

The Acoustic Manifesto



Preamble

It is time for a reckoning.
And the place of the reckoning is here.
Here in “Le Figaro”, where it all began 100 years ago, on 20 February 1909, the worship of noise, the call to mistreat our bodies, the instructions for eternal torment with sound. Here, where Filipp Tommaso Marinetti rose above himself with the Futurist Manifesto, glorifying with incredible hubris the scourge of boundless mechanization, motorization and mobility and with it the scourge of the limitless development of noise and with it the collective mistreatment of our bodies, thus inflaming what brought disaster and death to our forebears and continues to torment us and our children up to the present day:

Noise!
Noise!
Noise!

The Wild West of Hearing

Sonification is the new weapon of power. Sonification has become radiation. People are subjected to sonic radiation and made apathetic and stupid – in every place, at every time and under all circumstances. Products have long been acoustically manipulated and advertising acoustically designed. In supermarkets, businesses, shopping centers, restaurants, waiting rooms, on hold on the telephone, indeed in residences, staircases, even in toilets, every day millions of people are victims of the toxic sonic radiation creeping through their bodies. Like radiation cannons, swaths of traffic hurl their sickening noise at young and old, hurl it at men and women, even babies and the elderly!
No one escapes the bombardment. Automobiles, wagons of steel, and airplanes make us emotionless, lifeless and dead with their radiating militarism. That is the beauty of speed!
That is the war that Marinetti praised!
The powerful rape the powerless.
Welcome to the wild west of hearing!

Acoustic Space

Everything we hear is acoustic space. Here our living conditions become immediately concrete, are virtually incarnated. Acoustic space is being revolutionized by new technologies, evolving into something previously unimaginable. It is inflating at such a breathtaking speed that no thought has yet even been given to standards for the way we live together in this exploding space. This vacuum is an El Dorado for acoustic gold-diggers. They occupy new territories with new technologies and justify property and utilization rights. They do so free of rules. Might makes right.
Sonic radiation thus floods every area of life. Avalanches of mobility and avalanches of sound propel radiation waves that enervate the people.
Our body is a battlefield.

Yet we feel and sense nothing.
Why?
Can you close your ears?

In Praise of the Aural

Without hearing, we are nothing. What we are, we are through the ear: persons. As the Latin word says: sounding-through. Our existence is sound and our actions generate sound, not light. Suspended in the eternal vibrations of space, the pulsation of our own life flooding through us, embedded in the continuum of time. From the fiftieth day after conception to our last breath of life, we hear. From the fiftieth day after conception to our last breath of life, we sound.
Twenty-four hours a day.
Hearing warns us of dangers. Up to today, the fast data conduit in the oldest part of our brain is working to drive us to flight or fight. For this reason, we do not know that we are hearing. We hear. Nor do we know what we hear. We hear to survive.
Without interruption.

Trinity of the Ear

And just as uninterruptedly, the ear anchors us in the world. Balance, orientation and hearing conjoin into a trinity of perception. This is where the foundation for movement and space is found. Only the ear grants us three-dimensional perception, rather than an image of the world as the eye produces.

Triumph of Sonic Radiation

Should we allow access to our most inner self through our ears to anyone seeking to launch their destructive work, without control, without recourse, even without our knowledge? You have no body, you are body, we call out to you with Wilhelm Reich! Proto-fascism, communism, totalitarianism, industrialism, authoritarianism, capitalism, monetarism, neoliberalism, globalism inflame our bodies to rise up out of the debris that they have created. Today unbounded sonic radiation triumphs and rules over the sensitivity of human beings, sounding capitalism as horror spatii sono vacui. Yet our hands are free and pure enough to start again from the beginning.

Manifesto

1. - Architecture has degenerated into a deaf discipline, a mere shifting of backdrops. It builds auditoriums, from which the auditory is omitted, schools that make our children

hyperactive, aggressive and hard of hearing. Their buildings are turned against us like weapons. They bundle, focus, magnify, even generate the sonic radiation that torments us. New building means hearing!

2. - Traffic planning has become the handmaid of the fetish of mobility. The liberty of humanity is sacrificed upon its altar. Canyons of noise slice through the land, protecting the perpetrators of noise – traffic itself – with noise-protection walls. Sound-proof windows turn our houses into prisons. Free the people from the slavery of the capitalist ideology of mobility!

3. - The injustice has crept into the shadows of social attention. The avalanche of globalized sonic radiation sweeps up those who cannot take refuge in quiet and hence expensive residential areas. The hollow spaces of the earth, from which all natural resources have been pumped out, nourish vibrating capitalism again and again as a resonance body. Those who live in noise, live in poverty. Those who live in poverty, live in noise. New urban planning is acoustic urban planning!

4. - Parallel walls, uniform materials and surfaces increase the strain on hearing and reduce the intelligibility of speech and acoustic quality. Children struggle in schools, oppressed by the violence of the classrooms. Children want to learn to listen in order to discover themselves and the world. Found a new school!

5. - Overwhelming and perpetual sonic radiation from noise, background music and continuous self-exposure to sound increases the strain on the sensory apparatus and makes it more difficult to integrate acoustic and visual impressions. Stress, tinnitus, sudden hearing loss, even heart attacks can be the consequence. Quiet periods and quiet spaces must be a human right!

6. - We want to enjoy the gigantic capacity of our hearing throughout our life. Yet even if our hearing capacity decreases, we want to continue to take part in the world. This requires the best possible hearing aids and not disorienting crutches stuffed into our ears by untrained dilettantes.

7. - The hyenas of acoustic space, commerce and services, blast our bodies with tapestries of sound to cover up the humming of the air conditions, servers, ventilation, elevators and escalators of their poorly planned shopping centers cheaply cobbled together and to make us dumb and addicted to consume. No more!

8. - Plugs are pushed deep into ear canals. In public buses, trams, trains, subways, parks and from the pitiful loudspeakers of mobile telephones, pitiful, compressed and maximized plastic music blares. We do not want our children to become vibrated, hyperactive little monsters!

9. - The madhouse of acoustics is populated by parasites: on hold, jingles, audio logos, sound icons, warning and signal tones, corporate sounds, commissioned company songs, ring tones bore their way into ear canals. Get rid of them! We are human beings, not target groups.

10. - A general reduction of the speed limit in street traffic and a reduction of the size of automobiles could have a greater impact than all the noise protection walls together. But the auto industry has wrapped itself around the world like a Hydra with millions and millions of heads. By constantly breaking the law, it carries sonic radiation terror into the most remote corners of the world. It produces vehicles that can drive much faster than is allowed. And the state trembles before the industrial monster, instead of cutting off one of its immortal heads.

11. - We want buildings and cities with a balanced spatial sound, with a rich frequency spectrum. We need spaces, in which we can become engrossed in conversations and work and think with concentration. We want hospitals and nursing homes, where we can take leave of the world peacefully and with dignity. We do not want to die in passing during visiting hours in loud and overcrowded rooms.

Epilogue

Every person has the right to breathe healthy air. Every person has the right to a healthy environment. And every person has the right to bodily sovereignty. For this reason, every person has the right not to be made ill by what penetrates into their ears. And much more: Every person has the right to democratically co-determine and co-design what penetrates into their ears.

We are publishing this manifesto, so that acoustic space will become political space at last. We demand new politics!
Hearing is living.

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The title “European Capital of Culture” serves as a guideline: We regard culture as the way that people deal with one another and with nature, the way people arrange their living conditions. “Capital city” reminds us of the head, where thinking is supposed to be done. It is therefore urgent to think, to raise, discuss, impel social, political, artistic and economic questions, to point out possibilities, plans, and utopias.

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