

Unauthored Music and Ready-Made Landscapes: Aeolian Sound Sculpture

Introduction

The Aeolian harp and its various relatives – Roman wind chimes, Chinese musical kites and others – are arguably the earliest examples of sound sculpture. The instruments that are “played on” by the natural forces without a composer or a performer present have a long and well-documented history of being employed in areas as diverse as religious ceremonies, warfare or landscape design. However, their role in contemporary sound art remains somewhat underexplored. The articles on Aeolian art usually focus on describing the various ways musical instruments can be powered by the natural forces and listing the artists employing them.¹ However, they limit themselves to technical descriptions, discussing neither the aesthetical and political implications of such practices, the artistic challenges they present, nor the audience’s experience. On the other hand, the works on sound art in natural landscapes² and public spaces³ do not differentiate between various kinds of sound art, overlooking the specifics of Aeolian sculptures.

My aim in this article is to provide, through a discussion of selected works by Max Eastley, Annea Lockwood, Gordon Monahan and Jodi Rose, an in-depth analysis of the mechanics of Aeolian sound sculpture. To this end I will review them from three different angles: as musical pieces, as works of environmental art and as tools of urban architectural design, focusing on the ways such works engage their audiences and the landscapes, either natural or urban, they exist in.

¹ Cf. HUGH DAVIES, *Sound Sculpture*, in *Grove Music Online. Oxford Music Online*, Oxford University Press, <http://www.oxfordmusiconline.com/subscriber/article/grove/music/47630>, accessed November 5, 2015; ROS BANDT, *Taming the Wind: Aeolian Sound Practices in Australasia*, «Organised Sound», VIII, 2 (2003), pp. 195-204.

² Cf. BARBARA BARTHELMES, *Musik in Landschaft und Architektur. Zur Ästhetisierung der Umwelt in Klanginstallationen und musikalischen Environments*, «Positionen», IX (1991), pp. 15-20.

³ Cf. GOLO FÖLLMER, *Klangorganisation im öffentlichen Raum*, in *Klangkunst. Tönende Objekte und klingende Räume*, ed. by Helga de la Motte-Haber, Laaber, Laaber-Verlag, 1999 (Handbuch der Musik im 20. Jahrhundert, 12), pp. 191-227.

The Composer is Absent

The first work to discuss here is Gordon Monahan's *Long Aeolian Piano*. This project saw a number of realizations in different sites (a farm field, a public park, a mountaintop) during the late 1980s. The installation consists of an old upright piano with strings «strung through the piano soundboard and anchored to peg boards at the other ends of the strings». ⁴ This way the piano serves as a resonant body for the Aeolian tones that the wind induces in the strings.



Fig. 1: Gordon Monahan, *Piano on Frozen Lake Nipissing* (2014), photo by Gordon Monahan.

The piano imagery is not incidental here: Monahan is a trained pianist and a number of his works, both installations and music pieces, conceptualize the instrument and its cultural history. For example, *A Piano Listening to Itself* also employs long strings, attached to a piano's soundboard. Here they are used as a conduit to transmit electronic variations on

⁴ Gordon Monahan's personal website, *Long Aeolian Piano*, http://www.gordonmonahan.com/pages/long_aeolian_page.html, accessed May 11, 2015.

canonic piano pieces. The instrument is made to «react» to what made it a symbol of Romantic music tradition. The *Long Aeolian Piano* also falls into this «rethinking the piano» category. It can be regarded as a kind of prepared piano – a technique also often used by Monahan, both in direct (*This Piano Thing*) and subverted ways (*Piano Mechanics*). In fact, the preparation in *Long Aeolian Piano* is twofold: on the one hand, the piano is prepared with the long strings; on the other hand, the whole installation can be regarded as a giant piano, «prepared» by the natural forces. It is interesting to note that the preparation in Monahan's work and in the works of the technique's inventor, John Cage,⁵ serves completely different ends. For Cage, piano preparation was a way to reinforce the percussive nature of the instrument. This was to downplay the harmonic side of music and instate temporality as music's most essential aspect.⁶ The *Long Aeolian Piano* is exactly the other way around: Aeolian tones have pitches that interrelate harmonically, while the temporal structure of the piece is largely amorphous and left to chance.

This connects Monahan's work to another of Cage's inventions – namely, indeterminacy. Introducing chance operations into his compositional process, Cage aimed, in accordance with his Zen beliefs, to «say nothing», to free music «of individual taste and memory (psychology) and also of the literature and “traditions” of the art».⁷ Chance operations and indeterminacy gave Cage the opportunity to stop «making decisions» and start «asking questions», to discover the work along with the audience.⁸

Delegating all of the musical decision-making to the natural forces, Monahan presents a more radical version of this approach. Whatever rules Cage's compositions had are eschewed here, together with the composer's agency in favor of the blind, unpredictable element. While it is true that artistic intent presents itself to a certain degree in the acoustic model of the installation, uncontrollable weather phenomena still manage to defy the artist's will, making the installation function in a completely unexpected fashion.⁹

⁵ It is worth noting that Monahan performed Cage's piano music early in his career.

⁶ Cf. PAUL GRIFFITHS, *Modern Music and After*, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2010³, pp. 22-23.

⁷ *Ibidem*, p. 26.

⁸ Cf. RICHARD TARUSKIN, *Music in the Late Twentieth Century*, Oxford – New York, Oxford University Press, 2009 (*The Oxford History of Western Music*, 5), p. 76.

⁹ In his interview with Wolfgang Kos, Monahan says that the *Long Aeolian Piano* produced the loudest sounds in the softest wind. Cf. WOLFGANG KOS, *Möglichst Grosse Klangbewegungen. Ein Interview mit Gordon Monahan*, in *Töne und Gegentöne* [catalog of the Festival], ed. by Wolfgang Kos - Edek Bartz, Wien, Wiener Festwochen, 1991, pp. 12-14 (reprinted at Gordon Monahan's webpage, http://gordonmonahan.com/pages/vienna_pages.html, accessed May 11, 2015).

Richard Taruskin notes an uncanny similarity between Cage's indeterminacy and the total serialism of the Darmstadt school: both approaches served to automate the creation of music, their endgame being the ideal of absolute music, pure structured time.¹⁰ According to Taruskin, Cage's methods «were anything but anarchic. In seeming (but only seeming) paradox, the liberation of sound demanded the enslavement, indeed the humiliation, of all human beings concerned – composer, performer, and listener alike – for it demanded the complete suppression of the ego».¹¹ The performer was the one to suffer the most, as all the responsibility to make decisions was delegated to him/her. Thus, indeterminacy only reinforced the composer's power over the performer.¹²

At the same time, Aeolian sound sculpture allows the delegation of both the composer's and the performer's responsibility over musical decisions to the depersonalized forces of nature. The exclusion of the «human factor» resolves the contradictions that Taruskin mentions: as there are no performers, there is no one to enslave. Moreover, the lack of human performers allows the composer to do away with the score, the symbol of his/her power over the musical piece. Paradoxically, the move towards even greater automatism becomes a way to overcome the traditional hierarchy of the roles of the composer, performer and listener.

In its doing away with the composer and the performer, Aeolian sound sculpture is surprisingly reminiscent of certain electronic music techniques, namely: acousmatic music (since there is no visible performer) and algorithmic or stochastic composition (since the agency of the composer is largely diminished). Because of this similarity it serves to deconstruct the opposition of the natural and the artificial or technological in art, as these two poles are equally removed from a third point that is traditional human creativity.

The differences between indeterminate compositions and Aeolian sound sculpture go even further, however. It is not only the composer who is factored out from the piece, but also the performer. The consequences of that do not limit themselves to a more complete realization of the «objective» music ideal. Aleatoric pieces, even when performed by amateurs, are framed by the concert situation, and the performers adhere to this situation, however freeform and indeterminate the score might be. Obviously, the same cannot be expected from the natural forces. They can and often will act out of accord with the

¹⁰ Cf. R. TARUSKIN, *Music in the Late Twentieth Century*, cit., p. 55.

¹¹ *Ibidem*, p. 62.

¹² Cf. *Ibidem*, pp. 75-76.

artist's intentions. Natural forces can even destroy the sculpture-instrument. Monahan's *Aquaeolian Harp* consisted of a number of piano wires that were strung from trees and resonant bodies on the river shore to anchors on the riverbed and supposed to produce sounds affected by the current. A flood washed the sculpture ashore.¹³



Fig. 2: Gordon Monahan, *Piano on Frozen Lake Nipissing* (2014), photo by Gordon Monahan.

¹³ Cf. ELLEN WATERMAN, *When it Rains: Experimental Music and “the Cultural Ecology”*, «Echoic Chamber» (Western Front), 2007, <http://front.nfshost.com/theechoicchamber/documents/WhenItRains.pdf>, accessed May 11, 2015.

The fragility of the work in the face of natural forces is one of the reasons why Aeolian sound sculptures are often large. The wires of the *Long Aeolian Piano* and many other Monahan works attain a length of up to fifty meters. His installation *Aeolian Winds over Claybank, Saskatchewan* covers a whole abandoned factory complex with such long strings. In other words, the instrument becomes commensurate with the performer, i.e. the landscape, and so does the music itself. On the one hand, it acquires a certain spatial structure and cannot be heard wholly from any one place. On the other, such music is potentially endless: it will continue for as long as the instrument and the atmosphere exist.

All this leads to the listener's agency becoming all the more prominent. An important point in Taruskin's critique of Cage's indeterminacy as a «liberating» practice is the composer's commitment to the institutions of classical music such as the score, the concert hall or professional performers.¹⁴ Aeolian sound sculptures on the contrary exist in open spaces and are not limited by concert timeframes. Such disposition calls for the listener to become a co-author of what (s)he hears. With the composers abandoning their power over the musical work and the performers absent, the listener is the one who is handed the responsibility to make decisions and infuses the music with personality. It is worth noting that his/her participation in music-making goes beyond perception and interpretation. Due to the work's large scale, both temporal and spatial, the actual musical piece that the listener hears is always a direct result of his/her conscious action. It is the listener who determines when the piece begins for him/her and when it ends, while his/her movements define its structure.

In essence, an Aeolian sound sculpture creates a dichotomy of a «macro» piece – one that is indeterminate, commensurate with the landscape and never heard wholly – and a «micro» one that is experienced by the listener and co-created by him/her. Thus it challenges audiences' «preconditioned ideas» of «what they think sound installations are, what they think sound is, what they think music is, what their personal point of view towards this is».¹⁵

¹⁴ Cf. R. TARUSKIN, *Music in the Late Twentieth Century*, cit., p. 71.

¹⁵ Interview with Gordon Monahan quoted in GOLO FÖLLMER, *Klanginstallation und öffentlicher Raum*, degree dissertation, Technische Universität Berlin, Institut für Kommunikations-, Medien- und Musikwissenschaft, a.y. 1994-1995, p. 120.

The Landscape as a Ready-Made

Aeolian sound sculptures are not only commensurate with the landscape but also engage its elements artistically. To understand the mechanics of this engagement, let us look at Max Eastley's installation at Sutton Edge made for the *Tyne Tees* television program *Elements* in 1991. The work is composed of Aeolian flutes, harps and monochords spread across a beautiful landscape of hills, beaches and lush greenery. The shapes of the sculptures are decidedly minimalistic, mostly poles and frames, occasionally sprinkled with colour or decorated with red and yellow ribbons. While Aeolian harps were something of a fixture in landscape parks, Eastley's works are more in accordance with Land Art's attitudes towards the landscape: they do not seek to «overwhelm or intimidate» their audiences, but are «inclusive, participatory, even intimate».¹⁶ They do not seek to «enhance» the site with some sort of Romantic narrative, but frame the space as a site of art in a non-disruptive manner.

However, it is the sonic dimension where most of the engagement with the environment happens. Aeolian sound sculptures give voice to the air and water streams, making the listener aware of what is usually inaudible. That is to say, they reveal to their audiences the complex and dynamic structure of the natural environment. This once again makes such works akin to Land Art, which understood landscape as «a process of ongoing relationships existing in a physical region».¹⁷ It would be wrong, of course, to call Aeolian sound sculptures an environmentally conscious art form (regardless of whether the artist is), since, as musicologist Barbara Barthelmes notes, the critique of our attitude towards nature is not its main message.¹⁸ However, at the very least such artworks are environmentally aware and help raise such awareness across their audiences.

¹⁶ JEFFREY KASTNER – BRIAN WALLIS, *Land and Environmental Art*, London, Phaidon, 1998, p. 26.

¹⁷ ROBERT SMITHSON, *Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape*, in *The Writings of Robert Smithson*, ed. by Nancy Holt, New York, New York University Press, 1979, pp. 117-128: 119; orig. ed. «Artforum», XI, 6 (1973), pp. 62-68.

¹⁸ Cf. B. BARTHELMES, *Musik in Landschaft und Architektur. Zur Ästhetisierung der Umwelt in Klanginstallationen und musikalischen Environments*, cit., pp. 19-20.



Fig. 3: Max Eastley, *Installation at Sutton Edge for Tyne Tees Television* (1991, fragment). Photo courtesy by the artist.

Since Aeolian sound sculptures produce sound, they engage not only the landscape, but also the soundscape, which essentially becomes a part of a musical piece. The pitches, produced by the sculpture, frame it within their harmonic structure. Thus, the environment becomes both a performer to play the instrument, built by the artist, and at the same time a sort of a musical instrument in itself. In other words, the soundscape becomes an extension of the composer's artistic intent.

The nature of Aeolian sound sculpture's engagement with the environment is, therefore, twofold and self-contradictory. On the one hand, such artworks enrich the soundscape, making often silent processes audible. They widen the listener's perceptual horizons and raise his/her awareness of the complex balance of ecosystems. On the other hand, Aeolian sculptures transform the environment in accordance with the artistic intent. The landscape's subordinate position is most evident, however, in the sculptures' shapes rather than sound. For example, Max

Eastley in *New and Rediscovered Musical Instruments* provides a design for an *Aeolian Ground Harp* – an Aeolian harp whose strings are fixed on a bough of a tree that serves as a sounding board.¹⁹

This ambivalence makes Aeolian sound sculptures function differently depending on whether they are installed in an urban site or in a wilderness area. In *Spontaneously Harmonious in Certain Kinds of Weather* Gordon Monahan stretched music wires under the ceiling of the Berlin's Parochialkirche that since 1996 houses the Singuhr sound art gallery. The Aeolian tones were induced by the draughts that went through the rooms of the ancient building. In such a context Aeolian sound sculpture evidently becomes a device through which nature reclaims the urban space. Making the airstreams that exist inside the church space audible and connecting it with the space outside, the work emphasizes the presence of natural forces in any environment, however urbanized it might be. In fact, Raymond Murray Schafer, the founding father of acoustic ecology, directly proposes the use of Aeolian harps and flutes as a means of acoustic design that would enhance and harmonize disrupted soundscapes.²⁰

At the same time, however, it is equally evident that in a wild landscape sound sculpture is a both visually and acoustically alien object. It is a human-built structure that disrupts the landscape. One can even say that, since they lack a practical purpose, strings, percussions and other parts of a sound sculpture are effectively litter that poses a certain danger to the environment.

These considerations demand from the artists a very careful approach towards their materials and work methods. Max Eastley, describing his unrealized installations for the Danube River, claims that he strove to make his interference with the landscape minimal. If urban space demands a radical intervention to make the audience think in environmental terms, a natural landscape needs only a slight underlining that allows it better to present itself.²¹ In a way, this is a ready-made turned inside out: not a mundane object that is turned into art by situating it inside

¹⁹ Cf. MAX EASTLEY, *Aeolian Ground Harp*, in *New/Rediscovered Musical Instruments*, ed. by David Toop, London, Quartz Publications, 1974, p. 20.

²⁰ Cf. RAYMOND MURRAY SCHAFER, *The Soundscape. Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*, Rochester, Destiny Books, 1993¹⁰, pp. 246-252; orig. ed. *The Tuning of the World*, New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 1977.

²¹ Cf. MAX EASTLEY. *Future Applications of Sound Art and Design to Architectural and Natural Environments*, «Contemporary Music Review», XV, 3-4 (1991), pp. 143-150: 146.

institutional space, but an uncultured space that is framed as artwork through a minimal – at least by design – installation.

To explore further the idea of a landscape being treated as an inverted ready-made with the help of sound sculpture let us turn to Annea Lockwood's cycle *Piano Transplants*. The most famous of the four pieces in the cycle, *Piano Burning*, is the least related to the subject of this paper. The other three, however, present a sophisticated interplay between music, Land Art and sound sculpture. All of the pieces deal with relocating old derelict pianos into natural environments to be destroyed slowly by natural forces. In *Piano Garden* the instrument is planted in a garden to be overgrown by vines and other plants. In *Piano Drowning*, the piano is carefully placed on the surface of a swamp so that it will slowly sink over the course of several weeks. In the most recent piece, *Southern Exposure*, a piano left on a beach is exposed to the deleterious effects of the tide. All of the pianos can still be played (in case of *Piano Drowning* it is even prescribed by the score).



Fig. 4: Annea Lockwood, *Piano Drowning from Piano Transplants* (1972), photo by Richard Curtin.

The subversion of ready-made technique in Lockwood's work is twofold. First, the piano is not just a mundane, mass-produced object. It has a strong symbolic character shrouded in the Romantic myths of musicianship. Second, the piano does not enter the space of an art institution but leaves it. It is thrown out of the concert hall and placed into the wide, stripped of its symbolic value and literally consumed by the environment. But paradoxically at the same time it infuses the landscape with such value, making it a part of an artwork.

There are certain ecological connotations here also, as the derelict pianos get "recycled". The wood that the instruments are predominantly made of is returned into the natural environment. The landscape thus appropriates the pianos, and whatever music played on them becomes a part of a natural soundscape – much like the sounds of the Aeolian sculptures.

While the works comprising *Piano Transplants* are not strictly Aeolian or "Aquaeanolian", natural forces do play a large role in how the sculpture functions and how it sounds. Robert Morris wrote in his *Anti-Form* manifesto of 1968 that the sculptural materials must find their own form through interaction with gravitation and other environmental conditions.²² In Lockwood's cycle the pianos are essentially the material that is shaped by natural processes like gravitation, tide and plant growth. Their effect however is threefold: they simultaneously ruin the instrument, shape the sculpture out of it and produce sounds.

There is a certain musical-sculptural duality about *Piano Transplants* that is characteristic of sound sculpture in general, but Lockwood puts a unique spin on it. The whole cycle is first and foremost a musical work by virtue of having a textual score, reminiscent of Nam June Paik's action music. But then there is also the music produced by the sculptures themselves, which is aleatoric and composed of two parts. The first part is whatever the performer plays on the piano if (s)he chooses so; the second, the sounds brought upon by the natural forces interacting with the instrument. The strings snapping from the humidity, the raindrops striking the strings and the frame, the water swashing inside the instrument – all such sounds become part of the music because the cycle's score frames the landscape, in which the piano is placed, as a music piece. Moreover, the natural forces also influence

²² Cf. ROBERT MORRIS, *Anti-Form*, in Id., *Continuous Project Altered Daily: The Writings of Robert Morris*, Cambridge (Mass.) – London, MIT Press, 1993, pp. 41-47: 46.

the human-played part, as ruining the piano affects the way it sounds. As Lockwood herself puts it, *Piano Transplants* were a way to make a «permanently prepared piano».²³

Soundscape Architecture

Aeolian sound sculptures frame the landscape, making it a part of the artwork, and structure it harmonically. And since structured space is essentially architecture, this allows for a rethinking of the relationships between music and what in Goethe's words is «frozen music». For Max Eastley the architectural side of music composition means that it has an exterior that is available to the listener and an interior that is usually accessible only by the composer.²⁴ However, one can argue that Aeolian sound sculptures expose the interior of music to the listener. On the one hand, as was discussed in the first section, such works allow composers to abdicate from their artistic agency. Listeners have to act on their own, assembling the nature-produced sounds by themselves. And since they essentially do the composer's work, they deal with the same side of the music that the composer would. On the other hand, Aeolian sound sculpture encompasses the landscape and the listeners with it within a harmonic frame that assumes an architectural quality. This way listeners find themselves on the inside of the artwork, and since the work can be perceived as musical – on the inside of music, which thus becomes a kind of virtual invisible architecture.

This virtual architecture does not, however, exist in a vacuum but interacts with the actual architecture. In 1993 Max Eastley made an installation for the Nagoya Museum of Modern Art. The artist installed a group of Aeolian sound sculptures on the building's rooftop, and the sounds they produced was transmitted then into the interior halls through a multichannel acoustic system.

Writing of his work in architectural spaces, Eastley notes that they demand a synthetic approach, integrating the visual, the acoustic and the spatial into an undivided whole. Aeolian sculptures become a part of the *façade* decorations, but their sounds are applied to the interior, which (at least in theory) should form a stylistic unity with the *façade*, completing the circle.²⁵ All the elements of such work are inextricably linked to both each other and the space outside, and all of the connections are bilateral. The building reorganizes the environment around it, engaging in a dialogue with the surrounding buildings

²³ DANIEL BEBAN, *From The Banks of The River Danube: A Conversation with Annea Lockwood*, <http://bit.ly/1GF2OZv>, accessed April 22, 2015; orig. ed., «White Fungus», 9 (2008), pp. 26-32.

²⁴ Cf. M. EASTLEY, *Future Applications of Sound Art and Design to Architectural and Natural Environments*, cit., p. 245.

²⁵ Cf. *Ibidem*.

and affecting the air streams that in turn, through the Aeolian sculptures, determine the acoustic image of the building.

At the same time the presence of a meaningful, aesthetically charged sound in an architectural space directs the listener's attention towards the fact that the space itself is not silent. It is filled with sounds of the visitors' footsteps, their conversations, outside noises that enter the building through its doors and windows.²⁶ All these sounds form a kind of miniature soundscape of the room. However, the way Eastley's Aeolian sculptures interact with it differs significantly from what happens in natural environments. First, the space is already structured by the existing architecture. Second, the actual sound source – the sculpture – is located outside it. As a result, what the listener hears is a counterpoint of four different spaces: the inside, the outside, the space of the work and the one of the acoustic system that distributes the sculpture's sounds through the rooms.

Since Aeolian sculptures rely on natural forces in order to produce sound, they can only be installed outside. Therefore they inevitably interact not only with the interior of the building but also the surrounding urban space. In 2012 Eastley took part in a project curated by Peter Cusack that aimed to reimagine the space of the former Tempelhof airport in Berlin through sound art. Eastley put an Aeolian harp on the roof of one of airport's buildings and covered a spot of the airfield nearby with a net of Aeolian wires. Tempelhof ceased operations in 2008, its airfield subsequently being turned into a public park. However the future of the site remains uncertain. This allowed the sound artists to use it as a sort of laboratory to explore how «urban acoustic phenomena [could] be exploited for city planning».²⁷

²⁶ Cf. *Ibidem*.

²⁷ *Berlin Sonic Places. Imaginative Future – Acoustic Potential in the Development of Major Derelict City Spaces*, http://sonic-places.dock-berlin.de/?page_id=18, accessed May 20, 2015.



Fig. 5: Max Eastley, *Aeolian Phenomena* (2012). Photo courtesy of the artist.

Tempelhof is a public space that lost its function. However, in a more global sense this could be said of public spaces in general. Throughout the 20th century they ceased to be a place of social communication. Public spaces became only a background, an environment, having given up their function to electronic media. To give them back their purpose one has to intentionally construct such spaces. As Boris Groys puts it, «to create the emptiness where the public could constitute itself».²⁸ However, this leads to a paradox: to make social interactions possible, public spaces must be open and transparent. But «to build anything at all is always to build a closure», therefore the architecture of public spaces must become «anti-architecture».²⁹

²⁸ BORIS GROYS, *Self-Design and Public Space*, «The Avery Review», II (2014), <http://averyreview.com/issues/2/self-design-and-public-space>, accessed May 20, 2015.

²⁹ *Ibidem*.

The way Aeolian sound sculptures structure and frame space can be regarded as being precisely the synthesis of architecture and anti-architecture that the public space needs. Acoustic space created by such works is continual; it does not have clear boundaries, either internal, or external.³⁰ It is open and transparent. But at the same time such space has a structure and a purpose and is aesthetically charged. Therefore it promotes the formation of a community through a shared musical experience, sensuous and immediate.³¹ Aeolian sound sculptures pull the public space out of the everyday, making it meaningful again. They reconnect it with its inhabitants – and at the same time with the natural world.



Fig. 6: Jodi Rose recording the Brooklyn Bridge. Photo courtesy of the artist.

Surprisingly, sometimes such virtual acoustic architecture is already present in a public space, needing only the artist's keen ear to make it audible for the general audience. From Aeolian ready-made, discussed above, there is a logical step towards Aeolian found art. If it is possible for a mundane object to function as a sound sculpture after being installed in a landscape, the same obviously applies to a mundane object that is already there, only waiting for the artist to frame it as a work of art. In fact, quite a few urban

³⁰ Cf. MARSHALL McLUHAN, *Five Sovereign Fingers Taxed the Breath*, in *Explorations in Communication: An Anthology*, ed. by Edmund Carpenter and Marshall McLuhan, Boston, Beacon Press, 1960, pp. 207-208: 207; orig. ed. «Explorations», IV (1955), pp. 31-33.

³¹ Cf. G. FÖLLMER, *Klangorganisation im öffentlichen Raum*, cit., p. 226.

constructions have a high Aeolian potential: fences, electric wires, etc. Australian artist Jodi Rose, however, is most interested in bridges and in their cables singing in the wind, which is the focus of her site-specific projects, realized all over the world.³² Rose views – or rather hears – it as «an alternative language, one other than the purely pragmatic and visual experience of architecture».³³ This language, «messages we cannot hear, words we cannot speak» is the last bastion of meaning in a contemporary world so obsessed with communications and their effectiveness that they separate and disrupt the communities rather than consolidate them.

Rose's practice exists at the intersection of ready-made technique and site-specific art. Such a combination calls for some non-trivial artistic methods. On the one hand, traditional ready-made uses the institutional space of the museum to raise the viewer's awareness of the aesthetic qualities of found objects. On the other hand, site-specific art brings to the fore the aesthetic qualities of urban space, introducing artworks into it that engage in a dialogue with their environment. In Rose's case, however, neither the object (the bridge), nor the space surrounding it belong to the art world. To frame them artistically Rose employs two approaches: documentation and performance. In her performances the artist mixes the Aeolian sounds of the bridge with her own playing on the cables. At the same time, recording the sounds of bridges all over the world, she creates a virtual map of found sound sculptures, a sort of guide for future listeners.³⁴

Rose's works thus strive to raise awareness of the aesthetic value of mundane experiences,³⁵ of a here and now, and through that to re-establish the social connections that, like the sound of the bridge cables, are «overlooked or silenced in the maelstrom of life».³⁶ The symbolism of the bridge is hardly coincidental here, as the purpose of both bridges and Aeolian sculptures is to connect: one bank to the other, the natural to the urban, one person to another.

³² Cf. R. BRANDT, *Taming the Wind: Aeolian Sound Practices in Australasia*, cit., p. 196.

³³ JODI ROSE, *Song to Dissolve the World, Part 1 (1994-1996)*, «Leonardo Music Journal», VI (1996), pp. 114-115: 114.

³⁴ An online archive of Rose's recordings can be found at Jodi Rose's personal website <http://singingbridgesmusic.bandcamp.com/>, accessed November 8, 2015.

³⁵ Cf. MONIKA METYKOVÁ, *Bridge Guard. Transnational Artists, National Populist Politics, and Cross-Border Inter-Ethnic Relationships*, «East Central Europe», XLI, 2-3 (2014), pp. 277-295: 289.

³⁶ Jodi Rose's personal blog, *Green Bridge Singing*, <http://bit.ly/1GmMlYG>, accessed June 5, 2015.

Conclusion

As a contemporary art practice Aeolian sound sculpture has three main aspects. By virtue of such works being musical instruments and producing music, they can be regarded as a composition technique that furthers John Cage's quest for indeterminacy. Natural forces do not submit to any kind of compositional rules or performance practices – they are objective and impersonal and have no regard for artistic intent. This allows the art form to do away with the Romantic concept of genius and to democratize music, making it participatory. In the absence of the composer and the performers, it is the listener who has to assemble composition, infusing it with personality.

Employing natural forces and other elements of a landscape as parts of an artwork allows Aeolian sound sculpture to be situated within the context of Environmental and Land Art. Such works give voice to the natural processes that are usually invisible and inaudible, making the listener aware of the complex and dynamic structure of the environment. This marks the space as a site of art, framing the landscape itself as a ready-made artwork.

On the other hand, Aeolian sculptures do not only frame the space but also structure it. The net of harmonic relationships between the Aeolian tones and the sounding objects presents an additional plane of spatial organization. What follows are semantic links – between the interior and the exterior, the urban planning and the environment – that further deepen the audience's perception of space. These structures function as a kind of dematerialized, virtual architecture that reimagines the public space and allows the community to reinvent itself through a shared aesthetic experience.

These three aspects do not exist separately, however. If anything, the opposite is the case: Aeolian sound sculpture is a work of synthesis and convergence that connects the visual with the audial, the natural with the urban, the dehumanized with the personal. As a contemporary art practice it challenges our notions of what music, environment and social space are.

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