

## **Artist's Statement**

### **Jordan Bartee**

**When I was a young boy I had the misfortune of being utterly obsessed with a topic that my peers found variously boring, perplexing, or simply vaporous: boxes. Specifically, boxes inside of other boxes, arranged in an infinite string of self-similar, recursive splendor. I remember spending long hours after school organizing my substantial collection of boxes by size from largest to smallest, placing each box inside its predecessor. I wasn't sure exactly what was so fascinating about the activity except that it seemed to get at the heart of some profundity that I couldn't quite access verbally, but seemed persistent and true none-the-less.**

**It wasn't until many years later that I began gaining the vocabulary necessary to talk about loops, recursions, and feedback. By that time I had already decided that I was going to be an artist in some capacity, and found myself by a strange twist of fate heavily involved in the sonic arts. As with many artists, it seemed natural to me to begin by revisiting my most haunting childhood preoccupation. And so the boxes inside of boxes were reborn through the womb of music technology.**

**My work explores electronic feedback systems and recursive networks as they pertain to issues surrounding perception, memory, identity, and consciousness. I work with hardware, software, audio and video, and try my best to construct a unique, handcrafted system for each project. The desire to avoid using pre-made systems in my work has led me into various disciplines including electronics, hardware hacking and modification, DSP programming and artificial intelligence research.**

**In my essay *The Machine Doesn't Care* I discuss the interrelationship between technological obsolescence and the nature of identity as intrinsically bound up with memory**

**structures. I assert that our most ubiquitous technological object –the computer in all its various forms—is largely analogous to the human brain as pertains to the manner in which it stores, recalls, and restores memory. But computers are not built to do feedback, a process that seems to be at the very heart of human perception and identity. By taking machines and forcing them into a kind of self-perception, an exciting ontological can of worms is opened. Questions regarding personhood, the ghost in the machine, problems of time and memory, perception and self-perception follow naturally.**

**But the real heart of my work lies in an attempt to use the technological-other as a mirror, a way of aesthetically pointing to the fleshy question mark sitting between our ears. In this way the profundity of that childhood preoccupation becomes clear: consciousness arises from the loop. The boxes are self-aware. Somehow, networks of unimaginable complexity emerge from the simplest interaction of discreet parts. That is both the inescapable condition we find ourselves in as well as our most eternal, seemingly unanswerable question: how does a loop become mind?**

