moi J'adore les expéditions
C'est vraiment
Très Plaisent.

marie ANIK

C'était très intéressant de découvrir
le contraste en les sons calmes (le vent, les
feuilles, la rivière) et les sons bruyants (bruits
de construction, etc). Ce fut une marche fort intéressante au niveau sonore... Elle y a tellement
99: toutes sortes de sons à découvrir!
(étudiante en communications !)

très amusant vous avez bien travaillé.

Merci Stéphanie

Please respond! There is blank space throughout this
magazine. Please write in your sound stories...

cé plëtt
LACHINE

JOURNEES SONORES,
CANAL DE LACHINE

"Journees Sonores: Canal de Lachine" is a sound project in which we are documenting shifts in the soundscape of the Lachine canal as it changes with each phase of the revitalization project. Like all urban renewal projects, this multi-year, multi-million dollar project is having profound effects on how the areas surrounding the canal sound. By recording sounds from the trail that runs the length of the canal over several years, this project creates condensed sonic images that follow these urban changes. Listening to these sounds, we hope you will consider this space through sound and reflect on your relationships to the sounds of this place. Unlike visual representations of the place, sound recordings do not frame particular buildings or scenes, but point to relationships among different sources such as auto and boating traffic, cyclists, industrial/construction machines and pedestrians.

We intend to draw out the varying ways in which perspectives on this particular environment are framed by different sources and perspectives.

Soundwalking

The sound recordings are made through a method known as soundwalking. Soundwalking involves recording a sound environment of a particular place as we move through that place. It is an approach to the ethnography of place which focuses on listening as a way towards understanding how a sounding environment communicates. Our presence is never intended to be minimized or disguised, but rather is intimately part of the soundscape you are hearing in each clip. You will often hear a sniffle or cough in the winter months or pieces of passing conversation as curious onlookers comment on our peculiar appearance or say hello. We have made these recordings using a mini-disk recorder, stereo and binaural microphones, attempting to draw out particular relationships within the place and the sounds produced by it.

Soundwalks attempt to explore the "murmurs of everyday life" ("les murmures de la vie quotidienne," de Certeau 1984). We hope that through these recordings we can draw attention to the everyday activities of people (including ourselves) as we use the public space around us. These activities and sounds are often overlooked or inaudible, but become more present through attention to them. At the same time, in an effort to respect the privacy of people using the trail, passing conversations remain murmurs in the recordings in an attempt to maintain a respectful distance.

Thanks to the following organisations and individuals for their support of this work:

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Production design and editing
Andra McCartney

Interface design
Don Sinclair and Andra McCartney

Soundwalk recording
Andra McCartney, Anna Friz, Owen Chapman, David Paquette, Laura Kavanaugh, Ian Birse, Emilie Christiansen

Interview recording
Lisa Gasior, Andra McCartney

Earwitnesses
Hélène Lamarche, André Robichaud, Guy Rochon, Eddy Clément, Murray Schafer, Albert Laudi, A. Zachary, Valerie Walker

Sound editing and design
Lisa Gasior, Anna Friz, Andra McCartney, David Paquette, Laura Kavanaugh, Ian Birse

Writing
Andra McCartney, Peter van Wyck, Owen Chapman, Sandra Gabriele, Anna Friz, Lisa Gasior

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P. S. Moore, Anna Friz, Lisa Gasior, Andra McCartney, Jan Desrosiers

Graphic design
Angelica Calcagnile

Production management
Lisa Gasior

Translation
Anne De Léan

Acoustic design
(hairdryer)
Leo Campagna

Set painting
Daniel Hughes

Digital image editing
Andra McCartney, Lisa Gasior, Anna Friz, Owen Chapman

Interface design
Andra McCartney, Lisa Gasior, Anna Friz, Owen Chapman

Photography
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Graphic design
Angelica Calcagnile

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Lisa Gasior

Translation
Anne De Léan

Acoustic design
(hairdryer)
Leo Campagna

Set painting
Daniel Hughes
WHO WE ARE

Lisa Gasior has been hearing since birth but started listening about 8 years ago. She is finishing up her B.A. in Communications and Journalism with a minor in Electroacoustic Studies at Concordia University. Her work includes numerous electroacoustic pieces, soundscape projects, and soundtracks for film and video. Lisa is a teacher's assistant in sound production at Concordia, has done research for the Soundscape Journal and has thoroughly enjoyed working on this project with Andra. Lisa hopes to pursue graduate studies, introduce others to the joys of listening and find beautiful soundscapes wherever she goes.

Don Sinclair is a new media artist and professor at York University in Toronto. His creative work revolves around interactive interfaces. Drawing from his background in music, mathematics, computer science, and interdisciplinary studies Don works in a variety of contexts. Through his gallery installations (e.g. blow me, hug me, stomp me) and interactive dance (a journey toward the end in the shape of air) Don explores the infinite relationships that can be created between movement and media. Don is currently working on oh, those everyday spaces, a set of interfaces to a database of over 25,000 images captured while cycling over the past 1.5 years.

Peter van Wyck teaches in the Communication Studies program at Concordia University. He is at work on a project concerning memory and landscape on the Highway of the Atom in the north of Canada. His new book (Signs of Danger: Notes Toward a Philosophy of Threat, University of Minnesota Press) will be available in 2004.

Of David Paquette, Mr. Yous told us: "David is a young boy from the Northern Laurentians. Right now he's doing a Master's in Communication at Simon Fraser University. Seems like that place is on the top of a mountain. David keeps talking about soundscape studies, auditory cognition, sonic awareness and a whole bunch of other issues. The young boy also spends all his summers on the Nominingue Lake, doing sailing and windsurfing! Heh!"

Andra McCartney is an Assistant Professor in Communication Studies at Concordia University, teaching Sound in Media. She is also a multimedia sound artist with many multimedia works and research articles online. http://andsound.org. Andra lives in Lachine.

Angelica Calcagnile is finishing up a BA in Communications Studies, while developing her interests in design. Though lately she has been concentrating on poster work, Angelica has seven years of experience in web design. She is also the Director of Publicity and Promotions for CJLO.com, the Concordia student radio station, where she uses her executive privileges to run rampant in the DJ booth during Bulldozers vs. Treefrogs, the weekly radio show she co-hosts. Contact her at angelica_calcagnile@yahoo.com.

Working on a PhD in Communication Studies at Concordia University, Owen Chapman has integrated his interest in the philosophy of technology with experiments in turntablism, beat production and sample-based performance. He has written articles for M/C: the journal for Media and Culture, as well as for a forthcoming book on current issues in Canadian music. His compositions have been commissioned for ORF Kunstradio (Austria), and can also be found on his website opositive.ca.

Anna Friz is a radio and sound artist, curator and pirate. She has presented audio works in Canada, U.S.A. and Europe, and recently completed her Masters in Media Studies at Concordia University.

Sandra Gabriele is a doctoral student in Concordia University's Joint PhD in Communication Studies program (joint with Université de Montréal and Université du Québec à Montréal). She began sound recording as Andra's research assistant just this past year. She has recently begun researching her dissertation, entitled "Gendering Journalism (History): The Emergence of the Woman Journalist in Canada," which traces the entry of women into the journalistic field at the end of the nineteenth century. Her other areas of research include: electronic journalism, feminist theory and history, communications technology and cultural studies. Sandra lives in Montreal.

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This installation is presented with the support of the Canadian Association for Sound Ecology (CASE). The Canadian affiliate of the World Forum for Acoustic Ecology, CASE is a coalition of institutions and individuals interested in the state of the sound environment. For information on membership, please contact:

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179 Richmond Street West,
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Comments
ECHOES OF URBAN CHANGE THROUGH THE LACHINE CANAL

Andra McCartney

August 7, 2003

At the beginning of this soundwalk project, we expected to find aural traces of urban change around the canal, such as louder soundscapes surrounding the locks after they were opened, due to the sounds of boat motors. As the project has developed, we have learned about much wider and more complex types of change, including structural problems of acoustic design, and a long history of common themes and variations in the soundscape of the Lachine canal, which I will explore a little bit here: city life, marine life, communications, industry, construction, recreation, the St. Lawrence.

Acoustic design in the park

As Owen Chapman writes, the section of the bicycle path which borders Autoroute 20 is bathed in a loud traffic ambience that reaches 70 dBA during the daytime, when traffic is heavy. This is the same time of day that the bike path itself is heavily used. 70dBA is the approximate loudness of a close speaking voice, so the traffic can mask these communications. In addition, traffic noise includes much louder low frequencies (80-85 dBC). These infrasonic frequencies are not included in noise bylaws, because they are outside of human hearing range. Nevertheless, such low rumbles are perceptible as vibration, through the gut if not the ears. Owen notes that treed areas are quieter (and also more protected from the wind). This is an example of poor acoustic design in the park that could be improved by strategic planting of trees -- that have other good effects besides.

Sounds of city (and rural) life

As Hélène Lamarche says, "(The canal is a part of our life) Le canal, c'est une partie de nos vies." It is now a part of my life as well. I have lived close to the municipal pier at 34th ave. in Lachine, for four years now, and my daily life follows the shores of the canal. Lachine has been a meeting (and leaving) spot for centuries, because of its location next to the Lachine rapids. Long before the canal was built, this area was the beginning of a portage across the island, part of a system of trading routes. It was the point from which voyageurs left for points west during the fur trade. Lachine has been a town since the late 1600s. But even in the mid-twentieth century, it had vestiges of more rural life, with farms nearby. Hélène Lamarche's father used to keep delivery horses in his yard on 6th. ave. Lachine was also the source for the whole island of Montreal of ice for refrigeration, until the 1940s, and the horses and wagons would line up next to the canal to receive their load of ice, as we now see and hear snow removal trucks lined up in the winter. In the early nineteenth century, horses plied the towpath next to the original canal, pulling barges. And of course, horses were also used by the famous Dawes (Black Horse) brewery, as André Robichaud points out. Lachine was also an industrial port, with cargo ships lining the Grande Jetée (now Parc René Lévesque), on their way to and from the Great Lakes.

Communities such as St. Pierre, Cité St. Paul, Verdun and St. Henri, east of Lachine, were home to many workers in the canal's factories. The sounds of city life close to the canal in the late 1950s are evoked in Gabrielle Roy's book Bonheur d'occasion (The Tin Flute):

He stopped in the middle of St. Henri Place, a vast expanse furrowed by railway tracks and trolley car lines, and imbedded with posts and safety barriers striped black and white. Between the steeples and domes the clearing was exposed to the assault of howling locomotives, the peal of bells, the grating screech of trolley cars and the steady hum of traffic from Notre-Dame Street and St. Jacques Street, (1947: 28)

Marine life

The pleasure boats that presently ply the waters of the Lachine canal are the latest in a long line of shipping, each variation with its own acoustic signature: the canoes paddling through the St. Pierre River, the loaded barges pulled by horses through a narrow canal, the steamships blowing their powerful whistles and the tugboats pushing them, the low drone of diesel engines, the decades of only occasional canoes and finally the slow procession of power boats today, their powerful motors hushed to avoid disturbing the sleeping monster of industrial effluent below them.

In the 1950s, during the last years that the canal was open, R. Murray Schafer was a deckhand on a Great Lakes oil tanker that went through the canal. Schafer later became famous as a composer and researcher, founding the World Soundscape Project, an investigation of acoustic environments in change that was in many ways an inspiration for this project. As a deckhand, Schafer was responsible for jumping off the ship to put a cable around the bollard so that...
the ship could be winched through the locks. He found going through the canal to be a welcome relief from the constant noise of the ships engine, as it was stilled to negotiate the locks. He remembers the quiet of Montreal at night:

I do remember especially coming into Montreal, into the Lachine canal, several times in the middle of the night. It was really quite haunting. The city was quiet and the only sound really was the sound of the winch, winching the ship up, and occasionally the squeaking of rats along the shore.

As many earwitnesses said to us, the shipping had a profound influence on the community - traffic jams at the bridge, increased business, the spectacle of passing craft, and the sounds of the whistles, horns and powerful engines. From the perspective of residents on the shores of the canal in the 1930s, the night was punctuated by the sounds of ship horns approaching the locks. As Gabrielle Roy writes:

As soon as the channel was free of ice the sirens blow from sunset to dawn ... The house where Jean lived was opposite the drawbridge at the corner of St. Augustin Street. Flatboats passed before his door, tankers reeking of oil or gasoline, lumber barges, coalers, all hailing him with three powerful blasts on their sirens --a salute in passing and a cry for liberty, for the open sea. (1947: 26)

Communications

As Guy Rochon remembers, the shadow of the ships was even cast over the airwaves, intercepting television broadcasts to bring ship-shore communications to his living room, underscoring the inter-penetration of marine and shore life. Radio also had a prominent place in the soundscape surrounding the industrial canal. Author Gabrielle Roy speaks of the omnipresence of radio broadcasting in St. Henri during the late 1930s, at the end of a depression and beginning of a world war:

A loud, metallic voice blared out at him from the open doors of every shop. A sentence begun, was left hanging in the air until at the next shop the same voice began another unfinished sentence. A hundred radios, to the right, to the left, in front of him, behind him, poured out bits of news, doing their best to remind him of the world's agony. (1947: 247)

Industry

The Lachine canal has often been described as the cradle of Canadian industry. The factories that lined its shores were filled with huge machines run by turbines, steam and then electricity. Factory workers were surrounded by loud clanking and sighing that has now mostly disappeared. Factory sirens are replaced by quieter interior buzzers and electronic beeps, mechanics by computers, industrial facades masked by the broadband noise of air vents. The intermittent sounds of isolated factories have replaced the constant clatter of a working industrial canal. Many of the factories have closed long ago, and these empty buildings, waiting for demolition or reconstruction into condominiums, echo hugely in recordings done by Anna Friz near Old Montreal.

Construction

The sounds of construction have been part of the soundscape of the canal since attempts were made to construct a canal in the late 1600s, as Andri Robichaud points out. At that time, the sounds were of picks on stone, attempting without success to breach the area called Rockfield. The construction of the cradle of Canadian industry also included some of the earliest labour disputes in Canada. In 1843 the Lachine canal was widened to accommodate larger cargo ships by 8000 navigators (one English meaning of the word navigator is canal-digger), who were primarily displaced Irish workers fleeing famine - both catholic and protestant, as well as some local residents. Sounds were heard during the strike of 1849 by a listening miller, including the cries of strikers and the shots of government troops:

<<Quolibets, sifflets, vociferations, clameurs surtout, ébranlèrent son esprit ... Du haut de son moulin, Stephen May entendit des coups de feu intermittents>>

(Baily 1980: 41)

Today's construction includes the sounds of earth-moving machines, pile-drivers and trucks. We heard construction sounds from one end of the canal to the other, on the locks themselves as well as along the shores as residences spring up in the wake of demolished industrial buildings.

Recreation

The sounds of recreation by the canal did not begin with the contemporary bicycle path. In the early 1900s, the old canal in Lachine, between 6th Avenue and 15th Avenue, was not used for industry, and Helene Lamarque told us that people had small cabins by the canal in Lachine, where they would go to relax. However: recreation has since moved from the margins of industrial and shipping concerns into the main activity along the banks. We heard bicycles of many kinds, skates, wheelchairs, and walkers on the paths, cars and motorbikes in the parking lots. On the water, we heard all kinds of recreational craft from tall thrumming powerboats in the canal to kayaks, canoes,
sailboats and whining sea-dos in the Lachine harbour. Fishers dot the banks of the canal, and in the winter move out with their saws on to its frozen surface, as do the roaring car races in the coldest part of winter. On a hot summer’s day, every nook and cranny of the park is a place for a picnic or quiet moment looking out over the water. Each summer weekend, the Batobus and other ferries idle at docks, waiting to transport bicycles and people across the water.

The St. Lawrence

As Peter van Wyck writes, the canal is a river, part of the St. Lawrence, which is known for the force and energy of spring ice breakup. Remarkable ice sounds were recorded at the municipal pier in March 2000 and April 2001, aural evidence of the power of river and weather change. In March 2000, the temperature suddenly dropped 27 celsius from +10 to -17. The next morning, a thin skin of ice covered the water, and was slowly creaking and ripping as an ice fisher cut a hole in the distance. In April 2001, gusty winds jumbled small pieces of ice caught in large shoreline rocks. These sounds are included as loops in the computer installation. Many of our recordings include water sounds -- the rapids, heard from the end of Parc René Levesque, the wake of passing boats in the harbour, the smaller and quieter wakes of boats moving slowly through the canal, the rush of water through a weir. Some of these sounds are a result of the constriction of water by the canal, others have been heard here for centuries as the rapid river runs toward the sea.


Comments

Thanks for a wonderful experience! GeWitt

Merci! I listened to all 16 sounds. I loved it! Marlene Leigh
Public Soundwalks
Promenades Sonores
September 27 and 28
from 11am to 12pm & 2pm to 3pm
Come and take a guided soundwalk
around the Lachine Canal!
with Emilie Christiansen & Lisa Gasior
Comments
AN AURAL IMPRESSION OF MONTRÉAL'S LACHINE CANAL

Owen Chapman

August 1st, 2003

In the chapter “Walking in the City” from his The Practice of Everyday Life, Michel de Certeau describes the view of New York from atop the 110th floor of the World Trade Center as one that “arrests” the city:

Beneath the haze stirred up by the winds, the urban island, a sea in the middle of the sea, lifts up the skyscrapers over Wall Street, sinks down at Greenwich, then rises again to the crests of Midtown, quietly passes over Central Park and finally undulates off into the distance beyond Harlem. A wave of verticals. Its agitations momentarily arrested by vision. The gigantic mass is immobilized before the eyes. (de Certeau, p. 91)

In this chapter de Certeau maintains that this frozen image provides the model and foundation of the “Concept-city”, with its criss-crossed street networks, and undulating urban design and architecture. While this image is useful for “voyeur gods” (de Certeau, p. 99) and those who seek to outline a region such as Montreal as a discrete entity, the practice of everyday travel through the city significantly disturbs this construct. To quote de Certeau again: “The panorama-city is a “theoretical” (that is visual) simulacrum, in short a picture, whose condition of possibility is an oblivion and a misunderstanding of practices” (de Certeau, p. 99). In conceiving a city as something capable of being observed in its entirety by a single, naked eye, the “Concept-city” constructs itself as a monstrous panopticon, replete with its own figment of discipline through the notion of controlled circulation. On the Parks Canada website for Montreal’s Lachine canal, one finds this claim:

While strolling along the banks of the Lachine Canal, a complex landscape unfolds before your curious eyes. The locks and walls of the canalized waterway, the 19th-century factories and the downtown skyscrapers compose a fresco testifying both to the canal’s past vitality and to a promising future.

Similarly to the gods-eye-view concept of the New York which de Certeau encountered atop the World Trade Center, this statement from the body responsible for the maintenance and promotion of the waterway (which runs from old Montreal to the West Island municipality of Lachine—about 15 or 20 km) focuses solely on the visual aspects of experiencing the canal—articulating an image consonant with the “Concept-city” perspective common to many urban development projects.

In opposition to this visual account of the impact of the Lachine canal upon its visitors/neighbors, “Journées Sonores: Canal de Lachine” is aural research project in which we are documenting shifts in the soundscape of the Lachine canal as it changes with each phase of its revitalization, known as the Blue Montreal project. Like all urban renewal efforts, this multi-year, multi-million dollar investment is having profound effects on how the areas surrounding the canal sound. The weekly soundwalks and soundrides that we have conducted over the past 4 years have not only provided us with an archive of the changing canal soundscape, they have also revealed an everyday perspective on the canal as a space of movement: old warehouses and factories coming down, condos going up, water lapping against the canal’s embankment (recently affected by the canal’s re-christening as a pleasure boating route), ice crunching its way towards the St. Lawrence in the winter, and, of course, the sounds of pedestrians and cyclists throughout the spring, summer and fall. Parks Canada’s depiction of the canal, on the other hand, focuses on the “fresco-like” picture it provides of Montreal’s past and present. As such, it promotes only the desired image of what the canal provides to its users: static, frozen, quantifiable landscapes.

De Certeau’s chapter on walking in the city is dedicated to the articulation of an alternate conception of the city, a dynamic conception typified by movement. In a similar vein, my participation in the Journées Sonores project attempts to explore the sound environment of movement along the canal’s length, primarily through the making of recordings while cycling along the bike path. The path has been there in some form since 1974, and has been used heavily since that time both for recreational riding on the weekends and cycle-commuting during the week. The soundscapes recorded during my catalogued trips to the canal are at once very similar to the sounds of cycling elsewhere in the city; while at the same time containing an undeniable stillness and a rare feeling of being close to nature. Certain sections of my recordings always became overwhelmed with the sound of heavy traffic, while other sections of my canal recordings were almost just as predictably made up primarily of bird sounds, and the sound of wind rushing through leaves. This proximity to a more natural rhythm is what draws people to the canal, I believe, as opposed to the compellingness of its panoramas. Nevertheless, the canal does not exist in an acoustic bubble. The white
noise of traffic is ubiquitously present in all my recordings. However, although sometimes quite loud, the canal's constant traffic rumble does offer a significant respite when compared with traveling through Montreal's downtown core.

The "Concept-City", de Certeau claims, needs to be replaced by a new, dynamic appreciation of the narrative elements of movement through a space, as they are displayed in the choices we make as pedestrians (or in my case, as a cyclist). As he says,

Escaping the imaginary totalizations produced by the eye, the everyday has a certain strangeness that does not surface, or whose surface is only its upper limit, outlining itself against the visible. Within this ensemble, I shall try to locate the practices that are foreign to the "geometrical" or "geographical" space of visual, panoptic, or theoretical constructions. (de Certeau, p. 98)

Three considerations inform de Certeau's attempt to locate these practices: what he calls "operations", "another spatiality", and the "metaphorical" nature of pedestrian movement all become touchstones in de Certeau's attempts to point towards a city-concept which incorporates the vector-al nature of its daily bustling rituals and negotiations. In an effort to work with such a new conception, I've developed an audio track based on the sounds of the Lachine canal as they were present to me on July 2nd, 2002—while riding back downtown from Lachine (the resulting track is entitled Fresco or Freeway and is part of this installation).

De Certeau's notion of the metaphorical city involves the decisions one makes while navigating the city's byways. As streets and alleyways present themselves, one makes choices in the development of one's route based on how such spaces impact one's consciousness as a walker. The names of these places as well as their histories and relationships insert their way into a private, mental narrative which is constantly coming to be as the pedestrian moves through the city. My recorded trips along the Lachine Canal have their own such narrative related to my choices as to how I rode down the canal's length, at what speed, on what terrain, etc, as well as through my relationship to the lay of the land as it has been shifting throughout the canal's redevelopment. Fresco or Freeway is an aural attempt to explore the structure of these moving soundscapes.
speak up!

The Speakers' Corner at the Lachine Museum

October 11, October 25 and November 29 from 2pm to 4pm

Come record your memories of the sounds of the Lachine Canal!
Comments
FOOTBRIDGE AT ATWATER: A (PARTIAL) INVENTORY OF EFFECTS.

Peter C. van Wyck

July 24th, 2003

1.0 “Skies the gray of crystal. A strange design of bridges, some straight, some arched, others descending at oblique angles to the first; and these figures recurring in other lighted circuits of the canal, but all so long and light that the banks, laden with domes, sink and shrink. A few of these bridges are still covered with hovels, others support poles, signals, frail parapets. Minor chords cross each other and disappear; ropes rise from the shore. One can make out a red coat, possibly other costumes and musical instruments. Are these popular tunes, snippets of seignorial concerts, remnants of public hymns? The water is grey and blue, wide as an arm of the sea. A white ray falling high from in the sky destroys this comedy.” The Bridges — Rimbaud

3.0 If you were standing on the footbridge at Atwater as I am now this cinematic prose by the precocious Rimbaud could appear merely as an impressionistic checklist. Just for us, Canal, obviously. Minor chords, yes. Frail parapets, certainly. Public hymns, of course. And a sky the grey of crystal. Yes, crystal. Always.

4.0 None, really. And certainly nothing of technical, historical, or aesthetic distinction. A no-name bridge. No cantilevers, no turntable, no stonework, no appointments. It is vaguely bureaucratic looking, instrumental one might even say. It does the job. And it does so quite without recourse to anything we might call art. It is, after all, only a footbridge; merely a portage for les couriers de baguette, travelers to and from the market at Atwater.

5.0 Nice view from up here, though.

6.0 It is of course a bridge over the Lachine Canal. And just to bring you up to speed, if you were to ask, “what is the Lachine Canal?” of the contemporary Delphic Google, you would learn that the Lachine Canal is: “located in a heavily used urban park where one does not expect...”; we are not sure what. It is “part of Parks Canada’s historic sites; noted today for...; an integral part of Montréal’s sea port; a key part of Montréal’s past as a shipping and industrial centre; ideal for activities that are as cultural and historical as they are sportive and recreational.

7.0 Furthermore, it is “due to a clearance of 8 feet under the Canadian National Railway”; and “designed for vessels with a clearance of 8; open from May 14 through October 14.”

8.0 And apparently it is “stirring up as much enthusiasm among Montréalers now as it did 200 years ago during its construction; intimately tied to Montréal’s economic growth; full of human patterns” and “the oldest canal in Canada.”

9.0 It is “destined to become a favorite tourist attraction; completed; a green wonderland of leafY elephants” — my personal favorite, but I have yet to see any. It “opened after 5 years of construction; also the responsibility of Parks Canada.” It is “finished; an important and complex historic site; more severely contaminated; also scenic; full; experiencing an expensive but exciting rebirth as a centre for culture; now a popular tourist area; the oldest industrial area in Quebec; planned for this summer; a picturesque spot popular with Montréalers.”

10.0 And, “finally finished and allows boats to reach the west without having to go through the rapids; presently being refurbished to once again give pleasure boats direct
access to the old port of Montreal; a nationally significant cultural and historical resource; and apparently “good riding so I took my time and made it to downtown just before dark.”

11.0 And so on.

12.0 Anyway, apart from its rich setting, and structural artlessness, it is, like most of the bridges over the length of the canal, an abridgement of the work of the canal itself. That is to say, to have a canal — the Lachine, or otherwise — mustn’t one also have at the very least the idea of a bridge to cross it?

13.0 No need to be metaphorical here. This is not the bridge as a symbol of fraternity, as the holding-together across the waters. The point is different, and is simply this: the technology of the canal is unthinkable without a parallel technology of the bridge — they form a practice or a circuit together.

14.0 The canal presupposes the bridge, just as the bridge presupposes something for it to cross over.

15.0 Indeed, when legislation was enacted to allow the construction of the Lachine Canal, it specified that where the canal severed a public road, which of course it did at a number of points from Lachine to the Old Port, within a period of one month a bridge was to be built.

16.0 When you think of it, this is a long time to sever a road, and a very short time to build a bridge.

17.0 When the canal was widened in the middle of the 19th century, some 14 bridges had to be rebuilt — basically one per kilometer of canal. Some of these constructions were impressive structures indeed, drawing from the leading-edge of design technology, and most were the result of the renown Dominion Bridge Company: the Gauron, the Des Seigneurs, the Charlevoix.

18.0 Today the canal is crossed by some 25 bridges and structures, including 3 expressways and two provincial highways, and a number of railways. Crossing beneath it are two tunnels, one Metro line, and a clump of hydro, telephone, gas lines, and conduits.

19.0 In the 19th century, right up until the point at which boats plied the canal no more, divers were employed to remove objects that might prove dangerous to navigation. The canal was never very deep. Stones, pieces of wood and metal, dross from construction. Carts and other castoff debris. Everything had to be located and removed.

20.0 Here in the beginning of the 21st century, crossing the bridge at Atwater in winter, one can enumerate many such objects arrayed on the grey January ice—remnants of public hymns perhaps—a shopping cart or two. An installation of debris, of signs. The back of a Petula Clark CD. One tire. A small ski boot. One hat and one scarf. Many small objects not easily identifiable. A constellation of empty and mostly domestic beer bottles. A bowling ball. (Actually that’s not true; there was no bowling ball — that was a different bridge, and a different canal.)

21.0 But in any case, the bridge today affords a kind of archaeological viewpoint. It is an irredicibly modern bridge, but it looks over something built up from layers and layers of history. It would be useful, suppose those engaged to think about the canal in this manner “to examine the stratigraphic context, to identify what seems to be a fire layer, to locate any trace of occupation.” (Ethnoscop). Such traces are everywhere.
22.0 If you were standing on the footbridge now, you would be roughly midway along what is prosaically called Basin no. 3 of the Lachine Canal. This was a troublesome basin during the clean-up of the canal. Not that there was much of a cleanup undertaken; the worst was Basin no. 4, though, there were bikes, mattresses, picnic tables, and "so many cars that it would have been impossible for a boat to cross it." (Gedeon)

23.0 One must resist the idea that the basins of the canal are somehow interconnected lakes that communicate via locks. This could not be further from the truth. The Atwater Bridge overlooks the real secret of the Canal: it is a river in slow-motion. A post-industrial river.

24.0 From Lachine to the Old Port the Canal drops over 5 meters. In other words, the water one sees in calm reflection (yours or its) is moving. From the vantage point of our bridge at Atwater, the water falls. Hardly a torrent, but it falls. And it falls at something on the order of 6 cm per second. That's a little over 5 kilometers a day. That is, the water flowing past the museum today, will be in the old port 3 days from now. Down to the sea.

25.0 Yet our inventory here is hardly complete. Beneath the bridge, and beneath the water, it is a river, after all.

26.0 In the water here, beneath the bridge, in addition to things that might impede navigation, the river has tributaries. Many actually. 13 industrial water intakes, 30 industrial outfalls, and several storm outfalls... one would find such denizens of the deep as pelecypods, and oligochaetes. And fish. Chromatic fish, like Emerald Shiners, and Yellow Perch. And metals too: zinc, mercury, copper. And organic compounds like polychlorinated biphenyls (PCB) and polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH). Traces all, one imagines, of the serial history of production along this route. Pulp and paper, iron, rubber, leather, textile, steel, printing, non-ferous metals, electrical appliances, petroleum, coal, industrial chemicals, flour, nails, sugar, non-metallic ores, and so on.

270 Today in the "Directory of Federal Real Property," managed by the Treasury Board of Canada, the Lachine Canal is comprised of a number of contaminated sites. It is of course not possible to tell where these individual sites might be, nor the precise extent of the contamination. All the sites indicate the presence of "Heavy Metals," and some indicate in addition PAH, and "petroleum hydrocarbons."

28.0 Yet even from this vantage point on the Atwater Bridge, the very concept of contamination is ambiguous. By "contaminated site," is meant: "one at which substances occur at concentrations (1) above background levels and pose or are likely to pose an immediate or long term hazard to human health or the environment, or (2) exceeding levels specified in policies and regulations."

290 That is, either illegal, or dangerous. Or both.

300 Contaminated sites are also called brownfields.

31.0 Full fathom five.

32.0 Were this a piece of music, which it is of course filled with in any case — that is, a lot of sound — we might think of the Canal as a long line, as a rhythmic line, and we could also imagine (not a hard thing to do) that this line had a depth, say, a harmonic depth. And then, we would have something very special indeed, a remarkable line — a route I would call it — with a thickness and extension, or better, an amplitude and a frequency, the waves of the route falling down through the Canal: we would have a kind of polyphony of industry and water, and history and time, and progress and struggle and change, and the lives of men and women, of runners and riders and boats with Bob Seger, of immigrants and owners, and lockmasters and ship-builders, and styrofoam water lilies (unstable objects for sure), and steersman, stonecutters, masons and machines, iron workers, pipe fitters, dog walkers, and those without homes; all of these things would be there, as they are there, traces of them at least, and of course the contamination — each of the thirty two sites — about which we know so little, yet each subsists, each perfectly real wherever they are, and then we think of the bridge from which we survey this scene, and there we are; an encounter by chance, by accident.

Travaux:


micro radio broadcast

hosted by Anna Friz
September 28 at 3pm

tune in to 104.8 FM to hear a live broadcast from different areas of the Lachine Canal.
Comments
01 pierweave

Recordings from 1999 to 2002 are condensed, juxtaposed and layered year on year. The excerpts used in this piece were derived from hours of recordings using chance operations.

02 journéesonore, écluse 5

Condensed from excerpts of recordings from June 2000 to July 2002; bridge parts loading, October rush hour sunset, winter slush walk, summer bike soundride, all in the area of lock 5. The first part of this piece documents remnants of industrial sounds that are no longer heard in this location. Dominion Bridge was one of the most prominent industrial inhabitants of the Lachine canal for many years, constructing several of the bridges over the canal. Bridge parts were loaded for export at lock 5 and the municipal pier until recently, but this has now stopped.

03 buoytruck may 10 2001

This piece was condensed from a 30 minute recording made in the spring of 2001. This is a seasonal sound of the Lachine municipal pier. Each spring a truck brings navigation buoys to the pier. A crane unloads the buoys which are then put out into the lake along the channel to the harbour.

04 Municipal pier summer 2001

Condensed from excerpts over one summer. The piece begins with excerpts from two remarkable days of extreme weather change in the spring. On April 18, the water thuds against the pier underpass, breaking over the pier, seeming close to flooding. The next day, small ice pellets are thrust against the shoreline by the wind, and fill the holes between big rocks, waves making baroque melodies as they crash through.

05 La grande jetée, april 29, 2000.

Condensed from a soundwalk and ride to the end of the big jetty, formerly used for waiting cargo ships. It is now Parc René Lévesque, an extension of the bicycle path to the mouth of the Lachine harbour, by the rapids.
This piece was composed from sounds recorded along the bike path while bicycle riding from Lachine to the canal's intersection with the Décarie highway on July 2nd, 2002. Notable sounds were selected, equalized and then remixed into a "bicycle beat." Samples include: traffic noise, bicycle clicks, and wind, as well as a quick stop at a donut shop. See paper: "Fresco or Freeway?: An Aural Impression of Montreal's Lachine Canal."

On this day the length of the canal next to the Atwater Market was explored by 8 sound students from a Concordia Communications class. With microphones in hand, they made 4 separate soundwalk recordings that were used as the basis for this composition.

constructed from ambience recorded on the Charlevoix bridge over the canal east of the Atwater market. Car tires against the textured metal surface of the bridge produce this distinctive thrum, which are looped to enhance the existing rhythms of traffic. It was a cold dry day, with ice underfoot on the empty cycle path up to the bridge.

This piece begins with piledrivers working on a soon-to-be condo site next to the pedestrian bridge at Atwater market, recorded in the summer of 2002. This entire area around the market has been "revitalized" in the past few years through intensive condo development on the sites of old industrial warehouses and factories, either by renovating existing buildings or by razing them to construct new units. The canal was reopened to boat traffic in May 25, 2002 amidst much fanfare and pageantry, some of which is included here. Among the celebrants were actors dressed as various historical characters relevant to the development of the canal as an industrial hub for Canada, including a young francophone posing as John Richardson. Though this industrial wealth was sentimentalized by the celebrants that day, residue of that industrial heritage persists not just as red brick buildings to re-occupy but as toxic waste stirred up by boat traffic in the canal. The piece ends with recordings made in the summer of 2001 inside the now-demolished CN sheds west of Atwater market. These are 'lost sounds: echoes of the past both melancholy and cautionary.
shattered silo sound

Broken leaded glass shards falling twelve stories down in an empty silo. A hatch in the floor that leads down, down, down; impossibly vast and dark. The only way to hear the size of the space is to sing and to throw, so we do. The structures around the silos crack and cave in, but the giant cement cylinders stand like Ozymandias at the edge of the canal.

there's something under the bridge

An observation, made one evening in late February 2002, I have seen almost distressingly random objects abandoned on the ice under the bridge at other times--baby strollers, a single boot--but the coconut seemed worth noting. The other sound is indicative of the small sounds I hear in the winter along the canal--the wind in plastic bags hanging out of a garbage can or caught in a chain link fence, made soft by the snow and wind.

Through the St. Catherine Lock

This is a condensed piece that comes from a 25-minute recording of a ship passing through the St. Catherine lock of the St. Lawrence Seaway. These are the highlight sounds of the ship going from high to low water, recorded on May 15, 2003. The ships of the Seaway are larger than those in the former Lachine canal, but their movement through the lock is similar.

difficulty watching TV

Guy Rochon tells an amazing story about the difficulty of watching television in his home along the canal when he was a child in 1957. In this piece, Guy Rochon tells the story as it is re-interpreted using a clip from the Radio Canada program "L'Actualité" from the late 1950s as well as ship-to-shore communication recorded at the St. Catherine Lock on July 24, 2003.

Inspecteurs de glace

Hélène Lamarche talks about how the ice to fill ice boxes used to be carved out of certain sections of the canal. She recounts the presence of the "ice inspector" whose job it was to specify which sections of the canal seemed less contaminated. Ice was taken by horse-drawn cart and delivered to customers.
16 Passing Ships & Their Music

Albert Laudi and Zach remember the sounds of the canal. They recall the different whistles and horns of the ships that passed through the canal daily. Today, the soundscape outside Albert’s barber shop is comprised mainly of traffic but listen to what the harbour ambience might have sounded like before 1959, when the canal was a passage-way of the St. Lawrence.

17 Origins of the Canal

In an interview with André Robichaud, conducted June 8, 2003, he talks about the origins of the canal as we walked along the canal near 34th Avenue.

18 des sons agréables

During an interview with Guy Rochon on May 15, 2003, he talks about the sounds of the canal that he keeps close to his heart. Sounds such as the water on the rocks or the horns of the ships are warm reminders of his childhood. The sounds in the background are those of water on rocks recorded near Mr. Rochon’s home in the town of St. Catherine, where he goes to remember the past.

19 Radio Mix

Eddy Clement’s passion is collecting radios. His plethora of knowledge was extremely interesting and he was more than happy to share stories of some of the radios you can see in this installation in an interview conducted June 12, 2003. Listen as we scan through the radio dial and see what interesting bits of information we can find.

20 6th Avenue Traffic Jam

Albert Laudi has owned a barber shop on 6th Avenue in Lachine since 1949. This recording was made with Zach, one of his loyal customers. Both of them remember how busy it used to be on 6th Avenue in the 1950s because of the swing bridge that held up traffic. For Albert, it meant more business and for Zach... ice cream. This interview was recorded in Albert’s barber shop on June 27th 2003.
First boat of the season

Hélène Lamarche talks about the sounds of the canal as she remembers them from her childhood. For her, the sound of the first ship passing through the canal was a symbol of spring... and the start of the summer holidays. This interview was conducted in August 2002 at a restaurant near the canal. The sounds of the lock were recorded at the St. Catherine Lock in July 2003.

Farms along the Canal

André Robichaud talks about the farms along the canal and the work horses that people owned to deliver goods. While the interview was conducted along the present-day canal, this piece echoes some sounds one might have heard in the past, such as the horse sounds that we added. The remembered sounds of the horses attempt to drown out the traffic in the background.

lachine mix 2

The source sounds were recorded along the canal on Victoria Day 2003 - in Montreal on the way home from Victoriaville. We carried a Boss Dr. Sample and battery-powered speakers, sampling sounds and replaying them as we walked. (People kept thinking we were monitoring the sound levels - one guy said 'geiger counter'...) In-ear binaural mics recorded the replaying samples mixing with the environmental sounds - water flowing through the locks, bikes, people inline skate-dancing to a portable stereo, a guy whistling... When we got back home we recorded improvisations using samples from the binaural recording, and picked these two.

Agmont factory walkby

This is a short excerpt of a soundwalk with Valerie Walker, a textile and electronic artist, close to her home in Little Burgundy. We discuss the history and politics surrounding the Agmont factory while walking by it.
Recorded on October 25, 2000, this piece was part of a series of night recordings made by Sandra and Andra. Interested in hearing what differences the night produced for the sounding environment, Sandra recorded this excerpt while walking westward from the Atwater Street access point. Circumscribed by all the attendant cultural and historical meanings of women walking in the dark, soundwalking at night through trails that exist on the edge of the city, bordering an old industrial zone, can be risky business for women, as Sandra discovered on this night. The sound excerpt is an encounter Sandra had with a young man who rode past her on his bike initially, noticed her walking in the shadows, then turned his bike around and approached her. Fearing potential danger, Sandra stood under a lamp post, under full visibility, while feigning looking for something in her satchel. The few lines below are some reflections Sandra had on the experience.

This encounter, as I have come to call it, reminded me of what many feminist theorists have asserted: that moving through space is a complicated process for women because of the cultural meanings attached to gender. Her gendered body marks a woman's visibility, making the idea that a woman can observe quietly, detachedly - as one might expect in a soundwalk - almost impossible. For me, soundwalking at night posed an interesting challenge to my conventional practices of recording during the day. Without the benefit of clear visibility, I must already rely on sound much more. But, while recording, these sounds are much more amplified, creating a frustrating and discomforting experience. Whatever ways I have of engaging with the sounds that surround me during the day shift as I listen in a different way at night, leading me to take on an assertive stance that, nonetheless and paradoxically, begins with vulnerability. For me, this vulnerability, this willingness to hear in an unfamiliar way, is at the heart of my soundwalking practice. While the circumstances of this encounter may have been enough to have startled most women, the immediacy and intensity of this situation was a product of my active engagement with the sounds around me. Choosing to hear the sounds the way we do, by insisting on our active and bodily engagement with sound in our practice of soundwalking, the position of a detached observer remains out of reach for both Andra and I. While there are always risks associated with the ways in which we choose to move through the soundscape by remaining intimately connected to the places we are in, those risks are further intensified, further complicated by our gendered bodies.
27 Student Life on the Canal

This is a condensed time piece composed of sounds recorded near College Sainte-Anne, along St-Joseph Boulevard between 6th and 15th Avenue. The recordings were made in May and June of 2003 around lunchtime as students of College Sainte-Anne let off steam before heading back to class, preparing for exams. Listen to the voices of nature along with those of the students.

28 Soundwalk - March 17th, 2002 - 2:00 to 5:00PM

It was a particularly beautiful day, sunny with some isolated clouds here and there. The temperature was around 5°C. A subtle but constant wind followed me through my sound exploration.

Such beautiful spring weather brought a lot of people out to the Canal, eager to enjoy the day and get some exercise. I began the soundwalk at the western end of the Old Port. I met many cyclists, pedestrians and rollerbladers. Everybody, including myself, was visibly happy to be riding along the Canal.

In this short montage, I combined elements that seemed to be at the core of this ‘spring’ moment: some birds, many passers-by of all ages, a mobile radio modulated by a Doppler effect, a waterfall, some residual sounds from the railway and even a short musical ending, recorded as I admired some dancers on roller skates. There are many distinct sections, but I tried to make their transitions as natural as possible, much like I heard them on the path. I was myself quite calm and silent during the walk; my sonic presence personified only by the sound of my footsteps and wind blowing in the microphone.
Comments
IN MEMORIAM

Albert Laudi passed away in August 2003. Albert's barbershop on 6th Avenue served countless customers from 1947 to 2003. We are grateful that he had the chance to share his stories with us.