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The Inaudible as an Effect Tactics of Sound Erasure in Max Neuhaus

"[S]ound is all and always epistemology, and not ontology."¹

Steven Connor, *Acousmania*

"Any sound is a relationship. [...] Inaudibility, it seems, is just as relational as sound. But how do we unpack the term? Inaudibility implies some kind of horizon of audibility for someone or something else."²

Jonathan Sterne, *Relations of Inaudibility*

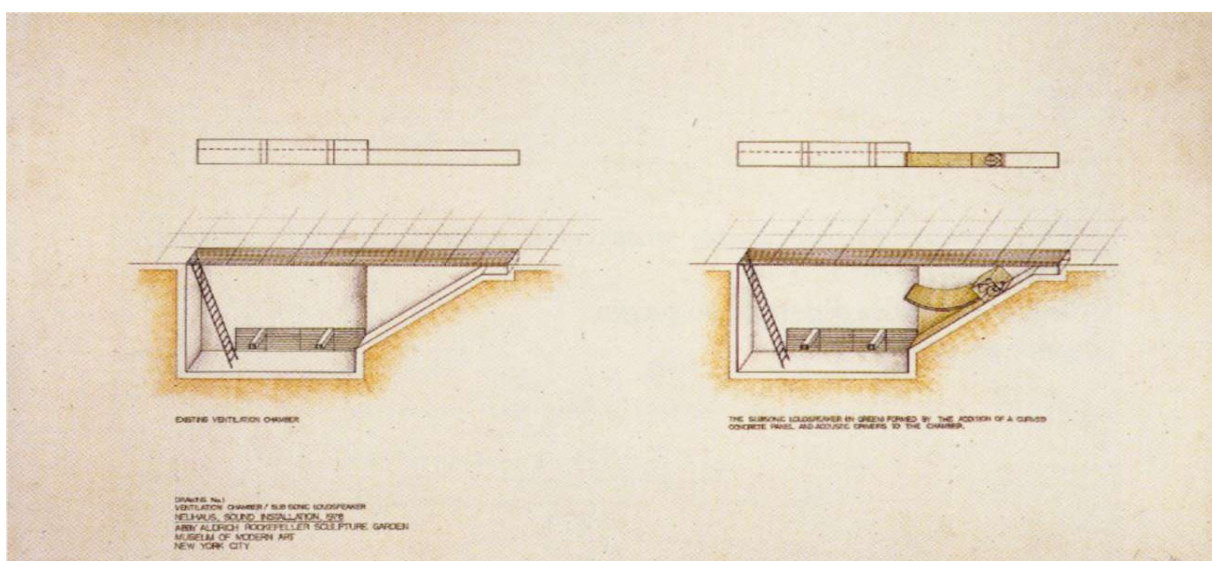
While Max Neuhaus's work on the inaudible began to develop in the early 1960s³, it seems to have gained focus with an exhibition in the form of a sound installation presented by the artist at MoMA between 8 June and 5 September 1978, as part of the Elaine Danheisser Projects Series dedicated to emerging artists. For this installation, Neuhaus took over the Abby Aldrich Rockefeller sculpture garden, and, more specifically, the ventilation pipe running along MoMA's eastern façade. His intervention consisted in modifying the shape of the duct's mouth, "by adding a concrete panel above a slanted side of the chamber, and [adding] four acoustic drivers to the end where they

met. It formed a huge loudspeaker with a mouth opening of three meters."⁴ Like some institutional critique, Neuhaus acted on the architecture of the site itself, in this instance its infrastructure, making his installation invisible to the public, because hidden behind the ventilation grid. However, the dimensions of the speaker were also significant:

"Contrary to common sense the size of a horn does not determine its loudness, it determines its frequency limits; the bigger it is the lower it can go. The size of this horn allowed me to generate pitches which were below where we have a sense of pitch, subsonic frequencies."⁵

In short, the work exhibited in the MoMA garden was both invisible *and* inaudible, the apparatus itself being rendered inaccessible to the public. What kind of experience was it therefore able to suggest? The museum press release did not mention it at all, seeming to avoid the subject.

Fig. 01: Max Neuhaus, *Drawing #1, Ventilation chamber/subsonic loudspeaker*, Museum of Modern Art, New York, 1982. Ink and coloured pencil on paper. 56 x 90 cm, © Estate Max Neuhaus, Courtesy Estate Max Neuhaus.



To find some kind of answer, we have to refer to a later interview with the artist by critic and curator Ulrich Loock, published on the occasion of an exhibition in Turin in 1990. Regarding his MoMA piece Neuhaus explained: “[...] *the sound itself was inaudible; what was audible was its effect on other sounds*. It was a terrain of an inaudible sound which *modified* all the existing audible sounds.”⁶ Certainly, the work’s apparatus was invisible and inaudible, but it produced an effect on its propagation environment. It acted discreetly on the other, fully audible, sounds at the site, altering perception of them.

In this article, I wish to explore the implications of and the issues involved in such a relationship to the inaudible, envisaged from the perspective and in terms of the perceptive effects that it promotes. By acting directly on the perception of a space, a mainly urban one that is part of public space in the case of Neuhaus, what relationships do these effects, in terms of their discretion itself, create with the places in which they are deployed? And in the first place, what exactly are these transformations of the perception of the site?

From object to effect

In their important work of 1995, *Sonic Experience*, Jean-François Augoyard and Henry Torgue, together with the team from the Cresson laboratory, undertook to draw up a typology of the effects encountered in everyday life. In particular, they looked at the urban environment, the “constructed space [which] itself shapes many sonic effects”,⁷ which, in turn, inform the perception that one may have of them. These effects are described as phenomena “relative to a context and a local organization”.⁸ They cannot be considered “either as basic reactions to a *stimulus* or as simple subjective impressions, but [...] in fact seemed like aesthetic operations including active shaping with particular local configurations of the physical sound element”⁹. There is then “an effect”, add the researchers, “to any sonic operation. The physical signal is under a perceptive distortion, a selection of information and an attribution of significance that depends on the abilities, psychology, culture, and social background of the listener”.¹⁰

Thus, the authors point out that “the effect is not an object itself. [It refers] to the context surrounding the object and its appearance”.¹¹ Every element is there-

fore used for its event-based and situated qualities, varying according to what constantly distinguishes our perceptive experience of it. However, Augoyard and Torgue do not seem to explore to their fullest extent the implications of such a relational perspective in which the sound object is, in fact, entirely diluted and becomes pure relationship. Maintaining a distinction between sound and effect, they see less “a relation of similarity but rather a set of mutual references between the sound, physically measurable although always abstract, and its interpretation, the particular fashioning by which it enters into perspective development”.¹² What the researchers call “the sound physically measurable” actually refers to the vibration propagating independently of our perceptive interpretation, while the effect is situated on the side of perception, the side on which the sound actually occurs. As Jonathan Sterne recalls: “Sound is a product of perception, not a thing ‘out there’ – the only thing ‘out there’ is vibration, which the body organizes and stratifies into what we call sound.”¹³ The border supposed to separate sound and its effect therefore diminishes appreciably. If the effect is part of the “perceptive development” of the sound, if only because all sound depends on a propagation space that influences our perception of it, can there be such a thing as a sound that has not already been shaped by an effect, subjected to its perceptive shift? This is a line that the authors of the *A Guide to Everyday Sounds* prefer not to cross, admitting however in conclusion of their definition of sound effects that “any perception implies some effect, that is to say a minimal work of interpretation”.¹⁴ Neuhaus, however, does cross this line, not without impact on the conception of the work resulting from his artistic approach. As of his first installations, the artist seems to dispense with the object and focus solely on effect. To put it another way, playing on the words, if the object can still be considered to persist in Neuhaus’ work, it only does so as a perceptive object, the sounds introduced by the artist tending to disappear to make way solely for the relationships established and any impact these relationships have on perception.

Although the researchers’ guide mentions several effects, such as mask or erasure, which may approach or involve the inaudible, the inaudible does not appear

as a specific effect within their typology. Because it cannot be distinguished, the inaudible is, rather, inherent to the manifestation of other effects, which themselves can be observed and analysed. When Neuhaus, on the other hand, talks about the inaudible as an effect, he does so rather to describe a mode of operation by which the effects produced by his sound apparatuses on the perception of the audible sounds of a given environment, seem to transpire without any apparent cause. Before describing this perceptive transformation further, we should however go into more detail on its *modus operandi*, the particular form of which can be likened to an effects rack.

Modus operandi: tactics of the inaudible

From one work to another, Neuhaus deploys a set of tactics which “sketch out the guileful ruses of *different* interests and desires” capable of producing the inaudible.¹⁵ The term tactic refers here to the definition given by Michel de Certeau, as “a calculated action determined by the absence of a proper locus”.¹⁶ Whether Neuhaus is occupying public or museum space, his aim is always, in fact, to discreetly infiltrate the space’s specific organisation, trying to influence the experience that this organisation aims to guide and to govern: “The space of a tactic is the space of the other. Thus it must play on and with a terrain imposed on it and organized by the law of a foreign power.”¹⁷ The lines below do not claim to offer an exhaustive inventory of these tactics for the different vectors of Neuhaus’s work¹⁸ but rather focus on those that are mainly used for his ‘Place works’.

A first tactic targeting the inaudible can be found in the choice of places that Neuhaus proposed to occupy. They were usually places where the public does not expect to find a work of art. Thus, with *Times Square* (1977–1992, 2002–), a particularly dense traffic intersection, with *Freeway Stack* (1982, incomplete project), a motorway interchange, with *Walk-through* (1973), an underground station entrance and with *Montparnasse Bienvenue* (1973–1987, incomplete project), a correspondence corridor. By these choices, Neuhaus wished to inscribe his interventions at the heart of spaces experienced daily by the inhabitants of big cities, favouring proximity to the works that the preserved space of the museum does not permit.¹⁹ But he also sought to penetrate the most mundane of

experiences by looking at the daily commute whereby the habit of taking the same path each day leads to no longer necessarily paying attention to what surrounds us. This is reflected in his installations for museum spaces, in which he often chose to use stairways, like at the CAPC in Bordeaux or the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago. As a functional space, a place of passage, stairways are often not part of a museum’s exhibition halls, such that, in this space, visitors do not spontaneously take up the attitude of aesthetic contemplation ascribed to them in the galleries. In short, in both cases, we’re talking about *infiltration*, whereby artistic proposals are smuggled into places in which aesthetic attention is usually absent, if not in which its eventuality is not entertained.

A second tactic involved the choice of location of sound sources within the chosen sites and, at the same time, their mode of diffusion. As with his work for the MoMA garden, his installation speakers were mostly hidden from view. Slipped inside a duct, behind a ventilation grille, buried in the ground, suspended in a tree or embedded in radiators, the aim was that the sound sources should not be locatable. For the desired effect to be fully operative however, nor could they be locatable in terms of their sound: “Because of course you see things with your eyes, but your ear is very good at turning where the sound is coming from. It’s not just a matter of hiding it; you’ve got to [...] hide it for the ear (as well as) for the eye.”²⁰ To do this, the artist rarely pointed his speakers in the direction of the propagation space, directing them rather at a wall opposite, the ground or any other wall allowing indirect diffusion likely to disguise their location.²¹ Concealment of sources and indirect diffusion are thus interdependent. Speaking about *Three to One*, which was designed for documenta IX and is now a permanent installation at the Kassel AOK Building, Neuhaus stated:

“Actually there was a heating system along the base of the glass by means of which I integrated the sound sources into the heating system. If I’d just put them in the heating system you’d have heard them coming from there, but by projecting the sound on the glass your ear heard the sound coming from the center of the glass, but your eye looked at the glass and said that there was noth-

ing there, and the contradiction between the two, caused the sound, the sources to disappear and the sound really perceptually to completely diffuse through the whole room.”²²

This interplay of perceptive contradiction thus introduced two effects: the *ubiquity effect* (the sound seems to come at once from everywhere and from nowhere) and the *immersion effect* (by means of the permanence of this sound envelope).²³

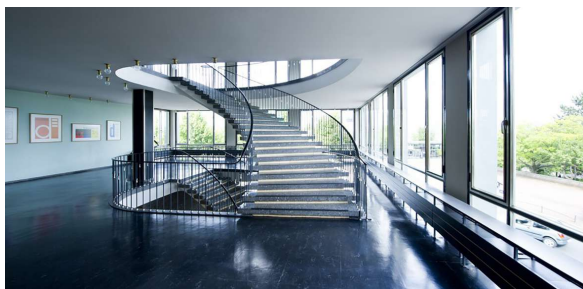


Fig. 02: Max Neuhaus, *Three to One in the AOK building*, Kassel, 1992 © Estate Max Neuhaus, Courtesy Estate Max Neuhaus.

A third tactic concerns the type of sounds that Neuhaus broadcast with his installations: electronic sounds produced by *ad hoc* synthesizers that the artist modelled for each work according to its environment. Although the MoMA installation broadcast frequencies which were, in fact, inaudible because they were below the threshold audible to the human ear, most of the time Neuhaus favoured sounds that are fully audible, but which, because of their plausible character in their broadcast context, blend in or almost blend in and can therefore at first appear inaudible. Neuhaus noted:

“In the work at the Museum of Contemporary Art in Chicago, there is exactly that situation: everyone knows the piece is there, but many people walk through it and do not hear it. This is an important point, a deliberate point of making the sound almost plausible within the space. It also leaves it hidden and means you can only find it by bringing yourself to the point where you can hear it.”²⁴

The desired effect here was that of *imitation*,²⁵ the artist playing with the limits of listening and its socio-cultural conditioning in a given context so that his syn-

thetic sounds were integrated within their sound environment. But as we will see later, this contextual 'resemblance' nevertheless functioned subtly alongside their obvious 'improbability' as soon as attention was paid to them, the camouflage resulting from a fragile formal balance between that which blended into the décor and that which detached itself from it.²⁶



Fig. 03: Max Neuhaus, *Views of Times Square, New York City*, 1977 © Estate Max Neuhaus, Courtesy Estate Max Neuhaus.

Lastly, a final tactic, also relating to the circumstantial nature of the inaudible, concerned itself with the dynamics of sounds. As Neuhaus pointed out, his sound interventions in public spaces were in no way to be seen as untimely intrusions. It wasn't about competing with the sound volume of ambient sounds, but of slipping inside them so that his interventions could go unnoticed. In this sense, the dynamics adopted were chosen according to the desire for anonymity which prevailed in several works designed for public spaces, the artist opposing the placement of any description or plate to index the experience. He explained:

“When I work in the public sphere, I am not interested in generating a confrontation. I feel like I am working in a space which is theirs; I'm in their territory. The public works are all deliberately pitched at a threshold of perception, a point where people can notice them or not notice them. They're often disguised, almost hidden in their environment.”²⁷

However, camouflaging his works did not mean adopting near-silence, but rather considering perception in

terms of the yardstick of its immediate context, in other words determining the volume of his installations by slightly sub-mixing them in comparison to the ambient noise. In a public interview with Arthur Danto, Neuhaus confided regarding *Times Square*:

“The sound [...] was subtle. If it was in this room right now it would be very hard to talk over it, but in the context of Times Square it was something you could notice or not notice.”²⁸

Such a relationship to volume sought in this sense to create a *masking effect*, produced by the site's own sound activity, to take advantage of “the presence of a sound that partially or completely masks another sound because of its intensity or the distribution of its frequencies”.²⁹

Through these different tactics, the inaudible is not simply therefore defined by Neuhaus as designating the set of frequencies located below or beyond the spectrum audible by the human ear, but also, and primarily, as falling within an arrangement of various interlocking effects: infiltration, ubiquity, immersion, imitation and masking shape a situation likely to produce a mode of listening mediated by the inaudible. It remains to be seen what this specific listening mode is or, in other words, what effect this construction of the inaudible has on the other sounds on the site, which are themselves fully audible.

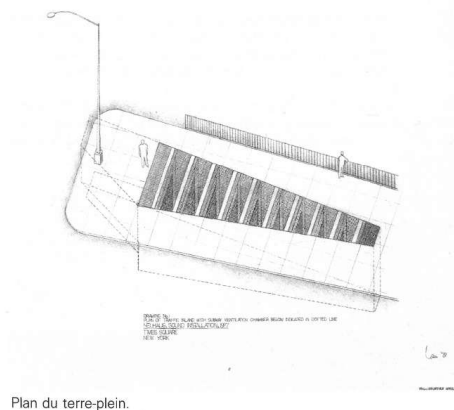
Vibrating the public space

In reality the tactical arrangement thus created converges towards one and the same goal, that of producing *causal erasure*: the discrete withdrawal of the conditions of possibility of a perceptive transformation of the site, namely an umpteenth effect whose operability depends on the absence of apparent cause in its respect. Consideration of this last effect requires us to look at the sounds that Neuhaus models on his synthesizers. While the choice of sounds is determined contextually, it is not about sourcing any sound drawn from this context. In his 'Place works', the artist considers the sites occupied as so many volumes of vibrating air, blocks within which he sculpts the movement of flows that circulate there.³⁰ These are masses

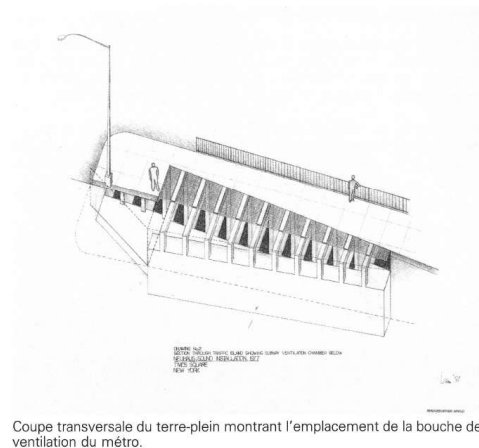
stretching and compressing themselves, a little like springs, on which he tries to provoke a *resonance effect*. While resonance is a particularly important effect in architecture and urban planning, it is nevertheless often misunderstood, because frequently used in everyday language to designate any remarkable acoustic phenomenon, when not simply related to reverberation. However in acoustics, resonance specifically means “the vibration, in air or through solids, of a solid element. The production of resonance requires a relatively high acoustic level and a concordance between the exciting frequency and the object put into vibration”.³¹

Thus, in many of his projects, the sounds that Neuhaus synthesized from sites were none other than a selection of a site's *resonance frequencies*, whether the site was apprehended as a whole or reduced to one of its architectural elements: such and such a cavity, wall, staircase or angle formed by the junction of two walls. Therefore, little matter whether these frequencies were audible or not, because their *raison d'être* is not to be listened to in themselves, but rather *the effect* that they may produce, namely the resonance, the vibration of their own propagation space, i.e. its *activation*. Talking about *Times Square*, Neuhaus said:

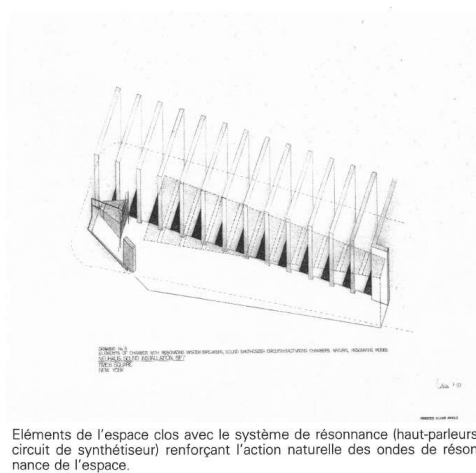
“I began making the piece by investigating what the resonant frequencies of the chamber were. [...] These resonance-stimulator sounds are produced with a synthesis circuit and come out of a large loudspeaker horn, one by two meters. But the sound heard on the sidewalk is not what's coming out of the speaker. I think the easiest way to think about it is to think of the air confined by the walls of the complex chamber as a block of material which the speaker is vibrating. The vibration of that block of air is exposed through the opening of the grating in the sidewalk, as the work's sound. [...] When you mix sound, you can mix sound A and sound B and you don't get sound AB, you get sound C. So, even though the piece itself doesn't by any means cover the sounds of the traffic, it transforms them into something else while you're standing in it.”³²



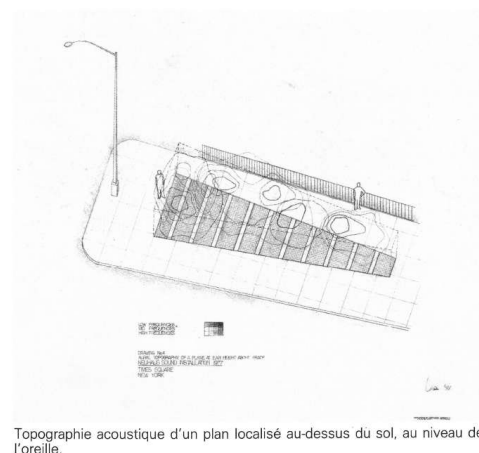
Plan du terre-plein.



Coupe transversale du terre-plein montrant l'emplacement de la bouche de ventilation du métro.



Éléments de l'espace clos avec le système de résonance (haut-parleurs, circuit de synthétiseur) renforçant l'action naturelle des ondes de résonance de l'espace.



Topographie acoustique d'un plan localisé au-dessus du sol, au niveau de l'oreille.

Fig. 04: Max Neuhaus, *Drawing #1-4, Times Square, New York City, 1977–1992, 2002–*, Catalogue *Max Neuhaus. Sound Installation*. ARC, 6 May until 12 June 1983, Musée d'art moderne de la ville de Paris, 1983. © Estate Max Neuhaus, Courtesy Estate Max Neuhaus.

In *Times Square*, the cavity located under the pavement and open onto the outside, which is none other than a subway air vent, thus plays the role of a resonator – a sort of reduced model of the square on the surface – whose own resonance frequencies can influence the surrounding sounds. By doubling frequencies already present *in situ*, whether the fundamental frequency or its multiples, Neuhaus was not thus making “new” sounds available to be heard but was rather soliciting a tension emanating from an increase in amplitude of the said frequencies. It is this tension that is then broadcast from the air vent, filtering the perception of the noises of the square by the passers-by who move across it, from the incessant traffic to the attractions for tourists which characterise the square today. Although Neuhaus frequently talked about the sound atmosphere emerging from the grid of *Times Square*

as an oasis of calm in the midst of the tumult, it can be noted that the resonance effect is more readily associated with its possible destruction in the collective imagination, like the legend of the bridge collapsing to the sounds of the boots crossing it in rhythm.³³ Although this “haven of peace” does not seem to have raised any concerns for the surrounding buildings since its installation in the mid-1970s, for those who listen out for it, it no doubt entails the perceptive deconstruction of its atmosphere.

Attention scale change

The causal erasure operated by the tactics of the inaudible is entirely directed towards this possibility of a perceptive renewal of the place provided by its resonance. For those who do so, the discovery of these subtle sounds causes a shift in attention, the crossing of a threshold that takes place precisely at the moment when the contextual resemblance of the sounds is eroded and one's way of listening challenged.³⁴ In one

of his interviews with Danto, Neuhaus summarised the process in these terms: “Many times I make a sound that’s almost plausible in the space, it fits there. It’s the point where you don’t accept its plausibility there, where you notice the difference, the shift, that you move into the work itself.”³⁵ Neuhaus described this shift elsewhere using an expression charged with meaning: that critical moment during which the singular character of these sounds is remarked on, sounds which otherwise blend into those on the site, introduced, according to Neuhaus, a “shift of scale”³⁶ and “when you change scale, you start to look at things differently”.³⁷ This is moreover reflected in the etymology of the word “resonance”: *resonare* literally meaning “sound again”.³⁸

Nevertheless, this resonance-enabled shift of scale is singular in as much as it would only seem possible to bring it about in the form of a sound paradox. It is indeed not simply a matter of listening to the sounds that have enabled it, at the moment when this change occurs, of focusing solely on them, because the attention widens at this moment to take in the whole of a situation. The perceptive shift at work would appear to consist of a movement from auditory attention to contextual attention³⁹. Thus, the inaudible does not merely represent the condition of possibility of experience, it is also, in a way, what it leads to, by providing access – Neuhaus speaks of a threshold⁴⁰ – to a perception in which the sounds in themselves are forgotten and instead in which one’s attention is addressed to the context as a whole. In this respect, listening to inaudible sounds is merely a medium, a means of passage towards something else.

To try to give a more precise idea of what takes place on the occurrence of the renewal of contextual attention onto which listening to the inaudible opens, it may be useful to draw attention to the distinction between place and space established by de Certeau in *The Practice of Everyday Life*. For de Certeau, place is characterised by its stability, each thing having its own place and its function. In the manner of an urban plan that draws boundaries and sets out spatial organisation and the regulation of activities taking place within it, “the law of the ‘proper’ rules in the place: the elements taken into consideration are *beside* one another, each situated in its own ‘proper’ and distinct loc-

ation, a location it defines.”⁴¹ A place, however, is not a simple plane, without depth or history, but is built on a stratified background; it is a palimpsest of its previous states, the multiple layers of which complicate the organising arrangement.⁴² Space is distinguished by its dynamic and the activation of flows that move across the said place. It is defined as “intersections of mobile elements”: “It is in a sense actuated by the ensemble of movements deployed within it. Space occurs as the effect produced by the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities.”⁴³ And de Certeau concludes: “In short, *space is a practiced place*.”⁴⁴ While every place, thus defined, contains spaces, insofar as place is necessarily produced by the social activities it frames, the spaces can, in their turn, bring about the objectification of the place by means of the very stability of the flows of these activities, the predictability of their movements and their degree of correspondence with the order of places and functions assigned. Thus, rather than a term-to-term opposition, perhaps it is preferable in terms of analysis to see, “fleeting polarities” in these categories, as suggested in Marc Augé’s reading.⁴⁵

For his part, Neuhaus repeatedly describes the situation created by his sound installations as akin to the “building of a place”. This is a process aiming to “transform the space into a place”.⁴⁶ The relationship between the two terms “space” and “place” may therefore at first sight appear to be reversed in relation to that established by de Certeau. Space here would seem to be an abstract extension, on which the attention slides without ever being able to cling to the slightest detail, even in a context where it is over-solicited, while place becomes the theatre of a new perceptive dynamic. But this reversal nevertheless involves the same movement from one term to another, that of the *proper* to the *improper*, in which reality is experienced otherwise: “To practice space [...] is, in a place, *to be other and to move toward the other*.”⁴⁷ However, we can submit an alternative reading of this lexical similarity. If the transformation proposed by Neuhaus consists in a reinvestment of the practising of place, by means of a renewed perception of it, this is perhaps simultaneously what makes it possible to re-examine the *making of place*, in the de Certeau sense, in the

space practised. In this regard, listening to the resonance of its inertia would lead to perceiving in a new light “the law of the ‘proper’ [which] rules in the place”, the order of places and functions that underlie the apparent movement of flows, the stability behind the incessant activity of a site, recalling, by this gesture, its initial contingency and therefore a possible change. The tactics of the inaudible used by Neuhaus in his installations would, in this sense, therefore enable the revelation of strategies that govern an environment, inviting an exploration of its flaws.

Endnotes

1. Steven Connor, ‘Acousmanía’, Lecture given at *Sound Studies: Art, Experience, Politics*, CRASSH, Cambridge, 2015, consulted on the 5th of July 2019 : <http://stevenconnor.com/acousmania.html>
2. Jonathan Sterne, ‘Relations of Inaudibility’, in Matthieu Saladin, *La capture de l’inaudible*, Paris, Art Kill Art, 2019, n. p.
3. Among others, here we are thinking about some of his interpretations of the New York School in 1964, such as *Four Systems* by Earle Brown or *The King of Denmark* by Morton Feldman, as well as the use of radio frequencies in *Drive-in Music* (1967-68) or his series of underwater installations, *Water Whistle* (1971-1974). On these last two works, see Max Neuhaus, ‘Max Neuhaus. Interview di Lucio Pozzi’, DATA ARTE, n° 18, September/October 1975 and max-neuhaus.info, consulted 14/07/2017, respectively.
4. Max Neuhaus, ‘Lecture at the Seibu Museum Tokyo’ [1982], *Inscription. Sound Works Volume I*, Ostfildern, Cantz, 1994, p. 69.
5. *Ibid.*
6. Max Neuhaus, ‘Conversation with Ulrich Lookk’ [1990], *Inscription. op. cit.*, p. 126. (My highlighting.)
7. Jean-François Augoyard, ‘Introduction – An Instrumentation of the Sound Environment’, in Jean-François Augoyard & Henry Torgue (ed.), *Sonic Experience. A Guide to Everyday Sounds*, Montreal, McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2005, p. 8.
8. *Ibid.*, p. 8
9. *Ibid.*
10. *Ibid.*
11. *Ibid.*, p. 10
12. *Ibid.*, p. 11
13. Jonathan Sterne, ‘The mp3 as cultural artifact’, *New Media & Society*, vol. 8:5, 2006, p. 834. See also Jonathan Sterne, *The Audible Past. Cultural Origins of Sound Reproduction*, Durham & London, Duke University Press, 2003, p. 11-12.
14. Jean-François Augoyard, ‘Introduction – An Instrumentation of the Sound Environment’, in Jean-François Augoyard & Henry Torgue (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 11.
15. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, translated from French by Steven Rendall, Berkeley and Los Angeles, University of California Press Books, 1988, p. 34.
16. *Ibid.*, p. 60
17. *Ibid.*
18. Neuhaus organized his work according to a set of convergent or divergent vectors: Place, Walks, Networks, Moment, Passages and Performance.
19. See Max Neuhaus, ‘Lecture at the Seibu Museum Tokyo’ [1982], *Inscription. op. cit.*, p. 58. According to Branden W. Joseph, Neuhaus’ relationship to public space is political in nature. See Branden W. Joseph, ‘An Implication of an Implication’, Lynne Cooke, Karen Kelly & Barbara Schröder, *Max Neuhaus. Times Square, Time Piece Beacon*, New York, Dia Art Foundation, 2009, pp. 64-67.
20. Max Neuhaus, ‘Conversation with Greg Desjardins’ [2003], *Max Neuhaus Archives*, n. p.
21. See Max Neuhaus, ‘Entretien par Jean-Yves Bosseur’ [1992], in Max Neuhaus, *Les pianos ne poussent pas sur les arbres*, Texts brought together and presented by Daniele Balit & Matthieu Saladin, Dijon, Les presses du réel, 2019, p. 229.
22. Max Neuhaus, ‘Conversation with Greg Desjardins’ [2003], *op. cit.*, n. p.
23. See *Ibid.*
24. Max Neuhaus, ‘Notes on Place and Moment’ [1994], *Inscription. op. cit.*, p. 98.
25. See Jean-Paul Thibaud, ‘Imitation’, in Jean François Augoyard & Henry Torgue (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 59-64.
26. Hanna Rose Shell, *Hide and Seek: Camouflage, Photography, and the Media of Reconnaissance*, New York, Zone Books, 2012.
27. Max Neuhaus, ‘Lecture at the Seibu Museum Tokyo’ [1982], *Inscription. op. cit.*, p. 64.
28. Max Neuhaus, ‘Sound and Space. A conversation between Arthur Danto & Max Neuhaus, Moderated by Yehuda Safran’ [1996], *Max Neuhaus Archives*, n. p.
29. Jean-Jacques Delétré, ‘Mask’, in Jean François Augoyard & Henry Torgue (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 66.
30. See Max Neuhaus, ‘Sound and Space. A conversation between Arthur Danto & Max Neuhaus, Moderated by Yehuda Safran’ [1996], *op. cit.*, n. p.
31. Jean Dalmais, ‘Resonance’, in Jean François Augoyard & Henry Torgue (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 99.
32. Max Neuhaus, ‘Lecture at the Seibu Museum Tokyo’ [1982], *Inscription. op. cit.*, p. 66-67.
33. See Jean Dalmais, ‘Resonance’, in Jean François Augoyard & Henry Torgue (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 108-109.
34. See Max Neuhaus, ‘Max Neuhaus, entretien avec Jean-Yves Bosseur’ [1992], *op. cit.*, p. 231.
35. Max Neuhaus, ‘Sound and Space. A conversation between Arthur Danto & Max Neuhaus, Moderated by Yehuda Safran’ [1996], *op. cit.*, n. p.
36. Max Neuhaus, ‘Notes on Place and Moment’ [1994], *Inscription. op. cit.*, p. 97.
37. *Ibid.*, p. 98. Taking up the typology of Roland Barthes’ mode of listening, Thierry Davila analyses the Neuhausian mode of listening in this respect as an interlacing of warning signals and decryption. See Thierry Davila, *De l’inframince. Brève histoire de l’imperceptible de Marcel Duchamp à nos jours*, Paris, Editions du regard, 2010, p. 219-220.
38. Jean Dalmais, ‘Resonance’, in Jean François Augoyard & Henry Torgue (ed.), *op. cit.*, p. 108.
39. See Max Neuhaus, ‘Notes on Place and Moment’ [1994], *Inscription. op. cit.*, p. 98.
40. *Ibid.*
41. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life. op. cit.*, p. 117.
42. *Ibid.*, p. 293-295.
43. *Ibid.*, p. 173
44. *Ibid.*
45. Our translation of “polarités fuyantes” in Marc Augé, *Non-lieux. Introduction à une anthropologie de la surmodernité*, Paris, Seuil, 1992, p. 101. See also the following pages for a commentary of the two concepts developed by de Certeau.
46. Max Neuhaus, « Conversation with Ulrich Lookk » [1990], *Inscription. op. cit.*, p. 124.
47. Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life. op. cit.*, p. 110.

Translated from French by Jack Sims

Abstract

About his sound installation presented at MoMA in 1978, Max Neuhaus explained: “the sound itself was inaudible; what was audible was its effect on other sounds. It was a terrain of an inaudible sound which modified all the existing audible sounds.” In this work, the apparatus was invisible and inaudible, but it produced an effect on its environment of propagation. It acted discreetly on the other – fully audible – sounds at the site, altering the perception of them. This article explores the implications of and the issues involved in such a relationship to the inaudible, envisaged from the perspective and in terms of the perceptive effects that it promotes. By acting directly on the perception of a space – a mainly urban one that is part of public space in the case of Neuhaus – what relationships do these effects, in terms of their discretion itself, create with the places in which they are deployed? And, in the first place, what exactly are these transformations of the perception of the site?

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Titel

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