

those distinctions – I like to work with all the complex sounds on the way out to the horizon, to pure noise, like the hum of London. If you sit in Hyde Park just far enough away from the traffic so that you don't perceive any of its specific details, you just hear the average of the whole thing. And it's such a beautiful sound. For me that's as good as going to a concert hall at night.¹¹

Eno's ideas about listening to the environment as music are shared by modern composer Pauline Oliveros, who has used such concepts as the basis of actual pieces. The instructions for the fifth of her *Sonic Meditations* (1974) read as follows: "Take a walk at night. Walk so silently that the bottoms of your feet become ears." *Sonic Meditations XVII* is somewhat similar: "1. Enhance or paraphrase the auditory environment so perfectly that a listener cannot distinguish between the real sounds of the environment and the performed sounds. 2. Become performers by not performing."¹²

The concept of "the environment as art" reached its height in the 1960s and early 1970s. Andy Warhol's putting Brillo boxes in a museum was perhaps the most celebrated example of an artist encouraging his audience to take a closer look at the sensuous qualities of everyday objects, though the painter Robert Rauschenberg had done something similar much earlier with his "white paintings" – monochromatic canvases that invited the viewer to become involved in the play of light and shadow on the "empty" surface. The most direct musical analog to these experiments is John Cage's "silent" piece, *4'33"*, in which a performer takes the stage and does nothing for the duration: the audience is given the opportunity to experience the ambient sounds of the hall as music. Eno clearly took the lessons of such experiments to heart: he is a person who has spent a great deal of time simply listening, and it shows in much of his ambient music, which is a music of understated inner strength and few outwardly vigorous events.

Much of Eno's music is constructed on a *vertical* basis: to a great extent, it is music concerned with the sheer color of sound, rather than with the linear (horizontal) growth of melodies. Each moment in Eno's music presents certain tone colors or timbres, and the interest lies in the relationships between these colors – rather than in the evolution of thematic material, which has been the norm in most Western art music for centuries. What Eno hears sitting in Hyde Park is a composite, geographical, ambient music, with no need of horizontal teleology or the logic of linear development. Such vertically-oriented musical experiences can be had using conventional instruments, also. In 1985 he cited the grand piano, the tambura (the four-stringed Indian drone instrument) and the electric bass guitar as his favorite instruments. It was the piano which he held in highest esteem:

I like it because of the complexity of its sound. If you hold the sustain pedal down, strike a note and just *listen* ... that's one of my favourite musical experiences. I often sit at the piano for an hour or two, and just go "bung!" and listen to the note dying. Each piano does it in a different way. You find all these exotic harmonies drifting in and drifting out

¹¹ Anthony Korner, "Aurora Musicalis," *Artforum* 24:10 (Summer 1986), 77.

¹² Quoted in David H. Cope, *New Directions in Music*, 2nd ed. (Dubuque, Iowa: Wm. C. Brown, 1980), 211.