

even so, some people are of the view

Jacques Soddell

born France 1946, arrived Australia 1951

multi-speaker sound installation (14 minutes)



Notes for talk for Exhibiting Culture / New Histories, presented by La Trobe University
at Bendigo Art Gallery and La Trobe Art Institute. July 4, 2018

A. My Practice

- sound artist / video artist <http://jacquessoddell.com>
 - Theatre: *Dead Twin*, Chi Vu, George Town Festival, Malaysia
 - Dance: *Parallax*, Megan Beckwith, Gasworks, Melbourne
 - Live performances include: *undue noise*, *Liquid Architecture*, *Make It Up Club*
 - Video: *#wanderingcloud*, Klare Lanson
 - Installation: *Punctum's Public Cooling House*
 - Composition: *Frozen Moment*
- curator of experimental music series *undue noise* <http://unduenoise.org>
- presenter of *possible musics* 1983-2013 on community radio
- experimental music label *cajid media* <http://cajid.com>
- microbiologist (fungal music with Fran, *autonomousAudio*, Artspace)

Field recordings

- use field recordings, often processed beyond recognition, as the basis of most of my sound work
- "musique concrète" Pierre Schaeffer / Pierre Henri in 1940s:
- manipulated records, tapes (vs German school of electronic music)
- conventional melody, harmony, rhythm not important
- acousmatic (loudspeaker) music
- Walter Ruttmann's *Weekend* (1930) "an audio-film for radio" "photographic sound art"
- Luc Ferrari's *Presque Rien* (almost nothing) which caused quite a stir in 1966:
 - unprocessed field recordings (fishing village on Dalmation Coast in Croatia)
 - application of John Cages's theories for **4'33"** (silence isn't silent. Listen to the music around you)
 - ironically for such adventurous experimenters in sound (at GRM), *Presque Rien* was both too far away from music and too far away from the main principles of *musique concrète*.
 - Renames as *Presque Rien No.1* in 1977, later one's were further numbered and use voices and processing

Recording

- Zoom H6 / various microphones: conventional, hydrophone, contact, induction/ iPad with iXY

Digital processing

- process digitally using software tools to **create new sounds / textures**
- GRM Tools, Uhbik, Molekular, NI Spectral Delay, Paul Stretch, Wormhole, Travellizer, M4L Pluggo, Audiomulch
- assemble the sounds (compose) using Reaper DAW (Digital Audio Workstation) (2-16 channels)
- interested in shifting textures (layers)

"A remarkable aspect to 'Frozen moment' is how every sound seems to occur in a complete different space: every layer of sound is isolated from the next one creating an impressive sense of 'parallel simultaneity' on every given moment. 'Frozen moment' is a compelling release." - John McEnroe in [The Field Reporter 137](#)

B. The Painting

Thomas Wright's *Sandhurst in 1862* is a view from McIvor Hill area of Bendigo 11 years after the beginning of the gold rush which was the impetus for the city. From *somewhere near East Bendigo Pool?*

Painted the month rail came to Bendigo (September, 1862), some people see evidence of a train.

David Thomas, Bendigo Art Gallery director at the time of the restoration of the painting in 1988 wrote:

"Even so, some people are of the view that one can be seen in the background"

I see water, people, animals, buildings, churches, and the beginnings of industry, *but I don't see the train*

I see Rosalind Park, Back Creek, St. Killian's Church (before the Stone one was condemned), Knipe's Castle, Lyceum Theatre, Buckley's Flour Mill, Forest Street Wesleyan Church, All Saint's Church

I don't see

the fouling of the waterways by the miners (Royal Commission in 1858/9 into pollution of Bendigo Creek).

evidence of the Chinese who made up about 25% of the population.

evidence of the indigenous owners.

These elements that are not visible fit well with my use of sounds that are not normally noticed or recognised (ie **"hidden"** sounds, eg those captured by means of special microphones like hydrophones, induction microphones or contact microphones, and sounds processed digitally beyond recognition to create new sounds and textures.)

C. The sounds

My piece is a *sonic meditation* on Bendigo featuring such invisible/abstracted sounds as well as occasional recognisable sounds of Bendigo and its people. (I prefer "meditation" rather than "soundscape" as defined by R. Murray Schafer).

So it is a *musique concrète* using

- unprocessed natural environmental & ambient sounds, albeit some using unusual microphones eg ants crawling over contact mic, sound of branches rubbing against a wire fence in the breeze.
- digital manipulation of field recordings of Bendigo (ie some sounds may not be recognised due to sonic processing eg Pall Mall traffic turned into a drone in the latter part of the piece)
- Recording locations include (using hydrophones, contact microphones, induction microphones as well as more conventional mics):

Bendigo Creek	Dispensary Walk
Back Creek	Pall Mall
Lake Weeroona	Rosalind Park
Kennington Reservoir	Hargreaves Mall
Chinese Lion team	Queen St roundabout
Karen New Year celebration	Athletics Centre (Flora Hill)
Sacred Heart Cathedral	crows, magpies, dogs, frogs, crickets, ants
Grand Stupa	Dan Andrews apology to Chinese
Smoking Ceremony at the Conservatory (Bec Phillips)	unidentified anti-mosque protesters
Bendigo station	unidentified anti-fascist speaker
Steam train in Golden Square	unidentified policeman
Tram depot	news broadcast fragments
Woollen Mill	clay chimes
Commonwealth Games Torch relay	my voice
Deano's IJO horns (celebrating diversity during anti-mosque protests)	

For this installation I use multiple speakers (8 suspended Orb Audio speakers + subwoofer in the ceiling) PLUS 2 "sound excitors" embedded in the wall on which the painting is hanging.

Within this **semi-abstract** work there are a couple of issues I wanted to address using the "hidden" speakers in the wall hanging Wright's painting.

- I was astonished to find that even before Wright arrived in Bendigo there had already been a Royal Mining Commission into pollution of Bendigo Creek. 150 years later we still haven't solved the problem of damage to Bendigo's water, with regular enquiries addressing the problem. Bendigo is not unique. Assurances about environmental damage have proved worthless in many cases in Australian and overseas mines. What about future mining ventures like Adani?
- Also, as refugee from Europe after the second world war, my family remembers some of the anti-immigrant and anti-Catholic feeling in 1950s Australia. When I arrived in Bendigo in the 1970s I was surprised by the strongly white, Anglo-Saxon community compared to my previous residence in inner Sydney. This has changed and

Bendigo appears to have embraced diversity, so I was appalled by recent anti-mosque demonstrations here and recordings from these form part of the work, as well as Dan Andrews apology to the Chinese.

There is no correct position for listening.
Wander around the large room or stay under the speakers.
Wander under the multiple speakers or sit down and listen.
Or stand in front of Wright's painting.
Create your own story. *Cinema for the Ears*.

D. Some Reading

Cage, John. 1961. *Silence: Lectures and Writings*. http://dss-edit.com/prof-anon/sound/library/Cage_Silence.pdf

Schafer, Murray, R. 1977. *The soundscape: our sonic environment and the tuning of the world*. Rochester, Vermont:: Destiny Books.

Schaeffer, Pierre. 1952. *À la recherche d'une musique concrète* Éditions du Seuil. English translation *In Search of a Concrete Music* published in 2012

Luc Ferrari in: *In the Blink of an Ear: Toward a Non-Cochlear Sonic Art* by Seth Kim- Cohen. (Continuum, 2009). "Sound-Out-Of-Itself" p. 175-185.

English, Lawrence. 2017 "A Memory of Almost Nothing: Luc Ferrari's Listening During *Presque Rien No.1*." *Leonardo Music Journal*, vol. 27, pp. 17-20. *Project MUSE*, muse.jhu.edu/article/679691.

Shapins, Jesse. 2008. *Walter Ruttmann's Weekend: Sound, Space and the Multiple Senses of an Urban Documentary Imagination* pdf [here](#)