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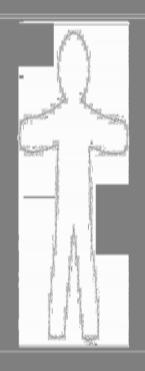


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Introduction

"What do we hear when we listen to the museum?" This is the overarching guiding question present within this thesis. This reflection I present as an introduction is a simple offering into the complexity of sound, the state of listening, and how we write about these things. This isn't just about listening to a museum; it's not about attempting to create a complete alternative dimension to how we would normally experience a museum. In this, listening is not opposed to the ocular, by listening to the museum we are not disengaging and negating our other senses. The museum is a complex space, in its largest f\s\s\corm it is an institutional, often grandiose, space. Defined through the size of its building and the collection of its artwork. It seems to connect to the public, through locals and tourists alike, it is responsible for the curating and cultivating the archive of this national public. Within this writing, I recognise the museum as not being a neutral institution. It has a history, surrounding colonialism, controversy, politics, and an imagined future.

A gallery is constructed along laws as rigorous as those for building a medieval church. The outside world must not come in, so windows are usually sealed off. Walls are painted white. The ceiling becomes the source of light. The wooden floor is polished so that you click along clinically or carpeted so that you pad soundlessly, resting the feet while the eyes have at the wall (O'Doherty and McEvilley 8)

The museum is largely considered a space in which a relationship is developed between the observer and the object, through the sense of sight. In which power dynamics are created through "civilising rituals" (Duncan) and as "apparatuses" (Hooper-Greenhill) in which disciplined bodies are produced. However, it has also been recognised within the visuality of the museum that it exists within multiplicities and interactions which complicate this notion

of the museum as the controlling observer. As recognised in the Exhibitionary Complex (Bennett), the public art institution does not confine, but rather "perfected a self-monitoring system of looks in which the subject and object positions can be exchanged, in which the crowd comes to commune with and regulate itself through interiorizing the ideal and ordered view of itself as seen from the controlling vision of power" (Bennett 82). It is similarly then scripted, but rather than maintaining the exclusivity of theological comparisons, discipline is formed in the complex network of apparatuses which have found formation in a wider range of institutions.

Notably however, in the discussions of the visuality of the museum, is how it often seems as if listening, as the sense, is on the verge of the analysis, ready to jump in and further complicate and broaden the multiplicity and understandings of museums and power structure. Especially with the increase in technological advancement, the museum's cultural conditioning is bleeding outside of the institution, just as the inside is shifting. With the increase of our sonic awareness and listening as a culture, it is important to recognise that museums have not stayed the same. In increased necessity to move and change as cultural identities and awareness becomes developed, they have begun implementing more sound and sonic art into their spaces, media is becoming a more prominent element. On top of this, the sonic has become more prominent in a shift of embodied knowledge and growing critiques of the ocular-centric regimes of knowledge production.

The museum soundscape is both a 'silent' and loud space. We consider this silence as necessary for contemplation, and for the space in which knowledge can be transferred from the institutional space to the individual. Yet, its silence is also commodified, the soundscape of a museum is controlled and sold, and Western museum visitors have been culturally conditioned in an embodied form to react a certain way. The large open architecture of these spaces invites sonic qualities such as resonance, reverb, and echo to push and pull the sounds

created within exhibition spaces. The sounds created by visitors and their bodily movements, the sounds created by the museum's technology (both intentional and unintentional), and the sounds of the guards. Almost feels like the attempt to capture real silence in which knowledge of the museum is attainable is impossible. But it is even within this small recognition, we become aware of the situatedness of the terminology of sound. It becomes apparent that power is and can be conceived through listening.

The literature present in the intersection between sound studies and the museum is growing at a rapid rate, in part due to the increase of technology and sound as part of the multisensorial museum experience. Critical considerations are being developed for curatorial practices of sound art and the sonic as a presence within the exhibition space. Whilst an oversimplification, generally one of the trends within this field moves towards theorising of sound-in-itself as a universal collective listening experience of different mediums and objects within the exhibitionary complex. Sound as an affective and ephemeral element which is beyond representation, but still reveals a certain type of knowledge, one which is implied to be recognisable by all (R. Cox, *There's Something in the Air*; Toop, *Sinister Resonance*; R. Murray Schafer, *European Sound Diary*; Bubaris). On the other hand, there has also been a recognition of the individuality of listening within the museum space, and how taking this into consideration can shift an understanding of how bodies resonate and listen to the echo and reverb of the museum. To understand how silence, noise, and power dynamics interplay between the museum, the visitor, and the exhibition (Bijsterveld; Sterne and De Luca; Salomé Voegelin, *A Sonic Journey through the Visual Display*; Schulze).

It is in this space of the ontological debate of sound studies, and the questions of materiality and knowledge production that I will be asking the following questions. Ones which will act as the underlying tension throughout the thesis, which will continue to sit on the periphery of my writing until the final chapter. How can the museum as a space help in

critically reflecting on the current ontological debate present within sound studies? How does listening offer a way of navigating and recognising the complexity and multiplicity of knowledge production? How does knowledge production clash in the museum through the power dynamics of the individual listener and the institution of the museum? There is a sense of knowledge being imposed by a larger body, a proverbial ear or eye of the museum space, of power dynamics coming into play in this contented space. I question hearing and listening; its and my own political and cultural situatedness. Through this line of thinking, I approach the Stedelijk Museum, one of the major modern and contemporary museums in Europe, and specifically the exhibition *Kirchner and Nolde: Expressionism. Colonialism.* as a site of examining these questions.

This thesis will be guided in part through ethnographic soundwalking¹ (Salomé Voegelin, *A Sonic Journey through the Visual Display*) I undertook which sets up and underlies my analysis of the exhibition. As part of this, I need to recognise that my ears and my listening are in themselves culturally influenced position. The listening of my White, Western ears has a different modality in the hearing of sounds and soundscapes than those of lesser or different privileges.

In the first chapter, I will engage with more overarching understandings of the museum as a disciplining space and how different understandings of this represent specific culturally learned and repeated behaviours. Opening the complexity of turning theory primarily associated with ocular-centric discipline into that of auditory discipline. Revealing power structures and how cultural forms of listening are created, as well as hinting at this concept of the museum as a space of contested sound, despite perceiving the museum as

¹ In total I attended the exhibition three times for practising soundwalking in different forms. My first visit was without the use of equipment and as I would regularly enter an exhibition space. On my second and third visits, I used a Zoom H4n microphone. On the second visit, I recorded my movement through the exhibition, and on the third for recording how this was for recording and noting other visitors moved through the exhibition. Other visits beyond sounds and writing for part of this research.

'silent'. In this, I will open with the theory present in this intersection and begin moving towards the complications in knowledge production under a contested space and set up the baseline for moving into my analysis.

The second chapter opens directly into the deeper end of studying sound and begins to critically understand and analyse the multitude of sounds present within the *Kirchner and Nolde exhibition*. Tracing ideas of Sound Studies but underlining my decisions and position with necessary theoretical colonial and postcolonial theories. It is here that the primary sonic elements of the exhibition are presented, bringing in discussions on different forms of listening within the space and beginning to piece together what this implies for the role of the institution as the holder of the archive and the presentation of knowledge through text, voice, music, and architecture.

The final chapter is where the underlying tension, the questions at the periphery of the writing till this point, are connected fully to the sonic aspects of the exhibition and the museum. Here is where sonic knowledge production is brought into question and reflected on through the ontological debate within sound studies. How can we hear the museum as a site that can critically engage with this debate? And how can it offer additional insights and complications to an understanding of listening and sound?

Chapter 1: The Silent Museum

1.1 Entering the Stedelijk Museum

I find myself on a busy Friday afternoon heading to The Stedelijk Museum. It is a wet and cold day. The streets are busy with nervous movement and a certain liminality that this type of weather brings. The Stedelijk Museum is found on the Museumplein in Amsterdam, a large open square which is surrounded by some of the largest institutional and significant cultural buildings and museums² in the city. As I walk towards the museum I am confronted with the large shadow of a white ceramic-like roof; often called the "The Bathtub"³.

As I walk underneath this shadow, sheltering from the rain, the surrounding sounds of the city slowly become more muffled: the general ambience of rain, cars, trams, bikes, and the usual experience of my movement through Amsterdam seems suddenly distant. A certain pressure creeps up and presses onto my ears; a sudden heightened awareness of sound. Footsteps, my own and those of other visitors, all reflecting towards me from the bathtub ceiling, in a very subtle but present manner. The surrounding soundscape of the urban city has changed, I still have a clear view of it from my position but by making this small step under the shadow of the bathtub, The Stedelijk Museum seems to bleed and extend its sonicity beyond the walls of its building. It feels as if it is hinting towards something, that it is already begun to reveal its interior structural discipline. Whether you are here to visit the museum or not, it seems to already incite and activate one's listening through its architecture. The external is seemingly becoming a part of the internal. Accentuated by the large glass

² These include the Rijksmuseum, The Stedelijk Museum, Het Concertgebouw, Van Gogh Museum, Moco Museum.

³ This giant bathtub was constructed in front of the old building, making for a modern extension of the original building. It is not very clear whether this is the original intended name or whether it is of colloquial origin. Either way it is culturally the name most people refer to it as.

panels which surround the bathtub at the ground level, making the entirety of the museum foyer visible from the outside. But then again, are we really outside? Visually we may think we are, yet even here things are becoming physically ambiguous.

Through large slow-moving revolving doors, I enter the bathtub, the foyer of the museum. Entering the museum feels like a familiar ritualistic experience, the process of entering such a space being slow and full of intent and thoughtfulness. The purchasing of the ticket, the storing of my bag and coat, and the scanning of my ticket. Multiple queues act as moments of waiting and reflection. Giving sufficient time to listen. A new form of temporality is created, the invoking of a disciplined museum subject begins to reveal itself at this point, following the unwritten but culturally recognised behavioural code of the museum.



Fig. 1. A view of the Stedelijk bathtub and the way it extends into its surrounding area (Lewis Marshall).

1.2 What Does the Museum Sound Like?

Certain unwritten rules have been created in the museum, where etiquette and specific societally ingrained behavioural patterns are expected. We embody these rules, where an accepted engagement of the contemporary, white-walled museum is achieved through its following and the act of self-policing. The museum is presented here as an eternal contemplative neutral space, in which the archive of institutional knowledge is presented, one of artwork, history, and the display of objects. It is a place of individual contemplation, of silent movement between the rooms, of ocular observation. The sonic rules of this space dictate silence to be the most optimal position to find yourself in as if the stillness of the museum will return knowledge as the reward (Salome Voegelin). Only through silence can we "elicit the essential truth of the exhibition [...] the museum can be rendered an ultimately sacred site of human civilisation" (Bubaris 1). Silence is accepted as the governing situation, as breaking this with sound will destroy the potentially holy connection with the cultural archives, whilst also positioning oneself as the perpetrator of this act. Where the subject producing sound within the architecture of the museum is now producing noise and interference to anyone who hears.

However ironically, the museum is never silent, the museum soundscape is littered with cacophonous and entangled sounds. The presence of human bodies, their movements, their footsteps, the small moments of whispered chatter, the accidental sounds of human life; coughing, sneezing, breathing, dropping of an object, the awkward fumbling interactions of people crowded around the same artwork. The presence of technology for the protection and preservation of the museum space and its collection; High pitched frequencies and camera

technologies.⁴ The presence of authority through the sounds of the security guards, their grounded footsteps, the crackle of the radio, and the squeak and scrape of their watchful chairs. Increased technological presence and multi-sensorial work and performance, screens, speakers, interactive artwork, sound, and music.

In this, we are confronted with seeming differentiations that are present within the definitions of these descriptors of sound. Noise and silence have clear subjectivity ingrained in them, as well as expectations of their affect. The silence of the museum is in actuality only silent in contrast to the cacophonous, loud, and uncontrollable sounds of urban life in the city. The museum presents itself as an antidote, an escape. Supplementing the idea of cultural knowledge being only hearable in the silencing of the ears and the opening of the eyes. "Sounds will destroy the seen" (Salomé Voegelin, *Sonic Possible Worlds* 15).

Why is it that the same sounds which are present just outside of the walls of the museum (and even in the lobby of the museum) are harshly rejected within the walls of the exhibition, and the spaces which contain and present artwork? Sounds in themselves have meaning based on their contextual environment; furthermore, the way they manoeuvre also has large implications for their affect on the body, and how the body derives meaning from this. The sounds human bodies produce within the museum aren't just sounds, their magnitude and presence are magnified by the architecture of the space. Museum and exhibition rooms are empty, large, white, cubic spaces. In these thick bricked concrete walls, any sound will echo and reverberates. The louder the sound, the harsher the resonance of the sound will respond. The general presence of sounds becomes amplified and sounds which are generally neglected or ignored suddenly hold increased weight and presence: as if the baseline of our hearing is a continuous noise. A feeling of being constantly on edge, a certain

⁴ Such as laser technology from a company called SICK Sensor Intelligence found in the Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna (*Laser Detectors Protect Art Treasures at Kunsthistorisches Museum in Vienna* | SICK).

understanding of the potential that sound has in such a space. It potentially reveals intentional design. If true silence is the connection to our cultural archive, it will not be something which can be achieved. Are we being misled? The institution that archives and has control over the canon of our culture is present within these spaces, in the silence, in the noise. Even if we were completely alone in an exhibition room, it will never truly be silent as long as there is a body in this space.

These considerations of the museum bring up some questions. What is this relationship between seemingly shutting off one sense to engage with this ingrained form of supposed knowledge production? What are the politics of engaging with listening within the museum space, and what entanglements and resonances reveal themselves through this process?

1.3 Soundscapes and Modernity

This entangled relationship between sounds and the architecture of the museum is what we can refer to as the soundscape of a museum. I am however partially apprehensive about using this word, which is why it has not been mentioned previously. Soundscape as a term is used ubiquitously within modern language, and as such a multiplicity of differing meanings are derived from it. It is common to see the term being used to describe the collection of sounds one experiences in public and private spaces, field recordings and field recording techniques, commercial design companies, and music recordings, to name a few. In this way, the term seemingly ends up referring to "almost any experience of sound in almost any given context" (Kelman 214). And this can hold true academically as well if the conception is not properly identified and considered.

1.3.1 Soundscapes

The term soundscape was originally coined by composer and writer R. Murray Schafer in his pamphlet: The New Soundscape. He defined the soundscape to describe sonic environments, in the same way that *landscapes* refer to physical environments (R. Murray Schafer, *The* Soundscape). Schafer's development of this concept was an exciting turn in considerations of sound, he clearly understood and recognised the importance of the historical period he was in. Composers such as John Cage and Pierre Schaeffer with *musique concrète* were shifting the perception of what constituted music, where sounds that we hear around us, no matter where we are, are all music, all part of a global orchestra, known to Schafer as "the sonic universe!" (R Murray Schafer 2). Within this, he promotes an active position of listening to one's surroundings. If indeed this is the future of music, then let us listen to the music that surrounds us and begin critically analysing what these sounds mean and why they are important. This pamphlet he created was a part of the World Soundscape Project (WSP), an education and research group started by Schafer with his colleagues and some of his students. In this project, they produced numerous soundscape recordings and publications, which culminated in Schafer's book The Tuning of The World, which is the writing primarily cited and referenced within academia when referring to the origin and coining of the term Soundscape. The term has resonated strongly with writers and academics and has since been reiterated and used often within the field of sound studies. It is an exciting ear opener and a significant moment within the development of sound in relation to knowledge production. However, within *The New Soundscape* and *The Tuning of The World*, a close examination of the conclusions Schafer had drawn reveals a definite bias and a problematic notion of his engagement with the sonic.

Schafer holds onto his background as a musicologist and attempts to listen to his surrounding soundscape through Western, white, and 'musical' ears. Whilst recognising a contemporary shift in musicology and wanting to situate himself in it, he attempts to hold on to classical conceptions of instruments and musicality by remodelling them through his listening as a composer. Schafer finds that "human history has been a sonic descent from the natural and harmonious into the mechanical and dissonant" (Kelman 216). That we have been shifting from a "hi-fi" to a "lo-fi" soundscape, which he predicates on a signal-to-noise ratio. The more differentiation there is between signal and noise, the easier it is to distinguish between what is "information" and what is not. Therefore, considering urban spaces to be of a "lo-fi" soundscape. Schafer has not allowed any room to move within his conceptions of noise⁵ and signal, instead only recognising them through his preference and bias that originates in his privileged form of listening. Through this, he hears himself as having the authority to teach and inform how people should listen to manoeuvre through and survive "lo-fi" soundscapes. In heavily focusing on this early conception of soundscape, we are critiquing a certain problematic engagement which is present in listening. One which situates itself within conceptions of classic music, modernity, and ecology, and does not allow for other forms of listening or respects other forms of knowledge production through different ears and cultural understandings and meanings of sound and noise. I want to further connect and reveal listening in conceptions of soundscapes through ideas of modernity and connecting it to the institution of the museum as it is important to engage with it critically to set things up for the research and exploration of this thesis. Schafer attempted to shape

⁵ There is a fascinating moment in his pamphlet, where he transcribes a listening walk, he did with some of his students, in which they wanted to explore noise through a process of active listening and measuring the environment through the use of a decibel meter:

[&]quot;What makes a sound ugly?" [...] Just then we were passed by a motorcycle going all out (98 dB). "That's a Harley-Davidson", Jeff said, who knew about motorcycle. "Sixty-two horsepower. What a beauty!" "Ugly?" I asked. "No, beootifull." "Oh!" (R Murray Schafer 13).

people's ears, he found himself to be in a position in which he assumes the necessity of his listening over others. In his ecological ear, he imposes this in his desire to reveal and help people recognise the hidden atrocities of urban destruction. How did Schafer's ideas influence and align with the ways people worked with and understood soundscapes in the context of city planning? How has the increase of technological tools which have become available influenced a culturally conceived recognition of universalised definitions of which sounds we should strive for?

1.3.2 Modernity

In *The Soundscape of Modernity*, Emily Thompson argues in the way that technological advancement and understanding of sounds in spaces have created a listening culture which aims to move towards "a modern sound". With the increase of technology and the ability to record sound's movement and intensity via electroacoustic devices, it appeared as if a solution had been created for the desire to control and sort out the increased attention towards the fear of noise and sound pollution. This allowed the ability to refine and constitute what a good sound entailed, and to produce this in the form of aural commodities. However, what this most importantly meant was a turn in a newly formed relationship between sound and space, where sound became detached and disassociated from space until the relationship between the two ceased to exist. By being replicated through electronic means, the distinction between the recorded sound and the original sound became impossible to distinguish, creating an illusion where sound became considered synonymous with its signal form. Here then the signal in a physical space, such as aspects of architecture like reverberation, became the new conceptions of noise. To strive towards this and create spaces that lack reverb in

which sounds should exist on their own became the new definition of modern sound. An ideology which conceived the modernity of the sound design of architectural spaces.

The physical aspects of a soundscape consist not only of the sounds themselves, the waves of acoustical energy permeating the atmosphere in which people live, but also the material objects that create, and sometimes destroy, those sounds. A soundscape's cultural aspects incorporate scientific and aesthetic ways of listening, a listener's relationship to their environment, and the social circumstance that dictate who gets to hear what (E. A. Thompson 12)

This notion of modernity is imposed through imperialistic Western thought processes and listening. To recognise developments in listening which are tied to and involved within the construction of architectural spaces. It reveals intention and a movement based on how culturally noise and sound became defined through a specific group of people. Soundscape as a term is an incredible turn within sound studies, which at that time was a fairly new and emerging field. However, this falling into the need for hi-fi, and that the desire for this has legitimised itself and found its way into cultural conceptions of listening is something I think must be considered and mentioned. Whilst some have called for the abandonment of the term (Ingold), I find that Thompson's outline for her definition of soundscape resonates with what I want to consider within this writing. I want to emphasise and be certain about specific aspects of writing on sound that need to be strongly considered. But also, because we can recognise this modernity as being present with the intentional construction of the museum. Soundscape is no longer a consequence, or natural signifier of how it was built. It is an intentional decision, a choice made to create a universalised listening subject, in which a shared definition of noise, silence, and sound can be created.

1.4 Power Structures and Discipline

Looking at this perception in soundscape creation within modernity reveals an intention, a clear display of power dynamics between the designers, the ones who uphold this institutionality, and those who enter and are contained within these spaces. How do sounds within the context of a museum promote a specific type of listening? In what way do we internalise and embody these sounds? And how does this change according to who embodies it? Can we hear the soundscape of the museum as being within an intentional design what does this imply? How can we trace similar conceptions of modernity within the framework of the museum?

These concepts of discipline and architecture in relation to the institution quite clearly resonate with Foucault's famous metaphor of the Panopticon. In his book, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of a Prison* (Foucault) Foucault uses Jeremy Bentham's architectural design for a prison to reveal how vision and gaze have become internalised forms of socially constructed obedience to the state. In which the condition of being observed in a state where judgement can be passed, the observed assumes a position of permanence. The 'all' and the 'optic', which etymologically construct the panopticon. Foucault recognises the fear of being seen as pervasive in modern times, the self-discipline and in turn applying this notion of discipline to others, self-policing, is a dehumanising action in the way it confines the bodies of oneself and others. This does not only apply to the incarcerated subjects of the carceral archipelago. By using this as a metaphor, Foucault applies the disciplinary nature to other institutions; The Panopticon "is polyvalent in its applications;" (Foucault 205) and its use is consistent in its effects throughout these different institutions. In Prisons, schools, factories, mental institutions, and prisons, the same tools are used to take charge of bodies.

Foucault did not directly reflect on the museum as an institution in *Discipline and Punish*, and interestingly he only briefly wrote and spoke on the museum within the history of his works, yet it somehow strongly felt like it was always on the cusp of what he was working towards. Predicating his work on Foucault, Tony Bennett writes on these concepts in his work *The Exhibitionary Complex* as recognising the development of the museum as a separate endeavour in the way it manifests discipline but through a similar intention as with the panopticon but through a multiplicity of the visual rather than the singular eye.

Bennett recognises how the European museum as an institutional space underwent a large shift in the 18th and 19th centuries, in which the state used their ability to organise and present knowledge into forms which would influence the public and their desires for museum and exhibition spaces. The transferring of objects from enclosed private domains to more open and public spaces is an act of creating a standardisation of knowledge production in the populace. The museum organising this knowledge through the mediation of the state as being involved with social scenarios. Akin to the panopticon, Bennett introduces the Crystal Palace, an architectural design which everyone can see, and "reversed the panoptical principle by fixing the eyes of the multitude upon an assemblage of glamorous commodities" (Bennett 84). In which the building is designed for everyone to see the objects on display, but also ensured the spectators could be seen by each other. It is a simultaneous moment of the museum holding the power of displaying the objects to produce knowledge and to discipline bodies for receiving this knowledge in a public mass.

It becomes evident that the museum is creating specific scenarios for creating this relationship between the visitor and the object through the visual. A creation of 'museum behaviour', which comes as a repercussion of the exhibitionary complex. In this, Carol Duncan recognises the museum as being structured through its 'rituals', which creates a stage in which visitors perform these 'rituals' through their movement in the museum, whether or

not they are aware of it (Duncan). In the actualising of this ritual, the museum becomes like a church, and being in this space requires giving in to the scenario which the museum has constructed, in which following the imposition of the museum through its routes and rules is rewarded.

1.5 The Museum is Listening

What then if we consider surveillance rather from the ear rather than the eye? The 'all' and the 'listening' can etymologically construct *The Panacousticon*. How can we understand and hear the disciplining of sound in space?

This is, however, not the first iteration or use of this term. *The Panacousticon* was first used in reference to the eavesdropping devices invented by 17th-century designer Athanasius Kircher, which were positioned at the entrance gallery to his museum: *Museo Kircherianum*. In which the conversations and discussions in the public sphere of the courtyard could be heard as it resonates through the spiral-shaped (mirroring the shape of the cochlear) conduits hidden in the walls and the ceiling. The museum has ears, and it is listening.

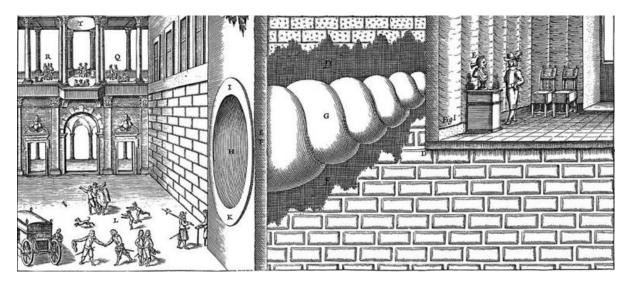


Fig. 2. One of Athansius Kircher's designs of his panacousticon (Kircher).

Whilst it has been noted that "Foucault is not really known [...] as a thinker of the "auditory-sonorous" at all" (Siisiäinen 3), it seems he too is reluctant to consider outside his conception of surveillance through the eye of power. Peter Szendy seems to however still invite acoustic considerations of *The Panopticon*, and introduces the term *Panacousticon* (Szendy and Végső).

Through my previous writing on *The Panacousticon*, I took a position of imaginative listening through the sonic considerations described by Bentham⁶ and the position of the incarcerated subject, using literature of earwitness accounts and personal stories of the sonic listening and stories of prisoners, it became evident that the sonic qualities of the Panopticon are of such a magnitude to the involvement of disciplined bodies, it is impossible not to consider it within the analysis (Clark). In the Panacousticon the "reality of sonic exposure effectively transforms the prison environment into a collective affective sensorium where prisoners can feel and be touched by the guards and by one another through the vibration of walls" (Elmer and Neville).

This consideration of *The Panacousticon* creates a specific awareness of sound that one may not have had previously. Inside the walls of the institution, within the presence of a larger authority, a new sonic and alien world is created. This new set of rules creates a different conception of listening that the people within this space embody based on their determined roles. There is an implication of noise being imposed on us, that the natural sounds of human movement and even so far as the sounds of being alive are noise. If we can

⁶ The only consideration Jeremy Bentham noted in his writing on the sonic of his prison design, is through proposed long tubes which would have extended from each individual cell to the centre tower. With the idea that this would allow ease of sonic information to be reported to the guards. There is a restriction in these developments, assuming the proposed pipes in our conception of the *Panopticon reveal* a confused conception of how voices and sounds exist in spaces. The pipes are logistical nightmares which would have removed voices from bodies and rendered the prison into an apparatus of cacophony. It thinks of sound as singular in its direction, and consistent in its loudness.

define these bodies as producing noise, then the authoritarian consideration and necessity to discipline them become justified in their ears. However, it also opens this up as a space of contested sound. These institutional spaces are cacophonous. Sound is produced and made by everyone and everything. This flurry of voices and sounds all produce and create different meanings for different people in these spaces, allowing for discipline, but also autonomy.

Museums have undergone shifts over the years as sound art, audiovisual work, and multisensorial pieces have become more prominent. Especially contemporary and historical institutions which provide a conception of national canon and archive. They adhere to their cultural positionality while aspiring to integrate sound in their exhibitions, it is gaining potential commodified presence, especially with the increase of attention economies and the engagement of the multisensorial to capture and capitalise on these exchanges.

Does sonic surveillance play a role in the museum? What kind of listening is promoted by the museum as an institution? How does this listening interact with our own listening and the embodiment of the senses? How do all these forms of listening and voicing interact within this institutional space?

1.6 The Cultural and Historical Entanglement of Museum and Sound

1.6.1 Listening to Museums

Museums and their entanglement with the sonic is a relatively new intersection within academia that has gained traction in recent years. When I speak of museums and sound, I mention entanglement through the multiplicity of what the sonic means in a museum, which I will be detailing here. What we are developing and speaking of throughout this work is not an imagined museum, we are in real museums, museums which employ sound, museums which present sonic art, a recognition of the variation of architecture. The white-walled museum

does not necessarily have white walls, in the same way, that the sound of the museum is not always quiet. Museums are dynamic, the number of visitors is different on an hourly basis, every day of the year. Whilst the museum maintains an ocular-centric approach to the display of art, sound culture has mirrored, circled, and bounced around the continued development and changing objectives of the museum (Wiens and De Visscher). The technology and the capturing and reproduction of sound have become more possible and continuously accessible, resulting in the archive of phonographic recordings, intentional sound design, and the creation of sonic art.

"How Do We Listen To Museums?" published in 2019, is the first major journal collection dedicated to the consideration of museums and sound (Wiens and De Visscher). Exploring wildly different notions and aspects, in an almost necessary academic collection, and calling for an invoked awareness in the listening to the museum. The journal gives an extremely brief and underdeveloped overview of the literature available within this intersection. This could be in part due to the fragmented nature of museums and sound, which as sound studies, exist in a multitude of different fields separately and simultaneously making it difficult to canonise. They do however make it a point to mention that there is not a significant amount of literature within this field. This chapter additionally makes the claim that the current relationship between sound studies and museums, especially in addressing the sonic dimensions "makes no distinction between music, sound, noise or even silence!" (Wiens and De Visscher 279). This a claim which seems to not have much backing or basis and one which I will return to, s it requires a deeper reading and exploration of the literature available.

From some of the more recent and prominent explorations of the sound and museum, we can notice that they tend to conclude themselves in a few distinct strands. The turn to the auditory in the museum can feel subversive, and it can come across often as a niche new

realisation of the museum experience. Sound is definitively and undeniably a more prominent aspect of the museum's interior.

In *There's Something in the Air: Sound in the Museum* Rupert Cox makes it a point to reconfigure and reconsider the relationship between the museum, the visitor, and the artwork. He uses a very concise and detailed historical take in which he explores fascinating examples of case studies of sonic artwork. I want to emphasise that the critical questions that are being considered within this article are very rich (R. Cox, 'There's Something in the Air'). He recognises the importance of sound in the context of the architectural structure of the museum and the material of the exhibition space, as well as the shifting meanings that the prominence of sound technology brings into the capabilities of museums as producers of knowledge. However, he seems to run through these different examples of exhibitions and artwork at a rapid rate just to present that there is a complexity between sound and the visitor in a museum space. By specifically focusing on the lens of sonic art, he makes an assumption about the visitor and how sonic art creates a singular specific type of listening. It seems to stop and succumb to sonic worship; describing sonic artwork as "immersive" and "ephemeral", but still as a "sonic way of knowing the world" (R. Cox, 'There's Something in the Air' 230), whilst simultaneously resisting representation.

On the other hand, Nikos Bubaris in *Sound in Museums – Museums in Sound*(Bubaris) begins to engage with the silent museum as a standpoint, questioning and defining the auditory aspects of the museum, and specifically the exhibition space. The museum can no longer be defined as 'silent' despite this common conception, recognising the way in which modernity has intentionally created this culture of silence to present the museum as a "metaphysical presence speaking the truth as the ultimate source of knowledge" (Bubaris 400). However, with the introduction of technologies and the presence of sound within the museum space, it is both hailed as a positive endeavour and as something which should be

treated with caution due to the fear that it may disrupt the museum's knowledge production. Meaning sound is 'controlled' as much as possible, the side effect being that "visitors are no longer just silent viewers and readers but are now also becoming silent listeners" (Bubaris 400). It becomes apparent that sound has complicated and confused the traditional museum model, and whilst it has adapted, the adaption of such has created shifts and potential confusion between the relationship of the visitor and the museum. Listening is becoming a more prominent practice by visitors to the space, to the extent that it is becoming an expectation. How do museums approach this form of listening? Is it an attempt at unified listening? And how does it recognise others who are unable to listen as expected?

1.6.2 Soundwalking

Another way in which the theory on museums and sound connect is through active listening approaches. These find themselves in the form of soundwalking and focusing on the increased technology presence within museums as spaces for inclusivity and multimodal experiences. But also taking more into consideration the manner in which the affect of the museum exists, recognising individuals listening, and the museums imposed and culturally expected listening.

It is interesting to return to R. Murray Schafer in this context, who as part of the World Soundscape Project (WSP) decided to travel around Europe in a van in 1975, to capture the soundscape of Europe. The culmination of which resulted in the *European Sound Diary*. In this diary, a section is devoted to the soundscape of the inside and the outside of *The Louvre*, in Paris, which finds itself denoted in the form of five columns: place, time, ambience (dB), sounds, and materials. This diary in these moments comes across as a research project, understanding a temporal day of The Louvre to note and attempting to

separate the entanglement of sounds within spaces and more specifically to gain an understanding of sound intensity levels.

Following this, in the appendix of the diary, the WSP gives a quiz-based Paris

Soundwalk of The Louvre. "How many visitors LISTEN to these paintings?" (R. Murray

Schafer, *European Sound Diary* 53). Creating an opposing form of the expected tourist

experience of The Louvre through the sounding of world-famous paintings along the walk.

For them, the idea of sounding was through the noting of musicological elements present

within the specific artworks. Which instruments are being played? What were the individuals

in the painting hearing at this moment? It presents a certain 'objectivity' of sound found

within the material and connects to the musicological ears of the WSP group. Why did the

WSP decide to take note of The Louvre in their sound diary? Potentially, it is a recognition of
the institution as an important object of study, through which to critically consider Schafer's
notion of the soundscape. Whilst not particularly useful in the larger scheme of the theory for
this thesis, it reveals an interest in the cultural space of the museum through listening.

These two positions present with Schafer's work of considering the aurality of paintings, and the soundwalking of the museum have additionally been explored further by different writers. The recognition of listening to the resonance and 'aurality' of exhibited objects (specifically paintings) was explored in David Toop's *Sinister Resonances*. Toop uses a form of imaginative listening to understand how sound is portrayed and experienced in artworks, calling for a type of "forensic listening", in which scientific intent is used in the understanding of paintings. He defines sound as intangible, transitory, and haunting, as creating ambiguity within space. Situating his ideas on the haunting qualities of sound, and therefore its ethereality. For Toop, sound is created in the listener through the visual, assuming paintings to be an early conception of recording technology (Toop, *Sinister Resonance*). The idea of the individual listener is starting to become more present within

considerations of the museum and listening. But similar to Schafer, sound according to Toop seems to be defined as partially universal, and similarly recognisable by everyone's ears.

Listening for Toop is a "form of mediumship" which takes on beyond the world of forms into the ephemeral. Theorising the aurality of objects as an approach to cultural analysis research I think holds a lot of value, in the sense that objects which do not directly produce sonicities are capable of aurality, but rather than triggering one to access the ephemeral state of this work, it is possible to recognise how the individual body mediates them as a form of cultural production.

On the other hand, the idea of the soundwalk has been used more recently, and slightly differently, as an intervention in engaging with the other sense within the museum space. Salomé Voegelin brings the practice of soundwalking ("walking the landscape with a focus on listening to one's environment" (Salomé Voegelin, A Sonic Journey through the Visual Display 120)) to the museum. The approach of soundwalking emerges from a concern with the lack of sensorial engagement with the museum, and the continued focus on the visual (which in part reveals the non-universal relationship between museums and sound). Voegelin's writing acts as an invitational guide, where soundwalking becomes an opportunity to "re-experience, question, and expand said assumptions about the museum, about curatorial practice, and the contemplation of art" (Salomé Voegelin, A Sonic Journey through the Visual Display 120). Extending the invitation to both the visitor and the curator. Here sound is considered in its ephemerality and invisibility but still through the material, as something which binds and recognises temporality. Voegelin is calling for an engagement with these sounds through the personal body, it is calling for a type of listening which is situated through one's own embodiment. Rather than calling for unified active listening, it is a reflection on listening and hearing through the self, and the individuation that comes from this.

Extending on these ideas, there is also more literature which approaches listening at an individual and specific level. Considering the intersections of technology and the differing potential of museum sites, Holger Schulze takes inspiration from soundwalking as a practice and recognises the individual experience of listening that arises from the use of an audio guide. Mobility becomes a necessary consideration as opposed to static when tracing movement through the exhibition space and the use of an audio guide. Reflecting on the potential of the listening experiences that audio guides could offer, recognising that this technology can "sonically illuminate the museum" (Schulze 205), if we were to take "the spatial dispositive, temporal dispositive and narrative dispositive of the listening experience in exhibition venues more seriously" (Schulze 204). Bijsterveld writes in Ears-on Exhibitions: Sound in the History Museum on an exhibition in the Amsterdam Museum in which visitors can compare a then-recent soundscape recording of Dam Square with simulations of how the square sounded in 1895 and 1935 (Bijsterveld). This article engages with serious and multi-layered considerations of the way in which the soundscape is used within the museum context. Warning on the commodified potential that sound design and sonic art have in displaying "immersive experiences", taking a standpoint away from conceiving sound art as solely immersive and ethereal to critically considering this soundscape and its presence within the Amsterdam Museum, as an auditory experience and a visitor experience. Sound is also material and 'real' in the ways it is manifested and presented, there are design and acoustic restraints which curators have to consider, such as sound bleeding. Where Bijsterveld recognises that projected loud noise occupies space; how did citizens define and communicate noise? Outside of the consideration of solely scientific discourse, how did these bodies conceive and reorganise sonic realities? How this does indeed "call for auditory history" (Bijsterveld 90) and furthermore an auditory culture.

It is in Bijsterveld, Schulze, and Voegelin that a form of listening begins to open which recognises the cultural positioning of listening, the museum's intention with listening, and the individual's way of listening, and how in this intersection a certain liberation can emerge of being in the museum. It is a liberation which also brings up more questions about the role of the museum, what artwork is shown, and how effective the use of sound can be. Whilst it does not necessarily give the answers, it does reveal that within the leakage of sound, a certain openness is created in the potential levelling or reconfiguration of power dynamics present within the museum.

1.6.3 Where to now?

If we return to the original claim from the journal, that sound studies in connection to the field of the museum "makes no distinction between music, sound, noise or even silence!", it becomes apparent that the point is fairly short-handed and immediate in its reaction. This is also evident in that the authors couples the literature of Schulze, Bijsterveld, and Toop as addressing the sonic dimension of the museum together without consideration (or potential awareness) of their differences. It is somewhat valid that within this sonic intersection, the literature seems less concerned with the specific vocabulary (silence and noise), potentially due to their multiplicities and cultural situatedness. Primarily this could be the case since the journal has a specific focus on sound design and more practical curatorial practice (Renel; Rossi Rognoni; Fryberger; Botts and Palmer; Everrett; Hjortkjær)⁷.

It becomes evident that like in sound studies, emerging intersections can struggle to find confidence in understanding the subtle distinction, which I have hoped to reveal more

⁷ Whilst still important and relevant, the focus on more design and curatorial practises eludes and moves beyond the scope and analysis which is the focus of this thesis.

within this section. For this, I must commend this journal and collection for its intention as it does offer a collection of previously written literature and gives space to new explorations of this field. Specifically, there are a few readings which contain relevant aspects and bring new development to this intersection. The concept of voices through the audioguide made by Abi Kahlili et al, presents an analysis of rhythm, where the rhythm of the voice is also intentionally introduced to interfere with the dominant rhythm of the museum (Abi Khalil et al.). As well as the recognition that in the museum there is not one listening subject, not a sole 'we', to reveal the institutional struggle of being able to take advantage of "how 'we' hear because 'we' always contains a multiplicity of acoustic perspectives" (Sterne and De Luca 1).

It is clear to recognise what makes the intersection between museum and sound increasingly appeal to many (including myself) within academic discourse. What has become evident through my review is that the initial considerations of many writers are excellent critical introductions to recognising the complexity and entanglement of the museum as a space for sound and listening. It is a disciplining sonic space, which also stumbles through its adaptation to new technology and the increased presence of sound art, where it often succeeds and simultaneously fails. Hearing paintings or listening to sound art seem to be universalised in their experience and therefore too in their potential. They seem to be considered beyond critique, and the further reaches of the museums as part of a larger context seem to be forgotten, or even ignored. It is important to recognise that writing on sound in museums is not done through the hope of it being a subversive, manoeuvre which will completely destabilise museums. It is in this that conceptions of knowledge production are where readings seem to differ. In universalising and understanding sound and sound art as beyond representation and signification, the analysis present in the writing of Rupert Cox, Schafer, and Toop assumes a universalised notion of knowledge that is received within the museum in recognition of the sonic. However, if we begin to recognise the lack of a singular

listening subject and understand the complexity of knowledge received from sound by different bodies, as well as the reverberation and echo of these sounds. Then we begin emerging into a space which recognises the complexity of museums as cultural paces, the power dynamics that come into play with listening and allow a critical analysis of the work that is being present within the museum and exhibition.

In a way, I am aiming to take things a step back. By considering deeper theoretical ideas in the context of the museum and listening, I find there is space here to consider the specificities of certain exhibitions, to interrogate sonic knowledge production, and the way these curatorial practices reveal themselves in the form of full exhibition space. By focusing on the exhibition, I am also, therefore, recognising the specific museum's role and maintaining its considerations. It is not just about the intersection between sound in the museum, it is much more specifically about what sounds (sound art, noise, technology) do we hear in the museum. What does it mean when we listen to these sounds? The museum is an institution of cultural knowledge production, archival colonial legacy, and canon creation. If sound is in the process of increased relevance within the museum and museum studies, then let us critically listen and interrogate what we hear, who is able to hear it, and how we hear. To wade through this complexity, entanglements, and encounters is where I position my research.

Chapter 2: Kirchner and Nolde

2.1 Kirchner and Nolde: Expressionism. Colonialism.

From the 4th of September to the 5th of Dec 2021 the Stedelijk Museum⁸ held the temporary exhibition: *Kirchner and Nolde: Expressionism. Colonialism.* The exhibition, as the name implies, focuses on the work of two German Expressionist artists within the frame of its ideological and historical context, therefore situating it within a postcolonial framework. The showing of this exhibition was considered a definitive step away from the familiarity of the Stedelijk Museum. These two artists who make up a part of the museum's collection, are moved away from the common perception of being pinnacles of art history and the movement of Expressionism (Vollam). This was achieved by taking the artworks and recognising the connections it has to the colonial gaze, and how that morphed, idealised, and othered the objects, cultures, and people present in the artwork of these artists. Placing the artwork alongside historical documents, "ethnographic objects", and photographs, to reveal the contextual appropriation, exoticisation, and exploitation of non-western people; the colonial gaze of Kirchner and Nolde. Heavily engaging with the idea of zooming in on the individuals portrayed within the work and connecting to their stories.

⁸ The Stedelijk Museum is one of the larger institutional museums found in Amsterdam, opened in 1874, it is now considered primarily as a museum of modern art, contemporary art, and design. It is an institution for the fact that it is considered to hold one of the most important collections and archives of modern and contemporary art in Europe ('Stedelijk Museum Amsterdam'). On top of this, it is important to recognise that The Netherlands is a country rooted and created by its colonial history, meaning this aspect permeates and continues to be present within many aspects of life within this country. This holds especially true for the position and role that institutions have, for both equally participating in its colonial history, and for recognising its historical and cultural position in consideration of decolonial frameworks.

The Kirchner and Nolde exhibition was surrounded by controversy, and due to it being situated in a prominent institution has prompted a variety of responses from media outlets. In the clarity of de-throning the artist's position and removing the ambiguity of this new view of the exhibition, it aims to destabilise how people have learnt about these artworks and how they continue to hold onto conceptions of them. Het Parool and De Volkskrant situate themselves on more right-wing agenda, with Het Parool calling this the "beginning of the end of the art museum" (Dijksterhuis).

It becomes apparent that what is happening in this Stedelijk exhibition is the contestation of voices or the lack thereof. What kind of sonic moments are created in the exhibition? Whose voices are amplified and whose are shunned? How can different approaches to listening echo the way we receive and understand knowledge? How is knowledge received sonically in the disciplined space of the museum, and what does this say about the type of knowledge?

To approach and consider some of these questions, a considerate approach of a partial history of sound studies is required. I will argue how distinct movements in sound studies have caused many to understand sound as not only separate from the visual but also as separate from its physical and social context; how it exists in a space. To consider this within the space of the museum is limiting and ultimately leads to the same fixed position which many have fallen into within the previous review on literature related to sound in the museum. I will then work in more contemporary and postcolonial theories related to sound, both to move against the theoretical pitfall of "sound-in-itself" and to begin to answer the questions I have posed. In studying of sound within the museum the intertwined nature of the ocular and the sonic should not be separated, and instead, we must work within a framework in which both are still present.

2.2 The 'Ever-Emerging' Sound Studies (and How We Write About Sound)

2.2.1 Tracing a Social Historical Lineage

The study of sound, or sound studies as it is more contemporarily referred to, is a nebulous field of study within academia. Michele Hilmes claimed in 2005 that "the study of sound, hailed as an 'emerging field' for the last hundred years, exhibits a strong tendency to remain that way, always emerging, never emerged" (Hilmes 1). It seems, however, even in the short period since this writing, that there has been a recognition of the "boom" of sound studies. Present through a steady stream of journals, anthologies, and an increased institutional recognition (Steingo and Sykes 5). Where sound studies can be considered to be found safely in the position of an emerged and "robust" field (Steingo and Sykes 5). "No one can deny that sound has captivated the imagination of scholars across many disciplines" (Kane 2).

This comes even despite the turn to sound studies and its origins as being something that is hard to trace. The ideas and developments find themselves strongly situated and distributed in multiple disciplines, which do not always listen and speak to each other (Lacey 11). In this sense, sound is often celebrated for its ability to cross over and between research practices from the humanities to social sciences to the field of technology. Which all exist under the same space: sound studies. Albeit in a conceptually fragmented manner.

Sound studies, however, very much is considered to hold this position of being situated in this ideological framework of being the 'other', or the accompaniment of the visual, therefore existing on the "peripheries of knowledge" (Steingo and Sykes 5) (Hilmes 2). It is perhaps this idea which strongly holds sound studies tied to this position of being "always emerging". It can be said that within the body of work and canon of the senses, the

⁹ Existing in fields such as media studies, anthropology, architecture, ethnomusicology, and aesthetics to name a few.

study and literature on the vision largely overshadow that which is available on sound. By being on this periphery and this multidisciplinary position, and the increase of writing and interest within sound studies, there are certain distinct movements which can be followed.

One of these is highlighted by Jonathan Sterne, who recognised and criticises the presence of what he refers to as "the audiovisual litany" which dominates much of the Western literature on sound in his book The Audible Past (2003). In this work, Sterne recognises that within this literature, the differences between hearing and vision find themselves within the form of a binary opposed list, with binaries such as "hearing is spherical, vision is directional"; "hearing immerses its subject, vision offers a perspective"; "sound comes to us, but vision travels to its object" (Sterne, *The Audible Past* 15). The most important aspect to recognise about this litany is that it is ideologically loaded, it "is essentially a restatement of the long-standing spirit/letter distinction in Christian spiritualism(Sterne, The Audible Past 16)", in which these binaries are called forth as "unquestioned warrants to support a host of arguments" (Novak and Sakakeeny 66). Making it largely responsible for the creation of value which is applied to the senses based on one's subjective position. The history of the senses becomes a zero-sum game, in which the dominance of one sense will lead to the decline of the other (Sterne, The Audible Past 16). It is not that these descriptors found within the litany cannot be used as descriptors of sound, but it is in the assumption that they act as singular aspects of only sound and without recognising that in themselves they still contain a visual other.

Sterne's writings act as an important point of recognising universalised and naturalised methods of thinking about sound and vision. If within writing sound is presented through the ideal of the other. It opens the potential for recognising that the writing may be situated within this dualism, and this framework is important to recognise through the encounter and reading of more theories and ideas within the development of sound studies.

To be critical of giving prominence to the "second sense", not to deny the prominence of the visual within literature ¹⁰, but to avoid a counter monopoly of the ear, rather seeing the senses as a network and realising that the creation of the hierarchy of the senses are always "arguments over cultural and political agendas" (Erlmann 3). Listening, hearing, and the sonic need to be recognised as having worked complicity "with the panopticon, perspectivism, commodity aesthetics, and all the other key visual practises of the modern era" (Erlmann 3). Some of the most prominent theorists on sound initiate their discourse with Derrida's deconstruction of binary oppositions (voice and writing; sound and vision; presence and distance). "The first move in any critical discourse on sound is to denaturalise and deessentialise it" (Steingo and Sykes 3).

This approach is apparent in its relevancy to the consideration of the museum as a multi-sensorial space and the way in which we approach our analysis. Sterne's litany can be traced back to the strand of sound and museums which focused primarily on sound art and resonance through the potentiality of sound-in-itself in the museum. Considerations of sound analysis here cannot be ignorant of the weight and prominence that the visual maintains in this specific context, even if we can recognise shifting landscapes and cultural positions. In these shifts, interactions occur more than ever. Where the changing positions of the museum, the archive, and the visitor can reveal themselves.

In this separation of sound and vision, and placing sound on a proverbial pedestal, we can trace a movement within sound studies which follows the domination of sound being studied outside of its source and the body of the listener: the finding of sound-in-itself. This

¹⁰ It also holds true that there is a specific bias within written language presented within visual and ocular studies, that is not mirrored within sound studies. That is not to say that there is no vocabulary for acoustic properties and the dimensions of sound, in fact in many different disciplines have made effort to account and develop new terms (Carolyn 215). For this, I will be careful in navigating through this type of language, to avoid too many visually connotated words which lie deeply rooted in our written language and are often a force of habit. Whilst it is not possible in every single scenario, writing and speaking on sound means we are "hearing" instead of "seeing".

approach is strongly mirrored and shared by the emergence of electronic music artists and the advancement of media and technology. The invention of the phonograph, the radio, and the continued technical ability to separate and remove the signal from its source¹¹.

2.2.2 Reconsiderations of Sound Studies

What would sound studies become if we began without the automatic assumptions that we have direct, full access to our own hearing, or through our hearing, direct access to the sonic world, or through the sonic world, intersubjectivity with others? (Sterne, 'Hearing' 74)

Despite the interdisciplinary nature of sound studies, the specific lack of academic work being published, and more specifically included within anthologies and journal collections interested in non-Western perspectives or subjects, has led others to recognise that "the West is still the epistemic centre for much work in sound studies" (Sterne, 'Hearing' 73). The field contains a universalised presumption that "has often reinforced Western ideals of a normative subject, placed within the common context of hearing and listening" (Novak and Sakakeeny 7). That is not to say, that the writings and understandings of knowledge production explored within the canon of sound studies should be neglected within this critique. Much of the writing is 'sound', inspiring, and academically solid, but it is important to recognise this bias.

In the opening of this position, there have been movements which have initiated a reconfiguration and breaking open of sound studies, and the recognition to 'decolonise' it.

Music and sound studies have been slower in this process than other disciplines, but they too have begun to move towards a recognition of the consequences of colonialism (Goh, 'Hungry

¹¹ This lack of a discernible or shared origin in the field of sound studies became apparent at the beginning of the 21st century, which Kim Cohen highlighted in 2009 in his book *In the Blink of an Ear*. The turn to sound therefore was based primarily on conceptual frameworks developed through sound art. As conceptualised by composers such as John Cage, and Pierre Schaeffer. Which treated sound as a material substance which was external from signification and discursivity.

Listening'). Gavin Steingo and Jim Sykes call for a "remapping" of sound studies, one which hints towards decoloniality in its contribution but distances itself from it partially. It engages with this consideration through the expansion of sound studies beyond the Western North's conceptualisations: opening up to the South not as the other, or the alternative, but through the multiplicity of its sonic ontologies, processes, and forms of listening. As well as destabilising the positionality of those theorising, by stating that "everyone—not only professional scholars—theorizes sound" (Steingo and Sykes 4).

In this, it still often feels as if the concept of "emerging" is a necessity in the writing of sound studies and one which many fall into. Indeed, it is the reason why within this writing, as I have continued my research within this field in the past few years I too approach sound studies carefully in a recognition of its origins. These distinct movements and theoretical considerations are important when approaching more contemporary issues. With the boom in sound studies, its literature and thinking are emerging at a rapid rate in which many discussions and oppositions take place. Rather than giving a full historical account, understanding the common pitfalls, and avoiding and being considerate in my criticality of theory found within the specific field I am approaching. Especially since giving a complete historical account seems beyond the scope of this thesis writing, instead pointing to vital turns in sound studies, to help build a baseline for the specifications and smaller fields I will be exploring later within this writing. In its multiplicities to narrow and recognize our scope and approach. It does feel like navigating many corridors and making certain choices to finally reach this space of analysis.

2.3 Soundwalking the Exhibition

2.3.1 Sonic Pockets

The bathtub of The Stedelijk Museum covers and obscures the original Stedelijk building. Its familiar red brick architectural style, reminiscent of a bygone era of Amsterdam. Entering through the doorway of the old building I find myself in a small foyer. A smaller space, more reminiscent of the traditional, white-walled museum. It is here that I encounter the entrance of *The Kirchner and Nolde* Exhibition. A large screen tells the story of how the exhibition came to be: its intentions, the process, and the expectations of its existence. Showing stories from curators, organisers, and experts. Opposite a large partially skewed world map details and offers a brief overview of the colonial movement and travels which are presented within this exhibition.

As I move towards the entrance and beginning trail of exhibition rooms, I encounter an unusual tunnel shaped exactly like the doorway, which juts outs and extends its way for around a meter into this main room. The outside of this tunnel matches the white wall of the museum in its colour and tone. The inside of the walls, however, are orange, and the word "BELONG" is written in large white capital letters. Repeating themselves for the entire length of the tunnel, in a form which resembles an angular spiral. This wall is however, not solely straight, at points it disappears, with entire panels missing on only one side, creating unexpectedly small corners and cut-outs, fragmenting the exhibition room. These walls exist in almost every room-to-room transition present within the exhibition, with each one depicting a different word and colour in its interior. These are the words repeated throughout: BELONG, SHOW, PERFORM, FACE, CHALLENGE, EXPLOIT, ASSUME.

As I walk through these tunnels, sounds feel condensed, and claustrophobic. As opposed to the reverb of the larger museum space, the tunnel's reverb, and echo, produced by

my footsteps and movement, is instantaneous in its reflected speed, and feels like a direct pressure on the ears. The words on these walls are written but feel spoken as if a disembodied voice is demandingly repeating and shouting them to whoever is inside. Their capitalisation makes them loud and unignorable. Whose voice does this belong to? Why does it need to be repeated so many times? It is hard not to imagine the feeling of the visitor as being actively being forced to participate in a recognition of the violence, of an authority. Their spirality feels like a guide, a passageway or hole that we are falling into, and from which we may not be able to return. The words are never sonically projected, but they are heard, by me as the visitor, and through the sounds that are produced by the bodies in the exhibition space. Walking through the tunnel the words seem to get louder and louder.

What is created here is an intense, what I shall call, sonic pocket. Pockets in the sense that they are small, confined spaces within a larger space which seem to contain. Which in this case is their own unique acoustic properties and effects. One which invokes a particular type of resonance on the bodies which are visiting these spaces. It is a forced part of the exhibition, acting as the passageway between all the rooms and being constantly present in one's peripheral vision. An intentional design choice, which evokes violence, confrontation, but also as a necessity.

Are these the words¹² Kirchner and Nolde used to invoke their colonial power to match their aesthetic desires? Is this how the Stedelijk expects us to perform during the movement of this exhibition? The voice to which these words belong seems to be of the museum. Invoking its postcolonial positionality through imposing the guilt of colonial self-recognition on the individual visitor. Awareness of coloniality as coming with feelings of crampedness and uncomfortability through imposition. A necessary confrontation, where we can recognise the vocalisation of the recognition of colonial guilt as a sonic event.

 $^{^{\}rm 12}$ BELONG, SHOW, PERFORM, PERFORM, FACE, CHALLENGE, EXPLOIT, ASSUME.



Fig. 3. The tunnel-shaped corridors, or sonic pockets, from the *Kirchner and Nolde* exhibition (van Flymen).

2.3.2 Attention Technology and Video Calling

As I emerge from the first sonic pocket and enter the first room of the *Kirchner and Nolde* exhibition, my ears recognise the familiar sound of a ringtone call¹³. This creates a strange moment. The familiarity of being called and hearing a ringtone sound within the space of the quiet contemplative museum. A common mistake that many can make, but still a moment met with shame and public embarrassment, to the people around you and through your 'respect' of the rules of the institution. As I scan the room to see who could have potentially left their phone on in this space, I realise that I am in the room alone. Suddenly, the familiar

¹³ Specifically, the ringtone used on the Apple Inc. exclusive FaceTime calling app.

'swooshing' sound of the call was picked up and answered. Whoever was being called, has now picked up the phone and answered the call. Where is this sound coming from?

As I move my way around the room, obstructed by these sonic pockets, a voice emerges into the room from what I assume to be this video call. I find a small screen placed on a wall around the corner of the pocket and I realise this is the origin of the sounds of the call. This screen is mimicking the technology of communication in the form of a video which is on a constant loop. In this video, I can clearly see the interface of the video call, matched by the low video and audio quality expected from such an online interaction. The audio playing from the video is hard to decipher, and even harder in combination with the in-built speakers of the screen.

The quality gives it a very distinct sonic characteristic, one which travels throughout the exhibition room. This sound of being called, and the tonality of the voice, can be heard as noise within the context of museum listening, due in part to its connotation as an act which is performed outside the museum, and by interrupting and breaking this specific type of listening. This interrupting causes a response, in relation to the expected position one should maintain within the museum space. There is an expectation of the soundscape of the museum, and any sounds that are produced which exist outside of this conception of the soundscape trigger suspicion and confusion. How do we deal with this interruption, especially if it's of an intentional design from the institution?

Simultaneously this also triggers a different type of listening that we have culturally begun to internalise during the period the exhibition was shown. The online video call reminds us of the ongoing global pandemic happening during the period in which this exhibition was presented, the constant tension of lockdown and rules being lifted and

imposed.¹⁴ The way in which our education, work, and social lives became channelled through video calls. A reminder of our continuous "Zoom fatigue" (Wiederhold). It is the initiating of a staged conversation, between the screen and the museum visitor, one we did not consent to being a part of, but we are still a part of. Here sounds cause dyssynchronous connections to the space around oneself.

These screens are scattered throughout the exhibition, each one featuring the same calling method to initiate the video. In these videos' scholars, artists, and experts share reflections and contemporary perspectives on the exhibition, the state of the contemporary art museum, and the colonial contextualisation and history that surround the creation of this exhibition and the museum. The visitor's engagement becomes activated through a listening awareness of the exhibition, and a willingness to partake in this.



Fig. 4. The small screen in the first room of the exhibition, showing a video call with artist Enotie Ogbebor, next to his artwork Global Heritage (van Rooij, *Enotie Ogbebor*, *Global Heritage*, 2019, in Kirchner and Nolde. Expressionism. Colonialism.).

¹⁴ In my visits to the museum, a facemask was required and expected of all those who visited and walked around the exhibition.

2.3.3 The Voices of Colonised Subjects

Around halfway through the exhibition, there is a room significantly larger than the others. This room focuses specifically on Emil Nolde and his stay in Papua New Guinea during its German occupation. The walls are now a pale light blue, large photographs cover the walls, and historical objects are scattered throughout the room in glass boxes. The sonic event in this space is the sound coming from a larger tv-screen playing from one of the walls, being much more reminiscent of traditional multimedia displays within exhibition rooms.

The video appears to be playing archival footage and photographs from five specific locations across Papua New Guinea. A map highlights and names each location, whereafter photographs ranging from the period in which German occupation was present and to photos of people and places from around the last decade, in the same location. There is an intentional choice of matching these locations with archived phonographic recordings of singing from the locals who lived in these specific areas. Papua New Guinea has over 900 different spoken languages, this is reflected in the music which arises from each location (*Session 2 Colonialism and Modernism*). The music is notably noisy and riddled with crackles, and overall contains a warping quality. These elements are all consequences of the phonographic recording techniques used by many colonising nations with the purpose of ethnographic research. Recording the voices, music, and sonic events of the people of these colonised countries. Most of these phonographic recordings were taken from archives in Germany and have been considerably 'cleaned up' by a sound engineer in preparation for the exhibition, as they were supposedly so noisy that they would have been unusable.

On top of this, sonically the images are matched with light sprinkles of sound design; the presence of insects, footsteps, and the sound of running water. The locations represent the main spaces where Nolde stayed during his time; where he lived, painted, and exercised his 'ethnographic' research. In this room, the video, photographs, and masks serve the idea of

contextualising his artworks in the place that were present in Nolde's vision and hearing embodiment of his time in Papua New Guinea but were left out of his paintings directly.

In this, however, a certain friction seems to arise, a certain meta-consideration. The contextualisation of the artwork, as organised by the institution, with the use of specific objects and different methods of conveying narrative seem to ignore their own colonial weight and furthermore their institutional position. Within the video, there is no further information given on the recordings, where they were recorded, who they recorded, and what they are recording. It seems to fall simply in the conception of it just being music. The only context is given through a video which zooms in on specific locations in Papua New Guinea which then reveals the selection of photos. We can make assumptions about the music based on this location, but we cannot confirm or know with certainty, at least not with my ears, or the ears of many of the visitors. The odd choice of not including this is highlighted further since within the same video, the context of all the photos and stills are given references and descriptions in relation to Nolde. Contextualising these moments with generic soundscape elements seems to introduce to us and impose a type of listening through the imagined ear of Emil Nolde.

Is this a specific neglect of the museum or is this an intentional choice? It seems this choice is predicated on a specific understanding of these recordings and generally in the use of sound as a tool, which has larger implications for the process which the museum uses in contextualising and presenting colonialism within its walls.



Fig. 5. The room which aims to contextualise Nolde's travels, the screen is situated on the wall to the left of this image (van Rooij, *Zaalopname Kirchner En Nolde: Expressionisme. Kolonialisme.*).

2.4 Leaving the Exhibition

As I approached the final room of the exhibition, I noticed the final sonic pocket, or tunnel, lead straight into a wall. Making it less of a tunnel and more of a box, in which a photo is presented of Nolde's work in the Entartete Kunst (Degenerate Art) exhibition in Munich from 1937. In this exhibition, his work was labelled degenerate and vilified by the Nazi Regime, refusing to associate his work as part of the German Art canon.

Next to this box, a large open doorway leads back into the open voyeur space of the museum. As I walk out into this space, the loud cacophonous soundscape of the museum I encountered when initially entering the museum returns. The chatter of people, the echo of footsteps, and the reverberation of the museum walls. The familiar sound we've become accustomed to hearing.

Chapter 3: What Do We Hear in the Echo of the Museum?

3.1 The Ontological Debate in Sound Studies

In a way, the whole underlying tension which has been presented within this thesis, with all the writing on sound studies, to our sonic considerations of the museum and modernity, to the literature on museums and sound, can be traced to this split of sound-in-itself and relationality. This niche area of sound studies scholarship is referred to as the "ontological turn" in sound studies. This (re)turn to ontology is associated primarily with three theoretical movements: "speculative realism, object-oriented ontology, and new materialism" (M. Thompson 266). Although they contain divergences in their approach there are underlying common aspects and thematics that run throughout:

The decentring of 'the human', the social subject and a renunciation of anthropocentrism; a focus on the pre-, extra- or non-social 'real' and/or 'material' world; the utilization of 'scientistic' approaches; and an interest in emergence, speculation, potentiality, the 'general' and the 'universal' (M. Thompson 266–67)

Brian Kane focuses on the works of three different authors to examine how this ontological turn is being used in the theorising of sound. He reads into Greg Hainge and his "ontological theory of noise" Steve Goodman and the "ontology of sonic vibration" And Christoph Cox with "sonic materialism" (Kane 3). He argues that these ontologies are based on selective readings of Gilles Deleuze, and more specifically through the work done by his student Brian

¹⁵ Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise (Hainge)

¹⁶ Sonic Warfare: Sound, Affect, and the Ecology of Fear (Goodman)

¹⁷ Sonic Flux; Beyond Representation and Signification: Toward a Sonic Materialism; Sonic Realism and Auditory Culture: A Reply to Marie Thompson and Annie Goh (C. Cox)

Massumi, where sound is recognised as a vibrational matter, which resists representation. Despite ontology being a turn to "outwit the so-called linguistic turn, or the privileging of cognition, consciousness, anthropocentrism, phenomenology, or culture" (Kane 3), it remains strongly situated in their bias, and their situatedness, even despite saying they can move beyond it, their theorisation remains strongly ignorant, and in fact reject auditory culture studies.

I will specifically be focusing on Christoph Cox's materialism, as this has sparked a debate within the field of sound studies. Cox develops a sonic ontology which calls for a new materialist and realist approach to sound art. For him sound art is resistant to larger paradigms such as art history and musicology, finding that they are inadequate in being able to capture the nature of the sonic. For Cox, this sonic ontology is radical in how it unsettles our 'everyday ontology' with an immersive and ephemeral flow and flux, one which upsets and shifts the subject-object relation present within the vision. "Sound is a virtual, material and temporal flow that is actualized in human activities such as music and speech but also exceeds them" (M. Thompson 271).

These ontological approaches, despite being commended in certain ways for their provocation, have additionally been criticised (especially Christoph Cox) for how they seem to strive for what they refer to as exciting and creative projects, whilst not recognising that within this, the pursuit of "the nature of sound risks uncritically naturalizing what is ultimately a specific onto-epistemology of sound that is entangled with, amongst other things, histories of whiteness and coloniality" (M. Thompson 270). We must recognise that these ontologies are primarily predicated on side-lining and ignoring of significant antecedents in indigenous cosmologies, decolonial and black scholarship, and speculative feminism (M. Thompson 268). Marie Thompson, and Kane alike, recognise that before we even begin to criticise and understand their sonic engagements, their entire argumentation on the way conceptions are shaped is situated through specific hierarchical constructions of power.

For example, his notion of the ontology of every day and his sonic ontology resonate with the audiovisual litany which I engaged with earlier in the writing of this thesis, here Cox inverts the philosophical and historical reliance on the visual with the immersive sonic, which strongly undermines against his 'neutrality' of the sonic indebted to "Eurological and patrilineal 'dotted line' of sonic experimentation" (M. Thompson 271) relating to the founders of sound art, such as John Cage. Thompson identifies a white aurality in which Cox has situated his theory; "it amplifies the materiality of 'sound itself' while muffling its sociality" (M. Thompson 274).

In the same issue of the journal *Parallax*, Annie Goh too criticises Cox's ontological turn. Going more into the dualism of the subject-object. For Goh, Cox's sonic philosophy is disembodied in the way that it does not engage with the "problem of the body" and the "processes of knowledge production" (Goh, 'Sounding Situated Knowledges' 286). Without the embodied knower how can its knowledge production be held unaccountable? Furthermore, by attempting to think of sonic matter (sound-in-itself) it ends up perpetuating the tendency it is trying to overcome. This problematic 'gesture', as coined by Sara Ahmed in relation to the new materialist movement (Ahmed). This "mutually reinforce [...] damaging dualisms: the re-stabilization of the subject-object binary supports the relation between the masculinist subject/mind/culture and the feminized object/matter/nature" (Goh, 'Sounding Situated Knowledges' 288).

These critiques have caused somewhat of a heated debate within this field of sound studies, with Christoph Cox responding to Marie Thompson and Annie Goh in his own article in 2018 (C. Cox, 'Sonic Realism and Auditory Culture'). This rift that Cox writes of in sound

studies¹⁸ between 'sonic ontology' and 'auditory cultural studies' exemplifies the fields in which this debate finds itself, with Cox situated within the former, and Kane, Goh, and Thompson situated in the latter. Explaining that he inadvertently fuelled this rift, whilst instead wanting to clarify that he conceives "ontology and cultural analysis to be complementary rather than adversarial projects" (C. Cox, 'Sonic Realism and Auditory Culture' 234). However, whilst he does open things up, it seems that Cox engages in this critique through partial distancing and engaging with a more universal conception of ontology, rather than situating it in the specifics of his ontology. It seems to become a troubling issue about what knowledge entails, where Cox seems to continue to decontextualise parts of his original writing and recontextualising it in other ways, seemingly to reject his whiteness through his recognition and appreciation of academic scholars outside of a Western context. It does seem within this debate, and from this response from Cox, that the actual function and consideration of moving further in knowledge production in relation to sound and listening gets lost in this sonic flux. It feels exclusive and caught up in its own elitism, where it seems not to be recognised that this flux is not accessible to all ears and in the same way. As much as Cox might claim it to be accessible for everyone. What we can take away from this debate and the way it has formed is that when sound becomes sound-initself or a vibration and is distant from the body, and therefore the listener, is an approach that many have fallen into with their theoretical situation.

This point needs to be made explicit, and something considered in the sensitivity of this seeming rift, especially in recognising how it will inform and contextualise my analysis. This is also because I too employ similar terminology and reflections on sound. "A work of sound art may sound more sonic (that is, may draw your attention to its 'sonicity' more) than

¹⁸ Although it seems since there has not been much in terms of a response since then, it seems Cox is continuing conceptions of materiality and flux in his recent publications (http://faculty.hampshire.edu/ccox/writing.html)

another; but no work of sound art is more sonic than another" (Kane 13). In the same way that Cox will claim that sound is ephemeral, whereas sound can be ephemeral.

3.2 Listening to the Multiplicities of Voices

The Kirchner and Nolde exhibit appears to be littered with different voices, some of which seem at odds. Within the museum "the voice seems at first sight to have little place in this context" (Holt 19). Yet in my listening to all the voices, and the considerations of my positionality, I do however notice a certain distinction. Whilst the Museum is speaking to us, it never seems to allow us to speak back to it. This manifested itself too within one of the soundwalks I undertook, as my holding of recording equipment was sufficient reasoning for another visitor to begin a conversation with me in the middle of the exhibition space, sharing his reflections on the exhibition, and what he felt it was missing. Did the object of the microphone offer the opportunity for one's own voice to be present? What does this imply about the voice of the visitor in the context of the museum space? Knowledge production through orality becomes an explicit act which then seems to be employed by the museum. It is a definitive exercise in framing and abuse of power.

The tunnel-shaped sonic pockets are used as a transitionary point between each room, a reminder of how we as visitors should condition our behaviour; a conditioning of the body whilst also risking the power of the institution. The directness of it reveals the producer of these words, the museum has used its position of dominance to enforce a type of listening and viewing but in doing so also reveals friction. Through its own voicing, it has revealed its own position, this leakage of the sonic qualities of the voice is what also could have led to a multitude of reactions. The visitor's illusion of the museum is partially broken, voicing has

complicated the rules of the space. What happens in the cultural embodied listening of the visitor when it is challenged directly by the institution it has learnt it from?

Along with the screens of online video calling, it seems voices and conversations are a continuous presence within the exhibition. In this, I will argue that the museum can be considered as a space of contested sonic space, one filled with dissymmetry. The politics of which comes apparent in the practises through which voices are refined and contained, which voices hold prominence over others, and which voices can be heard. Contested in the way that sounds and voices leak and bleeds in a way which means it is never fully controllable or able to be reduced and oppressed.

One way we can begin to critically examine this assemblage of different voices is through Ana María Ochoa Gautier's theory in her book *Aurality*. Ochoa Gautier recognised the voice and audible techniques as analytical tools which are central to the connection between coloniality, post coloniality, culture, and politics within Latin America (Cardoso, 'Aurality' 442). "How the uses of the ear in relation to the voice imbued the technology of writing with the traces and excesses of the acoustic" (Ochoa Gautier 7). The aural traces that leak out from the inscriptive capacity of writing, become more pronounced especially when the writing is sanctioned by the state. Everything still has the aura of the institution being in control of what it chooses, where the museum has taken up the role of the mediator and curator in making the final decisions on language and text within the exhibition. Here a cultural technique becomes an "auditory regime" (Ochoa Gautier 149), through which state power is used. What Ochoa Gautier invites is a recognition of spaces as contested sites of differing acoustic practices (Ochoa Gautier 4). The shaping of the nation occurs through the interplay of orality, aurality, and literacy; the museum can be recognised as a central space in which this interplay becomes directly present.

Through a reading of *Can the Subaltern Speak?* it becomes apparent that spaces which are involved in this contestation of voices mean that in conflict some will attempt to surpass others, through means of loudness, noise, or other. But also in this power dynamic, some voices speak for other voices. In her writing, Gayatri Spivak describes the Subaltern as colonised individuals who are referred to in an "inferior rank", in which they are not listened to, reduced to absence or silence. That the colonisers assume they are unable to speak for themselves, reducing them to this silence. In this sense knowledge production and research are not neutral, knowledge here can be understood as a commodity, which is exported and controlled between the West and third-world countries. The production of knowledge for Western ears is not a neutral process.

In the dissymmetry of the exhibition and as a sonic space of contestation, specifically in the context of one which aims to destabilise and reconsider the role of the museum, power and control become a tool to organise and stabilise an exhibition room. Even if it is not fully successful through the bleeding of the sonic, it has worked to a sufficient state that it is silencing voices. The museum opens a discussion through the voices of experts who exist beyond this institution in a way, to conceive of and consider what museums could look like in the future and the ways in which this exhibition is adapting and creating new paradigms. However, in the process of silencing, it also reveals that the museum considers itself beyond the criticality of what it brings up as if by being the purveyor of new ideals it becomes exempt from its own critique. From what we have examined in the theories of discipline, museums play an intentional role in the shaping of knowledge. But here we can understand it is to the extent that the modern museum's innovation and adaption exert power. With the aim of "soothing, silencing, of quieting questions, [and] of closing minds" (Hooper-Greenhill 214).

3.3 Repertoire and Performativity

How can we understand this dynamic between the museum and the visitor further? In the sonic events of the Kirchner and Nolde exhibition, how can we additionally recognise that through listening and embodiment a conflict of knowledge production is established? In this sonic event of the exhibition, a type of listening is imposed, and here I will argue we can make a connection to the performativity of this sonic event. Diana Taylor within her theory on performativity recognises in an attempt to recognise the importance of embodied cultural practise as an often-repressed form in terms of knowledge production and memory. Which can be defined within two distinctions, that of the archive and the repertoire. The archive exists in the form of items which are somewhat resistant to change and can endure. That is not to say it is fully or always resistant to change since the value, relevance, and meaning, of archival material can change through interpretation and embodiment. However, the archive succeeds in knowledge becoming separated from the "knower-in-time" (Taylor 19). On the other hand, Repertoire "enacts embodied memory-performances, gestures, orality, movement [...]" (Taylor 19), it is a transmitted act which is present through 'being there'; the participation in transmission through production and reproduction, which call for individual agency as it becomes stored in the body. The archive maintains stable objects, whilst the actions of the repertoire do not necessarily remain the same.

Taylor uses this to call for a remapping of how we have constituted historical processes, allowing for the tradition of embodied knowledge to be present within the canon. This resonates strongly with the remapping in sound studies which Steingo and Sykes call for, with the multiplicity of ontology and listening. They resonate in a way where the sounding and listening of all bodies become active participants in the recognition of their

potentiality for knowledge. From this, we can also recognise that "every configuration of hearing and sounding implies people, power, and placement" (Sterne, 'Hearing' 72). The archive and the repertoire are constantly interacting, they are not direct binaries, it is through this relationship that they constantly emerge in discussions on colonialism, "world culture", and "intangible heritage" (Taylor 20).

In thinking in this line, the recognition of the archive reveals a power imbalance in the ethnographic intent of the phonograph used to record the music presented in the exhibition. It reveals the archival desire of the Western colonist over the repertoire of the cultural importance of this music for the bodies which produce and share this sound. It freezes and materialises through often violent means of recording, turning the repertoire into an object of the archive through a colonial horn. The presenting of the musical recordings as part of this room in the exhibition, along with the loose and generic soundscape that accompanies it helps 'contextualise' insofar as we are now also hearing through the ear of the coloniser. But this brings up a curiosity and a seeming contradiction, if we need to contextualise the artwork in being situated in a colonial gaze, why do we not contextualise the recordings in terms of the colonial ear which produced them?

This archival desire can be considered as a form of listening which can be further understood through Dylan Robinson's *Hungry Listening* (Robinson). The term "hungry listening" is derived from two Halq'eméylem words; shxwelítemelh and xwélalà:m, which are juxtaposed in a purposefully uncomfortable way. The word 'shxwelítemelh' is used to describe the white settler as a "starving person", initially hungry for food, and then growing into a hunger for resources, culture, and more. The "settler's starving orientation" (Robinson 2) which "prioritizes the capture and certainty of information over the affective feel, timbre, touch, and texture of sound" (Robinson 38). The word xwélalà:m is used to refer to listening and a xwélmexw (Stó:lo-)-specific embodied orientation. The recognition of this type of

listening is moving towards a decolonising of music and sound studies through a criticality and awareness of listening positionality. One which allows us to hear the epistemic and perceptual violence, from which we can create a space to 'listen otherwise' (Robinson 11), in recognition of normative listening habits. What kind of power dynamics comes into play when music theorists and ethnographers analyse music and attempt to collect and pin down the music and sound artefacts? In the calling of this theory, it is a recognition of hungry listening in different contexts, both through hearing it within the exhibition, and also through self-awareness of the analysis I am undertaking within this thesis.

In one part it can represent an understanding of phonograph recordings as neutral archival material; a recognition of the recording tools capturing a sound which according to Western ears is representative of building knowledge on Papua New Guinean singing. But also, not recognising the displacement and colonial resonance that these phonographic objects contain. The wax cylinders on which they are recorded are primitive in their technology and ability to capture, and condition by numerous factors; to move the cylinder the one capturing the audio would have to move their hand at a steady rate, to place the horn close to the people being recorded, to recognise the frequency limit of recording onto wax. "It comes to represent a recording of assumed, objective reality" (In Between Silence and Noise). Whose voices are we listening to? What is the cultural importance of music in Papua New Guinea? How does orality play into the culture, and how is this displaced?

As the video plays out in the room, the complexity of listening becomes more apparent. Where I hear and recognise the noise and warped nature of the singing as inciting the colonial ear. Other visitors will hear and recognise an old recording of music from Papua New Guinea, without considering its historical origin. Some may even choose to negate engaging with these sounds. Or some may even recognise and know these sounds. Through these different forms of listening, they share the embodiment of creating a different temporal

and spatial environment to contextualise the space in which Nolde resided in. But through this, some bodies will resonate more than others, and in this sense, different forms of knowledge are received by different bodies. This desynchrony shows the ways in which the museum reinforces the archived notion of the recording, and therefore the voices of the Papua New Guineans.

However, this idea of repertoire also finds its space in different parts of the exhibition. In a sense, online video calls engage with a sense of repertoire. Although they are technically recorded videos, which exist as digital files, that can be reproduced and played on numerous devices, making them part of the archive of the exhibition. They seem to also situate themselves on a new framework of digital listening and embodiment which has been learnt through the pandemic. In this sense, as a visitor, one feels as if they are in a position of cultural knowledge exchange, one which feels subversive through its undermining of the unwritten rules and regulations of the museum, where honesty and direct reflection seem to be permitted under the authority of the museum. Or it is an intentional choice to position us as the colonialist? Are we trying to contextualise the artwork or is it that we are now in a position where we can only appreciate the artwork by embodying the colonist?

3.4 Sounding Situated Knowledges

It is, however, by returning to Annie Goh and her article that we are able to find a possible move in reconfiguring and taking the idea of knowledge production and sound into a new direction. In the end what Cox manages to do is "neglect to address the traditional subject-object relation in how they produce knowledge through sound and listening" (Goh, 'Sounding Situated Knowledges' 287) Annie Goh takes a Harawayan gesture which rejects dualisms of nature-culture shifting it towards 'natureculture'; the nature of sound to the

natureculture of sound, which has the ability to counter towards naturalism within sonic knowledge production. In applying Haraway's situated knowledges to develop a sounding situated knowledges in which both 'embodiment' and 'situatedness' are necessary.

However, these terms need to be understood in their complexity. Embodied for Haraway forms in recognising that it presents both a problem and a solution, it is complex and contradictory, structured and structuring. The only thing she claims is that the view from above, or the 'god-trick' is rejected. Situatedness moves beyond just a flat reading of place and positionality. It is "about the 'situatedness of situated [...] multiple-modes of embedding', i.e. the political-ethical conditions of knowledge production and a commitment to dismantling traditionalist notions which constrain contemporary thought" (Goh, 'Sounding Situated Knowledges' 292). Goh strongly recognises and makes it a point that she is not attempting an inversion of the senses as warned through Jonathan Sterne's audiovisual litany. Instead recognising and attempting to trace histories and "tracing different maps to a territory" (Goh, 'Sounding Situated Knowledges' 290), as a recognition of the complexity of the senses in creating bodily experiences and how sound can produce different conceptions of knowledge. Is this part of the remapping that Gavin Steingo and Jim Sykes were calling for?

As feminist science studies has demonstrated the necessity of opening up formerly unquestioned paradigms to enrich previously masculinist scientific cultures, by grounding sonic knowledge production in both embodiedness and situatedness, a closer interrogation of the subject-object relation enables a crucial rethinking to begin (Goh, 'Sounding Situated Knowledges' 293)

What are the implications of these feminist interventions into theories of sonic knowledge production? Annie Goh calls that further work needs to be done to look into the implications of this, however, the basis of which should be this "critical renegotiation of subjectivity and objectivity in sounding situated knowledges" (Goh, 'Sounding Situated Knowledges' 293).

This is something I hope to work towards with my configuring and exploration of listening and knowledge production within the museum context.

From this building of sounded situated knowledges, Goh then moves into the field of archeoacoustics, a recent and underdeveloped field, and looks at the reconceptualisation of the echo as proposed by Steven J. Waller. Waller through acoustic research found at a few different canyon locations in the US, found that there was a strong correlation between the positioning of where the rock art is located on the wall and the strength of echoes (as measured in decibels). Theorising that the placing of this was intentional, figuring the echo as a potential 'supernatural spirit' due to its divine qualities within these cultural contexts. This makes the echo a figuration that sits outside of Western enlightenment and shows how positing it outside of this context can open up new understandings of sonic knowledge production (Goh, 'Sounding Situated Knowledges').

Here Goh calls for the echo as a "feminist figuration akin to Haraway's cyborg, through which to theorize the subject-object relationship in archaeoacoustics" (Goh, 'Sounding Situated Knowledges' 295). A cyborgian echo is simultaneously present in the 'material-physical conceptions in acoustics' and the 'symbolic-semiotic conceptions in mythology' (Goh, 'Sounding Situated Knowledges' 295). The echo as a sonic element, contains an original and a repetition which resemble each other, where the positionality of the listener changes the way in which they hear the original and its repetition. In this it is not just reflecting the same elsewhere but rather works in the creation of difference, opening it up as "diffraction embodies difference in a productive way for future examinations of sonic knowledge production" (Goh, 'Sounding Situated Knowledges' 298). Through this we must recognise and move beyond the invisibility of self-recognition within one's socio-cultural interpretations. Annie Goh invites the proposition of potential companions to the echo, to see how different sonic moments of positionality and situatedness can allow us to gain new

knowledge on the qualities of sound which we had previously considered as universal, or simply noise.

3.5 (Post)Colonial Reverberations

If we were to recognise the phonograph through Christoph Cox, the modernity of the phonograph brought about a new form of listening, one which removed it from its visual reference, and focused on sound not captured through the human ear, but through finding "acoustic events as such", capturing the vast "spectrum of noise" (C. Cox, *Sonic Flux* 120). He views its scope as broader and less discriminatory that our ears. In this way, the noise is detached from having representation and signification, moving beyond the materiality of the noise and recognising its origin and situation. For Cox, noise is the ground which provides "the condition of possibility for every articulate sound" (C. Cox, *Sonic Flux* 119), connecting to his concept of the sonic flux. The noise of the phonograph is renowned as an aesthetic quality in itself, a repetition of the concept of treating this noise as a sound-in-itself.

Here we begin to recognise how the archive has been conceived as an imperial choice, where recording can be saved through an apparatus which supposedly captures sound in a method which is superior to our own ear, believing in the objectivity of recording devices, and constituting the removal of the body of the recorded subject. It is in fact the embodiment and situatedness presented by Annie Goh of this listening position that changes the sonic qualities, in recognising this situatedness the echo and reverberations of these sounds throughout the room in the *Kirchner and Nolde* exhibition move away from just the playing of music. The music, noise, its recorded materiality sounds the colonial means of capturing, archiving, and removing from bodies. These resonate through the walls of the museum, in

which the delay between the playing of the sound and its resonant echo creates a multiplicity of knowledge and understanding through listening.

"Through this embodiment, sound knowledge can become a method to break free of the discourses (of capitalism, of culture and education, of neoliberal politics) that make and remake the body in their own images. [...] Sound heralds a new body, and a new paradigm for the body. The body persists" (Kapchan 42)

This analysis is in a way more material than what Cox could ever hope for. Sound engineers working for the Stedelijk Museum attempted to remove much of the crackling and warping of these audio recordings, as in the ears of the museum and the curators of the exhibition, these sounds were considered noise, unwanted noise for the exhibition. What would this noise have done to the exhibition? How could the noise have leaked and bleed through the walls and into the corners of the room? Their attempts used technology to somewhat 'clean' the sound and make the singing more audible.

This is an active 'muting' of the sound of the coloniser. I intentionally choose to use the word mute instead of silence, despite the two words being similar and synonymous. The way in which we can understand distinctions between muting and silence is through technology, where mute is an action or button press used to intentionally turn off, muffle, or deaden. In muting the individual layers of an audio-visual experience become separated and individually controlled. Individual sounds, individual visual elements, sound editing design, and computer-generated images. On the other hand, silencing has more of a direct intentionality to it one which is overarching, and often with a more direct violence. Muting hides behind its technological intention and naivety, when muting it does not mean what is being muted is completely removed, but there has been a direct intention in attempting to do

so. What remains, the leaky remnants of the sound, the muffled and deconstructed version of the sound, or the lack of this sound is still present in some form.

Conclusion

If the art museum and the ethnographic museum are indeed equally crumbling into indiscernible states, then it is a very slow but welcome process. Through my listening to the *Kirchner and Nolde* exhibition, it becomes apparent that the Stedelijk Museum is taking active steps to be involved with this process of decoloniality. However, in the end, it feels like everything is hinting towards the museum manoeuvring through this in a way in which it continues to maintain its positionality.

Whilst the museum allows for a re-centring of narratives on their archival material and the use of engagement, communication, language, and voices. It becomes apparent that in this contested space of sound, certain sounds and forms of listening are imposed and suppressed. After all this consideration and reflection even revealing trade networks inherent to European museum collections, the Stedelijk seems to ignore its own role and is apprehensive in the reality of its position, seeming to treat itself already as a postcolonial institute, in a state of being beyond. I will not claim that its intention at revealing colonial structures through artwork was not successful in part, but it does reveal a different understanding of positions and the friction that arises ¹⁹. Striving for the decoloniality of the museum archive is a necessary move, but one which requires more consideration of its sonic possibilities and also a recognition of the shift happening between the museum, the canon it creates, and its visitors. Maybe in a recognition of a levelling of hierarchy is the move towards a re-mapping, reconsideration, and reconceptualization possible.

¹⁹ During the writing of this thesis a documentary film called *White Balls on Walls* has been released which reflects on the Stedelijk's complications which attempting to find ways of moving beyond the fact that 90% of the Stedelijk's collection has been made by white men. Whilst I haven't seen it yet, it reveals an interplay with sharing to the public some semblance of attempting to change and destabilise the museum. However, in how successful or genuinely transparent this is, it is hard to say.

As Sound Studies continues to develop and grow as an intersectional academic discourse, there will continue to be more space in consideration of the types of knowledge production that can come from understanding the materiality of sound, and potentially through different cyborgian qualities of the sonic. It is important to recognise that this specific strand of studying sound allows and opens up further conversation and analysis. By not reducing sound, and by recognising the multiplicity of listening and the ability and potential sound has in recognising and learning about forms of cultural embodiment, which exist outside of institutional authority. The museum as a site I would argue can offer a lot more complexity than what I have already involved in this writing; the concept of looking deeper into the archive and its relation to the public, as well as the consideration of other museums and spaces of colonial heritage (such as The Tropenmuseum) especially in connection to Dutch colonial history. The museum is a site of contested sound, of multiple voices which are supported and suppressed, of power dynamics which promote a type of listening, and the individual listener creates a large dynamic space of analysis through which we can recognise that the resonance of imperial colonial power still reverberates through the museum. To really move beyond into a space of postcolonialism will require an active type of listening, one which recognises listening as a culturally embodied and defined practice which is not universalised through one subject, where this materiality of sound in itself is ingrained with cultural preconceptions and a multitude of meanings.

Returning to the voyeur of the bathtub, the process of leaving the museum seems to be a perfect reversal of how I entered the museum. Similar to the feeling of emerging from a submerged state, my ears open up as the feeling of pressure and intensity subsides. The familiar sounds of the city return as I move slowly beyond the shadow of the bathtub. My

ears seemingly more sensitive to their surroundings. The resonance of the museum present inside my body. And despite the city's familiar sonic landscape, I seem to hear more now than when I first entered.

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