

## Walking as a Practice

Sound Treasures - Tuning in with birds and changing perception with waters  
Heloise Cullen Sampaio - 2015



In a pleasant walk with Karen McCoy starting at North Central Park we walked around experimenting with the sense of listening. The devices, handmade with different kinds of woods, allowed the sounds to be amplified. It took me a while to tune in. In the beginning I could only notice the lower sounds modified. The first sound treasure that I found was the sound of the birds singing. At first, I failed to capture it with my device. I would twist my body trying to align the direction of the amplifier, but nothing happened. Karen tried my device to see if it was a characteristic of this one in particular. She could listen to the birds singing at this small tree by the entrance of the park.

I feel a special connection with the sounds of birds singing. Being from a tropical country, one of the first things I learned about the heavy winter of New York was that I couldn't hear this sound in the mornings anymore. One of the first things I noticed in the Spring was their sound slowly coming back to welcome the new born sun in a daily basis.

They were really special to my mother also. I remember when she was sick she would wake up early everyday and make coffee (a tradition of hers), and specifically in those months, the birds were coming to the kitchen window and being almost invasive, exactly by the window above the oven. In each morning. She told me that she was happy about them coming to visit her. Later she had a dream in which a special spirit said those birds were sent from holy mother herself, as a gift to her. We came from a catholic tradition, so that was very symbolic to us.

The second time I tried I could listen to the birds and it felt like a big achievement. I then traded the device to a smaller one and then the sound of the birds became fiercer in my ears at the third attempt. It was certainly the sound that made me tune in to the sounds around me.

The next treasure I found was the sound of these small waterfalls. With the devices it was the first time I have listened to the sound of water in a different way. Usually I tend to experience the water sound in a soothing, calming way. I tend to think of it as the sound of cure and blessings. I have been to many waterfalls in my life but have never perceived the aggressive aspect of it, when falling on the rocks. There was a pungent aspect in this sound that changed my perspective on it.

I also have a special relationship with water sounds, and thinking of the other face of this one made me see the Yang in the Yin. I also related this sound with a feminine aspect, because in afro-brazilian religion (one that I was connected with for ten years of my life) the three main goddess are the goddess of the seas, the goddess of rivers and waterfalls and the goddess of thunder and rain.

I am grateful to have opened my perception to hear the strength in the sound of water. It made me reflect on how many aspects of reality we don't see or perceive that were there all along. It was there in the sound of the ocean waves, it was there in the sound of the rain. It was there in the sound of the waterfalls and it took me 27 years of existence to really open my ears to it.