

hear now their then

By: Juliet Hinely

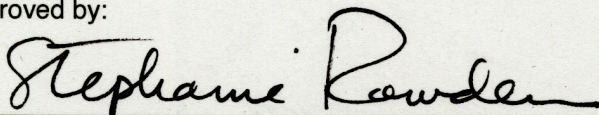
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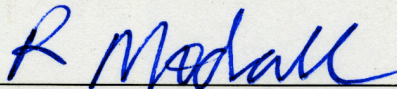
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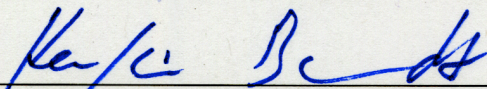
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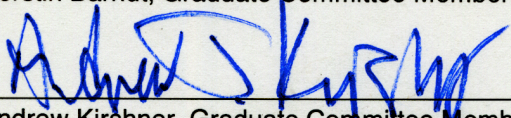
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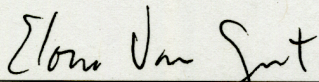
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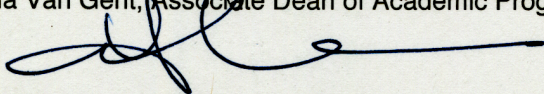
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hear now their then

imaginative geographical narratives through place-based sound and story

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Abstract:

This document records and reflects upon my MFA Thesis Exhibition *hear now their then*, as well as relevant research and contextual information. *hear now their then* was a site-responsive sound installation at the Jam Handy Building in Detroit in March of 2014. 12 audio vignettes heard through headphone speakers hung down from the building's rafters and created an experiential and imaginative geographical narrative of the building and its long and winding history. This paper begins with a declaration of beliefs surrounding the connection of story to place, the accumulation of history in everyday spaces, and the potential for site-responsive and place-based art to expand and interact with these site-based narratives. A chronological history of the Jam Handy Building follows, and a personal reflection of interest in that history -- including the layering of events over time and the context of these events in the larger history of Detroit. Detailed after that is the process of creating the audio pieces and their installation, situating them in art historical context, and describing the influence of other artists works. In conclusion I discuss the transportative power of sound and narrative, the simultaneous experience of past and present at historic sites, and the impact of this work on future creative endeavors.

Keywords:

sound installation, imagination, geographical narratives, history, Detroit, Jam Handy, palimpsest, listening

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“So conspicuously in old places layered in archaeological traces, an artifact building or ruin from the past does not hold comfortably some point in a linear flow of time from past through present. It is not just a dated event in the past. Instead the past bubbles around us. This is the life of things in the present, the life-cycle of artifacts and buildings, enfolded in a multitemporal mix which is the fundamental texture of our human social experience.”

- Michael Shanks, Theatre/Archaeology

introduction: out of sight/out of site

“Your mom and your sister are going to get lemonades, but I want to show you something.”

This was my dad, speaking to me when I was about 9 or 10, and our family was in St. Augustine, Florida, for summer vacation. I followed him across the small park in the town square, across King Street, and into a storefront, the windows of which displayed all the tacky souvenirs my parents never let me get. Wading through the racks of brightly colored beach towels and shelving units of snow-globes, I caught up to him facing the right-hand wall and motioning with his arms. “This is where it would have been,” he said. We stood in front of a floor-to-ceiling display of tropical souvenir t-shirts. “Where what would have been?” I asked. “The lunch counter.” he said, “from the sit-ins.” And there he proceeded to explain to me St. Augustine’s role in the civil rights movement and the story of the day that 16 teenagers were arrested in that very store for sitting at the whites-only lunch counter. All this, right there between a rack of bathing suits and a case displaying salt and pepper shakers shaped like oranges and flamingos.

History accumulates everywhere. History in the grand sense -- events that impact the nation or the world. History that is localized -- events that impact a town or even just a neighborhood. And history on a personal level as well -- events that shape us as individuals. These events are all connected to place. Over time, these events layer one atop the last, building a geologic strata of stories. Some leave markings and residue that are still visible from the surface; others are far below. Stories accumulate everywhere and occupy physical space.

There is a great word in the field of archeology: palimpsest. The word palimpsest refers to a document, usually paper but sometimes stone or wax, that has been visibly erased to make room for new text and written over again. The word comes from Latin and Greek meaning “scratched again” and “to rub smooth.” The word palimpsest has also gained application to architectural archeology, referring to buildings and structures where evidence of previous use remains.



a sample of Archimedes' Palimpsest, from the Walter's Art Museum, Baltimore, Maryland

There is an unwieldy term in the world of art: site-specific. Site-specific can mean any number of ways that a work of art relates to its location. The specific definition I work with refers to a work of art whose content is derived from the cultural or historical context of the site. I approach this type of work by calling it “site-responsive” and “place-based.”

When an artwork interprets the context or excavates the history of a site, it expands and complicates the narrative of the place. This work brings history and context back to the surface for contemplation or reexamination, drawing out details and filling in gaps. In this way, site-responsive art interacts with the palimpsest of place, excavating layers and stories. With my creative work I propose that places can be read and experienced as stories and, when they are, we come into closer contact with that place.

Experiencing the site's stories through artistic intervention can make the site more permeable, more relatable. Our perceptions and expectations of place might shift, and perhaps with a new perspective and relationship to that place, may come a deeper investment in that place's well being.

I am drawn to unsung historic spaces -- places where something culturally important took place, but where little trace of that event remains or is recognized. I also call these “historic places that no longer look historic.” To me, these places reflect on both the past and the present. They reveal the stories of what came before and also point to current cultural values or circumstances. There is a reason why they have not been up-kept or recognized. To me, these sorts of places bubble with a heightened sense of mystery and imagination. The gap between the story of the place and the current experience of the place is a wide-open field in which the imagination can run wild.



The Jam Handy Building, 2900 East Grand Boulevard, Detroit, Michigan. Photographed March 2014.

The Jam Handy building, in the North End neighborhood of Detroit, is most certainly one of these places. Once the most prolific film studio in Detroit, the training and informational films produced here served major American affairs, connecting the building and the city of Detroit to major American and World events, like World War II and the boom of the auto industry. The building itself, which was the hub of all of this activity, still stands, but only the bare bones structure. The layers of the building's past are visible to a careful eye --inside one finds vestiges of its former life, like theater lights, parts of a church balcony, and mismatched paint jobs that suggest missing staircases and bygone rooms. As a former movie studio, the building is inherently a place of stories, where scripts were written, performed, and filmed.

When exhibiting at the Jam Handy became a possibility, Wikipedia provided me a few interesting details, including that the building's namesake Henry Jamison (Jam) Handy had been a two-time Olympian, a filmmaker headquartered in Detroit, and a man who had his suits tailored without pockets because he didn't believe in them. "Ah hah!" I thought, "This place has potential."

building story

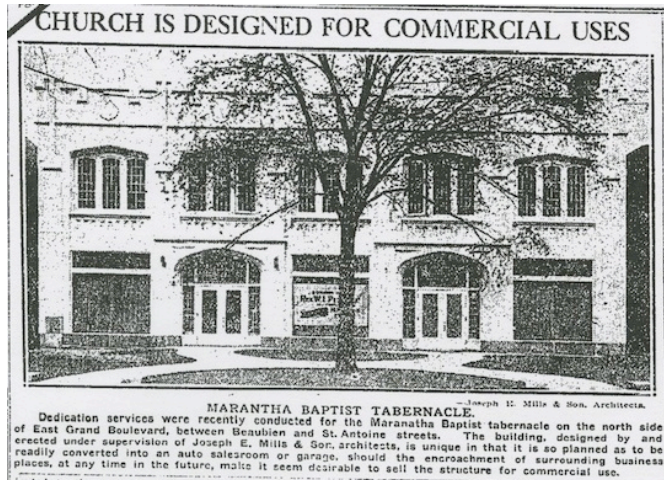
Today, Detroit's East Grand Boulevard is a variegated thoroughfare of residential homes, corner stores, gas stations, commercial offices, empty lots, and industrial buildings in all different states of use and repair. At 2900 East Grand Boulevard stands a 2-story neo-gothic beige-tiled building with a crenellated roofline, vaguely recalling a castle.



Top: View of East Grand Boulevard looking East. Photographed March 2014. Bottom: Façade of the Jam Handy Building.

The building was originally constructed as a community church in 1919, and operated as such for the better part of 10 years. But with anticipation of the auto industry boom on Detroit's horizon, the architects specifically designed the building to be readily converted into an auto showroom or commercial

property. Sometime between 1929 and 1930, enterprising businessman Henry Jamison Handy purchased the building to convert into the main office and soundstage for his new communications and film production venture.



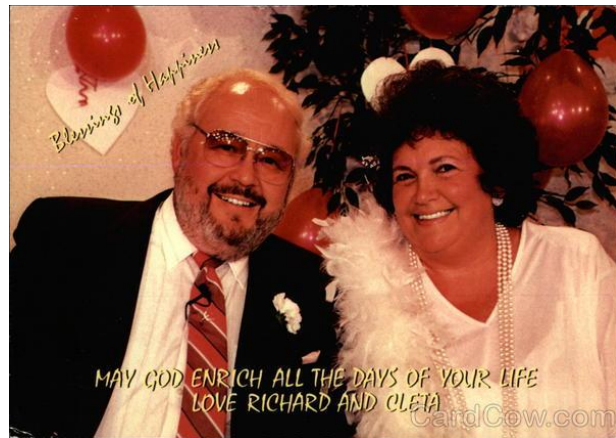
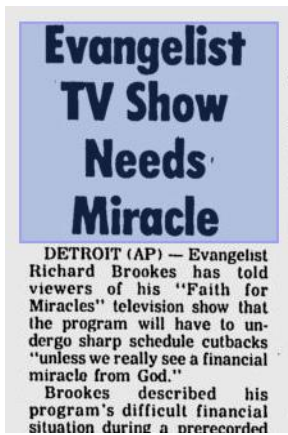
Left: newspaper clipping, Detroit Free Press, July 4 1920. Right: Jam Handy at work, undated

Over the next 50 years, this film studio, The Jam Handy Organization (JHO) grew to be the most prolific film studio in Detroit -- and there were 3 headquartered there at the time. The JHO specialized in informational films and advertisements and partnered with the auto industry, the US government, the Detroit Public Schools, and numerous independent companies to produce tens of thousands of films over the years. Topics ranged from how-to-be-a-car-salesmen to how-hot-air-balloons-work. The JHO employed over 700 people and even had a 100-voice choir on call. They had their own woodshop, machine shop, sound studio, and stage, and were noted as the best-equipped studio outside of Hollywood.



Exterior of the Jam Handy building, circa 1950s. Image from the Burton Historical Collection, Detroit Public Library

Jam Handy worked right up to the day he died in 1983 at the age of 97, at which point the JHO dissolved. The building was sold to a televangelist named Richard Brookes who saw the studio as the perfect location to shoot and produce his bi-weekly evangelical TV show, *Faith for Miracles*. *Faith for Miracles* was a revival-style church service broadcast on local television. There were prayer-request call-ins, faith healings with a live studio audience, and different local choirs and musicians would be featured each week. Richard and his wife Cleeta hosted the show there for several years before an article in the Detroit Free Press revealed that Richard Brookes had a shady past involving dubious financial dealings and extramarital affairs. Viewership and support for their show dropped significantly after the article was published. Richard Brookes repeatedly asked his congregation for a financial miracle to keep the show on air, but it never materialized. Richard and Cleeta discontinued the show, abandoned the building, and left town. The building stood vacant and deteriorating for the next 30 years.



Left: Newspaper clipping, Ludington Daily News, August 25th 1979. Right: Richard and Cleeta Brookes pictured on a postcard, from the personal collection of Robin Merrill.

By 2010, Wayne County was ready to liquidate the property and the building went up for tax auction. Simeon Heyer, a young transplant from Wisconsin was living nearby the Jam Handy and knew its history when he heard the building was going to be part of the auction. Simeon, looking for what he described as an “epic project,” registered as a bidder with his eyes on the property at 2900 E Grand Boulevard. At the end of the auction day he had purchased the building for a mere \$13,000. Simeon took ownership of the building and has spent that last 3 years nearly single-handedly restoring the structure, turning it into a multi-use art and performance space.

The Jam Handy both confounded and intrigued me. So many worlds became interrelated within this building over time: religion, commerce, industry, music and theater. There was industry as religion, religion as commerce, and stage-craft involved at all levels. The Jam Handy had represented so many things to so many people over time; the community of congregation, the promise of industry, the dream of the accessible automobile and leisurely modern consumer life, spiritual salvation for donation, then the blight of a city in decline, and now the hope of renewal in Detroit. In many ways, the life of this building mirrored the larger history of Detroit -- a city of industrial glory and Motown fame, currently in the international spotlight for financial ruin, but perhaps approaching an economic revitalization.

At first I hesitated to take on a project site in Detroit. It is not my town. I don't know it well, I object to the ruin porn, and I have unresolved feelings on the phenomena of people moving there to capitalize on its financial turmoil often treating it as a blank slate. But here I was interested in this place related to all of those things. In Rebecca Keller's book, "Excavating Histories, Artists Take on Historic Sites," she discusses the notion of the "historical present" -- the historical and cultural circumstance in which the artist creates that impacts what they chose to create. "The context of the historical present," she says "is partly what influences an artist to select a subject," Here, I substitute the word "site" for "subject" and recognize that Detroit's historical present *did* influence my decision to work there. I had to recognize that the context of Detroit unquestionably impacted the meaning of The Jam Handy and that was part of what I was taking on in this work.



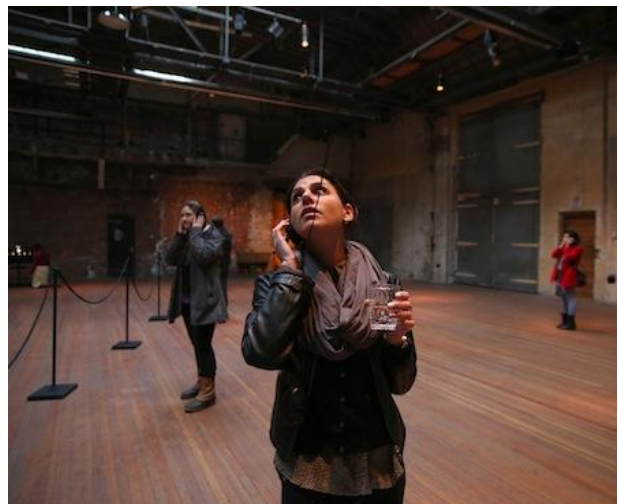
interior on the Jam Handy, December 2013

here-ing & hearing - making sound in response to the space



All images in this section: Listeners and visitors at the installation, March 20th & 21st, 2014

hear now their then is a non-linear self-guided sound installation and listening tour of the Jam Handy building. Visitors walk into the large, dimly lit main space of the building to discover 12 audio vignettes through a series of theatrically illuminated headphone speakers hanging down into the space. At each station, listeners draw the speakers to their ears and become immersed in a soundscape and story particular to that spot in the building's history. Some narrations orient the listener to notice particular feature of the building, while others begin in the midst of an event in the building's past.



Listeners might find themselves in the crowd at a property auction, in the audience at a live-broadcast of the evangelical television show in the early 1980s, or swept up into the hubbub of the 1940s film set. [play "Auction Day"](#) Other vignettes refer to stories related to the building that take the listener watching skywriting airplanes or standing on the beach at night. [play "Skywriting"](#)



The compositions range from 1-3 minutes long and play on a loop. The tour as a whole has no beginning, middle, or end, but each audio vignette has its own small story arc. The stories of the space accumulate as listeners step from spot to spot.

writing history, composing time, placing sound

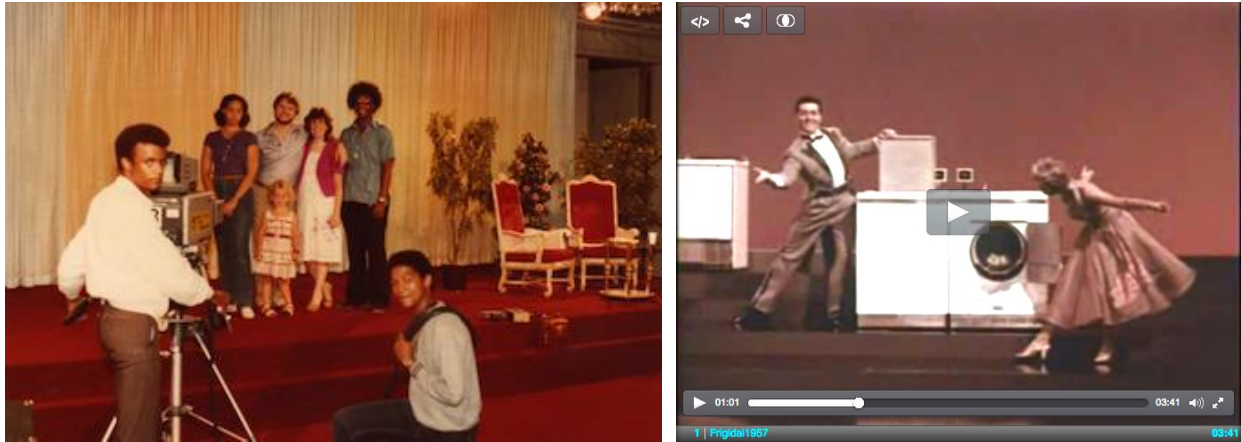


The green door, an architectural vestige of the building featured in one of the audio vignettes

I wrote the stories drawing on a range of sources. My research of the building and its former occupants included old city directories at the Detroit Public Library, Sanborne Fire Insurance Maps from the early 1900s, the Detroit Free Press archives, Detroit's Burton Historical Collection, the 700+ Jam Handy films in the Prelinger Archive, interviews with the building owner, eBay searches, and using a long-defunct online message board about old Detroit TV to locate someone who used to work there. I based some details on old photographs, such as the red velvet chairs that are mentioned in the *Faith for Miracles* story. Others, such as ballroom dancers in a Frigidaire commercial came from archival film footage. Some stories, like the memo or the original use of the church were spun out from documents I found in the library archives. And some, such as the time capsule, revealed themselves during interviews I conducted. [play "The Memo"](#)

The physical traces of history in the building were also the source of some of the narrative vignettes. The space features many nonsensical, puzzling remnants— a door that floats high up in the wall with no stairs, giant heavy silver doors that are taller than I'd ever seen, a partially exposed beam in the wall that holds nothing up. With the audio pieces, I wanted to expand these vestiges into stories, to bring the former life of the space into momentary focus. [play "The Door Floating in the Wall"](#)

Working like a quasi historical-fiction writer, I wrote the text and narration from what I could glean from the documents and designed the sound to fill out the details and activate these layers of time within the building.



Left: Photograph of Faith for Miracles production crew, circa 1982, from the private collection of Robin Merrill. Right: Still from Jam Handy film Frigidaire Finale, 1957

The sounds I used in composing the audio pieces also came from many points in time and many sources. I culled archival audio from Jam Handy films, drawing on the particular characteristics of voice and recording to transport the listener to the era of their creation. [play "Dinah Shore"](#) With some of the stories I supplemented my narration with sound effects like little radio plays to create a scenario unfolding around the listener. [play "To The Future"](#) Some of these sound effects I made myself. The sounds of people walking above on the catwalk, for example, I made by standing in my basement while I had my neighbors walk back and forth on my kitchen floor above me. Other sound effects I scavenged online, like the ocean waves coming in at your feet -- as that was something I could not record in the frozen Michigan winter.

For the visitor I was interested in a process of orientation and disorientation, in which one notices the space's eccentricities and experience two places at once — the physical and material space of the building, as well as the intangible parallel world of the story they were hearing. The position and experience of the listener varies from station to station. In some tracks I dropped them into the experience without any set-up, perhaps at the ocean's edge, or ensconced in the crowd at an auction. In other tracks I used my narration to physically orient the listeners in the space, having the listener locate the object that I was talking about before beginning the story.



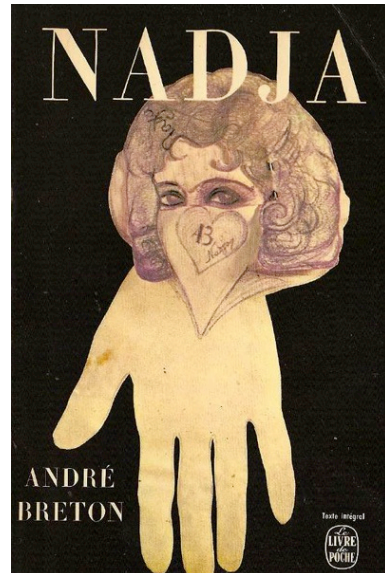
Left & Right: Listener being oriented in the space through audio narration

Surrealist writers, like Andre Breton in his 1928 novel *Nadja*, employed a similar tactic to confuse the distinction between reality and fiction, by replacing verbal descriptions of scenes in his story with actual photographs of places in Paris. In these photos, readers saw the story unfolding in a concrete place, one they perhaps even recognized. Karen O'Rourke, in her book, "Walking and Mapping," describes the effect this way: "The awareness of space is exacerbated by precise indications ... that readers... can match up to what they see on the street. It is a story that we perform." In this way, the readers are simultaneously on the inside and outside of the story. Just as Breton's readers could look at the photo of a real place and project the story into it, listeners at my installation could see in their imaginations the story they were hearing unfolding in the real, but empty, space in front of them. In both instances, readers and listeners ultimately come up against the gap between what they are imagining and what they are actually seeing.

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PLATE I. My point of departure will be
the Hôtel des Grands Hommes . . .
(SEE PAGE 23)



Left: Example of photos being used in Andre Breton's surrealist novel Nadja. Right: book cover of Nadja

To emphasize the sensation of being inside the story, I recorded and mixed in stereo. Listening to stereo recordings on headphones allows you to hear sound directionally and spatially, which creates a sense of space so that floors creak above you, doors open behind you, and choruses sing around you. Working in stereo allowed me to create a setting and also set the story into action around the listener. The transportative qualities of spatial stereo recordings were introduced to me by the work of Canadian sound artist Janet Cardiff. Cardiff makes narrative-based sound walks akin to audio tours for public places, but with a decidedly fictive twist. I had an art-life changing afternoon the day I did her sound and video walk *Alter Bahnhof Video Walk* at Documenta 13 in 2012 and felt completely immersed in the uncanny parallel universe she created with binaural stereo sound.



Left: Documentation image from Cardiff's project, Walk Munster, 1997. Right: Documentation image from Cardiff's project Ghost Machine, 2005

I also considered her approach to narration, which is very stylized, whispery and pondering. In *her* walks she speaks to the listener directly and implies familiarity, and the unclear but intimate relationship with her is part of the seduction of the experience. In *hear now their then* I chose to speak in 3rd person omniscient to have some distance as the narrator.

While my writing was relatively objective, my delivery was not neutral. I wanted to communicate a sense of awe and wonder about the space. I used my delivery as a way to engage the listener, pull them along into the stories in an experience that was intimate and imagined. [play "Frigidaire Finale"](#)

To heighten the sense of the stories being rooted in this particular place (the Jam Handy building) I placed the listening spots around the room in relation to the subject of each audio story. In *here now their then* some of the stories were heard in the exact spot they occurred, like the story about the red velvet chairs which I was able to locate in the room based on an old photograph. The stories that were about vestiges left in the

space or events that had taken place there were situated with the viewing of those objects in mind. In the realm of Public History, this is called geographical narrative — when a story or historical account is given in the spot where it occurred. Tours of the battlefields at Gettysburg are an example.



Left: a park ranger and tour guide at the Gettysburg battlefields gives a tour on site. Right: Pools of light on the floor of the Jam Handy marking the listening spots in the installation.



Left & Right projection installations by Shimone Attie. Left: Linienstrasse 137, 1992. Right: Mulackstrasse 31, 1992

Shimon Attie is an artist who also works from the archives to create geographical narratives of the lost history of public spaces. His haunting projections situate photographs back into their place of origin, often revealing a history of displaced minority groups. As he projects these images back into the doorways, windows, and crevices whereby they were originally shot, he creates a fragmented narrative of the past scattered through what he refers to as “the landscape of the present.” Like *hear now their then*, Attie’s projects do not communicate a chronological story but suggest moments that accumulate. Like Attie, I did not fix an order, a beginning or an end. The Jam Handy is a space whose layers have been so thoroughly shuffled over time that there is no beginning or end in the space. I wanted listeners to create their own order, weaving the story together by moving through the space.

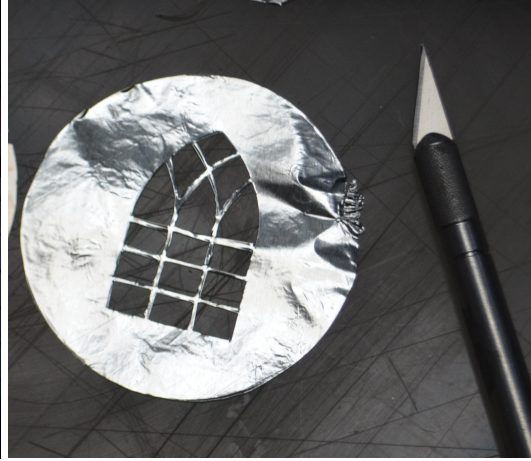
illuminating sound

Lighting became a major component of the work when I needed a way to create landmarks and areas of focus to guide the viewers through the space -- a room which operated essentially as a vast, empty and dark gymnasium. When I considered the building's history as a theatrical space and the ephemerality and intangibility of sound, light seemed like a fitting way to demarcate the room.



I used theater lights rigged on the catwalk to mark listening spots. Beams of light from above created pools of light on the floor at each listening station. These lights from above also illuminated the listener. In this way, the listeners became part of the installation and seeing other people listening was part of the experience of the piece. The listeners created the present moment of the piece.

I also employed lighting as a way to emphasize architectural vestiges of the building's past lives. Lighting these objects lit them like characters in the story and also created them as stages for the audio story to take place. "Specials," devices that create images out of light and shadow, created the effect of sunlight coming through the trees or the effect of sunlight coming through a church window when there wasn't one there anymore.



Left: Example of a listener illuminated by lights from above, and stained glass window light on the wall. Right: lighting special I made from tinfoil to create the stained glass window lighting effect.

This use of sound and light harkens to the tradition of Son-et-Lumiere, French for Sound and Light -- a storytelling event and narrative tradition that became popular in the 1950s, first in France and later in the US at sites like Independence Hall in Philadelphia. A Son-et-Lumiere uses light, projection, and sound to dramatize the story about a place *on* that place - usually buildings of historic importance or famous ruins like the Egyptian pyramids. Son et Lumieres though, typically take place on the exterior of a building and the light projections are animated, often synchronized with songs and narration. *hear now their then* brought these traditions to an interior space, with admittedly less grandeur, in which the imagery is thoroughly imagined.



Left & Right: Son et Lumiere projection events in France and Egypt

Historical precedents to this work reach back farther ...

historical precedents & contemporary context

History Paintings of the 18th and 19th centuries were grand scale depictions of epic narratives, often historic events, emphasized with myth and allegory. These paintings did not abide strictly by the facts of history but rather aimed to create an overwhelming visual experience to convey the import of the depicted event. *hear now their then* was not presented as a visual work, but became visual while listened to and illustrated the space with imagination. History painting also established a role of the artist as someone with authority to interpret and retell history. As the narrator of the space I took on this same role.



A famous history painting, Washington Crossing the Delaware, by Emanuel Leutze, 1851.

Ann Carlson is a contemporary artist who also takes on the role of historian, works site-responsively, and lets her knowledge and research of history of place influences the imaginative scenarios she creates in her sound and performance works. In collaboration with her partner Mary Ellen Strom, Ann Carlson created the monumental performance/sound/projection work *Geyser Land*. *Geyser Land* was inspired by the simultaneous invention of train travel and film, and the impact of those things on the myth making of the American west and the displacement of native peoples. Viewers experienced the piece from a moving train in Montana, witnessed video projections onto the landscape out the window, and heard sound through the train's interior speaker system. Her work sheds light on the confluences in history and current cultural circumstance, the site's former use and also to its change over time.



Left & Right: Documentation images from projection and performance installation, Geyser Land, by Ann Carlson and Mary Ellen Strom, 2003.

fragments

When Ann Carlson re-stages photographs along the path of a moving train, or Shimone Attie projects bits of writing and photographs along a sidewalk, or Janet Cardiff leads a listener to several spots around an old train station, they are all creating narratives by stringing together fragments. In *hear now their then I* created from fragments and shared them as stories elaborated from those fragments. Working in fragments let me work like an archeologist, building a story from the shards and remnants I sifted from the space and the related archives. Archaeologist and writer Michael Shanks describes archaeology in a way that parallels my creative practice: “The archaeologist is implicated as an active agent of interpretation. What archaeologists do is work with material traces in order to create something -- a meaning, a narrative, an image -- which stands for the past in the present... Rather than being a reconstruction of the past from its surviving remains, this is recontextualization... This we might call the archaeological imagination.”



Archaeologists at work on a dig near Tel-Aviv.

My primary interest in fragments is using them to engage the imagination. In this way, fragments create images because our imaginations fill in the gaps. As Shanks describes, “So too, the fragment of the past evokes. We can work on the archaeological fragment to reveal what is missing; the shattered remnant invites us to reconstruct, to suppose that which is no longer there.” In the Jam Handy, the physical fragments in the space and the fragments I found in the archives were the archaeological finds that my stories and the listener’s imaginations completed.

creative non-fiction & audio documentary

In my projects in general and *hear now their then* specifically, real lived histories inspire my content, which puts my work in conversation with documentary and creative non-fiction. While I am trying to communicate real histories and stories, I am trying to make them experiential, bringing the listener/viewer into contact with the story in surprising and intimate ways. I am striving for magical as opposed to museological.



In *hear now their then*, sound became my medium of choice for its ability to communicate intellectually as well as perceptively. Alan Hall is an award-winning experimental radio documentarist who describes the power I also find in sound: “Radio is transmitted through the air as sound waves, touching our ears and penetrating our bodies, leaving auditory images that resonate in our hearts and minds. As a medium, it is both cerebral and emotional.”



Since coming to graduate school my ears have been opened to a vast world of creative radio, in particular, the notion of the “documentary feature” -- a type of radio program produced mostly in Britain that applies techniques of fiction to factual stories. “In crafting radio features, the producer is using sound not only for its everyday, informational qualities...but for its metaphoric qualities.” The authors tell a true story but uses sound design to engage and activate the imagination beyond the facts. The radio feature *The Glass Piano*, produced for the BBC by Kate Bland and Deborah Levy, relays the “strange true story” of a 19th century Bavarian Princess who was convinced she had swallowed a grand piano made of glass. It is told through dramatized imaginary dialogue of the princess, narration by the producers, and conversations with a psychoanalyst, a historian, and an ER doctor. The musical clinking of chimes and shattered glass is a motif that runs throughout that both illustrates moments of the princess’ story, but also emphasizes the psychological aspect of the subject. The combination of fictive material speculated from the real story and the contributions of contemporary narrators create a story that reaches across time and pulls out metaphorical meaning with contemporary relevance.

Listening, for future projects

Jay Allison, perhaps the most highly esteemed independent radio producer in the US has said, “We are blind listening to the radio. Our imaginations are in play. We create the characters, envision the settings. Images are indelible because we participate in their creation.” Particularly interesting to me is the act of listening in which we are both transported beyond ourselves and “see” what’s not in front of us.

My understanding of using sound as a way to see grew with this work, as did my understanding of sound as vehicle for imagining what *can't* be seen. I learned a lot about the different descriptive and suggestive qualities sound conveys, especially in connection with narration. The combination of writing and language and sound has rich potential to guide an experience and perception of time. Creating *hear now, their then* sowed many seedlings for my next projects. I feel I have scratched the surface of the role and character of the narrator — both the narrator’s relationship to the listener, as well as the narrator’s relationship to the scenario for which they are the guide. I am excited to explore the nuances of these relationships further. I am also interested in experimenting with acting as a guide *in person* in combination with audio. In upcoming projects I am excited to work with sites where I might incorporate more fictional elements, that is, where fiction would not feel irreverent or over-shadow any real history of that place that I wanted to include.

I believe in the power of place, the power of the *real* place. A connection between many of the works I’ve mentioned here and my own, is that they are stories being told *in the places where they actually happened*. For a long time I have been trying to figure out why the notion of “this is where it would have been” has felt so powerful to me. I keep hoping that I will open a book by Lucy Lippard to find a sentence that says, “Being back in the place where something important happened affects us deeply. Here’s why: _____” But that writing does not exist. Still the question motivates much of my work.

Public Historians maintain, “Historical sites provide a tangible link to the past they evoke” This ‘link’ starts to get to the power of experiencing a story where it happened— historic sights provide a *connection*. But what I’ve realized through *hear now their then* is that the real power I feel in these places is in the *intangible* nature of the link that they provide. In the instance of being in an historic place, the only thing separating us from the historic occurrence is time —unmovable, elusive, intangible time. Working to re-evolve the story of a place creates a sense of continuity across time, and past and present noticeably collide. In those instances we are “so close yet so far” from the real moment. The act of considering the story links the past to the present. In that moment of hearing the story, *we* are the connection between the past and the present.

I went into the making of *hear now, their then* approaching it as a process of revealing the palimpsest of place in the Jam Handy, almost as if it had reached a stasis. Over time I realized that as I sought out and peeled back the layers of the past, I was becoming part of the layer of the building's continually accumulating present. This was never more clear to me than two nights before the opening when (and I'm going to go out on this) I had just eleven sound pieces, when I had been aiming for twelve. I had nearly given up on that twelfth piece when the building owner approached me to say "I hope you don't mind, and they won't bother you, but there's going to be a marching band practicing here tonight." [play "Rehearsal"](#)



Recording the Detroit Party Marching Band at our serendipitous meeting at The Jam Handy Building, March 18th, 2014

All 12 audio vignettes can be heard at: <https://soundcloud.com/julietflamingo/sets/the-jam-handy>

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TRACK

VOICING

SOUND DESIGN

OTHER

READY TO EDIT?

OFFICE DOOR
office door

written? ✓

OFFICE DOOR
SHORTER ✓

NEED TO ADD
VOICES

✓

CATWALK
catwalk

✓

✓

✓

GET SOUNDS FROM BOYS ✓

✓

BALCONY/DOORS
balcony doors

✓

BALCONY/DOORS ✓

✓

✓

WHIMMING
name of building

✓

SWIMMING ✓

✓

X ?

✓

MEMO
somewhere

✓

MEMO SOUNDCLAP ✓

✓

✓

SILVER DOORS
silver doors

✓

✓

PUT MOVIE AUDIO IN

✓

RIGID ARE
stage

✓

FUSIDARE SOUNDCLAP ✓

✓

✓

TIME CAPSULE
up stairs

NEED ONE FACT ✓

TIME CAPSULE SOUNDCLAP ✓

✓

NEED INFO FROM SIMEDON

✓

AK AUCTION
the building

NEED ONE FACT ✓

AK AUCTION SOUNDCLAP ✓

✓

NEED INFO FROM SIMEDON

✓

FATCH FOR MIPACLES
INTPO SONG
red velvet chains

✓

FATCH FOR MIPACLES SOUNDCLAP ✓

✓

NEEDS RE-WIRE? Need fatch hearing sound

✓

FM CLOSING

✓

FM ORGAN
organ

???

WRITE

✓

SEE THE USA

EMAIL BOBBY CHART

✓

RECORDING BOOTH

AUTO ADS

✓

Im about applying the postage stamp

GET ALL "DRAFTS TO EDIT" BY END OF DAY THURS TO THE POINT OF

LIVE FROM [scribble]

TRACK	TO-DO 1	TO-DO 2	TO-DO 3
OFFICE DOOR FRANCE DOOR SHORTER	adjustments in voice add stuff that will you? RECORD NARR	watch a watch Record a few more strip of names add game a house	INSTALL OFFICE DOOR 115 2:24
CATWALK ATWALK REPLY TO SAVE WD		fix levels in whisper	INSTALL CATWALK ask stephene about noise in whisper
BALCONY PROPAGATE Q	WRITING make more of an image add info about being built for commercial purposes EQ for distance	ADD IN NON VOICE	INSTALL BALCONY PROPAGATE Q
MEMO EQ	still loops seamlessly levels for loud	SHORTEN OCCAS	INSTALL MEMO
SILVER DOORS EQ?	punctuating the scenes	see what stephene thinks of bells	INSTALL SILVER DOORS
FRIGIDAIRE	amplitude is fucked up volume needs to be UP in dial		INSTALL FRIGIDAIRE
TIME CAPSULE	in the front of the folder was a letter dated ..		INSTALL TIME CAPSULE
TAX AUCTION	fix 12 minutes fact fix popping ps	in the last minute of the auction	INSTALL TAX AUCTION
RED VELVET CHAIRS		change who voice	INSTALL RED VELVET
SEE THE USA	CUT OFF BLANK SOUNDING ADD IN THIS SPACE CHANGE TENSE "SHE IS" make ADD BLOWS KISS ADD LONGER CARDSC.	filmed here	INSTALL DNM STORE
MARCHING BAND RECORDING BAND	WRITING get help making if not so piercing	send to starchy	INSTALL MARCHING BAND
SKYWRITING	WRITE IT SPUT IT FROM VOICE BOTH give it more RECORD VOICING	SHORTEN	CUT MUSIC @ end INSTALL SKYWRITING

TRACK	LIGHT?	OBJECT	Special thing?	NOTES
OFFICE DOOR	✓	on office door	x	<i>Straight down</i>
CATWALK	x	x	x	<i>straight down</i>
BALCONY 1	✓ 2 ✓ STAINED GLASS	balcony beam	plus stained glass (x?)	2 gobos 3 order multi color gels GET SIZE G389 (B) Bholders
MEMO 2	x	x	x	<i>12 footer only</i>
SILVER DOORS	✓ 3	silver doors	x	2 footer
FRIGIDAIRE	✓ 7	light on "stage"		<i>Straight down</i>
TIME CAPSULE	x	x	x	<i>straight down</i>
AX AUCTION	x	x	x	<i>straight down</i>
RED VEWETCHERS 2	x	x		<i>12 foot diagonal</i>
SEE THE USA	✓	back wall stage	light through the trees	Order trees <i>straight down</i> borrow one of Ann's gels 77863 Bholders (B)
RECORDING BOAT	x	x	x	5 footer
skywriting	x	x		2 footer