
Max Neuhaus

Sound work proposals for the Dia Art Foundation – June 2004

Possibilities for the creation of new works in forms from the Place vector of the oeuvre.

(Except for the Free-standing Sound Fields, no works in any of these forms are currently extant.)

According to method

Interior and Exterior

Interior

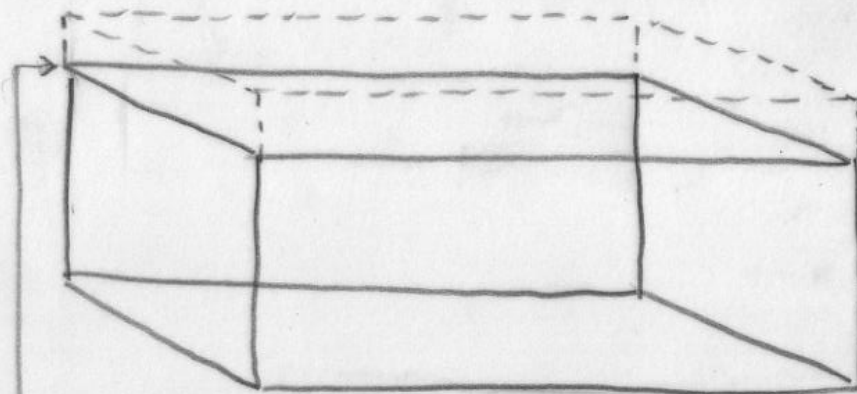
The following pages outline six possible forms for interior sound works. They may be realized singly, as groups of the same form, or as groups of different forms. (See drawings)

1. Resonant Aural Topographies
2. 'Identical' Spaces
3. Isolate Interior Sound Zones
4. Elusive Sources
5. Swift-moving Sound Shapes
6. Rescaled Spatial Perception

The sounds in these new works will be created on site by myself. I propose realizing them in visually uniform spaces. This will emphasize the transformations made by each work, with sound alone.

I have drawn a modular space which could be used in various combinations and configurations for their realization within the column grid of the Riggio Galleries' basement. These works could also be realized at other locations. In that case the module could have different dimensions and should have natural light.

MODULAR SPACE FOR RIGID GALLERIES' BASEMENT
5 x 10 x 5 METERS



AN ACOUSTICALLY TRANSPARENT CEILING IS PLACED FOUR METERS UP FROM THE FLOOR. THIS CAN BE MADE OF A FOAM WHICH SEEMS SOLID TO THE EYE BUT HAS BEEN DESIGNED TO PASS SOUND.

ALL SOUND SOURCES ARE INSTALLED ABOVE THIS DIVISION AND THUS CONCEALED FROM VIEW.

Resonant Aural Topographies

Here the body of air within the space itself becomes the means of producing the sound. By choosing several different resonances of the space, a stationary topography of presence and absence for each resonance is created.

From: *Five Russians*

A symmetrical room, almost a cube.

Two quiet low tones resonate the space in two different modes forming large sound shapes -- one cylindrical, the other four leaved.

Points of soft high tones placed throughout the room at ear width, mix only in each listeners mind according to his head's position.

See: Max Neuhaus, *Sound Works*, volume III, pp. 22, 23, 26, 27, 28, 29

'Identical' Spaces

For a number of years, I have been interested in juxtaposing multiple spaces which are identical except for sound. At the Deichtorhallen in Harald Szeeman's Einleuchten exhibition, the sound in one space was a fluid. Once you focused on it, you were completely immersed in it; yet it was so soft you could unfocus at any time. The other space was a mixture of hollow woody sounds - a dense texture. But here it was sitting above your head, like a ceiling. Most people insisted this space was much larger than the one with the fluid, yet they both had exactly the same shape and dimensions.

Part of the impetus for this idea may have been to silence those who are convinced that they perceive space solely with their eyes, that think this idea of transforming a space with sound alone is just rhetoric. It was nice to say: if it's only rhetoric, why are you so sure that this room bigger than the other?

From: *Two Sides of the 'Same' Room*

One room
divided
in two.

Both
sides
with
sounds
which
seem
identical,

but
open
converse
frames
of mind.

See: *Max Neuhaus, Sound Works, volume III, pp. 56-61, 66,67*

Isolate Interior Sound Zones

Sound textures focused to the degree that one literally steps in and out of them.

From: *Sound Line*

A line of sound,
running down
the length of a
large open space.

Standing inside it
the sound exists,
outside it,
it does not.

Unmarked, it leaves
expanse intact,

Forming an invisible
place within it,

Wholly separate.

See: *Max Neuhaus, Sound Works, volume III, pp. 48,49*

Elusive Sources

Invisible sources of sound which change their location as the listener moves.

From: *Infinite Lines From Elusive Sources #1*

As one enters the space,
a series of clicks seems
to emanate from the far
wall.

As one approaches them,
they switch their location
and seem to come from the
opposite wall. If one
approaches them there,
they appear again from
the first wall.

This click train is lyrical.
It expands and contracts
in time, gradually getting
slower and faster while
shifting in pitch. Its
loudness contour gives it
an emotional character.

The clicks seem to develop
an infinite line: a phrase
which evolves perpetually.

See: *Max Neuhaus, Sound Works, volume III, pp. 46,47 62,63*

Swift-moving Sound Shapes

It was a very subtle thing yet it was also very complex and powerful. The illusion was complete - something moved through the wall. If you were talking you didn't hear it, but if you were silent - you didn't see it but your ear saw this thing go across the room. It erected its space by articulating it. By moving through it, it exposed it.

The event was elaborate in timbre and shape. It was done by passing sound between speakers, in a complex way, not just one speaker to another, but different configurations of speakers to other configurations of speakers. That's what gave it a shape. Instead of being a point, it was a grouping of speakers; they made a shape in the room. Your perception was that the shape had moved. Explosive, but contradicting the explosiveness because it was so quiet. Aural lightning flashes, but very subtle and soft.

See: *Max Neuhaus, Sound Works, volume III, pp. 32, 33*

Rescaled Spatial Perception

From: *A Large Small Room*

Inadvertent sounds or talking in a small room generate sound reflections which duplicate those of a much larger space.

When one is in the room, these are usually not noticed. The ear's sense of space automatically adjusts to the eye's reality and rescales itself.

Upon leaving the room, however, one enters a much larger space with normal sound reflections.

Here the ear, with its new sense of scale, reasserts

itself, insisting that this larger space is much smaller than it looks.

See: *Max Neuhaus, Sound Works, volume III, pp 54, 55*

Three different typical combinations and configurations

1.

Resonant Aural Topographies
Two 'Identical' Spaces
Elusive Sources
Swift-moving Sound Shapes
Rescaled Spatial Perception

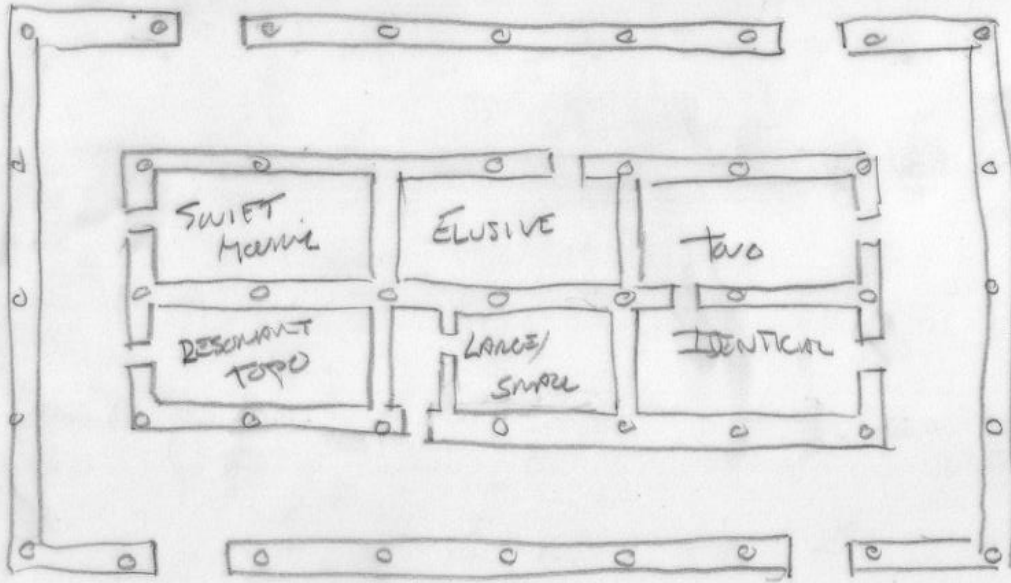
2.

Isolate interior Sound Zones (two)
Elusive Sources
Swift-moving Sound Shapes

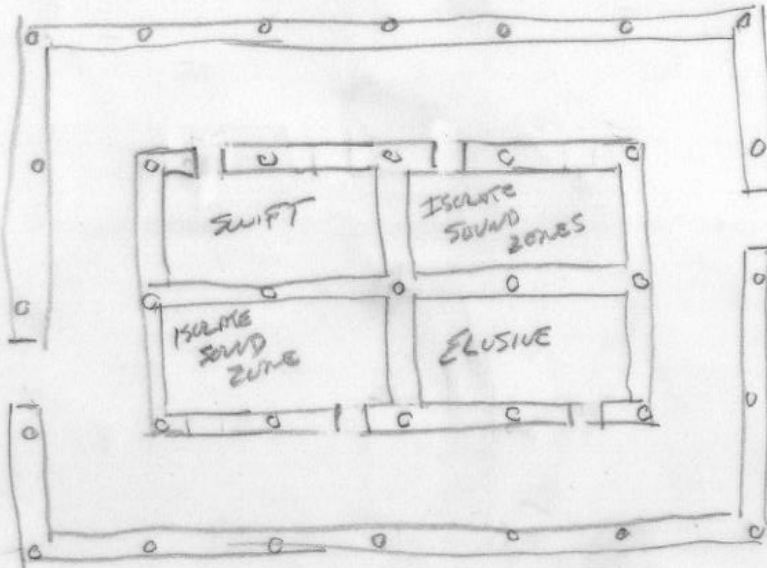
3.

Resonant Aural Topographies
Three 'Identical' Spaces
Elusive Sources
Swift-moving Sound Shapes

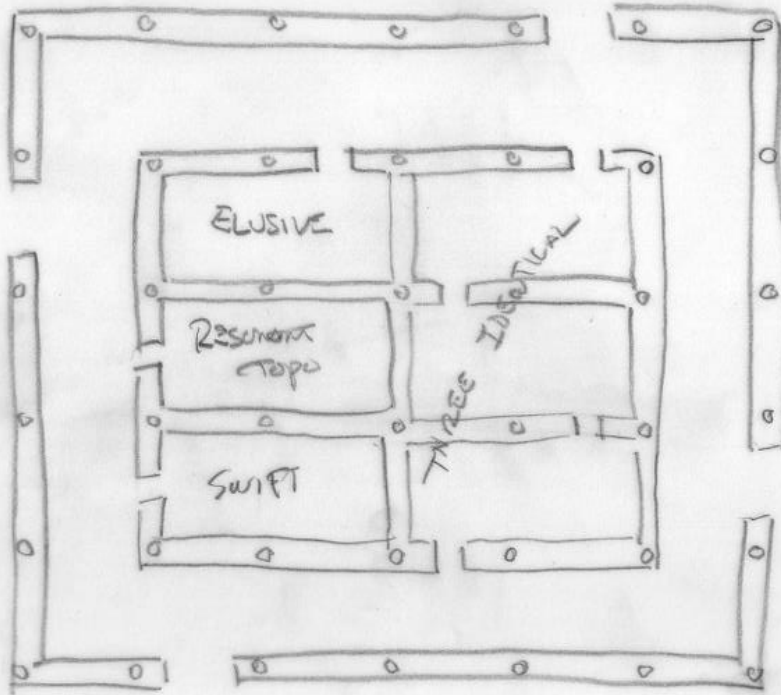
1.



2.



3.



Exterior

1. Free-standing Sound Fields
2. Reflected sound images
3. Wooded grove

Free-standing Sound Fields

In 1998 I succeeded in designing an underground sound source for the construction of free-standing focused sound fields. They allow me to shape highly-defined zones where the sound is heard as coming from around and above the listener even though it is actually emanating from narrow slots in the ground. As these slots are usually assumed to be for water drainage, the source of sound 'disappears'.

Each of these works is an invisible block of sound. Listeners entering them are enveloped in a quiet sound texture. When they leave, the sound vanishes. The listening zones are square, five meters on a side. On one axis the sound stops abruptly (within a few inches), on the other it gradually fades away.

One possible configuration could be to place three of these works side by side, and five meters apart. The works' tapering sides would then blend together forming gradual gradations between each other (see drawing).

Reflected Image

Placing a sound image on a surface (by projection) where it could not possibly be provides an excellent foundation for a sound work. Here it might be part of either the northern or southern façades of the Riggio Galleries. An example from a previous work is described below.

From: *A Bell for Sankt Cäcilien*

A high
bell sound
appearing
from the
façade of a
closed church
entrance,

Though
almost
plausible
within
this
context,

it provokes
investigation
by the curious,

and discovery
of another
place of
spirit
facing the
bricked up
doorway.

A Bell for Sankt Cäcilien - Walking through the small park you're struck with the contradiction that there seems to be a bell coming from this façade. It can't be, so you go over.

The bell sound isn't the work, it's the announcement - the work's entrance. It's not a regular ringing, and the bell is much higher than any kind of bell the church would have. But you are next to two churches - it's plausible but it's not plausible.

I built two parts to the sound - the stroke made as a real bell but higher than it should be, and then the after-ring - it dies away but in a way it doesn't die away. It's long. The dying away of the bell varies; there's a progression of timbre for each ring that contradicts what you expect a bell to do - its length and its development. When you're in the after-ring, just in front of the church, you also hear the bell; it's only this after-ring which doesn't carry outside of the space - the after-ring is the place of the work.

See: *Max Neuhaus, Sound Works, volume III, pp 54, 55*

Wooded Grove

A hillside
of woods.

Entered
through
inconspicuous
paths.

Sound

establishing
visions of
other
wooded
life.

See: *Max Neuhaus, Sound Works, volume III, pp 34, 35*

Note on installation

It is important that these works be permanently installed for the same reasons Dia has for the other permanent installations at Beacon and for some additional ones, as well.

Throughout our lives sound has always been the result of an event, something which happens, which begins and ends. Communication with sound has always been bound by time. Meaning in speech and music appears only as their sound events unfold word by word, phrase by phrase, from moment to moment.

The startling fundamental idea of my Place Works is the opposite: to remove sound from time and instead have it form an entity. To install and uninstall these works would place them back into time, turning them back into events.

These works are much more than site-specific, they are made out of their sites: their sites are their material component. Once committed to the artwork, they can not be withdrawn.