Homing Ears
Re-Synthesis 2001

What sounds surround your home? What sounds remind you of home? What sounds constitute an ideal home?

Dear visitor to the Betty Rymer gallery:

This book contains texts related to each track on the CD: select whatever you like and listen on the headphones. If you wish, use the blank spaces in this book to write memories, descriptions, and evocations of sounds that you associate with home.

Homing Ears combines soundwalk recordings from my previous home in St. Clair West, Toronto; made January to July 1999, and from my new home in Lachine, Quebec; July 1999 onward, with soundwalk journal entry excerpts from the same period. I wrote the following guide:

For a year, beginning January 13, 1999. Using whatever recording equipment is available (pen and paper, cassette recorder, DAT recorder etc.) record a soundwalk from street corner to home. Roll the 12-sided dice twice to choose a date from 2 to 24 days ahead. The next soundwalk should be on that date. After the soundwalk and journal entry, roll the dice again. And so on...

The soundwork includes several iterations: original unedited soundwalk recordings; excerpts of those recordings accompanied by written journal entries; condensed walks of cross-faded excerpts; a recording of a performance of this work in Peterborough, Ontario, in which audience members were invited to respond with sounds of home; a short piece by students at Concordia University in response to this work, and two more composed pieces based on sounds recorded near home. For the Re-Synthesis show, visitors are invited to write their responses in this book. Thanks to John Cage and Hildegard Westerkamp for inspiration.

Andrea McArthur
andrasound.org
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white pages soundwalk to home [page]
soundwalking interactions
may 8, 1999. 12:30 pm

Unedited soundwalk from streetcar stop to home. St. Clair and Lansdowne, a busy Toronto neighbourhood, just a few kilometres from the city centre. From loud traffic on St. Clair past a back alley oil drum fire and a truck passing, to pick sorrel in the back yard in the rain. I name garden plants which we were not able to transplant to Montréal when we moved.

\[\text{Why couldn't you transplant tulips?} \]

\[\text{reminds me of my walk back home in TX to "touch the gate" - 3 miles on a dirt road and over onion creek. I would stop at Allie Wrights and talk about the weather and make plans about the garden. Chickens because \( \_\_\_\_\_\) }\]
Overall – i've listened to several tracks – i've greatly enjoyed these soundscapes. however, i must agree with somebody who commented on the bright lights here. it is not the right environment to fully pay attention, one has the feeling one is on display! another thing, the cd player keeps going on and off, truly exasperating.

i love the idea, and the sounds. congratulations!

# in 1998, while working for the video data bank, i was given the task of transcribing & time coding the analog master tapes of years worth of adrian piper's audio work. one of her pieces involved walking around a block in nyc with a field recorder (long conceptual explanation as to why). she was undoubtedly not the first to do such a sound piece, but at least she ran into vito acconci.

do you know vito acconci? once i was driving past toronto and i thought "the only person i know in toronto is martin arnold," a few minutes later he called in to a political radio show that i was listening to in the car.

sounds like eating corn flakes.

i often take walks to record sounds, but so often i try to avoid my own sound creation. thanks for sharing your own sounds, i'm going to go walk now.
dec. 7, 1999

Unedited soundwalk from pier to home at 8 am in Lachine. 3 celsius and raining slightly, ski resorts stay closed in Quebec. Trains and traffic in the distance. The Lachine pier soundscape is much more seasonal than that of St. Clair in Toronto: In the summer it is full of fishers, tourists, cyclists and skaters. In the winter only the fishers are out every day, moved from the pier to the ice surface, which itself has an audible life shaped by the weather. This warm December day, noone else was on the pier.
Nice idea. I enjoyed the "Ice Walk" recording. Especially also, inviting the person to sit comfortably and listen to your sounds while writing was very nice, encouraging and appropriate. I think the variation in sound quality is both good and bad. Some of the distortion and textures created are appropriate. A series of simple, nice but perhaps inappropriate. A series of simple answers, I have better "put me undisturbed binovisual recording would better in your place". Still, I like the idea of just picking up whatever, and the variations and openness are enjoyable. Nice work.
March 3, 1999 Excerpt

Walking on a slushy day in Toronto, hearing singing from the nearby record store.

It's not March here yet,
But slush will be soon.
There's a sidewalk on my street that was cracked in such a way that it reminded me of E.T. Every time I stepped over it as a child, I would think, "Hey, E.T."

I like the sound of the birds. Hearing birds makes me happy! Chirp! chirp!
March 22, 1999 excerpt

In Toronto, a brisk pace and the sniffles of a late winter cold. The neighbourhood traffic is very present, and a plane slowly passes overhead. Snow is melting into drains; the birds lively.
may 27, 1999 excerpt

Recording at 7pm on a sunny day. The rhythms of raking in front yards as my neighbours cleared maple keys from their paths, a particularly seasonal sound. And other, more everyday sounds: children playing on the sidewalks, and birds, attracted by the trees of the cemetery close by, filling the air with song. And of course the streetcar running by on St. Clair, accompanied by a background, bass throb of traffic. Also, I want to note the silent presences of my daughter Sian and dog Niki, who accompanied me on this particular soundwalk.

I love the sounds of streetcars. I miss them in Chicago. It's nice to visit Toronto and see and hear them again. Kenosha is the closest thing to that these days. New Orleans' St. Charles line makes the best music, though.

I hear children and it makes me happy. Simple as that. What's wrong with

I prefer sharp knives YANG in

My shower.

I REMEMBER TAKING LEAVES FROM
THE HUGE MAPLE TREES IN THE
FRONT YARD OF MY AUNTS YELLOW HOUSE... WE BURNED THEM, THE LEAVES... THE SMELL FILLED OUR CLOTHES.
The sound of radiators hissing, deep metal clankings from deep down in the building, has always reminded me of home. The house I grew up in had radiators. Now finally, I have an apartment in Chicago with radiators—One of the few sounds that gives me both comfort and certainty.
august 16, 1999 excerpt

Around 6 pm, gulls wheel overhead to the constant drone of a passing boat. I am surrounded by fishers who frequent the pier throughout the summer, occasionally speaking to each other, mostly francophone.

Not far from my new home here in Chicago is a pier - I walk there most Sundays. I feel good to stroll on Sundays and not walk with any purpose at all.
March 15, 2000, Excerpt

This is a recording of a thin layer of ice on the water by the pier in Lachine, recorded on a day in March 2000 when the temperature plummeted 27 degrees [from 10 above to 17 below Celsius], skimming the water surface with ice that was tearing in a thousand places as we listened. There is also the sound of a chainsaw used by an ice fisher, and lots of seagulls. I was able to get a clear recording of the ice moving by lowering the mic on its cable to within a few feet of the surface. This also protected it from the wind.
rolling through the year I

Short excerpts from each soundwalk are chosen by rolling a six-sided dice. Then they are cross-faded to condense the passage of time from a year to just under eight minutes.

...a person just walked out of the gallery with a kid. When the place is full of headphones and opportunities just for one person to listen to one thing at a time - I guess it's no longer communal art? It's very private. Sound isn't that very usually, just the nature of headphones. But also this private experience is something different.

Hey!! The freakin CD player not workin. What sound?

I agree. It's nice to be able to enter a private world - the artist's world - in the middle of a public space. The rug, the chair, the boundaries of this small art space become a metaphor for the space you enter when you put the headphones on. It is complete in itself.

Good concept, idea + follow through. Very engaging.
rolling through the year II

Shorter excerpts from each soundwalk are chosen by rolling a 12-sided dice. Then they are cross-faded to condense the passage of time from a year to two minutes.
Home is the hunter
home from the hill
the sailor home
from the sea
homing ears, topia remix

based on a live performance, originally at the Market Hall in Peterborough, Ontario in June 2000 as part of the Sound Escape conference. Audience members were invited to contribute to the piece by walking through the performance space and listening in at each speaker, naming/descibing/imitating sounds that they associate with home, and activating sounds and images from a computer installation [sound by Andra McCartney, visual animation by P.S. Moore]. This topia re-mix shifts between the intimate spaces of the original neighbourhood soundwalk recordings, the public space of the performance hall, and the mediating space of the Trent Radio live broadcast. Thanks to Trent Radio for recording and passing on this broadcast. This remix can also be heard online at the website of the Topia journal (U of T Press).
homing ears, concordia mix

I played some of the soundwalk recordings for students in advanced digital sound production at Concordia University, and they responded by recording sounds of their own homes. Then we composed a piece collaboratively in Studio D at Concordia.

David Paquette
Most of the sounds I chose come from Nominingue, Québec, where I grew up. While I was going through my recordings, I realized that most of them were nature sounds; waves, rain, wind, frogs, birds. Voices of people who surrounded me during my life also produce in me a heartening feeling of being "at home", in a known environment. When I moved to Montreal, the sonic space changed around me, and I later found out that part of the urban stress that I often lived was partly related to this acoustic exile. After a few years, there are nevertheless some new sounds which I now consider as reflecting my "new" home. These are not really specific sonic events, but more some general reverberations particular to the small rooms of my apartment, as well as different "low-fi" flows that sporadically penetrate my daily activities (muted voices of my neighbors, a train passing, sirens...).

The specific sounds that can be heard in the project are the following:
-water sounds of some waves dying on the beach, recorded at Lac Nominingue, in which I swam and sailed for years.
-frogs as well as some crickets heard in a quiet night (interesting contradictory situation: the density and the loudness of these sounds help in establishing a quiet nature ambiance;)
-rain and thunder, with our turtledove in background. During rainy nights, I could fall asleep while listening to rain drops falling on the aluminum roof.
-my brother and my grandmother playing cards. I like this short discussion because it combines both familiar voices and a particular reverberation which produce in me some very precise and powerful memories.

Lisyan Pieries
This excerpt contains unpredictable sounds recorded in various areas of my home on an average weekday between 12-1 pm. The rooms/spaces I enter in are the following (in chronological order):
living room-hallway-kitchen-laundry room-living room (again)

Sounds include murmurings from the television, family members' voices lingering and meshing with the background (particularly within the kitchen): my father's voice (french) is the predominant one out of all of them. My grandmother's voice (french) asking: Que c'est tu fais? (Translation: What are you doing?) She's the last sound you hear from my piece.

Daniel Lafontaine
We used two of my sounds for the piece. One was my parents' front door opening to a windy day. The door, which is pretty old, squeaks in a familiar way and the wind is blowing through the neighbor's trees. The other sound is rusty nails crushed under my foot on a cement floor. This sound feels like home, because my father has always kept the basement a complete mess of tools and junk. As a child I often played down there and when I visit my parents I find myself down there for no reason but to be there.
Owen Chapman
Coffee Brewing. The sound of my old stove-top espresso maker fills our apartment every morning. There’s usually not a lot of talking going on at this time—to the point where the bubbling-percolation has become fused in my mind with the highly-anticipated coffee aroma that comes with it.

Tony Vaughan
The home sounds I included in my excerpt are the sounds of coins falling on a dresser, the metallic and hollow door-opening of a washing machine, a running dryer, my head being bashed (accidentally) against pipes in a bungalow-crawlspace and my own good friend, Jeff Czerkawski, ranting about washing his clothes.

Debbie Bombardier
My two pieces used for this project are that of my beloved airdale Gunner and my ticking alarm clock with a tune associated with my childhood in the background. My dog is a warm and funny reminder of home, with the unique way he expresses himself. He is a groaner and a moaner. Meanwhile, my alarm clock, which drives many of my friends crazy with its ceaseless tick-tick-tick, is a sound I simply cannot go to sleep without. I often take it with me when I am away so that when I close my eyes, I can be home in a tick.

Angela Kouris
The collection of sounds that I contributed to this sound piece were recorded in the immediate vicinity of my home in Laval, Quebec. The sliding, shutting and locking of the back doors, the rattling of keys and unlocking of the front door as well as the sound of my engine starting and alarm system beeping are all sounds that melt into my everyday routine. These sounds are beyond the point of familiar, so that the only time that I am conscious of them is after returning from a prolonged absence from home at which point they serve to re-ground me into my reality.

Andra McCartney
streetcar and seagulls. I wanted to live close to St. Clair in Toronto, partly because of the streetcars. I love their stately procession, their stability, their relative quiet compared with buses. I heard trams like these streetcars, while still a baby in Fleetwood, UK. Do I also love streetcars because at some deep level I retain a subconscious memory of those trams from my early childhood? I love the sound of gulls, and in Lachine in the winter, despite the sometimes blistering cold, I like to walk against the wind to the end of the pier, as I did in Tynemouth, UK as a young girl.
in transit 1999

in transit is based on streetcar, bus and subway sounds recorded near my home in St. Clair West, Toronto. It premiered at Synthèse 99, 29e Festival international des musiques et créations électroniques; Bourges, France, June 6, 1999. It explores the suspension, situation and paradoxically social solitude of moving through the transit system as I make my way home.
icesighs 2000

Based on a recording of a thin layer of ice on the water by the pier in Lachine in March 2000. This piece also includes a brief recording of my voice sighing [from a recording on another day]. I filtered, equalized and lowered the pitch of the original recording of the ice, then juxtaposed excerpts of the original recording with the processed version. The processed version speaks to me of the shifting power of the current below the water surface. The original recording sounds oddly like insects in summer. This piece forms part of the web sound installation Le terroir sonore du phare Lachinois, accessible from andrasound.org.

This reminds me of spring in Alaska, when the seagulls return once again and the sound of melting ice permeates.
Very beautiful & serene. Water & seagulls automatically remind me of home. I think of warmth (not cold ice). It brings me back to summer on the coast of Sweden.
I can't help but feel cheated.

This is a dent in a much larger idea. Very self-indulgent and poorly executed. Seems for visuals.

Yes, narration cheapens any effect by leading the audience. There's hardly any narration. 

What the fuck does that mean anyways.

I am interested in sitting here and listening, but this bright light is blinding me. This experience should take place in low light/complete darkness. The narration doesn't bother me, it's enjoyable being led. And for god's sake, no visuals. It's a shame the CD player just stopped working. I would've listened longer.
I want to talk today about a sound recording project that I undertook from January 1999 to January 2000, called "Soundwalk to Home." I began with the suggestion that Hildegard Westerkamp makes in her 1997 article "Soundwalk from Home," to establish a time for listening, and to move through my own neighbourhood paying attention to the sounds that surround me where I live.

In Westerkamp's article, the home she speaks of is a present home, the actual house where one lives in this moment, in "this time of your life" as she says. She suggests that the listener begins a soundwalk at her own door and learns more about her neighbourhood through listening: "Open the door of the building in which you live, step out and listen. Walk and listen. Stop and listen," (1997: 1) Westerkamp says. Following Westerkamp's suggestions in this way, the activities of listening and walking anchor my relationship to my home. Indeed, a neighbourhood can be defined precisely as what is accessible on foot from one's home. Pierre Mayol, a French researcher of neighbourhoods and everyday life, defines a neighbourhood in this way:

It is that piece of the city that a limit crosses distinguishing private from public space: it is the result of a walk, of a succession of steps on a road, conveyed little by little through the organic link to one's lodgings. (1998: 10)

My original intention with this project was to focus on my neighbourhood in an ambulatory and attentive way, to situate myself there by recording the sounds from the end of my street to my house door, periodically - about every two weeks - for a year. The fact that I moved to a different street, neighbourhood, city, and province during this year complicated this focus on one place over time. Now there were two places, and initially began to compare them.

Let me play you a few very brief excerpts to show you what I heard:

[play St. Clair May 27 excerpt]
St. Clair and Lansdowne, a busy Toronto neighbourhood, just a few kilometres from the city centre, where I often heard Italian and Portuguese spoken, or as in this sound excerpt, Mediterranean-accented English. Where this May 27, 1999 recording at 7pm on a sunny day expresses the rhythms of raking in front yards as my neighbours cleared maple keys from their paths, a particularly seasonal sound. And other, more everyday sounds: children playing on the sidewalks, and birds, attracted by the trees of the cemetery close by, filling the air with song. And of course the streetcar running by on St. Clair, accompanied by a background, bass throb of traffic. I must note also the silent presences of my daughter Sian and dog Niki, who accompanied me on this particular soundwalk.

My new home is in Lachine, a suburb just west of Montréal, Québec. The end of the street is a different thoroughfare: not a busy urban street but a civic pier, complete with lighthouse, marking the entrance of the Lachine canal into Lac St. Louis and the St. Lawrence river.

[play Lachine aug 16 excerpt]
In this excerpt, recorded August 16, 1999 around 6 pm, gulls wheel overhead to the constant drone of a passing boat. I am surrounded by fishers who frequent the pier throughout the summer, occasionally speaking to each other, mostly francophone. The Lachine pier soundscape is much more seasonal than that of St. Clair in Toronto: In the summer it is full of fishers, tourists, cyclists and skaters. In the winter only the fishers are out every day, moved from the pier to the ice surface, which itself has an audible life shaped by the weather.

So there are some obvious comparisons and contrasts between these two sound environments. But as I listened to these recordings further, I started to think beyond these comparisons between two recent homes. My parents visited my new home in Lachine shortly after we arrived, and my mum commented that Lachine, with its waterside walkways, the pier, and the boating traffic, reminded her of Fleetwood, the seaside town in England where I was born.

This was taking me even further from my original intention to focus on my [one, current] neighbourhood. Initially, this shift from single focus on one place to comparison and then a wider range of homes bothered me. Some time

1 Websites use many metaphors of place including the word site itself, the reference to a "home" page. The title of this paper is a play on these metaphors, as well as an acknowledgement that my website at York University Fine Arts server was an important touchstone, a way for friends to find me after I moved, and in an odd way a source of comfort during the act of migrating. While virtual, it remained in one place and allowed me a sense of staying connected to there while moving here. I now have two home sites - one in Montreal, one still in Toronto. Thanks again to Don Sinclair and the staff of the Winters Fine Arts Computer Centre for continuing to maintain my original 'room of one's own' on the web.
ago, I was reading an article by Murray Schafer in which he advised "forget where you came from; only then will you find out where you are" (Schafer 1994:232). Schafer was talking about Canadian nationalism when he said this, and deploring the habit of immigrants to Canada of clinging to memories or myths of their birthplaces or ancestral homes, rather than embracing Canada for what it is here and now. I had a great deal of sympathy with this kind of strategic nationalism. Yet I was never really able to do what Schafer advised.

but not any more...

While struggling with this change of focus from a singular home to thinking about migration and a plurality of homes, I was watching @discovery.ca, the daily Canadian televised science magazine, where there was a report on homing pigeons. Recent research indicates that homing pigeons navigate their ways home by using infrasound: frequencies below 20 hertz, below the range of human hearing. Apparently, waves crashing against the earth set up vibrations and thus produce sounds in this range. Homing pigeons hear and interpret an audible topography that guides them home. I began to wonder to what extent people carry around an audible map of home that may be subconscious, but nonetheless powerful, another kind of audible topography.

Perhaps we carry around memories of past homes that influence where we settle. American radio broadcaster and humorist Garrison Keillor thinks so: in his introduction to Lake Wobegon Days, a gently satirical set of stories about Midwestern American social life, he describes how European immigrants ended up in that place:

Lake Wobegon is mostly poor sandy soil, and every spring the earth heaves up a new crop of rocks.... Our ancestors chose this place, sad for having left the motherland behind, and this place reminded them of there, so they settled here, forgetting that they had left there because the land wasn’t so good. So the new life turned out to be a lot like the old, except the winters are worse. (1985: 16-17)

Luce Giard, a French philosopher and researcher of everyday life, expresses a similar thought in a slightly different way:

Our successive living spaces never disappear completely; we leave them without leaving them because they live in turn, invisible and present, in our memories and in our dreams. They journey with us. (1998: 148)

Our successive living spaces journey with us. And how, in what ways, do the sounds of those memories and dreams accompany our travels? Behavioural ecologists suggest that to understand the patterns of animal migration, one can document a lifetime track for the animal, its path through time and space from birth onwards. I did this, using myself as the animal subject. I have lived in twenty different neighbourhoods,² in my forty four years. Some for just a few months, one for as long as eight years [Tynemouth, Northumberland, England, from when I was four until twelve]. All are in the northern hemisphere, mostly north of the 49th parallel, three years north of 60, six months in the Arctic, only six months in the tropics. For seventeen of those years, I have lived within walking distance of a large body of water. Peterborough is one of the places that I have lived - the one I have returned to most often, the one where both of my children were born. It seems I am a frequent migrator, as are how many others in this room?

The two neighbourhoods that I recorded for this project are the first two homes that I have chosen partly because of what they sound like, having come into contact with the works of Schafer, Westerkamp, and others before moving to St. Clair. For instance, I wanted to live close to St. Clair in Toronto, partly because of the streetcars. I love their stately procession, their stability, their relative quiet compared with buses.

[play streetcar]

I heard trams like these streetcars, while still a baby in Fleetwood. Do I also love streetcars because at some deep level I retain a subconscious memory of those trams from my early childhood?

I think that part of Schafer's concern is that immigrants often romanticize past homes at the expense of the present. When I remember Tynemouth, where I lived as a child for eight years, strong sonic memories come to me; the waves beating the sea wall during a storm, the foghorns moaning through murky days. These are not unpleasant memories, even though they suggest harsh weather. I remember awe and pleasure at the power of the ocean, the pervasiveness of the foghorns, the strength of these sounds, the way that they oriented me in that place.

But let me read you an evocative quote about this same location, written by a medieval monk who was exiled there for bad behaviour, a reluctant migrant:

Our house is confined to the top of a rock, surrounded by the sea on all sides but one. Day and night the waves break and roar, thick sea frets roll in, wrapping everything in gloom. Dim eyes, hoarse voices, sore throats are the consequences. Spring and summer never come here. The north wind is always blowing, and

² For at least three months
it brings with it cold and snow or storms of wind. No ring dove or nightingale is here, only grey birds whose screaming denotes a storm. See to it, brother, that you do not come to so comfortless a place.

Grey birds whose screaming denotes a storm. Unlike the monk, I love the sound of gulls, and in Lachine in the winter, despite the sometimes blistering cold, I like to walk against the wind to the end of the pier, as I did in Tynemouth.

I consciously chose my new home in Lachine partly because I like the sounds of gulls, of moving water, of boating life, not consciously because it reminded me of my childhood homes. But perhaps what moves us most is precisely what we may have forgotten, what is not conscious.

But every home also brings us new sounds, if we are open to hearing them. I want to play you a sound that I had never heard before moving to Lachine, an aspect of my new home that intrigues me.

That was a recording of a thin layer of ice on the water by the pier in Lachine, recorded on a day in March 2001 when the temperature plummeted 27 C, skimming the water surface with ice that was tearing in a thousand places as we listened. I am fascinated by the audible life of the St. Lawrence, and this opportunity to get to know it better.

Before I go, let me return for a minute to the homing pigeons, to point out a sonic relationship between humans, our migration technologies, and these birds. According to geophysicist Jon Hagstrom, when supersonic jets like the Concorde fly through the paths of homing pigeons, sonic shockwaves produced by the plane appear to prevent the birds from hearing infrasonic beacons, and they get lost (Discovery.com 2000). The desire of humans to migrate faster and faster interferes with the ability of pigeons to navigate home. While it is important to know where we are, we also need to give attention to how we move to a place, and at what cost.

I cannot forget where I have come from, have found it helpful to think about how I got here, and I am eager to know more about where I am. Perhaps listening to become conscious of where I have been can allow me to better appreciate my desire for home as well as my urge to understand what is new in my life. I have begun a three-year soundscape study of the Lachine Canal, monitoring its sonic changes during a civic urban renewal project, learning more about my home by staying in one place for a few years - well, mostly in one place, anyway.

References:


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3 Our relationship to pigeons is further revealed by a web search on homing pigeons. Most of the links are about raising and racing these birds: the disciplining of migration. One leads to a software program called Homing Pigeon that tracks who has visited your website. And one leads to a pest-control site that talks about 'feral' pigeons who do not migrate, and are therefore considered a pest to be exterminated when they interfere with human homes.
Soundwalking Interactions: a panel presentation at Invenção, Sao Paolo, Brazil, Aug '99

My artistic practice often begins with soundwalking, which is simply walking through an area, and listening to it. Like many simple experiences, soundwalking is often profound as well. The act of focusing on that moment, that place and time, leads me to hear that place differently, to understand it in new ways. And when I record the sounds of a walk, I am able to reflect on it later, generating new understandings again.

I would like to tell you about a soundwalk that I did some time ago--two years ago in fact, in Queen Elizabeth Park, Vancouver, with Hildegard Westerkamp, who has taught me a lot about how to listen, and who often walks with me--on soundwalks, in friendly conversation, sometimes in my dreams. I want to talk about sonic interactions in soundwalks, interactions between recordist and environment during the recording, interactions between sound, text, and image in my compositions that result from those recordings, interactions between artists and audiences all based on listening to the environment.

When I record a soundwalk, I usually wear either a portable digital or analog tape recorder, or a minidisk recorder, depending on what I have available at the time. I sometimes carry a stereo microphone, or attach binaural microphones to my headphones, glasses or clothing. I have an amplified perspective on my surroundings-- at once closer to the environment as everything is amplified, but also separated from it as my experience is mediated by the microphone's perspective. My own bodily sounds are more present--I must remain very still to hear what is far away. Where I wear the mic is important--if I have the binaurals on my headphones, the listening perspective is similar to my own ears, with my breathing sounds particularly present. If I place the mic near my belt, it is as if my navel has grown ears, and my footsteps are closer. It is interesting to imagine having ears in other places, and to try to hear from that perspective. What kind of mic also affects what kind of interaction I have with other people in the place. When I wear the binaurals on my headphones, I resemble some kind of demented insect: people tend to look away politely, no doubt thinking "poor thing, she must have lost her mind!" When I wear mics elsewhere on my clothing, they are less conspicuous, and people might think that I am listening to music. When I carry a larger stereo mic in my hand, people often approach me and ask what I am doing, sometimes asking if I am videotaping. It is odd for many people to see a lone audio recorder with a microphone.

In the Queen Elizabeth Park soundwalk, Westerkamp and I were connected by our ears, our headphones both listening to the same recorder. She operated the microphone while I used a camera to record occasional images of the park. When we heard an interesting juxtaposition of sounds, we moved ourselves, and the microphone, to intensify sonic relationships. While saxophone and bongo drums are playing instruments, a microphone is primarily a listening instrument (although it can be used to produce sound using feedback). Whereas a jazz improvisor works with melodic and rhythmic lines and harmonic progressions, a soundwalk recordist improvises with perspective, motion, and proximity. In both cases, the partner in improvisation is partly known and partly surprising. In a jazz solo, I hear how intimately the soloist knows the other members of the band, how well she can anticipate their progressions, the energy that is born of new surprises. When I am recording, it is partly how well I know a place that determines the success of a recording. Do I anticipate the weather? Do I know this sound environment well enough to plan my walk at a time of day/week/month/year when particularly interesting sonic juxtapositions may occur? And then there are the surprises: an unusual sonic juxtaposition occurs, out of the blue. Am I listening carefully enough to respond to it? Can I let go of my pre-suppositions about this place and go with this new situation?

Then there is the point where I have several hours of tape, a few still images, and a plan to make a website or CD ROM. How do I put these together? My response is to return to listening, drawing from the sounds that I hear, dwelling on and with them, often listening to the soundwalk recording for months at a time. If I want to focus on a moment, I can draw the sound out and extend it with time-stretching, then work with the image in a similar way by zooming in on different parts of it. If I want to highlight the changing textures of a sound, I can filter different sonic frequencies, then work with the image in similar ways by focusing on different colours, different visual frequencies. By focusing on listening, I am going against the grain of most multimedia texts that I have encountered, which explain visual processes in great detail, then speak of "adding sound" at the end.

I worked with the Queen Elizabeth Park soundwalk recording to create both a website, <http://www.finearts.yorku.ca/andra/soundwalk/qep.html>, and a gallery installation. I worked with a visual artist on this installation, P. S. Moore, who created drawings, painting, and sculptures in response to listening to the soundwalk, artworks that are engendered by a listening experience. Throughout our creation of a multimedia installation, we listen repeatedly to the sounds of a place, deriving both abstracted sound compositions and abstracted images from interacting with the sonic traces of that place in a particular time. This gives gallery visitors an immersive experience which is based on sound, and brought into the visual and tactile realms. Visitors choose their own route through the place of the soundwalk, all routes leading back to the ear.