

ACOUSMA
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The world is an abundance of landscapes. As I amble along within it, the spheres drawn by my senses constantly change. These spheres become my perceptual universes. The brain manages these spheres with habit: What will be carried into consciousness and what will not? From countless signs of perception that are tangible, visible, audible, scentable and tasteable an image forms, woven with inconsistencies, their edges seldom intersecting. For instance, the scent of a sewer can envelop buildings of exquisite architecture. Or the boundless, serene meadows can be pierced by the roar of the highway.

Acousma is primarily concerned with noise. What is noise? At best, it is ignored; more often than not, it is disturbing. I hear it, but I don't listen to it; I brush it off, pretending it's nonexistent. If a landscape is the variegated existence of everything stretching outwardly in an "objective" manner, my body creates a "subjective" panorama around a center of attention. Everything outside of this center is noise. Yet, noise is skilled. From time to time, it manages to breach this barrier and become the center of attention. It has the power to overshadow every kind of sign regime that has been tamed into information, such as language or music.

In *Acousma*, Doğa Ünyaylar delves into the noise, the powers of sound, and the murmurs of the city and the body. Here, sound is not merely a medium; it is the protagonist. It is energetic; it spreads by clashing through vibrating molecules. Yes, the ears are its primary receptors, but my flesh, my bones, and my blood also "hear" it. This is a quality that neither sight, taste, touch, nor smell possess. The sound resonates, quaking through my body, echoing through my organs. At a party, as I dance, the thumping bass from the speakers matches the pulse of my lifeblood. I feel the blood flow split between my heart and the speakers. Or when I'm stuck in the midst of heavy traffic, waiting at a bus stop, the city's noises do not just fill my ears. The impatient honks of weary drivers, the roaring of engines, the mechanical sounds from a nearby construction, and the distant melodies by a street musician, all echo in my bones.

The body is a black box. It not only absorbs the surrounding sounds but compresses, expands, and re-emits them. Moreover, it produces its own sounds: its organs are noisy, sometimes it sings, sometimes it keeps a beat. It responds audibly to the sounds around it, joining the resonating and humming chorus with its whispers, steps, melodies, and sometimes screams. In *Acousma*, we deal not only with the hearing ear but also with the body that produces sound, that black box-body which makes the suppressed sounds audible with what it absorbs and emits. Were these sounds truly heard? Are they outside or inside the head? Along with the artist, we comprehend the vibrations of reality's membrane. In this place where the body merges with the landscape, we partake in this dispersing, buzzing, humming chorus.

Sound is extensive. It comes into being by occupying various materials and occupying volumes, stirring and setting them in motion. *Acousma* is primarily an auditory landscape, but not limited to it. It conceives of the extensive existence of sound within a visual landscape too. Yet here, what is audible and what is visible intertwine rather than compete, leaving behind the millennia-old vision-centered thinking of the intellectual tradition. This is neither about achieving harmony nor one medium representing the other. Rather, it is about realizing, as emphasized by the art practice woven by Doğa Ünyaylar between the two mediums, that the layers of the sensible are always interlaced. My senses, operating samely in a crowded bar in the heart of the city and in my home shower, co-create worlds that never fully overlap but do intersect.

Yet, sound conveys untamed affects. Regrettably, we've long inhabited a world where the meaningful is esteemed, where the primary objective is to filter out elements that do not derive any meaning from any signal flow: "War against noise." Sound has increasingly become synonymous with language and music, that is, with sequences reduced to meaningful units (phonemes or tonal or harmonic notes). All our technoscience and gadgets aim to eradicate noise from signals. Battling noise evolves metaphorically into an ideology encompassing all endeavors. A desire for sterility, for auditory monotony... This is a cynicism that merely wants things to go on as they are, seeking to make any encounter and experience impossible. *Acousma*, however, confronts this cynic auditory regime with the untamed affects of sound. These affects are not meaningful, but that doesn't render them nonsensical. Meaning is formed by placing sound into phonemic or tonal relationships based on intention, by extracting linguistic sentences or musical melodies from it. The meaning is the reduction of the plurality of senses to a single sense. However, *Acousma*'s soundscape opens the audience to the plurality of senses of sound. Here, sense lies in the impacts that the untamed affects of sound create in the body. To think about the event of hearing, which involves not just the ear – an alloy of flesh, bone, and blood – but also other bodily organs; to think of this auditory event that occurs between the vibrating volumes and the counter-vibrating surfaces of the body in its own multiplicity of senses: All the overlapping sounds encompassing the city are sensical, and the cacophony they form together is also sensical. Cacophony is polyphony: the unorchestrated polyphony of the city. As a sonic art installation, *Acousma* becomes an expedition into the equivocal and polyphonic universe of sound.

Then again, this caco/polyphony does not just begin and end with the physical presence of noise. The affects I'm exposed etch their traces upon my body. They are recorded upon the surfaces and depths of the body that unfold like tape, and especially in the ear. For sound is not only extensive, it is also intensive. It is intensive because it is violent, it is a force. It is not a passive material to be formed, it is a formative power. When I finally make my way home at night, my ears insist on responding to it. They ring as a response to the city's polyphony, as I find myself alone with its phantoms. The rhythms that move my body throughout the night are replaced by echoes that make my soul, in search of serenity, dance.

Doğa Ünyaylar's *Acousma* invites us to pay attention to the sounds of the city, and of the body. This play of compression-expansion, suppression-emergence, and absorption-emission of sounds, lies before us as a sonic experience that will vibrate our bodies.

Some terms for *Acousma*

Acousma: Auditory hallucinations that can manifest as ringing, buzzing, whispering, and even speech or melodies in the ears. Like all other types of hallucinations, it boasts a rich variety.

Noise: In physics, it is defined as a non-periodic complex sound; a combination of sound waves of different frequencies that are not in harmonic relations with each other. An unwanted and distracting sound that also has the potential to be harmful.

Soundscape: The auditory environment resulting from multiple sound sources and environmental interactions. The construction of a soundscape can be defined as the identification of distinct sounds specific to the studied area, independent of positive or negative judgments, in addition to disturbance by noise. Sonic art also produces soundscapes, assessing the disturbance caused by noise as well as the cumulative effect of different sounds specific to the analyzed site.

Sonic Art: While having sound as its primary medium, sonic art also encompasses visual forms such as graphic notation, oscilloscopic translation of sound, experimental performance, sound architecture, and body art. Practices of sonic art are based on the intentional and active listening of the produced sound by the audience.