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## **Sonic peripheries : middling with/in the event**

Klusmeyer, P.

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## Part Two

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### **SONIC PERIPHERIES**

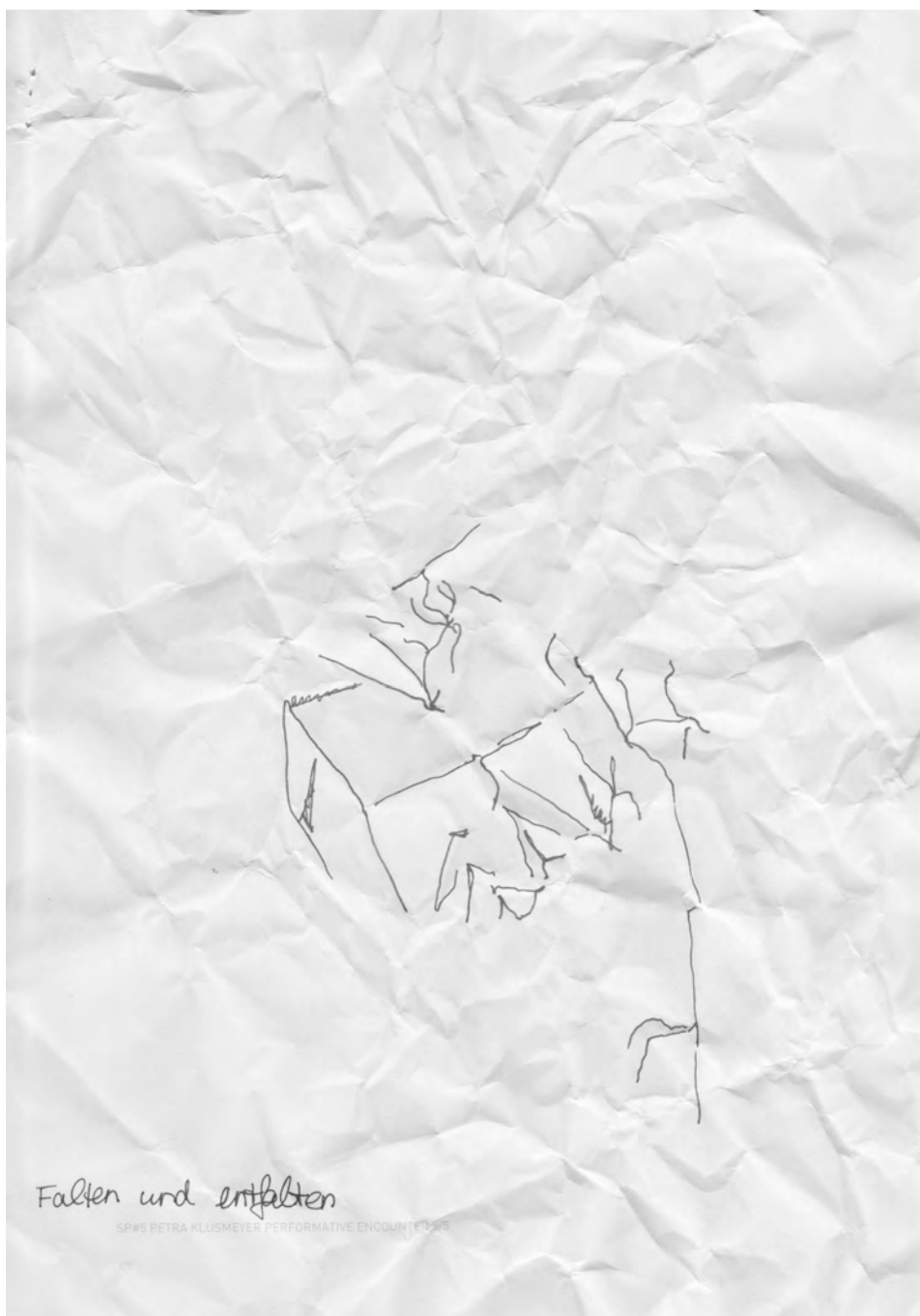


Figure 1

'Folding and unfolding' (*Falten und entfalten*). In response to Performative Encounter 4, crumpled paper and drawing by Hannah Klatt. As part of *Sonic Peripheries #5* (2011).

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“I don’t believe in things,” affirms Deleuze in *Negotiations* (1990/1995, p. 160); which is another way of saying that any notion of being as unchanging entity is untenable, not relevant. Things are always-already in the making: “becoming is not the becoming of some being. There *is* becoming, from which we perceive relatively stable points of being. [... Corollary:] there is not some world or being that then becomes, but [...] a life of complex change” (Colebrook 2002a, p. 52; italics in original). The world is not made up of things (and words) but of events; creative acts – here, be it research into sonic art practices, writing and drawing; indeed, the act of crumpling up a sheet of paper enfolds the dynamics of a life-living. These acts as events traverse a plane of changes. Hence producing percepts and affects, affording trajectories of sensations that fold-in perceptions. “Perception,” according to Manning (with Massumi), “infolds thoughts in the making. It does not reflect the world, it ingathers its relational fact into a feeling for its future infolding” (Manning 2009, p. 81). Folds; creases; pleats of matter (Deleuze 1988/1993). Consider for a moment the image at the beginning of this chapter (Fig. 1). What do you see?

*Or oughtn’t I to ask, do you think-feel the foldings of a past’s presence, its relational fact?* Let me address the former question and leave the latter pending. What *I* recognize is an image, strictly speaking, a scanned in version of an A4-sized paper that shows signs of folds and creases.

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*Remember the sound of a piece of paper crumpled up into a ball? It happens that ...; I look at the surface of unforeheard depth. The style of folding – rather brutish, not refined – yields crumbled paper, not origami. Folds and lines inscribed onto its hidden plane.*

*Like the moon in one's hand; resonant stuff across past-present-futures.* Creases striate the smoothed-out paper, marks of far-off resoundings. Resonance, it bears reminding, is a relational field. Looking anew at Figure 1, the drawn elements come into focus. The perspective is one from above, gazing down on a sea of folds; ridges, “waters, papers, fabrics, living tissues;” imaging “expressive matter, with different scales, speeds, and different vectors” (ibid., p. 34). Tracing the eventness of movement moving-on.

“What are these lines?”<sup>1</sup> Emergent evolutions, microperceptions, hallucinatory tendencies (Whitehead 1929/1978; Deleuze 1988/1993; Manning 2009). *Folding and unfolding. Resonant immediations.*

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“Was sind das für Linien,” queries Hannah Klatt in interview with this author (which translates as ‘what are these lines?’). Klatt was one of the *Sonic Peripheries #5* attendees (or participants) invited to partake in what I here call Performative Encounter activities – a mode of research creation of which more will be said below. Her experiment is of particular allure in this context because it embodies a thinking in doing that does not start in the mind but in nature *and* enacts an empirical manner, which is emblematic for middling with/in the event. Deleuze, we have learned, ‘does not believe in things’; instead, he says, he “spent a lot of time writing about [the] notion of the event” (*Negotiations*, p. 160). Deleuze-Guattarian philosophy is “interested in the circumstances in which things happen” and inquires into where and when a particular situation occurs and how it

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<sup>1</sup> Hannah Klatt in an interview with the author, following *Sonic Peripheries #5*.

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happens (ibid., p. 25). Research into sonic art practices – the way it's done here – seeks to attune to this philosophical attitude compelled by a radical empiricism, in other words, a philosophy of *doing*. We are looking to Klatt's exploration since it expresses a particular situation, an eventness of resonant spaciousness *infolded* – which is to suggest that she has experimentally/experientially probed into the nature of sonorous realities. This is how it's happened.

The situation was such (although we won't go into detail of the exhibition/sonic artwork-performance) that the audience was confronted with a kind of art *happening* – an overlap of multiple 'scenes' or 'sonorous sites' situated and taking place inside and outside the gallery of the Künstlerstätte Stuhr-Heiligenrode, inclusive of the nearby historic building, a mill with water wheel and machines in operation, and its natural surroundings (gardens, river and waterfall, etc.). (More on the artistic series and research events in the upcoming chapter.) The UK artist David Strang was commissioned to work on site. He created an intricate relay of relations where the natural and sociohistorical ecology of the locale played into the whole of the exhibit and sonic artwork-performance. This site-specific artwork (in the most literal sense of the terms) was "a performance of site," according to Strang (2011b). The artist employed field recordings and installed contact microphones to select parts of various machines inside the mill building to capture discreet sonic vibrations. Further, he arranged light meters in different areas of the mill to measure the variations in brightness – light-shadow motions caused by the rotation of wheels, for example. The data was then streamed to a computer with a bespoke MaxMSP software patch located in the main gallery space. The audience/participants encountered a live feed of sounds, vibrations and rhythms resembling machine noise, yet aestheticized and estranged from that reality. The live aspect of the performance-centered event derived from the direct entanglement of audience and computer with the mill, its machinery and resultant sonic cacophony, producing a contrasting, though complimentary sonic environment in relation to the adjacent grounds: river and water wheel, park and

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gardens, the bridge occasionally crossed by cars, bird song and people's laughter (from the ice cream parlor nearby). However, there was more to it.

There were scenes or, as it were, sonorous sites that added to the overall experience. And here is where Klatt's experiment comes in – how it demonstrates (not illustrates!) aspects of research done in and through sonic art practices. It should be borne in mind that this project wants to neither generalize nor speak to the conditions of possibility for all art research. In line with Deleuze and Guattari, this research into sonic art is “interested in modes of individuation beyond those of things, persons, or subjects: the individuation, say, of a time of day, of a region, a climate, a river or a wind, of an event” (*Negotiations*, p. 26). We are interested in concepts that explicate from research-creation. “A concept, as we see it, should express an event rather than an essence” (*ibid*, p. 25). Art and philosophy conjoin; “between a philosophical concept, a painted line and a musical sonorous bloc, resonances emerge,” describes Deleuze (1983, n.p.) in one of his lectures; “very, very strange correspondences that one shouldn't even theorize” – and which he prefers to call “affective [...] these are privileged moments.”<sup>2</sup> This type of research, namely the ‘act of looking, inquiring again and again’ (etymologically speaking) into sonic artworks seeks out the moments of the emergence of affect. The rather elusive and difficult to name *thinking-feeling* presents the trigger for Klatt's ‘forceful’ search. Therefore, let us return to the matter of how it happens and look to the privileged moment, the it-happens-that in the smallest details in-between as well as *in- and outside the folds*.

We learned that Strang's sonic artwork-performance explores sonic sites and territories by gathering field recordings and environmental data with the aim of folding site information back onto itself, that is, allowing site-specific materials

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<sup>2</sup> Translation from French by Bernd Herzogenrath; see Herzogenrath, B. ed. 2009. *Deleuze|Guattari & Ecology*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, p. 227. For the lecture transcription, see Deleuze G. 1983. Cours Vincennes, 02/11/1983. *Webdeleuze*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.webdeleuze.com/textes/69> [Accessed: 25 May 2018].



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to deterritorialize site. Visitors of *Sonic Peripheries #5* were then invited to participate in a so-called listening excursion for the purpose of surveying the soundscapes – either with the aid of an electronic device and headphones or *without* a technical extension – and prompted simply to be attentive to the moment. They were free to engage in the Performative Encounter activity (a curator-led intervention driven by the question of how to facilitate situations that incite contemplation of a sonic event; for further details, see SP Performative Encounter of Part Two) introduced here to act as a guide to help discern in which way vibrational force affects ‘our’ awareness of reality.

Klatt chose to walk the grounds with a listening device also known as electret or ambient microphone (Figs. 2 and 3). As part of Strang’s practice, the artist designs and constructs electronics that assist in exploring the environment (Umwelt) and “amplify certain aspects to heighten our perception of space and place” (Strang 2011a). For this art exhibition-event, he built various devices that would allow the participants to apprehend the soundscape through a different lens, or rather, an acoustic-to-electric transducer. In the case of Klatt, she auscultated the environs using an electret microphone; a world in stereo – though not heard in hi-fi nor truly binaural-quality sound.

The somewhat cheap materials used for the gadget impinge on both the transduction of air pressure and the reception of the signal, namely as “cheap-quality sound that can become sculptural as well” (Strang 2011b). This is to say that the device (indeed, any technological prosthesis) will have an influence on how the world is perceived. Strang’s suggestion concerning to the correlation between the cheapness of materials and the experience of sound as sculptural object is of particular interest. It seems to imply that a poor-quality rendering of a reality ‘out there’ gives the experience a visceral, even *haptic* objectlike dimension – it gives rise to sonic objecthood. Take a moment to consider this prospect before we proceed to Klatt’s privileged blink of an ear.



Figures 2, 3

*Sonic Peripheries #5* participant with listening device (top image). Turning the volume knob on electret (also, ambient microphone) to adjust amplitude level of incoming signals. Photos by Claudia Madeiros.

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Put research into practice:

Crumple up a sheet of paper;

then unfold.

Repeat, start with a clean sheet –

listening-in and -through.

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She walks and listens. Listens and walks – rehearses. In thinking-feeling, both in-acts make two sides of the same coin.

She walks and listens, *feeling* the rhythmic pulse from within and without her entire body. “This fascinates me,” Klatt might think. Then, she turns the volume knob on the gadget and enters into a strange realm – a zone of indetermina-tion, of indiscernibility. As if ‘I’ were no longer at a distance, but merged with something near and far – binding all sounds, all entities (human and non) onto a flat plane – a surface strewn with variations and kinks; *clacks and clicks*. *Snap, snick, chink and pops*.<sup>3</sup>

This affective soundscape lures, indeed *fascinates* in the sense of be-witches, enchants, to bring under the spell by some more subtle and mysterious power. The mill in particular with its rich cacophony of machines and belts in motion provides an infinite source of sonic iterations, drawing in the curious,

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<sup>3</sup> Klatt in interview with the author, following the *Sonic Peripheries #5* event. The statement, or rather observation is paraphrased, that is, poetically translated from Klatt’s original description. However, she said that the experience of listening via the device *fascinated* her, also because it enabled her to control the amplitude of her surroundings. This would allow her to focus on sounds in the distance, for example, that came to the foreground – a perspectival shift that she had not experienced before, opening onto a world of rhythms and strange sounds – *clacks and clicks*, as it were.

opening up to *felt unknowns* – *spellbound*, as it were, by vibratory forces. Even when taking off the headphones, Klatt’s senses the tingly throbs in her body as though connected to the old wood beams stretched across the floor. Each piece of timber is filled with the commotion of resonant particles, *tingling-tickling* along its surface and throughout. Fibrous material comes alive: utterances of a pastness present, anticipating a future in the “something *doing*” (James 1912, p. 161; italics in original). “Everything real must be experienceable somewhere,” asserts James in *Essays in Radical Empiricism*, “and every kind of thing experienced must somewhere be real” (ibid, p. 160). And it is worth repeating, “*the relations that connect experiences must themselves be experienced relations, and any kind of relation experienced must be accounted as ‘real’ as anything else in the system*” (ibid, p. 42; italics in original).

That which lurks in the folds of experience is ‘as *real* as anything else’ and takes precedence over questions of signification in this radically empirical research. Klatt lends her attention to this all-embracing activity, which stirs and steers her worlding: “It takes over life, fills the world, for an immeasurable instant of shock” – without a tinge of drama (Massumi 2015a, p. 108). This kind of rupture or provocation hits us, moves us; we sympathize, as Bergson might say, with the something’s happening-doing.

Klatt rejigs in the blink of an ear. She slips in and through the middle – middling with/in the event. The rejigging happens as a way of rearranging what is taken as the givens. “When all is said and done, it always isn’t. Something’s still doing. With each new circumstance [and happenstance], the process integrally rejigs” and starts going on and on again (Massumi 2015c, p. 164).

As mentioned above, the Performative Encounter activity served as guide for the listening (sonic) excursion. Each member of the audience was given a handout that consisted of directives, so-called Encounters, with a questionnaire, including a map of the area and a blank piece of paper. The final Encounter reads

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as follows: *Create a drawing (schematic, figurative, etc.) of a specific sound object.* With paper and pen ready at hand, Klatt attends-to the moment – ever so resonant with the situatedness from where she commingles.

“Participation is the yield in what Raymond Ruyer calls ‘aesthetic yield’. It is the yield both in the sense that it gives a sense of direction to a process already underway and that it opens that process to more-than of its form or content” (Manning 2015a, p. 63).<sup>4</sup> This (ad)venture is invested in the *more-than*; it asks how the material condition of a sonic artwork-performance (the form of content) and the form of expression (as bloc of sensations) are being produced in one another. Which then invites the question concerning the role exercised by the listener-cum-participant amid this vibratory conflux.

In Part One it was implied that the participant of a sound exhibition and performance might act as a coefficient of these *strange* realms or zones of indetermination infused by an affective quality or *affective tone*, which Klatt encounters above. In aesthetic experience, “the basic fact is the rise of an affective tone originating from things whose relevance is given,” says Whitehead (1933/1967, p. 176). No prehension “can be divested of its affective tone, that is to say, of its character of a ‘concern’ in the Quaker sense. Concernedness is of the essence of perception” (ibid., p. 180). Concernedness is of relevance to *this type of research* because it is set against any suggestion of knowledge, that is, of Reason in the

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<sup>4</sup> “Creative life of instinct: vital art. Ruyer remarks that it is of the nature of instinctive activity to produce an ‘aesthetic yield’. After all, what is a force of mutual linkage if not a force of composition? Deleuze and Guattari ask, ‘Can this becoming, this emergence’, this composition animating the genesis of new forms with a life of their own and producing an aesthetic yield, be called ‘Art’? [...] For if we can call this Art, it is because the human has the same self-animating tendency to supernormality. Only when we experience it in our own desiring lives we arrogantly tend to call it culture as opposed to nature, as if the animal body of human beings was somehow exempt from instinctive activity. As any biologist will tell you, the human body is on the animal continuum” (Massumi 2015d, pp. 9–10). See Massumi, B. 2015d. *The Supernormal Animal*. In R. A. Grusin ed. *The Nonhuman Turn*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press.

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Kantian sense understood as “the godlike faculty which surveys, judges and understands” (Whitehead 1929/1978, p. 6). Here, research into sonic art practices is interested in different forms and modes of knowing and looks to Whitehead’s stance on reason as “the force of thought that is immanent to the event. [...] It is the reason of nature, in nature, a concern with the very edges of the thinkable in its nonalignment to consciousness” (Manning 2014, p. 322; italics in original). Whitehead insists we should never ask, “what is in the mind and what is in nature” (1920, p. 30 as quoted in *ibid.*). The question should rather be how nature creates thought, or more to the point, how research into sonic art practices invents (cf. van der Tuin 2014).<sup>5</sup> These are matters led by the concern for the world and for an ‘ecology of practices’ (Stengers’s term akin to Deleuze’s notion of ‘thinking par le milieu’).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> The notion that ‘nature creates thought’, I draw from Manning (pace Whitehead). Also Vicky Kirby (as quoted in Barad 2003) makes a notable point regarding the humanist understanding of ‘we’ and its implications with respect to ‘thinking’; she writes: “I’m trying to complicate the locatability of human identity as a here and now, an enclosed and finished product, a causal force upon Nature. Or even ... as something within Nature. I don’t want the human to be in Nature, as if Nature is a container. Identity is inherently unstable, differentiated, dispersed, and yet strangely coherent. If I say ‘this is Nature itself,’ an expression that usually denotes a prescriptive essentialism and that’s why we avoid it, I’ve actually animated this ‘itself’ and even suggested that ‘thinking’ isn’t the other of nature. Nature performs itself differently” (pp. 228–29). Barad, K. 2003. Posthumanist Performativity: Toward an Understanding of How Matter Comes to Matter. *Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 28(3), 801–831.

<sup>6</sup> On ‘ecology of practices’, see Stengers, I. 2005. Introductory Notes on an Ecology of Practices. *Cultural Studies Review*, 11(1), 183–196. There Isabelle Stengers describes the notion as follows: “What I call an ecology of practice is a tool for thinking through what is happening, and a tool is never neutral. A tool can be passed from hand to hand, but each time the gesture of taking it in hand will be a particular one – the tool is not a general means, defined as adequate for a set of particular aims, potentially including the one of the person who is taking it, and it does not entail a judgment on the situation as justifying its use. Borrowing Alfred North Whitehead’s word, I would speak of a decision, more precisely a decision without a decision-maker which is making the maker. Here the gesture of taking in hand is not justified by, but both producing and produced by, the relationship of relevance between the situation and the tool” (p. 185).

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Again, to Manning, participation “is the yield both in the sense that it gives a sense of direction to a process already underway and that it opens that process to more-than of its form or content” (2015a, p. 63). In ‘Artfulness’, she speaks of the problematic of participation itself based on examples from her own artistic practice that is concerned with “the art of the event or event-time,” the exploration of “choreography as mobile architecture” by means of “crafting an ease of entry into a complex environment itself under modulation” (ibid., p. 52). There are aspects in this discussion that overlap with our venture, albeit that the context and the artwork under discussion differs greatly to this research. Nonetheless, the question Manning asks is of import, namely, “how to create generative lures toward a participatory process” (ibid.). It is of import because, in a nutshell, its emphasis lies on *attentiveness* to a situation; in our case: the concept of awareness. Awareness is not outside the sonic but within. To be aware means to take account of “a genetic process from the dark depths of the world” (Robinson 2010, p. 125). Klatt’s awareness of the vibrant conflux is not a matter of comprehension but *prehension*. It is primarily a sensuous, noncognitive experience that impels the complex dynamic (prehensive) unit toward a conceivable, albeit fleeting articulation. Meaning, firstly, the event of prehension presents “an ‘intermediary’, a purely immanent potential power, a relation of difference with itself, or pure ‘affection’ before any division into form and matter” (ibid., p. 124). And secondly, it gives way to what I provisionally term ‘fugacious expression’ – by which I endeavor to propose that the more-than individuates, comes into actualization; take this for an ad hoc formula: Incorporeal MATTER COMES TO MATTER that COMES TO MATTER. In other words: incorporeal events (as more-than) inhere in matter that comes to matter in achronological succession or manner. A rhythmic ‘frolicking’, a to-and-fro on the surface of sense and non-sense (see esp. Part Three: Experiment 1).

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Let us again turn to Klatt and her forceful response to the directive – the Encounter introduced above – in the attempt of tracing this ‘fugitive’ concept.

As part of the art happening and research event, Klatt and other participants of *Sonic Peripheries #5* were asked to create a drawing of a specific sound object that could assume a figurative, diagrammatic or entirely different form. Klatt went for the latter. In conversation, she later disclosed that she wouldn’t actually know how to draw a sound. Who could blame her? After all, it begs the question of what is meant by a ‘sound object’ in the first place; and on second thought, why represent a sonic event that naturally evades reification? Below, I shall clarify that this task is not about representation. This Encounter is what it is: an aesthetic experience – in this instance, an invitation to explore the sonic as “non-cochlear” (Kim-Cohen 2009) or conceptual construct to inspire a thinking sound anew.

Klatt listens-in and -through, attends-to the moment whilst sound waves traverse the wooden beams and continue to float in the space, her ears, head, throat, and teeth – the rhythmic pulse occupies Klatt’s whole being. She then picks up the sheet of paper and mindfully crushes it between her hands as a way of pleating and folding the vibrational continuum. Inscribing a genuine topology of sound onto paper – a performative gesture that implicates (*falten*) as much as it explicates (*entfalten*) the vibratory conflux. Charting twists and turns, creating new patterns or resonances. What are these lines? This is a concern that – perhaps similar to Klatt’s – has kept me occupied for some time inasmuch as I waver between reading the image and thinking-feeling the wholly otherness of a pastness-presencing in the folds (see again Fig. 1). Put another way, the ink-drawn lines conjure an anarchitecture of bifurcating branches that bear resemblance to a city’s detritus (oddly, the city of Detroit comes to mind and how nature has a way of reclaiming urban sites). Meanwhile, I am drawn into the jittery tracings, which seem to mimic the precursory act of crumpling up the



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paper – as such, revealing a world immanent to that gesture and of the paper-material.

Maybe Klatt tried to tend to “the disorganized perceptions of the life that pulses through our bodies” – the minute feelings, “the ‘microperceptions’ that make up who we are – not just the perceptions of the eye that sees and judges” (Colebrook 2002b, p. 40). In hindsight, she never explained; she simply stated a problem. Klatt thought aloud *in actu* of something she was taken with, namely the phenomenological and epistemological complicatedness of the event’s coming into being (and ?being). Going over the folds’ traces with ink was her way of inquiring into the nature of the (sonorous) event. Just this one problem-proposition set off an enduring trajectory of free-and-wild creations of concepts.<sup>7</sup>

Consider fugacious expression to be one of many guises of sound’s occasioning. Here, it takes the shape of an artifact of material-discursive nature. It relates to what Manning refers to as *aesthetic yield*; that which “expands beyond any object occasioned by the process to include the vista of expression generated by art as event” (Manning 2015a, p. 63). *Participation, in our case, produces a spectacle of materialized expression that opens onto the mysteries of felt unknowns*. Meaning that the participant of the Performative Encounter activity creates an *expanded situation* – one, by attending to the felt unknowns that spring from a sonic artwork-performance and, two, by inventing an action that transposes the experience into a material-discursive expression or ‘object’. Klatt heeds a situatedness that unravels before her ears as she is also encouraged to act, to reconfigure, to intra-act with art as event. Herself, sonorous molecules, the listening device, paper, the Encounter – all these elements are entangled in the production of a fugacious expression which articulates as in/determined sonic occurrence through aesthetic practices.

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<sup>7</sup> Cf. Deleuze, G. & Guattari, F. 1991/1994. *What Is Philosophy?*. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 105.

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It should be noted here that the neologisms 'material-discursive' and 'intra-activity' go back to Barad's agential realism (2003; 2007; 2010; 2012; see also Donna Haraway [1988] for 'material-semiotic'). Her theory challenges ideas of individualist (atomist) metaphysics, and instead advocates an entangled ontology from which material-discursive phenomena arise, hence opposing the idea that subjects and objects are separate and pre-existent entities that make up this world.<sup>8</sup> "Indeed, there is a host of material-discursive forces – including ones that get labeled 'social', 'cultural', 'psychic', 'economic', 'natural', 'physical', 'biological', 'geopolitical', and 'geological' – that may be important to particular (entangled) processes of materialization" (Barad 2003, p. 810). 'We' as part of the world co-compose the world's worlding through the agency of diverse practices and ongoing intra-activity. In this context, the forces and processes involved (or

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<sup>8</sup> Barad argues in 'Post humanist Performativity' (2003) that "[t]he relationship between the material and the discursive is one of mutual entailment. Neither is articulated/articulable in the absence of the other; matter and meaning are mutually articulated. Neither discursive practices nor material phenomena are ontologically or epistemologically prior. Neither can be explained in terms of the other. Neither has privileged status in determining the other" (p. 822). Which is also to mean that practices are constituted by both meanings and materialities. There is a *material-discursive* performativity at play; or yet in other words: "On an agential realist account, discursive practices are not human-based activities but rather specific material (re)configurings of the world through which local determinations of boundaries, properties, and meanings are differentially enacted" (ibid., p. 802). According to Barad, this requires a rethinking of materiality as "not a thing but a doing" (2007, p. 151) as well as a reconsideration of "notions discursive practices and material phenomena and the relationship between them" (2003, p. 802). In terms of 'intra-action' (also 'intra-activity') Barad writes in *Meeting the Universe Halfway*: "The notion of intra-action is a key element of my agential realist framework. The neologism 'intra-action' signifies the mutual constitution of entangled agencies. That is, in contrast to the usual 'interaction', which assumes that there are separate individual agencies that precede their interaction, the notion of intra-action recognizes that distinct agencies do not precede, but rather emerge through, their intra-action. It is important to note that the 'distinct' agencies are only distinct in a relational, not an absolute, sense, that is, *agencies are only distinct in relation to their mutual entanglement; they don't exist as individual elements*" (2007, p. 33; italics in original). Barad, K. 2007. *Meeting the Universe Halfway: Quantum Physics and the Entanglement of Matter and Meaning*. Durham: Duke University Press.

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entangled) provide the condition of possibility for this type of research on the sensory watch for entwined matter-meanings.

For Klatt, the experiment was pragmatic in its approach. She set out to investigate the sound of paper; this she did, and this, we know, led to surprising spin-offs and questions like the one about the lines. As proposed above, her concern lay in the microperceptions in-between the folds which she has thought-felt in the in-act of the something's happening. I will argue, though, that Klatt's experiential event is not only pragmatic if that is understood to mean "practical as *opposed to speculative or theoretical*" (Massumi 2011, p. 12; italics in original). Rather, it is speculative *and* pragmatic in character. "[S]peculative in the sense that a process remains open to its potential, and pragmatic in the sense that it is rooted in the in-acts of its 'something doing'" (Manning 2015b, p. 56). In the words of Massumi (2011, p. 12): "The speculative aspect relates to the character of potential native to the world's activity, as expressed eventfully in the taking place of change. The pragmatic aspect has to do with how, in the taking-definite-shape of potential in a singular becoming, the relational and qualitative poles co-compose as formative forces." *She puts research into practice: Crumples up a sheet of paper; then unfolds.*

Klatt as well as others who participated in the Performative Encounter activity enacted a speculative pragmatism advocated by Whitehead, Massumi and Manning. The latter two explored how creative research and philosophy come together: "putting art and philosophy, or theory and practice, on the same creative plane, in the same ripple pool" (Massumi 2011, p. 83). Each drop in the pool matters, calling forth a diffractive pattern that speaks of the possibility of emergence of unforeheard happenings: MATTER COMES TO MATTER COMES TO MATTER; short, how matter 'does' comes to matter.<sup>9</sup> Promoting what has

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<sup>9</sup> At this point, it is worth quoting at length from the philosopher Christoph Cox who, as the proponent of sonic materialism, gives an excellent account of the conceptual challenges encountered when discussing sonic ontology and sonic materiality. He clarifies how sounds – albeit thought of as intangible, invisible, and ephemeral entities – are material phenomena, namely "ontological particu-

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been put into practice and to the test means to engage in the concern for the relations that connect experiences, which are precisely those in/determinate and hard to grasp affective tones or atmospheres that enliven the encounter with the sonic and arising situatedness.

Klatt speculatively-pragmatically configures; *repeats, starts with a clean sheet – listening-in and -through.*

♦ ♦ ♦

Research into sonic art practices gives rise to onto-epistemological considerations. The term 'onto-epistemology' – coined by Barad (in connection with the neologisms discussed above) – brings ontology and epistemology into focus as co-dependent factors in the production of 'situated knowledges' (Haraway's

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lars and individuals" (Cox 2015, p. 126). Here is an excerpt from 'Sonic Thought' of *Realism Materialism Art*: "[S]ound present[s] us with an *ontology* that unsettles our ordinary conception of things. In philosophy, ontology is the subdiscipline that investigates being, determining what there is or what sorts of things exist. We ordinarily operate with an ontology that begins and ends with what J. L. Austin wryly called 'moderate-sized specimens of dry goods', the objects of our everyday experience: apples, chairs, trees, cars, and so forth. This ordinary ontology extends to include larger objects such as mountains or stars, and can accept scientific objects such as subatomic particles, provided that they are taken to be tiny versions of ordinary things – stable, solid, and durable, though very small. Indeed, when we speak of 'matter', we tend to think solely of *solid* matter. Few would take liquids, gases, or plasmas – water, air, or fire, for example – as paradigms of matter. This ordinary ontology privileges the senses of sight and touch; or rather, the senses of sight and touch determine this everyday ontology. The invisible, intangible, and ephemeral objects (so to speak) of smell, taste, and hearing seem to have only a shadowy existence relative to the standard of the ordinary solid object, whose presence is guaranteed by eyes and fingers, and enshrined in 'common sense', which names an entrenched hierarchy of the senses rather than some common agreement among them. But surely sounds, odors, and tastes exist, and surely they are as material as sticks and stones. Sounds, to take the example that concerns me here, set eardrums aquiver, rattle walls, and shatter wine glasses" (ibid., p. 124). Cox, C., 2015. Sonic Thought. In C. Cox et al. eds. *Realism Materialism Art*. Berlin: Sternberg Press, pp. 123-130.

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term<sup>10</sup>). The former concerns theories of beings, the latter theories of knowing; both -ologies are entwined and mutually implicated insofar as “all explicit epistemological reflection has ontological presuppositions as well as ontologizing effects [– and the other way around:] all reflections on ontology have epistemological presuppositions as well as epistemologizing effects” (van der Tuin 2014, p. 257). Barad considers *onto-epistem-ology* “the study of practices of knowing in being” (2003, p. 829). To engage in research, that is to say, to look carefully into situations that (come to) matter, means here (as well as in other scientific contexts) to acknowledge that “practices of knowing cannot be fully claimed as human practices, not simply because we use nonhuman elements in our practices but because knowing is a matter of part of the world making itself intelligible to another part” (Barad 2003, p. 829; cf. ‘prehension’ in Whitehead 1925/1967, pp. 69–73). The acceptance of this basic truth (or perception that is accepted as true) goes against our anthropocentric leaning inclined to uphold that it is we who call the shots that really matter.

Matter as it comes to matter enfolds both human and nonhuman aspects of life. Knowing (prehension, if I may) is a reciprocal action between various agents, elements or things – including sounds, paper, pen, and rhythmic vibrations through and through. What comes to matter is *how* an event comes to matter – followed by the concern of what matters to whom. “‘Humans’ are [a] part of the world-body space in its dynamic structuration” (Barad 2003, p. 829). What is at stake in a posthumanist account of performativity (to mean in Bara-

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<sup>10</sup> Marianne Janack (2004) writes, “Donna Haraway’s (1988) work on situated knowledges emphasizes the ways in which science is a rule-governed form of ‘story-telling’ that aims at getting at the truth, but the idea of truth she uses here is not that of reality *an sich* but a reality that is produced by human material practices. Thus, she argues ‘facts’ are in fact ‘artifacts’ of scientific inquiry. This does not make them false, but it does render them bound up with processes of human production and human needs. Nonetheless, they maintain an ontological independence to a certain extent; this is the central insight of the analogy to other kinds of artifacts” (n.p.; italics in original). More on ‘Feminist science studies’ see Janack, M. 2004. Feminist Epistemology. *Internet Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.iep.utm.edu/fem-epis/> [Accessed: 25 May 2018].

dian terms: “All bodies, not merely ‘human’ bodies, come to matter through the world’s iterative intra-activity – its performativity” [ibid., p. 823]) – is how the in-acts of experience play out in the emergent occasioning of a sonic event. How then does the entanglement of artistic, curatorial, and other participatory forces intra-act in the course of this experimental-experiential formation (i.e., artistic research), taking into consideration how discursive practices and material phenomena come into articulation in art as event?

Klatt’s undertaking is one of several instances that playfully demonstrate how human and nonhuman (material) bodies are able to co-compose material-discursive artifacts. But – and this is a pleading ‘but’ – we need to bear in mind that in this overall constellation, the human aspect assumes a *particular* position, albeit not a privileged one. To say otherwise would be ill-advised, even if it were to evoke anthropocentric values.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, we need to mind or factor in what practices can do. By practices, I not just mean artistic, philosophical, scientific, or the world’s microprocessual practices, but also socio-cultural and political workings, such as institutions, conventions and methods, among other things, that inform research. ‘To mind’ is in a sense an appeal to carefully look at (listen to) the ambient backdrop behind knowledge production. What may we hope for (to hear), then?

“Barad wants us to study *practices*,” writes Iris van der Tuin in ‘On the Mode of Invention of Creative Research’ and elucidates:

Such practices happen *in being* and they are *of knowing*. ‘In being’ points to appreciation for refraining from ontological assumptions, such as the assumption of entities being clearly delineated or of

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<sup>11</sup> This ‘appeal’, if you like, is written in reference to Massumi’s *Semblance and Event* and Jane Bennett’s *Vibrant Matter*, which I will further address at the end of the chapter SP Performative Encounter of Part Two. See Massumi, B. 2011. *Semblance and Event: Activist Philosophy and the Occurrent Arts*. Cambridge: The MIT Press, p. 165; Bennett, J. 2010. *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*. Durham: Duke University Press, pp. 119-120.

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entities being mute in the hands of signifying academics. Here, being is allowed the possibility to be messy and above assumptions tend to produce reductive accounts. 'Of knowing' indicates appreciation for refraining from epistemological assumptions, such as the assumption of knowledge claims ruling over objects of knowledge or existing in a web of words that refer to each other instead of to objects, of instruments being mentioned mediators and of environments being fully neutral. (2014, p. 259; italics in original)

'Of knowing' is the assumed onto-epistemological standpoint in this venture. Abstractions – from nature, from culture, from experience, etc. – never fully define 'knowledge', but rather this-or-that way of knowing (Stengers 2011). Indeed, the world's worlding is messy. The attempt by research and its methodologies "to convert this mess into something smooth, coherent and precise both miss out on particular textures of life [...] and tends to make a mess of what it does seek to understand, because it fails to account for complexity" (Coleman & Ringrose 2013, p. 5). I cautiously hold my research done in and through sonic art practices doesn't fail to account for complexity, though surely it derails notions of rational understanding or "exact knowledge" (Stengers 2011, p. 52) – diligently and purposefully (read the latter with a wink in my eye).

To discuss methodology in our case is not without complication, or rather *complicatedness*. On a side note, the terms 'methodology' and 'methods' are often used interchangeably in the discourse on artistic research (Borgdorff 2012, p. 49). In scientific research parlance, however, methodology is generally understood to stand for "a method or body of methods used in a particular field of study or activity" (*OED*) – or as Paul Kiff et al. put it plainly: "'methodology' refers to the different way in which researchers 'find things out'. The particular methods that researchers will employ will always reflect their ontological and epistemological

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beliefs" (2009, p. 46). This project subscribes to an onto-epistemological framework, which, alongside Deleuze and Whitehead, advocates an empiricism that is likewise a pluralism – which welcomes ‘complicatedness’, if you like. Meaning, “the abstract does not explain, but must itself be explained; and the aim is not to rediscover the eternal or the universal, but to find the conditions under which something new is produced (*creativity*)” (Deleuze 1987/2007, p. vii; italics in original). In *Negotiations* (1990/1995), Deleuze further explicates: “there’s nothing transcendent, no Unity, subject (or object), Reason; there are only processes, sometimes unifying, subjectifying, rationalising, but just processes all the same” (p. 145). This line of thought, akin to Barad’s, underlines the complicatedness or entanglement between various agents in which the Deleuzian notion of multiplicity takes on special significance.

Understood as complex structure, multiplicities endure temporally as so-called assemblage or grouping of relations that “ideally create new ways of functioning” (Livesey 2010, p. 18). Deleuze thinks of multiplicities as “becomings without history, of individuation without subject (the way in which a river, a climate, an event, a day, an hour of the day, is individualized)” (Deleuze & Parnet 1987/2007, p. viii). What counts lies in *the between*: “a set of relations which are not separable from each other” (ibid.). This type of empiricism concerns itself with real conditions of emergence issued from the between as a melding of (sonorous) materiality, force and sensation as movement; its emphasis lies on ‘the set of relations’ which can be experienced – albeit not known as such. “What defines [the multiplicity] is the AND, as something which has its place between the elements or between the sets. AND, AND, AND – stammering” (Deleuze & Parnet 1987/2007, p. 34). The techniques set in motion – rather than methods ‘put in place’, which alludes to producing certain kind of knowledges – emphasize the AND, and create openings to novel experience that extend from the middle of a field, that is, in the mess of relations not yet organized into terms or elements. “Against [the] rationalistic tendency to treat experience as chopped up into dis-



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continuous static objects, radical empiricism protests,” writes James (1912, p. 237). He insists that conjunctions like ‘and’, ‘with’, ‘near’, ‘towards’ need to be taken “at their ‘face-value’, just as they come. [...] While we live in such conjunctions our state is one of *transition* in the most literal sense” (1912, p. 237; italics in original). Hence living life-in; experiencing the something’s doing in its processual unfolding: AND, AND, NEAR ... *noihs* ... *noihsshzs*; as noise (vibrational force) comes into perceptual focus, it is always already on the cusp of a new – *buzzing* – *thrumming* – *whirring* – and AND so on. We shall intermit this clamorous contemplation with the Deleuzian dictum: “Thinking *with* AND instead of thinking IS, instead of thinking *for* IS: empiricism never had another secret. Try it, it is a quite extraordinary thought, and yet it is life” (Deleuze & Parnet 1987/2007, p. 57; italics in original). Do try.

If we want to speak at all of methodology, it is essential to consider the methods used as some kind of vehicle to access the middle, the between. Also of import is to keep in mind that this research (this thesis) wants to come to terms with occurrences that come about during the sonic artwork-performances. Even though of equal importance, yet not at the focus of this inquiry, are the respective artistic practices that make *Sonic Peripheries* possible. That is to say, the artists’ making (*poiesis*) and doing (*praxis*) provide the necessary foundation for this venture; or to put it this way: their works present the ‘resin’, the means and material to uphold the structure; they are *of* the in-between. Less figuratively speaking, the strategies and methods used by the artists are part of the overall entanglement and affect the process. However, this discussion will not say much about the artists’ respective context and manner of working – unless it informs the ‘*howing*’ of the event; as in the case of Strang whose listening devices, for instance, facilitate situations to encounter the sonic as transcendental occurrence

that provides the possibility for material-discursive articulations to arise.<sup>12</sup> Thus we turn to sonic artwork-performances that operate at the interface of the virtual and actual, conjuring new unprecedented experiences and expressions, producing *moods* or *affective tonalities* that point to the qualitative difference conjured above (e.g., Klatt's speculative pragmatic intervention and invention). In the upcoming chapter on *Sonic Peripheries* – the series and the related research – more will be said about the conception of the research event and the choice of commissioned artists. It should provide a general overview of the three art exhibition-events and the participants involved in order to help locate an otherwise *seemingly* abstract discussion on art and philosophy. (I emphasize 'seemingly' since this text wants to be anything but abstract; in fact, the coming-together of the written text seeks to parallel the art event – it is practice itself. In short, it aims at expanding but also delineating the limits of the sonic arts through the intervention of concepts via writing – at best producing *concrete* thinking-feeling sensations.)



As pointed out in the part Introduction, it is beyond the scope of this venture to engage in the debate on artistic research as such – a debate that, simply put, is concerned with the place artistic poesis and praxis can occupy as a research method in academia (Borgdorff 2012). This project neither argues for nor against artistic research as a *type of research* endorsed by academia (to mean the fields

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<sup>12</sup> Here I would like to reference Cox again who in 'Sound Art and the Sonic Unconscious' (2009) argues for a genuine sonic metaphysics wherein sound is conceived as "continuous, anonymous flux to which human expressions contribute but which precedes and exceeds these expressions" (p. 19). He claims that sonic art, at its best, "calls attention to an auditory unconscious, a *transcendental* or *virtual* domain of sound that has steadily come to prominence over the course of the twentieth century" (ibid.; italics in original). Cox, C. 2009. Sound Art and the Sonic Unconscious. *Organised Sound*, 14(01), 19-26.

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of science in the widest sense). It is relevant though to raise the issue due to the specific entanglement of artistic, curatorial, and participatory forces at play, bearing in mind that the impetus, here, is to call attention to the sensory knowings that we can hope for – to feel, to hear, to apprehend; in other words, knowings that emerge from the-dark-depths-of-the-world, as it were. To study the practices that partake in this artistic research – which envelop sound as their medium, concept and fabulation, that is, take the sonic as their subject and object for aesthetic exploration – presupposes a desire to ‘find things out’, as Kiff et al. put it, albeit narrowly. Their statement presents a definite view on *who* is the knower and *what* is the known. For example: ‘We’ find something out about the sonic environment of a bridge’s fencing by placing a so-called contact mic onto its surface and feel-hear the vibrations emanating from the object; or, Klatt solely discovers the buzzing amid the trembling depth of this little-piece-of-vibrating-world through attentive listening. The (human) Subject apprehends the (non-human) Object – period. This adventure begs to differ and takes its cue from Whitehead’s aesthetic philosophy and James’s radical empiricism. In ‘Against Method’ (2015b), Manning eloquently articulates the efficacy of the latter:

it gives us a technique to work with the in-act at the heart of experience, providing subtle ways of composing with the shifting relations between the knower and the known, keeping in mind, of course, that the knower is not the human subject, but the way relations open themselves towards systems of subjectification. Similar to Whitehead’s (1978) notion of the ‘superject’– which emphasizes that the occasion of experience is itself what proposes its own knower-known relations, resulting in a subject that is *the subject of the experience* rather than a subject *external* to the experience – radical empiricism refutes the notion that experience is constituted before all else of *human* relations. To understand

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experience this way places us, as humans, in a more nuanced relationship to knowledge. (p. 55; italics in original)

Polemics aside – the suggestion I want to make is that research into sonic art practices needs to establish a comprehensive (as well as unfinished) view on methodology. The nature of the sonic requires a pluralism of methods and techniques which takes into consideration that sound is a matter *of* experience *in* experience – and, as said from the start, is neither-this-nor-that. There is no sound in itself, no primordial ‘ursound’ that precedes the sound we come to apprehend. Instead, there is a virtual domain (also “chaosmos” [Deleuze 1969/1990]; “transcendental” [Cox 2009]) from which vibrations come into articulation as material-discursive phenomenon. Originating from chaos as energetic flux, progressing through matter-meanings, the sonic partakes in an experiential eventness, indeed, imparts on the “vector of prehension [that] moves from the world to the subject, from the prehended datum to the prehending one (a ‘superject’)” (Deleuze 1988/1993, p. 78). The methodological challenge is thus to enter the messy middling goings-on in resonance with each other, to conjure up techniques that afford a middling with and in the event that lets us assume ‘a more nuanced relationship to knowledge’ in relation to that which can be known, or rather be of knowing. However, this is also where the crux lies of researching the sonic and associated practices; to “[proceed] from the middle, through the middle [...] establish a logic of the AND, overthrow ontology, do away with foundations, nullify endings and beginnings” (Deleuze & Guattari 1980/1998, p. 25). The overall task will be then to embrace the crux and follow the relations: “Take everything as it comes” (Massumi 2011, p. 85). To Massumi (after James), “take everything as it comes, means you have to take continuity and discontinuity as *they come*” (ibid., p. 86; italics in original). This philosophical empiricism, calling for a kind of non-action echoes Cage’s promulgation ‘to let sounds be themselves’. The imperative is to invent methods that coincide with the so-called techniques

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of existence/relation which both Massumi and Manning consider a vital element in the arts; something that art can show us – lets us experience – not externally to the experience, but immanently to its occasioning.

Let me elaborate by referring back to the ‘Wow!’ example of which we talked in Aesthetic Encounter of Part One. In the context of Decker’s sonic performance/installation, the sheer wowness experienced by the artist – and by participants of the art events – exemplifies this type of artfulness that can occasion in art, however, is not limited to it. Massumi stresses that there is “an artfulness in every experience” (2011, p. 45). His point (my point being as regards the sonic arts) is that art has the potential to bring to the fore the relational-qualitative dimension that is registered as uncanny, strange, beautiful, or perhaps ugly; something that is present in the everyday, but remains hidden and might never see the light of day, or say, of apperception. The *Wow!* is expression of a thinking-feeling experience of a *something*, name it ‘atmosphere’ or ‘pure animateness’. A *vitality affect* that can be experienced as dynamic flow; such as, “spinning” or “jiggling hum,” terms used by *Sonic Peripheries* attendees to describe the sonic-derived atmospheres. They are not ‘figures’ in the sense of musical themes, variations, modulations, etc., but are “tessellations of sounds” generated by the live performance. What Decker describes as the *giant transformation* in the sonic artwork-performance is the moment of the THAT in the AND: air molecules pushing, surging forward, conjoining and conjuring up acoustic qualities. Heavy steps across squeaky floors; random changes in loudness initiated by an algorithm; sounds bleeding in from the outside; all the above creating a moment of joyful tessellation, non-stop moments full of self-enjoyment in no need of further explanation other than stammering “Wow! ... .”

Technique of existence (also: technique of relation) is Massumi’s turn of phrase “for a way of doing something that, ‘eventfully effects a fusional mutual inclusion of heterogeneity of factors in a signature species of semblance’. In other

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words, [it] refers to the manner in which [..., e.g.,] listening habits, assembling schemes, compositional gambits, etcetera, give rise to a form of abstraction through which one lives" (Massumi 2011, p. 143 as quoted in Priest 2013, p. 60). It affords the expression of a certain form of relationality. In fact, "anything that exists possesses a technique of existence insofar as the latter is a necessary condition for the former" (ibid.). Sonic artwork-performances bear techniques of existence specific to their manner of operation that bring about lived abstraction, i.e., semblances.

Recall that Massumi regards 'semblance' as "a placeholder in a present perception of a potential 'more' to life. [...] Semblance is the manner in which the virtual *actually appears*. It is the being of the virtual as lived abstraction" (2011, pp. 49, 15–16; italics in original). In 'The Thinking-Feeling of What Happens', the philosopher resumes that "art practice is a technique of composing potentials of existence, inventing experiential styles [... .] Art is inventive, literally creative of vitality affect" (ibid., pp. 73–74). Vitality affect and technique of existence, both to him, come down to the same thing, and here Massumi does mean 'technique' in its operative sense: "To achieve any affective-effective composition requires [...] minute attention to detail, and obsessive experimentation in how the situation is set up or framed" (ibid., p. 74). There lies the key, how a situation is set up: dynamic operative speculative pragmatically put into practice.

As previously mentioned, we need to remember that *Sonic Peripheries* is interested in aesthetic encounters that produce semblances of a kind unique to sonic art practices. In our constellation, the focus lies on the 'event-time' itself, that is to say, the taking place of a sonic artwork-performance in which the audience turns complicit ('runs interference') in the poetics of the experiential eventness in the making. We pay particular attention to the time and space during which the exhibition/performance-event takes place – a two-hour window. When everything happened; keeps on happening, generating reverberance

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unlimited. We prick up our ears to vitality affects in audition. We listen in and through – practicing a thinking-sound. Nevertheless, the question remains: how to facilitate situations that incite this sort of thinking which invites contemplation of a sonic event (coming and going) and thus lets us look into the goings-on (what's-happened-between the ebb and flow of coming-and-going)? In the last chapter of Part Two titled SP Performative Encounter, we will turn to the methods (and techniques of relation) this research has invented to enable conditions that make the not-yet-thought viscerally thinkable. This links to the concern this artistic research shares with speculative pragmatism, namely how to fashion generative lures for participatory processes (Manning 2015a; Manning & Massumi 2014). This and more will be discussed below.

Suffice it to say in conclusion of this section that research into sonic art practices here means to create a milieu for interference to take place for both the unforeseeable and unforehearable between the various agents of the *Sonic Peripheries'* events. As artist-led curator-theorist, I set forth the process by positing a research *lure*, rather than a research *question* (Doruff 2010) for the respective artists whom I invited to 'co-research' the proposition. Each case acted on different lures and hunches. There was not any pre-existing methodology to follow; rather, it was ours to engender, which is then a methodology understood as the mapping of the experiment and its entanglements with theory. For this, I looked to the broad field of social sciences and humanities to borrow methods relevant to the purpose of research creation. I tailored a methodological approach that includes aspects of a constructivist and hermeneutic perspective. The former holds that "objects and events actually become constituted in and through artworks and artistic actions;" the latter assumes that "artistic practices and artworks disclose the world to us" (Borgdorff 2012, p. 172). While this research seeks elements inherent to these perspectives, it also wants to exceed epistemology and circumvent hermeneutics. It wants to challenge the anthropocentrism implied in

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these logics. Let me quote a passage from *The Conflict of the Faculties* (2012, pp. 172–173) relevant to our concern. There Borgdorff writes:

Only in and through art do we see what landscape, soundworlds, histories, emotions, relations, interests, or movements really are or could be. Here lies the performative and critical power of art. It does not represent things; it presents them, thereby making the world into what it is or could be. [...] The world-revealing power of art lies in its ability to offer us those new vistas, experiences, and insights that affect our relationship with the world and with ourselves. Artistic research addresses this world-constituting and world-revealing power of art – the ways in which we constitute and understand the world in and through art.

For all the reasons discussed so far, this statement is as partial as it is partially true; partial to the hubris of a human-centered art theory-criticism that knows and explains, and partially true because it implicates the human as constituting force in the aesthetic experiences – though not understood to mean that he or she is *the* constituent who drives ‘the performative and critical power of art’, but seen as one constituent, among others, who is a part of this world’s worlding in the Baradian sense. Despite Borgdorff’s implied Kantianism when saying, “A distinctive characteristic of artistic research is that it articulates both our familiarity with the world and our distance from it” – I do agree with him on the point that “artistic research is the realization that we do not yet know what we don’t know” (ibid., pp. 171, 173). Thus research into sonic art practices is concerned with the not-yet-knowing and remains curious about what Sher Doruff (2010) refers to as “the surprise encounter with *unknown unknowns* (what we don’t know we don’t know)” (p. 7; italics in original). Although at risk of cutting the argument short, I want to leave a discussion on ‘unknown unknowns’ and



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'method assemblage' (Law 2004) specific to this research for later. In the chapter following the brief overview of *Sonic Peripheries* (artistic series and research events), we will turn to the methods and techniques employed in the case studies. So more on the style of research creation and the methods invented for inspiring participatory processes until then.

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## SP ARTISTIC SERIES

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*Sonic Peripheries* (in this chapter henceforth abbreviated as ‘SP’) started out as a curated series of exhibition-events featuring contemporary sonic art practices that developed into the research venture presented here under the same name. The cooperation between the Artist in Residence Stuhr-Heiligenrode and myself (as art researcher of Sound Studies at the University of the Arts Bremen) began in 2008 and has since commissioned artists to present work to the borough of Stuhr and beyond. Invited artists for the series include Mark and Laura Cetilia aka Mem1 (SP#1 2008), Lou Mallozzi (SP#2 2009), Howard Sandroff (SP#3 2009), Helen Pritchard (SP#4 2010), David Strang (SP#5 2011), Shawn Decker (SP#6 2012), and Stephen Lacy aka Academy Records (SP#7 2013). The artistic series, as figured in the title, maps the conceptual peripheries of expanded art practices with a genuine concern for the sonic. The historic and pastoral setting of Heiligenrode, located in Lower Saxony in the northwest of Germany next to the city-state of Bremen, affords yet another sense of ‘peripheries’, namely in terms of its geographic and aesthetico-political location: outside the city, outside mainstream exhibition sites. This constellation provides a favorable frame for a critical and inquiring approach to sound in the arts wherein received notions regarding form, content and context are creatively and imaginatively questioned and readdressed. As part of the series, the three case studies undertaken under the aegis of this research and discussed in this thesis, each introduce a specific take on the inquiry

of which more will be said shortly (and will further be explored in Part Three). Suffice it to say that the artists invited to conduct co-research were selected due to their idiosyncratic positions on sound as material and conceptual conduit. Take for instance David Strang whose work we encountered some pages earlier. He refers to himself as a digital media as well as a sound artist with a primary focus on acoustic matter and interactive elements. In his practice, Strang examines the natural surroundings we inhabit and amplifies singular aspects to heighten our perception of space (and place). For this, he deploys artistic strategies that involve sound recording, hacking gadgets and the usage of sensors, among other things. Strang is experienced in orchestrating experimental workshops within a collaborative framework where participants explore and probe into vibrational force more generally. With this in mind, I asked the artist to pursue with me the subject of sound in relation the Deleuzian concept of the virtual. SP#5 with the additional title 'Sound in the Virtual' was the first of three cases realized at the artist-in-residency in Stuhr-Heiligenrode between 2011 and 2013.

We learned from previous discussion that this venture is interested in how sonic art practices enable processes and experiences that create an aesthetic yield of the more-than. We might also note again – and pre-empt some discussion to come – that this research is interested in the onto-epistemology of sonic occurrence. This brings on the question of the role of curation, that is, how curatorial practice might facilitate as much as challenge these processes. For this reason, the (ad)venture explores curator-led intervention in tandem to the artist's work to unlatch 'generative lures' (Manning's term) for participatory enactments. Here curating takes on a "zoomed-out" position, revealing "the larger scenography of its relations inclusive of an immediate and expansive meshwork of actants that it affects and is affected by" (Doruff 2010, p. 6). In this sense, curator-led practice undertakes "researching through the notion of framing" (ibid.). Indeed, the framing of a particular content, condition or sensation implicates this act of

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research as “dynamic de-framing and re-framing method” (ibid, p. 9), which can engender novel perspectives and forms of expression in artistic production and its reception.

Below I discuss the objectives and strategies that apply to each case. One objective that applies to all cases, however, was to engage in what I consider to be co-research over a span of time, ranging from one and a half years to less than two months. The main co-research phase took place in the form of an ‘art laboratory’ during the artist’s stay at the residency. In *Rethinking Curating* (2010), Graham and Cook explain that the term *laboratory* resonates with science models with an emphasis on process: “experimental activities occur, things and ideas are tested, and sometimes they fail” (p. 237). Similarly, yet differently, the art world’s use of the word indicates “an alternative approach that can deal with process rather than object, with participant rather than audience, or with production rather than exhibition. Even in high modernist times, Alfred Barr was describing MoMA as a laboratory” (ibid., p. 235).<sup>1</sup> Which also goes back to Borgdorff’s idea that research in and through art is “about broadening and shifting our perspectives, our horizons. It is about constituting and accessing uncharted territories” (2009, p. 21). Staying in this groove, I would say that this venture makes use of this speculative and pragmatic attitude by creating space and time for processual thinking and doing that challenges and perhaps disables established concepts about the role of the artist and curator, or the researcher and researched. Co-research, then, becomes a collaborative intra-active endeavor that seeks to extend beyond a researcher-researched dichotomy, yet upholds the integrity of the respective practice which in turn yields an artist-led performance event on the one hand, and a curator-led intervention on the other. This strategy

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<sup>1</sup> Alfred Hamilton Barr, Jr. (1902-1981) was an art historian and the first director of the Museum of Modern Art in New York City. Stark, T. 2015. Barr, Alfred Hamilton, Jr. *The Metropolitan Museum of Art*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/libraries-and-research-centers/leonard-lauder-research-center/programs-and-resources/index-of-cubist-art-collectors/barr> [Accessed: 26 May 2018].

## SP Artistic Series

allowed for various ideas, sentiments, and approaches to undulate between the researcher and the researched until discrete trajectories crystallized. Each trajectory gave articulation to an activity that was autonomous, but intertwined in a common goal; it was agreed that each case would culminate in a one-off sonic performance and exhibition. The performative aspect was imperative to the project because it provided the necessary condition for others to engage in the curator-led Performative Encounter activity.

In the following, I introduce the artists and briefly outline each art event, without going into a full description and analysis of the artworks and situations presented. All SPs took place during the summer. The exhibition-events, always scheduled for Thursday nights, lasted two to three hours with gallery attendance ranging from 40 to 50 participants. The exhibitions (without the live performance element) were open to the public for several days only. Apart from the SP art events, select public events prior to the opening were held at the University of the Arts Bremen, such as artist talks and artist-led workshops. At the night of the opening, The SP exhibition-events included a free bus transfer from Bremen to Stuhr-Heiligenrode and back. Those taking the ride considered it a field trip *extraordinaire* – transporting the person from a place they knew to some kind of Alice's Wonderland.

I have already introduced aspects of David Strang's practice, but, let me now complement this information with further detail. In addition to working and exhibiting in a collaborative framework with artists and scientists alike, Strang's oeuvre includes site-specific installations, field recordings, performances, re-appropriated media objects and networks. Aside from this project, he presented solo works in the UK, Europe, Iceland, Russia, and the USA. In co-research and as leitmotif for the two-week art laboratory, the artist explored sonic sites in regard to questions of the virtual. Sonic territory was carefully surveyed, that is, field recordings made and environmental data gathered in order for site-specific

## Part Two – Sonic Peripheries

materials to fold back onto itself. That is, the specificity of the environs influenced the artwork in progress. Let me elaborate on this by briefly describing the general set-up.

The gallery of the artist residency is situated today in a landmarked building that was the house of a miller in the nineteenth and twentieth century. In the main exhibition space, the larger one of two rooms, gallery visitors were presented with an analogue tape installation and a kind of workshop set-up for the DIY (do-it-yourself) construction of cassette-loops. In the smaller room, an audiovisual piece was installed and displayed on a continuous loop. SP#5 attendees were invited to participate in a ‘sonic excursion’ (as part of the curator-led intervention), thus, explore the various acoustic artifacts and take into consideration the question of how sound and the virtual (also in the sense of haptic vibrations) relate and affect our perception and understanding of reality. The exploration could be pursued in the gallery and in nearby mill buildings as well as outside along the bridge and paths of the park (the site of a former Benedictine monastery).<sup>2</sup> In order to carry out the field excursion, the artist built listening devices, such as electrets, hydrophones, and contact microphones.

In preparation for the sonic artwork-performance, Strang attached several piezos (i.e., contact mics) to parts of various grain-processing machines inside the mill to capture discreet sonic vibrations. With the gears and belts running, the

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5. 

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<sup>2</sup> For a detailed account on the historic site of Heiligenrode and the monastery mill, I direct the reader to the website of the *Klostermühle Heiligenrode*, set up and maintained by the Fellowship of the Watermill Heiligenrode: <http://www.muehle-heiligenrode.de/b-index>. Especially the entries on the various mill machines, inclusive of an animation of the grain processing steps, are quite instructive. Special thanks are due to Rudolf Franke, member of the Fellowship of the Watermill, former teacher and mill enthusiast who volunteered to show us around and provide valuable information. He gave Strang and myself access to the mill building over the duration of the project and offered to operate the mill machinery for the purpose of the live sonic performance on the opening night. Franke, R. n.d. The historical Watermill Heiligenrode near Bremen in Germany. *Klostermühle Heiligenrode*. [Online] Available at: <http://www.muehle-heiligenrode.de/b-index> [Accessed: 26 May 2018].

machines caused a ruckus – some of which was discerned as audible noise or as vibrations that the piezos would pick up and transduce. In addition to this arrangement, the artist fastened a number of light meters in different parts of the mill to measure the variations in brightness, i.e., the light/shadow movements created by the rotation of wheels, for example. The data was gathered (via microcontroller and laptop) and streamed to the miller’s house. The live aspect of the sonic artwork-performance derived from the entanglement of the machines and their Umwelt. In the gallery, the SP#5 audience could then listen to a real-time transmission of the mill’s sounds and vibrations resembling mechanical noise, yet aestheticized and estranged from that reality – creating a contrasting, but nonetheless complementary sonorous environment in juxtaposition to the mill building itself and the park surrounding it. This changing soundscape (plus tape-loop installation, plus people talking, etc.) engendered a situatedness that invited further exploration of sonic territory in pursuit of a vibrational-*evanescent* map from which an acoustic trace temporarily emerged in the main exhibition space.

6. 

7. 

In terms of SP#6 with Shawn Decker, I would like to refer the reader to Part One where we have in part discussed this SP with the Whitehead-inspired subtitle ‘Non/Natura Naturans; Discerned Presence’. I shall refrain from providing a reading of the add-on title, but instead leave this to your collective imaginations. However, it is relevant to keep in mind the aspect of awareness that is implied in the title. In what follows, I will add some information about the art event that was omitted earlier.

We invited the SP#6 audience to take part in an acoustic exploration to investigate the notion of nature. What indeed is nature or ‘nonnature’ (as Decker will have it)? How can we define nature? Something Whitehead would ask and then answer as follows: It is “what we are aware of in perception” (1920, p. 28). This type of attentiveness was, and still is, of concern here. By means of the SP#6

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Performative Encounter activity (to which we return in the next chapter), the participants were asked to pursue the issue of how nature and acoustic artifacts (e.g., ‘natural’ versus ‘constructed mathematical’ rhythms) are encountered, will affect our perception (in prehension) and provoke possible worlds (or sound-spaces). While listening to the sonic artwork-performance (or ‘performative-installation’ as coined by Decker), the audience, or rather, the participants would move through the exhibition space of the miller’s house – including the hallway, kitchen, the garden as well as adjacent mill buildings – discerning various sonic environments and rhythms over a period of time. By way of motion and rest – walking and staying put – new diffractive patterns and rhythmic events gave way to a choreography of forces.

8. 

Let me add in passing that the gist of this event/project was to create a situation for a practice of thinking-sound as discussed in Part One. From what I learned through the interviews with the participants and my own observation and experience of being there that a sense of intense focus, even calm, ensued over time. There was no chatter, no hubbub – as Decker also noted in hindsight – rather a way of letting be and ‘to let sounds be themselves’. It is simply a way of discerning how sonic sites unravel whereby “[t]he space gets bigger, wider without barriers”<sup>3</sup> (Lehnert 2012) and “[s]pace and place have dissolved”<sup>4</sup> (Dogbey 2012). “The space becomes sound, it loses its structuring austerity”<sup>5</sup> (Thomssen 2012). Generally, sonic artwork-performance are a challenge to document and record – which made this an especially daring one to describe (hence my decision to add some participant responses above). Decker later remarked that a live event of this kind cannot be captured. For the artist, however, this is not a sign of a problem but rather a sign of success; in his words: “if you could

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<sup>3</sup> Translated from German by the author. In the original: “Raum und Ort haben sich aufgelöst.”

<sup>4</sup> Translated from German by the author. In the original: “Raum wird größer, weiter ohne Hindernisse.”

<sup>5</sup> Translated from German by the author. In the original: “Der Raum wird zu Sound, er verliert seine strukturierende Strenge.”



capture the essence of that performance, of that installation with a single audio recording, then, in my mind, it wouldn't have been a very interesting installation" (2012b). (The reader is invited to follow the audio symbol and to listen to an excerpt of the sonic performance. The audio recorder was positioned in the main gallery space. More on what the participants did during the art event to foster a thinking-sound, see upcoming chapter, pp. 135–137.)



Now we turn to the last of the three case set-ups, namely SP#7 with the US artist and musician Stephen Lacy who works under the moniker Academy Records. His works have been performed and exhibited at numerous venues – including Hyde Park Art Center, Linda Warren Gallery, Museum of Contemporary Art Chicago, and the Whitney Museum of American Art. I asked Lacy to join in co-research also because his artistic position, in my view, is emblematic of the expanded art practices of sound in the arts. Each Academy Records project is concept-led, site- and time-specific and generally of a DIY nature to encompass in a collaborative-performative act the actants and networks available through smaller economies. For this SP case with the subtitle ‘Sound/Image: Fielding Abstractions’, the conception of sonic occurrence lay at the heart of the investigation. Lacy and I sought to explore the constellation of lived abstraction and the effectuation of experiential events in conjunction with the notion of vanishing points in sound and image (in the context of site-specificity and space in general).

Unlike the previous cases, Lacy and I together deployed the Performative Encounter activity as a methodological vehicle to enquire into the materiality of site (with a focus on the art residency in the last phase of co-research) through field recording, photography, and drawing (more on SP#7’s artistic collaboration in the next chapter). Over the course of the exhibition-event, the audience was again invited to participate in an exploration or the contemplation of the nature of the sonic in relation to visual-perspective spatial topologies. They encountered a series of works – in part the result of the Performative Encounters enacted

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between Lacy and myself – and, importantly, experienced a live act or sonic performance by Academy Records, which informed the overall ‘mood’ and the coming into expression of so-called soundspace.

In the next few paragraphs, I will briefly outline the contents of the exhibition. In the main gallery space, Lacy installed photographs and drawings in contiguity with recorded sounds played back into space. Here the idea of image-landscape in relation to sound or soundscape was explored. A low tactile rumble suffused the room, creating a distinct presence, indeed making the listener aware of the gap between what was heard on the one hand and seen on the other. Even though we could discern frequencies that give rise to sonic objecthood (or semblance of ‘some-thing’), the soundscape was never descriptive, did not narrate, but would invoke a quality belonging to an undefined environment and situation.

In the other gallery space, an additional set of drawings we installed as well as two film projectors displaying each a distinct film loop onto opposite walls (Figs. 1, 2). The room was filled with the noise of the running projectors, though the film loops themselves were silent, displaying scenes that reflect on the notion of both sound and non-sound. These works resulted from the artistic collaboration where Figure 1 shows Lacy’s closing thought on our experimental series (and Fig. 2 shows mine, albeit not a closing thought as such since I continued to work on this problem through the conjunction of writing and image-graphics in *Experimenting: Sound/Non-Sound*).

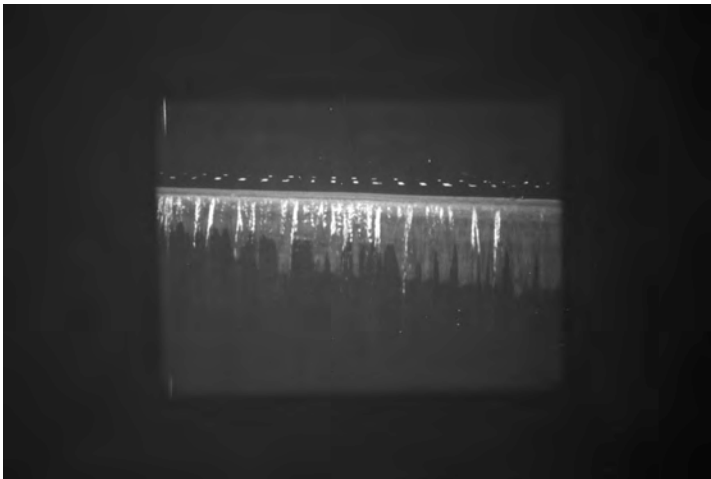
The drawings in general (and the score in particular) were Lacy’s explorations of sound and image relation that reference and frame the specificity of the artist in residency and its vicinity. In his own words, the artist states: “I am gathering field recordings to inform the generation of sight-responsive drawings that survey the individual’s sonic relationship to the landscape through line and

10. 

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11. 



12. 

Figures 1 (top), 2

Still images of ca. 20-seconds 16 mm film loops by Lacy (top) and Klusmeyer – results of SP#7 Performative Encounters 5 & 6. Photos by Lucas Odahara.

Lacy's film (Fig. 1) shows a handheld medium shot that imparts a partial view of a bench surrounded by lush greenery. Figure 2 shows a stationary mid to close-up shot of a body of water moving toward an edge from where it flows rapidly down.

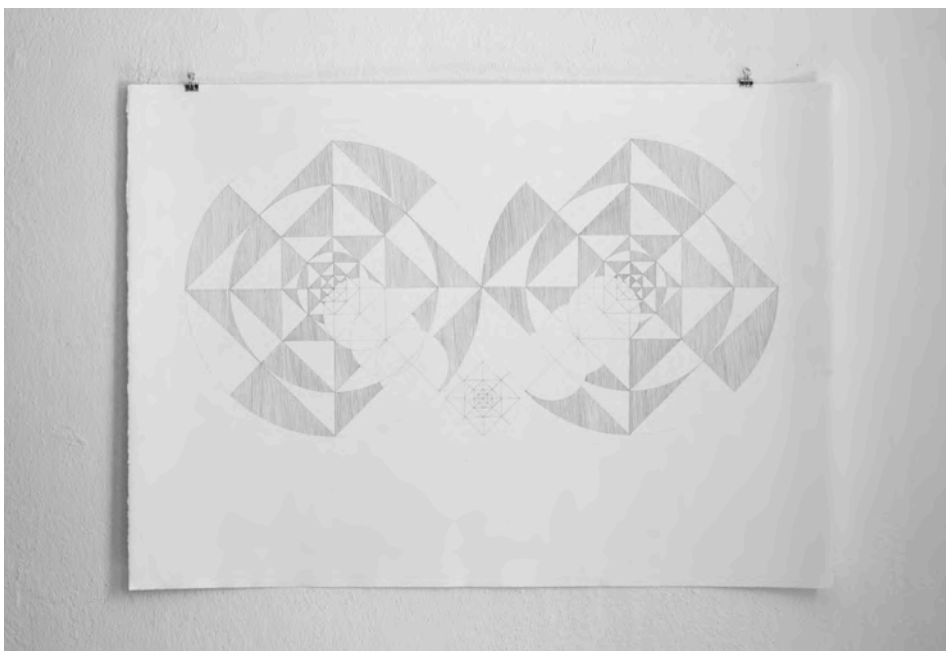


Figure 3

Diagrammatic score by Academy Records. Photo by Lucas Odahara.

pattern. In using landscape as a mode of research – through films, drawings, and sounds – I can relate pattern studies to temporal spatiality.”<sup>6</sup> The diagrammatic score commissioned for SP#7 (as seen in Fig. 3) presents a singular abstraction of space. In performing the drawing/score, Lacy reenacted (not reproduced) the ‘temporal spatiality’, or rather, the felt particularities of the given location. Participants were encouraged to move around the gallery, especially throughout Lacy’s 30-minute sonic performance – a piece that consists of one electric guitar, one stereo echo pedal and two guitar amplifiers. The melodic pattern, or what he calls ‘rhythmic figure’, was played through the pedal that split the signal to each amplifier situated in separate rooms, thus fracturing the pattern through physical

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14. 

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<sup>6</sup> Lacy S. 2016. Artist Statement. Email correspondence with the author, 7 December.

## SP Artistic Series

space. Due to the hard left and right pan of the stereo pedal, the ensuing patterns would only create a partial image of the actual played rhythm, generating sonic expression-events specific to the listener's relative position in space at a given time.

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## SP PERFORMATIVE ENCOUNTER

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Performative Encounter (in this chapter henceforth abbreviated as 'PE') emerged from the first case study. While I would refrain from calling SP#5 a pilot study, I will say that the first case was the most indeterminate of all three. This bears risks but also opportunities; in fact, uncertainty turned into an opportunity in the form of a curator-led intervention, namely the PE activity, driven by the question of how to facilitate situations that incite vital contemplation of a sonic event (its coming and going) and let us look into the goings-on (the what's-happened-between the coming-and-going).

Since our interest lies with the occasioning of sonic occurrences, the challenge was to conjure a method that accounts for the ineffable, the hard-to-grasp affective tones that 'seep up' from the unknown to become known. Something that we recognize, but speaks to us without clear content; "an incipient activity that summons intensities towards a coming-to-expression, a thinking directly imbued with rhythm, with feeling" (Manning 2015b, p. 61). By way of the PEs, we sought to tap into the summoned intensities, the throbs of feeling, or blocs of sensation that provide the condition for *erkennen*. The German verb 'erkennen' connotes a process where the prefix 'er-' suggests a revealing or unlocking that leads from recognition to knowing – *erkennen* to *kennen*. Manning in 'Against Method' (ibid.; see also Nietzsche 2003, p. 14) tells us that "there is often a sense of recognition despite a lack of knowing in the strong sense.

## SP Performative Encounter

Knowing is incipient to the experience at hand, sometimes known as such, sometimes actively felt but indecipherable in linguistic terms." But, and this is an important 'but', the unlocking of knowables in the indecipherable can be made palpable through invention. Here I mean invention on the part of the participant alongside the sonic artwork-performance.

How, then, to engage the gallery visitor in an activity that would foster *erkennen* – akin to "felt experience of knowing" (Doruff 2010, p. 7) – that comes alive at the moment of creativeness? This begs the question of how to set up or frame a situation so that it invites experimentation that will yield new modes of knowledge (outside predetermined schemas of knowledge). The felt experiences of knowing, I propose, occur by way of thinking in motion when engaging in experiments of a speculative pragmatic nature; that is to say, when experimentation and play provide us with the means "to engage speculatively in a pragmatic process" (Manning 2015b, p. 60). The PE activity, composed of a set of directives in the form of so-called Encounters and Prompts, opens onto a performative experiential milieu with the capacity to affect and be affected.<sup>1</sup> Here the term 'performative' takes on the meaning of a temporal presence, an *intuit-immediacy* where something compels us to think-feel the 'otherwise' (see Part Three: One).<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "The [Spinozan] formula 'to affect and be affected' is also proto-political in the sense that it includes relation in the definition. To affect and to be affected is to be open to the world, to be active in it and to be patient for its return activity. This openness is also taken as primary. It is the cutting edge of change. It is through it that things-in-the-making cut their transformational teeth. One always affects and is affected in encounters; which is to say, through events. To begin affectively in change is to begin in relation, and to begin in relation is to begin in the event" (Massumi 2015b, p. ix). See Massumi, B. 2015b. *The Politics of Affect*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

<sup>2</sup> Here I use the term 'performative' in the sense given to it by Peter Jaeger (2013) after Mieke Bal in *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* (2002). For both the performative "lives by the present and knows no anteriority" (Bal 2002, p. 17). Jaeger in *John Cage and Buddhist Ecopoetics* writes that he focuses "specifically on Bal's definition of the performative due to its immediacy, its temporal presence and its claim for non-dualistic awareness – categories of experience which can also be found represented in the literature of Zen" (2013, p. 3). See Bal, M. 2002. *Travelling Concepts in the*

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“This something is an object not of recognition but a fundamental encounter that can be ‘grasped in a range of affective tones’” (Deleuze 1994, p. 139 as quoted in Semetsky 2010, pp. 91–92). Middling with/in the world (and the event) “– *this* time, on *this* occasion, under *these* circumstances – is never settled in advance, but must be worked out, per-formed, as it were” (McCormack 2015, p. 89; italics in original). The act of ‘encounter’ is key to initiate the process – a ritual as a way of doing, if you like – for a thinking-sound ‘par le milieu’, to echo Deleuze. The first PE activity employed what I consider to be basic techniques. The PEs that followed grew in complexity – especially with regard to SP#7.

The reader might have noticed that I use ‘method’ and ‘technique’ interchangeably. Both terms refer to a set of practices that attend to the ineffable, the *atmospheric*, that provide the means and manner by which we intervene and invent anew from a field of relations arising from our intra-acting – ‘per-forming’ – with the artfulness of the givens in *that* occasioning, under *those* circumstances. Let us recall, though, that sonic artwork-performances bear *techniques of existence* specific to their manner of operation that bring about “signature species of semblance” (Massumi 2011, p. 143). Technique of existence (or relation) is immanent within experiential eventness in its coming-to-be. It gives rise to a form of abstraction through which we live – and, here, through which we participate – that can produce material expressions opening onto the mysteries of felt unknowns. Thus, it bears minding that techniques, or set of methods, work *initially* from without and techniques of relation from within. Each Performative Encounter activity provides directives (read, if you will: set of methods) that supply the participant with the tools to probe and auscultate sonic semblances. The intention was “to draw out something of the world that remains vague but still matters;” as such, the directives (initially from without) induce a matter mattering that, in turn, create fugacious expression – an artifact of material-

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*Humanities: A Rough Guide*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press; Jaeger, P. 2013. *John Cage and Buddhist Eco-poetics*. London: Bloomsbury Publishing.



## SP Performative Encounter

discursive nature – with its own aesthetic yield or semblance (from within the process) (McCormack 2015, p. 93). Here think back on Klatt's experiment or proceed to Part Three for other 'derivatives' that speak of the eventness.

Before turning to discuss particulars of the PE activity through examples, it will be helpful to recall once more the incentive behind this artistic research. Generally, the idea is to get attuned to the complexion of the sonic in relation to expanded art practices. From this, the question arises of how to create or infuse an openness to encounter sound in ways other than expected in a given circumstance; that is, how not to expect and repeat, but inspire an attentiveness to the *otherwise* incipient in an aesthetic encounter. For that reason, this project assumes aspects of what is known as 'method assemblage'. The neologism, coined by the sociologist John Law, advocates that the Deleuze-inspired concept of assemblage denoting "processes of arranging, organising, and fitting together," when thought in correlation with 'methods', will produce an alliance that accounts for the hard-to-grasp, the generative flux of which realities are made (Livesey 2010, p. 18). According to Law, "The task is to imagine methods when they no longer seek the definite, the repeatable, the more or less stable" (2004, p. 6). As such, he considers method in an extended manner, namely as *method assemblage* bound to make numerous, often surprising, connections. In this sense, the PEs are (along Deleuzian lines) a methodological abstract machine put into practice. I might add that this approach ensured the collection of empirical materials creating space for fabulation. Furthermore, borrowing from conventional (or say, established) models in social sciences and the humanities, I employed bespoke qualitative approaches, such as questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, audiovisual recordings, and research journaling (more on the Research Blog see footnote 5) for the purpose of documenting processes and gathering data for future reference. In sum, the PEs work in a twofold way: they create an opening ('generative lures' in the Manning-Massumian sense) for the gallery visitor to participate in research creation on the one hand and on the

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other serve as methodological and onto-epistemological devices to abstract experiences into actualizations in the form of writings, drawings, audiovisual recordings, or all other types of empirical thinkings that come to expression.

What follows from this in practical terms? One, the Research Kit; two, listening-in and -through; three, intervene and invent; four, the interviews. (Five, harnessing concepts.)



Figure 1

SP#6 PE activity; Research Kit in use. Photo by Annika Meyer.



15. 

Figure 2

SP#6 Research Kits collection after the event. Photo by Annika Meyer.

We begin with a description of the so-called Research Kit, which was a constituent part of each case/art event but unique with regard to its components. In the following, we look to SP#6 as example. Figures 1, 2 show the kit: a tote bag containing a clipboard, pen, papers, an audiovisual gadget, and, importantly, the PE directives plus questionnaire. The bag with the items was handed out to each gallery visitor at the outset of the opening night.

16. 

As mentioned above, the PEs are comprised of a set of directives in the form of Encounters and Prompts, plus a basic map of the gallery space (and immediate vicinity), a questionnaire and consent form. Following the introduction of the artist and works, the public was invited to participate in this project and carefully peruse the attached information. With this said and done, the event-exhibition was opened; the directives set the conditions for the course of action. Here, I offer Encounters 1 and 2 (from a total of four):

## Part Two – Sonic Peripheries

Please familiarize yourself with the map. Begin your listening journey in Gallery A. Enter the gallery space, seek out a place to sit or stand, and listen for some duration. You decide for how long.

Create a route that takes you through different spaces inside the gallery as well as outside the building. Draw the route on the map and indicate with a cross the locations where you spent some time for close listening. Please follow the respective prompts. Repeat the same route at least twice.

Encounters (or also 'performance scores') provide the frame for experiment-experience on site. Prompts differ from Encounters insofar that they are directed towards specific kinds of action. For example, one prompted the participant to 'feel' the heard (as opposed to thinking about the heard) – sauntering through the indoor and outdoor spaces – pausing here and there, with eyes closed. The next Prompt read: "Write down a word that comes to mind." We might say that the directives, on the whole, work on the level of the atmospheric. The PE activity endeavored to inspire a thinking-sound and connect the participant to a sonic, or rather vibrational ecology in the widest sense in order to draw out the hidden as well as tacit knowings. Especially those Encounters that would ask the participant to 'capture' the heard (through the use of audiovisual technology or other means of mnemonic recording, e.g., drawing, exploratory writing, etc.) incited the unexpected. Actual-corporeal participation (in lieu of or in addition to theoretical doing) not only gave rise but also form to the Real by invoking the potentiality of the Present into taking-shape. It provoked a "sense of permanent presence," as one participant put it.<sup>3</sup> And we might also say it

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<sup>3</sup> For questionnaire responses and interview transcripts visit the Research Blog online. More on the Research Blog and its function in addition to the Online Addendum, see p. 139 and/or proceed to footnote 5 of this chapter.

## SP Performative Encounter

provoked a provisional presencing of matter that comes to matter – for real (see Part Three).

Each PE activity inclusive of the questionnaire was designed in relation to the specifics of each case and the research proposition that informed the respective co-research process. The questionnaire consisted of an iterative set of semi-open questions and a distinct set of semi-open questions. The former pertained to the experience of time and space, the latter were questions that sought to elicit responses relevant to the coming-to of sonic occurrence (or select experiences thereof). The responses were returned to me at the end of the art happening. Interviews with those who gave consent for a follow-up conversation were scheduled in close proximity of time to the art event.

In closing this chapter, I will shortly address the artistic collaboration between Academy Records and myself. We together deployed the Performative Encounter activity as a methodological vehicle to enquire into the materiality of site, and, as said above, this was an approach quite unlike the previous co-researches. The process started out with a set of directives I devised for Lacy to work with. Once I received his response – in the form of photographs or field recordings – I would propose the next set until we reached Encounter 5: “Taking research into practice.” Here we decided (after a discussion on site-specificity in image-sound correlations) that Lacy called the Prompt which I would then enact. I also suggested that we integrate analogue film into the process. (This seemed only apt with respect to Academy Records’ practice and the problem that we were co-researching at the time.) His instruction read: “Using the Bolex consider the frame as demarcation of space. Using the viewfinder: frame up an image that conveys no sense of sound; also inverse, frame up an image that conveys a distinct (known or universal) sound.” The next and last Encounter (of a total of six), I again devised for Lacy to then put into practice. It said: “Reenact the semblance of an event;” followed by the Prompt: “Repeat Prompt 5 with the

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addition to reenact the scenes of PE 5: 1. waterfall, 2. stone; 3. bench; 4. water surface; 5. wall. For direction see photo/film documentation.” In other words, repeat the previous task (i.e., ‘Using the Bolex ... frame up an image’, etc.) and take the lead from the documentation of the location scouting for film loop one (see Fig. 2) to create a contrasting film loop two (Fig. 1).<sup>4</sup>

This is not the place to discuss the intricacies of our collaborative effort; suffice it to say, however, that we took the PEs to the limit (as far as we could) by integrating the method as exploratory means for the discovery of what arises from the interstice between sensation and cognizance. “The emphasis here is on the experience of making as *encounter*,” writes Doruff in ‘Artistic Res/Arch: The Propositional Experience of Mattering’ (2010, p. 8; italics in original). In Doruff’s account on artistic research, the style of research-creation takes on significance, meaning – it is how we enter a ‘thing’ in and through artistic poiesis that comes to matter mattering (the Germanic root *thing* assumes the meaning of the Latin ‘res’ in the sense of matters-of-concern as *ethico-aesthetic* matters-of-fact). The back and forth in the making of a thing, in this case, the film loops, is given primacy. Similar to the practice of the ‘exquisite corpse’ – based on the Surrealists’ method involving a sheet of paper “folded horizontally concertina-fashion onto which, in turn, each member of a group draws a part of a body, without being able to see what others have drawn on the paper” (Manchester 2002, n.p.) – the PE activity allows for an opening or *archway* (to use Doruff’s image) towards what we might anticipate but do not know ‘as such’. Although the PEs depart from the surrealist technique, the dual nature of our collaboration, the sharing and fostering *the difference in the one* – the exploring of sound in non-sound and vice versa – was, and is, of interest and a matter-of-concern for two et al.

One final thought, and pre-empting an underlying aspect of Part Four, I want to link this collaborative experience to my decision to create an offshoot

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<sup>4</sup> I want to thank Ali Eichelbach for his help in the realization of Encounter 5.

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project as part of *Sonic Peripheries*. I write this not to excuse my choice for diverging from curation for the pursuit of my own art practice, but rather to convey the importance of artistic work and the experiences it affords when navigating one's way through the labyrinthine passage of producing artworks, inclusive of writing and other kinds of creative endeavors. There is a sense of *joy* in the making that lets us access what I refer elsewhere to as the otherwise. Here I mean 'joy' in the Spinozan sense – not a feel-good-type as Massumi shows in *Politics of Affect* (although that, too, for me at times) – but “Joy in the Spinozan sense refer[ring] to the intensity of the affective encounter. The intensity of the encounter in turn refers to an augmentation in powers of existence – capacities to feel, act and perceive – that occurs through the encounter” (Massumi 2015b, p. 208). This ingredient to research in general and research-creation in particular I wanted to continue to trace *intensively* (in proximity to and in alliance with all that came previously) when exploring the Whiteheadian 'lure for feeling' through the experiment/project titled 'How is Nature'. For more on this, see Part Four: A Lure for Feeling and Experiment 2.



As way of concluding Part Two (though, somewhat lengthy in what follows), I would like to add two things here that pertain to the issue of sound art and performance-related documentation in general and audience participation in particular – something that has been, and continues to be, at stake for this kind of venture.

Let me take this as a cue to introduce the reader to my Research Blog.<sup>5</sup> I do this at this juncture since it relates to the subject of information, materials and

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<sup>5</sup> I decided to discuss the Research Blog here rather than in the chapter *Apropos Online Addendum* since I didn't want it to take up too much space right at the beginning. As said earlier, everything is in the thesis – supported by select audio, visual, audiovisual, diagrammatic, and textual examples online. The Research Blog is a different animal altogether, but it may just so give the reader an idea

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nascent ideas of which to produce archives on the one hand, and enable creative flows on the other, which, in my view, need safeguarding against the perils of losing one's thought-connection (see Part One, p. 38). To find out more, I invite you to proceed to the footnote 5 of this chapter. You may follow up on this now or later; for what is to come next, it is not critical to review the online site. What it

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of the extent of this venture (and why it took the time it did). As Rick Dolphijn said: "it's what anthropologists do," namely to open up their research journals to the initiated. And this is what I am doing here right now without claiming that this should portrait the entire story – it doesn't. It's another rhizomatic thread amid the ones that you find in the thesis (and others that may never see the light of day or made public, that is). Now let me add a few words concerning the layout and respective content of the blog. The menu shows the following rubrics: Case Studies, Theory-Practice, and Quasi Writing. Under the first rubric you find archived data from the *Sonic Peripheries* (SP) art research events: in part the process that led to the events as well as images, sounds, miscellaneous data from the performances/exhibitions – and, importantly, the interview transcripts. Altogether information I thought significant then and felt the need to organize by way of cataloging the bits and pieces. Note that I distinguished between what I call SP Annotated Archive and the pages under the same rubric that show a selection of responses/findings from the respective research events. Next, the rubric titled Theory-Practice. It shows how I (tirelessly) continued to seek new ways of organizing data with the intention of extracting conceptual lines; see Diagrams, for instance. (I must have been desperate, but then again the annotated mind maps reflect to some extent what later can be found in writing, albeit not directly.) The last rubric (there were others I deleted along the way) presents an offshoot idea; something in the way of art practice. A nascent idea that I didn't further flush out but will leave for you to ponder; it's slightly embarrassing to me now, or, say, I feel self-conscious about the experiment titled Quasi Writing. But if art research or art making were all too slick and neutral, then, perhaps, something was amiss. Well? ... Both tags and categories became somewhat diluted over time: too many tags, too many ideas; so the archive might have turned into a 'mad scientist's bin' ... at any rate, a useful one to me. The rest is self-explanatory or if not understood to be ignored. Enjoy rummaging (no negative connotation intended). You might find the occasional gem as I have over the course of the endeavor and while writing this thesis. The website with the title Research Blog (Excerpt) is a slimmed down copy of the original ongoing research blog/journal. I didn't go back and reread everything; there was simply no time nor desire to do so. I hope though that I didn't leave you with too self-indulging entries; there might still be some that are overly sulky or plain silly. I am afraid that's just part of *the adventure* – such as this one – no doubt.

<https://pklusmeyer.wordpress.com>

Username: cartomythographer

Password: sonicperipheries



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does, however, is to provide additional insight into the overall process. I thus consider it an add-on to the official Online Addendum.

Now back to where we left off. It is worth reminding ourselves that a discussion on sonic artwork-performances is no substitute for the experience of being there physically, attending the live event in person. That said, writing on art affords a different type of experiential event. It creates other assemblages, not so much a retelling of facts but rather a production of aesthetic encounters through ‘perceptual’ writing that opens up the art experience to further adventures (cf. O’Sullivan 2001b). It is a kind of interference of which Manning and Massumi write in *Thought in the Act* (2014, p. vii):

Philosophy does not yet know how to speak. Its thinking is active, uneasy because always in the encounter. Giving words to the encounter is what we have attempted to do here. Not to solve the riddle of how art and philosophy [...] move together, but to ask ourselves what writing can do to make thought-felt what art can do, with philosophy.

This venture aspires to “[run] writing interference” (ibid., p. viii). For example, the retelling of Decker’s experience (see Part One: Aesthetic Encounter) “has more fundamentally to do with speculation than designation, or any form of one-to-one correspondence between words and things” (Massumi 2011, p. 119). It thus implies a freedom involved – not only to run interference, but to run wild – to let the eventness re-enter the scene. Documentation of the *Sonic Peripheries* cases in the form of audio recordings, photos, and the like, is available and has been and will be made use of from time to time: on the one hand, to make reference to some specifics (see e.g., Figs. 1–3 on pp. 127–128); on the other hand, to play into the encounter between art and philosophy, hence to create thought-

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feelings in resonance with the concepts discussed in the text (see also Part Three: Experiment 1). Suffice it to say here (and to say it with Bishop who notes):

To grasp participatory art from images alone is almost impossible: casual photographs of people talking, eating, attending a workshop or screening or seminar tell us very little, almost nothing, about the concept and context of a given project. They rarely provide more than fragmentary evidence, and convey nothing of the affective dynamic that propels artists to make these projects and people to participate in them. (Bishop 2012, p. 5)

I shall leave this uncommented (letting it speak for itself) and move on to the next thing, the position of the participant.

As said earlier in this thesis, the audience is not merely a recipient but equally a participant and co-producer of situations. The *Sonic Peripheries* cases operated on the basis of inviting the audience to partake in the sonic artwork-performance – i.e., the art research events. Depending on the conceptual framework of the respective case, the part of the audience (or gallery visitors) varied between ‘active’ and ‘reflective’ participation, or a combination of both – of which some details were addressed earlier. Of import, here, is to stress the relevance, or rather irrelevance of a human-centered perspective in this context. Why both? Because it is never just one, that is, one perspective, one thing or element, one intercessor, etc. This (ad)venture explores what art can do by means of research creation and writing, which involves (and creates) various modes of thinking within an ecology of practices. In other words, there is never a neat divide between art, research and *those* participating in research creation (‘those’ meaning: human and nonhuman elements). However, for Massumi, the gallery visitor assumes a privileged link in the coming-together of elements: “The experiential effect occurs to the visitor, as it occurs to itself as its own event, through the

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conduit of the visitor" (Massumi 2011, p. 165). In that sense, the audience (or also 'art recipients') of a sonic artwork-performance acts as catalyst or transducer, bringing energies afloat into perceptual focus. What comes to pass as the experiential event (or 'the excess of the inexpressible') is the effect setting in as it wells up from below the threshold of human awareness. "This makes the experience integrally ecological," asserts Massumi (ibid.). Still, this doesn't imply that the event is 'natural' as opposed to 'cultural'. On the contrary. To the activist philosopher the event is ecological because "[i]t takes in elements classifiable as natural (the physiology of the human body, the physics of [sound] and materials) in a way that effectively fuses them with cultural elements. The coming-together draws on a nature-culture continuum" (ibid.). And lastly, in closing this line of thought: privileging the human in the encounter with the nonhuman may (or may not) underpin anthropomorphism (the attribution of human characteristics and intentions to nonhuman entities). "A touch of anthropomorphism," writes Jane Bennett in *Vibrant Matter*, "can catalyze a sensibility that finds a world filled not with ontologically distinct categories of beings (subjects and objects) but with variously composed materialities that form confederations" (2010, p. 99 as quoted in Manning 2014, p. 327). To invite the audience to participate in a sonic artwork-performance welcomes the opportunity (and the risk) to veer off the beaten path. *Sonic Peripheries* attendees were free to engage in experimentation that possibly enabled situations that could just be the right 'antidote' against anthropomorphizing. Being drawn to a specific sonic event and the experience it brings forth requires of us, in Bennett's words, "to relax into resemblances discerned across ontological divides" (2010, pp. 119–120). *I take the chirps of crickets for the sound and feel of rain – virtually – falling upon me*;<sup>6</sup> "a chord is

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<sup>6</sup> Dave Dowhaniuk in interview with the author, following the *Sonic Peripheries #6* event. He participated in the Performative Encounter activity, as part of the case study. The italicized statement is paraphrased, or rather poetically translated from Dowhaniuk's original response, which goes as follows: "The sonic textures were comforting from the rain, which felt as though I was covered and

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struck between person and thing, and I am no longer above or outside a non-human 'environment'" (ibid.). This awareness, precisely this listening-in and -through the materiality of sound, presents a concern for the world's worlding: "how the world composes itself in a mode of perception that does not privilege the human in any of its precomposed guises, or any other general categories" (Manning 2014, p. 327). We tune in; we become attuned to the messy middling goings-on, resonating with the things surrounding us, intra-acting with the world of forces – as a matter of fact – based on the principles of passage and in/determinacy.

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relaxed, and to the chirps of the crickets and birds, the warm hum which emanated through the space that had a meditative feeling."