

[Silence]

[Silence] is a listening session and sound investigation about communication. It is a proposal for a community interested in engaging in a long term listening session of at least 40hrs, with the purpose of challenging what lies underneath language, social structures and our own sound identities. The session is shaped regarding each participant's own inquiries in need of a social context to reach their depth. [Silence] is a collective and individual action as well as a tool to listen further.

[Silence] listening session at Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture's occurred during the residency of summer 2016. The invitation to participate was open to all 64 participants, staff members, visiting artists and everyone on campus. The timeframe was outlined by a beginning session [Silence Break] to gather as a community and say each's last word(s) in 40hrs, and by an ending session [Breaking Silence] to return to speech together. On the 18th of July 2016 at 20:30hrs, 14 artists from different backgrounds and investigations joined the session actively while all others, including the people from the town of Skowhegan and Waterville, participated in terms of reaction. On the 20th of July 2016 at 16:30hrs the session reached its end with a private meeting where participants gathered and talked about their own experience.

This compilation gathers all documentation and notes of the [Silence] listening session Skowhegan 2016: [Silence] Protocol, notes, transcriptions, sound recordings and tracks, photographs, stories, and a selection of texts that the artist shared during her listening session as a way to speak through others.

START: [Silence Break Session]

Previously agree to a time and a private place to meet with all people who are willing to participate in the listening session to start together. Seat forming a circle. Remind the protocol to everyone. If the group aims so, speculate about what will occur and your own expectations and inquiries. To begin, one by one, voluntarily speak out loud the last word(s) before 40hrs of [Silence]. After everyone finishes, start the session and wait 5min. Pay deep attention. After 5min. everyone can leave and decide what to do with their own listening session.

[Silence] Protocol

[a]

All participants of the session must not say any word during 40hrs.

[b]

All participants of the session must not write any word during 40hrs.-

[c]

Other sounds, noises, codes and movements are some other possible ways to communicate: drawing, laughing, dancing, singing, winking, whistling, humming, barking, staring, screaming, slapping, clapping [...]

[d]

All participants of the session must commit to listen beyond comfort. If some word is accidentally spoken or written, be observant and remain in the session. Make conscious exceptions if you really need them.

[e]

There are different approaches, but the participant must avoid mere isolation.

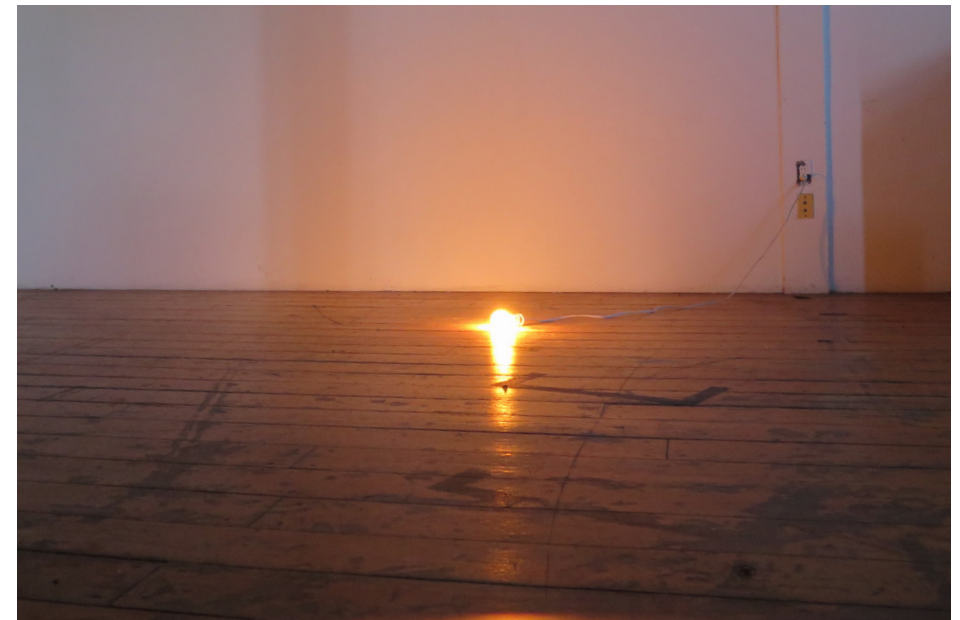
*Be ready to record relevant moments of your session.

**Decide considerably if you need to break the session.

END: [Breaking Silence Session]

Previously agree to a time and a private place to meet with all people who participated in the listening session to end together. Seat forming a circle. To end, one by one, voluntarily speak out loud a first word(s) after 40hrs of [Silence]. After everyone finishes, and if the group aims so, end the session discussing and describing your experience and observations of your session, listen and analyze together each encounters. End the session with a sound or music fragment that was significant for you during your listening session and walk away while it's playing.

- *START: [Silence Break Session]* -



[Trasncription of sound recording of the session (fragment)]

-Say goodbye to language.

-I think it's a nice thing to say something, could be a word or could be a phrase. The last thing you want to say before you forget language for 40hrs.

-It's like the life last wish before dead.

-We will wait exactly 5min. for the silence to settle here and to start feeling uncom-
fortable and nice.

-I feel scared about this experience.

-It's why you are doing it, silence is terrifying.

-I have to assist people build costumes tomorrow and wednesday.

-You will have to figure it out, or if it's that hard for you, make a decision, but it's up to you. It's a decision that you will have to do, on the way.

-The pauses or silences or the tension maybe feels in how people speak around us or whatever will happen.

-Maybe I will be recording some conversations that won't be happening anyway, so I guess...

-I really don't know whats gonna happen. It's gonna be fun. We can do that.

-I will say the last word that I want say in 40hrs.

[Silence]

-Ok. So, I will start.

[20 seconds pause]

-Thank you

-Today was beautiful

-Me da miedo esta experiencia

- ...

- ...

-...

- ...

-Happiness

-Good Luck

-Sleep

-Ok

-Chaos

- ...

- ...

- ...

- ...

[One participant leaved before waiting 5min.]

[One gorup leaved rapidly after]

[Other group stayed calmly: we all started laughing, feeling time pass so slow. One of the participants gathered everyone to be more close to each other, we hold each other while smiling and humming. After the 5min. we leaved the room laughing]

[2 Hours of Silence]

22:30hrs, Monday 18th July, 2016



Take a walk at night

Walk so silently

that the bottoms of your feet

become ears.

[1]

[On the way to the night walk through the forest organized by artist Chris Carroll.]



[Group gathering under the moon light after night walk]

In this quiet I can hear myself. My shoes slipping on the larger and smaller pebbles in the dark and my cold breath are at the centre of the sonic scene, which engulfs me still but does not carry me off in its deafening roar, instead it opens my ears to hear myself listen. After the crashing clamour of the afternoon I come back to silence. From the intense isolation of noise I join the quiet of the fishermen and start to sense the possibility of speech.

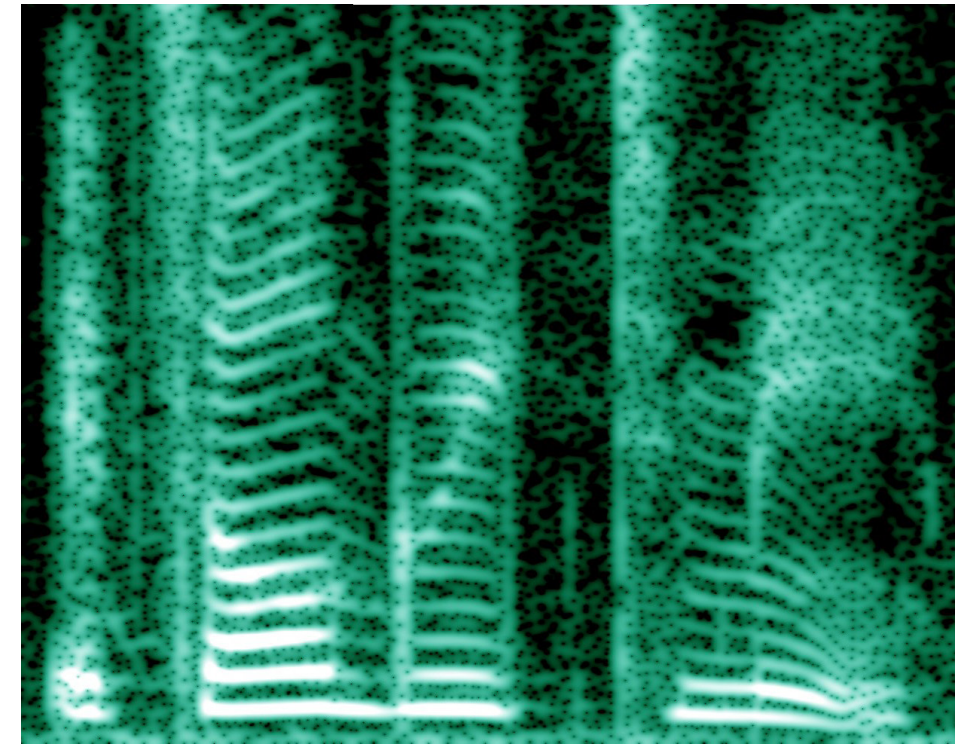
[2]

[1] Pauline Oliveiros, 1977.

[2] Voegelin, Salome, Listening to Noise and Silence , 2010.

[15 Hours of Silence]

11:30hrs, Tuesday 19th July, 2016



[3]



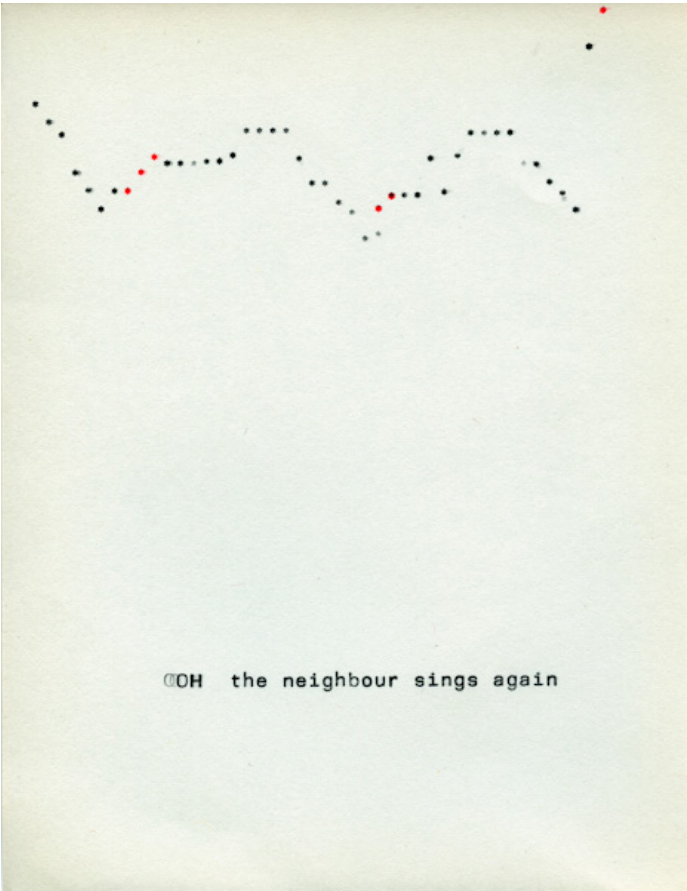
[During the second day of *[Silence]*, coincidentally, 5 people who needed to go to the town of Skowhegan and Waterville were all *[Silence]* participants. We took a silent trip to town, visiting different places such as a local laundry, several antique shops, Walmart, 1dll shops, we had a meal in a restaurant where we tried drawing and even ask a guy to take us a photo without one spoken word needed]

Listen: [http://www.lorenamal.com/uploads/w/\[Silence\]/2016_laundry.mp3](http://www.lorenamal.com/uploads/w/[Silence]/2016_laundry.mp3)

Listen: [http://www.lorenamal.com/uploads/w/\[Silence\]/2016_antiques-shop.mp3](http://www.lorenamal.com/uploads/w/[Silence]/2016_antiques-shop.mp3)

Listen: [http://www.lorenamal.com/uploads/w/\[Silence\]/2016_restaurant.mp3](http://www.lorenamal.com/uploads/w/[Silence]/2016_restaurant.mp3)



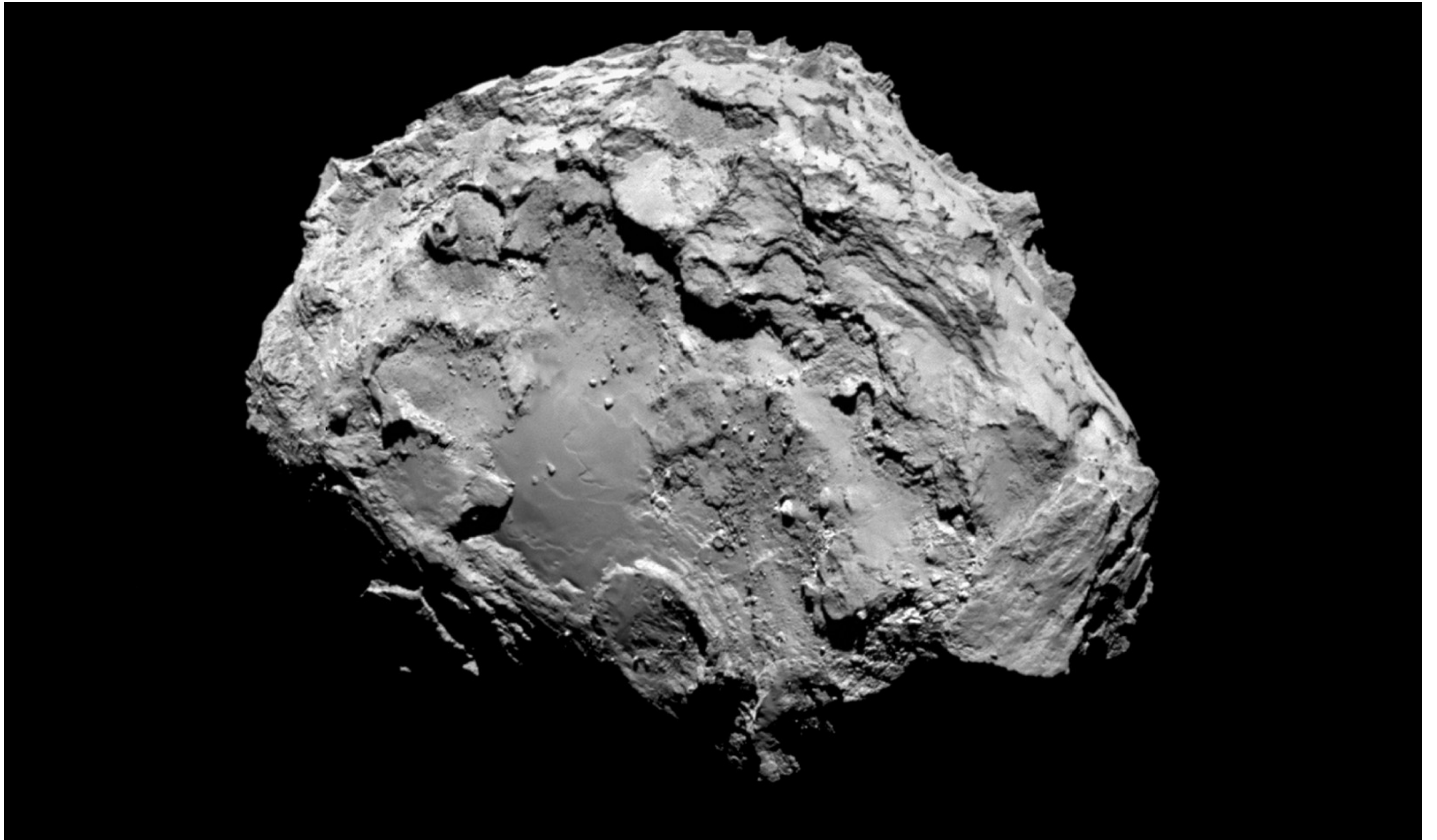


[3] A spectrogram (0-5000 Hz) of the sentence “it’s all Greek to me” spoken by a female voice.

[4] Betiina Hutschek, Leaves of Queen’s Velvet, 2013, Typewriter on paper, 17,6 x 13,6 cm.

[22 Hours of Silence]

18:30hrs, Tuesday 19th July, 2016



Turn off a light source, even
in a mirrored room, and
abruptly the space becomes
dark.

Turn off a sound source, and
the space continues to speak.

[6]

Walter Benjamin conveyed in *On Language as such and on the Language of Man*, in this very peculiar essay he reflects on the silent, magical and material language of things. Such as the language of a mountain, of a lamp, of a stone, of a fox, etc. At a certain moment Benjamin poses the question:

“And who is going to translate them?”

[7]



[Skowhegan crossroads between Upper and Lower Campus]

[Some *[Silence]* participants walking together to the Lower Campus started making noises. We tried imitating landscape sounds, sounds of wind, water drops or simply screams and laughs kept our attention by hearing their echo returning to us in the empty crossroad between Upper and Lower Campus]

Listen: [http://www.lorenamal.com/w/\[Silence\]/2016_crossroad-sounds.mp3](http://www.lorenamal.com/w/[Silence]/2016_crossroad-sounds.mp3)

When the living can't speak, what does the death speak for us?

[8]

[5] “The Rosetta comet is singing: as the orbiter approaches, the ESA uploads audio of the comet’s warbling magnetic ‘song’,
The Independent Newspaper Tuesday 11 November 2014.
Listen: [http://www.lorenamal.com/uploads/w/\[Silence\]/2014_rosetta-singing-comet.mp3](http://www.lorenamal.com/uploads/w/[Silence]/2014_rosetta-singing-comet.mp3)

[6] Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, Spaces Speak: Are you lisening?, MIT, 2007.

[7] Unknown source.

[8] Inquiry stated by Michael Roberson from Ultra-Red, during workshop at Museo Experimental El Eco, Mexico city, 2012.

[32 Hours of Silence]

8:30hrs, Wednesday 20th July, 2016

One final story: Anne Devlin, 1984, as told by the Irish filmmaker Pat Murphy. Anne agreed to act as ‘housekeeper’ to a group of United Irishmen lead by Robert Emmet who were plotting an uprising at the beginning of the nineteenth century. She was captured, tortured (almost hanged) and kept a prisoner by the British military long after the conspiracy had been crushed because she refused to ‘confess’. As Luke Gibbons points out, Murphy re-reads Anne’s silence, not as passivity or absence of meaning but as political act of defiance: “Throughout the film, Anne is pre-eminently a messenger, a vehicle or medium of communication between Emmet and his various contacts. Yet Anne is a medium with a difference.’ From a position always oblique to the action, Anne sees, she touches, but above all, she listens. And what she hears is an empty rhetoric that springs from the voices of both Irish romantic idealism and British colonial power. If she refuses to speak it is out of loyalty neither to Emmet nor to the nationalist cause, but because she will not speak in the voice of those others the words they want to hear. She refuses to be an ‘acoustic mirror’ to male narratives of redemption; and in this refusal her silence is to be feared. [9]

“The silent pauses. (...) The duration produces unease, a suspension of breath. I resist the demand to fill absence with the illusory plenitude of words.” [10]

An exercise of sonic power: social or political, autocratic or democratic, supportive or destructive. [11]

The history of human societies can be viewed through the prism of their acoustic arenas and acoustic communities. Like air, water, and land, acoustic arenas are resources to be shared, divided, exploited, regulated, and even polluted, by those with political and social power. Because allocation of acoustic arena resources mirrors the culture’s values, examining them reveals the social dynamics of acoustic communities. [12]

Listening is never natural. It requires and generates literacy. Since it puts subjects into relation with each other and with the world, listening has the potential to contribute significantly to the constitution of collectivity. [13]

Listening, is a means by which we sense the events of life, aurally visualize spatial geometry, propagate cultural symbols, stimulate emotions, communicate aural information, experience the movement of time, build social relationships, and retain a memory of experiences. [14]

Auditory landscapes can also be interpolations between space and time, space and reality, the psycho-social and the geographic, and temporality and memory. The act of listening involves a transitional state between attention and imagination, between sensual experience and understanding or seeking a possible meaning. [15]

Silence and Noise – the imaginary edges to auditory experience; they provide physical as well as phantasmic points against which sounds are measured, fantasized, conveyed; they gather the intensities of auditory experience, locating sound upon a philosophical and ethical scale, making volume a community issue and audition a political process. Silence and noise are an oppositional antagonism, with noise rending the system open and silence allowing all things to find their place. [16]

The use [of vocal gestures] raises fundamental questions about how we speak, how we listen, how trust is produced, and how such technologies of truth turn subjects into objects. In this context, the notion of silence comes into play -not only in a Cagean or a Situationist sense, where silence amplifies the situation and the omnipresence and spatiality of sound-, but also as a form of agency, as refusal and resistance. The act of listening is not about representation or the phenomenological; it is about resonance. What is that resonates when we listen? And ultimately, does the self resonate and with whom? [17]

When there is nothing to hear, so much starts to sound. Silence is not the absence of sound but the beginning of listening. This is listening as a generative process not of noises external to me, but from inside, from the body, where my subjectivity is at the centre of the sound production, audible to myself. Silence reveals to me my own sounds: my head, my stomach, my body becomes their conductor. This is not John Cage’s anechoic chamber, where the vacuum denies external sounds a path to the ear and the sound of blood pumping through the body and the tingling of the nervous system starts to be audible. Instead here the external sounds are so small, embalmed in the white silence of snow that they come to play with my body, close up and intimate. The rumbling of my stomach becomes the gurgling of the water pipes, my breathing relates to the humming of the house, inside and out take on equivalence. The muffled outside soundscape morphs with my inner soundings. I become the soundscape in me and from me. The explosive centrifugality of noise finds a centripetal motion to match -silence occupies their undulation.

Silence is possibly the most lucid moment of one’s experiential production of sound. In silence I comprehend, physically, the idea of intersubjective listening: I am in the soundscape through my listening to it and in turn the soundscape is what I listen to, perpetually in the present. Silence confirms the soundscape as a sonic life-world, and clarifies the notion that sound is a relationship not between things but just a relationship, passing through my ears. (...) Silence is everywhere near, and I am in that abundant silence all it sounds. In its hushed nothingness I am the simultaneity of listening and sound making. After the whirlwind fragmentation of noise I am an open sonic subject, ready to reciprocate sound with my fleshly body and to practise myself in that relationship. I am a sensible thing, thinging in the midst of sonic things, thinging with me in silence. [18]

The more one talks
the less words mean.

[19]

[9] Jean Fischer, “Refelctions on echo: Sound by women artists in Britain and Ireland during the 1980s”, 1990.

[10] Jean Fischer on O’Kelly’s work Chant Down Greenham, idem.

[11] Unknown source.

[12] Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, Spaces Speak: Are you lisening?, MIT, 2007.

[13] Ultra-Red, “Five excercises on organized listening”, 2012.

[14] Barry Blesser and Linda-Ruth Salter, Spaces Speak: Are you lisening?, MIT, 2007.

[15] Berit Fischer, “On the notions and politics of listening”, 2014.

[16] Brandon LaBelle, “Acoustic Territories”, 2010.

[17] Berit Fischer, “On the notions and politics of listening”, 2014.

[18] Voegelin, Salome - Listening to Noise and Silence.

[19] Dialogue extracted from “My Life to Live”, Jean-Luc Godard, 1962.

[40 Hours of Silence]

16:30hrs, Wednesday 20th July, 2016

W t e s w h?
h r o ? o s

o s i p s, o s i oo
d o V, o s o oo s
r s f c m f r t, o d s o p c e
d s t k t e f g h t n g c e s
r s o e l l y u w h t t d o
d s r o r i g h r d u
E t u r s t ' o h n g r
r s h v e a l w s n a l y h n g e

Ram sam sam Ah Ram sam sam
guriguriguriguri Ram sam sam
Aka yae-yupi Ah-KA-YEYA
AHUAA UUA NI KI CHI!

ord w th?
at re w r wo h? W s
s f n u c e, d s f ll
d w f r o c e a ll
s t d, w un
W o a u o u o e un

m t s p r s s é s, o s s n s é s,
o t s u i i s n t l v é t é,
m s m d t s, m s m s,
t s q i n q u n t l e f u i t d è t

Ram sam sam Ah Ram sam sam
guriguriguriguri Ram sam sam
Aka yae-yupi Ah-KA-YEYA
AHUAA UUA NI KI CHI!

I ' s a r p r c , w t h a f s t p c
C n c r t w d s, a b s t r c t w s
C r z y s d l y g s
H a y d y n g s
d f f t h n d t l l m s t r g h t
R r w r d s n d s w r w r d s
G d w d s n d b d w d s

Ram sam sam Ah Ram sam sam
guriguriguriguri Ram sam sam
Aka yae-yupi Ah-KA-YEYA
AHUAA UUA NI KI CHI!

e w d s h?
W w s o ? - s

Ram sam sam Ah Ram sam sam
guriguriguriguri Ram sam sam
Aka yae-yupi Ah-KA-YEYA
AHUAA UUA NI KI CHI!

W re w s h?
ha wo wo ? - o s

d s c n m e y a y n a y
F u - l t t I y
y, o t, d y d v l
W d s a e t r b l e, w d s e s b t l e
o f g e r, d s f a t e
d s o e r h r , r s o u t t e r e
I n i r d e e y w h e
f w d m, w o d o s t r f e
d s t h w r t h o o I i k
W d s n ' t f i d n o g h t s o l o n
T t h p l n t r t h ' s p o l l t n
S y t h e r g h t w r d, m k a m l l o n
o a e i e a e a i e o
o a ' a a e e a
o ' e a a e a
i a a a e e a a a a e e
e e e e
E e e e a a a

a i u p o r h e m m oo
L t s l s t t h n g h b r h d
I o k y, I ' e o t o o d
i s a a i oo , o a , e.

Ram sam sam Ah Ram sam sam
guriguriguriguri Ram sam sam
Aka yae-yupi Ah-KA-YEYA
AHUAA UUA NI KI CHI!

W h t r w r d s w r t h?
a a e o o ? - w

ha r ord ort ?
W t a e w r d w r t ? - s

Silence occupies my head.

I found that it is very easy to be misunderstood.

I found how fragile communication is.

I found that people are more likely to just do the minimum effort.

I found that most people think about a ‘meaningful’ conversation as verbal and literal communication.

I found that silence can be a property to some people that think they know what ‘true silence’ is and therefore they stop listening.

I found that it is easier for others to make fast judgements and be confused, than to wait and engage with attention and empathy.

I found that my own thoughts were louder without my voice.

I found that other’s voices were louder than my thoughts.

I found out that little things are amplified when you are silent enough to listen them.

I found that been voiceless is a feeling that I recognize in other situations in my life.

I found out that miscommunication goes both ways and is more a feeling than a fact.

Affirmation, Negation and swearing are the most difficult words to let go.

Smiles are no enough. Touch is better.

I found that I forgot things when I concentrated on “doing” and not “telling myself” what to do.

I found that sometimes I was able to think in my head in images, feelings and actions and not structured language, but the moment I noticed it turned into words.

I found that even though many situations where like everyday, they felt different and sometimes distant because I was aware.

I found out that music can unite everything. Music puts together without language.

- *END: [Breaking Silence Session]* -



[16:30hrs, Wednesday 20th July, 2016. Fresco Barn, Skowhegan School of Painting and Sculpture]

[Trasncription of sound recording of the session (fragments)]

-Thank You...

-I'm sad to break the silence. I broke it because, because I forgot I was silent because I was talking to a child. She came running and I completely forgot "Oh Hi! I don't think they introduced to each other!" Oh! I'm speaking but I am not gonna explain to a child why I am not speaking.

-I felt that my body was feeling weird, I had to concentrate too much on not talking, so like, my stomach was feeling waaahg.

-I had some moments when I said sorry or thank you...the next day that I tried to work in the studio I tried to put music without sound --without language, I tried but the shuffle kept putting music with words and I realized I was singing with words and happened again and again. In some point I tried to talk with people about the decisions of the work I was making and I decided to 'cheat', "Now I will use the thing, to not talk when I don't wanna talk" but then people knew I was cheating...then I tried again but today I switched to normal talking because i felt like it was such a relief to talk and I don't wanna be restricted.

-I yelled out when I got stuck by a wasp after the night walking, my first words where "mother fucker" which was probably appropriate since that is what i am painting right now.

[...]

-In the night somehow it got more dense for me.

-I felt less at night. I usually don't like to talk. It's more quiet and less people.

-I wonder if night means social. You know, because by myself I really didn't had any issue. But it was super interesting in the dinning hall I felt that the outsider in the school class, you know, everyone sat together and people really knew that I was silent because I guess usually I'm quite a verbal person so everybody knew I was silent, and nobody wanted to sit next to me!

-Exactly! I was amazed!

-Aaah!

-Oh! I'm worth nothing without my sarcastic or humours words!

[...]

-It was so strange, people felt it was a punishment. There was someone that told me "Oh! You're being silent, poor thing!" And I was like "poor thing?" And so I actually smiled, and he didn't understand my gesture and he said "Oh! What does that mean? That I am laughing at you?" - And I was like, you know..."what??" He was putting words on me that actually where his, you know.

[...]

-[Name] felt punished because he was amongst silents, it was so funny "Someone communicate with me!!" "Nobody wants to talk to me!!!" It was so funny.

-I just felt boring, sitting somewhere, and, I dunno, at the dinning table like afterwards like smoking just sat there and staring there like silent and someone is coming and asking you stuff and then is like "Oh you are silent" and I was like "Yeah" like just moving my head and smiling and they wouldn't know what to say, standing there, trying to say something, and I realized like "Ok this is boring".

[...]

-I just had a couple weird moments like when like, when we were watching, we watched [Movie] the first night, and people are always already like kind of awkward in that movie, but I noticed that because I was being silent I was interpreting, like, there was multiple different scenes where someone would be like sitting like let's say there where two characters in the film and you would be speaking to someone and this person would be just like reacting but not speaking at because they where in a conversation, and in my mind just immediately went to "Oh, that person doesn't speak" and then when they did speak I was like, wait a moment! And I felt like actually physically, like you were not supposed to do that! And that happen like in three different scenes in the movie, it was a bizarre feeling.

-Yeah I had that too

[...]

-There was a couple times that I completely forgot and I just said a couple of words to someone and they looked at me like "what are you...?" and I was like "oouuf!" but I never like spoke consciously until now that I walked in. So that was weird. In the beginning I fucking loved it, I was like so into it, I thought it was hilarious and I thought it was so frustrating for everybody else, people kept asking me like "how is it? is it super hard?" and kept trying to communicate "no, it's not hard for me, is hard for everybody else" but I didn't know how to say that! So it was something that was personal, then after a while it was so hard to constantly try to express complicated things so i just like dedicated myself to listening more and then even that became hard so then I just start putting headphones so then I just couldn't hear people be-

cause it's like I had to much of an impulse to not wanna talk, specially with [Name]'s thing and then like I was playing chess and there was like 7 people having this conversation there and hearing them for 2 and a half hours.

-I'm surprised you didn't say anything.

-And I just like honestly I woke up in the middle of the night because I had this like dream when I was seating in the exact situation and I just like "Alright! Like fuck all this I need to say something about this!" And then I did like played the exact situation as if I have been able to speak, so honestly it was like hard, it was actually like, lonely, I just felt like I couldn't communicate myself in the world to people.

-Yeah, I think that was the word. That suddenly, I felt, and it was exactly the time after a lot of people broke it. It was very much easier for me at the beginning when a lot of people was on it. It was like I had like, accomplices to something, into something. But when a lot of people start to break it, it I actually started feeling...wow, somehow the world became heavier.

-I was very curious about the necessity, or urgency to break it. I was sitting with [Name] and [Name] and [Name], where like my friends, and I guess in that situation I thought it would be like the hardest but actually it wasn't because I realized wherever I have to say I usually like kind of humorous remarks to make people laugh or whatever and it didn't seemed very urgent to me, and actually wasn't...and those remarks I was still able to kind of like express the eyerolls or whatever which made it even more fun that, yeah, I was surprised how few situations really required me to talk, there where so few, and whenever I did this like "oh forget about it" like I can't communicate this, like I did that a few times where I tried to communicate and was like "ah, not worth it" I realized that so many things I say are absolutely not worth to say, I thought like language, I had this moment yesterday like "agh god, like language is such a waste, I keep on using it for like, for what?" like very uncaredful or something.

[...]

-Couldn't you just draw a picture?

-I was trying, but it was kind of complicated, and [Name] she was like really really into it, like we are gonna get this, you can't give up, and then [Name] got involved, [Name]'s kids got involved, and this whole community effort for me trying to explain that I wanted to do this thing, and then he was like "no no, is it about sleeping? no no no, it's about desire"!

[Group laughs]

-It was hard tho, it was frustrating, I saw [Name] right after and I was like 'after 4:30 I'm gonna tell you this is fucking hard' [laughs] I was sweating!

-I think like the- the whole body part for me is like the worst because I felt I can't use all the letters of the alphabet, I know that I make a lot of sound always but like just for-for my body to say, just to go through all the alphabet like for real it makes my body more loose and I feel more free in a way to say something even tho i don't want to say something to someone, so more like the act of speaking and the sound, and the body involved in it, and like singing, not just like, yeah, singing words as well, just, just realized is so important to me is to go to through that scale and to feel like a free person. That was for me the worst part, like not using letters and words in general. I didn't like, I think, there was some moments I wanted to communicate, but I didn't really cared that much, it was like "you are bored of me now, but you are not gonna be bored at me in 2 days, I could make a joke now, actually I would do make a joke now, but I won't' and it doesn't matter", but like the body effect was weird, that was something that I didn't expect. Because what I said, I said sleep because I felt like silent or not talking was going to be calm and I have a constant overload in here and this is going to be better. It was like that, but more the thought of it that actually not speaking, so, that was something else.

-It made me want a space where I don't have to be like "I'm not talking", like a table at dinner or something like "this is the silent table" like [Name] and I said like I saw [Name] and I was like I'm sitting with [Name], I put my fucking headphones and I am not talking to anybody and that was such a bliss! And then fucking two people sat next to us and were like "how are you guys!" and I was like "Oh my god you not understand what this means!" So it made me really crave a space to have, like yeah just a non verbal space, I think that would be really nice here.

-I'm really craving that.

-Honestly like a lot of times I had my headphones like half of the time, and most of the times was not even music playing.

-I already did that even before the silence thing like would walk around on campus with headphones but I am actually not listening to anything, it's just a signifier that I am not available to talk

[...]

-Another thing that just came up my mind is the ehm, the thought of intimacy, and how, I-I felt like I was less, like worth less as a body, and particularly as company, so I remember going to the night walk and I caught up in the road with [Name], who is my friend, but I wasn't sure that she knew that I was silent, I wasn't sure if I should like actually walk with her or not, and I, realized that I was walking slightly quicker anyway and then at some point just walking in front of her it made me realized that all of my friendships and bondings here are actually extremely un-intimate because if it were about intimacy the I think I would care to just physically be in the company of somebody, but because my connections here are so un-intimate I am worth nothing as a body that you are physically company by, but rather brain or mouth.

-Did you feel like, umm, I mean does that make you understand differently how you are making relationships here?

-It underlined what I already sensed, that is like, that bondings feel very much like, relationships that are just necessary in this mini-society, or something, and also here where time works differently, still relationships and friendships take time to became intimate, for me. I can only speak for myself.

-I think that one of the hardest parts that I realized like pretty quickly wasn't like speaking to other people but it was actually speaking to myself, that I found that I use words a lot, like a loud talking to myself, like specially like waking in the morning and first thing I'm like saying things or I don't know, just mumbling to yourself and like for me to not be able to do that, but still be thinking of words, but then like even just the expression of yourself when no one else is around like the words aren't for the people, you know, but it's just like...

-I couldn't paint because of that, I talk when I paint, so that was really like "Fuck! I can't say anything!" It felt like I couldn't because I couldn't verbalize it and then I couldn't think and made me think that I couldn't do that and I was like--

-It was so strange...

-Nothing was going on in my brain! as like, this is so weird that I have to talk to feel like I'm thinking!

[...]

-I definitely went into survival mode

-Wow! We had opposite experiences, seriously!

-Really?

-Like twenty hours ago or something [laughs] I was just like "oh man, I have to make it through this because I committed to this" or whatever but this is fucking hard and I just need to like, like sound out, I just like cut myself out of the world

-For me part of the survival mode was the headphones actually, like I recovered, I couldn't listen to music so much until today, that I actually put my headphones and actually shut out everyone else, and I started actually like uhhm, I don't have to talk, I don't have to hear. Because I heard so much, I really tried to hear so much, from almost one day and a half or more, so you just like overload.

[...]

-You felt tired after the day that we spent together not talking or you felt tired after...?

-I'm still super tired

-I am too

-I'm needing to recover

-For me, this is the first night I slept really amazing! [laughs]

-Really?

-For the very first time! And I started dreaming and thinking in german again

-Wow! So somehow like reset the mind for you

[...]

-It comes like dominance, they trying to break you or something, I felt that by, not so strongly by any person but just like by certain groups of people like maybe just talk-ing about it and they were like trying to get me to speak, it's just like this thing that is like I don't know like this power struggle, or thought like disrespectful in some way, I just uhm

-Well, I think that Skowhegan is already is an experiment with people being in your space, like how people can of invade your space in ways that they don't normally

-Yeah absolutely

-And I had this expectation that if I do the exercise it would give me a break, like I would have more space, but it was actually the other way.

-Yeah

-I had to stop because it was too, like it was much more--

-Yeah it was much more confrontation

-Than just talking, because to communicate I had to really look at people at their eyes and see what they were doing and they kept looking at me and see what I was doing, so it was extra attention, and so it was very difficult, and also the misunderstandings, you have to communicate twice longer with people, much more than twice just to get something very simple across so, I felt like like--

-But I think it is directional with yeah, with how the other person is somehow em-pathic to you. I don't know, you really felt the empathy in that process of communica-tion, when it was fast then the empathy felt very good and when it was slow and you just don't go anywhere, you feel the distance...

-I think it's about intimacy, because of fear, if it's not talking...[Name] and I were sat together and we didn't had to use language at all, and it was like, I don't know! It was great! But like with other people, it was like yeah, there was this moment they don't want to have to engage with you at certain level, it's too-it's too intimate

-Some people are really intimidated by having to had that communication

-It was, for me it was really marked when I went to the office and I was like I just had, I have this project I want to do, and then [Name] was there, and the whole time I was trying to draw this out and he was like purposely saying the wrong thing and he thought it was hilarious and so frustrating for me, because I really wanted to do the project, and I was like, I want to communicate by drawing and gesture, and then he tell like, I don't know and then [Name] like heard that happening so she came over and she was so dedicated and he just basically got like out of the picture, and then like [Name] came over and he was like trying to help, and really like interested in like working through that method of communication whereas with him he was just like, I don't know, I think it like disarmed him in some way so he tried to get that back by turning into to a joke again.

-It's interesting how people had different strategies, like some people, I noticed some people making jokes about-- or other people just said "no" and walk away, other people like really stood and kept asking me, even though I said "no", and they kept asking like wanting to communicate. So it was interesting sought to see how people responded in different ways.

-Sometimes I was surprised that people were very dedicated, that actually surprised me

-I think that it showed another side of people

-Yeah, absolutely!

-Like it showed their investment in their friendship or connection more, actually, like do they actually really want to be...I think it is super interesting in terms of small talk, like the reason that I was looking forward to this exercise so much is because I can't deal with small talk any more, which is why I went around with headphones even outside of this practice, so much, it completely shuts small talk down, because you are not gonna put all of this effort of non verbal communication into something like "how was your day? did you have a studio visit? blah blah blah" when you don't really care about the answers, of course you can have questions like "how is your day? did you have a studio vist?" and really care, but then you might also like invest in non verbal communication

-I had an opposite experience because I learnt that I really default-- like it's really hard for me not to have a small talk for me, and I actually failed like a few times the first night 'cause I kind of instinctively like I didn't think 'hey!' I say hey to people or

like "how are you" and I didn't even think about it, I like I didn't even realized I was talking to them until I was like "oh I'm not supposed to say hi to the person" It was super weird for me to walk past people just to ignored them, ah, so I had a different experience, I felt like I kind of, my default was to default small talk, and I kinda sometimes just failed without noticing was chatting to people.

[...]

-Did you guys already talked about our trip to Waterville?

-That was really beautiful, we were all silent

-The entire time?

-The entire time

-Lunch? Shopping?...

-Everything, like everything

-And it was so nice to be in a car full of people where all being silent

-Oh my god I want to do that

-And it felt so, yeah, at the end it felt so-- I think that's maybe why you and I kind of broke silence 'cos after we came back that was such an intense experience like, but it felt like uhm

-Yeah, I really felt exhausted, it was very exhausting

-For me sometimes is difficult to have like a conversation in english you know, it's not my language, so in that moment when everybody was like silent it was like everyone, it was like even, you know, all the same.

-So, Equality by silence

-But you also not talking to the people on the way, I felt it was kind of like a performance, and we actually communicate without having them guess what we were doing.

-Yeah, they where like you are playing some kind of game, it was cool to see the reaction of the people from the real world

-The guy from the laundry mat was pissed

-He was super pissed

-I thought he was going to shot us, after that we made a note because he was telling us “Oh are you playing some sort of game?”

-Yeah he was pissed, he was not cool

-That was the first time that a laundry asked my name and I was like looking for a marker and he just looked at me and he is just like “do you guys are playing some sort of fucking game” or something, I don’t know, it was really like--

-Yeah it felt like that!

-...angry

-But then there was another guy from the store that really really liked it, and other people in line tried to guess what we were doing

-Also the guy from the restaurant started like doing---

-Oh yeah, like ‘I get you, I get you!’ like it was like

[...]

-Oh that night a few of us were right were the cut-through path comes down and we were like ‘hmm! hmm!’ and [Name] comes out and he was ike “Oh! You guys are all been silent! I was wondering what the fuck all of this weird noise happening outside of my window!”, and then he was just kind of like, he just seemed kind of pissed, and he is like “can you guys please be quieter I am trying to sleep” and it was really ironic that we were supposed to be the silent or something

[Group laughs]

-Well, every time that someone was like “Oh you have to be silent” and I would just scream as loud as I could! [laughs]

-Yeah yeah!

-So it was this thing about been silent I find it like demoralizing when someone is like “You can’t speak!”

[...]

-Who is controlling who? you know,

-Do you feel like, you think it threatens something very deep about people, about social interactions?

-I think is fear of missing out, like [Name] when you said you where laughing and [Name] gave you a bad look, like to me is like when there’s a table that looks like they are having more fun than you and you feel like you are missing out, I feel like when you don’t communicate but you are still enjoying your life people like, can’t control you, they don’t know where are you going, they don’t know what you are feeling, therefore they feel like, like you have something over them so they can’t control you, I think it’s like an issue of control, if they can’t hear what you are saying...

-Hmj!

-So then when you hear someone laughing you are like “Oh! They are laughing, they are enjoying, but I can’t hear what it’s about” so like, therefore that makes me really uncomfortable because it makes me feel like I just can’t participate

-Or like we are playing on them

-Yeah! Oh my god! I had a moment during the nightwalk where I had a thought that I couldn’t share and this thought was sooo hilarious and I just cracked laughing for like a minute or something [laughs] like I didn’t care! But I think that was like a moment where people were like “Are you now laughing at me?” or something, [Name] said that! It was like, “Are you having silent inside jokes or something?”

[Group laughs]

-Dude, it’s like...No!

-It makes people really insecure

[...]

-It’s funny because [Name] has a strange sense of humor

[Group laughs]

-And maybe I noticed it before, I noticed that cultural thing before, but because now I couldn’t communicate or work on that misscommunication it went wrong--

-Yeah it takes time

-Yeah, specially when you, you can’t, yeah it kind of enhances, it enhances the communication, like someone makes a little bit of a cynical remark you kinda, there’s no interaction to give back, so it’s just like you can just leave it and go like this, or you can take it and just...take it, you can’t be cynical when you are silent...in a way...

-Ahh!

[...]

-I'm done talking

[Group laughs]

-Yeah! I feel so weird now!

-I'm sad! I could have gone for another day

-I wish it could be a space!

-You can!

-A non verbal space we could have!

-Thank you!

-Really really really

-The night walk was fun!

-It was so so fun, come here everyone

[Sound of steps on wood]

-Aw! Intimacy!!

[Joy shoutings and laughs]

-Smelly intimacy!

[Group laughs]

-That's me!

-Thank you so so much, it was really amazing

-Thanks for everything!

[The participants that were present in the session at the Fresco barn left together, some of them dancing to a song by Tom Tom Club that started playing on a mobile speaker that the artist moved through all the common spaces of the residency, passing by, loudly and unexpectedly, resonating differently in rooms, studios and workshops. The song marked an important moment during a trip town by *[Silence]* participants, which lyrics were deeply related and that we danced and hummed but couldn't sing during the session. The music faded announcing the end of *[Silence]*]



[The mobile speaker playing the song ‘Wordy Rappinhood’ by Tom Tom Club after the end of the listening session]

What are words worth?
What are words worth? Words

Words in papers, words in books
Words on TV, words for crooks
Words of comfort, words of peace
Words to make the fighting cease
Words to tell you what to do
Words are working hard for you
Eat your words but don't go hungry
Words have always nearly hung me

Ram sam sam Ah Ram sam sam
guriguriguriguri Ram sam sam
Aka yae-yupi Ah-KA-YEYA
AHUAA UUA NI KI CHI!

What are words worth?
What are words worth? Words
Words of nuance, words of skill
And words of romance are a thrill
Words are stupid, words are fun
Words can put you on the run

mots pressés, mots sensés,
mots qui disent la vérité,
mots maudits, mots mentis,
mots qui manquent le fruit d'esprit

Ram sam sam Ah Ram sam sam
guriguriguriguri Ram sam sam
Aka yae-yupi Ah-KA-YEYA
AHUAA UUA NI KI CHI!

It's a rap race, with a fast pace
Concrete words, abstract words
Crazy words and lying words
Hazy words and dying words
Words of faith and tell me straight
Rare words and swear words
Good words and bad words

Ram sam sam Ah Ram sam sam
guriguriguriguri Ram sam sam
Aka yae-yupi Ah-KA-YEYA
AHUAA UUA NI KI CHI!

What are words worth?
What are words worth? - words

Ram sam sam Ah Ram sam sam
guriguriguriguri Ram sam sam
Aka yae-yupi Ah-KA-YEYA
AHUAA UUA NI KI CHI!

What are words worth?
What are words worth? - words

Words can make you pay and pay
Four-letter words I cannot say
Panty, toilet, dirty devil
Words are trouble, words are subtle
Words of anger, words of hate
Words over here, words out there
In the air and everywhere
Words of wisdom, words of strife
Words that write the book I like
Words won't find no right solution
To the planet earth's pollution
Say the right word, make a million
Words are like a certain person
Who can't say what they mean
Don't mean what they say
With a rap rap here and a rap rap there
Here a rap, there a rap
Everywhere a rap rap

Rap it up for the common good
Let us enlist the neighbourhood
It's okay, I've overstood
This is a wordy rappinghood, okay, bye.

Ram sam sam Ah Ram sam sam
guriguriguriguri Ram sam sam
Aka yae-yupi Ah-KA-YEYA
AHUAA UUA NI KI CHI!

What are words worth?
What are words worth? - words

What are words worth?
What are words worth? - words

[20] Tom Tom Club - Wordy Rappinghood (Incomplete lyrics), [Silence], Skowhegan 2016.

[21] Song Lyrics: Tom Tom Club - Wordy Rappinghood.
Listen: <https://youtu.be/6Vl1m5FYIAo>

[After Silence]



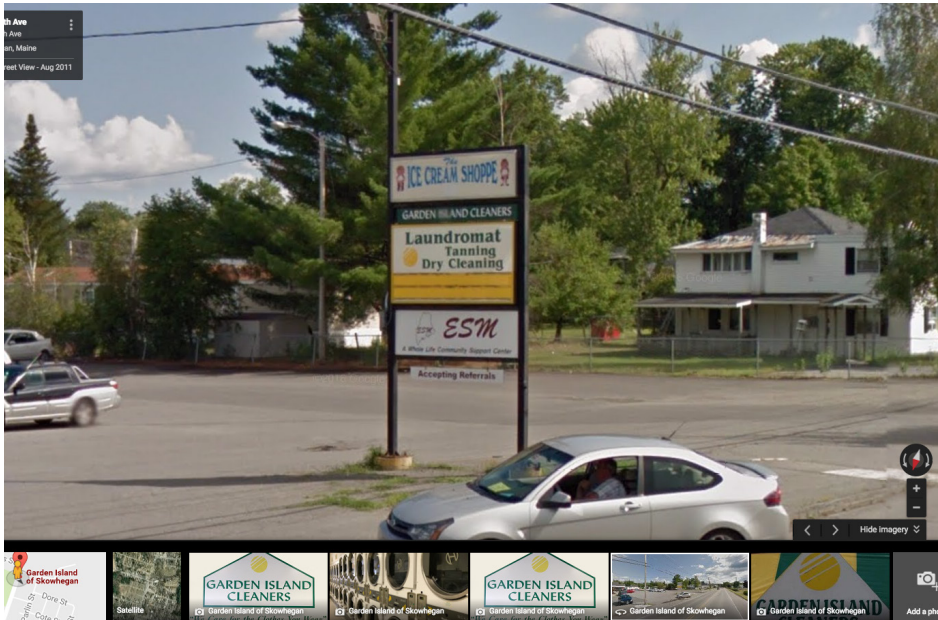
[Trasncription of sound recording of a conversation between [Silent] participants (fragment)]

- I don't know, I couldn't stop myself like thinking about meaning intended, I don't know, there where things just interesting, words like dead symbols, that were life sources...
- Now is more like a feeling, you know, this thing of structured sound, you know, the sound that I could make before were 'good sounds', permitted, not structured like “ag-giiiaahgg”
- [Group laughs]
- And I compare with this sounds that I am making now that somehow have a mean-ing and they are so basically the same, they are so similar--
- I kind of feel now when I'm being silent in a natural way and I feel the density that I'm being silent, and somehow I know now in a social context when I activate again that silence, it has a meaning now, a consequence, a power of sorts...
- Some of the things that you are saying happen to me too, and yeah!
- Yeah! In the same way, I think there's a power in silence, and then in the same way you have a new understanding of the sounds that you are making I think that is also a power--
- Also vulnerability. I stopped because I felt in danger, I was like, I went walking to town at night and it was very dark, I was on the side of the road and cars kept on going very fast, I was very calm and thought it was a nice thing to walk in silence and be outside the campus but then I started to get nervous feeling the cars pass by so close, thinking of what would I do if something bad happened, or if some police stopped me because I was walking at night with no lights, so after that I just kept on thinking that I could be in danger...
- Well, you extracted something you needed to extract and then came back
- Right, and experience, how to relate to experience, and how language gets in the way some times.
- [...]



[Artist’s studio with selection of texts, notes and sound objects of the listening session]

[The Laundry event]



[After a couple of days after the *[Silence]* listening session, some of the *[Silence]* participants that were on the silent trip to the town of Skowhegan and Waterville returned to pick up the laundry. The day of the silent trip the group was conformed mainly by foreigners, and we were not interested in provocation but rather on playfulness, interaction and politeness, all of us were regular customers who had been there before and the people from town knew about the artists residency, having communication with the residency's director and are regularly encouraged to engage with the program. The artists that picked up the clothes were one woman artist from the US and two male artists from abroad, the person who received them was different from the one that interacted with the group during the listening session, she asked and refered directly and particuarly to the woman in the group if they were responsible of the 'silent game' that occured days ago, and in an unsettling manner she prohibited that kind of behavior in their business, she refused to hear reasons or to open a dialogue, and she accused the behaviour of disrespectful, remarked that we weren't weolcomed if we acted like that again. This incident opened a series of conversations between participants about the political atmosphere and other events and situations in near towns regarding different and serious kinds of discriminations.]

[View in google maps of Skowhegan's local laundry]



Silence to unlearn language.

Silence as fear.

Silence as laugh.

Silence as translation.

Silence to listen.

Silence as community.

Silence as resistance.

Silence as an imaginary edge.

Silence as refusal.

Silence as occupation.

Silence as misunderstanding.

Silence as fragility.

Silence as amplification.

Silence as awareness.

Silence as punishment.

Silence as density.

Silence for disarming.

Silence as worth.

Silence as equality.

Silence as stomach ache.

Silence to disappear.

Silence as disembodiment.

Silence as resistance.

Silence as empathy.

Silence to reset.

Silence as confrontation.

Silence as intimacy.

Silence as investment.

Silence as exhaustion.

Silence as space.

Silence as dead symbols.

Silence as power.

Silence to extract.

Silence as experience.

Silence as disrespect.

Silence as danger.

