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Sound field

Helena Almeida, Jacopo Benassi, Luisa Cunha, Chelipa Ferro,
João Ferro Martins, Lea Managil, Laurent Montaron, Pedro Paiva
20.03.26 – 09.05.26
Opening 20.03.26, 18h – 21h

“It doesn't take much to trigger people's imagination. And I think that's one of the things we always do with sound. We like how the body denies the brain or vice versa”ⁱ

Janet Cardiff

Sound art has the ability to transport individuals and people collectively as the medium pervades spaces. It has the ability for the senses to be activated and then be transported by personal experiences to a different place and time. It can trigger the other senses; it can activate our nervous system, our emotions and an awareness through our memory process. By means of immersion it has the ability to take you on mental and concurrently a physical journey.

Under the banner of “Sound field”, the exhibition explores soundscapes through multidisaplanerian practices of the artists who work directly with sound and its tropes. Inviting the audience to engage in physical and audio works that ascribe to the narrative of sound, music, hearing, performance and moments of silence, to evoke sound. To ignite the imagination and memory.

In *Alda* by Luisa Cunha (PT 1949), the installation of 10 anthropomorphic speakers lines the gallery wall, each introducing a unique female name and in doing so each speaker becomes an identity. As the sequence plays out in a sinistrodextral order, with the same statement of presenting each person albeit with the same voice. The work appears to have a fragility as the context of the piece was first shown alongside another work *Senha Z 672* in which a voice lists off a series of codes with the corresponding room to attend to, here, it is arbitrary which is the organization these messages are emitted. In the same way that *Alda* perhaps is placed in this circumstance, one can imagine a protagonist recording the names of people or a professional meeting various clients over the course of a day, the faces may fade but the names do not. We are left to ponder this work as Cunha has stated that “I don't like to explain the works because works are not to be explained”ⁱⁱ, conceivably not to limit or contain the interpretation, to immerse oneself in the sound the syntactical flow, the rhythmic dynamic nature of the voices, allowing the imagination to wonder freely.

On the contrary, the seminal work *Ouve-me* (Listen to me) by Helena Almeida (PT 1934 – 2018), a four-part black and white photographic polyptych is inaudible although it is not. Her figure appears veiled behind a screen from the perspective of a profile, mouthing the words, although on closer inspection seems to be shouting the words, yet to no avail. A shadow of the sound appears to emanate from her mouth as a plume of air, devoid of noise as only a breath. As though the voice has been contained physically by the veil, not to be heard and relegated to the shadows and recesses of social and political hierarchical systems. Dually the volume of the work is pervasive in that, the four panels almost stagger the announcement, as if to draw the listener to the speaker, as the phrase is imbued across each of the photographs, demanding attention in its two-dimensional state. A silent conversation with the viewer ensues, as the eye passes again over the sequence of images, as though the figure is repeating the phrase, until it has our attention.

Within quiet instances, we are often required to repose, concentrate and pause while tuning into something, to tune into the present. Much in the way John Cage's composition 4'33 demands the silence during the piece, different nuances are heard each time the piece is performed live. The sense of being in the moment is pervasive. *Reverb Plate*, by Laurent Montaron (FR 1972), brings about the process of distortion versus the reality of what the truth of a live sound actually is while questioning its origin through phenomenological interpretation. In this piece, a reverb plate is connected to a rock of pyrite (fool's gold) – predominately used in crystal radios, although on a much larger scale, acting as part microphone and receptor for interferences in frequencies, as the viewer approaches or touches the rock. Through the piece and its plate we are privy to these invisible frequency ongoing of the universe, with the artifice typically used to restore the echoes of recordings here instead is playing live and therefore perhaps playing sound from another dimension. Through

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the use of this EMT plateⁱⁱⁱ in the work, Montaron poses a parallel question as not only does the artifice condition the sound itself but changes the way we perceive and believe what we are hearing in real time, even when we are physically present, alluding to what real time is and/or not.

The narrative of questioning what is real-time or the present and what is not, what is borrowed from another time, the suggestion of hearing or the act of it can be seen in the sculptural works by Pedro Paiva (PT 1977). It is acutely obvious in the two sculptural heads alluding to the act of hearing and storytelling. “Potters in ancient times decorated funerary vases with horizontal lines in order to create decorative patterns on the surface of these artefacts. They used straws whilst the potter’s wheel was turning. What they did not realise at the time was that much like a vinyl record, they were creating micro-grooves in the clay, and through this practice, they were recording resonances and sounds that could be reproduced today. Precisely for this reason, and with the technology available to us, we can today hear, for example, the sound of the potter’s own whistle from the 4th century BC; or the whistle of a Mesopotamian bronze kettle in the distance, as the water begins to boil, which, to our ears, sounds more like the breath of a musical instrument. Or, on other occasions, we can hear the voices of passers-by; indecipherable noises; mundane conversations. A prime example of this is the extraordinary, and particularly clear, recording made (by means of rotation) in the clay, which has preserved for our times the sound of the voice (the words) of an Epicurean recounting his impressions upon hearing the sounds emanating from within the funerary vase itself.”^{iv} The supports reinforces the narrative by communicating the passage of time, beyond that of the aesthetic and the multilayering of material and references.

Much in a similar way that Paiva’s pieces point towards the notion of static objects that suggest the emission of sound and reverberations through history and memory, *Soundscape #1* by João Ferro Martins (PT 1979) is an installation piece which engages us with a simple composition of a shell on a shelf with a microphone connected to an amplifier. Reminiscent of time which transports us to childhood, when children would hold up a shell to their ear and hear the sound of the ocean. Technically the sound that is heard is the concentration of reverberations of the noise from the outside. “An invisible landscape revealed to us by the acoustic properties of this object, which was once a living being and which, having come from the sea, carries within it, in what remains of its existence, this infinite audio ‘recording’ representing its place of origin.”^v Now, the once magical properties of the shell are played out through the arena of rock music. In contrast is his piece *Fat Chair* which is a tribute work to Joseph Beuys’ work of the same name. In lieu of the lard, is a sound column positioned and shaped in a similar way to the original, although now the piece has its original meaning subverted into the language of Ferro Martins, that of music and sound. Both works are redundant in their purpose; the column does not emit sound, just as lard does not emit heat. Lard needs body heat to do so, and sound only exists if there is silence on which to rest. Not initially evident in both works by the different artists is the presence of a seated figure or suggestion of this. The noise of internal ongoing of the human digestive systems suggested by lard in Beuys piece is replaced by a noisier almost android equivalent of the speaker in Ferro Martin’s work.

As imagery of sound and musical objects can also prompt our imaginations in various ways, it may not be identical and is not necessary to be so, they can have the impetus to create the same environments. The photographic works of Jacopo Benassi (IT 1970) in this exhibition are borne from underground music scenes and performances. These potentially raw and chaotic scenes are captured instinctively, appearing spontaneous and housed in equally unabashed materials, emphasizing these instances. Benassi’s compositions seem to harness the energy of the sweaty crowds, the fragility of a passing moment, the performer (self-portrait) in mid stance and the instruments staged as apostles to their audience. These documentary-style photographs come from bar Btomic, where the artist programmed the events and performed over several years, arousing the intensity and potentially volume of the establishment. In a way, giving us access into a world that we may not have had, yet the tension and noise ingrained in them is transmitted and the volume imagined.

On a more intimate scale are the sculptural and sound works *Corpo que pede fio* and *Roca* by Lea Managil (PT 1991), semi-autobiographical pieces inspired from her childhood, many of which will be able to similarly identify with. The makeshift home given to the silkworms, in this case disposable paper cups, are laden with Mulberry leaves and a non-living caterpillar appears to go about its munching away while crawling across the leaves. Where both whimsical and intimate pieces seem to harness the viewers curiosity and initial disbelief as to the realness of the objects, it is then reinforced by the unequivocal

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gnawing sound of these hungry creatures. Within these macro and micro worlds, we are presented with two perspectives, one of that from looking above and the other mounted on the wall where the leaves here, move in a circular motion echoing the manner in which the bugs create its cocoon. Saddened by her childhood experience of witnessing and then understanding that once the caterpillar has metamorphosized into a butterfly it will never be able to fly. Now however her pets will live forever in a perpetual state as larvae.

In Managil's work the apparatus is cleverly obscured and arbitrary, whereas the in Chelipa Ferro's (BR formed 1995) work it is incorporated, exposed and celebrated. Sound cables strewn across a floor and around the rigging connecting the instruments and sound devices to the speakers are hidden away in the shadows of concerts and stages, giving way to focusing solely on the sound. Rather than hiding this material out of sight these structures are often highlighted and celebrated in the compositions of Chelipa Ferro. They employ in tandem sound paraphernalia and quotidian objects to realize compositions, sound installations and experimental sound pieces to become "audio-visual" ones. This collective comprised of Barrão (BR 1959), Luiz Zerbini (BR 1959) and Sergio Mekler (BR 1963), collaborate on projects inspired by noise, sound and colour of their environments. *Cacho II*, like a bunch of fruit, is constructed with multiple sized speakers that hangs from cable and hook traditionally used for suspending a hammock. There is no sound from the work, yet we can imagine a cacophonous noise, perhaps of a bustling neighbourhood, one that is in preparation for an event or festival.

Sauntering through the streets, whether it be a city or a path in the country, the environments have the own distinctive sounds and symphonies. As with the works in this exhibition, each come from unique terrains and fields, inviting the audience to carry with them a heightened sense of sound as they wonder through the spaces. Considering the notion that "with the medium of sound you can really engage with your environment and draw attention to it in a new way"^{vi} as Susan Phillipsz cites, these pauses when focusing on sounds have the ability to trigger memory and the imagination, transporting you to another time and place, a field, a sound field.

Notes:

ⁱ The power of sound in Janet Cardiff's "Forty Part Motet" | ART AND THE SENSES, MoMA, <https://www.moma.org/artists/8473-janet-cardiff>, 2025

ⁱⁱ Luisa Cunha - Partitura #4 | Galeria Miguel Nabinho, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0ZxaAQ4HTxk>, 2022

ⁱⁱⁱ Definition: The EMT plate reverb, primarily the iconic EMT 140 launched in 1957, is a legendary electro-mechanical device that produces artificial reverb by vibrating a large (roughly), suspended sheet of steel. It provides a distinct, lush, and silky sound with a fast "bright" buildup, making it a staple for vocals, drums, and snare on countless classic records

^{iv} Excerpt from Pedro Paiva, artist statement, March 2026

^v Excerpt from João Ferro Martins, artist statement, March 2026

^{vi} Susan Phillipsz Interview: Song As Trigger of Memory, Louisiana Museum of Modern Art, Denmark, 2020

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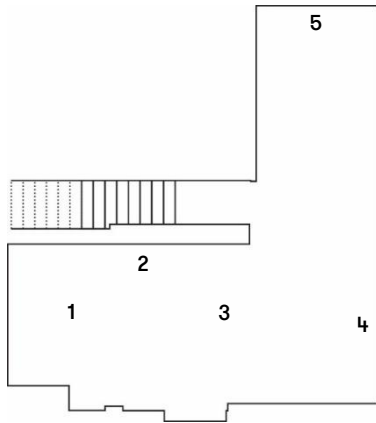
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GALLERY 1



1. Pedro Paiva, *Assobio*, 2026
Glazed ceramics and iron, 141 x 45 x 45 cm

2. Pedro Paiva, *Máscara de Sopro*, 2025
Glazed ceramics, 24 x 17 x 21 cm

3. Pedro Paiva, *Epicurista a Escutar o Interior do Plinto*, 2026, Glazed ceramics and iron, 124 x 45 x 45 cm

4. Jacopo Benassi, *Embryo al Btomic*, 2012-2026
Fine art prints, artist frame, glass, strap, 114 x 144 x 10 cm

5. Laurent Montaron, *Plate reverb*, 2026
Oak, steel, electronic components, pyrite, sound
134 x 109 x 10 cm

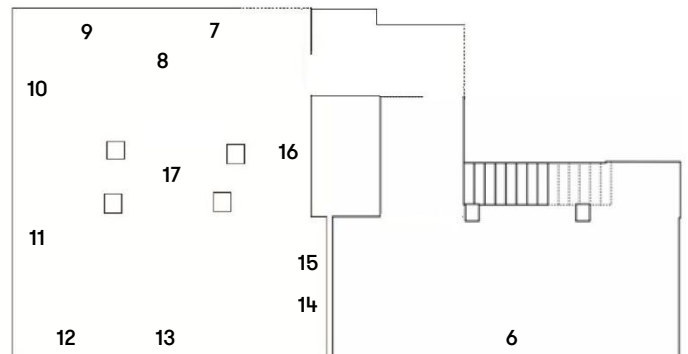
6. Luisa Cunha, *Alda*, 2025, Sound installation, 01'37"

7. Lea Managil, *Roca*, 2026
Silicone, pigment, mulberry leaves preserved in glycerine,
mini DC motor, mini speaker, sound, 26 x 14 x 7 cm

8. Lea Managil, *Corpo pede fio*, 2026
Silicone, pigment, mulberry leaves preserved in glycerine,
mini DC motor, mini speaker, sound, 19 x 7 x 7 cm

9. João Ferro Martins, *Compêndio #3*, 2010
Compact cassette, 6,4 x 10,2 x 1,2 cm

GALLERY 2 & SHOWROOM



10. Jacopo Benassi, *Performance*, 2018
Fine art prints, artist frame, 77 x 57 x 3 cm

11. Chelipa Ferro, *Cacho II*, 2018
Speakers, audio cables and cords, 100 x 37 x 20 cm

12. João Ferro Martins, *Soundscape #1*, 2007
Whelk, shelf, microphone, amplifier, audio cable, mp3
player, sound, Variable dimensions

13. Helena Almeida, *Ouve-me*, 1980, (polyptych)
Black and white photography, 75 x 51 cm (each)

14. João Ferro Martins, *Compêndio #22*, 2010
Acrylic on cymbal, wood, Ø 35.9 x 4,5 cm

15. João Ferro Martins, *Compêndio #27*, 2010
Cymbal, wood, Ø 35.9 x 4,5 cm

16. Jacopo Benassi, *Santo Domingo speaker*, 2017
Fine art prints, artist frame, 80 x 63 x 5 cm

17. João Ferro Martins, *Fat chair*, 2008
Chair, audio monitor, audio cable, 85 x 40 x 40 cm

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