

Call for Papers: Annual Conference of the Work Group Auditive Kultur und Sound Studies of the Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft (GfM) from September 7 to 9, 2023 at the Hochschule der Künste in Bern

SONIC ARCHITECTURES

Sound architectures form the foundation of musical listening and auditory (media) cultures. In a sonic inflection of the Spatial Turn, which brought space into focus as a (new) object of analysis in cultural studies in the late 1980s, the Sonic Architectures conference is dedicated to interdisciplinary contexts – from the architectural, technical and acoustic design of sound spaces on the one hand to musical sound architectures on the other. Space as a central parameter of contemporary composition fundamentally changes not least the concept of sound space itself.

A cultural history of listening rooms does not exist as such, but a long tradition of corresponding architectural designs does. The spectrum ranges from the amphitheatres of Greece to churches and all kinds of concert halls to club culture and the virtual spaces of the digital. The multiple superpositions of loudspeaker-generated and computed sound spaces enable new acoustic dimensions of virtual and non-Euclidean geometries.

Until the crisis of late Romanticism, the concept of space in music primarily referred to the architecture of tonal intervals in the symbolic of the score, which had to be designed compositionally long before the real-sounding aural spaces. In modernism, the boundaries between space and sound design, between sound space and spatial sound, have become increasingly blurred. With electroacoustic music, an emancipation of spatial manifestations finally takes place. It is no longer bound to special performance venues such as churches or concert halls; once recorded, it can be heard anywhere. Thus, new forms emerge that make use of the staging and interaction of sounds generated in the studio in nature, in galleries, factory halls, and in urban city spaces, and as such acoustically survey places and landscapes.

Spatial sound installations developed into art forms in their own right from the 1960s onwards, and were first referred to as sound art in the early 1980s. The technologies used were examined in particular for their artistic connectivity of bodies and digital algorithms. Multi-channel immersive processes such as ambisonics, wave field synthesis, and techniques in 3D audio offered new aesthetic approaches and became an integral part of musical design across genres. At the end of the 20th century, technical interfaces and their interconnection with artworks became the focus of spatial sound art works.

Today, art under the sign of spatial sound and sound space increasingly takes place in the virtual spaces of the Internet. In this context, we are increasingly interested in phenomena that are strongly anthropologized with the metaphors of artificial intelligence and machine learning. Computers can be trained by these techniques to learn and reproduce sounds, to simulate sound spaces and make them immersively tangible. In the black boxes of these programs, virtual sound worlds are created that no longer need to bear any relation to the real.

Guiding the conference are the histories, technologies, and aesthetics of sonic architectures between all these poles. We welcome proposals for topics from the whole range of sound studies, music, media and cultural studies as well as science and technology studies. In keeping with the thematic openness of the call, we would like to explicitly encourage proposals for formats other than the classic conference lecture. We welcome audio papers and sound lectures as well as workshop-oriented, experimental formats.

The following formats are available for the presentation of audio examples:

- Lecture hall: stereo 2.1, without discrete LFE channel; approx. 50 seats
- Multi-function room: 8.2 channel rectangle (Meyer Sounds), 16.2 channel on two levels (8 Meyer above + 8 Genelec 1029 center on stands, freely positionable); approx. 50 seats
- Seminar room: 12.2 channel mini-dome, 8.2 on the floor freely positionable / 5.1 / 7.1 / Auro 3d 5.4.1 (standard format 5.1 with 4 height speakers) or free combinations thereof; approx. 20 seats
- Studio control room: 5.1, can also be used flexibly as 2.1, 4.1, in stereo with subwoofer but without discrete LFE channel. Sweetspot relatively small with approx. 6 people; approx. 12 seats.

Student Panel

The conference asks about the connection between sound and architecture, about methods and approaches of researching and thinking about dynamic sound spaces. A holistic survey of the state of research on real and virtual spaces as well as a look into their future is not conceivable in the absence of student voices. For this reason, there will be a Student Panel at the conference, which, however, intends to be less a scholarly survey than a venue for space-specific approaches that do research not only about sound spaces but also, and more importantly, with, through, and on such spaces.

Format as well as content of the presentation are up to the presenters. Unfinished projects and (spatial) experiments are also welcome. Possible topics include discourses such as spatial sound movement, virtual and non-euclidean spatial sound models, genre conceptualizations, de-localized sound spaces, spatial practices of sound and/or music production, etc.

Submission

We kindly ask you to submit abstracts (approx. 300 words, including a short personal statement and the intended audio examples) for the Student Panel as well as for the general program to sonicarchitecture@gmx.ch. Abstracts should also identify the format of the proposed contribution (see above). **Deadline for submission is 15.04.2023.** The general conference language is German. However, we are also happy to receive submissions in English and would like to enable active participation also for non-German speaking participants.

Organization

Study Program Sound Arts and the Institute Interpretation of the Hochschule der Künste Bern
Michael Harenberg und Martin Skamletz

Work Group Auditive Kultur und Sound Studies of the Gesellschaft für Medienwissenschaft
Anna Schürmer und Maximilian Haberer

