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2024 Research Lab CRAFT!

SOUNDING CRAFT

Sounding Craft

PROLOGUE

I have been a musician for as long as I can remember. Many years ago, I met a ceramicist, and fell in love with her and with her work. Since then I am looking for ways to combine music with crafts, so that we can create together. In Sounding Craft, I put into words some of what I have learned, and demonstrate a practical way for craftspeople, or anyone else for that matter, to approach a musician's perspective on creativity.

Craft deals with objects, while music is a performative practice. My research is guided by the effort to bridge this dichotomy. The search for connections between material culture and performance has led me to look into the distant past of human culture and civilization.

Music and crafts are present in all human cultures, and play central roles in creation myths from around the world. Children take to these activities intuitively. Music and crafts have traditionally been practiced collectively and by everyone, often at the same time; people used to sing while they worked. The sounds of craft practice were part of their music, and musical progression guided the movements of the body.

The disciplines of crafts and music as we know them today are modern inventions.[1] With the development of industrial processes in the last centuries, artisanal production became largely obsolete. Many craftspeople had to seek employment in factories, where an increasingly sophisticated division of labor gradually hollowed out the heritage of intrinsic crafts knowledge among the population.[2]

Traditional craft techniques and expressions were preserved in museums,[3] or commercialized and marketed as "folk" art, rather than being practiced as organic parts of life.[4] Institutionalization of crafts education led to modern studio crafts, celebrating uniqueness and conceptualism,[5] and to a conscious and ongoing effort to elevate crafts practice to the status of art.[6]

Crafting and music making share the tempo of the human body. With the constant churn of powered machinery and assembly lines, any attempt at musical work in an industrial setting would be drowned out. To be heard, music had to move into the artificial silence of specially constructed concert houses, where the audience consumed the music in silence, rather than participating in its creation.[7] The status of music changed, it became increasingly seen as an artform and its practitioners as inspired artists.[8]

The disruption of age-old traditions and cultures, brought by industrialization and the extractive imperialism which supported it, may have seemed like a quaint concern in the face of the progress that took place in the 19th and 20th centuries. But a hidden (or ignored) cost of this progress was the degradation and eventual disruption of the normal functioning of nature, caused by the industrial paradigm. Today, it is very difficult to be oblivious to the fact that what we have built cannot be sustained. Each passing season seems to bring us closer to the cascading collapse of local and global ecosystems, and the societies they support.

Fragmentation of ancient cultural practices into separate disciplines, and the gradual disappearance of these habits from daily life, was a warning that we should have heeded. In hindsight, the transformation of people from musical artisans into passive consumers of mass-produced goods and entertainment looks like a symptom of the nihilistic tendency at the core of the industrial system. When

we reform our economic and social systems, voluntarily or after a collapse, I want to suggest that we use the degree to which our routine inspires us to sing while we work, as a way to measure sustainable progress.

Over the course of this project, I have worked with practitioners in the fields of ceramics, glass making, and painting (which I treat in the context of this text as a craft without any further qualification). We have explored the soundscapes of their practices in a search for the latent musicality of handicraft. In keeping with my previous artistic work, I have recorded these experiments in order to construct music pieces representing the different crafts.

EXPOSITION: JAZZ, WORK SONGS AND THE INDUSTRIAL REVOLUTION

> Hold it right there while I hit it
> Well reckon that ought to get it
> Been working and working
> But I still got so terribly long to go
>
> Oscar Brown Jr.[9]

Jazz music was invented in the cultural melting pot of New Orleans around the turn of the twentieth century.[10] New Orleans back then—at least the parts where jazz was born—was a never-ending party. French, Spanish and Anglo-American influences mixed with African American culture, to create a style of music so vital that it eventually developed into a lingua franca of Western popular music, capable of reinventing itself over and over, and adapting musical ideas and styles from all over the world.

Some essential elements of jazz are the complex rhythmical language, the improvisation and the microtonal approach to melody. These musical characteristics were not common in (Western) European music, but stem from the history of Black Americans, whose spiritual songs and work songs kept elements of their West African cultural heritage alive during their enslavement. (Brooks 1984, 5-28)

Jazz has been so successful as a language of musical expression, that it has become an academic discipline in many parts of the world for teaching musical improvisation. When a European teenager wants to learn to improvise on the piano, the default path is to study in the tradition of "Black Classical Music",[11] and that is what I did.

During the Industrial Revolution in Great Britain, a number of innovations in the textile industry meant that cotton could be processed and turned into textiles exponentially more efficiently than before. In the British Empire, North America was the main supplier of cotton, which was grown by slaves on plantations in the South.

As the textile industry grew, so did the demand for raw cotton material. Increased demand for cotton meant increased demand for enslaved laborers. More and more people were kidnapped and brought across the Atlantic Ocean, the so-called Middle Passage in the triangular trade between Europe, Africa and America.

In 1797, the slave ship *Charlestown* was abandoned in Antigua after starting to leak on its journey from Gambia to South Carolina. (Park 2000, 305) Onboard, the Scottish adventurer Mungo Park traveled as a passenger. He had explored the interior of West Africa to map the flow of the Niger river, and his notebook contained

the first translation of an African song text to a European language. (Southern 1971, 16) The song was written extemporaneously about Park himself by a group of village women, singing in their house while spinning cotton, after taking pity on the starving Mungo and giving him food and shelter. (Park 2000, 196)

The book he later released contained several examples of the connectedness between life, work and music present in West African societies, including encounters with "jilli kea," singing men who "sing of historical events, accompany soldiers into war, and compose various extemporaneous songs; songs used to request hospitality, to uplift the crestfallen, to describe a trip, or to greet a returned villager after a long absence". (Gioia 2006, 10)

In oral cultures, music has been valued for the specific functions it served, and has been performed by all members of society. On the other hand, music as pure entertainment or aesthetic enjoyment has been much less common. (Nettl 1956, 6) Music has been used "from hunting and herding to storytelling and playing; from washing and eating to praying and meditating; and from courting and marrying to healing and burying". (Wallin 2001, 4)

As a music student, I first became aware of work songs while learning the painful history of American slaves, singing while working the cotton fields, or while breaking rocks as members of a chain-gang. But work songs are found in cultures all over the world. In some circumstances they help to synchronize movements that otherwise would be ineffective or dangerous. Rowing a boat or cutting a tree or pounding plants and seeds in a mortar is faster, safer, and arguably more pleasurable when working together in rhythm.

Not all work songs are pulse-centric. Shepherds whistle to their animals and to each other to communicate over long distances. We blow a horn when we go to hunt, and when we go to war. Musical sound has been used to call to prayer, and to call the time. (Schafer 1994) Other times, as for the women Mungo Park met in Mali, work songs are a relaxing or meditative way to frame the work and pass the time. Work songs can spread news, tell stories and articulate political discourse.

The English poet Robert Graves theorized that the rhythm of Anglo-Saxon poetry was based on the pull and push of oars, while Irish metre was based on the work of smiths:

> The smith with his tongs lays the glowing lump of iron on the anvil, then touches with his hammer the place where the sledge blow is to fall; next he raps on the anvil the number of blows required. Down comes the sledge; the smith raps again for another blow, or series of blows. [...] So each stage of every process had its peculiar metre, to which descriptive words became attached; and presently the words found their own tunes.
>
> Graves 1969, 89

As Ted Gioia points out in the book *Work Songs*, there are linguistic clues to the particularly strong connection between textile craft and music. For example the West African Ewe people use the same word to mean "to weave" and "to sing" (Gioia 2006, 80). In English we use expressions such as "weave a song" and "spin a tale". Some of the oldest texts document this connection, for example in Homer's Odyssey, the goddess Circe sings while weaving on her loom (ibid.). In medieval India, the poet, musician, and craftsperson Kabîr wrote many spiritual songs about weaving.

You haven't puzzled out
any of the Weaver's secrets:
it took Him
a mere moment
to stretch out the whole universe
on His loom.
[...]
He fashioned His loom
out of earth and sky:
He plied the sun and moon
simultaneously
as His twin shuttles. [13]

Industrialization, and the urbanization that accompanied it, changed the relationship between work and music. Murray Schafer describes this development in terms of a loss of perspective in the soundscape, a transition from the high-fidelity sonic landscape of a pre-industrial town or village, where steps in the snow and the ringing of a church bell could be heard at distance, to the low-fidelity soundscape of bustling cities, busy streets and loud machinery, where the distance at which individual sounds are distinctly audible has shrunk. (Schafer 1994, 43)

Accompanying the loss of perspective was the transition from a soundscape of discrete sounds in pre-industrial societies, to soundscapes dominated by constant broad-band noise in industrialized and electrified societies (cars and other vehicles, machinery and electrical equipment) depriving the soundscape any sense of musical progression. (ibid., 78) This static and low-fidelity sound environment discourages musical expression as part of a work routine.

The ideology of industrialization was also opposed to music in the workplace. Work songs could be used to spread news and organize workers, to the frustration of factory owners. In *Rhythms of Labour: Music at Work in Britain*, (Korczynski et al. 2013) the authors describe conscious and sustained efforts by factory management to ban work songs from factories.

When music was eventually allowed back into workplaces, it was in the form of curated radio broadcasts of popular music, that created a "false consciousness" that would keep workers docile by "*mistakenly* searching for meaning from play at work rather than searching for meaning within work." (ibid., 278-9) This follows the American sociologist C. Wright Mills' idea of a "Big Split" in industrial society, into separate spheres of work and leisure. (ibid.)

In our time of algorithmically generated playlists, adapted individually based on who-knows-what parameters, and delivered to us through noise-canceling headphones, Mills' split has become automated and fully internalized. Our minds are "in the cloud" (which sounds much more benign than it is), while our bodies move through an abandoned physical space that seems almost unreal.

Another revolution of productivity is reaching its climactic stage. The generative algorithms of artificial intelligence are making crafts of the human mind relics of the past, in an echo of how factory production made handicraft obsolete. Singing together as a tool for work and community building seems further away than ever. But perhaps also more important.

1. cf. Adamson 2013 and Goehr 1992 for discussions on the developments in crafts and music respectively.

2. In *Signs of Change,* William Morris wrote with biting sarcasm about how the division of labor turned artisans into unskilled labourers: "You can well imagine how this glorious invention of division of labour, this complete destruction of individuality in the workman, and his apparent hopeless enslavement to his profit-grinding master, stimulated the hopes of civilization [...]" (Morris 2012, 68)

3. The first Arts and Crafts Museum (now the Victoria and Albert Museum) opened in London In 1862. The following year, a similar museum opened in Vienna. cf. Barasch 1998, 145.

4. cf. Muthesius 2013, on Alois Riegl's early book *Volkskunst, Hausfleiss, und Hausindustrie,* where Riegl discusses the economic and artistic implications of the disappearance of traditional crafts ("Hausfleiss") in the Habsburg empire, and its revival as "Volkskunst".

5. Bernard Leach—one of the most important figures of the 20th century studio-craft—begins his *Potter's Book* by stating that "The potter is no longer a peasant or journeyman as in the past, nor can he be any longer described as an industrial worker: he is by force of circumstances an artist-craftsman" whose work displays "unity of design and execution, a co-operation of hand and undivided personality, for designer and craftsman are one". (Leach 1976, 1-2)

6. The debate over craft's relationship to art makes up a large part of craft theory. In *The Invention of Art,* philosopher Larry Shiner references the Arts and Crafts movement of the 19th century, the Bauhaus movement in Germany, as well as a number of 20th century thinkers such as R. G. Collingwood, John Dewey and Walter Benjamin, as participating in a resistance against the division of fine arts and crafts. cf. Shiner 2001, 225-69.

7. cf. Schafer 1994, 103

8. cf. Goehr 1992

9. Oscar Brown Jr., "Work Song," on Sin & Soul, LP, NY: Columbia Records, 1960.

10. In 1938, the ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax interviewed Jelly Roll Morton, a great piano player and one of the creators of jazz in New Orleans. In the conversation, Morton gives his account of the birth of jazz, including claiming himself as its inventor. About New Orleans, Lomax writes: "'We had every different kind of a person in New Orleans', Jelly said, 'We had French, we had Spanish, we had West Indian, we had American, and we all mixed on an equal basis [...]'" (Lomax 1950, Prelude XV).

11. A term coined by the jazz musician and revolutionary Rashaan Roland Kirk in the 1960s. cf. Kun 2005, 141.

12. Ted Gioia cites a more than 200-fold increase in demand for cotton in Britain between 1760-1850, and a proportional increase in demand for slave labor. cf. Gioia 2006, 88

13. Excerpt from the poem *The Master Weaver.* cf. Kabir 2003.

INTERLUDE: THE VOICE IN MY HEAD

Making music used to make sense. An infant and their caretaker looked into each other's eyes, and invented a musical language of love, long before any words had been spoken.[14] Walking upright on two legs provided a steady beat to sing to, and our ancestors sang in chorus, amplifying their message, whether to scare off predators or attract interest from curious travelers.[15]

Our colleagues drew on cave-walls the animals they would hunt, and gathered around the paintings to sing, dance, and pray in preparation for the exertion, anticipating the evasive or threatening movements of the fleeing or cornered animal.[16] Playing on flutes made from animal bones let them embody the spirit of the animal, maybe making the next hunt easier.[17]

Musical maps of the forest have been sung.[18] When singing stopped, stillness used to reign in a way that is hard to imagine.[19]

*

The world is so different now. Thinking is fragmented, work is mechanical. Autonomy has been usurped by technology and nature ravaged beyond repair.[20] "Where once gateways opened to the heavens, now there gape black holes, ready to swallow everything into oblivion."[21]

New knowledge has been mass-produced, but we keep failing to conduct ourselves in accordance with the results of our inquiry. Instead of creating what we need, we consume what we don't. Instead of singing while we work, we use headphones to insulate ourselves from the sounds of modern life.

At the smallest scale, cause and effect are out of order. Mathematics points to a layered reality, unseeable from a fixed perspective.[22] We need a revolution in cosmology to reconnect with the world, to find purpose in the struggle for survival that we are facing together.[23]

14. The anthropologist Ellen Dissanayake developed a theory of the origins of music in the bonding rituals between newborn babies and their mothers. She argues that special affiliative mechanisms evolved to satisfy the need for emotional communion in early humans, and that this habit could develop into the temporal arts, as bonding and cooperation in adults became a critical part of human life. cf. Dissanayake 2001

15. According to a theory by the Swedish neuroscientist Björn Merker, singing and dancing evolved together as a way to increase the reach of social calls through amplitude summation. Amplitude summation is the phenomenon where soundwaves that are in phase with each other, will produce a louder sound than if they are out of sync. The steady pulse of bi-pedal walking-in-place, a precursor to dancing, could help to keep the calls synchronized, something most other primates are unable to do. cf. Merker 2001.

16. Ted Gioia argues that the location of neolithic cave paintings were chosen for their sound properties, citing the work on cave acoustics by Iegor Reznikoff and Michel Dauvois. The author also mentions the work of Steven Waller, who has written extensively about the psychoacoustics of cave art sites. Waller believes that the stronger echoes of the particular locations chosen for cave paintings are tied to beliefs about echoes as the voices of spirits. cf. Gioia 2006, 13.

17. The oldest presumed musical instruments ever found are bone flutes. Kunej and Turk have described flutes estimated to be around 40000 years old, concurrent with some of the oldest cave paintings by modern humans. cf. Kunej and Turk 2001.

18. The anthropologist Steven Feld has studied the "poetic cartography" of Bosavi people in Papua New Guinea. The Bosavi "sing the forest as a poetic fusion of space and time where lives and events are conjoined as vocalized, embodied memories". (Feld 2003, 227)

19. The pioneering ecomusicologist Murray Schafer quotes Canadian artist Emily Carr's description of the silence of the forest, in his book *The Tuning of The World:* "If you spoke your voice came back to you as your face is thrown back to you in a mirror. It seemed as if the forest were so full of silence that there was no room for sounds". (Schafer 1994, 23)

20. This artistic research project is about ecology, but not in an overt sense (for example regarding the amount of carbon or other pollutants that the work incurs). The ecology that I am striving for relates to the defragmentation of human experience. I am inspired by the French philosopher Sacha Kagan, who has constructed a theory of Art and Sustainability, based on the principles of transdisciplinarity proposed by the Romanian physicist Basarab Nicolescu. Kagan's main point is that the scientific and technical systems we have built up over the last half millennium have produced a Culture of Unsustainability, which is now manifesting itself in the climate crisis as well as innumerable other environmental issues. Overcoming the climate crisis requires a reformation of the Western culture of unsustainability. The proposed way to achieve this, is with radical modes of collaboration which transcend boundaries of disciplines, i.e. transdisciplinarity. cf. Kagan 2015.

21. Godwin 1989, 7

22. Basarab Nicolescu is one of the founders of transdisciplinarity, which he sees as a way toward the reconciliation between science and the humanities. According to Nicolescu, the need for rapprochement comes from the breakdown in classical physics that started with Max Planck's discovery of the discontinuity of energy at the start of the 20th century. This revelation, the first clue in the quantum physics puzzle, contradicted the fundamental assumption of local causality in classical thought. Quantum physics shook the scientific world with its absurd claims. One of its mind-bending principles is the entanglement of particles, which can be placed at an arbitrary distance from each other, but still stay connected. Einstein called it "spooky". Nicolescu calls it global causality. Put differently, there is another layer of reality where physical distance in space just isn't as important as it seems from our point of view. This pluralistic view of the laws of nature should lead us to a new appreciation for alternative ways of interpreting the world, as found in the arts for example, as well as in the ancient traditions of human cultures. cf. Nicolescu 2002.

23. The progress of scientific knowledge in the last five hundred years has continuously shrunk the importance of humanity in relation to the cosmos. We went from being at the center of everything, to inhabiting an arbitrary point of an arbitrary galaxy in an arbitrary part of a basically endless universe. The musicologist Joscelyn Godwin believes that our scientific perspective on the cosmos is making us insensitive to the true value of life. In a volume of essays in so-called "speculative music,", he writes about the need to confront this apathy: "What our difficult and threatening times need, more than anything else, is a revolution in cosmology: a complete revision of the way in which educated people have been trained to regard their cosmic environment. Only after this can those other changes take place on earth for which every responsible person longs." (Godwin 1989, 8). Through learning about ancient uses of music and sound, we can become better cosmic citizens. cf. Godwin 1989.

FIRST EXERCISE
MATERIAL

> In the ancient cosmogonies, rhythm is prized as the basis of the whole universe. Its origin lies in the primordial breath that sacrifices itself as it utters the word of creation in the blowing of the wind. This word, depicted as an empty form, is an impersonal, latent energy whose significance or power cannot be described in words. But nothing in the range of our experience stands as close to this energy of the empty form of rhythm as music, a play of pure form.
>
> Schneider 1989, 62-3

In Sacha Kagan's theory of Art and Sustainability, the seed of our current culture of unsustainability was planted in Western antiquity. Kagan cites the ecologist David Abram, who argues after Eric Havelock that the Socratic dialectic—asking your interlocutor to explain and rephrase themself—purposefully disrupts the function of storytelling in oral culture, and that language in Western civilization promotes a "distrust of sensorial experience while valorizing an abstract realm of ideas hidden behind or beyond the sensory appearances". (Abram 1996, quoted in Kagan 2013, 38)

This "divorce between the Western civilization and its natural environment" is contrasted with indigenous cultures, "which have retained an ability to perceive and respond more subtly and qualitatively more effectively to their natural environments." (Kagan 2013, 37) But while this anthropocentric tradition in Western culture can be blamed for many of the ecological problems we face, the alternative is not obvious.

As the transdisciplinary environmental thinker Sam Mickey shows, non-anthropocentric ethics can become "misanthropic and socially irresponsible as they marginalize problems faced by disenfranchised economic classes and ethnicities." (Mickey 2007, 227) Mickey argues for another alternative, the *anthropocosmic* ethics described by the Romanian historian of religion Mircea Eliade, where "values of humanity and of the environment are not spoken of in terms of an opposition between center and periphery, but in terms of an intimate intertwining of humans (anthropoi) with the world (cosmos)." (ibid.)

Marius Schneider, one of the musical cosmologists in Godwin's anthology, has written about the importance of sound in the aboriginal cultures described by 19th and 20th century anthropology as totemistic. In a worldview where all things have souls, vocal mimicry is "one of the oldest forms of magic". (Schneider 1957, 10) It lets the practitioner embody the spirit of an animal, an ancestor or a god. "By singing the name, or the song, the acoustic substance of the totem-god [...] one recognizes him and forces him to sound in the singer's breath", thus to become "substantially (acoustically) present." (ibid.) Schneider concludes that "the voice or the sound ranks as the ultimate indestructible substance of each object." (ibid.)

Joscelyn Godwin puts it another way in the book's introduction, asking us to recognize that "underlying the apparent solidity of matter there is nothing but a network of vibrations, which may be allegorized—as no doubt they have been since time immemorial—as 'sound,' the name given to vibrations in the human audible frequency range." (Godwin 1989, 13) In the musical cosmology "sound (or tone, or music) is ontologically prior to material existence." (ibid.)

The aim of Kagan's sustainability is for art to transcend the artificial and destructive division between nature and culture. In Go-

dwin's revolution of musical cosmology, this will happen when the ear regains "precedence over the usurping eye", and tone is "acknowledged again as the truest reflection of reality, and hearing honored as the sense through which we can best learn of its nature." (Godwin 1989, 7)

The musician and activist Pauline Oliveros developed, practiced and taught a method for sound awareness that she calls "Deep Listening". (cf. Oliveros 2005)

> I simply put a microphone in my window and recorded the sound environment until the tape ran off the reel. When I replayed the tape, I realized that although I had been listening carefully while I recorded, I had not heard all the sounds that were on the tape. I discovered for the first time how selectively I listened, and that the microphone discriminated much differently than I did. From that moment, I determined that I must expand my awareness of the entire sound field. I gave myself the seemingly impossible task of listening to everything all the time. Through this exercise I began to hear the sound environment as a grand composition.
>
> Oliveros 1984, 182

Like Oliveros, I also discovered that a recording device hears differently than a person does. As I learned my craft as a young piano player, reconciling my self-image with the recordings of my playing was the primary method that helped me to develop a musical voice. I believe that non-musician practitioners also can benefit from this type of reconciliation between their self-perceived aurality and how it reverberates in physical space.

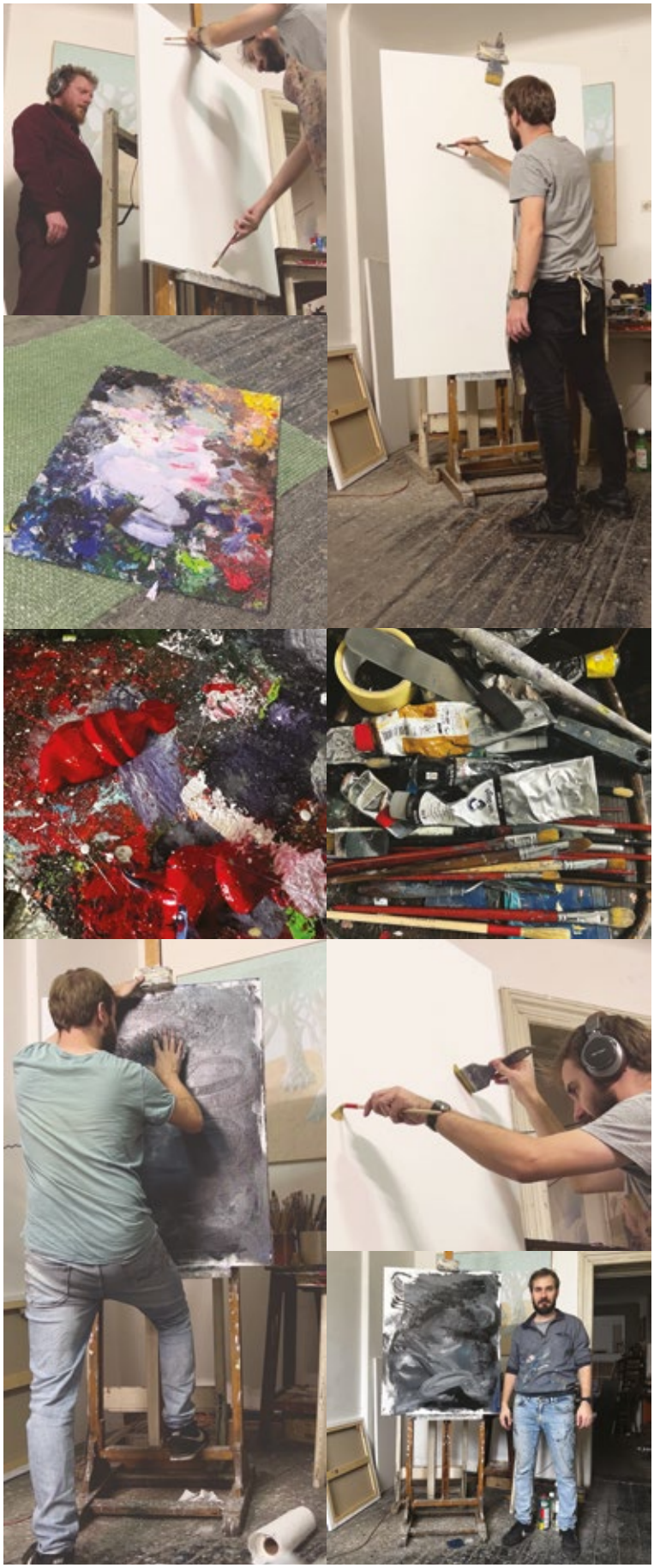
Learning to listen attentively and objectively—for lack of a better term—to one's actions, is a path to a performative attitude in practice. Insisting that the sound of one's actions matter, encourages precise and deliberate movement. In a series of exercises, I have asked craftspeople to lean in and really listen to what their hands are doing. We have recorded the process and talked about what the recordings can tell us about the craft work they represent.

The first exercise was made with the ceramicist and crafts researcher Diana Butucariu. Diana's Ph. D. work at the University of Arts in Bucharest deals with sustainability in ceramic art. As part of her research, she sources clay and creates installations in nature, which degrade over time and return to the earth. Diana and I have previously worked together on projects that bring together music and craft. This time we explored and recorded the sounds and gestures of working with raw clay.

Making with clay resembles the performative arts in that it is a practice which allows for the manipulation of time. Ideally, the clay is flexible enough to bend into the shapes the maker wishes, and at the same time stable enough to maintain the shapes. The flow of movements can thus be sped up or slowed down, stop and go in reverse.

Unlike ceramics, whose tone can be read by an experienced ceramicist, raw clay doesn't resonate. It absorbs vibration, consuming energy and responding in a muffled voice. Working with clay conjures the geomorphic processes of the planet, the flow of material between the surface and the interior. Listening carefully, we hear echoes of a primordial world before life made its mark.

SECOND EXERCISE
TOOLS



> [A]t some time or other any implement capable of producing a rhythm becomes a "musical instrument" in the hands of a savage.
>
> Schneider 1957, 5

A tool is an "extension and specialisation of the hand that alters the hand's natural powers and capacities" (Pallasmaa 2009, 48). An experienced craftsperson thinks of their tools as extensions to their body, a *tool-hand*. For a musical performer, what Pallasmaa calls the "pact with the trade" (Pallasmaa 2009, 50) takes the form of many years of an intense and deliberate struggle to grow their tool-hands, in the dreary practice-room.

The designer and craft theorist David Pye defined crafts as a *workmanship of risk*, where "the quality of the result is not predetermined, but depends on the judgment, dexterity and care which the maker exercises as he works". (Pye 1968, 4) This is contrasted with the workmanship of certainty in a factory, where the result is ensured by the production process.

In improvised music, any misstep of the fingers, any "wrong" note, has to be instantaneously and seamlessly incorporated into the performance. In fact, many musicians come to revel in these mistakes, and take them as jumping off points for a new direction in the improvisation.

The sociologist Richard Sennett writes in the book "The Craftsman" about preparing the mind for intuition through practice. He describes the state of becoming ready to make an intuitive leap as a feeling of frustration with the limitations of one's tool. This frustration makes it easier to "break the mold of fit-for-purpose," a process Sennett calls *reformatting* the tool (Sennett 2008, p 210).

Sennett divides tools into two categories: the difficult and the sublime. Difficult tools are complicated, specialized, require knowledge to operate and specific techniques of the hand to use correctly. Sublime tools generally are simpler, easy to understand, and can be used in many different ways. Sennett's example is the many uses a piano maker has for a flat-edged screwdriver.

The famous psychiatrist Abraham Maslow once wrote: "I suppose it is tempting, if the only tool you have is a hammer, to treat everything as if it were a nail". (Maslow 1966, 15) But a craftsperson, someone who has spent time growing their tool-hands, is able to turn this idea on its head; in a world of things that need pounding, a craftsperson can fashion a hammer out of anything. A musician is a person who is connected to the flow of music that constantly surrounds us. A manifestation of this connection is the assurance that any object can become a musical instrument.

Mihai Coltofean is a painter from Bucharest. We have known each other for a long time and it is more than ten years since I first recorded the sound of him working. Mihai's deep emotional connection to music let both of us become absorbed in the exercise of recontextualizing the tools of his craft—brushes, knives, easel, palette and hands—as musical instruments.

Recontextualization of musical instruments often happens in so-called "World Music". Famous examples include the use of Indian sitars in the music of The Beatles and Rolling Stones. The practice is not only (or even mainly) done for acoustic or performance reasons, but—according to Karl Neuenfeldt—"cultural baggage in the form of notions of authenticity is part of the instruments' appeal" (Neu-

enfeldt 1998, 6), the instrument is used "not only as an implement for producing music but also for making musical, socio-cultural and political meaning" (ibid., 7).

Ethnomusicology must deal with issues of colonialism. Kevin Dawe argues after the Australian anthropologist Nicholas Thomas that "It is conceivable that musical instruments become so entangled with museum culture and colonization by the 'host' that their meaning and exchange value are useful, and function only in relation to, the concepts that make up museum culture" (Dawe 2012, 204).

The *old instruments in new contexts* which are used in this project, were not originally conceived as music instruments. Thus it is probably more useful to view their usage in music as a *discursive recontextualisation*, (cf. Linell 1998) than as cultural appropriation. Linell states—following the sociologist Basil Bernstein—that recontextualization subjects discourses to "textual change, such as simplification, condensation, elaboration and refocusing", (Linell 1998, 145) while pointing out that these transformations of meaning are complex and not well understood. (ibid.)

During our exercise, Mihai made four music-paintings while paying as much attention as possible to the sounds of his tools, and as little attention as possible to the visual result of his actions. The defining moment of the exercise happened when we removed the paint, and Mihai painted an almost hour-long sound performance using only his tools on a dry canvas, tapping, brushing, scraping the fabric, searching for more or less resonant areas of the white surface. Removing the paint changed the tone of the canvas, but more importantly it made it easier to focus fully on the musicality of painting.

THIRD EXERCISE
WORKSHOP


BERMA

> The old art schools were unable to produce this unity; and how, indeed, should they have done so, since art cannot be taught? Schools must be absorbed by the workshop again.
>
> Walter Gropius, Bauhaus Manifesto[24]

> [W]e therefore take leave for a time of this noisy sphere, where everything takes place on the surface and in view of all men, and follow them both into the hidden abode of production, on whose threshold there stares us in the face "No admittance except on business".
>
> Karl Marx, Capital, Vol. 1[25]

The guild-based medieval workshop was a home for craftspersons, who "slept, ate, and raised their children in the places where they worked". (Sennett 2008, 53) The workshop was a place for education, families would sign up their children and pay for long periods of apprenticeship. The tacit and explicit craft knowledge of the *master*, handed down from generation to generation, was the most valuable resource of the workshop.

Sennett describes a well-functioning workshop as one where the master is made to explain themself, to "dredge out the assemblage of clues and moves they have absorbed in silence within". (ibid., 78) Without this condition being met, the workshop dies with the master, as in the case of the famous luthier Stradivari, (ibid., 74-8) whose workshop quickly declined after his death.

In the 19th century, as factories replaced many smaller workshops, new ideas of the craft workshop were formulated by the pioneers of the Arts and Crafts movement. C. R. Ashbee founded the Guild and School of Handicraft in London, which taught the ideas of John Ruskin and William Morris. He viewed the workshop as a place of spiritual growth, where the development of freedom and personality would precede quality in production. (Boris 1986, 16)

Ashbee emphasized the importance of community, and created a "utopian colony" in a rural village, where the craftsperson could lead a "simple life": "self-supporting, a farmer as well as an artisan; where life and labor, work and play would flourish in a mutually nourishing environment." (ibid., 17)

The holistic view of the workshop as a home for the craftsperson—the medieval workshop as well as the modern—reflects the fact that it can accommodate an entire process of creation, from early experiments to finished products. In performative arts, the work is created in two different locations; the studio and the stage. Practice and rehearsal happens in the studio, while performance takes place on a stage. The concept of a *workshop* in performative arts, especially in the theater, signifies a special form of collective engagement with a material, in between solitary practice and public performance. The workshop usually emphasizes improvisation and experimentation.

The influential theater theorist Richard Schechner thinks of the performance workshop as a way for modern people of "re-creating, at least temporarily, some of the security and circumstances of small, autonomous cultural groups." (Schechner 1973, 36) It is a "protected time/space where intra-group relationships may thrive without being threatened by inter-group aggression.", (ibid.) where "special gestures arise" (ibid.). Within this safe space, participants can engage in behavior which would be risky elsewhere, behavior

Schechner refers to as "dark play". (Schechner 1995, 27)

He is influenced by the anthropologist Victor Turner, whose work on the role of initiation rites in aboriginal cultures was important in the establishment of performance studies—a field Schechner himself also helped found. Schechner likens workshop participation to a *liminoid* (voluntary) initiation rite, which can have temporary as well as permanent effects on a person. (ibid., 258)

The work in a craft workshop also integrates performative elements. Sennett writes about the workshop as a site where a "perhaps unresolvable conflict between autonomy and authority plays out." (Sennett 2008, 80) The authority of the craftsperson is derived from "seeing what others don't see, knowing what they don't know". (ibid., 78) Autonomy is born in the idea of originality in the work, but can be undermined in "the power relations between artist and patron." (ibid., 73)

In *Together: The Rituals, Pleasures and Politics of Cooperation*, Sennett writes about the role of informal gestures, including sound, in the production process, social life and pedagogy of the craft workshop. The informality of collaborative crafting helps foster "cooperation under duress", useful inside the workshop as well as outside of it. "[T]he gestures which bond are learned behaviour rather than involuntary reflexes; the better we get at gesture, the more visceral and expressive informality becomes". (Sennett 2012, 208)

The anthropologist Wendy Gunn also emphasizes the importance of gesture in her study on situated learning within skilled practitioners' workplaces. Citing the French anthropologist André Leroi-Gourhan, she states that "intelligence lies in human gesture itself, as a synergy of human being, tool and raw material". (Gunn 2007, 107) She argues that we must understand the interrelationships between perception, creativity and skill to make sense of personal growth and development. (ibid.)

Today, many of the traditional values and habits of the craft workshop are preserved at institutions. In art and craft schools, the shared studio spaces are often the heart of the institution, much more than lecture rooms or auditoriums. Personal instruction in workshops means that much of the knowledge never is written down: "Seeing becomes a way of knowing and learning involves feeling one's way into a situated context." (ibid., 116)

The last exercise of my research project took place just in such an institution workshop, the glass workshop at the University of Art in Bucharest. Together with the glass artist Lucian Butucariu, who has headed the glass institution and built up the studio, and the technicians Gavril Oşan and Longhin Micas, we recorded the playful production of a glass sculpture, focusing on the sonic interplay of tools, materials and machines.

Whereas clay and paint allow for exploring and iterative movements, hot glass is a more demanding material, dictating the tempo and coordination of our gestures. And whereas the ceramicist and painter's studios are relatively serene places, the glass hotshop is a buzzing, fizzing, boiling mess, making sound recording a completely different challenge.

The exercises I have organized with craft practitioners took place in their workshops, but were also themselves performance workshops, where we engaged in the *risky behavior* of letting go of technique in a search for musical aspects of craft expression. Using Oliveros' *deep listening* approach, we investigated the *network of vibrations* that underpins materiality. Like Schneider's *savages*, we *recontextualized the tools* of craft as music instruments, and performed a *rite of passage* to become musicians. Whether the effects were temporary or permanent, time will tell.

24. Gropius 1992, 38.
25. Marx 1996, 186.

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IN THE MAKING

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