# Shawn Decker - Artistic Statement

My work is positioned at the intersection of music composition, the visual arts, and performance, using physical and electronic media to investigate, simulate and praise the natural (and unnatural) worlds. While I was educated as a composer of both instrumental and computer-generated music, my work has gradually evolved from primarily performance and tape-based music composition to installations intended for galleries or other spaces, as well as to interactive performance works. Moreover, as a boy raised in rural Pennsylvania who has become a passionate bird-watcher as an adult, my fascination with how the non-human world seems and sounds has apparently set me upon a certain path.

My new work focuses on the processes found in nature and in other large and complex systems, and the potential of computer programs to model or simulate such systems within time-based artworks. I have also been quite interested in creating media installations which are physical and tactile in nature, and which are grounded in objects. These environments are integrated with the gallery spaces they are presented in, creating immersive situations echoing those found in the real world.

Within my most recent interactive installations and performances, patterns of behavior are fixed and defined only by the algorithmic process specified within the computer program embedded within a micro-controller which is typically part of each work. These algorithmic processes are designed to simulate *the manner of operation* of physical and natural systems. This ongoing investigation of computer-mediated processes - both as a means of producing work and more recently as the form of the work itself - has been central to my interest in the use of computers for creative purposes.

I have become increasing dissatisfied with the electronic production of sound via conventional speakers (stereophony) and have been investigating the use of mechanical and other "direct" sound production techniques that may be controlled by a computer program. These techniques include the use of small motors to strike metal objects, piano wires, etc. and are often kinetic in nature. Due to the physical nature of these works the distinctions between sonic, visual, and spatial elements begin to blur. Another related approach I am taking is the investigation of the use of speakers in a more "raw" mode than usually used in stereophony – as kinetic electro-mechanical devices that may be clicked, and buzzed together in sufficient quantities and complexity to form spatially immersive environments.

The use of simple mechanical devices such as surplus motors, inexpensive piezoelectric speakers, etc. also certainly has a modestly subversive anti-high-tech element to it that pervades my entire aesthetic. Rather than being interested in creating complex "high tech" systems (for instance, complex robotic systems) I instead focus on the complexity of interactions between many simple, even common, machines. In other words, I am interested in building robotic systems in an environmental /sociological manner.

In addition to creating sound installations, I also frequently work collaboratively with a number of artists, creating visual and sonic installations. These artists include my long-time Finnish collaborator Jan-Erik Andersson, with whom I have created many public art installations, permanent architectural installations, as well as gallery pieces. I have also worked more recently with the artist Anne Wilson, creating multiple channel video and sound installations, as well as with the artist Arthur Liou. While in these installations I often use speakers and work in a more conventional media-based mode, my concerns with natural process and patterns of behavior, soundscape, and the spatial immersion within a field of sound remain central to me.