

LISTEN

Max Neuhaus

NSIT

Souvenir Program
of
Home-Coming Leave-Taking
Nice Way to Spend a Sunday Afternoon
CONCERT
of

Max Neuhau

Pieces by a lot of people including John Cage, Sylvano Bussotti, Morton Feldman, Philip Corner, James Tenney and Max Neuhaus

Beginning on the corner of Avenue D
and East 14th Street, New York City
3 P.M. 3/27/66

Invitation by Word-of-Mouth

The impetus for the title was twofold. The simple, clear meaning of the word, to pay attention aurally, and its clean visual shape – LISTEN – were capitalized. It was also its imperative meaning – partly I must admit, as a private joke between myself and my then current lover, a French-Bulgarian girl, who used to shout it before she began to throw things at me when she was angry.

involved in the gradual insertion of everyday sound into the concert hall, from Russolo through Varese and finally to Cage who brought live street sounds directly into the hall.

I saw these activities as a way of giving aesthetic credence to these sounds – something I was all for – but I began to question the effectiveness of the method. Most members of the audience seemed more impressed with the scandal than the sounds, and few were able to carry the experience over to a new perspective on the sounds of their daily lives.

limit listening to the concert hall? Instead of bringing these sounds into the hall, why not simply take the audience outside – a demonstration in itself?

The first performance was for a small group of invited friends. I asked them to meet me on the corner of Avenue D and West 14th Street in Manhattan. I rubber-stamped LISTEN on each person's hand and began walking with them down 14th Street towards the East River. At that point the street intersects a power plant and, as I had noticed previously, one hears some spectacularly massive rumbling. We continued, crossing

the highway and walking along the sound of its the wash, down river for a few blocks, re-crossing over a pedestrian bridge, passing through Puerto Rican street life of the lower east side to my studio, where I performed some percussion pieces for them.

After dinner I began to do these works as *Live Demonstrations*: the rubber stamp was the sculpture and the walk the demonstration. I would ask the audience at a concert or lecture to collect outside the hall, stamp their hands and hold these through their everyday environment. Saying nothing, I would simply concentrate on listening, and start walking. At first, they would be a little embarrassed, of course, but the focus was generally contagious. The group would proceed slowly, and by the time we returned to the hall many had found a new way to listen for themselves.

Of course, there were a few 'mishaps'. I remember one in particular at a university somewhere in Iowa. The faculty must have thought I was actually going to give a talk. They were nonplussed when I told the students to leave the hall, but fortunately not quick-witted enough to figure out a way of contradicting the day's 'guest lecturer'.

and take a walk. Several hundred of us formed a silent parade through the streets of this small town – it must have been Ames. The faculty was so enraged that, to a man, they boycotted the elaborate lunch they had prepared for me after the lecture.

A number of years later, when Murray Schaller's soundscape project became known, I am sure these academics didn't have any problem accepting similar ideas. But the reality – not being safely contained between the covers of a book

– was quite another matter. I suppose the real definition of this series of works is the use of the word LISTEN to refocus people's aural perspective. I began to think of other ways of using it. (The Iowa experience had blacklisted me as a university lecturer.)

The largest version of the work (1 million people) was certainly an opinion editorial, which I wrote for the New York Times in 1974, condemning the silly bureaucrats of the Department of Air Resources for making too much noise.

Unable to do their job of listening up the street, the men had to listen to the sound of their engines to clearing up the sound of the city. To keep their job boiling, they published a pamphlet entitled "Noise Pollution Means You Can't Hear Your Own Feet." In "Noise Pollution Noise," the basic point being that as noise condemning most man-made sounds as obsolete they were making noise where it never existed before. The pamphlet also stated that if people one has seen blurring their ears out (literally) with wadgets while riding the subway, convinced that they are protecting their ears from the noise, they are actually making it louder as loud as the ones inside their ears from their wadgets.

There were other manifestations of the idea. I organized "field-trips" to places which were generally inaccessible and that sounds which could never be captured on a recording. I also did some versions as publications. One of these was a poster with a view looking up from under the Brooklyn Bridge, with the word LISTEN stamped in large letters on the underside of the bridge. It came from a long fascination of mine with sounds of traffic moving across that bridge - the

The developers of the South Street seaport project, which is near the bridge, always felt that its sound would limit real estate values in the area. In the late eighties they succeeded in

the area, in the late eighties they succeeded in convincing the city to pave over the open grating with asphalt. Afterwards, they discovered that this tremendous added weight caused serious structural problems in the bridge. There is still a sound, but it is not as interesting as it was before the repaving.

In 1978 I published a do-it-yourself version – a postcard in the form of a decal with the word outlined in open letters, to be placed in locations selected by its recipients.

мн. 1988, 1990, 2004

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The brochure and the LISTEN postcard deck inserted into the back flap are published in association with The Estate of Max Neufhaus on the occasion of the exhibition *Sound as Sculpture* at The Warehouse, Dallas. The exhibition is organized by the Dallas Museum of Art, which must be extended. Silvia Cioara and Petru Rusak at The Estate of Max Neufhaus for their willingness to share the material and their openness to reproduce the LISTEN postcard deck.

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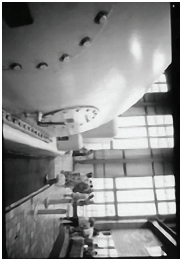


THE WAREHOUSE

THE WAREHOUSE, DALLAS, TX

Listen Walks

- Lower East Side, New York City (March 1966)
- Town Hall, New York City (program c.f. by Product)
- Hudson River Pier, Paterson, New Jersey (March 1967)
- Local power plant, Fairleigh Dickinson University (July 1968)
- Nagard Falls Power Plant, Haverhill, Buffalo
- Bryn Mawr
- Cornell College, Ames, Iowa (1969)
- Indian Point power plant, Ossining, New York (Jan. 1970) King's College
- New York radio interview (see Shen text)
- Brooklyn Bridge (Sept. 1970)
- Heier Inc. - deck (1970)
- Artforum* - deck
- Walter Dillboard (1980)



Nagard Falls Power and Light Power Plant, South Amherst, NY
Shen and Neufhaus visit
Photo by Peter Bloom

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This brochure and the LISTEN postcard decal inserted into the back flap are published in association with The Estate of Max Neuhaus on the occasion of the exhibition *Sound as Sculpture* at The Warehouse, Dallas (January 21–May 28, 2022), curated by Thomas Feulmer. Special thanks must be extended Silvia Cecere and Pidu Russek at The Estate of Max Neuhaus for their willingness to share the material and their openness to reproduce the LISTEN postcard decal.

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