

Artist Statement

This installation is part of a larger ongoing project which is primarily rooted in a process: while visiting my family in Morocco this spring, I traveled to 3 remote parts of Morocco to learn from their traditional musicians, record their music, and photograph the experience. I now plan on doing this every time I return to visit my family in Morocco (at least a couple months every year). What I do with the audio-visual material I have captured / will capture will vary. This installation is the first exercise in a series of works I plan on developing from these materials.

The meaning I derive from this project is deeply personal:

I was born and raised in Morocco, but (even while growing up in Morocco) was educated by American institutions and have now been living in the US for half my life. Broadly speaking, I therefore derive my sense of identity from two socio-cultural contexts. As a musician, that duality presented a tension between the Westernized ear training I've always received and the distinct rhythmic feels of Moroccan musical traditions. That tension has come to serve as a microcosm of the overall tensions inherent in my dual identity.

Through this project, I am for the first time seriously examining those tensions. It started with an educational component I would like to translate to Priceless attendees:

Moroccan rhythmic patterns can be heard two different ways. The correct way is incredibly rich and interesting, but counterintuitive to the typical Western-trained ear. The incorrect way is what our Western-trained ears will naturally hear initially. During my 2-month travels around Morocco, I was theoretically aware of which was correct, but I struggled with actually hearing / feeling some of the rhythms the correct way. I experimented with various tricks and agonized over ways to re-program my brain (and body) to hear / feel these rhythms the correct way. The process has been transformative. I will attempt to illustrate these 2 ways of hearing the rhythms in a way that skips the agonizing self-educational process I had to go through, and goes straight to the fun.

This project also raises questions about the relationship between sample origins and the context in which they end up when remixed in electronic music. By providing more of a glimpse into the people and the experience behind those samples, I aim to begin bridging the gap between producer and consumer of sample-based electronic music.

The other larger-than-me purpose I attribute to this project is that of safeguarding these increasingly vulnerable national treasures. The diversity and richness of Moroccan music is truly spectacular. At the crossroads of many civilizations and trade routes throughout history, Morocco has evolved as a true melting pot of musical forms and sensibilities. There are various conditions today, however, which may threaten the longevity of these traditions. I'm excited about the opportunity to play a small part in preserving these traditions for posterity. This process starts with sharing this richness with the community in which I live in the US.

