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Abstract

Radio Revolten: 30 Days of Radio Art documents the *Radio Revolten* international radio art festival that took place during October 2016 in Halle, Germany. It is a densely rich book that explores aspects of radio beyond the format, beyond time schedules and beyond podcast ratings, while still aiming to build a sense of community. It is reviewed by internationally acclaimed Australian sound artist Colin Black.

Keywords

radio art; sound art

Radio Revolten: 30 Days of Radio Art

EDITED BY: Knut Aufermann, Helen Hahmann, Sarah Washington, and Ralf Wendt

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SPECTOR BOOKS 2019

BOOK REVIEW by Colin Black

Radio Revolten: 30 Days of Radio Art documents the *Radio Revolten* international radio art festival that took place during October 2016 in Halle, Germany. It is a densely rich book that explores aspects of radio beyond the format, beyond time schedules and beyond podcast ratings, while still aiming to build a sense of community. Because radio art is multifaceted and inter-disciplinary, aspects of the aesthetic approaches and theories can be difficult to collate from across the various disciplines. Previously in 1994, Dan Lander has attributed some of the misconceptions associated with radio art to the “imposition of a borrowed musical discourse applied to all sound phenomenon.” I would argue that some of the misconceptions associated with radio art are also due to the imposition of a borrowed media discourse applied to all media. Nevertheless, this book (and others on the topic of radio art) asks mainstream radio producers and media academics to step out of their comfort zones; it challenges the reader to engage in what Jack Mezirow has identified as “transformative learning,” as some of what you will read about will not easily fit

into your existing meaning perspective. It invites you to critically reflect on the disorientating dilemmas that may arise and to dig deeper into all of what radio can be and how this radio art approach can enhance media production, contribute to an expanded media discourse and enrich our community. As Gregory Whitehead explains in the book, he encourages you to, “...*imagine and then create* a radio art that embraces an ethos of free association and honest ambiguity ... that rejects the tight and tidy formats of the corporate logos ... [and] restores vital imagination to the dumb-numb social brain.”

As you journey further into the strange world of radio art you will encounter other radio art manifestos by Chris Cutler, Ivor Kallin, Alessandro Bosetti, Tetsuo Kogawa and many more that were collected for the festival. However, it is claimed that the main focus of the *Radio Revolten* festival was not to ask what is radio art, but rather to ask “*how* radio might be and what it is in the process of becoming”? Moreover, Helen Hahmann and Ralf Wendt ponder “How can radio sound when it is occurring in a collective, when it becomes a space for discussing local and global social issues? How does programming change [when] access is considered strictly in artistic terms?” While not chiefly a theoretical book that only occasionally contextualises radio art historically (as Tina Klatte does when she nuances her chapter from a German radio background), it does add to the richness of contemporary radio art discourse.

The notion that the radio studio can be “acoustically porous” is proposed by Knut Aufermann, who illustrates his idea by introducing us to *Leslie*, a wireless binaural dummy head that is capable of transmitting sound live back to the studio within a 50-metre radius. During the festival, *Leslie* roamed “the corridors and streets, triggering responses unlike any other radio microphone and literally

lending an ear (or two to be precise) to the listeners.” In another intervention, one of the festival’s live-to-air programs, “Wikipedia-editing on air”, debated what constitutes radio art and attempted to establish live on air entries of their findings for the “Radiokunst” (radio art) page of the German Wikipedia. These innovations make the radio studio not only “acoustically porous” but also a transmedia node that generates its own references.

There are many, many more dimensions of radio explored throughout this book, all of which anyone with an interest in exploring a more experimental approach to media or willing to challenge their existing mainstream media meaning perspectives will find fascinating. As is stated in the book, “Radio art [ˈreidiəu a:t] (noun) happens when the radio has drunk too much art or art has swallowed too many radios. It is an anarchic aesthetic element that appears when the conditions are right.” I would suggest that the conditions are now right to become intoxicated with this most fascinating book and the unusual perspectives of radio it has to offer the reader. In the wake of this type of intoxication, find, adapt or simply appropriate stimulating new approaches for your own radio making; or for the media academics, consider all the untapped research potential this field of radio has to offer. Moreover, as Professor Seán Street noted in 2012, radio art “may currently be under-recognised as a fertile field of study within universities globally.” If that is the case, then *Radio Revolten: 30 Days of Radio Art*, would indeed be a very important reference for this potentially viable field of study.



DR COLIN BLACK is an internationally acclaimed radio producer, having won the 2015 New York Festival's award for Best Sound Art, the 2003 Prix Italia Award (Best Composed Work) and being shortlisted as a finalist in the Prix Phonurgia Nova (France), Prix Marulić (Croatia), Grand Prix Nova (Romania) and the APRA Professional Development Awards (Australia). Black has received multiple national and international commissions to create innovative major works for installation, performance and broadcast in Australia, USA and across Europe. Black's academic experience includes adjunct fellow at the Western Sydney University and casual lecturer at Darmstadt University of Applied Sciences and University of Technology, Sydney.

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