

Vivian

Caccuri

silent

walk

The “silent walk” project consists of an eight-hour long urban itinerary, conceived for an excursion of some fifteen to twenty people, all having taken a vow of silence, to places of intense acoustic activity: construction sights, rooftops, underground paths and isolated areas are just some examples of the locations the expedition will pass through. The restriction of verbal communication aims to invigorate a true interest towards the urban noise and the perception of links existing between urban development, privacy, property and intimacy. At the end of the route, the group gathers to share a dinner prepared especially for the occasion. In this social situation, the vow of silence is broken to invite participants to share their experience.

I like to create a space where there's a switch of consciousness.

Excerpt "Gap Station Podcast"

Words as Makeup

It's always surprising, even after performing the "silent walk" project more than thirteen times, how a group of twenty people in silence calls people's attention in the public place. It can be so magnetic as to turn people's heads. Is it that exotic? Does being in a group mean talking incessantly?

When I think of the many forms that spending time with people in the city can take, I start to debate with myself whether verbal language is usually exercised not with the purpose of bringing people closer, but of keeping them at bay. I am not talking about the stranger that might feel comfortable enough to make an approach and say "hello, how are you today?". I am talking about acquaintances and coworkers with whom we actually spend time in the city. It's with them that verbal language allows time travels, present fractioning, dying our memories with each new version told, renewing our reactions and deviating from the subject or theme, when necessary.

To look at a person in silence, however, makes his or her body speak for itself: in a certain way, the one that is not constantly verbalizing becomes more visual to our eyes and for that matter, more exposed. Silence in our own experience is known to awake and empower the senses. "Silence is only terrifying to the ones that are compulsively verbalizing," said William Burroughs in an interview in 1989. If not speaking carries on a message of "letting it be" and of being comfortable with our own senses, body and its visuality, then what exactly is the nature of the security that speaking makes us feel against all the sound the happens around us?

Posted 08 September 2014

The first "silent walk" took place in Rio de Janeiro in 2012. The idea came to me the year before, after spending more than ten nights photographing and drawing empty places on Princeton's campus for a sound design seminar. I was looking for places of intricate acoustics, sounds that were problematic or confusing due to architectural missteps or special social situations. What I couldn't foresee when I started my night strolls is that the sights were so interesting that it would make sense to share the experience with others. Considering my original silent/lonely situation during those visits and how it en-

hanced spatial sensation and mystery, I decided to ban verbal language if a collective experience was to take place. In order to challenge daily life's short attention spans even further, the duration of the path was extended to eight hours, same as a regular work shift.

Posted 30 August 2014

I realized, after performing the first "silent walk", that I was dealing with a very rare material: the collective silence. The participants weren't there for spiritual or medical reasons: it's perhaps more accurate to say it was attitude, a will to experiment, to have a taste of a situationist kind of day. The first ten minutes of the silent walk were the strangest I've had in the last years, as it became clear that the movements of my body were legible signs that could be decoded by whomever in the absence of words. For eight hours we listened to the rhythm of the city, to the small islands of tranquillity and calm, to the unbearable noise, hilarious conversations, animal sounds, the skaters and the Gregorian chant of Catholic monks. As an ending, we had a talking-permitted dinner and spoke nostalgically of the day that had just passed.

Posted 31 August 2014

I work to turn the city into a gallery, stage, home and music with the interventions and performances that are planned for the path, even if those are for a few moments.

Excerpt artist Q&A

During the "silent walk" I try to create a whole day dedicated to not having a goal. I believe some places have this power of just bringing you into the present time.

Excerpt "Gap Station Podcast"





Impressions "silent walk" in Riga, 01 September 2014

So much to process in my mind, not enough time to reflect. I predicted that something like this would happen at some point, after performing the “silent walk” in Riga. This “silent walk” had the power of shaping so many interesting and happy memories that I could easily get overwhelmed if I did not care to give them a safe space to rest and to be remembered.

I guess I had good instinct when I planned a long quiet trip to Muhu, a small island on the west coast of Estonia, before going to Helsinki.

Posted 04 September 2014



I wasn't expecting to do urban exploration in Muhu. In fact, I was looking for the exact opposite: nature, nature, nature. Strangely, as soon as I got on the main road to head to the south part of the island, my built-in ghost radio played some static and I turned my head to take a good look at this building.

Posted 05 September 2014

Can an offering stone hear us? Can an offering stone hear anything at all? I gave a chance to the good will of Muhu's ancient spirits to place my audio recorder on the main rock to experience how it would be if it had ears. There was a breeze coming from all sides.

<https://soundcloud.com/sound-development-city/offering-stone>
Posted 06 September 2014

This is sound from the seesaw that probably has the most gorgeous view on Earth. At Kissassaari island, Helsinki.

<https://soundcloud.com/sound-development-city/seesaw>
Posted 09 September 2014

During Sound Development City in Helsinki, I had an exhibition in Rio de Janeiro, at the city's main art fair — ArtRio. These works have all been created, having the “silent walk” project in mind: much of the material I use come from strolling around Rio de Janeiro or whatever city I visit for organizing the walk. The way I give form to these materials and fragments often involves sound, touch and movement. That is the case in this series of works that I left in Brazil right before coming here. Here are some pictures^{→p.55} of how I modified safety nets from Rio's harbor area and a supermarket display of curry sauce, amplified and over-driven to be turned into a quasi-guitar.

Posted 13 September 2014



“Pagode Azul” — Safety nets, samba bells and acrylic, 2014



“Knorr” — Supermarket display, contact microphone, amplifier, 2014



My second “silent walk” in Sound Development City happened in Helsinki on 12 September. We were a group of seven, more resumed in comparison with my previous groups, but I really enjoyed this size. Somehow we were faster while walking and more intense while resting. It is quite amazing how some members really manage to build bonds among everyone, make people feel secure and in a good mood. I feel I had everything I needed.

Posted 15 September 2014

The silence amongst friends

How do you write about silence? About walking without talking?

I could tell you about that water tower that looks like a giant mushroom. One of the yellow kinds with large lamellae — the one that we passed two hours later in some wood. Or, I could tell you how I fell deeply asleep after the lunch... water sounds and rustling leaves of birch trees in the wind around me.

Or, there was another thing that really struck me: After approximately six hours we entered the great Finlandia concert hall. It was empty. Quiet. We sat there for about twelve minutes.

It wasn't silence that we experienced. It was the absence of sound. The implosion of everything we heard before. Every sound bit — nice or noise — was sucked from my ears. Like a reverse concert.

That (and more) all happened and it was beautiful.

However, what surprised me was the sort of trust that came with the experience. We were a group of random people. Yet, the “not talking” created some trust. A way of just being together.

Language can connect people, yes, but it can also cheat on the quality of connection. “Ask no questions, and you'll be told no lies.” — that's from Charles Dickens' “Great Expectations”. We didn't talk so no space for lies.

And it reminded me of the silence amongst old friends, and the tranquility that comes with it. When they just stay quiet for a while because not all has been said but there is no need to argue, make a point nor position yourself via language.

Tranquility is a sign of trust.

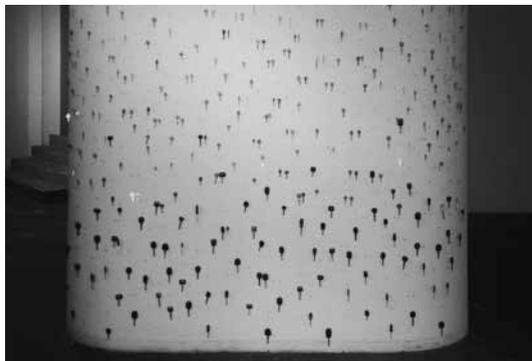
13 September 2014
Expedition writer, Uwe Lützen

My Mistake

The first time I had a strong impression towards keys and doors was during Sound Development City's "silent walk" in Riga. We were already half way through our path, crossing a neighborhood with old wooden houses, when one of the Latvian participants who was carrying some keys, stopped me with a written note and asked me to wait. She then walked towards one of the houses, opened its door and went in. It was her place! I was amazed with the coincidence. What was of the chance of something like that happening? I have never met her before, let alone known of where she abode, and yet, my route came right in front of her house. It made me feel like the city had a complex logic behind it and once in a while you decode it: it's just a matter of having the right people and the right keys.

When I came back to Brazil, I went to the locksmith to make the copy of a key. Something went wrong during the process, I saw him discarding the key in a big trash bin that had a bunch of other discarded ones.

Coincidentally a few days later, I came across an interesting musical instrument used by samba groups that were made from wrong or old keys. The sound was brilliant, loud and amazing. So I decided to make a version myself. I went to all the locksmiths I could find in São Paulo asking for all the rejected keys they had. I covered a whole wall with nails and hanged the keys close to each other so that when people touch the keys, they make a variety of bright high-pitch noises. A wall of keys that led to no real doors, the spaces they lock are inexistent.



"My Mistake" — Found keys, nails, nylon, 2014



"Guided Art Tour", Helsinki—13 September 2014
Stop #6: "silent walk"