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## Inconsistent Transduction

Not-knowing Through Sounding Art in Artistic Research

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*When you make or study art you are not exploring some kind of candy on the surface of a machine. You are making or studying causality. The aesthetic dimension is the causal dimension.* (Morton 2013, 20)

The growing integration of sounding art<sup>1</sup> as research practice in academia is a part of the “practice turn” (Borgdorff 2010, 51) in humanities and social sciences, where artistic practices and artefacts themselves become a form of academic inquiry.<sup>2</sup> As the process of creating art represents a valid research method for gaining new knowledge, sounding art pieces thus become more than mere objects for analysis: because the research unfolds in and through the acts of creating and performing art, practice is not only a methodological vehicle but also a site of knowledge production (Borgdorff 2010, 46). Over the last two decades concepts such as knowledge production and the division of theory and practice have been constantly discussed in the emerging field of artistic research in a process of becoming integrated into the knowledge economy of the academy (Borgdorff and Schwab 2014, 9; Borgdorff 2010, 44; Holert 2009, 1). Scholars in this new strand of literature argue that, to manifest the conditions hidden in knowledge and the unconscious transferences that accompany the need to be scientific, one must be critical of traditional understandings of knowledge production (Busch 2009, 4). Therefore, it is crucial to explore understandings of knowledge production that are directed at “not-knowing” or “not-yet-knowing” within artistic research (Borgdorff 2010, 61), thereby inviting and leading to “unfinished thinking” (Borgdorff 2010, 4) or “wild knowledge” (Busch 2009, 6) encompassing the unexpected, the spontaneous and involuntary.

However, we argue that the implicit human-centred perspective present in these alternative understandings of knowledge production in artistic research prevents us from fully engaging with the objects in question on their own premises. Therefore, tuning into the “not-knowing” requires expanding the perspective to encompass non-human forms of knowledge incorporated through an object-oriented ontological line of thinking. By switching the focus from the human perspective to that of the objects themselves we suggest that knowledge production through practice and theory is substituted with causality exploration (tuning) through “carpentry”, this being the practice of asking and exploring philosophical questions through artistic practice and performance. Through this lens art and other objects that we judge as belonging to the aesthetic dimension, offer a glimpse into

the ways in which causality operates. This world of objects makes clear that any exhaustive knowledge about the world and the things or human beings that occupy it is an illusion that simply offers a focus on how the materiality behaves, interacts, develops, manifests and translates through other objects (both human and non-human). This perspective points towards the challenge faced by existing understandings of knowledge production in artistic research to recognize the importance of the inconsistency and fragility of translations within and between objects. As a consequence, the aesthetic dimension and the knowledge derived from artistic research struggle to position themselves as more than candy on the surface of the scientific field unless considered within alternative knowledge paradigms that acknowledge the conceptualization invested in exploring these inconsistent tuning relationships.

Kevin Logan argues that sound has the potential to be a form of thinking and as a practice a kind of “doing-thinking” (Logan 2016, 121). Following this line of thinking we could ask what we hear when we listen to the wind in the trees? Do we hear the wind or the trees? And furthermore what do we hear when we listen to a recording of our voice on tape? Do we hear the voice or the tape? Questions that have engaged sounding artists over the last fifty to seventy years.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, these very basic questions exemplify why sound is such a productive way of exploring the nonhuman perspectives of artistic research and knowledge production, because in both cases we are hearing two or more objects as they relate to one another, a modulation of wind through the leaves, a modulation of voice through tape. Thus, sound needs a medium in order to be propagated: it could be air, water, wood, stone or electrical circuits. Through this mediation, sound becomes vibration in matter, whether it is mechanical, acoustic or electrical—and this matter naturally has a great impact on the sound itself, potentially altering its basic vibrational structure to extreme degrees. Much research has been done to optimize and refine this process through the development of recording and reproduction technologies, always with the final evaluation of the human ear as the endpoint: From when the sound/vibrations leave the speakers and meet the ear, and the acoustic experience emerges for our sensory apparatus. The tape machine does not, however, care about acoustics, and it is not interested in the coupling of electrical signals to vibrating sound waves in air. It cares about the magnetic coating on the polyester tape, the speed of the capstan drive, Dolby and DBX filter curves, and Resistor-Capacitor time constants. A line of thinking that can be used to broaden the

palette of artistic research, into the realm of the sounding art. We, as practitioners working with sounding art, are constantly faced with the traces and sounds of these material translations between the different media. This experience uncovers the paradox that the sounding materiality possesses both thingness, and at the same time constitutes an ambient and inconsistent “here and now”. The constant tuning processes when working with sound offer a powerful and concrete manifestation of how we will never be able to unravel the essence of sound, but instead we argue that practice-based research should not be concerned with reducing phenomenon and objects to consistent knowledge formations, but should turn to the inconsistency within and between the objects in question.

In conclusion the paper presents “transduction” as a philosophical lab equipment, a research method, similar to “carpentry” as outlined by Ian Bogost (2012). Carpentry is thus transferred to the sounding arts, through the conceptualization of transduction, evolving into a special branch of carpentry that offers both a physical and philosophical framework that can incorporate the translational, relative and fragile workings of sound. As such the thinking-doing mode of transduction that we present becomes important to understand both the artistic (both human and nonhuman) processes within sounding art, but moreover also as an initial contribution to the overall field of artistic research, because the framing that we propose in this paper exemplifies and develops concrete implementations of how artistic research offers alternative forms of knowledge production.

### **Artistic Research and Knowledge Production**

Practice-based research through sounding art belongs to the emerging field of artistic research, that in a Danish context has not until recently been a part of academia. However, over the last two decades the relationship between art and research has been discussed and unfolded in the field of artistic research abroad (Borgdorff and Schwab 2014, 9; Borgdorff 2010, 44). Art is thus said to contribute to academic knowledge and conversely academia offers knowledge that interferes with art practices creating new areas of knowledge production. As stated by key figures in the field, artistic research needs to critically respond and reflect on the existing knowledge imperative so it does not *just* make art in order to produce knowledge or blindly apply theory as canonistic knowledge for research driven art practice (Busch 2009, 1). Therefore, it is suggested that the division of art (practice) and writing (theory) is abandoned (Borgdorff and Schwab

2014, 12) if artistic research is to be more than an application of theory and theory more than mere reflections of practice (Busch 2009, 1). In this understanding art and theory are “nothing more than two different forms of practice interrelated through a system of interaction and transferences” (Busch 2009, 1). As such the work *is* the research, as a site of knowledge production where science and art are intertwined (Borgdorff 2010, 46). Overall these positions point to the need for critical reflexivity towards knowledge production within artistic research (Busch 2009, 4).

“Art as research” or better the “hybridization of art and research” (Busch 2009, 5) differs from *just* art, as art as research intends to carry out an original study about new things to enhance and contribute to what we know and understand. (Borgdorff 2010, 54). Thus artistic forms of knowledge do not restrict themselves to contributing knowledge to art practice, but rather begin to develop into hybrid formations of knowledge, or intervene and impact theoretical discourses, contributing to theory construction (Busch 2009, 5). But what are hybrid formations of knowledge and what kind of knowledge needs to be recognized in academia (Holert 2009, 1) when “thinking in, through and with art” (Borgdorff 2010, 42)?

Henk Borgdorff describes how this type of knowledge differs from other types of knowledge as for example “propositional knowledge” (facts) or “knowledge on skills” (how to make) as it is dealing with the articulation of the pre-reflective, non-conceptual content of art, as explored in phenomenology (Borgdorff 2010, 59). Therefore, it is better considered not as knowledge production but rather as “not-knowing” or “not-yet-knowing”, or the idea that all things could be different (Borgdorff 2010, 61) thereby inviting and leading to “unfinished thinking” (Borgdorff 2010, 4). To Kathrin Busch this type of thinking is coined “wild knowledge” (Busch 2009, 6). This concept encompasses the unexpected, spontaneous and involuntary. Artistic research is thus characterized by the fact that the actual object of research is still undetermined, and therefore “the knowledge of certain facts not being yet reduced into concepts” (Busch 2009, 6). Busch quotes Michel Foucault when explaining how art is valid as a different form of knowledge not “showing the invisible, but rather showing the extent to which the invisibility of the visible is invisible” (Foucault quoted in Busch 2009, 4). In this way artistic research could enable us to refer to that which cannot be articulated within the respective fields of knowledge.

In the next section we wish to expand on these ideas of how artistic research can help us tune into the hidden, by ex-

panding the perspective on encompassing non-human forms of knowledge incorporated through an object-oriented ontological line of thinking.

### **Object-Oriented Ontology and Causal Aesthetics**

The larger context of object-oriented ontology (OOO) originates from the speculative realism<sup>4</sup> of Graham Harman, Ray Brassier, Quentin Meillassoux and Iain Hamilton Grant. A speculative realist wants to break with correlationism—a term used to describe how *being* exists only as a correlate between mind and world, placing humans at the centre (Harman 2010a). As an example, Martin Heidegger claimed that objects can exist outside human consciousness, but their *being* exists only through human understanding (Bogost 2012, 4). Therefore, based on phenomenological thinking, speculative realism breaks with the fundamental focus on human perception and suggests that “one must abandon the belief that human access sits at the centre of being, organising and regulating it like an ontological watchmaker” (Bogost 2012, 5). In the development of a non-human phenomenology, all things exist equally, which introduces notions of a flat or tiny ontology, which collapses the traditional distinctions between subject and object.

The philosophical perspectives within OOO can be situated within a larger frame of non-representational theory. According to Hayden Lorimer, non-representational theory is “an umbrella term for diverse work that seeks to better cope with our self-evidently more-than-human, more-than-textual, multi-sensual worlds” (Lorimer quoted in Vannini 2015, 2–3) emerging from the post-Cartesian turn and distinct from cognition, symbolic meaning and textuality in postmodern theory. This emerging field has its roots in the field of human geography and the work of Nigel Thrift in particular, but is connected also to arts, cultural studies, the humanities and social sciences and attempts to synthesize diverse, but inter-related theoretical perspectives such as actor-network theory (ANT),<sup>5</sup> post-phenomenology and pragmatism from multiple fields, including material culture studies, science and technology studies, contemporary continental philosophy and anthropology of the senses. It must build on a principle of relationality, in that it seeks to give the same conceptual and empirical weight to object-human relations as human-human relations, and thus considers a concept such as “material” as wrong, as it implies that objects are consistent entities and not fragile materials entangled with other materials in use, as argued by Tim Ingold (Vannini 2015, 5). Thus, non-representational research privileges the study of relations and af-

fective resonances, as life is believed to arise from the entanglement of actors. It stresses the importance of relations felt in bodies, such as affects and moods, building a new ethics on craftsmanship of everyday life. It puts the unnoticed and contextual that often fall out of common awareness into the centre of attention as backgrounds against which particular things show up and take on significance. These backgrounds, or zones of stabilization, thus become important zones of inquiry open to intervention, manipulation and innovation as well as colonization, domination and control (Anderson and Harris in Vannini 2015, 9).

According to Timothy Morton, objects are ontologically riven between their withdrawn essence and their appearance for other objects (Morton 2013, 56). Withdrawal is understood as an unbreakable encryption irreducible to perception or meaning, which makes it impossible for any knowledge to replace the object in question (Morton 2013, 17–59). All objects are simultaneously fragile and autonomous, as they possess a potentially infinite progress in which they can be unfolded. As objects withdraw, no object or parts of an object can have direct access to any other object (Bryant 2011, 18, 26). This is because objects are deeper than their appearance to the human mind, but also deeper than their relations to other objects. If it is impossible to gain any knowledge about the real objects how do we proceed? If knowledge about reality is inaccessible in our knowledge society, how can we then justify what we as academics are doing? We start by examining the object that we engage with, and thus the “Rift”<sup>6</sup> becomes central to the development of an expanded form of causality, which becomes integrated within a new view on aesthetics, claiming that causality *is* the aesthetic dimension produced by the interaction between objects (Morton 2013, 64). Within the realm of sound, the Rift can be understood as the medium or mediation between the essence of the sound and its appearance, which is meaningful in relation to how the speed of sound changes depending on what material it is mediated by. This makes it impossible to grasp the essence of a sound without its mediation, suggesting that it is impossible for the sound object to be without its mediation, as it would then be reduced to appearance only. If this mediation is happening in air, making sound acoustically audible to humans, or in the flux lines’ strength within the tape recorder is secondary in this context, the important issue is the awareness regarding this Rift within the sound object (Morton 2013, 122). The aesthetic experience is then not solely something that occurs within our human mind, but is instead expanded

to incorporate all causal events taking place in and between objects (Morton 2013, 120–21).

Causality and the aesthetic dimension does not take place in a space- and time-container that has already been established beforehand; instead it pours or radiates from the tensions of the Rifts between essence and appearance, establishing the notion of inter-objectivity (Harman 2010b, 150; Morton 2013, 35–66). There is no space or time (or environment as background) in which objects float; instead, they are emergent properties of objects themselves. This understanding resonates with post-Einsteinian physics, in which space-time is the product of objects (Morton 2011, 151); therefore, objects *space* and *time* each other (verbs), rather than unfold *in* time and reside *in* space.

Through this line of thinking, art becomes collaboration between humans and non-humans, and thus an important way to explore the Rifts and attunements between objects (Morton 2012, 138). The aesthetic is not some kind of icing on the cake, but an elementary exploration of causality as the aesthetic dimension (Morton 2013, 79). In Morton's notion of the "Ambient" the environment comes forward from the background when art explores the fragile materiality of objects in this aesthetic dimension (Morton 2010, 107). Through ambient effects, art makes it appear as if, for a fleeting second, there *is* something in between (Morton 2007, 50), an understanding that challenges the concepts of ambient and atmosphere as something blurry in between, something that just sits there ready for humans to perceive—reducing objects to pure appearances (Morton 2013, 71). Morton denotes the Ambient as a *here and now* being evoked and sustained for a while, with cracks and strangeness pour out and permeate traditional distinctions between background/foreground, figure/ground, inside/outside.

### **From Insight and Comprehension Towards Tuning and Carpentry**

The developed perspective on causal aesthetics implies that it is impossible to observe the aesthetic effect from an outside position, a conceptualization that calls for a fruitful way of engaging with art practice. An engagement that tunes into the various objects involved which leads to investigation of them through a specific practical engagement. This type of investigation could be unfolded through Borgdorff's conceptualization of how "knowledge" and "understanding" in artistic research need to be expanded in order to incorporate the "wild knowledge" of practice-based research. He proposes the terms "insight" and "comprehension" as replacements

(Borgdorff 2010, 50), but these notions imply a correlationist understanding of the world, as it is insight and comprehension from a human perspective. The promise of artistic research is to unravel both our intimate and distant relations to the world, proposing how the unpredictable, non-representational, sensual and concealed can supplement traditional scientific types of propositional knowledge. Yet, as long as the artistic engagement is still reflected in a correlationist framework this paper claims that a hybridization of art and research is difficult to achieve. Consequently, we propose a non-correlationist understanding of causal aesthetics, which makes it possible to approach the invisibility of the visible through non-human objects. If we accept the premise that the aesthetic is the causal, then the practice of art becomes not just the candy on the surface of the world, but engaged with a perspective that does not exhaust or condense the objects involved, which makes it possible for artistic research to fulfil Borgdorff's claim that artistic research "enhances our awareness of the pre-reflective nearness of things as well as our epistemological distance from them" (Borgdorff 2010, 45). Therefore we propose an engagement conceptualized through both Morton's notion of "tuning" and Ian Bogost construction of "carpentry".

The notion of "carpentry", as conceptualized by Ian Bogost, is described as the philosophical practice of making things. As a philosophical lab equipment (Bogost 2012, 100) carpentry becomes a perspective on creative work that poses philosophical questions, as when matter is being used especially for philosophical use, executing what could be denoted as applied ontology. This happens because writing is dangerous for philosophy because writing is only one form of being, a comment on the assumption that we relate to the world only through language (Bogost 2012, 90). At the core of carpentry lies the understanding that philosophy is practice just as much as it is theory, the practice of constructing artefacts as a philosophical practice (Bogost 2012, 92). The practice that Bogost here mentions as being central for his applied ontology is a specific type of practice—a practice closely related to Timothy Morton's notion of tuning. "Attunement" (Morton 2013, 22) is described as the possibility to explore causality by creating or studying objects. According to Morton, tuning must be considered as more than just a way to standardize musical intervals; tuning is a methodology for approaching the very essence of causality and acting out phenomenology. Tuning in an object-oriented perspective becomes a way of demonstrating how all objects, (human and non-human) can affect each other in different situations. This understand-

ing references the basic acoustical understanding of tuning as the interference occurring when two frequencies collide. Through this perspective tuning becomes not an aim for a higher ideal, but rather a methodological approach for understanding the causal relationship between objects.

Carpentry and tuning can thus be used to tell us something about art practice’s epistemic character, because it foregrounds that “Knowing is not about seeing from above or outside . . . Knowing is a matter of intra-acting . . . Knowing is not a bounded or closed practice but an ongoing performance of the world” (Barad 2007, 149). Thus the role of the practice outlined here then becomes a way of attuning to the inconsistency of the Ambient as a tuning relationship that challenges the traditional subject-object division, giving rise to a sense of coexistence and connection to other objects. An attuning that is slightly out of phase—recognizing its inconsistency and fragility and thereby also its own uncanny strangeness (Morton 2013, 177).

In line with OOO’s rejection of correlationism, Tim Ingold argues how contemporary discussions of art and technology continue to work on the assumption that the artistic process entails the imposition of form upon the material world, by a human agent with a design in mind. He coins this a “hylomorphic model” of creation, referring to Aristotle’s division of matter as passive and inert compared to form imposed on matter by an agent. Instead he argues for a model based on the “textility of making”, where the agent follows the materials so that the forms of things arise within fields of force and flows of the materials in play in an “ongoing generative movement that is at once itinerant, improvisatory and rhythmic,” comparable to carpentry and drawing (Ingold, 2010, 91). This alternative model highlights the process of making as improvisation or a thinking through making—intrinsically dynamic and temporal. A conceptualization that resembles composer and pianist David Tudor’s iconic statement: “I try to find out what’s there—not to make it do what I

want, but to release what’s there. The object should teach you what it wants to hear” (Collins 2004, 1). This understanding foregrounds the dialectic relationship between the artist and materials, in that the electronic circuit becomes the score.

However, Ingold distances himself from both ANT’s and OOO’s attempt to move beyond the polarization of subjects and objects to rebalance the hylomorphic model through assigning agency to the objects. He argues that these accounts are still trapped in the same model, where life and action is now intended not only by humans, but also by objects on something else. In his view this model can only accommodate action in the traditional view of causation where a subject or an object through intention, cause an effect on the world. Instead he suggests that things, both human and non-human, do not possess agency and intention, but that all things are caught up and possessed by the action of the generative currents of the world. From this perspective there are no subjects or objects already present in the world that then interact with each other, but instead there are “things” that respond to one another in either counterpoint or as melody and refrain, constantly becoming in a “hive of activity” or “a place where several goings on become entwined” (Ingold 2010, 94–97)

Adhering to Ingold’s critique, we would however argue that both Morton’s idea of tuning and Bogost’s concept of carpentry are very much in line with Ingold’s “textility of making” when approached from the perspective of artistic practice in sounding art. Neither tuning nor carpentry focus on the agency of objects, but on the aesthetic and causal flux as the hive where things become. However, we argue that Morton’s emphasis on how objects *time* and *space* each other appears more useful because it both incorporates sound’s relational qualities, and at the same time reflects how sound is not just vibrations unfolding in space and time. In this sense it provides us with a conceptual framework that actively acknowledges the dynamic character of sound that we, the au-

<b>Hylomorphic model of creation</b>	
Knowledge	Understanding
Insight	Comprehension
<b>Non-representational model of creation</b>	
Tuning (Morton)	Carpentry (Bogost)
Textility of making (Ingold)	Thinking through making/Improvisation (Ingold)



thors, as artists are constantly engaged in. As sounding artists we work in the realm of the Rift, and our practice is concerned with showcasing how fragility and instability pours out of our endeavours when trying to control sound.

### **The Inconsistent Attunements of the Transducer**

The transducer is a speaker without a membrane—it is an electromechanical device that transforms electrical energy into physical movement. As such it can be placed on any surface, thus transforming this surface into a speaker. In his chapter on “Transduction” in the book *Keywords in Sound*, Stefan Helmreich (2015) refers to Jonathan Sterne’s recognition of transduction as both a set of physical principles and a cultural artefact. Helmreich thus argues that this duality lays the basis for transduction as a fruitful concept to think with in sound studies, as it joins the mutual interest in the material in both science and technology studies (STS) and cultural studies. On one hand transduction is an inevitable part of a physical sound transmission, as it is always translated, converted, modulated, transformed and transduced through different media be it a microphone, an ear or a loudspeaker. On the other hand, transduction can offer a powerful way to think about the infrastructures through which the vibrating world is apprehended. In this way transduction can help when thinking through the temporality of sound in a techno-scientific infrastructural context. As an example Helmreich refers to how his own field work on submarines has shown how the feeling of being underwater heavily relies on a transduction chain of sounds from outside to the inside sound world. This experience points to how transduction as a technical operation summons up experiential realness or a sense of being in an unmediated presence of a sensation or feeling. Based on this work he previously argued for a “transductive anthropology” that listens closely for “telltale distortions and resistances, turbulence that might reveal the conditions beneath any self-evident ‘presence’”<sup>7</sup> (Helmreich 2015, 225). However, he notes that the common use of transduction usually builds on a metaphor of the travelling of sound that does not correspond with the materiality of sound. He flags how waves might travel, but sounds do not—they become present at reception. Referring to Casey O’Callaghan he therefore argues that we have to think not *with* transduction but *across it*.

We therefore argue that doing-thinking across “transduction” can open up the processes of carpentry and tuning in sound, and exemplify how the act of making art also becomes a philosophical practice. In this way the transducer can be seen as an object of carpentry, as a philosophical tool and a

research method that can be used to investigate causality. In our artistic practice the transducer is a very important device, used in a multitude of pieces developed over the last five years.<sup>8</sup> When placing a transducer on different surfaces and materials questions present themselves. Questions regarding where and what we are listening to. When the transducer excites and vibrates for instance a metal structure placed on a wooden floor, what are we listening to? The sound of the floor? The sound of metal? The sound of transducers? What we are hearing is hearing-as, referring to Heidegger’s *As-structure* contextualized through the writings of Graham Harman (Morton 2013, 120). We are hearing wavefronts in the vibrating metal and wood through our human ears. The transducer hears the electrical signals flowing through the copper wires in a transducer-morphising manner, translating it into transducer-*ish*. Through this perspective, it becomes hearing-as and sounding to something else unfolded in a relational framing. A notion that resembles Morton’s description of how matter is always relational: it is matter-for something, not matter in itself as a closed entity (Morton 2013, 82). The transducer is an interesting object for exploring aesthetics as causality—what Harman calls vicarious causation—because we never hear the transducer itself—neither do the human ears, the metallic structure nor the wooden floor ever grasp the essence of the sounding transducer. Through this line of thinking the transducer is not a transparent medium that smoothly communicates semantic meaning to nearby objects—but instead something that translates, alters, devours, converts, demolishes, reworks and consumes reductionist knowledge in the process of creating space and time. Staging the transducers as objects in a performance can in this way show us how spaces are not containers that the objects exist in, rather, a realm of gaps between objects that are introduced when one object puts its footprint into another one by translating it, through interobjective transduction.

### **Transduction as Philosophical Lab Equipment in Sounding Art**

Even though OOO is a research field that has received attention in contemporary philosophy, it has also attracted substantial criticism. In Jonathan Sterne’s earlier writings, he clearly distanced himself from the perspective of OOO, claiming that “sound is a product of the human senses and not a thing in the world apart from humans” (Sterne 2005, 11). However, Sterne later pointed to the possibility of the validity of studying sound from perspectives other than those of humans (Sterne 2012, 7), and elsewhere he states that our

present psychoacoustic construct of hearing in-itself always is a product of the interaction between ears and sound technology (Sterne 2015, 69). OOO has also been critiqued in relation to political issues (or the lack thereof) (Galloway 2012; Thorne 2012). In Galloway (2010) and Cole (2013), a critical discussion of speculative realism can be found that critiques the speculative anthropomorphism of things through the use of phrases such as “objects speak, listen, feel” Cole ultimately claims that OOO outlines a very traditional ontology, which does not acknowledge how medieval philosophy and mysticism already have implemented the non-human perspective. As the above-mentioned critique of OOO indicates, an OOO perspective is often accused of being inhuman. However, advocates of OOO claim that it is necessary to break with the superposition of the human perceiver in order to return to the human position through a new flat and dark perspective that includes other objects and non-humans on the same level. This enables a new sort of humanism that is liberated from the correlational system (Bogost 2012) and can help us break from the autonomous and consistent view of for example art.

When working with sound and sounding pieces of art we are constantly presented and bombarded with the fragile relation between the real withdrawn sound object and its appearance. If it is as artist collaborating with different materials in the construction of sonic art, or in the reception of sounding art pieces, we are constantly reminded of the inconsistency within and between the endless chains of relations sound undergoes. As Brandon Labelle describes it “Sound art as a practice harnesses, describes, analyzes, performs, and interrogates the condition of sound and the processes by which it operates” (LaBelle 2006, ix).

To think across “transduction” gives us a construction that on one side provides us with a theoretical framework in which the network and its relations becomes very central, but on the other side always are negotiable. For example, time and space are constantly changing in relation to the medium through which sound travels. A perspective that can serve an intermediate function in broadening our insight into the sounding objects that constitute our present auditory reality, by recognizing that they are not consistent entities exhaustible through human knowledge.

In the present discussion about knowledge production in artistic research the proposed perspective in this paper forces us to coexist with a vast plenum of non-human objects. By taking this position we abandon the belief that we can distance ourselves from the world; and consequently our engagement with objects becomes not a matter of producing

knowledge about the world, but instead an ongoing process of not-knowing or listening.

## Notes

- 1 For an elaborated discussion of the term “sound art” see Højlund and Riis 2015. In the introduction to the newly published book *The Routledge Companion to Sounding Art* the editors present the term “sounding art” as alternative to sound art. They argue that using sounding art emphasises its movement, fluidity, energy, vibrancy, participation and confusion within a larger complex network and thus gets away from “a rigid and perhaps even old-fashioned materialism” of “sounds-in-themselves” (Cobussen, Meelberg and Truax 2016, 2).
- 2 See e.g. the conference “Sound Art Matters” (2016) at Aarhus University, Denmark, “ISSTA16” (2016) conference on Temporary Autonomous Zones in Derry, Ireland, “International Conference on Artistic Research” 2016 with a track on Writing Sound Art/Music, and the research centre of the University of the Arts London “Creative Research into Sound Arts Practice” (CRiSAP) and the research group at Goldsmiths University of London “Sound Practice Research Group” (SPR).
- 3 Examples of these practices could be found in the following pieces: John Cage, *4’33”* (1952), Alvin Lucier, *I Am Sitting In A Room* (1969), Rubin/Hansen, *Listening Post* (2001), Christina Kubisch, *Electrical Walks* (2004).
- 4 For a discussion of different positions in speculative realism and OOO see chapter 4 in Steven Shaviro’s book *The Universe of Things: On Speculative Realism* (2014).
- 5 A remark should be made regarding OOO and ANT (Latour 2005). From an outside perspective both theoretical stances seem to share many resemblances, e.g. both traditions subscribe to alternative forms of non-written knowledge generation, something that becomes evident in Bruno Latour’s claim that knowledge does not exist, but it is instead craft that holds the key to knowledge (Latour 1993, 218–19). ANT also recognizes the agency of non-humans, and even argues for an “irreductionism” in which all entities are equally real (though not equally strong) insofar as they act on other entities (Bryant et al. 2011, 5). Where the two research traditions differ is in the status of the relations (Vannini 2015) within the network. As Graham Harman notes (Harman 2013) then the whole of the object is not described by its relations, there will always be some kind of surplus, something withdrawn from its relations. This means that even though OOO and ANT analysis of a given phenomenon may at first seem both to



be concerned with unravelling a network of relations, OOO does not stop at these relations, but always reflects these according to the Rift between essence and appearance.

6 Morton capitalizes the Rift and Ambient to emphasize their status as concepts.

7 A perspective that greatly resembles the media archaeological method as developed by Wolfgang Ernst, Jussi Parikka and Erkki Huhtamo (Ernst 2013; Parikka 2010; Huhtamo 2013) which develops a mode of reverse engineering of normative understandings, a transformation of what has already been written, and thereby counter-history. Media archaeology builds upon these principles to assert that the material-technological dimension is not sufficiently developed in terms of accounting for the way that media produces knowledge and experience. These perspectives are significant as they shift attention to the ability of nonhuman entities to generate alternative forms of knowledge that are not easily perceptible to humans.

8 Morten Riis and Marie Højlund, *Inconsistent transduction*. Live recording (2016): <https://soundcloud.com/thelakeradio/sets/lydhor-pa-en-sondag> (accessed 22 November 2016). Morten Riis, *Opaque Sounding* (2014): <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nzybYC5nqJM> (accessed 22 November 2016).

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