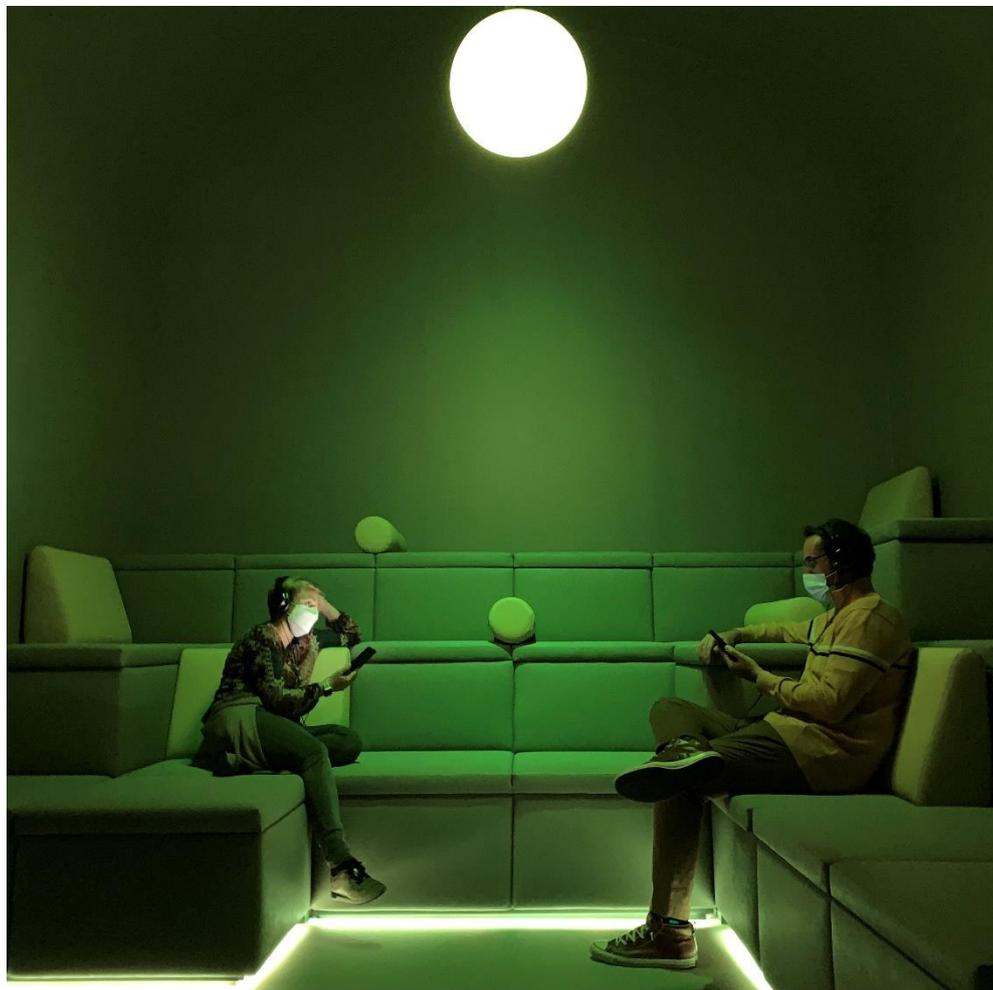


## **Audiosphere. Sound Experimentation 1980-2020**



**AUDIOSPHERE. SOUND EXPERIMENTATION 1980-2020**  
Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía. October 2020  
Photo credit: Alex Moltó. Archive of Museo Reina Sofía

**DATES:** October 14, 2020 / February 15, 2021

**LOCATION:** Museo Reina Sofía (Madrid). Sabatini Building 3rd floor

**ORGANIZATION:** Museo Nacional Centro de Arte Reina Sofía

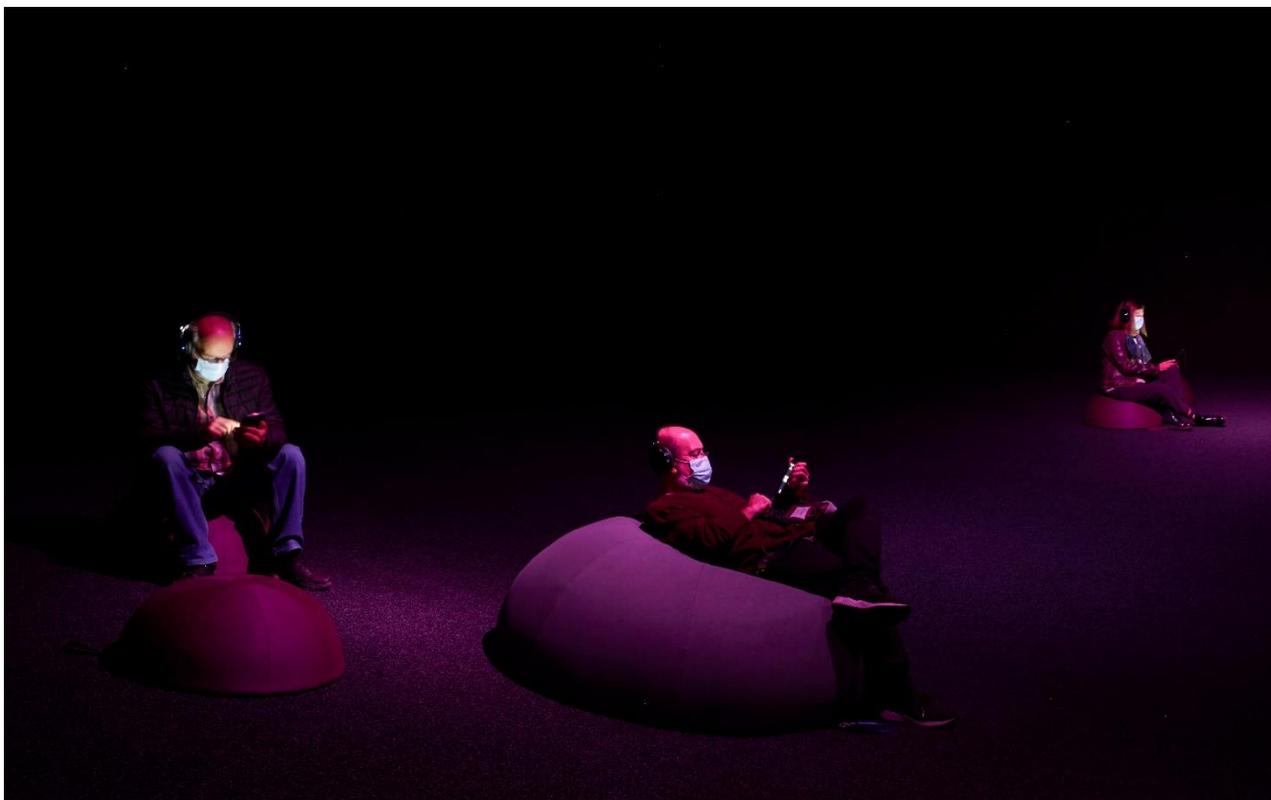
**CURATORSHIP:** Francisco López

**COORDINATION:** Rafael García

***Audiosphere. Sound Experimentation 1980-2020*** is an exhibition with **no objects or images**, which aims to show the vast and dynamic **universe of experimental audio in the last 40 years**. Curated by **Francisco López**, the show includes more than **700 sound pieces** by around **800 artists from all over the world**. It is the **first exhibition** with these characteristics, focusing solely on the **aural experience of the listener**.

The show, rather than being chronologically organized, is structured by seven thematic sections that explore the essential creative changes in experimental audio since 1980. The visitor is immersed in a singular sensory experience in a special setting, thanks to high definition headphones and a mobile device with an incorporated app that allows the listener to explore sound pieces by **Anne Gillis, Juan Crek, Alva Noto, Esplendor Geométrico** or **Víctor Nubla**, among many others. 21 completely new creations, such as those by **Barbara Ellison, Eric LaCasa, James Webb, Ryoji Ikeda** or **Olivia Block**, have been specifically commissioned for the exhibition.

***Audiosphere*** is part of a set of exhibitions that Museo Reina Sofía has organized with the aim of studying and showing the importance of sound as an artistic medium and its interconnections with visual arts, which also includes: ***Disonata. Art in Sound until 1980*** and ***Niño de Elche. Invisible Auto Sacramental: A Sonic Representation from Val del Omar***.



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## An innovative exhibition design

The use of the most advanced technology has been essential to shape the visitor's experience in **Audiosphere**. A special exhibition set-up has been designed that invites attentive and deep listening, where the visitor can comfortably delve into the sound creations moving between sections. In order to listen to the sound pieces, a mobile application has been specifically designed for the exhibition, with which the listener is able to select tracks, look at the exhibition map or adjust the sound volume of the high-definition headphones provided at the entrance.

The use of geolocation technology is essential for the exhibition experience, as it allows the visitor to listen to the sound pieces of each section (around 70, of varying duration) freely or through a guided tour. An introductory voice recording is activated at the beginning of each of the 7 areas thanks to beacons (small indoor location devices that use Bluetooth low-consumption technology) that track the user's location throughout the exhibition. All this technological system allows the visitors to immerse themselves into a personalized experience adapted to the preferences and needs of everybody.

Using the free app, the visitor can also request to download the exhibition's catalogue in pdf and a personalized selection of the works featured in the show (it is required to listen to more than half of the track in the exhibition space in order to be able to download it).

In the words of the director of the Reina Sofia Museum, **Manuel Borja-Villel**: "By placing listening at the center, the show seeks to transcend the realm of the exhibition and transfigure itself into an experiential space that functions as a gateway to the multiform universe of experimental audio, while allowing visitors to openly and directly interact with its content."

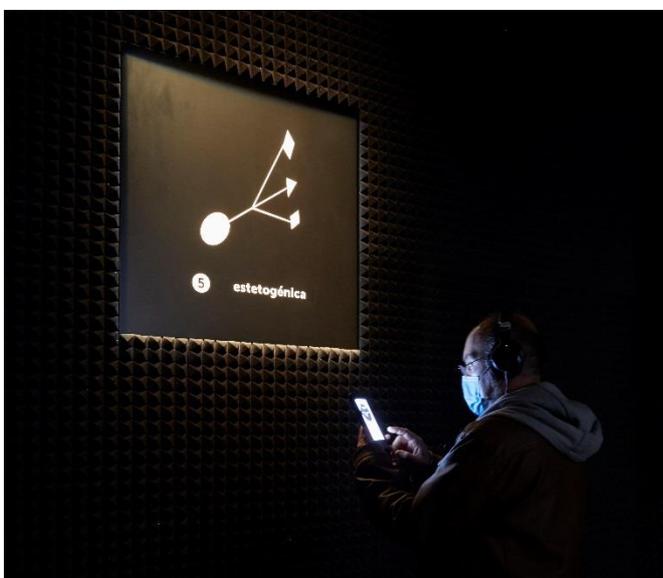


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## An extensive and comprehensive content

Far from being a recent phenomenon, the extensive availability to the artistic conception of experimental sound creation has its origins in the 80s, when massive access to music production and editing tools, such as cassettes or synthesizers, was widespread. However, the irruption of the Internet was a turning point that has facilitated the collective work of artists dealing with sound, its expansion without borders and a greater impact within the current contemporary artistic and cultural fields. The exhibition explores this pre and post internet scenarios through seven thematic sections.

### *Origins of experimental audio and social networks*



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Under the title of **Genealogies**, the first room focuses on the impact of popular culture (rock, pop, punk, electronic) and the use of more or less home-based technologies in the development of experimental audio since the 1980s. Through relevant sound pieces such as *Adrift (Waves)* by **Bethan Kellough** (UK); *Fragment for Balance*, by **Biota** (USA); or *Blanket*, by **Hilary Mullaney** (Ireland), the exhibition shows how the circulation of movements associated with the underground scene, as well as the redefinition of the role of the artist, differentiated from the traditional

musician or composer, are some of the changes to which thousands of sound artists, often unknown, were making contributions.

The next room, **Networks**, shows how social networks are a key element in the origin and development of experimental audio. However, as the curator Francisco López states: “This does not solely refer to the restricted case of the current so-called social media, nor even exclusively to the post-internet world in general. The multiple underground ramifications of post-punk, the so-called industrial music culture, and the global home-music network and cassette culture scenes are prominent and catalyzing pre-internet examples of the more widespread explosion of social experimental audio”. To illustrate this idea some of the available track in this room are fragments of *Attune*, by Japanese artist **Aube** (Akifumi Nakayima); *Ion Wind*, by **Cornucopia** (Jorge Castro and Claudio Chea, from Puerto Rico) or *Sonic Infinity Cruise (3)*, by the Australian artist **Jodi Rose**.

### *Creative technology and cyborgization*

The third room of the exhibition, ***Mega-Accessibility***, focuses on the possibilities that digital technology has offered to the expansion of experimental audio. In the words of Francisco López: “One of the most transformative and yet least recognized processes that has taken place over the past few decades is that of the massive socialization of creative technology”. Current digital tools have made instant exchange between artists a contemporary reality, and it does not seem far-fetched to assert that mega-accessibility has also produced an exponential increase in autonomous agents and broadcasting units. In this room, the visitor can listen to *NO studies #2*, by Spanish artist **Alberto Bernal**; *Image/Négation*, by **Alexandre St-Onge** (Canada); *Only Suggestion*, by **Dominik ‘t Jolle** (Belgium); or *Atmosfera de luz e sombra*, by **Herbert Baioco** (Brasil), among many others.

***Cyborgization*** shows how, with the incorporation of new digital tools, the immediacy and transparency of processes has come to the forefront of the creative experience in sound. In the new techno-cultural reality of experimental audio, the traditional concepts of the instrument and the virtuoso performer have disappeared, and the slate is being wiped clean of all earlier developments. At the same time, the manipulation of software, buttons, potentiometers and trackpads configures a present where cyborgization, or interaction with the machine, is a present-day reality. Some of the tracks available in this room are *Time Dot*, by **Alva Noto** (Carsten Nicolai, Germany); *Etonian*, by **Bruce Russell** and **Luke Wood** (New Zealand); and *One*, by **Chang Yen Tzu** (Taiwan).



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*New movements, creative rights and remixes*

**Aesthetogenics**, the fifth room, shows how the eclecticism of sources and the technological accessibility of experimental audio have fostered the generation of new musical movements at a hitherto unknown pace. Some of the types or subgenres that have been identified are known by names such as “industrial music”, “cassette culture”, “noise music”, “power electronics”, “drone”, “ambient”, “dark experimental”, among many others. Besides their formal or stylistic characteristics, many of these aesthetical movements have given rise to subcultures whose common denominator is a certain rejection of academic endorsement, so that any creator without a formal training but with talent and intuition has a chance to innovate. The examples available in this section include: *I2di-(3)*, by **Darius Čiuta** (Lithuania); *Stardust*, by **Elisabeth Schimana** (Austria); or *Ascendre, A L’Ombre du Vent*, by **Eric LaCasa** (France).



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With works such as *Samparâ*, by **Anonymous Entry** (Janaka Ambalampitiya, Sri Lanka) or *Palm Grove Lagos*, by **Emeka Ogboh** (Nigeria), the next space in the exhibition, **Rights**, addresses the proliferation of creators, a phenomenon that is revolutionizing experimental audio thanks to the democratization of the right to create and a new urge to step away from the production of leaderships and structures.

The exhibition ends with the **Recombination** section, the only room where the sound pieces can be heard without headphones. This space is dedicated to highlighting the importance of mixing or remixing sound materials for the creation of new pieces. Some examples are *Before The Evroremont*, by **Alexei Borisov** (Russia); *The predominance of the symptom*, by **Víctor Nubla** (Spain); or *Vasiliki*, from **Tasos Stamou** (Greece).

## Catalogue

On the occasion of the exhibition, the Museo Reina Sofía is publishing a catalogue in pdf, both in Spanish and English, which includes an extensive essay by the curator, **Francisco López**, as well as texts by other authors: **Thomas Bey**, **William Bailey**, **Margie Borschke**, **Víctor Nubla**, **Luis Alvarado**, **Guy Marc Hinant**, **Salomé Voegelin**, **Caleb Kelly**, **Paul Hegarty**, **Greg Hainge**, **Christoph Cox** or **John Oswald**. In addition, the catalogue contains a checklist of all the works featured in the exhibition with its corresponding link to online information about the artists.

**SANITARY MEASURES:** The mobile device and headphones that are provided to visitors are being properly treated after each use and follow all the necessary hygienic measures.

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