

March 17, 2012–January 6, 2013

Sound Art. Sound as a Medium of Art

An exhibition at the ZKM | Media Museum

Contemporary sound art has many faces: the varying interplay of sound, space, time, movement and form is reflected in sound sculptures, sound installations or music performances. The perceptual linking of seeing and listening, the articulation of silence and space, the sculptural characteristics of sound and the dissolution of the concert hall are the aspects that turn sound art into an independent art form within fine and music. The exhibition “Sound Art. Sound as a Medium of Art” presents for the first time the development of sound art in the 21st century at the ZKM | Media Museum and in a public space. For the duration of the exhibition the ZKM will be the navel of Sound Art.

From Futurism to Fluxus, through to Twitter sonifications, the ZKM charts the history of Sound Art during the 20th century. However, focus is placed on contemporary practices: with works from 90 artists from which approximately 30 new productions from recent years will be presented, the visitor gains insights into the unique sound cosmos of contemporary art. The sound world visualizes its own exhibition architecture, and the exhibition visitor himself becomes the generator of sounds.

Visual experience dominates in numerous exhibitions. “Sound Art. Sound as a Medium of Art” emphasizes auditory experience and transforms the visual experience. The visitor is thus provided with the opportunity to become acquainted with an entirely new sound cosmos, which neither radio, film nor the music industry has been able to establish to such an extent.

“The Media Museum literally becomes a sound space of unheard sounds – a veritable ‘palace of sounds’. A unique opportunity to become intoxicated and invigorated by contemporary sound creations.” (Peter Weibel)

Modern art began with a hitherto unknown sound: the noise. The Futurist painter and composer Luigi Russolo published the musical manifesto “L'arte dei rumori” in 1913 elevating urban noises to the level of an art. Later, Edgard Varèse preferred to refer “organized sound” rather than music. In the 1950s and 1960s representatives of musique concrète and the artists of the Happening and Fluxus movement (from Yoko Ono through to La Monte Young) extended the performative aspect of music; hence, in place of composition there could be randomness, in place of music, silence (John Cage, “Silence”, 1961), in place of an orchestra, the sea and in place of the musician, a horse. In the 1970s and 1980s Industrial Noise influenced even pop music (Sonic Youth, The Art of Noise, Throbbing Gristle, etc.), as well as punk music.

At the same time, loudspeakers became the building blocks of monumental sculptures (Benoit Maubrey); light and sound were compressed into mobile immaterial environments (La Monte Young /

Press Information

March 2012

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Location
ZKM | Media Museum

Duration
March 17–January 6, 2013

Press Conference
Thurs., March 15, 2012,
11 a.m., ZKM | Media Museum

Opening
Fri., March 16, 2012,
7 p.m., ZKM_Foyer

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Karlsruhe



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Marian Zazeela), inaudible realities were rendered audible in a synthesis of arts (Christina Kubisch) and hearing was gauged again by means of psychoanalytical experiments (Alvin Lucier). Sonifications of information and medial communication, sound environments as well as telematic or medial constellations exert an influence on the present-day multiplicity of creative output. In this connection, those political questions in sound art that lead to critical examination of sound and listening, occupy a central place.

Through the fusion of pop and art increasing numbers of fine artists discovered the record itself as medium of visual practices, from Milan Knížák through to Christian Marclay, who was awarded with the Golden Lion 2011 at the Venice Biennale in 2011. Even record covers, not only vinyl records, became presentable as art. Artists and composers also conquered the radio play as a medium since the 1960s. It is above all media and concept artists who made further advances in sound art, and who have secured for it a new foundation since the mid-1960s. With the introduction of the synthesizer and the computer, the era of techno-sound was initiated, which opened up an entirely new auditory space ranging from ambient music through to telematic installations.

The exhibition “Sound Art. Sound as a Medium of Art” makes new sound perceptions not only experienceable in the museum: passers-by may encounter sounds in the three installations located in the forecourt of the ZKM and five installations in public areas around the city of Karlsruhe. In addition, a selected concert program with outstanding performative projects enriches the exhibition: Marianna Amacher, La Monte Young / Marian Zazeela, Iannis Xenakis, John Cage and Ryoji Ikeda are representative of the program’s broad spectrum. The exhibition’s wealth of sounds has also been facilitated by the richness of the archives made accessible to the Karlsruhe public for the first time to this extent. Among these are the “Unheard Avant-garde” from Scandinavia, the Broken Music Archiv from Berlin, the Apollohuis Archiv, which is located in the ZKM since 2011, and curated audiopoints from various European archive inventories.

“The brain is the real center of music. Music is an emotional and mental experience, the depth of which has been obtained through no other artistic genre. Thus, both spirituality and sensual excitement comprise the poles of the world of sounds. Under the keyword “drunkenness of the ears” the exhibition opens up a new audio experience which is difficult to find in everyday life – an orgy for the ears.” (Peter Weibel)

Curator: Peter Weibel

Co-curator and project coordinator: Julia Gerlach

For further information please visit:

Desktop: <http://www.zkm.de/sound-art>

Smartphone: <http://m.zkm.de/sound-art>

A catalog will be published in conjunction with the exhibition.

Furthermore, one concert of the supporting programm is worth pointing out: on April 7, 2012 La Monte Young, Marian Zazeela and *The Just Alap Raga Ensemble* will perform live within Marian Zazeela's light installation *Dream Light* at the ZKM_Subspace.

(The concert is part of the project's tour from Berlin via Karlsruhe to Polling and is sponsored by the Kulturstiftung des Bundes.)