



Specials > FONS AUDIO

The *Specials* programs focus on projects by artists and curators who have some kind of connection to the Museum's programming and the MACBA Collection. Conceived as an audiovisual project, FONS is a documentary series in which artists from the MACBA Collection talk about their work. This series also includes a specific montage devised for radio, entitled FONS AUDIO, created from conversations with the artists.

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Produced by Lucrecia Dalt and Ricardo Duque. Interview and documentation: Dolores Acebal.

# FONS AUDIO #12

## Kristin Oppenheim

Kristin Oppenheim employs the dramatic properties of her own voice to articulate sound and visual installations that immerse the spectator in hypnotic environments replete with potential narratives. In FONS AUDIO #12, Oppenheim gives us some tips for approaching her installation *Hey Joe* (1996), which is part of the MACBA Collection.

### 01. Summary

Kristin Oppenheim (Honolulu, Hawaii, 1959) lives and works in New York. She uses her own melancholy and mysterious voice as a means to dramatise the exhibition space and stage the poetic relationships between sound, personal memory and collective experience. The austerity of her installations link her to the minimalist current, while the experimental use of voice and sound bring her into line with conceptual art. The earliest attempts at using the human voice in the visual arts can be traced back to the sound poetry of the Futurists and Dadaists in the twenties, which were taken up again in the fifties by the Ilettists and by figures like Vito Acconci, Henri Chopin and John Giorno.

Kristin Oppenheim takes fragments of popular songs or poems that she has written or found and sings them repeating them in a loop that almost functions as a mantra. In *Hey Joe* (1996), the artist recites the first line of the homonymous track that Jim Hendrix made famous in 1962, which talks about a man who has murdered his wife and plans to run away to Mexico to escape a jail sentence. The verse that Oppenheim recites goes like this: «Hey Joe, where're you going with that gun in your hand?» The repetition of this question and the fragility of the voice that speaks it plunge the spectator into a haunting atmosphere in which the sense of danger and vulnerability rises in crescendo. At the same time, the artist places two spotlights in the ceiling that project beams of light onto the floor of the empty room.

«For this installation I used two circular spotlights that constantly moved in an 'approach and avoid' dance across the gallery floor. The voice, which appears and disappears is mysterious and drowsy, as if in a stupor, slightly possessed. The viewer is hit by the lights, which might initially feel like circus lights, but gradually become more like prison yard searchlights.»<sup>1</sup>

More recently, Oppenheim has also worked with photography, painting and sculpture. Her work has been exhibited in solo shows at the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art (2002), KIASMA, the Helsinki Museum of Contemporary Art (2003), and Greengrass Gallery, London (2007). Since 1990, she has also participated in numerous group shows, including the exhibition *Voices* which toured in 1998 and 1999 to the Witte de With at Rotterdam and the Fundació Joan Miró in Barcelona, ending up at Le Fresnoy – Studio national des arts contemporains, Tourcoing. Her work was also included in *Visions from America* at the Whitney Museum of American Art in New York (2002) and *Elles* at the Centre Pompidou de París (2009).

<sup>1</sup> Kristin Oppenheim in *Voices*. Rotterdam, Barcelona and Tourcoing: Witte de With, Centre for Contemporary Art; Fundació Joan Miró; and Le Fresnoy – Studio national des arts contemporains, 1998, pp. 58-59.

### 02. Works by Kristin Oppenheim in the MACBA Collection

Hey Joe, 1996  
MACBA Collection. MACBA Consortium  
[www.macba.cat/controller.php?p\\_action=show\\_page&pagina\\_id=29&inst\\_id=312](http://www.macba.cat/controller.php?p_action=show_page&pagina_id=29&inst_id=312)  
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[Kristin Oppenheim during the setting up of *Hey Joe* for the exhibition *Volume!* Works from the collections of "la Caixa" Foundation and MACBA, 2011]

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### 03. Related links

Kristin Oppenheim at 303 Gallery, New York.  
[www.303gallery.com/artists/kristin\\_oppenheim/](http://www.303gallery.com/artists/kristin_oppenheim/)

Article by Thad Ziolkowski in *Artforum*. 2000.  
[http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi\\_m0268/is\\_9\\_38/ai\\_65649386/](http://findarticles.com/p/articles/mi_m0268/is_9_38/ai_65649386/)

Kristin Oppenheim at *Itinerarios del sonido*, 2005).  
[www.itinerariosdelsonido.org/](http://www.itinerariosdelsonido.org/)

Article by Jonathan Griffin in *Frieze Magazine*, 2007.  
[www.frieze.com/issue/review/kristin\\_oppenheim/](http://www.frieze.com/issue/review/kristin_oppenheim/)

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### 04. Credits

Produced Lucrecia Dalt and Ricardo Duque. Voice: Lucrecia Dalt and Roc Jiménez de Cisneros. Documentation and interview: Dolores Acebal.

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