

Marie Lechner and Anne Zeitz

Inaudible Matters

***Electrical Walks Paris* (Christina Kubisch), performances and lectures at the Gaîté Lyrique Paris**

Inaudible Matters, a project including *Electrical Walks Paris* by Christina Kubisch as well as a programme of lectures and performances, took place at the Gaîté Lyrique Paris from 12 September to 12 December 2019. *Inaudible Matters* was realized in cooperation with the Goethe-Institut Paris and the exhibition *Sound Unheard* and organized by Marie Lechner and Anne Zeitz. The project questioned the inaudible as “matter” in both senses of the term: first, as “physical substance” related to materiality, and second as that which is signifying and significant. The way Christina Kubisch’s *Electrical Walks*, the performances of the artists Dinah Bird, Mario de Vega, Jean-Philippe Renault and Matthieu Saladin, as well as the lectures by the researchers Maya Gratier, Alexandre Laumonier and Juliette Volcler expose different aspects of contemporary inaudible fields and domains relate to this double meaning. They point out cultural, social and political aspects — from high frequency trading to techniques of sound compression — at the threshold of human aural perception, and concentrate on their materialisation and their meaning. The lectures and performances were streamed by the hybrid radio/stream platform p-node: <https://p-node.org>

***Electrical Walks Paris*, 2019 Christina Kubisch**

Beginning in the 1970s, the artist Christina Kubisch (born in 1948 in Bremen) explored electromagnetic fields and physical processes based on induction. She questions the ways these fields — emitted by electronic devices — can be created and translated into sound. Throughout her career, she has questioned the environment that surrounds us as well as its transformations by proposing experiences of listening with a particular focus on the inaudible.

While in the 1970s Kubisch created installations by generating electromagnetic fields, in the 1990s she became particularly attentive to the omnipresent electromagnetic fields in contemporary urban space. She started to develop *Electrical Walks* based on the perception of inaudible geographies surrounding us. *Electrical Walks Paris* — produced within the framework of *Inaudible Matters* and *Sound Unheard* — focuses on possible forms of materialisation of electricity and of frequencies beyond the threshold of perception. The work also questions the meaning of electromagnetic fields and the way they relate to contemporary spaces and networks as part of the infrastructure of finance, security and communication.

Guided walks with the artist took place on the 16 October 2019.

Fig. 01: Christina Kubisch, *Electrical Walks Paris*, 2019, photo: Jean-Philippe Renault.





Fig. 02: Mario de Vega, *Towards an Observation of the Inaudible*, 2019, © Image Mario de Vega, Ceramic modified with microwaves, 2012, Photo: Gudinni Cortina.

Performances and lectures:

Towards an Observation of the Inaudible – Performance by Mario de Vega and lecture by Maya Gratier

In his installations, publications, works and performances, Mario de Vega concentrates on the limits of aural perception and extreme sensorial experiences. His work explores unknown, strange, invisible, inaudible and unforeseeable phenomena and navigates between noise (alarms, explosions, breaking glass, amplified electromagnetic frequencies) and relative silence (walls of loudspeakers waiting to emit a sound, low frequencies, the Mexican national anthem interpreted in sign language, or a large bell cast in bronze in foundry tradition and destroyed before it had emitted a sound, a work that was shown in the *Sound Unheard* exhibition at the Goethe-Institut Paris).

His performance questioned the indeterminacy and imperfection of our senses in order to highlight what goes beyond our perception and cognition. As part of a series of actions conceived as “intrusions”, Mario de Vega created an uncertain situation and confrontation tackling the lack of understanding and of empathy in contemporary society.

Maya Gratier’s lecture exposed the means to listen to and sense phenomena that have a particular temporal and spatial dimension outside of common perception. She concentrated on perception and sensibility on the cusp of life and on the aural intra-uterine experiences of the unborn child. Her lecture presented the way these experiences influence intimate relationships and the perception of the world after birth. Beyond sound, the infant begins to perceive his/her environment with all its senses already formed and forged. This particular form of perception makes it possible for the infant to follow and anticipate the temporal contours of the human senses, activating a sensibility beyond words.

Antenna Gods: The Audio Landscapes of the World of Finance – Lecture by Alexandre Laumonier and performance by Dinah Bird and Jean-Philippe Renoult

Since 2013, Alexandre Laumonier has been developing a meticulous and passionate study of contemporary financial systems and forms of trading, focusing on the race for time induced by electronic trading pro-



Fig. 03: Dinah Bird and Jean Philippe Renoult, *Antenna Gods*, 2018, © Dinah Bird and Jean Philippe Renoult, Photo: Jean Philippe Renoult.

cesses. His latest book, *4*, reveals the efforts undertaken in Europe and the US to gain a few milliseconds inside these processes. Laumonier exposes the link between the temporal dimensions on the scale of the micro-second and the financial gains these can generate through high-frequency trading (HFT). He also pointed out the sudden interest of companies for technologies that had been thought obsolete: radio communication, as waves move faster through the air than light does through fibre-optic cables. The lecture questioned this microwave race which started in 2010, allowing market data to pass from one data centre to another twice as fast as via fibre-optic cables.

The performance by the artists Dinah Bird and Jean Philippe Renoult was based on their project *Antenna Gods* which they have been developing since 2017. Building on the investigations by Alexandre Laumonier, they undertook sound recordings in order to capture and reveal aural traces of this new soundscape of HFT and its new emblematic towers and antennas in Belgium, Great Britain and the US.

Sharing Silence (Le partage du silence) – Performance by Matthieu Saladin and lecture by Juliette Volcler

With *La capture de l'inaudible* (Capturing the Inaudible), Matthieu Saladin exposes that which is commonly omitted and situated on the periphery of our perception due to the focus on efficiency and simplification.

The performance opened up to an aesthetic, social and political consideration of the inaudible, which is understood here as the range of sounds outside human capacities of perception, as well as that which exceeds the understanding of a group or community, or even a society as it is constructed socially, historically and culturally. It then points out that which cannot be heard. *La capture de l'inaudible* is based on an inverted MP3 encoder. While the common MP3 encoder suppresses inaudible frequencies in order to reduce the size of an audio file, for purposes of saving and sharing, this encoder preserves only these frequencies and, during the performance, Saladin invited the audience to listen to them.



Fig. 04: Matthieu Saladin, *The audiences, once silent, began to use their tongues*, 2016, Serigraphy produced by Synesthésie – Mmain-tenant, © Matthieu Saladin.

In her lecture, Juliette Volcler focused on another dimension of the inaudible. She questioned the politics and applications of silence in the context of public space and social life. Ranging from artistic approaches to real estate advertisement, the notion of silence is often presented as a rare resource to be preserved or rehabilitated. The lecture exposed this search for silence, which is taken for granted, and of a golden acoustical age to be recovered.

Gods in 2017 by materialising the secret inaudible spectrum used by high-frequency trading. Their projects include electroacoustic works, sound installations, radiophonic pieces, photographic series and performances that activate different protocols of communication.

Biographies of the artists and researchers of the performance and lecture programme:

Dinah Bird and Jean-Philippe Renoult

Dinah Bird and Jean-Philippe Renoult are sound artists creating aesthetic and social relationships, as well as a reflection on the past, via the manipulation and use of historical technologies of sound transmission: gramophones, radio waves, tape recorders, antennae, transistors, ghetto blasters, underwater cable, etc. Bird and Renoult reveal their context of application and their myths. They initiated the project *Antenna*

Fig. 05: Dinah Bird and Jean Philippe Renoult during the performance and lecture *Antenna Gods: the Audio Landscapes of the World of Finance*, Gaité Lyrique, 14 November 2019.





Fig. 06: Maya Gratier during the lecture *Towards an Observation of the Inaudible*, Gaité Lyrique Paris, 24 October 2019.

Maya Gratier

Maya Gratier is a professor in psychology of development and a member of the Ethologie, Cognition, Développement research lab of Université Paris Nanterre.

Fig. 08: Matthieu Saladin during the performance *Sharing Silence (Le partage du silence)*, Gaité Lyrique Paris, 12 December 2019.



Her research focuses on the development of preverbal communication between adults and infants, from birth to the end of the first year of life. She is specialised in vocal prosody and the rhythm of interpersonal exchanges.

Alexandre Laumonier

Alexandre Laumonier is the director of the publishing house Zones Sensibles. He is the author of *6*, *5* and *4*, as well as of the blog *Sniper In Mahwah & Friends* since 2013. He regularly contributes to the blog *Quantreg*.

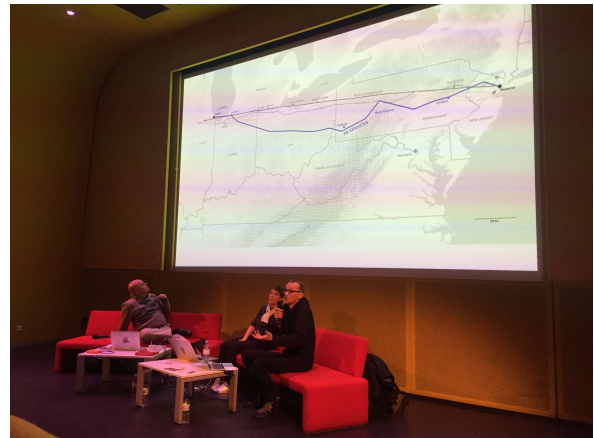


Fig. 07: Alexandre Laumonier during the performance and lecture *Antenna Gods: the Audio Landscapes of the World of Finance*, Gaité Lyrique, 14 November 2019.

Matthieu Saladin

Matthieu Saladin is an artist and musician and an associate professor at Université Paris 8. Frequently based on sonic forms, his work questions the production of spaces, the history of forms and processes of creation, as well as the relationship between art and society from an economic and political perspective. His research is widely based on sound art and experimental music. He codirects the series *Ohcetecho* of the Presses du Réel, is a member of the editorial staff of the journals *Volume!* and *Revue et Corrigée*, and is editor-in-chief of the journal *TACET*.

Mario de Vega

The artist Mario de Vega lives and works between Berlin and Mexico. His work concentrates on the materiality of sound, forms of listening, and the aesthetic potential of unstable arrangements. He explores cultural, social and political, as well as perceptual and sensual dimensions of fragility and vulnerability of systems, materials and humans. His musical work includes a large spectrum of customised electronic devices, electromechanical systems and digital interfaces.



Fig. 09: Mario de Vega during the performance *Towards an Observation of the Inaudible*, Gaîté Lyrique Paris, 24 October 2019.

Juliette Volcler

Juliette Volcler is an independent researcher, author and sound critic. She concentrates on the social and political application of sound as well as on the history of sonic practices. She has published two books: *Le son comme arme. Les usages policiers et militaires du son* (*La Découverte*, 2011) and *Contrôle. Comment s'inventa l'art de la manipulation sonore* (*La Découverte – La Rue Musicale*, 2017). She is responsible for the editorial coordination of the journal of radio-phonics and sound art *Syntone*.

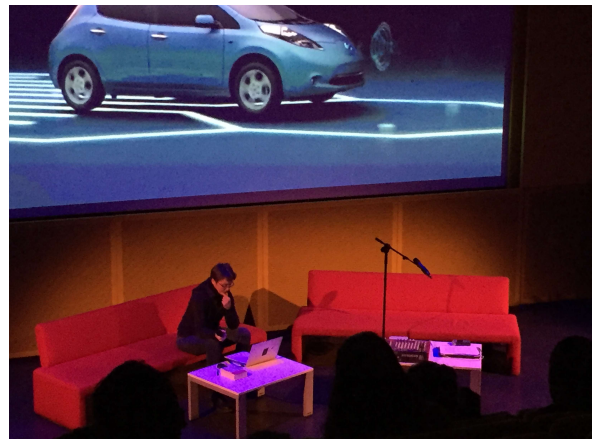


Fig. 10: Juliette Volcler during the lecture *Sharing Silence (Le partage du silence)*, Gaîté Lyrique Paris, 12 December 2019.

Abstract

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Authors

Marie Lechner is in charge of artistic programs at the Gaîté Lyrique. She curates the “Laboratory” (lectures, performances and workshops that explore the intersections between arts, technologies and society). Former journalist for the daily newspaper *Liberation*, specializing in digital art and culture, she was co-curator of the exhibition *Computer Grrrls* (HMKV, Dortmund)

- Gaîté Lyrique, Paris - MU, Eindhoven), *Lanceurs d'alerte* (Gaîté Lyrique, Paris, 2017), *Panorama des mutations du travail* (Biennale de design de Saint Etienne), the european project *Streaming Egos* (NRW forum, Düsseldorf, 2016), *Evil Clowns* (Hardware MedienKunstVerein, Dortmund, 2015), *Speed Show* (Paris, 2010). She teaches media archeology at ENSAD in Paris and collaborated on the research project *Haunted by Algorithms* led by Jeff Guess and Gwénoëla Wagon.

Anne Zeitz is associate professor (maître de conférences) at University Rennes 2, a member of the Pratiques et théories de l'art contemporain (PTAC) research lab at Université Rennes 2 and an associate member of TEAMeD/Université Paris 8. Her recent research focuses on auditory attention and distraction in contemporary art and on practices and writings tackling the notions of the inaudible and the unheard. She received a research grant from the INHA and Institut Français in 2016 and is directing the research project *Sound Unheard* (including the co-organization of



Fig. 11: Marie Lechner and Anne Zeitz during the introduction of the performance and lecture *Towards an Observation of the Inaudible*, Gaîté Lyrique Paris, 24 October 2019.

exhibitions at the Goethe-Institut Paris, the Musée des beaux-arts de Rennes and this performance programme at the Gaîté Lyrique in 2019).

Title

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