BACKROOM

SOMA²
6.9. – 9.11.2024

Ludwig Berger

As part of SOMA, artist Ludwig Berger presents a series of three works that invite us into the soundscapes of melting glaciers, photosynthesizing plants, and vibrational communication of insects. Through the performative practice of field recording Berger creates soundscapes that open new perspectives on landscapes, climate change and mass species extinction.

Collective listening sessions
with Ludwig Berger
Fr, 6.9.2024, 19:00
Fr, 4.10.2024, 17:30
Thu, 10.10.2024, 17:30
Fr, 1.11.2024, 17:30
Fr, 29.11.2024, 17:30

Ludwig Berger (1986, Zurich/Montreal) is a landscape sound artist, musician and educator. In his compositions, installations and performances, he enables intimate and playful sonic encounters with plants, animals, buildings and geological entities. In his musical work, Berger produces sonic eco-fictions with processed and synthetic sounds. He studied electroacoustic composition at the University of Music Weimar and Musicology, Art History and Literature at the University of Eichstätt. He also holds a teaching certificate from the Center For Deep Listening. As a sound researcher and teacher at the Institute for Landscape Architecture at ETH Zurich from 2015-2022, Berger studied the sonic dimension of Japanese gardens, alpine glaciers and urban landscapes. He has composed sound and music for award-winning films and theatre pieces and curates the landscape sound festival Sonic Topologies and the experimental music label Vertical Music.

SOMA 2024/2025

We listen in order to interpret our world
and experience meaning
– Pauline Oliveros

Sound is a powerful medium. It's omnipresent. It has a material-affective power of socio-cultural and political significance. How do you listen? When do you really hear?

Nested in the BACKROOM of KRONE COURONNE, SOMA is a vibrating listening platform that will accommodate the practice and research of sound artists through 2024/2025. Built as a result of curator Kristina Grigorjeva's research that investigates the emancipatory and transformative potential of different listening practices, SOMA invites to listen, linger, vibrate and hear collectively in a shared, plural, response-able and care-full context.

SOMA is about a relational way of hearing the world. In a text referring to Audre Lorde's "The Masters tools will never dismantle the Master's House" (1984), sound anthropologist Steven Feld suggests that we need to develop a different set of tools in order to listen to (as opposed to merely hearing) signs and signifiers, songs and birds and insects in a relational practice that performs a sonic phenomenology of the forest we are part of; through touch, smell and sound. Sounding as a "listening with". SOMA is listening as a transformative social practice and an attempt at an "auto-decolonization" through sounding, borrowing Salome Voegelin's call for "uncurating", following Sarah Ahmed's reading of social relations in Queer Phenomonology and taking lessons from Pauline Oliveros' Quantum Listening–from the somatic, interceptive to the social body.

The exhibition is supported by:
Migros Culture Percentage, GVB-Kulturstiftung
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Vibroscape of Hochmoor Gais, 2023
with Juan José López Díez
10 min
Laser-doppler vibrometer recordings

These insect substrate-borne vibrations were recorded with laser doppler vibrometers from local plants in a wet meadow located in Gais, Switzerland. Laser vibrometers are able to detect the vibrational signals emitted by insects that travel through the surface of the plants in the meadow. Over 20 different insect signals were documented during the field study, but only two local insects could be identified by the signals they produced – Aphropora major (a froghopper) and Sorhoanus assimilis (a leafhopper). Although their exact identity can not be determined, the assumption is that many of these signals belong to the Auchenorryncha suborder of insects, known for their vibrational communication.

The signals, emanating from the vibrational interactions within the local vibroscape, were extracted from 150 hours of recorded material collected over the course of three days in August 2023. The research of vibroscapes in nature is rather recent and this was the first time that an alpine meadow was recorded. All recordings made on site by Juan José López Díez, National Institute of Biology, Slovenia

Crying Glacier, 2023
10 min
Hydrophone and microphone recordings

In June 2023, Berger embedded underwater microphones in the crevasses of the Morteratsch Glacier in the Bündner Alps to document its rapid retreat. A variety of sounds can be heard in the glacier: the flow of subsurface melt streams, abrupt ice movements, falling debris, dripping meltwater—but most of all complex rhythms and melodies of escaping air bubbles. Its diverse voices react immediately to every subtle difference in temperature and can be intuitively grasped and physically felt. An empathetic listening might create special kind of connection to the glacier, which no longer appears as passive matter but as a geological person.

From these recordings, Berger created a montage that depicts the unique sound profile of the glacier as it was at the time. These recordings are part of a long-term audiovisual documentation project of the glacier's rapid retreat, that initiated at the Institute of Landscape Architecture of ETH Zurich in 2015.

Photosynthetic Beats - Utricularia vulgaris, Marais des Pontins, 2023
10 min
Hydrophone and microphone recording

On a too-hot summer day in the Swiss Jura, Ludwig Berger was listening to bog ponds with an underwater microphone. Beneath the surface lay swarming tapestries of submerged greenery bathed in sunlight. These were the aqueous cradle of oscillations essential to our world.

As aquatic plants photosynthesize, they release oxygen bubbles from their stems and leaves. The moment of release creates myriads of extremely short sound pulses, resulting in ever-changing polyrhythms stemming from different parts of the plant. At a particularly high frequency, the pulses become continuous tones. From these sounds, one can deduce if and how strongly the plant is converting CO2 to oxygen. This depends on light and temperature, but is also affected by contaminants, fertilizers or pesticides.

In this pond recording, the hydrophone was placed close to a common bladderwort (Utricularia vulgaris), a carnivorous aquatic plant. To emphasize the microscopic processes and polyrhythms of the plants, these recordings were saturated, equalized and dynamically processed. Yet they remain unedited and unchanged in their temporality. The recordings were made at the residence of la dépendance in St. Imier in July 2022 and released as vinyl at forms of minutiae, 2023.

Text by Pablo Diserens