

Klangpark 2007

Acoustic Memories of Landscape Soundings—Vienna 1990 by Bill Fontana

To mark the 40th anniversary of radio station Ö1 and the 20th anniversary of ORF Kunstradio, a remix of Bill Fontana's 1990 work *Landscape Soundings* will be played in Donaupark to call attention to the extraordinarily important role of experimental radio art as a forerunner of the Web 2.0 media formats that are currently getting so much hype.

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In May 1990, ORF Kunstradio and the Wiener Festwochen collaborated in the realization of *Landscape Soundings / Klanglandschaften*, a 14-day live sound and radio sculpture by Bill Fontana. Physically it was located between the two major museums in central Vienna and it was broadcast on all ORF radio channels.

Landscape Soundings developed into a project touching upon some of the most important aspects of telematic/radio art: the phenomenon of simultaneity as well as the dissolution of the traditional concept of the ("finished") work of art; the co-authorship between artists and non-artists, a new definition of the role of the artist as initiator, manager, facilitator responsible for motivating other people and finding highly unorthodox solutions.

From: <http://www.kunstradio.at/FONTANA/LS/index.html>

In May of 1990, I spent many hours in the control room for *Landscape Soundings* that had been set up in the basement of the Kunsthistorisches Museum. I made extensive stereo recordings and multi-channel mixes from the live sounds coming from the Hainburger Au. This was a unique project in its acoustic surveillance of a wetland habitat. As I now revisit these recordings, I am struck by the sonic intimacy with nature that *Landscape Soundings* had created.

With this sound sculpture I created a real-time musical information network consisting of 16 microphones placed in the area of the Hainburger Au that transmitted live sound to Vienna. This sound surveillance network became part of the forest and made it possible to hear this wetland from the perspective of the trees. There was no apparent human presence to cause the shy and wary avian residents to keep a safe distance. As cuckoos sat near a microphone and were amplified through a 70-speaker installation, they became bigger than life, or maybe as big as their life itself. My normal human, acoustic experiences while walking through this wetland were that these sounds were always at a distance. Listening to these transmitted sounds made me imagine what the sonic perspectives of a bird must be, while making and becoming these sounds.

The various recordings I made from the original live installation are now the source material for a new spatial composition that will move and echo on the grounds outside of the Brucknerhaus in Linz.

Text: Bill Fontana