



Artists Documentation Program (ADP) Interview Video Index

Artist: Max Neuhaus
Date: May 2, 2008
Location: The Menil Collection
Interviewer: Brad Epley
Video/Edit: Laurie McDonald
Total Run Time: 1:00:52

Abstract: Sound artist Max Neuhaus discusses his work with Artists Documentation Program Director and Menil Chief Conservator, Brad Epley, on the occasion of his exhibition at the Menil Collection “Max Neuhaus: Circumscription Drawings,” May 3-August 10, 2008, and the inauguration of a site-specific sound installation that Neuhaus created at the Menil Collection, *Sound Figure*, 2007. The conversation focuses on the technical and conceptual processes that Neuhaus employs to create his sound works and drawings, as well as his wishes for their future conservation and exhibition.

Controlled Access Headings (Library of Congress):

Corporate Name(s)

Andrew W. Mellon Foundation.
Artists Documentation Program.
Harvard Art Museum.
Menil Collection (Houston, Tex.).
Whitney Museum of American Art.

Genre(s)

Interviews.
Oral histories.

Personal Name(s)

Epley, Bradford
McDonald, Laurie
Neuhaus, Max, 1939-2009

Subject(s)

Art commissions
Art--Conservation and restoration
Art--Technique
Site-specific art
Sound installations (Art)

Exhibitions/Works:

Names of exhibitions and works referenced during this interview appear below in gray cells.

Controlled Vocabulary:

Except where indicated, all keywords employ Getty vocabularies (AAT/ULAN/TGN). Those marked with (*) employ Library of Congress Authorities. Those marked with (**) employ local terms.

Time	Contents	Subject Keywords
00:00:01	Opening Credits	
00:00:49	Introduction Brad Epley, Max Neuhaus	
00:00:58	(Exhibition Reference) "Max Neuhaus: Circumscription Drawings" The Menil Collection, Houston May 3-August 10, 2008	exhibitions (events) Menil Collection
00:01:04	(Work Reference) Max Neuhaus <i>Sound Figure</i>, 2007 Sound work The Menil Collection, Houston	art commissions inaugurations Menil Collection site-specific works sound sculpture works of art
00:01:22	Process of Creation Neuhaus explains how <i>Sound Figure</i> was commissioned at the Menil. Planning began over twenty years ago with Dominique de Menil. The recent commission came from Menil Director Josef Helfenstein.	art commissions art museums (buildings) Helfenstein, Josef* Menil, Dominique de Menil Collection site-specific works sound sculpture
00:02:15	Concept/Nature of Work Neuhaus describes site as an integral component of his work. He explains his choice to place <i>Sound Figure</i> at the main museum entrance and his desire for viewers to have a subtle experience of the work.	Minimal site-specific works sound sculpture viewers (observers)
00:04:31	Concept/Nature of Work Neuhaus describes two types of works that he creates: "time piece" (moment), and "sound volume" (place). He explains the historical significance of aural signals as institutional "voices," and how he aims to build new perceptions of places through sound.	communication systems (mechanical and electrical systems) site-specific works sound sculpture time-based works
00:04:31	(Work Reference) Max Neuhaus <i>Time Piece Beacon</i>, 2006 Dia:Beacon, New York Collection: Dia Art Foundation, New York	Dia:Beacon (Art museum)* site-specific works

00:06:18	<p>(Work Reference) Michael Heizer <i>Isolated Mass / Circumflex (#2), 1968-78</i> The Menil Collection, Houston</p> <p>Michael Heizer <i>Rift, 1968/82</i> The Menil Collection, Houston</p> <p>Michael Heizer <i>Dissipate, 1970</i> The Menil Collection, Houston, gift of Virginia A. Dwan</p>	earthworks (sculpture) Menil Collection
00:06:36	<p>Process of Creation Neuhaus explains how his place works, e.g., <i>Sound Figure</i>, are built in three phases: site selection, technical sound issue resolution, and equipment fabrication.</p>	audio equipment processes site-specific works
00:08:03	<p>Technical Specifications Neuhaus demonstrates the password-protected website that he uses to control his institutional works remotely. He explains why the web interface should only be seen by a limited audience.</p>	electronics Web logs (electronic records) Web sites
00:10:18	<p>Technical Specifications Neuhaus continues his web demonstration. He describes a test calibration tone that <i>Sound Figure</i> plays each morning and emails to key personnel at the Menil Collection.</p>	Burk, Phil** electronic mail Epley, Bradford* McConathy, Steve** sound measuring devices Web logs (electronic records) Web sites
00:12:08	<p>Technical Specifications Neuhaus continues his web demonstration. He explains how he implemented an Automatic Gain Control (AGC) system to maintain a precise, constant relationship between the volume of <i>Sound Figure</i> and the outdoor, ambient sound.</p>	Ambient sounds* Automatic gain control* sound measuring devices Web logs (electronic records) Web sites
00:15:22	<p>Concept/Nature of Work Neuhaus expresses his need for the Menil to control the ambient sound on museum grounds. He compares it to the need to maintain the museum's physical appearance.</p>	Ambient sounds* sound sculpture
00:16:55	<p>Technical Specifications Neuhaus continues his web demonstration. He explains how <i>Sound Figure</i> will reach a maximum possible gain (volume) in response to ambient sound. He illustrates his point with charts of sound measurements over time.</p>	Ambient sounds* Automatic gain control* charts (graphic documents) sound measuring devices Web logs (electronic records)

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		Web sites
00:18:23	<p>Technical Specifications Neuhaus describes the various degrees of control and precision that his different sound work systems afford. He discusses a sound installation that he completed in Times Square and describes the challenge of implementing Automatic Gain Control (ACG) with a noisy HVAC system in <i>Time Piece Beacon</i> at Dia:Beacon.</p>	Ambient sounds* Automatic gain control* electronics sound systems
00:18:28	<p>(Work Reference) Max Neuhaus <i>Times Square, 1977–92; reinstated 2002</i> New York Collection: Dia Art Foundation, New York</p>	site-specific works sound sculpture Times Square (New York, N.Y.)*
00:19:25	<p>(Work References) Max Neuhaus <i>Three to One, 1992-present</i> AOK Building, Kassel, Germany Collection: Documenta (Created for <i>Documenta 9</i>)</p> <p>Max Neuhaus <i>Time Piece Beacon, 2006</i> Dia:Beacon, New York Collection: Dia Art Foundation, New York</p>	art commissions Dia:Beacon (Art museum)* Documenta* site-specific works time-based works
00:20:00	<p>(Work Reference) Max Neuhaus <i>Three to One, 1992-present</i> AOK Building, Kassel, Germany Collection: Documenta (Created for <i>Documenta 9</i>)</p>	art commissions Documenta* Kassel site-specific works sound sculpture
00:20:17	<p>Technical Specifications Neuhaus describes his systems engineering workflow. For example, sound engineer Phil Burk programs his back-end software and performs straight engineering tasks, while Neuhaus programs the user interface software.</p>	Burk, Phil** processes programs (computer) software Sound engineers* sound systems
00:21:03	<p>Technical Specifications Neuhaus continues his web demonstration. He demonstrates and explains the technical specifications of a monitoring system that creates sample sound recordings and emails them to Neuhaus and Menil personnel each morning.</p>	electronic mail loudspeakers microphones sound recordings Web sites
00:23:05	<p>Technical Specifications Neuhaus continues his web demonstration. He demonstrates other miscellaneous features of the <i>Sound Figure</i> control interface.</p>	amplifiers Burk, Phil** microphones sound recordings Web logs (electronic

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		records) Web sites
00:25:22	Conservation Issues Neuhaus and Epley discuss who will maintain, monitor, and engineer the artist's sound works over the long term. Neuhaus describes the documentation that accompanies <i>Sound Figure</i> , as well as the various types of equipment that comprise the work's installation.	documentation (activity) foundations (organizations) loudspeakers preservation (function) Sound engineers*
00:28:20	Conservation Issues Epley asks about potential for inadvertent changes to be made to <i>Sound Figure</i> , particularly its settings. Neuhaus explains what the Menil must do to maintain the work and ensure that the settings and installation are correct.	amplifiers loudspeakers microphones preservation (function) Web logs (electronic records)
00:31:19	Technical Specifications Neuhaus explains which components of the equipment in <i>Sound Figure</i> can be replaced and offers suggestions for future replacement in the event of equipment failure.	amplifiers loudspeakers
00:33:38	Process of Creation Neuhaus clarifies two changes that he made to <i>Sound Figure</i> during the final phases of its design and installation.	loudspeakers microphones processes
00:35:44	Concept/Nature of Work Neuhaus explains which elements of <i>Sound Figure</i> must be preserved.	preservation (function)
00:36:47	Conservation Issues Neuhaus explains the sound files and software that are necessary for <i>Sound Figure</i> to function.	compact discs documentation (activity) preservation (function)
00:38:08	Concept/Nature of Work Neuhaus explains how a sound work like <i>Sound Figure</i> is as much an entity as a piece of sculpture, but much more fragile. He also explains how sound can be more robust and lasting as an artwork. He expresses his expectations with regard to the Menil's long-term care of <i>Sound Figure</i> .	art commissions documentation (activity) fragility sculpture (visual work)
00:40:26	Concept/Nature of Work Neuhaus reiterates his desire for the Menil to control the ambient sound on its campus. He and Josef Helfenstein have a conversation about the topic.	Ambient sounds* Helfenstein, Josef*
00:43:26	Process of Creation Neuhaus identifies the personnel who were involved in the <i>Sound Figure</i> installation. He explains why he always involves a museum's staff in his artwork installations.	art museums (buildings) Burk, Phil** McConathy, Steve** processes Sellers, Bill**
00:45:17	Exhibition	adhesive tape

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	Neuhaus expresses his preferences with regard to the framing of his drawings on paper.	drawings (visual works) exhibiting framing (processes) mats (framing and mounting equipment)
00:45:51	(Images) “Max Neuhaus: Circumscription Drawings” The Menil Collection, Houston May 3-August 10, 2008 (installation views)	exhibitions (events) Menil Collection
00:46:35	(Exhibition Reference) “Evocare l’udibile” Castello di Rivoli, Italy October 27-December 31, 1995	Castello di Rivoli (Museum : Rivoli, Italy)* drawings (visual works) exhibitions (events)
00:46:50	(Image) Max Neuhaus <i>Sound Figure</i>, 2007 Colored pencil on paper The Menil Collection, Houston, gift of the artist	drawings (visual works) Menil Collection
00:47:03	Exhibition Neuhaus explains how each of his drawings features two equally important panels. He expresses his desire for them always to be exhibited and reproduced together and that it is a common mistake for museums to separate them.	drawings (visual works) exhibiting reproductions
00:48:30	Concept/Nature of Work Neuhaus describes the various types of drawings that he produces in his creative process.	drawings (visual works) preparatory studies processes
00:48:42	(Work Reference) Max Neuhaus <i>Passage and mix of an outside sound, Three to One Drawing #6</i>, 1992 Colored pencil on paper The Menil Collection, Houston, gift of Sally and Wynn Kramarsky	drawings (visual works) Menil Collection
00:49:15	Technical Specifications Neuhaus discusses the materials that he typically employs in his drawings, including a special type of drafting paper.	colored pencils drawing paper preservation (function)
00:50:43	Process of Creation Neuhaus describes how he “built” the sound in <i>Sound Figure</i> , using a palette of about 700 sound colors and textures. He defines sound color.	processes sound sculpture
00:54:42	(Work Reference) Max Neuhaus <i>Times Square</i>, 1977–92; reinstated 2002	Dia Art Foundation site-specific works sound sculpture Times Square (New

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	New York City Collection: Dia Art Foundation, New York	York, N.Y.)*
00:58:05	(Video Montage) Max Neuhaus <i>Sound Figure, 2007</i> Sound work The Menil Collection, Houston	Menil Collection sound sculpture
01:00:37	Closing Credits	