

michael sheridan
videosonic art and documentary films

artist statement

We drove for two days and nights up dry riverbeds and over high rocky mountain passes lined with long rows of bombed military vehicles. The patches of ordered objects in the treeless land below turned out to be fields of gravestones. Coming around a large pile of boulders in this seemingly uninhabitable African no-where-ness, we found two men crouching in the sand. They were wrapped in rags and clutched walking sticks and listened to handheld shortwave radios. The sounds from their radios reconnected us with the world after days of isolation and disorientation.

This experience, which I had while producing a documentary in the highlands of Eritrea, was the catalyst for *Distant Views*, a sound installation created for the Boston Cyberarts Festival. A wall of windows was covered with the exposed electronics, antennas and micro-computers required to search for and broadcast multiple shortwave radio signals. Languages and cultural sounds from around the world filled the environment when triggered by motion detectors. At any one moment one might hear, for example, the day's news in Korean, Christian proselytizing and Persian music all affected by interference in the atmosphere.

As a new media artist, my video, sound, installation and performance art borrow from my documentary experiences. My documentaries tell stories about people in crisis, investigating the causes of hunger and poverty and analyzing the efforts made to solve the problems. In my artistic practice I go beyond the economic and political actualities to interpret the emotional and psychological aspects of how people cope with life, finding the tipping point between stability and instability, order and disorder.