

ANETTE VANDSØ FLUID STATES FLUID SOUNDS 2015

Listening to the world as object and non-human agency.

It has often been claimed that sound art in general is a non-expressive art that is not concerned with expressing the sentiments and feelings of people but instead is preoccupied with sonic phenomenon of nature and/or technology (Cage, 2004; Licht 2007). Often we see an almost 1:1 representation of the world as say in the sound walk or field recordings. Here the only difference between everyday sounds and sound art is the subtle framing of exactly these incidental sounds as art done either by the walk or the remediating recording.

Where the earlier readings of the avantgarde arts emphasized the anti-hermeneutical, anti-bourgeois and thus political quality of such apparently meaningless events (Russolo, Bürger) recent readings emphasize qualities that are a not negating, but confirmative. Such readings claim that sound art offers an enhanced sensitivity towards aspects of the subject-world relationship that is often overlooked. On the one hand sound art is claimed to create an enhanced sensitivity towards the singular, sensorial, phenomenological meeting between subject and world (Labelle, Voegelin).

On the other hand it is claimed to demonstrate the overall linguistic, semiotic, always already discoursified quality of subject-world relation (Kim-Cohen). Both positions can be regarded as an opposition to both the common everyday experience of subject and world as separate entities, and the scientific understanding of the world as something that can be described in an objective way without taking into account the subject or the context. However, with the off-set in this correlative relation between world and subject both positions overlook a quite different reflective potential. When re-reading statements and reflections of artists we see a fascination with objects that is not inserted in this human-world correlation. Cage for instance suggests that with the proper (imaginary) technology we could place an ashtray in an anechoic chamber and listen its "inner life" (Cage 2009) thus suggesting a non-human agency.

Across time we see many artists thinking of the world as vibrating matter, as transmissions as a part of a world-activity (e.g. Kahn, 2014). The world in Cages example is neither reduced into a simple scientific model of the world as made out of atoms but also not seen as a world *for* someone. Instead focus is on the object, the materiality that is also the main focus in the so called "object-oriented philosophy". Graham Harman's suggestion for a object oriented methodology is an object-altering experiment; to attempt modifications and "see what happens" (Harman 2012).

This presentation wishes to pursue this notion that these sound art experiments with sounds of the world opens a window towards an understanding of the world as objects, as vibrant matter (Bennet) and non-human agency? Is a sound art walk a walk that affords such an understanding of surroundings not as places or sites *for us* but as an assemblage of objects? (Deleue & Guatteri) And is what we hear in the field recording not just the world-objects, but also the technological ear the listening agency as a non-human or posthuman agency? (Virillo, Hayles). The presentation will pursue this argument in a discussion why we should listen to the world, or what kind of knowledge we might gain from the sound art experiment.

The *audiopaper* will be based on an experimental sound walk performed in the area of Amager. The purpose of this walk is to investigate the current material using the object oriented theory and the theory of assemblage. The audio paper will document this experiment: presenting the experiments with the local soundscape in combination with readings of the relevant academic texts.