

# DIVINA SONUS RURIS

THE SOUND OF THE SACRED IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

PUBLIC PRESENTATION OF SOUND WORKS  
CREATED AT NODAR RURAL ART LAB

**SATURDAY, 26 OCTOBER 2013, 15H00**

PARISHES OF COVAS DO RIO, SÃO MARTINHO  
DAS MOITAS & SUL (SÃO PEDRO DO SUL)

**MEETING POINT: MAIN SQUARE OF SUL**

Ana Rodríguez (UY)

Patxi Valera (ES)

Christoph Korn (DE)

Trish e Dan Scott c/ o Padre  
Rodney Schofield (UK)

Mary Rothlisberger (US)

Monique Besten (NL)

Rodrigo Malvar (PT)

Ana Guedes (PT)

Graphic design: Luis Costa from photo by Manuela Barile to artist Steve Peters in the village of Ameixosa (S. Pedro do Sul)



Organization:

binaural@nodar

Partners:



União das Freguesias  
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Funding:



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DA CULTURA



# Divina Sonus Ruris

## 6 - 26 October 2013, S. Pedro do Sul

### 1. Introduction

In these current times there is a growing interest in the idea of "memory of a territory" and a focus on the intangible heritage (know-how, techniques and technologies, oral history, musical traditions, etc.), which is facilitated by recent technological developments (namely the portability and accessibility of sound and video capturing devices, the Internet and social media) and by an ever evident feeling that the hypermodern, multiethnic and globalized life often lacks a sense of connection with the past, with the founding roots of a nation, a culture and even a family, which are aspects that give sense to the here-and-now.

The growing interest in rural areas has been essentially motivated by two kinds of impulses: the contact with nature and the contact with memory. This second aspect is often based on reconstructions of an idealized and somewhat superficial past made of gastronomy, handicrafts and music and that frequency fall short of what the deepest reality of the rural areas effectively was. Therefore, there is a need to research additional aspects that add density to the knowledge of a territory and, through that knowledge, generate new dynamics and acknowledgement factors towards diversified audiences.

Following examples being applied in other European regions, Binaural - Associação Cultural de Nodar (S. Pedro do Sul, Portugal) has been positioning itself since 2004 towards the generation of innovation and authenticity relatively to the heritage of its territory of intervention (encompassing the Gralheira, Arada and Montemuro mountain ranges and the Paiva and Vouga river valleys, in the Aveiro and Viseu districts), seeking to establish a wide range of dynamics: artist residencies on contemporary artistic creation based on social and geographical research of rural areas; the relationship with national and international scientific communities in the areas of anthropology, architecture, ethnomusicology, contemporary arts, etc.; educational activities directed to children, youths and senior citizens on sound and video recording of the rural villages and regularly publishing books, catalogues, CDs and DVDs. These activities constitute a continuous search for new forms of identity and heritage and a

way to promote the territory both nationally and internationally.

Throughout 2013, Binaural/Nodar is combining a wide range of creation, documentation and research activities related to the intangible heritage of the region and its inclusion in an European network of innovation in the field of multimedia archives for the promotion of mountain rural territories.

Since May 2012, Binaural/Nodar is part of the Tramontana Network on memory archives of Southern Europe, a project funded by the 2007 - 2013 Culture Program of the European Union and that includes six other organizations of Italy and France.

## 2. DIVINA SONUS RURIS: Sound and media arts residency about the intangible religious heritage of the Gralheira mountain range

6 - 26 October 2013

(Parishes of Sul, Covas do Rio and S. Martinho das Moitas)

Public presentation of sound and media art works:

Meeting Point: Main Square of the village of Sul

Saturday, 26 October 2013, 15h00 - 18h00

*"We were always friends. But as happens with between family members or between friends, our relationship was getting worn out. (...) We didn't explain you our things. (...) We didn't have you as students, friends, and talkers. (...) And we also went through dubious paths, where art and beauty, and - what is worse to us - the worship of God - weren't always served well. Let's remake the peace?"*

*(Pope Paul VI, Speech to Artists, 10-12).*

The sacred is a central element of the rural communities of the Gralheira mountain range, São Pedro do Sul (PT). The relationship between rural daily life and sacred practices is so close and real that it is impossible to think about these communities apart from the religious themes. Despite the accelerated transformation of these rural areas, there remains a strong support by the inhabitants towards religion, not only the older but also the younger ones, which may surprise many people given the increasing secularism of contemporary societies. It is therefore useful to analyze the particular aspects of religion in these rural communities and the reasons why it continues to deserve such high levels of adherence.

Religion is clearly a major element of social cohesion in rural mountain communities, where ancient ways of living and feeling remain vivid, which are passed on from parents to children, thus ensuring a very genuine balance, anthropologically interesting, between a contemporary way of life and the permanence of a set of ancient beliefs and practices that give a sense of continuity over time (historical, familiar, personal) and reinforce the sense of belonging to a place. In particular, religion intertwines their lives (the masses, the social work, catechesis, religious heritage, the festivals that mark the seasonal cycles, celebrations of life and death, etc.) that it becomes a crucial element for the study of the rural communities of the Gralheira mountain range.

As the religious subject is very contaminated by simplistic debates and irreducible positions, it seems to us that it's necessary to convoke free-spirited and multi-faceted visions about it. On the other hand, being the opening to the "other", to the "unknown" one of the primary focuses of Binaural/Nodar's, activities in order to build bridges between the world of globalized contemporary art and contexts that are not normally dealt with through a first-hand experience, we believe it's very relevant the inclusion of this subject in the artistic research developed in our region, which is materialized in the following aspects:

1. Rural hagiography: Legends of local saints and miracles.
2. Parish Stories: Memory of the local historical relationship with religion.
3. Religion, gender and generational issues.
4. Built Religious Heritage: Churches, chapels, sanctuaries, shrines and cemeteries.
5. Object religious heritage: garments, crosses, litters, chalices, books, etc..
6. Local religious musical heritage.
7. Sacred rites: Celebrations, Masses, weddings, baptisms and funerals.
8. Religious phonosphere in the landscape: Bell tolls, chants, processions, fireworks.
9. The sacred in the private sphere: Prayers and rosaries, religious iconography in the rural house.
10. Religion and the agricultural cycles.

The program of creative residencies in sound art and media art will precisely have as theme the rich religious heritage found in the rural villages of the Gralheira mountain range, within a framework of promoting an open and frank dialogue with local religious institutions and in line with the theological, liturgical and cultural changes initiated after World War II with the Second Vatican Council and more recently addressed by Popes John Paul II and Benedict XVI through regular dialogues with contemporary artists.



*“The relationship between rural daily life and sacred practices is so close and real that it is impossible to think about these communities apart from the religious themes.”*



### 3. DIVINA SONUS RURIS: creative projects

Christoph Korn (Germany)  
"Contemplations"

audio work/radio work

Body part ... for ... body part  
Quietly and in slow movements from  
Sound of language ... stillness ... sound of language

To implement the work, at least five people from the region of Gralheira should be found, who will read the individual body parts from a list. This will be recorded using an audio recorder. These recordings will serve as a foundation for the composition which, as described above, moves peacefully from the sound of language - to stillness - to the sound of language. The audio recordings should be made at a location that has a religious significance to the people (e.g. in the village church). The theoretical background of "Contemplations" stems from the concept of the "Face" (visage) from the Jewish philosopher of religion Emmanuel Levinas. In the "Face of the Other" - and Levinas expands the concept of the Face principally to all the parts of the body - the divine becomes immediately present. In her essay "Precarious Life," the philosopher Judith Butler refers to the category of the "Face" from Levinas and describes "face" as something pre-linguistic and as a "kind of sound." The appearing "sound" is specific and connected to the people from the region of Gralheira. Likewise, it is also non concrete and revolves around something general.

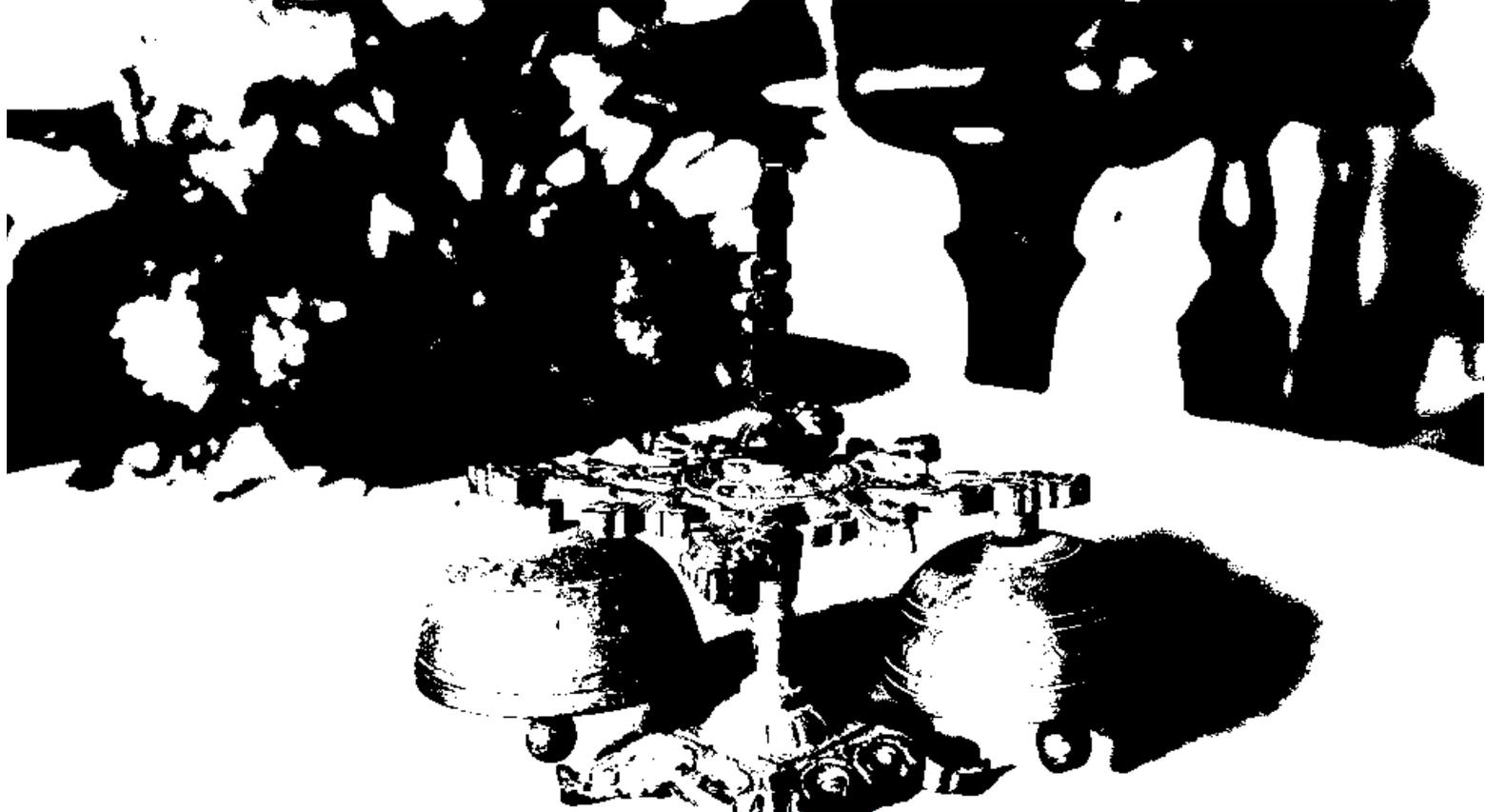
**Christoph Korn** studied Political Science, Philosophy and Pedagogics in Frankfurt upon Main at the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe University. In the 1980's, he was involved in political contexts and worked with street children in Rio de Janeiro and Sao Paulo in the context of a liberation theological project in 1988 and 1989. At the beginning of the 1990's his first artistic works emerged. Christoph Korn worked in Ensembles with musicians like Alfred 23 Harth, Rüdiger Carl, Wolfgang Schliemann, Joachim Zoepf, artist group TEXTxtnd (Oliver Augst/Michaela Ehinger/Marcel Daemgen), Lasse-Marc Riek, Otomo Yoshihide, or as well in different projects with visual artist Raymond Pettibon. His solo work moves at the interface of audio and media art. An essential part of this work is the phenomenon of "duration". In the last few years, he has increasingly put this into practice using the strategy of deleting and withdrawing. His works were exhibited and performed at numerous international festivals of contemporary music and media art.

Trish and Dan Scott with Father Rodney Schofield (United Kingdom)  
"Our Father"

We propose a multi-voiced and multi-perspectival project exploring the encounter between an English Catholic priest, the people of the Gralheira mountain range and ourselves as contemporary artists. In order to precipitate a debate that crosses traditional boundaries between contemporary art and religion we have invited Father Rodney Schofield (a theologian and Catholic priest from the United Kingdom) to work with us. Father Rodney has a longstanding interest in inculturation, and our project will document Father Rodney as he examines the significance of inculturation to intergenerational relationships in the area. Our methodology will be to visit households in different villages (using introductions from members of Binaural) and then follow Father Rodney's journey as he initiates conversations and gathers material. We will document soundscapes and conversations, and develop a narrative of the journey that incorporates different voices. In documenting Father Rodney's journey, we will create a narrative in the form of an installation, incorporating multi-channel audio and film, from the materials and findings gathered. This work will act as a stand-alone sound work and will also feature as a part of a proposed service given by Father Rodney at one of the churches in the region (with the permission of the local priest). Father Rodney's enquiries may also lead to the publication of an article at a later date.

**Trish and Dan Scott** are an artist partnership based in Kent, UK. Their practice incorporates their respective fields of performance and video art and sound art, and explores narratives of place, playfully utilizing institutional methodologies such as ethnography, archaeology, management consultancy and literature. Previous projects include *Change Management*, a life-coaching course for a piece of derelict land in Kent, *Herring Quest*, an exploration of the declining herring industry in Northern Iceland. The products of our projects have ranged from installations and live performance, to an audio guide to artist's books and short films. Trish and Dan have a background in Social Anthropology, and are currently both engaged in practice-based research at the University of the Arts, London.

**Fr Rodney Schofield** has a long and varied experience of the Christian Church. Brought up as a Methodist, he was ordained an Anglican priest in 1972, serving in English parishes and teaching in African seminaries (in both Lesotho and Malawi), before becoming a Catholic priest within the diocese of Plymouth in 2006. He studied theology at Oxford and later gained a doctorate at the University of Wales, Lampeter.



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Ana Rodríguez (Uruguay)

“La Fragancia de Los Pensamientos Salvajes” | “The Fragrance of the Wild Thoughts”

The project seeks the free and open exploration of the local “sacred rites”, from the point of view of someone who has not been trained in the Catholic tradition and has no previous experience in Portugal. Following a virgin, but not naïve, appearance, questions will induce honest narratives, explanations, stories of local traditions relating to the connection between religion and daily life as well as special events. The community dimension (festivals, processions, baptisms) and the domestic universe (prayers, healing rituals) will both be explored. This is not an anthropological investigation of an academic but an experimental investigation. The project is not intended to capture the treasures of the local elders but to be a humble cultural exchange. An Uruguayan searches the Portuguese rural cultural memory garden, seeking possible influences on the traditions that have shaped, with contributions from Spanish colonists and immigrants and indigenous cultural elements, the cosmogenic forest of rural Uruguayan cultures, the most influenced by the contribution of Brazilian Portuguese. But you never know what and who is going to be found. From the recording of these meetings, two radio pieces will be created, with an estimated duration of 20 minutes each. These radio pieces will consist of different materials: conversations, interviews, soundscapes, recitations, readings, archival material and will seek ways to bring to the sound narrative elements that give background information and sensitive understanding.

**Ana Rodríguez (Uruguay, 1975)** has a degree in anthropological sciences from the University of Uruguay and obtained a master’s degree in theory and practice of creative documentary by Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona. She worked on sound and video ethnographic archive projects both in the region of Tacuarembó (Northern Uruguay) and the Carranza Valley, Bizkaia (Basque Country) where she lived from 2008 to 2013. She was part of the creative teams of documentary films as “Aquells Joves” (2012), “Desde Baix” (2012), “Seat, las Sombras del Progresso” (2012) and directed ethnographic films as “La Ganadería en el Valle de Carranza” (2008), “Las Fogueras San Juan y El Divino del Cerro la Ventana” (2005) and “El Jesús de Praga del Cerro de la Virgen” (2005).

Patxi Valera (Spain)

“Aquófono. Mística” | “Aquófono. Mística”

The Theory of Five Movements, Wu Xin, offers a comprehensive and complete explanation of all stages, states and cycles. The Chinese patiently observed the close relationship between human and natural elements. The theory of five elements or movements was quickly reflected in medicine, associated with the five organs and the five viscera governing the related body functions. Its application has also extended to many other branches of knowledge, having been associated to the five flavors, five colors, five cardinal points, five seasons, five sounds, five tones, five planets, five virtues, five grains, five climates or five emotions, for a total of over fifty different categories. The project “Aquófono. Mística” is inspired by this five state theory and represents a complete sequence through various sound elements, as a dynamic creative proposal for the continuous creation/re-creation of the universe in motion. The aim is to pay tribute to a way of thinking that puts the elements of nature as the main force involved in the cycles of creation and destruction, from the moment of conception until death.

**Patxi Valera** was born in A Coruña (Galicia, Spain) in 1970 and has a degree in Social Psychology. His self-taught learning, as well as his eclectic artistic-musical character, directed him to engage with various formations of collective creations which work focused primarily on audiovisual experimentation and free improvisation. In 1991 he helped to put in motion the multimedia group Kozmic Muffin in which he participated as a drummer, percussionist, lyricist and screenwriter for more than 10 years. Since forming in 1999 PARTO along with drummer Luis Alberto Rodríguez Legido he dedicated to deepen the study of form and sound in experimental music. In 2002 he started working with L.A.R. Legido on the prototype of what is currently the Aquófono, a new way to generate musical noise from simple water drops. He is part of CNTPS, Pico Sacro Centre for New Technologies organizing the “Sesiones Vibracionales” cycle of improvised music concerts. A result of this experience was the orchestra OMEGA, Orquesta de Música Espontánea de Galicia, formed by nearly thirty Galician musicians and visual artists committed to creating real-time music guided by bodily signs from a director.



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#### Ar\_Search: Ana Guedes and Rodrigo Malvar (Portugal)

The Ar\_Search collective thought of a series of sound sculptures that will be installed in a church based on the local iconography and objectal religious heritage, crossing the private religious phonosphere - lament. The installation is based on a number of empty glass domes inhabited by a rotating system driven by a motor that will slowly make rotate a small metal arm, placed near the glass to produce a friction between the glass and the metal arm, a "lament". The empty dome, commonly used to protect religious images, embodies the palpable absence of the place where once symbolic faith objects dwelt. These small altars, empty of content, but cyclical and repetitive in its internal mechanisms, represent an ancestral movement of hope and disappointment. This works as a judicious metaphor for our era, where the sensation of imbalance and doubt has replaced the certainty of eternal progress and endless economic growth. In parallel, we propose a collection of recordings of songs, prayers and rosaries, because faith and personal strength takes in churches an expression of a collective nature, so the recordings to be made in the churches would integrate the installation, so taking advantage of the acoustic qualities and architectural space of the church.

**Rodrigo Malvar** attended the course in Civil Engineering at the University of Beira Interior and Interpretation Course at the School of Music and the Performing Arts (ESMAE). He Concluded in 2002 a specialization in Theatre Arts at the Academy of Contemporary Street Entertainment. He presently attends the 2nd year of Master in Contemporary Artistic Creation at the University of Aveiro. He is co-founder of Teatro do Frio where he assumes functions of artistic director and interpreter. He directed dozens of shows since 2001. He exhibited the sound installation FUGA GEOGRÁFICA at the International Puppet Festival - Porto ( 2012) and EXPO 12 - Aveiro (2012). In the context of the master course, he exhibited a video and sound art piece PROSSIGO at the Sound and Rural Architecture Festival BINAURAL/NODAR (2012).

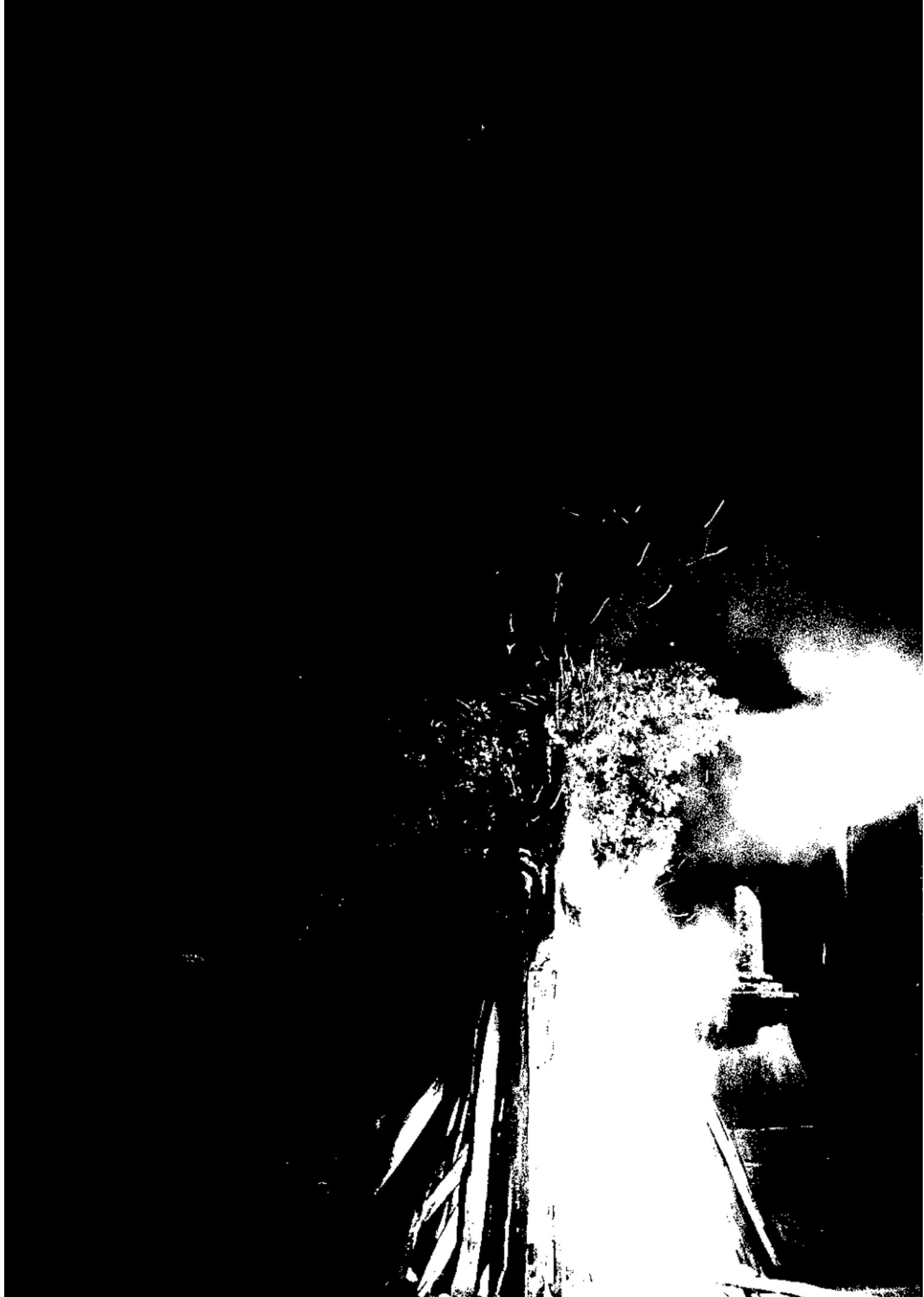
**Ana Guedes** has a degree in Fine Arts and Sculpture from the Faculty of Fine Arts, University of Porto and the Master of Visual Arts in Intermedia from the University of Évora and is dedicated to building "Prothetical/Proesthetical" objects for musical instruments. She has worked in scenography for Casa da Música, Teatro do Frio and Companhia de Música Teatral (CMT). As a visual artist she produced various exhibitions both nationally and abroad.

#### Mary Rothlisberger (USA) and Monique Besten (Netherlands)

Religion, though often dismissed in contemporary creative circles, is still the most powerful vehicle for empowering change and building community. When studied as a microcosm, religious practices boil down to a long history of powerful stories--stories seen through action- based rituals, stories told as lessons in living, stories passed from generation to generation to create a lineage of narrative identity. Our work is powered by an intentional awareness of, and interaction with, the stories we occupy. The internal compass by which we set our course is grounded and consistent, but adaptable in its application. Because of the conversational nature of our exploratory methodology, we're inclined to build a project based on rural hagiographies, parish relationships, or landscape phonospheres. This could take shape in many ways: as an interactive archive of sound and print media for a specialized religious narrative; as a content-driven sound system for collecting and experiencing religious phonospheres; as a micro-library of experimental theological research; as a hyper-local curatorial project in religious heritage artifacts; or as a performative social ritual that highlights and celebrates the sacred ordinary.

**Mary Rothlisberger** (b. 1983, Killeen, Texas) is a thinker, writer, conversationalist, and relationalist. Her creative work is community-specific and socially responsive and thusly takes many different forms. Projects have included building a neighborhood radio station, facilitating a social center on a frozen lake, developing creative living systems within a former thrift store or exploring microcosmic cultural production within interstitial spaces. Mary has served as a Collaborative Director of LOOK AROUND, a pop-up artspace and creative playground in Palouse, Washington. She earned a BA in Religion from the University of Mary Washington and an MFA in Sculpture from Washington State University.

**Monique Besten** studied medieval and cultural history for six years in The Netherlands and Ireland. She did research and wrote numerous articles about different historical subjects. Since 2004 Monique Besten organises New Riddles and Constellations: a project series for which she invites a number of artists to work next to each other during a period of 4 to 8 weeks to develop and/or present new work. Every edition takes place at a different, special location and is shaped according to the location, participants and guests. Founder of Stichting Mista'peo, organising art events and projects (15 editions of the festival "The Evening of the Longest/Shortest Night"), creating opportunities for artists from different disciplines to develop and present new work.



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