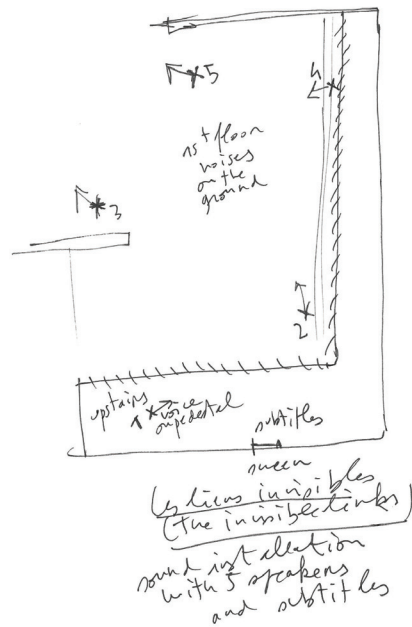


PLACE IS THE SPACE

A Building, A Decade, An Exhibition

JAM
CONTEMPORARY
ARTMUSEUM
STLOUIS

Dominique Petitgand



Drawing for *Les liens invisibles (The Invisible Links)*, 2013. Courtesy of the artist and gb agency, Paris

The use of sound as an artist's primary medium has become increasingly familiar within an art context and has defined the practice of Dominique Petitgand throughout his career. His work typically comprises multichannel presentations of voices and/or abstract noises and sounds deliberately developed for a particular space. Petitgand's installations negotiate the remarkably difficult conceptual prospect of transporting listeners into an imaginary elsewhere through the creation of fragmented narratives. At the same time he makes them acutely aware of their own physical and, given the circumstances of gallery or museum presentations, public presence. His work is reminiscent, in this regard, of legendary filmmaker Jean-Luc Godard's experimental and unconventional use of sound in his films to both drive and develop a story and simultaneously disrupt and unsettle the spectator's typically complacent and passive role in the cinematic experience. The nature of Petitgand's practice allows him to pursue a more spatially expansive, and physically affecting, manipulation of sound, which can produce in the listener an act of reinventing the direction or perspective, and redefining what is close, far, central, or peripheral. The various listening spots can then become as many fragmented approaches of the exhibited work.¹ In doing so, Petitgand invites visitors to a more active role in determining their experience and understanding of the work based on an engaged process of listening and re-listening in the space.

The use of silence is another key element in Petitgand's sound installations. The artist has stated, "each of my installations is the product of radical subtractions and the logic of it all—if I was not stopped by my desire to create narratives and tell stories—would be to reach the absence of everything, to reach silence."² Petitgand strategically uses silence to produce delays and voids that are temporal as well as spatial: "blank" aural sections correspond with the traversal through the space. His work frequently features words and phrases spoken or shown on a monitor in both French and English to create an additional layer of linguistic and cultural disruption. While the English is typically a translation of the French, it also suggests a dialogue or conversation, albeit a strangely repetitive and disjointed one.

Petitgand's project for *Place is the Space* is *Les liens invisibles (The Invisible Links)*, 2013. Speakers are placed in the main galleries, in the performance space, and in the mezzanine area on the second floor (a balcony space that along



with an open walkway creates an L-shaped bracket above the performance space). "Abstract" noises such as the sound of objects in glass containers and other nondescript effects that play intermittently on CAM's first-floor speakers are synchronized with a spoken word presentation in French that is translated into English on a monitor on the museum's second level. The vocal portion of the work features a woman's voice uttering brief phrases along with what seem to be excerpts of a monologue or statement. Petitgand encourages the people traveling through the space and listening to the sounds to make synchronic connections between the noises and voices in their concentrated and attentive perambulation of the space. The literally "invisible" links between sounds in the installation suggest the more metaphorical associations that people develop with the objects they encounter in a given space, but it is also suggestive of the links that form between people (often silently) as part of the dialectic between the individual and the collective experience that defines one's presence in a museum.

¹ Dominique Petitgand, "Interview with Dominique Petitgand by Guillaume Constantin," in *Dominique Petitgand: Installations (documents)*, (Paris: Editions MF, 2009), 86.

² Dominique Petitgand, "Interview with Dominique Petitgand by Vanessa Declaux," in *Dominique Petitgand: Installations (documents)*, p. 28.



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1-3: *Les liens invisibles* (*The Invisible Links*), 2013, five speakers, video monitor. Installation views.
All work courtesy of the artist and gb agency, Paris.

Dominique Petitgand: Born in Laxou, France in 1965; lives and works in Nancy, France

Selected Solo Exhibitions **2013** gb agency, Paris **2012** *Un tout, dont je fais partie*, l'Aubette 1928, Strasbourg, France **2011** *Domicile*, dans le cadre de Récits & paysages, Le Pavillon, Pantin, France **2009** *La tête la première*, FRAC Haute-Normandie, Sotteville-lès-Rouen, France; *Quelqu'un est tombé*, Abbaye de Maubuisson, Saint-Ouen-L'Aumône, France; *La porte ne s'est pas ouverte* (*The door didn't open*), Mudam Musée d'Art Moderne Grand-Duc Jean, Luxembourg **2005** *Ext 17*, Swiss Institute, New York

Selected Group Exhibitions **2013** *L'image papillon*, Mudam Luxembourg **2011** *Une terrible beauté est née*, Biennale de Lyon, France **2009** *Stutter*, Tate Modern, London, England **2007** *Some Time Waiting*, Kadist Art Foundation, Paris, France **2005** *Raconte moi/Tell me*, Musée National des Beaux-Arts de Québec, Québec, Canada

Selected Bibliography **2011** Khazam, Rahma. "Dominique Petitgand," *Flash Art*, Issue 278, May/June, p. 161. **2009** *Installations (documents)*, texts by D. Petitgand, interviews D. Petitgand with Vanessa Desclaux, Elodie Royer & Yoann Gourmel, Guillaume Constantin, Marinella Paderni, co-edition abbaye de Maubuisson / FRAC Lorraine / FRAC Haute-Normandie / Confort Moderne / gb agency, éditions MF, Paris.; Davies, Lillian. "Dominique Petitgand, Abbaye de Maubuisson," *Artforum*, Summer, p. 352. **2006** Nicolin, Paola. "Architettura Invisibili," *Mousse*, December, pp 56-58.; West, Kim. "Critic's Picks: Quelqu'un par terre," *Artforum.com*, December.