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Locus Sonus Creative Research Residency  
Project Proposal

How do we 'write' the space of our city, making it our own through our movements? Walking, Michel de Certeau argued, is like making a sentence: through our movement, we imbue each place we pass through with a new meaning, by connecting it to other places. A city, then, is a multitude of spatial stories and meanings: a story-map written by its inhabitants.

During my time at ESAAix, I will create an interactive sonic intervention into the city of Aix-en-Provence. At numerous public points around the city, a series of small speaker and microphone systems will be installed. For example, a speaker/microphone might be placed next to a bench in a public square. Each speaker would play a mix of spoken word and field recording audio from other parts of the city: a virtual audio portal to another location. Residents will be able to contribute their own vocal material to the work: each microphone will have a question written above it, and residents will be able to record short answers using the microphone. These questions will focus on the personal meanings and experiences of sites within the city. For example, one question might read: "Describe your favorite place in Aix-en-Provence." Each week, I will collect these new audio materials and spread them to other speakers installation sites in the city. Thus, the work will continuously evolve.

This project will explore the idea of Aix-en-Provence as a story-map. Drawing from research into local histories, as well as field recordings made around the city, I will create a variety of narrative audio materials for the installation sites. These will be complemented by the ongoing audio material recorded by residents. By opening up the listener's perspective to the diversity of possible meanings embedded in a place, this work will reveal the city not merely as neutral space, but as a palimpsest: space that has been written and overwritten with a myriad of experiences, both past and present.

In my artistic practice, I frequently use sound to explore the meaning and histories of specific places, as their inhabitants have experienced them. My project for this residency is centered around engagement with Aix-en-Provence, not only as a general thematic but as the material basis of the work: the audio that I produce will arise directly from the spoken material recorded by residents. I see this project not as an attempt to speak for the city or its residents, but rather as an experimental document of a series of encounters and dialogues: between the city space and its inhabitants, between these inhabitants and each other, and between all these elements and myself.