Exhibit Curation for Sounds

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ABSTRACT

This article is about a practice-based research on curating exhibits of sounds and exhibits for and about listening in the Philippines. The term "sounds" is used in this essay to refer to sound art works and music. As one of the few active curators who have been exhibiting sound/music in Manila in the past decade, I reflected on exhibits I have curated over the years as well as exhibits curated or staged by my contemporaries. This essay is a contemplation on and examination of lessons from such exhibits that may be useful in developing curatorial practice for sound exhibition in the Philippines. Special attention is given to exhibiting sounds as a counterpoint to the more conventional acts of performing sounds or exhibiting objects to look at. The act of exhibiting sounds, though it may appear random, actually expands the curatorial practice. This paper proposes that in exhibiting sounds, the task and responsibility of curators are not limited to selecting or putting up objects but cover a trifecta of affective actors. Sounds, spaces, and bodies perform together in sound exhibits, where each component contributes to a wholeness that the exhibit tries to achieve. Specifically, this paper focuses on exhibited sounds as omni-participant, observable boundaries of spaces, and frames audiences of such as listening bodies. Understanding the nature of sound as an exhibitable object (i.e., a physical object, idea, or sensation) vis-à-vis the act of exhibiting and of exhibition, as well as the place of sound among the audience, forms a complex armature that shapes the particular challenges and opportunities of exhibiting non-visual (art) objects.

Keywords: exhibiting, curating, music, sound art, Philippines

Introduction

The founder, director, and curator of the Museum of Portable Sounds John Kannenberg once asked, "what is at stake in creating an institution that focuses on listening to sound rather than looking at objects?" (174). In approaching the focus of this paper, I ask a similar question focusing on curating sound exhibits, rather than creating an institution (i.e., in curatorial studies building museums/ galleries, archives, libraries and instrumentarium). The question "What is at stake in curating

sound exhibits that focus on listening to sound rather than looking at objects?" still poses a big challenge. Although exhibiting sounds, which involves the crossover of practices may be familiar to many, it does pose challenges, because of its different requirements. Rick Altman comments on approaching cinema by studying sound, rather than the usual visual entry: "'remember how hard it is to see the duck once you've been shown the rabbit?'" The challenge of such an inquiry is in contesting a "prior image-based Gestalt" (171). Exhibiting sounds must contend with the familiarity of exhibits as a visual experience for audiences. Appraising exhibiting as an auditory experience is something new, and is maybe still unusual.

Historically, while museums have collected and exhibited objects that represent human activity, sound objects were not one of them. The objects containing sound or music recordings, like wax cylinders, magnetic tapes, vinyl records may have found their way to museum displays, but they are displayed as sound carriers.. There are rarely played; listening is deemed "more appropriately" done in the archives. However, because of contemporary approaches to curation, sound objects began to be heard, and their sounding (i.e., refers to both what the sound contains and what sound may be perceived) more than their containers, became the subject of exhibits.

I have always subscribed to the archaic definition of curation, which comes from the Latin "cura"' or "curatus," which means to care, or somebody who takes care of something/someone. As a discipline, this caring involves selecting, organizing, presenting, and looking after collections or exhibitions, and is guided by standards prescribed by relevant international organizations. As a praxis, curation becomes a question of the specificity of the case at hand—what is being collected or exhibited, and what is being cared for? Attending to specificity, however, means that the practice has to be dynamic and flexible to meet what the objects at hand demand.

In trying to answer the Kannenberg question and to confront Altman's challenge, this essay appraises sounds as a **performing object**—not as a performance object (as in those that are heard in concerts), but as something that performs as an exhibited object. I approach this query from my position as an artist and curator.[1] The first thing I do as an artist is to listen to the auditory objects that I want to put together and present. The first thing I do as a curator is to listen to the space where sound will be exhibited.

Curating sounds for exhibition is not too different from creating sound work. Although the approach and point of entry are different, one is faced with similar variables that have to be considered in creating the *whole-ness* of the work or

exhibit. Ros Bandt defines sound installation "as a place, which has been articulated spatially with sound elements for the purpose of listening over a long time span" (353). In creating or exhibiting sound art, one has to consider the possible bodies (audiences) who would go to the exhibit and how these bodies would engage with the sound work (e.g. intentionally or incidentally) and move around the space (randomly or purposefully). Another important consideration is the intention of the sounds and how the space would allow or restrict this intention. It follows that the characteristics of the space and how the sound art works might populate or overwhelm spaces and bodies should also be examined. Exhibiting sounds, then, may be considered "a form of sound installation"—an art within art. It becomes a controversial affair because it challenges conventional views on sounds (or music) and exhibitions. One may have to clarify 1) the difference between performing sounds and exhibiting sounds and 2) the difference between exhibiting for seeing and exhibiting for listening. In elaborating a response to these concerns, this essay examines the three variables in sound art curation identified above, namely, sounds, spaces, bodies, as performing objects in relation to their nature, place, characteristics, and conception. Although sounds, spaces, and bodies are understood as disparate factors, together they form a complex armature that gives shape to a particular discourse of exhibiting non-visual (art) objects.

In this essay I draw heavily from the my curatorial experiences in six exhibitions staged in Manila, Philippines,[2] namely, *Ikotoki Para* (2014),[3] *Listening Terminals* (2016),[4] *reading Maceda, Prelude* (2017),[5] *Attitude of the Mind* (2017),[6] *Composite Circuits* (2018),[7] and *Drone Progression* (2019).[8] I also draw lessons from exhibits curated or staged in the same city by other artists/curators who are my contemporaries: *Sound Art Festival* by Wire Tuazon at Surrounded By Water (1999/2015), *Reverb* by Claro and Eileen Ramirez at the Lopez Museum (2011), *Deus ex Machina* by Tad Ermitaño at 1335 (2015), *In Transit* by Rica Estrada at the Cultural Center of the Philippines (CCP) (2015), *Transmitto* at the CCP (2015), *This too shall past* at the University of the Philippines Vargas Museum (2015), and *Vocalisations* at Ayala Malls, Makati (2017) by Teresa Barrozo. Among these exhibits, *Ikotoki Para* and *Vocalisations* are soundscapes, while *Listening Terminals, Sound Art Festival, This too shall past, Transmitto,* and *In Transit* are compositive works. Meanwhile, *Transmitto, reading Maceda, Prelude* and *Attitude of the Mind* are largely exhibitions of music and archival collections and *Reverb, Deus ex Machina, Composite Circuits* and *Drone Progression* are sound art exhibits.

Sounds

"One does not hear the image of the sound, but the sounds themselves."

— Jean-Louis Baudry, "The Apparatus"

The terms "sounds" or "sound work" refer to sound art works and/or music. Although I recognize that they are fundamentally different, for this essay, these two are viewed as the **exhibited object**. To reiterate a point made in the introduction, sounds are **performing objects**, and their performance is to be exhibited as objects. What does it mean to say that an exhibited object is performing?

"Sound" can refer to various things. In scientific terms, sound is a vibration or a wave. As an object, sound is "invisible" but it can be felt. It cannot be seen but it exists; it is present. LaBelle describes sound as a relational phenomenon that occupies even the space beyond where the sounding happens. It also interacts with other sound sources and bodies in the space where the sound is heard or felt (as a vibration).[9] Hence, listening to or experiencing sound, even with headphones, "is never really a private affair" (LaBelle x). For Alan Licht, "sounds can indicate aliveness, connotes companionship, and reminds the listeners of his [sic] own presence" (Licht 17). These two characterizations suggest that sound is not only feelable but also **omni-participatory**. By this I mean that sound is not only present (as in "there") to present (as in "stage") itself. Rather, it participates (affects, forms a part of) in all the activities that comprise the wholeness of the exhibit. It participates in the spatial, relational, sensorial, and conceptual (including political and economic) production of space and experience of bodies. Sound is as sociable as it is fluid.

In an exhibition, this omni-participation is the behaviour that an exhibited object performs. It participates in the production of other sounds, the "sonic atmosphere" (Rönnenberg and Löwgren 126) of the space, and the experience of the audience. Essential to appreciating this is the physicality of sound when exhibited. The exhibits enumerated above may be classified into two general types. The first is where the exhibited object is a recorded sound. The manner of exhibition is the projection of the recording from a player using either loudspeakers or headphones and the audience is supplied the "completed version" of the exhibited object. The second type is where the sound is generated on-site. Sounds are exhibited when instruments in the installation are played, whether such playing is digital or electronically automated, or the audience interacts with them. In the second type, the object is live sound and the manner of exhibition is an interactive display of instruments. Exhibited objects are activated by the audience. There might be other observable types in other exhibits, but in the case of the exhibits examined for this study, these are the prominent types.

It may appear that exhibiting recorded sound is easy because the object is already made or is a self-contained completed work. In one respect, this is true, but the use of recorded sound also presents other challenges. For example, recorded sounds may come in popular digital formats (e.g., MP3, WAV, AIFF) or as analogue recordings (e.g., cassette tape, vinyl, open reel magnetic tape). Besides listening to the work, the first task of the curator is to choose the record player. Ideally, especially when it is not the artist who is installing, the work should be accompanied by instructions from the artist on what kind of player should be used. If these instructions are not available, the curator must consult the artist regarding the intended projection of the sound. The curator also has to decipher how the artist imagined the piece to be listened to. Common questions that articulate this concern are whether to use headphones or speakers, amplitude or volume, and whether the work requires equalization or if it may be projected as it comes. Does the artist imagine the listener to be listening while seated? Does the artist intend the audience to be still while listening or should the audience be moving? Does the artist intend for the work to be listened to by an individual, pair, or group? Should the artist not be available to answer these questions, past staging of the work or similar works by the same artist may be used as reference.[10]

Another task for the curator is to present an evaluation of the audience to the artist, and/or to factor it in in designing the exhibit. In particular, the curator should be able to identify the possible responses of the audience to the exhibited material based on past observation and/or research. The curator should have a measure of how much of the exhibited material the audience may be willing to listen to and to assess whether audience members have a tendency to fidget or can manage to stay still. Two things are being measured here—the attention span of the audience and how they conduct themselves (Bandt 354). Both aspects are important because the audience's movement contributes to the sound (Licht 18); when an audience walks, their footsteps, which create sound or vibration, introduce additional perceptible elements to the sound work. Some works may require the audience to move,[11] but just the same, the curator has to be able to consider this movement vis-à-vis the intention of the work. This will be discussed further in the section on bodies.

Sounds also tell stories. This is another form of their omni-participation—they approach the audience through a narrative or at least a theme. This is closely related to another task that the curator should consider: the placement or the position of the work within the gallery. This should be guided by three main things. First, the placement of the work should be consistent with the artist's intention. Second, especially in the case of multiple artists, multiple works, or both, the curator should consider how the placement of the works affects their

content or narrative. And third, the placement of the work should consider the sonic atmosphere, which is not only composed of the sound works, but also of other sound sources and the space architecture's acoustic quality (Rönnenberg and Löwgren, 129, 132). The exhibited objects should thus be arranged in a manner similar to dramaturgy, as their placement in space determines the story that they tell (Bandt 358).

These same three tasks of the curator are also considered when exhibiting interactive works, or sounds that are generated on-site, in addition to specific considerations. The curator must consider how the artist views their work. The work may be viewed as complete, requiring the audience's interaction in activating the work and taking it to another level of production, which is performance. Alternatively, the work may be considered incomplete until the instrument is activated while it is on display. Whichever perspective is taken, the curator should be aware that they are designing or preparing for a "people's social performance" (Rönnenberg and Löwgren 134), and that this performance, although regulated, cannot always be controlled.

As is the case with recorded sound, the installation of an instrument or sounding object must also be guided by the artist's instruction. Does the artist imagine the audience approaching the works one-by-one? Can the work be approached in pairs or groups? What is the projected tenacity of the instrument? Does it have weak parts that have to be protected? Again, should the artists not be available to answer these questions, past staging should be used as reference.

The curator also has to evaluate the audience of interactive works perhaps more closely than that of recorded sounds because the interest and readiness of the audience in "touching a work of art" must be gauged. This is specifically important for sound art, because for the longest time, museums and galleries have taught audiences not to touch art. The placement of the instruments of onsite-generated sounds is also more demanding compared to that required for recorded sound. While both rely on the placement of objects in the space to create a narrative, the irregularity of the sounds produced with the latter is a big factor in considering placement. The curator should be able to decide in which part of the space a particular sound is focal and where it becomes peripheral (Rönnenberg and Löwgren 127).

In examining sounds as an exhibited object, one has to be aware that the three components of sound exhibits—sounds, spaces, and bodies—are never passive. Sounds, especially, are omni-participant in forming the sound work, manifesting in the space, and directing bodies. It is strongly suggested that this participation or performance of sound be always directed by the intention of the artist, the

characteristics of the audience, and the capacity of the spaces to create an experiential environment.

Spaces

"There is no such thing as the curating of objects without curating the spatial setting."

— Peter J. Schneemann, "Curating Spaces"

Space is both a staging ground for and participant in exhibiting sound. It is a staging ground in terms of Euclidean and Cartesian models of space, which hold that it is in three-dimensional space where we locate sounds and bodies (Ouzounian 76). Space not only determines the sonic texture of its architecture (Sterne 1), but also defines the paths of mobility for bodies.

The exhibits that were examined used four general types of spaces: 1) The gallery or museum, which are typically "white cube" spaces; 2) artist-run spaces, which may have multiple functions, such as a gallery, studio, bar, performance and talk venues, or selling space; 3) commercial galleries, which are a different version of the "white cube", and; 4) outdoor spaces within a university campus. There is no one best way to exhibit sound in these spaces. What these spaces have in common however is that they were conceived with "(art) looking" in mind (to the extent that even outdoor space is primarily optically coded). Considering that it is difficult to contain sound in a space (Licht 11), the foremost challenge in exhibiting sound is how to control it as intended by the artist based on the material, structural, and atmospheric limitations of the built space.

Licht proposes that curators pay attention to the amplitude of sounds and consider factors like the intention of the artist, the size of the space, the volume level vis-à-vis comfort level, the audience's tolerance for sound, neighboring works, and so on (Licht 11). Additionally, they should also pay attention to the presence of "other sounds" (sounds that are not part of the work) within the space, and determine whether they are persistent or occasional, overwhelming or ambient. The curator may then choose to accommodate these sounds in the work or bar them from entering the work. For the latter, curators may use headphones, separate exhibit rooms, or, as Licht proposes, control amplitude and timing. But there is more to the space than controlling the volume of the sound. One also has to consider the size and shape of the room, the construction materials used for the walls, ceiling, and floor, how much space the work and people can occupy, and even some variables that may seem totally unrelated to the work, like the air-conditioning or the distance between the room and the streets or the toilets.[12] Understanding these factors in museums and galleries is usually not difficult, as these spaces have construction plans that the curator may review before installing works.

Among the spaces mentioned, an outdoor space is the most challenging site in which to put up an exhibit (but the one that I personally enjoy the most) because no walls surround the space. An outdoor space also poses an extra challenge if it is not coded as an art space as most outdoor public spaces are. In the two sound exhibits (and others that are not necessarily for or about sounds) that I curated, I learned that, even without walls, outdoor spaces present distinct borders, patterns, or habits—their own stamp. These borders, patterns, and habits may not be mechanically accurate, but may be perceptible if one observes the space closely for a duration of time. For example, on a particular street, one can observe when human or vehicle traffic is at its densest—when people tend to stop or move along, in which direction, and what factors influence this movement. These are unmarked but **observable boundaries**. Coding these observable boundaries, whether marked or unmarked, as appropriate for the sound work, requires us to expand our understanding of space.

This brings us to grapple with the conceptual limitations of the Euclidean and Cartesian models of space, which configure it as a receptacle of sound (Ouzounian 76), rather than as a discursive participant. Early composers who worked with spatio-temporal motivations, like Edgard Varese, observed that "every listener has a unique experience of a given work depending on his or her position in the auditorium, and that a work cannot be fully appreciated outside of the particular, contingent situations of hearing" (Ouzounian 76). Additionally, LaBelle tells us that sound "performs with and through space: it navigates geographically, reverberates acoustically, and structures socially" (xi). Henri Lefebvre's conception of space as a social construct is also helpful. His conceptual triad tells us that space is produced from the interaction of spatial practice or the perceived space, representations of space or the conceived space, and representational space or the lived space (Ouzounian 85). These ideas bring to fore the intersubjectivity of spaces and thus, their discursiveness in the whole affair of exhibiting sound. Spaces are therefore not only physical containers but are part of the performance, along with the sound object and bodies.

One should not simply ask then how to contain sounds in a particular space; rather, as Ouzuonian proposes, curators should ask: "how are spaces constructed, socially and politically? How do spatially organised sound works reflect and resist these constructions? What is the role of the public in shaping these forms?" (89). This question may be best approached by rethinking the spaces where one exhibits sound as **experiential realms** (Ouzounian 89), wherein acoustic relationships are forged. Given their interrelations, sounds must be thought of as having social relationships.

To expound on this, I will draw from my experience in exhibiting the *Listening Terminals,* which was one of my early attempts to apply my hypothesis that space is a participant in sound exhibition as a performance. For *Listening Terminals,* DIY sensor-triggered MP3 players with speakers were installed on rough wooden stands. These stands were then installed on the lamp posts lining the Academic Oval of the University of the Philippines Diliman campus. The Academic Oval is a busy street, as it is the main artery that brings vehicles from the University entrances toward the oldest part of the University, where the first colleges stand, and where the Main Library and the Administration Building are located. I grew up on this campus, so I am very familiar with this street. Having already recognized the existence of observable boundaries, for this project, I chose the part of the street directly in front of the College of Music. There is one waiting shed in this part of the street. It is also the tail of the Academic Oval, the last curb before an exiting vehicle goes back to the University Avenue and leaves the campus. This is the point of the Oval where the cars slow down to collect passengers or turn the corner, before speeding up again beyond the curb. Aside from being a main road for vehicles, the Academic Oval also functions as a park and a route for joggers, bikers, and walkers. The part of the street I chose is one of the places where people congregate to rest, buy snacks, chat, and generally socialize. Since this area is in front of the College of Music, people are used to hearing sound/music from the studios of studying, performing, or rehearsing students and teachers. I thought it interesting to introduce another sound in this already sound-saturated place. The challenge I faced then was how to make the busy-ness of the space work to the project's advantage—how do I turn something familiar into a new experiential realm?

Fig. 1. Original staging of *Listening Terminals* along the Academic Oval in front of Abelardo Hall. This outdoor exhibit was part of the Project Bakawan Festival. In the photo are two visiting Japanese artists. Photo courtesy of the author.

Fig. 2. *Listening Terminals* repurposed during *reading Maceda: Prelude at Bulwagan ng Dangal*. Foregrounding the photo are National Artists Ramon Santos and Virgilio Almario. Photo courtesy of the author.

Fig. 3. *Listening Terminals* restaged during the exhibit *Reroute* at the Vargas Museum. Photo courtesy of the author.

The work that I chose for this space was something that would play when triggered by movement. Motion sensing was crucial, so that when a jogger, pedestrian, or a person waiting for a ride passed through the Listening Terminal, a sound would play, and this sound must be something different from what would usually be heard from the College or from vehicles on the street. The latency and range of sensors

were also varied, so that it would take some time before the audience figured out a pattern for the experience. The final piece I added in the work was a blinker that turned on a few seconds before the sound played, and that lingered for a few seconds after the sound had played out. This element was another experiment, through which I hoped to observe the synaesthetic "habits" of people as part of the experientiality of space. This space—this part of the street—was not significantly altered, as far as the soundscape and visualscape were concerned. What I altered was how people interacted with the space. They were given sensorial triggers that caught their attention and made them stop and "do something else."

A few months later, I brought *Listening Terminals*, containing the same sound works, inside the Vargas Museum (the University Museum). It was exhibited along a corridor of the museum. Since the listening terminals were designed to aesthetically merge with street lamp posts, they became highly noticeable when they were brought inside the white cube. Audiences approached them to listen instead of discovering them while they were doing something else, as they would have on the street. A year later, I brought the same terminals to Bulwagan ng Dangal (another gallery in the University), this time as part of the exhibit *reading Maceda: Prelude*. I replaced the sound works with the compositions of National Artist for Music Jose Maceda, whose 100th Birth Anniversary was being celebrated. By then, the Listening Terminals had stopped being an artwork, and instead became an appliance (i.e., generally speaking, the equipment used that contains what is exhibited is called an appliance). This means that instead of the listening terminal itself being presented as an art object, it became a playback machine for the Maceda composition. It was difficult to view it otherwise, because the exhibit directed the audience to the Maceda work, and not towards appreciating the listening devices.

There are numerous cases that I can share to expound on how space is not only the site of staging but also a participant in shaping the whole feeling and meaning of sound exhibits. Space becomes experiential when sound is projected to be in contact with bodies who react to, towards, or against it. The sounds projected, then, do not only end up occupying space, but, more importantly, interact with bodies who receive them (Licht 11). Sounds are not only projected in space; they are installed or mapped to design an experience that would allow the interrelation of sounds (whether these emanate from the work, other sounds that are not "art," or the space itself) (Bandt 358). Finally, as exhibitor or audience, the experience of exhibiting sound is a social affair in which we perceive not a dud object in a passive space, but one wherein we are imbricated in the social and political construction of the object, the space, and even our bodies.[13]

Bodies

"Space seems to be a movement that emanates from your own body, or flow through it."

— *de La Motte-Haber,* ''Sound-Spaces-Fields-Objects"

Individuals have their own habits of experiencing exhibits, including their own pace, and their own sense of direction around exhibition halls. Over time, audiences collectively develop a certain decorum that they perform in art spaces.[14] This may be imposed through education (e.g., museums and galleries). We grew up being told: "no running in the museum," "no pushing," "stay silent," "do not touch the display," and so on. Some of these injunctions are not applicable when one goes to an exhibit of sound. The popular understanding or impression of the space also affects our decorum. People conceive of a commercial gallery as a place of business, where people conduct deals, then leave. On the flipside, artist-run spaces are seen as places for artists and their art, and therefore are viewed as "home," so people tend to linger in them. Again, as the outdoors are usually not coded as art space, people tend to go about their own affairs, and the curatorial task is how to engage or challenge their affairs in service to the art, taking into account the perceived, conceived, and lived layers of that space.[15]

Regardless of the type of spaces where sounds are exhibited, to make people "the audience" of an exhibit is to turn them into **listening bodies**. As suggested by Ouzuonian, a listening body is "a productive element of space, where space is understood not only as a physical quantity but also a production that includes the body and social action within its scope" (Ouzounian 84). Although people are more used to going to museums and galleries to "see art," listening in museums is not new—museum-goers listen to audio-recorded guides, ambient sounds, announcements, sounds spilling from other spaces into the museum (Licht 12), or even the chatter of other audiences. What is new is "listening to art" and listening as a primary rather than an auxiliary activity.

The two types of exhibited objects mentioned in the first section of this article—recorded sound and onsite-generated sound—each require a different kind of listening. As explained, the difference lies in the control the audience wields over what to listen to and for how much and how long. For the first type, audiences are given what they have to listen to. The duration, amplitude, texture, colour, etc. of the work are already set. For the second type, audiences are given instruments, and they create sound and, at the same time, listen to it.

If the point of sound exhibits is to listen, why take them to museums, when we already listen in concerts, or even on our phones? I propose that the practice of listening in an exhibit is different from listening in a music event (whether collectively, as in concerts, or privately, like on headphones), even if one is listening to the same sound.[16] Listening bodies move spatially and temporally. In terms of spatiality, the listening body is assigned a seat or chooses a spot (especially in outdoor concerts) in a music event. The music one hears from their designated spot is not exactly the same music heard by those occupying a different seat. While the sound waves travel in space, the distance of the sound source to the listening bodies, and the direction from where the sounds are coming cause this difference. Audiences may be listening to one piece but they are hearing different versions of it. This characteristic of sound which holds true in exhibited sounds, is something the curator or artist can take advantage of to further engage a listening body. The direction of the sound may cue the listening body to move from one work to another. The distance of a sound (like a small beeping or tapping at the far end of an exhibition area) may interest the listening body to come closer to it. Likewise, the closeness of a sound to the listening body (like a whisper played on headphones) may evoke more attention or other reactions from the listener.

Temporality is responsible for a much bigger difference between performed and exhibited sound in curatorial consideration (Bandt 354). While in concerts (and other performances), the music is only available to the audience during a performance, in exhibits, the sounds are there for as long as the latter are ongoing, which is usually longer than performance durations. The audience can listen to the piece many times over, or can freely move away without finishing the piece, or return to it. In sound exhibits, unlike in visual exhibits, an audience moving away from the work, could still possibly hear it. This is something that can be taken advantage of curatorially. In a group exhibition, especially where several sounding works are not separated by walls, a cacophony (if not actually symphony) may be created, just like what I did for *Attitude of the Mind*. When audiences move closer to each work, they will have a better chance of focal hearing while the composite of all other sounds is within their peripheral hearing (Rönneberg and Löwgren 127). This example demonstrates that a listening body moving away from a work does not mean that they have stopped listening. The nature of the exhibited object and the design of the exhibit may "force" the listening body to keep on listening.

According to Licht in his discussion on walking pieces, audiences have difficulty participating in sound works because it takes too much of their time, or because listening is not the traditional way of interacting with artworks, or because the materials often used for sound exhibitions are not conventionally art-coded

materials (Licht 20). I find that these are all too relevant to the issue of exhibiting sound. However, one should also consider that sound can be heard in all parts of the body (besides the ear). For example, in the exhibit *Ikotoki Para,* I placed a speaker connected to the audio player atop a hollow wooden box where audience members are asked to sit. This was done because the exhibit was inspired by the my experience of riding a jeepney, which usually has speakers underneath the passengers' seat. Listening with one's buttocks is indeed a non-traditional way of interacting with an artwork. It demonstrates however, that the listening bodies have more than their ears (or eyes) to use in receiving the work.

This is the beauty of doing sound exhibits. Everybody who can hear (through the ear or other parts) is a listening body. The challenge then is to keep them listening while they are still in the space of performance, which is the exhibition. Key to this is the positioning of the participating sounds in relation to each other, which depends on a thorough understanding of how the space can accommodate or enhance what the sound provides.

Conclusion

The question of curating a sound exhibition is inevitably a multi-pronged one. It is a question of curating sound and of exhibiting sound, against the backdrop of the more familiar question of curating exhibitions. In this essay, I identified the three main actors—sounds, spaces, and bodies— that make up a sound exhibit. I call them actors, and not factors, to emphasize that they perform *with* and *for* the exhibit, and are not merely passive containers or mediums of the message of the exhibit. To reiterate: actors make the exhibit.

Sound is presented in the essay as a performing object—an omni-participating actor that demands to be recognized in designing the space. Sound has movements, actions, volume, presence, and message, among other characteristics. Space is presented as an observable boundary, not only a site. Space not only gives form to sound, but may also alter its characteristics and those of listening bodies. Bodies in this essay refers to the audiences who move around the exhibit. As listening bodies, their position and movement affect the exhibition of sound. I propose that these three actors be made to work together in curating (caring for) sound and exhibiting (re/presenting) sound, and ultimately in curating sound exhibits. This means that in exhibiting sounds, the tasks and responsibility of curators are not limited to the objects; they are also expected to coordinate this trifecta of affective actors. As in music, harmony is almost always desired.

I have always thought of exhibiting as a form of storytelling. Listening is my favorite story. What I shared above are some of the lessons that I have learned in the short decade that I have been curating sounds. In the stories I have told, I have learned how to recognize the characteristics of sounds, spaces, and bodies as resources in furthering my storytelling. This has pushed me not only to challenge the conventional way of seeing art or listening to music but also to embrace the playful dissidence of listening as an art form, providing new experiences and creating new stories. The story is never the same when one listens.

NOTES

1. It is worth mentioning that I am an independent curator, not an institutional curator. My curatorial works, therefore, like my sound works, are not generated based on or for an institutional agenda, but stem solely from my own creative agenda. My curatorial projects, including those exhibited in my home university, are all contract-based.

2. Self-referencing becomes necessary as I am one of the few active curators exhibiting sound/music in Manila in the past decade.

3. IKOTOKI Para. https://pages.upd.edu.ph/ikotokipara/home.

4. *Listening Terminals* [for Project Bakawan]. http://www.dayangyraola.com/2015/02/listening-terminals.html.

5. *reading Maceda*: PRELUDE. http://www.dayangyraola.com/2018/11/reading-maceda-prelude.html.

6. *Attitude of the Mind*. http://www.dayangyraola.com/2018/11/attitude-of-mind.html.

7. *compositenoises* SERIES. https://compositenoises.dayangyraola.com/search/label/circuites.

8. *Drone Progression*. http://www.dayangyraola.com/2019/12/drone-progression-2019.html.

9. For Licht, "Vibrations are something we feel, and sound waves are often interacting with not only our ears but other parts of our body" (10). Ros Bandt shares a similar idea: "sound is felt through the skin and invades the body" (353).

10. This is the reason why I also emphasize the importance of documenting not just the work but also the staging/exhibiting of works.

11. As in the case of *Listening Terminal* , where the sensor of the audio player is triggered by body movements.

12. In some cases, these introduce sounds that may interact with the works that are exhibited in the galleries. For example, if the walls are too thin and the room is too close to the toilet, there is a possibility that every time someone flushes the toilet the sound will travel to the exhibit room. Some air conditioning units are too loud or are even too cold. Cold temperatures change the density of sound; it also affects electronic gadgets which are common parts used in building sound instruments.

13. Ouzuonian proposes a similar thought: "sound practice can emerge not only as a poetics, but as a politics, not only as an aesthetics, but as an ethics" (74).

14. This observation may apply too to non-art spaces.

15. As proposed by Lefebvre.

16. Like what I did for Jose Maceda compositions for the exhibits *reading Maceda: Prelude*, *Attitude of the Mind*, and *What has it got to do with coconuts and rice?*

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