

Walking While Listening

The perfect antidote to your screen life



Among all this isolation and screen-based communication, I thought it would be nice to introduce the concept of self-guided soundwalks. These can take place when we venture outdoors for personal exercise.

A soundwalk is a sensory, multi-dimensional experience that contrasts markedly with the bounded flatness of the computer screen, which is currently where most of us find ourselves spending our time. When we actively listen, our walks can become revelatory experiences. We hear sounds that transcend the boundaries of our visual matrix, allowing us to experience a different world. And anyone can do it!

In this guide there are four soundwalks with listening tasks that can be undertaken anywhere and at any time. They involve walking and quietly listening to the surrounding world. Don't overload yourself with too many instructions, though. Try Walk One to start with, which contains lots to listen out for on your first sound walk.

On your soundwalks you can go anywhere you like and take as long as your exercise takes.

To access these listening guides online visit <https://www.mcclellandgallery.com/walking-while-listening>, and click the small images. Online, you will also find more detailed spoken soundwalk introductory guides that you can download as mp3s.

Remember, sound exists in time and so must you. It takes practice to listen to the world differently. You might want to listen during only part of your walk, or when sitting.

I also invite you to upload your own comments and thoughts to discuss your listening experiences with myself and others on Facebook Group 'Walking while Listening'.

Instructions:

Put your phone on silent mode

If walking with others, no talking (unless crucial)

Best without pets



walk one repetitions/patterns/cycles

As you walk, begin to sense the different kinds of sounds that are reaching your ears. Where do they come from? Which sounds are natural, and which are made by humans?

Begin, in your own time, listening ...

Are the sounds you hear one-off sounds, or do they repeat in some way?

What makes them repetitious?

Do they have a rhythm? What kinds of patterns are they making?

Are there chaotic sounds?

What changes? What repeats?

Think of long-term cycles versus quick cycles.

All sounds have durations—listen for sounds that are fleeting and sounds that persist.

Sense how different repetitions coincide or overlap.



walk two direction/space/intensity

Notice how sound is always flowing to your ears. From its source, it transcends the geometric order of pathways, boundaries and public/private space.

Sense these flows of sound ...

Sounds come from all directions—listen left, right, in front, behind, above and below.

Sound is a marker of space and depth.

Notice the spatial distances between sounds, near and far.

Some sounds are moving.

Some sounds are quiet whereas others are loud and intense.

What kinds of intensities do you hear?

Which intensities affect you? Physically? Emotionally?

Some intensities are sudden, others prolonged.

Notice how intensities change as you move towards and away from sounds.



walk three textures/qualities/tones

Like a landscape, a soundscape is composed of many elements. A singular sound can also be made up of many parts.

Within the surrounding soundscape, try to isolate different sonic layers.

Listen to sounds as textures and tones, ignoring their source of origin.

Sounds might be bright, humming, whirring, subtle, intense or squeaky.

Some sounds contain a distinctive tone or a specific rhythm, whereas others are more complex.

Listen for sounds that are high or low pitched, fleeting or persistent.

Listen deeply into a soundscape to hear individual components.

Spend time with your awareness.

How might you describe these sounds to others?



walk four systems/signs/signals

Most sounds have an identifiable source and cause. The everyday soundscapes that surround you reassure you that the world is performing as it should.

Listen for sounds and imagine their sources and causes.

Do some sounds have no source or cause?

Can sounds tell stories?

Listen for sounds that are acting as signals or signs.

Consider the different ways sounds serve as signals and signs.

Is there a reason certain sounds occur together?

What kinds of relations are there between the sounds you are hearing?