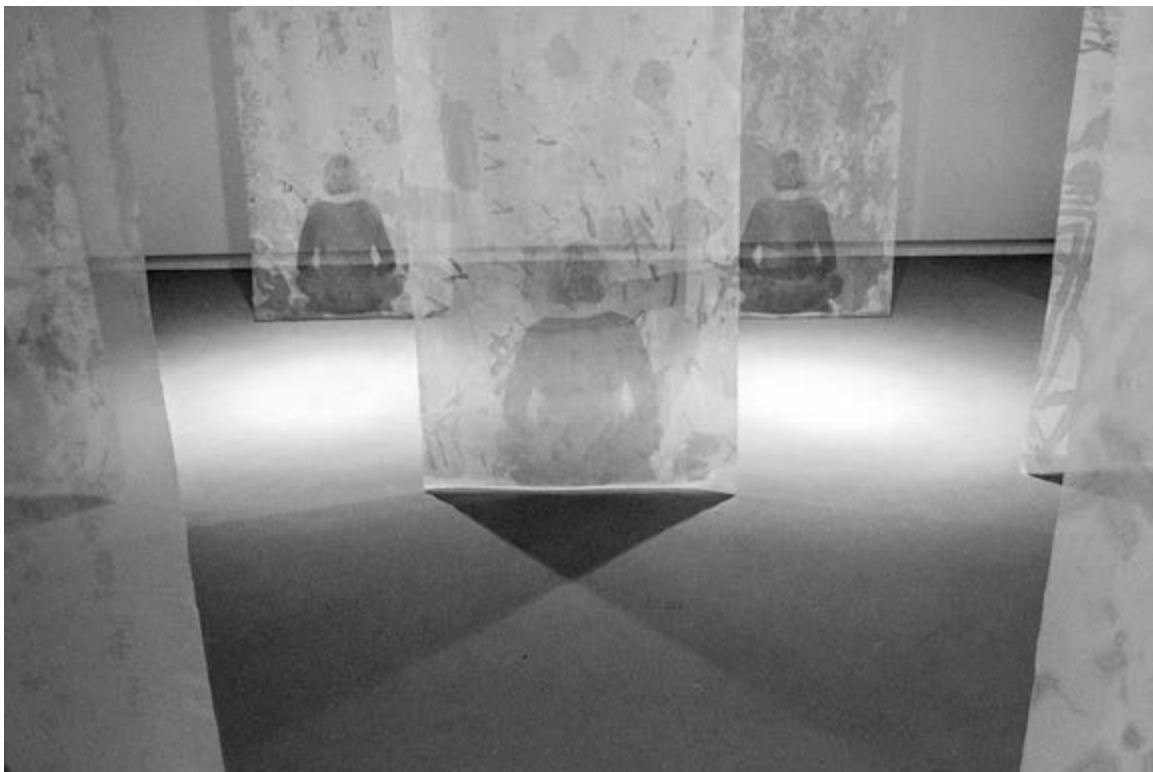


# Silent Passage

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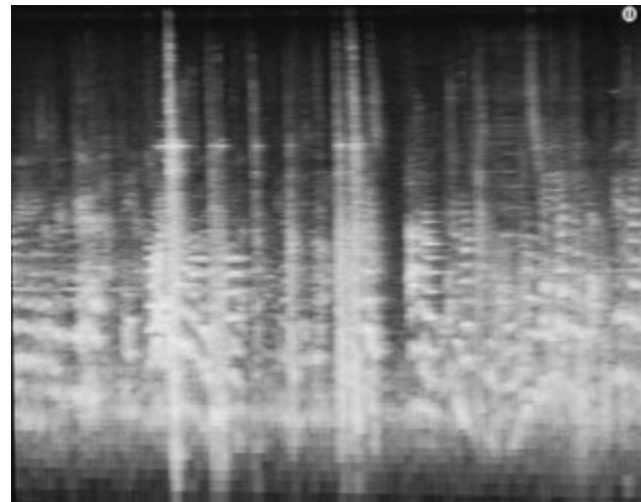


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## Be Silence

Be silence.  
Return us to our source.  
Be silence.  
Surround our hearts in peace.  
Be silence.  
Define sound, make music.  
Be silence.  
The loudest sound is to  
Be Silence.

— Deng Ming-Dao



*Spectrogram screen image*

## Concept:

Deng Ming-Dao's poem *Be Silence* inspired me to contemplate the deeper meaning of silence. I realized that the definition of silence, as the absence of noise, does not truly define silence if one can define such a notion. Ming-Dao's poem suggests an alternate inference; he releases the implication of silence as defined by an external event, to an internal condition. The connotation of his poem motivated me to create an autobiographical work entitled *Silent Passage*, reflecting my own search for still mind. The installation, comprised of 36 large-scale fabric panels, has one constant— my image, a seated figure in repose (meditation). Notation on the fabric pieces references rumination, the persistent thoughts racing through my mind, external sounds and events. The pronounced vertical format, an allusion to Oriental hanging scrolls, enhances the sense of stillness, and the suspended translucent fabric panels impart an ethereal quality: a metaphor for the elusive nature of my perceptions. Each fabric panel provides a surface to project my momentary sense of self-identity. Like watching a movie on a blank screen; when it is over, the screen is not affected.

The placement and spacing of the fabric pieces suspended from the ceiling will allow the viewer to physically walk through the installation and enter a space of quietude. The translucent hanging fabric panels can be viewed from all directions; front and back to create a space for the viewer to experience silence as palpable and tangible, given the right circumstance. The installation will be a place of quietude: an immersion in stillness and provide an opportunity to explore the sensory experience of silence. A spectrogram in one corner of the room will translate the ambient sounds in the room into a visual image.



## Process:

Creating the translucent fabric panels for the installation involved a challenging two-part mixed media process: a combination of intaglio printmaking and direct painting techniques. The first step was to create a high quality intaglio plate for the printmaking component of the process.

A photograph of me was taken in a seated position of repose and then transferred to a sheet of transparent Mylar, to make a contact positive. I sourced out a solar plate, which allowed me to use a non-toxic process to create an intaglio plate. Solar plates are a safer alternative to traditional etching, and have a light-sensitive polymer surface on a steel backing.

The contact positive was placed onto the solar plate and then exposed to UV-light. The UV-light penetrates clear areas of the transparency and hardens the polymer, while areas beneath the opaque areas of the photograph remain water-soluble. A double exposure with an aquatint screen, which simulates aquatinting in the traditional etching process, was necessary to ensure that the subtle greys of the photograph were transferred to the plate as a half-tone screen. The solar plate was then processed by rinsing and gently brushing out the soluble areas in water, which created a fine tooth on the plate, which holds the ink. A final exposure to UV light hardened the remaining areas of the plate.



*Original photograph*



*Solar plate*



*Mark making on small-scale prototypes*



*Preparing the fabric for the Intaglio process*

## Process for creating the fabric panels:

I tried small-scale tests on different fabrics such as silk, cotton and theatrical scrim, but polyester fabric turned out to be the best choice because of its transparent qualities. The most important criteria was to be able view the image clearly from any direction in the installation. I purchased a roll of sheer polyester fabric and cut the panels to a consistent size of 39" by 136" (1m x 3.5m). The marks referencing rumination on each unique panel were created with acrylic paint, sometimes augmented with graphite and charcoal marks. The choice of medium was important, as the marks had to be water-resistant: the intaglio part of the procedure required the fabric to be dampened prior to the printmaking process. To make the notations, I used a variety of oriental brushes in various sizes, as well as sticks and a mop that I would dip into a big bucket of paint to make marks on the large fabric pieces.



*Small scale prototypes*



*Large Intaglio press at the Banff Centre*



*Inking the solar plate*

The completed plate was inked by hand and worked into the tooth of the solar plate with a tarlatan (stiffened fabric). The excess ink was wiped clean from the surface and then the dampened fabric was carefully laid in position on the plate. It was drawn through the high-pressure rollers of an etching press to transfer the intaglio print to the fabric.

A variety of water-based printing inks were used to create a contrast of transparency and opacity on each fabric panel. I had to do a lot of experimentation, as fabric is much more challenging to print on, in comparison to the more traditional methods of printing on paper media.



*Installation at the Little Gallery, the University of Calgary*



*Installation at The Little Gallery*



*Fabric panel close-up*



*Fabric panel detail*



*Spectrogram at The Little Gallery installation*

### **A STILL MIND (excerpt)**

The silence, which is not the silence of the ending of noise, is only a small beginning. It is like going through a small hole to an enormous, wide, expansive ocean, to an immeasurable, timeless state. But this you cannot understand verbally unless you have understood the whole structure of consciousness and the meaning of pleasure, sorrow, and despair, and the brain cells themselves have become quiet. Then perhaps you may come upon that mystery which nobody can reveal to you and nothing can destroy. A living mind is a still mind, a living mind is a mind that has no center and therefore no space and time. Such a mind is limitless and that is the only truth, that is the only reality.

J. Krishnamurti, "Freedom from the Known"

To enhance the interactive component and evanescent nature of the installation, I plan to place an LCD monitor in the corner of the room, showing a real-time spectrogram of all sounds in the room. Translated into the frequency domain, the sounds picked up by the microphone generate beautiful flowing patterns on the screen.

The spectrogram translates ambient sounds into a real-time visual representation of those sounds in the frequency domain. This helps viewers to be aware of subtle nuances in the ambient soundscape, highlighting the personal nature of Silence from moment to moment.

