

SO! Amplifies: Cities and Memory

Stuart

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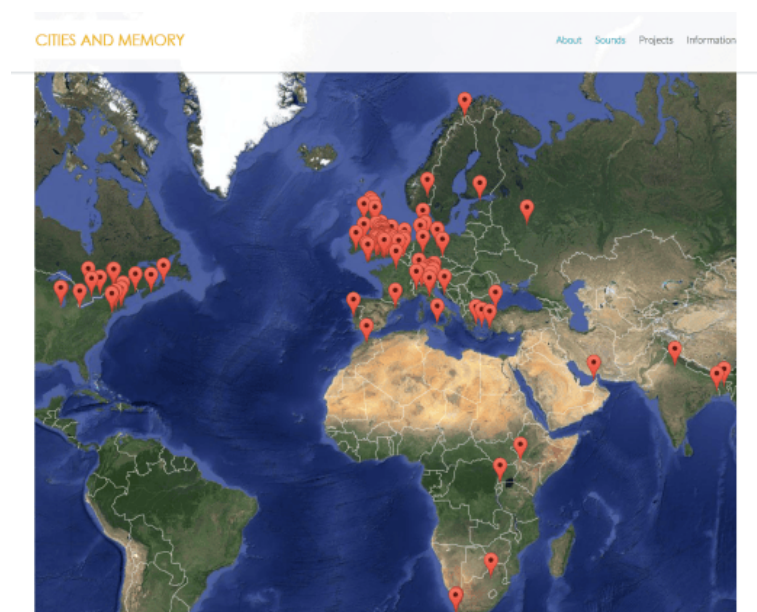
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Abstract

SO! Amplifies. . .a highly-curated, rolling mini-post series by which we editors hip you to cultural makers and organizations doing work we really really dig.

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Acoustic Ecology, Digital Humanities, Digital Media, Documentary, Field Recording



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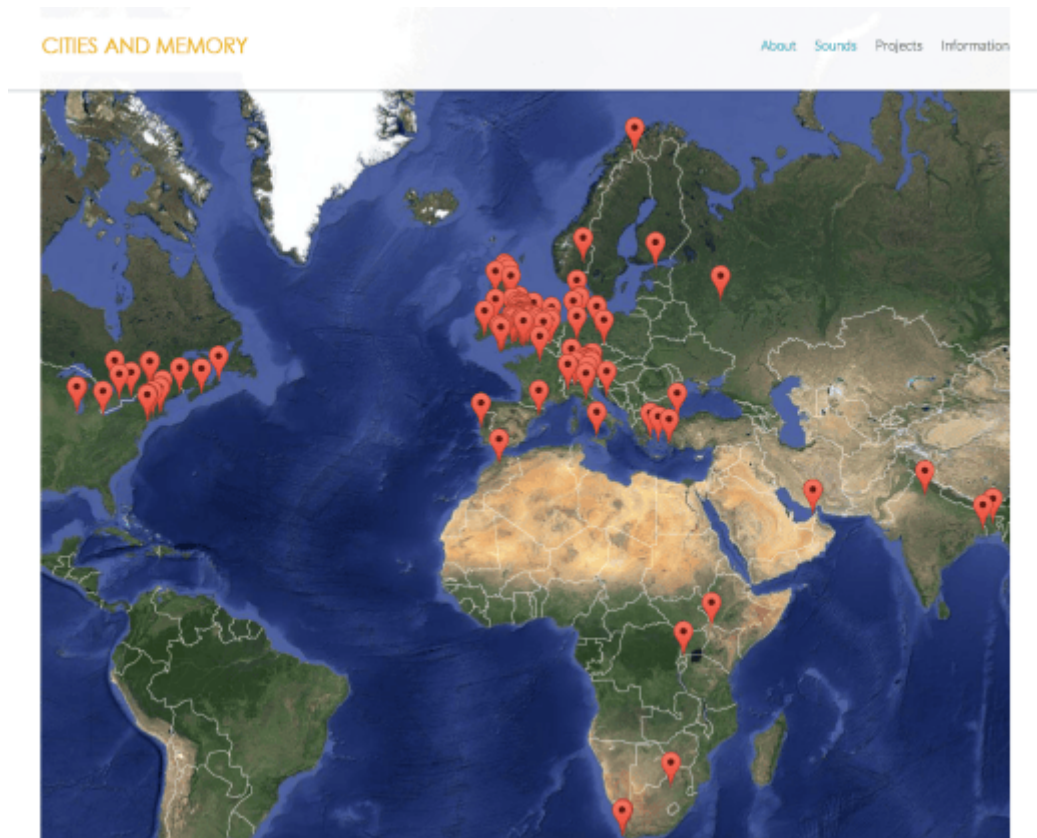


SO! Amplifies. . .a highly-curated, rolling mini-post series by which we editors hip you to cultural makers and organizations doing work we really really dig. You're welcome!

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Inspired by how sound and memory interact, [Cities and Memory](#) is a sound program with the aim of “remixing the world, one sound at a time,” existing on the (already quite blurred) line between documentary field recording and sound art.

Its primary manifestation is an [online global sound map](#), on which every location boasts two sounds, the “city” and the “memory.” The “city” sound is the faithful, documentary field recording capturing that place at that time, as it existed and was heard. The “memory” sound is a reimagined, remixed, reinterpreted version of that sound: everything from oral reconstructions, full-on techno tracks built around a field recording, ambient reimaginings, and all the points in between, as [summarized in this roundup of creative approaches from the site](#). The reimagined sounds represent how sound is remembered and experienced differently by each individual, and explore what happens in that magical period between sounds being physically experienced and their being mentally processed, interpreted, and above all felt.

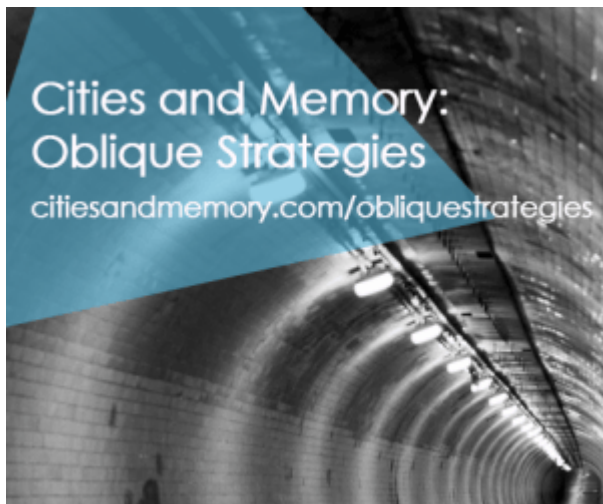


<http://citiesandmemory.com/sound-map/>

Starting from that basic premise, Cities and Memory has collected more than 600 sounds from around the world in just over a year, with more than 100 artists, musicians, field recordists and sound enthusiasts contributing anything from a field recording snatched on a mobile phone through to a complete musical reconstruction.

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Over recent months, Cities and Memory has expanded with a series of projects each exploring a different avenue or window onto sound that has been opened up. For instance, last November saw [#HamburgSounds](#), an ambitious project to sound map the vast city of Hamburg, Germany and to reimagine its sounds. A four-day recording session garnered enough recordings for forty sound artists each to give their take on a different aspect of Hamburg's sounds and what they meant to them. The results were symbolically released over a 24-hour period, representing a day in the city's life, and in the memories and imagination of its citizens. For more sounds from Hamburg, click [here](#).



This year also saw a project using [Brian Eno and Peter Schmidt's Oblique Strategies cards](#) as creative direction for [reimagining field recordings](#). The reimagined sounds that came from more than 100 different creative strategies employed in the project were even more diverse than its locations, which covered everything from jungle in Thailand and Shanghai temples to the urban centres of Chicago, New York and London. Spectrum analysis, musical cryptograms, working simultaneously with artists in different countries, even TripAdvisor reviews(!) – every creative sonic technique in the book seems to have been used in one way or another.

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The latest project, called [Quiet Street](#), takes the form of a simultaneous digital and physical exhibition, reimagining the sounds of the city of Bath as part of its [Fringe Arts Bath Festival](#). The physical installation presents two sides of sonic memory – first, the documentary field recording of a location in Bath, and second the reimagined, or 'memory' version of the sound. The audience can navigate between two sonic 'versions' of Bath simultaneously on different sides of the space. One side broadcasts the "city" sound from a location, the other the matching "memory" sound, a remix or reinterpretation of the field recording, time-synced so that the sets of sounds shift in and out of one another in unison. The listener chooses – by his or her own physical proximity – to experience freely the two sound worlds.

Cities and Memory: Quiet Street

part of Fringe Arts Bath

22 May - 7 June 2015

www.citiesandmemory.com/quietstreet

Cities and Memory: Quiet Street presents the sounds of Bath as they have never been heard before.

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The listener chooses – by his or her own physical proximity – to experience freely the two sound worlds.

You are invited to explore the sounds of Bath, and to reimagine and see those sounds from every possible angle.

Recordings for Quiet Street were collected in Bath during March 2015, and were reimagined both by local sound artists and the global sound community, with 19 artists taking part, making for an immersive, participatory sonic reconstruction of the city.

00.00-03.17 - Bath Spa railway announcements
03.17-06.28 - Foot tunnel next to Bath Spa station
06.28-07.17 - South Gate Street: shopping & busker
07.17-18.28 - Green Park: guide dog & vintage plane
18.29-19.47 - Pigeons under Midland Bridge
19.48-22.54 - Tourist talk outside Thermae Bath Spa
22.55-26.44 - Violinist busking outside Bath Abbey
26.45-29.44 - Music outside The Pump Room
29.45-33.04 - Saxophone busker outside Bath Abbey
33.05-36.36 - The organ of Bath Abbey
36.37-41.28 - Abbey Chambers: fire eater
41.29-44.48 - Union Street: tourists vs. buskers
44.49-48.32 - Norfolk Crescent: by the River Avon
48.33-51.12 - Old Bond Street: seagulls overhead
51.13-53.52 - Milsom Street: Sunday shopping
53.53-58.56 - Inside Walcot Chapel

Explore an interactive sound map of Quiet Street:
www.citiesandmemory.com/quietstreet

Quiet Street features field recordings and reimagined sounds by the following artists:

Mike Bingham, Eric Boivin, Lee Christian, Richard Fair, Stuart Fowkes, Fiona Haines, Heiko Jay, Alex McHattie, Nimmi Naidoo, Stanislav Nikolov, Jason Pinches, Lee Riley, Robert Cole Rizzi, Chris Robinson, Nick St. George, Dan Tapper, Toby Wiltshire, Christina Wong, Walker Wooding.

Seeing Sound from Inside Out

FRINGE ARTS BATH **FB**

www.fringeartsbath.co.uk

Visit the physical installation of Quiet Street at Fringe Arts Bath Festival,
22 May 2015 – 7 June 2015 at **8/9 New Bond Street Place, Bath**

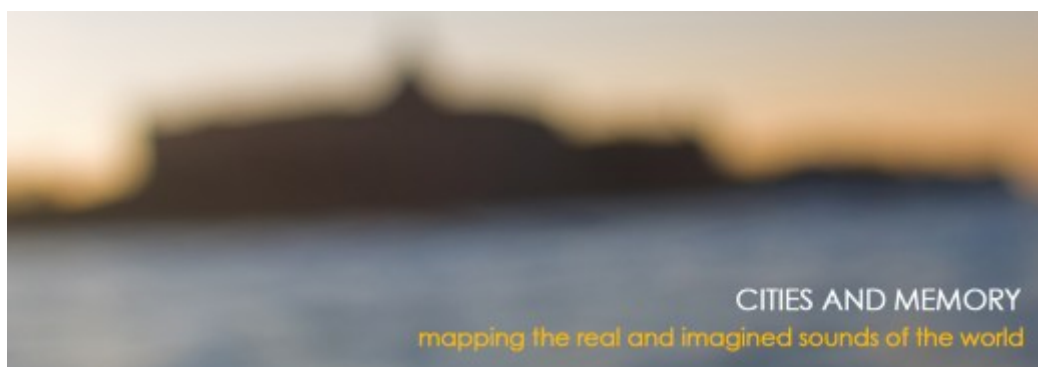
As the “city” and “memory” sounds are precisely time-synced in the installation, an additional creative challenge for the artists was to create reimagined version the same length as the source field recording. More importantly, they also needed consider not just how the reimagined sound stood on its own, but how it would live simultaneously in the same space as the field recording,

creating a direct tension between “real” documentary sounds and the memory of those sounds in the same space.

The [digital exhibition](#) of *Quiet Street* allows the sounds to be explored through a map interface. It also allows listeners to simulate the installation experience with a series of installation mixes, presenting the field recording and reimagined sound on opposite sides of the stereo field. You can access playlists [here](#) and [here](#) as well as download the album documenting the event [here](#).

As a curator, the most exciting thing to me is that the central idea behind Cities and Memory is so open; there are almost infinite possibilities for its application. A new angle on sound, place or memory can bring up a new project at any point, and every contributor brings their own experience and interpretation.

In the course of exploring hundreds of field recordings, examining them in detail and finding a creative angle from which to reinterpret them, I’ve developed a new appreciation not just of field recording as a practice, but of how to listen to whichever environment I find myself in. It’s given me a new perspective on sound and on music, and how utterly blurred the lines are between the two. I listen very differently to the world now. As Cities and Memory continues to grow, I hope many others will too.



Stuart Fowkes is the creator and curator of Cities and Memory, producing a large number of the source field recordings and reimagined ‘memory’ versions himself, as well as curating the project as a whole. *Quiet Street* runs from 22 May to 7 June at 8/9 New Bond Street Place, Bath, as part of Fringe Arts Bath, and digitally at www.citiesandmemory.com/quietstreet. Find out more about Cities and Memory and how to contribute: <http://citiesandmemory.com/what-is-cities-and-memory-about/>



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