**Preface to Sound Reasons Festival Catalogue, Delhi 2014**

*Forewords*

This is a foreword to listening that tries not to raise expectations nor to pre-empt the heard but to step towards it, gently, ears open, ready to hear what sounds and even the inaudible. This “stepping into the heard” is not only a physical but mostly a mental effort. It is not a geographical or architectural move but a shift into readiness, an abandonment of certain form and good taste, of habits and norms, to hear a fleeting world and fleeting works whose sense and significance do not precede the encounter and cannot be relied upon to judge their worth, which needs to be reached contingently and on the spot.

These ‘forewords’ arise not from an a priori knowledge and significance of language but perform its meditation as sound. Where words do not fulfil pre-existing criteria of structural relations and meaning but incite the primordiality of perception. This primordial perception is not pre-linguistic or immediate, it is not dumb to context, history or reality, but knows of their construction and the political and ideological interests that drive its build.

This linguistic meditation understands that what appears to be beautiful and good is but comfort, the known, the habitual: the cesspit of ideology and the sluggishness of a social drag on which corporate structures build their inequalities. In its stead it tries to open a space to hear process, the unfinished, the unperceived, that which we have no words for yet but which propels meaning and significance beyond the limits of actuality into the realm of the possible – aesthetically and politically.

The works these forewords stand in front of are varied, complex, made of sounds and things, inviting insight into the processes of their recording, installation and performance, and summoning between art and science new perceptions of the same world.

They overtake what is said here to say it themselves through allusion and the shimmer of their ephemeral objects that produce art with sound and without: demanding an engagement with the visible and the invisible, and inciting the imagination of the work and the world between them, granting us an alternative view.

Sound Art is a contested territory, at the margins and at times marginalising itself with a title that cannot encompass the complexity and plurality of its practice but instead expresses its desire for a position within art history rather than a present listening. Sound Arts and Sonic Art are offered up as alternatives. Out of these options I like the plural best. It is closest to doing stuff with sound and accepts a plural listening. It does not succumb to certainty but wobbles a bit, teetering on the brink of its own ephemerality, perched precariously on a plural ‘s’.

And through this wobble, on this uncertain post, we are reminded that the real limits of humanity are not national borders, the edge of the earth, or the vastness of the Universe, but the fact that I am I and you are you and nothing in this world is going to enable us to swap places. Visually this difference is absolute; I can only see you at a distance, however small there must be a gap for me to see your form. Sound ignores this chasm and renegotiates where we meet. Our voices extend beyond our bodies to avoid the gaze and encourage instead a meeting of my passing subjectivity with yours, at a new place, where, between us and away from us, unencumbered by the prejudice of physicality and the weight of the visual, sound demands reciprocity and permits formlessness.

In this passing meeting between me and you, and me and the work, the reciprocity of the world sounds a tune of responsibility and self-determination, deafened ordinarily by the habit of taste and the seduction of form. So I “step into the heard” on uncertain ground, and with a self-conscious wobble I teeter towards listening, to hear not just the work but myself existing reciprocally and as transient subject in the fragile processes of its invisible production that I am at least partly responsible for.

Salomé Voegelin