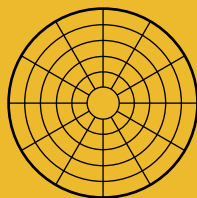


WHISPERS ON THE DAY WHEN A SOUND PIECE IS FINISHED

ANA FLÁVIA MIGUEL



On the day when a statue is finished, its life, in a certain sense, begins. The first phase, in which it has been brought, by means of the sculptor's efforts, out of the block of stone into human shape, is over; a second phase, stretching across the course of centuries, through alternations of adoration, admiration, love, hatred, and indifference, and successive degrees of erosion and attrition, will bit by bit return it to the state of unformed mineral mass out of which its sculptor had taken it
[Yourcenar 1983: 57]

N*ew Chronologies of Sound* (NCS) is a project that intends to promote a reflection about the erosion of time through the sounds and the soundscapes that surround us before, during and after the COVID 19 pandemic. In *That mighty sculptor, time*, Marguerite Yourcenar uses the idea of a statue to point out two different kinds of time. The time of creation and the time of contemplation that happens in parallel with the time of erosion, the time of maturation. The consequences of

the latter are, by nature, unknown. Similarly, the reality we have experienced since the beginning of 2020 has been unimaginable and incorporates different kinds of time.

Before the pandemic, it was impossible for us to imagine the “power” of the sounds or, in fact, the absence of sounds. During the lockdown some of us remembered with nostalgia the sounds of our previous “normal”. We also participated in domestic musical manifestations with neighbors clapping together at the balconies and windows for the health workers battling the coronavirus. That is in the memory of many of us. Nature took over the urban places in which the silence and the sounds of birds were only interrupted by the sound of the ambulance sirens; that is also something that many of us will not forget. In the cities particularly, these phenomena were really amplified. I am referring, for example, to the cities where tourists disappeared and we no longer heard their bags rolling down the streets. The common world mentioned by Hannah Arendt as essential to share and to establish relations between human beings disappeared. Our citizenship has been paused while the urban soundscapes have been silenced. And, after the strong impact of all these aspects on our new everyday life, we were able to guess that something will be different even if we didn't know what or how will be our “normal”. Inspired by the title of the José Ortega y Gasset [2000] famous book, *The dehumanization of Art*, I might say that we experienced the dehumanization of human and social life. The strangeness of this dehumanization configures a challenging moment for the artists; they have the tools and creativity to construct other worlds, perhaps also “strange” worlds, that allow us to return to the real world in a different manner. Or at least, to listen to the world from a new perspective.

How can a pandemic affect the way we listen?

What impacts can the pandemic have on our ways of enjoyment and creation?

These are the questions that NCS sent, as a provocation, to an inspiring group of sound artists with different backgrounds and from different countries and continents. The project includes different tasks and objectives. To create a digital open database with the sounds and recordings, to create a sound piece based on fieldwork recordings, to write a text with reflections on the creative motivations and processes. Some artists reflected on tourism and cities, others used their sound archive as inspiration for a sound metaphor of the present, others were influenced by individual experiences of extended periods of isolation and others reflected on the individual, domestic and global dimensions. My objective is not to summarize the different participations. Jorge Barco wrote a wonderful text, that you can read above, highlighting other artists' contributions.

The initiative comes from a call from Teatro Aveirense/City Hall of Aveiro to a local association, Associação Navalha and Aveiro Arts House (VIC) in the framework of the application for European Capital of Culture [2027]. The artistic director of VIC, Hugo Branco, who already directed many other artistic events in the city of Aveiro, is the curator of the project. The collaboration with a research center, the Institute of Ethnomusicology – Center of Studies on Music and Dance/University of Aveiro (through my participation) as well as the collaboration of Jorge Barco, a Colombian Sound Artist as International Consultant complete the network of NCS. The collaboration between institutions, local organizations, universities and artists is essential to achieve the goals to a sustainable development of the United Nations [UN].

The NCS occurred in 2021, the International Year of the Creative Economy declared by the UN. For the very first time, the economy of culture has been recognized as central for a sustainable future. Knowing that many professionals of culture are having huge problems facing the pandemic restrictions, I would like to highlight here the role of the municipalities (as institutions that are closer to the people) as important organizations for

the promotion of culture. In Portugal, we still see the heritage of Porto [2001] and Guimarães [2012] as European Capital of Culture. Even if Aveiro does not win the application for European Capital of Culture in 2027, the city and the people will always benefit from the many cultural events and initiatives developed during the preparation of the application. NCS is an example of this dynamic.

Before I finish, please listen to my whispers challenging you to listen. Close your eyes and allow yourself to admire and dream because on the day when a sound piece is finished... its life... in a certain way, begins.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

Gasset, José Ortega. *A desumanização da Arte*. Lisboa: Vega, 2000.

Yourcenar, Margaret. *That mighty sculptor, time*. New York: Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1983.



Round Table at GrETUA, Aveiro



Sound Performance at GrETUA, Aveiro