

D[é]rive Detroit



D[]rive Detroit

We walked a lot. Sometimes shorter, often longer, occasionally with, but mostly without a destination. Sometimes we lost our patience, now and then it was a thrill, often our feet hurt, and mostly it was lonely on the sidewalks.

We are a Hamburg-based group of artists and urban researchers doing a three-week research residency at *FILTER Detroit*. For *FILTER*, we are tying into this year's theme of sound to work. Our project is called *D[]rive Detroit*. In the spirit of the Situationist International we explored Campau/Banglatown and Hamtramck by strolling; we participated in collective practices by mowing the lawn and harvesting vegetables; we built a mobile sound installation to speak with people in the neighborhood and recorded it all.

We found ourselves in neighborhoods with a majority of single-family houses with patios and gardens, vacant lots, small biotopes, lots of cars, few designated public spaces, and a wide variety of community projects.

"Walking is something in Detroit." Maria

We walked to collect: sounds, impressions, encounters. We tried to see and hear what others passed by in their everyday routines. Inspired by the french Situationist International we used the experimental method of *dérive* to explore the city by walking. A *Dérive* enables new perspectives on everyday urban space. It breaks habitual thought patterns and perceptions. Instead of control and routine, chance steps in: wandering aimlessly and away from the usual places and routes, new insights into the diversity of the city emerge.

We have walked, heard and read the urban area in a city that has been (*re*)planned for driving. As soon as we got into an Uber, the city passed by in fast-forward, and the images and perceptions in our heads became correspondingly blurred.

How do we hear our everyday surroundings and what do the sounds reveal about our neighborhood? Sounds around us are like a kind of language, they tell stories and myths about the landscape. During our working process we recorded sounds with different recording devices, processed them with filters and

effects, discussed them during listening sessions and talks with neighbors, and recorded again. Through this iterative process we created audio pieces that reflect our impressions, partly documentary, partly abstract, partly commenting.

The result of our three week research is a sound piece, a sound diary, a participatory soundwalk and sound installation and this zine. By focusing on soundscapes, we avoid the otherwise highly overstimulated images of Detroit. Instead, the work assembles fragments of everyday realities and through that negotiates themes of (*in*)accessibility, ownership and responsibility.

"What do explorers discover? When Neil Armstrong landed on the moon, he first described the landscape. He found there a natural landscape. And one that he didn't have to fly to the moon for; he could have had similar experiences on the Stein Glacier, on the Furka, or in the Colorado Canon."

Lucius Burckhardt



... Walking across a large meadow.

Various sounds from different distances open up a wide soundscape. Close to us we hear the crackling of garbage bags, a little further away the rattle and clatter of lawn mowers, further away the chirping, rattling and hissing of cicadas, now and then the beeping of a bird, in the far distance the sound of voices, shouts and cheers. We hear the echo of voices reverberating from different directions. We move across the meadow and the mixture of sounds changes.

The echoes gets louder, the reverberation longer, the lawn mowers are replaced by a leisurely rhythmic thump and hum. From a distance, a howl and roar can be heard. Noise is just a sound.

Mo(wa)town

Machinery meets nature.
Nature lies at the feet of the machine.
Uncompromising shortcut.
Hare runs. The wild city tamed.
How much wilderness fits into
the idea of order?
Does wilderness need attribution
to become part of order?
What would the deer say to that?



Stroll the "Morse-Code-Walk"

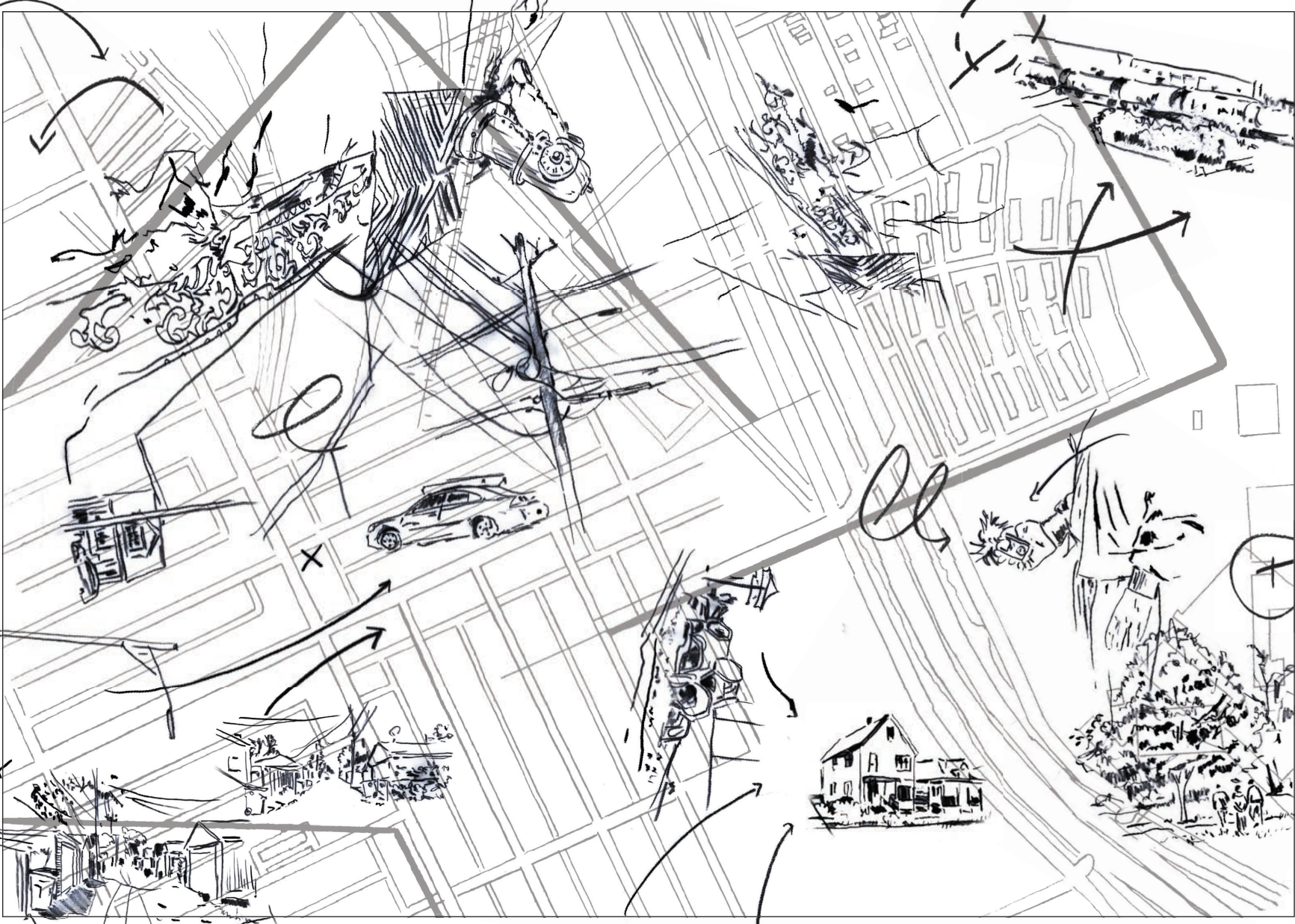
Follow the instructions to walk the morse code of the word *WALK* .

- [1] Start at an intersection of your choice
Wether you only walk mainroads or back alleys as well,
is up to you.
- [2] You can decide the directions: left or right
- [3] Dot = short road section
- [4] Dash = long road section
- [5] Engage all of you senses and experience with intention

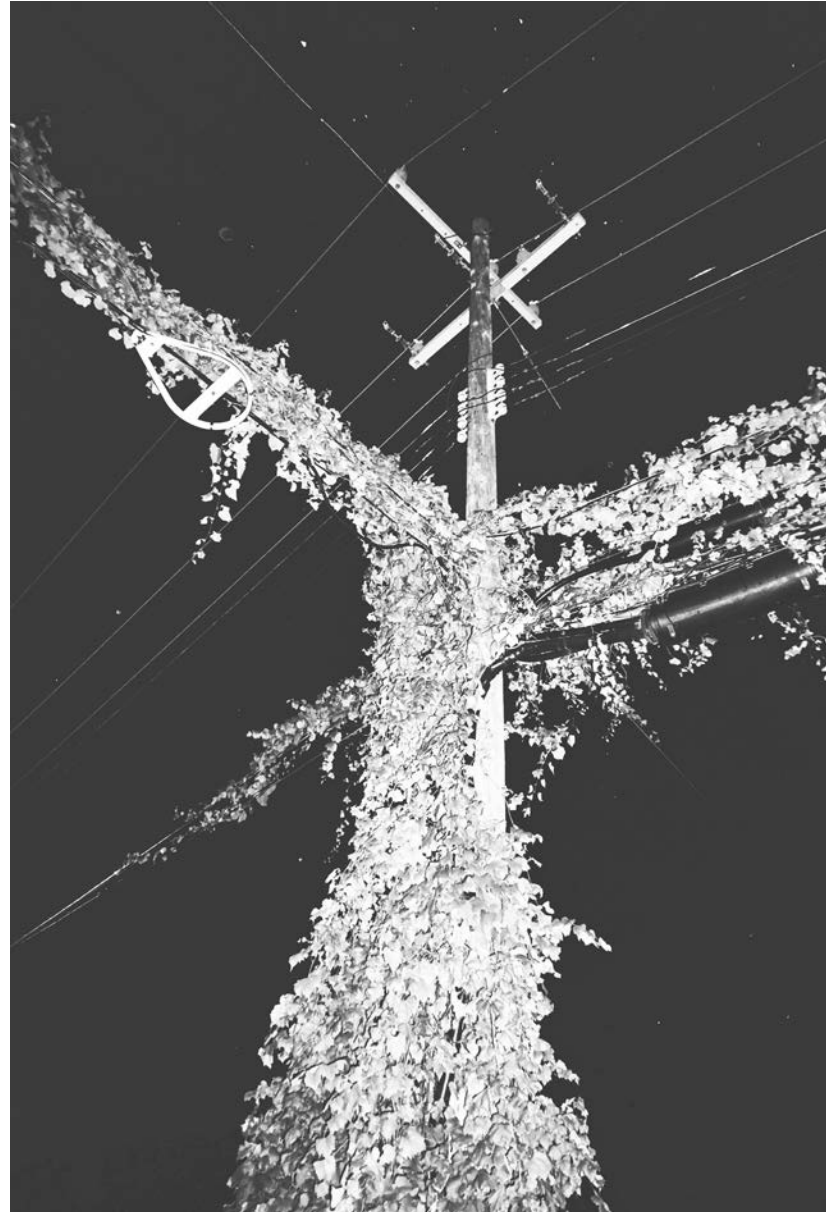
W	A	L	K
•	•	•	
			•
		•	
		•	

The International Morse Alphabet presents all letters of the alphabet in two characters: dots or dashes. Words are formed from the signal chains short / long. The street structure in Detroit consists mostly of straight short or long street segments.





Summer Madness
field free to do what you want.



...We don't see any people for a very long time, but many cars.

Standing at an intersection. Three different sounds appear one after the other. The first one starts quietly on the left side, gets louder and gets quieter again on the right side. The second one moves towards us from the front, and the third one from behind: three cars, three moving sound sculptures.



The different music can be heard not only through the open windows, but also over the thumping base rattling the car bodies caused by the bass. The music mixes with the material and the sound of the engine to create a new sound.



... We are walking along a main road. Hearing many variations of engines, low humming, booming, rattling, squealing, roaring, droning. We are walking along a small street. We hear birds chirping. Towards evening the cicadas become louder. Now it sounds like the electricity in the electric wires that hang over the streets.

We go straight for a very long time, we turn off, we go straight for a short time. We turn, we go straight for a very long time.

The Cut of the Goods

an orchestral shift of goods, is probably the most frequently performed cultural event in the field of experimental music.

Leaks at the Borders

4 corners
4 legs
1 human
1 radio
4 wheels
1 bass

clear shape, clear attribution

Encounter space, sound.
Negotiation. Contact.
Handling. Impression City.
Even property has limits.
Crossing them, inevitable.



...Sparrows whistling, wind in the trees, we hear geese calling, the echoes of calls in the distance and waves splashing on rocks. We are downtown surrounded by concrete: stairs lead down, a traffic circle, a stage, passageways, open spaces, halls, canopies. We hear the whir, hum and whistle of power lines. The loud blowing of air vents. Hearing cars, we are downtown.

A cough, a laugh, a shout, an answer, a rhythm, a man. We hear the voices of a child and a woman. We hear the crackle of a walkie-talkie, a man's loud voice echoing off the walls like in a canon or a large theater hall. Slowly the voice fades away ~~it's~~ a state law ~~it's~~ a state LAW

"Here's the garden, he said. Jerome pointed up ahead to an entire city block, vacant of any homes but filled with brightly colored raised beds that were lined up neatly across the lots. [...] Jerome did not own any of these lots, nor did he and his neighbors have the permission from the owners to use them. Bank of America owned some, the city of Detroit others. [...] It's irrelevant, he said, because nobody minds."

Claire W. Herbert





Scan the QR-Code to hear the sound diary on Bandcamp.

Visit: <https://derivedetroit.bandcamp.com/album/d-rive-detroit>

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"Walking people are slower by the very use of their feet – and since they walk because they feel like it, not to arrive, they are unpredictable in time."

Lucius Burckhardt

"One or more people who indulge in *dérive* renounce, for a longer or shorter period of time, the reasons for moving and acting that they normally know, the relationships, work, and recreational activities that are theirs, in order to surrender to the influences of the terrain and the encounters that accompany it."

Guy Debord