

**Aural Auras and Haunting Echoes:**

**Places with complex biographies**

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## Declaration

I, Antonis Antoniou, hereby declare that the work in this thesis and the work presented in the accompanying portfolio are my own.

Signed,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a series of loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end, positioned above a horizontal line.

Antonis Antoniou

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## **Abstract**

The aim of the thesis is to explore the distinct identities of places with complex biographies. In particular, it investigates the processes through which sound can enact dialogues between places and people, thus exposing these identities. Place, and more specifically the history of place, is understood as a field that is involved in a process of continuous negotiation and performance. Throughout the thesis, it is contended that the identities of "charged places" can be experienced similarly to how we experience ambience or background noise. Through the ostensible silence that characterises the places under study – a silence not necessarily acoustic, but rather one that relates to the absence of what was or what should have been there – a noisy narrative may develop in our mental realm. Imagination and daydream is the ultimate condition for creating what Gaston Bachelard (1958) terms the "poetic image", which will enable us to "listen" to the place through its histories and to delve into its "aural aura".

The specific topic of investigation is how a sound artist, following a place-specific trajectory, may foster a meaningful conversation between the audience and the place, thus exposing the place's biographical essences, and furthermore how they may "orchestrate" an aural aura in order to establish this communication.

The four works presented in the portfolio constitute a practical approach through which a response is given to the above inquiries. Each of the four works addresses fields that involve socio-political, philosophical, cultural and aesthetic concerns relevant to the island of Cyprus, as well as more practical artistic matters, such as interactivity, collaboration and ephemerality.

The thesis concludes that place-specific sound art with a guerrilla-art style, can be an effective way of expressing and communicating nuances and concepts that relate to the biography of places.

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## Preface

It seems important to begin this section with a brief account of what my concerns and objectives were when I first applied for a PhD degree. My studies at Goldsmiths, University of London, lasted for four years, in which I completed a degree in Music (BMus) as well as a Masters in Studio Composition (MMus). These four years were tremendously influential in many respects, such as in terms of the way I learnt to regard music, the ways I learnt to listen to music, and its aesthetics. Upon entering the Music course, an entirely new world opened up before me, a world that simply did not exist before. In Cyprus, where I was brought up, I had never had the opportunity to come across the musical movements of the 20th century and, especially, the so-called "electroacoustic music". On completing my Masters I realised that I had entered a world that was unknown to my homeland's audience, an audience largely unfamiliar with electroacoustic music and/or sound installations. Although the abstract and acousmatic character of electroacoustic music may qualify it as "universal", in the sense that it transcends specific cultural references (Truax, 2008), it nevertheless follows a musical language that is not comprehensible to untrained ears. This concern led me to reconsider my return to Cyprus, as I felt that I would not be able to implement my skills and interests there. It was extremely important for me that art should be meaningful and that I, therefore, should take under serious consideration the context and the particulars of its employment. I therefore decided that I would practise electroacoustic music and sound installation in such a way, that locality and culture would be embraced and highlighted in my works.

My initial PhD application involved field research and the potential construction of a theoretical framework that would provide the tools for creating meaningful works (either electroacoustic compositions or sound installations) in circumstances involving audiences with no background or prior knowledge of this specific genre. Within this framework, I needed to conduct in-depth investigation of an extremely crucial issue, that of communicating my art successfully. The question "Who is my audience?" needed to be answered before anything else, as this would give direction to the methodologies that would be developed and followed. When I applied at Goldsmiths, the committee that examined my application regarded my research subject as rather general, ambiguous and with no clear direction, and thus suggested that I reassess the proposal. While rethinking the subject I realised that the main focus of my quest was the concept of place. An artist working with place needs to follow a place-specific course

(as will be shown in the chapters to follow), in order to embrace its specifics and communicate these meaningfully to a particular society. Hence, it could be claimed that my new proposal's approach did not necessarily follow a different trajectory from the initial one, but, rather, it was developed within a more focused framework, driven by the concerns expressed in the initial proposal. Considering this now, at the stage of completion, I can say with certainty that this research constitutes a major step in my evolvment as an artist, as I am positive that meaningful ways of employing my artistic creativity in the Cypriot setting have since been developed and applied. Doctoral research is indeed a journey, as my supervisor stressed in its early stages; a journey with exciting adventures, a process that illuminates undiscovered fringes and matures one's philosophical attitude. The opportunity to study something specific on a long-term basis has been critical in the formation of an artistic articulation that is both personal and distinctive. Therefore, I consider this research project to be part of an ongoing progression, hopefully with no end; concluding this research is just one step on this long route, but it is most certainly not the final destination. It is rather a fresh beginning, since a major weight, that of academic obligations and commitments, will be lifted. Ending this section, I should probably confess that pursuing an academic career was not the reason behind my decision to conduct doctoral research. It was rather, as expressed above, my wish to develop my skills and knowledge, and to investigate more deeply the themes that were already a part of my quests as an artist. The above aims were certainly met, as I am now more confident to apply my ideas and concepts. Furthermore, I am now able to employ my "artistic toolbox" – which is admittedly an exogenous commodity – in the milieu of the country where I live and work. In this case I believe that the phrase "Think globally, act locally", used predominantly in environmental contexts, is aptly relevant.

## Introduction

As the present research project is practice-led, the approach followed is to engage with specific processes and methods in order to address and enhance issues related to its conceptual context. What I am interested in, and what I aim to expose through this research and specifically through the four projects included in the portfolio, is a mode of "listening" to the identity of places with complex biographies. All four works deal with places that have interesting and/or turbulent stories behind them, places that strongly emit the aura of history. When we experience these places and are acquainted with their histories, we find ourselves enmeshed in their intense atmosphere. I suggest that this sensation is of a similar nature to the way in which we experience background noise. Thus, this sensation is closer to our aural faculty than to any of our other senses. I call this "aural aura", a concept that will be further explored in Chapter 2, as well as in Chapters 3 and 4, where the projects are presented. The idea behind the four works is that the aural auras of places can be exposed through the use of sound. This is also the idea behind the film *The Stone Tape* (1972), where a team of scientists transmit sound on the walls of a haunted room in order to uncover stories of the past. This subject will be further examined in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.5.3.1). The artistic gesture of exposing the aural aura of a place by using sound would be what I term "orchestrated aural aura". Orchestrated aural aura is the artist's orchestration, which is developed in order to evoke a dialogue between the audience and the place. It is a constructed acoustic atmosphere that acts as an in-between layer in order to foster a meaningful relationship between subject and object. I will further reflect on these ideas in Chapter 2.

In the context of place-specificity (analysed in Chapter 1), this research investigates how sound art practice can offer new ways of reading places and how it can provide innovative methodologies through which the above ideas can materialize. While sound is intangible and in a way ghostly, it nevertheless can effectively – possibly due to its inherent correlation with time and space – trigger emotive responses. Thus, sound can be used as a powerful tool that can affect moods and feelings. In this sense, designed sound can produce ambiances that cause certain reactions. Therefore, in the same way that an orchestrated aural aura can be descriptive and evocative, it can also be conceptual and abstract. More specifically, some composed sound works, such as *AerodromeLefkosia* (Section 3A.2.1), carry a conceptual meaning and possibly sound extremely abstract or meaningless if listened to out of context. Nevertheless, when

listened to *in* context, they merge with place acting rather like the place's soundtrack. In the case of the work *Ambient Frequencies* (Section 3B.2.1), the designed pieces that are broadcast by the two FM transmitters have an easily recognizable, representational character (the first one involves a text recitation and the second an orchestra's tuning). Hence, they can effortlessly be correlated to the place, and may offer a more pragmatic understanding of its atmosphere.

This thesis is divided into four chapters. Chapters 1 and Chapter 2 introduce the theoretical framework, as well as some of the key guiding concepts which have been the driving forces of the practical part. Chapters 3 and Chapter 4 place the theoretical framework of the first two chapters within a more focused discourse, correlating it with the works presented in each chapter.

Chapter 1 introduces the most vital element of this research, namely "place". Here, an overview is given on some of the key theories regarding place and these are then brought within the context of artistic activity. The writings of human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan, as well as Lucy Lippard's notions regarding place, were highly influential in the forming of the ideas that developed in the proceeding chapters, especially regarding the methodologies used for approaching the aural aura theme. This is the reason why I so often engage with the ideas of Tuan and Lippard. Towards its end, Chapter 1 makes the distinction between the terms "site-specific" and "place-specific", proposing that artists working with place need to achieve a sort of resonance with it, by spending considerable time attempting to fully understand its particularities.

Chapter 2 provides the conceptual background of the research. It presents several theories in order to support and elaborate the meaning of the research title. This chapter also outlines the contexts from where the four works draw from. David Toop's as well as Gaston Bachelard's writings have decisively influenced the forming of the thesis' conceptual framework and thus, they, like Tuan and Lippard, are densely quoted throughout the thesis, especially in Chapter 2. Theories on atmosphere, ambience and foreground versus background are introduced within the framework of developing an argument regarding aural auras. What follows is a retrospective of the concept of background noise and silence, with regards to the sonic arts and to specific views and theories on this theme. Drawing from Hildegard Westerkamp's and Florence Debeugny's work *At the Edge of Wilderness* (2000), I reflect upon the act of appropriating material from places and bringing it into gallery spaces – especially in group exhibition settings

– as well as the importance of contextual listening. I argue that in the case of gallery settings, the works presented may not qualify as being place-specific. Although my works in Chapter 4, *H4C* and *Echoing Hamam*, are also part of group exhibitions, they are nevertheless considered to be place and site-specific as they actually occur in the places under-investigation, with their characteristics and parameters being a vital part of the creation process.

Towards the end of Chapter 2, certain theories and/or views are introduced (Charles Babbage, Guglielmo Marconi, Virginia Woolf, Thomas Lethbridge) that provide the conceptual bases from where the works then develop.

Chapters 3 and 4 are orientated towards the practical side of the research and describe the works of the portfolio. Both chapters include the description of two works. The description of each work involves the conceptual part, where some relevant thoughts on each work are expressed and the practical part where each work is described more directly, in terms of its methodology, techniques and implementation.

The four works have been grouped in the two chapters according to their nature, mostly in terms of their setting and format of presentation as well as the methodologies carried out. The main feature connecting the works *Rainzonances4* and *Rainzonances5* included in Chapter 3 is their outdoor, public-space setting and the ephemerality that characterizes their constituent works. Moreover the two projects are both collaborative in nature as well as multi-dimensional, in that they consist of several interdisciplinary works. Due to these characteristics the two projects evidently carry many more complexities than the works presented in Chapter 4 (*H4C* and *Echoing Hamam*). All four works follow a specific trajectory in terms of the process involved in their making. They all consider their corresponding places as laboratories in which an ongoing process is enabled. The revisiting and reworking of material maintains an open dialogue between artist and place which is undoubtedly a very valuable element in their relationship. Although the works presented in Chapter 3 are, as mentioned above, ephemeral in nature, this actually corresponds to the nature of each of the constituent works and not to the project as a whole. The outdoor setting of these works was surely a defining factor for their ephemerality. Nevertheless, as will be demonstrated in Chapter 3, the projects *Rainzonances4* and *Rainzonances5* are still considered to be ongoing as new materials and information keep surfacing and offer inspiration for new artistic endeavours.

Another feature that distinguishes the works in Chapters 3 and 4 is the background concerning their actual presentation. The works in Chapter 4 were both commissioned and part of group exhibitions. The complications involved were consequently far fewer than those that arose for the works in Chapter 3. *Rainzonances4* and *Rainzonances5* are two projects the production of which was entirely my own responsibility. There was no funding and no support regarding any of the procedures carried out. As mentioned above, these works were developed in public spaces, handling the place as part of the work and intervening with the environment and the everyday, often in abrupt ways. Creating works in public spaces often involves taking actions that are in grey zones in terms of their legality and they thus incorporate a level of risk and adventure. *Rainzonances4* and *Rainzonances5* follow a guerrilla-art approach in terms of their methodology and aesthetic concerns. Issues related to guerrilla art and public intervention will be considered in detail in Section 3A.2.0.3.

Another matter that needs to be addressed is the length of each work's description. The complexities surrounding the realization of each project, as well as the issues and notions they address, constitute the main parameters with regards to the length of each work's description. For example, the work *Rainzonances4* (Chapter 3A) is a multidimensional project, which involved and still involves (as it is ongoing in the stage of writing this thesis) a plethora of activities and themes. It addresses, among other things, existing socio-political issues, it analyses relevant theories and ideas and moreover, it involves several artistic methodologies. Therefore, *Rainzonances4* is developed more extensively than the other projects.

The final issue that should be raised in this section, is the challenge of documenting works such as those included in this portfolio, which as discussed above, are tightly connected to the place and time of their staging. Reducing the complex qualities of a sound installation for a short documentary film on a digital format or an online blog is unquestionably problematic, both on a practical as well as a conceptual level. One of the main themes that feature in this thesis, namely the peripheral and unconscious perception of finding oneself in a place, which, as will be examined in Chapter 2, is a prerequisite for attending aural auras, is obviously absent from the video documentation. Thus, the aural aura of a place will hardly ever be reached through any documentation medium. Nevertheless, in the case of exposing it within the framework of an academic project, as for example the present work, video documentation possibly constitutes one of the most apt presentation media, as it offers an audiovisual allusion of how the installation functioned, as well as some geometrical/topographical visual information on the

place. Still, it should be considered as merely being documentation, which evidently has almost nothing to do with the actual experience of the installation. Some thoughts that I had during the initial stages of my research, i.e. of reproducing the works in a private exhibition in London so that my supervisor and the examiners would be able to better experience them, were soon abandoned. Such an approach would have been in stark contrast with the concepts expressed in this thesis with regards to place-specific art and the act of bringing sonic or other materials from a place into a gallery context (see Section 2.3.2). Three of the portfolio works (*Rainzonances4*, *H4C* and *Echoing Hamam*) are documented on USB that include audiovisual material, and the fourth piece, namely *Rainzonances5* is presented on an online blog specifically designed to host the Rainzonances series. It should be noted here, that this is a practice-based research project and thus it is presented in two parts. The first part constitutes the portfolio, which includes the four projects and is submitted in the format of documentation material on USB and/or online blog, as described above. The second part is the written text, which functions alongside the works, supporting their conceptual foundation.

# Chapter 1 - Place

Inherent in the local is the concept of place – a portion of land/town/cityscape seen from the inside, the resonance of a specific location that is known and familiar...place is latitudinal and longitudinal within the map of a person's life. It is temporal and spatial, personal and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width as well as depth. It is about connections, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there. (Lippard, 2007, p.7)

## 1.0 - Background

The dynamic surrounding the term "place" is the principal force that drives my practice in the submitted portfolio. Thus, the discussion that follows in this thesis will always be revolving around this core term. Whether directly or indirectly, all works presented here are informed by the notion of place, which is the backbone of the discussion around aural auras, haunting echoes and ambience. This would be the reason why a "place-specific" ethic is pursued for the realisation of each project. What will also be revealed in the proceeding chapters is that no matter whether the conversation involves subjects ostensibly irrelevant to place, these however, all rotate around it. It should be stressed from this early point, that the challenge here is not of developing a new theoretical discourse with regards to place, but rather to use existing writings, studies and findings as setting the parameters in constructing and presenting a code or model that will be able to justify the connection between the title of my research and the works of the portfolio. The research title suggests that places with complex biographies can be repositories of aural auras and haunting echoes; in order to provoke the "listening" of these through the portfolio works, a place-specific attitude must be taken. All these notions are to be analysed in detail below and in chapters to follow.

### 1.01 - Place overview

Place is such a commonly-investigated term; numerous studies and analyses have been carried out by geographers, artists, psychologists, anthropologists and others, who have left us with innumerable accounts around this quite attractive theme. Attractive in the sense that place is often entangled in numerous disciplines and is heavily relevant in the construction of their theoretical trajectories. Conversely, place has been so intensely scrutinized by various disciplines that it has acquired diverse meanings and can be brought into discussions of all sorts

of agendas, such as political, mythical, imaginative, psychological but also more practical ones, such as architectural, artistic and so on. A notable example here would be the Austrian architect Christopher Alexander, who developed a new syntax in architecture, namely "A Pattern Language", in which residents could follow suggested patterns in order to design their own neighbourhood depending on their custom needs. This was exemplified in his 1977 publication *A Pattern Language: Towns-Buildings-Construction*, co-written by Sara Ishikawa and Murray Silverstein.

Human geographers, with possibly Yi-Fu Tuan being the most celebrated historical figure, have attempted to address the meaning of place by juxtaposing it with space, landscape and site (and other related concepts), and analysing its features and the way it is inextricably connected with human identity. More recent theories seem to be converging on the notion that place could be a much more open and versatile term that could fit multiple dimensions under its umbrella. This comes in sharp contrast with the idea that place is static and specific, and that it merely concerns the history of a circumscribed geographical site. Moreover, as technology advances in such a rapid tempo and everything speeds up and spreads out, our time-space is increasingly shrinking. "Smart cities" are certainly an aftermath of this; innovative electronic and digital technology is implemented in various sectors in a city's structure, in order to facilitate the functioning of the urban system and succeed in terms of efficiency, quality, speed, and low costs in an environmentally ecological framework (IEEE, n.d.). This tendency of time-space shrinking is also accurately detected by British contemporary social scientist and geographer Doreen Massey, who identifies it as what she calls "time-space compression" (1994, p.121) and calls for a "global sense of place" (Ibid., p.146). Also worth mentioning in this connection is the French anthropologist Marc Augé (1995), who introduced the term "non-place" to describe these new dynamics produced by "supermodernity". All these are detailed in Chapter 3A.

## **1.02 - Place and experience**

Human geographer Yi-Fu Tuan is, as mentioned above, one of the forerunners in determining and expanding the discussion around the meaning of place. Two of his early books, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* (1974) and *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (1977) were particularly pivotal and incredibly influential to many subsequent scholars. Especially in the latter book, Tuan attempts to draw lines between the

terms "space" and "place" and to shed light on the things each of these notions represent and the way they are co-dependant. Space, he argues, "is more abstract than place. What begins as undifferentiated space becomes place as we get to know it better and endow it with value" (1977, p.6). Two very interesting ideas surface from the above passage; the first is the obvious distinction between space and place in terms of the value given by humans to each of them and the second is the characteristic of non-stasis, in that a space can potentially transform to place. I would propose here that if observed from a specific angle, the vice-versa transformation could also be a possibility, that is, a place can become space or more suitably a non-place. This claim will be developed in detail and argued for, in the chapters describing the pieces *Rainzonances4* (3A) and *H4C* (4A).

Tuan emphasises the significance of experience in the process of his suggested transformation (space becoming place) and points out that "experience is a cover-all term for the various modes through which a person knows and constructs a reality" (Ibid., p.8). This is connected with the processes of learning and becoming familiar and consequently, of becoming attached. Experience is also personal since each one of us perceives things differently and at the same time, surely perception is a product of culture. A human's experience of a specific place then, can give meaning to that place over the years to a point that every little corner or every small object connected to it, tells a story and triggers emotional response. Tuan suggests that place is a type of object itself and that "places and objects define space giving it a geometric personality" (Ibid., p.17), but as we get to know the place better or as we are drawn into "topophilia" – described by Tuan as "the human love of place" (1974, p.94) – these geometries acquire a more abstract role becoming part of our everyday feel of the place. According to Tuan, place can be reduced to the size of a favourite armchair or at the other extreme it can be the whole earth (1977, p.149). Geographical coordinates and size, therefore, do not constitute valid parameters for measuring "place-ness" but are rather more pertinent in the discussion of space, site or landscape. This is eloquently articulated by Bachelard (1958, p.vii): "A house that has been experienced is not an inert box. Inhabited space transcends geometrical space".

Another central personality in the field of human geography who has himself been very influential in the course of defining place, is Canadian geographer Edward Relph. In his seminal book *Place and Placelessness* (1976) Relph uses a phenomenological methodology to analyse several decisive qualities of place. He seems to share Tuan's ideas in many aspects, such as the role of experience in understanding place. According to his reasoning, "places are

significant centres of our immediate experiences of the world" (Relph 1976, p. 141). Relph goes as far as to suggest a scale for measuring the significance of place, by assigning as factors what he calls "insiderness" and "outsiderness" (1976, p.50). As it is quite obvious, insiderness refers to the extent to which a person, a group or a community is tied to or involved in a specific place. On the other hand, outsiderness would correspond to the degree of alienation from a place. Consequently, depending on the intensity of this involvement and experience, different places will have different degrees of meaning for each person. This line of thought will be reintroduced into the discussion further on in Section 3A.1.3, when we will consider the construction of imaginary places through the input of stories and/or other materials, as well as reflect on the role of the random passer-by who in this case, according to Relph, would bear a high degree of outsiderness.

In a quite nostalgic tone, Relph has also used the term "authentic" in describing a sense of place that is truly and deeply lived. In his own words, an authentic sense of place would be "a direct and genuine experience of the entire complex of the identity of places – not mediated and distorted through a series of quite arbitrary social and intellectual fashions about how that experience should be, nor following stereotyped conventions" (1976, p. 64). Relph identifies that in contemporary society authenticity is gradually being reduced and he introduces another term to describe this situation, namely "placelessness". This will be brought into the discussion in Section 3A.1.1, concerning the dialectics between place and non-place as conceptualised by Marc Augé.

### **1.03 - Place as process**

In order to better understand the subject, and to address issues concerning the relation between sound and place within the framework of aural auras, I will take a brief look into some of the most influential theories that have developed around the notion of place. Interestingly, most of these views seem to adopt the position that place constitutes an open-ended process.

In describing human behaviour with regards to the regularity of place in everyday life, David Seamon (1980) has developed the concept of "place ballet". His idea is that places are being performed on a daily basis, and it is through this performance that places attain their character and their bond with humans (Ibid.). Seamon's postulation has been very influential with regards to linking the conceptual with the practical part of my research. As will be demonstrated later,

the idea of intentionally performing a place in order to extract its histories and identity has been a driving force towards the realization of all four works in my portfolio. This indeed relates to the concept of "orchestrated aural auras" as will be explored in Chapter 2. Seamon's thoughts seem to follow similar lines to those of human geographer Nigel Thrift. Thrift (Thrift and Crang, 2000) argues that place is inextricably connected to the world, in an embodied sense. He suggests that places are essentially performed by people on an everyday basis and that they are thus in a mode of constant reshaping (Ibid.). The idea that places may be performed may be fruitfully and creatively developed through an artistic prism, i.e. sound art or music. This very interesting idea has been explored in practice through this research's portfolio works, as will be shown in the following chapters. In a comparable tone to that of Thrift, geographer Allan Pred (1984) opposes the opinion that places should be thought of in terms of fixed, visible and measurable attributes but proposes instead a notion of place that emphasizes change and progress. Another interesting view is that of American philosopher Edward who links place with memory, echoing Tuan as described above. Casey (1987, p.186) states that "It is the stabilizing persistence of place as the container of experiences that contributes so powerfully to its intrinsic memorability" and he goes as far as saying that "memory is naturally place-oriented or at least place-supported" (Ibid.). This leads to the supposition that when we directly experience place – as opposed to when we hear or read about it through secondary sources – the triggering of memory is more actual. As will be discussed in detail in following sections, being on-site produces a dynamic that can offer a more profound experience since the subject is actually participating actively in the making of the place's history.

Art critic, curator and activist Lucy Lippard has contributed extremely constructively to the debate associated with place. In her formative book *The Lure of the Local: Senses of Place in a Multicentered Society* (1998) she theorises that "local places" consist of a hybridity and this hybridity changes whenever people enter it (Lippard, 1998, p.6). In other words, Lippard suggests that places are endowed with an interactive dynamism, in the sense that this so-called "hybridity" dramatically changes each time a new facet is in contact with a place. Elsewhere in the same book Lippard points to the significance of the factor of time in the context of place, stressing that "what was here is inseparable from what is here" (Ibid., p.116). Subsequently, a more all-encompassing attitude towards understanding place is needed, which will have to take into consideration its past, present and future. The second part of the research's title is informed by the above contemplation; places that carry complex biographies are rich in all three dimensions of time (past, present, future) and it is through this density that they acquire their

aural aura. Lippard's aforementioned book has been deeply inspirational for my research and her line of thought has managed to somehow encompass all the views mentioned above regarding the notion of place. Her work has also facilitated the formation of a theoretical framework for several conversations to be initiated regarding three important axes of my research: place, art and imagination.

This brief presentation and evaluation of some of the key theories on place has enabled the configuration of a context from which we can draw relevant ideas in order to develop or support new arguments. As previously mentioned in this chapter, the concept of place constitutes the backbone of my argument and hence a reflection on these ideas was certainly a necessary step. However, this should under no circumstances be taken to be an extensive or exhaustive survey of this complex concept, but nevertheless, as this dissertation proceeds, more relevant features and findings will inevitably join the discussion adding to this incomplete picture, strengthening the general dialogue and offering a more comprehensive understanding of place. Some crucial aspects with regards to place such as the political dimension have been deliberately omitted from this chapter, as they will be presented in later sections, mainly in Chapters 3A and 4A. Moving to the next sections, I shall attempt to gain an insight into how place is employed in art and later connect these ideas with my own works, placing my sound installations into this context.

## **1.1 - Site-specificity**

As mentioned above, over the past 50 years, the notion of place has increasingly been catching the attention of artists as a source of inspiration and as a fresh attitude towards the aesthetics of art. Important, yet ambiguous questions such as "What is the role of art?" have been reintroduced into the debate, after a long period of dominance by modernist tenets that wanted art to be autonomous. Briefly, in modernist aesthetic theory, the main concern is the beauty of the object and its value with regards to the aesthetic experience it is able to trigger. Therefore the artist's vision comes before anything else. According to Hilde Hein (1996, p.406) "The autonomous individual, glorified in the person of the artist and secondarily in the created object, equally transcends both life and the public, whose emancipatory benefit is vicarious and derivative". In other words, art is separated from everyday life and from any social, political,

historical behaviours and/or representations. Art critic Clive Bell (1924, p.9) summarises the modernist principles declaring that,

If a representative form has value, it is as form, not as representation. The representative element in a work of art may or may not be harmful; always it is irrelevant. For, to appreciate a work of art we need bring with us nothing from life, no knowledge of its ideas and affairs, no familiarity with its emotions.

As indicated above, according to modernist aesthetics the notion of place in art is quite irrelevant and with no value, not to mention that it is something which is purposefully excluded. In a postmodern era, especially within the general movement towards change, freedom and the breaking of taboos of the 1960s and 1970s, there has been a radical rethinking of the role of art and its value. In order to be meaningful to people, art was called to follow a different trajectory, one that would deeply consider social and cultural dimensions and reflect life directly or indirectly. In doing so, art had to break free from the barriers that kept it within exclusive art institutions and museums, directed only towards an acutely homogeneous public.

Various creative forms emerged within the context of the above reordering; this led to the formation of new artistic styles that essentially blurred the edges of the established individual disciplines. Erika Suderburg (2000, p.2) acknowledges that "this work grows out of the collapse of medium specificity and the boundaries that had defined disciplines". Beginning in the 1960s, this new mode of thinking gave birth to practices such as performance art, minimalism, guerrilla art, happenings, interventions, land art, installation art and many more. These practices usually employed interdisciplinary gestures that dematerialised the art object and strived to create intangible experiences or to provoke a conceptual narrative (Lippard, 1973). The aim was not to create works within controlled settings such as galleries, but rather to implement their ideas in alternative spaces that were usually public. Naturally, this brought forward the notion that the site itself is part of the experience of the artwork (Suderburg, 2000). In April 1964 German Fluxus artist Wolf Vostell invited people to his happening titled *You* in Great Neck, Long Island. The event took place within an outdoor setting in and around a swimming pool, an orchard and a tennis court (Goldberg, 1988). The audience was directed to walk through a very narrow labyrinth that was full of advertisement leaflets from *Life* magazine. Between the three locations (the swimming pool, the orchard and the tennis court) there were sound recordings coming from loudspeakers, which were repeatedly calling out "You" (Ibid.). Also, television sets were placed on hospital beds and around 40 performers wearing gas masks were involved in extreme situations such as throwing smoke bombs,

burning TV sets and creating a chaotic atmosphere. The audience was also encouraged to participate and they were given water pistols filled with ink and gas masks (Ibid.). Thus, the participants were essentially performers too since they were actively involved in the realisation of the work. With his work Vostell aimed at awakening the consciousness of the audience through horrific and chaotic scenes (Ibid.). As discussed above, these actions dematerialised the art object, offering the audience an "intermedial" and immersive experience, rather than just a visual or other representation. These actions move away from the restricted and/or defined contours of art institutions and "enter" outdoor public space, where the characteristics of the environment are considered ingredients of the physical as well as the conceptual nature of the work. The themes of immersivity, intermediality and interaction with regards to the art movements of the 1960s-1970s, as well as in relation to my own works in the portfolio will be further elaborated in Chapter 2.

"Public art" was one principal element that reflected the dynamics of the above movement. Stefan Gaie (2002, p.54) points to this: "[...] beginning with the 1970s, public art refuses the status of aesthetic autonomy and programmatically aims at a real dialogue with architecture and space". Public art recognizes the critical role of place in the function of art, and the need of pursuing a "site-specific" approach in order to reach a meaningful communication of the artwork. It escapes from the galleries and the art institutions and moves out into the public domain articulating a new language that aims to essentially foster a dialogue between place and public. In doing this, it is inevitable that the dynamics surrounding the roles of each "actor" – artist, audience, artwork – are dramatically deconstructed (in contrast with the previously established absolute hierarchical shape), reaching new balances according to the idiosyncrasy of each situation. The artwork need not be a tangible object anymore, it transcends this obsession with visual form and aesthetic experience and finds conceptual as well as practical ways of posing questions and raising issues concerning real situations in real places. This has been pointed out clearly by Miwon Kwon (2004, p.24):

Going against the grain of institutional habits and desires, and continuing to resist the commodification of art in/for the marketplace, site-specific art adopts strategies that are either aggressively antivisual – informational, textual, expositional, didactic – or immaterial altogether – gestures, events, or performances bracketed by temporal boundaries. The "work" no longer seeks to be a noun/object but a verb/process, provoking the viewers' critical (not just physical) acuity regarding the ideological conditions of their viewing.

### 1.1.1 - Site-specific / place-specific

Site-specificity is at the core of public art, as a means of methodology, in all stages of the creative process. Furthermore, installation art, regardless of the fact that it is often hosted in galleries, is nevertheless more powerful and meaningful within a site-specific context, as will be elaborated in Section 2.3.2. At this point, and informed by the above theoretical content, it would be fruitful to differentiate between the terms "site-specific" and "place-specific", since the manner in which they have been employed so far has been quite vague. Building upon the above distinction between space and place, an attempt will now be made to explore these concepts from a more practical angle, that of the artistic process.

In the final pages of her book *The Lure of the Local*, Lippard makes a clear distinction between the fairly established term site-specific, and the more intimate-oriented place-specific. In her own words, (1997, p.274) "site specific art conforms to the topographic details of the ground on which the work rests and/or to the components of its immediate natural built environment", whereas "place-specific art may incorporate some or all of these elements but can add a social dimension that refers to the human history and memory, land use, and political agendas relevant to the specific place". In a similar vein, American artist Christopher Sperandio – the one half of the collaborative group "Grennan and Sperandio" – in an interview with Miwon Kwon (2002, p.109) states that the group has abandoned the limited framework of the site-specific in favour of a more expansive notion of the "community-specific". For Sperandio the term site implies a space that belongs to "someone else" (Ibid.). In May 1993 Curator Mary Jane Jacob conceived and curated the project "Culture in Action" in Chicago. The eight individual works that the project consisted of followed the concept of community collaboration (Jacob, Brenson and Olson, 1995). This was a deliberate choice by Jacob who wished to address issues of communication between artist and audience as well as to criticize the course that the field of public art was taking (Ibid). She believed that there should be a move from the rather abstract concept of site-specificity to something more meaningful that would shrink the distance between the traditionally separate poles of production and reception (Ibid.).

### **1.1.2 - Artist and place**

Through the process of moving towards a place-specific ethic, the artist's concern would not necessarily be to deal with the physical attributes of the chosen site, but rather to adopt a more intimate approach to the specific place, in order to achieve an organic relationship with it. In her article "The Portable Border: Site-Specificity, Art and the US-Mexico Frontier" (1994, p.63), Claire Fox acknowledges that: "An art of place is concerned less with the phenomenal and geological aspects of a place than with the cultural, historical, ethnic, linguistic, political and mythological dimensions of a site". In order to work with place, it is crucial for the artist to understand that "a place is not merely a medium of art, but also its contents" (Ibid.). Thus, place – whether physical space or as expressed in other mental connotations that it carries – is actually the protagonist in the work, leading the creative process as will be demonstrated in Section 2.1. In order to be able to act in such a manner and to create works that would be meaningful, one has to understand the identity of the place in a spherical way, transforming oneself into an insider – if this is at all possible – or to live the place "physically, symbolically or empathetically" as Lippard suggests (1997, p.289), and achieve a level of resonance with it. In doing so, unexpected facets of the place could be revealed through the work, and past stories, events and experiences could be unearthed and exposed again into the present. These notions are to be further developed in a succeeding chapter.

Within our era's "time-space compression", and the growing commercialisation of art, the mobility of artists, who move in order to create site-specific works in different locations, has dramatically increased. Lippard (1997, p.278) problematizes this phenomenon and notes that, while outsiders may bring fresh eyes and insights, and create amazing things, their art has nonetheless little to do with the host place: "Such works might qualify as significant art about place but certainly not art of place" (Ibid.). Soundscape composer Hildegard Westerkamp comments on a similar phenomenon from the perspective of sonic material being used in compositions but taken from sound libraries rather than the composer recording them in the field: "In such a case, the composer relates to the recording as an acquired object rather than as a representation of an experienced place and of lived time" (Westerkamp 2002). She continues saying that, "The composer is working from within a schizophrenic stance, and creating a new schizophrenic experience" (Ibid.). She then too elaborates the problematic phenomenon of the "outsider artist": "If composers do record their own sounds and soundscape, another important question is whether they are familiar with the recorded environment or whether

they are visitors, foreigners" (Ibid.). It is therefore critical for the artist to not just be a visitor of the place in which he/she is creating the work, but to spend a considerable period of time there, finding ways of understanding its complex biography and attending to its aural aura. The artist will therefore be in a better position to proceed with the creation of an artwork, aiming to foster a dialogue between place and audience, and to communicate this aural aura, as will be examined further in Chapter 2.

It would be useful to conclude this chapter by bringing Richard Serra's multi-referenced and multi-debated work *Tilted Arc* (1981) as an example, in order to understand the complications that may develop around an art of place. *Tilted Arc* was removed from its location at the Federal Plaza in New York, some eight years after its creation. The work was a 36 meters long and 3.6 meters tall sculpture made of red steel that basically crossed the square and separated it in two. Following a plethora of complaints and letters of discontent by the everyday users of the square, a committee was appointed to investigate the issue. After a three-day conference with all interested parts, the debate ended with the decision to disassemble the work and relocate it to another place. Serra rejected the relocation of *Tilted Arc*, claiming that the work was site-specific and thus it would not have any meaning in a different setting. In defending his work Serra (1991, p. 574) stated that:

Site-specific works deal with the environmental components of given places. The scale, size and location of site-specific works are determined by the topography of the site, whether it be urban or landscape or architectural enclosure. The works become part of the site and restructure both conceptually and perceptually the organisation of the site.

According to Serra therefore, his work was meant to rearrange the use of the Plaza as well as the way people experienced and perceived it. The success of a work of art for Serra would be its ability to interrupt ordinary life and to address a challenge in the way people use space (Gaie, 2002, p.54). Serra acknowledges the homogenisation in our movements as well as in our cultural particularities brought by the rapid expansion of capitalism. His understanding is that site-specific art should try and bring back the identity and characteristics of the place or rather to create new ones (Ibid.).

While Serra's intentions seemed to have considered multiple aspects of the specific place, both conceptually and physically, he nevertheless failed to anticipate the actual impact of the work on the everyday users of the Plaza. For them the work was merely an unsettling obstacle to their movement and had absolutely no purpose of existence at that particular place. Moreover,

Serra was accused by art-connoisseurs that his work echoed a different era – that of modernism – where art was not concerned with context (as discussed above). Surely, such a large work, installed by an outsider who had won a competition configured by other outsiders, could be considered by insiders as inappropriate and provoking. Thus, the act of installing this work at that specific place also has a political reverberation, which assuredly needs to be contemplated by the artist, the curator, or the decision-makers.

## **1.2 - Conclusions**

The notion of place is the backbone of this research project. All works presented in the project's portfolio explore places with complex biographies and follow a sound art trajectory. The work differentiates place from space and begins with the premise that place is not merely geometrical perception; it is rather a more dynamic notion that involves experience, history, memory and emotion. The majority of ideas and theories that deal with place seem to agree that place is not something static but that it is rather an open-ended concept. Places are performed on a daily basis by humans and this performance contributes towards a continuous reshaping of their histories. Thus as Lippard suggests (1998, p.6), place has a hybrid form, which changes with contact and interaction. In this sense, the past, present and future of a place are indivisible since one crucially affects the other.

The research suggests that artists who investigate places should come close to place and attempt to enter into conversation with it. In this way a place's histories and its particularities will be more deeply and meaningfully understood. In contrast with modernist aesthetics, where, according to Bell (1924), a work of art should not necessarily bear any characteristics of life or any emotions, a place-specific approach produces works that scrutinize the layers of history in order to uncover life and emotion.

Places with complex biographies are characterised by their "charged" atmosphere which, as I suggest in the following chapter, can be perceived as an aural impression.

# Chapter 2 - Aural Aura

## 2.0 - Background

[...] every space has its own strong aura. I feel like a dog, sniffing around, trying to understand the atmosphere. How does the aura speak? It's like a ghost. (Kabakov cited in Kaplan, 2004, p.5)

As outlined in the previous chapter, understanding place proves to be an ambiguous and subjective experience since the very notion of place is subtle, intangible and personal. Yet, it seems that place's nature is somehow surrounding; it dwells both in our body and mind as well as in the external environment, or even better, somewhere in-between. In this context, it would possibly be apt to link the notion of place with the atmosphere that characterises it, the so-called "*genius loci*". *Genius loci* is a Latin term which in classical Roman religion referred to the "spirit or guardian deity of a place" (Relph, 2015). This term is also used today to denote the prevalent atmosphere or character of a place (Ibid.). We can feel places through their distinct atmospheres, which conversely seem to be formed through our own condition, our own imagination; a vicious cycle. A cycle that is made evident in Andrei Tarkovsky's science fiction film *Stalker* (1979), where the protagonist (the stalker) informs his companions that the Zone – a restricted and dangerous site where strange things come about and wishes come true – is a very complicated system where everything that occurs depends not on the Zone but on them. The Zone is what they have created through their condition (Tarkovsky, 1979).

I suggest that we perceive this atmosphere, which is so characteristic of places, mostly as an aural impression. It is not necessarily a corporeal hearing experience per se, but rather something contiguous with the feeling that distinguishes our auditory perception. It is not reserved only for the reception of soundings, but also harks back to histories, attitudes, feelings, ideas, experiences, relationships etc. This is what I term "aural aura".

## 2.1 - Atmosphere

As demonstrated in the previous chapter, there is evidently a strong connection between place and person. Usually this connection is personal and subjective, depending on one's experience

within the context of a specific place. It should be stressed however, that the theories and ideas developed in Chapter 1, concerning the relationship of person and place, should in no way lead us to romanticise this relationship, since it is not always of a positive nature. It could be an uncomfortable and negative relationship as a result of traumatising experiences.

The junction or intermediate space, which brings place and person together, is according to philosopher Gernot Böhme (2000), a discernible attribute of atmospheres. Böhme acknowledges that atmospheres are typically an in-between phenomenon, standing between subjects and objects (Ibid., p.14). As he postulates,

[...] one can describe them [atmospheres] as object-like emotions, which are randomly cast into a space. But one must at the same time describe them as subjective, insofar as they are nothing without a discerning Subject. But their great value lies exactly in this in-betweenness. (Ibid., p.15)

What is interesting in the above suggestion is that Böhme turns us away from the two prevailing assumptions surrounding the topic of "charged" – in the sense of being full of energy from past, present and future events – places; the first being that this energy may be detected in the place itself (house, building, area, etc) and the second that this dynamic is created in our mental realm and thus it is a reflection of a place through the mirror of our perception and imagination. During the course of my research and especially the first two to three years, I found myself building my concept of aural auras based on the assumption that aural auras are housed in places. As I progressed with my research, the assumption that aural auras of places are not actually found in places per se, but rather they are to be found in our mind, took over. Although at present I still regard this question as not decisively settled either way, theories such as Böhme's on atmospheres provide a very coherent possibility, which integrates the two assumptions. My understanding of Böhme's claim is that atmospheres could be seen as a dynamic language that enables a non-verbal dialogue between places and people, and that this language seeks feedback from both ends in order to be active and effective. Put in simple words, a place can "talk to us", when we manage to penetrate its atmosphere.

According to philosopher Edward Casey (1996, p.24) places carry a gathering and holding capacity:

Minimally, places gather things in their midst – where "things" connote various animate and inanimate entities. Places also gather experiences and histories, even languages and

thoughts. Think only of what it means to go back to a place you know, finding it full of memories and expectations, old things and new things, the familiar and the strange, and much more besides.

While places may gather experiences, histories, and thoughts as Casey asserts above, these can only be exposed through our act of "going back to the place" (Ibid.), keen to join the dialogue and eager to "sniff around" trying to understand its atmosphere, as Ilya Kabakov suggests in the passage at the beginning of this chapter.

An artist following a place-specific routine, as discussed in Chapter 1 (Section 1.1.2), enters this dialogue and by grasping the atmosphere creates works that interact with place, keeping the dialogue active by enhancing this atmosphere, and ultimately inviting the audience to join it too. It wouldn't be inapplicable – in the context of Böhme's analysis – to propose that through this process of enhancement, the artist's gesture somehow duplicates the atmosphere, since the artwork actually acquires an in-between role as well. In most installation art and specifically in sound art installations, it becomes the case that the work is actually an "orchestrated atmosphere" (as I call it – see discussion below), which takes on exactly this role: to enact an evocative and meaningful contact between the place and the audience. In place-specific installations – as will be argued further below in this chapter (Section 2.3.2) – this contact would essentially be much more meaningful, since the place itself is part of the work; it actually constitutes the body and the soul of the work; it is the protagonist (see Section 1.1.2), which surrounds all the other ingredients (as mentioned in the introduction of this chapter). And as place has a surrounding nature, so does a sound installation, both in a physical and a conceptual sense. According to Ros Bandt (2006, pp.353-354),

Sound installation surrounds and immerses the perceiver's entire being in a way that no other artform can [...] Sound installation's most important dimension, that of time, can take the consciousness into the familiar and non-familiar, the present and past, reality and memory at the same time as its presence is felt as a visceral physical phenomenon.

The diagram shown in Figure 1 is an attempt to demonstrate the train of thought underlying the above paragraph. The lines connecting the circles show the relationships between each part, and the arrows demonstrate the direction of the exchange and/or the energy flow regarding this relationship. The artist enters into a dialogue with place through its mediator, namely the atmosphere. Then the artist proceeds with the conceptualisation of a work, which is place-specific not only in theory but also in practice (installed on site). The work interacts with place, enhancing the existing atmosphere and maintaining (in theory) a dynamic conversation. This

conversation is enabled when the audience experiences the work and consequently interacts indirectly with place. Moreover, as mentioned above, in a place-specific setting, place is the ground upon which all this action occurs. It is an inextricable part of the work, encircling all other components and this is the reason it is additionally represented as a big circle in the diagram.

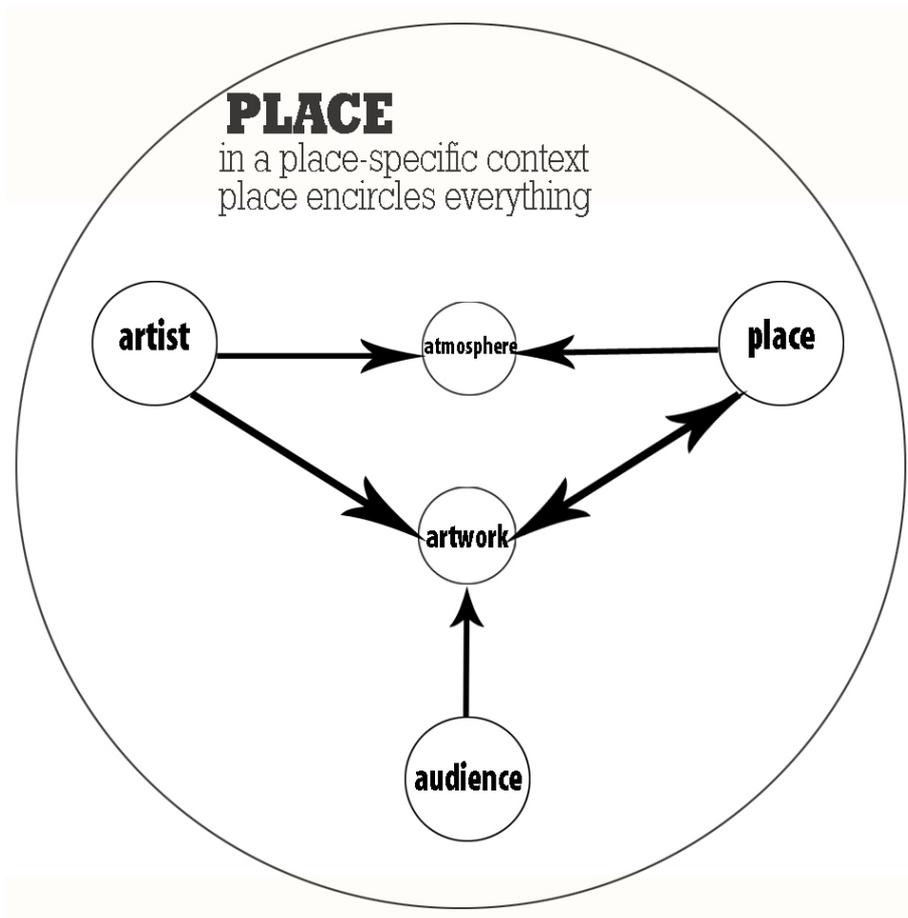


Figure 1 - Diagram showing relationship between place, artist and audience

German philosopher Gottfried Leibniz developed a theory that he termed "minute perceptions". Leibniz (1996, p.xix) refers to unconscious perceptions that consistently feed the conscious perception, greatly influencing the way we understand a place or a situation. In his own words:

There are hundreds of indications leading us to conclude that at every moment there is in us an infinity of perceptions, unaccompanied by awareness or reflection; that is, of alterations in the soul itself, of which we are unaware because these impressions are either too minute and too numerous, or else too unvarying, so that they are not sufficiently distinctive on their own. But when they are combined with others they do nevertheless have their effect and make themselves felt, at least confusedly, within the whole. (Ibid., p.53)

These unconscious perceptions, as he suggests, have a virtual existence. According to Leibniz (Ibid.), this virtual existence characterises also our memory in the sense that all our experiences occurring in the present, happen in an unconscious manner over huge amounts of memory layers. In a similar vein, Virginia Woolf (1939, p.67) recognises that our lives are to a great extent lived on an unconscious level and that memory acts catalytically towards this. As she appreciates, there are moments of "being" rooted in moments of "not being" (Ibid.). These moments of "not being" that are supplied by memory, seem as if they were "happening independently" (Ibid.). American anthropologist Irving Hallowell (1955, p.17) observes that, "Perhaps the most striking feature of man's spatialization of his world is the fact that it never appears to be exclusively limited to the pragmatic level of action and perceptual experience".

Finnish architect Juhani Pallasmaa's analysis in *Space, Place and Atmosphere: Peripheral Perception in Existential Experience* (2011) has been extremely influential and has unravelled thematic possibilities with regards to aural aura. Furthermore, it has provided me with a better understanding of how these themes may be explored through my portfolio works. Early on in his proposal, he recognises that: "The judgement of environmental character is a complex fusion of countless factors which are immediately and synthetically grasped as an overall atmosphere, feeling, mood, or ambience" (Pallasmaa, 2011, p.1). According to Pallasmaa (Ibid.), the character of place is not perceived through precise and conscious observation but rather in a diffused and peripheral manner. This evaluation also has a temporal dimension, as it fuses memory, perception and imagination.

Pallasmaa seems to agree with Böhme and confirms my train of thought and the diagram presented above. He maintains that atmosphere is the ingredient that "gives the place its unique perceptual and memorable character and identity" (Ibid., p.2), an idea that brings us back to the notion of *genius loci*. He recognises the exchange between subject and object when there is a contact experience, and goes so far as to say that: "As we enter a space, the space enters us" (Ibid.). Pallasmaa gives us a very insightful definition for experiential atmosphere, thus encapsulating the discussion above:

Atmosphere is the overarching perceptual, sensory and emotive impression of a setting or a social situation. It provides the unifying coherence and character for a room, space, place, and landscape, or a social encounter. It is "the common denominator", "the colouring" or "the feel" of the experiential situation. Atmosphere is a mental "thing", an experiential property or characteristic that is suspended between the object and the subject. (Ibid.)

The role of atmosphere, as analysed above, could also be seen as the medium that enables an interaction between subject and object. It may also be claimed that places have an immersive character both in terms of the physical sensation produced by their dimensional parameters but also from a more conceptual perspective which concerns their histories. Moreover, within this context, the theme of intermediality is also relevant here and will be discussed below.

According to Joan Soler-Adillon (2015, p.43), "interactivity is defined and confronted to the metaphor of the conversation". Like a conversation, in interactive systems there is a dynamic exchange of information between two or more active participants and the flow is bidirectional (Noble, 2009, p.5). Interactivity is a field that is being intensely explored by artists, especially in relation to the advances of digital technology during the last century. Usually the designed system responds to the participants' intentional or unintentional input or actions and this relationship creates such an effect that it essentially carries the meaning of the artwork. The audience acquires a different role to that of a passive receiver; they actually have an active part in the formation of the artwork and thus the conventional hierarchy from production to reception is drastically altered. This relates to the earlier discussion in Chapter 1, regarding the vast transformations in the art world during the 1960s and 1970s, opposing modernism values and finding ways of bringing art closer to people. Interaction is certainly an artistic gesture that augments the involvement of the audience in the creative process, making it an effective way of communication. Nevertheless, there is always the danger of interactive works losing their artistic value and becoming merely an entertaining game. For works dealing with place and history especially, it is crucial that the interactive system is used subtly and that it is able to support the thematic context rather than acting as a distracting or disorientating element through its technical design. Software such as Max/MSP offers an open-ended platform for designing interactive systems, incorporating audio as well as visual elements. As will be shown in Chapter 4, my work *H4C* makes use of the aforementioned software in order to produce an interactive audiovisual environment. Christian Moeller created an interactive sound installation titled *On Air* (2003)<sup>1</sup> at Eggenberg Castle in Graz, Austria. He placed 44 steel poles with touch sensors in the castle's courtyard, each one tuned to a specific radio station of a different country via satellite. When the passers-by touched the poles these triggered the broadcasted signal of the corresponding radio station. Moeller's gesture created a very interesting sound collage,

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.christian-moeller.com/display.php?project\\_id=37](http://www.christian-moeller.com/display.php?project_id=37) [Accessed 10 July 2016].

which connected radio soundscapes heard in different locations, to the specific locale. *On Air* is an idea very similar to Bill Fontana's concept of "sound sculpture", as will be discussed in Section 2.2.2.1.

Returning to the circumstance of people entering a "charged" place we can claim that there is evident interaction occurring. This interaction is enacted by the atmosphere of the place acquiring the role of an interface, which enables a sort of communication between the objects and the subjects. The conversation that is initiated is rather a subconscious condition, something that takes place in our mental realm. In reality the above consideration cannot be accurate as one can observe that it is impossible for inanimate objects to have any sort of active role, let alone an interactive one. Nevertheless, as will be shown further on in this thesis, the objects' histories enable them to transmit signals carrying information that incite an emotional response to subjects and enact a dialogue.

Aside from their interactive character, atmospheres of charged places also have an immersive quality in that they manage to enhance the senses of subjects, enabling a kind of subconscious understanding and association with place. As Bonnie Mitchell (2010, p.99) postulates, "Sensory immersion is fundamental to our relationship with the natural environment". Pallasmaa's (2011, p.2) view that, "As we enter a space, the space enters us", can be a very poetic way of representing Mitchell's quote. This is surely more apt in the case of charged places, where the senses become oversensitive due to the special biography that accompanies the space. In the arts and especially in installation art, the concept of immersion has played an important role which needs to be considered. Immersive works seek to evoke an experience of constructed realities in which the boundaries between real and virtual are blurred (Mitchell, 2010). The audience is immersed in an aesthetic world produced by the installation, which can be visual or multisensory. Bandt, as quoted above, acknowledges the leading role of sound installation in effectively immersing the "perceiver's entire being" (2006, p.353). The spatiality of sound establishes a strong relationship with architecture as it fills its entire volume and becomes shaped by it. Reversely, architecture becomes audible and acquires a temporal dimension. As Brandon Labelle (2007, p.xiv) notes, "Architecture is taken on, dissected, and redrawn by positioning sound work in relation to its given acoustics". In a sound installation environment and especially in a surround-sound configuration, the audience finds itself in a transformed space that defies the realistic essence of its physical features. This is also a theme presented in Chapter 4A (Section 4A.1.5) in the discussion of the project *H4C*, where the audience is

expected to use their imagination in order to transcend the rational dimension of a newly refurbished room in which several seemingly irrelevant objects are hung and are vibrating. The atmosphere orchestrated by artists who use sound is tightly connected to the temporal dimension and thus, as Bandt suggests, it immerses the audience and travels their consciousness "into the familiar and non-familiar, the present and past, reality and memory" (Ibid.).

The creation of immersive experiences in installations very often involves intermediality, a term introduced in 1965 by Fluxus artist Dick Higgins (2001) when describing the characteristics and tendencies of the avant-garde artistic practice of the 1960s, i.e. the Fluxus movement. He specifically referred to a conceptual fusion created through the use of different media (Ibid.). The Fluxus artists aimed at breaking down the disciplinary borders, or rather, they wished to observe them through collaborative means (LaBelle, 2007, p.59). According to Klaus Bruhn Jensen (2008, p.1) "the intermedia terminology has been employed to stress the innovative or transgressive potential of artworks that articulate their message in the interstices between two or more media forms". Jensen goes so far as to compare the meaning of intermediality with the term "fixed media". As he notes, intermedia refers to a more open-ended creative processes, usually located outside the gallery or museum setting, such as the "practice of art as installation, as event or, as performance" (Ibid.). Fixed media on the other hand, denotes a more static combination of material means of representation, typically presented in established art institutions (Ibid.). This comparison connects with the discussion in Sections 1.1.1 and 1.1.2 concerning the importance of following a place-specific path with regard to artworks that deal with notions of place. Intermediality is a typical configuration in immersive artworks. The different media employed actually depend on each other but they also interact in various ways, offering a broadened mode of communication and experience. Higgins' concept of *Danger Music* is one example where the line between the different mediums incorporated – music, performance art, theatre, activism – are not clear. In the *Danger Music* series, the performers are asked to proceed with a series of actions that would harm the audience or themselves, either physically or psychologically. Higgins' *Danger Music #17* is a piece that asks the performer to scream, and it is left open to interpretations. One very interesting performance of the piece was that of Jenn Cole and Didier Morelli for "The Future of Cage: Credo" conference at the University of Toronto in October 2012. Cole and Morelli turned all lights off and led the audience from their seats to the stage. As Cole (2012) describes, they cracked pink Canadian Tire glow sticks, dropped them into pails of water and began to

scrawl on the floor with chalk. Then they started screaming out the words they wrote. Through its intermediality – use of sound, performance, and light – the specific interpretation of the work manages to create an immersive experience where the audience is found in the centre of the performance.

Within the context of the above discussion, the works presented in my portfolio create environments that focus on the history of places with complex biographies and these works are characterised at varying different levels by their interactive, immersive as well as their intermedial nature. *H4C* is an interactive sound installation that fuses elements from various disciplines such as music, sculpture, video art and light art. It is interactive in many of its features, as will be analysed in Chapter 3B. The installation immerses the audience who can freely move between the hanging objects and their actions dramatically affect the designed system giving direction to the work. Unlike *H4C* which was a commissioned solo work for a group exhibition, the projects presented in Chapter 4, namely *Rainzonances4* and *Rainzonances5* are collaborative and follow a path influenced by the revolutionary ideas and actions of the 1960s and 1970s movement in the arts. The works are not institutionalised but on the contrary they are self-produced, they take place in the public domain and target the community, the everyday users and passers-by. By doing so the works dynamically trigger people's curiosity, surprise and speculation and allow them to freely produce their own meanings and interpretations. This is a contrasting situation to the case of a gallery setting in which there is usually a specific curatorial trajectory that definitely guides the work's production as well as its reception. The collaborative nature of the two projects produced interdisciplinary works that are quite open in their form and that scrutinize the concept from different angles. Through collaboration the process of artistic creation follows a very unique course which is based on different views and explores various materials and techniques. Joint artistic effort can produce fascinating and extraordinary results which can comment effectively on issues related to the project. It is certain that the collaborative nature of the two aforementioned works has been a decisive factor for their success both in terms of communication as well as the artistic experience gathered from the procedure.

Another feature of *Rainzonances1* and *Rainzonances2* that also characterises the so-called "happenings"<sup>2</sup> and "environments" of the 1960s, is their ephemerality<sup>3</sup>. As LaBelle (2007, p.54) describes,

Happenings and Environments grew out of a distinct moment of art-making that followed on the heels of John Cage and Jackson Pollock, and the overall shift from an art object to a greater situational event based on chance, found objects, and theatrical performance.

As mentioned above, these happenings were ephemeral in nature, as were most of the constituent works of my two projects. Especially the works *AerodromeLefkosia* in *Rainzonances4*, as well as *Ambient Frequencies*, *ΠΡΟΣΕΧΩΣ*, and *Act Zero* in *Rainzonances5*, were events, performances, or interventions that lasted only during their occurrence. Technically they involved the rearrangement of both the space and of its relationship with the objects. *Rainzonances4* and *5* are not considered as interactive in the explicit technical sense discussed above. The flow of information is not mutual between the audience and the artwork as it is in *H4C*. Nevertheless the works are immersive as they actually place the audience at their centre with the very crucial role of interpreting the work and absorbing the meaning. As in Cole's and Morelli's performance of *Danger Music #17* described above, the audience is also positioned on the stage, immersed in the performance and the place itself.

## **2.2 - Silence / Noise – Background / Foreground**

### **2.2.0 - Introduction**

It is now perhaps an appropriate moment to introduce the dialectics of noise/silence and of background/foreground into the discussion, as this will ultimately lead to the assembly of the conceptual contour apropos of aural auras. At this point, a brief examination of the works and proposals of pivotal figures and/or movements in the sonic arts that, to various extents, addressed the concepts of noise and silence will provide us with a robust theoretical framework for developing and supporting the idea of aural aura. What is crucial to the development of my

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<sup>2</sup> A term coined by Fluxus artist Allan Kaprow in 1957 to describe their anti-narrative performances.

<sup>3</sup> The word ephemeral derives from the Greek compound word *εφήμερος*, which means lasting for one day.

argument is that background sound, which is usually ignored or regarded as silence, seems to exemplify places, offering insights into their history and biography. In this vacuum, in this ostensible silence, we can find ourselves auditioning echoes from the past, present and future, echoes resonating with our subconscious awareness. In this sense, background sound is an agent of intersection and interaction between people and places.

### 2.2.1 - Noise

In most cases the term noise is used to denote an uncomfortable situation with regards to the acoustic environment. It usually constitutes unwanted sound that enters our acoustic domain and causes interruption, interference and distress. Cox (2009, p.20) acknowledges that:

The discourse of information theory lends scientific support to this everyday position, taking noise to be what interferes with the transmission of messages and signals. For the information theorist, noise is the muck that accumulates on or around a message as it makes its way from sender to receiver.

In his inspiring book *Noise: The Political Economy of Music* first published in 1977, French economist and writer Jacques Attali provides a definition of noise that runs along the same lines as the above quote. For Attali (1985, p.26) "A noise is a resonance that interferes with the audition of a message in the process of emission". Here, noise acquires a more general meaning, to include not only aural phenomena, but also visual and other. For instance, we often refer to television noise when the pixel quality of our television screen is low; in the days of analogue TV, noise was present when the TV screen was malfunctioning, due to when the antennas' reception being sensitive to weather conditions and other phenomena.

In his essay *The Liberation of Sound* written in 1962, composer Edgard Varèse discusses the inclusion of noise into contemporary music. He appreciates that what noise constitutes is merely a matter of perspective, pointing out that "noise is any sound one doesn't like" (Varèse, 1962).

French engineer and researcher Abraham Moles provides a more scientific justification, echoing Varèse's argument that noise is something subjective. According to Moles (1966, p.78):

There is no absolute structural difference between noise and signal. They are of the same nature. The only difference, which can be logically established between them, is based exclusively on the concept of intent on the part of the transmitter. A noise is a signal that the sender does not want to transmit.

For Paul Hegarty (2007) noise is not an objective element but is rather subject to our perception – both our sensory perception, as well as according to our presumptions – and this varies according to historical, geographical and cultural location. As he claims, "Whether noise is happening or not will depend also on the source of what is being called noise – who the producer is, when and where, and how it impinges on the perceiver of noise" (Ibid., p.3).

In his informative book *Noise Matters: Towards an Ontology of Noise* (2013) Graig Hainge has a rather different standpoint towards the meaning of noise. He avoids taking a specific position in defining it and he sees it as something out of reach that cannot be pinned down. As he postulates:

If the ontology of noise is relational, as has been suggested, then it can never be pinned down to one definitive thing, its points and coordinates will never remain fixed, able to be mapped...and will never allow us to believe that we have definitely once and for all contained it. (Hainge, 2013, p.273)

Hainge argues that once noise is brought into the musical domain, or when it is used by artists as an aesthetic musical object, it no longer qualifies as noise (Ibid.). He prefers to see noise as something chaotic, which is not reductive as it is presented in the relational analyses of numerous theorists and composers.

John Cage was actually the first to extensively investigate this subject, rejecting the common notion that noise is something disturbing. Essentially, Cage ascribed the same status to noise and to silence. As Cox (2009, p.23) describes, Cage believed that noise meant "background noise, the intensive murmur that fills every silence or, rather, that of which so-called 'silence' is made".

### 2.2.2 - Background noise / Ambience / Silence

Apart from the above elaborations regarding noise, it would be extremely gainful to analyse it by affixing the word "background" before it, as Cage has suggested (see above). Background noise, the permanent soundtrack accompanying our everyday life on a subconscious level, is, as I shall attempt to demonstrate, a vital dimension when it comes to defining the identity of places. We usually talk of haunted places, or places full of energy. As Michel De Certeau (1984, p.108) emphasises, "There is no place that is not haunted by many different spirits hidden there in silence, spirits one can 'invoke' or not. Haunted places are the only ones people can live in". This again refers to the so-called *genius loci*, which can take the form of a sounding heard subconsciously, what I call "aural aura". Aural aura's nature in terms of the function of its perception matches with that of background noise or ambience. It can be attended at a subconscious level, or what I call on a "conscious non-listening" one. These themes will be further explored in the following paragraphs of this chapter.

As a backdrop to the so-called "ambient music", which will be brought into the discussion in the next section and in Chapter 3A (3A.1.1.2), it would perhaps be useful at this point to examine the notion of so-called "ambience". Despite the fact that the terms "atmosphere" and "ambience" and occasionally "silence" are regularly used to express the same thing, nevertheless depending on the context, they can actually refer to different conditions. For instance the term atmosphere as analysed in the preceding section, does not necessarily point to our aural faculty in terms of its perception, whereas ambience and silence are more expressly tied to this. The word ambience has a somewhat broad definition; it is used in several circumstances to connote various things, not all of them dealing necessarily with sound. Generally though it is seen as some form of texture that belongs to the background.

In an interview with Varun Nair (2012) on ambience and interactivity, his four interviewees (musicians/composers and sound designers) provided some noteworthy views on ambience. Peter Chilvers (Ibid.) thinks of ambiances as "the set of near-subliminal cues that quietly define an environment". To Robert Thomas (Ibid.) "it's something to do with a place (which may happen to be real or virtual) which forms your state of mind or shapes your perception". And Yann Seznec (Ibid.) makes the correlation with sound stressing that "From a sound perspective, to me ambience is really a situational thing – it is sound that is occurring whilst something else is happening".

French philosopher Michel Serres has given a very critical elaboration on the theme of ambience and background noise. For Serres, background noise's role in our life is of immense gravity: "Background noise (*le bruit de fond*) is the ground of our perception, absolutely uninterrupted, it is our perennial sustenance, the element of the software of all our logic. It is the residue and cesspool of our messages" (Serres, 1982, p.7). Serres recognizes that background noise is ceaseless and that it is from there that anything with semantic meaning – what he calls "phenomena" – emerges (Ibid.). A very stimulating and valuable feature of Serres' analysis on background and foreground is his argument that once our focus passes from foreground to background, the background automatically loses its property. Serres very elegantly describes this ostensibly cogent thought:

The background noise never ceases; it is limitless, continuous, unending, unchanging. It has itself no background, no contradictory [...] Noise cannot be made a phenomenon; every phenomenon is separated from it, a silhouette on a backdrop, like a beacon against the fog, as every message, every cry, every call, every signal must be separated from the hubbub that occupies silence, in order to be, to be perceived, to be known, to be exchanged. As soon as a phenomenon appears, it leaves the noise; as soon as a form looms up or pokes through, it reveals itself by veiling noise. (Ibid., p.13)

American philosopher Don Ihde points out that this reversal is something intentionally pursued by phenomenologists and artists in their practice:

Artists and phenomenologists share a certain practice, the practice of exploring the possible and of doing it in variant ways. Phenomenologists name this practice: it is the exploration of variations in order to discover invariants or structures. It is the purposeful reversal of figure/ground. (2007, p.189)

### **2.2.2.1 - Sonic arts and listening to silence**

The reversal of perception, raised above, seems to be so crucial in the sonic arts, to the point that its entire philosophical milieu is built upon this formula. This appears to be the case in almost all artistic areas hosted under the sonic arts umbrella.

It is generally accepted that in the beginning of the 20th century, it was the futurists who first conceptualised the reversal of background with foreground. Luigi Russolo's well-known "*intonarumori*" (Russolo, 1913<sup>b</sup>) instruments brought sounds otherwise regarded as unwanted noise into the musical domain. Russolo's manifesto *Art of Noises* written in 1913 stated that

since their contemporary life had seen a dramatic transformation in terms of the soundscape, this ought to be embraced in the musical world, which should open its ears to these new sounds and include them in the compositional palette.

Just a few decades later, John Cage, as mentioned above, was the first to consistently and extensively explore the theme of silence. His defining composition *4'33"* (1952), basically opened the field of music to background noise, allowing all sounds of the everyday environment to have the role of a note on a register. This controversial piece draws attention to sounds that are usually ignored, as they don't necessarily carry any semantic information. Cage (cited in Perloff and Junkerman, 1994) listens to this noise with a musical ear and he sees the soundscape as a never-ending musical composition. According to Cage, this composition is paused only by our very own perception when we discontinue our dynamic listening activity (Ibid.). Cage's prevalent contribution was possibly his persistence regarding the nature of silence. For Cage there was no such a thing as an absolute silence and this was justly proved at his legendary visit to an anechoic chamber, where he could still hear his blood circulation and his nervous system in operation. Silence for him was not acoustic at all, but simply a matter of intention (Cage cited in Collins, 2004, p.2).

What raises some questions with regards to Cage's thoughts in the context of the present research is that in shifting our awareness from foreground to background what it seems that we are actually succeeding in is merely a reversal; background can indeed come to foreground, but at the same time it follows that something else becomes background. Is our brain equipped to be continuously attentive to everything that happens around us? Is it possible that we can listen to foreground and background at the same time in such a way that background actually becomes extinct? As Serres reminds us (also quoted above), this background atmosphere is "our perennial sustenance, the element of the software of all our logic" (1982, p.7) and thus without it essentially there would be no space for the foreground to emerge. Here we can use the metaphor of a built construction where only its visible parts (those found above the earth) can be observed, whereas the entire part found beneath the surface, its substructure, is almost always unnoticeable. Nevertheless, it is this substructure that keeps the building standing and functioning; without this foundation it would collapse.

Sound artist Bill Fontana's philosophical understandings regarding background noise and silence echo Cage's. For Fontana (n.d.<sup>6</sup>), listening to the background noise equals music. His

so-called "sound-sculptures" are created by transmitting soundscapes – either recorded or live – from various (usually distant) locations to a listening point (this could be a gallery or another location), and this audible outcome has for Fontana a sculptural and architectural quality. Fontana elaborates on the philosophy behind his work and points out that:

In designing such real time musical information systems I am assuming that at any given moment there will be something meaningful to hear. I am in fact assuming that music, in the sense of meaningful sound patterns, is a natural process that is going on constantly. (Ibid.)

Like Cage, Fontana sets the background within a time frame, in order to listen to it musically. He identifies musical patterns in the acoustic atmosphere and he is drawn towards reflecting these patterns in his own creations.

A number of contemporary researchers in the sound art domain seem to problematize some aspects of Cage and Fontana's views especially with regards to ascribing background sounds with a musical identity. David Toop (2004, p.75) is convinced that "once you accept the Cageian idea that noise can be music, you are caught in a trap. You hear noise with a musical ear, whether you are recording it or not". Salome Voegelin believes that Cage's approach has actually locked silence into the time code rather than freeing it. As she postulates (2010, p.81), "The dematerialization of the object of composition, emptying the score of its musical sounds, does invite new sounds but at the same time confines these new sounds in the tight space of musical conventions and expectations". Commenting on Cage's piece 4'33" she points out "it does not invite a listening to sound as sound but to all sound as music. The framework of the concert hall guides the listener towards that aim" (Ibid., p.80). This last sentence is perhaps rather unfair for Cage, since the work had indeed been performed several times outdoors as for example in Harvard Square, Boston, in 1968 (Labelle, 2007).

Through her book *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention and Distributed Subjectivity* (2013) Anahid Kassabian analyses the ways in which contemporary life and habits with regards to music have affected the way we listen. She inquires whether the ubiquity of sounds in our everyday life produces a passive engagement that degrades our act of listening and whether we have actually produced new adjusted ways of reception (Kassabian, 2013). Kassabian proposes a new mode of listening according to which we listen alongside our other activities, what she calls "Ubiquitous Listening" (Ibid.). What she postulates is that this phenomenon (of listening in this manner) occurs because our sense of hearing is almost always in a functioning mode and

also because these sounds do not seem to derive from a specific source but rather, they come from everywhere and nowhere (Ibid.). Thus, they act more like an environment that is situated in the background. Kassabian's position seems to be in line with the ideas raised by Serres regarding background noise, as well as Leibniz's notion of minute perceptions. Indeed, in the cases that Kassabian discusses the consumption of music and/or sound happens on a subconscious level. The sonic information seems to be registered in a different part of our brain, which apparently processes it in a peripheral manner in order to create a context for the foreground activity. Kassabian also differentiates between the two verbs that describe our sensory activity of absorbing sonic events i.e. listening and hearing. She maintains that hearing is more passive than listening and she thinks of hearing as a purely biological activity that converts the sound waves into electromechanical stimuli (Ibid.). Nevertheless, she argues that in consuming background music something more happens than just a physical activity and this is why in this case she prefers to use the word "listen" rather than "hear". Listening involves a more focused functioning that is associated with meaning. It is a dynamic participation in the acoustic environment which enables an active and interactive engagement. It occurs voluntarily in an effort to make sense of the sounds that surround us. Kassabian's claim that background noise is not a hearing experience but rather a listening one seems to be valid. Attending to the background is not a passive procedure but instead, it is something that engages our brain in an active way even if this happens subconsciously. It is indeed a mode of listening that, as pointed out by Serres (quoted above), provides a texture that is absolutely essential to our existence and the way we perceive the world.

At this point it would be useful to take a brief look at the three listening categories articulated by Michel Chion (1994, p.25) following Schaeffer, the so-called "modes of listening". Chion underlines that our auditory perception is not one-dimensional but multi-faceted with a multitude of functions (Ibid.). Reflecting Schaeffer, Chion distinguishes three modes of listening, namely "causal listening", "semantic listening" and "reduced listening" (Ibid.). Of course, composer Warren Burt (2009) interestingly distinguishes many more ways of listening (16 in number) in his article "Ways of Listening Incomplete Catalogue". However, an analysis of these additional listening modes goes beyond the scope of this research so I will therefore focus on the three major categories expressed by Chion.

Chion refers to "causal listening" as the most common, consisting "of listening to a sound in order to gather information about its cause (or source)" (Chion, 1994, p.25). What is interesting

here is Chion's observation concerning the instances where we do not have a visual cause, as was the case in my projects *Rainzonances4* and *Rainzonances5* (presented in the next chapter). Chion asserts that "An unseen cause might be identified by some knowledge or logical prognostication; causal listening (which rarely departs from zero) can elaborate on this knowledge" (Ibid., p.26). As will be discussed further on in this chapter, in the cases where a sound is heard but the connection with an object or a familiar source fails to be established, "the imagination intercedes and supplies a ghost" (Toop, 2010, p.151). Our mind almost always tries to make sense of stimuli from the environment and explain things by comparing them to familiar patterns or symbols<sup>4</sup>, formed by experience and assisted by memory and imagination (Eysenck and Keane, 2000). There is almost always a kind of primitive instinct, urging for the deciphering of the abstract into the rational and/or the linear (Ibid.).

Chion (1994, p.28) terms as "semantic listening" "that which refers to a code or a language to interpret a message". The most common example is undoubtedly the spoken language. In this mode the listener is already familiar with the source of the sound (i.e. his interlocutor) and he/she focuses on making sense of the meaning that seeks to be communicated. Alvin Lucier's piece *I am Sitting in a Room* (1969) is a remarkable example of how semantic listening can gradually give way to abstraction and to reduced listening. My works *H4C* and *Echoing Hamam* use Lucier's technique in a more complicated way, as will be analysed in Chapter 4.

The final category that Chion highlights is the so-called "reduced listening", a term coined by French composer Pierre Schaeffer. This refers to "the listening mode that focuses on the traits of the sound itself, independent of its cause and its meaning" (Schaeffer cited in Chion, 1994, p.29). Schaeffer was the one who theorised extensively on this and developed this concept at a practical level. Pierre Schaeffer, a major figure in the field of sonic arts, approached the topic of background noise and listening from a rather different angle. In the early 1950s, Schaeffer came up with the revolutionary concept of the "sound object" (*objet sonore*), directing us towards – as mentioned in the previous paragraph – a listening in a "reduced" manner, that is, stripped from the sound's source and meaning (Schaeffer, 1966). Schaeffer used environmental sounds in his compositions but manipulated them so intensely that they became non-recognisable.<sup>5</sup> He sought to turn the listener's attention towards the sound itself (texture,

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<sup>4</sup> According to Simon & Kaplan (1989 cited in Eysenck and Keane, p.2), "symbols' are patterns stored in long-term memory which designate or 'point to' structures outside themselves".

<sup>5</sup> *5 Etudes de Bruits* (1948). Available at: <http://www.ubu.com/sound/schaeffer.html> [Accessed 13 March 2015].

rhythm, etc) rather than to any of its representational attributes. Schaeffer's ideas, in combination with the major technological advances of his time in the domain of sound recording, undoubtedly constitute the cornerstone for the development of electroacoustic music. He too opened his ears to the everyday background noise, although he heard it in an abstracted way.

A somewhat contrasting orientation to Schaeffer's, in terms of focusing on the soundscape, appears to originate from the soundscape studies discipline. The "World Soundscape Project", initiated in the late 1960s by a group at the Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, Canada and led by composer R. Murray Schafer, followed a specific discourse in order to explore the interconnectedness between human behaviour and people's acoustic environment. The group believed that by attentively studying the distinctive soundscape of places they could make connections with the local communities and that the sounds produced by the people of a community, or their surrounding soundscape, could be directly associated with their identity (Schafer, 1994). In an attempt to categorise sounds, Schafer too identified the subject discussed in this chapter, namely the background. The term he employed for "sounds heard by a particular society continuously, or frequently enough to form a background against which other sounds are perceived" (Ibid., p.272), was "keynote" sounds and the foreground sounds that were being listened to consciously were termed as "signals" (Ibid., p.10).

The field of soundscape studies has evidently been extremely influential in the discourse of my thesis. The field's most crucial element is its orientation towards identifying networks and associations between the soundscape of a place and the place itself, while at the same time it acknowledges the importance of the background. Although in the artistic practice that stems from soundscape studies (i.e. soundscape composition), there is a strong direction towards a place-specific ethic in terms of the extent to which the artist is involved in the study and understanding of place, nevertheless, in its most usual rendition, soundscape composition follows a more conventional musical pathway. It is most frequently presented in a way similar to an electroacoustic composition, in a concert-like environment rather than following a site-specific direction.

In her article, "Linking Soundscape Composition and Acoustic Ecology" (2002), Westerkamp, who is considered as one of the most prominent figures in the field of soundscape composition, objects to one of her composer colleagues' attempt to situate soundscape composition under the

electroacoustic music umbrella. She seems uncomfortable with the idea of placing soundscape composition in a specific musical genre, stressing that it should not be restricted to specific boundaries. Westerkamp's stance is plausible, since as mentioned above, soundscape composition is not merely about the final outcome since it carries a conceptual context which is tightly linked to place. Additionally, this process can only be meaningful through in-depth field research. Apart from the musical outcome, soundscape composition also works on other levels, informed by numerous other disciplines such as anthropology, psychology and geography. Nevertheless, for the reasons stated above we can imply that at least in terms of its presentation, soundscape composition seems to be closer to electroacoustic composition rather than to other idioms that bear the site-specific notion, such as sound installation. In a footnote of the abovementioned article Westerkamp herself seems to admit that:

When I speak of soundscape composition in this article I refer to tape pieces that are created with recorded environmental sounds. I neither speak of sound installations nor of musical compositions for acoustic or electroacoustic instruments that are composed for specific sites and may address soundscape issues. (Ibid., p.51)

It seems that, at least from a technical angle, the most relevant musical approach with regards to the present research is the so-called "ambient music", considering that it does not attempt to bring about a reversal of foreground with background, but rather to set its body into this background. Of course, the term "ambient music" does not necessarily refer to a specific genre or a single musical category and it is usually used in an ambivalent way. Nevertheless this term will be used here as a point of reference in the discussion concerning music that does not aspire to convince the audience to listen carefully to musical articulations occurring through time; rather, it aims to engage their listening perception on a more subconscious level, following Brian Eno's approach, as I will further elaborate in Chapter 3A (Section 3A.1.1.2). However, the way in which ambient music is usually presented is on fixed media such as a CD, enabling one to listen to it anywhere and anytime. Place-specific characteristics and/or historical particularities are not sought after. The question whether Eno's pivotal work *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* (1978) could be considered as place-specific puzzled me intensely before I found the answer in its actual title. It can indeed be classified as place-specific when it is played in airports, either through loudspeakers or on an i-pod.

Film music is quite relevant in the discussion concerning ambient music since film music acts in a similar manner in terms of the deliberate background positioning. Claudia Gorbman (1980, p.183) recognises the importance of film music in the shaping of "our perception of a narrative"

pointing out that music has a crucial role in setting the mood and the tonality in a film. She differentiates it from other visual elements, such as light, claiming that sound is not as obvious and that it acts in a more subconscious way, since hearing is less direct than visual perception (Ibid.). Music is thus, as she postulates, relegated "to the viewer's sensory background, that grey area of secondary perception least susceptible to rigorous judgement and most susceptible to affective manipulation" (Ibid.). This is quite evident in David Lynch's works, such as *Eraserhead* (1977), a film known for its dense soundtrack, which is claimed to have a "continuous almost subliminal presence" (Rodley, 2005, p.72). Although these two forms (ambient music and film music) seem to share many elements in terms of their functional approach, they nevertheless differ in one significant aspect. While both seek to set a mood or give colour to a space, the space in film music is a virtual one or in the case of documentaries, the space is recorded material that aims to depict a narrative. On the other hand in the case of an ambient-music work installed in a specific place – as is the case in my works presented in Chapter 4 – the audience is immersed in the (real) space. Thus, place becomes part of the work and subsequently part of the experience. Further elaboration on ambient music, including a historical retrospect, will be presented in Chapter 3A.

Since sound – and in this case musical sound – has proved to act as a powerful mood-setter (as will be shown in Chapter 3A, in which I discuss the work *Rainzonances4*), creating "orchestrated atmospheres" constitutes a dynamic tool for manipulating moods. This is the case in most of the pieces presented in my portfolio and especially in *Rainzonances4* and *Rainzonances5*.

### **2.3 - Imagination / Aural aura**

As stated above, my research focuses on what I have termed the "aural aura" of places with complex biographies. Put in simple words these are places that have changed function through time, places that are deserted and derelict or even places that have never actually materialized (as will be shown in Chapter 3B). All of these places are characterized by a specific type of silence, which, as analysed above, is not necessarily acoustic in nature but one that carries all sorts of peripheral meanings. It is a silence that is born from the absence of something that once existed, or of what was supposed to have been there. Toop (2010, p.58) wonders about the way we could listen to the sounds long vanished which, as he notes, are not strictly sounds but rather something similar to the "fluctuations of light, weather, and the peculiar feeling that can arise when there is strong awareness of place". Mentally this assumed silence develops into a noisy atmosphere, incorporating an array of impressions such as memories, stories, myths, dreams, murmurs etc. These are perceived in a similar way to the way in which we sense our ambient environment, on a subconscious acoustic level, or put differently, as an aural aura. As Toop reminds us,

We hear, not just through the ears, as a conscious activity, but through the whole body, in a mixture of fully conscious, peripherally conscious and unconscious awareness. Hearing more like feeling: a multiplicity of impressions at the edge of perception. We hear space all the time, not just its echoes and foreground signals but also its subliminal undertow, the presence of atmosphere. (Toop, 2004, p.47)

What I am searching for then, which may sound as a paradox, is the presence in this absence. Although silence is typically thought of as being a kind of absence of sound, it is however "replaced by a louder phenomenon, a focussing attention, an atmosphere, which we mistakenly describe as silence" (Ibid., p.42). As an artist I first of all attempt to appreciate the ostensible silence and the presence in the absence, in order to enter this atmosphere. I then interpret my experience by creating something that will "activate" the place, in order to trigger an interaction with the audience. I act as a mediator in initiating a conversation between the audience and the place. This is accomplished via the artwork, which is essentially an already-interpreted viewpoint - the viewpoint of the artist- that guides the audience towards experiencing the place through a specific aesthetic filter. Nevertheless, even with this orchestrated guidance the audience will inevitably have their own subjective comprehension of the place, which surely depends on several other factors, such as their cultural background, their previous relationship with the place and other such factors. The experience orchestrated by the artist will be

successful only when it manages to highlight the qualities of the place, something that does not depend on the complexity of the work but rather on the deep understanding of the themes related to the histories of the place. This will consequently facilitate and/or enhance the process of communication with the audience.

Subsequently, following this train of thought, an aural aura can have two different levels: the first would be when the artist or any other person discovers this presence in absence directly, which I shall call "protogenic<sup>6</sup> aural aura" and the second when an aural aura reaches the audience via the artwork, which I shall call "orchestrated aural aura". These will be further examined below.

### **2.3.1 - Room tone**

It could be claimed that Cage's ideas on music that have been briefly presented above reflect those of Mark Rothko on painting. Rothko regarded air not to be a void, but rather an atmosphere, a texture that could be portrayed in a painting (Rothko, 1941-42). More specifically Rothko notes:

Tactile space, or for the sake of simplicity, let us call it air, which exists between objects or shapes in the picture, is painted so that it gives the sensation of a solid. That is, air in a tactile painting is represented as an actual substance rather than as an emptiness. (Ibid., p.56)

Virginia Woolf very poetically wrote in her early 1920s novel *Jacob's Room*: "Listless is the air in an empty room, just swelling the curtain; the flowers in the jar shift. One fibre in the wicker armchair creaks, though no one sits there" (Woolf, 1922 cited in Toop, 2010, p.211). David Lynch's first feature film *Eraserhead* (1977) is famous for its dense soundtrack. When asked by interviewer Chris Rodley about the unusual character of the film's music, Lynch (cited in Rodley, 2005, pp.72-73) replied: "I'm real fascinated by presences – what you call 'room tone'. It's the sound that you hear when there's silence, in between words and sentences".

Entering a place for the first time can cause certain emotions to arise depending on the memories and associations that one has of the place. Especially in the cases of derelict places,

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<sup>6</sup> Protogenic is a Greek compound word consisting of the words *πρώτος* [first or original] and *γένος* [genus].

where only the structure is left and occasionally some forgotten objects are lying around that are associated to its use, what actually remains are these associations, memories and atmospheres. One may even feel that buried inside the walls of this structure are the infinite stories that give form to the hosted place. Stories continue to be told and the place is still in a state of becoming as our presence affects this process, becoming part of its history. This brings us back to Lippard's notion presented in Section 1.0.3, concerning local places characterised by a kind of hybridity that changes every time people interact with it.

In her project with photographer Florence Debeugny *At the Edge of Wilderness* (2000) Hildegard Westerkamp and her collaborator visit the ghost towns of British Columbia, Canada, mostly abandoned mine sites. They devote extensive time trying to discover the feeling of the place and draw connections with life that used to exist there. They look for signs and traces and they pursue a listening to the past through an imaginative daydream but also through an active sound-performance of the various abandoned objects. For them these sites still carry an adventurous and magical energy that one can grasp by visiting, rediscovering and reimagining. Their silence has a haunting quality and soon turns to a lively listening experience as they slowly pace around sniffing the aura. As Westerkamp notes (2000b),

This project explores the moment of encounter between the contemporary visitor and the abandoned industrial sites: a strange moment of excitement and magic, discovery and adventure; a moment of questions and stories about human industrial activities of the past and present; a moment of sensing the spirits and ghosts still hovering among the skeletal remains while nature is gradually reclaiming its place.

Westerkamp seems to correspondingly acknowledge the role of the atmosphere as exchange and interaction between place and the mental realm of the subject – previously discussed in this thesis – providing us with a very intimate representation: "It is as if visitor and place are taking a deep breath together during this encounter [...]" (Ibid.).

In the above example, the two artists act in a similar manner to that discussed previously in this chapter (see Section 2.1). They firstly visit their place of interest and spend time focusing on sensing the protogenic aural aura. They experiment with the place, they play with several found objects and collect sounds and images. They then take this material back to their studio and manipulate it in certain ways, producing an artwork, which in this case was a sound-slide installation for a group show in Vancouver.

### 2.3.2 - Sound installation – place-specific versus gallery

Following the above brief elaboration on Westerkamp and Debeugny's work, I wish to raise some questions with regards to the act of appropriating material and presenting it within an unrelated context such as a group exhibition in a gallery, away from its source. The main question that arises in this case is whether such an act is problematic to begin with. I wish to discuss this within the context of Chapter 1 and especially its second part, which refers to the place-specific methodology. Let us suppose that the criterion for obtaining the protogenic aural aura (i.e. the artist visiting and spending time in the place, even if he/she is an outsider) is met. Could we then suggest that the orchestrated aural aura he/she proposes can be communicated if it is set in an extraneous environment? Would the audience be able to connect to the artwork, engage themselves with the offered orchestrated aural aura and connect to the original place? Wouldn't this scenario carry the very real risk of the listener forming a fictional impression that would ultimately have little or nothing to do with the original place, or with the salient conception of the artist? Furthermore, would this work bear the same degree of meaningfulness in the two contexts of presentation (place-specific vs group exhibition in gallery)?

Bill Fontana, as mentioned in Section 2.2.2.1, is fascinated with the idea of capturing sonic material from particular settings and projecting it, either in real time or not, in different environments, creating "sound sculptures", as he calls them. Fontana (2008, p.154) defends this as a process of "considerable aesthetic importance" and gives place "a new spectrum of possible acoustic meanings". Fontana's creativity is led by a very specific artistic aesthetic and it is unquestionably worthy in its own right. But would it be as valid within the context of place-specificity, as discussed previously? Fontana himself (ibid.) admits that "the relocation of an ambient sound source within a new context would alter radically the acoustic meaning of the ambient sound source". In a similar tone, Westerkamp (2002, p.56) provides a satisfying answer to the concerns expressed above:

In the end, of course, no matter where the sound sources come from, the composition created from environmental sounds will be experienced as an entirely new place and situation within an entirely new context, depending on where it is heard.

As shown in the diagram in Figure 1, place actually encircles everything; it constitutes the ground on which all activity falls and receives inspiration; it is the protagonist. If the actual place is omitted, as is the case in the above scenarios, then the most vital ingredient is absent

from the equation, and consequently we can safely suggest that the work will ultimately not have the same impact on the audience as it would have if it had followed a place-specific logic. As Mark Rosenthal (2003, cited in Tittel, 2009, p.58) claims, a sound work dealing with place,

[...] must include its locale, because it derives its very form and perhaps physical substance, too, as well as its meaning, from the context. Moving it is impossible, since the work cannot be understood or seen except in relation to the place. The viewer witnesses a dialogue, as it were, between the artist and the space.

Joanna Demers points out that the prevalent definition for sound installations incorporates the model of site-specificity, "meaning that sounds are constructed to interact with the locations where they are heard" (2009, p.39). This statement does not necessarily denote that sound installations are always interactive and that they always allow the audience to have an active role in their outcomes; this would signify a bi-directional flow, when in many cases sound installations are just orchestrated sound environments. Rather, in my understanding, Demers suggests an intangible interaction, a metaphorical one, one which refers to the artist's deed of orchestrating a sound environment that will maintain a meaningful relationship with place. Meaningful in that – as discussed in Section 2.3 – it will be able to enhance and describe the quality of the place, its histories and its protogenic aural aura. Considering the above, I would suggest that the orchestrated aural aura does not necessarily act as a replacement of the protogenic aural aura. Although it seems to supersede it, it would be more apt to suggest that the orchestrated aural aura actually builds on it or that it uses it as a base from which to construct a more "aggressive" way of communicating the protogenic aural aura. The main theme essentially remains the protogenic aural aura, whereas the orchestrated aural aura would act as an idiosyncratic means of reading it and addressing it.

In considering the works of Francisco López<sup>7</sup> and Toshiya Tsunoda<sup>8</sup> commonly presented on fixed media such as CD, Demers proposes "a more inclusive definition" (than her above) in which "we can understand site-specific sound art as any art that in some manner (but not necessarily through the lens of culture) addresses the topics of site and location" (Ibid., p.39-40). López himself though, seems to adopt Schaeffer's ideas directing his focus on the sound itself rather than on the source: "As soon as the call is in the air," he asserts, "it no longer belongs to the frog that produced it" (López cited in Montgomery, 2009). Therefore, Demer's proposition may sound *prima facie* reasonable, but at the same time it does not offer any solid

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<sup>7</sup> e.g. *La Selva* (1998), *Wind [Patagonia]* (2007).

<sup>8</sup> e.g. *Small sand-stream on beach* (2008).

explanation on how the omission of the "lens of culture" (Demers, 2009, p.39), can unravel the site-specific context, let alone the place-specific one, which as analysed in Chapter 1, has a referential relationship with the environment and the history of place. Thus, the only explanation that can be given with regards to Demers' claim is that she considers site as just landscape, stripped from its history and any other vital element that contributes towards its distinctive atmosphere. In such a case it becomes obvious that the discussion does not concern the notion of place anymore but rather has the impact of a landscape photograph. But as Emily Thompson (2002, p.2) reminds us: "A soundscape, like a landscape, ultimately has more to do with civilization than with nature, and as such, it is constantly under construction and always undergoing change."

As seen above, Westerkamp herself is strongly critical of dismissing the conceptual weight of soundscape composition and placing it under electroacoustic composition. She believes (as I do here) that the artist should get to know the place intimately before recording any material from it and that it is important that the sounds recorded are lived and understood by the artist (Westerkamp, 2002). Moreover, soundscape composers claim that the starting point of the compositional process does not take place in the studio, but rather on the recording site (McCartney, 2002). Westerkamp goes as far as to compare the ear and the microphone, arguing that, as opposed to the ear, the microphone is non-selective and that moreover, it is limited by its technical specifications. The composer is thus called upon to play with these realities, and present his/her own understanding of the soundscape and place through his/her composition (Westerkamp, 2002).

Westerkamp however, does not seem to comment on the fact that, in the case of a gallery group exhibition, the audience will not be stepping on the same ground as herself when experiencing the piece and thus they (the audience) will by default be excluded from the protogenic aural aura. It would indeed be a difficult task for the audience to grasp the proposed orchestrated aural aura, since one of its most crucial elements will not be present. Furthermore, imagining a place would not be necessarily reflecting the artist's intention or the setting of the original place. Therefore, in a dislocated presentation of a work, the answer to the question whether place can be virtually represented would be negative for the reasons stated above. Indeed, a work may be in a position to create a new context, based on the place under investigation, but my argument would be that this would not reflect the same conceptual understanding as when the work is presented *in situ*. If we were to compare the two forms we would possibly suggest

that the dislocated work can be a very interesting transposition that would potentially carry valuable meanings about the specific place but these meanings would be missing the ingredient of immersivity and direct contact with place. Apart from the advantage of being a receiver of the sense of history and of the protogenic aural aura, when being on location the physical properties of the space also greatly contribute towards the listening experience. The physical experience gained from a sound installation that is presented in the under- investigation place would by default be dissimilar to any other dislocated form. In his review of the practice of soundwalking, John Levack Drever (2009, p.169) argues that narrative unfolds when a dialogue between listener, sound and location is engendered through the dynamic relationship between the temporal and the spatial. The sound material heard by the audience in a gallery setting offers a very confusing time-space, producing something that could be estranging them from the genuine source and from the artistic intention. As Voegelin (2010, p.135) comments, "this is a time-space all of its own, produced somewhere between the site, the computer room, and my auditory imagination". Especially in a group exhibition setting, and under a general theme set by the curators that could possibly be unrelated to the specific place, establishing a relation between audience and place seems to become an even trickier venture.

Westerkamp's assertion (quoted in the previous chapter) regarding the so-called schizophrenic nature of the act of recording seems to acknowledge this controversial issue; the new experience (the work) that the composer creates in the gallery or anywhere away from the sounds' source, is by default a schizophrenic experience. The same of course could be said in the case of a site-specific work since the sounds are recorded at a specific timeframe, and thus bringing them back at any other moment, could also be understood as schizophrenic. In this case however, the schizophrenic level is only a temporal one, not spatial, and place still encircles the work, charging it with its multi-sensual atmosphere. Besides, the act of bringing past sounds back into the place where they once belonged, unravels a very interesting dialogue that draws from the history of the place. This is the reason why I find Alvin Lucier's piece *I am Sitting in a Room* (1969), to be greatly inspirational, both physically and conceptually. The logic behind the technique applied in this piece may be traced in two works of my portfolio, *H4C* and *Echoing Hamam*. This subject will be further developed in Chapter 4.

Following the above elaboration on the act of bringing sound or other materials from a specific place into a gallery setting, I wish to briefly focus on my decision to keep one of the works that were part of my research, out of the final portfolio. The work *Overtones* (2014) was a

collaborative work with curator Elena Parpa, and it actually shares many similarities, in terms of the form of its realization and presentation, with Hildegard's and Debeugny's work *At the Edge of Wilderness*, presented above. The curator's proposal suggested that we explore some issues regarding place, with Colin Thubron's book *Journey into Cyprus* (1975) as our point of reference and/or departure. This book is actually Thubron's account of his walk through Cyprus in 1972, and it gives an insight into the situation on the island, just some months before the peak of the political conflict that led to the island's division. The idea was to follow some of Thubron's tracks and to collect materials from these places in order to create a sound installation that would be part of a group exhibition at the Nicosia Municipal Arts Center (NiMAC). While the process of reading the book and following Thubron's steps had a place-specific orientation and gave us the opportunity to attend to the protogenic aural aura of the places we visited, when I was called to adjust these materials into the gallery space, a very contradicting situation emerged, of a kind discussed earlier in this section. This material would not meaningfully fit in this fabricated setting. It became clear that the experiences that we gathered while visiting the various places could in no way be reconstructed just by using the gathered material. We realised that the most valuable ingredient was missing. The place itself was absent. As a result, we decided to deal with this by creating a work that would use the same material but in order to produce a different experience, a journey in its own right. We therefore chose not to attempt to reflect the original place on the work. This led to the creation of a sound work installed in three dark rooms, (see Figure 2). The audience were invited to pass through these rooms in order to complete a sound journey. The work offered two spatial possibilities. One was through the three headphones hanging from the ceiling of each room and transmitting three different electroacoustic compositions. The other was a 3.1 surround composition played through loudspeakers installed in the three rooms. Although the work in its initial form dealt with place, its final format did not reflect the actual place for the reasons analysed above. It was therefore decided not to include this work in the portfolio, as it would contradict the ideas expressed here regarding place and place-specificity.



Figure 2 - *Overtones*, Installation view

### 2.3.3 - Phonograph and memory

With regards to the act of recording, some relevant ideas have developed as a result of my research that could possibly contribute towards the general discussion on foreground and background and strengthen my argument.

The discovery of the phonograph by Thomas Edison in 1877 is generally considered to have been a landmark in the history of music and sound. Although Edison's vision was to develop the capacity of capturing and preserving foreground signals with a semantic meaning, nevertheless, his machine, unlike human auditory behaviour that filters out noise or unwanted messages, was simply "listening to" and recording the whole spectrum of sound (Cox, 2009). Consequently, background noise was also transcribed. As discussed previously, humans perform selective listening considering that we usually focus on what attracts our attention at a given moment. We thus filter out all other sonic events, turning them into background noise. As seen above, Westerkamp stresses that, unlike our ears, the microphone (or the recorder) is non-selective in that it hears everything in a robotic manner and has no partialities (Westerkamp, 2002). Similarly, Ihde (2007, p.75) describes his personal experience with recording:

I go to the auditorium, and, without apparent effort, I hear the speaker while I barely notice the scuffling of feet, the coughing, the scraping noises. My tape recorder, not having the same intentionality as I, records all these auditory stimuli without distinction, and so when I return to it to hear the speech re-presented I find I cannot even hear the words due to the presence of what for me had been fringe phenomena.

Although the above reflections are indeed valid, we should nevertheless not dismiss the fact that even the recorder has its "preferences" in what it captures and these chiefly depend on its position. Hence in this case, the relationship between foreground and background is a geometrical one; whatever is closer to the microphone will sound louder and clearer in the reproduction, and the signals that derive from a distance will naturally sound as background and will thus be blurry and obscure. Still though, during the process of reproduction we could direct our listening to our desired sonic events but this time with the spatial limitation of the loudspeakers.

The functioning of the phonograph in terms of its capacity to register time can be paralleled with that of our own internal system of experiencing time. We experience time through the operation of memory. Both memory and the phonograph capture specific moments in time, registering them in a buffer that can be recalled at different time-spaces. In this sense, our memory also has a "schizo" aspect to it, as our personal experiences are naturally recollected in other instances of our lives, enabling us to react in certain manners. In a way therefore, our memory acts as a composer who collects sounds that may derive from different time-spaces and then organises them in ways that make sense, "creating our own internal narrative or sense of personal history"(McCombe, 2004, p.2). It conserves the past, altering and modifying it, and "organizing consciousness so that all ambiguities become coherent" (Cazan, 2008, p.66). Cox (2009, p.21) accepts that our reservoir of memory is not restricted to particular memories or experiences but also to everything to which those experiences and memories are connected, which is essentially the entirety of our past. These ideas link up with the concepts of Leibniz and Woolf, introduced in Section 2.1 regarding unconscious perception and memory.

Recorded sound can indeed offer a glimpse of events that happened in the past and has the ability to evoke emotion and associations. It is a fascinating way to revisit specific environments and recall information from the acoustic domain, be that foreground signals or background noise. An enchanting concert, a leader's voice, the first cry of a new-born baby can all be brought back to the acoustic domain and possibly trigger the rise of specific feelings,

depending always on personal experience, memory and the particular cultural associations connected to these soundings.

As explained above, aural aura has the character of auditory perception although not necessarily in the physical sense. The question that may be posed here is whether the phonograph would be able to actually communicate the aural aura of the moments portrayed in the above paragraph. How can it capture and represent silence or an atmosphere that is only felt and has no actual sounding? David Toop (2010, p.33) explores this theme and gives us some interesting insights:

I could have complained that while the phonograph was reproducing sounds, it was unable to represent the sound, say, of the fall of the Roman Empire. It can't record an eloquent silence, or the sound of rumours. In fact, as far as voices go, it is helpless to represent the voice of conscience. Can it record the voice of the blood? Or all those splendid sayings that are attributed to great men? It's helpless before the swan song, before unspoken innuendoes; can it record the song of the Milky Way?

#### **2.3.4 - Imagination – perception**

The role of imagination in the appreciation of aural aura is crucial; it is the vehicle that brings us closer to understanding place and to establishing an intimate communication with it. French philosopher Gaston Bachelard (1994, p.xxxiv) considers imagination to be "a major power of human nature". Especially in his two books, namely *The Poetics of Space* (1958) and *The Poetics of Reverie* (1960), he exemplifies the importance of fantasy and daydreaming in the development of the nature of human behaviour. The importance of imagination, daydreaming, "goofing off" and spacing out, is also exemplified in psychologist Emma Seppälä's recent article in the Washington Post, entitled "A Stanford Psychologist Explains why Spacing Out and Goofing Off is so Good for you" (2016). She defends the claim that these moments should not at all be considered as unproductive or idle time but rather as an absolutely creative process that contributes drastically to our effectiveness and welfare. As she argues, "To get a new perspective on something, we actually need to disengage from it".

Pallasmaa (2011) correlates perception with imagination noting that, according to recent studies, both take place in the same areas of the brain. He then indicates that our perception of the environment is constantly engaging with a portion of imagination and that these two

actually work together:

Experiencing, memorizing and imagining spatial settings, situations and events, all engage our imaginative skills; even the acts of experiencing and memorizing are embodied acts in which lived embodied imagery evokes an imaginative reality that feels similar to actual experience. (Ibid., p.7)

Through this relationship, imagination completes sensory perception by filling in gaps and contributes towards the synthesis of the complete picture. Palasmaa provides the example of reading a novel; through our imagination we create the setting and feel the ambience, without however being able to focus on detail (Ibid., p.6). A similar situation occurs in the case of the non-accessible Nicosia airport, as will be shown in my work *Rainzonances4*. Even in this condition of non-contact, imagination, with the synergy of stories and images, is inspired to produce ambiances; it constructs an eidolon, an effigy or a myth, which satisfies curiosity and fills this vacuum. Imagination, daydreaming and reverie act as an extension of history "precisely to the limits of the unreal" as Bachelard argues (1971, p.121).

In his inspiring paragraph "Imaginative Experience" of his book *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*, first published in 1976, Don Ihde (2007) debates the view that perception always occupies a primary role. Again, this synergy of imagination and perception is recognized in relation to the way the world is presented to us. Ihde (Ibid.) distinguishes the two by labelling the imaginative activity as an "active synthesis" and perception as a "passive activity". The logic underlying this course is based on the idea that sensory perception is usually taken as it is by our sensory organs and that this reception is fixed, limited and not open to manipulation, distortion or contradiction. Imaginative activity on the other hand, "allows a free variation of its contents" (Ibid., p.207). Ihde goes as far as to question the primacy of perception, arguing that there are ways in which imaginative activity exceeds perceptual modes of experience (Ibid.).

### 2.3.4.1 - Poetic image

According to Bachelard (1958, p.i), "The poetic image is a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche, the lesser psychological causes of which have not been sufficiently investigated". As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, Bachelard's conceptualisation with regards to the role of imagination and the so-called "poetic image" has been deeply instrumental to various disciplines but most significantly to artists who follow a place-specific path. He too is a supporter of the idea that we never experience an image directly but that rather, the image occurs as a result of the blending of perception, memory and imagination that colours it in certain ways (Bachelard, 1994). Ihde's aforementioned analysis seems to reflect Bachelard's view that for humans imagination constitutes an extremely vital element in the sense that it offers an alternative path which expands our perception. Bachelard (1994, p.151) notes:

The mind that imagines follows the opposite path of the mind that observes, the imagination does not want to end in a diagram that summarizes acquired learning. It seeks a pretext to multiply images, and as soon as the imagination is interested by an image, this increases its value.

For Bachelard imagination can never be wrong, "since it does not have to confront an image with an objective reality" (Ibid.). In this sense, he postulates that there is always something to absorb even in the cases of instances characterised by emptiness. This of course takes us back to Cage's ideas regarding the dialectics of noise and silence and also to Rothko. Only here, Bachelard (Ibid., p.140) describes this as the dialectics of full and empty:

For to great dreamers of corners and holes nothing is ever empty, the dialectics of full and empty only correspond to two geometrical non-realities. The function of inhabiting constitutes the link between full and empty. A living creature fills an empty refuge, images inhabit, and all corners are haunted, if not inhabited.

Bachelard provides us with the example of an empty shell and invites us to imagine the former inhabitant of the shell. Our imagination thus constructs a creature that is even more amazing than reality (Ibid., p.107). He also explores life in every form, such as a fossil: "A fossil is not merely a being that once lived, but one that is still alive, asleep in its form" (Ibid., p.113).

Of relevance here are also Walter Benjamin's views regarding the historical value of the static image produced by photography. For Benjamin there is a sort of transmission of aura through photographic images that can mediate sensations from the past into the present. This concept

resonates with the idea expressed in the four projects of the portfolio – especially in *H4C* – regarding the place's aural aura that immerses the subjects into the three temporal dynamics (past, present and future). With regards to the image's capacity of bringing the past in the present, Benjamin (1999, p.462) notes:

Image is that wherein what has been comes together in a flash with the now to form a constellation. In other words, image is dialectics at a standstill. For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: is not progression but image, suddenly emergent.

Benjamin's theory concerning the static photographic image resonates with Bachelard's poetic image. In order for a photograph to be able to bring past gestures into the present the employment of imagination is inevitable. The past story is unfolded with the constructive procedures of fantasising and this is possibly the only way of establishing a link with the time in which the image was taken. Moreover, this interpretation constitutes a personal engagement and the reverberation that comes through is always subjective. The poetic image can actually be regarded as the vehicle that carries this connection, as it can construct the myth and the narrative.

### **2.3.5 - Listening by imagination – The "extended ear"**

What is especially stimulating in Bachelard's philosophy (presented above), in relation to my topic, is that he effectively expands his thoughts into the domain of the auditory. His discussion regarding listening by imagination has been extremely influential to the development of the ideas expressed here and has given direction to the practice. Listening by imagination is the ultimate way of sensing aural auras. This mode does not necessarily seek a reduced, causal, semantic or musical listening. It does not seek a conscious, focused listening of the sound environment. I would suggest that what is required here is rather a form of conscious non-listening in the sense that the subject must be conscious of the atmosphere and the biography of the place, avoiding any effort to listen to it in any of the familiar ways. Rather, the subjects must let themselves loose and simply feel the ambience of the place. Labelle also points out that this type of listening does not necessarily involve the seeking of physical sounds but rather suggests the use of an "extended ear" so that we can experience it by "participating in the movements of the place's history" (Labelle, 2010, p. 108). Listening by imagination functions

alongside daydreaming and fantasy, translating this reception into a vibration, into a geometry of echoes that enables us to hear history through the walls, the air, the emptiness and the silence; to attend to aural auras.

### **2.3.5.1 - Aural hallucinations and the "Sharawadji effect"**

The very nature of sound is haunting in the sense that it emanates at unexpected moments and from various angles, it propagates and decays dissipating in the air, leaving behind just an impression. It is not unusual for this impression to be subconsciously reached through our imagination; hearing sounds (physically or mentally) that are not actually there, that are pure, aural hallucinations. These can be very dense and rich and sometimes even more complex and detailed than those heard in the air of the external world, as Toop (2010, p.40) suggests. The imagination can also construct a sublime music out of distant sonic events that are unrecognizable and unexpected. Through a perceptual perplexity, through this reverie, one is captured in a state of absolute magical experience, beyond any representations, where this ethereal sounding brings to the surface a feeling of eternity and pleasure. Once you are caught in this elevation, you are somehow hypnotized and steered by its energy, leading you towards becoming part of this atmosphere. It has in some way its own body and individuality and it is capable of "snatching" you away from everyday life. This has been referred to as the "Sharawadji effect" (Augoyard and Torgue, 2005, p.117) and it is undoubtedly one of the products of our aural imagination. Usually this effect reaches us during moments of tranquillity, when we remove ourselves from the mundane and reach a state of daydreaming. This effect of course may also be reached through the consumption of hallucinogenic substances although zealous intention is not necessarily the key. In other words, the Sharawadji does not emerge as a result of an obsessive effort to listen closely or to imagine. It emerges after we have surrendered to the ambience, when we become part of the atmosphere, if we are consciously not listening. The nature of the Sharawadji is not very different to Bachelard's poetic image. In this reverie state, "through the brilliance of an [poetic] image", as Bachelard suggests, "the distant past resounds with echoes, and it is hard to know at what depth these echoes will reverberate and die away. Because of its novelty and its action, the poetic image has an entity and a dynamism of its own" (Bachelard, 1994, p. xvi). This brings us back to Virginia Woolf's (1939) thoughts (quoted also at the beginning of this chapter) regarding moments of "not being" that, as she assumed, "are happening independently".

### 2.3.5.2 - Absence

The unspoken, the absence or that which remains unheard plays an important role in our lives. Also what lies in between words, messages or pylons of consciousness, essentially constitutes the ground for possibilities, it becomes the context wherein all things occur.

Labelle detects an emotional energy in the possibilities found in the silence between words, in these pauses of gesture: "To read then might be also to hear what lies somewhere between the words, inside the white blanks, or over and around the languages that were once scratched onto paper, as an emotional energy" (Labelle, 2010, p.108). It seems that this emotional energy cannot be grasped by attentive listening but (as discussed earlier) rather, in a peripheral manner, in the form of an ambience that shapes our mood.

In the sleeve notes of his compilation CD *A Call for Silence* (2004, p.1), Nicolas Collins argues that "the most important moments of our lives often lie in an unspoken ellipse". He offers the example of the New York skyline at the tip of Manhattan where the emotions borne by the void formed following 9/11, are "vastly more profound than any provoked by what used to fill it – or whatever will replace it" (Ibid.). The abovementioned CD constitutes a creative elaboration by sound artists and composers of the moments that lie in-between and thus usually remain unnoticed or out of focus. These aural moments essentially provide the milieu for the conversation between place and people. It is, as analysed earlier, the background noise, the ambience or the atmosphere that is so essential to our existence. Observing this characteristic of places, Toop (2010, p.58) stresses that: "Sounds can linger as vital presence, an intervention that existed for a time to reconfigure environment, and whose absence makes us pause for thought or deeper feeling, in our walking, working and waiting". The pause that Toop proposes here is vital for attending the aural aura of places. It is during these pauses and gentle movements that we manage to free our imagination and listen to the eternal echoes that haunt places. Pauses, as well as slowness, connect us with daydreaming and memory. As Milan Kundera (1995 cited in McCombe, 2004) writes in his novel *Slowness*, "There is a secret bond between slowness and memory, between speed and forgetting...the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting". Pico Iyer (2014 cited in Seppälä, 2016), author of *The Art of Stillness* (2014), reflects that when in stillness, he can hear his deepest voice, everything that becomes inaudible when he is in constant motion. Slow movement and daydreaming pauses are

our escape from the everyday; they lead us to the possibilities of what Iyer (Ibid.) calls "deepest voice" and Toop (2010, p.58) "deeper feeling". We are, in effect, enabled to understand things in a different way and are provided with essential information that stems from the overlooked. Utterances of the past scar places, they echo eternally and form aural auras that are heard by subjects during pauses.

### **2.3.5.3 - Eternal echoes**

The concept that sounds never actually die but are rather preserved in places as some sort of energy contained in buffers, such as in objects, walls or in the air, is supported by various researchers and artists although at a scientific level this cannot be validated. Electrical engineer Guglielmo Marconi was one of the pioneers in the field of radio transmission. In his late days in the 1930s, Marconi came to support that sounds never actually dissipate but rather linger in the atmosphere eternally, as a vibration inaudible to the human aural perception (Milner, 2009). He believed that with the right device, sounds uttered in the past could be recovered (Ibid.). British composer Gavin Bryars found Marconi's ideas very inspiring when he was in the process of composing his seminal *The Sinking of the Titanic*, which began in 1969. Bryars was fascinated by the story of the ship's band that kept on playing music up until seconds before the ship's sinking. Through his piece he tried to represent this eternal aural impression (conceptually) based on the idea that the band's performance continues to reverberate underwater (Michelfelder, n.d.). Anthropologist Ted Strehlow studied the aborigines of Australia extensively, focusing on the Aranda tribe. He notes that the Aranda "sees recorded in the surrounding landscape the ancient story of the lives and the deeds of the immortal beings whom he reveres" (Strehlow, 1947 cited in Tuan, 1974, p.99). For philosopher/mathematician Charles Babbage (cited in Toop, 2010, p.34) "the air is a vast library, inscribed with the sonic impressions of every sound ever uttered". Virginia Woolf (1939 cited in Schulkind, ed., 1976) ponders whether moments felt with great intensity have an autonomous presence and wonders whether they "are in fact still in existence". She sees her past as a long ribbon of scenes and emotions lying in the background and believes that strong emotional moments that took place in the past leave traces and can somehow be retrieved. She decides that "Instead of remembering here a scene and there a sound, I shall fit a plug into the wall; and listen to the past" (Ibid.).

### 2.3.5.3.1 - Stone Tape theory

The above insights also relate to British archaeologist/parapsychologist Thomas Charles Lethbridge whose so-called "Stone Tape theory" became extremely influential in the works of several artists including writer Nigel Kneale and phonographer Chris Watson. Lethbridge claimed that inanimate objects are repositories of history and information and that ghosts are atmospheres recorded in the ether (Welbourn, 2011). Echoing Marconi, Lethbridge theorised that strong emotional moments can be recorded in the air, the walls or the objects, and if the right procedure is followed, one may be able to recover this information (Ibid.). Lethbridge's ideas were popularised in a Christmas ghost film based on Nigel Kneale's script and produced by the BBC in 1972. The plot is as follows: An electronic company's research team moves to a recently renovated Victorian house in a small village, to work on developing a new recording machine. The team soon finds out that one of the rooms was not renovated because the workers claimed that it was haunted. The group explores the room and attempts to record the haunting activity but sounds are not captured on the recorder and they realise that it uses humans to "play" its contents. In a similar tone with the *Stalker* (mentioned in the introduction of this chapter) the protagonist and leader of the team, Peter Brock, realises that:

You shaped it that way. It's the room; just the room itself, nothing else. There is no ghost. The room holds an image, and when people go in there they pick it up. What you hear or what you see is inside your own brain. That would be why the sounds don't echo; that would be why they don't record, no machine hears them. It must act like a recording fixed in the floor and the walls. It would have to be in the stone; perhaps it only occurs under extreme conditions, some kind of extreme human output emotions, terror. (The Stone Tape, 1972)

The team then figures out that the stones of the walls actually act as a tape recorder with the capacity to record over the previous recording and therefore, lying behind the hauntings they experience, are actually other more ancient ones that link back to the biography of the place.

I find the above notion intriguing and extremely relevant to my research as its entire theoretical course is essentially based on this idea. Places are "accumulated times" (De Certeau, 1984, p.108); layers of stories embedded, defining the atmosphere of place. Like a palimpsest that has been successively reused and reprocessed but traces of earlier forms can still be detected. In a similar way, a place's history has been retold, reheard or misheard and all these tales, rumours, myths and frictions are still present and audible, forming the aural aura of the place. When we visit places we find ourselves exposed to their past, present and future, and we also become

layers of their biography. Through experiencing this "geography of time and place" (Voegelin, 2010, p.96) we invent a presence that goes deep and reveals the soul of the place. The echoes from the past blend with the echoes produced by us in the present as well as with the echoes reaching the place from its obscure future. All these echoes haunt the place, and similarly they haunt us; they are the ingredients that form aural auras.

## **2.4 - Conclusions**

Through the absence and silence that characterise the atmosphere of abandoned places or places with complex biographies, an emotional energy can be retrieved; this is what I call "aural aura". As this research suggests, this energy may be grasped much like the way in which we experience background noise. We rarely focus on background noise; it is mainly felt rather than perceived. As Serres (1982, p.7) points out, background noise is "our perennial sustenance", the cornerstone from which every sonic event occurs and makes sense. Artists who follow a place-specific trajectory should find ways to make themselves "resonate" with the specifics of place. They need to spend time within a place and attempt to enter into a meaningful dialogue with it, making use of their extended ear in order to "listen" to the place through its histories. In other words artists should be involved in an interactive process attending to what I term "protogenic aural aura". Protogenic in the sense that it is "discovered" directly rather than through an art project.

Orchestrated aural aura is the attempt of sound artists to "orchestrate" a conversation between audience and place through sound. It invites the audience to use their imagination and listen through the sound work, creating what Gaston Bachelard (1958, p.i) calls a "poetic image" in order to come into contact with place. Installed on-site the artists' work can act as a mediator, communicating in abstract or in representational ways the histories of the place. History is not something static that refers only to the past but it is rather an echo from all temporal directions (past, present, future); it is a fluid situation undergoing continual transformation and negotiation. In this sense both the protogenic and the orchestrated aural auras are interactive. This interaction may be seen through this contact with place, where both the artist and the audience become part of its history; they become parameters contributing to its reshaping and its transformation.

The aural aura of places with complex biographies is explored in the four works included in the portfolio. The theoretical content analysed in Chapter 1 and especially in Chapter 2 gave direction to the conceptualisation and realisation of all four projects.

# Chapter 3

## Introduction

In Chapter 3 the concepts that are analysed in Chapters 1 and 2 are explored within the framework of two projects, namely *Rainzonances4* and *Rainzonances5*. Chapter 3 is divided in two parts 3A and 3B, which correspond to each of the aforementioned works. Each part introduces further theoretical discourse that strengthens the conceptual argument of my research and enables a more solid connection with the practice and the particularities of each project.

*Rainzonances* is an ongoing project that I initiated in 2008. The title is inspired by David Tudor's milestone piece *Rainforest IV* combined with the word "resonance". The project functions as a collaborative platform for interdisciplinary artists to interact and co-create works that deal with the aural aura of places. *Rainzonances* follows a place-specific discourse, as well as a guerrilla-art style, aiming at exposing the special character of socially charged places. *Rainzonances1* (2008)<sup>9</sup> dealt with a building designed by acclaimed Cypriot architect Neoptolemos Michaelides. It consisted of a sound and a light installation created by me in collaboration with visual artist Euripides Dikaios. The second edition of *Rainzonances* – *Rainzonances2* (2010) – took place at the old Satiriko Theatre, former "Adelfi Varnakidi" cinema, a building that was scheduled to be demolished shortly after the installation was completed. The audience was invited to experience a final show in this space that was charged with so much energy; to move around the building and use it in a different way, to watch and listen to the voices and the shadows of the past. This was also a collaborative project very reminiscent of the Fluxus happenings in the 1960s. It consisted of sound and light installations, sculptures with found objects, and a performance<sup>10</sup>. *Rainzonances3* (2010)<sup>11</sup> was a collaborative project between myself and the theatre company "Paravan Proactions". The project involved the building of an installation that mainly consisted of three elements: a surround sound installation, a platform/stage area and a series of parallel events with invited artists. The

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<sup>9</sup> More information about *Rainzonances1*: <http://rainzonances.blogspot.com.cy/2015/08/rainzonances1.html>.

<sup>10</sup> More information about *Rainzonances2*: <http://rainzonances.blogspot.com.cy/2015/08/rainzonances2.html>.

<sup>11</sup> More information about *Rainzonances3*: <http://rainzonances.blogspot.com.cy/2014/02/rainzonances-description.html>.

installation had a duration of five weeks and each week the environment was transformed according to each different place under investigation.

The works presented in this chapter – *Rainzonances4* and *Rainzonances5* – follow a parallel trajectory in terms of their methodology, aesthetics and the context of their presentation. As mentioned in the introduction of this thesis, both works are interdisciplinary, collaborative and multi-dimensional. While the projects in their entirety are considered ongoing (at the time of writing), their constituent works are ephemeral and follow a guerrilla-art approach. They take place in outdoor public-space settings, targeting the random passers-by and the everyday users of each space. The works consider place as part of their substance and interfere in each place's routine atmosphere. As a result, the projects presented in Chapter 3 bear an element of unpredictability, risk and adventure.

## Chapter 3A - *Rainzonances4* (2010 - ongoing)

The wardrobe had no keys! ... No keys had the big wardrobe  
Often used at its brown and black door  
No keys! ... It was strange! Many a time we dreamed  
Of the mysteries lying dormant between its wooden flanks  
And we thought we heard, deep in the gaping lock  
A distant sound, a vague joyful murmur.  
(Rimbaud, 1870 cited in Bachelard, 1958, p.80)

### 3A.0 - Background

*Rainzonances4* is a multi-dimensional, multi-layered project, with the inaccessibility of the Nicosia International Airport (NIC) as its central axis. Although the project presented here consists of five works, it is however considered to be an ongoing process, given the frequent reformations and transformations of the dynamics related to its subject, as well as the constant unearthing of new material, which becomes impossible to overlook. The main piece in *Rainzonances4*, namely *AerodromeLefkosia*, is a collaborative project which includes a sound installation, a light installation and a performance.

I have chosen the Nicosia Airport to be one of the case studies of my research quest for the following reasons:

- 1 "Frozen" for the last 42 years, this space is charged with a ghost-like aura. One cannot avoid being overwhelmed by uncanny and haunting feelings when seeing photographs of the interior and exterior of the premises, and also when reading its history or listening to stories about it.
- 2 Despite my efforts to avoid the political dimension (or at least not to reflect it in the final piece) the place is literally a manifestation of the political scene being played in Cyprus even at present. Thus this is not merely a ghost airport but also a symbol of the conflict, the war and the tension that arose in the recent past, and which continues to this day.

- 3 The fact that the airport is situated in the Buffer Zone constitutes a big challenge for me, mostly in terms of the artistic approach. There were three key issues I had to find a solution to: a) how I can create something without having any material to begin with due to inaccessibility b) how I can incorporate inaccessibility in the work and c) whether inaccessibility is a fantasy-arouser in this case.

The main concept linking the individual works together is (as mentioned above) the Nicosia Airport's 42-year inaccessibility as well as the mental structures that have developed, especially in the perception of the local people. These structures may be seen as resulting from this fabricated geographical void. The works not only enter into this discourse using various methodologies, but each one of them goes further, addressing the forcefully constructed socio-political realities. The works also relate to other disciplines, such as human geography, anthropology and psychology, which are in turn all relevant to the presumed conflict of "place" and "non-place". Marc Augé's essay and book *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995) was a point of departure for the development of the project and especially for the laying out of a theoretical foundation and the shaping of a broader context. Although Augé's ideas may be considered outdated, for the purposes of this project however his ideas were employed as a reference. This was done in order to construct an argument that would reveal corresponding materials, themes and questions that could surface through the project's discourse. Augé (1995) himself states that neither place nor non-place exist in the absolute sense of the term, proposing that this is not a black/white matter. Hence the paragraphs to follow do not constitute an attempt to evaluate Augé's work, nor to theorize or to analyse in depth subjects that concern other related disciplines, such as anthropology and/or sociology. In other words, Augé's concepts will be introduced here in order to serve as the backbone for the realization of this particular art project.

### **3A.1 - Theoretical Framework [Airport as "non-place" – Airport as "place" – Airport as "fictional place"]**

#### **3A.1.1 - Airport as "non-place"**

Airports could definitely be placed under Marc Augé's category of "non-places". They are in fact one of the main concepts used in response to the question of what is non-place. Augé's

definition (1995, p.110) refers to sites that are characterised by the "fleeting, the temporary and ephemeral"; "Spaces of circulation (freeways, airways), consumption (department stores, supermarkets), and communication (telephones, faxes, television, cable networks) [...] They are spaces where people coexist or cohabit without living together". This change in peoples' perception of space, time and private/public is a main feature in Augé's concept of "supermodernity". One of the consequences of supermodernity, as Augé argues (1995), is the formation of non-places, meaning spaces, which are not concerned with identity, history and relationship. Augé's reasoning echoes Relph, who (as also presented briefly in Section 1.0.2) stresses that in contemporary life the meaning of "authenticity", in terms of people's connection with distinctive places, has dramatically diminished. Relph (1976) terms this new situation as "placelessness". He describes placelessness as "the casual eradication of distinctive places and the making of standardized landscapes that results from an insensitivity to the significance of place" (Ibid., Preface).

Relph's "placelessness", as well as Augé's "non-place", could be interpreted as having the opposite meaning to Lippard's quotation, used as an epigraph to the first chapter. For Lippard (2007, p.7), place is "[...] personal and political. A layered location replete with human histories and memories, place has width as well as depth. It is about connections, what surrounds it, what formed it, what happened there, what will happen there". On the contrary, non-place is impersonal and does not bear the histories and memories of the people that use it; it is not about connections, not about what surrounds it and not about what has happened there; it has neither width nor depth. Also, the feel of an airport cannot be considered to be "registered in one's muscles and bones", as Yi Fu Tuan (1977, p.184) very poetically notes when he discusses place. And indeed, Augé's term, which bears the oppositional prefix "non", actually suggests that a non-place is something that a place is not.

Another condition that characterises non-places such as airports is liminality. The concept of liminality was first introduced in the beginning of the 20th century by anthropologist Arnold van Gennep and was developed further by Victor Turner in the 1960s and 1970s. Turner (1975, p.237) defined liminality as: "[...] the midpoint of transition in a status-sequence between two positions". During this transitory position, solidity is lost and things become fluid, ambiguous and subject to change. It is an in-between situation where established hierarchies may be reversed, things become uncertain and future outcomes, once taken for granted, become doubtful (Horvath, Thomassen and Wydra, 2009).

This is undoubtedly a state in which we find ourselves when in an airport waiting for our flight. This anticipation period produces a spatial and temporal disorientation that promotes daydreaming and reverie. It is therefore a productive period (as discussed in Section 2.3.4) in that it offers us the opportunity to take a rest from our routine and discover new perspectives and new possibilities. It is through this act of transition and movement, as Tuan (1977) suggests, that we better experience diverse situations. In order to realise the change from one situation to another we need to move or pass through an intermediate condition where all values are de-established only to be rediscovered in a fresh perspective in the new situation/destination. Turner (1975) argues that liminality should finally come to a steady position, that this state of ambiguity and intensity needs to be assembled in a specific structure.

In the case of the airport traveller, as will be described in the following section, the temporal perplexity produced by his/her liminal state involves all three dimensions of time: past, present and future. Moreover through daydreaming the spatial dimension is also altered dramatically; while the body is physically situated within the airport the mental realm takes the subject on imaginary journeys, to diverse scenes and localities.

### **3A.1.1.1 - The traveller**

Roxana Cazan begins her 2008 article "The Poetics of Placelessness: Imagined Spaces Inside out in Rabindranath Tagore's "The Post Office"" by arguing that:

Real or imaginary journeys free the subject from the binds of a particular location, responding to the desire and pleasure of discovery, while simultaneously threatening with the unknown. The relative freedom afforded by travel, corresponds to other sorts of confinement: the estrangement from what the traveller could call a centre or a "home".  
(Cazan, 2008, p.65)

With the above quote as a starting point, we could consider a frequent psychological condition that arises in airports – especially in cases where one is a lone traveller – which could be an example or a practical model for Augé's theory. It is generally agreed upon that when we are experiencing environments, as well as artworks, the impact on our perception is greater when we are by ourselves, following our own rules in our own time, rather than when we are with others. "Greater impact" could mean a better understanding of the place/environment/artwork,

both in a physical, as well as a mental/conceptual sense, including of course the imaginary level, which, as explored in Chapter 2, is a vital extension of our cognitive realm. In this sense, "non-placeness", as discussed in the above paragraph, could be more effortlessly experienced by a lone traveller, who, without distractions, is enabled to enter into a deeper daydreaming state. The interactions occurring when travelling in the company of others create a dynamic of "placeness", a bubble encircling the group, radiating a home-like environment. This keeps the group on safe ground and thus clearly enables them to be less prone to experiencing the psychological state discussed here. Bachelard (1960, p.173) also detects this state, stressing that in a reverie of solitude, time is suspended, the dreamer's solitude is magnified and he arrives in a majestic world that has no yesterday or tomorrow.

In an airport, the unaccompanied traveller enters a state of solitude. He joins a silent dialogue with himself, and his unuttered thoughts mix with those of thousands of other travellers. An obscure and dream-like atmosphere seems to be formed. The lone traveller in an airport space enters into a bizarre state of liminality and temporal disorientation, somewhere between past, present and future, as Bachelard suggests above. His body is physically on-site, but his mind is fast-forwarding to the place of destination, or to other possible concerns and rewinding, to the memories gathered from the place he has left behind. The above conditions blend together with his psychological anxiety of successfully completing the necessary steps and procedures, and with other unconscious reactions to myriads of stimuli. This sensual ambience that arises however will definitely fade out from his memory once he has reached his destination. This specific ambience, that feeds the traveller's impression, is greatly enhanced by the physical properties of the building's architecture and its specific functions, such as the large and open spaces, the characteristic and intense white lighting, the abundance of visual cues and information, the random crossing and collision with other travellers, the very loud ventilation system and the highly reverberant spaces. This last point, in conjunction with the sense of hearing, is very intriguingly theorised by Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, in their book *Spaces Speak, are you Listening* (2007). They argue that there is a strong and direct relationship between the aural architecture of a space and the feelings, mood and associations of the people inside it or surrounded by it. They provide some very apt examples worth quoting here:

We may experience a living room as cold or warm independent of its actual temperature [...] The acoustics of a grand cathedral can create an exalted mood; those of a chapel can enhance the privacy of quiet contemplation; those of an elevator can produce the feeling

of encapsulation and, in the extreme, claustrophobia. The acoustics of an open area can produce feelings of either freedom or insecurity. (Blessner and Salter, 2007, p.2)

The traveller's mood and the impressions they gather from being in the airport environment are thus greatly influenced by the space's acoustics, as well as the other elements mentioned above. It could be claimed that since the atmospheres of most airports are very distinctive and rather alike (especially in the Western world), in an analogous manner, lone travellers could be sharing common impressions and moods that result from being in these spaces. It should be noted here, that these impressions and moods connected to the "non-placeness" of airports are not necessarily of a negative nature. In his book *Haunted Weather*, David Toop (2004, p.43) identifies this atmosphere and this mood, describing it as "an atmosphere of fairytale entrancement". He further elaborates that this entrancement "suppresses the underlying panic that afflicts all sensible passengers" (Ibid.).

### **3A.1.1.2 - Eno and ambient music**

British artist, musician and composer Brian Eno took the idea of our mood in airports a step further. Stranded in an airport in Germany for several hours, Eno gradually became irritated by the music being played from the terminal's speakers. As a reaction to this experience, he conceptualised a form of music (what came to be termed as "ambient music") that would potentially diffuse the tension and create a relaxed and calm atmosphere, without interfering with human communication (Nathanidiotend, 2007). As Eno (Ibid.) expressed in an interview:

I thought that everything that was connected with flying was kind of a lie, you know, when you went into an airport or an airplane, they always play this very happy music, which is sort of saying "you are not going to die, there's not going to be an accident, don't worry", and I thought that was really the wrong way round, I thought it would be much better to have music that said "Well if you die, it doesn't really matter" and so I went to create a different feeling that you were sort of suspended in the universe and your life or death wasn't so important [...].

This led to the production of the album *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* (1978), the first part of a tetralogy titled *Ambient*. This was actually Eno's second attempt to unravel his ideas surrounding ambient music, following his 1975 album *Discreet Music*.

As mentioned in the previous chapter (Section 2.2.2.1), the term "ambient music" is usually employed in a rather vague manner without necessarily referring to a particular musical idiom.

Still, in the context of this research we will be approaching ambient music with an "ear" towards Eno's perspective; a music that is not designed to be listened to through a conventional musical ear but rather, music that engages consciousness at different levels and that alters the temporal dimension, manipulating the listener's mood. This is a rather interesting concept, which becomes even more intriguing if we consider Bachelard's last quotation from the previous section: "[...] in a reverie of solitude, time is suspended putting the subject in a majestic world with no yesterday or tomorrow" (Bachelard, 1960, p.173). Considering the above we may come to the conclusion that what Eno actually aimed to achieve was to produce reveries. More specifically, in the case of *Ambient 1: Music for Airports*, which, as discussed in Chapter 2, could qualify as a place-specific work if installed in airports, we may suggest that Eno created an "orchestrated aural aura". Nevertheless, it is not clear whether Eno had actually conceived *Ambient 1: Music for Airports* as an installation in airports; it is more likely that he thought of it as a conceptual work presented as an album, although it did end up being installed in a few airports – at LaGuardia, New York for example – for short periods (Madden, 2014).

The seeds of ambient music were not planted by Eno. Its roots can be traced back to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century with the Dadaists, who were experimenting with such concepts. An important figure who was influenced by Dadaist ideas was Eric Satie, particularly with his controversial work *Musique d'Ameublement* (furniture music) (1920). This was music composed to "furnish" the intermission of a play by Max Jacob in 1920 in Paris. In the program note, Satie urges the audience to take no notice of the music and to behave during the intervals as if it did not exist. As he states, "This music, specially composed for Max Jacob's play claims to make a contribution to life in the same way as a private conversation, a painting in a gallery, or the chair on which you may or may not be seated" (Satie cited in Bernardini, 2008, p.2). Predictably however, as soon as the orchestra began to play the piece during the interval, most of the people stopped speaking and gathered around to listen in their usual way, with Satie urging them to go on talking, walk about and stop listening (Drever, 2009).

However, ninety years later, with his 2008 essay *Erik Satie's "Musique d'Ameublement"*, Nicola Bernardini disagrees that Satie's *Musique d'Ameublement* was a forerunner of ambient music. He challenges the idea that Satie's pioneering concept has any connection with, or can be

labelled as the precursor of ambient music, minimal music and/or Muzak<sup>12</sup>. He claims that in terms of its musical configuration,

*Musiques d'Ameublement* show even less resemblance to any minimal music, not to mention muzak: repetitions are always strictly identical, there is no identifiable "musical" form related to them, there are no variations, no extensions, there is no evolution in the strict sense. The message is exasperatingly static, and it does not seek to offer any solution nor escape to its staticity. (Bernardini, 2008)

Bernardini continues, affirming that,

Satie's *Musique d'Ameublement* was conceived as a tribute to the making of a culture: the claim that *Musique d'Ameublement* was "pure entertainment" which does not deserve attention nor intellectual speculation is obviously deceptive and it indicates that Satie was concerned with the deviations of the society of his time, unable to conceive music as a social bonding device any longer leaving all its functions to its representational capabilities. (Ibid.)

The question of whether this was the intention of Satie or not will remain enigmatic. Nonetheless, Bernardini's rather categorical claim does not appear to acknowledge the nature of artistic evolution, that is not characterized by "parthenogenetic" events and the general idea that past artistic activity acts referentially and influences newer forms of art.

It is widely acknowledged that minimalist composers in the 1960s, the most prominent example probably being La Monte Young, were influenced by the Dadaists and Satie. However, the assertion that Eno is the inventor of the so-called "ambient music" cannot be taken literally, although interestingly, in his review of Eno's *Discreet Music* (1975), Liam Singer (2004) notes that, "He [Eno] 'discovered' ambient music in the same way that most countries have been 'discovered' – when a Westerner finds it, names it, and gives it borders".

According to Eno (1978 cited in Licht, 2009, p.6), ambient music "must be as ignorable as it is interesting". Eno was not interested in creating a wallpaper of sound, in the way Muzak operated, but rather, as also mentioned above, to create music that would enhance the

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<sup>12</sup> Muzak was a company, which operated from 1934 up until 2011, supplying music to different types of businesses and other customers. It started with providing background music, usually instrumental arrangements of famous songs. At some point in time Muzak revised their strategy in line with the modern era and focused on so-called 'foreground music'. Within this new framework they obtained the necessary licenses for using original recordings. In the music discipline, the word Muzak is usually used to denote all music that is played in commercial spaces, with the objective of maximizing sales and has no artistic value. (Baumgarten, 2012).

prevailing atmosphere, produce several levels of listening experiences and alter one's sense of time, in order to manipulate his/her mood. This concept emerged following an experience Eno had during his recovery from an accident in 1975. Unable to move from his bed in order to raise the volume of the music he was listening to, he ended up listening to it at a very low volume level. As a result the music blended with the room's background noise (Madden, 2014). According to Eno, "This presented what was for me a new way of hearing music – as part of the ambience of the environment, just as the colour of the light and the sound of the rain were parts of that ambience" (Ibid.). This connects to the discussion in Section 2.2 concerning background noise and ambience.

Comments that listeners have made under the Music for Airports Youtube upload (Nineball87, 2007), offer us an insight on how this piece, and generally, on how this music is experienced, especially with regards to the parameter of time, as discussed above:

- User "Metabog": "Amazing how this track manages to compress time, it feels nothing like 10 minutes" (Ibid.)
- User "woohooooo": "Those were the fastest 10 minutes and 51 seconds of my life" (Ibid.)
- User "Steve Roe": "Music to watch paint dry" (Ibid.)

The static quality of Eno's ambient works, mainly in terms of the absence of conventional compositional techniques such as "tension and release", does indeed bring a balance to the site-specific conditions within which these works are supposed to be experienced. In the case of the airport, which is characterised by continuous movement and change, ambient music acts as the counter-agent. While the external environment has a rapid tempo and undergoes frequent adjustments and reshaping, the mood of the passenger maintains a contrasting calmness and a stillness, initiating a sense of floating or hovering in a nostalgic reverie. This is exactly the idea behind the composition and communication of this kind of music.

This concept seems to have provided a solid ground and a specific direction, constituting a refreshing approach towards the forms and the aesthetics surrounding the medium of sound installations, with many sound artists following this specific trajectory in their work. The analysis on sound installations developed in Section 2.3.2 can be complemented here with the proposal that a sound installation could be nothing but a production of an aural atmosphere that

could stimulate a specific mood to arise. Although the sonic outcome of a sound installation is technically propagating and emerging in time, yet, within the present discourse, the temporal aspect is actually a parameter to be manipulated in order to form a desirable mood. Moreover, following the above train of thought, sound installation is freed from any performative elements it may have carried; its meaning is not necessarily withheld in a time frame where the audience finds itself having to monitor in order to grasp a nuance; it is a suspended energy that fills the space and vibrates the bodies found inside or around it. It is an ambience (as analysed in Chapter 2); a subtle but defining background that affects the events that are occurring in any foreground.

The main work of this project, entitled *AerodromeLefkosia* (analysed in Section 3A.2.1) functions within the aforementioned framework, although it carries a major difference to the above brief analysis of ambient music. While the work sets to create an aural ambience, it nevertheless aims to project a conceptual dimension through this ambience: i.e. an imaginary identity of the deserted airport, largely formed by its 42-year inaccessibility.

### **3A.1.2 - Airport as "place"**

Through discussions with science teacher and philosopher Demetris Aristidou, on the abandoned Nicosia Airport in relation to themes and meanings surrounding the terms "place" and "non-place", a very interesting paradox arose, namely that a non-place – as introduced by Augé (see Section 3A.1.1) – could happen to be a "place". In order for the above idea to be understood more fully, and for it to be able to support my assumptions and my practical applications, it is essential to take a more detailed look into the airport's history and to reveal the context within which this paradox was/is taking place.

### 3A.1.2.1 - History<sup>13</sup>

The Nicosia International Airport (NIC) is situated on the western tip of Nicosia, the capital of Cyprus. It has been declared as "abandoned" by the International Civil Aviation Organisation (ICAO), and since the ceasefire between Turkish and Greek Cypriots in 1974, it is a part of the United Nations Protected Area (UNPA).

The NIC was constructed in the 1930s and acted principally as a military airport for the (British) Royal Air Force (RAF).<sup>14</sup> During World War II the airport's facilities and runway were extended and used by American bombers, among others. After the war ended, a basic terminal was built and the airport acquired a civil-aviation character. In 1966 the RAF withdrew from the airfield due to its increasing use by civilian aircrafts, and in 1968 the new terminal opened, which was regarded as an architectural wonder for the young Republic of Cyprus, as well as an important airport in the whole of the Middle East. The construction of the new terminal was a catalyst for the increasing tourist attraction to the island during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The new airport operated for only six years, up until 1974, when the Turkish invasion occurred. Since then the site of the airport (not the terminal) houses the Headquarters of the United Nations (UN) in Cyprus. The terminal is gradually deteriorating with nature claiming the site back.

According to Mr. Aristidou (2010), in the 1960's the Nicosia International Airport became a symbol of modernity, change, freedom, opportunity and ambition and it also acted as a bridge – both physical and metaphorical – connecting Cyprus (an island) to the rest of the world. From the moment of its opening the airport became a big attraction for non-travellers.

In the 60's people from around the area, even from far away, would drive their cars – cars were a fairly new thing in Cyprus then – to the newly built airport of Nicosia. They would visit the airport with their friends just for fun, for amusement; to watch travellers arriving and departing, to have a coffee and a chat at the café while watching the aeroplanes taking off or landing and other things. This was quite a usual phenomenon. I remember the revelation I had when noticing a guy – must have been a foreigner – eating spaghetti in the airport's diner, who poured a red liquid substance in his plate. This was the first time I saw ketchup ever! (Ibid.)

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<sup>13</sup> The historical information presented in this paragraph was taken from the Department of Civil Aviation (online - available at: [http://www.mcw.gov.cy/mcw/dca/dca.nsf/DMLhistory\\_en/DMLhistory\\_en?OpenDocument](http://www.mcw.gov.cy/mcw/dca/dca.nsf/DMLhistory_en/DMLhistory_en?OpenDocument) [Accessed 23 July 2015]) and from a lecture by Tim Reardon and Diana Bridger given in November 2014 at the Severis Foundation (Reardon and Bridger, 2014).

<sup>14</sup> Cyprus was then a British colony.

The airport as a popular attraction is certainly not unfamiliar amongst Cypriots of today. When I was younger I recall my friends and I embarking in the middle of the night for no specific reason (coffee was the excuse) to the Larnaca Airport, which is about half an hour away from my hometown, Nicosia. There, we would sit at the café or the terminal's central area, watching people appearing and disappearing, welcoming them or teasing them in various ways. To us, the Larnaca Airport was certainly closer to the meaning of "place" than of "non-place".

While examining Alexis Hadjisoteriou's (2010) photographs of the Nicosia Airport, I came across some very revealing comments written by a wide range of individuals such as visitors and UN soldiers that once served at the airport base. These comments also support the argument that spaces characterised as "non-places" (as in the case of airports), may acquire a sense of place-ness. Below are three of these comments:

- User "Mike": As a kid of 4 at the time when NIC ceased operations I do have memories from back then, dad used to take us there to watch the aircraft on Sunday afternoons. (Ibid.)

- User "Unknown": Can remember landing at the old airport in 1962 and the development of the new one. Took off from here a few times in a Cyprus Airways Trident, may well have been the one shown! Happy memories of the area, when I was a teenager a group of us used to go to the airport for a drink. (Ibid.)

- User "John Heymans": Along with Ron Denham and more than 100 other Royals and 80 Hussars, I spent the winter of 1974-75 at Nicosia International Airport. We moved in early December 74 and after a period of cleaning up we created a comfortable home for ourselves for the next six months or so. These photos bring back a flood of memories, most good, as we had a successful deployment operationally, and a great time together. (Ibid.)

The third comment above reveals that the airport's spaces were, and still are, used by UN soldiers since 1974 as their "home". These soldiers created a place related with everyday experiences and vivid memories. Place, as Creswell (2004, p.39) reminds us, is not "a secure ontological thing rooted in notions of the authentic", but it is rather "an event, an unstable stage for performance marked by openness and change rather than bounded-ness and permanence" (Ibid.). In this sense, the Nicosia Airport, even though it is not currently being "performed" by passengers and workers, continues to be "performed" by UN soldiers, rare visitors and, of course, the passers-by, through their imagination.

Another point that seems to strengthen the view that places that are traditionally termed non-places may be characterised as places is the case of employees at airports. For an employee, whether they are a duty free salesperson or an airbus mechanic, the airport site is essentially their second home. It is where they spend half their day on a regular basis, developing social webs as well as interactions with the space. Urry develops this idea, in his book *Mobilities* (2007, p.148): "Airspaces are also places of work for often thousands of workers and air terminals are becoming more like small cities. People spend considerable amounts of 'dwell-time' in these places [...]".

### **3A.1.3 - Airport as "fictional place"**

Umberto Eco (2009, p.84) postulates that "a fictional assertion should always tell what is not real-life". In the case of *Rainzonzances4*, imaginary histories and memories are explored, mainly from the perspective of a person with no first-hand experiences of the airport, but who has rather constructed its image through photographs, stories, and physical contact made from a distance. However, it also deals with people who have had first-hand experiences, although through the passage of time these have evolved into a blurry image which carries with it a large dose of nostalgia.

As discussed in Section 3A.1.2.1, since the 1974 war civilians cannot have access to the "ghost" airport of Nicosia. Even in the case of a very short visit for artistic purposes – as in my case – access is prohibited. This is demonstrated by the secret recording<sup>15</sup> I conducted with the use of binaural microphones in November 2010 (audible at the beginning of the "AerodromeLefkosia documentation" video), where the refusal of the UN soldier to my request for entering the site is clearly heard. Nevertheless most of the locals are aware of the airport's existence even if it is almost never in their visual – or other sensual – horizon. For people like myself who have experienced the airport only through photographs and historical documentation, the formation of a fictional place to substitute this geographical void is inevitable. Tuan (1977, p.184) identifies this oxymoron: "Still more curious is the fact that people can develop a passion for a certain type of environment without the benefit of direct encounter. A story, a descriptive passage or picture in a book suffices". Lippard likewise

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<sup>15</sup> The act of secretly recording the spoken word is undeniably considered unethical and it is in most cases a violation of the law. The consent of the person whose voice is recorded is required. Nevertheless, in this case I decided to take the risk and the responsibility of my recording act with the extenuatory that this would only be presented in the context of an academic project, and not to be broadcast anywhere in public.

acknowledges the above experience: "Even in places we've never been before, human lives can eerily bubble up from beneath the ground and haunt us" (Lippard, 2007, p.8). Following Relph's thoughts regarding "insiderness" and "outsiderness", discussed in Section 1.02, we may assume that the insider, i.e. the person who has experienced the airport either during its functioning days or after, surely has a less superficial insight of the place than the outsider. Nevertheless, drawing from Lippard's reasoning presented in Section 1.1.2, an outsider's view, despite its inherent superficial-ness, may provide a fresh way of experiencing things. An outsider may be in a position to offer perspectives that insiders are not able to have. An outsiders' viewpoint could also be valuable and can enhance the artistic process itself. However in order for the work to be meaningful, it seems essential that the artist should aim towards attending the protogenic aural aura before producing an orchestrated one. This is more or less Lippard's concern also when she argues that works by outsider artists "might qualify as significant art about place but certainly not art of place" (1997, p.278).

Tuan (1974) asserts that human beings act according to the symbolic behaviour they have developed and that these constructed "mental worlds" help them to "mediate between themselves and external reality. The artificial environment they have built is an outcome of mental processes – similarly, myths legends, taxonomies and science" (Ibid., p.13). An image, as Bachelard (1958) claims, is created through the synergy between real and unreal and for a place to have a value, it must integrate an element of unreality. Irish poet Oscar Wilde (cited in Lippard, 1997, p.290) seems to share Bachelard's thoughts: "A map of the world without Utopia is not worth glancing at". The above theses link up with the views of Pallasmaa, Böhme and Hallowell regarding atmospheres, as discussed in Chapter 2.

The vast silence of the airport site together with the stories narrated through various media (such as photographs, recordings and written documents) facilitates the formation of a new place, a fictional place, a place that makes the outsider relevant. According to Terry Tempest Williams (cited in Lippard, 1997, p.50) the story is "the umbilical cord between past, present and future" and thus one tiny piece of information or story about the airport may turn out to instigate the creation of a mythical place and to unfold a unique narrative. Merely the fact that the Nicosia Airport is closed, secured and inaccessible may be sufficient to stimulate the brain allowing it to develop fantasies which are, in most cases, much more colourful and vibrant than the "real" experience. Bachelard (1958, p.87) elegantly discusses this phenomenon: "[...] there will always be more things in a closed, than in an open, box. To verify images kills them, and it

is always more enriching to imagine than to experience". It is reasonable that when Bachelard talks about images above he is not referring narrowly to visual reflections but rather to a multisensory impression.

As in the *Stalker* example at the beginning of Chapter 2, the abnormality of the Zone arises not just from the place itself but also with the synergy of the visitors' (psychological) condition. This brings us back to Section 2.1 and specifically to the discussion on atmospheres acting as in-between situations that link subjects with objects and/or places. In a similar vein, we could say that the mythologizing of the Nicosia Airport and the reason why it is considered to have an eerie aura is because the passer's-by condition fosters this. Furthermore, this condition is fed, as mentioned above, by all sorts of stories surrounding this place, as well as the fact that the passer-by is not in a position to taste the "forbidden fruit". Of course, the airport site is not a part of the conscious topography of the passer-by and mythical construction is vital to his sense of orientation. For Bachelard (1958), "the fuzzy ambience of the unknown, gives man confidence in the known", and similar ideas regarding the importance of background and/or background noise, have been expressed by Serres and are analysed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.2.2). A borderline is not capable of binding our mental world and it is inevitable that this geographical void is usually substituted with an imaginary world.

#### **3A.1.4 - Fictional soundscape**

Digging through documentation on the functioning days of the airport could help reveal – to a certain degree – how the airport sounded like. However, an acoustic archaeological endeavour following Paul Devereux's (2010) methodology is not exactly the quest here.<sup>16</sup> The purpose is not to understand and represent or "replay" the airport's soundscape during its functioning era. Rather, what is relevant to this project is the soundscape that becomes audible in conjunction with the input of stories as well as the everyday experience of being forced to bypass the airport. This is not a soundscape in a physical sense but it could be described as a sensation or impression that is perceived as a form of aural aura as developed in detail in Chapter 2. In the absence of information, as is the case here, the mind desperately seeks patterns that will satisfy its curiosity. The void produced as a result of inaccessibility renders the airport a notion, an

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<sup>16</sup> Devereux (2010) defines the term "archaeoacoustics" as "the study of sound at ancient places".

idea, a breeze, a soundscape. Suddenly the apparent silence is substituted with noise and the airport gains once again its fully operational status.

## **3A.2 - Practice**

### **3A.2.0 - Stimuli**

Within the context of the methodology employed in the research practice, *Rainzonances4* draws inspiration from mainly three artistic idioms: walking art, border art and guerrilla art. Further on, I will briefly describe the ways in which walking art, border art and guerrilla art have influenced this project.

#### **3A.2.0.1 - Walking art**

Within the rapid rhythms of contemporary life which is led by a "time is money" mentality and where efficiency is the number one aim of society, walking seems to be the counterpoise, something that removes you from routine and offers an opening into time-space. Thus opportunities to focus on detail arise as well as chances to enter into philosophical monologues and thoughts. Walking probably offers the ultimate combination of pause and movement as the walker has the freedom of improvising his tempo at any given moment, expanding the possibilities of experience. In this sense, although walking is generally regarded as movement it can also be characterized as a type of pause, which, as discussed in Section 2.3.5.2, can free our imagination and lead us to the aural auras of places. "Each pause in movement makes it possible for location to become place", claims Tuan (1977, p.161), and Lippard acknowledges the significance of walking in the affinity with the history of a place: "Physical movement, [...] brings the tourist closer to the past than history books can" (1997, p.111). A walk can thus be regarded as the binding of fragmented pauses (places); if considered as a whole, a new place is in constant formation, consisting of the experience gathered from each of these pauses.

Walking art can take different forms, although generally it involves, directly or indirectly, the physical act of walking. It could be a walking performance, a video, a documentation of a walk, etc. A soundwalk may indeed be placed under the walking art umbrella, as it involves walking

with the purpose of attending to the acoustic environment (Westerkamp, 1974). This gesture is an active way of entering into a dialogue with a place. According to Schafer (1978 cited in Drever, 2009, p.163), "When you take your ears for a soundwalk, you are both audience and performer in a concert of sound that occurs continually around you. By walking you are able to enter into a conversation with the landscape".

Schafer's view quoted above relates to the field of psychogeography<sup>17</sup>. Guy Debord (1955, p.23) defined psychogeography as "the study of the precise laws and specific effects of the geographical environment, consciously organized or not, on the emotions and behaviour of individuals". The radical artists of the 1950s (Situationists and Letterists) who followed this concept were interested in observing certain processes that occurred around them which usually remained invisible or obscure. They kept a confrontational stance towards the controlled and the determined and this search for a new way of life was, according to Debord (Ibid.), "the only aspect still impassioning". This perspective surely links up with the discussion in Sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.2.1 regarding the background and the foreground. The quest of psychogeographers was essentially the reversal of foreground and background. They aimed at finding new structures within the environment that were hidden from the habitual and the customary. Modern psychogeographers, such as Ian Sinclair, have taken this concept further so as to include a sense of adventure through the discovery of urban dynamics. An interesting definition of this approach was given by American journalist Joseph Hart (2004, p.40) in his article "A New Way of Walking" (2004):

[...] a slightly stuffy term that's been applied to a whole toy box full of playful, inventive strategies for exploring cities. Psychogeography includes just about anything that takes pedestrians off their predictable paths and jolts them into a new awareness of the urban landscape.

Sinclair has explored deeply the concept of psychogeography through his writings as well as his practice. His walking expeditions mainly in the urban and suburban environment of London were an exploration into the histories of the place as well as an act of criticism towards the development of urban spaces. His famous yearlong walk around London's circular motorway

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<sup>17</sup> According to Joseph Hart (2004, p.40) psychogeography is a term "coined in the late 1950s by the Letterists and the Situationists – French artists and social theorists who adopted the playful-serious agenda of the Dadaists and Surrealists in an effort to break through the crust of post-war conformity".

(M25) was "a voyage into reverie [...] a way of reimagining London from its scattered ruins" (Sinclair, 2003<sup>a</sup>, p.1); a discovery of the city's fringes, which can be characterised by liminality. The M25 is a circular loop that stands in-between urban and rural, an uncertain situation that serves only the purpose of entering or leaving. My walk around the deserted Nicosia Airport is reminiscent of Sinclair's journey. I am also found on the fringe of the city exploring the landscape as well as the soundscape; the psychic atmospheres produced by the politically divided zones; the ambiences found in these contours. I act like a child discovering and absorbing details and ingredients, in order to unearth tales and myths and attend to the aural aura.

Apart from Sinclair, the work of several other artists who employ walking as their practice, such as Francis Alÿs, Richard Long and Hamish Fulton has been greatly influential in the way this project has evolved. In addition, it has greatly affected my relationship with the act of walking in my everyday life. Although at different levels, all five works of *Rainzonances4* engage with walking. The two long walks conducted along the Nicosia Airport's perimeter provided the material as well as the context for the creation of these five works. As a matter of fact one of the works, namely *AeroWalk* (see Section 3A.2.3), contemplates the walk itself as constituting the work, as will be elaborated further below.

### **3A.2.0.2 - Border art**

As mentioned earlier in this chapter (see Section 3A.0), while the political dimension was not planned to be pursued in this project nevertheless it became evident early on that it constituted a factor that could not be justifiably overlooked. The place itself was and still is a live manifestation of a political conflict, as it is located exactly in the middle of the two conflicting communities in the Buffer Zone of Nicosia. This no man's land, along which people just pass by and almost never pause rings bells of fear, distress and jeopardy. It has definitely developed into a symbol, bringing back memories of pain and grief, and reminding one that this war has never ceased, it is still occurring in the present. The political issues that this border transmits as well as the social and cultural dynamics that stem from this situation actually became the driving force of the project. I was led to search deeper into the history of the airport in an effort to convey this atmosphere through the concept of my research regarding aural auras. As an artist working on the borderline I found inspiration in the so-called "border art" and

especially prominent artists of this genre such as Richard Lou and Guillermo Gómez-Peña. According to Guisela Latorre (2012):

Border art can be defined as forms of creative expression that focus on the social, political, and cultural realities of life in regions like the US-Mexico border, but can also speak to the broader experience of marginalization and oppression due to the imposition of invisible yet socially-restricting borders.

The emergence of this artistic idiom can be traced in the early 1980s in the US-Mexico border. Artists that considered themselves as belonging in this category were concerned, on a conceptual level, with a variety of issues that arose from or that involved the border, such as identity, racism and prejudice.

One of their main focuses was to reframe the concept of border because they rejected its dominant representation as a chasmic barrier dividing two nations. Rather, [...] they viewed it as a zone of transformation and as a laboratory for social and aesthetic experimentation. (Berelowitz, 1997 cited in Locas, 2010, p.2)

Although a border art discourse was not directly followed in *Rainzonances4*, it could be claimed that viewing the border as a zone of transformation and as a laboratory was relevant to the work. As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, I consider this project to be an ongoing process, with frequent new input that triggers new ideas for interventions and projects either on-site or in different contexts. As in the case of all projects, and specifically of *Echoing Hamam* (presented in Chapter 4B), place serves as a laboratory that keeps feeding and generating the next actions.

My project *Rainzonances4* has much in common with Richard Lou's work *Border Door* (1988). *Border Door* was an installation and a performance on the San Diego-Tijuana border, very close to Tijuana International Airport. It consisted of a free-standing door with its frame, with many nails hammered onto it, and with 134 hanging keys (Latorre, 2012). The door could be opened only from the Mexican side of the border and this was a symbolic gesture by Lou, depicting an invitation to the Mexicans to pass through the border with dignity (Ibid.). Lou's installation was ephemeral in nature, not deliberately however, since the patrol police took it down two days later. It nevertheless acted as an interruption of the everyday life of the passers-by, posing new reflections and considerations on the social, political and cultural concerns

brought up by borders. In a similar way my installation/performance *AerodromeLefkosia* aimed to break the routine of the passer-by and to transform the place aurally, thus exposing issues related to the history of the airport. *AerodromeLefkosia* was also an ephemeral work that took place adjacent to an airport although, in this case, its ephemerality was intentional. Both works are created at a politically charged place at the fringes of the city. They address these dynamics and aim at fostering a dialogue between the spectator and the place's histories. One difference that can be noted between Lou's work and mine is that my work is more complex in technical terms as well as in its structure. It is a collaborative situation where several artistic forms integrate to create an intermedial experience. The fact that the work involves sound, light and a performance gives the piece a temporal character that produces a sense of movement. On the other hand *Border Door* is a solo work that stands still and provokes mostly the visual sense. Furthermore, one more difference could be that *AerodromeLefkosia* is part of an ongoing project (*Rainzonances4*) that deals with Nicosia Airport, investigating it from different perspectives. Therefore, the project's different elements are built upon research that incorporates themes and stimuli deriving from several disciplines, not only border art. For example, walking art has revealed a field of extraordinary proportions and especially the practice of walking has been incredibly informative towards the experiencing and appreciating of the place's identity.

### **3A.2.0.3 - Guerrilla art**

According to Keri Smith (2007, p.11), guerrilla art involves "anonymous work[s] installed, performed, or attached in public spaces with the distinct purpose of affecting the world in a creative or thought-provoking way ". What makes guerrilla artworks interesting is the ways in which they interact with the environment. As Seppälä (2016) notes, "New experiences that disrupt our usual way of life and show us a different perspective make us more mentally flexible or creative". In the case of *Rainzonances4* and *Rainzonances5*, this interaction, as well as the element of surprise and disruption, provides a direct way of expressing some ideas and concepts regarding the corresponding places. This kind of public intervention however, does not only disrupt everyday space; it also transforms its character. Especially in places characterised by static-ness, such as the Nicosia Airport or the Cyprus Cultural Centre (see Chapter 3B), guerrilla art can temporarily lift this lifelessness, offering new perspectives and

alternative ways of reading these places. On the other hand, one may perceive this artistic expression as violation and intrusion. This is very typical in graffiti art where public or private spaces are painted usually during night hours and these works often carry political or social messages that may be provocative to some (see Banksy's example below). Also, this type of intervention might cause discomfort to the random passers-by who happen to experience the work, as was the case in the work *AerodromeLefkosia* (see following section) that took place outside the deserted Nicosia Airport. In this incident the nearby inhabitants who heard the signals transmitted from my sound installation were truly alarmed and worried that something very uncanny was happening within the Nicosia Airport site (as the policemen who approached us mentioned). The residents decided to notify the police and reported the enigmatic situation in their efforts to solve the mystery of the unidentified noise. The ethics surrounding the guerrilla-art approach are certainly an important issue to be considered keeping in mind that the threshold that separates one's artistic expression from one's violation of personal space is subjective and not fixed at all. It is apparently up to each artist's judgement to discover this threshold so that their art can find a meaningful reception. Nevertheless, one can claim that this discomfort is a necessary ingredient in surprising and "waking up" people, and that this is exactly the role and the substance of guerrilla art. It challenges – sometimes aggressively – the ethical limits that are set by societies in order to provoke and to bring change. I consider this act to be above all political, as it essentially constitutes a deliberate attempt to bring a voice into the public domain. This voice may or may not comment directly on society in an activist-like manner but nevertheless, it is certainly an intervention, unsettling the everyday and transforming its character. With regards to the interventions in public spaces and the procedures required in order to obtain a license, Banksy (2006, p.237) advises that, "it's always easier to get forgiveness than permission". Judging from my experience during my endeavour of obtaining permission for the *AerodromeLefkosia* installation outside the perimeter fence of the deserted Nicosia Airport (see Section 3A.2.1.1), I can confirm the validity of Banksy's remark. My understanding is that guerrilla art represents a confronting gesture towards conformism and the powers that keep societies contained. Therefore, guerrilla art requires a distancing of oneself from containers and the setting of one's own rules based on the dynamics of each society.

It would be an omission not to mention the work of renowned artist Banksy, who is certainly one of the most influential figures in the field of guerrilla art. His work has an activist character, commenting on socio-political issues that concern the entire planet. His graffiti,

stencil and whitewash works can be found all over the world but he himself has decided to keep his identity hidden. An anonymous intervention is, as discussed above, at the core of guerrilla art even though Banksy's works are not actually unsigned – he usually puts his logo on his works. Sinclair (1997) describes urban graffiti as an anonymous autograph, a signature without a document. These notions link with the Fluxus ideology, which basically attempts to erase the boundaries between art and life, resisting the commercialization of art in the circles of a specific elite. Instead, Fluxus artists aimed to transfer the creative process into the public sphere; most of the time, it was the audience who actually shaped this process. Banksy's series of nine works in Palestine carried out between 2002-2005 became extremely popular because of their explicit political content although they were also criticised by many, even by some Palestinians who felt that the works enhanced their feelings of restricted freedom (Renmar, 2012).<sup>18</sup> This proves that even when one considers the positive impact of these works on an international level, considering that they shed light on the existing war-zones, yet, this positive impact is not felt in the same way by all every-day spectators. This brings us back to the ideas analysed previously in this thesis regarding the need for artists to deeply understand the place and the community they are working in and to find ways to incorporate their art from a place-specific angle (see Sections 1.1.1, 1.1.2). The question of whether guerrilla artists should take under consideration every single view and comment of spectators/audience cannot be answered in a straightforward way. There will always be criticism from people who think differently and the artists' actions will always be a matter of debate. This can be seen as a healthy situation, which is essentially part of the specific field of expression. By challenging taboos and sensitivities conversations are triggered and as Seppälä notes (2016), we become more flexible and creative, which is in turn something that will inevitably facilitate transformation and change.

### **3A.2.1 - *AerodromeLefkosia* - Installation / Performance<sup>19</sup>**

*AerodromeLefkosia* is undoubtedly the most prominent of the five works that belong to the general project *Rainzonances4*. It consists of four interrelated parts: the multichannel sound installation, the live radio transmission, the light installation and the performance. The work has a collaborative orientation, as all *Rainzonances* projects do. For its realisation I

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<sup>18</sup> <http://banksyworld.blogspot.com.cy/2012/10/banksy-graffiti-in-palestine.html> [Accessed 1 August 2016].

<sup>19</sup> See "AerodromeLefkosia documentation" video.

collaborated with light artist Carolina Spyrou, and performers Ariana Alphas, Polyxenie Savva and Nicolas Stravopodis. At this point I will focus on my part in the project, which is, as mentioned above, the sound installation and the radio transmission.



Figure 3 - *AerodromeLefkosia*, Installation view

### 3A.2.1.1 - General discussion / Practical concerns

The realisation of *AerodromeLefkosia* was an ambitious and challenging task with what turned out to be quite a demanding and stressful production. For example, the procedure for obtaining a license for the use of loudspeakers at the chosen location was much more complex than I had expected. The selected location turned out to be a "grey zone" meaning that it was not clear under whose control it is (as was the case with the work *Rainzonances5* discussed in the second part of this chapter – 3B). No authority seemed to take the responsibility of issuing a license for such an event. The Nicosia Municipality required permission from the Police, the Police required approval from the county authorities, the county authorities needed approval from the United Nations and the United Nations closed the circle by requesting written consent from both the Municipality and the Police. Finally, two months after my initial attempt and following countless visits and phone calls I obtained a license signed by all the aforementioned official bodies only two days prior to the event, which had already been advertised in numerous newspapers, magazines and the Internet.

Financial constraints were a second serious issue since the work was not commissioned and no sponsors were involved. I was therefore required to deal with this issue as the idea for the project was my own and I had the responsibility of the production (as was the case with *Rainzonances5*). A power generator needed to be hired, powerful enough to handle the heavy load required for Carolina's lights as well as for my seven speakers, which had to function practically in full volume. Also the workers who installed the lights had to be paid. As far as the sound equipment is concerned I used my own two speakers and the rest were kindly lent to me by the Nicosia Municipal Arts Centre (NiMAC).<sup>20</sup>

The ephemeral nature of the project meant that the team had to set up a large-scale installation and then some hours later to disassemble everything and carry it back home. Many cables and other equipment were accidentally left behind since the generator was needed for another job, so we were forced to dismantle everything in absolute darkness, cold and humidity.

### **3A.2.1.2 - Communication**

Another parameter concerning the presentation of the installation that needed to be thought out carefully involved the question: "Who is my audience?" The initial idea was to set up the installation and not invite anybody. In this case the audience would have been the random passers-by and the local residents. This scenario would have served the concept perfectly since expectations of what to see and what to hear could actually limit the mental journey that the work is supposed to trigger. The initial idea aimed at fostering an element of surprise and stimulating the audience's auditory imagination. These characteristics were considered to be crucial for the successful communication of the work. According to the above scenario the speakers would have been set around the airport's perimeter fence on a hill with no visual contact from the road (see "AerodromeLefkosia documentation" video). The passers-by would have listened to these intangible and out-of-reach, distant signals and would have been urged to construct a story in order to rationalize this abrupt metamorphosis of their familiar soundscape (a usually silent soundscape). The sudden switch from (acoustic) absence to presence would draw them into a fantasy, bringing about their reinvention of the airport.

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<sup>20</sup> The specific speakers were bought by NiMAC about a year earlier, for the purposes of my project *Rainzonances3*, hosted by NiMAC.

For several reasons the idea of not inviting an audience to the event was not finally employed, so the new approach was to create an environment enhanced with sound, light and performance. This environment would give the impression that something was happening behind the hill and inside the airport. The aim was by no means to create a theatrical illusion or a stage-set but rather to set the audience's curiosity in motion in such a way that they would be enabled to experience this orchestrated aural aura and to enter into a dialogue with the place.

However, non-invited audience, including passers-by and local residents, turned out to be part of the project after all, as discussed below.

### **3A.2.1.3 - Invited and uninvited listening**

The location and the direction of the speakers enabled the sound to travel towards the nearby residential area (see "AerodromeLefkosia documentation" video). Due to the lo-fi character of the soundscape in the installation's setting and more specifically in the area where the audience were supposed to be standing (right next to a very busy avenue), the volume of the speakers needed to be very high in order for them to be effective. The acoustic shadow created by the hill meant that the audience was not receiving the actual volumes emanated by the speakers. I was not in a position to estimate the distance that my sound was covering but as I found out later on that evening, it was not short at all. The sound installation was activated as soon as the setup was completed, at around 3pm. At twilight, the lights went on and the performance took place at around 7pm. Approximately one hour after the performance ended, everyone had left the space, partly due to the extremely cold weather. I kept the sound installation running a little longer in order to record it (listen to the track "AerodromeLefkosia installation recording"). As I was recording I noticed a police car stopping behind me. Two police officers came out of their car to check what I was doing. I explained that everything was under control and I proudly presented my license. They didn't quite understand what was happening but nevertheless their visit turned out to be very useful since they provided me with important information. They were sent to investigate the area because they had received numerous phone calls by local residents reporting strange noises coming from the airport direction. These complaints did not exactly refer to noise pollution but rather to an unfamiliar and mysterious situation, a mystery that needed investigation.

I believe or rather I hope that these people may have had an experience similar to the Sharawadji effect (discussed in Section 2.3.5.1) although in this case perhaps theirs was not such a pleasurable one. As a result of a disturbance in their everyday routine and the feeling of (sonic) ambiguity and possibly of threat, their survival instinct urged them to pause and listen to the echoes radiating from the airport. In this respect I consider the project to have been successful with regards to its communication. Concluding this paragraph I am tempted to use an apt quotation taken from Toop's book *Sinister Resonance* (2010, p. 24):

The aerial (or ariel) nature of sound, and by extension -music- always implies some degree of insubstantiality and uncertainty, some potential for illusion or deception, some ambiguity of absence or presence, full or empty, enchantment or transgression. Through sound the boundaries of the physical world are questioned, even threatened or undone by instability. Does sound rise out of solid life, or is it hallucination, a lack, this charm?

### **3A.2.1.4 - *AerodromeLefkosia* - stereo version<sup>21</sup>**

*AerodromeLefkosia* is a 6.1 surround sound installation (six loudspeakers and one subwoofer). The first version was a stereo piece produced electronically on a software called "MetaSynth"<sup>22</sup> and further manipulated and arranged on other software (Pro-Tools, Soundhack). When I embarked on this project about six years ago (November 2010) I rather naively considered that I would produce an electroacoustic stereo piece from field recordings taken from the terminal, which would in the end be returned into the terminal in the form of a sound installation. It didn't take long for me to realise that this was impossible to accomplish due to the incredible difficulty in obtaining a license for conducting such a work on site. A way of dealing with this in a creative and meaningful way was to produce a work concerned with the inaccessibility of the site per se, as well as to one's experience of the site merely by being outside it. Possessing no material other than a couple of digital photographs, I chose to use the visual data as the raw material that would produce sound.

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<sup>21</sup> Listen to "*AerodromeLefkosia* stereo".

<sup>22</sup> According to U&I Software: "MetaSynth plays a picture by scanning it from left to right. Every pixel within the image literally becomes an oscillator, or tape recorder, with control over volume, pitch, sustain, stereo placement, duration and the envelope of a sound. A time value is assigned to MetaSynth's horizontal axis, frequency, or pitch, it is mapped to the vertical axis, brightness of pixels represents volume or amplitude, and pixel color denotes the placement of the sound (pan position) within the stereo field. A fresh and innovative approach to sound design and composition, MetaSynth explores inexhaustible sonic possibilities" (<http://www.uisoftware.com> [Accessed 10 January 2013]).

Photographs, according to Lippard (1997, p.56), are viewed both as facts and as ghosts or shadows: "They are the imperfect means by which we fill the voids of memory in modern culture, or preserve the remnants of the world that has disappeared". Roland Barthes was one of the first to theorise on the attributes and essence of photography by examining themes of presence and absence. In his seminal book *Camera Lucida*, first published in 1979, he explores the subject of photography as well as specific photographs from a personal angle. In discussing about his favourite photographs and the reason he finds something exceptional in them he indicates that they take him on an adventure. He then concludes: " [...] suddenly a specific photograph reaches me; it animates me, and I animate it [...] this is what creates every adventure" (Barthes, 1981, p.20). Barthes's conception demonstrates a form of interaction between himself and the content of the picture. In my understanding, through the medium of the photograph, Barthes is able to reach back to a specific spatiotemporal dimension and have a conversation with the photograph's features, gaining an understanding of that history. He is animated by the photograph and the photograph animates him (Ibid.) drawing him into an adventurous imaginary journey through time and space. In a similar vein, in the introductory pages of his book *Sinister Resonance* (2010), Toop remarks that "dwelling in every written text are voices; within images there is some suggestion of acoustic space". He goes so far as to suggest that visual material, such as images and paintings, are "silent recordings of auditory events" (Ibid. p.xiii). In his book *The Poetics of Reverie* (1960, p.175) Bachelard writes: "A universe can be born from an isolated image". The above ideas were highly influential in the development of the conceptual background of my work, especially with regards to the methodology followed.

MetaSynth software is a useful tool able to "translate" a photograph into sound or to "play" a picture. This feature is employed by several sound artists, such as Robin Rimbaud aka "Scanner", who collaborated with visual artist Paul Farrington aka "Tonne". The duo created *Sound Polaroids* (1999), presented at the London Institute of Contemporary Arts as part of "Imaginaria '99". Scanner and Tonne asked people to suggest points of interest in London, which the duo then recorded and filmed. Using digital software they implemented the visual footage as the matrix from which they shaped the sound work. *Sound Polaroids* was the winner of the art show.

A digital picture of the airport (Figure 4), kindly sent to me by curator Pavlina Paraskevaidou, was used as the raw material in MetaSynth (Figure 5) to generate the first layer of

*AerodromeLefkosia*. However several parameters of the software had to be dealt with before launching this process, such as the tempo of the scanning, the type of synthesizer to be used and its variables among others. Surprisingly, the outcome was compelling, considering the rather random procedure followed by the software. The result seemed to actually resemble an airport's soundscape even though no material, other than the initial drone-like sound, was added in the process. This was then used as the basis for the arrangement of the fifteen-minute piece which was created with the consideration that it would not be presented as a musical composition in a concert-like manner. The initial idea was to set up the two speakers to the left and to the right side of the checkpoint booth, since in this location there was access to electrical power. To my great disappointment this was again not feasible due to the refusal of the UN to grant me with permission.



Figure 4 - Nicosia Airport (photo by Pavlina Paraskevaidou)

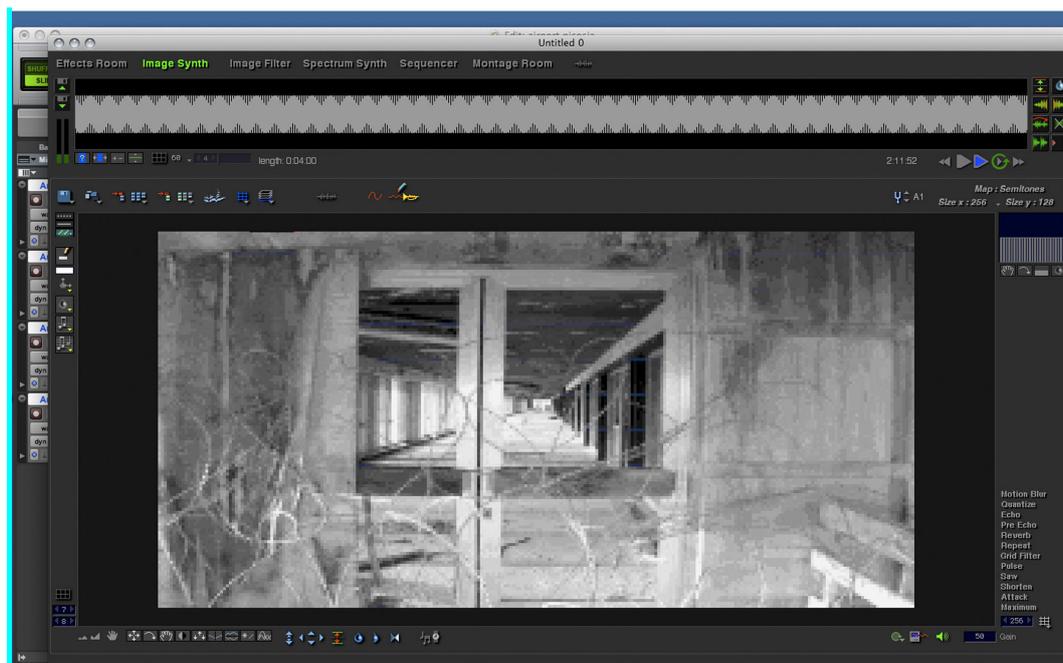


Figure 5 - Nicosia Airport photograph used in MetaSynth (original photo by Pavlina Paraskevaidou)

A 5-minute excerpt of the stereo version of *AerodromeLefkosia* was sent to the European project entitled "Europe - A Sound Panorama" (2011).<sup>23</sup> The piece was mentioned as a finalist and broadcasted on ZKM Karlsruhe radio station in October 2011.

### 3A.2.1.5 - *AerodromeLefkosia* - surround sound version

The option of using a power generator would give me the freedom of basing my installation at almost any point outside the airport's perimeter fence, since it was not actually a UN controlled area, as I was told by the UN representative. Several walks around the fence led to the selection of two or three potential locations for the installation. After much consideration, it seemed natural that the work should grow spatially in order to have a substantial impact.

The 6.1 surround version of the piece was composed solely from material of the stereo version. It was not produced in the conventional surround manner, with the speakers surrounding the creator in a circle, but the speakers were instead placed in a linear manner to the front. This was decided having in mind that at the installation point the speakers would be set along the fence,

<sup>23</sup> The project "Europe - A Sound Panorama" was organized by the Goethe Institute of Belgrade, Deutschlandradio Kultur, Radio Belgrade, the European Broadcasting Union's (EBU) Ars Acustica Group, the Institute for Music and Sound at the Centre for Art and Media Technology in Karlsruhe (ZKM) ([http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader\\$7667](http://on1.zkm.de/zkm/stories/storyReader$7667) [Accessed 30 October 2011]).

either suspended from it or on tripods (see "AerodromeLefkosia documentation" video). The effect produced by such a system setup (linear) – as opposed to the surrounding method – is definitely producing a totally different spatial experience. The audience is not immersed in a surround manner but they are rather experiencing it as something occurring at a distance that extends over a long lineation. Moreover, the audience does not have any visual contact with the loudspeakers and thus the sound reaches them from an ambiguous location. The use of the specific speaker configuration as well as having non-visual reference of this system was a deliberate decision in order to give an impression that there was something vast happening behind the hill in the airport's direction.

A pilot installation involving only the sound and the performance (not the lights) was conducted approximately a week before the scheduled event. Studio monitors were used instead of PA speakers and a small generator powered the whole system (see "AerodromeLefkosia documentation" video at 2:57-3:50). The pilot was extremely successful and gave us high expectations for the results of the following week's event.

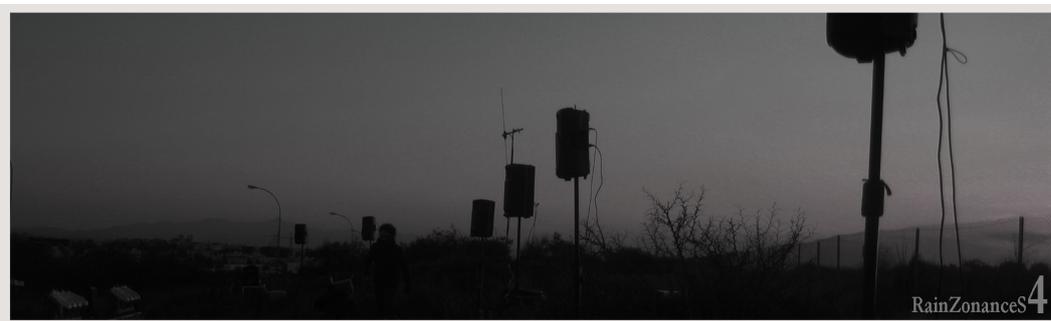


Figure 6 - *AerodromeLefkosia*, Installation view 2

### 3A.2.1.6 - Radio transmission

The radio transmission is another part of *AerodromeLefkosia*. I consider it to be an extension of the installation since it literally extended the sound, as well as the general atmosphere, reaching nearby listeners who either knew or were unaware of its source. The obscurity of the sounds radiated from an unknown, unbounded space, urging the listener to invent his/her own world within the time-space of the audible signal. The abstract and acousmatic character of the sound that was transmitted live from the installation left no traces to the listener, no references of any tangible world and thus s/he was driven to activate a limitless fantasy related to the airport world.

This fantasy is once again a personal affair that involves the formation of individual aural auras. Radiophonic production has, as suggested by F. Tommaso and P. Masnata, "the potential to refute logical, objective space and time, and opt instead to produce a temporality of its very own" (cited in LaBelle, 2010, p.160). This temporality could apply not only to the radiophonic listening but also to listening in general. As Salome Voegelin (2010, p.38) proposes, "the listeners are a collective of individuals, listening all together alone" and thus it will be a coincidence to hear or perceive the same sounding as another person. Once more we could take this idea a little further, suggesting that it could apply to all sorts of human sensations. Do I perceive the taste of a food in the same way as my partner does? Do I identify myself with a landscape in the same way as my friends do? – and so on.

A mono signal was broadcasted over an area of about five kilometres with a 20-Watt FM transmitter. The DIY antenna (see Figure 7 and "AerodromeLefkosia documentation" video at 7:25) was placed at a relatively high position with regards to the surrounding area and surprisingly the low-powered transmitter covered a wide range. The transmitting frequency was made known through social media and posters so that people who were driving towards the installation's location would be introduced to the project. From the feedback I received that night and the following days, this feature indeed added a great degree of eeriness and mystery to the project, acting as an excellent introduction to the rest of the piece. While the audience approached the site, the signal became louder and clearer. "A shadow that was increasingly widening" said someone. However my main concern was (as with my work Ambient Frequencies discussed in Section 3B.2.1) to hear the comments of people who tuned into my frequency by chance. What were their reactions? How did they interpret this haunting uncertainty? So far I haven't met any of those people, indeed I am not sure whether any exist.



Figure 7 - FM antenna transmitting a mono-signal reduction of *AerodromeLefkosia*

### 3A.2.2 - *AeroWire*<sup>24</sup>

#### 3A.2.2.1 - Concepts

The dynamics of a fence trigger certain feelings to arise, making the senses overly sensitive. Here, at the edge of my city, I suddenly feel that it is no longer my territory, even though I am still situated outside the forbidden zone. If I wish to be adventurous, I can walk along the fence, up and down, until I find an opening and sneak in; and then I can cross this artificial boundary and enter the forbidden zone. In this zone as in the Stalker's Zone, all my wishes could come true. Maybe this will never be the case if I do finally enter the "magic room" – as in *The Stalker*. Perhaps this is just a myth. But once on the opposite side of the forbidden zone the myth is certainly more real. At least we have the luxury to dream about it and to delicately build it in our minds. "An empty drawer is unimaginable" said Bachelard (1958, p.xxxvii).

The perimeter fence of the Nicosia Airport (see Figure 8) could be regarded as ridiculous when compared to the wall built by Israel to prevent Palestinians from entering their claimed territory. Is this thin layer of wire capable of stopping me from entering the airport site? What is that which actually distinguishes the land on which I am standing now from the land found

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<sup>24</sup> See "AeroWire" video.

just some centimetres beyond? These were some of my thoughts during my first walk around the perimeter fence of the airport and this is how the work *AeroWire* was conceived. Obviously the complexities surrounding the word "fence" are not as naïve as the thoughts expressed above. Beneath the paradox of this situation hide numerous effects resulting from a very complicated socio-political reality. The fence is there to tell a story and it does so by placing me on one side enabling me to observe the other. (More about this theme in Sections 1.0.2, 3A.2.0.2, 4A.1.2)



Figure 8 - Nicosia Airport, perimeter fence

This binary capacity of the fence creates the distinction between "us" and "them": whatever is beyond this fence is dangerous and evil and any contact with it should be avoided. Crossing the line is definitely seen as transgression and if I proceed, I will at once be rendered as "out-of-place". However, the status of sides is fluid in nature as is that of "insiderness" (see Section 1.0.2). As Cazan (2008, p.68) asserts, "The places over there become here as one travels and inhabits them [...] Insides become outsides the moment one realises that imagination breaks away from barriers, and real geographies get deconstructed". This is exactly the concept behind artist Glenn Weyant's work on borders (and also one of the main philosophies of the border art movement, as explained in Section 3A.2.0.2). Weyant sees the US-Mexico border as an instrument and he invents various ways in which to play it, to explore its sound and open a

dialogue between the communities found in either side. As Weyant notes in the LA Times (2014), "Nobody thought of the border wall as possibly anything other than something to separate people, I transform it; I play it; I'm a border deconstructionist; I want to deconstruct preconceived notions". Weyant's work has much in common with my work *AeroWire*, both on a conceptual and a practical level. The idea of "performing" the fence, in order to tell the stories of place, constitutes the starting point in both cases (Ibid.). Through the use of sound, both works aim to remap the territory acoustically and reveal new ways and new possibilities for narrating and understanding the history of the place.

### **3A.2.2.2 - Application**

*AeroWire* could be placed within the artistic genre of video art, although I consider its sonic dimension to be of equal, if not of greater importance, to the visual. Moreover, bearing in mind the work's political dimensions it could be characterised as border art and also walking art since it engages with walking. Nonetheless this kind of distinction and categorization does not seem to be meaningful and therefore it does not necessarily need to be analysed further here.

Francis Alÿs's work *Railings* (2004) inspired the work in terms of the initial technique used. Alÿs aimed at sounding the architecture of railings by walking along them and "playing" them with a stick. My performance at the airport's fence followed a similar path. In my case however these patterns were recorded and filmed, thus forming the material for the video work.

Australian musician Alan Lamb is fascinated with long wires (e.g. telegraph wires) and the cosmic sound that they generate when they vibrate with the wind. Lamb creates sound installations and conducts recordings of these effects by using contact microphones and accelerometers, among other techniques (Australian Sound Design Project, n.d.). Akin to Weyant's views described above, Lamb considers these wires to be a musical instrument reminiscent of harps. For him the sound produced is of "a far-off glorious life, a supernal life, which came down to us, and vibrated the lattice work of this life of ours" (Lamb cited in Hankins and Silverman, 1995). Although in *AeroWire* none of Lamb's techniques are used, his work and concepts quoted above have been great stimuli for my work.

The visual part of *AeroWire* is a manipulated sequence shot taken during my first walk along the perimeter fence, as mentioned earlier. It is a "process work" in the sense that for its creation certain predetermined actions took place: the video was repeated, and played backwards and forwards. At each repetition it is played at a higher speed. This prompts an abstraction as the process evolves.

The sonic part was generated from the visual, with the use of a Max/MSP patch, designed by myself. The video was played in the Max patch and was set to shape certain parameters concerning the sound production. This was mainly accomplished through Max/MSP's feature of reading the brightness of the video pixels. The data collected from that procedure was scaled and set in a way that would manipulate the sound sample. Several trials and adjustments were made until a satisfactory result was reached. Each time the video was played at a higher speed, this had a direct and powerful influence on the sound, which, like the visual part, became more aggressive and tense. This created an abstract obscure place, an impossible place that has an eerie mythical quality visually as well as acoustically. It resembles the situation of the Nicosia Airport or the mental structures developed in the minds of the passers-by, as a result of the airport's inaccessibility. A place that is impossible to physically experience and as a result it is surrounded by myth and uncanniness.

The audiovisual work *AeroWire* was exhibited at the "Scenofest Festival", as part of the Prague Quadrennial in June 2011.<sup>25</sup>

### **3A.2.3 - *AeroWalk*<sup>26</sup>**

#### **3A.2.3.1 - A walk on the wild side**

Inspired by the work of several walking artists and the concepts underlying this form of art as well as those of the border art, I acquired a new pair of hiking boots and drew my desired route on a map (see Figure 9): "From one check point to the other"; that was the idea; to walk along the perimeter of the airport's fence until I am blocked by someone or something; to follow a linear course keeping the fence as my point of reference or my guide.

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<sup>25</sup> <http://www.narcosislabs.com/3rd/AA1/AA1.html> [Accessed 3 April 2013].

<sup>26</sup> See "AeroWalk" video.

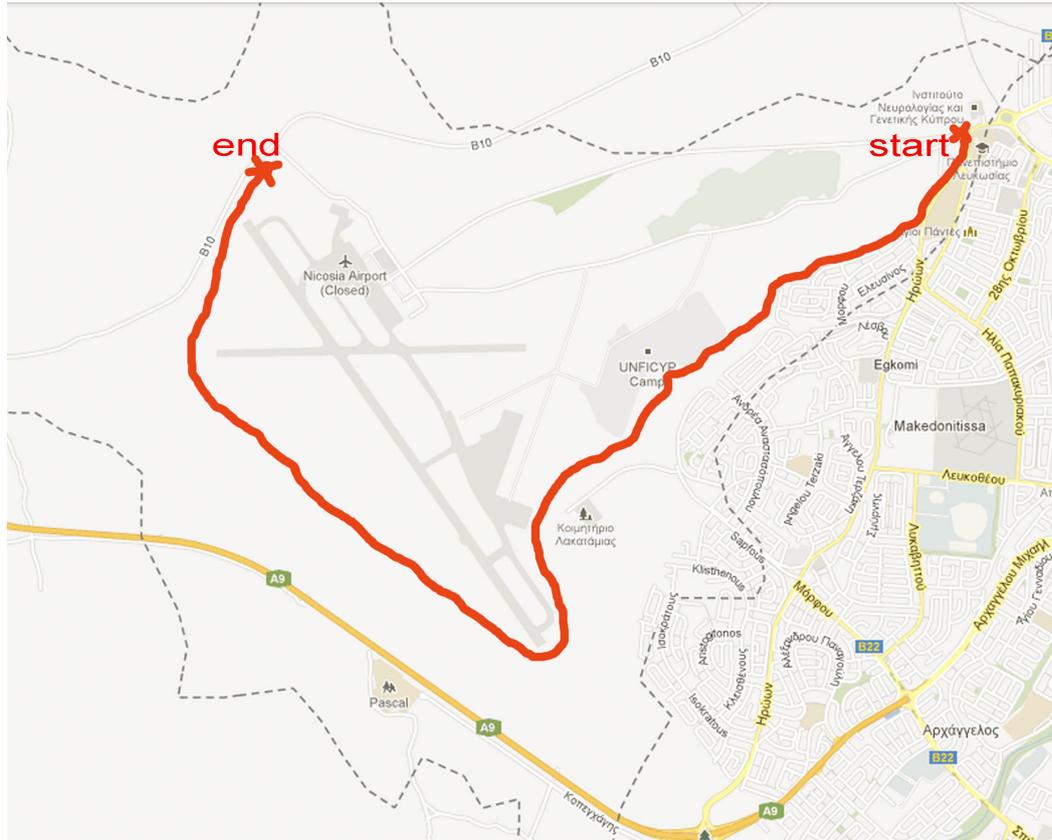


Figure 9 - Map of the walk along the perimeter of the Nicosia Airport, from one checkpoint to the other

This fence, as discussed in Section 3A.2.2.1 and later in Section 4A.1.2, is actually the border; it is a see-through frontier that renders two areas as the "here" and the "there"; the accessible and the non-accessible; the positive and the negative; the "us" and the "them". The fence does not only function as a geographical reference, it is, above all, political. It is a manifestation of dispute, discordance, clash, confrontation and egocentric/ethnocentric agendas. The realisation that this thin layer of metal net acts as the distinguisher of two peoples, and that beyond this line there is danger, fear, wilderness and obscurity is indeed an absurd scenario, which is explored through this project.

My walk was not actually meant to be a walk on the wild side, as the title of this section suggests but rather, a walk *along* the wild side. I am not within the wilderness, I am not really in danger, and I am not in a state of fear or alarm. I am walking along a threshold and I am observing with the inquisitiveness of an adventurer. As shown in much of the visual documentation of the "AeroWalk" video, the opportunities to violate this status quo were numerous and the temptation to do so, as discussed further below, was irresistible after walking for a while. I eventually did step into the wild side, I did encounter this mythical place and took a deep breath with it, as Westerkamp experienced when entering the various ghost towns of the

Canadian province British Columbia: "[...] a strange moment of excitement and magic, discovery and adventure; a moment of questions and stories; a moment of sensing the spirits and ghosts still hovering among the skeletal remains [...]" (Westerkamp 2000b) (Quoted again in Section 2.3.1).

The approximately 20-kilometre walk began at the first UN checkpoint (the nearest to the city – see "AeroWalk" video at 0:45) and ended near the second checkpoint (see Figure 9). The plan was to drive my car up to the first checkpoint and to be picked up from the second checkpoint at the end of my walk.

The date had to be rescheduled several times due to the wet and windy weather. The opportunity finally arose on the 2<sup>nd</sup> of February 2012. There were numerous reasons for conducting this walk: to daydream about the place and experience its protogenic aural aura, to become familiar with the boundaries of the airport, to explore the land and the topography, to "taste" the airport from a distance, to conduct field recordings, shoot videos, take pictures, create installations with found objects (see Figures 11-14) etc. Thankfully, all the above were successfully accomplished.

After several hours of walking along the fence, I began to have visual contact with the terminal. As I got closer the wire fence was replaced with barbed wire and I noticed that some parts of it had big gaps. Throughout my four-hour walk up to that point, I hadn't met a single person so I decided to take the risk and trespass. My feelings were extremely contradicting. On the one hand I was terrified by the thought of stepping on a forgotten mine or being caught by the United Nations patrol police and on the other hand I had feelings of immense freedom, similar to those of childhood, when taking that extra step away from the good-old neighbourhood. In this case I was aware that I was taking a step inside the forbidden zone, where the desired fruit is kept, or, into the Stalker's magic room where wishes come true. Proceeding towards the terminal I reached the runway, crossed it and stopped next to a small building that provided me with visual cover (Figure 10). At this point I began to think that since the terminal was so close to me, this was my chance to enter it for the first time ever. Meanwhile it was getting darker and I knew that if I attempted to do so, I wouldn't have time to reach my destination. So I stayed there for some time, watching the terminal and daydreaming of the times when the airport was operating. The place was evidently still charged with this energy. It would be very difficult for one to disregard this or to not sense it.



Figure 10 – View of the Nicosia Airport from the hideout

### 3A.2.3.2 - Application

*AeroWalk*, as found on the attached USB, could be regarded as a complementary work of the walk. The artistic practice in this case would be the actual 8-hour walk and the video sequence would just be a documentation of the walk. A walk, as expressed by walking artists, is more than anything else a performance since it involves gestures occurring in a specific time-space with a beginning and an ending. Walking artist Richard Long creates sculptures with his walking body and documents his walks through photography (The-artists.org). He also creates on-site installations during his walks as well as works in galleries by using found objects, commonly rocks and stones (Long, n.d.). In *AeroWalk*, I also follow a similar course by creating impromptu three sculptural installations with found objects (see Figures 11-14 below as well as the *AeroWalk* video at 6:19-6:40). This intervention on the site and the objects was made with the intention of shifting their 42-year static status, and changing the dynamic of their topographic relationships. As Jean Baudrillard (1996) believed, we understand the meaning of an object or of an object's image as part of its bond with other objects. Surely this idea can also be applied to other instances, such as the words in a language, our relationships as human beings and so on. Brought into this context, the decision to create installations of found objects

has conveyed a number of transformations in the relationship of the objects. This has consequently supplied them with a dissimilar meaning that demands a different interpretation.



Figures 11&12 - *AeroWalk* Installation1. A TV set placed on the wing of a wrecked military aircraft



Figure 13 - *AeroWalk* Installation2. Several found buckets stacked on top of each other in a deserted road in the airport area



Figure 14 - *AeroWalk* Installation3. A barrel positioned in the middle of the runway

Nevertheless, *AeroWalk* is not merely the documentation of a performance; the video sequence can also be presented as an autonomous work and can be communicated independently from the actual walk. It may well be viewed as an audiovisual work with a soundscape composition as its soundtrack.

Basic editing and specific manipulation techniques were applied for the production of the video sequence. The soundscape composition was created solely through the juxtaposition and the superimposition of field recordings, conducted during the walk. The soundtrack is not necessarily the synced sound recorded during the video recording. In most of the documentation video's duration the acoustic and the visual parts are not synchronised, although there are moments, such as the scene with the caged dogs (see *AeroWalk* video at 2:52) where these two become synchronised. This was mainly an aesthetic decision but it was also done in order to create a structure that would have moments of tension and moments of release through the manipulation of the tempo. This is also the motive behind the juxtaposition of acoustic environments with dissimilar visual sequences. Most of the visual part is manipulated in various ways and its form is very sectional, whereas the acoustic part remains continuous and layered over several visual scenes. This contrasting gesture gives the work an unstable and

eerie quality, an impression that is also formed due to physically being on-site. It also resembles a reverie or a daydreaming situation where one is found in a state of spatiotemporal disorientation. While one is physically present their imagination is travelling to different locations and times. This is something that I also experienced during my walk along the Nicosia Airport perimeter fence. While my feet were navigating within the specific landscape, the background sound absorbed me and dragged me to another world that had a continuous and repetitive rhythm with a kind of hypnotic essence. This impression was something that I attempted to also reflect in the documentation video through the specific editing style.

### ***3A.2.4 - I Can Hear Something But This is Not How it Sounds Like***<sup>27</sup>

#### **3A.2.4.1 - Out of sync**

"In order to sense across the years [...] dream is more powerful than thought. It is our unconscious force that crystallizes our remotest memories [...]" (Bachelard 1958, p.16). On the night of March the 5<sup>th</sup> 2012, 11 days after the installation happening outside the airport's fence, I entered the airport for the first time, through a dream. I found myself inside the fence, standing in the fields near the runway. I was with a filmmaker friend who was collaborating with me (in my dream) on a project about the airport. We could clearly see the deteriorated terminal and we anticipated that if we went closer we would reach the airport and experience it on one of its normal functioning days, before the war. I turned to him and asked "should we proceed to the terminal?", fully aware that doing so would actually constitute trespassing. "It's just there, so close, let's do it!"

The above dream did not seem to have occurred out of the blue. It reminded me of a similar situation that I found myself in on the 2nd of February of the same year when I conducted the walk along the perimeter of the airport's fence. On that walk, I had reached a safe spot behind a small building, but I had finally decided not to proceed to the terminal (described in Section 3A.2.3.1). In my dream I was standing at exactly the same spot with my friend, but this time the decision we made was to move forward and reach the terminal. The feelings during this walk were very similar to the ones I had when I trespassed the barbed wire. Perhaps in my dream the feelings were even more intense, since the limitless and formless nature of dreams

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<sup>27</sup> See "I Can Hear Something But This is Not How it Sounds Like" video.

can foster infinite possibilities of sentiment and experience. And suddenly there we were, standing next to the terminal building from the runway's side. Without thinking twice we stepped inside and walked through a narrow corridor. There was dust everywhere, the iron surfaces were all rusty and the smell of humidity and abandonment filled our nostrils. While walking down the corridor we started hearing human voices and when we reached its end we found ourselves in a huge space full of elementary school children who were being shown around by a guide. We realised then that the airport, in its deteriorated state, had been turned into a museum, full of visitors experiencing its strangeness. We then explored the terminal spaces, moving up and down, opening doors and entering restricted areas.

Three days after my dream I received a reply to a mass email that I had sent two weeks earlier inviting my friends to the *Rainzonances4* event. It was from an old friend with whom I hadn't had any contact for a long time. Sergios had read my invitation and realised that it had something to do with the Nicosia Airport. He wrote that he worked for the UNDP (United Nations Development Programme), a program for promoting cooperation and trust between the two main communities in Cyprus (Turkish Cypriots and Greek Cypriots). He informed me that the UNDP's offices were located inside the airport site close to the terminal. He went on to say that whenever I wished to visit the terminal and the airport site I could give him a call and he would be very happy to show me around. Of course I immediately contacted Sergios and arranged for a tour the following week. I took with me all my equipment (recorder, microphones, video camera, photo camera) and drove and parked near the checkpoint where we were supposed to meet. He then came out of the checkpoint with his car, picked me up and headed back towards the checkpoint. I could not believe that it was so easy. He just showed his pass and there we were, in the forbidden zone. In a few minutes the terminal appeared in front of us and in no time we were inside it. Sergios told me that what we were doing was still considered to be trespassing and he urged me to hurry because the patrol police inspected the area every now and then.



Figure 15 - Nicosia Airport, interior



Figure 16 - Nicosia Airport, interior

The sight that I confronted was extraordinary. I was ecstatic (see Figures 15&16). Even though I knew what the terminal looked like through photographs, physically being in the building was beyond comparison. As in the example of the missing twin towers from New York's skyline (see Section 2.3.5.2), the emotions that arose when I was confronted with this void were intense and overwhelming. My feelings were very similar to those that I had in my dream. Human

neglect had given way to nature which had reclaimed the space. This was now the home to hundreds of pigeons as well as other birds and who knows how many other kinds of animals. The deteriorated walls, the old posters and many distorted shapes in a chaotic arrangement were visual links to the time when all these objects were in use. As in my dream, this place had naturally become a museum, but with no structure and no order. The highly reverberant empty space made the experience even more uncanny and blurry. Was this happening in reality or was it another dream? Is this a place, a non-place or just a hallucination? Something is certainly abnormal in this image, something is missing. The silence here is unnerving; In fact I can hear something but this is not how it should be sounding. Sounds that I should have been hearing are absent; I cannot hear the abrupt stamping of documents at passport control nor the squeaks of the belts carrying the suitcases of the newly-arrived passengers. Are they all hidden within the walls or beneath the floor? These haunting echoes are present only in my head. I can only hear my footsteps on smashed glass and the murmur of pigeons which have never sounded as loud as now. This is the soundscape of the airport today. It is definitely not silent or frozen as all the privileged visitors before me had described in an explorer's vein. The visual and the acoustic dimensions are not in sync in this place. But something is missing from the visual part also. Where are the passengers? Where is the porter and the duty-free shop salesman? Following this stream of thought I was slowly led to discover that all expected senses were absent from this place, the smell, the touch; this is a totally different experience than it would have been 42 years ago; it is blurry and obscure, perplexing and ambiguous. This is a place out of sync.

### **3A.2.4.2 - Application**

*I Can Hear Something But This is Not How it Sounds Like* is also an audiovisual work. The acoustic part is a recording from inside the terminal, conducted on the day of my visit. No manipulation beyond a basic framing has been applied. It has been left in this raw form deliberately. This soundscape can say many things about the airport. Within this reverberant atmosphere one can activate his auditory imagination, and construct the story of the place.

The visual part consists of juxtaposed photographs taken on the same day. Every picture begins by fading in from black and at the same time becoming less and less blurry, fading back to black again. An entirely clear level is never reached, denoting the blurry impression that a visitor is very likely to have.

As in the work *Aerowalk* discussed in Section 3A.2.3.2, the sound part is not synced with the visual. In this case the still images are taken from different points in the terminal's interior space whereas all the sound recording was conducted from a specific fixed position. The juxtaposition of the two definitely creates a sort of polarity or rupture as the sound is continuous and offers a glimpse into that specific timeframe from an acoustic angle, while the visual images are static, representing in a way the airport's frozen state. Returning to Lippard's quote in section 3A.2.1.4, still images are not only viewed as the depiction of facts but also as ghosts and shadows from a world that has disappeared (Lippard, 1997, p.56). This disappeared world becomes evident in the work's photographs through the depiction of absence and deterioration. Subjects and objects that should have been there are physically absent but their imaginative presence haunts the place and contributes to its aural aura.

The continuity of the acoustic part and especially the repetitive sounds made by the pigeons in the empty airport's reverberant space produces a hypnotic, trance-like impression, also contributing to the formation of an aural aura.

### **3A.2.5 - *NoEntry*<sup>28</sup>**

#### **3A.2.5.1 - Vicious circle**

A close-up filming of a UN sign (Figure 17), a warning in three languages (Greek, Turkish and English) noting that entry is prohibited. This constitutes the fifth work of *Rainzonances4*. By scrutinizing the sign from top to bottom, right to left, between the letters and the deteriorated grainy surface, the inaccessibility of the site – as in *AeroWalk* – is highlighted. The fast and continuous movement of the camera resembles our agony when we find an opening that will set us free from a labyrinth, a vicious circle. Short pauses at specific points in the frame of the sign are possible exits, points of hope, where this circle could be broken. The sign could be the airport site and the letters could be the airport's perimeter fence and the barbed wire. The three languages could reflect the political situation and the symbolic and dynamic dimension of the fence; the pauses could be seen as attempts to cross the fence and access the airport. However a solution to this puzzle is never reached. As in *AeroWalk* the explorer is trapped in an endless

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<sup>28</sup> See "NoEntry" video.

loop and one can only experience this place in their dreams. This piece is presented in a loop with no beginning or end.

The sound accompanying this sequence is produced from the manipulation of a secret recording conducted at the checkpoint. In the recording I am requesting permission to enter the site and the UN guard does not allow me to do so (Audible at the beginning of the "AerodromeLefkosia documentation" video). The sound's gain was reduced to almost zero and an equalization effect was then applied to it, boosting the low-frequency area. This process was repeated several times until the talking acquired an abstract character. The amplitude of the sound piece is very low and it should be heard on an amplifier turned at a very high-volume. This will make audible the low-frequency negotiation talk, sounding from within a texture of white noise that is created by the extreme digital manipulation as well as noise produced from the high amplification level. The white noise, when heard at normal volume is perceived as silence. This links up with ideas expressed earlier in this essay, that the ostensible silence existing around and inside the airport creates a mental noise which constitutes the imaginative, obscure world that has settled in the passer-by's head.



Figure 17 - The warning notice filmed for the production of *NoEntry*

In 2002, Scanner collaborated with artist Mike Kelley and produced a piece entitled *Esprits de Paris*. The duo used digital technology in a rather unorthodox way to record soundscapes from places with complex biographies in Paris. In some cases they even made recordings with their microphones switched off (Toop, 2004). As Scanner (cited in Toop, 2004 p.85) noted, these techniques allowed them to explore a form of "audio mirage" where you almost begin to hear things not actually recorded on the original tape or disc. Acoustic data and information were gradually discovered through the distortions in digital recording. In an analogous manner, in my work *NoEntry*, through extreme digital manipulation and the turning of the amplifier at a high volume level several patterns begin to be recognisable. In this way the hiss and the distorted signal bring forward new meanings and narratives concerning the airport.

### 3A.3 - Conclusions

*Rainzances4* is the most extensive and the most thoroughly explored work of my portfolio. Through the project's five works I investigate the aural aura of the deserted Nicosia Airport. These works draw from the theoretical framework developed in Chapter 1 and Chapter 2, as well as from theories and views presented in this chapter, such as Relph's "placelessness" and Augé's "non-place". I discuss how a typical non-place such as an airport can become place and how our imagination can create fictional places and fictional soundscapes. The methodological approach draws from art practices such as border art, walking art and guerrilla art and engages many of their features at various levels and combinations. My examination of the so-called "ambient music" enables an understanding of the methodology undertaken with regards to this project's practice. I consider ambient music's compositional approach effective in exposing the aural aura of places; it follows a non-conventional course, creating music that is listened to and communicated at different levels. This discussion also connects with the debates around place and space presented in Chapter 1. Nicosia Airport is seen as a place rather than a space and in order for it to be deeply understood it is explored following a place-specific trajectory. Both the theory and the practice draw from the concepts articulated in Chapter 2 concerning foreground and background. The background is where the work nests; the work analyses the silence that characterises the place aiming to expose its aural aura. The background noise of the airport is understood here not as a void but rather as a meaningful feature that offers an insight into the place's political dynamic, as well as its turbulent histories. The practice and especially the intermedial work *AerodromeLefkosia*, constructs a background, an orchestrated aural aura that acts as the medium which activates a dialogue between the place and the audience. This work constitutes a practical approach towards the issues raised in the theoretical part of the thesis, as well as towards the research's conceptual discourse. Practice and theory must be understood as one, since one completes the other and they cannot exist individually. The application of ideas on the field always stimulates the discovery of new materials and these in turn lead the project towards new directions and ideas. It is certain that there is a sort of interaction between the artist's practical and theoretical work. The one feeds the other and the flow moves both parts forward resulting in a more meaningful and inclusive work.

## Chapter 3B - *Rainzonances5* (2014-ongoing)<sup>29</sup>

Human time is biased in favour of the future. Life is lived in the future, which may be as close as the next meal or as distant as the next promotion up the ladder of success. (Tuan, 1977, p.132)

### 3B.0 - Background

In mid August 2015, an online article published in the British newspaper *The Daily Mail* (2015) caught my attention. It concerned a hotel in southern Sicily, Italy, namely the "Grande Hotel San Calogero", whose construction began back in 1954. Bizarrely, since its construction, the hotel "has had several 'grand openings' but...no one guest has ever checked in" (Ibid.). This was due to several reasons, such as the fact that the owners couldn't find anyone to manage the hotel and also that it was later realised that the building was not adequately connected to the drainage system. The hotel still remains in a non-functioning state, steadily deteriorating and becoming the home for pigeons and other animals. The correlation with my two projects *Rainzonances4* and *Rainzonances5* was inevitably drawn. The article included photographs<sup>30</sup> of the hotel's interior spaces that were reminiscent of the deserted airport of Nicosia, which, as described in the *Rainzonances4* section, was also abandoned shortly after it was built.

Apart from the visual parallelism with the Nicosia Airport, the case of the Grande Hotel San Calogero also has something in common with the Cyprus Cultural Centre. What these two examples share is more intangible in nature, and is what constitutes the main theme of my project, *Rainzonances5*. I am referring to the failure of a vision to materialize, of a space to become place and to the hovering atmosphere of suspension, possibility and enigma. Both the Grande Hotel San Calogero and the Cyprus Cultural Centre have the prospect of becoming functional. This anticipation becomes even more intense through the processes of detailed planning, organization and preparation. Although in the material world we may describe this as failure, in that the initial conceptualization never succeeds in becoming a place, this would not be the case in the imaginary world, in which we can describe it as being a vision for the

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<sup>29</sup> Documentation material available online in the *Rainzonances5* blogspot:  
<http://rainzonances5.blogspot.com.cy/2014/02/rainzonances5-rainzonances5-is-5th.html>.

<sup>30</sup> See Daily Mail website: [http://www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/travel\\_news/article-3195275/Inside-Sicily-s-ghost-hotel-built-61-years-ago-grand-openings-not-one-guest-checked-in.html](http://www.dailymail.co.uk/travel/travel_news/article-3195275/Inside-Sicily-s-ghost-hotel-built-61-years-ago-grand-openings-not-one-guest-checked-in.html) [Accessed 26 August 2015].

creation of a place; the concept's nature is not divergent from daydreaming or reverie. As Lippard (2007, p.7) stresses in the epigraph of Chapter 1, place is not only about what happened there but also about what *will* happen. This place stands in the future and has a rocky pre-history and a complex biography. For its inventors, masterminds, architects, engineers, administrators and future users the Cultural Centre has already been constructed, it has operated and has sounded. Their vision is an echo sounding from the future that haunts the place, enabling the sounding of its aural aura.

### **3B.1 - Theoretical context**

*Rainzonances5* is the fifth edition of my ongoing project *Rainzonances*. It explores the aural aura of the Cyprus Cultural Centre, an establishment which was scheduled to be constructed in the centre of Nicosia; due to the financial crisis that hit the island in March 2013, the whole project was inevitably postponed and possibly even abandoned. A sense of lingering is vividly manifest in the surrounding area, in which this whole "new era" of Cypriot cultural life would have blossomed. The vision of a bright cultural future, which was one of the potential outcomes of this conception – at least for some people – could be sensed hovering over the eucalyptus trees, the unauthorized parking lot and the Information Office with the imposing façade displaying the architectural model of the building. The aural aura of the place is characterized by this adjournment and uncertainty, a place scheduled to take on a tangible form but that will possibly never get there; a ghost, a dream, a possibility.

What does this bodiless structure sound like? Similar to an acousmatic sound with no palpable source, it belongs to the spectral horizon and this could be the reason why sound may constitute the most suitable medium for commenting on such a condition. How does the passer-by, who is aware of these ambitious plans, experience the site? Architectural designs and a plethora of promotional expositions would certainly enable the forming of a reflection of this body in public perception; a mental ambience, an imaginary soundscape, a background noise sounding this anticipation, this lacuna, this unfulfilled course.

The project goes further and touches upon the social and political issues that arose following the decision to found and erect this Cultural Centre. Much heated debate has developed around the subject, ever since the conceptualization of the idea:

1. Such a grandiose establishment would be excessive for Cyprus standards, especially at a time when the arts scene in general, undergoes a lack of funding.
2. The foundation would mainly engage the élite and would be oriented towards their specific aesthetic angle.

The Cyprus Cultural Centre scenario may also be seen as a live manifestation of the Cypriot financial crisis, both mentally and materially. It reflects the over-ambitious and even arrogant and vain image of society, a society that dreams of suddenly transforming itself into something else, pretending that it has succeeded in revamping its character into a more superior one. This artificial path may certainly lead to directly opposite results. The deterioration of the site is also a manifestation of this crisis. A chronicle is accumulated here, in the huge corroded advertisement right in front of the Information Office. The sounds of the children's choir are gradually becoming damper and damper and distorted, matching the faded advertisement printed on the Information Office, which was built to promote the project. In a similar manner, time blurs aspiration and nature claims the site back. The grandiose building, with its vast outdoor spaces, still functions as a disordered parking lot and is filled with a variety of interesting rubbish, connecting us to its histories.

This space flirts with the meanings of place but fails to accomplish this in a physical sense; it does so just on an imaginary level. It is a site haunted by violin pizzicato notes, sophisticated ballet steps, exotic percussion rhythms and reverberant reflections of voices; it succeeds in achieving its goal on another dimension. We merely need to make use of our extended ear as Labelle (2010) suggests, to be able to listen to these echoes; to join the aural aura of this place; our intimate and personal aural aura.

## 3B.2 - Practice

### 3B.2.0 - General

The project is collaborative and consists of six distinct works. The audience's attendance is not required, as the whole idea behind the project is that it should maintain a spontaneous and unpredictable character. In other words, the real-time audience would be the random passers-by. The aim of each work is to create an orchestrated aural aura, exposing the multi-layered and complex biography of the place, as discussed above. All six works are documented and presented on an online blog<sup>31</sup>, especially designed for the purpose of this project.

Collaborative works, as discussed briefly in Section 2.1, have the advantage of offering a multi-faceted perspective of the concept. Moreover, intermediality opens the work up to different readings, as it might involve more immersive or interactive characteristics. Nevertheless, a collaborative project does not always have positive results. It is crucial that the aim of the production or the artistic discourse is shared by all participants in the collaborative process and that they all have equal roles. Very often some of the collaborators have different agendas (e.g. promoting themselves or feeling very strongly about their ideas) and this contributes to the production of a work that fails to be meaningful. From my experience, and especially with the project *Rainzonances5*, the selection of collaborators is of extremely critical importance as far as the creative process is concerned and as a result, with respect to the final outcome. It is very important to work with artists that share a similar quest in the arts as well as in life in general, and with individuals who have a matching aesthetic approach, although sometimes many fascinating outcomes may develop as a result of unfamiliar collaborative relationships. In the case of *Rainzonances5* all artists were individuals with whom I had spent a lot of time together discussing art-related issues, as well as other socio-political subjects. These artists are all very active in the society we live in and, through their work and lifestyle, are involved in the exploration and commenting on socio-political issues. Thus, the collaborative works that arose successfully reflected the concept of the project and exposed its ideas in very exciting ways.

For *Rainzonances5* I chose to collaborate with artists coming from various disciplines. I had an input in all six works, two of which were collaborations between the artists and myself. The works are listed below according to my level of involvement in a descending order:

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<sup>31</sup> <http://rainzonances5.blogspot.com/>.

1. *Ambient Frequencies* – A work of my own.
2. *Sonic Posters* – A collaboration between photographer Stelios Kallinikou and myself.
3. *Giant Ear* – A collaboration between street artist/designer Demetris Soteriou, aka "Rock the Dog" and myself.
4. *Prosehos* – A performance for which I had an input in the conceptual stage as well as the creation of the video documentation – With performer Ariana Alphas and choreographer Melissa Carro.
5. *Act Zero* – A performance by scenographer Harris Kafkarides for which I had a curator's role and I also documented the piece.
6. *I Think I Thought I Saw You Try* – A visual intervention at the site by visual artist Melita Couta, for which I had a curator's role and I also documented the piece.

As mentioned above, all works are documented and presented on the *Rainzonances5* blog. The blog was created mainly for practical reasons, since many individuals as well as the media (see Appendix II) were interested in the project. Considering that an "exhibition/event style" was intentionally avoided, none of the events/performances were announced. The project was not oriented towards art connoisseurs or the typical visitors of art institutions, but rather towards the general public, the random passer-by and the users of the site (see also Section 2.3.2). In the following paragraphs I will describe each of the six pieces although, for reasons of brevity the extent of the description will depend on the level of my involvement.

### **3B.2.1 - *Ambient Frequencies*<sup>32</sup>**

The work *Ambient Frequencies* is inspired by sound artist Max Neuhaus's very first sound installation, namely *Drive in Music* (1967). Neuhaus set up seven radio transmitters on trees along Lincoln Parkway Street in Buffalo, NY, broadcasting at the same radio frequency, but each transmitting a different sound piece. The work also used weather sensors, so that any changes in the weather affected the sonic outcome (Labelle, 2007).

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<sup>32</sup> Visit [http://rainzonances5.blogspot.com.cy/2014/05/blog-post\\_8.html](http://rainzonances5.blogspot.com.cy/2014/05/blog-post_8.html).

I find Neuhaus's technique a very intriguing way of dealing with space. His work creates a spatial zone defined by sound that enacts a conversation between space and imagination. The random passer-by driver that happens to have his/her car radio tuned to the specific frequency enters a zone of abnormality and obscurity, where his/her desired radio program is unexpectedly interrupted by unjustified abstract sound signals that are not connected to any rational source. Thus, this triggers the imagination to develop a story that will dissolve this puzzlement or, as Toop (2010, p.151) notes, to supply a ghost.

Abandoning a successful musical career as a percussionist, Neuhaus sought to work with different conditions and possibilities, taking his music outside of the concert hall and directing it to the public and the random passer-by. He wanted to surprise people by creating sonic experiences "inserted in their daily domain" (Neuhaus 1994 cited in Labelle, 2007, p.151). He believed that it was important that they discovered the work for themselves and connect to it in their own terms and time (Ibid.).

While Neuhaus's intention appears to be to create site-specific works, yet he does not seem to give sufficient weight on the concepts of place (in the sense discussed in Chapters 1 and 2). Although he shows an interest in reaching the audience and talks about the importance of the discovery of the work by the audience in their own time and terms, still, especially in his *Drive in Music*, he never actually goes deeper into understanding place, in the way a soundscape composer would do. Thus although the work is installed in a specific place, the notion of place is absent or (deliberately?) ignored. It would be safe to imply that, particularly in the case of *Drive in Music*, but also in his general artistic methodology, Neuhaus does not follow a place-specific discourse but rather, like Serra in the Tilted Arc example (discussed in the last paragraph of Chapter 1), he considers the characteristics of the site in a more abstract way. In this sense, *Drive in Music* cannot be qualified as orchestrated aural aura, in the sense discussed in Chapter 2, as it cannot be correlated with any of the place's physiognomies.

### **3B.2.1.1 - Methodology**

*Ambient Frequencies* makes use of Neuhaus's technique in *Drive in Music*, but looks closely into those aspects that turn the specific location into a place. It is an orchestrated aural aura that

invites the passer-by to imaginarily enter the Cultural Centre and hear the opera singer, the orchestra tuning before the concert begins, a chat during the intermission, and so on.

*Ambient Frequencies* uses two FM transmitters (see Figure 18 and Figure 19) to "hack" the passers'-by car radios in order to invite their imagination to join the aural aura of the site they are passing by; the proposed Cyprus Cultural Centre site. The two transmitters propagate different signals (compositions) on the same frequency, a very popular radio station in Cyprus. Upon entering the zone in which the transmitters' signals take over the radio station's frequency, the listener's favourite program gradually crossfades with the composition broadcasted from the first transmitter. Moving ahead, the signal crossfades for the second time, now with the second transmitter, which is set approximately 200 meters away from the first and broadcasts the second composition. Depending on the traffic lights and the traffic in general, a listener may spend more time in the zone of the first or the second transmitter (or even in the in-between zone where the two crossfade), hearing specific sections of each piece. Thus, the final outcome depends on several parameters, and each listener perceives the work in a different way.



Figure 18 - FM transmitter 1



Figure 19 - FM transmitter 2

The two electroacoustic compositions that are broadcasted from the two transmitters are not abstract at all, and this was a deliberate consideration so that the audience could easily make the connection with the site and the planned Cultural Centre. The first composition is a recorded female voice, reciting the Cultural Centre's English press release. The press release describes the institution's aims and goes into detail on its role and practical functioning. The linearity of the reciting is frequently disturbed by it being manipulated in various ways, such as granulation and filtering, through which specific phrases or words are emphasised. Google translator was used at a specific part (5:55–7:15) in order to have particular phrases heard in different languages, such as Arabic, Chinese, Greek etc. Nevertheless, the narrative can still be unfolded, and the listener's perception can, in theory, be directed towards the concept of the work, or at least be led to make some correlations with the corresponding place. The disembodied voice seems like a haunting echo from a near future, bringing to our ears a well thought-of text with a great dose of gloriousness and narcissism that becomes increasingly distorted and incomprehensible as time passes; a status not dissimilar to the vision and the idea of the Cultural Centre project that has gradually faded away. The composition broadcasted by the second transmitter uses as its main raw material a recording of an orchestra tuning and also

samples from various operas that emerge at different moments through the piece. The orchestra-tuning material is stretched and manipulated with several filters in such a way that it essentially becomes unrecognizable although it still resembles the familiar moment of anticipation just before the beginning of a concert. The aim was to create an ambient work that would correspond with this sense of expectation in a concert hall, alluding to the fluid situation that characterises the realisation of the Cultural Centre project. The work was designed to have a timeless, ghostly aura, reflecting a sense of possibility that haunts the site of the Cultural Centre.

### **3B.2.2 - Sonic Posters<sup>33</sup>**

Sonic Posters is a collaborative work by photographer Stelios Kallinikou and myself. It is a series of three sonic posters and it actually constitutes the first project of *Rainzonances5* chronologically. It uses found objects and sounds as raw material i.e. recorded sounds filtered by the structure of the Cultural Centre's Information Office, and photographic details from the huge display on the Information Office.

Of the six *Rainzonances5* works, this is the only one that is not presented on-site. Although it would be interesting to find ways that would make the work site-specific, due to various practical problems, it was eventually only displayed online, on the *Rainzonances5* blog and was also shared by email and circulated on several social media. This brings us back to the problematic act of appropriating material from certain places and placing it in entirely different contexts, as discussed in detail in Section 2.3.2. Indeed, our decision to share the work via email or on social media seems to be in contrast with the initial idea of *Rainzonances5*, concerning the targeted audience. In this case, the controversy did not only lie in that the work was announced through its sharing on the Internet, but in that it also was shared with particular people who would potentially appreciate it (art and music enthusiasts) and not with a random audience.

Moreover, in relation to a previous discussion on the relationship between the acoustic and the visual parts (See Sections 3A.2.3.2 and 3A.2.4.2), there is obviously a rupture going on here

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<sup>33</sup> Visit: [http://rainzonances5.blogspot.com.cy/2014/02/sonic-poster-1\\_27.html](http://rainzonances5.blogspot.com.cy/2014/02/sonic-poster-1_27.html).

too. The images appear as static objects and on the other hand the sonic accompaniment is continuous and teleological. While these images are static in a physical sense, they are however characterised by a very vigorous and spirited texture in terms of their representation. This appearing rupture is thus counterbalanced by the fact that the three photographs by Kallinikou were very carefully chosen for their ability to transmit a sense of movement and gesture and also for encapsulating the aura of a future place. The ostensible static quality of the photograph can be seen as an opportunity to focus on a specific moment, to freeze or pause the flow in order to be able to detect the scene's emotional energy. Thus, in this sense, a fragment in movement may not necessarily be considered as static, but rather as an attentive glimpse into the flow of information, that enables us to connect the dots and imagine or re-imagine a story that happened in the past or one that will happen in the future. For example, in *Sonic Poster #1* the aria accompanying the image of a young girl singing is specifically manipulated to become narrative-less, with the intention of evoking a timeless moment. It is a reflection of that instant, echoing its emotion eternally through the ages. The static-ness of the image does not reduce this almost subliminal scene but, I would suggest, this contrast adds to it by creating a tension and keeping the whole work on a suspended, reverie level of consciousness.

While the images were collected on-site, this was not the case in all three sonic posters (it only occurred for *Sonic Poster #2* and *Sonic Poster #3* not in *Sonic Poster #1*). In *Sonic Poster #1* some of the sonic material used were actually musical pieces (see below) and they are thus not directly associated to the place. Nevertheless, I do not consider this approach to be necessarily problematic as these materials are in a way linked with the project on a conceptual level; it is very likely that these pieces would have been part of the repertoire of an orchestra performing at the future Cultural Centre. Thus in this case their melodies as well as melodies from other pieces can be taken as being raw material from a future concert performance.

To my judgement, while this work has a strong connection to the place both on a visual as well as on an acoustic level, it nonetheless fails to produce an orchestrated aural aura, since the actual location is not a concrete part of the work. It also misses the general direction and idea behind the project regarding the question "Who is my audience?". Considering the above, one way of making this project more successful, would be to actually print Kallinikou's photographs and position them around the site, accompanied by my composed sound works, either on headphones or speakers. Of course, since the site still functions to this day (March 2016) as a parking lot, this idea can be implemented at any time.

### **3B.2.2.1 - Methodology**

As mentioned earlier, *Sonic Posters* mainly uses material found on site. Kallinikou's material involved close-up photographs of the images covering the Information Office of the proposed Cultural Centre. His camera lenses capture details in the images that reflect moments of intense emotion, focusing on specific subtle moods that could otherwise be ignored. He aims in capturing sonic circumstances or better, situations portrayed in the images that expose the aural aura. Apart from some basic framing and colour correction, Kallinikou has not manipulated the photographs in any other way. My four compositions were created in response to Kallinikou's photographs. In my work however, the material used was not exclusively collected from the site.

### **3B.2.2.2 - Sonic Poster #1**

*Sonic Poster #1* visually depicts a young girl singing in a poignant way. The imaginary sound emanating from her voice can almost be heard as a Sharawadji (see Section 2.3.5.1), a sublime and extra-terrestrial ambience, also melancholic and nostalgic. It can be felt as an eerie melody, coming from a voice that awaits to be heard before an audience at the Cultural Centre but to no avail. In this sense, it can be described as the voice of a ghost reaching us from an uncertain future.

The material used for this composition was the Aria *Thanks for These Lonesome Vales* from Purcell's *Dido & Aeneas* (1680) opera (Purcell, 2004) as well as the piano music (Chopin's *Nocturne op.9 no.1 in Bflat minor – 1833*) that was used as accompaniment to the promotional architectural video produced by the Cultural Centre Association<sup>34</sup> (Chopin, 2010). The particular Aria was chosen for its eerie-like quality, a quality that was enhanced further through its manipulation in various ways. Chopin's work can be considered as a "found object" since, as mentioned above, it was appropriated from the organisation's promotional video and it does indeed have a kind of reverie essence to it. Basic electroacoustic manipulation was applied here, such as time stretching, equalization and granulation, employed in order to create an

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<sup>34</sup> See Cultural Centre Association's website: <http://www.ccf.org.cy/ccf/index-en.php> [Accessed 5 October 2014].

ambient work. Its purpose was to create a mood that would interplay with the figure in Kallinikou's photograph.

### **3B.2.2.3 - *Sonic Poster #2***

The visual focus of *Sonic Poster #2* is the atmosphere of an unspecified show. Could this be a dance performance, a rock concert or an opera? In the picture we can sense some sort of action going on, with the lighting design and the smoke providing the ambience. Technology certainly constitutes a major factor in the production of shows and it has been used increasingly for enhancing the gestures in performances. Kallinikou's intention is to leave the audience with a question mark, leaving room for all sorts of possibilities. He focuses his lens on the background that enables the creation of an environment of memorable artistic experiences. Like Serres (see Section 2.2.2) Kallinikou too recognizes the importance of the background for any foreground to develop and be meaningful.

Through my attempt to recode Kallinikou's specific photograph into sound, I began to contemplate the importance of technology in compiling the element of atmosphere, so crucial in productions in Cultural Centres. It led me to consider the sounds emanating from technological instruments, such as a smoke machine, a spotlight fading in or out, a loudspeaker's hiss, static noise or interference in the cables. These are an integral part in the soundscape that haunts the Cultural Centre site and moreover, they are almost always considered as background noise and are thus usually filtered out.

While experimenting with my contact microphones on site (see Figure 20), I discovered an amazing effect when I attached them onto the Information Office's metal frame. The entire structure acted as a large antenna that received signals from the surrounding area. Through my headphones I was able to hear sounds from the environment around me (such as cars passing by) that were filtered through the metal material, white noise, interference, static waves and even voices from radio frequencies. This discovery was extremely intriguing, so I recorded it. An entire sound world unveiled itself, defining the space on a cryptic level. And since the structure of the Information Office incorporated the vision of the Cultural Centre, in a poetic/artistic sense it could be experienced as an echo from the future Centre. I finally chose to use as raw material only the interference sounds, which I found more appropriate for

accompanying the specific image. In the studio, I created an ambient work that was based on this ghostly material.



Figure 20 - Contact microphone attached to metal structure

### 3B.2.2.4 - *Sonic Poster #3*

*Sonic Poster #3* portrays an Asian man in an ecstatic state. Stereotypes of people that usually have this kind of facial expression in the performing arts are either actors or percussionists. This of course is not to be taken as a rule or in any way as a definitive idea. In any case, Stelios's close-up picture brings out a very powerful energy that in turn produces an almost deafening impact when it comes to its aural aura. For me, this image had a rhythmic quality; it was reminiscent of percussionist groups such as the Taiko<sup>35</sup> ensembles, playing complex arrangements in a very energetic way and with generous bodily movements, creating a corresponding choreography. This is the reason why I responded to this picture by creating a composition characterized by percussive sounds. The raw material used in the work was contact-microphone recordings of "playing" the Information Office skeleton as a percussion instrument, reflecting Westerkamp's approach in *At the Edge of Wilderness* (see Section 2.3.1).

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<sup>35</sup> The word "Taiko" refers to a specific range of Japanese percussion instruments and it also denotes the art of performing these instruments (see [www.taiko.com/taiko\\_resource/taiko.html](http://www.taiko.com/taiko_resource/taiko.html) [Accessed 25 September 2015]).

The Information Office can be seen as a sort of agent for the future Cultural Centre into the present time-space. In this sense, "playing" its structure and creating rhythmical sonic patterns could be a way of activating the future sound into the present. This concept will be further developed in the following chapter, as part of the discussion of the *H4C* project.

### **3B.2.3 - *Giant Ear***<sup>36</sup>

*Giant Ear* is a collaborative work by street artist/graphic designer Demetris Soteriou, aka "Rock the Dog" and myself. It involved a place-specific, wheat-paste poster, installed on the façade of the Information Office (see Figure 21 below). It portrays an ear with a hand beside it in the familiar gesture we make when trying to listen to distant or very soft sounds. There is also a representation of sound waves propagating towards the ear, as circular lines. The background of this image is the actual space (a photograph) behind the Information Office, as if its surface were transparent or not existent.

The work invites the passer-by to eavesdrop the soundscape behind the Information Office, and to delve into the space's ambience. It challenges the public to discover the Centre's aural aura via a daydream that reaches out into the future. As in Lewis Carroll's fiction novel *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865), where Alice enters into different worlds through a rabbit hole, the passer-by is in the same way drawn into an echo that comes from the future, in which the Cultural Centre is fully operational, its interesting biography being formed, day-by-day.

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<sup>36</sup> Visit: <http://rainzonances5.blogspot.com.cy/2014/05/giant-ear-by-demetris-soteriou-aka-rock.html>.



Figure 21 - Giant Ear, Installation view

### 3B.2.3.1 - Methodology

*Giant Ear* was an idea that emerged from frequent discussions between me and Soteriou, when visiting the site. It draws inspiration from Max Neuhaus's celebrated work *Sound Walks* (1966) in New York, where he rubber-stamped each participant's hand with the word "LISTEN", as well as his later creation of postcards and posters bearing again the word LISTEN. Neuhaus's most renowned such poster, which also connects to our wheat-paste poster, is possibly the one that depicts the Brooklyn Bridge<sup>37</sup>, which he created in 1976. *Giant Ear* is also inspired by the performance of 200 students in Wiesbaden, Germany, on International Noise Awareness Day 1999. The participants walked around the city wearing shirts that together formed the word "listen". In both cases, there is a call for us to "open up" our hearing sense to the soundscape of the everyday, and to pay particular attention to sounds that remain unnoticed (Dietze, 2000). Here, we can detect an intentional reversal of foreground–background, a theme examined in Chapter 2. Neuhaus's intention could be compared with that of Cage in his piece 4'33" where he redirects the focus from foreground to background; only this time instead of focusing on sounds

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<sup>37</sup> See poster here: <http://www.max-neuhaus.info/soundworks/vectors/walks/> [Accessed 20 May 2014].

within the concert hall, Neuhaus chooses to take the audience outside so that they are able to experience the everyday environment (or the background noise) as a musical composition. In the case of *Giant Ear*, the work does not seek a reversal of this kind, as this approach would merely produce new foregrounds and new backgrounds as discussed in Section 2.2.2. Rather, the objective here is to invite passers-by to experience a reverie that will activate their extended ear and allow them to listen to the aural aura of a future place.

*Giant Ear* implements also the characteristics of street art and especially the style of guerrilla art. In this way, as also mentioned in the introduction of the thesis, the artist takes the risk of defying the law and proceeds with creating impromptu art in public spaces. In the case of *Giant Ear*, the act of installing this work was clearly against Cypriot law regarding posting material in public places, considering that the event occurred on public property. On the other hand, since the Information Office was part of a project that had been abandoned, we approached it as an area for legitimate artistic intervention and this would have provided us with a strong alibi in the event of prosecution. My initial idea was to perform this work secretly, at night-time, when the traffic is low and the chance of being arrested even lower. However, Soteriou, with many years of experience in the field, insisted that, in terms of security, it would have definitely been wiser to install the work during daytime, so that people would not suspect that something strange was occurring. And he was totally right. At the time of action, we were in plain view, exposed to all the passing traffic on this main avenue and we had absolutely no distraction or complaint (see Figure 22). The work remained on the Information Office for several months, until it was gradually destroyed by the weather elements (rain, sun and wind).



Figure 22 - Installing *Giant Ear*

### 3B.2.4 - *Prosehos*<sup>38</sup>

As briefly described above, *Prosehos* is a collaborative performance by choreographer Melissa Carro and performer Ariana Alphas. Their interpretation of the project's concept involved the impromptu occupation of an imaginary stage set in the future Cultural Centre. The duo describe their work as:

A rare encounter with an "empty" space in the centre of the city that carries however a prescribed identity. A space flirting with the meaning of place but failing to accomplish this in a physical sense; it does so just on an imaginary level. The performance puts a staged physicality to the existing space making an imaginary stage appear for an instant, highlighting what is already there and looking towards what was to be. The movements draw the lines, mark the space and are performed within it, by us and by anyone or anything else that happened to be there. (Alphas and Carro 2014, cited in Antoniou, 2014)

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<sup>38</sup> Visit: <http://rainzonances5.blogspot.com.cy/2014/05/ariana-alphas-melissa-garcia-carro.html>.



Figure 23 - *Prosehos*, performance

Their work proved to be extremely successful, as a number of passers-by were quite intrigued and approached the site asking whether the specific performance had anything to do with the Cultural Centre. It is worth mentioning here, that during the period spanning from the decision to build this establishment until its recent abandonment a special Committee was assigned, responsible for materializing the project. Within the context of promoting the Cultural Centre the Committee had organized various events on site, at the nearby building that housed its offices. Consequently, the event did not seem strange for passers-by although the oddity about this performance was that it was taking place in the actual parking lot and that it had absolutely no audience. This of course puzzled them even more and I suspect that their imagination urged them to interact with place and listen to its aural aura. The performance was documented on a video shot by photographer Achilleas Zavallis with the assistance of visual artist Marios Constantinides. I was responsible for the sound recording as well as for the final editing and post-production.

### 3B.2.5 - *Act Zero*<sup>39</sup>

Harris Kafkarides responded to the concept of *Rainzonances5* by creating a place-specific work that can be described as both a performance and an installation. He performed the piece with no invited audience, just the random passers-by that, in this case, were only three-four people who had parked their cars in the area (see Figure 24). Kafkarides used whitewash on the present topography of the site, in an effort to interact with it, reconstructing and reshaping it. According to Kafkarides (2014 cited in Antoniou, 2014):

*Act Zero* is an exploration on reconstructing the abandoned space where a grandiose cultural centre would have been built. The space now used as a parking lot is transformed to an outlined ground plan of an imaginary stage set. Passers-by become unaware actors of this "ground zero" site, through the extension of faded parking area lines.

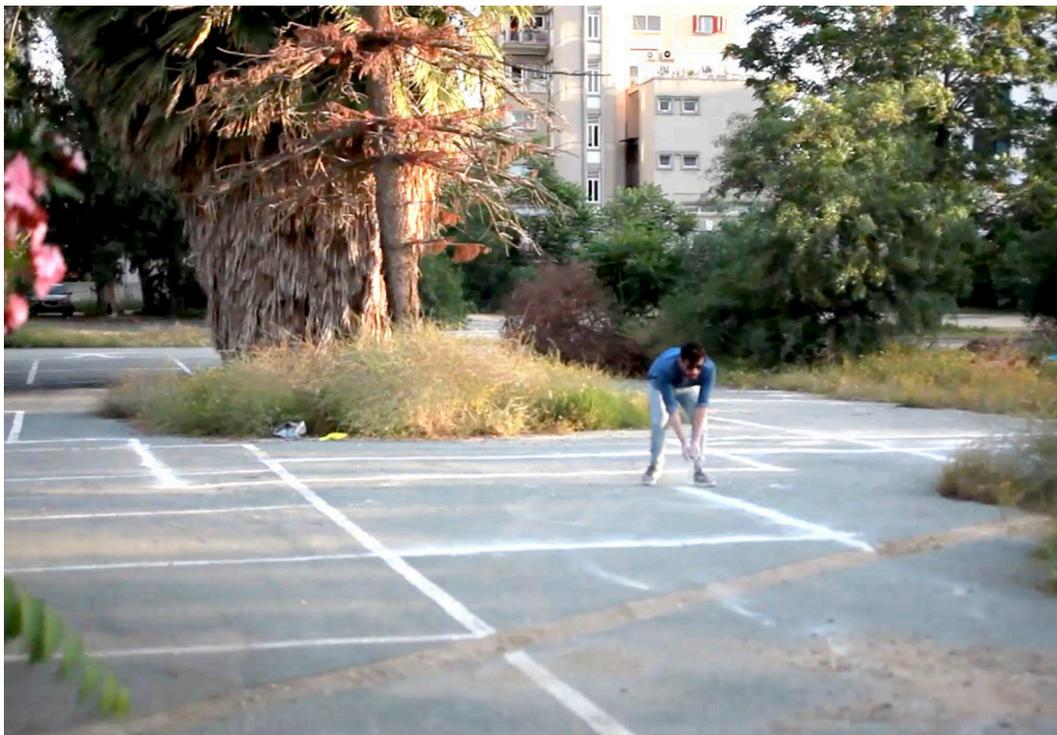


Figure 24 - *Act Zero*, Harris Kafkarides in action

Kafkarides was inspired by the existing lines of the parking lot, and through the use of whitewash he extended and exaggerated the lines, creating "a plan of an imaginary stage set" (Ibid.). His installation had an ephemeral quality as its duration was subject to weather conditions. When visiting the site one month later one could trace only faint remains of the whitewash powder. Time had washed the work away, reflecting in this way the reality

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<sup>39</sup> Visit: <http://rainzonances5.blogspot.com.cy/2014/05/act-zero.html>.

regarding the vision of building the Cultural Centre. The work was documented on video, which was produced by myself, and it is available online on the *Rainzonances5* blog.

### **3B.2.6 - *I Think I Thought I Saw You Try*<sup>40</sup>**

The final work of *Rainzonances5* involves visual artist Melita Couta's place-specific installation/intervention. Couta was inspired by the existing landscape, as well as the imaginary place, prompted by the vision of creating the Cultural Centre. Couta created two collage works using photographic material from the site, as well as material taken from unfinished constructions, which dealt with memory and history. Couta (2014 cited in Antoniou, 2014) describes her work as follows:

The gaze of a passer-by will fall on views that repeat each other like Russian nesting dolls. The view of the "terrain vague" is becoming the background of the images, displayed directly in front of the space. Another window within the collages draws on elements of history, memory, culture and urban expansion. Memories that were meant to be are represented as urban renderings of a silent place.



Figure 25 - Installing *I Think I Thought I Saw You Try*

<sup>40</sup> Visit: <http://rainzonances5.blogspot.com.cy/2014/05/i-think-i-thought-i-saw-you-try.html>.

Couta's collages were printed on banners, which were then installed on the huge banner stand, initially intended for the Cultural Centre's promotional material. When Couta began designing her intervention, the Cultural Centre's banners had all, apart from two, fallen from the stand. Thus, our idea was that the new ones, created by Couta, would be placed in the empty slots, so that they would enter into a dialogue with the existing Cultural Centre ones. This would also affect how the passers-by would experience the site, since the images that were familiar to them on a daily basis would be altered. Coincidentally, the remaining two original banners fell from the stand just four days before our installation and thus, the entire stand now contained only Couta's two banners (see Figure 25). The work remained on the stand for at least two months before it was torn off by strong winds and destroyed. It was documented in photographs presented online on the Rainzonances5 blog.

Installing the banners was once again a guerrilla-art-style affair. The abandonment of the Cultural Centre project had produced many grey areas in terms of the status of the site. Who was responsible for the site? What was the role and function of the objects and structures that had been created and installed in order to promote the Centre, such as the banner stand or the Information Office? Whether it was legal or not to install our banners on the specific stand was not a clear issue, nor was it easy to find out who was responsible for the free-standing structures. Thus, the decision was made to proceed without obtaining a special license. This was also the case with the work *Giant Ear*, described above. The fact that both works (*Giant Ear* and *I Think I Thought I Saw You Try*) remained *in situ* and gradually eroded is telling; it demonstrates that this area constitutes a grey zone in which, as in *Rainzonances4*, nobody chooses to intervene. In this sense, it could well be considered as "non-place", as it is now in a transient state. It is a site marked deeply by the plans of the Cultural Centre, and is now awaiting for the next governmental decision that will evidently change its status and its biography. Until then, no one wishes to take the responsibility of intervening with the site, as it is still haunted by the Cultural Centre vision.

### **3B.3 - Conclusions**

*Rainzonances5* is an interdisciplinary project that investigates the aural aura of the Cyprus Cultural Centre. The element that distinguishes this work from the rest found in the portfolio is

that it deals with an intangible place, a place that had never been realised but remained in the form of a vision. It is not a place with a conventional past – as the other projects – but rather its history is orientated mostly towards the future in a form of anticipation.

The area that this ambitious establishment would have been built is haunted by this vision, this expectation and this suspension. Visual associations related to the Cultural Centre such as the Information Office, can still be traced on the site, but time is steadily eroding them, much like the vision that keeps fading out.

As with Chapter 3A, the project has a collaborative nature and follows a guerrilla-art methodology having no invited audience but rather targeting the random passers-by. The six works are available as documentation on the Rainzonances blog.

# Chapter 4

## Introduction

Through the two works presented in Chapter 4, namely *H4C* and *Echoing Hamam*, I investigate themes and concepts developed in all previous chapters. Unlike the two projects presented in Chapter 3, the works here are realised following a different approach based on the context of their presentation. The works are commissioned and they concern places with a built environment. Consequently, these works take place indoors in an entirely controlled setting. Both works analysed in Chapter 4 are interactive in the sense that the audience's actions affect the sonic and visual outcome. They make use of similar techniques, such as Alvin Lucier's technique in his work *I am Sitting in a Room* (1969). These two projects are not as complex and multi-layered as those presented in Chapter 3. While the works in Chapter 3 are open-ended and ongoing, the ones in Chapter 4 were a part of group exhibitions with a specific duration and therefore they were approached in a rather different manner.

## Chapter 4A - *H4C* (2011)<sup>41</sup>

### 4A.1 - Theoretical framework and historical background

Drawing from the theoretical background on "place" and "place-specific", as presented in Chapter 1, my sound installation *H4C* is deliberately placed under the "place-specific" umbrella rather than the "site-specific" one since it does not only engage with the architecture and topography of the building under-investigation but it also focuses on the place's socio-political dimension, which in this case, is extremely loaded. As in the case of *Rainzouances4* (Chapter 3A), any deliberate attempt to omit or ignore the political context in which the building is situated (mainly due to the subject's high level of complexity, the risk of dangerously widening the scope of my research as well as the danger of tackling issues, theories and meanings that are not directly relevant to the project) would have certainly led to poor understandings that would in turn have produced insignificant and superficial works. In *H4C* the political weight is manifest from "head to toe"; it is undoubtedly a vital consideration and the starting and ending point of a potential artwork that investigates the aural aura of the specific place. It is thus necessary to outline some historical elements concerning the surrounding area and the building itself, as well as to try and imagine past articulations, feelings and sensations, through the stories of people who have had first hand experiences of the building and the area. By presenting the place in its historical context it is hoped that a better understanding of the specific installation would be achieved.

#### 4A.1.1 - The Building – History and changes in use

The building under-study (see Figure 26) was constructed in 1952 by the Mangoian brothers, two photographers of Armenian origin. It was erected right next to the brothers' family home in a street with a rich past and a promising future. Historical monuments and other cultural heritage landmarks are situated in the wider area, such as the Venetian walls, the Armenian cemetery and other important monuments in the Arabahmet District. The neighbourhood once had a strong multicultural character, with Latin, Armenian, Greek Cypriot and Turkish Cypriot residents. The then glamorous "Ledra Palace Hotel" (see Figure 27), built in 1948, was situated

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<sup>41</sup> See "H4C documentation" video.

directly opposite the Mangoian building. The hotel brought hundreds of visitors to the neighbourhood, among which were important figures in the artistic and political arena, such as the then Vice-President of the United States, Lyndon Johnson. The Ledra Palace Hotel would host all sorts of political and social happenings, ranging from international conferences to high-profile galas and beauty contests. The Mangoian brothers, who saw a unique potential in this rapidly developing area, finally realised their idea of constructing a multifunctional building that would consist of two apartments – which they rented out on the first floor – and a row of shops on the ground floor. During the 1950s and early 1960s the building hosted various residents in its apartments and numerous businesses in its shops such as: the "Melissas Car Rental Company", Melahat Hanim's hair salon "Salon Rose", Karydas' taxi office and the Machalepis mini-market.



Figure 26 - The Home for Cooperation building



Figure 27 - The Ledra Palace Hotel

Ahmet Chavusoglu (2011, cited in Epaminondas, et al., 2011, p.19) has vivid memories of the place:

I used to live in Kyrenia and I started going to the English School in Nicosia in 1961. The Street in front of Ledra Palace used to be the main road between Kyrenia and Nicosia, so I was passing in front of the Mangoian building almost every day. I remember that one of the shops was a hair salon, named "Salon Rose" and it was owned by Melahat Hanim. It was very popular with the women of Nicosia; Turkish, Greek, Armenian Cypriots would frequent the salon; women from the international community also visited very often... In December of 1963, the incidents happened and I was not able to finish the year. The Turkish Cypriot teachers and students all gathered and we started another school which was called "Turkish Koskluchiftlik English School". As far as I know Melahat Hanim also left the shop and transferred her hair salon in another part of Nicosia. My world became much smaller after that. I could not cross to the Greek part of the city and I didn't have contact with Greek Cypriots, especially between 1963-1968.

Chavusoglu's account allows us to begin to understand the abrupt metamorphosis of the place, from its zenith to its nadir. In 1963, only three years after the end of colonial rule and the independence of Cyprus and as a result of hostilities between Greek and Turkish Cypriots, barricades were set up by the two armies, separating Nicosia into a Turkish and a Greek sector, and leaving the Mangoian building, as well as the Ledra Palace Hotel, in the middle of this divide. In 1964 the United Nations peacekeeping forces arrived in the area and settled in a

section of the Ledra Palace Hotel. The UN forces also made use of the first floor of the Mangoian building, turning it into a hospital. While movement in the street was very limited and controlled, nevertheless, some of the shops, as well as the Hotel, continued to operate until 1974. The new residents of the building's first floor were Danish and Canadian UN soldiers, and in the ground floor, adjusting to the new conditions and the neighbourhood's new inhabitants/customers, new shops opened, such as a t-shirt shop and a photo-printing shop. The escalating uneasiness between the two communities as well as other foreign interventions led to a coup d'état in 1974, which was led by Greek and Greek Cypriot militants, who were promoting a unification of Cyprus with Greece (*Enosis*). Some days later, the Turkish invasion occurred, resulting in the occupation of approximately one third of the island by Turkey.

Avo Mangoian, (2011 cited in Epaminondas, et al., 2011, p.20), the owner of the building, recalls:

I was living at a different place in town until 1972, when I moved into an apartment in the building. I remember the road being unusually busy during the days after the coup d'état in July 1974; several delegations were visiting Ledra Palace for meetings. The evening of the 19th of July 1974 a Turkish Cypriot employee of Melissas' Car Rental Business warned me, telling me that it was better for me not to stay there during the night because things didn't seem to be good. I took his advice and stayed in a friend's house in Lakatamia. Next morning we saw the parachutes of the Turkish soldiers landing. I returned home during the first cease-fire and saw that my house had been destroyed. I managed to collect most of my belongings and left.

In the years following 1974 the Ledra Palace Hotel stopped receiving civilians and became the official Headquarters of UNFICYP (United Nations Force in Cyprus). The Mangoian building, half-deserted, was now situated in no-man's land, between the two barricades. The area became completely inaccessible to locals and the stretch of road running along the building became a symbol of confrontation, conflict and distorted historical representations. However some organisations refused to see the Green Line as a division line but rather they viewed it under a much more constructive and positive light. They saw the Line as a point of contact that would foster inter-communal dialogue enabling the reunification of the island. The Association of Historical Dialogue and Research (AHDR) is one such organisation. The role of the AHDR will be further elaborated below.

In the spring of 2003 the Ledra Palace checkpoint was the first to open and other checkpoints followed. People could once again cross to the other side of the divide after 30 years of

isolation. The road running along the Mangoian building came to life again with people crossing the border on an everyday basis. In 2009 the AHDR realised its vision: it acquired the Mangoian building and turned it into the Home for Cooperation. Funds for the acquisition and renovation of the deteriorated building were raised through various sponsorships. The aim was to "transform what is currently referred to as the Buffer Zone or Dead Zone into a zone of cooperation" (Epaminondas, et al., 2011, p.6). Two years later, in May 2011, the Home for Cooperation (H4C) opened its doors to the public. The leaders of the two communities were present at the inauguration on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May 2011, shaking hands and promising that they would try to follow the AHDR's initiative on a political level.

#### **4A.1.2 - The political dimension**

To enhance loyalty, history is made visible by monuments in the landscape and past battles are recounted in the belief that the blood of heroes sanctified the soil. (Tuan 1974, p.99)

In Cyprus, even as early as the first conflict of 1963, monuments of heroes were erected near the checkpoints, aiming to provoke patriotism as well as hatred towards the "other". Yiannis Papadakis notes in the abstract of his influential essay *Nicosia After 1960: A River, a Bridge and a Dead Zone* (2006) that,

Capitals are generally regarded as the spaces exemplifying nationalist ideologies, and in Nicosia these processes acquired added urgency due to the ethnic conflict that took place in Cyprus, leading to almost obsessive efforts to inscribe the national Self on the landscape and erase the Other.

In a similar vein but as part of a more general discussion, Tuan (1977, p.50) in a way standardizes this phenomenon: "A distinction that all people recognize is between 'us' and 'them'. We are *here*; we are *this* happy breed of men. They are *there*; they are not fully human and they live in *that* place". Likewise, Creswell (2004, p.97) claims that, "the construction of places is more than not, achieved through the exclusion of some 'other' – a constitutive outside". The dialectics of "inside" and "outside" (also discussed in Sections 1.0.2, 3A.2.0.2, 3A.2.2.1, 3A.2.3.1) are indeed a major issue in any socio-political discussion, theory or analysis. Gaston Bachelard quotes Jean Hyppolite (1956 cited in Bachelard 1958, p.212): "[...] you feel the full significance of this myth of outside and inside in alienation, which is founded

on these two terms. Beyond what is expressed in their formal opposition lie alienation and hostility between the two".

Going back to the Ledra Palace area, another strong indication of political propaganda and conflicting agendas are the different names given to the same street (demonstrated in the accompanying documentation video 8:00-8:20). Naming, according to Cresswell (2004, p.12), "is one of the ways space can be given meaning and become place" and Tuan stresses that "[n]aming is power – the creative power to call something into being, to render the invisible visible, to impart a certain character to things" (cited in Cresswell 2004, p.98). Lippard (1997, p.47) takes this notion slightly further and, from a more political perspective, notes:

The ability to name or rename oneself and one's place is an aspect of ownership. Conquerors have always taken advantage of it [...] Naming (or renaming) landmarks could be a matter of life and death, as well as a way of providing a sense of power and psychological security.

And how true this is, in the case of the place under research here. As demonstrated in the documentation video (8:00-8:20) the building's street had three different names: Edward VII avenue, Markos Drakos street and İkinci Selim street.

My personal experiences of the area seem to strengthen the above quotes. From an early age my generation was taught at school that the Turks were not civilised human beings but that they were, more or less, barbarians and murderers. This propaganda continued and was employed at different levels and degrees throughout my school years. During every anniversary of a national victory or defeat we were urged by teachers (not all) and other groups (although we never knew who these groups were and what their real motivations were) to leave our classrooms and march to the Ledra Palace checkpoint (sometimes to other checkpoints as well) and demonstrate against the "barbarians". I can clearly remember the wall at the checkpoint (visible from its north side in the documentation video at 13:20) covered with all sorts of national and religious symbols such as the Greek and the Byzantine flags, images of executed and missing people and portraits of heroes. On the surrounding buildings huge banners were permanent fixtures stating and showing how the Turks have stolen our land, raped our women and killed our men (see Figures 28&29). Similar backdrops were installed on the other side of the division line.



Figure 28 - Greek Cypriot checkpoint



Figure 29 - A statue near the Greek Cypriot checkpoint

On an acoustic level a similar conflict is expressed, that has not only been occurring since 1974, but is in fact becoming more and more intense as time goes by. For those living in the centre of Nicosia and especially within the walled city (like myself) the "battle of religious soundscapes", as I call it, is witnessed very strongly. The megaphone versus the bell, the muezzin versus the priest, Islam versus Christianity, Turkey versus Greece. In an interview that I conducted with an old Greek Cypriot shop owner in the walled city, the unfolding of this battle is evident. Mr. Aletras (2007) acted as an ear witness saying he could remember that, in the old days, the muezzin would climb up to the minaret balcony and chant the daily prayers with no amplification. Similarly the church bell was struck manually and not electronically as is the case today (listen to "Greek Cypriot church bells recording"). At some point in time the Turkish Cypriot community installed directional speakers at the top of minarets, which, according to Aletras (Ibid.), "are sometimes turned so loud that the signal distorts and the whole area shakes". According to Aletras (Ibid.), "this is obviously done by them to establish their presence here and to demonstrate their power". My sister, who lives some kilometres away from the centre, confirms that she can also hear the muezzin especially at dawn when the ambience level is low. Especially during the summer months when I sleep with open windows I am routinely awakened by the muezzin's dawn prayer (listen to "Muezzin at dawn recording").

#### **4A.1.3 - The AHDR and its child the H4C**

The fourth part of the documentation video entitled "Inauguration events & festivities" begins with a sequence (12:42-12:55) showing the bullet holes in the wall, caused by gunfire during warfare. In the subsequent sequence, where mainly the strip of the Buffer Zone between the two sides is shown, at 13:09-13:11, we notice a military guard's post. During the refurbishment of the building both the bullet holes and the guard's post could have been removed or concealed and this is probably what would have happened if someone else had acquired the building. The AHDR board, however, decided to keep these signs as evidence of what really happened in the area and as symbols of the consequences of conflict.

The establishment of the AHDR almost coincided with the opening of the Ledra Palace checkpoint. The Association's mission is to "defend and promote productive dialogue and

research into history and history teaching and, in this way, to enhance critical thinking, democratic citizenship, stability and peace in Cyprus" (Epaminondas, et al., 2011, p.24). The AHDR recognizes that much of the hostility and hatred between the two communities is the result of historical distortion and intentional misinterpretation and promotes the idea that taught history should become more objective. The AHDR board saw the geographic and symbolic potential of the area as a facilitator for promoting the Association's ideas. Transforming the Buffer Zone from a symbol of separation into a symbol of cooperation would act as a fertilizer bringing peace and reuniting the island. The Home for Cooperation is the child of this vision; it is a "unique multi-functional centre aiming to foster and promote dialogue and cooperation between people from different ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural backgrounds" (Ibid., p.6). With the inauguration of the House came the first assurance and vision that anything could be achieved. The coming years will demonstrate whether such an advance could result in a fruitful aftermath and whether the House can act productively, especially when it comes to issues that have been traumatising the island for years.

#### **4A.1.4 - Place / Non-place - Fluid status**

The themes around non-place, as discussed in Chapter 3A, can be reintroduced at this point in order to demonstrate how place could be transformed into non-place and back again to place. The Home for Cooperation is taken here as a point of reference. This case study may well reveal that the distinction of the two (place and non-place) is not so black and white after all, as admitted by Augé (see Section 3A.0), and that time could be an important parameter that should be taken into consideration. It should be noted that the analysis below follows a very specific discourse, which moves mostly in the context of Augé's distinction between place and non-place, as presented in the first pages of Chapter 3A. Recent debates on place, as analysed in Chapter 1, seem to all agree that places are not at all about physical boundaries but are rather a continuously changing process performed by people on a daily basis.

It could be said that during the period from its construction in 1952 until the first conflicts in 1963, the Mangoian building could be placed under the category of place as opposed to Augé's non-place. This may be demonstrated by the nostalgic stories of the people who lived in the building or who knew it from first-hand experience. As mentioned above, barricades were

placed in the street after 1963, rendering the area and consequently the Mangoian building inaccessible. We could suggest here that the building became a place of memory in the ex-inhabitants' minds. At the same time the building became a place in a physical sense, for the new residents (i.e. UN soldiers) and a transient place or a non-place for those crossing. During the period between 1974-2003 the area was strictly inaccessible to locals and thus the building remained a place in the minds of the old inhabitants, and a real place – as opposed to an imaginary place – for the t-shirt shop owner and the UN soldiers. For people of my generation who had never had the chance to experience the building in any way (before 2003 all checkpoints were closed), as was the case with the Airport project (see Section 3A.1.3), our impressions were affected by the older generations and we therefore had constructed an imaginary place in our minds, blurred by a huge dose of romanticism, drama and melancholy. At this point it is perhaps useful to bring to the forefront Tuan's thought (1977 p.184) (also quoted in Section 3A1.3) as it very aptly describes this kind of impression: "Still more curious is the fact that people can develop a passion for a certain type of environment without the benefit of direct encounter. A story, a descriptive passage or picture in a book suffices".

During the period following the checkpoint opening, from 2003 until 2011, it is reasonable to suggest that the street and the building acquired a non-place nature, since the area's use by those crossing was only transitional and people had no reason to stop anywhere in between, nor were they allowed to do so. They had to pass through this bizarre, static and lifeless zone, in order to enter the other side, where life went on normally and everything made sense again. Then in 2011 the H4C (Home for Cooperation) opened its doors. Today passers-by crossing the border can pause and wander inside or outside the building. They can have a coffee or a tea in the cafeteria, situated in the ground floor. They can meet other people and discuss politics or other subjects. As discussed in Section 3A.2.0.1, pauses constitute a viable means for experiencing aural auras of places. According to Tuan (1977, p.138) "Place is a pause in movement [...] the pause makes it possible for a locality to become a centre of felt value". By offering people this chance to pause the Mangoian building is once again transformed into a place that encompasses all the pre-existing places, including the imaginary and the non-places as discussed above.

#### 4A.1.5 - Concepts and themes

The work *H4C* is based on the premise that the walls of a building as well as the objects found within it, cache compressed histories in the form of acoustic energy and that they still vibrate with every frequency that has ever reached their surface. These concepts have been examined in detail in Chapter 2 and constitute the broad conceptual framework of this research. My sound installation suggests that the found objects and the walls of the building are a "vast library", as put by Charles Babbage (see Section 2.3.5.3), encompassing all sounds ever uttered within and around the place under research. One of the concerns of soundscape studies and acoustic ecology, as briefly exposed in Section 2.2.2.1, is that soundscapes can reflect habits, customs, beliefs and generally the way of life of the communities that produce them. In other words a community can be determined by its characteristic soundscape. With this in mind, the layers of sounds or soundscapes accumulated in the walls and objects can, as suggested above, be employed in order to produce a multitude of narratives, images, enigmas, aromas and textures, relating to a place's biography. The ostensible silent state of objects and walls is such only if we consent to the definition of silence being zero signal reaching the human ear. However, as Toop reminds us (2010, p.218), "we must accept that silence has many meanings, not all of which have much to do with sound, listening or hearing". Nevertheless even if these objects may appear to be silent – as in not generating any perceivable sound – still, according to my initial premise with regards to the concept of the installation, objects accumulate sounds and await to be activated in order to narrate the story of the place. As discussed extensively in Chapter 2 the creation of sonic artworks that deal with place are orchestrated aural auras that mediate between audience and place and communicate the place's history on a mental level. This was precisely the aim of creating this interactive sound installation.

Vibration produces sound; one could of course claim that vibration *is* sound or vice versa, that sound is vibration. A way of producing sound from found objects or of activating them would be to vibrate them. Toop's (2010, p.146) passage regarding the above concept is enlightening: "The idea that silent objects might be repositories of the soul of a house has a great dramatic potential, since their auditory activation would suggest that the house itself has chosen to speak". The audience's ability and will to decode the aural information drawn from the objects seems to be crucial in creating what Gaston Bachelard has termed "poetic images" (see Section 2.3.4.1). Within the above context the audience finds itself in the strange position of experiencing the past and at the same time it participates in the development of a place's

history. This is not to say that by entering the installation room the audience will suddenly have supernatural experiences. As discussed in Section 2.3.5 this experience concerns a kind of inner intuition that we may have if we are willing and relaxed enough to listen with our extended ear, with our auditory imagination. This process may lead to the forming of a poetic image. The only prerequisite for the above would possibly be that the audience should have some form of prior experience of the place or that they are in some way aware of the place's past. In the introduction to his book *Space and Place* (1977) Tuan provides a very relevant example which demonstrates how crucial it is to be aware of certain historical facts about a place in order to perceive and experience it. He quotes Werner Heisenberg from a conversation with Niels Bohr whilst the two famous physicists visited together Kronberg Castle in Denmark, which was the setting for Shakespeare's renowned tragedy *Hamlet*:

Isn't it strange how this castle changes as soon as one imagines that Hamlet lived here? As scientists we believe that a castle consists only of stones, and admire the way the architect put them together. The stones, the green roof with its patina, the wood carvings in the church, constitute the whole castle. None of this should be changed by the fact that Hamlet lived here, and yet it is changed completely. Suddenly the walls and the ramparts speak a quite different language. The courtyard becomes an entire world, a dark corner reminds us of the darkness in the human soul, we hear Hamlet's "To be or not to be" [...] (Heisenberg 1972, cited in Tuan 1977, p.4)

In any case there should definitely be some form of triggering of one's imagination in order for the audience to be able to transcend the pragmatic/tangible setting of a recently refurbished room that contains unconnected hanging objects which are creating some sort of noise (this would be a non-poetic image of the installation). Rather one should be able to move towards the orchestrated aural aura, where myths, rumours, and tales are reflected in the environment and are performed in the audience's presence. Moments remembered or imagined "can still be more real than the present moment" as Virginia Woolf (1939) reminds us.

## **4A.2 - Practice**

The installation could be divided into four main parts, one affecting the other at varying levels:

1. Object activation
2. Room activation
3. Real-time visual projection

#### 4. Performance / Live electronics

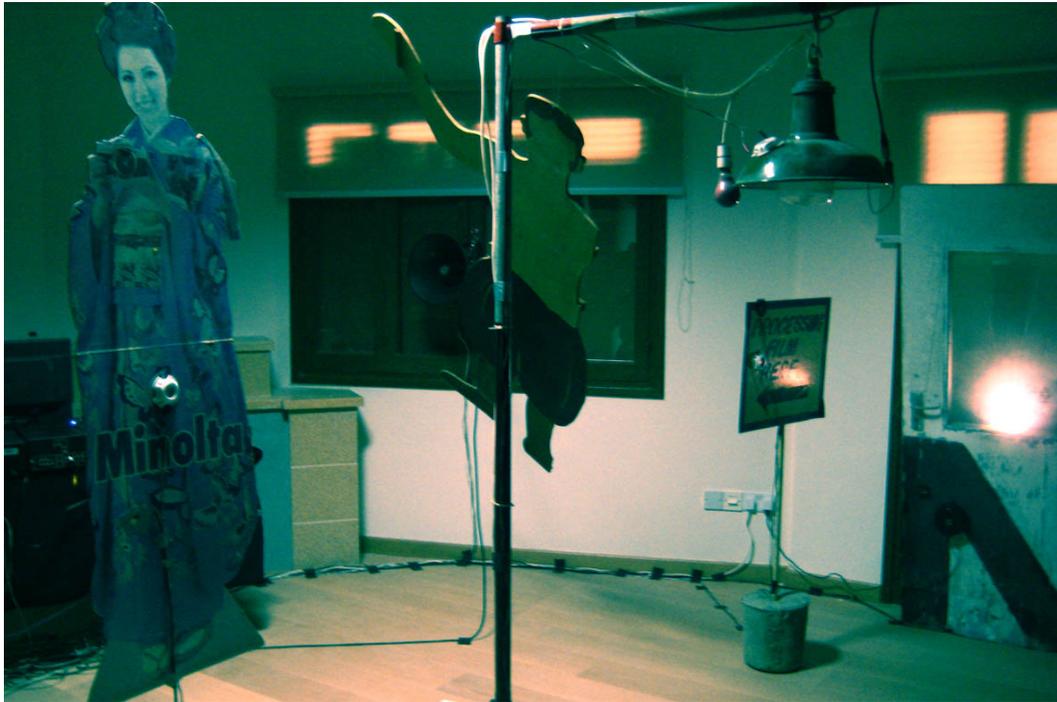


Figure 30 - *H4C*, Installation view

##### 4A.2.1 - Object activation<sup>42</sup>

Virginia Woolf's vision of fitting a plug in the wall and listening to the past, (see Chapter 2 – Section 2.3.5.3), was of major influence to the project as it gave direction to the realisation of the concept. Woolf's notion was fundamental in the arrangement of the first part of this work, acting as a dynamic driving force. The general idea was that a mechanism or system would be plugged on the objects, stimulating their infinite stories and allowing them to become audible. Of course one should by no means expect that they will actually hear a human voice narrating a story but as discussed above one would have to use his/her extended ear in order to be able to listen to the accumulation of stories through the resonant frequencies of the objects. Italian futurist artist Bragaglia's view that "every vibration is the rhythm of infinite minor vibrations" (Bragaglia, 1913) seems to support this notion, especially when his words are taken metaphorically. His view contributes to my notion that the sound created by the vibration and the feedback (further analysed below) is nothing but the rhythm of every single sound that ever set the object into vibration. The above notion could of course prove to be irrelevant since, as

<sup>42</sup> Listen to "H4C binaural recording".

previously noted, the aim of this sound installation is not to ascertain or verify mathematical equations related to the physics of sound waves or the physical attributes of objects. If this were the case my above view would have easily been confuted. But as Bachelard very wisely proposed, "the imagination is never wrong, since it does not have to confront an image with an objective reality" (1994 p.151).

The objects used in the installation were selected among many objects found in the building prior to its renovation. They were gathered and categorised by the curator of an exhibition (see documentation video 1:10-1:45) organised by the AHDR on the occasion of the inauguration of the Home for Cooperation premises in May 2011 (see documentation video 1:10-1:45). As a matter of fact the initial idea for organising the exhibition was inspired by these found objects that even in their silent and inert condition transmitted a very haunting feeling. Apart from the visual criterion the acoustic properties of the objects were an equally if not a more important factor when it came to selecting the objects for the installation. I chose five objects that, just by looking or listening to them, seemed to be telling stories.

A technique inspired by American pianist and composer David Tudor's landmark work *Rainforest IV* (1973) was employed for the development of this part of the project. John Driscoll (Driscoll and Rogalsky, 2004, p.28) describes the work *Rainforest IV* as a "technologically direct [...] outgrowth of the earlier *Rainforest* versions, using low-powered amplifiers, electronic and tape source signals and sound transducers fastened to objects". *Rainforest IV* is a collaborative work that involves the construction of sound sculptures and it can be regarded as a performance as well as a sound installation. By the use of transducers and contact microphones it explores the resonant frequencies of the suspended objects, creating a spatial and dynamic environment where the audience can "physically interact" (Ibid.) with the sound sculptures. All objects have a natural frequency and according to physicist Benjamin Crowell (1998) a vibrating system resonates at this natural frequency. An audio signal is channelled through suspended objects via the attached transducers and the vibration produced excites the resonant frequency of the objects. This is picked up by a contact microphone and fed back into the mixer from where after further manipulation (e.g. filtering) it is redistributed to the same or to a different object, or to loudspeakers (Krukowski, 2008). This circuit was described by composer Gordon Mumma as an "ecologically balanced sound system" (Ibid.).

This technique is undoubtedly one of the main features of my work *H4C*. With different combinations as well as with subtle filtering manipulation, this "ecosystem" is able to generate elaborate sonic worlds. The role of the audience as mentioned above is not passive as in conventional musical pieces but it is instead a very decisive parameter in the overall sonic outcome. If we consider the work as a musical composition then the sound of this composition or better, what one will hear, will be absolutely dependent on his/her choices, i.e. where one moves to, how long one stays in the same spot, what the position of his/her ears is in relation to each sounding object etc. Moreover, the audience can touch or hit the objects and observe how this simple act may change the entire balance of the system and of the "composition" (see documentation video 23:00-23:10). The fact that the audience can play a vital role in the produced sound environment can qualify the work as being interactive. Nevertheless in this case interactive-ness does not only lie in the relationship that the audience develops with the objects. The installation is also interactive at other levels, such as the visual and the room activation, as will be described below.

#### **4A.2.2 - Room activation**

##### **4A.2.2.1 - Concepts**

The main feature of this layer is the idea of merging the three classifications of time: past, present and future. The main inspiration for this part of the project was Alvin Lucier's pivotal work *I am Sitting in a Room* (1969). Lucier's work also affected the main technique used in the project *Echoing Hamam* (described in the second part of this chapter). Through a process of repeatedly recording and playing back his voice – he is reading a text written on the process itself – Lucier manages to make audible the natural acoustics of the space in which he is situated. His basic premise was that different spaces have dissimilar acoustic properties and thus when applying this procedure the outcome will be different in each space. Nevertheless it can be reproducible if applied in the same room. The significance of Lucier's work lies not only in the innovative practical dimension and the inversion of background to foreground – which admittedly creates an astonishingly uncanny and haunting sound world – but at a more conceptual level; through this process of inverting the background into foreground, Lucier very elegantly merges the past with the present. Although Lucier's work focuses on linguistic intelligibility in terms of moving from clarity to obscurity or from the semantic to the abstract,

it is used here in a more conceptual manner in order to expose a conceptual perspective of ambience. This is largely based on the discussions in Chapter 2 regarding background and foreground and how the background can carry meaningful data, which are as Serres suggests "our perennial sustenance, the element of the software of all our logic" (1982, p.7). The procedure undertaken by Lucier therefore does not only operate on a pragmatic level but can certainly be applied for addressing the notions discussed in this thesis, since the shifting from the foreground to the background – something that Lucier effectively achieves – is one of the main arguments here. This concern will be more thoroughly examined in Section 4B.1.2.1.

The background is extremely critical in the *H4C* sound installation. It is the presence that secretly dwells in the eerie silence. It is this background that holds the energy which we struggle to reveal through orchestrated aural auras. As discussed extensively in Chapter 2 the background is always something that is out of our sight or our attention. However the background definitely carries all the fundamentals in order for the foreground to make sense. In this work our background would be every single story related to the building, which is essentially what makes this building a place. These stories are therefore present in the room in an absence disguise.

#### **4A.2.2.2 - Application**

This system involves a pair of microphones, a pair of speakers and, more importantly, a Max/Msp patch, which regulates the recording and the playing back of the acoustic information in the room. It should be noted here that, contrary to Lucier's technique in which the process had a rather static character (playback and record it, play back the new version and record it, and so on), in this case, the recording and playing back is continuous and occurs simultaneously. This method is most certainly enabled by digital technology, which was not available in Lucier's time. Another difference to Lucier's procedure is that in the case of *H4C* there are *four* recording systems (in the patch) capturing the soundscape at different timelines. More specifically, each one of the four buffers in the Max/Msp patch (the space where the sound is stored before it is played back) has a different capacity (records for a different duration). In this way the played back material derives from different time zones and when this procedure reaches a number of repetitions the result is extremely complex. For example, one can hear reproduced utterances that occurred live five minutes earlier, and this sound will be

recaptured by the system and brought back again in different times in the future by the four unequally-capturing-time recorders. In this way the Lucier formula of manipulating past and present becomes even more complicated since yet another parameter is added, namely, expectation, a state that evidently relates to the future. The merging of the three temporal dimensions in this manner – past, present and future – constitutes a fascinating way of demonstrating that history is a continuous movement which does not only deal with the distant past. Rather it is more like a performance that is in constant transformation and is always under negotiation.

The sonic material that is captured and played back is also channelled into the suspended objects. This material is then filtered through their fabric and fuses with the existing feedback (discussed in Section 4A.2.1 above).

The audience's behaviour and general response is again a crucial factor in the formation of this layer. People's sonic activity in the room is captured and passed through the system, greatly affecting the development of the work. This process turns the members of the audience into performers and composers, since their choice of making sounds or not becomes part of the sound system, altering the final outcome. During the performance phase, which is discussed below, the audience is urged to participate by making sounds (listen to "H4C performance recording") and thus the interactive aspect of the work is enhanced.

### **4A.2.3 - Real-time visual projection**

Anton Giulio Bragaglia's photographs<sup>43</sup> influenced the aesthetics of the projection and even my decision to include a visual layer in the installation. Anton Bragaglia and his brother achieved this revolutionary effect by employing a practice called "Photodynamism", which concerns "the area of movement which produces sensation, the memory of which still palpitates in our awareness" (Bragaglia, 1913, p.1). Rendering movement visible in such a manner creates amazing visual effects that greatly resemble the way in which aura is usually portrayed. The idea of merging past with present and future is realized with this technique and visually enriches the installation's general concept. A camera connected to the computer captures the

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<sup>43</sup> See photographs here: [https://timpickup.wordpress.com/2008/04/25/11\\_photodynamism/](https://timpickup.wordpress.com/2008/04/25/11_photodynamism/).

movement of people entering the room. This signal is analysed into the software "Jitter-Max/MSP" where it is manipulated with various methods and is then sent to the projector in real time (the projector is placed behind the audience and opposite the camera). The projection on the wall consists of shapes generated by the audience's movement (see documentation video 21:43-22:18) and creates a ghost-like effect. The traces left behind by the audience's movements enable them to witness a history of this movement. These physical actions constitute yet another feature of the installation where past articulations are manifested into the present. Apart from the visual interaction the audience's movement also affects the acoustic part by ring modulating the sonic outcome of the room-activation division (discussed above) in a rather subtle way.



Figure 29 - *H4C*, visual projection

#### 4A.2.4 - Performance / Live electronics<sup>44</sup>

Another main feature of the performance is the recitation of a text (see Appendix III), influenced by the text in Lucier's *I am Sitting in a Room*. The text, which describes the functioning and the concept of the installation, is used at the same time as the sonic raw

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<sup>44</sup> Listen to "H4C performance recording".

material that feeds the system. During the recitation, as well as after the first recitation of the text, I perform a live manipulation of the sound, mainly by filtering frequencies through the mixer. I change the routings of the signal and I am constantly "fine-tuning" this sensitive ecosystem so that it does not "explode", due to the enveloping feedback. This procedure is entirely improvisational and therefore each performance sounds different. However the manipulation is very subtle and in most cases, the system is left to act on its own and to create its own sound world.

The audience's role is once again not passive but rather the sounds they contribute could transform or even give direction to the performance. Unfortunately I was not able to make any recordings of the performances on the day of the exhibition opening when the audience was participating in a very engaging manner. The attached recordings of the performance were made during the third day with no people present in the room and therefore when I urge the audience through my text to make some sound, the sounds heard are produced by myself.

At the exhibition opening performances were held approximately every hour. During the remaining days of the exhibition the frequency of the performances depended upon audience attendance numbers, and they usually occurred before and after parallel events.

#### **4A.3 - Conclusions**

The project *H4C* is a place-specific, interactive sound installation that explores the aural aura of the Home for Cooperation building. This building is located in the Buffer Zone, a politically charged area that consequently carries an exceptionally rich and extraordinary biography. Through the use of several found objects I constructed an installation inspired by David Tudor's milestone piece *Rainforest IV*, as well as Alvin Lucier's *I am Sitting in a Room*. Conceptually the work is inspired by many of the theories and ideas that have been presented in this thesis and specifically in Chapter 2. One such influence was Virginia Woolf's vision of fitting a plug in the wall so that she could listen to the sounds uttered in the past. Following this train of thought the found objects were seen as repositories of sounds that need to be activated in order to render their stories audible. This act of activating the objects essentially produces an orchestrated aural aura that mediates between the audience and the place, enabling a dialogue to develop between them. This activation urges the audience to wander through the installation

and use their auditory imagination in order to listen to the place's histories. The work is interactive, as the audience's behaviour ultimately affects the process and the sonic outcome at different levels. Technically the work is multi-layered, consisting of four segments that can be categorised as follows:

1. Object activation
2. Room activation
3. Real-time visual projection
4. Performance / Live electronics

These four processes are interrelated since each one affects the other in various ways. For example the real-time visual projection, which is fed by the audience's physical movement, affects the room activation process and thus alters the entire sonic outcome.

This work was the first one to be concluded as part of my doctoral research. As a result, the ideas expressed or implemented here were still in an evolving state and the specific work can be seen as the first successful experiment in introducing the main themes of my research. While I consider this project to be successful in terms of the methodology undertaken, as well as the aesthetic outcome, I feel that the concepts of the research were not reflected as clearly as in the works discussed in Chapter 3. Many of the features that I consider as essential in the stage of completion or in the realisation stage of the projects *Rainzonances1* and *Rainzonances2*, such as the guerrilla art approach or the element of surprising the random passer-by, are absent from the *H4C* project. Nevertheless, this work gave me the opportunity to test several parameters and to reflect on issues such as the political situation and the concepts of intermediality, interactivity and immersion. This project certainly played a crucial role in the development of the research processes as it revealed numerous possibilities in terms of available technical methods and aesthetic concerns but most importantly, in that it made the conceptual part of the research more concrete and robust.

## Chapter 4B – *Echoing Hamam* (2012-2013)<sup>45</sup>

### 4B.1 - Background

*Echoing Hamam* is the final work of my portfolio. It follows the same conceptual trajectory as the other works of my thesis. *Echoing Hamam* shares characteristics with *H4C* (discussed in the first part of this chapter), both in terms of the form of its presentation, as well as its methodology. The analyses on these two works were therefore included in the same Chapter, as elaborated in the Introduction. Like *H4C*, *Echoing Hamam* was a commissioned work, a part of a group exhibition with a site-specific setting. The place under-investigation was the Ottoman period mansion of Dragoman<sup>46</sup> Hadjigeorgakis Kornosios (see Figure 32). The building is considered to be the most important surviving example of Ottoman urban architecture in Cyprus (Cyprus Today, 2010) (see following section for more information on Dragoman Hadjigeorgakis and the building). The exhibition was entitled *Stis Maroudias*<sup>47</sup>, translated as "At Maroudia's [house]" and was curated by a team of art practitioners and researchers, under the name "Re-Aphrodite". The 28 participating artists were invited to create artworks in order "to use the tensions contained in the layered history of the house, to challenge old myths and narratives and weave together new ones [...] and to look at the history of the house as a museum as well as a home" (Re-Aphrodite, 2012). The conceptual framework set by the curators of the exhibition had much in common with the general discourse of my thesis, providing me with a familiar framework within which I was able to materialize my ideas. The exhibition also included workshops, participatory events, performances, discussions, presentations, educational programs, happenings, poetry and musical events. The majority of the participating artists had a place-specific orientation and background, and therefore developed inspiring ways to perform interventions within the specific environment. As a result, works were created that had place as their basic ingredient.

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<sup>45</sup> See "Echoing Hamam documentation" video.

<sup>46</sup> A dragoman was an official of the Ottoman rule, an interpreter, translator and tax collector (Egoumenidou, 1995).

<sup>47</sup> Maroudia was Hadjigeorgakis's second wife.

#### 4B.1.1 - History<sup>48</sup>

Hadjigeorgakis Kornosios was a rich Christian dragoman who was employed by the Ottoman administration.<sup>49</sup> Hadjigeorgakis, who was also a big landholder, remains a controversial historical figure in Cypriot history and had a tragic end. The Sultan appointed Hadjigeorgakis as a dragoman in 1790 and he maintained this prestigious title until 1804. The title of "dragoman" was one of the most prestigious titles given to the local Christians by the Ottoman authorities. However, as a result of harsh increases in taxation, a joint Christian and Muslim civilian uprising took place, forcing Hadjigeorgakis and his family to escape Cyprus, seeking refuge in Istanbul, where they remained until 1808. On his return to Nicosia, Hadjigeorgakis realised that he could no longer enjoy the power and status of previous years. Also, he was now confronted with powerful enemies who wanted to eliminate him, accusing him of numerous misgivings. He managed to escape Cyprus again and fled, once more, to Istanbul, where he was arrested and hung in 1809.

Hadjigeorgakis's Mansion was built in 1793, in the area of Saint Antonios, then one of the richest districts of Nicosia. He lived in the building with his wife Maroudia and their six children until 1804. Following Hadjigeorgakis' flight to Istanbul in 1804, the house was sealed and remained so until his death in 1809, when it was bought by a rich Muslim woman. In 1830, Hadjigeorgakis' younger son bought the house back and lived in it with his wife until their death in 1874 and 1894, respectively. The house was then inherited by the niece of Hadjigeorgakis' daughter-in-law, who lived in it with her family for some decades. During this period the house was divided and transformed, and some rooms were rented out. In 1935, the British colonial government declared the mansion an Ancient Monument and in 1949 some parts of it were acquired by the Department of Antiquities. Following the death of the last tenant in 1979, the entire property came under the administration of the Department of Antiquities. In 1988 it was renovated and declared an ethnological museum, and in the same year it received a Europa Nostra Award.

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<sup>48</sup> The historical information in this section were gathered from: Cyprus Tourism Organisation- n.d., Re-Aphrodite, 2012, Cyprus Today, 2010, Marangou, 1995, Egoumenidou, 1995.

<sup>49</sup> Cyprus was under Ottoman rule from 1571 to 1878.



Figure 32 - The Hadjigeorgakis Mansion

The work *Echoing Hamam* develops in the Hadjigeorgakis Mansion's hamam (Ottoman Baths), situated in the building's gardens (see Figure 33). The hamam had a central place in Ottoman period daily life. Having a private hamam in one's property was a luxury reserved for the rich. Poorer and middle class Cypriots would have used public hamams. In the case of the Hadjigeorgakis Mansion, its hamam is a relatively small structure built in the traditional hamam style (see "Echoing Hamam documentation" video). Light enters the space from several small pieces of glass incorporated in the dome. It has a distinctive acoustic character produced by the reflective surfaces as well as the dome, reminiscent of the acoustics of chapels. This reverberant property makes one's experience inside it more dramatic and mystical.



Figure 33 - The Hadjigeorgakis Hamam

#### **4B.1.2 - Concepts**

Today the Hadjigeorgakis Mansion functions as a museum with hundreds of visitors each year. It is no longer someone's home but it is rather a place that is observed, explored and admired by outsiders. On the other hand, as in the case of the airport workers (discussed in Section 3A.1.2.1), the guards who spend half of their life in the museum building regard this place as their second home, experiencing it as a place rather than an artefact. The building has therefore acquired through the years a new milieu and status, which of course also constitutes an integral part of its history (as described in Section 1.0.3). Traces from each historical period are easily discernible in the building and considering that the place functions as a museum, many layers of the past are often highlighted and even exaggerated. According to Thomas Schlereth (1980, p.184), this could be termed a "time collage".

Lippard (1997, p.92) reflects on the above situation and provides us with an insightful analysis:

Historic buildings that have survived urban development are decontextualised, divorced from place, isolated as objects, perceived and even labelled as "artefacts", in the "collection" of the state or municipality. Time has destroyed their contexts and provided new ones.

As demonstrated above, the biographical layers of the place under-investigation enhance it with a sense of historical density that is directly related to my research. As Watson (1996) suggests, "[...] There is an intangible sense of being in a special place – somewhere that has a spirit – a place that has an 'atmosphere'". What Watson is possibly referring to is the so-called "*genius loci*", briefly explained in Section 2.0. From its construction date back in 1790 up until today, this place has hosted numerous people and has witnessed myriads of interesting stories, conspiracies and violence. A visitor who has acquired some knowledge on the place's histories can quite easily grasp the atmosphere and sense the aural aura of this "special" place – as discussed in Sections 2.1 and 2.3. – aided by the museum's exhibited objects, as well as the signs, labels and maps concerning each object and room.

As in all the other projects presented in this thesis, and especially *H4C, Echoing Hamam* sets forth with the premise that all past articulations and gestures (not necessarily confined to the acoustic domain) involving a place, are somehow stored in the objects, the walls, even in the atmosphere. This concept has been inspired by Babbage and Marconi's ideas, presented in Sections 2.3.5.3 and 4A.1.5, and also by Lethbridge's Stone Tape theory. In the film *The Stone Tape* (1972) – as also briefly described in Section 2.3.5.3.1 – Peter (the leader of the team) comes up with the idea of the stone tape and leads his crew back into the haunted room. There he attempts to irritate the walls by transmitting the resonating frequency of the walls' stones from a huge loudspeaker. The members of the group are confident that they have discovered a new recording machine and they attempt to decode and understand the way in which it functions. This approach links up with the various theories and ideas discussed previously, such as Virginia Woolf's "plug in the wall" (see Section 2.3.5.3), and of course, Alvin Lucier's (1990, p.196) notion that "Every room has its own melody, hiding there until it is made audible" (see following section).

#### **4B.1.2.1 - I am sitting in a room**

As seen in Section 4A.2.2.1, in his work *I am Sitting in a Room* (1969), Lucier manages to employ the architecture of the room in which he sits in the production of a multidimensional sonic effect. On a first layer he transforms the semantic level of his recitation into an acousmatic and abstract one. With each repetition his voice becomes more eroded, retaining only its rhythmic pattern. This connects with the analysis in Section 4A.2.2.1, regarding the

transposition of foreground and the re-contextualization of the background. On a second layer, although unintentionally (Rogalsky, 2010), Lucier manages to create a time-space amalgam, registering the past into the present and providing an apparatus for different temporalities to coexist and interact. Each repetition contains sonic articulations and gestures that occurred in the past merging together to "haunt" the more recent ones. This trajectory provides a very fertile ground for applying various artistic ideas such as those presented in my research. On a third layer, which is the most obvious, Lucier manages to excite the space acoustically, rendering its resonating frequency audible. Although this seems to be an exclusively scientific endeavour – Lucier himself states that his intention is to explore the acoustic phenomena and to create a work that does not bear any cultural qualities (Ibid.) – it can nevertheless be used here in a metaphorical way and in combination with other theories that have been put forward for the development of this thesis (such as the theories of Babbage, Woolf, Marconi, and Lethbridge). It can therefore be claimed that such frequencies constitute compressed registers of all the sounds that have ever been voiced in a specific place. In this sense Lucier's "melody hiding in every room" (1990, p.196) may be understood as one that is being composed slowly and steadily out of all the sounds that have emerged throughout the room's history. As a result, the activation of the space following Lucier's method would in a way lead to the creation of an orchestrated aural aura that initiates a dialogue between audience and place.

A very interesting transposition of *I am Sitting in a Room*, is Jacob Kirkegaard's piece *Four Rooms* (2006). Kirkegaard applied a comparable procedure in four empty rooms in Chernobyl, Ukraine. However, his intentions were quite different to Lucier's. The Chernobyl area had been evacuated as a result of the tragic explosion in the nuclear plant in 1986, an event which left the area with high emissions of nuclear radiation. Playing with these realities of presence/absence and with the concept of "room tone", (themes discussed in Sections 2.3 and 2.3.1) Kirkegaard repeatedly recorded and played back the ambient sonic environment of these rooms. Unlike Lucier, Kirkegaard aimed to amplify the cultural aspects related to this situation and to expose the haunting quality of this place (Cox, 2009). He was not only interested in the scientific-acoustic result of this process but most importantly he wished to explore the ways in which this process may reflect upon the histories of a place by offering an aesthetic understanding of the specific environment and context (Ibid.).

## 4B.2 - Practice

My work *Echoing Hamam* draws inspiration from both Lucier and Kirkegaard's works as presented above. On a conceptual level *Echoing Hamam* follows Kirkegaard's trajectory, aiming to reveal the histories that nest in the silence of the hamam as it stands today. Each repetition brings forward the echoes of a bygone time and in the course of becoming abstract these echoes stretch deeper and deeper into the past revealing, through this orchestrated aural aura, the biography of the place.

The recorded soundscape of a functioning hamam in Dalston, London (listen to "sample1-original source Hamam London") provides the source material that instigates this process. Of relevance at this point are the theoretical concerns expressed in Chapter 2 (Section 2.3.2) with regards to appropriating material that belongs to one context and projecting it into another. The act of bringing sounds from a London hamam to a hamam in Nicosia is certainly problematic, as discussed in Section 2.3.2. In this case however the intention was not to unveil a specific soundscape and present it as the artistic object per se, but rather, to use the initial source as a point of departure for the implementation of Lucier's procedure. In other words my aim was not to explore the place that produced the recorded sounds but rather to embed these sounds in a process that would "excite" the walls of the non-functioning hamam in Nicosia. Moreover, this process was enhanced by the fact that the soundscape used is very similar to the one that would have once been audible in Hadjigeorgakis's hamam.

Before beginning the process the stereo source material was treated in the studio with an EQ filter. Two mono signals that derived from the original source were produced, one by applying a High-pass filter and the second by applying a Low-pass one (listen to "sample2-1st version"). The two signals were then played back through the two speakers which hung from the ceiling in the middle of the hamam's main room (see "Echoing Hamam documentation" video). The high-frequency channel was assigned to the smaller-sized speaker and the low-frequency channel to the larger one. The small speaker was tied on top of the large one, which faced in the opposite direction. The original recording was also kept in its stereo format and is audible through both channels. This procedure created a more spread-out and a spatially more interesting sonic outcome than the one that would have been produced if both speakers had only played the original sound from the same position. The studio process, described above,

was repeated each time a new recording was conducted (see Figure 34). The duration of each version differed; the main reason being that during each recording activity interesting sounds would emerge from the acoustic environment or from the audience, resulting in my decision of extending the recording process. In this sense the piece developed an interactive character as the recorded sounds, made or caused by the visitors, entered the system and drastically affected the outcome of the succeeding versions. As noted in Section 2.3.3, Edison's invention – the phonograph – did not only record the intended sound signals (usually the human voice) but also caught undesired signals from the background. In the case of *Echoing Hamam* the recorder did not only record the previous version played-back in the space, but it also collected new sonic material produced within the time-frame of each recording activity. Consequently, this process greatly defined the evolution of the work. For instance, during the recording of the third repetition, a group of secondary school students who were visiting the museum (see Figure 35), entered the hamam space and began to experiment with the installation (listen to "sample9-8th version secondary school students" from 02:10-end). The sounds produced by the students and their utterances were deliberately kept in the recording, as they comprised a layer of the hamam's history. These new sounds gave an entirely new direction to the recording as they drastically transformed the dynamics of the procedure and of the signal, enriching its texture, redirecting its rhythmic structure and at the same time providing a fresh narrative.



Figure 34 - Recording the newer version in the hamam



Figure 35 - School students in the installation space

As mentioned earlier, the installation was active for one year. Each month<sup>50</sup> I revisited the place, recorded the soundscape in the hamam, and after applying the studio processing – discussed above – I fed the newer version back into the system. Using the place as well as the work as a laboratory proved to be a very intriguing way of exploring the hamam's identity and biography through sound. During the course of the twelve repetitions, Lucier's effect began to emerge: in every repetition one could note the gradual transformation from representative to abstract, as the architecture of the space shaped the sound. In the third session (listen to "sample4-3rd version my sounds"), I contributed to the recording process with my own sounds (such as footsteps, breathing and utterances), adding an additional ingredient to the procedure. Moreover, during the sixth recording session I invited historian Dr Antonis Hadjikyriakou (see Figure 36) to contribute to the soundscape with his oral, historical presentation of Hadjigeorgakis's life and of the building's history (listen to "sample7-6th version Hadjikyriakou talk"). Hadjikyriakou also recited some old documents on the life of Hadjigeorgakis, written by Hadjigeorgakis himself and by others. This was a conceptual way of embedding an oral projection of the place's histories into the system, setting it into resonance with the other material that was produced.

The work is therefore rather interactive in character considering that the visitors' actions, either deliberate or not, will affect the whole balance of the work and turn it towards new directions. This is of course an indeterminate process, as the moment of the recording procedure needs to coincide with a visitor entering the installation space. For this reason my role as recordist has a major impact on the outcome. The decision to give more time to one recording and less to others definitely shapes the sonic result. Moreover, my own sonic interference as mentioned above, as well as the decision to invite Dr Hadjikyriakou to recite within the installation space for the purpose of recording him are elements that have surely played a vital role in the process and the final outcome. Hence, I am acting as a director and as a conductor who is carefully watching the flow and who intervenes at specific moments so that a specific colour, tone and shape is given, which represents my aesthetic approach. It must be noted that, in this case, interactivity occurs at a different level since the actual influence of the visitors' actions will only be perceptible in the subsequent version of the piece, which is usually installed a month later. Hence the interaction is not actually a vigorous flow of information between the audience and the work but rather there is a more "lazy" form of interaction. It could be claimed that the

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<sup>50</sup> Listen to the twelve versions in the attached USB.

work's nature is more immersive rather than interactive. As discussed in previous chapters, in place-specific artworks, place is part of the work. As shown in the diagram in Figure 1, place actually encircles everything; it is the protagonist in this proceeding. The audience is found in this small space, immersed by its physical contours as well as its historical context and the orchestrated aural aura enacts a conversation between the place and the audience. By entering the hamam the audience becomes part of the history of the place, as discussed in Chapters 1 and 2. This acquires a more literal dimension in the case where the audience's utterances and movements are recorded and brought into the system of the installation. Their actions in the present will affect the events in the future and this applies both on a conceptual level as well as on a more practical one (with the recording). Apart from the visual/architectural/historical immersivity, the sonic environment also immerses the visitors of the hamam. This is hugely enhanced by the extreme acoustics of this extraordinary monument. Moreover, the decision to use two speakers that hang in the middle of the room at different heights and face opposite directions, as well as separating the frequency range in each speaker, has opened the work spatially, contributing to the sonic immersivity.



Figure 36 - Dr Antonis Hadjikyriakou in the hamam

### 4B.3 - Outro

Upon being invited to participate in the exhibition *Stis Maroudias* I explored the Hadjigeorgakis Museum and was almost instantly inspired to develop my installation in the building's hamam which is a separate building situated in the mansion's garden (see "Echoing Hamam documentation" video). This choice proved to be very convenient on a practical level also, since the space was at a distance from the other art installations (mainly situated within the mansion itself). Thus, *Echoing Hamam* was acoustically isolated, situated far away from any undesirable noises that came from other artworks (video works, sound works). Indeed, this isolation proved to be essential for the work to be properly experienced. The sound installation remained in the hamam for one year, and it was activated throughout the Museum's opening hours. This gave the audience the opportunity to revisit the exhibition and to spend more time experiencing the works. In the case of *Echoing Hamam*, this revisiting proved to be an

extremely important element since the process was ongoing and thus during each repetition the audience was able to experience the work differently. Moreover, when the recording procedure occurred in the presence of an audience, their sonic action would constitute an integral part of the work and an ingredient for its development (as discussed above).

#### **4B.4 - Conclusions**

By using Alvin Lucier's technique in his seminal piece *I am Sitting in a Room*, I explored the aural aura of an old non-functioning hamam bearing a complex biography. I find Lucier's method to be a very sophisticated way of blending the temporal dimensions and exposing the layers of history of a place at an acoustic level. The project functions as a laboratory investigating fragments of the place's acoustic histories, via a specific year-long process. This procedure is actually an act of opening a dialogue between the place and the artist, enabling an exploration of the protogenic aural aura and at the same time producing an orchestrated one. Sounds that occurred by chance during the recording operations drastically affected the sonic outcome and the process; in this sense the work is interactive. Furthermore this is also a demonstration of the concepts analyzed in the theoretical part of the thesis and specifically in Section 1.0.3 regarding place being an open-ended process with every contact and every event affecting its hybridity (Lippard, 1997, p.6).

## Conclusions

In this research I have explored artistic practices and methodologies from the perspective of the sonic arts, which can be employed in order to address the idiosyncratic conditions of places with complex biographies.

The theoretical discourse that leads and supports the practical part of the thesis orbits around the concept of "place". As demonstrated in Chapter 1, place should not be viewed as something static, but rather as a notion characterised by movement and constant change. In this sense place is closely tied to its history, which is also fluid and continually in the shaping. The history of a place does not merely denote its past; it is affected and formed by every relevant factor that may derive from the past, the present or even the future, as demonstrated in Chapter 3B. In this sense history could be thought of as echoes that emanate from every direction (temporal and spatial) and haunt the place. According to Lippard (1997, p.85) there is a need for more "fluid" ways of communicating and understanding this "weaving" of layers. One such fluid way of expressing the above qualities is through sound. Sound is inherently involved in constant negotiations; it resembles a ghost appearing and disappearing from unpredictable locations and in unexpected moments. It travels through air, follows its own "anarchic" routes, and fades away after completing its destined lifespan. Throughout this fluid trajectory it carries semantic as well as non-semantic messages which are able to stimulate human perception and imagination. Hence, designed sound has the power to affect moods and feelings and it can indeed be used in order to convey the contexts that Lippard reflects on above.

"Charged places" or as Watson (1996) calls them, "special places", essentially signify a particular relationship between humans and places. As Gernot Böhme (2000) suggests, atmosphere or ambience is what acts "in-between" objects and subjects, promoting a conversation and providing an understanding between them. This thesis suggests that we can experience the distinct atmospheres of places with complex biographies in a similar way as the way in which we experience the sonic world; as an "aural aura". This reasoning does not suggest a physical analogy but rather a more subconscious experience, resembling the way in which we perceive background noise. Background noise is never heard on a conscious level. It is always happening without us usually paying attention and it is permanently out of focus.

Nevertheless, this background is, as Serres puts it, "our perennial sustenance, the element of the software of all our logic" (1982, p.7).

We can listen through these atmospheres and enter into a conversation with place. In this way we will automatically become part of the place's history, a layer in this palimpsest. In order to be able to achieve this encounter one could make use of their "extended ear" in the way in which Labelle (2010, p. 108) proposes. This ear should not strive to listen in any of the typical modes but rather, as I suggest, it could be "consciously not listening", floating in the background and imagining. The only thing that we achieve when we focus on the continuity of a sonic background is merely a reversal; the background comes to the foreground and consequently something else becomes background. Instead, what I am suggesting above, which is closely connected with the notion of aural aura, is that there should be no focus on the clear listening of the sonic events occurring at any moment, but rather what should be the aim would be to enter a different dimension of the listening experience. This listening experience is a subconscious procedure that builds on the imagining of the place guided by its history. It has an ethereal quality closer to a dream or to the Sharawadji effect, offering an opening onto a canvas where time and space are ambivalent and one can effortlessly navigate through history. An "orchestrated aural aura" could be seen as a channel leading to this experience; through its ambient and hypnotic sonic nature it acts as a mediator between the audience and the place offering an alternative focus where sound can stimulate imagination and a "poetic image" can be formed (Bachelard, 1958, p.i), without it necessarily being consciously noticed. By creating a poetic image about the place its aural aura is activated and we are thus enabled to "listen" to its histories.

This thesis proposes that within a sound art context, a "place-specific" discourse constitutes the key element in the process of "orchestrating" an aural aura. Before entering into the process of creating an orchestrated aural aura, it is suggested that we should first focus on attending to the "protogenic aural aura". The realisation of the work *in situ* is also considered to be of vital importance, enabling the place itself to be in a position to act as the protagonist. As argued extensively throughout the thesis, the presentation of the work also needs to be site-specific (both with regards the realisation and the creation processes) in order to be able to trigger the mental processes discussed above. Furthermore, the theoretical framework supporting this thesis with regards to aural auras indicates that the idea of transferring materials from a specific place into a gallery-exhibition setting could be problematic, considering that the main

ingredient, i.e. the place itself, would be absent. In such a case therefore, it would probably prove to be challenging, if not impossible, for the audience to grasp the intended outcome. Likewise a poetic image can be formed if a work is presented in a different context although in such a case we may say that the experience will be comparable to that of watching a film where the protagonist is absent. Therefore this experience will be of a different nature, bearing the risk of having no connection with the place under investigation or the conceptual pursuit of the artist. Yet, it would be a very interesting artistic endeavour to investigate ways and strategies through which this kind of experience can be transferrable and implemented away from the source of conceptual inspiration. In the technologically advanced era we live in this could be a very fascinating and challenging venture that can bring about immersive environments that would be able to address the concepts examined here. This is surely something that I can explore in my future artistic quest.

In a postmodern era, the communication of art is certainly one of the main concerns of artists and it is indeed of crucial importance, since creating art for oneself does not seem to be anyone's ambition. It is ultimately the artists' responsibility to discover ways in which to successfully communicate their works before an audience in a meaningful way. In order to reach this kind of communication artists should primarily consider the context and discover creative ways of engaging with it in the work.

The above consideration was one of the aims of my research. Applying my work to a Cypriot audience which is to a great extent unfamiliar with the specific genre was a great challenge. Hence, this thesis gave me the opportunity to investigate how my ideas could be meaningfully applied in the country in which I live and work. Following a place-specific course was in my case the answer to the above challenges. As a result works were created that address specific socio-political realities and themes were commented upon that are relevant to this particular society.

All four works included in the portfolio of this thesis follow the course described above, in an attempt to expose through sound, the aural aura of the places under-investigation. Before the works were realised, in-depth research was conducted concerning the history of each place and a considerable amount of time was spent on-site in order to experience the place's protogenic aural aura.

The two works presented in Chapter 3 (*Rainzonances4* and *Rainzonances5*) function in a rather different mode to the rest; they reach out to the random passers-by who have no expectations and possibly no awareness that what they have encountered is art. The two works are also self-produced and collaborative and furthermore they are not associated with any institutional or exhibition related contexts. They constitute spontaneous artistic practices that target the public and society in a direct manner. I consider the two projects presented in Chapter 3 to be more substantial than those of Chapter 4 not only in terms of their communication level, but also in the way in which they manage to capture the artists' involvement, possibly in all stages of the creative process. Their collaborative orientation as well as their openness in terms of their public exposure manages to lift the artist from the state of solitude state of creating an artwork directed towards a specific audience; safety and isolation are substituted by ambiguity, improvisation and interaction. In this case many unanticipated situations occur which are actually embraced, as they constitute valuable parameters guiding the formation of the work.

The fact that the projects presented in Chapter 3 were collaborative and interdisciplinary was a great challenge, as I had to find ways to achieve an overall coherence among the constituent works. Having this responsibility meant initially that I had to ensure that the concept was correctly communicated to my collaborators. I then guided them through the development of an idea for potential works that would support the whole project and that would be able to stand beside the other works. The curatorial role in a collaborative context is something that I find appealing as it offers the opportunity to coordinate more complex projects that can have a much greater impact than any separate piece can. Moreover, offering a platform for artists from different disciplines to collaborate creates a communal dynamism that gives birth to very fascinating dialogues. This illuminates many facets of the project, offering opportunities for widening the subject and for supporting it from a broader perspective, thus strengthening the general concept.

The outcomes as well as the feedback received for the four works in the portfolio shows that the specific remarks discussed in the above paragraph offers a rather alternative perspective of artistic style and communication. This path can of course prove to be a subjective matter and it mostly involves my personal experience within my aesthetic direction. The particular aesthetic direction has evolved through my engagement in the research questions that I have set and the processes undertaken in realising the projects. This valuable procedure gave me the chance to practise different techniques providing me with the skills that drive forward this specific

expression form. This context is one that I find extremely challenging and attractive and one which I certainly wish to explore more deeply in the future.

All five *Rainzonances* projects that have been realised so far have followed a similar course and they have reached their goals successfully. However, the evolution from the first *Rainzonances* to the last is quite apparent in many levels, such as their complexity and extensiveness, as well as the solidity of the conceptual part. This doctoral study has certainly played a major role for the above and has opened the field for the development of novel projects. One such project is *Rainzonances6* a project that I am involved at the time of writing this thesis. It investigates the aural aura of the Cyprus Government Railway, which operated on the island between 1905 and 1951. The knowledge gathered from this research, as well as the previous *Rainzonances* projects, is the vehicle that drives this current project on a practical, conceptual, as well as on an aesthetic level. In other words, it follows the artistic language described above, which was a product of my 5-year PhD research.

Although as mentioned above, the language "discovered" here is personal and subjective, nevertheless, I believe that this mode of action could act as a powerful tool in the hands of an artist dealing with place, a medium through which art could become more relevant, meaningful and constructive, especially in contemporary societies which are currently facing an abundance of complicated and unsettling realities.

One of the most important outcomes of this research was the discovery and development of the mode of action discussed above, as well as its implementation in a way that allows for the nuances surrounding the concept of place to be articulated. In other words, place-specific sound art following a guerrilla-art style and a collaborative course, can indeed act as the medium through which the concepts that have been developed in this thesis can be communicated to an audience in a meaningful way. This specific articulation draws from ideas expressed in the 1960s and 1970s such as happenings and Fluxus performances. The main features, which are traced mainly in *Rainzonances1* and *Rainzonances2*, are the widening of the form in terms of: a) the artistic "object", b) the move away from an institutional setting towards a looser environment where the audience could be anyone, and c) the collaborative spirit. These proved to be very valuable ingredients in the formation of my aesthetic view, for the strengthening of the conceptual substance of my research, and for my practical approach towards the realisation of the works.

As noted in the Introduction of the thesis, I do not consider this research to be a finale; rather I see it as the beginning of another journey, one which draws from this research in order to move on to other areas. Armed with the theoretical knowledge as well as the practical experience that I acquired during the course of this doctoral research, I feel more confident to develop its ideas further, delving into new schemes, new projects and most importantly, new journeys.

# Appendix I

## Documentation of Works Submitted for Portfolio

### PROJECT 1 - *Rainzonances4* (2010 - ongoing)

1. **Artist:** Antonis Antoniou, Carolina Spyrou, Ariana Alphas, Polyxenie Savva, Nicolas Stravopodis  
**Title & Date:** *AerodromeLefkosia* - 2012  
**Format:** Collaborative - Sound installation, Light installation and Performance
  
2. **Artist:** Antonis Antoniou  
**Title & Date:** *AeroWire* - 2010  
**Format:** Video with stereo audio
  
3. **Artist:** Antonis Antoniou  
**Title & Date:** *AeroWalk* - 2010-2012  
**Format:** Walking Art - Video documentation with stereo field recordings
  
4. **Artist:** Antonis Antoniou  
**Title & Date:** *I Can Hear Something But This is Not How it Sounds Like* - 2010-2012  
**Format:** Video with photographic material and audio with field recordings
  
5. **Artist:** Antonis Antoniou  
**Title & Date:** *NoEntry* - 2011  
**Format:** Video and audio with field recording

**PROJECT 2 - Rainzonances5 (2014 - ongoing)**

- 1.**     **Artist:** Antonis Antoniou  
**Title & Date:** *Ambient Frequencies* - 2014  
**Format:** Sound installation
- 2.**     **Artist:** Antonis Antoniou and Stelios Kallinikou  
**Title & Date:** *Sonic Posters* - 2014  
**Format:** Photographs with stereo audio
- 3.**     **Artist:** Antonis Antoniou and Demetris Soteriou  
**Title & Date:** *Giant Ear* - 2014  
**Format:** Installation / Wheat-paste poster
- 4.**     **Artist:** Ariana Alphas and Melissa Caro  
**Title & Date:** *Prosehos* - 2014  
**Format:** Performance
- 5.**     **Artist:** Harris Kafkarides  
**Title & Date:** *Act Zero* - 2014  
**Format:** Performance / Installation
- 6.**     **Artist:** Melita Couta  
**Title & Date:** *I Think I Though I Saw You Try* - 2014  
**Format:** Installation

**PROJECT 3 - *H4C* (2011)**

- 1. Artist:** Antonis Antoniou  
**Title & Date:** *H4C* - 2014  
**Format:** Sound and visual installation

**PROJECT 4 - *Echoing Hamam* (2012-2013)**

- 1. Artist:** Antonis Antoniou  
**Title & Date:** *Echoing Hamam* - 2014  
**Format:** Sound installation

# Appendix II

## Press response to *Rainzonances5*

1. "Art Scene - Cyprus Weekly" newspaper, 31 May 2014  
(Low resolution - read full article below)

28 | art scene lifestyle | SATURDAY  
MAY 31  
2014

# Tingling the aural aura of extraordinary spaces

*"Ambience, that's what I'm interested in, the ambience that spaces acquire"*

By Melissa Hekkers

The remnants of an art installation on Demosthenis Severis Avenue in Nicosia depict the notions of the fifth edition of a project initiated in 2008 by sound artist Antonis Antoniou that uses sound to bring to light unvoiced connotations of purposely chosen places.

Working under the title *Rainzonances*, Antoniou founded the concept at hand in 2008 since when he has materialised five separate projects inspired by David Tudor's milestone piece *Rainforest IV*.

"The idea behind all of the *Rainzonances* projects revolves around spaces which have a special aural aura," explains Antoniou. By his own definition, an acoustic aura doesn't derive from the space itself, but from a dialogue between the person and the space in question.

Having worked in spaces such as the abandoned airport of Tymboia or the old Statelico Theatre before it was demolished, it is through collaborative initiatives with varying artistic ventures that Antoniou has managed to bring visual elements to sound. In a nutshell *Rainzonances* functions as a platform for interdisciplinary artists to interact and co-create works following a 'site-specific' agenda.

"Each chosen place has its own aural aura and responds to our actions in a specific manner; it has the inherent ability to affect our feelings and moods; it is a 'sponge' of past voices, gestures and utterances," and it is precisely these realities which all the *Rainzonances* juggle with.

"This impression you have when you pass by a place where you know something was going to or is going to happen is not visual, it's more acoustic," stresses Antoniou. "It's as though you hear something, yet you don't. It's not a soundscape, it's an internal feeling which I think is closer to sound", he adds.

Throughout March and April, *Rainzonances5* explored the 'aural aura' of the Cyprus Cultural Centre, an establishment that was scheduled to be constructed in the centre of Nicosia but was suspended in March 2013 due to the financial crisis.

"The tone of suspension is vividly manifested in the surrounding area in which this whole 'new era' of Cypriot cultural life would have blossomed. The vision of a bright cultural future, which was supposedly one of the potential outcomes of this conception, could be sensed hovering above the eucalyptus trees, the arbitrary parking lot and the information room with the imposing facade displaying the architectural model of the building," described a press release on the project.

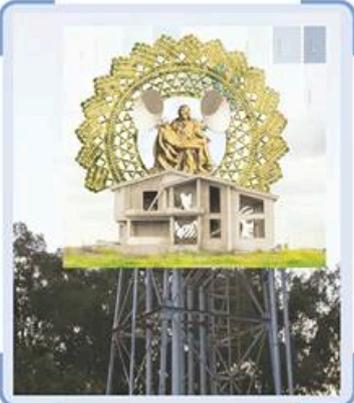
"The aural aura of the space is characterised by this adjournment and uncertainty, a space scheduled to take a tangible form but that will possibly never get there; a phantom, a vision, a possibility," it concludes.

The selected space to manifest the last *Rainzonances* project was appropriate with five distinct projects targeting passers-by and eventually documented and presented on the *Rainzonances* blog. But it was also the first *Rainzonances* project to work with a space with no written history attached to it, and thus worked on a vision which in turn created a fantasy on location.

Acknowledging that site specific works have to be experienced for oneself, *Rainzonances5* can however be experienced through its well documented identity on the net. A site-specific video performance by Ariana Alphas and Melissa Garcia Carro for example, was never presented in front of an audience. Antoniou's own site specific work *'Ambient Frequencies'* used two FM transmitters to "back" the car radios of passers-by in order to provoke their imagination to form an aural aura with regards to the site they are driving past - the site where the Cyprus Cultural Centre was going to be constructed on.

"The two transmitters propagate signals on the same frequency, a very popular radio station's frequency. On entering the zone in which the transmitters' signal overtake the radio station's frequency, the listener's favourite programme is gradually faded out and in its place drivers heard the composition broadcast from the first transmitter."

These selected highlights accentuate the need of experience in order to appreciate the work at hand, and can be internalised through <http://rainzonances5.blogspot.com> Should you come across the remnants on the left side of Demosthenis Severis Avenue, your acoustic aura may call you to follow through the experience.



## **Tingling the aural aura of extraordinary spaces**

By Melissa Hekkers

The remnants of an art installation on Demosthenis Severis Avenue in Nicosia depict the notions of the fifth edition of a project initiated in 2008 by sound artist Antonis Antoniou that uses sound to bring to light unvoiced connotations of purposely chosen places.

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"This impression you have when you pass by a place where you know something was going to or is going to happen is not visual, it's more acoustic," stresses Antoniou. "It's as though you hear something, yet you don't. It's not a soundscape in a physical sense, it's an internal feeling, an impression of an ambience, an unuttered inner

monologue, which I think is closer to the sense of hearing than anything else", he adds.

Throughout March, April and May, *Rainzonances5* explored the "aural aura" of the Cyprus Cultural Centre, an establishment that was scheduled to be constructed in the centre of Nicosia but was suspended due to the financial crisis.

"The tone of suspension is vividly manifested in the surrounding area in which this whole "new era" of Cypriot cultural life would have blossomed. The vision of a bright cultural future, which was supposedly one of the potential outcomes of this conception, could be sensed hovering above the eucalyptus trees, the arbitrary parking lot and the information room with the imposing façade displaying the architectural model of the building," described a press release on the project.

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These selected highlights accentuate the need of experience in order to appreciate the work at hand, and can be internalised through <http://rainzonances5.blogspot.com> Should you come across the remnants on the left side of Demosthenis Severis Avenue, your acoustic aura may call you to follow the experience through.

2. Phileleftheros newspaper (in Greek), 13 April 2014 (Interview to Christina Skordi)



Κυριακή 13 Απριλίου 2014



Ο ΦΙΛΕΛΕΥΘΕΡΟΣ

# ΑΝΤΩΝΗΣ ΑΝΤΩΝΙΟΥ

Μέσα από την ακουστική αέρα, ο γνωστός μουσικός και sound artist κτίζει ένα project πέντε πράξεων με σημείο αναφοράς το κτήριο του Μεγάρου Πολιτισμού που δεν έγινε ποτέ

**Τ**ο ότι ένας ήχος μπορεί να ευσυνείδητος, είναι αίγιομο. Η ιδέα της ακουστικής, το σκεπτικό στο οποίο βασίστηκε ο sound artist και μουσικός μέλος των γνωστών Monsieur Daumani και Trio Tekke, Αντώνης Αντωνίου στο εν συνεχεία project του Rainzances το τελευταίο έξι χρόνια, εμπίπτει σ' αυτό ακριβώς τον κόσμο του φωνητικού. Αυτή τη φορά με μια ακόμα ιδιαιτερότητα. Πως εμμένεται από ένα χώρο που δεν εμπεριέχει οπτική μνημύ ούτε παρελθόν. Αλλά έναν όλο οργανισμό, το Μέγαρο Πολιτισμού στη Λεωφόρο Δημοσθένη Σεβέρη στη Λευκωσία, ένα έργο που αναβλήθηκε ή και ακυρώθηκε λόγω της κρίσης. Το project βρισκόταν ήδη σε εξέλιξη στον χώρο, μέσα από νέες αυτόνομα έργα, τα οποία έχουν ως κοινό σημείο αναφοράς την ακουστική αέρα. Το κοινό ίσως το συνειδητοποιήσει τυχαία, αφού ο Αντώνης Αντωνίου αφηγείται τον παράγοντα της τύξης και του σφιδρασιού που εκπιέζει τους περαστικούς, αλλά και τους οδηγούς που θα έχουν την τύχη να το θιάσουν.

Όλα τα έργα καταγράφονται και παραμοιάζονται στο μπλογκ <http://rainzances.blogspot.com/> το οποίο έχει δημιουργηθεί ειδικά για τους σκοπούς του έργου.

► Το Rainzances 5 γίνεται χωρίς κοινό, αλλά και χωρίς ειδοποίηση για τη μέρα και την ώρα... Είναι μια από τις ιδιαιτερότητές του. Ο λόγος που έχω επιλέξει να μην ορίσω μέρες και ώρες είναι γιατί θέλω το project να λειτουργήσει ως ένα σπράγματο γεγονός. Το τυχαίο εαυτό που δεν προϋποθέτει καμιά προαόδοια, η οποία παλιές



4. Politis newspaper (in Greek), 5 May 2014

(Article by Meropi Moyses)

Visit the online version: <http://www.parathyro.com/?p=29020>

5. Cyprus Dossier, 21 May 2014

(Article by Peter Eramian)

Visit the online version: <http://cyprusdossier.com/rainzonances-5/>

## APPENDIX III

### H4C performance text

"I am sitting in a room different from the one Alvin Lucier was in back in 1969 when he was recording his speaking voice and playing it back into that room again and again until the resonant frequencies of that room reinforced themselves so that any semblance of his speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, was destroyed. Like Lucier did back in 1969, I am also recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of rhythm, is destroyed.

In this version, more ingredients are added to the fabric.

First, there are four different recorders, capturing and playing back voices from different timelines of this event blending past articulations with present ones. The recording and playback is continuous and so the material captured and played back includes every random sound occurring within the microphone's acoustic horizon. This means that you are part of this composition as much as I am and you could, if you wish, take a more active role at any given moment like for example now...

Secondly, your movement in the space affects not only the visuals projected on the wall but also the sonic outcome, in a kind of subtle way.

Thirdly, the equation of the sonic world produced in this room also includes other participants other than you and me, such as the resonant frequencies of these found objects feeding back, what I call, the acoustic energy pervaded within their texture, and revealing unknown facets of the object's past and of this building's history accordingly. A technique inspired by composer David Tudor in his seminal work *Rainforest*: A transducer and a contact microphone attached on each object cause this feedback, exposing its character, revealing its aural aura, making audible its haunting echoes, uncovering this amalgam of compressed chronicles and creating spatial sound

sculptures. The recorded sound of my voice as well as your sonic activity are channeled through these objects and the filtered sounds are once again captured by the recording system creating, what composer Gordon Mumma has called, when describing Tudor's *Rainforest*, "an ecologically balanced sound system".

Each resonating body in this room is part of this complex ecosystem, which fluctuates between past and present, and echoes our voice out to the future and back again sealed in the box of history.

Listen carefully because within these textures of sound you may be able to hear the voices of the Magoian family, or the printing machines of the t-shirt shop, or bursts of machine-gun fire.... and so on.

So remember: make a sound because you are echoing too".

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