ALMINE RECH

Tuning in
Acoustique de l’émotion

Oct 3, 2024 — Aug 24, 2025 | International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum, Geneva, Switzerland

'Tuning In – Acoustique de l'émotion' From October 3, 2024 to August 24, 2025

What sounds of humanitarian action do we preserve? How does a voice convey emotion? Who speaks and who has the right to be heard? What role does music play in the humanitarian sphere? From 3 October 2024 to 24 August 2025, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum will host 'Tuning In – Acoustique de l'émotion', an exhibition featuring sounds from the audio archives of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movement alongside major works – and newly commissioned pieces – of contemporary art.

In our daily lives, we tend to experience humanitarian action through our eyes rather than our ears. Images play a key role in shaping our perception of conflicts, natural disasters and other emergencies. Yet sounds – and voices in particular – are just as important in helping us interpret and make sense of humanitarian issues past and present. Through this interdisciplinary and experimental exhibition, the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Museum seeks to unearth and highlight hidden gems from a unique collection of sound recordings.

Thousands of hours of audio

The collections and archives of the Museum, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) include numerous vinyl records, tapes, cassettes and other audio media. Exhibited here for the first time – alongside musical instruments, scores, and concert posters and photographs from the 19th century to the present day – these remarkable recordings form a rich and diverse soundscape, shining new light on humanitarian action from three angles: the voice and the archive, music in conditions of detention, and humanitarian songs.

Ten contemporary artists and three newly commissioned pieces

Tuning In also features works by contemporary artists such as William Kentridge and Christine Sun Kim, inviting us to reflect on the very act of listening to humanitarian action and on how these sounds are preserved for posterity. These exhibits – sculptures, installations, films, drawings and paintings – touch on the themes that run through the archives: language, memory, community and our shared humanity. The Museum also gave carte blanche to three artists to produce new works especially for the exhibition: Piero Mottola created a participatory composition featuring the voices of 40 volunteers; Dana Whabira produced an immersive installation inspired by her research into the ICRC archives; and Gregor Hildebrandt conceived a sculpture representing sound in physical form.

New research opportunities

As an interdisciplinary, collaborative exhibition, Tuning In also provided opportunities for students and academics to further their research: audio recordings were digitized by a team from the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne (EPFL); students from the Swiss Center for Affective Sciences (CISA) at the University of Geneva dipped into the ICRC archives for a participatory study exploring the links between voices and emotions; and a group of students from the Valais School of Art (EDHEA) in Sierre used recordings from the IFRC archives to compose a soundtrack that fills the exhibition space.

An immersive and inclusive experience

For Tuning In, the Museum's exhibition space has been entirely reconfigured to enable all visitors – hearing and non-hearing – to fully experience the archives and works on display.