

screenplay for **Without Anesthesia**, a penetrating study of a responsible journalist suddenly plunged into nonpersonhood. The

would be confiscated, a routine procedure, and she has no reason to believe she'd be issued another one. And in a country where her most

Friday, November 30, at Pacific Multimedia Center, 1517 W. Fullerton, 281-4114. Tickets are \$4. - Pat Aufderheide

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## Music Notes: two artists explore Alcatraz

When the Spanish found the place in 1769, it was covered with birds, so they named it Isla de Alcatrazes, "Island of Pelicans" - whence derives its present name, Alcatraz. Its rocky, precipitous shores inspired the Spanish to build a fort on it, which the Americans in 1858 turned into a military prison. In 1933 it became a federal prison for those convicted of kidnapping, murder, and other serious charges involving life sentences. Virtually escape-proof, it was explicitly used for punishment rather than reformation, and prisoners were sent there only after they had proved themselves too violent and disobedient to remain in lower-security prisons on the mainland. In 1963, during the Kennedy administration, Alcatraz was discontinued as a prison - ostensibly for its inhumanity, though more likely for economic reasons involved with its upkeep, since the prison never held much more than 300 inmates at a time.

As a negatively romantic symbol, Alcatraz has resonated through the public consciousness via such films as **Escape From Alcatraz** and **Birdman of Alcatraz**. Composer Ingram Marshall, though, living across the bay in San Francisco, wanted to go beyond the Hollywood myth and create a work of art that would express the grim truth of the place with more accuracy. The manner of the eventual fruition of that desire flashed through his mind as he looked at photographs of old, abandoned Norwegian factories taken by a photographer friend, Jim Bengston (three of whose photos appeared in the exhibition "The Frozen Image: Scandinavian Photography" at the Museum of Contemporary Art last fall). Thus began a unique collaboration between two artists whose respective disciplines lie at opposite ends of the artistic spectrum.

Bengston twice left his home in Oslo to visit San Francisco and explore with Marshall the still closely guarded island of Alcatraz. The official tour lasts only an hour before tourists are whisked back to the mainland by boat, but Bengston and Marshall managed to befriend a sympathetic park ranger who thought they were merely eccentric and allowed them to wander more or less where they pleased. They visited the stone dungeons underneath the prison where the military prisoners had been thrown in solitary confinement. They explored the ancient machines



**Alcatraz—the Morgue (1982)** by Jim Bengston

where the luckier prisoners were allowed to do laundry for the Army base in San Francisco (though there is no water on the island, and it had to be carried over in tankers). They recorded everything: Bengston with his camera, Marshall with his tape recorder.

I should explain that, as a composer, Ingram Marshall is unusually well qualified to bring such a place as Alcatraz to aural life. Though largely electronic and often employing instruments, Marshall's music makes abundant use of the sounds of nature and real life. Underneath his Eastern-inspired improvisations sound recordings of the foghorns off San Francisco Bay; the sounds of waves lapping against the shore; cowbells, bird songs, and even the ancient calls of Norwegian shepherds. Occasionally, even the music of other composers enters his palette; **The Fragility Cycles** (performed here at Northwestern University in 1981) uses part of an old recording of Sibelius's Sixth Symphony.

**Alcatraz** is a true collaboration. The artists sent slides and cassette tapes back and forth to each other halfway across the world, constantly modifying the musical and visual sequence in accordance with each other's conceptions. The visual component of **Alcatraz** comprises some 100 slides selected from the thousands that Bengston took and arranged in careful sequence. As for the music, Marshall will improvise on keyboard and synthesizer over tapes of the actual sounds of Alcatraz: first the foghorns, waves, and sea gulls of the Bay, then the sound of Marshall's Balinese flute in the prison's sonorous old reception center, then footsteps down the

stone corridors, and the clanging shut of the heavy cell doors. Marshall emphasizes what a **silent** place Alcatraz is - in its first seven years as a federal prison, prisoners were not allowed to talk even during meals - and it is against this background of silence that the loud slamming of doors must be imagined in all its depressing finality. For Marshall, Alcatraz is a 20th-century ruin, and the tapes uncover layer after layer of the place in metaphorically archaeological fashion.

If this sounds too depressing, one should keep in mind that the slides and natural sounds are contrapuntally set against the spacious and mellow beauty of Marshall's music. Marginally describable as minimalist, Marshall's music is very influenced by the Far East, and displays a certain Zen-inspired emptiness. It is reminiscent of the music of his fellow Californian Harold Budd in its long, slow expanses of beautifully luxurious sounds, but it is more poignantly melancholy, and more structurally interesting as well. It seems fitting that Marshall has performed throughout Scandinavia, including Iceland (in addition to Western Europe and the U.S.), for the introverted temperament of his work makes one think of him as a sort of postmodern Sibelius.

**Alcatraz** will make its Chicago premiere Friday, November 30, at 8:30 PM in the Performance Space of the School of the Art Institute of Chicago, Columbus at Jackson. The program is 40 minutes long. Tickets are \$5, \$3 for students and seniors, and available at the door. Further information: 443-3710.

- Kyle Gann

To hell with shopping day long, all weekend annual **Anthropology** today and tomorrow others (Indians, Esk blacks, to name a few days, \$7 for one day museum is at Roosevelt 9410.

**Dada and Surrealism** today and continues of Contemporary Art symposium on the e Hotel, 909 N. Michigan seniors, and student for tickets to the Dec Site Cafe, but still ro Kurt Schwitters, Jan 2697 for information

Performance artists present their own st Anthony Adler calle **House on the Teller** at the all-new, impro Superior. Admission Info at 467-6550.

The Oriana Singers c a program of poetry **Drive the Cold Win** Saviour, 630 W. Full December 8, at 8 PM in Evanston). \$7; m

The **King David's J** commemorates Jew everything from the papermaking, callig runs from 10 to 4 at Community Center, \$1, with information

The Chicago Religio behind today's perfor **Salvador** - created a who have toured coe London with the pie apparently. The play the Peoples Church,

The **Holiday/Kwan** and continues throu Community Art Cent also scheduled for th from 2 to 3. Free: 37