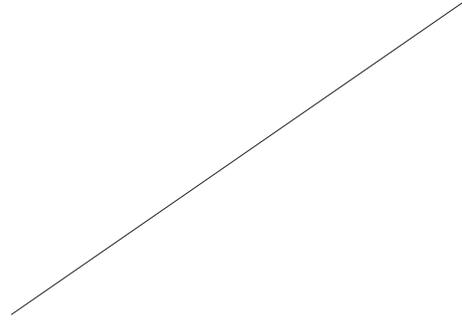


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MAKING ROOM FOR SOUND



This conversation I was invited to moderate, is part of Eric Namour's multipronged project *elnicho*. In order to expand on a concern that we have been discussing for a few years, we wanted to examine the following questions: how can we make better exhibitions that have as a central element aural or phonic works, be it music, sound, or noise? How have galleries, museums, and independent spaces incorporated these practices, and when have they been successful? Or, why have they been ineffective? What do we want to see happen and how?

As the name of Namour's project suggests, we know our wants and interests belong to a niche within the art world, a specialization set in motion by the futurists, Duchamp, and others at the start of the twentieth century. They contributed in the (then originitive) inclusion of different aural practices within art discourses and spaces, which now comprises a kind of responsibility for contemporary spaces. But an expected responsibility is not the same as compromise, and so, many times we have come upon problems with poorly made aural related pieces or programs. Often it takes people who are truly cross-disciplinary or whose practice is deeply collaborative to create new ways of experience.

We invited three curators who have worked widely with the different mediums in both institutional and independent art spaces, as well as in music venues and time-based-work festivals. The discussion in the following pages features Italian curator Andrea Lissoni, who has worked extensively with sound, music, and noise in the festival context as well as under a major art institution, the Tate Modern, where he implemented a sound program; Fionn Meade, who was the artistic director and senior curator of cross-disciplinary platforms at the Walker Art Center, previously curator at Sculpture Center in New York and the Henry Art Gallery in Seattle; and Chiara Giovando, a Los Angeles-based independent curator who is also a musician and sound artist, consistently demonstrating a concern in her programs for sound, music, performance and the ephemeral in both independent spaces and institutions. We started with the most basic question: what is the present state of sound in exhibition practices, and how has this come to be? This query, importantly initiated a conversation about the genealogies behind each of the mentioned terms. Set by Giovando, it became our first problem: why are these three very different forms or structures (sound, music, noise) always categorized as just *sound* within the art context, and can they really be treated the same inside of contextualized spaces, or even in this conversation?

Our cyberspace gabfest delved into the problematics of showing these aural forms in spaces that have been developed for visual encounters, where the actors involved—from curators, museum staff, preparators, to the audience—are already used to functioning in a certain way. The invited curators introduce us to issues like what Lissoni termed the impulse to ghettoize¹ these forms, or Meade's concern with the inclination to show these practices

¹ The use of the terms ghetto and ghettoize by Andrea Lissoni refers to their origins, about the segregation of minorities and the disregard from the larger dominant society. In this regard, it is an analogy of the museum's impulse to divide and relegate and not a reflection of the cultural richness of either the different historical European and American ghettos or the pieces presented in the auditoriums or peripheral parts of museums.

in a historized format and not an active one, and Giovando's thesis of art's consumption of other forms, lacking nuances and understanding.

As is necessary with other social, political, and cultural structures, museum operations have to be questioned. They should be excavated deeply in order to—as we foresee and desire—mutate enough so to defeat the power of expectation and change experience. Generally speaking, it is not a time to conform. We want to see art institutions flex, as time and sound do, to rethink their operations and programs.

We all arrived to this interest via diverse origins. Before entering into the conversation, the next two pages provide a brief overview of each participant's inception into the discussed media.

// Michele Fiedler, Mexico City.

MICHELE FIEDLER It would be great to hear about how each of you began working with sound, music, and noise in your curatorial practices and how this continues today.

ANDREA LISSONI I suspect I started working with sound at the same time I began collaborating with Link Project in Bologna in 1997. I first organized expanded cinema events and then moved into the electronic music scene. There, I began working with artists exploring forms of what I might call, "inventive VJ-ing." Having grown up with a typical countercultural ideology, cut'n'paste and cut'n'mix were central practices, hence a band like Coldcut or a label like Ninja Tune (funded by Coldcut), were fundamental for me. To say it in the simplest manner, it was essential for me to acknowledge how in their video and live acts with Hexstatic, in particular, the images and sounds (despite their inner nature and their varying sample rate) are basically the same beyond any music industry or anti-industry discourses. An image carries an array of sounds with it and vice versa.

To try to re-frame the sort of backbone-ish/schizophrenic cultural life and the concerns I had at the time, I'll end with the words (as I remember them) of an exchange from the film *Vicinato*, by Carsten Höller, Philippe Parreno, and Rirkrit Tiravanija, which I watched again and again in 1995 projected onto the walls of the gallery Studio Guenzani in Milan, occasionally interrupted by an inflatable floating fish: "There isn't any difference between an event, its image, and its perception. And if there is one, we don't perceive it anyway. Reality is made of this." And there is something about how the way out of reality is imagination, a lot of imagination.

FIANN MEADE I grew up around music and sound. From Babatunde Olatunji, Hamza El Din, and the Clancy Brothers, I met a lot of pretty impressive folks when I was a kid growing up in Seattle through my father and his work. I was also lucky enough to go to Evergreen State College in Olympia, where I met a lot of great people. However, what really distinguished composing for me was going to the old OK Hotel in Seattle at a time when kids under 19 years old could get in. I got to see and meet Bill Frisell, Lori Goldston, Robin Holcomb, and Wayne Horvitz, not to mention so many other folks, and foster relationships that continue through to today. However, in terms of my curating practice, it was definitely my collaborative work with scholar and musician Rob Millis of Climax Golden Twins on *In Resonance* (2005), and my work with Jay Sanders and others that got me going. Lastly, it was being in the room at Cornish College for Eyvind Kang's senior recital in 1992, I think that changed my appreciation the most. I was lucky to be there, and I've been a fan ever since.

CHIARA GIOVANDO I grew up surrounded by classical music. My father is the founder of a large orchestral and chamber music festival called Bravo! Vail, so every summer I spent my time with the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and some of the most accomplished chamber players in the world. Hearing a sound repeated relentlessly and perfected—tiny shifts in the resonance of the cello or the whisper of air passing through a flute—I loved the sounds, all of them. These early experiences still inform my art practice thus several of my compositions have been specifically written for classical players. In 2013 and 2015 I wrote graphic notation scores for the Calder Quartet that were performed at the Barbican in London and the LA Philharmonic.

I started playing noise and improvisational electronic music in San Francisco in the mid 1990s. There, I organized my first large-scale project called *Sound Structures* (2011), which was a series of concerts and happenings that invited artists and musicians from my scene to perform existing indeterminacy scores and graphical notation scores. What drew me to these scores was the relationship between structure and chaos that inherently exists in them. This early fluidity between sound, music, noise, and art has been a fundamental influence on my practice. It was with this work surrounding graphical notation that I initially blurred the lines between being an organizer (curator) and an artist.

ERIC NAMOUR My appreciation towards this particular kind of “experimental” music and sound only emerged pretty late after a slowly paced DIY learning curve process. In my youth, I wasn't influenced by any particular surrounding or community but rather learning by listening (and buying music!). When I moved to Rome in the mid-nineties, my knowledge was fed through CD purchases inspired by a trip-hop/ambient/acid jazz radio program and later through *The Wire* magazine.

It was then and there that I got hit by a train called Tony Conrad—a cold slap in the face that utterly stunned and shook me, and opened up an array of new weird sounds and people. A few years later, I quit my job and headed to the UK to pursue an MA on a socio-anthropological perspective on how audiences relate to electronic/experimental music but more importantly, how one could (i.e. myself) enter the community from the production side, without belonging to any set community. My first festival happened as a result of this academic process: with a friend, we put on the free program of Dissonanze (called dis.lab)

with quite an electronic crew and panels on digital culture. This is where I met Andrea Lissoni who was part of the symposium. Back in London, I started putting on micro events under the [no.signal] project. This is where my festival Sottovoce, a day celebration of noise and silence came to fruition. In parallel, in 2008, I launched elnicho as an independent music itinerant shop and started programming in festivals Radar and Aural. Through elnicho, I started putting on the festival and more recently, one-off events.

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MICHELE FIEDLER (MF) Let's talk about how sound and music operate in the exhibition space. The space they take up, the time, how they disappear, the attention they require (or not), how they travel and may be interactive, their economic distance from other kinds of works of art, and how accessible they are or are not.

CHIARA GIOVANDO (CG) Ultimately, I am interested in the ways that time can be inserted into the mythology of the static space of exhibition. What I mean by this is, of course, exhibition space is not static; it can't be. It participates in the same time/space continuum as everything else. However, the frame of exhibition, the presumption, and the historical crutch of the site of exhibition is that of a vacuum; it imposes a stillness on its viewers and holds them in a kind of captivity. Sound breaks this trance. It returns us to our time-bodies in a way that the visual does not. It works in two ways: first by holding our attention, in many cases for longer than a painting does, by suggesting a beginning and an ending; and then by allowing space for us as a body in time as opposed to a gaze. By not privileging the eyes, sound is aural and is actually also a felt sensory experience. It pushes back against systems of commodification that rely on visual constructions surrounding desire.

One of the first exhibitions I ever programmed in Los Angeles was called *Time Bodies* (2011), and it addressed this very question. It played with the idea that an object has the potential to be more of a subject than a human being because of an object's ability to be present in a moment, whereas the human mind is constantly traversing speculative futures and nostalgic or remorseful pasts.

With recorded sound, there is a rupture, a fissure—the expressive moment and the perceptive moment are disconnected. Before recording, sound had never been severed from the causal point of its manufacture. This is because sound is not static and has no body of its own. It merely borrows bodies. It moves as air pressure and forms space around itself as it passes. Sound depends on time and cannot exist without it; there is not static sound. Sound cannot “stop.”

Sound does not organize itself the way other matter does as a concrete form, but rather it spreads outward. In fact, it only finds form once it bounces off a wall or object and then the inner ear, so in this way sound is always relational. It can be thought of as mapping the negative space of any room, so it represents the architectures of museums and galleries. Its shape is made from all that is the site, including the other works.

MF Only since the early twentieth century have sound, music, and noise been included in art practices or featured as exhibition, performance, or public programming. How do these mediums currently exist in art practices and in the exhibition space? What are some of the moments in recent history where you see things turning, to give these formats the spaces they occupy now?

CG Sound, music, and noise are really three very different things for me, and I don't often discuss them as the same. I've started to define these things by interpreting sound as a material, music as language, and noise as gesture. This is useful, especially when seeing how sound, music, and noise show up historically over the last century of contemporary art practice.

ERIC NAMOUR (EN) Do you think that friction is important?

CG Yes.

ANDREA LISSONI (AL) I agree. There's confusion across the definitions of composition, noise, or sound art, but more often there's misunderstanding. Take dance and choreography, for example. They are often sort of thrown together, but they actually have different genealogies and histories, and this needs to be acknowledged.

There's also a more basic thing happening: when you introduce these terms into contemporary art, many of those distinctions become null or void, and you have to gather a certain capacity to do it all—show the work, present the work, and listen to the work in the best possible manner.

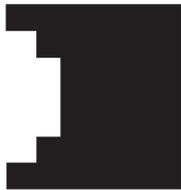
EN I think there's an evolution in presenting sound art and presenting music. I'm interested in how the terminology has completely detached itself from any genre. Whether it's sound art or noise, it all seems to fall under the umbrella of music when presented in a museum. How did music find its way into the museum? For me, the genre is agnostic in a sense. It's about the concept of auditory art and the intangible element. If you think of a string quartet or noise, it's still something that is being presented as music, and then the genre becomes secondary to the act of entering the art space.

AL As long as there is technical knowledge, skill, and commitment within the institution, sound, noise, sound art, and their auxiliary components can easily find a place in contemporary art. It's not so different from what happened fifty years ago, but today we

can—with more freedom—make sure the sort of sound pieces or events we are working on will be part of a bigger composition, or at least will be understood as satellites and not just as unknown, dangerous, flying objects. One could say that we are no longer striving, but rather making room for sound to exist within the gallery, as part of a main program based on contemporary practices.

CG For me, a discourse around sound would be a conversation about physical material and sculpture. It becomes a really interesting conversation, especially now, in this sort of internet-post-internet moment. Exhibitions have become increasingly represented through documentation, and the experience of contemporary art overall becomes increasingly ephemeral. I can't talk about music or noise in the same way.

This may seem like a tyrannical statement, but in my opinion, music is emotional and most often sentimental in a museum or gallery. It's almost impossible for music to avoid this as it reverberates against the hard parallel surfaces in most contemporary art spaces. So, it's a technical issue—it often sounds a certain way (very echoic)—but also a conceptual one: against the silence of the static, music can't help but become manipulative. And unless the work is intentionally addressing this problem, without great effort on the part of the organizer, it cannot really be listened to in any serious way inside a museum or gallery. So, I think when we discuss music in museums, it needs to be under these pretenses.



1// **Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago**
Chicago, USA

FIONN MEADE (FM) For me, Erik Satie is a good place to start, as John Cage's biggest influence is Satie. Satie is both a composer (a pretty brilliant one) and an interesting noise artist that was capable of bringing those kinds of tactics and that materiality into his work. There have been moments of quite fluid pollution across these genres regardless of the setting, whether it be a café or a gallery or a concert hall. For me, that's where it gets interesting.

For instance, in the Merce Cunningham exhibition held simultaneously at the Walker Art Center and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago. John Cage became a central figure in my thinking of the entire exhibition. Working on it for over three years, I was ready to bring in Eyvind Kang, Steve Roden, and a number of artists that had worked with Cagean tactics over the years and situated composition at the core of their practice. However, the museum structure simply wasn't ready for it. Audiences weren't ready for it.

Instead, we ended up focusing on choreography and live sound accompaniment. However, the museum structure as we know it is still not ready for this notion of embedding the influences of a figure like Cage via contemporary responses that are truly cross-disciplinary. In the end, you have these listening rooms (which are great), pleasant places to take in the sound and its histories. But, there is a simultaneous de-privileging of the sonic experience in museum contexts. For me, and no doubt many others, what's interesting is that these rooms predominate and present a conundrum. There have been very interesting moments when these conditions broke down, in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s, and arguably in the most recent experiments with choreography and recombinant sculpture. Take an artist like Tarek Atoui, for instance. In his exhibition at the Tate

Modern's Tanks, he proliferated the logic of the *Reverse Sessions* at Kurimanzutto Gallery in Mexico City. This was brilliant, in part, because you have this extension of research leading to collaboration and the material transposition into sculptural space—first in the gallery and then seeping into the museum. That was an example that worked brilliantly across formats and those distinctions and boundaries. Whereas, for Nevin Aladağ's *Music Room* at Documenta 14 in Athens, if you weren't there for those performances the installation didn't work because it looked like a stage without performers. Tarek's work is not like that: he's able to bring presence to his installations even when there is no liveness in the space.

There has been a theater at the Walker for the last twenty-five years. Conversely, when you go to see Cecil Taylor at the Whitney Museum, it's a concert in a museum space. What Jay Sanders did well was that he programmed Taylor, Fred Moten, Bonnie Davis, and many others, not as jazz composers but as artists, so it had the texture of an exhibition even if it was programmed in a museum space. It's still programming but to the level of exhibition-making and that's very interesting and challenging. You can do that in New York, in London, but you would be very hard-pressed to program in a gallery space outside major cities in that way, even at the Walker in Minneapolis, where such programming is cordoned off to the theater. This is venerable and laudable, but it does not challenge the museum structure outside of major cities like New York and Los Angeles. While at the Walker there were many examples



2// **Kurimanzutto Gallery**
Mexico City, Mexico

of attempts to impact the institution in this regard, including the programming and performances I organized in relation to Valerie Cassel Oliver's landmark exhibition *Radical Presence: Black Performance in Contemporary Art* (2014), as well as commissions done for Cunningham with longtime Walker stalwart curator Philip Bither, and yet it's honest to say that we didn't shift the conversation enough.

At the Walker, such challenges have been undertaken in the past. For instance, Nigel Redden, who was the performing arts curator in the 1980s, did occasional things in the museum's gallery space but also, simultaneously, throughout the city. This breaks down certain expectations of the exhibition by atomizing it into multiple spaces. So, if you're talking about making sound and atomized exhibitions in contemporary times, there are lots of great examples from the past to learn from. But if we're talking about implementing this notion at gallery space in leading museums, you're going to find even the most sophisticated venues won't do a listening room. It's sort of the crossroad that we are at with sound composition in exhibitions.

AL I completely agree, and this is the paradox at stake. For example, *The Tanks* at Tate Modern have been set, literally invented, dedicated, advertised, and marketed as the space for dance, moving image, and sound. I'm fighting against this constantly and saying, "No it needs to happen also outside of that impeccable space." Otherwise we are

building up the ghetto,² which we have been battling against for so many years, and it happens when we categorize or separate works within the museum as video art or sound art instead of very simply art made by artists with media cameras or sound devices.

So here, at Tate, the solution regarding dance was *If Tate Modern was Musée de la Danse?* (2015). Although it only existed for one day, it was an amazing idea. It was this big project by Boris Charmatz that allowed for an exhibition like Philippe Parreno's Turbine Hall commission to take place. Though in the end, I'd consider it an apparently huge moving image work masking an incredibly and accurately articulated sound composition. *If Tate Modern was Musée de la Danse?* concedes the possibility for sound to travel and inhabit the museum in a commanding way, relying on the legacy of Bruce Nauman's Turbine Hall Commission *Raw Materials* (2004), a genius, but not new, site-specific work consisting of a survey of the most compelling works Nauman has made using sound.

Atoui's *Reverse Collection* (2014) wasn't an existing work that was borrowed and displayed, rather, it was the outcome of more than a year of conversations based on a preexisting work called *The Dahlem Sessions*, made for the 2014 Berlin Biennale for Contemporary Art.

2 See note 1 p.5



3 // **Tate Modern**
London, England

We were challenging both exhibition and collection practices, thinking about how to reanimate a collection of instruments in a museum collection. How to imagine their form only through sound? How to share such an experience publicly by involving professional local musicians as well as composers? And regarding the collection: what does the museum end up collecting? A score, a series of sculptures, or are they props? What is the difference between a sculpture and an instrument? How to share the experience of the work instead of displaying dead objects alongside documentation of the original event? What is the affordance of an actual instrument? How, as a curator collaborating with the artist, can I establish a set of rules that will guarantee forever the possibility of sharing the work as a musical performance? How to open a new strand in collecting time-based media works with the aim and challenge of keeping alive a precious line of conversations with dedicated communities throughout generations (typology of musicians, availability, and skills in playing the instrument), in order to be able to activate the piece at any time in the future?

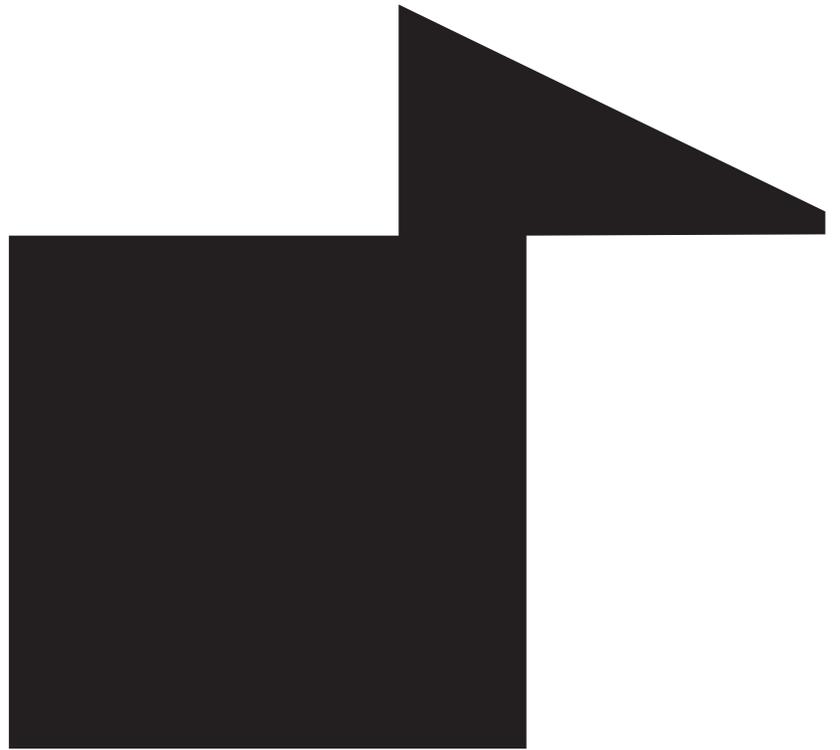
FM I think the most successful examples of including these mediums in institutional spaces have been made by the artist creating solo projects not solely engaged with sound. That's when you'll find a museum willing to go to a sophisticated place with music, sound, or noise. But you will not find it outside of that context. There are very few examples in the last fifteen to twenty years. I do think that previous to our moment there are many examples. Otherwise what you have in the recent era is unfortunately a less than satisfying list of sound art exhibitions.

CG You should come see my shows. I have curated mostly in *Kunsthallen* and non-profit or independent organizations, but one of the most important ways that I address sound in exhibition is by considering time. I recently curated a yearlong program of exhibitions titled *Sound Structures* at Disjecta Contemporary Art Center in Portland, Oregon. For the first exhibition, titled *Book of Scores* (2015), I invited five artists to make scores: two Danish composers, Tobias Kirstein and Johannes Lund, and visual artists Alison O'Daniel, Ellen Lesperance, and Helga

Fassonaki.

This project looked at Lawrence Halprin's book *RSVP Cycles*. But yes, I've curated at least seven large-scale exhibitions that specifically deal with sound in (what I hope are) impactful ways. So, I guess I disagree, I think there have been successful gallery shows that deal with sound art.

EN And I think that's also one of the reasons we've put together this kind of group, as we needed you to say, "You should come to my shows; you should see what happens there," and "I'm an independent. I can do whatever I want because I'm invited to use that space." I think that this is something, as I wouldn't consider myself



4 // **Disejta**
Portland, USA

a proper curator with a project like this, but I'm an independent agent trying to include music, sound, and noise, in the exhibition space—whatever that means. It doesn't mean that I curate a sound art show, but I do try to use the space and its particularities rather than just as a venue. So, if it's about putting music in the Tamayo auditorium, I'm not that interested unless it's part of a long-term strategy of sound appreciation that goes hand-in-hand with the museum. If you give me the whole of the museum where I can play with it entirely then I will go in, and I've managed to do that on a couple of occasions. It starts becoming how music enters the space.

I think this is one of the issues that comes out when we talk about whether it's been done successfully or not. There's also the factor of freedom, which is another word Andrea used before from the sound perspective, the freedom of execution, of finding one's way within the institution. I think that's an interesting point.

CG One of the best parts about working in independent venues is that I have the flexibility to respond to what's happening in my immediate cultural landscape. Since independent spaces don't have programs that are planned five to seven years out, the way museums are obligated to, they're able to respond to what feels vital and relevant now. When I was curator and director at Human Resources, I did a show with Fiona Connor where she wanted to drill into the gallery floor and access our main water line to install a working water fountain, and we said yes. I didn't have to go through any bureaucratic process for that; I just said yes and rented a jackhammer from Home Depot. So that's really exciting for me, giving the artists in these smaller spaces the freedom to take risks. Not only do we get to fuck with our physical space more because it's less

“precious” than a museum, but we get to tackle the infrastructure of the institution itself, its economic and administrative organization, and its didactic materials. All of it becomes a potential site for art. At Human Resources, we often programmed high level exhibitions and then the next night a concert of new music or dance. In this way, I think we successfully traversed several different worlds within one space, and that's something that you can't do at a museum without a huge conversation about insurance with the board and who knows what else. I feel like Sanders brought conversations about art, sound, and specifically experimental music to the Whitney in really successful ways.

FM I just want to clarify I totally agree with you in terms of scale, time, and audiences for non-profit and Kunsthalls versus museum contexts. The comment I was making was more reflective of some of the challenges with the museum space, meaning that a figure like John Cage or David Tudor or anybody from that group would not get an immersive treatment in a museum. They've yet to receive immersive museum treatment. These are major figures that we all think about and think through and alongside and with, and yet in a museum space there are very few examples of really sophisticated, synthetic, multi-platform engagement with composers, noise artists, or sound artists in that way.

I think that is very similar to the issue of dance in the museum that Andrea was talking about. It can be brilliant to have dance in the museum, but choreography in the museum is different. If you're going to engage a choreographic exhibition with someone who creates dance, you're going to have to go further than just saying,



5 // **Whitney Museum of American Art**
New York, USA

“here’s the space, bring your dancers to the galleries.” I think we’re still in a very early stage of engagement given the level of what’s happening in contemporary museums. Indeed, museums are still challenged by such questions, and when Sanders is programming at the Whitney, it’s great because it’s New York. People will come to the open space of the museum and listen to Fred Moten, Connie Davis, and hear an amazing Cecil Taylor concert. This is wonderful. But does that challenge the Whitney’s value system of exhibition making? I don’t think so. It’s a key moment in the NYC landscape with Sanders’ role as executive director at Artists Space, Matthew Higgs’ longtime tenure at White Columns, or Thelma Golden’s key leadership as the executive director at the Studio Museum in Harlem. I think these are the examples we should be looking at, just as much as the Whitney or MoMA.

AL I completely agree. For various reasons, I think it’s the most successful experiment we have done; we curated an exhibition in time, something that everyone would call a festival, but we (Tate’s senior curator of performance Catherine Wood, and myself) see it as a *live exhibition*. It had a secret title that we wanted to use, borrowed from Fred Moten’s poem “The Deep Tree,” a sort of visual metaphor for an ecosystem, an environment that you can’t really place in any space. It was interesting not only because the show was happening in The Tanks, but because the whole idea was to think about the museum as a possible metaphor of a tent (borrowing from Herzog & De Meuron’s suggestion for defining the shape of the new building), hence to think of the museum as a hosting environment, as a tree, ideally a mangrove, open to any kind of species from fish in the water to birds in the air. The title remained a secret inspiration and was transformed to *Ten Days, Six Nights*. The whole thing in the end worked very well: flow, composition, and the

presence of sound made by Isabel Lewis, Lorenzo Senni, Phill Niblock, Camp, Wu Tsang, and Fred Moten. The important thing to consider here is the legacy of this form of curation in the long tail of the institution’s story, and that the *live exhibition* is not considered a sort of festival. There’s a risk that this intention will be forgotten.

On the other hand, sadly enough, regardless of being in London or in New York—although I think perhaps something in New York is changing with The Shed—what’s happening now in the art world is that we are witnessing a process of shrinking. The openness, compared to the very good intentions raised five years ago, is now completely changing. We are finding ourselves squeezed between the necessity of acknowledging big numbers and therefore looking back more than looking forward.

CG What do you mean about big numbers, money-wise or visitors?

AL Visitors, audiences.

EN Do you mean the openness of the audience, or the openness of the institution?

AL The opposite. Big numbers means exhibiting something that everyone is able to recognize or to acknowledge. Something already known or perceived as familiar.

MF Like a blockbuster exhibition?

AL Yeah, but this also means, in the case of the Tate, revisiting outstanding figures of modernity such as Matisse, Giacometti, Modigliani,

and Picasso. The other side of the coin in this trend could be that institutions could give up on showing or researching more recent forms of art that are engaged with technology. No institution, as far as I know, is hiring or educating people that are able to deal with the true needs or intentions of artists like Atoui or Parreno. In some respect—and this may be a great difference between Kunsthallen or independent spaces and big museums—delivering an exhibition isn't the equivalent of producing or of taking care of one.

Given various constraints, big museums are suffering from the incapacity of being able to upgrade their technical knowledge and production skills and instead remain excellent only at delivering artworks, i.e. making sure they come in and go out in the safest possible manner—from the very early stages of asking for a loan, to revising the work, packing, unpacking, and handling. They're rarely contributing to give form or at least enable new forms to happen and maintain them throughout their exhibition life.

FM I have to say I agree. I'm just going to use examples again. Hassan Kahn's *Jewel* (2010) is a very good piece, a good video, it has great bass and samples from shadi street music in Cairo. However, it also stands as an example of what museum directors might want if they are going to acquire a sound-based piece. They want something like Hassan Kahn's *Jewel* perhaps too often.

MF It's interesting you say that. Our museums, Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros and La Tallera, are very small but not independent spaces

or Kunsthallen. We are funded by the government and are part of a large system of national museums. I think that due to many things like budget, the time it takes for money to be available, tiny storage space, climate conditions, and how our director Taiyana Pimentel works around these issues, we operate completely differently to what Andrea is describing. We mostly commission new works and then take care of them for months, and we learn how to deal with each new proposed challenge, making the process truly experimental.

However, though sound has not come into the program as much as I'd like. I think it might be a conflict of not having something visual in the space, or an issue with audiences, or just that the program is not specific to that matter as other museums within the national system like Ex-Teresa and Laboratorio del Arte Alameda are. Nevertheless, we have kept a hydroponic system made mostly of wood and clay that sustained nine hundred bean plants for four months. Artist Ximena Garrido-Lecca harvested the beans together with Ariel Schlesinger's performing machines, which let out soap bubbles filled with gas onto electrified grills, creating a dance of fire spheres in our main space for five months. In another project, Melanie Smith produced a series of seven performances, *tableaux-vivants* of Flemish paintings, that were held at the space for three months in La Tallera in Cuernavaca. For Smith's project,



6 // **Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros**
Mexico City, Mexico

7 // **La Tallera**
Cuernavaca, Mexico



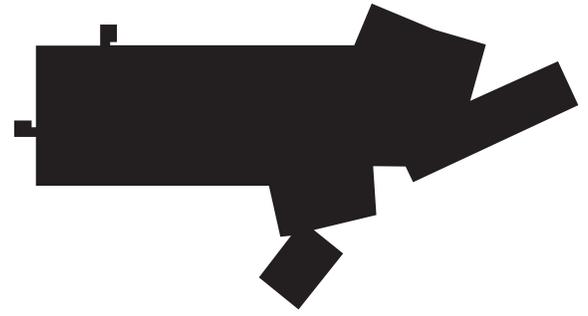
what remained in the space while there were no performances was the big wooden stage we built with all the props, costumes, work desks, etc., that had been used before or that maybe would be used in the future—and a video that was by no means precious but was complicated, as it was filmed through nine security cameras that moved around the space, some of them filming during the whole performance. We work like this.

I wonder if this way of working has to do with the size of our institution, and in a sense it might. To me, this has been an important way of looking at curating, an approach conceived by our director. In our program, the curator as author, director, or guardian of history is put to the side most of the time, and our curatorial views are expressed more in the bigger-scale of the program per se, we discuss how a year would look with new projects by artists that might contribute to or converse with the ideas the museum has been putting forward, and then we work closely with them to make it real.

- AL Maybe this would be something important to ask Chiara, given that so much is happening outside Europe. What's her idea of genealogy? What are the shows that need to be rooted, remembered, acknowledged, and supported? Because otherwise we'll be always saying "remember *Sonic Process*." Or, "do you remember *Sonic Boom*?"
- CG I feel like we're talking about a couple of different things here. One thing I think you are asking is, what are the limitations of museums in terms of their obligation to create historical reference points and designate what's "important" for collective cultural memory? So, one of the obligations of the museum is to become an archive and say, "These are

the iconic pieces; these are the pieces we need to remember." However, it seems that you both feel they're failing in this regard when it comes to sound.

- FM No, I think we're not making, for the lack of a better term, production-savvy, sound-engaged exhibitions of real sophistication.
- AL It's completely true. You both agree that if a good exhibition happens, within the museum context, then it'll be recorded, and as a consequence, Fred Moten will be someone in history who will be remembered within the context we're talking about. It would be amazing to consider his impact as somehow bridging a spoken word tradition to some crucial, ethical position that is acknowledged beyond this context.
- CG It goes back to this idea of visibility as well. Museums have a certain level of visibility that an underground space will never have.
- FM For instance, Jason Moran, the jazz composer, but also a really good collaborator—with Joan Jonas, Lucy Raven, Adrian Piper, riffing off of Robert Rauschenberg works, and the list goes on—has been doing this for over ten years. It had only been three years since he decided to start creating exhibitions, just after Okwui Enwezor's 56th Venice Biennale. This was, let's say, the next-level moment of performing within an installation that was in the exhibition context. So, I invited Moran to do a show in 2018, his first solo museum show at the Walker. It will be very interesting to see what such a savvy collaborator as Jason, who has done a load of interesting things, but only one or two gallery shows, will do. What will



8 // **Walker Art Center**
Minneapolis, USA

he do with the museum apparatus? What will he do with the exhibition convention? I think it's a really interesting proposition, and I also think these are the kinds of propositions that need to be made right now. You can't just talk about it. You need to put risk into the invitation. Like when John Cage did *Rolywholyover A Circus* (1993) at MoCA LA, right before he passed away. That may be the last major sound-based solo exhibition. That's a long time ago.

CG Well, there was some really great Iannis Xenakis programming at MoCA LA in 2010, but I hear what you're saying.

FM I think when we talk about conventions, we talk about sculpture, painting, and media art. There is a conversation around choreography now as opposed to, say, dance. The moment when conventions are taken apart in order to put them back together. We have to take advantage of those moments. I think that's what we're looking at right now. I think we all would agree in this conversation to versions of that—that there is a certain lack of support for serious sound-based art exhibitions that lead the conversation.

I'm not satisfied with the fact that sound art, noise, music and contemporary art are all sort of thrown together to create a kind of distortion factor. I think one of the things that could help clarify this predicament would be more invested invitations to make exhibitions that actually use the expertise from all of those different genres. I think that the willingness to do so is important because that's what will push convention and the conceptual framework of

contemporary sound as well as contemporary exhibition-making. I feel like it has to push the boundary of what an exhibition can be.

CG For me, the interesting question becomes: how can sound challenge the museum's approach to exhibition? How did we come to exist in this position that has privileged the visual sensory experience in the museum for several hundred years? In part, it has to do with technologies of representation and the relative lateness of sound recording technologies as opposed to visual representation, which we've had since forever, since cave paintings, right? So, now we have sound as a "thing" as opposed to a reverberant of an occurrence, and what are the ways that this new sensory experience is actually going to challenge viewers and programmers? That is really exciting for me.

FM I agree one hundred percent. For me, it's like you find that the successful examples of music and sound in contemporary art tend to be done by say, an artist like Manon de Boer. Like when she made *Attica* (2008), which is based on the composition by Frederic Rzewski, or when she made *Think About Wood, Think About Metal* (2011), which is a portrait of percussionist Robyn Schulkowsky. These are very good works of art, and they're done collaboratively with composers and compositions that take advantage of the convention

9 // **Sculpture Center**
New York, USA



of exhibition making, meaning it's a film which has a visual component, but the aural aspect is just as significant, if not more so. I think that what we kind of need is to look at these examples and extend from there. We need to take the time and not be in such a rush. We need to look and listen to know who has actually done really great sound pieces and put those forward within challenging exhibitions, at the heart of exhibitions. That to me is key. Otherwise you wind up in this strange, grey space for dance, music; everything goes. A space which is not a black box, it's not a white cube, it's just grey.

Jay Sanders has such great character and is a great curator. We did a project in 2007 at the Sculpture Center in New York, and it was a good example of how exhibitions and programming can almost trade places in one gesture. It was a sculpture exhibition, but the event lasted for twenty-four hours straight, which pushes the limit of duration. It was a twenty-four-hour program, not a four-hour program. There were, say, seven different durational performances

happening in the building at once within an exhibition I curated titled *Knight's Move*, which had twenty-three installations. So, people that had seen the exhibition, came to this twenty-four-hour durational thing, and then they came back and saw the exhibition totally differently. That is programming becoming exhibition, letting the exhibition slide into the backdrop, and it makes the two richer. For me, that was one of many moments in my work as a curator where durational aesthetics and the role of musical composition shared the stage equally with visual art. It's a tricky balance but one that is deeply significant to me and many others.

- AL It's interesting; you perhaps know Lucy Raven's past work as a curator better than I do. Take for instance the show she co-curated in Marfa in 2011, *The Marfa Sessions*. It would be interesting to think beyond the usual suspects. We're talking about artists, so it's John Cage, or maybe the simplest thing to think about is how artists themselves have been curating or programming.

I often think that the moment Tarek Atoui put together this sort of strange universe of collaborators and peers in his most ambitious works, he's thinking as a curator. To some extent, he's challenging the borders between the exhausted definition of participatory and relational art, but from the perspective of an artist with a background in music.

- EN I agree with you, but he doesn't seem to like being defined as an "artist-curator." The word collaborative came up in a previous conversation, and he said his work is not based on collaboration either.



10 // **Bumbershoot Arts Festival**
Seattle, USA

11 // **Ballroom Marfa**
Texas, USA

FM For instance, I think the first significant show I ever curated was called *In Resonance* (with musician, composer, and scholar Rob Millis of Climax Golden Twins), a ten day exhibition at the Bumbershoot Arts Festival in Seattle. It featured installations and live performances in *On the Boards*, an additional performing arts venue. This was supported by the Henry Art Gallery, a university museum in Seattle, and there was a two-month exhibition by Seattle-based artists Steve Peters and Christine Wallers. Overall, *In Resonance* lasted two months and it had different time registers so that some things took place over the whole two months and some things were shorter. It was great; everyone was really into it, but it wasn't repeatable. I think this can be a model, but it takes true philanthropic support, institutional collaboration, and artists working in the best possible conditions. This is the key to curating. At the time, *In Resonance* was memorable, but it didn't really change the art scene in Seattle at any of those venues, from the perspective of collaborating across institutions and genres. I think therein lies a challenge because many performance curators around the country are programming the same people we've all heard of, and one of the great things, to your point Chiara, is that it takes a curious curator who visits say Issue Project Room, or The Stone in New York City, and well beyond that, to successfully bring this into the museum in a way that will provoke and hopefully challenge convention.

EN That's another very important point: who actually moves?

FM Yeah, who gets exposed to what people are actually doing with sound? This is very challenging but a very important notion within the museum world because usually you wind up with a list of twenty codified artists they are supposed to show in a timely matter. Would you not agree on that?

CG That's part of the reason why I started curating. I began as a noise musician when I was nineteen, and I felt that this really important trajectory of cultural production was not being represented in a larger context. It felt so crucial as a response to the world, and so I thought, I guess I'm going to try to present it outside of the basements and noise clubs we were playing in. There were definitely several crossovers between experimental music and art that informed me. Marina Rosenfeld is a very good example of somebody that's an artist and musician and exists in both worlds very well. She was instrumental in first bringing me into these larger institutional contexts. I performed in her work *Sheer Frost Orchestra* at Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in 1999, and then performed and helped produce works for her at the Tate Modern and the Whitney Biennial in 2004 and 2005. This was my first work as an organizer with big museums.

However, while I have worked to bring aesthetics and energetic positions of noise into larger institutional contexts, there's also the potential for underground spaces and movements to get consumed by the museum. That's sad for me. Because it's so important for those scenes to have this sort of hidden space. What happens in those hidden, dirty, raw spaces will never happen in a museum and when these expressions are simply co-opted it's always a fucking bummer. So it's a fine line.

Experimental music already has its own formalized context that should not be ignored. A museum will never replace the blacked-out windows and piss-stained walls of the Kino Club in San Francisco; it will never feel like Baltimore's Red Room or have the chaotic subtext of Fort Thunder in Providence, Rhode Island,

or West Nile in Brooklyn, and the museum shouldn't strive to do this either. There is as much need for underground spaces as museums. Culture doesn't grow organically in any kind of environment. In order to support rigorous, political, dense, complicated, raw, sophisticated culture, both the "high" and the "low" must be privileged as distinct.

Unabashed appropriation within contemporary art is both wonderful and problematic. It is wonderful in that art's free movement across multiple topics and discursive terrains allows for an inquiry that is not obligated to specialized thinking but rather uses creative process to flexibly investigate. However, this mode of inquiry routinely materializes within a frame of cultural hierarchy where the museum becomes the standard for elevated creative experience.

It's critically short-sighted to assume that the way to elevate a discourse surrounding music is to take it and put it in a gallery space or museum. Why not bring what we have learned from those creative exhibition spaces to the experience of music as it exists in its native space? Living rooms, cars, social spaces, work spaces, kitchens: these are the spaces where we make and listen to music but also where it can actually display the strongest agency. There is huge potential in applying critical thinking to these everyday spaces.

FM Ei Arakawa, Jutta Koether, Jay Sanders, and others (a.k.a. the artist collective Grand Openings) did a really interesting project at the MoMA atrium with curator Sabina Brietweiser that broke down boundaries of curator versus artist versus musician. In November 2009, I did a project with them at Sculpture Center in New York that

ran concurrent with Mike Kelley and Michael Smith's massive installation *A Voyage of Growth and Discovery*, and it was cool. Grand Openings had a good vibe in Long Island City and likewise at the MoMA atrium. However, the fact that an alternative program went from Kunsthalle conditions to MoMA so quickly and left little footprint in its wake is problematic.

It was like "oh my god!" The acceleration of how alternative things can be subsumed into the museum space is not necessarily doing anybody any favors. To clarify, the programming at the MoMA atrium in regards to performance is strong, but are they ready to host the alternative vibe of, say, visual artist Yuji Agematsu, Eyvind Kang, or cellist Charles Curtis? Well, I hope so, and I know I'm advocating for this from here on.

- CG** And that's the thing: contemporary art will consume anything it can. That's its trajectory. It wants to consume anything it can. A lot of that becomes more about a trend than rigorous investigation, and that's a problem for me.
- AL** I agree in a way, but I also don't agree completely. The fact that we are talking about one person, say Jay Sanders, means that contemporary art is perhaps also open because it can be made by normal, passionate, inventive people, such as Jay. I always think that human beings working in a public institution must be the best protectors and caretakers of the smaller crucial spaces of experimentation. We can learn, we can be involved, and we can support them. The more we are committed, perhaps sometimes with sacrifices, the better.



12 // **Museum of Modern Art**
New York, USA

When I see a new venue like Silver Road in Lewisham, run by musician Lia Mazzari (who I wouldn't have known if it wasn't for Atoui's *Reverse Collection* and Eric's precious collaboration), I don't want to get her to come over and program something at Tate. What I really want in the end is the possibility for her to stay there. She struggled to refurbish a former water tank and build up a new identity for an amazing small venue. We will do anything. We will support her fight against real estate through attendance and signed letters. But the day we move it to the Tate and make it resident, it will inevitably lose its connections with its neighbors. Perhaps become the new Hype Williams. I think this is a pretty crucial part of our job. It would be weird if MoMA was thinking of acquiring Issue Project Room, but it's wonderful if we can establish some forms of collaborations and conversations and support in giving some strength.

EN It's the same with independent labels signing weird experimental acts that afterwards go on to sign with bigger labels.

FM I want to make one analogous point: what is the significance of dance and choreography asserting itself so much in contemporary art over the last ten years? The Yvonne Rainer show at Raven Row, produced by Alex Sainsbury, was the best show in many ways, better than any museum show; it was smarter, it was more sophisticated, it had more duration, it was more sensitive, and it engaged the artist more. This was after every museum wanted to do dance. So, we do have a question of skill, as you said Chiara, of the space and the local, the vibe and the mood. You can't just absorb. We feel like contemporary art can absorb anything, but it's not true.

MF I think it would be interesting to take a question Chiara posed earlier on: how can sound challenge the museum's approach to exhibition?

FM Major museums have, at times, ghettoized the history of new music, dance, and performance art from the 1960s and 1970s. In particular, this happens if they do not commission new work from contemporary artists that respond to that lineage and history.

CG When you said ghettoize, I'm curious to hear more of your thoughts on that. We've talked about the museum's job to historicize, and that will inevitably reduce or encapsulate a work, but what else are you talking about when you say ghettoize?

FM It's about the willingness of museums that have the financial capacity to commission new work for contemporary artists that would be shown in the museum with proper production support.

CG I guess what you're saying makes me think that we shouldn't let these older works be relegated to isolation, and that by commissioning new works, we allow the historical pieces to continue on in a sort of living conversation... Like they might get lonely and need the company of the new works.

FM Yes, I agree.

MF Not just making a historic exhibition, but making a whole program around it.

FM Correct, making a contemporary program that is informed by what the museum has in its collection but with new work.

AL I think I used the term ghettoized first. Actually, we should be stressing how the general tendency is to build and separate spaces for sound and moving images within museums. I'm mostly talking about public museums. The outcome being that all sound works, regardless of how they are produced, will end up there in these separate spaces. When it's the case of sound-based work, I think of the experience in Mexico City, in that beautiful room inside MUAC (Espacio de Experimentación Sonora). You somehow forget that the work has been produced in a different context. Also, this separates the sound-based from the rest.

This opens the second question: are we really talking about sound-based, or music-based, or noise-based exhibitions? Or are we talking about practices that we consider to be relevant to tell other histories, counter histories, and challenging histories of modern contemporary art? It makes a difference whether we are talking about Kunsthallen, private foundations, and spaces where you can interact with the sound artists on a pure level, or if we are talking about public institutions that are really into exploring other histories and therefore bring sound in. If we tend to put these works into a ghettoized area, it doesn't really integrate into museums' conventional storytelling approach.

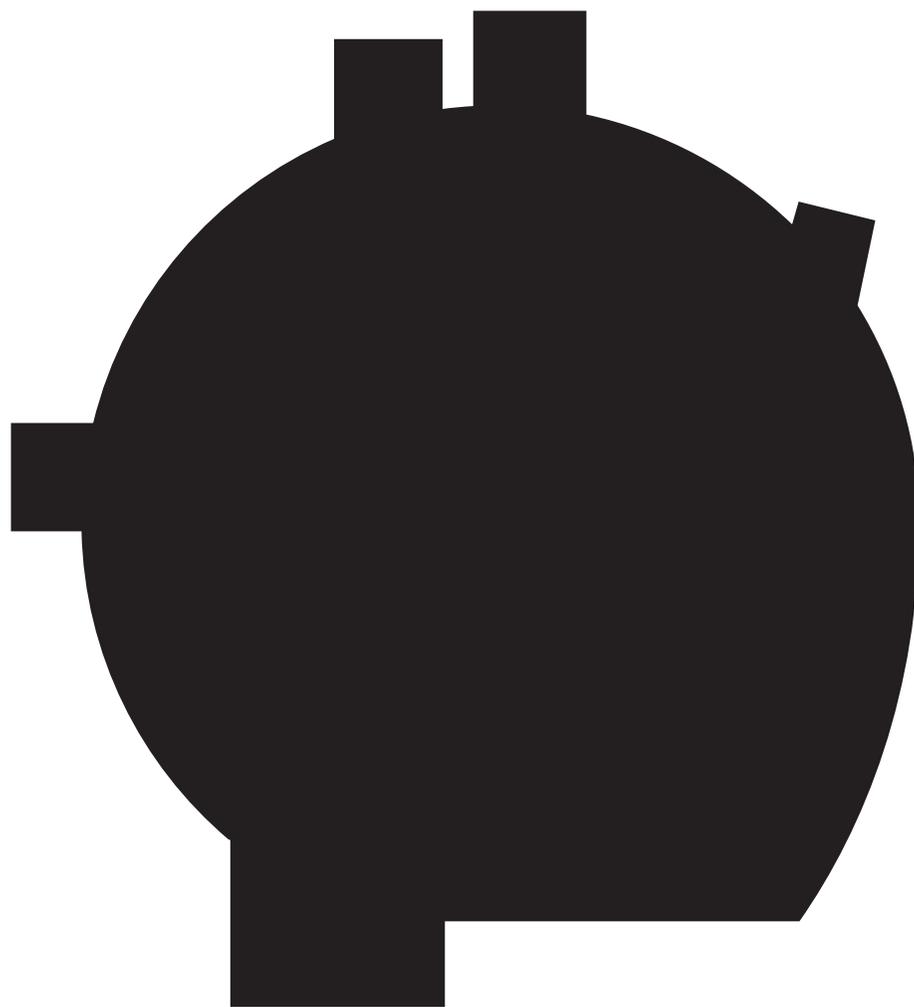
MF I think that's what I was getting from what you said when using the term ghettoized too, and I thought especially about the MUAC room

that you mentioned. It's a beautiful space, it's great for listening, but it feels like an afterthought in the museum, a space you go through right before you exit and it's rarely advertised in their program. It's just there, a door, and if you catch it, you go in. If you don't, it seems to not really matter that much. What do you think? Do you know how the program for that room was planned, Eric?

EN I know there's supposed to be a committee that decides on the yearly program; I'm not sure whether this is still the case.

However, the museum has also been criticized a lot, architecturally speaking. What Michele is saying is that you can actually skip it, as you can enter and exit the museum from the same space. You don't have to go through the whole loop; you can completely miss it as you can miss any other gallery space in that museum.

MF I wanted to make a comment directed towards the audience. This is just one example, but this year Documenta 14 did a great one night event. They brought Joaquin Orellana Mejía, who has an interesting history. He's a Guatemalan composer who has been constructing his instruments after studying music at the Instituto Di Tella in Argentina. When he came back to Guatemala, he found the instruments he was interested in playing were not available there, so he started constructing his own, and now he has been doing so



for years, tropicalizing his electro-acoustic music training. The Documenta 14 piece, *Symphony from the Third World* (2017), includes about ten marimbas that were played by Guatemalan musicians. He's been writing this composition for years, and this was the first time it was presented.

CG Joaquín Orellana is kind of like Harry Partch in a lot of ways. He's really cool.

MF Before this, he hadn't been able to really play in this capacity for years. The curators of Documenta 14 found out about his work. I don't think a music institution, at least not in Guatemala or Mexico, would have the money or initiative to do this. In a way, his practice has come into art because of an interested audience, and of course Stefan Benchoam, from the Nuevo Museo de Arte Contemporáneo in Guatemala, and artist Carlos Amorales who have been working with him. But why was it shown as part of Documenta 14 and not at the conservatory in Mexico or Guatemala, for example?

CG So, you're saying that sound art has entered contemporary art spaces because of the budgets?

MF I'm asking if that's a possibility, in some cases.

EN I would start talking about how Documenta 14 invited a sound adviser to put music into the side program, but it didn't appear in the exhibition spaces. For example, the Orellana concert was not part of the sound advising program; it's part of the Documenta exhibition. Alvin Lucier's installation, the radio program, and his paintings were put into a corridor in Kassel. But I felt that the music program

was just side programming and not intended to follow any particular curating line except for a few concerts spread out during July. I think Documenta's sound program was disappointing for me. It was almost, again, like an addendum.

FM That is exactly the problem that museums face. They only add music composition and sound as an addendum. The question is: when will that change?

AL I'm not sure we can compare Documenta 14 to a museum. It's very different. It's interesting to get signs and symptoms out of it, but you can't compare. At least in Europe, funds are shrinking. There are public institutions that are doing a lot less and focusing on other practices that they consider as priorities. Sound and music have never been crucial. There hasn't been any possibility as far as I know to hire either more hybrid figures or specialists, as happened with Documenta 14.

Let's say we still have a crucial opportunity: can we really think of other ways to integrate or to begin a conversation with specialists in order to bridge sound with modern and contemporary art? This, for me, is the main issue. I wouldn't stick to space or sound. I would suggest that we have to think about many major questions. And of course, Documenta 14 was interesting as an experiment, but full of problems. I will try to learn from these problems, bring them in, and keep the dialogue going. I'm always mentioning this show called *Sons & Lumières* at the Pompidou curated by Sophie Duplax and Marcella Lista in 2004. That was a great example of how to



14 // **Centre Georges Pompidou**
Paris, France

insert sound practices without building separately spaced or isolated, ghettoized galleries.

CG I think what you're asking in a way is: how can we propel the conversation around sound integrated with "art" within museums? That splinters into a couple of different things we've touched on.

First, this idea that the museum operates in a similar way to hyper-capitalism, in that it is expected to constantly produce new content, and it is obligated to reach new audiences that want to consume something new. That's the pessimistic side to this conversation. The optimistic side is that artists are in a constant exploration and so are audiences. So we get to traverse all these different landscapes and push these areas of discourse onto different mediums and let those mediums, in turn, push our discourse back.

Another really important point is that the technology of sound came much later than visual representation. We're dealing with this incredibly interesting moment. Only since 1877, when Edison first recorded sound, were we able to have sound as a thing—very different from painting or sculpture. This relatively new medium is doing something that's allowing us to question our cultural production.

I've started thinking about "peripheral logic" in relation to sound, or maybe a better name for it would be "perimeter logic." Anyway, peripheral logic is what I am calling an essentially pervasive system that stems from agricultural societies and their peripheral orientation. Since the invention of agriculture, Western cultures have positioned themselves in relation to borders and boundaries. Because of the crop field, private land, ownership, and spaces being sectioned

into squares, peripheral logic ripples outwards. Museums are oriented to peripheral logic, but sound doesn't do that. It fills exhibition space without a concrete materialized form, and that's amazing. To be able to apply the physicality of sound to ways that we're thinking about exhibition spaces is amazing.

I guess I'm less concerned about whether this is a funding issue or about the bureaucratic inner workings of the museum. I'm more interested in how sound pushes our thinking as a whole community of artists, curators, and thinkers together. I think, as Andrea said, it is more than a conversation specifically about sound, but how does sound allow us to start thinking about painting? Or how does sound allow us to think about other mediums?

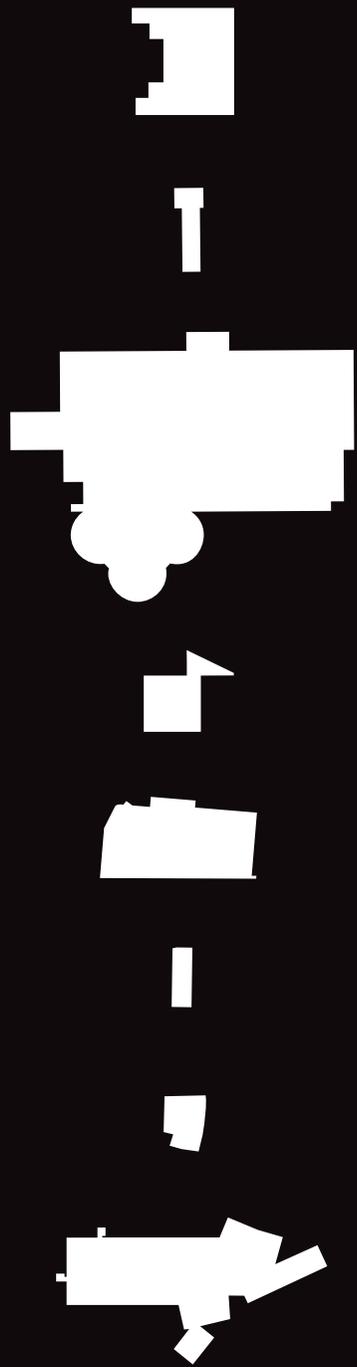
EN That's something that is really interesting to me. The peripheral thinking is a great idea. How should sound be important or not in that context? Regardless of the excuse, we could have it without seeing it. I think we're all working in that field with our prerogative of how to make it different and how to change the ways in which we experience space through sound.

CG I want to answer the question that Andrea asked earlier on. He asked me what my idea of genealogy is and what do I think are the shows that need to be rooted, remembered, acknowledged, and supported by museums.

I think that's an interesting question, but we should acknowledge first that our institutional models are so traditional and so archaic in relationship to the work that they're trying to present.

We've based our institutions on antiquated formations of power and then trapped our most radical cultural expressions inside of them. If it were up to me, every staff member of every museum would be obligated to switch roles every three years. So, the janitor would become the director, the director would work in the cafe, the curator would do installation, and the accountant would curate, etc. Or something like that. The structures of the institutions themselves need to be experimental and especially the economies that directly support artists, because those economies inevitably affect the art.

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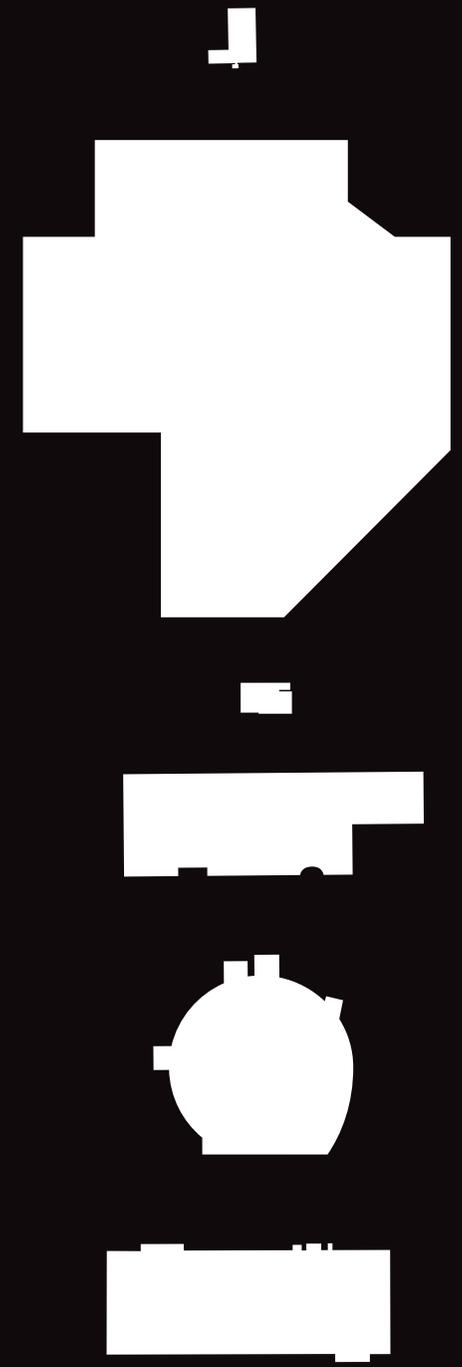
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CHIARA GIOVANDO

(Portland, 1976)

Is an artist and curator based in LA. Exploring experimental music practices, her work includes installation, performance, and film. She is curator of a new discursive program at Tel in Los Angeles and curator at PANEL.LA, a residency and exhibition space. Giovando worked as a curator-in-residence at Disjecta Contemporary Art Center, Portland, from 2015-2016, and was awarded a research fellowship with René Block where she was curator-in-residence from 2012-2013 at Kunsthall 44 Møen, Askeby, Denmark. Giovando was co-director and curator at Human Resources LA, and founded *Thousand Points of Light*, a site-works and residency program in Joshua Tree, CA, dedicated to sound and sound artists. Giovando has performed internationally, and her scores and films have been exhibited, among other venues, at the Barbican Center, London, LA Philharmonic and the Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC.

ANDREA LISSONI

(Milan, 1973)

Is senior curator, International Art (Film) at the Tate Modern, London. Formerly curator at HangarBicocca, Milan, the co-founder of the independent artistic network Xing and co-director of the international festival Netmage in Bologna (Live Arts Week since 2011). He has lectured at Bocconi University, Milan (2007-2014) at the Academy of Fine Arts of Brera, Milan (2001-2012). Since 2015, he's been a visiting lecturer at Kingston University, Goldsmiths, and Royal College of Art, London. In 2012 he co-founded Vdrome, an online screening program for artists and filmmakers that he co-curates. He sporadically contributes to publications as Domus and Kaleidoscope. Exhibitions he has curated include: Susan Hiller (2011, Fondazione Antonio Ratti, Como); Angella Ricci Lucchi&Yervant

Gianikian (2012, retrospective), Wilfredo Prieto (2012), Carsten Nicolai (2012), Tomàs Saraceno (2012), Apichatpong Weerasethakul (2013), Mike Kelley (2013), Ragnar Kjartansson (2013), Micol Assael (2014) and Joan Jonas (2014-15 retrospective, travelling to Malmö Konsthalle) at HangarBicocca in Milan. With Catherine Wood he co-curated the display and the live programme at the opening of the new Tate Modern as well as the BMW Live Exhibition *Ten Days Six Nights*. His latest project is the Hyundai Turbine Hall Commission 2016 *Anywhen*, by Philippe Parreno.

MICHELE FIEDLER

(San Juan, 1981)

Is the curator at Sala de Arte Público Siqueiros in Mexico City and collaborates in curatorial projects at its sister institution, La Tallera in Cuernavaca, Mexico. She worked as curator-in-residence at Disjecta Contemporary Arts Center in Portland, Oregon from 2016-2017 and in Fondazione Sandretto Re Rebaudengo in Turin, Italy in 2012. Part of her practice is concerned with experimental forms of exhibition-making, working with many artists on new commissions. She has independently curated shows like *Sucio Difícil*, by the playwright, musician, professor, and artist Nelson Rivera at Museo de Arte de Caguas in Puerto Rico; *God Only Knows Who The Audience Is*, at The Wattis Institute of Contemporary Art and *Mission Afterviews*, with Xiaoyu Weng and Sharon Lerner at the Victoria Theater, both in San Francisco, CA; and *How Far Can You Push a Sound Without an Image?*, which took the format of a radio show and a publication. She has worked on new commissions by artists and/or writers Melanie Smith, Matthew Rana, Lisa Radon, Kevin Killian, Ximena Garrido-Lecca, and Ariel Schlesinger among others.

FIONN MEADE

(Seattle, 1973)

Served as artistic director (2015-2017) and senior curator, Cross-Disciplinary Platforms (2014-2015), at The Walker Art Center, where he headed the Visual Arts Department. He has been a faculty member at the Center for Curatorial Studies, Bard College (2009-2014) and at the MFA program for Visual Arts, Columbia University (2009-2014). Meade holds an MFA in Poetry from Columbia University (1999) and an M.A. in Curatorial Studies from CCS Bard (2009). He has previously been a curator at the Henry Art Gallery, Seattle, WA, and at SculptureCenter, New York (2009-12), where exhibitions included 'Scene, Hold, Ballast' with David Maljkovic and Lucy Skaer; group exhibitions Time Again and Knight's Move, and the collaborative exhibition by Mike Kelley and Michael Smith A Voyage of Growth and Discovery, among others. Exhibitions at the Walker Art Center include: *Merce Cunningham: Common Time*, curated for the Walker and the Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago; *Question the Wall Itself, Less Than One*, *Andrea Büttner*. He was the recipient of an Arts Writer Grant from Creative Capital (2009) and the Andy Warhol Foundation Curatorial Fellowship (Fall 2014). Meade is the author of an ongoing criticism series *Becoming American*.

ERIC NAMOUR

(Lebanon, 1976)

Is a music curator and producer based in Mexico City who has worked on projects and festivals in Italy, the UK (Sottovoce festival and [no.signal] events), and Mexico. He set up the Mexico-based independent organisation elnicho in 2010—originally a micro itinerant experimental music shop—through which he now sets up (free) music series and sessions in various institutions, museums, venues, or public spaces. His personal interest and research through this work

is on promoting and disseminating adventurous and new music to a wider audience and cultural spaces, re-contextualising and creating an appropriate setting for sub-genres like contemporary composition, free improvisation and jazz, noise or electronic music and live cinema. As of 2017, the festival has now been spread into sporadic events as this kind of music needs continuity and diverse presentation contexts rather than to be fixed in time. Like the festival, the one-off projects are generally free and combine all genres into one single overall presentation. Eric also collaborated with Tarek Atoui to organize music ensembles at Kurimanzutto in Mexico City in 2015 for his *Reverse Sessions* project and then later on, he was invited by Andrea [Lissoni], to the Tate's Tank, putting together three large groups and a series of twenty trio combinations during the opening weeks of *Tank Sessions* in 2016.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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LIBRETA ELNICHIO

How to approach the accessibility of new music to new audiences? How to entice people to get closer and discover without preconceptions or reluctance—but rather as a new form of participation and natural listening experience, what is often perceived as difficult music? What is the relationship of this music, if any, with contemporary arts in a way that it may grasp the attention and active involvement of the spectator and/or listener?

Sound and music seem to have been underwhelmingly part of contemporary museums. However, they are shyly making their way in the area of contemporary art, often via visual artists keen on using sound in their work or inviting musicians or sound-focused artists to collaborate. But how are visual arts curators situated both within and outside the boundaries of institutions, and how do galleries and museums deal with the increasing importance of sound? Does its lack of tangible value make it a less interesting art form and more of an ornament or add-on? Should there be a more conscious engagement and investment from those gatekeepers, or does the independent space and community thrive better without the conventional boundary of contemporary art?

This *Libreta* gathers curators who are engaged with performance art and music in particular, as well as making efforts to make institutions more aware of the importance and value of creating new audiences, finding inclusive rather than peripheral settings for aural experiences.

While musicians and artists must reach out and pull people in, it is also our calling as listeners to brave boundaries of prejudice or fear. We hope that this series of *Libretas* will open new sound territories to a broader audience.

// Eric Namour, elnicho

elnicho is a small independent organization based in Mexico City dedicated to promoting the appreciation of new and experimental music via concerts, presentations, talks, workshops, and a festival. Through random micro-sessions and editorial projects, elnicho aims to put innovative music in the foreground, combining and reconciling different approaches and contexts to broaden the spectrum of contemporary culture through sound and music.

elnicho.org



This publication is a collaboration with elnicho, as part of a series of booklets dedicated to sound and music within the broad context of contemporary culture. *Libretas* is a project of Buró-Buró that aims to share conversations and encounters that contribute meaningful ideas and reflections on contemporary culture.

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