

With *Marches*, commissioned by Artangel Interaction in February 2008, I set out to explore the auditory perception of our built environment using the ephemeral and intangible nature of sound to re-imagine our architectural surroundings and daily spatial practices.

The audio recordings, the enclosed map and this booklet document the two performances that took place on the 23rd of May 2008. These choreographed marches saw ten participants navigate two planned passages through the urban districts of Tower Hill (track 1) and More London (track 2), areas distinct for both their lively history and mottled aural atmosphere.

Each member of this small troop was equipped with footwear designed and adapted in collaboration with west-end cobbler Andy during a mini residency at *Anthony Andrews Special Footwear and Orthotics* in April. These shoes were constructed for exaggerated sonic effect; loafers, boots and brogues were adorned with wooden platforms and hollow stiletto heels. The soles harboured different

combinations of hobnails, taps and quarter iron tips while inside specially adapted leather insoles were inserted to induce squeaking. At the shoemakers I immersed myself in an alien field of knowledge whilst the craftsmanship of the shoemaker was directed into the exploration of sound to create shoes like no other; shoes that emit impulses and acoustically define the architectural space through which the wearer travels.



During the course of these marches the ten strong brigade navigated subways, tunnels, churches, gift shops, stations, shopping malls, piers, bridges, breweries, business centres and banks, their stamping pads striking everything from concrete pav-

ing to the finest buffed granite. For the performers of my work the conventional act of walking is altered into a regimented, fast-paced exercise. This act is not only concerned with movement from A to B but also with the creation of sounds pushed through a series of environments and the response to incidental noise that inadvertently spills into its path. In *Marches* I wanted to exemplify the aural capacity to delineate space, treating architecture like dormant music, awakening it through the act of walking. The marchers advanced through the built environment performing a work that not only intended to disrupt the conventional sound-scape but also to disrupt conventional ideas of social space.



Participants were choreographed to join and disperse at points of distinctive acoustic interest. Pathways were planned according to the most acoustically exciting way of navigating all the domed roofs, narrow corridors and reflective glass walls that the specific urban territories offered. The routes, illustrated in the accompanying maps, were also planned involving sociological research and historiography; digging into the city's history to find stories and accounts of parades, processions, marches, trudges and demonstrations. Routes were harvested and mapped onto the current city form, intersecting new buildings and extinct pathways to create new navigations of the city.

This compilation of performance, cartographic illustration, sound recordings, writings, shoe making and research are all processes to enable an alternative reading of the city, one which has lost concern for function and is left only with transit. *Marches* illustrates a city that is waiting between two points, a city that existed briefly and for no purpose.

Lawrence Abu Hamdan



*"Hi Lawrence,  
Thanks for your query.  
Generally a squeak in a shoe will be generated by two pieces  
of leather rubbing against each other unsolutioned."*

## **LONDON, SHOD.**

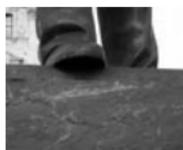
by Isobel Durrant.

Think of transport in London and you probably think first of cars and buses and tubes. But one of the most striking sights is during the rush hour at London Bridge, when suited workers stream along the pavements like a determined tide. The stop start of the road traffic is in contrast with their steady, purposeful march. By mid-morning the tempo has changed, people are walking more slowly, some admiring the view of the river and Tower Bridge, taking pictures or chatting, their progress a gentle ripple.

I can think of no statues around town of people in cars or on buses, though there are quite a few equestrian ones and hundreds of people on foot. Some are sandaled, some barefoot, some booted and even spurred, some in elegant heeled shoes that don't look very suitable for walking at all. They tell us about social status and fashion, when your fortune could be told from your feet, and they conjure up the sounds of the city in times past: from the slap of an urchin's bare feet to the quick clipping of high heels. Layer upon layer of sound down the centuries. Roman soldiers

marching; scurrying feet running from fire; bent back trudging of dockers at the end of the day; the massed sound of trainers in the marathon.

Off Cheapside cordwainer John Smith's statue shows him in swaggering boots. Outside St Thomas' Hospital Edward VI wears a pretty, buckled shoe. By St Paul's heavily shod firemen aim hoses to save the cathedral. In Parliament Square, the notorious philanderer Lloyd George wears sensible shoes that lack the romance of puritan Oliver Cromwell's boot outside Westminster Hall.



There can't be a square inch in London that no one has ever walked. I like the idea that we're constantly walking the same routes across town that people have walked for centuries, our footsteps an echo of theirs. The amazing thing is that most of the time there's no trace left. Imagine a skein of wool

attached to each person's feet. The city would be layered in wool up to the sky.

When it came to the recording of the second of these marches, I stood in Hay's Galleria. I wanted to see how people would react when they heard the marchers coming. It took a few moments for anyone to notice, then heads turned in curiosity, one or two people stood up. One person got out his camera. When the marchers disappeared down the steps there were a few smiles and comments, but within a minute everyone had returned to their previous concerns.

When I work as a tourist guide, a walk is broken down into many sections. I want people to look at their surroundings and also to imagine how a place would have been in the past. Often there are physical remains and indications, but sound isn't tangible and once it ceases there is nothing. So it is a challenge to us to conjure up sounds in our heads from the knowledge and experiences we bring to a walk.

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