

Elle Laforge

Positions through iterating, Written response

Part 1: A short statement (100–200 words) articulating my line of enquiry

My line of enquiry explores how graphic communication design can translate the sonic identity of a place into a visual language, and how sound can communicate position as both a physical location and an emotional experience. I am interested in how everyday environments are often understood visually, while their acoustic presence (for example buzzing, conversations, a tapping of the foot, a door closing, background hums, etc.,) remains unnoticed despite shaping how a place feels to each individual. Working from my own experience of visual-sonic synesthesia, I ask how sound can be represented through line, shape, and scale, whilst incorporating onomatopoeic text rather than simply through conventional audio recording or objective mapping. Can a place be read through listening instead of looking? How can line function as a form of notation rather than illustration? Can graphic design make invisible atmospheres visible?

To explore this, I recorded specific locations for the second week of iterations and deconstructed their soundscapes into individual auditory events, translating each into layered tracing-paper publications where the scale and form of each line reflects its perceived auditory presence. Through this process, I investigate how sound shapes spatial perception.

Part 2: Annotated bibliography

A. From the course reading list:

Ingold, T. (2007) Lines: A Brief History. London: Routledge, pp. 120–151.

“We draw lines as well as write them, and in each case the line is the trace of a manual gesture.” (p. 120)

Ingold’s description of the line as “the trace of a manual gesture” helped me understand my drawings not as not just illustrations of sound, but as records of listening enacted through the hand. For this project, I initially paid particular attention to the sounds of specific things, people or places, and translated them into drawn lines, allowing each sound to take shape according to how it feels, both physically and emotionally. Harsher or more discombobulating sounds become sharper and more angular, while softer sounds become rounder and smoother. The line therefore operates as a bodily response to sound, rather than a neutral visual sign.

This is further relevant to my tracing-paper booklets from the second week, where individual sound-lines are layered to build a visual language of a designated place. Ingold's discussion of drawing and writing also helped me think through the role of onomatopoeic text in the work: both word and line become traces of gesture, sitting between notation, and perception. Although Ingold is not writing specifically about sound, his argument supports my use of line as an embodied form of translation, through which the sonic atmosphere of a place can be made visible without solely using descriptive text.

Perec, G. (1997) *Species of Spaces and Other Pieces*. London: Penguin Books, pp. 46–56.

"Force yourself to write down what is of no interest, what is most obvious, most common, most colourless." (p. 50)

Perec's attention to the ordinary helped me situate my project as an attempt to notice what is usually backgrounded within everyday spaces. In *The Street*, he does not describe place through spectacle or fixed visual landmarks, but through repeated observation, small details, habits, movements, and systems that often disappear into familiarity. This directly relates to my project, which explores how a specific place can be communicated through its sonic identity rather than through visual observation alone, from the perspective of someone with auditory-visual synesthesia.

By recording the sounds of places over short periods of time and separating them into individual layers, I am also trying to attend to what might otherwise be dismissed as insignificant; faint laughs, keyboard typing, or construction sounds. My tracing-paper booklets do not aim to document a place objectively, but to translate how it feels to occupy it through listening. Perec helped me think about position as both a place and a feeling, a physical location, but also a subjective experience shaped by attention, atmosphere, and perception in a given place. In this sense, space is therefore understood through fragments and personal attention rather than through a single fixed view.

B. As a topic reference

Schafer, R.M. (1994) *The Soundscape: Our Sonic Environment and the Tuning of the World*. Rochester, Vermont: Destiny Books.

"A soundscape consists of events heard not objects seen." (p. 8)

Schafer's understanding of the soundscape helps me frame place as something that can be read through listening rather than only through visual observation. His distinction

between keynote sounds, signals, and soundmarks is particularly useful to my project, as it suggests that sounds play different roles within an environment: some form a continuous background atmosphere, some interrupt or demand attention, and others become closely associated with a specific place or community.

This directly relates to my tracing-paper booklets, where I record short moments of everyday environments and separate the soundscape into individual auditory events. Each sound is translated into its own visual layer using line, shape, and onomatopoeic text, with the scale of the line reflecting its perceived auditory presence within the place. While Schafer provides a vocabulary for analysing acoustic environments, my project uses graphic communication design to translate those environments visually. His work also supports my understanding of position as something shaped by sound: not only where I am physically located, but how a place is felt through atmosphere, interruption, rhythm, and attention.

C. Medium or method reference

Cage, J. and Knowles, A. (1969) Notations. New York: Something Else Press.

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The image displays a page of handwritten musical notation for Louis Andriessen's 'A Flower Song II'. The notation is written on ten staves. The first staff begins with a treble clef and a key signature of one sharp (F#). The notation is highly graphic and expressive, featuring various rhythmic patterns, including dense clusters of notes and long, sweeping lines. Dynamic markings such as 'p' (piano) and 'f' (forte) are present. The notation is signed 'Louis Andriessen' and dated 'amsterdam, febr. '64.' at the bottom right of the page.

Detail: A page from *Notations* showing sound represented through non-traditional graphic marks by Louis Andriessen.

Notations is a collection of experimental graphic scores that explore different ways of visually representing sound, rhythm, duration, and performance. Rather than relying on traditional musical notation, these works use line, shape, spacing, and composition to communicate how sound is experienced. This is highly relevant to my project, as I am also developing an individual system of graphic notation to translate the sonic identity of a place into visual form.

By recording specific environments and deconstructing their soundscapes into individual sound events, I use line and onomatopoeic text to create a visual language based on how sounds feel rather than how they are objectively measured, similar to the composer's embodied experience of music. In my system, sharper sounds become angular forms, softer sounds become rounder, and more immersive sounds expand into broader shapes. Cage and Knowles help me position these drawings as a form of notation rather than illustration, where the publication becomes a score for listening to place and "position".

Critical position reference

1. *Christine Sun Kim's practice*



Above; Kim, C.S. (2016) *The Sound of Obsessing*. Installation view.

Christine Sun Kim's work helps me position my project critically by challenging the assumption that sound is only auditory. In *The Sound of Obsessing*, a repeated phonetic mark becomes spatial and architectural, filling the wall like a sound that cannot be ignored. The work suggests that sound is not neutral: it can occupy space, insist on attention, and affect the body even when translated visually.

This relates to my project because I am also exploring how sound can be communicated through line, scale, repetition, and visual rhythm. However, Kim's work pushes this further by showing that the visualisation of sound is not only a formal exercise, but a way of questioning who gets to define, access, or control sonic experience. As previously mentioned, my tracing-paper booklets translate each sound from a place onto its own layer, with the scale of the line reflecting its auditory presence. Kim helps me think critically about this process and question where to take it further. From her work, it is clear that sound is not simply something to be recorded, it has much more breadth and shapes one's position, attention, and embodied experience within space.

Wild card reference

Hodgson, J. (1997) *Feeling My Way*. Animated documentary short film.



Detail: *Feeling My Way* combines live-action point-of-view footage with hand-drawn animation, using drawn marks and movement to represent perception, and Hodgson's emotional experience of moving through urban space.

Hodgson's film, although rooted in animation, helped me think about place as something felt as well as something which can be observed. Instead of documenting the city objectively, *Feeling My Way* presents movement through space as subjective and embodied, shaped by the author's memory, experience, rhythm, as well as attention. This strongly relates to my project, which explores how a place can be communicated through its sonic identity rather than through visual description alone, though inherently biased.

By recording the sounds of specific places and translating them into layered lines and onomatopoeic text, I am also trying to represent how a place feels to occupy rather than how it simply looks. Recording one's position, in the dual meaning of a place and a feeling. Position reflects a physical location, but also an atmosphere shaped by sound,

perception, and one's personal experience. Although my final outcome for this brief at the end of week 2 became a printed publication rather than animation, Hodgson's work remains important as a reference for how graphic communication can move beyond documentation and into sensory, emotional representation.