

**steve roden****with an ear to the earth...****2009**

permanent public installation: 1345 n. hayvenhurst drive, west hollywood, ca  
the piece runs for 15 minutes every hour, from 10 am - 4 pm

*with an ear to the earth* was commissioned by the city of west hollywood as a public art project for hayvenhurst park.

i began to think about the idea related to an "old wives tale" i was told as a child, which was if you dig a hole deep enough you will end up in china. so, i looked at a globe to see if this was true, and in fact, if you make a direct straight line from los angeles, you will not end up in china, but in the ocean.

so i started to think about ocean sounds, but it was too easy, too literal, and would've simply turned the victrola horn into a sea shell... so i started thinking about how this area of ocean is not static, and how people maybe move through it at times, which led me to some recordings of ship horns. these were quite beautiful but also too big and disturbing for a small park; so instead of manipulating the ship recordings, i notated their pitches and chord structures, and replicated them using a banjo played with a violin bow. this transformed the thunderous sounds into a presence more like a kind of shadow or apparition.

these distant horns drifting, are now a series of "half melodies", not exactly hummable, yet still suggestive of music. the idea is that these sounds can appear and disappear gently throughout the day unexpectedly, like the wind awakening for a few minutes to "sound" the leaves in a tree. i see the installation as having the presence of a small pool of water, "to quiet the mind" and to create a mental space for daydreaming and mental wandering.

the sculptural object is bronze, and was cast actual size from a speaker horn from a wireles radio set up, circa 1910.

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