

Sounding Matters

Exploring the Potentials of Sonic Leakage in Contemporary Art Spaces

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Abstract

Contemporary art spaces are typically structured in accordance with a visual paradigm. However, sound has the capacity to leak into other spaces and does not conform to visual logics. Still, sounding artworks are frequently presented in these spaces. Thus, the aim of this thesis is to examine the effects of leaking sounding works within art spaces with an emphasis on the sensory experience of sound, and to further the understanding of how this can be operationalised curatorially. The research is focused on these questions: How is sound operating to produce experiential effects in the respective exhibition situations? What are the transformative potentials of sounding works in art spaces? What are the curatorial implications of these effects?

The study investigates two cases, the exhibitions *Mother Courage and Her Children* (2022) and *Undamming Rivers* (2022) that both provide examples of the interactions of sounding works in contemporary art spaces. The material is gathered through observation and analysed using the theory of performativity. The analysis defines a set of terms that describe different experiences of sounding works in the art spaces. Furthermore, these effects are shown to operate transformatively on the art event as aspects of a contemporaneous production and reception of the art. The concluding discussion elaborates on the curatorial implications of these terms in the curation of sounding works to show how sonic leakage facilitates definition of space, movement through space, and a layering of experience.

Keywords

Sound, sound curation, curatorial studies, contemporary art, sonic experience, performativity, art space, audience, Accelerator, Bonniers Konsthall.

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Introduction

The soundscape of the world is changing. Modern man is beginning to inhabit a world with an acoustic environment radically different from any he has hitherto known. [...] It would seem that the world soundscape has reached an apex of vulgarity in our time, and many experts have predicted universal deafness as the ultimate consequence unless the problem can be brought quickly under control.¹

The gallery is not the hushed space it was once purported to be but rather is filled with sounds that can range from noisy to quiet, from gentle to aggressive, from overlapping to discrepant or disruptive. [...] It echoes around the space, bumping into sound that has crept out of adjoining galleries, and in the process it interferes and merges with it.²

The catalyst for this thesis came from a visit to *The Other Side of Silence*, Hrair Sarkissian's solo exhibition shown at Bonniers Konsthall in Stockholm during the spring of 2022. I find it pertinent to dwell on that experience for a while. The central room of the exhibition housed the work *Background* (2012), a series of 6 backlit photographs each portraying a different photo studio. In these pictures, the room surrounding the backdrop, the things you wouldn't expect to see in a studio photograph, are visible. Conversely, what you would expect to see, the human subject, is not present. Two other artworks contributed to the experience. The first, *Deathscape* (2021), is a five-channel sound work installed in a dark room. Upon entering that room, I was met with the sound of metal implements scraping or beating against a hard surface, interwoven with occasional heavy breathing. These sounds are the sonic remnants of unseen labourers struggling against the very earth. The sounds followed me out of the dark room into the open space containing *Background*, where they grew ever fainter until I reached the middle of the room. Here, they began to intermingle with the sound of loudly echoing hammer blows repeatedly striking a hard surface, followed by the distinct crash of rubble hitting the floor. The work the hammer blows emanated from, *Homesick* (2014), is a two-channel video work that was located in yet another room and invisible from my position. As I stood in the middle of the open space, looking at photographs of empty photo studios while hearing scraping, breathing, striking, and crumbling, the exhibition ceased to be a collection of disparate things. The sound

¹ Raymond Murray Schafer, *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* (Rochester: Destiny Books, 1994 [1977]), 3.

² Caleb Kelly, "Introduction," in *Sound*, ed. Caleb Kelly (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2011), 12.

of a searching and unearthing of something unseen was allowed to fill the visual cavities. To add absence to absence, emptiness to emptiness. The sounds of hammer blows against stone and the crumbling remnants falling to the ground did the same. It all culminated in a heightening of the sense of unsettling anxiety already conveyed by the photographs.

What I experienced in this visit, and what allowed these disparate works to reach their potential, to effectively communicate, to mean something, was the capacity of sound to move from its place, to ooze into different spaces and different works. Here, the potentials of sonic leakage came to a front as the amplification of an artistic encounter. More frequently however, this quality is considered a problem, a conflict arising from the introduction of sounding works into the visually dominated exhibition space. Literary scholar Steven Connor describes the simultaneous conflict and potential succinctly. He remarks that sound, due to its leakiness is the ideal medium for the impulse to break down boundaries and disrupt the confined gallery space. For him, sound has a reinvigorating effect, making for a more human gallery experience in contrast to what is provided by static art objects sealed in their visual qualities.³ When put into practice, however, this utopian conception of sound in gallery space quickly dissipates. Connor gives the 2000 exhibition *Sonic Boom* curated by David Toop as an example:

When sound comes into the gallery to play, its exhilarating and delinquent leakiness can make for ironies. [...] During the planning, the artists involved became a new species of suburbanite, protesting against their noisy neighbours in the gallery space.⁴

To resolve the issue of these artists turned hyper-local NIMBYs, Toop elected to construct walls and sonically insulated rooms, isolating, and containing the sounding works.⁵ And thus, the sonic expansiveness and leakage was negated, which forced the aural pieces into a visual logic.⁶

³ Steven Connor, "Ears Have Walls: On Hearing Art," in *Sound*, ed. Caleb Kelly (London: Whitechapel Gallery, 2011), 129–130.

⁴ Connor, "Ears Have Walls: On Hearing Art," 131.

⁵ The NIMBY (not in my backyard) phenomenon describes the opposition to neighbouring developments that are perceived as harmful to the neighbours and to the character of the neighbourhood, such as landfills, social housing and parks, See Rolf Pendall, "Opposition to Housing: NIMBY and Beyond," *Urban Affairs Review* 35, no. 1 (September 1999): 112–115, <https://doi-org.ezp.sub.su.se/10.1177/10780879922184310>; Peter J. Davidson and Mary Howe, "Beyond NIMBYism: Understanding community antipathy toward needle distribution services," *International Journal of Drug Policy* 25, no. 3 (2014): 624–625, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.drugpo.2013.10.012>.

⁶ Connor, "Ears Have Walls: On Hearing Art," 131.

It appears obvious that sound does not conform to the notion of the white cube. Owing to its tendency to fill space, to round corners, to leak and expand akin to a gas, sound cannot without serious effort be separated from its surroundings. Attempts to do so are not necessarily successful. Lower frequencies, for instance, are likely to leak through erected walls. Sound is simply ill suited for the sort of isolated contemplation dictated by the modernist art gallery where each artwork stands alone, separated from every other work by enough space to prevent any interference or fusion of their effects.⁷ Even so, the white cube represents the standard exhibition space to the extent that it has become a naturalised space for art, and artists are working with sound within this context.⁸

Aim and research questions

As outlined in the introduction, the presence of sounding works in art exhibitions is an increasingly prevalent occurrence, with both artists frequently employing sound in their works and curators becoming more interested in showing sounding artworks. However, art spaces are generally not designed with this usage in mind. Rather, they are typically constructed for showing visual art, with a predisposition for highlighting visual qualities. This conflict is further expressed in the limited understanding of how sound operates among curators and other professionals within the art field. The aural has traditionally held a secondary position compared to the visual in a sensorial hierarchy. With this in mind, the aim of the thesis is to examine the effects of leaking sounding works within art spaces with an emphasis on the sensory experience of sound. As well as to further the understanding of how these considerations can be operationalised curatorially.

The following questions guide the research:

1. How is sound operating to produce experiential effects in the respective exhibition situations?
2. What are the transformative potentials of sounding works in art spaces?
3. What are the curatorial implications of these effects?

⁷ Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (San Francisco: Lapis Press, 1986), 14–15; 29–34.

⁸ Caleb Kelly, *Gallery Sound* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 18–19.

The first two research questions are answered through the analysis of the examined cases within the two chapters of the thesis. The final question is first approached in the concluding discussion as its answer requires the compounding of the results of the two preceding questions.

Material

The material for the thesis consists of two selected case studies. Both are contemporary art exhibitions shown concurrently during the autumn of 2022 in Stockholm: *Mother Courage and Her Children* (2022) at Accelerator and *Undamming Rivers* (2022) at Bonniers Konsthall. Both cases are examples of contemporary art exhibitions featuring sounding works in different capacities, and thus they provide examples of different approaches to the relation between sound, space, and audience. This selection provides the opportunity to examine different possibilities for the use of sound in exhibition spaces.

The first case, *Mother Courage and Her Children* is a group show consisting of an installation containing a sound sculpture, as well as both a film programme, and a performance programme. Maria Kulikovska's installation *President of Crimea, Since 19th of March, 2014* (2020–2022) is the only permanent feature in the exhibition. The parallel film programme intermittently gives way to performances. The curators for this exhibition are Richard Julin and Therese Kellner, Accelerator's artistic director and curator respectively.⁹ In the space adjacent to *Mother Courage*, Accelerator is also showing the solo exhibition *Big Water* consisting of a combined video- and sound installation by artist Tori Wrånes.¹⁰ This provides a scenario where multiple sounding components are placed in a constant state of independent motion, making it possible for unexpected dynamics and interactions to arise.

The second case, *Undamming Rivers* is a comprehensive exhibition of the work of the artist duo Cooking Sections made up of a trilogy of works collectively titled *When [Salmon Salmon [Salmon]]* (2021–2022) that discuss various aspects of the farmed salmon as an industrial animal in a series of installations that utilise sonic components, as well as a the site-specific installation *Undamming Rivers* (2022) which both charts Swedish waters and dams, and

⁹ "Mother Courage and Her Children," Accelerator, accessed November 2, 2022, <https://acceleratorsu.art/en/utstallning/mother-courage-and-her-children/>.

¹⁰ "Big Water," Accelerator, accessed December 16, 2022, <https://acceleratorsu.art/en/utstallning/big-water-eng/>.

visually undams these rivers. The sounding works in this exhibition are presented as a cohesive whole, spread across the art space and programmed to activate in accordance with a fixed schedule in a linear structure.

Method

The study is situated at the intersection between audience, sound, curation, and space. This is encapsulated by the use of case studies as a methodological framework. Each case constitutes a complex of interactions between the above-mentioned factors. A demarcation of distinct cases thus makes it possible to discuss how sound operates within each particular set of circumstances. The use of two cases allows for both a more general understanding of the object of study wherein multiple aspects of the studied phenomenon can be added to each other with the additional possibility of reading different exhibition practices against each other. This is achieved by focusing the examination of the cases on one aspect: the experiential effects of sound in the art space. The intention is however, not to make altogether generalised claims, but rather to examine the specifics of each case and provide a move towards an understanding of both the conflicts and potentials of the use of sounding objects in curatorial practice.¹¹ The two cases are selected because they reveal particular aspects of the object of study due to differences in the contents of the exhibitions and how these relate to the physical art space.

While the case study functions as an overarching and organising principle, the method for working within each respective case and for gathering material is more concrete and tangible. Since a key aspect of the thesis is to examine how sounding objects in art spaces act on the audience, and on the potentials present in the effects of various aspects of this phenomenon, I am employing a method of observation and thick ethnography (*tät etnografi*).¹² Thus, the empirical material for the study will be grounded in my own experience of the described phenomena. Thick ethnography denotes the act of describing an event in such vivid detail that

¹¹ For a discussion on the case study as methodological approach, see Anna Lundström, “Former av politik: Tre utställningssituationer på Moderna Museet 1998–2008” (PhD Diss., Stockholm University, Gothenburg and Stockholm: Makadam Förlag 2015), 30–31, <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-116052>.

¹² Thick ethnography is my translation of the Swedish *tät etnografi* used in the field of ethnology. Lars Kaijser and Magnus Öhlander, eds., *Etnologiskt fältarbete* (Lund: Studentlitteratur, 2011), 138–141.

a reader could virtually inhabit the description.¹³ This act is not limited to any one sense. Instead, the method presupposes the fact that we experience the world multi-sensorially and that other senses factor into what might be conceived as a predominantly visual sensation. This is an acknowledgement that the experience of sound in art spaces is not strictly an aural affair. Rather, the sonic is a part of a sensorial web, interacting with other sensory stimuli to create a cohesive experience. And so, in an attempt to understand how sounding artworks affect the audience, this web needs to be analysed.

The description of each case is performed utilising thick ethnography. Each observation includes the summary collection of surface level information such as titles of works, sound-diffusion techniques, and the spatial configuration of exhibition rooms. However, the bulk of the descriptions are derived from extended observation and meticulous notetaking within the examined exhibition cases. This allows the researcher to parse through all impressions and to make as full an account of the experience as possible. This approach takes into consideration sensorial aspects as well as spatial dimensions. Using this method, no artwork is treated in isolation. Instead, each exhibition situation is considered from an experiential perspective as a complex context. The emphasis is on the use of sound, but not on the sound itself, rather on how sound acts on the situation and how that affects the experience. The material created using this method is, as stated above, experiential and individual. It can provide insight into how sounding works in exhibitions are received by the observer, but not into how said exhibitions are experienced by different people with different perspectives and expectations. Nor can it illuminate how the exhibitions were conceived or how the sonic qualities were considered from the side of production. This is tied to the focus of the thesis, to understand the effects of sounding works in art spaces at the point of reception or in the meeting with the exhibition situation.

The starting point of this research approach is the individual experience of the examined phenomena, as is common in art history and other disciplines within the social and human sciences.¹⁴ The direct experience of the individual is not however the result. Rather, it provides

¹³ It is important to note that thick ethnography is distinct from the similarly sounding mode of thick descriptions, the former denoting highly detailed descriptions whereas the latter involves interpretation at the stage of description. Kaijser and Öhlander, eds., *Emologiskt fältarbete*, 138–141.

¹⁴ For a more in-depth discussion of this within art history, see Malin Hedlin Hayden, “Out of Minimalism: The Referential Cube. Contextualising Sculptures by Antony Gormley, Anish Kapoor and Rachel Whiteread” (PhD diss., Uppsala University, Uppsala: Acta Universitatis Upsaliensis 2003), 10–11, <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:uu:diva-3589>.

the material for analysis. Beyond this, it is important to state that the study ascribes to the notion of *situated knowledges* first defined by Donna Haraway in the article “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective” (1988). This means that knowledge production is both positioned, as the researcher is an embodied subject writing from a specific perspective, and partial, as it is impossible to occupy all positions at once.¹⁵ Haraway concisely explains this position as follows:

I am arguing for politics and epistemologies of location, positioning, and situating, where partiality and not universality is the condition of being heard to make rational knowledge claims. These are claims on people's lives. I am arguing for the view from a body, always a complex, contradictory, structuring and structured body, versus the view from above, from nowhere, from simplicity. Only the god trick is forbidden.¹⁶

With this comes an acknowledgement not only of the researcher as an embodied subject who writes from a specific and partial perspective, but of all production of knowledge as being situated. It is precisely this situatedness, the partial perspective, that makes it possible to produce knowledge about the experience of sound since any knowledge claims must be made from the position of the specific body encountering the phenomenon.

As stated, the gathering of material is only a first step in the research process which is followed by analysis. Operational situations are selected from the raw material of the observation notes of respective case in accordance with the aim of the thesis. These situations are then redescribed and supplemented with necessary information, such as the titles of the work, both to enable the reader to navigate the situations and to produce a foundation for the analytical stage. The analyses of the cases in respective chapters are organised into discussions around specific concepts that capture the primary effects of sound within each exhibition. These terms are first used as analytical tools that make it possible to describe sonic experiences and to discuss how these effects operate transformatively on the art event. In the concluding discussion these concepts take on the function of a proposed set of terms, derived from the analyses that establishes a curatorial language for working with sounding artworks in contemporary art spaces.

¹⁵ Donna Haraway, “Situated Knowledges: The Science Question in Feminism and the Privilege of Partial Perspective,” *Feminist Studies* 14, no. 3 (Autumn 1988): 582–586, <https://doi.org/10.2307/3178066>.

¹⁶ Haraway, “Situated Knowledges,” 589.

Finally, the terminology used to define sonic practices within the arts is a complex web of somewhat fluid terms as evidenced by the extensive list presented by musicologist Leigh Landy in “But Is It (Also) Music?” (2016).¹⁷ It is not in the interest of this thesis to enter into the discussion of the distinction between, for instance, sound art and sound-based music. Instead, the term *sounding artwork* or *sounding work* is used to refer to all artworks with sonic components present in the examined cases. This term is aligned with what musicologist Marcel Cobussen calls *sounding art*, an expanded framework which includes artworks that premiere the sonorous qualities as well as works where the visual or tactile aspects are more prominent.¹⁸ The use of this term allows for installations, video works and sound sculpture to be collected under the same umbrella. The use of sounding work as opposed to sounding art within this thesis is purely a grammatical consideration.

Delimitations

Sound in art is a broad and amorphous field which encompasses a wide range of practices that are presented in an equally wide range of contexts. Since the focus of this thesis is on the effects of sonic leakage wherein sounding artworks interact with other works, with the space and with the audience, only a limited selection of these contexts are of interest. As such, art presented in specialised venues designed for exhibiting sound, such as concert halls, black boxes, or other designated sound art spaces are not considered. Neither are individual sound installations presented outdoors or sounding works that are experienced through headphones. Contexts like these serve to isolate the experience of sound which limits potential interactions.¹⁹ Thus, to fulfil the aim of the thesis, the cases are only drawn from art exhibitions that contain sounding works presented in contemporary art spaces.

Art exhibitions are a temporal phenomenon, sounding objects within exhibitions even more so. While a historic exhibition can be studied using reviews, documentation and supplementary texts, appropriate materials relaying the sonic qualities of exhibitions are rarely created. The

¹⁷ Leigh Landy, “But Is It (Also) Music?,” in *The Routledge Companion to Sounding Art*, eds., Marcel Cobussen, Vincent Meelberg and Barry Truax (New York: Routledge, 2016), 18–20.

¹⁸ Marcel Cobussen, “Introduction,” in *The Routledge Companion to Sounding Art*, eds., Marcel Cobussen, Vincent Meelberg and Barry Truax (New York: Routledge, 2016), 11–14.

¹⁹ For a discussion on the conditions of the black box and the use of headphones, see Andrew V. Uroskie, *Between the Black Box and the White Cube: Expanded Cinema and Postwar Art* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 2014), 1–9.

primary method for documenting exhibitions, photography, inherently fails to capture the aural. It is, after all, a visual medium. Whereas reviews do not always approach the exhibition from the perspective of sound, this is not necessarily within the purview of the reviewers who are primarily trained to work with visual materials.²⁰ As such, the added layer of a temporal, non-visual phenomenon, within the already temporal phenomenon of the art exhibition points towards an increased need for experiencing the studied exhibitions in situ. This approach is also necessary to produce a material that accounts for direct experience and allows for unexpected interactions between all factors of the exhibition to be examined. This means that an additional criterion for the selection of cases is the ability for the researcher to experience and observe the exhibitions. This entails restrictions on both time and geography: the exhibitions must be shown during the autumn of 2022 and in the vicinity of Stockholm.

Finally, since the aim of this study concerns the effects of sounding works at the point of reception, the collection and subsequent analysis of perspectives of people who have been involved in the production of the examined cases is deemed outside the scope of the thesis. Interviews with art professionals such as curators, technicians and artists would give insight into how these figures understand their own approach to the examined cases and what they want to accomplish. Such material, while interesting, would consist of intentions rather than of effects and would thus not serve to answer the stated research questions.

Theory

The theory of performativity was originally developed within the field of philosophy of language, and first concretised in philosopher John Longshaw Austin's seminal lecture series *How to Do Things With Words* (1975). Coming from the realm of language, Austin defines two different types of speech acts. *Constative speech acts* describe the state of things as they are. This aspect of language had been the primary focus of philosophers of language until that point. According to Austin, speech acts can also interact with the world in a more direct way. To denote this, he introduces a second speech act, the *performative speech act*. This is a use of language that does something. Austin's first examples of this are different types of ritual statements, like the *I do* of a wedding ceremony, which when said under certain circumstances

²⁰ Kelly, *Gallery Sound*, 12–13.

alters the state of things – the person making the utterance becomes married. This also comes into effect under less formal conditions. The prime example being that of making a bet. Upon making a bet, you enter into a contract, which will force you to act in a certain way depending on the outcome of the bet.²¹ Two key features in Austin’s conception of the performative speech act are those of intention and control, meaning that for an utterance to have an effect on the world, it’s originator must both intend for it to take effect and have control over the situation. The person entering into marriage by saying *I do* can only do so if they intend to get married and are in a situation wherein everyone participating acknowledges that they, by performing the speech act, will be wed. Philosopher Jacques Derrida, who both criticises and further develops Austin’s concepts, does not hold the same conviction. Instead, he posits that a speech act can be transplanted onto any number of different contexts where, removed from the originator’s control, it gives rise to new meaning. The meaning of an utterance is thus context dependent, influenced by the time, place and history of the person experiencing it.²²

Art historian Mårten Snickare extends the notion of the speech act by suggesting that various types of images, objects and architecture can have the same performative power as the spoken word. He states that the meaning of an object is constantly being renegotiated over the course of history in accordance with the performative acts, such as speech, movement, and gestures of people interacting with the object. He terms this the *performative meaning*, as an unstable and variable form of meaning when compared to the intentions of an author. Still, performative meaning is not arbitrary, as it is governed by tradition and convention as well as by the knowledge, preconceptions, and social positions of the audience.²³ When relating this to architectural space, Snickare discusses how the phenomenon of architecture interacts with bodies – wherein people continuously do things to space while the space does things to people. The specifics of this interplay are transformed depending on the context of the act.²⁴ Such a move enables different questions to be asked of art. Instead of searching for an intrinsic meaning embedded in an artwork, it is possible to ask what the work does or what meanings arise in the moment of reception.²⁵

²¹ John Longshaw Austin, *How to Do Things With Words: The William James Lectures delivered at Harvard University in 1955* (Oxford: Oxford Academic, 1975), 1–11.

²² Jacques Derrida, *Margins of Philosophy*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 307–330.

²³ Malin Hedlin Hayden and Mårten Snickare, eds., *Performativitet: Teoretiska tillämpningar i konstvetenskap: 1* (Stockholm: Stockholm University Press, 2017), 1–13.

²⁴ Peter Gillgren and Mårten Snickare, eds., *Performativity and Performance in Baroque Rome* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2012), 78–79.

²⁵ Jennifer DeVere Brody, “Black Cat Fever: Manifestations of Manet’s Olympia,” *Theatre Journal* 53, no.1 (March 2001): 96, <https://doi.org/10.1353/tj.2001.0006>.

Erika Fischer-Lichte, writing within the field of performance studies, redefines the work of art, from something that exists independently of artist and audience, to an *event* which involves everyone to various degrees and wherein both the acts of production and reception are contemporaneous.²⁶ She sets this against the performative-turn, which occurred in the visual arts in the early 1960s, signified by the increase in performative elements within different art forms as well as the creation of the separate genre of performance art and the blurring of boundaries between previously distinct art forms. Parallel turns are identified within music in the early 1950s with the introduction of audio-events, in literature with moves towards both interactive literature and readings, and within theatre as a renegotiation of the relationship between performer and audience.²⁷ Key in this understanding is a shift from the work of art as the focal point. Instead, it is reframed as an event which is dictated by the interaction of all involved subjects and objects: artist, artwork, and audience.²⁸ In this thesis, the concept of *event* guides the understanding of how sounding works act transformatively on each other and on the audience as simultaneous production and reception.

Finally, art historian Magdalena Holdar, operationalises performativity in the dissertation “Scenography in Action: Space, Time and Movement in Theatre Productions by Ingmar Bergman” (2005). Holdar’s analysis of scenography is predicated on a firm distinction between *presentational space* and *audience space* within the theatre. The presentational space is the space used by the performers, dominated by fiction while the contrasting audience space is simply the space for the audience.²⁹ Once established, the relationship between these two spaces is continuously renegotiated as scenography performs movements in response to the movements of the actors.³⁰ Two of these movements are of interest to this thesis. *Expansion* describes how the scenography spreads beyond its initial borders, incorporating more of the theatre into the presentational space. By necessity, a reversal of this movement, a *contraction* operating on the same principles is also possible.³¹ The second movement is *perforation*, conceived as a more sudden and violent form of expansion wherein the presentational space is

²⁶ Erika Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance: A New Aesthetics* (London: Routledge, 2008), 18.

²⁷ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 18–21.

²⁸ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 22–23.

²⁹ Magdalena Holdar, “Scenography in Action: Space, Time and Movement in Theatre Productions by Ingmar Bergman” (PhD Diss., Stockholm University, 2005), 15–16, <http://urn.kb.se/resolve?urn=urn:nbn:se:su:diva-427>.

³⁰ Holdar, “Scenography in Action,” 26.

³¹ Holdar, “Scenography in Action,” 28–29; 38–39.

pierced through, which also exposes the thingness of scenography.³² These concepts are expanded upon and translated onto the object of the thesis within the analytical chapters, and used to enable a discussion about the experiential and transformative interaction of sound and space.

Previous research

The particular intersection between curation, sound, space and audience that is the focus of this study is a mostly unexplored topic, especially within the nascent field of curatorial studies. There is however a body of research in tangential fields, which is of relevance to this thesis. Here, these contributions are discussed in the thematic groupings: sound and (art) space, musicology, and spatial acoustics.

Sound and (art) space

Positioned on the fringes of the field of sound studies, the scholar of sound art Caleb Kelly posits the idea that the art gallery is replete with sonic features in the book *Gallery Sound* (2017). Kelly charts a history of sound and silence in art spaces and argues for the importance of hearing, not only sounding works but also ambient sound, audience noise, and the architecture itself. He considers the acoustic qualities of gallery spaces as a key component of the artworks presented in those spaces.³³ Kelly's acknowledgment of sound as an essential part of contemporary art practices within the gallery and of the knowledge gap regarding the experience of sound in visual art spaces has been productive in framing this thesis. However, unlike the present study, Kelly focuses on the ways in which artists utilise the acoustic characteristics of the gallery rather than on what is experienced in the encounter between sounding work and listener. Also operating within the realm of sound art, Brandon LaBelle traces the development of sound as artistic medium in the book *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (2015). LaBelle views sound as an inherently relational phenomenon and traces this relationality through spatial modes framed as the dynamics of sound and space. Sound art as a practice, according to LaBelle, actualises this dynamic, revealing sound as spatial, social,

³² Holdar, "Scenography in Action," 69–70.

³³ Caleb Kelly, *Gallery Sound*.

and participatory.³⁴ This has been vital in informing the study's view on how the body is located within sound and how sound correlates to the production of space.

Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds (2006), edited by musicologist Jean-François Augoyard and sociologist Henri Torgue is a multidisciplinary source book of sonic effects developed within the Centre for Research on Sonic Space and the Urban Environment (CRESSON). This guide elaborates on the *sonic effect*, a conceptual tool that is descriptive, as the approach compounds perspectives from fields such as psychology, sociology and applied acoustics and compares the physical characteristics of the urban setting to the perceptions of its inhabitants to describe sonic experience. It is also operative, as it allows for the intervention into the described effect.³⁵ This list compiled by Augoyard and Torgue has been vital in the definition of the terms proposed by this study.

In the article “Museums as Sites for Displaying Sound Materials: A Five-use Framework”, Alcina Cortez proposes a framework for describing how museums have been using sound materials ranging from sound as lecturing to sound as ambience, and sound as art. Cortez' purpose in developing this framework is to support further research in how sound impacts the museum visitors' construction of meaning, how it affects their emotional state, and how it can stimulate the audience.³⁶ With the continuing evolution of sound-practices in the gallery arts as background, sociologist Whitney Johnson traces the use of conceptual texts that create value for audiences who are more attuned to seeing than to listening. With extensive use of ethnographic observation and semi-structured interviews, Johnson finds that sound artists are reliant on written text to both explain their works to the audience, and to support grant applications. She provides multiple possible explanations for this discrepancy. These range from *art world isomorphism* connecting the sonic arts with conceptualism, to text as a circumvention of technical shortcomings on behalf of the gallery spaces, and finally, that the use of conceptual texts in galleries is a learning tool to train the sensory perception of the audience.³⁷ Amy Cimini reads Sondra Perry's installation *IT'S IN THE GAME '17*, shown at

³⁴ Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015).

³⁵ Jean-François Augoyard and Henry Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience: A Guide to Everyday Sounds*, trans. Andra McCartney and David Paquette (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).

³⁶ Alcina Cortez, “Museums as Sites for Displaying Sound Materials: A Five-use Framework,” *Sound Studies* 8, no. 1 (2021): 43–72, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20551940.2021.1975442>.

³⁷ Whitney Johnson, “Reading Sound: Textual Value Devices in Gallery Sound,” *Sound Studies* 8, no. 2 (2022): 163–180, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20551940.2022.2105023>.

the San Diego gallery Helmuth Projects in 2017, against the physical environment the work was shown in. For Cimini, the walk to the gallery serves as a vital raster to understand the intricacies of class, race, and place that feature in the work. But, just as the surroundings spill into the gallery space and into the installation, the artwork spills out into the street with light and sound reshaping the neighbourhood.³⁸ These three articles all provide insight into the interactions between art spaces and sound, insofar as describing different uses of sound within museum practices, how sounding works are textually supported, and how an artwork can extend beyond its immediate confines.

Musicology

In the book *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (2018), musicologist Nina Sun Eidsheim argues that the fixed frameworks for analysing music are restricting, reducing dynamic and multisensorial phenomena to something static and one-dimensional. She refers to this trope-based understanding as the *figure of sound*, and proposes an alternative, *practice of vibration*, as a relational and unbounded framework.³⁹ Eidsheim provides a different way of understanding music, treating it, not as a purely aural phenomenon, but instead placing the sonic in a sensory web also comprised of sight, touch, and so on. Eidsheim's position has been valuable in developing the thesis' methodological approach to the examined cases. In the anthology chapter "Classical Music and the Politics of Space" (2013) musicologist Nicholas Cook discusses how music functions as a demarcation of space, that music facilitates spatial experience and that there exists a musical spatiality in the theory, performance and recording of music. Cook elaborates on these ideas in a discussion on how classical music contributes to a politics of space. This function is characterised by the double nature of music as it both establishes the distinction between the public and the private and reveals that the boundary is permeable.⁴⁰ Thus revealing how music has the simultaneous capacity to divide and bridge across space.

³⁸ Amy Cimini, "Walking to the Gallery: Sondra Perry's 'It's in the game' In San Diego in Five Fragments," *Sound Studies* 4. No. 2 (2018): 178–200, <https://doi.org/10.1080/20551940.2018.1612646>.

³⁹ Nina Sun Eidsheim, *Sensing Sound: Singing and Listening as Vibrational Practice* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2015).

⁴⁰ Nicholas Cook, "Classical Music and the Politics of Space," in *Music, Sound and Space: Transformations of Public and Private Experience*, ed. Georgina Born (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 224–238.

Spatial acoustics

Spatial sound has previously been studied with an emphasis on acoustic technology. These perspectives are outside the scope of this thesis but can still inform a discussion of sonic phenomena. Notably, musicologist Gascia Ouzounian traces a history of acoustic and auditory spatiality within a wide range of fields in the book *Stereophonica: Sound and Space in Science, Technology, and the Arts* (2021).⁴¹ This provides a historic perspective to spatial conceptions of sound in relation to the development of auditory technology which helps to deepen the understanding of contemporary practices and discourses. In the dissertation “Noise Design: Architectural Modelling and the Aesthetics of Urban Acoustic Space” (2003), architect Björn Hellström takes a structural approach to issues of sound within architectural urban space with the perspective that sound can function as a mediator of information rather than as something that architecture should protect people from. Hellström seeks to both identify conceptual tools and to operationalise those tools within architectural expression.⁴² While “Noise Design” operates within the field of architecture and is concerned with the design of urban spaces; it has provided valuable insight into perspectives on the perception of sound.

⁴¹ Gascia Ouzounian, *Stereophonica: Sound and Space in Science, Technology, and the Arts* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press, 2021).

⁴² Björn Hellström, “Noise Design: Architectural Modelling and the Aesthetics of Urban Acoustic Space” (PhD diss., Royal Institute of Technology, Gothenburg: Ejeby 2003).

Chapter 1 – Mother Courage and Her Children: an exercise in chance

In this chapter I give an account of my experience with the exhibition *Mother Courage and Her Children*, shown at Accelerator in Stockholm in 2022. The account is derived from an observation performed on October 13, 2022 and begins in the stairwell that separates the auxiliary spaces from the art space proper and that comprises the point of entry into the exhibition. While the focus is on this exhibition, the parallel exhibition *Big Water* is also included in the discussion since these two shows interact with each other. I begin by describing the exhibition in its totality to introduce the space and the artworks, and then continue with detailed descriptions of particular situations within the experience. This is due to the temporal nature of the exhibition and of sound which makes any attempt at a totalising description inept. The descriptive stage provides the foundation for the following analysis of and across the situations.

Description

As I descend the staircase towards Accelerator's subterranean exhibition space I am met with a humanoid figure made of leaves, suspended from an industrial crane in the centre of the stairwell.⁴³ The leafy body, reminiscent of a hanged person, comprises a grim encounter on the downwards move that gives rise to a near chthonic sensation when merged with a low drone and the sounds of oceanic depths rising from below. Upon reaching the bottom, I catch a

⁴³ This leafy form is a remnant from Roberto N Peyre's performance *Lövaman* that was shown as part of the performance programme for *Mother Courage and Her Children* at Accelerator on 8-10-2022, five days before my account. No information about this performance was presented in conjunction with the object, see "Mother Courage and Her Children," Accelerator, accessed November 2, 2022, <https://acceleratorsu.art/en/utställning/mother-courage-and-her-children/>.

glimpse of Tori Wrånes' work *Big Water* (2022), which is responsible for the soundscape heard thus far, before I open a wide and heavy door to enter the space of *Mother Courage and Her Children*. The large, rectangular room is bathed in darkness with the only light sources being emergency exit signs, a spotlight pointed towards an informational plaque, the light spilling out from a closed door at the room's left midpoint and from an open passage at the far end to the right as well as a projection placed directly on the far wall. In the middle of the room, there are six rows of six black chairs pointed towards this projection. There are two white speakers, one on each side of the surface, suspended from the ceiling and angled slightly downwards towards the seats. Scattered across the light wooden floor are short lines of white gravel, some are straight and some bent. A few of these are disrupted, as if someone has stepped on them or kicked some pebbles out of place.⁴⁴

The first room of the exhibition is, as the projection and seating suggest, a screening room where a looping 90-minute film programme compiled by curators Richard Julin and Therese Kellner together with representatives of Filmform Anna-Karin Larsson and Andreas Bertman is shown in chronological order. The exhibition statement describes that these films which were created between 1956 and 2012 are, "[...] immaterial works that, in various ways, depict courage or acts of resistance."⁴⁵ Since the eleven films are shown continuously, the audience members enter the space at some undetermined point along the loop and at some undetermined point in the film that happens to be screening at the time. The wall plaque placed along the path into the room gives a brief description of each film. However, it is not easy to immediately identify which film one is faced with since the placement of the sign makes it difficult to simultaneously see both the video and the descriptions. Moreover, titles and credits are only given at the beginning or end of respective film. This means that the context the audience member is given for any film is limited.

Beyond the open passageway at the far end of the screening room is a second space. It is significantly smaller than the preceding room but shares the same light wooden floor and the same white walls. In contrast with the screening room, this space is brightly lit. A sign on the wall introduces Maria Kulikovska's work *President of Crimea, Since 19th of March, 2014* (2020–2022), consisting of two metal bells cast in the shape of a woman, suspended from the

⁴⁴ These lines are remnants from another of Roberto N Peyre's works, *Labyro* (2017-), a temporary performance installation; see Accelerator, "Mother Courage and Her Children."

⁴⁵ Accelerator, "Mother Courage and Her Children."

ceiling, as well as flowers and text painted directly on the walls in a manner that gives the impression of the paint dripping towards the floor. There is also a performative component to the work. Someone is to ring the bells when an air raid occurs in Ukraine, for the duration of the attack. During the first days of the exhibition the performance was carried out by the artist herself, but the task has since been delegated to the hosts of the kunsthalle.⁴⁶ In the passage between the screening room and this room there is a small hallway providing a respite between the two spaces. To the left there are bathrooms, straight ahead is a closed door from behind which the sounds of *Big Water* can be heard, and to the right, the passage opens up to the space where Kulikovska’s work is situated in a room with only three complete walls.

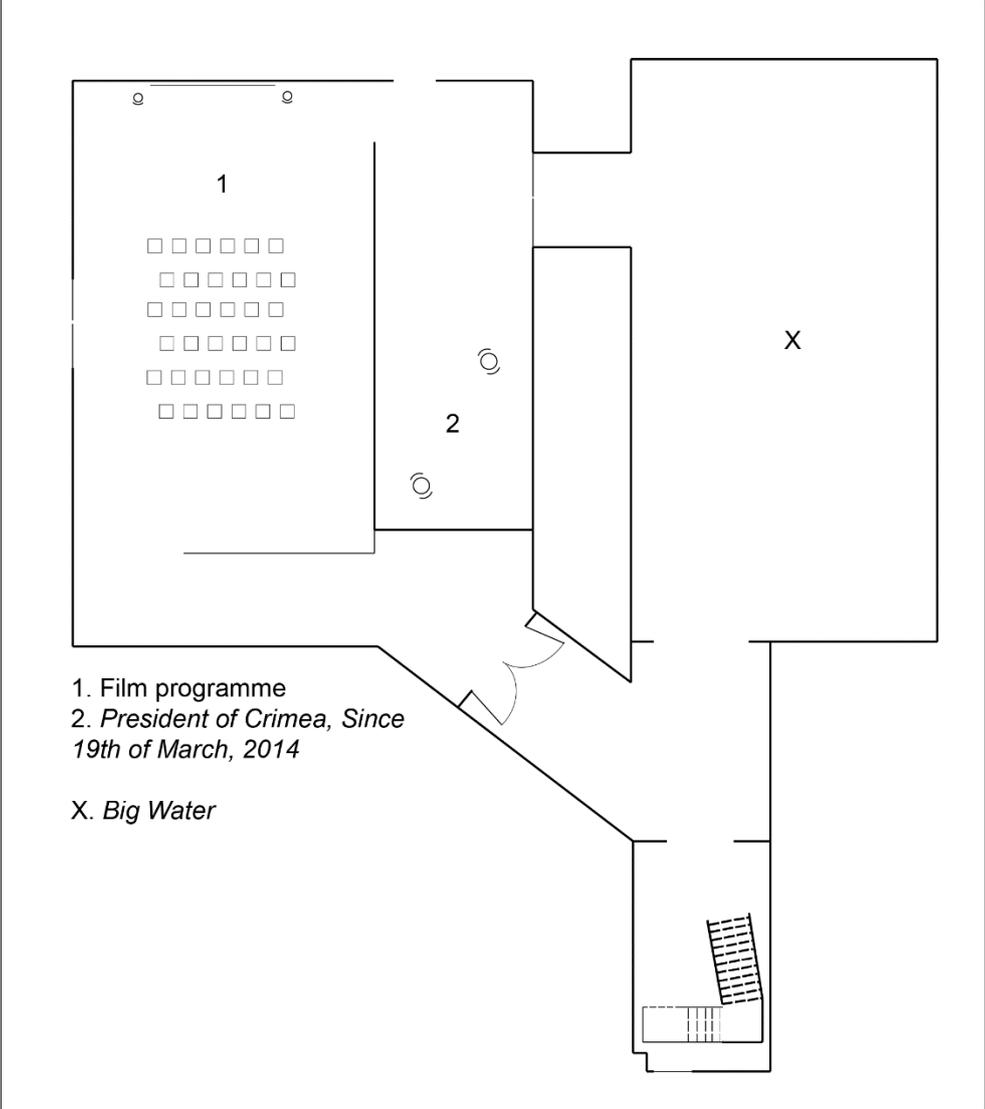


Figure 1. Map of the art space at Accelerator indicating location of sound sources, Joel Albinsson, 2022.

⁴⁶ Accelerator, “Mother Courage and Her Children.”

Situation 1 – *Russelltribunalen* and the tolling of bells

After entering the screening room towards the end of one film and registering my surroundings during a second film, the third film is the first one during the observation where I am fully immersed in the experience (Figure 1). This work, Staffan Lamm's *Russelltribunalen* (1967/2006) is an account of the Russell Tribunal, a war crime tribunal investigating American foreign policy and the actions of the US military during the Vietnam war.⁴⁷ The film is shot in black and white and is reminiscent of archival footage. Through its sound, the work presents two temporal layers. The first is retrospective, with the filmmaker describing in Swedish how this is the first time he looks back at the film since it was shot and outlines the context of what can be seen: a Vietnamese delegation arriving in Stockholm and making their way to Folkets hus by Norra bantorget to participate in this hearing. The second is the sound recorded during the tribunal consisting of testimonies and the judgment of the tribunal. A person dressed in orange, an Accelerator host, walks past me briskly. The film's narrative shifts to the immediate situation of the tribunal in 1967 and we are shown members of the delegation testifying about the use of incendiary bombs in Vietnam, with detailed accounts of the direct and prolonged effects of the weapon. At this point, a bell starts ringing. The tone is reminiscent of a cowbell, sharp and metallic. The steady beat of the bell pierces through the film but does not overpower the dialogue. There is a sense of confusion among the audience members. A person sitting in the front row of chairs asks about the meaning of the sound out loud but gets no response.

As time goes on, the bell toll grows more irregular. The beat slackens, and the tonal clarity falls away. The bellringer is audibly becoming tired. Meanwhile, the footage of spoken testimonies has begun to shift to visual evidence. Members of the delegation, adults and children alike, are taking off their clothes to reveal horrific burns to the tribunal. The ringing accompanies repeated testimonies of atrocities spiralling towards visceral signs of the same atrocities with a loss of energy for each piece of evidence. The film-maker states that Jean-Paul Sartre, the chair of the tribunal, is about to give his verdict. As Sartre opens his mouth to speak, the bell is silenced. He rhetorically asks if the United States of America has made itself responsible of war crimes. After a brief pause, he answers with an affirmative. Sartre goes into more detail, and both the ringing of the bell and the film-maker's voice return. We are told that this footage was never

⁴⁷ An excerpt from the film is available online: "Russelltribunalen," Filmform, accessed 10 November, 2022, <https://www.filmform.com/works/4253-russelltribunalen/>.

shown due to political and financial reasons, and that it feels now as if the tribunal is instead watching him.

The immediate sensation, as someone experiencing this intervention, is that each ringing of a bell underlines the testimony being made. The sharp, metallic, clanging adding more weight to each account of horrific abuse, thus bringing the archival footage into the audience's space and time. Adding to this, the deterioration of the sound of the bell which makes it clear that a person is responsible for the ringing, and that each toll of the bell takes a physical toll on them, arrives in parallel with a deterioration of the recorded testimonies from the verbal to the bodily realm. Both occurrences grow more visceral in conjunction with each other, which conjures a physical reaction in me as spectator.

The connection between these two works, *Russelltribunalen* and *President of Crimea* does not stop at the level of how the ringing bell interrupts the film. For an audience member who is aware of the context of *President of Crimea*, there is a possible additional layer of meaning. The bells ring whenever Russia is mounting an air raid against Ukraine, to serve as a reminder of the ongoing war.⁴⁸ When read against the testimonies of US napalm strikes in Vietnam, this makes the historic material and the historic war all the more real and present. You bear witness to the concrete effects of war while you are made acutely aware of the fact that people are currently being made victims of similar attacks. The war is reproduced, both in the art space, and in the world. When the ringing pauses briefly, allowing Jean-Paul Sartre to make his verdict in silence, it is as if the war in Ukraine also stops, its perpetrators judged guilty of war crimes in the same manner as the tribunal ruled against the US. The pause is long enough for me to feel a brief sense of relief, a respite, but the ringing resumes shortly thereafter. The verdict of the tribunal was ultimately ignored, and past atrocities are being repeated yet again.

Situation 2 – Red flags and unfamiliar familiarity

The second highlighted moment in the extended observation comes around 20 minutes after the first one. At this point the bell has been silent for some time and a new film, Felix Gmelin's work *Farbtest, Die Rote Fahne II* (2002), begins.⁴⁹ This silent two-channel video work shows

⁴⁸ Accelerator, "Mother Courage and Her Children."

⁴⁹ An excerpt from the film is available online: "Farbtest, Die Rote Fahne II," Filmform, accessed 10 November, 2022, <https://www.filmform.com/works/937-farbtest-die-rote-fahne-ii/>.

two similar images side by side. In each, a runner carrying a red flag is running along a city street. The flag is handed over to another runner at irregular intervals. While at first, one might assume that the two videos are shot in the same location, they quickly begin to diverge. Factors such as signage, vehicles and road markings reveal that one video was filmed somewhere in Germany in the 1960s while the other was filmed in Stockholm in the early 2000s. Both videos end with the respective runners entering a government building. In Stockholm it is the Stockholm city hall, which leads me to assume that the German footage shows a building of equivalent purpose. The cameras remain traced on the facades, and after a while, the runner in the German video emerges on a balcony, unfurling the red flag. In Stockholm, there is no such resolution.

In stark contrast to the previously shown films, this one is silent. As such, the presence in the room becomes more pronounced. I can hear the other audience members speak in hushed whispers, I can hear someone's heavy breathing behind me, and I can hear the mechanical whirr of the projector fans. At once, I am more aware of my immediate surroundings, my position in physical space. Without accompanying sound, the degree to which I am immersed in the film is lessened, allowing me to pick up external noises and sounds. Beyond the room I am sitting in, I can hear *Big Water*, the same soundscape that surrounded my descent into the art space. At first, this is primarily perceived as distant, low rumbling, and a constant pressure against my ears. After a while, the sound of a single flute breaks through. Soon after, more flutes join the chorus, harmonising. As time progresses, the character of the sound seeping in from *Big Water* becomes more clearly oceanic with the crashing of waves and deep-sea pressure. The more attention this distant work calls to itself, the more disconnected I become from the film I am watching. I cannot hear running footsteps, traffic, or the sounds of the city, the sorts of sound the visuals indicate. Instead, the soundscape the film is located within is transplanted and positioned within that of watery depths.

Familiar scenes, especially the video filmed in Stockholm, instead become decidedly unfamiliar when played against a backdrop of the vast and alien sea. There is no relation between what I see and what I hear, only an added eeriness, an uncanny feeling that detaches me from the work. Towards the end of the film, a low, rhythmic, pulsing sound emerges in threes from *Big Water*. For the first time sound and image connect, each pulse corresponds to a runner's step, and the uneasiness begins to resolve.

Situation 3 – Disorientation in the room with the bells

The third and final selected situation from the observation of *Mother Courage* begins about a minute after the previous one ended. I have since gotten up from my seat and walked through the open passageway at the far end of the film room, into the exhibition's second space (Figure 1). The brightly lit room hints towards a clarity of thought, contrasted against the sensation of having spent an extended period in darkness watching experimental short films spanning half a century. When I am in the room, the bells that hang from the ceiling and dominate the space are still, silent. Even so, this is not a quiet place. As it is only separated from the exhibition *Big Water* by a closed door, the sonic leakage is very prevalent. Likewise, this space is only divided from the adjoining screening room by a corner. These factors combined place *President of Crimea* at the intersection between two sound sources, where these emanations meet and intermingle.

As I enter the space, the soundscape is muddled. From the screening room, I hear an upbeat pop track interspersed with occasional sounds of metal striking against metal.⁵⁰ At the same time, the flutes and the ocean seeping in from behind the door are much louder here than they were before. This makes it difficult for me to concentrate which, in a sense aligns with the dripping paintings and scrawled writing on the walls. *President of Crimea* is visually disorganised, with text and images overlapping and bleeding into each other. Both sound and sight are dominated by noise. A host followed me as I entered the space. While keeping their distance, the sounds of breathing, footsteps and the rustling of clothes serve as a constant reminder that someone else is there with me with the express purpose of keeping watch. The film that follows does not clash with *Big Water* in the same way. Instead, I pick up the sound of speech, someone talking about clothes and chai, seemingly banal, everyday matters.⁵¹ With this change in audio, I can focus on the messages that are written on the wall. Sentences such as, “are you breathing?” and, “stay alive”, desperate and urgent, juxtaposed against the quotidian dialogue. As another host enters the room and begins to discuss schedules with the one who followed me in, I hear less of the film, only comprehending occasional phrases with something about a brain injury and about being a refugee signifying a complete tonal shift.

⁵⁰ This is Klara Lidén's work *Bodies of Society* (2006). An excerpt from the film is available online: “Bodies of Society,” Filmform, accessed 09 December, 2022, <https://www.filmform.com/works/1449-bodies-of-society/>.

⁵¹ This is Fia-Stina Sandlund's work *ACT 1: An Idealistic Attempt* (2007). An excerpt from the film is available online: “ACT 1: An Idealistic Attempt,” Filmform, accessed 09 December, 2022, <https://www.filmform.com/works/3448-act-1-an-idealistic-attempt/>.

Analysis

The situations described above demonstrate the effects of the interaction between sounding works, other artworks, space, and audience in distinct ways. While these are singular and potentially unique moments. Hinged on the convergence of several factors, they nevertheless articulate themes that are of consequence for the understanding of the effects of sound in art spaces in a wider sense. In the analysis of these observations, the concepts of *incursion* and *intrusion* provide an entrance into an understanding of how sounding works can transform spatial relations while the term *chance* introduces a dynamism and uncertainty to how these spaces are constituted.⁵²

Incursion

Incursion refers to the way in which an unexpected sound alters the atmosphere of a space as well as the behaviour of the listener. The incursion, using the everyday example of an unexpected phone call, “not only interrupts the present state, but also dictates new behaviour for a given moment”.⁵³ The incursive element features prominently in the first described situation, wherein the video work *Russelltribunalen* is suddenly penetrated by the tolling of the bell from *President of Crimea*. Initially, this interrupts the viewing, exemplified by the front row audience member vocally questioning the meaning of the new sound. But, as the ringing continues, this external interruption begins to merge with the reception of the artwork shown in the room, altering the ways in which it communicates without erasing what the first work communicates. The outlined incursion describes a generative process, where the external element acts upon the pre-existing by way of the addition of layers and by re-contextualisation.

Russelltribunalen by itself prompts emotional reactions. As it shows both testimonies and physical evidence of horrific acts of violence, one is hard pressed not to respond. The film is, however temporally and spatially separated from the viewing experience. Firstly, because of the film medium as such. The object that the audience encounters is by necessity a recording of past events. This is furthered by two other features of the film: it being shown in black and white and the retrospective narration. Both are factors that indicate a historical relationship. Black and white footage is familiar from archival material and is by and large a tell-tale sign of

⁵² The terms incursion and intrusion originated as sonic effects described in: Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 65.

⁵³ Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 65.

older film-making practices, and consequently older content. Whereas the narration is explicitly retrospective, the filmmaker himself looks back at footage he had shot decades earlier and provides both context and reflection for the events shown. In the encounter with this work, there are three distinct temporalities layered on top of each other: the then of the documentary footage, the then of the filmmaker looking back at the footage, and the now of the audience experiencing the work in the present. The reception of the work is thus characterised by a historical looking-back. This is furthered by the context the video work is inscribed in. Being presented as part of a 90-minute-long film programme consisting of 11 works created between 1956–2012 and shown in chronological order, *Russelltribunalen* is placed within the specific film history constructed by Accelerator.

Without decrying the affective potential of the work by itself, the sudden emergence of the unexpected sound of a bell enacts a transformation. It disrupts the pre-established spatio-temporal relation between work and audience. The conditions for the art event are altered. This allows for both artworks in question to act upon the ones experiencing them differently. The tolling of the bell exists within the space of the audience. While invisible from the viewing positions suggested by the screening room. Its sounds, unmistakably come from the adjoining room, reverberating through the space, with a presence distinct from the presence of the film's sound coming from the speakers above the screen.

Taking a naïve approach, the bell toll seems to emerge spontaneously, unrelated to the other parts of the exhibition and for reasons not discernible from the situation itself. With the additional knowledge that the bell rings in direct response to an action in the external world, the spontaneity or unpredictability of the event remains intact.⁵⁴ The bell toll is a response to something outside of, and not inside of the exhibition. Additionally, the duration which is also determined by the duration of the external action, cannot be predetermined. The bell will ring when it rings, until it stops. There is however a person who is tasked with tolling, and who does not possess the stamina to ring the bell indefinitely; evidenced by the audible decrease in tempo and the relaxed relation to beat and tonal clarity over the duration of the ringing. While this, read by itself, only describes a performance, it is of consequence for understanding how the performance acts on the other work, transforming the event. By way of this incursion, *Russelltribunalen* is transplanted into the time and space of the audience. It is no longer only

⁵⁴ Accelerator, "Mother Courage and Her Children."

heard and seen; it is physically felt. The bell acts as bells are apt to act, as a call to something. Compare this to the ways in which church-bells ring to signal a call to prayer, to announce death or to warn about crisis.⁵⁵ With this call to attention, the possibility for detached viewing is removed. Every ringing of the bell, which shares the audience's space and time, drives the focus towards the film, towards the testimonies being made. The incursion thus serves as a forceful punctuation of the present moment wherein the sound, as LaBelle expresses it, "[...] actively generates connections to the immediate and the situated that equally foster or evoke more ephemeral, temporal, and phantasmic relations to what we perceive."⁵⁶

To further understand how the sonic incursion operates transformatively on the art event, it is helpful to compare it to a similar concept used for analysing scenography. In the dissertation "Scenography in Action: Space, Time and Movement in Theatre Productions by Ingmar Bergman" (2005) art historian Magdalena Holdar utilises the concept *perforation* to describe how sudden, dramatic, expansions of the presentational space of theatre acts in a transformative way. Holdar discusses two versions of Euripides' *Bacchae* directed by Ingmar Bergman where this occurs, in the same scene, but in vastly different ways. One version is a drama staged at the Royal Dramatic Theatre in 1996 while the other is an opera and a collaboration between Bergman and the composer Daniel Börtz for the Royal Swedish Opera in 1991.⁵⁷ In the drama, the god Dionysus reveals himself, appearing from behind the audience in a flood of light, thus changing the direction of the dramatic focus, but principally revealing the alienation of the audience members as the presentational space surrounds them and the light robs them of their collective anonymity. In the opera, Dionysus instead reveals himself by crashing down from the ceiling, tearing a hole in the set and disrupting the perceived stability of a static space. In doing so, the materiality of the set and the illusions of theatre that allow the audience to believe in the reality of the narrative unfolding for a while are unveiled. In these instances, the audience is not transformed into participants. Instead, they themselves become scenography.⁵⁸

⁵⁵ For a discussion on past and present uses of church bells, see Gaspard Salakto, "The Worldmaking Ways of Church Bells: Three Stories About the Cathedral Notre-Dame de Paris," in *Worship Sound Spaces*, eds. Christine Guillebaud and Catherine Lavandier (London: Routledge, 2019), 61–74; For the uses of bells within Swedish parish churches from a perspective of cultural history, see Nils-Arvid Bringéus, *Den kyrkliga seden* (Stockholm: Carlsson, 2005), 55–71.

⁵⁶ Brandon LaBelle, *Acoustic Justice: Listening, Performativity, and the Work of Reorientation* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2019), 79.

⁵⁷ Holdar, "Scenography in Action," 70.

⁵⁸ Holdar, "Scenography in Action," 79–85.

Theatre as discussed by Holdar has a clearly defined distinction between presentational space and audience space, the relation between which can be renegotiated by way of perforation.⁵⁹ In the art space, this difference is not as strictly enforced, with art and audience often sharing the same space. Still, in *Mother Courage*, the setup of the screening room with rows of chairs directed towards a projected surface gives rise to a similar set of circumstances with given expectations. The audience sits on the chairs, watching the continuum of films. Even at this stage the parallel is strained as the lines of white gravel on the floor intersect the arrangement of chairs, art entering the space of the audience, and as the protocol for viewing within an art space are different from that of the theatre. The spectators are free to stand up, to move around or to come in and out of the room as they please. Nevertheless, the configuration of the space invites the audience to take the position of a theatre audience and to be lulled into a state of passive viewing. This invites to a comparison between the scenographic perforation and the sonic incursion.

When the established viewing situation in *Mother Courage* is suddenly interrupted by the incursion of the bell the established space shifts, it expands. The audience is made aware of another room beyond the one they are in and are forced to reconcile that with their previous experience. But the sound is acousmatic, there is no discernible source, no visible origin. Only the open passage at the end of the room indicates from where it emanates. This is an expression of the ubiquity effect, which describes the difficulty in locating a sound while knowing that it must come from somewhere, making it seem as if the sound is everywhere and nowhere at once. This often produces uncertainty in the listener as they do not know how to relate to a sound they cannot localize.⁶⁰ The effect is frequently utilised within contemporary theatre and music. By spreading out actors in the theatre, by making the performance mobile and by placing musicians in different parts of the concert hall or in surrounding space, the position of the audience is called into question. As ubiquity is predicated on a spatial uncertainty, it can be heightened by introducing modes of temporal uncertainty, such as repetition.⁶¹ Without physically leaving the screening room, it is impossible to find the sound source, so the audience is left with this increased uncertainty, which needs to be directed towards the situation present in the room, namely the film.

⁵⁹ Holdar, "Scenography in Action," 15–16; 69.

⁶⁰ Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 130–131.

⁶¹ Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 141–143.

The sonic incursion of the tolling of the bell thus acts both on the temporality and spatiality of the art event, re-defining and constituting these dimensions. The film *Russelltribunalen* which by itself is historical, a compounding of perspectives on the past or a looking back on a looking back on past events, is transplanted into contemporaneity with the audience as the bell rings. The sudden and sustained occurrence punctuates the present and establishes a more direct connection with the perceived. Since the incursion comes from outside the immediate space of the audience and the established viewing situation, it constitutes a forceful expansion of that space. The audience is instantly made aware of a larger context than before, but one that extends beyond the confines of visibility and that can only be perceived acousmatically by way of the incursive sound.

Intrusion

Thus far, the discussion has been centred on the term incursion. However, the second described situation wherein a silent film is submerged in sonic watery depths leaking in from outside, is more aptly framed in terms of the tangential concept of *intrusion* which describes how the presence of a sound in an otherwise protected space constitutes a violation of that space and thus alters the perceived situation.⁶² As *Farbtest, Die Rote Fahne II* in contrast to the preceding films is silent, the leakage that was previously only noted during particular instances predicated on the dynamics of the works in the different rooms of the art space, and otherwise erased by way of asyndeton, comes to the fore.⁶³ The distinctly distant, acousmatic, sounds entering the screening room instantly takes the place of the film's non-existent sound. This layering of a soundscape placed deep beneath the ocean upon visuals depicting bustling city streets presents an unsettling disconnection between the senses of hearing and sight, only resolved towards the end of the film when a rhythmic form in the sound incidentally matches the steps of the runners. Sonic intrusions cause a feeling of protected space being violated.⁶⁴ While violation is perhaps too strong a term to describe the experience at hand, it is disruptive, disorienting and anxiety-inducing. The sonic intrusion represents a different spatiality encroaching on the facsimile of

⁶² Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 65.

⁶³ Asyndeton denotes the deletion of certain sound elements from perception and memory. Together with synecdoche, the valorisation of sound elements, this produces a selective listening that makes it possible to comprehend complex ambiances, see Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 26; 123–124.

⁶⁴ Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 65.

audience space indicated by the arrangement of objects in the room and the previously established mode of viewing.⁶⁵

A similar effect to the one experienced in *Mother Courage* is described by Gascia Ouzounian as she listens to Maryanne Amacher's work *Sound Characters (Making the Third Ear)* (1999) on CD while sitting in her car, parked by a beach north of San Diego. Amacher's CD is composed for the body, with parts that resonate inside the skull, producing a different music than what is played from the speakers.⁶⁶ For the duration of the listening she makes note of military planes performing exercises in the sky, surfers exercising on the water, and the couples parked next to her who become witnesses to Ouzounian listening to loud, strange, music alone in her car. Here, the act of listening also becomes a way of acknowledging one's body in relation to the surrounding social and physical environment.⁶⁷ Ouzounian summarises this experience as:

Overall, I would characterize this listening ritual as a somewhat violent act, setting aggressively loud, strange sounds upon a scene where privileged people go to commune with the nature they forgot about in their oversized trucks and SUVs. Set to Amacher's soundtrack, a typical macho surfing and social scene became the stage for a strange psychodrama starring alien-callers, kidnap victims, eternally sinking ships and killer-bee helicopters that lurk guardedly over sun-streaked objects of American lust.⁶⁸

The introduction of Amacher's music into this place has a transformative effect, to the extent that it disrupts the very notion of place. Ouzounian's act of listening to this CD where she listens to it produces an entirely new place that supplants the sub-urban beachside and all that it entails.⁶⁹ *Big Water*, the sounding work that leaks into *Mother Courage* is markedly different from *Sound Characters*. It is not a sound installation, it is not made to be played within the body, and it is connected to a specific set of images – the video installation it belongs to. Even so, it is intrusive, both disrupting and reconstituting the space it enters. Rather than the listener actively choosing to set sounds upon a scene and transforming place in a listening ritual as Ouzounian does, the sounds are set upon both the scene and the listener without the need for any instigating action from the side of the audience. As such, the sense of place experienced in

⁶⁵ See, Holdar, "Scenography in Action," 32.

⁶⁶ Gascia Ouzounian, "Embodied Sound: Aural architectures and the body," *Contemporary Music Review* 25, no. 1–2 (2006): 70, <https://doi.org/10.1080/07494460600647469>.

⁶⁷ Ouzounian, "Embodied Sound," 74–76.

⁶⁸ Ouzounian, "Embodied Sound," 76.

⁶⁹ Ouzounian, "Embodied Sound," 76.

this event is remade into one that places both the room and *Farbtest, Die Rote Fahne II* within the leaking sounds intruding from *Big Water*.

The presence of *Big Water* is both felt and heard. As a pressure on the eardrums and as underwater rumblings which later shifts to more distinct sounds like the crashing of waves and flute playing. At once, this soundscape is disconnected from what can be seen while it fully surrounds the listener. The two parallel films depict two different European cities in the late 20th century and early 21st century respectively. While the exact locations shown might not be known to all viewers, the general atmosphere is certainly familiar to the exhibition's audience, especially since the newer footage is shot in central Stockholm, the same city where the exhibition is shown. The milieus in both films are those of everyday life, with the runners moving along streets where one might normally walk to school or to work and that are occupied by pedestrians, cars and buses all going about their business. Aside from the flag bearers, these scenes are remarkably ordinary. The sense of recognition is however upturned by the sonic intrusion which, with its dominating alien sounds detaches the video from its representational function. The effect becomes that of de-familiarisation as what would ordinarily be familiar and recognisable is positioned as something alien and strange. Rather than seeing the side-by-side images of runners carrying red flags through city streets towards places of local governmental power as two revolutionary acts with different outcomes, the focus is instead placed on the result of the interaction between disjointed sights and sounds. In this interaction, the event becomes that of audibly submerged cityscapes with runners floating through the environment, as if they are not quite making contact with the ground. Only when a steady pulse emerges from *Big Water* towards the end of the film is this tension resolved. The audio and video finally connect which grounds the experience.

In the third situation, where the bells that caused the incursion described in the first situation are found silent, another intrusion occurs. This time the intrusion is caused by the placement of *President of Crimea* at the point in the exhibition space where the sounds leaking in from both *Big Water* and from the films shown in the screening room intersect (Figure 1). Due to this doubling of intrusions, it is, unlike the previous situation not as simple to define how one work acts on another creating the transformative art event. At first, a loud, upbeat, pop song intermingles with a chorus of dissonant flutes resulting in a veritable cacophony of noise. Meanwhile the objects in the room, two metallic bells cast in the likeness of the artist suspended from above surrounded by walls painted with flowers and dripping texts, reproduce this effect.

No aspect of this tripartite interaction gives the audience enough respite to allow for the sorting through of the onslaught of sensations. This event is characterised by noise, dominating sound which demands one's attention and prevents any other sensory experience. It isolates the listener in their own body in an acute awareness of the auditory while making it impossible for them to fully perceive anything outside of this interaction.⁷⁰ In this instance, the concerns about the place of sounding works within visual art spaces described in the introduction to the thesis become apparent as the leakiness of sounding works interfere with the possibility for experiencing the works they intrude on. Thus, the normal protocols for quiet contemplation within the gallery are momentarily removed.⁷¹

While the above intrusion is intensely disruptive, it does not last for long. As the continuum of films moves on, the music disappears, replaced by the sounds of a conversation of considerably lower volume. This shift resolves some of the tension present in the space and thus allows for the silent *President of Crimea* to be perceived and for the text written on the walls to be read. This results in an effect close to what occurred during the viewing of *Farbtest, Die Rote Fahne II*, a layering of multiple distinct sensory inputs which alter the context of reception. The short snippets of heard dialogue about clothes and chai provide a contrast against the written messages, the desperate pleas for someone's safety and questions about their well-being. Utter banalities are set upon the most primal fears: powerlessness in the face of inexplicable horrors and the individual's insufficiency in protecting those they love. These things, the dull quotidian and sheer desperation co-exist, they are inextricably linked, one without the other is impossible. In this intrusion, the relation between the ordinary and the extraordinary is revealed as they are perceived simultaneously.⁷²

These intrusions constitute a layering of leaking external disruptive sounds onto the visual objects present in the respective rooms. In the interaction between these two aspects, the art event occurs, distinct from the experience provided by each part perceived in isolation. The sense of place in *Farbtest, Die Rote Fahne II* is disrupted, which results in the experience of de-familiarisation whereas the experience of *President of Crimea* is first prevented and then juxtaposed with dialogue signalling everyday life. The focus of the event created in the meeting between audience and art thereby lies in the interaction of disjointed sounds and images

⁷⁰ Salomé Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 47.

⁷¹ Connor, "Ears Have Walls: On Hearing Art," 131; Kelly, *Gallery Sound*, 82.

⁷² Ouzounian, "Embodied Sound," 76.

meaning that how each event is produced is dictated by the intruding leakage of sound from the outside.

Chance

All above situations carry with them an aspect of chance and unpredictability. As each art event is predicated on the interaction between three elements that move independently of each other and for different reasons. The first is the film programme, which is a 90-minute-long loop and only stopped when a performance takes place. The second is the bells in *President of Crimea* that ring whenever Russia carries out an air-raid in Ukraine. Something that might not happen at all on any given day, or conversely something that might go on for hours on end. The third element is *Big Water*, a work from a separate exhibition that runs on a 12-minute loop and the sounds of which leak into *Mother Courage*. The ways in which these elements meet give rise to unique events that provide the possibility for transformation.

Writing about tonality as the prime indicator for the fleeting nature of performance, Fischer-Lichte discusses how the aural space, or the sonic makeup of a performance, is constituted in two works by John Cage.⁷³ The first of Cage's *Silent Pieces: 4'33"* (1952) consisted of three movements and was performed as follows:

The pianist David Tudor entered the stage dressed in a black tailcoat and sat down at the piano. He lifted its lid and remained seated in front of the open piano for a while without beginning to play. Then he closed the lid. Thirty-three seconds later he raised it again. After a short period, he lowered it and reopened it 2 minutes and 40 seconds later. Then he closed the lid for a third time – lasting 1 minute and 20 seconds. He opened it for the last time. The piece was over. David Tudor had not played a single note on the piano. He rose and took his bows before the audience.⁷⁴

The sonic contributions of Tudor were limited to the incidental sounds of his footsteps and of the repeated opening and closing of the piano lid. Instead, the tonality of the piece was purely accidental: the blowing of the wind, rain hitting the roof of the building, and the audience talking or leaving. This non-silence was Cage's intention with the work, though the audience did not respond as he wished. What is of consequence here is the uncontrollability of the tonality. Sounds appear, spread, and vanish without intention which establishes a constant state

⁷³ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 122–123.

⁷⁴ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 123.

of transformation.⁷⁵ The coincidental was carried further in Cage's career with *Europeras 1 and 2* (1987) serving as Fischer-Lichte's second example. 64 randomly chosen operas were randomly modified and through many further processes of randomisation distributed among musicians and singers as time-bracketed fragments. All performers rehearsed independently of each other and were then distributed on the stage, divided into 64 parts, according to a computer program. Additionally, loudspeakers played a mix of opera recordings on a schedule decided by chance, and sounds produced by the spectators in the auditorium or entering from outside were amplified. No part of this work carried any intention, and all connections were purely incidental. Each performance was completely different from the rest, with the chance operations altering the lengths of each musical fragment and the external and audience-generated sounds being unique. As such, the event of these performances was the emphasis on chance and a dissolution of performative space by extending it outside the set architecture of the auditorium.⁷⁶

The chance operations taking place in *Mother Courage* are not nearly as prominent as those in the *Europeras 1 and 2*, being limited to three main factors: two of which are programmed but independent of each other and a third which is activated in reaction to external events. Compared to the degrees of randomness introduced by Cage this might seem inconsequential, but even so it is enough to produce unique events. The first described situation, with the incursion of the bells of *President of Crimea* into *Russelltribunalen* is a prime example of this. That Russian forces would drop bombs in Ukraine at that particular moment in the film-programme, prompting the bell toll, is in no way a predictable event. And even though it is possible for this to happen again, the more specific aspects of the occurrence are not as reproducible. Here are included the exact manner in which the bell was rung: the tempo, the tone, the rallentando and the pause; and the ways in which the ringing interacted with the film. The spatial expansion and consequently the heightened uncertainty introduced by the incursion is an unpredictable possibility, but one that produces transformation. Similarly, the two following situations are also dependent on an element of chance. *Farbtest, Die Rote Fahne II* will always be a silent film, and like *Big Water* it is 12 minutes long meaning that the entirety of Tori Wrånes' work leaks into the film every time it is shown in the exhibition, though the way in which the two correlate differs depending on at what point in the *Big Water* loop

⁷⁵ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 123–124.

⁷⁶ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 124–125.

Farbtest, Die Rote Fahne II begins. Beyond this, the bells are always a possibility. For example, during the vernissage, the bells were ringing for the duration of the evening and the intrusion of the sonic depths was drowned out resulting in a completely different experience. Finally, being in the room where *President of Crimea* is housed when the work is silent, as was the case during the observation, is decidedly different from the experience of being in the room when it is sounding. Beyond the difference in soundscape, the active work also presents another spatiality, with shifting borders between audience space and art space. When the work is silent the audience can freely move around the room. It is possible to walk in between the two bells and to examine the painted walls closely. When the bells are sounding, as was the case during the vernissage, the part of the room where the bells hang is reconstituted as presentational space which introduces a clear distinction between audience and art as either the artist herself or one of the hosts carries out the performance.

The introduction of chance to the analysed situations aligns with the temporality of sounding works within the exhibition and shows that the sonic experience is only possible as a singular moment. The leakages experienced as incursion and intrusion discussed above as central features in the production of the event and crucial factors in the definition of space are unstable possibilities with the potential to shift at any point. Thus, both the event and the defined spatialities are volatile. They exist in a constant state of transformation.

Chapter 2 – Undamming Rivers: rhythmic movement

This chapter opens with an account of my experience of the exhibition *Undamming Rivers* at Bonniers Konsthall in Stockholm in 2022. The material was gathered during an observation on October 23, 2022. The description commences in the sound lock placed between the auxiliary spaces and the art space which constitutes the entrance to the exhibition. It begins with a summary of the exhibition in its entirety to familiarise the reader with the artworks and the space. This is followed by in-depth descriptions of distinct situations within the experience that in turn make possible discussion of specific phenomena. The analytical section follows the description and contains analysis of and across the individual situations.

Description

The art space at Bonniers Konsthall is separated from the café, shop, and reception by a sound lock: two sets of sliding glass doors separated by a short stretch of corridor. As the second door of the lock closes behind me, I am within the atmosphere of the art space – everyday sounds like the clanging of cutlery and the murmur of a busy café have vanished. Instead, sounds of singing emanate from behind a black curtain to my immediate right. The accompanying wall text informs me that this is *Radio Brown Atlantis*, the exhibition shown in parallel with *Undamming Rivers*.⁷⁷

Straight ahead, the corridor extends a bit further. The exhibition text for *Undamming Rivers* is printed on the wall to the left and a sign on a stand warns the reader about blinking lights. The corridor then opens up into a square room, and the walls change in colour from white to black

⁷⁷ *Radio Brown Atlantis* is an adaption of the first season of a radio show with the same name. The episodes of the programme have been recomposed as scores for the exhibition, see “Ayesha Hameed and Guests / Radio Brown Atlantis,” Bonniers Konsthall, accessed December 12, 2022, <https://bonnierskonsthall.se/en/utstallning/ayesha-hameed-radio-brown-atlantis/>.

– they are covered in fabric. In this open space sit two benches placed in front of the installation *Salmon: A Red Herring* (2022), made up of a white box with sloped walls containing white, flat, animal figures. When active, a complex lighting rig suspended above the box gives off light in variable hue, temperature, and brightness, which alters the appearance of the figures in accordance with the narrative about the animals’ changing colours told by a voice emanating from a speaker placed above the back end of the box. Two more speakers, placed on either side of the box, project atmospheric sound and sound effects that, like the lighting, correlates with the narrative unfolding. Instead of turning right and entering this room, one can keep walking straight ahead and, after passing the installation, the room closes into a corridor again. This corridor, and a portion of the open room, is the location of a second installation: *Salmon: Traces of Escapees* (2021). In a straight line, eight ceiling mounted projectors project eight blue circles – aerial views of industrial fish farms, onto the floor. The circles animate in response to a narrative about the environmental impact of fish farming, told by a voice emanating from four wall mounted speakers in the corridor. The circular farms are intermittently changing in terms of shape and colour, spinning in different directions and at variable speeds. They are dissolving, disappearing, and reappearing. Music and atmospheric sounds come from three evenly spaced, ceiling mounted speakers. These two installations: *A Red Herring* and *Traces of Escapees* are staggered – when one ends the other begins.

After following the corridor to the end, turning a corner, and walking through a door, one enters the next room of the exhibition. In contrast to what came before, this space is wide open. It is lit up and has a high ceiling, white walls, and light grey stone floor. The only object present in the room is a large rotating arm with a speaker mounted on the end, suspended from the ceiling in the centre of the space. Like the two previous installations, this work: *Salmon: Feed Chains* (2022) utilises a voiced narrative to discuss an aspect of industrial fish farming, this time focused on the automated feeding systems of the farms. The voice moves between pedagogic and poetic cadences and is periodically broken up by effects and music. The rotating sound source on the end of the arm, mimics the feeding arms of the fish farms that featured prominently in *Traces of Escapees* and seems to suggest that the audience walk in wide circles along with the rotation. Although the sound can be heard clearly from any point in the room. An open doorway leads into the last room of the exhibition, a triangular space with the wall corresponding to the hypotenuse entirely made up of glass, a window to the street outside. Opposite of the glass wall is the only artwork in this room, the titular *Undamming Rivers* (2022), made up of a white wall covered in markings reminiscent of the way in which water features

are indicated on maps. 36 framed photographs of variable size depicting streams are placed on this backdrop, each with a portion cut out and folded over, revealing the line on the wall behind. Near the point of the triangle, an exit sign directs you towards a black curtain which, when passed through, deposits you back in the dark open room behind *A Red Herring*.

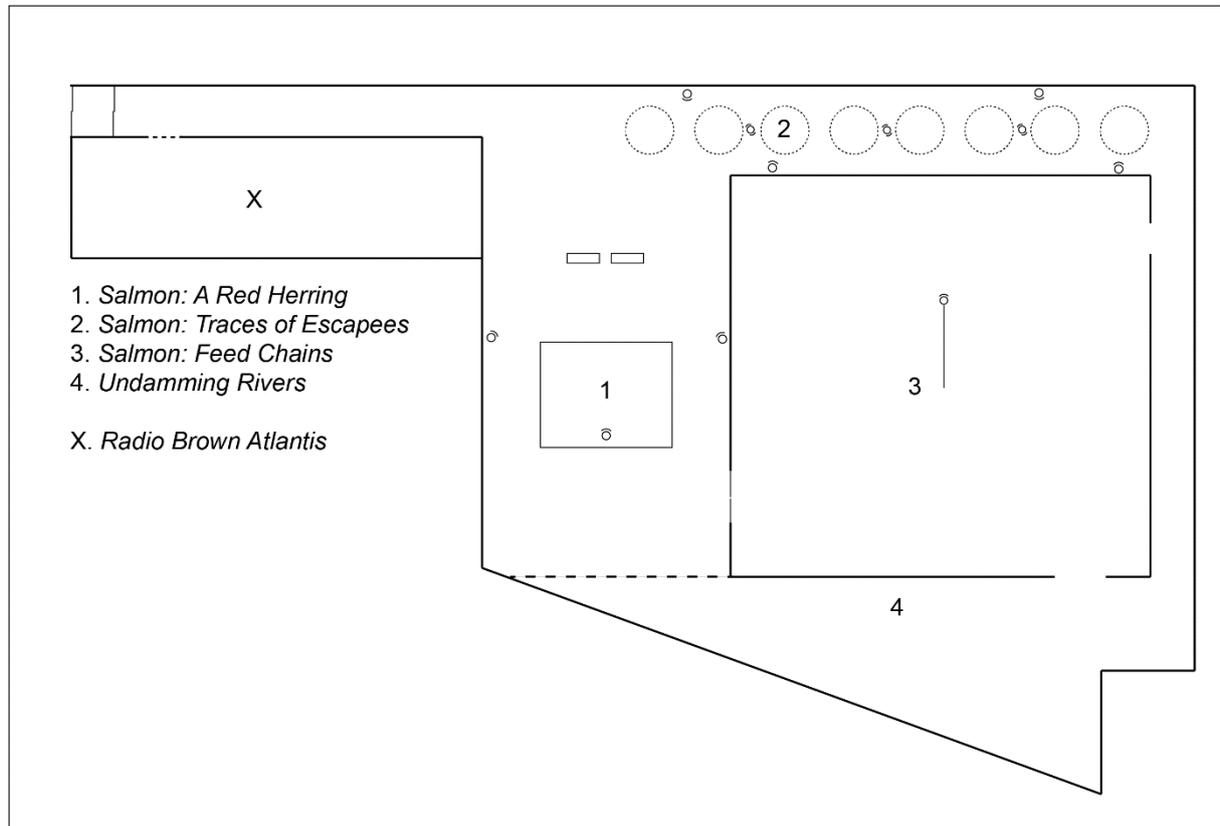


Figure 2. Map of the art space at Bonniers Konsthall indicating location of sound sources, Joel Albinsson, 2022.

Situation 1 – Turning on and turning off: directed movement in salmon space

The first two works in the exhibition, *A Red Herring* and *Traces of Escapees*, are both immersive installations that use sound and light to surround the audience and drive focus inwards. They share a space made up of an open room and a corridor that are unified by way of the absence of external lighting and walls covered in a black fabric (Figure 2). The works are also staggered, one begins as the other one ends, meaning that they cannot be viewed simultaneously. When I enter the exhibition during my observation, *Traces of Escapees* is active and, as I can both see and hear that work, I pass by the mute installation to my right and instead move towards the bright blue circles projected on the floor, taking up position near the mouth of the corridor. Shortly thereafter, the voice stops narrating and the circles begin to

disappear, one by one. As the last one vanishes, a deep sigh or heavy breath is let out and the entire space becomes quiet for a brief moment. Then a new sound, a low rumbling, emerges from behind me.

When I turn around, *A Red Herring* lights up. Drawn to this newly activated installation, I walk back into the room I passed through earlier and sit down on one of the benches. From here on out, I become immersed in the work, it envelops me with sound. Sometimes there are atmospheric murmurs, sometimes representations of known sounds like the buzzing of fluorescent lights or someone scratching the hairy body of a pig, and almost constantly there is a voice speaking. The colour and intensity of the lights are in constant flux, producing a sensation of the surrounding room disappearing. When bright, the installation commands my focus and when dark, the rapid change blinds me. It is as if all that exists is me and this work. This does not last forever, and when it ends it does so gradually. The narration finishes, the surrounding sound goes silent, and the light fades from an intense bright red towards a cool white. Something watery is heard from behind, a light seen in the periphery of my vision. I stand up and turn around. The blue circles begin to reappear on the floor. This time, the work beckons me to walk further into the corridor, carefully avoiding stepping on the projections as I do. I accidentally graze the wall, noticing that it is soft and has a little give. No external sound enters the corridor, it encloses me. The surrounding soundscape and voice describing the processes of fish farming becomes almost intimate. The only reminder of the outside world comes in the shape of the bright daylight pouring in through the glass doors of the sound lock. Once more the circles begin to disappear, a heavy sigh is let out, and the low rumbling re-emerges from a distance. I am too deep in the corridor to see *A Red Herring* begin and, having already experienced it, I move on.

Situation 2 – Walking along: a sonic feed arm

After turning two corners I enter a new space, a large open room, brightly lit, with high ceiling and white walls (Figure 2). It creates an immediate contrast against the preceding corridor. Two other visitors are walking hand in hand in a wide circle matching the speed of the arm suspended from the ceiling. They are following the rotation of the sole sound source in the room. A third person stands by a wall, looking intently towards the arm. I remain standing close to where I entered from. The voice emanating from the rotating speaker is clearly heard, though the volume fluctuates as the angle and distance changes. A narrator talks about salmon feeding

systems and is accompanied by atmospheric sounds like bird calls and the crashing of waves as well as by music that illustrates the narrative. The manner of speech varies. It shifts between prosaic, didactic forms and more poetic, almost musical language.

Having stood still for a while, I decide to join the walking audience members. The audible difference is miniscule. For the brief moments when I can perfectly match the rotation of the arm, the sound is slightly improved. However, since I am not the only walker, I cannot fully control my pace and I constantly need to adjust both speed and arc depending on the movement of the people ahead of me. I intermittently slip in and out of sync with the moving speaker, which intensifies the effect of the variable volume experienced when standing still. Each time I pass by the door where I entered, I can hear snippets of sound coming from *A Red Herring*, and on the opposite side, through a crack in the closed door, pink light seeps in. I both stop and resume walking multiple times, allowing the rotation to place me in different parts of the room. Close to where the light comes through, I notice a soft wordless murmur. Variations in pitch indicate speech, but the content is lost to me. The rotating voice describes the transformation of feed into fish into human flesh one last time. The arm keeps on spinning while emanating aquatic sounds. The machinery whirrs, something beeps, and then it becomes quiet. As the mute metallic arm rotates around the room in silence, the visitors begin to leave.

Situation 3 – Breathing room

Upon hearing the voice from *Traces of Escapees* return, I leave the room where the sonic feed arm spins silently and walk out the door to the exhibition's last part. The difference between this space and the preceding spaces is immediately apparent. It is bright. The entire room is evenly lit, and the long glass wall opposite the entrance lets daylight in from the outside (Figure 2). *Undamming Rivers*, the site-specific artwork in this room, is placed on the wall immediately behind me after entering the room. Made up of framed photographs on a background of white with painted lines that indicate rivers and lakes in dark grey. The artwork is unintrusive and does not detract from the sensation of stepping into an open, bright, and airy space. Beyond this, it is also remarkably silent. In contrast to the previous works, this piece does not emanate sound. While I clearly and intelligibly hear the narration of *Traces of Escapees*, it appears distant and is easy to ignore. It is as if it does not concern me in the present moment. The sound comes from a place and time separate from my own.

I stay in this room for a while, tracing the paths of the water with my eyes, every so often reaching a dam that blocks the course of a river. Upon finding the cut-out opening in each photograph where the flow should be obstructed, I too can keep flowing, following the stream further along. I sit down on the floor, close to the window, and repeat this process a few more times. Every dam does not get the same attention, but I count the pictures: 36 in total, 36 places where the interrupted flow of water has been re-imagined as coursing freely. When I get back up and start moving towards the exit by the point of the triangular room, I see a car passing by on the street outside and realise that I cannot hear it. I observe several more cars drive past, as well as pedestrians walking close by the window visibly talking, without making a sound. Even with a full view of the outside, the art space is separated from the city surrounding it. Following this brief interruption, I finally come to the exit where I lift a heavy black curtain and re-emerge behind *A Red Herring* in the exhibition's first room.

Analysis

The descriptions of the situations show different aspects of how the effects of the sounding works of the exhibition are experienced by the audience as the sound interacts with the artworks and the features of the space. In the following analysis of the observations, the terms *niche* and *attraction* inform how different artworks connect with each other to encourage movement through the art space.⁷⁸ *Envelopment* describes the acoustic space established between audience and sound as the audience is immersed in an artwork.⁷⁹ Finally, the discussion of *silence* introduces the idea of the rhythmic composition of the exhibition.

Niche and attraction

Undamming Rivers makes use of the *rhythmic niche* effect to organise *A Red Herring* and *Traces of Escapees* and to produce a cohesive experience removed of competing sensations. What was initially described as a staggering of works is more precisely understood as niche, an emission of sound at the most favourable moment. Specifically, this is a rhythmic niche since the sound is emitted in accordance with the rhythmic pattern in the situation as to not contend

⁷⁸ The terms niche and attraction originated as sonic effects described in: Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 78–84; 27.

⁷⁹ The term envelopment originated as a sonic effect described in: Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 47.

with other emitted sounds.⁸⁰ On the most general level this is something that is done habitually in day-to-day life. For instance, by waiting for a lull in a conversation before speaking, one has made use of a rhythmic niche. The manner in which this effect is employed in the exhibition, however, is more closely related to the use of niches in musical composition and performance. Within music composition, niches are defined as, “[...] the composer precisely organizes the totality of the work as a series of occurrences while maintaining a balance between event and context.”⁸¹ This is then actualised by the musicians as they navigate niches to create balance between different vocal and instrumental parts. When transposed to *Undamming Rivers* the effect of the niche materialises in the hand-over between the two works. When the blue circles of *Traces of Escapees* disappear and the installation sighs leading to a brief moment of silence that is then interrupted by a low rumbling from elsewhere in the space followed by the emergence of new narration, and when the ambient sounds of *A Red Herring* disappear as the intense light seemingly cools down before blue circles and watery sounds emerge. Both works operate in the same way, gradually receding or intensifying with a short respite in between. Beyond the concrete effect of the works not struggling against each other, the niches also set the stage for a different effect: *attraction*. Attraction describes how an emerging sound draws attention to itself or how it attracts a listener, something that can be accomplished by contrasting against an ambient soundscape.⁸² In the case of the first two parts of *When [Salmon Salmon [Salmon]]*, the fade into pause creates the opportunity for a new emanation to attract. The disappearance of the thing that had until that point commanded the attention of the listener leaves a vacuum for something else to take its place. On a surface level, this merely makes the audience responsive to the newly activated artwork. But it does something else as well, it invites movement.

The attraction does not merely work as a call for attention, but as an attractive force – pulling the audience to its source. When the two discussed works are inactive, they fade into the background. *A Red Herring* is present in the room as a large white diorama filled with animal forms, but it is not lit up. Instead, it is both sonically and visually silent. *Traces of Escapees* is even less visible, only indicated by the row of projectors and speakers suspended from the ceiling and the speakers mounted on the walls. When activated, this changes. Both works make use of dominating soundscapes combined with bright flashing lights or eye-catching

⁸⁰ Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 78–80.

⁸¹ Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 83.

⁸² Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 27.

projections. As these works do not compete but come to life in their respective rhythmic niches, they are the only things that can command attraction for the duration of respective activation.

The exhibition is staged as a four-act play, this is explicitly stated by Bonniers Konsthall in their communication, but the parallel is most prevalent in these first two acts and how they connect to each other.⁸³ One act fades out, marking its end, before the next one commences.⁸⁴ Moreso, the interplay between *A Red Herring* and *Traces of Escapees* makes up a simultaneous expansion and contraction of space. Within scenography, light defines the presentational space. It marks out a focal point and dramatizes the lit area. In doing so it can both contract space, a narrow beam of light fixed on an actor, and expand space, a spotlight following the actor as they move across the stage. Sound is, as Holdar remarks, the audible counterpart to light. It too is unrestricted by physical constraints and can move contrary to established logics.⁸⁵ In the transition between these two parts of *When [Salmon Salmon [Salmon]]*, light and sound combine to cause this effect. At the end of an act, light and sound fade out, gradually contracting the presentational space until there is nothing left but darkness and silence. The rhythmic niche is thus established. Then, they fade in again elsewhere, expanding and relocating the presentational space, attracting the audience. For this to take hold, a second move is necessary. It is not enough for the active presentational space to be relocated; the audience must follow along in this contraction come expansion, and it is ultimately the decisions of the individual audience members that shape the spatiality of the exhibition. To explicate on this, a comparison can be made between the manner in which sound attracts the attention and movement of the listener in *A Red Herring* and *Traces of Escapees* and LaBelle's discussion of crossing signals in *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life* (2010). The crossing signal orchestrates pedestrian movement in the city, warning about danger and placing a pattern on traffic flows by way of a noise that pierces through the urban atmosphere.⁸⁶ The ordering effect of this system is that, "the signal acts to coerce the body into rhythmic alignment".⁸⁷ They work to dictate how one should act to fit into the determined flows and rhythms of the city by calling attention to themselves and subsequently steering movement. However, these crossing signals can only dictate how one should move, they cannot force compliance.

⁸³ "Cooking Sections/Undamming Rivers," Bonniers Konsthall, accessed November 24, 2022, <https://bonnierskonsthall.se/en/utstallning/cooking-sections-undamming-rivers/>.

⁸⁴ Holdar, "Scenography in Action," 46–47.

⁸⁵ Holdar, "Scenography in Action," 48–49.

⁸⁶ Brandon LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life* (New York: Continuum, 2010), 94–96.

⁸⁷ LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, 96.

The two acts share a physical space, but they are spread out in this space, only connecting where the large open room narrows into a corridor (Figure 2). As such, the audience needs to move to be able to experience both works. When *A Red Herring* begins to sound in the breathing room after *Traces of Escapees*, and vice versa, the attractive pull directs such movement, dictating how the audience should approach the space as it provides a pathway between the works. Thus, the rhythmic niche goes beyond solving the problem of two sounding works having to compete for attention in the same room, as it enables attraction that also provides the choreography of the space. Attraction is not, however, unlimited. It only works insofar as it provides sufficient contrast against the background or stands out enough to hold a listener's attention. Once one has moved far enough into *Traces of Escapees*' corridor, the beginning of *A Red Herring* is noticeable, but no longer compelling. With the added physical distance, the acoustics of the cloth covered corridor and the absence of visible light, *A Red Herring* is relegated to the background and is only passively perceived.⁸⁸

An illusion of sound

The second described situation in *Undamming Rivers* is also concerned with the movement of an audience. Here, not as a way of choreographing the exhibition, but as a part in the performance of an artwork. The physical object in *Feed Chains*, a large rotating arm, recalls the visuals of industrial feed arms present in *Traces of Escapees* where throngs of fish swim around in circles within their nets chasing their food. It is also a sound source in constant motion. On both levels, this indicates that one should follow the arm as the salmon does. In a sense, the audience is encouraged to become salmon, mirroring the final lines of the work's narration that describes how feed turns into fish which turns into human flesh. The sonic conditions of the room present a different reality. As the volume of the sound emitted from the rotating speaker is loud enough that it can be heard from any point in the room, it does not draw the listener towards it. Nothing the listener does will have a marked impact on the experience of the sound. Even a perfectly synchronised walk-along, which is difficult to sustain, only marginally alters the sound quality of the piece.

⁸⁸ Hellström, "Noise Design," 72–78.

The spatial composition of *Feed Chains* resembles another well-known sound work, Janet Cardiff's *Forty-Part Motet (A reworking of "Spem in Alium" by Thomas Tallis 1573)* (2001). *Forty-Part Motet* is made up of 40 separate recordings, one for every part in Tallis' piece. These recordings have been assigned to individual speakers placed at average human height and distributed in groups of five in a large oval, corresponding to the composition's eight choirs. When installed in contemporary art museums the work is typically placed in a separate room with white walls and natural light. Except for the speakers and two benches the room is empty in accordance with the artist's instructions.⁸⁹ In this configuration, the speakers become representations of the recorded singers, and more akin to sculpture than simply functional technology. As art historian Anna Lundström notes, the first performance of Tallis' composition took place in an octagonal banquet hall with four balconies, where the eight choirs could be placed. The audience in turn were located in the middle of the room, and the polyphonic work could thus move from choir to choir and surround the listeners.⁹⁰ Cardiff's reworking recreates this original listening situation, the benches in the centre of the room indicate a possible place for the audience to be surrounded by singing. Likewise, *Feed Chains* is comprised of a representational sounding object, the speaker mounted on a rotating feed arm, and is otherwise placed in an open and unobstructed space. In neither of these cases is there a single optimal position for the audience: *Feed Chains*' arm is in constant rotation, the object itself moving around the room; and while the benches in *Forty-Part Motet* provide a visual focus or first position for a visitor, the changing experience of the work on one's way to the middle of the room point towards other possible positions.⁹¹

Moving around within the space of *Forty-Part Motet* provides a variety of different experiences. If one chooses to remain stationary on one of the benches for the duration of the work, it is possible to become immersed in the convergence of forty voices. Standing close to an individual speaker instead allows one to engage in a more intimate relationship with that particular voice. Beyond these static positions, an audience member in motion can experience multiple aspects of the work, moving from the edge of the room to the middle or walking in circles alongside the speakers. The experience of the work is dependent on one's interaction with it, the many dimensions of *Forty-Part Motet* can be discovered by way of movement as the listener follows

⁸⁹ Lundström, "Former av politik," 133–134; Linnea Semmerling, "Explorative Listening: A Phenomenological Approach to Sounding Artworks at Museums," *Leonardo Electronic Almanac* 22, no. 3 (December 2018).

⁹⁰ Lundström, "Former av politik," 125.

⁹¹ Semmerling, "Explorative Listening."

their ear and their curiosity. Historian of technology Linnea Semmerling calls this explorative listening, a manner of listening that allows for the development of a partial embodied understanding that can never be complete but where each point of experience instead leads to new discoveries.⁹² The repeated discoveries of new auditory dimensions that draw attention and provide the listeners with the incentive to move about is an expression of attraction, moving the audience with the emergence of difference. As described above, and in contrast with *Forty-Part Motet*, *Feed Chains* presents one auditory situation that is mostly unaffected by the movements of the listener. Neither following the rotation of the arm for the duration of the piece nor any other manner of moving about the room significantly alters the sonic experience. Matching the pace of the rotation only marginally improves the sound quality as the relation to the moving speaker stabilises. Besides, any difference in volume as the speaker moves further away from and closer to a static listener in the path of the rotation is negligible. Thus, the incentive to perform the work does not come from the perception of sound. While it, as with *Forty-Part Motet*, is possible for the audience to freely move around, either following the cue of the rotating arm or in any other manner, doing so does not alter the sonic experience of the work.

In contrast with the interplay between *A Red Herring* and *Traces of Escapees*, no niche is established. Since the sound is a near constant regardless of how a listener moves about the room, there is no occurrence within *Feed Chains* that allows for a more favourable sound emission than any other. To clarify this, it is fruitful to consider the possibilities of a niche within the experience of this work. While a rhythmic niche as discussed above cannot readily be ascribed to this situation, one can imagine the possibility of an intensity niche – that is a moment where the difference in volume between the ambient sound and the emitted sound enable optimal communication.⁹³ If then, the audience could perceive a marked difference in the volume of the narration depending on their position relative to the rotating arm, this could enact attraction akin to how the sudden emergence and consequent disappearance of a siren in the soundscape of the city instantly commands attention.⁹⁴ As there is no niche, what happens in *Feed Chains* when the audience physically follows the revolutions of the rotating feed arm might be better understood as a stage in an *autopoietic feedback loop*, a term used by Fischer-Lichte to describe the co-production of a performance between performer and spectator wherein

⁹² Semmerling, “Explorative Listening.”

⁹³ Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 78–79.

⁹⁴ Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 27.

the action of the performer informs the reaction of the spectator, and so on and so forth, thus creating the artwork.⁹⁵

Fischer-Lichte writes specifically within the context of performance and stresses the bodily co-presence of actor and spectator which is a precondition for the direct interaction between these two groups. Still, a comparable situation arises as the spectator moves through the exhibition *Undamming Rivers*.⁹⁶ The first two acts of *When [Salmon Salmon [Salmon]]*, are constituted as the audience moves in accordance with the actions of the works, resulting in the art event, which while pre-set is wholly dependent on the reactions of the audience. In this interplay, the audience also encounters the figure and function of the feed arm as a rotating object chased by salmon. The third act then presents the audience with the same figure, but this time as a physical object. From the previous interactions, it is not a far leap to choose to follow along. Still, the situation also presents the audience with the opportunity not to act, to remain stationary and let the arm revolve on its own, diminishing the didactic potential present in the contemporaneous symbolic transformation of the spectator into salmon and the description of feeding systems. Within this feedback loop the performer, here understood as the artwork, does not have control over the situation, relying instead on the audience to respond and fulfil the work.⁹⁷ The guidance the audience is given by the artworks is mainly visual, having been introduced to the object via the projections in *Traces of Escapees* and seeing the revolving arm as a physical presence in front of them. The speaker placed on the end of the arm should be considered as yet another visual indicator to respond to, one that both suggests a sonic effect and generates the expectation that there will be a difference in sound related to the spatiality of the piece. In actuality, this speaker is only the metaphorical delivery system for fish feed in the form of narration. But still, the suggestion that the sonic experience will change combined with visual familiarisation with the feed arm is enough to make the audience attempt the walk-along.

Envelopment

The analysis of the case's first situation has thus far focused on the start and end point of the two artworks or the interchange between them. Wherein a niche is established within one work, which enables the other work to attract, thus driving movement through the exhibition space.

⁹⁵ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 163.

⁹⁶ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 38.

⁹⁷ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 163–164.

Importantly, the niche must be defined in relation to something, an underlying soundscape which momentarily offers favourable conditions for a sonic emission to occur.⁹⁸ To better understand how this soundscape is experienced within *A Red Herring* and *Traces of Escapees* the term *envelopment* is vital. Envelopment denotes the feeling of being wholly surrounded by a body of sound. In contrast to the related concept of ubiquity, the experience of envelopment is not concerned with a difficulty in locating the sound source and is as such devoid of the elements of anxiety that are inherent in the experience of ubiquity and is instead characterised by bewitchment.⁹⁹

Within *A Red Herring* the envelopment is almost instantaneous, from the moment the work begins, the audience is surrounded by loud atmospheric sounds and a voice that moves around the room. This is paired with bright lights that illuminate the diorama and fluctuate in hue and intensity. At its peak, there are moments when it feels as if the surrounding room falls away, when all senses are occupied by a dominating soundscape and intense pulsating lights that make it impossible to perceive anything beyond the installation. When it ends, it does so slowly, abating gradually as the surrounding sound fades away and the light cools until it is still again. *Traces of Escapees* does not operate with the same intensity as *A Red Herring*, but it too envelops its audience. The enclosed space of the dark corridor is filled with both an atmospheric soundscape which relates the auditory to the oceanic images projected on the floor, and the voice of a narrator explaining the industrial process. The envelopment of *Traces of Escapees* is intimate rather than intense, predicated on the proximity of sound and listener contained in a small, delineated space.

The experience of envelopment within these two works is not simply that of being surrounded by sound. Rather, it is the experience of being within the sound. It is the production of an acoustic space that is created in the meeting between listener and sound, a space that is unsettled, ephemeral and dynamic. This occurrence is a co-production, a move from both the side of the sounding work and from that of the listener. Beginning with the sound, as it envelops the body by emanating from all directions, the sound touches the listener and enters into them. Each sonic touch constitutes an intense complex of sensations that aligns the body with the temporality of the sonic experience. Thus, the listener is enfolded by sound. This sensation

⁹⁸ Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 78–80.

⁹⁹ Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 47; 131–132.

prompts a response, a move towards the sound, an unfolding of the body into the experience. As LaBelle states, this reaction can be to draw oneself into the sound or to lean away from it. Regardless, in the moment of envelopment, one needs to respond.¹⁰⁰

What emerges from this co-production of acoustic space is, once again, an autopoietic feedback loop. As the sounds emanating from *A Red Herring* or *Traces of Escapees* enfold the listener, moving towards them, and as the listener unfolds towards the sound, the artwork and the audience produce the acoustic space together. This co-production, action and reaction from sound and listener, constitute the event.¹⁰¹ As stated, the co-produced acoustic space is dynamic, it shifts as the volume, direction and character of the sound does. Every separate emanation reproduces the enfolding and unfolding and thus redefines the spatial construction.¹⁰² To use the example of *A Red Herring*, in one instance a low surrounding murmur combined with the sound of a hand scratching against a hairy body distinctly coming from the left compose the enveloping sound while in the next moment it is made up of a voice repeating a phrase, moving around the listener with each repetition. The spatiality constructed between the listener and the sounding work is different each time. But, in every instance, the acoustic space constitutes an embodied connection that positions the listener within the temporality of the sonic experience.

As the audience becomes enveloped by the artwork, the presentational space contracts. What occurs outside this area becomes unimportant while the significance of what takes place inside the demarcated area is increased. Holdar states that, “Contraction appears to be a way of concentrating intensity onto specific actions and in terms of dramaturgic value the focus here lies on enhanced details rather than on dramatic equality.”¹⁰³ The spatial contraction thus marks different levels of significance between what is included and excluded from the reduced space. For instance, in the experience of the active *Traces of Escapees*, the diorama that is part of *A Red Herring* is still visible until one moves further into the corridor. However, this diorama is not included in the contracted space caused by the envelopment of *Traces of Escapees* where voice and atmosphere are situated in close proximity with the audience. As such it becomes experientially inactive, a mute object that, while present, does not act on the situation.

¹⁰⁰ Brandon LaBelle, “Restless Acoustics, Emergent Publics,” in *The Routledge Companion to Sounding Art*, eds., Marcel Cobussen, Vincent Meelberg and Barry Truax, (New York: Routledge, 2016), 275–277.

¹⁰¹ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 163–164.

¹⁰² LaBelle, “Restless Acoustics, Emergent Publics,” 284.

¹⁰³ Holdar, “Scenography in Action,” 38-39.

Silence

While the artworks encountered in the exhibition's first two situations are all sounding works, the effects of which have been discussed above, the work *Undamming Rivers*, described in the third situation is different. It does not emanate sound. Instead, it exists as a silent object in a room from which the exhibition's other works can be heard. These sounds are however experienced as distant and disconnected from the present situation and are thus tuned out.¹⁰⁴ The space is not actually silent. Beyond what can be heard leaking in from the other rooms if one focuses, the hard and flat surfaces reflect sound, allowing any noises made to be amplified. Further still, as John Cage's experiments with anechoic chambers in the 1950s showed, there are sounds in even the most silent environments; in these rooms that are designed to not reflect any sound and to prevent outside sound to enter, one can still hear the inner workings of one's own body.¹⁰⁵ Still, the room housing the work *Undamming Rivers* is perceived as silent within the context of the exhibition, and in contrast against the sonically loaded works one has to move through to reach this last artwork.

The position of this comparatively silent room at the end of the sequence of sounding installations can be understood as a spatial extension of the rhythm of the exhibition. Three sensorially demanding works involving sound, light and the interpellation to perform are followed by a fourth piece that includes none of this. A work that in comparison seems simple and static, only made up of photographs on a wall and the wall behind them. This room provides the audience a respite, somewhere to breathe and decompress. In his seminal book *The Soundscape* (1994), the composer R. Murray Schafer uses the figure of historic sanctuaries of stillness in the woods, the mountains or at sea where those weary of the sound around them could go to recuperate.¹⁰⁶ He goes on to argue for the importance of what he calls *positive silence* in improving everyday soundscapes. These silences, enable a more alert form of hearing and provide the backdrop for our actions and the comprehension of them.¹⁰⁷ Or, as LaBelle puts it, "[Acoustic design] would include conserving important 'soundmarks' while enabling a deeper appreciation for 'positive silences'—silences that may work to recalibrate the

¹⁰⁴ This is an expression of the asyndeton effect wherein sounds are deleted from perception or memory, Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 26.

¹⁰⁵ Kelly, *Gallery Sound*, 28–31.

¹⁰⁶ Schafer, *The Soundscape*, 253–254.

¹⁰⁷ Schafer, *The Soundscape*, 258–259.

soundscape and our place within it.”¹⁰⁸ Just as the intense flashing lights present in *A Red Herring* put strain on the eyes of the spectator, intense and prolonged sounds can be taxing on the listener. This fact is frequently brought into consideration by Kelly in *Gallery Sound* as he discusses the presence of demanding sounding works in various art spaces. Often, these works are limited in some way to reduce the degree of disturbance or discomfort they cause. These limitations can include restrictions on the times of day an artwork can be active, options for hosts to decide when a piece can be activated or to quickly lower the volume, or the opportunity to completely silence a work when no visitors are present.¹⁰⁹ All these solutions are reactive, enacted to prevent prolonged discomfort or immediate harm to employees and visitors alike. The silence in *Undamming Rivers* however operates on a different level, as a built-in function of the rhythm of the exhibition rather than as a solution to a perceived problem.

According to LaBelle, “Rhythm is not only the beating of time within music, but equally a ‘compositional’ question”.¹¹⁰ This means that rhythm is also an articulation of temporal spacing and of a rhythmic moving through the world. It works to frame space and time, pointing towards experiences of rest and to capacities for moving through space. It establishes an order and the possibility for friction. Rhythm also carries with it the possibility to anchor a sense of direction in a temporal frame.¹¹¹ Listening and sound, with the capacity to bind together the temporal and the spatial, thus determines how one moves and engages with a given space. The space is provided with alternative foci: places to stop or pass through as one encounters a repetition, a pause, an exclamation, or any other sonic figure. Space is thus made temporal, activated by the movement through it.¹¹² The arrangement of the exhibition *Undamming Rivers* constitutes such a rhythm, a structuring of time and space that nudges the audience into a set of movements. Having been steered through the three acts of *When [Salmon Salmon [Salmon]]* as they rhythmically activate, de-activate and attract movement, one enters a last room (Figure 2). A room, separated from the rest of the exhibition space with walls and curtains, in which nothing is sounding and all that can be heard feels distant. The entirety of the exhibition is thus rhythmically organised as a gradual movement towards rest.¹¹³ The last room, this final part of

¹⁰⁸ LaBelle, *Acoustic Justice*, 52.

¹⁰⁹ Kelly, *Gallery Sound*, 79–85.

¹¹⁰ LaBelle, *Acoustic Justice*, 41.

¹¹¹ LaBelle, *Acoustic Justice*, 46–47.

¹¹² LaBelle, *Background Noise*, 162–164.

¹¹³ LaBelle, *Acoustic Justice*, 46–47.

the rhythmic, spatio-temporal arrangement of the exhibition enables a different kind of listening, like the sanctuaries described by Schafer.¹¹⁴

To further understand the sanctuary enacted by the work *Undamming Rivers*, it is valuable to examine a similar space although of a different scale that was enacted when scenographer Nathalie Harb created *Silent Room* (2017). Harb's installation was an acoustic refuge installed in Beirut, a city where the average environmental noise levels are exceedingly high. Contrary to what its title suggests, the interior of *Silent Room* was not actually silent, instead it was acoustically treated to reduce ambient sound levels while containing a sound installation made up of recordings of urban sounds at the quietest time of night. The experience of being in the room did not erase the sounds of the city, but instead reduced them to a more comfortable level as if heard from a distance. *Silent Room* was conceived as a possible public utility, a place where people in underprivileged communities and those working outside can find an escape from the sensorial stress of the city. While the severity of the sound in urban Beirut is far greater than the sound in the exhibition *Undamming Rivers* – sustained exposure to the average measured noise levels in Beirut can cause loss of hearing, they both exert a pressure on the listener.¹¹⁵ For this to occur, it is not necessary for the sound to be particularly loud, it only needs to be exclusive. It must demand a listening to itself while removing the possibility for listening to sounds outside of itself, and that is precisely what happens in the first two acts of *When [Salmon Salmon [Salmon]]*.¹¹⁶ The listening that is possible within *Silent Room* and in the room containing the work *Undamming Rivers* alike is characterised by relaxation and recuperation, in contrast with the surrounding city and aurally demanding artworks respectively. When no longer in direct contact with the sounds of *When [Salmon Salmon [Salmon]]*, as they have receded into the distance, it becomes possible to re-attune the senses and to listen again.¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Schafer, *The Soundscape*, 253–254.

¹¹⁵ Ouzounian, *Stereophonica*, 157-159.

¹¹⁶ Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence*, 43–44.

¹¹⁷ LaBelle, *Acoustic Justice*, 120.

Discussion

The aim of the thesis is to examine the effects of leaking sounding works within art spaces with an emphasis on the sensorial experience of sound. As well as to further the understanding of how these considerations can be operationalised curatorially. This aim has been concretised in three research questions:

1. How is sound operating to produce experiential effects in the respective exhibition situations?
2. What are the transformative potentials of sounding works in art spaces?
3. What are the curatorial implications of these effects?

In this concluding discussion, the results of the individual chapters are recapitulated to answer these questions.

The analysis of each case in the preceding chapters has been organised into discussions around specific concepts that capture the primary effects of sound within each exhibition. These terms are used as analytical tools that both make it possible to describe sonic experiences and to discuss how these effects operate transformatively on the art event. As such, the analytical application of these terms also answers the first two research questions. To clarify this, the experiential effects described by these concepts as well as the transformative potentials they express are restated here.

IncurSION is discussed in relation to the first situation of the first chapter. A sonic incurSION is experienced as a temporal interruption of experience through the emergence of an unexpected sound. This also prompts a change in behaviour as the audience must respond to the altered circumstances of the situation. The incurSION acts transformatively on both the temporality and spatiality of the art event. As a sudden interruption, it punctuates the present and establishes a more direct relationship between the audience and what is perceived. Since the incurSION emerges from outside the established space of the viewing situation, it also constitutes a perforation or forceful expansion of that space. The incurSION thus makes it possible for unseen spaces to be included in the contemporaneous production and reception of the art event.

Intrusion is identified within the second and third situations of the thesis' first chapter. The sonic intrusion is the spatial counterpart to the temporal incursion as it describes how the emergence of a sound within a protected space violates that space. This is experienced as the disruption of a stable condition as outside sounds leak in. Through this disruption, an entirely new place is produced. A place which is made up of the compound of leaking sound and the visuals that the sound intrudes upon. The art event is thus constituted by the combination of all sensory experiences acting on each other.

Chance, which is discussed in relation to all of the situations in the first chapter, does not describe a direct sonic experience. Instead, it is understood as both a consequence of the experience of sound and as a condition for transformation. The interactions between independently moving elements that produced effects of both incursion and intrusion discussed above is an expression of chance. This reveals that the art event occurs in a singular moment when all aspects of the experience coalesce, and that any degree of difference compared to that particular situation has the capacity to drastically alter the outcome. Thus, the event, and the definition of space it enacts can be understood as volatile constructs that exist in a constant state of transformation.

Niche and *attraction*. These two terms are combined since the former is the condition for the latter to occur. They are discussed in the analysis of the second chapter's first and second situation. Niche refers to the emission of sound at the most favourable moment for its emergence. The niche can be established through any acoustic parameter such as intensity, pitch or timbre. The analysed situation specifically relates to the rhythmic niche, in which a sound is emitted in accordance with a rhythmic pattern wherein it does not compete with any other sound. Attraction describes how an emerging sound draws attention towards itself as it contrasts against the ambient soundscape, which in the case of the rhythmic niche is silent. The interplay between different artworks presented here enacts the transformation through a simultaneous contraction and expansion of space and the suggestion of a pathway between the works.

Envelopment describes the experience of being wholly surrounded by sound to the extent that sound and body seem to exist within each other. This concept is discussed in relation to the first situation of the second chapter. The envelopment is coproduced by sound and listener, as the sound moves towards the listener to enfold them and align them with the sonic experience, they

in turn respond by unfolding towards the sound. Within the envelopment, a contracted acoustic space is established. This both heightens the intensity of the enveloped experience and isolates it against any outside occurrences.

Silence is understood as a relative feature rather than an absolute one. It denotes the experience of something as silent in relation to a larger soundscape which makes it possible to find respite and to realign one's hearing. This is discussed in the analysis of the third situation in the second chapter of the thesis. Silence operates within the rhythmic composition of the exhibition wherein it provides a contrast against sonically demanding artworks. Thus, the direction of movement through the exhibition is one towards rest and silence. The silent room enacts a sanctuary which allows the sounding works to recede into the distance.

Having shown how sound is operating to produce experiential effects in the exhibition situations and what the transformative potentials of sounding works in art spaces are, this leads to the third research question to be answered: what are the curatorial implications of these effects? Beyond their utility as analytical concepts, the set of terms proposed by this study also provides a language or framework for curating with sounding artworks. The discussion of this language is divided into three primary functions that imbue conditions on the production of the event: definition of space, movement through space, and layering of experience. These are not conceived as a definitive guide, but rather as thinking tools to provide an awareness of the possibilities and consequences of leaking sound in contemporary art spaces.

Definition of space

An incursion constitutes a sudden disruption in the perception of space, which expands it beyond what is immediately present and makes the audience aware of things in unseen places that can interact with the situation they find themselves in. Importantly, this experience signals that the experience of art, the event, is not one of isolated contemplation but one of interactions and multiplicity. The screening room in *Mother Courage* initially appears as a room like the auditorium of a theatre, with a clear separation between the audience space and the presentational space: there are chairs for the audience to sit on while watching the films that are projected on the wall. As soon as *President of Crimea* begins to sound, this changes. The established space is sonically perforated and thus instantly expanded to include the origin of this sound, a space which can only be audibly perceived but still has the capacity to act on the

situation.¹¹⁸ This reveals to the audience that space is not static and that it can expand to include expressions that are located outside of their immediate vicinity. In the experience of incursion, the illusion of the art space as isolating is shattered. This relates to a key feature of sound identified by Connor in “Ears Have Walls: On Hearing Art”. Namely that sound has a propensity towards spreading far beyond its initial placement, and in doing so, becoming part of other spaces.¹¹⁹ These effects reveal a possibility in exhibition making, in that rooms that are physically separated can be experientially connected by a sudden or sustained spatial expansion which allows a sounding work to be present in the exhibition in a greater capacity than the initial placement of the artwork would suggest.

It is also possible for sound to do the opposite, to contract rather than to expand space. The envelopment of the audience as sound enfolds and listener unfolds constitutes such a contraction as everything that occurs outside the demarcated space becomes insignificant to the experience. Simultaneously, what occurs within the space is intensified by comparison.¹²⁰ This also has the effect of heightening the intensity of the experience. The listener is located within sound, which has the capacity to align them with the temporality of the sonic experience.¹²¹ In stark contrast to what has been discussed so far, the enveloped listener is isolated from other artworks and from other audience members. However, this is not a detached isolation. Rather it is a spatiality established in the immediate connection with the sounding work. Additionally, the isolation of the event is only experienced within the envelopment. The sounding work still leaks. It can simultaneously interact with other situations and contribute to spatial expansions elsewhere while being part of a contraction of space.

The silent space is established in relation to sound. Perceived as distinct and separated through a contrast in intensity. The leaking in of sounds that can be tuned out help to cement this effect. This is a perception of distance and of difference. The silent space is different than the loud, perhaps even noisy spaces. Schafer’s conception of the sanctuary is helpful in the understanding of the relation between sound and silence. Sanctuaries are places where someone who is weary of sound can go to rest, like the woods, mountains, or the sea.¹²² These environments are of

¹¹⁸ Holdar, “Scenography in Action,” 82–83.

¹¹⁹ Connor, “Ears Have Walls: On Hearing Art,” 129–130.

¹²⁰ Holdar, “Scenography in Action,” 38–39.

¹²¹ LaBelle, “Restless Acoustics, Emergent Publics,” 284.

¹²² Schafer, *The Soundscape*, 253–254.

course not silent, Schafer himself elaborates on the diverse sonic expression of the sea which he regards as the original soundscape.¹²³ Instead, the perception of such places as silent is dependent on a difference in the intensity between their soundscapes and that of the city. The identification of the last room of *Undamming Rivers* as a sanctuary is likewise predicated on the intensity of the sounds encountered in the preceding rooms. These sounds can still be heard, but here, they are perceived as distant and quiet, as not concerning the present moment. This silence by way of sonic contrasts enables a separation of space without isolation.

As the introduction of chance shows, the spatial definitions discussed above are inherently unstable. Sound is, as LaBelle states, a spatial phenomenon, but it is also temporal. It is perceived in time, and it changes in time.¹²⁴ Chance occurrences have the capacity to renegotiate established spatial constructs, instantly reshaping the perception of space. Returning once more to the interaction between *Russelltribunalen* and *President of Crimea*, the sudden spatial expansion caused by the incursion of the tolling bell constitutes such a chance occurrence. Since there is no guarantee that the bell will ring at any point in time, the perforation and re-definition of presentational space that characterised the analysed situation is only one possibility. It would also have been possible for no incursion to occur at all, which then would have left the perception of a divided space intact. Chance reveals a major difference between the two examined exhibitions: *Mother Courage* is replete with chance occurrences, whereas *Undamming Rivers* is not. This means that it is possible to limit the unexpected by controlling the leakage of sound using acoustic techniques or by carefully allotting time to different artworks, like a clockwork machination, where each cog interlocks perfectly with the next. Even so, incidental sounds such as those produced by the audience which have not been discussed within this thesis, are always a feature within the art space. An anechoic chamber designed to reduce the reflection of sound and to prevent external sounds to enter is only silent until someone makes a sound.¹²⁵ This means that the boundaries of even the most rigidly defined presentational spaces can be dissolved, if not by the unexpected interaction of sounding works, then by the unexpected sounds made by the audience.¹²⁶

¹²³ Schafer, *The Soundscape*, 15–18.

¹²⁴ LaBelle, *Background Noise*, xi–xiii.

¹²⁵ Kelly, *Gallery Sound*, 30.

¹²⁶ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 123–125.

Movement through space

The capacity of sound to incite movement through space or to have a choreographing function on the exhibition is derived from contrast. This can most prominently be seen in the discussion of niche and attraction as they relate to the works *A Red Herring* and *Traces of Escapees* in the exhibition *Undamming Rivers*. In that situation, the gradual conclusion of *A Red Herring* creates an optimal moment for an emanation of sound to come from elsewhere and to attract attention. This niche is filled by *Traces of Escapees* as it activates and begins to sound. In the same fashion, as *Traces of Escapees* reaches its conclusion, another gap is created and filled with the sounds of *A Red Herring*. The emerging sounds are also accompanied by light, seen first through peripheral vision and then fully as one turns to face the source of emanation. In both cases, the niche presents an opportunity for the other work to attract, to fill the void and to grasp the attention of the audience without competition. When these new emanations are made against a near silent background within the niche, they, like traffic signals in urban spaces, call out to the audience to conform to the rhythm of the exhibition and follow the pathway from one work to the next.¹²⁷

The incursion discussed in the first chapter of the thesis ostensibly bears many similarities to the complex of niche and attraction. The sudden bell toll immediately grabs the attention of the audience when it emerges. Although there is no lull in the film which could constitute a rhythmic niche of the sort that is present in *A Red Herring* and *Traces of Escapees*, niches can play on any defining acoustic parameter.¹²⁸ This is significant since both the pitch and timbre of the bell are different from the sonic background of the film, and the emergence of the sound takes place in a niche built on those qualities. Still, in that situation, no movement was incited from one room to another or from one artwork to the next. The incursion of *President of Crimea* simply acted on the experience of *Russelltribunalen*. To reintroduce the figure of the traffic signal, it is not only the signal's capacity to pierce through the urban soundscape and grasp the attention of a listener that makes them conform to the rhythm of the city. The sound of the traffic signal is accompanied by the visual traffic light, a road to cross, and a firm place in the conventions of the navigation of urban space. Unlike the interchange between *A Red Herring* and *Traces of Escapees*, the film does not end as the bell begins to ring. As such, the emerging sound is not the only thing that commands attention. In addition, *President of Crimea* is not

¹²⁷ LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, 95–96.

¹²⁸ Augoyard and Torgue, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 78–79.

visible from the screening room, which would require the audience to search for the sound source, nor does *Mother Courage* possess a clear linear progression from one artwork to the next.

In the second chapter of the thesis, silence is discussed as a function of the rhythm of the exhibition. This is understood as a compositional question regarding the intensities of different sounding works within the exhibition and the contrast between them. Rhythm is seen as a spatio-temporal structure placed on the exhibition, which steers movement through it and allows the audience to seek out various intensities of experience. In the case of the exhibition *Undamming Rivers* there is a gradual move from initial high levels of intensity towards a place of rest. This perspective on the relation between sound and movement through space operates on a different level than that of niche and attraction, as an overarching rhythmic structure of the exhibition rather than as a direct compulsion to move from one place to the next. This works on the scale of suggestion, as a rhythmic flow where contrasts between sound and silence makes it possible to experience resolution, to find reprieve after having experienced the demands of a continuum of intensely sounding works.¹²⁹

This discussion shows that the concrete capacity of sounding works to guide an audience through the art space, or the choreographing function of sound is something to be considered in the curation of exhibitions with sounding works. However, the efficacy of this is decidedly context dependent. The terms of niche and attraction are useful in marking the fundamental requirements for this to take place, but it does not guarantee that anyone will move anywhere at all. The audience needs to understand that there is a progression. And even when it is clear that the emergence of a new sound suggests that one should follow it, it is of course possible for someone to act against this impulse and move counter to any curatorial intention. Thus, the complex of niche and attraction to instruct movement through the exhibition can only be regarded as a guide or suggestion rather than as a definitive mode of directing the audience.

Layering of experience

Beyond the spatial considerations discussed above, the leakiness of sound has a strong effect on the meanings that can arise in the simultaneous production and reception of the event.

¹²⁹ LaBelle, *Acoustic Territories*, 48.

Connor states that, “Sound is permeable. A world of sound is a world grasped as irreducibly and undecomposably compound.”¹³⁰ This goes further than the composite which is merely a setting of entire things against each other. Instead, the compound is the complete mixing of different entities.¹³¹ As such it is of interest to reflect on the ways in which sounding works can interact with other artworks and what can arise in those meetings.

This capacity of sound is most prominently shown in the analysis in the first chapter of the thesis with the use of the concepts of incursion and intrusion. In those situations, sound that comes from outside the physical space of the audience, meld with what is present in the room which completely shapes the experience of the event. The first example of this is what was discussed in the first situation of the thesis’ first chapter. Here, the video work *Russelltribunalen* comes in contact with the ringing of a bell from *President of Crimea*. The film documents the titular war crime tribunal held in Stockholm in 1967. The tribunal proceedings are accompanied by two temporal layers of sound. There is both the film-maker’s narration of the film recorded decades later and the immediate sounds of the event. This state is quickly interrupted by the emergence of the sound of the bell which pierces through the situation without overpowering it. With its presence, the sound brings attention to the immediate situation and evokes a more temporal connection to what is perceived which negates any historical distance in favour of the present situation.¹³² Each tolling of the bell punctuates the narrative of the film, bringing the events of the tribunal in time with the audience. The conditions for these two separate artworks to mean something change as they meld together. In the moment of reception, they are constituents in one event.

Like the incursion discussed above, intrusions also constitute a layering of experiences, as exemplified by the interaction between the film *Farbtest, Die Rote Fahne II* and the adjacent installation *Big Water*. The film is silent and depicts parallel views of people carrying a red flag, running along the streets of two different cities. The silence of the film means that the sounds of *Big Water*, the crashing of waves, submarine resonances and the playing of flutes, also becomes the soundscape of *Farbtest, Die Rote Fahne II*. When these two works mix, and oceanic sounds are set upon urban streets, the place presented in the film is disrupted and

¹³⁰ Connor, “Ears Have Walls: On Hearing Art,” 132.

¹³¹ Connor, “Ears Have Walls: On Hearing Art,” 132.

¹³² LaBelle, *Acoustic Justice*, 79.

replaced with an entirely new place.¹³³ The running figures are disconnected from their familiar surroundings and submerged under water, and any political potential inherent in the red flags moving towards seats of local government is subordinated to this state of being.

Both of these effects, incursion and intrusion, comprise a layering of one artwork onto another or a mixing of multiple works, which has consequences for how the works are received. This can, as with the first example, take the shape of an intensification of the experience. Wherein aspects present in both works amplify each other. Here, the sharp ringing of a bell and the bellringer gradually tiring out reverberated with the events described in the film and the growing weariness as the evidence of those events were made more and more visible until the climactic ending. Unlike this, the artworks in the second example did not share synergistic features. Instead of amplifying something that was already present in the individual works, the interaction between *Farbtest*, *Die Rote Fahne II* and *Big Water* resulted in an event that differed from the constituent parts, giving rise to a new experience.

The introduction of chance in the first chapter of the thesis reveals that the sonic experience of the exhibition is a single instance in time. The experienced interaction between different works as they move according to their internal schedules or as a reaction to some external impulse, and thus how artworks are compounded is only one possibility among countless other possibilities. The fact that *President of Crimea* was not ringing during the last situation of the first case, when I was in the room where the bells hang, made it possible for the sounds leaking in from the screening room and from *Big Water* to intrude on the space. This in turn created two distinct events. First, as various intense sounds melded into a cacophony, the powerful sensations prohibited any consideration of the objects in the room. Second, as the seemingly quotidian dialogue of the following film leaked in and met the desperate messages written on the wall, this compounding revealed the relation between the extremes of life in the intersection of banality and despair. Thus, every encounter with an artwork within the exhibition is unique with possibilities for different shifts and interactions.¹³⁴ This also reveals the volatility of the experience as an event in constant transformation.

¹³³ Ouzounian, "Embodied Sound," 75–76.

¹³⁴ Fischer-Lichte, *The Transformative Power of Performance*, 123–125.

The concepts of niche and attraction provide a different manner for artworks to flow into each other. Rather than a superimposition of one work onto another where individual features are heightened or completely new meanings can arise, this entails a movement between the works on a continuum. When *A Red Herring* ends, the gradual toning down of the work allows or *Traces of Escapees* to begin and to become the new centre of attention. From a compositional perspective, the niche is instrumental in the organisation of a work which makes it possible for different occurrences to follow each other while maintaining the balance of the complex whole of the composition.¹³⁵ The relation between *A Red Herring* and *Traces of Escapees* is not simply that one thing ends after which another thing begins. The two works are connected within the overarching composition. What is conveyed in one work, informs the experience of the work that follows it. The changing colours of nature, and particularly of the salmon, which has been expressed with light, sound, and the forms of the diorama, accompanies the audience to the projections of spinning nets and the narrative about the processes of industrial fish farming. When nets break and the titular escapees enter the surrounding waters and ecosystems, they do so as synthetically dyed creatures which pollute the natural world. Niche and attraction thus make possible an asynchronous layering of experiences.

Future research

The study conducted here is by no means exhaustive. It has approached the phenomenon of sonic leakage within contemporary art exhibitions from a particular perspective and with a set number of examined cases. Since the proposed list of terms is derived from experiences during the observation of the exhibitions, they are not a definitive set and can be expanded upon. Further research within this area could make use of expanded, or different, material to identify more concepts and to further define the terms proposed here. The observations that form the material of the thesis are individual and experiential, and the terms are derived from the discrete observed situations. For a different observer, the same situations could potentially result in different experiences. For instance, what is discussed here as incursion can for someone else be experienced as intrusion, depending on how they perceive the relationship between a pre-established space and the leaking sound. As such, a study utilising a methodology which allows for the collection of multiple perspectives on the same situation can further the understanding of the experiential effects produced by the leakage of sounding works in contemporary art

¹³⁵ Augoyard and Torque, eds., *Sonic Experience*, 83.

exhibitions. Finally, the concluding discussion has shown the curatorial implications of the proposed set of terms in exhibition making by reflecting on how they operate in the examined cases. Within the thesis, these concepts are analytical. However, they could be operationalised in an experimental study which, rather than beginning from the observation of exhibitions to define terms, would utilise the terms as curatorial practice in the production of an exhibition.

Summary

Exhibition spaces designed for showing contemporary art are typically aligned with the standard model of the white cube. These spaces are designed to present each artwork as an isolated object to be contemplated. Sound, and consequently sounding artworks do not however conform to the visual logics employed in the white cube to allow for the separation of one work from the next. Sound does not stay put, it leaks into other spaces and interferes with other artworks. This can be understood as a conflict, an art form that does not comply to the rules of its context. But this also presents possibilities for the exhibition of contemporary art. The aim of the thesis was formulated in response to this friction: to examine the effects of leaking sounding works within art spaces with an emphasis on the sensory experience of sound. As well as to further the understanding of how these considerations can be operationalised curatorially.

The material examined in the thesis consists of two cases, *Mother Courage and Her Children* at Accelerator and *Undamming Rivers* at Bonniers Konsthall, both exhibitions of contemporary art shown in Stockholm during the autumn of 2022. These cases have been approached with a method of observation and thick ethnography which was used to describe the multi-sensory experiences of the researcher in the meeting with the examined objects. The analysis of the collected material was performed according to a theoretical framework of performativity. The concept *event* was used to understand a contemporaneous production and reception of the artwork as a compounding of all aspects of the situation. *Expansion*, *contraction*, and *perforation* all describe different transformations of space. Through the analysis, a set of terms were defined to describe the experiential effects of sound and to gain an understanding of the transformative potentials of the sounding works.

In the first chapter of the thesis, the exhibition *Mother Courage and Her Children* was analysed. The exhibition consisted of a film programme and an installation with a sound sculpture and was located in spaces adjacent to the parallel exhibition *Big Water* which also showed a sounding work. Through the analysis, the terms *incursion*, *intrusion* and *chance* were identified. Incursion is experienced as a temporal interruption of experience through the emergence of an unexpected sound. The incursion acts transformatively on both the temporality and spatiality of the art event. As a sudden interruption, it punctuates the present and establishes a more direct

relationship between the audience and what is perceived. It also makes it possible for the event to expand beyond the immediate confines of the experience. Intrusion is understood as a spatial counterpart to the temporal incursion and describes how an emerging sound is experienced to violate a protected space. This disruption establishes a new sense of place that compounds multiple sensory experiences into one event. Chance is both a consequence of the experience of sound and a condition for transformation. The coalescence of chance occurrences produces a volatile event that exists in a constant state of transformation.

In the second chapter, the exhibition *Undamming Rivers* was analysed. This exhibition presented four installations by the artist duo Cooking Sections. The first three were sounding works in the series *When [Salmon Salmon [Salmon]]* while the fourth was site specific work produced for the exhibition. In the analysis of this case the terms *niche*, *attraction*, *envelopment* and *silence* were defined. Niche and attraction are combined to describe the emission of a sound at the most favourable moment and the capacity for that sound to command attention. In the interplay between different artworks, these terms reveal a simultaneous contraction and expansion of space as well as the suggestion of a pathway between different works. Envelopment describes the experience of being wholly surrounded by sound and allows for the creation of a contracted acoustic space. Silence describes the experience of something as silent in contrast against the larger soundscape. It operates within the rhythmic composition of the exhibition and directs movement towards rest.

The curatorial implications of these effects were discussed in the concluding discussion. This section was divided into three overarching aspects that can be operationalised in exhibition making: definition of space, movement through space and layering of experience. Within definition of space, the terms incursion, intrusion, envelopment, silence, and chance were shown to constitute the space of the event in different capacities that allow for artworks to be placed in contexts that are not only defined by the limitations of vision and physical proximity. Niche, attraction, and silence all relate to the capacity of sounding works to guide the movement of the audience. These terms operate on different levels of abstraction but have in common that they can impose a framework that suggests a spatial choreography. Finally, incursion, intrusion, chance, niche, and attraction, were used to discuss a key feature in the leakiness of sound: that it is possible to compound multiple sensorial experiences into one event constituted by several distinct artworks.

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