

# The Responsible Ear: Heritage, Site and Sonic Methodologies of Encounter

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## Abstract

*"If sonic knowledge can be grasped as subjugated knowledge, then a Foucauldian archaeology of media forms and communication has the potential to pose radical challenges about current understandings of the past and present". (Goh 2016)*

We may rightly think of sound as a part of our cultural and social heritage. Sound and heritage, however, have an uneasy relationship. This is, in many respects, due to the fleeting nature of sound, and fact that until the early part of the twentieth century it was impossible to record, document, preserve and archive sounds of the past.

Now, in the second decade of the twentieth-first century, we are able to construct new relationships between sound and heritage and this paper offers a range of methods in which such relationships may be explored, viewed, heard and understood: "to grasp the uncertain meaning that leaks between technologies, bodies and ears." (Wright and Voegelin 2021)

The paper shall present a suite of projects in which such methods were enacted, highlighting key differences between them. The purpose is not merely to suggest ways in which contemporary sound heritage may now develop, but to highlight the various agents at play in the relationship between sound and heritage which invariably centre upon the knowing and making of practitioners determining how uncertain sonic meaning-making occurs. Projects include a range of activities, involving partnerships with Occursus, Kelham Island Industrial Museum and the National Trust.

We locate our work in the broader context of sound studies and conclude by drawing together theoretical and practice-based insights authored by London College of Communication colleagues, thus articulating methodological implications for the continuing development and nuancing of auditory epistemology.