

Daniela Villarreal
Lenoa Williamson
Sophia Callesen
Professors Ferrando and Marshall
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Making Noise, Making Sound: Final Project

Our project, *Auscultation Hallucination*, focuses on bringing together auditory and visual sensory inputs in a virtual reality setting. This was inspired by Jonathan Sterne's *The Audible Past*, which touched on the idea that the Western world has become so fixated on the visual world, that we are leaving behind or neglecting the audible world that we are submersed in. Sterne emphasizes that we should focus more on the aural senses because they offer a greater perspective that is more spherical in nature, thus allowing subjects to be better immersed within the world they reside in.

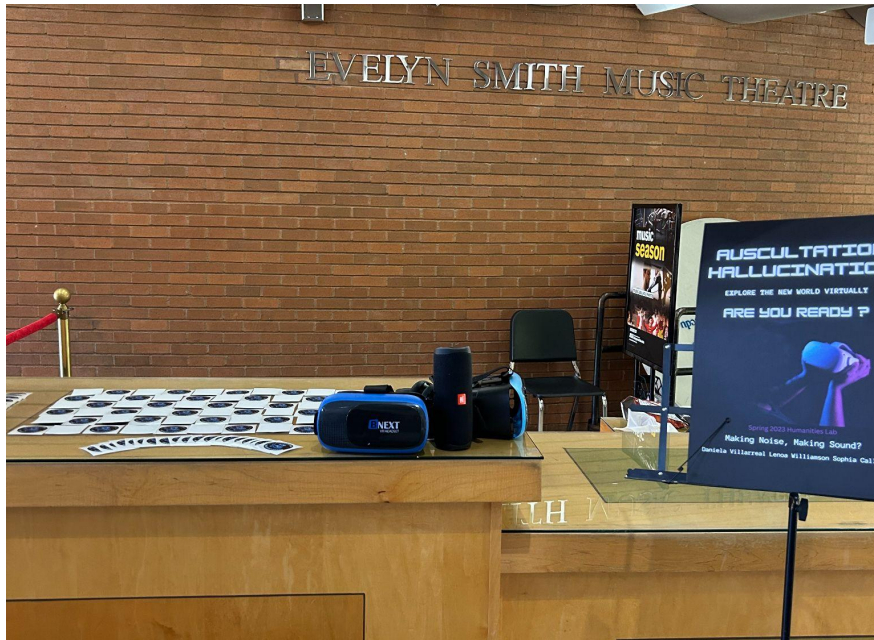
To put this to the test, we wanted to create an interactive experience that challenges the accuracy of our players' senses. We planned to create our own virtual world that consists of the three of us around a 360 camera pantomiming the same action. Simultaneously, a recording will play on loop of one of us making a sound that goes along with the action being portrayed. The player will be wearing a set of VR goggles and headphones that will transport them into the world we created. They are able to choose in between one of the many categories of noises we have to offer. At that point, they will be able to make their guess about who out of the three of us is actually making the sound.

The categories of actions and sounds that we will provide focus on bodily noises or noises we can create with our bodies. We studied a lot about the sounds that impact us on a greater scale from our environment or other external sources. However, as Westerkamp touched on in their article *Soundwalking*, when studying sound, it is important for us to first consider the sounds closest to us, or rather, the sounds that our bodies make. This is why we based our project on bodily sounds or noises we can create with our bodies. Some examples being, sneezing, coughing, speaking, blinking, scratching, cracking, etc. This also relates to the ASMR module we worked on at the very beginning of the course because we will be viewing how people react to the odd and random sounds we made by placing the mic close to our body as we move. For example, some of the reactions to the audio of us blinking gained attention because no one seemed to have considered a sound like that to exist. This goes to show how the small noises our bodies make go unnoticed, but if you pay really close attention, or if you put a mic close to your eye like what we did, you can hear a new strange sound.

The ultimate objective of our project is to test whether the visual world or aural world better enhances our understanding of the environment/world we are immersed within. We also wanted to see if we could utilize the visual world to trick the aural world's of participants. In the end, we successfully completed both objectives. Our project supported the idea that both the aural world and visual world have the capacity to influence our understanding of the environment/world we are immersed within. We were also able to trick the majority of our participants into believing the sound was originating from another person in the video. Our participants would generally get one-to-two of the noises correct out of four-or-five noises (depending on the category chosen). To our surprise, our professor Ms. Marshall and one other participant guessed $\frac{3}{4}$ and $\frac{4}{5}$ of noises correctly from their respective categories. This is interesting to think about because after playtesting, we predicted that participants would be able to guess more of the sounds correctly. After discussion, our group also thought the duration of the sound loops were too long, since participants would only take about 15 seconds to guess an answer. However, with tested evidence, the allotted time that should have been given for a participant to make an "educated" guess was about three times the amount taken by the creator (in our case 15 seconds multiplied by three), which is exactly how long we made the duration of our looped sounds, which seemed to be "too long" for most participants.

This idea may correlate with another discussion that needs to be brought up in future humanities labs, which is the idea that we as a people have become complacent with the need for constant stimulus change unless a threat is perceived that requires long, detailed perception. It may always have some correlation to consumer culture where people are looking for the next new thing to consume. In this case, the participants are consuming the noises because they are interested in viewing and hearing every sound that they want to quickly move on to the next sound out of their desire for new content. This left our group wondering, if we were to make it so participants only had two-to-three "lives," (chances to guess incorrectly) before they were eliminated, would participants be more cautious about their guesses and utilize the extra time given? Another change we would make if we had the chance to do this project again would be to have another pair of headphones so we can have two participants at a time instead of one. We had another VR headset but not another pair of headphones, and with another pair, it could have improved the flow by having more people join in on the fun. Many students wanted to try out the virtual reality but were discouraged when they saw there was a wait. If you are interested in learning more about the documentation and extra details regarding the artifact, please proceed viewing the following images and mini-descriptions.

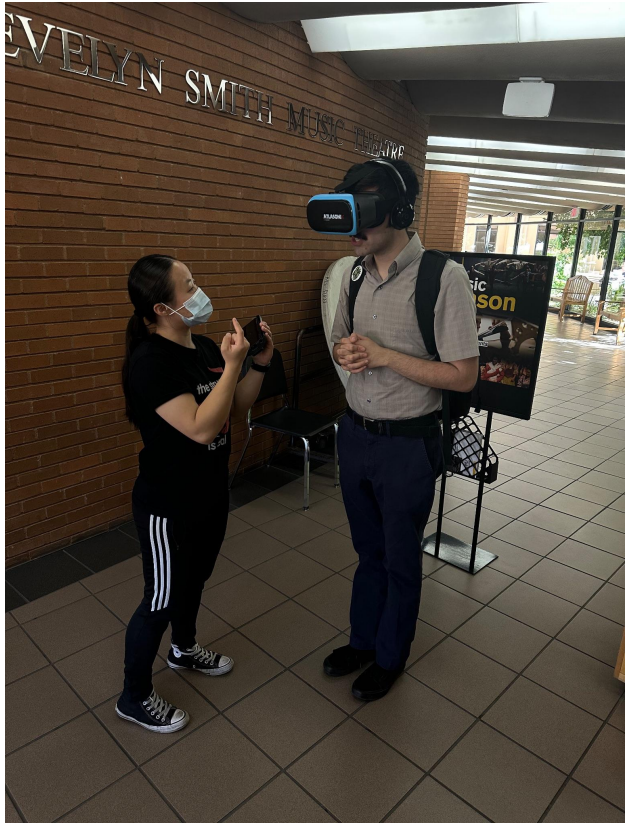
Here are some pictures of the set up we had for the day of the final presentation:





The setup and location for the presentation was ideal to showcase our project. The area in which the participants had to stand for the virtual experience was spacious allowing them to move freely and feel as if they were in the same location shown in the recordings.

These are some pictures that demonstrates some of the participants during the experimentation:



The way we conducted our presentation was first by introducing our project to the participants using a powerpoint created by our group, which included an abstract of the project and the instructions needed to participate, here is a preview:

Abstract

When we think of noise and sound, we think of the sounds made from our surroundings. However, we forget that our own bodies are also a part of that acoustic. In this project we challenge students to distinguish the sounds, that we composed using our body movements, and identify who it is coming from.

Instructions:

1. Choose a category:
 - a. Annoying Noises
 - b. Bodily Noises
 - c. Motor Functions
 - d. Noises
2. Put on VR headset + headphones
3. Verbally, or with your hands, identify who is creating the noise
4. Don't forget your sticker!

After explaining the instructions, we had the participants choose one category of the four (annoying noises, bodily noises, motor functions, and noises) and gave them the VR headset and headphones. As participants were playing, Lenoa kept track of the guesses the participants made and kept score. Afterwards, we cleaned the headphones with the cleaning wipes so it was ready for the next participant.

These are some pictures that demonstrate the recordings the participants had to watch using the VR headset:





OR FUNCTIONAL
Walking



These are the links to view the videos on Youtube where you can use the cursor to move the video around the virtual spaces:

- Annoying Noises: <https://youtu.be/8yFGwPU0GNo>
- Bodily Noises: <https://youtu.be/lIFp8qeAYGs>
- Motor Functions: <https://youtu.be/rUaXYWk4FPY>
- Noises: <https://youtu.be/BNfG-GqnIrY>

In regards to the noises we made for each category, here is a list of sounds for each category with the name of the corresponding person who's recording was used for the final VR experience:

- Annoying Noises
 - Cracking knuckles: Daniela
 - Sneezing: Sophia
 - Sniffing: Lenoa
 - Chewing: Daniela
 - Clicking: Sophia
- Bodily Noises
 - Blinking: Lenoa
 - Scratching head: Daniela
 - Moving extremity (ankle popping): Lenoa
 - Breathing: Sophia
- Motor Functions
 - Clapping: Sophia
 - Rubbing hands together: Daniela
 - Snapping: Lenoa
 - Stomping: Sophia
 - Walking/footsteps: Daniela
 - Jumping: Lenoa
- Noises
 - Humming: Sophia
 - Speaking: Daniela
 - Whispering: Lenoa
 - Shouting: Sophia
 - Whistling: Daniela

These are the images of our poster and sticker design:

