

MATT HECKERT – MECHANICAL SOUND ARTIST

Matt Heckert has been working as a performance-sound artist and an engineer since 1978. He is one of the founding directors of Survival Research Laboratories (SRL), a trio of artists including Mark Pauline and Eric Werner, that pioneered the use of machines, robots and pyrotechnics in performance art. His contribution to SRL's spectacular machine performances included the creation of various remote and radio controlled robot vehicles as well as the creation of elaborate and innovative soundtracks incorporating everything from industrial noise to dialogue from b-movies. SRL staged performances in San Francisco, Seattle, Los Angeles, New York City, Copenhagen Denmark and Amsterdam Holland.

In 1989 he conceived and developed a group of sound producing machines know as the Mechanical Sound Orchestra. With Mechanical Sound Orchestra performances all sound is produced by mechanical action of the machines with no use of sampled or pre-recorded sound. Heckert utilizes machine forms in such a way as to suggest a degree of personality and even dramatic interaction among the various moving elements. Rather than conveying the utopian vision characteristic of the modern machine aesthetic, however, Heckert endows his sculptures with simple motor functions that suggest hysterical or Sisyphian behavior. Heckert performed with Mechanical Sound Orchestra throughout the United States and Europe in festivals and galleries including the "Ultima Oslo Contemporary Music Festival" Oslo, Norwa; Germans Van Eck Gallery NYC; "Sonambiente-Festival for Eyes and Ears" Berlin, Germany; "Performing Bodies and Smart Machines Series" Whitney Museum of American Art, NYC.

For the past several years he has been concentrating on sound installations of multiples: "Birds" 1999 at the Yerba Buena Center for the Arts and "Rotifiers" 2003 Catherine Clark Gallery San Francisco. "Birds" was a computer controlled sound installation of 26 identical machines made up of a thin sheet of aluminum, 2' x 7', and a servo motor.

Heckert has won several art grants and awards for his work as a sound artist including:

- 1997 Prix ARS Electronica- Linz, Austria, Golden Nica for Computer Music
- 1996 Prix ARS Electronica - Linz, Austria, Distinction for Computer Music
- 1991 Western States Art Federation/NEA Sculpture fellowship
- 1991 New Langton Arts/NEA, San Francisco, CA Interarts Grant
- 1988 Golden Reel Award for soundtrack to film "A Bitter Message of Hopeless Grief"

Heckert has taught at the San Francisco Art Institute, San Francisco State University and University of California, Davis. Currently, Heckert is helping to build a chocolate factory in San Francisco.