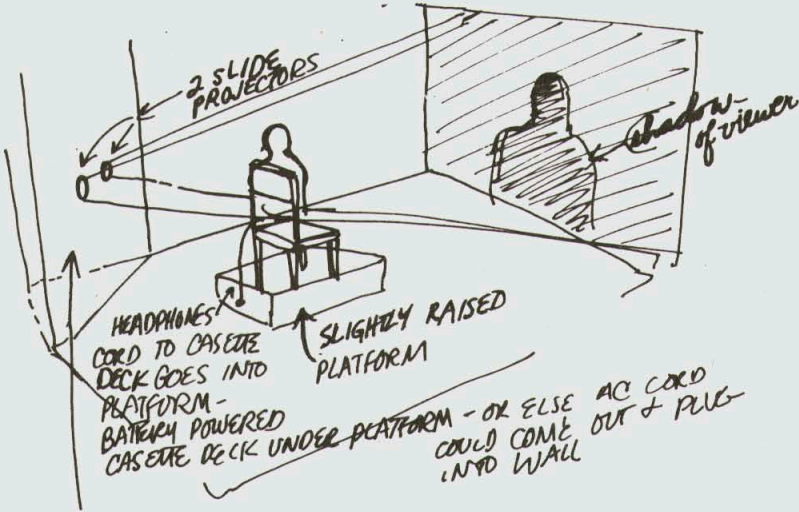


Preparatory sketch, Songs for the Night Driver, 1978



MATRIX is supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, a Federal agency.

Laurie Anderson is best known as a performance artist. She combines spoken and sung narratives with films, music and unconventional electronic sounds in her fast-paced and sophisticated programs. Anderson is one of a handful of important young artists who place a primary importance on the serious exploration of new aural effects. Her informality on stage sometimes distracts her audiences from the very real advances her work represents. In performance, Anderson is like a wonderful wizard effortlessly weaving magic with words and sounds.

In Songs for the Night Driver, a work made for the MATRIX space, Anderson layers sounds, words and visual images into frequently unrelated sequences. The effects are familiar and yet, at the same time, oddly remote. The discontinuity of the parts intentionally disrupts our accustomed patterns of language and thought.

Our culture teaches us to comprehend the world in a logical and coherent way. In all that we experience we hold high expectations of consistency and order. Virtually everything we think and feel is affected and inevitably restricted by these expectations. Many thoughtful observers feel that it is possible that the restrictions embodied in these prevailing patterns of language and thought block our access to a more profound level of human awareness.

Songs for the Night Driver is an experience which is neither logical nor coherent. Sounds, rhythms and images are poetically orchestrated into a strange and unfathomable whole. Anderson places the viewer right in the middle of a situation which lyrically disorients the fettered mind. You, as a museum visitor, are invited to settle into the driver's seat, and let Laurie Anderson get into your head!

This installation differs significantly from the customary encounter with a work of art in a museum setting. The viewer's pres-

ence is absolutely essential to the realization of the piece. Only when a visitor physically enters it do the visual images become clear. Whenever an image does appear it assumes the unique shape of the particular individual's silhouette. The participant moves, even slightly, and the image is altered accordingly.

Unlike any other work in the Atheneum, Songs for the Night Driver can be fully experienced by just one person at a time. The audio track is heard only by the participant who puts on the ear-phones. This is an essentially private experience set in a public context.

The museum visitor who wishes to experience Songs for the Night Driver must sit down, slow down and embark on a solo voyage. A valid encounter cannot be accelerated. Anyone wishing to listen to the audio tape in its entirety will remain in the center of the work for six minutes.

Who sings the Songs for the Night Driver? The voices on the audio tape are all manipulations of Anderson's own voice. The delivery is sometimes cheerfully direct, sometimes soothingly seductive and sometimes curiously without human precedent. The texts are equally diverse. The range includes syllables attenuated into melodies, choppy metaphors, single sentences and engaging monologues. Rhythms vary and an air of mystery prevails.

Most of the sounds and texts we hear seem to rely on the speculative venture we call memory. Anderson often incorporates autobiographical material into her works. She has said, however, "I've always felt that my pieces are more about the way memory works than about my memories themselves."

The projected slides intimate a vast distance beyond the gallery's south wall. Distance is then foreshortened as the headlights of an automobile on a snowy country road move in closer and closer. Slowly, in reverse order, they retreat. The sequence is repeated again

and again.

Images of headlights reflect into the viewer's eyes. "...*Nobody has ever stared at me like this...for such a long time....*" Projectors beam from behind, quietly marking time. Repetitive. Soothing. Hypnotic. "...*For such a l-o-o-o-n-g time...for s-o-o-o l-o-o-o-n-g....*"

The full moon recedes, dissolves and reappears. It quietly insists that motion, time and distance are all exquisitely relative considerations. "...*You never felt out of place because you never stopped. You were rarely where you thought you were.*" We have yet to reckon with even one of the billions of galaxies. We have yet to reckon with the mind's eye. "*I am in my body....*" Feelings and thoughts begin to ramble aimlessly and elusively through the back lots of memory. First hers, then yours. "...*I am in my body the way other people drive their cars.*"

Laurie Anderson was born in Chicago in 1947. She received a BFA (Phi Beta Kappa, Art History), from Barnard College in 1969 and an MFA in Sculpture from Columbia University in 1972. She has taught art history and written extensively for leading art journals. Anderson lives in New York City and exhibits regularly at the Holly Solomon Gallery.

AMK

PLEASE NOTE;

Laurie Anderson will deliver a MATRIX Evening Lecture on Wednesday, January 17, 1979 at 7:30 pm. This event is free and the public is cordially invited.

Work in MATRIX:

Songs for the Night Driver, 1978, a multi-media installation with a six-minute audiotape, headphones, two carousels of slides, three slide projectors, dissolve unit and chair.

RAW Performance:

In conjunction with this MATRIX installation a live performance by Laurie Anderson was sponsored by Real Real Art Ways, Hartford on December 9, 1978 at 8:30 pm.

Selected one-person exhibitions:  
Harold Rivkin Gallery, Washington,  
D.C.'70; Artists Space, NYC'74;  
Holly Solomon Gallery, NYC'75,'76,  
'77,'78; Hopkins Center, Dartmouth  
College, Hanover, NH; Discopictures  
'77; Museum of Modern Art, NYC,  
Projects'78.

Selected performances:

Artists Space, NYC'74,'75; The  
Clocktower, NYC'74; The Kitchen, NYC  
'74; Museum of Contemporary Art,  
Chicago'75,'77; Akademie de Kunst,  
West Berlin, Soho in Berlin'76; Mu-  
seum of Modern Art, NYC'76,'78;  
Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC  
'76; Louisiana Museum, Copenhagen  
'76; Franklin Furnace, NYC'77; In-  
ternational Cultureel Centrum, An-  
twerp'77; Kassel, Documenta 6'77;  
Biennale de Paris'77; Texas Opry  
House, sponsored by Contemporary  
Arts Museum, Houston'78; Walker  
Art Center, Minneapolis'78.

Selected group exhibitions:

California Institute of the Arts,  
Valencia, c.7,500'73, also shown at  
the Wadsworth Atheneum; Whitney Mu-  
seum of American Art, Downtown  
Branch, NYC, Autogeography'76; Art-  
park, Lewiston, NY, Artpark 1977'77;  
West Side Highway, NYC, Work to Be  
Destroyed'77; Los Angeles Institute  
of Contemporary Art, Narrative  
Themes/Audio Works'77; Contemporary  
Arts Museum, Houston, American Nar-  
rative/Story Art, 1967-1977'78;  
Institute of Contemporary Art,  
Boston, Narration'78.

Film by Anderson:

Dearreader'75.

Recordings by Anderson:

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Studio (California)'78.

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