

# THE TRIBECA TRIB

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ARTS, etc.

## Downtown Is the Place for Artful Earfuls

By **ETTA SANDERS**

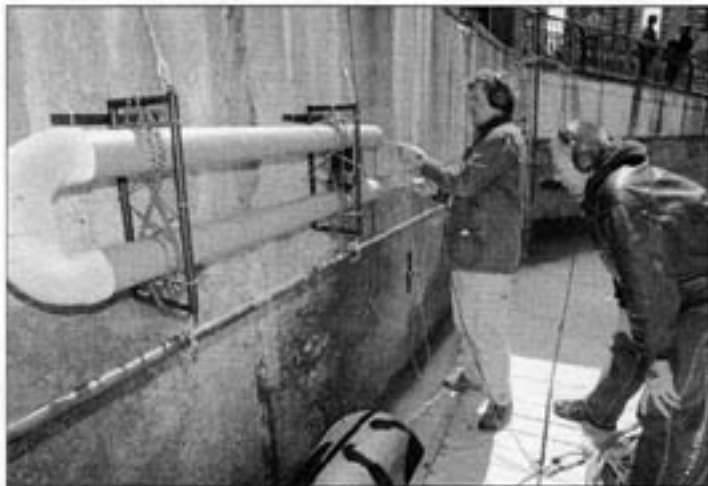
Downtowners, who are used to complaining about noise, will have a couple of places where they can sit down and enjoy it. Over the next few months, two neighborhood exhibits will highlight the art of sound.

In the plaza outside the World Financial Center, five sky-blue concrete cubes, arranged in an arc, conceal amplifiers that are attached to microphones inside u-shaped tuning tubes along the flood wall of the North Cove. Like a live broadcast from the sea and the air, the cubes emanate the steady hum and echo of the rising and falling tides, as well as the deeper tones of frequent helicopters and passing ferries.

The installation of cubes and tubes, called "Blue Moon," is the work of Bruce Odland and Sam Auinger (collectively known as O&A), who are billed as "sound alchemists."

"Here we're turning noise into music," Odland explained.

Their hope is that "people will perch like pigeons" on the cubes. "We want to change the idea of what a public space is by harmonizing it for people," said Odland. The goal is to create a continuous arc of sound along the plaza, but not so loud as to be intrusive. "We never want it to be loud enough that you couldn't have a conversation," he said.



On the flood wall of Battery Park City's North Cove, "sound alchemists" Sam Auinger, right, and Bruce Odland adjust their installation, "Blue Moon."

On a recent sunny spring day, Odland and Auinger were doing the last fine-tuning of the volume and pitch. Workers, dog walkers and women with strollers who passed by cast a curious glance at the cubes.

"It's very soothing actually," said Gary Light, a Battery Park City resident and one of the few who sat on a cube. "It almost has a whale feel to it."

"Blue Moon," which was commissioned by the non profit arts group Creative Time, in conjunction with the

Battery Park City Authority and the World Financial Center, will be in place from May 4 through Aug. 20.

Ann Pasternak, executive director of Creative Time, said that as far as she knew, nothing like this had been done in the city before. "Battery Park City is really the first for this kind of experience in New York City," she said.

Meanwhile, in Tribeca, sound artists are showcased in an exhibit called "Rock's Role (After Ryoanji)" at Art in General, where the sixth-floor

gallery has been transformed into an unusual Zen garden. In place of the traditional white sand and boulders, this "garden" is made of Styrofoam peanuts and variously sized speakers.

For the installation, organized by curator Ron Kuivila, 17 composers and sounds artists created short works responding to a piece by John Cage that was inspired by Ryoanji, a famed Japanese Garden. Kuivila was looking for two types of sounds—continuous, like the raking of sand in a Buddhist garden, or discrete, like the boulders.

The result is an ever-changing interplay of natural and synthetic sounds—the wind playing a flute, punctuated by the clicking of billiard balls. Chirping flows into a burst of clapping overlaid with claps of thunder.

The piece reflects Cage's sense of how space can work in music, Kuivila said. "You can come in at any moment and find yourself in the unfolding of the material."

In an adjoining room, Cage's compositional notations about Ryoanji, written on the back of a large envelope, are on display along with a video of a Cage performance.

"Rock's Role" will be at Art in General, 79 Walker St., from April 24 through June 26. For more information, call 212-219-0473 or go to [www.artingeneral.com](http://www.artingeneral.com).