CITY VOLUME CAIRO

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https://www.cityvolumecairo.com

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INTRODUCTION

by Duncan MacDonald, Isis Fahmy & Benoît Renaudin

As soon as sound is created, it dissipates in space. Just as humans may attempt to confine it within physical, conceptual, and spiritual frameworks, possibly to achieve a form of psychological balance, sound thwarts this convenient containment and bleeds into the realm of memory (only re-introduced through recording and playback technologies). How and why do we organize, remix, and study urban layers of sonic disorder? What new knowledge might be created in doing so? Touted as the second loudest city on the planet, Cairo is filled with noise that has an abundance of political, social, existential, and practical meaning. From the honk of a car, and its lexicon of various meanings, to the calls of vendors announcing their goods with unique timbres, sound plays a powerful role in day-to-day negotiations here. How might artists structure and utilize this cacophony for the purpose of artistic creation while critically examining its original audition and contextual framework? Furthermore, how can sonic events be mapped and echo political, social, and practical meaning - resonating long after a sound has faded into memory? This international grouping of artists working with sound explores everything from the mundane to the sublime, researching acoustemology as foundational to art, design, and technology - prompting audiences to consider aurality as key to the creation of knowledge.

This exhibition project at the Tahrir Cultural Center is the result of a meeting between three artists in Cairo and three institutions from Switzerland and Egypt: Duncan MacDonald (Director of Visual Arts at AUC), Isis Fahmy (Researcher at La Manufacture - Lausanne) and Benoît Renaudin (Researcher at HEAD - Geneva). With sound as a central element in our respective work, we met during a HES-SO Leading House Mena research project initiated in 2019 between the American University of Cairo, La Manufacture, and HEAD-Geneva. Our rich dialogue with students, professors, and artists in Egypt and Switzerland sparked a desire to share our research publicly by imagining an exhibition at the Tahrir Cultural Center (TCC).

We see this interdisciplinary project as an ongoing one that can move from city to city throughout the years to come. It is our intention to turn this project into an annual Sound Art Festival with accompanying talks, events, and performances to advance critical, creative, and academic discussions on sound regionally and globally.

Concepts and Context
This interdisciplinary research and production project explores three key concepts within
a contextual framework that requires clarification:
1. **Sound as by-product of urbanity –** place versus space

2. **Listening** - functional and psychological utilities that help position us in physical (external) and contemplative (internal) spaces
3. **Organizing sound / sound art** - within complex and highly dynamic urban spaces; aesthetic, conceptual, and philosophical meaning as Sound Art

Sound / By-product of Urbanity

Decades ago, Canadian composer R. Murray Shafer developed important research on the study of sound within rural and urban landscapes - or as the composer called them « soundscapes ». However, within Shafer's rubric of environmental sonic spaces, an important hierarchical judgment was made. Namely, rural spaces (also called 'hi-fi' by the composer) were deemed superior to urban spaces ('lo-fi') due to the ability of listeners to determine the sound, location, and similarity to original audition of the sounds transmitted. This model may prove useful to musicians and composers who tend to organize sound into sub-structures of consonance and highly ordered – and often repeatable - sonic cells. However, for those wishing to investigate the disordered and highly dynamic nature of urban sonic spaces, an important philosophical question emerges. How might the Noise of the city transform into something beyond an aesthetic value, but also into one of social and deeply philosophical expression? Shafer's dismissal of noisy cityscapes has prompted artists, architects, urban planners, listeners, etc. to map out cities with models differing hugely from those of the Western-classically trained Canadian (music) composer. Before exploring these models, it is important to come to terms with different perspectives on how we define Noise.

Sound studies scholars seem to agree that at least two forms of **Noise** are worthy of definition: **the first is a subjective experience** (where noise to one person might be music to another, for example). In this model, Shafer's Noise is generally associated with aesthetic value or consonance. However, while Shafer has made it clear that the purest loyalty to sound's context (rural hi-fidelity) is aesthetically superior to the Noise of the urban, he does not unpack the context in urbanity and its invaluable contribution to said Noise. This utopian model of soundscape studies would not have been of interest to an important character in the development of Sound in Art - the Italian Futurist Luigi Russolo. More than one hundred years ago, Russolo challenged musicians and western classical notions of music (and sound); he questioned why historical European musical instruments were still being used to make music. Instead, he wondered why not use industrial machines that were roaring in the landscapes of modernity? Why not use new sounds that had not been heard in previous generations? My point in countering Shafer with Russolo is to demonstrate that what is aesthetically pleasing to one person is not necessarily of interest to another. And secondly, how might we think of the city as an instrument that can be played or structured by artists and designers?

Another important way to understand Noise, parallel to Russolo, is through the work of American author Tricia Rose. Her research dives deep into the political socio-economics of Noise with her text *Black Noise: Rap Music and Black Culture in Contemporary America (1994),* looking at the history of Hip Hop as a form of expression and cultural innovation for marginalized African Americans. The aesthetics of Noise, and the power of Noise as a by-product of urbanity and social struggle, are painfully clear in this text. Utilizing various strategies such as playing vinyl (instead of expensive musical instruments), MC'ing on top of the records (later becoming rap), and 'borrowing' electricity from municipal infrastructure for block parties, early hip hop artists were champions of what Russolo called the Art of Noises; they were resourcefully shaping a new sound out of necessity with the tools of the city – creating 'Noise' that could not be ignored.

Noise is not only a peripheral phenomenon in urban spaces, it is also an existentialist cry for power, recognition, and dignity. This point is extremely important when considering who is creating the Noise of modernity within urban environments. While not necessarily pleasing, consonant, or musical in historical terms, such Noise is important in understanding the reality experienced by Cairene urbanites on a daily level. It is invisible information that echoes patterns, routines, work, and the city as a dynamic machine-like system.

The **second definition of Noise** relates to communication theory which defines Noise as an interference between a sender (of a communication) and its receiver. Within this model, an intentional delivery of a message is mediated by the technological interface it inhabits (McLuhan's adage that the medium is the message is appropriate here). The interference – or that which gets in the way – relates to a signal to noise ratio, or in other words, a by-product of transmission beyond the natural scope of human vocal communication. While this second definition is more technologically-centered than aesthetic, it does direct one to important concepts within Sound Studies – how often do people actively listen? And what are we listening for? And maybe most importantly, is the intentionality of the communication lost in its context, or is this a function of interference as a message in itself?

Cairo is one of the loudest and most fascinating cityscapes one can find. This is a place where Noise creation is not discouraged (despite written bylaws); it is however, a place where what is being communicated must be carefully considered for political reasons. Amplified calls to prayer routinely emanating from hundreds of mosques, vehicle honks communicating a variety of messages, street vendors announcing their business with coded sound effects, the vocal bustle of the city – to puncture this cacophony one has to compete with a wide range of frequencies and decibel levels. What can we learn about this city by listening to it? What can we

learn about its inhabitants? And what can we do to remix this cacophony to propose a rubric of understanding and empathy?

Listening

As alluded to earlier, listening is a foundational concept within Sound Studies. It is key to our research as artists, designers, and thinkers – guiding us to strange territories at times. Most of us are fortunate to have the physical ability to hear. However, active listening is a deeply psychological activity that compels us to direct our attention in one place or another. It is different from hearing as it is not purely a physical experience – it engages the psyche. It is an act that few engage with routinely. With this in mind, how might these foundational ideas guide us to listen to Cairo?

Just as we find in the physiology of the ear (and sympathetic vibration), so do we find with the act of listening. It is an act of sympathy and understanding. It is a process that unfolds over time, and is translated into neural information. In fact, the brain does not need much sonic information to understand its meaning. One could say the brain is as important to listening as the ears are. The process of listening is one of contemplation in an attempt to understand something external to oneself. And while the physical and psychological aspects of listening change over one's lifetime, it is, nonetheless, an act of humility and one of understanding the limitations of an individual's perspective in a given time. However, what happens when recording technologies are brought into the equation? Might there be multi-nodal perspectives layered within a new form of time? Can the re-mixing of urban environments conflate memory and perspective into a humanistic phenomenology of context, place, and time?

Organizing Sound / Sound Art

Translating the foundational ideas and functions of urban sound into art is a process of experiencing the city, listening to the city, and re-mixing the city on conceptual, aesthetic, and philosophical levels. The artists involved with this project all work with sound in conjunction to place, not space. They consider context as key to understanding meaning, and the social, as central to artistic creation. Translating invisible signals that we are constantly bombarded with into experimental sound ; researching a city by wandering and recording its unique tonal timbres ; translating city noise into experimental electronic works; documenting curfew quietude in our current pandemic ; re-imagining city soundscapes with technological innovation; studying the communication of drivers in Cairo – these are all strategies by our grouping of artists to unpack the layered and dynamic impressions sound provides us with in daily life and, in turn, offer re-mixed alternatives.

ARTWORKS

Budhaditya Chattopadhyay
Exile and Other Syndromes

An exhibition from *Exile and Other Syndromes* project that responds to urban migration, placelessness, and nomadism – impulses of a contemporary condition that blurs the boundaries between the digital and the corporeal, between local and the global, between private and public domains, or between intimate and dehumanizing spaces, helping the nomadic subject to emerge as an elevated, emancipated self. The project intends to examine these contemporary realities manifesting in an interactive and generative installation incorporating multi-channel sound diffusion and modulated text as multi-screen live visualization of field recordings to create a discursive situation.

Exile and Other Syndromes. Image Courtesy: Screen City Biennial

Julie Semoroz & Thomas Perrodin
HF Installation

Using a broadband field strength measuring device for high-frequency electromagnetic radiation Semoroz extracts the electromagnetic waves of the surrounding networks and antennas. The result is raw sound material which is then shaped, controlled and broadcast again. The endless interference which contemporary mankind is subjected to is thus made perceptible. For the installation in Cairo, Thomas Perrodin intervenes in the space with a wallpaper in dialogue with the sound device.
Material used: broadband measuring device for high frequency electromagnetic fields & hand pulled unique wallpaper in screen print
Created in 2019 in Swiss Art Awards, Art Basel, Basel, Switzerland
https://juliesemoroz.ch/hf-installation-2019/

Julie Semoroz & Mena El Shazly
HF Performance

Using a high-frequency detector, Semoroz extracts the electromagnetic waves of the surrounding networks and antennas. The result is raw sound material, which is then shaped, controlled and broadcast again. The endless interference which contemporary mankind is subjected to is thus made perceptible.
Creation: Julie Semoroz, created in 2018 at Usine Kugler, Geneva, Switzerland
Production: Motonomy
Audiovisual label: Lexico Records
Duration: 20 min

HF. Credit: ©BringInWeight_Munich20

Ola Saad & Asmaa Azouz
Echoself

In your inner world, many voices speak and argue with you. Sometimes, they cause you fatigue, conflict with you as they make their way outside of your inner world to arrive at their destination. As usual, stopping at the verge of their margins to retreat to their source, then remain wandering in your mind till melting. Again, these voices continue to roam in your inner world, this time they won't necessarily return to their source, like sound waves that imitate light which refracts according to the angle of the surface they end up meeting.
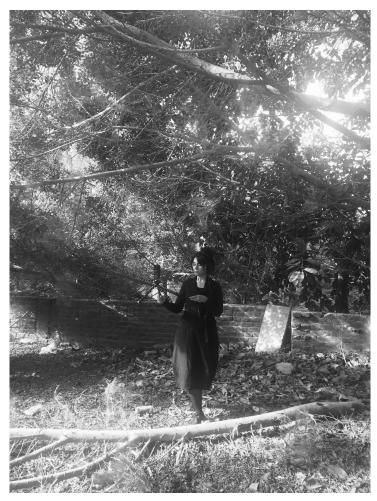
Ola Saad
The Place #1

An imitation of a historical landmark based on a contemporary art vision (Nilometer).

Hagar Masoud
Cairo Waves

Cairo Waves is a sound work that relies on a long term auditory research - on acoustic environments of cities and public space. Building the audio archive began in 2010 in Cairo and expanded to field recording in different cities such as Alexandria, Florence and Paris for ten years. Cairo waves consist of field recordings from Cairo between 2010 and 2020. Sound is ephemeral waves that recording helps to preserve the cultural identity of cities/public space and the transformation of societies through time. Every city has a distinct auditory identity as a consequence of cultural and political accumulation. That reflects the extent of stability or emergency in town. Cairo, for example, has different and various sound identities from 2010 to today, that are diverse between uncertainty, optimism, dream, silence, and unpredictability. On the contrary, Paris is distinguished by a constant police siren, which reflects the state of anxiety and constant alertness. In *Cairo Waves*, the initial field recordings in Ramsis Railway Station and Fagala were recorded within a group of participants with Ahmed Basiouny. Ataba sounds recorded by Jean. F. Jeans in 2015.

Cairo Waves. 2019. Photo by Jessica Sligter.

Isis Fahmy and Benoît Renaudin in collaboration with Sara El Barkouky
Cairotopies

Isis Fahmy and Benoît Renaudin have been probing the sounds of Cairo since 2015 during successive residencies, notably at Artellewa with the support of Pro Helvetia Cairo, to develop the Kairo[s] projects, which have taken the form of various sound installations presented in several venues. These sounds came from recordings made in the street, capturing emblematic moments of Cairo, interviews with artists and activists and more intimate discussions in living rooms, taxis and cafés. They offered the listener a kaleidoscopic concentration of sounds and sensations in a reduced space of the immensity of Cairo's city.

This time, the duo comes back to Cairo for a HES-SO Mena Leading House research project in partnership with the American University in Cairo. Their main goals are to collaborate with

artists, researchers and professors whose artistic research questions the representations of an elusive city like Cairo and enriches its apprehension through the creation of performative objects and sound installations. From these meetings and discussions, two projects were born. The first was a pedagogical workshop conducted in March 2021 in collaboration with Professor Shady El Noshokaty and mixed students from the Master Media Design of HEAD - Geneva (CH) and the Master Mise en scène et scénographie of La Manufacture in Lausanne (CH). The second, in partnership with Professor Duncan MacDonald, came from the desire to put several artists in dialogue on the use of sound as a vector of knowledge or experience to apprehend the megalopolis of Cairo in permanent mutation during a dedicated event: City Volume.

For this event, Isis Fahmy and Benoît Renaudin chose to present Cairotopies, research cycle composed of several artistic projects: sound installations that question urbanism in Cairo in the Margo Veillon Gallery of the Tahrir Cultural Center, a performance-visit in a bus that drives through the centre of Cairo and a blog that relates all their experiences and encounters. They also collaborated with a young artist, at the border of design and architecture, Sara El Barkouky, who over the course of a pandemic year of videoconferences, designed a series of images and participated in the creation of two of the pieces on display.

All of these works stem from an initial hypothesis, that of being able to understand the city from the sounds of the horns that invade the city, imagining that they are a key to reading Cairo and have the unsuspected potential to modify our way of perceiving the city. Collecting, classifying, studying in order to better show, modify, imagine, denounce, dream of possibilities, of Cairo utopias : Cairotopies.

Isis Fahmy, Benoît Renaudin
Klax ! ! كلكس
Video installation

Like a bass line in a pop song, you start noticing its subtleties after a while: it is one of the city's languages. Like screaming voices, Cairo horns are a way to express one's presence, ego, or existence. They are the symbols of a controlled society, where masculinity rules the streets and constructing roads seems to be the main urbanism innovation. What if Cairo klaxons have something else to say ?

Sara El Barkouky, Isis Fahmy, Benoît Renaudin
Paysage _ منظر
Video installation, 2021

How could someone not notice these advertising banners that flourish all along the highways, from the airport to the pyramids, from Cairo to Alexandria? These billboards propose a different vision of housing and the environment in Egypt, they praise peaceful and green places where the clamour of the city can no longer be heard on the images. How do these printed real estate utopias take root ? What do they tell us about Cairo ? *Manzar/paysage* is a scenery of an urban structure from a certain perspective. A community is reflected in its manzar/paysage.

Isis Fahmy, Benoît Renaudin
Cabinet of Klax
Sound installation, 2021
This cabinet displays the most beautiful sound ornaments used by different vehicles in Cairo, sometimes as a means of communicating with each other. Tuk-tuks, microbuses, cars, motorbikes, trucks: each of their songs is particular to the vehicle that uses it. Their sound represents different urban realities in Cairo. Their extinction in some neighbourhoods or their proliferation in others testifies to the urban upheavals taking place in Cairo.

Sara El Barkouky, Isis Fahmy, Benoît Renaudin
Motifs
Pocket performance, 2021
This piece is composed of six pocket performances that anyone can perform at any time they wish. In each bag are instructions for experiencing the city in a different way, with humour, using its sound and visual codes but offering a different intimate experience. A way of disseminating motifs, poetic and utopian gestures within a flood of sounds and visions imposed by the crowd in the megalopolis of Cairo.

Isis Fahmy, Benoît Renaudin
Cairo Sound Tour
Performance (40'). 2021

This bus tour of downtown Cairo offers a sonic dive into the sounds of the city. Isis Fahmy and Benoît Renaudin reverse their position of foreigners to become your special city guides for the duration of this tour. Conceived as an experimental tourist visit, this performance puts in relation the topography of the city and its sound dimension. In order to bring out an understanding of the noise of Cairo, the two performers are equipped with video sensors that allow them to mix the urban density live and to make it dialogue with a form of concrete music particular to the megalopolis.

issue-journal.ch/cairotopies
Isis Fahmy, Benoît Renaudin
Blog, 2021

Created on the occasion of the City Volume event, this blog retraces the questions raised by the latest research by Isis Fahmy and Benoît Renaudin. It is also a platform for the artists participating in City Volume to express their particular vision of the representations of the contemporary city through their sound art practice.

Duncan MacDonald
Boombox, (2020-2021)
Wood, mother of pearl, electronics

This boombox utilizes the aesthetics of Egyptian curios boxes, a craft that is fading due to challenges with tourism, a global pandemic, and day-to-day economics. The structure houses a variety of audio recordings that are inspired by the curfews that took place in Cairo off and on throughout 2020, initiated to subside Covid numbers. The hustle and bustle of Cairo was replaced with an eerie silence, and a communal longing for the noise of one of the most dynamic cities in the world.

Duncan MacDonald
Conceptual Manifestation, (2021)
Posters, wood, performance element (as long as possible)

This work is simultaneously something, and nothing. A grouping of visuals from comics found in Egypt have been enlarged and subtly altered, focusing on onomatopoeiac arabic text. The depictions of violence, intended primarily for the consumption by the youth, have been taken out of their original context and put into a new ambiguous one. The addition of wooden handles transform what would normally be posters into protest signs (meant for performance). Could a silent protest, only connoting noise, take place? And if so, what are the connotations of such an action in a solo or group context? What might it mean to use the form of protest conceptually exactly where the Revolution took place some ten years ago?

Detail from Conceptual Manifestation

VOICE/ NOISE/ POISE
Budhaditya Chattopadhyay

During a visit to Cairo a couple of years ago, I came across a scripture in the Cairo National Museum. The scripture read "*maa-kheru*" - an expression in Egyptian, translated into English: "true voice'" – as provided by the Museum. The term first appears in the court case between Horus (in some texts Osiris) and Seth, which ended in the verdict that Horus was the legitimate heir to the throne. The judges decided that his statement (voice) was "true", present and legitimate. Some scholars choose to translate "*maa-kheru*" as "blessed" - drawing on the idea that one who speaks in a true voice survives the test of time. The scripture struck me as a prompt for contemplating the essence in sound perception and cognition through their social and cultural associations. In particular, understanding the complex relationship between truth and listening process was a thought that I pursued to understand the emancipatory role of sound artists in everyday practice, now marred with various societal issues and crises.

Who or what is a true voice? One, who speaks with absolute honesty while exposing the many shades and splendors of the felt realities, can be called a true voice. In fact, within a society it is the artist, who speaks in this way, voicing personal truths consisting of (among others) the reflections, illuminations, streams of thoughts, perceptions, and poetic contemplations on the life lived. Indeed, to be true to oneself and one's true presence is the very foundation on which art stands. And it is this premise that encourages reading life's experiences and their comprehensive interpretations through art's lens. Art is, as artists point out, a mirror to society and a lens to measure the human condition. It is this blessed truthfulness that makes artists indispensable to society for sustaining its sanity and cognizance, but at the same time they are deemed

problematic for the mechanisms of a nation state, which relies on governance based on control by misinformation, mistruth, and often falsehood. Plato suggested that artists are better kept outside of the republic. Indeed, artists' true presence often antagonizes the state. Artists are much like that boy in Hans Christian Andersen's fable "The Emperor's New Clothes" (1837) pointing out a king without his clothes, standing by their unabashed truthfulness.

In the same visit in 2019, I faced this antagonism while strolling around Tahrir Square in search of site-specific ambient sounds. As I passed by a series of closed down buildings, I came across a desolate wall and an adjacent closed door producing a large drone sound from inside. My curious ears were trying to locate the source of the drone. My practitioner's hands were busy taking the sound recorder out of my pocket and putting the microphone on. My embodied presence at the entrance of the closed door was engulfed by the blinding sound, and I didn't realize a couple of military personnel were approaching me. As I pushed the recording button to keep a trace of the drone sound, I heard someone called me from behind. When I looked back, I saw two military personnel in full uniform and with rifles in hand scrutinizing me. One had a rifle pointed towards me. He asked me what I was doing there. I replied that I was recording sound. He asked again, with the rifle pointed towards me, "what is the purpose of recording sound?" I understood that seeing a South Asian in this disputed locality with a machine in hand disturbed the sense of humor of this military officer. He seemed not being able to connect the dots, as if thinking "what the heck?" Of course, I got the point: it was the intensified surveillance mechanism post-revolution in Egypt and any imagined or potential anomaly in this system would need to be quarantined. Comprehending my position, I started talking about how sound art is defined, what is the role of recorded

sound, and how urban noise is a great source of artistic inquiry into everyday practice. My voice, resonating with its typical South Asian accent coupled with my non-White skin, unfortunately, put these two officers in a mode of rapid racial profiling. My deliberately vociferous approach in making a human connection with them was immediately disparaged. In *The Parasite* (2013), philosopher Michel Serres notes how noise can pose a hiding mechanism in adverse social situations for both non-humans and humans: "He (the parasite) becomes invisible by making, on the contrary, a lot of noise. One can hide by being too visible or too perceptible. The parasite hides behind the noise." The social noise I impersonated to both withhold and justify my corporal presence at the post-revolution Tahrir Square was considered an aberration in the ears of the surveillance society and was reduced ultimately to an antagonistic and marginal voice in respect to the security and sovereignty of contemporary Egypt. On the other hand, the mediumship of the recording machine with its microphone still enabled, extended my MacLuhanian human presence in schizophrenic/ schizophonic seas of multiple possible political espionage. The officers first took away my recording machine thinking it to be a technological device to transmit data internationally. And then they grabbed hold of me - a mortal traveller and a sonic drifter, for interrogation. It was another story how I came back from their clutch and how some of these recordings survived. By narrating this personal experience, the point that I wanted to make here was the general antagonism with which artists are treated in an authoritarian surveillance society obsessed with control and sovereignty. I wonder how Egyptian artists deal with such militarization of public spaces and surveillance of public ambient sounds.

In an interview with me, artist Sherif El Azma hints at the ubiquity of sound in the city of Cairo: "I think sound is a big part of Cairo and, if I am bound to be attached to my environment, I am attached by sound. I really am, on a subconscious level. It is psychogeographical. So, sound in Cairo is inevitable." (Chattopadhyay, 2021). This psychogeographic approach is indeed crucial when one is aiming to perceive a historically transformative city like Cairo. Listening to the sounds of Cairo as of here and now might be phenomenologically reductive in approach, if the listener is aware of the historical constituents of its social sonic environments continually evolving. Therefore, one may ask: how can a sound artist draw a framework for understanding the social formation of Cairo's urban atmosphere? Is it possible for an artist to navigate the contemporary restrictions on artistic practice and policing over the artistic freedom of listening, recording, and re-composing, in search of truth? Will this expanded sonic practice be able to shed light on the methodologies for perceiving an ever-growing and rapidly expanding city of Cairo by engaging with its multilayered ambient sounds and intensifying urban noises of the present - being aware of the manifold traces of the past in the present, and, subsequently, evoking the essential and characteristic "true-voice" of the city (and that of its situated artists through historically and spatiotemporally aware artistic practice)? If we critically listen to Egyptian and Cairo-based sound and media artists such as Ola Saad, Khaled Kaddal, Hassan Khan, and Sherif El Azma, we might find an entry point to understand and further investigate the possible methodologies for artists to intervene into present urban conditions in Cairo that are still recuperating from the rubbles of political unrest while experiencing rapid growth, and offer alternative viewpoints that help to approach closer to the truthfulness about the city's public life, social formation, cultural associations as well as its political underbelly. While devising an unfolding auditory situation of Cairo in corresponding acts of drifting, listening, recording

and composing, some of these artists may be able to examine the processes of sensing an apparently chaotic and disorganized city with its multisensory complexity using a playful psychogeographic approach that also includes strategies to navigate the socio-political terrains in search of truth. Their methodologies vary from poetic abstraction to forensic investigation of urban life, expending urban noise as a source for engaging with Cairo as a place for the buzzing life amid the unspoken tension and angst regarding its recent history.

The question of the role of the artists as revolutionaries in the modern cities can be referred back to the Situationists, who were active in Europe in the 1950s and 1960s and whose ideas have attracted the deep interest of urban theorists and art historians. They were social revolutionaries made up of avant-garde artists, intellectuals, and political theorists, who employed the concept of "psychogeography" to describe the subversive and experimental practice of the subjective and mindful exploration of urban terrain by means of playfully walking or "drifting" (English translation of the widely used French word *dérive*) across the city (Coverley, 2010). This practice was designed to unsettle and disrupt the systems of consumerist homogeneity as well as the state control, surveillance and policing of everyday practice in the city. Some differences notwithstanding, the *dérive,* or drifting, is generally considered to be a chosen method for the psychogeographic exploration of a place, or a city in a manner "in which the contemporary world warps the relationship between psyche and place' (Self, 2007). In this same practice, I encountered the military personnel in Cairo like a ghostly remnant of the place and its historical past morphed into a late night dream.

By drifting in such a way through a city and listening to the urban places with a wider, contemplative, and inclusive perspective, an artist indulges in a subjective analysis or mental journey through the urban sound environment as a psychogeographic exploration in "an attempt to transform the urban experience for aesthetic purposes" (Coverley, 2010). One can take in and excavate a part of the acoustic geography without affecting it by

'nomadic listening'[1] or by drifting through the realm of sounds, altering the perspectives of the unfamiliar city into something creative or imaginative, which, Guy Debord suggests is a "playful-constructive behavior" (Sadler, 1999).

In the work of the Egyptian artists mentioned, urban noise is often considered a powerful medium to communicate political and social unrest because it is omnipresent and carries the vibrant energies within from the city to the listener. Noise can infiltrate from any side of a tightly closed space, signifying the controlled spaces of a police state and a surveillance society. As a disruptive force, noise can buzz around the ears until one tends to recognize it, and interpret a meaning from it – these are the characteristics of noise that artists excavate and exploit to achieve their creative poise – a kind of *Moksha* or emancipation with its own aesthetic energy that can mobilize the public sphere. This power of artists to influence people is the reason why they are faced with governmental suppression as it disrupts the autonomy and the regulatory barricades of the state. These mere noises transcend their ontological noise-hood to become site-specific ambient sounds that epistemologically connect to the cityscapes.

Artists like Kaddal question the complex link between the sound of politics and the politics of listening. Kaddal uses sounds of police sirens amongst other urban noise elements to expose audiences to an immersive sonic experience associated with the ominous feelings of "alert" and "alarm." In the statement of his work *Trapped Sounds* (2015) he writes about

[1] My own term used in my article 'Auditory situations: Notes from nowhere.' *Journal of Sonic Studies* 4, and later incorporated in my book *The Nomadic Listener* (Berlin 2020)

the work as it "aims to examine the relationship, or conflict, between individual and collective intelligence, manifested in the mass-produced noises observed in our surroundings." Thus, in his work urban noise takes a political position by carrying information and impressions about the city to affectively engage listeners.

In an interview with me, artist Hassan Khan says, "Because if it meant that, that would be like when the head of Egyptian intelligence in 2011 came up and said, 'Egyptians are not ready for democracy' or something. That's the statement of the man in power and who is threatened because of mass unrest and then the responses to define what the mass is and to say that they can't have this because they're not ready for it or whatever, you know, and that's exactly this binary. Within that mass, all different types of directions exist and people respond to it differently and nobody has the right to determine what someone is ready or not ready for. That is a historical experience that we went through. So, yeah, this is where my critique comes from." (Chattopadhyay 2021). The search for democracy and equity is always fertile in the mind of these artists, who are ultimately the true voices of the society. It is this inner revolutionary urge that constantly informs their artistic practice and thought processes.

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INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

The following is a number of questions posed to all artists concerning sound, noise and art practices. Responses correspond numerically:

1. How does your work offer a psychological insight into active listening? Thinking of phenomenology, how do you position your work within a larger discourse centered around listening and thinking? Is phenomenology relevant here, or does it "other" your audience?
2. How can noise affect the psyche? Or, How can noise affect people on a level deeper than they might be usually aware of? How does sound not affect humans??
3. How can one become more aware of the effects that Noise has on her/him on a subconscious level? How can one not?
4. What is unique about the soundscapes of Cairo? How do you see the noise in your artwork in the greater acoustic/noise-related landscape in the city of Cairo? How do you visually map sound in such a dynamic and complex environment such as Cairo?
5. Does media, as a ubiquitous component of our modern lives, become part of the art you want to deliver to an audience? Does choice of media affect the manner of "composing" noise? Please describe how you "compose" work or utilise processes that help organize sounds.
6. In other words, what are the boundaries of Noise?
7. What guided your choice of "Noise"? And what did not?
8. How do economics play into the reaction and reception of Noise? What might be potentially equivalent forms of organized "Noise" in Egypt?
9. What do you appreciate about working with sound, and specifically Noise, as foundational for the production of your artwork?
10. What are the obstacles you have found in continuing to work with sound and noise?
11. What role does media play in your art? Are there materials that you come back to over time- and if so why?

12. What do you think constitutes active listening? Can you give me an example please?
13. What is the use value of sound art?
14. Why is sound art, art?
15. What role do cultural institutions play in the audition of sound art?
16. How does one make a living as a sound artist?
17. How is this project like and both unlike a sort of cultural anthropology?
18. How can daily life and art be mixed within a rubric that is interchangeable?
19. What kinds of sounds intrigue you? Which sounds repel you ?
20. How would you explain your piece of sound art in the show for someone with a hearing disability?
21. How has working with sound art changed your listening?

Isis Fahmy & Benoît Renaudin

1. We believe that sound is a human sense that brings another understanding of the listener's surroundings. Compared to sight, sound is really powerful for humans to know in an instant the space that is around them. They can hear sounds produced very far from them. Sounds are better datas for discerning a specific territory. Sound is about immediacy and putting the audience in a state of instant awareness.

2. We are also working in the theater field where we are playing with words and their meanings. But we always feel very interested to listen to the text as pure noise to check if you can feel something when you receive it. Of course working with a foreign language, arabic here, is truly exciting in order to estimate what it is still sensitive for the audience from a particular situation without seeing and understanding.

3. Sound has to be experienced so you have to allow yourself to be aware of this experience. We notice that the one who wants to understand and make a conclusion before letting him/her listen, they usually miss the point. Listening is a skill to develop.

4. As soon as you are reminded of the acoustic atmosphere in Cairo, you perceive a kind of rumor made from voices, traffic, klax, wind, tv or radio's sound… Then, you can explore your sound memories to move from space to space or/and from time to time : early morning in Ard El Lewa, late night in Kasr Al Nile Bridge, afternoon in AUC Campus, evening in Al Hussein. And you notice a huge difference between domestic sound and outdoor even if the isolation of your home is not very efficient. The sound is linked to the size of the road nearby because it changes what kind of vehicles are using it and so the type of horns and of interactions between pedestrians and vehicles. For instance in the informal suburbs cars can not enter in the small back streets and the sound is totally modified.

5. The work we are presenting at City Volume is a new turn for us as we are not using field recording as much as in previous pieces. This time, sound is a social factor we analyse. In *Klax*, for example, noises from the car horns become a language which is the primary

definition of composition. In the other works we are going to present, we are playing with the noise elements of Cairo, like if the city was a generator of compositions. We are creating a paradigm where sound compositions are similar to urban planning, community organisation, social interactions, etc...

6. As far as you can bear or hear it. The absence of Noise means the absence of life.

7. A noise is, for us, an emanation of the society where it is produced. It represents an opening in the understanding of this specific society.

8. We worked in Cairo on the idea of analysing the city differently, through an art-based research that is part of the Swiss research program Leading House MENA. For us, noise is the main component of Cairo we wanted to address. So the idea that Cairo is chaotic does not apply to our understanding of the city. We think that every noise is organised somehow and is linked to a social trait of Cairo. We started to have a very rich dialogue with the Egyptian artist Sara El Barkouky to translate visually the archetype of the sound. What kind of area matches with what kind of sound. From the street sellers to the language of cars honking, the noises are telling us a lot about how life is organised and works in Cairo.

9. Noise has this particularity that it is made by everyone. It is not aesthetically scaled. Saying that a noise is beautiful is possible, but it is not what we think first. Noise is provoking an understanding of our surroundings in an instant.

10. The main difficulty is to isolate a sound you want in Cairo. When you are working in this city, sounds are dense, massive, and everywhere. You have to admit that others noises are part of the sound. The amount of data in a field recording in Cairo is always huge and needs to be embraced as a whole.

11. We have been working in Cairo since 2015, through different residencies and research programs. The material we find here is always exciting. We always come back and find the soundscape evolving as the city is growing and growing.

12. The passenger of the car in Cairo is the most active listener in the world. When you drive in Cairo, an experience we have had as part of our research, you navigate only with the sound of the other vehicles surrounding you. Everyone honks all the time to signify to the others that they are there.

13. In our case, and with our background, working with sound has similarities with urban studies and sociology. The sound art we produce is based on a research protocol and has a sociological value somehow.

14. In 2014, the Fondazione Prada in Venice presented the exhibition called Art or Sound curated by Germano Cellant. They were questioning the boundaries between musicians, instrument makers and artists creating new types of sounds or understanding of sounds. The result was amazing because it showed how our understanding of sound evolved

through the evolution of art, especially in western Europe. It took the exact same modern path as painting or sculpture for example.

15. For us, we have been supported by institutions like theater and research institutes. They have had a significant role for helping us create such sound art experiences. The most important thing for us was to have the time and means for our research more than the production part of the work.

16. Difficult question as every artist has its way about making a living. We would say that devoting most of its time on creating sound art is a first step. Creating a network is another. In our case, we work on interdisciplinary projects, not specifically in the visual art scene.We live by working on a lot of different projects in different fields of expertise : design, theater, research, teaching etc.

17. The most impressive for us who are coming from Switzerland is to compare the level of noise acceptance. You will say that you cannot choose your level of sound especially in Cairo that you have to undergo, to do with it. But how this situation affects your way of behaving, of communicating, of dreaming…

18. Of course borders are not so clear because you always explore as an artist question or territory which appeals to you. And our way of exploring Cairo is also a kind of investigation with our family's city.

19. Sounds are intriguing intrinsically as they all have a specific source. It is this source and how it is interrelated to other sources that are interesting for us. In a way, putting an appreciation on sounds is not part of our understanding of it.

20. The pieces we are showing are all representing a social aspect of Cairo as for us, in these specific projects, sound tells us a lot about how the City and its inhabitants are working.

21. We make huge progress in spatializing where the sound is coming from. Some people pay to have what they call a "bath sound" but if you are focusing enough, you can enter in a kind of meditation everywhere, anytime and be aware of the sounds surrounding you, trying to isolate some, or just letting yourself go.

Julie Semoroz & Thomas Perrodin

1. My artistic practice often involves the public, beyond its simple presence, I invited the listener during the "Cabinet Sonore" project to fill in a form and to represent, by drawing, its vision of time. Generally speaking, my music practice is generally done in public, so I have a direct relationship with the audience as well as discussions at the end of my performances.

2. The sound is immediate. You cannot accelerate it. You have to live it with your ears and your body. For me it affects the emotion and the memory and makes travel the listener.

Also in the research in neuroscience there is some interesting research about what you call interoception and it seems that sound also affects the body on many levels.

3. With interoception and also focusing on the body as in meditation.

4. I never travelled to Cairo but according to my different tours around the world as Dakar or La Paz, I can imagine a certain type of noise in this city that probably changed recently with the sanitary situation. But I am very curious to discover it, as for example in Valparaiso in Chile, the sound has a huge reverberation in the hills that I never expected before I travelled there. In Cairo I visually map the antennas in the city and probably the noise of this non audible frequencies are less important than in Switzerland or China. So I am pretty curious to discover as well the intensity of those antennas but also if the signal is stable or not. Those elements will directly affect the live concert as I will work with the current frequencies of the city in real time and the signal from the phone of the audience.

5. All media and interface affects the way we are in everyday life and how we listen and create sound as well. I use some interface which already exists in software as well as hardware or recently work with programmers to build what I imagine. I don't have a way to produce, except that all can be used no matter what the device is: computer, iphone, can, metal tube, voice, recordings. The sound can be really bad recorded or extreme quality, it doesn't matter to me. There's always some way to work with it. I think I shape the sound as any material and I am curious of any sound material to work with as well with any type of device which reveals sounds: speakers, sub, transducer, antennas,…

6. There are no boundaries except maybe in space. Even there you can collect some frequencies and datas.

7. Accidents, discussion, random encounters, obsessions most of the time.

8. I am not sure I understand the question, but the listener evolves with spaces and communities in their areas to listen to some noise. Cultural communities I mean in the sense of contemporary music, noise music or traditional music or even mainstream community shape the reality of human ears . I don't know what is the reality in Egypt or in Cairo.

9. It is immediate, invisible and you have to experiment it with your body. There is no language boundary. You cannot touch it, but you can touch with it. You can penetrate any bodies or living creatures with sound, which is pretty crazy if you really think about it.

10. For the moment not so many obstacles. That's pretty much the opposite.

11. I record a lot of stuff and have recently started to use community shared sound data banks which is pretty crazy online now (especially about animals archives or sound databases from space). I can use some sound recorded 5-6 years ago or even in the 70s.

It is pretty wide open with possibilities now. I like to work in situ when I have the opportunity.

12. Go into a space and listen to some sound or music with your body. Participate in a thunderstorm or go in front of the ocean- this is pretty much the best immediate active listening ever!

13. Propose spaces or structures dedicated to listening to sound.

14. Because it is not music, we have chosen to give a space dedicated to the sound piece as it was for video art.

15. The institutions are active in their proposal related to sound art and the environment remains supported.

16. By multiplying projects, from concerts and performances to performing arts and art spaces, by playing on definitions, these environments are not supported in the same way.

17. HF installation as well performance makes the imperceptible, the invisible audible, it evokes what few people can perceive but which is really there, it talks about technologies and their impact on humans and all living beings.
    In the unbridled race of the capitalist system to accelerate the flow of information, technological decisions linked to innovation are introduced into society without prior testing on living organisms. Human beings are surrounded and traversed by waves and frequencies, I put this into perspective and question it with this project.

18. I make and live only from my art, there is no question of interchangeability, it is a constant, all my living environment as well as my encounters and readings nourish my practice.

19. LIKE: Sound made by any electric system or inaudible frequencies
    DISLIKE: sagex

20. With movements

21. It is more how noise music and the experimental scene affected my way of listening and enjoying sound and then affected my sound work.

Duncan MacDonald

1. To be realistic, there is not much active listening happening. When you ask someone to listen, in an art context, or within the rubric of sound art - then there is a focus on such a concept. But, in day to day life, I feel that a lot of sound is edited out of people's experience. It is overwhelming how much sound we find in Cairo, for example. And there is no doubt that listening is important here - even just in crossing the road, so it is done without an accident or danger. With my work, I generally try to flip the visual and aural hierarchy of the senses so people rethink their ways of experiencing art.

2. On a physiological level, an overabundance of noise can be dangerous to one's hearing, obviously. Psychologically, it can be exhausting… However, there can also be moments of beauty in there. An openness to listening to all sound is important for this reason.

3. That is a tricky question to answer. I just know from personal experience that if sounds seem to be louder than they actually are, then I am likely tired and need rest, or food, or water. Beyond that, I think it is a matter of being cognizant of how sound affects oneself in public and private spaces.

4. Cairo has a very complex and healthy sonic culture that is as dense and dynamic as its population. With my recent work, I have been exploring the quietude that was introduced to Cairo as a direct result of Covid. The bustling and cacophonous city became strangely quiet - a very uneasy silence that I believe disturbed most Cairenes much more than the noise of the city itself. A year later, the noise has come back - but that memory of the silence is still there. There is something deeply existential about.

5. My process is very slow - methodical - and at times intuitive. Media, for me, is just another tool to consider in making art - like a piece of stone, paper, ink, or a camera. The tools, process, and materials all have to line up with my art so that a conceptual logic is created within a continuum

6. Immediately, I think of the edges of Noise. When we pass beyond the limits of perception, for me, this is memory

7. Intuition, formal properties, and much, much time spent listening...

8. I think generally speaking, here, wealthy people can afford silence - and live in contexts that reduce unwanted sounds. There is a direct correlation to Informal Economics and Noise in Cairo. The concept of organized sound in Egypt is different from what we find in the West. A tuk tuk going down a road often plays organized sound while it honks and speeds through the tight spots of Cairo. How organized is this? It is definitely not the Cageian concept of music as organized sound being music. It is much more utilitarian - and survivalist. Street music might be a form of organized Noise here - though it is rare to experience, and becoming more and more rare it seem (as the act of people congregating is highly discouraged on an authoritarian level).

9. The concept of taking sounds that interfere with communication - and to create a new form of communication through art - this interests me. I think there is something poetic about the idea of accepting dissonance as part of life and mortality.

10. The obvious one is a lack of understanding. So, part of any project like this needs to be educational.

11. I am a champion of media - and simultaneously a Luddite. Generally, I use it as a tool to prompt an audience to rethink how we consume media - and what creative alternatives media affords. Artists tend to use whatever tools at their disposal to make work - obsolete, low-tech, high-tech - whatever is needed (and available) to make their work. My practice is no different in that regard.

12. Active listening is quite rare I think. It involves not only focusing on sounds close to oneself - but also on all sounds ranging to edges of perception. It is a slightly redundant term as listening is different from hearing, of course (listening being psychological, while hearing is physiological). With teaching right now, via zoom, students need to do some active listening during classes. When I call out questions related to the discussion and people do not even realize I have asked a

question to them, they are likely not engaged in active listening. In Cairo, it is super important: can I cross the road now? Is there a car in my blindspot? Is it prayer time? Etc…

13. It is a strange and interesting question. I think it has great value in prompting audiences to rethink their assumptions about what constitutes art - and that the corporeal sensorium goes beyond the ocular. Is that use-value? Maybe not, but for me I see this as useful (possibly beyond a neo-Marxist definition of the term).

14. This kind of gets to the question - what is art, and what is not art? Sound art has been around for decades. Some might even say about 100 years. I think Russolo's "The Art of Noise" manifesto covers this topic well.

15. Sound art has the awkward problem of not being easily bought and sold within the art market. It does happen, and there are collectors, but institutions really have to step up their game to support this important art form. Without them, sound artists struggle.

16. I might not be the best person to ask this question. But, for me, I made a decision a long time ago that if I wanted to keep making work that excited me (like sound art) I would have to teach - and generate a relatively stable way to exist as an artist. Beyond that, it is a lot of fund-searching, grant-writing, and strategizing with artists and curators with similar interests.

17. I should be clear that my intentions are not to offer any sort of anthropological perspective on sound here in Egypt. I think that kind of ethno-musicology stuff is interesting, but something that I stay clear of. There are power dynamics at play that I find oppressive and hierarchical. This is not how I operate. Realistically, I am a foreigner in a rich and complex society who is lucky to be here. I do not see a need to categorize sound phenomena in conjunction with an academic understanding of the society who is making the sound. I prefer to pose questions over making statements about the context of sound here in Egypt.

18. The Fluxus artists did this very well. The blurring of lines between quotidian life and art was a very important discourse within 20th century art history. And I think it is very relevant right now as the world is trying to cope with the pandemic. This does get back to the question of what is art, however. And I think sound artists are in an interesting position of simultaneously being outsiders to the art world, and having both feet firmly grounded within it.

19. Birds. I find myself listening for the kestrels, parrots, and doves here in Maadi - sometimes even imitating them. I notice the different species in different countries, and enjoy the complexity they bring to any soundscape. I remember hearing some very wild birds in Berlin a few years ago that seemed to be almost singing free jazz - so complex, and wonderful. The way they puncture any sonic space (and of course, some of this has to do with their ability to fly in space) is fascinating to me. As for sounds that repel me - I think those of violence. Whether in sound design for film, or in real life, these sounds disgust me.

20. I would have them imagine a vibration that starts gently and becomes more dynamic, complex, and strong. Of course, they would be welcome to feel the work itself and sense the vibrations of the piece.

21. Every once in a while, I find a sound that catches my attention, like a message that is not meant to convey anything other than its resonance. Sound inspires me to think of new artworks, new ideas, and to rethink what I know in life. For me, sound represents the complexity of life. It is messy, chaotic, dynamic, time-based, and constantly fleeting.

Budhaditya Chattopadhyay

1. Listening at a certain place requires for me to be there and learn the history of the place. I have problems with approaches where the listener's position is colonial, and the approach is to extract sounds as much as possible from the place. On the contrary, I would like to develop an inter-subjective relationship with a place via sound. Rather than phonography, I prefer active listening, in which this reciprocal and inter-subjective approach to listening is central to a psychogeographic exploration of a site as my ground for phenomenological observation. Often, I don't record at all, though I might spend a month in a place exploring nooks and crannies of its body, and listen in depth.

2. I don't undermine noise as it is done from the traditional Shaferian soundscape approach. I even don't like the term *noise*; everything is sound. I rarely get annoyed with so-called "noise" in public and private spaces, because often such a concern is socially constructed. I am fascinated by the materiality of noise, its many splendors, many textures and multiple layers. My motivation, or the drive to work with noise or sound is to develop a kind of inclusive, contemplative relationship with the lived environment.

3. Noise is song of the oppressed. We cannot stay away from noise of any kind. Noise is powerful because it is omnipresent. Noise can infiltrate from any side of a tightly closed room. Noise can buzz around the ear until one tends to recognize it, and interpret a meaning. Noise has its own aesthetics that can mobilize the public sphere.

4. In the everyday soundscapes of Cairo, times past and present coalesce. The noise content in the city has a force of its own, that can be perceived and felt viscerally, in an embodied presence. My work deals with urban noise as a basic material for composition. I incorporate noise in my composition not as something abatable, but something that is part of a larger nature, man-made. In Cairo, I do not like to map the sound environment from a cartographic sense, but aesthetically engage with the merging of different noise-spaces through a psychogeographic practice.

5. After coming from the field, I deposit these recordings in my archive (where they rest for a long time). When eventually I come back to them, they lose the immediate emotional associations by this temporal distance. It's easier to work with them when this disassociation happens. Usually, I don't like to edit or compose. Almost all of my works are unedited, except minimal when it's absolutely necessary, such as fading in or out.

6. Noise is a social construct. Anything that is ontologically unrecognizable is termed noise. However, noise can be understood as a composite sound, just as the colour black consists of all the colours in a composite manner. The boundaries of noise is this sense of epistemic presence.

7. I work with urban sounds, often considered "noise" in everyday practice, but they are evocative and meaningful in my artistic vocabulary. I relisten to these sounds in order to figure the urban space, its dehumanizing and alienating properties. These sounds are sense data of urban life.

8. Organized noise can be a compositional strategy when it creates an immersive space for popular entertainment – this "noise music" scene has a commercial viability. There are many noise artists

performing regularly in the festival circuits as well as in the club scene, promoting a popular kind of immediately immersive sound works that are made to move the body and chill out.

9. I am not a "noise artist" the way it is defined. I work with listening, and I sensitize the listening faculty to noises that have socio-political connotations. For me noise is a polyphony of sound.

10. I find obstacles in people-perception of sound and noise. Sound art is still misunderstood by the untrained ears of ordinary people who are conditioned with visuality. The absence of a visual object or artefact makes these people resist appreciating sound works. This is the main obstacle in receiving public support and funding for sound art. I also see the marginalization of the practice in the mainstream artworld.

11. Media doesn't play any significant role, except promotionals on the expanding social media. As such, media, especially, news media, seems to be intrigued by sound art but doesn't consider it serious business. After all, sound art is hardly hung on the wall or showcased in a corner of a gallery – it is not object or artifact; sound artworks are rarely "bought" by the art collectors.

12. Active listening is going beyond the reduced and causal listening mode to involve the context of the listening and nurturing the contemplative potential. For example, I hear the laptop fan as a sound producing object, but active listening will make me contemplate the auditory associations. As I mentioned earlier, in active listening this reciprocal and inter-subjective approach to listening is central to a psychogeographic exploration of a site as my ground for phenomenological observation, as well as developing a personal cognitive sound world.

13. There is little material gain to have from sound art practice. However, sound art enables a greater faculty of listening, particularly to everyday sounds by engaging with one's environment.

14. Like all art, sound art does sensitize the human perception to societal issues, injustices, problems. The aesthetic quality of sound is embedded in its capacity to unpack the everyday and the realities that constitute the reality. Unlike visual art, sound art is more subliminal, and more ingrained in the subconscious, therefore, its effect is often ignored or misunderstood.

15. Cultural institutions, like galleries and museums may act to promote immaterial sound art. In so doing, they can break away from the colonial model of objectifications of art as for capital gain.

16. This I didn't yet figure out. There is little support and funding especially outside Europe. In Europe, there are some venues dedicated to sound art practices, but their support is still marginal. One may think about making a living by performing regularly, or work in the film industry.

17. I have little to say about whether sound art is cultural anthropology or not – the term is quite colonial. I think sound art, particularly, field recording practices, are auto-ethnographic in nature.

18. Co-listening and community art practices, such as my workshop project "Hyper-listening", enables mixing daily life and art within a social and collective rubric that is interchangeable.

19. The human voice repels me. I prefer environmental sounds, and the natural rhythm hidden in them.

20. Hearing disabilities still allow for haptic engagement with sound. I would let the artwork vibrate for the deaf person, so that a deaf person can touch the artwork and experience in an embodied way.

21. I try to listen to a sound source from different angles - and keep traces of these different perspectives in different media, not just one. I don't have or use a studio. I work on any platform

or spaces I have the time to be. I produced some works, for example, sitting in an airport! It's wonderful to develop a piece not alienated or insulated from an environment. I mostly work with the recordings, as they're - compositions on their own right. Working with sound art has changed my listening to sensitive sounds. These small and profound sounds are a discovery for me exposing my artistic sensibility to sound.

Hagar Masoud

1. How does your work offer psychological insight into active listening? Thinking of phenomenology, how do you position your work within a larger discourse centred around listening and thinking? Is phenomenology relevant here, or does it "Other" your audience?
   Active listening is a process of listening attentively, through allowing a direct interaction with the artwork and engaging the audience in a phenomenal listening experience. I believe that sound practice is an instrument of change, and not only a method to analytical listening and thinking but also a way to the development of human consciousness and self - awareness.

2. How can noise affect the psyche? Or, How can noise affect people on a level deeper than they might be usually aware of? How does sound not affect humans??
   The unwanted sound that is produced from a source or different sources and frequencies become noise. The disadvantages of frequent or loud noise can trigger psychological and physiological problems such as anxiety or stress as well as high blood pressure. For example, people who live in a noisy environment tend to have short temper and louder than others who live in nature, as their nervous system adapted to high levels of loudness. Besides, Noise can cause a kind of distraction and deafness relying on frequency, duration of exposure, frequency of interruption, and duration of the interruption becoming relevant in evaluating the effects of noise. However, noise also has advantages as it keeps people connected in time and space, and it enriches feelings of certainty and vibrancy. Silence is the borderline between life and death.

3. How can one become more aware of the effects that Noise has on her/him on a subconscious level? How can one not? Practising aware listening and analytical listing
   There is a need for raising awareness of loudness and the necessity to be taken into consideration as a dangerous factor on the human body and can cause early hearing loss. For example, Sound length and frequency should be explained at an early age for children as a part of the five main characteristics of sound waves. That could be through interactive activities or educational toys. Besides practising positive listening and analytical listening could enhance the learning process for young and adults.

4. What is unique about the soundscapes of Cairo? How do you see the noise in your artwork in the greater acoustic/noise-related landscape in the city of Cairo? How do you visually map sound in such a dynamic and complex environment such as Cairo?
   Through working on building an audio archive across many cities and practising analytical listening, and after a long distance from the soundscape of Cairo. I returned to Cairo with new ears, awareness and realization of the richness and uniqueness of Cairo's soundscape in comparison to other cities I lived in such as Paris, Bonn, and Florence. The soundscape of Cairo is

overwhelming and rich at the same time. Each district has its own auditory identity that varies throughout the day from morning to night. And, through listening to the previous field recordings back to 2010 passing by 2011 and 2015 one can realize how sound preserves the cultural identity of cities and the transformation of societies through time. Every city has a distinct auditory identity as a consequence of cultural and political accumulation. That reflects the extent of stability or emergency in town. Cairo, for example, has different and various sound identities from 2010 to today, that are diverse between uncertainty, optimism, dream, silence, and unpredictability. On the contrary, Paris is distinguished by a constant police siren, which reflects the state of anxiety and constant alertness. The complexity of the soundscape of Cairo reflects on my sound practice in composing multi-layered compositions and virtual auditory environments. That perceived as a continuous unfolding symphony with no place for silence. Besides, my interest in using the surrounding sound system allows the listener to partly experience the sense of soundscape and noise of Cairo, through multiple channels and sounds that suddenly rise and disappear before even recognizing it. Exactly as walking in Cairo's streets through listening to the sounds of the past 10 years and referring to the ephemerality. That relay to connect and engage the audience with the auditory memory of the city.

5. In other words, what are the boundaries of Noise?
It depends on how we perceive it and interact with it.

6. What are the obstacles you have found in continuing to work with sound and noise?
Due to socio-political variables and restriction of public space in Egypt, it's neither possible to do field recording nor experience sound work in public space. Besides, rare support for sound art and research, along with a lack of opportunities for production and exhibition of new works.

7. What role do cultural institutions play in the audition of sound art?
There are no cultural centres that specifically support sound art in Egypt, I try to find alternative opportunities for self-learning to develop my practice. Meanwhile, cultural institutions do not only connect the artist with the local and global art scene but also create cultural bridges between community engagement and sound artworks. Which enhances cultural awareness and work development.

8. Not yet experienced livelihood based on my sound practice only. As a sound artist, I have to do a side job to be able to make a living and I even contribute financially to produce my work.

9. What kinds of sounds intrigue you? Which sounds repel you?
All kinds of sound inspire me and have a unique diversity and reflection on my work.

10. How would you explain your piece of sound art in the show for someone with a hearing disability?
This would be an interesting experience and has something to do with sound and tactility. Which leads to the question: what is sound? For example, Beethoven used to listen while composing through a wooden stick between his teeth to feel the vibration, using solid objects and body bones as an instrument to transmit sound vibrations. Vibration is the key to perceive sound for non-hearing ones.

11. How has working with sound art changed your listening?

Working with sound enhanced my awareness and listening towards using sound as a tool, reference or evidence of activities that tell us more about social and political changes in societies. Practising analytical listening in different auditory environments cleared and sharpened the sensitivity of my ears, along with my way of perceiving sound, its sources and its characteristics.

Ola Saad

1. How can noise affect the psyche? Or, How can noise affect people on a level deeper than they might be usually aware of? How does sound not affect humans??

2. What is unique about the soundscapes of Cairo? How do you see the noise in your artwork in the greater acoustic/noise-related landscape in the city of Cairo? How do you visually map sound in such a dynamic and complex environment such as Cairo?

الضوضاء جزء كبير من حياتنا سواء بالسلب أو الإيجاب، والسلب كونه له أضرار على صحة الإنسان و الإيجاب بكونه جزء يعبر عن ثقافة الإنسان من حيث تنوعه واختلافه من حيث) تحدث الأشخاص وسائل النقل صوت الآذان نداء الباعة الجائلين والأسواق(. تجعل كل هذه الأصوات طمأنينة بشكل ما للإنسان الذي يعيش بداخل القاهرة وهذا ما يميزها كمدينة. المشكلة هنا فى ازدياد هذه الأصوات عن معدلها الطبيعي للإنسان.

3. What kinds of sounds intrigue you? Which sounds repel you?

كفنان صوت تثيرنى جميع ألصوات بإختلاف مصادرها و حدتها

ARTIST BIOGRAPHIES (in alphabetical order)

Asmaa Azouz

Multidisciplinary, Sound artist, film music producer, digital art curriculum designer, entrepreneur, instructor and facilitation consultative. Earned master's degree in Art Education in

2016. Joined sound art workshops since 2005, and started to be sound and music instructor since 2014. Participate in many contemporary art festivals and perform at many live sound concerts inside and outside Egypt. Was a member of Egyptian female experimental music.

Benoît Renaudin

Benoît Renaudin lives and works in Geneva, Switzerland. He is a musician, interaction designer, scenographer, author and university lecturer. Associate artist of the Abri in Geneva since September 2019, he is developing an artistic research project on the question of performative architectures, cabins and the creation of experimental musical instruments.
Website: https://www.benoitrenaudin.com/

Budhaditya Chattopadhyay

Budhaditya Chattopadhyay is a contemporary artist, researcher, writer and theorist. Incorporating diverse media, such as sound and moving image, Chattopadhyay's work conceptually inquires into the materiality, objecthood, site, and technological mediation of lived experiences, and considers the aspects of subjectivity, contemplation, mindfulness, and transcendence inherent in listening. His artistic practice intends to shift the emphasis from object to situation, and from immersion to discourse in the realm of sound and media art.
Website: http://budhaditya.org/about/

Duncan MacDonald

Duncan MacDonald is a Canadian contemporary artist and professor who currently acts as Director of the Visual Arts program at AUC. Working in various mediums/media, sound has been at the core of his artistic practice for more than 20 years. MacDonald studied at York University and NSCAD University, focusing on interdisciplinary studio practice and sound.
Website: www.duncanmacdonald.ca

Gilles Aubry

Gilles Aubry is a Swiss sound artist, musician and researcher living in Berlin.
His work is based on research into the material, historical and cultural aspects of sound and listening. He uses field recordings, voices, music and sound archives to create live performances, installations, movies and radio pieces.

Website: www.earpolitics.net

Hagar Masoud

Hagar Masoud lives and works in Cairo. Her practice is research-based and multi-disciplinary including sound art, performance, video and site-specific installation. Masoud is passionate about exploring, researching, and recording ephemeral sounds of urban cities, and building a sound archive. She observes social, cultural and economic conditions through walking. Masoud's practice investigates walking as a significant aspect of art practice and as a specific method of research into perception and experience. Masoud's work has been presented in numerous music festivals and venues across Europe, North Africa and the Middle East, including Sic! Raum für Kunst, Switzerland (2018) Biennale Africaine de la photographie (Bamako), National Museum of Mali (2017) Villa Romana, Italy (2016), Cité Internationale des Arts, Paris (2016), Künstlerforum Bonn, Germany. She is also a member of (Cairo Bats).
Website: soundcloud.com/hagar-masoud

Isis Fahmy

Isis FAHMY is a stage director and an academic researcher in La Manufacture (CH). She founded her theatre company called [IF] between Geneva and Lausanne in 2015. She invites artists from other backgrounds in experimental music, interactive design, contemporary dance to collaborate with her on artistic cycle of research. Kairo[s] (2015-2021) made in collaboration with Benoît Renaudin is based on sound research in Cairo and was presented in many installative and performative forms (Artellewa, FNC Montreal, Festival de la Cité in Lausanne...). Another cycle (2016-20), HORDE[s] deals with the Science Fiction novel *La Horde du Contrevent* by Alain Damasio and gave birth to a multidisciplinary performance in 2019. In her research field, she is developing the concept of performative objects.
Website: https://www.isisfahmy.com/

Julie Semoroz

Julie Semoroz, born in 1984, lives and works in Geneva, Switzerland. Singer, sound artist and head of artistic projects, Semoroz addresses transformation, metaphysical poetry and the invisible through her productions, and explores ethereal and intimate worlds that are on the brink of falling apart. Her work addresses new technologies and our post-industrial consumerist

society. Website: https://juliesemoroz.ch/

Mena El Shazly

Mena El Shazly is a visual artist and researcher born in Cairo. She received her degree in performing and visual arts from the American University in Cairo and the Home Workspace Program at Ashkal Alwan in Beirut. Her practice is concerned with entropy and sensitive surfaces that carry knowledge and memory. She has a well-established curatorial practice and has organized several video art events and workshops. She is the current Artistic Director of Cairo Video Festival for video art and experimental film organized by Medrar for Contemporary Art. Website: https://menatelshazly.wordpress.com/

Ola Saad

Ola Saad is a sound and visual artist based in Cairo, Egypt. She writes music, noise-scapes and textures, makes short films and music videos, confuses Boiler Room visitors with real music, manages the record label 100 Copies and is the publisher of "Egyptian Females Experimental Music Sessions''. The rest is noise.
Website: soundcloud.com/ola-saad

Sara El Barkouky

Sara Elbarkouky is a young Egyptian multidisciplinary artist who creates visual concepts through sculpture, space, form, architecture and performance. Having graduated in Visual Arts from the American University in Cairo, she believes in the power of multimedia and cross-disciplinary art practices. She is inspired by architecture as a concept in life, nature and humanity.

Stéphane Montavon

Stéphane Montavon lives in Basel (Switzerland). He is a poet and sound artist. Based on interviews, sound archives, field recordings and self-staged recordings, he composes quadraphonic pieces for site-specific installations or black box - ones that can be transposed, with the help of video artists, into surround-sound films. Montavon's main interest is in the listener's attitude and the auditory side of everyday (crisis) situations. As an "ear witness," he takes the most diverse voices from this babel and splices them together in order to create docu-fictional sound narratives on the art of listening.
Website: www.re-implant.blogspot.com

Thomas Perrodin

Thomas Perrodin is Geneva-based graphic artist and illustrator who teaches illustration at the Ecole supérieure de bande-dessinée et d'illustration de Genève (ESBDI). He is actively present in the alternative scene in Geneva, especially in the domain of music. Since 2015, he has been creating posters for Festival Animatou in Switzerland.

Website: http://thomasperrodin.blogspot.com/

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