

ROBERTO PUGLIESE

INTEMPERIES MUSICALES

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**ANA SERRATOSA
GALLERY**

Valencia, 27th October 2022 – 26th February 2023

Para que el hilo tenue tan infinitamente se prolongue,
para que solo quede por decir
la total extensión de lo indecible,
para que la libertad se manifieste,
para que andar del otro lado de la muerte sea
semplice e cantabile
y aquí y allí la música nos lleve
al centro, al fuego, al aire,
al agua antenatal que envuelve
la forma indescifrable
de lo que nunca nadie aún ha hecho
nacer en la mañana del mundo

(José Ángel Valente, *Arietta*, op. 111)

Intemperies musicales Pedro Medina Reinón

Sound landscapes

“For the last twenty years neither matter nor space nor time has been what it was from time immemorial. We must expect great innovations to transform the entire technique of the arts, thereby affecting artistic invention itself and perhaps even bringing about an amazing change in our very notion of art.” These words, written by Paul Valéry in 1928 foretold a dream: *The Conquest of Ubiquity*. They inspired Walter Benjamin in *The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction* (1936) as well as José Luis Brea, who saw in Valéry the intuition of an “art ready-to-circulate, faster than light, more ephemeral than time, more intangible than information.”

These words predict the need for languages for a new time, marked by the speed and simultaneity of its phenomena. According to this belief, Roberto Pugliese investigates the territories inaugurated by the new technologies from sound experimentation and their installative concretion. Nevertheless, before addressing this particular perspective, it is necessary to contextualize the field in which it is framed.

This field of studies is “Sound Art”, a current that is difficult to demarcate. As Max Neuhaus stated when listing different sound practices: “Music, kinetic sculpture, instruments activated by the wind or played by the public, conceptual art, sound effects, recorded readings of prose or poetry, visual artworks which also make sound, paintings of musical instruments, musical automatons, film, video, technological demonstrations, acoustic reconstructions, interactive computer programs which produce sound, etc. [...] In short, ‘Sound Art’ seems to be a category which can include anything which has or makes sound and even, in some cases, things which don’t.”

To understand this wide range, we should go back to the historical avant-gardes, with Luigi Russolo as an undisputed precedent thanks to his manifesto *The Art of Noises* and the invention of *Intonarumori* (Noise-Tuner), both from 1913. Certainly, for this purpose we should also keep in mind the harmonies conceived by Kandinsky in correspondence with Schönberg, as well as concrete music, with Pierre Schaeffer at its head and, of course, John Cage, the *pope* of experimental music. Furthermore, there have been extraordinary explorers in Spain such as Juan García Castillejo –with his “electrocomposer device” and *La telegrafía rápida, el triteclado y la música eléctrica* (1944), or more recently Llorenç Barber and Grupo Zaj, among centres, programs, festivals, and exhibitions. To name a few: the sound recordings of the National Library or music libraries like the ones in Murcia and the Canary Islands, projects such as escoitar.org or festivals like IN-SONORA, not to mention the exhibitions *Escuchar con los ojos. Arte Sonoro en España, 1961-2016* at Fundación Juan March (2016), *¿Arte sonoro?* at Fundació Miró (2019) or *Audiosphere. Sound Experimentation 1980-2020* at MNCARS (2020).

Among its theorists, Raymond Murray Schafer is one of the main references when considering the relationship between people and the sounds of their environment. His research was based on noise or acoustic pollution, proposing a positive approach to environmental acoustics that leads to an interdisciplinary field: the acoustic design.

Precisely, it was Schafer who popularized the concept “*soundscape*” (sound landscape) –already used by M.F. Southworth in 1967–. He explained it as it follows: “Soundscape can be defined as an acoustic environment, perceived as a total sound field, wherever we are. It is a word derived from

landscape; however, unlike it, it is not strictly limited to outdoor places.” By that he attempted to limit the research on acoustic environment within a determined field of study.

Nevertheless, other authors prefer terms such as “sound ecosystem” to emphasize a global perception of multiple sound dimensions at a place in transformation, besides generating sound identities in art. In any case, all of them concur on the specificity of these studies as opposed to visual studies, even though the investigations about sound sometimes turn to mental “images” or the “visualization” of phenomena. In fact, it is usual to make use of graphic representation as a means of translating sound into visual signs, either in a descriptive way (acoustic or phonetic) or in a prescriptive way (musical notation).

Indeed, notation is a special panorama to contemplate sound and the limitation of other means to reflect it, as Iannis Xenakis, Karlheinz Stockhausen, Luigi Nono or Llorenç Barber have already stated with their “visual music”, as well as other “visualization” experiments from Arseny Avraamov to Jorge Haro. It is precisely the Argentinian artist the one who proposes an expanded musical experience, involving visuality at the same level as presence or hierarchy, to encourage the materialization of sound in the longitudinal perception of the visual and sonic. It is therefore a matter of “expanded listening”, which could be easily understood as based on what authors like Michel Chion, Pierre Schaeffer and John Cage had discovered, asserting the dissolution of the traditional limits of artistic disciplines.

On balance, the different research approaches of Roberto Pugliese can be understood, mainly, in this huge relationship between sound art and visual art. At this point it is inevitable to recall Charles Baudelaire’s *Correspondences*: “Parfums, colours and sounds respond to each other.” This poem inspired *Sons & Lumières* at the Pompidou, in 2004, one of the most complete revisions of the history of sound in visual arts along the 20th century, regarded as a fertile period of convergence and dialogue. It was organized around three ways of understanding the interaction between these languages: correspondences (abstraction, colour-music, light in motion), traces (conversion, synthesis, remanence) and ruptures (chance, noise, silence). The formal experimentation developed by Roberto Pugliese could grant him room in all these sections, hence we present him as an extraordinary example of synthesis between positions that are sometimes understood as a dichotomy.

The “tempos” of Roberto Pugliese

There are several myths about the origin of music, although Schafer –after Nietzsche– points two to refer two different models. In the first one, Pindar tells the invention of the aulos by Athenea, moved by the appalling screams of the sisters of Medusa after her death. In the second one, Homer ascribes the creation of the lyre to Hermes, thanks to the shell of a turtle as an object of resonance. These two myths point to two directions that will lead to succeeding music theories: music as a subjective feeling or music as a product of the sonorous properties of materials. The aulos is present in Dionysian festivities, ideal for exaltation and tragedy, while the lyre is the instrument of Apollo, and it recalls the serene contemplation of the universe. Under the Dionysian conception, music is perceived as a sound exploding inside the chest; in the Apollonian conception, it is external and refers to the order of the cosmos. Finally, the Dionysian line is devoted to debauchery and is irrational, whereas the Apollonian conceives music as something exact and mathematic.

Where should Roberto Pugliese be placed? To answer such question, we should revisit Ernst Bloch, who stated that in music we can find both aspects: the maximum of *pathos* and the maximum of mathematic rationality, the maximum of con-fusion and the maximum of analytic exactitude. Thus,

we find passion and reason together, rather than confronted. Valéry also pointed out a close association between architecture and music, because of their composition but also because both can be “inhabited” by human beings: architecture as space and music as time.

Intemperies musicales arises from this perspective, aware of a condition as natural as disturbing: we do live in time, but in which time? This exhibition pursues to create new correspondences, combining the Spanish word *intemperie* (*intemperies*: exposed to the weather; negative form of *temperies*: perfect temperature or climate), with the vulnerability it awakens through the musical “tempo” (*tempus*, referring to chronological time, measure and duration of things, therefore also music) to produce new sound experiences.

The selection of works by Roberto Pugliese can then be understood not as a *corpus* that follows a single line of research, but as the coexistence of several itineraries that delve into the formal and social possibilities the new means offer and that our own era demands. It is to be expected that this experimental character has produced a complex work in continuous evolution. To understand it better, let’s have a quick look at his career.

Roberto Pugliese acknowledges having started out from sound art, kinetic art and programmed art. The first one is a direct consequence of his musical formation, conceiving sound as an object of study and as a means of expression, although being aware of the labile borders of what we consider “sound art”.

From kinetic art, he learned to understand the environment as an essential element of the work, serving himself from mechanical means and a software to generate extraordinary phenomena linked to sound. The result: a type of work in which sound and visuality happen at once since they are conceived as inseparable. Therefore, it is configured as a sound art practice prone to harmony between different arts, but also prone to the dissolution of limits between the artistic and daily spheres.

According to this disposition, he establishes several collaborations, first with his master Agostino di Scipio, expert in electroacoustics and electronic music and, afterwards, with visual artists such as Daniela Di Maro and Tamara Repetto, architects like Renzo Piano, or musicians like Paolo Fresu. Thus, from the beginning he shows concerns beyond the encounter between music, art and technology, revealing contrasts and coexistences between the natural and the artificial, tradition and modernity. Indeed, the fusion between natural and artificial is already clear in *Ivy Noise* (2009-2010), where electronic elements recreate vegetal forms, while sounds generated in the same room are reinterpreted. With pieces like this one, he exposes the spectator to an immersive experience, which encourages a sense of belonging and an emotional response to situations from which a debate emerges: the relationship between art, human beings, and technology.

It is linked to works like the ones of Christopher Janney, who considers architecture as a sound field, or with sound sculptures like *Singing Ringing Tree* (2007), by Tonkin Liu Architects. Precisely, the interaction with atmospheric weather (in situ or digital) will acquire an increasing relevance, as it is present in *A voice in the desert* (Marfa, Texas, 2012), translating online data related to the environment into sound, up to the piece that is presented for the first time in Valencia: *Acoustic Tides* (2022).

In fact, during this decade of experimentation, the osmosis between natural and artificial incites to think about technology, not only approached as an instrument, but –the same as with Schafer, closely to McLuhan, and with other paradigmatic authors like Benjamin, as a means bearing epistemology. Indeed, authors like Martin Heidegger claim something crucial: the need to meditate on technique to

understand the era, because the *techné* introduces an operative meditation that transforms the relationships with the world.

The works by Roberto Pugliese can activate that necessary reflection, generating different points of view on technique, its possibilities, and its current status within the artistic creation, keeping in mind that from the beginning, technique was conceived so that life could flow. The next step consists of observing the social dimension found in the configuration of his discourse, given to an ethical position, as it can be seen in works that address issues such as the deforestation (*Concerto per natura morta*, 2014) or the rise of the sea level (*Liquide emergenze future*, 2019), which has aroused them to be perceived as environmental art or close to an “ethics of nature”.

At the same time, he also turns other scenarios into testing grounds, from the world of performances to holography. Thus, he continues his musical speculation, understood within what he designates as “music to be seen”, which refers to “the relationship between visual and auditory imagery, the deviations and confluences that by now characterise the contemporary world”, as the artist confesses. In effect, there are several questions he still poses himself about music panoramas, from the transformations of the “concert” format, together with the opening up to new ways of listening, to musical compositions that emanate from environmental sound and which are modified due to algorithmic processes, that is, from the physical every day to music. However, he also makes the reverse journey, from music to its graphic and sculptural representation.

There are examples of both positions in *Intemperies musicales*, proving a fact: “The concept of music and all the arts has changed, and their mixing together has become increasingly important and has opened the way to multi-media experiences.” This revolutionary character pairs his work with breakthrough moments of the last century, such as dodecaphonic music or electronic music, but it also reconciles it with innovative classical composers like Mozart, fundamental for sharing a common idea of music today.

Moreover, we also find here the problem of musical quotation, a concern that could be applied to the entire career of Roberto Pugliese: the awareness of the inadequacy of traditional languages to face the totality of the acoustic universe, but also to express the unhinged rhythm of our own time. Assuming this diagnostic is to be positioned at the point of start of every avant-garde: the need of new forms to reflect the changing system of experiences.

In short, the experimentalism we find in these works allows us to value the amplification of sound perception, turning it into an event that is not exempt from poetry and social vindication, with a great efficacy thanks to its evolving character, which provokes deep emotions. From here, the horizons of music can only increase, maybe even to the point of embracing all the sounds of the world, to move us, with the goal of transforming the future of our time.

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Now I will do nothing but listen...
I hear all sounds running together, combined,
fused, or following:
Sounds of the city and sounds out of the city,
sounds of the day and night...

(Walt Whitman, *Song of Myself*)

Concerto per natura morta (Concert for still life)

2014

Wood, iron, loudspeakers, multi-channel audio playback system, specific software and sound composition (18'28'')

Installation built by chestnut tree trunks suspended in the air at different heights in horizontal position. The sound emanating from inside the trees comes from their places of origin. This sound has been digitally treated by a specific software for this work, with the aim of placing the spectator literally inside a still life, where the presence of the environmental sound, together with the visual landscape created, achieves an immersive atmosphere able to generate a strong emotional reaction.

26 Vicente Beltrán Grimal Street

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Concerto per natura morta – variante (Concert for still life– variant)

2019-2022

Wood, electroacoustic resonators, stereo playback system and sound compositions (35'00" and 49'57")

Interactive sculpture focused on the approach of a human being to their natural habitat, now threatened by the increasing deforestation. The electroacoustic resonators (devices that propagate sound by mechanical vibrations) are found inside the trunks of trees dead by natural causes, to transmit a composition created by the recording of the forestall atmosphere. In order to listen to it properly, the spectator should hug the work, thus establishing a close contact as a way of leading to social awareness.

19 Pascual i Genís Street

[\[QR CODE TO AUDIO\]](#)

Acoustic Tides

2022

Plexiglass, sound system, water, specific software and algorithmic sound composition

Interactive installation connected in live to stations that monitor tides (ioc-sealevelmonitoring.org) of the Spanish coast (Alicante, Valencia, A Coruña, Vigo and Cadiz). These data are processed by a software developed ad hoc to transform them into sound by a series of mathematic algorithms. The sounds are emitted through loudspeakers that are watertight into spheres and submerged into water, thus enabling the installative disposition of the elements that refer to the coasts of close areas to complete their litany.

19 Pascual i Genís Street

[QR CODE TO AUDIO]

Partiture possibili (Possible scores)

2016-2022

Score, digital printing on paper, harmonic steel cable, plexiglass, 3D printing on resin and 3D printing in ABS

Score, digital printing on paper and 3D printing on resin

The project stems from the analysis of the musical scores from 20th century authors such as Iannis Xenakis, Karlheinz Stockhausen or Luigi Nono, who have confronted the limits of scripture and traditional notation, overcoming them by creating a graphic alternative, still functional, to represent the music they composed. In this way, the score is not only a dialogue between composer and interpreter, but also a visual work, a meta-language that emanates from sounds and turns them into images as well as new combinations.

19 Pascual i Genís Street

Strumenti aumentati (Increased instruments)

2017-2022

Violin, mandolin, digital printing, sound system and sound composition (violin: 28'51"; mandolin: 21'31")

These works draw from the experimentation initiated by Paolo Fresu. In this case, it counts on the interpretations made by Luca Bagagli (violin) and Nunzio Reina (mandolin), analyzed and processed through algorithms to obtain an electroacoustic composition, work by Roberto Pugliese. The new musical piece is reproduced by instruments with digital printed prothesis, with the aim of generating a whole in which the contrast between tradition and modernity is always present.

19 Pascual i Genís Street

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La finta semplice, K51

2016

Double basses, cellos, violas, violins, harmonic steel cable, multi-channel playback system and sound composition (30'06")

The title of the installation refers to Mozart's composition –translated as *The Fake Innocent*, with a *libretto* by Marco Coltellini, adapted from a text for music by Goldoni. It aims to offer a different listening key, by means of an orchestra of string instruments that reproduces virtually Pugliese's composition, with the goal of provoking the appearance of a *novum* that rethinks the "concert" form through timbral experimentation and staging.

5 Cabillers Street

[QR CODE TO AUDIO]

Roberto Pugliese (Naples, 1982). Graduated in Electronic Music in 2008, under the guidance of Agostino di Scipio. Since 2009 he has taught at conservatories and fine art academies in Naples, Frosinone, Bari and Milan. He currently teaches Multi-media at the Conservatory of Naples, which he combines with his musical career as an electroacoustic artist.

Works in permanent collections

Soniche Visioni Olografiche, Museo della Memoria e della Pace Giovanni Palatucci, Campagna, Salerno (Italy)

Sinestesia Eco, Scuola di Alto Perfezionamento Musicale, Saluzzo (Italy)

Sequenze, Università Politecnica delle Marche, Ancona (Italy)

La piazza del vento, Studio Renzo Piano, Genoa (Italy)

Equilibrium, ZKM Museum, Karlsruhe (Germany)

Fluide Propagazioni Alchemiche, Ente Fiere, Bologna (Italy)

Recognitions

2021. Premio Matteo Olivero, Fondazione Amleto Bertoni, Saluzzo (Italy)

2016. Premio de la VAF Foundation (Germany- Italy)

2013. Mención honorífica en arte sonoro y música, Ars Electronica, Linz (Austria)

2012. Mención especial, Vida 14.0, Fundación Telefónica, Madrid (Spain)

Individual exhibitions

2022

Soniche visioni olografiche, Museo della Memoria e della Pace Giovanni Palatucci, Campagna, Salerno (Italy)

2021

Premio Matteo Olivero, Scuola di Alto Perfezionamento Musicale, Saluzzo (Italy)

2018

Concerto per architettura, Fondazione Arnaldo Pomodoro, Milan (Italy)

Transanatomy, Teatro Anatomico, Bologna (Italy)

Risonanze, Studio la città, Verona (Italy)

2016

La finta semplice, Museo degli affreschi, Verona (Italy)

2014

Concerto per natura morta, collaborating with the studio by Renzo Piano, MUSE, Trento (Italy)

Intrecci sinergici, Museo Caos, Terni (Italy)

Concerto per natura morta, Studio la città, Verona (Italy)

2013

Emergenze acustiche, Tenuta dello Scompiglio, Vorno, Capannori, Lucca (Italy)

Echi liquidi, TRA, Treviso ricerca arte, Treviso (Italy)

2012

Gervasuti Mix, omaggio a Cage, Fondazione Gervasuti Foundation, Venice (Italy)

Aritmetiche architetture sonore, Studio la città, Verona (Italy)

2011

Inside/Outside, Guidi&Schoen, Genoa (Italy)

Unexpected Machines, Galerie Mario Mazzoli, Berlin (Germany)

Soniche vibrazioni computazionali, Studio la città, Verona (Italy)

2010

Ivy Noise, Istituto Europeo di Design, IN-SONORA, Madrid (Spain)

Critici ostinati ritmici, Galleria V.M.21, Rome (Italy)

2009

Linfa sintetica, Ciocca Arte Contemporanea, Milan (Italy)

Ivy noise, Akneos Gallery, Naples (Italy)

Entanglement 2, Fondazione Idis, Città della Scienza, Naples (Italy)

Collective exhibitions

Present in 76 collective exhibitions in Armenia, China, Denmark, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Italy, Slovenia, Spain, United States and Russia, among which we find *Sound Art. Sound as Medium of Art* at ZKM Media Museum de Karlsruhe (2012).

Performances

Multiple performances in Austria, Franca and Italy, among which we find *Hipogheios* at Ars Electronica Festival - 24H RAVE, Linz, and at MADRE, Naples (2021).

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