

Title	<i>Listening to the Hands as Aliens</i>
Conversationalist	Thiago Granato
Conversation number	XIV
Date	6th of July 2023
Place	Ballhaus Ost, Berlin
Time of recording	58 minutes
Context	The conversation was possible due to our participation in The Listening Academy, Berlin, as part of The Listening Biennial. https://listeningbiennial.net/
Note for conversation	We met earlier in the morning, before the Listening Academy. By sitting in the courtyard of the Ballhaus Ost, with one side being Pappelallee Cemetery, we could slowly follow how the morning turned into a working day as usual, with sound increasing and the buzz of people arriving on site.

Publisher	Bureau <i>for</i> Listening
Contact Publisher	https://bureauforlistening.com/ bureauforlistening@gmail.com
Year for publishing	2023
ISBN	

- (Lukas Quist Lund): [

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(Thiago Granato): Maybe we could start this conversation based on what you feel that was missing in the workshop yesterday.

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] I like when

you have a space for listening, and you then have the time to not do anything. You can let the practice or the world just touch upon you, because you give it time to do so.

[

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[

] This makes me happy because the work in itself gave the appetite for having more time. [

] only really makes sense if you can repeat. [

] But if you repeat, repeat, repeat, repeat as a practice, you can embody the knowledge that emerged from that repetition.

- [

] Do

you feel that there's something in relation between repetition and listening? Do you feel that listening is something that we need to repeat doing, in order to actually be able to listen? Or can we also just do a single listening and then still call it listening?

[] for me, listening is a completely conditioned experience. There are many ways of listening and we can't avoid the place we are situated. I don't know, the way my mother in Brazil listens is very different than you, Lukas, listening in Denmark. Or a musician, or a guy working in a bakery. Or we here in the Listening Academy. [

] I don't know. What was your question?

- []

I think with repetition you are able to check the limits about your perception, and also to invent other ways, or to recognize other ways of listening. And also to unfold, to expand concepts, theories that help you to go further in this experimentation. For me, again, listening is not something that just only happens. For me, it's very much about where you put your attention. And this is like an universe, that I feel that can be expanded forever.

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[

] I

think it depends how we situate ourselves, consciously or not, this changes the way we listen to things.

- I find it quite interesting to then bring in the conditions and the unconsciousness around these conditions. Because I would imagine there are a lot of things around this conversation right now, that neither of us can even be aware of, but influence the way we listen. So of course we also sit here with elements and context and conditions that we are aware of, and these influence our listening, but I'm wondering if the things that we are unaware of is to a higher degree influencing the way we are listening. Do you have thoughts on that?

Not really. No. Not now, but it's a nice thought, yes.

- []

Well, how do I know the unknown? It's very tricky. I don't know.

- [] we don't know the concrete unknowns, but we know that they are there. I know that there's something I'm unconscious about, and how can I be sensitive towards that?

[]

- [] I feel that quite often my hands are like this interpreter between perhaps the unknown and the known, [

] my hands were a good ally in

terms of inviting this unknown condition. It was like my hands were not worried. My hands were fine. Does that make sense?

[] But while you were talking about the hands, I was reflecting on the previous, because it's connected, so I needed some time, more time actually. [

] I don't have a strictly scientific curiosity about life. I'm not interested in discovering things that are not here, in the planet that we live on. Me as an artist is like, of course I'm inventive. I like to invent. I like to create. But I don't want to understand why we are here. []

- []

[] that's how I situate a little bit of what I understand by the unknown, because the unknown comes from this life mystery that doesn't seduce me. I'm not interested about what we have in the cosmos. I'm so interested about what we have here on earth and what we can do with that, with the conditions that we have. []

- []

[]

- [] it is the close relationships that make us up.

[]

- But I just feel that there's so much unknown in the things closest to me. [

]

[]

- [] That I am acting in the world, I am sitting and talking with you, and just this situation has so many things that we will never know.

[]

- [] And I also think that you had this word yesterday with the alien.

Uh-huh.

- And that, for me, that can be like a metaphor of this unknown-ness close to us.

[]

- Like there's things that we don't need to understand. But they're just still there and they are having this impact on us and we are affected by it.

[

[] your cells are recording you. [] Like it's not me who is in charge of my experience, but this history is actually recording me.

- []

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- Like each time something new is happening. being recorded, that also alters the old recording. So it's not this static recording [] It is a living recording. []

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- []
] And I was wondering if you would maybe just elaborate on that starting point with the fascia as a way of listening, or a condition for listening.

Yeah. So actually I got in contact with fascia for the first time in a text about listening.

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] Because fascia is what I think is the biggest sensorial organ that we have in the body, because we have a lot of senses and feelings going on there, and the way the fascia reacts with the environment, also the reaction between the fascias. So you can actually understand this interaction as listening. []

] For me to bring fascia is very coherent because it's not only about listening, but also about connecting people, giving them the feeling of moving as an organism. [

]

- [] in what way is it important to understand listening through the body rather than as an intellectual concept or an abstract concept? Why is it important that we have a sensibility towards understanding listening through the body?

[] I don't know exactly. I mean, for me, I can feel that the attention on listening is a source for communication or for speculation or for creation of choreographic material. It's very rich, and for me, this is very interesting. But it's also very interesting to think about, to have a critical thinking on the society that we live in today. Like when you think about listening, it triggers so many others, like at once, boom, so many others questions in different levels, in different spheres in society. It's quite revolutionary for me.

- [

] We are always already our bodies. [

] so often, at least in my experience, my body is being the secondary objective of what I should do.

But I would mix body and listening. As a revolution, in the flag of our revolution, I would put body plus listening. [

] I would go for body technology and listening. This is like a super high-tech future that I would invest in.

- []
the idea of listening as a bodily technology?

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For the first solo, I invited two dead choreographers. For the second solo, I invited two living choreographers. And for the third one, I invited two choreographers who were not born yet. So it was a fictional collaboration. And the third one was the most difficult, because I had first to understand what is the context in which those choreographers will be born, you know? So I imagined it indigenous, Brazilian indigenous future, based on what I could learn from their cultures as a white Brazilian from São Paulo based in Berlin. So I decided to invite one stone and one jaguar as choreographers. [

] I don't know exactly what I'm saying, but... You asked about listening as a technology.

- [] as a future bodily technology.

[] indigenous technology is very much based in the body. In how the body relates with the environment, and the knowledge, the sensitivity, the intuition. With the plants, you know, the ayahuasca, those kinds of things that they do. [

]

- [

]

[

] You see how the body transforms and what kind of vocabulary emerges from it. And knowledge. This is a body technology.

- [

] how listening is perhaps a

different way of knowing. [

] How do we know differently with listening?

[

] when I look at you I project all my history. All my archives and my repertoires on you. But there is another way that I experience you. For example, through the affects. And I think listening is part of it. I cannot block my ears or my senses. [

] There is a part of me that is being affected all the time. There is an implicit knowledge that's going on in my body that I cannot stop. [

] And she said, Thiago, you don't have a body. You are a body. [

] There are many things that we don't know. Many organisms or forces that we are not aware of. The breathing, for

example, is a very concrete example. We are breathing. We cannot stop breathing. The breathing started before your consciousness.

- [] perhaps we can even go a step further and say we are bodies together. It doesn't make sense to isolate one body. What is one body by itself? I don't know. I've never been like that. []

[] For me it's not really clear, but there is something about... Because I am 43 years old. And I have a husband. We are 22 years together. And when I met him, we didn't have a mobile phone, for example. It's funny because my history with him is a sort of narrative of those technology changes chains in time. We bought our first mobile phones together, and then we did the email accounts. We didn't have the email before meeting each other. We saw this sort of technological revolution happening. []

[] I'm saying this because I have a feeling that my body today wonders what it is to live in a reality where everything is broken. Because I have the feeling that we are entering a moment in history that everything is fragmented, like interrupted. Everything is broken and there is no continuity in things. And we enter in this mode of rupture and repair, rupture and repair, rupture and repair. And my body is wondering how to adapt to that. It's not very clear for me what I'm saying, but there is something that I don't know... It's very interesting, actually, but it's very strange. It's very strange because the horizons become very fragmented also. []

[] For art it's great, but for life sometimes it's a bit challenging. []

- In what way do you experience or feel or know that the world is broken or being disrupted and repaired? []

[] before we as humans, as society, could feel much more in control of things. And now with Corona, the wars, the climate change, we are not the first actors anymore. [

]

- [] And there's always been elements like Corona or war that have been disrupting and breaking down things. And we have just not paid attention to it. Or we have been that destruction ourselves. And on a larger scale, this interplay between destruction and repair is just the state of nature? [

]

[]

- [] Our bodies feel detached from this destructive or repair state of nature. And of course, our bodies are also just being destructive and repairing. It's the same.

Because we are nature.

- [] we have to learn more from each other. Instead of our bodies have to learn from, I don't know, the technologies of iPhones. [

]

[] the condition of the place we live here, this planet, is different than 100 years ago or 200 years ago. We cannot say it's the same. [

] I lost a little bit of myself.

- [] I don't know why, but I was just thinking
about slowness [

] You cannot enforce things to go faster or slower.

They just have their own time. I'm wondering what time does our body exist in? What
time does this planet move in? What time is the wall moving in? What time is
listening moving in? [

] I just have this image of different times
bouncing around, touching each other, [

]

[

] And there is no past, there is no future, there is only present. Because you
are on the edge of... Imagine a flower that doesn't stop opening. So we are always in the edge.
But nothing is behind and nothing is in front.

- []

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- [

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[] There is also the Yamaras. [

] The future is behind. Because everything that you see, you saw already.
That's why you recognize. You are just like revisiting things. [

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- []

[]

- [

] You will sense it, but your

mind will filter it out.

[

]

- [

] That listening

places itself in contact with the things we don't know behind us. That listening is
reminding us about that. [

]

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- []

[] the indigenous, they have literally conversations with stones, with mountains, with entities. And they really sit with a stone [

] I'm wondering what is this listening? Do they really listen to a voice? Or is it [

] I don't know. We don't have this education.

- [

] We will never be able to actually know it in the same way. [

]

[

]

- [

] to recognize perhaps the agency of the hands. [

]

[] we use the hands so much since we are a baby, for example. And there is so much memory in our hands. That's very easy for them to have their own lives. [

] Sometimes I'm talking to you and I'm like, but why am I having this in my hands? Or I take a banana or I take the wrong key. And then you're like... but why did I take this key? So

because of this usage of the hands, I think it creates a certain autonomy for the hands to live. They almost have a parallel life. They are like two pets that we have. [

]

- []

[] Or there are a lot of stories about like you cannot leave your hands alone. [

] There is also a sort of morbid relationship between hands and mouth. You know, like putting your hand in your mouth or smoking or eating. [

] hands are very mysterious in a way. [

] And then you were trying to relate to this listening, right?

- [] Another thing is to say that they are alien. [

] It is something that I'm not able to understand fully. [

] Maybe there is some fear towards the aliens. I have to be careful. [

] find a way in order to communicate. [

]

Of course my hands are a good old friend. [

] But you might actually be this alien.

And I need you. [

] That I had to listen to my hands and I had to listen through my hands. And perhaps my hands have this special

ability to listen because they are alien. Because they have to experiment and be careful and attentive. []

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[]]

(Anonymous): Sorry, I need to interrupt.

[The conversation stops for a while.]

- []

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[] I think for me, one of the reasons why I think to work on listening or to talk about listening is that it touches so many different aspects of life, you know, in itself. []

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- [

] That one thing is all my words and my hands, but my whole fascia is also...

Communicating.

- [] And I don't know in what way. But I know it is doing it and it's trying to connect to your fascia. I thought that was a nice element also to say out loud.

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- [

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- [

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[

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- [] And I will end it.