

Guest editor: Anne Zeitz

Sound Unheard

Essays on the Inaudible and the Unheard in Contemporary Art

Editorial

The unheard often remains unnoticed. What we hear and what we do not, what we notice and what we do not is determined not only by our physiological aural capacities but by a complex intermingling of social, cultural, political and technological factors. The different contributions to this publication focus on artistic and literary works that concentrate on the unheard sonic spectrum of the past and present. The cultural, social or political phenomena questioned here are related to frequencies below or beyond the threshold of perception, to overlapping sound fields or to auditory distraction. The sounds they make use of or express have been obliterated, disguised, “drowned”. Listening to the unheard thus means to reveal or seek explanation for the silencing, concealment or disappearance of these sounds.

Beyond this dimension of lack of perception, of ignorance or of disregard, another subliminal meaning associated with the unheard appears here, especially when it encounters the unheard-of: what is “surprising because not known about or previously experienced”. Thus, the sense of the hidden and of discretion is confronted with the sense of the unprecedented as well as the shocking. The authors of this publication tackle the understanding of that which can be at once shocking and discreet, heard and unheard. From the analysis of different typologies of the inaudible to the reflection on the politics of the unheard, the contributions question the notions of muted sound, voice and accent, sonic interruptions, parasites, tactics of sound erasure, temporal deferral, silencing techniques and practices of listening. *Sound Unheard* includes contributions from scholars in sound studies, art history, post-colonial studies, musicology and art theory.

This edition of Auditory Perspectives was conceived by Jan Thoben and Anne Zeitz and developed in discussion with the authors. It is part of the eponymous research project initiated by Anne Zeitz and made possible by the research laboratory PTAC-Pratiques et Théories de l'art contemporain, Université Rennes 2. The edition was prepared by several workshops with the authors starting from 2018 at the Goethe-Institut Paris as well as a symposium at the Musée des beaux-arts de Rennes in February 2019 (organized with Séverine Cauchy and Yann Sérandour).

The research project is related to two exhibitions, a lecture and performance programme and a seminar, each of which is presented in this publication:

- *Échos magnétiques* — Christina Kubisch at the Musée des beaux-arts de Rennes in February and March 2019 (curated by Damien Simon and Anne Zeitz in collaboration with Clélia Barbut).
- *Sound Unheard* at the Goethe-Institut Paris in September and October 2019 (curated by Daniele Balit, Katharina Scriba and Anne Zeitz).
- The performance and lecture programme *Inaudible Matters* at the Gaîté Lyrique in Paris (organized by Marie Lechner and Anne Zeitz).
- The seminar “*Écouter par les yeux*” (*Listening with the Eyes*), *Reflecting on exhibitions, sound works and archival documents with René Block and Christina Kubisch* at the German Center for Art History in Paris (organized by Mathilde Arnoux and Anne Zeitz).

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