Remembering Forgotten Space:
Synaesthetic Effects of Poetic Installation

> It is not the material object which fills another by espousing the form that the other imposes. No, it is the dynamism of the sonorous life itself which by engulfing and appropriating everything it finds in its path, fills the slice of space, or better, the slice of the world that it assigns itself by its movement, making it reverberate, breathing into it its own life.
>
> — Eugene Minkowski[1]

As language is affected by its "local position"[2] – when and how something is said or when and how something is activated, a work of art is also subject to its place and position. Though these intrinsic relationships are unavoidable, there are varying degrees of how much location affects the perception of the work being shown. Moving a painting from one city to the next could affect how the artwork is perceived, but when it comes down to immediate logistics, it will probably still be on a white wall in a museum room set to a specific temperature; and most importantly the painting will be the same as it was when the artist created it. The space of the painting has been defined as that between the frame and moving it does not change that space. A piece which is dependent on its physical location such as Richard Serra's *Tilted Arc* is incapable of being exactly the same when moved because its variables have changed.[3] The piece does not exist anymore because it was tailored to that specific location. It is possible that in the relocating a painting someone could have a totally different experience with that particular painting in a different location, but it would probably have more to do with that person's subjective space, rather than actual parts of the piece changing. In

1 Eugene Minkowski quoted by Gaston Bachelard, <u>Poetics of Space</u> (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), xvi.

2 Nick Kaye, <u>Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation</u> (London and New York: Routledge, 2000), 3.

3 Erika Suderburg, <u>Space Site Intervention: Situating Installation Art</u> (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000) 5.

this thesis I will be talking about artwork that is dependent on the actual location to provide meaning and components of the piece.

In two of my own works: *Inhabitants* and *Shadows*, I explore the power of location by installing light and sound in "forgotten" spaces. "Space occurs as the effect of the operations that orient it, situate it, temporalize it, and make it function in a polyvalent unity of conflictual programs or contractual proximities. . . . space is a practiced place."[4] Unchanged, holding their last function, and unused, I name these spaces as "forgotten." My goal in these works is to transform the location into a mysterious space, creating a sensation for its participant that hints at what the site's cultural and historical resonance might be. Though unified by my aesthetic values, these pieces differ in how I approached the location, developed the creative process, and affected and involved the audience. I am deeply concerned with the differing roles spaces have, their transformation into an artistic site, and that site's potential to affect people's perception of time and space.

My preoccupation with space is rooted in my personal history and psychology. My mother and I fled Poland in 1981 and ended up in refugee camps in Austria, moving frequently from one to the next for a year before coming to meet my father in Chicago. While in grade school, as a result of our economic status, we relocated every couple of years and I was always exploring new territory psychologically and physically. I changed schools four times as a child and finally my parents moved from the city of Chicago to the suburbs where again I was thrown into a cultural maze, having to redefine my territory and my identity.

This is not an exceptional story, but because my parents maintained a Polish-speaking household I have always felt in flux between two worlds. I have developed a dialectical notion about space that has to do with the

4 Michel de Certeau, The Practice of Everyday Life (Berkeley, University of California Press, 1988), 117.

juxtaposition of my physical possession of it and my dream world. Just as all space is not mine, it is also all mine. I have the ability to do anything in my dreams as I am a lucid dreamer and I feel that I exist in two realities – my waking world and my dream world – simultaneously. When I dream it is often about places and usually the entire socio-economic scheme is re-ordered. Sometimes I am not sure in which world my memory originated. These two worlds merge when I have a poetic experience or when I am overwhelmed with inspiration. Part of what I do in my art is "explore the borders between the various dream and waking states in order to understand that we are just as asleep when we think we are awake, as we are in dreams."[5]

As a child I became fascinated with large open spaces and the concept of infinity and have always had an oversensitive awareness of my surroundings. Now as an adult I frequently change my environment during the day, travel often, and "escape" to natural places where there are few people and my preoccupations with infinity, color and silence become temporarily satisfied. "When this elsewhere is in natural surroundings, that is, when it is not lodged in the houses of the past, it is immense."[6]

I yearn to inhabit a space of my own and believe that no one really has a permanent ability to physically do that. Even people who own land that is not mortgaged are subject to the whims of their government.   In my philosophy this is the two-fold sadness of our reality as humans – we own only our bodies and are connected by the very fact that we are all disconnected. In my art I am trying to create an artificial shared space in order to challenge this. I am trying to extend the territory of my mind to a physical location.

---

5 Malcolm Goldwin, The Lucid Dreamer (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994), 15.

6 Gaston Bachelard, Poetics of Space (Boston: Beacon Press, 1964), 184.

I am fascinated with the concept of "owning" a space by installing art in it. I hope that this momentary possession can lead to transformation or transcendence of the disconnection we experience as humans. I am trying to explore the idea of taking what's inside me and externalizing it into a space that other bodies can physically enter and be a part of. This space creates time and potential for the externalized idea to again become internalized by others. Space becomes more than just the distance between two objects, it becomes the interface that connects two human psyches as well as an artistic situation.

All of my ideas start out as poetry and in these pieces they become actualized in space by the use of audio and video. Unlike other art forms, you can see the poem in its entirety while you read it and I wonder if it's possible to simulate that poetic experience electronically and induce change. The audio/visual relationship is different in both *Inhabitants* and *Shadows* as I am exploring how the two media interact and influence each other's meaning through the use of space. However, the success of these pieces doesn't depend on if placing the audio and video into a space connects the art as one whole piece. Even if people's senses dissect the situation, due to the projected elements and their interplay in the space, there still is room for synaesthesia. For my satisfaction the perception of my idea doesn't need to resemble my narrative, I hope only for a sonic, visual, or proprioceptive trigger of awareness.

By bringing new meanings to older spaces, I create the possibility of a deeper understanding of time. Because of the complexity of the physics of time, and the fact that there is no single clear understanding of it, there is room for challenging people's perception in this area.[7] It's possible that if I achieve a trigger of imagination in someone else's mind, if there is any

---

7 David Harvey, <u>The Condition of Postmodernity</u> (Oxford: Blackwell, 1990), 204.

synaesthesia – I am affecting their perception of time through the use of space.

I am aware that there are numerous possible ways in which time may be perceived in relationship to a work of art, as well as possibilities regarding the direction in which time actually flows. If individual biographies are paths in time and space, it is possible that rather than moving time through a poetic/synaesthetic experience, a disruption of time happens instead. Can the over-awareness of time and space disrupt its flow? The idea that I am affecting someone's awareness presupposes the notion of a separate individualized place where time is happening, but there is also the possibility of a "whole space, which already exists in its entirety, onto which ideas and images can be mapped, using only the portion of the space needed."[8]

My understanding of time is modest and that is why I am compelled to explore it. In dealing with two time-dependent media I have the opportunity to sculpt time and create complex relationships. I am not certain how this may affect the perceiver of the work, but I do know that location has significant potential to affect psyche, memories, and mood; by turning locations into sites I hope to relate exterior space to the interior psyche of the individual. Finally, because I believe our physical bodies hold universal truths and are our vehicles to the exterior world, I find that movement is essential in translating my ideas, and it became a unifying force in both of these works.

These projects were executed using similar media and I will be discussing the two different approaches, processes and artistic results in placing sound and video into a chosen location.

---

8 Bill Viola, <u>Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House</u> (London: Thames and Hudson, 2005), 100.

INHABITANTS — Delicate Intervention

> The space in question here . . . compromises the palpable as well as the dreamed, the yearned for, and the remembered.
>
> – Hans Gercke[9]

The two variables necessary for the perception and/or performance of sound are time and space. Regardless of the material used or how the sound is projected, these two variables are always interwoven into the contextual framework of the piece. The same is true of video. There needs to be a place where the image is projected, and time for the images to develop. Over the last couple of years, one of the main ideas I have been working with is controlling the context in which people see video and hear sound. As this idea started to gestate, I started to become fascinated with specific spaces and wanted to incorporate them. *Inhabitants* arose out of a deep desire to install something into a space I saw while being given a tour of the Music Building at Mills College. The inner suddenly wanted to become the outer.

My initial vision involved a dancer, flora, sound, and video. The garden/fountain/pond area to the right of the Concert Hall (see fig. 1) was completely decrepit, overgrown, wet, muddy, and my impulse was to bring it to life. As the idea developed, I realized that I didn't need to put actual physical material into the space, instead I would use sound and light.

---

9 Hans Gerke, <u>Klangraumlichtzeit</u> (Saarbrücken, Germany: Kehrer Verlag Heidelberg, 2000), 47.

fig. 1

I wanted the audio to blend with the acoustic space and for the sounds I installed to be native to that environment, with melodies coming in and out of a bed of "inherent" sound. One of my goals was to make this location into something it hadn't been in a while. Although this space had been forgotten, I wanted to "enliven" rather than "change" it.

My creative process, both in dealing with the video and with the audio components, was intuitive. After the initial vision inspired work in this particular location, one idea simply led to another. The process began with spending time at the actual territory and trying to conceptualize how I was going to bring this space back to local awareness. The idea was not concrete – I needed a catalyst. This came when I shot footage of two women underwater. Already while shooting I knew that this footage captured the quasi-corporeal vision that was in my head. I had shot a dancer out of water the day before and although we worked well and she was able to move in a way that I asked for, there was a missing element. That element was water – it became the choreographic glue that tied the dancers to this space. It moved their bodies and costumes in curves and swirls. The way the light refracted in the water created motion and shapes on their bodies that made

them seem like ethereal ephemera. I knew that with some video manipulation I would be able to take this footage and make it look like moonlight dancing on top of water from which human forms would emerge.

At this point I defined the actual site of this project as the area closest to the doors and surrounding the fountain. "A site is something that differs from a space in that it receives something specific. It receives the artist's signature, so to speak, which is more than the lines of latitude and longitude that cross here. An artist places a specific situation of perception in the space, turning it into a site."[10] The garden in the background would hardly be seen in the darkness and the site could be limited by the natural falloff of how far the human eye could see, but the space the viewer possessed could go on forever into the darkness. The focus would be the fountain in the middle and these forms would be projected onto water. Water became the aesthetic connector, the medium/surface of delivery, but not necessarily the theme of the piece.

In order to get the moonlight look I was after, I treated the color of the images so that they were almost black and white but with a hint of skin color to retain some of the humanness. The women ended up looking like ghostly substances floating on top of water. I chose the movements that were most expressive and created a palette of movement ideas from which I would choreograph the whole piece.

When beginning work on the sound I had a couple of preconceptions of how it would function in the space. It needed to help create a seamless transformation and emergence as well as suspend time. I felt that production of a musical atmosphere was possible if the audio were to come from the natural elements of the space and if it mirrored the appearance and disappearance of these forms.

10 Christina Kubisch interviewed by Christoph Metzger, Klangraumlichtzeit, 87.

Sounds at night can focus detail and attention. Sounds do travel further at night due to a layer of colder air being trapped near to the ground and man-made noise is also reduced, revealing otherwise prohibited locations . . . They point up an exciting, secret world upon which we can eavesdrop, appreciate and enjoy, but not necessarily understand and I think that sense of mystery and awe is an important detail which is missing in much of our daily lives.

Audio atmospheres are mysterious; not just because much of their content may be invisible and implicit; not just because their cumulative effects come from elusive and under-researched phenomena such as pressure changes, infrasound, ultrasonics, and other barely perceived sonic signals, aligned with subtle transitions in the acoustic environment; but because they are thick with imaginings, memories, utopias, foreboding. For the urban refugee, the desire for tranquility may be so neurotically pursued that any absurdity is worthwhile, even if it risks the possibility of revolution.[11]

My goal for the actual sounds was to create a new sound that represented my idea of making human forms emerge out of the natural elements that existed in this space. I achieved this by convolving and modulating what I heard as the natural sounds of the space — water, wind, and insects with the human voice singing melodies, whispering, and laughing. Using SuperCollider software, I tried different combinations of sounds transformed with FFT processes, convolution, amplitude and frequency modulation, and worked this material until I had a palette of short musical interludes and textures.

The form of the piece needed to be such that a person could come in at any point and glimpse another reality. Negative space, both visually and acoustically, is what would make the presence and re-appearance of these inhabitants powerful, as well as inducing a desire for the viewer to see/hear the "next episode." The "quiet atmosphere of a place, location or habitat can

_____

11 David Toop, <u>Haunted Weather: Music Science and Memory</u> (London: Serpant's Tail, 2004), 53, 54.

be a revelation – a profound 'presence' made up from the component parts."[12] The sound bed was created in a way that these musical moments would emerge out of these natural sounds at the same time as the images slowly came into momentary focus. By working with the sound in an improvisatory way and doing a live mix of the interludes there was enough variety and layering to create a different impression with each emergence.

The movements were intuitively chosen and edited to the bed of sound and the form of short appearances evolved from this process.   A perceiver could grasp the general mood of the piece quite quickly, but if they listened for longer periods there was enough variation, repetition and escalation to make the piece develop as a whole. These parts of a whole could be a representation of time in cycles. If the same thing occurs over and over with slight variations, can this notion be extended to a model for human life or life in general? The sound was also not completely aligned with the visuals; sometimes a cricket or voice or some wind would linger without visual accompaniment. The image was enough to draw the viewer in, but the sound was what kept them there. "So, overall, in first contact with an audiovisual message, the eye is more spatially adept and the ear is more temporally adept."[13]

The space was going to be inhabited by these human forms that would come in and out with the wind. Therefore there was no narrative over time but a suspension of time that could begin when you started trying to see the movement of these emanating dancers and that ended when you concluded that you could barely see them and that you'd had enough. It wasn't a story as much as a state of being that intrigued but eluded the viewer/listener.

---

12 Ibid, 52.

13 Michel Chion, <u>Audio-Vision</u> (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994), 11.

The transformation of the space was close to seamless. The sound came out of the garden through hidden speakers and the projector was behind the door and not visible. The space was as it always had been but now there was a presence there. The viewer/listener could do nothing but stand in the doorway and have this dreamlike experience within this forgotten space. They would never be able to touch this other reality, but could have some sort of yearning moment with it. "Because of its novelty and its action, the poetic image has an entity and a dynamism of its own; it is referable to a direct ontology."[14]

The space had been enriched with intangible sources that are artificially installed but use two completely natural elements – light and sound focused around the fusion of the human body with water. These images, too ethereal and ephemeral for anyone to get too close, emphasized a sadness and loneliness that this space had always exuded for me. *Inhabitants* could therefore be seen as a representation of repressed meaning in this particular space. A deeper sadness lies in the idea that if our bodies are the only space we have on earth, our dreams are really the only guaranteed frontier. The fascination of the viewer begins with the search for a real space and ends with their experiencing something like a space they have dreamed of. Perhaps with this dream dialectic I am striving to awaken awareness. However, the viewer's interpretation doesn't give this installation a function — what's more important to me is weaving the viewer/listener into the meaning of the piece. The "essence of life is not 'a feeling of being, of existence,' but a feeling of participation in a flowing onward, necessarily expressed in terms of time, and secondarily expressed in terms of space."[15]

---

14 Bachelard, xvi.

15 Eugene Minkowski quoted by Gaston Bachelard, xvi.

Images from *Inhabitants*
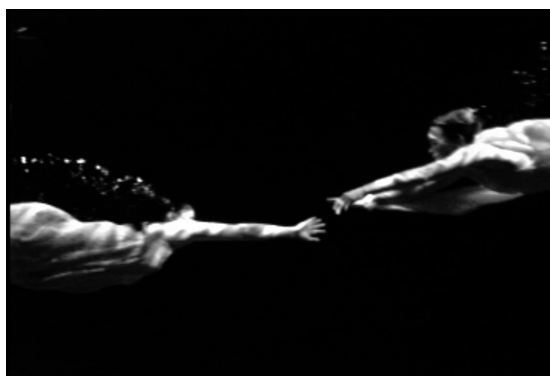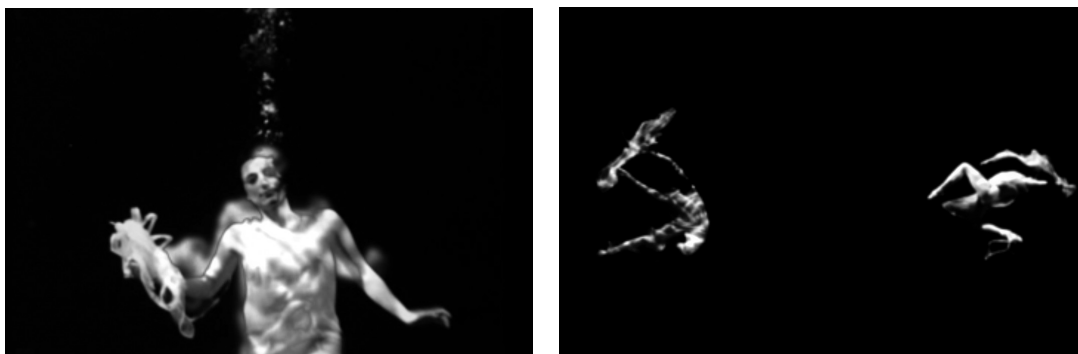
SHADOWS – Kinesthetic Appropriation.

> What characterizes space is both its form and its formlessness; architecture as stable medium and body as mobile force, and their subsequent meeting in spatial conversation . . . a kind of physical and spectral choreography . . . in which subjects and objects intermix, one shadowing the other, making their respective borders unclear, as levels of intensity.
>
> – Brandon LaBelle[16]

While *Inhabitants* was inspired by and made for a specific location from the beginning, *Shadows* was conceptualized first and then placed into a specific location. Once I found the space I worked with it programming in Jitter and MaxMsp until the day of exhibition. The creative process for this project was much more empirical because of the programming needed to make it interactive. I spent much time in data-space creating artificial memory systems that would disorient participants in order to raise questions of self-identity and time/space perception.

I was hoping that the innate mystery of shadows could become a medium for exploring movement, time and space. Because details of color, texture and facial characteristics are lost when shadows are created, there is an emphasis on movement in order for a person to orient the shadows to their original source. The light also skews the proportions of the body and in turn distorts the appearance of movements. I wondered if I could use this natural phenomenon of light to raise the participant's awareness of their own form by creating an environment in which the participant would be forced to move in order to interact with the space. This was a space where sound and light reacted but didn't connect in an obvious way. My goal was to convey a feeling that was slow and poetic, not frantic and overbearing, so that random

---

16 Brandon Labelle, <u>Site Specific Sound</u> (Frankfurt: Selektion, 2004), 8.

audio/visual relationships could seem serendipitous or open the possibility for space/time reexamination. "The simpler the image, the vaster the dream."[17] This time I was more interested in seeing an interaction in a created space rather than unearthing a location.

For the location, I decided a hallway would be an appropriate choice for projecting shadows since they had a better chance of being skewed, and walking through a hallway is a goal-oriented activity that normally induces movement. I liked the idea of the space having an entry way and a tunnel – often hallways are in-between spaces that people walk through and take for granted. I wondered if a space like this would be a more neutral canvas for shadows recorded from other spaces because it would have less direct implication as a specific location.

The hallway I used in the Media Studies building at the California College of Arts in Oakland, California was not only a hallway, but also one that was between inside and outside. The participant would enter from the outdoors and walk deeper and deeper inside.

---

17 Bachelard, 137.

view into hallway from entrance

view back towards entrance

It was a completely unused space, forgotten and hidden in the back of the building.   It was about four feet wide and about 60 feet long — very long

and narrow. In order in enter this hallway you have to walk up stairs that start outside of the building and end as you enter the covered hallway. In the piece, the further you went into the hallway, the smaller your shadow became and the further you were from the opening to the outside world – the cool air, the outside noise, the door – the further away from your previous consciousness.

view into the entryway of hallway from stairs
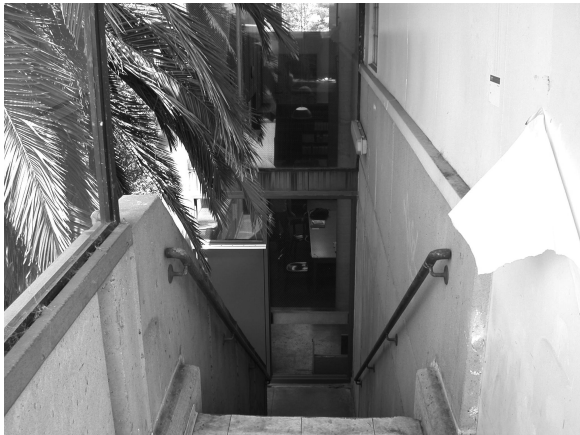
view back down stairs

The setup for the piece changed the space into a site. First the hallway needed to be cleared of all the junk in it. Then, I completely covered both sides of the hallway with white paper and stretched fabric from ceiling to ground at the far end of the space to create an artificial third wall behind which I put the camera. I put a speaker at the each end of the hallway, one being visible as you entered the space and the other one hidden behind the

fabric. The projector was located at the beginning of the hallway as you walked in next to the speaker.

There were two simultaneous visual elements. One was always consistent —an immediate shadow that the participant made just by being in the space. This shadow was created by the participant blocking the light of the projector with their body, was barely distorted, changed size as they descended down the hallway, and appeared on the fabric hanging at the other end of the hallway. The other visual element was one of three possible types of images chosen at random by the computer to be projected: shadows of strangers engaging in different activities, shadows of various trees/leaves moving to the wind, and a playback shadow of the person who had been in the space a few minutes earlier.

The fabric marked the end of the participant's space. I decided that I would have to cover both sides of the hallway with white. On the white the contrast of the shadows would be much more clear and I could eliminate the view of the bay from my site. The hallway was not a casual location anymore; covered by white paper on both sides it became a tunnel of projections focusing in on the participant's current shadow and drawing attention to the finite nature of the space. All the background of the video would be white, and all the space would be white so it would be harder to see the lines between real shadow and pre-recorded shadow. The dual role of the projector signified the merging of these two worlds, and drew attention to the complexity of projected whites and blacks. The dual role of the fabric was simply convenient.

All the images were carefully crafted to play back only on the side walls and not interfere with the regular shadow that appeared on the fabric because it was the key to all of the interactivity. Behind the fabric the camera was reading the size of this shadow as the participant's position in the hallway changed. From this camera information the computer could tell how much of

a person's shadow was in the frame, and using various objects in Jitter/Max including the cv.jit.sum object, I was able to calibrate specific events to happen as the participant entered different areas of the hallway. The projector was located at the very beginning of the hallway, so when someone walked in they blocked the light from the projector almost entirely. This was the first programming trigger in the piece and it started the playback of the pre-recorded shadows. The camera was at the other end of the hallway behind fabric hung and stretched from the ceiling to the ground acting as a wall.

The hallway was divided into eight sections, and the first section started the visuals when the person's shadow was the biggest. As the participant crossed into the third section of the hallway the camera would trigger the computer to start recording the person's shadow but only up until the fifth section of the hallway. Once they moved past Section 5, the recording would stop and this information was stored. When the person was leaving the space the same trigger occurred as at the beginning, and there was a randomized possibility that the recorded shadow would play back. If the participant turned around while leaving they might see themselves abstracted from a few moments ago. Because of the time delay and lack of features would people even be able to recognize their own shadow? Time obstructed the possibility for establishing a direct relationship of movement with your image.

Either the recently recorded shadow or the pre-recorded shadows (also chosen at random) would play again. If I ever install this piece again into another hallway, I will use more than one camera. It will help me form a better complete shadow, as well as improve the accuracy of program calibration so that the interactivity is less limited.

The discrete sections of the hallway were used more precisely by the audio portion of the patch. What I essentially built was a virtual instrument

using parts of the space as "keys." Section 1 didn't have an audio trigger but as the participant entered Section 2 they would hear a Bb in three possible octaves (chosen at random) rise and fall in volume. Each section of the hallway was assigned a note and a speaker. In order the notes were: Bb, D, F or F#, A, C, Eb, G.   The first four notes played in the speaker furthest from you, deep in the space, luring you in, and the last three notes played from the speaker closest to the entrance, guiding you back out of the space.

There was a direct relationship to time and movement because if you walked slowly or walked carefully into each section you would get single notes. If you walked faster you would have overlapping chords. If you were running through the space there was possibility for all seven notes to play. If you ran back and forth thirteen notes could play simultaneously. I programmed the computer to randomly play any one of three octaves for each note and for the fourth section, there was also a random possibility for an F# to play instead of an F. Regardless of how tall someone was, their shadow would most probably be recorded in this section.

As a sound source, the human voice seemed the most neutral to me. The human form is being projected, and the voice could carry the listener.   I wondered if the human voice would make the participant able to relate to the images of the "other" more. I recorded my own voice and enveloped each note so that it had a rise, a climax and a fall. Given that we are guided by voices our whole lives, would the human quality of these recorded voices guide participants into the proximity and length of the space? I imagined that sound would completely fill the space.

I was hoping that people would have time to explore the space and interact with this instrument while also being surrounded by walls of shadows, not finding any clear connections but instead being intrigued and letting themselves be open to possibility. The only thing that the participant could be

certain of is what their own shadow would do. Yet it was unclear what "shaping" this shadow would cause.

The idea for this piece was partly inspired by the shadows I saw on the Ensemble Room floor at Mills during an afternoon — the leaves phasing in and out of each other, with light changing the patterns around the images. I was always fascinated by the shadows that had layers. Even though three-dimensional objects became reduced to two-dimensional shades of grey, the light had this amazing ability to crawl around these images and become more dynamic. Before I began the programming for this piece, I went around and shot shadows of trees, leaves and branches moving in the wind. I captured this footage to make it part of an environment that could envelop the participant in a world of shadows.

I also filmed people's shadows. It was interesting to see how free my actors felt being silly while recording their shadows. Suddenly things that would be hard to do in front of camera for some of these folks were easier. The psychology of blocking light with your body and creating movement is curious especially since you can see what you're doing. If I had been shooting into a mirror people would have been much more inhibited. A shadow had the unexplainable quality of being a part of you but missing essential elements that make you self-aware. I hoped that this freedom of movement is what would happen when participants entered the site—this was one of the goals. I was interested in turning this moment of self re-examination into one of poetry – poetry written by that specific participant's movement. Each one would be different.

I was curious if it was possible to create a situation where self-identity was juxtaposed with other-identity. Would the participant feel a momentary loss of self? What would it feel like to be surrounded by a stranger's shadows? Are other people's shadows like other people's dreams– less

interesting than our own? Would my participants strive to see their own shadow?

This piece questioned why our recorded image is more interesting than the direct movement of our bodies. Why do most people feel more comfortable with the abstraction of their movements than with their direct movements? Is this also related to why some people feel more comfortable playing instruments than using their voices? It's interesting how our minds are trying to escape and move away from our physical bodies. "In attempting to represent and express what we believe to be our reality, we create models and ideas which are simpler and easier to grasp than reality itself."[18]

I wondered if this was related to our obsession with projecting our lives into the future and not letting ourselves really be in the moment. *Shadows* was a meditation on the psychological aspects of movement, our relationship to our bodies, and our constant displacement of our present reality into the future. The piece contradicts itself because it makes you think about being in the present facing reality, but it hopes to spark your imagination by projecting you into the future and into unreality. You must imagine in order to foresee.[19]

> Today abstraction is no longer that of the map, the double, the mirror, or the concept. Simulation is no longer that of a territory, a referential being, or a substance. It is the generation by models of a real without origin or reality: a hyperreal.[20]

This piece dealt with the idea of boundaries and time on two levels. There was the boundary that you felt when entering the space — this hallway literally lead to nowhere because it ended with the fabric; the only reason for the participant to enter it was to interact with the sound and the images. I

---

18 Goldwin. 15.

19 Bachelard, xxxiv.

20 Jean Baudrillard, <u>Simulacra and Simulation</u> (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1994), 1.

think that walking to the end of the hallway made some people feel trapped while others may have felt the comfort of an enclosed space.

The other boundary explored was that of images of present shadow and past shadow interacting with each other. Time was constantly tested because the participant would trigger images from another time as well as triggering audio that would linger and layer on top of more recently triggered sound. Rather than having sound whose form developed over time, the participant created notes with the direction of their body.

Normally when we deal with shadows, we deal with a projection of our own shape being skewed by light. Though this shape is often very different than our body shape we establish a relationship with it based on movement. I was hoping to use time as a deterrent in establishing a connection between our movement and our form as well as using the shape of the hallway to skew the projection so that distances and images were also stretched. The participant had to simultaneously deal with ideas of body abstraction, time distortion, the space as an instrument, and ideas of purpose in movement and of space. Would having shadows without the source of shadow be accepted or questioned? Could projections of recorded shadows even look like real shadows?

I knew I wanted to work strictly in alpha channels and keep color out — this would be a world of projected blacks and whites. So much of our aesthetic past has been painted in black and white and I wondered if my participant would make immediate connections to a darker, film noir world due to the lack of color. Would having a black and white world immediately characterize the site as "creepy" or "sinister" and make some participants feel less comfortable while others more intrigued?

Again because there are visual, spatial and auditory stimuli, it is difficult to analyze the experience of the participant, but the main idea was to separate your real self from a represented self only expressed in shape,

movement and sound. The walls became "fields of white whose boundaries were only understood when the shadows moved across them. There was a sense of displacement because the participant didn't know what was pre-recorded and what was happening then."[21] *Shadows* brought more attention to the participant's physicality and locale in the space. The participant entered a world without color, destination, and a place where they could paint their own time through movement. The only color present in the space was that of the human voice.

Images from *Shadows* Installation
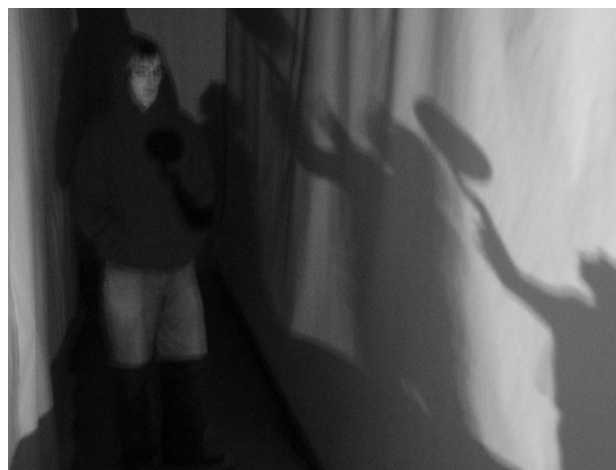
21 Ben Bracken in conversation on April 6th, 2006.

The aesthetic elements that relate these pieces are also what distinguish them. In both I am dealing with the dialectic of interior and exterior. In *Shadows* the participant is asked to enter from the outside and descend deeper into the interior. The sound marks and coaxes the participant as they explore the depth of the space and go further from the exterior and come to a fixed corner, an ending, a limit where they discover only a perfectly shaped form of themselves abstracted by light. While *Shadows* focuses on the inner, *Inhabitants* expands the vastness of the exterior. Coming from inside a building, the viewer/listener looks through doors to the outside, the sound floating in an uncharted space, integrated into the darkness of the infinite expanse of the unknown. The dominant presence of black, and the subtle emergence of sound and form, leave much room for imagination to soar. In *Shadows* the sound has a direct relationship to the limiting aspect of the space and the movement of the participant, it becomes something that can be concretized — an instrument, an object.

The relationship the participant has to light in both pieces is also quite different. In *Inhabitants* the light comes from an unexplained source and is untouchable while in *Shadows* the light is the very element that makes the piece interactive and the medium with which the participant has physical contact. In *Inhabitants* it is an ephemeral element concretized into images on water, whereas in *Shadows* it is something that can be interfered with but also a projection of masked identities with unclear boundaries and possibilities.

Related to this is also the aesthetic use and exploration of projected blacks and whites. I have become obsessed with the notion of projected black and its limitations. In *Inhabitants* I wanted to create an absence of light and a pervading sense of infinity. I was careful how I masked the projector to make the fountain's depth unknown. It is almost impossible to make projected black light invisible but I think with the black sediment in the fountain, I came close. As mentioned before there is much use of black and

negative space in the piece and I hope the presence of the black mixed with the blackness of the exterior space left dream space. In *Shadows* we experience the opposite. Going inside a space we discover total white, also dealing with negative space but this time by bringing the inescapable physical limitation of the space to light and creating a simultaneous feeling of finiteness and void. How the participant relates to the projected blacks of other shadows, I can't be sure. Perhaps these faceless shadows emerge like apparitions out the vacuum of memory and invade their present state of mind.

In *Shadows* there is an invitation for movement, while I hoped that *Inhabitants* would render the viewer motionless.

> Immensity is within ourselves. It is attached to a sort of expansion of being that life curbs and caution arrests, but which starts again when we are alone. As soon as we become motionless, we are elsewhere; we are dreaming in a world that is immense. Indeed, immensity is the movement of motionless man.[22]

For both pieces the level of sublimation will be different for every participant based on what they are bringing to the space and where they will allow themselves to go. I do not want to analyze this work in a psychological context because I am hoping that the work has more of a phenomenological effect on the participant. I hope for the opposite of intellectualization — to tickle a portion of the participant's dreaming consciousness and have them walk away with a nuanced sense of time diversion. Though presented in specific contexts, hopefully when a participant perceives these situations, they are not embedded in a specific context, but will spark an "inner light." I think this concept will continue to resurface in my future work regardless of the media that I choose to work with.

I was not interested in presenting an idea of "origin" either about the location or about myself as the artist. What makes these pieces complex is

---

22 Bachelard, 184.

the possibility of the whole–the sound, the video and the space interfacing–
and all the possible ways that this could be perceived. The work is not
dependent on being a "whole" however, because the level of sublimation
cannot be marked, or the trigger for an individual's psyche understood.
"Knowing must therefore be accompanied by an equal capacity to forget
knowing. Non-knowing is not a form of ignorance, but a difficult
transcendence of knowledge."[23]

      I want to dispel somnolence with waking dreams and not tie the
participant to any metaphorical meanings but instead give them the space to
free their imagination.

          "L'espace m'a toujours rendu silencieux" – Jules Vallés[24]

---

23 Bachelard, xxi.

24 Jules Vallés quoted by Gaston Bachelard, 183.

Bibliography

Bachelard, Gaston. <u>The Poetics of Space: The Classic Look at How We Experience Intimate Places</u>. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon Press, 1964.

Baudrillard, Jean. <u>Simulacra and Simulation.</u> Trans. Sheila Faria Glaser. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1994.

Bracken, Benjamin. In conversation on April 6th, 2006.

Chion, Michel. <u>Audio-Vision: Sound on Screen</u>. Ed. and trans. Claudia Gorbman. New York: Columbia University Press, 1994.

De Certeau, Michel. <u>The Practice of Everyday Life</u>. Trans. Steven Rendall. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988.

Goldwin, Malcolm. <u>The Lucid Dreamer: A Waking Guide for the Traveler Between Worlds.</u> New York: Simon and Schuster, 1994.

Harvey, David. <u>The Condition of Postmodernity</u>. Oxford: Blackwell, 1990.

Kaye, Nick. <u>Site-Specific Art: Performance, Place and Documentation</u>. London and New York: Routledge, 2000.

Kubisch, Christina, Carsten Ahrens, Hans Gercke, Antje von Graevenitz and Christoph Metzger. <u>Klangraumlichtzeit</u>. Saarbrücken, Germany: Kehrer Verlag Heidelberg, 2000.

LaBelle, Brandon. <u>Site Specific Sound</u>. Critical Ear series: addressing the acoustical. Errant Bodies/Selektion with Ground Fault Recordings, 2004.

Suderburg, Erika. <u>Space Site Intervention: Situating Installation Art</u>. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000.

Toop, David. <u>Haunted Weather: Music, Science and Memory</u>. London: Serpant's Tail, 2004.

Viola, Bill. Reasons for Knocking at an Empty House. London: Thames and Hudson, 2005.