

# *We Place Our Ideas / Our Ideas Place Us*

## **Scott Sherk**

*5 Steel Stele, 2015*

I have become increasingly interested in the sound of spaces. I welcomed the opportunity to spend time in the Williams Center listening to its sounds and getting to know it aurally.

The building has unique aural qualities with its open construction—sound moving between floors, long resonant stairways, exposed HVAC ducting noises. As I poked around and listened, however, I discovered an unexpected and mysterious source of sound. Each of the steel columns on the first floor “sings” a distinctive song. Apparently, the vibrations from nearby traffic, the adjacent construction, the sounds within and outside the building combine to create subtle, continuous tones.

I attached contact microphones to the steel columns and recorded them. Later, I raised and lowered the frequencies of the sounds by one or two octaves to bring as much sound as possible into the range of hearing. Nothing was added that was not already present in the recordings.

I present the sounds of the columns – the stele-- in five channels arranged vertically. Each recorded sound is played back through one of the five speakers in a continuously shifting order and from a continuously shifting spatial position. As a composition, the work is constantly changing with no beginning, end, or repeated patterns. I imagine myself moving deeply into the structure of the building and the aural construction of the space.

Perception should only be a rehearsing of constructions and schema. In its deepest form it must be a form of discovery. Listening gives me this opportunity.

