

The Forty Part Motet in New York City after 9/11

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Abstract

In Janet Cardiff's *The Forty Part Motet* (2001, *40Part*), 'a reworking of Thomas Tallis's *Spem in alium* (c. 1570)', the forty voice parts of the motet are played back via forty speakers. Visitors walk through and around the encompassing speakers arrayed in eight groups of five. Still in constant demand, *40Part* enjoys unparalleled success in the contemporary art scene. This article shows how *40Part* became associated with New York City's rituals of remembrance and healing after 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy, and considers the politics of the installation's stagings as part of those commemorations. Here, *40Part* took on a specifically comforting function that speaks to larger tendencies in twenty-first-century auditory culture, American cultural responses to trauma, and commemorative uses of music, which are built on white bourgeois sentimental attachments and the techno-social production of imagined spaces and times of privilege.

Cardiff offers a fourteen-minute bath of warm Renaissance counterpoint – a sauna for the mind. Physical and virtual space fuse. Normally, your ears will tell you where you are in the world, but not here.¹

The Forty Part Motet (2001; hereafter *40Part*) is a sound installation by Canadian artist Janet Cardiff that 'reworks' Thomas Tallis's *Spem in alium numquam habui* (c. 1570).² Members of the Salisbury Cathedral Choir performed Tallis's motet in 2001, and the forty voice parts were recorded separately. In Cardiff's installation, the audio tracks are played back via forty speakers – one per voice – distributed in a large oval within the exhibition space. The speakers are arranged in eight groups of five that correspond to the eight choirs of Tallis's piece. This arrangement of *40Part* allows visitors to move around the speakers as they select and try out

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This research was supported by the Baisley Powell Elebash Fund. A postdoctoral fellowship at Cornell University's Society for the Humanities enabled me to finish writing this article. I am also grateful to Emily Wilbourne, Karen Henson, Benjamin Piekut, Irina Troconis, Anne Stone, Tess Rankin, and Catherine Provenzano for their useful feedback and support at various stages, as well as to the anonymous reviewers for their valuable comments and generous engagement with this piece.

- 1 Justin Davidson, 'Polyphonic Spree: Janet Cardiff's Forty-Part Motet Flirts with Cacophony – and Is Instead Sublime', *New York Magazine*, 1 November 2010, <https://nymag.com/arts/classicaldance/classical/reviews/69340/>.
- 2 Art institutions and critics have used numerous variations on the installation's title since it was released in 2001. *The Forty Part Motet*, with the subtitle '(A reworking of "Spem in Alium" by Thomas Tallis 1573)', is the version that appears on Cardiff's website.

different listening positions and combinations of parts – they can choose to linger next to specific speakers and focus on individual voice parts/singers, wander around, or stay in the middle of the room and listen to the whole choir. The installation's aural component is a fourteen-minute loop – eleven minutes of *Spem in alium* and three minutes of intermission – that runs continuously during visiting hours, so that visitors can potentially experience the piece several times during their visit.

Cardiff's work is arguably the most widely known and beloved sound installation to date. Ever since its creation in 2001, the installation has been in demand and on display around the world. Cardiff's reworking of *Spem in alium* is, for art critic Blake Gopnik, 'one of the best works, in any medium, of the last decades'³ and, value judgements aside, the *Art Newspaper* describes it as one of the most 'ubiquitous contemporary works of the past few years'.⁴ As Cardiff herself puts it, *40Part* has taken on 'a life of its own'.⁵ Despite its tremendous popularity, *40Part* has received scant and mostly perfunctory scholarly consideration.⁶ Most references to the installation are limited to succinct descriptions that highlight the freedom of (musical) choice and of movement that Cardiff's installation grants its visitors and cite *40Part* as exemplifying trends in sound installation art or in Cardiff's oeuvre.⁷

3 Blake Gopnik, 'Did You Hear That? It Was Art?', *New York Times*, 1 August 2013, <https://nyti.ms/13zW8nE>.

4 Cristina Ruiz, 'Coming Soon to a Museum near You? You Can Never Have Too Much of a Good Thing', *Art Newspaper*, July/August 2015, 42–3.

5 Cardiff, quoted in 'Madame Speaker: Thomas Tallis Gets Rare 24-Bit Gallery Treatment', *Politico*, 27 October 2010, www.politico.com/states/new-york/albany/story/2010/10/madame-speaker-thomas-tallis-gets-rare-24-bit-gallery-treatment-000000.

6 This is particularly true when compared to the attention given to other Cardiff pieces, notably her series of audio walks. See, for instance, the discussion of Cardiff's work in Caleb Kelly, *Gallery Sound* (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 61–2 and 102–10, and in Seth Kim-Cohen, *In the Blink of an Ear: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art* (New York: Continuum, 2009), 223–9. To be experienced on location with headphones, Cardiff's audio walks are not and cannot become hits, and more readily fit the distinction between sound art and music core to the project that, as Brian Kane has shown, much literature on sound installations aligns with. That said, *40Part* is not necessarily representative of Cardiff's body of work, whether solo or in collaboration with her creative partner Bures Miller. Albeit engaging elements core to *40Part* (e.g., the centrality of auditory-spatial dimensions), Cardiff's works have little to do with the aspects that have proven to be most salient and cherished in the installation's circulation and use (i.e., *Spem in alium*). Brian Kane, 'Musicophobia, or Sound Art and the Demands of Art Theory', *NONSITE* 8 (2012).

7 See, for example, Kelly, *Gallery Sound*; Kim-Cohen, *In the Blink*; Natasa Paterson and Fionnuala Conway, 'Engagement, Immersion and Presence: The Role of Audio Interactivity in Location-aware Sound Design', in *The Oxford Handbook of Interactive Audio*, ed. Kasey Collins, Bill Kapralos, and Holly Tessler (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 266; Fari Bradley, 'A New Materiality Post-Speaker Sound Art', in *The Oxford Handbook of Sound Art*, ed. Jane Grant, John Matthias, and David Prior (New York: Oxford University Press, 2021). This type of cursory treatment is by no means exceptional in sound art literature. Joseph Browning, briefly and pointedly, has criticized the literature's inattention to sound art practices 'in practice'. Joseph Browning, 'Meeting the Garden Halfway: Ethnographic Encounters with a Sound Installation Microculture', *Ethnomusicology* 64/3 (2020), 498–9. One exception is Andrew Albin's discussion of *40Part*'s show at The Met Cloisters (2013), also in New York City, in 'Desiring Medieval Sound', *SoundingOut!* 9 May 2016, <https://soundstudiesblog.com/2016/05/09/desiring-medieval-sound/>.

This sound installation is neither site-specific – to the contrary, it has been shown ‘in any conceivable kind of place’⁸ and, as its exhibition history shows, can be transposed into diverse contexts – nor ‘political’, that is, concerned with politics in the way the ‘critical sonic-spatial practices’ that Gascia Ouzounian has identified are.⁹ That does not mean, however, that there is not a politics to the forms of auditory-bodily engagement the installation encourages and to the ways curators have framed those engagements, and how audiences have experienced them, in particular contexts. I propose that the differentiated sonic environment that *40Part* creates in each iteration of the installation not only engages its immediate physical location but also participates in a broader set of sociospatial and temporal relations for the duration of its display, by virtue of being located in that specific place. The installation enters into and animates social choreographies wherein the movements of visitors in, toward, and around the confines of the installation, as well as the temporary gatherings that occur there, are always implicated in the larger social relations and negotiations that are central to political and civic life and to its performance. In this sense, all the iterations of *40Part* can be said to have political and social stakes. In this article, I examine *40Part*’s localized trajectory in New York City and show what was at stake – though rarely acknowledged – in an instance in which Cardiff’s installation was called upon to do specific cultural work, and became entangled in complex psychosocial and material processes.

The installation was first shown in New York City on 14 October 2001. It was part of a mid-career survey of Cardiff’s work at the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center (now MoMA PS1) in Long Island City, Queens.¹⁰ The show coincided with the recent aftermath of 9/11, and ‘people started gathering in [*40Part*], and these audiences grew and grew and grew. There was never any sound except for the Thomas Tallis hymn.’¹¹ During autumn 2001, *40Part* became a site of mourning and catharsis for museum visitors. This early reception of *40Part* established it within the city’s rituals of remembrance and healing. I will show how a decade later, in the early 2010s,¹² Cardiff’s spatialized rendering of the Elizabethan motet was

8 Janet Cardiff, ‘Janet Cardiff’s Sound Sculpture’, interview by Natasha Kurchanova, *Studio International*, 17 September 2013, www.studiointernational.com/index.php/janet-cardiff.

9 Gascia Ouzounian, *Stereophonica: Sound and Space in Science, Technology, and the Arts* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2020), 118–24. Ouzounian’s distinction between a poetics and a politics of space in sound installation art practices is predicated on authorial intent – on soundworks being conceived, designed, and placed so as to make particular sonic-spatial interventions wherein sound and listening are purportedly deployed as, or else shown to be, tools for sociopolitical critique and work. Considerations of the politics of sound-based artworks, more broadly, have been largely limited to discussions of socially engaged artworks and/or of works that address ‘political’ issues.

10 *Janet Cardiff: A Survey of Works Including Collaborations with George Bures Miller*, 14 October 2001 – 31 January 2002, P.S.1 Contemporary Art Center, New York City. An affiliate of the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) since 2000, the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center was renamed MoMA PS1 in 2009.

11 Alanna Heiss, founder and director of P.S. 1, quoted in Daniela Rios, ‘Early Adopters of MoMA PS1 Look Back on Its 40-Year History’, *ArtNet News*, 24 June 2016, <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/40-years-of-moma-ps1-521849>.

12 In 2002 and following its momentous city premiere, one of *40Part*’s editions became part of the MoMA collection; this facilitated and partly accounts for *40Part*’s presence in MoMA PS1’s *September 11, The Forty Part Motet*, and *Rockaway! Via MoMA*, *40Part* was part of the inventory and available to join New York City’s objectified cultural capital – for the duration of its exhibition and at the discretion of a private nonprofit. More broadly, MoMA’s acquisition also accounts for the installation’s popularity and ubiquity in New York City. MoMA’s *40Part* edition was displayed in

expressly recruited as a techno-social response to 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy. It served to mark the tenth anniversary of 9/11 while recreating its own presence in the city in 2001 in MoMA PS1's *September 11* (11 September 2011–9 January 2012), and it remained in the museum's sculpture room throughout the entire year as *Janet Cardiff: The Forty Part Motet* (12 January – 10 September 2012), a single-work show that immediately followed the group exhibition. In 2014, *40Part* was installed at Fort Tilden's military chapel, as part of the first edition of *Rockaway!* (June–September 2014), an arts festival that celebrated the then-ongoing rebuilding of the Rockaway Peninsula, in Queens, and the reopening of the Fort Tilden historical district after the destruction caused by Hurricane Sandy in 2012.

This article interrogates the commemorative framing and uses of *40Part* in the wake of 9/11 and Hurricane Sandy. I argue that Cardiff's installation was employed as a techno-social tool for comfort – in the case of *Rockaway!* it was explicitly conceived as part of a 'relief effort'. In this context, *40Part* served to channel and to soothe ethno-culturally specific and class-specific angst regarding modern ruination and social atomization that was a response to the scale and complexity of the violence of 9/11 and of Sandy and, in turn, to the difficulty of commemorating and processing these traumatic events in the city.

By looking at what happened in, around, and beyond *40Part*, and by attending to the discourses and the logics underlying its commemorative deployment as well as to the imagined communities and effective assemblies the installation conjured up or else foreclosed, I question the ethical and social implications of the staging of the installation in the context of the *September 11* and *Rockaway!* exhibitions. These *40Part* commemorative stagings were built on white bourgeois sentimental attachments and the techno-social production of spaces and times of privilege. Yet its curation and content muted the complicity of those attachments and privilege in contemporary violence, that is, in the realities and immediate context that the installation's spatialized renderings of *Spem in alium* were meant to transcend. This comforting and anaesthetizing function, although inseparable from the affections and significance of *40Part* in its charged New York City commemorative iterations, was enabled by ideas about the transcendence and timeliness of *Spem in alium* that were embedded in the installation. It was also built on enculturated material orientations and a sensory training that manifests as *philia*s towards specific types of sonic materials (in this case, early music vocality)¹³ and environments that are markedly white and that are, too, attuned to neoliberal ideals

five out of the seven New York iterations of the piece to date. P.S. 1 (2001–2) and The Cloisters, where *40Part* was shown in 2013, loaned the National Gallery of Canada's edition.

13 The voices in *40Part* arguably are in marked sympathy with ideals of purity and with whiteness. Melanie Marshall has tackled the purity cliché of early music vocality, historicizing its British roots along with the service of the purity ideal as a tool for white supremacist and patriarchal control in 'Voce Bianca: Purity and Whiteness in British Early Music Vocality', *Women & Music: A Journal of Gender and Culture* 19 (2015). The 'pure' vocal style Marshall describes was associated with *voce bianca* – an epithet for children's voices and also a technique for adult female singers in search of a desexualized and 'unpolluted' vocality – and with Anglican institutions, such as the Salisbury Cathedral School and Choirs. For the recording of *40Part*, thirty-two adult male choristers (alto, tenor, baritone, and bass parts) were joined by twenty-seven choir children.

and practices.¹⁴ Whiteness and, particularly, whiteness's coalescence with classical music and specific late liberal modalities of listening (and of failing to do so) are a condition of possibility for and a major animating force behind the situated processes this article examines. One of main ways these white, neoliberal ideals operated in *40Part's* cultural history in New York City was by omission, by exnomination;¹⁵ therefore, naming them is part of this article's groundwork.

The installation's descriptive entry in the MoMA catalogue – 'the sublime glory that the divine has held in the imagination of believers for centuries is made palpable'¹⁶ – along with the specific framing of the installation in *Take Two* (MoMA, 2005–6), where *40Part* was part of a thematic ensemble of 'works that immerse the viewer in a total space as a means to provoke a sensory feeling and body-conscious response',¹⁷ intimated a set of investments around Cardiff's 'reworking' of Tallis's motet that were summoned and amplified in *40Part's* stagings in *September 11* and *Rockaway!* First, there is a hyperbolic and vague profession of *40Part's* transcendence (thanks to the supposedly transcendent nature of *Spem in alium*): the installation is deemed able to escape the mundane and the passage of time while bringing back, making 'palpable' – touching, present – *Spem in alium*. The Anglo-European Christian past and genealogy that *40Part* summons and that visitors are seemingly invited to join is at once left unnamed and unmistakable. Simultaneously, the motet's spatialized rendering is approached as an intensely somatic and haptic, which is to say, bodily experience of a curated environment, of temporary inhabitation, wherein *40Part* frames and works as a differentiated, extra-ordinary space in which visitors are invited to immerse, and to be affected.

In what follows, I first discuss the modalities of auditory engagement that *40Part* advances. This reworking of *Spem in alium* enabled safe intimacies and privatized experiences, as well as, simultaneously, an impression of historicity and a sense of here and now – all of which

14 See Mack Hagood on soundscaping devices, neoliberal ideals, and forms of self-actualization in 'Quiet Comfort: Noise, Otherness, and the Mobile Production of Personal Space', *American Quarterly* 63/3 (2011); Sarah Sharma on the production of 'slow places', self-management, and inequality in *In the Meantime: Temporality and Cultural Politics* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2014).

15 See George Lewis's discussion of the term in 'Improvised Music after 1950: Afrological and Eurological Perspectives', *Black Music Research Journal* 22/1 (2002), 223–7.

16 MoMA, *MoMA Highlights since 1980* (New York: Museum of Modern Art, 2007), 195. MoMA's description of its acquisition, which can be understood as sanctioning *40Part's* promotion to the contemporary art canon, also sanctions and is symptomatic of (*40Part's*) *Spem in alium's* sublimation into art's highest heights. Such elevation, at odds with the 'mainstream' status and appeal of Tallis's motet within the United Kingdom's choral music culture, is characteristic of the reception and significance of, via *40Part*, *Spem in alium* in the diverted contexts of contemporary art spaces; it is, too, telling of white American bourgeois attachments that have become activated by the installation/motet.

17 MoMA, 'Take Two. Worlds and Views: Contemporary Art from the Collection: New Installation in MoMA's Contemporary Galleries Traces Common Themes across Generations and Nationalities', press release, 26 August 2005, https://assets.moma.org/documents/moma_press-release_387093.pdf?_ga=2.173347555.1772662745.1632409671-746402983.1630347571. Among other publications, *New York Times*, *Art in America*, *Hyperallergic*, *The Guardian*, *Brooklyn Rail*, *Art Rated*, and *New Yorker* published glowing reviews of *40Part's* New York City shows describing the installation as 'transcendent', 'achingly beautiful', 'sublime', 'otherworldly', 'spiritual', or 'an artwork of full-immersion beauty'. They use spatial terms and/or metaphors of enclosure ('spatial meditation', 'sauna for the mind', 'virtual space', 'physical space of sound and emotion', 'environ', 'warm bath', 'refuge') and, invariably, stress the extraordinary emotional effects *40Part* has on its visitors.

were fundamental to *40Part*'s commemorative services in New York City. I will show how the prioritization of individual encounters with the music, of 'transcendence' over historical contextualization, of an encultured sense of comfort, and of an apparent sense of freedom in the how the visitor experiences the piece is what won the installation accolades for its commemorative work while concealing the politics of those priorities and their complicity with modern violence.

Listening in and to *40Part*

Notable in the experience of *40Part* is the fact that visitors can move through the space, from speaker to speaker, or remain still, choosing positions from which to listen to one or many voices. The notion that *40Part* allows visitors to freely shape their own experience and, in particular, that this freedom of movement avoids situating, even trapping, listeners in the traditional concert audience position, permeates discussions of this installation as well as, ironically, prescriptions of how to engage with it.¹⁸ This understanding of how the installation functions is, I suggest, misleading. First, it confuses greater control over certain aspects of one's auditory experience (of *Spem in alium*) with freedom. Second, it makes it harder to recognize and to address the ways in which, in practice, *40Part*'s framings and reception are coded in white bourgeois ideals of contemplative listening. Lastly, when invoked as a truism, the notion takes for granted that being free to choose your own (listening) path solo while among others is emancipatory and intrinsically desirable, thus naturalizing values that, following Mack Hagood, are rooted in neoliberal understandings of the self.¹⁹ While the visitor is free (and encouraged) to move around and (has) to choose their listening positions, that freedom is relative – it is 'freeing' in comparison to stereo reproductions and live renditions of Tallis's motet – and is qualified. First, simply put, there is only so much a *40Part* visitor can do – there exist limited possible engagements as well as implicit and explicit rules that, for instance, prevent visitors from singing along or from touching the installation's hardware. Second, the spatial arrangement of the installation and its sonic 'substance' encourage specific engagements and evoke, at the same time, a repertoire of contemporary audiocultural, somatic, mystic-spiritual practices and tropes; these, too, orient what visitors do with, think about, and get from the spatialized mechanical rendering of *Spem in alium*.

The installation also crafts a particular form of intimacy. It frames, and takes over, an acoustic space that is delimited by the inward-facing speakers. While experiencing *40Part*, you are inside the oval and inside the voice parts of *Spem in alium* – as Cardiff has said, 'when you walk into the space, the sound is so three-dimensional for you, that it is like walking into a piece of music'.²⁰ She chose 'the intimacy of the voice of the singer' to be 'the essence of

18 See, for example, Kelly, *Gallery Sound*, 62; Bradley, 'Post-Speaker Sound Art', 205, 210; Michael Wilson, *How to Read Contemporary Art* (Farnborough: Thames & Hudson, 2013), 82.

19 Hagood, 'Quiet Comfort', 573–5, 579–86.

20 Cardiff's comment in Lori Halloran, 'One Collective Breath: Janet Cardiff's "The Forty Part Motet"', *KQED*, 3 December 2015, video, www.kqed.org/arts/11126921/one-collective-breath-janet-cardiffs-the-forty-part-motet.

[*Spem in alium*].²¹ This work is, to paraphrase Anahid Kassabian, ‘one of those settings in which music is experienced through more than ears’,²² allowing for haptic and somatic engagements with music, hence its enveloping, ‘oceanic’ effects. As Cardiff explains, ‘no matter what, when you walk into this kind of music, and you’re enveloped by forty tracks of 24-bit audio, you just feel the sound vibes. You can’t refuse them; you can’t refuse the voices coming in and out of your body.’²³

The arrangement of the forty speakers encourages visitors to get their ears close to the speakers.²⁴ Upon close hearing, the voices are rich in what Chion calls materializing sound indices (‘sound’s details that cause us to “feel” the material conditions of sound source’).²⁵ The speakers’ emissions bring forth ‘vocalic bodies’, and allow visitors to indulge in what Connor would term the voice as an excess of the body.²⁶ This closeness owes to ‘a sense of safety in technology’ that facilitates a felt connection without having ‘to stand in front of that person’, as Cardiff puts it.²⁷ In the three-minute ‘intermission’ you can hear a warm-up arpeggio and listen to members of the choir chat, cough, and walk around (i.e., surrounding you) as wood and metal creak. After the conductor announces, ‘We’ll go through it one more time’, there is an audible long hush and a moment of silence before the motet begins to sound again. The intermission enhances the sense that *40Part* is recreating a performance in the visitors’ presence, thus advancing a sense of here and now, of synchronicity between visitors and the fourteen-minute loop.

Such intimacies are also brought about by the work of transductions that, following Stefan Helmreich,²⁸ go unheard – in this case, fifty-nine tracks were reduced to forty, three hours of recordings became the eleven minutes of music and the three-minute intermission, and the ongoing work of the software and hardware that bring forth the forty synchronized tracks and keep the loop going. They also depend, in part, on the visibility of the black speakers, what Cardiff refers to as ‘straight’ technology,²⁹ which does not distract from the experience, and, perhaps more importantly, depend on visitors’ own disposition and investments in feeling them.

21 Cardiff, ‘Sound Sculpture’.

22 Anahid Kassabian, *Ubiquitous Listening: Affect, Attention, and Distributed Subjectivity* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2011), xv.

23 Cardiff, in *Politico*, ‘Madame Speaker’.

24 The speakers are mounted on stands 5ft 5in (1.65m) from the ground (the height of the B&W DM303 speakers is 13in (33cm)). The design of *40Part*, as is the case with all techno-cultural artifacts, incorporates an intended visitor, assumptions about whom effectively become restrictions for other potential visitors. Some of the modalities of engagement that *40Part* is invested in, and that visitors have tended to entertain, imply specific hearing and motor abilities and body shapes.

25 Michel Chion, *Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 114.

26 Steven Connor, *A Cultural History of Ventriloquism* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 35.

27 Cardiff, ‘Sound Sculpture’.

28 Stefan Helmreich, ‘Transduction’, in *Keywords in Sound*, ed. David Novak and Matt Sakakeeny (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015).

29 Cardiff, ‘Sound Sculpture’. ‘I used straight technology . . . so that people would not think about the technology, so that they are able to enter into it.’

Whether the visitor remains in place before one speaker, moves around, or stays in the middle of the space, they are listening and are there. The voice tracks of *Spem in alium* act both as the forum for and the object of listening. They envelop the visitor and furnish the focus of the visitor's auditory and motor activities. It is a private and individualized listening experience; the intimacy *40Part* might offer to the receptive visitor entails a lack of reciprocity not only between installation and visitor, but also between visitor and visitor – during opening hours, multiple visitors can simultaneously pick and choose their own path/mix of voice parts 'solo' as, and because, the loop goes on. The installation's 'virtual choir' offers a particular blend of individuation and, to use Georgina Born's term,³⁰ aggregation that resonated with its New York audiences – as Heather White wrote in the *Brooklyn Rail*, the installation's 'artifice' is 'somehow brave and, like urbanites avoiding eye contact, sometimes necessary. We can wend our way through at will.'³¹ This feature, along with *Spem in alium*'s sensible pastness and avowed timelessness, was central to the installation's appeal, accessible spirituality, and deployment as a 'place' to gather (together but alone) in response to trauma.

Locating *40Part*

Cardiff's *40Part* specifies a place, and requires a site. The 'particular mood quality', the affective state that generates the very staging of a room, to use Gernot Böhme's expression,³² articulates with the installation's staging of *Spem in alium* in visitors' experience. As part of the show's setup, room and installation are tuned up to each other in ways that foster specific engagements. In addition to benches for people to 'sit' and 'to spend time with this piece',³³ for instance, the P.S. 1 gallery's arrangement to house *40Part* in 2001 included built-in interventions such as faux floors to cover the speaker wire as well as sound ceiling baffles and a soundproofed entrance to 'block off the room'.³⁴ These interventions sought to adjust the acoustic properties of the room and make it more conducive to the contemplation of *40Part*, in support of an aesthetic ideal that, because of *Spem in alium* and because of the installation's magnitude, has had a distinct weight in the circulation of this soundwork.³⁵ The site-specific equalization of *40Part* is meant to ensure balance among the forty channels and that the overall 'feeling' is consistent with what Cardiff and her collaborators seek, and want the installation to (empathetically) profess. As Bures Miller explained in 2015:

30 Georgina Born, 'Music and the Materialization of Identities', *Journal of Material Culture* 16/4 (2011).

31 Heather White, 'Janet Cardiff: *The Forty Part Motet*', *Brooklyn Rail*, December 2013, <https://brooklynrail.org/2013/12/artseen/janet-cardiff-the-forty-part-motet>.

32 Gernot Böhme, *Atmospheric Architectures: The Aesthetics of Felt Spaces* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017), 93.

33 'Janet Cardiff Installation', email from Diana Nemiroff to the Registrar of P.S. 1, 9 May 2001, MoMA PS1, I.A. 2892, MoMA Archives.

34 'Re: room sizes', email from Cardiff to Christov-Bakargiev, Monday, 9 July 2001, MoMA PS1, I.A. 2887, MoMA Archives, New York.

35 In comparison to other sound installations, *40Part* could be said to both ask more for and better lend itself to contemplative listening practices. Owing to its physical dimensions and sublimated magnificence, *40Part* tends to enjoy a room of its own and to be carefully installed, as was the case in New York City.

Every space absorbs the frequencies in a different way so when it moves to a new place, tuning is required to make sure that it feels right, right being appropriate to the piece . . . [The installation at San Francisco's Fort Mason] is as good as it gets, the sound is so clear. I was tearing up and I've heard this thousands of times . . . [I]t always gives me a reaction. If I don't get that reaction, which is a tingling up and down my spine, then I know I have to make it do that.³⁶

In the catalogue of Cardiff's P.S. 1 2001 survey, curator Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev explains her experience of *40Part* at the Rideau Chapel of the National Gallery of Canada earlier that year. As the visitor crossed the museum's galleries and approached Cardiff's installation, '[y]our mind was transported away from true location – a contemporary art show in a museum – to somewhere else, perhaps a cloister . . . you were drawn by the voices . . . until you entered a reconstruction from a 17th-century . . . chapel' (Figure 1).³⁷ However, this particular form of space and time travel to an indeterminate Christian past, 'somewhere else', was not what *40Part* was meant to offer New York City museumgoers in 2001. 'At P.S. 1, the work is installed in an entirely different context – the second-floor sculpture gallery, a large, solemn, minimal space, completely open to the imagination.'³⁸

The timing of the survey of Cardiff's work, shortly after 9/11, along with the sculpture gallery's windows, which overlooked the city, framed the visitors' responses to *40Part*, thus annulling the neutrality of the gallery space. That neutrality was already, as Brian O'Doherty has shown, an illusion – 'the white cube . . . stands for a community with common ideas and assumptions' – and an operation.³⁹ In 2001, *40Part* became, and was understood by the producers of the exhibit as, a service to the museum's community, as a site and channel for staff and visitors to grieve in the wake of 9/11. In the words of P.S. 1 founder and director Alanna Heiss, '*Motet* was a place where hundreds of people gathered, to be in a place together, and listen to that marvelous music individually and as a group, in the way that Janet had organized it. We mourned individually and together.'⁴⁰

If the 'sublime "empty" space of voices and speakers of *40Part* in the Kunsthalle'⁴¹ was not empty – because it never is – in 2001, the staging of Cardiff's installation in both *September 11* and *Rockaway!* was expressly charged: *40Part* was 'there' to mark milestones and thus to

36 Quoted in Geneva Anderson, 'Artist Janet Cardiff's "The Forty-Part Motet", a Musical Sanctuary for the Soul', *ArtHound*, 17 November 2015, <https://genevaanderson.wordpress.com/2015/11/17/artist-janet-cardiffs-the-forty-part-motet-a-musical-sanctuary-for-the-soul-at-fort-mason-centers-new-gallery-308/>.

37 Carolyn Christov-Bakargiev, Janet Cardiff, and George B. Miller, '*Forty-Part Motet*', in *Janet Cardiff: A Survey of Works Including Collaborations with George Bures Miller* (Long Island City, NY: P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Center, 2001), 140.

38 Christov-Bakargiev et al., '*Forty-Part Motet*', 140.

39 Brian O'Doherty, *Inside the White Cube: The Ideology of the Gallery Space* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2010), 79. To ensure that such putative neutrality was complete, out of a concern 'the view outside' would 'be distracting', curator and artist discussed the possibility of covering the windows – though ultimately they did not. 'Re: ps1 show', 12 May 2001, MoMA PS1, I.A. 2897, MoMA Archives, New York.

40 MoMA, 'Mourning 9/11 with Janet Cardiff's *The Forty Part Motet*', www.moma.org/interactives/moma_through_time/2000/listening-together/.

41 'Re: ps1 show'.

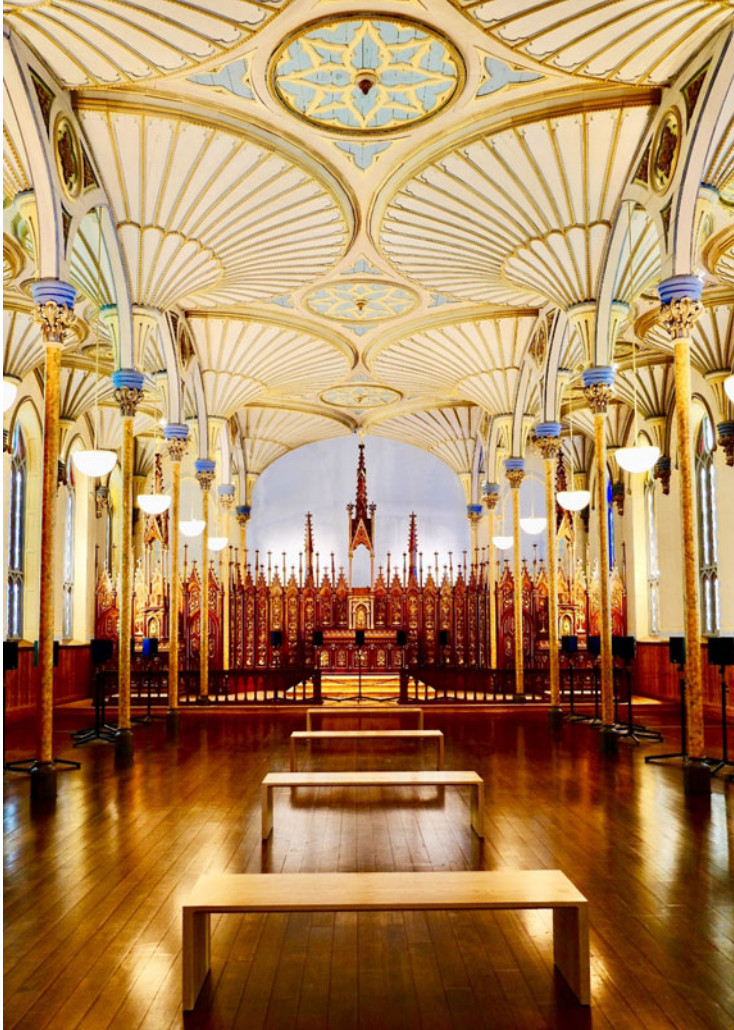


Figure 1 (Colour online) *40Part* at the Rideau Chapel at the National Gallery of Canada, Ottawa. Photo by Joanne Clifford. Reproduced with the permission of Joanne Clifford.

contribute to its New York City visitors' processing of two complex traumatic events, and it was also deployed as part of ensembles of artworks within which the spatialized rendering of *Spem in alium* was intended to articulate, to do, and to mean particular things.

September 11, 2011

September 11 was organized by MoMA PS1 curator Peter Eeley to mark the tenth anniversary of 9/11. Two-thirds of the seventy works exhibited had been produced prior to the attacks, and only one directly addressed 9/11. The curatorial decision to 'reflect upon [9/11] obliquely' was, according to Eeley, a reaction against the exploitation of 9/11 and of its memory and an

attempt to offer New Yorkers, at least art-literate New York audiences, ‘another way of thinking about what happened and reflecting on the event’s continued presence in our lives’.⁴²

Like the other works gathered in *September 11*, *40Part* was selected because of its ability to ‘transcend the specificities of its epoch, form, or content to address September 11’.⁴³ The re-creation of the installation’s own presence in New York following 9/11 had, too, an explicit purpose: ‘[T]he echoes of the *Motet* resounding once again in that room will invite us to consider what has changed in the intervening ten years, and what history has allowed to remain substantially the same.’⁴⁴ The exhibition catalogue reflects Eeley’s ideas and use of Cardiff’s installation in two dimensions. The same image of the installation is reproduced on two facing pages, representing that time has passed and suggesting that the reworking of *Spem in alium* and, although unseen, the motet endure and stay the same.⁴⁵ The juxtaposition is modeled on before and after photographs, but it violates their most emblematic aspect and their function: there is no change.⁴⁶ It is only when these two images are juxtaposed to the ubiquitous before and after photos of the New York City skyline that the duplicated image of *40Part* and the space in between acquire meaning.

Despite the mixed responses to *September 11*,⁴⁷ *40Part* was welcomed (Cardiff’s installation would remain at MoMA PS1 as a single-work show immediately following the group show) as was its integration in the remembrance of 9/11. Jonathan Beer’s review for *Art-Rated* largely ignored *September 11* as an ensemble to focus on *40Part*.⁴⁸ He wrote that Cardiff’s installation ‘provide[d] a transcendent refuge amongst works that offer a more direct connection to the

42 Eeley, quoted in MoMA PS1, ‘*September 11: MoMA PS1 Announces Major Exhibition Looking at Art from the Past 50 Years from a Post-9/11 Perspective*’, press release, 29 July 2011, http://press.moma.org/wp-content/files_mf/september11announcement_final.pdf. Eeley indicated that the show’s refusal to memorialize also responded to the ongoing character of the horrors of 9/11. Notably, Eeley referred to the spontaneous gatherings and rituals in which New Yorkers engaged as ‘unrivalled’ ‘in their commemorative power’ (*September 11*). In the aftermath of September 11, posters of the missing, small shrines, and memorials ‘transformed the cityscape into a space for remembrance’ (Marita Sturken, ‘Memorializing Absence’, *Social Science Research Council Essay Forum* (special issue: *After September 11*) (2001), <http://essays.ssrc.org/sept11/essays/sturken.htm>). These have since come to epitomize a spontaneous, grassroots, and local authentic public memory antithetical to a subsequent flawed official process of memorialization that seized both the event and its site, and that excluded and alienated most New Yorkers and their lived experiences in order to serve, to use Diana Taylor’s felicitous expression, a ‘nation-bodybuilding’ agenda and to attract tourists. See Diana Taylor, *The Archive and the Repertoire: Performing Cultural Memory in the Americas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003).

43 Peter Eeley, ‘A Lollipop/Two Branches’, in *September 11*, Peter Eeley, Alexander B. Dunbadze, and Karen Jacobson (Long Island City, NY: MoMA PS1, 2011), 57.

44 MoMA PS1, ‘*September 11*’.

45 Eeley et al., *September 11*, 26–7.

46 According to Ines and Eyal Weizman, before and after photographs ‘frame a missing event by showing the states that preceded and succeeded it’; what is crucial about them is the gap. Ines Weizman and Eyal Weizman, ‘Before and After’, in *Forensis: The Architecture of Public Truth*, ed. Anselm Franke and Eyal Weizman (Berlin: Sternberg Press, 2014), 109.

47 Eeley’s form of dealing with 9/11 by withholding the event was appreciated (e.g., by Roberta Smith in *The Times*) and questioned. For Hal Foster, *September 11* tried to make anachronism a virtue, and ultimately amplified 9/11 as a traumatic matrix of images (*September 11*, *ArtForum*, January 2012).

48 Jonathan Beer, ‘Reverence for Sound: Janet Cardiff at PS1’, *Art-Rated*, 7 December 2011, <https://artrated.wordpress.com/2011/12/07/reverence-for-sound-janet-cardiff-at-ps1/>.

painful realities surrounding 9/11'.⁴⁹ If *40Part* spoke to MoMA PS1 visitors in 2011, it was arguably because it allowed them to bracket disturbing material and political realities while experiencing a sense of continuity and relief in the face of 9/11's continued presence in the city, country, and elsewhere in the form of the 'war on terror'. Part of the function of *40Part* was to create this comforting sense of continuity through repetition: not only the repetition of the fourteen-minute loop within which to acoustically immerse oneself, to be 'surrounded by voices' and 'suddenly part of a fluid, undulating and surprisingly physical space of sound and emotion' during exhibition hours,⁵⁰ but also the iteration of a sixteenth-century motet that, by 'returning' in the 21st century, suggests the resilience of white Anglo-European Christian culture, a continuity between ancestors and heirs to that culture by means of site-specific cross-temporal contact.

Because *40Part*'s inclusion in *September 11* was predicated on its having been there in 2001 and its service to the mourning process had been coincidental, the fact that the installation exudes and indexes white Christianity was easier to overlook than if no such connection between the installation, museum, and 9/11 existed. While unplanned and by virtue of a temporal coincidence, such initial connection was not arbitrary: not any multi-channel sound installation and not any piece of pre-existing music would have resonated with PS1 workers and visitors in the aftermath of 9/11 in the way *40Part* did.⁵¹ The formal specificities of *40Part* were crucial to the installation's ability to provide that service in that particular setting. Those qualities included those of *Spem in alium*, which tied in with pre-existing sets of cultural meanings and practices (e.g., the use of Western sacred choral music for mourning rituals) and responded to the mood of the moment (the motet's 'anxious', soprano-heavy central sections may have been particularly poignant at the time). While the installation format – its enclosure and safe intimacies – afforded a sense of (non-committal) congregation.

While *40part* was not selected because of *Spem in alium*'s ethno-cultural import per se, that was central to its values and functions in *September 11*, starting with the notions of transcendence and universality that rendered unnecessary to qualify whose history, whose past Tallis's motet reckons and got substantiated by its 2011 repetition, with the notions that ensure whiteness operates unaddressed and, in this case, unheard.⁵² Neither the show's producers nor the visitors who appreciated *40Part* in *September 11* necessarily conceived of the installation's inclusion as a statement in the context of, for instance, framings of 9/11 as an attack on Christianity and the West. However, not just and not as much the presence of the installation but, in particular, the specifically comforting and reassuring functions it performed and was intended to perform in *September 11* were a different manifestation of the same naturalized

49 Beer, 'Reverence for Sound: Janet Cardiff at PS1'.

50 Beer, 'Reverence for Sound: Janet Cardiff at PS1'.

51 Indeed, *40Part* was not the only sound installation in Cardiff's 2001 show.

52 Jennifer Stoeber has addressed whiteness' self-effacing modus operandi succinctly: this is enabled by 'a general perception that white representations stand in for 'people' in general, rather than 'white people' in particular'. While whiteness does have sonic markers, Stoeber continues, these 'can be harder to hear because of their perceived role as the keynote of American identity' ('Splicing the Sonic Color-Line: Tony Schwartz Remixes Postwar Nueva York', *Social Text* 28/1 (2010), 66).

conflation of whiteness and Americanness;⁵³ the fact that it could play such a role may be symptomatic of the glaring overrepresentation and dominance of the white minority in the leadership and audiences of New York City's art museums.⁵⁴

In *September 11*, *40Part* offered visitors a shelter within the contemporary art museum, arguably an already shielded locale. To produce that sense of relief, the idea of trans-historicity (i.e., *40Part/Spem in alium*'s timelessness) was as important as the installation's evocation of longed for, calmer historical times (i.e., its pastness) in which there were neither planes nor skyscrapers.⁵⁵ The 'solicitous displacement' of *40Part*, as Eeley has called it,⁵⁶ into 2011 enabled and reinforced that double longing for a realm of permanence 'out-of-time' and for idealized remote pasts. On the other hand, the re-creation suggests another, more specific, negotiation between times as a means to memorialize and to cope with the trauma of 9/11. For visitors who had experienced the installation in 2001, re-experiencing *40Part* might have 'enacted the emergence . . . of "a" memory'.⁵⁷ In that sense, the installation potentially allowed some visitors, notably, MoMA PS1 workers,⁵⁸ a specifically recollective 'peak experience of intensified affect' in ways similar to how Ben Anderson describes the practice of listening to recorded music to remember.⁵⁹ As distinct from the private practices Anderson analyses, however, *September 11* visitors did not choose *40Part*, nor did they have it installed or press play – the curator did. Still, and regardless of visitors' previous experiences, *40Part*'s self-referential iteration ten years after its initial installation served to 'fix, freeze or frame an event'.⁶⁰

'Playing' *40Part* again made its 2001 run in P.S. 1 *the* past event. The re-enactment compromised the separation between present and past to, in turn, cope with the trauma of 9/11 while avoiding its complexity. Re-enactment, as Marita Sturken has shown, 'is a crucial factor' in 'responses to traumatic events'.⁶¹ Instead of looking to recreations of dramatic events,

53 Stoever, 'Splicing the Sonic Color-Line', 66. This conflation also underlays, in its pathological manifestation, the prosecution and harassment of Muslims and of those populations lumped in and produced as 'terrorist look-alike bodies', to use Jasbir Puar's expression, in New York City. See Jasbir Puar, "'The Turban Is Not a Hat": Queer Diaspora and Practices of Profiling', *Sikh Formations: Religion, Culture, Theory* 4/1 (2008).

54 Betty Farrell and Maria Medvedeva, *Demographic Transformation and the Future of Museums* (Washington, DC: American Association of Museums, 2010); Roger Schonfeld, Liam Sweeney, and Mariët Westermann, *Art Museum Staff Demographic Survey* (The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, 2015), https://mellon.org/media/filer_public/ba/99/ba99e53a-48d5-4038-80e1-66f9ba1c020e/awmf_museum_diversity_report_aamd_7-28-15.pdf.

55 Marita Sturken has noted that, by using airplanes and skyscrapers, the 9/11 attacks employed 'two key aspects of modern life'. Marita Sturken, *Tourists of History: Memory, Kitsch, and Consumerism from Oklahoma City to Ground Zero* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2007), 79.

56 Eeley, 'A Lollipop', 62.

57 Ben Anderson, 'Recorded Music and Practices of Remembering', *Social & Cultural Geography* 5/1 (2004), 16.

58 In 2001, *40Part* and Cardiff's survey show, as the center's first exhibition after the attack, gained special significance for MoMA PS1 and for its workers, who opened the show in the midst of the city's meltdown and a general climate of dread and distress.

59 Anderson, 'Recorded Music', 16.

60 Celia Lury, quoted in Anderson, 'Recorded Music', 15.

61 Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 29.

Sturken analyses forms of re-enactment that tend to be overlooked,⁶² and shows how those repetitions allow for responses to trauma that are comforting, even as they foreclose an alternative range of emotional registers (e.g., anger) and political engagements.⁶³ These repetitions provide ‘a sense of control and containment’, and partake in a therapeutic approach to memorial culture.⁶⁴

While it is unclear whether the sounds of Cardiff’s installation came to act as ‘mnemonic materiality’ (if they made visitors remember),⁶⁵ *40Part* effectively worked as an ‘affective catalyser’⁶⁶ in *September 11*. It offered a place to listen and to feel intently, an opportunity for a contained emotional release as well as for ‘safe’ proximities with the voice parts and the co-present visitors, just as Heiss said it had in 2001:

I have never had such a visceral reaction to a work of art, contemporary or otherwise. *The Forty-Part Motet* gives me goose bumps.⁶⁷

Each person in the room was transfixed with a strange kind of reverence – I stood enraptured; mouth agape as I glanced around to see the reactions of others. One woman sat down heavily on the bench, overcome, others walked among the speakers in a contemplative trance.⁶⁸

The role of *40Part* and the attitudes that underlay how it was used in 2011 become clearer when considered vis-à-vis the other two soundworks in *September 11*, works to which Cardiff’s installation was set against in terms of physical placement in the museum and of the meanings and affects that each work animated and was intended to convey: Stephen Vitiello’s *World Trade Center Recordings: Winds after Hurricane Floyd* (1999/2002) and the main theme of *The Patriot* (Roland Emmerich, 2000). *Winds* is a six-channel mix of recordings that Vitiello had created on the 91st floor of the World Trade Center (WTC) North Tower after Hurricane Floyd in 1999. In *September 11*, Vitiello’s work could not but call attention to the missing Twin Towers. *Winds* was ‘the only thing in the show that really is the thing itself, and it almost overwhelms’; Eleey ‘buried it in . . . the basement, away from

62 Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 29. Sturken, for instance, considers snow globes of the former World Trade Center and of the Oklahoma City National Memorial. They ‘represent a permanent instant in which time is arrested, yet they are also objects in which that instant is meant to be in constant replay’ (1–4). Providing at once emotional reassurance and distance, these participate in the sentimental economy of the nation both as practices of consumerism and as sanctioning a ‘categorical agreement’ with the prepackaged emotions they sell.

63 Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 24–32. For Sturken, healing and closure are central to US identity, and permeate memorialization practices and experiences – memorialization is sought of as a healing experience. Ultimately, these comforting and pathemic approaches to trauma and memorialization (re)produce the idea of an innocent culture, and then, feed into American exceptionalism.

64 Sturken, *Tourists of History*, 14.

65 See Anderson, ‘Recorded Music’, 16.

66 Anderson, ‘Recorded Music’, 16.

67 Sarah Zabrodski, ‘The Sensory Worlds of Memory’, *Hyperallergic*, 7 June 2013, <https://hyperallergic.com/72238/the-sensory-worlds-of-memory/>.

68 Beer, ‘Reverence for Sound’.

the rest of the show.⁶⁹ The role of *40Part* in *September 11* relied on the putative otherworldliness and timelessness with which *Spem in alium* endows the installation, and on the rerunning of the piece as it marked off a distinction between the then-present experience at MoMA PS1 and a moment that was brought about as a past. *Winds*, in contrast, was thought of as, and sounds, thing-y; the significance of Vitiello's installation hinged on an assumed direct and earthly bond with the former WTC. If *40Part* exuded ethereal antique and offered a 'transcendent refuge', *Winds* conjured up the crude materiality of modern ruination and advanced 'the feeling . . . that you are standing in the midst of the building as it sways and creaks with moments of wind and a plane passing',⁷⁰ an impression of immediacy with the no-longer-existing site that, not unlike Cardiff's installation, took visitors away.⁷¹

September 11 had as a backdrop ten years of (global, national, local) bad-faith politics and racialized violence that were, notably, embodied in and emboldened by the 2001 USA Patriot Act. More immediately, it had as context the killing of Osama bin Laden earlier that year, the very concrete affective responses that followed, and the tone these set for the tenth anniversary of 9/11 in the city.⁷² As a constitutive outside, these were fundamental to *September 11*, and, like 9/11 itself, were made present through allusions in the exhibition. In an oblique but hardly subtle gesture, the theme from *The Patriot* was broadcast in a gallery located on the opposite side of the room where *40Part* was housed. As Eeley explains:

I wanted something that could sit in the background . . . something that would quietly spectacularize the experience of the exhibition itself. I chose John Williams's theme from Roland Emmerich's film *The Patriot* (2000), set during the American Revolutionary War . . . Some visitors might notice the sacred music on one side of the exhibition and the nationalist anthem on the other, bleeding into the spaces around them.⁷³

In this oppositional role, *40Part* was, to use Hal Foster's term, 'not-quite-transcendental'; it was intended to signify in a way similar to the other, more recognizably referential artworks and juxtapositions in *September 11*, as Foster elaborated in his critique of the exhibition,⁷⁴

69 Eeley, 'A Lollipop', 64.

70 Vitiello, quoted in David Toop, 'Haunted Weather: Music, Silence, and Memory', in *Sound*, ed. Caleb Kelly (London: Whitechapel Art Gallery, 2011), 209.

71 Critic Brendan S. Carroll singled out *Winds* because 'more than any other in the show, [it] induced a palpable state of dread in me . . . I could feel the walls closing as the sounds of a 100-story tower lurched and teetered in the sky. Is this what it felt like for all those people trapped in the North and South towers?'. Brendan Carroll, 'Making Sense of Trauma through Art', *Hyperallergic*, 13 October 2011, <https://hyperallergic.com/38065/making-sense-of-trauma-through-art/>.

72 Bin Laden's death on 2 May 2011 sparked multitudinous celebrations across the United States that had a marked nationalistic character and that were all the more numerous and glaring in New York City's Ground Zero and Times Square. Benedict Carey summed up the contradictory Geist of those days: 'Some Americans celebrated the killing of Osama bin Laden loudly, with chanting and frat-party revelry in the streets. Others were appalled – not by the killing, but by the celebrations.' Benedict Carey, 'Celebrating a Death: Ugly, Maybe, But Only Human', *New York Times*, 5 May 2011, <https://nyti.ms/2kGjA73>.

73 Eeley, 'A Lollipop', 63.

74 MoMA PS1, '*September 11*'.

which focused on visual artworks. We could think of Williams versus Cardiff/Tallis as another way of acting out and containing unsettling realities within the curated environment of the museum. The opposition between *The Patriot*'s theme and *Spem in alium* could set up a contrast between those who engage in banal nationalism as a response to 9/11 (i.e., people identified with *The Patriot*) and those (presumably, MoMA PS1's visitors) who dis-identify with populists' naivety and find comfort in *40Part*. This move, whereby the liberal art-literate class seems to remove itself from – or simply does not acknowledge itself in – the nation's militarized patriotism and violent history, was enabled by the exnomination of early British Christian vocal music, which is to say, by the avoidance and/or failure to identify and to question whiteness as fundamental to *September 11*'s investments in the reworking of Tallis's motet.

As staged in *September 11*, *40Part* did as much to contain and to comfort as it did to obscure, to make questions unavailable. The experience that *40Part* offered tapped into a public desire for comfort while allowing for a sense of active participation and an embodied experience that was contained, literally and figuratively, within the installation. The show meant to mark the anniversary of 9/11 was, necessarily, a commemorative endeavor. And yet, this did not figure in how *September 11* was conceived of and presented – its commemorative drive was withheld. Eelco Runia has identified an affliction particular to the study of history and, hence, to 'infected historians': while 'history is pervaded with the desire to commemorate', 'the discipline' 'is held back by the fear that somehow is a bit improper to give in to that wish'.⁷⁵ A similar wariness was at play in the conception of *September 11*. Part of the sense of 'impropriety' had to do with a flawed politics of 9/11 memorialization that the producers of the show (and the particular public they imagined) did not want to participate in. Commemoration was not something the show was imagined to be doing; instead, it was something the show was exploring 'against the backdrop of 9/11's anniversary'.⁷⁶ And yet, 'the public desire to participate in communal mourning and grief'⁷⁷ permeated *September 11*'s staging of *40Part*, and the unacknowledged ways it not only summoned a necessarily select 'public' and satisfied desires within the installation's confines but was also inflected by fears and fantasies about actual and imaginary communities and realities beyond the room. In some ways and despite its counter-commemorative intentions, *September 11* was not unlike many other commemorations wherein, following Runia, 'the question "who are we that this could have happened?"' is unproductively 'answered in an identity-enhancing, yes, self-celebrating way'.⁷⁸

In its installation in the Rockaways during the Hurricane Sandy recovery, *40Part* was again called upon to provide relief in the wake of a violent and traumatic event. Though in a very different context, the installation's soothing effects and great popularity again short-circuited

75 Eelco Runia, 'Burying the Dead, Creating the Past', *History and Theory* 46/3 (2007), 315.

76 MoMA PS1, '*September 11*'.

77 MoMA PS1, '*September 11*'. In *September 11*'s press release, this 'public desire' is framed as something that particular featured artworks were commenting on; that is to say, as one of the show's subject matters and 'food for thought' for the audience but not as a drive.

78 Runia, 'Burying the Dead', 317.

reflections on the complex underlying causes and manifestations of this violence, in this case climate change, the inequitable responses to it, and the cultural codes that determine what feels comforting.

'It will remain in place'

Many of New York's gallery-owners and gallery-goers decamp to the Hamptons come July, but this summer one of the area's best arts festivals . . . is taking place within the five boroughs . . . it is Ms. Cardiff's transcendent reworking of *Spem in alium* . . . installed in the fort's chapel . . . that is the best reason to head there soon.⁷⁹

Rockaway! was a free public arts festival co-organized by MoMA and the community-oriented local arts organization Rockaway Artist Alliance (RAA);⁸⁰ it had been conceived by the then MoMA PS1 director Klaus Biesenbach and iconic punk singer-songwriter and artiste Patti Smith, both of whom were residents of the Rockaways at the time. The reason for the festival was 'to celebrate the reopening of Fort Tilden and recognize the ongoing recovery of the Rockaway Peninsula'⁸¹ in Queens, after the damage caused by Hurricane Sandy in 2012. The sacredness of *Spem in alium* – hence, that of Cardiff's reworking of the motet – was emphasized by placing *40Part* in a site for Christian liturgy. The installation was explicitly there as part of a festival and was itself an attraction. Fort Tilden is a historical and recreational district, and the Rockaways are a summertime destination for many city residents looking for a staycation.⁸² Some of the contradictions particular to *40Part*'s usage in *September 11* were amplified in this final iteration of Cardiff's installation in the city to date. In part, these were more apparent because, in *Rockaway!*, *40Part* was brought into 'the ground', to 'the urban fabric or landscape' that had been damaged by the hurricane,⁸³ and the material realities of the area's yet-unfinished recovery compromised the sense of stability and resilience that *40Part*, in synergy with the then just restored Fort Tilden chapel, sought to offer.

The chapel is a Series 700 building, a temporary and movable structure mass-produced in the 1940s; it was installed in 1941 and relocated to its current position somewhere between 1945 and 1955, as the fort was restructured to accommodate nuclear weapons.⁸⁴ The chapel

79 Prospero, 'Rockaway! New York's Festival by the Sea', *The Economist*, 23 July 2014, www.economist.com/prospero/2014/07/23/new-yorks-festival-by-the-sea.

80 Housed in some of Fort Tilden's old post buildings, the RAA had been impacted by the hurricane and was reopening in the festival. The New York City Department of Parks and Recreation, the National Park Service, and the Jamaica Bay-Rockaway Parks Conservancy were the other major co-sponsors of *Rockaway!*

81 MoMA PS1, *Rockaway!*, festival brochure, 2014, https://momaps1.org/pdf/MoMA_PS1_Rockaway!_brochure.pdf.

82 The Fort Tilden fortification area is a historic district included in the National Register of Historic Places. From 1917 until it was decommissioned in 1974, Fort Tilden was a military installation within the New York Harbor Defenses on western Long Island, during which time it was often revamped for defense purposes in the contexts of the First and Second World Wars and the Cold War.

83 Weizman and Weizman, 'Before and After', 109.

84 Christina Selvek and John Auwaerter, *Cultural Landscape Report for Fort Tilden, Gateway National Recreation Area* (Boston, MA: Olmsted Center for Landscape Preservation and US Department of Interior, National Park Service, 2005, rev. 2013), 34, 44.

is one of the ‘remnants’ of the post.⁸⁵ While historic Fort Tilden was reopening, the restoration of other of the Rockaway Peninsula’s public locales and residential areas was ongoing, as *Rockaway!* explicitly ‘recognized’.⁸⁶ That process was itself unevenly experienced and paced. For residents of the Rockaways, the recovery from Hurricane Sandy was vastly different for homeowners and those renting in the private real estate market than it was for tenants living in New York City’s Housing Authority buildings, right across the peninsula from Fort Tilden – Leigh Graham calls this ‘a tale of two recoveries’.⁸⁷ Writing in 2018, Graham notes that ‘there is reason to think that Sandy has put the Rockaways “on the map”’.⁸⁸ That was foreshadowed in *Rockaway!*, a show that drew thousands, and that art critics and ‘to-do’ recommendation lists alike deemed to be ‘certainly worth a trip to the last stop on the A train’.⁸⁹ At the opening, there was what Nate Freeman described as a ‘mob inside’ *40Part* in the chapel.⁹⁰ Cardiff herself ‘remarked [to *Rockaway Times*] that Fort Tilden might no longer be one of New York’s best kept secrets’.⁹¹

I do not intend to overstate the festival duplicities vis-à-vis the complex material and social realities of the Rockaways, which had been further complicated by the hurricane and its recovery, and tie in with New York City’s racialized economic inequalities and sociospatial practices of consumption and dis/emplacement. Nor do I want to exaggerate *Rockaway!*’s complicity in those inequitable practices – in any event, any such complicity would be

85 Owing to demolition, abandonment, and the new uses of the post that followed Fort Tilden’s decommission, prior to Hurricane Sandy, the post area did not ‘retain integrity’ – that is, ‘the ability of a property to convey its historical significance’ (Selvek and Auwaerter, *Cultural Landscape*, 93).

86 MoMA PS1, *Rockaway!* festival brochure. As used in the materials for *Rockaway!*, it is unclear whether ‘to recognize’ means to be cognizant of the fact that the area and the community were *still* recovering – in that case, the ongoing recovery would be excluded from the celebratory aspect of the festival – or whether it means to show appreciation, to commend the ongoing recovery of the peninsula. The second meaning would align with the celebratory rhetoric of resilience that underwrote *Rockaway!* That unresolved, easily overlooked semantic ambiguity points to the rather palpable ambivalence of the celebration (and of the acknowledgement) when the social, material, and economic spatial and temporal contexts for the festival are considered; it reveals some of the tensions that placing *40Part* in the chapel both soothed and amplified.

87 Leigh Graham, ‘Public Housing Participation in Superstorm Sandy Recovery: Living in a Differentiated State in Rockaway, Queens’, *Urban Affairs Review* 56/1 (2020). Notably, Graham approaches the experience of Rockaway’s public housing residents as part of a sociospatial phenomenon that involves physical boundaries and effective enclosures (e.g., bureaucratic, symbolic); these make up what she calls the ‘differentiated state’ in which public housing residents live (291). This works in ways analogous to ‘the carceral state’ (312–13), which, among other similarities, also disproportionately preys upon and, in this case, houses members of the same Black and Hispanic communities. Following Graham, we could say that, whether understood as matter-of-fact urban locales and physical structures or as complex sociospatial compounds, the so-called ‘projects’ are *other* estate.

88 Graham, ‘Public Housing’, 316.

89 Nate Freeman, ‘Art by the Sea: Klaus Biesenbach’s Beach Party: Patti Smith, James Franco . . . The Gang’s All Here at Fort Tilden!’, *The Observer*, 30 June 2014, <https://observer.com/2014/06/klaus-biesenbachs-beach-party-patti-smith-james-franco-the-gangs-all-here-at-fort-tilden/>.

90 Freeman, ‘Art by the Sea’.

91 Bianca Fortis, ‘Rockaway! Art Show Draw Thousands. Fort Tilden the Place to Be’, *Rockaway Times*, 3 July 2014, 2. My reading is that Cardiff’s comment reflected discomfort with the festival’s feel as well as with how *40Part* was received in the Rockaways.

unintentional.⁹² I am interested in *40Part*'s role in how those tensions were negotiated. The implicit values and commemorative frameworks that *40Part* mobilized, along with the experiences it offered as a specific listening environ, worked to smooth over contradictions the installation itself amplified. It was meant to provide a sense of comfort that is deceptive in a number of ways.

Although visitors' responses to the installation were positive, 'the people' did not decide to place *40Part* in Fort Tilden as part of a festival honoring local hurricane recovery because that was what the community needed; it was the curators who made that decision. From the vantage point of the installation's trajectory in the city, recruiting *40Part* for the cause made sense: MoMA owned an edition of the work, *40Part* is a beloved work likely to boost the critical and public response to *Rockaway!*, one of the available spaces was a church, the installation was already associated with processes of healing/remembrance and responses to major human/material trauma because of September 11,⁹³ and, most importantly, *40Part* would add 'depth' and a touch of solemnity to the festival, endowing it with what Peter Tregear would call 'theological gravitas'.⁹⁴ Considering 'The Ninth after 9/11', and, more broadly, the extensive practice of the 'pairing together of mainstream orchestral music and the memory of loss',⁹⁵ Tregear points to the radical lack of connection with the events at stake as fundamental to the allure of those musics, whose use invokes 'the power of art to transcend the moment'.⁹⁶

[T]he function of music in such circumstances seems to lie precisely in its presumed otherworldliness . . . Precisely because it avoids a direct relationship with a historical event . . . commemorative music is perhaps supremely placed to lend a sense of transcendence, of sublime consolation, to an occasion that might otherwise be thought to eschew it.⁹⁷

Echoing the currently established musicological rejection of the notion that some musical compositions exist outside of time, Tregear notes that the use of Beethoven in social rituals of remembrance has more to do 'with the potential for [certain groups] to use it as a kind of aesthetic emollient' than with any 'innate redemptive quality in his music'.⁹⁸ Much as each

92 Nathan Kensinger generously summarized the uneasy place of the festival and its line-up on the peninsula: 'Unfortunately, the tide of good intentions behind these installations does little to elevate them beyond a collection of works whose main commonality appears to be how little they have to do with the history of Fort Tilden, with the pre-existing culture of the Rockways, and with the looming specter of rising tides and climate change.' Nathan Kensinger, 'Fort Tilden Beach Reopens to a Changing Neighborhood', *Curbed NY*, 31 July 2014, <https://ny.curbed.com/2014/7/31/10066414/fort-tilden-beach-reopens-to-a-changingneighborhood>.

93 This association is explicit in MoMA PS1's *Rockaway!* festival brochure. There is a photo of *40Part* in *September 11* and a note explaining that the work's US premiere took place in New York in 2001, and that 'it was shown again . . . in *September 11*'.

94 Tregear, 'The Ninth after 9/11', *Beethoven Forum* 10 (2003), 221.

95 Tregear, 'The Ninth after 9/11', 221.

96 Tregear, 'The Ninth after 9/11', 222.

97 Tregear, 'The Ninth after 9/11', 221.

98 Tregear, 'The Ninth after 9/11', 222.

of those uses, as Tregear points out, might bank on ‘music’s lack of referentiality’ to invoke the transcendental powers of, for instance, the Ninth, those practices are also referential; they are following a pattern, invoking other acts of commemoration as they mobilize recognizable and established codes. *Spem in alium* is not the Ninth, and in *40Part* the listening environment and the modalities of engagement in which the visitor enters come to the foreground; these conditions are fundamental to the transcendental underpinnings of the experience, one that is, as distinct to a concert – whether experienced live or as a broadcast – private. But it is *Spem in alium* that signals solemnity and religiosity, as emphasized by the chapel location, and that distinguished *40Part* not only from other of the *Rockaway!* works and experiences, but also from the overall feel, auditory and otherwise, of the festival.⁹⁹ If, broadly speaking, the wish to ‘transcend the moment’ is, for Tregear, an ‘understandable response to tragedy’, in the case of the decidedly not somber or mournful *Rockaway!* it was the more (im)material underpinnings of otherworldliness, the ‘beyond nature’ quality of *Spem in alium* that – paradoxically coupled with *40Part*’s iterability and its markedly material auditory environ – might have been central. These have a specific allure in marking a milestone within the (ongoing) recovery after Hurricane Sandy, while acknowledging the prospect of future so-called natural disasters, which until recently were commonly referred to as ‘acts of God’.¹⁰⁰ This, in turn, invoked a particular sense of resilience, a term that was particularly present, through multiple and contradictory notions, in *Rockaway!*

Along with Cardiff’s installation, the installations *From the Series Brick Farm* by Argentinian artist Adrián Villar Rojas and Patti Smith’s *The Resilience of a Dreamer*, the only site- and occasion-specific work, were the headliners of *Rockaway!* Smith’s was the centerpiece and, alongside *40Part*, the most popular. *The Resilience* was installed in Building T9, once a locomotive repair facility that had been deteriorating prior to Hurricane Sandy, and reopened in its original ruinous state:

Having witnessed personal belongings of Rockaway residents being destroyed and washed away during Sandy, Smith will install a gilded four-post bed with pure white linens in a long-abandoned building that lacks windows and parts of its roof. The bed will wear down physically, yet remain in place, a symbol of courage and resilience.¹⁰¹

99 *Rockaway!* organizers wanted visitors to ‘respect’ the solemnity of the installation. On the opening day, as Freeman describes: ‘Klaus Biesenbach stood in the middle of the crowded chapel . . . and when chatter threatened to drown out the angelic sounds of [*40Part*] . . . he raised his hands like a preacher, swung them down and let out a great loud “SHHHHH!” The talking stopped at once, and the only sound was that of the forty voices’ (‘Klaus Biesenbach’s Beach Party’). Still other critics deemed the festival and location unworthy of *40Part*: ‘Inside the chapel, visitors in swimsuits and carrying beach towels tweeted, chatted, and filmed their fellow visitors. The faint strains of the Macarena could be heard outside, competing with Cardiff’s arrangement of choral music’ (Kensinger, ‘Fort Tilden’).

100 In legal terminology, Sandy was recognized as an ‘act of God’ by the US District Court for the Southern District of New York: ‘Although Hurricane Sandy was figuratively an Act of God, the question before the Court is whether Hurricane Sandy was legally an Act of God that absolves Defendant . . . of liability for Plaintiffs loss. The answer is yes.’ *Lord & Taylor Llc, v. Zim Integrated Shipping Services, Ltd.*, 13 Civ. 3478, (S.D.N.Y. 2015), at 1, www.nysd.uscourts.gov/cases/show.php?db=special&id=470.

101 MoMA PS1, *Rockaway!* festival brochure.

The material persistence (and environmentally induced decay) of Smith's installation made explicit the rhetoric of resilience that animated the festival,¹⁰² a sentiment that echoed the popularity of the term in urban planning and, specifically, in envisioning the prospects and morphology of the Rockaways (and of New York City at large).¹⁰³ As distinct from what resilience entailed for urban planners – for example, a reinforced boardwalk to resist flooding – or its more general meaning – the capacity to retain or return to the status quo – Smith was referring to a spirit, to a Geist. Although, properly speaking, the bed was not 'resilient', it retained a certain presence while undergoing a slow process of entropy, of ruination (the length of the festival was shorter than the time it would have taken the bed to decompose structurally, to wear down to unrecognizability, which would have added a grim layer to the 'symbol'), thus tendering those visitors who had made the daytrip to *Rockaway!* a potentially rewarding taste of 'authenticity' and voyeuristic distance vis-à-vis the harsh realities and prospects on which *The Resilience's* sublimated, staged decay was bargaining.¹⁰⁴ Within this context, *40Part* invoked a sense of resilience similar to the one it suggested in *September 11*, but at the Fort Tilden chapel, *Spem in alium* was more apparently engaged – and reified – as a place to visit, as sanitized heritage ruins to contemplate. As happens with the commemorative uses of certain Western art music, the rationale for the heritage protection of 'ruined sites or things', as Bjørnar Olsen and Þóra Pétursdóttir point out, 'rarely refers to an inherent value' these might have 'but to our need for, and right to, historical rootedness and belonging . . . In other words, heritage is mostly valuable because it is useful to us'.¹⁰⁵ If, arguably, both the imaginary and the de facto 'us' – both the musically imagined community and the actual temporary gatherings (i.e., visitors co-present at specific moments and engaged in their own private experiences) – that the spatialized rendering of *Spem in alium* could accommodate and comfort fell short in terms of inclusion,¹⁰⁶ questioning to

102 Though *The Resilience* was *Rockaway!*'s flagship work, the festival failed to recognize that resilience requires resources and material means, and that not having much choice – rather than just having the 'courage' to stay – also accounted for some of the population's compulsory endurance.

103 Following Hurricane Sandy, 'resilience' had become pervasive in public commentary and in New York State and City officials' vocabulary. It is often used in the context of climate change and disaster-planning initiatives (i.e., those seeking to build 'a resilient New York City').

104 See Siobhan Lyons, 'Introduction: Ruin Porn, Capitalism, and the Anthropocene', in *Ruin Porn and the Obsession with Decay*, ed. Siobhan Lyons (Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018), esp. 2, 6. *The Resilience* trafficked in allures and obsessions Lyons identifies as central to ruin porn. These qualities also recall drives and attitudes that animated *September 11*'s approach to trauma.

105 Bjørnar Olsen and Þóra Pétursdóttir, *Ruin Memories: Materialities, Aesthetics and the Archaeology of the Recent Past* (New York: Routledge, 2014), 15; emphasis mine.

106 As explained, the listening experiences the installation offers are individualized and, because *40Part* is only available in situ temporarily and has a limited occupancy, necessarily selective. In instances in which, as was the case with *Rockaway!*, *40Part* is free and 'open to the public', questioning whether the sonically defined space that the installation brings about is or can be truly 'open' and 'public' to begin with is all the more urgent. In the United States, including in New York City, there is a history of deploying Western art music to curate the racial and economic demographics of public spaces as well as of spaces that are open to the public; in those instances, classical music is not meant to convoke an intended audience, but to define a non-democratic 'public', to work as environmental deterrence. See Jonathan Sterne, 'Urban Media and the Politics of Sound Space', *Open: Cahier on Art and the Public Domain* 9 (Fall 2005).

whom it is useful and what it is useful for has additional implications when considering *Rockaway!*

The *Rockaway!* brochure made clear that this was not the first time *40Part* had been ‘there’, temporarily available for New Yorkers to visit in the wake of a major catastrophe; it also made clear that *Rockaway!* was not MoMA PS1’s first response to Sandy, which had been particularly destructive in Queens, the borough where the museum is located. Biesenbach elaborated on this in another piece of *Rockaway!* promotional material:

Together with Volkswagen, MoMA PS1 was able to establish the VW Dome 2 in Rockaway Beach, immediately following Hurricane Sandy. *Rockaway!* is an ongoing effort to continue museum and cultural support in the area. I feel strongly that Volkswagen Group of America is our greatest partner to achieve this important work.¹⁰⁷

It would be disingenuous to single out MoMA PS1 and *Rockaway!* for their reliance on, and promotion of, corporations and industries that, in terms of imagining better or at least livable futures for more humans (and non-human animals) and, specifically, in terms of climate change, we might consider to be bad actors. For the purposes of this discussion, though, the unsurmountable ambivalences of *Rockaway!* as a (cultural) ‘relief effort’ speaks to the material implications of relief that are also present in more abstract and individualized forms of comfort.¹⁰⁸ Indeed, the fact that those social and material implications are not necessarily appraisable and counter-intuitive for the comforted is key; in other words, what were *40Part* visitors not, or not encouraged to be, listening to?

Descriptions of *40Part* as a ‘unusually potent balm’ or a ‘sauna for the mind’¹⁰⁹ speak to an engagement of *40Part* as a form of what Mack Hagood calls soundscaping – the ‘technological fabrication of physical and psychological space through the aural’¹¹⁰ – and are, in turn and following Sarah Sharma, symptomatic of a spatially biased understanding not just of the installation but also, crucially, of the conditions of transcendence. These require ‘having distance’¹¹¹ and a place to take time away and, due to its particular atmosphere, to moor oneself. Sharma’s critique of what she identifies as ‘slow places’ and the ways these operate is useful to understand the work of *40Part* whenever deployed or engaged as a ‘transcendent refuge’:

There is a dominating sensibility within this discourse on slowness that being a ‘good’ political citizen requires transcendence. Transcendence pervades in both

107 Volkswagen US, ‘Volkswagen Supports the *Rockaway!* Arts Festival’, press release, 27 June 2014, <https://media.vw.com/en-us/releases/302>.

108 Hagood (‘Quiet Comfort’) and Sharma (*Meantime*) have addressed different manifestations of this, seemingly paradoxical, work of neoliberal comfort. See also Robin James’s theorization of ‘resilience discourse’ and of self-care as technologies of neoliberalism in *Resilience and Melancholy: Pop Music, Feminism, Neoliberalism* (Winchester: Zero Books, 2015).

109 Carly Berwick, ‘Forty Harmonious Voices Drown Out Your Woes: Cardiff at MoMA,’ *Bloomberg*, 10 January 2006; Davidson, ‘Polyphonic Spree’.

110 Hagood, ‘Quiet Comfort’, 575.

111 Sharma, *Meantime*, 111.

taking the necessary time out and abstracting oneself from the energy and traffic of everyday life. But this traffic conditions the very possibility for some to transcend. Slowness does not and cannot acknowledge its material preconditions or the diversity of demands that sit outside its concrete edifices and sacred spaces . . . slowness hides the rhythm of material relations, the very condition of its possibility.¹¹²

The sense of comfort that *40Part* could provide is time-sensitive because the installation ‘is there’ for a number of hours a day during a limited run; as most sound installations, *40Part* dwells and, as such, the relationship between installation and site, like that between installation and its visitors, is more similar to a rental agreement. While that was the case with all *40Part* iterations in the city (and is arguably the case elsewhere),¹¹³ this was more apparent at *Rockaway!* because it was explicitly a festival and because, with respect to the recovery, it was short-lived and it came and went *in media res* – ‘People have been visibly moved when they have experienced this piece . . . We are sorry to see it go.’¹¹⁴ During the festival, *40Part* was free and open to visitors from Thursday to Sunday – times when more day-trippers visit the Rockaways.¹¹⁵

Conclusion

This study has approached *40Part* as a cultural artefact that participates in auditory culture and that has a social history. In so doing, it advances a more nuanced approach to the spatiality of sound installations and to how these enter and animate – not just comment on – social choreographies and topologies that are political, in part, because the ways in which these participate in temporal economies. Sound art installations such as *40Part* are experiences for audiences – notably, art-literate audiences – to consume during their leisure time; not only do sound installations take (specific people’s leisure) time but also, with exceptions, tend to have opening days and hours and are ‘in place’ temporarily. Taking into account that the site a sound installation defines is meant for its intended audiences to spend time doing and feeling something other than what people do and feel elsewhere, notably at the workplace and at home, and, hence, recognizing sound installations’ attunement to the experience economy – the fact that much of their allure is, as is the case with *40Part*, connected to the rehearsal of new forms of audience participation is, too, fundamental to and symptomatic of such connection – is key to understanding the significance and uses of *40Part* in New York and I believe is also key to approaching sound installations as situated auditory-cultural and artistic phenomena at large. In this study, in particular, it allowed for a critique of *40Part*’s entanglement with white bourgeois sentimentality and consumption practices that extends

112 Sharma, *Meantime*, 134.

113 With the exception of the Centro de Arte Contemporânea Inhotim, Brumadinho, Brazil, where one of *40Part* editions is on permanent installation.

114 RAA president Dan Guarino, quoted in ‘Final Days for Forty Piece Motet’, *Rockaway*, 15 August 2014, www.rockaway.com/articles/final-days-for-forty-piece-motet/.

115 See note 106. This fleeting aspect of *40Part* arguably was part of what made the experience attractive for the city’s art-literate audiences, of what made it worth the trip.

into the material (re)production and obliteration of social inequalities. Part of the soothing and healing properties attributed to *40Part* had to do with the racialized impression that this immersive installation and its ‘pure’ sounds were the spiritual and somatic other of an antsy contemporaneity. Drawing, particularly, on the work of Sarah Sharma and Mack Hagood, this article questioned for whom and what for *40Part* could possibly serve as a ‘sonic refuge’ and how does this function within – rather than outside, ‘beyond’, or as a way to counter – the realities that make it possible, desirable, and exclusive.

The association of *Spem in alium* with simpler, more ‘natural’ times and, in turn, a framing of *40Part*’s experience as slow-paced and mooring were manifest from the beginning in the New York City reception of the work. In its staging as part of the commemorative rituals of these two, markedly modern, disasters,¹¹⁶ Cardiff’s installation came to be ‘percolated through intangible conceptions of history, identity and sense of belonging’¹¹⁷ and to invoke a sense of trans-historical resilience, wherein the avowed timelessness of *Spem in alium* worked as a proxy for the resilience of white Anglo-European Christian culture. Such work hinged on the material and symbolic aspects of the multi-channel audio installation’s rendering of *Spem in alium*, as these were mobilized in a time of cultural reckoning, and as these were positioned within the city’s existing architectures of memory and erasure. The installation’s usage in *September 11* and *Rockaway!* was imbued with, and sanctioned by, sentimental attachments, aesthetic judgements, and values that did not quite transcend, as much as obliterate their own complicity in those, less spectacular, underlying forms of racialized and neoliberal violence that 9/11 and Sandy had intensified, and become compounded with, in the city. Because white dominance and neoliberal disinvestments arguably are the flipside of some of the specific affinities and techno-social tendencies that I suggest were central to the possibility of *40Part* offering comfort as deployed in 2011 and 2014, and they are, too, central to what is ruinous about modernity.

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116 The September 11 attacks and Hurricane Sandy are two of the most traumatic events in the recent history of the city; they are often paired as such and otherwise imagined to belong to the same broad category – roughly, that of ‘unspeakable harm’, an equation that the recruitment of *40Part* for the commemoration of both events reproduced. Terror attacks and so-called natural disasters, following Brian Massumi, ‘define the two poles of [contemporary] disaster’; both of them strike ‘like fate with a speed or at a scale’ that appears to be ‘beyond the ken of human sense-making’. These quintessentially twenty-first-century catastrophes cause sudden and spectacular destruction and, physically and psychically, mark a before and after, that is, effect a sort of schism in vernacular understandings of historical time that the putative timelessness of *Spem in alium* bypasses. Brian Massumi, ‘The Half-Life of Disaster’, *The Guardian*, 15 April 2011, www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2011/apr/15/half-life-of-disaster.

117 Olsen and Pétursdóttir, *Ruin Memories*, 15.

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