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#### **ABSTRACT**

Surprising artistic interventions in the landscape of the public everyday are psychologically, socially, and politically beneficial to individuals as well as their communities. Such interventions enable their audiences to access moments of surprising inspiration, self-reflection, and revitalization. These spontaneous moments may offer access to the experience of distance from the rational "self," allowing the irrational and purely emotive that resides within all of us to assert itself. It is this sensual instinct that all we too frequently push aside, particularly in the public realm, for the sake of our responsibilities. Urban communities in particular are persistently accosted by visual and aural advertisements and consumerist lures, that further discourage individuals from accessing their non-rational selves. Yet, I argue that it would improve the health and vibrancy of our communal lives if we encountered among others in public, even for a moment, the strong feelings of sudden elation or confusion that we generally consider to be private. I also argue that an addition could be made to the already diverse oeuvre of artistic approaches that comprise the realm of "sound art" and that it may be termed "musical intervention art" – or, simply put, music played in a circumscribed area in the form of an outdoor installation, that is designed to accost, surprise, overwhelm, and through this, actively engage. This article will describe an imaginary example of musical installation art.

#### **KEYWORDS**

public art, self-awareness, artistic interventions, High Line, music

# Public Art as Aural Installation: Surprising Musical Intervention as Civic Rejuvenation in Urban Life

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## • The Need for Surprising Aesthetic Interventions in Public Urban Spaces •

Surprising creative interventions amid the business of daily life yield an important opportunity to all individuals: the opportunity to access an emotional, sensual, and spiritual self in the public realm, alongside other members of the community, rather than in private as is most often the case. Such public-space interventions encourage necessary pauses that lead first to spontaneous moments of too-rare stillness, then to connection with uncensored memories and buried emotions, and finally to reflection, self-discovery, and the accompanying disorienting yet revitalizing feelings. While surprising artistic interventions in daily life may include everything from an interactive performance that takes place amid a rush-hour crowd at a train station, to a passing car that has been decorated in an unusual, striking way, the key to the interventions under consideration here is that they are created apart from the needs of

the market. Such works seek to intervene in a daily life that is dominated by aesthetic experiences which are – however exciting or beautiful or even surprising they may be – primarily supportive not of individuals, but of the capitalist system.

Surprising artistic interventions in our most frequently traveled public spaces, and the aesthetic experiences they inspire, are distinguished from the purview of what thinkers from Henri Lefebvre to Yuriko Saito have called “everyday aesthetics.” Everyday aesthetics calls attention to the possibility that we may experience aesthetically, and thus be significantly affected by, everything from standard-issue street signs or telephone poles to cafeteria-issued silverware or door handles. In this, it takes seriously all aesthetic experiences that do not occur in reaction to “fine art” as it is traditionally conceived. While the notion of everyday aesthetics is fundamental to what is being argued here, surprising creative interventions are, contrastingly, designed to shock, to obstruct, to interrupt, to disrupt, to disorder, and thus aggressively alter the everyday landscape.

Inspirational interventions in the landscape of the public everyday are psychologically, and ultimately socially and politically, beneficial to individuals as well as to their communities. They are valuable in that they enable people to more frequently access moments of surprising inspiration, self-reflection, and revitalization in public, especially in our busiest public places in which so many have become comfortable that they largely navigate their daily experiences “on autopilot.” Contrastingly, in these spontaneous moments, akin to the disorientation we often feel when adjusting to foreign cultures and languages, people may experience a feeling of distance from the rational “self” that enables access to the irrational and purely emotive aspects that reside in all of us. It is this sensual instinct – i.e. pertaining to our raw, emotional senses – that we too frequently push aside, particularly in the public realm, for the sake of our schedules and responsibilities. This experience of “taking a pause” is often considered unnecessary in the practical sense. Yet I argue that it would improve upon the health and vibrancy of our communal lives if we encountered among others in public, even for a moment, the feelings of sudden elation or confusion that we generally consider to be private, but that so many humans have experienced.

More frequent opportunities for creativity, and the independent thinking that creative activity revitalizes within the individual, can increase our awareness of our selves and our surroundings, as well as our desire

and ability to engage more empathetically with those we walk amongst. Independent thought can indeed translate into deeper understanding of others. We typically distinguish ourselves from those with whom we share our communities according to such “external” characteristics as our occupations, our religions, and our wealth. But the more we are able to access ideas and feelings gleaned from within, from our natural, irrational instincts – our “inner” selves – the more that we can view others as similar to ourselves. It is in our instincts and emotions that we are most like other humans.

Much of the human desire to segregate and separate is borne of conceptions and impressions we have gained not only from the hierarchies of collective social life, but also from the values of capitalism. While any neighborhood would benefit from creative interventions, and rural life creates its own unique needs and concerns, urban communities are more persistently accosted with visual and aural advertisements and consumerist lures that further discourage individuals from accessing moments with their non-rational selves.

Such moments are simultaneously quiet (as in conversations with ourselves) yet stimulating, and function as a medium for revitalizing knowledge about oneself. Such increased self-awareness is vital to the development of an empowered and engaged individual, each of which is, in turn, a building block of an empowered and engaged public. I do not intend to argue that art is entirely redemptive and encourages only positive attributes. Rather, my argument is that powerful artistic experiences hold the potential to expand self-knowledge and thus enable liberation (from given ideas) and empowerment. This provides the possibility for the individual to become more aware of his or her own true self, as well as, therefore, increasingly open to, and interested in, connection with others and the spaces we all share.

This link between inner development of the individual and a more energetic public sphere goes far beyond the assertion that music can encourage productive emotions. While this is the first step in my argument, the key is that a “public” consists of individuals – many of whom, at least in the United States, are constrained by the kind of liberal self-interest that is encouraged by American democracy and the accompanying political culture.<sup>1</sup> This focus on the individual, and on “possessive individualism,” provides a haven for a “lazy” public sphere in which meaningful interaction and debate are rare.<sup>2</sup> Capitalist pursuits tend

to emphasize work responsibilities, societal divisions along those lines, and material success. If more individuals could experience moments that are untouched by either the market or rationality, and where there is a concentrated focus on the senses and the needs of the “spirit,” then individuals would be, at the very least, more equipped to approach the world in a manner attuned to needs that do not concern merely daily tasks, standard labels and distinctions. At most, individuals would gain genuine connection to a notion of self-interest that intrinsically includes an interest in the community.<sup>3</sup> Inner development does not directly give birth to more empathetic socialization, but it can pave the way to developing understandings of ourselves and the world that prioritize human emotions and associations which transcend the dictates of the market and simple self-interest.

Theoretically, frequent experience with a variety of public interventions may, over time, aid in the development of new “needs” within the individual and her community: specifically, creative, emotive, and sensual needs may gain priority over rational, market-sanctioned, and societally-approved needs. It is the hope of this author that at the very least, the presence of surprising artistic and sense-based interruptions of our city streets will combat some of the redundant advertisements, their unsolicited corporate “advice” that instructs us on how to amplify our looks or our lives through various products, and their societal “warnings” that implicitly teach us what is “sexy” or “normal,” with which we are bombarded with every day in media-saturated, twenty-first-century urban life. Surprising artistic interventions may initially provoke the very same senses that advertising aims to tweak, but unique creative moments are more likely to guide you into your truly independent inner world, as they aim to be fresh, unusual, obtrusive, and thus more difficult to ignore. Surprising artistic experiences are intended to force you to think about the current moment, and the space, and yourself, in a more thoughtful way than is generally needed to filter through billboards and posters. It is also important to make the point that it is a different (and usually surprising) experience in and of itself to engage in a creative installation that you know serves no clear “purpose” in our market-based economy, that is clearly not persuading you to try anything that requires a purchase. This is valuable in and of itself.

By providing an outlet in open public space wherein one can indulge freely in emotion, individuals could momentarily encounter the vastly unexplored terrain of the inner self that may often be revealed through seeing, hearing, touching, even smelling or tasting, powerful stimuli. Thus,

creative experiments in public space enable simultaneous release and self-education within the individual. Our irrational and thus truly free responses to the various provocations of life are often repeatedly put on hold or left veiled, as contemporary society enables us to be quite successful without needing to feel those parts of ourselves that neither the market nor societal rules and ethics speak to. These inner realms – our uncensored and yet-to-be-ordered thoughts and feelings, values and ideas – are often ignited through aesthetic experience. When, for example, we stand in front of a breathtakingly sinuous sculpture that seems like it could bend before you, or hear the strains of a bittersweet melody, art can tug at those often unstirred nooks inside of ourselves which we subconsciously put on reserve so that we can engage our daily responsibilities and focus on our goals – which for most of us, tend to revolve around the ability to earn money, to keep a job, to buy a house, and other such financial markers of success.

Savvy marketing techniques and various forms of propaganda aim to tug at the very aspects of our inner selves that I am describing here. We know through historical events, as well as the seemingly immeasurable strength of our ever-growing consumer system, that these methods of persuasion are often fascinatingly influential on the human psyche. They are thus manipulations of our inner selves. Such powerful propaganda preys on the vulnerability of the parts of our personalities we believe to be most private, through both the natural excitement of inclusion and the power of want, by creating longings for certain goods and capabilities. The potency of the ostensibly non-threatening nature of mass opinion in American social life demonstrates this.

Popular opinion, with its elusive boundaries and far-reaching tentacles, is a form of both marketing and propaganda rolled into one. It is far too easy to access a watered-down understanding of powerful emotions, of our needs and desires, when it is thrust at us in countless ways – from television commercials to the romantic comedies of Hollywood – in contemporary life. It is much more difficult, and there often seems little immediate reason, to take the time and energy to attempt to ascertain our own true passions. It is in fact not a mere manipulation of emotion that accesses our true “inner” selves but rather sensual (of the body), and spiritual (of the ever indefinable “spirit”) experiences – particularly when such experiences are surprising – that intervene in our quotidian emotional lives and reveal a more complicated, more thrillingly exhausting inner world.

Being struck by unfiltered emotions that have yet to be understood can be temporarily debilitating, and it can be vividly exhilarating, but it is always a rare opportunity for seeing the world anew. When surprising collisions with beautiful art set a light to such powerful emotions, it can overtake us so suddenly that we are literally unable to control it; we may feel uncomfortable or confused, as well as perhaps sweaty or red in the face. At some point or another, we have all been overcome by emotion in a way that has forced us to shield our face from others, or run to the nearest bathroom to throw cold water on our hot skin. It is this sort of temporary loss of control that is the vital desired response to public experiments with creative stimuli, and a valuable “good” in the creation of self-aware individuals and publics. It is not that, for example, beautiful music in public is intended to bring tears to all who hear it, although this may happen, but rather that a public intervention employing music would hopefully not be able to be ignored in the way that we are so easily able to avoid and push into the background so much of urban noise.

Instead, the force of an aesthetic moment in “grabbing” you as you go about a “regular” day could provide you a potential moment of true distraction, a private world of raw emotion experienced among so many others in the streets. This enables a chance to feel deeply, suddenly and without explicit preparation, unlike the planning for emotion that often takes place when attending a wedding or a funeral, or a spiritual or religious place of worship or contemplation, or even a museum exhibit or concert. It is key that we are able to come into contact with such out-of-place collective opportunities for the very private disorienting feelings of joy and pain and suffering and loss that are largely universal to all humans. These sorts of public experiences will enable interaction and understanding among a diversity of urban inhabitants who share city streets, but often not much else.

Thomas L. Friedman’s recent op-ed in *The New York Times*, entitled “This Column is Not Sponsored by Anyone,” called attention to the increasing ways in which our everyday lives and its institutions are decorated with corporate logos. This is an unfortunate truth all across America as well as the globalized world, but is even more true in urban contexts where the influx of both information and various forms of advertising is far more frequent and densely situated than it is in suburban and especially rural environments. Friedman discusses Michael Sandel’s new book, *What Money Can’t Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*, and its astute reminder that markets are not neutral beasts determined simply by pure economic forces, but are rather powerful and elusive mechanisms that

play a considerable role in our public spaces, interactions, and relationships.<sup>4</sup>

Friedman writes that:

Throughout our society, we are losing the places and institutions that used to bring people together from different walks of life. Sandel calls this the “skyboxification of American life,” and it is troubling. Unless the rich and poor encounter one another in everyday life, it is hard to think of ourselves as engaged in a common project. At a time when to fix our society we need to do big, hard things together, the marketization of public life becomes one more thing pulling us apart.<sup>5</sup>

In other words, we should be working together on immense projects like seeking ways to fix the inequalities in our society and the ongoing threats to our environment. The need to accomplish those universal goals becomes even more an uphill battle when citizens, on both the local and global levels, fail to easily identify themselves with a diversity of others. This is exacerbated by the leveling quality, or the lack of creativity and independent thought, encouraged by corporate advertising.

“Skyboxification” refers to the ways in which even widely-appealing public activities, like attending a sporting event in America, have become sites of de facto segregation between the more and less privileged segments of society – the 1% sits in the skybox, while the rest of us shiver or bake in the outdoor elements. As we separate into classes in even the most theoretically democratic of public spaces, it becomes even more difficult to increase vibrant connectivity – that enables, or at least paves the possibility for, a desire for, discussion, and compromise within the public realm.

What Friedman and Sandel call attention to here is not only the actual income inequalities between classes that are by all accounts growing steadily in the United States, but also the psychological, emotional, and ultimately political divide that this creates among a diverse public. If our public spaces are becoming less vibrant for exchange and interaction, then it would be greatly beneficial to renovate our communal environments so that they can transcend the stifling economic realities of 2012 and beyond, and encourage dynamic conversations and activities to flourish on our streets and in our parks.



Sandel's explanation for why consumerism has enveloped even the most intimate or traditionally civic-centered activities concerns the results of the Cold War, Friedman argues. With the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the consummate end to both the ideology and practice of communism in most parts of the world, it seemed in the popular mind that capitalism had prevailed and with it, the accompanying belief that market forces could and should determine and create societal good. Friedman also brings our attention to Sandel's assessment of the particularly disturbing trend that this market-centered development tends to now begin at a young impressionable age, "market values are crowding out civic practices. When public schools are plastered with commercial advertising, they teach students to be consumers rather than citizens."

I argued above that creative experience and independent thought is required in order to question the ever-more-natural-seeming inequalities and market virtues of contemporary popular life. In addition, diverse and interactive social activities are the foundation for individual interest in community life and democratic life. One such activity can be seen in what Jacques Rancière terms "relational art." Rancière's definition of politics – culled from a contemplation of the role of aesthetics in public life – is useful here:

In "relational" art, the construction of an undecided and ephemeral situation enjoins a displacement of perception, a passage from the status of spectator to that of actor, and a reconfiguration of places. In both cases, the specificity of art consists in bringing about a reframing of material and symbolic space. And it is in this way that art bears upon politics. Politics, indeed, is not the exercise of, or struggle for, power. It is the configuration<sup>6</sup> of a specific space, the framing of a particular sphere of experience...

Relational art, also termed relational aesthetics, and identified as such by French art critic Nicolas Bourriaud in his 1998 book *Relational Aesthetics*, refers to an approach to art practice that experiments with creating active environments that viewers can participate in, rather than objects which the viewer merely looks at. Practitioners of relational art attempt to create a communal atmosphere through the design of the artwork so that the boundary between creator and observer is reduced or eliminated. Relational art is in this sense inherently political and democratic in that it encourages any potential audience to become a decisive actor – an active participant rather than a passive observer. In *The Politics of Aesthetics*

(2004), Rancière argues that art is intrinsically political. He elucidates how both art and politics – our collective lives in the public – create social environments; they are forces that shape how we look at our world, and how one can interact within it. He believes fundamentally in a radical aesthetics, according to which we can transform ourselves as well as our everyday realities through artistic experience.

If indeed politics concerns primarily the arrangement of public spaces and institutions, the relationships between them, and the relationships between all of us who inhabit and experience them, then the feelings we access in public spaces are vitally important to healthy political life. Rancière believes that aesthetics that engage individuals and the spaces in which they live and interact, hold valuable potential for initiating change within our understanding of the political. Friedman concludes his own thoughts with Sandel's main lesson in navigating and revitalizing the contemporary, advertising-saturated public landscape: "Democracy does not require perfect equality, but it does require that citizens share in a common life...For this is how we learn to negotiate and abide our differences, and how we come to care for the common good."<sup>7</sup>

To aid in envisioning the power of a surprising artistic intervention, the last section of this paper provides a detailed example of an imagined artistic intervention in urban public space that uses particular pieces of music, arranged in the overlapping manner of a collage, to access the powerful emotions that all aesthetic experiences have the potential to evoke.<sup>8</sup> The aim of this imaginary sound artwork, and others like it, is to first arrest passers-by and then encourage them to feel deeply amid many others listening to the same musical sounds. This would be achieved through the creation of a compressed, encompassing environment within a larger outdoor area. Generally speaking, music that is played in public spaces is intended not to extract listeners to a "private world" that encourages alertness to one's own ideas and desires, but to put them in the mood to buy various commercial items or to subdue them while they wait for an appointment. But someone walking through an outdoor installation such as I have proposed, where the need to sell and persuade is clearly absent, would be able to more likely feel as though they have entered a new land where music suddenly and seemingly effortlessly drapes over them, abruptly heightening sensations and, accordingly, cognizance of oneself. Such occurrences would potentially aid urban dwellers in experiencing moments of self-awareness in public space.

It should be noted that what is argued here is not that only public interventionist art can achieve the goal of spontaneously, deeply, engaging people in public spaces, or that the imaginary project I will propose is the best way to achieve this goal. Rather, the most valuable idea put forward here is that creativity can provide us access to our inner terrains – those realms that are untouched by logical processing and the unavoidable rational order of civilized daily life. As we have all experienced after a moment of spiritual revelation, or a moment of awe in the vastness of nature, or when encountering a buried recollection, or having a good cry after a loss or disappointment, or a sweaty celebration filled with laughter and dance, strong feelings of the private self can awaken, revitalize, and renew. It is the importance of encouraging these feelings that I want to emphasize here. There are certainly many approaches to inspiring aesthetic experiences and the accompanying independent thought they can yield, and public art is only one of these avenues. I highlight it here as a way to democratically confront people amid the business of everyday life with opportunities for rejuvenation through connection with the sensual, the purely emotive, the abstract, the truly free.

### • How Public Spaces can be Sources of Sensual and Spiritual Awareness •

While considering the need to increase both self-awareness and communal connectivity in our urban public spaces, I came across a gem of an article in the travel section of *The New York Times*: “Where Heaven and Earth Come Closer.” In this piece, Eric Weiner, author of *Man Seeks God: My Flirtations With the Divine*,<sup>9</sup> describes the feeling of losing oneself in the quiet, grandeur, or inarticulable “spirit” of a physical space, and identifies such an experience with the discovery of a “thin place.”<sup>10</sup> The article’s primary message, developed in the context of travel and the disorientation often produced by temporary displacement from the comfort of the everyday, spoke to me of feelings that we can encounter most anywhere, not only on distant journeys. I believe these feelings are of great importance to the invigoration and development of the public sphere.

A public is built first on individual behaviors and passions, and second on the desire and ability of those individuals to interact often and in

a variety of ways. The public, viewed as a complex and active machine, is essentially tantamount to the individuals who live in it and develop its intricacies. While collective phenomena such as historical narratives and ideologies are often the noticeable “costume” of a public, it is the sweat and tears of those wearing that clothing that truly develops a public pumping with activity. In other words, just as a relationship is made stronger through the actions that result from love, not simply through its verbal profession, a public must be reborn often and consistently through individual behaviors and interactions.

The more that individuals can relate with energy to a space, and move through a space with their daily blinders lifted, keenly aware of their own bodies, their movements in space, their every sensation, every spark of emotion, the more that public spaces can become less “thick” in Weiner’s terms, and increasingly “thinner” for a greater diversity of people. “Thinness” conveys a sense of lightness – a feeling that you have suddenly lifted a load off of your shoulders as you take a breath from the “thickness” of the everyday world and encounter yourself in a slower, more tactile and cognizant way. In other words, thin experience equates to a spiritual experience that is encouraged or brought on by physical space. When a public space becomes something we cannot simply run or drift through, cannot easily relegate its structures and amenities to a view through logistical lens, cannot just encounter without becoming alert to our presence within that space, then that communal place has gained the ability to distract us, to engage us, to temporarily wake us from our usual responses and thought processes.

One of Weiner’s key points is that thin places are not always obviously identifiable. They can appear in the most surprising locales, and one person can experience “thinness” where another may fail to find it. Still, some places – whether overtly “spiritual” or overtly not so – are almost universally experienced in such an arresting manner. Places like this might include the Wailing Wall, or Mecca, or St. Peter’s Cathedral in Rome, or quite differently, the Grand Canyon or Niagara Falls. Still, there will always be some surprising places that catch us completely off guard in their ability to strike us with a sharp prick of sensation, to shake us up, to make us want to sit and think and stay. Nonetheless, well-known public spaces that are not overtly spiritual by design can and should be made to be more supportive and encouraging of “thin” occurrences. This could potentially be achieved through creative interventions in such places. “Thin” experiences in “thin” places make us temporarily and spontaneously

leave our rational selves. In the ensuing limbo between pure passion and logical understanding, we forget a little bit about who we are in our market-and schedule-dominated everyday lives, and learn more about who we are when suspended from the defining pressures of our rational goals and desires.

Weiner reminds us that a “thin” place is encountered organically, and often by accident. It is not a rational experience. He argues that when we do experience such intangible “thinness,” we become momentarily disoriented; we may forget where we are, feel a disarming but often fulfilling change in our moods and attitudes, and otherwise replace our routine and characteristic behaviors with a fresh approach to the world around us, and to our role in it. Weiner attempts to define the slippery outlines of what he terms such a “thin place”:

I’m drawn to places that beguile and inspire, sedate and stir, places where, for a few blissful moments I loosen my death grip on life, and can breathe again. It turns out these destinations have a name: thin places...They are locales where the distance between heaven and earth collapses and we’re able to catch glimpses of the...transcendent or, as I like to think of it, the Infinite Whatever.<sup>11</sup>

The potential for us to find such a feeling of disorientation and invigoration without having to leave for a distant unknown land, but rather among the landmarks of our daily responsibilities, can yield great rewards in the revitalization of our public lives. The transcendence that Weiner finds in thin places equates to the self-knowledge (learning about who we are) that, I argue, one locates in thin places. Although transcendence commonly describes something far beyond, whereas connection to our senses and emotions concerns realms deep within the individual, the feelings yielded are parallel. Looking far beyond the world is in at least one important sense the same as looking deep within oneself. Whether we are looking “up” (beyond earthly conditions) or “down” (beyond earthly reason), the key is that we are temporarily “leaving” the confines of civilized, material life.

The experience of “thin” places is akin to the experience of surprising artistic intervention. Moments like these (which can be brought on by certain places or riveting artistic moments, as well as by a vast diversity of other experiences) encourage us to become disoriented, and in this, to take the time to think more deeply and thus more independently.

As we slow down and engage with our inner selves (we transcend the veil of civilization that drapes over our emotions), rather than take for granted who we are already established to be among our families, neighbors, and at work, we may gain increased ability to interact empathetically with other people. Once the labels are shed, and we can feel, at least for a moment, without the burden of the rational knowledge of who we are in the world, we can recognize our most base and vulnerable qualities and thus our inherent connectedness to others.

Weiner also points to the paradox of spiritual experience – however we may define it: theoretically we may experience the spiritual anywhere and anytime, yet we usually pursue it in certain expected places during certain expected rituals. It would be beneficial to more actively encourage spontaneous spiritual moments in our everyday lives as these temporary transcendences are a source of knowledge for a more empowered populace that is the foundation to a vibrant and inclusive public sphere.

Spiritual moments in the sense described here can be accessed through powerful aesthetic experiences. In the early twentieth century, John Dewey argued that we can only understand the nature of aesthetic experience by first considering those observations, feelings, and interactions that inspire the creation of art in the first place. Art is inspired by our universal human experiences; the tools and materials of artworks are sourced from life itself – and especially those aspects of life that we share across all cultural boundaries. In line with Aristotle who famously declared in his *Politics* that man is by nature political, Dewey adds that human experience is inherently social: “the material of aesthetic experience in being human – human in connection with the nature of which it is a part – is social. Aesthetic experience is a manifestation, a record and celebration of the life of a civilization, a means of promoting its development...”<sup>12</sup> The first aim of engagement with art is solitary experience with “our spiritual selves.” Yet, as I argued in the previous section, this very much supports what Dewey believes to be the ultimate goal of art: to incite fulfilling social interactions.

Weiner’s attempt to “loosen his grip on life” counterintuitively supports the importance of engaging life as it demonstrates how vital it is for all individuals to experience such an interruption of conscious daily life, in order to access the inner subconscious self. Our “inner” selves to which I refer here are composed of a unified tension between the spiritual (as opposed to the material) and sensual (as opposed to the rational), thus our

most inner beings can be ignited by such “spiritual” moments. Although rationality is a part of our inner worlds, it is the realm most emphasized and revered in society, and thus it has become “external,” and is the least in need of reawakening or strengthening.

Through public art interventions, we can encourage such “thin” experiences that enhance our self-knowledge. Such awareness of one’s own true needs and emotions ultimately enables a richer understanding of the plight of others, and thus a more satisfying communal existence. Artistic interventions interrupt our earthly lives in order to provide an opportunity to look at our daily choices from a distanced vantage point. There is great potential that exists for public spaces – even those most utilitarian or disregarded – if experiments with public art are able to breathe new energy and disorientating capabilities into them.

### • Musical Intervention in Public Life: Sound Art •

A surprising joyful intervention in the experience of walking through a public space would help to increase the access to a spiritual, sensual, and emotional life within the expected and pragmatic everyday of our public. I have argued that this becomes even more beneficial to community building in increasingly advertising-filled visual landscapes, especially our urban centers. A musical intervention is an interesting variety to consider for several reasons. First, it is least often encountered in the ever-growing movement in public art design, which is still most commonly characterized by freestanding sculptures and performance-based works. Second, the fact that surprising musical public art is not an everyday experience provides it the ability to function even more effectively as a truly interventionist work that is intended to actually confront passers-by, not simply decorate or emphasize our shared spaces. Third, sound, with its ability to literally wrap around you like a blanket, sometimes stifling, while other times welcome and cozy, is inherently more difficult to ignore or avoid than a sculpture in a park or square that we can simply turn our eyes away from. This is particularly true for urban hubs and especially for inhabitants of cities like New York, who are provided with enough regular appearances of public art that it becomes more and more difficult to catch them off guard and provide an experience that truly jolts them awake. It is

worth examining such a public's reaction to an unexpected musical journey encountered in a restricted section of the public outdoors.

A surprising musical intervention could be categorized under the genre of what many call "sound art." What some musicologists have termed "sound art" is by nature a cross-disciplinary endeavor, and thus does not fit neatly into either the musical or fine art realms.<sup>13</sup> It most commonly, and narrowly, refers to sound sculptures, sound installations, and sound happenings or events, though it may also refer to electronic and experimental music of all kinds. Although many in the Western tradition, including the Dadaists and the Surrealists, have long experimented with sound art, the genre developed its legs among the performance and installation art ideas of the heady 1960s,<sup>14</sup> and was formally designated as "sound art" by composer and artist Dan Lander in the mid-1980s.<sup>15</sup>

The writer and sound artist Alan Licht argues that sound art can be divided into three basic categories: an installation of a sound environment that is able to be put on exhibit, and in that sense, treated just as a visual work of art would be; a sculpture that produces sound; and sound created by visual artists that complements their visual art.<sup>16</sup> He views sound art as fine art made with sound, but sound that is not organized in a melodic fashion like music. However, this thesis has been importantly refuted by some contemporary theorists. John Cage famously argued that all sounds are music, and I too struggle with accepting a strict distinction between music and sound art, as so much of "experimental" music is not "melodic" or linearly organized. Joanna Demers argues convincingly for a different point of view in her book *Listening Through the Noise*. She examines the relations between electronic music and sound art and demonstrates through example that there is considerable reason to doubt a true artistic division between the two. She does, though, agree with Licht that sound art and experimental music are not entirely identical; still, many artists of the form view their own works as both music and sound sculpture, and thus consider them to be at least similar and often tantamount.<sup>17</sup>

Leigh Landy's work on sound art led him to argue that the widely disparate field that examines sound as art uses terms that are less than useful, and often even confusing and misleading. Thus he chooses to refer to much of the practices in this realm— where the basis of the music (or art) is the sound, not musical notes— as "sound-based music."<sup>18</sup> He argues that all sound-based art is also, accordingly, sound-based music. Some sound artists believe that sound should paint an abstract picture, while



others argue that sound is figurative and thus emblematic of ideas in the world. Brandon LaBelle argues that Cage played a major role in the movement in experimental music that has shifted from the musical to what he calls the “extra-musical.” This, he explains, “can be thought of as a shift away “from music and toward sound, and, more important, from the symbolic and representational (music) to the phenomenal and nonrepresentational (sound).”<sup>19</sup> The imagined artwork I attempt to bring to life in the last section of this article functions on this vibrant borderline between representational music and nonrepresentational sound. The imagined project aims to temporarily disconnect participants from their regular perspectives so that they can transcend earthly concerns and gain energy for communal life through the relief and contemplation provided by the aesthetic experience. It attempts to disrupt and engage through both the overwhelming inclusion that loud compressed sound can provide, as well as through the emotional triggers that more traditional music can often offer.

Landy discusses how some varieties of sound art pursue connections between art and everyday life by employing sounds familiar from daily life. In this way, everyday sounds, taken from our public spaces, are reappropriated and reshaped. In a complementary point, LaBelle argues that sound and space have a particularly vibrant connection with one another. Sound has the capacity to shape and alter our attentiveness to physical space, and our navigation of the situations bubbling around us. Although how music is interpreted – and consequently the effects of music – depends on the concrete circumstances of the individual listener, music retains the potential to transport the listener by enabling a deep reflection and a transcendence of both time and reason: “Sound is intrinsically and unignorably relational: it emanates, propagates, communicates, vibrates, and agitates; it leaves a body and enters others; it binds and unhinges, harmonizes and traumatizes; it sends the body moving, the mind dreaming, the air oscillating. It seemingly eludes definition, while having profound effect.”<sup>20</sup> This exemplifies the way in which sound installation creates relational interactive artistic experience. Whether music invites you to gyrate your hips, retreat to a private corner, or both, it engages with our uncensored selves through its often unavoidable tickling of the senses.

Sound is inherently relational without the need to correlate sound to any image or set of images. A show titled “Sound/Art,” curated by William Hellermann, was presented at The Sculpture Center in New York City in 1983. Art historian Don Goddard, in that show’s catalogue essay, argued that:

It may be that sound art adheres to curator Hellermann's perception that "hearing is another form of seeing," that sound has meaning only when its connection with an image is understood...The conjunction of sound and image insists on the engagement of the viewer, forcing participation in real space and concrete, responsive thought rather than illusionary space and thought.<sup>21</sup>

This argument, that sound must connect with an image in a conscious, rational way in order to produce meaning, is misleading in several ways. To connect sounds with a visual story is a reasonable approach to both education and art, but it neglects so much of the natural power of sounds to push us through a narrative we can't quite understand – one that does not necessarily require a beginning or an end, but rather an influx of thrilling or debilitating emotion.

Every day, we are flooded with ample opportunity for "concrete, responsive thought." We are required to engage in such deductions in order to achieve success in our many rationally driven endeavors. It is not reasoned experiences that we are generally lacking in our hyper-productive twenty-first century. Our visual worlds are dominated by the rational, as to see is primarily a cognitive process of aligning colors and shapes with learned concepts. In contrast to this, hearing music is rather another form of feeling.

Since 1974, Bill Fontana's art practice has focused on the creation of aesthetic experiences through urban sound sculptures made for site-specific locations all around the world. He argues that moving the presence of a sound or a series of sounds from one ecosystem to another<sup>22</sup> provides them new definition, a reborn existence: "I began to realize that the relocation of an ambient sound source within a new context would alter radically the acoustic meaning of the ambient sound source...the act of placing this sound would have considerable aesthetic importance."<sup>23</sup> It is this idea that surprising musical interventions in public outdoor space pursue, to create a spontaneous and invasive concert hall in an unexpected place.

Fontana's contemporary, Max Neuhaus, also worked with sound installations in public urban spaces, in notable pieces like *Drive In Music* (1967), *Times Square* (1977), and *New Work (Underground)* (1978). Early in his practice he made the conscious move to create his

compositions in public settings in order to reach, “the uninitiated, in the time of their movements, within the spaces of the everyday.”<sup>24</sup> Both Fontana and Neuhaus experimented with the decontextualization of sound and the unusual placement of sounds within urban landscapes. Although their work is key to understanding the development of both sound art and public art practice, both of their approaches centered on placing ambient sounds in various nooks (often underneath the ground). The effect is that people walk over and around a continuously emanating sound. It may certainly confuse them or thrill them, but ambient sound reflects the many noises of city life, from the screech of brakes to the whirl of the subway. The goal of the imaginary sound installation that I describe below is to directly oppose the hum of the city with a collage of musical pieces one would likely not hear on a city street.

The experience of unassumingly walking along and suddenly being enveloped by beautifully composed harmonies while still inevitably entrenched in the many layers of urban noise that are unavoidable when stepping outside in a bustling city, juxtaposes the noises of the everyday – the ones we all train ourselves to ignore and override to some degree – with the strains of orchestral melodies that we usually hear either in private or in concert halls. “Collage...combines the foreignness of aesthetic experience with the becoming-art of ordinary life. Collage can be realized as the pure encounter between heterogeneous elements...”<sup>25</sup> Rancière’s point here exemplifies the goals of creative intervention projects such as the one I will describe. These spontaneous and unexpectedly inspired moments are intended to conflict with the rest of the urban happenings surrounding them. They are designed to be an intrusion, not a subtle layer of sound to add to the many already in existence. They inject the normal and commonplace with the unusual and intriguing so that one is beckoned to take note, to engage, to participate more actively and consciously, even in their most habitual environments. Too often we are merely passively engaged in the activity of our shared public spaces, missing opportunities for both internal and societal development, and taking our collective interactions for granted: “many do not actively listen...often turning the musical product into...background music. Music becomes a pacing device, a screen to block out noises of the environment.”<sup>26</sup> Partly to combat this concern, I aim to pursue public installations using sound that are designed to conflict with, and thus stand apart from the many sounds of daily life. I would like to include within an understanding of sound art, the quite simple notion of playing and hearing melodic music in shared public spaces. While I would aim to include

interventionist projects that use music in public spaces within the realm of public sound art, perhaps it would be both more useful to term the sort of interruption that the project described below exemplifies, “musical intervention art.”

In contrast, active participation encourages independent thought within the individual and thus is part of the pursuit of an increased sense of true freedom in our contemporary world, which is dominated by commerce and the power of popular opinion. It is key that this sort of intervention is made available in our most highly-traveled public outdoor circumstances. Public art in the sense that I mean here must truly be “public” in that it should not privilege those who either already regularly engage with art, or those who have the free time to explore unique projects in out of the way (though technically public) places. These sorts of interventions should easily complement diverse paths in the daily rush of life.

### • Case Study: Public Sound Installations on New York City’s High Line •

In contemplating an imagined example of a surprising artistic intervention that could be easily visualized by readers, I came to the choice of a musical project in a newly revitalized, formerly abandoned chunk of public land that is of such unique dimensions that it would likely stand out in the mind.

New York City, and in particular Manhattan, as it is a densely-developed and aggressively-populated community with strict boundaries of water that encapsulate it, is composed of a largely unrelenting grid that leaves little space for the creation of new urban architectural opportunities such as public squares. As a result, city developers and activists have in recent years approached the issue of new public spaces with heightened creativity. Among other projects in Manhattan, the last decade has seen the renovation of the Broadway intersection of Times Square into a pedestrian-only nexus in 2009, the rebirth of Governors Island into a mecca for both arts and recreation in 2010, and, also in 2009, the facelift for an abandoned stretch of railroad track on the far west side of the island into the vibrant and uniquely shaped elevated space that is now known as the High Line.

The High Line is a mile-long park and walking area, a unique strip of public land resembling an elevated concrete boardwalk, built on the neglected remains of a former railway trestle along the lower west side of Manhattan between 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> Avenues.<sup>27</sup> The original track of the New York Central Railroad had been built in the 1930s and closed in 1980, after which it was abandoned and later healthily overgrown into an urban jungle of sorts.<sup>28</sup> By the 1990s, what many considered a useless eyesore, more adventurous others enjoyed as a playland for urban experiments and explorations.

Under threat of the demolition of the High Line, the non-profit Friends of the High Line was formed in 1999 by local residents Joshua David and Robert Hammond, who fought for the area to be preserved and transformed into an inviting public space.<sup>29</sup> The first and southern section of the park, from Gansevoort Street to West 20<sup>th</sup> Street, officially opened as a city park on June 9, 2009. Almost exactly two years later, on June 8, 2011, the second High Line section from West 20<sup>th</sup> Street to West 30<sup>th</sup> Street was revealed and opened.<sup>30</sup> Friends of the High Line work with High Line Art (founded in 2009) to fill the various nooks of this designated strolling area with interesting artistic and environmental stimulus. High Line Art curates this outdoor museum of sorts with frequent site-specific commissions as well as performances and videos projected onto the walls of neighboring buildings.

I recently spent some time observing the goings-on in this relatively new public space. I witnessed the interaction between the space and the people experiencing it, the interactions among the people as they strolled or lounged, and the various artworks and creative architectural features that the unique space had to offer. Along with the commissioned works that are described below, there were also a couple of grassroots creative interventions around the High Line's entrances to the street below that served to further enliven the area. I began to think about the many possibilities for intervention in this space through music, and specifically about the potential for a public sound project that would use outdoor speakers hidden on the ground and among surrounding walls to produce a collage of carefully chosen musical pieces that would unfold one after the other like a collapsing row of dominos within a tightly-restricted portion of the walkway.

Detailed below are several recent public artworks created in New York City that were based on the ability of sound to captivate and transport. Perhaps the one that stands out the most is Stephen Vitiello's *A*

*Bell for Every Minute.* This project was initiated in 2011, commissioned for the High Line, and curated by Meredith Johnson of Creative Time, the New York City public art organization. It was installed along the 14<sup>th</sup> Street Passage, a semi-enclosed tunnel that runs between West 13<sup>th</sup> and West 14<sup>th</sup> Streets, on June 23, 2010 and remained in place until June 20, 2011. Vitiello recorded sounds of various and widely diverse bells from all over New York City and a few more from just beyond its boundaries. He documented many interesting bells, from the New York Stock Exchange bell to the United Nations' Peace bell to more quotidian bells like those of diners, churches, and even bicycles.

Vitiello wanted to use bells as a way to encompass the entirety of the city within one site-specific installation. He focused on bells as they work to punctuate the events of our daily lives – they mark celebration as well as emergency, beginnings as well as endings. High Line Art describes the project in more detail on their website:

During park hours an individual bell will ring each minute from speakers placed throughout the tunnel, the overtones fading out as the next bell begins. A chorus of the selected bells will play at the top of each hour, filling the space. The sounds will be represented on a physical sound map that identifies the location of each bell, allowing the listener to follow the geographic journey of the recordings. Collectively, the bells are a microcosm of the urban landscape as they relate to the sounds captured throughout the daily life in New York City. The site, much like a bell tower, becomes activated by the composition, inviting the passerby to engage with the High Line and its connection to the city around it.<sup>31</sup>

Julianne Swartz's sound installation, *Digital Empathy* (installed at various points along the High Line between June 8, 2011 and June 1, 2012), is unique in that it actually speaks directly to High Line visitors. According to their site,

At some sites, computer-generated voices speak messages of concern, support, and love, intermingled with pragmatic information. In other sites, those same digitized voices recite poetry and sing love songs to park visitors. Installed in 11 different locations throughout the park, the sound is transmitted through the park's bathroom sinks, water fountains, and elevators. These sites are not only unexpected places in which to encounter public art, they are places designed for individuals or small numbers of people, allowing for intimate encounters within an otherwise sprawling, communal space.<sup>32</sup>

A parallel example of a public art endeavor on the High Line that does not make use of sound but does employ the power of surprising intervention in unique fashion is Kim Beck's work. In October 2011, she used a skywriter to write messages in the open sky above the High Line that she gleaned from advertising signs around New York City. She filled the open-air canvas with common phrases that work to persuade the consumer to take notice such as "Last Chance" or "Now Open." Both the fact that these expressions were decontextualized from their capitalist purposes into open-ended statements without clear meanings, and the fact that they temporarily "hung" in the sky above the fury of everyday life, created ample opportunity for contemplation, both of our everyday language, and of the processes of advertising and the market in general. This work reflects the sort of surprising interruption – albeit via "falling" words rather than sounds – of the ordinary landscape I am arguing is most supportive of reinvigorating passers-by in busy cities.

### • An Imagined Musical Intervention in Public Urban Space on NYC's High Line •

I now ask my readers to allow me to take them along on a journey into the imagined surprising musical intervention to which I have previously made reference. The setting is a weekday afternoon in New York City, lower West side, sprawling formerly industrial avenues, the Hudson just beyond, and you have decided to enjoy your lunchtime sandwich on a bench situated on the perimeters of the newly opened elevated street near your office. Or perhaps even more easy to imagine in our never-enough-hours-in-the-day world, think of briskly walking along the carefully designed concrete promenade, avoiding the heavy fumes of the traffic in the street below, breezing through while running late to an appointment. You are checking your texts or making hurried plans on the phone, when suddenly, at first almost imperceptibly, you hear the first striking notes of a melancholy musical tune from an indiscernible nearby source. The volume level of the grand bittersweet music is far beyond that of a single street musician or even a roaming band. The music suddenly fills the air around you, forcing you to consciously acknowledge its presence.

As you walk, the music swells and fills the space around you and you feel transported, completely enveloped and warmed by the sounds, jolted from your momentary concerns and routines, from your ordinarily reserved demeanor on such a busy public walkway. As you start to pay attention, to really hear it, and you continue to walk along as you were – though now more slowly, curiosity pacing you – the envelopment will slowly loosen its grip and the sounds become softer and more distanced. Just as the piece of music you had just started to become accustomed to, fades back into the invisible record player of the earth and sky, another piece, again noticeably tilting with pain and hope, emerges from the untouchable walls of sound around you.

As reflection on the musical moment just passing could start to tweak your mind – as we are always desperate to process and organize – the new sounds begin to tickle your ears and you are back in the sensual grip of emotions and dreams. The crescendo of the next piece quickly fills your immediate environment, and as you walk, the journey that you didn't immediately realize had begun immerses you in the sensuality of the music. This process of blooming music that is rapidly followed by a fade out and then another bloom would, in this particular example, happen three times within a distance approximately equivalent to one city block.

I imagine that each piece of music would play for around three minutes. The idea is for the pieces of music to be just long enough to draw you into a moment, but just short enough that you can hardly become too used to it before it fades. Based on my own experiments, I have concluded that the use of three-minute pieces is one way to achieve this effect. The music would be intended to play through the air via hidden speakers placed both high and low. It would be designed to feel as though beautiful sounds were playing mystically from the insides of the earth and the tears of the clouds, growing heavier and closer, becoming almost tactile before receding back into the ground again.

One could choose to walk back and explore the musical tunnel in whatever direction they desire. They could choose a moment – the points along the walkway where each of the pieces of music are playing at their loudest – and go back to stand or sit there. Or they could walk through it again in reverse so that the sounds will lead into each other in an inverse fashion, or walk back and forth rapidly to again hear the musical installation in yet a new way.



Imagine that the sequence of musical interventions would consist of three short pieces, heard separately yet also together, with one fading out as the next one begins, leaving brief overlapping cacophonies. The pieces chosen for this example are famous works with which many listeners throughout history have claimed strong connections. A wide variety of combinations of musical pieces would work, with each set of pieces creating its own unique atmosphere. For this exercise, imagine that the first piece (or the last, however you may approach the installation) is the oft-covered song "Gloomy Sunday."<sup>33</sup> The version that I think of for this public sound project is the original "*Szomorú Vasárnap*," as heart-wrenchingly sung in Hungarian by Pál Kalmár. This piece is about two minutes and forty-eight seconds long. It became colloquially known early in its existence as "The Hungarian Suicide Song." It gained its infamous reputation after a high number of people committed suicide, usually jumping to their deaths, after or during listening to the song.

This song would be followed by the prelude from Johann Sebastian Bach's Cello Suite No. 1. Composed in the early 1700s, this intimate baroque piece embraces the uniquely personified voice of the unaccompanied cello, and I imagine a version played by Yo-Yo Ma. The last piece would be the *duettino sull'aria* from the opera *Le Nozze di Figaro*, composed by Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. A short duet of tangled passionate voices that blend in and out of each other, this piece has been performed beautifully by many over the years, but I hear in my mind the version performed by the Berlin Choir and Orchestra. This project could be installed and "performed" using a wide variety of musical works. The three pieces selected and described here are only one possible iteration of this potential project. Many interesting choices could be made in picking music that either works well together (similar genre and or style), or noticeably does not. Each set of potential choices would form their own unique collage, and thus experience.

The idea behind this imagined outdoor installation would be to create three separate, and concurrently one overarching, "self-less" moment(s) where the individual is drawn into their irrational and sensual unconscious. This would combine for an intended overall experience of release and rejuvenation through sharpened emotion. Emerging from the sensory overload of this musical tunnel, one is likely to feel more keenly aware of the relative silence of our public spaces, and at the same time, more alert to the musical sounds of the everyday. This installation relies on drawing you into a tunnel of collaged musical pieces, on pulling you away from the music of every day, which includes music emanating from

cars, the sounds of the cars themselves. The way that good music can make you cry, and make you dance, and shake with stirred memories, comes from the momentary leaving of our reasoned understanding of self and the world, and the concurrent immersion into the emotional abyss we all contain yet consistently push away for the sake of a calm, productive daily existence.

This project also highlights an unavoidable condition of contemporary life – that anyone can be listening to a powerful piece of music at any time, on a variety of personal technology equipment, without ever allowing those who share the public outdoors with them, to indulge with them. In those moments, individuals are having a personal experience among unaware others. Within the realm of the environment that this project constructs, individuals would be able to take part in a personal musical experience alongside others also engaging in a similar personal musical experience. All would be reacting to the same musical creations, in their own way but in an also inherently interactive way as they would likely not be alone. Just to be in the near presence of other warm bodies in a public outdoor space, even if not actively and productively engaging with them, is a substantively different experience from being alone and in private. This is important to one's awareness of sharing space with others. Just as the aim of the music employed is to serve as a contrast to the din of city life, the secondary purpose of the project's public-ness (the first being that public placement enables democratic access to the experience) is to encourage us to feel in private ways among those we do not personally know but yet with whom we share our community. This may often be viewed as undesirable or intimidating. In this sense, the work encourages not only new understandings of our selves, but also new relationships to fellow inhabitants, without the need to even exchange words.

People would be able to see each other, would be physically standing and walking and sitting among each other in a relatively confined street space. Imagined as a collection of private moments, individuals may naturally react to others, and be inspired by others and their reactions. They will be together in their concurrent personal experiences, and thus this project will create a constant (so long as people are pausing in it or walking through it) flow of new group experiences, as various configurations of individuals experience the outdoor music. The experience would be different each time the same individual walked through the installation – firstly, because of course they would never truly

be the same person each time (as Heraclitus has said, we never step into the same river twice), but also because those around them would change, and thus the collective happening as well. The music would not change for some time so that participants could listen to the same works in a variety of ways – in a different order, on different days, with different people.

The difference between this imagined artwork and the music that is habitually played over loudspeakers in a store or restaurant is of significant value. Firstly, such a musical installation would take place in the outdoors on an open street. This is itself out of the ordinary, as recorded sound, curated as a collage of several pieces of music, is not often played in the middle of a city street, with no walls or evident boundaries of any kind. Second, this imaginary work would not merely make use of recorded music as background atmosphere, but rather, it would use the music to be intentionally invasive and create a feeling of overwhelming envelopment where walls do not exist. Sounds would fall from above and below, their sources unclear, draped like musical curtains. As a result, the participant is suddenly swept into the temporary vortex of a passageway of sound and then almost as suddenly, released from the experience back into the busy street. Although some establishments, from stores to restaurants to clubs, will often play music loudly in order to attract the attention of passers-by, it is evident to all that the goal is to sell and to persuade. When individuals walking along a public street notice an artistic installation, a potential moment or experience that is free of self-interested motive and manipulation, it is inviting in a more truly disruptive way, and that is a large part of the goal of surprising creative interventions – to distract, unsettle, and hopefully renew.

## • Conclusion •

I argue in this paper that an addition could be made to the already diverse oeuvre of artistic approaches that comprise the realm of “sound art” and that it may be termed “musical intervention art” – or, simply put, music that is played in a circumscribed area in the form of an outdoor installation, that is designed to accost, surprise, overwhelm, and through this, actively engage. The idea behind “musical intervention art” is to lift musical works of art out of its many expected realms such as the theater, concert hall, museum, store, restaurant, and of course the home stereo, and into the

open and public venue of our streets and parks. Such surprising interventions are not intended to merely decorate or beautify the atmosphere (though this may too be a result of such projects), or otherwise make the public that is passing through the work, comfortable. Rather such installations would seek to sharply disrupt the habitual behaviors and thought processes of daily life and provoke unfiltered emotions and sensations through largely unavoidable immersion in sound. Such experiments would seek to stimulate and invigorate the diversity of individuals in various public locales, as well as the life of the public space itself.

The imagined artistic project described above is intended to supplement the theoretical claim made in this paper, that creativity encourages access to raw emotion, self-reflection, and the according independent thought. It is argued here that such depth of sensation and free thought is a healthy benefit first to the individual psyche, and second, to our local, as well as our global communal lives. Specifically, the benefits of experiencing surprising rejuvenating moments within the public realm lie in its ability to reawaken the truly free inner lives of human beings, enable the identification of needs and desires independent of economic life, and in this, encourage more engaged and reflective interactions with the physical public space itself, within the intellectual and emotional realm of how we understand the public, and among a diversity of individuals with whom we co-exist in our communities.

## • Notes •

<sup>1</sup> See Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, ed. and trans. H. C. Mansfield & D. Winthrop (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002). See also, among others, James P. Young's *Reconsidering American Liberalism* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1996).

<sup>2</sup> See C. B. Macpherson's work on this concept, as exemplified by the philosophies of Thomas Hobbes and John Locke, in *The Political Theory of Possessive Individualism: Hobbes to Locke*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011).

<sup>3</sup> See Jean-Jacques Rousseau's *The Social Contract and the Discourses*. trans. G.D.H. Cole (New York: Everyman's Library, 1993), for an explanation of what he calls "pitié" or empathy as a natural passion of man that co-exists with basic self-preservation.

<sup>4</sup> Michael J. Sandel, *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets* (New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2012).

<sup>5</sup> Thomas L. Friedman, "This Column Is Not Sponsored by Anyone," *The New York Times*, May 13, 2012, SR13.

<sup>6</sup> Jacques Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, trans. Steven Corcoran (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2009), 23-24.

<sup>7</sup> Friedman, "This Column Is Not Sponsored by Anyone," SR13.

<sup>8</sup> "... [A]ural stories preserve [culture] too. They preserve not only the story, but also the access to that story by making me complicit in its narration again and again. Sound evokes the permanence of participation and production." Salomé Voegelin, *Listening to Noise and Silence: Towards a Philosophy of Sound Art* (London: Continuum, 2010), 100.

<sup>9</sup> Eric Weiner, *Man Seeks God: My Flirtations with the Divine* (New York: Twelve, 2011).

<sup>10</sup> Eric Weiner, "Where Heaven and Earth Come Closer," *The New York Times*, March 11, 2012, TR10.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> John Dewey, *Art as Experience*. (New York: Penguin, 2005), 339.

<sup>13</sup> "Sound art," as a term for a category of art making, has been used more and more in the contemporary art scene, especially since the late 1990s (Alan Licht, *Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories* (New York: Rizzoli, 2007), 9), but it refers to so many different experimentations with music that it is difficult to argue that it has one comprehensive definition, that covers the diversity of art that is made with sound.

<sup>14</sup> Brandon LaBelle, *Background Noise: Perspectives on Sound Art* (New York: Continuum, 2006), xii.

<sup>15</sup> Licht, *Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories*, 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 16-17.

<sup>17</sup> Joanna Demers, *Listening through the Noise: The Aesthetics of Experimental Electronic Music* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).

<sup>18</sup> Leigh Landy, *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2007), 17.

<sup>19</sup> LaBelle, *Background Noise*, 9.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, ix.

<sup>21</sup> Hellermann, William, and Don Goddard. 1983. Catalogue for "Sound/Art" at The Sculpture Center, New York City, May 1-30, 1983 and BACA/DCC Gallery June 1-30, 1983.

<sup>22</sup> The concert hall traditionally served to present the "sounds that are separated from the outside world... a closed space separated from the outside world and the sonic domain of everyday life," in the words of Brian Eno. Licht notes importantly that the boundaries of the concert hall itself were questioned even before the advent of recording. R. Murray Schafer has traced the evolution of the concert hall as "a substitute for outdoor life." (Licht, *Sound Art: Beyond Music, Between Categories*, 73). In the twentieth century, Licht writes that while some composers experimented with using the outdoors as the concert hall, "Cage, Wolff, and Stockhausen are still thinking in terms of a performed concert with an audience, not music as a free standing installation that would attract visitors." (*Ibid.*, 75). Licht cites Stuart Marshall's and David Dunn's work in the 1970s as examples of placing sound sources or instruments in a natural outdoor environment.

<sup>23</sup> Bill Fontana, "The Relocation of Ambient Sound: Urban Sound Sculpture"

<http://www.resoundings.org/Pages/Urban%20Sound%20Sculpture.html>

<sup>24</sup> LaBelle, Bibliography of Max Neuhaus, <http://www.max-neuhaus.info/bibliography/BrandonLaBelle.htm>

<sup>25</sup> Rancière, *Aesthetics and its Discontents*, 47.

<sup>26</sup> Landy, *Understanding the Art of Sound Organization*, 22.

<sup>27</sup> [http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/h/high\\_line\\_nyc/index.html](http://topics.nytimes.com/top/reference/timestopics/subjects/h/high_line_nyc/index.html)

<sup>28</sup> <http://www.oldnyc.com/highline/contents/highline.html>

<sup>29</sup> <http://www.thehighline.org/about/friends-of-the-high-line/>

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.thehighline.org/about/park-information/>

<sup>31</sup> <http://www.thehighline.org>

<sup>32</sup> <http://www.thehighline.org/about/public-art/past-commissions>

<sup>33</sup> This is a song originally composed by Hungarian pianist Rezső Seress and published in 1933 as “*Vége a világnak*,” which translates as “The end of the world”). After lyrics were written for the song in Hungarian by László Jávör, the song was retitled “*Szomorú vasárnap*” or “Sad Sunday.” Pál Kalmár was the first to record the song in the original Hungarian in 1935. In 1936, it was first recorded in two different English versions, one by Hal Kemp and the other by Paul Robeson. Five years later in 1941, Billie Holiday made her own version, and it was her beautiful recording that brought it to popularity in America and other English-speaking countries.

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