



Research > ON LISTENING #1. Thinking (through) the ear

Over the last two decades, listening has gained a lot of attention both in the field of philosophy and in the human sciences. At the same time, sound has increased its presence in museums and galleries, challenging the visual narratives and spatial codification of these institutionalized spaces and demanding new aesthetic discourses able to cope with artistic practices that critically deal with and explore listening. A vast amount of books and academic journals devoted to almost every aspect of listening and to sonic phenomena of all kinds (mostly written by young theorists from different fields) attest to what Jim Drobnick has called a 'sonic turn' or as Veit Erlmann termed it, 'the resurgence of the ear'.

Against the backdrop of the fertile space for reflection and critical thinking around sound and listening, Radio Web MACBA presents the series ON LISTENING. Divided into three parts, each focused on a different topic, field or practice, we engage with leading experts to provide an account of what listening means and implies in different areas of contemporary society and culture, from philosophy to art theory and from anthropology to technology studies and media theory.

PDF Contents:

- [01. Summary](#)
- [02. Interviewees \(in order of appearance\)](#)
- [03. Related links](#)
- [04. Bibliography](#)
- [05. Credits](#)
- [06. Acknowledgments](#)
- [07. Copyright note](#)

Curated by Arnau Horta. Music by Annie Goh

Arnau Horta is a freelance curator specialising in contemporary sound art. In his curatorial projects and his work as researcher and communicator he analyses the phenomenological and political aspects of sound, with a particular focus on the relationship between sound and space and between the act of listening and the act of dwelling. At present he is a doctoral candidate in philosophy, writing his dissertation on composer and sound artist Alvin Lucier's seminal work 'I am sitting in a room'.

Annie Goh is an artist and researcher working primarily with sound, space, electronic media and generative processes within their social and cultural contexts. She has co-curated the discourse program of CTM Festival Berlin since 2013 and is currently undertaking a PhD on echo and archaeoacoustics at Goldsmiths University of London.

ON LISTENING #1

Thinking (through) the ear

In the first installment of this series, we discuss some issues related to the philosophy of listening with Seth-Kim Cohen, Christoph Cox, Julian Henriques, Casey O'Callaghan, Peter Szendy and Salomé Voegelin.

01. Summary

To what extent is listening 'thinkable'? Philosophical inquiry, deeply rooted in the visual regime, seems to struggle when it comes to theoretically coming to grips with listening and sonic phenomena. It is, after all, no coincidence that the Greek term 'theoria' (θεωρία) means 'looking at, viewing, beholding'. This programme explores philosophy's seeming difficulty in grappling with listening and its counterpart – sound – as a powerful deconstructive means to cut through some of the philosophical certainties that underpin classical and modern Western thought. Can we conceive sounds as objects, or it would be more appropriate to consider them events? How far can the phenomenological approach to sound take us, and how much can we rely on it? And what about new materialisms? Are they more useful, in hermeneutic terms, when dealing with sound and listening? These are some of the issues addressed in part one of the ON LISTENING series.

02. Interviewees (in order of appearance)

Salomé Voegelin, artist and writer
 Peter Szendy, philosopher and musicologist
 Christoph Cox, philosopher, writer, and curator
 Salomé Voegelin, artist and writer
 Casey O'Callaghan, philosopher and writer
 Seth Kim-Cohen artist and writer
 Julian Henriques, philosopher and writer

03. Related links

Christoph Cox, *Sonic Philosophy*
artpulsemagazine.com/sonic-philosophy

Martyn Hudson, *What, am I hearing light? Listening through Jean-Luc Nancy*
www.hz-journal.org/n19/hudson.html

Julian Henriques, *Sonic Bodies: Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques & Ways of Knowing*
research.gold.ac.uk/4257/1/HenriquesSonicBodiesIntro.pdf

Seth Kim-Cohen
earroom.wordpress.com/2013/12/04/seth-kim-cohen/

Casey O'Callaghan
www.youtube.com/watch?v=SEPWb3-8hO4

Salome Voegelin
earroom.wordpress.com/2012/07/01/salome-voegelin/

04. Bibliography

Christoph Cox, Jenny Jaskey, Suhail Malik (eds.), *Realism Materialism Art*. Sternberg Press. 2015.



Diedrich Diederichsen, Constanze Rhum (eds.), *Utopia of Sound*. Publications of the Academy of Fine Arts. Vienna. 2010.
Jim Drobnick (ed.), *Aural Cultures*. YYZ Books. 2004.
Veit Erlman, *Reason and resonance*. Zone Books. New York. 2010.
Veit Erlman (ed.), *Hearing Cultures*. Berg Publishers. 2004.
Julian Henriques, *Sonic Bodies. Reggae Sound Systems, Performance Techniques, and Ways of Knowing*. Bloomsbury. 2011.
Don Ihde, *Listening and voice: phenomenologies of sound*. State University of New York Press. 2007.
Caleb Kelley, *Sound. Documents of Contemporary Art*. MIT Press. 2011.
Seth Kim-Cohen, *In the blink of an ear: toward a non-cochlear sonic art*. Continuum. 2009.
Saul A. Kripke, *Naming and Necessity*. Wiley-Blackwell. 1991.
David K. Lewis, *On the Plurality of Worlds*. Wiley-Blackwell. 2001.
Jean-Luc Nancy, *Listening*. Fordham University Press. 2007. (*A la escucha*, Amorrortu. 2007).
Casey O'callaghan, *Sounds*. Oxford University Press. 2007.
Jonathan Sterne, *The Sound Studies Reader*. Routledge. 2012.
Peter Szendy, *Listen: A History of Our Ears*. Fordham University Press. 2008. (*A la Escucha. Una historia del oído melómano*. Ediciones Paidós. 2003).
Peter Szendy, *En lo profundo de un oído. Una estética de la escucha*. Metales pesados. 2015.
Salomé Voegelín, *Listening to noise and silence. Toward a philosophy of sound art*. Continuum. New York / London. 2011.
Salomé Voegelín, *Sonic Possible Worlds: Hearing the Continuum of Sound*. Bloomsbury. 2014.

05. Credits

Curated by Arnau Horta. Music commissioned to Annie Goh. Production: Anna Ramos. Edition: Arnau Horta, Roc Jiménez de Cisneros and Anna Ramos. Voiceover: Annie Goh.

06. Acknowledgements

Many thanks to all the interviewees, Matías Rossi, Sònia López, Annie Goh.

07. Copyright note

2016. Published under the Creative Commons license 'Attribution-No Derivative Works 3.0 Unported'.