Media Art Lab
Assignment 3
Sounds Like War

War and sound have had a long history. War cries meant to chill an opponent's blood predate the ear-splitting recordings intended to disorient and frighten during terrorism interrogations. The futurists' fascination with dissonant, non-musical sound was intimately tied with an aesthetic that glorified war. Their noise machines might be seen as ancestors of the 'less lethal' sonic weapons sometimes used today to dispel protestors. For veterans, sound's ability to trigger powerful learned responses and such painful memories that 4th of July fireworks, jackhammers, and backfiring cars may be better avoided. And of course the media landscape brings its own varied sounds of war into our intimate spaces through video games, films, news coverage, and the tradition of the protest song.

For this project, you will work in assigned pairs to create **two one minute** sound compositions reflecting on the sounds of war. Consider the prompt broadly and be prepared to consider its personal ramification. Where do you hear sounds of war? Under what conditions? From what distance or proximity? The two sound compositions should be related in some clear way, e.g. represent two different moments in time, two different sites at the same time, or an exploration of some binary opposition, such as enemy/ally or civilian/military. Your composition may be either abstract or language-driven, but it should have a distinct arc that roughly follows traditional narrative lines (exposition, complication, climax, resolution).

As you are developing the sound pieces, be in dialogue with your collaborator about how the piece might be installed in space. The piece will be installed twice, first for Intermedia Open House and second for the Pop-Up Museum being held at the Library Learning Commons as part of the "Worth Fighting For" programming surrounding the Liz Lerman Dance Project's "Healing Wars" show at Hancher. Your piece may need to be remixed or separated into more than two channels in order to be effectively installed.

Resources:

University of Iowa Library's content guide for Worth Fighting For:
http://guides.lib.uiowa.edu/worth_fighting_for

The Sound of War - 1950s radio show about World War II:
https://archive.org/details/OTRR_Certified_Sound_of_War

University of Iowa Veterans' Association:
http://www.registrar.uiowa.edu/Student/Veterans/VeteransCenter/tabid/73/Default.aspx

Timeline:

October 14 - Bring field-recorded and archival audio to class to contribute to group sound bank. Be prepared to speak for one audio piece that you expect to be central to your work. We will get into pairs based on complementary interests/aesthetics.

October 21 - Complete rough draft of one-minute sound files. Turn in to Dropbox and bring to PSI. Workshop with Liz Lerman and walkthrough/selection of space.

October 24 - Deadline for reservation/acquisition of equipment for Intermedia Showcase installation

October 28 - Meet at PS1 for installation and workday.

October 31, 8-10 PM - Intermedia Showcase at PS1

To Turn In:

Export the sound pieces as aiff or wav files, named "yourlastname_soundslikewar.aif" and place in the appropriate ICON dropbox. Documentation of the sound piece as installed in the two shows should also be submitted - forms this may take will be discussed in class.