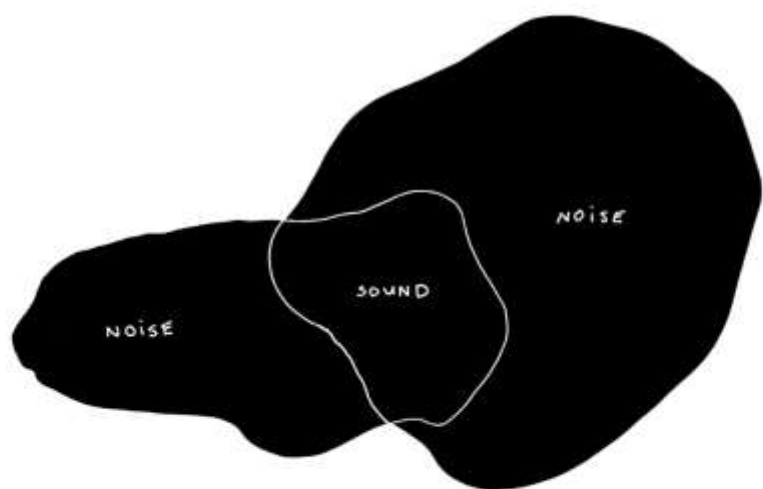Riley, Kit. *A Sound Barrier*. Made for *While the Hour*, Testing Grounds Residency, 2017.

A SOUND
BARRIER

TESTING GROUNDS

The traffic noise here is more or less constant. The site is in the centre of the city, where peak hour lasts all day. The noise is not altogether uniform – there are discernible, wave-like patterns in the volume. This variation could perhaps be explained by the surrounding traffic-light cycles, which compress and release the vehicular flow, creating intersecting formations that sometimes amplify and other times obliterate each other. Still, the frequency of these waves causes an overall effect of constant, unchanging noise – a dusty and supernaturally turbulent ocean beach.

When I take the traffic sounds as my point of focus, I begin to feel as though time has stopped. The consistency of the wave across the day dampens the feeling of time's motion. Time has frozen, yet the traffic keeps inexplicably passing. I know, intellectually, that I am hearing an effect of constant change, but I feel, bodily, the solidness, the dependability – the soundness – of the sound.

I feel the soundness of the sound, but I feel it via an unsoundness of my body. I notice a turbulence in my chest and gut, an agitated rolling and juddering across my skin. I suddenly feel a desire to lie on the ground or prop myself up against a wall. I'm looking for a sounder body to lean on, to brace myself against the intangible body of the noise.

WHALES

Whales can see barely 20 metres ahead in the water, but can hear a wave crashing on the shore from thousands of kilometres away. They use their voices to communicate, and they use their finely developed echolocation abilities to find prey and to understand the contours of their environment. Where a human's consciousness and sense of self relies heavily on visual information, a whale's is based primarily on sound.

The oceans have become much noisier over the last century. Busy shipping routes and underwater gas exploration have contributed to what marine scientist Christopher Clark calls

"acoustical bleaching" – an intense blanket of noise that drowns out the whales' voices, preventing them from feeding and communicating.

Whales have been observed hiding behind rocks and moving dangerously close to the shore in an attempt to escape the noise of underwater explosions. Whales living in noisy parts of the ocean are thought to be suffering from chronic noise-induced stress.

WAVES

At Testing Grounds, I feel awash in noise. I had planned to spend most days working here over the residency, but in the end I found I spent most days hiding from the site.

I had noticed the ocean of noise on my first visit, and realised that I would be unable to ignore it or to easily focus on anything else while I was there. Most people I meet appear to have the ability to filter out unneccessary aural information. This is an ability I have never been able to share or to fully comprehend.

I decided that if I could not ignore
the noise, I would make it the focus
of my work at Testing Grounds. This
tactic had worked for me in the past,
ameliorating my stress by narrowing my
focus.

Yet, despite my best efforts and my
lifetime of finely-honed coping
strategies, I felt as if I was
drowning. I fled home, and I dreaded
having to return the next day. The
site is as impossible and inaccessible
to me as if it were situated on the
bottom of the ocean floor.

SOUND BARRIER

Humans, like whales, experience
psychological ill-effects from noise
pollution. Noise-induced sleep
disturbance can contribute to high
blood pressure and mood problems.
Noise can impair concentration and
increase irritability, having negative
effects on people's interpersonal
abilities.

Noises from traffic, aircraft and
industry typically come to people's
attention only when they are loud

enough to cause a disturbance. These
noises are perceived as inherently
bad, meaningless, or unproductive.
They are an unfortunate by-product
that spills out of an otherwise useful
device or activity, an excess that we
can accept insofar as we can ignore it
in favour of more meaningful aural
activities.

This is no surprise. These sounds are
unpleasant, cacophonous, and
unstructured. They have no meaning
aside from their undifferentiated
excess. They are difficult and
worrisome and pointless. They are the
offcuts and refuse of something more
desirable. It's hard to love trash.

It's hard to love trash, but I think
trash is still worthy of remark, for
no reason other than that it exists. I
think it's worth acting as if the
noise is meaningful, even when there
is no meaning to be discerned. The
noise is audible, and that is more
than enough.

I have transcribed the sounds I heard
while I was in residence at Testing
Grounds, and listed them here in
alphabetical order.

REFERENCES

Stansfeld, S. A., & Matheson, M. P.
    (2003). Noise pollution: non-
    auditory effects on health.
    British Medical Bulletin, 68(1),
    243-257. doi:10.1093/bmb/ldg033

Jenner, C. (2017, February 15). Too
    much noise in the ocean for
    whales' sensitive ears. *The
    Conversation*. Retrieved from
    http://theconversation.com/too-
    much-noise-in-the-ocean-for-
    whales-sensitive-ears-17933

Schiffman, R. (2016, March 31). How
    Ocean Noise Pollution Wreaks
    Havoc on Marine Life. *Yale
    Environment 360*. Retrieved from
    http://e360.yale.edu/features/how
    _ocean_noise_pollution_wreaks_hav
    oc_on_marine_life

GLOSSARY

B

bagabagabagabaga

bchuewch

bebeek

bee bee

bee bee bee bee

beebaar

beebee

beebeebeebeebeebeebee

beebeebeebeebeebeebeebeebeebee

beebeebeebeebeebeebeebibeebibeebibeebi
beebibeebibee

beek beek

beek beek beek beek

biew

bik

bik beek

bik beek

bip

bip

blee

bleek pleek tleek

blip

blip

blip

boooorrooowmbbaow

bree breek

breeeeeeawwwoorrrrr

breeeeeeooarrreeeeeeeeoouuww

breek

breek breek breek breek breek breek

breeoooombrrrrrrh

brooooooooooooooooooooow

brooooooooowww

brooooooouuuuwwwwrrrrh

brooooooowwrrrrr

brooooorrrmbbrooooorrrab

brooooorrrrrrrwwhhrrrrouoruhhrr

broouumb

brrrrrreeeow brrrreee

bwearr bwearr bwearr

bweek

bweep

C

cataangk

chauk

cheechuk

cheee

cheeeeeooooooorrrrtakke

cheegh

cheegh

cheeoork

chhaaaaeeee

chiang

chich

chicheek-cheek

chickh

chik chik chik

chiw

chooochoochoocheek

chssseeeeaaam

chszoooeaawchzooiauw

chunggrr-ghungka

chuoorgh

chwaaaaaaaaahhh

chwoooooouuuurrrrrreeeooourrrrrgh

clackaka

claclaclacla

clagakatea

clip

clip

cluck

clukuweauwuh

craaarwwg

cree

creek

crik

croorkeroroorkrroo

crrooocreeeocrocreeecrroocrooocroocreeerrrr

culiang

cupcupcupcup

cuweek

cwoooorrrrrr woooorrrrrr

D

deedee-dee

deedeedeedidideedeeee

dib

diggadiggadiggadigga

dik

dip

djew

dlip

dlip

doo-d—duk

dureeeedrowch dreeeeedrouch
dreeeeeedrouch

E

eeeeeeeepuuur

G

gadink

galunk

gee

geegeegeegeegeeegeeegeeee

gek dek

gideek peek

gideek peek

gidiw

gigigiki

gik denk

gik dink

gleeeeooorw gleeouooorrrrrhhh

gleep

gleep gleep gleep

glik

glip

goocrooow

goocrooow

goocrooow

goocroow

googagoogagoogagooga

gooooooommb

goooorrraahogroorraway

gooorrooooooomb

gooweerrrrrgrrgleiowgr

gorooo goooo

greaaaaarrrrrrrrrrrreeeeeeeeeeeaaaeeoooe
eeeuuurrrrr

greaaaoouwrr

greeaaaahwh

greeeeeeeeaaaaoouerrrrrrrr

greeeeeeeoorrrrr

greeeeeeooooooorrrrrrr

greeeeew

greeeeoooorrrrroooooww

greeeeoooorrrrr

```
greeeeooorrrromb

greeeerrrroooooawwwweeewum

greeeoooaaaaeeeeeeeooooeoorrrhhhhh

greeeoooooooouuuoooorrrrooooooohhhh

greeeoooooouuuuurrrrrrhhhh

greeeoor

gree-gree

gree-grigree

greeooo

grep

greuwuwhh

gr-gr-gr-gr-gr-gr-gr

griiiimb

grink

grooeee

grooeeeeeeow

grooooeeeoooow

groooolobr-br
```

groooooooeuwh

grooooooooooeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeooorrrrrrrh

grooooooooooooooooorrrrdlip

grooooooow

grooooow grooouuw

groooorrrh

grooooweeeaeaahhwurrh

grooooww

grooowreeeeeee

groooww-groooowrrrh

grr grrrouaaer groowaamiueeauooow

grragrrragrrrrrrrrrroooooaww

grrgrrgrroooomgrrroooomb

grroooomb grooooaaaumb grooaaer

grrreee-wooorr

grrroooouuwwghrooomb

grrrooow

grrrrgrrrgraeaau-eek

grrrrreaah-gruw-grrreeah-gruw

grrrrroooomb

grrrrroooooooooouuuuwhhhh

grrrrrreeaarr

grrrrrrr

grrrrrreoooorrrrrrrrgrrrr

grrrrrrrooooooawwwww

grrrrrrrrooglourrglourrglourrglourglourg
lourglourgrugrugrrgrrooo

grruaouwuahwheeeeaahrww

grrurrrruoooaaaauur

grugrugrugrugru

grut-cheeeesh

gugugugugugugugugugu

gulangulang

gwaaaaaarrrrgh

gweeeeeeeeearrrrh

gweeeoooorrrrrooooooowww

gwoooooiiiiaaoooooowww

gwreeeeeeeeeaaaoourrrh

H

haaah

hee

hee hee hee hee

heee

hee-e

heeee

heeeeeau

heeeeeee

heeeee-ee-ee

heee-eei

heeeiiie-ee

hooweek

hoowooohaawaaeeehooweeooaliiah

K

kaa

kaaeeeaaawrr

keeeeaaiiaaeeoouwwwrrrr

kikiki

kikikikikikikiki

krrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr

kugueeschulawla

kwee

kweeeeee

kweegweek

M

mmmmmmooowwwr

O

ooorgroeeooouiuuw

P

paeep

paurp

peek

pelk peek

pik

pikpeek

pilk

pip

preeeeeeeaoourrr

preek preek

prrraaaaawwnb

prrrrrraaawunh

puk buk buk

Q

quooquooquooquoo

R

reek

roooooowrrrrrggrrrrhhkuuah-chkh

roowroowreaooow

rroooambe

rrrrrrrrrr

S

schreeowowowouuurrrrrrrrrrwww

schrreeeoowreeowreeowreeow

schuwwaaaaaaaaaghsss

schwaaaaaeaaaaaaahhhhh

schweaugh

see

shaaaaa

shaaaaaaghhhhh

shaaiii gu gu gu gu

shaashchchaaaachhhhahh

shee

sheeee

sheeee

sheeeeeee

sheeeeeee

sheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeoooorrreeeee
eeaaaaaaaaaaaaaaeeooouuuw

sheeeeeiiiiie

sheeek

shh

shh

shh

shh

shhaaaaaa

shhaaaaaghhh

shhaaeaagh

shhhaaaaaaaaaagh

shhhhaaaaaaaaaaaaachhh

shhhhhhhaaaaaaa

shhhoooooooowww

shhoooorrrrrrghgh

shtump-shtump

shueeeaaaawwwmmb

shwaaaaaae

shwaaeecheee

shweee

shweeeee

shweeeeeeeaaaooouuurggrrrrrh

shweeeeeeeeeeeeeeeehhhh

sshhaaaaaghhhhhhhhh

sshhaaaaah

ssshaaaaa

ssshaaaaaa

ssshhaaa

sssshhhhaaaaaaaaa

sssshhhhhaaashaa

sssshhhhhhaaaaaaaaahhhhh

sssshhhhsssshhhhh

sssssh in waaashh

sweeeeeeooorrrrreeeer

sweeegh

sweesweeswee

szheeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeoowwww

szoooaaaaaroouw

szoooaarrrrrmb

szoooeeooomb

szooooaaarrrmbe

szooooaaw

szooooieeeaw

szoooomb

szooooorrrrh

szzshzzoooooorrrrmb

T

tick

tink

tukatukatukatukatukatuka

U

uoorrrrrrghhhhhh

W

waa

waaa weeeeaaa

waaaaaaaaaaaaaeeooooorrrrrw

waaaaaaaaaaashhhh

waaaaaaaaaaawwwwwwwww

waaaaaaah

waaaaaooooooueeeeehk

waaaarrrrrrrrr

waaaeeeah

waaah-wuuh

waah

waiwaiwaawaawaiii

weark

weark

weark

weark

wee

wee

wee

wee

wee wee wee

weeaaaaahh

weeaaak

weeaaarrrh

weeaaaurrrauh

weeaarrrghrghrghroeeeoooglogloglogloglogrrgr
rrrrrrrrrroowrrowrrrowrrrowrrreorerrrowr
rrr

weeaw

weee

weeeaaaaash

weeeauwwbee

weeee

weee-eee

weeeeeeaaaeeeagregreduguduguduguoouuwww

weee-eee-aaawoow

weeeeeeee

weeeeeeeeeeee

weeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee
eeeeeeeeeeeeeeeeee

weeeeeeeeeeeooor

weeeeeeeeeeeraaurr

weeeeeeeeeeeuarrrgh

weeeeeeeeooooow

weeeeeeerrr

weeee-weewee-wee-weeee

weeek

weeeooouw

week

week

week

week week week

weeooooeaeeeeeoorrrrrohhhheeeehhhhh

weeoooooooorrrrrrr

weeooorrrrwu

weer

weewee-eeee-eeee-eeee-eeee

weeweeweeee

weuueeeeeaw

weuuuuurrrrhhhwuwuwuwuwu

whhaaaagh

wik

wiwiwiwiwiwiwiwi wee weee weeeeee

wooeeeegrooow

wooeeeg

wooeegroooaaeeooorr

wooloowooloowrrrooorrr

wooooaaaaooorrrrrrhhhhhaeeeei

woooooooaaaaaaeaarrooomb

wooooooooomb

wooooooooooowww

wooooooooowwww

woooow

woooow

wooorrrrmbgrooooorrrromb

woooww

woppa

wreeek

wrrrrooorrwwuwerrreeaaowrrrh

wruuurghoooorghurrrrroouuwr

wshhhh

wu wu

wuk

wum wum

wuueau

wuuuuaaaaaaeeioow

wwuww

wwwaaa

wwwoorrrheeahwr

z

zcheeeeeeeeee

zheeeeoooooouuwwwww

zhooooorrrrrrrr

zsweeeaaaooouwwwupikikink

zzrueeak