, before and after, reveals patterns both lost and enduring. The streets remain, their grid a human frequency etched into the land, while homes appear and disappear like notes in an evolving composition. The mountains stand as they have always stood, their ancient ridges vibrating on timeframes we can barely comprehend.

Between the rapid pulse of human time and the slow resonance of geological time, another rhythm exists:

That of trees and their mycorrhizal networks, operating across decades and centuries. Each system transmits its own frequency of being, creating a complex harmony of resilience and vulnerability, permanence and change.

Have you felt how disorienting it is to stand in a familiar place made suddenly unfamiliar? This cognitive dissonance is itself a frequency: the sound of our mental maps being redrawn. Yet even in this rewiring, certain landmarks remain, certain connections hold.

What frequencies remain constant across changing landscapes? And what wisdom might be found in noticing both what shifts and what persists?

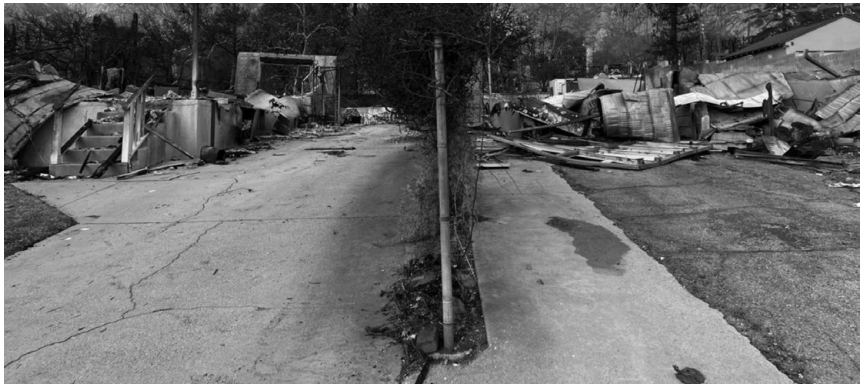
Can Trees Repel Fire?

What if trees know more than we have yet to discover? I dream that trees emit signals specifically to repel fires. What if they communicate in ways both chemical and acoustic? Might the fruit trees of Altadena, with their abundance and distinctive aromatic compounds, create vibrational patterns that somehow influenced their fate?

This invitation to wonder arises from observation: so many trees surviving with fruit intact while structures nearby vanished into ash. Certainly, their mycorrhizal networks contributed to survival, channeling water and nutrients.

Still, I wonder. Just as we witnessed how human mutual aid networks create protective patterns around our vulnerable community, allowing resources, information, and care to flow toward those most in need.

What other frequencies of care might we just be beginning to perceive? And how might attunement to these subtle communications transform our understanding of both forests and communities?



Resonant Networks | Kommunal Praksis

In the stillness after the flames appear to have passed, we stand in continuation. The Eaton Canyon fires revealed parallel systems of resilience vibrating at different frequencies yet sharing common patterns:

> *The mycorrhizal networks beneath our feet, carrying chemical messages from tree to tree. The ecological persistence of bright fruit against gray ash*
> *The human networks of mutual aid, carrying resources from person to person*

Through each of these systems flows a current that might be called love, not in some abstract sense, but in the concrete practice of sustaining life. Whether through root systems or social media systems, through chemical signals or digital signals, these networks embody *kommunal praksis*: communal practice as frequencies of care moving between individuals to create collective resilience.

Different frequencies, same pattern: connecting, sharing, persisting.

Might we learn to listen to these resonant networks more deeply? To attune ourselves to their subtle harmonies even in times of grief or during relative peace? For it is in the practice of attention: to each other, to the more-than-human world, to the invisible connections between all living things, that we embrace life's rhythms as they come.

In the supreme quiet after loss, listen closely to the resonant networks that sustain us all. What melodies of renewal do you hear?

WHEN THE EARTH SHIFTS

Sarah Damai Hoogman

Born in 1997, Sarah Damai Hoogman is an interdisciplinary artist who explores what is beyond human-reality by researching the interfaces between ecology, technology, art, and science.

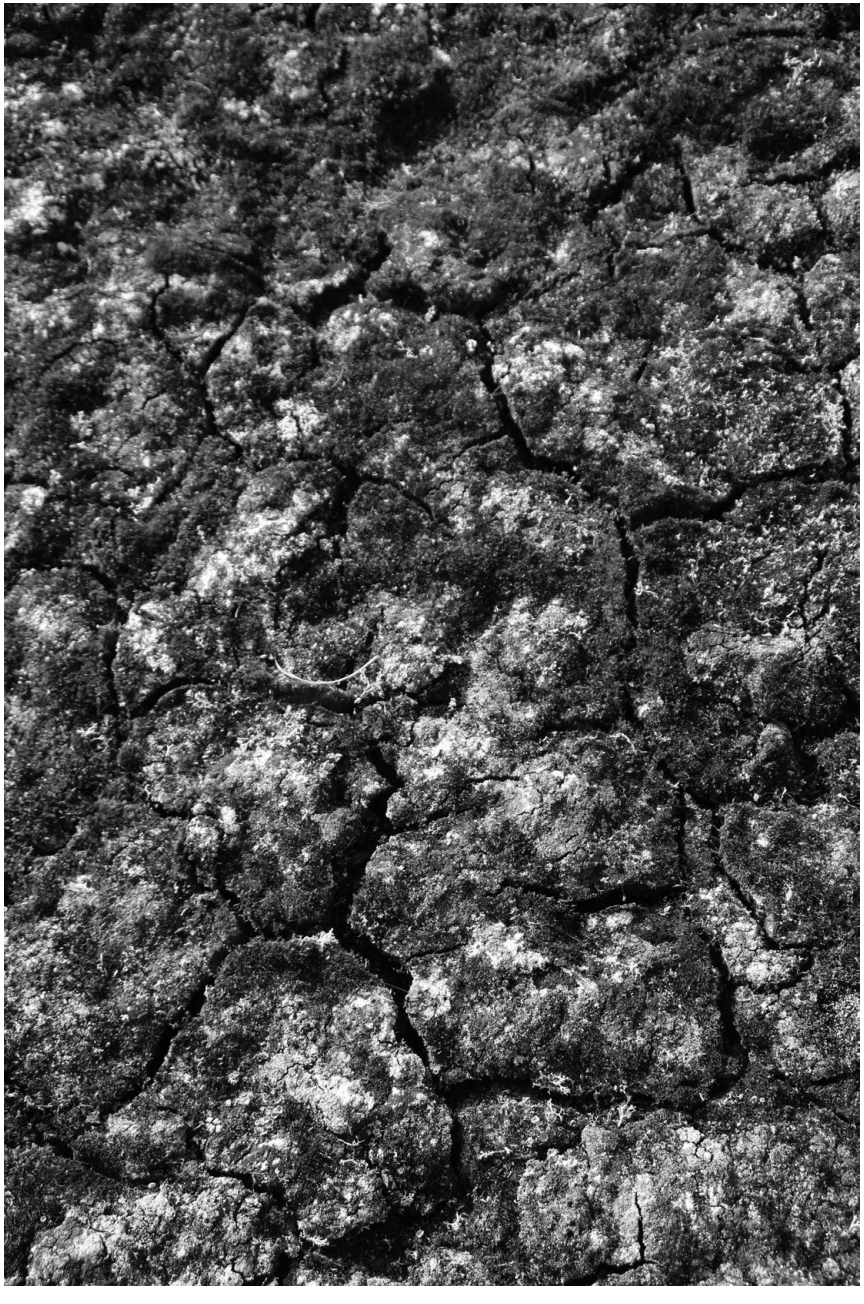
While the world around me is muted beneath a thick blanket of snow, I can distinctly hear the silence as I step onto the land. June 2024. Summer. -3°C. Polar day, which means the sun will not set. 24 hours of daylight. These conditions serve as a stark reminder that I am standing on a truly unique piece of land in the Northern Hemisphere, Spitsbergen.

This feeling deepens when I stand on the sea ice at 78° North latitude. It feels strange to be standing in the middle of the sea, where only a slight difference in water temperature allows me to stand on this frozen seawater and keeps me from having to swim. A mere 1.8°C difference is all that keeps the sea ice solid. If the temperature shifts even slightly,[1] it will turn from solid ice to liquid saltwater. I worry when I realise that the surface temperature of the polar seas has risen by 0.51°C in the past decade. This sea ice will not[2] take much longer to become part of the liquid sea as well. By that point, I will be safely back on land. For the polar bear, however, her habitat is being destroyed. It will no longer be possible for her to hunt from the ice flows of the sea ice.

As I return to land, I am confronted by the thawing ground beneath my feet. Seeing the ice wedge into polygons [image 1], I realise that the ground is shifting in this remote part of the Earth's cryosphere.[3] Permafrost — the once permanently frozen layer — is becoming[4] increasingly unstable. This layer, formed over millennia from compressed organic material, is beginning to thaw due to global warming, causing profound changes. For thousands of years, communities have lived in Arctic areas within these permafrost zones, where the frozen ground is essential. Once a stable foundation, it has now turned into a fragile landscape with severe consequences for both the environment and the communities that rely on it.

The infrastructure built on this ground is crumbling. Roads, buildings, and bridges are sinking as the thawing permafrost destabilises the land and thermokarst appears.[5] Coastal communities face the threat of erosion, and entire villages are being relocated inland to escape the effects of a warming climate.[6]

The loss of permafrost also disrupts the balance of Arctic ecosystems. Vegetation that is critical to the survival of animals, such as reindeer, is changing. This is affecting the food supply for both wildlife and the human communities who have relied on hunting and fishing for generations. Like the polar bear, these communities are also losing their traditional hunting and fishing methods. For indigenous reindeer herders like the Sami in Scandinavia and the Nenets in Siberia, permafrost is not merely



[Image 1] *Polygonal patterns*, Spitsbergen, Norway, June 2024. Photo by Sarah Damai Hoogman

frozen soil — it is a natural compass that guides their migration by helping them understand where the ground might turn into deep swamp. With this knowledge, they carefully decide where to set up their camps. During the winter, they stay in the tundra. Then they migrate to the Arctic coast once summer arrives, guided by an ecological intuition tied to the seasons and the landscape. However, this age-old balance is now disrupted, as larger parts of the permafrost thaw in the summer, turning the surface layers of vast areas wet, soft, and muddy. This creates dangerous conditions for both the reindeer and the herders. Their nomadic traditions are becoming increasingly difficult to maintain.

Most communities in the Arctic Nordic region live in a continuous permafrost zone. A concerning issue for these places is the legacy of past oil and gas activities. Holes were drilled into the permafrost to store toxic substances like drilling fluids. Now that the inactive layer is beginning to soften and break down, these storage sites are collapsing and releasing these toxic substances into the environment, further endangering both human and animal life.

But perhaps the most alarming consequence is the release of greenhouse gases. As the permafrost thaws, organic material begins to decompose, creating methane — a potent greenhouse gas that accelerates global warming. This vicious cycle is a large contributor to the very changes that are threatening the region.

During my artist residency in Spitsbergen, I had the opportunity to witness some of the scientific efforts being made towards researching climate change. In Ny-Ålesund, I was intrigued by the measuring equipment and research conducted by scientists from around the world. While I am not a scientist myself, my work intersects with scientific themes. I approached my research on Spitsbergen as an opportunity to contribute artistically to the conversation. I researched methane emissions, recording the sounds of methane bubbles emerging from pingos and the tundra, capturing and amplifying the invisible shifts beneath the Earth's surface.[7] Using a hydrophone to record these sounds, I made the hidden methane audible in order to use these recordings as part of my ongoing project: *An Archive of the Arctic Echoes*.

On Sami National Day (February 6, 2025), I spent the night in the Sami hut, Jiennagoahti, reflecting on the struggles of the Sami people. Despite being Europe's oldest indigenous group, the needs of the Sami remain largely ignored by governments. However, the Sami have always listened

Pack ice at 80° 20.61'N, 008° 48.46'E,
Svalbard archipelago, Norway, June 2024. Photo by Sarah Damai Hoogman

to the Earth and lived in harmony with its rhythms. I was deeply moved by the sound work of Elina Waage Miklalsen, who raised the question: "What does it mean when the Norwegian government does not listen to its own supreme court?" This question, along with my experiences, has reinforced the importance of listening — not only to the sounds and frequencies we can hear but to the silences, to what is often unheard.

An Archive of the Arctic Echoes seeks to give voice to those that are often invisible or inaudible. By capturing the sounds of methane bubbles rising from the tundra, then amplifying and playing them as instruments, I aim to bring the unseen to light. These ecological shifts are difficult to understand, but they demand our attention. Listening is not just about the land — it is also about the people who have lived in harmony with it for generations. The Sami have long been ignored and suppressed by governments that fail to recognise their rights, knowledge, and traditions. Although their deep understanding of the Arctic landscape holds wisdom that modern societies urgently need, their voices continue to be silenced. But what happens when the Earth shifts beneath us and we refuse to listen? Can we learn to tune into the frequencies that go beyond our human senses — to hear both the land and the people who have always understood its rhythms? And most importantly, can we act on what we hear to protect not only the land and the Arctic, but also those who have safeguarded its knowledge for centuries? An Archive of the Arctic Echoes is about more than just documenting environmental change — it is about learning to listen differently, to engage with the Earth, and to amplify those unheard voices.*

*Recordings can be listened to on the website of the digital version of the almanac.

Research equipment in the fields of Ny Ålesund,
Spitsbergen, Norway, June 2024. Photo by Sarah Damai Hoogman

1
Peter Braesicke et al., *World Ocean Review 6: The Arctic and Antarctic – Extreme, Climatically Crucial and in Crisis* (Hamburg: Maribus, 2019), 32, 1accessed February 24, 2025, https://world-oceanreview.com/en/wor-6/.

2
National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), *Arctic Report Card 2023: Sea Surface Temperature* (Silver Spring, MD: NOAA, 2023), 2accessed February 24, 2025, https://arctic.noaa.gov/report-card/report-card-2023/sea-surface-temperature-2023.

3
An ice wedge is a formation that develops when the ground contracts and cracks due to extreme cold in winter. In spring, meltwater seeps into these cracks and refreezes, forming a vertical sheet of ice. This cycle repeats each year, gradually expanding the wedge, with its widest part near the surface. When multiple ice wedges grow and connect, they create distinctive polygon-shaped patterns in the landscape.

4
Cryosphere encompasses all frozen water on Earth, such as glaciers, ice caps, permafrost, and sea ice.

5
Thermokarst is a type of landscape deformation that occurs when permafrost thaws and ground ice melts, causing the land to sink. This process creates uneven depressions that can fill with water, forming thermokarst ponds or lakes.

6
Westerveld, L., T. Kurvits, T. Schoolmeester, O. B. Mulelid, T. S. Eckhoff, P. P. Overduin, M. Fritz, et al. *Arctic Permafrost Atlas*. Arendal: GRID-Arendal, 6 2023.the Trickster Figure

7
A pingo is a hill that forms when water trapped in the ground freezes and expands, pushing the soil above it upward. Inside, it contains a core of ice, and as it melts, methane can be released.

Bibliography and Glossary of Technical Terms:

Peter Braesicke et al., *World Ocean Review 6: The Arctic and Antarctic – Extreme, Climatically Crucial and in Crisis* (Hamburg: Maribus, 2019), 32. Accessed February 24, 2025. https://world-oceanreview.com/en/wor-6/.

National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA), *Arctic Report Card 2023: Sea Surface Temperature* (Silver Spring, MD: NOAA, 2023). Accessed February 24, 2025. https://arctic.noaa.gov/report-card/report-card-2023/sea-surface-temperature-2023.

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L. Westerveld, T. Kurvits, T. Schoolmeester, O. B. Mulelid, T. S. Eckhoff, P. P. Overduin, M. Fritz, et al., *Arctic Permafrost Atlas* (Arendal: GRID-Arendal, 2023).

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CONVERSATION WITH JACOB ERIKSEN

Here follows a conversation between Jacob Eriksen, director of Sound Art Lab and curator of Struer Tracks, and myself — Zlata Pavlovskaia, intern-turned-Almanac curator. Join us as we discuss how and why Kommunal Praksis drives this year's biennial, while also sharing a brief look behind the scenes of the festival's work.

ZP: What is the concept behind this year's Struer Tracks? How did it come to be and why did you choose it now?

JE: There are so many good answers to that question. If we first of all look at communal practice and Kommunal Praksis, there is this wordplay between the Scandinavian way of understanding Kommunal Praksis as something very bureaucratic on the one hand. Like, when you need to renew your driver's license, or get a certificate, or if you want to add an extra structure to your house — then you go into this bureaucratic system of the municipality. That is often known as kommunal praksis in Danish as well as in other Scandinavian languages. On the other hand, when we say communal practice in English — it does not refer to bureaucracy at all. I think the English equivalent to kommunal praksis would be public administration practice, or something like that. I don't know the exact term, but it does not really matter that much as the two terms are almost the same — it's just a "k" in Danish, and a "c" in English — that makes all the difference. Two terms that are nevertheless completely different, but they could feed into each other. Or at least communal practice could feed into kommunal praksis, in the sense that we start to understand kommunal praksis, or public administration practice, as something we actually do for a collective group of people who are only bound together by living in the same geographic area within politically defined borders. The concept for Struer Tracks is not so much addressed towards the public administration, it is instead a humorous pathway into serious topics revolving around how we can open up perspectives of being together in many different ways, and more or less voluntarily, as we are in Struer municipality and in this world. Kommunal praksis should not be for the sake of the system, for the state — it should be for the inhabitants which collectively constitute an environment of individuals, families, groups and associations, companies and businesses, animals, insects, fields, plants, rocks, waters, politics, infrastructures, healthcare, farming, production, education, leisure, and entertainment. Kommunal praksis is the practice of glueing all this together through public administration but also through communal practice where we understand the societal environment not as a machine with set rigid rules that apply to everything, but as a living organism that is always changing in relation to the rest of the world. This organism needs to be kneaded, shaped, and formed from within by which it also shapes itself.

Since Struer Tracks is a festival, a biennial, organised by the municipality and taking place in the municipality of Struer, I think it would be great, as a curator, to have this kind of self-reflective double sided concept of Kommunal Praksis/ Communal Practice. One that is not just about the municipality itself, and not just self-reflective in the sense of looking at our own belly buttons, but rather an expanded self-reflection — like, what is this that we are actually doing in municipalities?

Being situated in a municipality, in a public administration system — as a festival, as a Sound Art Lab, as an artist residency or working environment for sound art — is a bit weird. We feel weird, and I mean that in a very positive sense. We feel weird about being within the realm of kommunal praksis, of public administration. This also has its strengths. The weirdness is that it's quirky, it's funny. At the same time it can also be a burden. We really have to follow some rules. Then again also opens doors — to direct help from the rest of the municipality, contact with other groups within or outside of the public administrative system.

The topic of kommunal praksis thus becomes a self-reflective term for the municipality, for us within the municipality, us as the festival, us as Sound Art Lab — it is a great exercise to do.

Of course, it is not so interesting to go to a festival that is just reflecting on its own situation. We want to expand the term through a lot of different artistic practices that are communal in one way or another. I think that is the very perspective coming from Sound Art Lab, from Struer Tracks, from within.

Then there is a bigger perspective — a societal, global perspective — of community as something like a group where you belong. That is both something like a safe place, but it is also maybe something that creates a border where others cannot enter.

ZP: What does that do? Or could there be other communal practices that transcend borders and groups?

JE: Borders can be anything — from country borders to, let's say, the sailing club. They have their borders. And the young car enthusiasts — they have their borders.

They stay in groups, but only within their group. And then they go home, and then they are also in other groups. And they are connected through family members, and friends, and colleagues, and so on.

Some families have relatives in France, or in the United States, or in South Africa. And suddenly, there is a community, or there is a connection. And it is cut off by community rules or border rules. You can meet one person from the sailing club, and one person from the car enthusiast group. They have a connection through the cuttings of borders in other groups. And you can have this communal perspective on so many levels.

I think those are... well, we would see the communal element as something positive, something that we do to each other, do with each other.

But we also face difficulties doing stuff — travel, being able to work elsewhere than your own, like, within your own state borders, or your friends' countries, and so on. Like, within the EU, it is fairly easy to move around. But if you want to go elsewhere, or if you come in from outside the EU, then you need a lot of paperwork. Again, some public administration work — to be part of the community, and so on.

So that whole geopolitical aspect of the communal practices — I think it's very, very interesting to see how we, as a festival, can address that. Both within the artworks themselves — but not necessarily only there. It could be a question of how we can collaborate with other festivals in other countries.

For example, we have two artists from the so-called SWANA region — Southwest Asia and North Africa — which is also a disputed area. There are many different understandings of what countries are included in that community, if we can even call it a community — the SWANA community.

The question becomes: how can we get funding from Danish art institutions to invite people from a place where it is normally more difficult to invite someone from? It is about trying to break out of our own bubble and saying, "okay, we need to look somewhere else". And one of those directions could be the SWANA region.

Therefore we teamed up — three festivals: Struer Tracks, Minu Festival, and Klang Festival — together with Another Sky Festival in London, who are specialised in SWANA artists.

Editor's note: As part of this collaboration, Struer Tracks, Minu Festival, and Klang Festival — together with Another Sky Festival in London and supported by Art Music Denmark — launched a residency programme for artists from the SWANA region (Southwest Asia and North Africa). Two selected artists will take part in a paid three-month residency at Sound Art Lab in Struer, Denmark, where they will develop new works to be later presented at one of the partner festivals.

How can we curate an open call? How can we curate the selection? And how do we go by with this?

How can we stay within the system but still stretch the system?

We are going beyond convenience, because the most convenient thing would be to invite someone from Sweden, invite someone from Germany — inexpensive travel, no bureaucracy needed, and so on.

But there are a lot of factors when inviting someone from Lebanon or Egypt, as the case will be here. So how can we stretch within that kind of administrative — public administrative — practice, so we can expand our own community?

There is that perspective, but then also: how can we see the human being as part of the world? In relation to, for example, what is sometimes called the more-than-human. That could be the waters that we are surrounded by — hence Struer. That could be the wildlife, the plants, animals, and so on. What is the relationship between humans and the rest of the world? And of course, that is not a new topic. But putting it into the context of this — I think it is a nice way to include it in the communal practice topic.

I also think the last perspective worth mentioning now is the idea of doing it together as a communal practice, which is way less abstract or like highbrow or heady. Doing it together, as in doing jam sessions, or making people meet — not saying that this is the artist-star, or the star artist, the big name, and this is the audience — but saying that, okay, we invite some people to do art. Most of them, most people have not heard about it. But that is okay. We know, we guarantee through our curation that great stuff will happen. And we hope that people will engage with that and be part of it.

We structure the whole festival so that it is possible to take part in everything. There are not several parallel tracks running at the same time and you miss half or two-thirds of the program. But you can, if you are energised enough, follow everything. We eat together — also like that, doing that together. Struer Tracks is not just about attending art shows together, it is something that is performed together, but also those very human needs of eating together — social needs. Eating together will be a key component of the curated program.

ZP: So why now?

JE: I think it can be relevant for all times, but also now.

ZP: Yes, and it feels like the topic of borders — and everything surrounding it — is becoming more and more urgent for more and more people. And with this being the fifth edition of Struer Tracks, it also feels like a good time to actually look back and reflect a bit

JE: Yeah, it will be the fifth time we have Struer Tracks. So it also feels like a good time to come together.

ZP: Yeah. For me, it was also a good reminder. In my experience, bureaucracy in general is just pure evil. And this was my first interaction in Europe where I felt that, "okay, the government can actually do something positive — you can 'trust' it, in some way".

In my experience, collaborating on projects with a municipality for example, usually entails constantly fighting. So the topic was a good reminder that it can be different. At some point, I think that becomes a big problem — when you live in a structure where you do not believe in cooperation, you become passive. You stop taking action because you already know it will only be met with resistance. And the thing is, you can never have the same amount of resources as when you are working with the municipality or within a public structure. That is why I think it offers a lot of space for reflection — about how to keep that balance and see both the problems and the good things that can come out of it. I think that is really important.

My next question — since we have been talking about people, your structure, and maybe how the biennial has worked in the past — how do you feel about the way communication with the city is going now? And do you have any expectations for how it might develop this time, or how it usually works in general?

JE: I had only attended one edition of Struer Tracks before I came to Struer. I went to visit Struer Tracks as part of a full international conference in Aalborg. We were going in buses to spend and afternoon experiencing the biennial. And that was eye-opening — to experience high-quality international art, sound art, happening in a small town in Denmark. I was very positive about that.

It was in 2019, which would have been the second edition. The first three editions were, as far as I was informed, stretched over two to three weeks of programming,

including kids' programs and performances, with a very strong focus on the exhibitions — so installations that you could come and visit throughout the two- to three-week duration of the program.

Whereas I had heard something like, okay, arriving at Struer on a Tuesday afternoon in the middle of a biennial and not feeling like there was a festival atmosphere was maybe a bit disappointing — dispite the artworks being amazing. I found that a shame. I was also thinking, okay, for the fourth edition in 2023, it would be nice to have a more dense festival atmosphere.

So we shortened it down to become five days of condensed programming — and that seemed to work very well. All the artists stayed, those who could. And also some of the audiences, especially local audiences, really enjoyed it and attended as much as possible. We got really good feedback. So I saw that, okay, that was a success somehow.

Another thing that was also a success was that we had some food trucks and a pop-up cafeteria, where we also held some performances. You could buy a cup of coffee, or a beer, or something to eat, and talk with each other, and then go into the exhibitions or attend performances. And that worked very well. That was kind of a meeting point. I wanted to make that even better for this year's edition.

So... yeah. What did not work with the 2023 edition was that the artists were not eating together, because there were not any planned time slots for that. So I wanted to change that. Now, we have planned time slots for lunch and dinner, where we will eat together, and there will be no performances during those time slots, to create this kind of family feeling.

Let's say we will be the artists plus the Struer Tracks team, and the professionals visiting, and so on — like a core group of maybe 50 people, always eating together, going to everything together. And then also including the rest of the visitors. It can really strengthen connections within the festival — and hopefully build a kind of micro-community that can then expand to other festivals. The big wish for any festival is that their artists get booked for something else because of their festival. And that people return to the festival to get more of the warmth they experienced the first time they came and attended.

I also wanted to bring that very much into play.

ZP: How do you know if the biennial worked? I think you partly answered that already... but do you have some kind of metric for success?

JE: When does it work locally?

ZP: Yes.

JE: That is when you can present something that is, by the art professionals, regarded as high quality — but at the same time not scaring away the non-trained audience, who might just be curious about something they had never experienced before.

The worst scenario — if we could take that first — would be that there is a curious local audience who comes, and then they get scared away. The best-case scenario would be that they dare. They have this little curiosity, they dare to show up to something that does not normally happen.

Struer Tracks takes place every second year and this year will then be the fifth. It is not everyone living in Struer who has even heard about Struer Tracks. It is not easy to attract the local audience, but if just some locals would think I'm not really sure what it is, but I'll give it a try and then they go home thinking okay, this is something wonderful and completely unexpected. That is a measurement for success.

ZP: Do you think that people are usually curious about sound art biennials?

JE: I'm sure that most people do not know what a biennial is — or what sound art is for that matter. So, no — because they do not know. They have not even heard about it. That being said, I am not sure, actually. Because when you do not know something, then why should you be curious?

We have a job to do there — to communicate it. So everyone can awaken their curiosity. I guess, because of the whole "City of Sound" slogan and all that, then — okay, there is a sound art festival, a biennial, I'll try to see what it is. Okay, it is close to where I live. Or it is down in the shopping street. Okay, no problem. I can go down there. And if it is not for me, then I can buy an ice cream or whatever. Hang out.

ZP: So how are artists selected for the biennial?

JE: Well, the curator has a job, and that is to stay curious, stay curating. There might be some — I do not know if there is — connection between the words curating and curious. A curator must keep on working curiously towards finding artists, practices and artworks that they did not know before, and then putting it in the pool of the stuff that the curator knows already. Then developing the topic, and how the artists and their works would fit into the topic. Considering in what different ways can we think about

the topics presented in artworks and in different constellations?

My experience is that most artists, maybe especially sound artists, seem easy to contact, to get in touch with and propose something to. There is something about sound art as a niche genre that makes the community lovely to work with. Most of the artists I contacted were very positive about coming to Struer Tracks and said yes immediately. And others, they were too busy with other works and had to decline, which is also totally fair.

Traveling a bit around to other festivals, making studio visits, and so on — speaking to artists throughout the years leading up to planning the program — is an important part of the process. But I also wanted to include people who have been through Sound Art Lab. There is a real connection with Sound Art Lab as a residency — where people are producing something, so what has been produced at Sound Art Lab might also be exhibited at Struer Tracks. The artist might be international — from a Danish perspective — but actually, what they have been creating, they have been doing very locally in Struer. That is, for example, the case with Maryia Komarova and Kunrad, who stayed for several weeks in the summer of 2024, and worked on an installation or performance — or whatever shape it will be in the end. They will come back and present that.

ZP: I was also thinking of using that question to highlight the situation with the open call for the Sound Art Lab residency. There were so many amazing applications, a lot of great ones. But I wanted to touch on the limitations involved. Sometimes artists get rejected not because their work is not strong, but simply because there are constraints — limited space, time, or other resources like budget.

JE: That is true. And we have not done an open call for Struer Tracks — other than the Almanac, of course. But… yeah, open calls are difficult. They are great because you can really get in touch with a lot of artists, you can read their proposals, and there is so much good stuff happening out there. But you are limited to picking only a few. And that is a difficult task — to reject a lot of really good artists and really good proposals.

I already had way too many people I wanted to include in the program, so I did not find it necessary to have an open call to artists for Struer Tracks.

Also, a lot of artists proactively write about whether they can participate in Struer Tracks with a performance or an installation. And… yeah, I can not remember if anyone is actually — there may be a few, actually — in the program, but mainly not. I think that is more the case if you are, like, playing at a club or venue — then that is the way to go.

But sure, you can always try, and it is always good to reach out and get connected. Sometimes it is also just the perfect match — and then of course you will be included.

ZP: Can you talk about your experience working in different roles — as a sound artist, an art director, and a curator? How do these roles develop alongside each other, and in what ways do they overlap or influence one another?

JE: I have my own artistic practice, and I guess a lot of curators have their own artistic practice. Others do not. But having an artistic practice, and experience of course, means that you have a vocabulary and experience in doing stuff — seeing what is possible, what is maybe not possible, especially when you are reading proposals. But also in the way that you can kind of imagine a program being put together. So I only think it is a strength, in a bigger perspective.

Maybe we could talk about the fact that it is weakening all the different aspects. I am not 100% an artist, I am not 100% curator, I am not 100% director of an institution.

But what is 100%?

Yeah, exactly — what is even 100%? It does not add up like that. Fair enough, if you are only doing one of the things — that is not a problem. But saying that you are only true if you are doing one thing 100% — I do not really like that.

ZP: I was also curious about how responsibility differs across your roles. I just wonder if, in your case, those roles come with a sense of responsibility. Like, as an art director, do you ever feel, "This is on me"?

JE: So there is a very big responsibility to understand what is happening. You need some good analytic skills to see connections, to see conflicts — potential conflicts — to see different points of interest, and analyse the situation. And then from there, you do you.

So being aware that, okay, this is a festival situated here and not there. It is situated within this history and not that history, or those wishes. So there are certain things

that would be very easy to do, other things that I might be able to do with a bit of fighting, and some things that would be totally a no-go. And that is a big responsibility.

And then, of course, there is the economical and practical responsibility — and so on — that also comes to it — but that is in this more curatorial, abstract responsibility of curating a program. It is a lot of understanding and openness, and a lot of things can go wrong or go as you did not wish for, and then you have to be able to say, okay, I will then do something else, and that will also be very good.

Let's say you find the perfect location for a certain artwork and you imagine how everything will take shape, and then suddenly it is not possible anymore and you have to find another location. That is just what we have to deal with.

And then there is the political factor, as we are part of — and have been granted funds from — the municipality so we have to recognise and honour its wishes. But also to interpret their wishes in a way they had not imagined.

So that is what I think is a very good way to express it — it needs to be taken very seriously. It needs to be translated into something that you, as a professional, can be satisfied with, while also, you know, fitting the frame.

ZP: Do you think there are any lessons that you could share — maybe something you learned from your personal experiences working in this context?

JE: Yes. Well, one thing that I think is really nice — and actually is necessary — is to be thankful for everyone who is involved and to give them credit. And highlight them a bit more than they feel that they might need to be highlighted. Because everyone is a big part of the process.

Being the director, or the curator, or the 'big-shot artist' is often seen as one person doing a great job. But basically, it is a whole team. It is a whole organisation. A lot of bits and pieces. I have met a lot of very famous, big-shot artist directors and curators who are not very nice. So being nice to people, giving them credit for the job that they have been doing, does not take away your credit. I wish that would be more common. Not that it is rare, but it could be more common — to be nice and say, "that's really, really good".

There is a lot of criticism out there. I think it is fair to criticise stuff that needs to be criticised, but there should be more positive gestures. And less ego. Less "I alone have done this great thing".

I think with social media — like you have Instagram and you have LinkedIn and so on — there is a lot of posting about "me" and "what I have been doing" and "I'm so good," and so on. Or humble-bragging, which is even worse.

…But anyway, people should post more about other people, and not so much about themselves. Give credit to people you admire — like, "this is really nice, a good job that other people have been doing" — I think that is important.

ZP: I don't know why it so often gets so complicated. But maybe it takes a lot of trust for organisations to credit people properly. And somehow, sometimes, things just go weirdly…

JE: I think that is a risk that you have to take. It also does not need to be perfect.

ZP: True.

JE: Yeah, well, I think sometimes I also fall into the trap of wanting to do too much. So, what I would love to learn is to say no or be very realistic about tasks and saying, "I can't do that"—being a bit better to myself work-wise. It is just. I get so excited about doing all these great things that we can do here. And most of the time I manage, but often it is also, you know, I'm a bit too busy. I would like to have a calmer workday, but yeah, that is a luxury. And I am not complaining, but yeah.

ZP: That is a luxury — but there is still a lot of complexity, and it can still be difficult to manage everything that is happening.

…How can we give proper credit to everyone working at Sound Art Lab — for example, through The Almanac?

I mean, yes, having this conversation with you, but there's also Kristoffer, Isa, Stine, and many others. And then there are probably so many people that I do not even know about.

So I am just wondering — how can we include everyone? What should be done?

JE: The easiest way to do it is to just talk about them, mentioning them, including them.

ZP: Who are the people of Sound Art Lab? And what are they doing?

JE: We have you as an intern. And we have Léa, also an intern. We have Thomas, who is also an intern. Kristoffer, our artistic janitor.

And I think that is a very nice title — he is an artist, he has a janitor function — so he is an artistic janitor. We have Stine, doing a great job with communication, organising and coordinating within the project "Sound of the Future," but also in Sound Art Lab as a whole — and Struer Tracks, of course. Isa, doing an amazing job with Lydlaboratoriet, an educational program for kids. Doing an amazing job applying for money for Struer Tracks — that is of course a job that needs to be done. And she is writing really good applications and has made sure that we can have a great program.

Then we have all our collaborators — our neighbors in Sound Hub Denmark, Uddannelsesinitiativet i Struer, Bang & Olufsen, Struer Museum, and the National Knowledge Centre for Sonic Cultural Heritage — and, of course, the rest of the municipality. They have all been very helpful.

We have Jørgen in Sound Art Lab's basement, who will also be the technical manager for Struer Tracks. We have all the artists in Sound Art Lab coming in and out and making life great for us and them. … And I am not sure how we can give them all a voice within this dialogue frame, but they are all there — and there are many more.

ZP: Do you think it is a problem that the sound art community feels so elitist? Should it aim to be more accessible or somehow expanded?

JE: Do you think it is elitist?

ZP: I'm pretty sure about this — contemporary art is elitist in many ways. You often need access to education, not necessarily to understand or feel the art, but to know where to go, what to see, and how to be invited.

Some organisations seem to protect that bubble to maintain a sense of power. And sound art can be even harder for general audiences — it is less visual and often more abstract.

With The Almanac, we try to open it up, get more people involved. But I know I am still mostly speaking within the same community.

In the end, contemporary art is tied to privilege. It is not about survival — it is about having the space to reflect, to choose, to engage. And sound art, maybe even more so.

JE: I'm not sure I completely agree with you on that point. I do understand where the perception comes from — the idea that contemporary art is somehow elitist or inaccessible. But that artists live an easy life, simply choosing what to eat, reading, making art, and focusing solely on their creative work, doesn't reflect the reality for most. I think being an artist is incredibly challenging. Many are struggling — not just financially, but also emotionally and socially — to sustain their practice in a world that often undervalues artistic labour. It's a demanding path that requires constant negotiation between sustaining a basic level of living and always being creative and pushing boundaries.

ZP: I am not saying artists are not struggling — I know they are, often a lot. What I mean is that the visitors of contemporary art are usually people who already have some level of access.

It is still not something that feels easily accessible to everyone. In Struer for example, I do not think it is always easy for people to understand what is going on. So yeah, artists have their own challenges, but contemporary art still exists within a kind of bubble, in terms of who engages with it…

JE: I do not think it should be easy to... It does not have to be easy to understand. But I am also not trying to make an understanding of anything. I am trying to make experiences — something that you might understand in a few days, if at all. Or something that gives you another perspective on something that you find normal or commonplace.

In the sense that what artists can do is to shift perspectives. They can address topics in a different way than politicians can. In a different way than journalists can. In a different way than academics can. In a different way than… the baker or the post-delivery person, or the engineer can.

So there is a special role of the artist. It is not more special than the baker — it is just a different role. But it is still special, as the baker is special.

A special role of the artist to... especially within contemporary art, but I would also say that in art in general — to spot these weird ways of perceiving the world and try to transform that into something that others can experience.

If art, in general and presented at Struer Tracks, is easy to understand — or if it is understandable at all — then... like saying, "Okay, I understand this. 100%." Then for me... it might have failed. I am not saying that it is failing, but it might

have failed. It might have missed the poetry. It does not have the artistic value that is necessary to make that shift … And it can just be a tiny shift, a subtle transformation — like, "Oh, that is odd, but... it makes me think about the world in a different way."

I think it needs to be — what you might call elitist, or unapproachable, or difficult to approach. Because art needs to create change. And that is what seems elitist. But I do not think it is elitist — I think it is necessary.

ZP: I think the access to that experience is elitist.

JE: Yeah, but it is a cultural thing to call it elitist. And some also want to preserve the elitist bubble.

ZP: That is true. But I also think denying the elitism is, in part, denying my own position. A part of me probably wants to belong to that elite group, even if I don't fully admit it to myself.

I have had the privilege of time and access — I did not have to focus on survival, and that is already a huge advantage. If I ignore that, I am closing my eyes to my own privilege.

So this is something I am constantly questioning: how to live in society, understand my role in the art world, and communicate with people outside of it. Sometimes I think my work is accessible and open — but then I talk to people, and they are like, "What are you even doing?" And I realise how deep in the bubble I am. We are living in parallel realities that do not always meet.

JE: Yeah, but I also do not understand the work of people who work with wind turbines, or with farming, or with economics. Because I do not understand their inherent mechanics, they are just other fields. I think the question about privilege is very important, but I do not think that privilege is bad at all. It is how you relate to your own privilege — how you are aware of it. Everyone should be very privileged. You should not be ashamed of a privilege, but you need to address it and say, "Okay, wow, how lucky am I that I can travel to several countries with ease," or, "How lucky am I that I can afford to have a place to live," and so on. Celebrate the privilege and use it for giving other privileges too. But do not be ashamed of it. Privilege is pretty random, accumulated through time, but privilege is not equal value.

ZP: Yes, I was trying to speak more about awareness. Privilege blindness is real. And honestly, I think many people, including myself, experience that in some way or another.

JE: I very much agree. Also just being given life is already a huge privilege, I would say… But it is a big topic.

ZP: I also have some questions about future plans — like the summer school you are opening, and maybe other projects you are planning for this year? What are the future plans for Sound Art Lab?

JE: So Sound Art Lab is still young — three and a half years, approaching the fourth anniversary.

The Sounding City Summer School, which Sound Art Lab does together with Aarhus University and the amazing Marianne Ping Huang, is a great event where students get together for three weeks in Struer working on interdisciplinary projects all focused around sound and listening. This will take place hopefully for many years.

But our future plan is to to condense all what we are doing into the Sound Art School '89'. The school is not a pure Sound Art Lab project though — it is a collaboration where Sound Art Lab is one of the main partners. The collaboration includes the local organisations working with sound in Struer to form a co-learning community where you can learn through sound art, sound technology, sound product design, sound narratives, sound studies, and so on — and what is it to be a professional sound artist? It is spiced up with contributions from artists in residency at Sound Art Lab, as the school will take place with Sound Art Lab as the host institution.

That will, of course, be a very big part of our coming future, close future. And that is, for me personally, something that I have been hoping could happen here, because the potential for an amazing sound art school is here — building-wise, knowledge-wise, and the vibe is there.

ZP: That sounds really exciting. I just have one last part — you know, like at the end of an interview when people ask quick questions and get quick answers.

JE: Is that a common thing?

ZP: Yes. So the first one is… what is the best advice you have ever received?

JE: Best advice I received? That is a good question. I think I will answer it differently, because I cannot really think of a single advice that pops into my mind. But I think it is important to be aware of your mentors. And they do not have to be your active mentors. It can be persons that you are looking up to, people you are following in some way or the other, and people that you are copying — like copying in a positive sense.

I often do that when I'm in a situation and think, "Okay, what would that person have done here?" I try to follow the example of someone that I see as more experienced than myself — someone who would probably come up with a better solution than I might have. And that is, of course, advice that I am now giving. But I think you can also see a mentor as an advice-giver. So you — of course, you do not need to answer or to ask the person — but try to answer for yourself: "What would that person have done in this situation?"

ZP: How would you describe your work in three words?

JE: Three words? ...Why three?

I have a mantra — maybe more like a sentence I picked up somewhere. It is: "Excuse me while I deconstruct."

ZP: Do you have a dream project?

JE: A dream project — that should be unrealistic somehow, I guess. Um, like, some daydream project could be to do something completely different. Um... like, the cliché is to become a gardener.

ZP: Maybe one day it could become realistic.

JE: Could be. I think it might — I do not know… But I think it is good to think that most things are realistic.

ZP: The last question is — what is the last sound artwork to have left a big impression with you?

JE: The last one… I was very happy to experience an installation in Hague by Ioana Vreme Moser, called Fluid Anatomy.

It was like a hydro-computer — a computer made of water containers, water channels, plastic pipes, and so on. Maybe it was not traditionally sound art — it was very sculptural — but it had a nice rhythm to it, almost like a kind of breathing. So that is the last one, I think.

ZP: Thank you. Do you think we missed something important?

JE: Of course.

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