

Richard Lerman "Fences-Borders"

By [Sue Peters](#)

Sound artist Richard Lerman's "Fences-Borders" is a quiet, stark installation. A long bougainvillea vine twisted and dried into a looping fence bisects the small room, cleverly mirroring the shape of razor-wire fences found along borders, right down to the menacing thorns. Lerman's fence, however, is embedded with transducers that emit eerie sounds recorded at various locations along the Arizona, California, and Mexico borders. U.S. Geological Survey maps on the walls show the unnaturally straight lines that divide and define these regions, illustrating the artifice of politically imposed boundaries. A video screen displays footage from sparsely populated points along these desert "borderlands." What is the difference between an "illegal alien" and a "refugee"? A fistful of dirt from Arizona and a handful of soil from Mexico? What goes on here? These are the sorts of questions Lerman poses in his piece, without overtly stating any of them. In these videos and recordings there are no voices of midnight immigrants or border patrol, whispers, or even footsteps. That absence is intentional. Instead, there are the haunting sounds of wind and scuttling debris. Lerman's focus is the place, the symbols, and the inanimate fences themselves, which he sees as witnesses to many bitter moments in world history. "I have recorded fences at many sites: internment camps in California, concentration camps in Germany and Poland, sites along the Chilean/Argentine border where persons 'disappeared,'" explains Lerman. "For me, these fences witnessed events. I hope to record the presence (and present state) of the fence while also hoping some of what this place/fence has witnessed comes through." "Fences-Borders" invokes these ghosts most effectively. **Jack Straw New Media Gallery, 4261 Roosevelt Way N.E., 206-634-0919, www.jackstraw.org. 9 a.m.-6 p.m. Mon.-Fri. Ends April 28.**



Richard Lerman

EXTRA INFO

Richard Lerman Q&A

An interview with the creator of "Fences-Borders."

the Stranger

Seattle's Only Music Section • Apr 20 - Apr 26, 2006

Fences-Borders

runs through Fri April 28 (Jack Straw Productions, 4261 Roosevelt Way NE, 634-0919), Mon-Fri 9 am-6 pm, free.



The Score

FENCES-BORDERS

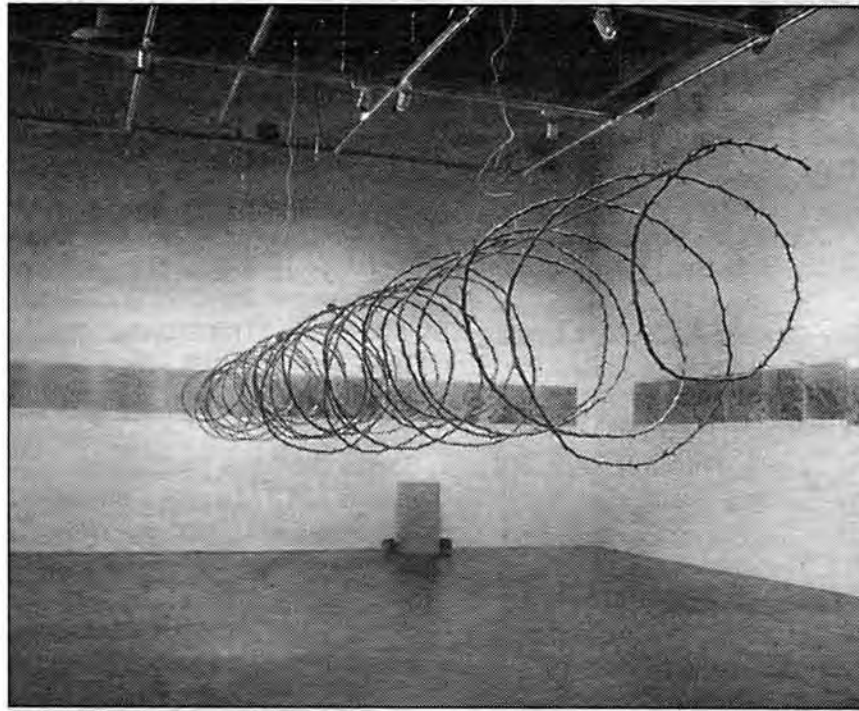
BY CHRISTOPHER DELAURENTI

Richard Lerman's installation *Fences-Borders* is a prime example of phonography, one of the most interesting musical movements in recent years, fueled by the profusion of inexpensive, high-quality MiniDisc recorders along with affordable (and sometimes homemade) microphones. Indeed, anyone who has recently researched or built contact microphones probably found Lerman's website and downloaded his helpful PDF schematics.

The essence of phonography entails capturing and transforming field recordings into a listening experience that blurs the boundary between music and everyday sounds. For *Fences-Borders*, Lerman placed piezo disk contact mics—those stiff, mass-manufactured brass wafers that serve as buzzers in doorbells and smoke alarms—on fences, walls, and amid vegetation along the Arizona/Mexico border. The Mexican state that abuts Arizona? Sonora.

Eerie clanks, sonorous moans, passing trucks, and street ambiance emanate from two sets of speakers. One ordinary pair rests near the ceiling; the other, a set of contact mics sliced and shimmed into a massive coil of bougainvillea, rattle and fizz, transforming the fearsome vegetation (Derek Walcott: "...the barbed wire of bougainvillea thorns...") into a speaker, as if the thorns could talk.

Lerman's room-sized piece cannily exploits the limitations of the gallery. Passing cars outside mesh with the accompanying square of video along one wall; daylight from the street illuminates the sepia-saturated aerial maps that ring the walls; and the dirt-brown carpet, an omnipresent sign of corporate blandness and indecision, is a discreet bourgeois simulacrum of the ruddy earth tramped by migrants every day and night. But *Fences-Borders* mainly succeeds by exposing the music of everyday sound that lurks along a dusty, disdained border.



JOSEF WOODARD PHOTO

From "Fences-Borders," Richard Lerman's art installation at Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum.

Sociosensory zone

SOUND ARTIST RICHARD LERMAN DEALS WITH TENSIONS ON THE BORDER

By Josef Woodard
NEWS-PRESS CORRESPONDENT

It doesn't take much imagination or insider knowledge to understand the underlying message and hot topic of Richard Lerman's new art installation, "Fences-Borders," at Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum. By bringing together wrap-around aerial photographs in the gallery, video clips, field recordings and a thorny, coiling vine acting as surrogate barbed-wire fencing, the Phoenix-based artist has focused attention on the troubled Arizona/Mexico border.

Our thoughts almost instinctively drift to the inherent social and philosophical conflicts involved with borders, immigration and nationalism. "Fences-Borders" was first presented in April 2004 at the Arizona State University West, where Lerman teaches, but its message has clear relevance in California, where the rights of immigrants and would-be immigrants is a loaded topic.

ART REVIEW

FENCES-BORDERS

When: Through July 31

Where: Santa Barbara Contemporary Arts Forum, upstairs in Paseo Nuevo

Gallery hours: 11 a.m. to 5 p.m.

Tuesday through Saturday,
noon to 5 p.m. Sunday

Information: 966-5373

gallery.

Sound art, which came of age in the 1970s, has slipped out of sight (and sound), but remains a fascinating frontier, a netherworld just off to the side of both the world of fine art and experimental music. Of the arts, sound and music remain the most abstract media, and music is merely organized sound, which makes Lerman a musician, as well.

As a practitioner and teacher, Lerman was involved in electronic music in the '60s, and then sound art and performance art in later years.

Locally, he last presented his work, involving bicycle wheels and enlightened sonic tomfoolery, at the Santa Barbara Museum of Art in the '80s.

And yet, in some strange way, the sociopolitical layers of meaning and contemplation can amount to so much surface "noise" in his piece. Lerman's deepest gift is not as a political artist, per se, but as an artist who has long understood the power of sound, especially when carefully interwoven with other visual and spatial elements.

In "Fences-Borders," the gurgling, ping-pong and droning sounds—ambient field recordings captured on the actual border zone he portrays here—eerily affect our sense of space and perception in the gallery. They're not merely decorative, but descriptive and poetic sounds, coloring the space from different vantage points mapped out by speakers carefully plotted in the

Then as now, Lerman has used small, surreptitious piezo discs to record and transmit sound, in this case, attached to the spiraling length of bougainvillea vine, which serves as the most imposing sculptural element in "Fences-Borders." Suspended on a metal rod in the gallery, the spiky, barbed-wire fence-like coil twists its way through the room and is fitted with piezo discs to transmit and capture sounds.

Encircling — and somehow fencing off — CAF's main gallery are numerous public domain aerial photographs of the border, generated by the Department of the Treasury and the U.S. Customs Service for less than scientific or

LERMAN / Page 16 ►

academic purposes. A partially hidden video monitor shows the desert area's actual terrain in close-ups and long shots. As an added touch, a red flashing beam suggests surveillance and an electric fence, with its sense of danger and enforcement.

All these various aspects of the installation converge in a blend of impressionistic suggestion and concrete reportage of the scene. But the crowning touch and artistic center is the presence of Lerman's three-dimensionally dispersed "found sounds." These represent

real time data from the site, and create an evocative quasimusic.

His sound art paints — or at least completes — a strong mental picture of desolation, desert aridity and the menace of forbidding metal twining through a no-man's land. Well-placed ideas in sound can do that. ■

From Aquarius Records Website

Japan's EM records strikes again. Without a doubt, the coolest, weirdest, most amazing re-issue label EVER!! We could list again all the killer reissues we've carried and reviewed and raved about over the past year or two, but we've done that in pretty much every other EM review, so do a label search for EM Records on the AQ website, and prepare to have your mind blown! Another long lost, long sought after holy grail of sorts, dug up and dusted off and beautifully presented by EM, Travelon Gamelon, a piece by Richard Lerman for amplified bicycles! Performed on stage with upturned bikes, but also, performed on the streets, the bikes mic'ed and each with it's own tiny amplifier broadcasting the various sounds of the bike rolling along streets, the metallic flutter of spokes, the sounds of passing cars, squeaking brakes, whipping wind, all woven into the organic whole. A piece of moving music, constantly shifting, obviously improvised and random, and so totally wonderful.

There are two versions of the piece, which has been performed for years all over the world, one is the concert version, which features musicians on stage, with upside down bikes, using various implements with which to strike, rub and bow the different parts of the bicycles, these are the versions that are the most gamelan like, a gorgeous assemblage of metallic clangs and percussive clamor. From dreamy and spare, to cacophonous and wildly chaotic. A sort of junkyard gamelan, definitely clattery but also strangely melodic.

But it's the other versions, the Promenade versions, that are the most exciting. These pieces are basically field recordings of cyclists on mic'ed and amplified bicycles, every sound their riding creates being broadcast through little speakers affixed to the bikes, and recorded by Lerman! So not only is this group of bikes creating this gorgeous whirring mechanical ambience, that sound is also travelling through city streets, a self contained performance of sorts, a strange little cloud of metallic shimmer and buzzing mechanical ambience performed for all passersby. It's also cool to hear the organizers' instructions, children laughing and playing, running alongside, ringing their own bike bells, you can hear Lerman giving orders to the cyclists as they prepare to begin the piece, and various warnings like "Watch out for the metal!" Street cleaners, random cars, voices and footsteps, all a sort of organic backdrop to the divine slow shifting whir the bicycles produce. Constantly shifting, and changing, depending on the speed of the bikes, the direction of the amplifiers the placement of the mics, the people or cars, amazing. It reminds us a bit of the Taj Mahal Travellers in fact, TMT's method of broadcasting their sounds out of loudspeakers, and then recapturing them with microphones placed at various distances, well, Travelon Gamelon is almost like a mobile Taj Mahal Travellers. So cool!

This collection would be well worth it for disc one alone, 5 lengthy excerpts from various performances of Travelon Gamelon, but also included is a second disc, of various other pieces Lerman composed and performed over the years spanning 1964-1986.

"For Two Of Them" is a soundscape of old records, a spring reverb, and manipulated tapes, very dark and dreamy, a fuzzy, multilayered drone shot through with streaks of metallic shimmer and sounding not all that different than contemporary noismakers like the Starving Weirdos, the Skaters and the like. In fact, most of the pieces on disc two, could just as easily come from some super limited cd-r we just managed to track down. "Sections For Screen, Performers And Audience" features the score presented as a film projected on a screen, the performers face the screen with their backs to the audience, and their improvisations are electronically modified into a gorgeous bit of twisted Twentieth Century. "End Of The Line" is a very dramatic tape piece based on the deaths of close friends, and is another piece that sounds presciently modern, huge dramatic swells, very melancholic and resonant, huge fields of drone and buzz. Even tracks like "Soundspot", a piece for amplified 40 foot Slinky, with its gorgeously resonant creaking and moaning and whistling metallic buzz, and "Music For Plinky And Straw", a piece for bendy straw and reverb, creating a dense field of abstract melodies, crystalline shimmer and percussive chimes, sound less Twentieth Century and more like any number of modern free noise abstract drone releases! This is the sort of collection we wish had been expanded to 4 discs, or 8 discs!! We want more.

But even with two discs there is plenty here to keep you busy and your ears full and happy for sure. Two hours plus of remarkable sound, a massive booklet, with tons of photos, liner notes in both English and Japanese, as well as notes on each individual piece, but also included are a rare video of Lerman performing his piece for bendy straw, as well as scores for several pieces, and a killer photo guide to building a tape delay out of two walkmans!! SO SO SO RECOMMENDED!

The perfect record to bring music nerds and bike nerds together (most of us here are both!)...

MPEG Stream: "Promenade Version [Boston, MA, July 2, 1979]"

MPEG Stream: "Concert Version [Pittsburg, PA, June 6, 1981]"

MPEG Stream: "For Two Of Them [1964]"

MPEG Stream: "Sections For Screen, Performers And Audience [1975]"

le cd de la semaine

semaine du 16 au 26 mars 2007

 [imprimer](#)

 [envoyer à ...](#)

Richard Lerman

Music Of Richard Lerman feat. Travelon Gamelon (Music for Bicycles) (em records / Métamkine)

Le label japonais em records publie une remarquable anthologie des travaux de l'artiste sonore, performer et cinéaste expérimental Richard Lerman. Cette parution est un événement car certains de ces enregistrements, couvrant la période 1964 à 1987, n'avaient pas été réédités depuis leur première parution chez Folkways en 1983. Dans ses oeuvres, Lerman, que ses admirateurs surnomment le "piezo-electric guru", a généralisé l'emploi de microphones pour rendre audible des phénomènes sonores difficilement perceptibles, comme dans Travelon Gamelon ou Music for Bicycles qui, comme son nom l'indique, introduit au monde sonore enchanteur de la « petite reine ».



Dès ses débuts, Richard Lerman choisit de s'affranchir de manière radicale des traditions musicales en vigueur. Sur *Two of Them*, enregistré en 1964, il crée des effets très planants de spatialisation du son – longs glissements tonaux couplés à de subtiles variations de volume – à partir d'une technologie rudimentaire aujourd'hui complètement dépassée. Comme d'autres artistes sonores de sa génération (Alvin

Lucier, Ellen Fullman, David Tudor), Lerman a la volonté de dépasser les limites sensorielles pour pouvoir donner à entendre ce que l'oreille humaine ne perçoit pas. Cette démarche va le conduire à multiplier l'utilisation de capteurs piézoélectriques, achetés ou de fabrication artisanale. Ce terme caractérise certains matériaux, tels les cristaux de quartz ou certaines céramiques, capables de produire un courant électrique lorsqu'ils sont soumis à des effets mécaniques, et à l'inverse de se transformer lorsqu'ils sont traversés par un courant électrique. *Travelon Gamelon* ou *Music for Bicycles*, dont le nom renvoie à la fois au voyage et au gamelan indonésien, existe en version promenade ou concert. Tout au long de ses voyages en Asie, Lerman s'est attaché à une véritable phonographie des différents paysages traversés, grâce aux vibrations de sa bicyclette, utilisant celle-ci comme un microphone. Cinq versions, enregistrées à Boston, Pittsburgh, Amsterdam et Wellington, sont ici présentées. Les versions promenade sont les plus impressionnantes, tant par le nombre de participants réunis (quelquefois plus d'une vingtaine), que par l'étrange jubilation sonore qui semble s'être emparée de cette armada de bicyclettes folles. Et pour ceux qui voudraient pénétrer plus avant les arcanes de l'œuvre, le cd offre en bonus la partition ainsi qu'un film du concert promenade de Vancouver en 1987.

Gérard Nicollet

> Pour en savoir plus

<http://www.emrecords.net/>



Lerman, Richard - "Music of Richard Lerman" - [Em Records]

The first listen made me think HOW do I interpret this? I mean I hadn't listened to this before? So I give it a listen. WOW. WHAT A RUSH. This is almost 2 hours of Manic music created by a local genius.

Richard Lerman(1944) is a San Francisco native who began working with electronic music in 1963, at age 19. He has taught at Universitys all over America. He has used sounds of bicycles and common everyday items combined with state of the art (for what ever era) electronic equiptment to create some outstanding sounds.

This is a 2 cd set. Music done from 1964-1987.

Travelon Gamelon? A gamelon orchestra is a large group of percussive instruments usually metallic from South East Asia. The name is a play on words. This is a auditory soundscape that is very spacious and cosmic.

This is a BIG departure from music I have listen to BUT I have really enjoyed it the more I listen. The pieces were created for Music festivals and debuted at those various festivals. Most of the tracks are long but there is one 2 minute track and a couple of 5-6 minute tracks on CD1. These panoramic sounds are flowing moving pieces. The piano, flute and metallic sounds create both music and a sound FX that is amazing. On CD2 track 2 Sections for Screen, performers and Audience is a 9 minute journey from music to FX and back again. It has a classical hint to it yet has a jazz feel as well. END of the LINE some recent dealings with DEATH has an ambient sound almost operatic voice combonation that was worth listening to again and again. A 14 plus minute journey that sounds AWESOME insurround sound. It is very much like classical in there are 2-3 second gaps in the piece that are segues into another tip. Perfect for potting down but let this one roll out. It is incredible.

I can hear this on MANY KFJC shows. Cheech, Goodwrench. Cinderaura, Outlier..

This 2 cd set was dedicated to every one who rides bicycles.

This is a cosmic auditory trip into hallucinations and fascinations. I highly recommend this. Either for awesome sound FX on a show or as stand alone pieces played alone.

Reviewed by sailordave on March 8, 2007 at 5:28 pm

<http://www.panpot.ca/reviews/renderAlbumReview.php?id=98>



Richard Lerman

(Music Of) 1964-1987 (EM Records)



Literally a riot, Lerman's 2CD *Travelon Gamelon (Music for Bicycles)* used real bicycles as musical instruments, occasionally emitting sounds like Gamelon music from south-east Asia.

The whole first CD of *Music of Richard Lerman*, a retrospective of composer, sound collector and inventor Richard Lerman's music, is comprised of performances of just one piece. As a part of EM Records' "Sounds, Reality & The Environment Series", the multiple performances of *Travelon Gamelon (Music for Bicycles)* show how the composition is highly dependant on the performance space to not only add texture and tone, but also shape much of the length and structure.

The voice of Richard Lerman pops up almost immediately on the first

"Promenade Version" of the piece, fine tuning some of the performance aspects and reminding the riders — and presumably listeners — to have fun. Taking the traditional style of Gamelan — a Javanese music with driving rhythms based on tuned, percussive instruments — and matching it with his own predilection for attaching small microphones to a variety of commonplace objects (coffee cans, straws, fences, etc.), Lerman outfits the prepared bicycles with microphones and loudspeakers to create a moving orchestra of amplified percussionists. While they ride through the city, the performance is recorded by Lerman, who is biking with them, recording the rhythmic sound of the spokes, as well as the spectators, riders and surrounding city.

The "Concert Version" — generally performed later in the same day — is for three bicycles flipped upside-down, with one player striking each wheel's spokes as it spins. Each bicycle solos and then plays an improvisation with the other two, creating a focus of tumbrel variation and tumult. The instructions for the players are also made in both standard musical notation and in picture, showing how the spokes should be played over time, which allowed both classically trained and self taught musicians to perform the piece. While these versions have a more consistent level of bicycle sound, both are highly dependent on the performance space with the sound of cars, people, street grills and pavement entering in regularly.

Disc two is mostly electroacoustic compositions for a concert environment where soundscapes are built out of the mixture of acoustical instruments, tape loops and live processing of the space. With the exception of the "Music for Plinky and Straw" — which includes a microphone placed inside a straw — many of the sounds veer far closer to traditional electroacoustics than the "Travelon Gamelon" performances, showcasing melody and orchestrated atmosphere. The finely crafted packaging includes a 34-page booklet with original liner notes and photographs of Lerman's other performances — including using a photograph as a microphone and amplifying tuning forks, and CD-Rom extras including original scores and videos.

www.emrecords.net

Alexander Buckiewicz-Smith

Lerman presenta sus experimentos sonoros

Anabelle Paulín Lara

Richard Lerman ofreció el taller de experimentación sonora la tarde de ayer en las instalaciones del Centro Mexicano para la Música y las Artes Sonoras ubicado en la Casa de la Cultura de nuestra ciudad.

El estadounidense compartió gran parte del repertorio que constituye su material, el cual está integrado por videos, sonidos e instalaciones que ha realizado a lo largo de su trayectoria en este ámbito, el cual comenzó durante la década de los 60.

Actualmente el artista sonoro cuenta con un amplio catálogo de proyectos en los que ha jugado con diversos sonidos del entorno natural y de algunos elementos. Lerman habló sobre varios de ellos como por ejemplo las composiciones generadas al tocar los rayos de las ruedas de las bicicletas amplificadas por medio del uso de micrófonos comunes, herramientas que captaron la sincronía y el ritmo de dichos sonidos basados en particulares partituras previamente escritas por el artista, en las que describe los compases y tiempos con los que debe ejecutarse para su correcta interpretación.

En este sentido, Richard Lerman comentó también que los micrófonos comúnmente utilizados poseen cualidades extraordinarias, en cuanto a la amplificación de pequeños sonidos, pero por otra parte también existen ciertas características que los distorsionan o que intervienen de manera que se vuelve difuso; es a partir de esto que mostró el transductor piezoeléctrico, un dispositivo diseñado y construido por Lerman utilizado a manera de micrófono, ya que considera que "es sumamente



Alfredo Desgarennes

El músico estadounidense mostró a los estudiantes de Michoacán sus experimentos en el mundo sonoro.

sensible y consigue captar sonidos que son sumamente suaves para nuestros oídos, sonidos que no se consiguen percibir de manera común".

El estadounidense afirmó que él no es el autor original de dicho dispositivo, sin embargo es uno de los principales artistas que ha impulsado su utilización y explicó que "estos discos además de poseer grandes cualidades sensitivas, resultan muy baratos y duran mucho. Yo tengo varios años utilizando los mismos dispositivos y estos continúan

funcionando".

Después de mostrar este transductor al público, presentó algunos videos en los que se aprecian los sonidos generados a partir de esto: el soplo del viento y las gotas de la lluvia entre otros que ha capturado a lo largo de varios viajes por distintos lugares del mundo colocando el dispositivo en diversas superficies.

Richard Lerman, que ha realizado diversos proyectos en comunión con su esposa, comentó que dichos trabajos han sido ideados bajo un contexto social y

político, como en el caso de *Los desaparecidos*, instalación en la que hacen referencia a los desaparecidos de Chile y para ello escribieron los nombres en delgadas hojas de madera colgadas del techo acompañadas por audio, entre otras interesantes instalaciones presentadas en varios países del mundo.

Además de la charla, el joven público presente observó una presentación en vivo en la que 2 músicos tocaron los rayos de una bicicleta, de acuerdo con el sistema creado por el artista. ■



Richard Lerman en Morelia

Por Anabelle Paulín Lara



El Centro Mexicano para la Música y las Artes Sonoras (CMMAS) continúa con su esquema de actividades y, en esta ocasión, el estadounidense Richard Lerman, profesor de la Universidad de Arizona impartirá un curso denominado Taller de técnicas de arte sonoro.

Lerman ha dedicado gran parte de su vida a la grabación de sonidos ambientales por medio de transductores, dispositivos capaces de transformar o convertir un determinado tipo de energía de entrada, en otra diferente de salida, además de registrar la información de entornos físicos.

En este caso, el artista utiliza traductores piezoeléctricos considerados como un tipo de bocinas que generan sonidos a partir de energía eléctrica. Richard Lerman utiliza dicha herramienta como un micrófono o transductor electroacústico tan sensible que consigue captar las vibraciones sonoras existentes en el elemento que desee escuchar. El resultado es una serie de sonidos inimaginables como el movimiento de la sabia dentro de las plantas, las vibraciones de los hilos de las telarañas, etcétera.

"Imaginé una serie indefinida de exploraciones sonoras que debían ser grabadas, fundamentalmente, utilizando transductores y micrófonos de construcción propia. Pensé que si la experiencia auditiva humana tenía su fundamento en las vibraciones producidas sobre la superficie del tímpano, también podíamos experimentar el sonido como una percepción/grabación a través de otros tímpanos". El resultado es una extraordinaria colección de 17 piezas que logra transmitir auditivamente minuciosas situaciones, materiales, texturas y fauna descubiertas a lo largo de esos viajes.

El uso de estos transductores como "otro tipo de tímpanos" conforma un repertorio de sus grabaciones -efectuadas en su mayor parte en diferentes espacios del entorno natural- particulares y únicos.

"Me considero un artista sonoro. Todo el material que produzco ya sea video, instalación o performance está enfocado principalmente al sonido. Empecé a trabajar en esto desde 1963 y debido a que en aquel entonces no había mucho equipo para realizar esto, aprendí a hacer mi propio equipo y con el tiempo esto me ha ayudado de tal manera que mi trabajo ha tomado un rumbo distinto", explicó Lerman, quien hoy, a partir de las 16:00 horas, mostrará a los asistentes parte de su material, tanto visual como auditivo, y el funcionamiento de su equipo, más una obra reciente.

Richard Lerman ha realizado diversos e interesantes proyectos con múltiples enfoques, desde sonidos generados a partir del aterrizaje y demás movimientos de insectos en ligeras cuerdas -en su caso- de arpas de viento, hasta los existentes a partir de vibraciones de los alambres de cercas fronterizas conformando obras con una orientación social y política.

"Al venir a este lugar pensé en utilizar mi equipo original y combinarlo con la computadora para así obtener nuevos y distintos resultados sonoros", afirmó. El curso será impartido en las instalaciones del CMMAS, localizadas en la Casa de la Cultura de nuestra ciudad sin costo alguno. Para mayor información sobre Richard Lerman y su trabajo realizado, consultar la siguiente dirección electrónica: www.west.asu.edu/rlerman.

Derechos Reservados: Diario Provincia