

L I S T E N I N G SESSION N°8 WITH P A M E L A Z

**EXHIBITION S O N I C G E S T U R E S
OPENING 23.05.2019 19:00
ON SHOW 24.05.-02.06.2019**

**PERFORMANCE O T H E R R O O M S
26.05.2019 19:00**

CURATION Kamila Metwaly
CO-CURATION Marcus Gammel Jan Rohlf
PRODUCTION Beya Othmani Ola Zielinska
COMMUNICATION Jasmina Al-Qaisi Anna Jäger
ARTISTIC DIRECTION Antonia Alampi Elena Agudio Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung
VISUALS Elsa Westreicher Ahmed Isamaldin
MANAGEMENT Lema Sikod Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock
TECH Bert Günther
ART HANDLING Kimani Joseph Willy Mungai

IN COLLABORATION WITH Deutschlandfunk Kultur and CTM Festival
SUPPORT Musicboard Berlin

EXHIBITION: SONIC GESTURES

In her first solo exhibition outside of the US, the renowned composer, experimentalist, sound and media artist Pamela Z will present a sonic exhibition and a solo performance, through which **U N T R A I N I N G T H E E A R** listens to the extra-musicality manifested in her oeuvre.

The four works for voice, video, text and sound, featured in this exhibition (*Sonic Gestures*, *Memory Palace*, *Parts of Speech*, and *Declaratives in the First Person*) focus on the multi-modality of voice. We listen to the uniqueness of Z's voice, her performativity and embodiment, her ability to freestyle across genres. Her work could be described in the manner of George E. Lewis's text *The Virtual Discourses of Pamela Z* (2007)¹ as: "post-genre (and post-racial) experimentalism", one rejecting almost any formal description and detailing, or association to one specific musical tradition, especially classifications based on the Western white male avant-garde music. Pamela Z mentions, for example, that framing her vocal techniques as extended is eurocentric. Referring to Tuvan singers in an interview she says that it is "assumed that using the voice in the Western way is normal and going outside of that is extending it. Tuvan singers do not think of themselves as using extended technique. They are just singing. It kind of reminds me of how our society sees being white and male as the normal thing and everybody else as the exceptions, so that women are just 'extended' men."² The artist's voice, often layered, in delay, chopped, stretched, detuned, compressed, creates dense utterances through which the mind-body nexus, enabled by her own voice, enters a cosmos of exchanges, between the listeners and herself.

Making wild sounds with an external instrument may seem like exerting control over something, while making those sounds with the voice might seem like losing control (i.e., madness, hysteria?). Pamela Z writes in *A Tool is A Tool*³

Pamela Z employs rhythmically spoken and sung words to resist the formality of language. She uses not only her mouth but her whole face and body to produce sounds, recalibrating relationships and boundaries set between the listener and the performer's voice. The sonicity of her gestures is amplified, manipulated and processed electronically through sensor-based gesture-controlled instruments, destabilizing the visitor's relationship to bodily and technological vocalities. Those gestural emissions often perplex the visitor about what is seen and what is heard, offering a way of seeing instigated through listening. The poetic interplay,

of the voice and instrument, hence engages with the contradictions of social perceptions and normative modes of listening.

G.E. Lewis writes that "Pamela Z is part of a generation of women sound artists, including Laurie Anderson, Hildegard Westerkamp, and Sarah Peebles who reassert the human need for exchanging stories in a logocentric culture that has privileged written over oral modes of discourse,"⁴ a generation "that has favored a transient, atemporal notion of space over historical time."⁵ Somehow her manipulation with voice, process of phasing it out and back into the foreground of our hearing spheres, complexifies our common understanding of space and time. One might suggest that her use of digital delays and looping, creates sort of a time machine, moving the act of listening between the controlled and uncontrolled manipulation of her voice and speech, of a personal story and the one narrated. In such musical structures, Pamela Z underscores that in delay listening "begins to either lose its meaning, because the repetition makes it stop sounding like a word, or it starts to take on new meaning, because the layering of it or the repeating of it gives the listener something to chew on and digest."⁶

In this **U N T R A I N I N G T H E E A R** exhibition, the grammars of language, technology and listening are dissected and re-imagined. Proposing an experimental grammar to conduct the visitors movement, and time, within and through the simultaneity of Pamela Z's voice.

PERFORMANCE: OTHER ROOMS

Within the body of the **SONIC GESTURES** exhibition in the framework of **U N T R A I N I N G T H E E A R** series, the composer Pamela Z will unfold the space performing **OTHER ROOMS** – a suite of works for voice, electronics, and video. Following the performance, a discussion between Pamela Z and the scholar Zeynep Bulut will trace the idea of sonic gestures and cross-sensory evocations of voicing in the contexts of immersive, site-specific, interactive and multimedia experiences.

The performance comprises a repertoire of various segments of Pamela Z's works through the years including: *Quatre Couches* (2015), *Flare Stains* (2010), *Typewriter / Declaratives* (1995/2005), *Syrinx* (2003), *Badagada* (1988), *Breathing* (2013), *Unknown Person* (2010), *Sixteen Actions* (2013), *Pool* (2015), *Other Rooms* (2018).

In anticipation of Pamela Z's performance, project your ears and imagination towards unique instances where sounds mix and melt, where the gestures controller triggers typewriter sounds, triggers poems, syllables repeat in silhouettes of rhythms, birdsongs stretched in low and slow, memory and locus are travelled with closed eyes and opened.

Quatre Couches is a sonic mille-feuille – juxtaposing four contrasting layers and manually toying with them – mixing them and moving them around on the plate until they all melt away. *Flare Stains* is a sonic poem on the residue left by emergency flares in which a typewriter uses voice, processing, and typewriter samples (triggered with a gesture controller). *Syrinx* is named for the avian vocal organ. In this little extract from her longer 2004 sound work, a birdsong is pitch-shifted and consequently stretched until its individual notes are slow enough and low enough to be accurately produced by a human voice. In *Badagada*, one of my early digital delay pieces, the syllables "ba-da-ga-da-ga-da-ga-da-ga" are layered in multiple delay lines to form a harmonic, rhythmic accompaniment to a melody sung in English. *Breathing* is a solo version of a movement from a 2013 multimedia chamber work called *Carbon Song Cycle*. *Unknown Person* is an excerpt from *Baggage Allowance*, an intermedia work that scans and inventories the belongings (and memories) we all cart around. *Sixteen Actions* is a work involving live video capture and gesture controlled audio and video samples. *Pool* is a short episode from *Memory Trace*, a full evening solo performance work exploring various aspects of memory. *Other Rooms* is constructed from samples of the speaking voice of Paul David Young taken from an interview Pamela Z recorded as part of the process of making her performance work, *Memory Trace*.

¹ George E. Lewis. *The Virtual Discourses of Pamela Z*, Journal of the Society for American Music 1/1 (2007).
² Kennedy, Kathy. A Few Facets of Pamela Z, MUSICWORKS Interview, 2000, www.pamelaz.com/musicworks.html.
³ Pamela Z. *A Tool is A Tool*, Women, Art, and Technology, The MIT Press, 2003, 349–361.

⁴ Ibid 1.
⁵ Ibid 1.
⁶ Rodgers, Tara. *PamelaZ*, Pink Noises: Women on Electronic Music and Sound. Duke University Press, 2010, 219.

B I O G R A P H I E S

P A M E L A Z is a composer/performer and media artist who works primarily with voice, live electronic processing, sampled sound, and video. A pioneer of live digital looping techniques, she processes her voice in real time to create dense, complex sonic layers. Her solo works combine experimental extended vocal techniques, operatic bel canto, found objects, text, and sampled concrete sounds. She uses MAX MSP and Isadora software on a MacBook Pro along with custom MIDI controllers that allow her to manipulate sound and image with physical gestures. Her performances range in scale from small concerts in galleries to large-scale multimedia works in theaters and concert halls. In addition to her performance work, she has a growing body of inter-media gallery works including multi-channel sound and video installations.

Pamela Z has toured extensively throughout the United States, Europe, and Japan – performing in international festivals including *Bang on a Can* at Lincoln Center (New York); La Biennale di Venezia (Italy); the Interlink Festival (Japan); Other Minds (San Francisco); and Pina Bausch Tanztheater's 25 Jahre Fest (Wuppertal, Germany). She has composed, recorded and performed original scores for choreographers and for film/video artists, and has done vocal work for other composers (including Charles Amirkhanian, Vijay Iyer, and Henry Brant). Her large-scale, multi-media performance works, including *Memory Trace*, *Baggage Allowance*, *Voci*, and *Gaijin*, have been presented at venues like the Kitchen in New York, Yerba Buena Center for the Arts, and Theater Artaud (Z Space) in San Francisco, the Museum of Contemporary Art Theatre in Chicago, as well as at theaters in Washington D.C. and Budapest (Hungary). Her one-act opera *Wunderkabinet* inspired by the *Museum of Jurassic Technology* (co-composed with Matthew Brubeck) premiered at The LAB Gallery in San Francisco, and was presented at REDCAT in Los Angeles and Open Ears Festival in Canada. She has shown media works in exhibitions at the Whitney Museum of American Art (New York); Erzbischöfliches Diözesanmuseum (Cologne); the Tang Museum (Saratoga Springs NY); the Dakar Biennale (Sénégal); Krannert Art Museum (IL), and the Kitchen (NY).

Z has had chamber music commissions from Kronos Quartet, the Bang On A Can All Stars; Ethel String Quartet, the California E.A.R. Unit; the Left Coast Chamber Ensemble; the Empyrean Ensemble, and St. Luke's Chamber Orchestra. She curates and produces *the ROOM Series*, a San Francisco avant-chamber series featuring the work of a variety of virtuosic solo artists and chamber groups playing experimental music. She has collaborated with a wide range of artists including Joan La Barbara, Joan Jeanrenaud, Brenda Way (ODC Dance), Miya Masaoka, Jeanne Finley + John Muse,

Shinichi Iova Koga (Inkboat), Christina McPhee, and Luciano Chessa. She has participated in several New Music Theatre events (including John Cage festivals), and has performed with The San Francisco Contemporary Music Players. Her interactive web-based work *Baggage Allowance* can be viewed at baggageallowance.tv where it is permanently installed.

Pamela Z is the recipient of many honors and awards including the Rome Prize, the Guggenheim Fellowship, the Doris Duke Artist Impact Award, a Robert Rauschenberg Foundation residency, the Herb Alpert Award in the Arts; the Creative Capital Fund; the MAP Fund, the ASCAP Music Award; an Ars Electronica honorable mention; and the NEA Japan/US Friendship Commission Fellowship. She holds a music degree from the University of Colorado at Boulder.

Z E Y N E P B U L U T 's research sits at the intersection of voice and sound studies, experimental music, and sound art. Bulut is a lecturer in music at Queen's University Belfast and visiting research fellow at King's College London. She was a lecturer in music at King's College London and a research fellow at the ICI Berlin. She is sound review editor for *Sound Studies: An Interdisciplinary Journal* and project lead for the collaborative research initiative *Map A Voice*. Her current book project *Building a Voice: Sound, Surface, Skin* theorizes the emergence, embodiment, and mediation of voice as skin. Her articles have appeared in various volumes and journals, including *Perspectives of New Music*, *Post-modern Culture*, and *Music and Politics*. Alongside her scholarly work, Bulut's artistic practice explores voice, singing and songwriting within the context of experimental and popular music, multimedia performance and interactive media art. She has composed and performed music for video and theatre, and exhibited sound works. Her composer profile has been featured by British Music Collection.

WORK DESCRIPTIONS

1 DECLARATIVES IN THE FIRST PERSON 2005 sound installation

Declaratives in the First Person was originally created as a six-channel audio installation for an exhibition entitled *The Art of Artist Statement* at the Hellenic Museum and Cultural Center in Chicago. In response to the exhibition's subject matter, Z sampled her own voice speaking the sentence: "I would like to think that the art itself would be enough of a statement." The text was then cut into fragments, compressed, expanded, and layered in various combinations to build a work that makes its statement as much through timbre and varying densities of texture as it does through language content.

2 PARTS OF SPEECH

Pamela Z's *Parts of Speech* installation grew out of her 1995 radio work and her 1996 performance work (both with the same title) exploring language. The original installation included objects (found and made), projected image, and multi-channel audio segments. Two of its segments appear in this exhibition in conversation with the *S A V V Y .doc*.

2.1. PARTS OF SPEECH 1988 sound installation wall-mounted text and stereo sound
From a larger work of the same name, *Parts of Speech* is an ironic portrait of English language grammar that presents an audible series of randomly generated sentences corresponding with a sentence diagram displayed on the wall. Though meaningless, the sentences are all grammatically correct – playfully challenging the notion that good grammar is the key to effective communication.

2.2. PARTS 1988 sound installation found cloth-bound grammar books four speakers
Parts is a sound piece heard through speakers mounted on small cloth-bound grammars. Each channel of audio contains speech fragments that randomly combine to make ever-shifting sentences. As the four books chatter in concert with one another, they present language as a poetic cloud of sound pulling focus away from the meaning and towards its sonic shape. This work is installed in conversation with the *S A V V Y .doc*, a critical archive which aims to encourage and enable access to rare, unnoticed or ignored documents. *S A V V Y .doc* will install a small selection of books and publications in response to *Parts*, since our bookshelves are home to a multitude of written texts spanning from critical theory to literature, from art magazines to political analysis, from exhibition catalogues to poetry collections. The *S A V V Y .doc* archive is constantly growing in its diversity and complexity.

3 SONIC GESTURES 2007 multi-channel video and sound installation

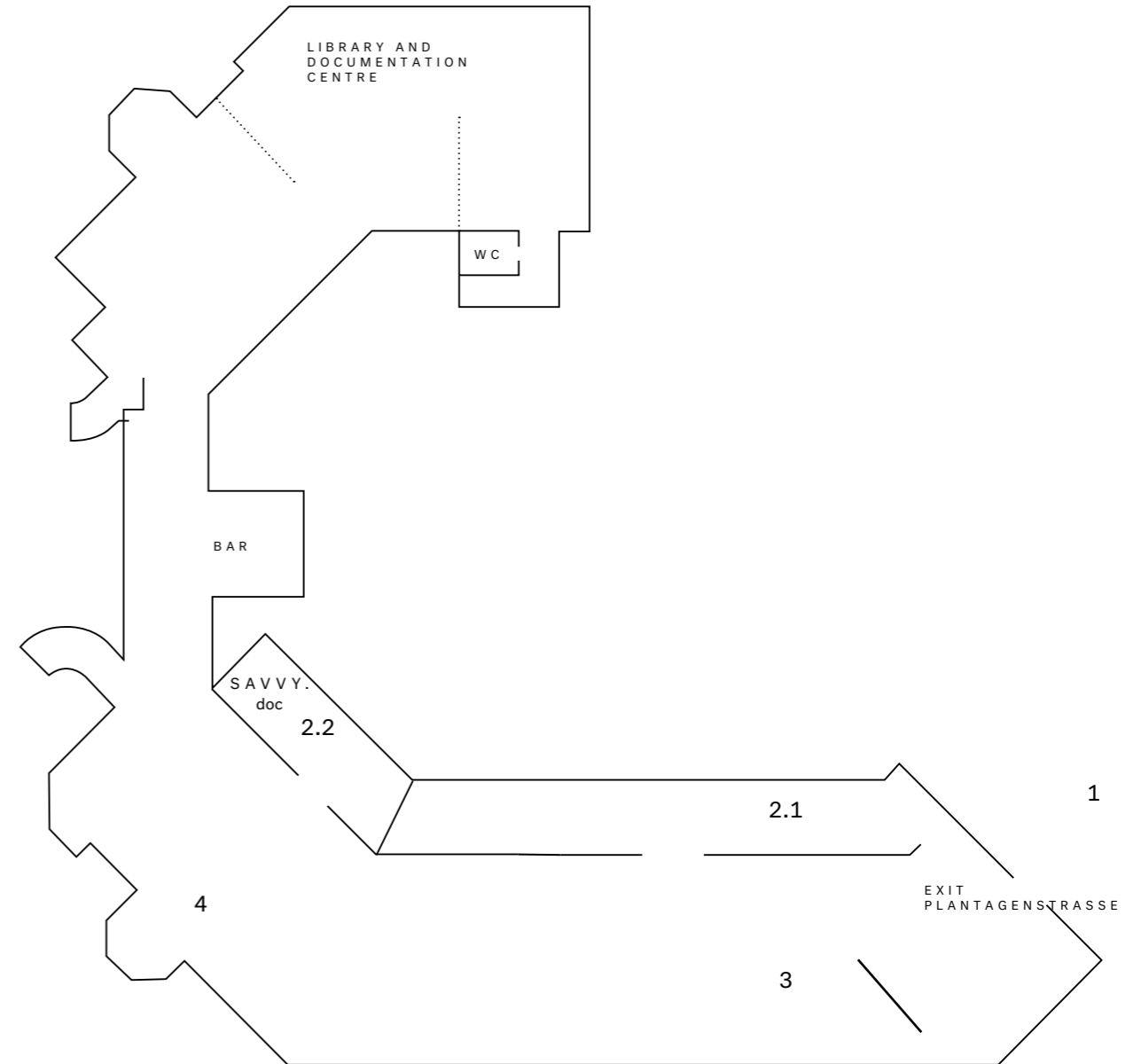
Sonic Gestures is a media installation that was originally created for a 360° immersive environment. It consists of multiple channels of video and audio composed of fragmented gestural images. The work surrounds the audience with a virtual chorus of chattering, whispering, singing, and ever-transforming sonic entities. Having Pamela Z's work respond to our proposal of listening is in essence calling out for plenary communication for our sensed knowledge. The work *Sonic Gestures* was originally commissioned by *NexMap* and premiered for *Recombinant Media Labs* in San Francisco in 2007.

4 MEMORY PALACE (from *Memory Trace*) 2018, six-channel video with stereo sound installation

Taken from a larger, full evening performance work called *Memory Trace*, which explored various aspects of memory through voice and electronics, interactive multi-channel video, sampled text fragments, and gestural movement. In this segment, a questioner interrogates a chorus of alter-egos about their memories and suggests trying the "Memory Palace" technique to aid recollection.

The performance comprised a series of dreamlike sonic and visual episodes of remembering and forgetting. It was first presented in an intimate, black-box theatre space called Royce Gallery, in San Francisco in 2015 and then had a large-scale showing at San Francisco's Yerba Buena Center for the Arts in 2016. Pamela Z says of the work: "I can still remember the time in the early 1990s when I first purchased 'memory'. I delighted in the fact that I could hold it in my hand: a thin, green wafer etched with a lattice of metal lines. And I quickly noticed parallels between the computer's memory and my own. Prone to anthropomorphism, I continue to compare and often confuse the two. I am interested in exploring how humans and computers store memory. How do they 'misplace' information and how do they lose it entirely? How can we differentiate between dreams, 'real' and 'manufactured' memories? How do certain sounds and aromas trigger very old memories?"

FLOOR PLAN



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S A V V Y Contemporary – The laboratory of form-ideas is an art space, discursive platform, place for good talks, foods and drinks – a space for conviviality. S A V V Y Contemporary situates itself at the threshold of notions of the West and non-West, to understand and deconstruct them. S A V V Y Contemporary has realized a kaleidoscope of art exhibitions, performances, film screenings, lectures, concerts, readings, talks, dances. S A V V Y Contemporary has established a participatory archive on German colonial history, a performance arts documentation centre, a library, a residency program, as well as educational projects with schools. The art space engages in its neighborhood's history and socio-political realities which are entangled with the reflections and discourses of the project.

S A V V Y Contemporary is Elena Agudio Antonia Alampi Jasmina Al-Qaisi Lynhan Balatbat-Helbock Bona Bell Marleen Boschen Federica Bueti Pia Chakraverti-Wuerthwein Olani Ewunnet Eirini Fountedaki Raisa Galofre Monilola Ilupeju Ahmed Isamaldin Anna Jäger Kimani Joseph Laura Klöckner Cornelia Knoll Kelly Krugman Nathalie Mba Bikoro António Mendes Kamila Metwaly Wilson Mungai Arlette-Louise Ndakoze Bonaventure Soh Bejeng Ndikung Abhishek Nilamber Jeff Obiero Beya Othmani Elena Quintarelli Marleen Schröder Jörg-Peter Schulze Lema Sikod Lili Somogyi Jorinde Spletstößer Elsa Westreicher Ola Zielirska

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