

NP: Yes OK I'll thank you for coming. So, I'm Nina Power, I teach philosophy at the University of Roehampton and I write for The Wire and various publications quite often. And I'm joined by Seth Kim-Cohen, who's going to introduce himself.

SKC: Yep, so I'm I teach at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago but I did my PhD here in London some time ago so it's nice to be back. I make music and art that often involves sound but I also write about sound. I've published a few books on sound in a number of articles and things like that, catalogue essays. And so we thought would be interesting to get together and talk about our shared interests and sound and specifically sound as it interacts with the world at large in terms of sociality and politics and gender. And I think the kind of overarching notion that we have about this - but Nina can of course correct me if she disagrees - is that the the discourse on this has changed over the past ten to fifteen years since there has been a field of sound studies and a field of sound art. At the beginning and for, you know, for the first half of that ten fifteen year stretch a lot of the writing around sound tried to think about sound in a very kind of de-politicized way in a very kind of autonomous way, that sound was the you know the kind of medium that didn't have the obligations of representation that images and language have. And so, you know, I think each in our own ways we've tried to combat that impression of sound and that kind of approach discursive approach to sound - and even the practical approach to sound, the way that sound gets gets made and received not just written about and talked about. So I think that's, you know, kind of a larger sense of what we're going to try to address.

NP: Yeah, totally, at least I mean I would say probably what does unite us is maybe thinking about the sort of social and the kind of political elements of sound and not just in the kind of institutional or kind of art gallery context, you know, because - so like in your book '[Against Ambience](#)' (a kind of collection of essays) you know it's quite a polemical take on the using almost, or the kind of dominance of a particular model of being related to sound. You know, as you said like the kind of 'oh against representational', you know, but also thinking about ambient sound as if it is just kind of immersive passive, you know, I mean you use quite a lot of quite feminine terms that describe it, you know, sort of the 'wombification' of sound I think you say one point and yeah, I mean that the kind of aligning with sort of sound and listening in particular and I suppose maybe, you know, some of the work I've been doing is not really about a kind of our context (apart from the sort of music review thinking about sound of music for The Wire) but thinking about the sound of the city - so I've done quite a lot of work on the prerecorded, often female, voices - 70% of these prerecorded voices that you hear in transport hubs and intimate technologies such as Siri and Cortana and so on, you know, have this kind of female voice so the kind of the sort of continuity of the secretary but the disembodied female voice that often you kind of find you might find quite seductive in some ways, and there have been various cultural expirations of that - but trying to think about that voice as the prerecorded voice of particularly in public or semi public spaces in terms of a form of political control, like, what is the political impact of these voices. you know, when they're kind of sort of softly coercing - so I try to think about soft coercion and the way in which

we're sort of steered through the city - not in a kind of maybe obvious, domineering authoritarian way - but in a more subtle way. And I suppose one thing be interesting to talk about might be some of the differences and the way in which you hear those voices and how they work differently perhaps in the U.S. context. But one thing I wanted to say about this politics of listening - and I do think you know since your kind of polemic, you know, mainly the from twenty thirteen when you're kind of very critical of this sort of art take up of ambience. You know you have like [Chino Amobi's record of 2016](#) that kind of explicitly deals with the kind of whiteness and the sort of the white modernity of ambient music as a genre - so he kind of remakes Brian Eno's record, you know, it's called "Airport Music For Black Folk" or "Black People" depending on which which edition - but where Chino Amobi records the experiences of people airports, you know, it's not this kind of meandering wandering around having this kind of 'aren't I modern and obscure and individual?' and, you know, but actually, 'look, this is the reality of borders' - and, you know, particularly if you're brown or black it isn't this kind of passive, immersive experience - it is actually much more aggressive. But in a way that's a kind of critique of ambient as a genre, you know, but kind of an intra-sonic critique which I think is very interesting. And then I guess thinking about maybe an interest, like you say, in the politics of sound and the politics of listening, so not just groups like [Ultra Red](#) who've been working for a long time but various books like [Brendan Labelle's recent book](#) which tries to think about sonic agency and listening as a kind of political practice, [Kate Lacey's work](#) and [Salome Voegelin's new book](#) is also about the kind of politics of listening. And they're all, I think - and Ultra Red as well in various contexts - you know, writing about sound and thinking about kind of protest and thinking about the way in which we listen, and things like trying to reclaim something like eavesdropping, you know, so not as this kind of suspicious repetition of a kind of paranoid moment, but actually as a form of kind of collective belonging or being together - as one way of kind of thinking about the city as an everyday sonic experience, where it's not just this passive or antagonistic or paranoid - you know you don't have to shut the sounds out in order to create your own sort of EDI-pod as Mark Fisher used to say, you know, this kind of like frightened shell. And so, it seems to me that the since you've written your polemic there have actually been quite a lot of books that are trying, you know, and essays and projects and sonic projects that try to explicitly move away from what you were going gunning for I mean, correctly, you know, but they may not all be in the kind of institutional context that you were attacking so I just wondered if you could...

SKC: Yeah I think that's right I mean I think, you know, I've noticed a change in the discourse too and in the practices. You know, I'm not going to try to take credit for that in any way - I don't think it has anything to do with with that book - but it probably has more to do with a kind of, you know, the inescapable - of the inescapability of politics now, you know, that in a way we were able maybe four years ago, three years ago, two years ago to set politics aside in certain contexts that [now] seems increasingly impossible and inadvisable. So maybe it's coming out of that, you know, just you know, Trump and Brexit are the two most obvious examples I think. But you know but so much kind of increased consciousness about the kind of, I don't know, - this would be an interesting

way to think about it too or an interesting way to talk about it because I'm not sure that these things translate across the Atlantic - but for from my experience in the US is that things that people are taking quite for granted in terms of where politics kind of sat in their lives and how much control it had over their lives and how much agency they had within politics, I think it's changed dramatically over the last few years. And so I think that to some degree that's part of why there's a turn towards thinking about sound and other things in this way. But I'm glad to see it - if that is the reason I'm not happy for the reason but I'm happy for the change in an attitude about it.

NP: I mean one thing that comes to mind in relation to Trump was, you know, actually I mean I suppose just being quite sort of cynical and skeptical perhaps about some of the political ways in which listening can also be understood right, so not just thinking about the way in which, you know, listening has become a kind of more critical discursive aspect in an active sense - but just thinking about say, for example, like Trump when he went to visit I'm afraid I can't remember the name of the school where there was yet another school shooting and he had on a bit of paper that everyone saw something like, 'we hear you'. So he had a reminder on his person, like, on a bit of paper to say 'we hear something', like, 'we'll let you know we're listening' as if, you know, he obviously had to remind himself to say it and someone or an advisor had said, you know, 'look, you need to be seen to be hearing what the children are saying', or what the people, you know, talking about the school shooting are saying - but the fact that he had to be reminded and be, you know, that it was written down like 'we hear you'

SKC: And see that he had to say it.

NP: Right, exactly.

SKC: Because there would be no other evidence that he was in fact hearing them

NP: Right. So I mean there's obviously a sense in which, like with everything, you know, there's a kind of vigilance and, you know, the co-optation - I mean thinking about I don't know, I mean of course everything can be but like the Tory Party take up of the idea of safe spaces for example, you know. Whatever looks progressive for about five minutes is then quickly coopted for the other end so as we know. I mean I suppose one thing maybe it would be interesting to push on would be just just that kind of in the broader sense experience of the city in terms of, you know, the pre recorded voice and the kind of experience of listening and how *you* think about that. I mean obviously there are lots of theories of listening that we could think of in like Pauline Oliveros, they're not always sort of directly political but it's been, you know, there is a lot a long history of thinking about that. I wonder - what you're saying about the last sort of few years 'well it's harder and harder to avoid politics (whatever we mean by that) and how that *you* think about in terms of maybe teaching students or how you think about city. I mean you're based in Chicago and as you corrected me as I have been corrected before like the windy bit of the city is not the, not the weather but the politicians bloviating in, you know, that's the

way [laughs]. You know, do you hear that wind whistling in you as this you walk around Chicago?

SKC: Yeah I mean maybe I can try to answer that by giving a quick kind of response or kind of a summary of what the the idea of the main essay in the book was. So that the book came out of a series of exhibitions in 2013 in New York all in one summer over the course of three or four months. There was a series of exhibitions - some of which expressly dealt with sound - so those would have included a show at MOMA which was the first major museum exhibition of sound work in the U.S. It's just called soundings. There was a sort of more sort of conceptually slanted sound show at a gallery in the Lower East Side in New York, and then there was a show in Chelsea that was curated by the former editor in chief of Art Forum and the title of that show was simply 'Ambient' and in the press release he cited Brian Eno and sort of made a claim that that there was a new kind of aesthetics - so this is 2013 remember, so a little bit before the political moment we're now in. In the press release for that show he said that maybe the kind of new turn in artistic work as of 2013 was towards this sense of a kind of ambient, immersive, atmosphere kind of creating kind of artwork, so there was that show, and then simultaneously there was the [James Tyrell show at the Guggenheim](#). James Tyrell had three simultaneous retrospective shows in L.A, Houston and New York of his, you know, immersive light environments and there was also a Robert Irwin show at the Whitney which was also an immersive light environment. So all these shows were happening simultaneously in New York, they all either expressly through sound or more metaphorically through light or this kind of notion of ambience, tried to talk about a kind of artistic experience that was about immersion and about kind of non signification - so we weren't supposed to kind of read and decode these artworks, we were just supposed to go and kind of you know go and luxuriate in them. As of 2013 that struck me as a kind of regressive move - it seemed like, you know, heading in the wrong direction in terms of a kind of re-embrace of Tyrell and Irwin but also that you know the editor-in-chief of Art Forum, somebody who's got his finger on the pulse of the art world is now, you know, he's left that position its first big curatorial work after that and he's proposing 'ambient' - interestingly written always with a lowercase a. So it was really ambient, you know, not 'Ambient'. Yeah, so I was trying to push back on that and say that, you know is this really what we want at this point in time, you know, and trying to - one of the kind of moves in the essay is to say, you know if you look at James Tyrell's work it's interesting that the kind of notion of what you're supposed to get out of a James Tyrell light immersive, light installation is this non-signifying immersive experience where you just kind of go and you don't think and you don't decode you just experience - and yet, if you look through all the text that accompanies James Tyrell's career in catalog copy and press releases, in every interview he's ever done the same set of discursive supports emerge. So he always talks about the fact that during the Vietnam War he had a pilot's license and he would fly people who wanted to avoid the draft out of the U.S. into Canada, he always talked about how he studied perceptual psychology as an undergrad. You know, I don't know, at least in the U.S. to study something as an undergrad means you took maybe two, possibly three courses in the subjects of it doesn't exactly make you an expert. He talked

about slightly after college renting a hotel room in Santa Monica California and then cutting holes in the ceiling and the walls of the of the hotel room to let light in at certain angles so he was destroying the hotel room - kind of some form of rock'n'roll hotel room destruction but, you know, in order to sort of experiment with how light came through certain apertures in the in the room. And then the big story about him flying in his plane around the US looking for something and he didn't know what, you know, this is how he always tells the story - he was looking for something but he didn't know what it was until he found it when he discovered this crater, I think in Mexico - I forget if it's in Mexico or Arizona - but in the desert southwest in the U.S. Finding this crater and thinking that's, that's my calling, I need that crater. I need to have that crater and then looking into buying that piece of land with a crater on it so that he could then cut apertures into the crater the way he had done with a hotel room in Santa Monica. And then the additional bit of that story which I think is very telling is that he went to buy this piece of land and the bank said, 'well we're not going to give you a loan to buy this kind of useless crater but if you buy, you know, an additional hundred acres around it and then you put cattle on that land then you can turn a profit on the cattle, then they'll be return on your investment and you can pay back the loan for the for the land.' So they insisted that he buy more land that he wanted in order to do this, and he went back to his wife and said, you know, 'I want to buy the land and the bank says I need to buy more land, but I really want to do this I'm going to take the loan.' And his wife said, 'if you do that I'm leaving and I'm taking the kids.' And he bought the land anyway and she left and took the kids. Yeah so the point of all that is to say that you know that this supposedly non-discursive ambient experience that we're supposed to have in a Tyrell is supported by all this narrative and all these kind of substantiating and justifying facts, you know, so it doesn't really seem like the work functions the way that it's purported to function, it really feels that for curators at the very least and funders - but also I think for large percentages of his audience - there's a lot of knowing that has to happen before you really can sort of trust or properly experience the work so that's what I was trying to get up there.

SKC: And then I thought - maybe being a little long winded here so I'll try and try not to be too Chicago and bloviate but - you know I think my feeling about this is that this is true of any sonic experience, and it's really true of any experience. We contextualise our experiences through a set of facts, or knowledge experiences cross referencing with other forces in the world, political, you know - about identity, about gender, about economics, about class - and make sense of those things in particular places in particular times based on those cross references. The same is true for Tyrell but in terms of our experience of non-art kind of urban song if you very much I think the same is true it's not - you asked about what do I say with student - one thing I try to say early in sound classes with students is, you know, if you're walking down the street and you hear the sound of footsteps behind you the meaning of that sound is not simply the sound right? It depends on who you are. Are you male, are you female? Are you black, are you white? It depends on what part of town you're in, it depends on maybe, you know, the sort of weight of those footsteps and what kind of body you then attach to what you think you're hearing in those footsteps. It depends on whether it's day or night, it depends on whether

you have money in your pockets or not and you know, so that the sound of it - you know, I just don't believe in the notion of sound in itself - it's so dependent on all these other contextual factors. So I try to use that kind of example of, you know, because they've all walked to class through Chicago so they've probably just had this experience you know earlier that day or the previous day or whatever, so maybe they've had to have to kind of process footsteps recently. So I do try to think about that, contextualizing those kinds of sounds well.

NP: Yeah, no totally. I guess as a couple of things that come to mind in terms of what generally, I mean one thing would be the role of conceptual art or you know the conceptual dimension as in, as part of a context for certain pieces of sound art. So one of the figures we wanted to talk about was Christine Kozlov and also the way in which in particular has been kind of erased, but also the way in which the work is kind of about erasure, the level of recording. And it fits I think with something that you say in the book, you know, where you state that we deserve an art that is the equal of our information age, you know, and to try to think what an art that would be sufficient to critique, conceptualize - whatever you want to say - contextualize, make relational, our situation vis a vis - not just kind of maybe more obvious questions of spying, thinking about NSA and the Internet Age in you know, that every keystroke is captured, every object record sounds somehow in its very being - but also I guess you know, more in terms of his thinking about the history of art and theorizing about the history of art as conceptual art, you know so - the kind of the reclamation of ambient or the presentation of ambient in 2013 that you're sort of diagnosing obviously in a way has to erase that kind of conceptual relation to sound which already exists, you know, like in 60's and 70's, you know, it kind of pretends that it's not really there in a way. So that I guess there are kind of two points there - one of which would be about the conceptual dimension of somebody like Christine Kozlov's work and maybe - I know you've just given a talk in Paris about her work in particular - maybe you could show you some images? And then the more broad question about, you know, the art equal to the information age - what would that be to you?

SKC: Yeah. How many are familiar with Christine Kozlov's work? Yeah. That's what I expected. It's amazing how she's been completely erased from the history of conceptual art despite the fact that she founded the Lannis with Joseph Kosuth, they co-founded it in 1967 which is often thought of as the year that the term comes into being. So you know the very moment of the invention of conceptual art, she and Kosuth are opening a gallery devoted to that kind of work. She's there right at the beginning opening the first place where you can kind of show this work and, you know, is never mentioned when they talk about you know - I heard about the Lannis Gallery decades before hearing her name connected to the Lannis Gallery. And then she was involved in some of the really significant shows in the early moments of both conceptual art and kind of information art, so the big show called Information 1970 at MOMA, she was involved in that, she was involved in a number of Seth Seigeleub's important early conceptual art shows, so she was there at the very beginning making work alongside the people whose names we

now associate with conceptual art, but her name is left out of that history. So yeah, I'll bring up a couple of things.



“Information: No Theory” as presented at the 2015 show ‘Information’ at the Henry Moore Institute. Photo by Jerry Hardman-Jones.

SKC: Oh. Yes I mean it's not much to look at, it's not much to look at frankly but this was a piece that she made in 1971 called '[Information: No Theory](#)' which consists of a reel to reel tape recorder set up in the gallery, and it records a two minute tape loop of the gallery space, so of the space that the spectator is in, and then after two minutes it records over that two minutes. So every two minutes it's re-recording over the previous two minutes, and the tape is the never played back. It's interesting to think about this in lots of different ways in terms of information, in terms of a kind of conceptual gesture, in terms of a kind of gesture of absence or erasure, but also as a kind of act of surveillance you know - if you're in the room with this thing you know you're being recorded. But you also know because the text on the upper left tells us that that that the tape will never be listened to, you also know that there's no listener on the other end of this recording. And she - there's a kind of history to this work, let me see if I can get these up without making a mess -

CHRISTINE KOZLOV, New York

Conditions: Continuous recording

Duration: 24 hours

Date: March 19, 1969

Time: 12 am to 12 am

Tape specifications: Loop tape, duration 1 hour

Actual amount of sound recorded: 24 hours

Actual amount of sound on tape: 1 hour

SKC: So this is - in March of 1969 Seth Seigelaub organised an exhibition called 'One Month' but also sometimes referred to as 'March 1969' in which he sent out a form letter to 31, 31 days in March? Yeah. Yeah, to 31 artists one for each day of the month of March asking them to send something akin to proposal for a work and then it would just be printed you know in paper form and so the works wouldn't be materially realized other than their material realization you know on the paper proposal. And this was hers on the 19th of March which just says 'Conditions: continuous recording. Duration: 24hours.

Date: March 1969. Time: 12am-12am. Tape Specification: Loop Tape duration one hour. Actual amount of sound recorded: 24hours. Total amount of sound on tape: 1hour. So this was, this is the same idea but in a one hour loop which those of you who work with tape know it's fairly hard to get a one hour loop - but you know it never it was never realized they didn't have to solve that technical problem. But this is the same idea of recording an hour's worth of sound and then immediately recording over that one hour with another hour for that for twenty four hours, and at the end you would have one hour audio so this is you can think of this as like the, you know the kind of early version, and then 'Information : No Theory' in some ways is the kind of more materially realized version. And then one other work I will mention.

And then this is a work from 1968 called 'Information Drift' and it's just a reel of magnetic tape framed and then a little bit of text below that says that it's a compilation of recordings of broadcasts of the shootings of Robert Kennedy and Andy Warhol which took place within about twenty eight hours of each other in June of 1968. So this is another kind of tape work that's you know, that exists as a kind of object that doesn't actually produce audio. But somehow alludes to audio. Yeah there's a little quick introduction to Christine Kozlov.

NP: There was one other work that I was particularly interested which was called '271 Sheets of Paper Corresponding to 271 Days of Concepts Rejected' which I really liked and there's obviously the resonance in the title of 'Information: No Theory'. OK so I was reading about this in terms of how do you preserve sort of anti-representational contextual work - so does it make sense to keep 271 now yellowed blank pieces of paper, or would it be the same work if you just had new blank pieces of paper? Right? So there's a kind of question about preservation - we don't necessarily need to go into that - but what I think is kind of interesting is that you know as you pointed out in some of your writing on Kozlov is that you know it's often dismissed as kind of hermetic, you know hyper contempt, cold, whatever, but actually another way of thinking about it is precisely thinking about in terms of kind of lack and void and as a kind of you know really active claim. I mean to say, you know, 271 days of concepts rejected is a kind of - there's a statement - that is not simply saying 'this thing refers to itself', you know, it's kind of completely pointing outside what it - what are the material conditions in which no concepts can be reduced? Or you know that kind of thing. It raises all kinds of questions, not least questions around you know gender and who has time and who can be the artist and I guess you know one thing that I tried to write about recently was thinking about this concept of the void, and thinking about the role of the void in particular relation to minimalism in relation to Audrey Wallin's very funny piece where you know, she says 'girls own the the void backoff fuckers' and she crosses out all of these minimalist works of John Cage and various other conceptual artists. And I think there was something very kind of provocative in that joke or gesture or however you want to read it - so trying to think about minimalism maybe in conceptual work in relation to questions of race and gender, and I'm also thinking about the way in which Eastman has been kind of resurrected in recent years as a kind of black minimalist you know forgotten, you know

died young and and that there's really been a kind of attempt to - not just the Chino Amobi project with vis-a-vis a kind of intra-critique of ambient music - but you know, to try to rethink the legacy in origin of these - not just the conceptual ideas but the entire genres of work - you know, what is minimalism if it's not just Cage etc, but actually was always something other as well. I think yeah, what if kind of conceptual minimalism or whatever you want to say was always something else as well you know? And that actually works like and artists like Kozlov make it harder to simply say 'well minimalism is just these things,' or 'conceptualism is just these things'. There is something more interesting always going on and as you point out also politically, you know - these are about the gaps on the Watergate tapes, these are about the absences of the political story that we're being told. You know, and the same is still true, what messages are we given, what are we allowed to hear, what are we not allowed to hear? I mean think about N.S.A. and so on you know.

SKC: I mean one thought about that is you know how does it complicate the claim that the void belongs to women if we don't think of the void as a void anymore? That it's, you know, that it's not the absence that it's purported to be. I don't have any good answer for that but you know but I don't take any of these things as a voice in that sense, but that the very little writing that there is on Kozlov always does make this claim - there's literally like three essays written about her, literally - and two out of the three rest entirely on the idea that her work is hermetic and about absence, the third one kind of hems and haws or at least kind of gives to two sides of the story - one that makes the same claims about Hermeticism and absence in the other, but then also kind of recuperates a little bit of how it's reflective of its time in a way. Yeah and that's the way that some of these works function and I think it's some of the way you know some of what Kozlov's doing with the work like this one where she's giving us an unlistenable tape about these two acts of violence against powerful men, you know, within twenty eight hours of each other. You know it's about a lot, even though we can't hear it you know. And it's about the events, but it's about the tape, it's about the kind of artistic obsession with tapes and information systems in the late 60's, and it's about the artistic obsession with the void, and with absence and with reduction and minimalism. It's about all that stuff you know it's a very information rich work even though we can't listen to the tape. But I think that's the mistake that the critics who have written about her make and then you know a lot of critics make the same mistakes about other artists you know yeah, but - I mean one of the things I do write about with this work is how it's so close in time to the to Nixon's taping system in the White House which eventually led to his downfall and specifically the fact that he erased eighteen and a half minutes of audio on a particular tape that the court had subpoenaed to try to cover himself, but in fact those eighteen and a half minutes were his undoing because they assume that if you erase a very particular eighteen and a half minutes there had to be something incriminating. So they spoke despite being you know, blank, essentially. So I think it's a similar kind of logic and it's it's a logic that pervades the kind of uptake of information systems at this time - if you think about the late 60's into the early 70's it's you know the beginning of Xeroxing as being a pervasive technology and there's also the political use of that, and you know the release

of the Pentagon Papers when Daniel Ellsberg who was a kind of a defense contractor had stolen papers from his office taken them to. He had a friend who had a girlfriend who had a advertising agency who had a copy machine in the advertising agency and so he would sneak the papers out and go to her office at night and photocopy you know two or three hundred pages a night and return them eventually copying seven thousand pages worth of these documents and leaking them to newspapers and revealing that the U.S. government for five successive presidential administrations had kind of covered up what they knew about the Vietnam War. And interestingly his assistants for that - what I call durational photocopying, you know, it's like a kind of a directional artwork but it's him in the at the photocopier - his assistants for that process were his nine and eleven year old children, so he got his kids to come and help you know collate. As the papers came out of the machine his kids had to put them in the right piles - imagine a nine year old, you're a nine year old kid and you're collating the documents that are going to bring down, you know bring the support for the war Vietnam and then eventually maybe bring down the government. So, so all that's happening almost simultaneously, so these things don't exist in vacuums - there's nothing hermetic about this work - it's quite resonant with other technologies and gestures and relationships to information. And information as power I think is a really important part of this. Nixon erased those eighteen minutes because he thought 'if no one has them then no one has power over me' and he made the recordings in the first place - sorry, I'm rambling a little so I'll fill in some blanks here - Nixon set up this taping system and all of his offices, he had multiple offices, and he set up this taping system in order to tape without telling people he was in conversations with in order to tape those conversations so that if someone turned out to be a political rival or someone he wanted to kind of get out of the way then he would presumably have evidence on these tapes that he could use against them. So he was taping everything just in case he needed something against someone so it's - again it's using information as a possession that can then be turned against someone. I have this thing and I have it and I can use it against you and then he thought, you know, the inverse of that logic is 'if I erase those eighteen and a half minutes then no one has it so there is no power there anymore' but he was wrong, you know, there was.

NP: In a way the absence of the silence is precisely the you know...Yeah I mean I guess two things come to mind I mean one of which is obviously the absurdity of the Twitter age and you know the kind of infinite recording age that we live in you know where everything you say and do is kind of there, and you know in a sense Twitter was going to go down and then Trump comes on the scene and Twitter is back there again and and I spose you know that's maybe an obvious point but that kind of, you know, 'the Internet never forgets idea' and then I suppose the kind of you know if we think about the Stasi and the kind of listening and recording devices under that regime I mean it's absolutely zero compared to you know the sheer listening power of devices that we willingly buy and use and I mean I don't but like generally speaking [laughs]. That kind of anxiety around being listened to has somehow kind of been generically forgotten somehow and that's kind of strange you know. Yeah and I think at the same time we're not sort of speaking to each other as much you know people don't call on the phone they just text,

so we're moving into a kind of really strange combination of tech space social life, you know, modes of communication that are primarily quite cold visually you know like visual cold mediums in which our voices become like generic voices - and this is has a strong political point if you think about the work of [Adriana Caverero](#) and her work around the singularity of the voice - and actually the voice when we talk about the voice of the people in a political sense yes, but it's not the people speaking as one it's everybody speaking in their own voice in a certain way, and the voice is what you know uniquely identifies more than anything else in a certain way you know about fingerprints and so on. You know, I'm thinking about the work of Lawrence Abu Hamdan around you know the kind of border control around the policing of voices you know so the way in which people claiming asylum are - you know, experts are brought in to adjudicate whether this person really is from the region they say they're being persecuted in you know that kind of policing of the voice

SKC: By analysing their accent

NP: Yeah by analyzing very specific details about how they speak you know so there's that kind of politics, another politics of the voice that's deeply linked. So there's all that going on. But one thing came to mind in terms of the kind of political sort of machinations in the Machiavellianism of what Nixen was trying to do with recording everyone, um, just reminded me of a much older idea about the difference between the Greeks and the Romans in terms of how they drank wine together in symposia. Right, so this is like kind of interesting so, I mean, supposedly the Greeks would all drink the same wine together - so whether you wanted to have a really excessive drunken evening or a kind of more sort of sedate thing that the wine would be watered at the beginning and everybody would drink the same strength wine so you would get kind of collectively, similarly drunk. Obviously there are individual differences in that if people get drunk - and we're all talking about you know men - it's just mad [laughs]. But what the Roman innovation was was that you could add your own water to your own wine but what this meant was that obviously people who wanted kind of political capital would let other people get much more drunk and they would stay much more sober and they would listen to the you know the confessions or the feelings of the person, the man, next to them and then would remember them right and then use them against them politically because you weren't getting drunk collectively anymore. And this just reminds me so much of like Nixon's kind of 'well if I record everyone at some point someone's going to say something I can use later on' and you know and Twitter just seems to serve this function but people are doing it voluntarily it's like you know [laughs]

SKC: Technological sobriety

NP: Right

SKC: The technology is sober even if we're not.

NP: I don't know, you know, that was a weird set of thoughts but [laughs]

SKC: We were going to get around to it but I'm glad you initiated...

[Breaks into Q&A]