

## **New Forms of Sound-Film and Radio: programme for a photographic sound art**

Film has proved that “natural” material is usable for art.

It uses (as material) neither invented formulae and symbols (as in music) nor "representation" (as in drama).

Even actors - in relation to film - are only autonomous components of its material once they have been stripped completely of their own qualities as actors and transformed back into "natural material".

The real production of film lies in the selection, arrangement and montage of this natural material.

Radio has similar possibilities in the field of the audible. It is able to convey acoustic images of events (be it a football match or the reception of an aviator) – as they unfold, but manages this only as reportage and not as composition.

The radio play, which comes nearest to such an acoustic expression, sees its unity of effect impaired by the fact that it must remain restricted to a relatively accidental and improvised assemblage of essentially dissimilar materials: natural, artistic, and imitative.

It provides signposts to experience without any pathway, it sketches anecdotally without definitive expression.

Real compositional structuring and configuration of the natural material available to radio presupposes the possibility of a montage free of all accidents and which is ultimately the responsibility of the creator, as in film.

The technique of the sound-film brings such a possibility.

Here sound-film is understood not as the combination of optical and acoustic photography, but simply as the process of photographing audible phenomena objectively, including their specific spatial characteristics. Since the photography of sound happens through the light-exposure of a filmstrip, it affords acoustic montage the same possibilities as film editing.

Everything audible from all over the world becomes material.

This limitless material can now be shaped into new meaning according to the laws of time and space. For the compositional purpose of this new aural art will be served not only by rhythm and dynamics, but also by the whole dimension of space through which it produces differences in sound.

So the way is open to a new absolute acoustic art – new in its means and in its effect.

In its practice, [absolute acoustic art] is heir to, enriches, and expands the fields of music and the radio play.

First and foremost, it makes use of radio and the gramophone disc.

[Translated by Christopher Williams 2017]

Source: Ruttman, W. 1929, 'Neue Gestaltung von Tonfilm und Rundfunk: Programm einer photographischen Hörkunst', *Film-Kurier*, vol. 11, no. 255.

Reprinted in: Goergen, J. 1994, *Walter Ruttmanns Tonmontagen als Ars Acustica*, vol. 89, Universität-Gesamthochschule-Siegen, Siegen.