

Introduction // Sound | In Empty Rooms : Lonely Listening to Affective Streams, and Production Politics

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INTRODUCTION //

SOUND I IN EMPTY ROOMS: LONELY LISTENING TO AFFECTIVE STREAMS, AND PRODUCTION POLITICS

During the second lockdown and while writing this text, a radio station in Berlin is advertising with the slogan “Hör Dich glücklich” (“Listen yourself happy”). While this tagline captures both an inherent connection of sound, pleasure, and affect, it also inadvertently points to one of the few activities still possible. But isolated listening is not the same as collective listening.

— “You can only narrate loneliness acoustically,” claims filmmaker Christian Petzold (Diederichsen & Ruhm 2010: 220). What sounds can be heard in the rooms that have been emptied due to COVID-19 precautions and restrictions? Berlin and other cities have become quieter than ever before in some regards, while noise from private parties in neighboring apartments or in public parks may have gotten louder and more frequent than usual.

— Jace Clayton’s rhetorical question “Where is the party?” in his review of famed DJ Carl Craig’s installation in New York in spring 2020 hit a nerve. Like several other artworks, Craig’s *Party/After Party* seemed both to anticipate and to comment on the uncanny situation of the present, almost acting as a seismographic forecast. As Clayton outlines, “The sweaty social contract invoked by the art of the DJ – according to which the relationship between performer and crowd is a self-modulating loop wherein the kinetic energy of the latter informs the aesthetic choices of the former and vice versa, resulting in a communal momentum powerful enough to shape the subsequent creation of more music – is underwritten by a sonic axiom: Amplified music sounds terrible in empty rooms” (Clayton 2020). Usually, dancing or standing clubgoers’ bodies act as a filter to the raw sound. Without them, not only does the music sound terrible, but the mutual energy, the overflow of affect, and the rapport between DJ and audience is missing.

— Since all spaces of collective listening, the clubs and venues, opera houses and bars, have been closed for most of 2020 and are still closed in 2021 at least until Easter, some people use their car as a substitute for the club, cranking up the volume to the maximum. At least in the car, they are moving through the city, are seen and heard by passersby, and the sound reverberates differently.

STREAMING SOUNDS AND PRODUCING AT HOME — During the first lockdown, videos circulated in social media of people from Wuhan, China to Lombardy, Italy standing on their balconies and singing to each other, expressing solace and solidarity. But as the disease's transmission paths were studied more, it was exactly the act of breathing, speaking, and singing together that was deemed to be the most dangerous, especially in indoor settings. The pulmonologist Michael J. Stephen stated the basic truth: "The atmosphere is a communal space, and lungs are an extension of it" (Stephen 2021). Choirs like *Mala Sirena*¹⁾ and directors like Katharina Schmitt started rehearsals via Zoom. This seemed like a difficult undertaking as one sometimes experiences a delay of some milliseconds, leading to an out of sync video. Sound is what provides temporal synchronicity. There is nothing more jarring than out of sync sound in a movie, where people move their lips, but their voices are not audible or do not match.

— In spring 2020, campaigns like "United we stream" and funding calls for struggling venues were quickly filling up my social media feeds. New podcasts and radio shows, or live streams of DJ sets proliferated. Everybody seemed busy creating something, playing from bed- or living rooms. This home recording situation and production setting is, of course, by no means new and not only a result of the pandemic. Underfunded electronic musicians have already known it very well for the last two decades. Artist, speaker, musician, and educator on transgender and pansexual queerness Terre Thaemlitz has always criticized this fact both in her writings and in her tracks.²⁾ She reflects on "how the various media industries ... demand a degree of optimism and uplifting happy-ends so as to generate a product capable of sale in a marketplace with no forgiveness for pessimism [...]" (Thaemlitz 2016). While Thaemlitz often points out that she is expected to work for free, this represents a taboo as she explains in her meandering style, since "doing so risks invoking romantic images of heroism, conviction, and suffering for one's art – perhaps as a consumer you admire our conviction and/or feel sorry for our financial state, or perhaps as a producer of some type you have had similar experiences and resent the potential implication that any of this is out of the ordinary or worthy of reflection [...]" (ibid.).

— For good measure, Thaemlitz as *DJ Sprinkles* had released a remix of Canada's *The Mole – Lockdown Party* (DJ Sprinkles Crossfaderama) in 2013.³⁾ During the spring 2020 lockdown, I returned to this track's fragmented house experience for a melancholic and at the same distanced memory of dancefloor euphoria. It

1)

The choir *Mala Sirena* was initiated by Constanze Ruhm in 2017. See: <https://www.mala-sirena.net/> (20 February 2021).

2)

For example, Terre Thaemlitz, *Midtown 120 Blues Album*, and the publication *Nuisance: Writings on Identity Jamming and Audio Production*, Vienna: zaglossus 2016.

3)

The Mole – Lockdown Party (DJ Sprinkles Crossfaderama), Youtube: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CAjU_6yw2Gs (3 February 2021).

features several brutally interrupted loops of voices, live screaming, singing, and evocative howling almost like a wolf, and a recognizable driving bass beat. In its remixed version by Thaemlitz/Sprinkles it is even more cut up and gets faded in and out, presenting the same material over and over with slightly different variations. It takes you from a high-intensity party crowd to a meditative aural space and back, while still being danceable, as one can observe on YouTube in an amateur video of Sven Våth playing the track live at Cocoricò club in Rome 2013.⁴⁾ Watching it, I felt like a visitor from another planet, how could these people be in this crowded space, carelessly moving so close together?

— And yet to return to the question of production: in spring and summer of 2020, the slew of home-recording activities was more than the aspect of low-cost DIY production of sounds. It was also about sending a signal out to the world: “Listen, I am still here,” and thus making sure one was not forgotten.

— The experience of being alone, speaking alone into one’s small laptop screen, hoping that others could hear you, was no longer a privilege or an outburst of narcissistic egomania, it became a common happening for many people. The mandatory question “Can you hear me?” or the command “Unmute your microphone” became standard repertoire. This experience also creates new modes of affect: in particular, there should be a word invented to describe the particular loneliness you feel after holding a lecture via videoconference software and then finding yourself alone in the bedroom of your flat.

— Virginia Woolf, of course, had described *A Room of One’s Own* (1929) as a pre-condition for women to write fiction. Now, in 2020, for a short while, it seemed that everyone who was not sick but stuck at home, could have become an instant writer. Alas, soon people felt the pressure of “corona-creativity-terror,” as it was once called in a discussion at the b_books collective.

AN AUDIENCE OF ONE — A work that was significant for me was Ari Benjamin Meyer’s *Solo*.⁵⁾ An audience of one person sits alone in an enclosed space. An opera singer starts to perform for this smallest audience ever. You can never see the singer, but you understand from the sound coming through the walls that she is moving around: sometimes coming closer to the wall behind which you are sitting and lowering her voice to a whisper, sometimes again singing from further away. The libretto comments on the relationship between the soloist and the solitary recipient and the tension between a live personal presence without ever meeting face

4)

Sven Våth playing the *Lockdown Party*
Remix: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1mQ99ZTMRDk> (3 February 2021).

5)

Solo was first presented in Berlin by Soundfair at Loge in 2009. Ari B. Meyers – Solo (Social Distance Version) 2009/2020, performance by Susanne Fischer, soprano, music score, variable dimensions, duration, 10 min. Courtesy of the artist and Esther Schipper.

to face. I heard the piece in Berlin during some easing of restriction after the first lockdown in September 2020. Having a professional singer sing only for me was a very special and luxurious experience. It created a very intimate feeling but by the same token it was also an utterly isolating setting. I wished I could have seen the singer and applauded her, but by the end of the piece she was already gone, before I was guided outside again. Meyer's piece was first performed in 2009, so it was not conceived during the COVID-19 pandemic, but it seemed to speak about its experience better than any other.

— In another rendition of a similar work by Meyers a DJ performs live for an audience of one in an empty club. He plays a composed track by Meyers and Deadbeat that lasts 10 minutes. This piece is called *K-Club*, and was shown in 2019 in Turin and in October 2020 at *Blitz Club* in Munich.⁶⁾

— Several clubs, like *Blitz*, opened their doors to art exhibits since they could not open all year as usual. Other venues together with theaters even became – alienated from their usual purpose, but since they had the necessary infrastructure in place – COVID-19 testing centers in winter '20/'21 in Berlin and Vienna.⁷⁾

WHERE IS THE PARTY, AGAIN? DANCE, PROTEST, SILENCE

— On May 25, 2020, Carl Craig streamed his DJ set live for *Movement*, which also only took place at *home* this year. *Movement* is one of the longest running and biggest annual electronic music festivals in Detroit, the rightful birthplace of techno.⁸⁾ Two camera views document Craig's set, one shows his upper body, the second zooms in on his hands on the controls of the mixing board. He wears a t-shirt saying "Merica." The term 'Merica is now frequently used in ironic or self-conscious fashion, emphasizing emblematic or stereotypical qualities of American traditions, institutions, and national ideals. The t-shirt with text hints possibly at the political turmoil that happened despite a global pandemic in 2021, and the often uneasy relationships of party and politics.

— On May 31, while on one of the countless walks around my

6) *K Club*, with DJ Tiefschwarz/Basti. Curated by Eva Huttenlauch (Lenbachhaus) together with Sarah Haugeneder (Various Others), see "K Club Performance von Ari B. Meyers am 9./10. Okt im Blitz Club München," *Tabula Rasa*, 25.9.2020, <https://www.tabularasamagazin.de/k-club-performance-von-ari-benjamin-meyers-am-9-10-okt-im-blitz-club-muenchen/> (6 February 2021).

7) <https://mitvergnuegen.com/2020/kit-kat-club-corona-schnelltestzentrum/> (6 February 2021).

8) <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YB-SMZmie3dw> (14 January 2021). <https://www.movement.us/> (14 January 2021).



// Figure 1
Ari Benjamin Meyers, *K Club*, OGR Turin, 2019, Performance, environment, neon sign, 2 12-inch, LP vinyl records, Installation dimensions variable

neighborhood, I suddenly heard beats and saw fog waving through the air. It was like an apparition and turned out to be a self-organized boat rave. There were protest flotillas and rubber boats on Landwehr canal in Berlin demanding an end to the closure of clubs.

— This event was condemned in social media and press, and criticized as too risky, even though it took place outdoors. A second criticism was its hybrid mix of pleasure-orientation and gesture toward politics. It was shortly after the killing of George Floyd by a police officer in the USA. Some of the young ravers were holding up signs reading “I can’t breathe,”⁹⁾ while dancing on top of a floating device to techno beats, sipping alcohol. At the same time the statement “I can’t breathe” took on extra resonance during a respiratory pandemic that disproportionately affected people of color, partly because they were living in areas with more polluted air and less access to health services. Thus the pandemic intensified what Rob Nixon termed “slow violence” (2011).

— In addition, the improvised boat rave offered a paramount example of the question of ‘voice’ in its political dimension and what kind of speech act was seen as a legitimate claim. At the same time the affective and casual coding of the protest and its mixing of issues (closure of clubs and Black Lives Matter) seemed to create a strong dissonance, mostly in its critics. As Jens Kastner and Andreas Spiegel had recapitulated in the context of popular music and politics: “Voice, or the possibility of raising one’s real voice personally or politically, has become Voice & Vote – a relation that extends into the relationships between pop cultures and parliamentarianism as equally diversified and interrelated forms of publicly representing voices”¹⁰⁾ (2018: 12–13).

— All means of public demonstrations in 2020 were under higher than usual pressure and seen as a conundrum. On the one hand, protest to raise one’s voice works best in the collective, on the other hand, exactly these gatherings were mostly forbidden under the pandemic precautions. Some formats of protest on social media were tried out as an alternative or amplification of analogue protest, as for example, posting no private images and instead changing one’s profile image to a black square in support of the Black Lives Matter movement.¹¹⁾ It became increasingly evident in 2020, however, that this gesture of only visual and silent protest was just *clicktivism* and in no way equivalent to gathering in large numbers on the streets, live and loud.

— And yet, there can be powerful statements in listening to the silence, and what is left out, in certain images and audio-visual materials. In her contribution to this issue **Katrin Köppert**

9)

These were the words uttered by several black men who were killed by police, and they appeared as graffiti and on protest signs globally in the summer of 2020.

10)

Translation of the author, original text: “Die Stimme oder die Möglichkeit, die echte Stimme so persönlich wie politisch zu erheben, hat sich aufgespalten in Voice & Vote – in eine Relation, die sich bis in die Beziehungen zwischen Popkulturen und Parlamentarismus als gleichermaßen diversifizierte wie aufeinander bezogene Formen der öffentlichen Repräsentation von Stimmen erstreckt.”

11)

Even though one interesting online-phenomenon was the unusual alliance of K-Pop fans that supported Black Lives Matter and flooded right-wing social media. See Cho 2020.



// Figure 2a & 2 b

Boat Protest on Landwehrkanal, Berlin
May 2020



// Figure 2c

Graffito “Rest in Power G. Floyd,” Pannierstr. Berlin, May 2020

analyzes the black American artist Arthur Jafa's *White Album* together with Glen Ligon's works and their specific engagement with both black sound culture and ongoing racism. Köppert employs Tina Campt's strategy of "listening to images" (2017) and contextualizes art works that denounce concrete policing practices, also in a wider sense as modes of capture connected to constructions of whiteness and blackness. Significantly, her analysis finds in these "bent notes" moments of decolonial explosion and escape.

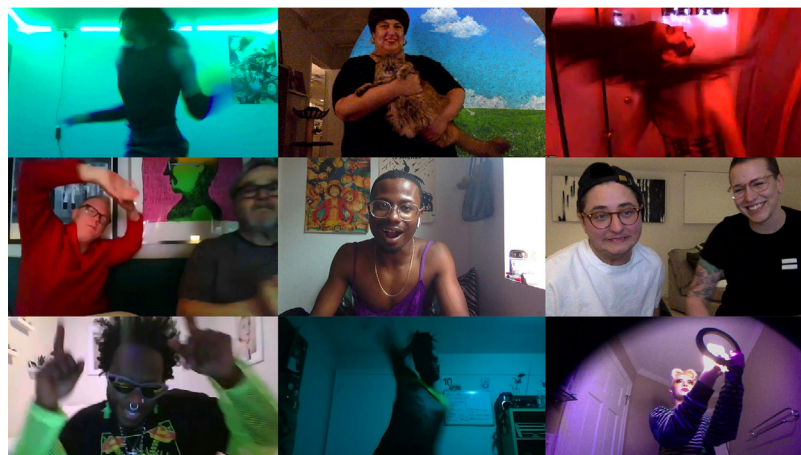
THE DISAPPEARANCE OF MUSIC? — Questions of class and stereotypes about audience behaviors are, of course, entangled with the discourses on pandemic safety. Why were classical concerts, for example, allowed to take place for some months indoors with socially distanced audiences, while clubs and live concerts of other musical genres remained forbidden? High-brow culture won out over low-brow culture, since there was a common assumption by the politicians that the listeners of classical music would be 'more orderly' than club goers, even though both venues are usually highly regulated in terms of access and audience surveillance. Clubs started to fight to be recognized as spaces of culture.¹²⁾

— Berlin's notorious club *Berghain* did not open at all again after spring 2020, and is still closed at the beginning of 2021. In the summer it hosted a sound installation and an art exhibit. A large banner has been covering the upper part of the building, which can be read from the S-Bahn windows, stating: "Morgen ist die Frage // Tomorrow is the question."

— Los Angeles based filmmaker Aurora Brachman instead embraced the opportunity of dancing together on Zoom, and documented a nightly queer dance party that she joined during lockdown, underlining the importance of clubs: "Historically, nightlife has been one of the few safe spaces for the queer community. It is no surprise that in this time of devastation, queer people have once again sought community in the club, albeit a virtual one" (Bachmann 2020 a). The result of Brachman's documentation and dialogue with participants is a short documentary film called *Club Quarantine* that captures the amazing diversity

12)

As I was finishing this text, there was another Europe-wide action day organized by several clubs #clubsAREculture on February 6th 2021 under the title of (Open) Club Day, see <https://www.clubsareculture.de/open-club-day/> (4 February 2021).



// Figure 3
Club Quarantine by Aurora Bachmann,
Film still

and some of the positive energy of this getting-together in cyberspace. (Bachmann 2020b).

— The House of World Cultures (HKW) had planned a festival with the title *The Disappearance of Music* for Nov. 13–15, 2020 in Berlin, comprised of live concerts, talks, installations, films, and performances. Tellingly, the curators Detlef Diederichsen and Zuri Maria Daiß had conceived this format, again, before corona was a factor, explaining that “[it] was meant as an exaggerated provocation. The pandemic, however, has given it a new meaning. [...] But music is already in the process of an extensive transformation due to digitization. Instruments, notes, virtuosity – even the human voice and composers – are gradually being replaced by computer programs and artificial intelligence.”¹³⁾ With the typical irony that characterized any planning of live events in 2020, a new partial lockdown was announced in the middle of November and the whole festival was moved online. This changed the festival fundamentally, especially for the soundwalk performance *Hauch*, created by composer Juliana Hodkinson, stage designer Marsha Ginsberg and director Katharina Schmitt.¹⁴⁾ In the performance, the recipients would have walked together with one performer, disguised as a member of the audience, who at the first location transforms into a creepy clown. The text of the libretto sung by the *Neue Vocalsolisten*¹⁵⁾ comments on a scary disappearance of people, and appearance of bodiless voices; “Skin without body. Body without voice. Voice without breath. Breath without skin. Will people one day disappear into the landscape the way that all sounds inevitably fade into space?”¹⁶⁾ The clown would then be joined by two others, taking the audience through an outdoor immersive sonic horror show, albeit with some playful elements. Schmitt, Hodkinson, and Ginsberg instead created a film, which they consider to be only the first instantiation of the piece due to the limitation and lack of interactivity.

13)

Quoted from the HKW-flyer, more information at: https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/2020/das_verschwinden_der_musik/start.php (1 December 2020).

14)

https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/veranstaltung/p_174131.php (1 December 2020). Even though the libretto is sung in both English and German, they decided to keep the title in German for its onomatopoeic quality. “Hauch” translates in English to “whiff” or “breath.”

15)

It was recorded in May 2020 by the Neue Vocalsolisten, see <https://neuevocalsolisten.de/> (1 December 2020).

16)

https://www.hkw.de/en/programm/projekte/veranstaltung/p_174131.php (1 December 2020).



// Figure 4 & 5

Hauch by Katharina Schmitt, Juliana Hodkinson and Marsha Ginsberg

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— In retrospect, I wondered if this scene in *Hauch* of an audience member turning into a performer does not also mirror some aspects of the theatrical staging effects on *Zoom*, where dialogue often feels more like an exchange of pre-scripted ideas than a spontaneous conversation and where the connection between body and voice is also cut.

— Many other musicians and DJs that would have played concerts or live DJ sets had to find alternatives and were invited by HKW to make videos, documenting the whole – or some steps – of the process of music making and track building. This shifted the perspective, again, to the construction, tinkering, and views of the sound artists and musicians alone in their (studio) rooms.

— The home studio as the ‘home office’ is a euphemism that conflates private with public space ever more completely, provoking media and affect scholar Simon Strick to rant: “I’ll just go ahead and say it, most of you know anyhow: there is no ‘home office’ despite what everybody claims. There is just the home, your or our home, two rooms and a kitchen, for sleeping, for cats, for eating, for cleaning up, for children, making the beds, for watching TV, for relaxing, wait no, no relaxing, not anymore. All the time we have is organized around working [...] there is no office in the home, and instead the home becomes a 24/7 factory” (Strick 2020).

— This of course holds true not only for musicians and lecturers, but even more for students, who often had to work from isolated and small rooms while universities and academies remained shut. My students from the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich were scattered throughout several countries due to travel restrictions, and I saw them only in the video conference format as little thumbnail-sized images (if they had a good internet connection). In one online seminar I asked them when they were last in a crowd. The answers ranged from a funeral in Serbia with a larger than allowed group of mourners, to a peaceful protest in South Korea, but most had not been together in larger groups for months. The students with bad internet connections only came through as distorted voices, sometimes sounding truly robotic. We laughed about this together, as some comic relief in dire times.

TRANSHUMAN LISTENING AND ALGORITHMIC CURATION? —

Diederich Diederichsen has remarked on the relationship of human hearing versus recording devices: “I don’t think [...] that sound requires less manipulation, but that the way in which sound records reality, before the manipulation, has something ‘transhuman’ about it, like a scientific specimen of reality” (Diederichsen &

Ruhm 2016: 224). Music and sound easily combines what is considered the human and analogue and its machinic abstract side. Louis Chude-Sokei recently stated in an intervention that in the realm of black music and sound these aspects were in fact never opposed.¹⁷⁾ In his seminal *The Sound of Culture* (2015: 5) he suggests that the black diaspora is the primary space of black innovation: “[...] to focus on this as a space of sound and sound production is to reorient our listening not only toward the means of aural production but also toward how blacks directly engage information and technology through sound.” This engagement in new hybrid practices between analogue and digital, human input and machinic output and vice versa has become especially important during the time of pandemic restrictions – the rapper Blackwell, for example, performed at the Super Bowl Pregame show in a virtual concert in February 2021.

— In everyday listening the transhuman aspect may be especially felt in the overlapping sphere of mathematics and music. Analyzing and calculating with sound data seems to be easier for artificial intelligence (AI) than seeing and recognizing images. Music play lists online are increasingly compared and curated by algorithms. If, for instance, one is a subscriber to *Spotify*, listeners are stuck within a circular and claustrophobic logic – if you listen to this song, try this similar song; closing our ears and consolidating music into a filtered mix of favorites that may soon turn stale, because it only offers more of the same.

— Simultaneously, the commodification and proliferation of paywalls online became noticeably audible in 2020. One now has to pay per listen (or view) for much content that used to be freely available. *YouTube*, for example inserts blaring commercials into hour-long DJ sets or uploaded albums every five minutes or so unless you sign up for a premium version that, of course, costs money. Similarly, *Soundcloud* adds advertisement at the beginning of tracks.

— It can be stated for the record that the auditive, the oral, and the format of radio-show or podcast have definitely gained ground during 2020 and the beginning of 2021 despite precarious working conditions. One already scandalized example is the new app *Clubhouse*, which provides a stage to an exclusive in-crowd (by invitation only) and offers a mixture of Ted-talk speeches, but all without any visuals. It seems to gain its appeal from the allure of scarce access, being part of the in-crowd, and the inclusion of some aspects of the confessional booth through this. This has led a few self-important politicians to disclose aspects they would have been better not to.

17)

Intervention at Brandhorst's *Future Bodies* Symposium, Jan. 21-23, 2021, see https://www.museum-brandhorst.de/en/events/louis-chude-sokei-the-desire-of-objects-slavery-and-the-sex-life-of-machines/?t=16114275001915&fbclid=IwAR1Q_U2k0A_j_T6vUxS9LrNX-EZsN1Li0nMgQcPDX3u8G4t8K_iIU1fC5PCE (5 February 2021).

—— Is this possibly indicative of a democratization of digital media production and (self-) broadcasting? On *Instagram*, for instance, one can post a picture and enter into a dialogue on images in seemingly the same way as the social media channel of, say, the Metropolitan Museum of Art or other well-known institutions. In *Clubhouse* one is given the same stage as prominent speakers. Are we moving closer to Warhol's declared '15 minutes of world-wide fame' for everybody? While it is too early to tell how the pandemic situation will change the media spheres and their promise of participation, many of us are, however, already used to turning one's microphone on and off like a *bona fide* musician or TV moderator. This experience of the online video conference is the starting point for **Vera Tollmann's** contribution, which draws on Mladen Dolar's theory of the voice. Nowadays more and more robotic and assistant voices are entering the arena along with human speech, but even these non-human voices are often gendered and stereotypical. Often they use a female voice in the uncritical tradition of female caring figures as Tollmann analyzes.

PARANOID LISTENING, TINNITUS, AND SYNAESTHESIA —— The Berlin collective *CHEAP* created the ingenious radio show: "You are so paranoid, you probably think this radio-show is about you," in which they simultaneously explore sounds from the archive, the pandemic present, and questions of surveillance, coding, and AI.¹⁸⁾ This brings up the question: What if you hear something and are not sure where it comes from, or if it is only inside your head? This could happen for several reasons, hearing non-existent voices points either to being a medium in the old sense of the word, or to an altered mental state. But what happens, when you hear no messages, but simply noise?

—— **Marie Thompson** considers the case of tinnitus in her text and addresses the question of whether the practice of listening can start with a "a clean slate," or whether it may instead already have a certain level of noise always going on. While John Cage, in his prominent piece "4'33'" (1952), made the sound within a room audible for a collective audience, without any of the expected musical sounds played for them, Thompson emphasizes the possibly never ceasing sound level within one's own head.¹⁹⁾ She describes tinnitus as a social phenomenon that usually gets silenced in the discourses within music and listening, since it interferes with any notion of exact or "clean listening." Paradoxically, the cure for tinnitus often involves de-centering listening in one's perception.

18)

Susanne Sachsse / Marc Siegel / Xiu Xiu (Jamie Stewart)
YOU'RE SO PARANOID, YOU PROBABLY THINK THIS RADIO SHOW IS ABOUT YOU
Ein musikalischer Unterhaltungsrundfunkdienst (2020) Hörspiel.
Paranoide Körperpolitiken nach dem Virus, in Sprechchören und Sprachkollisionen <https://www.paranoia-tv.com/de/program/content/207-youre-so-paranoid-you-probably-think-this-radio-show-is-about-you-ein-musikalischer-unterhaltungsrundfunkdienst> (20 February 2021).

19)

Similarly, Ulrike Bergermann argued that there is not only the dichotomy between people able to hear and people who are deaf, but a shade of different subgroups. See Bergermann 2016: 102.

— However, sensory input often overlaps in human perception and is never purely visual or sonic: Artist and curator **Nadia Buyse** shares some of her pandemic experiences and epiphanies in a diaristic piece. In her images she creates a visual jam similar to audio improvisation that starts with colorful blobs that evolve into miniature synaesthetic narratives: Hirameki conceivably meets with Rorschach and Kandinsky? Buyse's results have an unfinished feeling, inviting the audience to fill in or think further along with the alluded elements in a playful space somewhere between comics and a visual score, sometimes showing pop-cultural affinities, and re-playing minute perceptions. The pandemic seems absent from these visual recordings, except maybe in one scene of a UFO and a little stick figure beneath it, waiting to be beamed up, and who would not want that?

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// Image Credits

- Fig. 1: Ari Benjamin Meyers, *K Club*, 2019, Performance, environment, neon sign, 2 12-inch LP vinyl records, Installation dimensions variable
Exhibition view: Ari Benjamin Meyers, *In Concert*, OGR, Turin, 2019
Courtesy the artist and Esther Schipper, Berlin
Photo © Andrea Rossetti.
- Fig. 2a, 2b: *Boat Protest on Landwehrkanal*, Berlin May 2020, Photos © Marietta Kesting.

Fig. 2c: Graffito "Rest in Power G. Floyd." Pannierstr. Berlin, May 2020, Photo © Marietta Kesting.
Fig. 3, 4: Images of *Hauch*, © Katharina Schmitt, Juliana Hodkinson and Marsha Ginsberg 2020.
Fig. 5: Film Still *Club Quarantine*, © Aurora Bachmann 2020.

// About the Author

Marietta Kesting holds the position of junior professor at the cx centre for interdisciplinary studies at the Academy of Fine Arts, Munich. Her focus areas in research and teaching are post-colonial media and archives, affect studies, and (digital) art theory.

Kesting is part of the publishing collective *b_books*, Berlin since 2004 and has become a member of the editorial board of *FKW* journal for visual culture and gender studies in 2017. A recent publication is '[Dream] Images of Earth in Quarantine', in the journal *Photography and Culture*, 2021, Vol. 14, Issue 2, pp.1–17, DOI: 10.1080/17514517.2021.1889127 and together with S. Witzgall (eds.): *Politik der Emotionen. Macht der Affekte*. Berlin, diaphanes (forthcoming in May 2021).

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