

can listening be a tool?  
a tool for what?  
for care and concern?  
for possible worlds?

how can a space support an  
experience of togetherness?  
how to challenge geometries  
of power by listening?

where is the border between  
questioning and changing, art and  
activism?

how to counteract the commodifica-  
tion of participation? are there ways of  
withdrawing while fostering modes of  
becoming-with?

how to create spaces for reflection and  
mutual exchange?

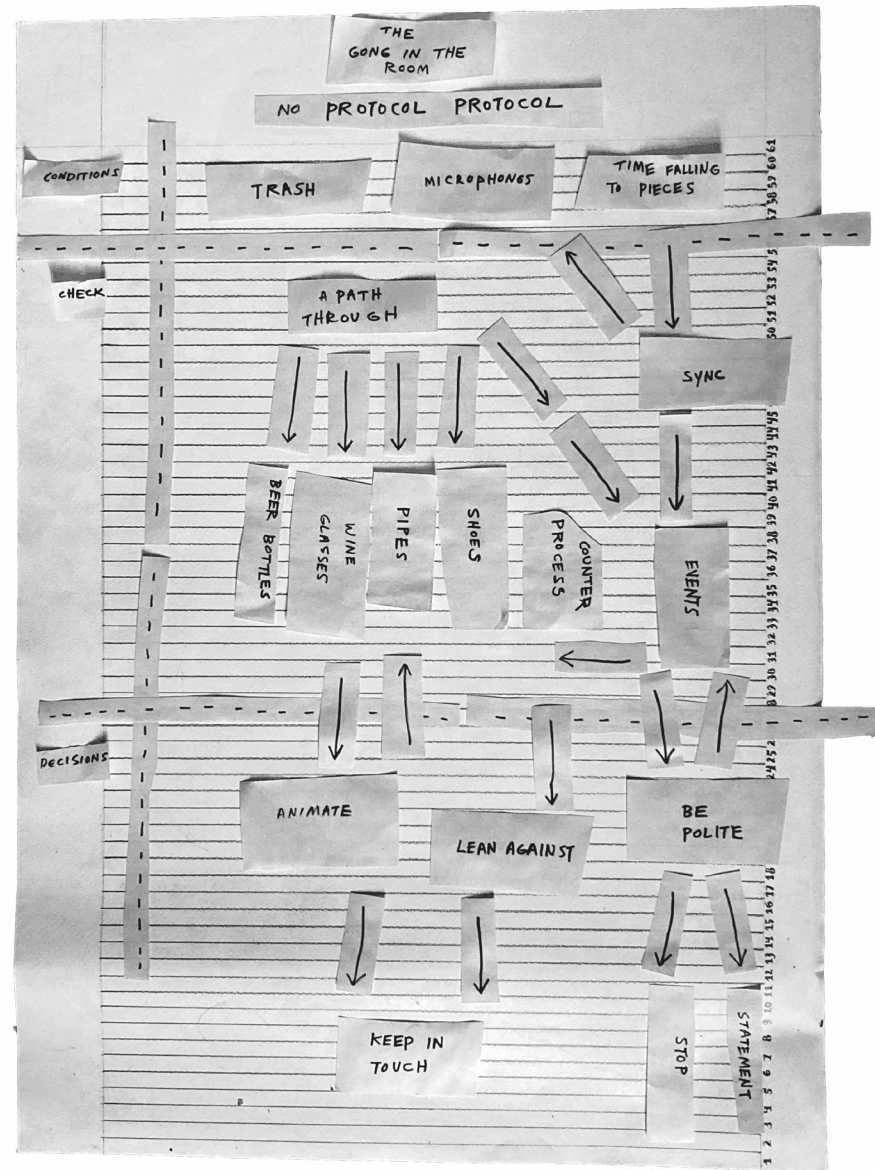
can we resist through states of  
unproductivity? through forms of  
doing-nothing?



## Le corps, le jeu.

Des résidus sonores tombent, se dispersent, font écho et frappent. Des gouttes d'eau dans un petit écosystème tremblant. La main sonde. Tout d'abord le claquement. Un son qui brise, qui fend - le tangible, l'intangible. Les vibrations, qui résonnent. Chaque son, fend l'espace, le connecte, le brise et semble créer des liens. Un gong apparaît, liant qui lie le fond de toile à présent rempli. Le fond de l'air s'épaissit. Une teinte. Comme un filtre de couleur posé devant une lentille optique. Tout devient alors jaune, bleu, gris, blanc. De quelle couleur est la mort? De quelle couleur, ce dernier fond, ce dernier bruit de fond apparaîtra-t-il? Un son sur un fil, une sonde filante, fait briller l'air sur son passage, il brise. Nous flottons. Tous ensemble.

Percival et ses dialogues imaginaires. Où sont les enfants qui jouaient, et criaient en début de parcours? Le jeu est revenu, les dialogues s'adaptent à nouveau au fond de l'air. Nous nous transformons. Ensemble nous nous transformons et nous nous répondons. Une nouvelle question apparaît. Nous avons fini par oublier le fond, et le jeu reprend. Une réponse appelle un écho, un contact, un échange. Que nous reste-t-il sinon cet échange? L'échange devient alors le son de l'espace, qui n'est plus un écho à l'espace, mais plutôt cet espace même de milieu. Nous sommes devenus un écosystème, un assemblage d'habitants. Brisé. Rompu. Traumatismes, joies, colères. S'entendent-ils? Un oiseau du dehors est apparu, soumis à une localisation. Chaque univers devient alors plus spécifique, attaché à une histoire, et s'estompe à nouveau. Les mots, alors comme les sons, improvisent. Ils composent, et exécutent dans un même mouvement. Mais les mots, eux, se relisent, s'arrangent, alors que les sons ont déjà disparu.





Vi lyssnar  
Vi avlyssnar  
Vi lyssnar inte  
Vi lyssnar igen  
Berlin

En relationell kollektiv sonisk kropp  
Kraft  
Potentiell spekulaton  
Imorgon

Kreativt flöde  
Lustfyllt flöde  
Nyfiket flöde  
Sprudlande flöde  
Berlin

#### A Global Wave of Silence

An unprecedented wave of silence spread around the world in the wake of the coronavirus pandemic, according to researchers who found that vibrations from human activity slumped under national lockdowns. Records from seismic stations all over the planet show that high frequency noise caused by industrial plants, traffic and other activities fell as much as 50% as country after country imposed restrictions that grounded planes, emptied roads and brought down the shutters on shops and businesses. During the pandemic, our cities became a novel listening matter. The seismic quieting unfurled during a short

time span, starting in China at the end of January 2020 and spreading to Italy and the rest of the world in March and April. The largest sonic drops were seen in metropolises such as New York and Singapore. When the lockdown took place in NYC in March 2020, my body's immediate reaction was like the embodied response in 2013: fear, intense anxiety, and bodily pain. It felt like everything I had experienced in Cairo in 2013 recurred in an instant. However, in sharp contrast to that time, when we stayed together in one household and could comfort each other, this time I was alone and 'forbidden' to touch anyone. In NYC, I listened to the silence day and night in this otherwise extraordinarily loud sonic world city. For the first time, I was suddenly able to hear the songs of birds from my home in the Lower East Side. During my daily walks, I visually gazed and sensed the surrealistic empty streets of the closed city, as many owners of delis and laundromats preferred to shut down during this uncertain period despite their consideration as essential businesses. After a short while, I listened to a new sound that comforted me in the otherwise silent city. A different body claimed space. It was the sound of voices from homeless people and drug-addicts, who had made a temporary home on the closed streets and the park after the nearby shelter on Boverly Street closed following the virus outbreak. After a while, a new sound appeared: the sound of ambulance sirens. Familiar and at the same time novel in this new silent Covid city, every time I heard their sound, my body trembled. The sound of ambulances, police, and fire trucks are part of the sound architecture of NYC. But, during this period, the sound of ambulance sirens had a totally new meaning: It was the sound of Covid-19, the sound of death and fear.

There's something deeply erotic about the exchange of air between bodies, the act of intertwining our sounds. It is a centripetal force that reveals a magnetism between the individuals involved, a deep form of communion. Voices are exchanged to remember, to survive, to imagine, to stand beside one another. When we do this, I believe we build a room to inhabit as neighboring bodies, four walls that close as far as our sounds can be heard. And when bodies are forbidden, voice turns into touch. On many occasions it is the voice only that feeds and holds our love tight, I wonder what happens to that love when one of the bodies leaves the room, to no longer exist. I also believe that the answer is as simple as it is painful: love remains, and it is precisely its resistance that feeds the nostalgia of the listening body. And so we hold onto the voice, even when there's no one left at its end to speak to.

(Inside,...)

We are sitting in our rooms, different from the one you're in right now. Millions of still rooms. We are recording the sound of our voices talking, shouting, describing the cruel feast that looms upon us, the feast of impractical closeness: we are sitting in the rooms of Serious Talks.

The Serious Talks are the ones that bind us beyond contact, that speak of our separate lives. They're the words of comfort, the words of anger, the brutal words that inflict wounds, double-edged weapons: weightless, elusive. The Serious Talks remind us of the constant need to share, to negotiate our spaces,

our frustration, our hurts and our love with skins that don't belong to us, but to whom we bond to, closely. And now more than ever before, that binding appears violent.

(...inside,...)

We are surrounded by smooth surfaces, emotionally sealed spaces, closed systems that restore cracks, hegemonic sounds that rule over the volume of bodies. We are tired bodies. Tired of not feeling our skin, tired of carrying on our shoulders the weight of a present that curves our backs, weakens our knees and tightens our throats. We are tired bodies in search of love. There is a need to sing, to scream and to become part of a whole that has slipped through our fingers, that collectivity that allowed us to synchronize our breaths to the rhythm of a common feeling.

Listening to oblique bodies, sounds that do not follow straight lines and tread on unexplored territories; scratching the layers of plaster that cover the cracks, digging in the direction of a hissing that comes from a benevolent darkness. Perhaps love hides in that very liminal space, a space large enough to welcome multitudes conspiring close together, in unison.

And if love was really abolished, there's always our voices that can give it back to us, and keep it alive.

(...out)



how to create a shared vocabulary?  
to foster processes or  
resonance?  
and -with?

to self-build instruments and events  
in order to elaborate  
of

practices of  
being-alongside  
how to define an encounter?  
the ongoingness  
collective life?  
a listening that matters







Alvin Lucier al referirse a la performance dijo – interpretar es más un acto de escucha activa que de hacer que las cosas pasen –, esta profunda y poderosa frase del célebre compositor norteamericano, nos lleva hacia uno de los conceptos fundamentales del arte sonoro del siglo XX. Esto es, la atención y consciencia en la escucha por sobre todo, escucha no sólo del tiempo, sino que también del espacio. Escuchar como un acto biológico, pero también de consciencia del ser y frente al mundo, de pasividad y no-acción, de calma y reflexión ante el devenir.

La acción sonora deja de ser un lugar donde estamos ávidos por la nota que sigue a la otra, por el sonido que viene después, por el ruido que antecede. La acción sonora, se transforma en práctica de escucha, ya no es en el sonido mismo donde está la atención. La atención se centra en el espacio intermedio, en el silencio, en el espectro que deja el sonido en el espacio, en su reverberación, en la cola que deja una onda sonora en sus infinitas refracciones, vibraciones que atraviesan nuestros cuerpos y el espacio, y que seguirán vibrando dentro de nosotros.

En un film de limura, Isozaki y Kosugi, llamado “Ma Space -Time in the Garden of Ryoan-Ji” se describe el concepto japonés del Budismo Zen “MA”, que habla de lo que está entre el tiempo y el espacio, el espacio negativo, la pausa, lo que está entre los sonidos, entre los objetos; MA es poner la atención en ese espacio/ tiempo intermedio que conecta y finalmente construye el todo a partir del vacío. No es el objeto, no es el sonido mismo, es todo lo demás que lo antecede y lo sobrepasa.

Durante julio del 2021 en la ciudad de Berlín, un grupo diverso de personas participó de la “Listening Academy”, espacio de reflexión y creación colectiva centrado en la escucha y el escuchar-nos. El ambiente general siempre fue de solidaridad y de atención al otro, a los sonidos, movimientos y palabras que nos rodeaban. La escucha como un acto filosófico frente al mundo. Como una manera de operar, de dialogar y crear.

Luego de cuatro días se creó una improvisación sonora con objetos encontrados dentro del recinto post-industrial donde estábamos. Improvisación desde la escucha activa en torno a los silencios que íbamos dejando, los espacios que creaba cada uno. Pasos, movimientos en círculo, formas que se encontraban y se des-encontraban, pausas, cuerpos que colisionaron, miradas en el suelo; se levanta algo, se deja caer, sonidos se van y vuelven a reaparecer, vibran entre nosotros, se pegan a los muros y al lugar, sonidos que se derriten, mientras que otros se congelan y se mantienen atravesando el espacio.

El simple acto de improvisar en vivo, constituye a la escucha como una forma de entender el mundo. Escuchar atentamente lo que cada uno hace y los sonidos que desprenden los demás, pero especialmente la memoria que nos dejan, como estelas dentro de nosotros. Si la vista nos separa del mundo, en la escucha lo hacemos parte y nos compenetramos con él, lo encarnamos y lo hacemos consciente.



STOP SKIN HATE

## Re-existing by Listening

1994 was the year of NAFTA, the world was witnessing the rapid process of globalization. The North American Free Trade Agreement meant to dismantle the borders of global markets, while fortifying the borders of territorial delimitation, of human mobility.

From now on, (they said) things would be better for the poor people of Mexico.

"El LIBRE MERCADO HA LLEGADO"  
(The free market has arrived)

When growing up in Tijuana, I understood that the city was meant to grow faster than any-other Mexican city. The border city is and always has been a point of departure for many, a new beginning, a transitioning zone. People have adapted to this condition since the very beginning of territorial delimitation.

Settlers versus Nomads, Nomads versus Settlers  
Can I see your passport please?  
*American Citizen...*

Because of NAFTA there was an increasing population of migrant workers. I understood why people abandoned their homes in the south, their lands, their customs. They would now move on to different paths, in order to provide food and shelter for their loved ones.

As Arturo Escobar teaches us, "Globalization came at the expense of relational worlds", and many

people lost their connection to their land in order to work the industrial facilities "maquiladoras". The free market configured the relationship with land / body, with remembering / forgetting, embodied migration.

*What happens to the resistance our body carries in modes of togetherness?*

I understood that half of the 'official' territory of the city was *informal / improvised*, and *paracaidistas* (squatters) occupied big parts of the land in order to resist the effects of globalization. Since the 1970s private and public entities have promoted the borderlands to host global corporations and install cheap labor, NAFTA accelerated this process.

In most of these squatted lands, architecture came by way of survival, meaning 'Informality' is a basic understanding of how to live in hostile lands. Informality brings other ways of inhabiting land, other ways of citizenship.

This an intent to highlight the knowledge production that comes along when improvising outside the discipline of architecture.

Resistance - Re-existence

In the informal settlements of Tijuana, architecture is built by non-architects. A community of migrant workers decide to stay in the city after years of labor. They become local scale entrepreneurs, I've witnessed communities of residue collectors piling up used components from industrial

facilities. Some people make art with the residues, some make tools, some make homes. They separate broken televisions, car parts, used iron, metal and pvc tubes in order to install the walls and ceilings to a soon to be family house. They build entire houses with used materials, they pass on the knowledge and they manage to live in the exterior of a formal economy that places them in cheap labor conditions.

Informality is improvisation, and when people live long enough in this condition, they move from resisting a brutal machinery of exclusion towards what Catherin Walsh calls 'Re-existing', living within the gaps of globalization and navigating within the cracks of nation state borders.

This is border sensing, knowing and doing. When people in the borderlands move from the dichotomy of oppression - resistance, towards a space of 'Re-existing'.

*Echoes of the Listening Academy*  
Group Improvisation session

In our 1 hour improvisation, we were banging / sounding / on pieces of metal, oxidized iron and found objects. Just like the collectors of the informal settlements of Tijuana, we took the time and care to collect materials that were once consumed and transformed in the name of the free market. The metal pipes, antennas and pieces of wood that we collected contained memories, scars, smells and substances that made them sound outside their industrial use.

When we listen to these objects, they reveal to us the absurd world of consumption we live in. A world of ecological devastation, where we consume to create and destroy landscapes.

When listening / sensing ourselves during the exercise, a plural temporality preceded normative perceptions of linear time.

When thinking / feeling about our group Improvisation, a feeling of 'remembering back' emerged in ourselves from the exterior of consumption. We were able to redefine objects as listening mediators.

Improvisation is embodied knowledge, it contains a plural way of inhabiting the world outside the reductiveness of nation state belonging. We now understand that globalization brought along new forms of waste landscapes.

In parallel it brought us along a world of soundscapes that re-exist in time, these are ways of re-existence by listening together.

**collective improvisation session /  
recorded on July 22, 2021 at Studio dB Berlin,  
as part of The Listening Academy, a creative  
research academy on practices of listening.**

**with Miguel Buenrostro, Giordano Cruciani,  
Daniela Gentile, Mathias Klenner, Brandon LaBelle,  
Maria Frederika Malmström, Elif Gülin Soğuksu,  
Shlomit Strutti, Sandra Volny, Matteo Zoccolo.**

