



JACOB THOMPSON-BELL

FIGURES, GROUNDS AND YOU

A Listener's Guide to Somerset House

February - November 2014

**Somerset House is full of noises. Figures: Sounds that stand out from the crowd - a voice, a coffee grinder, a footstep. Grounds: Sounds that combine, that work together to form the impression of a place - humming pipes mixed with crowded chatter, flowing water blended with droning traffic.
You: Are somewhere in the middle.**

The following scores are divided into Figures and Grounds, designed for performance by you and your fellow musician(s). Figures are shown on a black background; Grounds are shown on a white background.

Figures are solos. Grounds are ensemble dialogues. The scores should be played once each in the order given.

Take it in turns to stand out. Listen. Change scores together.

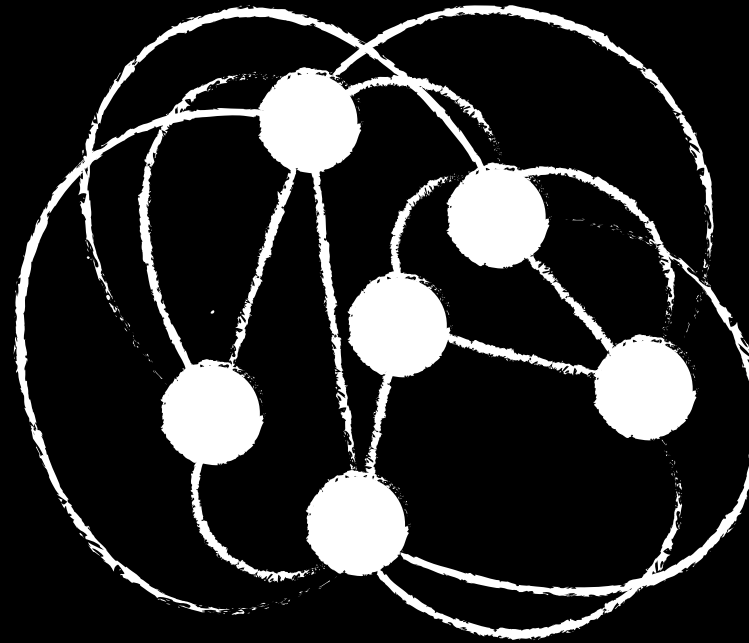
The Grounds all illustrate sounds in particular locations around Somerset House. The Figures are interpretations drawn from the responses of visitors to the building, reflecting on the sounds around the site. Recordings and responses were collected between February - November 2014.

Sounds at Somerset House (part 1)

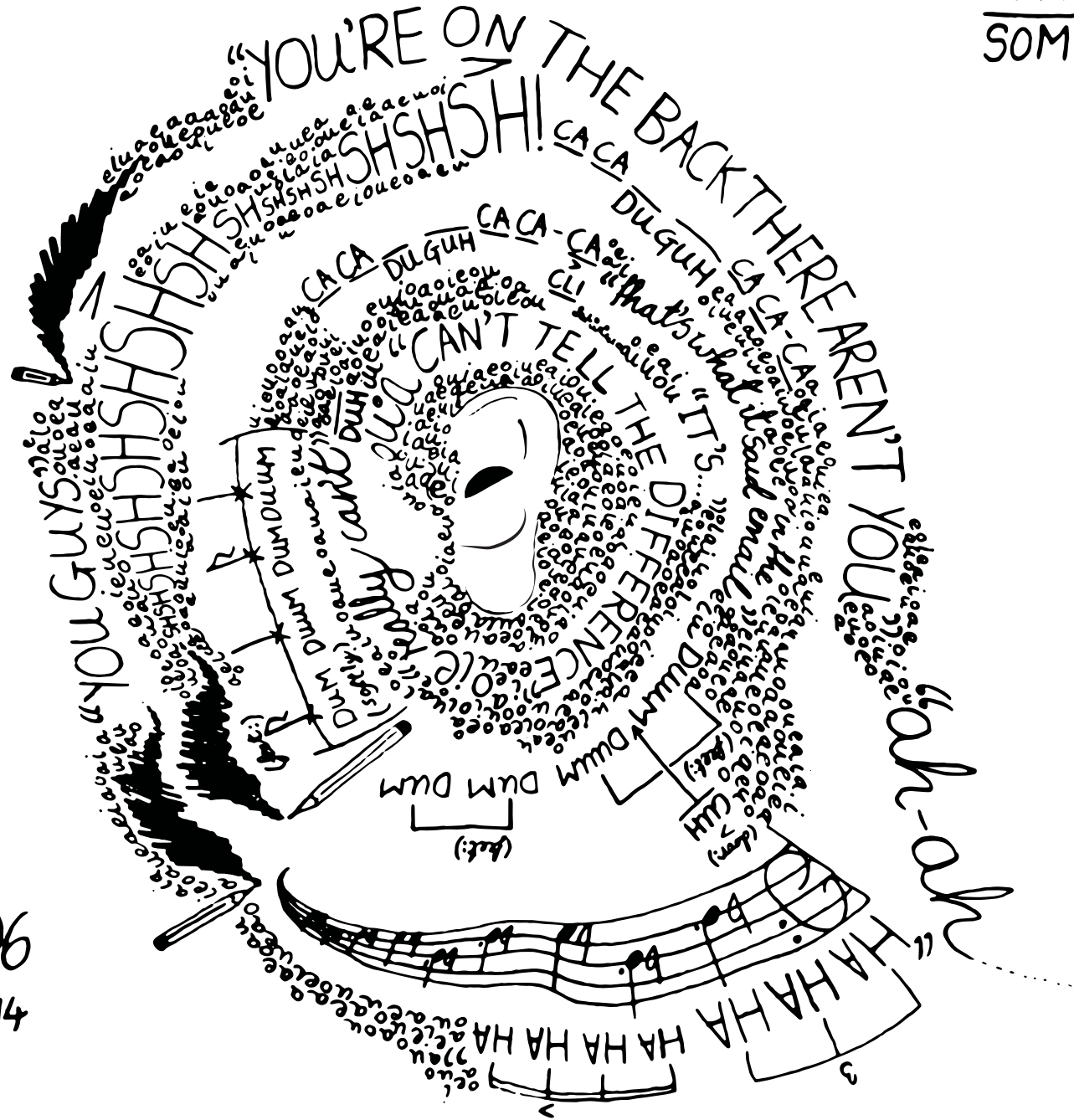
Here the sound of water, fountains,
splashes of chatter hitting the hard
stone floor, sounding through the rise
and fall of the fountains, shrieks of
laughter running through the water; till
ringing; a small radio fills a space.

An Interpretation

A hurried fragment,
Bubbling about
Uncontrollably,
Repeated and multiplied into a
Rich, sonorous
Phrase



TOM'S DELI
SOMERSETHOUSE



16:05-16:06
20. february.2014

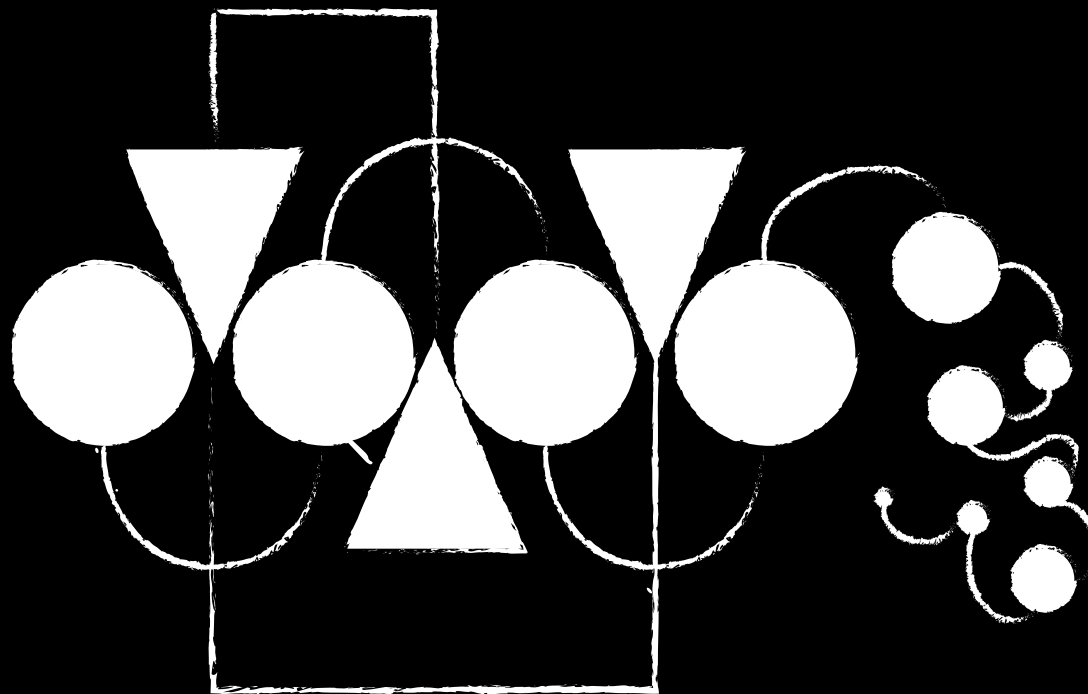


Sounds at Somerset House (part 2)

The wind swirling snatches of conversations in many languages, anonymous chatter, loud, soft; people talking in fleeting tones, the rush of traffic, buses, siren call creeps in; a helicopter overhead, punctuated momentarily by the chiming of the clock, the flight of a pigeon, a ringing phone, a child runs through, alive

An Interpretation

A subtle continuity,
Broken periodically by
Bright, Open
Chimes:
Strident and loud;
Unexpectedly trailing away in a
Momentary
Flurry of
Notes

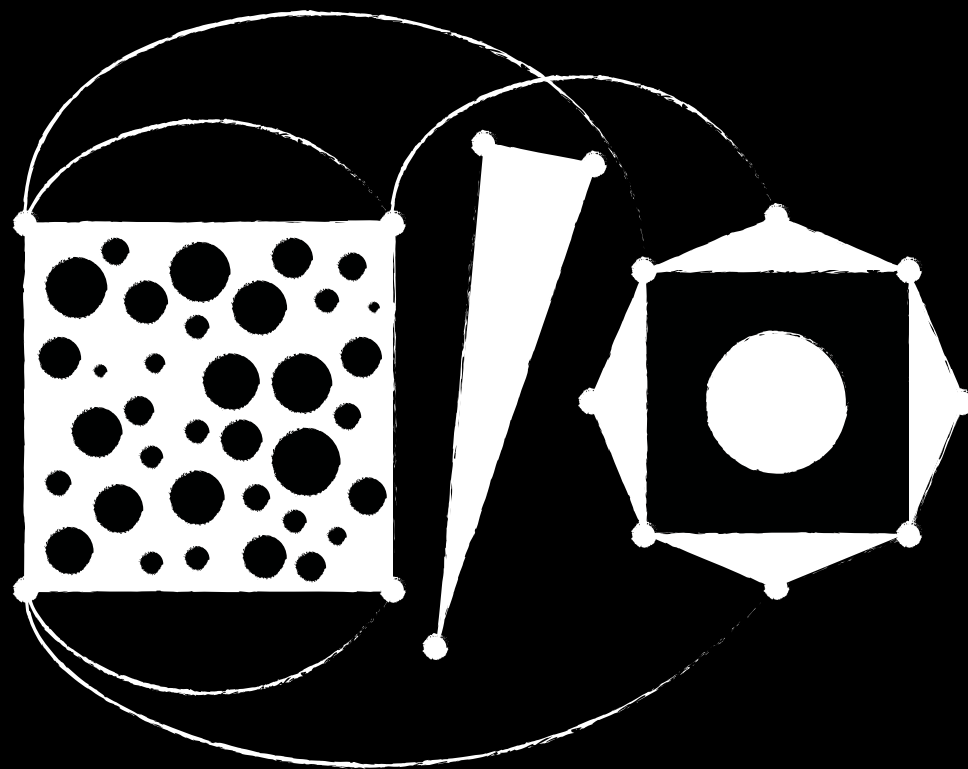


Sounds at Somerset House (part 3)

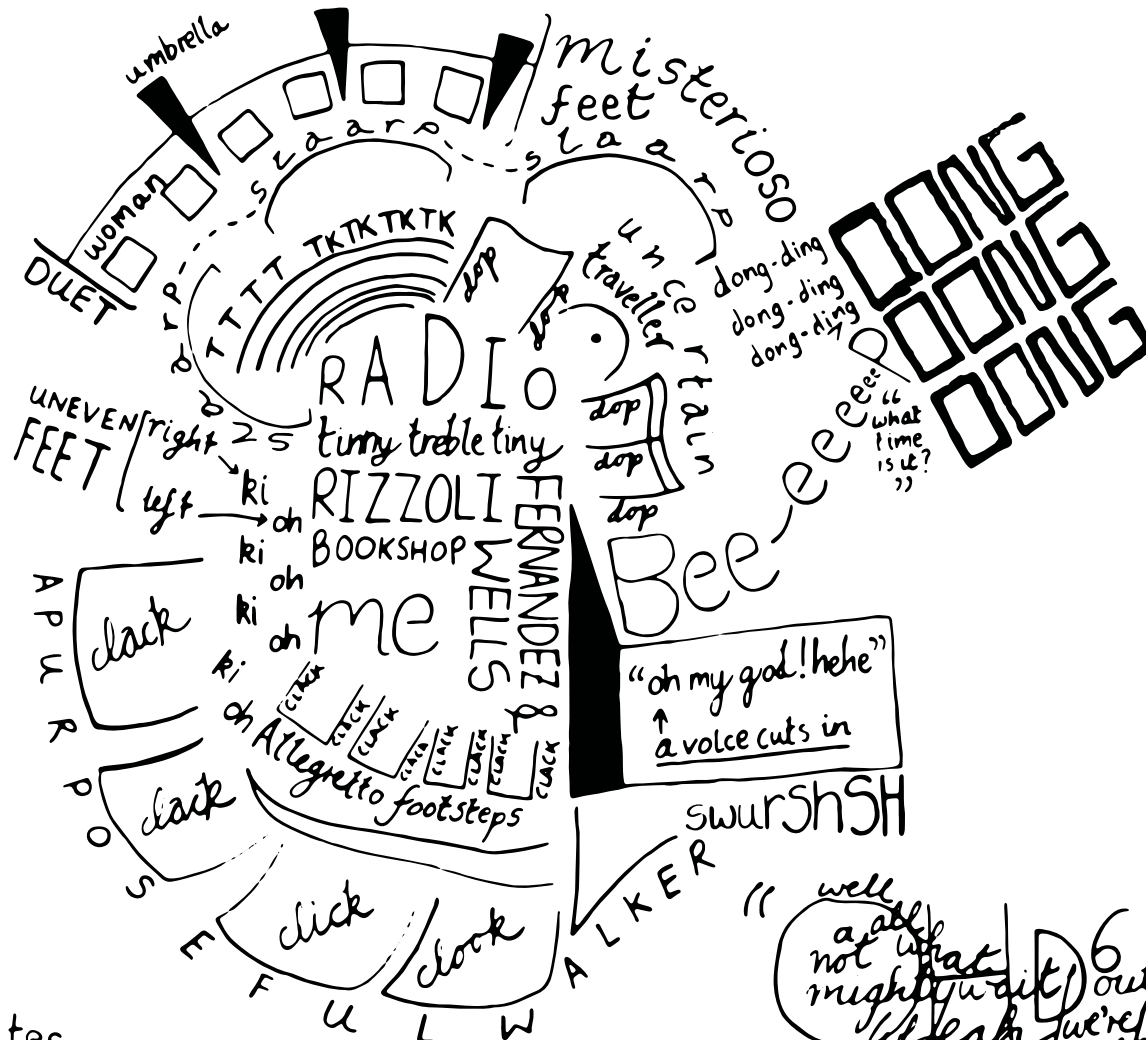
Contained sound in an open space, or closed within the corridors, footsteps echoing some musical phrase frozen within the architecture; grinding beans, vaporising coffee breezes through, a humming pipe hidden beneath the feet, bottles clinking, the scrape of a teaspoon hitting a cup and saucer

An Interpretation

Spritely sound,
Trapped and dulled;
Now majestic, melodic,
Static, rhetorical;
A fleeting flavour of something
Different, hidden;
Suddenly stopped in one
Memorable motion



EAST WING
SOMERSETHOUSE



5 minutes
14.2.14

well not what might I wait
6 outside we're at the front how hello darling

down there"

Sounds at Somerset House (part 4)

Creaking floorboards worked by walking feet, chit-chat talking heads, work place security guards bicker, a finger pressing the buttons on a lift going up; down the stairs, people talking unseen

An Interpretation

Softly, softly;
Sudden spike; a
PING!, going up;
Dropping back down into
Darkness



Sounds at Somerset House (part 5)

Thundering, muffled, distant sounds;
the loud babble of visitors close
quarters, a cackling baby lends another
voice, mixed, public noise, serenity;
seagulls up high, micè scurrying, clack-
clack heels tap the cobbles; my voice

An Interpretation

Distant sounds
Broaden and swell:
Expressive, playful;
Now sustained, though split
Repeatedly by short staccato;
A brief song

