

# Universalmuseum Joanneum Press office

Universalmuseum Joanneum  
Mariahilferstraße 4, 8020 Graz, Austria  
www.museum-joanneum.at

presse@museum-joanneum.at  
Telephone +43-316/8017-9211

## Bill Fontana Primal Energies and Sonic Projections (Graz)

Kunsthaus Graz, Space01, Lendkai 1, 8020 Graz

Duration: 01.07.–04.10.2020

Curated by Katrin Bucher Trantow

Information: +43-316/8017-9200, [www.kunsthhausgraz.at](http://www.kunsthhausgraz.at)

Re-enactment *Sonic Projections* is part of the 'Graz Year of Culture 2020'

In cooperation with the University of Art Graz, Ö1 Kunstradio (ORF), Radio Helsinki, mur.at and the 'Kultur inklusiv' Project

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In times of shutdown, the world around us became quieter and a sense of heightened perception became a certain normality for many of us. With the American sound pioneer Bill Fontana, sound perception becomes a way to unite with our surroundings. Since the beginning of his artistic career, Fontana has been challenging environmental questions and their connection to human life through the possibility of a holistic perception of the "overlooked".

Two site-specific projects by him run in parallel all through the summer. His solo exhibition *Primal Energies* in the biomorphic space of the Kunsthhaus makes us dive into a stimulating audiovisual composition of renewable energy productions and the audiovisual structures of water, wind, sun and geothermal energy. As a multidimensional composition, based on footage from around the world and moves constantly through the domed space. Using latest technologies and merging sites and times it enables the visitor to experience energy production as a physical intervention of interdependence.

*Sonic Projections*, on the other hand is a project in public space of the city of Graz that stages natural and cultural signal sounds and generates awareness for our environment and its intrinsic connectivity with us all. The conciliatory tones of *Sonic Projections* map the city and relate to an early work by him from 1988 and formed part of the steirischer herbst festival dealing with the role of Graz during WW2. Fontana then sent out his globally collected "harmonizing" sounds into the city, and their urban echo through all of Austria via the Ö1 Kunstradio (ORF). The re-enactment now relates to memories of the unforgotten project and sends old and newly collected sounds such as birds, trains or the mystic San Francisco foghorn from the city's hill to the Kunsthhaus in a dialogue. As recurring sounds, the project

thus functions as a means of orientation to time and space, as a trigger of commemoration and deliberate perception, plumbing what is currently an ever-more delicate construct of urban needs and strains.

As a former student of John Cage, Dick Higgins and Alison Knowles, Fontana's work today stands for a continuation of radical concepts of the 1970s. Apart from frequently researching environmental concerns, his work is exemplary for the urge to leave the studio – and so links up with the exhibition *Ca/Arts* that is showing parallel to his in the lower level of the Kunsthaus Graz. Beyond instrumented and composed music, his work centers on the activation of conscious listening and an awareness of sound qualities and harmonies in cultural production and everyday life.

With the help of continuously evolving technical instruments and unfamiliar localization, he makes characteristics of landscapes, and manmade architecture and engineering perceivable, while creating site specific, and locally rooted immersive sound sculptures. In his most recent audio-visual work, acoustic and visual patterns overlap in mesmerizing harmony and make us "become fully present" (Fontana).