

Proposal for presentation

Abstract:

Silent acts

In contemporary artistic practice sound has gained wide recognition as its own independent medium. Less clear is the notion of what actually constitutes a sound-based art and what unites the many and very different approaches to working with sound.

A recurrent point of reference in this debate seems to be John Cage and in particular Cage's notion of silence, as it appears in his artistic practice and his writings. It seems that the notion of silence in this respect allows for an expanded understanding of sound and the act of listening, thus moving the attention from the material qualities of the sonic phenomena to the conditions for listening.

This shift has certain consequences. Among others it opens towards a renewed phenomenological investigation of the relationship between sound and the environment. Just as important but only addressed to a lesser degree it calls out for a reflection upon the social and political dimension of the listening act and the critical potential of a sound-based artistic practice.

This paper will address the notion of silence and listening as it appears in contemporary artistic practice with the aim of highlighting different approaches to an expanded idea of sound.

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Technical need for presentation: projector and sound system (source is laptop)