

Why Sound?

How might a deeper focus on sound and listening shift interactions with Museum collections?

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“Sounds cannot be known the ways sights can...
seeing is analytical and reflective.”

“Sights are knowable. Sights are nouns”

“Sounding is active and generative. Sounds are verbs...
sound is incomparable...there can be no science of sound only
sensations...intuitions...mysteries.”

“Where are the museums for disappearing sounds?”

R. Murray Schafer (1977)

Ocularcentrism

Sight is prioritized by most institutions

Sight can be considered a distanced sense

Sound is an embodied sense that connects us, via physical vibrations, to each other and our world.

Sound and listening can be a bridge to more embodied and less normative experiences with daily life.



Lost/Forgotten Sounds

What are some lost/forgotten sounds?

It might be interesting to make a list of sounds that you have heard in your life that you can no longer hear. (finding historical pictures can help illuminate lost sounds)

Try to imagine still hearing these sounds with your mind's ear.

Write descriptions of these sounds.

What does it feel like to recall these?

“...sound, like movement, is experienced as vibration” and that it
“enters our body, enlivening and energizing” (p. 243).

Beverly Diamond

Sound and listening can be beyond, thicker than sight.

Sound is embodied and multisensorial.

Possibilities for audio in/at museums

Sound can extend and transcend normative experiences with artifacts, with the building, and beyond the walls:

- soundwalks through and around your museum
- collect or present soundscapes/soundmarks of participants
- sounding your artefacts, adding sound to visuals
- musicians/artists improvising with/within your museum space
- sound mapping of institutional space and neighbourhood
- mini “podcast like” audio clips on artefacts, narratives, soundmarks, sound memories
- ...

Ethical considerations

“As part of our listening positionality we each carry listening privilege, listening biases, and listening ability that are never wholly positive or negative; by becoming aware of normative listening habits and abilities, we are better able to listen otherwise” Dylan Robinson, 2020, p. 10-11

Who is making the decisions? Who is curating?

Whose voice is centred? Whose listening stance is centred?

Resources (links on handout)

Massey Hall Sound Museum

Archive of downloadable sounds in the hall recorded before renovation (interactive lessons)

Sounds of the Forest

Interactive soundmap of audio from forests across the world

Livable Soundscape Toolkit (SFU)

Toolkit for running soundscape interaction and assessment with community members

Citizen DJ - Library of Congress

Audio Recording Archive and Beat Project by Brian Foo

Walking Lab

Art research creation projects through walking with a focus on sound

BBC Sound effect archive

Easily searchable archive of BBC audio

Thank you!

There is another video on how to best capture and quickly edit audio

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soundmuseum.ca