



## O+A: Quiet is the New Loud Bruges city centre

For the Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015, the American-Austrian artist duo O+A acoustically decode the city. Using mobile sound installations, a walking trail through a unique sound experience, a sound platform and a carillon composition, they open the visitor's ears to the sounds and silences of a small city like Bruges. They offer a new, sensual approach to designing the city of the future as a creative public space.

### Quiet is the New Loud

The American Bruce Odland and the Austrian Sam Auinger form the fascinating transatlantic artist duo O+A. In a world dominated by the visual, they like to think with their ears and they invite the public to join them in listening more consciously. When Odland and Auinger first visited Bruges, they were impressed by the prevailing peace and tranquillity of the city. Not only did Bruges seem picture perfect in comparison with their hometowns of New York and Berlin, but it sounded good too. The historic centre enjoys a unique soundscape, rich in historical acoustics, resonant alleys and squares, babbling canals and the sounds that bounce from the many windows of canal-side homes. Here, you can still hear the sound of footsteps on cobbles, a duck ruffling its feathers and even someone whispering. Just as significant are the sounds that are missing - the trains, loudspeakers, helicopters, machinery and so forth that are so typical to metropolises. Bruges is a city where you can hear yourself think. O+A argue that this peacefulness, which many locals take for granted, makes the city a rare and unique "sonic capital". Their conclusion: *'Smart cities of the future don't need to shout'*.

With 'Quiet is the New Loud', O+A offer the visitor several options for experiencing the city acoustically.

### Songlines

O+A conceived a method of allowing people to see with their ears, like bats. The artists excavate the sounds that are frozen into the medieval architecture. A mobile sound system designed by O+A unlocks the secrets of the contours and materials of squares, streets, alleys, canals, bridges, parks and courtyards. A floating speaker is activated at particular locations by a GPS-driven network. The architectural environment is made audible through echolocation. O+A designed three *Songlines* to be explored with the floating speakers.

- **Water Songline** (1.2 km, 30-45 minutes)
- **Park Songline** (2.6 km, 60-90 minutes)
- **Night Songline** (1.6 km, 45-75 minutes)



## **Earmarks**

You can also set off an auditory expedition without the speakers. O+A went in search of special listening experiences in Bruges. These 'earmarks' are indicated on a detailed walking map that visitors then use to cross the city at their own pace, using their ears as guides. On the Burg, for example, one can listen to the sound of the carillon resonating from the various architectural surfaces of the square. Voices and footsteps provide a counterpoint to the bells, as does the distant sound of horses' hooves. Now and then, the underground car park's ventilation system blasts into life. All these sounds are dampened by the canopy of plane trees. On the city perimeter, elevated green berms shield the ears from the noise of modern life as they camouflage the sound of cars passing on the ring road. On the canals, you can hear how the gently lapping waters are disturbed by boatloads of tourists.

## **Bruges tuned**

O+A convert urban sounds into harmonic vibrations. On the Van Eyck square, they installed a square red ramp. When you lie down on this ramp you feel and hear the real-time sound of passing cars, buses and people transformed into harmonies. Disturbing noises are thus transformed into a Zen-like experience.

## **Sounding Bruges**

O+A in collaboration with city carillonneur Frank Deleu

The carillon bells in the medieval belfry are used as signals to make the built environment of the city centre resound. A new composition activates these unique acoustics with a series of simple tones and rhythmic patterns. By keeping the music very simple, O+A are able to focus on how the sound travels from the tower and resonates in the public space. The sounds activate the audible properties of the streets, squares, canals, walls and windows. Visitors can wander around the city finding their favourite listening spots. Sounding Bruges replaces the regular carillon concerts on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays.



## Bio

O+A (Bruce Odland, Sam Auinger)

Bruce Odland, °1952, Milwaukee (US)

Sam Auinger, °1956, Linz (AT)

The transatlantic partnership between Bruce Odland and Sam Auinger, under the name O+A, began in 1987. The sound-reflecting installations they create transform the way we experience our environment. They could be called composers and philosophers of modern life who think with their ears. O+A bring a hearing perspective to our visually dominated culture and pursue this objective both in their individual practice and in collaboration with other artists.

Celebrated works by O+A include [Garden of Time](#) (1990) in Linz, [Blue Moon](#) (2004), which commemorated 9/11, [Requiem for fossil fuels](#) (2007-2010), [Sonic Vista Frankfurt](#) (2010) and [Hearing View](#) (2013), a healing installation for Switzerland's oldest psychiatric clinic, in Rheinau.

[www.o-a.info](http://www.o-a.info)

The American artist Bruce Odland combines his commitment to O+A with projects for theatre, film and video in collaboration with renowned artists, performers and musicians, such as Laurie Anderson, Stacey Steers, Peter Sellars, The Wooster Group, JoAnne Akalaitis, Wallace Shawn, Andre Gregory, Peter Erskine, Tony Oursler, Dan Graham, Robert Woodruff and Bill Morrison. From the start, he was fascinated by resonance and the fractal music of nature. He creates harmonious compositions based on the urban acoustic environment (soundscape) and reclaims under-utilised public spaces by transforming the way they sound. Odland's current project, Tank, is a centre for experimental sonic arts housed in a giant abandoned water tank in the Colorado desert.

[www.bruceodland.net](http://www.bruceodland.net)

The Austrian artist Sam Auinger is a sonic thinker. He studied composition and computer music at the Mozarteum in Salzburg. Besides his long association with Odland, Auinger has been working since 2001 on *Stadtmusik*, a project that maps the interactions between urban planning, architecture and mobility and their impacts on auditory perception, together with media artist Dietmar Offenhuber and composer Hannes Strobl. He collaborates with urban planners and architects, gives lectures and is a frequent participant of international symposiums on urban planning, architecture, media and the senses, with particular focus on sound. Currently, he is an associate professor at the Harvard Graduate School of Design.

[www.samauinger.de](http://www.samauinger.de)



### Practical information for visitors

- **Songlines:** Poortersloge, Kraanrei 19, 8000 Brugge  
Counter for renting the hovering speakers and walking guide: Tuesday – Sunday |  
1:00 PM – 6:00 PM
- **Walking map** Earmarks: available at the informationpoints
- **Evening walk** on reservation, at least one week in advance via:  
info@triennalebrugge.be.
- **Sounding Brugge:** every Wednesday, Saturday and Sunday | 11:00 AM -12:00  
PM

### Press info

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### Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015 20 May - 18 October 2015

What if the five million tourists who visit Bruges annually were to stay? What if a small, preserved, historic city should suddenly become a megapolis? This is the premise for the Bruges Contemporary Art and Architecture Triennial 2015. Eighteen international artists create new works that form an art trail through the city centre. Three indoor exhibitions provide the opportunity to further explore and contextualise the topics. Bruges will be transformed into URB EGG: the Triennial cracks the egg of Bruges in order to reinvent the city from the inside out.

Information and programme: [www.triennalebrugge.be](http://www.triennalebrugge.be)  
Facebook: Triennale Brugge 2015  
Twitter: #TRIEBRU15



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