

Sound Art

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The concepts *Sound* and *Sound Art* are notoriously vague; they can be understood as terms denoting style or genre, and they encompass a whole spectrum of acoustic and visual phenomena as well as artistic concepts and themes. Due to its intricate, multifaceted nature, it is virtually impossible to address all aspects of Sound Art. Instead, I will attempt below to provide a general overview, structuring the history of Sound Art in the process. And even if this process of systematization leads to no more than a theoretical construction, it offers a means of grasping Sound Art in its complexity. To this end, I will undertake to retrace the dimension of Sound Art in a great curve along its salient points. In the place of *Sound Art*, terms such as *Acoustic Art* or *Audio Art* are also often used, but these terms delineate more or less the same context and can be understood as synonyms of Sound Art.

The concern here is not with sound in the purely musicological sense, but with the constant expansion of the perception of acoustic phenomena and with experiments which evade any and all classification. The liberation of sound from the confined territory of professional musicians, the renunciation of the traditional conception of art and the materialization of language together formed the basis for the emergence and development of Sound Art. In this sense, the term Sound Art designates independent works arising from a great number of movements all concerned with new, unconventional ways of exploring sound and language as objects and – from the conceptual perspective – with the investigation of auditive material. What they have in common is the continual transcendence of the boundaries demarcating the acoustic and visual fields of art, literature and music – this transcendence being the means by which new forms of perception were experimentally developed. The core of Sound Art forms the sound work as the manifestation of a new kind of artistic thought. As authentic productions and original artworks in the area of language, sound and visual-artistic concepts, they were published in small editions and/or made accessible to the public. In the process, the entire spectrum of the media used for reproducing, publishing and publicizing were employed, including radio, television and audio playback devices. These ‘mass media’ sound works as well as the sound interventions they generate evade traditional conceptions of the original and the composition in art and music. And Sound Art developed chiefly within the context of the mass media – being particularly indebted to the technology of the vinyl record – in the form of artworks published by artists.