

READ:
INTRODUCTION

My work as an artist is concerned with communicating visions from my imagination to people. Traditionally painters and sculptors have used the eye as a direct non verbal channel to the mind. I instead, have chosen to use the ear. The work is not conceptual, it is perceptual.

Although most people aren't aware of it, sound is as important an aspect of how we perceive a place as the way it looks. We of course sense the size of a space with our ears as well as out eyes and our sense of position and motion may come from aural as well as visual cues. Perhaps more interesting than these psychoacoustic observations though, is that the feeling of the basic nature of a place and ourselves within it is determined as much by sound as sight.

SOUND INSTALLATIONS

My sound installations use sound to actualize imaginary places-- places to explore aurally or simply to be in. Unlike music, the sound is not the work, the place is -- the sound is only the catalyst which creates the place. These works can not be captured in a recording. To do so would be like scraping the paint off a painting, putting it in a box and thinking you still have the painting.

The impetus for the first sound installation in 1967, was an interest in working with a public at large, and inserting works into their daily domain in such a manner that people could find them in their own time and their own way. Disguising them within their environments in such a manner that people discovered them for themselves and took possession of them --lead by their curiosity into listening.

I think of this body of work which I call sound installations as one form, tied together by this particular idea of place. There have been more than thirty works in a huge variety of locations -- public places, museums, private collections. Ten are permanent. The first permanent one is here in New York.

TALK:

SLIDES:

Site 1977

Site 1990

Works with both.

Plan of island

Cut away of island

Aural topography

READ:
TIME PIECES

During the last ten years I have also been working in another form, a series of works is called Time Pieces. Instead of forming places like the sound installations, they are about forming moments which link many places at the same time.

Large scale works which encompass a community rather than form a place within it.

These special moments are created by silence rather than sound-by removing a sound rather than making one. They are realized by gradually changing the acoustic environment and than creating a sense of silence by suddenly removing these changes. The instant of absence is what is perceived.

Although the idea of creating public silences is new, city wide aural signals have been used for centuries as a means of simultaneous communication among the inhabitants of communities. By the late seven hundreds in western civilization, the church bell had become a dominant force in European communities. It not only announced church services, deaths, births, fire, revolt and festivals; but was such a strong unifying force that in many cases the limits of the community were defined by its range. If you lived outside it, you did not know what was going on.

Four hundred years later the church bell had become united with the mechanical clock. The bell no longer just announced special events but provided a communal time base for the general coordination of activities. In present day society most of these minute by minute functions have been taken over by radio and television, but the intrinsic nature of these media have generalized and depersonalized them.

The Time Pieces are neither makers of announcements nor keepers of time, as such. They are reinstatements and extensions of the direct joining force of the tradition of aural communal signals.

TALK:

In 1982 I was asked to participate in the biennial here at the Whitney. I proposed a realization of a Time Piece which would periodically form silent moments in the immediate neighborhood surrounding the museum. It was not approved by the museum administration. I realized then that in a proposal, the scale of the idea was so overpowering for some people that it was impossible to get across the real nature of the work -- an aural event more subtle than most ordinary street sounds.

I decided to make a machete of the idea for the sculpture court.

SLIDE: WHITNEY TIME PIECE
EXPLAIN DRAWING

The nature of the silent moment in each work is determined by the character of the sound which produces it. For the few seconds after the sound has disappeared, what could be described as a transparent aural afterimage is superimposed on the everyday sounds of the environment. The idea I am working with when I am building the sound is actually the

shaping of this afterimage.

A key idea of the Time Pieces is their integration into the daily life of their communities - as they are long term, they gradually become unifiers, spiritually tying together a community's diverse places and activities momentarily throughout the day.

The first full scale realization of a Time Piece is in Bern, Switzerland and surrounds the Kunsthalle there.

SLIDE: BERN POSTER

SLIDE: BERN KUNSTHALLE PORTICO

SLIDE: BERN KUNSTHALLE ACROSS PLAZA

SLIDE: HELVETIA PLATZ - CARS

SLIDE: HELVETIA PLATZ - PEOPLE

SLIDE: PARK

SLIDE: WOODS TO RIVER

In this case the moment is created by the cessation of a sound texture which I built by ear from each of these areas around the Kunsthalle. Although it sounds like neither, the sound recalls the after ring of large bells and the sound of distant high flying airplanes; sounds which are common in the everyday environment there. It is a rich continuous aural texture which occurs two times an hour, going unnoticed until it disappears on the hour and the half hour.

It's been sounding for two years now and has begun to take its place in the community. At the present time funds are being raised to purchase the work.