



Hartware MedienKunstVerein

Press release

Sounds Like Silence

An exhibition by Hartware MedienKunstVerein (HMKV)

25 August 2012 – 6 January 2013

HMKV at Dortmunder U

Dortmund, 23 August 2012 In 2012 the world celebrates the centenary of John Cage's birth and the sixtieth anniversary of the premiere of the composer's "silent piece" 4'33" (four minutes, thirty-three seconds). This composition in three movements without intentional sounds is Cage's most prominent work today. The **exhibition *Sounds Like Silence*** organized by the Hartware MedienKunstVerein (HMKV) shows how artists continue to refer to 4'33", whether explicitly or by addressing wider issues such as silence and sound ecology. The exhibition features work by more than 40 international artists.

The exhibition, which runs from 25 August 2012 to 6 January 2013, unfolds over four floors at the **Dortmunder U – Center for Art and Creativity**. It will occupy the entire 3rd floor (HMKV) and the 6th floor (Gallery) space for temporary exhibitions. Furthermore the Lautsprecher (4th floor) will host a programme of sound art, and the RWE Forum I U Cinema will stage performances, talks and film screenings.

The exhibition effectively starts in the wee hours of 24 August 2012 with the **radio broadcast *Sounds Like Silence*** on **Deutschlandradio Kultur** (00:05 to 1 am). The broadcast is subsequently published as a CD on the label Gruenrekorder and will be available in the exhibition.

The **opening** at Dortmunder U starts at 7 pm on 24 August 2012, concurrently with the exhibition *FLUXUS – Art for All!* of Museum Ostwall. Both exhibitions will run through 6 January 2013. During the opening the entrance is free of charge. In the days between the opening of the exhibition on 24 August and the anniversary of the premiere of 4'33" on 29 August 2012 the HMKV will host a week-long **programme of events** including live performances, concerts, artists' talks, a discussion panel with the authors of the accompanying publication, lectures, film screenings and excursions (for details please refer to the press release detailing the programme).

The exhibition *Sounds Like Silence* comprises work by Manon de Boer (NL/BE), John Cage (USA), Martin Creed (UK), Merce Cunningham (USA), Guy Debord (FR), Einstürzende Neubauten (DE), Pierre Huyghe (FR), Yves Klein (FR), Collective Actions (RU), Shigeo Kubota (JP/USA), Christian Marclay (USA), Bruce Nauman (USA), Max Neuhaus (USA), Nam June Paik (KR/DE), People Like Us (Vicki Bennett) (UK), Robert Rauschenberg (USA), Harald Schmidt (DE) & Helge Schneider (DE), Mladen Stilinovic (HR), Gillian Wearing (UK), and many more.

Curators of the exhibition: Inke Arns (Dortmund) and Dieter Daniels (Leipzig)

Sounds Like Silence

The title of this exhibition—*Sounds Like Silence*—is ambiguous. On the one hand, silence effectively ‘sounds’—or as Cage put it, “there is no such thing as silence.” On the other hand, sound needs silence in order to be heard. Even if complete silence does not exist, every sound implicitly conveys the notion of silence: there is no presence without absence. The double meaning of *Sounds Like Silence* therefore touches upon the central issues at stake in this exhibition and the accompanying publication: what do we hear when there is nothing to hear? To what extent do we long for silence? And with how much silence can we cope—provided it even exists?

Starting point

4'33" is often referred to as “four minutes and thirty-three seconds of silence” or the “silent piece.” Yet *4'33"* is not so much about silence than about sound, or even noise. It implicates the active hearing of ambient sounds—the sounds that are constantly surrounding us, and in this specific case, the non-intentional sounds occurring during the performance of the three movements. In his “silent piece,” Cage lets listeners experience these sounds as music. *4'33"* implicitly encourages us to listen to what we normally fail to hear; by doing so it raises our awareness of the liveliness of our acoustic environment and our own corporeality.

Exhibition

The exhibition curated by Inke Arns and Dieter Daniels focuses on current artistic references to *4'33"*. Starting with a section dedicated to various scores of *4'33"* and other pieces by John Cage, *Sounds Like Silence* conveys a lively impression of the conceptual context of this paradigmatic work and its time. Since the 1950s numerous artists have expressed similar ideas, inspired Cage or expanded on his ideas. Some of their works can be seen in the exhibition (a.o. **Robert Rauschenberg, Yves Klein, Guy Debord** and **Heinrich Böll**). The various scores of *4'33"* and the audiovisual recordings documenting the performances of the work illustrate its alterations over the four decades from 1952 to 1992, as Cage continually developed it.

The exhibition is not a retrospective, however, as most of the works reflect contemporary views on the notion of silence. It thus comprises numerous **installations, audio works, performances and video works**, a.o. by **Manon de Boer, Martin Creed, Pierre Huyghe, Bruce Nauman, Nam June Paik** and **Gillian Wearing**. The artists in this part of the exhibition are concerned with issues of sound ecology, and more particularly acoustic pollution (traffic noise, muzak in shopping malls, mobile phones in the public space), while simultaneously addressing the human desire for silence and questioning the status of silence in the media, both in terms of content and technology.

The show furthermore encompasses examples from the realm of popular culture which are referring to the notions inherent in *4'33"*, illustrating the status of these concepts in today's media culture (**Cage Against the Machine, Einstürzende Neubauten**, and **Harald Schmidt and Helge Schneider**, who in 2010 performed *4'33"* as a piano piece for four hands).

The wider questions of how acoustic perception has changed in the course of time and what silence means today forms the cultural, medial and social context of our endeavour. This part of the project is likely to appeal to audiences who are neither familiar with Cage nor contemporary art, as it can be directly related to aspects of their everyday lives.

The exhibition architecture was designed by Ruth Lorenz (maaskant, Berlin) to provide an inclusive experience for visitors of all backgrounds by focusing on a sensory approach of the concepts inherent in *4'33"*, while conveying their importance for the present age.

Selected works from the exhibition

Bruce Nauman – *Mapping the Studio I – All Action Edit [Fat Chance John Cage]*

7-channel video installation, unique copy, between 32:00 min. and 82:00 min., 2001

Courtesy Friedrich Christian Flick Collection im Hamburger Bahnhof

This installation consisting of seven large-scale video projections shows images of the artist's studio in New Mexico, recorded with an infrared camera for one hour every night over several months. The studio was filmed from seven different angles in Nauman's absence. Besides the objects standing or lying about in the studio, the main protagonists are the artist's cat and some mice and moths. Occasionally one hears faint noises or the nightly sounds of the rural surroundings: trees rustling in the wind, a dog barking, heavy rain falling, a train passing by at a distance. The infrared recordings from the camera, which was switched on when the artist left the studio, not only allow him to monitor what happened in his absence, but also visualize what the human eye cannot see in the darkness. ... In *Mapping the Studio*, Nauman—like Duchamp with his readymades and Cage with his compositions *4'33"* and *0'00"*—straddles the boundaries of art and non-art. His works investigate the minimal difference between that which has always been present and an art that highlights everyday acoustic or visual events, whether in the artist's studio, the concert hall or the street.

Gillian Wearing – *Sixty Minutes of Silence*

Video projection, sound, 60:00 min., 1996

Courtesy of the artist and Maureen Paley Gallery, London

“Watching Gillian Wearing's *Sixty Minutes of Silence* (1996) is something of an endurance test. The video shows a group of about thirty police officers seated on stepped benches, as though they're posing for a school photo. As Wearing's title suggests, they have been instructed to sit still and seal their lips for the duration of the shoot. As time wears on, some of them wrinkle their noses or scratch their bums, lost in their own thoughts. You find yourself wondering what's on their minds, and it's not long before you're spinning stories around their fidgety fingers. When sixty minutes have elapsed, one of the officers lets out a scream of anger and relief.”

(www.tate.org.uk/magazine/issue2/tp_everywinner.htm) *Sixty Minutes of Silence* perpetuates the tradition of *tableaux vivants* introduced at the end of the 18th century, which consists of living persons restaging famous paintings or sculptures. Wearing's 'living image', however, does not serve to achieve the completion of a movement (as was, historically, the function of *tableaux vivants*), but is itself an—initially imaginary—moving action which eventually comes to completion at the term of the sixty minutes.

Robert Rauschenberg – *White Paintings/Self-Portrait with Four White Paintings*

White Paintings, 4 paintings, acrylic on canvas, each 90 x 90 cm, 2011

Self-Portrait with Four White Paintings, painting, acrylic on canvas, 90 x 90 cm, 2010

Courtesy Collection of the Museum of American Art, Berlin

In summer 1951 the American painter Robert Rauschenberg created his first *White Paintings* at Black Mountain College in North Carolina. These monochrome works caused a scandal in the New York art scene, which was then entirely devoted to Abstract Expressionism. Rauschenberg's *White Paintings*, which Cage described as “landing strips for dust motes, light and shadow” (or, alternatively, as “airports for light and shadow”), encouraged the composer to write his “silent piece” *4'33"* the following year. Like Rauschenberg's paintings, *4'33"* is not so much concerned with nothingness or emptiness than with the inevitable presence of something. The four paintings

shown here are on loan from the Museum of American Art (MoAA) in Berlin, an educational institution founded in 2004 to collect, preserve and exhibit reminiscences of modern American art as it was shown in Europe in the fifties and early sixties.

People Like Us (Vicki Bennett) – *Cage Silenced*

Audio work, 4:33 min., 2004

Vicki Bennett aka People Like Us is a master of appropriation and live-scratching of film and video imagery. For this audio work the artist has used an interview with John Cage conducted by the US art critic Richard Kostelanetz in 1978. Among other things, Cage speaks about the techniques he employed in *Writing through Finnegans Wake* (1977) and *Writing for the Second Time through Finnegans Wake* (1977). At the time of the interview Kostelanetz was suffering from severe bronchitis, which explains why he could merely whisper his questions to “Mr Silence,” as Bennett points out: “I decided that, since Richard couldn’t talk, I would make it so that John Cage didn’t say anything either ... So I ‘language-removed’ John except for guttural sounds, breaths, and so on. As a result Richard Kostelanetz sounds like a lunatic interrogating a bound and gagged John Cage. For 4 minutes and 33 seconds, naturally.” (Vicki Bennett)

Einstürzende Neubauten – *Silence Is Sexy*

Video documenting the 20th anniversary of the band’s existence, Columbiashalle, Berlin, 5:50 min., 2000

Courtesy of Einstürzende Neubauten GbR

The Berlin-bred band Einstürzende Neubauten rose to fame in the eighties with a genre of experimental rock that combined elements of noise and industrial music. In 2000, to the surprise of fans and critics alike, they released *Silence Is Sexy*, an album revolving around the notion of silence. Their approach is epitomized by the album’s title song, which slowly unfolds from silence. The band are weaving and unravelling minimal musical patterns, opening up a space for sounds which have no place in the mainstream of pop music. Listeners hear people taking a drag from a cigarette, breathing, noises produced in the cavity of the mouth without an actual sound being uttered. This video documents a live performance by the band in Berlin on April 1st, 2000.

Harald Schmidt & Helge Schneider – *4’33’’*

Performance of *4’33’’* in the Harald Schmidt Show on Das Erste (German public TV), 7:40 min., 9 December 2010

Courtesy of Kogel & Schmidt GmbH, Grünwald, and meine SUPERMAUS GmbH, Mülheim

On December 9, 2010 the German TV presenter Harald Schmidt performed *4’33’’* in his *Late Night Show* together with the well-known musician Helge Schneider, his co-host Katrin Bauerfeind and the bandleader Helmut Zerlett. The performance received mixed reviews from the public and the media. While some praised it as an ironic comment on the dumbing-down of TV, others were incensed at Schmidt’s ‘refusal to work’ and perceived elitism. Contrary to the initial version of the work, *4’33’’* was here interpreted as a piano piece for four hands, ‘accompanied’ by a violin and the resident band. The audience in the studio reacted hesitantly, most seeing the performance as one of the presenter’s trademark self-referential jokes infused with postmodern irony. They eventually became part of the performance, laughing and applauding during the first two movements, before falling silent in the third movement.

Jens Heitjohann – *In Begleitung*

4’33’’ in twelve versions for one visitor each, 2012

Performances in the public space every Sunday from 2 to 6 pm

A performance of 4'33" provides the framework for an encounter between performers and audiences and an opportunity for listeners to embark on an encounter with themselves and with the constituents of the situation in which they experience the performance of the piece. The starting point of this project was the question how I could use Cage's composition 4'33" to initiate a moment of disruption and irritation in a familiar public environment, which would become a moment of discovery and coming together of strangers. I invited twelve inhabitants of Dortmund to create with me a version of 4'33" in the public space. The choice of venues is determined by their experiences, memories, and everyday life in an environment unknown to me. As companions, they invite members of the audience to follow them and attend a version of 4'33" performed at a venue they have chosen. (Jens Heitjohann)

Hein-Godehart Petschulat – *Still*

Video, silent newsreader (Ulrich Wickert), 5:23 min., 2004

In Hein-Godehart Petschulat's video *Still*, the German anchorman Ulrich Wickert greets viewers from the studio of his late-night news show *Tagesthemen* and then lapses into a long silence. For the purpose of this work, the artist was able to convince the prominent TV presenter to stand still in front of the camera for five minutes. The absence of reports or comments makes for an irritating viewing experience, while opening up a space for individual interpretation. By deliberately foregoing the actual audiovisual broadcasting of news items, Petschulat breaks with viewing conventions and creates a unique TV experiment. The uncanny contrast between the familiar setting of the *Tagesthemen* studio and the speaker's uneasy silence and seeming attempts to make eye contact with viewers heightens their awareness of the flood of images, sounds and information they must handle every day.

Stephen Vitiello – *World Trade Center Recordings: Winds After Hurricane Floyd*

Audio installation, photographic prints, 8:37 min., 1999

In 1999 the US sound artist Stephen Vitiello completed a six-months residency on the 91st floor of One World Trade Center in New York. The first thing that caught his attention was that the windows could not be opened, which explained why all the outside noise was drowned out by the building's air-conditioning system. Vitiello decided to install contact microphones on the safety-glass windows, so as to make audible the vibrations caused by exterior sounds such as planes taking off, church bells, the wind, police sirens etc. The recording in this exhibition was made in September 1999, when Hurricane Floyd swept over the east coast of the USA with winds of up to 150 miles per hour and wreaked havoc. As though with a stethoscope Vitiello listened to the vibrations of the 110-storey building as it swayed in the hurricane, creaking like a sailing boat and moaning like a wounded animal.

Radio broadcast

The exhibition starts in the wee hours of 24 August 2012 with the radio broadcast *Sounds Like Silence* by Inke Arns and Dieter Daniels on Deutschlandradio Kultur UKW 96.5 (00:05 to 1 am), <http://www.dradio.de/dkultur/sendungen/klangkunst/1803282/>

Compact Disc

The CD is the recording of the radio programme *Sounds Like Silence* by Inke Arns and Dieter Daniels, which is broadcast from 00:05 to 1 am on 24 August 2012 as part of the Sound Art Programme on Deutschlandradio Kultur. *Sounds Like Silence*, Gruen 116 (2012), www.gruenrekorder.de (€10 in the exhibition / €14 in book shops)

Publication

The catalogue *Sounds Like Silence* (ed. Dieter Daniels and Inke Arns, 24 x 34 cm, ca. 250 pages) is published in English by Spector Books in Leipzig, 2012, and will be available at the venue. It comprises essays by Inke Arns, Brandon LaBelle, Dieter Daniels, David Toop, Dörte Schmidt, Julia H. Schröder, and Jan Thoben, an anthology of various interpretations of *4'33''* by Hans-Friedrich Bormann, John Cage, William Fetterman, Kyle Gann, Branden W. Joseph, Douglas Kahn, Jonathan David Katz, Irwin Kremen, Liz Kotz, Julia Robinson, Simon Shaw Miller, and James Pritchett as well as critical notes on the participating artists (€25 in the exhibition, €28 in book shops).

Programme of events

In the days between the opening of the exhibition on 24 August and the anniversary of the premiere of *4'33''* on 29 August 2012 the HMKV will host a week-long programme of events including live performances, concerts, artists' talks, a discussion panel with the authors of the accompanying publication, lectures, film screenings and excursions.

The complete programme can be downloaded as a PDF from:
http://www.hmkv.de/_pdf/HMKV_SLS_Veranstaltungsprogramm_Web_Einzelseiten.pdf

Please note also the press release detailing the programme of events.

For more information, please go to: www.hmkv.de

(18.139 characters – including spaces)

SOUNDS LIKE SILENCE
Cage – 4'33" – Silence
(1912 – 1952 – 2012)

Hartware MedienKunstVerein at Dortmunder U

25 August 2012 – 6 January 2013

Concept

Dieter Daniels

Curated by

Inke Arns und Dieter Daniels

Participating artists

Dave Allen (UK), Heinrich Böll (DE), Manon de Boer (IN/BE), Jens Brand (DE), Klaus vom Bruch (DE), John Cage (US), Cage Against the Machine (UK), Martin Conrads (DE), Martin Creed (UK), Merce Cunningham (US), Paul Davis (US), Guy Debord (FR), Christopher DeLaurenti (US), Einstürzende Neubauten (DE), Carl Michael von Hausswolff (SE), Jens Heitjohann (DE), Pierre Huyghe (FR), Jonathon Keats (US), Yves Klein (FR), Kollektive Aktionen (RU), Christoph Korn (DE), Shigeko Kubota (JP/US), Brandon LaBelle (US), Henning Lohner (DE/US), Christian Marclay (US), Ciprian Muresan (RO), Bruce Nauman (US), Max Neuhaus (US), Nam June Paik (KR/DE), People Like Us (Vicki Bennett) (UK), Hein-Godehart Petschulat (DE), Robert Rauschenberg (US), Matt Rogalsky (US), Matthieu Saladin (FR), Harald Schmidt (DE) & Helge Schneider (DE), Petri Söderström-Kelley (FI), Mladen Stilinovic (HR), Ultra-red (US), Stephen Vitiello (US), Gillian Wearing (UK), Dick Whyte (NZ).

Exhibition architecture

Ruth M. Lorenz (maaskant, Berlin)

Venue

Hartware MedienKunstVerein at Dortmunder U
 HMKV (3rd floor), Gallery (6th floor), Lautsprecher (4th floor),
 RWE Forum I Kino im U (Ground floor)
 Leonie-Reygers-Terrasse, 44137 Dortmund

Duration

25 August 2012 – 6 January 2013

Opening

Friday, 24 April 2012, from 7 pm, simultaneously with the exhibition *FLUXUS – Art for All!* by the Museum Ostwall at Dortmunder U. Entrance free.

Opening hours

Tuesdays and Wednesdays 11 am–6 pm
 Thursdays and Fridays 11 am–8 pm
 Saturdays and Sundays 11 am–6 pm
 Closed on Mondays
 Holidays: www.dortmunder-u.de

Entrance

€5 / €2.50 concessions, free entrance for visitors under 18.
 Tickets are valid for several visits of the exhibition.

Guided tours

Thursdays 6 pm, Sundays & holidays 4 pm (price included in the entrance fee)

Radio broadcast

Sounds Like Silence, by Inke Arns and Dieter Daniels, Deutschlandradio Kultur, UKW 96,5 (24 August 2012, 00:05–1 am), www.dradio.de/dkultur/sendungen/klangkunst/1803282/

CD

Sounds Like Silence, by Inke Arns and Dieter Daniels, Gruen 116 (2012), www.gruenrekorder.de (€10 in the exhibition / €14 in book shops)

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The exhibition is kindly supported by

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Ministry for Family, Children, Youth and Sport of the State of North Rhine-Westphalia

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