

# Workshops catalogue [an exploration of sonic possible worlds<sup>1</sup>]

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Most of my creations as a sound artist have a direct link to what we call Sound Ecology. This field of research is not only the awareness of the sound surrounding us, but also the multiple choices and interactions made by living beings to create and explore sound environments. Through different practice (installations, sound-walk, talks, field recording, albums...), I attempt to question the standardized musical form as well as to consider sound as the result of a set of complex variables. My practices can be considered as sociopolitical analysis of societies through the prism of sound art.

I think that it is not possible to reflect on our way of living on this planet and on the ecological crises we are facing, without bringing the idea of involvement.

In order to do so, one of the methods that I am developing consists in the creation of collaborative forms such as a series of modular workshops, exchanges, and discussions related to the social, the mental and the environmental aspects of sounds<sup>2</sup>.

By proposing activities going from open musical improvisation, electronic and audio do-it-yourself, sound exploration or field recording, the purpose of these workshops is to discover or highlight the interactions that exist between human beings and sounds, to create new ways of exploring our sonic Eco-system and to enhance the awareness of the infinities of possible sonic worlds we can shape together.

I consider sound art and the activities that I am proposing as investigations. By organizing workshops, exchange and sonic experimentation I am highlighting and going deeper on various researches. The multiplicities of possible interactions with sounds, the variety of ways to receive sonic data, the profusion of acoustic space and the ocean of subjectivity and sensitivity are tools to create and explore the worlds of sound and their complexities.

## List of experimental sound workshops:

- Craft Your Own Sound (instrument building workshop)
- Captured Ethereal Frequencies (field recording and phonography workshop)
- The Creative Layer (sound-walk, deep listening and sound exploration workshop)
- Found it, Play it (open musical improvisation with found objects workshop)

Those workshops are modular, they can be adapted, combined and modified to suit different situations, places, and public.

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1 Inspired by the title of the book *Sonic Possible Worlds: Hearing the Continuum of Sound*, by Salome Voegelin, Bloomsbury Academic, 2014

2 Felix Guattari, *The three Ecologies*, 1989

## → CRAFT YOUR OWN SOUND ←

instrument building & sound exploration workshop

Crafting, building, assembling, testing and exchanging are ways to understand how the technical object works. The appropriation of the making allow participant to be in control. The *Do it Yourself* movement<sup>3</sup> and the principle of creating together, are essential for a more integrated and ecological world. By unfolding the myth behind musical instruments, noise makers, electronic devices, tools an, more broadly, the technical object, this workshop aim to operate a shift, an integration of this object in every participant culture<sup>4</sup>. To understand by actually doing, making mistake, asking questions and finding new ways, is the first step to sustainability.

From cardboard-guitar to plexiglass-flute or printer motors, antennas to capture electromagnetic frequencies<sup>5</sup>, contact microphones, thumb piano made of old knives With some tools and a little bit of imagination, it is possible to create a lot of different instruments and sound machines. This workshop will also encourage participant to think about the recycling and the ecological aspect of creation.

Transmission is considered from the aspect of collective practice and horizontal exchanges. Some tools, materials and examples will be available but an open mind, thoughts, concerns, proposals, ideas and feedback will be highly encouraged.

The rendering of this workshop will be a musical improvisation at the end of the building process. It is also important to desecrate music. Everyone, even without any specific knowledge, can produce sounds and temporally organize them. For example, we do that everyday when we speak. By allowing people to reflect on this process and to musically express themselves as freely as they want, this co-creating time is a way to demystified art in general, to encourage people to be sustainable in their creative path and more broadly to become autonomous.

Here are some examples of sound makers, instruments, noise machine that we can build together during these workshops:

- Single Stringed Guitar
- Thumb Piano
- PVC Flute
- Aeolian Harp
- Very Low Frequency Antena
- Bee Hummer
- Metallic Sound Sculpture
- Motor Controlled Instrument

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3 [Do It Yourself Wikipedia page](#)

4 Gilbert Simondon, *On the mode of existence of technical objects*, Introduction, 1958

5 Wellmer, Layton-Grant, Khalidi, *Everything is Real : Alvin Lucier in Den Haag*, p.14 : Sferics, 2010

## → CAPTURED ETHEREAL FREQUENCIES ←

field recording, representation and phonography workshop

Historically, the discipline that we call *field recording* (literally going to the field and record the soundscape and other sound events) appears at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the technological evolution of portables recorders. At first *field recording* was a scientific tool, almost exclusively practiced by ethnomusicologist and audio-naturalists.

Nowadays, I think that the neologism *phonography* (direct reference to photography) is more adapted to the plurality of practices in the field because it is more neutral compared to the semantically loaded *field recording*. *Phonography* entails the capture of any event that can be reproduced and represented as sound<sup>6</sup>. This term not only incorporate the act of recording itself but also the context of the recording and the presentation, the outcomes, the possible lives of the audio-material after the recording. In this way, *phonography* is an evolution, an expansion of the *field recording* as a discipline.

Lately, sound artists are shifting away from being the transparent microphone man towards the body, the presence, the occupation of the field, considering it as a playground to reflect on gender, ethnicity, ecology, socioeconomic identity and politics. Thomas Tilly<sup>7</sup>, for example, consider the microphone as a musical instrument who needs to be situated in space, divert from its tool roles to compose with the soundscape. Other sound artists, like Davide Tidoni<sup>8</sup>, explore the acoustic response of a soundscape by confronting it to exceptional or external sound events (popping balloons for example).

In this workshop I like to combine both the exploration of acoustic response and work on the role of the microphone, adding tools or not, reflecting on approaches, selecting the places or wonder randomly, we can create new ways to explore and interact with sonic Eco-systems. Before each exploration, all together, we will think about this frame and constitute a form of composition for our exploratory *Phonography* session.

Here are some example that we can develop:

- Throw the microphone at each others, use it as a base ball.
- Bring magnet and try to make different metallic object in the city resonate.
- Bring bouncing balls and play with the space.
- Record movements, people shouting at every cars passing by.

To conclude, I think that *field explorations and recording* “[...]mark out a post-humanist sensibility where we do not seek to own the sounds of this world, to know and to have them, but understand ourselves to be part of its soundscape, not at its center but simultaneous with it, sounding with and through it a reality that is plural and passing.”<sup>9</sup>

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6 Yitzchak Dumiel, [What is phonography?](#)

7 [Thomas Tilly Website](#)

8 [David Detidoni Website](#)

9 Salome Voegelin, [Collateral Damage](#), The Wire Magazine, 2014

## → THE CREATIVE LAYER ←

sound-walk, deep listening and sound exploration workshop

For simplification purposes, I roughly distinguish three basic layers of Soundscapes<sup>10</sup>. Of course all the sounds interact, cross each others or oppose each others permanently. It is almost impossible to isolate one layer from the other, but for artistic maters, it is more convenient to classify sounds.

- The first one of those Soundscape layers is the Natural one. It is composed by the sound of nature: the sea or the singing of birds for example.
- Almost everywhere nowadays, there is the Urban Soundscape layer in witch we can hear subway, cars, phone ringing..
- In an artistic perspective, the third layer is the most important one. I call it the creative layer, the one that we will add, that we will create as an exploration group in this workshop.

The main goal is to understand how sound interact between themselves, how do we shape the soundscape and how sounds can affect us.

In order to create this third, creative layer, with a small group of people, we will develop different methods. Here is non exhaustive list of the few possibilities that we can try out, complete, modify, explore:

- We can do exploratory sound-walk. With different acoustic tools (from a drum stick to an electronically controlled DC motor...) we will tap, poke, scratch, caress and different ways some object, urban furniture, the architecture, trees, etc in order to create sounds.
- The same method but instead of a walk it can be inside a specific room or a building.
- I would love to recreate and think about some sound exercise that explore the soundscape. Inspired by R.Murray Schaffer, Salome Voegelin and many more, the goal will be to create or reflect about sound by doing several exercise like the one bellow and thinking and creating more:

*"Put on a plastic rain coat | Stand with your front touching the wall  
Spread your arms to the left and right of your body | Move them up and down, up and  
down | Making an audible rhythm between coat and wall"<sup>11</sup>*

- Pauline Oliveros, Pierre Schaeffer and many more artists theorized about listening. In this workshop we can also program different listening sessions with different purpose. For example, we can listen to field recordings of different country and try to detect the natural sounds that reminds us of urban sounds, we can listen to music concrete or electronic pieces with the will of adding some natural sounds to it, or simply listen to the environment we are evolving in and think about tools we can create to add sounds and explore the sonic Eco-system.

More or less framed sound exercises are at the center of this workshop. A lot of propositions and material can come from my readings but I really want to emphasis on the participation and the creation, by the public, of new ways to explore the third layer and the soundscape.

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<sup>10</sup> [The World Soundscape Project](#)

<sup>11</sup> [Soundwords](#)

## → FOUND IT, PLAY IT ←

open musical improvisation with found objects workshop

Defining precisely free improvised music is always problematic. It is a really large term going from picking a note inside a scale in a jazz song to the musical freedom practice. A free improvisation doesn't have any rules beyond the logic, the inclination or the feelings of the musician(s) involved. Here I will talk about this last practice, in which the characteristics are established only by the sonic-musical identity of the person or persons playing it.

Derek Bailey points out that free improvised music "Historically, pre-dates any other music, mankind's first musical performance couldn't have been anything other than a free improvisation [...]"<sup>12</sup>. In that regard, it can be an activity of enormous complexity and sophistication, or the simplest and most direct expression: a lifetime's study and work or a casual dilettante activity. This is why this workshop, is an interesting tool to provide accessible (to a variety of persons with different backgrounds) the artistic research on free improvisation music and, by extension, sonic ecology.

In order to combine this practice and the questions on the interactions that exist between human beings and sounds, I decided to reduce the possibilities of improvisation by focusing on found objects. Considering those objects as musical instruments, re-purposing them, allows me and the participant to think about the way we want to make them sound, to create a new idiom for those objects out of their primary function. This exercise also takes part in the creation of possible sonic interaction between object and therefore, a reflection on the way we also interact with them. John Cage considered every sound as music<sup>13</sup>. This workshop aims to do the same by focusing on the musical tool. Another ecological aspect of the practice I am proposing is the recycling aspect. Found objects can be trash, abandoned objects. A sensitization on the obsolescence of our object will take place.

Gathered in a room or outside, I am asking people to bring objects that they find on their way to the space or ask to take a moment to find something. There is no real restriction except the fact that they can not bring musical instruments. After a brief introduction we are going through different exercises. Here is a list of some of them. Again, participation will be encouraged, if, on the way, participants want to try something they can propose it. It is a collaborative exploration.

- Solo or group (of different size) improvisation
- Call and response between two groups (or more) or between individuals
- Follow of a graphic score, follow of instructions, signs, gesture, follow of thoughts, ideas, story, events
- Translation of writings to sounds, translation of spoken words to soundscape
- Moving in the room, switching places and objects during the performance
- Play with the walls, the ceiling, the floor, your body, other people's body...

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12 Derek Bailey, *Improvisation: its nature and practice in music*, p.10, 1992

13 John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, 1939-1961