

That stillness runs parallel to everything we do – as a dimension of reality invisibly interwoven with the world of objects.

That we can hear into the stillness only opaquely; only through and with the natural commotion of an environment.

The sense of multiple worlds penetrating each other without however coming into physical contact.

The necessity of accepting flow and change, of the inevitable movement from neutrality to joy to disaster and onward.

That sound is a remnant of a physical process, not truly a thing unto itself.

These are a few of the thoughts that emerged from the process of working on *A transparent gate (with ten panels)*.

The task was to create an eight-channel work, employing a set of small speakers that can be spread on a stage as an environment for a percussionist (Greg Stuart). Greg and I have worked in the past several years on pieces using a large number of instruments and sounds (requiring in some cases over 100 channels and/or instruments) and primarily intended for recordings. We thought it would be good to have a work truly intended for live performance, and thus these speakers seemed to offer a way of having a kind of traveling “ensemble” of percussion sounds.

Given the smaller scale implicit in using (only) eight-channels and smaller size speakers, it felt right to accept certain limits. Each panel is composed of two kinds of sound, often with a gradual transition from one sound to the next. In addition, the second sound of each unit gets used as the first sound of the next. They have something in common with the two-tone reliefs of Ellsworth Kelly (per Greg’s suggestion I spent a good deal of time looking at these works as preparation for writing the piece). All of the sounds emanating from the speakers, with the exception of the filtered noise, sine tones and field recordings, were recorded by Greg.

The open space created by spreading these rather delicate sounds over the wide field of the stage brought to mind a kind of window, colored or with images, that nonetheless allows something to filter in from the outside (light, the occasional image, a sound). What if Lorenzo Ghiberti’s gates had been etched in glass instead of carved in bronze? The *Gates of Paradise* are so beautifully proportioned that I also decided to steal their structure: panels (of nine minutes each) separated by borders (of 30 seconds on either side).

—Michael Pisaro