



reflections

on process
in sound

issue 2 winter 2013

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Editorial

By Iris Garrelfs

Dear reader,

It has been a long while since the first issue of *Reflections on Process in Sound*, but, finally, here is the second issue! The delay was due to an unfortunate combination of my own circumstances and those of potential contributors. As a result, most of the articles commissioned initially will not appear now, but in following issues. Knowing what they are I am looking forward to it!

As a reminder, *Reflections on Process in Sound* focuses on considering sound related activities, providing a forum where artists can engage in discussions about how they create, what their practices might be influenced by and how their ideas manifest themselves within the final artwork.

RoPiS #2 examines process in two ways: Two articles are first person reports making personal process transparent and three articles contain interviews and conversations between artists/curators. In the former category falls the reflection by sound artist and photographer Tansy Spinks (page 13), providing insights into her process creating site-specific performances, and an annotated journal entry by Maria Papadomanolaki (page 45) showing this specific facet of process in operation. As such diaries are proving to be extremely useful to process oriented artists, I am hoping to examine this subject further in subsequent issues.

In the conversation between Lucia Farinati and Claudia Firth (page 22) the artists consider process on the cusp of curating and creating. Following on from there (page 31) Lucia then discusses the process of a specific work, *Come una possibilità di incontro* on radio *bip bop* with two of the stations curators, Rita Correddu and Elena Biserna. Both pieces revolve, at least to some degree around *Autoritratto* by Italian feminist Carla Lonzi. They are, in fact, companion pieces, with some areas of overlap and some extensions, and highlight a necessity to incorporate relationships into artistic critique. In doing so the authors insert the creative process into the role of the curator, ultimately blurring the line between creator and critic. It seems poignant that within sound art, many of its theorists are also artists, for example David Toop, Salome Voegelin, or Brandon LaBelle.

The latter was interviewed by Anna Raimondo (page 2), and LaBelle points out the increasing need for debates about process. Well, we are happy to oblige!

Before doing so I would like to thank all contributors for their generous investment of time, and Peter Smith for designing it!

London, December 2013

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Brandon LaBelle

Interviewed by Anna Raimondo

Introduction

The interview was conducted at the beginning of 2013 during *Dirty Ear* at *Errant Bodies*¹ in Berlin, a forum on sound, multiplicity and radical listening set up by Brandon LaBelle in which Anna Raimondo was a participant.

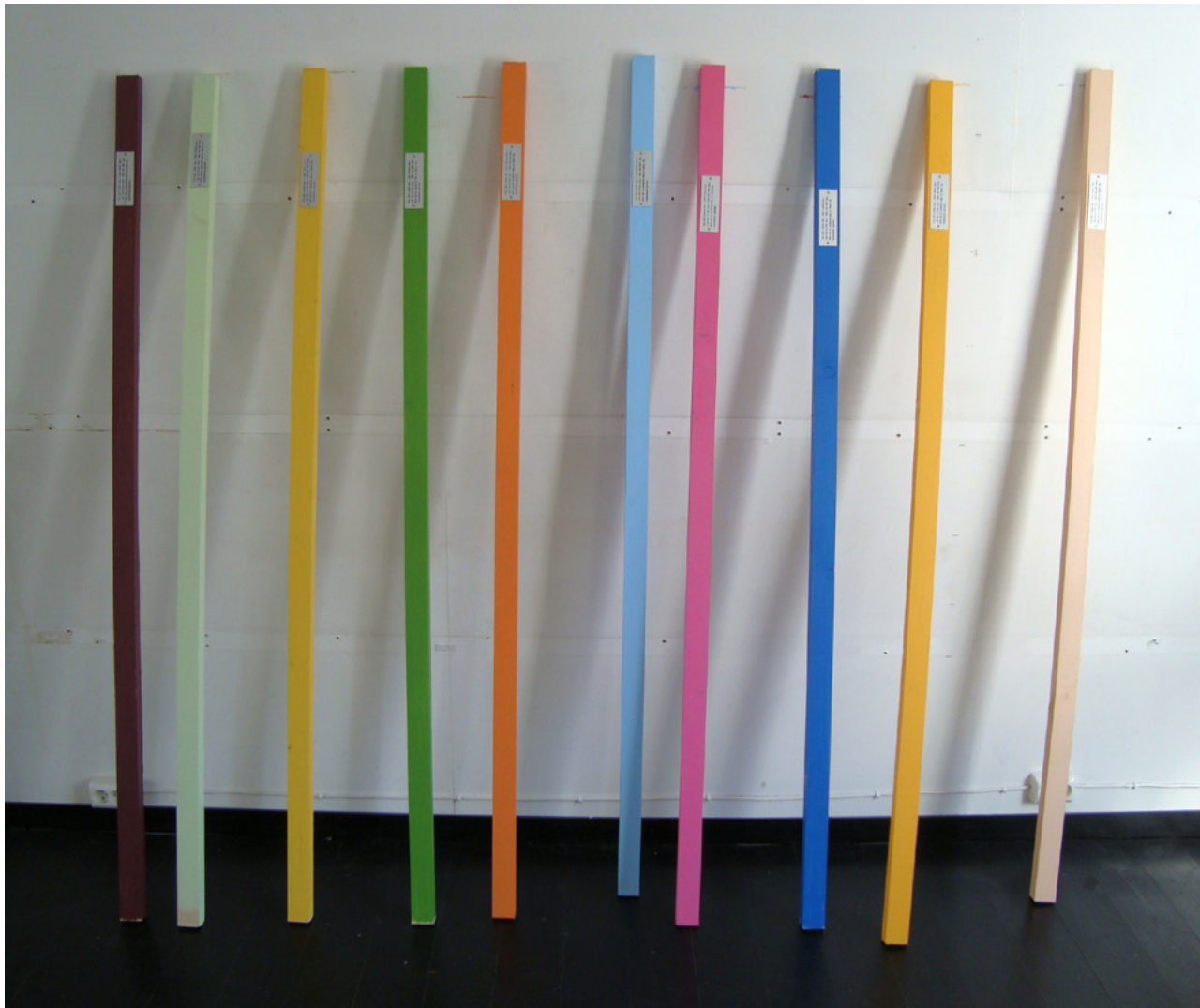
Anna Raimondo: As an artist, writer, curator, critic, your research is mainly focused on sound art and its possible social and cultural implications. Referring to the quotation by Anna Fritz 'Becoming is desire' which desire(s) led your attention to sound art?

¹ See www.errantbodies.org/dirty_ear_forum.html.

Anna Raimondo is an Italian artist and curator who explores listening as both a political and aesthetic experience. Her work has been shown internationally, for example *Dirty Ear* curated by Brandon LaBelle at *Errant Bodies* during *Transmediale* in 2013, *Paraphrasing Babel* in Maastricht; at *Nouzah Fenia – Festival de Casablanca* curated by Geraldine Paoli in 2012. Her radiophonic works have been broadcast internationally (*Kunst Radio* in Vienna, *Resonance FM* in London, *Arte Radio*, *Mobile Radio Bsp*, *Radio Grenouille*).

Her curatorial projects are mainly focused on sound and radio art and have been presented in different venues, including the *V&A*, London and *Le Cube-Independent Art Room*, Rabat. She is co-editor on the Morocco based radio and sound art platform *Saout Radio*.

annaraimondo.com



Brandon LaBelle: What led me to an interest in sound as an artistic project was certainly its relational potential – for me, sound is ungovernable, that is, it is at one and the same moment, mine and not mine; it is exactly what may allow for expressions of sharing: it teaches us how to negotiate loss, and how to also be extremely present. Sound for me is always more than I expect, and this I find very suggestive as an artist, as a body. I'm interested in many of my projects to use sound as a vehicle for generating types of interaction, forms of narrative and knowledge production, that are often circulating around or base themselves upon the ephemeral, the transient, the migratory and the associative. Sound and listening are extremely related and generative of such experiences and ideas; they provide a platform for building out processes that question or unsettle the singular, the human-centric, the law and languages of the proper.

In my projects I take this as a starting point, a medium, to develop materials and

'Diary of a Stranger', 2009, as part of 'Manual for a construction of a sound as a device to elaborate social connection', Atelier Nord, Oslo.

presentations, site constructions and conversations; sound gives me the courage to trespass the limits of particular languages, and especially, my-self.

AR: In your artistic and academic approach, it seems to me that you apply an 'inclusive definition' of sound art. Not defined as 'sound for sound's sake'. In your opinion, what does sound art include and what could it be made of?

BLB: Absolutely. I would say, a form of 'radical inclusion'. Because it also may include the excluded – not to speak in riddles! But what I take from sound is an opportunity to embrace uncertainty, interruption, the invisible, languages that migrate, being-one-and-different, associative knowledge, shivers, noise, voices of strangers, the radio within, formlessness, the quiet, you, and certainly, the future. These are also of course the very things a sound art could be made of.

AR: Aesthetically speaking, in your opinion, does sound art require any visual component?

BLB: I would never say it requires anything.

AR: I am thinking of the relation between sound art and silence. Let's focus on your art-work *Diary of a Stranger* (LaBelle 2009) is a silent intervention in public space in Oslo, in which you explore the social figure of the stranger. Participants carry one of ten wooden

sticks painted different colours, each with a metal plaque on with written messages, such as: 'you don't know me', 'I am lost in the city', 'take me with you', etc.

Those objects create a casual and participative cartography of the city, inviting people to circulate with the objects from one point of the city to another. In this case, silence and reading evoke the process of listening and the issue of strangeness between your invisible-silent voice and the one of the active spectator. Is this work a piece of sound art and if so, in which sense?

BLB: I appreciate your reading of the work, and as you point out, its relation to sound is not so direct; rather, it occupies or creates this space of silent recognition, or silent conversation. The object, this stick, for me is precisely a silence that asks for attention. And this is a direction, a path (not the only one...) toward the stranger, or a becoming-stranger, a coming close to the stranger – a figure that has the possibility to shift the lines of social life, that has as its central potential an ability to unsettle the perimeters of the status quo, because the stranger in a way is never fully knowable; he or she (if we can say this...) is a type of circulation, a body without a proper name, a body that migrates; that hovers around, to occupy a zone always on the edge of the center; a body in the dark, or even, at times, in the light – a body that can also be suddenly so close. I would say: it is a poetic- body. These conditions or characteristics for me also suggest the characteristics of sound: is not sound always somehow a stranger? Even the most familiar sound – my

own voice... your voice – often appears as if from nowhere; it escapes me. Becoming-stranger is a moment of encounter, a moment of sudden listening.

AR: The idea of a silent (thus sound) intervention in public space makes me think about another project, *Calling Card* (1986- 1990)² by Adrian Piper. In this piece, the Afro-American artist distributed written cards in public spaces with specific messages relating to concrete situations. Those cards, without providing any opportunity to verbally react to her, caused the reader to have an inner-silent-debate with himself about specific issues. We face here, again, what Salome Voegelin defines as 'sonic silence' or 'beginning of listening' (2010). What place does listening play in your interpretation of sound art and in your work in particular?

BLB: I think of the listener as someone who is curious but does not know; a body that is searching for what lies behind the scenes, that is suddenly touched by something – a voice, a fiction, a labyrinth to nowhere or to somewhere; I think of listening as a condition of finding association: every sound is already asking us to leave behind who we think we are. To say more about this: we have that feeling that sound comes at us; that it moves into our body, that it floods us. While this is true, I also tend to think that sound beckons us; it calls us toward it, and we move in its direction. It demands from us; it takes us toward a horizon of listening. In this way, sound is really a meeting point, a point toward which I move – yet where

² See www.spencerart.ku.edu/exhibitions/radicalism/piper1.shtml.

I will end up is never really knowable in advance; and further, this meeting point is never only mine. I like to think of it – this sound – as a space inhabited by a community of strangers. We meet here, as bodies associating, assembling – an assemblage... – and yet already on the way to something else, toward another listening. (But something can happen, along the way; this association does have consequence – sound changes me, this community can make something together)



'Counter-parts', 2006, as part of 'Surface Tension_Curitiba', in collaboration with Octavio Camargo and Ken Ehrlich, Ybakatu Gallery, Curitiba.

AR: I would like to come back to your piece *Diary of a Stranger*, which ended with a performance based on notes you made during the process. One of the enounced sentences was: 'To share – to be'. I would like to connect this sentence to the spirit of your last book *Diary of an Imaginary Egyptian* (2013), in which you ask for an 'agency of the intimate, outlining a tender map of the transnational' (from the presentation of the book on the web site).³

Can we speak about your general work as a 'poetic of strangeness', as a condition of constant discovery, as a desire to engage toward the other from the difference? Strangeness interpreted as a condition of constant discovery, as a desire to engage through difference, bringing with it a potential for intimacy.

BLB: I find this very interesting, and very thoughtful; your perspective definitely resonates with me, and I appreciate this notion, of a 'poetics of strangeness'. I think difference is about being recognized: there is always that idea that identity is formed only through separation (from the mother...), through a cut, a break (from wholeness...from attachment). To be 'self' is to be a body set against a horizon; a figure on a ground, outlined; it is to have a proper name, and to inhabit it, like no one else. Difference then is also the beginning of sharing; for it is what we give to the other – it is what we can offer, and it is also what we can receive: the difference of the other. Intimacy.

³ See www.pro-qm.de/brandon-labelle-diary-imaginary-egyptian.

AR: Does the fact that you are yourself a stranger in the place where you are based influence your artistic research and your political background? Does being a stranger allow you a more analytical perspective?

BLB: I would say maybe something more personal here: being a stranger can also be about carrying a certain loneliness with you (I'm always thinking to write a 'history of loneliness'... what can we learn from loneliness, as a thread stretched throughout culture, the body, thinking, etc.? I think there is a great deal of loneliness at the center of all our endeavors...) – so maybe loneliness is the driving force, a backdrop to the necessity to 'find the other'. It is in me like a thirst.

AR: Another interesting point of your work is the relation with the objects you transform. I am thinking now of your work *Counterparts*, that you realized in Curitiba (Brasil) in 2006 with Ken Ehrlich & Octavio Camargo.⁴ In this project, the final object of

⁴ The project took shape in relation to the city of Curitiba's recycling program, and specifically how this relates to 'unofficial' waste collectors living in barrio communities and functioning within an informal economy. Researching this community and culture of trash and recycling the work functioned as an act of shadowing. This involved building a cart similar to those used by the 'unofficial' collectors and circulating through the city to collect discarded wood.

The cart was built in collaboration with a local craftsman and aimed to intervene within this circuit of trash collecting, which comes to normalize the cheap and partially forced labor of an impoverished community. The cart functioned literally as a vehicle for creating interactions, and was finally exhibited at a local gallery space, along with additional works and artifacts, such as a table built from the collected wood and used for meals served during the exhibition.

the table built with the recollected wood synthesises the whole process. In this case, do you agree with me that the table – the final result- is at the same time the documentation of the whole process? Often working with ephemeral, time-based or site-specific works, what is your approach to the documentation? Could it be a second artwork?

BLB: I would say, yes, it's interesting to think of the table as the documentation, embodying the process of the entire project. Its material body is the very thing that captures the intention, the imagination, the development of the work. But the table also performed as an event – it stood at a particular location, and generated different interactions; people ate off the table; they talked across it, touched it and also, didn't notice it. So the table was also a machine for producing conversation.

Generally, I must say that I do not obsess over 'documentation': my focus is on the specific situation, and creating work to



'Counter-parts', 2006, as part of 'Surface Tension_Curitiba', in collaboration with Octavio Camargo and Ken Ehrlich, Ybakatu Gallery, Curitiba, Brazil.

speaking toward that situation. To document this will always be 'less' than the situation; it is a trace, for sure, and in that way, I am ok to let it be a trace. I don't need another artwork.

AR: I have the feeling that anyway, and anyhow, your voice (your silent voice or your physical one) is always present in your work. And here I would like to mention Adriana Cavarero 'The voice manifests the unique being of each human being, and his or her spontaneous self-communication according to the rhythms of a sonorous relation' (Cavarero 2005, p.173). Would you like to comment on this quotation in relation to your artistic research?

BLB: I certainly appreciate Cavarero's thinking, and learn a lot from her writings, on voice and histories of western logic. Her notion of the uniqueness of being is really quite beautiful (and brings to mind also the work of Walter Ong...) – at the same time, I miss something from her work as well. She tends to always move towards ideas of communion, that voice has a certain purity in establishing positive relations; that voice is the essential part of a human. While all this is very enriching and important, I'm also keen to hear in voice aspects of argument, disagreement, lack – voice in other words as negotiation. In this way, the sonorous relation at the center of voice is also full of struggle, where we don't necessarily commune, but rather we conflict. This doesn't move away completely from ideas of uniqueness, but it does suggest another perspective to the voice, another tonality: that it is not always a given.

AR: Sound is always inside and outside of the body. It is in between isolation and participation. Sound intimidates and requires intimacy. Starting from these points, in 2010 you edited with *Errant Bodies* the *Manual for the construction of a sound as a device to elaborate social connection*, a reflection of a residency you and other artists made in Oslo in 2010 (LaBelle 2010). What were the main intentions of that project?

BLB: The project was aimed at exploring sound as a public material. This was done by bringing together a small group of artists to develop new works, specific to the city of Oslo. We functioned as a working group, expanding on different questions on public space and public life, while each of us worked on our individual projects. Topics such as collaboration, noise, politics of listening and public art generally circulated through the projects, and took shape through public events, interventions in the city, workshops and recording. We thought it important to create this process also as a way to invite public interaction and input. This was given expression also by locating ourselves in a storefront in the city for the final period of the project. This space became a studio, a discussion and presentation space, a meeting point, but also, a potential open space toward the street.

AR: In my opinion, *Dirty Ear* (January 2013), the last project you organised at *Errant Bodies* during *Transmediale* seems to be a continuation of the reflections that arose in *Manual for the construction of a sound as a device to elaborate social connection*.



'Diary of a Stranger', 2009, as part of 'Manual for a construction of a sound as a device to elaborate social connection', Atelier Nord, Oslo, Norway.

In both projects, it seems to me that the main questions are how sound can be a tool, a method, a device to engage political landscapes. In both projects, there is a collaborative space-time among artists, in where to build new knowledge through a work-in-progress. Can you tell us more about if and how the last experience you had in Oslo guided you to the articulation of *Dirty Ear*?

BLB: Certainly part of all this work is really about developing strategies and methods of self-organizing, and of collective process, and over the years I've had the chance to experience this in different ways, in different locations. You might say it does become an education on how to facilitate and also direct informal collectivity and collaboration. This also appears in *Errant Bodies*, as a publishing platform, as well as *Surface Tension*, from which the Manual project grew. I'm not sure about any direct links between the *Dirty Ear Forum* and the Manual project, but of course there are resonances, in terms of a focus on sound, on questions of publicness, or group work. And the attempt to expand practices

connected to this. In this way, how listening can function as a platform for a type of social and political engagement.

AR: Coming back to *Dirty Ear*, it was mainly a working-thinking space in which you invited another 7 artists to join you in a reflection on sound as a social tool. Can you describe how you structured the project and why? And how did you select the invited artists?

BLB: I find it increasingly important to focus more on process, and to create platforms for types of experimental research, and this definitely requires discussion and exchange with others. The *Dirty Ear Forum* was an attempt to nurture such exchange, particularly on the question of sound and listening; I'd say it was about fostering and collecting a diversity of working methods and issues, and to do so by structuring it around the notion of 'multiplicity', or ideas of 'publicness' – the 'public' being an arena for diversity, interaction, processes of conversation: searching for commonality through difference. These then became also the themes for the Forum, and I thought of each participant as representing a certain perspective. To bring together a diverse group of practitioners whose work is also infected by discursive energy, by curiosity and inquisitiveness, and by an engagement with process. I didn't want to get rid of these differences, but to amplify them in the work itself, in the sharing and occupying of a single space, together.

AR: The project, in different phases, ended with a collective sound installation made of 8 speakers, one speaker for each artist. From a

curatorial point of view, it was an interventionist, provisional setting. How does the curatorial approach reflect the relationship between multiplicity and isolation?

BLB: I thought the idea of the 8 speakers occupying a single space would operate to generate a sense for individual work, for individual process, while also forcing this into a process of negotiation, of sharing and of working together. I always have this sense that sound is always crossing over between the private and the public – we might say, it shows us this as a dynamic event, as a channel for the relational; it reminds me that my body is not my own. The structure of the Forum in a way was simply an analogy to this: that to make a sound is already to enter the public sphere, and so the question becomes, what can be made from this collectivity?

AR: In the text that accompanies the project you mention that *Dirty Ear* was also about Radical listening. What do you mean by this definition? Is there a connection with political movements?

BLB: I would not insist on any specific relation to political movements – part of the project was not to pre-determine a particular affiliation, a particular politics, other than a type of 'anarchy'. But more, to insist on the potentiality of listening to act or contribute to today's political environment. A method of inclusion that also does not insist on cohesion.

AR: What are the next steps of this project?

BLB: I'm very interested to continue this project by relocating it within different places and different contexts. I think what's important is to continue – it's clear that one of the most difficult things is how to sustain the conversation, how to extend the project so it might grow and in a way, realize some of its embedded complexity. There is always this great unfolding of energy at first, of perspectives, of sharing that goes with these projects, and that in itself is extremely enriching and significant. But I'm searching for what can happen once that energy is there, once we know each other: what can we do next.

AR: *Errant Bodies* is your Berlin-based publishing venture, with a multi-disciplinary interest in sonic and spatial practices. How would you describe it?

BLB: I think of *Errant Bodies* as a project of publishing in the expanded sense – of making public, which definitely includes a politics of association, a type of active poetics, which takes shape mainly through the book. The experience of the book is something I'm very interested in, and I find the book to be an extremely powerful tool, a powerful weapon, a powerful space of gathering, and for poetics – precisely what Edouard Glissant calls a 'poetics of relation'. It is a public space, a shared space, of the page and its reverberations, into conversations and the civic. So, the book has a particular resonance that I do think offers an important opportunity for deepening reflection on society, as well as for leading the imagination. I like the slowness of the book, which in relation to

the quickness of digital culture may offer a valuable counter-balance today. I'm also interested in how *Errant Bodies* can operate as a platform for collaboration, for extending the idea of 'authorship' – this has been developing through different project series, for instance, the Setting for an Open Source series, which is staged as a performative installation where visitors contribute to a collective writing action. For me, the physical book, and the act of publishing, is also a perfect articulation of the union of the actual and the virtual (and always has been) – the book is already so palpable, and yet so immaterial; it invades this room with its silent energy, while remaining always already elsewhere; it is pure network, pure potentiality, whose materiality is both fixed and yet entirely open to sampling, referencing, reading. For a multiplicity of uses, and certainly, for types of action.

For the last two years we've also had a project space in Berlin. While the publications function as platforms for collaboration, for sharing and disseminating, for developing conversations and extending work into the space of the book, the project space for me is important as a platform for more direct meeting. I see it as a way of supporting artists and the processes of research and experimental production, in sonic and spatial work, in text production and critical and poetical thought, and also, a way to invite the influence of these artists into the work we're doing. So, the project space is about opening *Errant Bodies* up to others, to also contributing something to the city of Berlin, to act as a meeting point, and to extend *Errant Bodies* as a platform, and to be surprised by what may still happen.

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Thinking Aurally and Visually about Process

by Tansy Spinks

Tansy Spinks studied Fine Art with a BA from Leeds Polytechnic and an MA in Photography from the Royal College of Art and has an LGSM. She has exhibited widely both at home and internationally and her photographic works are in the *Fine Art Museum* in Houston, Texas and the *National Museum of Media* in Bradford. Many of her images have been used as book covers by major publishers. She is currently combining lecturing in Fine Art at Middlesex University and Illustration at Camberwell College of Art with part time PhD study involving live, site-specific, associative sound performance, based in CRiSAP at LCC, University of the Arts, London with supervisors Angus Carlyle, Cathy Lane and David Toop.

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Abstract

In this article Tansy Spinks reflects on her understanding of process as it relates to and comes out of her site-specific performance practice.

This process includes the need to act as a 'curator' of the associations that the work reveals through the research, but also understanding it as extending beyond the maker and her work to its audience.



Image of 'Hoop' at Beaconsfield, by Matthew Whyte.

Introduction

As a practicing artist who has spent many years pondering visually and latterly aurally about how art is made manifest, I have reached the conclusion that, quite simply, process is and reveals the means by which an artwork comes about. Moreover, it is inherent in all three aspects of artistic creation: in the thinking, the making, for example form and methods used, and in how it is received. If the making of art involves process, via thought and the combination of form and matter, does the word 'process' imply anything for the creative artist, beyond arriving at a working method?

On Process

In examining the term process, there would seem to be an implied difference between the word 'process,' (without the indefinite article, like 'Tate' instead of 'The Tate'), 'to process' (in transit as a verb) and the notion of 'the process' (as a noun and something finite). The first definition seems all encompassing, a generic term which could include means, method and matter. 'To process' suggests action, something ongoing. 'The process' is particular to a specific circumstance. The word process then is something of a moveable feast.

The basis of my own current site-specific sound practice lies in an over-arching process, in all three senses of the word, that deals with live sound, performance and spaces. The connection made with the spaces, a mixture of public, working and gallery spaces is what I call an 'associative' one gleaned through research, whilst

the method used is mimetic and performative. Chosen aspects of the research become what I have come to describe as the 'material of the site'. This is information as an associative prompt to make sounds that are peculiar only to that specific place. These prompts can include historical, cultural, aural and even envisaged sonic references resulting in a sound performance, which is then an attempt to distil and convey elements of these associations of site. Process here is revealed in the performance, through the combination of the liveness, the sonic characteristics and visibility of the place, instrument and objects used, and the perception of the sounds produced for both performer and receiver.

Operating between the place and the sounds is a form of site responsive, mimetic interface in which the approaches come together as a new form of experiencing sound in both (social) place and as performance. As the performer, sound-maker, host, I act as a curator of the associations, a selector of material, a translator or interpreter of mediums, a filterer of sounds, of the spirit of place and time, of the traces of human activity and of the site's inherent narratives.

On first visiting a site, the questions that arise in situ are initially very general. What is its purpose? How was it used or how is it used now? Who has been in this space before? What aspect lends itself to some form of sonic interpretation? How can some aspect of that previous existence or current usage be harnessed and transmitted performatively? Interpretation inevitably suggests the role of the artist as some sort of conduit, making many subjective

decisions behind the scenes as to what may or may not be interesting or relevant and editing these choices. The sound piece can therefore never be an all encompassing summation of what has gone before within the space – it does not attempt a complete narrative interpretation or provide historical instruction. It can only hope to be slightly more than the 'sum of its parts', which is: one person with a set of sound making devices inhabiting a space for a relatively short amount of time and conveying something of the sense of this newly acquired knowledge of the site back into the space.

In considering what my definition of process is now, I revisited an earlier unpublished interview from 2005 in which I describe my visual art practice, in this case the analogue photographic process, in primarily technical terms:



Instrument and objects.

I do not want the reading of the image to be too seamless. I want the process, (the grain structure or half tone dots seen within a print) to be visible in the images – there has to be a sort of screen between the viewer and the subject reminding them that they are looking at something made, which has a surface – and that their experience is not simply the act of looking through a window at a subject.
(Spinks 2005)

The *Encarta*¹ dictionary provides a specific photographic definition for the word 'process' as follows:

- to treat or prepare something in a series of steps or actions, for example, using chemicals or industrial machinery
- to treat light-sensitive film or paper with chemicals in order to make a latent image visible

The images were therefore to be experienced as a fabrication, but a knowing one.

In this context/sense, the term process was used as a means of drawing attention to the nature and qualities of the medium itself as an intrinsic vehicle for conveying ideas. Technique was allowed to have its own agency as a way of adding the understanding of depictive artifice to the reading of the subject matter.

¹ The *Encarta* dictionary appeared as a digital multimedia encyclopedia between 1993 and 2009, published by Microsoft.

I wonder now if this is also a possibility within sound as a medium and in the sound works themselves. Can the process or means itself, as the 'medium' (alluding to Marshall McLuhan), be read as a part of the 'message'? Could means here be simply an awareness of how things are coming about and how they are being fabricated via the performer and the sound making and distributing equipment?

A sonic equivalent to this awareness of means might be found in the use of visible microphones recording a sound found or devised on a site. In *Silent Zone* (Spinks 2012), for example, during a sound performance occurring in a library, it is quite possible to ascertain what act is occurring; the sound of writing is being recorded live, amplified, layered and relayed back into the space. The process is apparent.

Similarly the way the electric violin is used in performance involving amplification, causes and permits the sounds of the process of the sound making itself to be heard – the 'mechanics' of the sound of the bow travelling across the string, the grain and whistle – usually something one is at pains to suppress on an acoustic instrument but which has a raw quality on an electric one and is of great value in holding up a mirror to the artifice of this sound making.²

² An example can be heard in part two of *SeaNoiseSea, Seafort* (Spinks 2010) at www.tansyspinks.com/performance_seafort.htm.

Could the idea of the process as a means, moreover, extend to the associative connections of the site?

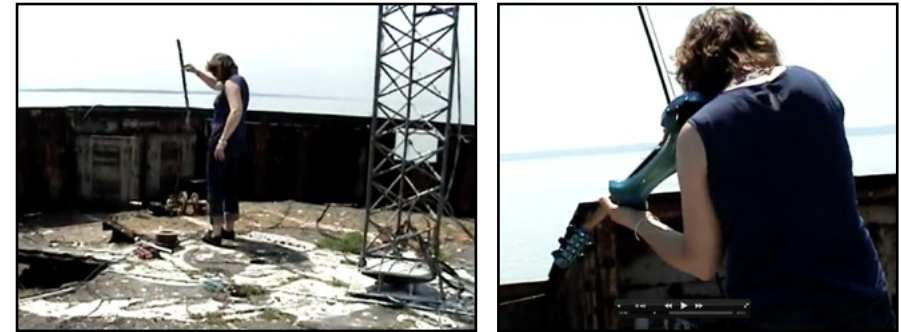
Two examples of a site-specific, performative artwork that play with these boundaries are cited by Nick Kaye in *Site Specific Art, Performance and Documentation*. (2000). The first illustrates how the Welsh site-specific performance group *Brith Gof* takes architecture beyond its literal properties to be considered a combination of place, the public and performance. Kaye describes this as:

the installation of 'ghost' architectures [that seek] to engage with and activate narratives and properties of a 'host' site. In this context, [Artistic director of Brith Gof], McLucas observes, the site may offer:

- a particular and unavoidable history
- a particular use (a cinema, a slaughterhouse)
- a particular formality (shape, proportion, height, disposition of architectural elements etc.)
- a particular political, cultural or social context. (Kaye 2000, p.53)

He adds:

'...the real site specific works that we do, are the ones where we create a piece of work which is a hybrid of the place, the public and the performance.' (McLucas in Kaye 2000, p.55)



At 'Redsands Seaforts' for 'Whitstable Biennale Satellite' in collaboration with Antoine Bertin, June 2010.

Akin to the photographic definition of process, these works deal perhaps with the realisation of the latency of the site's many narratives; similar to Anselm Adams' reflection on the potential within the photographic negative.

Kaye's second example of an artwork which pushes these boundaries is by UK artist Fiona Templeton,³ the founder of *Theatre of Mistakes*, and amounts to an example of what he defines as site-specific theatre. *YOU-The City*, initially sited in New York in 1988, entailed taking journeys through obscure parts of the city as one-to-one 'guided tours.' In *Diversive Assembly, some Trends in Recent Performance* Tim Etchells' response to Templeton's work when it was realised in London, 1989, reads as follows:

The old dialectical separations between inside and outside, fiction and reality, self and other, audience and performer, were here exploited and blurred, leaving the strange sense that the city and oneself were now almost the same thing, a shifting network of narratives, places, touches, voices, lost puns, myths and intimacies. (Etchells 1994)

Thus process in this context could be taken as a form of parallel experience, allowing some, but not total access to the means by which these works are created as a conscious combination of fiction and reality, performer and receiver, the medium and the message.

³ See www.fionatempleton.org.



'Sonic Triangle' by Idit Nathan.

In one of my own sound works, *Floor Zero* (Spinks 2011), the process used is apparent but not immediately so. A performer is recording and layering the authoritative recorded voice in a working lift rendering it eventually meaningless. Listeners are either unwitting lift users or those who have come specifically to experience a sound performance. In this case, a real everyday scenario (travelling in a lift) and a sound artwork are conflated to present an unsettling experience. As an occupant observed:

When at one point the doors opened and we saw a man from the first floor get in smiling (ah! I found you!) I realised all sense of time and space were gone. This moment was artful, derivative of Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting In A Room* or Gilbert and George's *Gordon's Makes Us Drunk*, but with a physical dimension all its own. The art was the feeling in the stomach, located in the whole body, not just the eyes and ears. An unusual feeling, adoring an art work yet blessedly relieved when you could finally walk away from it. (Collins 2011)

Another part of the process, the mimetic interface mentioned earlier is in greater evidence in a previous work, *Sonic Triangle* (Spinks 2009), in which the performances act as a guide to the possible associative sounds heard within a more conventional gallery space, shared with others in a group exhibition set in a building which had a former life as a penitentiary. Less artful perhaps but more reflective, the interface itself becomes the process, allowing more to be discerned than the sum of the

combination of space, instrument and objects. As another listener commented ironically: 'The sounds have much more presence than the rest of the [physical] works in the room' (MK) and 'Where is the music being played? In the instrument, the listener, the sound system, the room?' (DP).⁴

In this case, what can be called 'the process' extends to the responses of the listener/experiencers also.

So, to return to address my earlier question: Does the word 'process' imply anything for the creative artist beyond arriving at a working method? I would emphasise that it can indeed be considered to encompass all aspects of creative practice, from the initial spark, the thinking, through the means and procedures put in place to its reception and the many possibilities of documentary form, deriving value and meaning from the risks of the intended and the unintended, the rehearsed and the unrehearsed, the expected and the unexpected.

I conclude with a draft sketch of an instructional word score that seeks to allow access to this form of site-specific compositional interface between experiencer and place by extending the whole process to the reach of others.

⁴ Artists Mary Kuper and Deborah Padfield, respectively, responding to the *Sonic Triangle* performances, October 2009. From Tansy Spinks' portfolio of soundworks 2008-2012, unpublished.

Sample instruction for a live, site-specific sound performance:

- Choose a location that is busy or frequented by a passing flow of pedestrians, or one of quiet contemplation.
- Visit this venue in advance of your event and give some thought to how it looks, sounds and why it is a significant place for you.
- Spend some time on researching the site, its histories and narratives.
- On the event occasion, set up your instrument/voice/object/sound-making device, amplifier and looping device.
- Then, EITHER listen to a particular sound around you and make one in response to it OR consider a sound relevant to an aspect of the space which you have researched and attempt to evoke and convey it on your 'instrument'.
- Record this on the looping device pedal (depress left pedal) for a while and play it back (depress a second time). This second action closes the 'loop' automatically for the selected time period.
- Repeat this action with another, listen-and-response action. You may be responding to a sound in the space you are listening to or you may be responding to the sound you have just created on the instrument.
- When you are pleased with a particular sound you can overdub the first loop with the pedal (depress for third time). The layering will now build up successively.
- Keep doing this until you have enough sounds or several layers of sounds playing out simultaneously.
- Then, EITHER decide how long this should last and finish by sharply cutting the sounds (depress right pedal and hold it down to delete recordings) or by fading with the volume control. ALTERNATIVELY, put down the instrument and walk away, leaving the sounds playing indefinitely in the space.

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Reversals and Recognition: An Interview about Process

Lucia Farinati and Claudia Firth in conversation

Lucia Farinati (Italy/UK) is an independent curator based in London and the Director of *Sound Threshold*, an interdisciplinary curatorial project that explores the relationships between site, sound and text. She studied on the Curatorial Programme at Goldsmiths College, London, Public Art and European Cultural Planning at De Montfort University, Leicester, and History of Art and Aesthetics at the Faculty of Humanities, University of Trento, Italy. She has collaborated on many sonic art projects and radio initiatives including *bip bop*, *Sound Proof 5*, *Errant Bodies*, *Audio Arts*, *Resonance 104.4 FM*, *Institution of Rot*, *Radio Papesse* and *Radio Arte Mobile*. With Daniela Cascella she co-edited *Transmission*, a book commissioned by *Sound and Music* for the 8th edition of the *Cut & Splice* Festival, London, 2010. Lucia also created a choral reading of the book *Autoritratto*, by art historian and feminist Carla Lonzi, which was conceived for *bip bop* (Radio Città Fujiko 103.1FM, 28 June, 2013) and was linked to the exhibition *Autoritratti. Iscrizioni del femminile nell'arte italiana contemporanea* (MAMbo, 12 May-1 September 2013)

Claudia Firth (UK) is an artist and cultural theorist. She studied Fine Art at Brighton University (BA Hons, 1995) and Chelsea College of Art (MA, 1997) and

Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths College, London (MA, 2009). She is currently a PhD student at Birkbeck College, University of London. She has exhibited widely in the UK and abroad, including installation and performance *A War of Nerves Indeed* at *No.w.here* (2012) and is a founding member and regular contributor of *Nyx*, the journal for the Centre for Cultural Studies at Goldsmiths, University of London. Her research interests include technology and the body, art and politics and the crossovers and tensions between image and text.

Lucia Farinati and Claudia Firth have recently run a workshop on collective listening at the *Bergen Academy of Art and Design* (28 Oct – 1 Nov 2013) as part of the *Nordic Sound Art Program* and the *Dirty Ear Forum*. Together they are currently researching and writing *The Force of Listening*, a book on the role of listening in contemporary conjunctions between art and activism. This will be published by *Errant Bodies Press*, as part of their *Doormats* series in 2014.

mambo-bologna.org/mostre/mostra-107/pag-116
bipbop.org/episode-6
soundthreshold.org

Claudia Firth: For this essay, you were asked to write about yourself and your working process. Rather than write a straightforward article you asked me, an artist, writer and collaborator to interview you, putting both of us in unfamiliar positions, so I wondered firstly, if you would say something about your request to me.

Lucia Farinati: Well yes, my starting point or question is how we can retain the exchange we are having in this moment, this process of speaking to each other by way of writing. I am interested in your use of voice recognition as a tool for writing ... and right now, while speaking to you, I am discovering a new process: speaking in order to write ...

CF: I feel more self-conscious while using the software, so it is a bit tricky to use this tool for an interview. What you can't see on the screen is that the computer hasn't written a very accurate record of what I said when I asked the first question which is quite interesting. You also obviously use technology in your work, so perhaps you could detail your process in terms of the interview and of the conversations that you have as a curator with artists.

LF: The process is very simple. When I record a conversation with a portable recorder I don't have to think about editing sentences or to give instructions to the computer as you are doing right now. What I like about an audio interview is the fact that it is normally a straightforward and direct process that brings two people together,

but it also captures the actual voice of the person I am talking to. By voice I do not mean only language and meaning, I also mean utterance, intonation, inflection etc., the grain of the voice, its musicality. The second reason why I normally prefer the audio interview instead of writing a critical text is the possibility to give voice to the artist, to let his/her words resonate freely.

CF: So in terms of your own process, you have preferred to work in ways that have kept the audio interview as a piece of audio rather than being inscribed or transcribed and turned into writing. Is that right?

LF: Yes, that's right. A conversation is for me an explorative and creative process in itself. To turn an audio interview into a transcript, a text, which is often edited or refined, can inscribe speech into a fixed linear framework. However this of course at the same time means it can be more readable and accessible for the public.

I assume then that the reason why I have been reluctant in producing transcripts, is because I like to keep the process of the conversation with an artist open as much as possible, as a kind of extended process itself rather than a process that leads to an end product (and the inevitable decay into writing.) And I find it more challenging and perhaps more creative to try to minimize or even to reverse the curatorial role, in brief to question the supposedly 'critical' voice of the curator.



'Come una possibilità di incontro' ('As a possibility of an encounter'), a choral reading of 'Autoritratto' by Carla Lonzi, Bologna, February 2013, a project by Lucia Farinati for 'bip bop - Radio Città Fujiko' 103.1 Mhz FM, Bologna, Italy.

CF: Talking of reversals, I am quite curious to use this to reflect on the present situation as you are the one being interviewed when usually you are the person doing the interviewing. I also wonder if there is any connection with the idea of self-portrait both for itself and also because I know you've been very interested in the work *Autoritratto* by art historian and feminist Carla Lonzi and its use of interviews.

LF: Yes sure, there is a strong connection with the work of Carla Lonzi. Despite the title, *Autoritratto* (Self-portrait) the book is a free montage of artists' interviews she recorded between 1965 and 1969. The recordings were transcribed and edited in such a way to retain the colloquial and discursive style of the audio interviews. The book has been constructed as a long continuous conversation between 15 artists, an imaginary gathering in which Lonzi appears as one of the interlocutors. In the introduction of the book Lonzi wrote: 'At some point the artwork was felt by me to be a possibility of an encounter, as an invitation addressed by the artists directly to each of us.' (Lonzi, 2010, p. 3) Therefore, *Autoritratto* can be read in this light as an account of many encounters, and yet more importantly, I think, represents a clear attempt to de-construct the power of the art critic, if not to see his disappearance. This was in fact Lonzi's last major work as an art critic before the establishment of Rivolta Femminile, a radical feminist group.

But to come back to your question, the fact of being interviewed can certainly be seen as a kind of self-portrait, a way for me to talk about my work. What remains under scrutiny is however

WILLIAM FURLONG AUDIO ARTS

curated by Lucia Farinati

EXTRACTION CONSTRUCTION ABSTRACTION

SoundArtMuseum
19-31 October 2006

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www.soundartmuseum.net
info@radioartemobile.it



Memorex cassette, 1973
The first issues of Audio Arts were produced on Memorex cassette in 1973. Photo: Audio Arts
Courtesy Tate Archive

Reversals and Recognition...

the authorial gesture of the curator even in this kind of reversal, something that makes me feel rather uncomfortable.

CF: So in your taking on of the audio interview as part of your practice, how much was influenced directly by Carla Lonzi? Was it a decision you made in response to her work, was it something that happened in parallel or before you discovered her writing?

LF: Well actually, it started way before discovering her work, but I will certainly continue learning from her. Before reading Carla Lonzi I encountered William Furlong and the *Audio Arts* project¹, an audio magazine on cassette that was established in 1973. I have been collaborating with Furlong since 2006, initially as an interviewer for the magazine and later as a curator of several exhibitions investigating this archive. Very much like *Autoritratto*, *Audio Arts* is a project that can be entered at any time as a continuous conversation. The substantial difference however is that *Audio Arts* was established as an experimental auidial space based on the new possibility to play back original recordings. To listen to an *Audio Arts* conversation one does have a sense of authenticity prompted by hearing a real person in a real space, to hear the actuality of the recorded voices. *Audio Arts* has had a great influence on my practice: first of all it leads me to think about the artist interview as a critical/curatorial methodology, and thus to work with the artist

¹ *Audio Arts* can be found at www.tate.org.uk/audio-arts and *Off the Record: The history and legacy of Audio Arts Magazine on contemporary art* (Tate Britain, 13 October 2012) is at www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/conference/record.

Detail from poster-publication for the exhibition 'Extraction, Construction, Abstraction', edited and designed by Lucia Farinati, Radio Arte Mobile, September 2006.

voice as a primary source/account, and secondly to understand aural space as a platform for collaborative work and dialogue.

CF: So that's made me think of a few different points I want to ask you about, one of which is about the archive. You've spoken about this on several occasions and not just now in relation to Bill Furlong's project. You talked about the archive as a form of resistance or even of protest. I think it was in the context of producing alternative archives or alternative memory is that right?

LF: It was in the context of a panel discussion dedicated to *Audio Arts* in 2006 in Rome, which I titled *Active Archive*, and more recently in the context of a radio show *Against the Olympic Myth: a Memorial to Clays Lane*² I co-curated with artist Adelita Husni-Bey in 2012 for *Resonance FM*.³

It is relevant to say that *Audio Arts* was not established in order to become an audio archive. William Furlong defined it in fact as a recorded space of contemporary art. So, the notion of the active archive came about through a conversation with Furlong, from his idea of revisiting the recordings of *Audio Arts* through a series of sound installations. Which was an opportunity for Furlong to activate this archive as well as for the viewer/listener to experience this body of work as a sound sculpture.

² *Clays Lane Live Archive* can be found at www.bishopsgate.org.uk/blogs_entry.aspx?id=54.

³ *Against the Olympic Myth: a Memorial to Clays Lane* is available from <http://resonancefm.com/archives/9391>.



From 'We Sell Boxes, We Buy Gold'.

The notion of the archive as a form of protest is more related to the project by Adelita Husni-Bey, *The Clays Lane Live Archive*. On the occasion of inauguration of the London 2012 Olympic Games (and the presentation of the *We Sell Boxes We Buy Gold* audio archive)⁴ we put together a radio programme that brought together a series of interviews made with the former residents of the *Clays Lane Housing Co-operative*. Adelita worked with this community for over five years. She created an archive out of the testimonies she had collected from the people who were living there and who were subsequently evicted. In this case, an archive is not simply a production of memory but also an act of resistance, a form of dissent or protest in response to what happened in the name of the Olympic legacy.

⁴ *We Sell Boxes, We Buy Gold* is documented on <http://boxesforgold.blogspot.co.uk> and http://soundproofexhibitions.com/we_sell_boxes_we_buy_gold.html.

CF: So it seems like in both examples there is something about activating or reactivating the recording. In the first example you were talking about reactivating the recordings within a space and in the second one by replaying them on the radio.

LF: The practice of staging recorded sound in space, as in William Furlong's sound installations, is very much informed by the idea of 'active listening' and 'activated spectatorship', which means to invite the viewer/listener to have an active role in the art work.⁵ On the other hand, in the case of the *Clays Lane* memorial, the play back was not bound to a physical space but to the invisible architecture of radio. What both projects 'activate' through the use of recorded sound is a multitude of voices. Both projects have in fact a strong social component. In both projects the very process of making the recordings, has created a generative relational space in which opinions and stories were exchanged.

CF: So I wondered what for you then is the potential of listening? What is the potential of the experience of listening or re-listening to the playback.

LF: The potential of the playback is the potential of sharing the experience of listening with others, to extend this process through

time and space, to create moments of collective listening. I believe that listening plays a relevant and crucial part in group formation, especially in our time. Despite the emphasis on freedom of speech promoted by neo-liberal culture what we are experiencing right now is what Nick Couldry has called 'a crisis of voice' (2010). Attentive (or active) listening can be seen, then, as a tool for re-shaping a social and political space that seems lost, to counter-act the individualization and fragmentation enhanced by neo-liberal culture and its demagogical use of technology.

CF: Another question I would like to pose is around issues of gender and feminism in your practice and how this is related to sound art and curatorial practice.

LF: Well, my engagement with feminism always starts from reading a book. Before discovering the writing of Italian feminists Carla Lonzi and Adriana Cavarero, a crucial reading has been *Mapping the Terrain – New Genre Public Art* edited by artist Suzanne Lacy (1995). The re-conceptualization of public art in terms of relational art proposed here places listening at the core of the new genre of public art. Understanding listening as a practice is not therefore the exclusive perspective of sound art and experimental music. Feminist artists have also followed this trajectory by addressing issues of process, participation and gender. How has this been translated back into my curatorial practice? I really like the definition of Mary Jane Jacob given in this book. She wrote:

⁵ William Furlong's *Speaking to Others: Who Speaks to Who* is available from www.villaromana.org/front_content.php?idcat=25&changelang=2&idart=536.

Reflections on Process

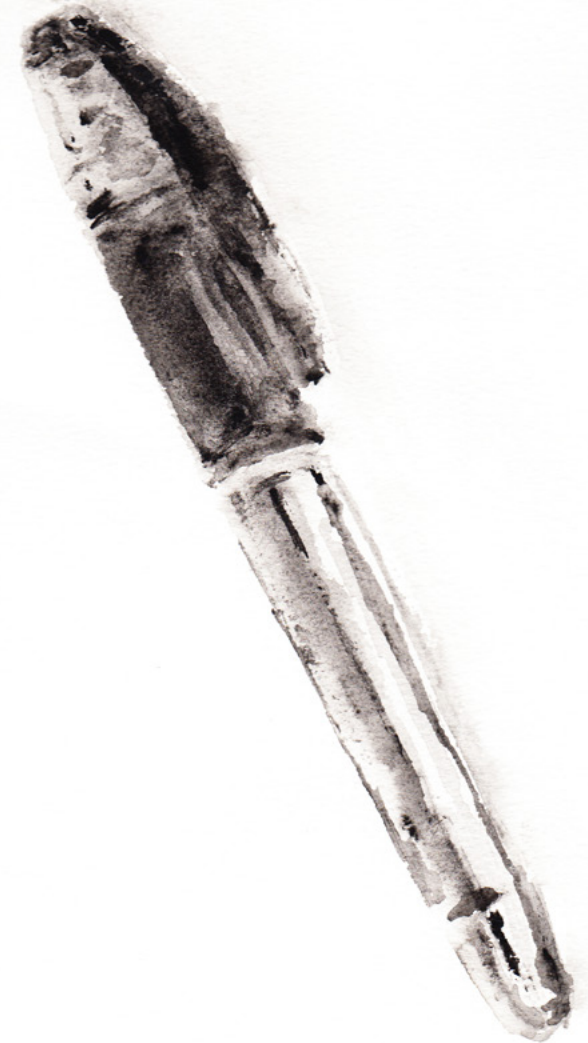
As a curator, I do become involved in the creative process. The curator becomes a collaborator, a sounding board, and ultimately a facilitator. (Lacy 1995, p.41)

CF: And in fact it's something that I was going to pick up on – the description of the curator as sounding board can be applied here to your mode of interviewing, of being the interviewer...

LF: The metaphor of the sounding board is also very appropriate since my research has focused in the past years on the relationship between site and sound. To commission and produce site-specific works has often involved a certain level of engagement with different people and places and not simply an exclusive dialogue with the artists. In many projects done under the umbrella of *Sound Threshold*⁶ for example, I explored various sites through field research, including walking, taking photos and notes, interviewing local people and experts in the field, making field recordings, collecting texts and any relevant references that provide insights about the chosen context. This contextual material constitutes a kind of narrative or subtext if you like that I share and exchange with the artist. A process that remains largely invisible because it is somehow embedded in the making of the work. This contextual material, including the conversations

6 See www.soundthreshold.org.

Claudia Firth, 'Pen', drawing on paper, 2007, originally published as part of the article, 'Tools: the edge of apprehension', in 'Nyx a nocturnal', 2010, Goldsmiths College, University of London.
Available from <http://nyxnocturnal.org/back-issues/issue-4-work>



with the artists, normally ends up in my personal archive as documentation of each project. And the question is always what to do with this material, and if documentation can be possibly turned into an art form itself.

CF: Okay, well the other thing I wanted to ask, while thinking about reversals is if you were going to ask yourself a question for this interview what would it be?

LF: Okay, let me answer in this way. In the preface of *Autoritratto* Lonzi writes:

What does remain now that I have lost this role [the role of the art critic] within the arts? Have I become an artist perhaps? I can answer: I am not a foreigner anymore. (Lonzi 2010, p.5)

CF: Lastly, as someone who often takes the role of the interviewer, being a sounding board for artists and reflecting something back to them, I am wondering what it's been like occupying the other position? How has it felt being the person being interviewed?

LF: There was not so much difference because in speaking, I often feel truer to myself. However, I am aware that a transcript of this interview won't be the same, it is not the same! Somehow the true account is/will be in-between this edited transcript and the text produced by the voice recognition system ...

CF: Well even within the technology itself there is the potential for reversal because a microphone and a loudspeaker can be reversed very easily, a loudspeaker can be used as a primitive microphone...

LF: Fascinating... and what about you, how was this process for you?

CF: It's funny, using the software is a bit different because in order to actually write something that makes sense, after every sentence I would have to check it normally... and go back and delete and change things. What it's written – if I read it out to you maybe in a minute – doesn't make very much sense. So it's interesting, you know, how it writes now, it's very stream of consciousness and... is making a lot of mistakes.

LF: You told me that you wanted to read me a quote from Derrida, which somehow is linked to the issue of technology ...

CF: Well, there was less to do with technology and more to do with memory and the elusiveness of capturing something. As someone coming from a visual arts background, I am still interested in the visual. Derrida has written about drawing as being about blindness as much as about seeing – the idea that in order to make a mark on the paper you need to look away from the thing that you are drawing. However for Derrida this isn't solely negative and is in fact part of its power (Derrida 1993). So I was curious to draw some kind of parallel with producing a written text (which is a visual trace) from a recording or in response to listening.

LF: This idea of Derrida makes me think how drawing is something that you process first in your mind and then you translate back through your hands...

It is always difficult to make a process visible because when you are in the process of doing something, in this case drawing, there is no distance from it. Process means that you are both out there and within it, it implies a double act. I think a simultaneous translation could provide a very interesting example on how a double act works... And on this note, I am terribly curious to see what our 'digital translator' came up with. Let's look at its transcript, as a piece of writing:

Phyllis is very you were asked to write about yourself and your working process known but rather than write a straightforward article you ask me as an artist sorry you asked me an artist writer and a collaborator to interview you M. putting both of us in unfamiliar positions then so I wanted to sit just wondered if you've would say something about your request to me. Return return

What you can't see on the screen is that at the moment the computer has written a very accurate record of what I said when asked to the first question, which is quite interesting. I am a something that was following on from what you said and about machines and people is that youth you've obviously use machines when you you know in your process in intensive interviewing people earn so I dunno may be you might want to detail what your process it is in terms of the interview and in terms

of these conversations that you have as between artist and curator so in terms of your own process known you prefer or have worked in ways that have kept the order interview as a piece of audio ban rather than as you say being in scope unit in scribal transcribed and turned into writing...

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From Carla Lonzi's *Autoritratto* to *Come una possibilità di incontro*

Elena Biserna, Rita Correddu and Lucia Farinati in conversation as part of *As a possibility of an encounter*,
a collective reading of the book *Autoritratto (Self-portrait)* by Carla Lonzi

Background

Bologna based Rita Correddu¹ creates works which are conceived as experiences, as platforms for observing, realising, and being surprised. They leave impressions, signs, images, sounds.

Elena Biserna is a researcher in residence at *Locus Sonus*, *École Supérieure d'Art d'Aix-en-Provence* and *École Nationale Supérieure d'Art de Bourges*. Her interests focus on interdisciplinary aesthetic research combining expanded sound, listening with contextual, urban, ephemeral and participatory practices. She is part of *Sant'Andrea degli amplificatori*, a non-profit organization for contemporary music in Bologna.

1 See ritacorreddu.wordpress.com.

With Alice Militello they co-curated *bip bop*,² a monthly radio program conceived as a temporary exhibition space for *Radio Città Fujiko* 103.1 Mhz in Bologna (January – June 2013). The project explored the aesthetic, social and cultural potentials of radio through contemporary art and music practice.

In this article the artists discuss the implications of one of these programmes, *Come una possibilità di incontro (As a possibility of an encounter)*,³ with its creator Lucia Farinati.⁴ It extends and illustrates the preceding article, *Reversals and Recognition: An Interview about Process*, beginning on page 22.

2 See www.bipbop.org.

3 The programme is archived on <http://bipbop.org/episode-6>. The complete recordings of the reading meetings are available from www.mambo-bologna.org/mostre/mostra-107/pag-116.

4 See her biography on page 22.

Introduction

This book was born from the collection and montage of conversations made with some artists. However, the conversations did not take place as materials for a book: they respond less to a need for understanding than to the need to entertain each other in a communicative and humanly satisfying way. (Lonzi 2010, p.5.)

With these words the Italian feminist and art historian Carla Lonzi introduces *Autoritratto* (in English, *Self-portrait*), a book that collects a series of interviews recorded between 1965 and 1969, then transcribed and freely edited into an imaginary group conversation between 14 artists (originally interviewed by Lonzi): Carla Accardi, Getulio Alviani, Enrico Castellani, Pietro Consagra, Luciano Fabro, Lucio Fontana, Jannis Kounellis, Mario Nigro, Giulio Paolini, Pino Pascali, Mimmo Rotella, Salvatore Scarpitta, Giulio Turcato, Cy Twombly.

Re-reading the pages of this book means to enter the body of a living, direct, colloquial language and, at the same time, to see the deconstruction of the role of the art critic, if not his disappearance: *Autoritratto* is in fact also a threshold, that marks Lonzi's abandonment of the art world to found, the following year, the Italian feminist group *Rivolta Femminile*.

Come una possibilità di incontro (As a possibility of an encounter) – a project by Lucia Farinati for *bip bop*, a monthly series of broadcasts

on Radio Città Fujiko 103.1, Bologna⁵ – stems from this twofold reflection. A series of meetings to re-read and give voice to the words and conversations that make up *Autoritratto*, re-vocalizing and actualizing their content through a process of collective reading. Following Lonzi's suggestion 'At some point the artwork was felt by me as a possibility of an encounter, as an invitation addressed by the artists directly to each of us' (Lonzi 2010, p.5), Lucia Farinati proposed to use this book as an invitation to generate real gatherings.

We embraced Lucia's idea, proposing it as the concluding event of *bip bop*, as a way to activate a mutual resonance between voices that, in different ways, animated the space of the programme, or intersected the discursive trajectories of the project. A celebration, a convivial moment, and, above all, an opportunity to explore, once again, the dynamics of shared listening.

Together, we created reading groups involving art and cultural workers in Bologna, London and Trento, according to criteria such as proximity, affinity, friendship, and also embracing the synergies that progressively have developed through the project. This process, in the course of time, has involved 60 readers: Fabio

5 A monthly radio program conceived as a temporary exhibition space, *bip bop* was curated and run by Elena Biserna, Rita Correddu, Alice Militello for *Radio Città Fujiko* 103.1 Mhz in FM, Bologna, January-June 2013.

The project explored the aesthetic, social and cultural potentials of radio through contemporary art and music practice. It presented six thematic episodes including context specific projects, historic and recent works, dialogues and conversations in collaboration with other radio stations. See www.bipbop.org.

Altamura, Giorgio Andreotta Calò, Anna Babini, Romana Benvenuti, Nicoletta Boschiero, Marie Nöelle Botte, Angela Busolin, Francesco Brasini, Francesca Burzacchini, Gaspare Caliri, Annalisa Cattani, Cristian Chironi, Micol Cossali, Richard Crow, Michela De Grandi, Piersandra Di Matteo, Alberto Duman, Emilio Fantin, Paola Farinati, Matteo Ferrari, Ennio Ficiur, Claudia Firth, Elisa Fontana, Fabio Franz, Ludovica Gioscia, Eléonore Grassi, Valeria Graziano, Marco Guarnieri, Barbara Lisci, Donatella Lombardo, Luisa Maccatrozzo, Laura Malacart, Susanna Mandice, Christian Marchi, Valentina Miorandi, Valentina Musmeci, Sandrine Nicoletta, Antonella Ofosu, Eleonora Oreggia (xname), Chiara Pergola, Greta Pistaceci, Lorenza Pignatti, Paolo Plotegther, Maria Rapagnetta, Letizia Renzini, Osvaldo Maffei, Mili Romano, Francesca Salvetti, Chiara Santuari, Cecilia Scatturin, Chiara Servalli, Giorgia B. Soncin, Annalisa Sonzogni, Laura Ulisse, Dominique Vaccaro, Giusi Vecchi, Francesco Ventrella, Uliana Zanetti. Voices heard in the present (to rediscover the past) and through which to re-imagine the future.

Each meeting was hosted in the informal setting of a private home, gathering 15 readers around Lonzi's book and a recorder. Each reader lent his/her voice and his/her breath to one of the artists included in *Autoritratto*, with only the indication of a time and a place to meet, following the natural and enjoyable rhythm of reading. The process of reading this book, re-reading it out for the first time, brought the original conversations, recorded and transcribed by Lonzi, to the present moment, yet it prompted further discussions among the participants on such a simple but also unusual experience.



First Reading of 'Autoritratto', Bologna, Italy, 15 February 2013.

Arisen as a reflection on this ongoing process, this conversation explores some of the many issues that this experience generated. Is reading out a kind of performance? How do our own voices resonate in the relational space of reading together? What are the processes that may trigger collective listening and speaking? How to reposition ourselves in the 'threshold' experienced by Lonzi in *Autoritratto*? What is the critical potential of re-actualizing the contents and the experimental *modus operandi* that Lonzi practised in this book? What does it mean to do this thing right here, right now?

The Discussion

Lucia Farinati: I would like to think about this dialogue with you both as a way to link *Come una possibilità di incontro* with other projects and also as a way to retrace our common trajectories.

When you invited me to participate in *bip bop*, I told you: I already have an idea'. This idea came into being during the summer of 2012, when I finally came across *Autoritratto* in the house of a friend. For the first time, I had the possibility to leaf through the book and read the introduction by Carla Lonzi. After reading the first few pages I had the feeling of engaging with something very familiar and which I could fully identify with. But it was the art historian Francesco Ventrella who had first mentioned Carla Lonzi and this book to me way back in Rome, 2006, on the occasion of the symposium *Venice Agenda V* (2007). However, it has taken me a few more years to push myself to read it! And it happened like that, as a real encounter! I also remember that, on the occasion of another conference, Francesco said that *Autoritratto* was a book to be read aloud.⁶ Quite suddenly then the idea popped into my mind to do this together with other people, but with whom?

Two months later, your invite reached me as a kind of timely and happy coincidence that has allowed me to realise what I had in mind. I had not finished reading some parts of *Autoritratto* then,

⁶ 'Taci, anzi parla. Carla Lonzi e l'arte del femminismo', 'Casa internazionale delle donne', 5-7 March 2010, Rome.

therefore the beauty of this experience existed in discovering this book together with both of you and reading it together with others. I am not re-discovering Carla Lonzi, this was not a presumptive reflection that comes out of an in-depth knowledge of her work, but it's more like I am thinking about it at the same time as I am discovering it with you.

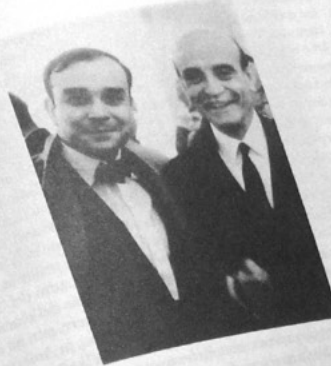
This, perhaps, embraces much better than other aspects the approach or mode in which I have chosen to work as a curator: to embody a critical act in the doing itself, therefore to think always in terms of 'critique in action' (*critica in azione*), a definition that I have borrowed from the philosopher Rosario Assunto, and which I came across twenty years ago while studying art history (Assunto 1958, p. 12). Assunto was referring to a form of art criticism based on human behaviour (*critica come comportamento*) rather than on discourse. This includes the art market, patronage, collecting art, the preservation or even the destruction of art works.

Elena Biserna: I would go back to the first thing that you said, to this personal identification with Lonzi that you felt while reading her writings and that probably led you to conceive of *Come una possibilità di incontro*. I feel there is a strong will to relocate yourself in that book, which is also a kind of threshold between a Lonzi working within the art world and a Lonzi abandoning it for activism. This seems very urgent for you now, but it is also the horizon that many of us are interrogating.



30.

d'incontro perché, sennò, resta qui in Italia e... il punto d'incontro è mancato, manca, manca". Sai, da dove mi è venuta? dopo la mostra a New York, a me, questa reazione, questa sensazione. Perché, fai una mostra d'italiani a New York... ma la mostra che uno dovrebbe riuscire a fare nella sua vita, sarebbe non una mostra italiana a New York, ma una mostra dove c'è il tale francese, il tale inglese, il tal'altro americano... c'è Carla Accardi, insomma... Figurati, una parola, no?



31.

Fontana: Perché, vedi, adesso noi siamo suggestionati dagli americani. Tu vai in America e loro dicono che in Europa non c'è più niente, e tutto quello che stanno facendo è ancora un'educazione europea perché, quando il signor Manzoni ha fatto la linea, gli americani, con tutta la loro arte glaciale, non hanno ancora raggiunto la linea. Quando mi parlano di Pollock, di Spazialismo... Pollock è un macaco tale che l'abbiamo inventato noi europei, perché Pollock è un pasticcione che non ha fatto nient'altro... che ha fatto il Post-impressionismo, e di Spazialismo e di misura di spazio nuovo non ha capito niente. Voleva uscire dal quadro, però l'ha imbrattato, il quadro, c'è un gesto di ribellione e basta. Incomincia a esser valido Klein quando fa tutto blu, che è una dimensione... Lui, l'ha intuito... però, te lo dico, quelli, proprio, che l'hanno capito siamo noi, guarda, con la linea all'infinito e, fino adesso, non c'è stata una mostra più grande di tutte le sperimentazioni che stanno per arrivare, con che ci sia, e io col buco. E gli americani che cadranno in l'associazione di far del cinema

Il fumo provoca cancro mortale ai polmoni



First Reading of 'Autoritratto',
Bologna, Italy,
15 February 2013.

Rita Correddu: In my opinion, it makes sense to combine this reflection with the definition of 'critique in action' that you read twenty years ago and that has always been so important.

LF: Well, there are two points I would like to bring in here. The space I have tried to occupy, or which I ended up occupying, by need or by choice, is a threshold zone (the space of the threshold). It is not by chance that a few years ago I have initiated a project called *Sound Threshold*.⁷

The threshold is a liminal space, an in-between space, which is neither inside nor outside. It represents an interesting observation point, but also a position from which to operate from, one can always go back inside having looked outside, and vice-versa, a kind of communicating vessel.

In the last ten years, inhabiting the threshold has meant for me to keep moving constantly because the art market (or what Italian art critics call the 'sistema dell'arte', the social and economic system of the arts) does have an incredible ability to absorb (and re-package) everything that is or has been considered radical or avant-garde.

Right now, I find myself in a very similar position to Carla Lonzi, or so I think. And I wonder: do I need to leave the arts and/or to continue to make art by playing another role? Perhaps it is not

⁷ See www.soundthreshold.org.

longer a matter to be connected to art or to activism, but rather perhaps an issue of how to build bridges between them, perhaps the issue is how to re-think what education could be as well as how to work with the social.

However, what this project allows me to do is the possibility to better understand where the threshold zone is located right now, and subsequently to find out if this is the right moment to accomplish this passage or perhaps to move again towards another direction.

EB: During the conferences held at *MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna*⁸ there has been much talk about the *impasse* which Carla Lonzi's thought could create for those who want to remain within the art world: because, although some talks highlighted several continuities between Lonzi's critical and activist practice, her transition was radical and uncompromising. Perhaps this is linked to what the philosopher Federica Giardini said during these conferences: that, in relation to the production of dissent, the female subjectivity can't be absorbed or result in the assumption

⁸ A series of conferences organized in conjunction with the exhibition *Autoritratti. Iscrizioni del femminile nell'arte italiana contemporanea*, MAMbo – Museo d'Arte Moderna di Bologna, 12 May - 1 September, 2013. *Autoritratti* was a wide-ranging collective show dedicated to the relationship between women and art in Italy in recent decades.

The theme, proposed by Uliana Zanetti and developed by a section of the museum's female staff, has stimulated the interest of established women artists, critics, scholars and directors of Italian museums who have taken part in the initiative. The exhibition presented the works of prominent female artists, many of which created for the occasion and related to various thematic cores.

of power within the system, because it aims at changing the system itself and to establish another system of relationships that is not based on the logic of power.⁹

LF: From my point of view, Lonzi's threshold moment was *Autoritratto*. Perhaps it was a brief, short moment, but very precise and accurate. She took the materials recorded between 1965 and 1969, four years of recordings, she edited and collected them together as one long conversation between 15 artists. Perhaps, as the artist Emilio Fantin suggested in one of our meetings, shall we ask ourselves: 'Was it her who did initiate the 'birth of curators', 'la stirpe dei curatori'?''

When I talk about this idea of 'critique in action', I refer directly to the role of the curator as well, a role that I have chosen to inhabit in order to escape from art criticism as a purely discursive approach. But what does 'curating' or 'curation' mean? The Italian verb 'curare' (curate) brings

⁹ Federica Giardini's talk included in the series *The matter is not how woman is represented in the art system but how woman does art outside of it* was curated by Elvira Vannini in collaboration with Maddalena Fragnito, MAMbo, Bologna, 23 May, 2013.



Second Reading of 'Autoritratto', London, UK, 14 April 2013.

us back to the Latin word 'cura' which means 'to cure', 'to care'. As you know, the notion of care is central to feminist practice and theory, it draws on a different kind of space, a relational space that implies a 'relational self' (sè relazionale), as Adriana Cavarero would say (Cavarero 2002, p.111)

RC: In this regard, I think that your way of behaving in *Come una possibilità d'incontro* is similar to that of Lonzi: a very human way of curating, not linked to any professional etiquette.

EB: It seems to me that this reasoning on curating as a relational space and subjectivity that you mentioned can be linked to *Autoritratto* in two ways.

Firstly, the fact that Lonzi decided to abandon interpretation and any critical stance, seeing them as means of control and power over the artwork. Instead, she decided to relate directly with the artist as a person, as a human being, by listening, talking, conversing, etc. In this book, however, the creation of a collective subject is still a sort of literary fiction (I say 'literary', because for me *Autoritratto* is also a literary work, even experimental, if you like). Perhaps, in *Come una possibilità di incontro*, are you trying to put it into practice?

In my opinion, all this is also connected to the issue of recording. The art historian Giovanna Zapperi emphasised that one of the elements that Lonzi uses to deconstruct and radically rethink her role is precisely recording, which implies the zero degree of

criticism.¹⁰ We also use a recorder during the readings and this leads me to wonder about its function. Maybe for me to think of the recording in terms of transparency and authenticity is a bit problematic because, from a certain point of view, the placement of a microphone already determines a change in the situation.

LF: There are many points... To establish a direct relationship with the artist as a person, as a human being, has always been necessary for me. This is a critical approach that does not consist purely of talking about the work produced by an artist, it rather implies to take part in the work, to enter the thinking sphere that informs the creation of a work, or what I simply call process.

Carla Lonzi said: 'At some point the artwork was felt by me to be a possibility of an encounter, as an invitation addressed by the artists directly to each of us' (Lonzi 2010, p. 3).¹¹ This sentence seems to express a wish that she managed to fulfil. The collective gathering of the 15 artists of *Autoritratto* remains, however, as you have pointed out, a literary fiction. All these artists never met in the same place and talked to each other in that way. It is Carla Lonzi that made them speak as if this event was a group discussion.

The thing I am trying to do with *Autoritratto* focuses precisely on participation and the moment of the encounter itself. I make use

¹⁰ Giovanna Zapperi's lecture included in the same series, *MAMbo*, Bologna, May 25, 2013.

¹¹ Translation by the authors.

of this book in order to gather people together. The intervention is not a critique of a text, neither a critique of the critique. I make this intervention for and as a human experience.

First of all, it has been essential for me to avoid the museum as a place for the readings, but then, secondly, not to have the aspiration to create an artwork, for example, a performance for an art audience. I like to experiment with the space of the reading itself in order to understand how this could work not only as a cultural/ artistic endeavour but rather as a social device.

Why did I at some point end up working with music and sound? Because music and sound proved to be one of the strongest spaces for social gathering. And what drives this project in the end is a much wider interest in collective listening.

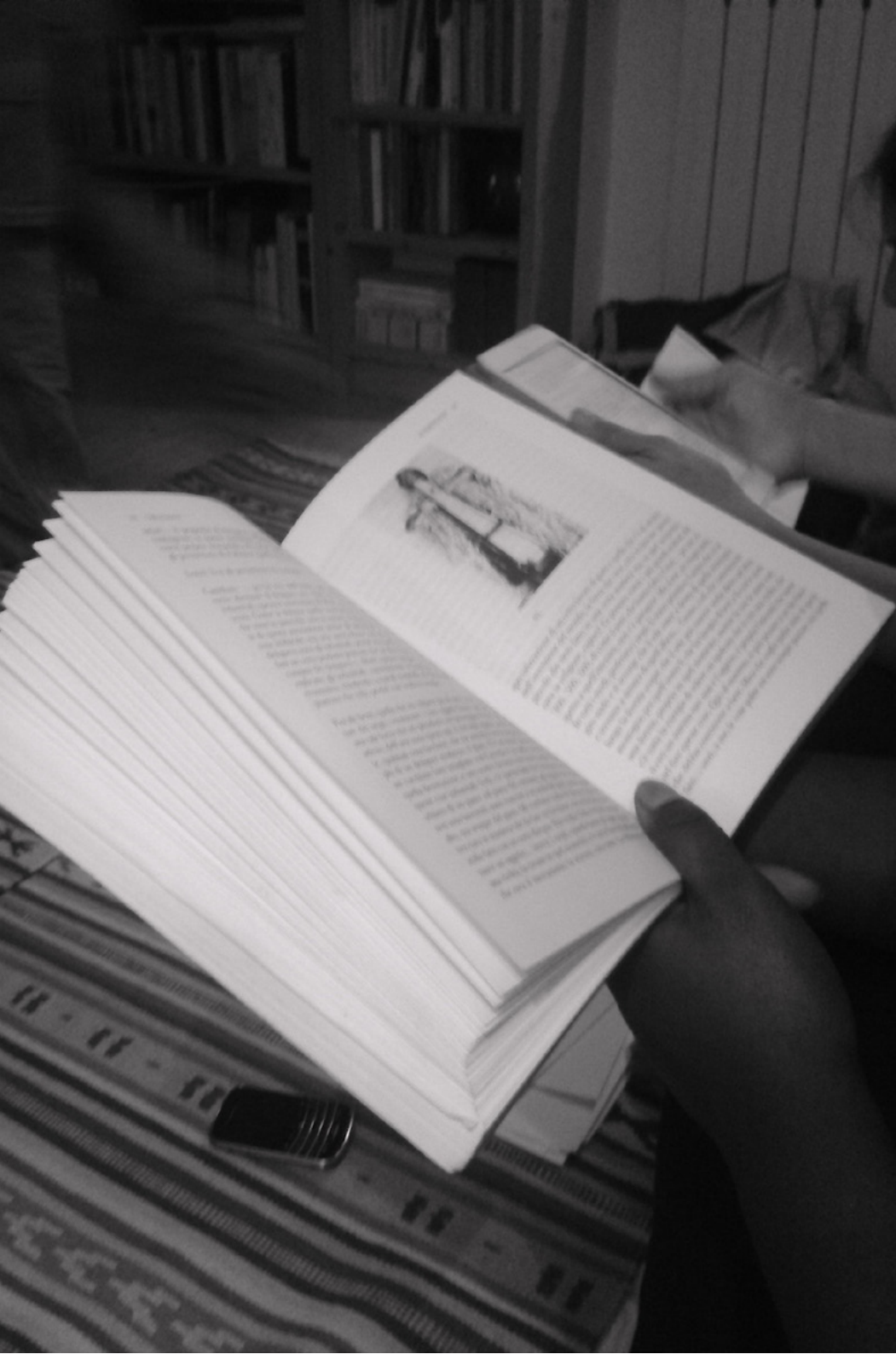
EB: Yes, and maybe it isn't only a way to meet and being together. It seems to me that reading this particular book has become also a sort of device to see if the fact of speaking through the words of another person – but one that expresses herself in such explicit terms as the artists in the book – may encourage to personally speak out, to take on the challenge of speaking our mind... Indeed, I didn't expect at all that there could have been such long discussions among the participants after the readings; debates that went much further than the experience itself and often focused on our positioning within the system. Looking back, I wonder: what is the role of this apparatus in activating this kind of debate?

LF: Yes, sure. The idea of the collective readings was a way to form a group, or more than one group, it was for me a kind of dream, a utopia. I was not expecting that this invitation would actually open up an actual convivial space, a temporary vital space that perhaps ends here, we don't know that yet. It was not my intention to establish a collective, anyway! What the hours spent in reading together did create, though – as the artist Alberto Duman, one of the participants in the London group said – is a community of readers, a very important space, I think.

RC: In my opinion, this process is very individual. For example, I didn't feel more motivated to speak. I found it more interesting to let the words that we read reverberate within me, rather than covering them with my voice.

LF: This is very interesting because it raises an issue that really matters to me: the question of resonance – the resonance created through the reciprocal communication of voices. Here is where my research is situated: when we talk about voice and not generically about sound, we talk about a sonic manifestation which reveals the uniqueness of each human being, as the philosopher Adriana Cavarero has suggested (2005).¹² Through the voice we are able to distinguish the singularity of one from another: voice is not mere language and meaning, it is also body: accent, intonation, timbre.

¹² 'The voice manifests the unique being of each human being, and his or her spontaneous self-communication according to the rhythms of a sonorous relationship.' (Cavarero 2005, p.173).



From Carla Lonzi's *Autoritratto* to...

The double act of reading the words of another aloud and playing them back (to listen back to the voices inside your inner space) gives space to a continuous intersection of voices from the outside to the inside and vice-versa. What this multiple action realises is a reverberation of a singularity within plurality.

Cavarero, in contrast to Derrida, argues that we don't have a voice in order to listen to ourselves and construct monologues, we have a voice to speak to one another, to converse, to communicate with others (Cavarero 2005) If we embrace her point of view – that is the de-construction of the subject, and the proposal of a relational self, the inter-subject – it is clear that what you are doing when 'you listen to the words resonating within yourself', is that you are listening to another voice and not simply to yourself: you are in relation with the other. Your individual process, as you have called it, is therefore the result of resonance, the reverberation of a voice through another.

What I am currently learning by looking at feminist practices, especially the practice of consciousness-raising, is how the re-valuation of the vocal cannot be understood merely in acoustic terms and as a physical phenomena per se. The voice has always had a political weight, because it is connected to the human space, to the polis, the public sphere as well as to what the feminists called 'the personal is political' (Hanisch 1969, online).

This discourse on singularity is finally connected to the issue of authenticity. If voice defines the uniqueness of a human being,

Fifth Reading of 'Autoritratto', Trento, Italy, 24 August 2013.

the recording is, so to speak, the medium that allows us to retain the singularity/uniqueness of each human being. The recorded voice can, of course, be modified, manipulated, amplified, however, the feeling that we normally have when listening back to a human voice is a sense of actuality and authenticity. What a recording cannot give us is, of course, a real person – flesh and bones.

RC: Sure, but I think that what the recording keeps is something living, something very much alive. Think, for example, of the image of a person who is gone and then, think of his/her voice instead...

EB: Perhaps it is more like a 'resurrection...'. The recording is always an inscription of something that is irrevocably gone.

All what you have just said may lead us to two points. Firstly, the fact that the readings made us experience the impossibility of writing to convey voice and, at the same time, the dualism between the semantic and the vocal dimension of language. By reading out the transcripts of Lonzi's recordings, we did not only repeat the artists' words. In a certain sense, we also had to re-perform their mouth to articulate those conversations that were put on paper, with great fidelity to the spoken language. But we had to do so through the medium of writing, which can convey this vocal dimension only through graphic and punctuation marks, and thus is always lacking.

Then, there is the issue of our own process and recordings, and the value we give to them. What role will the tracks of these gatherings have?

LF: I am fairly convinced that a truly collective space can only begin in a real physical space. By talking with many artists that are experimenting with sound and listening, as for example the collective *Ultra-red*, I am under the impression that localised listening is a catalyst for group formation, although web listening represents a useful tool for dissemination. Consequently I doubt that our recordings presented via the radio or the web will produce a similar collective process. By saying this I hope, of course, to be proved wrong!

Another aspect linked to what you are saying is also the issue of memory. Can we think of these recordings as a trace of an event, as an historical document? This is an issue that I have not investigated very much, as my priority always follows the desire to 'activate' something, to think about an archive in terms of an 'active archive'. This means to take these recordings as tools to challenge our present life, as well as to revisit *Autoritratto* without nostalgia.

The risk inherent in revisiting radical works such as *Autoritratto* is, of course, to turn them into a nostalgic object. When Francesco Ventrella asked me once how it might be possible to retain the authenticity of a work such as this one, and how to be faithful to the work of Carla Lonzi, I answered immediately: 'By doing

something authentic.' The core of this project has never been to provide a philological reading of Lonzi's work, or to provide new possible interpretations. To be faithful to her work means, in my view, to do something that appeals to me, that resonates inside me as well as in the people I work with by creating a social and convivial space. A space that, in the book, was simply imagined.

I say this in the light of another experience: the collaboration with William Furlong and *Audio Arts*, a project that I see very close to *Autoritratto* as it revolves around artists interviews, audio recordings, the theme of the voice and dialogue as artistic material. *Audio Arts* was established in 1973 as a magazine on cassette and also as an experimental audial space. Today all the recordings have merged into the *Tate* archive.¹³ The true work for me has been to revisit these recordings not so much as historical material, but rather as a way to collaborate with Furlong in the creation of a new body of work. And this is a project that I have been doing since 2006, and which started with an exhibition in Rome.¹⁴

EB: Another interesting thing is the fact that Furlong's work is based on the montage of these interviews and sources, just like *Autoritratto*.

LF: Exactly! There is a work by Furlong entitled *Conversation Piece* (1998) which is very close in spirit to *Autoritratto*. It consists of

¹³ *Audio Arts* is available from www2.tate.org.uk/audioarts.

¹⁴ *William Furlong – Audio Arts, Extraction/ Construction/Abstraction*, curated by Lucia Farinati at *Sound Art Museum/Radio Arte Mobile*, Rome 2006.

a constructed conversation between Warhol, Beuys, Duchamp and Cage, built through the montage of individual interviews. Exactly like Lonzi, Furlong realizes an imaginary gathering. The only difference between the two ways of working is that Furlong does not work on paper but relocates the recorded speech in space. In comparison to this sound installation, *Autoritratto* can be seen as an artistic operation, an 'ante litteram' intervention of writing sound.

EB: Coming back to what you said about the re-activation of sources: lately, I often see this need to go beyond nostalgia, to let the past live and act today. For example, during *Live Arts Week II*,¹⁵ I talked with Tony Conrad. He presented *Fifty-one Years on the Infinite Plain*, the re-enactment of a performance originally made in 1972. I asked him: 'What is the significance of proposing this work again today, after so many years?'. And he replied that the first risk was nostalgia, while his interest was rather working in the present moment.

LF: Re-enactment is a very recent artistic practice. I don't think, however, we could define *Come una possibilità di incontro* as a re-enactment because we are not proposing again an action, a performance which happened for real.

EB: Moreover, there isn't an urgency to use the sources as a script, or as a document...

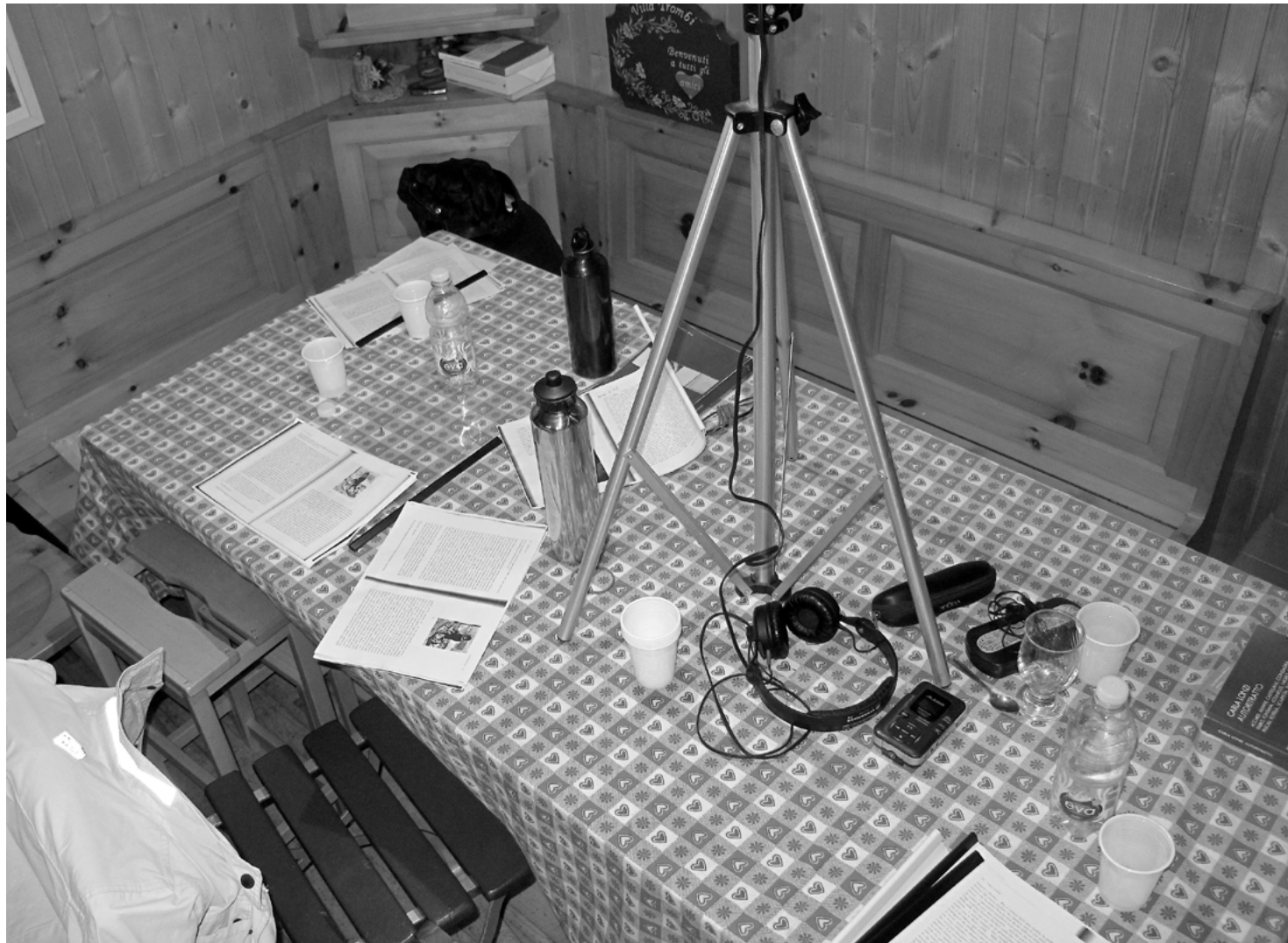
¹⁵ *Live Arts Week II*, curated by Xing, April 16-21, 2013, Bologna.

LF: This opens up another issue, that of appropriation of original sources. I take the text by Carla Lonzi as it was assembled and published and I make new recordings from it. In other words, I create my own work. On the other hand, I engage with the imagined space created by Lonzi, the supposed gathering, by inviting people to take part in this project and rely on their voices and on their will to complete the work.

What I am creating is perhaps something in the middle, which is not entirely an archive, nor an audio version of the book. This is an issue I would like to investigate fully once I will have finished to read *Autoritratto* in its entirety.

EB: Just two nights ago I was reading the latest issue of *e-flux*. There is an article by Boris Groys that ends like this:

It seems to me that today we are beginning to be more and more interested in the non-historicist approach to our past. We are becoming more interested in the



Sixth Reading of 'Autoritratto', Trento, Italy, 8 September 2013.

decontextualization and reenactment of individual phenomena from the past than in their historical recontextualization, more interested in the utopian aspirations that lead artists out of their historical contexts than in these contexts themselves. And it seems to me that this is a good development because it strengthens the utopian potential of the archive and weakens its potential for betraying the utopian promise – the potential that is inherent in any archive, regardless of how it is structured. (Groys 2013, online)

Maybe, in the same way, what leads us to re-read *Autoritratto* now is not so much the desire to place it within Lonzi's theoretical perspective or in the historical context of the 1960s, but rather to use it for its utopian potential in the current context, for those elements that speak to us today.

LF: I agree. To revisit *Autoritratto* not as a historical source but as a work that can help us to understand and challenge our present, is something that we have been trying to do so far with the book. However, we are able to do this now because there are academics such as Laura Lamurri, Giovanna Zapperi and Francesco Ventrella who have been doing in-depth historical research about Carla Lonzi and her body of work.¹⁶ If their work had not been done, this project would have been just an awkward re-appropriation of it. What does it mean to do this thing right here, right now?

¹⁶ See conference in Paris, 2013, organised/convened by Giovanna Zapperi at <http://travellingfeministe.org/blog/?p=95>; and video documentation from a conference in Rome, 2010, with a paper by Laura Lamurri and Francesco Ventrella (as mentioned in footnote 6 via <http://vimeo.com/10784950> and <http://vimeo.com/10899377>).

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The Journey of a Journal Entry

Maria Papadomanolaki

My research investigates the cross-pollinations between the urban landscape, literature and perception through listening. I draw on soundwalking practices, contemporary fictional psychogeographical writings as well as locative sound projects. This article was written during the first year of my PhD after a field visit and it embeds the different writing times framing a journal entry.

The journal entry itself was written with the intention to provide additional information on an actual recording of a field visit. The text in red refers to thoughts and questions raised after the entry was written. It aims to shed some light on the thinking-in-progress undertaken in a PhD research; a process that leads to the generation of core concepts that then may be reflected back in the practice. The journey of a journal entry addresses the notions of thinking as listening, self-reflection and the potential challenges of walking and engaging in a 'here and now' mode with the sounds of a location.

Maria Papadomanolaki is a Greek artist that works within the fields of sound design for dance and film, networked performances, exploratory workshops, installation and transmission art. She has presented her projects and research at galleries, conferences and festivals in Europe, UK and the US. She is the co-editor of the book *Transmission Arts: Artists&Airwaves* (2011, PAJ Publications). Papadomanolaki is currently pursuing PhD research on urban literature and listening at CRiSAP, UAL, London and is the producer of *Sensing Cities*, an ongoing series of interviews broadcast on *Resonance FM*.

voicesoundtext.com

December 8th 2012: Muted streets, car parks and alleys.

On the morning of December 8th I walked along the railway path from Dalston/Kingsland to Hackney Central following in the footsteps of the narrator in one of the chapters in (Iain Sinclair's) *Downriver*. For this walk I was totally unprepared as to what sounds to search for and where. I embarked from Kingsland Shopping Centre's parking area where the contact with the railway tracks is immediate.

The trajectory began with the sounds¹ of a busker who roamed around the staircase leading to the parking area. I tried to record his motion while moving around him but the intrusive sounds of the cars and shopping carts made my work more difficult. On my way out of the garage, a kid came near me and asked me if the train had passed.

Sound becomes one of the many voices that inhabit the experience as part of a series of material clusters. It can be used to define relationships between these but its elusiveness makes the whole attempt ambiguous and challenging. Does it really matter what it sounded like at that particular moment, what dynamics it had?

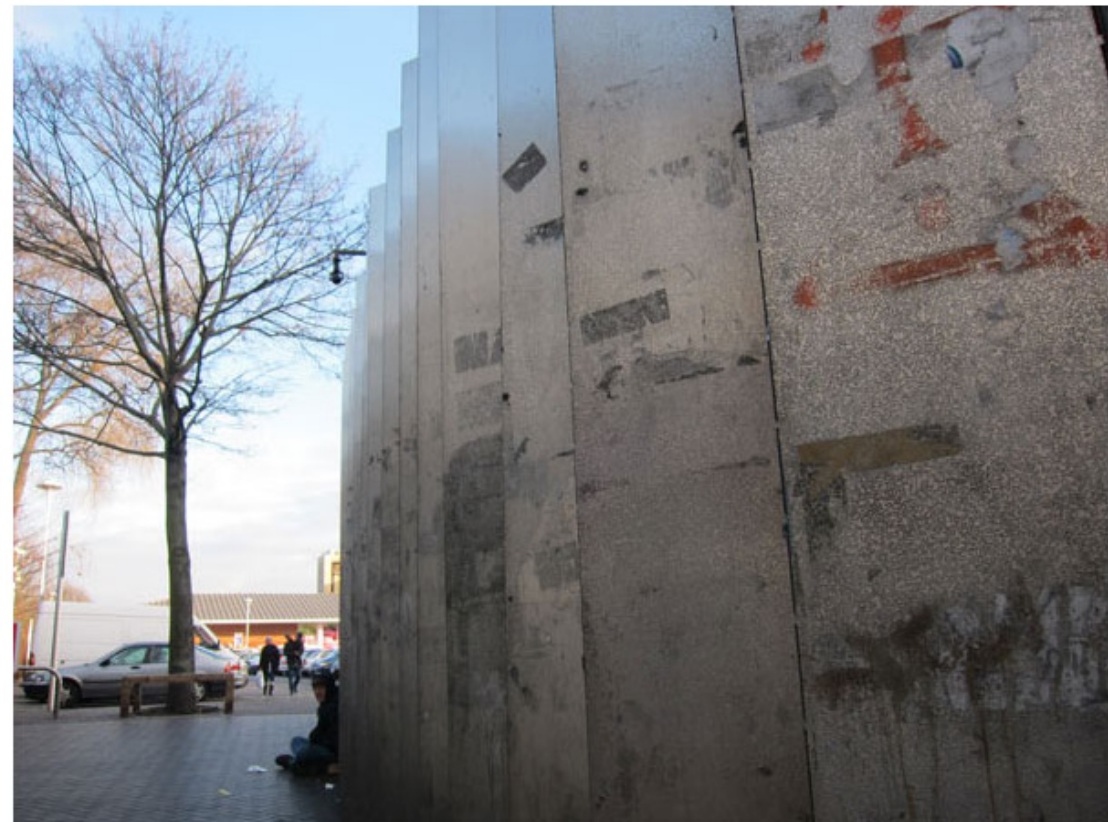
The itinerary rapidly enough became obvious to me. The contact with the tracks was lost after a while and I ended up walking along streets full of silent presences and the usual suspects: the sounds of traffic. Dysfunctional street lights, "unattended" garbage, heavily breathing tunnels² and deserted man-made constructions caught my attention. The signs of the passage of time and the ruin-like side of the city became more prevalent to my senses. The coldness of absence was there again to accompany my walk³.

This is perhaps the only sound that I physically remember, the breathy sound of the tunnel. It is a pity that it is merely audible in the recording.

The sound is not fore-grounded; it rather becomes an indirect source affected by the landscape that is part of. Absence and distance: I engaged with the heard world through the activity of recording but how was I listening at that particular moment? What references did I carry with me and how did these lead me to shape that particular understanding of the urban landscape? How did I negotiate my presence and movement in the landscape? Did the technology I used act more like an intermediate safety layer so that I ensure my proximity/distance from it?

The occasional Graffiti art would make its ghostly appearance and fade away at a glance. After about half an hour I arrived at Graham Road. The roads in London are too narrow to accommodate both pedestrians and double-deckers. Too many of both in such a small piece of land. I decided to cross the street and in a few seconds I was walking up the alley to the nearby mega-Tesco. And yet another site to confirm my idea of London's "under construction" vortex state. Again I engaged with the sounds of trolley carts, trains, people talking loudly (some of them foreign or drunk), car sounds and the distant yet persistent presence of a dog and a crow.

Somehow it all made sense to me. I could hear (and see) where the world of the writer stems from. That whole trajectory was nothing I had previously encountered, it was something new but it somehow felt familiar as it contained all the important ingredients of the Sinclairian world, and for that matter any world that struggles to come to terms with that everyday grind of materials, sounds and experiences. We all feel the need to either block all this information out in order to rest calm and safe or to let it all in and overwhelm our senses. For a writer, I can easily assume that the second state is more relevant; a state of hyper-sensuous neurosis where the mind escapes the reality by means of fiction. But again fiction may not be a stranger to reality; would it be naive to say that it's "realistic" in the same way that "futuristic" relates to the future as a vision of reality?



Images from a field visit by Maria Papadomanolaki.

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