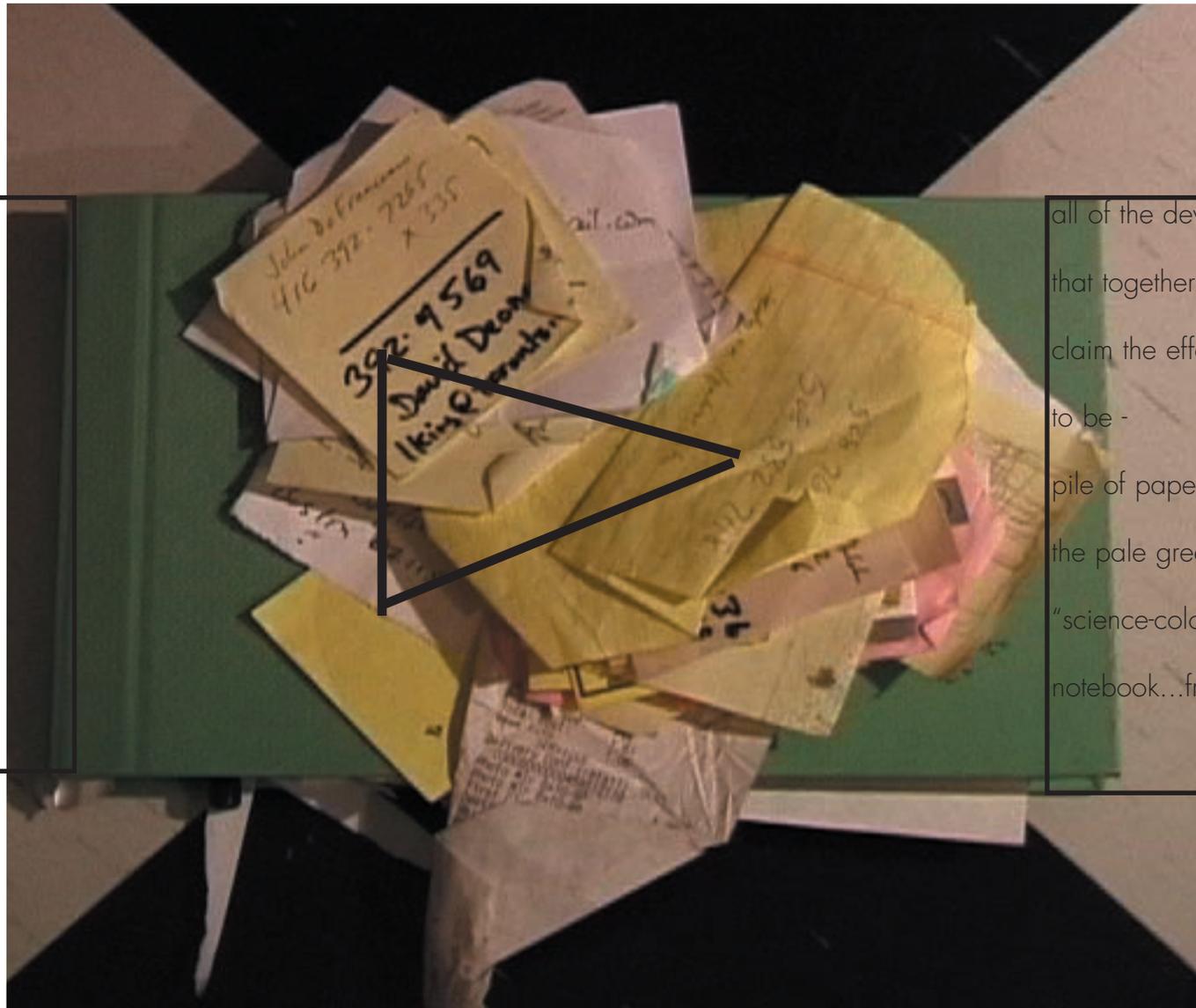




**IN - PROGRESS** *Jed Speare*

the post-its  
the notes  
the phone calls  
the scriblings  
the sketches  
the signs  
the emails  
the images



all of the devices  
that together  
claim the effort  
to be -  
pile of paper squares,  
the pale green,  
"science-colored"  
notebook...from Minsk

listening to oneself

and the voices

of others

The project began with the proposal to create a Quiet Zone, through municipal channels, in a neighborhood of Toronto. Where, I did not know. Quiet Zones are generally requested through city governance by hospitals, nursing and retirement homes to restrict certain types of noise within those zones at all times, and at certain times of day. There was a little loophole in the Toronto description, beyond the infirmed - to other similar situations - giving individuals the right to request them - and there was the opening I needed...

Originally within this zone, I was going to create small, contained sound installations of pre-recorded sound from the zone. They would be auditioned through a bone-conduction hearing device - think of biting a wooden spoon and touching it to a vibrating surface - you would hear the sound through your jawbone, traveling to your inner ear, and not through vibration pressure on the tympanic membrane, - your "eardrum". Secondly, I was going to perform myself in a kind of box that would be viewed through a remote camera and video monitor in the zone, and auditioned as well through bone-conduction. The idea was simply that one could choose to listen to the recycled sound and my performance, while still keeping their ears attuned to the sound environment in the zone.

I began a series of communications with the City of Toronto. I was coming to visit in August to get more information, determine the site and begin implementing the logistics of the entire program. But I needed the zone. This zone, created on the philosophical basis for listening, awareness, and contemplation. A non - restrictive zone. The idea lies at the heart of how our laws govern public and private spaces, and our behavior within them. Why couldn't one suggest another reason for their existence?

The first place - Access Toronto - led me to the department of Healthy Environments. They shunted me over to Municipal Licensing and Standards, who at the mention of an "art project," directed me to the Office of Cultural Affairs.

At the Office of Cultural Affairs I found a sympathetic and helpful ear. The public art program officer did an amazing thing, putting me directly in touch with the sign maker for the City of the Parks and Recreation Department. It would be as easy as ordering the City-made Quiet Zone signs through him. So I came to visit Toronto with this knowledge, but with unresolved questions about the process for establishing the legitimate zone.

When I visited in August, I worked with the FIVE HOLES: Listen! festival curator and organizer, Paul Couillard, to determine the site and discuss the various components of the performance. On University Avenue, across from Mt. Sinai Hospital, there is a section of the long park median. Coincidentally, there is also a HOSPITAL QUIET sign in front of the hospital. This seemed like a suitable location. But the ambient traffic noise at the site suggested something else: that instead of sound box installations, I

would mic and amplify the environmental sound and output it inside a dumpster - auditioned through its walls - as though the sound could be contained, discarded and trashed. I would be inside the dumpster, mixing, and you would listen, if you chose, again via bone-conduction through the the receptacle's vibrating metal walls...

But the afternoon before I left I phoned the City and asked them to forward me the specific by-laws pertaining to Quiet Zones and noise. There I read the name of another department that had not been raised to me - of Urban Development Services. I realized then in my discussions with Paul that the project had still not met its conceptual criteria directly - establishing the zone through municipal channels - and that with my new awareness of this agency I should pursue a more direct course to establish that. Paul suggested switching locations - Toronto Island, with its remove across the water and majestic vistas to the City, would be an ideal site to promote sound awareness and contemplation. Additionally, there were islanders who were dealing directly with noise issues there. The extent to which the project could allign itself with their concerns, and to create a legitimate zone on the island, on its own basis, would be a course worth pursuing.

Back in Boston, I joined the Toronto Island e-group from their website ([www.torontoisland.org](http://www.torontoisland.org)) and issued a communication to it about the project. I had several supportive replies, especially from members of the noise commttee there - Mary, Kate, Lynn, and Vivian. In the meantime, I was getting nowhere through Urban Development Services. I was passed along to three people, and the final person I was unable to reach directly...

Arriving in Toronto last week and meeting with Kate and Vivian at the Rectory Cafe Board room on the island, I learned many things about the sources of noise and how they were working with the City government to deal with them. There are over 70 Special Events permits issued for events on the island annually. A handful of them are for concerts that the City stages on Olympic Island, one of the web of several islands that comprise Toronto Island. These amplified, outdoor concerts occur with no berms of buffers protecting the island residents. Kate was wondering how much the City made from these concerts? I suggested that a portion of the profit be given back to the island as a mitigation; that the money could be used for education about sound and noise. Or on a more practical level, Vivian proposed that a facility could be built to house the concerts, or sound barriers be constructed to absorb or reflect the sound away from the inhabitants.

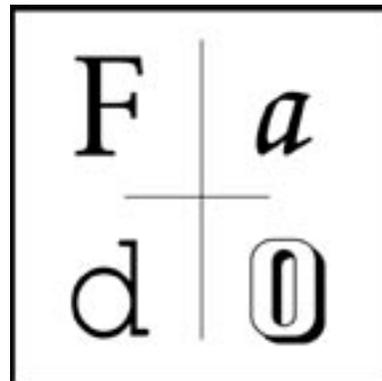
Water is a very reflective surface of sound. This explains the distress over the sound coming from the Docks nightclub along the Toronto waterfront late at night, in the summer, with its patio doors open. There is also an airport on Toronto Island at its very west end with many small, low-flying aircraft. "Cigar boats" travel across the harbor. Their low frequency motors can be felt lying in bed: a wooden floor supporting a wooden bed frame, with metal springs in the bed's mattress, could also carry a sound through one's bones (bone-conduction...!).

It's a strange phenomenon - you sit up and it disappears - you put your head back down and it roars again...These were the elements explained to me by Kate and Vivian. They are working with an assistant City Councillor and with the Municipal Licensing and Standards Department to deal with each noise issue piece by piece.

To make a Quiet Zone on Toronto Island, you must begin with a new rationale. The link to hospitals, nursing and retirement homes will not do here (even though there is a retirement home). One has merely to venture to the island and experience its parks, beaches, and paths to understand that with the affronts and indifference of the city well behind you, your senses are tuned high within moments of arrival. A Quiet Zone on Toronto Island is therefore an affirmation of a kind of unimpeded sonic experience that is possible there. For islanders however, there are many levels of acoustic experiences on the island, and the intrusion and persistence of noise, from a number of different sources, is a problem they have met with organization, dedication, and skill. These Quiet Zones on Toronto Island are not, as in the municipal by-laws, meant to restrict noise and demarcate a space within them, but are instead centrifugal, promoting sound awareness and contemplation...That these signs could become a marker for the sound advocacy that is occurring here, and how they could suggest a philosophical and aesthetic approach to shift municipal government regulations, so that they could be used by the islanders through the legitimacy of their efforts in conjunction with this project, is a question that could be explored in the future and answered through potential further actions... !

Jed Speare  
October 6, 2004

A Quiet Zone II was produced through Fado Performance Inc as part of the FIVE HOLES: Listen! series.



A Quiet Zone II is dedicated to the distinctly Canadian sound activists, acoustic ecologists, and the residents of Toronto Island. I would like to especially thank Paul Couillard of Fado Performance Inc. for making this opportunity possible, and for his invaluable support and insight during the process. I would also like to thank Rebecca Ward, John DeFrancesco, Larry King, Warren Hoselton, Don Sutherland, Kate Shepherd, Mary Partridge, Lynn Robinson, Vivian \_\_\_\_\_, Carol Bigwood, Bob Gibson, Chris Jones, and Gillian Whittall.

This document can be found at:

<http://www.performanceart.ca/5holes/listen/speare/zone.pdf>

To see images of the installed signs, visit

<http://www.performanceart.ca/5holes/listen/speare/index.html>

*Jed Speare is an artist from Boston working in variety of media. Initially trained in music composition, he has created works in time-based media such as video, sound, and performance art, and conceptual and community-based works for over twenty-five years. His work has been presented in festivals and exhibitions in such places as San Francisco, New York, Boston and the New England region, and abroad in Holland, Belgium, France, Italy, Poland, Croatia, Bulgaria, Belarus, and Taiwan. He is a member of the Mobius Artists Group of Mobius ([www.mobius.org](http://www.mobius.org)), Boston's artist-run organization for experimental work in all media, and served as its Director from 1996 to 2004. A QUIET ZONE II is a part of body of work by Speare that deals with the sound environment. Other works in this realm include CABLE CAR SOUNDSCAPES, an album on Smithsonian Folkways Records; PEACEFUL - AN PING, a project on the soundscape of a waterfront village of Tainan, Taiwan that used sound walks of the village's oldest streets and aural histories of the residents' sonic memories to suggest that sound could be used as an element in the future restoration and urban planning and design of the city; AUDIOGRAMS, a text and image work which explores his experience as an industrial hearing conservationist and the effects of hearing loss; A QUIET ZONE, a photographic, text and multimedia work about a neighborhood in Fitchburg, Massachusetts by that designation; and the artists books CRUSHED BUCKETS and I CALL YOU.*

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*for Mariel B...*