

Curatorial Dispatches from the Nendu Archives: The Journals of Rui Chaves and Tiago Costa

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Abstract

Rui Chaves will be documenting his creation of Nendu—an archive of Brazilian sound artists—in real time on *Sounding Out!* throughout 2016–early 2017. A Portuguese version of Chaves’s journals was published in *Linda*, an online platform created by a composers’ collective called NME.

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Acoustic Ecology, Article, Curation, Digital Media, Documentary



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Rui Chaves will be documenting his creation of Nendu—an archive of Brazilian sound artists—in real time on Sounding Out! throughout 2016-early 2017. A [Portuguese version of Chaves's journals](#) was published in Linda, an online platform created by a composers' collective called NME.

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Nendu—the title of my archive—envisages the creation of an online platform dedicated to presenting and mapping the work of contemporary Brazilian sound artists. I have based my based upon the following four objectives:

- 1) Creating a 'map' that enables the dissemination and discovery of local praxis;
- 2) Prompting conversations or different types of documentation that better illustrate individual creative processes ('journal');
- 3) Re-affirming the idea of the 'archive' as a research tool;
- 4) Writing a historical and critical report on Brazilian sound art;

Nendu's online 'map' will enable users to discover different practitioners based on location, but more importantly on what *categories* the artists themselves have asked to be associated with.

These *categories* consist of designations of practices that cross the current imaginary of sound art historiography and reflection. A porous and rizomatic territory, to be sure, the categories will echo the obvious specificity of the experience and presentation of sounding artworks — temporally, spatially and formally — without excluding practical, historical and conceptual connections with music, architecture, performance or visual arts.

My selection framework interweaves individual research with contacts with curators, friends, and other researchers. It is important to mention that this process remains open to any individual that wants to be part of the platform until the end of the project in June 2017. This openness facilitates a dialogue between the archivist and interested parties, while at the same time enables reflection regarding the relationship with the idea of "sound art" and the role of sound within different artistic practices.

The second element (called a 'journal') consists of field work (to be done until the end of 2016) where I—together with a smaller selections of artists—attempt to present different in-depth reports of "ways of doing" sound art. The journal will consist of interviews, photos, videos, audio recordings and other relevant items. I will publish this material in tandem with the map in the form of a blog and I will share dispatches from the journal with SO!'s readership regularly throughout 2016.

The articulation of the map and journal foregrounds a critical reasoning regarding the idea of the archive as a research tool. My archive will not only be a repository of artists and work done, but also a way of doing an 'archeology' of discourses, made objects, and creative processes of sound

practitioners. Methodologically, I support my archive via an ethnographic approach, tracing common ideas or patterns between conversations, materials, and/or other artifacts (texts, videos, audio recordings or photographs) gathered during the project. This not only allows an understanding of a possible formal aesthetic discourse (collective or individual), but also offers insights and possible contextualizations of various thematics within a broader cultural arena. Through mapping particular ways of doing, I argue, my archive will allow participants/artists—and also future users—a better comprehension of the prevalent cultural terms.

In the end, this methodology is geared toward the creation of a historical and critical report regarding the current panorama of Brazilian ‘sound art’. Because Nendu is also Tupi for “listening to one-self,” it functions as a metaphor for the creation of an archive that envisages alternative reflections and historiographies from European/American narratives.

For my introductory presentation for *Sounding Out!*, I want to take the opportunity to present a ‘journal’ that I made with the artist **Tiago Costa** in the town of Tiete (state of São Paulo). We perform this activity with “two-voices,” each one of us writing about their experience — starting with me.

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RUI CHAVES:

Day 1

My rendez-vous point with Tiago was at the Barra Funda metro station and bus station. Our meeting results from a series of conversations and our eagerness to record the sound of the cicadas in his home town (Tietê). He was also interested in using binaural microphones, which end up being the main recording setup for what we did in the weekend between the 29th to the 31st of January 2016. Over the course of this weekend, I ended up in a series of conversations where I try to explain how these microphones work—in a very imprecise manner.

Our trip begins early in the morning, so I wake up early and still in night time to travel to the metro station, carrying all the recording equipment. When I arrive, there is already a lively buzz in the place. I have breakfast and, still feeling hungry, I have a second. As always, I arrive way too early and I look for the travel information center in order to try to find the right bus ticket sales booth. Fortunately, Tiago also arrives really early and I get an SMS from him telling me that he had already bought the tickets. We meet up and immediately get along. The conversation between us will constantly flow during our time together. He is an artist with a vast experience in audio post-production and he’s also pretty active and interested in São Paulo’s experimental music scene. This type of in-depth knowledge will also be a good source of jokes and gossip regarding particular musicians in the scene.

The conversation continues inside the bus, during which I compliment the vehicle’s air conditioning set temperature, quite mild at that time. Everyone that has travelled by bus in Brasil is acquainted with the cold that one has during long distance travels. While we continue to chat

and get farther away from the city, we start to gaze a landscape that cuts through our daily experience of living in São Paulo—it is so hard to see the horizon in that city!

We came across and stop briefly in a town with a weird and funny name to me: Boituva!

Boituva is really well known for its paragliding activities. Sometime during our weekend together, I discover that Tiago is afraid of heights and that he is not planning to paraglide any time soon—I agree. It also during this stop over that Tiago describes to me a regional musical traditional called “Cururu”: a form of song-off duel between two “violeiros”; based on that description, I commented to him that it sounded a lot like a rap battle. A smile comes up on Tiago’s face, a smile that grew larger and larger due to my inability to say “Cururu” the right way: Pururu, Cururuca, Pururuca.

We arrive to Tietê early and sleepy. At first sight, the city has a contrasting scale and size in regards to São Paulo. The height of the buildings is relatively small, punctuated by a few condos slightly off the main urbanscape. The bus station has a small boteco, and not much else. Botecos are common in Brazil; to me, they seem like a cross-over between a pub, restaurant and coffeehouse. There are a few clouds in the horizon, but Tiago tells me that the city is much warmer and drier than São Paulo. He also tells me that signs of Italian immigration are quite present in the city, as well as assorted religious events. Not long after, Tiago’s mom arrives and she is extremely kind.

At Tiago’s place I have my third breakfast (called café da manhã here). With some effort and excitement, we go out to check a few places near Tiago’s home for recording and I’m impressed by the relatively diversity of the nearby soundscape. Besides the sounds of birds, insects and some motorbikes—there is a pungent smell of sewer in the air that envelops us.



Bairro Seis Irmãos – Tietê (São Paulo). 29/01/2016. Picture by Rui Chaves

We also see a series of houses with an architecture that reminds me of other parts of the world. We make the most of this small trip and Tiago records a small route in that area using the binaural microphones.

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Tiago Costa field recording // Best heard with headphones

We go back home and Tiago listens to the recording we just made. We have a small talk about this process. We sit at the table to have lunch and I try to explain to Tiago's mom my research and what the process of binaural recording entails:

| *The head is a filter that enables to create a 3D image during the recording process.*

I think I have a limited understanding of the process.



<https://youtu.be/Yd5i7TlpzCk>

We end up having a quiet afternoon. I'm still a bit excited, so I decide to go out to run a few tests with the camera I bought to document my research work. Tiago and his mom suggest that I go and visit the river.



Rua Júlio dos Reis – Tietê (São Paulo). 29/01/2016. Picture by Rui Chaves

I do a small video recording through the city using a gadget that enables me to strap the camera to my head. Following their indications, I find the river Tietê. The color of the water is really brown and there is a smell that I can't explain. It seems that in bygone times one could have a swim there, and that there was also a swimming club. With time that changed, but there is a small religious celebration where two boats meet in the same place.



<https://youtu.be/Z080x83EY18>

I find a small wooden stage near a construction site and inadvertently, I hear a conversation about which national team has the biggest number of fans in the country. I start to get really tired and decide to go back home. I try to transfer the files to watch the videos. The computer has problems playing them, so I give up and fall asleep.

We wake up for dinner and after, we go on a stroll through the city, literally going in circles around the main plaza. The conversation is good and we continue talking over a few beers on the porch of Tiago's house. I don't know if it was on that day or the next, but we comment on the lack of representation of certain groups in the São Paulo experimental music scene.

Tiago also describes to me a map of the local labels. We decide that it might be interesting to have a dedicated field recording label, because there are none in Brasil. We laugh at the possibility of the project being profitable or manageable. It would be one of those things that you would do out of passion, as were most things that we talked about during that evening.

We decide to wake up early in order to do our first recording of the day and try to capture the local dawn chorus. It was a really warm night, so I fall asleep to the sound of the ceiling fan refreshing me.

Day 2

I had an idea for a possible project between us, having sent Tiago a plan beforehand. The project consisted of using the binaural recording process as a metaphor for a collaborative recording process. I soon realize that that could be too complex for the time we had, and that I didn't want to condition our weekend meeting and recording process. From now on, the focus would be on documenting Tiago's work.

The alarm rings and I prepare the audio and video recording equipment. We both look tired, but are in good moods. The idea is to document the recording/path that Tiago is going to make—so I strap the camera to my head and Tiago sets up the binaural microphones; for some reason there is a glitch with the audio recorder SD card, but I manage to solve the problem.



<https://youtu.be/GhFN7XBm8qs>

Tiago – Field Recording // Better heard with headphones

We go back in order to get bit a more rest; we must, as later on we are going to do a few more recordings. I try, but I end up staying awake. It starts to get hot, so I get out of bed and have have breakfast. Tiago's mom is already doing some house chores. It is a beautiful day and I am quite excited about what we are going to do in the afternoon. The area surrounding Tietê is quite beautiful with sugar cane plantations all over the place, supposedly for the production of bio-diesel.

We were meant to go out early, but we are going to meet a friend's of Tiago and he suggested that we went after lunch. So we did that, just before leaving an intense rainfall strikes Tietê. We head out anyway, toward a place whose name I forgot. After we arrive, and while we wait for the weather to improve, we decide to recording the momentary ambience.

When the rain stops, we meet up with Marcos—a really gentle and nice person. On our way, I explain my research project to him and lend him my recorder to listen to how binaural recordings

sound. He tells me that it feels like the sounds are happening around him. Discreetly, I record their conversation and I am briefly taken away by stories about friends and TV shows that discuss the evolutionary nature of pain.

We arrive at the dirt track where we are going to do a few recordings. We have to jump a fence and my shoes get all dirty with mud. In the end, all of our clothing ends up wet and dirty and Tiago's mom's car will suffer the consequence of our little adventure. At the same time, I can't understand if we are actually allowed to enter this property.

The surrounding landscape is amazing and we walk, hopping a few more fences until we reach the river. We stop there in order to do another recording. The river water has an intense brown color and the sky is still cloudy. We mainly record the sound of the water coursing. After we finish, Marcos goes out to do a recording and disappears for a few minutes.

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Marcos André Lorenzetti recording // Best heard with headphones

After a while, we get a bit worried about him, but he soon arrives saying that we have to change to another, more interesting place. We start walking, avoiding our initial choice of a route due to the possibility of existing spiders or snakes, crossing a small ranch where we encounter a family getting ready for a barbecue. Marcos, a former vegetarian who now eats chicken, asks Tiago if he misses eating barbecue. He says he doesn't.

At another part of the river bed, for some odd reason we decide to go through a complicated route (especially for people carrying equipment!). I worry I'm going to get wet. So it was, but Tiago and his friend helped me with my bag. We arrive to a small island of rocks and we do another recording. The weather is nicer now and it feels really wonderful. Tiago and Marcos go for a swim in the water and I get in a little bit to make a video recording. After a while, I felt obliged to go for a swim too, although I was a bit phobic regarding germs, bacteria or other nasties that could be in that water. I join them and suddenly we spot a sewer drainage pipe. I ask Marcos if the water is clean and he replies that:

I *Clean, clean, it never is!*



<https://youtu.be/SbTpHtzval4>

Returning to the ‘mainland,’ I accidentally misplaced one of my feet, and slip on my back on one of the rocks. Fortunately, none of the equipment gets wet and I leave with only a few bruise marks.

TIAGO COSTA

In mid-November 2015, there was a strong heat wave in the interior of São Paulo. I was in the city of Tietê, my home town, two hours west. I remember being home, the seasonal dry air and the surrounding sounds picked up my attention, in particular the strong sound of the cicadas. I became interested in capturing them, and imagined myself in a recording situation in the middle of the woods, just a few meters from my house. At that time, I had been listening to a few interesting works that utilized binaural microphones and start querying colleagues that used that type of setup in their work. That’s when I contacted Rui.

Rui is developing research about Brazilian sound art, and for that he interviews and documents a series of artists that work with sound. Part of his process consists in spending some time with them, documenting what they usually do and proposing interventions. I explain what I wanted to do; Rui got interested and he invited me to do something in Tietê.

Due to our agendas, our meeting had to be postponed a few months after this conversation, unfortunately when he finally had time, the cicada weren’t ‘sounding’ as much as before. We decide to maintain our intent to meet, and during the month of January, we left for a weekend to do some field recordings together.

We went to Tietê on the 29th of January and the soundwalk happened briefly after we arrive. With the recorder and binaural microphones in hand, we visit the outskirts of the woods in proximity to a neighborhood called Seis Irmãos (literally translating to “six brothers”).

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In the past, that part of town had only a few small farms (called *chácaras* in Brasil), and although today it has been replaced by urban development, it still maintains a considerable native green area. Well, partially native. as we encountered a mix and pipes that send untreated sewage to a water stream called Ribeirão da Serra.



Bairro Seis Irmãos water stream/sewage – Tietê (São Paulo). no date available. Picture by Tiago Costa

During that walk, we had a go with binaural recording, and we discussed a possible ‘narrative’ that could be done the next day. This ‘narrative’ would consist of emphasizing the *first* morning sounds, starting in the middle of the neighborhood houses, until a particular moment when we would enter the woods for a more contemplative appreciation. We also recorded a few ‘urban sounds’ during the walk, inside a car on the way to the next recording spot: a brief rain storm, the car’s mechanical sounds and our casual conversations.



<https://youtu.be/xR4WUNE9Cos>

Rui Chaves field recording // Better heard with headphones

The second stage happened in a nearby town, Cerquilho. This was a plan parallel to the cicadas that we made at the banks of the Sorocaba River, a place with less human intervention and strong currents, so it demanded the help of someone that knew it well. I invited my friend Marcos to accompany us. He had practiced canoeing and regularly frequents that spot, building a very close relationship with this river. During the trip he told us about an experience he had spending the night close to the river with only a hammock. He described how the sound part of this experience transformed his perception:

One time I went to sleep close to the river [. . .] in the hammock, and during the day the sound of water is harmonic, but during the night it transforms into something really intense. And since it was night time and our perception gets a lot sharper, more alert, because there could be an animal close, so with any noise made we become more alert. There were times where the experience of the water 'noise' became so intense that it somehow even changed my consciousness [. . .] it was incredible [. . .] because it is a constant sound, right, [. . .] the current is constant [. . .] and if you don't feel trapped by it, you set yourself free.



<https://youtu.be/21-TM9YYLEY>

Tiago Costa Field Recording // Usar fone de ouvido

The sound recordings made in that afternoon captured a river with a strong presence in constituting that acoustic space, taking upstage presence in regard to all other sounds. After the recordings, we had a swim and talked until the end of the afternoon.

This multi-vocal diary manifests the methodological frame for the ‘type’ of archive that I am building — a performative endeavor that envisages presenting process and work through a multi-layered weave of text, audio-visual documentation, and online material. Ultimately, its format signals a dialogical movement between archivist and artist, the underlying force in building a critical and historical report on Brazilian sound art. This publication is part of a series of installments that will run until mid-2017. The next post will focus on the work of [Lilian Nakao Nakahodo](#), a composer/performer and researcher that created the [Curitiba Sound Map](#).

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Featured Image: In a ranch between Tietê and Cerquilha. 30/01/2016. Picture by Rui Chaves

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Rui Chaves is a Portuguese sound artist, performer and researcher. His research and work foregrounds a discussion of presence — both physical and authorial — in the process of making sound art. This endeavor is informed by a contemporary critical inquiry and exploration of the thematics of body, place, text and technology. He has presented his work in several institutions and events throughout the United Kingdom, Brazil, France, Canada, Portugal and Germany. He holds a PhD in music from Queen’s University Belfast and is currently a postdoctoral researcher at [NuSom \(University of São Paulo\)](#).

Written in collaboration with ***Tiago Costa***.



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