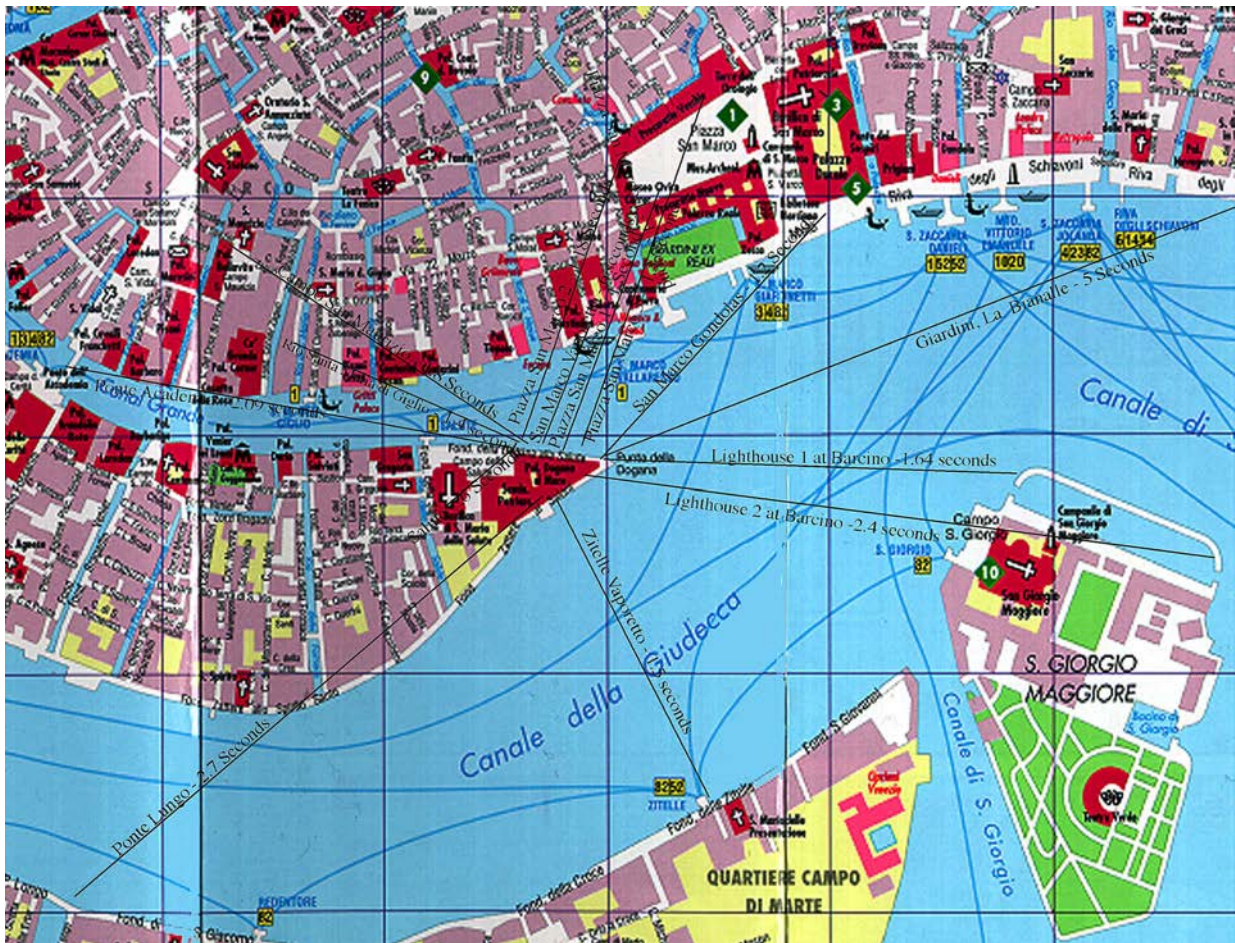


ACOUSTICAL VISIONS OF VENICE

Bill Fontana



A Spatial Sound Map of Venice during the time of the Biennale



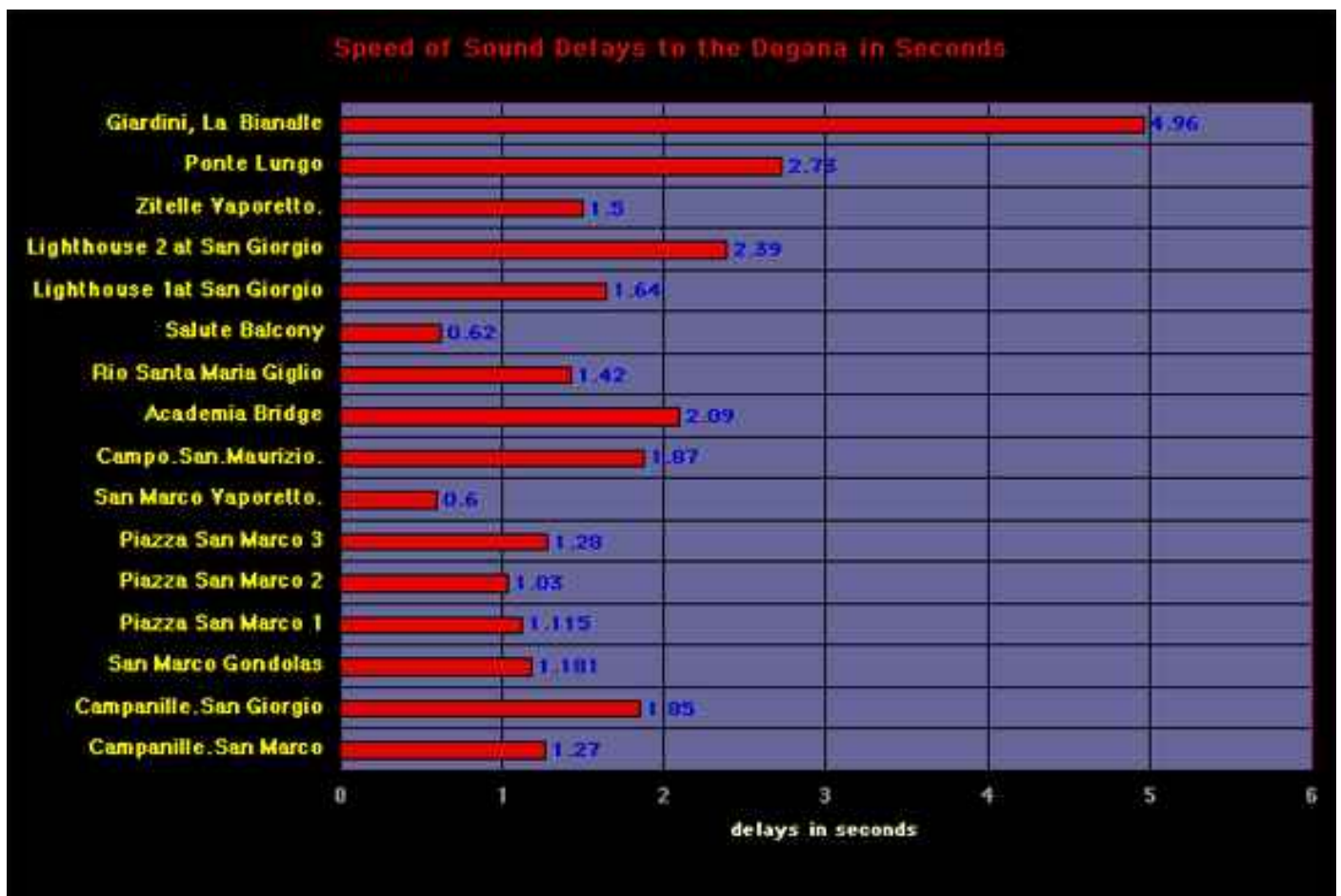
Venice is the most acoustically transparent city in the World. It is without the sounds of automobiles and the resulting acoustic background is exceptionally low level. This makes it possible for the sonic details of urban life to have a surprising delicacy. Everyday sounds such as footsteps, speaking and calling voices, the coos and wings of pigeons, and the wheels of carts, have a clarity as they penetrate and mix in the public acoustic space. Monumental sounds such as bells and ship horns can travel long distances within this transparent sound space.

This project will continuously map the journey of sounds traveling through the natural silence of Venice tracing the spontaneous acoustic cubism created by the simultaneity of multiple listening perspectives. Its realization during the time of the Venice Biennale will be especially interesting as the natural silence of Venice echoes with the voices and energy of a city transformed by the presence of the international art community.

The ideal site for this project is the Punta della Dogana, which has one of the most comprehensive ground level views of Venice, a quality which makes it one of the most visited sites of the city. With a single turn of one's head it is possible to see the Ponte della Accademia, San Marco, the Giardini (site of the Biennale), the distant Lido, San Giorgio, and the Giudecca with Palladio's Redentore, all of them united by water - the flowing together of the Canale Grande and the Canale della Giudecca becoming the vast Barcino expanding at one's feet.

The presence of this sound sculpture on the facade of the Dogana will translate this unique visual panorama into an acoustic one, for once making it possible to hear as far as one can see.

Microphones will be installed at locations in the surrounding visual panorama of the Dogana that will transmit (via UHF wireless systems) in real time to loudspeakers placed on the facade to create a living sound map. Some sounds, such as bells and ship horns, will be audible at all of the microphone positions. Due to natural speed of sound delays (1000 feet = 1 sec.), this will result in real time multiple soundings of the bells and the horns, transforming these recurring acoustic events into shimmering multiple echoes floating as a virtual reality on the familiar views of Venice.





San Marco Gandolas

Small microphones and transmitters are placed inside of a box inside of the base of a lamppost. A microphone is placed in the top of the lamp post. The transmitter is powered from inside the lamp post. Two such installations are proposed at this site in two different lamp posts. The SK250 transmitter and MKE 2 microphone will be used. This location has an acoustic delay of 1.2 seconds relative to the Dogana and hears the most interesting percussive rocking from docked Gondolas in Venice.



Campo San Maurizio

A microphone (MKH 20) is placed on the balcony of the religious center adjacent to the church. The transmitter (SR3054-U) should be placed and powered indoors near the balcony. It may be necessary to place an antenna on the roof. The sound from this campo is has a wonderful resonance of footsteps, voices, bells and pigeons. The acoustic delay to the Dogana is 1.8 seconds.



Piazza San Marco

Microphones (MKH 20) are placed on the balconies on two sides of the Museo Correr overlooking Piazza San Marco and on a ledge of the Cafe Quadri on the third side of the Piazza. Transmitters (SR 3054) should be placed in metal boxes and kept in a discrete location inside. This placement of microphones will render the acoustics of the large Piazza in all of its spatial complexity, simultaneously hearing the bells of the Campanille from different perspectives. The acoustic delays to the Dogana are 1.2 seconds.



Rio Santa Maria di Giglio

This very small canal opposite the Peggy Guggenheim Museum is a Gondolas only waterway. It is one of the quietest canals where passing Gandelieri will sing. A small microphone (MKE 2) is placed along this canal on the side of a private building. The transmitter (SK250) is in a small metal box mounted on the ceiling of this quiet private passageway. The acoustic delay to the Dogana is 1.5 seconds.

San Marco Vaporetto

This busy stop is also point where many Gandolas depart. There is a secure room with power where an SR 3054 transmitter can be placed. A small microphone (MKE 2) can be installed on the outside edge of the floating pier, away from people. The sounds will be the Vaporettos and Gandolas, water, the pier itself and occasional bells. The acoustic delay to the Dogana is 0.6 seconds.



Academia Bridge

A microphone (MKE 2) is placed on the underside of the bridge near the public toilets on the Dosoduro side. It should be possible to find a secure place for a transmitter (SR 3054) in the work area on this side of the Bridge. Many sounds of footsteps, boasts, the Vaporetto Stop and occasion bells. The acoustic delay to the Dogana is 2.09 seconds.



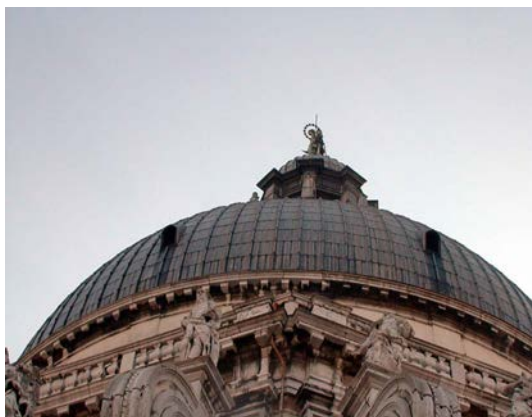


Santa Maria della Salute

A microphone (MKH 20) should be placed on the balcony surrounding the outside of the rotunda.

A mains powered transmitter (SR 3054) should be placed inside with a small antenna on the balcony.

The sounds are bells of salute and all the surrounding bells of Venice, and ship horns in lagoon. Pidgeons will also be an ambiance of the church tower. The acoustic delay to the Dogana is 0.6 seconds.



Zitelle Vaporetto

The microphone at this vaporetto stop will hear visitors to the Bienalle going to view the Caro installation, the vaporettos and the bells audible on the Giudecca. There is a secure room with power where an SR 3054 transmitter can be placed. A small microphone (MKE 2) and be installed on the outside edge of the floating pier, away from people. The acoustic delay to the Dogana is 1.5 seconds.



Two Lighthouses at the Barcino next to San Giorgio

These two small lighthouses will each have a stereo transmitter (SR3054) and two microphones. One microphone in each lighthouse will be an MKH 20, which is omnidirectional and will hear the general ambiance of the harbor, bells and ship horns. The second microphone will be directional, an MKH 60, which will be focused on the sounds of the yacht harbor between the lighthouses. The acoustic delays to the Dogana will be 1.64 and 2.4 seconds and the delays between the two lighthouse will be .7 seconds.

The simultaneity of perspective between these lighthouses will be very interesting as they can hear such a wide panorama of sounds.





Giardini - La Biennale

A small microphone-transmitter box is placed in the top of this round structure in the park, on the inside lip, near a light. It will pick up the mixed voices of people visiting the Biennale and the distant bells of San Giorgio. The microphone should be an MKE 2 with an SK250 transmitter. The acoustic delay to the Dogana is 5 seconds.



Ponte Lungo

This metal bridge leading from the Giudecca to a small harbor is active with boat traffic. It is also close to the Palladio church Il Redentore, whose bells it can hear. A small microphone and transmitter are placed in a metal box hidden below the underside of this bridge. This is location must be battery powered. The acoustic delay to the Dogana is 2.7 seconds.

