

An aerial, grayscale photograph of a city street. The street is paved with a brick pattern, and a circular manhole cover is visible in the lower-left quadrant. The text "Whispers of the Terrain" is overlaid in white, bold font across the center of the image.

Whispers of the Terrain

Claudia Robles-Angel

Whispers of the Terrain

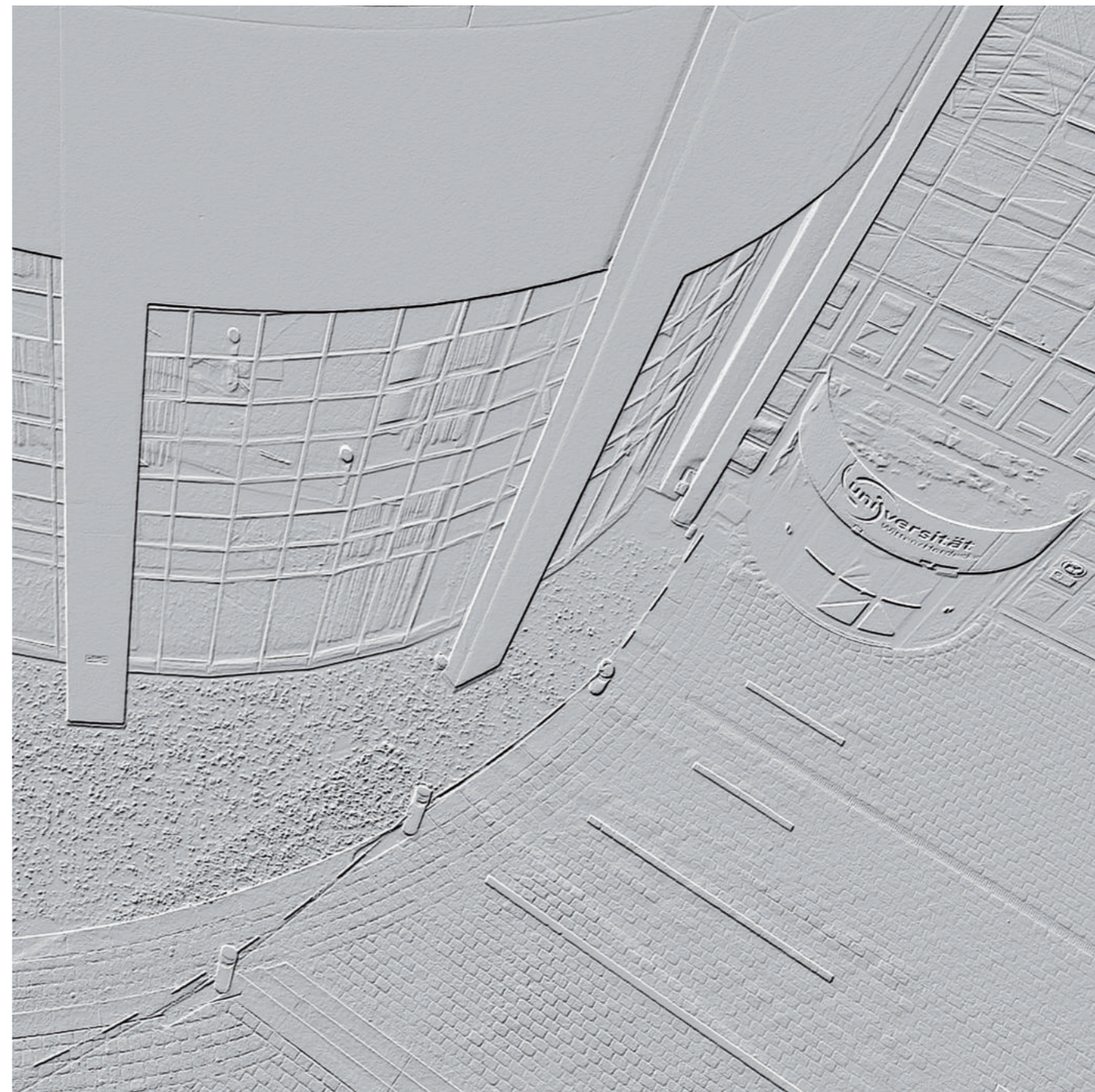
A Sound Cartography of the Witten/Herdecke Campus

Artist-in-Residence Project at Witten/Herdecke University
in the Summer Term 2024/25

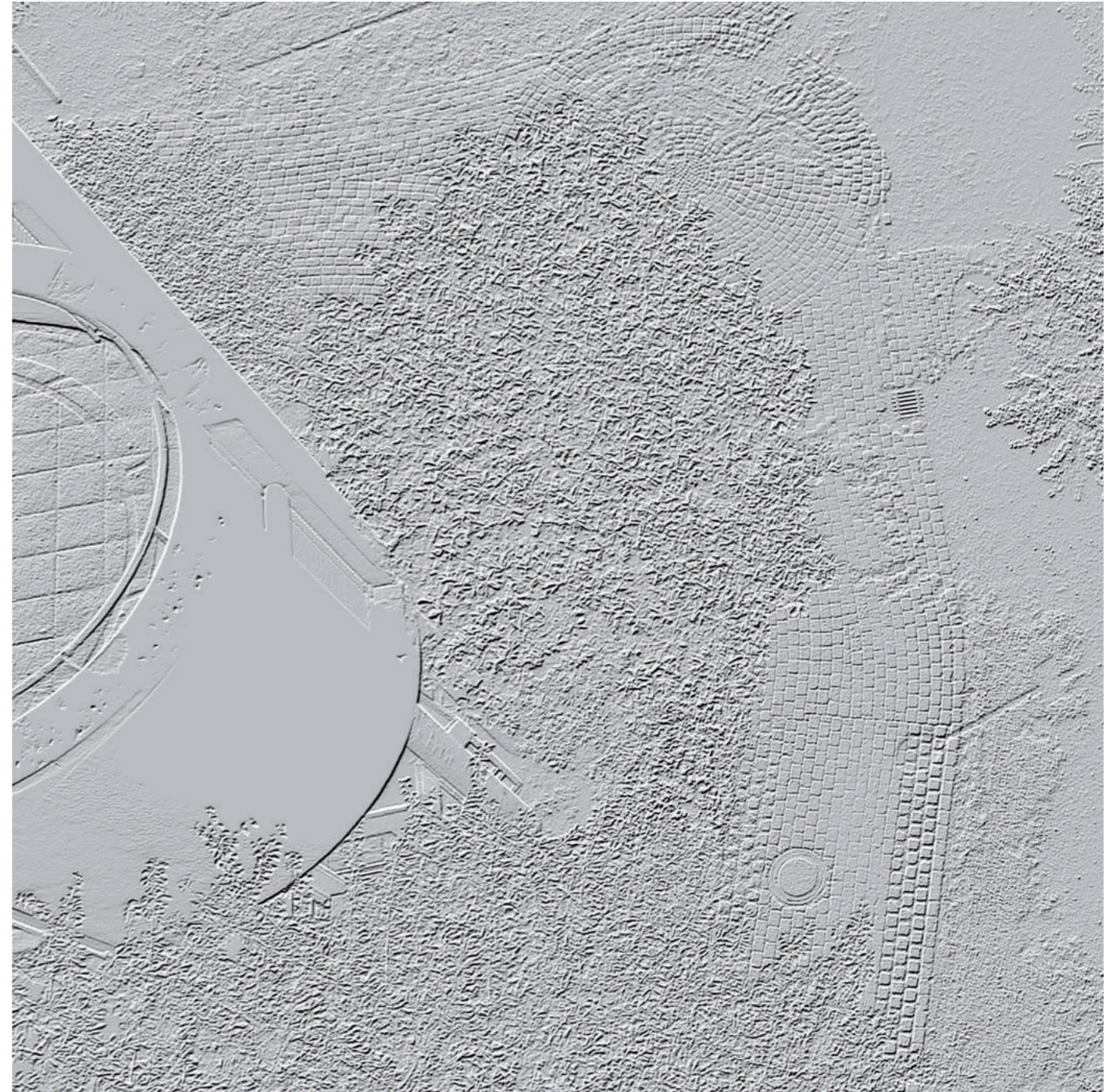
'The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation.'

Deleuze & Guattari

Muffled



Whirling



Chirping



Ribbit

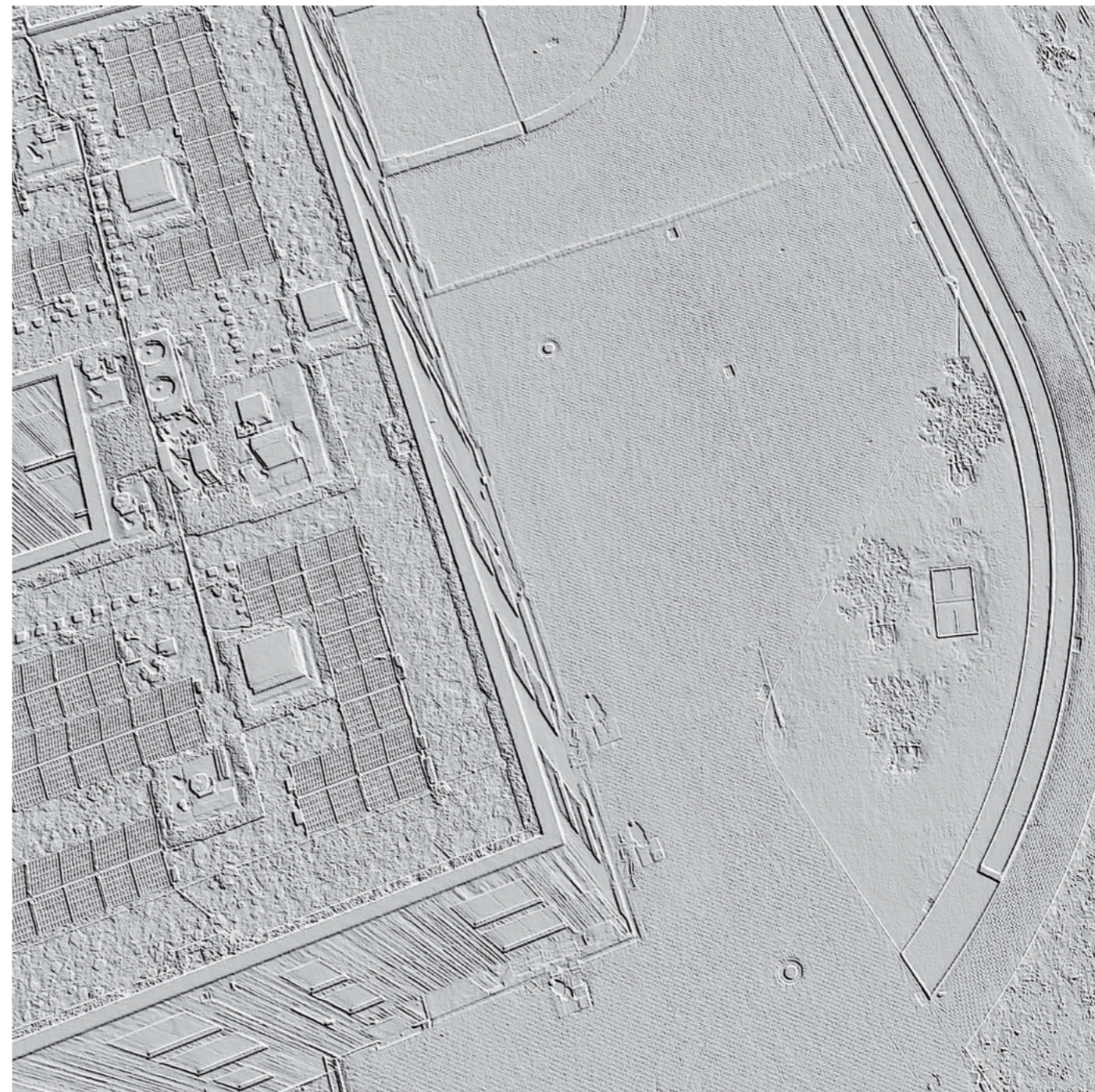




Rustling



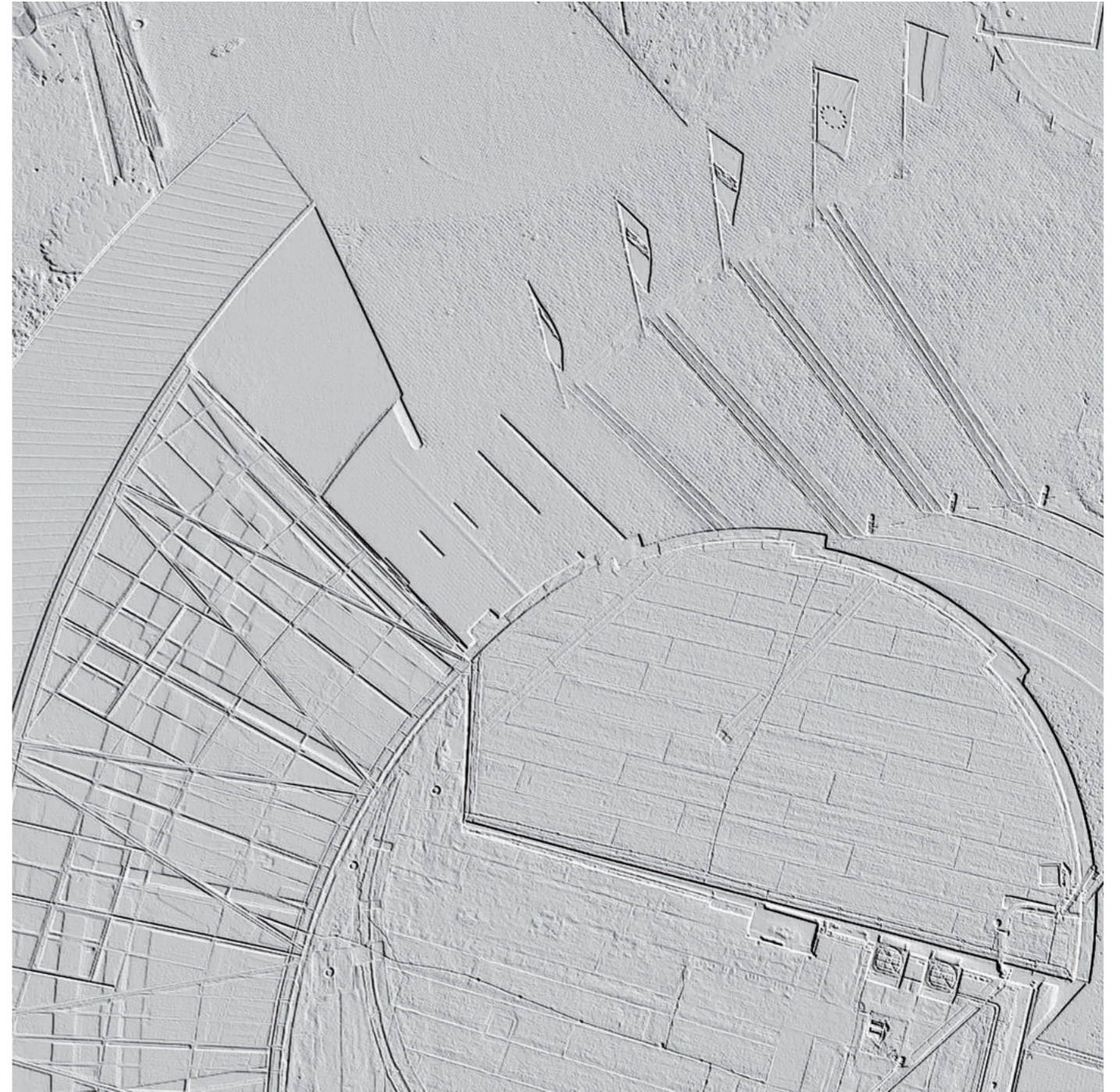
Hubbub



Bubbling



Flapping



Crunching



Speculations about Anonymous Sounds The Artist-in-Residence Project by Claudia Robles-Angel

In Claudia Robles-Angel's performances and installations, the human organism is understood as a constant flow of signals. Employing medical procedures that gather real-time data on bodily functions, the artist translates these silent, numerical readings into striking acoustic and visual experiences. In her work, the automated recording of physiological processes—such as skin moisturisation, heartbeat and brainwave activity—is liberated from scientific interpretation and instead becomes the digital material of embodied artistic expression. While her approach diverges from scientific methodology, it remains exploratory and thought-provoking in its own right.

It was this quality that inspired me to invite Claudia Robles-Angel to participate in the Artist-in-Residence programme at Witten/Herdecke University, where she could engage in dialogue with scientists from our medical faculty. The residency was conceived with minimal formal or thematic constraints and was intended as an open-ended experiment shaped largely by the artist's own interests. The programme offers access to the university as a co-working environment and is rooted in the belief that the artist's perspective on this unique setting—a place dedicated to the production, dissemination and transmission of knowledge—will in itself spark new projects and insights.

When Claudia Robles-Angel builds interfaces to convert biomedical signals into immersive sound and visual environments, her ambition goes far beyond simply illustrating how efficiently the human body functions. Her performative and interactive works are compelling in the way they investigate the relationship between corporeality and consciousness. Through biofeedback techniques, her performances reveal how physical responses can be modulated by focused attention. Robles-Angel not only demonstrates how she activates and guides the body's internal stimuli—translating them into audiovisual effects via interfaces of her own design—but also invites the audience to take part in this feedback process.

A powerful example is her installation 'LEIKHËN', where individual introspection gives way to mutual interaction and interdependence among participants. At the centre of the immersive 360-degree video projection, one person's brain activity is recorded using a BCI (Brain-Computer Interface), influencing the audio composition. Simultaneously, other participants send signals back to this person by touching the projection screens. The audiovisual environment shifts continuously, shaped by a shared network of emotional responses. To realise such a technically and conceptually sophisticated responsive installation, Robles-Angel drew upon the expertise and facilities of the Institute for Computer Music and Sound Technology at the Zurich University of the Arts during a 2018 artist residency.

By contrast, her reflections at the end of her stay at Witten/Herdecke University take a quieter, almost minimalist turn. Robles focuses on the fundamental act of listening. As an independent composer of electronic music, often incorporating field recordings of natural sounds, she has cultivated a heightened sensitivity to the nuances of noise and acoustic environments. This is not about formal aural training, but rather about attuning oneself to the textures of sound—regardless of their source.

At a university that educates future doctors and psychologists, part of the curriculum involves understanding the physiological basis of hearing and the importance of listening—particularly in doctor-patient communication. Robles-Angel encourages students to practise 'deep listening', a method that invites them to concentrate their attention fully on the subtle, the quiet, the trivial and the easily overlooked.

The practice of 'deep listening', perfected by composer Pauline Oliveros since 1988, centres on intentional and heightened awareness of sound. Associated with the Fluxus movement and a pioneering figure in new music, Oliveros—like artists John Cage and George Brecht—attached importance to acoustic events in silence and discovered musical motifs in unspectacular, minimalist sounds. As one of the first women to carve out a place in the male-dominated music scene of the 1960s, she championed both auditory openness and the use of electronic sound technologies.

Today, the widespread use of in-ear headphones and headsets reflects a growing desire to shut out the din of urban life, workplace distractions and public noise. Personal playlists often serve to drown out our acoustic surroundings. In this sense, conventional noise cancelling functions as a defence against 'deep listening'—a form of random, unbiased and unintentional hearing that can be explored during the 'Whispers of the Terrain' walk. On campus, Claudia Robles-Angel and the students identified specific acoustic environments—locations whose sound environments are usually drowned out by the demands of daily university life. These sounds are typically overlooked, ignored or simply lost in the background.

As I write this, I can only speculate on what anonymous sounds will reveal themselves to me and the other participants at the 'Whispers of the Terrain' listening stations. Will it be the hum of fans? The rustle of leaves? The clatter of dishes? The shimmer of warm air? The breath of a passer-by? I am curious to discover what will surface—and whisper in my ear.

Renate Buschmann

CLAUDIA ROBLES-ANGEL

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Born in Bogotá (Colombia), Claudia Robles-Angel lives in Cologne (Germany). A composer, sound and new media artist, her work spans various aspects of visual and sound art, ranging from acousmatic and audio-visual compositions to interactive performances and installations using biomedical signals and artificial intelligence (AI).

She has been artist-in-residence in several outstanding institutions worldwide. In 2022 she was awarded an honorary mention GIGA-Hertz Prize for sound art and electronic music by the ZKM Centre in Karlsruhe (Germany).

Her work has been performed and exhibited internationally, including at: ZKM Centre, Karlsruhe; KIBLA Centre, Maribor; CAMP – Salon Suisse at the 55 Venice Biennale; NYCEMF – New York City Electroacoustic Music Festival; NIME – New Interfaces for Musical Expression, Oslo; STEIM, Amsterdam; Harvestworks Digital Arts Center, NYC; International Image Festival, Colombia; Heroines of Sound, Berlin; Audio Art Festival, Cracow; MADATAC, Madrid; Athens Digital Arts Festival (ADAF); Beast FEaST, Birmingham; ICST ZHdK, Zurich; MAH Media Art Histories - RE:SOUND, Aalborg and RE:SOURCE, Venice; Electric Spring Festival, Huddersfield; AI Biennale, Essen; International Symposium on Electronic Art (Istanbul, Manizales, Durban, Gwangju, and Barcelona); MAC Museum of Contemporary Art, Bogotá; Centre for International Light Art, Unna; Acht Brücken Festival, Cologne; NOW! Festival-Philharmonie Essen; Gerdau Museum, Belo Horizonte; New Ear Inc at Fridman Gallery, New York City; 60th Venice Biennale at Palazzo Bembo; and most recently at Videonale.20 at Kunstmuseum Bonn.

You can access the audio recordings of the locations here:



Muffled



Whirling



Chirping



Ribbit



Rustling



Hubbub



Bubbling



Flapping



Crunching



IMPRINT

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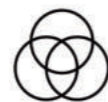
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