El Caracol: A Stroll through Space and Time in Mexico City

Anthony W. Rasmussen

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Abstract

A sound art multimedia piece by Anthony William Rasmussen Funded by the UC MEXUS Dissertation Research Grant Map graphics by Julie K. Wesp Additional Footage by Oswaldo Mejía The megalopolis of Mexico City is experienced by many who live there as a network of “known” places, laden with both personal memory and collective meaning.

Keywords

Music (Subfield), Chican@/Latin@ Studies, Digital Media, Field Recording, Installation, Latin American Studies



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A sound art multimedia piece by Anthony William Rasmussen

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Map graphics by Julie K. Wesp

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The megalopolis of Mexico City is experienced by many who live there as a network of "known" places, laden with both personal memory and collective meaning. Sounds provide inhabitants with a powerful means of navigation: the unique calls of street vendors, song fragments, speech, and protest chants echolocate the listener within a vast spatiotemporal grid. The title of this piece ("the snail/the shell") refers to the prolific spiral motif in Mesoamerican cosmology and alludes to a nonlinear vision of time and space.



El Caracol, Sounding Board Installation, 2015, Image by Leo Cardoso

The piece consists of four journeys, each beginning at the outskirts of the city and ending in or near the Zócalo—Mexico City's central plaza and the symbolic heart of the nation. The video element consists of footage captured while walking through various sites in Mexico City and represents the phenomenological present. The audio element provides a counterpoint to the visual: sounds meander and drift from the visual field; occasional ruptures of historical sound expose layers of this audible palimpsest.

***Sounding Out!* is thrilled to host a virtual installation of "El Caracol" right here, right now:**



https://youtu.be/QJrhdFygXlM

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Featured Image: Screen Capture from El Caracol

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Anthony W. Rasmussen is a musician, educator, and postdoctoral fellow at Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México. Currently, he is investigating the transformation of whistles from a rural system of long-distance communication to an aesthetic/symbolic practice in Mexico City. In 2017, he completed a PhD in ethnomusicology from UC Riverside with a dissertation on sound culture and urban conflict, "Resistance Resounds: Hearing Power in Mexico City." His work can be found in *Ethnomusicology Forum*. Anthony also holds an MFA from UC Irvine where he studied Persian classical music, music composition, and interactive arts technology. He has composed for film, a range of traditional and experimental ensembles, and is singer/songwriter for the pop group, The Fantastic Toes.

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