

Q: What your sound practice consists of?

A: There are 3 main research areas within my work. The first one relates to the propagation of sound in space and the relationship between sound, body, and movement. The focus here is on sound perception and the capacity of the listener to co-produce and shape sound.

The second area concerns the damaging of loudspeakers and microphones up to the point where they fail and break. This area deals with the disappearance of sound as a metaphor for the impermanence of bodies, it deals with their vulnerability, and transient nature.

Then there's a third area which is more related to sound culture and specifically to the relationship between sound, subculture and social struggle.

From these three areas I produce works that are presented in different formats such as workshops, walks, performances, text scores, videos, exhibitions, publications, field research, etc.

[04:34] PLAY an extract from the unreleased audio work "I Have Always Wanted To Be in a Band".

Q: Where does your fascination for sound come from?

A: It comes from the emotional reactions that it provokes. It comes from the power sound has to touch, both in an emotional and a physical sense. I have always experienced sound as a sort of presence, a living entity capable of putting me in a concrete relationship with people, objects, spaces, and situations. It's a presence that comes with a strong feeling of contact, intimacy, aliveness, and movement.

On a conceptual level, what stimulates me is the physical behavior of sound, the fact that it changes according to what it encounters along its path, the fact that it transforms according to what it finds on its way. This phenomenon tells me about processes of exchange, interpenetration and participation. What I find interesting is to use these phenomena as archetypes. I like to think about the propagation of sound as a model, a sort of a guide for self introspection, interaction, and orientation in the world.

[06:50] PLAY an extract from the publication "Touch of the Pops".

Q: You have created a series of listening exercises called 'Listening as Intervention'. How do these exercises work?

A: It's a series that I've developed in the last 10 years during my workshop practice. They were born as a perceptual training for the exploration of the acoustic space and

the exploration of one's own capacity to modulate and shape sound with movements. Some of the exercises have also been developed as performances in front of an audience in collaboration with performers and dancers. At the moment I am trying to develop sequences of actions to be presented both as a dance installation and a choreography. I am also working on a publication containing the exercises written in the form of text scores. To give you an idea of what the exercises are about I'll read you one.

Position a loudspeaker connected to a microphone in space.
Take the microphone in your hand and position yourself far from the loudspeaker.
Activate the sound system and set the volume very high.
When you feel ready start moving towards the loudspeaker.
Try to reach and turn off the loudspeaker without causing any sudden feedback to occur.
Working with the directionality of the microphone and the positioning of your body try to anticipate and control the feedback.
The piece ends when you manage to turn off the loudspeaker.

In addition to the focus on listening and movement, there is also a psychological/imaginative way of reading the exercises. I like to associate the loudspeaker or the microphone to a certain character or feeling so they would represent something in my mind. I like to build up a little story so the action I perform acquires a symbolic meaning. In the case of *Feedback*, you can think about the loudspeaker as if it was a sleeping beast. While walking you have to pay attention not to wake it up otherwise it might bark and the feedback could get very loud and damage your ears. If you don't like it to be a beast, you can also think about the loudspeaker as an obstacle, or a mental block you want to overcome.

It's a sort of a psychomagic reading of the exercises.

[09:30] *PLAY an extract from the live performance "When Sound Ends".*

Q: You often work with sound in urban and public space. What spaces you find the most interesting to work in and why?

A: If we talk about public space, I feel the need to define it first. I think the public character of a certain space is to be considered as the result of an action or a process. It's the result of a constant renegotiation with norms, institution, and users. It's through appropriation and the redefinition of its functional uses that space can turn into public. I don't think public is a given thing that we could take for granted. So I cannot really say that I work in public space. Instead, I work in outdoor spaces and it's through my actions, through my performances, and through my workshops that outdoor space becomes public. It becomes public because I use it; it's not public per se.

Going back to your question I can say that in general, I like to use space not as a background but as a field that I activate or set in motion. At times, I use spatial

features and architectural elements (like columns, windows, roofs, ...) and use them as central components for the performance. Another important thing is the position of the audience: where they stand while witnessing the action and their point of view. Space, acoustics, topography, and scenery, they all determine the mood of the performance and put the audience and the participants in a certain dimension. They predispose the audience in a certain way; therefore the space you choose is already half the work.

I'll give you a few examples. There's a piece where I'm standing on one side of a road and on the opposite side there's a microphone placed on the asphalt. I start pulling the microphone towards my side trying to get it across the road until all of a sudden a car passes by and smashes it.

There's another performance which is a choreographed sequence of movements where one or more people move inside a building carrying a loudspeaker with them which is playing back white noise. The performers use the building's architecture and windows to filter and cut the sound while the audience is standing outside listening to how the white noise gets modulated.

I keep going. There's another one where I swing a microphone and slowly loosen the cable until it gets longer and longer and the microphone crashes against the wall.

And maybe a last one... A car fitted with a loudspeaker is driving on a mountain road. The audience is standing on the other side of the valley around 1 and a half km away from the car, they listen to the sound played back from the loudspeaker. To reach the audience's ear, sound has to travel across the valley and what the audience perceive is a tiny sound being filtered by the distance and modulated by the wind.

Q: In your performances microphones are regularly burned, run over or otherwise destroyed. What does this destruction of the microphone symbolize?

A: These actions reflect on the materiality of sound devices and explore their corporeal aspects. The actions deal with the ephemeral nature of bodily existence. Through the presence, absence and disappearance of sound, these actions work as metaphors representing life and death. It is not so much about the destruction of the devices themselves but on the disappearance of sound. Destruction serves as a strategy to get the audience to identify with the microphone up to the point where they start feeling sorry for it. I believe that while witnessing these actions, the audience can reflect and meditate on the impermanence and fragility of the body and ideally make a parallel between what's happening to the microphone and their own life.

On a perceptual level, the shifting from presence to absence of sound is quite a revelation. When sound disappears it's as if void was created; it's as if space dried up.

It's an epiphanic moment, a strong realization of how bodies take and occupy space through sound. When sound dies you lose your reference points. Then you have to find a way to reorient yourself from scratch and cannot hold on to it anymore as you did before. You also suffer a bit because you lose what you had before.

[14:10] PLAY an extract from the video "Cut Off", from the series "All Bodies End in Silence".

Q: Do you consider the microphone to be a musical instrument?

A: Everything can be a musical instrument. The microphone is an instrument just as any other object can be an instrument. I personally began using the microphone starting from a material relationship with it, a sort of exploration of its affordances and constraints. I tried to forget about "how it should be used" and started to relate to it without prescriptions. It's an approach that comes a little bit from affordance theory, object design, and hacking. For example, I have a piece called Single Strokes. It's a piece where two microphones are used as a pair of drumsticks to play the snare drum. The recording explores the physical properties and affordances of the microphone. It investigates the practical materiality of the microphone and violates the basic rules and principles of audio technology.

[16:14] PLAY and extract from the audio work "Single Strokes".

Q: In what ways a recording is a performative act?

A: A recording is performative when the recordist is not interested in "recording the sound" only, but they are interested in recording the interaction they have with sound. So not the sound itself, but what they can do with that sound, how they play with it.

I've an example that particularly fits what I'm telling you. It's a piece where the microphone moves inside/outside a pair of ear-defenders while capturing the sounds coming from a construction site. While recording the event, I also describe the microphone's positions and the sonic qualities the positions add.

[18:40] PLAY and extract from the audio piece "Mic In&Out".

Q: In an earlier conversation between the two of us you mentioned that you find 'risk' interesting especially in relation to how it affects listening. What do you find interesting about 'risk'? How do you use 'risk' in your practice?

A: I need a bit of risk in order to feel what I'm doing is real. It helps me to be more concentrated and focused on the action. In my performances with microphones and loudspeakers there is always a bit of risk. For example, a firecracker doesn't set off, or wind rises and extinguishes the flame, or it might be raining, or the fuse doesn't light up, or the microphone doesn't want to break, or the explosion is too strong and I

get scared. These are things that I can't easily control. This means that I'm forced to pay attention to everything that's going on around me. So I become more focused on the moment itself. Risk adds urgency and tension.

However, the risks I take are minor risks. I mean: my ears might be hit by loud feedback; or i could be hit by fireworks; or i might get sued because I do a performance without asking permission. That's basically it. I like to think that this is nothing compared to partisans' sabotage actions where they had to be extremely silent otherwise they would have been shot by the enemy; or if you think about detainees attempting to escape from jail or perform a bank robbery... Anyway, I don't want to take myself so seriously...

[39:07] *PLAY an extract from the action "Avondklok".*

Q: What are we listening to right now?

A: It's a night walk I've done in 2020 during the Corona curfew. I've fixed a pair of metal plates underneath my shoes as a strategy to amplify my walking in the street. I wanted to break the silence of the curfew and somehow confront the restrictions used as a control measure during the pandemic crisis.

Q: You have a strong interest in the use of sound and music in counter-culture and you have made a sound ethnography about the Northern Italian Ultras group Brescia 1911. What did you learn through your work about the Ultras?

A: I've learned that chanting is not improvised but it follows a certain logic which is the expression of the mentality of the group. There are a series of parameters that influence the choice of the chant to sing. Chanting is really dependent from the live situation and from the capacity of the group to read the situation. Chanting is in close relation not only to the game but also to what happened before and what will happen after the game. I had the opportunity to witness this in the early 2000s. What's happening now is that all that knowledge has slowly disappeared, mainly because of repression and normalization. The most interesting ultras groups have been heavily criminalized and didn't find a way to pass their knowledge onto new members. Also the stadium as it is now is drastically different from what it was 20 years ago. Today there's much less freedom in terms of what behaviors and what chants are tolerated. It also became much more difficult for the ultras to use the stadium as a public arena where to perform without being censored or excluded. And it is not by chance that in 2007 drums, megaphones, and other means of sound reproduction were banned from Italian stadiums. The government never really explained the reason of this law but it's clear that it has been a strategy for reducing the affective potential of the chants, reducing the influence of the ultras on public opinion and denying their legitimacy to inhabit the stadium and use it as a resonant chamber for expressing commonality, disdain for authority, and harsh critiques against modern football.

So you see how the stadium becomes a contested space and the ownership of its soundscape is put at stake. It's nothing different from what is happening in some Italian cities where street music is not allowed anymore in public space. It's the same paradigm of law and order which reduces public space's functions to consumerism and distraction.

Q: Can we listen to anything from this research?

A: We can listen to a recording from my publication called *The Sound of Normalisation*. It's a demonstration recorded outside the prison in Brescia. The demonstration was organized to express solidarity with the detainees and bring attention to the problems of prison overcrowding. What you have in the recording is that, instead of chanting for the team, the ultras chant for the detainees; chants move out from the stadium and infiltrate the city. After the ultras leave the area surrounding the prison, the detainees continue to sing from their cells taking the chanting of the ultras and making it their own. I think this is a beautiful example of how sound gets contagious and moves from mouth to mouth or from body to body.

[46:37] PLAY “Freedom For All II”, an extract from the publication “*The Sound of Normalisation*”.