

Since 2011 I've been developing a series of works entitled "In Place," in which I address the process of what transpires when I go to a place to make a recording. Of course, I come away with a recording of something. I've made my catch of material or perhaps a stand-alone composition or panoramic still life. But more than this I take back with me the experience of spending time in a place, absorbing that place in all its details: its sights, its sounds, how on emotional and intellectual levels I interacted with this place. When I'm back home listening to the recordings a rush of memories accompanies them, much like Proust's famous biscuit in his cup of tea unleashing a torrent of recollections from his childhood. My mind wanders beyond the recordings and their subtleties. I begin to think about the place, how I felt being there, what that place was about in terms of its social context, its function; how people reacted to me being there, to what my mind was thinking while I was making the recordings -- all this mental and emotional material existing alongside the snazzy sound files I'd managed to make with all my shiny equipment.

So I decided, why not just write a text about this process, about my time spent in a place making a recording? And the text itself would be the actual recording, with my reading the text a presentation of the place. My words and the emotions they convey...will this reveal more about the place I've spent time in than an actual sound recording? Or just something different? What does it mean to spend time in a place and just being there? Not "doing" anything there. Not making a recording. Not taking notes. Not making photos or doing anything at all but just being there?

"In Place" is also to a large extent influenced by my reading of the works of Henri Lefebvre, in particular his two books "The Production of Space" and "Rhythmanalysis." Lefebvre dissects the issue of space, what constitutes a space, how we can create a space, what the social elements are of a space and how we interact with a space on these different planes. The daily rhythms of life, the dynamics of time passing and spaces changing over time, both on the grand historical scale from erection to ruin, as well as on the daily level all shape how space is formed and experienced. And these are precisely the issues I want to explore in spending time in different spaces, investigating them, experiencing them and then reflecting about them. "In Place" exposes what remains at the juncture between the space's physical presence and the presence of my voice, embodying my experience of that space on all its planes.

On October 1, 2012 I spent twelve hours (5 AM to 5 PM) in the Daitoku-ji temple complex in Kyoto. More specifically, I was sitting in front of the main Hon-do and by the Sentai-Jizo. The Daitoku-ji temple complex is actually a large grouping of twenty-four sub-temples. Though not all of the sub-temples are open on a daily basis, and those that are only from the morning till the early evening, the main temple grounds are always open to the public. Many people from the surrounding neighborhood pass through the temple grounds each day, walking their dogs, jogging, coming to pray or just to take a relaxing detour away from the city outside. And, of course, many tourists also come but not in the droves which afflict many of Kyoto's more famous temples and shrines. I was living nearby the temple and passed through the main grounds nearly every day. I couldn't think of a better place in Kyoto to spend a long day.

On October 11 I spent ten hours (6 AM to 4 PM) at the Shibuya Crossing in Shibuya, Tokyo, shifting

my position throughout the day to each of the four corners which delineate the crossing. This intersection is home to some of the most dense accumulations of people in Tokyo, with wave upon human wave emptying from Shibuya Station and disappearing into the office towers and businesses of the Shibuya district beyond. Large video screens mounted on buildings at three points of the crossing drench the area in sound and light. The air is incredibly polluted from the constant traffic. One corner of the crossing is a favorite place for political demonstrations, which pretty much go on through the whole day. From my many visits to Tokyo I was familiar with Shibuya Crossing. It seemed to epitomize for me some of the best and worst elements in Tokyo. I wanted to spend a day getting past the glare and noise of Shibuya by planting myself at its epicenter.

I chose these two locations to juxtapose what I felt were the most extreme ends of modern Japan's cultural spectrum. And I wanted see what it would be like to experience first hand these two very different yet, in some ways, very similar spaces by spending a day in each. I would be lying if I claimed to have gotten to the heart of these two places by spending some hours there, but I do feel that I scratched the surface and moved beyond my earlier impressions. I only hope that through the sound of my voice reading the texts which I've written about these places, that the listener will also come away with some essence of Daitoku-ji Temple and Shibuya Crossing.

Jason Kahn

Zürich

2013