

A Sound Map of the Egyptian Museum, Cairo

John Kannenberg, 2011

Two channel stereo soundscape composition

Duration: 60:00

During a five-week stay in Egypt from April to May 2010, I devoted four days to recording the sounds present inside and outside the Egyptian Museum, Cairo, resulting in eight hours of material from which this soundscape composition has been composed. As a cultural institution, the Egyptian Museum in Cairo represents one of the foundations of human history; as a soundscape, it represents an unexpectedly rich sonic experience with its own place in the history of a country in transition.

Opened in 1902, the current architectural structure housing the Egyptian Museum has had little renovation work since, with historic objects of world heritage stored in dusty, decaying galleries. Plans have been underway for years to move the collection to a new location at the Grand Egyptian Museum in the contemporary Cairo suburb Mohandiseen, the ancient city of Giza. However, before the relocation was undertaken, the uprising of January 25, 2011 transformed the museum's current location near Tahrir Square into a pivotal battleground in the struggle between anti-government protesters and pro-government forces loyal to Hosni Mubarak, the Egyptian president whose thirty years of non-democratic rule served as the catalyst for the uprising.

As a record of the sonic experience of this entropic space, the somewhat Lockwoodian sound map I have constructed presents a virtual tour of a museum in decay: buzzing fluorescent lights about

the extinguish themselves, squeaking fans moving air through a building without air conditioning, drills and hammers making spot repairs. Yet this physically needy structure is still an active node in the cultural network of humanity. With its contents now partially looted and the building itself under constant threat of the violence periodically breaking out around it, the museum's identity has been ruptured, yet it has also been elevated to a new level of importance as the world scrutinizes the developing situation in Egypt. This soundscape composition preserves the museum's pre-revolution sonic identity while foregrounding its identity as a nexus where the paths of world history cross.

John Kannenberg is a sonic and visual artist whose work deals with a wide variety of themes including collection, temporal perception, nature, mindful contemplation, the sonics of space and place, and the processes of making and experiencing art. His quietly reflective pieces blur the boundaries between intention and accident, incorporating techniques derived from drawing, free improvisation, cubism, graphic musical composition, photography, and abstract expressionism in their construction.

He is the creator, designer and curator of Stasisfield.com, an interdisciplinary digital art space presenting works by a worldwide selection of artists.

More information: **JohnKannenberg.com**

Available on CD from Hungarian record label 3Leaves: **3leaves-label.com**