

PAOLA LOPREIATO
University of Plymouth

Analysis of noise as a way of understanding emotion and making an installation. Reflection on phenomenological, parametric, inner and outer world meeting and becoming audible.

Abstract

This paper is centred on the idea that from the analysis and interpretation of data from the crowd noise (at historical and engaging events) it is possible to define the manifestation of extroversion of people's perceptions and emotions. What I seek to reveal in my artistic research is not the conjugation of perceptions and emotions for individual participants but rather the collective feeling, that energy that connects and refines the involvement of individuals and creates from it a new and indivisible whole: a collective perception and sentiment that in the multi-layering of noise finds its full manifestation. Crowd noise therefore represents the synthesis of this unique collective emotion, a psychological and physical synergic experience channelling its force, energy and form into a distinctive event that is noise itself. What I am investigating is the sum, neutralization, enrichment and suppression of the constitutive elements of the emotion experienced by participants in an event, and noise "as a register of the intensity of relationships" between them. Showing and describing an event, its sensations and atmosphere, or the perceptions and emotions of a moment, is impossible. The question of how emotions emerge, how mental and physical perception is stimulated by our senses or how consciousness develops is unanswerable; what it is possible to show as an artist is what happens in the middle, what lies between the lines, within the fabric of events, what one grasps and realizes from the exploration of what is in the involuntary traces that the experience itself leaves behind.

Keywords: phenomenology, emotion, parametric, noise, energy.

Showing and describing an event, its sensations and atmosphere, or the perceptions and emotions of a moment, is impossible. The question of how emotions emerge, how mental and physical perception is stimulated by our senses or how consciousness develops is unanswerable; what it is possible to show as an artist is what happens in the middle, what lies between the lines, within the fabric of events, what one grasps and realizes from the exploration of what is in the involuntary traces that the experience itself leaves behind.

Art as mimesis of nature, can only be an expression of our inner reality of our condition as "thinking beings", each carrying its own world, its own universe from which we can not escape, that we can not ignore, to which we are inspired, and from which we draw our every gesture, any moment of our consciousness, each of our senses. As artist and researcher I think it's important to direct the observation in depth and thus be able to observe and grasp that fine line that combines the logical dimension to a gesture of poetry, to the inner vibration able to understand a truth hidden in the folds of happening of reality. All that we can possibly know or reach of the world of experience lives in our bodies and in our psyches that is our world, the only possible world. What it does not belong in this liminal space between body and mind is totally invisible to us, unattainable, we might even say non-existent. It appears so immanent the extraordinary

coincidence between all that exists and our consciousness, our psyches, our thoughts and bodies. The universe, as we know it, is completely an expression of our own being.

From this concept comes the idea of my research that from the analysis and interpretation of data from an analogic event, a phenomenon (an historical and engaging occasion) it is possible to define the manifestation of a collective emotional state. This is possible because as I said the universe, as we know it, is completely an expression of our own being. Therefore a physic thing such as noise as we hear it can be the manifestation of people collective emotion. This is what I state in my research but noise of course, as Hillel Schwartz says in the book *Making noise*, can be the manifestation of this emotion and many other things as well, in fact noise can express many relationships:

Crinkle of candy wrappers or yipping of coyotes, low-frequency hum or high-energy hoopla, noise is never so much a question of the intensity of sound as of the intensity of relationship: between deep past, past and present, imagined or experienced; between one generation and the next, gods or mortals; between country and city, urb and suburb; between one class and another; between the sexes; between Neanderthals and other humans (Schwartz H, 2011, pp. 20-21)

For me noise, a physic analogical event, represents the synthesis of a unique collective emotion, a psychological and physical synergic experience channelling its force, energy and form into a distinctive event that is noise itself. What I am investigating is the sum, neutralization, enrichment and suppression of the constitutive elements of the emotion experienced by participants in an event, and noise “as a register of the intensity of relationships” between them. I think that data extracted from analysis of crowd noise can provide the guidelines that will determine the structure of an installation and will help me create and define the component parts of it. I believe that through analysis and interpretation of data from the “external physical world” it is possible to reveal the manifestation of the extroversion of the crowd's own perceptions and emotions.

To create an installation from physical event represent an attempt to name the emotion and reveal the collective sentiment compressed into the analogic signal, into the crowd noise, and to give it my own formal definition. I believe that the properties Merleau Ponty attributes to thought and the object, can also be ascribed to emotion:

A thought limited to existing for itself, independently of the constraints of speech and communication, would no sooner appear than it would sink into the unconscious, which means that it would not exist even for itself. To Kant's celebrated question, we can reply that it is indeed part of the experience of thinking, in the sense that we present our thought to ourselves through internal or external speech. It does indeed move forward with the instant and, as it were, in flashes, but we are then left to lay hands on it, and it is through expression that we make it our own. The denomination of objects does not follow upon recognition; it is itself recognition. When I fix my eyes on an object in the half-light, and say: 'It is a brush', there is not in my mind the concept of a brush, under which I subsume the object, and which moreover is linked by frequent association with the word 'brush', but the word bears the meaning, and, by imposing it on the object, I am conscious of reaching that object. As has often been said, for the child the thing is not

known until it is named, the name is the essence of the thing and resides in it on the same footing as its colour and its form (Merleau-Ponty M., 1978, p. 117)

To design an art piece is to some extent an attempt to translate collective emotion into a physical form, giving it a face and a name, or better, making it recognisable. In my personal experience and research for example the collective emotion already has a physical form in the signal itself, in noise, but is an enigmatical form, or rather symbolic, the emotion is expressed through the superimposition or compression of a multitude of elements which cannot be encoded on initial listening. The physical event, the signal is thus the synthesis of an inner state, but is a compressed file that I will first analyse and deconstruct so that this state (which in its original context could be defined as subliminal) can be made visible and readable, and then converted into concrete form, into an installation.

In my research I observe phenomena of reality and from the contemplation of it I develop a survey and an understanding to offer to the public. Contemplation is not synonymous with passivity, but rather a conscious mode of seeing; mode that obviously not to be random needs technological means and precise investigative strategies. The samples that I decide to analyse are the symbolic representation, indeed as the Greek origin of the word symbol (*syn-ballein*: put together, melt), noise represents the con-fusion and contemporaneity of multiple components. Extrapolating the data (the constituent elements of the crowd noise) enables me to implement a process of dismemberment (*dia-ballein*: divide), which is the only way to encode the emotion contained in a complex signal, and by mediating it in this way present the code to the audience in an understandable form. So my artistic process and art in general is a way to mediate reality, to go from pure phenomenological experience to comprehension, to conceptualization and understanding passing through the creation and the use of a language.

Art is the experience of expression, of communication, of sharing, therefore art is crucial toward an investigation of the mechanisms that constitute the thinking, logic and rationality and the expression of the inner emotional world or the expression and comprehension of lived reality. As the knowledge of the brain and body, their structures, their operations can be a way for the understanding of certain aspects of the art, it is extremely interesting to see in art a potential tool for the investigation of the functioning of our mind, nervous system, body and perception. The focus of my investigation as artist is the analysis of the dialogue between perceptual and emotional experience and the unified and shared experience of exteriority and interiority through physical occurrences and phenomena.

Phenomenological events evoke, contain emblematically and incomprehensibly an emotion, but to fix the impression that it generates from experience, to bring out the existence of a feeling becomes necessary to name it and give it an image through the artistic language, in order to reconstruct what is lost in the phenomenological experience and its symbolism. The method Hermann Usener use to rebuild what is lost is the name, while Aby Warburg used the image, in

both cases what the philologist and historian tried to do as well as all artists and myself is to give life and substance to something:

Of Usener, Warburg adopts the method with which to rebuild what has been lost. The function that for Usener has the name in the second (Warburg) is taken from the image: either it is the attribution of a life, the personification of a phenomenon through its "anthropomorphisierende Projektion" [anthropomorphizing projections] (SH 264) and the fixing of the impression aroused from it. Consequently name and image become elements with which distance themselves from the unknown force that Warburg calls "evocation", that is not direct manifestation of that vital movement that the arts will fix in the representation ("das festhalten der Bilder des Lebens bewegten" [fix the images of life in movement] cfr. A. Warburg, Botticellis Venusbilder, in the WGS 54) (Vivaldi, 2011)

Artistic research is an hope to open up new scenarios where "being thrown in the representation", lost in the chaos, you are accompanied by the possibility of "a look from farther away, a look suspended in the depths of meaning.

"Seeing is already a creative process that requires much effort" ... this intuition that Henri Matisse wrote (well ahead of scientists) in some way, explains the role of the brain and body in the process of perception / creation of reality. The vision is therefore an active process just as are our other perceptual activities. The profound bond that combines different dimensions such as logic, mind, language, perception, reality, corporeity, rationality, it is in the substance of the psyche and the body at the same time and which is nothing but the shared humus where all the human energies find their origin, their expression, and their reality. That is how those dimensions overlap with what belongs to the sphere of human emotions, feelings: they coincide because they are all elements of the same substance, that unity that "in der welt" (being in the world) as Heidegger says which is no merely consciousness and on the other hand is not just flesh. There is a profound emotion in our existence when body and consciousness resonates, when are waken up in front of something that become aware of or which existence unexpectedly is perceived and art is an important way of making this resonance possible.

References

- Merleau-Ponty M., *Phenomenologie de la perception* (1945, tr. Eng. *Phenomenology of perception*, Routledge & kegan Paula, New Jersey, 1978)
- Schwartz H., *Making noise, from babel to the bog bang & beyond*, zone books, Brooklyn NY, 2011
- Valentina Vivaldi, *Aby Warburg: Grundlegende bruchstücke zu einer pragmatischen Ausdruckskunde*

Paola Lopreiato

Via del madonnone n°5, Florence, 50136, Italy

paolalopreiato@hotmail.com

www.paolalopreiato.com

Contributor Biography

Paola Lopreiato is a PhD student in New Media Art at the University of Plymouth (Planetary Collegium), her research interests include the multisensoriality, electronic and computer technology, acoustic, interactions between gesture, image, sound and word. She received an MPhil in Multimedia composition from University of Sheffield. Her recent work has been exhibited in: SANTARCANGELO39, 7 stanze in cerca di autore in MANTOVA, Marino Marini Museum Piazza della Signoria Firenze, Festival della Creativita Palazzo Strozzi Firenze. Also exhibited in UK University of Chester, University of Bournemouth, Sheffield Drama Studio, Belfast SARC, in USA SEAMUS 2011 and 2012, New York City Electro acoustic Music Festival 2010, 2011, 2013 and 2014, NYU, Stedman Art Gallery NJ, Rutgers University, in Greece Corfu Academia Yonica, Kefalonia ICAC gallery and the Athenian I-Club; in Mexico Fonoteca National 2011, in Slovenia Ljubljana ICMC 2012, in Australia Perth ICMC 2013, Rio de Janeiro August 2014 CAC4, Istanbul Halka project october 2014, Johannesburg South Africa December 2014 Fak'ugesi conference, Plymouth Undivided mind conference, Portugal Obras foundation. She also teaches at the conservatory of Perugia and Bologna. (www.paolalopreiato.com)