



Pierre Bismuth, *Following the Right Hand of Audrey Hepburn in "Breakfast at Tiffany's"*, 2007, marker on Plexiglas
Over C-print, 32 x 49".
From the series "Following the Right Hand of", 2007–.

AUDREY HEPBURN ON THE PHONE. It's a quintessential image of the soundscape of daily life. She waves her hand through the air as she talks, punctuating every word with a gesture, embodying language as a physical act. What makes this so special is the fact that it's sound we see, not sound we hear.

The soundscape is expansive. It's everywhere. People, dogs, birds, trees, cars,

Radios, rain, Jimi Hendrix spilling out of a boom box, Adele leaking out of headphones, Thomas the Tank Engine chortling from a Kindle—it's an immeasurable and unholy mix of frequencies, both heard and beyond hearing, stretching from the streets of New York to the woods of the Yukon. For decades, the soundscape has been subject to archival preservation: The Library of Congress has a vast collection of sounds gleaned from everyday life even sounds from remote places far from human habitation. In December 2000, the director of the National Park Service, Robert G. Stanton, issued Director's Order no. 47 on "Soundscape Preservation and Noise Management," arguing that the soundscape is an "inherent component" of the scenery of our parks and our wilderness. It's not just that sound is everywhere: Sound matters.

Imagine turning a dial and clicking it all off—the people, the dogs, the sound track to *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. We tend to think of "visual" art with the exception of cinema, as being devoted exclusively to representing the visual field, but the implied presence of sound fills the pages of art history. Painting and sculpture, the film still, the news photograph—by definition, all are muted by their media, yet in subtle ways they reveal the nonstop sound of a sonorous world. One evening I was watching a choir on TV with my wife, Amy, and after watching for a while she turned to me and said in sign language, "The world must look really silly without sound."