

Tessa Solomon, "11 Essential Sound Artworks, from Reviled Noise Orchestras to Protest-Minded Installations," *ARTnews*, October 8, 2020.

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BY **TESSA SOLOMON**  October 8, 2020 2:24pm



Christine Sun Kim, *Closed Captions*, 2015.

PHOTO BY JEFF MCLANE/COURTESY FRANCOIS GHEBALY

In 1979, the Museum of Modern Art in New York presented a modest exhibition called “**Sound Art.**” The museum’s small media art gallery could only accommodate one artwork at a time, so the three works in the show, by Maggi Payne, Connie Beckley, and Julia Heyward, took turns on display. “‘Sound art’ pieces are more closely allied to art than to music, and are usually presented in the museum, gallery, or alternative space,” the exhibition’s curator, Barbara London, said in a statement at the time.

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In essence, London had helped define a medium that was newly emergent back then, but her explanation offered few parameters—which was exactly the point. Anything aural—radio art, spoken word poetry, the chiming of clocks, even silence itself—was game. The 1983 show “Sound/Art” at the SculptureCenter in New York City helped expand the canon of sound artists, and since then, new technologies have brought in new artists, who have helped make the medium one of the defining ones for right now. Below, a look back at 11 essential sound artworks.

Samson Young, *For Whom the Bell Tolls: A Journey Into the Sonic History of Conflict*

The Hong Kong-based artist Samson Young is at the forefront of a new vanguard of sound and performance artists driving the mediums in political directions. A traditionally trained composer, Young has been on the rise since he won the inaugural edition of Art Basel’s BMW Art Journey Award in 2015 for his project *For Whom the Bell Tolls: A Journey Into the Sonic History of Conflict*. Over two-months, he documented the chime of iconic bells across five continents. He then crafted responses which explored the bells’ status as musical instruments and political, social, and religious representations of their communities. In June 2016, he drew critical acclaim at Art Basel Unlimited for a similar exploration into the militarization of sound. Seated atop a booth-sized cube and dressed in police uniform, Young performed with a Long Range Acoustic Device, a sonic weapon used to disperse crowds at protests. A low level form of the weapon is also used to repel birds from private properties, which Young represented by recreating distressed bird calls.

<https://www.artnews.com/feature/sound-art-guide-most-famous-works-1234572580/>