Case study

Radical Soundness

Restorative infrastructures for long-life

There is extensive evidence determining that health is deeply shaped by the environments we inhabit. Yet health care has tended to be understood as the treatment of disease and confined to healthcare settings. Beyond clinically recognised diseases, aspects of our societies may become subject to pathologisation and could be addressed through other forms of civic life. Certain experiences linked to ways of living together and to social structures, such as unwanted loneliness or how people perceive their own social usefulness, can contribute to less healthy societies. Other factors, however, such as sound or the possibilities for movement within a space, can have a positive influence on our relationships with others and, in turn, on community health.

In line with the recent agreement between Spain's Ministries of Health and Culture proposing the incorporation of the arts into public health policies, Radical Soundness Radical Soundness, bringing together in its title the meanings of soundness, as a state of good health or solidity, and sound itself, explores the potential of artistic experience to foster healthier lives. The extension project of the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza will serve as a field of experimentation from which to explore, poetically and politically, a future museum that integrates mental, cognitive, and physical health as a structural criterion for the design of its programmes and spaces.

Pulso: Mayte Gómez Molina

In collaboration with: Universidad Carlos III de Madrid y Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales - CSIC

Initiative promoted by:

Gobierno de España · Ministerio de Cultura y Deporte · Thyssen-Bornemisza Museo Nacional · El Museo de Todos Everyone's Museum · TBA Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary Academy

Case study´s collaborating entities:

uc3m · Universidad Carlos III de Madrid · mBODY lab · erc · Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales CCHS

02. Case study conceptualization

In October 2025, Spain's Ministries of Health and Culture signed an interministerial agreement to incorporate culture and the arts into public health policies, with particular attention to mental health.[1] Although numerous initiatives have been promoting this intersection in Spain for years, only now does an institutional roadmap recognise that culture can make a difference in this field. Since the advent of modernity, healthcare has tended to be confined to the healthcare sector; yet aspects of society that may become subject to pathologisation[2] can also be addressed by attending to the environments we inhabit. This case study proposes extending the focus on wellbeing to the conditions of everyday life and exploring the capacity of cultural experience to positively affect health.

By 2030, more than 23% of Spain's population will be over 60.[3] Longevity can be understood as a quantitative measure of a society's health: how many years we live. Living longer is a social and democratic achievement, but lifespan alone does not offer a qualitative account of those years. Our societies are becoming increasingly long-lived, yet they do not always guarantee the conditions needed to live the time gained to the fullest. Autonomy, relationships, and opportunities to participate in collective life are all part of this question. If modern architecture polemically reconfigured the nineteenth-century architectures that preceded it according to the principles of hygienism,[4] a new radical reconfiguration seems necessary to respond to the health paradigms of a society that lives longer. The museum can be a place from which to explore this relationship, attending to the diverse capacities and circumstances of those who give the institution its meaning. Can a museum foster other forms of civic life? What might a design process look like that integrates these questions structurally, rather than treating them as complementary additions?

The aspiration of *Radical Soundness* is to think poetically and politically about this potential of museums. To this end, the case study proposes working from softness and uncertainty to question programming and architecture, acoustics and light, experiences and policies, in collaboration with specialists in neuroscience, architecture, longevity, economics, sound, and demography. What emerges from a process that questions when a museum tires, excludes, disorients, or imposes particular ways of being? A conceptual approach to softness, understood as a phenomenon arising from the combination of fluidity and plasticity, offers a way to explore this capacity for adaptation. We can only say that something is soft after interacting with it, touching it, and transforming it. [5] In this context, «tender» brings together meanings associated with tenderness, sensitivity, and vulnerability. Applied to the museum, it invites the imagining of an institution capable of allowing itself to be transformed by those who inhabit it. Could a tender museum be kind, easy to chew, or sensitive to pain? Could it be inexperienced, or inclined to sway in response to the wind created by the bodies moving through it? Could the museum be a stomach, receiving, digesting, and returning energy?

Radical Soundness intends working poetically to formulate questions that can activate a radical imagination of other forms of museum and reconsider the decisions that shape the design of its spaces and programmes. Here, poetry means looking at the world differently and experimenting with relationships that established frameworks of thought leave out, in order to explore other ways of attending and making sense. This approach includes the possibility of encountering unfamiliar experiences, having one's own ideas challenged, inhabiting uncertainty, or encountering a museum that does not shy away from the discomforts it contains. Discomfort is understood here as an intellectual challenge that allows for a reconsideration of what is taken

1. Ministerio de Sanidad, "Sanidad y Cultura acuerdan integrar las artes en la salud mental y la atención sanitaria," October 8, 2025, https://www.sanidad.gob.es/gabinete/notasPrensa.do?id=6766
2. Beatriz Colomina, "Can Architecture Ever Save Us From Sickness?," The MIT Press Reader, June 8, https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/can-architecture-ever-save-us-from-sickness/
3. Oficina de Ciencia y Tecnología del Congreso de los Diputados (Oficina C). Informe C: Envejecimiento y bienestar. Una radiografía de las personas mayores. 2023. https://doi.org/10.57952/q3ze-2c39
4. Beatriz Colomina, "Can Architecture Ever Save Us From Sickness?," The MIT Press Reader, June 8, https://thereader.mitpress.mit.edu/can-architecture-ever-save-us-from-sickness/
5. Laura Tripaldi, "Soft Future," e-flux Architecture, March 2025, https://www.e-flux.com/architecture/intensification/656807/soft-future

for granted about sensory experience. How can space and programming sustain this tension while also fostering orientation and autonomy? To be loved and inhabited is to be worn down. To feel means taking the risk of feeling. *Radical Soundness* proposes working with a museum that contributes to mental health because it creates a safe space in which to feel unsafe; a museum with enough silence to hear the voices that have been pushed into an undertone.

Case study's applied dimension:

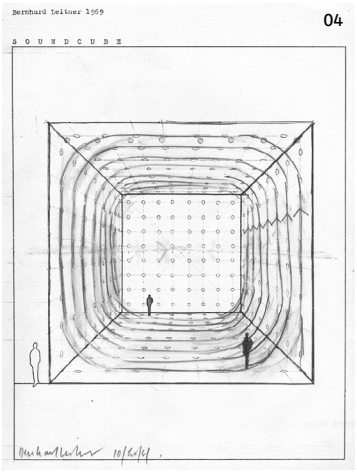
Radical Soundness will take the extension project of the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza as a situated context from which to explore its applied dimension. The Palacio del Hielo y del Automóvil in Madrid will house the museum's new venue, which will accommodate a significant selection of contemporary artworks from the TBA21 Collection and is conceived as a meeting point for contemporary art, ecology, and civic participation. *Radical Soundness* proposes approaching the institution's overall design as a field of experimentation and radical imagination, open to expressing the transformative potential of a museum that places health among the guiding principles of its spaces and programming. Its opening will be a milestone in this process, but this challenge is not confined to the project's founding vision and proposals: the institution's capacity to transform itself will have to take shape through its encounters with those who inhabit it.

01

02

03

04



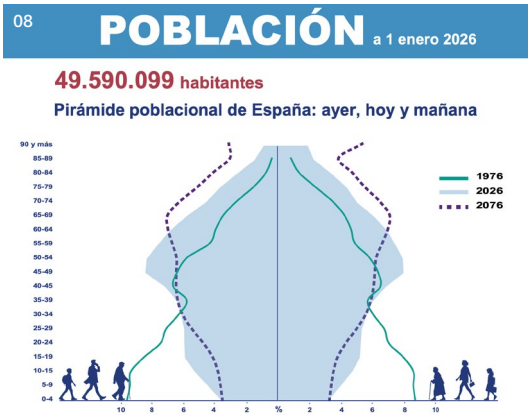
05

01. Children play on mounds of earth at *Baltic Street Adventure Playground*, a community-managed playground in Glasgow, Scotland. Credit: Assemble Studio.
02. A resident in a wheelchair faces *Emma*, a social robot, at a care home in Germany. Credit: Paula Hornickel, *Emma the Social Robot*, World Press Photo, 2026.
03. Philips Pavilion at the Brussels World's Fair, designed by Le Corbusier and Iannis Xenakis, 1958. Photograph by Wouter Hagens. Credit: Wouter Hagens, CC BY-SA 3.0, Wikimedia Commons.
04. Bernhard Leitner, Soundcube, 1969. Drawing of a cubic room with a grid of loudspeakers tracing sound paths through space. Credit: Bernhard Leitner.
05. Nicole L'Huillier, *Foundation 1 (Pétalo Trio)*, 2025, detail. Credit: Nicole L'Huillier.

06

07

08



09

10

11

06. Pol Esteve Castelló, *Infinite Interiority*, 2022, CA2M, Móstoles. Credit: Jorge Anguita Mirón.
07. Hydrotherapy pool at REHAB Basel, with a concrete roof punctuated by circular skylights. Herzog & de Meuron, *REHAB* Basel, Basel, Switzerland, 2002.
08. Population pyramids of Spain in 1976, 2026, and 2076 (projection). National Statistics Institute (INE), "Population as of 1 January 2026. Population Pyramid of Spain: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow," 2026. Credit: INE.
09. Children climb and slide down a recycled-foam ramp with yellow railings at *The Brutalist Playground*, a temporary installation at Park Hill Estate, Sheffield, 2015. Credit: Assemble Studio.
10. A worn stuffed rabbit, photographed in two positions. Katja Kemnitz, *Too Much Love*. Credit: Katja Kemnitz.
11. Jeremy Deller, *Sacrilege*, 2012. Visitors jump and play on a life-size inflatable replica of Stonehenge, installed in London. Credit: Jeremy Deller.

03. Key research approaches

The Sound of Health

A growing body of evidence links noise pollution to chronic stress, neurocognitive decline, and metabolic alterations. It has also been demonstrated that while certain sounds affect our well-being, others can positively contribute to sustaining it. The sonic experience of a space depends not only on the types or levels of noise, but also on how we perceive and interpret what we hear. Sound can orient us, alert us, or soothe us; it can alter our perception of space, as well as our relationship with our very own bodies and with those around us. Together with specialists from the i_mBODY Lab (Interactive Multisensory Body-centred Experiences at the Intersection of Neuroscience & Technology), we will think about the museum through the qualities of its sounds, moving from an architecture that merely controls noise towards one that listens; one that considers which sounds it attracts, which it produces or attenuates, and what forms of attention, orientation, rest or encounter it enables.

Poetic thinking as a method

Radical Soundness proposes poetic thinking as a tool for creating questions capable of renewing the imaginary of museums. There is an increasing tendency towards the homogenization of identities and responses due to the algorithmic drift of our socialization, the attention economy, or the precarisation of our lives. Poetry may be capable of creating its own system of thought and action through an internal logic that lends it rigor, and which can serve as a starting point for provoking new ways of seeing. This proposal considers Anne Carson's poems, Gordon Matta-Clark's perforations in buildings, and the connection between mental and physical health through the gut microbiota as equal forms of poetry. In a kind of quantum disjunction, we will draw on poetry to pose the wrong question in the pursuit of devising a possible right answer.

Against the pressing of the body into mere image

The forms of consumerism in societies also include the consumption of bodies. It can be observed how the intense concern with the state of our health ultimately translates into a surgical gaze upon bodies and their habits, which, strongly promoted in digital spheres, reveals the way in which health becomes individualized and ultimately associated with the maintenance of a beauty canon that pursues eternal youth, rather than a genuine concern for health. We will analyze the economy of artificial life extension in order to reflect on the forgetting of death fostered by capitalist aspirations. The anti-aging industry, closely linked to technocratic utopias, encourages a conscious forgetting of aging and the finitude of life. What does it mean not to age? Where are the efforts towards physical and cognitive immortality leading?

The influence of the environment: ecologies of long-life

In longevity studies, the environment has often been understood as a static factor, in contrast to the dynamic perception of the life course. Yet, in the accelerated societies of capitalism, the rapid transformation of the built environment is exerting an increasingly decisive influence on pathologies at different points of our life trajectories. Unwanted loneliness may be exacerbated by processes of gentrification that erode networks of social connection, or by isolation stemming from the digital divide. In what ways can museums listen, accompany, and become restorative environments? Radical Soundness will approach museum architecture through its acoustics, lighting, or microbiome to explore how to transform the walls of a museum into hands, its corners into open ears. This provocation aims to move from understanding the museum as a container towards conceiving it as civic infrastructure, shifting the paradigm of accessibility towards models of hospitality, autonomy, interdependence, dignity, and well-being across the life course.

Post-work societies

As individuals, we tend to define ourselves through our professional activity, and our value is often calculated according to our capacity to produce and consume. What does it mean to stop doing so? Retirement, as well as the possible arrival of automation, will affect working life in very different ways. Can the museum offer a space in which to collectively rethink the purposes of life? Meanwhile, in contrast to productive work, reproductive labor is invisibilized, without being adequately integrated into public services and often relegated to women in the family, informality, or privatization. Can the museum become a hospitable infrastructure for the entire life course? Radical Soundness proposes a post-work approach, understood as a framework in which social life is reorganized beyond employment as its structuring axis, in order to reconsider the museum as public infrastructure. We will reflect on ageism and the stigmatization of illness in order to resignify the imaginaries associated with them.

Practices, protocols, and roles for the culture-health symbiosis

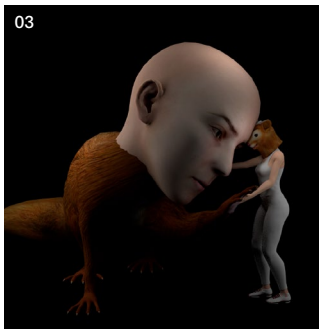
What does it mean to prescribe culture? How can museum design inform the ministerial process of designing protocols to promote the prescription of culture? What can be learned from other contexts with experience in social prescribing practices? And what is the particular idiosyncrasy of these practices within the specific context of Spain? In places such as the United Kingdom, the Arts on Prescription framework has been active for more than 30 years. Within it, the figure of the link worker is a key element: as a public worker, they dedicate time to understanding “what matters” to the patient and connect them with community resources. What other possibilities could be explored in the design of these protocols, and what potential might they reach? What happens if we stop thinking of health solely as an intervention on illness and begin to understand museums as part of the infrastructures that sustain a healthy life?

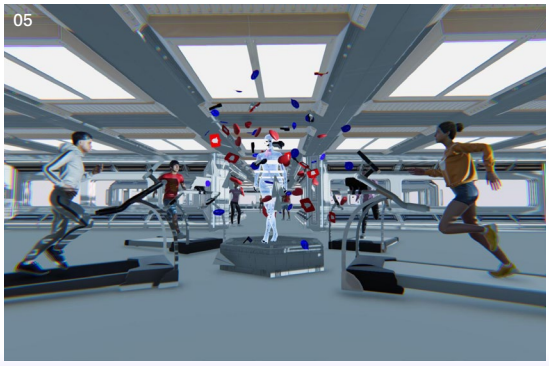
04. Pulso

web →

Mayte Gómez Molina

Mayte Gómez Molina (Madrid by accident, Granada by blood, 1993) is a writer, researcher and new media artist who uses writing as the backbone of a plural practice. She uses poetry and fiction in a traditional sense, creating “book” objects, but also explores the expansion of literature into digital formats through essays and poems using experimental film, 3D and virtual reality, in a practice she calls «expanded literature». Her audiovisual works have been exhibited at numerous institutions and festivals around the world, including the 36th Ljubljana Biennale of Graphic Arts, Tabakalera Donosti, Documenta Madrid, Festival de Sevilla, FILE São Paulo, MMMAD Festival and the Moss Arts Center at Virginia Tech. Her second book of poetry, “Los Trabajos sin Hércules”, won the Miguel Hernández National Young Poetry Prize in 2023. In 2026, her first novel, “La Boca Llena de Trigo”, was published by Anagrama. A Fulbright Scholar from 2019 to 2021, she studied for a Master’s in Film, Video, New Media and Animation at the School of the Art Institute of Chicago. She is currently part of the MAKE/SENSE Doctoral Programme at the Basel Academy of Art and Design, where she also teaches at the Institute of Art, Gender and Nature.





Portrait: Vincenzo Rigogliuso.
01. Mayte Gómez Molina, *Como ardilla en el agua*, still, 2024
02. Mayte Gómez Molina, *Unintended Puzzle*, still, 2023
03. Mayte Gómez Molina, *Como ardilla en el agua*, still, 2024
04. Mayte Gómez Molina, *Entre algodones*, La Puebla de Cazalla, still, 2026
05. Mayte Gómez Molina y Carlos Alcántara, *La máquina que siente*, still, 2024

05. Collaborating entities

Universidad Carlos III de Madrid

web →

→ Universidad Carlos III de Madrid is a leading public institution that uniquely brings together scientific rigour and a humanistic vocation. With a strong multidisciplinary profile, it stands out both for its advances in research, engineering and applied sciences, and for its firm commitment to artistic creation, interdisciplinarity and the dissemination of knowledge. With a clear international and innovative outlook, its undergraduate and postgraduate programmes foster critical thinking, connecting scientific methods with creative sensibility. Its Vice-Rectorate for Communication, Culture and Transparency facilitates the necessary dialogues to position the university as an active agent within its territory, fostering scientific communication and culture as tools for working with communities.

Within the framework of Radical Soundness, we will collaborate with their research groups working on interactive sound (i_mBODY Lab, led by Ana Tajadura-Jiménez) and social robotics (Robotics Lab, where Concha Monje conducts her research), as well as itsFaculty of Health Sciences, which has launched the first Neuroscience Degree in Spain.

Grupo de Investigación sobre Envejecimiento - Centro de Ciencias Humanas y Sociales - CSIC

web →

→ The Grupo de Investigación sobre Envejecimiento (Research Group on Aging), based at the Institute of Economics, Geography and Demography (IEGD) of the Centre for Human and Social Sciences (CCHS-CSIC), researches ageing and longevity from a multidimensional and interdisciplinary perspective. Founded in 1989 in response to the growing social relevance of demographic aging in Spain, the group brings together expertise in demography, geography, sociology, psychology, social epidemiology and economics to deepen the understanding of old age and its transformations. Currently led by researcher Mª Dolores Puga González, its work is structured around three main areas: trajectories of longevity, health and autonomy across different ages and generations; residential strategies and the contextual factors that shape ageing trajectories, from the perspective of environmental gerontology; and participation, ageism, and the determinants of quality of life and wellbeing at different stages of later life.

Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza

web →

→ Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza (MNTB) houses in the Palacio de Villahermosa one of the most important collections of paintings in the world, with a thousand works of art assembled over seven decades by the Thyssen-Bornemisza family. Since its opening to the public in 1992, MNTB has been fulfilling its mission to transmit knowledge, educate and socially integrate through its collection, an extensive program of exhibitions and the programming of a wide variety of activities. Its daily work is based on values such as excellence, sustainability, innovation, integrity, involvement, trust, teamwork and avant-garde spirit. It also emphasizes the dissemination of its collections with programs aimed at involving all kinds of audiences in a universal cultural project, based on the firm belief in the capacity of art to enrich people and to enhance creativity and critical thinking, improving their quality of life. MNTB, on the other hand, carries out extensive work in the field of sustainability. Both in its exhibitions and activities and in its internal management, it responds to the challenges of the climate emergency, firmly advancing in sustainability and social responsibility in accordance with the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) included in the United Nations 2030 Agenda.

TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary

web →

→ TBA21 Thyssen-Bornemisza Art Contemporary is a leading international art and advocacy foundation. Established in 2002 by philanthropist and art patron Francesca Thyssen-Bornemisza, the foundation stewards the TBA21 Collection and its outreach activities, which encompass exhibitions, educational programs, and public engagement activities. TBA21, headquartered in Madrid, works in association with the Museo Nacional Thyssen-Bornemisza and operates key initiatives in Venice, Italy, through its art and science center, Ocean Space, as well as in Portland, Jamaica. The foundation's work is inherently collaborative, driven by artists and guided by the conviction that art and culture serve as catalysts for social and environmental transformation, ultimately contributing to a culture of peace. TBA21 views peace as an ongoing practice rooted in the affirmation of life, diversity, and coexistence. Committed to this vision, the foundation seeks to theorize, experiment with, and advocate for peacebuilding practices in partnership with artists.

06. Guest experts

A first selection of voices informing the development of the case study includes the following names. Additional guest experts will join the conversatiosn as the process evolve:

Alegría y Piñero

web →

→ Alegría Castillo Roses and José Antonio Sánchez Piñero have worked as an artistic duo under the name Alegría y Piñero since 2009. Graduates in Fine Arts from Universidad de Granada, they develop long-term projects exploring the relationship between image, language and perception. Their practice incorporates optical and sound devices, mechanisms and forms of experimentation that expand sculpture into the performative. Recent projects include De ida y vuelta, presented at C3A in Córdoba, and ABOA(C)AOBA, at Galería Alarcón Criado. Since 2014, they have also developed a collaborative art programme with people with intellectual disabilities in La Puebla de Cazalla, where they founded the collective Ojo Pértico.

María Dolores Puga González

→ María Dolores Puga González is a demographer, Senior Research Scientist at CSIC and lead researcher of the Grupo de Investigación sobre Envejecimiento (Research Group on Aging) (GIE-CSIC), based at the Institute of Economics, Geography and Demography. Her research focuses on demographic ageing, living conditions and health in later life, intergenerational transfers and long-term care. She has participated in numerous national and international research projects and has received several distinctions for her research. She is a consultant to the Centro Latinoamericano de Demografía of the United Nations and has contributed to parliamentary work on demographic change in Spain. She has also served as Social Sciences manager at the Agencia Estatal de Investigación and coordinates the Expert Committee on Ageing of the Fundación General CSIC.

Nicole l'Huillier

web →

→ Nicole l'Huillier is a transdisciplinary artist and researcher born in Santiago de Chile. Her practice explores sound, vibrations, resonances and their multiple forms of transduction as materials through which to think about agency, identity, collectivity and relations beyond the human. She works through installations, sonic and vibrational sculptures, listening and sound-distribution devices, performances, experimental compositions, writing and resonant rituals. Her research also examines the possibilities offered by new and ancient technologies to generate alternative forms of storytelling and creation, from decolonial and non-anthropocentric perspectives. She has developed her doctoral research in Media Arts and Sciences at MIT.

Pol Esteve

→ Pol Esteve Castelló is an architect, researcher and educator. His work explores the relationship between space, technology and the body, with a particular interest in non-canonical histories, collective architectures, non-normative bodies and aesthetics as a political tool. His practice brings together historical and theoretical research with spatial practices and has been presented in the fields of architecture and art. He is the author of Arquitecturas Peligrosas / Dangerous Architectures (Puente Editores, 2025 / DPR, 2026), a collection of essays exploring sexuality, comfort, gender, pleasure and health as spatial and cultural constructions. He is co-founder of the architecture studio GOIG and is affiliated with the Architectural Association and ETH Zürich.

07. Expanded study materials

visit are.na Radical Soundness →

1 e-flux Architecture and Care. "Unbuilding Ageism." e-flux Architecture, May 2026. – link →

2 Goldsmiths Art. "Helen Hester: After Work: What's Left and Who Cares?" YouTube, April 19, 2016. – link →

3 Gretchen Jennings, Jim Cullen, Janeen Bryant, Kayleigh Bryant-Greenwell, Stacey Mann, Charlette Hove, and Nayeli Zepeda. "The Empathetic Museum: A New Institutional Identity." *Curator: The Museum Journal* 62, no. 4 (2019): 505–526. – link →

4 Ursula K. Le Guin. "It Doesn't Have to Be the Way It Is." 2011. – link →

5 Museo de Arte Moderno de Buenos Aires. "Paradigmas para vivir mejor. Reflexiones entre Ana Gallardo y Gabriela Cabezón Cámara." YouTube, June 26, 2020. – link →

6 RTVE. "El derecho a las cosas bellas: palabras y horizontalidad." *Blablando*, November 23, 2025. – link →

7 Sala, Leticia. "Dame veneno que quiero vivir. Skincare, bótox, miedo a envejecer y linaje femenino." Barcelona: Anagrama 2026. – link →

8 Lynne Segal. "El escándalo de envejecer." Video, Centre de Cultura Contemporània de Barcelona, March 22, 2017. – link →

9 Lynne Segal. "A Politics of Radical Care & The Care Manifesto." YouTube, 2024. – link →

10 The Architectural League. "Making the Inclusive Museum." YouTube, March 11, 2024. – link →

Vila-Matas, Enrique. The Illogic of Kassel. Translated by Anne McLean and Anna Milsom. New York: New Directions, 2015.– link →

→ "For a man who was growing old and doing nothing to hide it, going to Kassel meant finding doors opening to a new world. Maybe there he would come across ideas other than the usual ones, and perhaps, if he had the patience of a wanderer, he might manage to gain an approximate view of the state of contemporary art at the beginning of the twenty-first century. He was curious, besides, to see if there were many differences between the literary avant-garde—if it existed—and the artistic avant-garde, which came together every five years at Documenta. In the literary sphere, the avant-garde had lost ground, if not become almost entirely extinct, although there might still be some poetic projects of interest."

Callahan, Eliza Barry. *La prueba de audición.* Translated by Rita Da Costa. Barcelona: Anagrama, 2025. – link →

→ "I quickly became a subject of study. I was referred to three specialists researching the field, who agreed to make room in their schedules for me over the following two days, waiving their fees and co-payments. Within forty-eight hours, each of these specialists informed me that I was unlikely to recover fully, if I recovered at all. In the worst case, one of them pointed out, it could be the beginning of degenerative hearing loss, which tends to affect older people and generally leads to profound deafness. The most sincere form of silence. We have reached the Moon, another doctor told me, but not the inner ear."

Oldenburg, Claes. "I Am for an Art." In *Environments, Situations, Spaces*. New York: Martha Jackson Gallery, 1961. – link →

→ "I am for an art that unfolds like a map, that you can squeeze, like your sweetie's arm, or kiss, like a pet dog. Which expands and squeaks, like an accordion, which you can spill your dinner on, like an old tablecloth. I am for an art that you can hammer with, stitch with, sew with, paste with, file with. I am for an art that tells you the time of day, or where such and such a street is. I am for an art that helps old ladies across the street."