

Transducer Series Films of Richard Lerman

Museum of Modern Art; Big as Life: An American History of 8 mm; November 18, 1999

The concept for these films came about when asking myself the question: what would the world sound like if my eardrum were made of _____ ? This was a direct outgrowth from my music composition and performance work dating from the early 1960's. I had begun to work with piezo electric devices then, but in the 1970's, approached this more seriously after composing Travelon Gamelon for amplified bicycles. The piezo transducer, usually used as the ubiquitous 'loudspeaker' in beepers and the like, also has the amazing good grace to be an incredible contact microphone. It has two virtues: It's sensitive; and it's inexpensive. I have purchased them from nearly every electronic surplus store I have been in and am constantly finding new ways to use them. The ones I use in these films are often the same devices I use in performances and installations.

I began to shoot films using super 8 sound film because it had a better frequency response than 16mm optical sound tracks. I often experimented with listening to the difference between film shot at 18 fps and 24 fps. While traveling, I decided to shoot at 18 fps because a cartridge of super 8 lasted a minute longer than at 24 fps. When I made prints to super 8, I was not happy with either the quality of the picture or the sound, and decided that I would screen these films as originals. They have been screened probably 60 + times or more, and there is wear and tear.

I also shot several pieces as long ago as 1984 using 3/4 inch video. I was less happy with these pieces because the sound quality was inferior to super 8. As sound in video improved, and as super 8 film became increasingly more difficult to find and to get processed, I did cease working in super 8. The last film in the Transducer series was shot in Eindhoven, the Netherlands in 1988. Excerpts from these films were included on my CD, **WITHIN EARREACH: SONIC JOURNEYS**, now out of print.

11: **A Copper Strip on Fire** 3 min 1984

A 14 meter long strip of copper burglar alarm tape suspended between 2 pitchforks filmed at dusk. Joshua and Jesse Lerman applied the propane torch to the adhesive.

12: **On Board the SS Edgerton** w/ Brass Screen Tube, a Blue Ribbon Microphone, and a Copper Screen 10 min. 1984

Near Cape Cod while on an outing with Sound/Image/Events to play music to humpback whales using underwater speakers, the whales did not sing back. On the return to Boston I wired the boat with these microphones

20: **2 Square Microphones in the same Month** 5 min 1985

In March of 85, I filmed the stainless steel square in Boston on a very cold, windy and bright day. The piece of steel is much alive with sound and has its own incredible energy. That same month, I filmed my friends Charly and Natalie Di Costanzo in the redwoods of Eureka, CA using a blue-gel microphone.

25: **Newfoundland Transducer Series: St. Johns Harbor & Port Kerwin w/ screens, wind-harps & amplified pine trees** 11 min 1986

In Newfoundland for the 1986 Sound Symposium Fest, I stayed at the home of Isabelle St. John and Paul Steffler on the Harbor (just below the hill, Signal Tower, where Marconi made the first wireless broadcast back to Europe). Using transducers made from window screens and nylon cord, and amplifying the tall grass and weeds, I shot several cartridges of Super 8 in very windy weather. The last one was shot in a gentle rain and the rainfall 'plucked' the windharps as it fell, while I filmed a fisherman preparing his boat.

The middle section of this film was shot in a small fishing village Port Kerwin, about 60 miles south of St. John's, at the studio of artist Don Wright. Here, I amplified pine trees, set up windharps and recorded the gulls overlooking a bay beneath me. This film is dedicated to the memory of Don Wright, his courage and his work as an artist.

33: **Sunrise at Yuraygir Natl. Park, NSW** 3 1/2 min 1986

A hand-held metal microphone in the Northern part of NSW.

46. **A red-earth microphone by Mona Higuchi, w/ a butterfly**
3 1/2 min 1987

In 1988, Mona Higuchi and I traveled to Argentina and Peru. This film was made at Iguazu Falls using a drawing that Mona was making as the sound source.

56. **Pisac, Peru w/ Thorns and Windharp** 3 1/2 min 1987

High in the Andes, the ruins at Pisac are not as 'spectacular' as they are at Machu Picchu, but the stone work is finer.