

TERI RUEB | PROJECT DESCRIPTION

INVISIBLE CITIES | SOUNDING BALTIMORE (working title)

PROJECT CONCEPT

Every city is a layered topography of physical, social, political and cultural histories that define the urban landscape and cultural identity of its people. *Invisible Cities: Sounding Baltimore* is a project that seeks to engage residents of Baltimore in an effort to describe their city – a city that is increasingly defined in broad, superficial brushstrokes by television cop shows, the tourism industry, and tales of urban blight spun by suburban dwellers - through an articulation of their daily movement through it.

In *Invisible Cities | Sounding Baltimore* the movement of residents and visitors through the urban environment will define the contour of a series of spatialized narratives that have both sonic and visual presence. The project consists of a series of sound recordings that are presented as invisible sonic overlays that augment the actual urban landscape. Sound recordings are based on contributions from city residents who have allowed the artist to join them on their everyday or favorite journeys through the city (by car or foot). In the final design, fragments of these narratives will be intercut with soundscape elements sampled from the locations to which they refer. Visitors to the installation may use interactive headsets or their own portable stereos to hear these recordings as they drive or walk along any of several intersecting story-paths. The final presentation will also include a visual component in the form of a three-dimensional interactive drawing located in the space of a gallery or museum. This drawing, or map, will be comprised of the stratigraphical layering of the visual contours of participants' and visitors' movements through the city. Corresponding sound content can be activated by touching a point along one of the intersecting lines that represent paths through the installation.

The stratigraphical layering of stories and paths will become increasingly dense as the number of visitors and contributors to the project expands. Patterns of use of the urban circulatory system and their narrative, political and poetic dimension will be revealed over time to address issues of insider/outsider, tourist/local, public/private, social mobility and stagnation, urban renewal and decay. Rather than reifying such binarisms, the project will seek to render visible the inter-relatedness of diverse communities and issues as the intersecting lines and patterns reveal a collective definition of the complex interrelation of urban space, movement and identity.

INFRASTRUCTURE

Sound recordings can be heard by listeners as they drive or walk through the city with custom wireless interactive playback devices (*SoundScout*, designed by Rueb with technical realization by UMBC computer science and engineering students) that can be borrowed from participating galleries and museums. Alternatively, low-tech modes of access include manual playback using a sound CD and maps indicating the location at which each track should be played. In order to increase accessibility by the general public, CDs will be distributed for free or for a small fee at community centers, schools, libraries and local businesses. Web users may download the recordings, burn their own CD compilations and listen to them on personal stereos as they travel through the city, providing another point of free access to the project.