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**Audio Arts Archive:
From Inventory Space to Imagined Space**

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Conclusion

In this thesis I have employed both the term ‘expanded collaborative art practice’ and ‘expanded sound practice’ to define *Audio Arts* collaborative ethos and its sonic dialogic form. In this concluding chapter, I firstly discuss these terms by comparing them with the notion of ‘social sculpture’ proposed by Mel Gooding and other possible theoretical frameworks. Secondly, I summarize the main outcomes of this research with particular attention to the performative methodology applied in the creative projects. I will draw my conclusions by following four points of discussion which have emerged through this research:

1. *Audio Arts* interviews at the intersection with critical practice, oral history and art criticism
2. *Audio Arts* as a dialogic art work
3. *Audio Arts*: an expanded sound practice
4. The Performative Archive as a curatorial methodology

i. Audio Arts Interviews: The Intersection with Critical Practice, Oral History and Art Criticism

In the introduction to this study I have argued that the legacy of the *Audio Arts* interviews lies at the intersection of critical practice, oral history and art criticism. However, none of the affiliation with these disciplines is exclusive nor does one discipline exclude another. In an interview I conducted with Furlong in October 2006 in which I asked him about the interactive process of material-gathering through interviews, he said:

It is an interactive moment but it is a very pure and informative moment, a very vivid moment. It is the moment that everyone enjoys or experiences when they meet people. In that moment I am just a person talking to people. That is what I have been doing all this time. It is nothing more complicated [than that].¹

Interacting with people through dialogue has been the very core of Furlong’s recording practice. As the artist himself has underlined, there is nothing special or complicated in that process. Speech, as he repeated on many occasions, is the primary form of

¹ Interview on the occasion of Furlong’s solo exhibition *Hearing Me Hearing You*, curated by the present author, Plymouth Arts Centre, 18 November 2006 - 7 January 2007.

communication, the common denominator between all sorts of conversations. Yet it might be argued that talking and interviewing artists, especially when they become notable public figures such as Tracey Emin, might not be a straightforward affair such as walking down the street, stopping and asking passers-by their impressions of a specific place. Certainly the celebrity phenomenon of the artists of the 1990s especially in conjunction with the ‘Young British Artist’ movement had an impact on the way in which talking to an artist became extremely laborious and sometimes off-putting.² Oral historian Linda Sandino has argued that ‘in keeping with the ethos of oral history’ *Audio Arts* has more recently shifted away from the focus on famous artists, or as she put it, on ‘elites’.³ As I have pointed out in the audio essay *Listening to Audio Arts Sound Works*, Sandino’s argument is potentially misleading for two reasons. Contrary to her opinion, *Audio Arts* interviews were never dictated by the achieved status of an artist. Furlong was always attracted by the particular energy and significance of a certain artist who had something to say in a very specific moment and/or context as shown in *Chapter 2*.⁴ Secondly, the process of recording local residents on specific locations was informed by the same recording practice which began in the 1970s and fully developed in the 1980s and not, as Sandino argued, a recent development. Sound works made from recordings gathered in the streets of London’s East End, Brixton or Derry in Northern Ireland for example were done in fact between 1983 and 1987 (See *Audio Essay 2*). In which way therefore, can *Audio Arts* be seen through the lens of oral history?

Similar to an oral historian Furlong privileges aural to written accounts. Moreover the audio recording is considered the actual trace of a primary source (‘actuality’). Yet Furlong considers the relationship with oral history ‘purely incidental’.⁵ As Mel Gooding explained, Furlong’s premise comes from a very different angle and critical perspective.⁶ If we take for example the ‘Artist Lives’ project by The British Library initiated by Cathy Courtney, the project started in 1990 by looking at ‘the individual artist’s life as opposite to the individual artist’s art. Since the art was part of a

² Furlong recalls for example how difficult it was to interview Tracey Emin at the Venice Biennale in 2007 as she was reachable only through her PR assistants.

³ Sandino refers to the work *Anthem* (2009) in which Furlong interviewed residents at the seaside in Bexhill on Sea as part of his commission by the De La War Pavillion. Matthew Partington and Linda Sandino (eds) *Oral History in the Visual Arts*, London: Bloomsbury, 2013.

⁴ See Interview with Mel Gooding with the present author, 13/12/2018.

⁵ See interviews with Furlong by the present author, 17/03/2016 and 2/12/2005. Furlong, however took part in conference *The Artist Interview: Contents and Contentions in Oral History*, at the 32nd Annual Conference, Association of Art Historians, Leed University, 5-7 April 2006. Conference organiser Fred Orton. Chairs: Jon Wood (Herny Moore Institute), Rob Perks (National Sound Archive). He also presented the paper *The Artist’s Interview*, at the symposium *The Documentation of Fine Arts Processes and Practises*, Visual Intelligences Research Project, The Lancaster Institute for the Contemporary Arts, Lancaster University, 2005 .

⁶ See interview with Mel Gooding with present author, 13/12/2018.

life it subsequently becomes part of the recording'. According to Gooding *Audio Arts* is instead 'all about the art'.⁷ Compared to the 30-hour-long unedited interview process of the 'Artists Lives', the *Audio Arts* interviews are more focused. They are critical in their origination and practice as Furlong consciously decided whom to interview, when and how to conduct the interview and finally how to edit it. There is no prescriptive model to follow or any particular restrictions. Although the emphasis on the authenticity of the artist's voice can be regarded as another point in common with oral history, the non-intermediation of the written text was a choice made in direct response to the debate fuelled by art magazines such as *Studio International* in the 1970s, rather than the influence of oral history protocols and its democratic ethos.⁸ As J.J. Charlesworth has argued in his research on British art criticism:

... the issue of who writes about the art of the moment – the artist or the critic – is itself a lively dispute between artists and critics at the turn of the 1970s. The emphasis on artist's publications in current research, especially with regards to the particular form of the artist's interview (whose exemplars would be the American *Avalanche* and Andy Warhol's *Interview*, and in Britain, William Furlong's *Audio Arts*), therefore already privileges a particular aspect of the mediation of art – that of the artist's self-representation, supposedly unmediated by the institutional ambit of art criticism or the intervention of the critic. This tendency was of course an important aspect of how artists in the late 1960s and 1970s sought to establish the legitimacy of their activities, and their independence from what they saw as the sclerosis of modernist criticism as it had become established in the venues of art criticism. Yet the emphasis on this aspect of artist's self-representation in print in current scholarship tends to obscure the way in which artists were also involved in writing art criticism for journals and magazines, and the way in which artists negotiated publishing criticism of others while being the subject of published criticism themselves.⁹

In *Chapter 1* and *2* I have highlighted that *Audio Arts* belongs to a history of artists' magazines which, similarly to *Avalanche*, opened up an alternative space for the discussion and dissemination of contemporary art. As Gwen Allen notes in regards to *Avalanche*, the magazine embraced the artists' interview as a strategy to challenge the authority of the art critic, promoting a form of anti-criticism. Whereas *Audio Arts* can be seen as the counterpart of *Avalanche* in the UK as Charlesworth has suggested, through this research I have shown how its establishment in 1973 was not motivated by the idea of acting as an

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ A shift within oral history occurred in 1960s and 1970s. From the assumption that oral history was a gathering of documents, not a practice of reflection, in 1960s it became a tool for community history project breaking social/class division of intellect workers from others and promoting community cohesion and ethnic diversity. See David K. Dunaway and Willa K. Baum (eds) *Oral History Anthology: An Interdisciplinary Anthology*, Altamira Press, 1996.

⁹ J.J. Charlesworth (2016) p. 9.

oppositional site to the art market or mainstream art and criticism. *Audio Arts* deliberately presented itself as a complementary context to printed publishing, open to collaborations with other magazines including *Art Monthly*, *Artscribe* and *Studio International*. However, its autonomy and direct engagement with artists and the art-world at large remained anchored in a DIY mode of production and distribution, thus defeating the risk of becoming rapidly institutionalised. As Tate curator Richard Francis has underlined, Furlong is a ‘sympathetic listener’. The magazine was primarily *for* artists yet it was also *about* art. And the way art was discussed between artists was not necessarily the language of analytical linguistic philosophy as in the case of the *Art-Language* Journal. Alongside the production of its own interviews, *Audio Arts* published the early proceedings of Art & Language, Lawrence Weiner’s word-based works, the performative interviews by Braco Dimitrijevic and Michael Craig-Martin, Richard Cork’s lectures and not least the documentation of the whole symposium *The State of British Art*. By giving voice to a diverse spectrum of ideas and concepts *Audio Arts* criticism is to some extents embodied in its mode of material production and distribution.

What distinguishes *Audio Arts* from the other art magazines is that it inhabited the media by transforming the form and the scope of a traditional magazine into a medialised form itself. Whether or not the *Audio Arts* interviews can be considered a new form of criticism (or anti-criticism), need therefore to be addressed in relation to the history of the audio interview and its entanglement with broadcasting and radio, media and intermedia art in general and not simply in relation to the history of conceptual art and oral history. As has been addressed in a recent symposium ‘there is no history of the artist interview as a critical genre in its own right. Rather, it has been underplayed as a journalistic tool, or overplayed as a historical source, predicated on the authentic artist’s voice’.¹⁰ The question at stake is above all historiographical: how has the practice of art history and art criticism been impacted by the introduction of the interview as method and/or as methodology? How did it challenge its assumptions, constraints and language is an open question. Also what might be the possible criteria to think about a history of the artist interview in itself, is an issue that needs to some extent to be critically addressed. Given the vastness of the subject and the complexity of these questions this is a topic that has to (and will be) pursued in another venue beyond this dissertation.¹¹

¹⁰*The Artist Interview: An Interdisciplinary Approach to its History, Process and Dissemination*, Association for Art History, Annual Conference, 6 April 2018, University of Brighton, co-convened by Lucia Farinati and Jennifer Thatcher.

¹¹ The outcome of the conference above will be published in the *Journal of Art Historiography* in June 2020.

In 1971 art historian and critic Charles Harrison decided to resign from his role of assistant editor of *Studio International* to become editor of *Art-Language*. ‘The ‘uncomfortable but unjustifiable’ circumstances of the time in which it seemed hard ‘to dissociate the practice of criticism – and a fortiori the role of the entrepreneur - from the self-critical practice of art’, was one of the relevant factors behind his decision.¹² If this is a symptomatic example of how artists and critics active in 1960s and 1970s seriously considered the divide between criticism and practice a key issue in relation to the ‘crisis of Modernism’, for the following generations the interplay between criticism, curatorial and art practice become ipso facto a new *modus operandi*. It is in conjunction with the curatorial turn of the following decades and what has been framed by art historian Julian Stallabrass as ‘the decline and fall of art criticism’, that the conversational model of *Audio Arts* as creative critical practice became recognised although not always directly acknowledged by his protagonists.¹³ In his introduction to the anthology *Das Interview* historian Michael Diers writes:

Heidi Grundmann sets out – and deservedly so – Furlong’s historical achievement when she writes: ‘Furlong has introduced the figure of the mass-media influenced interviewer, well-equipped with recording technology, to the arts, and transformed him (sic) into an insightful, open – not always aiming for certain answers – trustworthy, conversation partner.’ If this characterization also applies to the interview and dialogue praxis of Hans Ulrich Obrist, then, whether you like it or not, the latter’s model can be found in Furlong’s *Audio Arts*.¹⁴

From the vast production of Obrist’s interviews as a curatorial methodology to the development of many ‘platform for discussions’ widespread in the 1990s and beyond, the dialogic and conversational approach of *Audio Arts* can be seen as a precursor, and an example of the discursive and curatorial turn of the 1990s often associated with the conviviality of ‘relational aesthetics’ on one hand and the figure of the curator as author/producer on the other.¹⁵ However, I have argued that although there are cross-

¹² Another reason behind this choice was that the practice of Art & Language as discursive practice of art ‘appeared to promise an exemplary if not possibly sufficient place of work, even if the “work” in question could not be all “art”. Charles Harrison, *A Crisis of Modernism*, in *From Blast to Freeze*, p. 224. Harrison argued that distinction of criticism from practice was symptomatic of a problem within modernism.

¹³ According to Stallabrass with the rise of Young British Art (and in contrast to academic art theory) there are no longer any British art critics who have a credible intellectual presence both within and without the art world. Stallabrass regards art critics such as Matthew Collings, Sarah Kent and Brian Sewell, far from being intellectuals, ‘are figures of fun’. See Julian Stallabrass, *High Art Lite: The Rise and the Fall of Young British Art*, 2006, London: Verso, p. 271.

¹⁴ Lars Blunck and Michael Diers, *The Point of Interview. Zur Einführung*, in *Das interview: Formen und foren des künstlergesprächs*, Philo Fine Arts, 2013, p.18, translation by present author.

¹⁵ Irigit Rogoff argues that ‘in the wake of Documenta X and Documenta 11, it became clear that one of the most significant contributions that the art world had made to the culture at large had

overs between *Audio Arts* curatorial approach in presenting and framing artworks and discussions in the ‘space’ of the cassette, its genealogy originates from another constellation: that of voice attached to sound, and sound attached to space and time.

ii. Audio Arts as a Dialogic Art Work

As I have argued in *Chapter 2*, actuality, sound and site are the key characteristics of *Audio Arts* interviews and conversations. Rather than looking at Furlong as the progenitor of curators embracing the artist interview as a methodology, and *Audio Arts* as a form of relational and convivial curatorship, I would like to return to the sound of the voice, and its relational dimension. In her insightful account of vocal expression, philosopher Adriana Cavarero argues that voice is always relational. Voice, she notes, ‘is sound not speech; but speech constitutes its essential destination’ and precisely because speech is sonorous, to speak to one another is to communicate beyond the specific content that the words communicates, the acoustic, empirical, material relationality of singular voices.¹⁶ In a polemic with Derrida and his theory of voice and the presence of voice, Cavarero argues that we do not have voice to listen to ourselves speaking to ourselves, generating monologues. We have voice to communicate with others through dialogue. She states: ‘The thesis that the ear is there - as Derrida puts it – “to hear oneself speak” is curiously narcissistic (and metaphysically suspect).’¹⁷ In contrast to metaphysical and essentialist theories of voice which have informed various studies on the phenomena of sound,¹⁸ Cavarero’s perspective on voice allows us to rethink the relationship between logos and politics, assigning to ‘vocality’ a key role in the construction of the public sphere.¹⁹

been the emergence of the conversational mode that it hosted’, in Paul O’Neil and Mick Wilson (eds) *Curating and The Educational Turn*, Open Editions/de Appel, 2010, p. 43. The term is from the book *Relational Aesthetics* (See Nicolas Bourriaud, *Relational Aesthetics*, Les presses du reel, 2002). Artist Liam Gillick featured in *Relational Aesthetics* and former collaborator of *Audio Arts*, also employed the term ‘Discussion Platform’ for a series of sculptures made at the end of the 1990s. Aspects of conviviality related to the ‘conversational mode’ including interviews with *Audio Arts* interviewers have been analysed by Alexandra C.M. Ross in her unpublished PhD *Continuous Curatorial Conversations, An Exploration of the Role of Conversation within the Writing of a Supplementary History of the Curatorial*, University of Dundee, 2014.

¹⁶ Adriana Cavarero (2005) p. 209 and p.13

¹⁷ Ibid, p.178.

¹⁸ See for example Don Ihde, *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, Suny Press, 2007.

¹⁹ Cavarero’s main thesis is the foundation of politics on speech and ‘vocal ontology of uniqueness’ developed from Hanna Arendt’s notions of ‘action’ and ‘plurality’. The shift introduced by Cavarero from speech to voice, is based on idea that speech is beside language and meaning (logos), a vocal embodied expression (*vocality*). See Adriana Cavarero (2005).

Furlong realized the full political, social and aesthetic potential of voice in his encounter with Joseph Beuys at the Institute of Contemporary Arts in 1974, at the exhibition *Art into Society, Society into Art*. In *Audio Essay 1*, I have retraced this key moment of the history of *Audio Arts* highlighting that there is a legacy of Beuys and social sculpture on one hand, and Furlong's legacy on the other. Whereas Furlong alongside many other artists has been influenced by Beuys in the use of speech as artistic material, he also explored the potential of the audio-cassette as a new, democratic form of information and communication.²⁰ In other words Furlong pioneered the communicative, aesthetic, social and political potential of an art magazine by turning it into a dialogic audial space of a new kind. What he simply but aptly called 'a recorded space for contemporary art.'

Whereas Michael Archer's reading of *Audio Arts* has mostly insisted on 'the creative use of the "space" made available by recording technology' stressing the 'continuity between the magazine and the artworks', Mel Gooding's writing has repeatedly celebrated *Audio Arts* as a work of art.²¹ From the first publication of his essay *The Work* in the *Audio Arts* books (1992, 1994) to its extended revision in the Phaidon volume in 2010, Gooding's reference to Beuys' social sculpture remained central and faithful to the words of the artist:

It has always been understood by Furlong that *Audio Arts* is a collaborative, creative endeavour, that his work as editor and as curator of audial space is part of his work as an artist, and that this activity is an imaginative intervention in the world, whose meaning is indisputably *political*. *Audio Arts* may be entered under the terms of an ethic/aesthetic – that of a modified version of 'social sculpture – that is more specifically time-bound within our present, imperfect epoch than the beautiful and noble identification of *all* human creative potential with ART as defined by Beuys, and conceived by him only as a *future* possibility: "This most modern art discipline – Social Sculpture / Social Architecture – will only reach fruition when every living person becomes a creator, a sculptor or architect of the social organism".²²

Audio Arts embodies, according to Gooding, the very aspects of the social sculpture as a *gesamtkunstwerk*, a total work of art. As such it is a kind of 'social organism', 'a continuous work that contains many disparate components', which does not have a linear structure, it is open-ended yet is holding a 'conceptual unity of purpose'. The recordings, the tapes,

²⁰ I refer here to a wide literature which investigates speech and dialogue as performative artistic material, in particular the lecture-performance as an artistic form in itself. For example: Lerm Hayes Christa-Maria, 'Unity in Diversity Through Art? Joseph Beuys' Models of Cultural Dialogue', *FEEM Working Paper*, no. 60, 2006. Cara Jordan, 'The Evolution of Social Sculpture in the United States: Joseph Beuys and the work of Suzanne Lacy and Rick Lowe', *Public Art Dialogue*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2013, pp. 144-67.

²¹ Archer (1994) p.115.

²² Mel Gooding, *Audio Arts: The Archive as a Work of Art*, 2010 p. 9.

the sound sculptures, the events, the actions, the books, the essays, the transcripts, the archival documents, are in this light part of one whole work. ‘Such a work of “social sculpture” comprehends the subjective responses of its viewers, listeners and readers, the writings it generates and the statements of its principal instigator’.²³ It could be argued that in this respect there is no distinction between the structure orchestrated by Furlong through the volumes and the supplements of the magazine and the new sound works originated from it. Yet what seems to result differently between the history of the magazine and Furlong’s artworks produced independently from it, is the nature of the original invitation made to each artist across different times and places.²⁴ Whether the future life of the Audio Arts project can continue as a continuous conversation and as an active archive is a challenge that I have tested in this research by extending the creative use of the archive from/by its main author to other *Audio Arts* former collaborators as well as a new generation of artists.

iii. Audio Arts: An Expanded Sound Practice

In the early 1980s Furlong and Archer produced a series of sound works and performances under the name of ‘Audio Arts’; a term such as ‘sound art’ was not very common. Much of the sound works created by visual artists at that time were simply called ‘sound by artists’ or ‘audio art’.²⁵ The idea of considering sound recordings as works of art was, however, still attached to ‘the popular understanding of mechanically reproduced media as an accurate transcription of reality’, due to its documentary

²³ Ibid, p.10.

²⁴ Furlong’s invitation to artists to contribute to *Audio Arts* was never articulated around the idea of creating an artwork. It could be argued that when *Audio Arts* project expanded into authored sound works for display, this could be seen as an act of appropriation. However, when Furlong decided to use fragments from the *Audio Arts* interviews and conversations for his sound installations such as *Conversation Piece* and later on for his solo show at the South London Gallery, there was never any complaint from the artists regarding copyrights for the use of their voices. Furlong has often received positive feedback from artists. As resulted from the interviews with the former collaborators, nobody ever turned down the invitations to contribute to *Audio Arts*. Most of the artists trusted Furlong in the editing process. In this respect Furlong gained a lot of trust and respect within the art world and this allowed him to freely use the voices of the artists he recorded for his own sound works produced independently from the magazine.

²⁵ According to Douglas Kahn who published one of the first surveys on sound art, this terms seems to be used for the first time by Canadian audio artist Dan Lander. Lander together with visual artists Micah Lexier edited in 1990 *Sound by Artists*, one of first anthology of texts that investigates the use of sound recording as artistic medium. *Audio Arts* is mentioned in two essays in the anthology: in relation to *Live to Air* as an important compilation of sound works (see Kevin Concannon, 1990, p.174); and to the sound work *Ums and Ahs* as an example of the use and manipulation of the medium of tape recording in creating a work of art from pre-existing sounds (see Max Bruinsma, *Notes of a Listener*, 1990, pp. 89-90).

evidence.²⁶ In his essay *Sound in Recent Art* written in 1992, Furlong welcomed the lack of definition as being advantageous.

The failure of sound to construct a distinct category for itself has in fact proved an advantage, given that categories in the end become restrictive and the work circumscribed and marginalized.²⁷

Ten years on from Furlong's essay, sound art had become a discrete category of artistic production, with several artists and scholars taking it in many different directions and building on its relationship to performance art and experimental music, as well as to site-specific art and conceptual art. One of the first critical reflections on the genealogy of sonic arts at the intersection between visual art, experimental music and performance was an online symposium hosted in 2004 by the magazine *Artforum*.²⁸ A plethora of exhibitions organised between 1998 and 2002 in prominent venues in London, Paris, New York, and Rotterdam, also contributed significantly to the debate on sound art through the possibility of displaying sound works within the physical space of the gallery.²⁹ As discussed in *Chapter 4*, Furlong was not directly involved in any of these initiatives, nor it appears active in terms of contributing academic writing on the subject while he was still producing *Audio Arts*. This apparent absence from the recent debate on sound art can be seen as his resolute position of refusing this new categorisation. As he stated in the symposium *Active Archive* organised by the present author in conjunction with his solo exhibition at the Sound Art Museum in Rome in 2006:

Why are we so concerned, or hung up with the medium an artist chooses to use? An artist uses the material that is closest to hand, and like any language, he feels most comfortable with. What is more available than sound? We do not live in a silent world, we live in a world that is characterised and materialised through sound. Take the human voice for instance. What instrument is more important in articulating our relationships within the world than the human voice? The voice is a multi-layered channel of two-way communication. The voice has identity, age, gender, ethnicity, authority, vulnerability, excitement, indifference, boredom, engagement, distance, closeness and so on. We decide to form close ties or otherwise as a result of the voice... Recorded sound retains the actual trace of the voice. Recorded sound is factual. Having said all of that and as an artist who

²⁶ See Kevin Concannon (1990), p. 161.

²⁷ William Furlong, *Sound in Recent Art*, 1992, p. 286.

²⁸ In spring 2004 the magazine *Artforum* invited art historian Branden W. Joseph, composer and author David Toop, curator Anthony Huberman, and sound artists Carl Michael von Hausswolff, Steve Roden, Marina Rosenfeld, and Stephen Vitiello to participate in an online roundtable discussion moderated by philosopher and critic Christoph Cox.

²⁹ See *Chapter 4*, for the first wave of sound exhibition, also Jim Drobnick, 'Sound Exhibitions: The Second Wave', *The Senses and Society*, vol. 5, no. 3, 2010, pp. 403-411.

works primarily in sound I feel uncomfortable being described as a ‘sound artist’. Do we call Lawrence Weiner a ‘word artist’, hardly. The term ‘artist’ will do.³⁰

The rationale to critically frame *Audio Arts* project in terms of an ‘expanded sound practice’ rather than as a ‘social sculpture’ might be in the ears of its creator wrong or limited. The possibility of simply adding the adjective ‘aural’ or ‘audio’ to social sculpture (‘aural social sculpture or ‘audio social sculpture’) might in fact suffice in the task of naming what ‘Audio Arts’ theoretically and physically implies. It has been noted that the term ‘audio’ refers to sound when it is recorded, transmitted or reproduced, in other words to ‘a process that employs technology to construct temporary social architectures made of air’.³¹ ‘Sound’ instead pertains to the domain of physics, it is vibration that travels through air. It can be further argued that ‘the material of art is not sound’ but ‘sound can be a tool with which to shape material’. Yet there ‘are not sound objects, only listening objects’.³² To use the term ‘sound practice’ rather than ‘sound sculpture’ is to think of the act of recording, transmitting and reproducing sound through a process that is repeated, perfected: in one word *practiced* over time. Contrary to Gooding’s proposal of theorizing *Audio Arts* as a total work of art, an ‘expanded sound practice’ focuses on sound as something that can be practised through the available recording technologies and attentive listening. Regardless of the fact that the medium of sound recording might be called electro-acoustic music, audio art or sound art, the practice of recording is fundamentally an act of listening, as I have argued: the microphone is an extension of our ears through which sound is amplified and, the tape recorder is an extension of our hands through which sound is inscribed into a magnetic/digital tape. The term ‘expanded’ also has a strong connotation with both sculpture and conceptual art of the 1970s as theorized by critic Rosalind Krauss.

... within the situation of postmodernism, practice is not defined in relation to a given medium - sculpture - but rather in relation to the logical operations on a set of cultural terms, for which any medium - photography, books, lines on walls, mirrors, or sculpture itself - might be used. Thus the field provides both for an expanded but finite set of related positions for a given artist to occupy and explore, and for an organisation of work that is not dictated by the conditions of a particular medium.³³

As sound theoretician Seth Kim-Cohen has pointed out, the nexus between conceptualism and sonic practice has been overlooked in the history of post-war art

³⁰ *Sound Matters*, notes from William Furlong’s symposium paper, Rome, October 2006.

³¹ Micah Silver, *Sound, Audio, Music // Physics, Intention*, in *Zetesis*, vol. 2 no. 3, p. 106.

³² *Ibid*, p.105.

³³ Rosalind Krauss, *Sculpture in the Expanded Field, October*, vol. 8, Spring 1979, p. 42.

history. Whereas much critical attention has been dominated in the past by the theory of the sound-in-itself informed by an essentialist phenomenological perspective, Kim-Cohen proposes instead to re-read the short history of sound art through the prism of visual arts and poststructuralism, 'embracing the expansiveness of the textual and the discursive'.³⁴

With the term 'expanded sound practice' I would like to suggest - following the trajectory of Kim-Cohen and Krauss - how the sculptural as well as the discursive elements of *Audio Arts* are connected to the history of conceptualism that intersects with sound art. And finally, this term also refers to the set of activities conducted by Furlong and his collaborators under the name of 'Audio Arts'. The fusion of the aural with the visual, the documentary with the performative, the critical with the curatorial, the creative with the pedagogical was a possibility encompassed by *Audio Arts*.

iv. The Performative Archive as a Curatorial Methodology

The recording process offered a new context for artists, enabling them to generate artworks within a technological acoustic space, reproduced each time the recording is re-played. The work itself is therefore realised on such an occasion, rather than a reproduction or documentation of it.³⁵

William Furlong, 1994

In the introduction I argued that the expansion of *Audio Arts* from the 'pure documentation' of sound events to the production and dissemination of art works represent an important legacy of the project. In *Chapter 4*, I also addressed how the creative use of the Audio Arts Archive by Furlong and his impetus of revisiting (and indeed unboxing) its 'own' recordings have resulted in the creation of new sound works which activated his own archive through choreographed spatial settings. Through the

³⁴ In *The Blink of an Ear, Toward non-cochlear sonic art* (2009), Seth Kim-Cohen problematizes the way in which the discourse about listening and sound have been conceptualised in terms of pure phenomena and how the notion of the sound-in-itself originated from the work of John Cage and Pierre Schaeffer is an unsustainable proposition. By looking at Krauss's critique of sculpture Kim-Cohen proposes a way forward, out of the dead end of essentialism, connecting the sonic arts to broader textual, conceptual, social and political concerns. What it suggests is not 'an eradication of phenomena' but how the 'phenomenal is reduced in favour of the expansiveness of the textual and the discursive'. He also proposes the term 'gallery arts' to describes a diverse range of sonic art projects that have been presented in the context of art galleries and often labelled 'sound art'. His proposal to critically re-frame the term 'sound art' in a more sociological and conceptual way than previous studies brings to light the entanglement between modern modes of listening introduced by the recording technologies and post-modern critique of institutions.

³⁵ William Furlong, *Sound in Recent Art* (1994), p.128.

project *Activating the Audio Arts Archive* I have created the ground for multiple narratives about *Audio Arts* to be heard by an audience. Through the recordings made at each event I have created four audio essays (*Chapter 5*), exploring the means of audio documentation as a mean of production (documentation as production). The methodology of the performative archive, critically and theoretically discussed in the introduction, has been developed and applied as the main curatorial methodology. It combines the display of objects with the play back of recordings from the archive. Returning to the questions of how the continuity between the ‘discourse’ and the ‘practice’ of *Audio Arts* can be shown, and how the archive is active and not the dead end of the project, the answer to these questions relies on the participation of others (the guest speakers and the wider audience) in their willingness and interest in listening and speaking about the material selected.

During one of the events I organised at the Tate Archive, one member of the audience commented that the activation of the archive was for her in the very experience of listening. In other words, the listening experience was the real activation of the material presented. The dialogic approach I have demonstrated here in the initiatives such as the *Show and Tell* programme organised by the Tate Archive are key in promoting and enhancing access and participation in the space of an archive. Alongside the temporary display of archival items and a guided tour, the opportunity to listen to audio material together with others in a shared space, expanded the boundaries of the *Show and Tell* format into a third possibility, that of Listen and Tell. This third possibility re-connects I argue to the original premise of *Audio Arts* of exploring the technological audial space as a discursive space, yet expanding this possibility into other spaces and contexts.

To the question ‘what is in your view the legacy of *Audio Arts* both in terms of the wider cultural and social context and your personal experience’ Mel Gooding replied:

It gave me in terms of my own work, the opportunity to write what I call critically and perhaps even critically creatively from within a situation, it gave me a lot of confidence in a way because ... it made me feel if I knew I had an insight in towards I was writing about that was difference from an external assessment.³⁶

Similarly to Gooding’s writing, in this thesis I have written critically and creatively from within. In this sense it can be also read as the direct legacy of *Audio Arts* and not simply its first historical and critical account.

³⁶ Mel Gooding from an interview with the present author, 13/12/2018.

v. Contribution to Knowledge

In conclusion, the PhD makes a significant contribution to the field of art history, curatorial practice and sonic studies. In particular it contributes to the history of artists' magazines of the 1970s, the emergence of sound art in the 1980s and the development of the artist interview in conjunction with British conceptual art and performance art. By providing a unified historical and performative methodology for understanding the complex legacy of *Audio Arts*, the research also contributes to the field of curatorial practice and sonic studies with particular regard to the study of the recorded voice and listening within the context of archives and galleries presentations as well as in the production of audio critical/historical accounts.

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