

Underground Sidewalk (#SoundWalk)

By Andy Slater and Emily Cook
16 September – 14 December 2025

Route suggestion

Upon exiting CUAG, enter the tunnels via the doors to the left of the gallery’s lower-level doors.

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- 1

Proceed down the corridor and turn left at the first junction and then left again at the next and then right to enter the tunnel leading to the new residences. At this junction there is a metal access panel in the ground which makes a loud booming echo if you stamp on it. Stop there and play sound file #1.
- 2

Retrace your steps back toward CUAG but continue past the corridor for the St Patrick’s Building and proceed down the wooden floored tunnel past all the residence buildings and continue the long walk to the Nicol building. At the Nicol building junction turn left. You will start to hear the hum of the Maintenance Building. As you approach the loudest hum, you will find a nook in the wall that you can stand in where the tunnel narrows. Tuck yourself in there and listen to sound file #2.
- 3

Proceed further down the tunnel to the next junction. Pull over here and listen to sound file #3.
- 4

Retrace your steps to the Nicol Building and carry on toward the Architecture Building. At the Architecture Building there is a ramp with a window and a flight of stairs. Stand out of the way against the wall between the ramp and the stairs. Listen to sound file #4.
- 5

Now head toward the Herzberg Building past Nideyinàn into the D tunnel and Health Sciences Building. You will pass a small courtyard and lockers and then on your left there will be a line of tables against windows facing a courtyard. Sit down at a table and listen to sound file #5.
- 6

Retrace your steps toward Nideyinàn. You will find a steep ramp lined by lockers. The sound is suddenly quieter, less echoey. Follow the ramp as it swings sharply left unit you reach the E tunnel. Follow it past Dunton Tower, turn left and you will find yourself at the MacOdrum Library. Stand next to the vending machines and play sound file #6.

As part of Andy Slater and Emily Cook’s fieldwork for their exhibition *Unknown Area* at Carleton University Art Gallery, they explored the tunnels beneath Carleton University, navigating and documenting the space through touch and sound.

They have chosen six locations in the tunnels, but with a twist: each stop plays a field recording from a different part of the campus. This deliberate mismatch invites listeners to reflect on how sound, memory and place become woven together. The hypothesis is that this dislocation can generate new appreciation for the acoustics of everyday space.

This sound walk acts as an introduction to blind listening practices, inviting all participants to tune into their environments as a method of orientation. By scrambling the relationship between the original source of the sound and listening location, Slater and Cook suggest that attentive listening can be a powerful tool for navigating space. Whether stopping to listen to the recordings at the suggested locations or wandering to take in ambient sounds, listeners are prompted to consider how they locate themselves in the world through sound.

The sound walk is accessed via a QR code, with maps available in print and digital formats. It operates as a form of auditory augmented reality, recasting the physical world through the layering of sound. Many of the field recordings were activated using the artists’ white canes, echo-location clickers, vocalizations and movement, bringing attention to the acoustic texture of the space through non-visual navigation.

Other campus sites also influenced the development of *Unknown Area*, including the Tory Building’s mosaic mural *The Pilgrimage of Man* (1962), by artist Gerald Trottier, and the lecture hall known as “the Egg,” where recordings were made while it was under renovation. Other influences were the Living Wall in Richcraft Hall and the Architecture Building, with its many concrete surfaces. These locations serve as points of contact with Carleton’s lived environment. By engaging with and sourcing field recordings from spaces across the campus that may be recognizable to students and staff, Slater and Cook embed a speculative audio narrative within the tunnels, inviting listeners to reflect on how sound shapes our perception of our environment.

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A self-guided soundwalk in Carleton University's tunnel system invites listeners to reflect on how sound shapes our perception of our environment.

