

University of Tartu
Department of Semiotics

Mariia Kornietska

Sound Mediation of Memory:
Sound Monuments as Counter-Monumental Forms

Master's Thesis

Supervisor: Tiit Remm

Tartu
2025

I have written the Master's Thesis myself, independently. All of the other authors' texts, main viewpoints and all data from other resources have been referred to.

Author: Mariia Kornietska

Signature:

Date: 14/01/2024

Table of contents

Introduction	4
Research Questions, Objectives, and Structure	5
1. Overview of the theoretical approaches and key concepts	8
2. Mapping the field: auditory turn in history	15
3. Multimodal approach to sound forms. Sound as a mode	19
3.1. Sound as semiotic resource and affordances of sound in sound monuments	22
4. Counter-Monumentality and sound forms.....	24
4.1. Breaking the monumental: critique of the traditional monumentality	24
4.2. Counter-monumental forms in relation to sound.....	27
4.3. Sound interventions in public spaces	29
4.3.1. Urban space as a scene for monuments' performance	31
5. Semiotic approach to the meaning-making of monuments	33
5.1. Toward the model for sound monuments analysis	34
5.1.1. Plastic, figurative and political dimensions in Bellentani's model	36
5.1.2. Reinterpreting the model for sound monuments analysis	37
6. Outline and comparative analyses of the case studies	42
7. Analyses of the case studies	48
7.1. Distant Trains. Bill Fontana (1984)	49
7.2. Touched Echo. Markus Kison (2007).....	51
7.3. The Inhabitants of Colosseum. Nikita Kadan (2018)	55
7.4. Results and discussion	58
Conclusions	60
References	62
Case studies documentations	64
List of other artworks	65
List of figures.....	65
Resümee.....	66
Annex 1. Conversation with Markus Kison	68

Introduction

This thesis emerges from the ongoing reevaluation of national histories in Ukraine and the transformation of commemoration practices within the country's memory politics. In recent years, Ukraine has undergone a profound rethinking of its historical narratives, a process intensified by the events of 2014 and, more recently, the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022. These shifts have reshaped not only the content of memory but also its forms, transforming monuments and historical representations in public spaces. In response to this change, I am exploring the potential of sound as a powerful and underexplored modality of commemoration.

A critical issue behind this research lies in one of the consequences of war—the widespread destruction of monuments across Ukraine, where the loss of these physical forms leads to a parallel erosion of the meanings and collective memories they once embodied. In response, the act of covering or concealing monuments has become common in urban public spaces, raising a fundamental question: how can a society preserve its collective memory when its traditional, physical referents are systematically erased or obscured from view? This challenge invites a turn to non-traditional modalities of commemoration, particularly the modality of sound, as a potential means to sustain memory in the absence of enduring physical markers.

Further exploration into the disintegration of material monumental forms was inspired by my personal auditory experiences during the early months of the war, when Kyiv's soundscape was profoundly altered. The city's wartime soundscape—marked by the omnipresent wail of air raid sirens, rocket bombardments, and the profound silences that followed—became an essential component of the lived experience of conflict. In response to that, my thesis investigates sound as a sense and as a medium capable of bearing the weight of memory, particularly during times of sociopolitical change. By engaging with sound studies, semiotics, sound art, and memory theory, this research seeks to provide a novel framework for understanding how auditory experiences can serve as vehicles for remembrance. Through this lens, the thesis aims to contribute to the broader discourse on rethinking monuments and commemorative practices in post-conflict contexts.

My interest in the dynamics of memory and monumental commemoration began during my master's in Cultural Studies when I was completing my internship at the Ukrainian Institute of National Remembrance in February - March 2021, with further continuation in January - February 2022. Another source of inspiration arises from my professional experience at the

PinchukArtCentre, a contemporary art centre based in Kyiv, where I worked as a tour designer and communication coordinator from March 2021 to August 2022. Following the onset of Russia's full-scale invasion, one of the institution's primary goals became the communication of the Ukrainian war experience—both from the perspectives of the people and the artists—through exhibitions in Kyiv and international cultural initiatives. These experiences offered valuable perspectives into how memory is constructed, contested, and expressed across institutional frameworks and artistic practices. They also led me to explore the intersection of historical, political, and artistic perspectives in commemoration, particularly in the creation and reimagining of monuments.

Building on the inspiration outlined above, I have chosen sound monuments as the primary *object of study*. As a main objective with that research, I aim to propose a framework for analyzing sound monuments as mediums of remembrance. Through this approach, I hope to contribute to the rethinking of traditional commemorative practices and contemporary monument creation strategies. Additionally, I seek to highlight the importance of a semiotic approach to sound experience and perception within the context of incorporating sound monuments into collective memory processes.

Research Questions, Objectives, and Structure

Research questions of the study are the following:

1. How does sound act as a semiotic resource and interact with other modalities in sound monuments?

On the structural level, sound monuments function as multimodal texts, integrating different modalities (auditory, spatial, visual, etc.) into cohesive meaning-making systems. Such multimodal integration raises questions about the affordances and limitations of sound as a main communicative mode and its interplay with other modalities.

2. In what ways do sound monuments contribute to collective memory functioning?

Externally, sound monuments function as multimodal texts within broader collective memory discourse, challenging traditional (visual-based) commemorative paradigms by prioritizing auditory perception. The question is built around changes in collective memory mediation and engagement with the past through the appearance of sonic forms.

3. How do sound monuments act within public spaces?

Sound monuments trigger collective memories within public spaces, engaging with the built environment, acoustic landscape, and audience. By interacting with the physical space, actual soundscape, and the audience, they serve as a form of activation of memory. This question highlights the importance of both the broader cultural context and the physical, real-time environment in which the monuments are situated.

To address these questions, I propose to approach them through the following *research objectives* and *structure*:

- To make an overview of the theoretical approaches to sound analysis within the context of sound studies and memorial practices.

Chapter 1 presents an overview of the key concepts and theoretical works relevant to the study, providing a theoretical background for further analysis.

- To propose a semiotic foundation for analyzing auditory experiences, particularly in the recreation of historical soundscapes and their impact on recipients, this study will present both the strengths and limitations of sound as a medium.

In *Chapters 2* and *3*, I will provide an overview of semiotic approaches to understanding sound, focusing on its potential and limitations as a medium for conveying knowledge about the past. I will contextualize the approaches of Raymond Murray Schafer and Günther Kress in relation to auditory perception and the mode of sound, applying concepts such as the sensory experience of history, aesthetics, affective experience, and multimodality.

- To demonstrate how sound monuments are organically integrated into anti- and counter-monumental movements in commemorative art, where sound serves as an alternative to traditional material mediums of memory.

Chapter 4 will examine the heritage of anti- and counter-monumentalism. This chapter will explore their profound influence on transforming monument forms and their contributions to contemporary commemorative practices. I will discuss the anti-/counter-monumental qualities of sound monuments and illustrate how these qualities are expressed in contemporary examples. The chapter will conclude with reflections on the significance of sound interventions in public spaces for cultural memory, particularly in the context of shifting commemorative practices.

- To suggest illustrations that support theoretical premises and can be identified as sound monuments.

Chapters 6 and 7 will be dedicated to providing detailed descriptions and a comparative analysis of three key case studies of sound monuments, exploring their relationship to the collective past.

- To propose a semiotic model for analyzing sound monuments and demonstrate its application to selected case studies.

Chapter 5 will reimagine Federico Bellentani's model of meaning-making in monuments in the context of sound monument analysis. In Chapters 6 and 7, this model will be applied to the analysis of the chosen case studies, demonstrating its practical functioning.

1. Overview of the theoretical approaches and key concepts

The theoretical framework of this study integrates concepts from sound art, commemorative art, and semiotics, focusing on the intersection of sound as a medium and the evolving practices of public memory. The primary works informing this thesis span sound theory and acoustic ecology studies. Among these, key texts include *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World* by Raymond Murray Schafer (1994 [1977]) and *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* by Brandon LaBelle (2006). These works provide terminology for describing sound objects and events, exploring the relationship between sound and its environment, and establishing the importance of auditory perception in shaping memory and experience. Sound theory and acoustic ecology offer a universal language for discussing sound phenomena, addressing the challenges of describing sound modalities (e.g., music, vocalizations, recorded sound, collective sound production). The interdisciplinary dimensions of sound studies highlight the need to discuss sound in socio-cultural contexts, moving beyond technical aspects of sound production. In the context of sound monuments, where sound functions as a reference to past events or sonic environments, describing qualities such as texture, frequency, and pitch seems secondary. Emphasis will instead be placed on the indexical and symbolic nature of sound.

Another question these approaches address is what we can consider sound, beyond its musical sense. The works mentioned above help to conceptualize sound as a unit of the soundscape and an element of acoustic environments, including unconventional or noisy and disturbing sounds. These may not be traditionally pleasant or harmonious but remain significant in their symbolic and referential roles. Finally, the medium of sound is the message itself. Using sound in commemorative art reveals a broader picture of the culture of remembrance and how the ways we remember are changing. For example, the sound of bombing can symbolize acts of war, using auditory engagement rather than visual images of destroyed cities to commemorate these events, appealing directly to sensory memory.

These approaches are necessary to build a certain opposition to the dominance of the visual domain. This does not mean entirely rejecting vision—an impossible task—but rather minimizing its dominance and striving to create an equally powerful descriptive language for the auditory domain. Partially addressing this challenge, the study employs a social semiotic approach. In this sense, the semiotic basis of the study is grounded in *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication* by Gunther Kress (2010) and *The Meaning of the Built Environment: A Semiotic and Geographical Approach to Monuments in the Post-Soviet Era* by Federico Bellentani (2021). Kress's text offers social semiotic

frameworks for understanding how sound functions within multimodal texts. This approach allows for the analysis of sound monuments as multimodal texts, where sound does not act in isolation but interacts with the built environment and broader cultural contexts. It helps in understanding how meaning is constructed through the integration of different modalities (spatial and visual ones as well). Sound monuments emerge as complex multimodal and multisensory projects where sound can dominate meaning-making while still engaging with physical (architectural) and social (audience) environments.

Another issue addressed is the cultural choice of how to remember and which mode is selected to commemorate past events. This problem will be explored further in subsequent chapters. The representation of the past in sonic forms is neither widespread nor consistent across cultures and time periods. Additionally, not all historical events can be commemorated sonically, as sound technologies primarily developed in the 20th century. For this reason, the case studies are limited to the commemoration of events from 1939-1945, maintaining a consistent temporal soundscape frame. Nevertheless, the use of sound in commemoration reflects local cultural approaches to memory and highlights shifts in contemporary memory representation frameworks.

Bellentani's semiotic approach to monuments, especially his analysis of meaning-making processes in post-Soviet contexts, is particularly helpful for conceptualizing sound sculptures as monuments. His work also provides insight into the relationship between form and environment, which is especially useful in analyzing how sound monuments function in public spaces. These monuments have the capacity to transform the meaning of built environments, reintroducing past memories — forgotten or compressed — into public consciousness.

Foundational theories in counter-monumentalism are drawn primarily from James Edward Young's *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning* (1993). Further insights into the cultural dimensions of memory come from Pierre Nora's *Sites of Memory, Sites of Mourning* (1996) and Rosalind Krauss's *Sculpture in the Expanded Field* (1979). These works inform the understanding of novel forms of monuments and the shifting practices of memory in a postmodern context.

The thesis develops the concept of sound monuments as a hybrid art form and memory medium, bridging the ephemeral qualities of sound art with the reflective and dialogic potential of counter-monumental practices. By synthesizing these theoretical insights, the research explores how sound operates within public commemorative spaces, challenging traditional visual and static memorial forms. This approach positions sound monuments as both a

continuation and transformation of counter-monumental practices, aligning them with contemporary cultural and semiotic needs.

1. 1. Sound

For analyzing sound as it functions in sound sculptures, I have chosen Gunther Kress's framework in social semiotics and multimodal communication. Through this approach, I will explore how sound operates as *a mode of meaning-making*. Kress's model of multimodality—where meaning is constructed through various interacting modes such as visual, spatial, and auditory—aligns with the complexity of sound sculptures, where sound functions both as a material and semiotic resource. This approach offers a detailed framework for examining sound's affordances and its interplay with other sensory modes. Additionally, Kress emphasizes how sound and other modes perform representational, interactive, and compositional functions to form multimodal texts (Kress 1996: 43). I would argue that sound sculptures could be regarded as examples of multimodal texts. Thus, this framework enables me to focus not solely on sound as a mode but also to examine its relations to other modalities, as Kress situates sound within a dynamic system of interaction, revealing how it can amplify meaning alongside visual (when present in sound artworks) and spatial elements in sound sculptures.

Deriving from this foundation, I will also incorporate several other approaches to understanding sound. Steven Feld's socio-cultural approach views sound as a “total social fact” that embodies cultural identity, community, and collective experience. Feld emphasizes sound's role in expressing cultural values and connecting individuals to their social environments (Feld 1996: 91). Raymond Murray Schafer, a key figure in acoustic ecology, defines sound as fundamental to the «soundscape» that shapes our perception of place and environment. Schafer's view situates sound as both reflective and constitutive of surroundings, influencing how we perceive and interact with our environment (Schafer 1994 [1977] : 7). Schafer's terminology and framework will be further discussed in Chapter 3 in relation to the sense of hearing.

From artistic viewpoint, in the musique concrète tradition, Pierre Schaeffer introduces the concept of sound as an «objet sonore», or «sound object,» which emphasizes its perceptual qualities independently of source. Schaeffer's approach encourages a deeper analytical focus on sound's abstract properties—such as texture, pitch, and rhythm—promoting a sensory engagement with sound itself (Schaeffer 1966: 76). Michel Chion's notion of sound as an

«acousmatic experience»—hearing sound without its visible source—highlights sound’s interpretative and emotional impact, particularly in audiovisual contexts (Chion 1994: 25).

From a semiotic perspective, Roland Barthes conceptualizes sound as a «signifying system» that conveys symbolic meanings, enriching communication through complex, layered interpretations (Barthes 1977: 179). Finally, Brandon LaBelle frames sound as a spatial medium that «defines space» through movement and immersion, positioning it as a relational force within its environment (LaBelle 2006: 133).

These perspectives emphasize the complex character of sound, highlighting various dimensions such as cultural significance, environmental influence, and interpretive depth. Together, they will contribute to a broader understanding of sound within the context of sound monuments’ analysis.

1. 2. Sound sculpture

I am going to discuss the concept of sound sculpture as the closest paradigm of sound art to the understanding of sound monuments. It will mostly be used in the sense of a multimedia art form, which evolves in space and time, where the sound plays the primary role. This definition is drawn mostly from the works of sound art researchers. Holger Schulze describes sound sculpture as a «multisensory object» that merges sound with physical space (Schulze 2018 : 41), emphasizing both its material and auditory aspects. Brandon LaBelle highlights sound sculpture’s social dimension, defining it as «a sonic entity situated in space,» which interacts with public environments and invites listeners to experience sound as part of their surroundings (LaBelle 2006 : 77). Douglas Kahn emphasizes its temporal aspect, noting that sound sculptures unfold in both space and time, inviting movement and interaction from the listener (Kahn 2001 : 25).

The sound artist Bill Fontana, whose work «Distant Trains» will be discussed further, characterizes sound sculptures as «relational structures» that transform their surroundings, enabling sound to resonate with the environment (Fontana 2004 : 104). Expanding on this concept, Rosalind Krauss (Krauss 1979 : 33) suggests that sound sculptures function as anti-monuments, operating in an «expanded field» beyond traditional monumental forms and challenging static commemorative practices. In the context of this research, sound sculptures are recreating elements of historical soundscapes, providing a framework for examining how sound engages with collective memory. And, to conclude, they can be understood as multimedia art forms, where sound takes precedence, merging materiality, social interaction,

and temporality to reinterpret environments and, in particular, challenge traditional commemorative practices.

1. 3. Monument

As Bellentani and Panico (Bellentani; Panico 2016 : 28) suggest, monuments are «built forms erected to confer dominant meanings on space», shaping not just the physical landscape but also the social and cultural identity of a place. At their core, they are meant to keep alive the memory of significant events or individual achievements, ensuring that they will be remembered by future generations. This purpose is highlighted by Riegl, who described monuments as structures created specifically to «keep single human deeds or events alive in the minds of future generations.» (Riegl 1903: 117)

I will mostly focus on monumental structures in public and urban spaces, in the way they become part of the urban fabric, acting as landmarks and reference points that help shape the identity of a city or space. As Caves points out, these structures are more than just commemorative symbols; they embody cultural, historical, and artistic values, serving educational, political, and artistic purposes. (Caves 2005 : 380) In this way, a monument appears as not merely a physical structure but a cultural and symbolic tool.

Lotman mentions the role and significance of monuments in preserving cultural memory. Monuments are described as those that fixate a certain cultural state. «Previous cultural states are constantly tossing fragments of themselves — texts, fragments, individual names, and monuments — into the future of the culture» (Lotman 2019 [1986] : 148).

1. 4. Counter-monument and anti-monument

In this work, I will use the term *counter-monument* to refer to a form of memorial that aims to provoke critical engagement with history, encouraging reflection and dialogue while often addressing themes of trauma, loss, and injustice. James Edward Young, the founder of the term, defines counter-monuments as those that «challenge the established narratives of memory, allowing for voices and histories that have been marginalized or silenced» (Young 1999 : 6). This perspective highlights the role of counter-monuments in reshaping our understanding of the complex nature of collective memory. Additionally, Paul Connerton notes that counter-monuments «reflect the complexities of history, offering alternative interpretations and challenging dominant historical narratives» (Connerton 1989 : 19). This characteristic

emphasizes the importance of presenting multiple viewpoints within the discourse of memorialization. Shoshana Felman further articulates the function of counter-monuments by stating that they «serve as sites of political and social commentary, questioning the ethics of commemoration in public space» (Felman 2002 : 45).

Expanding on this notion, Miwon Kwon asserts that «counter-monuments are not simply the opposite of traditional monuments; they are complex structures that embody absence, create dialogues, and invite participation, reconfiguring public space in a way that encourages critical reflection on history» (Kwon 2004 : 90). This highlights the transformative potential of counter-monuments in engaging the public in meaningful conversations about memory and history.

Moreover, sound can be regarded in light of the theory of counter-monuments. Brandon LaBelle posits that «sound can function as a counter-monument by creating an auditory space that challenges dominant narratives, inviting listeners to engage with the complexities of memory and history in ways that visual monuments often cannot» (LaBelle 2006 : 133). This notion emphasizes the potential of auditory experiences to evoke critical reflections that may be overlooked in traditional visual memorials.

The concepts of anti-monument and counter-monument are closely related. For example, as Pierre Nora observes, «anti-monuments serve as sites of cultural memory that can disrupt hegemonic narratives and present alternative histories» (Nora 1996 : 52), which is close to the definition of counter-monument. Yet, in some respects, they emphasize different approaches to challenging traditional commemoration practices. Both forms aim to disrupt conventional narratives—counter-monuments by critically engaging with historical complexities, sometimes still employing traditional forms to create a space for active reflection, and anti-monuments by questioning monumentality itself through absence, transience, and memory. I use the term *anti-monument* in the thesis to emphasize these reflective and often temporary qualities, which align well with sound's inherent ephemerality. Anti-monuments resist the authority of traditional monumental forms, and the narratives they embody as well as the power structures they represent. Additionally, Robert Smithson notes that anti-monuments often «subvert the conventions of monumentality by employing temporary or non-traditional materials that emphasize transience rather than permanence» (Smithson 1996: 84). This concept aligns well with sound as a medium in my study, as its transient nature organically supports non-traditional forms of commemoration.

1. 4. Sound monument

In this work, I aim to establish a definition of *sound monument* while also providing a framework for analyzing sound monuments as multimodal texts. A preliminary definition of a sound monument is a sound sculpture that embodies memory and history, where knowledge of the past is mediated through sound. I will refer to the sound sculptures I analyze in Chapters 6-7 as sound monuments already.

My goal is to integrate this concept by blending sound art with anti- and counter-monumental discourses, offering a possible way to reinterpret both fields. This situates sound as an alternative medium for public memory and historical engagement, but not as one necessarily breaking established narratives. Additionally, by positioning sound sculptures as sound monuments within these frameworks, this research opens sound art to serve as a vehicle for public remembrance and collective history, bridging sensory experience with collective memory in ways that go beyond the critical detachment often associated with anti-monumentalism.

At the same time, this approach allows anti- and counter-monumental practices to adapt to contemporary contexts, potentially expanding their role from critical interventions against fixed narratives to more fluid forms of engagement with the past. In contrast to the 20th-century critiques of monumentality, which will be discussed in Chapter 4, this combined approach could emphasize an ongoing relationship with memory, where sound offers an evolving form of remembrance that resonates within public space, reawakening collective memories.

2. Mapping the field: auditory turn in history

The exceptional role of the senses, particularly hearing, in shaping our understanding of history and memory is increasingly acknowledged in contemporary historical studies. By approaching past events through sensory experiences, we gain new ways of understanding identities, spaces, and cultural dynamics. This approach not only aims to reconstruct historical settings but also unveils previously undiscovered experiences of the past. Additionally, it underscores the significance of memory and emotion in shaping historical narratives.

«This has been informed by a heightened awareness of the role that the senses play in shaping modern identity and understanding of place, ... and increasingly, how the senses are central to the memory of past experiences and their representation. » (Damousi, Hamilton 2017 : 1)

The sensory turn in historical studies does much more than merely re-create historical landscapes imaginatively. The sensory approach lets to explore different aspects of the past that have previously gone unrecorded. This methodological shift helps us understand «subliminal histories»—aspects of the past that have always been present but are now being interpreted differently.

«Yet this field does so much more than imaginatively re-create the historical landscape. The senses also provide us with tools to explore different aspects of the past hitherto unrecorded or unknown, and to examine afresh a partly known past through a different lens.» (Damousi, Hamilton 2017 : 1)

«When we think about the senses, we are exposed to ‘subliminal histories’ that may have always been there, but we are now choosing a different path for understanding their meaning.» (Damousi, Hamilton 2017 : 2)

Hearing, as a vital sense for the perception of sound, not only serves a biological function but also holds profound semiotic and relational significance. Raymond Murray Schafer’s idea that hearing can be described as «a way of touching at a distance» (Schafer 1994 [1977] :11) underscores the tactile nature of sound, showing how it bridges the gap between the individual and their environment.

Sound’s dual role—both deeply personal and inherently social—creates a certain dynamic in collective auditory practices. Even in group settings, such as concerts or communal

soundscapes, sound maintains a sense of intimacy. Schafer's notion that «the intimacy of the first sense is fused with sociability whenever people gather together to hear something special» (Schafer 1994 [1977] :11) can be interpreted as a capacity of the sound to enable sharing experience while still engaging individuals on an intimate level. It lets us see those auditory experiences, whether solitary or communal, are rooted in personal perception, forging connections that transcend the visual and tactile, blending the personal with the collective in a seamless act of auditory participation.

While sound studies have emerged as a major academic field, much of this material remains ahistorical or focused on technological advances. There is also limited work on memory and the senses, beyond their role as «mnemonic triggers» (Damousi, Hamilton 2017 : 2). This gap may exist because it involves the physiological basis of cultural effects. Treating the senses merely as cultural phenomena ignores the crucial role of memory and emotion in their articulation. Sound, like vision, responds to external stimuli and has been separated by recording technologies.

«While sound studies in particular have emerged as a major academic field in recent times, much of this material remains ahistorical or focused on technological advances of sound.» (Damousi, Hamilton 2017 : 2)

In studies of historical soundscapes, the concept of «earwitnessing» presents another challenge, particularly when considered alongside the ahistorical nature of data and the emphasis on technological aspects of sound. Using Schafer's definition of soundscape—«any acoustic field of study. We may speak of a musical composition as a soundscape, or a radio program as a soundscape, or an acoustic environment as a soundscape» (Schafer 1994 [1977]: 7) — this research considers mostly the representations of the sound environments of the past as perceived by modern humans.

While earwitness accounts provide historians with a means to access periods predating the advent of recording technologies, allowing an engagement with past soundscapes through written records, they do offer a historical foundation. As Schafer notes, «we may utilize the techniques of modern recording and analysis to study contemporary soundscapes, but for the foundation of historical perspectives, we will have to turn to earwitness accounts from literature and mythology, as well as to anthropological and historical records » (Schafer 1994 [1977]: 8).

However, the inherent limitations of language make it possible to describe the common qualities of sound logically, though not always capturing the emotional resonance. As such, examining the sensory dimensions of the past, through both material culture and memory,

deepens our understanding of historical experiences and the resources available for interpreting sensory histories.

In this sense the question of sources for not just logical understanding (from the written word) but also experiencing, hearing the soundscapes of the past remains open. This highlights the challenge of fully capturing the emotional and sensory depth of historical sounds. As Damousi and Hamilton emphasize, we need to explore how the senses «...illuminate the historical and what sources are available to read the senses of the past through the material and memory» (Damousi, Hamilton 2017 : 5). This broader sensory approach underscores the importance of using material culture and memory as critical resources for accessing and interpreting the sensory experiences of the past.

Another problem of approaching historical soundscapes lies in the creation of situations of sonic experiences, finding the ways of representing the sounds of the past, especially in public spaces. One of the possible ways that can be regarded is the creation of aural augmented realities. Aural Augmented Realities (AAR) show how lost soundscapes can be reconstructed and what kind of impact they can have on a visitor's connection to the past.

«Hearing past soundscapes can provide whole new ways of experiencing, understanding, and feeling history» (Graham, Shawn, et al. 2019 : 224).

Fighting an assumption that sight is the most important sense for understanding the world, auditory experiences can offer a more affective and immersive method of connecting with history. As cognitive and perceptual research shows, the use of sound (through spoken word, natural soundscapes, or spatialized audio) can help to engage people more deeply in historical narratives.

«We assume that the senses neatly cleave, allowing us to prioritize one sense over another. With our contemporary focus on the visual, we tend to prioritize sight over other senses, but in this chapter, we suggest that 'hearing' the past is a more effective and affective way of providing immersive AR». (Graham, Shawn, et al. 2019 : 224-225).

The key element here is a certain feeling of immersion in a space, which is created through relationships between humans and their environments. When these relationships are disrupted, immersion can be lost. Since hearing relies on attentiveness, audio AR has a unique capacity to sustain what Turner refers to as «affective» and «cognitive/perceptual» intentionality.

Ultimately, the past can often be «heard» more readily than it can be «seen.» (Graham, Shawn, et al. 2019 : 225).

However, the mediation of the sound can take place not just by means of AAR, but also — through contemporary art and public art practices, especially through sound art and through the sound monuments.

3. Multimodal approach to sound forms. Sound as a mode

Alongside the turn to senses in history, the study of sensory semiotics has evolved over the past few decades. Gregory Paschalidis mentions among dominant contemporary approaches shaping the field (Paschalidis 2017: 5-6) the approach, rooted in social semiotics, focuses on multimodality and the complex interplay between different semiotic modes in communication. This approach, initially developed by Gunther Kress and Theo van Leeuwen, emphasizes how verbal, visual, and sensory modes work together in creating meaning. While initially centered on the relationship between text and image, multimodality has expanded to encompass a multisensory understanding of communication, considering how sound, touch, and other sensory inputs influence perception. Kress's notion of «reading the world» through all senses highlights that sensory input—whether visual, auditory, or tactile—is an integral part of how we interpret our environment. The concept of multimodality recognizes that meaning is not confined to linguistic or visual elements but is distributed across a variety of sensory experiences.

In the framework of multimodality, sound occupies a unique position as a mode of meaning-making, shaped not only by its physical properties but also by the cultural practices and social conventions that frame its use. According to Kress, a mode is a «socially shaped and culturally given semiotic resource for making meaning» (Kress 2010 : 79). This means that sound, like other modes such as image or writing, derives its capacity to convey meaning from both the material characteristics it possesses and the ways societies use it for communication. However, sound has often been dominated by visual modes, especially in public spaces, raising questions about its potential and significance in contemporary semiotic systems.

Kress emphasizes that different modes offer distinct potentials for making meaning, which affect the choices made in specific communication contexts. In the case of sound, the following «material» properties – such as *variations in pitch, loudness, rhythm*, and the use of *silence* – provide a wide array of resources for meaning-making. These material affordances are experienced through hearing, a physiological process that interacts with sound's temporal nature. And already mentioned, unlike visual modes, which rely on the spatial arrangement of elements, sound unfolds in time.

Kress further elaborates that sound can be shaped into various modes, such as *speech, music, or soundtracks*, each of which utilizes different affordances of sound as a material (Kress 2010 : 80). The variation in pitch in speech can generate intonation patterns that change the

meaning of sentences, while rhythm and pauses contribute to the structure and emphasis of spoken language. Similarly, music employs pitch, rhythm, and dynamics to evoke emotional responses and create meaning, while soundscapes in film might use background sound to set a mood or convey implicit information.

In contemporary public spaces, sound monuments serve as a compelling example of how the mode of sound can be re-engaged and reinterpreted in meaning-making processes. Sound monuments exist as multimodal forms, where sound interacts with physical objects, spaces, and often with visual and tactile elements. The question that emerges in the context of sound monuments is: what kind of semiotic work is being done with the mode of sound? And how do specific social practices and requirements reshape the affordances of sound in these contexts?

To explore this, we need to examine the broader societal trends and preferences in modal choices. Kress notes that «societies have modal preferences» (Kress 2010 : 83), meaning that over time, certain modes are favored for specific purposes. In Western societies, Kress mentions, writing has historically been preferred over image for formal communication, particularly in public and institutional contexts (Kress 2010 : 83-84). In recent times, we can see that increasing emphasis on visual culture, especially in digital media, has marginalized sound in public communication. The predominance of image-based communication raises the question: why, then, is sound important, and why should it be reintroduced in public spaces?

To answer this question, it is essential to consider how sound functions in human experience and communication. Sound, unlike image, operates under the «logic of sequence in time» (Kress 2010 : 81), meaning that it requires the listener to engage with it over time. This temporal dimension makes sound a particularly immersive and embodied mode of communication.

Furthermore, sound has the potential to foster a deeper connection to the environment. In public spaces, sound monuments can serve as reminders of the lost historical and natural soundscapes. This resonates with the increasing interest in using Aural Augmented Realities (AAR) that was briefly discussed in the previous subchapter. In this way, sound monuments, by harnessing the affordances of sound as a mode, can evoke memories, emotions, and even a sense of place that visual modes may not be able to replicate.

Kress's assertion that «modes differ in what they offer from culture to culture» (Kress 2010 : 82) is particularly relevant here. The social and cultural shaping of sound as a mode means that different societies and communities use sound in diverse ways to fulfil their communicative needs.

«Societies and their cultures select ‘materials’ – sound, clay, movement (of parts) of the body, surfaces, wood, stone – which seem useful or necessary for meaning-work in that culture to be done. Selections from the potentials for making meaning which these materials offer, are constantly made in the social shaping of modes. In communities of humans who are speech-impaired, the affordances of the body – the positioning and the movement of limbs, of facial expression – are developed into fully articulated modes, so-called sign-languages» (Kress 2010 : 82)

«To put it briefly: socially, what counts as mode is a matter for a community and its social-representational needs. What a community decides to regard and use as mode is mode.» (Kress 2010 : 87)

In light of the dominance of visual culture, sound monuments can be seen as a response to the neglect of sound-based modes in public communication. They represent a turn toward sonic experiences as a way of creating meaning in the present. By engaging with the material affordances of sound—its energy, volume, pitch, rhythm, and duration—sound sculptures challenge the prevailing preference for visual modes and offer a sensory alternative that emphasises the importance of hearing in human experience.

Moreover, sound as a mode is inherently multimodal, often interacting with other modes, such as visual or spatial elements, in complex ways. In sound monuments, this multimodality is particularly evident, as sound does not exist in isolation but is embedded in a broader semiotic system that includes the physical environment, the movement of people, and the interaction between sound and space. As Joaquim Braga suggests, «sound, combined with other modalities, can develop relations while, at the same time preserving its modal entity,» allowing it to «articulate distinct sensuous data» (Braga 2019: 132).

Braga also introduces the concept of «implicit multimodality,» emphasizing that sound, although primarily perceived through hearing, engages other senses as well. He notes that «the sense of hearing is not the only perceptual sound channel» (Braga 2019: 133), highlighting the intricate and layered nature of sound’s interaction with other sensory experiences. Thus, we regard sound in the context of the multimodality of sound monuments. Now, it is important to emphasize separately how sound functions as a semiotic resource and what affordances it offers.

3.1. Sound as semiotic resource and affordances of sound in sound monuments

A *semiotic resource* refers to any means or tools used by individuals to create meaning and communicate within a social context. Unlike the rigid structures implied by terms like «grammar, » semiotic resources are socially constructed, context-dependent means that «carry the discernible regularities of social occasions, events and hence a certain stability; they are never fixed, let alone rigidly fixed. » (Kress 2010 : 8) They are shaped by cultural and social practices and are continuously adapted and transformed based on the demands of communication and interaction. Basically, Kress suggests using the term «semiotic resource» over «grammar» because it highlights the flexibility and contextual adaptation of meaning-making processes. Thus, resources function as tools for representation and communication, shaped by social needs and responsive to the changing demands of interaction (Kress 2010 : 7-8).

Affordances refer to the potentials and constraints of a material or mode that determine how it can be used in representation and meaning-making. They reflect how specific materials or modes (e.g., sound, image, gesture) offer unique possibilities for expressing and framing meaning, influenced by their social and historical shaping. As Kress notes, affordances describe what it is possible to do with a resource for representation, given its material and social histories of use (Kress 2010 : 79).

As a semiotic resource, sound is imbued with meanings derived from the cultural and historical contexts in which they are used. For instance, the use of air raid sirens or bells in sound monuments evokes memories of war or communal rituals, serving as a cultural prompt that activates collective memory. The process of ‘remaking’ sound occurs through its interaction with space, audience, and context, where each iteration potentially alters its meaning. Kress explains that resources for representation are constantly remade and transformed by their use in specific social interactions (Kress 2010 : 7-8) .

Sound's affordances as a mode include its spatial and temporal characteristics. It can fill a space, move through it, or be constrained to a localized point, shaping how audiences physically and emotionally experience the monument. Unlike visual forms, sound's ephemerality makes it less about the logic of permanence and more about dialogic interaction with memory. This aligns with counter-monumental principles, emphasizing process and the fluid flow of memory over fixed narratives. By leveraging sound's temporal and spatial affordances, sound monuments create immersive, participatory experiences of commemoration. Separately, the affordances of sound as a material can also be discussed, as they were briefly mentioned in the previous section (e.g., volume, pitch, rhythm).

Through its dual role as a semiotic resource and a mode with specific affordances, sound in monuments becomes a tool for engaging collective memory. It derives from social histories and material potentials to construct meaning and reimagine traditional commemorative practices. To conclude, sound can appear in multimodal texts (sound monuments) and interact with other modes both internally, within the art form, and externally, during its perception. Additionally, the process of listening itself is implicitly multimodal, involving not only hearing through the ear channel but also engaging other sensory channels and body resonances. At the same time, the sound mode acts as a semiotic resource—a means for representation and communication shaped by social needs with specific affordances, which can also be analyzed through its appearance in sound monuments.

4. Counter-Monumentality and sound forms

Monuments have always served as powerful symbols of remembrance. These material objects and physical structures have been fundamental in preserving and perpetuating collective memory. However, the concept of monuments is not static; it evolves over time, sometimes questioning its very nature. One of the explosive moments in the evolution of the monument concept is linked to a broader movement within commemorative practices — namely, counter-monumentalism.

Counter-monumentalism is defined as a «new, critical mode of commemorative practice,» characterized by its «opposition to traditional monumentality» (Stevens, Franck, Fazakerley 2012 : 718). Throughout this study, I often pair it with the concept of anti-monumentalism, their interrelations were discussed in Chapter 1. Both terms reflect a shift away from traditional, static, and permanent monuments towards more dynamic and reflective forms of memorialization. James Edward Young provides a key framework for understanding counter-monuments, describing them as «brazen, painfully self-conscious memorial spaces conceived to challenge the very premises of their being» (Young 1993 : 271). His analysis focuses on how, in the 1960s and 1970s, a new wave of artists in Germany began to break away from the established canon and the traditional «memorial code». These artists questioned the very idea of what a monument should be and the possible forms a memorial can take.

Sound forms are among those permanently used in counter-monumental commemoration. The question that could be asked is why does the audible so effectively challenge the monumental? What do counter-monuments—and sound-based counter-monuments in particular — aim to disrupt in conventional commemorative practices? To address these questions, it is necessary to clarify what does it mean — breaking the monumental, which features of the traditional monuments require rethinking? I will then examine how sound forms are integrated into counter-monumental practices and conclude with a discussion on sound interventions in public spaces.

4.1. Breaking the monumental: critique of the traditional monumentality

To understand the ideology underlying counter-monuments, we must first examine the monumental forms they oppose. Traditional monuments, built to embody permanence, stability, and authority, have historically dominated public memory practices. To critique these

effectively, it is essential to analyze the logic and characteristics that underpin traditional monumental structures.

Traditional monuments are constructed as durable, static structures, symbolizing the unchanging nature of memory and history. As Alois Riegl explains, such monuments are created with the explicit intention of preserving specific memories for future generations. This durability reflects an authoritative, steadfast commitment to the narratives they embody (Riegl 1903 : 21). Their static nature reinforces the idea of memory as fixed and absolute, resistant to reinterpretation or challenge.

A second defining feature of traditional monuments is their scale and grandiosity. Monumental structures often assert dominance over their surroundings through size and grandeur, projecting power and authority. James Edward Young observes that such forms have historically been used by nation-states to consolidate selective historical narratives. Their sheer visibility reinforces their function as symbols of dominance and control (Young 1993: 100).

Traditional monuments also prioritize singular narratives and glorification. They frequently celebrate specific individuals, events, or ideologies deemed significant by prevailing cultural or political forces. Benedict Anderson highlights the role of these monuments in constructing national identities by selectively shaping collective memory (Anderson 1983: 178). These singular narratives often exclude alternative perspectives, marginalizing dissenting voices.

Finally, traditional monumental forms are characterized by their visual primacy. They rely heavily on iconic forms, inscriptions, and figural sculptures to convey meaning, privileging sight over other sensory or participatory experiences. Rosalind Krauss critiques this visual dominance, suggesting it limits the capacity of monuments to engage with audiences in more dynamic or interactive ways (Krauss 1979: 39).

In conclusion, counter-monuments challenge the permanence, stability, grandiosity, scale, singular narratives, and visual dominance of traditional monuments. It is now important to explore the reasons why these notions require rethinking.

The critique of traditional monumental forms stems from their inability to address the complexities of modern memory and the exclusionary nature of their narratives. One significant critique arises from shifts in memory practices during the 20th century. Events such as the Holocaust and world wars exposed the inadequacy of traditional monuments in grappling with fragmented, traumatic, and contested memories. Pierre Nora, in his concept of *lieux de mémoire* (sites of memory), emphasizes that memory is not static but fluid and subject to constant renegotiation. This demands commemorative forms that reflect its evolving nature (Nora 1989: 7).

Another critique centers on the exclusionary narratives promoted by traditional monuments. These forms often marginalize alternative histories and voices, transforming monuments into sites of contention. Andreas Huyssen argues that the dominance of singular narratives alienates minority perspectives, undermining the potential for shared remembrance (Huyssen 2003:14).

The rejection of heroization has become a significant focus in commemorative practices, this shift aligns with what Roxana Marcoci describes as the «dematerialization» of public art, where postwar artists have abandoned heroic monumentality in favor of transient, critical forms (Marcoci 2000 : 3). Examples such as Felix Gonzalez-Torres's *Untitled (Death by Gun)* (1990) and Horst Hoheisel's conceptual proposal to destroy the Brandenburg Gate illustrate this trend. Instead of glorifying heroes, new practices prioritize the remembrance of victims, significantly influencing the forms of artistic expression.

The permanence and authority of traditional monuments are also called into question. Counter-monuments challenge the rigidity of these structures, advocating for forms of commemoration that encourage dialogue. Young underscores the importance of engaging with memory as a dynamic, pluralistic process rather than a fixed representation (Young 1993 : 120). In that sense, a shift from object to process (and from spatial to temporal respectively) has redefined the logic of monumentality. Commemoration is increasingly viewed as an interactive, participatory, and temporal act. As Young notes, counter-monuments are «not built to last, but to disappear; not to be seen, but to be understood; not to remain fixed, but to change» (Young 1993 : 134). This shift reflects broader cultural movements that prioritize engagement and adaptability over static representations.

Young also highlights a common motivation behind the creation of this new type of monuments. These artists were «ethically certain of their duty to remember, but aesthetically skeptical of the assumptions underpinning traditional memorial forms» (Young 1992 : 271). As a result, they began to explore the limits of both their artistic media and the broader notion of what constitutes a memorial. In doing so, they helped to redefine the purpose of monuments, moving away from static representations of history towards forms that propose ongoing reflection and challenge.

Overall, the traditional principles of permanence, grandiosity, singularity, and visual dominance have made monuments powerful but deeply problematic tools for memory. Counter-monumental movements challenge these principles, advocating for new forms of commemoration that are dynamic, inclusive, and reflective. In doing so, they redefine the role of memory in public spaces, promoting dialogic, participatory, and ephemeral approaches that better resonate with the fragmented and diverse nature of contemporary society.

4.2. Counter-monumental forms in relation to sound

The conceptual framework of counter-monumentality has influenced the diversity of artistic expressions. Building on James E. Young's observations, I aim to outline the characteristics that have contributed to the emergence of sound forms of commemoration. The qualities of immateriality, abstraction, and performativity question the permanence and materiality of classical monuments, instead emphasizing absence, fluidity, and temporality. The following sections expand on Young's premises, incorporating additional theoretical insights and considering how counter-monumental principles align with sound-based commemorative forms.

Immateriality. Counter-monuments often arise in contexts where the destruction of communities or sites of historical significance has left a void. Monuments are created for places and sites that have disappeared, been destroyed or lost, «to mark a site of destruction, deportation; or to remember a lost Jewish community» (Young 1993 : 269). Rather than filling these voids, counter-monuments emphasize absence, using minimalistic forms or artistic gestures to evoke the emptiness left behind. This is reflected in cases of «vanishing monuments», such as Sol LeWitt's *Black Form* (1987), which was installed in Münster, then removed, and later reinstated in Hamburg. This cyclical appearance and disappearance reflect the transient, immaterial quality of memory itself.

«But perhaps no single emblem better represents the conflicted, self-abnegating motives for memory in Germany today than the vanishing monument.» (Young 1993 : 268)

Andreas Huyssen elaborates on the significance of absence in contemporary memorial practices, arguing that voids and absences «become central markers of memory rather than its negation» (Huyssen 2003: 3). He highlights the *Holocaust Memorial* (2005) designed by Peter Eisenman in Berlin as an example of how emptiness and negative space are deployed to confront collective memory. Sound-based counter-monuments naturally extend this principle. Sound avoids traditional material representation, fostering solely auditory and emotional connection to historical events.

Abstraction. The shift towards abstraction reflects the nature of relationship between artists and historical events, especially as the temporal gap widens. This abstraction arises from an acknowledgment that direct representation or figurativity may inadequately convey the complex and layered nature of memory, particularly for those who did not directly experience

the events they commemorate. Young describes this tendency among young artists working in the context of Holocaust remembrance:

«At home in an era of earthworks, conceptual and self-destructive art, these young artists explore both the necessity of memory and their incapacity to recall events they never experienced directly. To their minds, neither literal nor figurative references suggesting anything more than their own abstract link to the Holocaust will suffice. Instead of seeking to capture the memory of events, therefore, they remember only their own relationship to events: the great gulf of time between themselves and the Holocaust» (Young 1993 : 271 - 272)

Thus, abstraction can be seen as a response to the challenge of representing a history that feels distant but still significant. In abandoning literal or figurative forms, artists explore alternative modes of engaging with memory. By avoiding figurative depictions, these works deny audiences the comfort of easily recognizable forms, compelling them to confront the complexities of memory on their terms. Abstraction aligns with broader shifts in commemoration practices that emphasize ambiguity, participation, and reflection. However, it also risks alienating those who seek concrete connections to history. As Huyssen notes that «the danger of abstraction lies in its potential to obscure specific historical realities, even as it seeks to universalize their significance» (Huyssen 2003: 18).

The risk of alienation is particularly relevant when perceiving highly conceptual and sound-based forms. For instance, Susan Philipsz's *Part File Score* (2014) exemplifies this dynamic. The installation features fragments of music composed by Hanns Eisler, a Jewish Austrian composer who fled Europe for the United States in 1938 to escape Nazi persecution. By presenting these disjointed, incomplete fragments and even single notes Philipsz evokes themes of exile, displacement, and loss. However, the abstract nature of the work—both in its conceptual framework and its reliance on sound—can create a barrier for audiences unfamiliar with Eisler's biography or the historical context of his music. In addition to that the citations and artistic gestures in music form is hard to grasp for people unfamiliar with music grammar. Hence, abstraction allows artists to engage with the silences and absences of history, letting the listeners confront memory as an incomplete and fractured process rather than a static narrative.

Performativity. Counter-monuments reject the permanence and fixed meanings of traditional monuments, seeking instead to challenge assumptions, and engage audiences in the memory-making processes. As Young concludes, counter-monuments aim «not to console but to provoke; not to remain fixed but to change; not to be everlasting but to disappear; not to be ignored by its passersby but to demand interaction; not to remain pristine but to invite its own

violation and desecration; not to accept graciously the burden of memory but to throw it back at the town's feet» (Young, 1993: 277). Jochen Gerz and Esther Shalev-Gerz's *Harburg Monument Against Fascism* (1986–1993) exemplifies well this performative aspect. The monument's gradual disappearance under the ground and possibility for the audience to write on the column transformed it into an act of public engagement, showing memory as an active ongoing process.

Performativity becomes especially potent when sound is integrated into the commemorative process. Sound, as a temporal medium, inherently resists fixation and requires embodied engagement from the audience. Unlike static visual forms, sound requires presence and listening, turning hearing into participatory experience and often letting the listeners become performers (as the case studies from the *Chapter 2* illustrate).

However, Horst Hoheisel's *Aschrott Fountain* (1987) demonstrates another interesting interplay related to the absence of sound. The inverted fountain exists as a silent void beneath the square, but the imagined sound of water—what should be there but is absent—activates a sensory memory in the viewer. This imagined auditory element becomes performative, as the audience is compelled to fill the silent space with their own meanings, connecting sound to loss and absence.

As we can see, the counter-monumental characteristics of immateriality, abstraction, and performativity align well with sound as a medium. Sound medium's sensory and affective qualities create a specific type of emotional resonance. However, as shown in the examples, these features can be expressed through various media, and most counter-monuments appear as multimodal texts, so usually sound does not act alone. That gives a room for discussion on the relation of sound to other modes of meaning-making, and particularly to the space where sound is placed.

4.3. Sound interventions in public spaces

The conversation around novel forms of monuments is being reflected in urban art practices. The counter-monumental shift and reimagining of the ways of remembrance led to the appearance of new concepts in public art. Gaia Salvatori introduces *counter-monuments* alongside the *ephemeral, invisible, absent, and non-monuments* (Salvatori 2015: 933). She also explores the concept of *dialogic monuments*, which actively invite public engagement in shaping historical narratives and embracing a participatory approach. This perspective echoes Carrier's argument that the public discussion about a monument's meaning should take precedence over its aesthetic form (Carrier 2000: 160).

Salvatori illustrates how contemporary monuments blur the lines between sculpture, environmental art, and architecture, building on shifts that began in the 1960s. She suggests that memory has moved away from its traditional associations with permanence, universality, and rhetorical power (Salvatori 2015: 934). This reorientation was reflected in public art, which increasingly emphasizes direct engagement with memory over the creation of purely symbolic or representational spaces.

Focusing on the sonic forms of monuments, I propose the concept of the *sound monument*, which will be discussed further in more detail. For now, in exploring the term that best describes the relationship between sound and public spaces, I encountered the idea of *sonic interventions*—a form of artistic intervention. In their counter-monumental nature, sound monuments can take on the qualities of sonic interventions within the city spaces. Artistic interventions, whether visual, sonic, or performative, aim to disrupt the established rhythms of urban life, challenging conventional perceptions of space and social dynamics. In this way, by engaging with the environment in a non-traditional way, sound monuments as sonic interventions not only question the permanence and materiality of monuments but also invite new forms of interaction and reflection within public spaces. Claire Bishop, a scholar of participatory art practices, emphasizing their ability to reimagine social relations and suggest alternative modes of engagement with public space: «the participatory turn in contemporary art has been underpinned by a belief in the potential of art to shift the dynamics of social relations, to empower the spectator, and to collapse the distance between artist and audience» (Bishop 2012 : 9).

Artistic interventions often take the form of temporary installations or events, in contrast to urban infrastructure's permanence. This transience creates a tension between the fluid nature of art and the city's materiality. In the context of counter-monuments, such interventions serve critical and dialog-creating purposes. In a broader sense, all the counter-monuments in their immateriality, abstractness and performativity could be seen as an intervention into the permanence of the urban frame.

Sound-based interventions in that sense aim through engaging the auditory senses and interacting with the urban soundscape, to uncover the cultural and historical layers of the space. As Brandon LaBelle notes, «sound reshapes the sensory fabric of cities, infiltrating their spaces in ways that challenge habitual modes of navigation and perception. Unlike visual art, which occupies fixed spatial boundaries, sound operates fluidly, disrupting urban soundscapes and drawing attention to overlooked or suppressed histories. » (LaBelle 2010: 58)

Thus, if we are regarding artistic interventions, including sound-based ones, in the light of counter-monumentalism, several key features could be outlined. Firstly, **impermanence** and

the temporary nature of interventions which opposed to the the traditional permanence associated with monuments and urban infrastructure. Secondly, **disruption** of the flow of urban life, proposition of the alternative mode of engagement with the space. Thirdly, **site-specificity** of interventions, drawing on Gaia Salvatori's observation that since the 1960s, artists have sought to create works tied to specific locations and with an intention to engage public spaces (Salvatori 2015: 934-935). Fourthly, **creation of the sites of memory** (or *lieux de mémoire* in Pierre Nora's terms): interventions can reveal unexpected, marginalized or suppressed narratives, creating new sites of memory or reimagining the existing ones.

Sound interventions intensify these effects by engaging the often-neglected auditory senses and provoking emotional responses. Also, sound is a medium that mirrors the fragility and fluidity of memory itself. This is particularly significant when dealing with historical traumas, where fixed monuments often fail to capture the complexities of and nuances of these stories. The sense of fragility is becoming evident in urban spaces, which Andreas Huyssen describes as «living repositories of memory, » (Huyssen 2003: 49–50). He emphasizes the erasure caused by urban development, revealing the dynamics of forgetting and the loss of memory sites through transformations in the urban landscape. In this context, sound interventions act as counterforces to such erasure, rendering forgotten histories audible and accessible.

4.3.1. Urban space as a scene for monuments' performance

The concept of the «performance of the city, » as suggested by Paul Makeham, positions public monuments as active participants in the social and cultural dynamics of urban spaces. This idea aligns with the notion that monuments have transcended their traditional « golden age » within the protected ambiance of art museums, moving toward the conquest of everyday life and public environments (Salvatori, 2015: 934-935). In this context, monuments become performative agents, engaging with the rhythms and rituals of the city.

Makeham's framework shows the performative nature of monuments, which mirrors the dynamics of sound interventions as well, where sound serves as a force that disrupts the habitual flow of urban life. He argues that the streets have become a new «scene» for contemporary artists, opposed to the gallery space, where such performances would be impossible. I would add that the streets have become a space for critical opinions and discussion on memory, social and power dynamics. And this critique can be expressed and manifested through the intervening the space.

Paul Makeham is also mentioning «other kinds of performative engagement with the urban fabric, » where individuals enact their own meanings and experiences within the larger

urban context (Makeham, 2005: 158). This idea resonates with the opposition of individual or marginalized memories, which are often excluded from collective memory spaces, including urban environments. In the context of counter-monumental performance, such a gesture transcends merely performing memories; it becomes a means of giving voice to personal, individual, or suppressed histories. The artist's role, therefore, becomes twofold: to challenge the audience and intervene in the urban space itself. Artistic actions, in that sense, disrupt established patterns of movement, thinking and perception. In case of sound intervention, the habits of listening will be challenged, sound is interacting both with the urban soundscape and with individual sense of hearing of the individuals.

If the «architecture of the streets heightens the drama of living» (Makeham, 2005: 157), it can also reveal the drama of historical events embedded in the space. Just as pedestrians create their own rituals and paths as part of the urban performance, the artist intervenes to create new connections to historical memory or reveal those that were overlooked.

In conclusion, public urban spaces serve as sites of contested and evolving memory. Public art, influenced by counter-monumental movements, offers dynamic ways for artists and audiences to engage with memory. Sound creates a sensory way to engage with the city space, with its relationship to the environment shaped by the intervention logic.

5. Semiotic approach to the meaning-making of monuments

When adopting a social semiotics approach and incorporating elements of soundscape analysis, I primarily address the sonic dimension and describe the auditory experiences shaped by sound monuments. However, analyzing these monuments through the lens of memory and their interaction with space requires an additional semiotic framework. I propose combining an acoustic phenomena analysis model with a framework traditionally used for physical monumental structures.

Sound monuments do not solely evoke memory; they also establish specific relationships with public space, interacting with urban soundscapes and shaping the auditory environment. That question — what is the relationship between sound monuments and public space? — is crucial for understanding the shared characteristics of traditional and sound monuments. While much research has explored the spatial dimensions of monuments, claiming the term *sound monument*, requires recognizing not only their commemorative function but also their semiotic and communicative role within space.

Federico Bellentani's semiotic framework for analyzing traditional monuments provides detailed perspectives. His model identifies four « interplays » in meaning-making:

1. Between plastic, figurative, and political dimensions;
2. Between designers and users;
3. Between the monument and cultural context;
4. Between the monument and the built environment (Bellentani 2021 : 26).

While sound monuments demand a distinct analytical framework that accounts for auditory and temporal characteristics, their analysis can build upon Bellentani's model of meaning-making for monuments. (Bellentani, 2021: 26) The figurative and plastic aspects need rethinking to accommodate the non-material nature of sound, and the political dimension requires adaptation for counter-monumental forms and sound-based commemorative practices. My approach aims to redefine these analytical categories to address the features of sound monuments while maintaining their conceptual relationship to the spatial and communicative traditions of monumental forms.

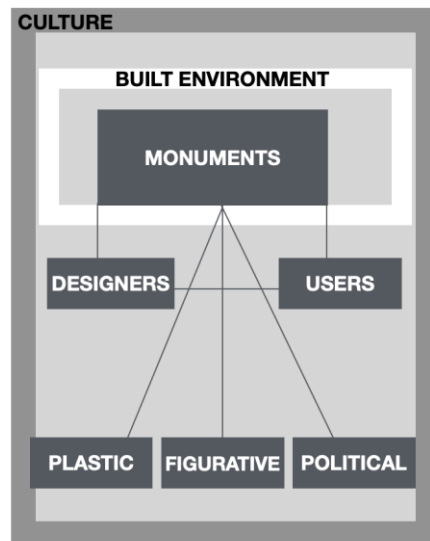


Figure 1. Bellentani's model for traditional monuments analysis (Bellentani 2021 : 26)

5.1. Toward the model for sound monuments analysis

First, we must address the applicability of plastic and figurative analysis, which is suited solely for visual texts. In the case of sound analysis, we need to identify new categories to replace these. I draw from the terminology suggested by Raymond Murray Schafer, particularly the concepts of the sound object, sound event, and soundscape.

The *sound object* («l'objet sonore»), a term introduced by Pierre Schaeffer, is defined as «an object for human perception and not as a mathematical or electro-acoustical object for synthesis.» Schafer further describes it as «the smallest self-contained particle of a soundscape» (Schafer 1994 [1977]: 129), analyzable through its «envelope,» which consists of three main components: *attack*, *body*, and *decay*.

- **Attack:** This is the onset of the sound object, where the sound begins and briefly creates a noisy, enriched spectrum. A rapid attack adds sharpness, while a slower one produces a smoother quality. The attack is critical for sound identity, as its absence can make sounds unrecognizable.
- **Body:** The body is the relatively stable phase of a sound object, though it is never entirely stationary. Some sounds (e.g., bells, gongs) lack a body, while others (e.g., air conditioners) consist predominantly of this phase, contributing to their prolonged presence.

- **Decay:** This is the final phase, where the sound weakens and fades into ambient noise. Decay often includes reverberation, blending reflections into an indistinct persistence, in contrast to the clear repetition of echoes. (Schafer 1994 [1977]: 129-131)

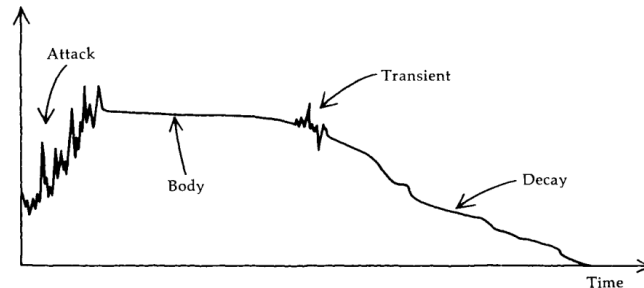


Figure 2. Graphic depiction of the components of the sound object, its «envelope» (Schafer 1994 [1977]: 130)

While these components can be separated for analysis, Schaeffer insists on the holistic perception of the sound object, independent of its source. This framework offers a foundation for understanding sound in monuments, replacing visual categories with auditory-focused tools.

This acoustic approach has notable strengths. It allows sound components to be identified and analyzed by the human ear, using descriptive, graphic language rather than musical notation. However, such graphic representations are typically produced under controlled laboratory conditions, where sounds are isolated from the complex interplay of other auditory elements present in real-world environments. This limitation led to the introduction of another concept: the *sound event*.

Schafer defines sound events as individual sounds whose associative meanings are examined within their context, distinguishing them from sound objects, which are studied as isolated entities in a controlled setting. He explains:

«When we focus on individual sounds to explore their associative meanings as signals, symbols, keynotes, or soundmarks, I propose to call them sound events, to avoid confusion with sound objects, which are laboratory specimens» (Schafer 1994 [1977]: 131).

In line with the dictionary definition of «event» as «something that occurs in a particular place over a specific interval of time,» sound events inherently imply context. For example, the sound of a church bell could be analyzed as a sound object in a laboratory, focusing solely on its acoustic properties, or as a sound event when studied within a community, emphasizing its cultural or social significance.

The *soundscape*, therefore, becomes a dynamic field of interactions where sound events are not merely isolated components but part of a larger auditory environment. Understanding how sounds interact with and transform one another — and influence human perception — within their natural contexts presents a far greater challenge than analyzing individual sounds in isolation. Yet, it is precisely this interplay that offers profound opportunities for soundscape researchers to explore.

5.1.1. Plastic, figurative and political dimensions in Bellentani's model

Before introducing new analytical categories, it is crucial to clarify the functioning of the first interplay within Federico Bellentani's model of monument analysis. This framework identifies three key dimensions—plastic, figurative, and political — and it is rooted in visual semiotics and Greimasian tradition. His approach incorporates categories of plastic and figurative levels (*material* and *symbolic* respectively) traditionally used for interpreting visual texts. Alongside these visual dimensions, Bellentani includes the political aspect, describing the relationship between the three: «The visual dimension of monuments (plastic and figurative) refers to monuments as material-built forms beyond their political implications. » (Bellentani, Panico 2016 : 36).

The **plastic dimension** deals with the physical characteristics of monuments—size, shape, material, color, and spatial arrangement. As Bellentani explains, «the plastic level refers to physical aspects such as shapes, materials of construction, colours, topological distribution and sizes» (Bellentani, 2021 : 27). This dimension emphasizes a monument's materiality and its spatial placement in the environment, treating these as significant elements in shaping how it is perceived and interacted with. In that way, this layer considers monuments «as independent from their visual representations» (Bellentani, Panico 2016 : 36).

The **figurative dimension** refers to representational and symbolic elements, connecting monuments to scenes, objects, and figures. This level is about what the monument shows or suggests, how it reflects or stages narratives of characters, actions, or interactions. Bellentani notes, «the figurative level is recognised on the basis of a correlation with objects of the world. Monuments stage scenes and represent characters, objects, actions and interactions in material forms» (Bellentani 2021 : 27). It appears as the iconography, symbols, and visual motifs embedded within the monument's design and the cultural messages it carries: «It looks at the iconographies and the symbols that monuments embody.» (Bellentani, Panico 2016 : 36)

The **political dimension** places the monument within power structures and social discourse. It is framed as «relating to the circumstances under which monuments promote

political messages and perpetuate power relations» (Bellentani 2021 : 27). This dimension highlights the active, non-static nature of monuments, which become sites of negotiation where ideological messages are affirmed, redefined, or challenged.

Understanding these dimensions provides a foundation for adapting and extending Bellentani's model to analyze sound monuments, accounting for their auditory and temporal characteristics while retaining a connection to the semiotic tradition of monuments analysis.

5.1.2. Reinterpreting the model for sound monuments analysis

Thus, introducing new models becomes important to adequately analyze sonic forms and their commemorative potential. Building on the framework outlined in the previous chapter, I propose adapting the plastic and figurative dimensions traditionally used for visual texts by employing corresponding concepts from sound studies. This adaptation aligns Bellentani's approach — rooted in the Greimasian semiotic tradition — with the auditory domain, enabling a nuanced interpretation of sound monuments within their temporal, spatial, and cultural contexts.

In the plastic dimension, the focus shifts to the material properties and textures of the medium. In sound analysis, this corresponds to the concept of the *sound object*. The sound object is particularly effective for examining recorded sounds, as it isolates auditory components from their broader context, enabling a detailed analysis of their intrinsic characteristics, such as timbre, pitch, and duration.

In the figurative dimension, the analysis moves beyond texture to explore representational and symbolic qualities. In sound, this aligns with Schafer's concept of the *sound event*, which highlights the contextual and associative meanings embedded in sounds. Here, sounds will be analyzed as signals, symbols, keynotes, and soundmarks, considering their capacity to evoke narratives, reference specific environments, or function as cultural and historical markers. Raymond Murray Schafer suggests the concept of «keynote» sounds that means the «background sounds» of a particular environment, which are heard continuously or frequently enough to establish the tone or character of a place. They often go unnoticed by the conscious ear, appearing just as the sonic foundation for other sounds.

«Keynote sounds are those which are heard by a particular society continuously or frequently enough to form a background against which other sounds are perceived. » (Schafer, 1994 [1977] : 272)

At the same time, Schafer introduces the term «soundmark» as an auditory equivalent to a landmark. A soundmark is a unique sound in a community or environment that holds special significance to its inhabitants and contributes to their identity.

«A soundmark is a community sound which is unique or possesses qualities which make it specially regarded or noticed by the people in that community.» (Schafer, 1994 [1977] : 274)

Finally, the **soundscape** will be included in the analysis of the interplay with built environment, which includes not only physical objects but also interactions with other sounds. It is particularly critical for understanding how sound texts function in situ, engaging with their surroundings and reshaping the auditory experience of a space.

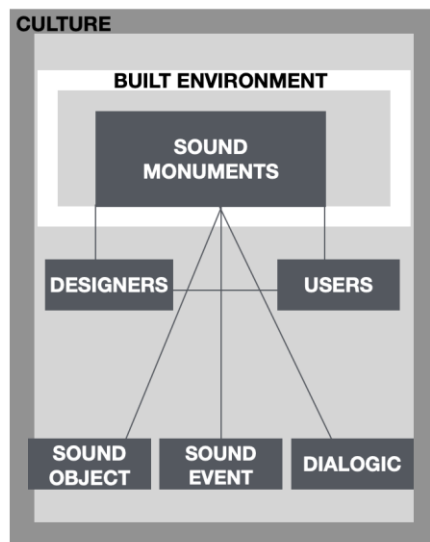


Figure 3. Reinterpreted Bellentani's model for sound monuments analysis

By aligning these categories with Bellentani's semiotic framework, this approach allows for a comprehensive examination of sound texts, addressing both their material and symbolic dimensions while situating them within their broader environmental contexts.

Another reinterpretation I suggest is replacing «political» dimension with «dialogic» dimension. Bellentani describes monuments in political context as «built forms deliberately erected to promote selective and dominant historical narratives.» (Bellentani, Panico 2016 : 37). In this chapter, I include the term «dialogic» for both the models for counter-monumental forms and the analysis of sound monuments. Unlike traditional monuments, which aim to reinforce political statements aligned with established historical narratives, counter- and sound

monuments emphasize conceptual and dialogic dimensions. They are more about inviting critical gestures, as well as offering a more open and participatory form of remembrance. I term this approach «dialogic» because it emphasizes discussions on remembrance and the social, political, and cultural conflicts it entails.

As Bellentani and Panico argue, «Monuments embody discourses that inevitably express selective points of view on the past, focusing on convenient events while marginalizing what is discomforting for an elite» (Bellentani, Panico 2016 : 37). Traditional monuments often embody selective historical narratives, reinforcing political agendas. While sound and counter-monuments can also carry political aspects, their role is more critically oriented, questioning dominant narratives rather than affirming them. These forms do not merely seek to assert political agendas but instead emphasize a critical function, encouraging engagement and dialogue. By doing so, they allow visitors to experience remembrance in alternative ways.

I use «dialogic» instead of «political» because, while monuments can certainly have political relevance, they are not solely political in their function. The term «political» often implies a collective, institutionalized action, while «dialogic» better reflects the individual, participatory, and sensory experiences that sound monuments provoke. In this approach, the focus is less on political contexts (though they will be mentioned) and more on how visitors interact with and interpret the sensory experiences these monuments create. I aim to avoid framing these works through purely political or narrative language, instead highlighting how sound and other sensory elements can create more embodied and personal interactions with the past. Furthermore, individual artistic gestures and the rationale behind artistic interventions cannot easily be categorized as political. Additionally, these gestures and the logic of artistic intervention are not often overtly political but can be dialogic within a political context.

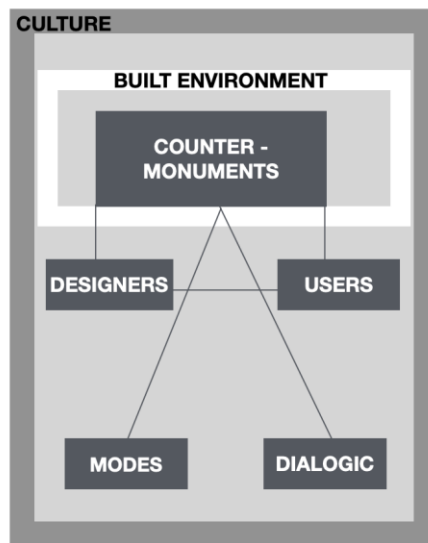


Figure 4. Reinterpreted Bellentani's model for counter-monuments analysis

In case of counter-monuments analysis, I would keep the dialogic aspect but generalised the analysis of the modes and their material. In that light sound monument analysis' model is more of a specified model than the one for counter-monuments analysis.

The relation of the monuments with the built environments and the context stays the same. Additionally, the relationship between designers and the users will place the artists (mostly the designers of the sound monuments) in relation to the institutions, and the visitors. It is not only the designers who shape the work but also the institutions that contextualize it and the visitors who engage with the sound, co-constructing meaning through their interaction with the auditory experience.

Integrating Gunter Kress's «modes» and his framework of social semiotics and multimodal communication into counter-monuments model suggests a more comprehensive way to analyze the complexities of these alternative memorial forms. While Bellentani's model primarily focuses on the visual and spatial elements of traditional monuments, it has limitations when applied to counter-monuments, particularly those that are non-visual or temporal in nature, such as their sonic forms. Kress's framework addresses these gaps by emphasizing the interaction of various modes of communication, enabling a richer analysis of how meaning is constructed through multimodal experiences.

Counter-monuments, as multimodal texts, often involve multiple modalities working together to convey meaning, with some relying more heavily on certain modes depending on

the context. In the case of sound monuments, sound becomes the dominant mode. However, in counter-monuments more broadly, there is rarely a single modality that consistently prevails. Instead, the focus shifts to how different modes—whether visual, auditory, spatial, or even tactile—interact and contribute to the meaning-making process. This interplay of modes is key to understanding how counter-monuments function as dynamic, multisensory experiences.

Unlike static, traditional monuments, counter-monuments engage visitors interactively, inviting real-time, socially negotiated interpretations. Kress's emphasis on the co-constructed nature of meaning aligns closely with the dialogic quality of counter-monuments. These monuments do not offer fixed or universal interpretations but rather evolve through the individual and collective perceptions of the audience.

Additionally, Kress's approach allows for a holistic integration of these sensory experiences into the analysis of meaning. Sensory modes, including hearing, touch, and movement, are not isolated from their symbolic functions; they are woven into the semiotic fabric of the monument and act as semiotic resources. Tactile experiences, for instance, can evoke personal connection or resistance, while movement through space can guide interpretation or reflect a journey through historical narrative. Similarly, the temporality of sound and movement further deepens the embodied experience, influencing how visitors perceive and interpret the monument in real-time.

In conclusion, this chapter aimed to introduce a refined semiotic model for analyzing sound monuments. The analysis will proceed in three stages: first, by examining the dominant sound modality as primary in sound monuments (through the analysis of sound objects and sound events); second, by exploring the dialogic aspect of sound use, addressing the question of why certain memories are brought forth and why through this particular medium, as well as what it contributes to the functioning of collective memory; and third, by outlining the relationships between designers and users, interactions with the built environment, and the cultural context of each case study.

In this way, by foregrounding sound as the central semiotic mode and integrating the conceptual and relational dimensions of counter-monumental forms, this reinterpreted model emphasizes the interplay between sound, space, and memory. In doing so, it provides a comprehensive framework for understanding sound monuments as distinct mediums of collective memory and commemoration, capable of reshaping practices of remembrance.

6. Outline and comparative analyses of the case studies

For my case studies, I have selected three examples of sound-based art that can be considered sound monuments. These works commemorate events that are already viewed as historical, rather than addressing more recent events. This focus on historical events allows me to explore how sound can function as a medium of remembrance for past tragedies or milestones, without the immediacy or political tension that often accompanies more contemporary commemorations.

Additionally, I chose minimalistic works where the physical setting is intentionally subdued or stripped down. In these cases, the absence of elaborate or overwhelming visual elements enables the sound itself to occupy a more prominent role. By removing distractions and limiting the physical context, these works emphasize the significance of sound and its ability to convey meaning on its own, allowing the sound to shape the experience and understanding of the commemorated event in a more direct and contemplative manner.

I will contextualize and discuss three sound monuments: *Distant Trains* (1984) by American artist Bill Fontana, *Touched Echo* (2007) by German artist Markus Kison, and *The Inhabitants of Colosseum* (2018) by Ukrainian artist Nikita Kadan. A unifying aspect of these works is their geographical placement—all were situated within German cities (Berlin, Dresden, and Regensburg, respectively). Additionally, each of these projects reflects on memories of World War II (1939–1945), engaging with themes of destruction, trauma, and loss, and addressing the impact of emotionally charged and traumatic historical events.

What further unites these works is that each was a public intervention, existing only temporarily in the urban landscape. Sound was used as a medium to reactivate memories embedded in specific city locations, imbuing these spaces with new layers of meaning. *Distant Trains* was created at the ruins of Anhalter Bahnhof in Berlin; *Touched Echo* was installed on Brühl's Terrace in Dresden; and *The Inhabitants of Colosseum* tells the tragic story of the guesthouse «Colosseum» in the Stadtamhof district in Regensburg.

This auditory reawakening of memory within the cityscape brought historical narratives into dialogue with the present, transforming how contemporary audiences experienced these spaces. By drawing on collective memories and presenting them publicly, these sound sculptures created a situation of a meaningful engagement with the historical past in the heart of public urban environments.

Another important aspect I want to highlight is the complexity of the German culture of remembrance, particularly in relation to sound artworks that address World War II events. In

this context, these works are not only engaged with the legacy of the Holocaust but are also placed in dialogue with the issue of collective German guilt for the atrocities committed by the Nazis. This cultural dialogue is especially relevant in works that address the destruction within Germany itself and the crimes committed by the Allies. By engaging with these sensitive and often conflicting aspects of memory, these sound monuments contribute to the ongoing process of reflection and reconciliation.

3. 1. Bill Fontana's «Distant Trains» (1984)

Being an American composer, Bill Fontana (b. 1947) developed an international reputation for his pioneering experiments in sound. Since the early 1970's Fontana has used sound as a sculptural medium to interact with and transform visitor's perceptions of visual and architectural spaces. He created sound sculptures and radio projects for museums and broadcast organizations around the world.

Distant Trains was created in 1984, the artwork was exhibited for one month in Berlin at the ruins of Anhalter Bahnhof, once one of Europe's busiest train stations before its destruction in the World War II. Devastated by bombing during the war, it was formally decommissioned in 1952. For this piece, Fontana buried loudspeakers in the empty field of the station's former site, transmitting live sound from Köln Hauptbahnhof, a bustling station in Cologne. This real-time sound recreated a "phantom" acoustic environment, overlaying past activity onto the station's silent, empty space.



Figure 5. Documentation of the *Distant Trains*. Bill Fontana. 1984

3. 2. Markus Kison's «Touched Echo» (2007)

Markus Kison (b. 1977), a German artist based in Berlin. *Touched Echo* is a piece of public art, «a minimal media intervention set within a public space». It is placed in the Brühl's Terrace in Dresden, Germany. Using bone-conduction technology developed originally for hearing devices, the installation transmits sounds of the cities which were devastated in the February 13, 1945 carpet bombing, through the arms of the visitors when they rest their elbows on the balustrade and hold their ears closed.¹



Figure 6 . *Touched Echo*. Markus Kison. 2007

3. 3. Nikita Kadan's «The Inhabitants of Colosseum» (2018)

Ukrainian artist Nikita Kadan (b. 1982), based in Kyiv, created *The Inhabitants of Colosseum* (2018) in Regensburg. This piece reflects on a satellite of the Flossenbürg concentration camp established in the guesthouse «Colosseum» in 1945, where around 400 prisoners from across Europe were forced into railway repair work. Ukrainian guards oversaw the prisoners, and more than 10% of them died in five weeks. The artist invited 400 volunteers to wear wooden slippers, like those worn by the prisoners, and silently walk across the Stone

¹ description and documentation of *Touched Echo* s can be found on Marcus Kison's official web page: <https://www.markuskison.de/touched-echo.html>

Bridge, retracing their steps. The sound of their footsteps is recorded and turned into a sound sculpture.²



Figure 7. Documentation of the performance. *The Inhabitants of Colosseum*.
Nikita Kadan. 2018

Through the nuances of these works, one can see differences in the creators' backgrounds and artistic contexts. Bill Fontana, Markus Kison, and Nikita Kadan each hail from different countries and historical momentums, bringing individual perspectives to the role of sound in memory and commemoration. These distinctions, which will be explored in the following analysis, open the door to a broader examination of the memorial function of sound sculptures.

Firstly, artistic backgrounds and approaches are different — Fontana, Kison, and Kadan bring different art practices and have different artistic statements. Bill Fontana, as a composer and sound artist, is using sound as «sculptural medium»³ and focusing on transforming spaces through live sound transmission, often using real-time acoustic environments to reshape visitor's perception of place. Marcus Kison is a representative of new media art and «interested in our engagement with physical objects»⁴, in his practise he makes minimal media interventions and creates installations. Nikita Kadan is a multimedia artist, he «works with installation, sculpture, painting, graphics, often in interdisciplinary collaboration with historians, architects and human rights activists».⁵ Additionally, temporal and cultural contexts of the initial productions differ as well: the works were created in different decades—1984,

² more detailed description is given at the Danube Art Lab's page: <https://www.regensburg.de/kultur/eu-kulturprojekte/kulturplattform-donauraum/danube-art-lab/nikita-kadan>

³ from Bill Fontana's artistic statement: https://resoundings.org/Pages/Artists_Statement.html

⁴ from Marcus Kison's official web page: <https://www.markuskison.de/about.html>

⁵ from Nikita Kadan's official web page: <http://nikitakadan.com/cveng/>

2007, and 2018—reflecting the varying artistic, technological, and historical concerns of each period.

Secondly, mediums and methods of sound transmission are not similar: each artist utilizes a distinct method for reproducing the sound. Fontana's *Distant Trains* uses live broadcasting, transmitting sound through the systems of live microphones and loudspeakers. Kison's *Touched Echo* relies on bone conduction, a technology developed for hearing devices allowing visitors to feel historical sounds through touch. Kadan's *The Inhabitants of Colosseum* uses recorded footsteps from a performative reenactment, presenting sound as a documentation of action.

Thirdly, performative aspects: performance plays varying roles across the three works. In *Distant Trains*, there is no direct performative element; the sound environment functions autonomously inside the ruins. *Touched Echo* requires recipients' cooperation—visitors become performers themselves by touching the installation and acquiring a specific pose. Kadan's work, however, directly incorporates performative reenactment, as volunteers physically retrace the path of the prisoners, linking bodily engagement to sonic memory.

Fourthly, the relation between sound production and action can be established. In Fontana's sound sculpture, sound exists independently, with no action required from the audience beyond listening. In Kison's work, the action of physical touch is necessary for reactivating the sound. Kadan's piece, however, blends action with sound as the movement of the participants is inseparable from the auditory experience.

Fifthly, social dynamics and the embodied experience are especially prominent in *Touched Echo* and *The Inhabitants of Colosseum*. In *Touched Echo*, though the experience is individualized, the shared act of touching the installation creates a social bond between the visitors, as each person physically activates the sound and embodies the historical memory in their own way. In Nikita Kadan's work, the social aspect is amplified, as the collective performance of history by a group fosters a sense of communal memory and shared responsibility. The embodied nature of both works—through touch and physical movement—forces the participants to confront the history with their bodies, imbuing the sound with a tactile and performative dimension that transcends simple auditory perception. Thus, the varying levels of interactivity and embodiment across the works create different relational dynamics between sound, action, and audience. *Distant Trains* represents a passive auditory experience, *Touched Echo* makes the listener an active, individual participant, and *The Inhabitants of Colosseum* emphasizes collective action and shared historical engagement.

Finally, returning to the problems of concepts and typologies, the works are being described differently. When *Distant Trains* is being described as sound sculpture,⁶ *Touched Echo* has been put under the name of sound installation.⁷ *The Inhabitants of Colosseum* is referred to as both sound sculpture and social sculpture.⁸ In these ways, the terms «sound installation,» «sound sculpture,» and «social sculpture» present overlapping and sometimes ambiguous boundaries:

- *sound installation*: Refers to a spatial arrangement where sound occupies an environment, creating an immersive experience for the audience. (LaBelle : 2018) This term applies to all three works, which use sound within specific sites to shape sensory engagement with memory.
- *sound sculpture*: Defined as the use of sound as a sculptural medium, where sound becomes a tangible presence that reshapes the spatial experience. Fontana's *Distant Trains*, for example, acts as a «living» sound sculpture through real-time transmission (Neuhaus : 2004). This term applies to all three works as well.
- *social sculpture*: Originating with Joseph Beuys, this concept views art as a collective, participatory form that engages the public in meaningful social discourse. (Beuys: 2007) Kadan's work best exemplifies this, as it uses performance and collective participation to engage historical memory.

⁶ from Bill Fontana's artistic statement: https://resoundings.org/Pages/Artists_Statement.html

⁷ from Marcus Kison's official web page: <https://www.markuskison.de/about.html>

⁸ description at the Danube Art Lab's page: <https://www.regensburg.de/kultur/eu-kulturprojekte/kulturplattform-donauraum/danube-art-lab/nikita-kadan>

7. Analyses of the case studies

In this chapter, I will apply the proposed model for the semiotic analysis of sound monuments by examining the works of Bill Fontana, Markus Kison, and Nikita Kadan. This analysis aims to understand how sound monuments are conceptualized, created, and function within built environments and cultural contexts. The reinterpreted model provides a framework for analyzing the auditory, spatial, and dialogic dimensions of these works. It seeks to demonstrate the universality of semiotic principles in existing sonic forms—particularly sound sculptures—where sound interacts with public space and materiality to shape meaning. By doing so, this chapter contributes to creating a language and logic of meaning generation for designing future sound monuments, illustrating how auditory experiences in existing artworks are reimagining commemorative practices.

The analysis of sound objects, sound events, and their interactions with the surrounding soundscape will be based on available documentation of the artworks. Unfortunately, this approach has certain limitations. The first thing that should be mentioned, it does not allow for direct interaction with the artworks in their original settings, which is quite important for fully understanding how the sound works interact with the physical environment, urban noises, and with the visitors. Additionally, I am unable to experience these works firsthand, meaning I cannot access the sensory and embodied perspective of a visitor interacting with the artworks on-site. Then, the quality of the recordings and the way the works are represented in video documentation can influence the analysis. Issues such as sound clarity, recording techniques, and how the artworks are framed through the video format may affect the accuracy of the interpretation.

At the dialogic level, the analysis is also limited by the reliance on general knowledge of general knowledge of Germany's cultural and historical context, rather than a detailed understanding of the specific histories and local interpretations. Furthermore, since the artworks were created in previous years, the analysis cannot fully account for the specific political and social contexts of the time when the works were produced, which may have influenced their meaning and reception. Another discussion, that can actually be included on the analysis will focus on the innovative aspects of the form, especially on how these sound artworks engage with and reactivate memory, as well as on the ethical and critical dimensions of using sound in counter-monumental practices.

For the designer-user relationship, the lack of direct access to some of the artists limits the ability to explore their intentions in depth. Similarly, there is no opportunity to collect

feedback from visitors who experienced the artworks, which restricts the analysis of audience interaction and how visitors contribute to the meaning-making process.

Despite these challenges, the study aims to provide a clear understanding of how these works function as sound monuments, emphasizing their unique contributions to commemorative practices.

7.1. Distant Trains. Bill Fontana (1984)

The analysis of *Distant Trains*, a sound sculpture by Bill Fontana, is based on the artist's web portfolio,⁹ which features a video slideshow accompanied by the original site recording. The video, lasting 3:10, documents the installation at Anhalter Bahnhof, a once-bustling train station in Berlin, now a large empty field. The station's legacy is revisited through the sound sculpture, which transmits live the acoustic environment of the Köln Hauptbahnhof, Europe's busiest contemporary train station.

Sound object analysis

In *Distant Trains*, two primary types of sounds emerge as distinct sound objects: the mechanical sounds of steam trains and the ambient noises of a busy station. These elements evoke the multilayered historical experience of the site. The video starts with ambient noises of the busy train station, the loudest of them are the voices with station announcements.

Attack: Sudden bursts of voices and station announcements appear on the different volume and on the different distances of the listener.

Body: The layered mix of voices, footsteps, and low-frequency rumbles forms a dense auditory environment, situating the listener in the bustling environment of a train station.

Decay: These sounds gradually fade, blending with the diminishing train noises and leaving a quieter atmosphere.

Another distinguishable sound is the whistle of arriving or departing trains. While softer than the audio announcements, these whistles remain perceptible and contribute to the layered soundscape. The sound of moving trains is audible throughout the audio at varying volumes, but this analysis focuses on the whistle occurring between 1:01 and 1:07.

Attack: The steam whistle gradually intensifies, piercing the soundscape as it grows louder, mimicking the train's approach. Its slow, measured onset gives it a gradual attack.

⁹ <https://www.resoundings.info/distant-trains-berlin-1984>

Body: The sound transitions into the rhythmic clatter of wheels and the continuous tone of the whistle, evoking the momentum of a train beginning its departure.

Decay: As the train moves away, the whistle and wheel sounds steadily diminish, fading into the ambient echoes of the environment.

Sound event analysis

The sound event captures the signals of a busy train station, where sound becomes a symbol of life and functionality. Historically, the sounds of trains symbolize industrial progress, while in the context of the Holocaust, they carry the darker connotations of deportation and displacement. This dual symbolism derives from placing the ordinary sounds of a train station within the ruins and an empty field of the Anhalter Bahnhof.

The ambient hum of the station, blending distant reverberations with the low-frequency rumble of trains, serves as the keynote sound. This sonic foundation immerses the listener in the station's acoustic environment. The distinctive steam train sounds can act as auditory landmarks, known within the communities of Berlin. They encapsulate its dual legacy as a monument to industrial progress and a somber reminder of human tragedy, amplifying its role as a site of memory.

Dialogic aspects

As a sound monument and counter-monument, *Distant Trains* engages in a dialogic exploration of memory, embodying contested narratives that include the station's dual legacy: a symbol of industrial progress and a site of Holocaust deportations. This contrast amplifies the unresolved tensions between the value of technological advancement and the atrocities of its wartime use.

As a sound monument, *Distant Trains* preserves and commemorates the acoustic memory of train stations, transforming real-time sounds into markers of historical significance because of the space they are placed in. The artwork has qualities of a sonic intervention as well: by reconstructing the auditory environment of the station, it situates listeners within its historical past while simultaneously alienating them from the present through an immersive

experience. In doing so, it not only memorializes the station's legacy but also expresses an implicit disagreement with its destruction and the erasure of its cultural memory.

In addition to that, Robert Stokowy highlights the former station's symbolic role in Berlin's urban environment, noting that "it was a key symbol of the metropolis Berlin had once been. Many citizens remembered the building very well. Younger Berliners, on the other hand, only knew the place as a field of rubble and were potentially unaware of its historic implications" (Stokowy 2017:113). In this respect, the sound monument mediates the historical significance of the site, acting in accordance with the principles of creative memory by preventing younger generations from forgetting this aspect of the city's history. *Distant Trains* thus exemplifies the dynamics of remembrance and forgetting in Berlin. Viewing the city as a text, the project illustrates Lotman and Uspensky's notion of the «conversion of a chain of facts into a text, » where certain events are selected and «fixed» as essential elements, while others are omitted as nonessential (Lotman 1978: 226). Fontana's work demonstrates how forgotten (or questionable and controversial) «elements» of a city's memory can be reactivated through art.

In Fontana's work, visitors find themselves «confronted with an empty field without visible action but hearing the sonic environment of what sounds like a busy train station, at the same time forming an ambivalent space for experience» (Stokowy 2017: 112). This temporal and immaterial quality let the artwork be described as a sonic form of counter-monuments, further distinguishing them from traditional commemorative practices. Among other counter-monumental qualities its impermanence and performative nature can be mentioned. By prioritizing sound over physical form, the work challenges traditional monumental practices, making memory an embodied and participatory experience.

7.2. *Touched Echo*. Markus Kison (2007)

In general, *Touched Echo* utilizes bone-conduction technology to transmit sound through the visitors' arms. Markus Kison is using a recording of «the horrendous noise of the explosions» and «the sound of airplanes and explosions», as mentioned in the artwork's description.¹⁰ The sound object and sound event analysis could be made on the basis on the sounds we here on 0:56 – 1:20 time on the video.

Sound object of the *Touched Echo*

¹⁰ <https://www.markuskison.de/touched-echo.html>

Two primary sounds can be identified: the sound of airplanes and the sound of bombs falling on the city. Airplane sounds high in the sky can be heard on 0:56 – 1:06, it seems like two airplanes approaching on the distance (0:56-0:59), another one is significantly closer to the recorder (1: 01 – 1:06).

Attack: The sound begins with the high-intensity noise of airplane engines, characterized by a slow attack that gradually introduces the auditory presence of the planes.

Body: A steady, repetitive, rhythmic industrial sound, with the continuous hum of engines signifying the approach of the planes.

Decay: The sound diminishes as the planes move away from the listener, marked by fading intensity and reverberation.

The sound of bombing is being introduced on 1:07 and lasts until the 1:20, it is placed on the significant distant from the listener as well. It follows the sound of airplanes.

Attack: The onset is sharp, abrupt, fast rhythm, representing the series of explosions. This phase is characterized by a fast attack.

Body: The echoes of explosions and destructions follows one another, capturing the auditory imprint of buildings collapsing on the distance.

Decay: The sound gradually fades, with reverberations blending into the ambient noise, evoking the lingering aftermath of the explosions.

Sound event of the *Touched Echo*

For the sound event analysis we need to consider the sounds of airplanes and explosions as signals, symbols, keynotes or soundmarks. The sharp, piercing air raid sirens act as auditory signals of imminent danger, immediately immersing the listener in the historical context and triggering a sense of urgency. On the symbolic level, the sound of airplanes and bombing together functions as a symbol of war times and war destructive impact, particularly referencing the bombing of Dresden during the World War II. Also, from the texture and the quality of recording they are clearly historical sounds, symbolising the past.

The persistent hum of airplane engines and ambient wartime sounds, machine noises serve as keynotes, forming the auditory background of the piece and situating it firmly in the historical context of urban warfare. These recurring elements create a sonic atmosphere of that times. The distinct sounds of airplanes and bomb explosions can be regarded as soundmarks, uniquely tied to the cultural memory of Dresden's destruction. They stand out as iconic auditory

elements, evoking collective memory and emotional resonance associated with the historical trauma of war.

Dialogic aspects of *Touched Echo*

The dialogic aspect of *Touched Echo* derives from its intervention in public space, bringing sounds associated with traumatic memories and wartime destruction into a shared urban space. The work was realized with funding from the Saxon Ministry of Science and Fine Arts, supported by the Trans-Media-Akademie Hellerau and Schlösser und Gärten Dresden, indicating institutional approval and alignment with broader cultural agendas. However, its intervention into the public environment sparked some discussion.

One of the central points of contention revolves around the ethical implications of reintroducing the «horrendous noise of explosions and other wartime sounds» into a public space. The main critique was centered around the question whether such auditory interventions might retraumatize or alienate listeners, particularly in a location that serves as a tourist and leisure site.

The work also enters into the broader debate surrounding the bombing of Dresden during World War II, a subject that evokes contested narratives. On one hand, the bombings by Allied forces are remembered as acts of devastation against civilians, often framed as «terror bombing, » complicating the notion of Germany as the sole aggressor in the war. On the other hand, such memories must be situated within the larger context of Germany's accountability for initiating the war and the Holocaust.

In addition to that, by capturing the auditory experiences of Dresden's civilian population, the work emphasizes the victims of war, and human vulnerability in general. In that sense, *Touched Echo* situates itself within this fraught dialogic space, arising reflections on victimhood, responsibility, and the contested nature of wartime memories.

Touched Echo can also be analyzed as a form of counter-monuments, challenging traditional expressions and monumental practices in several ways. Firstly, the artwork is immaterial, performative, and unlike conventional monuments, relying on sound and performance rather than physical grandeur. Its performative aspect centered on visitors actively engaging with the auditory experience, which transforms memory into an embodied act of listening. Secondly, it is participatory and immersive, visitors become part of the memorial

process through bone-conduction technology, which allows them to physically «feel» the sound, placing them metaphorically in the position of wartime civilians.

Thus, the dialogic nature of *Touched Echo* lies in its ability to provoke critical engagement with public memory and contested histories. Through its immateriality, performativity, and participatory design, it challenges the grandiosity and permanence of traditional monuments, offering instead an affective encounter with the auditory traces of history.

Designer-users relationship

Through interviews and personal accounts, Markus Kison reveals how the work seeks to connect visitors not only with the historical memory of Dresden's wartime destruction but also with the sensory and emotional dimensions of remembrance. One of the descriptions of the artwork even using the term « visitors/performative memorial»¹¹

Kison's design prioritizes audience interaction, making participation essential to the artwork's activation. The use of bone-conduction technology transforms passive observers into active participants. Visitors have to place their elbows on the stone balustrade of Dresden's Brühl Terrace, through which the sound of wartime airplanes and bombings is transmitted directly to their auditory system. This method of sound delivery is highly personal, creating an intimate and embodied listening experience. As Kison describes, the technology bridges physical sensation and auditory perception.

Kison has also shared instances of direct communication with visitors, particularly those with lived experiences of the events evoked in the artwork. In one of the interactions, a survivor of the Dresden (an old lady) bombings engaged with the piece, recounting their own memories of the destruction. These exchanges reveal the work's ability to function as a catalyst for dialogue, enabling personal histories to intersect with collective remembrance. For Kison, such moments validate the work's aim to create a shared, participatory space. (*Attachment 1*)

The artist-audience relationship is further shaped by the ethical and emotional implications of the work. Kison acknowledges the potentially unsettling nature of reintroducing sounds of destruction into a public space, particularly in a context that serves as a leisure site for tourists and locals. However, he frames this tension as integral to the work's purpose: to disrupt everyday urban experiences and provoke thoughts on the weight of history. By situating *Touched Echo* in a public space, Kison invites diverse audiences to engage with the historical narrative, making the artwork a democratic and inclusive form of memory-making.

¹¹ <https://www.markuskison.de/touched-echo.html>

Relationship with the built environment and the cultural context

The relationship between the work and built environment has a character of the sonic intervention to the public space. In that sense, the work appears impermanent and minimalistic. As a site-specific intervention, *Touched Echo* reframes Dresden's Brühl Terrace, commonly associated with tourism, as a site of memory. Its minimalism and lack of permanence underscore the transient and fragmented nature of memory itself. At the same time it has disruptive nature. By introducing unsettling sounds into a historically layered urban space, the work disrupts the everyday experience of the site, inviting visitors to reflect on the past interweaving the present-day urban fabric.

Describing the broader picture of the *Touched Echo*'s positioning in cultural context, I would say that engages directly with the memory of Dresden, a city deeply marked by the destruction it suffered during World War II. The artwork addresses the bombings of Dresden as a contested historical event, remembered both as a tragedy for civilians and as a consequence of Germany's role in initiating the war. By incorporating sounds of airplanes and bombings, the piece recreates the wartime sonic environment, creating a link between individual experience and collective memory.

This approach aligns with Germany's broader practices of critical memory work (Vergangenheitsbewältigung), which emphasize confronting the past. The sounds used in *Touched Echo* are not neutral but evoke specific emotional and historical associations, making the artwork part of a cultural dialogue about the ethics of remembrance and the complexities of war narratives. The choice of sound over visual forms disrupts conventional memory practices and emphasizes the ephemeral, yet deeply personal, nature of auditory experiences.

7.3. The Inhabitants of Colosseum. Nikita Kadan (2018)

In this part I provide an analytical framework for understanding the sound objects and sound events as documented in the video recording of *The Inhabitants of Colosseum*,¹² a participatory performance staged by Nikita Kadan in Regensburg in 2018. The performance, captured in a video lasting 1 minute and 5 seconds, presents a mixed auditory environment featuring two main types of sounds: the clatter of wooden shoes on the stone bridge and

¹² <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WHqkSbzuXQ&t=5s>

intermittent unintelligible human voices. These sounds have to be regarded within the work's broader historical and commemorative contexts.

Sound object analysis

The predominant sound object in the performance is the rhythmic, repetitive clatter of wooden shoes striking the bridge's stones. This sound is loud and intense, becoming discernible from the first seconds (0:01) and persisting throughout the performance. However, isolating this sound as a distinct sound object proves challenging due to the collective nature of its production. Ideally, the sound of a single pair of wooden shoes could serve as a clearer object of analysis, but in the context of the performance, the sound must be approached as a collective sonic act.

Attack: The sound is characterized by a rapid attack, with each step producing a sharp, beating impact as wooden soles meet stone.

Body: The repetitive continuity of the steps creates an echoing effect, emphasizing the layered nature of the sound object.

Decay: As participants move across the bridge and into the distance, the sound gradually fades, and its volume diminishes.

Another sound that should be mentioned is the human distant voices appearing clearly on 0:21-0:23, they are very silent, and basically consist of the fast attack that fades fastly.

Sound event analysis

The sound events of *The Inhabitants of Colosseum* are connecting audiences to the historical and sociopolitical themes of the artwork. The clatter of wooden shoes functions on multiple levels. In general, the sound signaling the collective action of walking, the group dynamics is in the focus. On the symbolical level, the mechanical and rhythmic nature of the sound alludes to the machinery of war, industry, and systemic exploitation. It speaks to themes of destruction, routine, labor, and the dehumanizing forces of violence.

In the particular context of Regensburg's history, the clatter of wooden shoes carried a specific cultural resonance, familiar to civilians during the time period referenced by the performance, so it does function as a community sound, as a soundmark in that sense. For the contemporary audiences outside the Regensburg cultural history, this sound could symbolize the presence of prisoners or forced laborers, making its reintroduction a powerful auditory reminder of historical suffering.

In addition to that, particularly when detached from its video and visual context, the clatter takes on an alien quality. It recalls the sounds of horseshoes or industrial machinery, reinforcing the dehumanizing and mechanical undertones.

The intermittent voices that appear throughout the performance add a contrasting dimension, basically they sounds as keynotes, the background ordinary urban sounds . These human sounds, representing the life of the city, are periodically interrupted by the harshness of the clattering steps. This juxtaposition heightens the emotional impact of the sound events, mirroring the fragility of life and the intrusion of systemic violence into the everyday. That performance appears as a sonic intervention, which was realized by the collective body' s sound making.

Dialogic in the work

Nikita Kadan's work situates Regensburg's local history within broader historical narratives, including Ukraine's fraught relationship with World War II and the Holocaust. The inclusion of Ukrainian guards among those complicit in the suffering of prisoners¹³ complicates collective memory, highlighting the ambiguities in accountability and remembrance. By situating a Ukrainian artist's work in Regensburg, the performance fosters dialogue between different cultural histories and commemorative practices. The reference to Ukrainian guards adds complexity to discussions of shared and contested memories of World War II, creating a space for the themes of collaboration, guilt, and national memory.

The Inhabitants of Colosseum exemplifies the potential of sound as a counter-monumental form, blending impermanence, abstraction, and performativity. As a site-specific intervention, it transforms the Old Town of Regensburg into a site of memory, uncovering historical layers and reactivating them through sound. The clatter of wooden shoes recreates the historical soundscape, bridging past and present to form a persistent yet intangible sound monument. This act reveals the certain resonance of history, where echoes of past events reverberate in the present, reawakening remembrance dynamics.

The participatory nature of the performance uncovers the embodied dimensions of memory. Walking in wooden shoes connects participants to the physical discomfort and symbolic weight of historical suffering. Through this embodiment, through being producers of the sound and listeners at the same time, individuals become active agents in commemoration, transforming their collective movement into a polyphonic document of shared memory.

¹³ as stated at the artwork's description : <https://www.regensburg.de/kultur/eu-kulturprojekte/kulturplattform-donauraum/danube-art-lab/nikita-kadan>

Sound, as a medium of dialogue, transcends linguistic and cultural barriers, making it particularly significant in the historical context of the camp, where prisoners represented diverse nations, including the Soviet Union, Poland, Hungary, Belgium, France, and others.¹⁴ This diversity renders these events a matter of international commemoration, and the universality of sound becomes a vital element in a shared remembrance, which does not require translation or language grammar to grasp.

7.4. Results and discussion

The analysis of the selected sound monuments using the reinterpreted Bellentani's model resulted in several findings into how sound monuments can act in commemorative practices within urban environments.

The first significant outcome was the utility of concepts like *sound object*, *sound event* (which includes keynotes and soundmarks), and *soundscape*, drawn from acoustic ecology studies the auditory experience description, especially from the perspective of the perceivers or users. For designers, these concepts help anticipate how sounds will be perceived by an audience, allowing them to predict the impact of sound in various contexts. The model proved effective in this regard, especially for novel sound experiments (like sound mediation of memory), by providing a framework for understanding how sound is interpreted by listeners.

Another important discovery was the transformative potential of sound in built environments through minimal interventions. Subtle sonic elements added to public spaces can significantly change the way those environments are experienced, layering historical memory into the present-day soundscape of cities. By drawing on the sonic history of a place, these works help to activate forgotten or overlooked memories, adding another layer of meaning to the spatial experience. The ability of sound to introduce this extra dimension demonstrates how even small sonic alterations can have an impact on public perception and engagement with space.

The dialogic dimension also proved essential in understanding how these works function to reawaken collective memories. Following the counter-monumental logic, rather than glorifying historical events, these sound monuments focus on the remembrance of trauma, destruction, and loss. This dialogic dimension invites reflection on the complexities of history. The sound itself becomes a tool for engaging audiences in a deeper understanding of collective memory, particularly in relation to difficult or painful historical moments.

¹⁴ <https://www.regensburg.de/kultur/eu-kulturprojekte/kulturplattform-donauraum/danube-art-lab/nikita-kadan>

Lastly, the cultural context of the works provided further insight into how different societies use sound as a means of remembrance. The model encourages a deeper examination of how sound functions as a cultural tool for commemorating history. The way sound is employed in public monuments reveals much about a society's traditions of collective memory and how those traditions are transmitted and reshaped in the present.

However, the study faced several limitations. The inability to experience the works firsthand restricted the ability to fully capture how visitors engage with them in their original settings, particularly the interaction between the sound monument and the real-time soundscape of the city. While video documentation and recordings proved useful, they risked distorting the authentic experience of the sound, especially in terms of clarity and spatial interaction. Additionally, cultural and historical contexts were understood more generally rather than through specific, localized perspectives, which may have influenced the reception and interpretation of the works.

Conclusions

In this study, I explored the underexamined modality of sound in commemorative practices, positioning sound monuments as novel, dialogic forms of memory mediation. By addressing the research questions, the study demonstrated how sound functions as a semiotic resource, acts within multimodal texts, and interacts with public spaces to reimagine traditional monumental paradigms. Sound monuments operate according to the logic of sound sculptures, recreating elements of historical soundscapes while also serving as an art form. As multimodal texts, they combine auditory, spatial, and occasionally visual modalities to create complex systems of meaning.

Their use of sound as a primary medium allows for critical commentary on the contemporary nature of memory. In this way, sound monuments signify a shift in commemorative practices challenging the dominance of traditional visual paradigms. Sound's temporal and affective qualities make it a potent semiotic resource, capable of conveying nuanced layers of memory and experience.

Continuing the counter-monumental tradition, sound monuments resist static representations of history, embracing fluidity and dialogue. Thus, sound monuments provide alternative opportunities to mediate memory through sensory immersion and emotional resonance. Unlike static, visually dominated commemorative forms, sound's fluid nature challenges fixed interpretations, promoting personal, sensory, and participatory engagement with history and memory. This research advocates for recognizing sound as a transformative medium of memory, positioning commemoration as a dynamic, dialogic process.

By reinterpreting the Bellentani model, the study analyzed how auditory experiences connect with built environments, considering the designer-user relationship within broader cultural paradigms. A semiotic framework was developed, adapting visual-based categories into sound-focused ones—sound object, sound event, and dialogic dimension—bridging the gap between sound sculptures and traditional monuments.

In public spaces, sound monuments create site-specific interventions, reshaping spatial and acoustic perception while retaining a commemorative function, as demonstrated by the selected case studies—minimalistic works by Bill Fontana, Markus Kison and Nikita Kadan, which emphasize sound over physical form. These examples illustrated how by interacting with urban soundscapes, sound monuments act as agents of memory, triggering collective recollection through their integration with the built environment, acoustic landscapes, and audience participation. Ultimately, sound monuments expand the boundaries of how memory

is mediated and experienced, offering a participatory, sensorially rich approach to commemoration attuned to the complexities of contemporary memory cultures.

Future studies could explore integrating other sensory modalities, such as touch or olfaction, into counter-monumental practices. Investigating their interplay with sound might reveal new dimensions of multisensory commemoration. Additionally, expanding the scope beyond Western and post-Holocaust contexts to include non-Western traditions could provide valuable insights into sound's role in diverse cultural memory practices.

With advancements in augmented and virtual reality, future research might examine how these technologies enhance the immersive and participatory qualities of sound monuments, particularly in contexts where physical memorials are inaccessible or impractical. Exploring how sound monuments evolve over time in response to changing urban soundscapes and audience perceptions would also deepen understanding of their role in memory-making processes.

References

- Anderson, Benedict 2016 [1983]. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso Books.
- Barthes, Roland 1977. *Image-Music-Text*. London: Fontana Press.
- Bellentani, Federico; Panico, Mario 2016. The Meanings of Monuments and Memorials: Toward a Semiotic Approach. *Punctum: International Journal of Semiotics* 2(1): 28–46.
- Bellentani, Federico 2021. *The Meanings of the Built Environment: A Semiotic and Geographical Approach to Monuments in the Post-Soviet Era*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.
- Beuys, Joseph; Harlan, Volker 2007. *What is Art? Conversation with Joseph Beuys*. Witten: Verlag Freies Geistesleben.
- Bishop, Claire 2012. *Artificial Hells: Participatory Art and the Politics of Spectatorship*. London: Verso.
- Braga, Joaquim 2019. Imagination, Multimodality, and Sound. In: Grimshaw-Aagaard, Mark; Walther-Hansen, Mads; Knakkegaard, Martin (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Sound and Imagination*. Volume 1. Oxford: Oxford University Press. 131- 148.
- Carrier, Peter 2005. *Holocaust Monuments and National Memory. France and Germany since 1989*. 1st ed. New York: Berghahn Books.
- Caves, Roger William 2005. *Encyclopedia of the City*. Oxon: Routledge.
- Chion, Michel 1994. *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- Connerton, Paul 1989. *How Societies Remember*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Damousi, Joy; Hamilton, Paula 2017. *The Sensory Past*. New York: Routledge.
- Feld, Steven 1996. *Sound and Sentiment: Birds, Weeping, Poetics, and Song in Kaluli Expression*. 2nd ed. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- Felman, Shoshana 2002. *The Juridical Unconscious: Trials and Traumas in the Twentieth Century*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.
- Fontana, Bill. 2004. Hearing Through Walls. In: Cox, Christoph; Warner, Daniel (eds.), *Audio Culture: Readings in Modern Music*. New York: Continuum, 103–107.
- Graham, Shawn; Kee, Kevin; Compeau, Timothy 2019. Hearing the Past. In: Kee, Kevin; Compeau, Timothy (eds.), *Seeing the Past with Computers: Experiments with Augmented Reality and Computer Vision for History*. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Huyssen, Andreas 2003. *Present Pasts: Urban Palimpsests and the Politics of Memory*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Ihde, Don 2007. *Listening and Voice: Phenomenologies of Sound*. 2nd ed. Albany: SUNY Press.
- Iturbide, Manuel Rocha 2013. The Expansion of Sound Sculpture and Sound Installation in Art. In: Alias, Esteban (ed.), *El Eco Está en Todas Partes*. Ciudad de México: Antítesis, 32–49.
- Kahn, Douglas 2001. *Noise, Water, Meat: A History of Sound in the Arts*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Krauss, Rosalind 1979. Sculpture in the Expanded Field. *October* 8: 30–44.
- Kress, Gunther 2010. *Multimodality: A Social Semiotic Approach to Contemporary Communication*. Abingdon: Routledge.
- Kress, Gunther; van Leeuwen, Theo 1996. *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*. London: Routledge.
- Kwon, Miwon 2004. *One Place After Another. Site-Specific Art and Locational Identity*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press.
- LaBelle, Brandon 2006. *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- 2018. *Sonic Agency: Sound and Emergent Forms of Resistance*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- Lotman, Juri 1978. On the Semiotic Mechanism of Culture. *New Literary History* 9: 211–32.
- 2019 [1985]. Memory in a Culturological Perspective. In: Tamm, Marek (ed.), *Juri Lotman: Culture, Memory, and History: Essays in Cultural Semiotics*. Cham: Palgrave Macmillan, 148–158.
- Makeham, Paul 2005. Performing the City. *Theatre Research International* 30(2): 150–160.
- Marcoci, Roxana 2000. Counter-Monuments and Memory. *MoMA* 3(9): 2–10.
- Neuhaus, Max 2004. *Sound Works: Volume I*. Bern: Kunstmuseum Bern.
- Nora, Pierre. 1989. Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire. *Representations* 26: 7–24.
- Paschalidis, Gregory. 2017. Introduction: Semiotics and the Senses. *Punctum: International Journal of Semiotics* 3(1): 5–11.
- Riegl, Alois 1903. *Der Moderne Denkmalkultus, Seine Wesen und Seine Entstehung*. Wien & Leipzig: W. Braumüller.
- Salvatori, Gaia 2015. Stone or Sound: Memory and Monuments in Contemporary Public Art. *Il Capitale Culturale: Studies on the Value of Cultural Heritage* 12: 931–954.
- Schafer, Raymond Murray 1994 [1977]. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books.
- Schaeffer, Pierre 1966. *Traité des Objets Musicaux*. Paris: Éditions du Seuil.

- Schulze, Holger 2018. *The Sonic Persona: An Anthropology of Sound*. London: Bloomsbury Academic.
- Smithson, Robert 1996. *The Collected Writings*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Stevens, Quentin; Franck, Karen; Fazakerley, Rachna 2012. Counter-Monuments: The Creative Resistance. *Memory Studies* 5(4): 718–728.
- Straebel, Volker 2008. Zur Frühen Geschichte und Typologie der Klanginstallation. In: *Klangkunst*. Munich: Richard Boorberg Verlag, 67–78.
- Stokowy, Robert 2017. Bill Fontana's Distant Trains: A documentation of an acoustic relocation. *Organised Sound* 22(1): 112-121.
- Young, James E. 1993. *The Texture of Memory: Holocaust Memorials and Meaning*. New Haven: Yale University Press.
- 1999. Memory and Counter-Memory: The End of the Monument in Germany. *Harvard Design Magazine* 9: 1–10.

Case studies documentations

- Kadan, Nikita 2018. Video documentation of the performance *The Inhabitants of Colosseum*:
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-WHqkSbzuXQ&t=5s>
- Kison, Markus 2007. Video documentation of the *Touched Echo*:
<https://www.markuskison.de/touched-echo.html>
- Fontana, Bill 1984. Video documentation of the *Distant Trains*:
<https://www.resoundings.info/distant-trains-berlin-1984>

List of other artworks

Eisenman, Peter, 2005. *Holocaust Memorial*

Gerz, Jochen; Shalev-Gerz, Esther 1986–1993. *Harburg Monument Against Fascism*

Gonzalez-Torres, Felix, 1990. *Untitled (Death by Gun)*

Hoheisel, Horst, 1987. *Aschrott Fountain*

Hoheisel, Horst, 1995. *Conceptual Proposal to Destroy the Brandenburg Gate*

LeWitt, Sol, 1987. *Black Form*

Philipsz, Susan, 2014. *Part File Score*

List of figures

Figure 1. Bellentani's model for traditional monuments analysis. In: Bellentani, Federico 2021. *The Meanings of the Built Environment: A Semiotic and Geographical Approach to Monuments in the Post-Soviet Era*. Berlin, Boston: De Gruyter Mouton.

Figure 2. Graphic depiction of the components of the sound object, its «envelope». In: Schafer, R. Murray. 1994. *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester, VT: Destiny Books.

Figure 3. Reinterpreted Bellentani's model for sound monuments analysis. Visualisation is made by the author.

Figure 4. Reinterpreted Bellentani's model for counter-monuments analysis. Visualisation is made by the author.

Figure 5. Documentation of the Distant Trains. Bill Fontana. 1984 : <https://www.resoundings.info/distant-trains-berlin-1984>

Figure 6. Documentation of the Touched Echo. Markus Kison. 2007: <http://www.markuskison.de/touched-echo.html>

Figure 7. Documentation of the performance *The Inhabitants of Colosseum*.

Nikita Kadan. 2018 : <https://www.regensburg.de/kultur/eu-kulturprojekte/kulturplattform-donauraum/danube-art-lab/nikita-kadan>

Resümees

Heli kui mälu vahendamine: helimonumendid kui vastumonumentaalsed vormid

Oma uurimistöös „Heli kui mälu vahendamine: helimonumendid kui vastumonumentaalsed vormid“ uurin heli rolli mälestamises, keskendudes helimonumentidele alternatiivina traditsioonilistele visuaalsetele ja materiaalsetele mäluvormidele. Minu uurimus põhineb ajaloonarratiivide ümbermõtestamisel Ukrainas, eriti sõja ja ühiskondlike muutuste taustal. Rõhutan heli ainulaadset võimet edastada mälu ja tekitada emotsionaalset vastukaja, muutes selle võimsaks vahendiks kultuurilise mälu säilitamisel.

Alustan oma tööd traditsiooniliste monumentide kriitikaga, mis ei suuda sageli kajastada tänapäeva mälu killustatust ja voolavust. Traditsioonilised monumendid on tavaliselt püsivad ja staatilised objektid, mille eesmärk on esitada ühetaolisi narratiive. Need on peamiselt visuaalsed ja suured ning sümboliseerivad ajaloo muutumatust. Kuid sellised lähenemisviisid on üha enam küsimärgi all, eriti konfliktijärgsetes ühiskondades. Vastumonumendid ja helipõhised mäluvormid seavad need traditsioonid kahtluse alla, rõhutades ajutisust, abstraktsust ja avalikkuse kaasamist tähenduste loomisse.

Minu uurimistöös on kolm peamist küsimust:

Kuidas heli toimib semiootilise ressursina ja suhtleb teiste modaalsustega helimonumentides?

Vaatlen helimonumente multimodaalsete tekstidena, mis ühendavad erinevaid modaalsusi (auditiivne, ruumiline, visuaalne) ühtseks tähendussüsteemiks. See tõstatab küsimusi heli kui peamise suhtlusvahendi võimaluste ja piirangute kohta.

Millisel viisil aitavad helimonumendid kaasa kollektiivse mälu toimimisele?

Uurin helimonumente multimodaalsete tekstidena, mis muudavad kollektiivse mälu diskursust, esitades väljakutseid traditsioonilistele visuaalsetele paradigmadele ja rõhutades auditiivset tajumist.

Kuidas helimonumendid toimivad avalikus ruumis?

Uurin, kuidas need aktiveerivad kollektiivset mälu, suheldes füüsilise ruumi, akustilise maastiku ja publikuga. Need toimivad kultuurilist konteksti ja reaalse tähtsust rõhutavate sekkumistena.

Töö esimeses peatükis annan ülevaate peamistest teoreetilistest lähenemisviisidest, mõistetest ja töödest, mis loovad analüüsi aluse. Heliliste kogemuste semiootilisi aluseid selgitan 2.–3. peatükis Raymond Schaferi ja Günther Kressi auditiivse tajumise ja

multimodaalsuse teooriate kontekstis. 4. peatükis analüüsin, kuidas vastumonumentide puhul toimib heli alternatiivina traditsioonilistele materiaaletele mäluvormidele.

Federico Bellentani monumentide semiootilise analüüsi mudeli põhjal töotan välja mudeli helimonumentide analüüsimise semiootilise mudeli ja demonstreerin selle rakendamist juhtumite analüüsis.

Oma töösa uurin helimonumentide seost avaliku ruumiga, tuginedes Raymond Schaferi, Brandon LaBelle'i ja James Youngi töödele. Rõhutan, et heli võib toimida kui „heliline märk“, mis kõnetab kuulmist ja tekitab mitmekihilisi assotsiatsioone. Heli suhtleb teiste modaalsustega (visuaalne, ruumiline), luues tervikliku kogemuse. See võimaldab laiendada traditsioonilisi mälestamise raamistikke ja kohandada neid kaasaegse kontekstiga.

Toetudes teoreetilisele käsitluseanalüüsin kolme helimonumentide näidet, mis toimivad omamoodi mälumehhanismidena:

Touched Echo (Markus Kison, 2007): interaktiivne installatsioon, mis kasutab heli, et viia külastaja minevikku.

Distant Trains (Bill Fontana, 1984): heliinstallatsioon, mis kutsub esile sõdade mälestusi kaugete rongihelide kaudu.

The Inhabitants of Colosseum (Nikita Kadan, 2018): projekt, mis kasutab heli poliitilise ja sotsiaalse mälu uurimiseks.

Töö tulemusena tõstan esile, et helimonumendid pakuvad uut viisi kollektiivse mälu säilitamiseks, minnes kaugemale visuaalsetest ja materiaaletest traditsioonidest. Need aitavad luua interaktiivsemat, dialoogilisemat ja isiklikumat minevikukogemust. Heli muutub vahendiks, mis mitte ainult ei kõneta emotsioone, vaid loob ka mitmetahulise sideme inimese, ruumi ja ajaloo.

Annex 1. Conversation with Markus Kison

11/21/2024

Mariia: Which relationship with sound do you have? And is it only *Touched Echo* where you are experimenting with sound, or also in other works?

Markus: In general, I do not do that much with sound. I am more interested in interaction, especially physical interaction. So, the *Touched Echo* work was more about the physical interaction with the railing, at least initially.

Mariia: So is it more about interaction with the visitors and sensory experience?

Markus: Yes.

Mariia: On your website, it is described as a minimal media intervention. How would you also classify it? Like a sound installation, public art? What do you think about framing it in some kind of genre?

Markus: Sometimes it is also framed as a performative memorial because the person who is interacting with the artwork becomes a performer, in a way.

Mariia: Performative memorial, that sounds very cool. I think I will refer to the works I am going to analyze as sound monuments. What do you think, is it correct?

Markus: Yeah, fine, sounds good.

Mariia: Yeah, my idea is to justify this concept and see how it works, if it is applicable, if it is not. So this will be the idea. If we are talking from the perspective of people outside Germany and European culture, what does the sound of bombing mean for Germany? Why is the 13th of February 1945 the day you highlight in this work?

Markus: I was previously impressed, especially by the sound of an airplane flying above your head, like with the intensity it is bouncing off. And I was invited to Dresden as part of a grant. So, I was just wandering around the city, and I was kind of inspired by this place where you have this history above you. And there was another person from Dresden who has this knowledge about the history. So yeah, this kind of triggered me to do something about this memory that is still inside everybody who is visiting the place.

Mariia: I saw that this work had some additions in museum spaces in Tokyo, for example. What do you think? Does it have the same influence in the museum space, or is it irreplaceable, this interaction with the real space of Dresden?

Markus: No, but I mean, in the museum space, it is just a documentation. If you really want to experience it, you would have to go to Dresden, or you had to go. There was another installation in Osnabrück, which shares a somewhat similar history as the city. Yeah, it is meant to be in the place that is fixed, but I was asked to show it. So, we made the documentation, which was this Tokyo museum setup.

Mariia: Did you have an opportunity to talk to the visitors? I know it was kind of long ago, but what kind of impressions did they share, if they shared them?

Markus: Yeah, I had a lot of talking. There was an old lady; she is in the video at the very end when I asked her if she could hear it. And she was really nice. She actually lived in Dresden during that night. And she was really happy that there is a memorial for this. She immediately started to tell the story of how she survived in the basement that night and how all her friends and everybody came into the basement. She also told me that the animals from the zoo in Dresden escaped and went into some basements to hide. At first, I was a bit afraid if I was allowed to do this artwork externally without that knowledge or permission, but she really pushed me to do something.

Mariia: Wow, that is an amazing story. Cool, it is nice when people share this kind of story.

Markus: Yeah.

Mariia: Were there some visitors who were shocked? Like, I wouldn't say traumatized—that's maybe a big word—but for whom it was maybe too painful to experience these kinds of sounds?

Markus: Yeah, there was a TV show in Germany, kind of a comedy show. The show works in a way where you see a photo, and then the comedians ask yes-or-no questions about what it is. They showed an image of a person interacting with the railing by covering her ears. One comedian asked about it, and they were quite shocked that somebody would do something like this—bring back those sounds, which are so horrible. So that was something that happened.

Mariia: Ohh.

Markus: But, I mean, for me, this was not that important because I had direct conversations with those who were there when I set it up, and it was very different. Yeah, so I think if you put it in the wrong context, or in a bit of a traumatic or negative context, I don't know... But what I received from visitors who were unaware was different.

Mariia: That is actually a question I've been asked a few times when I was discussing my topic. What is the ethics of using certain sounds, mostly sounds related to war times, in public spaces?

Markus: I mean, I think it's a really serious topic, but I personally solve this by just talking to visitors and listening. Then I decide if I can do this or not based on the feedback.

Mariia: This work was created not long ago, but in 2007. Just a personal question: would you ever come back to this kind of public art in your practice?

Markus: Maybe. I think I like this because media art usually happens in media art festivals, where there is a kind of homogeneous crowd of techie people and such. While in Dresden, there were really very diverse people—old people, people who had never experienced media art before, stuff like that. And that was really nice.

Mariia: Yeah, I think it is a very nice idea. And I think the last question is more about monument creation. I know it's not exactly your thing, but what do you think—should monuments be created by artists or by, let's say, governmental structures and urban designers?

Markus: I think actually it is a good niche for artists to do stuff like that. I mean, governments could define the content that should be conveyed in the monument, but I think the design, the aesthetics, and stuff like that cannot come from the government.

Mariia: That is one of the questions I try to discuss—maybe governments should invite artists more and have a permanent dialogue to search for interesting and meaningful ways of interaction, like interactions through performance with memory. But it's a very open question, and I know there is no definitive answer.

And maybe you know some of your friends or German artists who work with memory now, if you can share?

Markus: There is a nice memorial I like very much in Berlin's EastEnders. It's a memorial for the night when the Nazis burned all the books at Humboldt University. It's at Bebelplatz. It's basically a large spot in the city, an empty spot. There is a window in the floor, and when you

look into the window, you see an empty room below you, kind of a basement, and it's full of empty bookshelves. That's actually a really nice memorial.

Mariia: Oh yes, I see, I understand. It's like the embodiment of emptiness and absence.

Markus: It's also kind of minimal, like my work. You might not notice it when you're walking around, but once you know it, it's really impressive.

Mariia: Is it your personal style to do minimalistic works? Do you think they are more interesting to perceive?

Markus: We, as artists, always try to focus on the essence. With media art, this often leads to very minimal physical setups. Maybe that's the reason.

Mariia: Yeah, I'm very impressed, and that's what I liked a lot about *Touched Echo* and your other works. Traditional monuments, or monumental artworks, often lack the value of finding something deep and meaningful.

Markus: Cool.

Mariia: Thank you for the interview!

Markus: Thanks a lot.

Mariia: It's a completely different picture. Before our talk, I was mostly thinking about the sound part. But now I see it's so much deeper.

Markus: What is the topic of your thesis?

Mariia: It's about sound mediation of memory—sound monuments as counter-monumental forms. I use the term “counter-monumental” to include all the typologies: performative memorials, commemorative art, and public art with memorial aims. I'm basically arguing that sound is more personal and interesting way to establish relationships with memory and history. That's the main point.

Markus: Okay, great! Good luck with your thesis.

Non-exclusive licence to reproduce the thesis and make the thesis public

I, Mariia Kornietska

1. grant the University of Tartu a free permit (non-exclusive licence) to reproduce, for the purpose of preservation, including for adding to the DSpace digital archives until the expiry of the term of copyright, my thesis

Sound Mediation of Memory: Sound Monuments as Counter-Monumental Forms

supervised by Tiit Remm

2. I grant the University of Tartu a permit to make the thesis specified in point 1 available to the public via the web environment of the University of Tartu, including via the DSpace digital archives, under the Creative Commons licence CC BY NC ND 4.0, which allows, by giving appropriate credit to the author, to reproduce, distribute the work and communicate it to the public, and prohibits the creation of derivative works and any commercial use of the work until the expiry of the term of copyright.

3. I am aware of the fact that the author retains the rights specified in points 1 and 2.

4. I confirm that granting the non-exclusive licence does not infringe other persons' intellectual property rights or rights arising from the personal data protection legislation.

author's signature 14/01/2025