Auditions: Architecture and Aurality (MIT Press)

By Rob Stone

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In *Auditions*, Rob Stone proposes a new and transformative view of architecture and sound. He offers a radical rethinking of the inhabitation of architectural space in terms of its acoustic dimensions, presenting a concept of aurality as an active, speculative, yet conditional understanding of the complexity of social spaces. The aural architectures he discusses are assembled from elements of architecture and music -- including works by Ludwig Mies van der Rohe and John Cage -- but also from imagined spaces and other kinds of less obviously musical sounds.

Stone presents a series of aural-architecture moments, each of which brings architectural space into conversational relationships with extra-architectural concepts and perceptions, often suggested by other art forms and social practices. He considers, for example, the acoustic themes of a silent movie; Greg Louganis's failed dive at the Seoul Olympics and the moral values attached to water in architecture; the custodianship of high culture at a second-hand classical record shop in London; and hair (as in the conductor's hairstyle) as a mediating form between music and architectural space.

In *Auditions*, Stone brings together and revises the canonical instances of sound's relationships with architectural spaces, and he does so by granting new kinds of spatial agency to sound. Sound is not only a portal into otherwise imperceptible aspects of architecture but also a reflection on the concepts that produce our expectations of architecture.

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Editorial Review

Review

Rob Stone deftly maneuvers through an array of cultural phenomena -- from audible accidents to buildings to swimming pools -- by way of aural association. *Auditions* reorients our view of modernity, affording opportunities for hearing its architectures to discover a labyrinth of acoustical fugitivity.

(Brandon LaBelle, author of *Acoustic Territories: Sound Culture and Everyday Life* and *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art*)

Through a beguiling arrangement of sensate experience, erudition, cogitation, and nerve, Rob Stone offers a resonant networked narrative that guides us to a greater understanding and awareness of what aural-architecture may be, with a particular focus on modernist culture in all its complexity. This vivacious contribution to an emerging field is attained via Stone's insightful familiarity with the materials that he exploits despite disciplinary vicissitudes, be that architectural history, psychoanalysis, experimental music, opera, or acoustics.

(John Levack Drever, Professor of Acoustic Ecology and Sound Art, Goldsmiths, University of London)

" *Auditions* conducts a highly original and generative enquiry into the folding of acoustic and architectural space. The book traverses a rich seam of material from modern and post-modern buildings, dormitory towns, classic operas, avant-garde compositions, and technical developments in sound recording, to the hairstyles of great conductors. These and an array of other cultural references are brought into unexpected juxtapositions, elegantly threaded through with ideas and associations that produce a composition, which is nevertheless porous and open for interpretation. This book is a delight to read and is something like a work of art in its own right in its ability to transform the meaning of things with nuance and poetic invention.

(Grant Watson, Curator and Lecturer in Curatorial Theory, Royal College of Art, London)

About the Author

Rob Stone is Associate Professor in Critical and Cultural Studies at Emily Carr University of Art and Design, Vancouver, and a founding editor of *The Journal of Visual Culture*. He established the MA program in Aural and Visual Cultures and the Centre for Research Architecture at Goldsmiths College, University of London.

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