



Expanded Aurality:
Doing Sonic Feminism in the White Cube

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Declaration of Authorship:

I, Sandra Kazlauskaitė, hereby declare that this thesis and the work presented in it is entirely my own. Where I have consulted the work of others, this is always clearly stated.

Signed:

Date:

Acknowledgments

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Abstract

This thesis is a practice-led quest to expand aurality in *white cube* gallery spaces. Using video art installation practice, feminist phenomenology and spatial theory, it explores the soundscape of whitened contemporary exhibition spaces and questions how women-produced sounding video artworks, the experiencing bodies and background noise affect the production of the gallery in perceptual and socio-political terms. This project proposes that the archetypal *white cube*, as a product of modernism, has served as an architectural and institutional construct since the start of the twentieth century. Built on ocularcentric, patriarchal and capitalist ideology, it has continued to condition our way of displaying and experiencing art. The white cube has primarily accommodated rational, individualised and decontextualised white heteronormative middle-class male subjects, whilst quieting and excluding stereotypically 'irrational', 'subjective' and 'feminised' bodies and their sound from the gallery walls. The white cube, in this sense, has operated as a site of policed silencing and gendered control.

This thesis makes an intervention into the field of contemporary art and museum studies by proposing the need to readdress the legacy of the *white cube's* gendered and autonomous ideology by bringing video art, sound and gender studies into the white cube debate through theory *and* practice. This project introduces a methodology of sonic feminism: the acts of speaking the mother tongue and listening to *all*-sound when exhibiting and experiencing video art *inside* the gallery walls. Whilst reflecting on my video art projects, I propose that once we allow our bodies to engage in the totality of sound and speak in a language that aims to offer rather than claim when *being with* art, we might begin to dismantle the white cube's gendered and spatio-temporal limitations. We might then discover a more expanded *white cube* – an aesthetic site that exceeds gender binaries, empowers social connectedness and offers a *whole*-bodied engagement with art, a white cube that is home for *all*-bodies rather than some.

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Introduction

0.1. Prologue

'Your installation is quite noisy and unnerving, it might disturb the gallery visitors. Maybe it would work better without sound?' This ambiguous request arrived from a curator at Surrey Gallery just moments before one of my audiovisual installations – *13.1.91* was due to be opened to the public in the spring of 2016. He implied that the artwork would satisfy the gallery architectures more adequately if the sound of the piece was removed. 'The noise of your artwork', he asserted, 'will distract the audience'.

'No, *13.1.91* will not work without sound', I responded – 'sound and image here are equally important. If anything, the whole piece was built on sound'. *13.1.91* – a multi-channel audiovisual installation, revisits the images and sounds of a particular political protest, which took place in January 1991 in the USSR, now independent Lithuania. It transports the voices and noises of the archive into the gallery with the mission to amplify the collective political body that sought to resist the Soviet oppression. Using both images *and* sound, *13.1.91* invites the exhibition visitors to listen and to tune towards the protestor's stories, grievances and their struggles. It does not wish to silence them further. *13.1.91*, thus, is all about sound.

The gallery room in which *13.1.91* tried to speak out, however, was eerily empty. It was surrounded by austere and angular interior design, reverberant acoustics and a sense of discipline and order. Like any emblematic modernism-inspired white cube gallery space,¹ Surrey Gallery appeared ocularcentric, prioritising the eye rather than the participants'

¹ 'A place free of context, where time and social space are thought to be excluded from the experience of artworks. It is only through the apparent neutrality of appearing outside of daily life and politics that the works within the white cube can appear to be self-contained – only by being freed from historical time can they attain their aura of timelessness' (Sheikh 2009).

sounded ears or sounding bodies. If anything, my body,² when placed in the gallery architectures, became '[...] superfluous, an intrusion' (O'Doherty, 1986, 15). By bringing the sound of the artwork into the gallery, I also brought my female artist body, and because of it, I embodied the position of an intruder.

Whilst critiquing the auditory elements of my artwork, the curator at Surrey Gallery spoke at me with a rational and authoritative tone, the language of power and control that feminist writer Ursula Le Guin calls 'the father tongue' (Le Guin 1989, 147) – the universal language of patriarchy. This language, Le Guin tells us, aims to split, divide and exclude. For the curator, my sound was perceived as outside of the bounds of the father tongue. It was an intrusion. It was not rational or objective enough and therefore could not be trusted. After all, since Sophocles, we have been repeatedly told that 'silence is the *kosmos* for women' (quoted in Carson 1995, 127). According to a classics scholar Anne Carson, *our voice*³ must be controlled as it makes men feel uncomfortable (Carson 1995, 119). We say things that should not be said. If we bring our sound into the gallery that has been built for a man's eye rather than a woman's ear or her sounding body, we disturb the institution's governance. If we refuse to be ordered, we are undisciplined and out-of-control. And because of it, we have to be administered.

Yet, we persist. When installing *13.1.91* at Surrey Gallery, I refused to be quietened. Whilst my artwork revived the sound of a silenced political history, the sound of my bodily presence in the gallery space became a form of dissent against the institution in which the historical un-silencing was taking place. By refusing to remove the sound of my artwork, I became what Sara Ahmed calls a wilful subject (Ahmed 2014, 2017)⁴ – a subject that

² My sounding body refers to the sounds of my material body, the sound of my body as a creator as well as the sound of my artwork.

³ By 'we' and 'our' I mean those who historically have been 'othered' by patriarchal systems and laws. In *The Gender of Sound* (1995), writer Anne Carson explores how our voice has been deemed 'deficient in the masculine ideal of self-control. Women, catamites, eunuchs, and androgynes fall into this category' (Carson 1995, 199).

⁴ 'We reclaim wilfulness in refusing to give up; and in refusing to forget the severances that have been performed and narrated as the spread of light to the dark corners of earth; to persevere embodies that refusal. We have to embody that refusal' (Ahmed 2017, 80).

actively disrupts the flow of the prescribed (patriarchal) order. Ahmed continues: 'We might have to become willful to keep going, to keep coming up. Willfulness is thus required in ordinary places: where we live; where we work. Willfulness too is homework' (Ahmed 2017, 83). *13.1.91, I realised, was my homework.*

The artwork, in the end, retained its images *and* sound. Even when deemed 'out of tune' (Ahmed 2017, 40), it lugged itself against the father tongue prescribed by Surrey Gallery and its curator. Through sweat and effort, it refused to follow the ocularcentric order, unsettled the gallery's institutional walls and turned the space into *our* shared and communal home, rather *his* place or *his* home. This form of wilfulness, I propose, was an act of *sonic feminism*.

0.2. A Case for Sonic Feminism

In this project I turn to sonic feminism – a practice-led conceptual methodology embedded in my personal video art practice, aural thinking and feminist phenomenology. I use this approach to question how sound can subvert the production of space inside institutional art gallery spaces and museums. My reading of sonic feminism arrives from the early women's video practice as well as composers and feminist thinkers Pauline Oliveros, Hildegard Westerkamp and Ursula Le Guin who conceptualise sound, bodies and listening in expanded, embodying and social terms. For Oliveros and Le Guin, sound is a form of offering. It is an act of generosity. Oliveros once said to Le Guin that when speaking and listening, we should 'offer your experience as truth' (Le Guin 1989, 150). Afterwards, they did not talk objectively *at* one another, they did not demand or claim from one another. Instead, both Oliveros and Le Guin listened and spoke *with* each other. Through speaking and listening together, they were able to offer and share their experiences as unique and truth. Ursula Le Guin calls this way of speaking 'the mother tongue' – a language that aims to connect rather than divide, a language that

allows us to 'speak subversively' and to offer rather than claim (Le Guin 1989, 160).

Oliveros proposes that if we actively tune towards what she calls 'the sonosphere' (Oliveros 2010, 22), listening to everything that can be perceived bodily without strictures and restrictions, we might be able to form a more ecological and socially inclusive interconnection with our sounding world. In order to offer, however, we must listen globally, not focally (Oliveros 2005, 15), and be open to *all* sound. For Westerkamp, every place waits to be listened to and it is our task to tune our ears and bodies towards what is sounding (ibid.). The composer suggests that by actively participating in our lived sounding environments – 'soundscapes' (Westerkamp 2006) – we can build more embodied and social bonds with what surrounds us. Listening, thus, should not be bracketed or reduced as it may stop us from forming these bonds: 'Listening cannot be forced. Quite the opposite: true receptive listening comes from an inner place of non-threat, support, and safety' (Westerkamp 2015). Participating in our soundscapes, instead, should be an open-ended and unrestricted practice.

Historically, video has served as a powerful instrument for opposing the limitations of the soundscape inside the gallery space. Since the 1960s, women video artists used the sound of video as a way of confronting the boundaries and walls of the patriarchal world (Elwes 2005).⁵ Video art, after all, rejects sensory divisions. Its mission is to unite and to connect. As argued by Spielmann (2010) and Rogers (2013), video grants *audiovisuality* – a synchronicity between image and sound, consequently refusing disciplinary and sensorial frames. Video, one of the first technologies to offer a unification of senses, allowed early women video artists to offer their experiences and subjectivities as truth. Joan Jonas, for example, used sounding television monitors and video projectors to interrogate the position of women's bodies and voice in society. In '*Organic Honey's Visual Telepathy*' (1972), the artist

⁵ Catherine Elwes also discusses women's video in Leuzzi, Laura, Elaine Shemilt and Stephen Partridge (2019). *EWVA: European Women's Video Art in the 70s and 80s*. London: John Libbey.

combined performance and video to explore female archetypes and social rituals through bodily self-examination recorded on camera. Video artist Howardena Pindell in *'Free, White and 21'* (1980) turned to voice as a way of amplifying her personal grievances and traumas of growing up in racially segregated communities. Avant-garde artist Charlotte Moorman, on the other hand, used her body and video as a form of instrument and a playful method to perform sound in gallery spaces. These artists, whose work I explore more in depth in the following chapter, demonstrate how the audiovisual signal has allowed female video artists to call for the much-needed expansion of the gallery institution in terms of gender and race. Through images and sound, they made their voices as well as their bodies heard.

Whilst the history of women's video is not the core focus of this project, in this project I acknowledge the importance of their work. I build on the early women's video art practice and use the sound of my video artworks as a tool for questioning the ideological limitations of contemporary gallery spaces. I propose that when spoken using the mother tongue, as experienced during the *13.1.91* exhibition at Surrey Gallery, video has the capacity to unsettle patriarchal spaces and their norms.

Sonic feminism, as practiced in this project, calls for an *audiovisual* or whole-bodied thinking. Using video art practice and auditory embodiment, it questions how *all-sound* can help our bodies to operate and navigate through ideologically driven spaces in more open and uninhibited terms. *13.1.91*, for example, resisted the splitting the senses and instead invited a whole-bodied participation. The mission of the artwork was to connect images and sounds of a political protest against the USSR regime with the audiovisuality of the gallery space, this way confronting the ocularcentric and, to an extent, patriarchal nature of the gallery. By refusing sensorial divisions and binaries, it allowed the gallery visitors to explore the exhibition room as an audiovisual, potentially a *whole-bodied* and a socially interconnected site, rather than purely ocularcentric or individualised.

My approach to sonic feminism rejects the idea that bodies can operate as universal. Instead, in line with Sara Ahmed, Anne Carson, Ursula Le Guin and Iris Marion Young, I propose that our position in the world is inhibited (I. M. Young 2005) and orientated (Ahmed 2006b). Our sound, as a result, also becomes conditioned (Carson 1995). Whilst departing from the early phenomenologists, including Husserl (1983, 1975), Merleau-Ponty (2014) and Don Ihde (2007), who admit our bodies and our bodily experience of the world as global or *a*-gendered, in this project I conceptualise bodies as socio-historically positioned and framed. Our sound, as a result, to use Carson's thinking, is also bound to social and historical limitations (1995). When I entered Surrey Gallery to install *13.1.91*, for example, I embodied the exhibition space as a gendered subject whose intentionality was inhibited. I was asked to remove my sound and follow the orders prescribed by the curator who spoke *at* me using the father tongue.

Upon reflection, I resisted the curator's authoritative voice and performed as a sonic feminist: a practitioner and a thinker who thought *with* and *through* sound, spoke the mother tongue, listened to her body and embodied what Oliveros calls the globality of sound – *all*-sound. I used my embodied experience of the space to confront the gallery's ocularcentric and patriarchal governance, this way unleashing the socio-political and embodying potential of the exhibition space beyond the institution's gendered limitations.

Through sonic feminist acts, I discovered that a different kind of white exhibition space might be possible. *13.1.91*, when exhibited and sounding within the architectures of Surrey Gallery, offered a space that is embodying, a relationship and co-connecting and temporally active, rather than individualising, disembodied and timeless. *13.1.91*, to the discomfort of the ears of men, was boisterous and wilful, opposing the splitting of senses. It became a conceptual and creative intervention against gendering and conditioning in contemporary gallery spaces and museums today.

0.2. Why the White Cube?

My encounter with the curator at Surrey Gallery indicates that the soundscape of institutional art galleries today dedicated to modern and contemporary art is not as open or generous as we are led to believe. Whilst supposedly diversifying in its operations, representation as well as audiences, whitewashed exhibition rooms, whether they are privately run or publicly funded, can still be experienced as austere, patriarchal and ocular-led.⁶ To use Ahmed's thinking, the archetypal white cube gallery space is still not a home for some. For example, if you are deemed 'feminine' and you make too much sound, as the *13.1.91* exhibition at Surrey Gallery reveals, you might be asked to quieten your artwork. If you refuse, you might be asked to leave.

The white cube is a very particular gallery construction – an ideologically architectural aesthetic and an institutional mechanism that has conditioned our way of *being with*⁷ art since modernism. Since the appearance of empty bleached gallery rooms at *Museum of Modern Art (MoMA)* in New York in 1929, white exhibition spaces have been called patriarchal, ocular-led, autonomous, rational, autonomous, eternal, disembodied, elitist, racist, capitalist and universal (e.g. Elkins and Montgomery 2013, Filipovic 2014, Grunenberg 1994, Krauss 1990, O'Doherty 1986), implying that institutional art spaces have operated as sites of perceptual, socio-political and economic limitations.

According to Simon Sheikh (2009) and Elena Filipovic (2014), contemporary art spaces can still be experienced as containers for timelessness, autonomy and disembodiment, as arenas in which ocular-led 'commodity fetishism and

⁶ Whilst there have been a number of women-led conceptual initiatives to subvert the limitations of gallery institutions in terms of gender and race, including the AWC movement and Guerrilla Girls, the patriarchal and capitalist white cube, as I will discuss in chapter one, the white cube ideology continues to exist successfully. Specifically, I will provide case studies of *MoMA* and *White Cube Bermondsey* and will discuss how these institutions, both as private and public, continue to frame our experience of art according to the white cube's spatial ideology.

⁷ The white cube has consistently conditioned the being of art and the being of the spectator as separate entities. I will instead speak of being with art, drawing on Jean-Luc Nancy's insight that being is never isolated, but instead that existence is always co-existence (Nancy 2000).

eternal value(s)' is still advocated (Sheikh, 2009). Indeed, whether it is an exhibition room at *MoMA* in New York, *White Cube Bermondsey* – a private commercial gallery in London, *Museum of Modern Art* in Barcelona or *documenta* biennial in Germany, these spaces continue to share something in common – their commitment to the modernist aesthetic. These institutions, including other privately run or publicly funded galleries and museums across the West, are surrounded by bleached white walls, square or rectangular box-type rooms, unaccommodating reverberant acoustics and, as witnessed at Surrey Gallery, amplified ocularcentrism as well as patriarchal control. Such architectural and institutional arrangements, this project proposes, are not purely functional, but also ideological, and they have continued to shape and, to an extent, inhibit how some of us are expected display and experience art.

Whilst contemporary white exhibition rooms are becoming more boisterous and accommodating,⁸ the reality, as experienced and embodied at Surrey Gallery, is different. This particular gallery aesthetic still has the capacity to isolate, limit and reduce some voices and bodies, including the bodies of women. When a visitor enters a gallery space 'designed according to the angular, not to say perpendicular logic dispensed and required by the eye' (Connor 2011, 129), they are presented with a set of Euclidean rules: not to talk, make noise, sit on the floor or touch the artworks. Some may only be permitted to look in silence. The white cube does not allow distractions, interruptions or any form of disturbance, including sound. In the *13.1.91* exhibition, *her* sound, if anything, had to be regulated if not silenced.

As a female artist working with sound in archetypal white cube settings, I have time and time again been met with gendered silencing and institutional walls, which have been difficult to cross. I have then struggled to dismantle

⁸ Consider the curatorial programming at *Tate Modern's* Turbine Hall, for example. Eliasson's *The Weather Project* (2003), Carsten Holler's *Test Site* (2006) and Tacita Dean's *Film* (2011) offered an aesthetic experience that exceeds the white cube tradition. Most of the commissioned works, however, were created by men rather than women, and contained little to no sound, apart from the 'natural' soundscape of the gallery room, thus, still presenting some residues in terms of the modernist art spaces' patriarchal and ocularcentric ideology.

them. I have had to negotiate. I have had to abandon my own unique way of *being with* art and allow myself to be directed and orientated. I have repeatedly learnt that my bodily presence, including my mobility and movements, voice as well as the noises I make or hear, are admitted as problematic or unwanted. At times, if I talk or cough, I am considered to be a distraction. If I make too much noise through and about the video artworks I exhibit, including *13.1.91*, I am declared out-of-control. My embodied experience of *being with* art in white cube exhibition spaces has led me to repeatedly adopt a position of – to use Sara Ahmed’s term – an affect alien (Ahmed 2017, 57): as someone who is affected, but in an unsound way, as someone who is out of tune (Ahmed 2017, 40).

Having embodied the ideological limitations of contemporary art institutions and their gendered soundscapes, in this project I call for a reconceptualisation of the production of space *inside* the white cube from the position of sound and gender. Using theory *and* practice, I confront the white cube’s patriarchal, ocular-led, timeless and decontextualised ideology that is still experienced by *some* bodies. To articulate this challenge, I turn to sonic feminism and consider how the gendered embodiment of sound in institutional art gallery spaces affects the bodies of self-identifying women and what can be done to change the inhibitory power conditioned by white exhibition walls. Here, I propose that unless we explore this issue by combining *theory* and *practice*: by way of historiographic survey, bringing sounding artistic practice and sonic interventions into contemporary white cubes, the legacy of this ideologically driven project will continue to prevail.

The mission of this thesis, thus, is to consider the gallery’s perceptual and socio-political potential beyond the eye and beyond the father tongue. To do that, I situate my sound *inside* the white cube as a form of dissent and ask: what happens if those who operate outside the father tongue refuse to be quietened, and instead, speak up and noisily resist? Can *our* sound, as produced and experienced by self-identifying women, subvert the gendered production of space in the white cube? By situating the acts of sonic feminism

– video art and a phenomenology of *all*-sound – *inside* white exhibition spaces, we might be able to subvert the white cube gallery spaces’ ocularcentric and rational regime and offer the gallery as a site for *whole*-bodied and social forms of engagement. Refusing binaries and divisions may also allow us to subvert the white cube’s timeless and decontextualised character and experience the gallery as environmental and as social.

While paying respect to the histories of women artists and thinkers working with video and sound as well as their successful expansion of the gallery in terms of gender, this project proposes *doing* sonic feminism as a theoretical *and* creative practice, through which the gendered embodiment of sound in gallery spaces (and social spaces more broadly) can be reconsidered on a more permanent basis, this way forming an original contribution to knowledge. As an interdisciplinary way of thinking and ‘doing’, sonic feminism aims to contribute towards the disciplinary fields of sound studies, gender studies, contemporary art and museum debates. My broader hope is that this inquiry will allow us to consider how sonic feminism, as a wilful methodology and a form of thinking, can also be utilised to question the gendered embodiment of social spaces in broader cultural and socio-political terms beyond the white cube.

0.7. Towards an Aurally Expanded White Cube

Chapter one addresses the origins of the white cube. It asks: what is the white cube project, when did it emerge and how did it transform our way of *being with* art? The chapter traces the historiography of the white cube in relation to modernism and offers a critique of the white cube’s ideological structure. I demonstrate how different practice-led ventures and movements, including the 1960s artist workers coalition as well as the emergence of women’s video art, turned to sound to subvert the limitations of the autonomous exhibition display. These sounding practices, I will discuss in the thesis, have contributed towards the mobilisation of the white cube perceptually as well

as socio-politically, leading me to call for a further practice-led intervention using sound and video.

Chapter two builds upon the white cube critique and proposes that modernist gallery spaces are always audiovisual. Sound in the white cube, however, remains undertheorised. The chapter, therefore, calls for an expansion of aural thinking and considers the white cube from a position of sound and aurality. It provides a critical overview of theories and practices that address sound in relation to space, art, embodiment and feminism and relates them to the question of the gallery. In sound studies, as the chapter demonstrates, the concept of sound remains bound to the contexts of sound art, music or soundscape studies. Apart from a few publications that deal with sound in screen-based art settings (Rogers 2013, Hegarty 2014, Kelly 2011), the question of aurality in *visual* art spaces, specifically its experiential and socio-political potential, remains underexplored. In this chapter I address these gaps and call for a further expansion of the disciplines.

Chapter three dwells into my conceptual and methodological approach to this research project. It presents a case for *doing* sonic feminism. Here, I enter the debate as a female artist working with sound as well as a female body experiencing sound and propose that in order to critically re-evaluate the white cube's ideology, we must experience and embody sound, and *do* sonic feminism using theory *and* practice. In this chapter I consider the methods of video art practice and listening to *all*-sound and demonstrate how they help us to rethink the ideology of the white cube.

Chapters four and five confront the idea of disembodiment and a rational ocular-led subjectivity when *being with* art. In Chapter four, I guide the reader through the conceptual and practical development of *13.1.91* and present a case for exploring the issue of bodies in the white cube using sound. Chapter five forms a critical analysis of the artwork using the method of listening to *all*-sound. By tuning my body towards the sound of the artwork, the gallery architectures as well as other bodies, I demonstrate how the exhibition room

can become an embodying ground in which intersubjective relations between human *and* non-human agents can emerge. With *all*-sound listened to and accounted for, the gendered nature of the gallery space I propose, collapses – the aesthetic site becomes home to all and *whole* bodies rather than some or just the eye.

Chapter six and seven call for a spatio-temporal expansion of the gallery through the dimension of *all*-sound. It proposes that listening to *all*-sound can connect the gallery to further temporalities and spatialities, transforming the space into an active social ground. In chapter six, I reflect on my installation project *Airport* (2015) and a sounding art exhibition *Sound/Place* (2015), which I co-curated and participated in. The aim of these two chapters is to demonstrate that the white cube is an ongoing event co-connected with a multiplicity of outside worlds that change and transform over time. Drawing on sociologists Doreen Massey (2005) and Henri Lefebvre (1992, 2004), I propose that due to the relentless activity of *all*-sound, the gallery is unable to retain its ‘dead’ status. Instead, it is experienced as a spatio-temporally expanded social ground.

In the conclusion of my thesis, I form a synthesis, in which I propose that with *all*-sound uncovered and accounted for bodily, the white cube performs as aurally embodying – a site where bodies are empowered to form environmental relations with other bodies in time. Whilst reflecting on the case studies, I propose further steps, evaluate the project’s limitations and discuss the intended outcomes of the study. The reflections on the case studies suggest that *all*-sound should – as constructed by *all* bodies rather than *some* – leak into and seep beyond the architectures of the white cube space, enhancing and extending our potential experience of contemporary art beyond white exhibition walls.

1.

The White Cube Project

1.1. Introduction

Like the church or temple of the past, the museum plays a unique ideological role. By means of its objects and all that surrounds them, the museum transforms ideology in the abstract into living belief.

(Duncan and Wallach 1978, 28)

The enquiry into the aurality of contemporary art gallery spaces begins with an evaluation of the proposed research question – the ideology of the white cube. The term ‘white cube’ was first introduced in Brian O’Doherty’s collection of essays *Inside the White Cube* (1986), where he used the notion of white ‘cubeness’ to characterise the ideology of modernist art galleries and museums. He called the white cube a ‘white, ideal space, that, more than any single picture, may be the archetypal image of 20th century art’ (O’Doherty 1986, 24). The white cube could be described as a rather empty and vacant, interior-wise, gallery exhibition setting surrounded by white walls, with little to no furnishing, hard flooring and reverberant acoustics. This universal way of presenting and experiencing artworks can be discovered in private and public modern and contemporary art galleries and museums across the West and beyond: from *Tate Modern* in London, *Guggenheim* in Bilbao, *MMOMA* in Moscow to *Museum of Contemporary Art* in Tokyo.

White cube exhibition spaces present a rather ascetic minimal interior aesthetic, through which, any exterior distractions, including histories or details of the outside world, including sound, become extracted. O’Doherty proposes that since modernism, art galleries and museums have adopted a

timeless and decontextualised ideology, in which rational forms of ocular-led participation have been granted (O'Doherty 1986). Nikolett Eróss provides a summary of what the white cube gallery aesthetic is:

White cube is an emblematic gallery and exhibition space, as well an ideological field surrounding, of western modernism. The white cube is to ensure the presupposed ideal environment for the presentation of artworks: white, undecorated walls, hidden sources of artificial light, polished wooden floor or homogenous carpet; a clean and discreet environment to reinforce the abstraction of space and the decontextualization traditionally present in museum and gallery spaces. In order to make the "essence of art" visible, and to ensure a kind of timelessness and sacrality to infiltrate the encounter with the isolated works of art, they are detached from the outside reality, their historical, economic, and social context (Eróss n.d.).

Eróss' reading of the white cube implies that white exhibition aesthetic, whether it is a commercial gallery or a public modern art museum, operates according to a shared set of values: ocularcentrism, rationalism and autonomy.

In order to understand what the white cube is, how it emerged and how it operates today, I will consider the proposed research issue historiographically and explore why white exhibition walls emerged and how they have become the dominant form of exhibition display. I will trace the entrance of the white cube to modernism and the crisis of subjectivity and will consider how this ideological project re-affirmed patriarchal and capitalist values. I will turn to the case studies of a non-profit organisation *MoMA* in New York and a private limited company *White Cube Bermondsey* in London to demonstrate how the white cube's spatial ideology, despite the expansion of the arts beyond white walls and bleached gallery spaces, continues to dominate the Western exhibition culture in the silent referential way.

Whilst navigating through the histories of the white cube, this chapter will propose that sound, despite its silencing and exclusion, has played a political

and social role in expanding the ideology of the white cube. Here, I will consider how sound, as mediated through artist-led movements and practices, has continued to reform and expand white cube institutions since modernism. From noisy political interventions organised by Artist Workers Coalition to early women's video art, major art organisations and private galleries, including major art galleries and museums such as *MoMA* in New York or *White Cube Bermondsey* in London, have had to rethink their governance and their way of treating its subjects and objects, even if temporarily.

More recent temporary sound and audiovisual art exhibitions *inside* white exhibition spaces such as *Sonic Boom* at Hayward Gallery in London (2000), *Her Noise* at South London Gallery (2005), *Soundings* at *MoMA* (2013), *Sounds Like Her* at Nottingham Art Exchange (2017-2018), also showcase that different forms of exhibition display and experience are possible. The conceptual attempts, undertaken by artists, curators and sometimes by institutions themselves, evidence that sound can serve as a form of amplification and resistance against the ideological limitations of the white cube. However, as the case studies of *MoMA* and *White Cube Bermondsey* in will discuss, these, in many cases, are short lived. Despite the resistance and abandonment of the white cube aesthetic, the ocularcentric, decontextualised, timeless and patriarchal white cube exhibition aesthetic still remains *the* common sense. It continues to serve as the unquestionable truth, consequently framing the majority of contemporary art exhibition display and experience.

Brian O'Doherty, in *'Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space'* (1986) presented a fierce analysis of modernist museums and galleries, critiquing the art spaces' austere patriarchal and capitalist vision. In his critique of the white cube, O'Doherty drew on Marxist theories of ideology to suggested that: 'Every system construes human nature according to its desired ends, but ignoring the grubbier aspects of our nature, or disguising them, is every ideology's basic attraction' (O'Doherty 1986, 88). In other

words, with the introduction of white walls in gallery spaces, the galleries adopted a very particular ideology. As the case studies of this chapter will demonstrate, modernism inspired galleries have repeatedly applied material instruments of power to impose its governance over its bodies in intricate and subtle ways – they have conditioned, orientated and inhibited certain bodies, specifically the bodies of women and ethnic minorities. In this sense, the white cube has never been *just* about the physical space in which artworks are exhibited. Whilst supposedly built on ‘non-ideological’ grounds (Grunenberg 1999, 34),⁹ this particular Western construct has functioned as *hyper*-ideological since the start, presenting us with rules and conditions under which we would be expected to operate.

This chapter sets out to demonstrate that the white cube gallery aesthetic was built on the foundations of capitalist logic and patriarchal structures. Since the initiation of the modern gallery space, white exhibition rooms have served as bureaucratic sites for promoting rationalism and objective forms of knowledge, trading artworks as commodities for economic exchange. According to Adorno, the museum is a ‘metaphor [...] for the anarchical production of commodities in fully developed bourgeois society’ (Adorno 1983, 177). Walter Benjamin also notes that ‘the concentration of works of art in the museum approximates them to commodities, which – where they offer themselves in masses to passer-by – rouse the idea that he also must have a share’ (Quoted in Grunenberg 1994, 201). The white cube, as a continuation of the museum, offers precisely that. In Christoph Grunenberg’s terms, it exploits ‘the lessons of contemporary commercial architecture’ (Grunenberg 1999, 34).

The archetypal white cube gallery spaces have continuously called for rationalist and objective forms of exhibition display, presenting themselves as patriarchal grounds for aesthetic experience. According to Grunenberg, modern art spaces have actively sought to break away from the so-called

⁹ Grunenberg writes: ‘The galleries were intended to provide a neutral environment for the contemplation of art – without any distraction from decoration, neighbouring works of art, or indeed any external influence at all’ (1994, 34).

'feminine' features which were present in nineteenth century museum spaces: 'the so-called 'white cube' liberated modern art from its common association with decadence, insanity, sensuality and feminine frivolity [...]' (Grunenberg 1994, 205). This view implies that sensuality and feminine levity that had been previously felt was to be excluded from the modernist gallery frame. In this sense, the white cube gallery aesthetic enclosed its architectures and called for a very specialised gallery visitor: a primarily white, middle class man led by individualism and a silent rational mind rather than a whole-body sensory engagement.

Traditionally, the everyday sound in gallery spaces are suppressed. The gallery visitor is not permitted to talk, make noise or touch the artworks. Social interaction is generally discouraged. The more permanent 'inhabitants' of the white gallery space, including the gallery staff – invigilators, security guards and the management, also tend to be eerily silent. The exhibition rooms usually accommodate little to no sound, unless sound is granted by artworks. The overall architectural setting of white exhibition rooms, then, presents itself as primarily austere and disciplined – as if these sites were constructed primarily for the eye, as if someone permitted them to operate as controlling surveillance grounds, restraining and isolating bodies, removing voices, commodifying art objects, abandoning histories and eliminating external worlds.

In this chapter I demonstrate how this particular Western construction for displaying and experiencing art has supported ocular-led forms of participation, repeatedly refusing to accommodate sensorial or active bodies – bodies that would listen, feel vibrations or potentially embody artworks, for example. Any senses beyond vision, including hearing and listening, would be deemed distractions and as a result quietened by modern art spaces. The consequence of such a regime has resulted in certain subjects, specifically those stereotypically associated with subjectivity and embodiment, including 'feminised' bodies, being restrained, conditioned or at times *literally* excluded from the white cube's experiential spectrum. The

gallery visitor, identified as *he*, once in the gallery space, would be expected to leave his body outside and instead enter with their disembodied eye switched on. Once *in* the gallery space, he would be allowed to look and explore the rooms in a solitary manner.

The white cube, however, has not always been white or a cube. Before the appearance of white exhibition halls, galleries and museums operated as hustling and boisterous grounds, in which noises and rhythms, whether through social interaction, cacophonous interior design and furnishing as well as bodies sharing the space, would manifest (Maak, Klouk, Demand 2011). With the entrance of new modern art spaces during the first half of the twentieth century, for example *MoMA* (est. 2019), *Whitney Museum* (est. 1931) and *Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum* (est. 1939) in New York, *ICA* (est. 1947) in London and *The Busch-Reisinger Museum* in Harvard (1903), the sounds, colours and soft furnishing were abolished and replaced by an empty bleached cube. After WWII, however, the gallery interiors have started to shift and expand, moving away from white gallery rooms towards alternative venues and sites, as acknowledged by Charlotte Klouk (2009) and Ressa Greenberg (1996). According to Greenberg, the insurgence of 'alternative' gallery settings, including 'site-specific' exhibitions, black boxes, feminist and artist-run galleries has led to 'the inclusion of considerations of gender, class and race and the position - geographic, hierarchic, typological' (Greenberg 1996, 350). The exceptions to the white cube include a cooperative run space *FOOD* (1971-1973) in New York, *The Kitchen*, set up by video artists Woody and Steina Vasulka in 1971 in New York, *The Living Art Museum* (est. 1978), an artist-run museum in Reykjavik, as well as *Transmission Gallery*, established in 1983 in Glasgow. Whilst the work of these non-institutional spaces has been crucial, as they have addressed some of the social, economic and political issues that had been previously suppressed or ignored in the white cube frame, most of these projects have had to simply flee and set up initiatives outside of their governance.

Whilst major contemporary art institutions, including *Tate Modern*, have started to adopt more inclusive interior techniques, avoiding the classic 'whiteness' that is often associated with elitism and white patriarchy through the museum's 'turbine hall' and 'tanks' spaces, yet, some contemporary visual art institutions, as the case study of *White Cube Bermondsey* will reveal, still follow the same modernist regime, consequently shaping the art market and culture. If anything, as pointed out by Filipovic, the white cube condition is only becoming bigger than ever before and is expanding globally:

Fast forward, virtually everywhere, sometime here and now. Like modernity, the white cube is a tremendously successful Western export. Its putative neutrality makes it a ubiquitous architectural surround [...] for artworks in museums, but also for galleries and art fairs that transform commercial environs into what look more and more like mini museal spaces (2014, 46).

In Filipovic's reckoning, the exodus from the white cube to less controlled environments have not necessarily resolved the problem that has been systematic at its core since the introduction of the white cube, as almost a century later, the same laws are still present and can be felt when *being with* art in many galleries and museums. As argued by Simon Sheikh: 'White cube is [still] conceived as a place free of context, where time and social space are thought to be excluded from the experience of artworks. It is only through the apparent neutrality of appearing outside of daily life and politics that the works within the white cube can appear to be self-contained' (2009). Sheikh's viewpoint implies that despite the critique, the white cube ideology still operates *inside* art institutions and it continues to dictate how we connect to art.

1.2. The Entrance of the White Cube

'Image removed due to copyright'

Figure 1, Exhibition view, We Like Modern Art, MoMa, Dec 27, 1940 - Jan 12, 1941, photo: The Museum of Modern Art Archive, New York

The history of the prescribed archetypal ideal white exhibition container could be traced back to the beginnings of the twentieth century, specifically the entrance of abstract art as well as the initiation of modern art institutions such as the *Museum of Modern Art* in New York, USA. The existent historiographic accounts reveal how the shift in the artistic tradition presented the need for a transformation in terms of museum display. According to Charlotte Klouk: 'Before and after the First World War, there was a desire to show pieces of art against a background with the greatest possible contrast to the dominating colours of the paintings. [...] Then in the 1920s discussions in which white received connotations of infinite space started to emerge, mainly among Constructivist artists and architects' (Demand, Klouk and Maak 2011). This meant that a 'modernised' environment for exhibiting and experiencing art was called for – spaces that

could offer 'a much more immediate, concentrated viewing experience than previously' (Grunenberg 1999, 28).

Modern art museums began to operate as a very particular institutional apparatus, structured with a capitalist and patriarchal ethos in mind, introducing a set of strategies that would dictate the display and the experience of art. White exhibition rooms and with that, their institutions, according to Graham and Yasin, became elitist and fetishistic – spaces of class and privilege: 'deeply inscribed with division, hierarchy, elitism, objectification, and problematic relationships with its "others"' (Graham and Yasin 2008, 159). 'White', 'visible', 'undecorated', 'polished', 'homogeneous' and 'ideal', as Erőss points out (n.d.), suggest that white cubes have carried a level of uncomfortable sterility and discipline since the start.

Modern art museums and galleries have followed a specific ideological path: they have used visually-led techniques to attract the disembodied rational eye, consequently presenting themselves as primarily ocularcentric spectacles, removing anything that would exceed the eye from its experiential spectrum, including the tactile and sounding body. Graham and Yasin argue that by controlling its experiencing subjects, modern art spaces served as '[...] an extension of the colonial model operating in museums in its functions of collection, object-ordering, and narration' (Graham and Yasin 2008, 164). White exhibition rooms, in that sense, became both representational and objectifying, turning any bodies that would enter their architectures into objects for an eye-led contemplation. Even today, once a gallery visitor enters a room surrounded by four white walls, a certain way of *being with* art, as demanded by the surrounding ascetic landscape, can still emerge. In a classic archetypal white cube scenario, the participant is authorised to move slowly in isolation and gaze at the neatly presented artworks in a disembodied ocular-led manner.

By imposing isolation and individualism, the classic modern art museum has been able to create a fantasy of an 'ideal' aesthetic arena (white,

uninterrupted and unquestioned), in which rational participation could take place. In a way, an archetypal white cube could be compared to a religious sanctuary, overpowering, immobilising and controlling the viewer. As Brian O'Doherty suggests: 'a [modernist] gallery is constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church' (O'Doherty 1986, 14). He continues:

The ideal gallery subtracts from the artwork all clues that interfere with the fact that it is art.... The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. The wooden floor is polished so that you click along clinically, or carpeted so that you pad soundlessly, resting the feet while the eyes have [*sic*] at the wall' (O'Doherty 1986, 14).

Duncan and Wallach also argue that: 'Museums, as modern ceremonial monuments, belong to the same architectural class as temples, churches, shrines, and certain kinds of palaces. Although all architecture has an ideological aspect, only ceremonial monuments are dedicated exclusively to ideology' (Duncan and Wallach 1978, 28). These sites insist you perform and act in a certain way. The white cube, specifically, asks its participants to bring their eyes and leave their bodies outside. The bodies of the gallery visitors as a result become an odd piece of furniture (O'Doherty, 1986, 15).

Charlotte Klonk, however, calls O'Doherty's reading of the gallery space a fable: '[...] this White Cube, a myth that O'Doherty himself created and that has since dominated our understanding of modern art museums. A closer look at the history of museum displays shows that although there had indeed been many experiments with white walls in museums since the 1920s, a uniformly hermetic room with four walls and a stable function and meaning never existed' (Klonk 2016, 67). She continues to suggest that museums transform according to social change and alter their meaning accordingly. Roberta Smith follows Klonk's suit and suggests that private and public galleries today are more fluid than we might think. She argues that due to

‘changing exhibitions and precarious finances, galleries are by definition fluid forms, under constant revision’ (Smith 2006).

The critique of the ideology of the white cube, despite O’Doherty’s myth, remains present. According to Niklas Maak, when *inside* the gallery: ‘our experience of visiting museums and galleries is traditionally characterised by the quasi-religious atmosphere: nothing is to be touched, one is rather quiet and reverent, nobody laughs, it is eerily still, nobody is allowed to talk loudly’ (Demand, Klonk and Maak 2011). Such techniques of control, as performed by the white cube architectural setup, have allowed the space to reinforce its dominance over artworks and its experiencing subjects; an exercise that has authenticated the ideological power of the institution.

This, Klonk proposes, has not always been the case: ‘since the end of the eighteenth century, when museums turned into widely accessible public spaces, they were apparently used not only to cultivate relations with objects, but also with subjects’ (Demand, Klonk and Maak 2011). In other words, before the entrance of the so-called white cube, museums and galleries served as primarily social sites, in which more spontaneous bodily encounters would occur. Whilst the museums of the pre-white cube era were still problematic in terms of gender and class, the spaces for experiencing artworks did allow more bodily interaction and social mobility, consequently producing different sets of experiential architectures when *being with art*.

From an architectural perspective, the eighteenth-century art spaces were filled with softer furnishings, more comfortable seating and more ‘chaotic’ exhibition display, this way welcoming distractions and consequently bringing the outside life and its temporalities into the museum architecture: human chatter and clatter or bodies moving in space, for example.

'Image removed due to copyright'

Figure 2, Martini, Pietro Antonio, Exposition au Salon du Louvre en 1787, 1787. Wildenstein Institute, Paris

'Image removed due to copyright'

Figure 3, J. J Grandville, An Exhibition Gallery, Illustration for the book Un autre monde, Paris, 1844

Klonk explains: 'We know that people went to the National Gallery in London shortly after it opened in 1838 in Trafalgar Square to have picnics or teach their children how to walk. It was simply a public space in the midst of the city that would replace the park on rainy days' (Demand, Klonk and Maak 2011). Klonk's view suggests that pre-modern museums did not serve austere and disciplined environments as such, even if it operated according to elitist and patriarchal principles. In other words, the spaces for collecting and experiencing art before modernism did not eliminate all of the senses beyond the eye or present themselves as a primarily ocularcentric site. Thus, we must further ask, what led the change? Why did modernist art spaces introduce sensory and social disciplining? And more importantly, why the eye and not the ear or the rest of the body? In order to address these questions accordingly, I situate the ideology of the white cube project in the context of modernism and the 'modern' subject and question how the 'modern way of thinking' has impacted the initiation of the modern art institution.

1.3. Tracing the Entrance of the White Cube

The white cube ideology emanated in line with the crisis of subjectivity during the modernist era. According to Jola Škulj, modernism: 'as a movement of movements with an inscribed sense of rapture, [...] was interpreted as an issue in crisis of culture [...], or crisis of identity' (Škulj 2003, 147). The emergence of new technologies as well as the manifestation of industrial capitalism during the nineteenth century led to a reorganisation of knowledge, communication and subjectivity. In his discussion of the role of politics in modernism, Frank Kermode writes: 'At such times, there is a notable urgency in the proclamation of a break with the immediate past, a stimulating sense of crisis, of an historical licence of the New' (Kermode 2014, 2). As a result, modernist thinkers and makers called for an 'updated', or New approach to obtaining knowledge – a form of knowledge that was led by rationalism, objectivity and individualisation, consequently re-imbuing the power of the patriarchal social order.

By the start of the twentieth century, the 'classical' forms of representation, associated with fluidity, decadence and soft forms of knowledge production, as exercised by the previous cultural and scientific practices during Romanticism, would be deemed as no longer adequate. Habermas has demonstrated how ([1985] 2015) modernity served as an embodiment of Enlightenment and the Enlightened thought, with rationality and visuality praised as unquestionable and as truth, whilst subjectivity and bodily encounters, stereotypically associated with the feminine, would be marginalised. A feminist response to this precise historical shift denotes how the crisis in representation as well as the loss of the subject during modernity is linked to the restraints of the feminine. Alice Jardine's *Gynesis* (1986) for example, demonstrates how the female subject was placed in an oppositional duality with the man, deemed as outside of reason, as the Other. To quote a famous passage by Simone de Beauvoir: 'He is the Subject, he is the Absolute – she is the Other' (Beauvoir 1997, 26), non-subject, non-person, non-entity. Rita Felski also notes that: "Modernity' [...] signifies [...] not only such socio-economic processes as industrialization, urban expansion, and the increasing division of labor associated with the development of capitalism, but also the epistemic shift towards a secularized worldview exemplified in the articulation of universalizable concepts of rationality, freedom, and equality' (Felski 1989, 47). This view implies that whilst the logic of modernity offered a 'progressive self-emancipation of man' (ibid.), it simultaneously presented women's social and political subjectivities as undesirable, an, as a result, not equal. This view implies that modernism, served as 'inherently terroristic and oppressive' (Felski 1989, 48).

In the context of the arts, modernity offered a new conceptual and critical thinking 'space' across the West granting the idea of 'subjective' freedom and progressive radicalism, empowering primarily white male subjects to return to their egos, to self-reflect and to question their individual unique existence.¹⁰ Whilst on one hand modernism promoted a liberation of

¹⁰ According to Anthony Giddens, during modernism: '[...] self-identity becomes a reflexive organised endeavour. [...] In modern social life, the notion of lifestyle takes on a particular significance. The more tradition loses its hold, and the more daily life is reconstituted in terms of the dialectical interplay of

individual subjectivity, on the other hand, this cultural phenomenon coincided with the rise of patriarchal and capitalist logic, placing its now presupposed 'free' subjects under a new social regime – a system that would condition and commodify the modern space and time.

The first modern art gallery spaces, including *MoMA* in New York, adopted these patriarchal and capitalist attributes. The first white exhibition rooms accommodated the needs of heteronormative middle-class white men rather than women. For example, the gallery rooms would remove any architectural details stereotypically associated with 'femininity', including soft furnishings or colour, with artworks hung at the eye level for the rational pleasure of the eyes of men. In the case of *MoMA*, for example, art would be presented as 'self-sufficient symbols of freedom in a capitalist society', which, according to Whitney B. Birkett, aligned perfectly with 'the needs of an era and was emulated by museums and businesses alike (Birkett 2012, 75).

The early modern art museum's obsession with 'rational' architecture aligns with modernism's *visual* or *ocular-led* culture. Jonathan Crary proposes that modernity was founded on capital-led spectacles. He contends that whilst the modernist way of thinking sought to assert and centralise the subjects' visual perception, the forces of modernity were not purely founded on 'the necessity of making subject *see*, but rather on strategies in which individuals are isolated, separated, and *inhabit time* as disempowered' (Crary 2001, 3). In other words, Crary's view implies that modernity served as a broader ideological apparatus reinforcing a particular capitalist ocular-led system under which subjects would operate. In Rosalind Krauss' words: 'modernist visuality wants nothing more than to be the display of reason' accommodating the needs of men (Krauss 1994, 22). This statement implies that modernism and the modern way of *seeing* was not an unembodied construction; it was not detached from the effects of power. By asserting that modernism 'wants', Krauss implies that 'modernism' and 'visuality' were

the local and the global, the more individuals are forced to negotiate lifestyle choices amongst a diversity of options' (Giddens 2013, 5). In other words, modern subjects are allowed to take control of their own being and reflexively organise their lives.

active agents of control capable of 'wanting' and ordering reason. The modern era, through politics, art and culture, thus, served as a powerful institutional apparatus, reinforcing itself through spectacles and visual attractions aimed at the consumerist and commodified masculinised eye rather than sensing bodies.

It was the objectively controlled and the rational patriarchal mind, rather than a sensing 'maternal', 'the mystical' (Felski 1989, 34) or feminised body that became incorporated into the new capitalist system. The rest of the body would be deemed a servant, a labouring tool utilised for production; a machine operating under the governance and the dominance of the spectacle. In Tim Armstrong's view, with the processes of modernisation, the body became 'the site of animal nature which required conscious regulation' (Armstrong 1998, 2), directed and led by capitalism. Thus, with the new 'modes of circulation, communication, production, consumption, and rationalisation' (Crary 1992, 14), an 'observer-consumer' or the sensorially repressed modern subjects would evolve according to the logic of capital whilst other bodies, including the socially deemed 'feminine' bodies, would be used as tools of labour instead.

The socio-political shifts of modernity began to resonate within the early avant-garde of the twentieth century. Composers, visual artists and performers, primarily men, became energised by the forces of industrialisation, technological advancements and the reawakening of the self. They started to challenge and critique the traditions of Romanticism, this way expanding their artistic practice towards more technologically driven experimental domains. An Italian futurist painter and experimental music composer Luigi Russolo, for example, demanded for an inclusion of noises in music. He wrote a manifesto in which he argued that the past was nothing but silence (Russolo 1967, 4). He began to build noise making instruments – *Intonarumori*, with the vision to: 'conquer the infinite variety of noise-sounds

(Russolo 1967, 6).¹¹ Experimental music composer Arnold Schoenberg, on the other hand, chose to abandon classical Western harmonies instead moved towards free atonality. A French composer Edgard Varèse called for a liberation of sound, arguing that: ‘there will no longer be the old conception of melody or interplay of melodies’ (Varèse and Wen-Chung 1966, 11). In visual arts, a Russian born artist Wassily Kandinsky began to experiment with sound through images, calling for the release the ‘inner sound’ through abstraction and image: ‘Colour is the keyboard [...] The artist is the hand which plays [...] to cause vibrations of the soul’ (Düchting, Kandinsky 2000, 17). Artists Oskar Fischinger and Alexander László created *Farblichtmusik* performances, which explored the relationship between moving images, sounds and light. Inspired by ‘modern’ ideas and ideals, including modernism’s commitment to rationalism, objectivity and technology-driven thinking, the new avant-garde art movements, including Futurism, Bauhaus, Dada and Russian Constructivism, advocated more radical, progressive and future-oriented artistic expression, consciously removing themselves from the aesthetic limitations of the past. Such a conceptual reawakening of the self in the arts meant that any sentimentalism, nostalgia or glorification of the past – a form of past that would be associated with femininity and sensuality of Romanticism, would be hidden or deemed unwanted.

The technology-determined cultural transformation advocated a renewed form of rationality that would serve the objective mind and with that, the socially prescribed ‘masculine’ subjects. Others, including those deemed ‘subjective’, would be consequently removed from rationally driven explorations in the early avant-garde artistic experimentations. It is important to acknowledge, however, that women, even when working within the peripheries and outside the avant-garde’s father tongue, formed experimentations outside of the technologically-determined conceptual realm. Artists, including Mary Ellen Bute, Pauline Oliveros, Daphne Oram, Lis

¹¹ The Futurist Manifesto, initially written in 1913, initiated an avant-garde movement that was primarily led by men who followed patriarchal and authoritative voice. Their mission was to be radical and be violent, this way re-establishing their power in terms of leading the future. By removing themselves from the past, they would also remove any feminine traits that were carried throughout Romanticism. The idea was to glorify violence and war, this way retaining their patriarchal power.

Rhodes, Joan Jonas or Alison Knowles, to name *a very few*, have continuously pushed the disciplinary boundaries of art since modernism, experimenting with images, sounds, silence, transforming non-musical objects into instruments, drawing sound on film and questioning the potential of soundscape. Some artists have used sound and images as a way of challenging the gendered silencing, whilst others pushed sound into more expanded conceptual and critical domains. The technologies that emerged during modernism enabled women artists to amplify their presence as creators and thinkers. Technology, in a way, was also used form of ammunition against bodily inhibition, the endemic sexism and the ongoing institutional exclusion, which I explore further in this chapter.

The avant-garde's conceptual approaches to art production resulted in the transformation of the exhibition display, and consequently, one's way of *being with* art. The classic museums, for example the *Louvre* in Paris and *The Metropolitan Museum of Art* in New York, were now considered as limiting and regressive, thus, more modern and future-oriented gallery rooms that could accommodate the newly emerging visual forms of art, including cubism and abstract art, were called for instead.¹² The new modern art museums of the early twentieth century, including *MoMA* and *Whitney Museum* in New York, aspired to redefine themselves as progressive and forward-looking grounds, offering uncomplicated and bare interior design, presenting themselves as three-dimensional blank canvases situated outside a particular time or space. According to Cyrus Manasseh: 'Much of this was achieved by displaying artworks on plain white walls. This policy had stemmed from an impetus to create neutral spaces for art display. Small rooms devoted to a particular and individual artist's work in this

¹² In the context of the Metropolitan Museum of Art, for example, Alfred H. Barr, Jr., the co-founder and first director of MoMA, wrote: 'For the last dozen years New York's great museum – Metropolitan – has been often criticised because it did not add the works of the leading "modernists" to its collections' (Quoted in Manasseh 2009, 59). Cyrus Manasseh further suggests: 'By the late 1920s, the proliferation of various new movements in art, which had required a new approach to cataloguing and classification, would result in serious problems for the Metropolitan's collection and display policies, irrespective of its attempts to supplement a historic collection with contemporary artworks from the Modernist period. The Metropolitan had, overall, strongly reflected the classical outlook inherent in museums such as the Louvre' (Manasseh 2009, 59). The classical museums, as a result, failed to provide the 'successful transmission of stimulating and reasonable artistic standards by the early twentieth century' (Manasseh 2009, 64).

environment would be designed to create an intimate experience for visitors, who would be encouraged to respond to the artworks in a personal way without confusion with the environment in which it was held' (Manasseh 2009, 65).¹³

The drive for clarity, simplicity and disembodied forms of engagement became increasingly apparent in the modernist art spaces' interior design.¹⁴ Such spaces became sanctuaries in which the eye would lead, and white masculinised bodies would follow. The white exhibition rooms galleries enclosed their architectures, by way of their design, to those external influences conceptually as well as physically, transforming their grounds into 'ideal' white sanctuaries. As argued by Grunenberg: 'These calm, contained spaces [...] provide relief from the bustling metropolis outside and, more broadly, from the material world of production and consumption' (Grunenberg 1999, 34). The white cube frame - an aesthetic vacuum, instead, created its own authority-governed experiential economy system.

1.4. From *Museum of Modern Art* to *White Cube*: A Question of Ideology

In order to grasp how the ideology of the white cube project manifested itself through practice, and more specifically, how it has shaped exhibition display and our ways of *being with* art since modernism until today, in this section I consider the histories and operations of two major art institutions: *Museum of Modern Art*, which opened in 1929 in New York and is often regarded as the first white cube institution and *White Cube Bermondsey*, a private art gallery which was set up in 2011. Here, I form an analysis of the two 'classic'

¹³ In her discussion of MoMA, Manasseh argues: 'MoMA's discriminate elimination of the nineteenth-century model through its "White Cube" paradigm would result from the positioning of single paintings at eye level (or just below it), compelling visitors to stand in a fixed position in order to examine individual artworks as unique specimens (rather than as wallpaper). This method would contrast uncompromisingly with the method employed by traditional nineteenth-century museums, which displayed their paintings by filling the wall space from top to bottom with pictures. This created a mosaic effect covering most of the museum wall. [...] By contrast, the visitor's experience on approaching MoMA's sparse exterior anticipated the almost "clinical" interior which attempted to suspend the artworks within a decontextualised environment' (Manasseh 2009, 66).

¹⁴ 'space with white walls and a polished wood floor or soft grey carpet' (Grunenberg 1999, 26).

white cube art spaces with the hope to uncover how this spatial ideological construction has evolved, whether it is still present in publicly or privately art institutions, and where it sits in relation to contemporary art culture today.

1.4.1. The Inauguration of The White Cube: *Museum of Modern Art*

Museum of Modern Art serves as one of the more pertinent examples of the modernist white cube aesthetic and, as a result, its ideology. *MoMA* could be 'credited with establishing the white cube as an international standard' (Grunenberg 1999, 26). Founded in 1929, unlike its predecessors, the museum offered a different and at that time rather radical approach to exhibition design. Gallery rooms were no longer surrounded with intricate furnishing or multi-layered interior. Instead, each space was presented as predominantly empty, consisting of little to no furnishing, with paintings neatly hung against white walls. This mode of exhibition display has allowed the museum to promote the idea that art experience did not necessarily have to be social and could be experienced more self-reflectively in isolation.

'Image removed due to copyright'

Figure 4, Exhibition view, Robert Irwin, MoMa, Oct 24, 1970 - Feb 16, 1971, photo: MoMa Archive, New York

MoMA adopted modernist ideals and applied rational and self-reflective minimalist design to its architectures as well as its operational structure. In a way, the museum used modernist aesthetics as a source of inspiration for shaping the institution's identity. According to Manasseh:

MoMA's objectives from the outset had been to modify European Modernism in parallel with the culture, politics and economics of America. Through its advanced marketing, publicity strategies, and relations with various corporate sponsors [...], it would promote and market European and American Modernism as commodity. As both a privately-owned enterprise and "national" institution, MoMA's plans would be to function as a permanent museum of modern art, which would acquire and display to the public "... a collection of the best modern works of art". (Manasseh 2009, 62-63)

Grunenberg further argues that *MoMA's* visual identity 'functioned as an effective manifestation of its modernist principles and internationalist outlook. The building represented a radical departure from the temple-like museum architecture that dominated the United States until after World War

2: no ceremonial staircase but access at street level; no grandiose columns but a flat, clean facade set flush with the street front' (Grunenberg 1999, 33-34). *MoMA's* vision, in this sense, was clear: to remove itself from the romanticised ideas around art and its ceremonial celebration. Whilst initiating a space organised and run with a set of laws and conditions, however, the museum became a unique container – a solitary religious ground promoting modernist ideas and universalising our now 'modernised' way of *being with art*.

MoMA, in line with modernity, implemented bare interior design as a way of materialising the sense of timelessness, autonomy and aesthetic idealism. The institution introduced white walls, little seating, no talking and a no picture policy; it formed a rather controlling setting in which visitors' involvement in the surrounding exhibition spaces would be directed. When reflecting on *MoMA's* architecture in 1939, art critic Henry McBride commented: 'Apparently, in the new museums, we shall be expected to stand up, look quickly and pass on. There are some chairs and settees, but the machine-like neatness of the rooms does not invite repose' (McBride 1997, 371). *MoMA's* machine-like interior design generated a self-reflective and disciplining quasi-neutralised setting, which would advocate for aesthetic, social and sensory alienation. The museum's white walls became the only context from which the so-called interrupted, direct and, as envisaged by the institution, ideal eye-led aesthetic contemplation, would emerge.

The museum's architecture utilised ocularcentric techniques to achieve this level of presupposed idealism, allowing vision to function as the primary sense and control the rest of the body. A gallery visitor would not be expected to listen or bodily participate in the works presented. Instead, she would be told to visually observe. As Klonk explains: 'the disciplining began at an early stage with the design of reverential entrance halls and exhibition rooms. They were sumptuously decorated but weren't intended to distract from viewing the art' (Demand, Klonk and Maak 2011). This was evident in *MoMA's* case. In order to remove any potential distractions, the museum, through

architecture, reinforced visually-led aesthetic observation as a technique of control that would allow the institution to discipline how the participants would engage with exhibited artworks.

Whilst built on ocularcentrism and rationalist ideals, *MoMA* also functioned as a socio-politically problematic institution. To begin with, the museum was introduced as a primarily capitalist venture with the intention to turn art into a form of commodity and product. Set up by private investors from 'America's social elite' (Grunenberg 1999, 32), *MoMA* followed a very particular capitalist business model. It became a cultural emporium for collecting and trading what the founders considered to be high class art. Even though *MoMA's* vision was to provide 'a comprehensive survey of contemporary visual culture' (Grunenberg 1999, 32), simultaneously, this institution used a set of capitalist codes – from applying particular marketing strategies to investing into collection acquisitions – as ways of establishing itself as a leading service and goods (artworks) provider: 'Not only was MOMA itself run with all the efficiency of a business competing in the capitalist economy, but the political activities of its trustees sometimes had a direct impact on the museum' (Grunenberg 1999, 32). Manasseh further argues: '[...] its multifarious activities and attempts to monopolise modern and contemporary art, would be enabled through, and stimulated by, an efficiently run business, which gradually would create enormous wealth for many of its founders and investors' (Manasseh 2009, 61). *MoMA*, thus, ran as a business corporation, this way becoming what Allan Wallach calls: 'a ubiquitous symbol of corporate modernity' (Wallach 1998, 79).

Managed and run by private investors, *MoMA* aligned itself perfectly with the capitalist frame.¹⁵ The museum was located in a shopping district at the heart of Manhattan. It branded itself as an accessible venue with the works of art

¹⁵ Businessmen and philanthropists, including Anson Conger Goodyear (the president of the Great Southern Lumber Company), Paul J. Sachs and Frank Crowninshield became the first trustees of the museum. The first appointed director was Alfred Hamilton Barr Jr. According to Grunenberg: 'Like many other museums in the United States, MOMA was founded by wealthy private benefactors and its trustees continue to be recruited from America's social élite. They determine the overall direction of the museum and, especially through the appointment of leading staff members, exert influence on its exhibition policy' (Grunenberg 1999, 32).

displayed in a clear and approachable manner, creating an effect 'similar to a department store' (Grunenberg 1999, 34). Grunenberg's argument suggests that *MoMA* became a niche supermarket for trading and experiencing art. Indeed, whilst strolling through the shopping district, anyone could choose to escape the boisterous New York streets, enter the architectural solitude and 'buy' a piece of the experience as offered by the museum. In this sense, by offering the experience of art as a form of commodity, the museum imposed its own trading system, presenting itself as a business and a service provider, acquiring art, offering entertainment and selling cultural experience.

In order to maintain its 'shop-like' status, *MoMA* developed a number of strategies that would direct and manage their visitors. Once in the white cube, for example, the museum goer would accord to the museum's economic trade structure: they would purchase admission tickets, follow guides and curated routes when exploring the exhibition rooms. By submitting themselves to the guidelines, as authorised by the museum, the visitors would essentially give in to the museum's institutional capitalist regime. With the entrance of *MoMA*, experiencing art collectively was no longer an option, as the visitors were expected to explore the space in an isolated confinement and, consequently, in silence. This form of experience was offered with the price of the ticket.

Since its opening in 1929, *MoMA* conformed to the patriarchal social order. Whilst there were a few women associated with the opening of the museum, including patron Miss Lillie P. Bliss, trustee Josephine Boardman Crane and the first film curator Iris Barry appointed in 1935, most of the trustees, patrons and directors were men, including the first appointed director Alfred H. Barr, Jr. as well as trustees A. Conger Goodyear, Paul Sachs and Frank Crowninfield.¹⁶ This meant that the museum placed primarily not women or ethnic minorities but white men at the top of the institutional chain to lead

¹⁶ A full history of *MoMA*'s governance can be found on the museum's website: <https://www.moma.org/about/who-we-are/moma-history>

and direct. According to Grunenberg, *MoMA* integrated modern art 'into the male sphere of production and economics', which enabled those in power to transform it 'into an aesthetic acceptable to American businesses without disturbing the social order' (Grunenberg 1994, 205), which in this case, was informed by patriarchal power structures. The writer further suggests that MoMA 'revealed the inherent masculinity and authoritarian character of formalist aesthetics' (ibid.). The operational structure of the museum suggests that the institution conformed and to an extent extended the already deeply ingrained patriarchal regime that had been visible and felt in art and culture for centuries. By offering autonomy and prescribed social order, it reiterated the gender inequality that was becoming increasingly visible in art institutions. Brian O'Doherty, when critiquing modern art museum, draws our attention towards the question of the modernist gallery visitor:

Who is this Spectator, also called the Viewer, sometimes called the Observer, occasionally the Perceiver? It has no face, is mostly a back. It stoops and peers, is slightly clumsy. Its attitude is inquiring, its puzzlement discreet. He - I'm sure it is more male than female - arrived with modernism, with disappearance of perspective. He seems born out of picture, and, like some perceptual Adam, is drawn back repeatedly to contemplate (O'Doherty 1986, 39).

O'Doherty's proposition implies that modern art museums and gallery spaces structured aesthetic experience as primarily masculine. Women and those who identify themselves as such would instead be expected to adopt the stereotypical masculine qualities and perform according to a prescribed social status: 'In that space of encounter, the ideal viewer (white, middle-class) is also constructed -- well behaved, solemn, disembodied, and able to focus on the singularity of the work of art with an uninterrupted gaze' (Filipovic 2014, 45). This ideology-led strategy meant that men could remain in power and the social order would not be disrupted.

The ideological traces of the first white cube gallery – *MoMA*, including its capitalist and patriarchal properties, have been adopted and continue to be

used by gallery spaces and museums today across the globe. The universal white cube, as the next case study will reveal, has now become the international standard that continues to dictate how galleries are built, set up and organised.

1.4.2. The White Cube Project Today: *White Cube Bermondsey*

White Cube Bermondsey, a private art gallery located in south London, endorsed the *MoMA* model and implemented its ideological foundations into the gallery's governance. *The White Cube* art enterprise was initially set up in the early 1990s in West London by art dealer Jay Jopling. Whilst approaching the initiative as a business, Jopling built a global art empire, successfully branching out into Hong Kong and Sao Paulo in 2012. *White Cube Bermondsey* – Jopling's latest business project in the UK, opened its doors to visitors in 2011. Built on the physical grounds of an old industrial warehouse, the gallery offers a 5,400 square metre space for art exhibitions and commerce. As noted by *The Guardian* reporter Charlotte Higgins, the space was set up to become 'the largest commercial art gallery in Britain: the Tate Modern of the for-profit art world' (Higgins 2011). The vision of *White Cube Bermondsey* was clear: to provide an exclusive and an in-demand space, with its primary function being to exhibit and trade emerging and established artists' works for profit – in the art gallery and on the White Cube company's website. From an economic perspective, the gallery was opened with the incentive to make profitable returns. The *White Cube's* director of exhibitions, Tim Marlow, has spoken openly about the project and its potential brewing success: 'London is a city where artists always want to be shown, to have representation. It is the equal of New York in terms of the art market. And we're not scrabbling around for shows. It's still going to be a struggle for our artists to have major exhibitions at White Cube more than once every three years' (Quoted in Higgins 2011). As a high in demand space, *White Cube Bermondsey* initiated an effective business strategy that would serve both the business and the artists. Through exhibition, acquisition and trade of artworks it would bring lucrative profit returns for the gallery and simultaneously bring fame and

acknowledgment for the artists associated with the *White Cube* label. In this sense, the project was solely built with a capitalist and neoliberal vision – to create a successful brand that would trade art and artists as commodities.

White Cube Bermondsey extends the ideology of the white cube project. Rather than practising sensorial and social inclusivity, connectedness and diversity, it instead operates outside the lived space and time, only connecting itself to the outside world through economic transactions. I propose that the gallery is neoliberal at its core: built as an entrepreneurial venture, it offers a so-called ‘free’ space for young artists to showcase their work,¹⁷ presenting itself as an active space for experimentation, offering creative vibrancy and ‘up-to-dateness’. Ideologically, however, *White Cube Bermondsey* only reiterates the same social and political limitations that were already visible in the early governance of *MoMA*. Decontextualised from its neighbourhood historically and spatially, the gallery offers a rather controlled structure, under which artists, artworks and those who enter the gallery space to experience art continue to function. It disguises itself under the shield of creative and cultural progressiveness, however, the ideals of the gallery are still embedded in social inequality. *White Cube Bermondsey* has actively contributed towards gentrification of lower-class neighbourhoods (including Hoxton and Bermondsey) transforming areas into so called ‘cultural sites’,¹⁸ it has used aggressive capitalist techniques to eliminate its potential competitors in the field,¹⁹ it has continued to offer a primarily visual and rational interior design aesthetic, consequently presenting itself as an ocularcentric and disembodied ground, reducing any senses beyond vision, it has a-historicised the buildings it chose to occupy, it is managed and administered by an upper-class white man... If anything, *White Cube*

¹⁷ *White Cube*, for example, have exhibited and now represent a number of YBA (Young British Artists), including Damien Hirst, Marc Quinn and others.

¹⁸ Elizabeth Currid comments that during the early 1990s, ‘not surprisingly, the White Cube Gallery on Hoxton Square, which showcased many of the YBAs, has become one of the most influential art galleries in the world. Again, neighborhood residents and the world alike witnessed the same evolution from lower-class neighborhood to cultural new media Mecca with designer jean boutiques and fancy coffee shops’ (Currid 2010, 258).

¹⁹ In 2011, White Cube shut down a project dedicated to critical experimentation for using a version of the ‘white cube’ domain (whitecu.be), after which, a law suit by the gallery was filed. For more information: <http://poool.info/i-trolled-jay-jopling-into-paying-the-kingdom-of-belgium-1620-eur-in-chump-change-and-all-i-got-was-this-lousy-legal-correspondence-from-his-high-profile-law-firm/>

Bermondsey only epitomises the white cube project and endorses its ideology and, consequently, its limitations. The lived space and time of the outside world, when in the architectures of *White Cube Bermondsey*, becomes secondary, whilst further socio-political contexts, ones that do not involve the *White Cube* enterprise, become suspended. In that sense, *White Cube Bermondsey*, whilst expanding successfully across the globe, continues to operate as a highly ideological and as a result problematic institution.

As a gallery visitor, I have personally experienced the limitations of the *White Cube Bermondsey* gallery space. I recall walking around artist Christian Marclay's (b. 1955) solo show at the *White Cube Bermondsey* gallery space in 2015. The moment I entered the exhibition site I was immediately confronted with the blinding 'whiteness' and the 'cubeness' of the exhibition rooms. Artworks came second. This made me question what I was actually experiencing – was it the gallery architectures or artworks that inhabited it? Considering Christian Marclay's practice aims to extend visibility through sonic and audiovisual forms, I expected the space to be booming with action and sound. Yet, as soon as I entered the space, I became disorientated. The artist's paintings and pictures of music scores, for example, were neatly presented on white walls, moving images also felt like paintings, with little to no sound emitting from the projector speakers. A darkened dedicated room to sound, in which a multi-channel audiovisual installation *Sounds* (2015) was displayed was silent, and, to an extent, silenced. It is interesting to think that sound had to have a 'dedicated' space in the white cube architectures, as if a separation between the two (auditory and visual) has to be made and that both cannot coexist together. In the main white windowless exhibition room, wine and pint glasses were scattered along the space. The white walls, however, took precedence over the art objects themselves. *Visibility* in that particular room was the primary mode of experience. There was no room for sound.

'Image removed due to copyright'

Figure 5, Exhibition view, Christian Marclay, 9 x 9 x 9, South Galleries and North Galleries, White Cube Bermondsey, 2015

The streets of Bermondsey were filled with noise, but once inside the doors of *White Cube Bermondsey*, the noise disappeared and visitors were transported into what felt like an anechoic container, where listening or making sound was just not granted. I also felt as if the time and space of the external world were abandoned, whilst my body (including the sounds of my heartbeat, the crackling of my bones or even my inner voice) evaporated as soon as I entered the gallery doors. The overarching visual dominance of the interior design forced me to walk and look, rather than allowing my body to explore, listen or potentially feel the artworks. I caught myself in the moment of disembodiment. Whilst sounds, from noise to voices to on-screen soundtrack, were emitting in the space, it was clear that these intrusions were not welcome, and I had to keep my sound as quiet as possible. I was not allowed to use my voice or body to interact with art or other bodies in space. I became subsumed by the whiteness of the rooms, not the artworks.

'Image removed due to copyright'

Figure 6, Exhibition view, Christian Marclay, 9 x 9 x 9, South Galleries and North Galleries, White Cube Bermondsey, 2015

The experience of being in *White Cube Bermondsey* made me reflect on Rosalind Krauss' essay on *The Cultural Logic of the Late Capitalist Museum* (1990), in which she argues that the experience of a modern museum space, which, in most cases is overwhelming, comes first. Krauss writes: 'we are having this experience, then, not in front of what could be called the art, but in the midst of an oddly emptied yet grandiloquent space of which the museum itself-as a building-is somehow the object' (Krauss 1990, 4). Beatriz Colomina further suggests that in galleries and museums, 'the space between the works is more important than the experience of the works themselves' (Colomina 2017, 117). Thus, in a 'classic' (white, uninhabited) art space environment, it is the visual white walls and empty rooms that continue to operate as the main points of attention, made ready for cultural and consumer-led participation.

My experience of Christian Marclay's exhibition at *White Cube Bermondsey* echoes Krauss' reading of the capitalist museum. When in the exhibition room, I was swallowed by the space first, including the shop which was

imposingly placed by the entrance, and only then I was able to experience the artworks authorised by the walls; primarily through *seeing*, rather than with my whole body. The visually-led regime of *White Cube Bermondsey*, at least so it seemed, directed and conditioned my presence – I was only subjected to the world created by the gallery; no other contexts or temporalities beyond the one presented by the cube’s architectures seemed relevant.

Both, *MoMA* and *White Cube Bermondsey*, have been including sound into their recent exhibition curation. In 2013, *MoMA* organised their first major exhibition of sounding artworks – *Soundings: A Contemporary Score*, presenting artworks by sixteen contemporary artists. Curated by Barbara London, this project sought to connect a variety of disciplinary angles, including performance, architecture, visual arts and music, and questioned how these disciplines would interact with one another, and potentially sound out in a museum setting. Despite the mission to ‘bring sound works by artists into the Museum’ (London 2013, 9), one could argue that the exhibition failed to escape or subvert the white cube’s autonomous, patriarchal and capitalist ideology. If anything, it was subsumed by it. Considering the exhibition included the artworks of sixteen artists, only five of them were women. In addition, when inhabiting the museum’s exhibition walls, the artworks, in line with the spatial ideology of the white cube, were presented as objects outside a particular time or space, some of which were perceived as autonomous sculptural objects, whilst others were hung against white walls ready for rational ocular-led contemplation; for example, Tristan Perich’s *Microtonal Wall* (2011).²⁰

Christian Marclay’s solo exhibition at *White Cube Bermondsey* (2015), could also be considered a gallery space full of sound – the white exhibition rooms contained images and sounds emitting from audiovisual artworks, sound

²⁰ The artwork resembles a minimalist painting. Hung against white walls, the first experience of *Microtonal Wall* is rather disembodied. A rectangular painting-type two-dimensional object is perceived by the eyes first. Whilst the artwork aims to deconstruct electronic music, and ‘sensorial, in the physical experience it offers’ (London 2013,12), in reality, because of the white cubeness of the exhibition space, it loses its ability to embody its participants, and instead, is first experienced as painting. The artwork becomes subsumed by the rational whiteness of the space.

performances, records and scores. The space, however, was perceived as patriarchal and inhibiting. Even though aurality was present and leaking to and from the different rooms, the ocular-led architecture of the space somewhat silenced the potential of sound and quietened my body when experiencing the artworks. Making noise, or moving noisily, was not an option. Instead, the observation of sounding artworks had to be performed in silence.

There have been a number of curatorial projects, led by self-identifying women, that have sought to subvert the patriarchal space *inside* the white cube through practice. *Her Noise*²¹ at South London Gallery (2005), a project and a group exhibition curated by Lina Džuverovič and Anne Hilde Neset, is an example worth noting. The exhibition featured newly commissioned sound-based installations created by five female artists. The exhibition, however, as the co-curator Džuverovič argues: ‘was never explicitly articulated as a feminist project’ (Džuverovič 2016, 88), suggesting that it was the silence behind the feminist voice of *Her Noise* that allowed the exhibition to surface. It was the open-ended, or what the co-curator calls the ‘non-committal’ nature of the curation (ibid.), as well as the active avoidance of the term ‘feminism’ that allowed the curators and the artists to inhabit a mainstream gallery space surrounded by white walls and uncomfortable reverberant acoustics. Džuverovič reflects: ‘We avoided outspoken and direct engagement with feminist politics out of fear of the outward association with second wave feminism and a dismissal by the artworld. The London artworld did not appear to us at all interested in what we had to offer, unless we dressed it up as something more palatable. [...] We wanted to make sure we had a voice but the only way forward that we saw was to silence the explicit feminist politics of the project’ (Džuverovič 2016, 93). At that time, they believed that it was important to *do* feminism rather than just talk about it.

²¹ Džuverovič writes: ‘*Her Noise* began in 2001 as a multidisciplinary, multi-output project to gather information and research about women working in experimental music and sound. The terms “experimental music,” “sound,” and “boundaries of inclusion” were not clearly articulated at the outset of the project and continued to shift throughout its development’ (2016, 88).

However, by just *doing*, and by not contextualising or voicing their issues or problematizing the institutional art context in which the *doing* was taking place, they only reinserted, according to Džuverovič: ‘two “others” into the art history canon: the unpopular medium of sound and the previously marginalized female gender’ (Džuverovič 2016, 95). Thus, whilst the approach to the exhibition was one of silent sonic feminism, one could argue that by quieting their feminist attitude and their wilfulness, the exhibition became absorbed by the institutions ideological walls. In other words, due to the fear of alienating the exhibition from the wider public, they instead chose silence: ‘it was important to us that this project should happen in what we considered to be the “mainstream space of art,” knowing that the space we were trying to claim for the project could not be claimed were we to be explicit in our association with feminism’ (Džuverovič 2016, 93). *Her Noise* could be considered as an attempt to do sonic feminism and a demonstration of why it is still difficult to claim spaces that historically have been spaces of exclusion to some bodies. In a way, what this teaches us is that the only way to enter mainstream gallery spaces is to enter quietly and make little to no noise about the reasons for entering them, or, in other words, by depoliticising your body and voice.

These examples demonstrate that the white cube spatial ideology continues to haunt art institutions and art visitors, limiting our communication with art. Thus, it is important to address, challenge and re-examine the institutions’ ideological conditioning with the intention to move beyond the gallery’s visually-led rationality, beyond the institution’s spatial and temporal isolation as well as the patriarchal regime it functions under. If contemporaneity, in Terry Smith’s terms (2012), is structured around coterporal relations, offering multiplicity of relations and simultaneous collectivity, then it is important to consider alternative conceptual and methodological tools that could help us to connect the white cube to the outside world politically, socially and corporeally and allow its walls to open up.

Over the last few decades leading contemporary art institutions across the West, including *Tate Modern* in London, *Pompidou* in France as well as *MoMA* in New York, have addressed the ongoing failings and the effects of the white cube phenomenon, offering more diversity awareness raising initiatives, utilising off-site exhibition settings, running community and education projects, implementing more socially engaged art participation techniques as well as less exclusive interior design strategies. Yet, as the *White Cube Bermondsey* case study reveals, the ideology of the modernist project is far from gone, thus, it needs to be tackled further.

In this project, I propose that we can reconsider the limitations of the white cube through sound, specifically, through the methods of sounding art practice and aural thinking. In the next section of this chapter I consider the aural dimension of the archetypal white cube space as a way of exploring how sound contributes towards the experience and operation of contemporary gallery spaces. Whilst proposing that white cubes, even when silencing and 'silenced', have been sounding since the start, here, I question how sound, in its technological, socio-political and corporeal capacity, has challenged the white cube ideology and continued to subvert its condition since the initiation of institutional sites such as *MoMA*. My aim is to demonstrate that with the art practice of the twentieth century slowly expanding in its velocity, whether it is through technologically mediated art or political interventions, white cubes are becoming increasingly sounding, and with that, more social than ever before. Yet, the silencing is somewhat still felt by *some* of us. Thus, what happens if we actively sound out and listen to the gallery? Can our experience of these institutions transform? Whilst leaving the Christian Marclay's exhibition at *White Cube*, for example, I posed the following question: what if I performed sonic feminism? What if I had entered the space with the mindset of openness, ready to listen and retain my whole-body, rather than be subsumed by the eye, would I have been able to break that sensorial and social discomfort I was feeling? I propose that it is only by re-entering the gallery through *practice*, specifically, by tuning our conceptual, critical and corporeal bodies towards aurality that we can begin to

experience what an *audiovisual* and not a solely visual white cube might feel like. I begin by considering this methodological proposition historiographically.

1.5. The Histories and Practices of Un-silencing the White Cube

Sound has been utilised in modern art gallery settings by artists working with media technologies including film, photography and auditory devices since the initiation of the first white cube at the start of the twentieth century. Even when disregarded or covered under the art exhibition spaces' visual coating, I propose that there have been persistent attempts to reawaken aural architectures and confront the modernist museums' autonomy, timelessness and its gendered disciplining.

The initial efforts could be traced back to the first World Art Fairs and international exhibitions. The early avant-garde used radical exhibition techniques to push their political ideas and bring external worlds into temporary exhibition rooms. With international art pavilions, each participating country would bring their political, social and technological contexts, transforming white blank art spaces into spatially and temporally co-connected sites. These spaces did not aim to represent timelessness or cultural detachment. Instead, they sought to promote individual countries' progress and cultural achievements. In this sense, international exhibitions offered something quite different – a space where differing 'subjects, issues, and ideological agendas' would connect, coalesce and potentially clash (Mary Anne Staniszewski 1999, xxiii). The white cube ideological context in these instances would become secondary, as exhibition visitors would not be focusing on white walls or silenced atmosphere as such, but instead actively engage and participate in the space more whole-bodily. Herbert Bayer, an Austrian artist who created exhibition design for the *Exposition de la Socete des Artistes Decorateurs Grand Palais* international exhibition in Paris in 1930, introduced the concept of 'field of vision' – a diagram that sought to create a

more expanded gallery visitor-artwork experience. Staniszewski writes: “Bayer’s [...] installation methods were all intended to reject idealist aesthetics and cultural autonomy and to treat an exhibition as a historically bonded experience whose meaning is shaped by its reception’ (Staniszewski 1999, 27), this way connecting the experiencer to the projected experiential space.

The Soviet art pavilions of the 1920s and 1930s, on the other hand, utilised sound not only as a tool for presenting technological advancements but also as a way of conveying the union’s political-propagandistic messages, whether it was the promotion of the union’s national prestige or the achievements of socialism (Staniszewski 1999). The soviets would bring technologically mediated art including installations, films, sounds and photographic images into a single experiential space, consequently creating rather cacophonous and vibrant settings. El Lissitzky, one of the most renowned masters of the Soviet avant-garde and architecture, was commissioned to design a number of soviet pavilions in Europe, including *Raum für konstruktive Kunst* (Room for Constructivist Art) at the International Art Exhibition in Dresden (1926), *Soviet Pavilion* at the International Pressa Exhibition in Cologne (1928) as well as *The Soviet Room* at Film und Foto Exhibition in Stuttgart (1929). A follower of the Stalinist regime, Lissitzky used technology, including photography, film and sound to immerse the participating exhibition visitors as a way of activating their political thinking. Lissitzky’s approach was to transport the participants into a noisy revolutionary setting, showcasing the power, the energy and the strength of the socialist ideology. The objective of the *Soviet Pavilion* at the Pressa Exhibition, for example, was to ‘present advancements in the press sector of the socialist state [...]. Also included was the presentation of such themes as the industrialisation and electrification of the country; the living conditions of the proletariat; trade unions; agriculture; and social life within the new political system’ (Pohlmann 1999, 55). Even though the pavilion mostly consisted of photographic montages rather than sounding artworks, the installation content, techniques as well as presented context, increased the velocity of the acoustic architectures of the space

through mobilized participation and the revolutionary noise that was echoing in the propagandistic atmosphere of the room. The imposing large-scale photographic murals of revolutionary crowds, images of Lenin delivering speeches as well as photographs of protesting children formed a noisy setting, mobilized and as a result emancipated the participating subjects beyond the eye. These pavilions were not about the individualisation of the participant, but an active process of co-connecting groups into a social unit – the core political vision of the socialist ideology.

Sound also entered gallery spaces through the voices of resistance. *MoMA*, for example, has repeatedly faced noisy political upsurges against the institution's governance. Towards the end of the 1960s, the artists associated with the museum began to critique and actively intervene with the institution's structural operation and governance. The first artist-led union – Artist Workers' Coalition (AWC) began to issue a number of demands directed at *MoMA*, calling for a structural reform and a 'democratisation' of the museum.²² Greeted by silence from *MoMA*, AWC took active action against the museum and began a series of protests inside the exhibition rooms, including the museum's garden, lobby and gallery rooms.²³

AWC's anti-institutional and anti-war protests, held within *MoMA*'s premises, introduced a yet unfamiliar dimension of sound inside white cube spaces – an amplified soundscape of the protesting crowd. This to an extent transgressed the rigid boundaries of the white cube ideological structure. Even if momentarily, it turned the museum's autonomous site into a sounding social ground, where collective voices interconnected and unsettled the stagnant architecture of the institution. As Julia Bryan-Wilson argues: 'The AWC's significance extended beyond its short life span, as it

²² Julia Bryan-Wilson writes: 'the demands – including planks about greater racial and gender diversity within museums – demonstrate how the question of artists' rights and control over their work in the institution moved rapidly into other activist concerns' (Bryan-Wilson 2011, 18).

²³ On March 22nd, 1969, for example, more than twenty artists gathered at *MoMA* handing out free fake admission passes designed by Joseph Kosuth with the words 'Art Workers', hoping that the museum would consider the AWC's 'free admission for all' request. Other interventions included out-loud readings of the group demands, flyer distributions on site as well as anti-war protests in front of paintings.

brought together a disparate group of artists to rethink the role of the institution and the autonomy of art in a time of social crisis' (Bryan-Wilson 2011, 26).

The entrance of video, as practiced by self-identifying artists during the 1960s and 1970s, contributed towards the expansion of the aural architectures of the gallery space. The performances, sonic and audiovisual artworks of Alison Knowles, Joan Jonas, Charlotte Moorman, Steina Vasulka, Howardena Pindell, Lis Rhodes, VALIE EXPORT, Carolee Schneemann, Yoko Ono, Guerrilla Girls, Dara Birnbaum, Martha Rosler, once situated *inside* the gallery architectures, began to unsettle the modern art institution's ocular-led and patriarchal administration. The synchronous recording of image and sound meant that women artists would now be able to record both moving image and sound and play it back in gallery spaces in simultaneity. According to Rosalind Krauss, the 'instant success' of video technology within art practice became a tool for dismantling 'modernism's medium specificity' and establishing what Krauss calls a 'post-medium' approach to making and experiencing art (Krauss 2000, 31). Video, however, not only reawakened and mobilised participants as such, but it also incorporated the sound of those who in the history of art had been previously quietened or excluded – the voices and bodies of women. In other words, with the audiovisual signal granted by video technology, the voices of self-identifying women entered the primarily male-run gallery spaces. Their sound was used as a political tool to undermine the visual arts institution's gendered inequality.

When creating avant-garde video works during the 1960s and 1970s, Joan Jonas utilised audiovisual technology as an attempt to escape bodily inhibition and disrupt male governed spaces. The soundtracks in *Disturbances* (1974) and *Vertical Roll* (1972), for example, served as forms of noisy interruption through which the artist is confronting the representation of female identities, their fragmentation and manipulation. Through sound, Joan Jonas exposed her struggle to reclaim her *whole* body and with that, her identity. I read Jonas' early works as active acts, as statements against the patriarchal authority,

against the processes of gendered dislocation and against institutionalisation that continues to repress certain bodies just because they are deemed, for one reason or another, wrong bodies.

A British artist Lis Rhodes, on the other hand, used film as a way of transporting sound into physical exhibition environments. Celluloid film, for Lis Rhodes, served as an auditory instrument for expanding the listeners' perception when experiencing sounding installations in physical gallery settings. The artist would transform film stock into scores, which she would compose using hand-drawn sound, inscribed directly onto celluloid film, a method called *optical sound*, this way expanding the potential of the visual medium and obstructing its representational nature. When thinking *with* and *through* sound, Rhodes believed that by interfering with the heightened visuality of film and challenging its limitations, specifically, by inscribing sound into an image, sound would become visible and felt in the experiential space. Rhodes' artwork, *Light Music* (1975), for example, demonstrates how sound can be experienced beyond the screen frame. The artist positioned two film projectors in the opposite parts of a darkened exhibition room, with each projector facing each other. Both audiovisual machines would emit black and white minimal graphic shapes composed using the optical sound technique, allowing sound and sound-induced light to fill the architectures of the space. Sound, when in operation, would travel from one wall to another, interfering with the visual objects and the experiencing subjects in time, this way extending itself into the experiential space and transforming the exhibition room into a pulsating sounding sculpture.

Rhodes used this technique as a way of subverting the ideological position of the cinematic apparatus – the industrial and the mental machinery that would condition the participant's way experiencing music and art. For Rhodes, the process of sonifying the visual medium has always played a political function. As a feminist working in a primarily male dominant field, Rhodes confronted the ingrained issues of gender and spectatorship within the arts and film tradition. She argued that art, the way it has been practised and understood,

has been 'directional' and with that, full of patriarchal lines and walls, which has led to an 'inflexible chain' (Rhodes 1979, 120). As a creator, she refused to limit her conceptual visions when imagining sound or making sound visible, even with the knowledge that she would actively obstruct the ingrained cinematic order and contest the conventions of musical composition. As a feminist, she used her tactile and embodied experiences of seeing sound as a way of offering her experiences as truth and extending our perception of sound.

The creative and political work of a performance artist and cellist Charlotte Moorman's also contributed towards the expansion of the gallery in perceptual and institutional terms during the 1960s and 1970s. Moorman's work, inspired by the Fluxus movement, focused on the questions of body, sexuality and play. Whilst her practice emerged alongside the second-wave feminist ideology and creative practice, according to Joan Rothfuss, Moorman was not necessarily 'an obvious protofeminist figure' (Rothfuss 2014, 4). The writer continues: '[...] Moorman never understood herself or her work as feminist. Coquetry was second nature to her, and some of her feminist peers feel that she allowed herself to be used by the male artists with whom she collaborated' (ibid.). Her long-term collaborator Nam Jun Paik called the artist his instrument,²⁴ whilst the founder of Fluxus Jurgis Mačiūnas placed Moorman on a "Flux-blacklist" for performing naked.

Whilst not a traditional feminist, I would consider Moorman's work as sonic feminist acts. Even when side-lined or physically refused entrance from the gallery,²⁵ the artist pushed the boundaries of the arts institution. In 1963, she founded the Annual Avant Garde Festival of New York running performances, concerts and exhibitions in parks and various non-gallery venues, including

²⁴ Moorman explained: 'Paik thinks of me as a work of his, and I'm very honoured about the whole thing' (Quoted in Rogers 2013, 174). Holly Rogers, however, continues to point out that elsewhere, Moorman presents herself as a more equal part of the collaboration (Rogers 2013).

²⁵ Jurgis Maciunas once announced that he would not 'cooperate with any exhibit, gallery, concert hall or individual that ever included her in any program or show, past and future'. For more, read: Harry Ruhé, *Fluxus, the Most Radical and Experimental Art Movement of the Sixties* (Amsterdam: "A," 1979).

the Staten Island Ferry. When performing *inside* gallery spaces, the artist retained her wilfulness and her tenacious character. For example, the *Opera Sextronique* (1967) and *TV Bra for Living Sculpture* (1969) performances, developed in collaboration with Nam June Paik, consisted of Moorman either appearing topless whilst playing cello and tv monitors or playing instruments whilst performing a striptease. The artist was consequently arrested and convicted of indecent exposure (Rogers 2013, 174).

For Moorman, video was an important form of self-expression. It enabled her to blur the power dynamics and the boundaries between the art and music institution, the artist and the audience. When premiering *Concerto for TV Cello*, for example, at the Galeria Bonino (1971), the artist used TVs as an extension of the cello: 'I don't make conventional cello sound, I make TV Cello sounds', the artist wrote (quoted in Rogers 2013, 175). According to Rogers, this performance 'destroyed the tradition gulf between performer and audience, activating the neutral concert space by making it primary material for the concert itself' (Rogers 2013, 175). In other words, the sound mediated by Moorman's video performance mobilised and activated the gallery space.

Other artists' video practice, including Steina Vasulka's *Violin Power* (1970-1978), Dara Birnbaum's *Technology/Transformation: Wonder Woman* (1978-1979), demonstrate how the auditory element of video could be used as a political tool – a form of protest as well as a potential liberation from the confinements of the institutional arts container. Birnbaum used the technology of video to address the gendered boundaries of representation in popular culture, whilst Vasulka questioned the predefined assumptions about seeing and hearing. For Vasulka, video also served as an auditory instrument, enabling the artist to transform images into sounding objects, consequently subverting the sensory hierarchal order, and with that, the gallery space's ocularcentric order.

Video, in this sense, contributed towards the political mobilisation of women, allowing artists to use the now economically accessible technology to speak out against the inequalities in public life. As argued by Catherine Elwes: 'The

hidden experiences that women had suppressed now entered the public realm of art and these stories were offered, not as monuments of individual artistic egos, but in the hope that other women would be inspired to add their own accounts and promote the process of political awakening' (Elwes 2005, 40). Guerrilla girls – an anonymous group of female artists, is a lived example of this precise political unrest. The members of the Guerrilla girls have been running exhibitions, performances and interventions and performances in New York since 1985. *The Night the Palladium Apologized* (1985, Palladium), *Guerrilla Girls Review the Whitney* (1987, Clocktower) exhibitions used different forms of artistic media, including video, to confront gender and racial inequality in the arts.²⁶

The work of the 1960s-1970s video artists and female-led artist groups demonstrates how the audiovisuality of video inspired women to resist isolation and individualisation and instead offered activism and collectivity. Elwes continues: 'women could begin to use the association of video with facticity to develop political campaigns' (ibid.). In that sense, the new political trajectory, as induced by women's sound, began to emerge and consequently transform white cube gallery settings. Rather than restraining women's voices to domestic intimate environments, 'often in one another's kitchen's, to exchange stories of their lives and re-interpret them' (Elwes 2005, 39), with video, women's struggles would be amplified and played out in gallery rooms, making it increasingly difficult for those in power to quieten or remove them.

This project acknowledges the importance of the 1960s-1970s women's video art in conceptual and political terms and situates my own practice as well as my thinking in relation to their practice. My art, in this sense, serves as an extension of, for example, Moorman's uncompromising approach when dealing with art institutions, or Lis Rhodes' conceptualisation of the

²⁶ The group has been criticised since its inception for racialised tokenism and whitewashing, with some artists of colour abandoning the movement. 'Alma Thomas' describes her experience as 'being used as window dressing' (Quoted in McCartney 2018, 134). For more, read: McCartney, Nicola. 2018. *Death of the Artist: Art World Dissidents and Their Alternative Identities*. Bloomsbury Publishing.

relationship between the image and sound. These histories, in this sense, contributes towards what I call sonic feminism. My project, however, is not solely embedded in feminist sound or video art as such. Instead, it uses my artworks as points of conceptual departure – a form of laboratory – through which the embodiment of sound when exhibiting and experiencing sounding artworks in contemporary gallery settings is investigated in theoretical terms. When *doing* sonic feminism in the context of the contemporary white cube, thus, I turn to both – sounding video practice as well as theories around embodiment and feminist phenomenology, to understand how sound is able to subvert the production of space inside the white cube.

The histories and practices of women’s video art demonstrates that sounding artworks, when exhibited in the gallery, have the potential to liberate the experiencing bodies from their disciplinary boundaries, allowing bodies to be guided by aurality in a more chaotic and turbulent manner, consequently reducing the power of the ocularcentric governance and re-introducing space as a potential social and lively ground, rather than a site of control or confinement. The historical examples, in line with my own sounding art and feminist phenomenology practice, confront the conception that the white cube, as an architecture as well as an institution, can operate as exclusively visual, ocularcentric or fixed. Whether it is through political echoes, technology or feminist experimentations, it adopts noises and rhythms from the outside lived world into the architectures of the white exhibition room, consequently existing as a form of temporal flux, not a static or decontextualised entity.

1.6. Uncovering the Sound of the Gallery

In this chapter I turned to the history of the white cube gallery in order to grasp how the ideology of this particular exhibition aesthetic emerged and infiltrated our way of *being with* art in institutional art gallery spaces today. I have discovered that since the emergence of the white exhibition spaces during modernism, the white cube, as an ideological construct, has

transformed exhibition spaces into sites led by the ocularcentric, rational, and as identified, patriarchal, eye. My aim here, however, has been to demonstrate that the white cube, even when presumed as a *purely* visual construct, has always carried a level of sound. Exhibition rooms, like any space, have always operated as audiovisual compounds. The aural dimension of the gallery, as revealed in this chapter, has only been increasing in its velocity as artworks, bodies and spaces have continued to expand in their aurality. Despite the ongoing attempts to bring sound through 'non-traditional' exhibitions into white exhibition settings, the potential of sound, however, in socio-political and perceptual terms, continues to be diminished by contemporary art institutions. This historiographic survey has allowed me to discover that in order to address the issue of the white cube in contemporary terms accordingly, we must turn to sonic feminism. We must apply practice-led approaches, specifically, sounding artistic practice and experiential methods, in order to reconsider the gendered, ocularcentric and autonomous limitations of the white cube as felt and experienced today.

This chapter, therefore, sought to present an urgency in addressing the white cube project and its problematic legacy in relation to contemporary art museums and galleries methodologically. It demonstrated that even though the ideological limitations of the project have been critically addressed in the field of visual cultures and contemporary art debates (O'Doherty 1986, Filipovic 2014), the institutional apparatus of the white cube continues to affect the governance and operation of gallery and museum spaces today. Institutions such as *MoMA* in New York, *Tate Modern* and *White Cube* in London, *Museum of Contemporary Art* in Tokyo and well as numerous others, still follow the same white cube aesthetic, offering white walls, artificial lighting and little to no furnishing.

White Cube Bermondsey only evidences how contemporary art institutions still follow the modernism-inspired logic, creating spaces for the eye rather than other senses, accommodating certain bodies whilst isolating others, this way diminishing our sensorial and socio-political potential when *being with*

art. After all, the name of the gallery – *White Cube* – says a lot. The institution evidently prides itself for following the modernist ideology and continues to build upon the white cube project’s mission. Thus, despite the critique, despite the art practice diversifying, despite technology advancing and becoming louder, despite spaces increasing in velocity through consumerism and bodies entering it, despite alternative spaces opening up and confronting the institutionalism of the white cube project, the white cube, as an ideological construct and an architectural structure, as it stands now, still remains a problem. It continues to be ‘the standard’ dictating our way of displaying and experiencing art. By excluding the spatio-temporality of the outside world, by quieting certain bodies as well as their historical, gendered positions, *White Cube Bermondsey*, for example, still promotes its architectures as ‘ideal’ – a universal patriarchal self-governing ground, one that does not need to account for or connect to anything that operates beyond its walls, both in abstract and material terms. Instead, it maintains its own world, and with that, its own authoritative system. The white cube is ‘the common sense’. Thus, it is our task as women thinkers and practitioners to confront it.

The next chapter actively turns towards aurality and considers how sound – as a form of thinking and practice – can be brought into the white cube debate. It connects the proposed research problem – the ideology of the white cube – with the fields of art practice, sound studies, spatial theory, aural embodiment and gender studies. Whilst navigating through the different fields, it aims to offer a more interdisciplinary route for exploring the proposed issue. It considers sound and aurality as potential theoretical and creative instruments for reconsidering the institution, including its spatial and temporal structure as well as its gendered regime. In other words, when building a case against the ideology of the white cube using sound, this thesis does not aim to reiterate the pre-existent critiques of the issue that already exist in the field of contemporary art and visual cultures, but to find a way of thinking and theorising institutional art spaces in more constructive interdisciplinary terms, specifically, by combining *theory* and *practice*. I

propose that if we *think* and *act* with and through expanded notions of sound and aurality when being in ocular-led settings, we might be able to reconsider the white cube frame beyond its ideological limitations and 'open up' its walls towards more expanded sensorial, social and political domains.

2.

Aural Thinking

2.1. Introduction

Why should we turn towards aurality when addressing the ideological limitations of the white cube? To follow Oliveros thinking, aurality allows us to consider concepts as reciprocal and co-connecting. It forms relations between the sounding *and* sounded, the ear and hearing *as well as* the oral and speaking. Aurality, thus, is about connectedness between the speaker and the listener, between the world sounding and the world sounded, between the world lived and the world experienced. Because of its reciprocal nature, I turn towards aural thinking as a way of subverting the presupposed divisions promoted by the white cube project and the discourses attached to it. For example, thinking with and through sound can help us to reconsider the question of bodies in gallery spaces, specifically, how we connect with sounding art beyond the eye. It also allows us to explore how sound contributes towards the production of the gallery, specifically, its spatio-temporal and social structure. Aural thinking, thus, enables us to question the gallery beyond the white cube ideology and in more expanded terms.

Our understanding of how aurality in white cube gallery settings shapes us has so far been minimal. Whilst sound has been discussed in different cultural and socio-political contexts, when it comes to the issue of sound in contemporary art institutions, the theoretical input remains limited. In the field of sound studies, many debates so far have been tied to sound art practices and soundscape studies, leaving little room for addressing the potential of *all*-sound: the sound of technology, voice, noise, bodies and the outside world when *being with* art in gallery settings and museums. The question of gender and gendered forms of aural embodiment in visually-led

art exhibition sites is also yet to be addressed by existing scholarship. When it comes to the field of visual cultures, the question of aurality also remains under-developed.

This chapter demonstrates the impossibility of experiencing sounding art in white cube exhibition settings without sound. It presents the importance of considering *how* the sound of the artwork, the experiencing bodies as well as the museum/gallery space affects our overall aesthetic experience as well as the production of the gallery apparatus as a whole using theory *and* practice. The contemporary white cube, as proposed already, carries its own unique soundscape, thus, it is our task to consider its aural dimension by experiencing sound and accounting for its perceptual and socio-political effects when *being with art*.

When thinking aurally, this thesis actively avoids disciplinary bracketing and refuses to frame the gallery as purely visual and instead considers it as an inherently *audiovisual* and, consequently, a multisensorially experienced construction. In other words, here I propose that to think aurally is to think in interdisciplinary terms. It means to connect different fields and allow them to communicate and intersect. Following this approach, in this chapter I will explore how aurality has been theorised alongside the discussions of space, technology, art and experience. Whilst navigating through the theoretical fields of sound studies, feminist theory, social geography and embodiment, I will identify limitations and gaps in the aforementioned disciplines in order to provide a structure for creating a productive conceptual territory from which the issue of displaying and experiencing sound in contemporary gallery spaces can be initiated. Because of the interdisciplinary nature of the subject matter proposed, I will steer my discussions towards the 'sounding' dimension of the fields. In other words, I will deliberately divert from the visuocentric discussions and instead I explore sound in the context of aural architecture, sounding spaces, technologically mediated sounding art as well as the embodiment of sound.

The aim here is to consider how sound, as a mode of thinking and practice, can be utilised theoretically and methodologically when confronting the ocularcentrism, patriarchy and the timeless autonomy of the white cube. Arriving to the issue using aural thinking, I will consider the following:

- 1) No visual art can exist outside sound, whilst no sounding art can be excluded from visibility. Every artwork carries a unique soundscape *and* landscape. Sound and vision, therefore, cannot and should not be split or separated.
- 2) With the inception of video – the first audiovisual technology into the so-called ‘visual’ gallery spaces, aurality in gallery spaces becomes amplified.
- 3) The sound of women’s video art disturbs the gallery’s gendered, autonomous and timeless character. It expands the gallery’s perceptual and spatio-temporal potential.
- 4) The gallery space is full of sound or what I call *all*-sound: the sound of bodies, artworks, technology, the gallery space and the outside world, which, when *being with* women’s video art in white exhibition rooms, confronts the white cube’s rational and patriarchal regime.

2.1.1. What is Aural Thinking?

Aural thinking, or what Bernd Herzogenrath calls sonic thinking, is a method for connecting concepts and practices through sound, where ‘research and art, theory and practice’ can coalesce and become ‘coextensive’ (Herzogenrath 2017, 10). For him, sonic thinking is a form of becoming, which materialises through being *with* and *by means of* sound and connecting sound with other forms of thinking in time (Herzogenrath 2017, 8). Aural thinking is not a closed or pre-determined mode of thinking; instead, it is open-ended and expansive. It transforms according to the lived social and political shifts in the world, which change and re-form over time. In that sense, aural thinking is temporally and spatially active – it is a metamorphic form of thinking.

My theorisation of aural thinking in the context of this project arrives from a feminist point of view. It does not come what Le Guin refers to as ‘the father tongue’ (Le Guin 1989, 147-160) – from predetermined, claimed or unquestionable truth or the all-knowing ‘wisdom’, but instead, it arrives from the experiences of *being with* and *by means* of sound in the lived world. Aural thinking, therefore, is conceptualised as a lived and an embodied form of thinking. It does not seek sensory exclusivity; it does not operate outside of the visual forms of thinking. In a way, it could be argued that aural thinking is actually an *audiovisual* and *multisensory* form of thinking as it does aim to separate the thinker from the visual world but instead it connects her with it through sound. Whether a thinker is vocalising her ideas through speech, communicating her sonic thoughts through music or art, immersing her body in an environment or writing a note – she uses her body to perform as an aural thinker; she is immersed bodily in thinking *with* and *through* sound whilst still being connected with other senses, including vision.

By turning towards aural thinking when approaching the issue of the white cube project, I propose that thinking *with* and *through* sound can expand our paths to developing new knowledge beyond the limitations of the rational and ocularcentric modes of thinking. Aural thinking is social and relational, it does not aim to divide or determine. Aurality travels and connects itself with visuality, consequently expanding our ability to experience and translate our encounters into new knowledge. By challenging the unquestionable truth, aural thinking enables us to offer our experience as truth as lived and as connected together (Le Guin, 1989, 151).

Aural thinking, however, as a mode of enquiry, is yet to establish its ‘place’ within the field of arts and humanities. Whilst thinking through sound has provided the very much-needed ‘sonic turn’, the aural equivalent to visual forms of thinking, as Jim Drobnick argues, is yet to be established in the academy (Drobnick 2004, 10).²⁷ Drobnick, however, is positive about the

²⁷ Whilst Drobnick’s conceptualisation of the ‘sonic turn’ was made over a decade ago and the scholarly field in sound studies has become expanded, I argue that there is scope for the field to grow further.

turn. He argues that by shifting away from visuocentric forms of thinking, scholars have increasingly used sound as ‘a site for analysis, a medium for aesthetic engagement, and a model for theorisation’ (ibid.). In other words, with an ‘increasing significance of the acoustic’ (ibid.), the discussions around contemporary cultural and political issues have become more interdisciplinary.

The critical and conceptual inquiry into sound has become an undeniable force in recent decades.²⁸ Jonathan Sterne confirms: ‘there are new histories of almost every imaginable sound medium, a pile of new periodisations of electronic music and sound art, several excellent reconsiderations of hearing and deafness, and yet another pile of books that turn to sound to understand particular problems in new ways’ (Sterne 2012, 11). This, of course, provides a new productive avenue for alternative forms of knowledge production, outweighing the limitations of commonplace logocentric and ocularcentric epistemologies. Whilst I recognise the importance of the field and its contribution to political, philosophical and social science debates so far, I simultaneously suggest that aural thinking, in its socially open and relational form, is still in its embryonic stage and needs to be considered with more attention and care in the context of the visual cultures, philosophy and gender studies, amongst other fields.

There are a number of reasons why I call for a further expansion of the aforementioned fields. When it comes to the question of aurality and gender and the gendered experience of sound in galleries and museums, for example, critical discussions remain eerily absent. A few recent publications have addressed the issue of sound in gallery settings (Hegarty 2014, Kelly 2011, 2017, Rogers 2013), however, these accounts have consistently neglected the gendered aspects of inhabiting such institutions. Whilst the experience of sounding visual art, including video art and moving image art has been

²⁸ Numerous recent publications have considered aurality through historiographic (Halliday 2013, Kahn 1999, Schwartz 2011, Sterne 2003, E. Thompson 2004), political (Attali 1985, Gilbert and Pearson 1999, Goodman 2012, Lacey 2013, Siisiäinen 2015), and philosophical (Bonnet 2016, Cox 2011, Kane 2014, Nancy and Wills 2007, M. Thompson and Biddle 2013) positions. A review of the field is beyond the scope of this project; however, it is important to note the proliferation of the field in interdisciplinary terms.

addressed from a position of spectatorship and bodily participation in visual cultures (Trodd 2011, Mondloch 2011), once again, the aural dimension of one's bodily experience and its effect on bodies has not yet been thoroughly explored.

The academic field of architecture is in a similar position. Apart from a few publications challenging the notions of bodies, sound and space, in which bodies are primarily theorised in universalist terms (Blessner and Salter 2009, Grueneisen 2003, Fowler 2017, Leitner 1998) these publications have relied on the acoustics and psychoacoustics, music, soundscape and sonic arts debates rather than the issues of gendered experience. Rob Stone's *Audition: Architecture and Aurality* (2015) serves as an exception in that it expands considerations of architecture and sound by shifting the analysis towards more interdisciplinary domains. Through his readings of film, music and social spaces, he presents sound as a spatial agent capable of shaping our perceptual understanding of architecture. Stone's research, however, does not consider the issues of exhibiting and experiencing sound in museum and gallery architectures; how certain aural architectures potentially limit or condition one's ability to experience art also remains unresolved.

My project is a quest to address this particular academic gap. Using sound as a point of methodological and theoretical departure, I ask how sounding art – specifically sounding video art – exhibited and experienced in the white cube, affects the experience of museum and gallery architectures. I will specifically address video art created by self-identifying women and examine the broader socio-political operations of the white cube including gendered relations. In order to situate my inquiry accordingly in the field, I continue by forming a critical review of aural thinking in the context of debates around space, sounding art and aural phenomenology.

2.2. Sounding Spaces

2.2.1. The Histories of Experiencing Sounding Spaces

Sound and space have always been interconnected. According to architect Colin Ripley: 'No sound exists outside space; no space is every truly silent. Sound and space mutually reinforce one another in our perception' (Ripley 2007, 2). This proposition implies that architectural dwellings, whether through acoustics or bodily presence, influence our consciousness. The existing studies in archaeoacoustics²⁹ so far have demonstrated that the perceptual potential of sound was already considered in ancient architectural constructions: 'the ancient times were not silent and noiseless. [...]', Debertolis, Mizdrak and Savolainen propose (2013). The writers suggest that echoes and resonances played a crucial role in the architectural planning of ancient sites. Ancient buildings' acoustic character, for example, would determine the purpose of the dwelling: '[...] for example, rituals, music, or speaking performances' (ibid.). Depending on the buildings' acoustic character, each space would be adapted to serve a specific purpose as a way of enhancing one's perception of the surrounding architectural setting. In the context of ancient sites, as Debertolis, Mizdrak and Savolainen propose, sound would 'have a direct effect on the human body' (ibid.). Their argument implies that sound has been utilised as a tool for heightening one's senses since the beginnings of architecture.

²⁹ Archaeoacoustics, or acoustic archaeology, is still a relatively new field. It exists as an innovative methodological tool for learning about the history of prehistoric and ancient sites. It acts as a much-needed form of 'experiential archaeology', providing significant insights into the history of sound in architectural terms. In Rafael Suarez, Alicia Alonso and Juan J. Sendra account, it informs us how spaces of the past were experienced and utilised. Archaeoacoustics differs from most other scholarly research into sound and architecture as it offers something new and experimental approaches to studying sound: it utilises acoustic measurements to investigate archaeological sites, consequently extending our understanding of history through sound (Scarre and Lawson 2006). However, as Annie Goh (2017) argues, the field has limitations. It considers the histories of sound through the perspective of a white male body, questioning what can be learnt about spaces through a white man's ear, not really considering the intricacies of intersectionality, for example.

Outside archaeoacoustics, most scholars investigating the history of sound in relation to space have primarily relied on the debates around music, often not paying enough attention to the architectural sites' acoustic effects on bodies. Deborah Howard and Laura Moretti's research into Venetian churches (2009), however, demonstrates an alternative route for studying the phenomenon of sound in relation to architecture. Using acoustic estimations, the authors demonstrate how the spatial character of sound is able to influence certain musical as well as social conventions. By providing a quantitative study into the acoustics of specific historical sites, the writers have extended the music/architecture debate and considered how bodies respond to architectural acoustics. Howard and Moretti's historiographic project brought 'sound to its spatial context' (Howard and Moretti 2009, 196), however, their research remains tied to a specific historical period, specifically Renaissance, and does not consider contemporary architectural sites. Whilst such experiential approaches to investigating the history of sound and space are useful as they provide an insight into how spaces *could* have sounded, I propose that further alternative methodologies for discussing sound and space in more contemporary contexts are required. Specifically, in this project I am interested in exploring how white cube architectural design – white walls, no furnishing, hard flooring, technologically mediated sounding artworks and reverberant acoustics – frames and conditions the bodies of women through aural architecture.

There is a whole academic field dedicated to spatial acoustics and architecture (Thompson 2004, Erlmann 2010, Long 2014, Maekawa and Lord 2011). When questioning the timeless, autonomous and the patriarchal nature of 'visual' white cube gallery settings, however, I move away from the traditional approaches to studying architectural acoustics. Whilst acknowledging that the studies into acoustic design have been valuable, for the purpose of this project I instead develop a qualitative account of lived bodily experiences of contemporary institutional exhibition spaces from a gendered position. In other words, I turn towards feminist writings and form a critical account of a gendered embodiment of sound in the context of the

white cube. I am specifically interested in how institutional art spaces are embodied from the position of those who have socio-historically been conditioned and framed as 'feminine' bodies – as irrational, too subjective and untrustworthy (Carson 1995). In this project, I primarily focus on the white cube's historical categorisations of gender within the man/woman domain. I acknowledge, however, that the intersectional complexities of these categories are more convoluted and exceed the white cube's prescribed gender regime. In order to escape the institution's historically inscribed divide, however, it is important to begin by critiquing how the white cube has continued to conceive gender and condition its power dimensions. Thus, when considering bodies, I will begin by turning towards the bodies of self-identifying women. By accounting for *our* sonic experience, I will aim to form a better grasp of how spaces constitute our experience of sound and how our gendered bodies, when sounding and sounded, contribute towards expansion of the architectures of white cube spaces in relation to socially prescribed gendered categories. The hope here is to escape the white cube's prescribed gender binary and explore the potential of expanded aural experience as potentially post-gendered.

2.2.2. Aural Architecture

How does sound and space reinforce each other? In *Spaces Speak, Are you Listening? Experiencing Aural Architecture* (2009), Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter propose that our experience of architecture is not purely visual, but also auditory. We rely on our ears and eyes to navigate through spaces. In other words, we navigate *audiovisually* rather than just purely visually. Their research encourages us to consider spaces beyond 'exclusively [...] visual aspects of a structure' (Blesser and Salter 2009, 1). As soon as we enter an architectural dwelling, as the writers suggest, we are in what they call aural architecture: 'The composite of numerous surfaces, objects, and geometries in a complicated environment creates an aural architecture. As we hear how sounds from multiple sources interact with the various spatial elements, we assign an identifiable personality to the aural architecture, in

much the same way we interpret an echo as the aural personality of a wall' (Blesser and Salter 2009, 2). In Blesser and Salter's view, aural architecture is integral and equal to visual architecture: 'they reinforce each other' (Blesser and Salter 2009, 3). Whilst arguing for an audiovisual unison in aesthetic and social terms, they simultaneously note that both aurality and vision can also produce conflicting responses, which are yet to be negotiated and disentangled (ibid.). By questioning how we *hear* and *listen* to spaces, rather how we *view* them, Blesser and Salter successfully challenge the visually orientated conception of architecture and extend the field of aural perception into a new domain. The concept of aural architecture is useful for addressing the ocularcentric nature of the white cube project. By tuning our ears as well as the rest of our bodies towards the *visual* gallery space, we might be able to expand our perceptual awareness and our ability to embody the space through sound *and* vision rather than just the eye.

Blesser and Salter's account of sound and space contributes to the field of sound studies, perception and architecture. As the writers note themselves: 'we know much about measuring acoustic processes and sensory detection, but less about the phenomenology of aural space' (Blesser and Salter 2009, 10). The authors, however, consider perception in universal terms, consequently bypassing the issue of gendered spaces and gendered listening. Whilst they acknowledge that 'aural architecture can also have a social meaning' and to an extent 'determine the experiential consequences of spatial attributes' (Blesser and Salter 2009, 3), their reading of 'sociality' remains limited. They fail to account for the social inequalities and the power structures that determine *how* certain bodies engage with aural spaces. As already argued in chapter one, white cube exhibition spaces since modernism have presented themselves as gendered. They have prioritised and accommodated some bodies, mostly the bodies of white men (including the sound of men), whilst excluding and limiting the bodies of women. Therefore, although Blesser and Salter introduce a phenomenological structure for defining aural spatial awareness, including sensation, perception and affect,

a more thorough feminist critique of experiencing acoustic architecture needs to be introduced.

Blessner and Salter's account of aural architecture could be read as a continuation of Marshall McLuhan's work. McLuhan introduced the idea of what he calls 'acoustic space' (McLuhan and McLuhan 1988) as a way of critiquing the West's obsession with visuality. He argued that since the invention of the technology of print, modern culture has been directed to think in more linear and forward-facing terms. Visual space, in McLuhan's view: 'is an infinite container, linear and continuous, homogeneous and uniform' (McLuhan 1988, 32), whilst acoustic space, on the other hand, is fluid and omnidirectional (ibid.). For McLuhan, acoustic space is lawless and disobedient. It is anarchical because it does not conform to the laws assigned by the eye: 'Auditory space has no favoured focus. It's a sphere without fixed boundaries, space made by the thing itself, not space containing the thing. It is not a pictorial space, boxed in, but dynamic, always in flux, creates its own dimensions. [...]' (Quoted in Genosko 2005, 66–67). By comparing acoustic spaces to forms of disorder, however, the theorist aligns the acoustic to pre-culture, whilst the visual to culture. As argued by Seth Kim-Cohen, McLuhan's acoustic space signifies anthropological primitivism: 'nature-in-the-raw inhabited by non-literate people' (Kim-Cohen 2009, 93), placing sound as a second-class citizen: 'Always in vision's shadow, sound must shout to be heard' (ibid.).

By creating a divide between visual and acoustic space, McLuhan presents us with a dualist and a determinist argument. In his view, acoustic and visual space cannot exist in unison and instead are in a permanent conflict with one another, a suggestion that also echoes in sound ecologist R. Murray Schafer's writing:

Auditory space is very different from visual space – we are always at the edge of visual space, looking into it with the eye. But we are always at the centre of auditory space, listening out with the ear. Thus, visual

awareness is not the same as aural awareness. Visual awareness is unidirectionally forward; aural awareness is omnidirectionally centred' (Quoted in Genosko 2005, 72).

This divide, however, is not as separated as both McLuhan and Schafer portray. As Blesser and Salter's main proposition suggests, spaces are always perceived both visually and aurally – they are audiovisual and thus, multisensory. Even though McLuhan believed that a removal from visual space and a return towards auditory space was necessary, it is important to question whether diminishing and removing all of the social and cultural information that has been accumulated since the establishment of visual space, whether it is visual, audible or tactile, is even possible.

In this project, I argue that this division of the sensory, as advocated by McLuhan and Schafer only contributes towards a withholding of aurality as a secondary element in relation to the audiovisual complex. It obstructs multisensory experiences to be entirely enacted and perceived, thus not permitting a whole-body experience to emerge. Whilst I agree that a call for more expanded forms of listening to environments is necessary, I believe that the visual attributes of spaces, whether in their social, perceptual or political contexts, should not be disregarded – they also contribute towards our experience of art. With this in mind, I echo Jonathan Sterne's approach and refuse to follow the same 'audiovisual litany' (Sterne 2003, 18).³⁰

I propose that when learning about our understanding of spaces in social or embodied terms, we have to think beyond the mono-sensory. In line with the science fiction writer Ursula Le Guin, who explored the potential of listening and speaking in more holistic terms in her *Bryn Mawr Commencement Address* in 1986, in this project I reject the dualisms that have been continuously advocated and reinforced by men who speak 'with forked

³⁰ Sterne argues: '[...] seeing and hearing are still often associated with a set of presumed and somewhat clichéd attributes, a configuration I call *the audiovisual litany*', including hearing as omnidirectional whilst visuality directional, hearing immersing its listeners whilst visuality offers us perspective (Sterne 2012, 9).

tongue' and with 'dichotomies' (Le Guin 1989, 149). When thinking aurally, thus, I aim to think openly. I refuse to split and divide concepts and ideas into 'subject/object, self/other, mind/body, dominant/submissive, active/passive, Man/Nature, man/woman, and so on' (Le Guin 1989, 149). When considering sound in the context of the white cube project, I turn to aural thinking as a way of confronting these dichotomies and any essentialist approaches to the issue around bodies, sound and space.

In chapter one I demonstrated how modern and contemporary art spaces continue to follow a particular ideology, one that has been embedded in ocularcentrism, white patriarchy and rational forms of exhibition display. Arriving from my embodied experience of installing and experiencing *13.1.91* at Surrey Gallery, I offered my subjective experience as truth – as an act of sonic feminism – and discovered that the soundscape of the white exhibition spaces divides, splits, excludes, removes and silences. In other words, it genders.

According to Maura Reilly's report published on *Artnews* in 2015, gender inequality, whilst more difficult to pin down or detect, is still present in the arts sector (2015). In the context of *MoMA*, for example, Reilly writes: 'in 2004, when the museum opened its new building, with a reinstatement of the permanent collection spanning the years 1880 to 1970, of the 410 works on display in the fourth- and fifth-floor galleries, only 16 were by women. That's 4 percent. Even fewer works were by artists of color. At my most recent count, in April 2015, 7 percent of the works on display were by women' (2015). This report evidences that the voices of those speak with the forked tongue are still louder than others. And whilst a number of positive initiatives, including *MoMA's* Women's Project (MWP), have been emerging over the course of the last decades confronting and reassessing 'the traditionally masculinist canon' (Reilly 2015), the issue of gendered silencing in the context of public contemporary art institutions as well as private art galleries is evidently still an issue.

When addressing the ideology of the white cube from a position of sound and gender, I propose a more environmental route embedded in sonic feminist thinking and practice. I acknowledge that the white cube ideology places its subjects into 'feminine' and 'masculine' frames, prioritising and accommodating the latter. In this project, however, my mission is to subvert this patriarchal binary. In other words, whilst arguing against the androcentric split, here I turn to sonic feminism and present the need to move beyond the historical categorisations of gender and the gendered power dimensions assigned by the history of modern art spaces and consider how sound can potentially dismantle gender norms, so that a more open way of *being with* art can manifest.

2.2.3. Sounding Gallery Space

The question of sound in gallery spaces, as the existing literature shows, remains underdeveloped. Most of the debates so far have focused on 'sound art' spaces and practices (Connor 2003, Kahn 1999, LaBelle 2015, Leitner 1999, Licht and O'Rourke 2007) and soundscape debates (Schafer 1977, Schafer 1993, E. Thompson 2004, Westerkamp 2006), not necessarily considering the experience of sound in the so-called visual art contexts or environmental sound inside gallery architectures. In this project I shift away from the discussions that limit themselves to sound art and consider aurality in contemporary gallery spaces in more expanded terms. I propose that it is not only sound art that 'spreads and leaks, like odour' (Connor 2011, 129) but also video apparatus, noises, voices and the technological hum – all of the sounding elements that enter gallery spaces. In other words, it is the 'sonosphere' (Oliveros 2010), as Oliveros would argue, or *all-sound* that leaks and spreads like odour rather than just sound art. I consider how *all-sound*, and by that, I mean everything that is sonically perceivable to our ears and bodies, affects the production of the exhibition space and the art institution more broadly.

Caleb Kelly's research into gallery sound (2011, 2017), for example, acknowledges that sound has played an integral role in shaping contemporary art and contemporary gallery architectures as a whole. He bridges the field of visual culture and sound studies by suggesting that gallery spaces are filled with all kinds of sound, from sounding artworks to restaurant chatter and clatter. His approach to the issue, however, is limiting because the writer primarily presents cases of how galleries sound from perspective of male artists (and the male ear) working with sound.³¹ He fails to recognise that historically galleries and consequently gallery sound has been gendered and gendering, primarily organised by men serving other men. By placing his interest on men's sonic practices, Kelly fails to address the issues around gender representation, gender inequality and gendered experience that has been present in modern gallery spaces.

Whilst the writer demonstrates that sound has always already been there when experiencing art, I suggest that this argument is too restrained and needs to be politicised further. In this project, I bring larger feminist debates that exceed the limited readings of politics of representation in gallery settings. My aim is to examine how gender structures the experience of space, which is entwined with but not reducible to, questions of gender representation. We need to understand how institutional gender inequality, as advocated by the modernist white cube project, has shaped (and continues to shape) the overall production of contemporary gallery soundscapes. More importantly, however, we need to find a *practical* way of subverting the white cube's conditioning techniques. Thus, when forming my critique of the white cube, I proceed by acknowledging the soundscape of white exhibition rooms as gendered and propose an *all-sound* practice-led intervention with a feminist mission in mind.

³¹ Caleb Kelly primarily discusses the works of Robert Irwin, James Turrell, Michael Asher, Bruce Naumann, La Monte Young, Alvin Lucier and other male practitioners in the field. It is important to note, however, that women artists, including Pauline Oliveros, Daphne Oram, Hildegard Westerkamp, Annea Lockwood, Maryanne Amacher, Lis Rhodes, Mary Ellen Bute, Alison Knowles, or Judy Dunaway, to name a *very few*, have also pushed the auditory boundaries in the gallery. These, however, are missing in Kelly's texts.

2.2.4. The Production of (Sonic) Space

The production of space has been an ongoing debate in the fields of social geography, philosophy and feminist research. The term, initially posed by a French philosopher and sociologist Henri Lefebvre, questions how spaces are structured, arguing that spaces are always experienced as lived and social, thus, they are not immobile, but temporally active constructs. In other words, for Lefebvre, lived space does not exist outside of lived time, whilst lived time does not operate outside of lived space. He writes: ‘They live time, after all; they are in time. Yet all anyone sees is movements. In nature, time is apprehended within space – in the very heart of space’ (Lefebvre 1992, 95). Feminist geographer Doreen Massey, in her account of gendered spaces, points out that philosophy has been paying too much attention to time, consequently dismissing the social, political and experiential potential of space. In social sciences, she argues, the concepts of space and time have been disconnected (Massey 2005). Space has served as a residue of time, as static and inherently representational: ‘it is without time, it is without dynamism, it is a kind of flat, inert given’ (Massey 2013). For Massey, as for Lefebvre, however, space is inherently social and is never outside of time – both are interconnected and contingent upon one another.

In this project, I propose that sound, as a temporal and spatial entity, contributes towards the production of space. Even though sound has often been theorised in the context of temporality, existing theoretical accounts of sounding spaces and aural architectures reveal that it is reductive to classify sound as purely temporal or outside of space. If anything, sound is contingent and simultaneously informs both, space *and* time, together. Sound contributes towards the formation of architectures, places and spaces. Specifically, sound affects how spaces appear to us and are experienced by us. Therefore, in this project, I follow Lefebvre and Massey’s theorisations of social space and explore how sound shapes the spatio-temporal contours of white exhibition rooms.

2.2.5. Soundscape

As discussed in chapter one, galleries, like any other spaces, carry unique soundscapes, but what do I mean by the term soundscape? The concept of soundscape was initially introduced by Murray Schafer at the start of the 1970s. For Schafer: 'the soundscape is any acoustic field of study. We may speak of a musical composition as a soundscape, or a radio program as a soundscape or an acoustic environment as a soundscape. We can isolate an acoustic environment as a field of study just as we can study the characteristics of a given landscape' (Schafer 1993, 7). Soundscape, as LaBelle further argues, is both method and a practice of listening to 'environmental sound as found in given places at given times' (Labelle 2015, 199). Schafer's reading of the soundscape requires further critical unpacking. In *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (1993), Schafer proposes that our planet has always been sounding, whether it was with voices of the sea, snow, or wind, surrounded by harmonic tones, cacophonies, noises and rituals. The writer aligns soundscape to nature – as something that is heard and experienced in what he refers to as 'uncontaminated' environments. By connecting soundscapes with nature and the so-called natural, the ecologist calls for an ontology of sound.³²

The appearance of technology, as Schafer tries to argue, has disturbed and interrupted our sounding environments. For Schafer, the urbanisation of sound, led by technological mediation, resulted in a deterioration of soundscapes, degrading their 'undisturbed' and 'unprocessed' nature. Schafer divides between natural and cultural sounds, distinguishing the sounds of nature as 'hi-fi' from the sounds of the urban environment as 'lo-fi'. Such a framing suggests that with technology entering soundscapes, sound abandons its natural disposition and becomes an element of culture, which

³² Sound studies scholar Brian Kane argues that: 'Some scholars within sound studies, by turning to the ontology of sound and to the material-affective processes that lie 'beneath representation and signification', reject auditory cultural studies' (Kane 2015, 2). He implies that the ontological turn is dangerous as it presents the world as it 'neglects the constitutive role of auditory culture at its peril' (ibid.).

Schafer dismisses. The urban contamination of sirens, alarms, machinery, and other sonic artefacts, for him, are seen as secondary and, to his view, became 'a narcotic to the brain' (Schafer 1977, 74) infusing 'schizophonia':

Schizophonia refers to the split between an original sound and its electro-acoustic transmission or reproduction...Originally all sounds were originals. They occurred at one time and in one place only. Sounds were then indissolubly tied to the mechanisms that produced them... [With sound production technologies], we have split the sound from the maker of the sound (Schafer 2007, 33 [1973]).

Schafer's soundscape splits the listener's body. In his writings, he invites men to abandon cultural sounds and return to nature. He argues that in order to rediscover 'original sound', we must bracket it and remove ourselves from everything that is no longer in its original form. Schafer's project, as Jonathan Sterne argues, implies sonic essentialism (Sterne 2003, 342). It presents us with a determinist binary, aligning men with nature, splitting subjects from objects, nature from culture and minds from bodies. Schafer's account of soundscape serves as an opposition to my reading of aural thinking. Rather than opening our way of *being with* sound in sounding environments, instead, it limits and restrains our ears and the rest of our bodies. If soundscape, as Paul Rodaway suggests, is '[...] a context, it surrounds, and it generally consists of many sounds coming from different directions and of differing characteristics... [...]', which 'surround and unfold in complex symphonies or cacophonies of sound' (Rodaway 1994, 86), then it is naive for Schafer to suggest that we can remove ourselves from a particular sound and bracket ourselves from *all*-sound. In line with Rodaway, we should read and experience environments as compositions created by environments we inhabit in their totality. Thus, isolating and bracketing sound from its soundscape, as Schafer encourages us to do, becomes a restrictive and consequently damaging exercise. As media theorist Frances Dyson argues, our ears have already been muddied, thus, it is unproductive to try and eliminate the sonic knowledge and sonic capital that has been accumulated since the emergence of machinery and technologies (Dyson 2009, 80).

Composer and writer Hildegard Westerkamp, one of the founders of the World Soundscape Project, shifts away from Schafer's determinism and offers a more open and a socially conscious reading of the concept, which I find more useful when considering the soundscape of the white cube. Whilst drawing on her personal subject-led experiences of the surrounding sonic world, she envisages soundscape as a method for forming embodied and social bonds between bodies and environments. In other words, she refuses to split sound, this way avoiding Schafer's essentialist approach to theorising soundscape. Westerkamp conceptualises soundscapes, whether naturally or technologically constructed, as vital to our ability to participate in the world.

The composer and ecologist, when thinking *through* and *with* sound places 'a strong emphasis on human *experience*' (Duhautpas and Solomos 2014, 6). In her writings about sound, Westerkamp argues that listening should not be forced, bracketed or directed: 'quite the opposite: true receptive listening comes from an inner place of non-threat, support, and safety (Westerkamp, 2015). Rather than aspiring to return to the pre-supposed natural 'hi-fi' ideal, which is often associated with patriarchal power, the composer believes it is important to acknowledge sound in its potential inclusivity and social relationality, whether it is mediated through nature or technology.

Pauline Oliveros, a feminist sonic experimentalist and writer, extended the idea of listening to the world even further. The artist believed that by engaging with *all*-sound, we, as a social body, can become more inclusive and interconnected. For Oliveros, listening and sound-making are inherently political and social acts. She argued that opening our ears and our bodies to everything that is sounding can offer a more expanded connection between bodies and the audible world – it is able to 'heighten and expand consciousness of sound in as many dimensions of awareness and attentional dynamics as humanly possible' (Oliveros 2005, xxiii). On a socio-political level, Oliveros explains, consciously engaging in listening to the world also facilitates compassion and a more open understanding of one another: 'New fields of thought can be opened, and the individual may be expanded and find

opportunity to connect in new ways to communities of interest. Practice enhances openness' (Oliveros 2005, xxv). Unlike Schafer, Oliveros believed that if we do not open our ears to the *whole* of sounding world, we become what she calls focal listeners, which restricts our ability to participate in the social lived world.

When considering the sound of contemporary institutional galleries and museums, I echo Oliveros, Westerkamp and Dyson and suggest that it is impossible to disconnect or 'split' the body into bracketed notions of sound and listening. What we experience in architectural dwellings is always a mixture of elements, some are natural, some are technologically constructed. Thus, our ears are always exposed to *all*-sound, rather than separate 'hi-fi' or 'lo-fi' sound. We, as listening subjects are exposed to the social, cultural and political conditions that define and shape our ability to listen, which we are not able to abandon when experiencing sound. Whilst subjected to a setting that is already cacophonous, both 'hi-fi' and 'lo-fi' at the same time, bracketing our experience to what we consider 'natural' becomes unattainable. In this project I shift away from Schafer's call for a splitting of sound and instead propose a more expanded conception of the term. I suggest that by enabling our bodies to engage in *all*-sound, we can begin to break down institutional walls. *All*-sound, then, becomes a tool for encouraging *all* bodies (and not just male bodies) to form a whole-bodied connection with the soundscape of the white cube beyond their respective gender brackets.

2.2.6. Gendered Soundscapes

If soundscape is a social construct, then it is important to consider that it does not exist outside the structures of political power but is integral to them. In other words, it is not only up to the listeners' bodies to decide what can or cannot be listened to. We, as listeners, are subjected to the dynamics of oppression and control. Our listening bodies are dependent on the external material forces that inform and condition our way of engaging with our visual *and* sonic environments. Spaces, as Doreen Massey argues, are utterly political, and the different practices of space have political implications (Massey 2005, 13). If space is always political and soundscape is an integral part of any space, then we should consider soundscapes as political social constructs.

Whilst soundscape has been considered in political terms by academic scholars writing about sound, including Lacey's account of listening publics (Lacey 2013), Bijsterveld's research on the histories of urban soundscapes (Bijsterveld 2014), Goodale's reading of the race of sound (Goodale 2011) and Birdsall's considerations of soundscape as a biopolitical force in the context of Nazi Germany (Birdsall 2012), when it comes to the question of gendered soundscapes, the existing academic research remains sparse. According to Christine Ehrick: '[...] not enough consideration has been given within the fields of history to the ways sound may be gendered and gender sound' (Ehrick 2015). Whilst the writer acknowledges that: '[...] attention to gender has altered the very questions historians ask of the past and the way we understand structures of power and historical change' (ibid.), when it comes to the question of gendered sound, the discussion needs to be extended further.

The term 'gendered soundscape', initially introduced by Helmi Järviluoma, Pirkko Moisala and Anni Vilkkö, questions how gendered hierarchies are established and governed from a position of sound (Järviluoma, Moisala, and Vilkkö 2003, 84–106). They argue that gender can be reinforced and

conditioned not only visually but also aurally. The writers propose gendered soundscape as a method for confronting issues around gender inequality (2003, 17). Ehrick's (2011, 2015) research offers a historical evaluation of sounding landscapes and explores how soundscapes have been gendered in the context of radio technology and the female voice. She implies that with the arrival of auditory technology, specifically radio, representations and contestations of gender have changed not only in the visual realm but also through soundscape. She further argues that: 'while much of the discourse about gender, voice, and speech persisted into the age of mechanical reproduction, the mass communication and mass consumption of the twentieth century altered gendered soundscape in important ways' (Ehrick 2011, 74), which she continues to discuss throughout her book (2015).

Ehrick's research creates a necessary intervention in the field, however, her project does not escape historical debates. In other words, the writer does not consider how the social spaces we inhabit today are gendered through the dimension of sound. My thesis, whilst drawing on historiographic accounts of the white cube project, is more interested in what the soundscape of institutional museums and gallery spaces operates today and how it affects gendered bodies. It aims to understand how the gallery continues to place subjects in gendered frameworks through its soundscape and how listening and experiencing *all*-sound bodily can be utilised to confront the institution's gendering ideological regime.

Feminist classics scholar Anne Carson also draws on the issue of sound and gender in her essay *The Gender of Sound* (1995). Carson demonstrates that sound has been traceably gendered at least since ancient Greece. Specifically, she argues that a woman's voices, because of its presumed high pitch has been 'evidence of her evil disposition' (Carson 1995, 119), thus, it would be removed from the civil spaces operated by men. According to the writer, since the ancients, 'high vocal pitch goes together with talkativeness to characterise a person who is deviant from or deficient in the masculine ideal of self-control. Women, catamites, eunuchs and androgynes fall into this

category. Their sounds are bad to hear and make men uncomfortable' (Carson 1995, 119). The writer implies that: 'putting a door on the female mouth has been an important project of patriarchal culture from antiquity to the present day' (Carson 1995, 120-121). Her analysis, however, remains tied to the question of female voice and does not necessarily account for environmental sound or bodily sound, as created by those with 'wrong' voices. Whilst it is useful to refer to Carson's arguments as points of departure when thinking about gender inequality through the dimension of sound, it is important to think more broadly, and consider *all*-sound in order to form a more detailed understanding of how lived social spaces shape gender.

When addressing the issue of gender and sound in relation to the white cube project, I intend to pay attention to both the ideological soundscape of the modernist white cube project, as advocated since its initiation during modernism, as well as the soundscape of contemporary institutional white exhibition spaces, as experienced by 'feminised' bodies. By doing so, I hope to problematise the concept of soundscape from a gendered position and to build a more grounded understanding of what steps we can take to offer an alternative and a more inclusive aural space when *being with* sounding art in institutional art spaces today.

2.2.7. Rhythmic Spaces

Could we consider white cube spaces as full of rhythmic activity? Henri Lefebvre conceptualises the notion of social space as a product of rhythmic events that emerge inside and outside the living subjects' bodies. For Lefebvre, space is not a static entity, but a temporal construct that shifts and transforms in time. In *The Production of Space* (1992), the writer discusses how concepts and ideas that emerge in time do not exist outside of space, but are integral to a production and experience of our lived social environments. He asks, for example: 'What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and kinks it makes use of, and

whose code it embodies?' (Lefebvre 1992, 44). In reality, as Lefebvre argues, nothing. Ideology and power, he continues, are the foundations of any lived and embodied spatial production. This leads the philosopher to suggest that space is a product of 'lived action' and social relations, which are activated through rhythms. In other words, social space is not a fixed object but an ongoing set of relations between objects and products, in which social systems operate and instruct how we inhabit and experience spaces.

To understand how spaces are produced, Lefebvre turns to the concept of rhythm – 'a science, a new field of knowledge' (Lefebvre, Moore, and Elden 2004, 3), which he uses as a methodological and conceptual route to exploring the practical consequences of embodying lived social environments. In *Rhythmanalysis* (2004), Lefebvre uses the analysis of rhythms to challenge the representational and linear readings of time and space. The writer suggests that every space has a rhythm, whilst every rhythm is attached to space (Lefebvre 2004, 15). Lefebvre further suggests that every living subject possesses rhythm: repetitions, pulsations, circulations, assimilations, durations. Whilst some rhythms are discordant, others are linear or run in simultaneity with other rhythms. In his publication, Lefebvre creates an important argument. For Lefebvre, the rhythmic structure of our bodies and the outside world is not linear, but instead, a multitude – a plurality of spaces and events. It emerges, operates and dissolves as many rhythms, which then travel in all directions. Thus, as lived beings, we do not adapt a single rhythm, but many rhythms: polyrhythms, eurhythms and isorhythms, which emerge in us bodily, and are heard, witnessed, felt and experienced (Lefebvre 2004). For Lefebvre, rhythms keep us connected with the world – they enable us to form embodied relationships between our bodies and our lived spaces. Being rhythmical and being subjected to rhythms, to paraphrase Lefebvre, is at the heart of social lived space.

Lefebvre's study of rhythms provides us with a conceptual route for challenging some of the white cube project's ideological limitations,

specifically, its presupposed autonomous and timeless nature. As discussed in chapter one, institutional white gallery exhibition rooms tend to position themselves as special sites for aesthetic contemplation that operate outside a lived social world or time, thus, outside of rhythms. Surrounded by white walls and no furnishing, these spaces symbolically remove themselves from cultural, social or historical attachments. Lefebvre's study of rhythms, however, allows us to suggest that white exhibition spaces are unable to operate outside of time or space, but, through rhythms, they are always temporally active and in connection with the rest of the world. In other words, it suggests that the white cube ideology cannot exist independently of social space-time. Instead, as any ideological construct, it is 'a relation of a time and a space, a localised time, or if one wishes, a temporalized space' (Lefebvre 1992, 230). Thus, when confronting the white cube's decontextualised and atemporal nature in the context of contemporary art museums and gallery spaces, I turn to Lefebvre's method of rhythm to question how our bodily rhythms, the rhythms of sounding artworks as well as the rhythms produced by the space affects the gallery's visual architecture: its surfaces, walls, objects as well as its institutional operation.

2.3. Sounding Art

In this section of the chapter I explore the idea of art as always sounding. I propose that art has always carried a soundscape. Whether it is the sound of wind or air accompanying Palaeolithic cupules and carved rocks, reverberating acoustics of cave art, sounding rituals and pagan sculptures, frescos echoing in churches or the 'ringing silence' of the early modern paintings, sound, whether in the form of a residue, harmony or voice has not ceased to surround art. As Douglas Kahn suggests: 'None of the arts is entirely mute, many are unusually soundful despite their apparent silence' (Kahn 1999, 2). The writer argues that with the invention of sound recording technologies at the end of the nineteenth century, art has only continued to increase in velocity. This project is interested in exploring how the sound of technologically mediated art, specifically video art, has affected gallery

architectures and our ways of *being with* exhibited art. It deliberately shifts away from the art forms that have been institutionally labelled as sounding, such as music or 'sound art' and instead explores the expanded forms of sounding visual art.

The project challenges the disciplinary boundaries and institutional frames that tend to separate visual from aural. Even if institutionally labelled as visual, video art, I argue, is a form of sounding art, which has challenged the white cube's patriarchal, timeless and autonomous structure. My aim here to politicise video art's sonic dimension and to question its effects on contemporary art institutions. Whilst surveying the existing discussions around sound technology, gender and video art practices, this section of the project situates video art in the realm of feminist sounding art practices and as practices that have transgressed the white cube ideological limitations.

2.3.1. Sound in Technologically Mediated Art: A Feminist Critique

The potential of aurality in art was not fully recognised until the 'big bang' of sound studies. Theorists, including Daniels and Naumann (2010), Delehanty (2013), Kahn (1999), Sterne (2003), Kelly (2011, 2017), Rogers (2013), and Halliday (2013), have demonstrated that with the advancement of sound recording technology, aurality was finally 'accepted' in the field of visual arts. As argued by many, it was the invention of Edison's phonograph in 1877 that accelerated this precise shift. Kahn explains that with technology, 'sound saturates the art of this century [the twentieth century], and its importance becomes evident if we can hear past the presumption of mute visibility' (Kahn 1999, 2). The ability to record, store and reproduce auditory signals has enabled the once mute visual art practices to expand and 'sound out' as a result. In addition, phonography has not only pushed new forms of auditory experimentation, but it has also extended visual art forms, such as cinema and moving image art (Chion 1994, Hegarty 2014, Daniels and Naumann 2010, Rogers 2013).

Douglas Kahn and Suzanne Delehanty were among the first scholars to consider aurality in the context of twentieth century visual art, specifically the avant-garde practices. In her essay *Soundings* (2013), Delehanty proposes: 'at the beginning of this century, sounds began to reverberate through the once silent and timeless world of plastic arts' (Delehanty 2013, 21). She admits this transformation as essentially conceptual – artists, no longer satisfied with the world of illusion and the inaccessible ideal as offered by previous forms of art such as Romanticism and Symbolism, instead began to form a space for revolutionary ideas, which sought to break away from ingrained conventionalism.

For Delehanty, sound enters and permeates art in relatively abstract and metaphysical terms. Placing importance on conceptual conditions and transformations of late modernism, she explains the shift towards auditory expansion in plastic art through metaphors. The writer describes sound as 'gathered from the space around us by our skin and bones' and proposes that sound, 'both heard and unheard' (Delehanty 2013, 21), becomes the liberator of art as well as our experience of art through its imminent abstraction. Yet, the author acknowledges the importance of the 'machine' only in passing. She suggests: 'With the Industrial Revolution and the birth of the machine in the nineteenth century, new technologies appeared to extend, and even replace, the natural materials that painters and sculptors had previously used to shape illusions of reality' (Delehanty 2013, 26). Whilst Delehanty admits that sound technology induced 'a new beginning' (Delehanty 2013, 36) in art, this proposition, especially in relation to the question of temporality and abstraction, remains ambiguous and consequently underexplored.

Kahn provides a more detailed technological analysis of sound in the context of the early avant-garde practices. In his publication *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts* (1999), he explicitly states that it was the entrance of phonography that 'sonified' art: '[...] the phonograph represented a new day in aurality through its ability to return virtually any sound back again and again into the sensorium [...]' (Kahn 1999, 5). The scholar suggests that the

auditory recording device enabled an inclusion of all sound. The auditory recording device, as Kahn notes, went beyond music and voice – it included noise, utterances as well anything and everything audible that is ‘unwanted’: ‘because phonography did not just hear voices – it heard everything [...]’ (Kahn 1999, 9). He concludes by suggesting that: ‘Modernism thus entailed more sounds and produced a greater emphasis on listening to things, to different things, and to more of them and on listening differently’ (Kahn 1999, 9), which to a lot of the artists working with sound became a point of interest. Sound, as recorded via the auditory apparatus, brought out the yet unheard into the open.

Whilst both Delehanty and Kahn provide a much needed historiographical and critical evaluation of sound in the arts of the twentieth century, introducing the idea of auditory temporality and the expansion of sound in art, their analysis primarily remains within the late modernist auditory practices and concepts, such as Italian Futurism, Pierre Schaeffer’s acousmatics and John Cage’s musicalisation of silence. In addition to that, their research does not consider sound in the context of broader sound technology, visual art and gender debates, which I propose, requires further attention in the scholarship.

When it comes to the question of sounding art practices, technology and gender, most of the writers so far, apart from a few exceptions, including Tara Rodgers’s *Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound* (2010), Irene Noy’s *Emergency Noises: Sound Art and Gender* (2017) and Holly Ingleton’s PhD project *Composing Paradoxes: Feminist Process in Sound Arts and Experimental Music* (2015), continue to fail to expose our problematic relationship with sound technology from a position of gender. According to Rodgers:

It is thus necessary to lay out a broad critique of gender issues across multiple histories that electronic music [and sounding art practice more broadly] inherits, including affiliations with militarism in the evolution of

audio technologies, a logic of reproduction that operates in audio discourses and practices [...]. Together these factors have informed electronic music histories by delimiting who and what counts in such matters as invention, production, and making noise' (Rodgers 2010, 6).

As the existing books and compendia on sounding art practices demonstrate, most of the technology-led artistic experimentations throughout the twentieth century have been undertaken (or at least written about and published) by white men rather than women. Women's contribution towards sounding art explorations remains under-researched. We often hear how sound permeated Duchamp's non-retinal art sculptures, Kandinsky's non-representational paintings as well as Oskar Fischinger's Optical Sound experiments, for example. When it comes to auditory experimentations in experimental music, we are often told that it was composer John Cage who rejected the idea of silence, Edgar Varèse who extended sound into space or Bernhard Leitner who explored our bodily relationship to sound.

We do not, however, often hear about women practitioners, such as Mary Ellen Bute, Lis Rhodes, Maryanne Amacher, Joan Jonas, to name a very few (this list would be an endless one), who have also questioned silence and auditory spaces in gallery settings. This gap does not dissipate once we enter contemporary debates, as discussions of men's sound art continue to lead the field. It is important to point out, however, that women practitioners working with sound have started to address this precise gap.³³ Tara Rodgers, for example, established *Pinknoises.com* in 2000 'to promote the work of women making electronic music' (Rodgers 2010, 3). To return to *Her Noise*, a project initiated by Lina Džuverović and Anne Hilde Neset in 2001 and later curated by Holly Ingleton, in collaboration with Cathy Lane and Irene Revell, presents the necessity to create a dedicated archive that addresses women's

³³ The question of sound and gender in recent years has been explored by a number of artists and academic-led groups, including *pressure*, *Women's Audio Mission*, *WISWOS* and *Sonic Cyberfeminisms*. When it comes to the scholarly field of sound studies, however, the question of women artists working with sound in gallery spaces is yet to be addressed.

contribution to sound. When discussing the project in a 2012 interview, Cathy Lane points out:

I do think that there is a lack of gender discourse in sound arts. I'm not entirely sure why this is but I suspect that it is largely because sound arts could still be said to be an emergent discipline so up until very recently it has been largely concerned with trying to trace its lineage and mark out its territory or set its boundaries very broadly (Lane 2012).

This pressing and yet concealed gap needs to be addressed and accounted for further. Thus, whilst considering the issue of sounding art in its technologised forms in institutional gallery exhibition settings, my aim here is to shift away from the disciplinary and gendered divisions that are still ingrained in the fields of sound and visual art. I reject the technological fetishism that has too often pervaded discussions of sound technology. Instead, I turn towards the practices of women who, even when silenced or excluded from the field, have continued to explore art through auditory and audiovisual technologies as a way of subverting the gendered limitations of art institutions. As explored in chapter one, video art, as an inherently technologically sounding art form, has refused these divisions and allowed women to transgress the walls of the white cube.

2.3.2. Video Art

The entrance of video, the first technology to offer the simultaneous capture of image and sound, offered instantaneity. Kaizen explains the 'magic' behind video: 'to immediately see a moving picture with synchronised sound, to be able to monitor, record and replay one's self and the world right away - this was video's 'Oh wow' when it was first introduced' (Kaizen 2008, 259). As showcased by Spielmann (2010), Krauss (2000), Elwes (2015), Rees (2011) Rogers (2013), Mondloch (2011), Trodd (2011) and Hayden (2016), the invention of video extended the potential of audiovisual art practice, specifically, how time-based art would be constructed, executed, exhibited and experienced. Artists, empowered by the new technology, began to

challenge the medium's domesticity (such as Joseph Beuys and Martha Rosler), questioned the power of media and the mainstream television (Dara Birnbaum, George Barber), articulated socio-political issues (Valie Export, Vito Acconci, Richard Serra), undertook technology-driven experimentations (Nam June Paik, Steina and Woody Vasulka) and formed feminist critiques of society and bodies (Joan Jonas, Carole Schneemann, Chantal Akerman).

According to Yvonne Spielmann, video technology offered something unique that was not available before:

What differentiates video from other media technologies lies in the expression of electronic processing, for example, in closed-circuit video feedback, delayed time processing, and other electromagnetic manipulations of the electronic flow of the video signal. [...] The ability to process the electronic signal and the interchangeability of the audio and video signals manifest the transformative qualities of video (Spielmann 2006, 56).

From a technological perspective, video introduced a form of uninterrupted audiovisuality, which not only enabled a new spatial and temporal unity between image and sound, but also between the medium and the subject experiencing it. Whilst television and film granted a very specific subject-technological object relation tying the subject to a seat and the screen, video offered a less dictated exchange. In this sense, video surpassed the prescribed conditions of previous screen-based technologies. According to Spielmann, video apparatus, unlike film or television, offered malleability (Spielmann 2006, 58). It was up to the user to decide upon the life of the recorded audiovisual material. Now, videos could be altered, re-written, played backwards and paused.

As discussed in chapter one, video was one of the first 'visual art' technologies to amplify the voices of women artists. Women artists who chose video as a medium of artistic expression began to question the gender bias of societal structures and norms. They used video as a way of communicating the issues

of inequality and representation (Elwes 2005, Hayden 2016). Video apparatus for women video artists became a political tool, which inspired feminist activism. Hayden, however, argues that by aligning 'feminist' with women's video art practices only removes women's contributions to video from the main historical video art narrative, which, according to the writer, only 'brings forth the sex-biased structure prevalent in (too) much art history and art criticism, but that this also, simultaneously, determines two different ways of being a video artist' (Hayden 2016, 151). It categorises and places their contributions as *other*. Whilst I partially agree with Hayden's argument and suggest that not all women video artists are feminists and not all feminists are women, I also argue that it is important to acknowledge that by bringing their sound into galleries and museums, female video artists, as a creative and a social body, introduced a sonic dimension that had previously been hidden behind the patriarchal art structures. This historical shift, as inspired by video technology, has consequently unsettled the social and political operation of art institutions.

Catherine Elwes, for example, notes that the proliferation of video enabled women to speak politically and about politics. Women artists gravitated towards video 'because of their confrontational nature and their ability to deliver an immediate message to an audience' (Elwes 2005, 41). And so, it happened, that 'with these direct forms of address, women were able to convey, almost instantly, the various doctrines of feminism' (ibid.). The directedness of the conversation was amplified by the instantaneity of the recording and the playback of images *and* sound. Thus, it was both the visual *and* auditory aspects of the new apparatus that enabled the expanded form of exchange. Whilst Elwes points out different forms of political 'messages', 'direct contact' and 'a new language' (ibid.) were able to emerge with the medium, the writer fails to account for the technological dimension that enabled this language to emerge and travel beyond the screen – the dimension of sound. Through video, sound also contributed towards the subversion of the production of the gallery space, specifically, its gendered soundscape. The sound of women's video artworks offered new rhythms,

new pitches and new noise that had been hidden or covered before the entrance of the medium. Whilst some of these ‘noises’ were deemed outside the bounds of the father tongue and at times *literally* excluded from the physical architectures of the gallery,³⁴ the new messages, mediated through women’s video signal, began to successfully unsettle the autonomous and fixed patriarchal architectures of the gallery space, as discussed in chapter one. Sound enabled the un-silencing and amplified the different narratives and stories that had previously been ignored by art institutions. The ongoing silencing and un-silencing of women’s sound inside the white cube, however, calls for further critical attention. Having reviewed the literature on video art practice and exhibition, it becomes evident that the affective and socio-political potential of the sound of video art in the context of gendered soundscape of the gallery architectures is yet to be accounted for.

Video not only provided women creators with new avenues for expression but also opened the gallery visitors’ ways of connecting with exhibited sounding artworks in gallery spaces. Catherine Elwes, for example, admits video art as the first truly ‘spatial’ phenomenon, as it extended the potential of immersion and subject mobilisation (Elwes 2015, 235). In the context of experiencing video in gallery spaces, for example, the gallery visitors also became ‘unchained’. They were no longer tied to a particular seat or fixed by the screen.³⁵ With video objects scattered across the exhibition space, the participants were able to explore the screens from different angles of the room. This form of technologically-led transformation has allowed for

³⁴ Charlotte Moorman was arrested during Nam June Paik’s *Opera Sextronique* (1967) performance, for example, and charged with indecent exposure.

³⁵ Such aesthetic participation opposes existing apparatus theories, which imply that subjects, once subjected to screens become absorbed and controlled by it. Video mobilised the experiencing subject, allowing the participants to connect with the screen in more democratic and ‘equal’ terms. A traditional cinema experience offers a very specific audiovisual experience: feature films usually have prescribed temporal narratives and forms of seating, which the cinema spaces accommodate. The subject mostly sits in front of the projection in an immobile position with her eyes fixed for an assigned period of time. Rather than connecting to the reality of the audiovisual images perceived, or experiencing her own bodily reality, cinema offers a form of perceptual escapism. In that sense, the cinematic screen, in all of its assigned symbolism, produces a sense of spatial and temporal saturation, which absorbs and monopolises the viewer’s perception of time. This creates a sense of disembodiment. Yet, video art spaces transform the aesthetic experience. Rather than fixing the participants’ bodily position in allocated seats, video enables gallery visitors to *freely* explore the light and sound of the artworks from multiple spatial points.

alternative forms of participant-apparatus engagement to emerge: 'In contrast to [previous systems] of perspective construction, video appears in modular presentations wherever the machines can be plugged together, so there is no systematic relationship between the placement of the apparatus and the medium's temporal-spatial model of addressing the viewer' (Spielmann 2006, 58). Spielmann's view implies that video became an 'open' medium, offering new forms of temporal and spatial connections between the subject and the art object.

This notion also echoes in Kate Mondloch (2011) and Tamara Trodd's (2011) propositions. When discussing expanded screen-based practices, both Mondloch and Trodd note the subjective effects on the spectatorship. They propose that the experience of screen-based practices in gallery spaces initiates a sense of three-dimensionality. Angela Dalle Vacche (2012) also considers the possibilities of active experience when viewing digital screen-based artworks, introducing the question of subjectivity in the technologically mediated museum settings. Whilst these positions account for one's visual and bodily experience of video art, the dimension of sound once again remains absent. Considering video was the first 'visual' technology to bring sound into white cube exhibition settings, the aurality of screen-based installation practices, including its spatial potential, I propose, needs further attention.

2.3.3. Sound in Video Art

White cube exhibition spaces have not been designed to accommodate sound. The white rigid walls and little to no furnishing design has meant that the reverberation levels perceived in space are usually very long – unwanted sound is either treated or removed, otherwise, it is deemed cacophonous and disorderly. These spaces, after all, as discussed in chapter one, have been constructed as ocularcentric sites – designed to serve the eye rather than the ear or the rest of the body. Once video art – the first sounding visual art form entered the gallery, dealing with acoustics became an ongoing issue for art

institutions. The soundtracks of the artworks as well as the technological operation of the video apparatus would reverberate endlessly in harsh acoustic architectures of exhibition rooms making it difficult and at times almost impossible to hear what the artwork is communicating. This has led to galleries either building 'special' rooms with appropriate acoustics, introducing headphones or walls, separating sounding artworks from silent artworks or just ignoring the problem. There have been times that I have personally witnessed the sound of exhibited video artworks emitting directly from the internal digital video projectors' speakers, meaning that the sound of the artwork would be so quiet, muddled or reverberant that it would be impossible to understand the auditory content of the artworks. Thus, whilst video art continues to speak, the gallery continues to fail to accommodate its voice.

The issue of sound in video art has been addressed in a few publications. Holly Rogers (2013) and Paul Hegarty (2014) explore video art from the perspective of sound, both arguing for video as a form of expanded sonic practice. In *Sounding the Gallery: Video and the Rise of Art-Music* (2013), Rogers describes the 1960s-1970s avant-garde visual arts as crucial, as it finally integrated sound into gallery spaces. Rogers proposes that it was the musicality of video that enabled the expansion of sound in visual art exhibition settings: 'when placed within the broader cultural and artistic climate of experimentation and inclusivity of the '60s, the technological simultaneity of video encouraged expansive and interactive situations and challenged conventional methods of art and music consumption' (Rogers 2013, 2). Rogers presents us with the idea that video apparatus became a form of a musical instrument, one that was explored and experimented with by artists and musicians of the decade. The scholar turns to artists such as Nam June Paik, Bill Viola, Tony Conrad and the Vasulkas and argues that these artists utilised video and created composer-led video spatial compositions this way incorporating sound as an equal element of the audiovisual medium.

Here, an argument could be made that video practice enabled a democratic unity between image and sound in technological and conceptual terms. Steina Vasulka, for example, argues for the medium's inherent *equal* audiovisuality: 'video always came with an audio track, and you had to explicitly ignore it not to have it' (Quoted in Hegarty 2014, 114). Holly Rogers further suggests that: 'the physical components of video positioned it within a technological lineage that was aural rather than visual in nature, [...]. Produced via a continual scanning process, the video image is in fact not an image at all: it is a moving point of light within a flowing stream of electrons' (Rogers 2013, 19-20). According to video artist Bill Viola: 'a video camera is closer to a microphone in operation than it is to a film camera; video images are recorded on magnetic tape in a tape recorder. Thus, we find that video is closer in relationship to sound, or music' (Quoted in Mèredieu 2005, 60). These considerations of video technology as a sounding instrument allows us to theorise video art beyond visuality. With the video camera now acting as a form of microphone, a true audiovisual synergy, as Rogers claims, is able to form (Rogers 2013, 2).

Paul Hegarty introduces video art as a variation of sounding art. In *Rumour and Radiation: Sound in Video Art* (2014), Hegarty proposes that video art not only became 'capable of being, as well as using, sound art', but extended both visual and sound art forms by operating as 'intermediary' – a form of medium that could no longer be bracketed or defined (Hegarty 2014, 2). Hegarty here revisits Dick Higgins's notion of intermedia³⁶ and argues that video is 'a new form that no longer refers back to the 'parent' forms from which it budded. More accurately, it is not even a medium, but something that exists or functions diffusely between media forms' (Hegarty 2014, 3) – something that falls in-between media. Hegarty continues to suggest that video art is not an isolated medium but is 'inherently some sort of multimedia access point or strategy' (Hegarty 2014, 3). In other words, it is a tool or a technique, which

³⁶ The term 'intermedia' was introduced by Fluxus artist Dick Higgins in the 1960s to describe the interdisciplinary nature of art practice at that time. He argues: 'Much of the best work being produced today seems to fall between media' (Higgins 2001, 49).

enables a relationality between different media and forms. By using video art as an 'intermedia', the scholar demonstrates that disciplinary bracketing of audiovisual art in both conceptual and technological terms is unattainable. Hegarty further argues that through an increasing and continuously advancing technological application of sound in art (from video art to interactive art), sound now exists at all times 'both here, present, and there, entangled yet separate; it is elsewhere and infiltrating here, and most of all, it is almost everywhere', mediating between images, subjects and spaces (Hegarty 2014, 13). In that sense, it has permeated screen-based installation art and can no longer be avoided.

Whilst Rogers, Hegarty, the Vasulkas and Viola propose that there is *something* inherently sounding about video art, whether in technological or conceptual terms, their accounts do not discuss the effects of the video's sonic dimension beyond the apparatus or the art object. Their conceptualisations primarily centre around the relationship between artists and video art objects, video as music and video art exhibition. In doing so, they do not account for video sound's potential to transform art galleries and institutions as well as the experiencing bodies entering them, specifically, when it comes to the question of gender. The aural dimension of video art inevitably leaks and exceeds the video screen when exhibited in acoustically awkward gallery spaces, consequently expanding the spatio-temporality of the artwork, the subject experiencing it and the space in which the artworks and the experiencing subjects are present. Most of the existing discussions that explore the sound in video art practices remain bound to the artworks' 'on-screen' sound and fail to account for *all*-sound: noise, voice, bodily motility and background sounds that become amplified because of video.

In order to fully grasp what the potential of sound in video exhibition environments is, it is also important to consider who the listeners are and how the sonic dimension of video and the surrounding space affects their experience of art and the overall gallery space. Therefore, my task here is to consider sound beyond its on-screen presence and account for the medium's

leaky nature beyond the apparatus. Whilst evaluating the soundscape of video art in white cube galleries, I question who the inhabitants are and how the overall soundscape of the gallery affects the experience of *being with* sounding video art, specifically, the experience of women's video art, in contemporary gallery settings.

2.3.4. Sound in Contemporary Art

Where does sound sit in relation to contemporary art practices today? Caleb Kelly proposes that 'sound is now an integral aspect of art, from installation to screen-based, performance-based and participatory practices, yet its presence is too often ignored' (Kelly 2011, 13). Elsewhere Kelly also writes: 'there is currently a flurry of activity within the art institution around art that explicitly includes sound. [...] There is a profusion of books, catalogues, essays, and journals dedicated to sound. Sound has become the must have media of this part of the century. Yet the art world has been very slow to come to terms with the actuality of sound within the confines of its gallery spaces' (Kelly 2012, 10). According to the writer: 'critics from a visual art background often have trouble describing sound; their lexicon does not include an ongoing dialogue with audio concepts' (Kelly 2011, 13), implying that the language around sound is still in the process of being shaped. Galleries and museums across the West have been adopting more and more sound-based works, organising dedicated retrospectives and group shows, including *Sonic Boom* (2000) and *Infinite mix* (2016), at Hayward Gallery, London, *Sonic Process* at Centre Georges Pompidou, Paris (2002), *Soundings* at MoMA, New York (2013), to name a few. Yet, the theories around sound in contemporary visual art continue to remain sparse.

Considering the vastness of conceptual experimentation with sonic and audiovisual practice today, Naumann and Daniels suggest: 'the valuation contexts of visual art, music, theatre, and film are as separate today as they have ever been' (Daniels and Naumann 2011, 6). In other words, the disciplines remain, to an extent, closed, which means that the institutions are

also reluctant to change. Even though the galleries are increasingly sounding, or even 'booming' with sound, institutions continue to cling to their 'visual' status. The curator of the Museum of Modern Art curator Barbara London, however, argues otherwise. Gallery spaces are no longer in conflict with sound but instead have successfully adopted it:

Today, museums are fully adept at incorporating video and media installations, and by extension, sound art, into their contemporary programming. [...] This practical step, along with the burgeoning of interdisciplinary art practices, contributed to what is now a widespread acceptance of time-based media installation as a collectable art form. As media and performance have become the default modes for many artists, sound has moved up through the ranks to be recognized and exhibited as an art form in its own right (London 2013, 9).

Whilst one could argue that artists and institutions are in the process of 'learning' how to deal with sound, the theory around aurality in contemporary art settings, specifically, its problematic reading of gender, is still in its evolving stage. The gaps, therefore, continue to persist.

As the review of sound in the context of art demonstrates, the significance of sound in contemporary gallery spaces can no longer be avoided. It influences how art is constructed, exhibited and experienced as a result. Especially, with video technology entering gallery spaces, our way of *being with* art transforms. This, I propose, is partially an effect of sound. Here, I follow Rogers (2013) and Hegarty's (2014) theorisations and suggest that with the appearance of the first *truly* audiovisual medium (Spielmann 2010, 1) – analogue video, sound has become an encompassing and fundamental element of installation art environments, challenging the boundaries between the visual and auditory, between fixed and mobile, between the stereotypically 'masculine' and 'feminine'. In addition, I follow Rachel Devorah's view, who argues that ocularcentric discourses embed androcentrism and promote essentialised false dichotomies between vision/sound and masculine/feminine (Devorah 2017, 305). Arriving from

video's audiovisual (and its multisensory) potential, I problematise the auditory dimension of the medium and question how sound, whether in its technological and spatio-temporal form, when mediated by the bodies of women, transforms the ideological as well as the physical architectures of (androcentric) exhibition sites. When thinking about the sonic experience of video art, I think bodily, specifically, through sound and gendered embodiment.

2.4. Sound and Experience

The issue of sound and experience has been addressed in sound studies, media theory and philosophy for more than a few decades (Born 2013, Bull 2015, Carlyle and Lane 2013, Dyson 2009, Dufrenne 1973, Henriques 2011, Ihde 2007, Lacey 2013, Oliveros 2005, Schaeffer 1966, Thompson and Biddle 2013, Young 2016). Frances Dyson's *Sounding New Media: Immersion and Embodiment in the Arts and Culture* (2009), for example, forms a critical overview of how we experience sound in the context of technologically mediated art. Thompson and Biddle's *Sound, Music, Affect: Theorizing Sonic Experience* (2013), on the other hand, explores how sonic experiences shape 'the affective contours of our day-to-day lives' (Thompson and Biddle 2013, 11). In philosophy, Don Ihde (2007) and Jean Luc Nancy (2007) problematise our bodily relation to sound and listening from a phenomenological perspective, calling for a more dedicated conceptual space to address the phenomenon of sound. As outlined above, Pauline Oliveros, in *Deep Listening* (2005), invites listeners to listen to the world and open their perception to the whole spectrum of sound. The interest in questioning how we experience sonic environments, auditory technologies and music evidences a further demand for a theoretical scrutiny of sound and experience. As most of the existing accounts have suggested so far, bodies actively listen and participate in their aural surroundings, thus, the affective potential of sound should not be disregarded.

When it comes to the question of sound and experience in contemporary art spaces and museums, specifically, the question of a gendered experience of sound, the research remains sparse. Most of the writings so far have primarily centred around the debates of gender and music (Hill 2016, Kheshti 2015, Kearney 2017, Koskoff 2000, Rodgers 2010), gender and voice (Bloom 2013) and gender and technology (Suisman and Strasser 2011; Young 2016; Ehrick 2015). My interest here, however, is to think beyond these categorisations and consider bodies not only in relation to music or voice, for example, but also in relation to *everything* that is audible, or what Pauline Oliveros calls 'the sonosphere' (Oliveros 2010, 22). The aim of this study, thus, is to explore how *all*-sound – the soundscape of institutional gallery and museum settings exhibiting women's video artworks – affects the bodies of those who are framed in particular gendered norms, specifically, the 'feminised' bodies. Here, I critically evaluate the existing conceptualisations on aural embodiment and studies into phenomenologies of sound and listening. Whilst discussing the field, I present their respective limitations and call for a further inquiry into sound, experience and gender.

2.4.1. Studies into Aural Embodiment

Whilst embodiment and experience, as a field of study, has been on the rise in cognitive science (Calvo and Gomila 2008, Gibbs 2005, Weiss and Haber 2002), cultural studies and social anthropology (Ahmed and Stacey 2003, Blackman 2012, Clough and Halley 2007, Frykman and Frykman 2016) as well as in the field of contemporary aesthetics (Scarlinzi 2014, Crowther 2001, Loesberg 2005, Munster 2011), when it comes to aural embodiment and embodied listening, the main theoretical input so far has been placed on listening to technology: from studies into embodied sound media technologies (Birdsall and Enns 2008), human-computer interaction (Holland, Wilkie, Mulholland and Seago 2013), Sears and Jacko 2009), virtual reality and computer voice (Cartwright 2008, Jekosch 2006, Neumark, Gibson, and Leeuwen 2010, Young 2016), to technologies of surround sound (Leman 2008). Some writers, however, have been addressing the gaps,

connecting sound and experience in the age of technological reproduction within the realm of cultural studies, media studies and political theory. Julian Henriques' *Sonic Bodies* (2011), Steve Goodman's *Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear* (2012) and Kate Lacey's *Listening Publics: The Politics and Experience of Listening in the Media Age* (2013), for example, demonstrate that sound, as mediated through technology, is integral to our lived environments that are shaped by cultural and socio-political forces. In their respective ways, the writers suggest that sound, both in material and abstract form, contributes towards our embodiment of spaces and cultures. Whilst their research provides important insights into the production of listening and sounding bodies through the prisms of biopolitics, media as well as race, my project's theoretical focus is on how video technology, the politics and social structures of the white cube institution, frame our experience of sound. This will include a gendered analysis of these structures and experiences. Specifically, I question how ideologically driven aesthetic spaces, such as the white cube, affect the ways we as women are subjected to different modes of sonic embodiment.

2.4.2. A Phenomenology of Sound

Philosopher Don Ihde treats sound phenomenologically, drawing on one's continuous experience of and ability to reflect on it. Sound, for Ihde, becomes the primal dimension of an embodied experience (Ihde 2007, 17). When thinking phenomenologically, Ihde places sound outside the visual perceptual realm. He argues that sound, unlike vision, enables us to access the 'invisible' – the always already present, waiting to be experienced (Ihde 2007, 13). In a way, Ihde conforms to what Jonathan Sterne calls an 'audiovisual litany' (Sterne 2013, 18). Ihde describes visuality as limited in its perceptual capacity, as something that arrives to us directionally. Sound, on the other hand, does the opposite – it surrounds us at all times – it is omnidirectional. Sound, once perceivable and experienced, as Ihde argues, is more powerful than vision as it carries an 'auditory aura' (Ihde 2007, 79) – 'a special kind of "shape"' (Ihde 2007, 79), thus, it exceeds the perceptual

realms of visibility. Here, Ihde implies that visibility is flat and quantifiable whilst sound is always spatial (more spatial than image). This theoretical proposition splits bodily perception; it places vision and sound into the outdated binary domains.

Whilst treating sight and sound in opposition, Ihde interestingly suggests that neither sound nor light can exist independently (Ihde 2007, 53). His reading, however, goes as far as to suggest that aurality is far more spatial than image, this way once again, situating both senses in opposition. When referring to the aural dimension, he argues that '[...] as no "pure" auditory experience can be found, neither could a "pure" auditory "world be constructed' (Ihde 2007, 44). Sound, according to Ihde, is always contingent upon surfaces, materials and bodies. However, rather than being connected with whatever these contingencies are in a relational manner, sound is treated as a form of 'other', which only comes to being if permitted.

F. Joseph Smith, when considering a phenomenology of sound, avoids such a bracketing. He argues that when thinking phenomenologically and when thinking about how we, as embodied beings, exist in the world, we must not only *look* at things, but also *listen to* and *with* things (Smith 1967). He suggests that in order to assemble a full phenomenological spectrum of how we inhabit the world, '[...] it is necessary to do more than *look* into the situation' (Smith 1967, 187). In that sense, we must always think visually *and* sonically, and acknowledge that both operate in unison rather than in separation. David Espinet puts it allegorically: '[...] there is a noetical and ethical situation that is paradigmatic for the whole of metaphysics: sight becomes the leading sense whereas its counterpart among the distance senses, listening, disappears in the process of ascension towards the sun' (Espinete 2015, 184-185). According to Espinete, there has been too much investment in Western philosophy on discussing visual experience and little attention has been paid to hear 'echoes': 'in the ascent, the auditive dimension is reduced to pure visibility. [...] we are present at a double reduction, in which all sensible experience first is reduced to sight, and, then,

sight to thinking' (ibid.). Thus, if we continue to suggest that environments and bodies carry unique soundscapes, we must account for how these soundscapes, in their auditory totality, inform our bodily presence and contributes towards our perceptual construction of lived spaces.

2.4.3. A Phenomenology of Sound and Bodies: A Feminist Critique

Whilst I propose that an inquiry into *all*-sound, as experienced bodily in contemporary white cube gallery architectures when *being with* women's video art, calls for a phenomenological approach and embodiment, as I elaborate in this section, I simultaneously acknowledge that the philosophical field of phenomenology and the way it has been treated from the position of sound has limitations, especially when it comes to the question of gender.

I begin my critique by considering Merleau-Ponty's existential phenomenology and his conceptualisations of body-subjects. In *Phenomenology of Perception* (2014) the philosopher suggests that our knowledge of and about the world begins with a body and bodily consciousness. Merleau-Ponty bypasses the Husserlian transcendental epochè and develops a philosophy that refuses to isolate or separate the subjects' presence from the lived world. Instead, the philosopher proposes that consciousness is not independent of the body but is essentially embodied, and what we embody is always a multiple rather than isolated or bracketed sensations.³⁷ Merleau-Ponty moves away from the Cartesian subject/object and mind/body dualism. He rejects Husserl's idea that bodies exist as unconditioned objective things-in-themselves, outside of their own lived being and skin. Instead, subjects as bodily beings are inherently attached to their own bodily subjectivities, which contribute towards one's

³⁷ Whilst intellectualists propose that consciousness exists as a thing in-itself, and thoughts, as noted by Kant, accompany all of our representations, this way enabling us to conceive the world, Merleau-Ponty questions this suggestion. He asks: 'How do we know that that there must be a pure for-itself, and from where do we learn that the world must be able to be thought?' (Merleau-Ponty 2014, 227).

bodily orientation in the world: from bodily motility to social relations, to knowledge. In a way, Merleau-Ponty suggests that by being a lived body-subject, we can begin to blur the boundaries between the inside (the inner consciousness) and the outside (objective world): 'the distinction between subject and object is blurred in my body (and no doubt the distinction between noesis and noema as well?)' (Merleau-Ponty 1964, 167), which is a productive start for thinking about bodies. However, here we must question: who is this body Merleau-Ponty is writing about?

Historically, *being* bodies has not been an easy task for *certain* bodies. Yet, most phenomenologists, including Merleau-Ponty, have repeatedly failed to acknowledge the material and lived contingencies that make bodies what they are and how they inhabit the world. In Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological analysis, for example, the philosopher ignores the social, political or historical components that contribute towards our embodied presence in the world and consequently how we experience sound and sounding environments. Merleau-Ponty's philosophy instead implies that all body-subjects are universal subjects. As body-subjects we are always already in contact with the world before our ego's knowledge of it. The body, then, for Merleau-Ponty is primordial: 'we are our body', which is to say, 'we are in the world through our body, and insofar as we perceive the world with our body' (Quoted in Carman 1999, 224). Merleau-Ponty's position implies that by being body-subjects we are not attached to gender, sex or culture – our lived presence arrives prior to our social or political bracketing; thus, our ability to bodily connect to sound also bypasses any socio-political structures.

Merleau-Ponty's philosophy dismisses the power relations between the exterior body-subject, the interior body-subject and the broader social and political body. This is a weakness and a limitation in Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological thinking. When entering an archetypal white cube exhibition space, for example, certain bodies will feel more at comfort whilst

others more alienated because of their cultural and socio-political position.³⁸ As discussed in chapter one, the white cube, as an ideological construct, has repeatedly manifested itself materially when *being with* art in institutional exhibition environments. The sites have continued to present themselves as patriarchal, consequently limiting and conditioning certain bodies whilst prioritising others. When thinking about bodies in the context of the white cube, therefore, we must be conscious of the fact that bodies are not treated equally and how such aesthetic sites are embodied is also contingent upon the ideological structuring of the institution.

The feminist critique of phenomenology implies that 'the body', as a mode of being, has been dealt from a primarily masculine perspective. When Merleau-Ponty talks about 'our' body, for example, he appears to bypass gender (or arrives before gender). According to Russell Keat, however, Merleau-Ponty's writings could be read as primarily serving masculine projects and concerns (1982). According to Linda Martín Alcoff: '[...] the body of phenomenological work in the canon has been indelibly imprinted with a masculine orientation in its development of the constitutive categories of experience. [...] it needs to acknowledge and explore the ways in which it has been affected by masculine [...] structures (Alcoff 2004, 247). Alcoff's point leads us to suggest that phenomenology has been dealt from a position of a male subject, often ignoring the 'female' body. In other words, it implies that the female body-subject has not 'operated' in equal terms with, for example, the white male body-subject. According to Jennifer Bullington, the lived body is 'never the product or result of physiological processes. We are also psychological, cultural beings. The materiality of our body is a fundament which is taken up and transformed into levels of existence which lie over and over our brute physicality' (Bullington 2013, 28). Thus, it is important to acknowledge bodies are subjected to different social, political and cultural structures,

³⁸ In their critique of the first *MoMA* exhibition space, writers Carol Duncan and Alan Wallach, for example, wrote: 'A museum, like a church or temple, serves different people in different ways. If you are a regular and informed visitor, you probably to see a specific exhibition or film. If not, your unfamiliarity with the building may result in a sense of spatial disorientation' (Duncan and Wallach 1978, 31-32). Finding your 'space' in white cube gallery spaces can be problematic.

which inevitably shape how certain bodies exist in the world and how the world is shaped for those that have been gendered.

Iris Marion Young (2005) suggests that bodies cannot exist as universal. In a patriarchal society, she argues, the man/woman binary conducts how certain genders perform and operate in spaces. The reading of bodies as universal, according to Young, is problematic as it ignores the social inequalities that shape the lived body. By treating the body-world relation in a general way, the traditional phenomenological thought fails to account for what Young calls the inhibited subjects, for example, the culturally framed 'feminine' bodies. Young argues that a closer reading of the encultured lived bodies and their embodiment of the world is necessary (Young 2005, 12). For example, she proposes the idea of what she calls 'inhibited intentionality' (Young 2005, 36) – a way of being that restricts and limits women's bodies' motility.

Young, in line with Merleau-Ponty, acknowledges that '[...] body is the original subject that constitutes space' and that 'there would be no space without the body' (Young 2005, 41) as subjects are never *objects* outside their own being. However, Young claims that 'feminised' bodies fail to constitute the space around their being and because of that, they are placed in a contradictory position. Their construction of space becomes inhibited: 'In its immanence and inhibition, feminine spatial existence is *positioned* by a system of coordinates that does not have its origin in her own intentional capacities' (Young 2005, 41). In other words, certain bodies are socio-historically situated and their way of being in the world is a result *positioned* rather than *positioning* (Young 2005, 39). Feminine bodily existence, she argues, is 'self-referred and thus lives itself as an object' (Young 2005, 41) – her body becomes *a thing* that is situated outside her own bodily presence. A body-subject then becomes an alien to her own existence – an alien in her own skin.

When Sara Ahmed addresses the question of queerness, she points out that consciousness 'is always directed toward objects and hence is always worldly, situated and embodied' (Ahmed 2006b, 545). She suggests that

'phenomenology, after all, is full of queer moments, moments of disorientation' (Ahmed 2006b, 544), which, are overcome by processes of reorientation, or to quote Merleau-Ponty, 'becoming vertical', by being directed and redirected.³⁹ When entering spaces that are considered as masculine or have been for one reason or another claimed by men, she argues, there is an expectation of how those who are not socially deemed as men should manage and control their bodies; for example, taking less space whilst allowing those in power to take more. The history of the white cube reveals that it has been men rather than women taking more space in the gallery context. In this sense, institutional exhibition spaces since modernism have operated vertical and orientating. When considering the embodiment of sound in relation to contemporary galleries and the art institution more broadly, we need to account for the power structures that have continued to separate and condition bodies, and question whether sound, in its totality, is able to subvert them and whether a post-gendered social body is possible.

When it comes to the existing theorisations of a phenomenology of sound and listening, the same philosophical limitations still apply. Sound has been primarily addressed from a masculine point of view. Philosopher Don Ihde, for example, has repeatedly referred to sonic phenomena as something that 'absorbs' and 'penetrates' our being in time: 'Sound penetrates my bodily being [...]' (Ihde 2007, 45), music 'penetrates my awareness' (Ihde 2007, 78), 'sound physically penetrates my body and I literally "hear" with my body from bones to ears' (Ihde 2007, 81), 'I am so deeply absorbed [...]' (Ihde 2007, 125). Here, Ihde clearly arrives from a masculine stance. 'Permeates', 'penetrates' ... these temporal acts, as performed by a continuous presence of sound, as described by Ihde, imply that sound takes control of one's body. Because of its visceral and overwhelming nature, it immobilises us and disturbs our experience of the world. The philosopher admits that the permeability of sound violates his visual, or in other words, knowledge-led,

³⁹ Ahmed applies Merleau-Ponty's use of verticality when discussing queer moments, or, what the writer refers to as: 'a queer effect'. She argues that Merleau-Ponty considers how subjects 'straighten' any queer effects and asks what this tendency to 'see straight' suggests about the relationship between bodies and space (Ahmed 2014).

presence in time. His masculinity as a result becomes affected. Because of sound, his ability to think and act objectively in the world becomes disturbed. He is no longer able to operate as an objectively thinking subject but is now led by a sonically violated body – he is now guided by ‘soft’ or ‘feminine’ forms of knowledge (Rodgers 2010, 7). Such a reading of sound and listening places sound in a gendered binary domain, conditioned by patriarchal power. It refuses the idea that sound can serve as social or a perceptually co-connecting. It also rejects the possibility that sound can offer a two-way relationship between bodies and environments.

When proceeding with a phenomenology of sound and exploring how sound affects *certain* bodies in the context of the white cube project, it is important that we are mindful of the route we take so that we do not reiterate the same phenomenological problem of universalising body-subjects. Here, I turn to feminist writers Iris Marion Young and Sara Ahmed, who have explored the position of bodies in relation to different historical, social and political contexts, including class, race and gender. Both Young and Ahmed’s accounts of lived body-subjects suggest that embodiment and one’s way of being in the world is encultured. If your bodily existence is feminised, your body-subject existence may become inhibited. You may be forced to become an object outside of your own subjectivity. If you do not conform to your own inhibition, then you might be orientated and directed. Your bodily space, to follow Young, might become constituted. Certain bodies, when directed and orientated, might find their own bodily motion alien and alienating.

As an artist working with video and sound as well as a gallery visitor, I have experienced gendered conditioning in the white cube through practice. In the epigraph of the introductory chapter of this thesis, I pointed out how I have repeatedly arrived at white exhibition rooms as a gendered subject, as someone who has been alienated when exhibiting and experiencing artworks in white cube gallery settings. Through and by being gendered, I have learnt the language of the whitewashed exhibition rooms. In order not to become othered or stand out, I have grasped how to condition my being, how to

perform, move my body and my sound so that it does not disturb the hierarchical structures of the institution. To follow Iris Marion Young's thinking, the external processes of gendering have repeatedly forced me to exhibit '*inhibited intentionality and discontinuous unity*' with my environment (Young 2005, 35). At times, I have experienced inhibition, immobilisation and compartmentalisation. There were times where I have consciously become a thing or an object outside my own bodily self so that I would not be confronted or excluded.

Thus, when thinking about the aurality of bodies in the context of institutional contemporary museums and gallery spaces and the white cube ideology, here, I consider bodies as both: always embodied, but also always embodied *by* and *with* the world that is *lived*. *Lived*, in this case, includes the material elements that construct the experience of being *lived*: the entering of gallery sites, the encountering of artworks, gallerists, curators, other visitors, the experience of passing hallways, museum stores and restaurants, but also the world from which one enters and continues to live beyond and after the aesthetic encounter. This conceptual route allows us to divert from the idea that bodies are universal entities, preceding any social, political, historical or cultural systems. It also allows us to argue that bodies do not abandon their subjectivities when entering the white cube. Instead, we are able to consider body-subjects as always already embodied *in* the world that is built on socio-historical foundations, on material bricks that shape body-subjects' subjectivities and bodily operations.

2.5. Expanding Aural Thinking: Theory and Practice

Having surveyed sound in relation to space, art and experience, here, I return to my initial proposition and suggest in order to confront the ideological limitations that are still present in contemporary museums and galleries, specifically, its gendered, autonomous and timeless regime, we must continue by thinking *with* and *through* sound. In other words, we must think openly, rather than in closed terms and consider whether *all*-sound, as

mediated through the sound of video, is able to bypass the white cube's ocularcentric regime and allow bodies to exist as fully embodied rather than split or gendered. We, therefore, must steer away from the ocularcentric, or what Devorah calls androcentric (Devorah 2017, 305) and techno-fetishist readings of visual or sounding spaces, visual or sounding art and our bodies. I depart from the phenomenologists who have failed to account for the gender struggles of being in the world. I simultaneously move away from thinkers and practitioners who have excluded women's voices from white cube spaces. Instead, I proceed by exploring the potential of *all*-sound with a feminist mindset. I turn to practitioners such as Pauline Oliveros, who used her body to engage in the whole sounding world. I also turn towards feminist phenomenologists and writers including Iris Marion Young and Sara Ahmed, who have demonstrated that our being in the world is shaped by social and political structures in order to explore aurality as an embodied lived practice. In short, when proceeding, I connect sound and feminism through practice, and using the route of sonic feminism, tackle the ideology of the white cube project.

3.

Methodology: Doing Sonic Feminism

3.1. Introduction

Having established a theoretical route for addressing the issue of sound in contemporary art museums and gallery spaces, this chapter presents a case for *doing* sonic feminism when addressing white cube project's gendered, atemporal and autonomous nature. I develop this practice-led method as a form of *applied* sonic feminism, which situates my video artworks and my experiencing body in the white cube gallery spaces to question how our bodies connect to *all*-sound when experiencing sounding video art. Inspired by Oliveros, Le Guin and the 1960s women's video art practice, in this project I utilise sonic feminism as a form of political activism through both theory *and* practice. In line with Le Guin's thinking, I propose that in order to experience, to be subjective and to offer, one must actively *do* sonic feminism rather than purely insist on it. Sonic feminism invites researchers and readers to *think* and *act* with and through sound *and* feminism. It asks us to bodily immerse in *all*-sound, as creators and experiencers, with a feminist attitude, with the idea that patriarchal and the so-called 'masculine' norms when *being with* sounding art in white cube spaces can be dismantled.

As a female artist working with sonic media in institutional art gallery settings, I adopt Oliveros' approach and use my body as an instrument as well as a recorder to tune in to 'the whole of the space/time continuum of perceptible sound' (2005, xix). Oliveros discovered that by *listening* to the world, a more embodied and social relationship between our bodies and our lived environments can be initiated (2005, xxii). Through making and listening to *all*-sound, I explore how sound's experiential, social and political capacity contributes towards the production of space inside white cube

exhibition rooms understood both in perceptual and institutional terms. If we allow our bodies to engage in *everything* that is audible, we might discover a different kind of aesthetic space – a setting that is not necessarily ruled by the laws of rationality, ocularcentrism and autonomous order, but a space that is more fluid and open to a myriad of temporalities and spatialities. I call for thinkers and makers to be wilful, noisy and subversive. After all, it is by resisting, by being wilful and noisy that the artist is able to refuse bodily conditioning – or, to use video in its audiovisual capacity to protest.

Following Le Guin, I propose that it is only by refusing to be guided, directed and quietened that we can form a mountain range and we can empower ourselves to erupt (Le Guin 1989, 160), thus, we must proceed by *speaking the mother tongue* and *listening to all-sound* when embodying ideologically driven spaces. It is only then that we can begin to transform patriarchal systems. Sonic feminism invites us to be subjective, to open our bodies to intersubjective experiences of the world, and to use lived encounters of the gendered struggles as foundations for building new knowledge, through practice.

3.2 My Way into Sonic Feminism: Video Art Practice

My invitation to consider these methods arrives from my lived experiences of being in the world of art: being a female, an artist working with sound as well as an aural thinker who has been repeatedly conditioned by white cube walls. In the epigraph of the introduction of my thesis I gave an example, one of many. I revealed how one of my installation artworks – *13.1.91* (2016, Surrey Gallery), an artwork that explores the soundscape of a political conflict, which took place in the USSR, now independent Lithuania – the sound levels of the piece had to be reduced at the requests of the curators. The curators were men. Even though I openly opposed to the idea, suggesting it would devalue my concept, and even though ‘I made noise’ and rebelled, the sound levels *had* to be reduced, according to the curator. My sounding body – my body as an artist mediating through my sounding art was as a

result negotiated and diminished. Through institutional quieting, the hierarchy and the order of the white cube space had to be maintained. Maybe, to the ears of men, my sound 'was associated with the disorderly and uncontrolled outflow of sound' (Carson 1995, 126). Maybe, to the ears of men, it had to be managed, maintained and consequently reduced.

Let us put things into perspective. When 'one of the most important sound and video artist' (Tate, n.d.), Bruce Nauman (b. 1941), installed his multi-channel sound installation *Raw Material* at *Tate Modern* in 2005, he was not ordered to reduce the sound levels of his artwork. The sounding installation consisted of multiple directional speakers, emitting different recordings at different volumes, some of which were unbearably loud. At points, the piece caused pain in my ears. As a gallery visitor I was provided with only two options: either to endure in the pain or leave. The artwork dominated the surrounding architecture and spoke *at* me. Through its authoritative voice, it absorbed and penetrated my being alongside other experiencing subjects inside the space.

Raw Material presented itself as an act of power and control which, for one reason or another, was granted by the institution. After all, to reiterate, Bruce Nauman is one of the most important sound and video artists to have ever lived. *Tate Modern* granted the artist a license to cause auditory discomfort. And yet, when installing *13.1.91*, my noise and my chaos had to be avoided. In both cases, the institutions implemented the same strategy of silencing: at *Tate*, I was overwhelmed by noise and therefore silenced, whilst at *Surrey Gallery*, I was refused from making noise. Even though my noise in *13.1.91* was trying to convey the pain and trauma of a political protest through loud sonic bursts, my sound at *Surrey Gallery* had to be controlled. Maybe, the curators, as men and as guardians, felt that managing and controlling my presence was necessary as, after all, it is a 'man's proper civic responsibility towards woman [...] to control her sound for her insofar as she cannot control it herself' (Carson 1995, 127). Like a lot of female artists creating sound, we are not the most important artists of our time.

An archetypal white cube exhibition space tends to present itself as a site that does not allow for the outside time or the external world to come in. Having exhibited video artworks in gallery spaces, I have learnt that this is not necessarily the case. As discussed in chapters one and two, white cube spaces are not sonically empty sites – they are full of sound, and thus, full of spaces and times. I have discovered that aurality manifests itself in different ways: through my artworks, through my bodily movements (even when they are conditioned), through background sounds and accidental noises. Each exhibition space, when inhabiting and being *inside* it, reveals itself as a unique composition, as an active sounding site performing and transforming over time. And yet, white cubes continue to convince us that there is only *one* universal white exhibition room and that there is only *one way of being with* art: whether it is through gallery visitors quietly walking from one exhibition hall to another or through being inhibited in fixed positions. I have found that bodies and spaces are more cacophonous than the stiff white exhibition rooms would like to admit.

I have also realised that my artworks and my sound, when in gallery spaces, *does* something to the operation of the gallery architecture and the institution. My television sets, my speakers and my sounding, creative and experiencing body affect the aural architectures of the cube. The context and the content of my works also contribute towards the shaping of the environment. Even when conditioned, orientated or admitted as unsound, they inevitably sound out and consequently change the white cube's 'life'. This realisation has motivated me to challenge the experiential as well as socio-political potential of the white cube project's operation through the dimension of sound: through tuning my ear as well as my body towards the voice of the artwork, but also the auditory residues. Here, I listen to the sounds that escape the speakers or the screen. I listen to the noise that emerges from one's bodily movement. I also account for the sounds of the external world that leak into the world of the white cube. The sonic life, as I discover, is an ongoing one. It does not stop even if the architectural design of white exhibition rooms orders it to. Thus, if we tune towards the sonic

activity in a creative and experiential capacity, we might be able to offer and expand the life of the so-called universal white cube into a sounding multiple – a sonic plural filled with many sounds.

Offering, however, is a process that requires effort and labour. It involves emotional and intellectual sweat and materialises only when actively acted upon. In Ahmed’s view, trying and being pushy is a ‘sweaty concept’: ‘Sweat is bodily; we might sweat more during more strenuous activity. A “sweaty concept” might be one that comes out of a bodily experience that is difficult, one that is “trying,” and where the aim is to keep exploring and exposing this difficulty [...]’ (Ahmed 2014). By following the steps of sonic feminism, I propose to take on this challenge – I will build my artworks using the mother tongue, I will enter white cube exhibition spaces with my body as a sounding instrument and a recorder, I will listen-*with* and embody *all*-sound with the intention to confront, to spatio-temporalise and to break the gendered boundaries of the ideology-driven aesthetic spaces that continue to remove us from the external world, the external time and our socio-cultural baggage.

3.3. Doing Sonic Feminism: The Approaches

3.3.1. Listening to *All*-Sound

Sonic feminism, as practiced in this project, is indebted to Oliveros’ approach to listening. When engaging in aural environments, Oliveros considered the globality of sound – the ‘sonosphere’, or the sphere that encompasses everything that can be sounding: ‘[...] all sounds that can be perceived by humans, animals, plants, trees, and machines’ (Oliveros 2010, 22) – as a route, as noted by Rodgers, towards expanding one’s ‘personal and social consciousness’ (Rodgers 2010, 27). Listening to *all*-sound, as Oliveros argued, allows us to experience the spatio-temporal continuum of sound, which, according to the artist, heightens and expands ‘consciousness of sound in as many dimensions of awareness and attentional dynamics as humanly possible’ (Oliveros 2005, xxiii). One must, however, as pointed out

in the introductory part of the thesis, be open and listen to *all*, including the hidden noises or sounds we sometimes are told to ignore or avoid.

Oliveros believed that by immersing and engaging in everything that is sounding, we are able to construct and shape the knowledge about our embodied presence in the world. Yet, if we control our ears, according to Oliveros, we become focal listeners, subjected to power and authority (Oliveros 2005, 15). If we let the ears be orientated and directed, the in-betweens get lost, then, we may be able to offer less. *All*-sound, however liberates and expands the listeners' perception, enabling the listener to be embodied, to be a body. Following Oliveros, thus, opening our bodies to *all*-sound when experiencing sounding art in galleries and museums can help us to reconfigure institutional art settings. I call them sonic 'in-betweens' – the gaps and cracks in the speech, the quiet moments between the speaker and the spoken to, the space and time between the sound emitted and the sound perceived and the unwanted as well as wanted. Attending to the sonic 'in-betweens' might make those mountains erupt (Le Guin 1989, 160), it might break institutional walls.

Listening to *all* that is there to be heard and by listening as a way of building relations, we can potentially form, what Bruce Odland and Sam Auinger call 'a sonic commons' (Odland and Auinger 2009, 64)⁴⁰ – a sounding community that diverts from the 'father tongue' (Le Guin 1989, 147). Listening to *all*-sound thus might help us to build a different kind of exhibition space – a space that is not built on individualism, economic wealth, social divisions or institutional autonomy, but on social and embodied intersubjective relations.

The act of listening to *all*-sound, however, means listening subversively. It is an act of activism – an active act. I propose that when performing this act, we might be able to resist inhibition and involve the whole of our body in the

⁴⁰ 'The Sonic Commons can be defined as any space where many people share an acoustic environment and can hear the results of each other's activities, both intentional and unintentional' (Odland and Auinger 2009, 64).

listening practice. It is then that we can form mountain ranges. It is then that we can reconsider white cubes as potentially whole-bodying and audiovisual rather than just ocularcentric. Thus, I propose bodily listening and embodiment of *all*-sound as methodological approaches to combat the art institution's prescribed laws, including its ocularcentrism and spatio-temporal isolation when *being with* art.

3.3.1. Speaking the Mother Tongue

Let us return to the moment when the artist and feminist Pauline Oliveros met the science fiction and fantasy writer Ursula Le Guin for the first time in the early spring of 1986. Oliveros said to Le Guin: 'Offer your experience as truth' (Le Guin 1989, 150). This sentence resonated with Le Guin. In reflection of the encounter, she wrote: 'There was a short silence. When we started talking again, we didn't talk objectively, and we didn't fight. We went back to feeling our ways into ideas, using the whole intellect not half of it, talking to one another, which involves listening. We tried to offer our experience to one another. Not claiming something: offering something' (ibid.). Le Guin and Oliveros were able to talk in a language they both shared – a language that sought to offer something rather than claim something; a language Le Guin calls 'the mother tongue'. For Le Guin, the mother tongue is a language of a relation, a relationship: 'it connects. It goes two ways, many ways, an exchange, a network' (Le Guin 1989, 149). Those who speak it do not wish to divide or separate. Those who live by it, do not speak *at* you but *with* you – *all* of you: your body, your limbs, your ears and eyes. The mother tongue, then, is a language of embodiment. It encompasses more than mere words; it includes gestures, bodily presence, movements and the environment. It is a language that allows bodies to listen, experience and be with one another and offer something, rather than claiming something.

The mother tongue, however, is not a universal language. It sits on the peripheries, outside the centres of governance. At times, it is barely heard or understood. Not everyone speaks the mother tongue, although those who do,

time and time, and time and time again, are misunderstood or dismissed as bad to hear: as irrational, as incomprehensible, as incognisable. The mother tongue, then, is one of weirdness and queerness. It operates outside the language of rationality and order, or what Ursula Le Guin calls 'the father tongue [...] – the language of power - of social power' (Le Guin 1989, 147). The father tongue considers itself to be the universal language. Whilst it *may* be universal, or it *may* call itself the *principal* form of language that organises and sets the systems of social power, simultaneously, it is a language of limitations. It conditions, it claims, it restrains. It is not built on kinship. Quite the contrary, it is 'spoken from above. It goes one way. No answer is expected or heard' (Le Guin 1989, 149). It does not speak *with* or listen *with*, but instead, it speaks *at* you. According to Le Guin, 'It only lectures' (Le Guin 1989, 148). The father tongue, then, is one of disconnection and disembodiment; it divides, individuates, excludes, distances; it creates gaps. It claims its own unquestionable truth and calls itself the highest form of language – the 'true language', as Le Guin puts it (ibid.). The father tongue, thus, is not a relation or a relationship. Instead, it is a language of inequality and disparity.

By speaking *at* you, the father tongue presents a world that is constructed using dualistic polarities, separating subjects and objects, men and women, minds and bodies. The scope of the father tongue, therefore, is limited and limiting. It enables those who follow the father tongue to alienate and exclude those who do not speak it. Too often, those who are unable to adjust to the limitations of the father tongue have become excluded from places of decision making; they have been spat out from the centres of governance, or what Carson calls, 'the civic space of men' (Carson 1995, 125). Those who do not conform to 'men's way of speaking' become displaced into 'the city limits, [...] relegated to suburban areas, like the mountains, the beach or the rooftops of houses' (ibid.).

The modernist white cube project has been built using the father tongue: the space, the institution, the discourse and the people that dictate it, speak *at*

you rather than *with* you. The ideology of the white cube claims, it partitions, it splits, it genders. It devalues and excludes those who fail to conform to the prescribed dualisms, binaries and divisions. As discussed in chapter one, Charlotte Moorman, when performing *Opera Sextronique* in 1967, was deemed too 'jarring', thus, was *literally* escorted from the gallery space by police officers and charged with indecent exposure. The issue of gendered division, however, is not just a historical fact, but also a lived present. According to a statement provided by Guerrilla Girls: 'now the bias is more coded. Tokenism, showing the same few women or artists of color over and over, is a huge distraction. The glass ceiling is so crushing you bang your head against it every day!' (2015) A study undertaken by the Association of Art Museum Directors (AAMD) also demonstrates how gender inequality continues to manifest itself in terms of the museums' operational governance and the existing pay gap (2015). To return to Maura Reilly's study, gender representation in the context of major art institutions in Europe and the US demonstrates that sexism is still integral to the institutional fabric of today's art world: 'A glance at the past few years of special-exhibition schedules at major art institutions in the United States, for instance, especially the presentation of solo shows, reveals the continued prevalence of gender disparity. Of all the solo exhibitions since 2007 at the Whitney Museum, 29 percent went to women artists. Some statistics have improved. In the year 2000, the Guggenheim in New York had zero solo shows by women' (Reilly 2015). These lived facts and embodied data demonstrates that the division, the partitioning and silencing is a form of reality to some bodies that exhibit and engage in the arts.

The language of the so-called white cube, after all, presents itself as all-knowing. Its tone is persuasive. It acts as a language of power – of an authority that grants itself to direct and orientate. By doing so, it reduces your ability to speak and listen *with*. It relies on power, because, as Sara Ahmed argues: 'Power works as a mode of directionality, a way of orienting bodies in particular ways, so they are facing a certain way, heading towards a future that is given a face' (Ahmed 2017, 48). When entering square and whitened

gallery rooms, you are expected to move in a certain way, to wear a certain face, to face a certain way. You may want to turn to the mother tongue, but *it* – the institution, and *they* – those in power, forbid you to do so. The white cube continues to speak *at* you in the father tongue, even if you cannot speak back, even if you do not understand what is being said. Even if you try, *it* and *they* silence your being, limit your body to assigned paths and routes. If you refuse, you are spat out, you become an ‘affect alien’ - you are alienated because you are affected (Ahmed 2017, 57). As a stranger you become what Nirmal Puwar calls a ‘space invader’ (Puwar 2004, 7), you are told to leave.

The mother tongue, on the other hand, refuses to divide the world into dualisms and limitations. It acts against the determinism of the father tongue. As a relation, a relationship, it is formed and spoken by those who can trust each other and offer their experience as truth. The mother tongue, in that sense, is a language of social and political connectedness and communal resistance. In the words of Le Guin, once you adopt and embody the mother tongue, even when displaced into the peripheries away from the centre, you begin to challenge the father tongue, you subvert and transform (Le Guin 1989, 160). Thus, by speaking the mother tongue, you resist, you refuse to give in, you act against the norms of the centre. It is by persisting and refusing that enable you to form what Ahmed calls an army – an army of those who share the mother tongue and who ‘pulse with shared life and vitality’ (Ahmed 2017, 84), and who, consequently, push the unquestionable centre. I turn to my video artworks as a way of speaking the mother tongue.

3.4. Towards an Aural Expansion of the Gallery

When Le Guin and Oliveros met for the first time and listened to each other, they refused to be spoken *at*, together. Both – as a relation – a relationship, demurred, protested against direction or orientation. They stood against carrying a face that was assigned by *him* and *them*. They did not see their presence together as directional or facing forward, but as expanded, erupting in all directions: left, right, up and down, inside and outside. By speaking the

mother tongue, they spoke with the *whole* of their sounding and sounded bodies. The mother tongue empowered them both to reject the rigid boundaries of the father tongue, through offering something and not claiming something.

In this chapter I have sought to demonstrate that tuning towards the mother tongue and listening when displaying and experiencing sounding video art might help us to confront the language of the white cube project – the language of power and control. By following the mother tongue together and looking for a social commons, as Le Guin argues, ‘we can try to hear and speak that language which may be our truest way of being in the world, we who speak for a world that has no words but ours’ (Le Guin 1989, 159). These concepts inform my use of sonic feminism as a practice-led method. This method employs the mother tongue to challenge the white cube project’s limitations.

In the chapters that follow, I turn towards my sounding art practice and question how my practice is able to confront the white cube’s ‘forked tongue’ (Le Guin 1989, 149). My sounding video artworks, inspired by the voices of the 1960s avant-garde women’s video art practice, arrive at the gallery using the mother tongue. When exhibited and in operation, they do not lecture in dichotomies, nor do they aim to split and separate. On the contrary, video, I propose, enables my sound – as experienced, embodied and captured by the audiovisual signal – to be amplified and offered to the space of experience. My sound, as mediated through video, serves as *our* sound – the sound of the mother tongue.

Using methods informed by the concepts of the all-sound and the mother tongue, my practice addresses and critiques the ideological structure of the white cube. When constructing the artworks, I play with the idea of mediating time, space and gender through sound. I bring audiovisual archives into art spaces with the hope to challenge the spatio-temporal structure of white exhibition rooms. In my artworks, I bring the time of the

past into the present, I question how time is remembered, shaped and experienced, and how time, as mediated through technology, connects farther spaces and bodies. I re-tell the stories of those who have previously been silenced or ignored, and I ask the participants of my exhibited artworks to listen and to embody the uncomfortable histories and the voices lost. I refuse to conform to the disciplinary nature of white exhibition rooms and instead, by being wilful, unsettle the aural architectures of exhibition spaces. I scatter sounding televisions, projections and audio speakers in bleached square exhibition rooms and invite the experiencing subjects to be bodies and be embodied, and by being embodied, to contribute towards the sonic improvisation of the experiential space.

As a sounding video artist, I use our sound as a way of calling for openness, generosity, connectedness, offering conversation, rather than control or orientation. With video made using the mother tongue, bodily and social relations might be potentially activated. Through simultaneous image and sound transmission, video refuses mono-sensorial individualisation, and instead it forms a multisensory community – space that empowers bodies, despite their gendered framing, to be *whole* bodied and to connect with other bodies, including their times and spaces.

To be able to uncover the potential of *all*-sound in the context of contemporary gallery architectures and institutions, I dedicate the next two chapters to reflect on my sounding video installation practice. Here, I use the exhibitions of my artworks and curatorial projects as points of critical departure for addressing the ideological structure of the white cube in the context of contemporary gallery exhibition settings. Each chapter presents an artwork in relation to the proposed research problem, which is then addressed through the methods of the mother tongue and listening to *all*-sound. Chapters four and five, for example, will focus on questioning bodies in white cube spaces through the dimension of *all*-sound whilst reflecting on an exhibition setting where one of my audiovisual installations – *13.1.91*, was displayed. Chapters six and seven will present an artwork and a curated

exhibition – *Airport* and *Sound/Place* – that challenge the gallery spaces' prescribed universality and their timeless and autonomous character. The hope here is that this practice-led contribution will initiate an entrance point towards re-thinking institutional exhibition spaces in more open and embodying terms, and offer sonic feminism as a way of tackling the ocularcentric and patriarchal nature of lived social spaces, such as the white cube exhibition space.

4.
13.1.91



13.1.91
2016/2017, Sound, Video, Duration
variable, Looped

FIG. 8, 13.1.91, INSTALLATION DETAIL, SURREY GALLERY, 2016

Figure 7, 13.1.91, Exhibition View, Surrey Gallery, 2016



FIG. 9, 13.1.91, EXHIBITION VIEW, SURREY GALLERY, 2016

Figure 8, 13.1.91, Exhibition View, Surrey Gallery, 2016



FIG. 10. 13.1.91, EXHIBITION VIEW, SURREY GALLERY, 2016

Figure 9, 13.1.91, Exhibition View, Surrey Gallery, 2016

13.1.91: Exhibition Documentation*
Surrey Gallery, 2016: <https://vimeo.com/160481903>

**Appendix B*

4.1. The Un-silencing of Political Bodies

Having discussed the methodological approaches to doing sonic feminism in chapter three, here, I undertake a critical reflection of one of my sounding video installations – *13.1.91*, which was exhibited at Surrey Gallery (2016) in Guildford, UK. The artwork encourages the experiencing gallery subjects to bypass the gallery’s ocularcentric conditioning, to retain their bodies when entering the gallery space and to experience the exhibition with their *whole* bodies rather than just the eye. The video and sound of the protest at different points is slowed down and becomes abstracted so that we can detach ourselves from our social readings of gender (of what specific gender is ‘expected’ to look or sound like). The artwork encourages the participants to consider bodies beyond gender and to be with others in the gallery as a post-gendered social body – a group of unique body-subjects with unique subjectivities, social and cultural attachments interconnected through the dimension of *all*-sound.

13.1.91, in this sense, furthers the argument of this thesis by demonstrating how the methods of video art practice, speaking the mother tongue and listening to *all*-sound might empower bodies to retain their bodies when *being with* bodies, to sound out and to listen to *all*, this way subverting the white cube’s tendency to quieten or diminish *certain* bodies. The hope is that with the sound of *13.1.91* leaking, spreading and resonating between the gallery walls, the exhibition space will become a home to *all* bodies rather than *some*.

4.1.1. The Artwork Overview

13.1.91 (2016/2017) is a multi-channel audiovisual sculpture, constructed using four 35" HD screens and a four-channel speaker setup. The installation utilises a rediscovered video archive of a political protest, which took place in the USSR, now independent Lithuania, in January 1991. Using analogue and digital video technology the artwork addresses a specific historical moment – a political conflict, during which thirteen individuals were killed and over a thousand citizens were injured. This protest became a significant political mark as it led the country towards its independence later that year. In addition, the event sparked further political unrest in the neighbouring USSR countries, including Belarus and Ukraine, which resulted in an overall dissolution of the Soviet Union. The January 1991 protest was closely documented by the National Radio and Television Broadcast as well as non-professional camera users, who used VHS camcorders to capture the event.

In *13.1.91*, I expose the bodies of the protesters as discovered in the immense video archive. The piece consists of a number of screens showcasing the enlarged and decelerated protesters' faces accompanied by decelerated sound of the event – masses cheering and screaming. Using technology as the main tool for questioning, here, I offer a historiographic intervention, or, using operative media, bring the forgotten bodies – the bodies that fought for freedom – from history into the present. The main conceptual goal of this piece is to reawaken the life of the abandoned archive and unsilence its bodies: the bodies of protesting women, old men and a dismantled sculpture of Lenin. By decelerating images and sounds, I uncover, expose and extend the historical details, such as protesters' faces and bodily parts of the revolutionary crowd. Through images and sounds, I aim to extract the potential affect from each individual being as caught on the videotape. I slow the footage and sound down as a way of 'un-quarantining' the bodies of the protestors with an incentive to extend their short-lived presence as well as 'unsilence' and retain their being, consequently, re-opening the repressed

affective potentialities that are hidden in the video archive's timeline. By manipulating the time and space of the archive, I aim to connect the bodies of two temporalities: the bodies of those in the lived and endured political past with the bodies of those in the present space/time of the gallery experience. I slow down the visible and audible elements of the archive with the intention to encourage the exhibition participants to immerse and embody this part of history and to tune their listening bodies towards the struggles lived and experienced by those who were physically there and present to experience it. The historical time, in that sense, as inscribed in the gallery visitors' bodies through the experience of the artwork's archived past, comes back into the present.

The sonic dimension of *13.1.91* aims to immerse the listener in a slowed down ambience of the overall protest, with sporadic shocks of what I call 'aural reality', as brought by short, yet, unbearable intervals of noise. The intermittence of the archival sound inescapably brings us back to the affective cacophony of war. The loud sonic moments act as a reminder that history cannot be concealed or kept in the past. Through the sound of the video, the shocks continue to return, whether it is on screen, the physical space of experience or in one's memory. Through sound and video, the artwork aims to connect the historical bodies with the experiencing bodies in the gallery, this way forming an embodied social connection between the two.

4.1.2. The Artwork Development Process

13.1.91 was initially intended as a silent museum sculpture. The artwork had to include a number of slowly moving paintings, hung on gallery walls (as still 2D paintings) in a natural museum-type lit environment. The plan was to exhibit the moving image works with no sound and question the silence of the political past. However, a number of conceptual changes as well as logistical compromises were introduced due to the spatial and technological limitations of the exhibition space.

The piece was built site-specifically in the gallery space. Having spent two weeks in the exhibition room playing with materials, trying different layout arrangements, being told 'no' or 'that is not possible' repeatedly, I have come to realise that sound was becoming an increasingly crucial part of the artwork and had to be amplified and exposed. Arriving from sonic feminism, I subverted and sounded out. I began to question the auditory dimension of the audiovisual signal, considering it as an inescapable element of video's temporality and the historical moment captured. I began to 'play' with the soundtrack of the archive, consequently decelerating it to its maximum capacity using a digital computer interface. The slowed down soundtrack of the video signal induced a sense of unrest and tension. Yet, the sound of the video archive called for further artistic scrutiny. I decided to include shorter intervals of loud noise, which would intermittently emerge during the participants' encounter with the artwork. In the end, a 4-channel audio setup, consisting of a decelerated and noisy soundtrack, was introduced. In *13.1.91*, the low frequency decelerated soundtrack is juxtaposed with extremely loud bursts of the political protest – the noise of resistance. By including noisy parts into the artwork my aim was to 'awaken' the experiencing gallery subject and induce a disturbing bodily response as a result.

The video element of the artwork also transformed during the development process. No longer a museum-type painting, the screens were instead scattered around the gallery space. This was a site-specific decision – an institutional negotiation undertaken between the gallery and the artist. The gallery walls were not strong enough to support the screens so alternative formations had to be introduced. Rather than treating screens as paintings, the television objects were transformed into three-dimensional sculptures, placed in accordance with the layout of the gallery space.

In summary, the overall construction of the piece encompassed a number of procedural changes, during which, *13.1.91* continuously evolved into something that was not predicted. Because of such a persistent conceptual fluctuation, negotiation, transformation and expansion of the artwork, the

piece developed a time-criticality of its own. It became an embodied sonic feminist response to the art institution in which the artwork was due to be displayed.

4.1.3. *13.1.91*: A Technological Overview

The *13.1.91* artwork's technological specifications for exhibition were as follows:

4-channel Video (Video to HD transfer, H.264, silent)

4-channel Sound (Video to Uncompressed Audio File transfer, WAV)

The proposed exhibition technical setup was as follows:

Four HD Televisions (35")

Four Audio Speakers & Subwoofer (connected to an amplifier)

Four Media Players

XLR-XLR Cables

4.1.4. The Surrey Gallery Exhibition Space

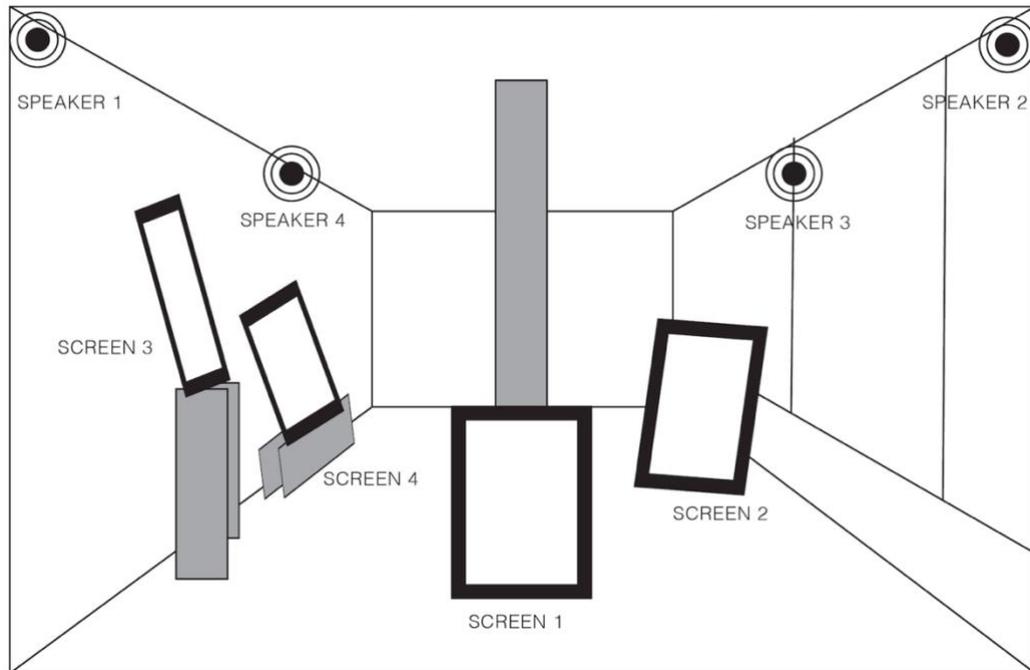


Figure 10, 13.1.91 Exhibition Room Layout, Surrey Gallery, 2016

As the floor plan of the 13.1.91 artwork demonstrates, the architectural structure of the space is relatively open. The exhibition setting consists of concrete walls, windows, wooden doors, carpet flooring, cement pillars and a metal bracket-type ceiling – a mixture of different architectural components, which shape the overall structure of the room. The space is not square but rectangular – it is secured by a number of cement-type pillars, which divide the room into several smaller rectangular sections. Two of the exhibition walls are white, resembling the character of the white cube, whilst the other two consist of large windows, a partition wall and a wooden door, which leads into a hallway. The window-wall releases a considerable amount of exterior light. Thus, in the daytime the artwork primarily relies on natural lighting as leaked from the street. In the evening, the light emanates only from the four screens. The ceiling is covered with metal grills, a feature most commonly used in large-scale open office environments, whilst the flooring,

is covered with carpet. This interior setting not only contributes towards the visual peculiarity of the space, but also towards its acoustic character.

The Surrey Gallery exhibition site adopts a particular soundscape formed by the exterior sounds of a nearby pedestrian street, the sound of planes and cars passing that enter the architectures of the gallery space, the sound of the *13.1.91* artwork, the noises emerging from the operative media technology and the accidental sounds created by bodies leaving and entering the space. With the artwork's technology operating in time, the ceiling's metal grills begin to vibrate, windows tremble, whilst the doors also produce intermittent noises. The internal sonic architectures of the *13.1.91* exhibition setting become suffused with different sounding substances: electrically powered machines, static sonic and light elements, architectural design components, such as radiators, automatically programmed doors.... the sound of the technologically mediated assembly, as discovered in the gallery space, is an endless one. The sonic elements produce an aurally active, a 'hectic' audiovisual environment, in which visible and invisible elements, even when static, reverberate or echo in time, consequently affecting the surrounding architectures. Whilst at first glance the white cube setting presents itself as uninhabited and aurally blank, in reality, it is noisy, resonant, and buzzing. Even before the video apparatus is in place, the room is already filled with exterior resonances and echoes that leak through the door, the partition and the window wall. With the technological artwork in operation, however, the sonicity of the space increases. Different interior design material, including the carpeted flooring and the ceiling's metal grills affect the reverberation levels.

In summary, the audiovisual apparatus of the *13.1.91* installation object renders the space as an aurally active site – devices radiate, sounds bounce from one wall to another, the *13.1.91* artwork's voices emerge, as a result, different sounding rhythms form. With the artwork's screens and speakers in operation, the aural architectures inevitably begin to expand, consequently mobilising and spatialising the experiential subjects. Here,

however, we must question, how does the sounding operation of *13.1.91* affect the gallery institutional walls as well as the bodies experiencing the artwork? Considering Surrey Gallery space follows the same institutional laws prescribed by the white cube's 'father tongue' (Le Guin, 1989, 147), does *all*-sound disappear behind the ocularcentrism of the space? Does the gallery begin condition my body as the creator as well as the bodies of those entering to experience *13.1.91*, or does this artwork offer an alternative?

5.

The Question of Bodies in the Gallery

5.1. Introduction

I'd like to get beyond gender! I'd like to get to the faculties or processes that are available to the human being. And the fact that one process is associated with one gender is too bad, because I think that all processes should be available, and encouraged, in order to come out with balanced human beings who are able to access any resource they have, rather than being cut off from it.

(Oliveros, Maus, 1994, 180)

In this chapter, I use the *13.1.91* exhibition at Surrey Gallery as a point of critical departure to address the question of bodies in contemporary gallery spaces. I aim to understand how *all-sound* – the audiovisual signal of the artwork, the sound of our bodies, the sound of the gallery walls as well as electric current, technological hum and background noises travelling through and beyond the exhibition architectures – can bypass the white cube's gendered ideological structure and extend our bodies towards post-gendered social body when *being with* art in the gallery. By body here I mean the *whole* of my lived body: the voice, the sounding limbs, the rhythmic operation of my heart as well as the voices and limbs of other bodies (both as mediated through the artwork and as encountered in real-time during the experience of the artwork) that enter gallery spaces to display and experience sounding artworks. As discussed in chapter one, despite the diversification of voices and practices in white exhibition rooms, art spaces retain their institutional power and control, prioritising and accommodating certain bodies whilst limiting the voices of others. Whether it is through exhibition design or institutional infrastructure, as described in *13.1.91*,

contemporary art galleries and museums continue to condition and manage the bodies of those who fail to speak the 'forked tongue' (Le Guin 1989, 149). This includes the bodies of women and consequently women's sound. I propose that institutional forms of bodily control manifest themselves not only visually but also through the institution's soundscape: through quieting particular sound and sounds, through supporting the construction of austere acoustic architectures and interior design, through advocating ocularcentrism and rationalism and through splitting the world of the gallery into dichotomies: visibility/hearing, feminine/masculine, mind/body, subject/object or nature/culture.⁴¹

This chapter is interested in questioning what happens once we, as self-identifying women creators, allow our bodies to be bodies, to listen and to sound out through video art. Can our sounding/sounded bodies potentially emasculate the gallery space and obstruct the art institution's binary regime? Can speaking the mother tongue and listening to *all*-sound produce a more open and generous space where bodies can be *all*-bodies despite their gender? In the context of *13.1.91*, for example, if we open up and listen to the archived bodies of the artwork alongside the environment inside and beyond the gallery architecture, maybe we can discover a setting that is open and not divisive, embodying and socially connected and not closed or discrete – a space that grants all, rather than some.

I approach the analysis of the *13.1.91* exhibition from a position of embodiment: as a lived and experienced encounter between my sounding artwork, my body as a female creator/experiencer and the art institution in which the artwork is installed. In the spirit of Oliveros and Le Guin (Le Guin 1989, 147-160), I start from my experience of facing institutional walls and use the methods of sonic feminism to redirect my presence towards embodying the space through *all*-sound. Having been repeatedly made uncomfortable and unsound when entering white cube exhibition rooms, I

⁴¹ As discussed in the epigraph of my introduction, this was very much felt when exhibiting *13.1.91* in the gallery space. My sound was reduced and my 'mobility' as an artist was diminished by the curator, and with that, the institution of the gallery.

consciously resist the prescribed patriarchal idealism of such sites, which ideologically I have been repeatedly excluded from. When being in the gallery, I tune towards my sounding art and my listening body and question whether the regime can be subverted and whether an alternative can be proposed. In other words, I use the embodiment of *all*-sound as a way of challenging the rationalism and the ocularcentrism of the exhibition setting and consider the potential of experiencing the gallery as audiovisual (thus multisensory), socially interconnected and beyond my socially prescribed gender frame. My body here serves as a sounding instrument as well as a recorder through which I attempt to subvert the patriarchal structure of the white cube with the hope to reach for a post-gendered social body – a home to unique body-subjects, rather than gendered subjects.

To begin with, the chapter considers the gendered limitations and the institutional walls of the Surrey Gallery space. It explores how the exhibition site (and the art institution more broadly) might condition, orientate and diminish the presence of those who operate outside the white cube institution's prescribed 'ideal' – outside the rational, the discrete and disembodied. I then discuss how *13.1.91* departs from the institution's patriarchal ideology. *13.1.91*, as a sounding video artwork created by a self-identifying woman artist, enters the exhibition room using the mother tongue – as bodily lived and experienced, as an artwork that aims to offer communal forms of embodiment rather than set a number of expectations or isolate its subjects.

In the spirit of Oliveros (2005), I enter *Surrey Gallery* to experience *13.1.91* in operation. I tune my listening and sounding body towards everything that can be perceived through the dimension of sound in order to grasp how *all*-sound affects my way of being in the world of the gallery; whether it liberates, opens up, activates, conditions or limits my bodily presence in time. I explore how the internal as well as external sounds as produced by our bodies and our surrounding environment relate to the *all*-sounding architectures of physical gallery spaces mediated through *13.1.91*, and how our sonically

perceived environment shape our ability to inhabit the space and connect with the elements that share it.

When entering Surrey Gallery, I admit that a body does not exist as an object outside one's being in the world. My body and I, in that sense, are indistinguishable. I, as a body subject, then, am not a divided entity, but a sum of parts that shape my being in time and space. My limbs, my heart, as well as my lived historical and cultural identity are not accessories that operate outside my consciousness, or objects that my consciousness carries, but instead, they are integral elements that inform me as a subject and my being in the world. Following Iris Marion Young (2005), I am also aware that whilst all limbs and hearts are distinguishable and unique, they are simultaneously socio-culturally conditioned. For example, when entering an archetypal white cube setting to display or experience sounding video art, I inhabit the space as someone who has historically been placed in a particular gender frame. In this sense, I enter Surrey Gallery as a *gendered* body.

In line with feminist scholars Sara Ahmed, Iris Marion Young and Elizabeth Grosz, I refuse to follow what Grosz calls 'dichotomous thinking', which 'necessarily hierarchizes and ranks the two polarized terms' (Grosz 1994, 3) and places lived body subjects in gender normative dualisms (man/woman). In this chapter I question whether *all*-sound can empower bodies to operate 'as discontinuous, nontotalizing series of processes, organs, flows, energies, corporeal substances, and incorporeal events.... [...]' (Grosz 1994, 164) - as unique and as outside binary oppositions. The aim of this analytical inquiry is to escape this precise gendered conditioning and to present a case for a reconfiguration of gendered body-subjects. I turn to *all*-sound as a route towards dismantling the white cube's gender binaries (in which some of us are still inhibited) and consider our bodies as *whole*-bodied and unique when *being with* art in contemporary gallery spaces.

5.2. The Gendered Soundscape of Surrey Gallery

Surrey Gallery conforms to the ingrained ideological structure of the modernist white cube project – it presents itself as gendered. The aural architectures of the exhibition room, when first encountered, do not willingly accommodate one’s sound. If anything, it is rather reluctant to it. The space itself does not contain much sound as such, however, its unnatural ‘silence’ creates a somewhat austere auditory ambience, which immediately affects my bodily mobility and consequently my way of inhabiting the aesthetic site. The surrounding setting is awkwardly reverberant – the soundscape, due to carpeted flooring and gridded ceiling, is dampened, and as a result, limited in its frequency range. Some sounds are perceived as uncomfortably loud, whilst others disappear without being properly heard. The overall sonic environment of the room is harsh and uncomfortable. Whilst in the gallery, I embody the position of a space invader (Puwar 2004, 8), I perform as someone who is out of tune (Ahmed 2017, 40) and as someone who is presumed not to be equipped to understand the order of the space. Because of the subdued soundscape of the site, my body becomes captured and disciplined, and consequently, immobilised. I become conscious of my sound: I avoid bodily movement, I try to remain quiet, I do everything possible not to cause noise (both literally and metaphorically) – I fear my noise is not wanted.

Visually, to use Le Guin’s term, the space speaks *at* me (Le Guin 1989, 147-160). It performs as rational and all-knowing; it uses the language of power – ‘the father tongue’ (ibid.), through which, my ability to be a body, to be open and to connect to the surrounding space, is diminished. This father tongue, in the case of the Surrey Gallery, is not only mediated through the architectures, but also through the presence of the curators, who are white able-bodied, heteronormative, middle-class men and who seem at comfort and at ease when speaking *at* me and when instructing my bodily presence in time. The curators and I are not having a dialogue as such. Instead, they explain and talk *at* me about how the space works and how it does not. In other words, I

am instructed to follow the orders and concur when being spoken *at*. As if I am expected to leave my sound outside and not to disturb or upset the carefully organised architectural structure of the space. I notify the curators that *13.1.91* is both silent and noisy and may disrupt the rooms nearby. They inform me that noise levels must be reduced, if possible. Whilst the negotiations continue, my bodily space is becoming increasingly reduced. In Ahmed's terms, I feel that the more sound I use, the more out of tune I become: 'the note heard as out of tune is not only the note that is heard most sharply but the note that ruins the whole tune' (Ahmed 2017, 40). I fear that my sound will ruin the overall tune of the space, thus, I temporarily fall silent.

The gendered soundscape of the Surrey Gallery space is burdensome, closed and demanding. It presents us with a number of conditions, which we, as those who are othered and at times excluded, are expected to follow. Rather than opening itself to all subjects, the austere and harsh sounding landscape of the room instead calls for a very particular ideal ego – a rational, ocularcentric and bodiless subject. In other words, the space favours a stereotypically framed 'masculine' ego, someone who is able to remain in control and maintain order. This means that those who are generally associated with femininity and soft forms of knowledge become restricted and controlled. When I enter the space, I feel that my body is bracketed into a particular limited social frame, which classifies me as feminine, subjective and disorderly. Because of it, to follow Carson, my sound has to be controlled and maintained (Carson 1995, 119-137). I fear that because I am not a man my sound therefore is not wanted.

The visual architectures of Surrey Gallery call for a discrete, individualised and a disembodied participation. The harsh and uncomfortable surfaces, architectural layout and curatorial voices suggest that the space is not interested in listening to its objects or its subjects. In that sense, the gallery does not welcome sociality or communal ways of *being with* art. Instead, the walls and those who shape it aim to order and instruct. For example, when in the space, I feel that my body is expected to disconnect from the rest of the

world as well as from other bodies sharing the space during the aesthetic encounter. The almost empty dampened soundscape as well as the bare architectural design of the gallery room present me with a confined solitary ground, in which I am supposed to remain hushed and detached. In that sense, when entering a space built on the father tongue, such as Surrey Gallery, one is expected to split their body – you must remove your eyes from the rest of your body, abandon your social, historical and cultural body, you must separate yourself from the outside world. You must only enter with your eye rather than the rest of your senses. When in the gallery space, you become divided and separated according to the white cube's ocular-led ideology. This condition inevitably leads to disembodiment and a loss of social potential, which I confront and reconsider when installing *13.1.91*.

The experience of entering the audiovisual architectures of Surrey Gallery space leads me to suggest the following: being a woman, a female artist and a female gallery visitor in white cube gallery settings, then, is not an easy task. Surrey Gallery, primarily aimed at the masculine eye and specifically *not* at female ear or her body, follows the ideological lineage of the white cube project: it accommodates brick walls, hard uncomfortable surfaces, high ceilings and almost no furnishing. Certain sound and sounds are favoured, whilst others are quietened or omitted from the space. As a result, a hostile and eerie sonic ambience is produced, which affects how I use my sound and locate myself bodily in the space. Whilst speaking *at* me, the architecture and the institution of Surrey Gallery, instructs me that if I use my sound, I might disrupt the order and cause chaos and, as a result, the ears of men might be offended. Women's sound, as Carson argues, if not managed or maintained, may cause 'monstrosity, disorder and death' (Carson 1995, 121). In Ahmed's terms, I might be seen as 'having too much subjectivity, being too much' (Ahmed 2017, 72). And yet, if I subvert, I might be quietened or spat out from the gallery frame, as social systems and machineries of power tend 'to spit some bodies out' (Ahmed 2017, 46).

One's bodily position in the context of being confronted with Surrey Gallery architectures, is one of historical, social and political orientation. It is one of 'being directed' (Ahmed 2006b, 2); directed towards whiteness, towards 'squareness', towards patriarchy and disembodiment, towards a rational and ocular way of being, towards a way of being that is limited and limiting. As the initial encounter of the Surrey Gallery space reveals, such sites primarily accommodate the bodies of men rather than women, allowing certain body-subjects, yet, not others to inhabit exhibition spaces and call it their home. The walls of Surrey Gallery tell us there is only space for a very specific kind of body – *Others* and *Othered* bodies are unwanted. *Others* and those *Othered* have to orientate themselves, perform in a certain way and control their way of being with art in order to fit in the prescribed masculine ideal. *Others* and those *Othered* consequently sweat and struggle or alternatively they give in and are excluded from the experiential domain.

Whilst being conscious of my bodily stiffness and inhibition, my inability to sound out or make noise, whilst knowingly carrying my body as an object outside of my being in the art space, I turn to *13.1.91* as a way of extending my body and reclaiming my bodily space – the same bodily space that has previously been removed from me. I bring *13.1.91* into Surrey Gallery with the intention to amplify my sounding presence and use *all*-sound as a way of confronting dichotomous divisions and gender epochès. I use my artwork as well as my body as a creator and a gallery visitor as an instrument to confront the prescribed patriarchy and rationalism; as a form of disinhibition and as a form of opening-up in terms of the gallery's space to welcome and accommodate *all* and unique bodies rather than some. As Sara Ahmed argues: 'it is through the effort to transform institutions that we generate knowledge about them' (Ahmed 2017, 93). Therefore, I bring *13.1.91* as a way of demonstrating my effort to transform the spaces that continue to condition our body and our being in social spaces so that we can develop new knowledge about them.

5.3. Against the Gendered Soundscape of the Gallery Space

5.3.1. The Mother Tongue of *13.1.91*

13.1.91, when installed and operative in the architectures of Surrey Gallery, confronts the gendered soundscape of the exhibition site. It does that by entering the space using the mother tongue and by resisting the conditions as presented by the ocularcentric architectures of the gallery. The artwork, in its audiovisual totality, aims to dismantle the gendered binarism that is ordered by the room and instead, it opens itself to more expanded forms of embodiment and experience. It offers *all*-sound and welcomes *all*-sound from *all* bodies that enter the space to *be with* the amplified bodies of the political protesters in *13.1.91*, to *be with* other participating bodies of the aesthetic encounter and to *be with* the acoustic architectures of the room. The artwork, when in operation, does not demand a particular form of participation. Instead, to return to Odland and Auinger's term, it aims to offer a sonic commons (Odland and Auinger 2009, 7). In other words, the artwork does not aim to inhibit or immobilise the bodies of those who enter the space. Instead, it empowers the participants to open up, to be mobile and active and to share their sound with others. If anything, it resists the idea that an artwork, when exhibited and sounding in gallery spaces, should 'demand' or 'expect' a prescribed response or a predetermined way of *being with* art.

As the history of modern and contemporary art practices reveals, there has been a tendency to demand that the participating subject identifies, responds accordingly and is active in the aesthetic experience in order to achieve an authentic relation between the subject and the art object. As noted by Adorno: 'True, even an authentic relation to the artwork demands an act of identification: the object must be entered and participated in – as Benjamin says, it is necessary "to breathe its aura". [...] In other words, he must submit to the discipline of the work rather than demand that the artwork give him something' (Adorno 2004, 370). This position implies that unless an

experiencing subject is willing to actively participate and allow the artwork to alter their consciousness and to an extent, their life afterwards, the contract between the artwork, the experiencing body and the space accommodating that particular experience collapses. Such a reductionist, or ascetic, approach to aesthetic experience implies that artistic objects can be 'separated from both conditions of origin and operation in experience', which, as John Dewey argues, renders an opaque wall of significance (Dewey [1934] 1958, 3). Dewey believes that the works of art and the everyday events cannot be separated and are always experienced as socially entangled. The separation between the two is unattainable. Submitting yourself to the discipline of the artwork means to submit yourself to the language of the 'father tongue' (Le Guin, 1989, 147) – the language of power and control – a way of being that is inhibiting and restricting.

Art created through the father tongue imply that the works should speak *at* you, call for obedience and full dedication. This way of demanding or, in other words, claiming, only limits and frames the embodying potential of the participating subjects. For example, Bruce Nauman's or Christian Marclay's artworks command such forms of participation. When witnessing Nauman's *Raw Materials* at *Tate Modern* in London, the participants were expected to actively participate, and even if in physical pain, they were tasked to endure in the noise of the piece. When experiencing Marclay's artworks at *White Cube Bermondsey* in London, the gallery visitors' presence was orientated and directed, guided in specific directions as led by the eye, and at times against their will.

The soundscape of *13.1.91* shifts away from such rigid forms of commanding or demanding. If anything, it does the opposite. It escapes the presupposed ideal contract between the experiencer and the experienced. Inspired by the social and political resonances of the 1960s avant-garde women's video art practices, *13.1.91* brings wilfulness and openness into the rigid architectures of the Surrey Gallery space with the attempt to unsettle and unfix them. By sporadically sounding out and spreading through the architectures of the

exhibition room, the screens and the soundtrack of the artwork speak *with* you rather than *at* you. In the spirit of the mother tongue, the reawakened audiovisual video archive aims to empower conversations to be spoken loudly and openly together, to be heard and embodied collectively. It welcomes both, the artwork and the experiencing subjects, to communicate in a way that is unique to their bodies rather than the universal 'masculinised' body.

When exhibited in the gallery space, *13.1.91* refuses to create divisions. It uses audiovisual signal as a way of uniting senses and bodies. The audiovisuality of the archive amplifies the voices and the bodies of those who have been previously silenced and ignored by the political protest. It presents the demolition of Lenin's statue alongside the screens of the protesters' exposed faces, this way offering a literal as well as metaphorical dismantling of dictatorial masculine figures and with that, an empowerment of women who stood against their bodily and social inhibition. By scattering itself across the room in the different angles of the gallery space, the artwork also invites the participants to mobilise, be active, to sound out and immerse in everything that is sounding: the wanted as well as the unwanted sounds – the sonic 'in-betweens', this way offering a more embodied connection between the experiencing subject and the art object. In other words, *13.1.91* opens itself and others to gestures – free forms of bodily movement, voice and noise, and with that, expanded communal sonicities. The artwork, thus, aims to offer a sense of hope that a more generous and open ground for *being with* sounding art is possible.

The audiovisual operation of *13.1.91*, specifically, its auditory dimension serves as an active act towards the un-gendering of the exhibition space. Whilst speaking the mother tongue, it stands against the prescribed white cube norms, it confronts the site's ocular-led discipline and order as well as its prescribed 'masculinity', rationalism and disembodiment. By decelerating and amplifying the sound of the protestors' bodies, it offers a different kind of gallery setting, one that is not led by gender binary norms, but instead, by

unique lived bodies. The sound of the artwork, when slowed down, detaches itself from semantic barriers or meaning – it is not clear who the speaker is and what is being said. Instead, we immerse in a low frequency androgynous drone-type sound produced by the protestors' voices, which unsettles the 'masculine' architectures of the gallery – the walls start to tremble, the windows begin to shake, our bodies also begin to oscillate. The now obscured sonic dimension of the gallery affects the participating elements of the aesthetic encounter – the gendering of the gallery as a result becomes disturbed. The protestors' slowed down voices lose their gendered origin, this way reawakening the gallery architectures and consequently our bodies as more fluid and un-cemented in terms of our bodily position when *being with art*.

By pushing the gender boundaries of the gallery site, the sound of *13.1.91* opens a possibility for a collective sounding social unit, composed of unique gallery body-subjects, the gallery architectures and the artwork. When emitting the sound of the crowd, for example, the artwork invites others to listen *with* communally, this way initiating a space for listening *with* others and listening *out*, rather than speaking *at* or immobilising the participating subjects. All of the sounding elements of the gallery space become an element of the sonic commons. The audiovisual signal brings a number of unique bodies with their unique bodily features, from old women mediated via video screens to a metal statue of Lenin, to sound out together, this way inviting other bodies to tune towards this particular moment of history and participate in the artwork and the gallery space as distinctive, but connected bodies, 'with specific features, capacities, and desires that are similar to and different from those of others in determinate respects' (Young 2005, 18), as interconnected subjective beings-in-the-world, to live and experience together rather than in isolation. In summary, the sound of *13.1.91* offers a possibility of moving beyond our prescribed gendered positions and to experience the artwork and the space as socially connected sounding commons.

5.3.2. Listening to *All-Sound* in the 13.1.91 Exhibition Space

Having established 13.1.91 as an artwork that confronts the gendered white cube ideology, here, I address the position of the experiencing body-subjects and question how the soundscape of the 13.1.91 exhibition is perceived by those outside the stereotypical rational/masculine frame, specifically, the bodies of women. I have demonstrated that the artwork offers a possibility of moving beyond the white cube's gendered frame. Here, however, I explore whether engaging our bodies in *all-sound* enables us to escape the socially prescribed gender boundaries, and with that, its institutional conditioning. In order to address this issue, I tune my body – a body that culturally has been repeatedly admitted as 'feminine' and 'subjective' towards *all-sound* and sonically immerse in the 13.1.91 exhibition space. I act as a sonic feminist and undergo the processes of listening to the soundscape of the 13.1.91 exhibition. Following Oliveros' methodological approach, I intentionally open myself up and embody the *whole* possible spectrum of sound.

The sonic feminist route of listening to *all-sound* extends the broader feminist mission: '[...] [to] develop a better account of the relationship between reason, theory and bodily, subjective experience' (Quoted in Duncan 1996, 17). According to Rosi Braidotti, our work contributes towards elaborating '[...] a truth which is not removed from the body, reclaiming [our] body for [ourselves]... [We need] to develop and transmit a critique which respects and bears the trace of the intensive, libidinal force that sustains it' (ibid.) Thus, when listening to *all-sound* in the context of the 13.1.91 space, I listen 'in as many ways as possible to everything that can be possibly be heard all of the time. [...] whether natural or technological, intended or unintended, real, remembered or imaginary' (Oliveros 2010, 78) with the hope that we can reclaim our bodies from the ocularcentric white cube and form a critique against it. In line with Oliveros, I do not listen inwardly, but outwardly. Thus, I listen *out*. I situate my lived sounding and sounded body *outwards* towards

the sounding world rather than *inwards* towards my individualised being. In other words, I listen in communally.

I enter the *13.1.91* experience as a listening body rather than a subject led and controlled by the disembodied and decontextualised eye. This wilful and active act allows me to immerse in the *all*-sounding architecture of the exhibition room without a feeling of inhibition or orientation, without feeling that I have to submit my experience to the eye. The feeling of disinhibition does not begin *in* the gallery space of the *13.1.91* artwork, but outside of it. Even before entering the architectures of the exhibition room, I can already hear the sound of the artwork leaking into the outside world. The noisy resonances, whilst ambiguous in their source, are weaving and intermingling with the soundscape of the outside environment: the sound of the streets, the passer-by conversations, wind and traffic. The cacophonous sonic improvisation that is forming outside moves my body towards the interior and towards the source of the artwork. The ambiguity of the *13.1.91*'s soundtrack and its sonic residues welcome me in and lure my body towards the gallery space. When in the exhibition space, I actively do not limit my experiencing body. Instead, I tune my body towards the sound of the artwork, the acoustics of the space as well as noises and background sounds that surface and dissipate in time. I continue to listen globally (Oliveros 2005).

The soundscape of the *13.1.91* exhibition site does not speak *at* me or instruct my presence as such. On the contrary, it invites me to join and listen together: with the bodies of the artwork, with the noises of the gallery space as well as with other physical bodies experiencing the artwork. Whilst engaging in *all*-sound, I connect with the cultural and social resonances of the artwork's soundtrack, the dismantling of the political regime and the authoritarian male figures associated with it. The pain and trauma of the female bodies, amplified by the decelerated soundtrack, slowly immerse my listening body in time. I become embodied, affected and connected with the noise of the

protest. Thus, rather than participating as enclosed or isolated, the sound of the artwork enables my body to open itself to collective forms of embodiment, an experience that is shared by my body, the bodies mediated through the artwork and other bodies in the exhibition space. Our listening body, as sounding and sounded, to an extent, becomes emancipated together, as a social embodied unit.

My listening body, when listening *out* and *with*, experiences the sound of 13.1.91 as empowering. It is rejuvenated by the cacophonous sound of the crowds mediating through the speakers. It immerses in perceivable sonic 'in-betweens': the almost inaudible expressions of the protestors' bodies as well as the decelerated demolition of Lenin's statue. It allows itself to tune towards accidental noises and to be noisy, to move around the space without being directed or instructed, to communicate with other bodies in the site of the experience. My body is not demanded to respond in a particular way or move in a certain direction. The setting, audiovisually, is chaotic and cacophonous – it speaks with openness and generosity. The 13.1.91 exhibition room becomes a shared sonic sphere where any and all sound is welcomed, and with that, any and all possible ways of *being with* the artwork presented also becomes possible.

Although my artwork is loud at times, it does not oppress my bodily presence. If anything, it does the opposite – it activates and mobilises my body. The audiovisual signal of the artwork enables me to listen to the political histories as communicated by the screens and the speakers and to tune towards the voices that have previously been silenced, consequently extending my body towards a more communal and social way of *being with* others in the space. When *inside* the exhibition space, I do not feel that I have to leave my body outside the gallery walls. Instead, the power of the mother tongue, communicated by the audiovisual signal of the artwork, allows me to trust the space and the sonic community inside it. It allows my body to 'speak our experience in our own language, the language we talk to each other in, the mother tongue; so we empower each other' (Le Guin 1989, 151). This leads

me to suggest that the auditory dimension of the *13.1.91* exhibition space: the sound of the protest, the slowed down protestors' voices, the sound of my body inhabiting the exhibition the space, the communication between the bodies sharing the experience, enables my body to listen and speak the mother tongue, to resist the language of power and authority, to break the institutional walls and to sound out – I actively contribute towards the transformation of the gallery, un-cementing its commitment to immobilise and split subjects.

By engaging in *all-sound*, I am able to respond to the artwork as a *whole* body rather than a conditioned or a disjointed body, this way, to echo Ahmed, refusing 'to support the system that sucks the blood, vitality, and life from limbs' (Ahmed 2017, 87) – the gendered system of the white cube. With the sound of the protest, the hum of the video apparatus leaking into the architectures of the room as well as my bodily movements sounding, I do not conform to the white cube's prescribed norms. For example, I do not perform as 'feminine'. Instead, I inhabit the gallery as a unique body-subject, with my own unique limbs and heartbeat. As a wilful subject (Ahmed 2014), I retain my body and insist on sounding *out*, rather than allowing myself to be silenced, this way creating a 'freedom to construct' (Young 2005, 16) myself against the prescribed facticity of the white cube ideology. In that sense, rather than prescribing my body to the dichotomies of the gallery: rational/irrational, subjective/objective, female/male, instead, I constitute myself as *unique*; a unique body-subject with my own voice, heart rate, history, cultural memory.

The amplification of video allows my body-subject to reconnect with my unique history, my experience of growing up with and around political protests and being subjected to different political regimes. In a way, the audiovisual signal amplifies and expands my unique *bodily-self*. The slowed down women protestors' voices and sound reawaken my subjectivity and my memory, which opens itself to the gallery architectures during the aesthetic encounter with the artwork. The decelerated soundtrack of the artwork

allows me to immerse in the protest: to tune towards the sonic ‘in-betweens’ and to dissect the historical event beyond words: beyond semantic barriers, beyond the prescribed meanings and beyond specific commands or messages, this way extending the experience of the artwork towards more open intersubjective forms of sonic embodiment between my body, other listening bodies and the bodies mediated by the artwork.

The sonicity of the space, as granted by the soundtrack of the artwork as well as by my now reawakened sounding body, becomes expanded: the noise of *13.1.91*, the pulsation of the gallery architectures, the rumbling of the gallery windows and doors, the hums of video technology as well as my bodily rhythms form a sonic commons. The overall composition offers a multitude of pitches and tones, some more obscure and abstract, some more recognisable. This composition, however, when sounding and resonating between the gallery architectures, does not conform to the white cube’s ‘feminine’/‘masculine’ division – it does not follow a specific gender regime. Instead, the sonicity of the gallery becomes expanded and more fluid, which means that our bodily position also becomes more obscured. As all the elements of the *13.1.91* exhibition continue to communicate, amplify each other and sound out together, they, form a social body that dismantles the gendered gallery walls.

5.4. Conclusion: Towards the Un-Gendering of Bodies in the White Cube

The auditory reawakening of bodies allows us to continue to problematise the white cube project’s ideology, specifically, how *all*-sound and now established sounding bodies contribute towards the overall production of the architecture and the institution of contemporary gallery spaces, specifically, its autonomous and timeless disposition. I turned towards *13.1.91* with an intention to grasp how we, as gendered body-subjects, produce and experience sound when *being with* sounding video art in today’s gallery spaces. Through listening to *all*-sound, I asked what sounds we emit into the

world and what noises we make when inhabiting restricted sites such as institutional white cube spaces. By doing that, I questioned how we, as sounding bodies, are able to contribute towards the construction of the world, and in this particular case, the world of the white cube. When exhibited, my sounding video installation artwork, for example, brought unique velocities into the space. My bodily presence experiencing the exhibited artwork also affected how the acoustic architectures of the gallery spaces in which *13.1.91* inhabited sounded out. Whilst inhabiting the site as a listening body rather than a disembodied eye, I was able to account for everything and anything that was sounding during my encounter with *13.1.91*, this way confronting the white cube's mono-sensory laws and consequently unsettling the gendered conditioning when *being with* art in the gallery.

13.1.91 initiated a sonically embodying experiential space. Through wilfulness and the power of the mother tongue, it confronted the laws of the white cube ideology, consequently opening the gallery room to *all* bodies rather than gendered bodies. The artwork actively resisted ocularcentrism, and with that, the preconfigured forms of rationalism, objectivity and disembodiment. Through images and sounds, *13.1.91* confronted the father tongue of the art institution as well as the father tongue of the soviet dictatorial regime. The audiovisual signal of the artwork reawakened, decelerated and amplified the sound of archived bodies that had previously been silenced, consequently expanding the sounding spectrum of both, the gallery room and Lithuania's history. It emitted the sound of slowed down bodies and the voices of the women protesters and a slowly deteriorating statue of Lenin, this way opposing the dictatorship's prescribed historical temporal and spatial linearity.

The exhibited artwork, now manipulated and slowed down, allowed the gallery visitors to escape the dominant historical narrative and to interrogate this particular historical event and our bodily connection with it subjectively and intersubjectively, as unique bodily subjects in a shared perceptual space.

Listening to the *all*-sound of the 13.1.91 exhibition site allowed me to dissect images and sounds of the protest as well as its sonic 'in-betweens': the unwanted, the hidden and the lost. The dispersed audiovisual elements of the artwork encouraged the gallery visitors to mobilise, to move around the space and experience the artwork and its history from all directions in their own terms – openly, and without orders or demands, without prescribed temporality or spatiality. I propose that 13.1.91, by openly sounding and spreading through the architectures, offered *a gesture* – an amplification of the experiencing subjects' sound, which liberated bodily mobility and offered a sonically embodied social exchange between the experiencing subjects, the artwork and the space. Whilst the ocularcentric forms of exhibition design tend to present artworks as static and finished – as complete objects for static contemplation, 13.1.91 rejected this ideological condition. Instead, it transformed the prescribed static space into a space of movement, and, thus, a space of expanded aurality.

The sonic dimension of the artwork rejected inhibition. During the experience, it travelled from one direction to another, spreading through the architectures and leaking into the outside world. With each operation and replay, the artwork reappeared as unique and new, a different version of its previous self, thus, active and alive. The artwork continued to build upon the echoes and resonances of its previous (replayed and looped) self, this way making it difficult for the space to reduce the audiovisual presence of the artwork and determine its binaries. By sounding out in decelerated and abstracted forms, the artwork made it almost impossible for those in power to fix the artwork or frame it as either 'masculine' or 'feminine'. It is by not complying to this binary that the sound of the artwork contributed towards the un-gendering of the space, allowing the architecture to open up, enabling bodies to exist as unique lived bodies rather than gendered bodies. Such a reconfiguration of the space, as offered by the soundscape of 13.1.91 affected how bodies, when entering and listening to *all*-sound, would inhabit the exhibition site.

The audiovisual signal of *13.1.91* initiated an embodied rather than a disembodied experiential space in which the participating subjects would inhabit the gallery as *whole*-bodied and active, rather than immobilised or quietened. Whilst mobile and sounding, the experiencing bodies of the *13.1.91* exhibition were affected and transformed by the sound of the artwork and the gallery space. In response, the bodily-subjects contributed towards the overall acoustic structure of the exhibition site. For example, the participants when immersing in *13.1.91*, were 'touched' by the decelerated voices and sounds of the protesters as well as the gallery walls. With the artwork in operation, the walls began to vibrate, windows started to rumble, the technological equipment of the artwork was resonating between the walls, this way travelling through the space and touching the participants' bodies. By absorbing the *all*-sound of the gallery, the experiencing bodies consequently affected the acoustic architectures of the space. With bodies inhabiting the exhibition room, the resonance levels in the exhibition room would change, whilst the temperature of the gallery would also transform. By allowing *13.1.91* to sound out, both the experiencing bodies *and* the gallery space transformed – both were brought to life and reactivated.

The analysis of the *13.1.91* exhibition space leads me to suggest that if we, as experiencing sounding/sounded bodies, surpass the ocularcentrism of the exhibition site and allow our bodies to exist as *whole*-bodied and listen to *all*-sound when *being with* art that does not demand but offers, then, we can begin to transform the gendered limitations of the white cube project. And whilst our bodies do become fractured and divided when placed under the reign of the white cube's father tongue, as the experience of the visual architecture of Surrey Gallery reveals, there are ways of re-uniting our bodies. In this particular case, it was the practice of sonic feminism that has allowed us to rediscover our bodies as unique bodies, through which, an embodied social commons was formed.

When witnessing my artwork *13.1.91* in operation, *all*-sound encouraged sounding bodies to be social bodies. By sounding out and experiencing *all*-

sound, bodies inevitably connected with other bodies, consequently forming a sonic community. The cacophonous placement of screens and sound empowered the experiencing subjects to mobilise, the gallery walls to oscillate and the participating bodies to absorb the gallery's reawakened architectures (sounding windows, ceiling as well as pillars), consequently forming a sounding social plural of sounding bodies. This involved unique timed gestures (from the resonances of the gallery walls to bodies' heartbeats) through which, intersubjective connections between all bodies were able to emerge.

The possibility of sonic social community implies that sounding bodies, as embodied through a multiplicity of *all*-sound, are able to form an environmental body – a listening community where *all*-bodies are able to connect and build social and embodied relations with other human *and* non-human bodies. Environmental body not only allows us to reconfigure the gendered regime of the white cube project but also extends the gallery's spatial and temporal potential – it breaks the white cube's universal status and connects it with the outside world and the outside time. The electricity supply of Surrey Gallery, for example, creates sound inside and outside the gallery space, this way extending the gallery's walls. The sound of *13.1.91*, on the other hand, connects the acoustics of the gallery with the sound of the political protest mediated by the video apparatus. These temporalities and spatialities co-connect in the architectures of the exhibition space. Thus, even though the archetypal white exhibition rooms continue to present themselves as atemporal and autonomous – as universal grounds outside the lived time and space, if we enter these spaces (both conceptually and practically) as sounding/sounded, multisensory and *whole* bodied (rather than isolated, decontextualised and removed from our social and historical identity), we might then learn that their spatio-temporal nature of white exhibition rooms is more expanded and co-connected with the outside world than we are led to believe.

To summarise, entering institutional white cube exhibition spaces using the mother tongue and through an embodiment of *all*-sound, then, is a call for an expansion. It is an active step towards breaking away from the ingrained reductionist dualisms that continue to split bodies into prescriptive defined categories, separating men and women, mind from the rest of the bodies when *being with* art. Maybe, through *all*-sound, we can open bodies into expanded domains, and consider lived bodies not as static or predefined in terms of their sexual or gender position, but as fluctuations, situations or events that change and evolve in time. Maybe this approach can allow us to dismantle the patriarchal walls that continue to direct our way of *being with* art. Maybe lived bodies, when activated by *all*-sound, can begin to ascend and descend, open up and close, connect and disconnect, this way mobilising and liberating body-subjects, allowing them to exist as ‘discontinuous, nontotalising’, to reiterate Grosz’s point (1994, 164), rather than as an opposition or a binary. Maybe, if we consider bodies as environmental fluctuations that cannot be prescribed to categories, then we can begin to un-gender the cube’s architectures as well as the art institution more broadly. If we allow ourselves to reconsider lived bodies as sounding and sounded and whole-bodied, rather than mono-sensory representational objects, maybe then we discover them as abstracted and non-binary rather than gendered.

With *13.1.91*, I have showcased how bodies, when all sounding, are able to connect to different histories, this way forming a community, one that exceeds the eternal and universal white cube frame. Thus, if we continue to be bodies and embodied, speak the mother tongue and listen to *all*-sound, we might actually come closer towards an aurally expanded white cube, one that is no longer able to maintain its timeless or autonomous nature, but is spatio-temporally expanded, thus, in ongoing coexistence with different bodies, worlds and times.

I explore this proposition in chapters six and chapter seven. I discuss of my artistic projects – an artwork *Airport* (2015) and a group exhibition of sounding artworks *Sound/Place* (2015) that dwells into the question of the

gallery's spatio-temporal nature. My aim here is to use the concept of *all-sound* as a way of arguing against the white cube's fixed and autonomous regime as well as its tendency to split space and time. Whilst exploring the sound of the artwork and the exhibition site, I tune towards environmental, political and social noises, voices and rhythms of the different soundscapes and explore how they coalesce in time and transform the gallery.

6.

Airport & Sound/Place



Airport

2015, Sound, Video,

Duration variable, Looped

FIG. 12. AIRPORT, INSTALLATION DETAIL, ST. JAMES HATCHAM, 2015

Figure 11, Fig. 8, Airport, Installation Detail, St. James Hatcham, 2015

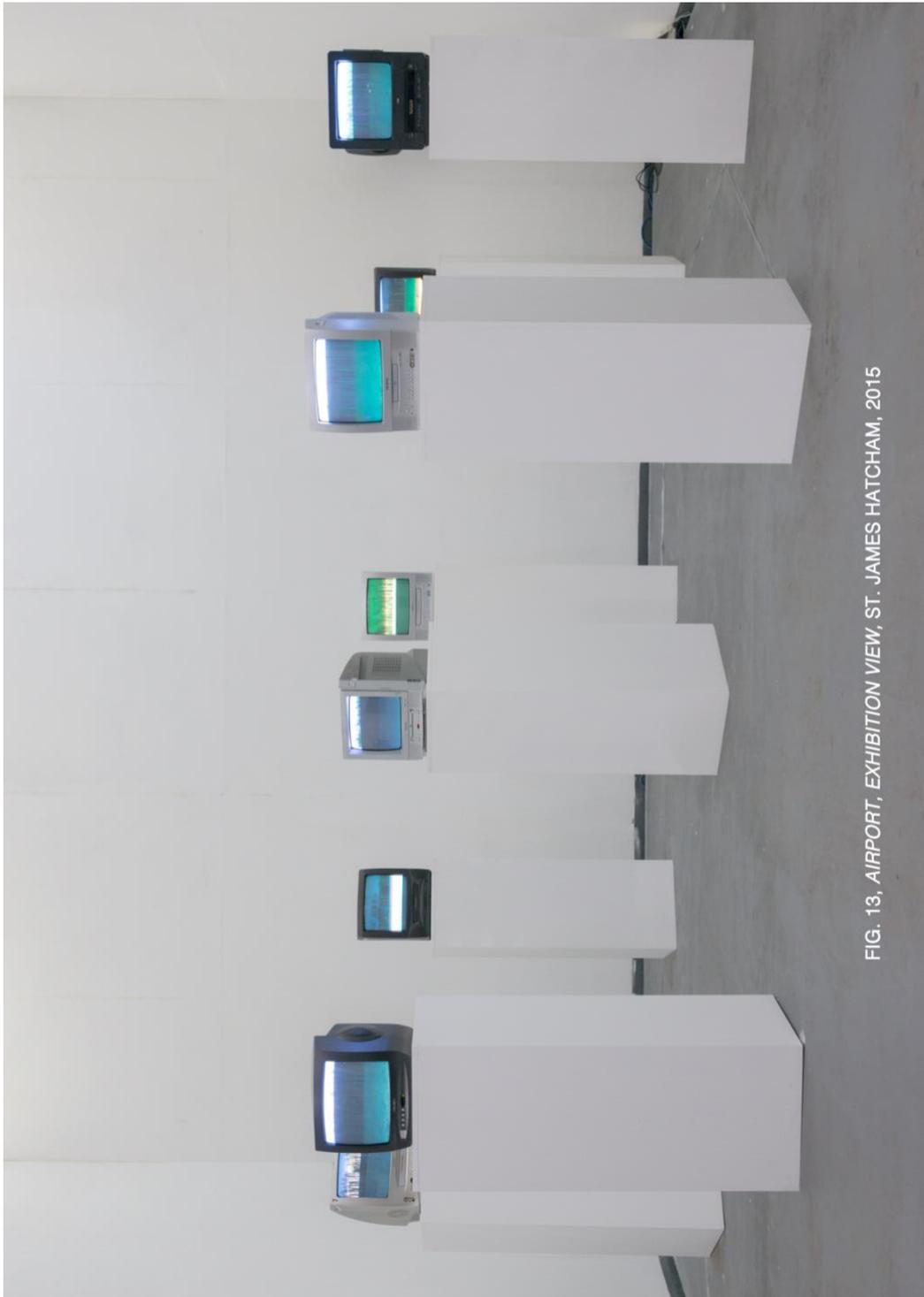


FIG. 13, AIRPORT, EXHIBITION VIEW, ST. JAMES HATCHAM, 2015

Figure 12, Airport, Exhibition View, Sound/Place Exhibition, St. James Hatcham, 2015



FIG. 14., AIRPORT, EXHIBITION VIEW, ST. JAMES HATCHAM, 2015

Figure 13, Airport, Exhibition View, Sound/Place Exhibition, St. James Hatcham, 201

*Airport Exhibition Documentation**
St. James Hatcham, 2015: <https://vimeo.com/144563137>

**Appendix B*

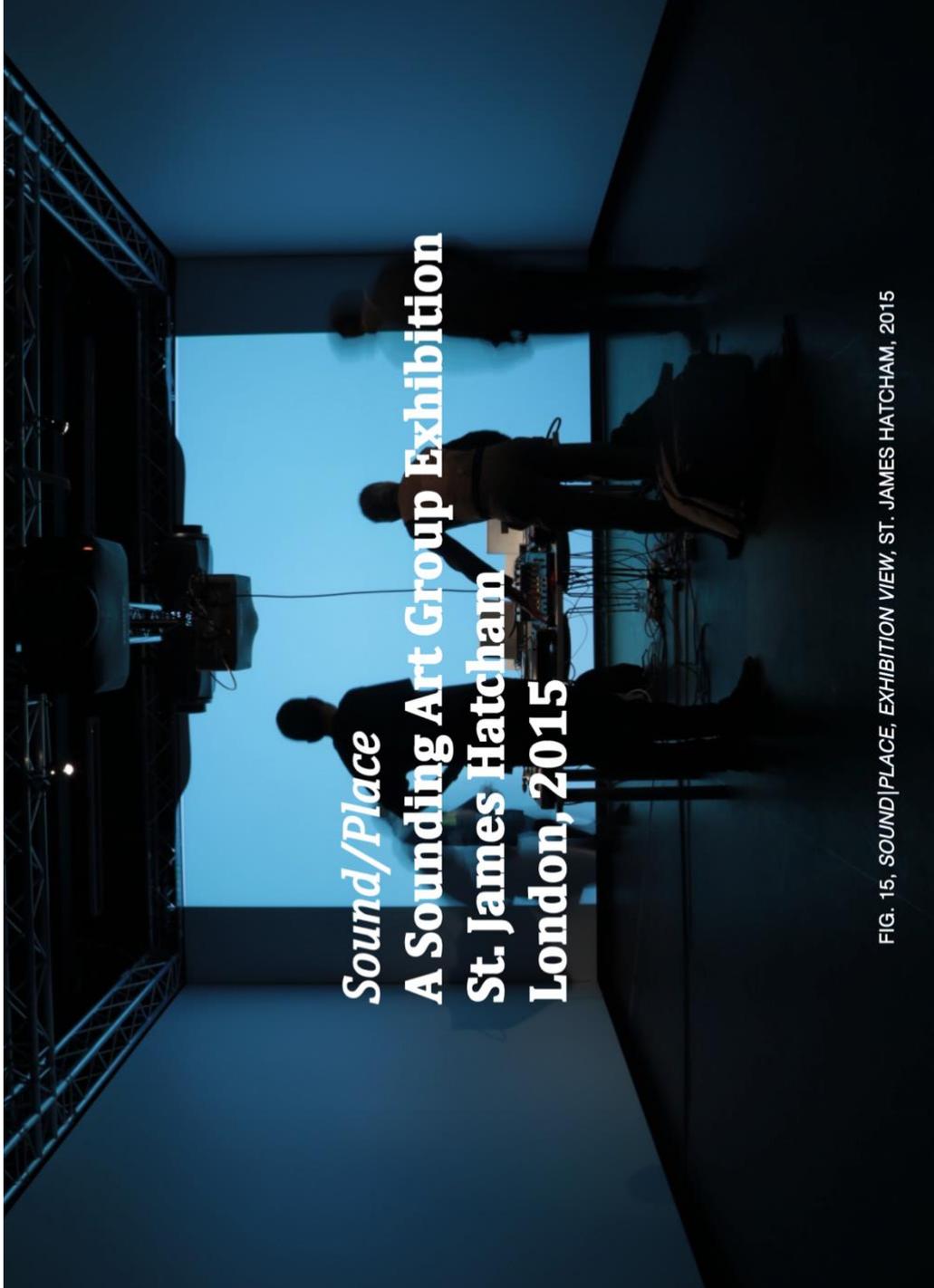


FIG. 15. SOUND|PLACE, EXHIBITION VIEW, ST. JAMES HATCHAM, 2015

Figure 14, *Sound/Place, Exhibition View, St. James Hatcham, 2015*

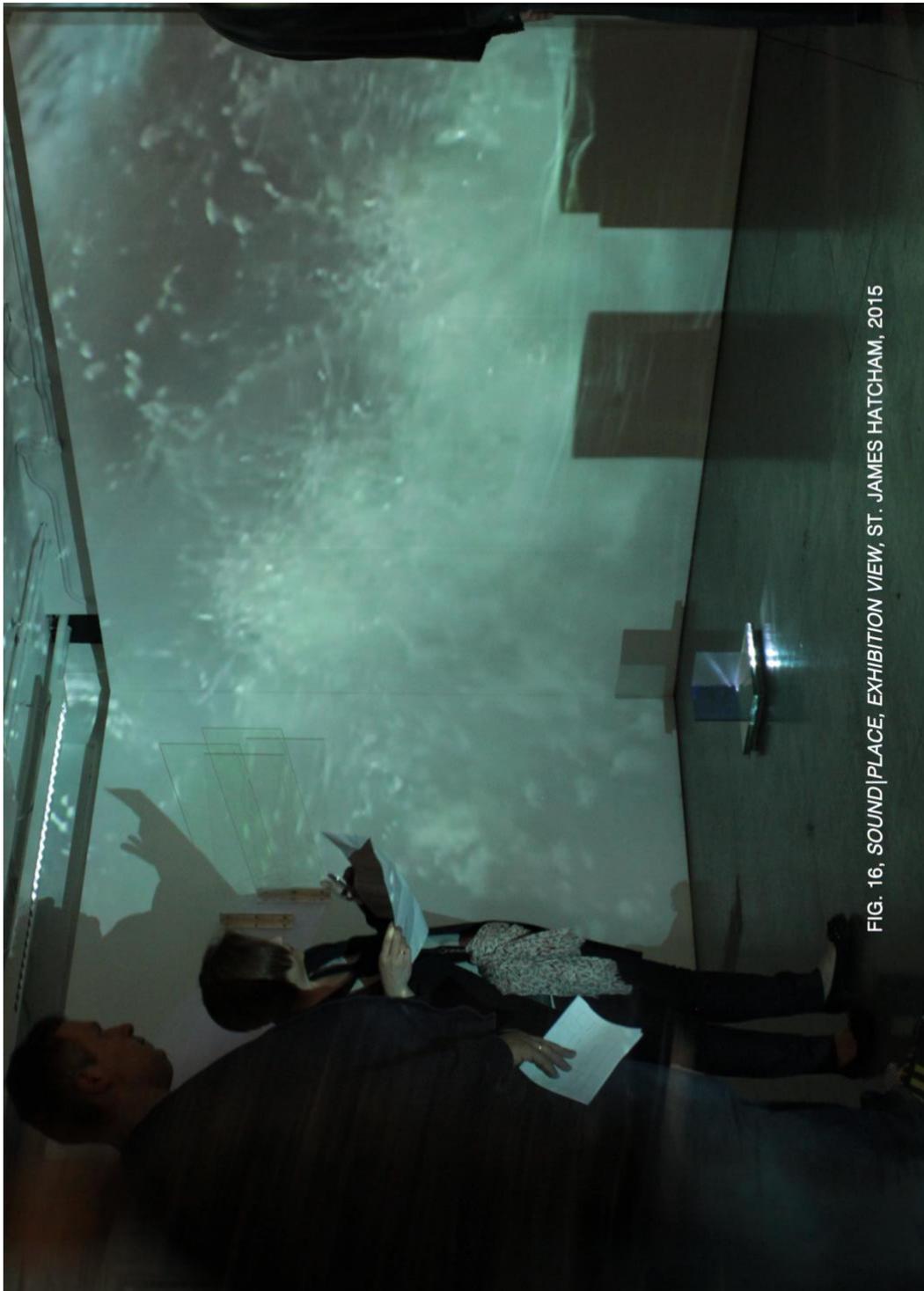


FIG. 16. SOUND|PLACE, EXHIBITION VIEW, ST. JAMES HATCHAM, 2015

Figure 15, Sound/Place, Exhibition View, St. James Hatcham, 2015



FIG. 17. SOUND|PLACE, EXHIBITION VIEW, ST. JAMES HATCHAM, 2015

Figure 16, *Sound|Place, Exhibition View, St. James Hatcham, 2015*

*Sound/Place Exhibition Documentation**
St. James Hatcham, 2015: <https://vimeo.com/303169937>

**Appendix B*

6.1. Connecting Spaces and Times in the White Cube

In this chapter, I form an overview of *Airport* (2015) – a multi-channel audiovisual artwork, which was developed and exhibited as a part of *Sound/Place* (2015) – a group exhibition I co-curated with a number of artists at the St. James Hatcham gallery in London in 2015. The aim here is to introduce the exhibition and the artwork and use sound as a point of departure for addressing the assumed timelessness and autonomy of the white cube. I propose that with artworks sounding and with the sounding bodies now operating as a post-gendered social unit when being *with* sounding art, we can subvert the idea that bleached exhibition rooms can operate outside lived space-time.

Airport brings audiovisuality from Nida, Lithuania into the white cube setting whilst other exhibition artworks bring further spatio-temporalities into the same room. Simultaneously, the participating experiencing subjects, when *inside* the gallery as *whole*-bodied, with their unique subjectivities, histories and cultural positions retained, also become sounding during the aesthetic encounter. These elements meet sonically in the gallery, consequently coalescing and forming rhythmic compositions in time – an event that inevitably expands the acoustic architectures of St. James Hatcham. This practice-led intervention: *Airport* and the *Sound/Place* exhibition, extends my argument against the white cube ideology further by revealing how audiovisual artworks and *all*-sound, are able to transform the gallery's institutional walls. Sound video artworks, in this sense, allow the white cube to exist as spatio-temporally expanded and in an environmental coexistence with the outside world.

6.1.2. *Airport* – A Conceptual Overview

Airport is a site-specific 8-channel audiovisual installation that aims to connect two sites: the St James Hatcham gallery in New Cross, London and an airfield located in Nida, Lithuania. Nida airport was built by the soviets during the USSR occupation. It was abandoned during the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991. Since then, the human-built construction has been resting quietly like a grey coffin waiting to be unearthed. In a way, the small aerodrome has transformed itself into a post-soviet cement sculpture, hidden behind the wilderness of the surrounding natural habitat: the forest, the lagoon, the dunes and the Baltic sea. Whilst not immediately visible or detectible, the airport continues to linger and converse, this way reminding us of a history that has been silenced for decades.

Airport plays with the idea of connecting space and time. It transports the disused airfield site, located thousands of kilometres away, into the architectures of St. James Hatcham, a contemporary gallery space in London. Using a row of 8 video monitors and a 4-channel sound setup, the artwork presents the audiovisual landscape of the site with intermittent auditory extracts of women singing old Lithuanian folk songs, which periodically emit from television monitors. The aim of the artwork is to transport the auditory and the visual ambience of the physically distant landscape surrounding the airstrip into an enclosed gallery setting, this way forming a temporal and spatial conversation between the gallery and Nida. The artwork uses footage from the airport, the surrounding forest and the soundscape of Nida Airport as ways of inviting the St. James Hatcham gallery participants to transport themselves into the projected audiovisual setting.

When *being with* the artwork, the participants are also encouraged to consider further ecological and political questions related to the area, specifically, its geo-political position in the context of the neighbouring countries. Located between Russia, Kaliningrad and the West, the site projects itself as a potential ground for a military unrest – a midpoint for

weaponisation and a mobilisation of NATO armed forces. Whilst subtle in its soundscape, the site does not present itself as stable or set. The ecology of the surrounding area, for example, is fragile. The site has been subjected to an ongoing industrialisation for decades, which, as a result, has had an impact on the area's natural habitat. The Curonian Spit has been awarded UNESCO world heritage status, however, the site has been increasingly exposed to pollution from the Baltic Sea as well as the industrial port located less than thirty kilometres away. As the landscape surrounding the airport is changing, it is our responsibility to start listening to its story. Using field recordings, old folk singing voices and almost still imagery of the surrounding forest, *Airport* aims to amplify the life of the site, this way revealing its immediate and impending realities to the gallery visitors in the St. James Hatcham space.

6.1.3. The Development Process of the Artwork

The conceptual idea behind *Airport* was simple, however, due to a number of technological and logistical limitations, it had to be reconsidered and, as a result, negotiated. The aim of the piece was to connect two locations in real-time through a method of spatialised sound: the gallery setting would have adopted the architectures of the remote site, whilst Nida Airport would have transported the sonic activity of the white cube space into a secluded forest setting surrounding the airfield. The core idea of the artwork was to introduce a technological intervention in both environments: the so-called 'natural' would be mediated into the gallery space, whilst the 'cultural' would be transported into Nida Airport using video. The hope was that the distinction between what is considered to be natural or cultural would become blurred and that the sites, with the help of the audiovisual signal, would co-connect in time. When in the architectures of St. James Hatcham the gallery visitors, would have questioned their sonic environment, whilst the inhabitants of the airfield would have been met with the ambience of the gallery space: the sound of the bodies, other artworks as well as the gallery induced resonances and echoes.

Due to a number of restrictions encountered during the development process, however, the idea had to be altered. To begin with, the method of 'real-time' audio proved to be a technological barrier. Initially, I considered using a radio transmission signal to transport the sound from both locations. However, the idea proved to be too challenging in terms of its technological setup. I then investigated the possibility of online radio: to send the audio signal in real time using a wi-fi connection. The airfield site, however, was not electrically powered, thus, gaining access to the internet was difficult. The option of installing a router and setting up a network system exceeded the overall project budget, and thus had to be abandoned. The second barrier in terms of connecting the two sites in 'real time' was an environmental one. The Curonian Spit is a protected nature reserve, in which different rare bird species nest throughout the year. The *Airport* project was set to take place during the nesting season (April – May), thus, installing the equipment would have potentially disturbed the birds' nesting process. The speakers would have produced interferences and noises, which would have obstructed the site's natural habitat.

A number of conceptual compromises were introduced as a result. To start with, the natural site – Nida Airport – was no longer used as an exhibition ground. Audio signals were not transmitted directly from the airport into the gallery space. Instead, a number of field recordings were collected around the airfield and later used as sonic material for creating a spatialised field recording composition, which was played out using a quadrophonic audio setup in St. James Hatcham in a continuous loop. In addition, eight television screens were introduced. I was interested in exploring the potential of the audiovisual signal to transport space and time through images *and* sound in simultaneity. A number of video recordings were undertaken in order to construct a fractured panoramic view of the forest. Each monitor was placed on a plinth and dispersed across the exhibition space, consequently initiating a form of a 'mediatised forest' – a physically accessible version of the proposed site. The video elements of the installation introduced a sense of coordinated liveness, a CCTV presence, where the participants were able to

witness the location. Their visual involvement, however, was only possible through a disembodied lens. In order to distance the screens away from their embedded representational and directional status, the visual material became musicalised and transformed into a sounding instrument – each TV monitor redefined itself as a sound object emitting old Lithuanian folk compositions sung by women. Through various sonic intensities and sonic manipulations (some almost inaudible, some extremely loud at times) the sounds emitting through TV monitors brought the participants closer to the projected site.

In summary, the conceptual idea behind *Airport* transformed during the creative development process: from live to recorded, from purely sonic to audiovisual, from planned and staged to site-specific. The final sculptural composition, however, did not stop transforming once it inhabited the gallery architectures. *Airport*, once in its audiovisual operation, became an element of the overall group exhibition environment, in which the artwork continued to evolve and change in time. Surrounded by eleven other time-based technologically mediated artworks, *Airport* persisted to extend its spatio-temporal boundaries, consequently, as I continue to explore in chapter seven, contributing towards the spatio-temporal expansion of the gallery space.

6.1.4. A Technical Overview of The Artwork

Airport was constructed using a quadraphonic audio playback and 8 television monitors. The technical details of the artwork are as follows:

- A spatialised 4-channel speaker setup: the speakers play out a composition created using a collection of field recordings collated on site. The composition was diffused using *SuperCollider* and played back in a loop.
- 8 video monitors displaying the location surrounding Nida Airport played back in a loop.

- Additional technological elements were introduced: DVD players were used to play the video footage (connected to video monitors via SCART), a multi-channel sound card, a computer and a number of XLR Cables were used to connect the sonic elements of the piece.
- Images were recorded using Sony 6500 camera using ARW format later transferred into Apple Pro Res using MPEG2 codec onto DVDs.
- Sounds were collected using H6N field recorder, edited using Audition and exported as WAV files (44.100Hz / 16bit).

6.1.5. *Sound/Place* – A Conceptual Overview

The multi-channel installation *Airport* was exhibited as a part of the *Sound/Place* group exhibition at St. James Hatcham gallery in London between 8th – 15th May 2015. The exhibition included twelve artists, who worked in collaboration to construct time-based media artworks to be exhibited in a shared open gallery space. The curatorial decision was not to isolate the artworks, but to exhibit them in an open and sonically exposed setting, where no partition walls would be introduced. In other words, *Sound/Place* refused to enclose the sound of the artworks into individual containers. Rather than building partition walls or introducing bespoke noise-cancelling systems, all artworks were displayed in an open exhibition setting, where the sonic elements of each art object could leak and superimpose upon each other for the duration of the exhibition: the sounds of the monitors, speakers as well as other bespoke-type media objects as a result co-connected in space, consequently forming a cacophonous technologically mediated sounding space, in which unique auditory compositions would be formed.

The *Sound/Place* curatorial review describes the decision of using sound as a tool for creating a conversation between sounding media artworks:⁴²

⁴² The full *Sound/Place* exhibition programme can be found in **Appendix A**.

Sound | Place revisits the notion of Place, as a creative canvas and a platform for interdisciplinary collaborative and critical exchange. The show utilises the nonlinear, boundless, and 'leaky' nature of sound, as the starting point for exploring how to share sound works in one acoustic space. The St James Hatcham gallery space has been selected, as an ideal location for the show; it involves unique architectural and acoustic attributes. Contextually the building is also intriguing, as it is in the process of undergoing a structural shift from a church building into gallery space.

12 Selected sound and audiovisual artists have been invited to work together in the building in the period leading to the exhibition. Together, they question and re-evaluate this unique exhibition setup, where no acoustic or visual barriers separate works, and where the 'leaky' collaborative acoustic environment requires the sounds of different works to intermix and inter-breed. The interwoven composition is then carefully balanced in the days leading to the exhibition, in a process of negotiations carried out at the exhibition space, presenting the viewer with a composition that is diffused in space as a result of this collaborative process.

The resulting installations, films, sound sculptures, music, performances and textual presentations begin to form conversations and forms of exchange. Together, the works question space and place, as physical containers, as well as philosophical and political constructs, that contribute to the formation and to the experience of knowledge.

Artists: **Wayne Binitie, Alexander Bridgen, Ryann Donnelly, Ryo Ikeshiro, Sandra Ka, Helene Kazan,Hardi Kurda, Roberto Mozzachiodi, Kuldip Powar, Emily Rosamond, Susan Schuppli.**

6.1.6. The Exhibition Space

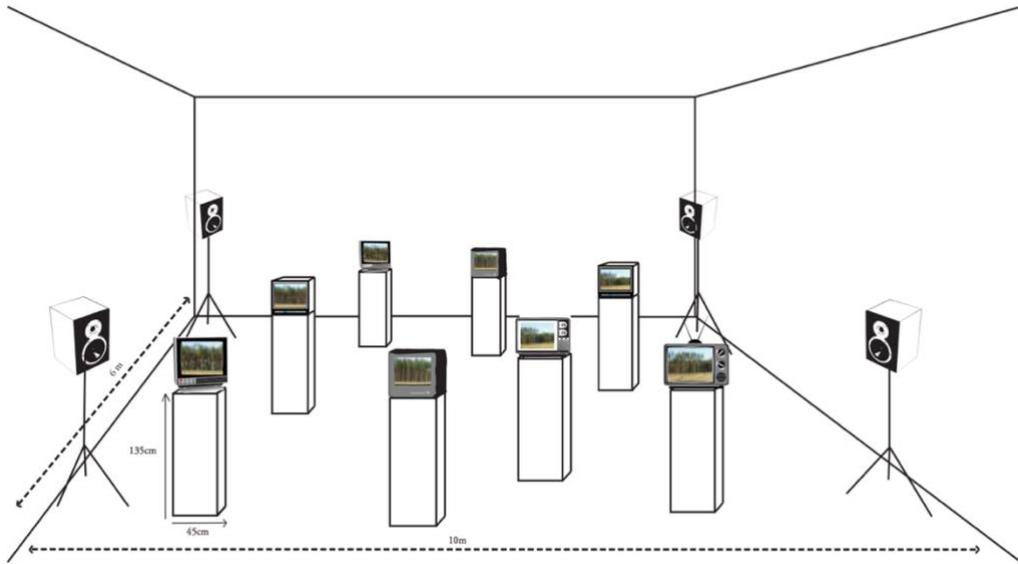


Figure 17, Airport Exhibition Floor Plan, Sound/Place, St. James Hatcham, 2015

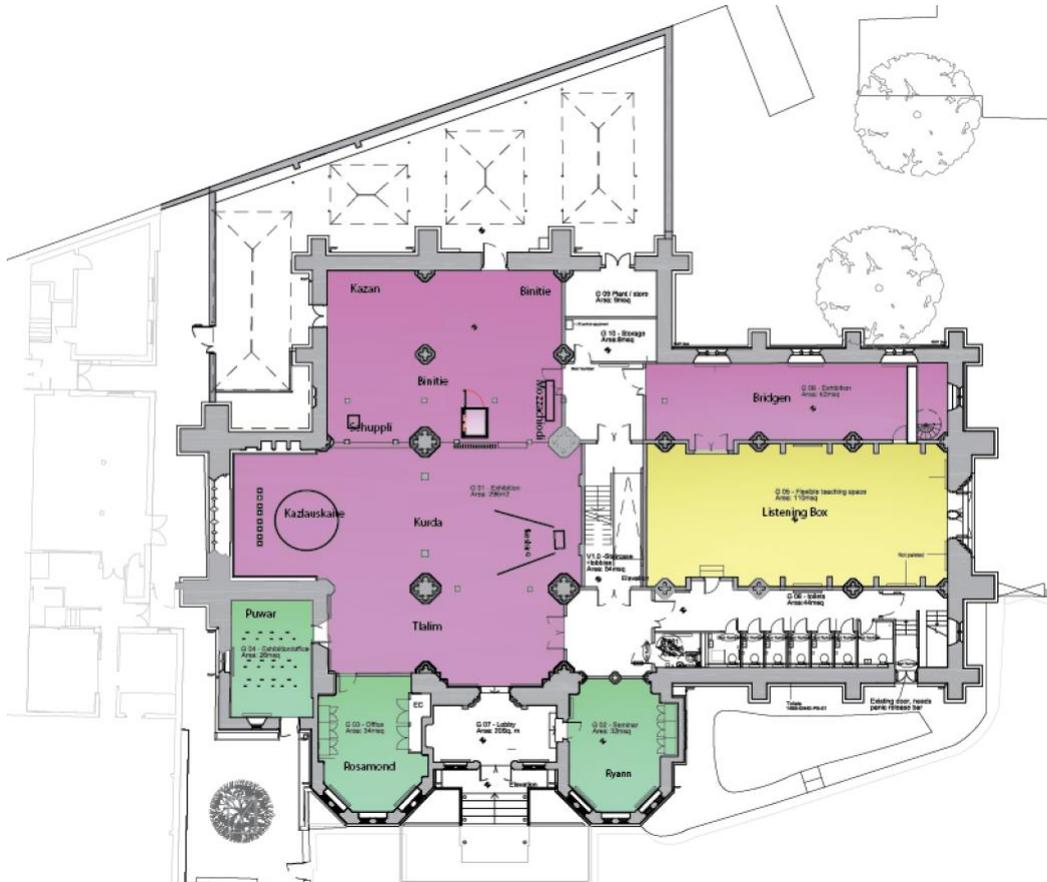
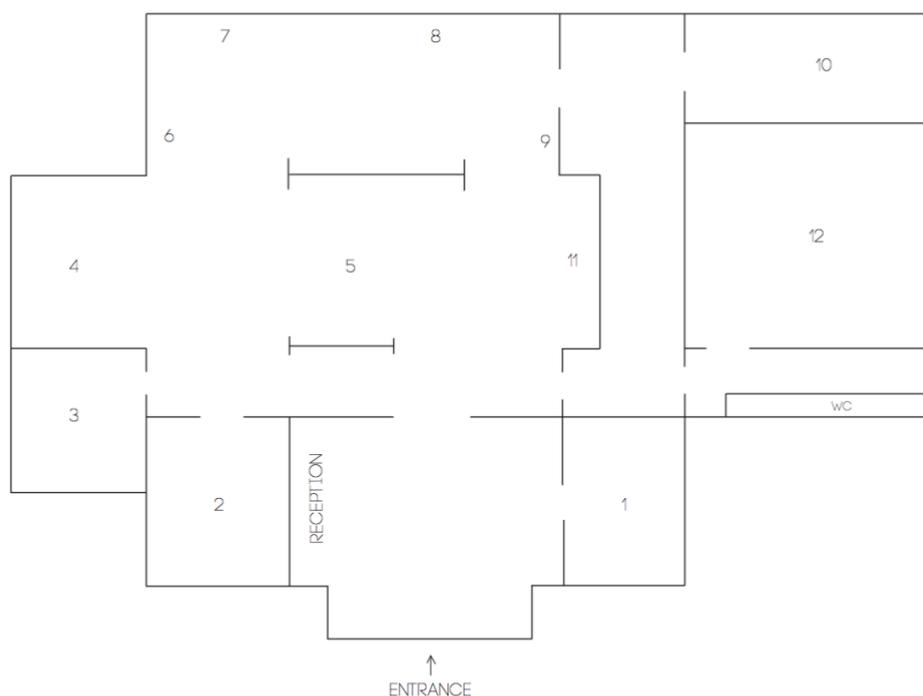


Figure 18, St. James Hatcham Gallery Floor Map



- 1 - *Swallower*, Ryann Donnelly
- 2 - *Here's How the Voice Speaks*, Emily Rosamond
- 3 - *Unravelling*, Kuldip Powar
- 4 - *Airport*, Sandra Kazlauskaitė
- 5 - *Open Ensemble*, Hardi Kurda
- 6 - *Tape 342*, Susan Schuppli
- 7 - *(De)constructing Risk: A Domestic Image of the Future*, Helene Kazan
- 8 - *Frequency, 64°04'13"N 16°12'42"W, and Glacial*, Wayne Binitie
- 9 - *Storage*, Roberto Mozzachiodi
- 10 - *Threshold*, Alexander Brigden
- 11 - *Ethnic Diversity in Sites of Cultural Activity*, Ryo Ikeshiro
- 12 - Listening Box Performance Space

Figure 19, *Sound/Place Exhibition Floor Map, St. James Hatcham, 2018*

The *Sound/Place* gallery space consisted of twelve sounding artworks. As a result, when entering the architectures of *Sound/Place*, the gallery visitors encountered a rather dissonant setting. As soon as the exhibition doors were opened, a discordant composition consisting of video screens, speakers, computers and PA systems, gallery visitors' bodies and accidental noises began to circulate and coalesce in time. Within the first moments of entering the gallery space, the exhibition visitors were greeted by Ryann Donnelly's *Swallower* (2014): an open room, in which an audiovisual installation emitting harmonic melodies, women-led voices and instrumental compositions began to leak. The doors of all the rooms were kept open in order to ensure that sound was not isolated from the rest of the exhibition

space. As the participants continued to walk into the main gallery site, the other artworks began to sound out: including Emily Rosamond's *Here's How the Voice Speaks*, Kuldip Powar's *Unravelling*, Hardi Kurda's *Open Ensemble*, Susan Schuppli's *Tape 342*, Helene Kazan's *(De)constructing Risk: A Domestic Image of the Future*, Wayne Binitie's *Frequency*, Ryo Ikeshiro's *Ethnic Diversity in Sites of Cultural Activity* as well as my audiovisual installation – *Airport*.

The architectural space of the main gallery site was predominantly white, divided by plinths, which supported the overall structure of the room. The second floor of the space contained some workspaces – artist studios, which were not immediately visible to the experiencing subject. The flooring and the ceiling were both made of concrete. Due to the height of the ceiling, the reverberation times of the frequencies produced in the main room were predominantly long. As a result, the sounding artworks formed an aurally resonant environment, in which different soundtracks continued to accumulate and echo in time. The auditory decay time, in that sense, was long. The experiencing subject, once in the gallery space, was encouraged to immerse in the cacophonous setting and explore the space from any direction: the exhibition map did not imply any particular routes, it did not aim to direct. Thus, the visitors were free to explore the space in more open terms.

The *Airport* artwork area of the exhibition space was surrounded by a set of pre-built partition walls attached to the original concrete wall structure. The setting also included cement flooring, a stained-glass window and a concrete ceiling (15-20 meters height). *Airport* was surrounded by three white walls, which meant that the sound of the artwork would leak easily into the general soundscape of the exhibition space – the sounding space of the artwork was not enclosed. The artwork's televisions and plinths were scattered across the area, whilst the four speakers were positioned in the four corners of the island. The television screens were positioned at different angles facing different walls, making it difficult for the visitors to witness the whole

panoramic view of Nida forest from a single position. The participants were instead encouraged to explore the different elements of the forest mediated by the screens from different angles of the exhibition area.

The artwork emitted the soundscape of Nida Airport and intermittent women's voices singing old Lithuanian folk songs. However, whilst sounding out, *Airport* simultaneously connected with the soundtracks of other artworks: the sound of glass breaking as mediated by the *(De)constructing Risk: A Domestic Image of the Future* installation, the noise emitting from the *Tape 342* monitor, the sound of glacier travelling from *Frequency*, the sounds produced by the gallery visitors' bodies as well as technological objects operating in the room. *Airport*, in that sense, did not operate in isolation. Quite the contrary, it sonically intermixed with other elements of the architectural setting.

In the following chapter, I dwell on the sonic activity of *Airport* and the *Sound/Place* exhibition further and question how *all-sound* contributes towards the overall spatio-temporal activity of the gallery and how it affects the gallery's supposedly autonomous and eternal structure. The analysis of the artwork and the exhibition suggests that maybe, if we allow artworks to sound out and leak through the architectures more openly and without partition walls or borders, we might discover a gallery setting that does not aim to limit or remove its subjects or objects from the lived world, but quite the contrary, is able to offer itself as sonically expanded and as a result socio-politically connected with the outside lived world. As mentioned in chapters five and six, listening to *all-sound*, as an active act, offers a more environmental way of *being with art*, a way that shifts away from discrete experiences of art *objects* as separate and autonomous towards an ecology of interconnected mutually influencing activities operating in coexistence. The reconsideration of the gallery as environmental also allows us to move from the gallery's universal (isolated rational heteronormative male) ocular-led subject through the particularity of a gendered body-subject, towards a potential post-gendered social body.

7.

Towards a Spatio-Temporally Expanded White Cube

7.1. Introduction

‘Coincidences of events form the structures of time-space.’

Massey (2005, 3)

This chapter explores the question of space and time in the context of contemporary gallery spaces by accounting for the spatio-temporal configurations of *Airport* in the overall *Sound/Place* exhibition space. As a participating sounding/sounded body of the gallery setting who places themselves *into* the exhibition room, I question through practice how the experiencing bodies, artworks, the gallery architecture and the outside world communicate in time. Arriving from *all-sound* and listening to *all-sound*, I am interested in exploring the following: what happens to the space and time of archetypal white cube exhibition spaces once time-based sounding artworks inhabit its architectures? Does the fixed eternity of such sites crumble or can the artworks remain cemented in the white cube’s timeless and autonomous regime? The core mission of this chapter is to use sonic feminist methods – the mother tongue and listening to *all-sound* – and question whether the ingrained white cube ideology, including its autonomous and timeless regime, can be dismantled by *being with* sounding video artworks as *whole-bodied* through the dimension of *all-sound*.

7.2. The Timeless Autonomy of The White Cube

Could we consider contemporary art museums and gallery spaces as living organisms, oscillating and pulsating in time? To some ears this might sound like a rather peculiar proposition, considering buildings are not usually seen as breathing, moving or fluctuating structures. They do not have a pulse or a heart rate as such. Instead, as objects made of brute and technical matter, architecture has generally been deemed as inactive, as static and anchored in timelessness. Museums and galleries, as sites for collecting, preserving and displaying what we consider as 'culturally valuable' objects, have also been often considered as static and lifeless configurations; as out of time and out of life, as outside the present, as resisting the current and the flux of time, forever moored.

Theodor Adorno, in his essay '*Valéry Proust Museum*' (1983), for example, critiques the museum's decontextualised nature. According to Catherine Lui, Adorno expresses his discontent with the art institution's 'increasingly rational disposition of art objects', (Lui 2005, 217). For Adorno, art museums are dead constructions disconnected from the lived contemporaneous world: 'Museums are like the family sepulchers of works of art. They testify to the neutralisation of culture' (Adorno 1983, 175). He continues: '[...] "museal" [museum-like], has unpleasant overtones. It describes objects to which the observer no longer has a vital relationship, and which are in the process of dying. They owe their preservation more to historical respect than to the needs of the present' (ibid.). Whilst Adorno's critique is primarily aimed at displaying historical work, it could be argued that museums and galleries since modernism have continued to follow the same laws of decontextualisation and neutralisation of culture. Artworks and gallery visitors, when *inside* the architectures of a white contemporary art gallery or museum also become placed under a temporal and spatial quarantine to ensure that both are kept at 'a safe distance from the tensions of contemporary contradictions' (Lui 2005, 218). In other words, when in

whitewashed galleries and museums, we are removed from the contemporary socio-politics of our world as lived.

Brian O'Doherty also critiques the museums' timeless and autonomous nature:

Unshadowed, white, clean, artificial – the space is devoted to the technology of esthetics. Works of art are mounted, hung, scattered for study. Their ungrubby surfaces are untouched by time and its vicissitudes. Art exists in a kind of eternity of display, and though there is lots of “period” (late modern), there is no time. This eternity gives the gallery a limbolike status; one has to have died already to be there’ (O’Doherty 1986, 15).

For O’Doherty, the gallery and museum exhibition walls reinforce a closed system of values that operates outside the materialities of lived time and space. Here, the writer implies that the white cube is not a progressive but a temporally and spatially regressive construct. It abandons history. It refuses duration. It is not interested in the outside. It is cemented in eternal present or, what Boris Groys calls, ‘non-historical excess’ (Groys 2010, 95). When in a whitewashed gallery space, ‘we are stuck in the present as it reproduces itself without leading to any future’ (Groys 2010, 94). This implies that museums and galleries, whether they were set up at the start of the twentieth century or in 2015, are predestined to maintain an eternity of display, uncontaminated by time. In the introduction to Brian O’Doherty’s *Inside White Cube* (1986) Thomas McEvilley writes: ‘this specially segregated space is a kind of non-space, ultra-space, or ideal space where the surrounding matrix of space-time is symbolically annulled’ (O’Doherty 1986, 8). According to Elena Filipovic, contemporary white exhibition spaces continue to present the same issues. Galleries are still as static and decontextualised as they were during modernism:

No tabula rasa, the white cube is an indelibly inscribed container. Far more than a physical, tectonic space (monochromatic walls delimiting a

certain geometrical shape), the art world's white cube circumscribes an attitude toward art, a mode of presentation, and an aura that confers a halo of inevitability, of fate, on whatever is displayed inside it. The legibility of the artwork as work is contingent upon the structuring of that legibility by its surroundings [...]. [...] In that space of encounter, the ideal viewer (white, middle-class) is also constructed—well behaved, solemn, disembodied, and able to focus on the singularity of the work of art with an uninterrupted gaze. Particular to the white cube is that it operates under the pretence that its seeming invisibility allows the artwork best to speak; it seems blank, innocent, unspecific, insignificant. Ultimately, what makes a white cube a white cube is that, in our experience of it, ideology and form meet, and all without our noticing it (Filipovic 2014, 45).

The position, as advocated by Adorno, O'Doherty, Filipovic and others, implies the white cube is *not* an alive construction, but a lifeless and a confined site – stuck in eternal presentness.

Can spaces, however, exist outside of time? According to Henri Lefebvre, no space is timeless whilst, simultaneously, no time is able to exist outside of space. Lefebvre suggests that space is a product of energy, thus, it contains time, which is experienced through social lived interactions – rhythmic events produced and shared by human and non-human bodies in time. Lefebvre argues:

When we evoke 'energy', we must immediately note that energy has to be deployed within a space. When we evoke 'space', we must immediately indicate what occupies that space and how it does so: the deployment of energy in relation to 'points' and within a time frame. When we evoke 'time' we must immediately say what it is that moves or changes therein. Space considered in isolation is an empty abstraction; likewise, energy and time' (Lefebvre 1992, 12).

Doreen Massey further proposes that space is a product of interrelations that transform in time (Massey 2005, 10). Thus, space is never one. Instead, it is always experienced as a contemporaneous multiplicity – as a plurality of

space-times and never in isolation: 'Without space, no multiplicity; without multiplicity, no space' (Massey 2005, 9). Both, Lefebvre and Massey, argue that space is an active social construction: an ongoing interchange between bodily spaces, ideological spaces and conceptual spaces, which contribute towards our ability to embody and participate in the world. In other words, once we inhabit the world, we cannot operate outside of space or time. And whilst the white cube tends to diminish its spatio-temporal activity, *all-sound*, due to its unceasing and permeating nature, reveals that white exhibition containers are *not* timeless spaces and *not* dead after all. Sound contributes towards the social construction of space: it escapes walls, it leaks and resonates – it allows bodies and artworks to converse. In what follows I address the issue of white cube's timeless autonomy by entering the *Sound/Place* exhibition through practice. I bring my artwork and listen to *all-sound* of the exhibition as a way of questioning what happens to the presupposed 'dead' white space once audiovisual artworks begin to speak and move in time.

7.3. The Time and Space of St. James Hatcham Gallery

At first *sight*, the visual setting of the St. James Hatcham gallery space conforms to the rules of the modernist white cube project. Whilst the original construction was built during the nineteenth century and functioned as a church, the site underwent a renovation project in 2014, during which the church was transformed into a site for displaying and experiencing contemporary art. The exterior of the space has maintained its church-like look; the original features of the interior, however, have been stripped off. The internal architecture was replaced by an open-plan blank white room – a space with little to no furnishing, purpose-built bleached partition walls and, as a result, rigid acoustics. To an extent, the space, like *MoMA, White Cube Bermondsey* or any other Western white cube gallery of the twentieth century, adopted the archetypal white cube model and transformed the site into a universal aesthetic ground, which would operate outside a specific time or space, as dominant and universal. The consequence of this renovation

project was that the history of the building was eliminated – its connectedness to the past as well as its cultural context was lost. The space no longer serves as a church and, when inside, we are asked to forget that this was ever the case. Instead, St. James Hatcham's interior architecture was transformed into a blank canvas, from which uninterrupted and uncontaminated forms of exhibition display and experience are supposed to manifest. The visual architectures of the main gallery room, as a result, come across as rational, objective and, to an extent, 'masculine'. Because of its unwelcoming interior design, the space is not perceived as a ground for connectedness or interrelations. Instead, the setting appears ocularcentric and consequently, autonomous, timeless and individualised. While the building may have functioned as a church once, today due to the architectural remodelling and repurposing of the site, the life of the once functioning community space has been annulled and replaced by an environment that is experienced as fixed and static, as if it has 'conquered time' (Massey 2005, 29). In other words, when *inside* the architectures of the St. James Hatcham gallery, temporality becomes irrelevant.

After removing any sense of its own past and cultural belonging, the white exhibition room in St. James Hatcham instead imposes a sense of the site of autonomous eternity, re-establishing itself as a site of patriarchal power – a space for rationality and control. The consequence of this deliberate design is that any possible 'feminised' traits or associations are removed from the space and the site is experienced as culturally 'masculinised'. The main gallery room of St. James Hatcham, to return to Le Guin, speaks the father tongue – it splits, divides and separates (Le Guin 1989, 149). Whilst there are different rooms in the same building that try to escape the gallery's ocularcentric regime, including Sonic Immersive Media Lab, educational spaces as well as artists' studios, these spaces struggle to become sonic because of the bleached whiteness and the ocularcentric sterility of the main gallery room. The main gallery space – the first space one encounters when physically entering the building – tells you to enter the site with your eye. It orders you to abandon the rest of your body. The uncomfortable interior

design orientates and consequently limits the movements and the sound of its inhabitants. By presenting itself as universal and as the *one*, the space retains its ocularcentric and gendered condition. According to Massey, when space is determined and sealed, it 'enables the existence of only one history, one voice, one speaking position' (Massey 2005, 42); it orders and speaks *at* us rather than *with* us.

7.4. Against the Timeless Autonomy of the White Cube

The father tongue, however, as already demonstrated in my analysis of *13.1.91*, can (and must) be challenged. Video artworks created and experienced using the language of the mother tongue, as discussed in chapter five, are able to resist ocularcentrism and allow bodies to remain bodies, to embody artworks with *whole* bodies rather than just the eye. In that sense, video artworks confront the ideologies and inequalities ordered by the white cube project. Perhaps audiovisuality can thus also help us to reawaken the galleries' space and time, maybe it can offer space as a product of interrelations and sociality, as advocated by Massey, rather than a timeless and isolated container. In the case of the *Sound/Place* exhibition at St. James Hatcham, the auditory resistance against spacelessness and timelessness, I propose, is present and active. The amplified audiovisuality of the artworks, as the case study will demonstrate, allows for the different spatio-temporal worlds to emerge. These worlds speak communicate and converse, consequently reawakening the environments that inhabit the white cube. This form of sonic activity, as activated by the acts of sonic feminism, confronts the white cube project's austere confinement.

My preliminary proposition is that by actively allowing different worlds and stories to enter and leak via the audiovisual signal through the architectures of the gallery, the sonic dimension of the exhibition space opens the site to spatio-temporalities that are usually diminished by the white cube project's autonomous barricade. In other words, the sonic activity of the artworks, including *Airport*, transgresses the institution's material and ideological

walls and opens the gallery up to the outside world. According to Massey: 'Conceptualising space as open, multiple and relational, unfinished and always becoming, is prerequisite for history to be open and thus a prerequisite, too, for the possibility of politics' (Massey 2005, 59). Thus, here, I act as a sonic feminist and I tune my listening body towards the *all*-sound of the *Sound/Place* exhibition. I ask whether *Airport*, whilst sounding and resonating in the gallery, is able to empower us to perceive space as a living organism in which social intersubjective relations between *all*-bodies (both human and non-human) can come to life. I explore whether the sonic activity of the artwork, the bodies as well as the surrounding architectural space enables us to inhabit contemporary gallery spaces *not* as segregated from our lived space or time, but as *environmental* and *socially co-connected* – a space that pulsates and transforms in time.

Whilst undertaking the analysis I hope to demonstrate that because of *all*-sound:

- The gallery is unable to retain its autonomous or timeless stasis. Instead, it reveals itself as a multiplicity of space-times.
- The gallery is never *one* or *universal*. Instead, it is a spatio-temporal plural.
- The gallery is always in a process of transformation – a space that is 'always under construction' (Massey 2005, 9).
- The gallery, as a sphere of multiplicity, is always in co-existence with a plurality of external worlds and times.
- The gallery is a product of interrelations. It is social and environmental at its core.
- The *all*-sounding gallery is a spatio-temporally expanded arena.

7.5. The Spatio-temporal Activity of *Sound/Place*

Would I admit my experience of the *Sound/Place* exhibition space as dead and no longer alive? The more I listen, the more I grasp that there is *something* in between these walls that keeps the space moving, whether it is the artworks, voices, bodies, accidental noises or the walls themselves. As soon as I grant my body to immerse in the *all*-sounding nature of the gallery, I learn that video artworks in the *Sound/Place* exhibition, including *Airport*, are talking, the accidental sounds are leaking (from technological objects to different interior objects such as the door, for example), the bodily sounds of the gallery visitors are spreading, whilst moving images and walls are rumbling: the space, as experienced bodily, reveals itself as temporally active and transformative – it is not perceived as static or fixed. It becomes embodied as, to use Doreen Massey's term, 'a simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey 2005, 12): an event in which different elements – from artworks and bodies to gallery architectures – move in time.

The twelve artworks of the *Sound/Place* exhibition entered the presumed 'dead' gallery with a mission: to actively resist the autonomous nature of the space and to reawaken the exhibition site's life in temporal and spatial terms through sound. Each artist brought a set of unique spatio-temporal constructions: the soundscape of domestic homes in the areas of conflict in Helene Kazan's *(De)constructing Risk*, the resounding archives in Susan Schuppli's *Tape 342* installation, the sound of an abandoned airport in *Airport* as well as the echoing voices in Emily Rosamond's *Here's How the Voice Speaks*, to name a few. Once in the gallery space, we, as a collective of artists and curators, explored how different aural worlds would meet, harmonise or clash, and what compositions they would be able to form. In a way, our artworks became sounding instruments for exploring how sound leaks in and through spaces. When installing the artworks, we questioned whether sound would mobilise us or the space, and whether it had the potential to socialise our way of *being with* art when inhabiting white exhibition walls.

The curatorial summary of the exhibition states that the artists sought to break down representational walls and allow different sounding worlds to permeate and meet in the gallery space. Inspired by Brandon LaBelle, who argues that: ‘sound, as physical energy, reflecting and absorbing into the materiality around us, ... provides a rich platform for understanding place and emplacement’ (LaBelle 2012), the exhibition invited artists to work together to reconsider how to build a shared gallery setting in which no acoustic or visual barriers would separate the works, and whether the ‘leaky’ collaborative acoustic environment would enable the sounds of the different art pieces to inter-breed and coalesce. In other words, we turned to sonic feminism with a mission to build a sonic community – ‘a sonic commons’ (Odland and Auinger 2009, 64) with which, the fixed gallery walls could be potentially unsettled and eventually dismantled. As artists and curators of the exhibition, we utilised the ‘nonlinear, boundless, and leaky nature of sound, as the starting point for exploring how to share sound works in one acoustic space’ (*Sound/Place* Curatorial Statement).⁴³ As the statement suggests, we amplified sound as a way of escaping isolation, individualism and the autonomy of the artworks exhibited. Through group negotiations, the artworks formed a collaborative ‘interwoven composition’, which diffused in the gallery.

7.5.1. *Sound/Place* as a Living Organism

Whilst St. James Hatcham at first *sight* comes across as fixed and representational, when we tune our listening bodies towards the soundscape of the *Sound/Place* exhibition, we discover a different kind of space – one that is not dead or ocularcentric but a living organism with its own ecosystem, in which active forms of exchange between *all*-bodies (both human and non-human) emerge in time. Because of it, the site performs as environmental. I explore this proposition by turning to Doreen Massey’s conceptualisation of space, where she argues that space is product of dynamic interrelations (Massey 2005, 9). I demonstrate that with the artworks of the exhibition, a

⁴³ For more information, refer to Appendix A: *Sound/Place* Exhibition Documentation.

set of what Henri Lefebvre calls rhythmic structures (Lefebvre 2004, 15) emerge, which affect and, to an extent, transform how the gallery is produced. Sound travels from one artwork to another, from one body to another, from one wall to another, this way creating an active sphere in which conversing is able to take place.

By embracing sound's leaky character, the *Sound/Place* exhibition space amplifies two aspects of sound: sound is always already there waiting to be experienced and sound cannot be isolated or excluded – it is perceived as a plural. In the context of the case study, when *inside* the exhibition space, I am greeted by a multitude of soundscapes: some emit from the artworks whilst others emerge from the experiencing participants' bodies inhabiting the gallery architectures. In this sense, it could be argued that *Sound/Place* calls for a communal embodiment of sound: rather than trying to separate or diminish sound, the exhibition invites the participants to explore its social and collective potential, together. As argued by Nikos Bubaris, once un-silenced, sound in museums can perform '[...] as a mode of cultural communication [...] (Bubaris 2014, 398). He continues:

Sound and acoustic experience expresses the dynamics of an action, when listeners are not only just silent receivers but also agents and, as such, are permeable and in harmony with their environment. In other words, aside from the enlivening focal points of knowledge in the exhibition, sound creates a sense of being in action that is not limited to its interpretative function' (Bubaris 2014, 396).

Bubaris implies that sound, when reverberating and echoing, touches both, human and non-human surfaces, this way activating both the space and the gallery visitors and bringing them into a communal way of being together, into a form of attunement towards one another (ibid.), through which the sonic commons is able to emerge. In order to discover the sonic common when *being with* sounding art and the gallery, however, we must continue to listen *out* and listen to *all*. We must also allow our bodies to remain *whole* bodied and to sonically embody the St. James Hatcham space. It is only then

that the exhibition site is able to lose its authoritarian and controlling status. It is only then that the gallery can become a more egalitarian socially connecting ground with a multiplicity of social relations coexisting in time.

Considering sound's heterogeneous nature, it is possible to suggest that the exhibition space, by being full of sound, also consists of a multitude of sonic spaces *and* times, which operate and perform in unison, rather than in separation. After all, sound, as an energy that travels in time, requires a space for it to be perceived. It cannot exist outside of space or time, but is always perceived as both, temporal *and* spatial. When the soundscape of Nida Airport leaks into the sound of a glacier emitting Wayne Binitie's *Frequency* from the other side of the exhibition room, the voice of Emily Rosamond's *Here's How the Voice Speaks* spills into the sound space of Kuldip Powar's *Unravelling*. At the same time, the voice and the sound of *Unravelling* leaks into the soundscape of Airport as well as the sound of glacier, all in simultaneity, all in the same shared space. The soundtracks of each artwork, thus, conjoin, consequently forming a polyphonic composition: a multi-track arrangement that consists of a multitude of space-times – a slowly moving glacier in Iceland, a decaying airport in Nida as well as an archived interrogation room in the US – to be experienced by the gallery visitors in simultaneity. By sounding out as a polyphonic plural, St. James Hatcham opposes the idea that the gallery space can be experienced outside of space *or* time. Instead, the ever-evolving soundscape of the exhibition setting opens the gallery architectures towards a multiplicity of spatio-temporal territories full of social potential.

7.2.1. The Spatio-temporal Activity of *Airport*

Having discovered that *Sound/Place* consists of different temporalities and spatialities, here, I explore the aural dimension of *Airport* in more depth. I question how the sounding space and time of this particular artwork contributes towards the production of the overall *Sound/Place* exhibition as well as the architectures of St. James Hatcham. I propose that *Airport*, as perceived by my listening body, performs as full of space and time. And by doing that, it contributes towards the *spacing* and the temporalising of the perceived aesthetic site in a number of ways.

To begin with, *Airport*, when in the gallery architectures, does not abandon its spatio-temporal nature. The audiovisual signal retains the artwork's unique sounding world and time: the near immediacy of Nida airport as well as the sounding echoes of the location's cultural and political context, which, despite the gallery architectures' 'will', inhabit the room. This consequently affects the time and space of St. James Hatcham. By actively sounding out and moving in time, the artwork forms a spatio-temporal interrelation with the gallery space and its inhabitants – it transports the soundscape of Nida Airport as well as women's voices into the exhibition setting, consequently extending the exhibition site's potential to coexist with the worlds beyond the gallery walls.

I perceive *Airport*, when exhibited and sounding, as active and as in a continuous process of metamorphosis. With each audiovisual loop of the natural soundscape surrounding the faraway site, new echoes emerge, resonate and multiply in the gallery. The artwork, as a result, continuously extends itself towards new spatio-temporal domains – always as a new version of itself. Media theorist Wolfgang Ernst claims that sound reveals itself through resonance: "The specificity of [...] sonic articulation cannot be captured and subsumed by the logocentrism of traditional narrative historiography. Acoustic space is of a different temporal nature: not linear,

but synchronous, simultaneously from every direction at once – *echo land*' (Ernst 2016, 15). Thus, rather than forming a particular linearity or a fixed spatiality, the space-time of the auditory dimension of *Airport* becomes that of an expanded echo land, travelling in all directions at different speeds, and thus forming unceasing loops and contributing towards the spatio-temporal expansion of the gallery. In other words, the audiovisual signal of the artwork rejuvenates the gallery space – it un-fixes its presumed static nature and transforms it into a resonating echo land.

When re-listening to *Airport* in *Sound/Place* exhibition context, I discover that the artwork consists of a multiplicity of spaces and times:

- To begin with, I experience a *near-present* of the projected geographical site: the sounds and images the Curonian Spit landscape transmitted through the audiovisual apparatus. The near-presentness of Nida Airport, allows my body to be transported into the faraway location in what is felt as real time. Through bodily listening I am able to connect to the airport, the surrounding disintegrating forest, the sound of the trees being blown by the wind, the voices of migrating birds, the sporadic utterances and roars of human and non-human species that inhabit the remote setting at that time – all of these sounding elements are transported by the TV monitors and the speakers into the architectures of the white cube in *near* real-time.⁴⁴
- By tuning towards the sound of the artwork, I also learn that *Airport* carries broader cultural and socio-political spatio-temporal echo lands. When experiencing the piece, I am able to connect to the temporality of the past. The historical residues of the USSR occupation are felt both visually and sonically through the airport's brutalist character and, as a result, its cement-infused soundscape. The

⁴⁴ According to Ernst, media technologies are unable to reproduce real-time but are always subject to temporal extensions and delays. He argues that a media 'moment is never without extension' (Ernst 2016, 20).

historical space-time is also experienced through women's voices singing polyphonic multipart folk songs, which enter the mediated soundscape from time to time as a reminder of the collective sociality led by women that was once present, but was later removed by the USSR's occupation, war and trauma.

- As I continue to listen to the artwork, I discover that *Airport* also projects the spatio-temporal configurations of Nida Airport's *future* ecological, economic and political life: the material processes of urbanisation as well as the militarisation and the weaponisation of the area (this is witnessed through the sounds of deforestation, military presence and technological control) in the fear of Russia's presumed plans to annex the area after the annexation of Crimea in Ukraine in 2014.

Airport, thus, emits a multitude of spatio-temporal arrangements. The resonances of the past, the near-present delays and the imagined future in a simultaneous coexistence, consequently informing and re-informing each other in time. As a result, both the artwork and the gallery space are experienced as an ever-evolving event – a sounding and resounding echo land composed of natural and technologically mediated sounds, in which space and time, are perceived as a multiplicity of spatio-temporalities. To use Massey's thinking, by carrying flow and movement, the past, the near-present or the impending future become 'the dimension of multiple trajectories, a simultaneity of stories-so-far' (Massey 2005, 24).

The artwork's audiovisual signal transports the multiplicity of technological, cultural as well as socio-political space-times into St. James Hatcham architectures, which, as the artwork reveals, are not diminished or silenced, but continue to live on, evolve and expand, together. The life of *Airport*, once active and in communication with other entities in the exhibition site, reveals how the white cube space is unable to exist as a fixed or a timeless entity. On the contrary, it is always in a process of shifting and being shifted – 'space is

never finished; never closed' (Massey 2005, 9). In that sense, by adopting the spatio-temporal multiplicity of *Airport* mediated by the audiovisual signal, the *St. James Hatcham* gallery space is unable to retain its eternal qualities. Instead, the space becomes an event in time with its own story to tell.

Having experienced the multiplicity of the spatio-temporal arrangement mediated by *Airport*, I discover that the audiovisual signal of video artworks is able to reawaken and bridge the white cube with the outside world, thus expanding the institution's spatio-temporal potential and its ability to exist as social and embodying rather than isolating and individualising. After all, as Massey argues, space is a product of relations 'as constituted through interactions, from the immensity of the global to the intimately tiny' (Massey 2005, 9). *Airport* empowers this precise constitution of interrelations between bodies, places and contexts inside *and* outside the gallery walls. It allows for inclusivity, openness and generosity to emerge, and encourages an exchange and connectedness between two unique lived space-times – St. James Hatcham and Nida Airport.

The conceptual idea behind the project was to connect the two sites through an audiovisual signal. The intention was to form a reciprocal relationship between Nida Airport and St. James Hatcham. The gallery visitors, when in St. James Hatcham, would have embodied the audiovisual panorama as well as the soundscape of Nida Airport. Simultaneously, the environment surrounding Nida Airport would have been able to tune towards the sound of the gallery environment – both would have been in a near real-time auditory contact with each other. The participating space-times, as mediated by video's audiovisual signal would thus have potentially co-connected and begun to co-exist in time, slowly shaping and transforming each other as they communicate, evolve and exchange.

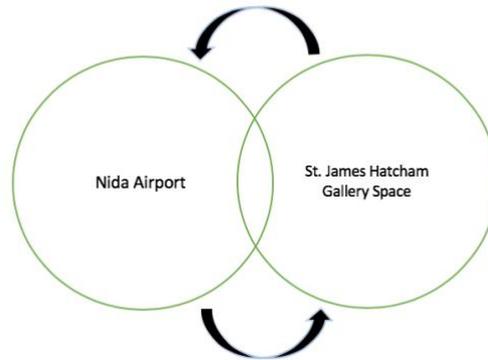


Figure 20, A Spatio-temporal Relationality in Airport

The potential of the audiovisual conjunction between the two sites allows us to reconsider the relationship between the gallery and the outside world as environmental: as speaking *with* and listening *with* one another and responding *with* one another through echoes, resonances and delays. With both in a coexisting operation, a conversation that does not aim to claim but to offer (Le Guin 1989, 150) emerges. Nida airport and St. James Hatcham are able to initiate a space for openness and exchange: an expanded form of communication through which walls can be bypassed, sounds are allowed to leak and bodies are empowered to sound out as unique bodies, rather than gendered bodies. This, however, does not imply that a contract between the two sites can be requested or demanded. It is offered by my artwork, however, no party is obliged to respond. The environmental commons can be freely declined by Nida, or indeed by any visitor and that is the nature of the offer. Instead, the sounding dimension of the artwork performs as a mediator between the two sites, demonstrating that the potential for exchange *is* possible.

This precise possibility of an environmental exchange between the spatio-temporalities of Nida Airport and St. James Hatcham is able to break the binary divide: the walls and boundaries that tend to separate nature and culture, to split objects from subjects, to prioritise objectivity over

subjectivity, to accommodate minds but abandon bodies. *Airport*, by operating as audiovisually alive, active and in conversation with the gallery, can empower the architecture of the St. James Hatcham exhibition site to pulsate, breathe and to oscillate, consequently reawakening and expanding the spatio-temporal structure of the usually decontextualised and immobile institutional space. *Airport* is able to revive the museum's internal organism and consequently, its environment.

7.5.3. *Sound/Place* as a Co-connected Rhythmic Ground

The analysis of *Airport* leads me to suggest that the *all*-sounding St. James Hatcham gallery space performs as an environmental co-connecting plural – a space in which co-temporal and co-spatial relations between *all* elements of the experience manifest and co-exist in time. To explore this proposition further, I turn towards Henri Lefebvre's conceptualisation of space and his methodology of rhythms. Lefebvre argues that: 'everywhere where there is interaction between a place, a time and an expenditure of energy, there is **rhythm**' (Lefebvre 2004, 15). He further suggests that space is not a static object that is able to exist in-itself but is a production of events (rhythms). Each space, Lefebvre proposes, consists of a multiplicity of rhythms: biological, social and psychological events, through which lived social interrelations and embodied connections become possible. Lefebvre's conceptualisation of rhythms allows us to consider the gallery as an expanded rhythmic organism in which multiple ecosystems of embodied sociality between human and non-human bodies are able to emerge and transform in time.

Sound/Place, as a site in which an assemblage of sonic events emerges, operates and dissolves is full of rhythms and thus – of sociality. Let us consider the rhythmic activity of our bodies, for example. After all, as Lefebvre tells us, it is in the body that the paradigm of rhythmological study can be initiated (Lefebvre 2004, 68). The bodily activity of gallery visitors, when in the St. James Hatcham space, offers unique repetitions and irregular

differences in time. For example, by tuning my body towards the *all*-sound of the gallery site, I discover that my interior organs (heartbeat, blood circulation), my thoughts (inner voice, for example) as well as my exterior movements in the space (my feet touching the ground) form a rhythmic unit. Some rhythms are experienced as cyclical or linear, whilst others are more discrete and irregular.

Bodily rhythms form a unique composition that leaks into the gallery. The beating of my heart, my thought processes, my bodily motility as well as my cultural/historical rhythms enter and follow my body in the architectures of the exhibition site. They do not abandon me. Whilst in operation, they consequently form what Lefebvre calls a rhythmical crowd: 'the substance [mattiere] is the crowd (of molecules, corpuscles), it is a *body*. The crowd is a body; the body is a crowd (of cells, of liquids, of organs)' (Lefebvre 2004, 42). Heartbeats form pulsations, whilst the outbursts of breathing and voice interject and co-connect with the rhythms of my internal thoughts, all of which form 'polyrhythmia' – a symphony of rhythms, in which each element retains 'its place, with its recent past, a foreseeable and a distant future' (Lefebvre 2004, 31). With each respiration, every breath and every footstep, different micro rhythms appear, dissolve, reappear and dissolve again: they initiate a series of repetitions, this way transforming bodies into crowded entities that retain their unique subjectivities whilst co-connecting with others.

We, as crowded entities, thus, do not exist in autonomy. When in the *Sound/Place* gallery, we connect with other polyrhythmias in time: the social, technological and institutional oscillations perceived in the gallery space. These consequently contribute towards our bodily rhythmic activity, whilst our bodily rhythms simultaneously contribute towards other rhythmic events that take place outside of our bodies. Let us consider this rhythmic relationality in the context of the *Sound/Place* exhibition. If my body is conditioned by the gallery space (as the visual white cube architecture tends to do), some of my rhythms might be quietened or silenced. If the gallery

space opens up (as it has been sonically in *Sound/Place*) my rhythms might also unleash themselves as amplified and more cacophonous. In one case or the other, bodies as rhythmic crowds are unable to exist in confinement. Instead, they form polyrhythms and interconnect with other rhythms in space – the rhythms of the artworks, architectures, walls, chairs, doors as well as other bodies in space.

The artworks of the *Sound/Place* exhibition also carry a multiplicity of rhythms: the continuous polyrhythmia of the Nida soundscape mediated through the *Airport's* televisions and speakers, the discrete rhythms of voices emitting through the *Tape 342* screens, the polyrhythmia of *Open Ensemble*, *Frequency* and other artworks. The rhythmic structures of the twelve sounding pieces that resonate in the exhibition architecture form their own discrete temporal cycles, introducing a network of repetitions and asymmetrical loops, in which a set of rhythmic compositions, dispersing and discordant, rather than bound to measure, emerge. The more I listen the more I learn that the list of foreground and background rhythmic and polyrhythmic structures is inexhaustible. The rhythmic circulations, as created by the artworks' unique and communal polyrhythmic structures, continue to produce and re-produce themselves, increasingly unsettling the walls of the gallery space.

It is important to point out that the physical structure of the gallery space also consists of a multiplicity of rhythms: the slow rhythms of the concrete walls decaying in time, the gallery doors being opened and closed, the discontinuous rhythms of the building's historical and cultural contexts – all of these elements, whether they are sounding or quietened, operate according to their unique rhythmic structures. When in each other's presence, however, they form a rhythmic plural. Some of the rhythmic events are audible and felt, whilst others pass by unnoticed and unheard. And yet, even when hidden, they still circulate and surround, they emerge and dissolve, they connect and disconnect: they are alive elements of the gallery ecosystem, of the space in which rhythms meet, clash, coexist and disappear.

The gallery space, in Lefebvre's terms, becomes a rhythmic concert hall, in which unceasing temporal 'concertos', as performed by the visitors' bodies, the artworks, the architecture as well as the external worlds, are conducted. For example, when tuning your ear as well as your body towards the aurality of the main St. James Hatcham gallery room, the participant begins to hear the gallery visitors' footsteps, whilst simultaneously they become subjected to the low frequency noise emitting from the monitor of the *Tape 342* artwork. At the same time, the listener also begins to hear the opening and the closing of the gallery doors and the environmental background sounds that leak into the exhibition room from the outside world. Synchronously, the audiovisual content of *Airport* forms a polyrhythmic connection with the sound of a video projector operating at the other end of the gallery space. It is through the lack of walls and partitions between the artworks, the experiencing subjects, the surrounding space as well as the outside world this cacophonous auditory composition becomes possible.

It is these precise sonic events in time, as performed by both living and non-living objects of the shared gallery space, that form a rhythmic concerto open to auditory forms of embodiment. And because of it, St. James Hatcham is experienced as ongoing, transformative and unceasing. In this sense, the rhythms (artworks, bodies and architectures) that emerge inside the gallery keep the architectures alive and active, in communication and conversation with the elements that inhabit the space as a result, consequently becoming spatio-temporally co-connected with its inhabitants and, as a result, the outside world. The rhythmically awakened St. James Hatcham, once sonically embodied by its participants, thus is no longer able to maintain its autonomous temporal or spatial governance.

The bodies that enter the exhibition space also resist the white cube's dichotomous structure. In the case of *Sound/Place*, the gallery visitors are not segregated or separated by any walls. All artworks are experienced in the same shared environment. The participants are not instructed to follow a specific artwork or sound. They are not expected to remain silent, move in a

certain direction or face a certain way. Quite the contrary, the cacophonous nature of the gallery encourages the visitors to open their ears as well as their bodies to their environment as social and shared. It offers a possibility of connecting to *all*-sound and everything around them in a more generous and unconstrained way. This approach to experiencing sounding artworks, I propose, actively resists the isolation or immobilisation of participants and instead allows them to embody the space as *whole*-bodied unique bodily-subjects – a social unit that expands and, to an extent, subverts the gendered soundscape of the white cube.

Lefebvre's conceptualisation of rhythms leads me to suggest that the St. James Hatcham gallery space or any other archetypal white cube exhibition site, once erupting with technologically and bodily mediated audiovisuality and listened to openly, might not be experienced as a spatially or temporally isolated container. Instead, there is scope for white exhibition spaces to be perceived as a socially expanded ground, in which a multiplicity of spatio-temporal interrelations between worlds (the world of the gallery site, bodies as well as the plurality of external worlds) can coexist. By opening the *Sound/Place* gallery space through *all*-sound, we discover a multiplicity of spatio-temporal pasts, presents and projected futures that conjoin, flow, move and evolve as a plural. Listening to *all*-sound of *Sound/Place* empowers us to experience the gallery as an active ground in which different rhythmic space-times coalesce, connect and form an ongoing conversation, a form of offering, rather than claiming. *Sound/Place*, in its expanded rhythmic structure, offers connectedness and sociality, or, to return to Nancy's term, a form of being-*with* – there is no 'I' but 'we', there is no 'existence', but 'coexistence' 'being-with-one-another' (Nancy 2000, 1). The gallery becomes a sonically embodied collective common through which the individualised ocularcentrism becomes unsettled.

7.5.4. Summary: The Mother Tongue of *Sound/Place*

The soundscape of *Sound/Place* spoke the mother tongue. The artworks, the bodies and the architectures, when in social and embodied coexistence with one another did not speak the language of power, of social control. Instead, the soundscape emerged with the hope to offer, to open up and to connect. By empowering us to tune our listening bodies to the multiplicity of sound, to experience it openly and without borders, the exhibition space spoke the language of generosity and connectedness. It presented us with the hope that if we listen to everything that is sounding: the screens, the architecture, the bodies as well as the external worlds, the stereotypically alienating and controlled aesthetic grounds for displaying and experiencing art could be extended. The gallery space could then potentially be experienced as home to all bodies and all worlds, rather than just certain bodies and the isolated world of the white cube. This leads me to further propose that because of the mother tongue, as mediated through *all-sound* – the sounding video works, bodies, acoustic architectures and the outside world, the space became rejuvenated and expanded. The *Sound/Place* space was perceived as *social* and *environmental*. It was embodied as a ground on which all sounding elements (both visual and sonic) connected and operated as a plural living organism, pulsating and oscillating together as a unit in space-time.

The architectures of the St. James Hatcham space were reawakened and opened up towards a multiplicity of trajectories because of the flow and movement of sound. It allowed all bodies despite their gendered status to immerse and participate in the cacophony of the experience, as an embodied unit. In that sense, the sounding St. James Hatcham allowed us to move beyond the patriarchy of the white cube and explore the space as post-gendered and co-connected through *all-sound*. As Brandon LaBelle notes: ‘Sound, the result of a series of material frictions or vibrations, arises from a given object or body to propagate and leave behind the original source – *it brings the original source from there to here*. This movement grants the feeling of progression; the temporality of sound, in vectorizing the image,

does so by always leaving behind its origin to enliven sense of place with continual animation' (LaBelle 2010, 6). Sound, in its temporal and spatial capacity, is then able to push gendered frames, enliven and transform places, or at least our experience of them. In the case of the *Sound/Place* exhibition site, the sonic mobility of the artworks, as mediated through video art objects, the audiovisual material as well as the mobility of bodily subjects, enabled the aural architectures of the gallery site to come to life and connect with other lives (bodies, other artworks, the outside world).

The exhibition site, once listened to bodily, became aurally animated: the trembling of the walls, bodily activities, the buzzing of multiple soundscapes mediated by the artworks, the noises leaking into the space through the main gallery door were gradually amplified and conjoined in the presence of my bodily sonic encounter with my artwork and the exhibition space. Once audiovisual works and bodies began to aurally 'push' the boundaries of the architectural site, the life of the exhibition as well as its subjects, as my experience of it tells us, was revived. And because of it, the architecture and the institution opened itself towards a sphere of ongoing construction and transformation (Massey 2005, 9).

The *Sound/Place* architecture offered intersubjective forms of embodiment. When exploring the space, my listening body did not feel confined, orientated or inhibited. It did not feel like it had to abandon its sound, its history or its cultural baggage. On the contrary, my body was empowered to move as uninhibited and to explore the site in a more open and cacophonous manner. The soundscape of the exhibition did not present any rules as such. Instead, bodies and artworks inhabited the gallery space with their own subjectivities, which would connect in the space and form an intersubjective compound. In a way, St. James Hatcham became a transient meeting point, in which different worlds would mediate and co-connect through the dimension of sound. *Sound/Space* was embodied as relational, co-connecting, open and thus – social. With the twelve audiovisual artworks, the bodies and the architectures leaking into, through and with one another through the

dimension of sound, the space became a dynamic 'simultaneity of multiple trajectories' (Massey 2005, 61) evolving and metamorphosing in time. In Massey's words: 'on the side of space, there is the integral temporality of a dynamic simultaneity. On the side of time, there is the necessary production of change through practices of interrelation' (ibid.). This simultaneity of interrelations was embodied as a unit whilst *being with* artworks in the *Sound/Place* gallery space.

The now sounding gallery space was experienced as environmental. It welcomed intersubjective relations between *both* human and non-human bodies – between *everything* that was sounding in the space: the video screens, speakers, the different projected worlds, the gallery architecture as well as the bodies of the experiencing subjects. The living organisms, in their unique audiovisual rhythmic operations, extended the life of the gallery beyond its rigid closed walls, connecting it with the life of the outside world. The elements of the gallery's now spatio-temporally amplified ecosystem dismantled the ingrained dualisms, as promoted by the white cube project: the separation of time and space, the separation of the culturally prescribed masculine/feminine as well as the division of nature/culture, mind/body and the objective/subjective. In Val Plumwood's terms, by refusing to exclude, to other and to divide, the exhibition space performed as anti-dualistic (Plumwood 2002). It did not conform to its prescribed patriarchal status.⁴⁵ *Sound/Place* refused divisions and cracks, and instead, enabled a plurality of naturescultures (Haraway 2003),⁴⁶ minds and bodies to intermix through the dimension of *all-sound*.

⁴⁵ Plumwood addresses the possibility of reconsidering human identity beyond the dualised conceptions of man/woman, culture/nature, and looks for 'an alternative culture which fully recognises *human* identity as continuous with, not alien from, nature' (Plumwood 2002, 36). She continues to suggest: 'Thus the anti-dualist approach reveals a third way which does not force women into the choice of uncritical participation in a masculine biased and dualised construction of culture or into accepting an old and oppressive identity as 'earth mothers': outside of culture, opposed to culture, not fully human. [...] Both men and women can stand with nature (Ynestra King 1989) and work for breaking down the dualistic construction of culture, but in doing so they will come from different historical places and have different things to contribute to this process' (Plumwood 2002, 36-37).

⁴⁶ Natureculture is an idea proposed by a feminist scholar Donna Haraway, who argues that nature and culture are in an inseparable ecological relationship with one another – they are physically and socially connected. This idea stands against the dualist thinking that is still discovered in the sciences and humanities.

7.6. Expanded *All-Sounding White Cube*

The *Sound/Place* exhibition could be conceptualised as an act of sonic feminism: a route towards escaping binaries and the limitations of the modernist white cube project. In its pulsating sonic cacophony, the exhibition refused the white cube's ideological timelessness and autonomy, and with that, its ingrained patriarchal regime. Massey argues that 'the *mutual* necessity of space and time [...] rests the liveliness of the world' (Massey 2005, 56). Thus, in order to continue to break out of the conditioning of the white cube project, we must allow sound to leak, to permeate and to inter-breed, so that the divide between the gallery walls and the external world, its prescribed 'masculinity' and 'femininity' and the division between natural and cultural, can be transgressed so that the non-linear plurality of space-times, in its inclusive totality, can be offered. Massey continues to suggest that by *being with* a multiplicity of space-times we can reconsider spaces as events – spheres of 'open ongoing production', in which 'genuine multiplicity of trajectories, and thus potentially voices' (Massey 2005, 55). *Sound/Place* presents us with a multitude of voices and trajectories, all of which, in their unique spatio-temporal capacities co-connect and form a social plural that is open to *all* bodies rather than some or certain bodies. *All-sound* of the *Sound/Place* exhibition, as experienced bodily, openly and without boundaries, transgressed St. James Hatcham's autonomous and timeless nature.

The analysis of *Sound/Place* and the *Airport* artwork leads me to suggest the following: once we allow our bodies to listen to everything that is sounding around us, we can bypass the limitations of the white cube project and, as a result, we discover alternative – more generous and open-ended – formations of the white cube. By refusing to experience the world in split terms or within the confinements of the eye and by allowing ourselves to engage in the aesthetic world as *whole-bodied* – with our eyes, ears and limbs, we can disrupt – as Grosz argues, the Euclidean geometry and straight lines (Grosz 1995, 95). By being bodies and sonically embodied, we can oppose the

prescribed associations of space as fixed and as outside of time or of time as linear. Tuning towards *all-sound*, as revealed in the case study of the *Sound/Place* exhibition, expands the exhibition space's social and political potential and allows us to reconsider it as an echo land, which dismantles the institution's fixed autonomy and, consequently, the patriarchal laws that come with it. With the exhibition's auditory ongoing-ness, the space for *being with art* is longer able to function as a constant – it is *not* closed or universal. Instead, the gallery becomes a unique event that refuses closure and opposes the institution's mission to claim fixed timelessness, and with that, its bodies. In that sense, the practice-led methods of sonic feminism – *the mother tongue* and listening to *all-sound*, offers us a productive route of moving beyond the regimes of the cube whilst still being *inside* the cube. It allows us to consider white gallery spaces as expanded: as social, interconnected and embodying. *Being with all-sound* when being in sonically amplified gallery spaces empowers us to inhabit spaces with generosity, connectedness and interrelations.

Conclusion

In the autumn of 2015, a year after I started my practice-led research project, an American art dealer Lawrence Gilbert Gagosian extended his chain of galleries and opened a prestigious exhibition space in the heart of London's West End. Just a few months before that, one of the most prominent British contemporary artists Damien Hirst transformed a scenery-painting workshop into yet another bleached white cube. *Newport Street Gallery* in South London, UK opened its doors to the public to display Hirst's personal art collection.

'Image removed due to copyright'

Figure 21, Newport South Gallery, Exhibition View, Gallery 2, Photo: Photograph: Andy Rain/EPA

Whilst a level of enthusiasm was expressed by the art world about the launch of the new gallery, the local community responded differently. In a conversation with the *Guardian's* architecture and design critic Oliver Wainwright, Sylvia Edwards, a director of *Creative Sparkworks* – a charity that runs training programmes for young unemployed adults – expressed her concerns about their new neighbour occupying the backstreets of Vauxhall in London: '*Newport Street Gallery* could be a fantastic facility for the

community, but I fear it's all part of the growing Shoreditchification [gentrification] of the area. We would love to make connections with them – we've written two letters but haven't heard back' (Wainwright 2015). *Newport Street Gallery* did not offer anything new in terms of its spatial design, exhibition display or its ideological position. By refusing to connect with its local community, it only continued to follow the universal logic of the white cube project: incorporating white walls, artificial lighting, a no furnishing or no talking policy, to reinstate a sense of timelessness, decontextualisation and authoritative autonomy.

With contemporary galleries and museums now implementing more inclusive participation strategies and 'alternative' art spaces (DIY spaces and community-led projects) becoming the 'norm', some argue that the concept of the white cube is no longer relevant (Klonk 2016, 67).⁴⁷ Whilst this speaks some truth, the ideology of the white cube, specifically, how we display and experience art as well as *who* gets to display and experience art, is still an obstacle for some. As discussed in the introductory chapters of this thesis, the white cube is *not* just about white walls or ascetic interior design. It is also about the institutional conditioning of the subjects and objects that enter the white cube architectures either willingly or wilfully.

In this sense, the legacy of the modernist white cube project is also felt and experienced in the gallery and museum settings that are not necessarily 'white'. Only a few days before I sat down to write the concluding chapter of my thesis, I witnessed how one of my female colleagues – an artist working with sound – was quietened by the museum curators and staff at *The Collection* in Lincoln, UK. My colleague was commissioned to create an auditory response to a temporary exhibition of paintings that is currently being exhibited in the museum. She was asked to produce a sounding art piece for the museum's *sound wall* – a permanent structure that sits in the centre of the main museum space. Whilst granted 'freedom' to work with a

⁴⁷ Charlotte Klonk calls the white cube a 'myth' (Klonk 2016, 67-79), arguing that different forms of experimentation offering different shades of white have been taking place since the 1920s, offering alternative exhibition environments, with more different gallery settings opening today.

twenty-two-channel auditory set-up, she was simultaneously asked to avoid any potentially 'uncomfortable' cacophonous sound and instead create something 'more ambient' so that the museum visitors would not be too agitated. According to the museum staff, the institution had previously received numerous complaints about the space being too noisy and sound obstructing their experience of art. A particular staff member, when discussing the commission with my colleague, went as far to suggest that he would *literally* have to vacate the space if the sound was too jarring. He implied he was a fan of classic rock and classical music and would not be able to cope with any sound that is too discordant or 'experimental'.

My colleague, however, refused the orientation that was imposed by the institution. Similarly to my experience when exhibiting *13.1.91* at Surrey Gallery in 2016, she said 'no', and by saying 'no', even if unknowingly, she responded to the art institution as a sonic feminist. She has started producing a piece that is a response to the *all*-sounding environment of *The Collection*: the echoes of the exhibition walls, the paintings displayed, the ambience of the exhibition rooms and also the imperious resonances of the museum institution's voice. When constructing the piece, she wilfully listened to the *all*-sound of the museum (including the uncomfortable sonic 'in-betweens') as her way of offering her experience of dealing with the museum – the architecture *and* the institution – as truth. In this sense, her artwork, once completed, will serve as a sonic feminist act against the institution's patriarchal regime with the hope that the institution will listen and potentially change its approach to commissioning artists in the future. This case, experienced two years after my 'noisy' encounter with the Surrey Gallery curators, demonstrates that even as we enter the third decade of the 21st century, our sonic feminist work must not stop. Through amplifying our sound, we need to keep erupting, to transform the institutions we inhabit, so that we can form, what Le Guin calls, new feminist mountains (Le Guin 1989, 160).

8.1. Towards an Aurally Expanded White Cube: A Summary of Findings

In this project, I followed Pauline Oliveros and Le Guin's thinking and sought to discover new mountain ranges when displaying and experiencing sounding art in contemporary art gallery spaces. Inspired by the 1960s-1970s women's video art practice, I problematised the white cube's gendered, ocularcentric, autonomous and timeless ideology and questioned how the production of institutional art spaces could be subverted today in perceptual and socio-political terms. I turned to the method of sonic feminism: sounding video installation practice and the embodiment of *all*-sound with a mission to discover an aurally expanded white cube, in which a *whole*-body experience of space could be offered. In other words, the aim of the project was to open the gallery architectures to *all* bodies despite their gender and to reconsider our way of *being with* art as potentially environmentally and socially co-connected, rather than individualised, ocularcentric or decontextualised, through the dimension of *all*-sound.

To return to Lefebvre's thinking, space is an ideological construction through which power relations are shaped and conditioned. According to Lynn Stewart: 'spatial practice denotes the ways people generate, use, and *perceive* space' (Stewart 1994, 610). My research project turned to the white cube – an architectural construction and an institutional mechanism – and demonstrated how white exhibition gallery spaces have served as an ideological machinery since modernism – ocularcentric, patriarchal and outside of a particular time or space since. The case studies of *MoMA* and *White Cube Bermondsey* revealed that the ideological limitations of the modernist white cube project can still be experienced by some bodies, including the bodies of self-identifying women. *White Cube Bermondsey*, for example, continues to offer uncomfortably quiet exhibition rooms with artworks hung against white walls ready for ocularcentric, and as discussed in chapter one, masculine forms of production and consumption. In *MoMA's*

case, gender disparity and inequality are still present.⁴⁸ This issue, Reilly argues, is not just representative of a single institution, but is endemic and can be discovered in the operational governance of many major private and public art institutions, including *Hayward Gallery* and *Tate Modern* in London, *Whitney Museum* in New York, *Centre Pompidou* in Paris and *Berlinische Galerie* in Berlin (Reilly 2015). Whilst alternative practices and initiatives outside archetypal white cube institutions have been crucial in terms addressing the issues of gender, class and race,⁴⁹ as argued by Terry Smith: 'the white cube [...] has been extraordinarily persistent' (Smith 2012, 60). In Simon Sheikh's words: 'Gallery spaces and museums are still white cubes, and their ideology remains one of commodity fetishism and eternal value(s)...' (Sheikh 2009). When considering the spatial ideology of the white cube, I echoed Sheikh's view and proposed that by preserving white walls, modern and contemporary art institutions continue to demand rational and objective forms of ocular-led contemplation, separating the experiencing bodies from the exterior world, whilst silencing or excluding others.

As an artist working with audiovisual media, I have embodied the silencing and the exclusion from white cube art spaces. I have repeatedly confronted the rigid white walls and been asked to act a certain way and to face a certain direction. I have been told that my sound was too intrusive – it obstructed the visual order to the space. The ongoing experience of embodying the position of 'affect alien', to return to Sara Ahmed's term (Ahmed 2017, 57), has led me to raising the following research question: how can we – as those who are deemed obstructive and intrusive – subvert the production of space *inside* the white cube? Specifically, what noisy tools can we use to dismantle its patriarchal disciplining? Would sounding or listening to the white cube wilfully, for example, allow us to bypass its ocularcentric nature? After all, sound is an integral part of the gallery architecture. It affects the production

⁴⁸ To return to Maura Reilly's study, MoMA still struggles when it comes to gender equality in the context of artist representation, art acquisitions and collections (Reilly, 2015).

⁴⁹ I briefly discussed alternative modes of exhibition and display in chapter one, where I acknowledged the social and political importance of the different forms of resistance, initiatives and movements that abandoned the white cube model. This includes spaces such as FOOD, Kitchen in New York, The Living Art Museum in Reykjavik as well as more successful temporary exhibitions, including *Infinite Mix* (2017, 180 Strand), that actively moved away from class white walls and ocularcentric forms of participation.

of the space and its inhabitants. According to Bubaris, sound enlivens us: ‘the movement within sound does not only serve to interconnect static, predetermined or inert focal points of reference but also is a productive force as it reverberates through the bodies it encounters’ (Bubaris 2014, 396). And whilst Steve Connor admits that modernist galleries have been designed to follow a horizontal logic to accommodate the eye, he also suggests that sound cannot be avoided – it leaks and spreads through the gallery space (2005).

Arriving from my personal video art practice and a feminist phenomenology of sound, I explored the idea of experiencing gallery spaces not as purely visual constructions, but also as sounding spaces, or, in other words, as always *audiovisual*. My initial experience of exhibiting *13.1.91* at Surrey gallery, however, revealed that the soundscape of institutional art spaces, as embodied by those who operate outside the father tongue, may not be as generous as we might think. As sound does not operate outside structures of power (Ehrick 2015), it can be used as a tool for socio-political control and silencing. In the context of this project, I discovered that the soundscape of institutional art spaces can be experienced as gendered. It quietens, silences and, at times, *literally* removes the sound of certain bodies from its architectures. After all, our voice has distressed the ears of men since the start of civilisations, thus, it has had to be removed from the civic spaces of governance (Carson 1995, 119).

To confront the gendered soundscape of the white cube, I turned to early women’s video art and feminist writings on sound. I discovered that sound, despite its presupposed silencing in modernist art galleries and museums, has been used as a tool for transgressing of the white cube’s spatial ideology: its gendered structures as well as its spatio-temporal amnesia. In chapter one I discussed how the entrance of women’s video art practice during the 1960s and 1970s brought new noises, voices and pitches into gallery settings, consequently expanding the resonances and echoes between white exhibition walls. The dissonant noises emitting from Joan Jonas or Steina Vasulka’s video artworks, the rebellious sounds produced by Charlotte

Moorman's TV instruments, the uncomfortable political realities revealed in Howardena Pindell's artworks, once exhibited *inside* white cube gallery spaces, I proposed, functioned as a form of resistance against the patriarchy of the art world. Video artist Carolee Schneemann, for example, has spoken openly about the institutional walls she had to face and fight against when creating and exhibiting works during the 1970s: 'This richness was seized by feminist determinations in the 1970s when we founded independent galleries, activist journals, and public protests against our exclusion' (2015). These wilful noisy feminist acts, mediated by video's audiovisual signal, have been crucial in terms of expanding the soundscape of the gallery in socio-political terms. However, as my reflection of the *13.1.91* exhibition reveals, the gendered silencing in contemporary art galleries and museums continues to persist.⁵⁰ Thus, more work needs to be done.

The conceptual work undertaken by feminist artists and thinkers in sound, including Pauline Oliveros, Ursula Le Guin, Anne Carson and Hildegard Westerkamp, as discussed in chapter two, showcases that our lived soundscapes, if engaged openly and using our whole bodies, can help us to dismantle patriarchal boundaries and binaries. In the order to confront, subvert and transgress, we must be wilful, to use Ahmed's term. We must become an electric current – we must spark and light up (Ahmed 2017, 82). Sound, thus, must be used as an active act to open our *whole* bodies, rather than just our eyes or minds, towards listening *to* and *with all*-sound, without borders or strictures. In order to understand how opening our bodies to *all*-sound when exhibiting and experiencing sounding artworks could potentially disturb the white cube's ocularcentric and patriarchal structures, I turned to a feminist phenomenology of sound. I questioned: can the sound of voices, bodies, memories as well as our lived environments, when in conversation with their environment, reshape how the gallery space is perceived and embodied? (Grosz 2001, 7). Can *all*-sound, as mediated by *our*

⁵⁰ Reilly's 2015 study confirms: 'Discrimination against women at the top trickles down into every aspect of the art world—gallery representation, auction price differentials, press coverage, and inclusion in permanent-collection displays and solo-exhibition programs' (Reilly 2015).

artworks, *our* bodies as well as the sound of *our* lived environment, expand the aurality of gallery spaces on a more permanent basis and open its architectures to *all* bodies rather than some?

8.3. New Mountains: Sonic Feminism

Inspired by the 1960s and 1970s women's video art and feminist readings of aurality, I introduced the concept of *sonic feminism* – a practice-led method that combines my personal sounding video art practice and my embodied experience of sound as a way of tackling the ideology inside the white cube. I proposed that sonic feminism, as a theory and lived practice, can help us to understand how we, as self-identifying women, can use sound to transform social spaces in which gender inequality continues. In the context of the white cube, my artworks and my lived embodiment of sound *inside* white cube spaces became sonic feminist acts – a laboratory through which I discovered that sound, if approached using the language of the mother tongue and listening to *all*-sound, has the capacity to subvert the production of spatial ideology *inside* the white cube, specifically its gendered, autonomous and timeless nature. Sonic feminism, as a noisy and a wilful practice, allows me to bypass our socially conditioned gender positions and participate in gallery architectures as unique and as co-connected, rather than 'feminine', 'masculine' or individualised.

In the context of the *13.1.91* exhibition case study, for example, my sound confronted the practice of gendered silencing *inside* the white cube. By way of being wilful and noisy, the artwork confronted my socially prescribed 'feminine' position as a creator and allowed me to embody the space as a unique body-subject with my history, cultural memory, bodily motility and my heartbeat. It refused to follow the gallery's ocularcentric rules and commands, and by doing that, it opened the space towards whole-bodied participation and experience. My sound was a conscious sonic feminist act, through which I discovered that by allowing our bodies to embody *all*-sound, we, as the participating bodies of the gallery space, are able to retain our

bodies as unique body-subjects rather than gendered subjects, consequently forming a communal sounding/sounded social body that refuses the white cube's patriarchal regime.

The case studies of *Airport* and *Sound/Place* revealed how sonic feminist acts can subvert the presupposed timeless and autonomous structure of the gallery. The artworks, the experiencing bodies and the surrounding environment, when speaking and listening openly, offered a language of social interconnectedness. The sound of *Airport* as well as other artworks, the noise of the exhibition room, the participating gallery visitors' bodies and the outside worlds, opened the exhibition site towards a multiplicity of spatio-temporalities inside and outside the gallery walls: an airport located thousands of kilometres away, a melting glacier in Iceland, an interrogation room in the US in the 1960s, the rhythms of our heartbeats, the technological hum, the electricity current, or the vibration of the gallery walls. In the end, the space was perceived as a socially co-connecting environmental ground in which intersubjective relations between *all* sounding elements of the space – both human and non-human – were able to coexist in simultaneity.

Thinking and acting through sonic feminism has also allowed me to discover an *environmental sonic commons* (Odland and Auinger 2009) inside the gallery architectures – space for 'being-with-one-another circulating in the *with*' (Nancy 2000, 3) shared by *all* elements of the aesthetic encounter that changes and transforms in time. After all, as Nirmal Puwar tells us: 'space is not a fixed entity' (Puwar 2004, 1); it is open to transformation and change. Sonic feminism offers this change. It confronts the gallery's commitment to autonomy or timelessness and introduces the space as spatio-temporally expanded rather than decontextualised or removed from everything and anything that exceeds its architectures.

Sonic feminism, thus, offers us hope. It empowers those who carry the 'wrong' bodies (Ahmed 2017, 65) and those who are repeatedly pushed out or refused from patriarchy-run social spaces, to be wilful and to resist the

language of power and control. In the context of this project, it demonstrates that a different kind of white cube is possible, and with that, any lived space conditioned by the language of the father tongue – an environment that is built on generosity, inclusivity and connectedness. When *inside* the whitewashed exhibition architectures, I refused to be quietened or leave my body outside the gallery doors. Instead, I turned towards the language of relation, relationship and engaged the *whole* of my body in everything that was sounding *inside* and *outside* the exhibition space (Oliveros 2010, 22). Building upon the early women’s video art practice as well feminist approaches to sound and listening, I was able to enter the gallery space as a sonic feminist – I brought my sound through video art and my sounding experiential body *into* contemporary gallery architectures as a political act. This practice-led route has allowed me to rediscover the gallery as audiovisual, multisensory and expanded in terms of its gender, space and time – an environmental sonic commons, consequently extending the art institution in social and embodying terms.

8. The Aurally Expanded White Cube: Project Contributions

My practice-led project forms an original contribution to knowledge, specifically to the scholarly fields of sound studies, contemporary art debates and practice, museum studies, gender studies and theories around embodiment. It introduced a concept – sonic feminism – a methodological route for studying bodies in lived spaces through sound and feminism, which can be extended beyond the white cube debates. Sonic feminism is not a pre-determined or a fixed method. Due to its interdisciplinary nature, it is open to collaborations, transformation, redirections and additions. Sonic feminism, therefore, should be read as a network – an ongoing project with a shared mission to confront inequality in the context of art, music and other fields, *together*. As a form of thinking and practice, it can be used to tackle the gendered conditioning that manifests in any lived social settings, including workplaces, homes, public sites or educational spaces.

In the context of contemporary art practice and exhibition, this project also offers a practical contribution. It aims to encourage galleries, museums, curators and artists to consider *all*-sound as a productive rather than a reductive dimension of the exhibition. It demonstrates that by opening ourselves to *all*-sound and embracing its cacophonous nature when *being with* art, the gallery participants, the artworks and the artists can become less isolated and more socially co-connected with *all* the elements inside and outside the gallery space, this way democratising *how* and *who* gets to experience artworks. In this sense, sonic feminism has helped us to dismantle the white cube's elitist patriarchal disposition.

The practice of sonic feminism also demonstrates how practice-led research is able to create new knowledge. It showcases that we can learn more about concepts if we *experience* and *embody* them first and then, in the spirit of Le Guin and Oliveros, offer our subjectivities as truth. My discoveries and project findings just would have not been possible if I did not experience them and conceptualised them through *lived embodied practice*.

8.4. Notes for Further Research

The white cube – as an ideological apparatus as well as an architectural structure – presents us with a labyrinth of complex issues, some of which, due to the scope of this project, even if unwillingly, had to be left out and saved for future. This includes the white cube as a capitalist project, its colonial and racialised history as well as the art institution's refusal to consider the issues around intersectionality. The white cube is inescapably a question of racial division, something that has already been demonstrated by Dieter Lesage and Ina Wudke in *Black Sound White Cube (2010)*. In this thesis I decided to focus on the white cube institution's patriarchal nature and question of bodies and sociality when displaying and experiencing art. When forming my critique, I primarily exposed and confronted the white cube's ideological 'feminine'/'masculine' divide. However, I am aware of the

intersectional complexities of these categories and I intend to explore this specific issue in more detail in my future projects on sound and gender in the context of contemporary art exhibition culture.

Sonic feminism, as an open-ended practice-led method, calls for further expansion. In this thesis, I primarily focused on my video art practice and my experience of dealing with the white cube, however, it would be useful to apply the method of sonic feminism to other exhibition contexts beyond the white cube (from land art, office art to public art) as well as social spaces (from domestic spaces to workplaces) and consider how the gendered soundscape of such sites can be subverted using sonic feminist methods as a way of tackling inequality and conditioning. I intend to explore these potential avenues and ways of forming practice-led sonic feminist collaborations in my future creative and academic projects.

In summary, *Expanded Aurality: Doing Sonic Feminism in the White Cube* should be read as an opening chapter towards the un-silencing of some of the ideological restrictions imposed by art institutions today. By exposing the limitations of the white cube project and its legacy, it invites further experimentations to be undertaken, further interventions to be held and further critiques to be offered so that the residues of the white cube ideology can be *fully* dismantled and so that a more inclusive space in terms of gender, race and cultural background when *being with art*, can be offered. Maybe the next step for sonic feminism in the context of institutional art spaces is to go beyond unique artworks or group shows that aim to subvert the white cube, and instead, set up working networks or discursive-practice initiatives, through which a white cube, that is home for *all* rather than *some*, can be offered on a permanent basis.

Appendix A

Sound/Place Exhibition Programme
(St. James Hatcham, 2015)

SOUND PLACE

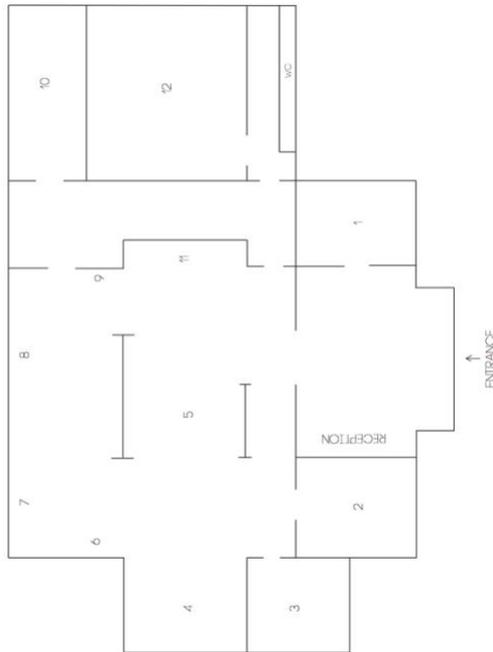
Opening Times:
5th May - 13th May 2015
10am - 6pm

Sound, as physical energy, reflecting and absorbing into the materiality around us... provides a rich platform for understanding place and emplacement. (Brandon LaBelle, 2014)

Sound | Place revisits the notion of Place, as a creative canvas and a platform for interdisciplinary collaborative and critical exchange. The show utilises the nonlinear, boundless, and "leaky" nature of sound, as the starting point for exploring how to share sound works in one acoustic space. The St James Hatched gallery space has been selected, as an ideal location for the show: it is an interdepartmental building, which also involves unique interdepartmental collaborations. The show is a process of building is also intriguing, as it is in the process of undergoing a structural shift, from a church building into gallery and an academic building.

12 Selected sound and audiovisual artists from different departments at Goldsmiths (Music, Computing, Visual Cultures, Media & Communications, Art, and Sociology) have been invited to work together in the building in the period leading to the exhibition. Together, they question, and re-evaluate this unique exhibition setup, where no acoustic or visual barriers separate works, and where the "leaky" collaborative acoustic environment requires the sounds of different works to intermix and inter-breed. The interwoven composition is then carefully balanced in the days leading to the exhibition. In a process of negotiations carried out at the exhibition space, presenting the viewer with a composition that is diffused in space as a result of this collaborative process.

The resulting installations, films, sound sculptures, music performances and textual presentations showcase the rich diversity of artistic and sonic research across departments at Goldsmiths. Together, the works question space and place, as physical containers, as well as philosophical and political constructs, that contribute to the formation and to the experience of knowledge.



- 1 - Swallower, Ryann Donnelly
- 2 - Here's How the Voice Speaks, Emily Rosamond
- 3 - Unravelling, Kuldip Powar
- 4 - Airport, Sandra Kazlauskaitė
- 5 - Open Ensemble, Heidi Kurda
- 6 - Tape 342, Susan Schuppli
- 7 - (De)constructing Risk: A Domestic Image of the Future, Helene Kazan
- 8 - Frequency, 64°04'13"N 16°12'42"W, and Glacial, Wayne Binittle
- 9 - Storage, Roberto Mozzachiodi
- 10 - Threshold, Alexander Brigden
- 11 - Ethnic Diversity in Sites of Cultural Activity, Ryo Ikeshiro
- 12 - Listening Box Performance Space

Sound | Place is open
5th May - 13th May 10am - 6pm
St James Hatched Church
Goldsmiths
New Cross
London SE14 6AD,
United Kingdom
soundplaceexhibition.co.uk

5th May - 13th May 2015

Alongside the exhibition, The Sonics Immersive Media Lab (SIML) at St James Hatched, is being transformed into a "Listening Box" where a programme of mono / stereo / multichannel audio works and live performances will take place throughout the exhibition period, exploring the immersive potential of the audio setup in this innovative new facility. Performing artists include John Wall, Tom Muud, Yorgo Sakellaro, Phil Julian, Lee Fraser and Erik Nyström.

St James Hatched building will also be hosting a one-day CHASE Sonic Listening Box, which will be open every 12 May 2015. Attendees will be able to experience the sound art exhibition, share conceptual and practical approaches, and discuss the challenge of sound to ideas and their realisation in the context of state-of-the-art equipment and art-making. Speakers include artists and researchers Robert Curgenven, Dr. Susan Schuppli and Dr. Nirmal Puwar.

Artists: Wayne Binittle, Alexander Brigden, Ryann Donnelly, Ryo Ikeshiro, Sandra Ka, Helene Kazan-Heidi Kurda, Roberto Mozzachiodi, Kuldip Powar, Emily Rosamond, Susan Schuppli.

Curators: Tom Tallim & Sandra Kazlauskaitė
Curatorial advisory panel: Dr. Julian Henriques, Prof. Sean Cubitt, Prof. Alan Tynjala
Project advisors: Susan Schuppli, with Nico Fratelli
Project advisor: Steph Heron
Audiovisual technicians: Peter Mackenzie, Ryo Ikeshiro, Peter Sart
Exhibition technicians: Fred Breen, Nicholas Donald, Joe Redman

Sound | Place is supported by the Media & Communications department, EAVI, the A-HRC CHASE training programme, the Goldsmiths Interdisciplinary Fund, and the Graduate Festival Fund.

Sonic | Place is supported by:
175 Space Andrew, David Shephard, Stuart Wood, David Trimmer, Jellal Islam, Remy Cheal and Nick Bell.
Goldsmiths estates: Kate Yates, Anthony Stacey, Fred Breen and Nicola Heggen.

5th May - 13th May 2015

Deconstructing Risk: A Domestic Image of the Future
 2015, HD Video 10', Looped, Talk via Skype, Field recording
 Helene Kazan

Under a condition of heightened insecurity, produced through armed conflict or natural disaster, the architecture of the home undergoes a radical shift. As an occupant, the understanding of its materiality changes as it becomes the site where a series of small-scale actions are undertaken in anticipation of an exterior threat. For example, taping windows to prevent glass from shattering or reinforcing outer walls. These small-scale actions are precarious attempts to fortify the home against violent exterior forces. This installation uses an assemblage of image and sound to draw attention to the transformative condition created in this context, to better understand how it impacts directly upon the human subject within the home.

Frequency / 64°04'13"N 16°12'42"W / Glacial
 2014-2015, Sound and Glass Installation, Dimensions variable
 Wayne Benite

Iceland is a rapidly disappearing sonic landscape. At a time of accelerating climatic and atmospheric transformation, Glacial captures and reveals the frequency of the disappearing soundscape. The piece is a series of field recordings of the sound of water being poured over glass panels, which are then laser-etched across the surfaces of glass panels. In *Frequency*, the sound is of several glass water bowls played by hand, exploring the tension between fluid sonic ephemerality and the solidity of glass. In *64°04'13"N 16°12'42"W* the sound is of field recordings from Jökulsálfón, a rapidly expanding glacial lagoon in southern Iceland, which contains a 3,000m³ volume of water, is 1.5km in length, and reaches a submerged depth of 200m. Appearing in the architectural space of the exhibition as a silent procession of luminous icebergs, the panels can be "heard" by the gallery visitor to dissolve spatial notions of time, place, volume and mass.

Steps
 2015, HD Video, 14'20", Looped
 Roberto Mazzachiodi

Recasting interviews conducted in 2013 against a context of spatial production that has become symptomatic of a new era of temporary placing, the work interrogates the constitution of imagined attachments to space through sound. The absent soundings of the storage unit becomes the interstitial site in which memory retreats as provisional attachments to place become more commonplace.

Threshold
 2015, Interactive AV
 Alexander Bigglen, ahaialex.com

Authorisation aggression protecting capital investment. No trespassing, no loitering, no stopping. Civil urban engineering is an becoming an ecosystem, counterproductive, increasingly uncolonised and combative against the public. How far will it go?

Ethnic Diversity in Sites of Cultural Activity
 2014-2015, Interactive audiovisual installation
 Ryo Keshiro, www.yoieshio.com

This computer locates faces, detects skin colour and alters the sound and image produced depending on the ethnic diversity of the visitors. In its current format, the music morphs between Johann Strauss II's *Blue Danube* performed by the Vienna Philharmonic and Fela Kuti's *Zombie*. But as with most software, it is not completely reliable. It may be possible to trick the algorithms e.g. by using make-up or changing lighting conditions. The use of face recognition technology is becoming increasingly common. Often, they are designed primarily for white West European and North American ethnicities. The piece is also a homage to the Vienna Philharmonics lack of ethnic and gender diversity.

Swallower
 2014, HD Video 15', Looped
 Ryan Donnelly

Swallower is an audiovisual installation comprised of video, soundtracked by a recording of the choir performance arranged for the exhibition's opening. The visual themes of Swallower explore ideas of gender as a performance. In this series, social relationships and representations are questioned and threatened, exposing the performative, and therefore unfixed nature of our gender roles. Common, and stylized icons, or in fact, "characters" we assume such as bride or widow, and their respective rituals such as weddings and funerals are visually subverted, while maintaining the aesthetic appeal that may draw us to these social performances in the first place.

Here's How the Voice Speaks
 2015, Celebrity masks, Paper, Stands, Dowelling, Thorns, A Capella Audio Loop
 Emily Rosemond

This slaptick sound installation responds to online experiences of/as networked personas. Layered voices sing to (or imitate) a group of celebrity face masks.

Unravelling
 2008, HD Video, 17', Looped
 Kuldeep Power

Produced by *Noise of the Past* (AHRC) project Unravelling is the result of a unique film-making process, creatively working with poetry, archive materials, visual art and music. Internationally acclaimed Nalin Sawhney composed a new score in response to an original inter-generational sonic dialogue in Urdu between Sawarn Singh, a WWII Indian soldier who fought for the British in Burma, the Middle East and Africa, before moving to the UK, and his grandson, Kuldeep Power. Working with this haunting score Power directed an evocative and searching film.

Airport
 2015, Sound, HD Video, Duration of each variable, Looped
 Sandra Katsauskaite

Nida Airport, located in Neiriga, Lithuania, was built more than four decades ago and abandoned ever since. A small aerodrome, cement-like field, has been resting quietly for decades, like a grey coffin, waiting to be unearthed. 'Airport' transports the disused airfield site, located thousand of kilometers away by the Baltic Sea into St. James Hatched Church. It asks the participants to abandon their immediate space, and through surrounding landscape, to enter a new space. The piece is a series of field recordings of the sound of water being poured over glass panels, which are then laser-etched across the surfaces of glass panels. In *Frequency*, the sound is of several glass water bowls played by hand, exploring the tension between fluid sonic ephemerality and the solidity of glass. In *64°04'13"N 16°12'42"W* the sound is of field recordings from Jökulsálfón, a rapidly expanding glacial lagoon in southern Iceland, which contains a 3,000m³ volume of water, is 1.5km in length, and reaches a submerged depth of 200m. Appearing in the architectural space of the exhibition as a silent procession of luminous icebergs, the panels can be "heard" by the gallery visitor to dissolve spatial notions of time, place, volume and mass.

Open Ensemble
 2015, 9 Channels, 9 Headphones
 Harid Kurdi

What happens when a performer plays an instrument without hearing it? How do a body and a mind respond to each other? What does it sound like when the performer excludes him/herself from the existing medium in order to explore a new medium? The open ensemble is a work for headphones, which provides a new space for listening and playing sounds. The performer, which is the audience, makes new interpretations of the sounds by listening and playing. In other words, the audiences are the performer and the performers as well. This work creates different shapes, forms and spaces, and depending on audience/performer reflections and reactions to the sounds they hear, and to the place.

Tape 342
 2008, 18-1/2 minute audio copied from Watergate Tape 342 (courtesy of NARA) and converted into a video file
 JD JTC monitor, digital media player, Looped
 Susan Schuppel

Tape 342 is but one of a sprawling archive of 3,700 hours of audio recordings taped secretly by the late American President Richard Nixon over a period of several years. Known as the "Nixon White House Tapes" these recordings detail conversations between the President, his staff, and visitors to the White House. Of the many thousands of audiotapes confiscated from the Oval Office, Tape 342 remains by far the most infamous. Not because of the damaging nature of the information it contains, but precisely because of its absence of a gap in the tape of 18-1/2 minutes. A residual silence that is haunted by the spectre of a man who declined to speak on the grounds that such testimony might be self-incriminatory. In a post-9/11 era of surveillance and privacy, Nixon refused to fill in the gap. But would return the voice to the machine's silence of the tape and enable the playback of history.

Appendix B

DVD: Artwork Exhibition Documentation

13.1.91(2016)

Airport (2015)

Sound/Place Exhibition (2015)

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