

Curator's Note

Sound art historically derives from electroacoustic and electronic music, where electronics are used to generate or modify sounds. It is sonic and auditory explorers like Luigi Russolo, John Cage, Pierre Schaeffer, Pauline Oliveros and R. Murray Schafer (among many others) that have expanded the understanding of audio culture.

Sound or sonic art has now moved into what is known as "audio culture", an ever widening category in which musicians, composers, sound artists, scholars and listeners are attentive to a variety of auditory possibilities, sonic material, the act of listening and creative possibilities of sound recording, dissemination, transmission and playback. This "culture of the ear" has come to prominence only recently when social scientists, anthropologists and scholars active in culture studies began to look at sound as a marker of cultural difference and temporal study.

In continuing Khoj's sound exploration since 2006, we presented another sound residency in January 2013. This residency, titled *Auditions*, aims to grow opportunities of dialogical and practical exchange to foster sharing and growth of auditory understanding. Taking a collaborative approach, the residency has looked at how low-tech devices can be used to produce different aural modalities by employing various media to craft sonic landscapes. Exploiting the highly interdependent social technology that characterises contemporary society, the residency aims to dispel the illusion of superficial machine mediated relations. It looks to direct attention towards an immersive sonic experience by using simple, inexpensive, recycled technology.

Auditions samples auditory practices of different kinds. Each of the participating artists comes from different backgrounds with contrasting engagements. While Priya Sen's work is like moving through a sound mine where the listener can excavate sound in different areas of the room and investigates the connect and disconnect between sound and image, Abhijeet Tambe's *Flying* creates an immersive environment with a fictional account derived from his personal experience of being in Delhi placed in an intimate environment of a black box. Pawel Janicki's work is an interactive installation in which he uses field recordings made in Delhi along with a database of the Hindi language. His uses a program that can be easily accessed by anyone. Rudi Punzo's kinetic sculptures use movement to create rhythmic sounds. Where in Punzo's work sound is a residue of an interaction between objects, Malose Malahlela's installation de-contextualises musical installations, bringing forth the innate feelings evoked by music.

The residency has been an opportunity to reveal the many layers of sound encountered, captivated and occupied, and is intended to foster sharing and growth of auditory understanding.

Charu Maithani, January 2013

Critic's Note

The common theme in the work by the artists involved in *Auditions* might be... the lack of a theme. A ridiculous statement for sure. But, focused sound practice is such an emerging field, especially in India, that definitions are proving elusive. The term "sound art" itself is problematic. The invention of recording (in 1877) completely changed how we perceive ourselves and our music. It changed how we make and use sound, just as the expanding of mechanization and the ever increasing human population changed the ambient background-sound of life. If left as an open-ended definition, pointing

in a variety of directions, sound art can be a useful though not very meaningful term, an umbrella practice, a catch all phrase... but lets not get hung up on needle in a haystack definitions, in dancing about architecture (to quote Frank Zappa).

Some of the artists here come from a musical background (composing in a traditional style or playing in bands); some come from video and film work and are dissatisfied with the way sound and image can be so co-dependent; some approach sound through abstracted technological interfaces; some through tactile experience; some through performance with objects or voices; some through field recording; some through group participation and interaction; some through storytelling; some through improvisation or intuition. But these are not as disparate "sounding" practices as might first be perceived. All these artists are trying to make sense of new information and are reacting consciously or unconsciously to the experience of sound in India in general, and Delhi in particular. The volume of life here can be overwhelming to both the initiated and the uninitiated, especially for people who are sensitive to sound. You can learn to block it out, to live with it as the norm, but it makes the work of a so-called sound artist a very different experience than elsewhere in the world. The sound here re-arranges your listening priorities and leads you in surprising sonic directions. This is a loud city, there is no denying that, but Delhi has its share of beautiful sounds as well. It is certainly unlike anywhere I have ever been: the car horns, the construction, trucks, auto rickshaws, street hawkers, the television and radio leaking from homes and shop fronts, the barking dogs, the ringing cellphones, the clunk of the night watchman's staff, the calls to prayer, the temple bells, the motors, generators, buses, the sound of multiple languages and dialects. Just as Delhi seemingly wants to disrupt your usual auditory sensors, so to do these artists want to disrupt traditional listening paradigms, to see where that might lead, to hear what new relationships, amongst our senses and amongst ourselves, however indefinable, might develop.

Christian Marclay said, "I think it is in sound's nature to be free and uncontrollable and to go through the cracks and to go places where it's not supposed to go..."

So perhaps a show as varied as this is a fitting experience of sound in the context of India.

Robert Millis, January, 2013