

Listening To Angels

The unique interaction each viewer has with an art object is something independent from the physical product of art. My work deals with the 'art experience' as existing separately from the 'art object', just as Los Angeles exists independently from its physical nature.

Robert Irwin is an artist that was raised in Los Angeles. Irwin practiced art in L.A., heavily contributing to the expansion of the Los Angeles art community. Irwin says there is no right way to live in L.A., people in Los Angeles can, 'build [their] own ideas about culture'.

"See, what I've always liked about this town, still do, is that it's one of the least restrictive towns in the world. You can pretty much live any way you want here. And part of that is because the place has no tradition and no history in that sense. It doesn't have any image of itself, which is exactly its loss and its gain. Like when New Yorkers tell me what's wrong with L.A., everything they say is wrong - no tradition, no history, no sense of a city, no system of support, no core, no sense of urgency - they're absolutely right, and that's why I like it. That's why it's such a great place to do art and to build your ideas about culture. In New York, it's like an echo chamber; it's overwhelming sense of itself, of its past and its present and its mission become utterly restricting."

Experiences in Los Angeles are created by individuals. The city has no sense of self, no imposed criteria and no physical dominance. The structure of the city is expansive and varied with juxtapositions. The culture of the city is constantly being renewed, reinvented, shifted, rejected, deconstructed, or demolished. The people of the city represent countless nationalities, races, religions, and nearly every type of thinker. The city creates situations that can be interpreted to fulfill expectations and desires of varying individuals. Los Angeles doesn't control you, you are free to make judgments, Los Angeles gives you choices, and you associate Los Angeles with these choices and events that you experience individually, Los Angeles becomes what you do, not just a place that you live.

In the same way that 'Los Angeles' exists independently from the physical city so can 'art' from the 'art object'. Art is an experience, an idea, a reaction, an opportunity; a moment that can redirect your focus from the physical 'art object', and from the physical space you inhabit. The 'art experience' is discovered and interpreted on an individual basis. The viewers, or participants of a work of art activate it and assign meaning through personal interactions. A work of art can potentially manifest a unique experience for each individual viewing the work.

The work of art I intend to make will function like Los Angeles. The piece will consist of multiple experiences functioning simultaneously, potentially influencing one another, while existing separately and independently. The work I am creating will have no physical images other than the land that it occupies, just as Irwin says Los Angeles has no 'image of itself'. The art will not occupy any physical space or control the viewer in any

way. This will allow the artwork to be discovered in a way determined by each viewer's personality.

I want to create a sculpture that changes the environment in which it exists. I want people to interact with the sculpture in intimate ways and to interact with other people experiencing the altered space. I want the people around the sculpture who are not yet experiencing it to question the interactions between active participants, the sculpture, the surrounding environment and each other. I want the sculpture to surprise people, by being unexpected and out of context. I want people to decide together what the sculpture is, if it is anything at all.

Sculptures of stone and other materials can very efficiently convey an artist's intention, but it can be better represented with sound in some cases. The sound associated with any entity communicates some aspect of its character, and conveys some set of emotional reactions. Re-creating sounds three dimensionally will allow interactions and associations similar to those broadcasted from the origination of the sound, and unexpectedly different ones.

Imagine columns of directed sound audible only within the column. The intense rush of a waterfall heard in the center of the fall could be represented in a column as wide as the waterfall. The rush of water being heard within a twenty-foot radius from the center of the waterfall could be simulated around the central column, larger and larger columns encompassing the ranging audibility surrounding the waterfall could be constructed, all the way out to the sounds that first hint at the existence of a waterfall.

A sculpture representing any physical phenomena can be constructed by using a technique of emitting directed audio. Audio confined within a defined space can only be directly experienced within that space. This experience, although technically the same for each participant, will create associations based on each individual's previous experiences, presenting 'art experiences' determined by individuality.

This sculpture will exist in a representational fashion as Walther Ruttmann's 'Weekend' does, but the auditory representations of the city of L.A. will be able to be accessed in a non-sequential order like Nam Jun Paik's 'Random Access'. The participants will choose the sounds they experience by the way in which they explore the spaces the sounds occupy. The best place for this sculpture is a place where a sculpture is unexpected. The best way to first experience it is to not know you are about to experience it. This sculpture shouldn't have a plaque next to it or anything signifying it as a work of art. This sculpture will essentially leave the land it occupies untouched, except for the addition of new interactions amongst people and the land.

The Los Angeles State Historic Park is a prime location for the sculpture. The park, in the northern area of downtown L.A., was being threatened by industrial and real estate development, but is now historically protected. The site was not only home to the Southern Pacific Rail Station, but it was the only natural pass into Los Angeles when it was first settled (besides the coastal route); the city's first depot and hotel were built here. The park is a stone's throw from the L.A. River and is next to historic and ethnically diverse communities as well as the homes and workshops of cultural activists, concerned

citizens, and artists. The site is a sort of microcosm of Los Angeles and its history; the sound sculpture that will occupy the space will amplify this historic plot of land.

The sculpture titled, 'Listening to Angels', consists of 4 elements: The sounds of a river, a railroad, a field of electricity, and a highway. The auditory representations will be projected on the field like powerful spotlights motionlessly monitoring the field from east to west (the longer length of the land). Each of the four elements will utilize five directional speakers aiming parallel to each other, the central speaker being the loudest and the outer two being softest. The speakers will create a gradient of sound perceived only within each auditory representation. The park will appear to the eye (and to the ears prior to entering) as a typical grassy plot of land, but once the park is entered from any direction people will begin to hear the sound of whatever 'audio field' they are nearing. As this shift happens peoples perceptions of the park will become altered.

Entering the park from north or south will orient a participant perpendicular to the 'spotlights'. The first auditory representation encountered from either direction in this fashion is the river. A 25-foot wide auditory gradient, rising then falling in amplitude, will recreate the experience of passing over a river. If a participant decides to walk straight across the park from north to south they will next experience a 25-foot wide gap of silence, following the silence is the auditory representation of a heavily traveled railroad (rendered with a gradient like the river experience and all the other elements), next 25 feet of silence, then a field of electricity, then more silence, finally the busy highway, and then a 50-foot wide area of silence creating the central area in the park. If this central area of silence is traversed the highway is heard again and the entire experience can be heard in reverse.

What this sculpture will mean to people will depend on the same factors that dictate the way they experience life and the city of Los Angeles. Individuals may experience part of the piece, by only seeing part of the park, or they may experience nothing by habit of merely observing the scene with out entering its boundaries, or they may take in every aspect of the situation and influence others along the way. Regardless of the amount or type of exposure each viewer has with the piece, they will be experiencing art, not seeing art objects.

Budget

40 HSS (HyperSonic Sound) speakers: \$500 per speaker	\$20,000
Technical advising	\$ 1,000

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