

The Pulse of the Earth and sonification

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Abstract Le Souffle de la Terre/The Pulse of the Earth is an on-going sound work (1996–20–) by the artist L. Abenavoli. She outlines the sonification methods employed in the making of the work in an analysis of its technical and conceptual features. The work is described in terms of her artistic objectives.

Keywords Sound art · Earth art · Sound installation · Interdisciplinarity · Sonification · Art-science

To explore one of my works in terms of sonification, in other words by way of an approach that focuses on the medium and the devices of sound,¹ is to flirt with a mediological approach. Echoing Debray (1991),² who stated, and not without humor, that “when the sage points his finger to the moon, the mediologist looks at his finger”,³ I will focus primarily on means for showing the moon in an exploration of the interests that have guided my work.

As an artist of French-Italian descent, who graduated in Fine Art in France during the 1990s, coming from a culture that is deeply rooted in the visual, one might say that I was not predestined to work one day in the medium of sound.

However, as a young artist, one question dominated my thinking: *which medium could one day enable me to give form to vibration of the world?* As I directed my practice to the investigation of notions of form, representation and matter, sound appeared as a medium that could replace the more tangible media of sculpture and painting, remediating them, as Bolter and Grusin (1999) would say, by renewing a system of representation, whilst, continuing in the lineage of visual arts that are regarded as figurative.

As a sculptor, I very soon realized that *matter was already form*. Accordingly, I set myself the goal of extracting and revealing the inherent form of matter, matter that is vibrating and vital, using techniques for capturing its internal movement. These techniques offered a means of grasping the mute temporality of form in the world—of the Earth, trees, the body, and the cosmos⁴—a means of opening our sensory experience of it through sound.

Le Souffle de la terre/The Pulse of the Earth is emblematic of my research into the nature of form, and specifically, temporal form. It consists of a sound installation that enables audiences to hear the vibrations and fluctuations of the Earth. The form of the sounds varies according to exhibition sites and developments in my artistic research. To experience the work, the public enters an often dimly lit space in which there is a spatial

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¹ Translator’s note: “device” is used to translate the French term of “dispositif”.

² Régis Debray is a French philosopher and essayist, and founder of the neologism and methodology of mediology.

³ The quote is a play on a remark originally attributed to China: “When the sage points his finger to the moon, the idiot looks at his finger”.

⁴ A source of inspiration for the sound works that I have created in recent years.