

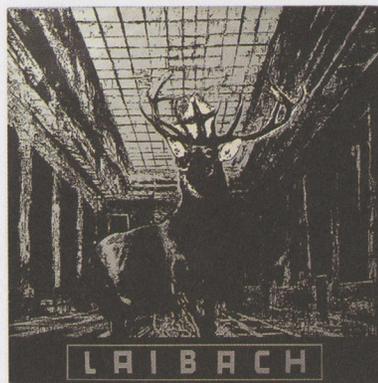


At the beginning of the seventies, the designer and sculptor Harry Bertoia developed many sound sculptures, coining the term 'Sonambient' to describe the combined effect of the materials, the installation in space, and the resulting sound experiments. His record series documents the sounds produced by the different sculptures.

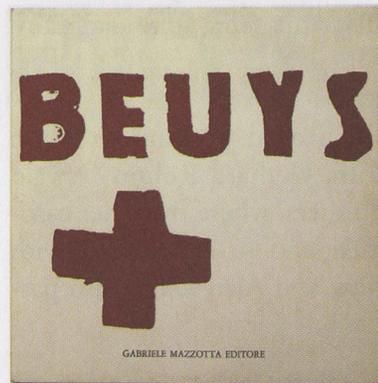
The spoken word has featured on vinyl in various ways: as a lecture, a reading, a conversation, and, in 1969 on the record *Art by Telephone*, even as a catalogue. The Museum for Contemporary Art in Chicago composed telephone calls with artists in which they made a preliminary description of the works they planned for the museum.



The Slovenian band Laibach, founded in 1980 and named after the capital city Ljubljana, also belongs to the artist group New Slovenian Art (Neue Slovenische Kunst or NSK). Their often-ironic play on totalitarian ideologies and their symbols was controversial and much discussed. Distorted and personal interpretations of pop classics, like *Let it Be* by the Beatles, also formed a part of Laibach's repertoire.

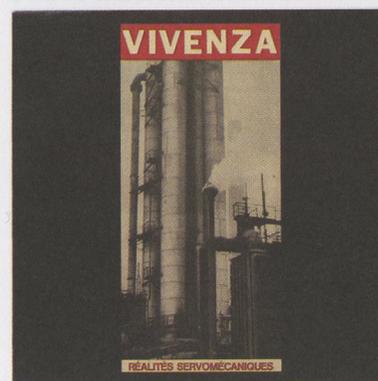


The artist records of Joseph Beuys are at the centre of a network of collaborations. The recording of *Ja ja ja, nee nee nee* was created in 1970 and is made up of the repetition of the words yes and no with every imaginable nuance. A founding member of the German Green Party, in 1982 Joseph Beuys claimed *Sonne statt Reagan* (literally 'Sun instead of Rain', but with the German word for rain, 'Regen', replaced by the U.S. President's name). Further recordings were made in collaboration with Nam June Paik, Henning Christiansen and Albrecht d., who in their turn also made solo records or performed in other artist combinations.



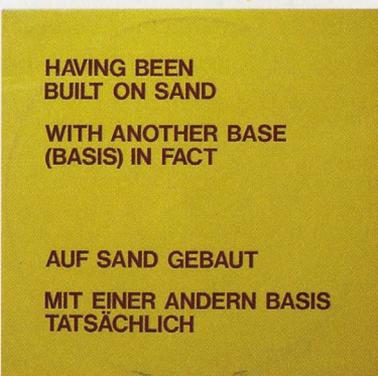
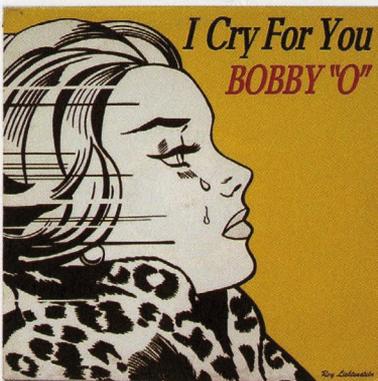
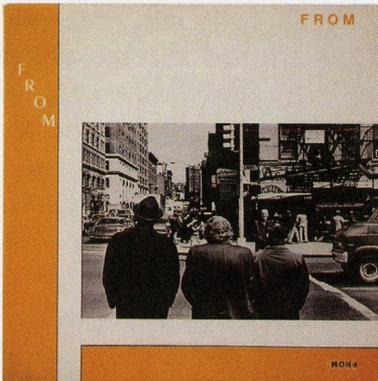
The early avant-garde movements of the first decades of the twentieth century, like Dadaism and Futurism, had already broken new ground in transgression in music, theatre, visual art and literature. They presented their works in public performances: early forms of Happening and Performance Art. Composers like Eric Satie also had a great influence on later generations and the understanding of music and visual art.

The Futurists integrated the sounds of aeroplanes and train engines into their works. From the eighties on, similar procedures can be found in Industrial Music, in groups like Vivenza, who use the industrial sound of machines.



The LP *RRR 500* constitutes a unique project, which could only have been carried out in the medium of the vinyl record. Consisting of 500 separate record grooves containing work by 500 artists, the pickup arm needs to be put into place manually time and again. This record furthermore constitutes an example of a total visual design concept, including the label and the inner sleeve as well as the outer cover.

Vinyl: records and covers by artists



Bent over the Grundig tape recorder with a broad smile, and vigorously trumpeting out of the limits of the picture, Jean Dubuffet's figures on the cover of his *Musical Experiences* mark the opening of the exhibition *Vinyl: records and covers by artists*. Published in 1961, the record is one of the earliest examples of a new medium that made art from the combination of image and sound. Without formal musical education, and thus in the best sense free of the music world's traditional rules and limitations, visual artists enthusiastically explored the possibilities of instruments, sound and voice. For the first time the tape recorder had made it possible for artists to create their own recordings without the need for great technical expertise, while the vinyl record allowed for the possibility of multiplying the results.

Peter Downsbrough's record *From* is exhibited alongside a four-piece graphic work by the same artist. The different media stand side by side on an equal footing, using words as graphic material (and sound) to address the thematics of both language and space. Elsewhere, the graphic works of Gerhard Rühm and Hanne Darboven take the form of scores, while the physical presence of the record is also always in evidence.

All directions in twentieth-century art are represented. The spectrum ranges from Futurism and Dadaism, including modern classics such as Joan Miró and Fernand Léger, movements like Cobra, Lettrism, Minimalism, Conceptual Art, Sound Poetry, Fluxus and Pop Art, as well as more recent trends. The list of those who have designed record covers for musicians or bands includes such prestigious or popular artists as Roy Lichtenstein, Keith Haring, Pistoletto, John Baldessari, Gerhard Richter, Francisco Clemente and Raymond Pettibon. With his series of six record covers for Philip Glass's *Music in Twelve Parts*, Sol LeWitt created a body of work that relates to the spirit of Minimalist music, while at the same time maintaining its integrity as a visual artwork.

The project *Selten gehörte Musik* (music rarely listened to) came to life in the workshops of the artist friends Dieter Roth, Gerhard Rühm, Oswald Wiener, Günther Brus, Hermann Nitsch and others, where they met casually on several occasions to improvise together and to experiment with music and language. A.R. Penck, Michael Snow and Alan Davie also participated in 'free music' groups.

Throughout his artistic career, Lawrence Weiner has used different sound formats, including LP and single, audio cassette and CD, while the new Museum Weserburg in Bremen presents a 'fundamental' extension of his visual media: the title piece of the record, *Having been built on sand*. With another base (basis) in fact is written in big letters on the exterior of the museum, immediately over the river Weser.



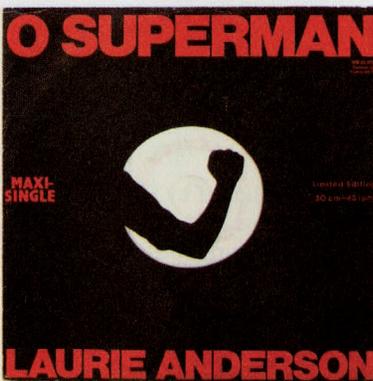
All the work in this exhibition belongs to the Collection Guy Schraenen, which, while concentrating on the sixties and seventies, also includes some pieces that, at first sight, may seem out of context. However, these recordings were included because of their innovative nature or because of their influence on the perception and conception of music and sound. Thus, for example, Karl Valentin is represented, as is the *Singing of Whales* (*Gesang der Wale*), a recording which opened up previously unknown worlds of sound.



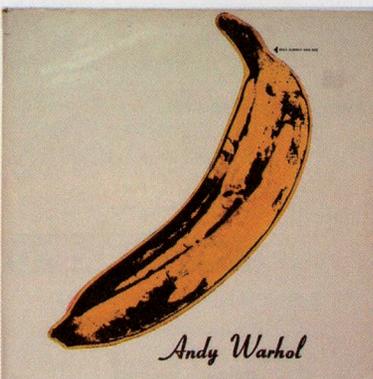
The Fluxus movement and related currents, like Zaj in Spain, enriched art with new artistic positions, as well as actions and performances that went under the name of 'concerts'. Three videoworks, through which Ben Vautier represents pieces by Nam June Paik and Mieko Shiomi, demonstrate the break with traditional concepts. Instruments make their appearance in totally unexpected and striking ways: a violin slowly lowers itself down to the stage or, after slowly and dramatically gaining momentum, is smashed to pieces on the edge of a table. Actors cover a piano in paint, while Vautier nails down the keys, obtaining a last sound sequence from the instrument.



The Czech artist Milan Knižák cuts vinyl records into pieces and recomposes them. The record object *Destroyed Music* juxtaposes the two halves of different records. In theory, it can still be played – the result is an unusual assembly of two different sound sources. On the other hand, George Brecht, with his handwritten phrase, addresses himself directly to a receptive audience: *Musik ist das, was du in diesem Moment hörst* (Music is what you are listening to at this very moment).

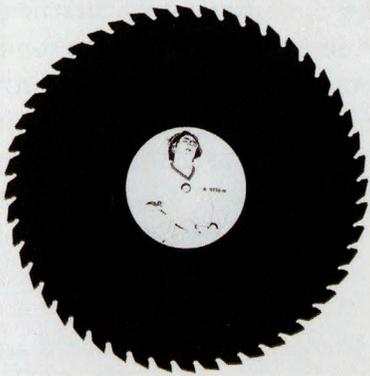


Laurie Anderson's *O Superman* was one of the few exceptions in Sound Art to be put out by a major record company and found its way to the top of the charts. Generally artists financed and produced themselves, according to demand, in small editions, something that could be achieved easily with the ubiquitous audiocassette, with the material becoming known mainly by word of mouth.



Andy Warhol's album cover for Velvet Underground & Nico from 1971 is probably the most well-known piece in the exhibition. The banana skin, which could be peeled to reveal a pink banana beneath, attained a fetish status, its ambiguous intent similar to that of Warhol's *Sticky Fingers* cover for the Rolling Stones. Other classics of the genre in the pop and rock world include Richard Hamilton's *White Album* and Peter Blake's *Sgt. Pepper* covers for the Beatles.

At another point, the exhibition presents a group of album covers by Andy Warhol, in the style of his popular portrait series. For Diana Ross's double cover, all four surfaces are used; for Paul Anka and John Lennon, the design is repeated with variations on both front and back.



Some artists give the record more significance visually, as an object in itself. The picture disc, with a picture printed on one or both sides of the vinyl, is one of the better-known examples. More unusual is Hans Schabus' record, shaped like the blade of a circular saw, or the record by an unknown author, sandwiched between two sheets of sandpaper with the abrasive turned inwards.



The CD as a supplement in magazines, catalogues and other publications has now replaced the flexidisc of the eighties. Simple and cheap to produce, the CD serves the purpose of documenting sound creations and has thus acquired a function similar to the photographic reproductions of visual artworks.

Many literary works by artists of the Beat Generation have been preserved as recordings, giving access to the voices of the authors, as for example in Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* from 1955. The series *Giorno-Poetry-Systems*, initiated by John Giorno in the seventies, represents the Beat Generation, along with artists from other verbal vocal currents. On the record cover of *Totally Corrupt*, for instance, Anne Waldman, John Giorno, William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg and John Cage pose together.



Sound Poetry is an independent development, evolving from the extension of literary forms into the realm of sound. Henri Chopin is one of its most significant representatives. The magazine *Revue OU*, which he edited in the sixties and seventies, included supplementary records by sound poets in practically every issue, including François Dufrêne, Brion Gysin and Sten Hanson, among others. The newly-awakened interest in these works is reflected by the fact that all the sound contributions were re-edited on CD in 2002.

The 'sound station' of the exhibition comprises 300 digitalised records that can be selected and reviewed individually. Pavel Büchler's single *Encore*, from 2005, marks the last visual and acoustic accent of the exhibition, with the artist presenting a sequence of opening and closing applause taken from different concerts. The effect is both animating and soothing.

ENCORE

Bettina Brach

Making use of the glossary composed by Guy Schraenen in the catalogue *Vinyl — Records and Covers by Artists*. Bremen: Neues Museum Weserburg Bremen, 2005.



Co-production: Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona and Research Center for Artists' Publications/ASCP in NMWB.

This exhibition presents works from the collection of Guy Schraenen, curator of the show.



Plaça dels Àngels, 1
08001 Barcelona
www.macba.es

Museum Opening Hours
Daily, 11 am – 7.30 pm
(From 24 June, 11 am – 8 pm /
Thursdays, 11 am – midnight)
Saturdays, 10 am – 8 pm
Sundays and public holidays, 10 am – 3 pm
Tuesdays, closed
Mondays, open

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