some soundwalks (Denton, TX)

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

*some soundwalks (Denton, TX)* is an audio portrait of the Denton square - the area in downtown Denton bordered by the streets Oak, Hickory, Elm, and Locust. For three months (June - August, 2012), I went on soundwalks in this area, recording the soundscape and collecting material from each hour of the twenty-four hours of the day. The resulting work is presented as a sort of layered montage of this gathered material that takes the listener on a twenty-four hour journey through the Denton square in about eighteen minutes. The material in the work is arranged chronologically – sounds collected at 8:00am are presented before sounds collected at 11:00pm, for example.

The sounds themselves reflect the social, architectural, and quotidian character of the square: traffic going by, conversations in bars and restaurants, the internal ambience of stores and businesses, music performances, nearby warning sirens, trains entering and leaving the station from a distance.

In addition to the ambient sounds mediated only by the presence of my microphones, I have also employed spectral averaging techniques at times throughout the work by layering recorded source material and finding common frequencies to create hybrid sound events that serve to unify sounds recorded within the same timeframe. Ultimately, this sonic portrait of the Denton square is my subjective reaction to the daily soundscape of an area of Denton that embodies a strong sense of tradition combined with a newer presence of a growing population.

The United States Census Bureau reports that Denton, TX is one of the fastest growing cities since the 2010 census; ranking in as the seventh fastest growing city in the country
between April 1, 2010 – July 1, 2011.¹ This population growth has ushered in new housing and business developments across the city. Although the city is growing and changing at a rapid pace, the square in downtown Denton remains much the same as it has been for decades. The combination of a growing population, new architectural developments, and a largely “untouched” historical downtown area has implemented a fast-changing social eco-system for the Denton square. *some soundwalks (Denton, TX)* reflects this dynamic environment by documenting the changing soundscape and presenting it as a collage portrait.

This paper begins with a brief overview of *field recording* – its definition and historical development as an artistic practice – followed by recent examples showing the depth and breadth of field recording as a discipline and the radical advancements in both the aesthetic and technical domains of the work of more recent artists from the beginning of the twenty-first century. In addition to this overview of significant sound artworks using field recording, the practice of soundwalking as a discipline is addressed through descriptions of historical examples of this practice being performed by artists such as Max Neuhaus, John Cage, and Hildegard Westerkamp. This historical background serves to introduce my current project, which is located at a meeting point between both field recording and soundwalking practices.

¹ United States Census Bureau, [http://www.census.gov/popest/about/geo-topics.html](http://www.census.gov/popest/about/geo-topics.html) (accessed November 12, 2012).
CHAPTER 2
AN OVERVIEW OF FIELD RECORDING AND SOUNDWALKING

2.1 A Brief Overview of the Development of Field Recording as an Artistic Practice

Field recording may be defined as any recorded sound taking place outside of a recording studio – though the implications of the term itself include the use of environmental sound in experimental music and sound art, as well as the practice of potentially including the entire world of sound – whether these sounds could be traditionally described as “musical” or not – in an artwork.²

The practice of recording naturally occurring sounds in the environment dates back to the beginnings of phonography itself; however the contemporary status of field recording as a sonic art form in and of itself finds its roots in the musique concrète of Pierre Schaeffer in the 1940s.³ Schaeffer's concept of the objet sonore – or “sound object” – formed the basis of a listening practice based on reduction.⁴ The objet sonore was a discrete sonic unit not to be defined by the same criteria that had constituted musical sound up until the beginnings of musique concrète. Musical sound before Schaeffer's objet sonore was largely defined by its pitched properties and the hierarchical structures of musical organization that had been handed down from the traditions of Western art music. Tonality and atonality were concepts that Schaeffer wished to avoid altogether in order to arrive at an “acousmatic” listening that treated the sound being heard as an object in and of itself with no reference to a particular musical instrument, voice, or any other signifying materials that would reveal the sound's

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source. Schaeffer found the medium of recording to be useful to this end in that it allowed for
the whole world of sound – and thus the sounds of the whole world – outside of those
traditionally encountered in music up to his time to be used as musical material. In his words:
“when I proposed the term 'music concrète,' I intended... to point out an opposition with the
way musical work usually goes. Instead of notating musical ideas on paper with the symbols of
solfege and entrusting their realization to well-known instruments, the question was to collect
concrete sounds, wherever they came from, and to abstract the musical values they were
potentially containing.”⁵ Schaeffer’s first experiments with musique concrète yielded his 1948
work Cinq études de bruits, a collection of five compositions created from prerecorded sounds.⁶
One piece in this collection, Étude aux chemins de fer, consists entirely of sounds recorded at a
train station. Though Schaeffer would soon after reject the work based on his opinion that the
sounds recorded were too easily recognizable, and thus not in adherence to his quest for the
objet sonore, this early composition served an important purpose in introducing recorded “non-
musical” sound to musical discourse that would have an influence on composers and sound
artists for decades to come.⁷

Schaeffer’s use of recorded sound in compositional practice offered a freedom from
traditional compositional method that was greatly inspiring to others of his and subsequent
generations. Luc Ferrari was one composer in particular who shared Schaeffer’s enthusiasm for
recorded sound as material for musical composition. Ferrari differed from Schaeffer in that he
did not subscribe to the idea of reduced listening. Rather than attempt to hide the sources of

⁶ Kahn, 110.
⁷ Ibid, 110.
his recorded sounds and encourage a listening based on the concept of the *objet sonore*, Ferrari embraced the sources of his sounds as something with which the listener could connect with on multiple sensory levels. He discovered that by keeping the meaning of his sounds intact—the subjective personal and social meanings implied by the sounds he recorded—he could use recorded sound as musical material in a way that was more in touch with the world of associations surrounding the sonic material. This contrasted Schaeffer's *musique concrète* practice of abstracting sounds from their sources to be heard as “sound-in-itself.” Ferrari's approach to using recorded sound involved elements of documentary and narrative:

> From 1963 on I listened to all the sounds which I had recorded, I found that they were like images. Not only for me who could remember them, but also for innocent listeners. Provide images, I told myself, contradictory images which catapult in the head with even more freedom than if one really saw them. Play with images like one plays with words in poetry.

Ferrari's seminal 1967 composition *Presque Rien, No. 1* was created during a time when Ferrari placed a pair of stereo microphones facing outside of his bedroom window each morning, recording the sounds of the Dalmatian coast. Ferrari recorded the first ambient sounds of each day, yielding a collection of sources that included the sounds of fishing boats and automobiles passing by, animals such as hens and donkeys, and pedestrians walking and talking. The resulting work is a portrait of the everyday life of a place through the representation of its significant sonic characteristics. The most significant difference, then,

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8 Kim-Cohen, 177.
9 Ibid, 177.
11 *Presque Rien, No. 1* was originally titled *Presque Rien, ou, Le lever du jour au bord de la mer* (Almost Nothing, or, Daybreak at the Seashore) in 1967. The work was released on Deutsche Grammophon in 1970, and has been known by the current title *Presque Rien, No. 1* since 1977.
12 Kim-Cohen, 177.
between Ferrari's *Presque Rien, No. 1* and Schaefferian reduced listening is found in Ferrari's preference for his sounds' meanings to remain evident in the resulting work, not to be heard as sounds in and of themselves, but sounds to be understood for what they represent within a social context. With *Presque Rien, No. 1*, Ferrari broke away from the restrictions of musique concrète and in so doing inspired others to follow his path in creating sonic artworks that reflect on place and society through a narrative formal approach using field recordings.

While Ferrari’s project – in *Presque Rien, No. 1* and subsequent works – has been to link phonographic documentary with the narrative of the everyday, other artists using environmental sounds have located their work in an ecological aesthetic territory. In 1973, Canadian composer R. Murray Schafer outlined the beginnings of *acoustic ecology* – a hybrid field of study bridging art and science to address the relationship between living beings and the environments in which they live – by identifying two diametrically opposing kinds of sonic environments: 'hi-fi' pre-industrial rural soundscapes and 'lo-fi' urban soundscapes. Schafer believes that 'hi-fi' rural soundscapes allow for a greater communication between an environment and its inhabitants, and that human hearing was much more alert and able to understand the sounds of the lived environment before the ever-growing presence of 'lo-fi' urban soundscapes and all of the noise that these environments have brought with them:

> From the nearest details to the most distant horizon, the ears operated with seismographic delicacy. When men lived mostly in isolation or in small communities, sounds were uncrowded, surrounded by pools of stillness, and the shepherd, the woodsman and the farmer knew how to read them as changes of the environment.

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13 Ibid, 179.
15 Ibid, 44.
Schafer's influence on the practice of field recording in contemporary music and sound art may be viewed as an addition to his ecological concerns. He identifies a difference between a *sonic environment* – a natural environment not mediated by the artifice of recording – and an *abstract construction* – or soundscape composition, created using recordings of natural soundscapes. His position is one calling for a sonic art that seems akin to nature photography as approached with an intention to preserve the supposed purity of the natural landscape, albeit through recorded sound, and by viewing (hearing) “the world as a macrocosmic musical composition.”

2.2 Recent Examples

Many of the most influential composers and sound artists who use field recordings in their work in the present day are influenced by Schafer to some extent; he is an important figure that must be addressed when studying contemporary sound art. Though it is often not in how these artists’ works coincide with Schafer’s naturalist idealism, but in how they differ from his theories that make their work an engaging and meaningful listening experience. A number of twenty-first century sound artists use field recordings not to preserve a kind of ideal naturalism, but rather to show “man” in “nature” by exploiting contemporary technology and the aesthetics of representation in present sonic art discourse. The three examples below will trace the evolution of the use of recorded environmental sound as artistic material. While the aesthetic distinction between “music” and “sound art” is beyond the scope of this discussion,

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16 Ibid, 274-5.  
17 Ibid, 5.
these examples represent a wide range of aesthetics. Together, they demonstrate the vital role of field recording in present-day sonic art.

Stephen Vitiello is one of the most prominent sound artists in the present day. Most of his work takes the form of audio recordings based on field recordings of rural and urban environments. His approach to field recording is quite liberal with regards to how he chooses to present the environments he records. Much of his recordings are quite heavily processed and thus not attempting to depict a “pure” sonic landscape. On the contrary, Vitiello's intervention as an artist is brought to the forefront of his aesthetic in much of his work. One such example of this approach is his recording *Listening to Donald Judd*. Recorded during a residency at the Chinati Foundation in Marfa, Texas, Vitiello sought to capture the soundscape surrounding and comprising American minimalist artist Donald Judd's famous museum. In order to truly “listen” to Donald Judd, Vitiello attached contact microphones to the surfaces of Judd’s sculptures, recording the subtle vibrations of these minimalist objects. Other source sounds include the train passing through town, crickets in the wide open fields of Marfa, and the sounds gathered from a ride on a glider aircraft. During the editing process, Vitiello used extensive electronic processing on these sounds – such as digital time-stretching – often completely obscuring the sources beyond recognizability. Vitiello attributes some of the reasoning for this processing to the fact that the final mix of these recordings was made three years after his visit; and that his experience of Marfa has been “modified by memory.” The droning electronic textures of the finished release reflect the minimalist structural characteristics of Donald Judd's sculptures

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20 Ibid.
themselves. Judd's decision to permanently display much of his work – work that is characterized by an industrial, “man-made” presence – in the desert landscape of Marfa is mirrored in Vitiello's treatment of his field recordings.

An even more radical and interventionist attitude is found in the work of Japanese sound artist Toshiya Tsunoda. Rather than intervene during the mixing of his recordings, Tsunoda's handwork is present during the recording process itself. He often places small microphones inside objects such as bottles, in between sheets of metal, and in pipes in order to capture the vibrations of these objects. His work does not attempt to recreate the listening experience of a particular place as such, but rather to present the phenomenon of sound as vibrations in the air. His 2001 CD release Pieces of Air shows the wide range of his aesthetic.21 One track – entitled “inside of a pipe at the seashore 2” – was made by placing a metal pipe into the seashore, with half of the pipe submerged in water. A microphone was placed inside the pipe, and Tsunoda covers the open end of the pipe with his hand. Throughout the track, he gradually opens and closes the pipe by moving his hand both away and towards the open end of the pipe, in a kind of performative manner. What is heard is the resonance of the pipe itself. Water sounds are filtered through this resonance, and the slowly changing pitch caused by Tsunoda's hand motion focuses the listener's attention on his mediation through physical acoustic properties. Other tracks on this release focus on vibration in a different way. “Islamic Chant” – recorded in Istanbul – was made by placing a pair of stereo microphones on the balcony of Tsunoda's hotel room, reminiscent somewhat of Luc Ferrari's Presque Rien, No. 1, although in Tsunoda's recording only one unedited take is presented. Here, Tsunoda is

recording the Islamic call to prayer, which occurs several times a day and is projected through speakers on top of mosques. From the singular location of Tsunoda's microphones, one hears several of these calls to prayer from around the city at staggered times; echoing off of the buildings and eventually dissipating into thin air. As in the previously discussed track – and indeed all of Tsunoda's recorded works – the artistic emphasis is on the physicality of sonic vibration, more so than any narrative of “place” is concerned.

The work of American composer Michael Pisaro draws inspiration from the work of John Cage and other mid-twentieth century experimentalists. His interest in field recording may be observed by his Transparent City series, a collection of field recordings of the Los Angeles area mixed with subtle sine tones added at a later time in the composer's studio.22 Pisaro's interest in field recordings and instrumental compositions have bonded in recent years. One of a handful of recent projects that combines field recording with instrumental sounds is the monumental July Mountain from 2010.23 A collection of ten field recordings gathered from mountainous areas is presented simultaneously, followed by a barrage of layered instrumental and electronic sounds that include piano, percussion instruments, and sine tones that gradually take over the texture of the layered natural soundscapes. The percussion sounds – recorded by percussionist Greg Stuart, one of Pisaro's frequent collaborators– are organized into ten categories in the musical score of the work.24 The sounds Pisaro calls for include bowed snare drum, bowed woodblocks, seeds falling on a glockenspiel, and bass drum strikes with rice on the drumhead, among many other traditional and non-traditional percussion sounds. The quiet

24 Ibid.
nature of most of these sounds lends itself well to a realization within a recording studio. Pisaro creates a massive sonic environment out of these recorded textures. Pisaro's intricate performance instructions belie the simple form of the work, which the composer describes as a “(twenty) minute crossfade”\textsuperscript{25} between the layers of field recordings and the layers of the recorded percussion sounds. The result is a striking shift of perspective. Due to the nature of both the sound of the field recordings and the sound of the recorded instrumental and electronic sounds, it is almost impossible to discern when the field recordings end and when the sounds of the musical instruments begin. This illusive quality characterizes much of Pisaro's work as a composer. His careful melding of field recordings with instrumental sound serves to expand the aesthetic potential of environmental sound.

The three artists mentioned above approach field recording in ways that expand the artistic possibilities of recorded environmental sound. In many examples of present day sound artworks that involve field recording, the idea of preserving a kind of “sonic fingerprint” of a given natural soundscape with as little intrusion by the artist as possible is not desirable. Instead, there is a focus on the artist being placed directly in the environment and not hiding the artist's personal “signature.” Whether this signature takes the form of external sounds that are added to the field recording after the fact, radical approaches to filtering and processing sounds within the natural landscape itself, or combination of field recordings with more traditional instrumental sounds, depends on what the artist is attempting to convey to the listener. New technologies, new aesthetic models, and new relationships between the natural

\textsuperscript{25} Ibid.
soundscape and its inhabitants will continue to allow for the expansion of field recording as a meaningful creative activity.

2.3 Soundwalking

According to composer Hildegard Westerkamp, soundwalking is “... any excursion whose main purpose is listening to the environment. It is exposing our ears to every sound around us no matter where we are.”26 A soundwalk is usually organized beforehand based on a predetermined route that features characteristic sonic locations of an environment. These characteristics may be sounds that are unique to a given place, or perhaps sounds that are often overlooked within the “normal” state of being in that particular place, such that the act of soundwalking draws attention to these sounds in ways that direct the focus of the participants’ hearing. In this sense, soundwalking is a social act. Andra McCartney states that “[a] soundwalk is an exploration of, and an attempt to understand, the sociopolitical and sonic resonances of a particular location via the act of listening”27 A soundwalk may be taken alone, or in groups. Should a group soundwalk be taken, a leader is usually followed by the other members. The group moves in silence along a given route, with a focus on listening to whatever sounds are to be encountered along the journey. Thus, soundwalking, according to writer and sound artist Brandon LaBelle, “... captures the general drift of the meandering body.... What such instances

aim for is a deeper tuning of self and surrounding, lending to the pedestrian project of making malleable the sense of place and feelings of relatedness.”

Soundwalks often yield a heightened awareness of one's everyday environment. This was precisely the goal in composer-percussionist Max Neuhaus's LISTEN project, which began in 1966 and continued on for the following ten years. In these guided soundwalks, which first took place in New York City, Neuhaus would “... ask the audience at a concert or a lecture to collect outside the hall, stamp [the word 'LISTEN' onto] their hands, and lead them through their everyday environment. Saying nothing, [he] would simply concentrate on listening ... The group would proceed silently, and by the time [they] returned to the hall many had found a new way to listen for themselves.” With his LISTEN series, Neuhaus provided an opportunity for participants to focus their listening in an effort to transform “...'space' into place', meaning that an otherwise mundane environment could be rendered meaningful simply by listening to it. LISTEN... inspired an enduring tradition of sound art that reconstitutes the everyday through sonic interventions.”

One important artist influenced by Neuhaus's project was John Cage – the man who championed the idea of bringing “all sound” into music. His 1971 lecture/demonstration entitled Demonstration of the Sounds of the Environment constituted a ninety minute soundwalk at the University of Wisconsin, Madison. This walk was followed by approximately

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three hundred participants, all following Cage on a chance-determined route in silence, listening to the sounds of the environment.\textsuperscript{32}

Another important proponent of soundwalking is the composer Hildegard Westerkamp, who in 1978 began a project for Vancouver Cooperative Radio entitled \textit{Soundwalking}. Westerkamp walked through various Vancouver soundscapes while recording her travels. These recordings were then broadcast on the radio, an act which “... brought community soundscape into the listeners' homes and simultaneously extended listeners' ears into the soundscape of the community.”\textsuperscript{33} These soundwalk recordings were significant in that not only did they feature Westerkamp recording the environment she was traversing, but they also contained voiceovers of descriptions of the various sceneries in which she occupied; in order to form a link “… to the listener who is not physically present”\textsuperscript{34} This attempt to bring the listener closer to the sounds' source through narrated mediation is significant in that it recognizes one of the fundamental features of soundwalking from a participant's perspective: that soundwalking forms a dialogue between the activity of the soundwalking subject(s) and the environment in which the soundwalk is taking place. By providing more details of the environment through spoken narration, Westerkamp conceptually situates the listener as a participant along the soundwalking path.

Soundwalking continues to provide engaging aesthetic experiences for participants as well as listeners of recorded soundwalks. These experiences involve a focusing on listening to the sounds of the everyday with a level of attentive commitment not usually present during

\textsuperscript{32} Drever, 187.
\textsuperscript{34} Ibid, 90.
routine everyday excursions. The act of participation is a key difference between the listening activity in soundwalking and other everyday listening activities, as explained by John Levack Drever:

Taking the everyday as its context, soundwalking mingles in the everyday but is not of the everyday. Akin to other modes of cultural performance, such as the classical music concert, it is a kind of limbo activity, where the goals and stresses of everyday life are temporarily lifted, and the sensation of partaking in a performance event is invoked, but distinctively in soundwalking the relationship between participant and everyday life is conspicuously porous.\textsuperscript{35}

\textsuperscript{35} Drever, 165.
CHAPTER 3

AN OVERVIEW OF some soundwalks (Denton, TX)

3.1 Previous Experiences Informing some soundwalks (Denton, TX)

I began taking daily soundwalks at some point during the spring of 2012, with no intention of recording my journeys. I had already been active in creating field recordings in various locations throughout the North Texas region, notably in Sanger and Lake Ray Roberts State Park. Recording my soundwalks eventually began out of curiosity. I soon noticed that the sounds around me in my everyday life were interesting enough to be the basis of an entire work. One significant difference between my soundwalks and previous field recording activity was that the soundwalks took place within what I considered to be a more “everyday” context: in public areas such as parking garages, suburban streets, and inside buildings. The field recordings I had been making which were conspicuously far away from this more social context: in non-populated open fields, on lake shores, and in forest areas. These field recordings were also typically made on weekends, outside of the weekly schedule of my day-to-day life, and I began to develop a curiosity for creating a sonic documentary of sorts that followed my more routine activities.

A meeting point between my previous documentary approach to field recording and more recent interest in recorded soundwalks developed when I began recording my soundwalks through the Denton square in downtown Denton, TX. I noticed that this area was particularly interesting sonically, and rather than simply settle for recorded soundwalks of single trips to the square, I developed an interest in documenting this location on a more long-term basis. I decided to take recorded soundwalks through the square at different times during
the day and night, while following routine paths that – when taken at different times – would yield quite different results due to the socially active nature of the square. There was a more dynamic range of public activity taking place within the borders of the square that seemed to operate on different rhythmic planes depending on the time of day or night. With this realization, I became less interested in producing field recordings of sparsely populated areas, and started to make plans for a fixed media audio project located within the tradition of field recording that would show the human, man-made environment of a town square in its social, architectural, and quotidian forms.

3.2 Initial Considerations and the Recording of Soundwalks

My initial intention was to record while taking the same route through the square at different times throughout the day, and using these recordings as source material in the final project. I soon came to the conclusion that this process-oriented approach, though attractive on one hand for its consistency in providing a formal arrangement for the gathering of sonic material, was ultimately not as interesting as taking a more intuitive path for each soundwalk. I found that my chosen path would always leave me wishing to abandon it in favor of following specific sounds that I heard while walking. Another reason for abandoning this initial approach was that it ultimately limited the amount of sonic variety that could potentially be collected. I realized that it would not be possible to record both exterior and interior environments, since not all of the buildings on the square remain open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week. I decided that the most important element in defining the rules of the process was located in the time of recording, and that this stipulation alone could serve to provide a consistent
distinction for the placement of formal material in the finished work.

Thus, I set out to record my soundwalks on the square – in whatever path seemed most sonically interesting to me at the time, each and every time – with the intention of gathering material from each hour of the twenty-four hours of the day. Recording took place between June – August of 2012. Several soundwalks were made during this time.

On the first several times that I ventured to the square to record my soundwalks, I made a conscious effort to remain in motion the entire time. This mindset was later adjusted to allow for moments of standing still and recording an interesting sound that I happened to come across: construction workers digging, crickets chirping on the lawn, conversations inside a coffee house, a mariachi band performing outside, etc. The soundwalks therefore served as a starting point for collecting interesting sonic material, whether I was in motion or standing still at any given point during the expedition.

At the end of each recording session, I would listen to what I had recorded and choose which moment(s) might be useful to use in the creative work. To arrange the material that I had gathered, a taxonomic approach to organizing the sounds was naturally adopted, placing sounds into categories based on three criteria:

1. The quality of the recorded sound – as in the quality of the audio recorded with my microphones. Wind noise and other factors would often make a sound unusable, and the sound would be discarded.

2. The time of recording – specific times were carefully documented after each soundwalking session in order to serve as a formal organizational aid in the actual putting together of events in the final creative work; as I had already decided on
arranging the sounds in a chronological way based on the time of day/night (i.e., sounds recorded at 8:00am would be heard in the piece before sounds recorded at 11:00pm).

3. The similarity of the sounds captured compared to all other recorded sounds thus far – categories of commonly heard sounds were arranged and given names such as “traffic sounds,” “conversation sounds,” “music sounds,” “air conditioning units,” “interior store sounds,” “interior restaurant/bar sounds,” “bird and cricket sounds,” etc.

In addition to recording material at each hour of the day, I also recorded during the same hours on several different days. This allowed me to capture the multitude of sounds that could be heard around the square during those hours. The result was many days' worth of recorded material, which inspired me to take a collage-like approach to the realization of the finished project.

3.3 Aesthetic Context and Formal Overview of some soundwalks (Denton, TX)

The final realization of some soundwalks (Denton, TX) takes the form of an audio collage of ambient sounds recorded on soundwalks through the Denton square. The parameters for the large-scale formal arrangement of material is related to the time of day or night that the material was recorded. Aspects of formal arrangement on the smaller scale, local level such as choosing which recorded sounds to use at any given were determined intuitively. This intuitive approach allowed for an openness to the aesthetic potential of the collected sounds. The presence of the artist's “handwork” is evident in the intuitive arrangement of sonic material.
This arrangement contrasts with the imposed restraint of using sounds in a chronological manner and yields a final work that places sound events in chronological order without denoting any further constraints on the nature of how these sound events are shaped.\textsuperscript{36}

\textit{some soundwalks (Denton, TX)} exists as an intuitively arranged abstraction of the Denton square soundscape informed by recent examples of field recording works. One element of abstraction in the work beyond the intuitive arrangement of local material discussed in the previous paragraph is the use of spectral averaging; inspired by the work of artist and programmer R. Luke Dubois, particularly his work \textit{Billboard}.\textsuperscript{37} Spectral averaging is a technique of processing audio in which sonic material is digitally analyzed and average frequencies are derived from the full spectrum of the sound being analyzed. Dubois explains the affect of this technique as being akin to time-lapse photography:

\begin{quote}
Just as a long camera exposure will fuse motion into a single image, spectral averaging allows us to look at the average sonority of a piece of music, however long, giving a sort of average timbre of a piece. This gives us a sense of the average key and register of the (piece).\textsuperscript{38}
\end{quote}

Spectral averages of sonic material recorded on soundwalks were made by layering similar sounds together into a single mix, then employing spectral averaging using composer and programmer Michael Norris's SoundMagic Spectral audio plugins implemented in the software platform Max/MSP.\textsuperscript{39} Sounds from the same recorded time period were averaged to create a composite of multiple layers of recorded activity and used in the final project as formal

\begin{itemize}
\item[\textsuperscript{36}] The idea of “handwork” was explained to me in a masterclass with composer Steven Takasugi. I was inspired by his idea of using rigorous formal processes while simultaneously using material that was more personal and less capable of being defined in a logical way.
\item[\textsuperscript{39}] Michael Norris, \url{http://www.michaelnorris.info/software/soundmagic-spectral.html} (accessed November 12, 2012).
\end{itemize}
links between major sections of the work. The most prominent example of spectral averaging occurs from 0:24 – 1:40, during which a spectral average of outdoor ambient morning sounds functions to link the opening of the piece to the next formal section.

Another aesthetic element central to the work is the use of the collage format itself. This approach was chosen to organize source material taken over several recorded soundwalks that occurred at the same time of day. Presenting recorded material as a collage serves as an aesthetic reflection on the growing population of Denton through the lens of the historical downtown square area. The composite “soundwalk” that is produced is not one journey, but a multitude of journeys through the Denton square, all experienced at one time through the sonic collage format that shapes the work.

As mentioned previously, the overall form of some soundwalks (Denton, TX) reflects a layered twenty-four hour soundscape of the Denton square. The work begins with sounds collected at 7:00am. This section occurs in the work between 0:00 – 1:40, and serves as an overture of quick cut-up sound events recorded between 7:00am – 10:00am. The following section appears between 1:40 – 4:00. This section comprises mid- and late- morning sounds collected between 10:00am – 12:00pm. The sound of birds and crickets on the courthouse lawn, morning traffic, and construction work serve as a starting point for introducing more layers of audio gathered during this time. This gradual layering of sounds continues through the 4:39 mark. Between 4:00 – 4:39, sounds gathered between 12:00pm – 1:00pm are heard. These sounds include a distant train passing through, police sirens, and the warning sirens that are tested monthly in Denton, on the first Wednesday of each month at 1:00pm. The sirens begin at 4:39. The full test is heard, ending at 7:40. During this time, the ambient soundscape of the
square are heard underneath this siren texture, with spectral averaging applied to them. These sounds were captured between 1:00pm – 3:00pm. Late afternoon sounds recorded between 3:00pm – 5:00pm are heard between 7:40 – 10:07. These sounds are made up mostly of the sounds of interior buildings on the square, including the historical courthouse building, which contains a clock that can be heard ticking from the inside of the building. Also in this section are sounds from various businesses on the square, such as the thrift store and pawn shop. Not only were ambient sounds collected at these locations, but also the sounds of objects such as musical instruments, pots and pans, various glasses and bottles, and other items that were performed upon using percussive implements (sticks, brushes, etc.) with the gracious permission of the store owners. The sounds of several external air conditioning units located outside the buildings around the square are heard between 10:07 – 12:30. There is a great variety in different types of these units and they form a prominent component of the soundscape. These sounds were gathered between 5:00pm – 8:30pm. The external units fade into the next section, which feature sounds collected between 8:30pm – 11:30pm (at 12:13 – 13:13). The following section (13:22 – 16:01) contains sounds recorded between 11:30pm – 3:00am. This section is related to the beginning of the work in its quick “jump-cut” nature and is composed mostly of sounds from bars and musical performances that take place during this time in many venues around the square. Finally, the section between 16:01 – 18:18 completes the twenty-four hour cycle; presenting sounds gathered from 3:00am – 7:00am. This section of late night and early morning sounds ends the work on a quiet note. Longer sounds are heard in contrast with the shorter segments of material in the previous section. The sound of my footsteps is the final sound heard before a final fadeout.
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

The concepts and techniques found in the practices of field recording and soundwalking informed the creation of some soundwalks (Denton, TX). The resulting work is an audio portrait of the Denton square created by imposing parameters during the creative process concerning the time and place of recorded sounds to be used in the final work. This strict large-scale formal arrangement contrasts the intuitive use of material on the small-scale local level of individual sections of the work. Source material was arranged into a sonic collage to form an abstraction of the Denton square soundscape. This collage approach was chosen in order to reflect the dynamic relationship between the historical location of the Denton square soundscape and the newer presence of a growing population. A many-layered approach to the collage was adopted in order to accommodate the amount of source material that had been gathered from several soundwalks over the course of three months. The final project is presented as a composite of material from these soundwalk recordings.

some soundwalks (Denton, TX) has led to an interest in projects involving ideas of place, time, and a creative approach to documentary-based projects. I am currently developing a video project that is related to some soundwalks (Denton, TX) in its focus on local historical narrative.
WORKS CITED


