



# Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories

*Alan Licht*

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## **Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories** Alan Licht

Over the past century, an art form has emerged that draws from the worlds of visual art and music. Sound art's roots can be found in the experimental work of Italian Futurism, Dada, and later the Fluxus group and the pioneering efforts of the American composer and artist John Cage. In the wake of this groundbreaking work, sound art began to mature into a movement, and artists explored the interactive possibilities of sound and in turn created entirely new modes of experiencing and engaging with art. In this volume, the complete story of sound art is told by one of the country's leading critics and scholars. The author traces the history of this form of art—highlighting the convergence of the indie world bands such as Sonic Youth with the art world—looking at the critical cross-pollination that has led to some of the most important and challenging art being produced today, including work by Christian Marclay, LaMonte Young, Janet Cardiff, Rodney Graham, and Laurie Anderson, among many others.

## **Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories Details**

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Author : Alan Licht

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# From Reader Review Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories for online ebook

## John says

Sound art purists undoubtedly will find nothing but irritation here, since almost 50% of the book deals with experimental music or music made by visual artists. But at least at the stage I'm at right now, I can't see how you can discuss sound art without addressing experimental music and their influence on each other. I think this book does a good job of making that case. It's an incredibly quick read due to the number of great illustrations. Definitely inspiring and a good introduction for people who might be just encountering a lot of the artists discussed here for the first time...If nothing else, the approach of contextualizing sound within the experimental music domain gives the book a "spoonful of sugar" quality that could help people who might be afraid of exposing themselves to non-musical sound.

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## Scott says

Worth it for the pictures alone.

I think the book tries to be a bit too broad for what it is. I have a hard time believing bands are sound art, whatever that term may mean. I would maybe consider Destroy All Monsters or Forcefield.

That said I tend to like Licht's writing and I think he's trying to provoke a bit here.

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## Andrew says

Smart and to the point

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## Jim says

I think that Licht goes to great lengths to include a lot here, and he does name a lot of movements and people that are seminal in the world of sound art and experimental music. And he certainly does highlight some of the more central figures like Cage, the Dadaists, Alvin Lucier and LaMonte Young, and point out the connections they opened up in the field.

However, this book reads a lot like a laundry list, or a "Who's who" of Sound Art, and Licht doesn't go to much length to investigate the significance of any of these figures and their works. On one hand, that's a positive -- let your ears be the judge and go out and hear some of this work for yourself. On the other, we're naming DJ Spooky as a significant sound artist for his innovative "scratching" techniques (c'mon, really?) and not naming someone like Richard James (Aphex Twin) for his use of sandpaper on a turntable, among other efforts inspired by Marclay and artists before him. Why?

If you're making the move to include A LOT, to not include is a fairly political gesture. This is especially

true when the bounds of the genre are nearly invisible and include many people who would consider themselves straight-up composers or musicians rather than "sound artists."

Licht gets 3 stars for just centrally locating a lot of mind-bending work in one tome, but he really does lose two stars by not really going into the meaning of any of it, and he leaves more questions than answers with the choices he makes.

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### **Grig O' says**

much better than the Gibbs book, this was pretty informative and inspirational.

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### **Jesse says**

A beautiful, thoughtful resource on experimental sound. A lavish overview, really, with useful illustrations. Very academic, on the whole, which is fine. But I wish Licht was less treatise-like and more thorough. Though I enjoyed the pomo conjectures, a lot of the material would've been strengthened if interspersed with a straighter historical overview.

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### **Ben says**

Pretty good book covering a lot of sound art and "sound in the arts" that is hard to find information on in other places. If you are looking for a book on "pure" sound art, beware that Licht spends a lot of time discussing experimental music and music by visual artists. All this is pretty interesting, but I think it comes at the expense of not going into as much depth when it comes to artists like Max Neuhaus or Bill Fontana. Of course this material is covered, but at times I wish Licht had spent more time with sound sculpture, etc and less with music.

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### **C.Reider says**

Inconsequential. It has several good to adequate summaries at the beginning, but quickly starts to read like a disjointed list of sound art pieces he's seen or read about, with little analysis. It feels like it's on more comfortable ground again later when talking about art in music, which takes up almost half the text length, but that wasn't really supposed to be the topic, was it? About half the book is photo plates & index, so it's a quick read, anyway.

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### **gdg says**

lots of information with little narrative...

