

Orange country
EDU COMELLES





Orange Country is the outcome of various recordings done between october 2009 and august 2010. This project is a combination of composed soundscape compositions and none edited field recordings captured in Valencia and Tarragona, Spain.

All compositions are aural portraits of different places and locations. Also some of the none edited soundscapes are the sound documentation of different events happening along this period of time. All tracks were done under a certain set of rules. Those are written on my Personal Contract for Site-Specific Soundscape Composition. This text tries to set some guidelines according to sound editing techniques and soundscape composition. The procedural guidelines are based on texts by Barry Truax and Matthew herbert's PCCOM Manifesto.

Finally Orange Country is a tour around Valencia and Tarragona a journey across found events and lived experiences framed between 2009 and 2010.

Moreover this project aims to be a depiction of a reality, the specific reality of Valencia and how I have experienced myself all the found situations I had lived through.

There is also an important aspect to remark, and this is my own situation in Valencia. Coming from Catalonia and sharing so much in terms of culture and language it has been an amazing experience to discover another part of a culture that after this year I also consider mine.

Finally Orange Country is a homage to the people that hosted me in this land.

Edu Comelles
Benimaclet, 14th of Desember 2010.



01. Port de Silla.

3:07 minutes

Port de Silla is a small fisherman's harbour located in the middle of Albufera de Valencia a natural lagoon. The area is well known by locals because of the massive production of rice settled there.

Port de Silla still preserves the atmosphere of the long gone fisherman's life at the Albufera. You can find the traditional boats used on those shallow waters.

I went to Port de Silla one Sunday afternoon around October. There were still some locals coming back from a Sunday spent on the countryside. The crickets were starting to wrap the ambience and the silence was taking space welcoming the night.

In this first approach, we proceeded to the recording of different sounds that one can find in this part of the Albufera of Valencia. I recorded at dusk and took different sounds obtained from wood, small boats and pontoons. The piece is conceived as a walk around this area.

The footage was recorded in one session on the evening of October 25, 2009. I used a Zoom H2 digital recorder. The sound was subsequently mixed with Logic Pro and any digital processing of sound was applied, just some equalisation, compression and subsequent normalisation.



02. Estación de la Melgosa.

2:45 minutes

Estación de la Melgosa is an old station close to Cuenca. The facilities include the main building of the station, a couple of barns and the old tracks where no trains have passed by since many years.

The spot is quite close to a road a fact that attracts graffiters onto the station increasing the downward spiral of a place that still preserve some kind of melancholic beauty.

I went there on November-December. At this time of the year this area of Spain can be really cold so to keep my body temperature fine I started to play with all the ruins I could find, moving, kicking, dragging and so on.

Finally this track seems to me a library of sounds of ruined buildings, a symphony of the falling apart pieces of another abandoned spot on the railway network of Spain.



03. Font de la Murta.

2:08 minutes

After a 7-hour march by the summits of the Murta (Alzira). I reached the bottom of the valley where the ruins of the ancient monastery of La Murta. Farther south of the monastery and into the depths of the valley there is a fountain that supplies the religious complex.

The supply pipe extends along 600 meters from its source to the ponds of the monastery. This pipeline passes aerially at certain points and certain sections are an aqueduct. The recording was made along the hydraulic work trying to frame the different sounds that the flow of water occurs and its relationship with the surrounding forest.

At the same time I tried to portray certain aspects of capturing spatial concrete sounds and extrapolated to most environmental sounds. According to this I tried to create a range that goes from the microscopic to the macroscopic in an acoustic sense.



04. Cabanyal.

2:29 minutes

Cabanyal is one of the most economically depressed districts in Valencia city. Because of institutional oblivion the district has been abandoned to its own luck. The very specificity of this district is that it's one of the best examples of low-class 19th Century Modernist architecture. The district has a variety of house styles and keeps the atmosphere of the old Valencia that nowadays has been wiped out, changing the original urban structure of two-floor houses to massive beehive apartment flats.

Since 10 years ago the neighbours are maintaining a court battle with the city hall of Valencia that tries to demolish the whole district, speculate with soil and rebuild from the ground the area. Even that the district is declared National Historical Heritage, the City Hall still tries by all means to finish with the district. The struggle is now a days on the supreme court in Madrid.

Finally this track more than being a faithful soundscape of the district is the soundscape of the neighbour's fear to the heavy machinery in charge of demolition, constantly sieging the area.



05. Mas Mercader.

2:05 minutes

Mas Mercader is an old farmhouse “Casa Pairal” in catalan, which is located 1 km north of La Pobla De Montornés (Tarragona). The building was built in the mid XVII century is now in a state of neglect. Despite being occupied until two years ago, the deterioration of the building is very clear. In this piece I intended to record ambient sound from the different rooms of the house, changes in terms of reverberation and echoes are clear according to the room where the recording takes place. The piece begins with the recording made in the chapel adjoining the main building, where stands a powerful reverb effect.

Although the building is not located near Valencia I decided to keep the recording as part of Orange County project, understanding that the timeline, process and techniques applied were exactly the same and one can link immediately the modus operandi.

The photo was taken by Oriol Panadés the day of recording. At the beginning you can hear the characteristic sound of his camera.



06. El Mercantil Valenciano

2:33 minutes

I had the opportunity to visit the warehouse where the newspaper Levante is printed. In the warehouse on the outskirts of Valencia, the company has a rotating machine that prints the daily edition of El Mercantil Valenciano and the local edition of El Mundo. This machine measures approximately 10 meters high and another 15 wide and deep and each night begins its permanent noise symphony, newspapers, walkways, cylinders, gears and mechanisms.

Over there I recorded various industrial sounds, static rhythms and metallic hum of semi-infinite digital and rhythmic repetitions automatic mechanical process. All this symphony of industry has been built over the factory tour we made with binaural microphones. While the chronological order of events does not match the actual tour.

One of the most interesting items on the tour was in the newspaper's newsroom. The editor in chief asked us to be silent because journalists were working on the next day's edition (it was already 11 pm) and journalists needed concentration. So we set out to cross the broad newsroom and immediately we realised that no matter if we spoke or not the soil proved to be the loudest ever heard soil. The combination of high heels with drywall type material of floor plates built a beautiful symphony of rhythmic drumming that made us think about tribal rhythms. You can hear the floor of the wording around minute 1:04 of the recording.

The combination and overlapping of textures and rhythms found in the factory can give us an idea of how risky it is to work on a sound level of this environment and what it takes to bring noise-reducing headphones. This is a noisy recording sure the good old Russolo would have liked. And we end up remembering that listening is best done with headphones as the spatial aspects are seen better with them than without.



07. Mascletá 19.03.2010

6:08 minutes

The Mascletá is provably one of the most important and traditional events happening every year in Valencia. This is one of the main events of the city's main fest, Fallas.

The Mascletá is set of fireworks that fires everyday at the city hall square of Valencia during the fest days. Everyday at 14:00 h. the pyrotechnic chief in charge fires tons of gunpowder that lasts for 6-10 minutes. The event is a compositions of three kinds of firecrackers called Masclets (according to high, mid and low frequencies). And each of the pyrotechnic chiefs in charge of Mascletá has to develop a sound composition using those specific firecrackers.

The combination of the power of the firecrackers and the compositional arrangements makes Mascletá a huge and massive sound event that echoes over the whole city and becomes an event that none in Valencia misses those days in March.



08. Rus Dimissió!

2:47 minutes

On March 2010 Roman de la Calle, the director of MUVIM (Valencian Museum of the Modernity and Illustration) was apprehended by its political superiors (Alfons Rus) because of the opening of a press photography exhibition at the museum showing images of the past's years political scandal involving the very own president of Valencia.

The images showed the corrupt politicians sitting on court and having secret meetings. Those images were showed in all newspapers during the whole year.

Just after the opening the deputy chief of the museum censored the exhibition forcing to close the hall to the audience. Immediately after, the director of MUVIM Román De La Calle resigned to the position sending an letter to all media in Spain unleashing the censorship situation that Valencia community suffers since Partido Popular (center-right) rules in the town and region without any other political opposition.

The recording capture the demonstration that supporters of freedom of speech organised in front of the museum. This act became a homage to De La Calle the latest victim of the corrupt government that rules Valencia.

Foto: Amadeu Sanz (CC License 3.0).



09. Gola del Pujol

3:40 minutes

Gola del Pujol is the center of the thin piece of sand and dunes that separates the Albufera of Valencia from the Mediterranean Sea. Over there is the spot where the closed lake connects to the sea by a canal.

This composition is a walk from the beach on Mediterranean Sea until the shore of Albufera, passing by dunes, swamps and pine forests.



10. Día dels Trons

3:03 minutes

Día dels Trons (Day of The Thunders) is the final day of Moros i Cristians fest at Alcoi a industrial city on the mountains between Valencia and Alacant.

The fest of Moros i Cristians recreates the battles held between muslim troops and cristian troops to get control over the city of Alcoi down in Ancient Times.

To recreate the last battle in which the cristian troops take the city in hands of the muslims, the locals spend one day firing blunderbuss all day long. The locals go on groups of thirteen and they fire twelve shots and one thirteen that has a double charge of gunpowder that is fired on the ground to increase low frequencies on the blast.

This recording its provably the most dangerous thing I have recorded. Accompanied by locals I crossed the main street of Alcoi having locals firing their guns all over the place. After that I refuge on the city hall where the big rooms increased the reverberant effect of the blasts.



11. El Bosque, La Canícula y Los Insectos

6:25 minutes

Mentre dibuixo, del fons de la vall, de cap al límit de l'urbanització i penetrant la calma xafogosa del migdia, com un contrapunt al brunzir espès de les cigales, en pugen unes intermitències de so. Un colpejar lleu, fosc, sec, entretallat i discontinu com un Morse primari. És el senyal d'algú que treballa. Sembla el missatge insistent i poruc de l'únic ser actiu d'aquests contorns i en aquesta hora. Reconec aquest so esqueixat que puja, com l'eco d'un fer calmat però sense pauses. Reconec aquest so encara que arribi filtrat per un serrell d'alzines, buguenvil·lies i mimoses. En reconec el dring esquerdat de test mesclat amb el metall que colpeja: un paleta escapça totxanes. [...]

Salvador Juanpere. 14.08.2010. Published at sjuanpere.blogspot.com (in catalan).

Before summer 2010 Marcus Kuerten (German phonographer) asked me to participate on project he was working on. He asked me to describe a sound of my childhood in words. I decided to talk about the sound of cicadas which is a very specific insect song that one can hear in any mediterranean forest on summer.

After that I though it would be great to record the cicada song largely, and so I did. Since this insects use to sing on the hours of the day with the highest temperatures I had to go to a nearby forest in my hometown and spend three hours sitting on the forest quite and waiting for the song to start.

After three hours sitting and 40° and a very humid atmosphere I almost faint but I managed to capture an extensive library o f this curios insect song. This composition is a mixture of different recordings and a recording done the same day at night on the same spot. This time I got crickets instead of cicadas.



12. Plaza del Carmen

3:02 minutes

This recording is part of the compositions of La Ciudad Aural project. This corresponds with the composition that can be heard on the square where Carmen's church is settled.

The recording is a combination of different recordings done in the square during the work in progress that lead to finish my master degree's project at Valencia.

This is just a grasp of the project that had me occupied for a whole year building a sound walk through Valencia's Old Town.



13. Paelleta, Paelleta
(Alcoi Bonus Track)

2:03 minutes

This is a particular homage that a group of musicians of a band played late at night after three days of fests and drinks. The outcast group of young musicians performed a song that talks about the most popular dish of valencian gastronomy, paella.

This track has become some sort of anthem between my friends and I. It's a joke, a wink to the partying and joyful manners of valencian people.

All recordings done in Valencia and Tarragona between October 2009 and September 2010.

This work couldn't be possible without the help of all those who encouraged me to record, capture and enjoy the particularities of this region where I live now.

I would like to specially thank the Jordà - Bou Family that hosted me at Alcoi during Moros i Cristians fest and all those locals who pointed me out the traditions and identity elements of Valencia and its culture.

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