Progress

1. Environment

I spent the past two weeks in Tanzania. Away from the bustling city Addis Ababa, I found myself in a foreign environment marked by its remote location at Lake Tanganyika. Both, the Katavi National Park and the Gombe National Park captured an isolated space for reflection. We were the only foreign guests to these landscapes and its respective inhabitants, and were thus lucky enough to engage in close proximity with wildlife and nature.

The soundscapes I encountered in these environments were peaceful, rough, unsettling and penetrating. The emotional response to the quite breath of a hippo that is caught in its meeting with the rushing water of a winding river, or the continuous and high pitch cry of insects, which unite their voices to drown the rain forest in their presence, couldn’t have been more different. Both situations speak of isolation and yet, the latter was so extremely overtaking that it became more restless than any day in the traffic of Addis Ababa. The quiet movements of the hippos on the other hand seemed to tune down the volume of the loud river and I found myself in a meditative state. Now, in retrospect, I find a strange parallel between this meditative state and two particular photographs I took in Katavi. In the example below, the mist and isolation speaks of and mirrors the soundscapes I heard and felt when I sat and listened by that river – visually.
2. Ideas

“Interesting Twist – Busy city images with remote and isolate natural sounds.”

The response I experienced to the environments in Tanzania brought upon an interesting consideration of the multiple facets a sound or image can carry. The almost nauseating feeling I encountered when the chirping of insects took over my entire body reminded me so much of the feeling that creeps into my body when I am caught in and surrounded by the horns and screams of Addis’ traffic that I began to examine the relationship between the two soundscapes. Both are overtaking, meaning that they do no longer allow for selective hearing but fill your entire attention span. I find this correlation very intriguing, as two completely different locations, one entirely filled with nature the other totally marked by the presence of machines and technology, can produce a very similar response in an encounter. I feel that this holds potential in the realm of my audio and video work as well.

I am generally fascinated by sound design that goes beyond the image and this is an approach I would love to incorporate in Bedtime Stories. Instead of portraying the traffic of Addis Ababa with its relating sounds I would now like to experiment with the recordings of the insects I made in Tanzania. By correlating these two environments I can draw on my emotional experience and present it to an audience, assuming that the viewer/listener will discover a similar response. This way the element of sound would begin to carry metaphoric qualities that extend those of the image itself. A common street scene can thus gain a character of itself, handing it weight and attention within the larger context of the film – an emotional catharsis triggered by sound.

This is a creative direction that I would like to engage with in the next few weeks. I would continue to record a variety of sounds and begin filming different locations and environments in the city and at the outskirts of such. For example, I could flip the description above and film the natural environments of the Entoto Mountain in Addis Ababa and overlay it with the rushing sounds of the city’s heart. The juxtaposition of urban and natural environments is after all a major characterization that can communicate much of Ethiopia’s current economical and cultural state and fits well into the contrast driven puzzle that is Addis Ababa.
3. Recordings

While travelling I made a series of recordings that I would like to share with you. As I have not yet created my own HTML website I would suggest to share the files via Dropbox until I have my online sound library up and going. I will send an invitation to join the folder to all of you via our webmail accounts.

I would very much appreciate any feedback you may like to share with me, particularly regarding the emotional and embodied responses you may encounter – if any. I am curious to see how such might change for a listener who cannot connect the sound to the first hand experience of being present at that place at that very moment. Or can you? Can you close your eyes and “sit and listen”? Or what does it feel like when you listen to these sounds through your headphones while you look at the setting of Vancouver? Do you experience a similar correlation between sounds that I am describing above, or does it feel entirely disconnected? I feel that this element of discussion can bring a lot to my own observations and would love to hear from you.

Here is a brief list of sounds I choose to share with you this week:

a) The movement and breath of Hippos framed by their sporadic roars and the rushing river that is accompanied by the calls of birds.
b) The penetrating and overtaking chirps of hundreds if not thousands of insects, at times underlined by the movement of waves travelling from Lake Tanganyika.
c) The roaring waves of Lake Tanganyika caught in a nightly fight with the wind.
d) The calls and grunting conversations of the chimpanzee high up the mountains of the Gombe national park.

Some of the recordings capture some handling noise of the microphone or steps, sometimes even voices that I am not happy with. I think that they are still useful as most recordings are long and can be cut in post, but I want to ensure that this issue will not occur in future recordings. I think much of it had to do with the fact that I often had to react very suddenly and found myself in a group of people who needed a while to get adjusted to the presence of the microphone. Anyways, happy listening! 😊