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Exploring the Perception and Identity of Place in Sound and Image

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Abstract

In this paper the concept of place is explored as the stimulus for the creation of original works combining electronic music and photography. Although the compositions of both authors take inspiration from different facets of place there is a similarity of theoretical approach regarding the identity of the individual and their relationship to geographical situations and place. We will draw upon aspects of psychogeography, psychosonology, the theory of 'atmosphere' by Gernot Böhme to explore complexity of place in 21st century.

Keywords: atmosphere, *City Colours*, composition, *Drift Trilogy*, photography, place, psychogeography, psychosonography, social geography.

1. Introduction

This paper explores the theoretical context for audio-visual projects by the authors: *Drift Trilogy* by Adkins and *City Colours* by Santamas. The *Drift Trilogy* (*Rift Patterns*, *Residual Forms* and *Radial Drift*) is about the psychogeographical exploration of places and how they impact on our identity and emotions. In the *Drift Trilogy* the artistic intention is to expand the psychogeographical drift from the city, into the wider landscape as well as to our inner world in which multiple instances of experiencing a place converge to form a palimpsest of that place. This intention is also expressed through the photography accompanying the work by Stephen Harvey, particularly the overlaying of images that occurs in the images for Residual Forms (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. photographic layering (palimpsest) for Residual Forms

City Colours by Santamasis part of a larger project focusing on audio-photographic art and the creation of atmospheres. It is a portrait of a city based on the experiences of the artist created through processing and layering photographs and field recordings as well as synthesised colour and sound. Through this approach Santamas is aiming to create an audiovisual artwork where the photography and sound are presented as equals as opposed to one supplementing the other.

In these works, both authors are not concerned with the objective representation of place in order to make a political or ecological statement about the location being recorded or depicted. Rather we are concerned with the communication of an individual's emotive response to a specific location through sound and image. We acknowledge that this emotive response is both culturally conditioned and is fluid due to the changes that occur in one's perception of place through repeated engagement with that place over time.

2. Composer and Place

Place is a complex and multifaceted phenomenon including elements of memory, sight, sound, smell and atmosphere amongst others. There have been many composers and sound artists who have responded to or been inspired by 'place'. In the nineteenth century depicting 'place' in music became more common as musical tone painting – a depiction in sound of something tangible – made fashionable through the symphonic tone poem. Bedɽich Smetana's *Má vlast* depicts the Danube from its origins to a vast river and Edward Elgar's Cockaigne Op.40 provides a series of musical vignettes of life in London. Although there is no narrative in Elgar's work, it is about a specific place. In both *Má vlast* and Cockaigne the music is a metaphor for external events.

In contemporary music a similar preoccupation with place is evident. It seems that for all of our technological advancement and globalisation that artistically, we still take inspiration from, and respond strongly to, our personal connection and history with geographical locations. John Surman's *Road to St Ives*[1] is inspired by the West Country. Surman, born in Tavistock, Devon, writes that,

> Most of the music on this recording has been inspired by the landscape and history of the county of Cornwall in England. I am not Cornish. My birthplace lies just to the east of the river Tamar, which forms the border between Devon and Cornwall. However, ever since my first visit to Land's End, the county has held a special fascination for me. Its early inhabitants are traceable back to Paleolithic man. It has a language of its own, which remained in use up until the nineteenth century. With a rich fund of folklore and legend in addition, I've found much to inspire me. The pieces are not intended to be musical portraits of particular places or events, the titles being simply a collection of some of the intriguing place-names found on and around the road to St. Ives.

A similar pre-occupation with place names from the West Country is to be found on Simon Bainton's *Visiting Tides*[2] which goes further than Surman's work in that it uses field recordings taken from the locations referenced. Although the content of the field recordings

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1. John Surman *Road to St Ives* www.ecmrecords.com/Catalogue/ECM/1400/1418.php
2. Simon Bainton,*Visiting Tides*, Hibernate Records, 2013, http://hibernate-recs.co.uk

do not locate the work specifically in the West Country it is clear that for Bainton they are an important part of communicating a sense of place and his emotive response to it to the listener.

Richard Skelton is another composer who has a specific relationship with place. His work is often inspired by the West Pennine Moors and the landscape around Lancashire, and more recently the West Coast of Ireland. Skelton has responded to the landscape in a particularly musical way and one that tries to capture the essence of a place or environment and an individual's presence within it. His music is abstract and is created from multi-tracking predominantly stringed instruments. Skelton has recorded in specific locations on the Moors, buried instruments and subsequently then recorded tracks using them. In an extended interview Skelton states that,

> 'Ridgelines', for example, is the music of two hills – Black Combe in Cumbria, and Cappanawalla in County Clare, Ireland. I spent a significant amount of time living near, and visiting, each, before commencing the recordings. For me proximity is vital, as is duration. The longer I can spend with something, the better – observing and experiencing a place in different seasons, light and weather … In my own work the music is a rendering of space, or more accurately, place. It is a distillation or transmutation of landscape. The landscape is full of voices, audible and inaudible. Its contours and reliefs are a patterning of melodies, and the music I create is a string, resonating in sympathy … Provenance is important to me, though. Some of my recordings are composed of sounds recorded in specific places, and I feel that it's important to acknowledge that. I feel that a listener's experience is enriched by this knowledge … When I released handmade editions of music through Sustain-Release, I would frequently include natural ephemera from the landscape that inspired the music. Leaves, bark, grasses, etc. These were things that had fallen – they were in a way detritus – and ultimately bound for decay. I found the idea of saving them quite meaningful, and by including them in the packaging it bound the music to the landscape, acting as a physical link or signifier. (Wright, n.d.)

Skelton's past physical releases[3] have been hand-crafted artworks in their own right and were often accompanied by bark, pine cones or other natural ephemera collected whilst

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3. On the Sustain-Release press – now an archive entitled *Skura*.

working on the tracks that signify a 'local' personal sense of place rather than the predominant trend towards globalisation. (see Figure 2).

Figure 2. ephemera in Skelton's hand-crafted releases

A further example, to demonstrate how a sense of place is manifest in many different genres of music, comes from the field of popular music. Place is a central concern of the musical and photographic project of Mount Eerie (a.k.a. Phil Elverum). In an interview shortly after the renaming of his alter ego project from The Microphones to Mount Eerie, Elverum discussed the link between his home town Anacortes and his art. He states that,

> I love this place. It is home, in a deep way. The mountain (Mount Erie) is right in the middle of the island. It has this distinctive, dramatic rock face. It's almost like the mascot of this place. I grew up under it, staring at it every morning waiting for the school bus. It's a special place for me, and the mysterious beauty in the rock face is potent. It has a similar vibe to much of what I am trying to do in music. 'The voice of an old boulder.' So I called it 'Mount Eerie' to marry myself to this place because it is the center of my universe. I guess I had this idea that everyone must have some similar landmark that could be the center of their universe. Some places have a mountain that's always on the horizon. Maybe for some people it's a grain silo. Maybe a tree. Maybe a flat field. Maybe an apartment building. The iconic mascot of a place that is 'home.' (Stosuy, 2009)

As with Skelton, Mount Eerie's work is not merely a description of place but an on-going emotive response to it that reflects both the seasonal changes of the landscape, one's own accumulating experiences and memories, and the intersection of these. What all of these examples illustrate and something that is echoed in the authors' works, is the individual's response to place and the communication of this through music. Furthermore, there is a desire not merely to describe place but the emotive connection the composer has to it, often amplified through the inclusion of objects or additional artwork such as photography. It is

this expression of place and the communication of atmosphere, memory and psychological space that is fundamental to these works and takes them from being mere tone poems to psychsonographical portraits of place (Iosofat 2009).

As well as considering this individual approach to place in creative work it is interesting to note a parallel development in geography studies. In the past two decades there has been a shift in how social geographers consider the relationship between place and the individual. Gillian Rose writes that many geographers use 'place' in a 'quite specific sense, to refer to the significance of particular places for people. These feelings for 'place' are not seen as trivial; geographers argue that senses of place develop from every aspect of individuals' life experience and that sense of place pervade everyday life and experience.' (Rose, 1995). Rose continues,

> Identity is how we make sense of ourselves, and geographers, anthropologists and sociologists, among others, have argued that the meanings given to a place may be so strong that they become a central part of the identity of the people experiencing them ... a sense of place is more than just one person's feelings about a particular place; such feelings are not only individual but also social. All places are interpreted from particular social positions and for particular social reasons ... a sense of place is seen as a result of the meanings people actively give to their lives. It is part of the systems of meaning through which we make sense of the world. (Rose, 1995)

Our repeated contact with a place changes our perception of it. Our memories become a palimpsest as each visit provides new memories that are added to and nuanced by existing ones. Mark Graham extends this notion further writing that 'Places have always been palimpsests. The contemporary is constantly being constructed upon the foundations of the old.' (Graham 2009) Graham continues,

> All places are palimpsests. Among other things, places are layers of brick, steel, concrete, memory, history, and legend ... The countless layers of any place come together in specific times and spaces and have bearing on the cultural, economic, and political characteristics, interpolations, and meanings of place. (Graham, 2009)

It is the sense of place as discussed by Rose and Graham and expressed in abstract terms in the music of Skelton and Mount Eerie that is key to the contextualisation and understanding of the authors' works. The desire to make the communication of place more tangible through the addition of ephemera objects, text or photography as Rose indicates, reveals much about the identity of the artist and the strength of their connection to a specific place. To an extent our work could be considered neo-expressionistic in that a depiction place is presented from a solely subjective perspective. The process of abstraction from the reality of place to musical composition engenders affects in the listener evoking various emotions or ideas. Where our work differs from the expressionism of Schoenberg, or post-war abstract expressionism is that our work is concerned with *all* emotive experiences. Adorno describes expressionism as concerned with the unconscious, and states that 'the depiction of fear lies at the centre' of expressionist music, with dissonance predominating, so that the 'harmonious, affirmative element of art is banished' (Adorno, 2009). What is important for the authors is to acknowledge that our relationship with place changes over time. At different times the same place can be both affirmative and oppressive as a result of both the individual's psychological state and the seasonal changes in a given location. Even though our work has certain commonalities with *some* aspects of expressionism, a more important theoretical basis is to be found in psychogeographical writings and the extension of these by Dani Iosofat with his term psychosonography in which sound becomes the medium through which place is communicated rather than writing. Iosofat writes that,

> Psychosonography and expressionism share an attitude toward representation of material reality: impressions and experiences are rendered directly, with a referential and not interpretative perspective on the actual nature of the cosmos, with a focus on the subject of observation; they make use of the 'poetic logos'. (Iosofat 2009)

For Guy Debord, places are made by 'subjecting space to a directly experienced time' (Debord, 1995). For the authors this statement is fundamental. Whereas many soundscape artists working with place often present quasi-neutral, objective recordings of place, Debord's focus places the individual experience at the centre of an understanding of place. His psychogeographical understanding of place therefore has a kinship with the contemporary social-geographic thinking of Rose and Graham. What is important for the authors is Iosofat's poetic logos - the communication of place through a creative practitioner's 'directly experienced time' in that location.

3. Psychogeography and Psychosonography

Psychogeography is 'the study of the specific effects of the geographical environment … on the emotions and behaviour of individuals.' (Andreotti & Costa, 1996) It emphasizes a personal response to place and thus a departure for artistic creation. Psychogeography has historically been associated with the exploration of our cities and the 'drift', and has been described by Joseph Hart as 'a whole toy box full of playful, inventive strategies for exploring cities … just about anything that takes pedestrians off their predictable paths and jolts them into a new awareness of the urban landscape.' (Hart, 2004) This notion of the drift is to be found in BJ Nilsen's *Eye of the Microphone*[4] which is closely aligned with Chris Watson's hyper-real field recordings. Nilsen states that his goal was simply to document the streets, sights, and sounds of the city with no real emphasis on route or destination. Although Nilsen's drift has its origins in psychogeography, what is missing here is the communication of the individual's emotive response to place. The *dérive* has as much to do with how a specific place stimulates an individual's past experiences and memories and the intersection of these with present experience. Anthony Harding (a.k.a. July Skies) talks of the music on his album 'The Weather Clock' (2008) which is influenced by post-war British architecture, as 'having an emotional reaction to things from the past, and connecting with that past … It's about things buried in your psyche that emerge when you see a building or a landscape, and then trying to summon those feelings in sound – especially examples that are decaying or dying.' (Rogers, 2008).

Such an emotional reaction, especially in conjunction with the ambient electronica of the authors could be interpreted as nostalgia with its inherent associations of sentimentality and melancholy. However, research studies of nostalgia and consideration of the past in the context of the present (Zhou et al, 2008) have demonstrated the positive aspects of such thinking and how it improves social connectedness. Even when consideration of the past is tragic, the function of art becomes cathartic and one of purification. Joanna Demers takes this approach when writing of the sense of 'melancholy at the operatic drama in Tim Hecker's artwork' (Demers 2013). For Demers, Hecker's titles provide a suggestion of place such as 'In the Fog III' on *Ravedeath 1972* without suggesting any specific place. As such, they provide a psychological condition for listening. The relationship between Hecker's music and place is akin to the lettrist theory of metagraphy. Mark Goodall writes, 'the psychogeographical practice of using writing to visualize a location, to rend a place in text is in effect a

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4.   BJ Nilsen, *The Eye of the Microphone*, Touch Records, 2013

metagraphic expression.' (Goodall 2008) In the authors' creative output the same process is at work. The practice of using sound to evoke or rend a location in music is what Dani Iosofat (2009) would term psychosonographic expression and is not merely a recording or sonification of place. Any sense of nostalgia in the authors' works and the desire to amplify the communication of place through extra-musical elements is to enhance a sense of connectedness between the audience and artist. Iosofat writes that our psychosonographic perception of place results from,

> the consideration and appreciation of perceptual stimuli that provide this general impression, through association and other cognitive processes ... the aesthetics and poetics of visual stimuli, such as the observation of architecture and landscape, can be important; so, of course, can sound. A method of representation of the sense of place using sound as the sole medium must, therefore, provide means of reproducing general sensations and impressions, complete with context, memory and emotion involved as appropriate. The inverse, obviously, also holds: Situationism 'presupposed that it was possible for people to synthesise or manage these situations [which affect the individual's consciousness and will] as an act of self-empowerment' (Sadler 1998: 45–6). The relationship between individuals and environment is therefore bi-directional. (Iosofat 2009)

While one of the authors (Santamas) does use some location recordings in his work (as do Iosofat and Bainton), Adkins, Surman and Skelton rarely use such recordings. Chion notes that sounds are recognised to be 'truthful, effective and fitting not so much if they reproduce what would be heard in reality, but if they render (convey, express) the feelings associated with the situation' (Chion 1994). Iosofat writes in relation to his own work that,

> The use of location recordings may suggest a similarity to soundscape composition. The latter, however, deems 'the acoustic ecology arena as the basis from which [it] emerges' (Westerkamp 2002: 52), and, as such, serves a completely different purpose. It is reasonable to suggest that soundscape composition is to psychosonography what photography is to expressionism: the Brücke artists, for example, 'tried to capture their sensory experiences and visual impressions [...] in the form of paintings' ... Wassily Kandinsky ... in his 'Concerning the Spiritual in Art', wrote of 'artistic recreation of mood in its inner value'. (Iosofat, 2009)

The psychosonographic is therefore not a representation of place through field recordings but requires sonic intervention to express a sense of experience or 'otherness'. For the authors, the composition and its interpretation arises from an intersection between individual cognition, place and atmosphere. A given composition may evoke an associated visual image from either the composer's or the listener's past or present experience. Iosofat writes,

> An image (not necessarily visual) that possesses such evocative qualities can be said to be poetic, in the Aristotelian sense. Bachelard remarks that, [the poetic image] is referable to a direct ontology. [It] has an entity and dynamism of its own ... The relation of a new poetic image to an archetype is not a causal one. (Bachelard 1964: xvi) Therefore, an object's image is a being in its own right, a separate entity from the object's material existence, and disjunct from all causality related to the nature of the phenomenon. It is possible to consider this image (or general reconstruction, in the sense discussed) as completely remote from the reality from which it originates. (Iosofat, 2009)

It is this relationship between sound and stimulated poetic image that is explored in the authors use of photography, what Santamas (2013) terms audio-photographic art. In audio-photographic art the experience of an artwork is through the integration of image and sound. The audience is invited to subjectively reconstruct and share the emotive experience of the artist. The inclusion of image in both authors' works conditions the audiences perception of the artwork in a more directed manner than sound alone. Derrida (2010) considers photography as 'auto-affective' in time, something that is both a passive record of time that has passed and an active intervention through the artistic decisions the photographer takes (exposure time, perspective etc.). This same idea can be applied to field recording's relationship with time. It is both passively recording the past but at the same time intervening through microphone choice, placement and production techniques. This exposes a flaw if the intention is to capture place - the intervention in the soundscape means that the sound of the place can not be truly objectively recorded. Our work differs from soundscapes in that instead of using detailed 'clean' recordings of space to attempt to transmit a sense of place, we use a full range of sounds and instrumentation as well as image to *evoke* sense of place rather than recreate it. What one has in *City Colours* (Santamas) and the *Drift Trilogy* (Adkins) is a sonic impression of place as an expression of a mental image. This mental image is not just of place but is also a subjective response to a real or imagined sensory experience of place. As such it is not bound by spatial materiality. There is therefore a disconnect between

representation and expression. This is the creative act. An act that consciously plays with the evocation of memory, atmosphere, place and sound.

4. Atmosphere

In Gernot Böhme's writings on atmosphere there are a number of concepts mentioned above that are brought together, particularly Debord's notion of 'spaces' becoming 'places' through an individual's experience of a given location; the bi-directionality of individual and place discussed in Iosofat's writings; and Kandinsky's expressionist recreation of 'mood'. Böhme writes,

> atmosphere indicates something that is in a certain sense indeterminate, diffuse but precisely not indeterminate in relation to its character... Atmospheres are indeterminate above all as regards their ontological status. We are not sure whether we should attribute them to the objects or environments from which they proceed or to the subjects who experience them. (Böhme, 1993)

For Böhme the meaning of atmosphere is manifest between or intermediary to subject and object relations and is the fundamental concept in a new aesthetics for him. He contends that his new aesthetics is 'concerned with the relation between environmental qualities and human states. This 'and', this in-between, by means of which environmental qualities and states are related, is atmosphere.' (Böhme 1993) Böhme states that since the time of Kant, aesthetics has predominantly been about a positive or negative response to the arts and providing a critique and judgment. He writes that,

> aesthetics is now the full range of aesthetic work, which is defined generally as the production of atmospheres and thus extends from cosmetics, advertising, interior decoration, stage sets to art in the narrower sense. Autonomous art is understood in this context as only a special form of aesthetic work, which also

has its social function, namely the mediation of the encounter and response to atmospheres in situations ... set apart from action contexts. (Böhme, 1993)

Böhme draws on Hermann Schmitz's philosophy of the body in the creation of atmosphere, writing that, 'if we accept their [atmospheres] relative or complete independence from objects, [then they] must belong to the subject. And in fact this is what happens when we regard the serenity of a valley or the melancholy of an evening as projections, that is, as the projection of moods, understood as internal psychic states.' (Böhme, 1993) For Schmitz feeling are 'unlocalized, poured forth atmospheres ... which visit (haunt) the body which receives them ... affectively, which takes the form of emotion.' (Schmitz, 1964) For Böhme, Schmitz only goes so far and there is a need to liberate the latter's notion of atmosphere from the 'subjective-objective dichotomy' (Böhme, 1993). Böhme goes on to state that atmospheres are,

spaces insofar that they are 'tinctured' through the presence of things, of persons or environmental constellation, that is, through their ecstasies. They are themselves spheres of the presence of something, their reality in space. As opposed to Schmitz's approach, atmospheres are thus conceived not as free floating but on the contrary as something that proceeds from and is created by things, persons or their constellations ... Conceived in this fashion, atmospheres are neither something objective, that is, qualities possessed by things, and yet they are something thinglike, belonging to the thing in that things articulate their presence through qualities – conceived as ecstasies. Nor are atmospheres something subjective, for example, determinations of a psychic state. And yet they are subjectlike, belong to subjects in that they are sensed in bodily presence by human beings and this sensing is at the same time a bodily state of being of subjects in space. (Böhme, 1993).

For Böhme the concept of perception,

is liberated from its reduction to information processing ... Perception is basically the manner in which one is bodily present for something or someone or one's bodily state in an environment. The primary 'object' of perception is atmospheres. What is first and immediately perceived is neither sensations nor shapes or objects or their constellations, as Gestalt psychology thought, but

atmospheres, against whose background the analytic regard distinguishes such things as objects, forms, colours etc.' (Böhme, 1993).

In our compositional work the creation of atmosphere can also be understood through Barthes' notion of punctum and studium proposed in his Camera Lucida. For Barthes, punctum 'wounds' the viewer, usually by evoking memory or the imagining of what could have been. The punctum has a few possible causes. The first is 'detail': Barthes explains that for him the punctum is often a detail such as a necklace or shoes. These items may bring forth memories of relatives that these objects remind him of. The second form of punctum is time. Barthes said 'This new punctum, which is no longer of form but of intensity, is Time, the lacerating emphasis of the noeme ("that-has-been"), its pure representation' (Barthes, 2000).

Music can also have an effect through its association with particular moments in memory. Barthes explains that details of some photographs trigger memories and emotions, this is one way in which the viewer can experience the punctum. This effect however, does not appear to be limited to the details of things but rather the general impression that they leave upon you. In this way it is possible to look at other mediums with a different temporal frame such as music in the context of the punctum. This is not a new idea; in their essay 'For The Record: Popular Music and Photography as Technologies of Memory' Emily Keightley and Michael Pickering use Barthes' punctum as a means for analysing music. They go on to explain that 'along with the visual punctum, there is also the aural punctum where music pierces, cuts through and penetrates in such a way as to be indistinct from the experience of it' (Keightley & Pickering, 2006). They go on to cite an interview from Music in Everyday Life (2000) in which the participant talks about a song on the radio triggering grief for her recently deceased father. This is a clear parallel with Barthes' 'winter garden photograph', a photograph of his recently deceased mother which through its punctum triggers feelings of grief and loss. Keightley and Pickering however, do not look at the problems of applying the idea of punctum to sound. Punctum relies on photography's noeme ("that-has-been" (Barthes, 2000)) and as such much of its effects are unique to the temporal aspect of the medium. What is clear is that in sound the punctum is not time based but a reaction to the generality of the music. It is not a just a detail or the specifics of time but the music as a whole which is associated with part of the past - or place. Due to music's abstract nature, its sounds are not always clearly indexical of any particular situation. This abstraction allows the listener to attach memories to the whole as well as any detail with a personal referent. It is the music's association with the time of the memory that triggers that memory: its place in history as referent rather than the visual punctum'sobject as referent or 'the lacerating

emphasis of the noeme' (Barthes, 2000). It is the music's association with personal history which allows it to create a punctum. In this case the music is equivalent to the 'detail' in photography that causes punctum. The music is what takes you back to when you listened to it previously or intensely. This does not mean that a particular sound detail that occurs cannot 'prick' you, (after all, sound is 'pregnant with meaning' (Prevost, 1995)) however, this contributes to the whole rather than just that moment. The continuous sound does not allow you to dwell on an individual detail therefore not allowing the brief shock to become a punctum however, that detail then is subsumed into the whole, leading the listener to associate the whole piece with that time, each detail playing a part in creating an abstract atmosphere. In summary, the details do create a punctumbut one which is the sum of a number of small 'pricks' which create or contribute to an atmosphere rather than a single detail which the audience has time to dwell upon. This explains the example from Music in Everyday Life (DeNora, 2000) that Keightley & Pickering (2006) use: it is the piece as a whole, not any one detail of the piece that causes the strong emotional reaction.

Although both author's use of electronic music has a similar goal it is interesting to note that their use of photography can trigger the punctum in different ways. Stephen Harvey's photographs for Rift Patterns (*Drift Trilogy* Pt.1) are rich with detail and likely to trigger Barthes' notion of punctum through the recognition of a particular detail (see Figure 3). Santamas' use of photography in his work is different from Harvey's clean-cut and detailed style. There is a very different sense of atmosphere created. Santamas uses a number of experimental techniques to create unusual blur and light effects. These include taking the lens off the camera body itself (see Figure 4). In Santamas' audio-photographic art the photographs as well as the music explore the creation of atmosphere through the erosion of detail. In Santamas' work the colours and shapes in the images create more of general atmosphere. The lack of detail leads the viewer to create their own associations, away from the more specific cultural referents of Harvey's work. Freed from detail, the audience can link any memory they associate with those shapes and colours to the image rather than being anchored to a specific cultural referent.

With the majority of our work, abstraction is a key component in the way we explore place. The experience of place is not just an aural one or even simply audiovisual so

when looking towards representing place it is clear that our respective mediums of music and audio-photographic art are fundamentally flawed.

Figure 3. Stephen Harvey's photographs for Rift Patterns (Drift Trilogy Pt.1)

In The Order of Things Foucault (2002) suggests that a similar barrier between language and painting exists - the phenomenology of both is very different. Any attempt to represent one with the other is always going to be problematic as 'Neither can be reduced to the others' terms'. This incompatibility however, could be used to the artist's advantage.

> ... if one wishes to keep the relation of language to vision open, if one wishes to treat their incompatibility as a starting-point for speech instead of as an obstacle to be avoided, so as to stay as close as possible to both, then one must erase those proper names and preserve the infinity of the task. It is perhaps through the medium of this grey, anonymous language, always over-meticulous and re-

petitive because too broad, that the painting may, little by little, release its illuminations. (Foucault, 2002)

Foucault's writing is particularly pertinent to Santamas' work. Here Foucault suggests that erasing the details and dealing with generalities could still evoke the image but not recreate it. In this way by using general atmospheres one can evoke a sense of place using the full palette of sounds and colours available - using sound and image to its full potential and on its own terms. This creates a far more open way of experiencing art: through the erosion of detail one can leave the audience to interpret the material they are presented with in a much more liberal way, connecting the sound and image with their own memories to create a strong sense of place. By communicating generality there may be something that anyone can latch onto to build their own sense of place from the music whether through psycho-sonographic imagined images or memories of past experiences.

In Santamas' audio-photographic installation *City Colours*, the audiovisual material is a mixture of captured reality (photographs, field recordings) and synthesised elements, layered to create an abstracted piece of work that takes advantage of a range of sound and image processes on their own terms.
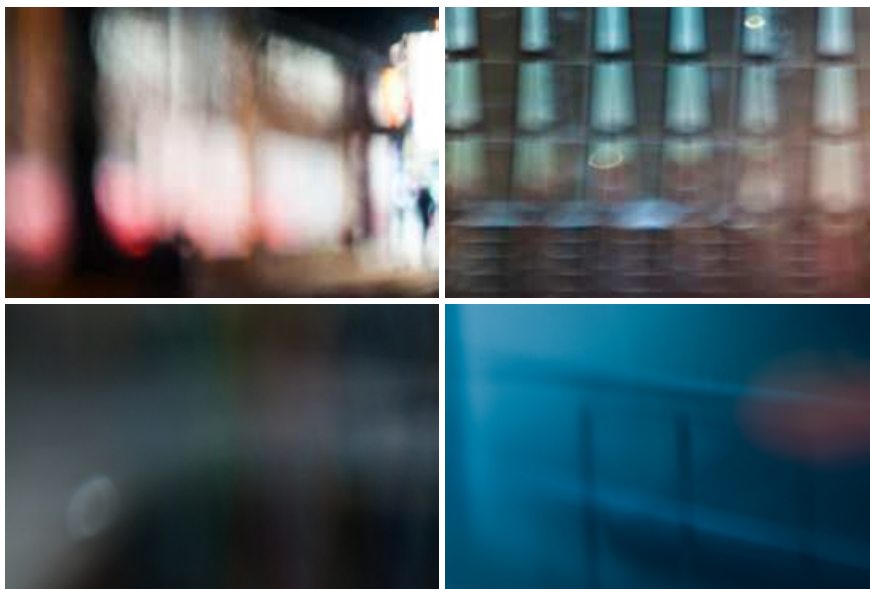

Figure 4. Hali Santamas' images for City

Here evocation of place through generality is key to the work. In Adkins' *Drift Trilogy*, the approach to place is still the focus of the work but the method is different. Adkins also uses abstraction in sound, going even further by not including field recordings of place and so

creating a neo-expressionistic emotive evocation of the intensity of place. Harvey's images and Adkins' sound focus on detail rather than generality arguably creating a more directed and hence restricted interpretation of the work rather than Santamas' openness. In Adkins' and Harvey's work there is a desire to communicate the author's individual response to place and its importance to them. In Santamas' work an interpretation of the work is more ambiguous as it is the audience's perception of place that comes to the fore.

5. Conclusion.

There are a number of conclusions that can be drawn from consideration of the authors' creative work in relation to place and identity. The first, paradoxically, is informed by writings on super-modernity by Marc Augé. Augé's notion of 'non-place', or spaces that are the same the world over in contemporary society, such as airport lounges and hotel lobbies typify super-modern culture. Augé contends that the contemporary understanding of 'local' can only be defined through reference to the 'global'. In artistic terms the authors' work, as well as that of Bainton and Skelton fits into the 'global' contemporary ambient genre - integrating instrumental recordings, field recordings, drone and noise as exemplified by artists on labels such as Kranky, 12k, Crónica, Room40 and Hibernate. What makes the distinctive is the 'local' emphasis of place and the communication of this through the creation of atmosphere. Skelton's use of ephemera emphases the fragility of the 'local' within a 'global' environment and although not overtly political in the sense of acoustic ecology, his work communicates to the audience, the importance of a given location to him. Similarly, the authors' work emphasises the individual's link with place and acknowledges the local and individual relationship that exists between them. It is a 'political' artistic statement in that through the perception of atmosphere in a work, the audience comes to appreciate how the identity of the artist is shaped by the relationship with the 'local' and hence comes to understand that the preservation of the 'local' in relation to the 'global' non-place is essential for the artist and society at large.

Although our compositional work considers identity and place from a different perspective to that found in soundscape composition, the unifying factor is Böhme's notion of at-

mosphere in that both are concerned with the relationship between human beings and their environment mediated through sound. Understood from this perspective both approaches are two sides of the same coin emphasising a subjective artistic response or an objective response to a location through sound and contextualising this within a local-global perspective in relation to the individual and society.

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