

A SURVEY OF CONTEMPORARY SOUND SCULPTURE

A THESIS

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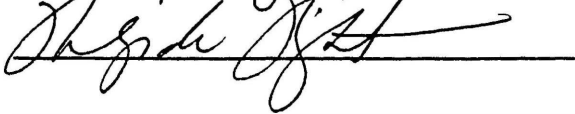
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To the Provost of the Graduate School:

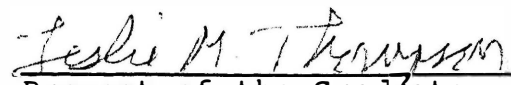
I am submitting herewith a thesis written by James A. Estes entitled "A Survey of Contemporary Sound Sculpture." I have Examined the final copy of this thesis for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Arts, with a major in Sculpture.


A. E. Green, Major Professor

We have read this thesis and
recommend its acceptance

Accepted


Provost of the Graduate
School

ABSTRACT

Sound sculpture and other closely related artforms have become increasingly prevalent within the last few decades. By means of a questionnaire, this study surveyed artists who use sound as an essential aspect of their work. The questionnaire was designed to establish some of the basic parameters and attributes of the current activity in the field, including type of work, artist and exhibition histories, economic support and audience profiles.

In this way, the findings address the fundamental questions of who, what, when, where and how, both for individual artists and the group as a whole. The results of the study suggest the need of continued research founded on an interdisciplinary perspective in order to fully address the broader topics and scope of this genre. Such research studies would be composed of three principal and interrelated forms: detailed documentation, organized exhibitions and historical and critical reviews.

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to the artists
who participated in this study.

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CHAPTER I

A SURVEY OF CONTEMPORARY SOUND SCULPTURE

Introduction

Within twentieth century art there has emerged a category of work wherein sound--audible vibration--is included or employed as an essential element in the artwork. This work, often referred to as sound sculpture, has become increasingly prevalent within the last few decades. Along with advances in acoustics and technology, this activity has led to a growing generation of artists, musicians, craftsmen and inventors creating new acoustic objects of diverse nature. As a result, there has developed a prevalent need for a broad based directory of primary information relevant to the study of sound sculpture.

Statement of the Problem

Surveyed in this study were sculptors, musical instrument inventors, performance and environmental artists who use sound as an essential element of their work.

Purpose of the Study

This study identified, collected and described the primary attributes and nature of contemporary sound sculpture with the intent of creating a resource tool valuable in examining and understanding sound sculpture in general.

Significance of the Study

Due to the interdisciplinary nature of sound sculpture, and to the relatively recent emergence of interest in the field, awareness and communication of such work has been limited. The free exchange of ideas and information is essential to the development of any art form. By collecting, organizing and publishing primary information concerning sound sculpture and related disciplines, this study will provide a reference and resource guide for use by artists, collectors, curators, critics, scholars and students.

Limitations

Encompassed in this study are the following limitations:

1. No editorial or critical role in the assembly of the data was assumed, except as provided in the following limitations.
2. Entries could be eliminated due to inaccurate

or incomplete responses.

3. Artworks and associated artists were only listed if they were acoustic and sculptural in nature.
4. Questionnaires and responses used English language only.
5. This study surveyed artists living or working in the United States and Canada only.

Definition of Terms

All terms used in this study are common usage.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Current literature relevant to the study of sound sculpture was divided into three basic groups: First were the references which addressed the subject of sound sculpture in general; second were exhibition catalogs of shows featuring sound sculpture; and third, those which described and surveyed the work of particular artists.

John Grayson through his work and experience at the Aesthetic Research Center (ARC) in Vancouver, British Columbia, has published a number of works concerning sound sculpture. The first, simply entitled Sound Sculpture¹ still remains the only major work dedicated solely to the field. The book surveys a handful of the most prominent or visible personalities associated with recent sound sculpture, including Harry Partch, Harry Bertoia, Lou Harris, Charles Mattox, David Von Heune and Grayson, and consists primarily of essays and articles.

Another book by Grayson, Environments of Musical

¹John Grayson, ed., Sound Sculpture (Vancouver: Aesthetic Research Center, 1975).

Sculptures You Can Build,² describes the work done through ARC in creating sound sculptures and environments built primarily for children, emphasizing education. The book describes and illustrates the construction of several instruments invented and built primarily by community volunteers in a program sponsored in 1973 by ARC. Grayson also described a proposed sound environment which emphasizes participatory experience on the part of the viewer.

An article published in Leonardo³ by Grayson calls attention to and surveys some of the possibilities of new technological products and processes which are potentially useful for the sound sculptor, musical instrument inventor and composer. A few instruments were described, but the emphasis of the article was on the materials and processes themselves, with only minor reference to artists and their works.

The most comprehensive coverage of sound sculpture was found in The New Grove Dictionary of Musical

²John Grayson, ed., Environments of Musical Sculptures You Can Build (Vancouver: Aesthetic Research Center of Canada, 1976).

³John Grayson, "New Materials and Methods for the Musical Instrument Designer, the Audio-Kinetic Sculptor, Musician, and Composer," Leonardo 3, 295 (1970), pp. 295-304.

Instruments.⁴ Entries written by Hugh Davies briefly describe artworks, methods, philosophies and exhibitions, and are listed under specific artists, many of whom may more properly be called musicians or composers rather than sculptors. Entries include Jean Tinguely, Bernard and Francois Baschet, Luigi Russolo, Harry Partch, I. A. Mackenzie, David Jacobs and Harry Bertoia.

Hugh Davies has also contributed to the second category of literature in the exhibition catalog, A Noise In Your Eye,⁵ of an exhibition of the same name. In his article, "The 20th Century Sound World: New Instruments and Sound Sculpture," Davies establishes a brief historical perspective, along with a survey of ideas and methods, citing numerous examples of work by artists included in the exhibit, and others as well. The majority of the catalog is devoted to descriptive sections about individual artists and their work. Another exhibition catalog, Sonic Art,⁶ includes brief articles by Martin Halverson, Bob Bates and Jonathan Glasier, and similarly reviews the work of the artists included in the show.

⁴The New Grove Dictionary of Musical Instruments
3 vols, 1985.

⁵Hugh Davies, "The 20th Century Sound World: New Instruments and Sound Sculpture," A Noise In Your Eye (Bristol, Great Britain: Arnolfini, 1985) pp. 7-15.

⁶Sonic Art (San Bernardino: California State College, 1982).

The third category of literature, which deals specifically with individual artists and artworks, was more plentiful and varied. Probably the most widely circulated is Genesis of a Music,⁷ by the composer, Harry Partch. He described in detail his personal history and ideology concerning music, including a chapter on his musical instruments which, though intended for use in performance, were designed visually to function as sculpture or stage set. In describing the instruments' tonal peculiarities and construction, Partch emphasized their role and purpose in his musical composition and theatrical events, addressing their visual aesthetics only in passing remarks.

The journal, Leonardo, has included several articles about sound sculptors, notably a brief article by Charles Mattox,⁸ describing his work with audio-kinetic sculpture and an interview examining the work of Stefan Von Heune.⁹ Both of these articles adequately introduce

⁷Harry Partch, Genesis of a Music (New York: Da Capo Press, 1974).

⁸Charles Mattox, "The Evolution of My Audio-Kinetic Sculptures," Leonardo 2, Autumn, 1969, pp. 355-363.

⁹Dorothy Newmark, "An Interview with Stefan Von Heune on His Audio-Kinetic Sculptures," Leonardo 5, 1972, pp. 69-72.

the methods and goals of these artists but convey limited information of the type sought for this study.

Percussive Notes,¹⁰ a journal for musicians, has begun a regular column by Jon Scoville featuring new instruments and sound sculpture of interest to percussionists, as well as articles concerning musical and performance technique. While primarily addressing percussion players' interests, Scoville has occasionally reported about material pertinent to this study.

Finally, a relatively new journal has been published, Experimental Musical Instruments,¹¹ which features several articles on new acoustic instruments and sound sculptors, including Ellen Fullman and Bill and Mary Buchen. This publication promises to be both a good source of information and a forum for ideas about sound sculpture.

In General, the information provided in the above sources may be germane to the present study, but is of a different nature and purpose than the goals of this research.

¹⁰Percussive Notes (Urbana, IL: Percussive Arts Society, October, 1984).

¹¹Experimental Musical Instruments (Point Reyes, CA: Experimental Musical Instruments, June, 1985).

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Selected Sample

Artists in the field of sound sculpture and closely related disciplines were surveyed in this study, including musical instrument inventors, environmental, and performance artists whose work employs sound as an essential element of the artwork. The sample consisted of fifty artists selected from a variety of sources, including High Performance Magazine, Experimental Musical Instruments Magazine, and personal references from other artists, musicians and composers. The artists were queried directly through a questionnaire via normal postal routes.

Questionnaire

As the purpose of the questionnaire was to establish a broad based study of sound sculpture, it was deemed appropriate to foster a high rate of response from artists queried, rather than to conduct an in-depth survey of a few individuals. Therefore, in order to encourage as complete a response as possible, the questionnaire was designed to be simple, brief, and direct, and sought

only basic information necessary to establish primary attributes of the work being done in the field of sound sculpture (see appendix A). Artists had the option of submitting supplemental information with the questionnaire. Specific elements were designed into the questionnaire to help establish basic information from which the following questions could be answered or inferred:

1. What general types of work are currently being pursued?
2. How long has the current activity in this field been in development?
3. What is the economic basis of support for sound sculpture?
4. Who is the primary audience or client supporting sound sculpture?

It was decided that answers to these questions would document some fundamental parameters in the field of sound sculpture as it exists today and would emphasize indicators which are not available or cannot be inferred from current literature.

Data Collection

Included in the survey were many artists whose work may not be strictly regarded as sound sculpture. Since a working definition of sound sculpture, along with appropriate terms and distinctions, has not been

developed, an inclusive sampling of a broad spectrum of artists and activities within and related to sound sculpture was adopted. The very nature of sound sculpture makes it closely allied to the discipline of music, especially that commonly termed "New Music." Many of the artists and artworks which are the subject of this survey participate actively in both fields. The sample population did not include every potentially appropriate artist, since the diverse and diffuse nature of activity in this field made it impossible to identify and question every artist who might be found. However, the sample population did include prominent artists active in the field, as well as artists previously unidentified.

Returned questionnaires were organized and assembled into a chart displaying the responses in an organized manner. Responses to questions were entered without interpretation or editing. A list of the artists who responded to the questionnaire is included in appendix B of this thesis.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

The survey addressed fifty artists in the United States and Canada. Of these, twenty-nine answered the questionnaire, achieving a response rate of fifty-eight percent.

The survey itself was the first and only research of this type known to this author. As such, it establishes the foundation upon which a thorough census of working artists in this field can be built or added. It is my opinion that the size and quality of the sampling could be increased by: (1) networking efforts among artists and scholars (2) the inclusion of artists working in all geographic locations, including Europe, Japan and third world countries, and (3) inclusion of artists of every discipline which conceivably pertains to the subject.

The creation of a list of primary sonic artists active in the field furthers the establishment of communication and discourse among those interested in the subject. Forums for intellectual interaction are virtually non-existent at the present time or are severely restricted to small disciplinary circles.

Geographic Distribution

The geographic distribution of artists surveyed revealed that fifteen lived in west coast states (52 percent), eight lived in northeastern states (27.5 percent), and the remainder were scattered among various states and Canada (see table 1).

When considering the geographic distribution of the artists surveyed, it was observed that the figures generally correspond to the distribution of artists in general. Possible influences on this distribution may be associated with avant-garde music and the film and video industries which have similar geographic concentrations, historical development and interdisciplinary foundations.

TABLE 1
GEOGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTION

Artist No.	Location
1	Pasadena, CA
2	New York, NY
3	Duluth, MN
4	New York, NY
5	San Diego, CA
6	New York, NY
7	Tempe, AZ
8	Dallas, TX
9	Reseda, CA
10	Tujunga, CA
11	Ontario, Canada
12	Anchorage, AK
13	Rochester, NY
14	San Francisco, CA
15	Bainbraids Is., WA
16	West Hurley, NY
17	New York, NY
18	Boston, MA
19	Irving, TX
20	La Jolla, CA
21	Santa Rosa, CA
22	Marlboro, UT
23	San Francisco, CA
24	Lunenburg, VT
25	San Francisco, CA
26	Los Angeles, CA
27	Eugene, OR
28	Sebastopol, CA
29	Los Angeles, CA

Type of Work

Examination of the responses regarding the type of work showed that a large number of artists classified their work in more than one category, or in a category of their own description. Such responses demonstrated the difficulty of supplying terms used in traditional disciplines to artworks being pursued in the field of sound sculpture.

A prominent illustration of this point was the fact that every artist who labeled his/her work as sound sculpture also classified that work as belonging to at least one other category. Further, Bill and Mary Buchen and Doug Hillis, whose works are popularly referred to as "sound sculpture," declined to indicate them as such; all described their work as environmental in nature and further labeled it as "audio art" and "public art," respectively. Another well known artist, Richard Lerman, checked all possible categories and further labeled his work, "sound art." Conversely, most of the artists who described their work as "musical instruments" did not use any other terms to describe their creative efforts. From these responses it may be suggested that while inventors of musical instruments tend to specialize in making tools for performance purposes, other artists had a much

higher propensity to use sound in a more generalized manner; i.e., as an element incorporated into artforms which themselves are at the center of the aesthetic statement (see table 2).

Significantly, more responses included the term "musical instrument" (68 percent) than any other in describing the artworks. This figure suggests either a disproportionate balance of instrument makers in the current lists of artists, or an unexpected intensity of these activities. I am personally inclined to believe the former, since these artists are networked through small newsletters and, thus, tend to be more accessible to a survey.

TABLE 2

TYPE OF WORK

Artist No.	Description or Classification of Artwork				
	Sound Sculp- ture	Musical Instru- ment	Perform- ance Art	Environ- mental Art	Other
1	x	x			
2		x	x		
3				x	
4				x	x ¹
5		x			
6		x			
7	x	x	x	x	
8					x ²
9	x				
10	x	x			
11	x	x			
12	x		x	x	
13		x			
14				x	x ³
15		x			

¹ audio art² artist³ public art

TABLE 2-continued

Artist No.	Description or Classification of Artwork				
	Sound Sculp- ture	Musical Instru- ment	Perform- ance Art	Environ- mental Art	Other
16		x			
17		x			
18	x	x	x	x	x ⁴
19	x			x	
20		x		x	
21		x			
22		x			
23	x	x			
24		x			
25			x		
26		x	x		
27		x			
28	x	x	x		
29	x			x	x ⁵

⁴sound art⁵sound drawing

Artists' Histories

The average length of involvement with sound sculpture by artists surveyed was twelve and one-half years, with over half having worked in the field ten to fifteen years. The maximum length of involvement was twenty-five years; the minimum was two (see table 3).

These figures indicate that the majority of artists began their work in the early 1970's and suggest a gradual decline in the years leading up to the present. I am reluctant to draw conclusions about this recent decline due to the likelihood that the sample population did not fairly represent the younger emerging artists who tend to be much more difficult to identify and address. However, the sharp rise in activity indicated in the figures which occurred about twenty-five years ago is supported by a corresponding wealth of related literature appropriate to that time. Further, the frequency and popularity of exhibitions and performances reflected in the survey suggest that the activity level continues to be relatively high.

TABLE 3
LENGTH AND DATES OF INVOLVEMENT

Number of Artists	Years of Involvement	Corresponding Dates
	0	1986
	1	1985
1	2	1984
1	3	1983
	4	1982
2	5	1981
	6	1980
1	7	1979
2	8	1978
	9	1977
3	10	1976
2	11	1975
3	12	1974
1	13	1973
2	14	1972

TABLE 3-continued

Number of Artists	Years of Involvement	Corresponding Dates
4	15	1971
1	16	1970
	17	1969
3*	18	1968
	17	1967
1	20	1966
	21	1965
	22	1964
	23	1963
	24	1962
1	25	1961

*note: one artist's stated length of involvement was fifteen to twenty years, and is entered in this table as the average of those years: 18.

Abbreviated exhibition and performance records were solicited in order to document the general frequency of these events. Emphasis on brevity and simplicity in the design of the questionnaire required many generalizations. Interpretation and analysis of the data are further complicated by the diversity of artforms addressed. No provisions were made in the questionnaire's design to establish relative importance or scale of reported events. Similarly, no distinction was made between exhibitions and performances due to the fact that although these public events are held as quite separate kinds of activities, in many of these artworks the distinction is arguable or irrelevant. Thus, generalizations were made in order to properly address this broad spectrum of creative endeavors. A summary of the findings regarding exhibition and performance histories found in table 4 is as follows:

Over half (sixteen) of the artists had been included in more than twenty-five shows or exhibits; of these, eight said that over twenty-five shows were specifically organized to exhibit sound sculpture or related objects, and five reported between six and twenty-five shows to be organized sound sculpture exhibits. One of the above artists stated that fewer than five of the shows were specifically related to sound sculpture.

Six artists were included in six to twenty-five shows or exhibits and five of these artists reported that between six and twenty-five shows were specifically related to sound sculpture, one indicating that five or fewer shows were organized around sound sculpture. Four artists exhibited five or fewer times.

A more accurate interpretation of this data is obtained by cross referencing it with table 2 in order to better profile the nature of the shows reported. For example, of the sixteen artists who reported having participated in over twenty-six shows, only three did not describe their work as performance related. Of the eight artists who had been in more than twenty-five shows in this genre of artworks, six stated the shows were performance-related. The remaining two were environmental artists. Of the ten who had been in six to twenty-five of these specific shows, three were not performance-related.

When compared to the fact that seven of the total twenty-nine artists surveyed were not performance-related, the above figures suggest that these artists have had fewer opportunities to present their work publicly than those who perform. This is especially true for shows which specifically pertain to sound sculpture.

TABLE 4

ARTISTS' HISTORIES

Artist No.	Number of Shows or Exhibits						Length of In- volve- ment (years)
	In General			Specific to Field of Sound Sculpture			
	1-5	6-25	26+	1-5	6-25	26+	
1	x			x			13
2			x			x	15
3			x		x		22
4			x			x	10
5	x			x			12
6			x				20
7			x			x	15
8	x			x			5
9		x			x		14
10		x			x		14
11			x			x	10
12			x			x	16
13			x		x		8
14			x			x	15
15							2

TABLE 4-continued

Artist No.	Number of Shows or Exhibits						Length of In- volve-
	In General			Specific to Field of Sound Sculpture			
	1-5	6-25	26+	1-5	6-25	26+	
16			x				7
17			x		x		12
18			x			x	15-20
19		x			x		3
20		x			x		8
21							25
22			x		x		15
23		x			x		11
24			x	x			10
25			x			x	18
26			x				12
27	x			x			5
28			x		x		18
29		x		x			11

Economic and Public Support

In order to complement previous questions, questions regarding economic and audience support of artists working in the field of sound sculpture were included in the survey. Strictly speaking, indicators of economic support and audience profiles are only that, yet many inferences can be drawn from this data. For example, artists who support their work from sales of objects or performance fees are frequent in this survey but are relatively rare among artists in general, according to income studies of artists in the United States.¹² Similarly, the artists who described their audiences as being composed primarily of musicians, composers and other artists could be thought of quite differently from those artists who describe their supporters in economic terms, such as "commissions" and "retail," and further demonstrate the diversity of the artform in question.

Twenty-one artists reported their prime client or audience to be the general public. Eleven disclosed that musicians and composers were prime supporters, while educational institutions were marked in five instances. Craft and trade shows were reported in three cases as prime avenues of support while the fine art

¹² National Endowment for the Arts, Artists Compared By Age, Sex, and Earnings in 1970 and 1976 (Washington: National Endowment for the Arts Research Division, 1980).

market was indicated twice. Retail outlets, dance and theatre productions, artists, and art audiences were also primary clients (see table 5).

Since composers, musical performers and educational institutions were said to be significant audiences for sound sculpture, we could infer that these artists have even larger public followings than the actual figures indicate. A large majority of artists stated that the general public was the primary audience or client. This might suggest a positive public acceptance of these works.

TABLE 5

28

PRIMARY AUDIENCE OR CLIENT

Artist No.	Fine Art Market	Craft/Trade Shows	Music Composers	Educational Instit.	General Public	Other
1			x			
2			x		x	
3			x	x		x ¹
4					x	
5			x			
6			x		x	
7	x	x		x	x	
8					x	
9					x	
10					x	
11				x		
12					x	
13	x	x	x	x	x	
14					x	
15					x	

¹art audience

TABLE 5-continued

Artist No.	Fine Art Market	Craft/ Trade Shows	Music/ Compos-ers	Educa-tional Instit.	General Public	Other
16						x ²
17						x ³
18						x ⁴
19					x	
20			x		x	
21					x	
22					x	
23			x		x	
24				x	x	
25			x			x ⁵
26			x	x	x	
27		x			x	
28			x			
29					x	

²retail³dance and theatre⁴many⁵artists

Twelve artists stated the prime avenue of support for their work came from unrelated activities. Ten indicated support from performance/exhibition fees and eleven included education and teaching as primary sources; six gained support through grants, endowments and similar sources. Seven artists responded that sales of artworks are a significant means of support (see table 6).

In general, the economic basis did not appear to be as concrete as the audience support because many artists gain their support from unrelated activities. Again, public interest and support was significantly channeled indirectly through performances, education and endowments of various kinds, while direct sales of artworks accounted for a relatively small proportion of the economic support of the activity in this field. Such profiles are not unusual for creative or artistic endeavors; indeed, considering the experimental and interdisciplinary nature of sound sculpture, support might even be considered relatively vigorous.

TABLE 6

PRIMARY MEANS OF ECONOMIC SUPPORT

Artist No.	Sales of Objects/ Artworks	Performance Fees	Education, Teaching	Grants Fellowships	Other
1					x ¹
2		x		x	x ²
3		3	1	2	x ³
4	x	x	x	x	x
5					x
6		x		x	
7	x	x	x		
8			x		
9					x ¹
10					x ¹
11		1		2	
12			1	2	
13	x				
14					x ²
15					x

¹ self² commissions³ art audience

TABLE 6-continued

Artist No.	Sales of Objects/ Artworks	Perform- ance Fees	Educa- tion, Teaching	Grants, Fellow- ships	Other
16	x				
17		x	x		
18		x			
19			x		x ⁴
20	x	x	x		
21					x ¹
22		x			
23					x ¹
24			x		x ¹
25			x		
26			x		
27	x				
28	x				x ¹
29					x ¹

⁴ spouse

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

Summary

Sound sculpture, new musical instruments, audio art and other closely related art forms have become increasingly prevalent within the last few decades, reflecting a growing genre of interdisciplinary artists, craftsmen, musicians and others who are currently active in this field. Geographic, ideological and academic isolation have resulted in a need for a broad based study of these artforms.

This thesis surveyed artists who use sound as an essential aspect of their work, with the emphasis on identifying, collecting and describing some basic parameters of the field. The design of the survey was to ask a minimum number of questions in order to foster the participation of a maximum number of artists and garner attention to the subject of sound sculpture as a whole, rather than focus on isolated artists or ideologies. The most obvious questions relating to who, where, what, when, and how were addressed directly to the artists

themselves. This information was used accumulatively to represent the group as a whole.

In a sample population of fifty artists known to be presently active in sound sculpture and related fields, twenty-nine responded. As a result, a list of artists in the United States and Canada was produced. These tended to be concentrated geographically in the west coast (52 percent) and northeast (27.5 percent) regions. Artists were queried as to the type or classification of their work, history of their involvement in the medium (including show and exhibition histories) and basic demographics of economic and audience support. On an average, the artists surveyed have been working in this field for twelve years or more, with over half having been included in at least twenty-five shows or exhibits; twenty-three artists have been included in shows specifically pertaining to sound sculpture and closely related fields. The general public was identified by a majority of artists as their prime audience or client, and eleven indicated musicians and composers were prime supporters. Economic support for the artists' work came from unrelated activities in twelve cases, with performance or exhibition fees and educational activities contributing ten and eleven, in that order.

Conclusions

The survey poses many more questions than it illustrates conclusive or unusual observations. An examination of the assembled data, including related literature and other sources, suggests the need for further studies to adequately address the broader topics and scope of this field. Currently there are few sources which reflect the full diversity of these artists or which present a clear picture of historical precedent. Fewer still address the aesthetic issues involved in making, viewing and understanding these artforms.

While the diversity inherent in the field of sound sculpture may quickly lead to complications in making generalized observations, the relationship of these artworks between themselves and other contemporary artforms quickly points to the value of studying them as a coherent, identifiable genre. When concepts of music, time and performance are installed in a sculptor's work, or when thoughts of space, mass, landscape or environment come into the composer's concerns, the two might well have much more in common than they do with their background disciplines. These works might appear to the viewer to be strikingly similar in results.

Very little has been written addressing these concerns. Since the essential characteristics of these

activities suspend them between relatively independent and isolated disciplines, a coherent observational and theoretical framework must be developed to adequately examine and understand the range of works and issues in this emerging field of study. This thesis documents a significant body of artists, shows and published literature worthy of a more comprehensive interdisciplinary study, which lies beyond the confines of traditional academic, aesthetic and geographic boundaries. Many of the artists surveyed have been the recipients of major grants, awards and fellowships. Exhibitions and performances dedicated exclusively to these artworks have increased in frequency and regularity, and annually New Music America presents many works of this type at their conferences. In spite of the fact that these artworks are receiving increasing attention from many different fronts, very little is understood about them as a whole in their own right.

The task of thoroughly addressing the art and issues at hand is a complex and extensive evolutionary process. First it would require retrieving from the obscurity of the fringes of traditional disciplines, information about artists' works and literature relevant to sound sculpture. Subsequently, the information must be organized into a comprehensive document library which could be accessed and drawn upon by those interested in

the field. In this way, more information would reach broader publics than if the information remained isolated in scattered intellectual circles directed at divergent audiences.

Imagine that a sculptor, a musician and a stage designer go to a dance concert and see a performance in which the dancers make their own musical accompaniment on stage (a complex African rhythm number, let's say), using a large setpiece which somehow moves and makes musical sounds. (Such an occurrence is possibly more common than one might think.) Now suppose it was a really good performance (probably not as common as one would hope), and all three went home filled with excitement about what they had witnessed and wrote down their thoughts to a friend. The sculptor was amazed by the forms, the musician captivated by the unusual music the dancers produced, and the set designer was enthralled with the kinetic setpiece and the way in which it united the stage space with the dancer's movements. Each report would be from a very different perspective, each viewer making interesting observations, but each would miss the artwork as a whole--its essential unity--even though they had all experienced it. Its existence as a single object would belie its aesthetic function and importance, the whole being greater than the sum of its parts. This is my perception of the relevant literature on this subject today.¹³

The documentation of sound sculpture and related work is hampered also by the need for and lack of high quality visual and aural illustrations. Although photographs may be available in some publications, much is

¹³Jim Estes, "A Parenthetical Non-Joke to Lighten Things Up," 1987.

left unclear about the real nature of the artwork when sound recordings are not available as well, which is usually the case. Similarly, published recordings are often inadequately illustrated. Provided with the raw material, current technologies can cost effectively publish this type of information on a small or large scale. In this way, these artworks which are frequently fragile, temporary or too complex to move, will become accessible to and more easily understood by a much greater population. Also, this resource library should initially include all artists even marginally related to the field in order to help establish appropriate parameters and guidelines to accurately define the nature and scope of the field.

Generally, the exhibition of sound sculpture suffers similar technical, conceptual and practical problems. Geographic, ideological and media boundaries tend to isolate or restrict audiences. These problems must all be actively overcome if exhibitions addressing the entire spectrum of current activities are to be presented.

Curatorial and critical roles go hand in hand. Each in its own way focuses attention on the subject and directs and supports the other's efforts. It is no accident that while there has been no comprehensive critical review of the subject, neither has there been an

exhibition demonstrating the entire spectrum of these works. Given the fragmented and obscure state of these activities, it will be some time before an interdisciplinary framework from which such comprehensive reviews can be constructed. The evolutionary process of information exchange, critical discourse and self-examination (which must necessarily involve artists, critics, scholars and the public) will educate and unite audiences and define the nature of these artforms, both holistically and in their parts.

Until such a point is reached, the genre might be divided into several categories or sub-sets for practical, theoretical and demographic purposes. Musical instruments made primarily for performance purposes tend to follow their own somewhat traditional criteria and ideas and tend to center around the objects themselves. This is quite different from performance artists who use sound in sculptural ways and place emphasis on the process or performance. Conversely, there are no clear lines of definition between the works of artists who hail to be sculptors, painters, composers, sonic artists, musicians or environmental artists and who--as a group--are in the greatest need of interdisciplinary merger. Given the current need and level of activity, although far from mature, there is already a foundation for initiating

unified interdisciplinary approaches to the entire genre. Each of these categories, along with its own historical survey, could easily become the basis for publication.

In conclusion, this author is encouraged and hopeful about the findings and prospects of this survey. It has produced a report on the general demographics of the field of sound sculpture and has outlined the need for and possibility of further studies. In short, there is relatively little known and much to be understood about this under-recognized, yet far reaching, realm of artistic endeavors.

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APPENDIX A

Sample Cover Letter for
Survey Questionnaire

Sample Questionnaire

APPENDIX A

SAMPLE COVER LETTER FOR SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear (Artist):

There has been increasing activity in the field of sound sculpture and other closely related disciplines within the last few decades. There has emerged a need for a broad based directory of primary information describing the artists, artworks and significant events currently active in this field.

I am currently conducting a survey of sound sculptors, musical instrument inventors, performance and environmental artists who use sound produced by acoustic objects as an essential element of their work. The purpose of this study will be to identify, collect and describe the primary attributes and nature of sound sculpture, thus creating a comprehensive guide and resource tool to the prominent ideas, personalities, and events pertinent to such work. It is expected that such information shall be of interest and use to artists, curators, collectors, critics, scholars, students and musicians.

I would like to have the benefit of your input. The success of this study will depend upon the data provided by individuals like you. If you would, please answer the brief questionnaire and return it to me. While the immediate use of this survey will be to prepare a master's thesis at Texas Woman's University, the eventual goal is to gather base information for a more detailed survey of sound sculpture and related disciplines. Therefore, I would also appreciate any additional information, photos, recordings or comments you may provide.

I am looking forward to your response. If you have any questions or thoughts you wish to relate, please feel free to write or phone me.

Sincerely,

Jim Estes

SAMPLE QUESTIONNAIRE
Contemporary Sound Sculpture

Name: _____ Home ph.#: () _____
Address: _____ Bus. Ph.#: () _____

1. How would you describe or classify your type of work?
 Sound Sculpture-(Objects which utilize sound as a basic part of its design in addition to more traditional elements)
 Musical Instrument-(Objects which are primarily intended for musical performance purposes.)
 Performance Art-(Events which utilize acoustic devices as part of but secondary to performance by individuals.)
 Environmental Art-(Installations/events which use sound as part of a controlled environment not directly associated with performers.)
 Other: _____
2. How long have you been active in this type of work? _____
3. How many shows, exhibits, or performances have you been included in? (circle one) 1-5 6-25 26+
4. How many of the events above were organized specifically to incorporate sound performances/ objects/ environments? (circle one) 1-5 6-25 26+
 -If available please include an exhibition/performance record of your work which is pertinent to this study.-
5. What is the prime means of financial support for your work? (circle one)
 -sales of objects/artworks -education/teaching
 -performance fees -grants, etc.
 -other: _____
6. Who is your prime audience or client? (circle one)
 -fine art market -educational institutions
 -craft/trade shows -general public
 -musicians/composers -other: _____
7. Have you been featured in any major publications? Y or N
 -If available please include a list of works published.-
 -If available please include an artist's statement sharing any thoughts or personal philosophies by or for which you work.-

If you have any comments or suggestions, please feel free to contact me. THANK YOU!

Jim Estes
(Mailing address and phone number)

APPENDIX B

Table of Artists Queried

APPENDIX B

TABLE OF ARTISTS QUERIED

Artist's Name	Returned Question- naire	Artist's Name	Returned Question- naire
Chris Banta	x	Bob Bates	
Glen Branca	x	Chris Brown	
Leif Brush	x	Bill & Mary Buchen	x
William Colvig		Ivor Darreg	x
Arnold Dreyblatt		Dean Drummond	x
William Eaton	x	Jim Estes	x
Bruce Fier	x	Bill Fontana	
Chris Forster		Arthur Frick	
Ellen Fullman		John Gibbon	x
Glass Orchestra	x	Robin Goodfellow	
Ken Gray	x	Ward Hartenstein	x
Jim Hobart		Doug Hollis	x
Ron Konzak	x	Garry Kvistad	x
Skip La Plante	x	Richard Lerman	x
David F Mariott	x	Connie McCreary	x
Blake M. Mitchell	x	Gordon Monahan	
David Moss	x	Tom Nunn	x
Rich O'Donnell		Nazim Ozel	
Tony Pizzo	x	Jim Pomeroy	x
Susan Rawcliffe	x	Prent Rodgers	
Sharon Rowell		Robert Rutman	
Remko Scha		Jonathan Scheuer	
Daniel Schmidt		Stephen Scott	
Stephen Smeed	x	Richard Waters	x
William Weatherford		Karen Wolff	x