

# Resounding the Past

## Re-presencing Historical Places, Fragments, and Objects through Sound Art

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Simone Dotto, Francesco Federici<sup>1</sup>

However dubious as a scientifically demonstrable proposition, the findability of sounds that occurred in the historical past excited my imagination and challenged my skills as a scholar trained to deal with tangible physical objects in the form of literary texts.

Mark M. Smith, *Listening to the Blue White Yonder*<sup>2</sup>

### 1. Historical Documents and Contemporary Arts

What is a document? According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, there are several possible answers to this question: depending on the context, the term may indicate »an original or official paper relied on as the basis, proof, or support of something« or »something (such as photograph or a recording) that serves as evidence or proof«; a »writing conveying information«; »a material substance (such as a coin or stone) having on it a representation of thoughts by means of some conventional mark or symbol« or, in a more contemporary fashion, »a computer file containing information«. All these definitions hint at different technological processes and supports, but they also insist on the *informative*, *inscriptive* and *evidentiary* features as the defining traits of the concept.

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1 The essay was conceived and developed by the two authors in close collaboration. However, as regards the single sections, Simone Dotto wrote the paragraphs *Sound and History* and *Resounding Objects* and Francesco Federici wrote the paragraphs *Resounding Places* and *Resounding Fragments*. The paragraphs *Introduction: Contemporary Arts and Historical Documents* and *Conclusions* were written jointly.

2 Smith, Mark M.: »Listening to the Blue White Yonder. The Challenges of Acoustic Ecology«, in: Veit Erlmann (ed.), *Hearing Cultures. Essays on Listening and Modernity*, Oxford/New York: Berg 2006, pp. 21–42, here p. 22.

The same features become crucial when, to prove something or to retrieve information of any sort, we have to overcome a temporal distance. Whereas any un-recorded past occurrence is more likely to be lost to our historical awareness, records can be properly considered documents only insofar as they have been actively chosen for their informative value and invested with evidentiary value. As Lisa Gitelman suggests »any object can be a thing, but once it is framed as or entered into evidence – once it is mobilized – it becomes a document, an instance proper to that genre<sup>3</sup>. Inscriptions, traces, and informative accounts of past events can be considered the raw material out of which any historian has to build their documentation, a material that has increasingly fascinated contemporary artists as well. Over the last fifteen years, academic literature has repeatedly stressed the importance of the archive within the artistic context as a material form, a theoretical concept, and as an institutional dispositif. Already in 2004, Hal Foster identified a widespread tendency which he labeled »archival impulse«: according to the art critic, an archival artist seeks to make »historical information, often lost or displaced, physically present<sup>4</sup> by elaborating on found objects, images, and texts. What matters most in this theoretical account is the fragmentary, tangible nature of the archival materials and the concrete ways in which they are dealt with by the artist, which stands in sharp contrast to the allegedly immaterial ways in which the digital databases store and retrieve information.<sup>5</sup> Three years later, Mark Godfrey, senior curator of the Tate Modern in London, compared the artist to a historian: he also took »the digitalization approach« as a point of departure to conclude that the encounter with old analog photographs sensitizes »artists to the way in which such media used to serve as record of the past« – a sensitivity which, in turn, »provokes artists to make work *about* the past«.<sup>6</sup> Here, archival materials are not only found objects and fragments but they properly qualify as historical records, i. e. documentary evidence of past events. By synthesizing and concomitantly extending these two positions, Dieter Roelstraete's essay *The Way of the Shovel* described the artist as a historiographer: other than comparing the base materialisms of archival repositories, part of his creative effort consists in contextualizing them within a historical discourse. In this case, the document has not already been provided: the artist »writes history« by engag-

<sup>3</sup> Gitelman, Lisa: *Paper Knowledge. Toward a Media History of Documents*, Durham/London: Duke University Press 2014, p. 3.

<sup>4</sup> Foster, Hal: »An Archival Impulse«, in: *October* 110 (2004), pp. 3–22, here p. 4.

<sup>5</sup> For an insight on the critical approach to the »materiality of the digital networks« cf. Tischleder, Babette/Wasserman, Sarah: *Cultures of Obsolescence. History, Materiality, and the Digital Age*, New York: Palgrave MacMillan 2015; cf. Hu, Tung-Hui: *A Prehistory of the Cloud*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: The MIT Press 2015; cf. Balbi, Gabriele/Magaudda Paolo: *A History of Digital Media. An Intermedia, Global Perspective*, New York: Routledge 2018.

<sup>6</sup> Godfrey, Mark: »The Artist as Historian«, in: *October* 120, pp. 140–172, here p. 146.

ing in what Roelstrate calls a historiographic mode, »a methodological complex that includes the historical account, the archive, the document, the act of excavating and unearthing, the memorial, the art of reconstruction and reenactment, the testimony«. It has become both »the mandate (content) and the tone (form)«<sup>7</sup> of recent archeologically inspired artworks.

## 2. Sound and History

These theoretical accounts primarily tend to refer to the work of artists who face the issue of cinematographic or photographic media. Tacita Dean's work on 16mm films and photographs in *Girl Stowaway* or the decay of film exposed in Matthew Buckingham's *Images of Absalon* suggest that the documentary reliability of the analog image and the photographic inscription is now taken for granted almost as much as the one ascribed to paper documents. The same is not always true when we talk about the archival records that address the sense of hearing. To properly understand why sound is so rarely mentioned when discussing the archival and historical impulse in contemporary arts, we should move from a general epistemological dimension (concerning the relationship between sound and historical records) to the relationship between sound and history. Considered unique and unrepeatable, acoustic emissions have long been irretrievable through historiographic endeavours. As Douglas Kahn puts it, sound as a physical phenomenon »inhabits its own time and dissipates quickly. Its life is too brief and ephemeral to attract much attention, let alone occupy the tangible duration favored by methods of research«<sup>8</sup>. In the last century and even before, however, it has become possible to inscribe and reproduce sound at any time with the help of recording technologies. Nonetheless, sound may still resist interpretation, even when it is properly stored by some sort of technological support. As pointed out by Alexa Geisthövel, we tend to notice the importance of aural phenomena only when we recognize them as part of a distinct cultural and symbolic order, i. e. when we can trace them back to a language, whether spoken or musical.<sup>9</sup> But let us suppose we have just stumbled on an audio recording containing environmental noises from the past. How should the recording be examined? How can it enrich our knowledge of the

7 Roelstraete, Dieter: »The Way of the Shovel. On the Archeological Imaginary in Art«, in: E-Flux 4 (2009), February 7, 2020, <https://www.e-flux.com/journal/04/68582/the-way-of-the-shovel-on-the-archeological-imaginary-in-art>.

8 Kahn, Douglas: *Noise, Water, Meat. A History of Sound in the Arts*, Cambridge, Massachusetts/London: MIT Press 1999, p.5.

9 Cf. Geisthövel, Alexa: »Auf der Tonspur. Musik als zeitgeschichtliche Quelle«, in: Martin Baumeister (ed.), *Die Kunst der Geschichte. Historiographie, Ästhetik, Erzählung*, Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht 2009, pp. 157–168.

time in which it was produced? Past sounds, at least in their non-signifying features, challenge the hermeneutical methods we usually adopt to interpret written and visual documents from the past. Consequently, making lost or scattered historical information physically present, as prescribed by Foster, becomes a more difficult task whenever we are confronted with aural phenomena: an art or cultural exhibition based on historical audio-material can choose whether to exhibit the materiality of the sound documents as physical objects (without reproducing a single sound) or to play the recording of musical tunes and oral speeches not so much for what they actually sound like but for what they are supposed to *mean* or what they *tell* us about the times when they were written and performed. Whenever we aim to consider the historicity of sound without limiting it to its semantic features, the notion of ›making history for the ear‹ may call for an overall redefinition of the historiographic mode as conceived by Roelstraete.

To outline this redefinition, we refer to the idea of *re-presencing* of past sonospheres, a crucial concept in the recent theoretical production of media-archaeologist Wolfgang Ernst. Starting from the premise that sound as a non-significant entity challenges the linearity inherent in historiographical narratives and in the concept of history itself, Ernst identifies signal-based phonographic technologies as the only tool able to inscribe, store, and represent acoustic realities as they occurred in the past. According to the German theorist, it is not the collection and preservation of sound recordings as evidentiary inscriptions, but the recording itself that acts as a techno-cultural archive in its own right. Ernst's suggestion is, therefore, to model the methodology of historical research after the temporality at work within the technological media.<sup>10</sup> Rather than an additional documentary source for the historian, sound recordings may serve as an inspiration to revise their methods:

By auralization as re-enactment of the sonic past, the historical method is not only extended but even pushed to its margins, since the temporal effect which arises from such media-archaeological auralization as re-presencing is different from the familiar text- or image-based historical sensations.<sup>11</sup>

Taking Ernst's reflection as a starting point, art historian Mandy Suzanne Wong specifically made the case for sound art as a way of representing (and presencing) history through a sensorial rather than a descriptive approach. As she states:

<sup>10</sup> Cp. Ernst, Wolfgang: »Auralization as Re-Enactment of Sonic Past« (2016), February 7, 2020, <https://www.musikundmedien.hu-berlin.de/de/medienwissenschaft/medientheorien/ernst-in-english/pdfs/medarch-akust-aural-kurz.pdf>.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

History isn't just what humans say and do. Events and entities that are irreducible to concepts: such things are also history. Alongside people and their descriptions and discussions, nonhumans do historical work, recording and remembering history. This means that history is felt, heard, seen, tasted, smelled, and done, as much as it is written and spoken. It means that accounts of history are always incomplete, especially discursive ones, and that some aspects of history are beyond human understanding. Sound art can do some historical work that language can't. Like any artwork, a sound artwork isn't a description of the past but a presencing of the past in the here-and-now. But unlike film and visual art, sound artworks, especially installations and sound sculptures, rely as much on hearing and touch as they do on seeing.<sup>12</sup>

Wong associates the evocative power assumed by a sonorous artistic work in close connection to what she calls *nonhumans*, which »express themselves by being physically and materially present. Using our senses to engage with them may help us become aware of the past's persistent vivacity, to undergo history as a *felt* experience«<sup>13</sup>.

Taking up Ernst and Wong's suggestions, the following review of war-inspired art installations and exhibitions examines the role played by different kinds of non-discursive and non-human entities within the work of figures who are particularly significant for sound art and institutions dedicated to the preservation of historical heritage. Although far from being exhaustive, this comparison aims at identifying continuities and differences between artistic and exhibition practices involving sound and to demonstrate how these practices can provide a sensorial experience of the past, which effectively circumvents the use of inscriptive evidence.

### 3. Resounding Places

The first non-discursive category we will explore is the category of geographical sites and physical places. Starting in the mid-seventies, with a series of site-specific installations called Musical Networks, American artist Bill Fontana sought to invest noises (here understood as ›unwanted sounds) with new meanings, by moving them away from their sources and relocating them to a physical place not meant for attentive listening under normal circumstances. As the artist stated at

<sup>12</sup> Wong, Mandy Suzanne: »History, Archaeology, and De-Anthropocentrism in Sound Art«, in: Marcel Cobussen/Vincent Meelberg/Barry Truax (eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Sounding Art*, London: Routledge 2017, pp. 363–372, here p. 363.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 366.

that time, »such a transformation of ›noise‹ in a more permanent way will make the human/built environment become more livable, because it will stimulate society to develop a sensibility for its ambient sounds, causing more of the general public soundscape to become designed«.<sup>14</sup> Fontana's Musical Networks re-design the borders between the human and the natural environment, starting from the basic assumptions that »at any given moment there will be something meaningful to hear«<sup>15</sup>. A first significant example of this artistic practice is the installation *Distant Trains/Entfernte Züge* realized by Bill Fontana in 1984 on the occasion of the DAAD Künstlerprogramm in Berlin, which was located in the area that used to be the German capital's railway junction and commercial exchange center with the west (Anhalter Bahnhof) which was destroyed during the Second World War. The amplifiers – buried in the abandoned space of the building and arranged in parallel to evoke the conformation of the railroads – are connected to hidden microphones in the still-active main station of Cologne (Kölner Hauptbahnhof) to reconstruct a crowded acoustic space in a deserted place. *Sound Island*, commissioned to the same artist by the French Ministry of Culture on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the Normandy landing, adhered to a similar model: forty-eight amplifiers placed on the walls of the Arc de Triomphe in Paris transmitted the sounds of the waves captured by the microphones along the coasts of Normandy. It is worth noticing that in this sculpture the speakers are generally hidden from the visitor's view: the technical process enabling us to hear the sounds of the past remains invisible to form »a transparent overlay to visual space« that will »suspend the known identity of the site by animating it with evocations of past identities«.<sup>16</sup> However, historical representation as direct relationship between past and present calls into question places and artifacts without ever making visible the process that renders it possible: the immersive experience on the part of the visitor must correspond to an ›immediate‹ association between physical spaces and soundscapes, whereas the features of the place remain visibly unchanged and the resulting short circuit effect depends exclusively on what is heard. In these cases, there is not only a socio-geographical but also historico-temporal short circuit between deserted and crowded, ›natural‹ and urbanized environments. In the former, the sounds of today are transmitted to the places of yesterday; in the latter, the very same connection between the center of Paris and the coasts of Normandy perpetuates a relation which had been fixed in the course of history, already vanished, and yet still ›present‹. *Pigeon Soundings* serves as a further example of how historical memory was embedded in Fontana's art: in 1994, the Köln Diözesan-

<sup>14</sup> Fontana, Bill: »The Environment as a Musical Resource« (1990–2000), February 7, 2020, <https://resoundings.org/Pages/musical%20resource.html>.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

museum commissioned to the American artist a permanent installation for a building that was to incorporate the ruins of the church of St. Columba destroyed during the Second World War. Fontana captured the sound of the pigeons that had inhabited the broken walls of the abandoned Church for more than fifty years. An eight-channel audio map was placed around the space occupied by the pigeons to record their cooing and their wing-flapping, as well as the traffic noise coming from the outside. Ten years later, in 2005, when the building was turned into the Kolumba Museum designed by the Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, the same recording was reused as a sort of acoustic reception for the visitors. Unlike most musical network installations, *Pigeon Soundings* works on the superimposition of temporal layers rather than the relocation of sound in spaces. The cooing of birds is the only presence left from the place as it once was, aural remains: the pigeons' non-human presence represents an index of the obsolescence of human-made things that have been left behind by past cultures and have been, in some way, reclaimed by nature. Once they are not under human control anymore, these places can re-enter history only by a non-discursive, purely sonic mediation.

#### 4. Resounding Fragments

The work of Susan Philipsz is also often related to historical sites but in a significantly different manner. Often associated with the avant-garde practices of the psychogeography movement, the Scottish artist developed an interest in the interrelations between physical places and human artifacts. *Study for Strings*, a site-specific audio installation premiered during dOCUMENTA 13 in 2012, was inspired by the history of Kassel main station which, during the Nazi Period, served as a point of departure for the trains directed to the concentration camp Theresienstadt. In this case, the historical meaning of the installation is to be found not only in its location but also in the musico-archaeological research that led to the realization of the artwork. The composer Pavel Haas, author of the musical piece *Study for Strings*, was killed in the concentration camp with other prisoners: although the original score was lost after his death, Philipsz managed to reconstruct the musical composition by listening to the recorded version featured in the soundtrack of a 1944 propaganda film titled *THERESIENSTADT. EIN DOKUMENTARFILM AUS DEM JÜDISCHEN SIEDLUNGSGEBIET* (D 1944, R: Kurt Gerzon/Karel Pěcený). Philipsz collaborated with a conductor to rewrite the score and viola and cello players to perform it. Each of the twenty-four loud-speakers positioned above the station railways was assigned with a singular note to play, thus scattering the musical composition over a wide area.

In 2015, a more recent series of sound installations called *War Damaged Musical Instruments* was exhibited in different archeological sites, museums, and art

galleries. Similarly, for the Theseus Temple of Vienna, the version *War Damaged Musical Instruments (Pair)* plunges into the recording of a pair of trumpets from the 19th century. The context is fundamental: the Theseus Temple is part of the Volksgarten in Vienna and it is a magnificent example of neoclassical architecture, a copy of the *Theseion* of Athens, and originally conceived to host *Theseus and the Centaur* by Antonio Canova, currently on display in the art history museum of the Austrian capital. The purpose of the trumpets used by the Scottish artist was once to call the cavalry of the Archduke Francesco Ferdinando to advance or to retreat. Thanks to the context of the park, constructed on the ruins of the fortifications destroyed by Napoleon, and to the impressive installation in the Temple, the viewer is immersed within a historicized soundscape. At Kunsthaus Bregenz the same attention is given to architecture in its context and to history. Starting from the museum building, situated on the shores of Lake Costance which are often covered in characteristical fog, Philipsz takes the documentary film *NUIT ET BROUILLARD* (F 1955) by Alain Resnais as a focal point. In Philipsz's work, the soundtrack of Resnais' film is deconstructed to isolate the individual instruments and to locate them in the space of the Kunsthaus. In the words of the artist herself:

At Kunsthaus Bregenz I would like to explore disappearance, obscurity and absence, merging the atmospherics of the site with a deeper historical perspective. [...] I have chosen to work with mainly wind and brass instruments to emphasise the breath passing through the instruments and passing through the space. Each of the tones will be separated and there are gaps and pauses where the other instruments should be. At each level the work is different but the composition is reprised and there is a sense of repetition with sounds from different levels combining in unexpected places throughout the building.<sup>17</sup>

In another version of the same installation exhibited at the Tate Gallery in London, the ancient instruments were used to perform *The Last Post*, a tune originally played during military funerals and ceremonies as commemorative music. The choice of an elegiac tune would be significant in itself, but it was recorded note by note so that the familiar piece of music was almost unrecognizable to listeners:

Walking through the Duveen Galleries today is like traversing history and time. Although the space has not been altered visually in a way that we would easily notice, we feel immediately that something has clearly been changed. [...] We are drawn to follow these hesitant and faltering sounds, to go from one loudspeaker

<sup>17</sup> »Night and Fog – Press Release« (2016), February 7, 2020, [https://www.kunsthaus-bregenz.at/fileadmin/user\\_upload/PDFs/Press\\_Release\\_Philipsz\\_Engl\\_Dateilink\\_01\\_a.pdf](https://www.kunsthaus-bregenz.at/fileadmin/user_upload/PDFs/Press_Release_Philipsz_Engl_Dateilink_01_a.pdf).

to the other, to come back and to stand still – half hoping to succeed in recombin-ing the single notes we hear into a familiar melody. In vain.<sup>18</sup>

Just as in Fontana's *Musical Networks*, the technical means of sound reproduction underlying the sonic installation remained hidden from the visitors' view to immerse them in a purely aural experience. However, unlike the American artist, Philipsz's use of spaces does not necessarily rely on their historical identity; all of her mentioned works build on some sort of historically located record (be it a documentary film, a soundtrack, or a written musical score), which gets systematically deconstructed and scattered all over the exhibition place. By adopting this strategy of fragmenting, Philipsz moves away from the human-made and discursive character of these recordings to emphasize their material, physical features instead. The »hesitant and faltering« sounding quality of artworks like *Damaged Instruments* serves precisely to enhance the sensorial aspects of our encounter with history – at the expense of the semantic aspects of the melody.

## 5. Resounding Objects

As the Tate Gallery example shows, how the artist evocates impressions of the past may also depend on the capability of getting the visitors involved in the exhibition. The use of sound in art galleries, museums, and cultural institutions shapes our experiences and enriches the awareness of the (historical) material on display. The exhibition strategies recently adopted by the Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums in Newcastle provide us with a further example of non-discursive entities related to the use of historical objects. The aim of the institute is to preserve a »material cultural« heritage related to the lives of the local communities: its Regional Social History collections include archaeological relics dating back to the 16th century as well as radio and television sets, magazines, and a number of artifacts of the past which, according to the Tyne and Wear Acquisition and Disposal Policy, may »help people determine their place in the world and define their identities«<sup>19</sup>. Some of these objects were displayed during the *Decoded 14-18* exhibition organized by the Archives in collaboration with the local Institute of Creative Art Practices and the sound artists Chris Watson, Tim Shaw, and John Bowers.

18 Schädler, Linda: »Exhibition Essay: Susan Philipsz: War-Damaged Musical Instruments« (2016), February 7, 2020, <https://www.tate.org.uk/whats-on/tate-britain/exhibition/susan-philipsz-war-damaged-musical-instruments/exhibition-essay>.

19 Tyne & Wear Archives & Museums: »Acquisition and Disposal Policy for Museums and Galleries« (2015), February 7, 2020, p. 5, <https://twmuseums.org.uk/files/5029-acquisitions-and-disposal-policy.pdf>.

The work *Tuning In: Listening Back in Time* by Shaw and Watson was inspired by a pioneering form of audio amplification technology, namely the aerophones known as »sound mirrors« already featured in the work of Tacita Dean with the same name. During the early decades of the 20th century, these sound booths placed along the English coastlines were deployed by the British army to detect oncoming enemy aerial attacks and prevent them before it was even possible to see anything on the horizon. By capturing the sounds that these cumbersome concrete buildings still echo today, the artists created a fifteen-minute multi-channel recording on which they later superimposed the sound of diaries and accounts written by soldiers and civilians stored in the Tyne and Wear Archives read out. The aim of their artistic work was to reconstruct distant voices and personal accounts of the Great War as it was experienced in the north-eastern regions of the United Kingdom. With the conviction that these structures once »designed to pick up long-lasting sounds and communications from what may happen in the immediate future [...] may well have recorded powerful memories and events«<sup>20</sup>, Watson and Shaw turned them into storage for communal sound memories, or archival media.

During the same exhibition, the artists also presented *War Workings*, an audience-assisted performance based on the objects housed in the Science and Technology Basement. For two days, visitors could participate in the creative process, creating sound installations from archival materials. In the word of the artists, the creation of new contemporary works using historical archives is a way of making up for the lack of original sound recordings: with this objective, contact microphones were used to amplify the imperceptible sounds of the table surfaces and the exposed materials and loudspeakers were arranged on the walls to form different »listening stations« all over the exhibition. Visitors were able to alter the sound composition in real-time by touching the objects on the table, or by simply moving through the exhibition spaces and thus changing their point of audition. As the artists remarked, the overall aim was, once again, to provide the visitors with an experiential account of the War, involving their sense of hearing in an »extended sensorial engagement«:

sound artists use materials extracted from the social and natural world, reworking and recomposing sonorous materials into new forms, narratives and assemblages [...] The multiple aural and physical places of performance of the assemblage of objects again point to the importance of sound art – that very entwining

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<sup>20</sup> TW Museums: »Decoded 14-18. Tuning In – Listening Back in Time« (2015), February 7, 2020 ([https://youtu.be/qwbRi\\_dl4QI](https://youtu.be/qwbRi_dl4QI)).

of the spatial and the temporal, the visible and the audible tells us something about >knowing the dead world.<sup>21</sup>

From the perspective of material culture, which the Tyne and Wear Archives chose to adopt, history appears as a continuous re-assemblage of objects: making them >resound< after a long time in a public context means, in this case, to renew the contact between old objects and the community they once belonged to. As a direct expression of those objects, sound becomes the carrier through which this contact is reestablished by merging past and present, stories of material artifacts and human history. In this way, sound art, in some of its aspects, can develop a new relationship between audience and rediscovered objects – brought to the surface by history – and also with the surrounding space, which can be perceived with renewed qualities.

## 6. Conclusions

As we have tried to establish with this short review of sound artworks and installations, the evocation of history within contemporary art practices is a process based on an interaction between places, fragments, and objects. Taken together, these three key categories of non-discursive entities provide the basis for an experiential reconstruction of the past. This becomes palpable in the shaping of exhibition paths like the ones offered by the Tyne & Wear Archives and Museums, but also in the particular positioning of some works, such as *Study for Strings* by Susan Philipsz, where only the overlap of various elements allows for the completion of the work and the rewriting of history in particular. Whether they are places, artifacts, or musical sheets deconstructed or reconstructed to be put on display, the raw materials that form the basis of most of the sound art in question cannot be defined as >sound documents< which are already given. They are not documents – at least not in the traditional sense of objects containing information on a past event or serving as inscription and proof of their existence. Furthermore, they are not even aural in themselves because, as we have illustrated earlier, ruined buildings, old musical instruments, and old artifacts all need to be actively >re-sounded<. It is precisely the artistic practice that, interpreted in a historiographic mode, ascribes an historical identity to non-discursive and non-human entities such as places, objects, and fragments; unlike that of the historian, the

21 Shaw, Tim/Bowers, John: »Public Making. Artistic Strategies for Working with Museum Collections, Technologies and Publics« in: ISEA 2015. Proceedings of the 21st International Symposium on Electronic Arts, February 7, 2020, [https://isea2015.org/proceeding/submissions/ISEA2015\\_submission\\_68.pdf](https://isea2015.org/proceeding/submissions/ISEA2015_submission_68.pdf).

sound artist's task is not to make his sources »speak«, but to make them »sound«, or, in Wolfgang Ernst's terms, to »auralize« them, re-enacting the past sonospheres they originally belonged to. In other words, whenever these materials are made audible, they are invested with historical meaning.

Hal Foster said about archival artists, that they make »historical information [...] physically present«.<sup>22</sup> This also applies to the sound artists considered here, as long as we re-assess the purely informative aspects of the way. These historically inspired artworks are not based on evidences, inscriptions or informative accounts of past realities; they rather create *events* re-activating past remains as physical presences at the time of listening.

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<sup>22</sup> H. Foster: *An Archival Impulse*, p. 4.

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## Films

NUIT ET BROUILLARD (F 1955, R: Alain Resnais)

THERESIENSTADT. EIN DOKUMENTARFILM AUS DEM JÜDISCHEN SIEDLUNGSGEBIET  
(D 1944, R: Kurt Gerron/Karel Pěcený)

