**Sound Art as Public Art: performing the civic between listening and being audible.**

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In this presentation I will propose that Sound Art, whether gallery based, or site specific, in nature or within the built environment, places us in a very particular way within what Chantal Mouffe considers the ‘democratic paradox’, and what Étienne Balibar calls within the notion of ‘égaliberté’, since it always engages the listener in the agonistic conflict between individual freedom to hear the invisible material in the formless shape of her auditory imagination and the demand of equality, of a collective hearing, that aspires consensus and a shared vocabulary of what that formless form might be.

The ephemeral materiality of sound ignores the boundaries between the realm of the aesthetic and that of the public. It merges aesthetic identity and civic identity, and questions the politics of art, as well as the politics of citizenship. Its invisible mobility thus makes accessible and thinkable a different sense of materiality and subjectivity, belonging and participation: In sound we are listening while being audible; we are performing a civic participation that allows us to consider the dynamic of the democratic paradox whilst constituting its very condition.

I will be discussing this particular interpretation of sound art as a public art in relation to a recent “Kunst am Bau” project (Kleefeld-Klangfeld by Mollin+Voegelin) and will consider how the invisible temporality of sound foregrounds the relationship between the material and architectural

design of an environment and the more ephemeral and often fleeting activity of

socialising and relating as a community; the activities, in other words, with

which a community realises and lives in a built environment and that reveal how

inhabitants and users are influenced by or influence architectural and social givens.