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LEARNING TO LISTEN: KNOWLEDGE OF VALUE IN AUDITORY CULTURE

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ABSTRACT

Though auditory culture is quickly emerging in the gallery arts, with exhibitions popping up at prestigious museums around the world, the art world is still learning to listen. Based on 105 semi-structured interviews and four years of ethnographic observation in Chicago, New York, and Berlin, this dissertation considers the relationship between the senses and aesthetic value. Although it is a better fit than market, niche, or other field models, Bourdieu's field of cultural production is not the best model for this empirical case either, due to evidence of overlapping definitions of boundaries, heterarchies of value, and the instability of sonic objects. First, disciplinary boundaries are not only worked out in organizational contexts, placing works of art and music on one side or the other, but actors also contest the definitions of what objects constitute their own disciplines. Without a shared knowledge of which sounds belong where, organizational and semantic boundary work employ these conflicting definitions to draw lines, particularly regarding the performed, exhibited, formal, or conceptual nature of sound. Furthermore, sound art has had to rely, paradoxically, on conceptual texts in order not to be mistaken for art music, which is valued through hearing, or the other gallery arts, which tend to be valued through sight. These textual value devices are the tools of economic *agencement*, rendering the aesthetic economic, but they cannot be readily aggregated into a single ranking of cultural consecration. Following these empirical findings, a final theoretical investigation into the nature of hearing calls on theories of perception in social aesthetics and phenomenology to question if sonic objects are perceived in socially stable ways. On the contrary, hearing is an embodied sensory process particular to the attention, adumbration, and affect of the listener, and it is unclear if sonic percepts are heard in common by evaluators. These findings suggest that rather than a field, auditory culture better resembles a rhizomatic assemblage, where language is

the rhizome rendering the aesthetic economic. And yet, if embodied listeners in a sonic sensorium might be freed to associate meanings without a mediating text, these emancipated spectators may engage in expanded discourse.

I. LEARNING TO LISTEN: KNOWLEDGE OF VALUE IN AUDITORY CULTURE

“So, if paintings decorate space, then sound decorates time.”

In an informal conversation at an experimental music performance, I described my dissertation research to someone who stopped by the venue on his way home. Unfamiliar with the abstract electronic music performed that night, he was charmed to discover a group of people who all seemed to know one another and whose social life revolved around what he found to be unintelligible sound. I explained that I studied both the kind of music performed in this space, which I termed “art music,” as well as “sound art” in museums and galleries. I went on to explain that, as a sociologist, I was curious to know his impression of what he heard. His pithy distillation of auditory culture in this epigraph became a hinge for my own thinking and a way to explain my empirical field site in later conversations with outsiders to the world of auditory culture.

I.1.0 Sociology of Sound

Though hearing is a marvel of the human body, perceived by the human mind, sounds are understood according to lifelong social learning. Sociology steps alongside cognitive psychology, psychoacoustics, audiology, and physics to account for the ways we understand the sounds we hear. Indeed, the properties of sound that exist outside the body are physical phenomena: waves of pressure in air that may encounter the ear directly or reflect off of architectural surfaces, natural substances, or other material objects. Though this dissertation refers to these sources and properties of sound that exist outside the body, the task will be to theorize, describe, and account for the bodily experience of hearing within the human form, the mental process of auditory perception, and the social understanding of what is heard.

Many approaches to hearing in the natural sciences stop short at the point of understanding. The acoustics and physics of sound are well known (Berg 1982, pp. 1-14), with even the curious phenomena of critical bands, temporal masking, and binaural beats rigorously studied in experimental settings (Sahley and Musiek 2015, pp. 490-520). Even when sound waves enter the ear, the relation between physics and anatomy are well documented from the pinna to the auditory nerve (Gelfand 2004, pp. 37-84). Yet, the mystery of hearing occurs at this moment and location, transforming subtle variations in pressure and vibration into the understanding of such complex structures as language and music.

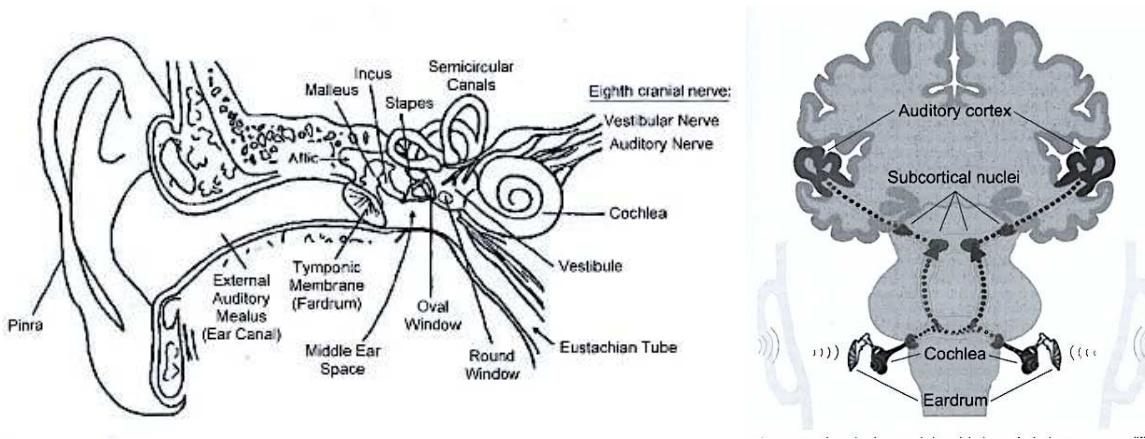


Fig. 1: (Left) Cross-sectional View of the Human Ear (Gelfand 2004, p. 39)
 (Right) Coronal View of the Human Brain (Arnott and Alain 2014, p. 87)

Auditory paths through the central nervous system have been witnessed (Gelfand 2004, pp. 209-242), but my dilettante venture into these literatures found several accounts of the transformation of nervous activity into meaningful understanding as an ongoing mystery (Watt 1917, pp. 208-19; Moore 1997, pp. 43-46; Plack 2005, pp. 82-85; Grondin 2016, p. 35). More seems to be known about technical aspects of neural signal processing such as frequency, loudness, and localization (Palmer 1995, pp. 75-121) than how we derive complex meanings from these aural impulses. Yet, mounting evidence of an “action pathway” in cognitive neuroscience suggests that

the brain may preferentially process sounds that are associated with bodily movements (Arnott and Alain 2014, p. 90).

The knowledge of visual perception became a useful source of comparison and contrast in this study, particularly given its primacy not only in the gallery arts but also in the sociology of the senses. For instance, Luhmann's closed systems theory ([1984] 1995) was built on the cognitive psychology of the nervous system as an autopoietic machine (Maturana and Varela 1980, p. 135). Chilean biologists Maturana and Varela (1992, pp. 16-23, 161-163) established that "it was not possible to correlate directly light wavelength and neuronal activity. The same nervous activity could be generated by different light situations, while the same wavelength of light could lead to different experiences of color" (Mingers 1991, p. 327). Instead, they claimed that our eyes witness shades of light that do not congeal into percepts until they are meaningfully understood within the closed system of the mind. Luhmann took the phenomenon of sight as an empirical and symbolic basis to extend autopoiesis to social systems that are able to reproduce and maintain themselves. And yet Maturana and Varela did not address the sense of hearing. Van Valkenburg and Kubovy (2005, pp. 114-5) extend their findings to the sense of audition, claiming that both senses require the mind to organize objects of perception out of undifferentiated wholes, but the specific features of this transformation remained opaque to me as a lay reader of neuropsychology. Phenomenology and other social theories have drawn inferences from the sense of sight, but the particularities of hearing have been largely overlooked.

The literature more important to this dissertation is the one written and cited by natives of auditory culture. The rich and quickly growing interdiscipline of sound studies has its own way to conceive of hearing. Drawing on physics, physiology, psychology, and archaeology (Schafer

[1977] 1994, pp. 13-67) some of these authors have devised a contrasting assessment of vision and hearing, imagining how they might differ at that moment that neural impulses are transformed into meanings. Jonathan Sterne is foremost among them, modeling the audiovisual litany:

Hearing	Vision
Spherical	Directional
Immerses its subject	Offers a perspective
Comes to us	Travels to its object
Concerned with interiors	Concerned with surfaces
Involves physical contact with the outside world	Requires distance from the outside world
Places us inside an event	Gives us a perspective on the event
Tends toward subjectivity	Tends toward objectivity
Brings us into the living world	Moves us toward atrophy and death
About affect	About intellect
A primarily temporal sense	A primarily spatial sense
Immerses us in the world	Removes us from the world

Table 1: The Audiovisual Litany (Sterne 2003, p. 15)

Though many participants in auditory culture echoed these sentiments, I do not mean to set them out as facts of perception. Rather, they may be taken as individual reports of experiences in the perception of sound felt to be particularly subjective or interpretive. Of course, my group of respondents and field participants were predisposed to give heightened attention to their sonic environments and experiences. Yet, the processing of auditory stimuli from simple pulses of air pressure resulted in such a wide variety of value judgments that I became curious to use the methods of sociology to understand how sounds became meaningful.

This dissertation will step just beyond the moment at which sensations in the ear become electrical impulses in the auditory nerve, asking how the “social stock of knowledge” (Berger and Luckmann 1966, pp. 34-46) comes to bear on auditory perception. These sounds are not only the objects of meaningful understanding but also of evaluation and valuation (Lamont 2012, pp.

204-7). Sociological studies of value have tended to focus on markets, exchange, and quantification. Though this study of auditory culture brushes against these aspects of value, it deals most closely with the qualitative attribution of aesthetic value: shared understandings of what is artistically good. These value determinations often rely on imperfect information and are subject to heated contestation, but they also have patterned effects on practitioners' trajectories within auditory culture, including fraught relationships with economic rewards. Before situating sound within the academic discipline of sociology, a better starting place will be to try to depict the assemblage of auditory culture, including which pieces are of interest to this study and which must be left out.

I.2.0 The Assemblage of Auditory Culture

Though others have considered the ways humans perceive sound in everyday life, this dissertation deals specifically with auditory culture: intentionally created sound in culture “as such.” Though sounds emit from all kinds of objects and bodies, auditory culture refers to those sounds that musicians and artists craft in aesthetic disciplines. Music has a history as long as any cultural form, but the gallery arts have only adopted the medium of sound much more recently. This study employs the term “gallery arts” as an umbrella term for the art world, not only including the visual arts or “fine” arts, but all of the contemporary works, practices, and disciplines that appear in galleries and museums—painting and sculpture, as well as video, installation, and performance, to name a few. Art history and theory tend to rely on vision as the primary sensory mode within galleries and museums, but this dissertation will address the ways that the other senses, including hearing, operate in these organizational spaces.

While talking with participants in auditory culture, a system of connections gradually took form in my mind. At first I thought of this organization as a typology of ideal types (Weber

(1922) 1978; 1949) or a typificatory schema (Berger and Luckmann 1966), as a way to distill the many reported understandings of social actors into an analytically useful framework (Gerber 2017, p. 152). Others have thought of this organization as a system of genres (Bourdieu 1993, pp. 46-52; Lena and Peterson 2008, pp. 697-700). Yet, as I continued to take part in auditory culture as both an insider and an outsider, I came to understand the ordering of sound as an assemblage (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987 pp. 503-5). Deleuze and Guattari took pains to explain what makes an assemblage different from a network or a field by using several extended metaphors, including a body without organs, a machine, and a rhizome (see II.4.0 “Rhizomatic Assemblages and Economic *Agencements*”), but the musical metaphor that caught my attention was the synthesizer. A common type of synthesizer subtracts from the chaos of electrical voltage according to a number of parameters. By attenuating the harmonic content of an audio signal,

A synthesizer places all of the parameters in continuous variation, gradually making fundamentally heterogeneous elements end up turning into each other in some way. The moment this conjunction occurs there is a common matter. It is only at this point that one reaches the abstract machine, or the diagram of the assemblage. (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987, p. 109)

If this machine must have an assemblage, it is the synthesizer. By assembling modules, source elements, and elements for treating sound (oscillators, generators, and transformers), by arranging microintervals, the synthesizer makes audible the sound process itself, the production of that process, and puts us in contact with still other elements beyond sound matter. It unites disparate elements in the material, and transposes the parameters from one formula to another. The synthesizer, with its operation of consistency, has taken the place of the ground in *a priori* synthetic judgment; its synthesis is of the molecular and the cosmic, material and force, not form and matter, *Grund* and territory. Philosophy is no longer synthetic judgment; it is like a thought synthesizer functioning to make thought travel, make it mobile, make it a force of the Cosmos (in the same way as one makes sound travel). (p. 343)

I glimpsed a flash of interpretive sociology in the metaphor of the synthesizer as an instrument for “making audible nonsonorous forces” (p. 95). Having listened to so much synthesized sound

in my fieldwork, I adopted the assemblage as a way to capture the complexity of (auditory) culture while still finding something to say about it.

Although there was some disagreement among interview respondents, particularly regarding the material, conceptual, and formal boundaries between the disciplines of art music and sound art (see Chapter III “Locating Sound”), the following assemblage reflects my best effort to depict not only participants’ commonly held understandings of the connections between worlds but also the arrangements between these connections in terms of disciplines, media, and idioms of auditory culture.

World		Discipline	Medium	Idiom		Examples	
Music	Popular Music					Elvis	
		Art Music	Scored Composition	New music/neo-classical		Minimalism (Reich, Glass, Riley, Young, Conrad)	
				Graphic scores and musical games		John Cage	
			Unscored Composition	Musique concrète		Pierre Schaeffer, Pierre Henry	
				Free jazz		Alice and John Coltrane, Sun Ra	
				Ambient		Tangerine Dream, Brian Eno, William Basinski	
				Noise		Synthesis (Oliveros, Subotnik), Nurse With Wound	
	Auditory Culture	Sound Art	Audible	Immaterial	Environmental sound and installation	The Dream House, Bob Bielecki	
				Sound sculpture		Sergei Tcherepnin, Tristan Perich	
				Kinetic sculpture		Richard Garet, Zimoun	
				Performance art		Carolee Schneeman, Zefrey Throwell	
				Audio-video		Bruce Conner	
	Gallery Arts		Non-Cochlear	Immaterial	Conceptual art "about sound"	Yoko Ono, Sol Le Witt	
				Material	Painting, drawing, sculpture "about sound"	Christine Sun Kim, Richard Serra's <i>Silence</i>	
				Cymatics		Susan Philips	
	Visual Culture		Painting			Da Vinci	
			Sculpture			Rodin	
			Etc.				

Table 2: Assemblage of Auditory Culture

Building from the ground up, music and art idioms formed the lowest level of analysis; this list should not be taken as comprehensive and might have been grouped any number of other ways. Rather than devise my own analytical organization of these idioms, I relied on the terminology most commonly used by participants and interview respondents (Lena and Peterson 2008). One exception to this coding rule was the discipline of “art music.” I devised this term to include all music other than “popular,” because respondents used such a diversity of terms,

including “experimental,” “avant-garde,” and “new.” Though Elvis and John Cage have little in common, it was difficult to discern where the boundary should be placed between these two extremes. On the other hand, disciplinary divisions in the gallery arts were closely related to media (e.g. painting, sculpture, sound), but even this heuristic approach was more complicated than it seemed. Where respondents disagreed with one another, I have tried to explain all the competing perspectives, drawing attention to actors striving for the power to define categories in addition to striving for success within those objective units (see II.3.1 “Boundaries of Disciplines).

The distinction between material and immaterial media in sound art led this inquiry down a number of paths (see III.3.2.2 “Form: Materiality in Sound Art”). Though sound in itself is patterned pressure wave in the air, not taking on material form *per se* (Upton 2017), many sound artists related sonic phenomena with material objects. For some, the “material” sonic object was a speaker or other amplification technology, while others embedded speakers within sculptures or other 3D installations. However, a conversation with a sound art historian revealed the problematic nature of the “sound sculpture” as well as the idea of “sonic material.” Though many respondents used this terminology to describe sound as if it had material properties, sound waves are forces, fluctuations in pressure acting upon material, yet not material substances in themselves. For trailblazing twentieth century composer and sound artist Pierre Schaeffer, the *objet sonore*, or sonorous object, was a bounded ontological unit ([1966] 2004), yet contemporary theorist Christoph Cox pointed out that the sonorous object is more precisely a temporal event, a process (2011). Cox would have these properties of sound extend into our understandings of the gallery arts more broadly, not merely as material forms, nor as representations, but as “complexes of forces.” He drew this claim from Deleuze and Guattari: “It

represents nothing, but it produces. It means nothing, but it works” ([1972] 1983, p. 109). Thus the work of art might be seen as a result or an artifact of flows, forces, and circuits, relating with capital and economy, as in a hall of mirrors.

Complicating matters further, one may ask how to categorize art that is *about* sound, though it does not make an audible sound to the human ear. Similarly, how would one categorize sound art as perceived by deaf and hearing-impaired audiences? The medium of “non-cochlear” sound art engages with these questions through conceptual art, material works that point toward auditory phenomena, and cymatics, works wherein sound waves create visible or tactile patterns in matter (see III.3.2.1 “Concept: Non-Cochlear Sound Art”). All of these art forms have to do with sound as a process, principle, and physical force, yet they do not vibrate the cochlea of the ears in ways that can be sensed.

At the next level of aggregation, I considered the division of aesthetic disciplines. Rather than considering what takes pop music beyond the purview of this study, some specific examples of art music pulled to the center of the discipline. Art music may be scored or unscored, and this distinction tended to map onto organizational contexts, as well. Scored music lent itself to concert halls, and included not only notation on the 5-line stave but any graphic or textual representation of a composer’s instructions to performers. Though many composers continued to use the 5-line stave, others have shifted their instructions toward abstraction, offering up a wider interpretive space for performers (see III.3.3.1 “Form: Extended Notation in Art Music”). On the other hand, unscored art music took a number of compositional forms. Some forms of jazz and experimental music used no notation at all, rather relying on improvisation in the moment. Though some unscored compositions were quite complex, such as the tape collages of *musique*

concrète, other unscored compositions were minimal, including some examples in ambient and noise music.

The disciplinary parameters of sound art were much more tightly bound than art music. Much like the fractal distinctions within sociology (Abbott 2001, pp. 10-21), the gallery arts have engaged in a feedback loop of differentiating disciplines from one another on the basis of countless binaries. Set against the classical disciplines of painting and sculpture, as well as the contemporary disciplines of photography, video, fiber, and performance, sound art has emerged as not only a medium for artistic exploration but also a conceptual landscape for meaning-making. Audible sound within galleries took many forms, yet the material imprints of sound became a central point of inquiry for this study. Sound sculptures were just such quixotic material objects, seeming to emit sounds from within. Kinetic sculpture, similarly, set matter in motion to create sound. The audio-video medium, often referred to simply as “video,” projected images onto screens and gallery spaces along with accompanying sounds, and some performance art foregrounded sound, as well. Immaterially, this study considered the ambient or environmental soundscape, one in which the content of art was the wave of pressure in space, seeming to arrive from nowhere and to travel directly to the human ear. Walking into this kind of installation, the uninitiated might have even asked, “Where is the art?” in a seemingly empty white room.

This depiction of the assemblage emerged slowly over these four years of fieldwork, and one might contest not only my attribution of objects into categories but also the semantic content of the categories themselves. Yet, this very contestation became a piece of the valuation puzzle attendant to these worlds and disciplines. How can value be adjudicated and attributed when not only the conditions of value but also the very definitions of what constitutes a discipline are

subject to disagreement? Contrary to other fields of “organized striving” (Bourdieu 1993, pp. 55-61), auditory culture seemed to me chaotic. Furthermore, even if actors were willing to concede a degree of consensus around the definitions of things, they also demonstrated faulty or missing information regarding the other actors within these worlds. Many interview respondents expected me to enter into conversations with some art historical knowledge, but I have regrettably little. Still, it became quickly apparent that actors did not point to the same “big names” within the discipline, let alone did they know the same “emerging artists” who were currently active. Though several excellent historical accounts have been published, with significant overlap in the artists they included, even these texts tended not to agree about fundamental definitions (e.g. what is “sound art”), and, by corollary, the major players in these disciplines.

I.3.0 Methods

In order to ask these questions, I engaged in two modes of qualitative research: semi-structured interviewing and participant observation. Interview respondents included artists, musicians, curators, gallerists, art dealers, talent buyers, venue managers, scholars, and educators in Chicago, New York, and Berlin. The sites of New York and Berlin were chosen as global hubs for sound art, and Chicago was chosen as my own place of residence with thriving art and music scenes. The 105 interviews included in this project averaged one hour and eight minutes, with four interviews under thirty minutes and one interview lasting nearly four hours. These conversations were loosely structured according to a list of topics (see Appendix C: “Interview Guide”). Though the first few interviews were exploratory in nature, themes arose from these early interviews in the project that became theoretically interesting as I began to write about the ethnographic field. These topics were explored further in subsequent interviews in the research process.

Four years of participant observation took place at galleries, museums, concert halls, and music venues in each of these three cities. Though I had more familiarity with art music, as a musician myself, I was altogether unfamiliar with the world of sound art at the beginning of this research, prompting me to seek out exhibitions, gallery openings, and any public events I could find in the art world. In addition to ad hoc attendance at exhibitions, performances, and events, I volunteered at two sound art organizations: La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's *Dream House* in New York and the Chicago-based organization Lampo. At the former site I spent two months working as a full-time volunteer installing an art exhibition and at the latter I worked as an ongoing program assistant at events, such as checking names at the entrance to public performances.

With transcribed interviews and field notes in hand, I personally analyzed responses to identify general themes that emerged. As part of the grounded theory method (Glaser and Strauss 1967), the specific codes were not decided prior to analysis, rather identified as qualitative descriptors of small units of the text. These commonalities among the codes were grouped together as general concepts in the dataset. In turn, these concepts were further grouped together in the form of categories of response, in this case, categories of value. By identifying potentially causal relationships between categories, original theory was generated from the data. Another important facet of this analytic method was the ability to probe in subsequent interviews into concepts that arose from interviews earlier in the research process.

This grounded theory approach to interview analysis was accompanied by hermeneutic analysis of ethnographic observations, as well (Glaeser 2005, 2011; Pugh 2013). Specifically, participant observation was useful to check the reports gathered in formal interviews, recursively moving back and forth between observations and theoretical findings as in the method of

abductive analysis (Tavory and Timmermans 2014). By interpreting what I heard in interviews against what I observed as a participant in these spaces, I was able to see continuities and discontinuities clearly, avoiding, I hope, the attitudinal fallacy (Jerolmack and Kahn 2014) that assumes interview respondents' reported attitudes map onto their actions (see Appendix A: "Methods").

I.4.0 Learning to Listen

The resulting dissertation interprets the fascinating world of auditory culture as a way to understand society. Marx was not alone in his preoccupation with the relationship between consciousness and life ([1932] 1978, pp. 148-155):

Every epoch of human history seems to derive its unlimited number of manifestations from this dualism between movements of thought and life, in which the basic streams of humanity find their most simple expression. This deep, living antithesis in human affairs can be conceptualized only through symbols and examples. During each major historical period a different shape of this contrast appears as its basic type and original form. (Simmel [1896] 1968, p. 68)

Observing the examples and interpreting the symbols of auditory culture have not been a means to a humanistic end but rather a sociological one: to understand better that fundamental relationship between consciousness and life. Though the sociological literature on art and music is vast, the quickly growing interdisciplinary of "sound studies" approaches auditory culture from many perspectives. Some of these texts came up repeatedly in my interviews, not only classics such as John Cage's *Silence* (1961), but also theory collections such as *The Auditory Culture Reader* edited by Michael Bull and Les Black (2003) and *The Sound Studies Reader* edited by Jonathan Sterne (2012), historical surveys such as Alan Licht's *Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories* (2007) and *Background Noise* by Brandon LaBelle (2015), and newly controversial work, including Seth Kim-Cohen's *In the Blink of an Ear* (2009) and *Against Ambience* (2016). These texts have become a lingua franca among practitioners, a way of

signaling investment in their disciplines and taking positions with reference to the dynamics of history, theory, and contemporary practice. In order to contribute a particularly sociological approach to sound, this dissertation proceeds with two theoretical interventions in the existing literature (Chapters II and V, “Knowing Value” and “Hearing Value”) and two empirical findings about the nature of the senses and value (Chapters III and IV, “Locating Sound” and “Inscribing Sound”).

The logical trajectory of this work is as follows. Although a literature review reveals that field models have prevailed among sociological explanations of value in the cultural economy, Chapter II “Knowing Value” proceeds to question three epistemological assumptions of these models: boundaries of disciplines, hierarchies of value, and the stability of objects. In the first case, Chapter III “Locating Sound” demonstrates that disciplinary boundaries are not only worked out in organizational contexts, placing works of art and music on one side or the other, but that actors also contest the very definitions of what objects constitute their disciplines. Subsequently, practitioners and gatekeepers do not ascribe to the same hierarchies of value, and Chapter IV “Inscribing Sound” explains that the discipline of sound art paradoxically uses text rather than sensation to value sounds. Finally, Chapter V “Hearing Value” calls on theories of perception in social aesthetics and phenomenology to question if the sonic objects thought to take positions in fields are perceived in socially stable ways. Given these faulty assumptions of field theory in the specific case of auditory culture, rhizomatic assemblages are found to be a better explanation of value. The following sections offer an overview each of these chapters to come.

I.4.1 Knowing Value: Rhizomatic Assemblages

Language is the rhizome that renders the aesthetic economic, a relation of economic agencement.

After a literature review of reductive market models of the cultural economy, Chapter II “Knowing Value” looks at the opposite extreme of differentiation models that would fragment cultural preferences to the niche or individual level. Between these poles, field models of the cultural economy claim that individual preferences are patterned yet multifaceted. At least three major types of fields are important to the sociological literature: social psychological, strategic action, and cultural production. Though fields in social psychology are able to model the impressions of individual minds, they tend not to include a dimension of time, crucial to the analysis of sound. Strategic action fields fuse micro- and macro-level forces into a meso-level theory, yet they assume actors’ shared knowledge of the power relations and rules of behavior within the field, features this empirical case did not demonstrate. As an alternative, I take the field of cultural production as a starting point, though proceeding to explore a theoretical skepticism regarding Bourdieu’s foundation and some of those who have adopted his model. Though Bourdieu emphasizes that fields are objective social realities, existing apart from the knowledge of participants within them, current scholarship sometimes assumes that they are oriented around a cohesive body of knowledge. Even apart from the knowledge of actors, the boundaries of disciplines, hierarchies of value, and stability of objects are all necessary for the field to be taken as an ontological reality.

Taken in turn in the following chapters, the world of auditory culture questions each of these epistemological claims of field theory, pointing toward another model of social organization. Though markets, niches, and fields are not ideal configurations of the social space, assemblages better fit the observed relation between practitioners of these art forms. Without

needing to assume complete information or aesthetic consensus, the assemblage affords the organized (or sometimes disorganized) striving for success, not only to achieve a goal but also to define the meaning of aesthetic value. Extending from postmodern cultural theory, aesthetic assemblages are a way to draw maps in emerging stateless regions of auditory culture, such as sound art. The particular type of assemblage that fits best with this empirical context is an economic *agencement*—rendering the aesthetic economic by transforming qualitative differences into ranked differences of value. Adopting the metaphor of a rhizome rather than a tree, these assemblages manifest shared principles among seemingly disparate objects (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987), such as the use of similar texts by artists who are unaware of one another. Unlike art music, where value can be perceived solely by the musical sounds produced, or the other gallery arts, where value has historically been perceived with the sense of sight, sound art tends to value the conceptual nature of sound, and the rhizome beneath the surface is a system of classic texts and artist statements that construct value.

I.4.2 Locating Sound: Boundary Work

Rather than agreed-upon boundaries between disciplines, organizational and semantic boundaries are worked out with nuanced, overlapping, and sometimes conflicting definitions.

Chapter III “Locating Sound” considers two ways that the boundary between the disciplines of art music and sound art might be worked out: organizationally and semantically. Though the organizational form is more familiar to sociology, addressing the networks, places, and formal groups tasked with filing objects into categories, semantic boundary work takes differences on a deeper level, considering how actors work out boundaries by playing with their definitions. The fundamental organizational boundary within auditory culture had to do with whether sound occurred in a gallery or museum as opposed to a music venue or concert hall, but this straightforward distinction hid many discrepancies. The more specific distinction between

art “exhibition” and music “performance” became an easy heuristic for organizations to decide if they should support work or not, but boundary cases often overlapped these categories. Though the prototypical cases were clear (e.g. a sound sculpture exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art or a Mozart performance at the Lincoln Center), other instances muddled the difference between exhibition and performance. How should disciplines treat an experimental music performance in a gallery, such as the concerts hosted by the Chicago-based sound art organization Lampo, or an exhibition of ephemera from a musician’s career at an art museum, such as controversial exhibits on David Bowie, Björk, Cecil Taylor and Yoko Ono? On the contrary, how do spatial installations in music venues or durational performances in concert halls figure into these categories? In these cases, actors tended to rely on other organizational cues to understand disciplinary placement, such as artists’ biographies, educational backgrounds, or exhibition/performance records. Not only did the current organizational contexts matter in these moments of boundary work, but the imprints of past organizations did so, as well.

In other instances, particularly when organizational heuristics complicated or failed to provide distinctions, practitioners made incisive semantic distinctions of which objects should be included in disciplines. Whereas organizations tended to make funding decisions based on quickly recognizable distinctions, such as whether a work is performed or exhibited, artists and scholars tended to rely on more complicated definitions, such as the “conceptual” or “formal” nature of sound. Many respondents considered conceptual works in sound to be more highly valued in the gallery arts, and the medium of “non-cochlear” sound art (work that is about sound yet cannot be heard by the human ear) was a thriving example of this conceptual emphasis. Though discussions of “materiality” in sound art were quite common, they drew attention back to concepts rather than formal, perceptible properties of sound. On the contrary, respondents in

the discipline of art music emphasized these formal elements of sound; even John Cage's conceptual approach to expanded notation prompted musicians to consider formal processes with more acuity. Despite the formal emphasis in art music, conceptual moments occurred when artists crossed boundaries into music disciplines, such as an avant-garde performance artist's collaboration with classical musicians.

Semantic work of this kind did not only cast artists' identities into a state of instability, but it made moments of boundary crossing precarious and risky identifications. Only a few works were able to successfully fuse the two disciplines, such as the long-standing *Dream House* by La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela, which drew on institutional acclaim in both worlds. A brief but fruitful observation of auditory culture in Berlin drew out some of the differences in boundary work between the American and German national contexts. While allowing the conceptual statements discovered in American sound art, the narrow German idiom of *Klangkunst* was rigidly formalist in its boundary distinctions. Ample yet shrinking institutional support for sound art in Germany may have had to do with the rigidity of its disciplinary boundaries, whereas the fluid and complicated boundaries in American auditory culture might have derived from privatization and market forces. Thus, although a field model requires an acknowledged positional starting point from which boundary contestation may arise, the center may not hold in a discipline of auditory culture where actors have such different answers to the question, "What is sound art?"

I.4.3 Inscribing Sound: Textual Value Devices

Rather than cohesive rubrics of cultural consecration, textual value devices aid the individualized process of sensory learning to evaluate sound art.

Beyond the challenges artists face in determining the boundaries of their disciplines, Chapter IV "Inscribing Sound" points to the difficulties they face in determining the value of

their works. With so little capital flowing through the restricted markets for sound art, cultural value takes center stage. Contrary to the reliance on hearing in art music or vision in the other gallery arts, sound art has had to rely, paradoxically, on text for valuation. In an art world still learning to hear value in sound, artists tend to devise conceptual statements to value their works, and these textual value devices take a number of forms. In handouts, wall text, program notes, grant applications, and online platforms, the conceptual nature of a work in sound is often the best way to translate value to an audience who has been trained to look, if not to listen.

When asked how to explain the incongruous dominance of text in sound art, respondents pointed to three general reasons. First, art history ushered visual artists to a moment just beyond conceptual turn of the 1960s, and sound artists have been tasked with establishing value for their emergent discipline along the path that has already been laid out for them. Though the visual art world ostensibly has moved beyond Conceptual Art, sound may be forestalled in this just-past moment in order to be certain of its own value. Second, the slow technical adaptation of visual environments to sonic media required many sound artists to use conceptual statements as a backup plan to make their work valuable if they could not be heard properly. For example, when sound art was placed in an elevator, bathroom, or stairway, it might have encountered restricted sonic possibilities, just as when it was limited to headphones within the gallery. Furthermore, group exhibitions tended to allow sound to bleed from one piece into the next. Though artists often felt responsible to supply their own amplification, they still took the opportunity to improvise in less-than-ideal technical environments. Thus, a gallery might have misrepresented the sonic intention of an artist for a number of reasons, but text was sure to communicate its conceptual value despite these problems.

The third explanation practitioners gave for the use of text in sound art was that it was a device helping audiences learn how to hear sonic value in their works. In addition to making audio-visual connections and the esoteric practice of “Deep Listening,” conceptual statements were used to guide audiences through the listening process. Though music tended to be an internally referential system of value, whereby listeners made their own connections solely based on the sounds they heard, the visual art world has not yet disseminated a sonic “language” for this kind of value. Textual value devices build knowledge of the ranked value of sounds, even if the contents of those value judgments are quite different from one adjudicator to the next. Though Bourdieu described these struggles to achieve value as fields of organized striving, field modeling either tends to assume cohesion in the dominant judgments of value or at least that they can be aggregated to a single hierarchy. Yet, these struggles to understand value in sound art might be better off assuming dissensus as the principle of action.

I.4.4 Hearing Value: Embodied Perception

Rather than stable totalities of perception, sounds are embodied sensory processes particular to individual attention, adumbration, and affect.

Amidst this ongoing struggle to understand value in sound art, a controversy erupted over the relative merits of conceptual or formal work, the latter sometimes referred to as “ambient” sound. This distinction between understanding sound through language or through sensory perception opens a final theoretical investigation in Chapter V “Hearing Value” into the nature of listening. Though the sense of sight lends itself to quick linkages between sensory stimuli and value judgments, sounds must be differently focused in attention, adumbrated in time, and filtered through affect, emphasizing the ongoing process of noesis rather than momentary recognition of noematic content. These subjective particularities of sound allow the process of perception to occur slowly over time and particularly through the body. Although conceptual

language is predisposed to the active taste judgments of a cultivated mind, ambient sensations lend themselves to the passive *doxa* of conviction. *Gestalt* psychology claimed that percepts enter our minds as sensory totalities, at once understood and judged, but these subjective particularities of hearing discovered in social aesthetics and phenomenology question the possibility of a field of auditory culture. If the perceived qualities of sounds are not shared among the evaluators of field positions, or if some sounds are not equipped for hierarchical ranking at all, then a field model of sound might not have the objective structure observed in other cultural worlds.

What would it mean for sound to be understood and valued in the body rather than through reading conceptual texts? Though the history of visual art has tended to value the authorial hand or the conceptual mind of the artist, sound art may allow audiences to contribute their own understandings of what they hear in these rapidly changing disciplines. The subjective ability to derive meaning from sound without a mediating text extends social aesthetics beyond Bourdieu's bivariate field and Habermas' linguification of the sacred to imagine the possibility of Rancière's emancipated spectator in a sonic sensorium. The particular bodily nature of sonic perception and listeners' personal conviction of their evaluations points to the possibility of an expanded aesthetic discourse. And yet, if the aesthetic assemblage of auditory culture is a way to understand social relations, then it is a descriptive tool, not to be misunderstood for a public.

I.5.0 Representing Auditory Culture

Though the empirical sites for this dissertation research supplied me with just such a rich sensory environment as Rancière imagined, representing the senses through an academic text like this one is a thorny endeavor. Where possible, images are included to demonstrate some of the "looks" of auditory culture, yet supplying an archive of the sounds was not possible in the

textual dissertation format. I have attempted, ironically, to represent the sounds I heard in the text that follows, but I would also encourage the reader to seek out audio and video recordings of the cited works to accompany this silent format.

II. KNOWING VALUE: INSTABILITY AND FLUIDITY IN AESTHETIC ASSEMBLAGES

“A concept is a brick. It can be used to build a courthouse of reason.

Or it can be thrown through the window.”

(Massumi in Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987, p. xii)

II.1.0 From Fields to Rhizomes

In order to understand value in auditory culture, this chapter begins with a literature review of social understandings of cultural-economic value. Though some would dissolve the cultural and economic realms into a single market of aggregated value, others would differentiate them into contextually specific individual preferences. Between these extremes, field models of the cultural economy divide social position into two distinct dimensions of value, objective in their aggregated patterns yet subjectively determined through social action. Before exploring innovations in cultural economic modeling, this chapter will dig into some of the informational assumptions of field theory.

The use of field theory in studies of cultural economy has become second nature to sociologists since Bourdieu’s interventions in consumption ([1979] 1984) and production (1993). Although conceptualizing cultural work as a constantly shifting two-dimensional vector space is both generative of social theory (Martin 2003, pp. 6-8) and empirically predictive of social action (Santoro 2010), this dissertation begins with skepticism about some of the underlying assumptions of cultural fields. Though objects are thought to have trajectories through a field in terms of economic and cultural value, with the underlying field of power imposing its force of privilege or oppression according to the social positions of actors, the objective nature of the field relies on the ranking of the “position-takings” it contains (Bourdieu 1993, p. 30). Several of the underlying assumptions of field theory are problematic in auditory culture. First, as to be seen in Chapter III “Locating Sound,” boundaries may be subject to significant debate in

emerging disciplines, questioning the very definitions of what objects belong within and without. Furthermore, as seen in Chapter IV “Inscribing Sound,” disciplines may demonstrate more or less consensus on the rubrics of cultural value, particularly in nascent artistic idioms where actors struggle not only for cultural success but also to determine the conditions of that success. Some applications of field theory have assumed that actors have relatively complete knowledge of nearby position-takings within the field. Though this belief is more reasonable in the established discipline of art music, a quickly growing discipline such as sound art only provides fragmented knowledge of the important players, not only in terms of the other contemporary artists but also the constellation of historical leaders. Finally, as to be explored further in Chapter V “Hearing Value,” sound art brings a particular instability to field theory, in that it remains unclear to what extent a given object is perceived to be the same by actors in or observers of the discipline.

An alternate model of cultural-economic value identifies the assemblage of actors with underlying patterns of behavior rather than the self-organizing hierarchies modeled with field theory. Instead of binary relationships of linear continua, Deleuze and Guattari’s now classic work *A Thousand Plateaus* ([1980] 1987) describes the relation between cultural objects as a “rhizome,” whereby they employ the same principle of morphology without knowledge of one another. As the following empirical chapters will describe, this model of aesthetic sociability fits more closely with the relations observed in this study. The tension between stability and instability necessitates the drawing of maps (Jameson 1984) in auditory culture, yet this act of cartography is an application of expertise in the knowledge of value, as well. Despite limited consensus on the boundaries of art forms, hierarchies of value, and the qualities of particular

objects, auditory culture nonetheless holds together as an assemblage according to shared principles of change.

II.2.0 Models of Cultural-Economic Value

Models of the economy for culture “as such” order objects according to reductive market price, differentiated niche tastes, or fields of cultural production.

The website for the *Journal of Cultural Economy* offers a collection of associations between culture and economy under the heading “Aims and Scope” (McFall and Nelms 2018). These domains include a number of scholarly disciplines, such as sociology, anthropology, geography, history, business, and cultural studies, as well as an array of substantive areas of inquiry that overlap these disciplines. In addition to referencing materiality and material culture, the editors include governmentality, pragmatism, narrative analysis, actor network theory, and science and technology studies among the important topics for publication. With special issues on finance, money, and temporality, the *Journal of Cultural Economy* takes a broad understanding of the cultural in economic action. However, such a diversity of associations with the term “cultural” confounds its offering to economy. How are we to understand what differentiates the cultural economy from any other form of economic behavior?

One way to classify this interdiscipline borrows loosely from Zelizer’s typology of intimate economies (2011). Though many have preferred to understand the cultural economy as “nothing but” another form of market interaction, Zelizer’s own work has tended to address the “differentiated ties” that distinguish particular actors, actions, or objects as cultural or economic in a specific context. This tendency relies on a situational logic of differentiation, often formed out of frustration with the disciplinary imperialism of positivist microeconomics. Though the first extreme emphasizes the aggregating power of markets, the other differentiates cultural-economic behavior into atomized interactions between market actors. Between these two, field

theory models cultural and economic value as “separate spheres” of hierarchy, which some even find to be “hostile worlds” of value with the potential to pollute or degrade one another. Field models benefit from a systematic understanding of the slippery concept of “cultural value,” yet they tend to rely on shaky assumptions about the nature of objects within field boundaries. This section will begin by investigating the meanings attached to the “cultural economy” before describing some of the theories of value that can be understood according to these three models of value in the literature.

The category of “cultural economy” is distinguished from other domains of economic action in a number of ways. Some prefer to think of cultural economy in terms of the exchange, sale, and circulation of self-consciously cultural material objects “as such,” including works of art (Hutter 2008; Hutter and Throsby 2008), recordings of music (Lena 2012; Phillips and Owens 2004), publications of literature (Lacy 1970), and anthropological artifacts (Geismar 2004). The first layer of extension beyond the domain of materiality is to the performance of “cultural” activity, such as playing musical instruments, acting in theater settings, and the conceptual combination of movement, dialogue, and material objects in performance art (Throsby and Withers 1979, Zukin 1988, Zolberg 1989). The sale of tickets for admission to these events is understood to be in a similar domain as the sale of art objects themselves, though abiding by some unique principles, such as a particular need to identify the activity as an “authentic” one (Grazian 2003, Lindholm 2008).

Beyond the markets for these self-identified cultural material objects or activities, the domain of fashion is among the first to stretch the boundary between the cultural economy and other economic activities. Classically defined in terms of the tension between class identification and individual expression (Simmel 1957), markets for fashionable clothing may be understood to

be forms of high culture akin to visual art, theater, and music (Currid 2007) or mere commodity exchange. Here we first encounter the fragility of a notion of the cultural economy as somehow different from any other commodity market, a sentiment championed by critical theory from the Frankfurt School (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2002; Benjamin [1955] 1968; Adorno [1972] 1991) as a cultural superstructure that manifests the base of social production (Williams 1980).

In part due to this uneasy distinction between objects of culture and objects of commodity, some frameworks prefer to understand culture in terms of the social construction (Velthuis 2003) or phenomenology (Aspers 2001) of meanings associated with material objects or activities, as well as the practices of exchange for these objects and activities (Wolff 1993). Broadly, this approach to cultural economy looks like the “sociology of culture,” while the former approach that focuses on art, music, and literature mirrors “cultural sociology” (Griswold 2008, p. 9). By understanding culture in terms of systems of meaning, these models have a broad scope of application beyond the limited domain of culture “as such,” including not only television programming (Bielby and Bielby 1994), self-taught artists (Ardery 1997; Fine 2004), and craft makers (Campbell 2005), but also finance (Hardin 2017), management (Lezaun and Muniesa 2017), and crypto currencies (Dallyn 2017). Although these areas can be considered “cultural” in that they abide by a particular set of rules and conditions (Gans 1974), they can become part of the sociological discipline according to the social meanings they generate and re-inscribe. This approach to the cultural economic literature extends far beyond the substantive area of this dissertation, including the shared meaning practices in traditional economic sectors, such as stock exchanges, market regulation, and banking, to name only a few. In order to draw in the relevant literature, this chapter will focus on the economies of culture “as such,” specifically

those objects created with the intention to communicate meaning while also (sometimes) generating profit.

As distinct from other definitions of the economic, this chapter will also emphasize valuation processes (Lamont 2012) rather than the more limited framings of exchange, transaction, monetization, or financialization. Behavioral economics has evolved to consider market devices (Callon, Millo, and Muniesa 2007), performativity (Callon 2007), and quality conventions (Favereau, Biencourt, and Eymard-Duvernay 2002), looking beyond the content of social behavior to focus on the process or quality of that behavior. Value determinations occur whenever actors impose an economic logic of hierarchy on an object or social group, and this broader understanding of valuation was much more common in this empirical site of auditory culture than was monetary exchange. Whether these objects were material or immaterial, “art” or other signifiers of meaning, building consensus over value tended to be a fragile endeavor. Indeed, the economic value of these objects did not exist in a vacuum but rather had a symbiotic relationship with other cultural manifestations of value and worth. At least three processes of value attribution congeal in this collected literature. The first emphasizes the price mechanism as described in positivist microeconomic theory (Varian 2005). The second emphasizes the economic embeddedness of taste cultures, niches, or clusters of desiring subjects who ascribe value to the objects they deem worthy (Zelizer 2011), though this value is seldom shared by the population in aggregate (Anderson 2006). The third looks to the consecration of gatekeepers in cultural industries (Bourdieu 1993, p. 51), responsible for attributions of both economic and cultural value. These three locations of value consensus—in the market, within desiring niches, and among gatekeepers—each carry a particular categorization of objects, emphasize a group of important actors, and extend to a set of challenges in the process of value determination.

II.2.1 Market Models

Positivist microeconomics reduces all forms of value into measurable prices despite informational asymmetries and barriers to entry.

Cultural economics in the 1970s began to debate the nature of a seemingly unstable and subjective hierarchy of cultural value. With an expanded, and some say imperialist (Grampp 1989), definition of value in terms of utility, one side of the debate absorbed cultural considerations into microeconomic theory (Frey 2000). Taking price as an indicator of all types of worth, including aesthetic, cultural, and critical value, these theories made somewhat broad assumptions about informational symmetry in art markets and tended to disregard barriers to entry. Although this perspective has lost steam in sociology, due to its inability to account for variations of value outside the pricing mechanism, adherents remain in economics.

An important critique of this perspective emphasizes informational asymmetries in markets that can lead to Pareto inefficiency (Keat 1999). The author's premise is that a consumer's judgment of wellbeing is only based on a closed set of information provided by the market. If the market fails to provide goods that expand a consumer's understanding of the meaning of "true" wellbeing (including those supplied in literature, music, art, and film), then that consumer may be satisfied to buy a limited range of sub-optimal goods. As a corollary, Keat finds that goods that are genuine cultural enhancements of wellbeing are often coopted as advertising for other goods. Although the author fails to substantiate the basis by which cultural goods increase true wellbeing, the problem of informational asymmetry is indeed an incisive critique of the claim that price perfectly reflects consumer utility.

The force behind many of these economic theories of cultural activity was a related debate over public funding of the arts. Fiscal austerity measures of the late 1970s gave a political and policy orientation to the positivist economic modeling of cultural organizations' activity

(Throsby and Withers 1979). By identifying the inefficiencies of performing arts organizations and the faulty logic of elite taste that were used as justification, Throsby and Withers proceed to advocate for a private patronage rather than the use of public grants to fund theater, opera, and classical music performances. Heilbrun and Gray offer a more even-handed view of public funding for the arts that remains embedded in the microeconomic approach (2001). By considering the economic value of a variety of collective preferences, including a historical legacy, national identity, liberal education, and distributive concerns over access to high-price cultural objects, these authors round out the argument over public funding.

II.2.1.1 The Price Mechanism

The price mechanism models the value of collectible objects at a high level of aggregation, but it cannot explain cultural idiosyncrasies.

The microeconomic model of cultural economy would like to boil down the many social attributions of value into a single hierarchy measured (Grampp 1989, Frey 2000, Hutter and Throsby 2008) or indicated (Throsby 2001) by market price. Though this perspective continues to have merit among some economically rationalist thinkers, it has fallen from favor in the vast sociological literature on cultural economy, which emphasizes the incompleteness of contracts in cultural worlds (Caves 2000), bounded rationality, and incomplete information about the range of cultural objects from which to choose (Keat 1999). Two empirical cases elaborate these weaknesses. Pricing practices in New York and Amsterdam galleries have demonstrated beguiling anomalies: prices seldom fell, even for long-unsold objects, and works of the same size tended to be equally priced within a collection (Velthuis 2003). As well, artists' pursuits of cheaper input costs in terms of materials and technology seldom resulted in a lower market price but rather demonstrated the visionary genius of the artist that was able to speak through low-quality media (Hutter 2008). Though reducing value to price is useful in economic modeling, it

does not illuminate why or how cultural objects are valued in the first place, the central question of this study of auditory culture.

Furthermore, the price mechanism is only explanatory at extremes of aggregation, and it does not explain idiosyncrasies or outliers of value. Though some suggest that the simplicity of the price mechanism in neoclassical economics has become a straw man for economic sociologists, some scholars continue to abide by this simplicity (Frey 2000), claiming that all forms of value manifest in the price mechanism, the equilibrium of consumer desire and producer capacity. Others acknowledge the existence of other schemes of value but claim that price subsumes them when an object enters the market (Grampp 1989). This view finds that “whatever a painting is—a capital or a consumer good—it is an object that in and of itself yields utility,” and consumers attach reservation prices to the utility provided by these objects (1989, p. 36). Even some who emphasize two distinct spheres of economic and cultural value find them to be “structurally coupled” in the market (Hutter and Throsby 2008).

The collectability of unique art objects continues to dominate the literature employing market modeling. Although these models claim to apply to both the sale of material art objects and other cultural products, such as tickets for attendance at live performances, they tend to find the latter more difficult to quantify (Throsby and Withers 1979). The unpredictable and time-specific nature of performance tends to make the curation of music performance in high art settings, such as symphony orchestras or operas, more conservative than the display of art objects in similarly elite contexts (Zolberg 1989). Yet, even reproducible material objects can blur the distinction of materiality and challenge the power of the price mechanism. For example, written works of literature, once understood to be collaborative acts of production between typesetters, printers, publishers, and writers, gradually found it necessary to abstract this process

to the copyrighted intellectual property of an authorial mastermind rather than the material object of a literary print (Woodmansee 1994).

In addition to concerns with materiality, the auction has been a paradigm of rationality in the pursuit of price specificity and the reduction of dead weight loss in the market (Smith 1993). However, just as other markets demonstrate, the social process of price determination in auctions exhibits systematic differences from these stylized representations. For example, rather than occurring at a single event, price is negotiated at a series of information exchanges in the protracted auction process for “tribal” art (Geismar 2004). Perceived motivations play a large part, as well, as evident in sanctions on buyers who want to “flip” artwork for a higher price in the future (Thornton 2008). Despite the price mechanism’s reliance on collectability and uniqueness, auctions for cultural objects are more flexible than they appear.

II.2.1.2 Public Funding

Those who advocate for private patronage point to the inability of grant-making agencies to differentiate good art from bad art, but they disregard the determining role of gatekeepers.

A persistent debate regarding market models of the cultural economy has to do with public funding of the arts. Some flatly denounce this practice as undue governmental interference in a self-sufficient market (Grampp 1989), while others try to understand public funding in terms of the positive and negative externalities of arts organizations, questioning the ability of government bodies to distinguish good from bad art (Heilbrun and Gray 2001). For example, Brooks takes the case of the *Sensation* exhibit at the Brooklyn Museum of Art from 1999 to 2000 as an empirical example of conflict over the use of public funds (2008). With controversial works including *The Holy Virgin Mary* by Chris Ofili, which featured the Madonna’s image smeared with elephant dung, the show evoked outrage from both the general public and elites, such as Mayor Rudy Giuliani. Brooks analyzed the demographic trends of support for the show

itself and for its public funding, determining that past museum attendance was the best predictor of support for controversial art, ultimately suggesting the efficacy of arts education.

In addition to such polarized disagreement over value, these authors observe that even art that is widely agreed to be valuable requires state support, an example of the failure of market models to explain cultural value. In these cases, organizations often take the role of elite gatekeepers, deciding which works deserve which prices within tightly knit networks. Although this research mobilizes economic theory in order to understand the relationship between price and cultural value, it fails to identify preferences that do not appear in the price mechanism, for example due to informational asymmetry or unequal distribution of wealth in the population. Those who understand culture and economy to exist as separate spheres draw attention to non-monetized cultural objects and the possibility that a lack of economic capital might even add cultural worth in some domains (Bourdieu 1993, pp. 53-5).

The controversy over public funding points out another of the weaknesses of positivist microeconomic theory for explaining the cultural economy. Theories of gatekeeper tastes emphasize the role of industry leaders in determining which cultural producers are allowed admission to disciplines and in setting prices for their objects. Whereas the price mechanism emphasizes consumer demand, gatekeeping models describe a hierarchy of cultural consecration adjudicated by powerful actors in terms of their class positions (Bourdieu 1993, pp. 37-40). Recalling patronage structures of the past (Henning 1970; Baxandall 1972), these organizations and inter-organizational firms develop their own rubrics for value determination (DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976). Some see this cultural industry as hegemonic or oligopolistic (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2002; Adorno [1972] 1991; Gramsci 2011), while others observe a more loosely segmented market according to form, medium, idiom, or genre (Lacy 1970; DiMaggio 1987;

Lopes 1992; Lena 2012). Rather than prices measuring which art is essentially good, this alternative view finds that gatekeepers are responsible for deciding which art is good.

II.2.2 Differentiation Models

Differentiation models emphasize the contextual specificity of valuation in niche taste cultures, but they fail to capture values that transcend categorical lines.

Rather than aggregating preferences to the market level, another subset of cultural economic modeling differentiates these large-scale hierarchies into individualized tastes. Though niche taste cultures are imagined to include all the subsets of desiring subjects who ascribe value to worthy objects, this theory of value tends to emphasize cultural producers who have made a rupture with the bourgeoisie (Bourdieu [1992] 1996) and the enactment of individual agency in the development of artistic identity (White 1993). These clusters have internal status logics, either in terms of subcultural capital (Thornton 1995) or other iconoclastic systems of reward (Crane 1987), often emphasizing object worlds that come alongside the “retraction of social principles and environments” (Knorr Cetina 1997, p. 1) and a return to cult value rather than elite-oriented exhibition value (Benjamin [1955] 1968; Menger 2013). Taste cultures marshal symbolic capital as a resource for reconversion into economic capital (Scott 2012), often using strategies of resource mobilization, political opportunities, and framing similar to social movements (Baumann 2007). Through networked circuits of commerce (Zelizer 2011), surprising objects are both aestheticized (Welsch 1996) and reconfigured as desirable to the subject of consumption (Baudrillard 1981; Sayer 1999; Campbell 2001). Although this process follows a “bottom up” path from consumer to value, similar to the price mechanism, it does so through loosely networked clusters of individuals rather than population averages.

Perhaps this orientation toward individual differentiation within networks offers insight into the turn toward culture in contemporary economic scholarship. The temptation to stylize

economic theory into a single or dual explanatory variable structure has the benefit of simplicity but suffers from a lack of predictive power for many cultural phenomena. For example, without an understanding of shared meaning structures, how would one account for the distinct taste cultures in the selection of art for corporate spaces (Martorella 1990)? What motivates Fortune 500 companies in the Northeast to collect and display avant-garde or abstract expressionist artwork, while similar organizations in the Midwest prefer representational and realistic works from their own region? Economic theory alone falls short in these instances, and the notion of shared understandings of cultural value becomes a crucial explanatory tool.

Although this literature does not explicitly hypothesize the origin of the cultural turn in economic scholarship, post-structuralism freshly emphasized individual understandings of reality. Though now sterilized as part of the theoretical canon, postmodernism was formulated as a “cultural dominant” (Jameson 1984), destabilizing fundamental economic principles that underlie assumptions of preference and action, such as the principle of human “need” (Baudrillard 1981). If a social force as fundamental as human desire could found ideological, perhaps the imperialist disciplinary ambitions of economics in fact resulted in a mutually informative dialectic relationship (Grampp 1989). By planting the seed of cultural relativity at the axiomatic level of economic preference, cultural explanations may have grown through the cracks of empirical scholarship in a most unlikely discipline. Just as economic rationality had its day to colonize the social sciences, so have surprising “cultural” circuits emerged in economics. Not unlike the global history of colonialism, the process of transmission is seldom unidirectional.

II.2.2.1 Trans-Categorical Values

Prevailing values in the cultural zeitgeist, such as authenticity and uniqueness, are not adequately captured in models of separate spheres.

Although cultural-economic models of “differentiated ties” emphasize the contextual specificity of valuation and niche taste cultures, many value judgments transcend categorical lines. For example, a key distinction for many taste cultures is whether objects are what they claim to be: if they are authentic. According to the ethic of aesthetic autonomy (Harrington 2004), cultural producers are called to verify the cultural origins of their creations (Lindholm 2008). Although this process is an idealized narrative of the cultural “original,” it continues to be a widespread consumer desire (Grazian 2003). One way to perform this authenticity is through the conspicuous display of an expert knowledge of objects, demonstrating solidarity with them (Knorr Cetina 2001b, pp. 531-2), such as sampling obscure performers in a music genre (Lena and Pachucki 2013) or amateur crafts that use specialized objects and processes (Campbell 2005). Of course, such an idealized cultural narrative is fragile, and producers are called to perpetually renegotiate the terms of production in full view of a subcultural network of tasteful experts (Thornton 1995).

Another value judgment that crosses taste categories is the desire for uniqueness. Recent literature has emphasized adherence to genre conventions as a means for cultural producers to signal their value to industry leaders (Holt 2007; Lena 2004, 2012; Lena and Pachucki 2013; Verboord 2011), and musicians are said to derive pleasure from these conventions (Crossley and Bottero 2015). However, conventionality is opposed to innovation in many niche tastes for art and music (Zolberg 1989; Lopes 1992; Caves 2000; Phillips and Owens 2004). With the ubiquitous value of uniqueness, some industries even express a desire for obscure, unknown, and weird art and music across idiomatic lines (Johnson 2017). These trans-categorical values

question the overly differentiated model of niche tastes by identifying a common zeitgeist that weaves between aesthetic forms like a “rhizome,” even manifesting in cultural groups unaware of one another (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987).

II.2.2.2 Restricted Culture

Though bohemians and music subcultures find culture and economy to be hostile worlds, none is immune from the market and elite influences.

An important group to determine value in taste cultures is the “bohemian,” an authentic and unique cultural producer who rejects bourgeois lifestyle, social norms, and economic security. Drawing imagery and narrative from nineteenth-century Paris, these artists display poverty and deviance in the service of art making, usually in urban enclaves (Simpson 1981; Lloyd 2006). This group is thought to be an important cultural niche for value determination, demonstrating economic autonomy and aspiring to cultural consecration (Bourdieu 1985, 1993); whether causal or correlative, the two are thought to go hand-in-hand in bohemia. Bourdieu finds that cultural accolades may preclude market success for bohemian producers of “restricted” culture ([1992] 1996). Non-economic status differentiation is crucial to constructions of authenticity and uniqueness in bohemian taste cultures (Graña and Graña 1990), although class taste continues to be embodied and inescapable even for the downwardly mobile (Featherstone 2007).

As a reaction to the cultural consecration of bourgeois exclusivity, bohemian artists and cultural producers reverse the location of good taste while preserving the power of exclusivity. Not only distinguishing themselves from the unenlightened bourgeoisie but also from pseudo-bohemians (Graña and Graña 1990), those who claim to live in intentional poverty use the autonomy of art from capital as a source of validation. By making art for art’s sake alone (*l’art pour l’art*), the cultural object is freed from the constraints that would be imposed by patronage

or the market. The class location of this exclusionary group is ostensibly different from the bourgeoisie (though bohemian artists' livelihoods and "true" class location are fairly drawn into question), but their mechanism of exclusion is much the same (Lloyd 2006). Drawing on superior experience, knowledge, and emotional enlightenment, these bohemian cultural workers also conversely emphasize deviance and even madness as rites of passage to differentiate true artists from pretenders (Lloyd 2006, p. 56). Excluding both bourgeois artists and the unenlightened working class, bohemian artists may create an illusory social role, grounded more in metanarrative and imagination than in the practice of art making (Gerber 2017, pp. 96-98).

Though many have cast aspersions on this imagined character of the bohemian artist, others identify the consequences of bohemian lifestyles in contemporary urban space. In *Loft Living*, Zukin traces the bohemian character through Manhattan from Greenwich Village to SoHo and finally to the Lower East Side with incisive attention to the effects of gentrification on working class communities (1988). By claiming poverty as part of a bohemian identity, these artists chase the cheapest rent for maximal space through the city. However, the "cool" status of the artist becomes a tool of middle-class real estate development to raise the value of loft spaces from artist studios to luxury condominiums. The desire of bohemian artists and pseudo-bohemian residents to exclude the bourgeoisie is thus cast into a state of constant failure through the mechanism of gentrification, with negative consequences for the displaced working-class residents of each location.

Some disciplines of auditory culture emphasize exclusivity similarly to bohemian art movements of the past. Although the contents of exclusionary categories vary, the mechanics of exclusion are shared among all music subcultures, giving careful attention to the specific attributes that belong on either side of their boundaries (see II.3.1 "Boundaries of Disciplines").

Punk subcultures are some of the best known for writing and revising the definition of their own niche (Moore 2007). In his ethnography of Southern California punk music, Moore locates these acts of exclusion not in terms of style, as prior scholarship had done (Hebdige 1979), but rather in relationships with the market. By limiting economic interaction to carefully defined do-it-yourself (DIY) networks, these cultural producers were able to differentiate themselves from the discipline of popular music. Not only by avoiding major record labels in favor of independent ones, but also through the circulation of small-scale media in handmade magazines (or “zines”), these musicians, industry actors, and subcultural consumers excluded the trappings of corporate culture from their repertoires and exchange practices. However, Moore fails to complicate or contextualize the definitions of such dense terms as “corporate,” “independent,” and “DIY” in the parlance of Southern California punk cultural production, unintentionally drawing attention to the arbitrary nature of such exclusionary distinctions for many such subcultures.

In the homologous context of dance music scenes in the United Kingdom, Thornton offers a much more nuanced portrayal of the social construction of boundaries in subcultures (1995). By developing a theory of “subcultural capital,” Thornton identifies the status-oriented benefits of symbolic exclusion not only at the border of a subculture but also within its own hierarchy. Using the tools of style, knowledge, and media, subcultural members engage a perpetual process of defining and redefining what is “hip” and what is not. The case of dance music subcultures in the 1990s is particularly relevant as idioms turned over rapidly along with their incorporation into dominant culture and mass media. Just as mainstream journalistic outlets identified “acid house” music as a moral panic, its producers and subcultural consumers redefined the idiom as “rave” music in order to preserve their wealth of subcultural capital (Thornton 1995, p. 116). Accordingly, this dissemination of proper terminology, fashion, and

music taste within the subculture became a process of symbolic exclusion, often with people of color and women either at the bottom of the hierarchy or demonstrably working harder to retain the subcultural capital they had secured.

Despite the desired autonomy of bohemian, avant-garde, and other taste cultures, market and industry ideals nonetheless have succeeded in regulating cultural production. Though the history of avant-garde art movements through the 20th Century reveal a continued desire to subvert and criticize bourgeois art, they face structural problems in their more fundamental ambition to negate the autonomy of art in general (Bürger [1974] 1984). A comparison of avant-garde stylistic movements finds that long-term recognition requires not only ideational development but also social ties outside the movement (Crane 1987). Furthermore, industry tastemakers may require formal modifications of objects in order for a taste culture to be circulated broadly (Phillips and Owens 2004). Organizations face market pressures in curatorial practice, often requiring them to balance their own cultural desires with that of funding bodies (Alexander 1996). Though contemporary art practices may engage with these economic realities (Velthuis 2005), no taste culture is immune from market and elite influence.

Though these individualized taste cultures may be restricted from market success, valuable trends are evident among them, as well. By differentiating social analysis of the cultural economy to such a granular scale, tendencies among actors, objects, or events may disappear. Where market models operate at such a high level of aggregation that the subtlety of cultural meaning is lost, these differentiation models may obscure the patterned relationships in auditory culture. Varieties of field theory (Köhler 1947; Fligstein 2012; Bourdieu 1993) converge in a third type of cultural-economic modeling between these two poles.

II.2.3 Field Models

Field models divide value into distinct linear hierarchies of culture and economy.

Field models of cultural economy stand between market and differentiation models, providing a way to understand both aggregate patterns and contextual specificity. Mirroring the ordinal utility function of positivist microeconomics, this literature extends the method of hierarchical ranking beyond a single preference set and into two dimensions or “separate spheres” of economic and cultural value. Relational theories of art worlds (Becker 1982) and cultural production networks (DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976) emphasize the embeddedness of economy and cultural activity, as well as role differences within these networks. Although actors and activities are carefully differentiated according to art, craft, administration, and business roles, they occupy space in the same networks, thus unifying the field of “art” making. The classic work in the sociology of art, Becker’s *Art Worlds* pays close attention to overlapping and differentiated roles in the many activities of cultural production (1982). With particular consideration of the processes and flows of behavior into and out of roles, he arrives at a simple yet important claim that all artistic production is a collaborative activity in the cultural economy.

In addition to role differentiation, DiMaggio and Hirsch emphasize the interorganizational character of cultural production (1976). Tensions between innovation, control, and substance play out at the individual, organizational, and institutional levels for each art form. Particularly in terms of funding streams, the content of cultural production is constrained by the requirements of interorganizational bodies, such as foundations, non-profit organizations, and public sector departments to determine the survival of an individual artist or organization:

Take, for instance, the question of whether art shapes society or society reflects art. Although most scholars have agreed that the process is dialectical, to really understand the relationship one needs to understand the social context of production – who produces

art, what biases of selection make art which is produced and distributed systematically different from that which is not, and what political and economic factors influence the content of cultural products and the audiences to which they are directed. (1976, p. 85)

Thus breaking down the simplicity of market and differentiation models, these authors' emphasis on networks incorporates both unity and differentiation in a field framework for culture and economy.

An important challenge to the theory of elite gatekeeping comes from the literature on cultural "omnivorousness" (Peterson and Kern 1996; Rossman and Peterson 2015). With the rise of egalitarian values more generally (Gans 1974), middle- and upper-class tastes incorporate and appropriate a wider range of cultural production, even those originating in lower strata. Though power structures remain intact, globalization and digitization are changing the circulation of texts (Hesmondhalgh 2002; Warner 2002; Featherstone 2007), and new tastemakers are coming from a variety of social locations (Currid 2007). The fashion photography market offers an important critique of other rigidly hierarchical industries, with evidence of actors fluidly switching roles from producer to consumer within the same market (Aspers 2001). Even consumers of abstract art demonstrate a decorative approach to value (Halle 1992), rather than the trained, class-based understandings presupposed by the theory of elite distinction. Though omnivorousness may be on the decline (Rossman and Peterson 2015), overall egalitarian norms continue to emphasize status-neutral networked clusters of aesthetic value.

This new class of cultural "omnivores" continues to desire and demonstrate knowledge of high cultural objects and idioms, but it also digs into popular or lowbrow culture to find hidden gems. This act of cultural appropriation does cross the boundaries of class and race but only in order to incorporate subordinate cultural forms into the hegemonic taste. Though the authors speculate on a number of origins for this change—perhaps coming from new media outlets, a

rising liberal value of cultural tolerance, changes in the value orientation of the art world, or the effect of the 1960s “Woodstock” generation—the most promising explanation is that higher status groups gain symbolic capital through this act of cultural gentrification, appropriating lower status cultural objects as their own (Peterson and Kern 1996, p. 906).

In a surprising twist, David Throsby’s understanding of the cultural economy has evolved through the years from a strict microeconomic perspective to one more akin to Bourdieu (Hutter and Throsby 2008). Though his earlier work emphasized the power of the price mechanism to measure individual preference for cultural activities (Throsby and Withers 1979), recent work has formalized Bourdieu’s notion of cultural consecration in economic terms (Throsby 2001). Though economic value is reflected in willingness to pay, cultural value may offer benefits to consumers that extend beyond the price mechanism, due to incomplete knowledge and benefits that accrue to groups rather than individuals. As evidence, Throsby points to the consumer’s ability to identify qualitative unranked differences and to rank objects without a “willingness to pay,” both in support of Bourdieu’s separate sphere of cultural consecration (1993).

Before looking more closely at the informational assumptions of the field of cultural production, two alternate field models will be explored in social psychology and strategic action fields. Though they each offer a useful model of social life in other contexts, they are not well suited to the aesthetic site explored in this dissertation. Specifically, although social psychology considers the relation between perception and value, it reduces them to a single cognitive moment rather than a starting point for positional movement. As well, strategic action fields are best suited to formal organizational and institutional contexts where actors have a shared knowledge of the purposes, rules, and logics of effective behavior, as well as the prevailing power relations within fields.

II.2.3.1 Social Psychology

Although they capture totalities of perception and judgment at a moment in time, social psychological fields do not account for temporal change.

Martin (2003) gives a comprehensive summary of the social psychological variety of field theory, tracing its roots to the *Gestalt* tradition in German social science. Particularly drawing on the work of Kurt Koffka (1935) and Wolfgang Köhler (1947), the psychology of *Gestalts* claims that objects of perception, or “percepts,” are taken in as totalities rather than atomized features of sensation that are subsequently integrated in the mind. Along with the theory that these totalities are concurrently valued at the moment of perception, the entire field of perception was thought to integrate into sensory understanding. In this branch of social psychology, a variety of value dimensions might form the two-dimensional spatial model, each constructing a useful reduction of social reality for typological analysis.

These spatial relationships between variables are a way to describe the totality of mutually dependent social facts taken up by Kurt Lewin (1939). He modeled the field of perception as a synthesis of personality and environment, each reflexively determining the other (1939; Martin 2003, p. 16). Along with Ronald Lippitt (1939), these approaches tended to conflate the social space of a bivariate field with geographic space of human locomotion, as with experiments on animals in a maze or observation of children on a playground. Though the dimensions of hierarchy are different (Liu and Emirbayer 2016), this branch of social psychology models social space quite like Bourdieu’s field of cultural production. Confusion over these dimensions of spatial organization in Lewin’s field theory have led some to question if it is useful at all (Gold 1992; Martin 2003), pointing to some of the problematic informational assumptions to be described in this chapter.

Social psychological approaches to cultural value have expanded throughout sociology (Fiske and Taylor 1991; Simpson 1981; Vaisey 2009; DiMaggio and Markus 2010), and yet these fields tend to stop short of theorizing a vector space of forces and contestation, as Bourdieu's field of cultural production does. Instead they often provide a snapshot of a relational map in a single moment in time. By collapsing perception and value into a single cognitive moment, these social psychological fields are not well equipped to model positional movement of aesthetic objects through time. Though social psychology offers the added phenomenological dimension of perception in the individual mind, the ability to model temporal change makes the field of cultural production the preferred starting point for this dissertation.

II.2.3.2 Strategic Action

Strategic action fields capture mesolevel social orders in the economy, civil society, and the state, but they assume shared knowledge of the purposes, power relations, and rules of legitimate behavior among actors.

Fligstein and McAdam devise another field model of strategic action (2012). This spatial configuration assumes a shared (though not necessarily consensual) understanding of purposes, power relations, and rules of legitimate behavior. Building on the history of institutional field modeling (Martin 2003, pp. 26-28), including Mannheim's sector fields (1940, p. 381), Emery and Trist's turbulent fields (1965, p. 26), and DiMaggio and Powell's organizational fields (1983, pp. 147-50), strategic action fields incorporate the dimension of time into topological spatial arrangement of actors, including concepts such as incumbency and settling (Fligstein and McAdam 2012, pp. 13-16, 22-23). Strategic action fields are two-dimensional by modeling individual agency at the micro level and institutional constraints at the macro level.

As such, strategic action fields are quite useful models of "mesolevel social orders, as the basic structural building block of modern political/organizational life in the economy, civil society, and the state" (Fligstein and McAdam 2012, p. 3), particularly by incorporating change

and stability where social psychology does not; yet, they also make strong assumptions about the shared knowledge of actors within them. Though this work will proceed to question some of the informational assumptions of fields of cultural production, strategic action fields go even further to assume shared knowledge, if not consensus, among actors regarding the meanings, rules, and logics of action within them (Fligstein and McAdam 2012, pp. 9-13). Though these assumptions may well suited to formal organizations and institutions such as firms or state bureaucracies, they are inappropriate to this empirical context of auditory culture. The disciplines of art music and sound art better resemble fields of cultural production, where individual actors create works, sometimes in isolation from one another, that are then presented in formal or informal organizational contexts. The variety of formality and awareness of others in the field make the weaker assumptions of Bourdieu's field of cultural production a better starting point, even for the epistemological critiques to come.

II.2.3.3 Cultural Production

Bivariate fields of cultural production model the trajectories of objects through time according to their relative positions in cultural and economic hierarchies.

Perhaps the best-known formalization of this perspective is Bourdieu's theory of the field of cultural production (1985, [1992] 1996, 1993). In its simplest form, this theory identifies two hierarchies of value: an economic continuum from lack of capital (or “autonomy”) to market success (or “heteronomy”) and a continuum of cultural acclaim (or “consecration”) from low to high. Any object introduced into this field of production, such as a work of literature, art, or music, can be understood as a position-taking in relation to the surrounding objects according to these two axes. Powerful gatekeepers adjudicate this hierarchy of cultural consecration (Crane 1976), drawing on the resources of their class positions (Bourdieu 1993, pp. 44-45). As well, position-takings according to these two categories of worth are correlated with social profiles of

class and power, including the quadrants of intellectual, bourgeois, bohemian and “mass” production.

Though this two-dimensional social space of organized striving has become the dominant sociological way to understand aesthetics, the model has residual weaknesses. Tending to categorize objects as a part of elite/high culture (Gans 1974), bourgeois/middle-brow culture (Bourdieu [1979] 1984; Peterson and Kern 1996), or popular/mass culture (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2002), each framework develops a typological ideal with close ties to the class positions of actors. With trans-historical ties to a privileged class location, the content of “high” culture is historically specific. Just as fashion demonstrates the interplay of class affiliation and differentiation between status groups (Simmel 1957), cultural objects demonstrate a class-based dialectic through time, with elite-endorsed objects attracting the highest prices (Martorella 1990) but quickly incorporated into popular culture. In this way, the history of cultural objects can be framed in terms of bourgeois adoption of elite culture, such as the development of the piano as a fixture of the parlor or sitting room (Weber [1921] 1958). From the other direction, restricted culture can be incorporated into mass culture, as well, with resistant or subversive objects and practices quickly becoming legible to the mainstream or re-appropriated as popular culture (Hebdige 1979; Clarke, Hall, Jefferson, and Roberts [1975] 2006).

Although mass culture is not worthy of elite affiliation, it tends to proceed through channels of industry power before arriving as a commodity for consumption. The programming of prime-time television relies on well-worn industry homologies (Bielby and Bielby 1994), as does the selection of popular music artists for recognition and commodification (Negus 1992). Though these objects are packaged and priced for the general populous, sometimes appearing to

be simple products of the price mechanism, this framework emphasizes the control of industry leadership rather than egalitarian models of consumer demand.

Some producers resist incorporation into large-scale cultural economies (Bourdieu 1985), yet even these restricted forms tend to be subject to elite control. For example, though graffiti artists begin their careers in illegal contexts, many are quick to accept art-institutional rewards in galleries when they are offered (Lachmann 1988), as are many self-taught and folk artists defined as “outsiders” from this level of the social system (Becker 1982; Ardery 1997; Fine 2004, pp. 4-6). Even “underground” rap artists who refuse cooptation into hegemonic culture sometimes accommodate their lyrical content to marketable themes (Gramsci 2011; Oware 2014). Contrary to the large-scale field of production, this idiom intends its restricted mode of production to remain true to subversive ideals (Bourdieu [1992] 1996). Yet, despite the political consciousness of many of these artists, themes of misogyny, violence, and homophobia tend to emerge as they climb industry hierarchies. Although Oware questions whether these themes originate with the artist or the industry, the content often marries anti-authoritarian race consciousness with controversial lyrics that are sure to fuel record sales. Lena and Pachucki extend this logic of industry control to outlying rap performers (2013). Contrary to Bourdieu’s *ars obligatoria* claim that the aesthetic range is already defined for a field ([1992] 1996), the authors find that radical innovations can be met with accolades from within the field. Though these innovators will be pushed from the core status contests, they may be included in cliques of emerging artists. Once again, these cases emphasize that selective inclusion must abide by the standards and desires of industry leaders rather than the logic of far-flung regions of the field. Thus, the constructed categories of popular and restricted production often remain subject to the consecration of elite gatekeepers, as well.

The highly educated consumer is another powerful actor in the process of cultural consecration. Though this market sector may masquerade as the origin of mass-market demand, this perspective sees it instead as the mask worn by homologous industry leaders, a justificatory strategy for object selection (DiMaggio and Useem 1978). When middle- and upper-class consumers have been trained to appreciate categories of cultural objects, industry leadership tends to continue to endorse these groups. Though consumers may demonstrate multicultural capital through the taste for a variety of idioms, they still tend to exclude cultural objects affiliated with less educated groups (Bryson 1996). The division of labor within culture industries tends to cement an educational hierarchy in production, as well (Becker 1982).

A parallel bivariate model of the cultural economy draws on Marx' concept of base and superstructure ([1939-41] 1978), taken up by the Frankfurt School of critical theory (Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2002; Benjamin [1955] 1968; Adorno [1972] 1991; Williams 1980). Although critical theory perceives the cultural economy through the lens of bourgeois tastes (Bürger [1974] 1984), the logic of the base/superstructure dichotomy rejects the validity of cultural value (Hauser 1982), pointing instead to an abstract notion of aesthetic pleasure (Marx [1939-41] 1978). Rather than devaluing the object as a manifestation of false consciousness, historical materialism could instead draw attention to the social conditions of production (Wolff 1993), with artistic practice as an aspect of the social base, only the objectification of which can be taken as superstructure (Williams 1980). Thus, extensions of historical materialism to the cultural economy need not necessarily rely on a mechanistic understanding of elite hierarchies and may be more suited to a bivariate field model.

To review, these three general models of cultural-economic value—market, differentiation, and fields—draw out the variety of ways to understand auditory culture. First,

although the market view emphasizes population averages, both the field and differentiation views locate price determination in smaller subsets or clusters of the population. Second, in terms of status hierarchy, the market and differentiation views draw attention to the cultural power of subordinate groups, whether the anonymous “consumer” or the tasteful cultural specialist, while the field view tends to understand the cultural consecration as a top-down process. Finally, in terms of production-consumption dynamics, both the market and field models see consumers as primary, while differentiation models emphasize tightly knit clusters or fields of producers who establish value according to internal status logics. Yet, with market and differentiation models operating at opposite levels of aggregation, field frameworks have become dominant in sociology. Though social psychological and strategic action fields are both useful models in other contexts, Bourdieu’s field of cultural production is the best starting point for this study. And yet, fields of cultural production remain limited in their own assumptions. This dissertation looks beyond auditory culture as a cultural industry and asks how it develops a knowledge of value and how it operates more broadly as a form of sociality.

II.3.0 Knowledge in Fields

The field model of cultural production supposes baseline knowledge of the boundaries of disciplines, aggregate hierarchies of value, and shared perceptions of objects, each questioned in auditory culture.

Field models of aesthetic sociality have been dominant in the sociologies of art and music, formulating the arrangement of particular works in relation to one another according to objective hierarchies (Bourdieu [1992] 1996, 1993). The objectivity of these fields does not rely on the knowledge of actors within it, yet it can be observed, quantified, and taken as an objective ordering of social action, specifically as organized striving (Bourdieu [1979] 1984; Martin 2003, pp. 20-6). Contemporary studies of cultural economy continue in line with this theory, understanding works of art and music to exist along an economic hierarchy of autonomy or

heteronomy and a cultural hierarchy of consecration (Bourdieu 1993, pp. 39-40). However, although the economic ranking can be measured in terms of price or profit, the cultural hierarchy remains somewhat of a black box (Latour 1988). Market and differentiation models transform cultural hierarchies into prices or tastes, respectively, but field models require at least three types of baseline knowledge from which actors may contest positionality. Chapter III “Locating Sound” explains that the boundaries of disciplines within auditory culture are hotly contested, both in terms of the organizations that are appropriate for particular works and the semantic boundaries for which objects belong in which disciplines. With the placement of objects into disciplines so controversial, the knowledge of value is, as well. Chapter IV “Inscribing Sound” demonstrates a struggle to define this hierarchy of cultural value, often relying on textual explanations in art and sonic distinctions in music. Actors may have limited knowledge of the existence of others in their own disciplines, both historically and currently, as well as others’ standards of worth. Chapter V “Hearing Value” theorizes even greater instability, because audiences, gatekeepers, and producers may not perceive objects in the same way; differences in sensory perception question whether works of art and music can be considered shared objects within fields at all. The lack of consensus regarding these three forms of knowledge bring such instability to field theory that the model itself can be drawn into question for this particular empirical case.

II.3.1 Boundaries of Disciplines

Though Bourdieu concedes a degree of boundary contestation, some field models presume agreement over the definitions of objects that populate the field.

Auditory culture includes regions of the worlds of art and music, yet the boundary between them is contested from both sides. In order for field modeling to function in these domains of cultural economy, it is necessary to place objects into one discipline or the other. As

will be seen in Chapter III “Locating Sound,” organizations work out these boundaries, but actors also adjudicate fine-grained semantic differences. With such debate over the location of the boundary between art and music, the field model encounters an epistemological complication. Boundaries are constructed and enforced both in terms of exclusion and acceptance, yet each requires shared baseline knowledge to operationalize a field.

Although field models of art and music have emphasized cultural production as a mechanism for social exclusion, categorical inclusion is another side of the same coin. Just as in the world of fashion, artists and musicians desire to imitate those in desirable positions while differentiating themselves from lower cultural strata, in terms of social class, economic reward, or cultural acclaim (Simmel 1957). In so doing, creative worlds seek to include desirable members in their own disciplines while in the same moment excluding undesirable artists, styles or aesthetic dispositions. Though both perspectives operationalize the same act of differentiation, the tendency to see this process as exclusionary has roots in the historical distinction between fine art and popular culture in Europe and the United States (Gans 1974; Henning 1970; cf. Horkheimer and Adorno [1944] 2002).

II.3.1.1 Symbolic Exclusion

From both the bourgeois and bohemian perspectives, excluding unacceptable cultural objects is a struggle for domination, yet the transmission of these principles may not come through direct training of tastes.

Drawing on Bourdieu’s understanding of cultural distinction (Bourdieu [1979] 1984), auditory culture can be seen as a field bounded by the process of exclusion. Specifically, in *The Rules of Art* he describes this process as one of structural subordination, where actors may exclude some art and literary forms according to market determinations, as well as the durable links of lifestyle and value dispositions ([1992] 1996). The literary salon was an important venue for this doubly exclusionary process, first setting apart the bourgeois elite of consecrated authors,

then regrouping some of the remainder into “the bohemian set” of avant-garde artists creating *l'art pour l'art*. Flaubert's great literary success may be attributed to a unique ability to reference the entirety of this field, bourgeois and bohemian alike, and to cast each into a context of inversion. Although Bourdieu's model includes both the exclusionary practices of the bourgeoisie as well as the bohemian *l'art pour l'art* ethic of production, other work in this literature tends to emphasize one or the other, with each venue of exclusion carrying its own consequences.

Though the history of bourgeois cultural exclusion must be as long as the history of class struggle, the formal attributes of exclusion continue to adapt to contemporary contexts (Hauser 1982). Though generally taking the form of a high art versus mass art distinction (Gans 1974), the content of artistic exclusion is historically specific. One tool of bourgeois distinction has been the constructed category of the “genius,” the autonomous individual inspired with an either metaphysical or superhuman capacity for original creation (Baxandall 1972; Campbell 1987; Negus 1992; Wolff 1993; White 1993; Woodmansee 1994). This development can be traced to the 15th century European turn from the collaborative production of portraiture with a specified caliber of materials toward the desire for high-status directors of art workshops to give the final touch, for example in the painting of faces or eyes (Baxandall 1972). This exclusionary divide between art and craft became associated with bourgeois class positions through the patronage system, binding stylistic preferences to the livelihoods of these genius artists (Henning 1970).

That these stylistic preferences are transmitted through generations has been taken for granted in theories of bourgeois class distinction, via the mechanisms of education, exposure, and conspicuous consumption (DiMaggio and Useem 1978; Bourdieu [1979] 1984). However, Halle's qualitative analysis of the audience for abstract art demonstrates surprising continuity

between bourgeois and working class perceptions of aesthetic value (1992). He finds that a taste for high culture is not as widespread among the upper classes as Bourdieu, DiMaggio, and Useem suggest and that the assumed mechanisms of training in family contexts or education have little to do with bourgeois tastes for abstract art. Though many point to upper class knowledge of art history and their ability to access the “meaning” of an abstract, nonrepresentational work, in fact, most respondents described a decorative approach to these works, even claiming that they coordinate with the furnishings and décor of their homes. Although this critique is an important challenge to the assumed mechanisms of education and family training in the formation of artistic taste, Halle does not downplay the exclusivity of bourgeois choices or the consequences of aesthetics for class distinction.

II.3.1.2 Inclusive Conventions

Economic power enables actors to appropriate the culture of lower-status objects, yet the resulting hybrids may no longer resemble earlier idioms.

On the other hand, cultural producers and gatekeepers, as well as social classes, can mobilize inclusive tastes in order to accumulate symbolic capital, in much the same way social movements mobilize resources, take advantage of political opportunities, and reframe issues. Drawing on these foundational tactics of social movements, Baumann finds comparable mechanisms in art world strategies of success through inclusion (2007). These mechanisms drive the process of legitimization, drawing objects and artists into an existing, some say hegemonic, structure of capital and critical success (Williams 1980; Gramsci 2011). Baumann describes how political opportunities incorporated jazz into the highbrow canon alongside classical music, how galleries mobilized folk art, African art, and works by mentally ill artists as resources for additional capital gain by elites, as well as how literary scholars reframed the feminist content of novels to legitimate inclusion in the canon. However, each of these apparent acts of inclusion

maintains a status quo of gatekeeping, moving new objects within the legitimate realm yet doing little to change the terms of legitimization more broadly.

These mechanisms of limited inclusion take place particularly in organizational and industry-oriented venues, with capital consequences for artistic forms that remain excluded. For example, genres are the categorical apparatus of music industries to determine which recordings are worthy of inclusion (Lena 2012). According to a shared set of genre conventions, the music industry determines the career trajectory of musicians through time. Lena identifies two primary paths of genres themselves. The first is more recognizable, even part of the cultural imaginary of musical success; a genre begins as a small avant-garde collective with a stylistic innovation, develops a local scene for this style, soon achieves industry success, and finally becomes a canonized tradition of its own. On the contrary, a more surprising trajectory emerges from her quantitative analysis: some genres, such as funk and nu metal, began as industry-level innovations, often modifications of existing genres, only then to be adopted by local music scenes and finally being accepted as genre traditions. In both cases, music industry actors are essential to the canonization of new music genres, and many idiosyncratic or iconoclastic styles are excluded in the process of genre consolidation.

One of the consequences of this type of selective inclusion is a persistent status inequality in the objects chosen for legitimization. Bryson disentangles some of the contradictions in taste and status in the context of race, education, and music taste (1996). Contrary to Bourdieu's finding in *Distinction*, the exclusivity of musical taste actually has an inverse relationship with education *ceteris paribus*. However, musical tolerance does have a limit; those with tolerant tastes are still less likely to include idioms of music made by those with the least education: gospel, country, rap, and heavy metal. The author concludes that a new form of "multicultural

capital” looks like the omnivorousness described by Peterson and Kern (1996), yet it includes a specific pattern of tolerance for middle-brow genres such as Latin music, jazz, and blues, rather than these lowbrow genres associated with low education. Though this multiculturalism manages to include a diversity of race associations to genres, it does not tend to extend across class or educational lines.

As these industry-oriented paths of inclusion have demonstrated, they often convey formal and demographic consequences for artists caught in the process. A particular example of these industry-oriented paths of “selective inclusion” comes from the emergence of recorded jazz between 1920 and 1929 (Phillips and Owens 2004). In order for this new genre to achieve canonization, several formal changes became necessary. Dominant record labels of the turn of the century were hesitant to incorporate such a radical innovation as “hot” jazz into their artist rosters, so formal and stylistic modifications were incorporated into the genre. By inserting orchestral elements and white musicians into existing groups, jazz obtained a newfound legitimization and perceived competence within incumbent firms. The resulting fusions of hot jazz with legitimated genres were met with less resistance and were able to climb the status and capital hierarchies with greater facility. However, the resulting music warranting inclusion was a diluted hybrid of the original innovation, drawing into question the validity of classifying these actions as “inclusion” at all.

As these descriptions of inclusive frames have demonstrated, it is the other side of the coin of exclusivity. Where some authors attempt to cast artistic differentiation in the light of inclusivity and broadening definitions of aesthetic worth, the underlying logic of art worlds tends to maintain a strictly exclusive boundary. More often, artists must modify their work according to the standards and conventions of those in power rather than find inclusion on their own terms

(Phillips and Owens 2004; Lena 2012). To frame these processes as inclusionary or exclusionary refers to the evaluative point of view and the direction of cultural objects' movement across boundaries, yet the principle of differentiation applies to both. To frame the movement across boundaries as exclusionary refers back to the history of European and American distinctions between high culture and mass culture (Henning 1970). This perspective emphasizes strict standards of elite gatekeepers to keep unworthy cultural objects out of the canon (Gans 1974), employing the power of the bourgeoisie to define the difference between high and mass culture. Though the today's petit bourgeoisie may demonstrate egalitarianism on the surface, by incorporating popular television and rock music into the critical and scholarly canon (Featherstone 2007), this boundary work retains the power of distinction, recalling the history of class conflict that has used cultural exclusivity as a tool of domination (Bourdieu 1985).

Each of these sociological understandings of boundary work—whether framed as symbolic exclusion or inclusive conventions—assumes that a boundary is legible, if contested, by actors within fields. When these boundaries are applied to field theory, they borrow from the basic form of rational choice economics for the set of possible objects to be ordered (Varian 2005, p. 35). The first assumption is that preferences between objects are complete: for any pair of objects one must be preferred or the evaluator is indifferent. The second assumption is that these preferences are reflexive: any object is at least as good as itself. The final assumption is that preferences for objects are transitive: if an evaluator prefers A to B and B to C, then A is also preferred to C. Though contemporary cultural-economic models and bounded rationality have both criticized and modified these informational assumptions, some field theory modeling continues to assume actors' complete knowledge of options in building an ordinal preference set. Rigid boundaries are necessary for this ranking to take place. For example, Martin and

Merriman's develop a formal model of "sour grapes" judgments that requires a closed ontological set of possibilities for transitive ranking. They admit to assuming "a simple world of completely hierarchically ranked positions" "solely for purposes of explication and contrary to a great deal of good data" (2016, p. 145) when they devise their model. And yet, they are not alone in assuming a closed set of objects for field modeling. According to the set theory employed by rational choice microeconomics, the boundaries of fields must be agreed upon in order for the objects within them to be linearly ranked.

Bourdieu admits that these field boundaries are the site of struggle not only for success but also to determine the conditions of inclusion within the field (1993, pp. 40-3). Yet, the world of auditory culture has demonstrated a more fundamental critique of the knowledge of boundaries required for field modeling. As will be demonstrated in Chapter III "Locating Sound," actors do not only question which objects belong in which organizational context but they debate the definitions of the art form, begging the question of how much consensus over these definitions is necessary to constitute a field, as Bourdieu and others define it. The principles of "position-takings" are unclear when there is dissensus around the boundaries between disciplines and the definitions of which objects should or should not be included within them. Even the framing of "boundary" contestation in Bourdieu (1993, pp. 40-41) presumes agreement about the contents at the center of a two-dimensional field. A field model requires an acknowledged positional starting point from which boundary contestation may arise. For instance, though actors in Bourdieu's empirical case of the literary field might ask, "What is the boundary between fiction and non-fiction?" they do not ask, "What is a book?" Yet, in a discipline of auditory culture where actors continue to ask, "What is sound art?" the center may not hold.

II.3.2 Hierarchies of Value

Fundamental dissensus around the rubrics of cultural consecration or symbolic capital positions can destabilize the field model.

Even if aesthetic fields were able to reach consensus over which objects belonged in our out of their boundaries, the rankings of cultural value remain subject to heated debate. Field theories tend to claim that the many diverse evaluations of cultural value can be aggregated into a single hierarchy (Bourdieu 1993, pp. 29-37; Martin 2003, pp. 23-6). Some instances of this theory assume an informational symmetry between the actors within the field and the adjudicators of value, while others, including Bourdieu's own, do not. Specifically in the case of cultural objects taking positions within fields, an actor in a position of adjudicative power might have a different conception of cultural consecration than another person in a parallel position, and the opacity or transparency of relations within fields can become a site of significant controversy among cultural producers and gatekeepers. Yet, field theory proposes that these differing individual decisions aggregate to a single objective hierarchy. Although Bourdieu's field of cultural production does not assume total consensus on these rubrics of consecration, wildly different judgments might confound the model at a fundamental level.

Michéle Lamont has led the sociology of valuation and evaluation by conceptualizing heterarchies and plurarchies (2012, p. 208) as divergent rather than convergent forms of cultural consecration. Along with Boltanski and Thévenot's writing on the economic justification of "worth" ([1991] 2006), Lamont considers the competing standards of evaluation in scholarly work, including peer review and the ratings and rankings of texts (2009). Though Lamont (2012) acknowledges that for Bourdieu (1993, pp. 78-9) "the ability to impose criteria of evaluation, or the power to consecrate, is the major stake in symbolic fields, as it allows actors to reproduce

their own positions,” his field model presumes that the battle is won at the moment a field becomes an objective ordering.

Quite unlike a vector field in which actors agree upon the principles of movement, as in the laws of physics (Bourdieu 1993, p. 72), these principles of “organized striving” may or may not be shared among actors in the same field (Bourdieu 1993, pp. 40-3). Interventions occur by those who do not know they are participating in the field (e.g. musicians performing in an art gallery) or by those who are unaware of the field altogether (e.g. musicians who do not see sound art as distinct from what they do). Furthermore, the principles of aesthetic judgment within the field are under contestation such that different subsets of the field may engage in qualitatively different cultural disciplines (e.g. ambient vs. conceptual artists) that others claim not to really belong. Thus a field theory of structure is fundamentally different from a theory of perception. Martin and Merriman theorize actors’ abilities to perceive their own and others’ positions in cultural fields:

Let us call the ‘lemma of the environmental validity of social space’ the assumption that the principles used to organize individuals by the analyst are shared by the analyzed. They may not be the only, or even the most important, such principles, but they are recognized by actors, and hence, to an empirically assessable degree, structure patterns of interaction. (2016, p. 143)

In the case of a nascent art discipline, it may or may not be that actors are aware of these general principles of analysis; furthermore it remains unclear if they have complete or accurate information about the content of these analytical units. Though Martin and Merriman go on to claim that “the ‘openness’ of fields leads them to elicit broadly consensual views of reality for the actors within them” (2016, p. 143), the evidence of this study demonstrates precisely the contrary. In the case of the emerging discipline of sound art, not only are the contents of judgments not shared, but neither are the principles of judgment shared by those in the highest

positions of power, those with the greatest theoretical acumen, or those whose work receives the most economic remuneration. Although “judges” pay a great deal of attention to other judges within the field, quite often this attention is not given in order to “orient their actions accordingly” (Martin and Merriman 2016, p. 145) but in order to convince other actors in the field why they do not need to do so.

Though Bourdieu tends to address organizations such as universities, literary circles, and theaters as striving for the power to consecrate objects ([1979] 1984, [1992] 1996, 1993), Martin and Merriman emphasize the ability of individual actors to understand the hierarchies within these fields:

Such organizationally delimited or anchored fields (note that this is not the same thing as an ‘organizational field’) have two characteristics. First, one’s ‘position’ may have a very clear relation to consensually understood organizational attributes: an appointment in some academic department, a partnership in some firm, a column in some media outlet. People occupying positions in these fields can know in a very definite sense where they are and where they are with respect to others in the field. Second, this analytic simplicity can lead us to propose the existence of different kinds of field-specific capital. Such capital is, in essence, a reification of position (which is just what it should be, if we follow Marx—it is a social relation made into a thing subject to appropriation by an individual); an actor, rather than being seen as occupying a particular place in a world endowed with various qualities, can be said to ‘possess’ a certain quantity of social substance. (2016, p. 134)

As revealed in the interviews and ethnographic observation in this study, actors within the world of auditory culture were often unable to understand their own positions or the positions of others. Though those at the very top or bottom of hierarchies of value understood structure in terms of the relative ease or difficulty they faced, the vast middle space of auditory production found actors quite uncertain of their own value and with constantly evolving understandings of the positions held by would-be proximate others. Actors who might have been in adjacent positions within their disciplines were sometimes unaware of one another’s existence.

Thus capital accumulation, in reified form, was also uncertain, not only in the symbolic or cultural sense but also economically. Few respondents in interviews understood the quantity, origin, and destination of capital flows within their disciplines, either economic or symbolic. General references to grants and residencies were common, yet few could explain the livelihoods of cultural producers, nor the possibilities for selling works of sound art. That this social substance is quantifiable or ordinally ranked by actors within a field remains dubious. Though quantitative sociologists may come up with clever ways to impose rank and order in the chaotic, constantly changing space of cultural acclaim, those actively working within disciplines experienced limited and sometimes contradictory understanding of the major players and their relative positions. Thus fundamental dissensus around the rubrics of cultural consecration in auditory culture may destabilize the field model in this empirical case. Though the world of auditory culture may be particularly contrarian, not only differentiating their judgments from one another (i.e. whether or not a particular work is good) but also their principles of judgment (e.g. whether or not conceptual content is a condition of “the aesthetic good”), the tendency to organize a creative discipline around striving rather than consensus is not unique to the artists observed in this study. Though Martin and Merriman’s model of social action is amenable to fields of organized consensus, fields of organized striving (and especially fields of disorganized striving and disagreement about the very terms of strife) may be better off assuming dissensus (Rancière 2010) as the principle of action.

II.3.3 Stability of Objects

Rather than Gestalt totalities, the perceived qualities of sounds may not be shared among the evaluators of field positions, nor must all sounds be subject to hierarchical ranking.

Field theory also tends to assume that those who adjudicate cultural value perceive objects, or “position-takings,” to be the same. This assumption may be more plausible in the case

of literature, though postmodern literary theory also questions if two readers are encountering the same text (Barthes 1967; Derrida 1973, 1992; Jameson 1984). Yet, to question this assumption in field theory does not require a thoroughgoing post-structural approach; the physical features of sound lead us to ask whether two listeners are hearing the same thing. Particularly in the case of abstract or ambient sound art, Chapter V “Hearing Value” will demonstrate that attention, temporality, and affect make the perceived sonic object particular to the individual.

Gestalt psychology also engages with sensory perception at this juncture of time and understanding, yet it tends to take the sense of sight as its paradigm. Though phenomenology has tended to see the moments of stimulus and understanding as analytically distinct from one another, *Gestalt* psychology conceives of them as totalities: concurrent and ontologically unified aspects of perception. Carl Stumpf, whose students went on to form the *Gestalt* school of psychology, began to notice these forms (“*Gestalts*”) as unitary objects rather than syntheses or aggregates in his studies of harmonic structure with Christian von Ehrenfels (Martin 2011, p. 163). Yet it was his student, Max Wertheimer, who extended these unitary *Gestalts* toward a general theory of unified perception and judgment. Whereas the unities of perceived elements might be necessary for the immediate processing of stimuli, to say that they are also immediately valued is another matter.

By studying the sense of sight, Wertheimer and the school of *Gestalt* psychology adopted the principle of cognitive economy whereby sight apprehends a multi-dimensional space in terms of shapes and shades of light rather than discriminant units. Where things cannot be understood, they are immediately categorized under the *Gestalt* of “ambiguity,” as with the perception of a person speaking another language immediately categorized as “unintelligible” (Heidegger [1926] 1962, p. 207). Setting the question of the relationship between ontology and value aside,

this category of “ambiguousness” introduces the possibility that not only judgment but also perception must be learned. The *Gestalt* psychologist Wolfgang Köhler claimed, “Phenomenologically, value is located in objects and occurrences; it is not an action to which they are subjected. Value may reside in the most varied classes of things. A dress may look elegant or sloppy, a face hard or weak, a street cheerful or dismal, and in a tune there may be morose unrest or quiet power” ([1944] 1971, p. 364, quoted in Martin 2011, p. 167). He goes on to claim that “what happens in the visual cortex is one fact—it depends on both external conditions and operating forces” (1938, p. 366). Yet, this logical leap from a unitary structure of understanding to one of value is predicated on the temporality of the sense of sight rather than the longer durational process of hearing.

Informational assumptions about the contents and qualities of cultural objects go even further in field theories of the cultural economy. Husserl is clear in his assessment that the act of noesis is particular to the sensing subject, requiring by corollary that the noematic content perceived by one sensing subject may or may not be identical to that of another. In other words, if *Gestalt* psychology considers that “the perceived object as perceived” (Husserl [1913] 1931, pp. 257-260) arises in the consciousness concurrently with the “judged content of the judgment as such” (Husserl [1913] 1931, p. 272), then the nature of that judgment might be quite unstable within the field model. Furthermore, if the objective nature of the field of sonic production were distinct from any one actor’s understanding of it, then the unitary sense-judgment of the *Gestalt* school would be unlikely to arrive at the shared space of judgment Bourdieu described.

The former critiques of field theory carry with them an implicit critique of the *Gestalt* psychologists’ description of knowledge society. If actors within fields have only partial and sometimes quite incongruent understandings of the objective structure of the fields in which they

act, then might not the conflation of sense and value judgment be similarly incomplete or incompatible? That persons are able to “create single virtual unities out of complex tangles that our intellect would classify as abstractions” may well be so, but whether or not they are simultaneously able to “retrieve information about the qualities of these unities, information that has a veridical nature in that it allows actors to successfully orient themselves to action in concordance, complementarity, or contradiction with others” (Martin and Merriman 2016, p. 137) remains quite unclear given the tumultuous assemblage of incomplete and unstable information demonstrated in the world of auditory culture.

Perhaps the reason for this discrepancy is the theoretical reliance of the *Gestalt* theorists on the “‘ambient optic array’—all the reflected, organized light flying about us” as the prototypical percept (Gibson [1979] 1986, quoted in Martin and Merriman 2016, p. 137). To say, as does Köhler, that “value appears as an attribute of things and events themselves rather than as an activity of the self” ([1944] 1971, p. 363-4) is to presume that all sensory data emerge in a hierarchical world rather than a flat one. Indeed he claims that “demand extends from a value object to the self,” rather than the other way around ([1944] 1971, p. 374). Though the active eye may be working its muscles to move through space, scanning in order to view a demanding object, the passive ear is only active in valuation as an appendage of the mind. Sometimes the mind may rank sounds according to a linear hierarchy of value, such preferring the timbre of a viola to that of a violin. Yet, what about that faint fan buzzing in the room? What about the motor whirring nearby? Though the mind’s attention may fix itself on these sounds, ambient experience may be *value neutral*. The act of valuation may not always occur in conjunction with the percept of sound but rather as a learned practice. When added to the possibility that the

attributes of these sounds may be different from one mind to another, they may not be stable enough for field modeling.

II.4.0 Rhizomatic Assemblages and Economic Agencements

Language is the rhizome that renders the aesthetic economic, a relation of economic agencement.

At the end of his classic essay on postmodernism, Frederic Jameson describes the need for maps in a landscape of disintegrated meanings (1984). In the wake of widespread cultural fragmentation, he points to a renewed aesthetic didacticism, drawing cognitive maps as spatial relationships (1984, p. 89). Extending beyond the “ideology of [mimetic] representation” these maps draw on the situated position of the cartographer to represent a vast and “properly unrepresentable totality” of the social space. Beyond subject-centered diagrams of the “existential journey of the traveller,” these cognitive maps can go one step further to transform the problematic relationship of a part to the whole. This form of inquiry enables the map to transcend what he calls a Marxian-Althusserian dualism of science and ideology, or the Real and the Imaginary, and introduces the Lacanian third of the Symbolic (1984, pp. 91-92). Holding in mind the problems of knowledge in de-centered aesthetic terrain and furthermore the “world space of multinational capital,” one might be able to create new symbolic work to describe the relations between parts and an alienating whole.

Yet, the problem of power persists in Jameson’s proposed solution to the imprint of the cultural dominant of postmodernism on the field of cultural production. The assertion of a relationship between parts on a map is an assertion of expertise, devising symbolic organisms out of the component parts (Knorr Cetina 1999, p. 113), and, in the case of auditory culture, that knowledge of aesthetic relations is highly political. Though an aesthetic map might seem a better alternative model to the field of cultural production, given the problematic informational

assumptions described above, Deleuze and Guattari's notion of the rhizome even better models the world of auditory culture and its plurality of definitions of value ([1980] 1987, pp. 16-17).

Though rhizomatic assemblages are not mimetic ([1980] 1987, pp. 7-8), they are indeed grouped according to a common principle, in this case the concept of "sound." As will be elaborated in the coming chapters, "non-cochlear" works in sound are not audible to the human ear, yet they cohere with more traditional works of sound art through this common principle. Again, this type of aesthetic sociality does not form a two-dimensional space as in a field, nor does it grant power to a cartographer who would evaluate comparative value between objects. Instead, clusters of valuable elements pop up in surprising places, evolving in some of the same ways ([1980] 1987, pp. 328-329), yet potentially unaware of one another. For example, Deleuze and Guattari describe the simultaneous evolution of a cat and a baboon ([1980] 1987, pp. 10-11). Though they are not considered to be part of the same tree of descent devised by Darwin and his successors, they are subject to many of the same forces of natural selection, such as a type C virus discovered in connection with the DNA of both species. If a flu virus affected the evolution of both species, then the two are related according to a rhizomatic principle of change, if not a hierarchy of descent. The authors refer to these tree-like hierarchical structures, so common in sociology, as "arborescent schemas," and they find these models insufficient to capture many facets of brain activity ([1980] 1987, p. 15), aesthetic relations (pp. 92-100), and social reality (pp. 202-207, 328-9).

Language is the rhizome that renders the aesthetic economic. Extending the metaphor of the rhizome for the process of aesthetic valuation, some relations in auditory culture may not naturally lend themselves to hierarchical thinking, as in a field of cultural production. Instead of two linear dimensions that intersect, the rhizome is composed of three types of lines. The "molar

line” segments one identity from another according to rigid distinctions ([1980] 1987, p. 195), like the boundaries between worlds. Second, the “line of flight” resembles the vector of field theory, a trajectory with force between territories, and inasmuch a function of deterritorialization ([1980] 1987, p. 510). The line of flight is akin to the process of gaining or losing value over time. Finally, the “molecular line” is a particular manifestation of the rhizome, an articulation that contains the multiplicity of the entire system by replicating all other molecules ([1980] 1987, pp. 6-9). Also called “molecular machines” ([1980] 1987, p. 34), these supple segments morph out of the rhizome as do objects of sound from the act of listening, reshaping the units of perception (Windsor 2015, p. 162). As opposed to the strong knowledge assumptions in field theory, Deleuze and Guattari offer a flexible, if postmodern and sometimes confusing, model of ontology and morphology that can be applied to social aesthetics.

Deleuze and Guattari refer to territories linked by rhizomes as “assemblages,” originally “*agencements*” ([1980] 1987, pp. 503-505), zones through which a line of flight might pass. Assemblages occur within strata as collectivities of multiplicities. I imagine an area of soil at a particular level of depth where the rhizome might grow upward or pass through. The passing rhizome draws from the assemblage on its way to another location, more than a network of nodes in that it is a single organism. The original term *agencement* differs from the assemblage in that it denotes not only a state of affairs but furthermore the connection between a state of affairs and what can be said about it (Phillips 2006). As with the parts of a machine, the focus is on the connections between them, rather than the elements in isolation. Though a field emphasizes the linear ranking of units within a boundary, an *agencement* is better suited to sound practices and the way that people perceive and conceive of them.

This economic *agencement* uses language both as a mediating third factor between the artist and spectator (Rancière [2008] 2009) and as a way to constrain behavior:

“Language is not made to be believed but to be obeyed, and to compel obedience... Words are not tools, but we give children language, pens, and notebooks as we give workers shovels and pickaxes... Language is not life; it gives life orders.” (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987, p. 76)

Well known to linguists, anthropologists, and cultural sociologists alike, words are not only units of meaning; words do things (Austen 1975). As to be seen in Chapter IV “Inscribing Sound,” text is used to impose a ranking structure on aesthetic objects that are not fundamentally economic in nature. The use of text for valuation is a common force upon disparate objects in auditory culture, and this *agencement* may dispose auditory culture, for example, toward conceptualism, the adulation of John Cage, or the dominance of a particular art theorist, critic, or text. These rhizomatic assemblages result in success for some and failure for others, but they do not assume linear rankings or common knowledge between the objects that are similarly affected, as field modeling and other “arborescent schemas” require (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987, pp. 16-17).

Furthermore, though one can describe the power of a force, practice, or actor within an assemblage in terms of molar lines, the epistemic agency of a single cartographer is deactivated. Deleuze and Guattari describe the act of mapping as distinct from “tracing,” with the latter inscribing a mimetic relationship and the prior allowing an experimental creation of the unconscious, yet Rancière goes one step further. As described in section V.5.0 “Embodied Perception, Expanded Discourse,” mimetic tracing can be compared with his “stultifying pedagogue” in *The Emancipated Spectator* ([2008] 2009). He explains that this didactic approach to artistic practice intends to transmit knowledge from one side of a relationship to another, but in so doing requires a chasm between the knowledge of the teacher and the

ignorance of the pupil. Thus, the goal of teaching is precluded or “stultified” by the very conditions of that vacuum of knowledge. On the other hand, creating the space for a spectator or cartographer to form her own connections between elements follows the model of the “ignorant schoolmaster.” This postmodern approach to performance, politics, and ethics supposes that spectators will form their own associations between elements, venturing alone into the forest of signs and meanings. Yet, this model also relies on the distance between the knowledge of the schoolmaster and the ignoramus, who is tasked with mapping a provided set of elements. As an alternative to the hierarchies of fields or the maps of postmodernism, Rancière looks toward a third possibility in the “emancipated spectator” ([2008] 2009). By refusing the mediation of texts or the assumed distance between the knowledge of the artist and the audience, he imagines a sensorium where territories do not have boundaries and roles are not distributed between bodies in the space. This community of narrators and translators allows each to become an active interpreter, making her own stories out of sensory perception.

Though this alternate model of aesthetic value seems to be status neutral and does not rely on economizing hierarchies, Rancière offers few details for how it would work or what it would look (and sound) like (2002, [2004] 2009). Though the rhizomatic economic *agencement* seems to be the most appropriate model of value in the contemporary world of auditory culture, the possibility of another form of aesthetic sociality remains ambiguous. Chapter III “Locating Sound” will proceed to detail the interplay between distinction and valuation in auditory culture, while continuing to reflect on the rhizomatic nature of the assemblage, more generally. Though boundaries are necessary for field models, these formulations of difference are controversial among individual practitioners. Organizations often work out the boundary between art and music in terms of performance or exhibition, but individual gatekeepers and practitioners rely on

“concept” and “form” as nuanced molecular lines of semantic difference to decide which works belong in which disciplines and against which other artists they should be evaluated.

III. LOCATING SOUND: ORGANIZATIONAL AND SEMANTIC BOUNDARY WORK

“Conceptual art offers viewers a journey along an associative chain. There is always a bottom. Or rather, the work attains its own life by cannibalizing the half-lives of its sources. Looping back through multiple tropes to arrive at its own existence, the conceptual art work offers itself the protagonist of an old-fashioned well-crafted story composed through the collision of historical referents rather than characters.”
(Kraus 2011, p. 122)

III.1.0 Definitions at Disciplinary Boundaries

In the nascent discipline of sound art, defining boundaries has been vital to the emergence of the art form. Though quibbles over the appropriate use of terminology might seem pedantic to some, they dominated many interviews with artists and gatekeepers alike. Rather than steering respondents away from discussing “what is sound art,” the very preoccupation with definitions became a central meta-analytic empirical finding of this study. Not only were practitioners learning to hear value in performed and exhibited works, but they also engaged in boundary work to establish what set apart their area of practice from the surrounding disciplines of auditory culture, such as art music, or other gallery arts, such as sculpture. In so doing, these actors defined not only the legitimate objects and actors within their disciplines but also the rubrics of value according to which they operated.

Gatekeepers—curators, gallerists, dealers, and organizational administrators—played a crucial role in the process of boundary work (Hirsch 1972; Foster, Borgatti, and Jones 2011; Lamont 2012). These actors, who were tasked with granting artists exhibitions, performances, residencies, and funding for their works, also took on the task of determining which works were legitimately considered sound art. The process of boundary work took two forms, both symbolically excluding some works from the discipline and affirmatively including works that adhered to conventions (see Sections II.3.1.1 “Symbolic Exclusion” and II.3.1.2 “Inclusive

Conventions”). Auditory culture emphasized the former exclusive form, pushing away ineligible work into other adjacent disciplines. As sites of “organized striving” (Martin 2011, p. 252), the conditions for participation within disciplines were similarly subject to strife. Even in the relatively small social world of people practicing sound art in New York, some actors remained surprisingly unaware of others at proximate positions within the discipline. Disputes over boundaries and disciplinary membership may have been responsible for this limited awareness.

Working out the boundary between sound art, art music, and the other disciplines of the gallery arts was primarily left up to gatekeepers. Textual value devices, to be described in Chapter IV “Inscribing Sound,” were an important way artists tried to communicate the value of their works, yet text served a dual function of establishing value and engaging in boundary work at the same time (Gieryn 1983; Gaziano 1996; Lamont and Molnar 2002; McClure 2017). What makes boundary work distinct from simple classification is the enactment of actors’ interests or incentives in the negotiation of that boundary. For instance, in the case of designating activity across the boundary of science and non-science, characteristics of institutions, such as practitioners, methods, values, and types of knowledge, are tools of the trade in boundary work (Gieryn 1983), and conflict over boundaries emphasizes the power and authority of the boundary itself (Gieryn 1995). Boundary work takes place when new areas of activity are related to extant ones according to existing distinctions (Abbott 1998, pp. 111-113). Again, in the case of scientific expertise, boundary work employs a “vacancy model” when the perception or construction of an available space occurs within a scientific discipline (Abbott 1998, pp. 86-91). Yet, in the world of auditory culture, boundary work may not abide by the structures of expert knowledge that have developed in scientific disciplines or professional fields, particularly when it comes to drawing boundaries around a new discipline of artistic practice, such as sound art.

If boundary work in auditory culture employed distinctions between objects, practices, or artists, exactly how did this process take place? What specific distinctions were drawn, what interests were at stake in the struggle for membership, and what actors were tasked with the process of decision-making? This chapter will consider each of these questions as means for contemporary sound art to legitimize its place within the gallery or museum, making itself legible to audiences and gatekeepers alike. Historically, boundary work in the gallery arts has dealt with the distinction between high culture and folk culture, as in Becker's description of "Sunday painters" and quilt makers (1982). A problematic extension of this distinction bounds Western European high culture from "folk" cultures conflated with race, as in the Harlem Renaissance, or indigeneity, as with New Mexican Pueblo pottery (White 1993). Though these distinctions between the fine art elite and "self-taught" artists continue to be worked out in institutions (Fine 2004, pp. 239-272), the boundaries between sensory-specific disciplines, such as sound art, are in a similar state of flux. Actors within and without the boundary have vested interests in where the line is drawn and which other actors are allowed to participate.

Boundary work in auditory culture took at least two forms: organizational and semantic. In the first case, the organizational location where cultural activity took place was the way that boundaries were drawn. When asked about the definition and nature of sound art, many respondents gave a quite simple reply: sound art occurs in galleries and museums. Yet, this simple definition was insufficient, with many musicians performing in art spaces and sound art occurring outside these locations, as well. A different type of organizational boundary work emphasized more about the nature of sound practice: exhibition or performance. If exhibitions of sound occurred in art spaces, displaying art that did not require the temporal and embodied manipulation of the artist, then they were incontrovertibly considered to be art. If performances

of sound occurred in concert halls or venues, where an embodied artist manipulated sound in real time, then they were incontrovertibly considered to be music. Yet, even this distinction between exhibition and performance left room for boundary confusion.

Particularly in these ambiguous organizational contexts, finer semantic differences were used to perform boundary work. These distinctions did not only define what was valuable or good work in a discipline (though they also do that), but they also decided quite narrowly what was definitionally included within disciplines. Specifically, the conceptual or formal nature of sound was not only used to define aesthetic value in terms of “the good” but also to draw a semantic boundary around an art form. Several respondents claimed that unless a work in sound has a conceptual underpinning, it could not be considered sound art. This claim had implications not only for the boundaries of these disciplines but for artists’ identities and the process of valuation; artists and musicians had to know how to define their own work in order for value to be ascribed to it, or, “Art styles develop within reward systems” (Crane 1987, p. 110).

Furthermore, a contrasting emphasis between the German and American forms of sound art emerged in interviews and fieldwork. Though the American art form was actively engaged in boundary work, the older and narrower German form of *Klangkunst* had a better understanding of its parameters and aesthetic conventions. Some gatekeepers and key community leaders in Berlin adhered to a quite narrow and “classic” understanding of *Klangkunst*, limiting the discipline to sound art that used material processes to emit sound, amplified in ways that were spatially interesting. Though these works were defined by their conceptual nature, specific formal properties allowed them to fall within the rigid structure of *Klangkunst*. On the contrary, there was comparatively little consensus in the American definition of sound art. This

complicated intersection of organizational and semantic boundary work points to the interplay between meaning and value in Chapter IV “Inscribing Sound.”

The field of cultural production acknowledges that fields are sites of struggle not only to define the conditions of value but also to determine which actors belong within them (Bourdieu 1993, pp. 40-5). Although Bourdieu rejects the operational definition of field membership, including boundary cases, he goes on to claim, “There is no other criterion of membership of a field than the objective fact of producing effects within it” (1993, p. 42). The tautology of this effectual membership renders it meaningless at the boundaries of disciplines. He goes on to describe the boundaries of fields as sites of struggle both for membership and to determine the conditions of membership. Yet, at what point is the struggle over the definitions of boundaries sufficient to reject the field model altogether? In this chapter, I hope to “describe a *state* (long-lasting or temporary) of these struggles and therefore of the frontier delimiting the territory held by the competing agents,” just as Bourdieu challenged the social scientist to do (1993, p. 42-3). Yet, I will proceed to suggest that boundary contestation is sufficient to make a field model inadequate in this empirical case.

On the contrary, the rhizomatic molar lines described by Deleuze and Guattari ([1980] 1987, p. 505-6) moved my understanding away from the boundaries between disciplines and toward a multiplicity of aesthetic assemblages. Molar lines are rigid ways to segment one identity from another. These lines may be spatial, temporal, or, in the case of auditory culture, sensory and conceptual. In the discipline of art music, actors use the sense of hearing to understand works and performances; in sound art, conceptual language is used. This distinction is not imposed from the top down, nor is it merely the effect of members struggling with one another for power (Bourdieu 1993, p. 43). The tendency for artists to use conceptual language

pops up in practitioners quite unaware of one another, including those who deny that they are engaged in any kind of struggle. Yet the use of concepts is a common thread linking the behavior of sound artists, even those who actively shun the hierarchies of the art world through idiosyncratic practices.

III.2.0 Organizational Boundary Work

Though organizations tended to rely on the distinction between musical performance and art exhibition, the boundary was complicated by performance art and site-specific music.

Though organizational boundaries have been explored in public, private, and non-profit contexts, the influence of organizations on cultural production receives comparatively shorter shrift in the sociological literature (cf. DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976; Becker 1982; Crane 1987; Zelizer 2011). Particularly at the contested boundary of sound art and art music, the organizational context of sound often made a crucial difference for how it was understood and whether or not it found an audience at all. Though Zolberg found it “ironic that experimental music has a better chance of being performed in a museum than in an orthodox setting for music (Harry Partch's work, for example, was performed by his own trained group on instruments designed by himself at the Whitney Museum in New York)” (1989, p. 338), these complicated organizational attributions had direct effects on cultural production. Gatekeepers were tasked with placing works in organizational contexts, yet much of contemporary cultural production failed to find an organizational home.

Two types of respondents were important in this line of inquiry: gatekeepers and practitioners. Though gatekeepers were primarily tasked with working out boundaries, artists and musicians used their own understandings of the assemblage of auditory culture to predict, negotiate, and sometimes to manipulate their positioning within disciplines. By discussing boundary work with gatekeepers as well as practitioners, both personal beliefs and multi-layered

beliefs-about-others'-beliefs informed my understanding of these distinctions. Yet, despite the ubiquity of boundary conversations in this study, often initiated by respondents themselves, many also told me that these distinctions were meaningless! When asked directly about the boundary between sound art and art music on the syllabus for his course in “sound art,” one theorist and educator of auditory culture replied:

Well, I disregarded it entirely... It's a strange game you have to play, because you can start out by totally disregarding everything and just putting it all in a pot, right? But then sometimes these classifications can be useful as shorthand. Because, if you have an artist that is doing sound-based work and then exhibiting it in a gallery or a museum, then there are certain social elements to the way that it's received and maybe conceived that will orient it to a different audience or emphasize different parts or angles of that work versus when it's in a space like [New York multidisciplinary art organization] Issue Project Room. Then that can emphasize different elements where it becomes less sculptural and more performative, or musical, even, if you want to use that term. I tried to not let those distinctions influence the types of works that I considered, but sometimes I did have to rely on those things for shorthand, especially when I'm dealing with, say, undergraduate students who have never heard the term ‘sound art’ or ‘experimental music’ at all. Which is kind of a good opportunity to discuss it in an open context, because without forming those boundaries for them, they can see this stuff in one context. But, at the same time, to talk about the noise machines of Luigi Russolo, who is a Futurist artist and composer, then there is a certain quickness or shorthand that you can use to align it with Futurist painting or sculpture or something like that, which can be useful pedagogically. So, there were elements of aligning these things with certain art movements, say, drone music with minimalism. That makes sense historically, contextually. Formally, it gets a bit difficult because sound is such a different material than wood or steel or ink or pen. So, you do have to bring in maybe a musical element to that, or musical perspective to talk about duration and time and the experience of the listener versus the viewer, right? So, there are moments when you have to sway between these boundaries. But I think it's important to not ever seal yourself off in one of them.

In this packed statement, the professor moved agilely from the organizational context of display and reception to the distinction between exhibition and performance and again to the historical context of the work. It was peculiar to me as an interviewer that the utility of boundary distinctions as “shorthand” was found to be a reason to disregard them in academic settings. While others might have taken these heuristics of disciplinary distinction as a point of departure in aesthetic analysis, this educator found them to be epistemologically insufficient, even if

pedagogically expedient. Yet, he offered a glimpse at organizational designations as one of the two important forms of boundary work.

In addition to organizational gatekeepers, conversations with artists and musicians working at the boundary were another useful way to understand the distinction between the two adjacent disciplines. Though gatekeepers were often tasked with managing these competing identities, some practitioners created work that intended to play with the boundary or to critique one discipline from the perspective of another. The following sound art graduate student also had a background in concert music composition. As a way to comment on that discipline, he created a piece for a gallery context that borrowed features of art music, as well:

My background is music composition, so I always like to put in an aspect that is very musical into my sound art works, and at the same time I'm very critical about the contemporary music scene right now. It's paradoxical. The contemporary music scene is very paradoxical because people are always trying to do something new, but by doing something new they're being conservative and shutting out everything that they have done in the past. So in my sound art piece I wanted to describe that through my work. So I have one cymbal just sitting in a room, an empty, austere white-walled room in a gallery setting. And then I have some Arduinos just plugged into the cymbal and some oscillators and some sensors, and I will also have a manifesto on the wall, which just describes how contemporary music nowadays is. If I use this word it's a controversial thing, but it's very 'bureaucratic' and power hungry, and people can't really do what they really want to. People have to do something because that's the way it is in the contemporary music world, so I want to break that barrier in the sound art world. So that's the description on the wall: my manifesto. So, people are going to come into the gallery, read my manifesto first, and they'll be encouraged to hit the cymbal. By hitting the cymbal they are making sound, a sound or a noise. And that directs to my concept. What is music? What's sound? And what's noise? And I'm sure that people are going to bang the cymbal a lot of times, but this is going to be a paradoxical work that by making noise, you can conceptually say that you're making music. And there is no distinction between noise and music or noise and sound, and there is no academic definition of what noise is. There are a lot of speculations what they are, but nobody can really solidly grasp the notion of what music is or what noise is. So I want to just merge everything together: music, sound, and noise. And by criticizing contemporary music I am paradoxically making contemporary music, so that's the whole concept of this gallery piece.

It seemed to me that by critiquing contemporary musical composition, this work would also be creating contemporary music, and by making sound in a gallery environment, it became a

performative object of sound art, as well. I went on to ask if he considered the final product to be an object of sound art or music, and he voiced the commonly reported intention to dissolve the boundary:

I just merge everything together, so anything with sound that I think is beautiful—this is a subjective beauty—anything that I have found or created, I think it's an 'art of sound,' and music is included. And I want to silently protest to the very conservative contemporary music world that anything that produces beautiful sounds can be called an 'art of sound,' and music can be included. Noise can be included. Anything can be included... I want to confuse everyone, and I want to challenge everyone to think what music actually is because there actually is no definition of it. And because my background is in contemporary music, I've learned all the theories and all the so-called academic stuff that we need to learn, like orchestration, harmony, counterpoint, all the written stuff that we have to think about. But in sound art we don't really have to think about anything. If we say that the sound of the air conditioning is sound art, then it can be sound art, but in composition we have to learn the orchestration, the registers of each instrument and stuff. So that's why I think both sides are glaring at each other, trying to protect their own things that we do, trying to protect our stance. But I just want to merge everything together.

By intending to merge disciplines, his work pointed its message at the boundary itself, both between the concepts of music, sound, and noise, as well as the disciplinary boundaries between art music and sound art. Yet, although the structures of orchestration and counterpoint remained important in much of the art music composed for concert environments, just as this practitioner reported, other types of new music shied away from these formal qualities. The distinction between tonal counterpoint and the sound of an air conditioner might have been a starting point for drawing distinctions, but other respondents took quite different approaches to these boundaries. Despite widespread aversion to disciplinary boundaries, these distinctions were not only important to the sociology of art but also, as the above respondent described, they frequently have a reflexive effect on the contents and characteristics of the works themselves.

How, then, did gallery arts gatekeepers decide which artists belonged in their organizational contexts? Perhaps the stickiest and most dogmatic boundary belief revealed in

these interviews had to do with a musician's physical presence and live manipulation in art music, as opposed to the self-generating quality of sound art. One way to reframe this distinction is the difference between performance and exhibition. In discussing this distinction with a sound artists and educator early in the course of the project, she described another practitioner working at the boundary of the two disciplines. Regarding her application for a teaching post in sound art, past education and experience in music performance were thought to get in the way:

She was applying for a teaching position at my school years ago, and she let me look at her CV. And instead of exhibitions everything was listed as a performance, like with the date in the margin and then the performance listed. And I was like, 'This is a completely different kind of CV.' I was like, 'Whoa, you need to switch this around.' I said, 'Maybe you should have a couple different categories, like an exhibition category versus like screening versus musical performance.'

In order to apply for an academic position in a sound art department, this practitioner was advised to reconfigure her vitae to reflect exhibitions rather than performances. We went on to discuss the role of the artist or musician in the two disciplines. Sound manipulation in the moment was often thought to push the work into the context of music, whereas a self-generating or recorded piece exhibited in a gallery context qualified for the demarcation of sound art.

Also, early in my own developing understanding of the disciplinary landscape, one respondent became rather testy when he sensed that my working definition of the term "sound art" was too broad. I was unaware that the distinction between performance and exhibition was used by so many as shorthand for the distinction between disciplines. When I mentioned that my starting definitions were quite broad and I was more interested in practitioners' own definitions of the boundary, he pushed back, saying that his practice would fall into the category of sound art. "Well, I mean, if you're defining it broadly like that, then it's just an element in the music that I'm creating all the time and what I'm currently working on." I asked him directly if he thought of his music as sound art, and he replied, "I don't, as I create it, no. I make a distinction

between sound installed that emanates from an object, a more certain place, rather than performance.” Thus he pointed out two distinct aspects of his practice: installed sound that emanated from an object and music performance. Later in the interview, I asked him why he considered another auditory work as “sound art,” and he described the role of the individual ego as the differentiating factor:

Because the sound was the main medium. I mean, for me the distinction as you’re broadly defining it as just music that people perform. With sound art, there’s a force of ego that doesn’t take place with performance. I think it’s unnecessary, or at least a difference in ego, because you’re not the agent of impact. You’re not there. And also you’re consciously aware of the fact that you’re putting it in a physical structure, or you create a physical structure. The people who walk into it or walk up to it are automatically going to have associations with it outside of what you try to do. I mean, that happens in live performance also, but since it’s fluid you have more control over disrupting their associations.

He considered the role of the ego in sound art to be displaced in time and also dissociated from the reactions of interpreting and judging audiences. Though the artistic ego created a work in time, the hands were removed from the object when it entered exhibition space. On the contrary, a performer was thought to have the ability to respond to audiences in the moment, possibly shifting the approach and the content of sound in order to disrupt their presumed associations.

Most respondents did not describe gatekeeping in terms of maintaining disciplinary boundaries; rather, they tended to look at existing works in sound and decide if they rightfully belonged in the art or music world. A curator at a sound art gallery in New York began with an equivocal take on boundary distinctions, yet he turned back and considered a work in terms of its site of exhibition:

I don't think I could ever even really draw a hard line in the sand between music and sound art. I don't know if it's necessary to do that. Some people like to do that, and some people definitely draw that line. But, I mean, if I had to draw the line, I guess I would say that for me, music is listening to a record of what would be considered popular music and experiencing music in that way. Music could also be external music, but I think maybe I think about it in terms of the location and the activity. For me, if I'm sitting, listening to

music on my headphones or walking around, that's music. If music falls into a gallery or into an installation or into the context that tends to be the qualifying context of art, then maybe it starts to become sound art... Obviously, there are people out there that are like, 'Everything is music, man. That table is music. You're music.'

Though this respondent began with the claim that sensory activities or apparatus define the boundaries between disciplines, he moved quickly to stating that music in a gallery can become sound art. Yet, another way to think about this boundary work was in terms of the organizational experience of the listener. By first pointing to the nature of recorded music, particularly popular music, this description found the experience of listening to be different in the gallery. Rather than listening to a recording, the organizational context supplied a different kind of experience. Implicit in his pejorative claim that other people find all sounds, or even all objects, to be musical, this respondent suggested that there was something structurally different about the organization of music.

However, the discipline of "performance art," adjacent to sound art, also entered the conversation when some respondents excluded performance from their definitions. One sound artist described this tension between performance art and experimental music:

That's all very confusing to me. I grew up in Los Angeles, and there's a tradition of performance on the West Coast from the seventies onward that I'm very interested in and that, to some degree, I was familiar with as a teenager in the eighties. So, when I think of performance, I think of things like Linda Montano in the seventies in California, or somebody like Chris Burden, or people who have a grounding in the visual arts. I also think of performance more in relationship to sculpture, for some reason. That is to say sculpture as, I guess from a [Rosalind] Kraussian standpoint, the idea of sculpture encompassing a lot of different kinds of hostile modes of presentation. Performance means a lot of things now. I think that there's a possibility in performance in the visual arts, as far as playing with time and space, that also could happen with sound installations, but that really has very little to do *per se* with experimental music. Experimental music is such a broad and also easily contested category. I'm much more interested in the problems around style and categorizations in relationship to identity in experimental music, and I don't think that has anything to do with sound installations *per se*. I think there are the types of conversations that are similar, like what is the relationship between dance music and sound installations, or what are the kinds of ways that installative sound in dance clubs somehow mirrors the work of sound installations.

And my impression is that, for example in New York, when people talk about experimental music and performance installations, they're not really interested in that.

Performance art was acknowledged as a distinct gallery discipline, just as dance music was a distinct discipline in music. In these comparative and contrasting cases, performance art unequivocally belonged in the gallery arts even though an artist was physically present in time. On the contrary, even though dance music in a club did not require an aspect of live performance, it was undoubtedly categorized as music. As well, Yoko Ono's vocal performances were often a point of reference in these interviews; though she performed live in gallery spaces, her work drew specifically the organizational context of the museum, as well as the Conceptual Art movement, clearly locating her performances within the discipline of performance art.

Though museums and galleries tended to shy away from performative sound in their exhibitions, they may have circumvented sound as an artistic medium, more generally. Regarding their discounted membership available to “artists,” the Museum of Modern Art did not list sound as one of the qualifying art forms for the discount, nor were musicians included:

MoMA has this thing where you can get an artist membership for \$35.00 now, and the interesting thing about it was it lists all these media and it's very visually oriented. It kind of leaves out sound and music—definitely leaves out music, and this is where I feel like the art world does draw its boundary. I feel like I could say, ‘Oh, I want an artist membership. I'm a sound artist. I present myself as that.’ But I happen to describe my work as music more publicly, like on my website. [Laughs] And I'm like, ‘Wow, would I be discriminated against as a musician? Is that another world? Is that another economy? Is that why it's not explicitly offered to musicians, because everyone's a musician, and it's like a social form?’ The guy at the financial firm is a songwriter in his spare time and made a website. Can he get a discounted membership? [Laughs]... And I think that they ask for some kind of proof, as in a CV or a website, but I do wonder about the exclusion of the words ‘music’ and ‘sound’ and the marketing for that.

Although another interview respondent pointed out this discrepancy, as well, he explained the policy as a problem of contested boundaries between sound art and art music. This respondent,

on the other hand, described that even those who self-identified as sound artists were ineligible, perhaps denoting the underdog status of this emerging gallery art form.

Alongside performance art, site-specific music challenged the binary of performance and exhibition in organizational contexts. One sound artist, who is now pursuing her masters in fine arts, described her personal transition from the discipline of art music to sound art. Though the move led her from the concert hall to alternative spaces, including galleries, this shift was accompanied by a changing approach to sound in different organizational contexts. Regarding site-specific experimental music:

I saw a lot of improvisation concerts with prepared instruments, with guitars on the tabletop instead of in a normal playing position, with prepared loudspeakers, with sort of DIY electronics, you know, input-less mixers, et cetera. So all of those scenes there are kind of joining together, or the boundaries are very fluid. So I guess I couldn't really help being exposed to that, even if I hadn't been interested, but I was really excited by it all. So that was sort of one of the first moments that I thought, 'Okay, I'm really interested in working outside of the concert hall and outside of the concert format.' And that did, at the same time, come—maybe to give then another part of the narrative, is thinking about the sound dimension. I was already getting interested in a more extended instrumental sound range, and that came through working with electronics, also. The fact that you can synthesize sounds, the fact that you could record a specific instrument sound, like I was saying before, that it might be hard to repeat if you ask a performer to play it again, but when you have it on tape, it's there completely, repeated exactly. So for me, that helped—that was in the process of making me expand my sonic element, and I think that maybe—I don't know if I was thinking about it at the time, but definitely since then it feels to me like those two things, the site specificity in concert format and the more open approach to sound, actually, that there's a kind of point of contact between them, which is that a lot of the sounds that I'm talking about are sounds that don't project necessarily very well. They're sounds that either require amplification or a really close physical presence between the listener and the performer, and that already was beginning to trouble or complicate the usual concert format, where people are at a very large distance from what's happening on stage. So amplification is one way to address that, but having a situation where you can walk up right next to a performer, walk around the performer, listen in closely, is another way to address that. And I think that sound artists in general have been some of the people doing the most exciting work about that idea of kind of intimate sound, or bodily contact with sound.

Though the move beyond concert environments may have begun as a separate impulse, she found that it offered a new range of sonic possibilities. With audience members closer to sound

sources, whether they were performed or otherwise amplified, this proximity allowed audiences to have “bodily contact with sound,” even if the sound was quiet. As opposed to the concert environment with a stage elevating sound production from the audience, the relation between bodies and sound waves became one site-specific aspect of the expanded sonic element.

These organizational boundaries were easily understood when they made a homologous match; exhibitions of material objects in galleries and museums went unquestioned, as did live performances of sound in concert halls and music venues. Yet, the more interesting cases of organizational boundary work occurred at mismatched intersections. When sound art was performed rather than exhibited, organizations had to handle fragile moments of disciplinary placement with care. On the contrary, art museums’ retrospectives of musicians’ careers were sometimes met with censure for their inability to engage the important discourses in the gallery arts, particularly when the musicians had achieved popular success.

III.2.1 Boundary Performances

Sound art festivals and popular music performances in museums confounded disciplinary boundaries, while the organizational features of Lampo performances maintained an artistic context.

Further complicating the organizational distinction between performance and exhibition in sound art was the role of the sound art festival. Though these events sometimes hosted exhibitions in galleries or public spaces, they more often were opportunities for sound artists to perform an aspect of their work live. One respondent, who made it clear that he was a sound artist and not a musician, described this complicated organizational context:

I’m not in the music world at all. Although, you know, I brought up [Unsound Festival in Kraków, Poland] because I think it was a really interesting festival that’s kind of in the middle of that. The festival is mostly performance based, and a lot of the artists that were in the festival, they performed, they’re musicians. But some of them are also visual artists, too. So that was the whole other side of the practice for them, but the festival represented one side of them. So that would be an interesting thing to look at. But for me, I’m definitely the visual art side. Yeah. And I have some relationship to the music world,

but my dad, he's a musician, which is why I think I'm kind of close to that world, in that sense, but yeah, my own background is visual art, so my whole network is in the visual art world.

Though the complicated relationship between performance and sound art in this festival might have confounded his disciplinary position, I confirmed with him that he thinks of himself as a sound artist. He pointed back to the distinction between performance and exhibition once again:

I go into a space, I perform it live, and I spend time. And you're supposed to listen to the whole thing. [Laughs] And if I were to make an installation, I would make it under the pretext—well, I would either be like people go in for 30 minutes, and they stay in for a distinct amount of time. Or, chances are, I would just say they would come and go as they please. Like a painting: you can look at it for as long as you please until you feel like you've got what you need out of it. But for me, I'm very reliant on time to be dictated for me. And I think that's why sometimes I go to a museum and I feel like I speed through. Some painting that I know I'm supposed to be impressed by, I glance and I'm like, 'I don't get it,' and I move on. [Laughs] I'm not a very visual person, but the best paintings actually do suspend time in that way. And they ask me to. They demand it. So I think the idea of sound art is more of that experience of encountering a painting, and it's up to the sound art and the audience member to interact, to hold attention. Music is more dictatorial that way. [Laughs]

An important corollary to the distinction between performance and exhibition is how the two processes engage with time, as well as the temporal requirements they place on audiences. In the exhibition context, audiences are welcome to come and go as they please without an expectation that they will encounter the entire duration of the work. Some sound art in galleries even engages a generative process, so that the piece unfolds slowly over the course of exhibition, never the same from one moment to the next. On the other hand, “concert time” comes with some expectations of the audience, or at least negotiates these temporal aspects with them. Concert time has a beginning and end, usually expecting audience members to hear the entirety of the piece (see IV.3.1.3 “Program Notes”).

Contrary to these sound art performances, both popular music and art music in museums and galleries drew criticism not only toward the performers but also to the curators and

organizations hosting them. An artist and academic whose work explores the interdependent rhythms of the body, technology, and the environment wondered if popular music performances were artistically relevant or if they merely drew attention to the commodity form in gallery arts organizations:

What I worry about is the art discourse becoming non-critical and substituting a fashion/rebelliousness kind of politics for a more engaged, at-risk politics. [The Museum of Contemporary Art in Los Angeles] is interesting in this regard... [The director, Jeffrey Deitch,] ended up engaging people like one of the Beastie Boys and some of these celebrity people. There was a skateboard show, you know? But it really bugged me, because it was like, you know—what am I trying to say here? It was going for this cool factor but not actually pushing experimental underground practices in the way that it could be. So, that always haunts me when I see like Liturgy playing at MoMA. Even though I love Liturgy, and I love MoMA, what is the point of that? What are we saying? Is there a contemporary issue being addressed? Is there a politics being put forward, or is it just trying to make—is it just like the cultural economy of these things... So, sound art practices are distancing themselves from that. I think what should be distanced is not classical music. That's something that should not be targeted, or experimental music. Because really, who cares? I would like to see more resistance to popular music forms and more of a line. Maybe that's kind of like an old fart position, but, yeah, more of a line between what is commodifiable, as you say, versus these more subversive practices.

The sentiment that music performances are threadbare attempts to bring patrons into museums came up countless times in these interviews, yet the distinction of whether they were popular or art musicians was seldom mentioned. In this case of the popular black metal band Liturgy, the respondent did not question the band's pop nature; during the group's career they had high record and ticket sales, as well as accolades in the popular press. Though the line between popular and art music is impossible to generalize, he pointed immediately to the commodity form of music as insufficient to legitimate a popular music performance in a museum.

Contrary to the rejection of popular music performances in museums, my volunteer work at Lampo in Chicago unearthed some of the organizational conditions of success for sound performances. This non-profit organization “promotes and supports artists working in experimental music and intermedia by commissioning, producing, and presenting special

projects and performances.” My volunteer interaction focused on their core activity of performances by sound artists and art musicians:

Our core activity has been and remains the Lampo performance series, now in its 21st year. Rather than making programming decisions around tour schedules, we invite selected artists to create and perform new work for Lampo, and then we help them realize their vision. By design, Lampo produces few projects annually, focusing attention on each one, and making each a distinct experience for the artists and their audience.

This brief program statement explains some of the features of Lampo performances that allowed their art status to go unquestioned. By commissioning new works, the organization did not capitalize on popular musical recognition or performance of songs, *per se*. By focusing limited resources on fees, flights, and accommodations for only a few artists each year, the caliber of curation also went unquestioned; the organization contributed to the high status of the artist while acknowledging it through a selective booking. Finally, all the performances were free to the public, a convention in the art world that was not operationalized in the same way in the world of music. Admission to galleries was always free, and museums often relied on a suggested donation for entry. Similarly, Lampo drew on resources from donors and members to make its performances free to the public, with an online RSVP list that filled up quite quickly.

These organizational features did significant boundary work for the arts organization, even though the works in its core activity were performed rather than exhibited. Yet, the infrastructure did so, as well. Most of the Lampo performances took place at the Graham Foundation for Advanced Studies in the Fine Arts, a historic mansion in Chicago’s Gold Coast that “fosters the development and exchange of diverse and challenging ideas about architecture and its role in the arts, culture, and society.” Gallery spaces filled much of the first floor of the building, and one of my tasks as a volunteer was to make sure Lampo performance visitors did not touch (or spill wine on) the art in these open galleries. Also on the first floor, an architecture

bookstore included rare and hard-to-find publications along with periodicals about art and design. Seated performances took place in a ballroom upstairs, and an overflow of visitors tended to sit on the floor or stand around the perimeter.

Though performers at Lampo had a quite wide range of sound practices, a few themes emerged in my time volunteering with them. Synthesis was a common form of sound production, whether using modular hardware or self-designed software instruments, through the SuperCollider or Max/MSP programs. The range of “performance”—artist manipulation of process in time—extended from physical manipulation of each sonic moment to “pressing play” on an existing recording and allowing the audience to hear the completed work. Though the latter was quite rare, it was met with some excited controversy in the case of Jeff Witscher, who performed as Renee Hell. Unfortunately, his 2014 performance took place before my tenure as a volunteer, but attendees described the event to me. Sitting down at a laptop, most audience members assumed that the artist would be manipulating software programs and instruments in real time, an invisible yet “live” process of sound production. Yet, Witscher sat down at a laptop in front of a crowded room and started playback of a new, completed recording. Some might have wondered if he iconoclastically made the recording during his flight to the event, as his artist biography mentioned:

Rene Hell premieres *Bifurcating a Resounding No!* The latest project from Rene née Jeff draws from years of recorded sounds (acoustic instruments, field recordings and voice), collected in cities across the U.S. and shaped with various digital techniques, to make one new weird work. Jeff Witscher a.k.a. Rene Hell (b.1983, Long Beach, Calif.) is a visual artist, avid chess player and music obsessive, who has explored a variety of underground styles since his teens. His aesthetic choices, expressed over dozens of recordings released under many pseudonyms, have anticipated the shifts in U.S. experimental music spanning the last decade. Most recently, he received acclaim for synth albums *Porcelain Opera* and *The Terminal Symphony* (Type), a 2012 split release with Oneohtrix Point Never, and his newest recording, *Vanilla Call Option* (PAN). Witscher’s M.O. is peripatetic—roving styles, changing monikers and wide-ranging influences. Travel is central to *Vanilla Call Option* too, with its digital palette constructed on the move between airports, performance

spaces and public libraries, to evoke the *musique concrète* of Bernard Parmegiani and computer music of Charles Dodge.

Drawing attention to the boundary of performance and exhibition, this event uniquely asked the audience to unpack assumptions about the skilled or even “genius” hand of the artist in the production of works, as well as the distinction between performance and exhibition. By turning the performance into a listening room for a completed work, the disciplinary boundary became even more complicated.

Similarly, Phill Niblock played with the line between exhibition and performance in his *Lampo* appearance. As an important member of the New York minimalist movement beginning in the 1960s, Niblock’s audio works were incredibly slow moving and immersive drone compositions (see IV.4.1 “Art Historical Path Dependency”). Each oscillation took minutes to complete a phase cycle, and the overlapping frequencies often crossed paths in moments of released tension. Some of his compositions had a clear trajectory while others seem to arrive at a place indiscernible from the beginning. A thrilling audio-visual hybrid sensory effect happened, however, with his paired video art. For many years, Niblock filmed people around the world engaging in repetitive motions at work: loading fish from a net into a boat, sawing timber into logs, or washing clothes by hand. For his 2017 *Lampo* performance, he showed time lapse and macro close-up footage from nature, primarily flowers. Watching the looped action of a body working or the quivering form of a flower petal at high speed had a dizzying and transcendent effect when paired with incredibly slow-moving sine waves in sound. Yet, neither of these art forms required much manipulation by Niblock in real time. Though he didn’t do so at the *Lampo* event, he has been known to play solitaire on his computer in full view of the audience during performances, comically drawing attention to the art-world obsession with sound artists distance from the works they create as well as the music-world fetish of live-ness.

Other Lampo performances emphasized the role of the artist in the moment, yet they tended to employ other tropes of the art world in order to play with the organizational boundary. Many were oriented around material objects, while others were heavily focused on bodily performance and movement; still others incorporated elements of both. Yoshi and Tashi Wada performed on traditionally unmusical sound objects, such as sirens, alarm bells, and audio generators, as well as musical ones, such as droning cluster chords on an organ and culminating their piece with a roving bagpiper. MSHR was the collaboration of Birch Cooper and Brenna Murphy, and their Lampo performance merged bodily movement with the material manipulation of light-audio feedback. Their quadraphonic performance synthesized sound waves with lasers, strobes and incandescent lights through ceremonial bodily motion. While these artists left no doubt in audiences' minds about the live performative quality of the work, they drew on valuable aspects of the art world, such as material objects and precise bodily movement to situate themselves on the gallery arts side of the disciplinary boundary.

Each of these Lampo events drew on a combination of organizational features, spatial location, and valued elements of the art world to situate performances as artistic, whether they might've been categorized as art music or sound art. Although breaking the commonly held rule that sound art must be exhibited rather than performed, these organizational features fused into an aesthetically valuable event, and I greatly enjoyed each of my experiences volunteering with the organization. Another key feature of the art world was to draw attention to its own boundaries. This self-referentiality, ushered in with both Conceptual Art of the 1960s and extending through postmodernism and beyond, continued to have an imprint on the gallery arts, and these sound performances similarly looked at disciplinary boundaries as an act of aesthetic *agencement* (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987; Phillips 2006), drawing attention not only to the

performances but also to what might be said about them from the perspective of aesthetic disciplines. Contrary to these performances of sound art, exhibitions of musicians' career retrospectives did not appeal to all audiences. Some artists who attended these popular exhibitions echoed the tension felt when popular musicians performed in museums or galleries.

III.2.2 Boundary Exhibitions

Some derided art museums for exhibiting retrospectives of popular musicians, but some also appreciated their camp aesthetic that rejected disciplinary boundaries.

The relationship between organizations, worlds, and disciplines became quite complicated in exhibitions of musicians' work at well-known art museums. For many, the institutional cache of these organizations came up against the popularity of musicians, yet my fieldwork revealed a wide range of art-historical status in the musicians exhibited. In terms of Bourdieu's two-dimensional field of cultural production, a pop star's celebrity status, such as David Bowie, took a quite different position than an art world celebrity like Yoko Ono, or, alternately, an art musician such as Cecil Taylor; only a few artists might compare with popular musicians in terms of economic capital, but nearly all of them eclipse popular musicians' cultural capital. The disconnect between these two positions no doubt led to the controversy surrounding the exhibitions among art critics. Not only in the United States, but also in Europe, sound scholars questioned the expansion of music into gallery art contexts:

Sound art really in Germany was so much about musicians and composers doing visual art, in a way, and musicologists theorizing, writing art theory. So, I think it has really been a war of positions in Germany, a little bit. You know what? Often when I read art magazines and they have an issue about sound, they usually don't call it 'sound art.' They call it 'sound,' and quite often then it's kind of about artistic aspects of music. And then very often it's about artistic pop music. Which means everything from the Futurists to John Cage and then the Velvet Underground, Laurie Anderson, punk, post-punk, contemporary electronic music. You know, because the DJ became a thing within the art world 20 years ago, 15 years ago. And that's very interesting, too. I also see the German magazine called *Texte zur Kunst*, and they did a sound issue in maybe 2006 or 2007, and it was only about music.

Not only in exhibition organizations, such as museums and galleries, but also in art critical publications, allowing music to cross the organizational boundary was taken as controversial. The above critic, editor, and curator of contemporary music and sound art brought a particularly astute understanding of the organizational boundary between disciplines, working in both while maintaining their difference.

Exhibiting musicians' work in art museums was quite common in both the American and European contexts. As an extension of Danto's interpretation of Bourdieu (1999), the incorporation of popular musicians into the museum might be understood as carving out an alternate position within the field:

In New York painting in the 1950s, there was a polar opposition between Abstraction and Figuration, with an open space for a kind of abstract figuration and for something which was neither. The challenge, as it turned out, came from Pop, and it is a matter of interpretation whether it occupied the fourth position or simply challenged the whole field, making the arguments used by occupants of the two main positions decreasingly relevant to the subsequent forms of artistic creation. (1999, p. 218)

By turning its back on existing aesthetic distinctions, Pop Art both questioned and disregarded the prevailing boundaries of the art world. Susan Sontag refers to this alternate aesthetic position as "camp," neither adhering to a convention in the traditional form nor directly rejecting it, as does the avant garde (1964). Alternately, camp operates as if the convention or standard of value were never there in the first place. Another way to understand these sensibilities is in terms of morality, emotion, and aesthetics:

The first sensibility, that of high culture, is basically moralistic. The second sensibility, that of extreme states of feeling, represented in much contemporary 'avant-garde' art, gains power by a tension between moral and aesthetic passion. The third, Camp, is wholly aesthetic. (1964, p. 526)

Though curators might be loath to describe it as such, exhibitions in art museums of popular musicians' careers brought a camp sensibility to the traditional and avant-garde cultural forms

they tend to display. Taking a popular musician's career at an aesthetic distance for contemplation robs it of moral content and emotional affect, considering ephemera and documentation as much for their relevance to the artist as for the social context of their production. Two exhibits of popular music at contemporary art museums complicated the process of organizational boundary work, while two contrasting exhibits for an art musician and sound artist had the effect of confirming art world status despite cultural acclaim across the boundary.

III.2.2.1 David Bowie Is

Mass cultural popularity, entertaining technology, and an industry-oriented biographical narrative each contributed to the mixed reviews of David Bowie Is at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago.

In Chicago the best example of the pop-musician-as-artist phenomenon was the exhibition *David Bowie Is* at the Museum of Contemporary Art in 2014. This “multimedia installation” of ephemera, costuming, album artwork, and an accompanying audio soundtrack was met with as much backlash as accolades in the art world. Several interview respondents were equivocal about whether a popular musician belonged in the gallery, pointing to the economic capital it was sure to bring into the organization as an explanation for the curatorial choice. When asked about the exhibition, one art historian began with the general impression that it was “really hated”:

So there are a couple of things there. One is that, if I recall, they had his outfits and his stage persona accoutrements and these things that are more likely to be seen in the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame or in the kind of more popular culture, kitschy kind of venues. And so, I think there is a fear that that will ruin the aesthetic realm of the museum. It's lowbrow culture, right? So there's a certain fear... popular culture will threaten the aesthetic autonomy of the museum. People like to say the museum is a space to critique popular culture, so what does it mean when you're inviting that into it? ... You also have the added hatred of popular music, and maybe people like Bowie, right? And I think there's probably a good chance that the people who are going to go to a contemporary art museum might like David Bowie. I would probably wager on that, but he's seen as a popular culture person connected to the avant garde. Maybe he's aware of art, the art

world, and summons it, like maybe Lady Gaga does today, but is maybe not part of it. Is not creating his work in that realm, nor is his work for that audience, specifically. So, that might be different than, say, if there was a retrospective of Karlheinz Stockhausen's music. And I think there very well could or should be, among other musicians and composers, too. I don't think that the museum necessarily needs to protect itself from music, nor do I think from popular culture. But I think Stockhausen is more likely to be received well than David Bowie.

For this art historian, the identity of the exhibited individual as a musician was not thought to be as problematic as the affiliation with popular culture. Though a Stockhausen retrospective might have fared better in art criticism due to his incontrovertible place in high culture, the challenges of the sonic medium would have been similar. By curating an exhibition for a popular musician, the boundary with art music became unstable, just as the inclusion of a musician, in general, might destabilize the organizational boundary of an “art” museum.

One of the innovative aspects of the exhibition was to use a spatially sensitive technology to change the music played through headsets as the museum visitor moved through the rooms of the exhibit. Along with the chronology of Bowie's career, music from each era was faded in and out of headphones at room thresholds to accompany the curatorial bent. This approach to audio recording in the museum solved some of the problems of sound bleed that many respondents described in galleries and museums alike (see IV.4.2.3 “Sound Bleed”). Rather than the constant assault of songs intermingling, each visitor had the experience of an individualized playlist. Yet, this very effect detracted from the high cultural position of the exhibit. Though audio guides in art museums structure visits similarly, they also offer up artworks for contemplation at an objectifying distance. Rather than allow the visitor to consider the works from a remove, the auditory environment constructed in *David Bowie Is* immersed the visitor in entertainment. This homology between the entertainment quality of the exhibit and Bowie's career felt natural as I

walked through the space, yet it opened questions about the purpose of art exhibition, particularly when recordings and images are readily available outside museum walls.

Finally, Bowie's personal biography was foregrounded in ways that other art exhibitions would not have been at the same institution. As a visitor moved from one room to the next, an interpretive frame for each phase of his career positioned it on a long narrative arc. Though wall text often gave biographical detail on gallery artists, it tended to emphasize the art historical significance of career phases or the features of works themselves. Yet, *David Bowie Is* positioned each moment of his career in terms of a personal struggle with the music industry. One multidisciplinary artist whose primary medium is sound took this biographical emphasis as evidence of the random nature of celebrity. Regarding the recent exhibits of David Bowie, Björk, and Yoko Ono:

These are the people I'm talking about, who have the hustle that they needed or just the luck and the good timing. I don't know what it is. They each have a different story. [Laughs] But to do it all, like to participate in all of the world. It's funny, because all three of those people are such legitimate artists in my mind who haven't compromised what they do to be celebrated for it. Culture is weird how it decides who they want to celebrate. [Laughs] I think it really is actually kind of random. The combination of that person's willingness to put themselves in a situation to whatever situation's got them where they are and people's interests colliding.

Rather than building a sense of legitimacy or even genius for these artists, drawing such attention to the biographical narrative pointed out the lucky career moments that led to mass cultural success rather than art historical legitimacy. Both the sensory environment and biographical emphasis of *David Bowie Is* drew critique from the art world, yet the exhibition was considered a great success in terms of museum attendance. Though museums have historically faced a challenge of demographic diversity, this kind of exhibit was not only successful in generating revenue but also changing the identity profile of the average visitor.

III.2.2.2 Björk

In addition to these aspects of David Bowie Is, disconnection with appropriate art discourse and the unconventional medium of sound stoked the controversy over Björk at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

New Yorkers encountered a similar boundary tension with the *Björk* exhibition at the Museum of Modern Art in 2015, the following year. Though I did not have the opportunity to attend this exhibition in person, interview respondents reported that it was quite like *David Bowie Is* in Chicago, including a blend of “sound, film, visuals, instruments, objects, and costumes” from her 20-year career. A similar technology, “Songlines,” used positional data to make audiences’ walks through the galleries interactive, bringing up songs from each era of her career with entry to the respective rooms. Despite Björk’s undoubtedly “artistic” approach to musicianship, her position in the museum was similarly contested among interview respondents. The same art historian who described the problem of popular culture in *David Bowie Is* also explained this contention over *Björk*, not in terms of her identity as a musician but in terms of her popularity:

People really didn’t like that exhibition in much the same way they didn’t like David Bowie, and Björk is even more connected to the contemporary art world, in some ways, than he was, and maybe is even more deserving of a show for her own artistic output. And, I think there was a really—maybe this is getting into a more contentious area—but kind of a missed opportunity with that show to work with her artistic output... I remember one person saying, ‘Why would I want to see an exhibition of Björk’s music, when I can listen to it at home or go on YouTube or something like that?’ And that’s kind of a snarky thing that casts off the potential for an exhibition, but it poses an interesting point, which is that there maybe are more ideal ways to present this stuff than in a gallery. So what would it mean for a museum to think of a different type of exhibition mode, right?

Particularly with the use of headphones walking through the space, the importance of the exhibition environment was uncertain, aside from the archival collection of ephemera and material objects of her practice. Just as in *David Bowie Is*, the act of walking through the

museum listening to pop music on headphones might have seemed an odd use of resources to the average museum attendee.

Yet, how else might these exhibitions have allowed visitors to perceive the creative output of these popular musicians? When I asked a multidisciplinary artist why these exhibitions were necessary if one could “listen to the recordings at home,” her response was quite direct:

I want to say an honest, naïve thing. It’s to elevate this person, to give context for what they’re doing. I think it’s because these people are icons. I know, yeah. It’s these people that hold this sort of iconography. And when you show all these documents, what you find is actually a lot of intersections with other artists in other communities. They’re sort of woven throughout. Like everyone’s one or two degrees from Björk in both the art and music and commercial music world.

Despite uncertain membership in the art world, artists like David Bowie and Björk connected worlds with one another, and perhaps that connectivity both lent them iconic status and a place in art institutions. Yet, others were not so generous when it came to the legitimacy of this kind of retrospective, with one curator referring to the exhibition as “a bit of a fiasco.” Similarly, one composer, musician, artist, and educator found it to be a barefaced attempt to get unlikely visitors to attend art museums:

I thought the *Björk* thing was more, kind of, fashion. I mean, I love the Alexander McQueen show they had at the Met. That was amazing. That was an amazing show. But the *Björk* thing, yeah, I didn’t see it, so it’s kind of hard to speak to that. Yeah, I mean I guess it’s the same. I mean it’s probably an even broader thing with *Harry Potter* exhibits or something at museums. And it’s the prerogative to bring in more people I guess. And I know the *Björk* thing definitely did, brought in a lot of people, and if that helps them do another sound art show, that’s a good thing. And if like reading all the stuff about Bowie and how much he was kind of like a fashion icon, as well, that idea plays into a part of music for sure.

Not unlike displaying commercial fashion designs in museums or even a young adult literary sensation like *Harry Potter*, these attempts with popular culture to bring new patrons into the museum might have had adverse effects on the boundary distinctions used to legitimate art museums as institutions worthy of patronage and even public funding.

Despite some respondents' and critics' hesitance and resistance to art museum retrospectives of popular musicians' careers, none were willing to say that musicians did not belong in art museum contexts wholesale. One curator made this position clear:

I don't necessarily think that musicians shouldn't be represented in a museum. I mean, I think if it's an appropriate musician where works have linkages or can reveal something to us about the discourse that the museum supports, then I guess they should be and could be represented in there. But oftentimes I think it can be problematic.

Without clearly engaging in the art world discourse, these pop cultural exhibitions were often found to be problematic. One must wonder, though, if the issue is one of celebrity, appropriate discourse, or the historically inappropriate medium of sound that brings censure on these exhibits. Though art stars bring an element of celebrity, and movements such as Pop Art engage in appropriate discourse, I had to wonder if the challenging medium of sound might have brought added disdain for these exhibits from some curators, practitioners, and critics. Contrary to the censure of these two exhibits, an art musician rather than a popular one was likely to have less trouble working out the boundary between worlds and legitimating his place in the art museum, as was the case with Cecil Taylor.

III.2.2.3 Open Plan: Cecil Taylor

Contrary to these retrospectives of popular musicians' careers, Cecil Taylor's multidisciplinary practices and primary membership in the discipline of art music legitimated the exhibition Open Plan: Cecil Taylor at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York City.

In part, the boundary contestation in these exhibits had to do with the discipline of popular music, one historically garnering a great amount of economic capital and comparatively few consecrating accolades. Particularly in the case of jazz and classical music—idioms with long histories of academic inquiry—museums had less trouble convincing administrators, critics, and audiences that they should be exhibited. I asked a sound curator, generally, if some sounds

might belong in a gallery while others belonged in a music venue. He affirmed and elaborated on the fraught relationship between art and music organizations:

Music has always had this strange history with galleries, where it's always been kind of present. Museums have incorporated music to some degree; usually it's in the auditorium, or it's in the atrium or in the garden, in these outside spaces. It's not in the galleries, or if it is it's like, 'I'm going to play the saxophone inspired by Jackson Pollock' or something like that, right? So it's a little contrived, and I think there's a fear, territorially, institutionally from having music be curated, by intermingling with the other works, despite the fact that they've come to point where purely conceptual artists and even performance artists can partake in the gallery space. I mean, the Whitney Biennial, the last one, did a pretty good job of incorporating different types of sound, music and non-music, and so I think we're moving away from that. And actually this year in April, [the Whitney Museum of American Art] is hosting a Cecil Taylor retrospective. So, he's a free jazz pianist. So what does it mean for the Whitney to take up a full floor of their museum for a jazz pianist, right? It's an interesting thing to talk about, but I think that, in any case, some of this folds back into the production of the art, where you have artists that are wary of becoming too musical. Or maybe they think they don't know enough about music, so how could this be music or conceived of as music? And so they totally disregard it because maybe they're unsure of it. Maybe they think someone from the music world will look at it and say, 'That's terrible. Clearly it's not music.' The openness of categories is fearful, for some. Or, it inspires fear in artists and curators to a certain degree, despite the language that they might use about being open or being interdisciplinary or whatever. They're not. I think a lot of times people don't truly embrace that idea [of interdisciplinarity].

One way of thinking about organizational boundary work between art and music is a fear or aversion to making a valuation mistake. If a curator were to include music not highly valued within the world of music, due to lack of knowledge of those conventions, she would be culpable for not only mistaken value but also a failure to adequately translate and define the work in the right discipline. This fear might have led some curators to shy away from sound that edged toward the boundaries of disciplines.

Yet, in the case of *Open Plan: Cecil Taylor*, the 2016 retrospective at the Whitney Museum of American Art, the curatorial staff boldly stepped into the liminal space between worlds. A diverse group of curators undertook communicating with the artist and selecting works for the Whitney, a group with combined experience in the worlds of art and music. However, the

initial decision to host this exhibition was not without complications and reticence from museum and art world administration. Though I unfortunately was not able to be in New York while the exhibition was up, I did have a chance to interview one of the curators, Lawrence Kumpf, while the exhibition was in the planning phase. He described the process and boundary work involved in curating a jazz pianist's retrospective in an art museum. Working with Jay Sanders, a member of the Whitney staff whose title was "Curator and Curator of Performance," he explained:

We've both been very interested in Cecil's work for a long time. I got to meet Cecil in 2012 when the other curator I worked with at [New York multidisciplinary art organization Issue Project Room] presented a concert of his. Cecil lives right down the street here, so we've been batting around the idea of doing a concert. We had wanted to do something, and there was this opportunity that came up. The Whitney had this internal idea to do this series of solo exhibitions on the 5th floor of this 18,000 square foot space. All the walls are modular in this new building, and it's the largest unbroken gallery space in New York or something like that. So they're going to do about five solo shows, and Jay threw out the idea of having one of them be Cecil. And, of course, Cecil has a long history. He played at the [Whitney-affiliated] Breuer Building in 1968 and again in 1977 or '78. He played there a couple of times with The Unit, too, so there is a history with the museum. And plus the director of the museum, Adam, his brother used to run this place in the neighborhood called The Cooler where Cecil played a lot, so it's a funny coincidence. Yeah, so they were super into the idea, and in addition to doing this performance series we're also building out an exhibition that celebrates Cecil's life, especially how his work intersects with other cultural fields of production. It's not just about music but it's also about articulating his interests in architects like [Santiago] Calatrava, his relationship with poetry, not just his own poetry but also thinking about the influence of Amiri Baraka, [A. B.] Spellman, Bob Kaufman, and all these people. And then mapping out these different traditions of music that he draws from, his political engagements, his political stance or the politicization of his music in the Sixties and Seventies. Also, thinking about his interest in dance from his work with Dianne McIntyre, Fred Herko, and then more recently his collaborations with Min Tanaka. There was also a brief interest in theater. He was involved in the second New York production of *The Connection*, which was done at Living Theater, so his ensemble with Archie Shepp did the music for it. Originally it was Jackie McLean's group, and they were in London or maybe shooting the Shirley Clarke film. So Cecil's Unit was part of the presentation of *The Connection* at the Living Theater. Then he also collaborated on this Adrienne Kennedy play at La MaMa and directed it, actually, called *A Rat's Mass*. We're desperately trying to find documentation of it, but I don't think it exists. It was this insane opera. I mean, the play itself and Cecil's direction of it were really crazy. So yeah, taking him as this exemplar, probably one of the most important living American musicians today, and seeing how his practice draws on all these disparate fields and also, in turn, influences them, and then looking at the intersection of his art career and his life. So it's a

special project, because there hasn't really been much of an opportunity for this type of artist to be so represented in the context of the museum.

In order to carve such enormous space in the museum to display a musician's retrospective, his collaborations and his own work in other disciplines became important legitimating factors. Not only is Taylor "one of the most important living American musicians today" but also his multidisciplinary work in poetry, dance, and theater combined to tell the story of an artist-at-large, collaborating with varied talent and creating hybrid forms. Of course, his personality as a neighborhood and New York figure contributed intrigue to the exhibition, and the organization was able to lean on the high cultural legitimacy of jazz, his hybrid cross-pollination of art forms, and that celebrity status to legitimate their curatorial choice.

III.2.2.4 Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960–1971

Despite her later career as a musician and personal connections with famous musicians, Yoko Ono's primary affiliation with the gallery arts helped to legitimate the exhibition Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960–1971 at the Museum of Modern Art in New York City.

Yet another retrospective drew attention to the liminal space between the worlds of art and music; rather than failing to properly work the organizational boundary as *David Bowie Is* and *Björk* might have done, *Yoko Ono: One Woman Show, 1960–1971* came from the opposite direction than *Open Plan: Cecil Taylor* to effectively question the nature of distinction between them. In the same year as *Björk*, the Museum of Modern Art captured a single decade in the long career of Yoko Ono's performance, video, Conceptual, sound, and visual art. Though her own placement tended to be squarely within the gallery arts, her marriage to John Lennon gave her an undeniable affiliation with popular music, as well. Although her Plastic Ono Band was recorded and reproduced on the Apple Records label alongside the Beatles, the group pushed the boundaries of experimentation in the early 1970s music industry. Instead of focusing on her music career during the early 1970s, the exhibition at MoMA focused on the performance, video,

and Conceptual art she made leading up to her billboard success. The 1960s culminated in her unofficial MoMA debut, with the self-said “one woman show” entitled *Museum of Modern [F]art*. A single sign outside the museum entrance informed the audience that she had released flies in the museum and that they were welcome to track them as they dispersed throughout the city. Using this performance art piece as the temporal bookend for the exhibition was an adept curatorial move, just as her music began to hit the billboard charts.



Fig. 2: Yoko Ono. *Cut Piece*. 1964.

Performed by Yoko Ono in *New Works of Yoko Ono* at Carnegie Recital Hall in New York on March 21, 1965. Photo: Minoru Niizuma, courtesy of Yoko Ono. © Minoru Niizuma 2015.

Responses to Ono’s show were steadier, on the whole, than for Bowie and Björk, who are unequivocal avatars of popular music. One composer and artist could not say enough about his appreciation of the show. Compared with the Björk exhibition at the same institution in the same year:

I was much more enthusiastic about the Yoko Ono show they put up there. It was amazing. It was specific, you know, it was her early career, so there was enough of everything in the show: the text, videos, there were some films, the records from Plastic Ono Band. So, there was some [sound], but the technical side of it certainly wasn't the point. They had the whole of [the Conceptual Art book] *Grapefruit* put in its own room, kind of spaced out. So they had that, and there were some archival videos of some of the performance pieces. And then there were actual physical manifestations of instructions for some of them... But at the same time, that work is still so strong and a lot of the issues—like *Cut Piece*, so they had a video where she's on stage and people come up on stage and cut her clothes off. I think that was first performed in the sixties, and that seemed like mostly men come up and take scissors to her clothes. I mean, that's still very relevant to now.

Not only were the technical aspects of the show satisfying to this respondent but he also lauded the contemporary relevance of some of the works included in it. Whereas a common criticism of the Bowie and Björk exhibitions were their irrelevance for contemporary discourses in art history and criticism, Ono's exhibit achieved art world relevance on its own terms.

Though responses to the exhibit were overwhelmingly positive, her art world membership pushed the relevance of the show away from her sonic output and toward other media with a longer tenure in the gallery arts. One art historian expressed some frustration with the lack of emphasis on her works in sound. In comparison with the *Björk* exhibition that also shied away from her sonic output:

The same thing happened with the Yoko Ono show at MoMA recently, where they had a retrospective of hers and all of her musical, not even musical, just her sonic output was put into a back room with chairs and headphones and posters and record albums. It was kind of like, 'Okay, this is her musical stuff, and it's off to the side. And here's her real art, yeah.' And so, I think that on top of the fact there might be a general fear of inviting popular music people, musicians, into this realm, there's also the reality that the institutions don't quite know how to do that yet, properly. And I don't know what properly would mean.

Though he pointed to a missing emphasis on sound artists' and musicians' actual sonic work, even this art historian couldn't imagine how those works would be properly displayed in an art museum context. One of the challenges of each of these musicians' work was that it was

intended for recording and reproduction, not exhibition. Though sound art is just now beginning to take hold in art museum curation, it was not so throughout these artists' careers, when they might not have imagined the technology necessary to incorporate sound into museum space. In this way, the medium of sound becomes historically problematic for crossing the boundary of art and music in museum settings.

Ono's role as a sound artist was sufficiently defined by her organizational context. Although she went on to perform in music venues and concert halls, her career began in the gallery and continues to thrive there. And even though she is one of the trailblazers of the discipline of sound art, her own music career, early marriage to the composer Toshi Ichiyanagi, later partnership with a popular musician, and undoubtedly her gender and ethnicity, have contributed to her absence from so many anthologies of the art form (Cox and Warner 2004; LaBelle 2015; cf. Kelly 2011). Though she is highly respected in many contemporary sound art circles, her role in constructing the aesthetic criteria of the discipline seems to have been vastly undervalued. For instance, the LaBelle's otherwise comprehensive text on the art form (2015) only mentions her in terms of events hosted by undisputed figures La Monte Young and Robert Morris at her loft. Perhaps this lack of canonization has to do with the multimedia nature of her career, yet her ambiguous affiliation with the worlds of art and music might have contributed, as well.

III.3.0 Semantic Boundary Work

Though sound art might have been easily confused for music or one of the other gallery art disciplines, artistic concepts made sure that audiences did not make the mistake.

Organizational decisions were one important way for gatekeepers and practitioners to work out the contested boundary between sound art and art music. Some respondents in this study claimed reductively that anything audible in an art organization must be sound art and that

anything audible in a music organization must be music. Although this seemed to be a useful heuristic at first glance, confusing gray areas remained in the cases of sound art festivals, pop musicians performing in museums, and exhibitions of musicians' retrospectives. In these cases, many respondents adhered to the edict that sound art was exhibited and art music was performed, but even this straightforward distinction was not without complications. Another way to maintain the distinction between juxtaposed disciplines was to point to the conceptual nature of sound art, thought to make it appropriate for galleries and museums. When asked about this common conceptual emphasis, an art historian and sound enthusiast directly reported the desire to be distinct from music, even a fear of being categorized as musicians:

One of the problems that we see is that the idea of conceptual sound art is partly the result of the fear of music, and so you have artists who are using sound, maybe they're not musicians, maybe they are. And they're consciously saying this is not music, it's something else.

Though sound art might have been easily confused for music in a gallery or museum, emphasizing an artistic concept was one way to make sure that audiences did not make the mistake.

Similar to the boundary work separating science from pseudoscience (Callon 1980; Gieryn 1983) arts administrators faced a quandary in establishing the works in their organizations as other than music. Distinctions of "taste" (Lamont 1992; Bryson 1996; Pachucki, Pendergrass, and Lamont 2007; Lamont 2012) were not enough to redefine them, as well. Though some sound artists avoided overtly musical content, such as harmonic relationships and structured duration, more commonly they used conceptual language to define their works as belonging to the gallery arts. Not only was a disciplinary distinction necessary for audiences to understand these works, it was an important process of valuation among actors who discussed, negotiated, and sometimes argued these definitions among themselves. With the music economy

operating by its own rules and the collectability of sound works yet undetermined, sound artists faced a challenge to convince gatekeepers in the gallery arts of their appropriateness. The few gatekeepers who worked exclusively with sound art faced a similar challenge to communicate these boundary definitions to their colleagues and audiences.

This section will first set out to briefly describe the general turn toward conceptualism in the gallery arts, before explaining the role of the concept in the contemporary discipline of sound art. The world of music, on the other hand, is reticent to forego its formal structures in favor of verbal meanings. Normative and aesthetic claims to value aside, interview respondents tended to use the tension between concept and form as a semantic tool to draw the boundary between art and music, as well as the disciplines of sound art and art music within them. This distinction between concept and form was not only a type of economic *agencement* ascribing aesthetic value, as will be seen in Chapter IV “Inscribing Sound,” but also it was a way to define which works should be included in these competing disciplines.

III.3.1 The Conceptual Turn in the Gallery Arts

The twentieth-century gallery art turn toward valuing concepts was ushered in by Marcel Duchamp’s Fountain and had its heyday in the widespread 1960s movement of Conceptual Art.

The distinction between concept and form in the arts mirrors other twentieth-century distinctions drawn in the humanities and social sciences. After the “linguistic turn” in philosophy, the gallery arts underwent a “conceptual turn” concurrent with the “cultural turn” of the humanities and social sciences (Spillman 2001; Kim-Cohen 2016). Yet this opposition remains difficult to describe in either art-historical or sociological terms. The rich history of phenomenology draws out the nature of consciousness in terms of “meaning and object” (Husserl [1900] 1973, [1913] 1931), sensory stimulus and focused response (Schütz [1932] 1967; Berger and Luckmann 1966), and recently has been extended to first and second order

constructs (Aspers 2001). As well, the sociology of culture continues to emphasize the relationship between the senses and understandings (Friedman 2011, 2015; Vannini, Waskul, and Gottschalk 2011). Yet, the particular nomenclature of “concept and form” in the gallery arts does not have an analog in social theory.

Fortunately, many sound artists and composers offered up this distinction in interviews, explaining its use in art and music theory. Seth Kim-Cohen offers a concise definition of “concepts” in his 2016 *Against Ambience*, distinguishing them from the historical moment of Conceptual Art in the 1960s: “Concepts are abstract ideas that create connections between objects or other concepts. I use the term as an allusion to capital C conceptualism in visual art, without mapping, 1:1, to that category. I will insist on small c conceptualisms, plural” (p. 9). Thus, these concepts are links between objects of perception, ways to think about and understand what is sensed. These concepts are related, for Kim-Cohen, to precepts, which are “general rules that regulate behavior or thought,” sociologically understood as schemes (Schütz [1932] 1967), norms (Parsons [1937] 1968), or conventions (Becker 1982). Where Kim-Cohen emphasizes concepts, others have drawn attention to “form,” denoting the sensory percepts available to audiences. Perhaps Clement Greenberg is the best-known adherent of formalism in art criticism, though in “Towards a Newer Laocoön” (1940) rather than his widely cited “Avant-Garde and Kitsch” (1939). These opposing schools of thought alternately emphasize the use of language or the senses to link artworks to political-economic reality, and advocates of each approach imagine liberation in their own method, to the exclusion of the other. Despite this theoretical battleground, nearly all of the actual works encountered in this dissertation demonstrated a blend of concept and form.

A formative text in the Conceptual Art movement of the 1960s, Sol LeWitt's "Paragraphs on Conceptual Art" (1967), described a trend in art practices and prescribed a judgment that would be held in subsequent decades. By setting up concepts and perceptions as competing forces in works of art, he exposed an additional aspect of art making: artists' lack of control over the perception of their creations. Though he found concepts to be the domain of the creator, the perception of artwork became the domain of the audience. As visual works of the early twentieth century became increasingly abstract and representations fragmented, the intentions of artists concurrently became more valuable.



Fig. 3: Alfred Stieglitz. *Fountain* (photograph of assisted readymade by Marcel Duchamp). 1917. Gelatin silver print. 9 1/4 x 7" (23.5 x 17.8 cm). New York: Collection Jacqueline Matisse Monnier. © 2010 Georgia O'Keeffe Museum/Artists Rights Society (ARS).

Many art historians look to Marcel Duchamp's 1917 exhibition of *Fountain* to mark the initial moment of the conceptual turn in the gallery arts (Kim-Cohen 2009, p. xvii). By signing and displaying a toilet in gallery space, Duchamp transfigured the work of art from an image to a

thought, or from “appearance” to “conception” (Kosuth [1969] 1999). The continued influence of this particular piece cannot be denied, referenced in many interviews in this study. Duchamp predicted that the artist would become the “one who points his finger,” shifting the emphasis from the object in the line of sight to the mind of the person pointing.

This tension between appearance and conception has continued to preoccupy the gallery arts for decades to come. Kosuth went even further to claim that “the ‘value’ of particular artists after Duchamp can be weighed according to how much they questioned the nature of art; which is another way of saying ‘what they added to the conception of art’ or what wasn’t there before they started” ([1969] 1999, p. 164). By so saying, Kosuth does not locate artistry in the particular concept underlying a work, *per se*, but in the contribution to the concept of art more broadly. He saw material objects as artifacts of this contribution, not unlike displaying *The Spirit of St. Louis* in a museum of technology.

During this 1960s conceptual explosion, art-as-language became particularly valuable, including works that made meta-statements about the nature of art (Meltzer 2013). For example, Robert Rauschenberg sent a telegram in 1961 to the Galerie Iris Clert as his submission for a portrait exhibition, simply containing the line “This is a portrait of Iris Clert if I say so.” By extrapolating from the trajectory of abstract painting, Rauschenberg’s piece questioned art institutions and the nature of art making. Similarly, Joseph Kosuth’s *One and Three Chairs* (1965) places the emphasis on concept by displaying three forms of a chair: the readymade material object, a photograph of that chair, and a dictionary definition of the word “chair.” These three forms look backward to painterly representation, presently to the dominance of photography, and forward to the developing trend of dematerialization in the late twentieth-century art world. Other work by Lawrence Weiner, Robert Barry, and Ed Ruscha follow a

comparable path, extending art beyond object production, which was criticized at the time as a mere commodity form, and into the thought that underlies the produced object.

Though these practitioners of conceptual art remain influential in art institutions and education today, no art movement would be noteworthy without a backlash. Many artists resist conceptualism, and one interview respondent cited historian Jacques Barzun's 1975 claim about abstract art:

Jacques Barzun says this really delightful thing about abstract art, which is that he says it doesn't exist. He's making the obvious point with regards to abstract painting, for instance, that in fact, there's no such thing. In fact, it's a painting.

Rather than follow the line from abstraction through conceptualism, this artist and writer working with sound and performance explained that some artists would prefer to return to formalism, depiction, and painterly qualities in their works. In my own ethnographic observation of a faculty critique, a student pursuing a Masters of Fine Arts in painting was stubbornly resistant to using conceptual language to describe her representational work, preferring to call a spade a spade. Indeed, others have gone so far as to declare the death of conceptual art, such as the Stuckists art collective who placed a coffin outside the White Cube Gallery in London in 2002. Others have sought to usher in a new era of de-conceptualism, neo-conceptualism, or post-conceptualism, reconfiguring the emphasis on linguistic concepts.

Though the conceptual emphasis of late twentieth-century gallery art influenced the entire art world, it was a particularly Western or, perhaps, American phenomenon. An art dealer working primarily with contemporary works in sound drew a comparison between Asian markets and American ones:

That's one of the things that I hear a lot from artist friends who just came from China or places in the East, that the first difference they notice is that it's all about concept here, whereas in the East in school they teach you a lot of technique, but here you almost don't have to touch anything. It's all about theory and concept.

This emphasis on conceptual art and the relative downplaying of materiality in the United States might have detracted from the technical crafts of painting or sculpture, with unclear implications for sound art. The “dematerialization” of the work of art (Lippard and Chandler 1968) went hand in hand with conceptualism, yet the effects on an already-immaterial media such as sound remains to be seen.

As a nexus of forces and flows (Deleuze and Guattari [1972] 1983), a sound environment can exist without material forms other than, say, the air particles in the room and the cochlea in human ears. For those working in this idiom of sound art, immaterial sonic environments often became the canvas for concepts. Situated among a long history of conceptual artists who reduced the exhibited work into empty space, beginning perhaps with Yves Klein’s 1958 *Le Vide (The Void)* at Gallery Iris Clert in Paris, these sound environments appear to be empty rooms. Just as Klein emptied the gallery and painted the walls white, exhibiting a conceptual, immaterial sound piece similarly required artists to hide amplification technology from view, sometimes behind walls or screens or inside air vents. By emphasizing concept and downplaying materiality, sound took on a timely role in the twentieth-century gallery arts alongside other dematerialized works. At the same time, the immaterial and often uncollectible nature of conceptual art pointed the art world away from art production and toward art practice. Though most artists’ practices included the production of material objects, this re-orientation toward all the activities of the artist as creative acts downplayed the completed work and highlighted instead the identity and intention of the artist throughout life. Within this paradigm, any artifact of art practice might have become collectible, whether a painting, a preparatory sketch, or a conceptual text. The turn toward practice and away from production was particularly suited to the sound artist, using innovative

processes to make unique sounds but sometimes lacking a physical manifestation of creative work.

III.3.2 Concept and Form in Sound Art

Sound art drew on the history of the other gallery arts to emphasize concepts rather than the formal qualities of sensory perception.

Early in my investigation into the world of auditory culture, I asked a curator and artist to explain to me the difference between sound art and music. The reply betrayed both my own novice approach to the disciplines and her own belief about the reliance of art on “theory.” While discussing a sound artist who was able to coexist with the world of music, this respondent pointed out that I was not using a native approach to the boundary:

She’s done a lot of post-docs in music departments now, like at Brown and stuff. And now she has some gigs at [the Rhode Island School of Design] where she’s teaching a few classes, but I’m just wondering how she even communicates her work. And we’re close friends, so we talk a lot about stuff we see, but we don’t talk about it in the way that you’re asking the questions. I know she’s not interested in theory at all. And I know that she has not read among the stuff that I’ve read. She doesn’t have the same kind of visual art background that I have.

I asked if she had a music history background, in comparison with interest in “theory.” She affirmed and went on to explain that her friend was “kind of anti-theory, so it’s interesting to think about what she’s doing. When you’re looking at it from a visual art perspective, a lot of that stuff becomes really theoretical because it’s not tangible.” Though she also explained the role of education in differentiating positions of practitioners, she went on to describe these liminal artist/musicians’ fraught relationships with theory. I tried to suggest that music theory is also “theoretical,” though dealing with pitch and duration rather than linguistic text. The respondent avoided my subtle suggestion and returned to her belief that her friend’s “anti-theory” stance pushed her into the discipline of art music rather than sound art.

Another description of the conceptual nature of the art world was the phrase “symbolic reference.” A sound practitioner described a non-profit funding organization that he thought tended to support musicians who looked more “like an artist”:

They’re a great organization, and they do a lot of work to support artists, but often when they’re choosing musicians to support, whatever it is, a three-year cycle or something like that, they’re choosing people like an artist would choose somebody. So, they’re choosing people who have a strong symbolic reference in their work, basically what we were talking about before, where it’s something you can talk about. In their case, it seems to be stuff that’s barely accessible.

Though he didn’t explain the parameters of accessibility, the phrase “symbolic reference” perked up my ears. He assumed that the gallery arts required something to talk about in the works they supported, and this emphasis on language was thought to be contrary the definition of art music.

Conceptual language was tied to art education in several interviews. A prominent sound artist who exhibited at world-class museums such as MoMA pointed to language as a way to lend complexity to his work:

I’m stepping away from musicology more and more, and I’m becoming more involved and embedded in art history. I feel that I have a shorter process for music when I need it. For a long time, I listened to very specific composers and very specific models within the world of music, experimental music, that formed my aesthetics, my works and interests. Now, it just comes out naturally. Now, I’m more interested in the complexities of language and the complexities of mental space and conversation with art history.

Given his impressive exhibition record, I gathered that the move from musicology to art history went along with his emphasis on semiotics, linguistics, and the meta-analysis of language, all drawing on art history rather than musicology. These symbolic and linguistic references in conceptual sound art became important definitional qualities in my ethnographic observation, as well. Our conversation continued to the subject of the boundaries between art, music, concept, and form. He found the music world to permit broad definitions but quickly made the link between conceptualism and art schooling:

In the music world, yeah, I guess [concept and form] are kind of equally valued. I don't know, because the music world is so broad, too. I think craft is definitely valued. I mean, maybe to its detriment. A lot of more classical academic composers could use a bit more humor or something. I don't know. For me the art world, it always seems it's like just out of reach, like I don't quite understand how things kind of come together in that world... I think a lot of it has to do with schooling. That's pretty much the bottom line... Yeah, I think here a lot of people have told me, my friends, I think they call it the 'Bard Mafia' or something. In the sound art world that's definitely, at least in New York City, that's who's going to get the shows because that's the known quantity or quality or whatever thing.

Those with an education in conceptual sound from Bard College, a leading sound art institution, were understood to be reliably defined as artists of a "known quantity or quality," and I found it fascinating if also disheartening that even this highly acclaimed sound artist remained confused by the art world. His response also associated conceptualism with a sense of humor, while taking for granted the alignment between education and conceptualism. I had to wonder if other artists were even more baffled, given his broad success and residual misunderstanding of boundaries.

An interdisciplinary artist, composer, and writer eloquently described an idealized relation between content and form in the work of sound, taking the theoretical apparatus of sound art and applying it to a "critical" music in order to transcend musicological limitations:

Overall, my issue is I want to be able to articulate both in practice and in theory what I think should be called 'critical music' or 'critical musical practices.' And I think, broadly speaking, sound art theory comes close to articulating what I would wish to see in music practice, new music practices, and so on, but with the very troubling caveat that there is a conscious categorical move to call it something else... 'Critical music' is a label that I've coined to refer to art practices that engage the histories and forms of musical practice while also opening onto a broader cultural engagement, so in a certain sense to de-essentialize, to have a nonessential relationship.

An important feature of this nonessential musical practice, for this respondent, was that it may or may not have included sound. Working and writing in tandem with Seth Kim-Cohen's concept of non-cochlear sound art, this respondent imagined that music might follow a similar trajectory, shedding essentialism alongside its connection with the sense of hearing. Though he was quite

reticent to use the term “concept” to refer to this development, preferring “critical music,” he imagined a form of practice that had everything in common with the conceptual approach: reliance on text, alignment with ideas rather than sensory perception, and locating the work of art or music in meaningful thought rather than embodied perception. Yet, this respondent hoped to preserve the formal structures of music in the metamorphosis into “critical music,” even when these structures could not be heard.

Though most respondents emphasized the boundary between sound art and art music in terms of concept and form, there were exceptions. When I asked an interdisciplinary artist, composer, and writer more about his ambition to dissolve the boundary between art and music, he explained that the division between worlds might transform into a new mode of aesthetic practice. He derided the “cottage industry” of sound art theory for falling into the trap of “pseudo-interdisciplinarity.”

I think the relationship between art history and sound art theory is not so easily disentangled, because I think a lot of art history does a very good job at talking about music. I think Liz Kotz does a similar thing in *Words to be Looked At* in contextualizing proto-conceptual art in relation to music. But not attempting to use that as an opportunity to suggest any new pseudo-categories for this particular artistic production, but actually to work with it in its full historical weirdness. I think she looked again at [John Cage's] 4'33" and said, ‘You know, here's this work, this musical score, that for all intents and purposes is a piece of language.’ But what makes it unique is it provides instructions to be realized, to be executed. But really when you look at it formally, it's no different than any other musical score. So then it's not that flectional but there is this implication that there's a specific relationship between, a deep relationship, between conceptual art and music.

Again, this sound theorist described an idealized relationship between concepts and music, though, in this case, as part of a reinterpreted disciplinary past. Though Kotz described the role of text in 1960s Conceptual Art (2007), this respondent imagined that the same might be imposed upon the history of music composition. Alas, this imagination was not in keeping with

the musicians interviewed in this study, who tended to identify music in terms of sonic structures, forms defined by sounds to be heard rather than ideas to be apprehended.

Interview respondents tended to agree that contemporary sound art emphasized conceptualism over strict formalism; some even found it difficult to imagine what the extreme of formal sound in a gallery or museum context would look and sound like. Although concept and form were commonly thought to complement one another, when asked to describe work they did not find to be valuable, some interview respondents pointed to works in sound that failed to merge these two important aspects into a single piece. Even if an artwork intended to be highly conceptual, sometimes the formal aspects failed to illustrate the “idea,” relying too heavily on text for communication:

This is classic, right? The idea’s so much more eloquently stated in the description of the piece than the piece illustrates the idea, you know? And my thing is, there’s a lot of good writing about sound out there at this point. It’s had a great resurgence and I just, I don’t know. If you can just write something about it and communicate the idea, then awesome, do that. You don’t need the other part, and I do feel like there’s a lot of work that definitely hides behind the idea. They keep saying the same thing.

This artist seemed to suggest that critical writing about sound might be sufficient to communicate concepts, particularly those that are not unique or in harmony with artwork. A sound sculptor described the opposition between concept and form in terms of downplaying sensory pleasure. Regarding a piece of conceptual sculpture that he had recently encountered at the Tate Modern:

The manifestation of the piece is in most ways unimportant. It could be anything... There’s not really anything to look at. There’s nothing fun for the eye. In some ways there’s minimal pleasure of an immediate sort, if you’re lucky enough to get a lot of pleasure out of thinking hard, which every other Saturday on months with no R in them I might get there.

Rather than sensing a piece, its concept became the focal point; in this case the visual elements were downplayed, but sound art also had the possibility of downplaying, paradoxically, its own sonic elements.

Though I imagined the possibility of a purely formal sound piece—for example, a sound environment without an accompanying conceptual statement, like the many cited in Seth Cohen’s *Against Ambience* (2016)—one composer who also worked in the gallery arts claimed that this type of sound art was very unlikely to be exhibited:

I think [works of formal sound art] are really extreme cases. And contemporary music is the one where intention is everything and how it sounds is like 90 percent. Concept is like 10 percent. And sound art, what people perceive is sound art, is on the side where people don’t really care how it sounds, but it’s more about the visual element or the concept of it. And I think I’m still on this concert music side where I try to have sonic beauty, which is, again, a subjective term. Yeah, I want to put what I think is beautiful in the sound and not just the concept. And conceptual art, of course, I’m not critical of anything conceptual. I use concepts a lot. But yeah, at the same time, to listen to a sound, it’s still a time art like concert music or sound art. You need time to listen to it. And if you don’t like the sound itself, people are going to walk away. So I’m not saying that I’m doing this for all my work but for the majority of the work I am more sound oriented.

This composer went on to describe how he relished the opportunity to engage an audience for an extended duration, a possibility more often provided in concert music than in visually oriented gallery contexts. One such concert piece allowed the audience to sit among the performers and experience a close bodily connection with the composition. He compared this more “beautiful” piece with his newer work of conceptual art that incorporated jarring and harsh sounds.

Regarding the beautiful piece of concert music:

Nobody left. People could leave during the concert. It was like 40 minutes. But nobody left. They sat there from the beginning to end. But for the sound work, if people don’t think about the concept, which takes energy, if they don’t do that, they’ll never understand that, because nothing is beautiful in the sound. The beauty is in the concept. So if they don’t take the time out to think about what’s happening they’ll probably just walk out and forget about it.

The contrast between the use of time in the harmonic piece of concert music and the disjointed work of conceptual sound was plainly stated in this conversation, yet the willingness for audiences to engage was quite ironic. In the concert piece, audiences were willing to sit and give their attention for forty minutes, whereas the sound art piece displayed in a gallery found it a challenging to engage an audience for the short time needed to read the conceptual text. The finesse and beauty of the concept might have registered with audiences almost immediately, requiring only a brief investment of time (and reading) in order to apprehend the piece, yet this artist was unsure if they would do so. Compositional music in concert settings, however, often required longer duration in order to listen without a quickly digested conceptual statement.

The relation between concept, form, and language remains complicated in the gallery arts. The art world has built a visual lexicon to understand its works using the sense of sight alone. For instance, the viewer of a painting might make historical references without the aid of language, strictly in terms of the visual perception of color, line, texture, and pictorial representation. Art music does the same with the sense of hearing, building a sonic language of references to other musical styles, tonalities, and idiomatic conventions exclusively drawn from the listener's ears. Yet, the history and prevalence of sound art has been too brief and rare to achieve this autonomous sonic chain of reference. Rather than relying on the sense of hearing to understand works in sound, the gallery arts tend to use conceptual language to define what belongs within its boundary. Two borderline cases are important to understand the relation between concept and form in sound art. In the first case, non-cochlear sound art pushes to the extreme of the conceptual, not even making a sound and appearing to be painting, drawing, or sculpture. At the other border case, formal material qualities confound the physics and perception of sound, drawing attention back to the conceptual foundation of sonic phenomena.

III.3.2.1 Concept: Non-Cochlear Sound Art

Non-cochlear (inaudible) sound art pushed conceptualism to the extreme, appearing as paintings, drawings, sculptures, or multimedia installations yet maintaining a textual connection with sonic phenomena.

The conceptual extreme of auditory culture was the “non-cochlear” work in sound: sound art that cannot be heard. Derivative of Duchamp’s concept of the “non-retinal” readymade that, like *Fountain*, was not meant to be visually examined, Seth Kim-Cohen coined this term for works that were conceptually oriented toward sonic phenomena yet inaudible to the human ear (2009). Though this type of work was ostensibly “about” sound, it drew into question the relation between sensory perception and conceptual reference in art. For outsider audiences, and certainly those who hadn’t read the conceptual statement, these works appeared as paintings, drawings, sculptures, photographs, or installation art, yet an act of boundary work within the world of gallery art drew them semantically into the discipline of sound art. I might have remained unfamiliar with this signifying move had it not been for the frequency with which interview respondents mentioned Kim-Cohen’s book and ideas.

One type of non-cochlear work was found in the medium of cymatics: using sound waves to create material and visual phenomena. Among the earliest of these pieces is Liz Phillips’ 1988 *Fluid Sound* at the Kala Institute in Berkeley. For this piece, Phillips used ultrasonic transducers to capture sound signals from audience members and fish in a koi pond then transmitted these wave patterns onto the surface of the water. This piece inspired an array of similar work using sound signals to manipulate various material substances. One high-profile cymatic sound work was Carsten Nicolai’s *wellenwanne lfo*, originally at the Echigo-Tsumari Triennale in 2012 and re-installed at the MoMA group exhibition *Soundings: A Contemporary Score* in 2013 where I witnessed it in action. In this piece, Nicolai captured inaudible, low-frequency sound waves and transmitted them onto the surface of water. In the artist’s own words:

The installation *wellenwanne lfo* was especially designed for the Echigo-Tsumari Triennale 2012. It uses principles from optics and acoustics, demonstrating the polarity of the elements chaos and order, movement and stagnancy. A two-channel composition of sub-frequency sounds is transmitted onto the surface of a specially designed water pond via four excitors through variations in air pressure. Each sound continuously creates concentric circle waves, causing interference patterns when they meet. By means of synchronizing the sound waves with a stroboscope, the wave patterns can be made visible on a display screen. Depending on the original frequencies induced on the water surface, the interference patterns can be either regular or irregular, hence creating orderly or rather chaotic visual results that cannot be entirely controlled. In this context, the installation can be perceived either as a scientific means of analysis or a resource of meditation, reflecting on natural phenomena on an almost philosophical scope.

The connection between technology, movement, and vision is laid bare in this piece, yet without making a sound audible to human audiences. Instead, sound takes the form of a visible force, literally creating flows in the water with symmetrical and neatly patterned waves on the water. The conceptual statement extends the technical explanation into vague realms of science, meditation, and philosophy.

Lisa Park took this approach even one step further, using electromagnetic pulses from her own brain to create ripples in water. Wearing a headset with electroencephalography (EEG) sensors, Park monitored her own brain waves and translated them into sound waves through a Max/MSP processor in the *Eunoia II* installation. Cutting out the intermediary technology of transduction and at the same time deconstructing the idea of the signal source, Park translated directly from thought to pressure in the fluid via vibrations in a 15" speaker beneath a tray of water. Similarly, Masaru Emoto used an array of vibrational phenomena, including sound and music, to observe and document their effects on freezing water crystals. He claimed that good, resonating music and sound resulted in beautiful crystal patterns and "disfigured crystals in the opposite situation" (Emoto 2001). What these cymatic works had in common was the connection between visual sensory perception and wave pattern regularity. In each case, sound waves were

used to create visual phenomena, whether they could be heard intermediately or not, resulting in a complicated distinction between sound art and kinetic sculpture.

Another form of non-cochlear “sound” is two-dimensional visual art such as painting or drawing. Sometimes borrowing from a musical lexicon and calling this work a “score,” visual representations can be considered another way to listen, particularly among those with bodily hearing impairment. Christine Sun Kim’s work does just that, forging an assortment of semiotic links between how she, a deaf person, imagines the experience of hearing and her abilities as a visual artist. Her series of *Scores and Transcripts* in the MoMA *Soundings* show were two-dimensional works of charcoal, pencil, ink, and pastel on paper that placed text directly on the works, as well as in the accompanying artist statement:

This work is a re-enactment of the unconscious sound I make while concentrating. I often employ my own voice in my work. I can feel it inside of my body, and in this way it is accessible to me. My partner, Thomas Benno Mader, notices ‘a very heavy weight’ on my chest when I make this sound; he describes it as if I have to ‘fight to get the air in and out’ whenever I am focused. He calls it ‘concentration suffocation,’ as I seem to hold my breath as I make this sound. His description intrigued me because I constantly physically feel all kinds of sound coming out of my vocal chords, but whenever I’m not conscious of my own voice box, I make a completely different set of sounds that I am neither aware of nor able to feel. I asked Mader to describe my unconscious sound in a short text. I then attempted to re-enact his description like one would re-enact a murder scene with actors and props. Because it is impossible to fully replicate the circumstances in which I would normally make this unconscious noise, my re-enactment easily becomes a misinterpretation of my own voice. I’m beginning to think I have two voices, like two different realities that are far from each other, but in the same place.

These “re-enactments” were inaudible symbolic depictions of sound from the perspective of someone born deaf. Though the museum website included a sound file to accompany the work, as well, the exhibition consisted only in the four works on paper, manifesting the musical reference of the show as a “contemporary score.” I encountered Kim’s works a number of times in fieldwork, most recently in a series of drawings and videos at the Rubin Museum in early

2018. In each case, visual representations were used to point conceptually toward the sense of hearing.

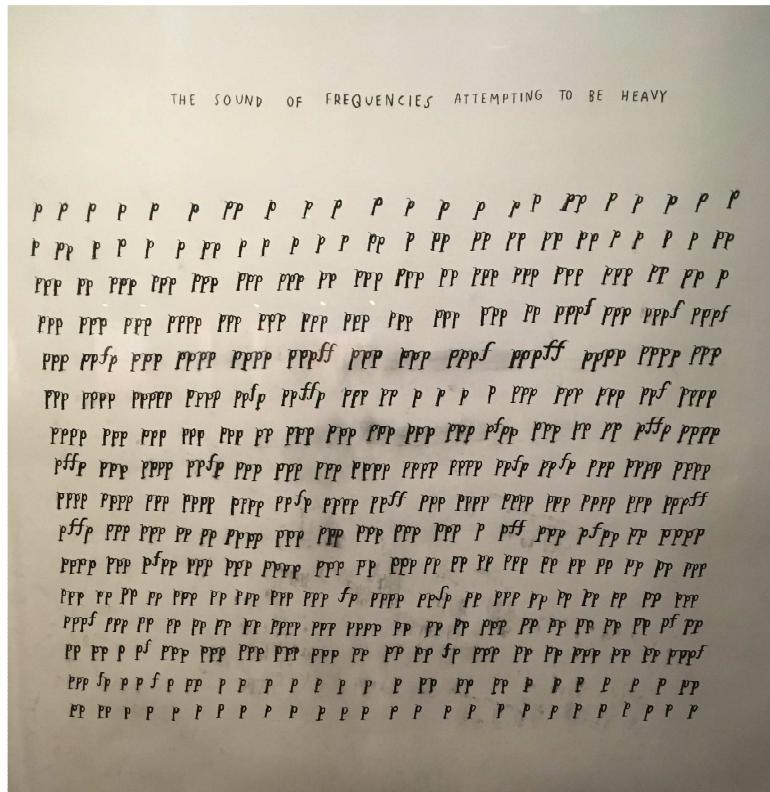


Fig. 4: Christine Sun Kim. *The Sound of Frequencies Attempting to be Heavy*. 2017. Charcoal on paper. New York: Rubin Museum.

Another medium of non-cochlear sound art was even more strictly conceptual, linking art to sound only as an idea rather than a sensory experience. For example, multi-disciplinary artist Cory Arcangel's series *Since U Been Gone* included conceptual, non-cochlear sculpture alongside sounding works. I was fortunate enough to have an interview with the artist via Skype while he was in Europe and I was in New York. He described this series in our conversation:

That piece started off as a CD binder. I collected CDs that were related in my mind to the Kelly Clarkson hit 'Since U Been Gone,' and I kind of organized them in a Case Logic CD binder, and that was two different ideas that kind of came together. One is that I had always wanted to make a sculpture that was just a Case Logic CD binder full of CDs, and that's because I kept seeing them in people's houses. And it was just when they were starting to become depressing to see, because obviously everything at that point was digital, but you would still see these binders lying around in kind of various states of

neglect, you know? And so I made a mental note that I wanted to make a sculpture that basically took the form of one of those cases that I had seen around. And it had just been loosely about the Kelly Clarkson song since it came out, and that is basically a personal interest without any art. I had just been thinking a lot about that song, and every time I heard other music that I felt related to it I made a mental note. And so the artwork was a really nice opportunity for me to kind of give those ideas a form. So when I would hear The Strokes I would think, 'Yeah, this is really related to Kelly Clarkson.' When I would hear Phil Spector, I would think, 'Well this is related to the Ramones. And the Ramones are related to Kelly Clarkson.' So it was kind of a six degrees of separation kind of thought thing... A chain of associations, which you could really point to concretely in the music, where you would hear something over and over again throughout the years, and finally that something ended up in the Kelly Clarkson song. I have good reasons for including all the CDs that I included, and then once I had a CD binder, in order for me to remember which CDs were in the binder I scanned each CD, and then I turned those scans into silkscreens. And that ended up being a whole other manifestation of the piece, which was cool because they were silkscreens on metallic foil, which is actually holographic foil. And so when you look at the print, you actually think it's just a CD because it's just an optical illusion. It's printed on reflective holographic foil so it looks like you just stuck a CD to the paper.

In addition to this print series (2011), the other incarnations of the piece included performance, in which Arcangel DJed parties using the CDs, as well as audible sound art, placing a home stereo or iPod in an art gallery and allowing it to shuffle through tracks on five of the CDs. Though all iterations of the series had a conceptual component, the non-cochlear pieces were unique in that they required their conceptual link to sound in order to transform into an object of art, exhibited in such prestigious places as the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York, Lisson Gallery in London, and the Herning Museum of Contemporary Art in Denmark. Arcangel links these pieces together into a series not by playing the hit song in each manifestation but through a conceptual association. Part of this conceptual bond exists only in his own mind, particularly the specific selection of CDs included in the binder. Quite like Duchamp's readymades, the CD binder takes on content related to the nature of sound, nostalgia, and technological change when it is exhibited in a museum or gallery context; otherwise it might be taken as mundane.

Though the medium of non-cochlear sound had vast currency within the discipline, Kim-Cohen's book *In the Blink of an Ear: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art* (2009) remained quite controversial. Subsequently, in the 2016 *Against Ambience and Other Essays*, Kim-Cohen expressed worry that formal works in sound might become too common within the gallery arts, depoliticizing the art institution into a mere site of pleasant immersion or even a mystical encounter. For Kim-Cohen, these embodied spaces of sensory perception lacked crucial meanings:

Perhaps confronted with avalanching evidence of state and corporate corruption, of the theft and cooptation of private communications and online behavior, of base manipulation of societal values for the gain of a select few, the art world would prefer to escape to soothing environments of diffuse light and sound. [James] Turrell's inchoate spaces of wombessence seem safe from such encroachments. But it's impossible to play possum. While you're in the soft space of light, the NSA and Facebook are still collecting your data. The money in your bank account is still being used to fund who-knows-what without your knowledge or consent. The government you elected is still imprisoning and targeting people with whom you have no beef.

This indictment of the creators of formal works of sound art, of course, was met with significant backlash in the course of this research, even though none of the sound artists I interviewed were working in strictly formalistic ways. Chapter V "Hearing Value" will extend the controversy over Kim-Cohen's approach to sound art to a more fundamental tension between seeing and hearing in the gallery arts. Indeed, by taking the conceptual nature of sound to its furthest extent, non-cochlear sound art foregrounded language and meaning, allowing sensory perception of sound to fall into the background. In conjunction with this type of desonified sound art was an emphasis on material formalism that, oddly enough, did not emit sound either. In this contrasting case, material objects drew the attention back to the conceptual phenomenon of sound.

III.3.2.2 Form: Materiality in Sound Art

Although sound itself is not a material phenomenon, rather a force acting on the matter of air particles, architecture, and bodies, respondents' descriptions of material properties in sound art drew attention back to the conceptual foundations of sound.

Although non-cochlear sound art pushed toward the extreme of conceptualism, sound artists described the formal, non-conceptual aspects of their works in terms of their material properties. This term “materiality” came up frequently in interviews with a wide, and frankly quite confusing, range of meaning. Though the material of an artwork strictly regards its physical properties of substance, matter, and mass, many suggested that sound might share a quality of materiality, as well. Technically speaking, sound is a phenomenon of pressure in space—patterned vibrations on particles of air that are recognizable to human ears—and therefore it is a force upon material rather than a material entity in itself. Nonetheless, interview respondents tended to describe the material targets of sound waves as if they were audible in themselves. Some pointed to sound sculptures, such as the public art trend of benches that seemed to emit sound, and others drew attention to reverberant flat surfaces of architecture, such as gallery walls, as material aspects of the sound. Yet, in neither case was sound itself a material entity, rather a force acting within and upon the material properties of space, objects, and technology.

For example, a music composer pivoted immediately from frustration with the cleverness of conceptual art to describe the non-conceptual work of sound artist Zimoun who constructed buzzing sonic spaces with “a fundamental tactility and materiality” that were not “self-consciously clever.” Indeed, the title of Zimoun’s *317 prepared dc-motors, paper bags, shipping container* took the audience directly to the formal content of the piece, bypassing any conceptual framework. Exhibited in 2016 at Art Basel in Switzerland, the piece was installed with paper-bag-covered motors of slightly different speeds inside a shipping container. A video on the artist’s website captured the range of crinkling sounds and the slow robotic movements of these

animated paper bags. Though primarily working in installation and sculpture, Zimoun also composed stereo and multi-channel works of sound for exhibition and performance. Although he has been performing live about once a year, exhibitions manifested as collectible material sculptures and installations. Sound was one medium employed in the practice, but material forms gave the work legibility in visual art contexts. This respondent pointed to Zimoun's approach as one that emphasized materiality:

I like artists, like my friend Zimoun, who do something completely different with [sound]. He would not call his works conceptualist when you see them. You see them made up of like, 100 different motors that are vibrating with slightly different sounds. That's not basically conceptualist. There's a fundamental tactility and materiality to it that is different from the self-consciously clever pieces like, 'Oh, look what I did with this thing.'

In this case, the materiality of the work displaced what might have been a clever concept or what the respondent later described as a "gimmick" in some conceptual sound art. Yet, the material aspects of the vibrating motors were not properties of the sound but rather a technical sound-generating process, again dissociating the sense of hearing from the valuable aspects of the work.

One of the few formally oriented sound pieces I encountered in my fieldwork was Cecilia Lopez' untitled 3-channel video/sound installation at the Friedman Gallery for the New Ear Festival in January 2016. Exhibited before each night of performances and as an ongoing installation during gallery hours, this audio-visual work was both a document of a personal art practice and an engagement with exhibition space. An excerpt from my own field notes describes my surprise at encountering a formal work in sound at a gallery:

Cecilia Lopez' installation is a three-channel projection of a prepared oil drum with a hole cut in one side to allow light, spinning from left to right. It gives the impression that the audience is inside the drum with a strobe effect in the completely dark room of the gallery. The sound moves through the space from the oil drum, as well, with whirring, plunking, clicking, and humming, all deeply reverberant. The piece was playing as we entered but then seemed to 'start' at one point, and everyone fell quiet. We only knew it

was an oil drum through the artist statement on a piece of paper, but generally this seemed to be a rare example of a non-conceptual formal piece.

Her own textual description of the installation offered little more guidance regarding the process of creation, nor any overtly conceptual orientation for the work:

This installation is composed with footage of a kinetic sound sculpture. This is an object that consists of an oil drum mounted in a rectangular steel frame with an axis that allows it to be spun. It has a speaker inside that is used to play music or sound, which is filtered by the spinning of the machine. The barrel is moved by hand and that movement shapes the sound that is being played from the inside. The sound materials used in this operation include my own compositions, improvisations, and sound appropriated from different media. The content is filtered through the machine several times, each one with a different spinning rate and then they are presented synched.

Though there was little textual description of her process, Lopez' resulting untitled 3-channel audio video piece used spatial sound and three projections to simulate the effect of being both inside and outside the oil drum at the same time. Originally exhibited at Bard College in June 2015, this piece was recreated in the Friedman Gallery space, and I witnessed the piece from my seat on the floor at the packed event prior to the screening of the documentary *The Movement of Phill Niblock* and his performance (Wouters 2015).

This work by Lopez stood out in comparison with other sound art exhibitions I encountered in a number of ways. First, the piece appeared as a document of art practice behind closed doors. Whereas so many other works placed the authorial hand of the artist at the center stage, Lopez focused on the activity of an artist in secluded space, captured with clear documentation and replayed for a watching audience. Furthermore, the piece took the common themes of time and space and folded them in upon themselves. Though the video had a roughly 13-minute length, and the audience sat in quiet observation, the movement of the oil drum stopped and started at different times in each of the three channels, giving a feel of impossible duration. The cameras seemed to come both from within and without the oil drum, and three

channels of video were projected on three walls of a square space. With these three images in motion and the audience at the center, a feeling of immersion as well as distanced objectivity was achieved. As well, the lack of conceptual text accompanying the piece opened it up to vast interpretation or unmediated sensory perception on the part of the audience. The circular moving lights undeniably lent themselves to a connection with the phases of the moon, but the artist did not supply this meaning. The 2016 pre-electoral connection with absent industry, foreign oil, and hollow circuits of commerce came to mind as well, but these ruminations emerged from my free play of subjectivity rather than the guiding hand of an auteur. Finally, the formal aspects of the piece emphasized materiality rather than space. The hollow drum with rusty flakes, the cyclical movement translated into a two-dimensional stereo field, and the way light patterns reacted to motion were all foregrounded, while the sound was nearly photorealistic in its representation: the sound of a spinning oil drum.

Paradoxically, by emphasizing the formal properties of material, the phenomenon of sound became conceptual. Even Lopez' description of the sound art process was left quite vague, drawing sources from her "own compositions, improvisations, and sound appropriated from different media." She directed the audience's attention at the process of spinning an oil drum rather than the particular features of sound in itself. When sound art took a formalist path, rather than a conceptual one, it tended to do so by foregrounding its engagement with material. Though sound is not a material entity, it requires material in order to be perceived, and formal sound art emphasized this relation. Thus, sound art moved in two directions, each specific to the history of the gallery arts. One took the work of art toward language, communicating its conceptual nature as in the non-cochlear work. The other emphasized the sense of sight, primary in the gallery arts, through material forms and processes. In both cases, the sense of hearing was downplayed while

emphasizing the ideas behind the artwork instead, a relation to be explored further in Chapter V “Hearing Value.” However, exactly the opposite phenomenon was evident in the comparative case of art music. Here, actors in the discipline demonstrated their understanding of sound without the assistance of concepts, images, or material forms, rather employing their valuable knowledge of theory and music history simply through the sense of hearing.

III.3.3 Form and Concept in Art Music

Though some suggested that compositional music was forestalled at a moment of high modernism, even John Cage’s clever concepts remained committed to the formal structures of perceived sound.

At the same time that the gallery arts exploded with conceptualism, art music turned toward technical perfection and the vast repetition of minimal sonic units. The acclaimed trailblazers of this form—Steve Reich, Philip Glass, Terry Riley, La Monte Young, and Tony Conrad (Hubby 2016)—repeated scant elements with slight variations over time to achieve a hypnotic and some say meditative effect. Though carrying forth some of the techniques of integral or twelve-tone serialism from Schoenberg, Stockhausen, Babbitt, Boulez, and Webern, these minimalists broke with that discordant nature, preferring to make music that was easy to listen to and that would attract broad audiences. Perhaps the university tenure of earlier serialists insulated them from the need to develop audiences, but the minimalist avant garde sought to create music that would usher listeners into spiritual, ecstatic, and transcendent states, building devoted bases outside classical music circles in California and New York (Lawrence 2009, pp. 27-29). And so, although the conceptual turn in the gallery arts had begun as early as 1917, its heyday did not come until the 1960s, a time when new music was moving from serialism to minimalism, joint manifestations of high modernism. These idioms emphasized formal structure, and interview respondents tended to claim that they downplayed conceptualism.

Linguistic concepts, so pervasive in visual and gallery art of the same time, were nearly absent from musical minimalism. While musical minimalism can be seen as stripping off layers of historical and musicological meaning, such as the diatonic scale, into the bare forms of sine waves, artistic conceptualism stripped off layers of material until the art object existed in its purest form in the mind of the artist. Though these parallel processes of reduction disconnected art and music from their pasts, their paths diverged as they related with language. Though experimental and new music undoubtedly came under the influence of postmodernism in subsequent decades, an interdisciplinary artist, composer, and writer pointed to the relationship between compositional music and high modernism. When asked about the role of concepts in compositional music, he replied, “Well, I mean the received critical wisdom is that music never moved beyond high modernism, which is maybe true. But I guess I want to say, ‘Wait a second, not necessarily. I think that’s too easy.’” The notion of music composition as an artifact of high modernism had its imprint in aesthetic and cultural theory, yet the character of that modernism remained somewhat unspecific. Perhaps the modernist principles of efficiency, atomization, autonomy, and newness were in mind (Babbitt 1958), but the political economy of multiple modernities might reveal the multivalent character of midcentury art music, as well (Schmidt 2006). That art music is an expression, manifestation, or realization of its political economic moment has been the terrain of Frankfurt School theory and the sociology of culture more broadly, yet the respondents in this study offered explanations from art history, musicology, and the humanities as to why the non-conceptual nature of art music persisted despite opposing trends in the gallery arts.

Later in the conversation with this interdisciplinary artist, composer, and writer, I circled back to ask specifically about the missing conceptual statement in compositional music relative

to artist statements in the gallery arts, asking if it was fair to say that this kind of music did not think of itself as conceptual in the same way. He agreed, but extended his answer to the essentially social nature of sound and the possibility of its sublation into a yet-unknown cultural form:

I've been banging my question against the wall about for the last decade or so. I mean, I want a musical practice that is thoroughly conceptual but with the caveat that conceptualism is not maybe the right paradigm... All sound is social. Well, but not really... To me, that seems like a very un-thought-out response to this question. Like, 'Oh, well, because music is presented in a social context that already includes some notion of sociality.' Again, the question is conceptualism, but a lot of times this is the response. Sort of like, well, music is already about the exchange of ideas and concepts or something... What has come before historically can also be changed in the future, so to acknowledge the fact that it wasn't at one time can make room for it not to be in the future... And I think we're living through this moment in which music is reduced to something extremely limited, and we have this particular response to it that is to bracket off a part of this rich history of formal relationships to sound and to call it 'sound as an artistic medium' as one approach to this historical problem. And another is to continue to play along with the modernist paradigm and maybe allude to other aspects that can be recuperated under a broader hermeneutic tradition or whatever. So that being kind of musicology and new musicology. But all that's to say that I think at some point the possibility for, again, not necessarily conceptualism but something in which music, whether it's a form that is reconstituted from music or something almost like a specter from what it has been becomes relevant or even, perhaps, necessary. There's always that sort of openness... When some element of music becomes a model for social organization that it could perhaps change or transform into something else in the way that you could argue that contemporary art has transformed art as something that works more within a certain classical conception of aesthetics to something that must be conceptualized... It's hard to say well, okay, now we're going to speak to this contemporary music crowd but use a logic or a vocabulary just completely grafted over from the visual art world. Not to say that's impossible, because I think that it happens often. Not often. It happens sometimes. In the good moments where Cage is presented in visual art institutions.

In that art music has preserved its relationship with modernism, even anachronistically in the face of the gallery arts, literature, and popular culture, it makes itself and its publics aware of its own historical moment. This quite thoughtful respondent found art music's time-sensitivity to generate the possibility of a new cultural form, yet unknown. Borrowing directly from Marx' method of historical materialism in political economy ([1939-41] 1978), he imagined, along with

other theorists of sound, that auditory culture might undergo a revolutionary transformation, finding within itself the contradictions pointing to another mode of cultural production. Yet, the gallery arts had already come and gone along this trajectory, remaining hung up at the point of conceptualism. Though classical aesthetics were conceptualized in the gallery, he imagined that modernist standards in the concert hall might yet transform themselves into the next necessary historical moment. It is telling that he arrived at John Cage as the only example of conceptual language thriving in music, and even then only in visual art institutions.

Indeed, John Cage was the single most commonly referenced historical figure in all of my interviews. His expansion of sound, noise, and silence in the idiom of compositional music forever changed the landscape of acceptable tonalities and timbres for the concert hall. Yet, the transition to conceptualism and structure that Cage ushered into the music world also carried along his positionality in terms of race, class, and gender. One sound curator drew my attention to a controversial essay Cage published in the *Village Voice*, as well as jazz pianist Cecil Taylor's response:

Cecil Taylor is so great talking about this. You can sort of see this in the Luc Ferrari video that he shot of him in Paris in the '60s. He's asking him about Cage and Stockhausen and he's just like they're not from my community. He's like 'I know they all about their shit, but have they ever come into Harlem? Absolutely not.' And then also there's this famous Cage in the *Village Voice*, trashing jazz. Even still today, Cecil Taylor's like 'John said something he should've never said.' This is a very important split of what's going to get funded, what's going to get valued, what's participating in the intellectual discourse, and what's being marginalized.

This curator has no trouble drawing a direct line between Cage's claims and the institutional history of funding and marginalization. George Lewis and others have similarly noted the problem with Cage's approach to composition and improvisation, emphasizing indeterminacy and chance operations as "serious music" yet deriding jazz as "rather silly" (1996, p. 99). In terms of the opposition between concept and form, Cage's style of composition, musical games,

and graphic scores were an early moment of boundary crossing between art music and sound art through his emphasis on concept and departure from traditional musical form.

Despite John Cage's conceptual intervention into art music, these disciplines have remained quite committed the formal structures of sound. Some musicians reached beyond a descriptive difference between worlds and explained the absence of conceptual frameworks in terms of normative resistance. One contemporary composer even pointed to the conceptual nature of sound art as a reason that he did not choose to self-identify as part of the discipline. Although vast regions of the art world remained conceptually oriented in the ways described by Duchamp, Le Witt, and Kosuth, this conceptual turn had not taken place in the same way in the world of music, if at all. He claimed that the work of conceptualism had already been completed in the gallery arts, at once obviating its place in music and forcing it into the realm of cliché in the discipline of sound art:

I tend to be cynical, and this is another reason why I don't primarily identify as a sound artist, because I have a certain cynicism about a lot of contemporary art. Duchamp, he kind of worked that stuff out. I feel like you don't really need to go forward beyond this, and I feel like so much of the contemporary arts scene is so geared around just rerunning the same clichés of conceptualism that it's treading this fine line between basically being advertising, you know? Advertising. The idea of advertising is that you come up with some little, clever, semiotic thing that makes you go 'Huh' for one second, and when you go 'Huh' your brain puts down its defenses and thinks—the viral vector of control—and you buy something. Conceptual art, so much, is just this one note thing where it's like, 'Oh, that's neat it, great idea for a piece, clever.' This is me being cynical as a musician who's very interested in structure and interested in harmony and all these traditional musical values. A lot of sound art to me is that same conceptualism that I find relatively hollow in the visual arts, but now it's sound, just to make it one more clever thing you can do.

This composer's cynical approach to sound art set up the opposition between concept and form, in this case the clever semiotic unit against formal musical structures, such as harmony. Importantly these formal structures belong to the domain of hearing, while clever concepts belong to the domain of thought, easily translated between an audience's experience of sound art,

critical response, and popular media outlets as advertising. Though one must listen to music in order to understand harmony, one may read an artist's concept in order to understand a gallery work in sound, and this composer found the ease of communication to be too close to advertising for him to affiliate.

What some might call the missing conceptual turn in art music can also be understood variously as the perpetuation of high modernism, the willingness to engage affect, or the resistance to semiotic cleverness. Yet these respondents concurred that the resulting discipline relied on the sense of hearing, a knowledge base developed over time for which sounds are innovative, which musical references are unique, and which hybrid structures might be a creative recombination of elements. Though these sonic features might have been described subsequently with language, they were identified initially by listening. Conversely, the discipline of sound art was identified through language, sometimes bypassing the sensory perception of the work altogether, even making it possible to draw the boundary around sound art without hearing it.

III.3.3.1 Form: Extended Notation in Art Music

Non-traditional notation and performance techniques opened the range of possibilities in art music, yet these expansions did not tend to push composers in the direction of conceptualism.

In addition to the persistent sonic formalism in art music, the graphic score was another way that formalism manifested through the senses, this time offering creative visual guidance to performers through depicted technical instructions. Though composers began to add symbols to the lexicon of the five-line staff in the 1950s or earlier, including Krzysztof Penderecki and Iannis Xenakis, other composers of the time began to work with complete graphic notation, notably György Ligeti and John Cage. These scores opened the notational semantic range to a host of new signifiers, intending to widen the range of signified sounds in the minds of performers. These developments in the symbolic instructions available to composers came

alongside the emergence of “extended technique” available to performers, methods for playing classical instruments in new and unusual ways. The combination of these two innovations led to an expanded formal apparatus in the domain of art music in the mid-20th Century.

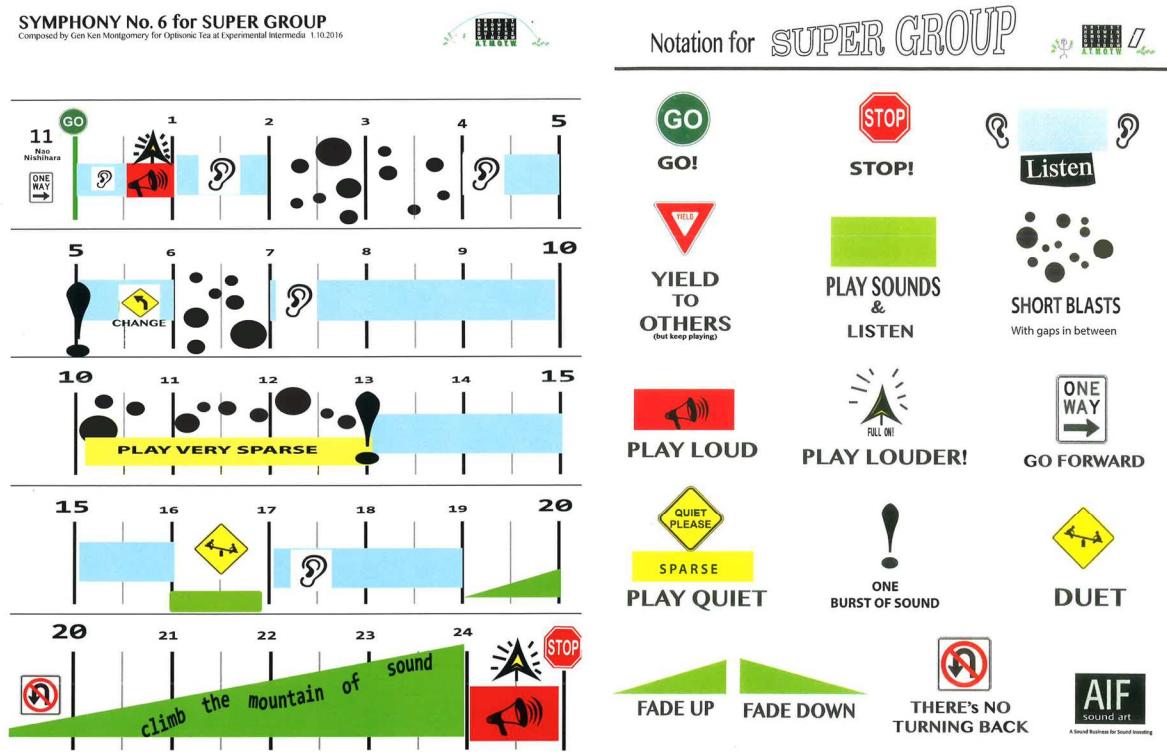


Fig. 5: Gen Ken. *Symphony No. 6 for Super Group*. 2016.
Performed at Experimental Intermedia in New York on January 10, 2016.

Several interview respondents and field participants used graphic scores in their own compositions. One striking example merged the classical five-line staff with other symbolic notation, hoping to instruct performers in the types of extended techniques the composer had in mind:

There definitely always is conversation involved, but in the end I try to keep things pretty traditional. I guess I use that word kind of frequently, but my notation is very precise. It's very much based on meter and rhythm in that traditional way. I use some verbal indications often in the scores because it would really be impossible otherwise, if I couldn't say in a few words or even a few sentences, you know, 'Remove contact microphone at this moment,' et cetera. But then I also try to develop a kind of limited vocabulary of extended staff-based musical notation that can help indicate some of the sonic richness of these techniques.

Though he thought of his notation as “traditional,” built upon a five-line staff, his use of other symbols, most importantly a drawing of a cello, pulled the composition into the scope of a graphic score. This pictorial depiction of the instrument allowed the performer to understand where extended techniques should be applied, such as tapping, scraping, and slides. This notational technique was borrowed from German composer Helmut Lachenmann, specifically from his 1969 composition *Pression*. The graphic aspects of notation were combined with textual cues and instructions, such as when to apply and remove a contact microphone from the instrument, directives that could not be communicated either through traditional or inventive symbols.

This composer offered one example that although graphic scoring had the potential to open up the conceptual space of the composition, the respondents in this study did not think of it that way. Instead, they used graphic tools to guide the techniques of performers beyond the limited range of expression available in the five-line staff and standard Italian text (e.g. *forte*). Another composer used extended notation as a guide for performer reinterpretation of an existing piece. In this case, the score was a recording of a past performance. With only this document in hand, the new performer was asked to reinterpret the composition:

The way I’m conceiving it now, but of course things can change, is I want to have these almost subconscious utterances be the format as an aural score so that I would give a performer this tape of my performances that they would reinterpret for a live kind of thing... But not like a direct, literal score. It’s kind of a starting point, I guess, for reinterpretation... I have a vision of an end point of what I want and then the idea is: how do you get there? And so things can go from being fairly well notated, though I haven’t done that in a while, to being graphically notated or text... I transitioned away from heavily notating it because it seems too final, and the way that I’ve wanted to have a performance or a realization is something that would surprise. There’s no end product perfection. It’s something that could be constantly reinterpreted to have a moment in time that would be great, but, at the same time, even that wouldn’t be the final version. There’s other ways that you can do things, so that’s why I’ve liked to do either more textural based scores, give direction but not make it finite.

This composer was a rare exception who thought of his practice as having a conceptual aspect as well as a popular one. He even went as far as to claim that with some of his compositions he didn't care what the resulting piece sounded like if it achieved his conceptual ambition, a trend more common in sound art than in art music. Yet, despite his proclivity to work conceptually, the use of this audio score did not have a conceptual intention. Rather it was a framework within which improvisers and performers were allowed to interpret, a loose guideline for live performance.

A fascinating comparison with extended musical notation is the use of image files for 3D printing. As one interview respondent pointed out, the design conveyed to a 3D printer can be seen as a very precise composition for performance. Even though these 3D prints appear to be exact replicas of one another, each inevitably will have slight differences, though they may be imperceptible to the human eye. When asked about the tension between concept and form, one composer took his response in this unexpected direction:

This question makes me think of artists who are working with 3D printing where the score is the digital file, and any given print of it is an imperfect copy... I'm interested in the sonic object. I wouldn't want to put myself in the thrall of entirely conceptual or entirely formal works, I guess. I understand the point of view. For instance, there's something like John Cage's tape works, like *Williams Mix*. The process is really the thing, the six months that he and his friends spent in his kitchen cutting tapes according to *I Ching* coin calculations, which coalesce into this four-minute piece that couldn't be further experientially than from the process, in my opinion. [Laughs]

Like the digital image file that is the source of a 3D print, the musical score is a set of instructions for performers who will translate the information into action with varying degrees of obedience. The semantic range of each aspect of notation will allow performers interpretive license, with some works being very precisely ordered and others open-ended gestures. Yet the precision of scoring was no safeguard against an unsatisfying sonic experience, for this

composer. With the example of John Cage's *I Ching* chance operations, even a painstaking score and detailed attention to process can result in a sound piece that might frustrate the audience.

Whereas the drive toward authorship in sound art sometimes manifested in dematerialized concepts, extended approaches to notation continued to emphasize formal sonic structures in the discipline of compositional music. In addition to the exceptional case of John Cage hovering above the boundary between sound art and art music, some sound practitioners crossed boundaries, bringing along their own disciplinary emphases. Boundary crossing was another important way to understand how semantic decisions were made in this discipline.

III.3.3.2 Concept: Boundary Crossings into Art Music

When a conceptual performance artist crossed into the idiom of classical composition, experience and accolades in his native discipline legitimated the crossing.

Though respondents agreed that art music lacked the conceptual turn found in the mid-twentieth-century gallery arts, interesting hybrids of concept and form appeared when practitioners of auditory culture moved from one discipline to another. One delightful example came from Zefrey Throwell's *Entropy Symphony*, particularly in its final movement that is currently underway (2010-2014). Throwell, with a background in philosophy and fine arts, composed four movements of his "symphony" and an additional prelude, performed in locations around the world: New York, Berlin, Los Angeles, Trentino, and finally at the borders of Italy, Austria, and Germany. The first three movements used sound as an aspect of interruptive performance in public space, not unlike Garfinkel's breaching experiments (1967). In the first movement, a team of performers breached every rule imaginable at the Whitney Biennial on cue, causing pandemonium. Throwell described the performance in detail during our interview:

The Whitney Biennial happened in 2010. The museum is split up into multiple levels, internally, organizationally: the curator, the board of directors, the director, and the trustees. And the curator is the one who organizes the show. The Whitney Biennial happens every two years. It's America's best artists, a special show. So the board of

directors thought the biennial was boring. They thought it was terrible, and they were like, ‘Why don’t you come and do a performance here? We invite you as more senior than the curator to come do a performance.’ And I said, ‘Whoa.’ And they said, ‘We just want something crazy, something to liven it up, because it’s boring.’ And I said, ‘All right. I can do that.’ And I tried to break every single rule I’d ever heard for a museum at once. Five minutes—I tried to break every single rule. I took 75 people and organized 25 simultaneous performances, everything from stealing a piece of art off the wall and running away with it (but it was actually a forged piece of art) and security guards tackling me and ripping away what they thought was an original, to people wrestling frozen turkeys in the aisles, to naked people reenacting Duchamp’s *Nude Descending the Stairs*. There were four couples breaking up, violently breaking up. People kissing strangers. People smoking. People fucking in the bathroom. A massive airplane fight. A fake doctor who tried to help somebody who was having a massive back seizure. A woman who got hot coffee spilled on her baby. All of this. Mass pandemonium on every single level of the Whitney and outside. The symphonic part of it comes in when all these panics are happening at once. Guards have walkie-talkies, and a walkie-talkie is a one-way device. When somebody’s talking, nobody else can talk. And then when they’re done talking, somebody else can talk. So with 25 emergencies happening in one place, all the security guards tried to use the walkie-talkies at the same time. So it’d be like [loud garbled noise]. And so the sound came out as crazy chirping noise from all the walkie-talkies at once. This sound was the first Entropy Symphony.

This first movement arrived at quite a conceptual approach to the sound of chaos: a chirping noise from museum guards’ walkie-talkies. Throwell grew a beard for the event, so that when he was tackled and thrown out he was then able to return an hour later with a cleanly shaven face, fresh clothes and wearing contacts rather than glasses. He asked the guard who had tackled him how his day was going and got the response, “It’s been a hell of a day.”

The second and third movements engaged public urban space rather than arts institutions with a similar intention to disrupt public expectations. The second movement used a score to instruct 140 air horn performers in Berlin’s Alexanderplatz in a musical performance. Throwell drew on John Cage’s idea that “whatever’s happening, that’s the music” to create a symphonic movement with unconventional instrumentation in public space.

A kind of call and response symphonic movement used the entire city as a resonating chamber for a five-minute piece that I wrote... Everybody got a piece of paper instructing when and how to blow their air horns. We split into five different parts based on who you were and where you were, and then it was fairly simple stuff. You would tap out

patterns—long, long, short—and then other people chose to modify their air horns by placing things inside the bell, and things like that. It was in the middle of a blizzard, unfortunately, so it was cold. One guy's air horn froze to his hand, because, you know, if you play a compressed air object for five minutes straight in the cold it will just become part of your being.

Bringing together performers' own bodies and improvisatory techniques, this piece began to explore the liminal space between art and music. Though the conceptual intention was to breach social expectations with the surprise of harsh sounds coordinated in a public square, the formal designation of the symphonic movement began to ask questions about the boundary between worlds. In the third movement, a similar public interruption was the conceptual intention, this time upping the ante with 1,000 car horns in Los Angeles:

I took 1,000 car horns: a thousand people with cars. I writ out. I wrote out. I writ out. I writ it. I wrote out a five-voice movement of the symphony based on what kind of car you had. They have charts of which cars make which honking sound, and so if you had a '98 Audi then you got the tenor. If you had a '64 Mustang then you were in the lower frequency. Car horns actually have become more and more annoying. When they first started, car horns were actually kind of pretty, just one note, like [sings]. But when they started to make them with five or six different conflicting notes, then it became the most jarring possible sound. So, a thousand people were organized independently all across the city. It happened while people were sitting in six o'clock LA traffic, which is a time when you might be waiting there for hours. Picture somebody: it strikes six, and they just start honking their horn. Everybody else is just waiting. You know you're going to be there for an hour at least, inching slowly along toward the coast or something. And then one asshole honks the horn, and then two, and then three, all around you at random. I didn't try to control where in the city they were, so I had people as far as Pasadena to the Valley to Venice Beach, all over, everywhere. Downtown you could hear quite a few, because people were getting off work, and there were a lot of people, a lot of employees at the Museum of Contemporary Art. That museum decided to take part, so there was a big concerted effort from them. You could hear a lot there. Otherwise, maybe you'd hear two or three, or maybe you would be sitting in traffic out somewhere in Orange County, and there's just one asshole behind you honking. So, I gave everybody an mp3, and then they'd play it on their stereo and then play along. And one of my favorite things is that there's this crazy bridge: when you're honking your horn for, I would say, 10 seconds, you're an asshole. When you begin honking your horn for longer than 10 seconds, you become a crazy person. Maybe 15 seconds, right? There's this beautiful breaking point where all of a sudden you are no longer a rational person being judged by rational standards. You're somebody to be avoided at all costs. And then, after you hit about the minute mark, you come back to just being a clown, a comedic figure, and then other people will start mocking and mimicking you. They're like 'Ah, look at this guy, huh?'

It's really an amazing arc to watch. And I think [Los Angeles public radio station] KCRW broadcast it on the radio, so a bunch of people were playing along that way, too.

At least three aspects of this performance complicated the boundary between art and music. First, though a score is used, it was not a five-line stave but an audio directive, one suited to non-musical performers and musicians alike. Similarly, “horns” were played, but car horns rather than brass instruments with variable tones. These horns had a range of available pitches, as an ensemble, yet each performer had to play the instrument offered up by her car. Finally, although these elements pulled the performance toward the world of music, the conceptual nature of the movement explored social psychology through an interactive breach of driving norms. The shifting understandings of “audience” members on the highway played out through time, with implications for the perceived mental states of the performers. As well, the contagious aspect of the project was uncommon to music, with other drivers inspired to combust into honking, joining the performance. Though Throwell framed the second and third movements of the symphony as music, their conceptual aspects tended to be non-musical.

The final movement of the *Entropy Symphony* will draw out the differences between music and the gallery arts through interaction between actors. This final piece will be a 10,000-person choir forming a chain across the Italian-Austrian border from Verona, through the Dolomites, through the Alps, through Innsbruck, and finally crossing into Germany and back again into Kufstein, Austria. One singer will be placed every 50 meters across over a 300-kilometer distance, transmitting a single melody through space one note at a time, an act of “sonic dominoes.” Though this final movement has not yet taken place, a *Prelude* prepared for this event within a single fortress at the historically contested border between these countries. In this movement, 500 singers lined the perimeter of the fortress and sang a linear canon, transmitting pieces of the song by listening and overlapping the music as well. However, when

Throwell proposed the piece to the administrators of Transart, an Italian sound and music organization, he was met with some resistance from art music practitioners:

At first I asked for fewer singers, but they said, 'Well, you know, this is where opera was born. This is why it's called *opera*, not some German word, you know?' They have an amazing amount of singers there—50,000 or 60,000 singers—so I met with three major choir directors in Northern Italy and Austria. They were not interested in the project at first, because they're working on a new Wagner festival, you know, 'Wag-ner,' 'Vahg-ner,' your choice. They were unconcerned with an artist doing a three-hour project. They were like, 'We're putting on things that people come from all over the world to see.' And I said, 'Well, this is something different.' After playing them a recording of the *Prelude* to the project and then going to the fortress where it was performed and enacting a lot of it for them, they put their full weight behind it. They fell in love with it, particularly as a way to unite these really disparate regions of Europe. I mean, this area of Italy speaks German. Italian is a second language that nobody speaks there, even though they fly the Italian flag. This is a very big deal. There is a lot of conflict and fighting over this border, still going on from World War I, let alone World War II. And so, to unite this region in something nonpolitical was something the EU was very excited about... One guy, a big guy, didn't think that the music was complex enough, which was interesting. I said, 'Okay, you're a professional. I understand that. I am not a fabulous virtuoso of any kind, nor do I claim to be.' But then I asked him to sing it, and after he sang it he was like, 'Well, I guess it's complex enough.' And this was a big deal, because it's not particularly easy to sing. This will be the longest choir in history. It'll stretch a distance from about [New York City] to Baltimore. It is a concert or a symphonic movement made only of soloists: seven thousand divas, where everyone is part of this massive project, but each person is also the apex of it... One of the things that Transart was very good about was that they teamed me up with a very famous Austrian composer named Wolfgang Mitterer, specifically to address the technical aspects of how to organize that many people singing together. And so, Wolfgang and I are working together on the project. He is going to use this piece after I'm done, and so it was a good collaboration. I find him super helpful. I said, 'I'm not a classically trained musician.' Wolfgang's been doing it for at least 40 years, but he is still very helpful. Both of us have minimal egos, and that has been really nice. But, there are definitely moments when I say, 'I don't know what that means. What's the range of a soprano? Anybody? Range of a soprano?' And then everybody's like 'Oh... you're not... yeah.'

In this clear example of the formal emphasis of many musicians, the conceptual aspects of the piece were also enticing to them, a grand spectacle of European unity at a time of political fragmentation. Yet, the formal components of the piece became a hang-up for several people involved, particularly the classically trained choir directors in the operatic tradition. Though the technical complexity of the piece was drawn into question, upon further investigation that

complexity was not found to be lacking. One has to wonder if the difference was merely one of disciplinary affiliation, with Throwell's background in performance art coming in conflict with these musicians performing works from the traditional repertoire of the region. Though this final movement will not have the conceptual relationship with "entropy" that the prior three movements had, it will be a spectacular conceptual work nonetheless. By jumping the hurdle of the formal aspects of the composition, Throwell invoked his background as a conceptual performance artist to convince stakeholders to take part.

The cleavage between conceptual sound art and formalist art music was quite durable across the interviews in this project, and even the boundary cases of non-cochlear sound art, material forms, expanded notation, and boundary crossings reaffirmed the importance of the distinction for practitioners. Specifically, the semantic boundary between sound art and art music was used to decide which artists, musicians, and works belonged in which discipline of practice, with consequences for the success, support, and funding of those actors. Gatekeepers held much of the power to attribute works in sound to one discipline or the other, but fellow practitioners also had much to say about the appropriate semantic distinctions between modes of practice. The identities of artists and musicians were consequent to the organizational and semantic boundary work between these disciplines, as well.

III.4.0 Boundaries of Identity

Underrepresented identities were faced with a feedback loop between a lack of high-status experience and the inability to gain that experience due to empty CVs.

So far we have heard evidence from different corners of the world of auditory culture about how participants draw boundaries around their aesthetic assemblages. Organizational heuristics have been insufficient to make decisions in boundary cases, and the semantic difference between conceptual or formal sound has found varied applications. The allocation of

sound into disciplines was contested along with their definitions, and these competing approaches to boundary work may have been sufficient to render the field of cultural production model inoperable. Along with disciplinary boundaries, practitioners' identities were used to decide what to do with the sounds they created. Education was the primary identification for many, and holding a Masters in Fine Arts, particularly in sound studies, was thought to bring better odds of success in sound art. Education worked differently in art music. Though many styles of composition required higher education, other forms of writing and performance did not. Musicians in many idioms have prided themselves in being "self-taught," and this DIY ethic persisted in this study.

Although many respondents noted shifting demographics in auditory culture, gender, race, and class continued to be tools of privilege in these disciplines. Of the 108 participants in this study, 72% were men, and this gender dominance seemed to be consistent across all modes of practice and administration. Race was not as easy to generalize among this sample of interview respondents, with the demographics of Germany quite different from the American case. Yet, people of color in the American disciplines of auditory culture were underrepresented relative to race proportions in the population at large. The particularities of the New York sample confounded generalization about race and ethnicity, as well, with many of the respondents in this study coming from other parts of the world and residing in New York as a global hub for their art and music forms.

The underrepresentation of women and people of color in these disciplines was consistent with the worlds of art and music, as well. One sound sculptor explained the absence of women in the discipline in terms of a systemic cycle:

I have to say there are never women in their shows. It's as if women don't make sound art, which is complete bullshit. I've had quite a few fights with my gallerist about it. He's

tired of hearing it. He did let me do a show, but he was like, ‘There aren’t... I can’t find them.’ I was like, ‘Let me curate a group show. I’ll get six artists, and I guarantee you their work is just as good as the boys.’ He’s like, ‘Yeah, but their CVs aren’t good.’ And I’m like, ‘Yeah, why aren’t their CVs good? Because people like you and [another curator] say that their CVs aren’t good enough.’ And yeah, you have to start somewhere.

Without being given a chance to exhibit their work, these women sound artists were unable to build their CVs, as well. This sentiment was echoed among not only women in the discipline, but to the frustration of men who wanted to make the art world more egalitarian, as well. The effects for boundaries of practice were sometimes that women were excluded from participation, not according to the organizational or semantic affiliations of their practices, but according to the boundaries of gender.

Along with an understanding of the variety of social boundaries that are established between the adjacent disciplines of sound art and art music, this project also discovered some of the consequences of crossing or fusing boundaries, as well. The act of boundary crossing was not always an artist or musician’s choice; gatekeepers and critics were also responsible for plucking practitioners from one discipline and dispatching them to another according to organizational and semantic boundary determinations. Yet, not all workers in sound were so easily categorized. Though many of the respondents in this project participated in both disciplines, they tended to maintain a primary affiliation, according to critical response, education, informal training, or social networks. Only a few were able to genuinely fuse the disciplines into a distinct hybrid practice, and one of my primary field sites, the Dream House, was among these rare blends.

III.4.1 Crossing Boundaries

The ability to cross boundaries of educational identity, particularly from art music into sound art, required new networks of legitimization.

As seen in III.3.3.2 “Concept: Boundary Crossings into Art Music,” Zefrey Throwell was met with some opposition when moving from a background in performance art into the highly

formal world of classical composition. Yet he was able to draw on his experience and legitimacy in the art world to make it work. Yet, crossing the boundary from art music to sound art came with even more complicated judgments, and critics often had the power to place an organization or practitioner in one discipline or another. A unique space on the Lower East Side of Manhattan in the 1980s began as an experimental music performance venue, but it organically morphed into an exhibition space for sound art. At this later phase of its tenure in the neighborhood, it continued to host performances with a beginning and end, a feature many ascribed to music, while it also exhibited “sound environments” in the basement space:

I really had these sound art environments, and I remember at that time there was a guy who used to come to the early [space] who wrote for the New York Press, which was like a local paper. And he also had an article about experimental music in Keyboard Magazine and he wrote some articles about some of the people that came to [the space]. So he was kind of like growing in writing and he just kind of stopped coming. He never came anymore. And after a while I wondered why he never came. And I actually called him up and I asked him, I said, ‘How come you never come anymore?’ And he said, ‘Oh, because I follow the music world. I don’t follow the art world. You’re in the art world.’ And I remember that was when I first really started thinking about this distinction. Like, oh, I’ve transitioned to the art world, but yet I wasn’t in the art world at all, so people in the art world didn’t come to [the space]. But I guess I can’t say for sure who all was coming to [the space], but, yeah, it was a strange thing. And people are playing instruments and making sounds, and it begins and ends. And then what I was doing now at the new place was – yeah, in a way he was kind of right, but I liked blurring the distinctions between the two.

Though the loss of coverage by one music critic may not have been catastrophic for the space, this small gesture denoted a loss of musical affiliation in exchange for supposed affiliation with the gallery arts. At the same time, although some might imagine affiliation with the worlds of music and art to be a trade-off, with art status acquired through exclusivity, this gatekeeper sought to exist at the contested boundary of the two disciplines. His commitment to this liminal realm of auditory culture made disciplinary attribution quite difficult, and at least this critic

considered his curatorial practice to be a crossing of the boundary rather than a fusion of disciplines.

In addition to critical response, the education and informal training of organizational patrons and members had the power to place a space in one discipline or another. This same respondent went on to describe some of the sonic similarities in the boundary region between art and music, with many experimental musicians making sound that might be thought of as sound art. The experiences and expectations of visitors, performers, and exhibitors were sufficient to identify the space:

I also found that the people that were attracted to [the space] at that time came either from a music or an art background, like they actually knew music or they knew art. They knew music, but they were on the furthest edges of music, so they went deeply into abstract sound kind of things. Or they were visual artists who became interested in sound, and sound incarnated into their art, but they thought it was important. There was this nebulous area between the two but they would show their roots kind of a lot of times in a way in how they would – you know, musicians would tend to think like musicians and want to put out a record. Artists would want to have an exhibition, you know?

Important to his distinction is the tendency for musicians to release recordings while artists gravitated toward exhibition. Though this difference appeared to be one of disciplinary conventions, the two types of production have economic implications, as well. Whereas the sale of a recording is often thought to be limitless – even material copies of records can be endlessly repressed or reprinted – the art world continues to orient itself around the principle of collectability. As will be seen in the following chapter, the relationship between sound, collectability, and reproducibility require extra-textual valuation achieved in practice.

Aside from the differences in production and reproduction, others echoed this respondent's claim about knowledge as the differentiating factor between music and art. For some it took the form of formal training and education:

I would say because I was never formally trained in music, I would never call myself an experimental musician or a musician at all, really. I just call myself an artist. That's it. You know, the differences between electronic musician or experimental musician I'm not quite sure about. I think the musician is the most important part... Typically I'll correct people and just say I'm an artist.

Just as the former respondent claimed that training, education, and expectations of production bounded the worlds of art and music, this respondent concurs that he felt uncomfortable claiming membership in a world in which he had not been formally trained. Curiously, the idiom of experimental music tends to premise itself on the non-necessity of training. Though the discipline is thought to be filled with self-taught musicians, this respondent still imagined that formal training in music was necessary for membership.

Of course, the most powerful way to cross the boundary between sound art and art music was to shift social networks in one direction or the other, and several artists and musicians intentionally made the jump in this way. Educational environments were also important in this instance, though not in terms of the theory and forms of practice learned in these institutions. Instead, they had the effect of shifting a practitioner's social network and aiding the process of recontextualization. Some classically trained composers built a network in sound art by pursuing an MFA in the discipline, and others made the transition from other disciplines of the gallery arts, such as performance art, in the same way. Social networks also pulled art musicians into sound art experiences through curatorial decisions.

For example, the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago hosted a twenty-five-hour performance entitled *Cage Unrequited* by William Pope.L. This event drew on the art and music communities in Chicago to read the entire text of John Cage's classic text *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (1961) by a continuous stream of small groups. The program notes describe the piece's intentions: "The performance reimagines the book for contemporary audiences by filtering a bit

of the past through the voices and attitudes of a diverse community of more than 100 invited readers from Chicago.” I was able to attend the reading for some time, overwhelmed by the art-world obsession with John Cage laid bare in the public reading of such a lengthy text through the night. Despite this fixation on the unquestioned figurehead of conceptual composition, I noted that as many musicians as artists took part in this work of “performance art,” allowing even popular musicians to dip their toes into a new type of creative practice for the night. A sound art dealer stated directly, “I think his book should be the Bible of sound art. Everyone is like, interpreting it like the Bible, like, in different ways. So, no, it's great. It doesn't even have to be that serious, too. But, you know, you see people with no education to a lot of education interpreting it in different ways.”

Sound art events such as *Cage Unrequited* became opportunities for musicians to cross the boundary, drawing on their art-world networks to take part in another discipline for a night. Yet, this boundary crossing did not require wholesale re-identification. When expansive networks allowed musicians to practice another art form, they did so without the complications of valuation that came with other types of boundary crossing. These boundary crossings were not uncommon on the part of auditory cultural producers, and primary identifications were not threatened by the occasional foray into another discipline. However, very few were able to fuse the disciplines genuinely or durably. Though many respondents in this study claimed not to care about the boundary between art and music, valuation practices suggested otherwise. One of the only instances of genuine fusion came from my extended fieldwork at a renowned institution of New York auditory culture: the Dream House.

III.4.2 Fusing Disciplines

Only rarely were artists and musicians able to fuse disciplines into a genuine hybrid of auditory culture, and the Dream House was able to do so with such finesse due to the canonical positions of its founders.

The most compelling critique of boundary assumptions in field theory may have come from rare instances of disciplinary synthesis. La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's Dream House was created out of their TriBeCa loft in 1993 as a fusion of light and sound into an immersive and transcendental sensory environment. Young's trailblazing experience in the New York minimalist music composition movement confirmed his historical significance alongside contemporaries Philip Glass, Steve Reich, Terry Riley, and Tony Conrad. Though he may be best known for his work in this idiom of 1960s New York, he went on to practice as a raga and Kirana Gharana musician, mentored by Pandit Pran Nath. His partner Marian Zazeela brings light to the sound supplied by Young, working in molded neon, colored light, and colored shadow. Though her training was in painting and her early career emphasized calligraphic drawing, her works in light have been said to inspire artists ranging from Andy Warhol to Dan Flavin (LaBelle 2015). The two have been collaborating consistently since they met in 1962.



Fig. 6: La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela. *Dream House*. 1993. New York: MELA Foundation. Photo: Marian Zazeela.

I first encountered the Dream House on January 15, 2016 while I was doing interviewing and fieldwork in New York. Many people had recommended the space to me when I told them I was studying sound art, and I recorded my first impressions in my field notes from the day:

I've been hearing about the Dream House for years now, but it's one of those things that I put off visiting because it's always there. I buzz to get in, and am admitted to the corridor. I walk up three flights, and an attendant is at the door. He asks me to take off my shoes, put my coat and bag in the corner, and suggests a \$7 donation. I oblige and proceed into the Dream House. The sound radiated through the door, so I had a sense of the pitch and tone I would encounter, but it was immersive when I walked in. I immediately went to the right, a small room with a geometric 3D hanging on the wall, lit to create shadow. I sat down in the middle of the room on a pillow and began to listen. Two sounds overlap, each changing with movement through the space. One is a low pulse, with what sounds like a filter as I move. The other is a higher-pitched buzz. Even the slightest movement creates a sine wave through the space, but perfect stillness makes the pitch stay intact. The pitch doesn't change with movement exactly just some kind of phase I can't put my finger on. I stay in this room meditatively for a while and hear the attendant come into the bathroom and back out. I get up and move into the next room. The sound becomes louder and more intense toward this larger room. There are four large speakers in the corners of the room and pillows around the periphery. One pillow is in the center of the room. Two spiral paper mobiles are hanging from each side of the room, and the lighting makes them appear as if there are four. An altar to an Indian guru is on one side of the space, with incense burning and photos on the wall. I first walk the periphery of the room to feel the change through the space. Windows are covered with black plastic, though it is already dark outside. After a perimeter walk, I sit in the middle, moving my body slightly to interact with the sound. I sit here for a while, then start to move, stretching my legs on the ground, suddenly aware how rare it is to have this much open space in New York (more than I've felt in a while). I move stretching and expressively in the space, and I have it all to myself. Another attendant or volunteer moves from the door to the bathroom or the kitchen area briefly. I sit in the center again, calm and welcoming the sound. It becomes completely saturating and engrossing. I'm reticent to leave. I love this space. I begin to devise a plan to work as a volunteer the next time I'm doing fieldwork in New York.

Volunteering at the Dream House was just what I did. After only one or two attempts to contact the organization through their general email, I received a response from one of the other volunteers, welcoming me to help at the space during the summer of 2016. I was tasked with helping install the multimedia work of the founders' disciple, Jung Hee Choi. Though most of my time was dedicated to installing Light Point Drawings #23, #24, #25 and #26 as

Environmental Composition 2016 #1 (2016) for the exhibition *Ahata Anahata, Manifest Unmanifest X* (2017, Fig. 9), I also assisted with the video projection *RICE* (1999), an incense installation *Color (CNN)* (2009), and a multi-media graphite drawing *AUM* (2008). We moved slowly through the space, treating the objects with care and precision. Aside from stopping each afternoon for coffee and cookies from the bakery down the street, we worked quietly and calmly in the more than two-month process of installing the exhibition. I was unfortunately not able to see the work completed, because I had to return to teaching in Chicago; yet I was able to revisit the space in October 2016 and see the striking results of the summer's work.



Fig. 7: Jung Hee Choi. *Ahata Anahata, Manifest Unmanifest X*. 2016.
Mixed media: black wrap with pinholes, translucent paper, video. 23' x 10'8".
New York: MELA Foundation. © Jung Hee Choi 2016

The light point drawing was a massive work of tiny punctures on four floor-to-ceiling sheets of black wrap. Black wrap is matte-finished studio aluminum foil used to control and reduce spill light, and the punctures "create elaborate curvilinear patterns that are inspired by the

shape of incense smoke. Incense smoke is a vapor; it does not have a solid physical body and its form is infinitely variable" (Choi 2009-2017). Behind these sheets of black wrap, eight symmetrically aligned projectors cast slowly moving color fields through the punctures, creating the effect of a moving drawing. Choi's own words best describe the process of creating the light point drawings:

Most of my work came into being not through logical deduction but more from a revelatory discovery during early experimentation. In 2008, one day I was resting after hours of working and experimenting with a number of video devices. I turned my head to face the video projector on the floor, which was connected to a VHS video deck. At that moment I became totally attracted by the beautifully choreographed moving light from the video projector and gazed at it for a very long time in a completely transfixed state. Of course, focusing on the projector was very harsh and abrasive for the eyes. However, as one looks at the projector one cannot recognize the image it projects but can only see the moving and transient patterns of light. These transient patterns revealed to me that this perception corresponds to a Buddhist understanding of reality, which advocates the illusory nature of subject-object duality, sees all apparently opposite concepts, which in Korean are gong (emptiness, transcendental reality) and saek (matter, perceived reality), intrinsically as one. I wanted to create a work that utilizes projection light itself but does not project an image, and started experimenting with different objects that could cancel the representational quality of projection and could allow the viewer to confront a profound light source. Around that time I was diagnosed as glaucoma-suspect. Glaucoma is an incurable eye disease that can permanently damage vision. I was totally crushed and felt absolutely hopeless. It seemed that there was no meaning to go on in life if I would have to give up being an artist. However, I tried to find a way to continue to create visual work without seeing it, and a way to use my other senses to perceive my work. I discovered that when I puncture the black wrap with a needle, I could read the image with my hands as if they were braille points. The motif of the patterns in these works grew out of the organic curvilinear shapes that Marian Zazeela had developed in her drawings from the early '70s. When the *Light Point Drawing* is stretched out on a horizontal flat surface, the drawing is almost indistinguishable and is like invisible braille points. I was not able to see the whole composition while I was working on the drawing and had to rely on the intelligence of my hand to create the patterns. When light strikes one surface of the long scroll of the *Light Point Drawing*, only the light that has passed through the needle holes is visible from the other side. As the light from the projection passes through the needle holes, the video image loses its representational properties and can be seen merely as colored light. The drawings are viewed as indiscernibly moving light from the video projection glowing through the needle hole patterns, creating an abstract and analogous representation of *Manifest Unmanifest*. (2009-2017)

Drawing on her personal experience with a glaucoma-suspect diagnosis and the guidance of her mentor Marian Zazeela, Choi created an undeniably beautiful two-dimensional work through a meticulous embodied process. In addition to the material works, Choi's composition *Tonecycle Base 30 Hz, 2:3:7 Vocal Version* was amplified through the space during exhibition hours.

The compositional approach of Young, Zazeela, and Choi drew on the method of “just intonation,” which applied intervals in whole-number ratios to frequencies (in this case 2:3:7), rather than working with fixed pitches as in the Western European tradition. With these interval relations, this composition used 77 sine waves and 6 voices to ascend to a fixed frequency destination over the course of 16 minutes before slowly descending to the starting point in another 16 minutes. “Each of these seven sine wave frequency components gradually separates from each of the other components over time while ascending at slightly different rates of speed, and then descending toward the starting frequencies, infinitely revolving as in circles.”

Starting Frequencies (Hz)	@ 16 minutes (Hz)	@ 6 hours (Hz)
120.0	120.088890	122.0
120.0	120.177780	124.0
120.0	120.266670	126.0
120.0	120.355552	128.0
120.0	120.444442	130.0
120.0	120.533333	132.0
120.0	120.622222	134.0
60.0	60.044445	61.0
60.0	60.088890	62.0
60.0	60.133335	63.0
60.0	60.177776	64.0
60.0	60.222221	65.0
60.0	60.266666	66.0
60.0	60.311111	67.0

Table 3: Jung Hee Choi. Rates of Frequency Change in *Tonecycle Base 30 Hz, 2:3:7*. © Jung Hee Choi 2011-2015

With these technical parameters of the 77 sine waves in place, the three vocalists improvised over the droning tones (although they were actually creating an *implied* tonic through constant motion at fixed ratios). This vocalization intuitively responded to the constant yet imperceptible change in the sine waves. Again Choi explains the nature of the composition:

Music is a relationship of sounds. In Indian music and all modal music, each pitch of a modal scale is determined in relation to the tonic. In Indian classical music, a pitch is not always a fixed frequency but its relationship to the drone determines the musical meaning of the pitch. This openness and wide range of possibilities allows improvising performers to have some control over the scale and to express subtle microtonal articulations of the pitches of the mode in which the raga is set. The harmonic series extends beyond the limits of our perception and each set of harmonically related pitches produces a particular set of combination tones that together create a unique musical essence. Amidst the infinite shift of tones in *Tonecycle Base 30 Hz, 2:3:7*, both the fundamental and its relative pitches in invariant ratios, can be considered isomorphic to the infinite possibilities of a unique essence. (2011-2015)

The “infinite possibilities of a unique essence” were isomorphic with the exhibition as a whole. The combination of two-dimensional drawings of light in motion, projections *of* incense alongside projections *on* incense, and the constant whirring of the symmetrical *RICE* video projection fused with this composition into the unique essence of the Dream House. Though the history of the space has used Zazeela’s gradients of colored light with Young’s motion sensitive sound installation, Choi brings together these elements along with careful material craftsmanship and the implementation of new technology, such as video projection and a live feed from CNN cable news.

The installation space also hosted performances of the piece *Tonecycle for Blues Base 30 Hz, 2:3:7, Ensemble Version with 4:3 and 7:6* by The Sundara All-Star Band, including Young, Zazeela, and Choi contributing vocals, the brothers Jon and Brad Catler on guitar and fretless bass, Naren Budhkar on tabla, and 77 sine wave frequencies all in collaboration. I revisited the field site for one of these performances and was able to have dinner with the artists after the

event. While we shared Lamb Vindaloo (Young is known to say “To sing like a lion you have to eat like a lion”), the artists described their experiences at the space over the years to the volunteers and acolytes. Not only was I inspired by the founders’ lifelong commitment to their art forms, but I was also grateful to see the beautiful result of committing myself for the short duration of a summer to work with the gifted next generation.

It is hard to explain why the *Dream House* achieved such a profound fusion of disciplines into a genuinely unique art form. Perhaps the spiritual commitments of the artists lend authenticity to the practice and process of creating their work. Perhaps the esoteric knowledge of frequency ratios and cyclical phase patterns mystified my understanding of the resulting sound works. Undeniably, the artists’ idiosyncratic personalities and worldwide celebrity confirmed the distinctiveness of the space and the MELA Foundation supporting their work. Ultimately, the decades long collaboration between composer La Monte Young and gallery artist Marian Zazeela has manifested in the multidisciplinary work of their disciple Jung Hee Choi, and the tenure of these prolific artists in their worlds makes them able to fuse disciplines in a genuine way. The confluence of these factors led to a rare fusion of sound art and art music, one that was seldom achieved in my field experience aside from this very special place.

III.5.0 A Boundary Work in the United States and Germany

Brief but compressed observation in Berlin drew out some of the differences in boundary work between the two national contexts.

Though my field observations were primarily drawn from New York and Chicago, I became curious about sound art in Berlin, as well. Many interview respondents reported exhibiting their work in Berlin, and others pointed to the city as the other global hub for the art form, aside from New York. With a small grant, I scheduled a packed two weeks of observation and interviewing in the city, amounting to nightly performance observations, attendance at many

exhibitions, and 26 formal interviews. Of the national similarities and differences that arose in these conversations, differing approaches to boundaries were foremost. Though organizational boundary work tended to be quite similar in the two contexts, semantic boundaries were drawn and ordered differently, prompting me to reflect on the rigidity or fluidity of the conventions they employed.

III.5.1 Sound Art and *Klangkunst*

While allowing the conceptual statements discovered in American sound art, the narrow German idiom of Klangkunst was rigidly formalist in its boundary distinctions.

Before traveling to Germany, my respondents in New York had referred elusively to the art form *Klangkunst*. Without much explanation, a few of them had mentioned that Berlin is the other global hub for sound art and that they have a distinct form of sound art that is not as common in the United States. When I traveled to Berlin, this distinction between sound art and *Klangkunst* came up in my earliest interviews as one of the most important differences between the disciplines in these national contexts. One respondent even handed me a jump drive with an article that clearly described the distinction:

The German texts on *Klangkunst* ('sound art' in German) focus upon the sound material's relation to a spatial location where sound sculptures and installations are given central focus. These are genres that transcend the old divisions between spatial arts (*Raumkunst*) and the time-based arts (*Zeitkunst*). A strong emphasis on the dual aspect of seeing and hearing could be described as a central point of departure. *Klangkunst* concerns an investigation of both time and space, through ear and eye. In the English literature on sound art, there are often references to sound's inner aesthetical qualities. The perspectives on sound's relation to room is evident also here, but the perspectives are however broader, in the sense that the aspects of space and locality are diversified and pluralistic. (Engström and Stjerna 2009, p. 11)

The authors go on to explain that the intellectual history of *Klangkunst* comes from musicology, while the "sonic turn" in English literature draws more broadly on cultural studies and acoustic phenomena, technology, and design. They continue to mention that although English texts have been incorporated into the German literature, "the tendency is not reciprocal" (2009, p. 11).

In addition to academic textual descriptions like this one, German classic works of art criticism and history have explained the art form, as well. Many interview respondents pointed to Helga de la Motte-Haber as a foundational scholar in distinguishing the art form from the visual arts, music, and even other types of “sound art” in the broad English sense. Of her many publications on the topic, including handbook entries defining the term (1999), Motte-Haber draws on a musicological background to distinguish the discipline from other types of aesthetic practice (2002). Unfortunately, I do not read German and had to rely on interview responses to clarify this difference in terminology. Yet, even practicing sound artists and scholars struggled to convey the difference, such as this sound art program director:

I've been trying to disentangle the different histories and also definitions in the US and in Germany, and I haven't managed. [Laughter] It's also very much connected, because American artists were coming over very early on... The definition depends a lot on who you ask. There's a very narrow sense of it, which really depends on sound installations and only that... And then there's a broader sense that also involves sound performances or just any kind of work with sound that goes beyond the musical tradition, which can simply be that a visual artist works with sound, or people with a contemporary or visual art background start working with sound. Well, obviously most of the time they'll do things a little bit differently than musicians would do them. For many people this already qualifies as sound art because there's just a different approach there.

Just as was reported in the American context, educational background was important to boundary work between disciplines. Though the resulting sonic experiences might be quite similar, a practitioner with a Master of Fine Arts was often said to make “sound art” the educational background of musicians was quite varied.

In order to understand more about the distinction within the international discipline of sound art, I relied on artists to describe their own understandings of the boundary. A successful sound artist explained that the designation of *Klangkunst* was a strict aesthetic boundary coming from a small coterie of art world gatekeepers:

In the German sound art scene there are very entrenched positions that have been carved out. At the moment it seems like the argument is that there's something called *Klangkunst* which means 'sound art.' But they're like 'No, but if it's *Klangkunst* then it is this!' And 'this' is minimalist and based on an old cabal of artists who, like Rolf Julius, kind of established a set of very minimal pieces with soundtracks from field recordings and not much color, things in black and white... You get a very warped sense of what the world is if you talk to them... And Helga de la Motte-Haber is the historian and critic who's really on that side, that sound art is this thing. Anything outside of that is basically bullshit, as far as they're concerned. It's just bad art, which is masquerading as sound art and has not enough focus on what the nature of sound is. And this is the categorization. People want to make their little box that they can live in, and everything outside the box is nonsense... It's *Klangkunst* versus sound art, so there are a lot of composers and DJs who would say, 'I'm a sound artist,' even though they're basically spinning techno, but they would never say, 'I'm a *Klangkunstler*.' That would be too bold, and you'd risk getting cut down by the powers that be.

With a strict definition of the aesthetic properties of the discipline, *Klangkunst* carried along similarly strict judgments among these gatekeepers.

Along with Motte-Haber, this respondent pointed to Carsten Seiffarth, a powerful curator in Berlin exhibiting works of *Klangkunst*. Though I was unable to reach Seiffarth for an interview, I was able to attend an exhibition at his gallery, *singuhr projekte*. The current installation *Objekt* was by Edwin Lo, a sound artist in residence with the gallery, based in Hong Kong. Several respondents pointed me toward this sound installation as a good example of the classic form of *Klangkunst*. His artist statement explained some of the technical and conceptual apparatus:

Over the past few years, I have explored different paradigms in working with the theme of seascape and water in terms of field recordings, performance, and sound installations. By extending different elements of my previous artistic materials such as stones, glasses, mirrors, and sound transducers, I attempt to expand and constitute a new phase of the combinations of these materials into a larger scale of a sound installation with the sounding of riverscape in Berlin. Throughout the residency period I investigated and recorded the auditory landscapes of rivers, canals, and lakes in Berlin and transformed the sound materials into spatial sound experiences that allows careful and attentive listening. Meanwhile, the installation aims at articulating different levels of translation between the recordings and the materials that I use in this installation. We are not only listening to the sound itself or the abstractions of sound but at the same time we listen to

different kinds of translations and interactions of the sound recordings with the glasses, stones, and mirrors or even the space.

As I had been prompted, this installation drew attention to the medium of sound, emphasizing its physical properties in time and space. With a limited color palette and a small collection of material objects, the gallery transformed into a sound environment. These sounds were quiet and textural, and I was unsure how to explain either where they came from or how they reverberated in the space. A pile of rocks and mirrors filled the center of the room, and I found myself walking around in circles to understand the sonic properties.



Fig. 8: Edwin Lo. *Objekt*. 2017.
Multimedia sound installation in Meinblau Projektraum. Berlin: Singuhr.

The same sound artist who explained *Klangkunst* to me in the above interview also pointed me to Lo's installation to understand the German discipline. He was equivocal about the originality of the exhibition, but part of this reticence regarding the show may have come from his own experience with the gatekeepers of *Klangkunst*:

I mean, there's a perfect example up right now at [*singuhr projekte*] by a Hong Kong artist who looks like he studied everything that happened in Germany ending about 15 years ago. And, I mean, it's his own piece. He's developed something, but I walked in and I was like, 'Wow, that's a Rolf Julius piece, just bigger.' Everything's in black and white and gray, and it's like rocks and a mirror and a nice white room. It really is *Klangkunst* in the way that there's a whole school of German critics, curators, and artists who are really convinced of that and also extremely protective. Some are quite active in cutting down the plants that they consider to be weeds. I would be one of those.

By drawing boundaries within boundaries, these art world gatekeepers are able to carve out a space for their own aesthetic choices. This sound artist likened the act of boundary work to making a distinction between plants and weeds, simultaneously legitimating the choice of which to cut down.

Just as this sound artist might have felt the distinction between plants and weeds to be somewhat arbitrary, or at least an act of power in the gallery arts, others were similarly uncomfortable with the attention to sound as a medium of practice. One sound artist working in Berlin explained that it would be absurd to put together all "visual arts" as a single idiom, and the blanket terminology of "sound art" made him uncomfortable, as well:

I was just saying that when I was reading literature about sound art it didn't really make sense to define it as this one thing, because it's actually quite multifarious, and people have come to it from different positions. And it would be like saying 'visual art' as if that were a genre. I mean you might be a visual artist, but then it generally gets quite quickly broken down into sculpture, installation, painting, and Conceptual Art. So from that perspective it's just as ridiculous as saying 'visual art.' It's just so big and there are so many different approaches... I think sound also lends itself to conceptual practice, I think just because you can't see it. So you tend to internalize the experience more. And I think it's somehow inherently more contemplative or reflexive.

Not only was sound as versatile and multifarious as the "visual arts," this respondent also found works in sound to lend themselves particularly to contemplation and conceptualism. This approach to sub-disciplines might have permitted them to coexist side-by-side, rather than requiring a hierarchical ordering of aesthetic preference. As will be seen in Chapter IV "Inscribing Sound," his inclination to rank objects against one another can be seen as an act of

economic *agencement*, measuring value in quantities rather than describing qualitative differences between art forms.

Of course, this inclination to position artworks hierarchically was not unique to the German case of *Klangkunst*. Rather, the strict aesthetic standards of the sub-discipline were a way to codify a boundary as an even more refined act of semantic boundary work. Though the American context used the worlds of the gallery arts and music as semantic distinctions between works, this German case drew even finer distinctions between what would and would not be eligible for disciplinary inclusion. A sound artist working in Berlin made the link between an “old school” German definition of sound art and Seth Kim-Cohen’s conceptual definitions of the discipline:

I think it’s also really German to really define things... I often say ‘old school’ sound art, and by that I mean art that’s dealing very much with sound in a room or the phenomena of sound or our perception of it. So I guess that’s what Seth Kim-Cohen would define as ‘sound in itself,’ though not strictly sound in itself but also sound and its relation to the world or the room. But essentially, yes, sound is a phenomenon, but maybe that’s also because it was just the beginnings of sound art, so people were fascinated within itself... I feel like so many people have done that kind of work, and that is always fascinating anyway, but it’s not interesting for me to pursue it.

Other artists echoed this fatigue with liming the content of sound art or *Klangkunst* to the phenomenon of sound so rigidly. They might have preferred to use sound to communicate something other than the physical, spatial, and durational qualities of the sense of hearing, instead using sound to communicate something about media and digital information processing, as did this artist.

One practitioner who was able to use the rigid definitional space of *Klangkunst* to make art that communicated beyond its boundaries was British artist Max Eastley. While I was in Berlin, his *Lines and Traces* exhibition at *daadgalerie* was showing as part of the *mikromusik* festival of experimental music and sound art. This festival certainly took the broad view of

auditory culture, incorporating installations in both gallery and public space alongside music performances of composed, improvised, and experimental forms. Along with several other field observations, my attendance at this exhibition drew out the homology between sound and nature, as intended by the artist statement:

The exhibition *Lines and Traces* at the *daadgalerie* presents a selection of installations by British sound artist Max Eastley, who combines kinetic sculpture and sound into consistently surprising unique forms. The work of the artist and musician born in Great Britain in 1944 (2017 ABP guest) is created primarily in the interplay between artistic intervention and nature, not in the sense of imitating nature but of imagining and inventing it. Envisioned contours of a landscape or motion patterns of fictitious insects are divided into smaller details and multiplied in a variety of ways; the variations are the result of slight deviations in the attempt at repetition. Patterns and rhythms are produced whose richly detailed characteristics can be perceived by the eyes and ears in meditative contemplation. In the two installations, movement, drawing, and sound are placed in nonlinear relationships to one another: continuity and discontinuity, periodicity and irregularity are directly linked. The drawings and paintings of Max Eastley, presented in this solo exhibition for the first time, recall studies of movement, form, and color. The drawings are taken from sketchbooks Max Eastley has made since the 1960s.

A kinetic sculpture spun in clockwise circles around a simple terrain of sand and rocks, making clicking sounds as it moved. Though the pace of the rotating sculpture was static, the rhythmic sounds it produced were irregular, drawing out the connection between perceived regularities in the grains of sand and the slight differences that were able to differentiate one stretch of topography from another.

In this case, the physical properties of sound were not the focal point but rather the result of a material process. Yet, the stated links between “continuity and discontinuity, periodicity and irregularity” were manifest in the exhibition. I went away unsure if this work would qualify as *Klangkunst* or not, even though some directed me to the exhibit as a good example of the discipline. Nonetheless, this work seemed to bring together many of the conceptual and perceptual elements of the German context in a single piece by a British artist.

III.5.2 Rigid and Fluid Boundaries

Ample yet shrinking institutional support for sound art in Germany may have had to do with the rigidity of its disciplinary boundaries, whereas the fluid yet complicated boundaries in the American context might have derived from privatization and market forces.

Few could explain the comparative rigidity of the German art form of *Klangkunst* without defaulting to stereotypes of national character, as with the above respondent who claimed it was “really German” to define things. Upon digging deeper into the origins or an explanation of this narrowly defined art form, some respondents explained changes in European art funding. Respondents in the Germany and the United States were unanimous in the claim that there was more public funding for art and music in the former than the latter; European institutions maintain many budgets and departments designated for auditory culture, whereas even the single American agency for art funding—the National Endowment for the Arts—has been threatened with elimination. Though public arts funding is much more common in Europe, in general, one American sound artist working in Berlin found the lack of funding in the United States to be affecting the German context:

The definition [of *Klangkunst*] gets wider and wider. There’s still a lot of focus here, because there’s museum support. There are a lot of museums, even in small towns like Magdaburg. It’s got quite a nice sculpture museum. They do sound shows, and then there are grants. And it’s all gradually being dismantled, of course, because they look around and say, ‘They don’t have grants, and they have art.’ It’s like, ‘No, don’t do this!’

Referring to the absence of public funding in the United States, this respondent caught wind of German organizations that borrowed the logic of privatization, assuming that auditory cultural practices would continue without support.

Perhaps some of the comparative rigidity of German disciplinary boundaries had to do with ample yet shrinking funding for sound art. With budgets on the chopping block, subject to neoliberal austerity measures, disciplinary territories became even more important. Though distinctions like that between sound art and *Klangkunst* might have disappeared with time in

other disciplines, they remained important boundaries in the face of increasingly limited funding. One critic, editor, and curator of contemporary music and sound art working in Berlin pointed to this disciplinary competition:

I could be wrong, but I have a little bit of a feeling that ten years ago in Berlin you would only speak about sound art in the German sense, but very often now you can hear also Germans speak about sound art or *Klangkunst* and they basically mean experimental music. So, it's a little bit changing in that sense, too... Also, sound art curators have to be pragmatic, of course. I think there are more sound works being curated by sound art curators which are more performative. Of course, I've been to so many seminars, and when the German curator or whoever starts talking there's always someone who says, 'Why, when we talk about sound art, do we always have to spend the first 30 minutes by definition?' And it's a little bit like that... It's important, because it's a matter of funding and recognition, as well. I have also seen sound art exhibitions that have been kind of hijacked. This is especially in Sweden, but they have hijacked the idea of music or sound art and just called it 'art.' Here we are an art exhibition space, but now we are exhibiting music as art.

From an economically rationalist point of view, it should have come as no surprise that gatekeepers and practitioners would want to preserve their disciplinary domains. Fluid boundaries risked diluting aesthetic standards and conventions that had taken work to legitimate in these disciplines. Yet, the fluid boundaries of American disciplines came from an economic context of competition for private collection and sponsorship, whereas the comparatively rigid boundaries of German art forms had to maintain their legitimacy while public coffers were thought to be drying up.

This chapter has moved from the simplest distinction between art and music—that art was exhibited in museums while music was performed in concert halls—to the many examples of complicated boundary cases. With such variety in the way people understand “what is sound art,” the field model started to make less sense for this empirical case. If those within and without the boundary of a field disagreed about fundamental definitions, nor were they aware of important others doing similar work, the very concept of a bivariate hierarchical space seemed to

rest on faulty assumptions. Rather than a field with objective, if contested (Bourdieu 1993, p. 42) boundaries, the stratified segmentations of molar lines better fit the case of auditory culture (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987, p. 195). As will be seen in the next chapter, “Inscribing Sound,” actors did not share an understanding of rubrics of value either, making economic *agencements* a better-suited model of the observed case.

IV: INSCRIBING SOUND: TEXTUAL VALUE DEVICES IN AUDITORY CULTURE

“The blink of an eye lasts three hundred milliseconds. The blink of an ear lasts considerably longer. From birth to death, the ear never closes.” (Kim-Cohen 2009)

IV.1.0 The Language of Value

In early 2014, Jeanine Oleson’s four-month residency *Hear, Here* at the New Museum resulted in a wide range of art objects, practices, and documents: an exhibition, several public programs and workshops, a publication, and an experimental opera. Crossing from sculpture to performance and back to the display of material objects in a museum setting, textual description became the link between each manifestation of the residency. As I was still early in my study of sound art, I struggled to understand the connections between these disparate aspects of her project. Knowing little about the exhibition except that it was a “sound art show,” my first encounter upon entering the gallery was a garment rack of costumes for a cast of Carmens, bloody Lucias, sad clowns, hunchbacks, bohemians, and the ever-present operatic cast of rich and poor. Cardboard boxes of props sat on the ground. On the back wall of this corridor, a 42 x 34” photograph of a landscape was displayed, an image of the entry to a cave. In a glass case, three ceramic objects were exhibited, two of them round carved mazes and the other a square with finger-sized indentations. I could hear recordings of famous arias coming from another room in the exhibition, but this entryway itself emitted no sound. After viewing these works, I discovered the laminated map to the exhibition on the wall and began to read in order to understand why I had been directed here in my exploratory study of sound in the gallery arts.

If this description seems like a bizarre introduction to the world of sound art, it was for me, as well. None of these works made a sound, and musical, rather than artistic, themes figured prominently. Upon reading the object descriptions on the laminated gallery guide, I discovered

that the costumes were relics of a conceptual opera already performed, in which the audience wore the costumes and the quartet of singers wore civilian clothes. The ceramic sculptures were titled *Scores*, meant for tactile reading by singers, and the untitled photograph was meant to represent a throat, begging the question, “What is the exterior, and where does the interior begin?” These works each relied vitally on text for understanding, and I found myself feverishly transcribing the descriptions from the laminated guide into my notebook before I left the exhibition. Though I was aware of the Conceptual Art movement of the 1960s and avant-garde music made by Dada, Futurist, Surrealist, and Fluxus performers of the early twentieth century (Bürger [1974] 1984), my expectations of a sound art exhibition were confounded by this early encounter with the discipline.

Sound art is a discipline of auditory culture juxtaposed with art music and quite distinct in terms of valuation processes (Gans 1974) and organizational hierarchies (DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976; Zolberg 1989; Pachucki, Pendergrass, and Lamont 2007). Although I initially understood sound art to be any work of auditory culture performed, displayed, or exhibited in a gallery or museum, my understanding has been both expanded and refined over the course of 105 semi-structured interviews and four years of fieldwork in Chicago, New York, and Berlin. Practitioners and administrators vary in their own understandings of these worlds, but the (contested) “Assemblage of Auditory Culture” in Figure 3 emerged from qualitative research into native understandings of the two main disciplines of auditory culture investigated in this study: art music and sound art. Within the worlds of music and the gallery arts, these two disciplines of auditory culture are only a fragment, yet the nuances of categorization are crucial to understanding the internal processes of valuation. For example, though some respondents claimed that performed sound on instruments did not qualify as “sound art,” others utilized a

conceptual approach to performance and scoring in order to push their work into this category of value.

Though I initially expected sound art to be valued in terms of its audible properties, it struck me as quite puzzling that text accompanied the sonic at each step along the way from production to exhibition and reception. With the exception of highly conceptual “non-cochlear” sound art that does not emit an audible sound, these artworks present a sensory stimulus to audience members’ ears; yet, with a relatively short tenure and historically rare presence in the art world, these works tend to rely on text for valuation and evaluation (Lamont 2012). Upon entering a gallery or museum, art audiences may immediately hear these artworks, depending on the architecture of the space and the sensory abilities of their bodies. However, language also accompanies these works on a number of platforms, giving context in terms of art history, theory, and criticism. This textual basis is a primary mode of sound art valuation in the gallery arts, at least supplementing, but at times supplanting, the sonic properties of the work.

This chapter sets out to establish sound art’s reliance on language to communicate valuable concepts to gatekeepers and audiences. After a look at the evaluative processes of meaning making in the cultural economy, the next section will draw out specific characteristics and examples of textual value devices in the gallery arts. These devices appear in the form of artist statements and art criticism on the platforms of handouts, wall text, program notes, grant applications, and online, constructing value for works that otherwise might be mistaken alternately as music or visual art. Three possible explanations for the linguistic valuation of sound art will be explored: art historical paths, technical maladaptation, and sensory learning. After looking at these particular features of sound art texts, this chapter will proceed to contrast sensory perception and textual understanding as distinct forms of economic *agencement*, with

implications for the relationship between the body and evaluation in other worlds of the cultural economy, as well. Though works in sound are quickly emerging in the gallery arts, with group and solo exhibitions popping up at large museums and prestigious galleries around the world, the art world is still learning to listen.

IV.2.0 Cognition and Meaning in Cultural Economy

Market devices refer to the material and discursive tools used to construct markets, but text is used in auditory culture as a more general form of economic agencement, rendering the aesthetic economic.

The economy for cultural objects “as such,” including works of art, music, literature, film, and performance, is a contested site of valuation. As we saw in II.2.0 “Models of Cultural-Economic Value,” although some would dissolve the cultural and economic realms into a single market of aggregated value (Frey 2000), others would differentiate them into contextually specific niche tastes (Harrington 2004). Between these extremes, field models of cultural-economic fields divide the two spheres of culture and economy into distinct hierarchies of value (Bourdieu 1985, [1992] 1996, 1993), objective in their aggregated patterns of value yet subjectively determined through social action (Baumann 2007; Santoro 2010). Each of these models of the cultural economy carries assumptions about the process of value attribution. Although market models would exempt valuation from cognition through the invisible hand of the price mechanism (Hutter and Throsby 2008), models of extreme taste differentiation may fail to recognize the meaningful homologies of norms and values between social actors (Sayer 1999). Field theory, on the other hand, includes a wide array of models of cultural consecration, ranging from the social psychological (Fiske and Taylor 1991; Simpson 1981; Vaisey 2009; DiMaggio and Markus 2010) to strategic action in organizations (DiMaggio and Hirsch 1976; Wolff 1993; Fligstein and McAdam 2012) and structural (Bourdieu [1992] 1996, 1993; Lena 2012). Despite the informational assumptions that may not hold in the case of auditory culture (see II.3.0

“Knowledge in Fields”), they have been the dominant sociological way to understand the cultural economy.

On the other hand, although economic sociology has long considered markets to be configurations of actor behavior rather than rigid formal structures, a growing literature takes an even more pragmatic emphasis in its consideration of market ontology and morphology. These studies of markets consider multiple conventions of valuation (Favereau, Biencourt, and Eymard-Duvernay 2002), methods of calculation (Espeland and Stevens 1998), and expectations within transactions (Zelizer 1988, 2005). This scholarship tends to be suited to situations of uncertainty and the specificity of individual economic interactions. Yet drawing such attention to the specificity of market behavior can reduce analysis beyond generalizability, and more recent work considers the commonalities of “market devices” across contexts (Callon, Millo, and Muniesa 2007). Most continue to emphasize the commensurability of value through metrics, technology, and data aggregation analytics (Burrows 2012), but others have extended the notion of market devices to the senses (Kim 2017).

Market devices are “the material and discursive assemblages that intervene in the construction of markets,” including pricing models, analytical techniques, merchandizing tools, trading protocols, and aggregate indicators (Callon, Millo, and Muniesa 2007). Though these tools can be considered to have agency on their own, they cannot operate apart from the actors who utilize them, whether helping or forcing actions to take place. In this sense, market devices are assemblages or *agencements* (Callon 2007; Hardie and MacKenzie 2007) of actors, devices, and the networks between them. Originating in the classic *A Thousand Plateaus* (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987), the relation between the assemblage and *agencement* has been disputed (Phillips 2006), with the *agencement* particularly denoting the connection between a state of

affairs and “what we say about it.” Though Brian Massumi translated the original by Deleuze and Guattari as “assemblage” ([1980] 1987), it seems that they chose *agencement* for its particular epistemological meaning, and this chapter will move in that direction of understanding the relation between text, value, and action in the world of auditory culture.

In this way, a market device is a type of “socio-technical device,” a term borrowed from actor-network theory (Callon, Méadel, and Rabeharisoa 2002), shifting our understanding of the nature of agency from the human subject to the nexus of people and objects. An economic *agencement*, then, is that which renders a thing, process, or behavior to be economic. Though the price mechanism might be an obvious market device, other devices are not so obvious, and the economic *agencement* is a social relation that “economizes,” whether through interaction, description, or transfer. For the purpose of this chapter, the difference between a market device and an economic *agencement* is a crucial one. Though the use of text in sound art contexts is not a market device, in that it does not specifically relate works of art with “circulation, pricing, and exchange” (Callon, Millo, and Muniesa 2007, p. 4), it is an economic *agencement* in that it renders an aesthetic object economic, subject to hierarchies of value. Calculations of price are seldom made in this narrowly defined art world, and capital does not flow freely or in large quantities. Yet, adjudications of value are at the surface of nearly every sound art interaction, an economic *agencement* of the aesthetic. Thus, the use of text in auditory culture is a device of economic *agencement*, describing the value of sound for art practitioners, gatekeepers and audiences even when these ranked objects are not given a price, nor are they ever exchanged.

IV.3.0 Textual Value Devices

The conceptual emphasis of the gallery arts uniquely poised sound art to use language as a device to construct value in works.

Though the markets for sound art were often opaque to artists, other practitioners, and myself as a researcher, the economic *agencement* of aesthetic value was evident in many instances. Specifically, the conceptual emphasis in the gallery arts uniquely poised sound art to use language as a device to construct value in works. Though some sound artists used formal aspects of their work, such as audible sounds, to communicate the valuable content of their work, they tended to offer textual statements, as well. These textual statements originated from artists, curators, gallery administration, or art journalists and critics, and they were disseminated to publics in a number of ways, each with unique implications for the creation of value in the work. Perhaps the prototypical textual value device was the artist statement, and it was communicated through a number of different platforms in gallery arts contexts and in the media.

Beliefs about the flows and quantities of economic capital in the disciplines of sound art and art music were recurrent points of controversy in this study. One experimental musician made an explicit claim about the money available to fine artists. Regarding the differences between the worlds of art and music, he said, “You know, in a lot of ways they’re very similar, just there’s way more money in the art world.” Though he found more “diversity” in the world of music, he found more economic capital to be exchanged in the art world. Yet, his own position as a musician dipping his toes into the world of sound art must have informed this explicit belief about capital flows. Alternatively, a sound art curator noted the “silly” tendency for musicians to pitch themselves to him as sound artists:

I think it’s just a strategy to assign different types of value and meaning to a practice in different sort of contexts. Sound art sounds fancier... but I also understand that people need to do that to make a living and, you know, there’s artists that I know that definitely are like, ‘Man, I need to get out of music and get into the art world.’ Yeah, you get more

money, so like whatever. It's cool. They can do whatever they want. You know, their practice is still their practice.

Though many art musicians attempted to make the shift into the world of sound art, they struggled to redefine their practices according to the values of the gallery arts. In the struggle to assign value to these works of sound art or music, many musicians relied on critics to assign textual value for them:

The value system is so different in [the art and music worlds]. I mean, I think in music it's a little bit more – I think it's a little bit more defined – like, the terms in the music world, just because I have some musician friends and some producer friends, and it's – it's very – it's a little bit more rigid and – and the art world, it's more flexible, it's more fluid, and things are not – there's not so many rules... You just need to know good critics.

Though he found the art world to be more flexible, he also pointed to critical response as one way to add value to these works. In addition to lacking the formal education used as a signal of value by curators and gallerists, they reported to me the need to frame their work as “conceptual” rather than musical or straightforwardly sonic.

Despite mixed perceptions of economic value in the worlds of art and music, respondents unanimously acknowledged the challenge in establishing a collectible market in the discipline of sound art. One approach to collectible value was to produce a material object as part of a work in sound. Performance artists are known to sell these material artifacts as representations of their work, though ontologically distinct, and they can collect high prices in art markets indeed. For instance, Marina Abramovic has famously sold artifacts of her performances for quite high prices on the primary market and at auction. Yet, she also sold collectible sculptures that had an interactive, performative quality with audiences. Her Quartz Pillow series sold objects used in performance at collectible prices:

The 1995 exhibition at Oxford consisted of standing platforms, constructed out of wood and copper, mounted on to the gallery walls at various heights, resembling medieval statue niches. Crystal blocks of solid quartz, carved and polished into pillow-shaped

headrests, were mounted onto the wall-based platforms, and members of the public were invited to step in to them, standing upright with the backs of their heads resting on the crystal pillow. The artist encouraged these participants to assume meditative states of mind in an effort to absorb the ‘vibrations’ and ‘healing’ powers from the crystal. The present work was produced in an edition of 3 to accompany the exhibition, aside from the unique objects used in the abovementioned ‘performance.’

Selling the material objects used in performances was reminiscent of archeological museum collections displaying the tools and implements used in rituals and ceremonies throughout time and geography. Yet, the collectability of these objects relied on the valuable career already established by the artist in performance.

According to this logic of value, sound art tended to rely on material objects for collectible value. Sound sculptures had no problem finding markets, because they were legible material objects for dealers and collectors alike. However, installations were more challenging for dealers to describe to collectors as worth their purchase. One sound art dealer explained the difficulty in finding the right buyer for installation work:

One of the challenges that I find interesting is to sell installation art. [An artist I represent] does installations, and a lot of times it's just a sound piece that's presented over like ten speakers, which is why it's only collected by people that can understand this type of work. But it's totally doable, you know, it's just about how you sell it.

When I asked about the tendency for some collectors to house artwork in warehouses rather than to re-install them in spaces, this dealer agreed that some of these collected pieces would not be exhibited again:

I think we really have to work with the collector on that, like, how they want to present it. I mean, so many collectors own work and then put it in a storage space. They never see it. They never even look at it, you know? It goes from the gallery, delivery, and art handler to a warehouse, and that's it for, like, 20 years. But I try to push that. We could install something in someone's room or for a space, and one of the things with sound art, you could turn it on or off.

She looped back to describe the collectability of sculptural work, such as a recent collection of work by an artist she represented who used transducers on metal to create low vibrating tones.

These sculptures could be displayed silently or could be “turned on” to add the sonic medium to the visual when it was desirable.

Following the path laid out by video art, sound artists often mentioned the possibility of editioning their work: only allowing a limited number of copies of a piece to be sold. The era of mass replicability of sound and music makes this limitation a fragile one, often maintained in trust with collectors’ own self-interest in mind. “Owning” a work of video art housed on YouTube or Vimeo might be confounding to some collectors, while others understood it to fit naturally in the “age of mechanical reproduction” (Benjamin [1955] 1968):

The art world is still very old-fashioned, in a way, that they still work in a very kind of – many rules are just not published, you know, they’re just really unsaid things. So that is not online yet, thank – you know, luckily. I hope someone doesn’t just make another site or app that just like, you know, puts all of the under-workings of the art world on it. But, you know, when a collector collects a piece, you know, what really draws them to owning something is also about the artist, too. It’s about that as a whole, owning an object, and ownership of something. You know, so usually when you buy a video or an artwork, you know, photo or you know, a sound piece, you get a certificate of, you know, authenticity, and that’s issued by the gallery or the dealer. So, you know, in that sense, that creates security and value for the work, for the collectors. So I mean, then they feel more safe that that they own this work, they own edition one out of the three. So if it’s on YouTube, you know, I don’t – I don’t think they – it would be – it wouldn’t matter to a lot of collectors. Maybe it would to some, but you know, to certain friends of mine, they’re not bothered by that because they own it and they have it.

Though very few sound artists I interviewed were successful in selling editioned works in this way, photographers, printmakers, and video artists have led the way in maintaining the collectability of reproduced works based on their material singularity. Yet, owning a digital file or a private link to a work housed on a “cloud” was more precarious and relied on the open-mindedness of collectors.

Aside from the exceptional examples of material objects or editioned works in sound, sound art collections remained quite rare. More often, sound art required extra-sensory support in order to become valuable to art world gatekeepers and collectors. The world of the gallery arts

relied heavily on concepts for value, but these concepts did not always require textual explanation. An American sound artist working in Berlin explained that some visual works did not require a great text to explain their conceptual foundation. Regarding a work of conceptual sculpture by another artist:

You can apprehend completely everything that's there. There is no manual for this thing. There's no great text. The text, you just come up with it. It's sort of so blatant. There's no subtlety to it, in some way. The subtlety only comes probably when you walk away from it and the image is still in your head, and you start mulling it over. In some ways I think when you're standing in front of it, in some ways it's so stark that it's when you leave that the conceptual side starts to kick in.

He went on to describe Nathan Coley's 2007 conceptual sculpture *Untitled (Threshold Sculptures)*, a piece in the collection winning him the Turner Prize for that year. This piece simply took a piece of threshold molding from a door in a gallery space and drew a distinction of one place from another. The above respondent went on to explain that the conceptual simplicity of a piece like this one did not require text to be immediately apprehended, yet it was not "about" the material or visual aspects of the piece. He said plainly, "The manifestation of the piece is in most ways unimportant. It could be anything."

With the concept visually achieved, the audience would be satisfied to supply the understanding without a lengthy statement. In fact, Coley's website included a brief interview describing his desire to stymie critics' penchant for conceptual understanding:

The threshold sculpture is a simple eight-centimeter-high plank of wood on the floor, which you have to step over to enter the gallery space. Very simple and a bit annoying—I think of them as being a frame for the space. Critics hate them, as they think I am trying to trip them up, which of course is exactly what I am doing.

However, sound works were not so lucky. With so many gatekeepers and audiences yet untrained how to hear value in works, they required textual explanations of the underlying concepts or technical features that made the sounds valuable to the gallery arts. These texts took

many forms, ranging from the classic artist statement to responses by art critics, and they appeared on several platforms, including handouts, wall text, program notes, grant applications, and online. For each type of textual value device, the following sections offer one example from fieldwork and interviewing to exemplify the empirical context.

IV.3.1 Artist Statements

Without textual support in artist statements, works of sound art might be mistaken alternately for visual art or music.

Though some artists wrote statements about a particular exhibition, collected body of work, or even an individual piece, other artists preferred to write about their practices as a whole. Particularly in the case of sound, these artist statements may fuse the technical and conceptual aspects of a piece into a single description. Ursula Nistrup, a Danish sound artist who has done curatorial work in New York, provided ample text to accompany her conceptual works in sound, beginning with this general statement on the “About” page of her website:

My multidisciplinary work takes its point of departure in the human ear as an organ that we use to navigate the physical world, and as a sensory apparatus that can simultaneously open up this world towards other speculative and enigmatic horizons. To me, sound is the most affective dimension of human perception. It offers an extremely rich and intricate pathway into psychological, existential and social situations and conditions. Grounded in a conceptual minimalist tradition, I investigate sound in and of itself but also as a cultural phenomenon, how sound creates worlds, intimate imaginings and expanded spaces. I am especially interested in the way that sound—as music—has shaped human imagination and cultures all around the world for thousands of years and will continue to do so for as long as humanity is around. I work in sculpture, installation, photography, text, performance and drawing. Common to these different output formats is an attention to materials. I listen to materials. I learn from materials. And finally I expand the field of resonance of the materials. (2016)

Drawing attention to the particularities of the sense of hearing, Nistrup’s statement both justified sound as an artistic medium and distinguished it from the world of music. This general claim oriented the audience toward her work, including the psychological, social, and cultural

dimensions of her concepts. An additional statement “On My Work” expanded the conceptual framework for her practice as a whole:

As part of a conceptual base, these projects attempt to investigate issues of perception and communication, through the use of acoustics, sound and light. Through each project a possible suggestion is established and their aim is to reveal how perception and communication occupies our physical and mental space. This approach is not simply the tool of the work, but also as essential part of the subject. Therefore I regard sketches, notes and tests as much part of the work as any pieces presented or publicly displayed. This continuing and non-definite approach to the work, I base upon situations, thereby employing structures or other kinds of essences, even if they involve social and/or political notions and simply formal interpretation. These projects are undergoing a constant review by the process, as they are constantly questioned, and resiting to each situation. This website will exist as an accumulation of these projects, as an extension of this constant review, and hopefully constitute a reference point for an interested audience. (2016)

Beyond these two general artist statements, text accompanied each individual work with a wide range of conceptual content. Though a general statement of the technical process accompanies some of the work, these tend to be her visual works, earlier in her career. For example, her earliest piece *Handheld in Situations* (1998) is a series of three photographic negatives. The accompanying text simply describes each as such, “4'x5' Handheld exposed negative 1:5 Cph 1998.” Similarly, *This work was created while walking next to a river in Glasgow* (2001) is a series of watercolors. The accompanying text is as follows: “Several sheets of A5 paper with water colour. Placing drops of liquid water colour in one end of a sheet of paper, walking with it until it dries, then extending the marks to a new page.” These visual works describe process and material, including dimensions and changes that took place. However, as her career proceeds, three parallel changes occur; Nistrup’s work veers toward sonic media, expands the length of accompanying text, and adds conceptual content to the technical/process orientation of the visual work. Perhaps these changes are concurrent with her development and maturation as an artist, but the relationship between sonic media and conceptual text cannot be denied. In her *Tonewood*

Hills (2012), Nistrup begins by describing the material properties of these five sculptures, but she begins to suggest a conceptual nature:

5 pieces of hand carved, sanded German spruce wood, coated with white shellac. Individual sizes, between 30 cm and 55 cm. The shapes and carvings of these pieces are made to mimic the shapes to be found in the landscape, the tree line in the German Alps, where these spruce grow. The carvings also make reference to the use of this wood as resonating material for the construction of fine musical instruments. In this construction process, even minute differences in form influence the resonating quality of each instrument.

This non-cochlear sound piece relates itself with the potential sound of the wood through a conceptual statement, and absent this accompanying text the carved wood planks would lose their sonic meaning. By explaining the piece in terms of sound, the material objects take on sonic value.

More recent pieces expanded on the sonic concepts underlying the works. Although the 2014 *Eavesdropping* appeared to be a book, Nistrup conceived of the piece as a “tonepaper.” The accompanying text explained that the bound paper was indeed a musical instrument:

How can something immaterial acquire a shape and occupy space? Music and sound belong to the category of things that inspire feelings such as affection. The aesthetic information they contain is essentially untranslatable and transcends language. Over the past decade, Ursula Nistrup has worked with a range of different media with a distinct focus on sound and its relation to space in the attempt to confer upon the former a perceptible shape through the mediation of images, language and architecture. Between the pages of the book, as if they were the supporting walls of a tale or the pauses in a composition, four different sheets of handmade paper are inserted, each with a specific composition, weight and surface, and each generating a distinctive tone, and sound when they are shaken. Together they comprise a new work, *Tonpaper*, which, as a musical instrument, represents the shape and space of a sound.

Though this piece might easily exist as a book, it took on art value through the accompanying conceptual text, blurring the line between a limited printing of a book and the editioning of a printed art piece.

Whether sculptural, two-dimensional, or in bound form, most of Nistrup's work manifested as a material object. One exception was the conceptual performance *A Musical Investigation of a Space in 3 Parts* at the Sorø Art Museum in 2014. The artist statement accompanying this performance for violin and cello described it as an investigation of forbidden sexuality in religious contexts:

This composition was initiated by artist Ursula Nistrup, taking the form of a collaboration between herself and the cellist/composer Cæcilie Trier, and artist/violinist Maria Diekman. The composition was written and performed as part of the exhibition *Immateriality no. 3 (consciousness)*, curated by Birgitte Kirkhoff for Sorø Art Museum, in Sorø, Denmark, May 2014. The composition is part of a new body of work which Ursula Nistrup created specifically for the exhibition and with the unique properties of the exhibition space in mind. The project investigated a musical phenomenon known as the tritone interval. At various times throughout European history, the use of this interval was forbidden, including a period during the Middle Ages when the interval was referred to as the Devil's interval, because it was slightly disharmonious. It was then believed that beautiful harmonious music was one of the most direct ways to communicate with God and due to the tritone's somewhat disharmonious quality, it was regarded as a device to communicate with the Devil. It was also believed that listening to these unholy tones could provoke the sexual lust in people. This musical composition is based on the tritone. It has been developed by means of a series of experiments and tests in the exhibition space of Sorø Art Museum, which is constructed entirely of concrete and therefore has very lively and challenging acoustics. The acoustic qualities of the space are themselves a key factor in the composition itself. When composing this piece, 4 factors were considered: 1) the acoustic qualities of the two string instruments, 2) the distance between them, 3) the positioning and number of audience members, and 4) the physical qualities of the concrete surfaces constituting the space in which the piece is performed. Please enjoy the musical investigation of a space.

Though this conceptual description might have been thorough, a musical score accompanied the performance, as well. Two other texts accompanied this performance, as well. Each movement of the piece had a paragraph textually explaining the intended process. In this case, the two instrumentalists were instructed to stand at a distance of 25 meters while maintaining eye contact, each playing one note of a tritone interval. In the second movement the two played harmonics of the same pitches across space. In the third movement, the violinist walked toward the seated cellist while they played a new interval – the minor second – creating discomfort for

the audience. Performers were instructed in the types of sound they should make as well as the ways they should move their bodies through the space. Although the use of classical European instruments may have pushed this performance into the discipline of art music, the conceptual statement validated its place in the art world.

As Nistrup's work exemplifies, text can be a crucial aspect of value for sound works in gallery contexts. Without an artist statement of the conceptual content of a piece, it might have fallen into the visual realm, as with the bound "Tonepaper," or it might have fallen into the world of music, as with *A Musical Investigation of a Space in 3 Parts*. Language not only values sound art as such, but it also prevents the categorical misappropriation of a piece outside the artist's intention. Artist statements can appear in a number of platforms, including handouts, wall text, program notes, grant applications, and online.

IV.3.1.1 Handouts

Handouts providing conceptual artist statements were read before, after, or even while using the senses to perceive sound art.

Artist statements are most commonly disseminated on handouts at the entrance of galleries or laminated brochures in museum exhibitions. These long-form statements give artists the opportunity to describe in detail the conceptual nature of their pieces. Curators, gallerists, and art historians often work together with artists to devise these statements in collaboration. By offering paper copies of these statements at exhibitions, the artists and curators hope to guide the perception of audiences through the galleries while they encounter the works.

For example, the sound art duo MSHR exhibited *Knotted Gate Presence Weave*, a large installation of sound, light, and sculpture, from September 2017 to February 2018 at the Museum of Arts and Design in New York. A brochure accompanied the environment, including not only

an artist biography, brief interview with the artists, and a diagram of the piece, but also an artist statement:

With *Knotted Gate Presence Weave*, MSHR has constructed their largest environment to date: a cybernetic musical composition that uses circuitry, visitor presence, and sculptural arrangement as its score. Visitors become an integral part of the system when they navigate the environment, demarcated by a series of archways, thus triggering a change in the feedback system of sound and light. These archways are literal and metaphorical ‘gates.’ The main principles of MSHR’s synthesizers are emergent generative structures, and digital logic gates run as analog systems and feedback between light and sound. In electronics, a logic gate is an elementary building block of a digital circuit that regulates the flow of electricity through the input of binary values. *Knotted Gate Presence Weave* immerses visitors in a hyperbolic analog modular system where their movement through the environment is analogous to an electric current. The result is a complex audio-visual environment of distinct and unrepeatable sequences, in which emergent formations of light and sound unfold over time.



Fig. 9: MSHR. *Knotted Gate Presence Weave*. 2017.
Installation for *Sonic Arcade*. New York: Museum of Arts and Design.

Without this textual description, I would not have understood that the piece was responsive to my body moving through the environment nor that it was meant to depict an electric current

moving through the process of synthesis. The flashing colorful lights and playfully noisy sounds stunned my senses, and text was necessary to pull me from overwhelming sensory perception into conceptual understanding.

Through my years of fieldwork I have collected countless of these handouts from galleries and museums, leading me to more deeply understand my many encounters. At the beginning of this study I was unclear how to understand sound work yet intrigued by the experience in a traditionally visual context. With artist and curatorial statements in hand, I came to understand the nature of these works in terms of art history and theory. In my own phenomenological experience as an audience member at exhibitions, I tended to peruse the statement quickly as I entered the gallery or museum. Eager to encounter the work, I stepped inside and allowed my senses to perceive the piece. While I was hearing and seeing the work, my eyes sometimes returned to the page, reading the description provided by the artist. With this new understanding of the concept behind the piece, I continued in guided perception of the work. Though some may read these statements thoroughly before or after experiencing the sensory content of the work, other art audiences will be familiar with this interrupted reception of sight, sound, and language in apprehending a work.

IV.3.1.2 Wall Text

Those who preferred pure sensory perception were sometimes annoyed by wall text that unavoidably provided an interpretation of sound art.

In addition to the full-length statements provided by artists or curators, short-form wall text in museums can communicate the conceptual basis of sound works, as well. Both in paragraph form on museum walls and in small plaques that describe individual pieces within a body of work or a curatorial grouping, these shorter statements offer a concise and pithy expression of the conceptual nature of sound works. Paragraph-long wall text tends to describe

the art-historical nature of the work, while individual wall plaques give more attention to the material and technical properties of the work. Though these brief conceptual statements can guide the perception and understanding of audiences, some audiences resist the sensory direction offered by artists and curators. One sound artist described her resistance to the text accompanying a piece by the acclaimed artist and composer Annea Lockwood:

What I really didn't like about it was that she put the sign in the middle of the bench. There was a sign, and I had to stare at it the entire time. And I was like, 'That's too bad.' And I really wanted to take the sign off it, to just vandalize it, but I didn't want to vandalize Annea Lockwood's work because I really, really, really respect it. I'm a big fan. I think words and text and explanations are a very dominant, very strong—how do you say it? —they take on a lot of attention and dominate your understanding of what's going on and kind of flatten it, make it understandable before you have the chance to even understand it for yourself. And her work, it was so beautiful because you couldn't see any of the speakers. You could really just sit there and let your mind work and watch your mind work with deciphering, and just hearing and the depth of – and there's so much. And then, you open your eyes and then there's this explanation and you're like, 'I just – I was just somewhere really – it took me somewhere else and now I'm back.' And then, 'Okay now,' and you just start listening again and getting into it, and by accident you would blink, and the sign again. I'm over-exaggerating, but that's pretty much how I felt about the sign, and that's why I wanted to vandalize it... Even if you have to read, even if you would spend 15 minutes with it, the explanation that you just read will be the dominant experience.

Although wall text or other signage is a dominant form of valuation in the gallery arts, this artist's resistance came from a desire for an open, unguided perception of sound. Preferring the free play of sensory perception and association, respondents like this found textual valuation as a form of domination, in this case catalyzing her impulse to vandalize the sign itself.

IV.3.1.3 Program Notes

The conventions of "concert time" often provided audiences at music performances a better opportunity to read program notes than lengthy handouts for sound art exhibitions in "gallery time."

Program notes are another value platform for sound art that is performed or oriented around a durational event. Though these works hover at the boundary of the disciplines of sound art and art music, program notes often include artist and curatorial statements just as do gallery

and museum text. However, the time for perception and reading is often extended in performative contexts, depending on each audience member's approach. In my own experience, the time before performances, at intermissions, and even during the performance can be used for more detailed reading than while strolling through museums or galleries. The relationship between artist statements for installed work and program notes for performed work was demonstrated by the text for the outdoor group exhibition *In the Garden of Sonic Delights* in the gardens of the Caramoor estate just outside New York in 2014.

Upon entering Caramoor, I received the exhibition catalogue and festival schedule, along with a map of the gardens and the locations of off-site exhibits. The exhibition included ten works on the estate, as well as five other pieces throughout the Hudson Valley. Arriving in the morning, the ten pieces at this site were placed along a comfortable walk through the gardens, and I was able to give each work as much time as I liked before the evening performances began. Although time was ample, I wanted to put as much energy into sensing the work and taking notes on my experience, telling myself that I would read the exhibition catalogue after I returned from the event. As I walked through the gardens, I took a brief look at the titles of each piece and perhaps some of the artist biographies included in the catalogue, but I did not read each artist statement at length. Only in the following days did I return to the exhibition catalogue to read the detailed artist statements accompanying each piece.

Though I intended to privilege my own sensory perception apart from the meanings provided in these texts, only in hindsight did I realize how much I had missed. For example, Stephan Moore's piece *Diacousticon* was installed into the Sense Circle fountain in one of the gardens. A series of robotic slide whistles seemed to be sounding at random as I walked around the piece, and I enjoyed the orchestrated glissandos I heard. However, not until I left the exhibit

and read the artist statement did I come to understand the relation between technical process and concept in the piece:

Diacousticon is capable of both listening to its surroundings and generating sonic responses to what it hears. *Diacousticon* is also a platform for experimentation. Several different algorithms will be deployed to govern its decisions and behaviors, which will range from the poetic to the animalistic, from lyrical to game-like, and from subtle to frantic. Each of these algorithms is in essence a composition that becomes realized in the interaction between the piece and its surroundings, according to the rules adopted. Information about the results of each algorithm will be collected over the course of the exhibition and periodically used to enact further refinements. Finally, *Diacousticon* takes into account a post-Edward Snowden reality, which must embrace the interchangeability of 'interaction' and 'surveillance.' We can no longer assume that the actions of any technological system – even an artwork – that is listening and attempting to comprehend its surroundings are benign. Aspects of *Diacousticon*'s behavior may emerge which call into question its purpose and its relationship to its environment.



Fig. 10: Stephan Moore. *Diacousticon*. 2014.
Site-specific, interactive sound installation for eight robotic slide whistle/music box instruments and 8-channel at *In the Garden of Sonic Delights*. Katonah, NY: Caramoor.

Little did I know that my verbal reactions to the piece were being recorded and fed back into the algorithms guiding the robotic instruments. Had I taken the time to encounter the conceptual nature of the piece, my experience of it would have been wholly different. This tenuous relationship between sensing and understanding sound work presented itself many times in fieldwork, both a balancing act of reading and perceiving work and a trade-off between the two ways of understanding sound art.

At *In the Garden of Sonic Delights*, not only were sound works installed throughout the space, but sound art performances also took place to celebrate the opening of the exhibition. The program notes accompanying these performances came in a separate text for the one-day exhibition opening festival. Two performances took place that evening, the first by an improvising quartet *Volume VI*, featuring electroacoustic harpist Shelley Burgon, turntablist Maria Chavez, electroacoustic flautist Suzanne Thorpe, and Stephan Moore (creator of *Diacousticon* and curator of the exhibition) performing on laptop. The only sentences describing the performance: “Individually these players are singular voices in the New York scene. Together they create an inimitable sonic entity, luminous and enigmatic, without obvious exit or entrance points.” Biographies of the artists followed, including descriptions of their improvisatory approaches to performance. After an intermission, Vicky Chow performed Tristan Perich’s composition for solo piano and 40 channel 1-bit electronics, *Surface Image*. Although biographies of the artists were included in the program notes, no formal statement was included regarding the piece performed. I was thrilled to see 40 individual speakers sounding in tandem with Chow’s virtuosic performance but remained curious if there might be a conceptual or other textual basis for the piece. While waiting for the performance to start, as well as at the intermission, I read these biographies of the performers and had time to look back on the artist

statements for some of the installations I had encountered earlier in the day. My contrary tendencies to read in performance settings and to sense in exhibition settings came up against the opposite trends in performed and exhibited work.

This relation between time and text was not uncommon in my observation of installed and performed sound art. Though lengthy texts often accompanied sound in gallery and museum contexts, just as in the garden exhibition at Caramoor, they were less common in performance contexts, even for compositions such as Perich's that fit into the sound art discipline. Yet the time for audiences to apprehend these works was individualized in the case of exhibitions and socially organized in the case of performances. One interview respondent who worked in both contexts referred to the difference between these as "gallery time" and "concert time." He went on to compare concert time with cinema time, where a narrative is able to unfold in ways it cannot in gallery contexts:

Well, obviously the main thing is how each deals with the concept of narrative time. I mean, music performance generally still deals with, like, I don't know what it would be called. Just like cinema time almost, just like, 'Sit down.' There's a beginning and there's an end, and you're required to sit and concentrate. That's the biggest difference. And with the gallery, time is kind of free floating. And that's the difference that usually I deal with, because it's such a drastic difference. It's so far apart from each other that that's kind of the main kind of thing that you have to kind of contend with when you're doing one or the other, and I think each is good for different things... And often what I will do when I'm in the process of writing something, I will already know where it's going to end up and then take advantage of the situation.

Not only did this sound artist and composer play with the conventions of gallery time and concert time in opposing contexts, he preferred to provide program notes in the concert as well as artist statements in the gallery. The procession of time in the concert environment expected audience members to remain seated as a matter of etiquette, whereas the gallery environment encouraged free movement through the space and autonomous use of time. Though many interview respondents described the differences in time between the gallery, museum, and

concert hall, the role of narrative unfolding is particularly germane to the apprehension of concepts through texts.

IV.3.1.4 Grant Applications

Foundations and government agencies required the economic agencement of auditory culture by practitioners applying for funding.

Some artist statements take form on grant applications as explicit claims to value. Though these statements sometimes described the formal aspects of work, such as the materials or technical approach, many interview respondents and field observations revealed the tendency toward conceptual content in funding applications. One sound artist made a causal claim between funding streams and the gallery arts' tendency to rely on conceptual text:

If you want to get a grant or anything you do, if anybody's going to take you seriously as an artist, the first thing they ask for is that the concept or the artist's statement, because otherwise, unless you're really established, I think there needs to be a supporting statement. It's just the way it is.

On one hand it goes without saying that funding bodies rely on statements about work to decide which artists to support. It would seem impossible to know about a sound work without a description of it. However, on the other hand, one can imagine funding of music composition based on reviews by other musicians and composers who can engage directly with the sounds of the work. This respondent goes one step further from the reliance of funding bodies on artist statements to locate the ontological basis of sound art in the statement supporting it, claiming that without the statement it "becomes a different thing."

Funding bodies express a range of expectations from artists in their requests for proposals (RFPs), and most require both formal and conceptual aspects of eligibility. The New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) funded several of the artists engaged in this study. Of the many opportunities available to artists and arts organizations in the state, one of the capital streams available for sound art is the Electronic Media and Film Program. One section of the application

directly addresses “Artistic/Programmatic Excellence,” though other sections of the application require similar descriptions of the artistic merit of projects seeking funds:

NYSCA believes in artistic excellence without boundaries, and its evaluation process embraces the widest variety of cultural and artistic expression being offered to the public in a broad array of settings and contexts, including classrooms and community centers, parks, open spaces, and traditional venues. NYSCA considers four dimensions of proposals when evaluating applications: Idea: the concept or artistic impetus behind the artistic work or services proposed. Practice: the effectiveness of the artistic work and the impact it has on those experiencing it, or in the case of services, the effectiveness of the services in practice and their impact on the community served. Development: the contribution the artistic work makes to the development of the artists involved, the art form, and the arts generally, or for services, the contribution the services make to the development of a vibrant arts and cultural community in the State. Context: the context in which the work or services are being presented and the appropriateness of the work or services in that context. (2018, p. 39)

Primary among the aspects of sound art applications for funding is the “idea” at the foundation of the work. This requirement is not medium-specific, and both visual arts applications as well as sound are required to describe the concept behind the work. This emphasis on concepts may not say as much about the conceptual emphasis of the arts as it does the reliance of funding bodies on language to communicate the nature of work being funded.

IV.3.1.5 Online

Without textual support, audiences might have mistaken sound art exhibitions for visual art when they only saw images online.

Artists’ websites also may include statements, ranging from the concept of a particular piece to the nature of an artist’s entire practice. However, some high profile artists may not communicate statements via personal websites but rather through gallery representation or accompanying museum exhibitions. Though some of Sergei Tcherepnin’s work is highly conceptual, he does not have a readily available personal website. Instead, several different organizational web locations include statements about his work. Murray Guy Gallery’s website includes the text of Tcherepnin’s vita alongside lists of important interviews, press coverage of

exhibitions, and critical writing about his work. In August 2016 I had the opportunity to attend an exhibition of *Games* and picked up an extended description of the conceptual and formal qualities of the work, also included on the Murray Guy website. The statement transitions quickly from the formal qualities of the work to their conceptual nature, as well as a brief mention of the relationship between sound and queer theory:

The title of the exhibition is also the title of the life size photo sculptures on view in the gallery's main space. In *Games*, a group of young men in futuristic basketball attire reach out at each other's bodies and for a copper ball. The distinctive and theatrical poses are inspired by Vaslav Nijinsky's ballet *Jeux*, as well as representations of athletes in social media, television, and advertising. Each of the photographs has an exterior 'limb' that, when touched, triggers a stereo recording. The visitor moves through the game and has the power to activate infinite possibilities of sonic characters and shapes. *Games* sets the stage for another choreography and a queer body of sound... The complicated composition and veiled narrative of *Jeux*, is a starting point from which Tcherepnin investigates the body's potential to alter and to be altered through innumerable combinations of movement and sound... The interplay of artist, choreographer, player, cruiser, and visitor, is restructured in haptic fluidity through the public and private space of body and sound. As Drew Daniel writes in his essay *All Sound Is Queer*, 'Sound, the confusing eruption of the sonic into our life, can reinforce our privacy, our alone-ness. But it is also shared and shareable, and thus makes possible a certain kind of collectivity, or better, a perceptual community that we share by remaining perpetually open to the world beyond that community.'

The availability of this statement online makes it possible for the gallery attendee to read about the work prior to experiencing the exhibition, and paper handouts of the piece are provided at the gallery, as well. Were it not for statements regarding the interactive aspects of the work, audience member might not be aware that they are welcome to touch the artworks, bringing out their sonic aspects. These statements seem to have been devised in collaboration between the artist, curators, and gallerists, including a link between the individual works and queer theories of sound.

Though artist statements and curatorial notes available online make a wider audience aware of an artist's work, they can also contribute to the dematerialization of art practices.

Though many will read about an exhibition and also engage directly with it, others will simply read about a work online without sensory perception. Online platforms enable works to be valued without audiences' bodily interaction, particularly when works have clever conceptual foundations. One artist pointed to the relationship between these clever conceptual foundations and the ability of social media to quickly convey them to publics:

In academia it's more the economy of exposure, and this also applies with work, especially within new media context, like doing a piece that I can make a video of that will then circulate online, having it be popular enough to gain some cache or something. But that's a particular type of work, too, that tends to be more of like a one-liner or like a clever thing, you know? Sometimes cleverness is cool, and sometimes it's annoying. Sometimes I don't want to have, 'Oh, that's a clever idea that people are going to share on social media.' Sometimes, maybe, it's a more involved thing, and that's much harder to get across.

Though clever one-liners are easily shared in social media, more involved work may be harder to communicate on these platforms. Sensory engagement with artwork may be impossible to convey on digital platforms. In my own experience with Tcherepnin's *Games*, the statement described the ability for listeners to interact with the appendages of these photographic sculptures to trigger stereo recordings. Yet, the sonic properties of the piece were not mentioned at all in the statement. When I engaged with the copper triggers, the sounds were sometimes harsh noise and at other times rhythmic oscillations. Overall the room took on an ominous feel, and I even imagined that the copper plates might shock me due to the tactile apparatus. If the exhibition had been oriented around a clever one-liner, it might have been easily disseminated via social media or other online platforms without audiences needing to make the trip to the gallery to interact bodily with the work. However, the tactile, sonic, and visual connections I experienced were not easily conveyed in text, and therefore were not fully realized in online platforms.

In addition to artist homepages, gallery websites, and social media platforms, the linguistic aspects of artwork can be communicated through online art media platforms, as well. Although these web magazines often represent work through images, the conceptual nature of a piece can be delivered via marketing and art critical platforms with very little representation of the piece itself. Though some were frustrated that works could be reduced to pithy conceptual statements, particularly artists whose material and sonic practices were very time intensive for audiences, others saw the opening of online discourse as a potential to move the art world forward:

There's a relationship between the idea, or a possible idea, of the unfolding and flowering of that through engagement and through discourse and through criticism, and that apparatus is arguably very robustly set in motion within the visual art world. You have a show. There's like an article about it in *Artforum* or *Texte zur Kunst* or whatever, and there's a response to that, and it's clear that the object is far beyond that sort of thing that wasn't solved in that gallery in Chelsea or whatever. Actually it has this kind of opening onto the world.

As this sound artist and composer suggests, discourse about work may have greater potential to open onto the world beyond "Chelsea" with the help of online platforms. Blogs, individual websites for critical writing, and academic journals are among the ways a wider, potentially global, audience can engage with work without the ability to encounter it in physical space. Yet this type of expansion of the work's relevance has the inevitable effect of dematerialization and, in this case, "desonification" of the work. The possibility that a conceptual sound piece may be understood on some level without having been heard made some respondents uncomfortable and others optimistic.

Though online value platforms may contribute to the desonification of sound work, they undoubtedly contribute to their accessibility, as well. In the course of this fieldwork, my observation took me to countless galleries, and learning about relevant exhibitions and their

opening hours became a challenge. An artist friend introduced me to “See Saw,” a mobile application compiling all the gallery and museum showings in New York, organized by borough, location, and address. One useful feature of this application was the ability to plot these locations on a map, helping me lay an efficient trajectory on my walks from gallery to gallery. Upon investigation, the application was designed by a Ellen Swieskowski, a curatorial associate at Virginia Dwan Collection and Archives, out of her own desire for an easier way to move through the gallery districts of New York, planning an efficient walking path (Freeman 2015). Yet, the adoption of this application has had consequences for galleries and artists; some shows are included on the application and others are left off, at the discretion of Swieskowski, her brother Patrick, and the friends and colleagues who send her tips on which shows to include. She views the project as an act of quality control as well as ease and efficiency. In addition to the name of the gallery, artist, and show, an image accompanies the listing, as well as some text. This text associated with each exhibition ranged widely in length and content. Though many exhibitions included photos of work and a press release or artist statement, others included abstract and bizarre text to accompany the work. In some cases, a few lines of poetry or nonsensical text might be all the application included as an introduction to the work.

Though this application was quite helpful to me in my fieldwork and is far more user-friendly than other similar applications, such as the popular Artforum application, it also highlights the reliance of sound work on text. Sound sculptures lose their sonic qualities in photographs, and immaterial sound environments are impossible to capture as images. In another sense, if the text on See Saw did not mention the sonic properties of an exhibition, I would not have found it relevant to this research and passed it by. Though I attended some exhibitions that used musical terms or names in their descriptions, wondering if they might make sound, many

did not, opening up the question of how far to take the potential of non-cochlear sound art. For example, the curatorial statement for Rashid Johnson's exhibition *Fly Away* at Hauser & Wirth locates the inspiration for the show in the 1929 hymn "I'll Fly Away," and I decided to investigate the show further. The show consisted in several parts: a series of *Anxious Audience* and *Falling Man* mixed media mosaics, three *Escape* collages, a sculptural table composed of shea butter on a Persian rug, and the incredible *Antoine's Organ*. This latter piece may be best described by Roberta Smith in the New York Times review supplied as a handout at the gallery:

Fly Away culminates in a final large gallery with *Antoine's Organ*, a type of installation Mr. Johnson has developed over the past four years and has not shown in New York before. At once exultant and instructive, this large, looming rectangle of black metal shelving is profuse with leafy potted plants and some cacti – a bit of real Eden to pore over, become intimate with. The shelves also hold recurring stacks of books by black authors, from W. E. B. Du Bois's 1903 *The Souls of Black Folk* to Mr. Coates's 2015 effort, as well as the Alcoholics Anonymous handbook, whose cover is entirely black. Renée Green's *Import/Export Funk Office* (1992-1993) may come to mind: similar shelving that presented material mapping the flow of hip-hop music among several cities. Mr. Johnson's work also includes four short videos he made in the early 2000s, sometimes humorously focused on blackness; there's also more shea butter, sometimes crumbled on Persian rugs, sometimes carved with expressionistic faces. Most planters were hand-built and glazed by Mr. Johnson, and often exceedingly beautiful. This again is a new, promising move. Finally, high inside the shelving is a gleaming upright piano on which the pianist and producer Antoine Baldwin, also known as Audio BLK, plays his own flowing jazz compositions Tuesdays and Wednesdays, from 3 to 5 p.m. and Saturdays from 1 to 4 p.m. They are transporting, but the piece is equally engrossing in silence. *Antoine's Organ*, which might be called a conservatory in the form of a library, is outstanding. It thoughtfully assembles several of life's essentials: knowledge, nature, and art, along with incessant growth and exchange – a combination that should foster tolerance.

In this case I was drawn to the exhibition, curious about the relation between the work and the hymn from which it was inspired, yet unsure if it would have any audible sonic properties. If the "See Saw" listing mentioned the sound and performance aspect, I missed it. What I encountered was a non-cochlear work, except the sets of headphones woven into *Antoine's Organ* with audio to accompany the video players. Some of this audio had the feel of early New York hip hop,

though I couldn't place the tracks in history precisely. Had I been aware, I would have loved to experience the enormous sculpture as an organ to be performed by Baldwin, recalling a massive church organ composed of plants, books, and ephemera. Thus the reliance of sound art on language is underscored; though the image of *Antoine's Organ* was part of what drew me to the exhibition, my unawareness of Baldwin's performative contribution took away its sonic properties in my own experience.

IV.3.2 Critical Response

Some prestigious artists were able to forgo writing their own statements, instead relying on high-profile critical responses to value their works.

Though most galleries offered artist statements at the door along with a catalogue of exhibited work, some exhibits for high-profile artists supplied only art criticism and journalistic reports of the work rather than an original statement by the artist or curator. This step toward understanding art strictly in terms of criticism at once liberated the work from the artist's exclusive power of signification as well as narrowly drew it into prevailing discourse. For example, Richard Serra's enormous metal sculptures at Gagosian did not have an accompanying conceptual statement but rather relied on statements made by art critics to communicate the meaning of these pieces. Of particular interest for this project was his 2015 sculpture *Silence (for John Cage)*, inspired by the composer's seminal sound studies text of the same name (1961). I considered that this sculpture might belong to the category of non-cochlear sound art, because, though it did not make an audible sound, it dealt with a famous text in auditory culture by a much-adored composer. Yet, the artist's undeniable discipline affiliation is sculpture, where he maintains a top position in terms of economic and critical success. The particular works of criticism supplied by the gallery were rich in content and equally prestigious in source, coming from top artistic and journalistic critical outlets.



Fig. 11: Richard Serra. *Silence (for John Cage)*. 2015.
Forged steel. One slab, overall: 16" x 29' 6" x 9' 2" (40.6 cm x 9 m x 2.8 m). New York:
Gagosian. Photo: Cristiano Mascaro. © Richard Serra

Upon entering the gallery, a single sheet was available for audience members. This statement was a brief press release about the exhibition, including a short biography of Serra and highlights from his vita. Laminated copies of critical reviews of the show were available, as well. However, these journalistic responses from Art Observed, The Brooklyn Rail, Wallpaper*, El País, Hyperallergic, and The New York Times were the only textual frameworks offered for the sculptures. I was puzzled by the lack of an artist statement as a handout or wall text and investigated the exhibition website, as well. There, too, no conceptual statement was supplied, only links to the same critical responses to the work. The website included the same list of biographical highlights as a press release in the “About Exhibition” section, and a nearly identical four-paragraph biography was listed as “Artist Info.” Three images from the exhibition were included on the website, as well as a video moving through, within, and beside the sculptures accompanied by a recording of minor-key solo piano. An unframed poster of the show

was available for purchase in the “Shop Items” section of the website, but no other textual explanation was supplied. I asked the gallery assistant if there was any statement by the artist or curator, and she let me know that the journalistic responses were the only available text. Curious to know more about these enormous sculptures, particularly the relationship with John Cage, I read the supplied critical responses, as well as others like them.

Of the brief critical guidance provided by the gallery for *Silence (for John Cage)*, five of the six reviews were in English, each a few paragraphs long and filling no more than a double-sided page or two. The shortest piece came from Aaron Peasley’s review for *Wallpaper** magazine, only two brief sentences about his sensory experience of the work:

The luminous white gallery at 24th street is anchored by *Silence (for John Cage)*, a minimalist masterwork featuring an 80-ton forged steel slab, which, laid-down horizontally, dominates the space. Primitive and raw, it has an almost overwhelming physical presence.

The overwhelming feeling evoked by a colossal steel slab nearly filling a gallery room was taken up in the other critical reviews, as well. D. Creahan in *Art Observed* paired this fullness of space with the visual experience of light moving across the sculpture:

Serra’s *Silence (for John Cage)*, places a lone, 80-ton panel across the floor of the space, welcoming the changing glow of the gallery skylight to trace lines and shadows across its surface. It’s a fitting tribute to the avant-garde master, repeating his investigations into the presence of sound and performance as an exercise in light. Framing the space itself, Serra allows the conditions for both the reception and appreciation of the world around his works. In this relationship, of space, material and viewer, Serra works a remarkable range of intensities and conversations, much like the composer he pays tribute to.

In each of these first two reviews, the critic as subject in the gallery takes a dominant position, supplanting the authorship of the artist and entering the free play of a signifying sculpture and associating viewer. Yet, where these reviews emphasized the visual sense and affect of the audience, Phong Bui’s *Brooklyn Rail* review took on brief poetic form:

In the hours of *Silence*, vastness of aura, brevity of massive form reposes like a monumental tablet from Mount Sinai. It is defined by two ragged edges on both sides, cradled by a pair of impeccable lines on either end. In solemn graces I was blessed to have given this communion with his spirit.

The remainder of Bui's review goes even further into literary and mythological associations with the piece, using only eight terse poetic lines to comprise the critical response to *NJ-1*, another sculpture in the exhibition. Crucial to these reviews is the attention to the viewer's sensory perception of the formal aspects of the sculpture and near neglect to address the sound theory for which it was dedicated. Contrary to the tendencies of sound art, text took attention away from the conceptual value of the work and toward the apprehension of a single viewer in space.

The remaining two reviews by Thomas Miccelli for *Hyperallergic* and Ken Johnson for *The New York Times* took longer form in describing their subjective sensory experiences, yet similarly abandoned the conceptual possibilities of the work. Miccelli began to explore an imagined relationship with sound, yet through the framework of personal affect:

It's hard to avoid the deeply unsettling sensation of standing beneath a very tall, very heavy wall that's literally leaning over your head. But the purity of Serra's forms and the spaces they carve out, both in the passageways and in the apertures admitting light from above, are dazzling in the distilled beauty of their stark geometry. This is art that's stripped to the essentials yet doesn't shy away from spectacle — a paradox, but not a facile one. It trusts its forms first, and the emotional response of the viewer follows from that. This is especially true of the works on 24th Street. The sculptures don't swallow you up; they are works you walk around, not through, which engenders a more conventional art/viewer relationship. But that doesn't mean you're off the hook. Looking at these massive objects, it's easy to feel unnerved, if not threatened, especially when coming upon the tonnage of *Silence (for John Cage)* (2015), a 16-inch-thick slab of forged steel, nine feet across and nearly 30 feet long, lying flat on the floor. The sheer density of the thing can leave you speechless, though that isn't the kind of silence Cage had in mind: Cage's silence was meant to foster acute listening, so that everything audible would become music; Serra's "Silence" exerts such downward pressure on the space around it that you ignore everything, including sound, that might interfere with your absorption in its frightening mass.

Combining an unnerved affect with the focused visual perception of the sculpture, Miccelli uses John Cage's philosophy of hearing as a foil for a philosophy of viewing in the gallery. This

emphasis on the sensory perception of the sculpture goes hand-in-hand with the lacking conceptual framework provided by the gallery or the sculptor. Viewing this enormous steel slab was a completely absorbing act for gallery audiences, and the connection with focused hearing in *Silence* seemed justified by the massive physical properties of the steel. Yet, the freedom to detach the art object from conceptual signifiers was not only a product of the material used. Serra's position at the top of cultural and economic hierarchies in the discipline of sculpture may have freed the work from the clever position taking in the adjacent discipline of sound art.

Ken Johnson concurred, beginning his review with the unequivocal claim that Serra is "certainly today's greatest living sculptor of Minimalist abstraction." Yet he went even further in the direction of sensory perception than any of these other reviews:

The most arresting piece at West 24th Street is *Silence (for John Cage)*, an 80-ton slab of forged steel lying flat on the floor. Knee-high and 29 ½ feet by 9 feet 2 inches, it astounds by virtue of its sheer mass, its rugged physicality intensified by contrast with the pristine white walls of the gallery. It's worth noting Mr. Serra's titular dedication to Cage, the avant-garde musician whose most famous composition, for piano, '4'33", consists of 4 minutes and 33 seconds of silence. Mr. Cage's piece is presumed to heighten audience attention to and appreciation of ambient sound and to invite meditation on just what exactly music is. Mr. Serra's piece is similarly effective. You become enthralled by the brute presence of this enormous hunk of steel and your involvement with it. What did it take to transport such an unwieldy, dangerously heavy object to the gallery, to unload it and to place it so precisely in the gallery? What does such an operation cost? If you saw this piece in a steel foundry you might find it magnetic and even beautiful. But you wouldn't necessarily know it to be a work of art as it bears none of the conventional signs of aesthetic design, technique or symbolism. What does it add, then, to see it as an artwork? It shifts attention from the object itself to the sensory, intuitive and cognitive experience of it. It's a be-here-now situation. You might wonder what it means, for surely if it is art then it means something. But it answers only with a provocative silence, as per its title, as if to say that ultimate answers to questions of meaning and being are beyond human comprehension.

These questions listed by Johnson beg another: how is it that this sculpture, lacking textual valuation by the artist or the gallery, also received critical reviews that underscored the sensory perception of the work? In contrast with the works in sound described so far, this object was

unmistakably a sculpture, and that by a sculptor at the top of his discipline. Where contemporary sound artists use textual value devices to position themselves within an emerging discipline in the gallery arts, the historical legitimacy of sculpture as an art form is second only, perhaps, to painting. Though this particular piece engaged on some level with Cage's auditory theory of sound and silence, it did so as a handshake between leaders from allied nations. Whereas sound continues to seek legitimization through textual value devices in gallery contexts, sculpture has been liberated from the need to do so through its own history. Though one might contest Serra's top ranking within the discipline or the quality of an individual work, none can question that he sculpts highly valued art objects from massive amounts of steel.

IV.4.0 Explanations for the Conceptual Language of Sound Art

Though textual value devices were a common form of economic agencement in sound art, practitioners differently explained their necessity in terms of art historical path dependency, technical maladaptation, and as a device of sensory learning.

Language and sensory perception coexisted throughout the gallery arts and in music, as well. Yet sound art seemed to rely particularly heavily on linguistic explanations of artworks and practices in the many forms mentioned above. These textual statements were not market devices, *per se*, in that they did not explicitly supply information about price or exchange (Callon, Millo, and Muniesa 2007). Rather, they can be understood as economic *agencements* (Deleuze and Guattari [1980] 1987), rendering the aesthetic economic through claims to artistic value. Of the many possible explanations for this reliance of sound art on language, at least three types emerged in interview reports: art historical, technical maladaptation, and sensory learning. Each of these explanations is sociological in nature, though interviews may not have framed them as such. Respondents tended to assume a depth of art historical background that I unfortunately did not have, so I had to do my best to quickly fill in some gaps in knowledge during my fieldwork,

trying to quickly understand the specific historical, technical, and sensory components of their explanations.

IV.4.1 Art Historical Path Dependency

Though references to valuable moments in art history might have been visible to gallery art insiders, sound art required textual assistance to draw out these historical influences.

For those who saw contemporary sound art emphasizing the conceptual, many pointed backward in art history for an explanation. Though this explanation could be seen at face value as tautological, a deeper mechanism of sensory knowledge was at play in this response. Some of these respondents set up an opposition between privileging the sense of hearing in music and the increasing role of language in art. This contrast between sense and language came up in the conversation with this sound artist and composer:

I don't think music has needed the language around it historically to function. And art has benefitted from that language more—social, cultural, who knows? That's just a coffee shop riff. But yeah, I think that might be it. So there's just less of a history of it and so less of an acceptance.

Digging into this coffee shop riff, I asked how language and sound related in his current art practice:

For me it's something that comes from such a long background of functioning purely in the sonic world, in the experiential, in settings where the music is experienced and understood aurally, you know? But I think that as far as at least my own practice, it's been the case that the conceptual is something that could run parallel to it, and I find that that can be very playful. Sometimes the conceptual element will be an undergirding for a composition that helps dictate all the parameters and sets up the questions that are asked. But sometimes it's a little looser, and the sort of language that I'm developing around the piece runs parallel to it. And I think of it as almost two separate streams that affect each other by proximity. So, I'm not holding to one or the other, and they're both sort of playful. And they're both kind of creative endeavors. I really like making a piece. Sometimes I like making a piece and then letting the language to describe the piece sort of complicate it.

Though the history of art making allowed space for language to dictate the work, this sound artist saw music history as doing so to a lesser degree. Yet his current compositional work allowed

language to complicate the experience of sound, adding a layer of meaning to the sonic privilege handed down through music history. If music history afforded work that was purely sonic, permitting meanings to be conveyed through sounds rather than words, then this composer's innovation upon the form allowed language to redirect the understanding of the listening public.

The systems of meaning that were conveyed through art and music history tended to be internal structures, understood best by practitioners within these worlds. When asked about the emphasis on conceptual sound art rather than formal sound, one respondent had a different approach to the role of art history. He found conceptual art to be an easier entry point for contemporary audiences, requiring less knowledge of the discipline to understand a piece:

I think generally conceptual sound art is more agreeable to people who aren't familiar with the history of it, because conceptual art, generally speaking, is popular now. And the irony is, say considering [Max] Neuhaus, when you do have a sound artist that's too formal, completely formal, then I think that might become problematic, because it's been evacuated of the conceptual elements. And that's not to say that there isn't a conceptualism to his works, because there are, right? But they're not easily apparent. If we're talking about purely aesthetic form, then there's not much conceptually to grasp on to. Let's say, if you're not familiar with acoustic theory or sound wave patterns and things like this. So, I don't think that we're likely to see purely formal sound art really develop now.

Those unfamiliar with the conventions, references, and technical approaches of sound artists might have a hard time understanding the relevance of purely formal work. Faced with only with droning sine waves emitting from a sewer grate in a busy urban intersection, a casual passerby might not understand the relevance or meaning of works such as Max Neuhaus' *Times Square*. Yet work that allows language to convey the conceptual nature of a piece might have an easier time capturing audiences with limited art historical knowledge. As one of these audience members without an art historical background, I can concur that artist or curatorial statements do help to place them within the art world. When I encountered *Times Square*, I was thrilled by the surprise of this non-conceptual piece. A few lines from my field notes explain my response:

After walking through Manhattan for most of the day, I was exhausted and not in the best physical or mental shape for a rush hour jaunt into Times Square. As we walked up from Chelsea, the crowds became thicker and more saturated with what seemed to be tourists. Somewhere around 40th Street we saw the first furry character walking around asking for photos (and payment). These characters became more and more commonplace as we approached the sewer grates that house the Neuhaus piece, also home base for Elmo, Spiderman, Minnie Mouse, and several Statues of Liberty on stilts. I was unsure which grate would hold this sound until I was standing on it. With rush-hour pedestrian traffic swirling around me, furry Disneyesque beings rushing from child to child, and the pulsing, sizzling lights and video of Times Square, the sound came as a calming thrill. First, it was a good excuse to stand still in a hurried environment. I felt lucky to be focusing on the ‘art’ when the characters were hustling tourists and a few New Yorkers rushed home from work. I took video and some photos of the space but was unable to capture the surreal experience. The actual sound was a low, soothing hum, not unlike a fan or motor in the belly of the city, but with a smoother, less rhythmic tone. The sound escalated to the edges, right beneath the stilted feet of the Statues of Liberty. One of them approached my companion and asked if he was there to hear the sound. He said yes and the statue went on to tell him that it is ‘art.’ Despite the oasis on these grates, we had to flee after only 15 minutes at the most, heading to Rudy’s for cheap beer and free hot dogs to wait out rush hour.



Fig. 12: Max Neuhaus. *Times Square*. 1977-1992 and 2002-present.
Digital sound signal beneath Broadway Avenue between 45th and 46th Streets. New York: Dia Art Foundation.

This encounter with public sound art was completely sensory, each of them overloaded in this saturated location, one of the busiest in the world. Upon returning to write my field notes, I found a description of the piece at the Dia:Beacon website. Here I learned that this piece was first installed in the 1970s, into quite a different Times Square. Instead of the tourists and furry cartoon characters encountered in 2014, past incarnations of the piece would have been surrounded by sex workers, johns, and patrons of the many pornography theaters of the time. The 1970s audience may have received the droning oscillation quite differently in that environment.

However, not only urban history but also art history informed the meaning of the piece. Sound in the gallery arts was not considered a distinct medium in 1977, as it is today; instead it tended to be one of many elements in multimedia or visual installation work. The non-conceptual *Times Square* was an important intervention at the time, both taking part in the interactive trend toward public art and the use of sound. Indeed, my lack of art historical understanding of the piece allowed me to freely associate with it as a sensory experience and, at the same time, might be a reason that contemporary sound artists tend to prefer conceptualism. In order to guide the perception of an untrained audience, language may be the simplest and most effective way to do so.

In a variation on this type of explanation, another respondent did not look broadly to art history but rather to the personal history of an artist's practice. When asked how sound artists might deal with the divide between concept and form, an art dealer at once put the focus on the life of the artist and the connections audiences might make through time:

How do artists deal with the divide? I think it's all very personal to them. I mean, I think in the end it just goes along with their whole body of work, what makes them, each in their personal practice. I think a good example would be Phill Niblock, because he's so established. You could see in the seventies he made this whole series with the movement of people working, which is a video but also a sound piece, because he layers a composition over it. The video that he captures is his travels to different places. I think

it's interesting because he captured a time back in the seventies, before the Internet, of just people. He zoomed into people who only use their hands to make a living, whatever they do. And until now he can still play this work, and it's still relevant now, because it's not just the static video installation, but he layers over composition that's kind of timeless, actually, and that expands the experience a little bit. I mean, I'm taking your question a little literally, but so the video is his personal perspective. It's his search into something over a ten-year period of time, and then I think his sound installation over that is conceptual. He kind of brings that together really nicely there. Other artists who are doing that? Yeah, I don't really know other artists who are really doing something similar, but I see them being in separate worlds. But they're kind of just going into their own artistic search.

Over the course of many years, Niblock captured video footage of people working in repetitive motion, and the video content is unmistakably of its time, shot on 16mm film and capturing people amidst their 1970s lives (see III.2.1 “Boundary Performances”). Yet the sound might have come from any time in the latter twentieth century. Long droning tones might have seemed to be static on first encounter. Yet their slow unfolding over time connect them with the incremental changes made on lived environments through repetitive motion in the video: sawing wood, throwing fish from boats into buckets, or stacking hay. In this way, his work connected itself to a long-term practice of documentation through world travels, as well as particular moments in the personal histories of the subjects of these films.

In turn, Niblock’s work has become renown in sound art circles and in the gallery arts more broadly, assuming his place in the lineage of art history. Though this art dealer described his sound as conceptual, when I encountered the piece at the Friedman Gallery’s *New Ear Festival* and in the group exhibition *I Beam U Channel* at Bortolami, there was little or no accompanying text. The Bortolami curator offered only these brief lines:

The Movement of People Working (1973-2010), Phill Niblock’s series of films shot around the world, offers an earlier glimpse of the Anthropocene. Now transferred to video, two selected 16mm films from China and Canada play together with the artist’s dense musical compositions, collapsing geographies through the studied repetition of labor and its tedious choreography.

Perhaps the connection with one's personal history was not enough to explain the use of text in gallery sound, as this piece had so little.

Similarly, music history is a chain of reference guided both by the historical situation of a composition as well as its sonic elements. Yet, the task of many composers has been to communicate this location within the discipline using only notes on a score without an accompanying statement. I spoke with one video and performance artist who often collaborated with musicians. Regarding her primary collaboration with a composer and sound artist, she didn't feel that conceptualism often came up:

I don't think I have worked so much with people who work like that. Although I know there's a lot of intellect in the making... But at the same time I don't believe it's his head that makes the piece. It's something else that makes the piece. It's just like he has the technique and the theory so in him that it's just coming out. But, to me, his music is not intellectual like you sometimes call something intellectual. Not at all. It's very visceral. When you look at the structure of it, it is actually very intellectual in a way that can only happen if you have the theory so much in yourself that it doesn't come anymore as intellectual but as visceral. And then only if you look into actually the making of it you will realize, 'Wow, there is actually so much.' I mean, I don't really know what I want to call it—theory or composition—in it, which maybe to some ears can just sound like it's quite random. Although it's not at all.

With this collaborator, music theory seemed to come out naturally in compositions, though not from an intellectual approach. She found these compositions to be quite complex, but a history of studying music composition with high-profile teachers and institutions helped this composer develop a rich and second-nature reserve from which to compose. Though the history of music composition was quite different, he similarly drew upon it, even in ways he might have been unaware.

In interviews, I tended to close with a double-barreled question: "Can you describe something you encountered recently that you found valuable and try to think about why you found it so? And, on the other hand, something that you didn't find valuable?" These questions

came directly at the top-of-mind value judgments of respondents, and I left it open ended whether or not these valuable encounters were with sound art or not. Of particular interest to me were the responses from a curator of sound, music, and visual art, wondering where he would take his current explanations of value in these widely bounded worlds:

I think that things that I find valuable are often something that sort of shifts my perception of how I thought about things or exposes new linkages or connections or ways of understanding something. You know, a piece that I find valuable I often don't find valuable right away, but it's something that I feel like I can sit with over a long period of time and constantly be engaged by exploring it more, having a dialogue with an artist about it or finding different ways that it fits into other ideas or things that I'm interested in or has come in contact with historically. Or it's an idea presented in a new and really concise way. You know, I was thinking about Henry Flynt's photographs in the *Greater New York* show [at MoMA PS1 from 2016-2017], documenting these Basquiat tags and all of the graffiti around it. The last years that he was doing the 'SAMO' tag while he simultaneously was going through the roof of the art markets and making all this money, where there's this anti-art stance happening in the street level around Henry's neighborhood. You know, it's in the '80s, I guess. So thinking about that piece as a really great distillation of a lot of his anti-art ideas, coming up again and the way that he documents them and presents them and how that lineage or serialism with some of the other pieces in *Greater New York*. Or like the Zoe Leonard piece that MoMA acquired recently, mapping the change of the downtown landscape. I don't know. For me that piece really struck me as being a historically interesting piece. An interesting piece of the artist but also playing well within a group show and the cultural landscape of New York because it's something that hasn't been seen for quite some time and I think draws out really nicely alternative histories and narratives that haven't been taught, allows new trails of thought to happen, which in practice it seems very disparate.

What these examples had in common were their connections with art and urban histories, drawing out these linkages over time in ways that might not have been apparent on first viewing. Unlike an individual artist's practice, which tends to be a collection of disparate elements, objects, and thoughts, tightly curated shows were able to pull together these historical connections between works and across time. Though this respondent's trained mind might have recognized these connections through sensory apprehension, even some that may not have been considered by the curator of the show, recognizing historical connections required a base of knowledge on the part of the audience. Where these connections were not made explicit in

gallery or museum text, they might be lost. A second explanation took attention away from sound art's place in the long history of art and into its present state of technical needs and capability.

IV.4.2 Technical Maladaptation

Museums and galleries had not yet adapted to sound artists' sensory and technical requirements, making textual statements a failsafe way to construct value.

Another possible explanation for the conceptual and textual emphasis of gallery sound was the necessity to communicate an artistic intention despite technical challenges. Though individual sound works have been presented in galleries and museums at least since WWII (Kim-Cohen 2009) the domain of sound art continued to grow. Yet, the technical adaptation of the gallery arts to sonic media was an ongoing process, constrained by the resources of arts organizations and the experience of arts administrators. The technical constraints facing artists in galleries and museums led them to find new ways to exhibit their work, sometimes supplying their own technology and other times taking the failures of organizations as opportunities for improvisation; yet the lack of technical capabilities might have contributed to sound art's reliance on language to construct reliable value. It came as no surprise that textual value devices would step in as a specific form of "socio-technical device" (Callon, Méadel, and Rabeharisoa 2002) to make sure that audiences understood the value of sound art when auditory sensation was not sure to deliver.

The technical shortcomings of galleries, and museums to a lesser degree, came up quite often in interviews with sound artists. These reports began with the technical histories of art spaces being constructed for clear vision without distraction. Originally intended for the viewing of paintings and sculpture, these spaces are traditionally thought to be white cubes with square corners and no other objects in the space. Though this type of room may be best for audiences to

visually sense art objects without distractions, they are not perfectly designed for the sense of hearing. Without other objects to break up the sound in the space, they can become overly reverberant boxes. This possibility for reverberation is sometimes thought to soften and warm sound but is not ideal for a piece that requires a clear and dry sonic environment:

Well, there are many things to consider. One is that galleries are often boxes that are all perfect angles, which means they're incredibly reverberant spaces, because the walls are perfectly parallel to each other. And the floors, I mean, it's the worst possible mathematical situation if you want to minimize reverb, because most really good studios have walls that are not at right angles to each other. So the sound, that's one thing to consider, that they're very difficult acoustically. Reverb is a problem. So, often, playing music in a gallery is difficult because it's hard to hear stuff, because there's so much reverb.

These sonic properties of galleries and museums make them less-than-ideal spaces for the medium of sound, yet institutional conventions maintain these features. The lack of other visual stimuli is used to draw attention to the visual works on display, but some formal sound works do not have visual content to offer. Curators may even feel compelled to add visual objects to a space in order for it to appear not to be empty to the causal passerby or visitor:

The other thing is that people sometimes fail to realize that a gallery that is filled with sound is full. So an empty gallery that has a really nice sound piece playing in it is actually a gallery that is full, but sometimes people think, 'Oh, there's not enough in here.' Do you know what I mean? So, there are all these kind of situations where you can do a show that doesn't look like anything, but actually it'll have a ton in it, because it's completely full of sound.

The presence or absence of other material objects in the space will have an effect on the sound, via reverberation effects, yet the decision to include other visual objects or not may be determined by the desires of audiences and gatekeepers.

Though an empty gallery may be six smooth surfaces at right angles with one another, these spaces were seldom empty of bodies. Whether at an art opening, during exhibition hours, or for a performed event, other people tended to inhabit the space, and, of course, one's own

body was always present. One sound artist and engineer comically referred to these bodies as “dampening meat”:

[A now-closed sound art gallery] had the advantage that because of the wooden ceiling and some architectural coincidences it just sounded good. There was this massive industrial, post-industrial space that then sounded good, more towards the concert hall rather than empty gallery warehouse, reverberant concrete box. So, the gallery [where I curate] is more like a reverberant box. But I can still host some shows where that will work and where you have an intimate setting and people that can work under that condition. Because, let's say a string quartet sounds great in a gallery like that, because then if you have 30 to 50 people being your dampening meat, then a string quartet has nice room to breathe, but then other things it's not the right sonic environment for it.

On the one hand, having people in a space detracted from the reverberant properties of the empty room. Yet, on the other hand, these bodies also made their own sounds. Talking, moving, breathing people in a space became noisemaking objects, as well. Though many artists saw the sounds of people in space as negligible for their work, art openings were often cited as exceptions. In a packed gallery of people interacting with one another, an exhibition opening for sound art was perhaps the worst time to aurally sense the work! One sound artist explained that the blank reverberant “canvas” of the gallery came in conflict with the presence of these noisemaking bodies:

The thing is, in terms of the production of music and sound that is made for the sake of sound, a gallery space meant for paintings is just never going to be good. It's white walls and a bunch of resonance and a bunch of people. I mean, the two things are just really in conflict if you're thinking in terms of like sound installation and multi-channel sound installation as art.

In addition to the acoustic properties of the white cube and the noisemaking bodies that inhabit the space, many galleries and museums had other sounding objects in the space, as well. Several respondents noted the irony that at the opening event for the large group exhibition *Soundings: A Contemporary Score* at the Museum of Modern Art in 2013, attendees were not able to hear the art over the din of voices, footsteps, and laughter.

Not only the voices of visitors to MoMA attracted censure from respondents, but several also noted the notoriously squeaky elevator in the main lobby. This elevator even radiated into some of the galleries, sonically getting in the way of sound art:

The fact that sound doesn't even show in art museums and galleries until the '80s is really despicable, and the fact that these art museums built these structures without thinking about sound as part of it, and they only made them with theaters—sound will be in the theater—that's so short-sighted. Because that's performative music presentation, that's not curated sound format. And so then you have to present sound art pieces in these terrible sounding reverberant spaces that aren't meant for it. And that's the board of director's fault; that's the architect's fault for not thinking about that. I mean, even at the MoMA in the atrium, that's where all the performances happen, and it sounds like shit every time because they don't have sound treatment. They have this awful squeaking elevator that goes up and down because thousands of people visit the museum every day, and so that's all you hear. It's something I would like to do someday there is record all the sounds there and play it back, just to highlight it and make it even more obvious what this space does, rather than trying to hide it or put extra speakers, because it's just travelling too much. So we need to make it louder.

Though these bodies might have been appreciated in some contexts as “dampening meat,” their constant movement through a space also prevented the clear hearing of sound art, particularly when they were riding a squeaky elevator. Though museums and galleries have been designed for uninterrupted viewing, even leading art institutions such as MoMA provided a whole host of auditory interruptions.

Whereas gallery and museum curators were accustomed to exhibiting objects fixed in space, this tendency was disrupted by mid-twentieth-century kinetic, video, and performance art. Sound, too, by its nature moves through space, and one respondent who worked in both music and art contexts pointed out the technical learning needed in both worlds:

I'd say my interaction with the art world is fairly limited. It's interesting. Perhaps because I come from such a venue-oriented background, maybe I'm not looked at as much as someone who works within a gallery. But I have certain tech requirements that also require a musical knowledge base that I don't often find with art gallery. Art galleries don't—okay, so there's a learning curve for everybody. So, this confluence is happening and there are learning curves on both sides of the equation. And for people coming from a visual arts background there is an education that needs to happen around what a sound

artist needs and vice versa, and vice versa. So I have found that sometimes there's just a lack of understanding, a deficiency in what sound needs on the part of the visual world. You know, it's not just a fixed object. This is something that's almost living and breathing, in a sense, so we have to allow space for that.

Though the defining characteristics of galleries make them appropriate spaces for viewing visual art, they can become quite problematic for sound art, particularly work that expects its audience to move through a space and sense acoustic differences. Particularly when full of other people, it may be impossible to apprehend these sonic qualities of the piece. Though galleries and museums have come to be defined by these characteristics, other technical challenges facing sound artists had more to do with resources.

IV.4.2.1 Elevators, Bathrooms, Staircases

Like hanging a painting behind a pillar, some sound art was exhibited in places that made it impossible to hear, or at least made artists feel like their work had been given short shrift.

Though they may have more to learn, arts administrators and artists have devised several strategies to work around the technical constraints of the gallery or museum space. The first way to avoid the sonic properties of the white cube is to find alternate space within the gallery or museum better suited to sound. These spaces were sometimes corridors, atria, or alcoves, but more often they were elevators, stairwells, or even bathrooms. Though these spaces may have offered better acoustic environments for the exhibition of sound, they led to conflicting feelings on the part of artists. Some found it to be an insult, representing the lower status of sound artists in the broader gallery arts. After a question about site specificity, one high-profile sound artist still expressed frustration at these undesirable spaces:

It's also becoming very tiresome, because who are the people that are always putting it in an elevator, in a bathroom, in a corridor, in a staircase? The people that work with sound, but that's going to change. I think it's almost insulting. Why they don't put sound artists in the main gallery? Site specificity in the history of the practice has to do with the fine institutions, galleries, et cetera, where the person maybe always thinks of the sound guy or the sound woman as the weirdo they put in the staircase or in the place that no one wants to be.

This placement sometimes fell under the guise of “site specificity,” a highly valued aspect of sound that is commissioned and installed in a space of particular dimensions and material. Yet, this term may also have become a way to disguise the resource constraint of an organization.

This sound artist continued to describe his own experience in those contexts:

Site specificity is very interesting. Don’t take me wrong. I love it, and I like those challenges, too. I have done many pieces in that fashion, but also, in my experience, I have been placed in those situations because nobody else wants to be there... That changes the focus. That changes the experience, but many artists have very specific ideas, and they could tailor their work to very great and refined situations, as well. It not always has to be site specific, unless the artists wants something site specific. But often, opportunities come where they tell you, ‘Okay, this is the group show, or this is the show, but I have this space. Can you do something in it?’ You don’t want to say no, so something like that happens, quite often... Headphone pieces are classic, and, yeah, elevators, bathrooms, staircases.

The artist in this situation must balance a desire to preserve the intention of the piece against the excitement of the opportunity to exhibit. One sound artist reported that she refuses to exhibit her work in these alternative spaces, unless there is a “compelling reason.” Rather than seeking work that might lend itself to this space or has a conceptual connection, she found it to be a product of space constraints in New York more generally.

Particularly when a gallery wanted to exhibit multiple works in sound at the same time, small spaces forced some of the work into closed chambers, such as an elevator. This sound artist went on to explain that time constraints were a related problem in the New York gallery scene. In addition to boxing a sound piece into a tiny space, curators often boxed the process of sound installation into a narrow time frame, too short to achieve all the acoustic ambitions of the work:

I didn’t want to do the elevator piece. I can’t tell you how many times I was asked, ‘Can you do a piece for an elevator?’ No. No. ‘And can you produce it in three weeks?’ No. That’s another component that I find that is maybe particular to New York curators but also particular to the visual world, is sometimes lack of recognition for how much time it takes to make a piece. You know, I don’t suppose they would expect their visual artists to make pieces in a really short period of time. I don’t know if they’re looking because

they're thinking of it as performance sound or if they're thinking like a time frame for making it work. I don't know. I don't know if that's New York specific. It may just be a symptom of New York, of 'I have this show in three weeks, do you want to do something?'

By pushing works in sound into narrow constraints, artists were faced with a cost-benefit decision regarding the quality of the work and the opportunity to exhibit. Though they may have been excited for the chance to display their work in a particular gallery or group exhibition, they sometimes had to suffer the cost of narrowly conceiving of their work for the context, particularly in a spatially dense city like New York.

Over the course of my fieldwork, I encountered many works of sound art in elevators, bathrooms, and staircases; some were appropriately placed, for instance drawing on the reverberance of a tall, enclosed stairway, while others were directly in conflict with the exhibition space. I was disappointed by the latter case at the Rubin Museum's *The World Is Sound* exhibition of Hildegard Westerkamp's soundscape *Into India, 1990/2002* (2017). Using field recordings and a collage-like technique, she designed a soundscape for the museum. Though the rest of the exhibition was incredibly sensitive to the spatial location of works, including the awe-inspiring *Le Corps Sonore* by Éliane Radigue, Laetitia Sonami, and Bob Bielecki (2017), Westerkamp's piece was placed in the entry to the women's bathroom. I struggled to hear the piece amidst a cacophony of toilets flushing. This misplacement was a prime example of the art world still learning how to exhibit works in sound; a painting would never be placed behind a pillar, but sound was sometimes exhibited in places that made hearing impossible.

IV.4.2.2 Headphone Art

Although it solved some problems of sonification, headphone art in galleries was not spatially responsive.

Another potential solution to the sonic constraints of the gallery or museum was to exhibit sound work on headphones. A tradition that began with the display of video art in galleries, these headphones are available for audience members to pick up and use as long as they like. However, one sound artist referred to the group show of headphone art as a “curatorial trip,” suggesting that it drew more attention to the curator than the individual artists within the show. Audiences often demonstrated very short attention spans for this work, and the use of headphones left audience members socially disconnected from one another, unable to discuss work while encountering it. One sound artist suggested that headphone art might not belong in public space at all, saying explicitly, “Headphone art, you might as well stay at home and listen to it... I hate headphone art. You might as well just not have it be public then.” Indeed, the paradox of a social space full of people listening to art on headphones struck me as odd.

As well, if a work in sound was intended for headphones, it might have used the particularities of the medium to its advantage. Particularly, an artist might have exploited the nuanced use of the stereo field, and headphones allowed total sound isolation in a way that other listening environments may not allow:

I feel like headphones are really fun, but I don't agree with people that just submit musical tracks to be heard on the headphone. I don't agree that curators put sound in headphones when they're not meant to be heard in this minimal stereo, isolated scenario. So I feel like if you're making a piece for headphones, then absolutely utilize them because they're a really great detail, a really great asset. But I don't agree with the use of them if it's in those contexts. I feel like it's just not – it doesn't give the sound piece a chance or it's just kinda lazy... It can get a little disorienting, because you're isolated and no one else can hear it. I really also like the way people react and that no one else can hear what they're reacting to, you just see them reacting. Which I think is fun, unexpected fun added in.

As this sound artist describes, some sound work simply can't be translated into the context of headphones, and artists are faced with a similar decision as that with the use of elevators, bathrooms, and stairways. If the piece is made to use space to its advantage, then headphones will not be able to capture the subtle changes in space that correlate with changes in sound. Regarding a recent museum show, even a historically acclaimed sound artist faced a compromise:

They made me do a voiceover for the room on earphones for my installation, because they just weren't going to change the form. And I said, 'Take off your earphones.' But I did some explanation, but they just want to walk through, be told what they're seeing, what they're hearing, what's in front of them. And so it isn't a great time because people want all those explanations, instructions, adapters. I mean, and I guess a public space, how do you get people to stop talking?

Rather than record an audio guide for headphones that would take the audience out of a state of spatial hearing, this artist gave instructions for the sound to be experienced just as she would've liked. As an alternative to the inappropriate use of headphones, some have enabled them with GPS capability to be able to change sounds along with changes in space as a person walks. As a listener moves through space, this location-sensitive technology will allow the sound to change, as well. However, this is quite a different approach to space than the artist who uses the architecture to her advantage. The ways that sound bounces off walls, ceiling, floor and other surfaces makes it truly site-specific, whereas a GPS enabled set of headphones tend to use movement or deviation from the location of origin to correlate with sonic change.

Of course, another challenge is possible with the use of headphones to overcome the sonic properties of galleries and museums; they may not work at all. I encountered this with a work by Nina Katchadourian at the NYU Gallatin galleries. Her piece was both visual, using fragments of cassettes, and a sound piece, collaging together recordings on cassettes that the artist found on the street near her longtime home on the Lower East Side. After traveling to

experience this exhibition, I was disheartened to find that the mp3 player that kept the sound file for the piece had run out of batteries. Perhaps if the work were sounding in the room, a gallery monitor would have noticed when the sound disappeared. Alas, in this case the sound was unavailable, and I was left with only the textual description of the piece to understand it, absent half of its sensory content.

IV.4.2.3 Sound Bleed

Group shows of sound art forced “collaboration” between the exhibiting artists.

Perhaps the most commonly reported frustration with the technical capability of galleries and museums was the inability or simple failure to isolate one piece from another. This challenge may be intrinsic to a group show in sound, short of exhibiting each piece in an anechoic chamber. As even the highly resourced museums were unable to achieve this sonic separation, artists were faced with the “classic” problem of sound contamination in their work. One artist remarked, “That’s the classic, right? It’s like, oh, let’s put a bunch of loud pieces all together... Because [sound proofing] is like super expensive. If you wanted to do it right you would stick each thing in a completely different part of the museum, and it’s just not practical.” Due to resource and logistical constraints, most galleries and museums were simply unable to achieve this kind of sound isolation in public space. One sound artist attributed the problem to arts organizations’ privileging the sense of sight and orienting their spaces around the exhibition of visual arts. The Kitchen is a trailblazing organization for exhibiting works of sound, but even at the forefront of sound art, resource constraints persisted:

If you go even to this show at The Kitchen, they’ve made the artists with sound either put earphones or these very localized crummy speakers on the pieces. Some are good, but these are not so good. They’re okay in Mary Lucier’s piece, but the others, they’re sort of faulty. How high you put them, what kind of rug you have underneath makes all the difference in containing the sound. And they just sort of plop them around. So they think they’re minimizing the sound in the room. It’s kind of, they’re still very reluctant, like my sound artists still at college, graduate students are in a show, and they don’t want sound

in the gallery. Nobody wants to hear sound spilling. I mean, understandably... They should make a room if they're going to have a sound piece. They should make a nice curved entrance to a room if they don't want it to be an ambient piece that affects the whole environment. Or they should make a piece that's sensitive to the environment that's in it, that doesn't just play back.

Another gallerists flatly refused to exhibit more than one work in sound at a time: "You can't do a group show with sound art. You just can't do it, I said. Unless you want to be a composer and you're composing the show or you want to do a chaos show. You can do that." He justified his decision by describing a group show that became utterly chaotic when the room held a full audience:

This was the early '90s, so that was when there started to be these shows that had headphones and that kind of thing. Or they would have shows and everybody had to do things really quiet. So I kind of got really turned off by all that. Not so interested.

Although there was one show at Pierogi Gallery in Williamsburg, which was a visual art gallery. They decided they wanted to do this one sound art show. And it was not a very big gallery. And I actually spoke with the curator about it, and I told him, I said, 'It's going to be chaos unless you get a bunch of quiet artists.' And he ended up filling the space with like 18 artists and had motion sensors, so that as you would walk in you would trigger off the different things that were making sounds. So as you walk through the space, his idea was you could then kind of select what you wanted to listen to. But when it was crowded, like at the opening, everything was going at the same time. It was just chaos, and at the end of that show he was like, 'Never again,' because it drove him crazy to just be in the space.

Interestingly enough, this same gallerist now performs in group contexts with the guidance of a graphic score, leading to a genuinely collaborative effort. Rather than putting multiple pieces in the same space that are intended to be in isolation, he has moved to creating an ensemble of collaborative sound.

The comparison between sound and video art came up in this context, as well. Just as museums and galleries had to allow video art audiences' eyes to adjust to the dark room with an S-shaped entryway, they also needed to accommodate multiple sound works in the same space: You've probably already read this, but a famous bad example of this is the *Sonic Boom* show at Hayward Gallery. Everybody mentions it. I'm going to do it, too. But ever since

that show museums have been much more cautious to space works out better. I think the MoMA [*Soundings*] show, actually one of the things that was spectacular about it was the way the show was laid out. Sensitivity to the kinds of inexpensive things that one can do to set people up for a sound piece in the same way that it took twenty years for video rooms at museums to do a snaked S of an entryway in order to get your eyes down to dark level so when you go into a space you're acclimated already. There are those things happening now at museums, and it's just a ridiculous time propagating. But the high profile shows like this are helping with that.

Another solution to this problem is to commission work for a group show that intentionally relates the sounds with one another. By notifying artists up front that their work will need to join in conversation with the others in the space, they are able to engage in collaboration rather than fighting against one another:

Because sound operates, sound is a waveform like light, waveforms. These things they're harder to contain because they're resonating outwards, and because of that, you have to have really isolated spaces or else they'll conflict with each other. And so the challenge of a lot of sound art exhibitions is to be able to have controlled enough environments in order to allow the piece—you need a big canvas, you know? It's beyond a canvas in order to allow the piece to be what it is. That doesn't mean it can't be done, but usually it gets into the intentions. As a person who's working with sound, if there's someone else who's also working with sound within earshot, well, then we have two choices: to work with or against each other. And often it's the case, if a show's being curated, you don't have the opportunity to have the artistic intention of working with each other. So it's a lot trickier for a curator, too, than saying, 'These paintings look great next to each other.' It's possible these two sound pieces sound great next to each other but is that even the intention of the work to be referencing each other? And I think most artists would want to have the opportunity to intentionalize that relationship rather than have it left to chance, unless the piece is about chance, somehow. So, yeah, group shows are harder.

Another sound artist mentioned that he had been part of a collaborative group show in a Berlin gallery and that the Institute of Contemporary Art in Philadelphia had done the same with a group exhibition of sound. Even curators of group shows in visual art explained that they prefer artists to work together in genuine collaboration rather than displaying disconnected work in the same space, though it could pose a challenge to get visual artists to work together in this way.

A related but distinct problem facing sound exhibition came not from sound bleeding from other artworks but from the surrounding urban space. Short of massive structural

reconditioning of the space for sound isolation, cities provided a sonic backdrop in galleries and museums, including the sounds of sirens, car horns, trains, machinery, and passersby. The opposite consideration came up, as well, with sound exhibitions becoming a nuisance to their surroundings. Particularly if an artist conceived of a loud, noisy, or long durational piece, the city residents and tenants in neighboring spaces might have become annoyed with the persistent sound coming from a gallery:

There are limitations, because sound bleeds through the walls. So if you are in an industrial building where there are offices around, or—well, it doesn't need to be an industrial building in order to have offices around, but if you are in a situation like that, you cannot go full blast 12:00 to 6:00 every day. So we are conscious of that, and we tried to figure out, again, the best condition. So maybe sometimes if the situation is complicated, we run it for two hours a day, two hours a day for two weeks.

With sound isolation such an expensive problem for galleries and museums, administrators, gatekeepers, and artists had to devise other ways to communicate their artistic intent, usually with text. If a group show experienced too great a sound bleed between pieces, or into the surrounding urban space, then the use of textual value devices would enable the works to be both conceptually distinct and sonically separable in the context of group exhibition.

IV.4.2.4 Amplification

After experiences with inadequate amplification, many artists opted to supply their own speakers, making sure the subtle sounds in their works were audible.

A persistent imprint of the music world upon the gallery arts was the expectation that galleries supply some kind of sound amplification for work. Just as music venues buy speaker systems to project sound from musicians, many artists hoped, if not expected, galleries and museums to do the same. They compared the provision of sound equipment to that of lighting in a visual art context, the bare minimum necessity for an audience to be able to sense a work. However, many art spaces newly accommodating sound work did not have their own sound

equipment, or what they did have was thought to be substandard. In these cases, artists supplied their own sound systems for their work, a very expensive and fragile endeavor:

The typical situation is like, ‘Yeah, thanks for the conversation. I’m a sound artist. I’m gonna install a work.’ ‘Yeah, we have a speaker system, a pair of JBL EON speakers in the back that sound like shit. Feel free to use them.’ It’s like, ‘No. I’m bringing my own equipment in, \$10,000 worth of equipment without any insurance. [Laughs] Bringing it in.’

This capital investment in sound was impossible for most of the respondents in this study, yet many extended themselves as far into the purchase of sound equipment as possible. Others paid out smaller amounts to rent amplification for particular exhibitions or events. That said, sound technology has advanced such that a wider range of artists found it financially and logically feasible to provide their own sound:

One thing, performatively, that I’ve been trying is I have a portable multichannel system. So, when trying to perform, the whole issue of a particular sound system, especially if you’re using lots of speakers, that’s a big issue. So, I tried to make this system that I can pack in a suitcase and set up very quickly. And it’s sort of possible now because of the amplifiers. They have these new digital amplifiers that are super small and light. So, that’s a big difference.

Though some provided their own sound, many would have liked assistance from a gallery to amplify their work. One sound artist, curator, and technician was satisfied with the stereo offering of a gallery but created a multi-channel work requiring more than two dimensions in the space:

I own my own sound system. I have an eight-channel system, some subwoofers. [A gallery] has two speakers that are pretty good. He has a big, fairly big, PA system, but most of the time the focus of the series is spatial sound works. So most of the time I need more than two speakers, and then usually I would just bring in two of mine, if necessary.

In this case, the formal aspects of the work took it out of the stereo range provided by the gallery and required additional resources. In an extreme case, one canonical sound artist handcrafted her own sound systems in order to make these specifications precise to her intention. When an

existing system was designed for playback of a simple recording, she instead created ways to describe three dimensions with sound, marking space with aural stimuli:

People don't think of sound art as anything but maybe a tape or something that just plays out of any old speakers, so we all traveled with our own speakers. You know, I had my own for field sound, these that radiate in all directions. And now most of my speakers are homemade out of objects that resonate the sound. So I don't even have to put speakers in most of the pieces. So I put transducers on objects I make the sounds from and for playing back through those objects, and the objects are in the space. But all of that, making each object an instrument, putting it in the space, getting things to flow so sound can actually buzz around you, zip around your head, find you, and move, and all those fixing the parameters for the distances in each space. I'm always proportioning time of an event of sound with movement across a space, details of movement, of something, and how long, how fast, how slow, how much it's still. And no one expects that much work. They want you to throw up something in whatever they give you. A standardized system, they believe, and so that doesn't really work as well, in a lot of ways. And I get students who think that sound art is sort of noise music or bad music and not that they're describing space with sound, not that they're marking space. Not like a Stockhausen sense of sound and not a very refined sense. They want it to be loud, say, when the very best sound pieces are usually tuned to the space. And some are very quiet, almost subliminal, like Maryanne Amacher's early work was. And a lot of my work is just sort of speaking, whispering range and louder, shouting, it's sort of a lot like music in its ranges and it can go very, very quiet, and if something moves quietly and quickly or resolves itself in your ear even by a different tone, or you feel it because it because it's sub-audio and vibrates across a space, you know. It can be very dramatic and physical.

Even this trailblazer in auditory culture found that galleries misunderstood her desire to tune her work to the space, requiring specialized technology. A sound art scholar pointed to her as one of the old guard of sound artists who doubled as audio engineers, tasked with creating their own sonic environments from scratch:

Well, and there's a reason why many sound artists are sound engineers and a reason why people who perform experimental music often do the acoustic set up for more conservative performing shows, or performances. Or maybe they control the soundboard at a bar or at a music venue. Or, they'll mic up the piano for somebody. They have an intimate knowledge of working with electronics and working with acoustic materials because they need to, right? It's a necessity to produce their work, and they need to do it because they maybe don't have the resources to pay someone else to do it. It's hard to say, 'cause it's now decades old. Now it's an aesthetic thing to make handmade electronics. It's not just a thing of necessity, but people use that as an aesthetic part of the work, that they've made it themselves or it's customized or something. [The sound artist quoted above] has a very intimate knowledge of sound tech, simply and partly because

she needed to. In the '60s and '70s you couldn't go out and buy this stuff. Museums didn't have it around. Stores didn't have it around, and so you needed to know how to build it and how to solder pieces together and how to do all these things. And so it started as an economic necessity, but now it's become—I don't know if it's fetishized, because I don't wanna go that far. But, it's aestheticized, definitely.

Though some may still have the technical capability to design, construct, and engineer their own sound equipment, sometimes with an anachronistic aesthetic, many look to technicians for support in their work:

Especially coming out of the classical music world, it was the norm that you work with an engineer when you make music. This is what [a sound program in] France is based around is pairing composers with engineers. And I don't find most of that work compelling, because really what you end up with is the engineer's work. And they're not thinking about things in the same way as an artist thinks about things, but the artist doesn't even have the toolset to even communicate to an engineer necessarily what they want. I mean, check out, just Google Bob Bielecki. He coded three or four of the pieces at [*In the Garden of Sonic Delights* at] Caramoor, and he's been doing this forever and rarely gets credit for it. And he's one of the exceptions of an engineer who's like a totally fucking legit artist. But, yeah, I mean it's pretty common. I mean, Stephan [Moore] used to write all of Pauline [Oliveros]'s [Max/MSP] patches for her. And I have several friends who write [Max/MSP] patches and do all this stuff for artists that you would think would be doing that themselves, since they bill themselves as these electronic artists.

Comparable to artist assistants in the visual arts, these engineers may engage in support at any level, from straightforward amplification of artists' creations to designing the sound itself. Just as outsiders may wonder about the role of the "painter" who hires artist assistants to do the manual work of putting paint on canvas, the role of the engineer or technician who designs sound work for an artist opens up the question of the role of conception and execution of a piece.

IV.4.2.5 Improvisation

When it suited their aesthetic instincts and intentions, willing artists took moments of technical maladaptation as opportunities to improvise.

Faced with myriad technical challenges in the gallery, artists sometimes supplied or created their own sound systems, but another possibility presented itself: to improvise. Given technical constraints in a space, artists sometimes found it most expedient to work with what

they were offered, to make the most of the sonic environment, and to discover new terrain with the surprises that a less-than-ideal situation supplied. For a performer, this imperfect sound context led to other aspects of a good performance:

One of the best concerts we did with my [experimental] trio was when we played in Paris, and this is like heavy electronics. We need a good sound system, stereo, and everybody comes with lots of electronics. We had three people. The guy said, oh let me get the amplifier. He went to the basement and brought out like a huge mono bass amplifier for a bass guitar and we're like, 'Oh shit.' We had to play mono for bass and it was the best concert of the whole tour, because we were so forced to listen what are we doing with this now. And still, if you have a perfect sound system, the variations between all of these sound systems are not as big as all of a sudden you have a crappy, big heavy-metal mono bass amp. Not heavy metal; that was too old for that. So it was great, a great performance. At that point I say that you're a good improviser if you can deal with that. You're not a good improviser if you then like break down and start crying and not working.

In this case, the artist's musical background betrays him, by privileging the ability to improvise over the exacting control of his artistic intentions.

Specifically, some artists with clear conceptual intentions did not feel they should be asked to improvise within technical constraints. A sound artist reported a conversation with his dealer and curator about the use of imperfect technology. She expected artists on her roster to be able to improvise within a given technical environment, but he was unwilling to budge. He recounted the experience, "She was like, 'Okay sound artists just need to get used to this... There's a different way of looking at it,' which I was at first a little bit taken aback by. I was like all right, maybe I do need to work at this differently. Then I was like, 'Nah, I want my space,' you know?" In this case, regarding the conditions of sound bleed in a group exhibition environment, this artist considered that he might need to improvise within the space. Yet, upon consideration, he maintained his conceptual intention and required isolated space for his work. Again, this decision was conceived as a tradeoff for the artist, debating whether to take an imperfect opportunity or to stick firmly with an artistic intention that required sound isolation.

Though he chose to maintain the intention of his work, another artist surely filled that space in the group exhibition, gaining value in the process.

Yet, certain gallery environments and works in sound precluded the possibility of improvisation. In one extreme example, a sound piece was simply “turned off” during exhibition hours. The artist did not become aware of the status of the piece until about a week into the exhibition:

I was in a group show in Lower East Side in 2009, and I had these little like sound devices. The basement had these interesting pipes, so I zip tied these devices to the pipes, like little speakers, and they were supposed to play something. And I called [the gallery], a week later to make sure everything is okay, and the receptionist is like, ‘I don’t know if they’re working, like, I don’t know if they’re on. Could you maybe come check?’ And I went and they were just turned off. A week into the show, and no one had thought, ‘I don’t hear anything.’ It’s a sound piece. So there’s still this major—working with sound art in the visual world is just really tough.

Though this is an extreme example, some galleries were not prepared to engage with work that emitted subtle sound, not sure if the pieces were technically in operation. Furthermore, galleries that tended to exhibit visual work such as painting and sculpture may not have had technical assistance as part of their organizational models.

Despite these problem cases, many art organizations have learned to accommodate the technical needs of sound, as well. Respondents tended to find site-specific work to be the best achievement in this context, taking care to integrate sound and space harmoniously. Yet, a sound artist may not know what to expect upon engaging with these organizations for the first time. Even high-profile museums and organizations struggled to adapt to the exhibition of sound, and artists sometimes braced for the worst. One way to head off these technical failures that threatened to crop up was to emphasize the conceptual nature of sound work, providing value-in-text for work that may not be able to communicate its intention in terms of sound alone. Without

the formal capability to exhibit sound, these artworks relied on concepts, communicating value to audiences under sometimes-imperfect circumstances.

IV.4.3 Sensory Learning

Artists engaged in somatic work to teach those in the gallery arts, who are predisposed to the sense of sight, how to hear value in sound.

Respondents in this study offered several explanations for the emphasis on conceptual text in gallery sound. Some explained that art history had ushered the entire art world to a moment of conceptual value. Others explained that the gallery arts remained technically maladapted to the medium of sound; textual statements were a failsafe way to communicate value, given the uncertainty whether they would be able to present works as they were intended or not. In addition to these explanations, others described text as one of the only ways to learn how to hear value in an art world that has historically privileged the sense of sight.

Using sensory perception to value auditory culture began with the premise that one must differentiate sound in order for it to be understood. The common refrain that “you can’t blink your ears” meant that the constant stream of sound into the cochlea require differentiation into social categories in order not to be overwhelmed. One respondent, in trying to differentiate noise from sound art, thought about her children’s experiences growing up in New York:

I have two young children, so I read about this stuff all the time, but both my kids were born in New York City. They’re both very small, and neither of them is fazed by noise at all in the city. I mean, they ride the subway every day; they hear sirens continually. We live in an apartment that’s basically the front. The façade of the building is round, facing a big circle, so all the sound is amplified in our apartment. I can hear every conversation on the street as if someone’s right next to me, but we don’t pay attention to it because we’re used to it. They go to bed every night, so they don’t hear it. I mean this idea of the ability to blink your ear, it’s also just an interesting thing about what you don’t consider as being noise or being something worth paying attention to.

Perhaps the first step in understanding and valuing sound art is to set aside the mundane sound and noise from everyday life as a separate sensory category. Though artists working with field

recordings may abstract sound from context in order to create artistic value—perhaps a sonic version of Duchamp's readymades—most artists generate their own sounds that can be distinguished from everyday life. Even upon encountering sound in a gallery environment, some audience members fail to recognize the sounds they hear as artistic. Regarding a sound installation without any material or visual content, a sound art curator and organizational administrator explained:

Many people will walk to the glass wall, look in, see there is no visual art, and don't even walk in. I would invite them, and they would say, 'Why? Why? What do you guys have?' Some people will walk in and don't even realize that there was a sound piece going. They would think maybe it's the A/C or a sound that they are not even hearing because they are blocking it. It's like the brain just classifies it as noise.

Although this is an extreme case, one might not be able to hear the sound of an artwork if it too closely resembles the ambient sound expected to be in such a space, such as fans, footsteps, and motors. Subtle sonic works have the double challenge of sensitizing audiences first to their own expectations of sounds in space, and second to hear the space as one of sonic intentionality on the part of the artist.

After quotidian noise has been differentiated from the sound worthy of attention, artists must unify that sound with the broad category of "art." Historically, art has been understood as a collectible material object subject to visual display, but sound art questions, expands, and may confound this understanding of the discipline. One respondent drew an analogy between the claim that non-visual work simply isn't art and the inability for a computer to process data: "It doesn't compute. It's like, 'Error!' You know? It's like the computer tries to operate, and it's like a division by 0. It's like, 'No, I can't.'" Another pointed to sound art as a third broad category of sound: noise, music, and sound art. This third form of perception required boundary work to become distinct from the other two:

There is that conceptual enemy that you have to go through in order to start listening. Before, you're just hearing. It's just like the sound waves are reaching your ear, and your ear is translating that variation in air pressure into a stimulus that is going to your brain. That's hearing. But then when you start interpreting this, if you have a firewall that is blocking that it's like 'Noise!' like, 'No!' But once that barrier starts getting more flexible, then you start, 'Oh wait, but there are different kinds of noises. Oh, but this noise has certain behavior that this one is moving.' Then it's like there is this universe that starts opening up, so it's not for granted. It's difficult to try to understand. That's why I don't lose my nerves. [Laughs] I understand either way, and I try to walk them through.

Walking audiences through the experience of sound art does require nerve on the part of the artist, particularly in an art world whose history has left out hearing and that may not yet have technically adapted to the sense environment. In the face of these challenges, conceptual and technical language steps in to guide the listening audience through their experiences, shedding light on, or rendering audible, the sensory environments they encounter.

Although language is the dominant form of communicating the knowledge of value in sound art, two other methods of sensory learning were said to contribute, as well: audio-visual hybrid perception and deep listening. Although these sensory modes may help practitioners hear aesthetic value, language remains the dominant form of teaching audiences, artists, and administrators how to listen to sound art. Alternately considered "somatic work" (Vannini, Waskul, and Gottschalk 2011), these practices are necessary to "make sense" of what we hear, sometimes experienced as hard labor and other times as a playful reverie. Though it may seem puzzling that text was necessary to construct value for artworks defined by a medium of sensory perception, the theory of economic *agencement* may clarify the peculiarity of this art world. Rendering the aesthetic economic has been at least a centuries-long process in the gallery arts (Baxandall 1972), and this long social process of learning the worth of visual objects required organizational, institutional, and scholarly support (Becker 1982; Boltanski and Thévenot [1991] 2006; Baumann 2007). Though works in sound are quickly emerging in the gallery arts, with

group and solo exhibitions popping up at large museums and prestigious galleries around the world, the art world is still learning to listen.

IV.4.3.1 Audio-Visual Connections

Blending sight with sound attuned audience members' ears to the nuances of sound art with something like a synesthetic effect.

With the dominance of vision in galleries and museums, some drew on the visual art world to build knowledge of the sense of hearing. Several artists used a single data source for their visual and audio content, drawing out their connections in real time. For instance, a sound artist programmed a piece using Max/MSP to send the same information to a video feed and to a set of speakers. As the two sensory formats unfolded in time, the audience was able to perceive the connections between them:

I do these performances, and I always work with custom software systems. It's usually one laptop, like the sound system. Max/MSP Jitter is the program that I create it in, so I perform the sound live and then that goes to a second laptop where I make a visual system, also custom software. And the images breathe to life from the sounds. The performance work, really since about like 2008 or so and before that, I'd say starting around 2000, I was pretty exclusive, single channel video plus sounds, so not performance at all. So I've always been a sort of hybrid. I was a painter when I was a kid. I played music as well, so I always had this sort of painterly approach to video and sounds, really. So I started making videos, and then I also proposed a sound for it. The sound matched the images somehow. The performance work I've been doing since I was in grad school... It'd be like maybe a sound of a loon with some ambient wind or something. According to the frequencies of the scale I'm working in, I'll tune the sound and kind of smooth it out to specific frequencies to shift it certain ways. So then, the software that I make that has these differences of the sound families, then I can sort of play via the faders and mixers, and they all sort of harmonize with each other, so it's sort of abstract but somewhat recognizable.

By merging the senses of sight and hearing, this artist was able to pull out moments of harmony as well as abstraction, building aesthetic knowledge of sound for a primarily visual audience. Similarly, he made two-dimensional images of sound waves for display and sale in galleries, a way to using sight to understand sound. Crucial to these combinatory acts is their ability to

communicate connection and separation, sometimes using the senses in tandem and at other times differentiating them into distinct modes of perception.

Another instance of this audio-visual connection came from a performance I witnessed by the 2016-2017 SAIC sound department MFA cohort at an event called “Waveforms.” Adam Bach performed a temporal piece that linked sound and sight. In this performance, Bach sat with his back to the audience and his laptop screen visible. Atop the laptop was a large webcam. The first impressions of the piece, as a listener, were sounds occurring at the same time as dots appearing on a computer screen. These dots moved from the left to the right of a visual field projected on the wall. Next, I noticed that the sound occurred at the same time that the dots appeared somewhere toward the left of the field and again as they disappeared to the right; the sounds accompanied the entry and exit of these dots from the visual space. Finally, I put together that the dots appeared in the visual space when accompanied by some hand, screen, or bodily movement performed by Bach, captured by the webcam and translated into both visual and audio stimulus. As the performance progressed, the bodily movements transitioned from very subtle and “natural” movements such as typing on the keyboard and adjusting the computer screen to hand waving and manipulating the direction of the webcam itself. The audio content changed into multiple forms throughout the performance, but it was always temporally linked with both the bodily movements and occurrence of the dots on the video screen, connecting two aspects of sight to sound. Had there not been a visual component of the piece, the popping sounds might have felt randomized. As well, when changes to the audio component were made separately from the visual cues, they were emphasized in their distinction, a way of learning how to hear assisted through the existing knowledge of how to see.

Some referred to this sensory hybrid in terms of “synesthesia,” the conflation of two sensory stimuli into a single meaningful response. By trying to create synesthetic environments, these artists relied on the existing context of sight in the gallery arts to fuse with hearing as a newer medium. The classic synesthetic example is being able to “hear a color,” though the phenomenon could also work in the other direction. Similarly, one sound artist and performer described the ways she drew on the McGurk Effect in two of her works. The McGurk Effect is the neurological phenomenon in which visual stimuli is used to fill in the gaps in auditory stimuli, a mistaken form of speech recognition through “reading lips.” Specifically, the listener hears one sound, views a mouth making another sound, and “hears” a third sound separate from the sonic and visual stimulus. This artist used the principle of the McGurk Effect in two pieces, taking the idea of sonic gaps and applying them to visual consistencies. In the first, a basic connection between visual and audio stimuli was made in the minds of the audience, though the piece did not construct a temporal connection between them:

It was a video turntable broken vinyl piece where it was a broken vinyl composition and the viewer would approach it, place the needle on, push play and then watch the video while they were listening to the broken vinyl piece jump around. And the video imagery had this kind of glitch, this Internet feed glitch that I recorded and then created a video piece for. And that glitch matched the broken vinyl glitch. And then people afterward were like how did you sync the vinyl with the visuals, like what program did you use? I’m like, ‘It’s all here, using the McGurk effect. That’s the natural brain feed that naturally syncs what you see and what you hear.’ So, everyone thought that it was some program, but actually it was just individuals’ brains that just naturally do this. From there now this is kind of a next step in that, where it’s almost like I’m saying, ‘You read it first,’ so your brain is already triggered to expect something, and then you place the headphones on to hear it, and then it’s just like ‘Ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah-ah.’ It’s not in an order that you know.

Though audiences experienced a temporal connection between the audio and the visual, they in fact were completely disconnected, autonomous glitches without a pattern to relate them. Nonetheless, audiences found connections between them, a phenomenon reported by several

other artists, particularly in aesthetically “psychedelic” media and disciplines. In the second piece, this artist used wall text as a simple 4-word visual, textual stimulus. When audience members encountered a disjointed sonic environment with these linguistic components, the resulting audio-visual hybrid was consistent:

What I did was I took three different interviews, one from an interview with Marcel Duchamp, one with Alvin Lucier, and one with me that was an interview I did a few years ago. And I went through each interview. I dissected them pretty much. I took out all of the ‘I’s, the ‘know’s, the ‘just’s and the ‘it’s. And then I randomly aligned them together to hopefully make the phrase, ‘I just know it.’ But I didn’t put it together that way. I just pulled them all, organized them, and mixed it down. And it changes from stereo to mono, so that you can hear the different words and letters in their own context. But because you read the title ‘I just know it,’ then your brain is trying to pull that phrase together, which is something I’m really interested in right now, or what I’m always interested in, is natural brain phenomena in relationship to sound.

Though the auditory content was disjointed and did not exactly form the title phrase, the vision of the phrase did the semiotic work for audiences. In this way, the artist made a “meta” statement about sensory learning and the privilege of sight over sound in the gallery arts, drawing attention to sonic content in a primarily visual world. In each of these examples, the sense of sight was used to teach audiences something about the sense of hearing, either in connection or contradiction. Yet, text tended to accompany these moments of sensory learning, as well.

IV.4.3.2 Deep Listening

The Deep Listening method developed by Pauline Oliveros coached listeners to learn how to listen in situ, yet this practice required textual assistance, as well.

Though the sense of sound may be learned and valued with the assistance of the sense of sight, many sound artists developed the ability to listen through a depth of focused attention to sound alone. This process of “Deep Listening” was initiated in the 1980s by Pauline Oliveros, one of the founding figures of contemporary sound art, as a way to focus the power of hearing in a world full of sound. Oliveros describes Deep Listening in the “About” section of her website as “a way of listening in every possible way to everything possible to hear no matter what you are

doing. Such intense listening includes the sounds of daily life, of nature, of one's own thoughts, as well as musical sounds. Deep Listening is my life practice" (Oliveros 2016). The Deep Listening Institute describes the practice in other terms:

Basically, Deep Listening, as developed by Oliveros, explores the difference between the involuntary nature of hearing and the voluntary, selective nature—exclusive and inclusive—of listening. The practice includes bodywork, sonic meditations, interactive performance, listening to the sounds of daily life, nature, one's own thoughts, imagination and dreams, and listening to listening itself. It cultivates a heightened awareness of the sonic environment, both external and internal, and promotes experimentation, improvisation, collaboration, playfulness and other creative skills vital to personal and community growth. Plus it's a ton of fun. (2018)

This method of sensing the world hopes to arrive at an autonomous sensory apparatus of pure listening, attaching meaning to sound as a recursive process, yet learning the practice requires entrenchment in the world of language, as well. In addition to the countless books, websites, and pamphlets on the practice, Oliveros and her team host Deep Listening retreats in Europe, New Mexico, at the organizational headquarters in upstate New York, and by extension around the world. The practice of Deep Listening seems simple enough—to fine-tune attention to the constant influx of sound—yet adherents tend to talk about Deep Listening as an esoteric and potentially enlightening act. One sound artist described her experience attending a Deep Listening retreat in California:

It was awesome. There were a lot of different things that we did. We did different listening meditations throughout the day and then a lot of the people there were also musicians, so there were different kinds of jam session moments. But I think part of what was most helpful was really just focusing on that work for day after day after day. For instance, we start most of the days doing—I don't even know how long it was, maybe 10 minute, 15 minute—listening meditation where we would just sit and listen. We did it at this place called 'Ratna Ling' in Northern California, which was so quiet... I would say one of the things that is so powerful about letting oneself have those kind of Deep Listening experiences is how it totally connects you with everything that's around you in a way that I want to find a way to talk about that doesn't sound too 'woo woo' because it was really easy to sort of fall into kind of spiritualist language, which doesn't necessarily feel very good to me. But there really is this feeling of being in response and to bring

attention to all these things, your whole surrounding environment. And that also connects you to that surrounding environment in a way that it's so easy to just ignore.

When others referenced the Deep Listening movement, they demonstrated similar aversion to the mystical or “woo woo” aspects of the practice, emphasizing that there need not be anything metaphysical or psychedelic about the act of listening carefully to one’s surroundings. Yet, these same respondents were unable to describe exactly why the process was so liberating or enlightening. A crucial aspect of developing the ability to deeply listen was to be taught, through linguistic communication, how to engage in the practice.

Even those who have not been trained in the method of Deep Listening suggested that learning to listen might occur through practice *in situ*. One art musician pointed to the tendency for experimental music to avoid textual assistance, instead hoping that the audience might understand what they hear without assistance:

I guess I admittedly am the person who’s like, ‘I want to see if I get it without reading the artist statement,’ and then there’s too much of a crowd around the artist statement, and I don’t read it... I think it’s become unfashionable specifically in the noise music community to state your concept in a written form. I’s just like you walk in, you plug in this huge mess of shit, you stomp on it [laughs] or do subtle things, whatever, and then you hit power off and you’re like, ‘That was my thing.’ And it is what it is. It speaks for itself. There’s a speaks-for-itself mentality. And I don’t even know how to get people to pay attention to a concept in the performance context that I’ve inherited, except through this notion of showing documents or literally talking, just talking, before you play. And I certainly love it when people do that. It’s so refreshing to hear someone frame their work and then give a performance, or give a performance and then frame their work verbally. In the written form, like I said, in a concert environment, I don’t see where it would go. [Laughs] I mean, I don’t know if people would pick up programs. [Laughs] And I don’t know that that’s the best way for that context. I think verbally is the best way for that context. But I guess what I’m saying is I think there’s room for it, room for more conceptual basis. But I also see and relate to the aversion to stating it and wanting to achieve this ideal of your work speaking for itself. For me, that’s become not enough though, because of this question of advocacy for the experience. I’m seeing that the experience of experimental music is endangered, and especially if it’s subsumed in this art world that ignores its suspension in time and its need for quiet surrounding it.

Though she understood the inclination for works of experimental music speak for themselves, this respondent was quick to admit that she would like to add textual support to her conceptual works in sound. Alas, the music world in which she found herself expected its audience to learn through listening, an extended process of understanding in dialogue with the self. Yet, textual support appealed to this respondent, thought to contribute to the value, or at least the clarity, of the work.

A composer concurred that the ability to listen and understand is privileged in music relative to the discipline of sound art. He even went as far as to describe it as an act of rebellion against the linguistic signifying modes of other art forms, with literature as the paradigm. Regarding the missing conceptual turn in compositional music:

That's not what it's trying to be. And this is a struggle. My wife is an academic. She teaches at [a university] and is in the theater department, but she does feminist theory and performance art. And she gets very angry at all my performances, because she always wants there to be a text, a discourse, an explanation. She always wants program notes, she always wants stuff, and if you've looked at my website you see it's exactly. The whole point is to do absolutely, because I want the music to be the thing itself. So it's particularly ironic that I have this book coming out of hundreds of pages of text of me talking about my work and other people, but it's all about how the text is pointless, and it's really the music you should focus on. And I think that within the art world, which is where sound art is leaning, conceptually, I think people want that sort of discourse. They want the program notes. They want in the book the long academic essay. I remember reading an academic analysis of a [Morton] Feldman piece that was the funniest thing I've ever read in my life. I had this book. It was one of the first books to ever come out on Feldman. I'm reading this, and it's one of his later period pieces, which was before John Cage. It was an hour and a half long, and this guy's thesis was that the whole thing has an ABA form. I'm like, 'Are you kidding me?' Like, 'Have you listened to this music?' The whole point is you can ultimately have whatever discourse you want. If you want to prove that a Feldman piece has an ABA form, you can find a way to do it. And I also come from a literary background. My parents were English teachers, and, to me, literature was always the model of art, and that, to me, is what you aspire to do. And, in a way, I think that music is a kind of rebellion, of saying 'I want to sense something that's completely a-signifying, that's completely outside the world of linguistic discourse,' because that was a tremendous liberation to me. And that remains, I think, the appeal of music, is that it's outside of those systems.

Thus, art music made extra-linguistic signification possible in a way that it has not been in the discipline of sound art. At least this composer looked at the lack of text in his music as a way to free the process of signification from the bounds imposed by language. Perhaps the presence or absence of text formed the fundamental boundary between the worlds of music and the gallery arts. In casual conversation, one musician who was familiar with the gallery arts noted, “The real difference between music and sound art is whether or not you talk beforehand.” Indeed, this claim rang true in interview responses as well as ethnographic observation of the world of auditory culture.

IV.4.3.3 Textual Value Devices

Conceptual text was the primary economic agencement of sound art.

Although some respondents described using the senses to develop an understanding of the value of sound, language was the most common value device in sound art. One of the first steps toward aesthetic value was to build a rich, descriptive language around sound. As this lexicon grew in the gallery arts, artists were able, in turn, to build new features into their own work. One sound artist saw a reflexive relationship between developing a language for sound art and the production of it, finding new positions in the field as subtler distinctions were made (Bourdieu 1993, p. 35):

I think that people are becoming a little bit more sensitive to the abundance of ways in which a work can be read as they’re making the work. And so, it used to be that you could get away with putting four speakers on the floor and having a sound come out, and if it was pretty, people would be like, ‘Oh, your work was so great.’ And now critics are looking at it and going, ‘Okay, so technology is exposed; means of production is exposed. That’s a sound of glass breaking, but we can’t see the glass. That’s acousmatic. We’ve got a word for that.’ You have to be able to, as an artist these days, not change what you do to suit people but be aware of the different ways something can be read and pare away the readings that you aren’t interested in the work having, and then leaving the rest of it free for the audience to interpret.

With such a wide range of interpretation available to the audience, this respondent went on to note the risk that an artwork may be misconstrued as offensive to an audience. Taking care to provide language around a piece that constrains the range of interpretation while allowing fluidity for an audience member to move through a space and encounter a work became an important tension of meaning and value for this artist.

Beyond using technical language to describe the formal features of sound work, conceptual language was the dominant way to value sound work and to guide the perception of audiences. Having a direct explanation of the intended conceptual meaning of a piece was one way to help audiences talk about and process what they encountered:

It's not usually a dialogue, I guess. It's kind of more of an explanation... It's definitely hard to mentally process something you just heard 15 minutes ago. But some people will be able to draw out more influences and things like that. Especially right after a performance or at an installation, I find it kind of harder to have a meaningful conversation.

Though artists found it to take time for a piece to distill in the mind of the listener, a direct explanation was thought to be helpful, providing conceptual reference points for the sonic experience. These conceptual reference points were sometimes “dissonant” with those brought in by audiences, but they engaged a dialogue around the work. One sound artist used the term “collective literacy” to describe the discourse opened up by conceptual works in sound:

In bringing an object to collective literacy, we co-create through our listening, as conditioned by the object. We co-create a set of shared reference points. That doesn't mean they're the same. They can be dissonant. There can be difference and disagreement, but that difference and disagreement become something to be investigated, as opposed to being resolved or solved.

He went on to describe sound as having a different epistemology than vision, first as a spatial phenomenon, immersing the body in three dimensions, and also as one that is necessarily durational: the specificity of sound in time and space. Chapter V “Hearing Value” will take up

these differences between sight and sound in terms of the phenomenology of meanings they afford. Providing reference points for this new sonic knowledge required language on the part of practitioners, bringing up disagreement yet pulling the senses into unexpected meaningful contexts.

Respondents were split on whether these descriptions needed to be read prior to sensing a sound work. Some thought that the context was necessary for understanding and made sure to provide handouts, wall text, program notes, or a verbal announcement prior to a performed work. Others thought that the unfolding of auditory meaning could take place before, after, or at the same time as reading a conceptual statement. Regarding the timing of these textual value devices, one sound artist noted:

All the things that I've done have had something where at least the opportunity was there for people to get it. I would like to have that. I generally used to not be very interested especially in performance. My first conceptions were allowing the audience to just hear it and see what and just get their own impression. But then you're losing. The more I've gotten into conceptual frameworks of my work, to me as an audience person, I want to know more about the work while it's happening. And I wouldn't necessarily say that it would make it sound better, but for me that's the fun part is the research, a lot of times. The end result is almost not as exciting. Definitely not.

Whether creating work or encountering it as an audience member, learning about the piece was more fun and meaningful for this respondent than the end result, a notion repeated by other sound artists making conceptual work. One artist even went so far as to say that the way an artwork “sounded” didn’t matter.

IV.5.0 Sound and Sight, Listening and Reading

Textual value devices built knowledge of the ranked value of sounds, even if the contents of those value judgments were quite different from one adjudicator to the next.

Key to each of these descriptions of the role of text in sound art was the phenomenological process of perceiving, understanding, and judging what was heard in order to build knowledge of how valuable it was. Sometimes this knowledge was framed in terms of the

aesthetic and economic “good,” while other framings had to do with the nuances of sonic content and the ability to pick out specific frequencies, timbres, and spatial relationships. Though this ordinal ranking was an act of economic *agencement*, the contents of value judgments were quite different from one practitioner to the next. These phenomenological acts of identifying the formal qualities of the work and deeming some of them valuable tended to go hand-in-hand, and language was the device most often used to convince gatekeepers and audience members alike of the value in sound art. The listening subject modifies the content of that which is heard according to attention, adumbration, and affect, drawing into question the appropriateness of field modeling for the discipline of sound art, and Chapter V “Hearing Value” will consider these differences between seeing and hearing, as well as how they may differently allow audiences to value what they perceive. More generally, sensory perception contrasts with conceptual understanding as a distinct process of economic *agencement*, with implications for the relationship between the body and evaluation in the cultural economy. If bodies were freed to associate their own extra-textual meanings apart from conceptual guidance, they might learn to listen to qualitative differences without economically ordering them.

V. HEARING VALUE: TAKING TIME FOR PERCEPTION AND UNDERSTANDING

“The formalist method: suitable for those ignorant of, or indifferent to, history. This, surely, is part of its appeal now. One doesn’t need to be ‘learned’ to understand a literary text or a painting, only intelligent. One doesn’t need more than the work itself.” (Sontag 2012, p. 448)

V.1.0 For or Against Ambience

The theoretical inquiry of this chapter works backward from a potent aesthetic claim discovered in fieldwork that was taken to be controversial among many sound practitioners. On June 17th and 21st of 2013, prior to the exhibition *Soundings: A Contemporary Score* at the Museum of Modern Art, Seth Kim-Cohen posted two essays to his blog. Disseminated quickly through the sound culture community, Kim-Cohen posted an apology on June 29th under the title “Killing the Message, not the Messenger,” hoping to dispel the feeling that these were personal attacks rather than imprecations against an aesthetic form he found to be problematic, even unethical. These blog postings morphed into the book *Against Ambience*, first an e-book published in December of that year and later printed in 2016. The core essays are an invective against ambient sound and light in the gallery arts, soothing “inchoate spaces of wombessence” (2016). Though without elaborating on that feminization of the abject art form, he called out ambient artists for the missed opportunity to communicate important concepts at a vital political moment. Instead, the book develops an argument in favor of conceptual sound art, works that use text to describe their nature rather than doing so with sound or light alone, more adeptly able to communicate crucial ideas with global consequences. These aesthetic claims rippled through the world of auditory culture, particularly in the gallery arts, and came up frequently in interviews and ethnographic conversations in this study. Craig Dworkin, quoted on the cover of the book, described this effect: “*Against Ambience* is like one of those bombs the anarchists dreamed of back at the birth of modernism: exploding whole worlds with a single throw. In their case, some

wood paneling was splintered, tuxedoes were spoiled, and a few (usually the wrong) people injured. But Kim-Cohen here, once again, pulls off the more utopian dream—and with aplomb” (Kim-Cohen 2016, back cover). By directly addressing solo exhibitions by name and the controversial *Soundings* exhibition without having yet attended, Kim-Cohen indeed interrupted the comfort of ambient sensory experience.

Before addressing the argument directly, this chapter hopes to expose the differences between sound and sight as modes of sensory perception and valuation. Working from aesthetic philosophy through phenomenology, the history of how we understand sensory inputs may inform Kim-Cohen’s argument, as well as the polarized response by other sound art practitioners. Though *Against Ambience* takes sound and light together, this analysis begins by identifying the distinguishing features of each, noting that the relatively passive ear may have different implications for sensory understanding than has the active eye. Taking the sense of sight as a synecdoche for all of the senses is not only common in aesthetic philosophy (Kant [1790] 2007; Husserl [1913] 1931, Merleau-Ponty [1945] 1962), art theory (Panofsky 1997), and sociology (Latour 1986; Bourdieu [1997] 2000; Martin 2011, pp. 203-6), but it has been the primary mode of sensory practice in the gallery arts, as well. Yet, some peculiarities of the sense of sight might lead to conclusions not warranted in the other bodily senses, including hearing. Without addressing the senses of taste, smell, and touch, this chapter’s focus on the sense of hearing draws into question some assumptions derived from theories of seeing regarding sensory phenomena, perception, and aesthetic judgment. Particularly, the active nature of the eye (Martin 2011, pp. 206-20) may not be generalized to the sense of hearing. The eyes look in ways that the ears do not listen. Rather than an active organ that uses muscles to train itself on an object of perception, the passive cochlea of the ears are constantly presented with sonic stimuli from

which meaning must be distilled. The act of listening is one of attention, qualitatively different than the bodily movement that results in the act of looking. As with the *sensus communis* in aesthetic philosophy (Kant [1790] 2007), Jonathan Sterne draws out the primacy of hearing speech for phenomenology (but not “sound,” as such), and this primacy runs parallel to the idealization of seeing within the audiovisual litany (2003, pp. 14-6, see Fig. 2 “The Audiovisual Litany”). Just as the actions of listening and looking are different, so are the phenomenological implications of meaning in the relationship between sensation, perception, and judgment.

Listening is distinct from looking in at least three important ways. First, if the act of listening, or “hearkening” in Heidegger ([1926] 1962, p. 207), is one of conscious attention rather than bodily motion, a phenomenological approach to perception is crucial to understanding the relationship between sense and understanding. Second, listening, as opposed to hearing, is a way to remove oneself from the state of being-in-the-stream (Schütz [1932] 1967); the act of temporal “adumbration” (Husserl 2001) is necessary to bracket off one sound from the surrounding ambient noise of life and to step out of the *longue durée* through a moment of reflection. Finally, the subjective perception of sound relies heavily on the affectual dispositions and attitudes of the subject, with moods and emotions having a strong relationship with the meaning of what is heard. These aspects of sensory phenomena reveal that focused attention, temporal adumbration, and affective states are important to the auditory sense in much the same way that focused centrality in space is important to the visual sense; it is unclear under what circumstances the object of sonic perception is shared from one listener to the next. *Gestalt* psychology (Martin 2011, p. 76) is an important moment in the study of the senses, particularly the claim that sensory understanding and judgment occur as a concurrent totality rather than as distinct moments of cognitive processing (2011, pp. 195-197). Yet contemporary sociology of

the senses (Friedman 2011, 2016) tends to disentangle the act of sensation from the consciousness of value, if not as distinct moments in time then at least as distinct aspects of consciousness. These complications of sensory judgment demand nuance from Kim-Cohen's emphatic aesthetic claim, particularly in terms of the relationship between the body as a locus of social subjectivity and the agency of audiences to engage the free play of sensation and judgment. Just as Rancière theorizes an emancipated spectator ([2008]) 2009) who can engage the aesthetic sensorium (2004) as a forest of possibilities for embodied perception and meaning-making, so can we imagine other social reconfigurations in a broad range of sensory environments.

V.2.0 The *Sensus Communis* in Aesthetic Philosophy

Similar to language, sensory stimuli are understood in a shared web of social meaning, and their qualities are subjectively determined in cultural context.

Before disentangling the relationship between sensation and judgment, aesthetic philosophy directed its attention to the possibility of a supersensible realm inaccessible to our cognitive powers of empirical inquiry (Kant [1790] 2007, pp. 10-2). On this distant ontological plane, the object can be considered beautiful and even sublime (Kant [1790] 2007, pp. 23-7). Though these qualities of objects were thought to be distinct from the principles of judgment and attribution by a perceiving subject, Kant set up disinterestedness as necessary for the pure judgment of aesthetic objects (Ardery 1997). The possibility that objects might have essential qualities apart from subjective understandings has largely been set aside by 20th century social theory, particularly since Bourdieu's unification of the actor and object in the process of judgment within fields of power (1993, p. 30). Martin concurs that "the first task of an aesthetics is simply to determine how we may be able to attribute qualities to objects even when we cannot simply posit that they were 'put there' by their creator" (2011, p. 198). Austin Harrington has

drawn attention to the relationship between particularity and generality in the object of perception as a way to understand the possibility of a shared knowledge of aesthetic qualities (2004). By extending the notion of the object beyond the material or temporal form in perception toward the qualitative characteristic of the object-in-itself, Harrington proposes a dialectic relationship between Kantian transcendentalism and Bourdieusian relativism.

Yet, the possibility that objects might have essential qualities independent of subjective judgment has a long history in aesthetic philosophy, reaching back to Aristotle's category of "quality." Distinct from the other categories of being—substance, quantity, relation, location, time, position, possession, action, and affection (de Rijk 2002)—the quality of an object of perception is thought to be consubstantial with its material form (Martin 2011, p. 206). Apart from the possibility that objects might have essential "qualities," this first category of being, "substance," has distinct implications for the sense of hearing rather than seeing. The object seen is presumed to have material substance, off of which light reflects and is sensed by the active attention of the eye. On the contrary, the relation between sound and matter is at a microscopic scale and undifferentiated degree. As a sound presses its patterns against the generic particles of air, these vibrational impressions make sound distinctive, rather than any patterns inherent to the material against which the sound presses. Aside from reverberation effects, material differentiation does not occur until the location of the body, specifically the acutely sensing cochlea of the ear canal (see I.1.0 "Sociology of Sound"). At increasing depth and shrinking size, the ear is able to understand differences in sound patterns at higher frequencies, with the amplitude of sound perceived in the degree of pressure throughout. If the ear is the sculpted matter against which sound pressure enacts its stimulus, the material substance of the sound is not an external object at all but rather can be found in the intricacy of the human body. Converse

to the sense of sight, whereby patterns in matter differentiate one stimulus from another, the sense of hearing requires nothing but scattered particles of air to impress sounds within the body. In this way, the objects heard are not different in “substance,” but they are different in Aristotelian “quality.”

Christoph Cox takes up this distinction between substance and quality both in his 2011 “Beyond Representation and Signification: Toward a Sonic Materialism” and more recently in his 2013 “Sonic Philosophy.” In each he establishes the material forces of sound without mistaking sonic phenomena for matter in themselves. If the aspects of sonic objects are not material but rather patterned processes acting upon the material forms of architecture and ears, then in what ways can we understand their qualities to be available to sensory perception and the consciousness?

If we proceed from sound, we will be less inclined to think in terms of representation and signification, and to draw distinctions between culture and nature, human and nonhuman, mind and matter, the symbolic and the real, the textual and the physical, the meaningful and the meaningless. Instead, we might begin to treat artistic productions not as complexes of signs or representations but complexes of forces materially inflected by other forces and force-complexes. We might ask of an image or a text not what it *means* or *represents*, but what it *does*, how it *operates*, what changes it effectuates. (2011, p. 157)

Cox arrives at this question via a Deleuzian ([1980] 1987) extension and distillation of Kant ([1790] 2007), distinguishing the “actual” from the “virtual.” On this distinction, he writes, “This pair of terms marks the difference, within the flux of nature, between empirical individuals and the forces, powers, differences, and intensities that give rise to them” (2011, p. 152). Perhaps this opposition can be extended to that of “substance” and “quality” and in terms of the parallel opposition between *what appears* and the *conditions for the possibility of that appearance*, as will be seen in Husserl’s notions of noesis and noema ([1913] 1931). Though Cox claims that these conditions are not conceptual or cognitive, as they are both for Kant and Kim-Cohen, but

rather “material, immanent in nature itself,” the relatively blank character of air particles calls this notion of materiality into question.

Also crucial to a theory of sound are the categories of place and position. These related aspects of sound situate perception in a reflective material space in addition to the three dimensions of air surrounding the body. The matter surrounding the body becomes a reflective surface on which the force of sound bounces in multiplicity back to the body. Similar to the reflective surfaces by which light becomes image, these reflective surfaces make the sense of hearing one of spatial location and bodily position. Yet, the sense of sight requires a reflective surface whereas the sense of sound requires only the micro-material environment of air particles against which to press. If all sight is reflective in its position, then the positionality of sound is doubly so. With sound patterns encountering the ear both directly and reflectively, the objects of visual perception can only encounter the eye through a reflective, though much faster, process. Indeed, the human ear perceives the surrounding environment through reflection in much the same way the eye does, yet with less acuity. The sonar power of bats differs from humans’ in precision and range, though not in quality. Though Cox, along with much of the interdiscipline of sound studies, might tend to overplay site specificity as a particular material aspect of auditory culture, still that material substance is a necessary condition for the phenomenon of sound, both directly and through reverberation.

Extending beyond the Aristotelian categories of understanding, Kant discussed the role of the individual subject in apprehending these categories ([1790] 2007). He differentiated the act of sensory perception through stimulated organs of the body (e.g. encountering colors as “the isochronous vibrations (*pulsus*) of the aether” or tones as “the air set in vibration by sound”) from the act of reflection, “the regular play of the impressions (and consequently the form in

which different representations are united)” ([1790] 2007, p. 55). Reflection requires abstraction from the quality of the sensation, and the possibility of this pure judgment of formal beauty relies on the cultivation of taste. Kant described the problem facing those who lack this cultivation of taste as mistaking an agreeable sensation for a beautiful form. Kim-Cohen extended this problem to the “inchoate spaces of wombessence” (2016), in that these sensations stop short at the point of agreeableness and should not be judged as beautiful in form:

All form of objects of the senses (both of outer and also, meditately, of inner sense) is either *figure* or *play*. In the latter case it is either play of figures (in space: mime and dance), or mere play of sensations (in time). The *charm* of colors, or of the agreeable tones of instruments, may be added: but the *design* in the former and the *composition* in the latter constitute the proper object of the pure judgment of taste. To say that the purity alike of colors and of tones, or their variety and contrast, seem to contribute to beauty, is by no means to imply that, because in themselves agreeable, they therefore yield an addition to the delight in the form and one on a par with it. The real meaning is that they make this form more clearly, definitely, and completely perceptible, and besides enliven the representation by their charm, as they excite and sustain the attention directed to the object itself. (Kant [1790] 2007, pp. 56-57)

For Kant, emotion, too, was exempt from the rubric of beauty, contributing rather to the experience of the sublime. Where, then, was the place of the “conceptual” in considerations of beauty? Kant described the process by which taste is cultivated, which we may call, alternately, the knowledge of value, as likened to the *sensus communis*, a common sense ([1790] 2007, pp. 69, 123). Distinct from the colloquial notion of common sense as a widely shared logic of action, Kant’s use had more to do with shared (common) understanding of sensory stimuli. Just as language without social understanding is a string of meaningless phonemes, perhaps all sensory stimuli are similarly subject to common sense.

Though Kant set forward the autonomous qualities of sensory objects, he also established that these sensations were subject to social apprehension. Despite the necessity of a *sensus communis*, an array of social meanings can be attributed to any sonic object, not limited to a

basic semiotic understanding but extending to political economy, as well. Panofsky analyzed the changing use of perspective in European painting to unseat religious and monarchic authority over perception and to raise the beautiful image to a seat of honor (1997). Dewey concurred that Kant's understanding of the "beautiful" reflected "the artistic tendencies of the eighteenth century" (1934, p. 253), which were situated in the *sensus communis* of a particular historical moment. The historical contingency of the qualities found to be valuable in objects of perception became the site of critique for Dewey:

For that century was, generally speaking, till towards its close, a century of 'reason rather than of passion,' and hence one in which objective order and regularity, the invariant element, was almost exclusively the source of esthetic satisfaction—a situation that lent itself to the idea that contemplative judgment and the feeling connected with it are the peculiar differentia of esthetic experience. But if we generalize the idea and extend it to all periods of artistic endeavor, its absurdity is evident. It not only passes over, as if it were irrelevant, the doing and making involved in the production of a work of art (and the corresponding active elements in the appreciative response), but it involves an extremely one-sided idea of the nature of perception. It takes as its cue to the understanding of perception what belongs only to the act of recognition, merely broadening the latter to include the pleasure that attends it when recognition is prolonged and extensive. It is thus a theory peculiarly appropriate to a time when the 'representative' nature of art is especially marked and when the subject-matter represented is of a 'rational' nature—regular and recurrent elements and phases of existence. (1934, p. 253).

The universality of the "qualities" of objects suffered critique from art and social theorists throughout the twentieth century, yet the relation between consciousness and the senses remains an important artifact of Kant's aesthetic framework. Though the meanings and value judgments associated with aesthetic objects are historically and spatially contextual, the principle of common sense remains useful in a theory of perception. Only by bounding the scope of the "common" can the rubric of aesthetic value have a socio-historical foundation. For Kant, the purity of tones was a standard of sonic beauty, whereas, for example, the frequency range of those tones might be a commonly shared standard in sound art today. In each case, the senses do

not apprehend the qualities of objects in a vacuum but through socially contextual schemes of understanding and value.

With the social basis of sensory perception passed along from the classics of aesthetic philosophy, phenomenology began to address the social processes at play in the development of perceptual understanding, including the invocation of a *sensus communis*. If sensory stimuli are not understood out-of-hand, then how does a social subject bring these stimuli into conscious perception and judgment? As we will see, the *Gestalt* school of psychology took perception and judgment as a concurrent, even self-evident, totality, but phenomenology drew attention away from the simultaneity of cognitive processing and looked instead to its unfolding through the procession of time. These particularities of the sense of hearing, especially its reliance on attention, time, and attitude for perception, make it a special case in phenomenology. Apart from the attention to spoken language, the sense of sight has been privileged in this discipline, as well. Where visual images may not need to be bracketed in time for understanding, sonic impulses do require the perceiving mind to set them apart from the ongoing stream of consciousness.

V.3.0 The Stream of Consciousness in Social Phenomenology

Hearing is unique among the senses in that the body remains immobile while it reflects on sensation through time.

With rapid movements averaging three per second, human eyes scan surroundings and use the extra ocular muscles to train themselves on objects, centering them within the visual field. This act of motion through space is unique among the senses, with the exception of the sense of touch prompting a body to reach out for sensation. Conversely, smell, taste, and hearing are immobile in the body of the perceiving subject. Though the sense of sight might be easily understood to be active, engaging either the mindful will of the subject or at least a mobile body through space, the ear cannot be understood in this way. The act of listening attention is not one

of motion but of conscious identification. Martin (2011, pp. 206-20) draws conclusions from the actively seeing eye for the nature of social action, yet the passivity of the hearing ear may have other implications for the role of the will in action. In rare cases one might move the ear closer to an object of desired perception, but more likely the mind reverts to the dominant and active eye, turning the head in order to see the origin of the sensed sound. Indeed, sound art audiences tend to look at sound sources while listening, even when they are strictly functional, such as a speakers and amplification systems.

The gallery arts, entrenched in the sense of sight, have historically expected active audiences to look at works trapped in time and space. Despite the interventions of kinesis and video into the gallery, objects trapped in time and space, such as paintings and sculptures, dominate the landscape. When an immaterial, invisible sonic work enters the gallery, it is subjected to different criteria of sensation. The properties of these visual objects, such as color, form, line, shape, space, texture, and value, can be acknowledged in the same place a moment later: spatial and temporal stasis. Yet, when one points out the sonic properties of sound, such as pitch, timbre, and volume, these same elements may have changed a moment later, making the object particular to the attention, adumbration, and affect of the listener. The durational nature of sound makes it unique among the other senses.

Martin points out that vision has been as “our exemplar of sense,” downplaying the possibility of consubstantiality. Indeed that the seen object is part of the eye seems less plausible than that the heard sound is part of the ear. Just as with taste, the material mingling of substances leads to our perception of them, and the same pressures that act on cochlea also act on floors, walls, and ceilings before bouncing back again. Yet, this study hopes to contest the claim that the inactivity of perception is “dead wrong” through the ever-sensing ear (2011, p. 221). Though we

might train our eyes on the objects of visual perception through bodily movement, the practice of training one's ears on the objects of auditory perception must be done through attention, focus, and a learned sensory landscape. As Martin admits, a timbre may be composed of many different sine waves of different wavelengths and amplitudes. The quality a percept, then, is not a fusion but is composed of fused, inseparable elements. A phenomenological "object" cannot be removed from its site of occurrence (e.g. a rainbow from the sky in Dewey [1930] 1960, quoted in Martin 2011, p. 224). Deleuze's *Bergsonism* addresses the composition of the object according to quantitative differences, a "numerical multiplicity":

'Object' and 'objective' denote not only what is divided but what, in dividing, does not change in kind. It is thus what divides by differences in degree. The object is characterized by the perfect equivalence of the divided and the divisions, of number and unit. (1988, p. 40)

Bergson introduces the possibility of different types of multiplicity, namely continuous and discrete ([1889] 2001). Though the same object may be perceived in different duration, the subject perceiving this duration also observes a qualitative difference, a non-numerical, virtual multiplicity, virtual in that it is actualized in the process of actualization (Deleuze 1988, pp. 42-43).

Phenomenological accounts of the senses have tended to take the sense of sight as paradigmatic, as well, using images rather than sounds as the building blocks of theories of perception. Drawing on Bergson ([1889] 2001, [1896] 1990) and Husserl ([1913] 1931, [1928] 1964), Alfred Schütz developed a theory of consciousness on two levels ([1932] 1967). On the surface level, the Ego acts and thinks in the world of space-time through apprehension of discrete discontinuous images. "Its 'attention to life' prevents it from becoming submerged in the intuition of pure duration" (Schütz [1932] 1967, p. 47). On the level of the consciousness, images present themselves to the Ego and may require attention or action. Yet, on a deeper level

where psychic tension is relaxed, the consciousness is dissolved into the *longue durée* of continuous transitions without contours, boundaries, or differentiation. This experience of a unidirectional, irreversible, and unbroken stream is sometimes interrupted by the intervention of the sense-making conscious mind, pulling the consciousness up to that other level of active consciousness. What unfolds in Schütz' text is a theory of the nature and genesis of that differentiation, the apprehension and comprehension of images that present themselves to the mind. Even to find oneself to be in this stream of consciousness is a moment of reflection, pulling away from the uninterrupted stream; to be conscious of consciousness immediately draws the mind to the second level. Yet these interrupting objects may be unique according to the attention, adumbration, and affect of the perceiving mind.

V.3.1 Attention: Noesis and Noema

The meaning of the sensory world is an emergent meaning, endowed by the reflexive mental “glance” of noetic attention rather than the perceived noematic content of the object in itself.

Husserl takes up the phenomenological puzzle of conscious listening and hearing in his distinction of noesis and noema. Though the intentional act of noesis sets apart an object of perception in the mind of the perceiver, one might wonder about the practices, principles, and process of that setting apart. Though it may seem to be tautological at face value, the noema of the object of perception is “the perceived object as perceived” ([1913] 1931, pp. 257-260) or, by extension, the “judged content of the judgment as such” ([1913] 1931, p. 272). However, the prototypical object for Husserl’s distinction between noesis and noema is the apple tree in the garden, subject to the sense of sight. In this exemplar case, the particularities of sight are crucial to the theory of perception, as well. These particularities begin to play out in Husserl’s notion that every intentional act has an “I-pole (the origin of the noesis)” and an “object-pole (or noema)”:

From the natural standpoint the apple-tree is something that exists in the transcendent reality of space, and the perception as well as the pleasure a psychical state which we enjoy as real human beings. Between one and the other real being (*Realen*), the real man or the real perception on the one hand, and the real apple-tree on the other, there subsist real relations. Now in such conditions of experience, and in certain cases it may be that the perception is a ‘mere hallucination’, and that the perceived, this apple-tree that stands before us, does not exist in the ‘real’ objective world. The objective relation which was previously thought of as really subsisting is now disturbed. Nothing remains but the perception; there is nothing *real* out there to which it relates. ([1913] 1931, p. 259)

In questioning whether the object-pole of perception – the noema – might be a mere hallucination, what is Husserl’s condition for “the real”? The material substance of the apple tree might be necessary for it to be understood as real. Though at a microscopic level the boundary of tree and soil may be complicated or indistinct, the vast mass of an apple tree in a field is distinct from its surroundings in terms of material substance. Yet, the reality of sonic noema is not so, and even more contingent on the attention of the consciousness.

Schütz ([1932] 1967, p. 72) building on Husserl’s notion of the real analysis of experience to theorize the noetic acts of perception and judgment as dual components of noematic content. The object of perception is contingent on the perceiving mind, at least in its noematic content: the perceived object as perceived and the judged content of the judgment as such. Thus all real experience is constructed out of elements of perception that are bounded and treated as unified by the individual mind:

We have to distinguish the parts and phases which we find through a *real* analysis of the experience, in which we treat the experience as an object like any other... But on the other hand the intentional experience is the consciousness of something, and is so in the form its essence prescribes: as memory, for instance, or as judgment, or as will, etc., and so we can ask what can be said on essential lines concerning this ‘of something.’ ([1913] 1931, p. 257)

Husserl proceeds in this passage to explain how the objects of experience (“this ‘of something’”) become meaningful. Yet, for Schütz the development of relevance structures of meaning is not a simple one. Particularly regarding the noetic-noematic content of vision, he asserts that the

thematic percept might remain the same despite variation in the noetic process of apprehension. The example given is the sight of a snake by one who fears them, and the specific character of vision is again crucial to development of a theory of the senses more broadly. Schütz claims plainly, “At least we may say, the noema of this percept remains unchanged despite all possible noetical variations. But on the other hand, it is true that in order to collect new interpretively relevant moments intrinsic to the same thematic object, I must shift my attentional focus in such a way that data which were horizontal are drawn into the thematic kernel” (1970: 41). That a noematic “kernel” might survive the attentional modification of the noetic process is taken as controversial for Schütz scholars and Husserl scholars alike. Cox (1978) takes pains to draw out moments in Schütz’ other writing that demonstrate he does not claim a single noema can remain unchanged through multiple noeses. As well, he criticizes Schütz for reification of key terminology on several accounts, perhaps most incisively his vague approach to the marginalization of a “topic” (1978, pp. 155-156). Such slippery aspects of consciousness demand greater specificity if they are to contribute to general claims about the noetic-noematic aspects of sensory perception.

How to resolve the tension between noesis and noema, described elsewhere as the tension of subjective sensory perception and the object sensed (Bergson [1896] 1990)? Where that object is material, as a snake in the grass, the possibility of a thematic kernel is intuitively plausible. Perhaps this example is an especially poor one, as cognitive psychology has given a convincing evolutionary account for the rapid response of humans to feared objects, even demonstrating that visual recognition, measured through bodily response, can occur prior to conscious awareness of the visual stimulus (Öhman and Soares 1993; Öhman et al 2012). It seems likely that the case of such a threatening and uncommonly smooth predator might be a poor example of the noematic

kernel's stability despite varied noetic processes of apprehension. In the case of auditory phenomena, the field of sound art has built itself upon the principle of site specificity, with some artists even requiring personal installation of their works in order to ensure that the noetic context falls under their own artistic guidance. Though we may try to describe the features of the perceived object as perceived and the judged object as judged, we cannot know how the intention of the perceiving subject nor the artist relates with the content of that perception.

Patrik Aspers' 2001 *Markets in Fashion* disentangles these tensions in Husserl and Schütz regarding noesis and noema, yet again in the empirical context of the sense of sight, specifically fashion photography. His distillation of Husserl brings together the possibility of a stable material object endowed with multiple noemata by perceiving subjects. This possibility may lead away from the troublesome possibility of the "thematic kernel" and toward a contingent relationship between object, perception, and perceiving subject, particularly in aesthetic contexts:

Noema as a form of intentionality implies that what is, is partly constructed by the individual. Thus the meaning of the actor, or actors, is integrated into the object. Husserl, however, is clear about the idea that we do 'see' an object. We do not see the parts of a car, the steering wheel, tires and so on; what we see is a car. But not only physical objects are constructed in this way; actions and events are too. An 'object' may then carry many different noemata (plural of noema), or somewhat more intuitively, different persons may hold different noemata of the same 'object'... Thus noema is related to the constitution of the perceived object; an object 'is' what it is perceived to be. The way the world is structured is thus not given. (Aspers 2001, p. 175)

Aspers extends the possibility that persons may hold different noemata of the same "object" to contribute to the instability of products within markets, generally, and especially in markets driven by aesthetic principles. Not only are the shifting qualities of crude oil and grain in commodities markets the products of perception, but so are fashion photographs (2001, p. 159).

If the noematic content of objects is individually determined, then the meanings associated with these objects and the principles of aesthetic value derived from these meanings might be, as well.

Thus, the meaning of the sensory world is an emergent meaning, endowed by the reflexive “glance” of attention rather than the object of perception in itself. How, then, can this specificity of meaning be reconciled with the ability of individual subjects to communicate meaning with one another? Schütz connects the temporal specificity of meaning in the act of noesis and the shared meanings of the “social world”:

I no longer have before me a complete and constituted world but one which only now is being constituted and which is ever being constituted anew in the stream of my enduring Ego: not a world of being, but a world that is at every moment one of becoming and passing away – or better, an emerging world. As such, it is meaningful for me in virtue of those meaning-endowing intentional acts of which I become aware by a reflexive glance. And as a world that is being constituted, never completed, but always in the process of formation, it points back to the most basic fact of my conscious life, to my awareness of the actual ongoing or passage of my life, to my duration; in Bergson’s words, to my *durée*, or, in Husserl’s terminology, to my internal time-consciousness... What we call the world of objective meaning is, therefore, abstracted in the social sphere from the constituting processes of a meaning-endowing consciousness... In contrast to this, when we speak of subjective meaning in the social world, we are referring to the constituting processes in the consciousness of the person who produced that which is objectively meaningful. ([1932] 1967, pp. 36-37)

The incomplete, emergent sensory world, then, is contingent upon the reflexive glance, or attention, of the consciousness upon its own stream of experience. Though the objects formed in the consciousness are intentional acts of noesis, their noematic content is taken for granted as such, locked into a moment of time-consciousness with subjective meaning. The bracketing off of the internal time consciousness makes the sonic object subjectively determined in ways that visual objects are not. The immediacy of apprehending a material object of sight as a unified whole is not so for many of the audible objects that present themselves to unblinking ears.

If the visual objects of perception are reliant upon what Husserl calls “attentional transformations” ([1913] 1931, p. 267) of noematic specificity, how might they be even more so

for the sense of hearing? Though he refers to again to the “mental glance” ([1913] 1931, p. 267) of the pure Ego to form the consciousness, the ear might have trouble “glancing” with such acumen and agility within the constant stream of sounds. Husserl goes on to describe an attentional transformation as the intentional act of fixing the “beam of attention in its appointed circuit” ([1913] 1931, p. 268), but the passive ear must allow time to pass in order to construct an object out of sensory information, rather than the immediate fixing of a beam in space. This difficulty is taken up explicitly, with the physical properties of light becoming essential to Husserl’s theory of perception:

It is usual to compare attention with an illuminating light. What is attended to, in the specific sense, subsists in the more or less bright cone of light, but can also shelve off into the half-shadow and into the full darkness. Little as the image suffices to inculcate with the proper distinctness all modes calling for phenomenological fixing, it is still significant as pointing to changes in that which appears as such. This alteration of the lighting does not alter that which appears in and through the meaning it coveys, but brightness and darkness modify its mode of appearing; they are to be found in the directing of the glance to the noematic object and there described. ([1913] 1931, p. 269)

Although that noematic object may be relatively stable within the cone of light, subject to the apparent modification of brightness or darkness yet of the same nature, can the same be said of sonic phenomena? Particularly in the case of auditory culture, the temporal limits of sound may have more constitutive impact than do the shades of light or darkness in the process of conscious understanding. This attentional modification of noematic content may be negligible in many cases of visual experience, but the definitions of aspects of sonic experience may be quite different in the minds of social subjects. These differences call into question Kant’s very notion of the *sensus communis*, not only the universal sense but also in the tightly bounded assumption of shared objects of perception within historically specific aesthetic communities. Though a handful of visitors to a gallery might be said to view the same painting, can they be said to hear the same work in sound?

V.3.2 Adumbration: Temporal Boundaries

Sounds are bounded in time when we hearken to them, but the beginnings and endings of these perceptual units may not be the same from one person to the next.

To break from the stream of consciousness through a moment of attention is a temporally specific act. Husserl draws out this durational phenomenon in terms of picking out the “now-phase,” applied as a specific unit of time to the heard sound:

If we look closer and notice how in the mental process, say of [perceiving] a sound, even after phenomenological reduction, appearance and that which appears stand in contrast, and this in the midst of pure givenness, hence in the midst of true immanence, then we are taken aback. Perhaps a sound lasts. We have there the patently given unity of the sound and its duration with its temporal phases, the present and the past. On the other hand, when we reflect, the phenomenon of enduring sound, itself a temporal phenomenon, has its own now-phase and past phases. And if one picks out a now-phase of the phenomenon there is not only the objects now of the sound itself, but the now of the sound is but a point in the duration of a sound. (Husserl 1970, pp. 8-9)

Schütz takes for granted Husserl’s assumption that time is a linear procession in which the mind moves continuously: “This world is now present to me and in every waking ‘now,’ obviously so, has its temporal horizon, infinite in both directions, its known and unknown, its intimately alive and its unalive past and future” ([1913] 1931, p. 102). Extending in each direction toward an “unalive” future and past, the mind is only living in its present, the slipping away point of consciousness in a linear trajectory forward. That “actual Now” experienced by the Ego is “a form that persists through continuous change of content” including the object or idea apprehended within it ([1913] 1931, pp. 237-241). Corollary to the existence of this unitary line of Time, for Husserl, is the “Time Consciousness,” the sense of change within the mind, in a constant “stream of experience” ([1913] 1931, p. 236). The awareness that “now” is not the same as either “before” or “after” is crucial for the mind to be able to understand its experience, yet the contents of these forms are variable. In particular, the “actual Now” must be set apart from the

rest of the stream of consciousness in order to be perceived as an event, a mental act Husserl describes as “adumbration” (2001) that may be either active or passive.

Yet, adumbration is often conceived as a visual concept, the “shading off” of an object of perception from the surrounding stimuli in the stream of experience. Made from only one perspective of “the spatial object from one side” (Husserl 2001, p. 39), this visual object points to the “multifarious continua of possible new perceptions” (p. 41). Heidegger describes the opposing act of auditory adumbration as one of “hearkening,” distinct from mere hearing ([1926] 1962, p. 207). For him, the being that understands a sound does so immediately:

Hearkening is phenomenally still more primordial than what is defined ‘in the first instance’ as ‘hearing’ in psychology – the sensing of tones and the perception of sounds. Hearkening too has the kind of Being of the hearing which understands. What we ‘first’ hear is never noises or complexes of sounds, but the creaking wagon, the motorcycle. We hear the column on the march, the north wind, the woodpecker tapping, the fire crackling. It requires a very artificial and complicated frame of mind to ‘hear’ a ‘pure noise.’ The fact that motorcycles and wagons are what we proximally hear is the phenomenal evidence that in every case *Dasein*, as Being-in-the-world, already dwells *alongside* what is ready-to-hand within-the-world; it certainly does not dwell proximally alongside ‘sensations’; nor would it first have to give shape to the swirl of sensations to provide the springboard from which the subject leaps off and finally arrives at a ‘world.’ *Dasein*, as essentially understanding, is proximally alongside what is understood. ([1926] 1962, p. 207)

Heidegger’s sonic object is adumbrated from the rest of sonic stimulus immediately in association with the origin of the sound. Except in the artificial and complicated state of mind in which one can sense a pure noise as distinct from its origin (essential to the field of auditory culture), the stream of conscious experience tends to link sonic objects in time with their expected origins: wagons, motorcycles, and woodpeckers. This explanation of hearkening, or sonic adumbration, would seem simple enough were the sources of sounds always self-evident. Indeed most of life is structured around these relatively correct guesses. Rather than being hung up on the range of possibilities (e.g. “is that thing I hear breathing in the adjacent library carrel

really human?”), our guesses tend to be sufficient for action or inaction, and they remain almost always within the framework of passive intuitions (Husserl 2001, p. 121).

If the stream of experience is accompanied by constant hearing, then the consciousness must become active in order to hearken. Assumptions about the origin and nature of sound are closely tied to the parameters of adumbration. For example, the quick tweet of a bird might be of less than a moment’s duration, while the passage of a fire truck’s screaming siren takes several seconds; though the units of sound are temporally different, they are similarly understood in terms of their material origination. Furthermore, the ongoing hum of motors, fans, and machines in buildings does not require temporal adumbration at all, as long as the active consciousness does not hearken to them. The constituting process of subjective meaning merely requires that the observer notice a sensation as experience:

Even the fact that I become aware of the meaning of an experience presupposes that I notice it and ‘select it out’ from all my other experiences. In each moment of its duration the Ego is conscious of its bodily state, its sensations, its perceptions, its attitude-taking Acts, and its emotional state. All these components constitute the ‘thus’ or ‘whatness’ (*So*) of each Now (*Jetzt*) of the Ego’s conscious life. If I call one of these experiences meaningful it is only because, in taking heed of it, I have ‘selected it out’ of and distinguished it from the abundance of experiences coexisting with it, preceding it, and following it. (Schütz [1932] 1967, p. 41)

Schütz arrives at the most “primitive sense” of meaning: that a sensation has been selected out from all the sensory stimuli of life. Though they may be immediately associated with believed origins, these sonic objects only require the attention of the consciousness to select them from the constant inundation of sound for understanding. Though the color, shape, and size of the bird tweeting may be unknown, it is often sufficient to rely on the vast category of “bird” to understand a tweet as a non-threatening and pleasant experience.

Yet, sounds of unknown origin pose quite a problem for Heidegger, Husserl, and Schütz. If the constituting process of subjective meaning requires that the observer notice a sensation as

experience, then she must hearken to the sound within temporal parameters. Though many sounds do not require a boundary in time in order to select them out from the abundance of experience – as the bird, siren, or motor – sounds of unknown origin must be delimited from the rest of sonic stimuli and attributed a length of time. For the study of sound art in galleries and museums, the length of the sonic object to which we hearken is crucial for the question of whether we are, in fact, listening to the same thing. Furthermore, these sounds are not created in order to point to origins, except in the case of acousmatic sound (Chion 1994). Rather, these sounds exist as objects-in-themselves, not simply signifying a recognizable signified origin but entering cultural space as both signified and signifying in a single sensory object.

Hansen's *New Philosophy for New Media* extends Bergson's singularity of perception to the construction of digital images, as well, yet still restrained to the context of sight (2004). Though some of the artists Hansen describes also work in audio media, such as Bill Viola, the new philosophy Hansen develops is one of seeing a “digital image,” one that is modular, flexible, and specific to the seeing individual. Though the selection of visual images may lead the individual to embodied singularity, how might the sense of hearing differ? Once again, time differentiates hearing from seeing. Though the inundation of digital images requires a sensing subject to choose between them in the filter of affect and memory, the apprehension of sound is further time-bound. Whether skipping through a streaming audio file, filtering out everyday sounds in order to recognize an amplified recording in public space, or registering a few moments of music in memory, the length of sound is another layer of specificity in the precision of embodied hearing, extending beyond the selection of visual digital images.

These differences between vision and hearing might have further significant effects on theories of perception. The temporal dimension of setting one's eye on a visual object is quite

different from the act of focusing one's ear on the procession of sound through the stream of conscious experience. Not only are the boundaries of temporal attention on sound, the brackets of the sonic object, relative to the listener, but also it is possible for the listener to step in and out of submersion in the stream of consciousness at all, giving attention to sonic stimuli in varying degrees. As the listener may or may not focus attention on the sound perceived, the moment of reflection pulls her out of intentional listening and into the passive state of hearing. The active eye is an intentional organ, while the passive ear is a receptive one, waiting for a sound to cue attention. The temporal and attentional transformations of sound, not to mention the affectual particularities to be seen, have significant effects on the meanings associated with them.

V.3.3 Affect: Attitudes and Meaning-Making

Particularly with sounds of unknown origin, the mood of the listener can change not only the value of a sound but its perceived qualities, as well.

The differences instituted by the attentional and temporal particularities of meaning, as acts of the consciousness on the objects perceived, are compounded by differences in the attitudes and affect of perceiving subjects. Not only might we question if the noematic content or temporal adumbration of perceived sonic objects are the same, but also the attitudinal or affectual prejudices of audiences might have a drastic effect on the meanings they contain, as well:

From moment to moment the Ego shows, toward the objects of its attention, attitudes which vary in degree and kind. Its consciousness manifests, for instance, different degrees of tension depending on whether it is directed in lively activity on the world of space and time or whether it is submerged in its inner stream of consciousness. And, all together, there are many different fundamental attitudes that the Ego can assume toward life, attitudes similar to the 'moods' of which Heidegger speaks under the heading of 'the existentialia of *Dasein*.' Now the attitude of the Ego toward life – its *attention à la vie* – determines in turn its attitude toward the past... The meaning of a lived experience undergoes modifications depending on the particular kind of attention the Ego gives to that lived experience. This also implies that the meaning of a lived experience is different depending on the moment from which the Ego is observing it. (Schütz [1932] 1967, p. 73)

If one's mood has such an effect on the attention to lived experience, as well as the meaning of that experience, the problem of continuity extends even further. Bourdieu addresses the implications of power and class on these dispositions to sensory objects ([1979] 1984, 1993), but changes in the individual attitudes from one moment to the next may have as great an effect on meaning as class position within the field of power. With such variety in the possibilities of perception, discontinuity in judgment comes as no surprise. Far from the universal, qualitative form of beauty consubstantial with an object of perception (Kant [1790] 2007), the potential for difference in not only the attentional and temporal facets of subjectivity but also the affectual disposition takes perception far in the direction of contextual relativity.

The nature of this affectual state is treated quite differently throughout social theories of emotion and cognition. In the empirical case of sound art, the difference between ambient and conceptual sound art runs parallel to Weber's distinction between affectual and meaningful behavior. These two are joint aspects of experience, yet the latter can be analyzed in terms of rationality while the former cannot:

Purely affectual behavior also stands on the borderline of what can be considered 'meaningfully' oriented, and often it, too, goes over the line. It may, for instance, consist in an uncontrolled reaction to some exceptional stimulus. It is a case of sublimation when affectually determined action occurs in the form of conscious release of emotional tension. When this happens it is usually well on the road to rationalization in one or the other or both of the above senses. (Weber [1922] 1978, p. 25)

The work of conceptual sound undoubtedly falls into the rationalized and meaningful scheme provided by Weber. By attaching explicit linguistic meaning to a work of sound art, the perception of the sound is not only a release of emotional tension but also an expression of meaningful thought. However, where does the formal work in sound fall in Weber's distinction, particularly the ambient artwork described by Kim-Cohen? Weber's concept of affectual

behavior from *Economy and Society* is distinct from affectual action; behavior is neither conscious nor meaningful, while action is meaningfully directed toward a value, even if that value is sensory rather than rational. The latter includes “contemplative bliss” ([1922] 1978, p. 25), not unlike the absorption into ambient sonic perception Kim-Cohen finds to be lacking meaning. Perhaps the ambient work in sound brings the audience member’s affect from mere behavior and translates it into action. Becoming aware of one’s affectual condition in the gallery or museum pulls that affective state into the consciousness, and Weber draws on Nietzsche’s of sublimation ([1878] 1996, pp. 57-59) for the channeling of antisocial urges toward socially acceptable action, pulling the passive affective state into a normative social context.

Weber applies the difference between an uninvestigated affectual state and conscious attitudinal behavior to his studies of music. This distinction takes the form of the harmonic system that seeks to “cover or bypass” irrationality, contrary to the melodic system that plays with it (Darmon 2015, p. 24). Though the technicality of his distinction is lost on the microtonal composition of much contemporary sound art, the difference between these types of sound may have a connection with Simmel’s subject-object synthesis in the “metaphysical meaning of its concept,” whereby the “logic of impersonal structures and circumstances is laden with dynamism” ([1911] 1997, pp. 66-67). Only through a social subject’s apprehension can an object take on logical content, and in the case of sound art that logical content might also be conceptual. It remains to be seen if the non-conceptual sensory domain of ambient sound can take on a logic, as well, though it would seem that for Weber or Simmel, who tended to consider sensing sound only as “music,” the cultural landscape of their times did not allow for such sounds to exist.

The role of affect in the subject-object dialectic appears in Bergson’s account of perception, as well, connecting with Simmel’s phenomenological approach to the senses. Though

his “affection-subjectivity” may point toward pleasure and pain, the “recollection-subjectivity” and “contraction-subjectivity” in *Matter and Memory* decompose representation in two directions: matter and memory, perception and recollection, objective and subjective ([1896] 1990). In this way, Bergson develops a theory of sight that radically relativizes the qualities of the thing seen; the images selected from the environment are specific to the singularity of embodiment. This “impurity of perception” is an affirmation of the ways affect and memory specify the sense of sight for the individual. Drawing on the primary sense of sight, the extensions to unitary or divisible processes of understanding go in different directions, yet the affective states associated with the sense of hearing both dissolve the subject/object divide and suggest that the valuation of perceived sound is a learned process rather than an essential quality or form.

As to the sense of hearing, Mead also tends to bracket the senses as selections from the constant inundation of sonic stimuli according to the linguistic model of the “significant symbol” ([1934] 1967). Whether a bird calling to another bird or the intersubjective trading of vocal gestures, Mead takes the networked meanings of language as pre-given. The sonic arts present us with another type of sensory stimuli altogether, particularly for those whose tastes are cultivated toward vision. These stimuli cannot be understood with the mapping logic of meanings onto gestures, as would Mead’s linguistic model of the mind, along with most phenomenological examples of the sense of hearing. Rather, these sonic units employed in sound art may be taken to form their own “languages” apart from the sign system provided by, say, English. Understanding that the use of a technique in modular synthesis references another actor in the idiom or that a type of instrumentation derives from a regional history can lead one into a different web of association, just as a brush-stroke or use of perspective might draw upon a

political-economic moment (Panofsky 1997). Absent from Mead's theories of hearing are the affectual states into which listeners are cast by sonic language. Like the connotations of textual language, each of these sonic units carries with it a meaningful and affective relation specific to the social subject hearing the sound. Though tendencies of connotation and affect can be mapped between those who can understand these languages, the subtleties of meaning and feeling may be lost on those who lack total fluency. Where Mead limits his analysis to sounds with known or presumed sources, such as animals or machines, the abstractions of sound art construct a distinct language, one that must be learned in order to develop fluency for both meaning and affectual relationships. Not only must the meaning of these sensory inputs be learned, contributing to the professional knowledge base of arts practitioners, but these practices are infused with affectual content, as well (Knorr Cetina 2001b, p. 531-2). The process of "subject-object differentiation" (Knorr Cetina 2001a, p. 185) is particularly germane to creative, non-habitual practices where relations and affect construct these incomplete, emergent objects (Knorr Cetina 2001b, p. 528). In these settings, the object is the locus of wanting and lack, and postsocial actors develop a sense of solidarity through expert knowledge of them (Knorr Cetina 2001b, p. 532).

Though phenomenology and sociology have theorized the particularities of attentional, temporal, and affectual sensation, they remain in the empirical contexts of seeing material forms, hearing semiotic units, and understanding sounds according to their imagined origins. The possibility of sound that is not linked to material form, does not communicate linguistic content, and does not have a distinct origin was not imagined by these scholars at the time of writing, yet their theories of perception are applied broadly in contemporary sound art criticism and social aesthetics alike. Though their premises about the relationship between sense and meaning may

be plausible in the case of vision or the case of hearing a sound with an obvious source, sound art delivers an unlikely context for this theory of sensory perception.

If the phenomenological apprehension of sound can be so varied in the mind of one social subject to another, then what is the role of the “concept” in sound art? Perhaps one function is an act of power over the perceiving body of the individual, offering guidance for what should be heard in the work. These concepts work on several levels. Attentionally, the conceptual statement instructs the listener how to engage in noesis, defining which sounds are worthy of attention and on what terms. Temporally, the concept helps to adumbrate the important sounds within a work from the sounds of the rest of life. Though sound art audiences experience sound throughout the gallery, the reading of a concept often forms a bracket around the sounds perceived in the space. Affectually, the concept provides a suggested emotional framework for audience members, particularly in sound works that do not link sounds with feelings in conventional ways. For example, though a minor-key melody played on a violin might be straightforward in its emotional suggestion to the audience, most sound art tends toward varied textures, granular articulations, and ambiguous tonalities. In these cases, the conceptual statement gives guidance to rein in the attentional, temporal, and affectual particularities of sound.

V.4.0 The Sense of Value

Aesthetic value is constructed through judgment and conviction, which derive from taste and sensation respectively.

After returning to the disciplinary controversy between concept and ambience, this section will consider two types of valuation: conviction and judgment. Though these two forms of value originate from different social processes, they have a close relationship with the subjective specificity of perception described in the prior section. Just as a work of auditory

culture is understood according to the individual conditions of time, attention, and affect, these two forms of value are similarly specific to the individual, but the two processes engage differently with the mind and the body. Consistencies of value within social groups rely on shared understandings, and these understandings do not only take the form of cultivated tastes but also embodied sensations. Just as Deleuze and Guattari's synthesizer, the assemblage of auditory culture discovered in this dissertation "makes audible the sound process itself, the production of that process, and puts us in contact with still other elements beyond sound matter" ([1980] 1987, p. 343). These three oppositions—concept and ambience, judgment and conviction, taste and sensation—do not only relate with the elements of sound explored in this dissertation. Aesthetics can help us understand the social relation between consciousness and life more generally (Simmel [1896] 1968, pp. 68-71).

V.4.1 Concept and Ambience

Though it may be that all sounds signify meaning, advocates of conceptual sound art presume unfairly that the artist must supply these associations to audiences and, further, that these meanings should be supplied via text.

Before considering these particularities of aesthetic value, a return to Kim-Cohen's argument about the superiority of conceptual sound art might anchor the theoretical investigation. His essay begins by questioning the possibility that auditory perception in the gallery arts can be detached from meaning:

What I'm attempting to diagnose is a moment, if not a turn, in some recent museological and curatorial practices, toward an art concerned foremost with percept, with sensory experience, detached, to whatever extent possible, from social meanings and discursive justifications and analyses. (Kim-Cohen 2016, p. 37)

Yet he goes on to question whether this perceptual realm of sensory experience can ever be truly autonomous from the process of signification, more generally:

I mean it when I say I don't know if there are experiences that exist prior to or outside of signification. But if such experiences exist, they are wrapped in a form that allows not

conveyance. We cannot speak them. We cannot even think them, because thinking is a transposition that relies on signification: a this-for-that transaction that would encumber ‘pure’ experience with all the burdens of signification. Thus, ‘I don’t know’ is the only real answer to this question of unsignifiable experience. Pure tones can’t escape the process of signification. In use they acquire meanings. Differences, contexts, and conventions load the wave, corrupt its purity. Even the sine is a sign. (Kim-Cohen 2016, pp. 55-56)

Kim-Cohen justifies his the need to separate concept from form in the valuation of sound art by claiming that meanings, based in language, accompany all sensory perception. Indeed the possibility that ambience might be separated from meaning presents a problem for his ardent claims about the ethical superiority of conceptualism. Stephen Turner’s notion of practice denotes the “nonlinguistic conditions for an activity that are learned” (2001, p. 120), and these practiced, nonlinguistic conditions, in this case, are formal qualities of sound. Turner goes on to problematize the “sharing” of these practices that, unlike language, require mastery (pp. 128-9). The meanings of sounds in auditory culture have such wide valence that many practitioners default to the shared lexicon of the linguistic conceptual statement rather than the imprecise transmission of meaning through sound in itself, where there is not yet a tacit rule book to be mastered.

Following his chapter dissecting the “sight, site, and *zeit* (time)” of ambient light, he proceeds to address the “sine, sign, and *sein* (being)” of ambient sound, drawing on Heidegger’s *Being and Time* ([1926] 1962). In the end, he advocates for the *mitsein*, the *mit*-sign, and finally the *mit*-sine, asserting that no tone stands alone and that sound does not have any essential features or qualities but only relational meanings. That all *sein* is *mitsein* might go without saying, sociologically, but Kim-Cohen emphatically stakes this claim as a malediction against ambient sound, that there is no such thing as pure sensory experience. Yet, the relation between language and meaning is the missing link in his polemic. The classical theorists in this chapter

concur that the sensory percept becomes meaningful as soon as it is called to consciousness, through an act of “reflection” in Schütz’ terminology ([1932] 1967). But, to claim that the act of reflection on the stream of consciousness is necessarily one of “concept” is a giant leap forward. Furthermore, Kim-Cohen unfairly presumes that the artist must supply these associations to audiences with text.

In addition to conflating meaning with concept, a sound artist, audio engineer, and arts curator criticized Kim-Cohen for privileging the sense of sight over sound and, furthermore, expecting sound to follow the same trajectory of vision in the gallery arts. Though this interview respondent acknowledged the importance of *In the Blink of an Ear* (2009) for his own thinking and for the discipline of sound art more broadly, he was concerned that the peculiarities of hearing were lost on the author:

[He] also forgets the difference between visual arts and sound and that the listening approach, hearing approach, is significantly different and something else than the visual approach. I feel like Seth Kim-Cohen just says, ‘Well, visual art has developed much further than sound art, so now sound art has to do the same progress that visual art has done over the 40 years.’ And I’m like, ‘Yes, in a way, but no’... I feel like the basis of his judgment is simplification and ignoring the complicated, hard-to-grasp difference, substantial difference, between hearing and seeing. I think it’s only challenging through claiming this kind of – how do you say? – polemic, anti. But he gets there only by simplifying the stuff, the thoughts that he argues against.

By constructing an abject object out of the sensory experience of hearing without a textual basis, Kim-Cohen is, by default, privileging the visual history of the gallery arts and ignoring bodily differences in sensory experience. Given this predisposition, one might flip his argument on its head, pointing out the conceptual sound artist’s dominating capability over the sensing body of an audience member.

Some respondents felt resistance to the category of conceptual non-cochlear work, more generally, such as this musician who preferred to work in the domain of audible sound. Yet, he made space for the idiom due to some frustration with the formalistic language of music theory:

When I first read the Kim-Cohen book [*In the Blink of an Ear* (2009)], I was very ‘anti’ that idea, because there’s a purity about music. And the more I think about it, putting music in its own little box, like the sound art thing, you’re limiting. It’s a limiting factor. That’s why I think I’ve gotten more interested in broader conceptual frameworks about things. Even if it’s esoteric, music to the layperson, with pop music, some of that can strike you very quickly and emotionally. But at the same time it’s almost like a secret language to people that aren’t versed in it, when you see like notes on a page. I still read music blogs about the young composers that are doing things and getting symphony commissions or whatever. And the language of when you read a review, the first movement did this, and it’s such a limiting factor to have that be what you’re going for. It’s like, ‘He moved from the one to the two and then in the second movement he went to the subdominant mode,’ or whatever, ‘the second theme.’ So, I find that I do love that kind of analysis, too, but it’s not something you can talk about with people, you know?

Though this composer began with his resistance to the category of the non-cochlear work, he proceeded to describe his own irritation with the secret language used to describe of music, one that cannot easily be communicated to audiences without a shared background. Implicitly, the conceptual language of sound art was thought to translate more easily to lay audiences than some of the particularities of music theory that might make composition interesting to a trained musical audience.

Kim-Cohen cites two examples from the exhibition *Soundings: A Contemporary Score* at MoMA in 2013 as paradigmatic of non-conceptual ambience and conceptual sound art: Tristan Perich’s *Microtonal Wall* (2011) and Jacob Kierkegaard’s *AION* (2006). The former is a two-dimensional array of 1,500 one-bit speakers on a long corridor at the entrance to the exhibition. The curatorial statement quotes Perich’s description of the work:

Microtonal Wall is made up of 1,500 very simple one-bit speakers, tuned individually to create an intricately varied continuum of pitch, rendering this twenty-five-foot wall a spectrum of sound. Perich has explained, ‘Each listener’s exploration of that aural space shapes what they hear, from the totality of white noise (from a distance), to the single

frequency of each speaker (up close).’ This near-endless variation ‘opens the scope of the piece to the entire universe, since only from an infinite distance would we be equidistant to each speaker, though in that case they would also have zero volume, and we would be very far from home.’ (London 2013)

Though Kim-Cohen considers this piece to be non-conceptual, the relations of space and sensation might be meaningful hooks on which to hang the spectacle of the installation.

Microtonal Wall questions both the spatial nature of embodied sensation and the possibility of *Gestalt* totality in sound, each arriving at a meaning readily available to the audience. “You might move forward a little after contemplating it in all its *Gestalt*-glory, then lean in to examine a detail on the canvas, wondering how it was made, and then step back again. You can’t get too close because it is too precious an object for the body to touch or even breathe on” (Feldman 2014, p. 1). These relations of proximity and distance are both the strength and problem of sound art: audiences want to cross the black line on the floor, getting as close to the source of sound as possible and breaking institutional boundaries. In so doing, the piece might also spark questions in audience members’ minds about language, politics, money, and ethics, as it did for Jessica Feldman (2014, p. 2). This ability of sound art to ask questions points ahead to the political-aesthetic relationship in Rancière (see V.5.0 “Embodied Perception, Expanded Discourse”). Yet, absent a deeper textual statement of concept, Kim-Cohen forecloses the possibility that the work might be implicitly meaningful for audiences in the museum.

In Jacob Kierkegaard’s *AION*, Kim-Cohen’s example of the conceptual work in sound, he identifies text as the hinge on which value distinctions are drawn. In this work, Kierkegaard references Alvin Lucier’s seminal work *I Am Sitting in a Room* (1969), in which Lucier recorded himself saying, “I am sitting in a room, different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice.” This recording captured not only the sound of his voice but also the sound of the room. He then repeatedly played these phrases back and re-recorded them to

magnetic tape, adding layers of room sound each time, until his words were unrecognizable and “his voice smoothed into a warbly hum” (London 2013). In *AION*, Kierkegaard followed this process in four abandoned spaces near the Chernobyl nuclear power plant. “In the final recordings, each of these ostensibly silent, empty spaces takes on a very distinct resonance” (London 2013). Kim-Cohen locates the value of this work not in the sound or silence it emits but rather in the textual basis of the concept:

From the evidence of the work alone, it’s not clear what we are witnessing. For all intents and purposes, *AION* uses the reference to *I Am Sitting in a Room* as its explanatory text. Whatever transparency it has, it acquires by positioning itself in Lucier’s wake. (Of course, this positioning also invites the type of comparison I’m engaging here.) (Kim-Cohen 2016, p. 65)

Even the “important” inputs (nee contents) in *AION* still trap the work in a single art historical moment, and Kim-Cohen identifies this moment as the problem of medium specificity.

Drawing on Max Neuhaus’ 2000 statement about the comparative absurdity of defining a discipline of “steel art” and Craig Dworkin’s 2013 description of the blank canvas, Kim-Cohen asserts that an artistic medium is merely a social category, “not a thing but a process and a set of conditions” (2016, p. 67), denying that the “reality” of an artistic discipline might be constructed out of a network of social meanings. Yet Dworkin claims, with Kim-Cohen’s agreement, that perception is limited by the thresholds of medium specificity, in this case the distinction of sight and sound: “‘Media,’ accordingly, are perhaps better considered as nodes of articulation along a signifying chain: the points at which one type of analysis must stop and another can begin; the thresholds between languages; the limits of perception” (Dworkin 2013, quoted in Kim-Cohen 2016, p. 68). The essay closes with some speculation on the motivations behind ambient sound art, namely that it is a response to information overload via technological change, that it is an aversion to Adorno’s “post-Auschwitz poetry,” and that it is an attempt at transcendence from a

bleak political-economic reality. Indeed these three may be the motivations behind any work of ambient sound, yet a fourth important possibility presents itself: that hearing might be fundamentally different from seeing, and that the gallery arts have not yet learned how to listen.

V.4.2 Judgment and Conviction

Conceptual language is predisposed to the active judgments of a cultivated mind, while ambient sensations are predisposed to the passive doxa of conviction.

In light of the incomplete or contradictory value information available to perceiving subjects in auditory worlds, a return to the foundations of phenomenology can illuminate distinctions within the process of valuation. Particularly in the context of ambient sonic soundscapes, this process of valuation was a complicated one. Whereas the *Gestalt* school imagined a unified moment of visual perception, understanding, and judgment, Husserl disentangled these aspects of the consciousness not only as distinct moments in time but also distinct social processes. For Husserl, judgment comes from an active synthesis, while conviction comes from a passive *doxa*:

The ego does not always take a position judicatively in this strict sense. When it simply perceives, when it is merely aware, apprehending what is there and what, of itself, is presented in experience by itself, there is no motive for taking a position provided that nothing else is present. There must be proposing motives in play, open or not, effecting a particular consciousness; disjunctive possibilities in a tension of opposites must be at hand. Judging is always deciding this or that, and is thus deciding-for or deciding-against, active acceptance or dismissal, rejection. (Husserl 2001, p. 93)

If the consciousness has two modes of sensory apprehension—one actively searching out an object, giving it attention, and judging its relative position among similar objects, and the other passively receiving a stimulus and bringing it to awareness—then judgment and conviction are two modes of valuation conditioned on the motivations of the perceiving mind. In the case of hearkening to sound, the first mode is more likely, with the listener drawing attention to the

object and judging its value. On the other hand, the ambient sonic soundscape, whether in everyday life or in the gallery, lends itself to the passive reception of stimuli through the *doxa*:

We must note here that it is not a matter of merely making passive intentionality patent. It is not a matter of becoming merely cognitively aware in perceiving, a mere living through the enticement that is taking place in an attentive turning-toward, that is, a matter of merely becoming consciously attentive to enticements, nullities, and the like. Rather, the ego passes its judgment in its own position-taking, *it makes* a decision for or against, and so forth. One may well say that here lies the specific source for what we normally mean or can mean by judging. ‘Conviction’ expresses more: Issuing from the passive perceptual situation, letting oneself be determined such that one has a judicative position and then has a judicative determination. Thus, we also understand why in practice, judging and conviction become equivalent expressions. (Husserl 2001, p. 93)

Though a judicative determination comes from the decision to take a position—*to make* a judgment—a conviction requires the self to “be determined.” Thus the conviction that arises from passive perception issues directly from a determined self, a manifestation of *doxa*. This type of valuation is clearly connected to the use of *doxa* in Bourdieu’s *Outline of a Theory of Practice* ([1972] 1977, pp. 159-170) as the “quasi-perfect correspondence between the objective order and the subjective principles” whereby “the natural and social world appears as self-evident” (p. 164). Though conscious judgment might call to mind rubrics of value and ordinal rankings of worth—acts of economic *agencement*—the determined self that experiences conviction does not draw up these relations in the same way. The *doxa* of conviction may not necessarily render the aesthetic economic.

Such a relation between the determined self and passive conviction seems quite likely in ambient sonic spaces, yet the textual basis of a conceptual work in sound lends itself to an act of incisive judgment. When a conceptual statement posits a meaning in connection with sensory input, it reins in the process of noesis and, in so doing, also constrains the range of possible noematic content in the sound. Rather than the free play of perception and valuation that might

be experienced aside from textual guidance, the conceptual sound piece constrains its audiences into a range of acceptable meanings, and therefore a narrower range of value judgments:

When the judging process shapes itself on the basis of a perceiving or other plainly 'positing' act of presenting, the noema of the presenting act becomes part of the judging act taken in its full concreteness (just as the presenting noesis also becomes a constitutive part of the essence of the concrete noesis of the judgment), and within it takes on certain forms... Demanding of us, if we wish to obtain the pure noema of our judgment as experienced, that we 'bracket' the delivery of the judgment. (Husserl 1970, p. 272)

The artist, curator, or theorist seeking purity of noematic content must bracket the range of possible judgments, as well. A determinate relation emerges between the meaning of the work of art and audiences' limited judgments of them.

Some interview respondents in this study voiced frustration with not only the redundancy of meanings expressed by conceptual works in sound but also this limited range of critical responses, two aspects of the art world that inform or even determine one another. With the range of meaning strictly defined for audience members, the types of judgments they may obtain are subject to similar stricture. On this point, phenomenology folds back on itself:

It goes without saying that the general phenomenology of reason has to solve also the parallel problems of the correlation between valuing and the things valued, etc. If the word 'phenomenology' were used so broadly as to cover the analysis of everything self-given, the incoherent data would become coherent: analyzing sense-given entities according to their various kinds etc. The common element is then in the methodology of the analysis of essences within the sphere of immediate evidence. (Husserl 1970, p. 12)

It comes as no surprise that the essential qualities of ambient sound seem to be their only conditions of value. The direct correlation between text and value in conceptual sound is able to bypass the sensing body altogether. Artists' frustration that so much contemporary sound work can be distilled into a single line on an art mailer or a gimmick shared through social media may derive from this relation between the convictions of a determined, perceptive self and the judgments of a cultivated, reasoning mind. In each case, the value of the object is derivative of

the type of perception from whence it comes: the passive gathering of sensations or the active seeking of meanings. The formal, ambient work in the former case draws its value from the already-surrounding sensory environment and is prone to convictions. The conceptual, textual work in the latter case attributes value by focusing attention on the linguistic meanings supplied by the artist or curator and tends toward judgment.

Simmel takes up this juncture between the qualities perceived in objects and the processes of valuation attendant to them, though in terms of the general relationship between the object and the subject. Just as Husserl finds the noematic content of an object to be conditioned by the subjective process of noesis, so does Simmel see the subject as the locus of value:

In whatever empirical or transcendental sense the difference between objects and subjects is conceived, value is never a ‘quality’ of the objects, but a judgment upon them which remains inherent in the subject. And yet, neither the deeper meaning and content of the concept of value, nor its significance for the mental life of the individual, nor the practical social events and arrangements based upon it, can be sufficiently understood by referring value to the ‘subject’. The way to a comprehension of value lies in a region in which that subjectivity is only provisional and actually not very essential. (Simmel [1900] 2004, p. 60)

Though the subject is the origin of value, it is only provisionally so. Value judgments can change drastically along with the constant changes of the noetic process, coming into conflict with other valuing subjects and also sometimes with themselves. Thus the judgment of value, an action of the cultivated, reasoning mind, cannot be considered superior to the conviction of value issuing from the determined, sensing self. These ways of understanding and valuing sensory perception are each conditioned on the temporal, attentional, and affectual particularities of perception, as demonstrated above, but also by the nature of the valuation process in the moment it occurs.

V.4.3 Taste and Sensation

Though both tastes and sensations draw meaning from positions within the field of power, tastes have been associated with the spirit and morality, while sensations have been tied to the profane and flesh.

Though the contents of these judgments and convictions can be quite varied, their relation with identities and power are unevenly socially distributed. In the case of ambient sound, the conviction that a sound is harsh or soothing comes alongside beliefs about the self in the gallery, most notably if gallery sound is “for me” or “not for me.” The tiny fragment of society that enters galleries and museums in order to hear sound art is narrowly identified in terms of wealth and education, determined by the field of power. Further, the ability to judge a work of conceptual art in terms of its place within an artistic discipline is determined by that field of power, as well. Though the knowledge of contemporary art does not require wealth and education in order to be gained, *per se*, it comes attendant with cultural power in the knowing of it. Therefore, might these principles of aesthetic valuation extend beyond such a tiny corner of the art world in the niche discipline of sound art?

In answer, Kant points toward the cultivation of aesthetic taste as one way to understand both the judgment and conviction of value. The concepts of truth, propriety, justice, and so forth, like those conceptual bases of sound in the gallery arts, do not live in the “empirical senses” alone, but must be the product of cognition (Kant [1790] 2007, p. 123). This cognition takes place not at the individual level but through that reflective act of the public sense, the *sensus communis*:

Representation of everyone else, in order, as it were, to weigh its judgment with the collective reason of mankind, and thereby avoid the illusion arising from subjective and person conditions which could readily be taken for objective, an illusion that would exert a prejudicial influence upon its judgment. This accomplished by weighing the judgment, not so much with actual, as rather with the merely possible, judgments of others, and by putting ourselves in the position of everyone else, as the result of a mere abstraction from the limitations which contingently affect our own judging. This, in turn, is effected by so

far as possible leaving out the element of matter, i.e. sensation, in our general state of representational activity, and confining attention to the formal peculiarities of our representation or general state of representational activity. (Kant [1790] 2007, p. 123)

Kant claims that abstraction from emotion and charm into the judgment of a universal rule must take place as unprejudiced, broadened, and consistent thought, in other words, according to understanding, judgment, and reason. Yet the parallel with the conditions of class and power in the given case cannot be denied. Education and, perhaps, a class position permitting leisure might be necessary for the cultivation of understanding and knowledge of aesthetics. Just as Kim-Cohen disparages the mysticism evident in so much ambient sound art, so does Kant's Enlightenment epistemology reject superstition in the passive reception of taste:

The first is the maxim of a never-passive reason. To be given to such passivity, consequently to heteronomy of reason, is called prejudice; and the greatest of all prejudices is that of fancying nature not to be subject to rules which the understanding by virtue of its own essential law lays at its basis, i.e. superstition. Emancipation from superstition is called enlightenment; for although this term applies also to emancipation from prejudices generally, still superstition deserves pre-eminently (*in sensu eminenti*) to be called a prejudice. For the condition of blindness into which superstition places us, and which it even demands from us as an obligation, makes the need of being led by others, and consequently the passive state of the reason, all too evident. (Kant [1790] 2007, p. 124)

Yet, is not this possibility of being led in judgment by others precisely that which training and cultivation of taste confers? Indeed a contradiction of the Enlightenment mind is that it wants to individualize reason, free of "prejudice," yet it also hopes to detach itself from these same "subjective personal conditions of judgment" ([1790] 2007, p. 123) through the broadened mind. The stigma against mysticism, such as Kim-Cohen points out in La Monte Young and Marian Zazeela's *Dream House*, may have its roots in Kant's rejection of superstition on the basis of unenlightened or uncultivated passive reason, received within a niche community of sensing subjects rather than the imagined autonomy of the perceiving mind.

Part of the problem with ambient sound was that it was often conflated with outmoded notions of “beauty.” Yet, for the purpose of this analysis, the ambient sonic work might have been an uncomfortably harsh soundscape or the soothing tones that Kim-Cohen describes. Kant takes up this distinction in terms of the agreeableness or disagreeableness of an aesthetic object:

Aesthetics, just like theoretical (logical) judgments, are divisible into empirical and pure. The first are those by which agreeableness or disagreeableness, the second those by which beauty is predicated on an object or its mode of representation. The former are judgments of the senses (material aesthetic judgments), the latter (as formal) alone judgments of taste proper. A judgment of taste, therefore, is only pure so far as its determining ground is commingled with no merely empirical delight. But this always transpires where charm or emotion have a share in the judgment by which something is to be described as beautiful. (Kant [1790] 2007, pp. 54-55)

These judgments of taste may appear as the crystallization of a set of social relations (Marx [1867] 1978; Knorr-Cetina 2001a, pp. 188-189), yet ambient sound need not be agreeable or beautiful, an assumption that fanned the flame of the controversy within the discipline.

These tensions inherent in Kant’s *sensus communis aestheticus* are nowhere clearer than the notion of “cultivated taste” that relies on universal aesthetic principles drawn from a social stock of knowledge, as judgments. Yet, Kant gives scant description of the cultivation of this taste, and all the given antecedents seem to be closely tied to the elite history of Western Europe. How can the process of cultivation be disentangled from Kant’s reliance on the distinctions of high and low culture? Dewey shares this question and extends it to the relation between sense and thought:

Why is there repulsion when the high achievements of fine art are brought into connection with common life, the life that we share with all living creatures? Why is life thought of as an affair of low appetite, or at its best a thing of gross sensation, and ready to sink from its best to the level of lust and harsh cruelty? A complete answer to the questions would involve the writing of a history of morals that would set forth the conditions that have brought about contempt for the body, fear of the senses, and the opposition of flesh to spirit. (1934, p. 20)

The rejection of the body in the sensory apprehension of ambient sound has been set against the high achievements of fine (conceptual) art as the opposition of flesh and spirit, of lust against morality.

Dewey also explains the proclivity for opposing high and low, spiritual and profane, ideal and material as one aspect of the social drive to compartmentalize its functions, with art adopting the same hierarchies as does religion, morality, and politics. Tasking the critic with knowledge of “the tradition of his particular art,” he goes on to admit that there is no single tradition, as some critics might have us believe (1934, pp. 309-315). Each tradition has an internal logic of value, and the “knowledge of many traditions is no foe to discrimination” (1934, p. 311). Groups of people learn the same things. They encounter the same stimuli, identify elements of them, discuss these elements and others, and, based on discussion, identify connections between elements. These consistencies of learned distinction manifest both in the passive *doxa* of aesthetic conviction and in the active cultivation of aesthetic judgment. Yet, if distinctions are learned both through the senses and through conceptual text, these two modes of acquiring knowledge of value differ regarding the body and mind. “Learning to listen” is a solution to the problem that both Dewey (1934) Martin (2011, pp. 201-3) find in Kant’s notion of the uncultivated taste. In addition to the dispositions of class, power and *habitus* that lead to the *doxa* of taste (Bourdieu [1979] 1984), sensory stimuli undergo a process of learning from birth to death, the accumulation of meanings, judgments, and values associated with particular sounds.

And yet, this chapter has unearthed the ways that these accumulated values associated with sounds are different from one person to the next. Returning to the question of the field of cultural production, it is assumed that objects of auditory culture can be plotted in the two-dimensional space of a field according to their economic and cultural value. The prior chapters

have demonstrated that the definitions of field membership are not shared, nor are value hierarchies easily aggregated into lines. This chapter questions the field model at an even more fundamental level. The perceived qualities of sounds may not be the same from one listener to the next, depending on the aspects granted attention, the temporal starting and ending points imposed, and personal affect at the time of listening. Furthermore, many sounds are not subject to a ranked ordering of aesthetic value at all. Where one hears the fan of an air conditioner, another hears a work of sound art. Apart from the economic *agencements* of conceptual texts that impose hierarchy on sensory perception, many sounds may not be stable enough to formalize into fields.

V.5.0 Embodied Perception, Expanded Discourse

As opposed to making value judgments of artistic concepts, the embodied, emancipated spectator in a sonic sensorium might be able to engage in expanded discourse.

The specter of this dissertation has been the role of the body in perceiving and valuing sound. Each of these theories locates the moment of sensory reception in the individual body, yet that moment is particular to the attention, adumbration, and affect of the perceiving mind. Though some imagine that the qualities of visual objects present themselves to the mind already and immediately conditioned for judgment, as in *Gestalt* psychology (Martin 2011, pp. 223-6), the properties of sonic art objects require the passage of time for understanding. Where some would privilege conceptual judgment over the passive *doxa* of conviction as a higher-order valuation process, the body in an ambient sonic environment may experience greater autonomy over understanding and evaluating sound works. Though the body is the receptor of sensory stimulus in the sense of hearing, the power relations of signification within auditory culture have remained somewhat unexplored.

A return to social aesthetics can illuminate these relations between art, power, and politics. Jacques Rancière brings his metaphor of the schoolmaster to bear on the possibility of an “emancipated spectator” in art and performance contexts. His notion of emancipation—“the blurring of the boundary between those who act and those who look, between individuals and members of a collective body” ([2008] 2009, p. 19)—has clear application to the theater where many have sought liberation, extending from Brecht’s *Verfremdungseffekt* alienation of the audience from performer ([1935] 1961), to Artaud’s “theater of cruelty” that intended to unify the two ([1932] 1976), and Debord’s third category of the spectacle ([1967] 1995). Might this path toward emancipation be extended to the listener or viewer of art objects, not only the spectator of performances? Specifically regarding the broader political potential of aesthetics, Rancière begins with the premise that contemporary artists tend to resist didacticism in their work:

It will be said that, for their part, artists do not wish to instruct the spectator. Today, they deny using the stage to dictate a lesson or convey a message. They simply wish to produce a form of consciousness, an intensity of feeling, an energy for action. But they always assume that what will be perceived, felt, understood is what they have put into their dramatic art or performance. They always presuppose an identity between cause and effect. This supposed equality between cause and effect is itself based upon an egalitarian principle: it is based on the privilege that the schoolmaster grants himself—knowledge of the ‘right’ distance and ways to abolish it. But this is to confuse two quite different distances. There is the distance between artist and spectator, and there is also the distance inherent in the performance itself, in so far as it subsists, as a spectacle an autonomous thing, between the idea of the artist and the sensation or comprehension of the spectator. In the logic of emancipation, between the ignorant schoolmaster and the emancipated novice there is always a third thing—a book or some other piece of writing—alien to both and to which they can refer to verify in common what the pupil has seen, what she says about it and what she thinks of it... In this logic, the mediation of a third term can be nothing but a fatal illusion of autonomy, trapped in the logic of dispossession and its concealment... For the refusal of mediation, the refusal of the third, is the affirmation of a communitarian essence of theatre as such. ([2008] 2009, pp. 14-16)

The intermediary text of the artist statement is a meeting place between artist and audience, an objective space for meaning to be specified, clarified, and judged. Yet in the absence of this

conceptual statement, the “sensorium” emerges as an aesthetic way of being in time and space. “Works of art are now defined as such, by belonging to a specific sensorium that stands out as an exception from the normal regime of the sensible, which presents us with an immediate adequation of thought and sensible materiality where sense and meaning, a site where communication is no longer unidirectional” (Rancière 2002, p. 135).

Though the emancipated spectator might achieve a degree of autonomy through the sensuous perception of sound, arts institutions come with deeply engrained “techniques of the body” (Mauss 1973). These bodily actions are considered techniques in that they are both effective and traditional. In the gallery or museum space, visitors tend to quiet their voices, move slowly, and, except in rare circumstances, do not touch the objects of art they encounter. They may move closer or further away from the objects in order to perceive them from varying perspectives, and they determine the amount of time devoted to the perception of each object. However, the bodily techniques of art music contexts are quite different. Audiences tend to be seated and do not use their bodies to get closer to sound sources in order to change their perception of them. In popular music contexts, audiences may even strive to be closer to the bodies of the performers rather than closer to the locus of sound amplification; speakers are too loud at close range. Though art music techniques prepare bodies to hear with precision and focus, galleries and museums continue to be oriented toward the sense of sight. Now, with the rise of sound art, the dominance of sight among the senses carries expectations of bodily action in the gallery arts.

Yet, these predominantly visual contexts do not foreclose the possibility of bodies learning new ways to hear; on the contrary, new possibilities are quickly arising. Seated audiences for art music are relatively immobile, experiencing one spatial location from which to

perceive the sounds emitted from a stage. In the gallery, however, bodies are able to move freely, experiencing the interaction of sound and space. Not only in terms of changing amplitude, moving closer or further away from sound sources, but also through the different reverberation patterns and timbral spectra, audiences can encounter a range of sound from a single source. This mobility is to the site specificity of much sound art today, a possibility that may have come about through the affordances of the gallery. At the same time, the gallery arts present limitations for bodies that have often led to frustration on the part of artists and audiences alike, as described in Chapter IV “Inscribing Sound,” in terms of the tendency for sound to bleed from one piece into the next, for technology to be insufficient, and for works to be placed in noisy bathrooms. The cavernous reverberance of empty gallery rooms and the competing sounds from moving and talking audiences, the surrounding environment, and even one’s own footsteps make museum and gallery spaces less than ideal for some types of hearing.

Beyond these features of the gallery arts that both liberate and constrain the ways bodies can hear, the role of the conceptual statement may have effects on the perception of sound, as well. Rancière’s three regimes of art illuminate the roles of concept and sensation as mediating factors between aesthetics and politics (2010, pp. 20-1). First, the ethical regime permits the art object no autonomy, questioning the truth of its moral character in terms of its effects on the individual and the community. Pointing to Plato’s *Republic*, this regime sees the work of art as a means to an end. Second, the representative regime finds the work of art to be one of imitation, not subject to the rubric of truth, ethos, or utility, but rather to mimesis. This mimetic act is not so much a copy of reality but rather a way to impose form on matter. Finally, the aesthetic regime “overthrows this normativity and the relationship between form and matter on which it is based” (2010, p. 21). It is only under this regime that art can become part of a “sensorium”

detached from the normal regime of the sensible. In the aesthetic regime, language, image, and sensory stimulus are used as poetic powers and as ends in themselves. According to Rancière, only under this regime can art arrive at the “poetics of knowledge,” establishing objects as available both to the senses and to thought, and when all discourses become available to the spectator, philosophy and theory are activated on the same plane as the practice of art.

Though the aesthetic regime may be built on language in many aesthetic worlds, such as literature, theater, and song, the sonic sensorium is not fundamentally one of speech. Spoken thought, for Rancière, is the domain of the representative regime and is bound to a double restraint:

On the one hand, the function of visible manifestation restrains the power of speech. Speech makes manifest sentiments and wills rather than speaking on its own, as the speech of Tiresias—like that of Sophocles or Aeschylus—does in an oracular or enigmatic mode. On the other hand, this function restrains the power of the visible itself. Speech institutes a certain visibility: it makes manifest what is hidden in souls, recounts and describes what is far from one’s eyes. But in so doing it restrains the visible that it makes manifest under its command. It forbids the visible from showing on its own, from showing the unspeakable, the horror of the gouged-out eyes. ([2001] 2009, p. 17)

At once restraining the sense of vision from showing the unspeakable and excluding the pathos of knowledge, speech is found to be a limitation rather than assistant to aesthetic practice. What is the unique capacity of the image, after all, if not to show the unspeakable? To expand the sensorium beyond the sense of sight into the realm of hearing, this capacity to hear the unspeakable may be a similarly valuable capacity of auditory culture. Not only does abstract sound art detach the direct representation of the sound source—no longer pointing explicitly to birds and sirens as assumed in phenomenology—but also ambient soundscapes fragment conceptual representation. Instead of providing readymade representations, the sensorium allows sound to reverberate and resonate uniquely within each spectator’s body. The height and orientation of the body within the room affects the qualities of perceived sounds, and the

uniqueness of each ear affects the reception of sound in unknowable ways. Sound art emerges in a predominantly visual context with a subtlety that may be lost on untrained ears. This process of bodily learning continues to challenge the art world, given the relatively brief tenure of the medium of sound.

With the free play of signifier and signified in non-conceptual sound art, the sign becomes an object belonging to a community of practitioners rather than the directive of an individual artist's authorial speech. By dissolving the cause-effect relationship, or at least questioning the direction of causality, the community of emancipated spectators

Proposes to conceive [the stage] as a new scene of equality where heterogeneous performances are translated into one another. For in all these performances what is involved is linking what one knows with what one does not know; being at once a performer deploying her skills and a spectator observing what these skills might produce in a new context among other spectators. Like researchers, artists construct the stages where the manifestation and effect of their skills are exhibited, rendered uncertain in the terms of the new idiom that conveys a new intellectual adventure. The effect of the idiom cannot be anticipated. It requires spectators who play the role of active interpreters, who develop their own translation in order to appropriate the 'story' and make it their own story. An emancipated community is a community of narrators and translators. (Rancière [2008] 2009, p. 22)

Though this narrative, interpretive, and translational function may seem abstract within the gallery arts, it is an experience common to many of us. While listening to instrumental music we may call up images or construct a narrative behind the scenes. While viewing a painting, we may imagine the lives of those depicted. In some hermeneutic milieu these acts may be discouraged in favor of art historical accounts and adherence to artists' conceptual frameworks. Yet, Rancière suggests that the interpretive power available to audiences might be able to expand rather than retract and that the boundaries of this community might extend beyond the gallery.

Furthermore, this aesthetic community might look more like the space of forces and flows than a unidirectional communicative path. The artist does not only express a concept

through a work but the audience, as well, expresses meaning through interpretation and discourse. In terms of auditory culture, Salomé Voeglin suggests that the phenomenon of sound is particularly suited to this discourse, questioning all the surfaces against which sound waves reflect and reverberate before entering conscious perception:

Sonic materialism proposes to pursue a phenomenological materialism that engages in the reciprocity of being in the world and the world being the comingling of all the slices of its possibilities, complex, plural, and possibly at times unintelligible and unreliable but felt and lived. It tries to grasp the experience of the mobile and unseen thing of sound in thought and speech, to make it count and impact on the actuality of the work and of the world. (2014, pp. 86-87).

Unifying the work and the world is yet another way to dissolve the binary puzzle of cause and effect, the duality of subject and object. In this way, the work in sound is not necessarily void of spoken language, but it opens a discourse rather than issuing an edict. As well, the work is not deconceptualized but rather has the possibility of infinite reconceptualization in the openness of artistic communities' response and conversation:

The most desired plateau is not the stability, the illusion of permanence, once implied by these objects, but perpetual flux. Far more creativity goes into the marketing of products than into the products themselves. Likewise, the fact of the disappeared object is key to conceptual art, a term that is oxymoronic: all art now is conceptual, deriving its value only through context, at a second remove. (Kraus 2011, p. 131)

Corollary to this reconceptualization of meaning and subjectivity in art is its value-in-context. Unseating gatekeepers' unilateral authority to value works, the discourse surrounding aesthetic value is both enlivened and newly responsible to its own discussants. Where once a journalistic dismissal might have done minimal damage to the market value adjudicated by the esoteric knowledge of dealers and buyers, the new landscape of art criticism and publishing has a quickly reflexive relationship with the prices they garner on markets. Not only can a hyped exhibition collect high prices, but blanket rejection also can generate valuable controversy around the work. Perhaps the ultimate failure is silence. Where once institutions had monopolistic power to

consecrate art according to an axis of symbolic value, though organized through incessant striving (Bourdieu 1993, p. 30), contemporary arts discourse has newfound potential to depose these brokers, not through a single dissenting voice but through the quantitative chatter of posts, clicks, likes, and commentary.

Thus Rancière's theory of perception and power is another way to conceive of the field model of cultural production. Instead, this approach to art practice engages the sensorium as a shared imaginary. Olcese and Savage (2015) affirm this fertile space where the theories of fields and sensoria can coexist:

In pursuing these themes, we see the intellectual encounter between Bourdieu and Rancière as a highly fertile one. Rancière (2004) calls a 'sensorium' the idea that anything sensible, when addressed from the right angle, could captivate the mind, create attachment, and inspire a new way of being. The sensorium of Rancière's aesthetic regime negates any necessary relationship between form and content, and treats the infinite arrangements of this relation as the proof of the equality of all subjects. (pp. 732-733)

If the sensorium is an assertion of the equality of bodies, this claim comes about as alternate aesthetic imaginary against the backdrop of the hierarchical positionality of political and social reality. The equal sensory landscape of aesthetic practice is depicted against the relief of unequal power. Rancière's theory of the political is also in conversation with Habermas' rational structure of the linguification of the sacred (1987, pp. 77-111). Critiquing Durkheim's understanding of solidarity ([1893] 1997) through the aesthetic realm of the "sacred" ([1912] 1995, pp. 207-225), Habermas theorizes language as the means to transform the belief in sacredness into a new shared meaning of value. As (post)modern societies have become increasingly individuated from collective consciousness (1987, p. 108), spoken and textual language are necessary to determine consensus over concrete values. In pursuit of the good life of happiness and well being, social subjects individuate themselves as distinctive, singular, and

peculiar (Mead [1934] 1967, pp. 221-2), ascribing less often to shared notions of the sacred.

What may have been communicated through sacred symbols of the collective consciousness now must be rendered legible through logical language.

Partially on this basis, Kim-Cohen is clear that his ideal works in sound ought to use conceptual texts to codify these concrete values. A conversation with a performer of the very kind of droning ambient music rejected by Kim-Cohen revealed the nature of its radical political potential: the politics of the everyday. She noted that, in light of the failures of the Occupy movements, anti-Trump mobilization, and large-scale protests against particular right-wing policies, the meditative making of slow music might operate as a radical rejection of the conflation of time and capital in the production of cultural commodities. Though Kim-Cohen finds conceptual sound art to subvert things like Facebook's data collection and unethical banking investments, she questioned the success of those creations, instead pointing to her fellow musicians who have deleted their Facebook profiles and moved their limited capital to credit unions. Though the scope of action was small, the everyday political radicalism of these musicians transformed their works in sound into acts of micro-protest.

Indeed, Rancière imagines another way to engage in political discourse over “the good” without the aid of a mediating text. Bodies perceive and judge sound and sight differently, and, absent a textual “third” mediation (Rancière [2008] 2009, pp. 14-15), this bodily autonomy can become the site of both Meadian self-determination ([1934] 1967, p. 1999) and a discourse of shared norms and values (Habermas 1987, pp. 87-92). In the case of sound art, bodies must inhabit the gallery or museum space in order to experience the sensorium, but purely conceptual work does not similarly require sensory engagement. Thus, a conceptual, linguistic statement transports readily from the gallery wall to the social media news feed, but ambient sound

requires physical engagement in order to become valuable. Concepts also transmit fluidly through critical discourse, but embodied encounters with sound do not. Where critical texts have been able to capture the value of conceptual sound art, they have failed to do so with the ambient work in sound.

V.6.0 Learning to Listen

Just as one must learn to read in order to apprehend the conceptual content of some sound art, one must learn to listen in order to gather the nuanced character of formal or ambient works in sound. Though the meaning of many sensory inputs can be gathered from the *sensus communis* in the broad sense, each sensing mind transforms sound in terms of attention to its noematic content, temporal adumbration, and the affect with which it is associated in context. Contrary to the instantaneous totality of a visual *Gestalt* (Martin 2011, pp. 160-1), these works of sound art require time and space for valuation, both by the active judgment of taste and the passive convictions of the senses. The possibility Rancière presents—that an embodied, emancipated spectator might be able to freely associate meanings and values with these sounds—affords a new possibility for connecting political discourse with aesthetic production, one unacknowledged in Seth Kim-Cohen's critical standpoint.

Returning to the metaphor of the synthesizer, Edgar Varèse checks the expansive optimism one might derive from Rancière. If the synthesizer was one way Deleuze and Guattari ([1980] 1987) explained the social assemblage, with interlocking parameters attenuating the chaos of electrical voltage,

We should also remember that no machine is a wizard, as we are beginning to think, and we must not expect our electronic devices to compose for us... Like the computer, the machines we use for making music can only give back what we put into them. ([1962] 2005, p. 20)

If the synthesizer is an instrument for “making audible nonsonorous forces” ([1980] 1987, p. 95), it is a reductive compositional tool, not to be mistaken for music in itself. And if the aesthetic assemblage modeled in this dissertation is a way to understand social relations (Simmel [1896] 1968), then it is a descriptive tool, not to be misunderstood for a public (Warner 2002, pp. 65-124). Or, in Rancière’s own words,

To situate these small theatres of memory, which contemporary art exhibitions are inclined to become, one can indefinitely construct contradictory scenographies—mystical oceans of sound, blessed in the name of Bachelard, Stockhausen, or Sun Ra, or the storefront windows of shopping malls, stricken by the maledictions of Adorno or Guy Debord... There is always a danger, as Deleuze and Guattari pointed out, of confusing cosmic machines and machines of reproduction. It may well be that they all have the same genealogy and that what clashes in the background of the great proclamation is above all the different ways of archiving, narrativizing, and theatricalizing the archive; of slowing down or speeding up the metamorphoses of use objects and art documents into the material of memory and into forms of its theatricalization. The politics of art which redistributes the forms and time, the images and the signs of common experience will always remain ultimately undecidable. ([2002] 2011, pp. 128-9)

APPENDIX A: METHODS

A.1.0 Research Design

This doctoral dissertation was built on two pilot studies. The first was a 2012-2013 masters-level project in Chicago addressing the value decisions of 26 music venue personnel through in-depth interviews. The second was a two-month dissertation pilot study in 2014 asking similar research questions of 25 sound art practitioners in New York. Based on the findings of these first two waves of research, this dissertation continued to engage in interviewing and participant observation in Chicago, New York, and Berlin for interviews with an additional 57 participants in auditory culture and four years of fieldwork. With research support from the National Science Foundation, the *American Journal of Sociology*, and the Division of Social Sciences at the University of Chicago, I was able to travel to these three cities and the surrounding areas of upstate New York, comparing and contrasting these two disciplines of practice in auditory culture as well as the different geographic and national contexts.

A.1.1 Research Questions

At the proposal phase of research design, this project sought to explore questions of genre conventions as standards of aesthetic merit. Specifically, I asked, “In what ways do the interactions between auditory culture actors emphasize adherence to or deviation from conventions in the construction of economic and cultural value?” Two empirical questions followed this general question: “How can curators and artists adjudicate value in the growing field of sound art where there are relatively few outlets for the public attribution of aesthetic merit?” and “How can industry leaders and cultural producers in the live music performance industry predict the value of a performer prior to the event?” A final theoretical question had to

do with genre conventions, as well: “Why do some culture industries emphasize adherence to conventions while others value deviance?”

Although my pilot interviews in 2014 began with this line of inquiry, I quickly discovered that adherence to or deviance from conventions was not an important consideration for practitioners of auditory culture. Rather, they tended to talk about the particular features of their works in terms of formal/technical qualities, conceptual frameworks, and disciplinary histories. Most downplayed genres, instead emphasizing the innovative, unique, and hybrid nature of what they produced. As demonstrated in “Appendix C: Interview Guide,” the resulting topics of conversation followed the interests of respondents within the broad sociological categories of valuation and evaluation. My research questions after the first two waves of pilot study took empirical and theoretical form. I asked three empirical questions regarding perception, understanding, and value: “How do actors describe the process of sensory perception and understanding of sound art and art music?” “How do practitioners and gatekeepers perceive value in auditory culture?” and “What factors increase or decrease the ascribed value of these sound objects?” These two empirical questions were closely related to my central theoretical question: “How do social subjects derive cultural-economic value from sensory perception?”

A.1.2 Qualitative Rationale

This dissertation chose a qualitative research design in order to capture the nuances of perception, understanding, and value that might not be revealed in survey methods or other quantitative approaches. Although survey methods benefit from the generalizability of a large, random sample, this research was designed to engage in deep investigation with a smaller number of respondents in a narrowly defined sample. First, there were simply not enough actors in the discipline of sound art to make quantitative generalization possible. With such a relatively

small but aesthetically powerful group of actors, in-depth interviewing and participant observation were the best way to understand their own values and beliefs.

Second, interpreting detailed reports has the benefit of nuance and specificity over the broad strokes of survey research. Some deride interview methods for relying on the self-reports of respondents, subject to both the power of suggestion on the part of interviewers (Cresswell 2003) and social acceptability bias on the part of interviewees (Weiss 1994). Due to these potential weaknesses of interview methods, I paired the explicit statements in formal interviews with participant observation. Ethnographic fieldwork revealed the implicit values of actors in auditory culture through observing what kind of art and music was exhibited and performed and with what reception, remuneration, and other rewards.

Finally, qualitative research in these two modes did not only gather the nuance of actors' self-stated beliefs and values alongside the particularities of their observed actions, it also enabled the topics of inquiry to develop with the research program. At the outset of the project, genre conventions seemed to be of interest, but respondents revealed that they were not important to their understandings of auditory culture. Had the research design been rigid, my own bias as a researcher might have ignored the emergent empirical and theoretical significance of responses. Instead, a flexible grounded theory approach (See Section A.4.1) allowed the theoretical findings of the research to arise organically from the topics most interesting to respondents.

A.2.0 Modes of Inquiry

These empirical and theoretical questions mapped onto two methods of inquiry: in-depth interviews and ethnographic observation. Semi-structured interviews with producers of auditory culture revealed explicit speech about the valued attributes of sound art and art music, as well as

the boundary between the two disciplines. These reports explained many of the normative aspects of ascribed value and the prevailing points of agreement. These interviews also revealed the narrative description of behavior in these organizational contexts, particularly self-reported accounts of unobservable behavior and thinking by practitioners and gatekeepers. However, these interviews were limited to the willingness and ability of respondents to candidly report their value structures (Lamont and Swidler 2014).

In order to compensate for these weaknesses of interview methods, ethnographic observation revealed other aspects of value. In particular, observing participants moving through museums, galleries, venues, and concert halls, listening to their reports, and engaging in informal conversations revealed values that would not be reported in formal interview settings. By attending exhibition openings and performances, observing public art, and reviewing curatorial notes at museums, I developed a sense for the ways that practitioners create auditory culture in space and time and how curators and administrators influenced their perception. Finally, I gave attention to the sonic aspects of these spaces and processed my own experience through interpretive methodology. Building on the growing method of visual ethnography that uses researchers' visual perception to understand a social world, careful listening in these aesthetic spaces revealed features of value not reported with language.

A.2.1 Interviews

Interviews were conducted in Chicago, New York, Berlin, and the Hudson Valley of New York. Most interviews were conducted in cafés at the convenience of artists and musicians. Others took place in homes, studios, music venues, schools, and offices. Interviews lasted an average of one hour and eight minutes. Of the 105 total interviews, four were less

than 30 minutes, and three were over two hours. Three of the 105 interviews were with two respondents at once for a total of 108 participants. When possible I conducted these interviews in person; in only four instances did I conduct interviews via a Skype teleconference or over the phone.

Location	Count
Café	52
Venue	14
School	10
Home	9
Office	7
Studio	6
Gallery	2
Park	1
Skype	3
Phone	1

Table 4: Interview Locations

Though recent scholarship has emphasized the technologically mediated forms of copresence (Campos-Castillo and Hitlin 2013), I found that the Skype interviews tended to be shorter and lacked some of the depth of conversations in physical copresence. I had only one hostile interview respondent, and this interview took place via Skype; I cut the conversation short after thirty minutes. Though she agreed to participate in an interview, the conversation was so strained that I was unable to build rapport with the respondent. Though I have not included the data from her interview in the text of this dissertation, I included the interview in my sample for demographic purposes.

A.2.1.1 Sampling

This research used a theoretical sampling frame to capture several facets of the research questions (Glaser and Strauss 1967). All participants in the disciplines of art music and sound art were eligible for interviews, including artists, musicians, curators, gallerists, collectors, dealers,

talent buyers, venue production managers, non-profit administrators, and scholars. By including all practitioners, I was able to capture the direct cultural producer and indirect gatekeeper alike (Foster, Borgatti, and Jones 2011), each with a determining role in what auditory culture was exhibited and performed. In each location and for each type of practitioner, I sought interviews until I reached the point of saturation (Small 2009), even though respondents continued to suggest that I speak with other artists, musicians, and administrators. Unfortunately, the scope of this wave of research did not allow me to interview audiences for auditory culture, though I hope to continue my research in this direction in the future. The resulting sample was non-random but attempted to capture the diversity of roles in sound art and art music, the two disciplines of interest to this study.

A.2.1.2 Recruitment

I am very grateful for the generosity of interview respondents in this study. Not only were they willing to offer their time to talk, but many of them pointed me in the direction of other respondents I might not have known otherwise. This snowball sampling method, of course, comes with benefits and detriments to the research design. On one hand, I was able to discover the contact information of respondents who did not pop up in my searches online, helping me to overcome the bias toward “famous” respondents. On the other hand, some of these respondents were part of tightly woven social networks with others. The resulting group of interviews, however, did not all result from snowball sampling. Many respondents were contacted out of the blue via publicly available email addresses on their personal, organizational, or university websites, and although they had no context for my research or identity other than that I was a doctoral candidate in sociology at the University of Chicago, many were willing to talk with me over coffee. I kept a contact log as a spreadsheet saved to my computer under password

protection in order to track my progress and to limit my recruitment attempts to no more than two contacts for any one potential respondent. I was often surprised at the willingness of internationally acclaimed artists, musicians, and curators to speak with me, and I owe all of these respondents a debt of gratitude.

A.2.1.3 Instrument

The research instrument for interviews was a thematic interview guide (Weiss 1994), loosely structured according to topics of interest rather than recited verbatim (see Appendix C: “Interview Guide”). Due to the intention of semi-structured interviews to encourage unsolicited responses on these topics of interest, the guide was a starting point for my conversations, and all of the listed topics did not come up in all interviews. However, I repeated a general structure in each interview. First, I asked respondents to describe something they were currently working on, walking me through the process from inception to production, and finally to reception, in the case of completed works. Respondents took this opening question in many different directions, and it seemed a good way to break the ice. Based on these responses, I began to ask about the particular topics in the interview guide, particularly those that were related to the narrative of practice respondents supplied. Finally, I concluded each interview with a double-barreled question: “Can you describe something you heard recently that was valuable to you? And what about something you didn’t find to be valuable? You don’t need to give names or specific details of the works if you don’t want to, but I’m most curious to know why you do or don’t value particular things.” This final question often extended into a much longer conversation about the nature of aesthetic value, my key point of inquiry. Others have expressed reticence to ask directly about value judgments, considering that respondents might not be able to clearly describe their thinking (Gerber 2017). On the contrary, I was most interested to learn how arts

practitioners give language to their complicated internal determinations, and self-reports were the best way to capture this public-facing aspect of aesthetic valuation. The belief that interview respondents may not *really* be able to describe the contents of their minds is an epistemological claim that may be better left to cognitive psychology. My sociological analysis of value is aimed at the ways that internal realities (beliefs, norms, tastes, etc.) are transformed into external realities (spoken judgments, curatorial decisions, written criticism, etc.) where they can be observed and where they have effects on other social actors.

A.2.1.4 Documentation

These open-ended, semi-structured interviews were recorded on my cell phone and transferred to my personal computer as .wav files for analysis. These recordings were transcribed as needed, and transcriptions of interviews were saved to my personal computer under password protection. Only one respondent declined to have our conversation recorded. She thought that having a recorder running during our conversation might have brought an element of awkwardness to our meeting. She was also working in mobile application development, and it occurred to me that she might not trust my promise to keep our conversation anonymous and confidential. Other than this interview, all others were glad to have our conversations recorded and to be quoted in my dissertation or any other publications that were to come from the research. Audio recordings and transcripts of interviews were saved to my personal computer under password protection. When transcription was necessary, the files were be anonymized and saved as Word documents, searchable by keyword and easily transferred to text files for use in qualitative analysis (see A.4.0 “Data Analysis”). Quotations taken from interviews were also edited to become more readable. Repeated words such as “like,” “sort of,” “you know,” and “right?” were removed from some of these quotations when their overuse became distracting.

Removing portions of text and inserting an ellipses was used only when the intermediary text was a digression or when it included personally identifying information. Brackets were used to denote changes to interview text where respondents assumed a reader's knowledge of names and details or, conversely, to abstract from these specific details in order to maintain anonymity.

A.2.1.5 Demographics

These interview respondents were chosen to reflect the diversity of the disciplines of art music and sound art within auditory culture. Though they were not statistically representative of these practices or professions, they captured the variety of people working in these cultural worlds. However, many respondents worked in both disciplines at once. Primary disciplinary affiliations were often decided by education; in the cases where artists or musicians had higher education, they tended to identify in line with the discipline of study. In my attempt to attribute the primary affiliation of respondents, these identities were hazy. Similarly, my attribution of respondents into the categories of practitioners and gatekeepers were contingent on the context of our conversation. Many artists worked as ad-hoc curators, and many musicians programmed, promoted, or otherwise put together performances for other musicians. The easiest attributions of gatekeepers were those with organizational roles: museum curators, non-profit administrators, and talent buyers for music venues. Categorizing respondents as practitioners or gatekeepers tended to be based on the specific context of our conversation.

Art	64
Music	44
Practitioner	67
Gatekeeper	41

Table 5: Demographics

Femme and female-identifying respondents composed only 28% of my interviews, and this composition seemed to roughly map onto the gender composition of these worlds. I did not specifically seek women as respondents to weight the sample; rather I engaged with all respondents on gender dynamics of auditory culture when it seemed appropriate to the interviews. Many reported the underrepresentation of women, including the self-fulfilling prophecy that women were simply not as active in these disciplines, though what hindered them from inclusion was the lack of exhibition history on their vita (see III.4.0 “Boundaries of Identity”).

Women	30
Men	78

Table 6: Gender

These interviews took place in three locations, one chosen for convenience and the other two for their importance to the disciplines of auditory culture. My doctoral work has been in Chicago, which made it a convenient and affordable location for interviews and ethnographic observation. Generous funding from the National Science Foundation and the University of Chicago Division of Social Sciences made it possible for me to travel to New York and Berlin for research. For more on the specificities of these field sites, see A.2.2.1 “Informal Observation.” Roughly half of interviews took place in New York, while one quarter took place in Chicago and Berlin. This disproportion had to do with my length of stay, as well my own need to interview sound artists. As a musician, I had a much steeper learning curve in the discipline of sound art, and New York is one of two global hubs for the art form, alongside Berlin. In addition to interviewing in the city, I took a weekend-long research trip up the Hudson River Valley in the summer of 2016 to meet with respondents who had ties to the city yet had chosen to reside in the

surrounding countryside. These six resulting interviews (included in the New York cohort) offered me a glimpse at the trajectories of artists who had once resided in an urban area but were drawn to more affordable space and educational opportunities outside the city.

Chicago	26
New York	55
Berlin	27

Table 7: City

A.2.2 Observation

In order to integrate the reports of interview respondents with the features of their aesthetic disciplines, I engaged in participant observation at the three field sites, as well. These observations took place in person as informal, ad hoc observation of exhibitions and performances, formal, ongoing observation as a volunteer at a field site in Chicago and New York, and through the developing method of auditory ethnography. Though research support funding was generous, it unfortunately did not allow me to physically attend all important events, exhibitions, and performances, and I supplemented my in-person findings with archival and Internet research. The differences between these two types of observation are noted in the text. One of the particular benefits of in-person observation is the ability to use the senses to learn about a social group (Stoller 1989, 1997), and I listened to each of these locations, recording what I heard.

A.2.2.1 Informal

Informal observation took place on an ad hoc basis in Chicago, New York, and for two weeks in Berlin. Auditory culture in Chicago formed the bulk of my observation at the outset of this project, yet sound art is a relatively small discipline within the worlds of music and the

gallery arts in this location. Though not to suggest that sound artists do not reside in Chicago, in order to attend many exhibitions in a short time and to observe shows at important museums and art institutions, my research took me to New York. I first encountered the discipline of sound art at the exhibition *Soundings: A Contemporary Score* in August 2013. After witnessing this show, I traveled to the city on five more separate occasions. A pilot study took place in the summer of 2014 where I attended individual gallery shows as well as some museums. The National Science Foundation provided funds for two visits to New York in January and the summer of 2016. Finally, two return visits to the field took place in 2016 and 2018, only for a weekend each. In October 2016 I returned to my field site *The Dream House* to view the final installation I had been working on all summer and witnessed a performance by the artists in the space, as well as attending gallery exhibitions. In January of 2018 I took a weekend visit, thanks to funding from the University of Chicago Graduate Studies Council, to observe four museum exhibitions devoted to sound.

Thanks to generous funding from the Division of Social Sciences at the University of Chicago, I traveled to Berlin for two weeks in August 2017. Respondents in interviews in New York and Chicago had been pointing to Berlin as the other global hub for sound art, and they suggested that boundaries between disciplines might work somewhat differently in another national context. Though I was only in Berlin for two weeks, I completed 27 interviews during that time and attended exhibitions and performances each night I was able, including an incredible Sunday afternoon DJ set by the Swedish pop musician Robyn at the legendary nightclub Berghain. My other observations in Berlin ranged from sound art exhibitions at world-renown museums, sound-specific galleries, outdoor spaces, and an interactive work of sound art at a pop music festival.

A.2.2.2 Formal

In addition to these informal observations of performances and exhibitions, I engaged in ongoing volunteer work at two organizations, *The Dream House* in New York and the sound art and experimental music organization Lampo in Chicago. Each experience afforded me a look behind the curtain of arts organizations, and I was able to get to know actors in these spaces on an ongoing basis rather than the others I bumped into during ad hoc observation.

A.2.2.2.1 *The Dream House*

Founded in 1993 by minimalist composer La Monte Young and visual artist Marian Zazeela, *The Dream House* has been a permanent installation of light and sound for decades. I first became aware of the organization in the summer of 2014 during my pilot field research when interview respondents and friends pointed me in their direction. As a personal fan of minimalist music of the 1960s, I was already familiar with La Monte Young's composition, but I was unaware of this installation above his home with Marian Zazeela. After writing once to the MELA Foundation that sponsors the space, I decided to write again in early 2016, offering my services in any way they might need. I was delighted to receive a response, asking me to help with the installation of Jung Hee Choi's exhibition of sound and light, *Ahata Anahata, Manifest Unmanifest X*.

For two months I worked six hours per day installing artwork, gathering materials, and assisting in any way I could at *The Dream House*. As described in III.4.2 "Fusing Disciplines," this work gave me insights into the way the boundary between art music and sound art has developed over the decades of the installation's existence. I was thrilled to meet the founding artists near the end of my volunteer work and to meet them again on my return visit in October 2016. My experience in the space was unforgettable, and I am grateful not only to the Division

of Social Sciences for making me able to devote my time to volunteering at the organization but also to everyone at *The Dream House* for sharing their experiences with me.

A.2.2.2 Lampo

In a longer-term but more sporadic way, I volunteered at the sound art and experimental music organization Lampo in Chicago from 2014 through 2018. Lampo has sponsored artists in experimental sound since 1997, particularly known for their free performance series at The Graham Foundation, a historic mansion in the Gold Coast of Chicago. Andrew Fenchel, the director, was generous to meet with me in November of 2014 to discuss ways I could support the organization. I assisted right away with devising a survey of attendees, members, and supporters of the organization, gathering their insights on Lampo activities and suggesting new ways the organization could support auditory culture in the city. In addition I helped look for space for a new Lampo office, though they didn't secure a permanent space until much later.

In addition to these two specific activities, I gained the most from serving as an event volunteer at performances. Whether checking off names on the RSVP list, serving wine after performances, or making sure that attendees were careful with the art exhibits in the Graham Foundation space, I learned a lot from not only the performances but also causal conversations with event attendees. Chatting with these visitors gave me a rare perspective in this wave of research. Whereas I formally interviewed people who were actively involved in the worlds of auditory culture, these conversations with casual concert goers pointed me toward my next wave of research, in which I hope to interview museum visitors to learn what they find valuable in their encounters with auditory culture. I'm grateful to Lampo for allowing me to work with them in these small ways and, along with so many others, to be able to attend free performances by many of the best sound artists in the world.

A.2.2.3 Auditory

Though visual ethnography has become an established method of analysis in anthropology and sociology alike (Schwartz 1989; Pink 2001; Dicks, Soyinka, and Coffey 2006; Spencer 2011), auditory ethnography is a nascent approach with vast potential (Feld 1988, 1996; Stoller 1989, 1997; Howes 1991; Schoer, Brabec de Mori, and Lewy 2010; Gallagher and Prior 2014). Specifically, this method asks researchers to listen carefully to social spaces and to use field recording to re-contextualize these sounds into a narrative, analytical, conceptual, or aesthetic representation of social life. Visual ethnography has used photography and video documentation to create ethnographic records of a place and time, but the other senses can be used in multimodal observation, as well (Dicks, Soyinka, and Coffey 2006). Though this dissertation has employed auditory ethnography, one can imagine the delicious offerings of the other extra-visual senses in the process of place-making (Pink 2008).

In the research for this dissertation, I actively engaged the process of listening to the social world of sound art and art music. Though one might think I primarily heard these works of sound culture, on the contrary I heard human voices, footsteps, and machines much more than any work of sound culture “as such.” Human bodies in these aesthetic spaces are noisy organisms, and this dissertation is replete with descriptions of the interaction between people and auditory culture. Whether the deafening cough of an audience member at a symphony or the inability to hear sound art at an opening reception, we can learn more about people through listening than what emits from instruments are artworks. Although I collected sociological data in the form of audio and video field recordings, this resulting dissertation is limited to the medium of text. A few photos are included, though I do not intend to make a work of visual ethnography, *per se*. Rather than supplying recordings for the reader, I have tried to describe the

sonic features of these works in sound with as much clarity and specificity possible, and I hope that readers can imagine the sounds or might dig deeper to listen to the works described.

A.3.0 Data Analysis

In tandem with the two modes of data collection, two methods of data analysis enabled me to determine the significance of these findings: grounded theory and hermeneutic analysis. First, I interpreted the interviews and ethnographic observations to identify common themes in the form of codes, concepts, categories, and original theory (Glaser and Strauss 1967; Glaeser 2005, 2011). After engaging in grounded theory, I methodically interpreted regularities in the language used to describe value in order to arrive at the empirical and theoretical findings of the study.

A.3.1 Grounded Theory

Listening to interview recordings was the first step in the grounded theory method. Although I found it impossible to set aside all of my theoretical assumptions about the research topic (Glaser and Straus 1967), I listened carefully to respondents' intentions and my own biases in these recordings, taking note of the moments when I might have misunderstood their intentions. With interview recordings and transcriptions in hand, I personally coded these responses to identify general themes that emerged. As part of this method, the specific codes were not decided prior to analysis; rather they were identified as qualitative descriptors of small units of the data. These commonalities among the codes were grouped together as general concepts in the dataset. In turn, these concepts were further grouped together in the form of categories of response, in this case, categories of value. By identifying potentially causal relationships between categories, original theory was generated from the data (Glaser and Strauss 1967). For example, I arrived at the empirical finding that conceptual sound was an important

category of value in the gallery arts by aggregating codes in the data. Subsequently, I devised the theory that textual value devices were a form of economic *agencement*, rendering the aesthetic economic by communicating these concepts. Another important facet of this analytic method was the ability to probe into concepts that arose from interviews earlier in the research process in subsequent interviews. Recurring codes from interviews early in the schedule allowed me to ask deeper questions about these terms if they came up again, though not forming a new category of questioning unless suggested by subsequent respondents. This ability to probe into concepts of interest was a uniquely valuable aspect of the grounded theory method of analysis.

A.3.2 Hermeneutic Analysis

This grounded theory approach to interview analysis was accompanied by hermeneutic analysis of ethnographic observations, as well (Glaeser 2005, 2011; Pugh 2013). Specifically, participant observation was useful to check the reports gathered in formal interviews. This recursive process of moving back and forth between observations and theoretical findings resembled the method of abductive analysis (Tavory and Timmermans 2014). On the one hand, the process was inductive, problematizing the assumptions of field theory through the newly collected data in these disciplines. On the other hand, grounded theory sought to develop new theoretical findings that emerged from the data. Between these two, abductive reasoning took the form of interpretation, as I creatively inferred new theories and hypotheses based on surprising ethnographic findings. By interpreting what I heard in interviews against what I observed as a participant in these spaces, I was able to see continuities and discontinuities clearly, avoiding, I hope, the attitudinal fallacy that assumes interview respondents' reported attitudes map onto their actions (Jerolmack and Kahn 2014).

Furthermore, with attention to the language used in everyday and ritual contexts (Silverstein 2004), I identified the links between value and action in these sound culture economies. In order to interpret these links, I participated in these communities as both an insider and outsider, developing rapport in order to learn about personal values while adjusting my lens to see the connections between reported values and actual decision-making. This hermeneutic approach to ethnography allowed me to verify and falsify the value statements made by interview respondents because I became a participant over time, as well. Others in these sound culture communities began to look to me as an expert, sometimes assuming art historical knowledge I did not have. These interpretive analytic moments allowed me to test my hypotheses and to answer my research questions not only through self-reported data in interviews but also through direct observation of activity.

A.4.0 Ethical Considerations

Though the full details of my research design are available in the protocol submitted to the Internal Review Board at the University of Chicago, a few ethical considerations come to mind as unique to the methodology of this project. In addition to the use of verbal consent, this research took a unique approach to the identification of artists and musicians, given the specificity of their works. Finally, my own active role in auditory culture placed me in the world as both an insider and an outsider.

A.4.1 Consent

Before asking for consent to participate in interviews, I provided potential interview respondents with a project information sheet (see Appendix B: “Project Information Sheet”). This document described the nature of the project, the desired outcomes, potential benefits and discomforts to the respondents, and respondents’ ability to end the interview or revoke consent at

any time. An important part of this document was a description of the use of audio recordings of interviews. When possible this information sheet was distributed both in electronic form prior to the interview as well as in hard copy at the interview itself.

I obtained verbal consent documented on the interview recording and project information sheet from each respondent. After offering the information sheet and ensuring the confidentiality of the data, I asked each respondent to verbally consent to the recording, quotation, analysis, and potential publication of their responses. This statement of the informed consent was documented for each interview participant. However, the documentation of informed consent does not include the name of any individual or organization associated with the research, leaving no paper trail linking the identity of these respondents or their organizations to the content of the interviews.

A.4.2 Confidentiality

Interview recordings often include personally identifying information about the respondents, but transcriptions of formal interviews were anonymized of personal identifiers, including the names of individuals, organizations, or works of art and music that were tied to their identities. Respondents were not given pseudonyms, and in only a few cases their actual names are used in the text. Instead, I used their own self-identified title (e.g. “multidisciplinary artist working primarily with sound”) to frame quotations whenever possible. Although masking the identity of respondents has been a sociological and ethnographic tradition, respondents were mixed in their desire for anonymity (Jerolmack and Murphy 2017). Some artists and musicians seemed eager to have their work named in an academic dissertation, one of the legitimization strategies that we discussed in interviews. Others did not want to connect their responses to their identities in order to freely tell me their opinions of events, other actors, and particular works of art and music. In only two cases did I connect the identity of respondents to interview quotation:

Lawrence Kumpf and Zefrey Throwell. In these instances it would have been impossible to use the interview text without revealing the respondents' identities, so I obtained email consent and approval of the specific excerpts to be used. In all other cases, respondents are anonymized according to their professional role (i.e. "a sound artist" or "an experimental musician"). Where specific artists' and musicians' names are used in this text, they may or may not be respondents in the interview mode of research; my reflections on individual works of art and music came from my own observations at museums, galleries, and performances. All identifying information has been removed from quoted interview text except in the cases where I received explicit permission from respondents that I could do so.

A.4.3 Reflexivity

Understanding that the reflexive position of the qualitative researcher is inextricable from the process of data collection (Creswell 2003), I disclosed my own role as an ethnographer in my formal volunteer sites and whenever possible in informal ad hoc observations. Yet my role in auditory culture did not stop at the point of observation. As a participant in these worlds, I immersed myself in social contexts whenever possible, including a dinner at a sound artist's house and attendance at countless art music performances. Many took my participatory role to be that of a scholar, assuming my knowledge of the world and trusting my assessment of the social aspects of cultural action. Yet, I also participate in the discipline of art music as a performer. Very few of these interview respondents knew that I was a musician, but those who did used my role as an opportunity to use language and references that took me as an insider. The vast majority of interview respondents saw me only as a social science researcher. Although I have background knowledge in experimental and noise music, my experience stopped short at the line of the art world. Teaching sociology at an art school gives me some familiarity with the

contemporary practitioners who pop up in student presentations, but my art historical knowledge is threadbare compared to those who are active in galleries and museums. Fortunately, the role of the scholar is an insider status in the gallery arts, so I was able to build rapport with practitioners by *de facto* through my research function.

A.5.0 Limitations

These observations and reports are drawn from what appear to be tiny worlds of auditory culture, yet their influence is far reaching. Though these findings cannot generalize empirically beyond the boundaries of these disciplines, the principles of sensory perception and valuation have wide reaching implications. As well, the relation between the senses and valuation discovered in these worlds suggest how the knowledge of value may be constructed in other cultural economies. As this project proceeded, I became increasingly curious about the sense of taste. Just as I am not trained as a sound artist, I am not a foodie either. Yet, the origin of my inquiry into sound art was the sensory similarity I perceived with electronic music. If the sounds encountered in galleries could be ripped out of social context, I wondered if they would be discernibly different from electronic music played in a music venue. And yet this social context was crucial to valuing them differently. In the same way, I wonder about the extra-sensory cues that come into play in the culinary contexts of restaurants, fast food, and grocery stores. Beside the taste and smell of food, how do we know what is valuable?

This research is also limited to three auditory worlds: Chicago, New York, and Berlin. Though funding and time constrained my study to these locations, I wondered about these choices. Sound art is a small but quickly emerging art form, and smaller cities undoubtedly have practitioners and gatekeepers of their own. Though it would require travel funds and quite a bit of digging to discover these cultural producers, I wondered about regional differences between

artists and musicians, as well as the differences in value structures between big cities and rural areas. Extending beyond the Global North would be another exciting route of future research, discovering the countless forms sound art and art music take around the world.

The main limitation of this research design has been its focus on the production side of auditory culture to the exclusion of audiences at performances, visitors at museums, and other listeners. These niche disciplines often found producers engaging as supporters and audience members, as well. One curator mentioned that participants in the small world of free improvisation were “all kind of trading around the same 50 bucks. Maybe I earn 20 bucks in one gig, but then I show up at another venue the next day and I give 10 of that to the door, so in a sense we’re all just recycling some of the same money.” Another musician even hatched the plan to mark a bill and see if it came back around, circulating through communities of practitioners and listeners.

Though some of these audiences were composed of insiders, I became increasingly curious to understand the value judgments of outsiders to the world of auditory culture, particularly the patrons of major art museums. With so many tourists entering the hallowed space of the Museum of Modern Art, I had to wonder what they thought of sound art and in what way it was valuable to them. In my next wave of research I intend to engage with this social group, with particular attention to the diversity of demographic identities who encounter sound in museums. Though the race, gender, and sexuality of auditory cultural practitioners was quite diverse, class and education positions were quite homogeneous. Yet, visitors to art museums come from each stratum of the economy, and I am curious to know how different types of audiences value auditory culture differently.

APPENDIX B: PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO VERBAL CONSENT FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPATION

Study Title: Understanding Value in the Cultural Economy

Principal Investigator: Karin Knorr Cetina

Student Researcher: Whitney Johnson

I am a graduate student at the University of Chicago, working with my faculty advisor, Professor Karin Knorr Cetina, in the Department of Sociology. We are planning to conduct a research study, which I invite you to take part in. This form has important information about the reason for doing this study, what we will ask you to do if you decide to be in this study, and the way we would like to use information about you if you choose to be in the study.

Why are you doing this study?

You are being asked to participate in a research study about the experience of sound and economy in art and music activities. Topics of study will include sound experiences, exhibition and performance conventions, and economic norms. The purpose of the study is to discover the similarities and differences between the sound art and music economies.

What will I do if I choose to be in this study?

You will be asked to:

- Participate in an in-depth interview that will be conducted in person, over the telephone, or via videoconference.
- The interviewer will ask if you are willing to have the interview recorded on a digital device or personal cell phone. The purpose of this recording is to allow for a thorough transcription after the interview for data analysis.
- The interviewer will ask if you agree to the use of quotes from your interview and if you are willing to use your real name. If you would not like to use your name, you may choose a pseudonym for use in research-related documents and analysis, and no record of your interview will be linked to your real name.
- At the end of the interview, you will be asked for your willingness to be contacted for a follow-up interview. The purpose of this follow-up interview would be to clarify any of your statements from the first interview. You may decline this request with no consequences to you.
- Following the interview, you will also be asked to pass on a call for participation to any person who may be of interest to the study. This recommendation is completely voluntary, and your participation will not be affected if you decline to make recommendations.

Study time: Study participation will take approximately one hour, or longer or shorter if you would like.

Study location: All study procedures will take place at any location that is convenient for you, such as a coffee shop, cafe, office, or residence.

What are the possible risks or discomforts?

To the best of our knowledge, the things you will be doing have no more risk of harm than you would experience in everyday life.

What are the possible benefits for me or others?

You are not likely to have any direct benefit from being in this research study. This study is designed to learn more about the cultural economy. The study results may be used to help other people in the future.

How will you protect the information you collect about me, and how will that information be shared?

Results of this study may be used in publications and presentations. Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used unless you give explicit permission for this below. To minimize the risks to confidentiality, I will transfer the interview recording to my personal password-protected computer immediately following the interview. This recording will be sent to a reputable transcription service. Upon receipt of the transcription, all personally identifying information will be removed from the interview transcript, and the original recording will be deleted. We will destroy the original data at the end of this research study. Any personal information that could identify you will be removed or changed before the data we collect are shared in any way, including with other researchers, or in publications and presentations. No one other than Whitney Johnson, Karin Knorr Cetina, and the transcription service will be permitted to listen to the tapes or to view the original transcripts. You may receive a copy of this transcript if you request it. The original recording will be deleted upon transcription.

Financial Information

Participation in this study will involve no cost to you. You will not be paid for participating in this study.

What are my rights as a research participant?

Participation in this study is voluntary. If at any time and for any reason, you would prefer not to participate in this study, please feel free not to. If at any time you would like to stop participating, please tell me. We can take a break, stop and continue at a later date, or stop altogether. You may withdraw from this study at any time, and you will not be penalized in any way for deciding to stop participation.

If you decide to withdraw from this study, any information collected will not be used.

What if I am a University of Chicago student?

You may choose not to participate or to stop your participation in this research at any time. This will not affect your class standing or grades at University of Chicago.

What if I am a University of Chicago employee?

Your participation in this research is in no way a part of your university duties, and your refusal to participate will not in any way affect your employment with the university, or the benefits, privileges, or opportunities associated with your employment at University of Chicago.

Who can I contact if I have questions or concerns about this research study?

If you have questions, you are free to ask them now. If you have questions later, you may contact Whitney Johnson at Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, 1126 E. 59h St., Chicago, IL, 60637, via email at whitneyjohnson@uchicago.edu, or via telephone at (219) 628-3103.

You may also contact the Principal Investigator, Dr. Karin Knorr Cetina at Department of Sociology, University of Chicago, 1126 E. 59h St., Chicago, IL, 60637, via email at knorr@uchicago.edu, or via telephone at (773) 834-3312.

If you have any questions about your rights as a participant in this research, you can contact the following office at the University of Chicago:

Social & Behavioral Sciences Institutional Review Board
University of Chicago
1155 E. 60th Street, Room 414
Chicago, IL 60637
Phone: (773) 834-7835
Email: sbs-irb@uchicago.edu

APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

(Scripted portions in bold)

Thank you for agreeing to meet with me today. Please take a look at this information sheet about my project. After you've had a chance to read through it, I'll be happy to answer any questions you might have.

Distribute “Project Information Sheet”

My project is, generally, about the sound art and music economies, and I want you to feel free to say exactly how you feel about the questions I ask. As you've seen in the Project Information Sheet, your participation in this interview is completely voluntary, and you are free to end the interview at any time. Also, you can opt out of any questions that you aren't comfortable answering. Both your name and/or the name of your organization will be removed from the interview transcript to protect your confidentiality. I would like to record our interview so I can get accurate quotes from you. Do you agree to participate in this interview and to have it recorded on this digital recorder?

Great, thank you!

Topic 1: Current Work

- Types of sound installed, recorded, or performed (artist or musician)
- Types of sound exhibited, distributed, or booked (curatorial or administrative)
- Description of audience
- Description of a recent performance or exhibition
- Description of the field
 - What is sound art? (gallery art)
 - With what genre do you identify? (music)
 - How is sound art different from art music?

Economic activities

- Types of economic activity
- Charges for admission
- Overhead costs
- Payment to artists/musician
- Funding and price of collectible artwork
- Grant funding and relationships with foundations

Topic 2: Perceptions of Value

- Valuable aspects of own work (if applicable)
- Description of high and low value contemporary work
 - (with or without identification of the particular object)
- Art vs. Popular
- Perception of other artists or musicians
 - Motivations for participation
 - Strategies for success
 - How to book an exhibition or performance

Perceptions of the field

- State of the art world
- Power players
- How to succeed
- Changes over time

Topic 3: Theories of Value

Categories of value

Knowledge of value

How do you know a sound object is valuable?

Strategies to increase value

Role of institutions

Regulation of cultural activities

Role of New York City, Chicago, or Berlin

Licensing of cultural spaces

Perceptions of institutions by artists and attendees

Relationship between funding bodies and standards of value

Thank you so much for talking with me. Do you have any questions for me? Is there anything else you'd like to share before I wrap up?

If something comes up that was unclear, would you mind if I contact you again via e-mail or telephone to clarify your answer? This is completely your choice and does not affect your interview in any way.

Also, if you would like to pass along my contact information to anyone else who might want to participate in an interview, please do so. I'll leave some extra copies of the project information sheet with you, if you'd like to give them to anyone. Feel free to have others contact me through e-mail, telephone or Facebook to schedule an interview.

Distribute additional copies of "Project Information Sheet"

Thanks again for talking with me!

APPENDIX D: LEXICON

Acousmatic: Sound that does not have a visible origin. Not only applied in the case of hidden amplification in museums and galleries, the term may also be applied to the imaginary sonic world that exists beyond the loudspeaker, as in Pierre Schaeffer's *musique concrète*. As opposed to the union of sight and sound in the process of perceptual reduction, theories of sensation reaching back to Pythagoras have considered that listening without sight can more sharply attune attention.

Amplifier: Any technology used to increase the volume (or amplitude) of an electronically transmitted sound wave. Some amplifiers use electricity to project sounds loudly through speakers. Others are elements of electronic instruments, such as synthesizers, used to increase the amplitude of sound waves before they are transformed into a form that is audible to human ears.

Arduino: An open source hardware and software company, known especially for designing interactive digital objects that can sense and control objects in the physical world. In addition to the huge number of audio possibilities, several respondents in this study described the ability to sync sound and light through a programmable circuit board. The resulting application enables artists to create sound and light impulses that seem to occur in unison.

Art Music: Without reference to instrumentation or the demographic characteristics of its makers, art music refers to music made for any purpose other than entertainment. Idioms at the boundary of popular and art music include hip hop and folk musics made to raise political awareness and as lyrical platforms. Though not a value judgment, art music, rather than popular music, is of interest to this study as a comparative and contrasting case with Sound Art. Perhaps an analog distinction with the gallery arts would be advertising arts.

Conceptual Art: Though many of the works described in this dissertation are “conceptual” in nature, meaning that they are valued and understood according to the ideas they bring about in the minds of audiences, Conceptual Art was an American movement of the 1960s that utilized text and other then-untraditional media to convey these valuable ideas in the gallery arts. Among the important Conceptual Arts practitioners were Yoko Ono, including her art book *Grapefruit*, Jasper Johns, and ...

Cymatics: Vibrating thin surfaces to manifest patterns. Coined by Swiss philosopher Hans Jenny, the most common application has been to use sound waves to affect material, such as liquid, polymer, or sand. As well, the sound waves do not need to be audible to human ears, often drawing from sub- or super-sonic ranges to create sound visualizations and durational performances.

Durational Art: Performance art that emphasizes the passage of time, usually taking place over long durations. Recent examples include Marina Abramović's *The Artist Is Present*, in which she sat silent and still in a chair at the Museum of Modern Art in New York for 736 hours and 30 minutes. In auditory culture, *Organ²/ASLSP (As Slow As Possible)* is a piece by John Cage currently being performed in St. Burchardi church in Halberstadt, Germany. The performance is scheduled to have a duration of 639 years.

Electroacoustic Music: The integration of traditional European instruments and electronics. In the 20th Century, contemporary classical, or “new music” began to compose extended techniques for symphonic instruments, including tape music, electronic music, and computer music. The resulting hybrids may include electronic means of processing sound from traditional instruments or entirely new instruments, such as Electronic Wind Instruments (EWIs).

Experimental Music: Perhaps the most fraught category in this research, experimental music refers to the idiom defined by a sensibility of exploration and rejection of traditional conventions. The wide semantic range sometimes includes synthesizer and electronic music, free improvisation, noise, minimalism, and early 20th Century avant-garde movements. Though John Cage applied the term to all music “the outcome of which is not known” (1961, pp. 7-17), others, including Pierre Boulez ([1955] 1986), have claimed that there is no such thing as experimental music.

Gallery Arts: Borrowing from Seth Kim-Cohen, the gallery arts include all works exhibited in museums and galleries, as well as their counterparts for placement in public space (such as parks) and private space (such as corporate lobbies) not ostensibly for the purpose of communicating information or advertising a product. This term is used in contrast with the “fine arts,” which might encompass music or literature, for example, and the term “visual arts,” which might be too narrow to include performance and work that engages with the other senses, in this case sound. Along with the traditional media of painting and sculpture, contemporary media include video, Internet, performance, and conceptual art, along with sound.

Klangkunst: One of the time-based arts, this German term directly translated “sound art,” denotes a specific discipline of the gallery arts unique to the German context. Systematic musicologist Helga de la Motte-Haber is best known for explaining the aesthetic principles of *Klangkunst*, taking form as sculpture, installation, or performance, yet always emphasizing the ways that sonic phenomena interact with space and time.

Max/MSP: A computer programming language for sound. During the years of this study, Max was the most common multimedia programming platform, though others such as SuperCollider and Pure Data, were used, as well. Max/Jitter is a component video platform. Though Max/MSP is known to have vast possibilities, it is also notorious for a steep learning curve, and each sound artist has a unique approach to transforming code into audible sound.

Musique Concrète: A form of experimental music composition that collages sound recordings into a work greater than the sum of the parts. Made famous by Pierre Schaeffer beginning in the 1940s, the compositional approach cut up and reassembled pieces of tape from music, natural, and everyday sources into a work greater than the sum of its parts. *Musique concrète* draws on acousmatic sound to denaturalize the relationship between source and production. (See also “Acousmatic”)

New Music: Contemporary classical music. Though usually drawing on the instrumentation, compositional form, and performance conventions of classical music, this contemporary

manifestation is also known to expand the idiom by incorporating new instruments, graphic composition, and interactive performances.

Non-Cochlear Sound Art: Though the human ear cannot hear it, non-cochlear sound art incorporates the phenomenon of sound as a concept or in terms of its formal, physical properties. These works in sound may be material manifestations of auditory phenomena, including painting and sculpture, or they may use sub-sonic or super-sonic sound waves as aspects of process or production. Non-cochlear sound art also tends to take sound as its conceptual framework, questioning the abilities of bodies to hear, varied perception, and sonic relationships with time and space. (See also “Cymatics” and “Conceptual Art”)

Oscillator: An electronic mechanism that emits patterned electrical current. These currents are transformed into sound waves through their patterned nature, for example as sine waves, and they are often categorized according to frequency. Low frequency oscillators (LFO), under 20 Hz, are used in synthesizers, while higher frequency oscillators above 100 kHz can be used in radio communication.

Sound Art: Also referred to as “works in sound,” these objects of sonic contemplation are exhibited in galleries and museums. Though sound art can usually be heard by the human ear, this discipline also engages the physical and conceptual properties of sound without making it audibly. (See also “Non-cochlear Sound Art”)

Synesthesia: The phenomenon of experiencing multiple sensory percepts when only one of the senses is stimulated. One common form related to this study is chromesthesia, whereby a person sees colors associated with certain sounds.

Transducer: Any device that turns variations in pressure into an electrical signal, or vice versa. Although microphones and loudspeakers are both transducers, with the former turning the pressure of sound waves into electrical impulses and the latter doing the opposite, one common form of transducer mentioned in this study converted an electrical sound signal into vibration. These devices might be used to vibrate metal or liquid along with the variations of a sound source.

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