

Heivi in the mountains, outcome of our experience as part of the Research project "How Does Landscape Sound?" research project, led by Thomas Isler and supported by the IFCAR Research Grant 2023

Introduction

As ZHdK students, we embarked on an exploration of alpine acoustic landscapes with our mentor Thomas Isler, aiming to understand how the surroundings and their recordings shape our perception of the mountains in film and how they can be implemented into our own artistic practice.

Research Trip and Fieldwork

Accompanied by our mentors, we ventured into the Swiss Alps equipped with cameras and different types of recording equipment. Over the course of three days, we meticulously captured the sights and sounds of the alpine landscapes in fixed long shots, documenting the nuances and intricacies of our surroundings. Prior to this event, we received thorough explanations and presentations of the different recording techniques that we were going to use, conducted by Reto Stamm and Eric Larrieux, enabling us to replicate them while in the Alps.

Atelier Work and Experimentation

Back in the studio, we experimented with the narratives of our film shots and our observations of the contemporary Alpine landscape, which differed a lot from the mainstream and "perfect" filmic picture. We shot our own material in the 6.K02 room to add upon our Heidi narrative and used the facility's editing room to build our video installation.

Creation of the Video Installation

Drawing from the material we recorded during our research trip, we then started to research and create a narrative exploring the idea of "dirty and busy" landscapes and the ideology behind the folkloric character of Heidi. From those observations was born *Heivi in the Mountains*, a video installation that reimagines the classic tale of Heidi in a dystopian narrative. We ingeniously portrayed Heivi's return to the alpine landscape, now drastically transformed by human influence, prompting contemplation on environmental shifts. Using visuals and ambient sounds from Oberwallis captured earlier that year, the video employs shots from the Alps that Thomas had captured, accompanied by AI as a storyteller - and an uncanny translator - offering a satirical take that urges viewers to ponder the evolving Swiss landscape. Focusing on the reception of sound within sound/video installations, we cleverly used a 5.0 surround system to convey immersiveness to the visual experience. The video installation was shown in room 6.k03 and presented to the IFCAR committee, the recipients of the grant, and the public.

Reflections and Insights

Our experience working on this project was both enlightening and transformative. We gained a deeper appreciation for the intricate relationship between sound and landscape, and the ways in which they intertwine to shape our sensory experience. This project allowed us to gain knowledge about sound recording, perception of sound, and its effects. On the technical aspect, we learned how to use the different sound engines to recreate our “immersive” recordings in post-production, using Davinci, and be resourceful by using the equipment provided by the university. This whole experience also made us reimagine Heidi, offering a contemporary glance at the character.

Conclusion

As students and artists, our involvement in the "How Does Landscape Sound?" research project was a journey of discovery and exploration. Our video installation serves as a testament to the transformative potential of artistic inquiry and the boundless possibilities that lie at the intersection of art and science.

Special Thanks

To our mentors, Thomas Isler, Reto Stamm, Eric Larrieux, for helping us and sharing your knowledge with us. To the IFCAR committee, for allowing us the possibility of being part of this journey.

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